

Implementation Report 2020

Annual Policies and Strategies update of the Imagine Duluth 2035 Comprehensive Plan



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CITY COUNCIL

PLANNING COMMISSION

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT STAFF

IMAGINE DULUTH 2035 VISION COMMITTEE

DULUTHIANS

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INTRODUCTION

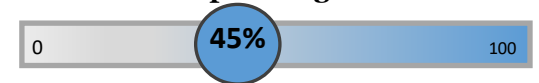
During the process of Imagine Duluth 2035, it was highlighted that the City should be required to annually report progress made on the plan. In order to ensure government accountability and transparency, the Metrics & Measurements chapter of the plan outlined the need to report back on identified indicators, other periodic demographic information, and implementation actions.

This report includes the annual reporting on implementation actions. There is a section for each chapter laid out in the Imagine Duluth 2035 Comprehensive Plan: Economic Development, Energy & Conservation, Housing, Open Space, Transportation, and Transformative Opportunities. The matrices in each section shows the implementation status and specific actions that have taken place thus far.

This Implementation Actions Report 2020 is the second annual report, and the formatting has dramatically changed; the 2018 report looked at specific strategies instead of the broad policies shown here. While the previous report was more detailed, the current formatting provides an easier and quicker understanding of the City's progress.

Above each policy you will see a gauge designed to portray the percentage completed for each policy. This percentage is based on analysis of each strategy laid out in the plan, and how many have been completed or are an ongoing process for each policy.

Sample Gauge



This report provides not only a tool to communicate our progress but also a means to prioritize additional course of implementation along the way to 2035.



IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS ANNUAL REPORT





Duluth's economic environment will advance the success and health of our community by promoting growth through an expanded tax base and the creation of new jobs and Innovative ideas.

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Policy 1: "Invest in people to increase employees' skills, ensure workforce availability for employers, and promote income self-sufficiency"

- * In partnership with CareerForce, non-profits, and private employers, the Duluth Economic Development Authority (DEDA) and the City are evaluating ways to foster a welcoming community, embrace a diverse workforce, and enhance a sense of place for populations that have historically been disadvantaged.
- * Staff has actively been involved with the Regional Childcare group meeting as well as child care providers to address the childcare shortage that affects parents' ability to enter or stay in the workforce. The 1200 Fund launched multiple childcare loan programs that provide loans and grants to assist licensed childcare providers in creating new childcare availability.
- * Career pathway training options have been expanded, in partnership with ABE, SOAR Career Solutions, Lake Superior College, and the building trades. All of these programs target low-income adults with barriers to employment and historically disadvantaged residents.
- * The workforce board, which includes K-12 education, higher education, business, and community partners, is pursuing a number of strategies to encourage young people in a career pathway in the hospitality and construction sectors.

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Policy 2: "Foster growth of existing employers and strategically recruit new employers to Duluth"

- * The City of Duluth actively networks to promote communications between emerging businesses and the City.
- * The City has frequent communications with local Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development staff in order to be knowledgeable of current state-offered financial tools. With a developed network of businesses, the City can connect opportunities for investment with the appropriate financial incentives.
- * The City and DEDA are continually evaluating leads in an effort to drive investment into brownfield sites; in 2019 the City received an EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant which enables the City to allocate funds for environmental assessments, reuse plans, and clean-up plans.



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Policy 3: "Build on existing economic strengths & competitive advantages"

- * The City visits with existing businesses to understand their operations, growth plans, site constraints, and workforce to promote employer expansions within the Duluth economy.
- * The City and DEDA regularly communicate with the Duluth Seaway Port Authority and the Duluth Airport Authority to coordinate activities and investments that can maximize economic impact.
- * The City is engaged in networking and business groups as a method of supporting localized and industry-specific economic opportunities.
- * The City and DEDA are identifying potential projects that would expand areas of current tourism activity, as well as projects that would create new destination neighborhoods, and utilizing economic development tools, network resources, and additional state funding, as appropriate.
- * The 1200 Fund issued over 100 Fast Grants in 2020 to support existing businesses with grants of \$10,000 during the COVID pandemic; a total of \$1.2 million was dispersed to businesses and organizations in Duluth.



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Policy 4: "Embrace the outdoors as an economic engine and source of community health"

- * When considering the transfer or sale of public lands for economic development purposes, the City and DEDA evaluate the value of the land as an outdoor asset in comparison to the economic impact produced by the transfer or sale of said property.
- * The City has increased signage and wayfinding to and within parks; prioritized outdoor programming such as the annual Cold Front activities; continued to convene the St. Louis River Technical Advisory Committee to support clean-up and development within the Area of Concern; and is working on plans to complete the Cross City Trail, improve the Baywalk behind the DECC, and make substantial planned park improvements to Lincoln Park.



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Policy 5: "Effectively coordinate marketing, communication, and the City's image"

- * Marketing a developed Business Retention and Expansion program to get active participation by the business community is of utmost importance to its success. The City and DEDA are working toward collaborations with regional and state partners under programs such as the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce's GrowMN! Program.
- * Leveraging social media and word of mouth, City staff have publicized Duluth's attributes, redevelopment opportunities, and Duluth's competitive advantages.
- * The City has participated in the National League of Cities—New Cities of Opportunity to enhance coordination between the Workforce and Planning and Development departments.
- * Staff serve as the Duluth Public Arts Commission liaison and meet with various groups and artists (Duluth Street Art Initiative) to promote and grow the arts within Duluth.
- * Staff created an initiative to lift up and build brand awareness of Duluth businesses in the hospitality and retail industries. The Locally Rooted program encourages citizens to shop and support local businesses during an economically challenging time.



Housing in Duluth will promote the essential character of its neighborhoods while providing safe, clean, and equitable living space for all members of the community.

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Policy 1: “Increase community involvement in decisions about energy and infrastructure investments”

- * The Energy Plan Commission was created to help the City achieve its goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions 80% by 2050.
- * The City’s first Sustainability Officer was hired in 2020, which has led to significant data collection and tracking, a Sustainability Communications Plan, and collaboration with internal and external partners.

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Policy 2: “Provide incentives for developers and encourage green buildings and renewable energy use in new residential and commercial buildings”

- * Staff began to re-evaluate the Sustainability Point System (SPS) outlined in the UDC. The SPS requires developers to complete a set of sustainable development standards. The re-evaluation is designed to promote further sustainable development by requiring new developments to score higher, and to add a redevelopment category to the matrix.



Policy 3: "Incentivize commercial, anchor institutions, and large residential building/facility owners to reduce energy use and increase energy efficiency in existing buildings/facilities and community gathering spaces"

- * The City of Duluth hosted meetings about the Minnesota Cities' Initiative for an Advanced Building Standard with key staff and the newly-formed Energy Plan Commission. Staff continue to coordinate with the state-wide Working Group on Standards that can reduce energy use intensity and carbon emissions from buildings.



Policy 4: "Incentivize households and landlords to reduce energy use and increase residential energy efficiency"

- * The City allocates HUD funding towards housing rehab programs that focus on energy efficiency, in partnership with Ecolibrium 3.



Policy 5: "Encourage community-wide investment in appropriate local renewable energy sources including solar, wind, and biomass"

- * City staff and Energy Plan Commission members supported local partners with solar questions at meetings and events, including the Climate Club at Ordean Middle School, Duluth Public Schools Facilities Management, the SUN Delegation at the University of Minnesota Duluth, and many homeowner requests.
- * A SolSmart website for Duluth was created, including a solar permitting checklist: <https://duluthmn.gov/energy/solsmart/>.
- * City staff participated in a statewide and international initiative to increase adoption and expansion of the use of renewables as well as efficiency through the Climate Smart Municipalities program. This program is organized and funded by the German Government and Institute of Environment at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.
- * City staff participated in Minnesota Power's (MP) Integrated Resource Planning process, encouraging renewables, efficiency, electrification, and collaborations
- * City staff engaged with Duluth Energy Systems (steam plant) to integrate sustainability into future planning, including a team focused on energy efficiency goals with large customers.
- * City staff are collaborating with Minnesota Power on a proposed solar installation on City property.



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Policy 6: "Adopt energy efficiency and energy saving targets for City-owned facilities and City operations"

- * The City has committed to reducing GHG emission from the 2008 inventory 80% by 2050.
- * Energy efficiency improvements were implemented in several City facilities (building controls, new boilers, demand monitoring) at the City Center West building, which houses Duluth Fire Hall #8, Library branch, and a community center.
- * A Minnesota GreenCorps member was hired in 2019 to better measure progress on energy goals for the City through updating the City's GreenStep database.
- * Lighting efficiency was improved at the Lakewalk, Bay Walk, City Hall, Facilities Management Building, several fire halls, Fleet Services, Main Library, and Public Services Building. A lighting control system used for parks and streets provides options for increased efficiency.

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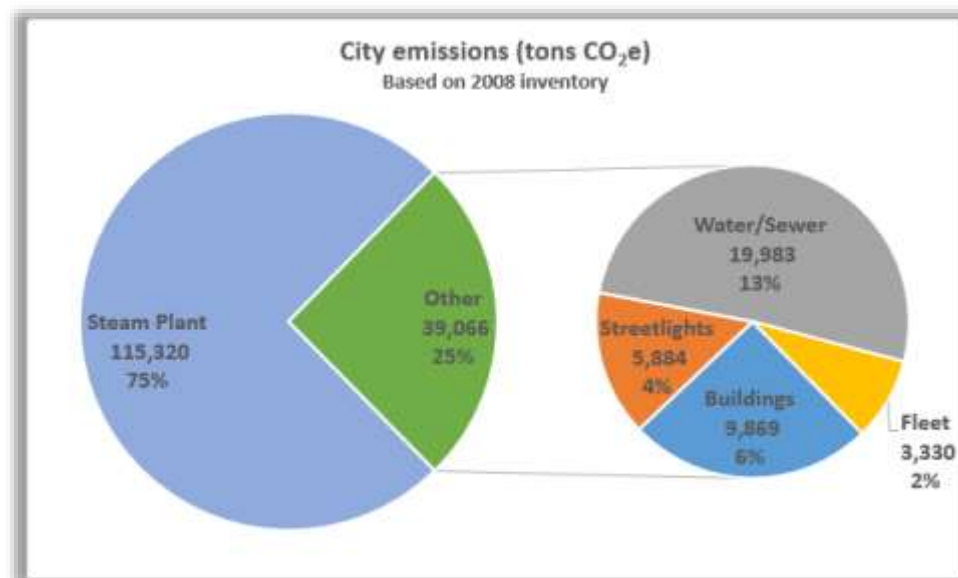
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Policy 7: "Increase efficiency of utilities and services"

- * The City's water system is assessed regularly for leaks, which are then repaired as soon as feasible. One water booster station upgrade is being design currently, which will include new pumps and premium efficiency motors.

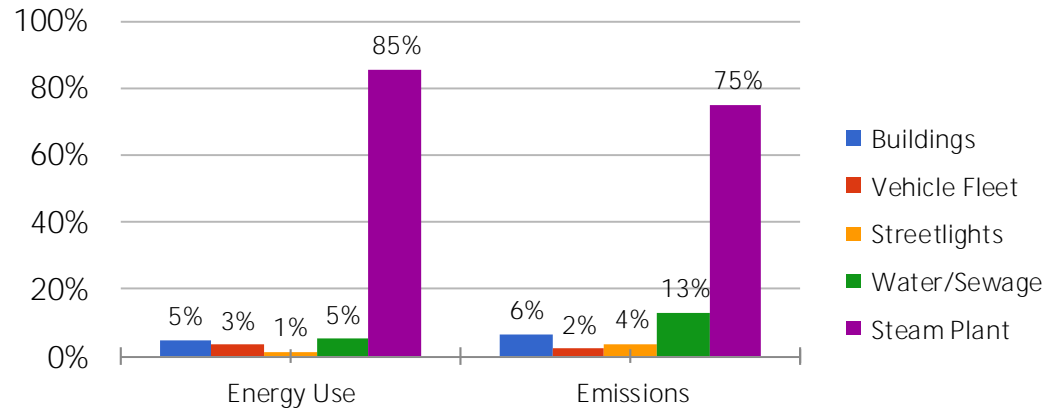


Minnesota GreenStep Cities

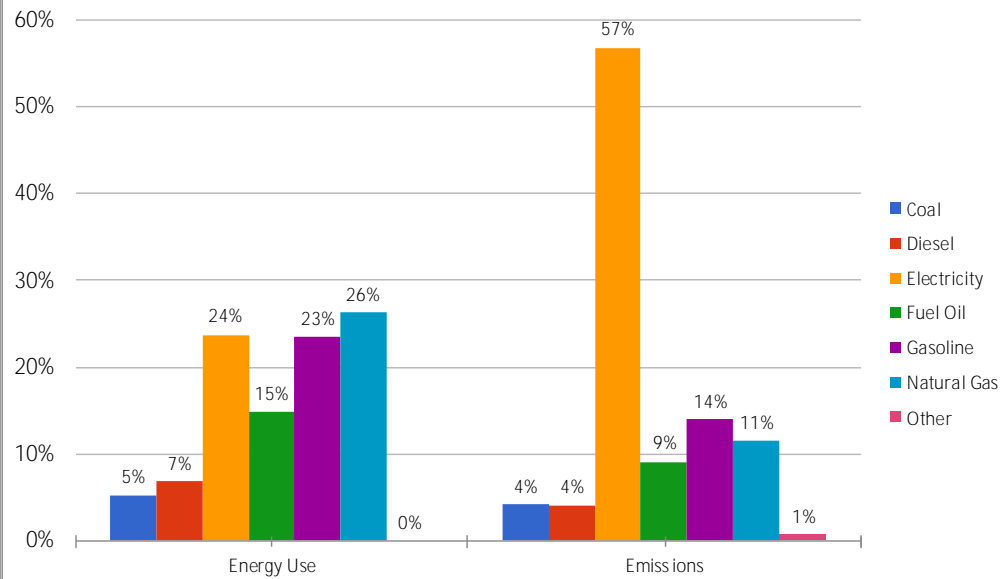




Municipal Operations Energy Use and Emissions by Category



Community Energy Use and Emissions by Source





Housing in Duluth will promote the essential character of its neighborhoods while providing safe, clean, and equitable living space for all members of the community.

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Policy 1: "Increase density in and around the designated Core Investment Areas"

- * Three mixed use projects and one multifamily project are planned in Lincoln Park for 2020 construction and pre-construction.
- * The multifamily project Bluestone Vue is under construction in the Bluestone development at Mount Royal.
- * Decker Dwellings (see Policy 2) is under construction, located in the Mall Core Investment Area.



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Policy 2: "Provide affordable, attainable housing opportunities"

- * Decker Dwellings is a 42-unit affordable housing project that started construction in 2020, located off Decker Road near the Miller Hill Mall.
- * Another affordable housing project near the Miller Hill Mall, Birchwood, started construction in 2020 with a total of 30 units.
- * The Board of Trade Building in downtown Duluth provided 17 affordable units, out of a total of 84 units, available at 50% AMI.
- * 10 affordable units opened in Cityview Flats on 4th Street in downtown Duluth.
- * 5 affordable units are available at 80% AMI at Cove Apartments downtown, located at Lake Avenue and First Street.
- * The Rebuild Duluth program (see Policy 4) included two lots conveyed for land trust homes in the first round of development.
- * The Lincoln Park Flats project on West Superior Street signed a development agreement stipulating provision of 23 affordable units, and will begin construction in 2021.
- * The City allocated funding from HUD towards rehab and new construction programs at the community land trust.
- * The City works with local services agencies to administer various rent assistance programs.

Policy 3: "Prioritize inclusive housing policies to reflect the city's social, cultural, economic, and historic diversity and development patterns"

- * Housing projects such as Cityview Flats, the Board of Trade Building, Lincoln Park Flats, and Cove Apartments included development agreements with a requirement for affordable housing.
- * The Bluffs Senior living development, under construction, had a development agreement signed in 2019 that offered tax abatement support in exchange for 35 apartments of assisted living and memory care.
- * The Rebuild Duluth program (see Policy 4) encourages diversity in housing type and design across the city.
- * In 2020, as part of the Consolidated Plan for 2020-2024, the City approved the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice to address activities that limited housing availability or choice on the basis of color, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, family status, and national origin gender. Future tasks include:
 - * Addressing exclusionary rental housing practices and policies directed at Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher holders and persons with criminal histories.
 - * Addressing involuntary displacement and limited housing choice caused by gentrification.
 - * Looking at policies and physical limitations in the built environment.

Policy 4: "Improve the quality of the city's housing stock and neighborhoods"

- * The City is identifying potential vacant properties for redevelopment in Specific Investment Areas (SIA) and Core Investment Areas, and streamlined the process for acquiring condemned homes to salvage or raze, removing and improving blight.
- * The City launched a new program titled "Rebuild Duluth," designed to provide infill housing lots throughout the city at no cost to developers who propose a variety of new housing developments. These projects range from tiny homes to multifamily structures, and maximize existing infrastructure while encouraging innovative housing. Two rounds of proposals for identified properties have allocated a total of 18 lots for development of housing.
- * The City created rental inspection incentives program by researching other municipalities' "Gold Star Landlord" programs.
- * The County's tax forfeit process allows blighted structures to be identified and razed if necessary.
- * The City and HRA coordinate to provide homeowner and rental rehab loans that would improve building envelopes for energy efficiency and aging housing stock.
- * The City is allocating HUD funding to help eliminate blight in neighborhoods.

Policy 5: "Expand a variety of housing opportunities throughout the city while maintaining unique community characteristics within distinct individual neighborhoods"

- * The Rebuild Duluth program (see Policy 4) encourages a mix of housing types; tiny homes, single-family homes, and multi-family housing have been approved across the city as a result of this program.
- * Additional housing projects discussed under Policies 1-4 span neighborhoods throughout the city, including Lincoln Park, Mount Royal, downtown, and the mall area.
- * The Board of Trade Building and Cove Apartments provided rehabilitation of historic buildings downtown.





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, historical, cultural, and recreational values, and will contribute to its resilience to natural disasters.

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Policy 1: "Improve Duluth's resiliency to flooding and natural disaster"

- * The Unified Development Chapter (UDC) was updated with increased stormwater standards that require new development to reduce peak discharge rates below the level seen with pre-development conditions.
- * The City is working to acquire tax forfeit properties within upper watersheds that are wetlands and water retention areas, to reduce runoff and flooding.
- * The 2020 St Louis County Multi-hazard Mitigation Plan was completed and identifies implementation actions related to improving Duluth's resiliency to natural disasters.



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Policy 2: "Examine the value and need for all of Duluth's publicly owned spaces"

- * The City and County are collaborating to convey land parcels to the City for protection and management as open space, using a state legacy fund grant as part of the process.
- * The Hartley Natural Area and the St. Louis River Natural Area were nominated and are slated for final designation to the Duluth Natural Areas Program.
- * The creation of the City's Natural Resource Commission in 2019 improves the ability to receive advise and input on preservation and restoration of public lands.

Policy 3: "Remove barriers to accessing parks and open space"

- * Parks and Recreation implemented six sign and wayfinding projects in 2019.
- * In 2019, a new bridge was installed over Amity Creek to reconnect trails in Lester Park to the adjacent neighborhood.
- * Recreational programming was enhanced with the addition of a large amount of recreation equipment made available to the public. Two additional Recreation Specialists were added to the Parks and Recreation Division, and True North Americorps members provided additional youth programming throughout the year.
- * Two ribbon cuttings—Quarry Park and Riverside—celebrated enhanced outdoor recreation access for all ages.
- * Funding continues to be provided to five youth agencies who provide their programs free of charge to neighborhood youth.
- * The Waabizheshikana: The Marten Trail mini-master plan was completed. This trail will further enhance public access to the riverfront through an approved rail and trail design that will connect seven western neighborhoods and eventually extend the current Western Waterfront Trail to Chambers Grove Park.
- * New canoe/kayak racks were installed in three locations—Chambers Grove, Park Point Recreation Area, and Brighton Beach—for users to rent a space to store their boat for the paddling season.

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

- * An asset management inventory is underway, which will enable City staff to better understand the quantities, locations, and age of infrastructure within the parks system.
- * In 2020, an additional \$280,000 was provided to the Parks Division to support expanded programming initiatives across the City.
- * Since the creation of the Natural Resource Coordinator and full time forester positions, the City's collaboration and with other organizations has increased tremendously, allowing the City to leverage resources of other organizations in planning and management of green spaces.



Policy 5: "Encourage urban food growth"

- * The City provides Community Action Duluth with HUD funding to foster growth in the Seeds of Success Program, helping unemployed Duluthians attain transitional employment growing vegetables. Seeds of Success then uses the produce to meet food access needs by selling it at the Lincoln Park Farmers Market.
- * The City helps the Duluth Community Garden Program by providing access to City land and refilling water catchment systems in the event of low rainfall.
- * The UDC supports urban food growth/agriculture in the sustainability point system for new residential developments.





Duluth's transportation system will connect all users in a way that promotes safety, health, and quality of life.

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Policy 1: "Improve street conditions to function better for everyone"

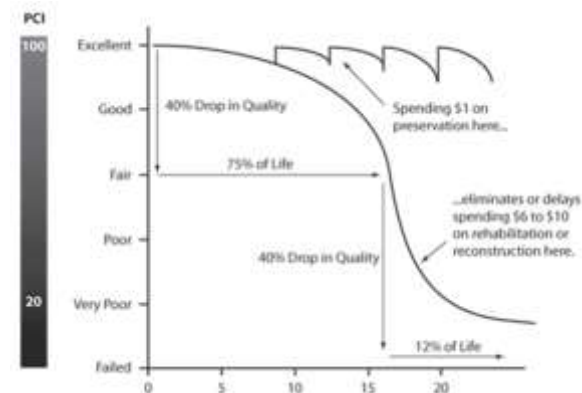
- * The City completed the reconstruction of Superior Street in downtown Duluth, including improved pedestrian amenities and underground utilities.
- * First Street was converted from one-way to two-way from 6th Avenue W to 24th Avenue E, including the removal of several unwarranted traffic signals and the addition of truck loading zones.
- * Staff conducted City Hall in the City events to present the 2020 and 2021 Sales Tax-Funded Street Improvement Program, and to identify needed improvements to include in the City's Capital Improvement Program in future years. The program will improve 10 miles of streets in 2021.
- * The County completed the reconstruction of Woodland Avenue from Oxford Street to Calvary Road, including upgraded sidewalks and bike lanes.
- * A Snow Emergency Plan was prepared for implementation in 2020-2021.
- * Completed the reconstruction of E 2nd Street from 9th Avenue E to 12th Avenue E, including new utilities, traffic calming, new sidewalks, and intersection bump outs. Design was completed for the next section, from 6th Avenue E to 9th Avenue E, to be reconstructed in 2021.
- * Decker Road reconstruction was started, with new utilities and 1.5 miles of new bike lanes, from Piedmont Avenue to Mall Drive.
- * The City has applied for a \$200k MnDOT grant to reduce carbon in fleet through purchase of five Electric Vehicles (EVs) and one electric mower.

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Policy 2: "Reduce infrastructure costs through innovation and wholesale design change"

- * Nothing to report



Spending money on basic street maintenance is more cost efficient than waiting until the street needs major rehabilitation.

Policy 3: "Add to the transportation network by systematically enhancing multimodal opinions"

- * The City and MIC completed planning for the Campus Connector Trail from Rice Lake Road to London Road, and secured adoption of the plan by the Parks Board and City Council.
- * The City completed design and construction of the Cross City Trail Phase 2, from Carlton Street to Irving Park, and initiated a location study for Phase 3, from Irving Park to Keene Creek Park. A design was also completed for temporary relocation of the Cross City Trail through Lincoln Park during Twin Ports Interchange construction.
- * The Duluth Transit Authority (DTA) implemented the DuLooper in 2020 and increased frequencies on a number of higher ridership routes.
- * The City worked with legislators to include \$5 million in the bonding bill for the Northern Lights Express project.
- * The City worked with MnDOT to enable and activate Transit Signal Priority for DTA buses in the Grand Avenue Corridor, which is the DTA's highest ridership corridor. This will result in time savings for both passengers and budget savings for the DTA.
- * City staff supported DTA in the launch of a study of transit-oriented development opportunities in the area surrounding the Downtown Transit Center, and a Comprehensive Operational Analysis of its transit System.

Policy 4: "Improve system condition and connections in and between Downtown and Canal Park"

- * The City collaborated with MnDOT to replace the bridge deck of Lake Avenue over I-35, including the addition of bike lanes, new turn lanes, and accessible sidewalks.
- * Recommendations from the Bayfront Circulation Study, with the help of MIC, were implemented, providing pedestrian, transit and auto circulation to the waterfront area, especially during special events like Bentleyville.



Policy 5: "Base decisions about transportation infrastructure primarily on improving City and neighborhood vitality"

- * The City Administrator oversaw a comprehensive cross-departmental effort to improve winter snow response, including increased enforcement effort for clearing sidewalks, greater efficiencies in snow plowing of streets and trails, in coordination with other transportation agencies.





Policy 6: “Protect and enhance regional transportation networks, especially for purposes of expanding opportunities for movement of freight”

- * The MnDOT District 1 Freight Plan was completed, in cooperation with ARDC/MIC, Port Authority, freight carriers, other local jurisdictions, and WisDOT.
- * The City has coordinated with MnDOT on the TPI project, including plans to activate space under the TH 53 Bridges in Lincoln Park.
- * City staff are participating in the launch of multi-year planning/design for the Blatnik Bridge rehabilitation and/or replacement project.
- * The Duluth Airport Authority completed the Duluth International Airport Master Plan, which includes development of the 3-21 crosswind runway.



MNDOT—graphic representation of the Twin Port Interchange (can of worms) reconstruction

Transformative Opportunities



From the Lakewalk in Canal Park to Skyline Parkway along the bluff, transformative ideas and visions have helped make Duluth unique and beloved. This chapter explores new ideas that could continue to transform Duluth.





Concepts presented in this chapter differed from the policies and strategies elsewhere in the Imagine Duluth 2035 plan either because of their unifying elements across issue areas, or because they represent stand-alone actions which would require dissimilar amounts of resources.

Consideration of any one transformative element addressed in this chapter does not necessarily depend on other prospective ideas.

Historic Transformations

Skyline Parkway was first envisioned in 1889 by Duluth's first Park Board President, William Rogers. Constructed in segments between 1891 and 1940, and championed most vocally by Mayor Samuel Snively, the parkway spans nearly the entire length of the city and is a defining element of Duluth—culturally, historically, and even from a practical standpoint. The parkway is not only a means for accessing parks and the vistas of Duluth along its twelve scenic overlooks, but also a useful street serving neighborhoods and providing passage across the city's many streams at higher elevations.

1. **CORE INVESTMENT AREAS**—Core Investment Areas present the opportunity to create vibrant, walkable, neighborhood-scale commercial centers. Twelve initial CIAs are identified around the city for their reinvestment potential and for their promise as future community gathering hubs.
2. **DOWNTOWN PLANS & INVESTMENTS**—Being cognizant of downtown development efforts by establishing priorities for the total number of jobs, residents, and creation of new public connections to Canal Park, redeveloped plazas, and additional commercial activities.
3. **YEAR-ROUND INDOOR PUBLIC SPACE**—Create cost-effective, active spaces in the form of an indoor arboretum, winter garden, and/or play area accessible for all residents and ages.
4. **UPHILL CONNECTIONS**—Create an uphill, transportation/connectivity link that sponsors health, fairness, and safety for both residents and tourists.
5. **PUBLIC MARKET**—Create a public, potentially all-seasons market that could act as redevelopment catalyst for certain neighborhoods. The market would also serve commercial needs and create opportunities for small-scale vendors.
6. **BOUNDARY**—Originally conceived in the 2006 plan, the city would continue its plan to minimize development in tier 3 areas and discontinue further infrastructure expansions while potentially removing or privatizing some streets or utilities.
7. **CITY FLAG UPDATE**—Define and carry out a process to redesign the city flag in order to promote recognition for the city, better design standards, and a stronger sense of community pride.
8. **VIEWSHEDS**—Establish parameters regulating development types and heights across Duluth so all residents of the city are able to access and enjoy such areas.
9. **INDUSTRIAL WATERFRONT**—Preserve and expand opportunities within the City's waterfront to foster a vibrant industrial economy through coordination of the City with various local or international stakeholders.
10. **MOVING FORWARD**— 1) Redevelop unused CN ore dock for public amenity or economic development adjacent to the site, 2) Implement a ferry or water taxi to better connect high traffic destinations in the Twin Ports, 3) Enhance waterfront through the construction of a system of canals, and 4) Create additional freeway caps to sponsor better public spaces and water access in addition to accommodating vehicle traffic through its environs.



CORE INVESTMENT AREAS



Staff in the Planning & Development Division have created a community engagement framework, and identified stakeholders for the Spirit Valley Core Investment Area. Staff will hold 3 community meetings in order to identify potential projects/initiatives, produce deliverables for public review, and connect relevant partners to these identified projects/incentives for rapid implementation.

DOWNTOWN PLANS & INVESTMENTS



Medical District planning has evolved to implement the Essentia expansion and the new St. Luke's building, further expanding opportunities for transit, pedestrian, and Lakewalk connections to the medical districts.

CITY FLAG UPDATE



The City of Duluth has adopted a new city flag following a robust process. The community was asked to submit designs, spurring 195 submissions. A flag committee was created by Mayor Larson, made up of nine volunteers representing artists, youth, and community members.

INDUSTRIAL WATERFRONT



The City, DEDA, Duluth Seaway Port Authority (DSPA), and the Harbor Technical Advisory Committee analyzed service and utility provisions in industrial areas, resulting in the ICIC Study 2018 found on the DSPA website. This group also developed employment targets.