

Imagine Duluth 2035

Draft Focus Group Policies & Strategies

Vision Committee review

September 16, 2017

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Transportation Policies & Strategies

Policy #1

Improve conditions for all users: Prioritize basic maintenance of streets and paved trails to extend the life of existing infrastructure, and focus bigger maintenance projects and reconstruction on corridors used for transit lines, bike routes, and concentrations of pedestrians (such as near schools and commercial centers). This also includes improving safety for all users and promoting active transportation options.

1. Develop an asset management plan that includes annual crack sealing, chip sealing, and similar low-cost maintenance activities that can extend the life of pavement.
 - a. Maintenance activities should occur at scheduled intervals known to most effectively extend the life span.
 - b. If a street or trail condition has deteriorated to a point where such maintenance is not effective and efficient, then maintenance should be shifted to a different location where it can have maximum effectiveness.
 - c. At a minimum, the yearly street maintenance budget should begin the budget process with a list of streets needing crack sealing, chip sealing, or other low-cost maintenance in the upcoming year, without which the pavement condition will likely deteriorate significantly.
2. Priority streets and trails, shown in the map, should maintain a minimum condition level (of ___?). This includes transit lines, paved trails and bike lanes, roads that are part of the bike route system, pedestrian-friendly shopping areas/destinations, and safe routes to school, as these are all instances when the roads serve multiple purposes and the city can get more “bang for the buck.”
 - a. Sidewalks within ¼ mile of these routes should also be prioritized.
 - b. The asset management plan described above should include a year-by-year plan for resurfacing or reconstruction of these priority routes.
 - c. Resurfacing plans should include consideration of on-road bicycle facilities, as described in FHWA’s guidance in *Incorporating On-Road Bicycle Networks into Resurfacing Projects* (March 2016).
3. Dedicate annual sidewalk funding independent of road improvement projects to achieve needed improvements and complete missing segments of the existing sidewalk network. Funding should also be dedicated for maintenance such as vegetation trimming and stairway maintenance.
4. Change street assessment rules that require property owners to pay 100% of sidewalk costs; sidewalk assessment should be consistent with street assessment (25%).
5. Ensure that sidewalks are cleared of snow by clearly identifying which sidewalks are cleared by the city, county, state, and property owners; increasing use of the Snow Angels program; incentivizing snow clearing; and enforcing the sidewalk clearing ordinance. To provide equitable transportation for all modes, sidewalks must not be delayed until after roads are cleared, but must be cleared on a similar timeframe. Sidewalks along priority routes, which includes transit lines and safe routes to school, should be cleared right away.
6. Participate in safe routes to school planning and implement transportation objectives from these plans.

7. For improved safety at intersections, evaluate changing parking rules to require vehicles park further from intersections to increase sight lines.
8. Utility repairs often result in uneven pavement and potholes. When designing and reconstructing utilities, place them in a location easiest to be restored when future utility repairs are needed. Generally, and when possible, first avoid locations that would impact street trees, and place in areas where patching after repair work is least likely to impact the travel experience (i.e. place in sidewalk area of reconstruction of a sidewalk section is easiest, place in middle of street rather than where vehicle tires travel, etc.).
9. As the biggest safety issue contributing to injuries and death, vehicle speed must be slowed. This can be accomplished through design considerations including lane width, speed humps, stop control devices, warning lights, street trees and plantings, bump outs and medians, etc. Existing streets can be retrofitted by improvements such as installing small medians mid-block or speed humps in necessary locations. The presence of on-street parking has also been shown to slow traffic.
 - a. All neighborhood, safe routes to school, small area plans, etc. should include an assessment of local roadways with problematic vehicle speeds and identify both short-term and long-term traffic-calming solutions.
 - b. Establish school safety zones where applicable, with reduced speed limits and signage.
10. Identify pedestrian crossings needing safety improvements, such as those near transit stops, schools, or pedestrian destinations.
11. Encourage demonstration projects such as temporary bump outs and bike lanes to test proposed safety improvements.
12. Implement the Skyline Parkway Corridor Management Plan, including creating pedestrian/bike facilities.
13. Future bike lane development should prioritize protected bike lanes over unprotected bike lanes, both to increase cyclist and pedestrian safety and to encourage people who are uncomfortable biking with vehicle traffic. Minimize use of the gutter adjacent to the curb as part of the minimum width for bike lanes, given the potential safety issues of the change in pavement height.
14. As self-driving car features increase, monitor and adopt best practices regarding safety, parking, or other considerations.
15. Plan for an increase in Electric Vehicles (EVs), and implement needed charging stations and other improvements.

Policy #2

Lower infrastructure costs: To minimize construction and long-term maintenance costs, prioritize areas for development and redevelopment that maximize use of Duluth’s existing infrastructure. Existing streets should be rightsized to accommodate needs of users and, as they are reconstructed, should be evaluated for narrower lanes or road widths, or other strategies that will lower costs of both the road and stormwater infrastructure.

1. Priority will be given to development where utility services can be provided at average or less than average cost. Development where utility installation will be more costly will be discouraged.
 - a. Infill development

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- i. Identify vacant lots directly adjacent to city streets and utilities that would be candidates for infill development, and create a way to share this information so that potential buyers can see which areas in which the city is supporting infill development.
 - ii. To more strongly prioritize infill development over greenfield development, amend the City’s Unified Development Chapter Sustainability Point System for added weight to the following criteria: “Development on a previously undeveloped site that is located immediately adjacent to existing city roadway and utility infrastructure and that does not require additional public roadway and utility infrastructure to be constructed to service development.” The site reuse criteria should also be increased. Note that to ensure sustainability point totals are not diluted by this prioritization, the total required sustainability points should be increased accordingly.
 - b. Redevelopment
 - i. Support development redevelopment in the Irving Neighborhood that increases density there. An analysis of utility capacity and roadway capacity showed the Irving neighborhood currently has strong water pressure, roads without congestion issues, and immediate freeway access providing transportation to the region. – *Add map of Irving for illustration*
 2. The City will evaluate existing roads in low-density areas to determine where vacation or reconfiguration of streets would lower the infrastructure burden. Establish a metric for evaluating the value and need for these streets to determine if the infrastructure should be replaced, reduced, removed, or made private to reduce long-term maintenance costs and increase resilience to natural disasters.
 3. Increase green infrastructure, such as bioswales, urban trees, and rain gardens, throughout the city. Green infrastructure is cheaper over its life cycle than conventional stormwater treatment and can be more adaptable to changing conditions.
 - a. For all street reconstruction projects, conduct a cost-benefit analysis of green infrastructure options to understand the return on investment.
 - b. Increase urban tree planting along streets and on city and private property.
 - c. Require a buffer around wetlands to increase their natural infiltration and storage capacity.
 - d. Amend the Unified Development Chapter Sustainability Point System to allow development to earn additional points for the use of green infrastructure to meet stormwater requirements. The point system already lists points for use of a green roof on buildings but additional items could be added.
 4. Conduct a feasibility analysis about an organized waste hauling program to study how a new system could reduce wear and tear on city streets.
 5. Examine city road standards and road projects, narrowing roadways (in most cases, when reconstruction is due) where possible to reduce maintenance and replacement costs.
 - a. Lane widths should start at the narrowest standard width (9-10 feet) and be increased only after need is demonstrated. This will also slow traffic and shorten crossing distances, both of which are safer for pedestrians and bicyclists.

On local residential streets, start design with a lane width of 9’:

Narrow streets also slow traffic in these residential areas where people may be riding bikes or kids may be playing nearby.

Not all residential streets need sidewalks. With slow traffic speeds and low volumes, pedestrians and bicyclists can be accommodated within the same space as vehicles.

- b. On residential streets where properties have off-street parking available, consider the elimination of a parking lane to reduce pavement. In areas that allow parking on one side of the street, construct only one parking lane rather than alternating sides of the street every week.
 - c. Extra width in the right of way can be used for sidewalks, trails, or bike facilities (all of which use shorter depth of asphalt and increase the use of the street), or for street trees, plantings, rain gardens and other stormwater treatment.
6. In commercial areas with paid on-street parking, use parking meter fees to pay for construction, plowing, and maintenance of those parking spaces; pricing should be set to account for the city's cost of providing the parking. Any increases in parking fees will also induce parking behavior that is responsive to the market, allowing on-street spaces to be used for quick stops at businesses rather than for long-term parking, and encouraging ramp usage.

Policy #3

Increase multimodal options: Active transportation choices enhance the health of the community, and options that do not require a private vehicle provide a more equitable transportation system. Duluth's transportation system shall include transit, biking, and walking as viable choices that are also safe and convenient, and will prioritize these over single-mode travel. Duluthians of all abilities and incomes should be able to safely access needs including employment, food, health care, and housing.

General:

1. Ensure all new development includes pedestrian connections to sidewalks, transit stops, and neighboring destinations. Buildings should be placed and designed to encourage a pedestrian friendly streetscape and to support alternative modes of transportation. Developers should be required to add bicycle parking and transit stop amenities as needed.
2. Promote rideshare, carshare, and bikeshare programs as they can provide connections to other modes of transportation as well as increase transportation choices.
3. Conduct a feasibility study for a gondola or incline connecting Canal Park, Downtown, and the Central High School site/Central Entrance. Pending results of feasibility study, identify alignment and stop locations, and begin acquiring property and easements.
4. Pedestrian stairways are a unique feature in Duluth's hillside that increases walkability and provides additional transportation options in steep topography. Stairways should be maintained and new stairways added where appropriate.
5. Support occasional closed streets events in key locations such as Superior Street and other downtown streets, Canal Park, and Skyline Parkway.
6. Plan for the area immediately around the future Northern Lights Express (NLX) station, focusing on connections to local transportation and wayfinding to Duluth destinations.

7. Increase bike capacity on buses and identify ways for non-traditional bikes (i.e. fat bikes, tricycles, etc.) to travel by bus.
8. Maintain unused or decommissioned railroad corridors, as an avenue for potential future transportation options.

Transit:

9. Prioritize transit growth in areas where projected vehicle growth predicts future congestion, and in/between areas with the greatest population and employment density. This includes:
 - a) The Woodland Avenue corridor and UMD area.
 - b) Between Lakeside and Congdon/I-35, using E 4th Street and London Road.
 - c) United Healthcare and the airport area.
 - d) Between West Duluth and the mall area.
10. Support development and redevelopment of mixed use nodes and corridors along transit lines that increases residential density and commercial square footage, and identify incentives to implement this. Multi-story buildings should be prioritized over single-story buildings, and parking ramps encouraged over parking lots as a more space-efficient way to provide parking.
11. Recognize that rerouting of established transit lines can affect people without vehicle access who depend on transit for needs such as employment opportunities, food access, and school transportation. Work to minimize the rerouting of these established transit lines.
12. In the “Transportation” section of the UDC’s Sustainability Point System, add a category for transit, awarding the highest level of points to a project built within ¼ mile of DTA Routes 1, 6, and 10; a secondary level of points to a project built within ¼ mile of DTA Routes 4, 9, and 13, and a smaller level of points to a project within ¼ mile of Routes 2, 3, 7, 11, and 12. To avoid diluting the overall sustainability of projects, increase the total sustainability points required accordingly.
13. Improve transit amenities and transit stop conditions including sidewalks and concrete landing pads, shelters, heat, signage and updated information, cleanliness and aesthetics, and snow clearing. Create standards for transit stops, including ADA accessibility, and use transit stop inventories to identify those in need of improvement, starting with those that are most used and at key nodes. Explore new strategies for funding at transit stops, such as sponsorship of transit shelters or stops (add photo).
 - a. Amend the Connectivity Standards in the UDC to require transit stops be brought up to standard if a new development or redevelopment abuts a transit line and has a transit stop directly adjacent to the property.
14. Use creative branding and marketing strategies to increase transit use. Create a smartphone app and other tools to provide immediate, user-friendly ways to get real-time information and pay for bus passes. Highlight the comfort, reduced stress, environmental friendliness, and convenience of transit.
15. Establish a transit network of routes with 15-minute frequencies or better during peak times, and identify ways to streamline routes and shorten travel times. Weekend routes should be the same as weekday routes.
16. Create incentives for employers who offer reduced transit fares for employees, and for those who do not provide free vehicle parking but instead charge for parking. Work with institutions including the hospitals to provide free bus service to employees, similar to UMD’s existing program.

17. For bus services to and from schools, align transit schedules with school and class times to the extent feasible. For bus service to the airport, align trip times with flight arrivals and departures.
18. Continue to ensure transit connects to grocery stores and farmer's markets, and that those buses have grocery bins.
19. Identify opportunities for future rapid bus service, and tools such as signal priority to ensure consistent and fast travel times on those routes.
20. Make improvements and increase marketing for transit park 'n' rides in Piedmont and Woodland.

Bike Network

21. Complete the Cross City Trail and Campus Connector to connect gaps in the existing paved bike infrastructure. Create bike lanes downtown to connect existing bike lanes on 4th Street and London Road with the Cross City Trail.
22. Assess bike routes using FHWA's "level of stress" metric, and implement recommendations to improve bikeability in Duluth.
23. Increase available bike amenities such as repair stations, lockers, and bike racks on public and private property. In busy bicycle areas, the City will install bike corrals, using either sidewalk space, where wide enough, or on-street parking spaces.
24. Participate in regular bike lane demonstration projects to test and determine the best locations for permanent bike infrastructure. *Photo: Michigan St bike lane project.*
25. Participate in bike sharing feasibility study, and support bike-share programs to promote cycling for commuting, reducing congestion on roads and offering residents and visitors and active mobility option.
26. Discourage on-street parking that is angled or perpendicular to the roadway in any new locations, as vehicles backing into the roadway is a dangerous condition for people on bicycles.

Policy #4

Improve connections in downtown and Canal Park: Travel to and within these areas can be challenging in busy tourist seasons and during large events, and impacts quality of life as well as visitors' experience. Congestion, parking, and wayfinding need special emphasis in this area of the city.

1. Manage event congestion through a dynamic parking information system that will direct drivers where parking is available in private and public lots, including signage on the freeway directing drivers to the appropriate exit. This should include lots at the DECC and downtown to reduce vehicles circulating in Canal Park looking for parking.
2. Improve connections over I-35.
 - a. Re-envision the Lake Avenue and 5th Avenue W bridges as complete streets, incorporating pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. Install ADA compliant curb ramps. Add sidewalks to both sides of the 5th Avenue W bridge.
 - b. At two public plazas along Lake Avenue (adjacent to Minnesota Power and Electric Fetus), create direct pedestrian linkages to the overpass, removing current walls and barriers that require pedestrians to backtrack to Superior Street before crossing to Canal Park.
 - c. Create identifiable and direct pedestrian linkages to Lake Place/Lakewalk from East Superior Street.

3. Provide transit circulation and transit stops within downtown and Canal Park/Bayfront, connecting key destinations and parking facilities. Expand the downtown zone eligible for reduced fares, and create a free circulator between parking facilities and key destinations.
4. Conduct a traffic study to identify how to best route vehicles between Park Point and the freeway, to minimize congestion from through traffic.
5. In those areas with the highest pedestrian traffic, such as within Canal Park and along East Superior Street, investigate strategies to make pedestrian crossings of roadways easier, such as mid-block crossings, bumpouts, and signal phasing (i.e. exclusive pedestrian phasing, split phasing, or leading pedestrian interval).
6. Improve the alley between S Lake Avenue and Canal Park Drive as a woonerf; add a smoother driving surface for vehicles, but design so that all modes can use this alley. Include wayfinding and aesthetic improvements such as signage for businesses, trees, and landscaping where appropriate.
7. Redesign the Baywalk, taking into account the entire stretch from Pier B on the west to the Lakewalk on the east, including a pedestrian connection along Buchanan Street. This redesign should include wayfinding and a consistent “feel” for the Baywalk as an inviting thoroughfare for pedestrians and bicyclists that connects important public spaces and enhances views of the harbor. Reconstruct sections of the Baywalk as necessary, including the seawall behind the DECC.
8. Create a downtown street plan to guide future street improvements.
 - a. Emphasize wayfinding for vehicles to the Duluth Transportation Center and to parking facilities.
 - b. Streetscape design should be consistent with the Superior Street Reconstruction design.
 - c. Include conversion of one-way sections of 1st Street to two-way traffic flow.
 - d. Incorporate connections to and infrastructure needed around the future NLX station.
 - e. Identify ways to make safer pedestrian crossings and improve the visitor experience for the block of Michigan Street between the library and Depot, as well to enhance the “plaza” feel for the public space adjacent to the library.
9. Complete a parking plan for downtown and Canal Park that estimates future parking demand, identifies strategies for market-based approaches that incentivize ramp parking and transit use where appropriate, creates efficiencies with shared parking, and suggests ways to incorporate parking in efficient land use scenarios that support economic development and other community goals.

Policy #5

Support city and neighborhood vitality: Transportation decisions should contribute to citizens’ and visitors’ quality of life and enhance the image of Duluth as an urban, progressive, outdoor city. Public investments should support private reinvestment in housing stock, neighborhood commercial districts, employment centers, and new mixed use areas.

1. Core Investment Areas (Further recommendation needed)
2. Road construction, street improvements, and trail projects shall retain existing trees where feasible and include new street trees where space allows.
3. Use green infrastructure as aesthetic amenities in addition to providing stormwater treatment.

4. Transportation corridors such as Central Entrance and 6th Avenue E should be treated as gateways into the city and neighborhoods. Defining aesthetic elements, identification signage, and streetscape design should reflect this.
 - a. When major streets are reconstructed, the design process shall include consideration of gateway and aesthetic elements.
 - b. The City will work with neighborhood and business organizations to implement signage and other elements.
5. Incorporate public art and creative placemaking into street, transit, and trail projects.
6. Explore opportunities to use bus stops and shelters, fire hydrants, bike racks, utility cabinets, and other normal components of streets as low-cost ways to implement public art. Identify locations where painting could be allowed in street intersections, and a process for permitting this.
7. Strengthen connectivity standards to require more pedestrian and bicycle paths through parking lots to increase local access to businesses and services.
8. In neighborhood commercial areas, facilitate shared parking as a way to reduce expectations on individual businesses and promote walkability within those neighborhoods as well as create a common feel for the district. The shared parking calculations in the UDC should be revisited. Marketing and outreach efforts should include education about the benefit of shared parking, and a design manual that includes considerations for pedestrian amenities and information on shared parking agreements. Some areas might want to consider a parking management district to pay for and maintain shared parking facilities.

Policy #6

Protect and enhance regional and freight transportation: Transportation planning in Duluth needs to recognize the importance of air, rail, water, and highway transportation. These planning initiatives should *associate freight mobility to other community goals such as economic development and job growth.*

1. The City will continue to work with the Army Corps of Engineers, Coast Guard, and stakeholders to maintain Duluth's shipping channels and port facilities.
2. The City will continue to protect and enhance freight corridors and intermodal facilities that link water-borne shipping with rail and truck shipping.
3. Support reconstruction of the Twin Ports Interchange, focusing on freight connections, safety, and neighborhood connectivity.
4. Support for airport cargo growth through increased economic activity in the region based on population growth and an increase in business activity and employment.
5. Support expansion of the air cargo facility.
6. Invest in transportation improvements that support the export and mobility of freight by truck, rail, air, and shipping.
7. Form partnerships with rail freight companies to maintain, improve, and expand rail infrastructure.
8. Encourage appropriate use of truck routes; be thoughtful in positioning industry and truck routes. Get freight out of neighborhoods.
9. Promote industrial, port, transportation, and logistic businesses near the port, railroad, airport, or highway interchanges so those businesses can take advantage of infrastructure. Protect location-dependent economic uses, including port, railroad, and airport facilities, from encroachment by land uses that are incompatible or not location-dependent.

Economic Development Policies and Strategies

Draft Mission Statement: To develop an economic environment that advances the success and health of our community by promoting opportunities.

Policy 1. Support existing and new employers. Most growth in employment comes from existing employers. A strong business retention and expansion program that will help our community to build upon existing success should be a priority. Consider options for business incentives, financial and non-financial, for small local employers that may not be able to take advantage of traditional tax incentives.

1. Prioritize redevelopment development efforts in existing neighborhood nodes (downtown, Spirit Valley, Lincoln Park, Gary/New Duluth, Central Entrance, Miller Hill, London Road, Kenwood, Woodland, Lakeside, etc.) before developing new commercial nodes or corridors.
2. Develop a work plan to help prioritize investments of staff and financial resources into development areas and employers that can have the most benefit to Duluth and take advantage of existing industry clusters and employment centers.
3. Consider zoning incentives, such as density or height bonuses, for development or redevelopment on core investment areas/neighborhood commercial nodes. Consider a zoning overlay district that applies to incentive areas that provides incentives or reduces regulatory requirements.
4. Consider incentivizing or providing relief from some zoning standards or regulations for new developments that have 75% or more of their parking spaces provided internally within the principle structure, or in parking ramps.
5. Limit any rezoning along major transportation corridors to commercial, mixed use or industrial use; focus this type of rezoning activity adjacent to existing neighborhood commercial nodes or core investment areas.
6. Pursue and promote financial and non-financial options (for local, small, employers to keep or expand their employment base.
7. Develop/encourage local developers and entrepreneurs with a mentorship program, and promote business incubators to help foster development of very small businesses. Promote business startups, retention, and expansion to bolster the existing economic base. Promote and support programs to grow an entrepreneurial culture.
8. Clarify and expand standards for home based businesses. Help promote and develop home based businesses, but also promote a program to help home based businesses grow up to
9. Promote opportunities and incentives to keep newly graduated students stay in the area.
10. Continue to assist businesses in identifying appropriate locations within the city. Assist in site assembly for strategic commercial and industrial development where appropriate.
11. Continue to coordinate contamination cleanup and land readying activities in order to provide clean and competitive sites

Policy 2. Embrace Outdoors as an economic asset. Outdoor recreation is both a source of wealth by drawing tourists to our community, and an asset for attracting and keeping a talented workforce. Preserve and protect existing open space, and continue to maintain recreational options, including regional, neighborhood, and pocket parks, as well as trails, sidewalks, greenspace, access to water and other outdoor recreation amenities.

1. Promote parks as a supporter of economic activity and as a tool to increase property values and promote the health and recreation opportunities of citizens
2. Promote programs demonstrating how protection or restoration of wetlands can provide economic value to the City, in addition to the environmental benefits
3. Public access to the waterfront and development of water trails should be encouraged where they do not conflict with existing waterfront businesses and maritime transport. Monitor and improve the coexistence of recreational and commercial maritime use, and enhancement of natural resources in the St. Louis River estuary, St. Louis Bay, Superior Bay and Lake Superior. Recreational use of the harbor and estuary is encouraged when compatible with maritime transportation and development that needs to be adjacent to the navigation channel.
4. Promote passive recreation activities, such as bird watching or nature walks, in addition to active recreational opportunities, in order to provide options for citizens of all ages and physical fitness abilities.
5. Promote efforts to restore the “garden city” concept of Duluth with recreational corridors of parks, trails, and open space running alongside the streams.
6. Review City-owned and tax forfeited land and prioritize lands according to ecological/recreational/cultural/historic importance and infrastructure availability so that lands not needed for protection can be made available for development.
7. Review the sustainability point system in the UDC to encourage more resource protection through the site development process.

Policy 3. Build on Existing Economic Strengths. Encourage diversification of businesses and employers for a healthy economy, and focus public partnership and incentive efforts on strengthening our existing industry successful clusters, primarily: health care, aviation, professional services, education, arts, tourism, natural resources, advanced manufacturing, and transportation/logistics.

1. Promote development that supports or enhances the city’s existing industry clusters: biomedical/health care, creative/professional, energy alternatives/renewable energy, forestry/fiber, innovative manufacturing, mining, and transportation/logistics support.
2. Take advantage of historic appeal of Duluth to promote economic tourism and promote historic preservation through financial and non-financial assistance.
3. Strategically invest in tourism infrastructure and projects which also support economic competitiveness and quality of life. Improve connections and mobility for local and regional tourism/trail connections
4. Collaborate with the schools and higher education facilities to support youth employment, apprenticeship and mentorship initiatives. Build a regional/local talent path that starts in elementary school to inform about opportunities in the region and prepare future workers.

5. Promote efforts to match job training with employment needs. Encourage the schools and higher education facilities to engage with employers to design appropriate programs.
6. Maintain accurate and current data on retail properties and tenants. We recommend an annual update. Keep an inventory of all available lease and sale opportunities.
7. Identify areas shown on the Future Land Use map as Auto-Oriented Commercial, and assess them for other Future Land Use recommendations; retire use of the Auto-Oriented Commercial land use category.
8. Support planning for the Northern Lights Express (NLX), promoting its importance to Duluth's economic and transportation future. Plan for the area immediately around the future station, focusing on connections to local transportation and wayfinding to Duluth destinations.
9. Support development and redevelopment of mixed use nodes and corridors along transit lines that increases residential density and commercial square footage, and identify incentives to implement this.
10. Buildings and other structural elements along main streets should be designed in such a way that emphasizes streets as identifiable gateways and neighborhood centers.

Policy 4. Use What We Already Have. Developing new businesses near existing infrastructure is the most effective way to leverage existing public investments in road, sewer, and water. Encourage development in existing built up areas (including the downtown and neighborhood centers) and in the reuse of brownfields. Encourage the use of transfer of development rights or other regulatory tools to discourage the development of greenfields that are not near public service, including public infrastructure and transportation options.

1. Promote commercial development in existing neighborhood centers and limit expansion or rezoning of strip development. No expansion of strip zoning should be allowed until nearly all the developable land in neighborhood or core investment areas is saturated. Rezoning for new commercial strips reduces the value of existing commercial property and makes redevelopment a less active option.
2. Prioritize areas for development and redevelopment that increase utilization of Duluth's existing infrastructure and favor maintenance and reconstruction of older infrastructure over infrastructure expansions. Development in locations where the initial installation and provision of utility services require lengthy extensions without intermediate connections should be discouraged.
3. Encourage appropriate investment on previously developed lands, incentive infill development over Greenfield development when staging development, rezoning for development, or providing public support or investment.
4. Limit any extension of city utilities, roads, and other infrastructure beyond what is currently in place for new development
5. Support new development that incorporates multi story buildings on reduced footprints instead of large single-story buildings, and parking ramps instead of large parking lots, in an effort to reduce the impact of large impervious areas on the stormwater system.
6. Port area lands adjacent to federal shipping channel, rail, and road access are to be given preference for future maritime development. Lands that aren't waterfront properties, but are

strategically ideal for multi-modal transportation purposes due to road and rail access should be maintained for industrial or transportation and distribution related land uses.

7. The International Airport is a significant transportation network asset; lands near the airport should be given preference to activity that compliments and supports the airport.
8. Four class one rail and heavy haul corridors and Interstate and highway systems that transport goods and connecting us to world.
9. Maintain unused or decommissioned railroad corridors, as an avenue for potential future transportation options
10. Protect location-dependent economic uses, including port, railroad, and airport facilities, from encroachment by land uses that are incompatible or not location-dependent. Reserve areas for expansion of airport or port related businesses and reserve or require buffer/transition areas between waterfront industrial areas and other waterfront uses to minimize land use conflicts
11. Port area lands adjacent to federal shipping channel, rail, and road access are to be given preference for future maritime development. Lands that aren't waterfront properties, but are strategically ideal for multi-modal transportation purposes due to road and rail access should be maintained for industrial or transportation and distribution related land uses.

Policy 5. Promote Housing Options. Having affordable or desirable housing options is important to attracting and keeping a talented workforce. Assist efforts to help the housing market provide a variety of housing options for all types of families, including housing options near existing outdoor recreational opportunities.

1. Encourage or provide incentives for new housing developments that are within ¼ mile of existing public parks, and within 1/8 of a mile of a bus stop, and adjacent to public sidewalks.
2. Promote additional options for short term housing options for visitors to Duluth, such as RV parks or camping facilities, where appropriate.

Policy 6. Communication and Coordination

1. City staff and elected officials should schedule annual visit to all major neighborhood/resident groups and associations, annual visit to all major employers in Duluth, and biannual visits to most small employers to ensure city efforts are responsive to current needs and conditions.
2. Have a central office or division that is responsible for receiving, tracking, and responding to all non-public safety complaints.
3. Implement the Comprehensive Plan through cooperation, incentives, development bonuses, and education in addition to simple regulation.
4. Ensure that land use regulation sets clear written expectations for development, redevelopment, and protection of Duluth's natural, cultural, economic, and social assets, and for ease of developers and citizens to understand regulatory expectations Continue to stream line city development review, permitting, and licensing to make it easier to develop property. Provide more options submitting electronic applications and more clarity in estimated time needed to review projects. Consistency in city licensing and fees.
5. Create a Wayfinding program with consistent and clear signage
6. Provide more resources and make it a priority address blighted and nuisance properties (including absentee property owners) that negatively impact property values and livability of neighborhoods.

7. Improve communication about risks and limitations with development in floodplains and shoreland areas.
8. Clarify city standards and regulations for urban gardens and urban farms. Allow agricultural uses that have no land use conflicts with residential properties (such as orchards, gardens, etc) as a permitted use in all residential zones. Lessen restrictions on where farmers' markets can exist throughout the city.
9. Consider public or community gardens on underused public lands. Support efforts to create a farm business incubator on city open space. Include small scale agriculture, local food distribution, and local food retail (such as grocery and restaurant) in economic development investments.
10. Incentivize the development of grocery retail spaces within currently designated food deserts. Consider adopting a Staple Food Ordinance which ensures improved food access in areas without adequate grocery options.
11. Assist in the development of a more competitive business climate.
12. Develop policy on Workforce Development

Open Space Focus Group

Mission Statement: Duluth will strive for a sustainable open space system that enriches the lives of all Duluthians. These open spaces will reflect the community’s ecological, historic, cultural, and recreational values, and will contribute to the community’s resilience to natural disasters.

Open spaces are more than undeveloped land. They provide places for people and wildlife to breathe, literally and figuratively. They are part of the character of the city, including the green hillside of western Duluth, wetland areas of Duluth Heights and Piedmont Heights, sheltered bays of the Saint Louis River, and the ribbons of Skyline Parkway and the creek corridors that weave the other open space areas together. They are formal parks such as Bayfront, Lester, Enger, and Chambers Grove, the plazas of Downtown, the Lakewalk, and the neighborhood parks found throughout town. Some of these open space areas were deliberately set aside, others are the “left behind” areas of yesteryear.

In the ImagineDuluth2035 plan we base open space policies on the principles of providing for the current needs of the community while preserving the ability of future generations to meet their needs for jobs, housing, food, health, safety, recreation, and inspiration. We recognize that land is a limited commodity that should be preserved in its natural state until needed for cost-efficient public or private development. Some land should be more permanently preserved to meet goals important to the community.

Policy 1. Improve Duluth’s resiliency to flooding and natural disasters.

The floods of 1972 and 2012 are dramatic reminders of the potential for lost lives and property in the community. Flooding potential is affected by Duluth’s topography of wetlands and broad stream corridors above the bluff flowing to narrow, rocky streams below the bluff. Many of these streams have been channelized and covered over by infrastructure and buildings increasing the damage potential when the designs of these structures are exceeded. The City will work to ensure that this infrastructure is maintained and, where feasible, upgraded to minimize effects of future flood events. The City will also reduce the damage potential through limiting construction in flood-prone areas. The City will protect the flood storage capacity of wetlands and stream corridors above the bluff through appropriate development controls and acquisition of land important for flood control. Green infrastructure can be an effective tool to handle rain water, but sometimes is more complex to construct and maintain and doesn’t work in all situations. Explore where this tool can be best deployed in development projects and in public infrastructure and make the necessary regulatory changes to enable its usage. Duluth’s vast open space areas also make it prone to wildfire, like the Cloquet-Duluth fire of 1918 that burned much of Cloquet and part of Duluth’s Woodland neighborhood. Duluth’s aboveground power grid is vulnerable to damage from weather-related events and steps could be taken to improve the resiliency of this important infrastructure.

Policy 1 Strategies:

- a. Continue to support coordinated planning efforts for surface water management among jurisdictions with watersheds flowing through Duluth.
- b. Conduct a stormwater infrastructure assessment that includes streams, which act as natural drainage ways, to determine where improvements are needed to reduce risk of flooding.
- c. Once FEMA flood plain maps are updated the City should create an implementation plan for new areas that are identified to reduce risks to lives, property, and infrastructure.
- d. Investigate MN Statute 282 on tax forfeited lands to determine if retaining wetlands and stream corridors for storm water management purposes is a valid reason for retaining tax forfeited land in public ownership and, if not, request the MN Legislature expand the statute to allow this reason in the City of Duluth.
- e. To help with water storage capacity above the bluff, conduct a feasibility study on creating one or more wetland banks within the watersheds flowing through Duluth, including seeking an amendment to the State’s Wetland Conservation Act or amending the Unified Development Chapter (UDC) to give priority to the purchase of wetland credits from these banks. Additionally, amend the UDC to increase the replacement ratio for impacted wetlands above the bluff to discourage out of the watershed replacement.
- f. Incorporate green infrastructure into UDC requirements for new and redevelopment projects. Create a mechanism to provide resources to ensure green infrastructure on privately-owned sites is maintained over time.
- g. Implement green infrastructure at City facilities and in roadway design, where feasible, and provide resources to maintain this infrastructure.
- h. Encourage existing rural residents and businesses to implement National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) *Firewise* principles to make their properties more resilient should a wildfire approach.
- i. Require all new developments and sites that are redeveloped to install power lines underground to reduce risks of power outages during storms.
- j. Transition above ground power lines to buried lines when streets and alleys are reconstructed, especially larger distribution lines to reduce risks of power outages during storms.

Policy 2. Examine the value and need for all of Duluth’s open space and commit to preserving it long term or repurposing it to meet other community needs.

Duluth has an asset many other cities would love to have . . . abundant open space. Many cities are spending millions of dollars to buy land for parks and open space that Duluth already has. The city contains thousands of acres of open space including City Park land, State Tax Forfeited land, and privately-owned, undeveloped land that contains wetlands, stream corridors, large forest tracts, and other important ecological features. While this land may be undeveloped now, it is not permanently protected from development or environmental degradation. Alternatively, Duluth has a lot of land that is near infrastructure that could be used to meet the community’s housing, economic development, and transportation needs. It will take a balanced approach of weighing the current and future needs of Duluth to prioritize if land should be marked for preservation or future development. Consider the role open

space plays in defining Duluth's urban form. This form includes a green belt along the bluff with green corridors flanking many of the streams flowing to the Saint Louis River and Lake Superior. Duluth is known a scenic city with views from the hillside to the harbor and lake, views from the waterfront to the hillside, and views of important structures like the Lift Bridge, Civic Center, Old Central High School, Armory, to name a few. The community should identify these important views and take steps to preserve the views to them. Duluth has many important cultural and heritage sites within in it borders. Work with community partners to identify these areas and take steps to preserve and interpret them for the greater community's benefit.

Policy 2 Strategies for PRESERVATION OF OPEN SPACE:

- a. Review all government-owned land in the city and prioritize lands according to ecological importance for more permanent protection. Areas to be protected include forested areas, wetlands, stream courses, and bluff areas as well as lands important in forming the green belt as part of Duluth's urban form.
- b. Identify a private nonprofit entity and/or establish a City land classification system to hold and maintain those ecologically important lands that are not needed for active park purposes and lands that are needed for natural disaster resiliency (i.e. flood plains and wetlands). Options to consider include:
 1. creating a "minimum maintenance park" classification where the City owns the land for park purposes but is not expected to do daily maintenance,
 2. creating a "storm water retention area" classification for holding areas prone to flooding or important wetland areas where the City owns the land, but signs it as being closed to public use,
 3. creating an entity to hold and maintain conservation easements over private land to be preserved during the development process (i.e. purchase of development rights).
- c. Encourage the use of the Duluth Natural Areas Program to more permanently protect high-quality self-sustaining ecosystems where resource protection is prioritized over human use of the land similar to the States Scientific and Natural Areas Program.
- d. Increase efforts to streamline management of public lands within the City's borders.
- e. Work with tribal leadership, archaeologists, the State Historic Preservation Office and other resources to identify open space sites, districts, and structures of historic and cultural significance and utilize the Duluth Heritage Preservation Commission and Duluth Indigenous Commission to designate these structures and areas as landmarks. Create resource management plans for these designated sites and districts, including interpretative programs, and promote Duluth's rich heritage tourism opportunities.
- f. Partner with groups, public and private, with a mission of preservation and restoration of the Saint Louis River and Lake Superior.

Policy 2 Strategies for REPURPOSING OPEN SPACE:

- g. Create minimum standards for extending new urban services in areas of the city with significant tracts of ecologically significant lands through the establishment of an urban services boundary.

Work with Western Lake Superior Sanitary District (WLSSD) to amend their Urban Services Boundary.

- h. Amend the Unified Development Chapter (UDC) to require more permanent protection of ecologically significant lands (including wetlands, important forested areas, streams, etc.) identified during the development process. Consider implementing a transfer or development rights (TDR) and purchase of development rights (PDR) program.
- i. Review City-owned and tax forfeited land and prioritize lands according to ecological/recreational/cultural/historic importance and infrastructure availability so that lands not needed for protection can be made available for development.
- j. Utilize City authorities such as the Duluth Economic Development Authority (DEDA) and the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) to package lands for sale or strategic development to implement housing, economic development, and transportation policies in the Comprehensive Plan.
- k. Revisit the 2006 Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map and Conceptual Staging of Urban Development Maps to determine which lands may be needed for development and which ones should be preserved.
- l. Create a viewshed plan to identify the most important signature “Duluth views” and establish appropriate tools to protect the views to and/or from these features. Possible implementation tools could include creating a viewshed overlay in the UDC, purchase/transfer of development rights program, and urban design standards. Work with Visit Duluth to promote the “Duluth views” as a tourism resource.

Policy 3. Remove barriers to accessing parks and open space.

While physical barriers are often the most evident including busy roads, topography, and water bodies, there are several other types of barriers relating to open space that need to be addressed. The City will work to address social, economic, and cultural barriers to ensure that as many people as possible have access to parks, recreation, and open space in Duluth. To address physical barriers to parks the City will work to improve pedestrian and bike connections to parks and open space area. People need to be able to find parks and open space areas to be able to enjoy them and the City will improve wayfinding to and within these facilities.

Policy 3 Strategies:

- a. Implement the City’s Gate, Wayfinding, and Signage Final Design Plan to better identify parks and the resources within parks.
- b. Create a wayfinding system directing residents and visitors to regional, community, and special use parks from within neighborhoods and business districts as well as outside the community. This should include roadway and pedestrian-scale signage, as well as Internet resources.
- c. Enhance the physical connections from neighborhoods and business districts to nearby parks, including wayfinding signage, improved pedestrian/bike trails, and enhanced street crossings.
- d. Provide access to recreation equipment and instruction at community recreation centers.
- e. Utilize public/private partnerships (YMCA at Woodland Community Center model) to expand programming in parks.

- f. Work with community partners to develop a parks ambassador program for outreach to people of all neighborhoods encouraging the use of parks and recreation facilities and programs.
- g. Ensure existing connections are protected and new connections are established to the waterfront (Lake Superior and Saint Louis River).

Policy 4. Improve the delivery of parks and open space services to the community.

Duluth has received national recognition for being a city with tremendous outdoor and recreational opportunities. However, our park system is vast and requires tremendous resources to maintain. Eliminating, reimagining, and establishing how Duluth will maintain its park system with limited resources is important to ensure Duluth's vitality. Opportunities could include the evolution of some park land to passive open space with minimal maintenance. Passive open space areas could be used for bird watching and nature walks providing options for citizens of all ages and physical abilities. Recent years have seen a dramatic increase in the provision of trails for various user groups while existing recreation facilities are continuing to show their age and recreation services desired by many are left unfulfilled. What are the future maintenance costs for the new trail facilities and can recreation services be provided in the future? An updated Parks master plan will help address these issues. Preserving and maintaining trees are critical to many City policies, including beautification of neighborhoods and business districts, storm water management, parks facility management, resident education, and reducing tree loss from development projects. Trees are more under threat of disease and stress now than in the past.

Policy 4 Strategies

- a. Undergo an in-depth Parks & Recreation Master Plan update to incorporate recently completed mini-master plans and trail improvements and plan for their long-term maintenance and service provision.
- b. Review the organizational structure for delivery of parks and open space services in the city and make changes to improve service and reduce cost.
- c. Identify stable sources of revenue for park maintenance and service provision including giving consideration to elevating the Parks Commission to elected representation and granting them taxing authority.
- d. Adequately staff municipal forestry management functions in the City to protect and enhance this resource according to the urban forest management plan.

Policy 5. Encourage urban food growth, food security, and healthy lifestyles.

Growing and distributing food that is locally-grown strengthens communities in a variety of ways, including eliminating food insecurity, providing a place for neighbors to meet, positively influencing health, and creating economic opportunities. Not all Duluthians have easy access to quality, affordable food. Over the years, groceries have gravitated to larger sites away from some of Duluth's core neighborhoods leaving a "food desert" behind. The community should work to provide better food resources in these areas. Producing food locally reduces energy inputs needed to transport food to

consumers. Where do animals fit into urban and rural food production in Duluth? Can downtown plazas be utilized for farmers' markets, community gardens and edible landscapes? Healthy lifestyles should come naturally through the prioritization of active transportation modes (walking/biking) over automobile transportation in our built environment.

Policy 5 Strategies

- a. Study the demand for community garden lots throughout the city and utilize existing public land where additional space is needed.
- b. Identify barriers to urban agriculture on urban and suburban lots and remove the barriers where possible.
- c. Investigate the need for a coordinating body that maximizes efficiencies and assists in the development of community gardens, urban agriculture, and small-scale value-added food production.
- d. Determine where public market space is needed for the sale of fresh and value-added local food and identify resources needed for creating that space.
- e. Study where the keeping of animals for food production fits into urban agriculture as well as rural areas and amend the Unified Development Chapter (UDC) accordingly.
- f. Work with the Parks Department and community partners to incorporate edible landscapes in parks where appropriate.
- g. Remove Duluth's food desert by working with community development partners to locate food markets where needed.
- h. Encourage healthy lifestyles by giving priority to the use of active transportation (walking/biking) over automobile transportation in community design. This may include intersection redesign, providing on and off-street bike resources, expanding sidewalks in urban areas and pathways in rural areas, sidewalk/bike path snow removal, provision of street trees, and reducing the convenience of automobile transportation.

Housing Policies and Strategies

Immediately- means completed within a year

Active-means completed within 5 years

Long Range- means completed 5 to 10 years.

Policy #1: Increase the accessibility of housing units to places to where people work, shop, learn and play. One of the dominating issues is how people travel from where they live to places where they work, shop, and play. This issue is compounded when there are children and/or people who live in the house that do not have their own transportation. In addition, having non-residential places closer to residential uses promotes the neighborhoods character. Places where there are walkable services have been shown to be more desirable and functional. Building stronger neighborhoods with good accessibility is key component for this plan.

Strategies

1. Build near transportation hubs and social centers

- **Immediate Priority:** Promote infill development where lots are platted and served by existing transit.
 1. Find and build on the vacant lots that are suitable for new housing, including being close to bus routes, bike lanes and within reasonable walking distance to shopping and entertainment
- **Active Priority:** Encourage mixed use and higher density housing near existing social centers.
 1. Reuse quality iconic structures that serve as the hub for neighborhoods.
 2. Support neighborhood community centers and/ or gathering spaces and focus housing on having residents engage with each other in ways that promote the uniqueness of all of Duluth's neighborhoods.
- **Long Range Priority:** Create more opportunities for live/work type developments that support a higher density of housing while providing amenities for residents
 1. Promote higher density developments and housing near social centers that can provide amenities for all residents living in the area.
 2. Build higher density residential units in places that are serviced by existing infrastructure such as utilities, roads, transit, etc.
 3. Have higher density housing near places of employment.
 4. Minimize development in areas where is limited utilities and transit.

2. Locate housing near job centers and schools

- Immediate Priority: Infill existing lots in the city in neighborhoods that are within walking distance of jobs and schools
 1. Prioritize infill housing near schools and employment to provide the most attractive housing options
- Active Priority: Encourage business development in places that have a high density or established housing.
 1. Bring new employment centers to places that already have high numbers of residential units.
 - a) Promotes fewer suburban-style developments
 - b) Shorter commutes and fewer personal vehicle trips
- Long Range Priority: Promote the live/work style development in the core of our downtown
 1. Reusing existing buildings for constructing new live/work spaces
 2. Build new structures on empty lots or prime development sites (piers) for live/work spaces

3. Improve the conditions and number of sidewalks in neighborhoods

- Immediate Priority: Keep sidewalks clear in the winter and maintain existing sidewalks in high use areas
 1. Coordinate snow clearing and develop a comprehensive snow removal system.
 2. Assess the existing high use sidewalks in the downtown core area and focus on repair.
 3. Identify sidewalks that are the most used in neighborhoods that connect to parks and schools and focus improvement there.
- Active Priority: Identify sidewalks that need reconstructing and create accommodations for uses of all ages and physical abilities
 1. Start rebuilding neighborhood sidewalks that are near schools or assisted living facilities
 2. Clean out sidewalks that have been overgrown and replace railings on sidewalks that get close to the edge of steep slopes
- Long Range Priority: Connect sidewalks across the city
 1. Connect neighborhoods with high quality multi-use paths or super sidewalks

Policy #2: Promote inclusiveness of diverse populations to provide housing for different needs. The City of Duluth is unique in that there are well defined neighborhoods that people live in. Many people who live in a neighborhood wish to remain in their neighborhood for their lifespan and as people age, typically their housing needs change. This change ranges from starting in smaller units, graduating to larger units to sometimes reducing to smaller units. During this life time, relationships and family connections grow and people wish to continue this connection rather than moving unfamiliar areas. In addition, people of different incomes wish to live in different neighborhoods, rather than in concentrated area and providing a variety of housing types will assist in expanding housing opportunities. People of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds

also want to live in different neighborhoods therefore it is important to understand the importance providing equal housing choices for everyone.

Strategies:

1. Increase housing opportunities for all people in all income levels in all neighborhoods.

A vibrant solid neighborhood has people of all incomes living together so that people can better understand and relate to one another. In addition, by providing a variety of housing types, people live in the same neighborhood while their housing needs change, which helps maintain the community connections.

- Immediate Priority: Learn what housing is needed and build it. The focus should be on building the housing types that people are currently needing and demanding.
 1. Work with housing agencies, realtors, and businesses to understand what types of housing is needed and communicate this information to developers. Look for grants to assist with this housing type.
- Active Priority: Provide more housing types in neighborhoods. Respect the existing densities and development patterns, but promote creativity.
 1. Allow for single family, duplex, triplex, and multifamily developments in all neighborhoods.
 2. Place higher density developments near social centers and transit areas.
 3. Provide housing in all price points in all neighborhoods.
 4. Provide a choice of housing types in all price points.
- Long Range Priority: Track the housing construction and housing demand to make sure needs are being met, but being careful to avoid an overbuild situation.
 1. Continued communication with housing professionals and study the housing market.

2. Enforce Housing Equality for everyone. All people, regardless of race, age, sexual orientation, history, and income deserve safe, healthy, functional housing. Unfortunately, discrimination either implicit or blatant, does exist and limits people's housing choices. Duluth will not be able solve society's problem by itself, but having people being more conscious of it will help to address it.

Immediate Priority: Listen to what is needed. Provide an on-going opportunity for people to express their concerns and work on ways to address those concerns.

1. Work with community groups and people of color organizations to develop a report with measurable benchmarks for improvements.
2. Educate people on what is allowed and what is not allowed.
3. Develop and implement a tracking system recording rights violation. Look for repeat violators and proactively address the situation instead of being a complaint basis.

Active Priority: Be creative to celebrate different cultures and provide unique housing opportunities. Duluth is comprised of people from different cultures therefore these different cultures should be showcased so that all people can enjoy them and learn from them. In addition, some people have unique housing needs that would benefit Duluth if they were provided.

1. Improve the neighborhoods.
 - a) Add culturally diverse art and statues in all neighborhoods.
 - b) Make street names more culturally diverse.
 - c) Make parks and trails names more culturally diverse.
 - d) Make all neighborhood safety a priority, so that every neighborhood has a sense of safety when walking at night. Work with neighborhood protection and watch groups.
2. Provide housing types to meet specific needs.
 - a) Increase senior housing options
 - b) Look at co-housing opportunities.
3. Assist families that have difficulty of finding housing due to criminal record.
4. Implement universal design standards.

Long Range Priority: Continue to promote equality in neighborhoods.

1. Listen to the community to understand current biases and work with people to address them.
2. Study other communities to learn about successes and see if they can be replicated here.

Policy #3: Maintain the unique characteristics of Duluth neighborhoods while improving and

increasing housing options. Duluth has fascinating neighborhoods with separate histories, development patterns, characteristics and Pride. It is vital that the neighborhood characteristics are documented and preserved. When people describe where they live, they do so by describing their neighborhood which creates a visual image in a person's mind. This image is influenced by the topography (over the hill or by the lake) and the understood established patterns (such as high density of downtown to the rural-ness of Fond Du Lac to the small town of Gary/New Duluth to the concrete house in Morgan Park to the waterside Riverfront to the modern development of Duluth Heights to the mansion in Congdon to the park-like area of Woodland to the mixed use of Lester Park). As these neighborhoods grow, it is important to understand what makes them unique and protect their character. During the input session of this comprehensive plan, approximately 40% of people said they wanted to continue to live in their existing neighborhoods rather than moving elsewhere.

Strategies

Improve Safety and Reduce blight

Immediate Priority: Endorse neighborhood events to promote safety and clean up vacant lots

1. Encourage grassroots approach that can initially focus on trash pickup from streets, alleys, parks, and empty lots

2. Promote neighborhood wide events (Hill Fest, Far West Fest, Spirit Valley Days, Lester Park Rendezvous) that bring together residents and let neighbors meet neighbors

Active Priority: Implement city wide neighborhood safety initiatives in all neighborhoods

1. Work with neighborhood leaders and the police to make all streets in the neighborhoods safe place to walk, play, and live.
 - a) Continue the National Night Out Celebrations.

Long Range Priority: Establish neighborhood specific programs for reducing blight and improving safety

1. Create attractive sidewalks
2. Reduce dark sidewalks
3. Remove blighted properties

Improve Curb Appeal

Immediate Priority: Clean properties

1. Help citizens report blight and establish a comprehensive blight enforcement process. Develop a zero tolerance for blight.
2. Proactively enforce the zoning code. Work with the police and neighborhood leaders.
3. Have neighborhood cleanup days.

Active Priority: Incorporate neighborhood art in community and social centers

1. Work with community groups and home owners to have art in the neighborhoods.
2. Have local artists paint murals representing neighborhood

Long Range Priority: Continually promote neighborhood attractiveness

1. Establish a blight reduction fund

Identify and Embrace the Unique characteristics in neighborhoods.

Immediate Priority: Conduct neighborhood studies to understand what makes them unique and desirable.

1. Learn and promote the history of neighborhoods with art, events, and booklets. Celebrate the history in the community areas. Continue to make these places identifiable.
2. Recognize existing neighborhood plans and implement the strategies.

Active Priority: Work with residents to build homes and buildings that follow neighborhood design patterns

1. Incentivize builders to follow design patterns.
2. Have design guidelines for neighborhoods
3. Amend the Unified Development Chapter (UDC) to increase the minimum lot area required for development in those areas planned to remain rural to maximize water storage capacity and to reduce the amount of lives and property at risk to wildfire.

Long Range Priority: Make new developments fit within existing neighborhoods

1. Promote best practices with new development so new projects aren't blatantly different from the neighborhood's characteristics

Policy #4: Provide affordable, attainable housing opportunities. People of all incomes need a place to live and cities need to have people of all incomes to thrive. Typically, people's income changes over their life time, therefore it is important to having housing types that reflect this change. Some people's income does not change significantly, but they provide needed services in the community and should have dignified, safe, clean housing.

Strategies

1. **Increase housing units.** Currently the total housing demand is estimated to be at 3,000; therefore, more housing needs to be built in Duluth.
 - **Immediate Priority:** Finish existing developments. Developments that have platted lots, infrastructure, and active construction should be completed as soon as possible to meet the current housing demand.
 1. Inventory the current developments and make contact with the developers to help assist in completing their developments as soon as possible
 - **Active Priority:** Work with housing groups and developers to build and/or add more housing units.
 1. Identify unused public lands and blighted priorities and sell them to developers for housing.
 2. Promote increased flexibility with zoning requirements such as mother-in-law apartments, lot coverage, and parking requirements to allow for additional units.
 3. Change the zoning to allow for higher density developments near social hubs and transit.
 - **Long Range Priority:** Inventory the housing stock to confirm the supply of housing and the housing types is meeting the demand.
 1. Perform a housing inventory study at least every 3 years to track the supply and demand of housing. Publish the results.
 2. Be a partner with developers and realtor to understand the existing market.
2. **Provide better rentals.** For the past couple of years, the vacancy rate has been around 3%, it should be 5% for a healthy rental market. Most people have lived or live in a rental unit, this type of housing typically is more affordable and provides flexibility for people who do not wish to own a home.
 - **Immediate Priority:** Build more rental units.
 1. Review current needs analysis to understand what type of rental housing is needed most at this time and then connect with a developer to build that housing type.
 - **Active Priority:** Improve the existing rental housing stock.
 1. Work with Life Safety to enforce safe, well-maintained rental units.
 2. Increase the awareness of rental rehab programs for all income levels.

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3. Promote the benefits of renting to people who receive housing vouchers, such a guarantee rental payment. Work with agencies to develop a fund for repairs to address the concern about housing vouchers.
- Long Range Priority: Maintain an adequate supply of rental housing.
1. Provide different rental housing types, ranging from single occupancy to large size single family homes.
 2. Provide rental units in all areas of the City.
 3. Located higher density rental units near social hubs and transit areas.
3. **Improve the housing stock.** Duluth has approximately 20,000 housing units and the majority of these housing units were built prior to 1940, therefore by 2035 the majority of housing units in Duluth will be almost a century old. It is imperative that these housing units are inspected to understand what improvements are needed to insure these units are viable.
- Immediate Priority: Identify the housing units that can be sustained.
1. Develop and promote a process to help homeowners determine the structural integrity of their house and what improvements would be needed to maintain the structural sustainability. This process may include a City funded cost estimator that would be available to homeowners to ask for an independent inspection of their housing unit to determine the long term sustainability of the unit
 - a. If a unit is determined to able to be sustained, then the homeowner should be made aware of how much it would cost and various loan programs.
 - i. Loan programs must be easy to understand.
 - ii. Loan programs should be available to people in all income levels.
 - iii. Loan programs should be a mix of private and public funds.
 - iv. This program should be widely promoted.
 2. This process will need to work with homeowners, agencies, governmental units, and community groups to develop options for homeowners when it is determined that their unit would not be able to be sustained for the next 20 years.
- Active Priority: Promote the value of maintenance. The most important factor in preserving the housing stock is maintaining the housing units. Unfortunately maintaining housing units can be expensive, therefore it is sometimes not actively done. The City should look to ways to promote active maintenance.
1. Investigate ways to reduce the cost of maintenance.
 - a. Work with the colleges and schools to develop programs to offer lower cost maintenance and rehab work in exchange for training opportunities.
 - b. Work with the housing agencies to widely promote rehab loans for people of income levels.
 - c. Offer homeowner maintenance education and training in neighborhoods to connect with more people.
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- d. Develop a program to assist people who cannot maintain their homes, such as the elderly people. This program could include providing options of purchasing their homes in exchange for housing in another area (such as an elderly assisted living facility).
 - e. Be open to new technology or different construction techniques to reduce cost.
 - f. Promote weatherization and resilience improvements in the housing units.
 - g. Research other locations that have housing that is similar in age or older to see how they have maintained their housing, this research should include other parts of the US, Canada, Europe, and Asia.
 - h. Develop programs that allow people to purchase “fix-er uppers” at a very low price in exchange for the new homeowners to rehab the housing unit.
- Long Range Priority: Promote Duluth as a City known for having resilient housing no matter what the age.
 1. Keep an updated list of housing units that have been maintained to track the status of housing units. Identify housing units that have not had improvements and proactively work with the owners to determine what improvements would be needed. Make housing maintenance a key component of Duluth’s character.
4. **Be more creative with housing finance.** Although Duluth’s topography and natural features are key components to the City’s character and desirability; they create hardships for development. Unlike other communities, there is comparatively little flat, developable land that is available for development. In addition, construction costs are increasing similar to other communities in Minnesota. As stated earlier, Duluth needs additional housing units, and with the high cost of construction it is critical that assistance is provided to households that who can least afford it. Unfortunately, many established housing assistance funding programs have been decreasing, therefore Duluth must consider alternative ways to finance housing.
- Immediate Priority: Be an active partner. The City of Duluth will need to continue the existing partnerships, such as the Affordable Housing Coalition, LISC, MN Housing, and St. Louis County and develop new partnerships (public and private) with a focus of providing housing.
 1. Connect with major employers (hospitals, colleges, industry) to understand what assistance they can provide for their employees.
 2. Work with housing providers and agencies on grant opportunities.
 3. Support programs/agencies that have a record of providing decent, affordable housing.
 - Active Priority: Look at ways to expand the pool of funding for affordable housing.
 1. Utilize tax incentive programs, including but not limited to:
 - a. Tax increment housing
 - b. Tax exempt bond financing
 - c. Tax incentives/direct subsidies to support new construction and/or replace blighted property
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2. Work with private developers and employers for opportunities.
 3. Promote innovative technology that helps to reduce construction costs and/or provide energy efficiency savings. Research best practices in resiliency.
 4. Support Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing Opportunities.
 5. Promote and encourage home improvement loan programs. Research to learn about programs currently not offered in Duluth.
 6. Support a mission-based property management company in Duluth to work with a coordination entry system and low-income rents who have difficulty getting accepted by landlords.
 7. Research best practices to create a dedicated, on-going funding source for affordable housing, such as a housing trust funds or similar program.
 8. Support Community Land Trust programs.
 9. Research and consider student loan reduction incentive programs to encourage recent college graduates to purchase a home
- Long Range Priority: Support initiatives and programs that work.
1. Evaluate and identify what programs and initiatives that have successfully provided quality affordable housing and support them.
 2. Proactively preserve existing affordable rental units.

Energy & Conservation

G1: Reduce energy use and increase building energy efficiency community-wide.

P1: Provide incentives for developers to encourage green buildings and renewable energy use in new residential and commercial buildings.

S1: Establish clear guidelines for green building and solar ready development in all zoning districts where solar is a permitted use, including guidelines for solar easements.

S2: Revise the Unified Development Code (UDC) to offer exemptions, such as reductions in parking requirements, for new buildings with high sustainability points.

S3: Revise the sustainability points system in the UDC by increasing the minimum point value requirements and adjust the point values of individual actions to encourage more green buildings and more buildings built solar ready or with solar, or other renewable energy sources, already installed.

S4: Support the development of the SB2030 energy stretch code, or equivalent code, by the state, and prepare to implement the stretch code when enabled by incentivizing its use and training code staff as needed.

P2: Incentivize commercial, anchor institution, and large residential building/facility owners to reduce energy use and increase energy efficiency in existing buildings/facilities and community gathering spaces.

S1: Incentivize building owners to voluntarily benchmark and publish building energy use by establishing a city-wide recognition program to promote energy efficient buildings/businesses and buildings/businesses that significantly increase energy efficiency over time.

S2: Update the UDC to offer incentives for cool surfaces like reflective roofs, green roofs, cool pavement and ground surfaces.

S3: Market case studies and information about programs and incentives including information about benefits of investing.

S4: Develop a policy for energy efficient outdoor lighting, such as LED, on public and private property and streets, while ensuring lighting doesn't negatively impact the aesthetics and quality of life of the city.

S5: Revise the sustainability points system the UDC to require a minimum level of points for existing structures that are significantly remodeled or rehabilitated.

S6: Invest in and facilitate partnerships for projects that reduce wasted resources by the capture and use of waste energy in large scale operations such as manufacturing plants, landfills, and wastewater treatment plants through processes such as cogeneration and methane capture for electricity production.

P3: Incentivize households and landlords to reduce energy use and increase residential energy efficiency.

S1: Partner with local utilities to encourage residential customers to reduce energy use by providing information about how customers' utility use compares to their neighbors' utility use.

S2: Prioritize residential energy efficiency retrofit programs and projects for low to moderate income residents with housing rehabilitation funds.

S3: Work with community partners and water, gas, and electric utilities to compile and widely publicize a list of energy efficiency resources for residents such as, rebates, low interest loans, and affordable energy retrofit programs, and update annually.

S4: Implement an energy audit and average energy use disclosure policy for rental properties

linked to the issuance or renewal of rental licenses to inform potential tenants of the relative energy efficiency of housing and to encourage landlords to increase the energy efficiency of their properties.

S5: Work with community partners and water, gas, and electric utilities to offer and widely publicize a low fee (no fee for low income households) home visit program to install low cost energy conservation materials such as low flow faucet aerators and energy efficient lightbulbs in residential units.

G2: Increase the use of renewable energy sources.

P4: Increase community awareness regarding decisions about energy and infrastructure investments.

S1: Annually benchmark and publish citywide energy use and emissions by source (ex: residential, commercial, industrial, healthcare, higher education, etc.) and type of utility including a metric to track change over time, such as total energy use per resident.

S2: Educate the community about the financial, social, and environmental costs and benefits of different energy sources, and how energy use relates to land use patterns.

S3: Identify and promote opportunities for renters and incentives for commercial building owners, commercial tenants, landlords, residential tenants, and homeowners to affordably invest in renewable energy.

P5: Encourage community-wide investment in appropriate local renewable energy sources, including solar, wind, and biomass.

S1: Develop City-owned renewable energy resources to offset consumption and invest in renewable energy sources whenever feasible, seeking out opportunities to invest in partnership with private and nonprofit sector institutions and businesses.

S2: Identify wind and solar energy resources within the City, enable development where land uses and natural resources do not conflict with other land uses, and limit development where wind and solar resources are insufficient for capture or land use conflicts too great.

S3: Review and revise the UDC and the zoning code to prioritize development of renewable energy generation in otherwise unusable locations such as brownfield, closed landfills, and rooftops.

S4: Identify biomass resources in and around the City, and opportunities for expanded or new use of biomass to substitute for non-renewable fuels.

S5: Work with state and federal partners to pass Revenue-neutral Carbon Tax legislation.

G3: Support development and growth with efficient public infrastructure and services.

P6: Adopt energy efficiency and energy saving targets for City owned facilities and City operations.

S1: Finalize and adopt a corporate City energy plan, including an annual City of Duluth operations energy savings requirement of at least 2.5%, an annual GHG emissions reduction of at least 2.5%, and require annual public reporting of corporate city energy use and emissions.

S2: Develop a policy that explicitly prioritizes energy efficiency upgrades and repairs in the course of maintenance and operations of City owned properties and City operated facilities, including energy conservation measures such as low flow faucet aerators and LED light bulbs.

S3: Develop criteria for continued investment in City owned facilities that prioritizes energy efficiency as well as community use and social value, in order to equitably manage City owned

facilities and have transparency in decisions to disinvest in facilities.

P7: Increase efficiency of City owned utilities.

S1: Require the Comfort Systems gas utility to increase energy efficiency to 1.5% annually from the 2007 state mandate of 1% and report annually on its progress.

S2: Regularly assess and repair water system leaks with the newest technologies and upgrade old pumps and motors with newer, more efficient versions during planned replacements.

S3: Create incline block tariff pricing structures that incentivize conservation.

S4: Conduct a study to determine the best investment in the Steam Plant, which considers options such as retrofitting for the use of cleaner fuel sources and decommissioning, and adopt a plan to reduce emissions from the Steam Plant by at least 50% over 30 years.

G4: Increase community resiliency by planning and preparing for extreme weather, adapting to changing climate conditions, and fostering stronger community connectedness and social and economic vitality.

P8: Prepare for extreme weather events and changing climate.

S1: Require green stormwater infrastructure in publically funded projects to reduce the impacts of flooding.

S2: Work in partnership with local institutions and transportation providers to plan for weather related community emergencies and increase community awareness of emergency protocols.

S3: Prioritize diversifying energy sources when considering energy investments, including supporting local energy production and storage, and community owned power as much as possible.

P9: Support the growth of an increasingly localized food system.

S1: Review the zoning code to ensure that the City's land use policies adequately and appropriately support Duluth's existing and potential local food system.

S2: Work with Western Lake Superior Sanitary District (WLSSD) to implement a curbside pickup composting program and sell the resulting compost using a sliding scale fee structure to increase low to moderate income community member's access to food growing resources.

S3: Increase food access via various modes of transportation by revising the sustainability points system in the UDC to offer points for residential development built in areas with food access or non-residential development that improves food access in areas with low or no food access.

P10: Foster community connectedness.

S1: Organize an annual forum to engage nearby tribes and surrounding municipalities regarding regional resiliency and to share innovative projects and best practices for energy and conservation policies.

S2: Work with utility providers, local low income community members, and low income services providers and coalitions to identify how to better provide reasonable access to clean energy and relief of energy burdens for low to moderate income community members.

S3: Acknowledge Indigenous Peoples' sacred and longstanding ties to the earth and their role as protectors of the environment and consult with tribal leaders and the Indigenous community about our shared energy future as appropriate.