

Saint Paul for All: The 2040 Comprehensive Plan

Introduction

What is the Comprehensive Plan?

The Comprehensive Plan is Saint Paul's "blueprint" for guiding development for the next 20 years, 2020-2040. It outlines policies that address city-wide physical development, and contains chapters on Land Use; Transportation; Parks, Recreation and Open Space; Housing; Heritage and Cultural Preservation; and Water Resources. The Plan's core values, goals and policies reflect an understanding that how we arrange the physical elements of our city – streets, parks, housing and public infrastructure – impacts and is impacted by the people in our city. This Plan also addresses several overarching issues that are integrated into each chapter, including racial and social equity, aging in community, community/public health, economic development, sustainability/resiliency and urban design. The policies contained in the Comprehensive Plan are based on Saint Paul's core values; history; community priorities; and emerging social, economic and environmental trends.

In Saint Paul, several other plans have been adopted over time as addenda to the Comprehensive Plan, including the *Central Corridor Development Strategy*, station area plans, master plans, area plans, and district plans. These documents are not being updated at this time, but will be reviewed after adoption of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan to ensure compliance.

Legal Framework

The Minnesota Metropolitan Land Planning Act requires that every city and other local government in the seven-county metropolitan region have a Comprehensive Plan with a 20-year time frame, and that it be updated every 10 years consistent with the Metropolitan Council's regional plan (*Thrive MSP 2040*) and regional policy plans for transportation, parks, housing and water.

The Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan must respond to *Thrive MSP 2040*, as well as regional growth projections for population, housing units, and employment. Saint Paul is designated as an "Urban Center" in *Thrive MSP 2040*. According to the Metropolitan Council, Urban Center communities are experiencing redevelopment attracted to their vitality and amenities, often at significant densities, but face many challenges, such as land availability for redevelopment and infrastructure improvements, congestion and pollution remediation costs.

The Metropolitan Council projects that Saint Paul will grow by 30,000 residents, 13,000 households and 20,000 jobs between 2020 and 2040.

	2010	2020	2030	2040
Population	285,068	315,000	329,200	344,100
Households	111,001	124,700	131,400	137,400
Employment	175,933	194,700	204,100	213,500

The Comprehensive Plan must plan for this growth, and chart a course for how local policies will implement regional policies. In its review, the Metropolitan Council also considers Saint Paul's Comprehensive Plan's compatibility with the plans of neighboring municipalities and agencies with jurisdiction within the city limits, such as watershed districts, Ramsey County and the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

Major Trends Informing Comprehensive Plan Policy

The 2040 Comprehensive Plan must take into account broader physical, economic, social and environmental trends – both current and projected – that will impact the city's built environment over the next 20 years. These trends include:

Climate change

Cities are being increasingly challenged to find ways to reduce their dependence on fossil fuels, and build in a way that makes them more resilient to environmental threats caused by global climate change. Policies in this document speak to the need to use land and public infrastructure more efficiently by increasing densities on infill parcels, expanding our transit system to lessen dependence on automobiles, and providing for diverse land use.

Aging housing stock and infrastructure

Currently, 72% of Saint Paul's housing units are 50 years or older. The median construction year for all housing structures is 1949. In addition, much of the city's infrastructure (e.g. streets and public utilities) is more than 50 years old. While older housing may initially be more affordable, the extraordinary maintenance costs could lead to neglect and loss of the stock over time. This adds to the challenge of maintaining diverse and affordable housing options in Saint Paul. As infrastructure ages and public funding to maintain, replace or expand it becomes scarcer, it could be more difficult for Saint Paul to meet the growth projections laid out for us by the Metropolitan Council.

Constrained financial resources to pay for City services and facilities

The City of Saint Paul is increasingly challenged to pay for City services and facilities, primarily due to reductions in Local Government Aid from the State of Minnesota. Other financial stressors include increasing demands on property taxes and other public sources to pay for public services. In addition, 23% of Saint Paul's property tax base (appraised value) was tax-exempt in 2016. According to a recent Citizens League report, to compensate for exempted properties, the City of Saint Paul requires two to three times more property tax effort from properties that are taxable than the average Metro Area city. The need is ever greater, while the financial resources are spread thinner. The City must continually work to "do more with less."

Changing demographics

Saint Paul, like much of the region, is experiencing significant demographic changes.

Our population is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. Between 2000 and 2015, the percentage of people of color in Saint Paul increased from 36% to 46%. The trend line suggests that Saint Paul became majority people of color in 2017. Ramsey County has increased from 13% people of color in 2000 to 30% people of color in 2014, and is projected to be at 45% people of color by 2030. Further, over the next three decades, the region will become more diverse: in 2010, 24% of the region's population were people of color; by 2040, that number will be 40%.

Our population is aging. Ramsey County is projected to experience a 48% increase in residents 65 and older between 2015 and 2030, and another 10% increase in this age cohort between 2030 and 2040. The Metropolitan Council projects that those age 65 and older will be the fastest growing segment of our region's population, doubling in absolute numbers by 2030 and becoming one in five of the region's residents by 2040. This new generation of older adults will be more diverse by race/ethnicity, live and work longer, be more independent, and want to age in their current community.

Saint Paul residents are experiencing significant gaps in education, income, employment and homeownership. In 2014, 52% of whites age 25 and older had a bachelor's degree or higher, while only 19% of people of color were in this category. While labor force participation is nearly equal between whites and people of color (72% and 68%, respectively), the per capita income for whites in 2014 was three times that of people of color (\$39,344 vs. \$13,856). In 2014, there was a 33% gap in homeownership between white residents and people of color (61% vs. 28%, respectively).

The Metropolitan Council has identified Areas of Concentrated Poverty (ACP50) – Census Tracts where at least half of the residents are people of color and at least 40% of the residents live below 185% of the federal poverty line – and has committed to using its public resources to catalyze investment in these areas. Saint Paul's ACP50 area shows a concentration of the highest percentages by block group of carless households, families living in poverty, non-English-speaking households, severely cost-burdened households, and population 25 years and older with no bachelor's degree. The ACP50 area also exhibits the lowest high school graduation rates in Saint Paul. The Comprehensive Plan supports the equitable geographic allocation of public funding and investment (especially for land use, housing, transportation, public utilities and parks) to ensure that residents in these areas have the resources they need to thrive and prosper.

Challenges and Opportunities for the Future

Related to these local and regional trends is a set of challenges and opportunities that the City of Saint Paul must address in its 2040 Comprehensive Plan:

- **Equity** – How we grow, develop and invest over the next 20 years must be done in a way that reduces racial disparities in jobs, income, education and homeownership.
- **Growth and density** – In a land-locked and fully built-up city like Saint Paul, the only way to grow is by increasing densities on infill parcels as they become available for redevelopment, and by serving new development with enhanced transit options. While there are a few large infill sites that will be redeveloped over the next 20 years, much of the city's growth will come from densification on smaller, infill parcels. The challenge is to use growth to our advantage and ensure that new development is sensitive to its urban context.
- **Economic development** – To address our equity, diversity and growth goals, the City and its economic development partners must capture innovations in the marketplace (including service delivery, job training, education and new business sectors) that lead to a growing, adapting, strong local and regional economy.
- **Large redevelopment sites** – For the first time in decades, several large sites are ready for major redevelopment, including Ford, Snelling Midway, West Side Flats and Hillcrest. These projects will have a significant impact on Saint Paul's vitality, tax base and livability.
- **Climate change mitigation, adaptation and resiliency** – Saint Paul signed the Compact of Mayors agreement in 2015, stating its commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase resiliency. The challenge to achieve emissions reductions in the building and transportation sectors, the largest contributors to emissions, presents opportunities to reduce energy consumption, improve energy conservation, transition to renewable energy sources, install infrastructure for electric vehicles, and use land use and transportation strategies to reduce the need for driving. These, along with resiliency strategies developed and implemented with an eye toward equity, can also create economic opportunity and enhance the livability of neighborhoods.

- **Designing a city for all ages and abilities** – A vital, healthy city is one where people of all ages and abilities can thrive and live productive lives. The aging Baby Boom generation presents both challenges and opportunities for Saint Paul. Comprehensive Plan policy needs to support mixed-use neighborhoods where housing, shopping, services and volunteer opportunities are within walking distance of one another; a full range of transportation and housing options; and a parks and open space system that meets the needs of older citizens. It also needs to recognize the equity and community health aspects of aging, and ensure that there is ongoing dialogue with seniors. If successful, Saint Paul will be a city where “aging in community” is supported and celebrated.
- **Fostering the next generation** – If a city is going to grow, innovate and prosper, it must provide opportunities for its youth to grow, innovate and prosper. The same physical systems that need to accommodate an aging population need to accommodate a young population. This is especially important in the areas of education and employment.
- **New technologies and their impact on development patterns** – New technologies, such as autonomous vehicles and district stormwater systems, have the potential to significantly alter our physical development patterns. Autonomous vehicles may allow for narrower streets, require fewer parking spaces, and influence our housing patterns. District stormwater systems may allow for higher densities on larger infill sites. While the Comprehensive Plan cannot anticipate or predict all new technologies, it has to set the stage for a physical development pattern that is flexible and adaptable.

Preparing the 2040 Comprehensive Plan

The Saint Paul Planning Commission began preparing for the 2040 Comprehensive Plan in 2015. The Planning Commission ensures that the chapters respond to the regional mandate for growth, maintain a city-wide perspective, are consistent with one another, and reflect the City’s core values. The Comprehensive Planning Committee of the Planning Commission was designated as the Steering Committee to provide oversight of and coordination between the chapters.

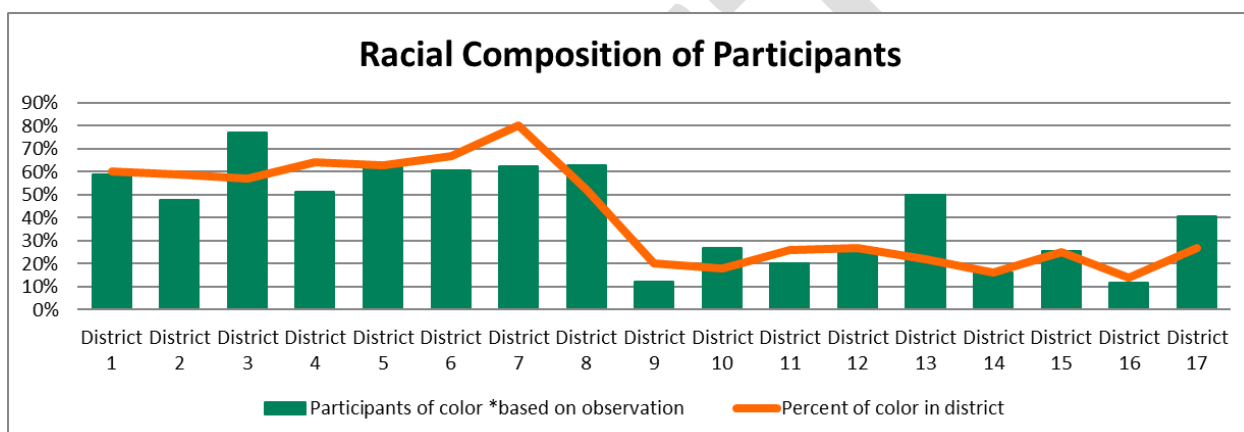
A City staff working group was created for each chapter, comprising inter-departmental staff and, where appropriate, a member of the City Commission with responsibility for Plan implementation (i.e., Parks and Recreation Commission and Heritage Preservation Commission) or staff from a partner agency with implementation responsibility (e.g. Ramsey County Parks). Each working group was led by a City Planner, who was in charge of writing that chapter. As part of the background work for each chapter, the lead Planner reviewed the existing 2030 Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan chapter to determine what had been accomplished, what was still relevant and yet to be done, and what was no longer relevant. While each chapter’s process was unique, most used the current chapter as a foundation and added community input, understanding of development trends, research, and a review of comprehensive plans of peer cities to identify issues and best practices.

Extensive community engagement was undertaken to set the community vision and priorities for the Comprehensive Plan, and to identify issues to address within it. Our goal was to reach as many people as possible; be genuine about the role of engagement; and be representative by race, age and geography.

Major engagement kicked off in May 2016 with three broadly advertised open house events, and continued throughout 2016 into 2017 with staff attendance at community festivals, pop-up meetings in public locations, district council meetings, City department meetings, policymaker interviews, radio interviews on WEQY (Voice of the East Side) and KMOJ (The People’s

Station), Open Saint Paul online input, and discussions with experts and advocacy organizations. A concentrated effort was also made to meet with experts and advocacy groups to identify issues, especially regarding how racial and social equity, aging in community, community/public health, economic development, sustainability/resiliency and urban design intersect with the six chapter subjects.

During the first phase of community engagement, staff spoke with more than 2,200 people at 67 events, generating more than 3,700 comments. At least one event was held and at least 25 people were engaged in each of Saint Paul's 17 planning districts, with an average of three events and 100 people per district. During the big engagement push from May-September 2016, the 800+ people of color engaged represented approximately 50% of the total participants compared to a city-wide population proportion of 40% (in 2010). The age of participants was also mostly representative of the city-wide population, if somewhat older.



Nine themes and priorities emerged from the community engagement.

- **Livability, equity and sustainability.** When asked about regional themes established by the Metropolitan Council, a majority of responders said livability and equity are the most important for Saint Paul. Further public input established sustainability as also being vitally important.
- **Parks and open space.** Parks and open space, from Como Park to Swede Hollow to the Mississippi River to local playgrounds, were consistently identified throughout the city as cherished places that we should preserve and enhance.
- **Sense of community.** Many people identified social connections, diversity and their neighborhood's character – whether “vibrant” or “quiet” – as key advantages of living in Saint Paul.
- **Public safety.** People want to be safe and feel safe in their communities, and to have positive relationships with police officers. Strategic investment and thoughtful design can improve public safety, as can responsible land use, transportation and housing policies that create a livable, equitable city.
- **Road safety for pedestrians and bicycles.** Pedestrian safety at crossings and improved facilities were frequently identified as issues, as were bicycle facility improvements and safety.
- **Invest in people.** Whether job training or programming at recreation centers (especially for youth), people identified this as an important issue for Saint Paul. Many commented that these investments pay dividends for livability, prosperity and public safety.

- **Jobs.** People said we need more and better jobs to allow them to provide for their families and lift up the entire community.
- **Quality affordable housing.** People said we need more affordable housing, and that existing housing must be well-maintained.
- **Saint Paul is full of opportunity sites.** The range of “places with potential” identified was astounding, including major projects like Snelling-Midway (soccer stadium area) and the Ford site; large geographies like “the East Side,” “the Green Line” or “the riverfront;” commercial corridors like White Bear Avenue or Selby Avenue; and individual sites throughout the city. People said there are gems throughout the city, ready for (re)discovery and investment.

Drafts of the plan chapters were prepared between March and December 2017, and reviewed by the working groups, appropriate City Commissions, and the Comprehensive Planning Committee of the Planning Commission. A draft of the complete plan was submitted to the Metropolitan Council in March 2018 for a preliminary review, at which time it was also sent to adjacent and affected jurisdictions per Metropolitan Council requirements. City staff met with district councils, advocacy groups, and other interested parties between April and June, and held two Open Houses in June. After reviewing comments from adjacent and affected jurisdictions, a public hearing draft was released in July 2018.

The Planning Commission held a public hearing in September and recommended a final Plan to the City Council in October. The City Council held a public hearing in October and adopted the 2040 Comprehensive Plan in November. The adopted Plan was sent to the Metropolitan Council on December 31, 2018.

Vision and Core City Values

The vision for the 2040 Comprehensive Plan is that Saint Paul is a community that is welcoming to and a place of opportunity for all, regardless of income, age, race, ethnicity or ability. It will do this by addressing the place-based dimensions of our disparities: embracing growth; offering a wide range of housing choices for its diverse residents; providing a transportation system that meets the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users and drivers; preserving, celebrating and building on our history; and supporting infill development that sensitively accommodates a growing, aging and increasingly diverse population.

This vision is based in the following core values. The City of Saint Paul believes in:

- **Racial and social equity** – a city where race does not pre-determine opportunities in education, employment, housing, health and safety.
- **Fair and equitable access to and choice of healthy, affordable, safe housing** for all household sizes, incomes, ages, races and abilities.
- **Transportation mobility and connectivity** – a multi-modal system of movement that provides options for all ages.
- **A robust parks and open space system** that is accessible to all.
- **A healthy community** – the “social determinants of health” – housing, transportation, land use, parks and economic development opportunities – are the largest contributors to human health.
- Addressing climate change mitigation and adaptation to be a **resilient city**.
- Providing for the transit, housing, parks and infrastructure needs of its aging citizens so that they can **age in our community**, and recognizing its older adults as valued, integral members of our community.

- **Economic mobility and opportunity**, including jobs, job readiness, education and training.
- **Recognizing and celebrating our complex and inter-related histories**, as they give us our sense of identity, community pride and experience.
- Strengthening the region through our commitment to **a strong urban core**.
- **A citizen's right and responsibility to engage in decisions** that affect him/her.
- **Beauty** – including physical design that celebrates the best of what Saint Paul can be, brings people together and fosters creativity.
- The importance of **the Mississippi River** to our economy, ecology and community.
- A **creative city**, with the arts and culture as an extension/celebration of our diversity, inclusivity and shared strengths.
- **Growth and prosperity through density** – well-designed infill development that responds to its neighborhood context and fosters diversity and prosperity.
- **Food equity** – access to healthy food for all, regardless of income, location or race.
- **Social justice** – expanding opportunity for all persons and supporting corrective actions.
- **Diversity** – racial, economic, age and social diversity that is recognized and celebrated.
- A **safe and welcoming** city and neighborhoods.

How to Use This Document

Guiding principles for the document are to: 1) use clear and concise language; 2) focus policies on the big picture, not on specific action strategies; 3) keep it to a manageable size; and 4) make it as user-friendly as possible. The 2040 Comprehensive Plan is the City's vision or "blueprint" for guiding future development through 2040, based on the commonly held vision of its citizens for a just, equitable city that is primed for growth, opportunity and vibrancy. It is the foundation for how the City of Saint Paul will respond to trends and guide change in the coming years. It should also be viewed by community groups, development partners, housing and transportation providers, and other governmental agencies as a guide for their work in Saint Paul.

The policies that follow will be used to (among other purposes):

Inform zoning decisions. Zoning actions must be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. For example, per guidance in the Land Use chapter, is a parcel requested for rezoning from B3 General Business to T3 Traditional Neighborhood located along a transit-corridor or at a Neighborhood Node identified for strategic, higher-density, transit-oriented development?

Guide the expenditure of public funds through such tools as the capital improvement budget, tax increment financing and STAR. For example, per guidance in the Parks chapter, will a proposed park improvement lead to more equitable access to City parks?

Guide private investment. The Comprehensive Plan also establishes priorities for where the City wants privately funded development to occur, consistent with public investments in housing, transportation, public utilities and parks. For example, the Land Use chapter says that high-density multi-family construction should be concentrated at Neighborhood Nodes.

Secure other public funding (grants, etc.). Regional, state and federal agencies often require projects they fund to be consistent with the applicant's Comprehensive Plan. For example, a Transportation chapter policy supporting the lessening of the impact of interstate freeways on adjacent neighborhoods would be the basis for pursuing federal funding for a "land bridge" over I-94 to reconnect neighborhoods torn apart by the construction of the freeway.