

GARY/NEW DULUTH SMALL AREA PLAN HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT: PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS

THE SMALL AREA PLAN

From June 2013 to February 2014, the City of Duluth has been working with community members on a small area plan (SAP) for the neighborhood of Gary/New Duluth. The SAP builds on the goals, policies, and implementation strategies in the City's comprehensive plan in five specific areas: Commercial Development, Residential Development, Natural Environment, Transportation, and Park Planning. For a list of final SAP recommendations, go to the [Gary/New Duluth Small Area Plan webpage](#) for the Recommendations under the Documents subheading.

THE HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The Minnesota Department of Health has been conducting a health impact assessment (HIA) on the SAP in collaboration with City staff and a Technical Advisory Committee made up of community members and representatives from St. Louis County Public Health, Arrowhead Area Agency on Aging, Parks and Recreation, Metropolitan Interstate Council, and St. Luke's Hospital. The purpose of the HIA is to explore how the SAP will impact the community's health, positively and negatively, and make recommendations to the SAP to promote positive impacts and reduce negative impacts.

Based on community input, the HIA Technical Advisory Committee selected three areas of focus for the HIA: **Social Cohesion**, **Physical Activity** and **Access to Healthy Food**. This document provides a summary of the HIA findings and draft recommendations, and solicits public comment (see yellow box).

HIA FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The HIA findings are based on extensive literature review, conducting analysis of local data using geographic information systems (GIS), summaries of data and analysis from existing local studies, and input from community members and topic area experts from local agencies and organizations. In order to promote the positive impacts of the SAP and reduce the negative effects, the HIA proposes a number of recommendations which have been grouped by social cohesion, physical activity, and access to healthy food. Each group is then subdivided by the sections of the SAP (commercial, residential, natural environment, transportation, and park planning). Each recommendation includes a priority level (low to high) that was identified by the HIA Technical Advisory Committee based on a combination of the recommendation's significance

What is Health Impact Assessment (HIA)?

HIAs bring together scientific data, stakeholder input and public health expertise to identify the potential health effects of a proposed policy, plan, program, or project on a population.

6 Steps of HIA:

1. **Screening:** Is an HIA feasible and likely to add value?
2. **Scoping:** Identify health effects and populations to consider.
3. **Assessment:** Analyze baseline conditions and the effects of the proposed plan on health.
4. **Recommendations:** Suggest changes to the plan to promote positive health effects and/or minimize adverse health effects.
~ We are here ~
5. **Reporting:** Present results and recommendations to stakeholders and decision-makers.
6. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Determine the effect of the HIA on the decision.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

The public is asked to provide comment on the draft Small Area Plan and HIA recommendations by March 14, 2014.

Go to the [Gary/New Duluth Small Area Plan webpage](#) for the Small Area Plan and HIA summary and submit your comments in the comment form.



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for health impacts and feasibility the recommendation based on the City's activities and priorities.

SOCIAL COHESION

Social cohesion describes the strength of the relationships of a community; areas with high social cohesion are characterized by trust, participation and mutual support. People with higher levels of perceived social connectedness have lower blood pressure rates, better immune responses, lower levels of stress hormones, and live longer.

In the **Commercial Development** section, the SAP may promote social cohesion by strengthening relationships among business owners; offering new business and recreation amenities that act as informal gathering spaces for residents; increasing employment opportunities; increasing the sense of identity and belonging with signage and wayfinding; and decreasing crime and improving safety through the removal and redevelopment of blighted properties and appropriate lighting and streetscape improvements. The HIA proposes the following draft recommendations to promote social cohesion in Commercial Development:

#C1. The proposed Gary/New Duluth Business Association should network with West Duluth Business Group or other appropriate business groups, and add LISC as networking partner and investigate becoming an [At-Home Neighborhood](#), if possible. Priority level: High

#C2. The City's public information coordinators and the Gary/New Duluth Community Club should coordinate to increase media connections to promote the identity of Gary/New Duluth, including connecting the City's Wikipedia page to Gary/New Duluth, Tweeting, and connecting with Perfect Duluth Day to ensure Gary/New Duluth events are publicized on the Duluth events blog. Priority level: Low/Medium

#C3. Duluth Workforce Development should connect residents with training opportunities and workforce development resources (such as, [Duluth at Work](#), the Duluth Talent Database, etc.) to ensure that residents have the appropriate training for new jobs in the City and community. To increase access, trainings and/or neighborhood job fair should be held in the community at Stowe School or new Community Center. Priority level: High



#C4. The Duluth Economic Development Authority (DEDA) and Community Development should focus recruitment on high jobs-density businesses to catalyze economic development, and prioritize development on the sites identified by the Gary/New Duluth blighted property list. Priority level: Medium/High

#C5. The community should work with the City and other partners to develop a comprehensive wayfinding system that welcomes people to Gary/New Duluth. The Canadian Northern (CN) bridge could be one of four sign points and gateways into Gary/New Duluth (similar to Superior's branding across Blatnik Bridge). If CN does not want a sign on the bridge, then a new sign could replace the existing basic green metal sign with white letters. Priority level: Medium/High



In the **Residential Development** section, the SAP may promote social cohesion by introducing new residents into the community increasing opportunities for new social ties. Additionally, social cohesion can be promoted by ensuring housing stock remains affordable to current residents, thereby reducing residential turnover and maintaining social networks. However, the Residential recommendations could decrease social cohesion if new residential infill housing

units cost more and as a result property values and taxes increase, displacing existing residents and breaking their social ties; and if income inequality between new and current residents increases. The HIA proposes the following draft recommendations to promote social cohesion in Residential Development:

#R1. The Gary/New Duluth Community Club and Gary/New Duluth Development Alliance should coordinate a community organized “welcome wagon” to welcome new residents. Priority level: Medium

#R2. The SAP should include a recommendation to support more diversified housing stock to meet the needs of all citizens in all neighborhoods for all incomes, all ages, and all family groupings. Develop a map of residential properties identified for residential construction as part of implementation. This work could be done as a partnership between private sector (realtors, developers) and the City, including the Housing Redevelopment Authority (HRA) and DEDA. Priority level: High

#R3. The SAP should include a recommendation to work with HRA to support transitional housing, such as single-level housing for seniors and persons with disabilities. Priority level: Medium

#R4. The SAP should consider including a recommendation for bringing in an in-home care service or develop a residential-care home for seniors or those with disabilities, which could provide jobs in the community, as well as transitions for people who live in the community and want to remain there. Priority level: Medium



In the **Natural Environments** section, the SAP may promote social cohesion by preserving natural and well-vegetated areas and incorporating natural features into future development; increasing access to parks, trails and natural areas; and promoting development and programming that would preserve the environment and/or bring the community together to promote social bonding. The HIA proposes the following draft recommendations to promote social cohesion in Natural Environment:

#N1. Include a SAP Natural Environment Recommendation to define an urban tree canopy goal and strategy to further increase Gary/New Duluth’s commitment to preserving and improving the natural environment. Consider fruit trees to increase access to healthy food. Priority level: Low

#N2. The University of Minnesota (UMN) Duluth and Extension should conduct an Ecosystem Services Assessment to quantify the benefits of the local urban forest and waterways in Gary/New Duluth. Priority level: Low



#N3. The SAP should include a recommendation to encourage high-efficiency building design and operation for future construction and existing buildings. Priority level: Medium



In the **Transportation** section, the SAP may promote social cohesion by decreasing traffic speeds, increasing use of traffic calming treatments, encouraging streetscape features, and improving sidewalk conditions which will all improve the pedestrian environment to encourage more walking and neighborly interaction, especially for older adults and youth who rely on active forms of transportation to get to social activities. The HIA proposes the following draft recommendations to promote social cohesion in Transportation:

#T1. The SAP should consider recommendations for street lighting, marking unmarked street crossings, maintaining short blocks and frequent street crossings, orienting any new development to face the street, and increasing window coverage on street-facing commercial buildings. (See Commercial Development HIA Recommendation #C6.) Priority level: Medium

#T2. In the spirit of accessibility and creating a welcoming/usable neighborhood for all, streets should be designed and maintained with all users in mind. The City Council should approve the adoption and implementation of a [Complete Streets Policy](#) in Duluth. Priority level: Medium

#T3. The SAP Multi-Modal Transportation Recommendations should address lighting and vegetation along sidewalks and trails to enhance safety. Priority level: Medium/High



In the **Park Planning** section, the SAP may promote social cohesion by developing the Gary/New Duluth Community Center and Recreation Area which may enhance residents' sense of belonging or identity with the neighborhood and provide activities where residents interact with each other and build social networks. The HIA proposes the following draft recommendations to promote social cohesion in Park Planning:

#P1. The City should approve and tangibly support implementation of the Gary/New Duluth Community Center and Recreation Area concept plan. Priority level: High

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Physical activity refers to any activity that encourages the movements of one's body, including walking, bicycling, weight-lifting, skateboarding, stretching, or even working around the house or in the yard. Positive health effects of physical activity include: lower mortality rates; decreased risk of cardiovascular disease mortality in general and of coronary heart disease mortality in particular; decreased risk of colon cancer; lower risk of developing non-insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus; lower rates of obesity; relief of symptoms of depression and anxiety and mood improvement; and improvement of health-related quality of life by enhancing psychological well-being and by improving physical functioning in persons compromised by poor health.

In the **Commercial Development** section, the SAP may promote physical activity by attracting new businesses for residents to walk to and improving the pedestrian environment; increasing the number of jobs within walking or bicycling distance; and reducing crime through the development and removal of vacant and blighted properties and increasing the number of people out and about in the community. The HIA proposes the following draft recommendations to promote physical activity in Commercial Development:

#C6. The Business Association should work with appropriate City departments to develop Commonwealth Ave commercial corridor design guidelines. Could start by piloting a Streetscape Greening Program for the Gary/New Duluth Business Association. Priority level: Medium

#C7. When new commercial development occurs in the community, City Planning and Engineering should ensure that the development promotes pedestrian access, for example by including sidewalks to the new development if sidewalks do not already exist. Priority level: Medium/High



In the **Residential Development** section, the SAP may promote physical activity by increasing the number of households within walking distance of recreation opportunities. The HIA proposes the following draft recommendations to promote physical activity in Residential Development:

#R5. The City Planning Department and Parks and Recreation should work together to ensure that new housing is connected to recreation amenities and/or include privately-owned green space built into the development to

promote physical activity and social cohesion. This may include, but is not limited to, supporting the SAP Natural Environment Recommendation C for conservation design. Priority level: Medium

#R6. The HIA Technical Advisory Committee strongly encourages the Gary/New Duluth Development Alliance to implement the proposed community garden in the Gary/New Duluth Community Center and Recreation Area concept plan. Priority level: High



In the **Natural Environment** section, the SAP may promote physical activity by increasing recreation opportunities, such as trail extensions and access to natural areas and the St. Louis River through sidewalks and trails; and providing active and engaging opportunities for the community and visitors to practice stewardship and enjoy Gary-New Duluth's natural features. The HIA proposes the following draft recommendations to promote physical activity in Natural Environment:

#N4. The City Parks and Recreation, Community and Business Development and DNR should individually or in partnership identify potential scenic natural sites for scenic overlooks and seating areas from existing natural amenities like the St. Louis River. Additionally, they should locate passive recreation features like seating areas or even walking paths identified sites, and increase pedestrian access points from sites in the area to the regional trail system outside of Gary-New Duluth. Priority level: Medium



In the **Transportation** section, the SAP may promote physical activity by decreasing traffic speeds, increasing use of traffic calming treatments, encouraging streetscape features, and improving sidewalk conditions will all improve the pedestrian environment to encourage more walking and active transportation; improving sidewalk network and overall conditions will improve safety conditions for residents by not having to walk in the street; and designating a bicycle lane, which also may improve safety for bicyclists and enhance safety for all road users. The HIA proposes the following draft recommendations to promote physical activity in Transportation:

#T4. The SAP Motorized Transportation Recommendation B should be modified to acknowledge there are "lane ends" signs on the road now, but they are not adequate or visible enough. Consider recommending flashing lights to grab drivers' attention. Priority level: Low/Medium

#T5. The SAP should include a recommendation to update the Gary/New Duluth sidewalk survey. Focus should be around Stowe School and other high foot traffic areas. Priority level: High

#T6. Implementation of the SAP Non-motorized Recommendation B should be done in conjunction with SAP Non-motorized Recommendation A so that the entire burden of sidewalk improvement, which benefits many, does not fall on a few individual property owners. Priority level: High

#T7. To quantitatively monitor the impact of these recommendations, the Gary/New Duluth Community Club, MIC, and City Planning Division could conduct a walking survey of residents, either by counting pedestrians or providing residents with a questionnaire to understand their walking habits, before and after recommendations are implemented. Priority level: Low



#T8. The proposed road improvement to Boy Scout Landing should be designed with rest areas for pedestrians on the steep hill, for example a couple of benches on the hill. Priority level: Medium

#T9. For traffic calming recommendations, City Engineering, Planning and Public Works, Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) and the Metropolitan Interstate Council (MIC) should focus specifically on 1) the business area and in front of Stowe School on Commonwealth (traffic calming could involve stop signs, center medians or line redesign), and 2) the immediate vicinity of Stowe School and the Gary/New Duluth Recreation Area along 101st Ave West, Carterett St and 102 Ave West to House Street. Priority level: High

#T10. The SAP should add a Multi-Modal Transportation Recommendation to ensure that any new subdivisions or residential developments include sidewalks. Priority level: Medium

#T11. The SAP should include a statement about working with City of Duluth Public Works, MnDOT, and neighborhood organizations to prioritize routes and coordinate snow removal efforts on sidewalks in the area. Priority level: High

#T12. The City's Master Trail System Plan should include trail connectivity to schools and recognize the importance of school connectivity to new developments with the provision of sidewalks and trails. This should be a key principle in the Duluth Comprehensive Plan and zoning codes should be revamped accordingly. Priority level: High

#T13. The SAP should further qualify the recommendation for a bike lane on Commonwealth Ave. by revising as "Encourage Minnesota Department of Transportation to work with City of Duluth officials to consider how to install a designated bike lane along Commonwealth Avenue that works well with the parking needs in the area and minimizes safety conflicts between cyclists and parked cars." Priority level: High

#T14. Include a recommendation in the SAP to increase bicycle infrastructure, such as parking near bus stops and commercial and recreational destinations, to encourage bicycle riding and transit ridership. Priority level: Medium



In the **Park Planning** section, the SAP may promote physical activity by developing the proposed Gary/New Duluth Community Center and Recreation Area concept. The HIA proposes the following draft recommendations to promote physical activity in Park Planning:

#P1. The City should approve and tangibly support implementation of the Gary/New Duluth Community Center and Recreation Area concept plan. Priority level: High (*Repeated*)

#P2. The Gary/New Duluth Development Alliance, MnDOT, and Parks and Recreation should partner to direct bicyclists to the Gary/New Duluth Recreation Area off of Commonwealth Ave as a rest spot when biking to or from Fond du Lac. There will be a picnic area and also concession stand in the Community Center. Priority level: Medium

#P3. The Gary/New Duluth Development Alliance should consider providing equipment for rental at the Gary/New Duluth Community Center and Recreation Area, possibly by accepting donations of used sporting equipment from community members. Priority level: Low/Medium



ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOODS

Access to healthy food can include access to reliable transportation, or proximity to healthy food retailers, such as grocery stores, community gardens, meal delivery services, such as Schwans and Coburns, or programs like Meals on

Wheels. Studies have found that residents with greater access to supermarkets or a greater abundance of healthy foods in neighborhood food stores consume more fresh produce and other healthful items, while lack of access to grocery stores is linked to serious health concerns, such as higher rates of obesity and increased risk of diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

In the **Commercial Development** section, the SAP may increase access to healthy food by recruiting new businesses if they include a grocery store or new restaurant, and increasing the number of jobs and households in the community to support a grocery store. The HIA proposes the following draft recommendations to promote access to healthy foods in Commercial Development:

#C8. A partnership between Gary/New Duluth Community Club, Local Business Association and Gary/New Duluth Development Alliance should consider conducting a market study on the potential of a food market in the community and identify options to provide fresh food, such as mobile markets, food hubs or farmers' markets. Then obtain zoning/permitting from City Planning for the desired option. Priority level: Medium

#C9. The City in partnership with St. Louis County should develop an urban agriculture plan that includes guidance and resources for individuals and organizations that want to acquire or lease underutilized properties for urban agriculture, and minimizes the financial burden and red tape for obtaining leases and permits. Priority level: Medium



In the **Residential Development** section, the SAP may increase access to healthy food by increasing the number of households within walking distance to existing markets and transit stops with service to grocery stores. The HIA proposes the following draft recommendations to promote access to healthy foods in Residential Development:

#R7. The Gary/New Duluth Community Club should partner with not-for profit organizations, such as Seeds to Success, to conduct a study to determine how many residents have residential gardens, how many rely on gardens as important food source, and determine demand for more gardens (community gardens). Priority level: Low



In the **Natural Environment** section, the SAP may increase access to healthy food by enhancing and preserving the environment to support pollinators, improve soil health and reduce contamination in fish. The HIA proposes the following draft recommendations to promote access to healthy foods in Natural Environment:

#N5. The Gary/New Duluth Development Alliance, UMN Duluth, UMN Extension and the School District should partner to implement community education programs around beekeeping and gardening to promote local food production and lifelong environmental stewardship. (Example: a young naturalist/young gardeners program in partnership with Stowe.) Priority level: Medium

#N6. City Parks and Recreation, Western Lake Superior Sanitary District (WLSSD), and UMN Extension should work together to explore the feasibility of a neighborhood or city-wide composting/mulching program. Priority level: Low/Medium

#N7. City Engineering and Park Maintenance should increase native planting and natural landscaping that absorbs water, requires less maintenance, and can support pollinators. Priority level: Low/Medium



In the **Transportation** section, the SAP may increase access to healthy food by improving the pedestrian environment through traffic safety measures, streetscape enhancements and sidewalk and bicycle infrastructure to existing markets. The HIA proposes the following draft recommendations to promote access to healthy foods in Transportation:

#T15. Add an additional focus area to Non-motorized Recommendation B to include sidewalks from neighborhood streets to bus stops. Additionally, the Gary/New Duluth SAP could make a recommendation for the City to improve the pedestrian environment in West Duluth between the bus stop and grocery store(s). Priority level: Medium/High

#T16. Add a SAP Recommendation for an educational campaign through Duluth Transit Authority on the benefits of riding public transit (cost savings) and develop colorful, high quality materials that show transit connections to major destinations, such as grocery stores. Priority level: Low



In the **Park Planning** section, the SAP may increase access to healthy food by developing the proposed Gary/New Duluth Community Center and Recreation Area concept, which includes a community garden and could be used for a farmers' market or food hub. The HIA proposes the following draft recommendations to promote access to healthy foods in Park Planning:

#P4. The Gary/New Duluth Development Alliance could consider partnerships with established organizations working on access to healthy food, including Community Action Duluth's [Seeds of Success](#) and the [Duluth Community Garden Program](#). Priority level: Medium

#P5. A partnership between the Gary/New Duluth Development Alliance, Gary/New Duluth Community Club and Local Business Association should consider using the updated Community Center for a farmers' market or mobile produce truck (refer to HIA Commercial Development recommendation #C8). Priority level: Low/Medium

NEXT STEPS

Community members and the public are encouraged to provide input on these recommendations until March 14, 2014. On March 11, the Planning Commission will hold a public hearing for the SAP and HIA. This is another great opportunity for the community to learn about the project and provide feedback. On March 24, the SAP and HIA will be presented to the City Council for approval. Following the City Council hearing, the SAP and HIA will become official City documents that will guide the future of development in Gary/New Duluth. These documents will eventually be incorporated into the update to the City's Comprehensive Plan in 2015-2016.

To provide comments on these recommendations go to the [Gary/New Duluth Small Area Plan webpage](#) and or contact Kelly Muellman or John Kelley (see information at right) by March 14, 2014.

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