
Citizen Participation

The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth incorporates input from a variety of stakeholders including citizens, neighborhoods, institutions, businesses, and neighboring jurisdictions.

Public Process

In June 2006, the Planning Commission set the tone and direction for the update to the comprehensive plan. The update was based upon the premise that the policies in the previous comprehensive plan as adopted in 2000 were working, but that the concepts of heritage preservation, sustainability and urban design warranted additional attention if Minneapolis was to evolve as a great city of the 21st century.

The City of Minneapolis sought input from a variety of sources during the drafting of *The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth*. Public meetings, focus groups, a website, surveys, and public hearings were used to gather input from stakeholders. The previous comprehensive plan for the City of Minneapolis (*The Minneapolis Plan*) was completed in 2000, and required several years of intensive stakeholder involvement. The current comprehensive plan process was identified early on as an **update** to the 2000 comprehensive plan. Due to relatively recent and extensive involvement from the public in creating *The Minneapolis Plan*, the public participation effort for the plan update was focused on a few key elements which were new in the update. Community outreach and participation was designed in consultation with the city's Community Engagement Coordinator, Multi-cultural Affairs staff, and the city's communications office.

There were six main phases to the public process for the comprehensive plan update:

1. Incorporating input from previous public planning processes
2. Visioning for direction of plan
3. Focus groups on key issues
4. Review of draft policy content
5. City's approval process of draft to submit to Metropolitan Council
6. City's final approval process after Metropolitan Council review (not yet done)

The following is a timeline documenting the major public participation efforts that were utilized in the creation of this document.

Previous Planning

The comprehensive plan is a primary policy document for the City, covering a broad range of topics at a fairly high level. As such, there are many more narrowly focused plans (either based on geography or topic) which are referenced in the comprehensive plan, providing both a basis for its policy and a means for its implementation. Many of these plans have their own public involvement process, so incorporating these plans also incorporates the public comment from their related processes.

One of the first steps of the public involvement process is to acknowledge the public input and planning that has already been received. The comprehensive plan generally affirms the directions provided from recent planning processes, affirming their value to the City. This includes both neighborhood and City level planning efforts. It is not the role of the comprehensive plan to include the full level of detail present in other plans, but rather to provide an overall policy framework.

Examples of these policy and action plan documents include the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Comprehensive Plan, The Access Minneapolis Ten Year Transportation Action Plan, The Minneapolis Plan for Arts and Culture, The Industrial Land Use and Employment Policy Plan, Light Rail Station Area Plans, and various Small Area Plans representing many areas of the city.

Visioning

As stated above, this plan did not start from scratch in developing a vision for the City. Rather, it built upon the direction of the 2000 comprehensive plan. However, there were some specific areas where more input was needed regarding general direction. These focused around areas that were not fully developed or articulated in the previous version of the plan. Specifically, these included [urban design](#), [sustainability](#), and [heritage preservation](#).

A series of three open houses were held in April-May 2007 at the Minneapolis Central Library, Midtown YWCA, and Capri Theater. The focus of these meetings was to discuss participants' vision for the three specific areas identified above, in the context of proposed policy for *The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth*. Comments were recorded at these meetings and can be found in the [May 2007 Outreach Report](#). Over 100 people attended these meetings and provided comments. These were followed by an online survey, wherein the same questions were asked as those at the open house. Over 1,200 individuals participated in the [survey](#).

Focus Groups

Focus groups representing a variety of stakeholders were created to gain insight into specific issues. These were held from June-December 2007. These focus groups included Realtors, environmental advocates, builders, neighborhood groups, architects, heritage preservationists, and NRP staff. One specific group that met a number of times was the Downtown Task Force, which focused on policies for

Downtown. This was important due to the fact that policy for Downtown for the first time in decades is being incorporated fully into the comprehensive plan, rather than existing in a separate document (most recently, Downtown 2010). Updates were also provided to standing boards and commissions with citizen members, including Heritage Preservation Commission, Minneapolis Arts Commission, and the Planning Commission. An additional focus group was held in early 2008 for Hispanic/Latino residents and was conducted entirely in Spanish.

These focus groups provided in-depth insights into specific elements of the plan, again related to the three main themes identified during the visioning phase.

Draft Policy Review

As the public process moved forward, comments and direction were incorporated into the draft document. The first public draft of the policy document was completed in November 2007 and released publicly on December 1. Although the official public comment period lasted from January 1st, 2008 through February 15th, 2008, this additional month provided additional time for the public to review and comment on this substantial document – particularly before the next round of open houses were launched in January. Draft chapters of the comprehensive plan were made available online on the plan’s official website, and copies (both printed and on CD) were provided to public libraries, neighborhood groups, and surrounding jurisdictions.

The Minnesota chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) volunteered to pilot a test format for the urban design chapter. They configured an online editing tool called a “wiki” that allowed interested parties to edit the document interactively and discuss changes to the plan through commenting. This process generated numerous comments and edits from participants, and the resulting edited version of the chapter was used as input into the draft document.

As the next part of this phase, a series of five open houses were held at the North Regional Library, Lake Hiawatha Community Center, Martin Luther King Jr. Recreational Center, Mill City Museum, and Eastside Neighborhood Services. These meetings occurred during the 45 day public comment period and afforded community members an opportunity to give one-on-one feedback to city staff regarding the draft content of the plan. Participants also had the opportunity to submit comments in writing.

Approximately 450 people participated in meetings during this phase, and 250 individual comments or surveys were submitted. Since the comments were more specific to plan content, they were [compiled and responded to individually](#).

Plan Approval Process

The typical path for a planning document in the City’s approval process is from Planning Commission to the Council’s Zoning and Planning Committee, to full City Council. However, due to the importance and complexity of the comprehensive

plan, this process was expanded, to give commissioners and council members – as well as the public – additional chance to review and comment on the plan’s details.

Chapters of the plan relevant to various City Council Committees were taken to public committee meetings to discuss issues and opportunities with moving forward in the comprehensive plan adoption process. In addition, the Heritage Preservation Commission, Board of Adjustment, Minneapolis Arts Commission, and City Planning Commission all reviewed draft documents and commented on the plan. Input from these meetings was again used to review and revise draft content.

Before submitting the draft plan to the Metropolitan Council for approval, the Planning Commission reviewed the draft and made a recommendation for approval to the City Council at a public hearing on June 2, 2008. The plan was subsequently approved for submittal by the City Council on July 11, 2008. For the next twelve months, Metropolitan Council staff worked with City of Minneapolis staff to ensure required elements were accurately, consistently, and adequately addressed throughout the plan.

On July 22, 2009, the Metropolitan Council approved *The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth*, paving the way for final approval and adoption by the Minneapolis City Council. Several technical amendments were required as conditions of approval, none of which changed the policy content of the plan. The City Council took final action to approve the plan, including the required amendments, on October 2, 2009.

Outreach Tools

Getting the word out about a citywide plan such as the Minneapolis Plan can be challenging. It covers a broad range of topics, and impacts a large and diverse group of stakeholders.

Due to this, the City worked to identify a range of ways to get the word out to the public about the plan and opportunities to comment. While providing information and allowing feedback through the internet has grown increasingly popular and can reach a large number of people, the planning process acknowledged that some people still lack access to or comfort with this technology – and need alternative means to participate. The range of strategies used included:

- Hosting a series of meetings at a wide range of locations and times, as described above
- Maintenance of a regularly-updated comprehensive plan website, as well as announcements on the City’s main website
- Interactive online surveys, including the ASLA pilot wiki site

- Emails to City-maintained mailing lists, including those compiled for other planning efforts
- Press releases to regional, city, and neighborhood publications
- Direct mailings to targeted groups
- Flyers posted at and near meeting sites
- Hard copies of draft documents and supporting information at public libraries and neighborhood offices
- Announcements on public access television
- Messages on the City's phone system
- Personal contacts through the City's ongoing work in the community
- Ongoing coordination with City departments and other agencies and jurisdictions
- Logo and branding activities to create recognizable identity for comprehensive plan and related documents and activities
- Radio and newspaper interviews, resulting in several news stories on comprehensive plan

Some of the most important outreach made was not through the City at all, but through neighborhood, community, and professional organizations which reached out to their members and stakeholders to let them know about this opportunity to participate. The City appreciates the role of its active, engaged citizenry in making this happen.

Implementation

Many existing City processes will ensure that effective implementation of the comprehensive plan occurs. The City has identified a number of ways in which the comprehensive plan will be implemented, they include but are not limited to:

- Use public hearing bodies such as the Board of Adjustment, the City Planning Commission, the Minneapolis Arts Commission, and the Heritage Preservation Commission to ensure implementation that is consistent with the goals and policies of this document.
- Identify opportunities in various city departments for implementation of

the goals and policies of this document. For instance, through the Capital Long Range Improvement Committee (CLIC) where recommendations on infrastructure improvements and repairs are made.

- Adopt regulations consistent with the goals and policies of the comprehensive plan in the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances.
- Monitor and solicit continued input from stakeholders throughout and beyond the city in situations where policies are being applied to citywide implementation strategies.
- Adopt new plans that are consistent with the goals and policies of this document by openly involving stakeholders.
- Maintain the impact of plans through neighborhood level and citywide awareness of the importance of the policies and goals of this document and continued advocacy for those goals in all city business lines.