

Planning Process

In October of 2004, the City of Duluth restarted its stalled comprehensive planning process by issuing a Request for Proposals for a consultant to assist in the completion of a comprehensive plan, and by forming a citizen and stakeholder body to oversee the planning process. The process was to run on an accelerated schedule approximately a year in length, include substantial opportunity for public review and comment, and result in a comprehensive plan with an emphasis on city-wide land use patterns and systems.

Citizen and Stakeholder Oversight

Duluth is a city with a long history of citizen involvement. A transparent and inclusive planning process was critical to the successful development of a new Comprehensive Plan. To meet this goal multiple opportunities for citizen and stakeholder oversight were built into the planning process:

- Oversight by a stakeholder steering committee
- Regular public meetings
- Listening session presentation before the committee

In addition to these venues, other forums were created to garner public input, including a public website with process and draft materials and outreach by staff and consultant team to local organizations and businesses.

The Comprehensive Plan Committee

The Comprehensive Plan Committee (CPC) was created as the primary public review body for the planning process. The CPC included 27 individuals representing a wide variety of perspectives, interest groups, and appointed and elected officials. The CPC included Planning Commission members and City Councilors, representatives from business organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce and institutions such as the University of Minnesota, a variety of interest groups such as historic preservation and parks and open space organizations, representatives of neighborhood districts, and other citizen and civic organizations (a complete list of CPC members is on the Acknowledgements page). The CPC was to oversee the hiring of a consultant team, review the content of the draft plan, and ultimately make a recommendation to the Planning Commission and City Council on a plan to be adopted. The Planning Commission is the statutory body responsible for overseeing the planning process, and the City Council responsible for final approval, modification, or rejection of the final plan.



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Duluth Comprehensive Plan Committee Schedule

Meeting Date	24-May	15-Jun	5-Jul	20-Jul	2-Aug	17-Aug	6-Sep	13-Sep	26-Sep
Phase 1	Present process	Public Meeting	Listening Session	Summary and distribution of draft background material	Listening Session	Presentation and discussion of background	Listening Session	Planning Commission Meeting	City Council Meeting
	Present public meeting role			Presentation of Issue Inventory from Pub Meeting		Presentation of draft Governing Principles	Governing Principles discussion	Discussion and approval of Governing Principles	Discussion and approval of Governing Principles
				Create Governing Principle categories		Modify Governing Principle language			
Meeting Date	21-Sep	4-Oct	Late October	1-Nov	16-Nov	6-Dec	3-Jan	18-Jan	7-Feb
Phase 2	Set parameters for alternative land use scenarios based	Listening Session	First round of Area-wide meetings	Present results of public meetings, including final draft land use scenarios	Discuss land use categories for use in the land use map	Present natural systems, infrastr. cost analyses, maps	Listening Session	Present draft future land use map	Discuss future land use, overlay districts
	Identify priorities for additional background information		Present Land Use Concepts and draft undeveloped lands	Present results of public meetings	Discuss policy categories and priorities	Modify goals and recommend policies based on CPC discussion	Hist/Cultural; Trails/Rec; MIC Regional Utilities	Discussion of land use policies and overlay districts	Finalize City-wide policy language
Meeting Date	15-Feb	Late Feb.	7-Mar	15-Mar	30-Mar	4-Apr	19-Apr	2-May	17-May
Phase 3	Discuss map, prepare for public meetings	Second round of Area-wide meetings	Review findings of public meeting comments	Discuss policy changes and map adjustments	Discuss subcommittee recommendation	Discuss subcommittee recommendations	Finalize policies, land use map	Discuss land use implementation strategies	Discuss transportation implementation strategies
	Present final draft map and policies	Presenting final draft map and policies for review and comment	Discuss policy and map responses to public comment	Create subcommittees for particular topics	Discuss future land use map	Policy changes	Introduce strategies	Present capital improvements and public facilities considerations	Present draft implementation section
Meeting Date	25-May	6-Jun	19-Jun	26-Jun					
Phase 4	Final Public Meeting	Review public meeting results	Planning Commission meeting	City Council Meeting					
	Present draft plan	Discuss final changes to plan map and	Recommend Plan	Adopt Plan					



During the planning process the CPC worked with Planning department staff and the consultant team to craft draft and final plan language and future land use map. The CPC evaluated background material compiled by staff and the consultant team, considered substantive presentations by stakeholders, attended public meetings and reviewed public comments, and offered comments and recommendations for changes to draft documents. CPC members attended over 25 officials meetings during the year-long process in addition to briefing their respective constituencies on the process, attended subcommittee meetings to advise the larger group on specific topics, assisted in the facilitation process at public meetings, and spent considerable time reviewing documents and draft away from the meetings.

Public meetings

The year-long process included four points of public meeting outreach and presentation:

1. The kickoff meeting, held in June of 2005. This meeting included presentation of background material, a review of the function of a comprehensive plan in city decision making, and the process to be managed by the consultant team for facilitating the creation of a comprehensive plan. The CPC members then facilitated an issue identification process in small groups. The issue inventory was the start of substantive discussion for the content of the Plan.
2. The first round of area meetings, held in late October of 2005. Three area meetings (in the west, central, and east areas of Duluth) were held over the week to present the initial draft material of the comprehensive plan. After presentation, meeting attendees completed an exercise on what they believed to be the opportunities and risks presented by the draft material. Each meeting included extensive comment and discussion by participants. Written comments were also taken both at the meeting and after the meetings for people who were unable to attend.
3. The second round of area meetings, held in late February of 2006. Three more area meetings were held over a week to present the first complete draft of the future land use map and the Plan policies. Meeting participants identified those components of the future land use map or the policies with which they agreed, and those that raised questions or reservations. Participants then discussed their reservations and approval in small groups facilitated by CPC members, staff, and the consultant team. Written comments were also collected at and after the meetings.



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4. A final public meeting, held in May of 2006. This meeting presented the revised future land use map, policies, and implementation strategies, and demonstrated the link between the four elements (principles, policies, map, strategies) of the draft Comprehensive Plan. After a presentation on the plan elements, participants engaged staff, consultants, and CPC members in individuals discussions at four stations. Written comments were also solicited and accepted.

At the final public meeting, the Planning Commission held a public hearing on the draft plan, and recommended the Plan for adoption by the City Council.

Listening sessions

The review by the CPC was the primary means by which citizen and stakeholder perspectives were incorporated into the Plan process. In order to ensure that CPC members were hearing from a broad range of constituencies, the process included a number of 'listening sessions' when interested groups could present their priorities and concerns to the CPC. Six listening sessions were held, one per month for the first six months, at which the CPC would hear the presentation of up to three organizations and have the opportunity to ask questions.

Presentations were made by large institutions such as the Airport and Port authorities and St. Luke's Hospital, open space and trail advocacy organizations, affordable housing organizations, advocates for sustainable development and eco-industrial development, and infrastructure-related entities including Minnesota Power, Comfort Systems, and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.



Principles and Plan

The process was designed around the creation of two separate documents that would be combined in the final Plan. First, the process would develop a set of governing principles to guide the development of a comprehensive plan. The Governing Principles section was to be adopted by the City Council before moving ahead with the larger task of creating the body of the comprehensive plan. Creating the principles allowed the decision makers, reviewers, and staff to come to an initial agreement about the general content and concepts.

Creating the principles took the first three months of the process. The Planning Commission and City Council then weighed in with modifications. The principles were adopted by the Planning Commission on September 21, 2005 and by the City Council on October 24, 2005.

The subsequent process of creating the future land use map, policies, and strategies, which took approximately 9 months and 18 CPC meetings, was based on the governing principles. The CPC, staff, and consultant team started with defining land use categories, focusing on mixes of land uses rather than single use categories. In using the land use categories on the future land use map, the the CPC endorsed the concept of first setting aside the city's green infrastructure in order to determine where to direct development. This concept follows a 'no-regrets' approach to identifying the best areas for development; decisions to conserve undeveloped land are relatively easily undone, but decisions to develop are difficult to undo. Complementing this concept is the emphasis that priority development areas focus first on redevelopment, infill development, and neighborhood extensions. Greenfield development is to be staged carefully to ensure an efficient expansion of gray infrastructure.

The policies were compiled, discussed and reviewed over three months of meetings in order to define how the governing principles affect the built and natural landscape. In the final month of the process, the CPC, staff, and consultant team moved from policies to implementation, by selecting the preferred strategies to bring the Plan's principles into the day-to-day operations of the City.



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