

Governing Principles

The first phase of the Comprehensive Plan process was to create a set of governing principles. The principles are to guide not only the Comprehensive Plan process but the implementation of the Plan over time.

Duluth's Comprehensive Plan process began with the development of an over arching governing set of principles. The governing principles set the foundation for the entire framework of the Comprehensive Plan by providing the fundamental concepts by which physical planning needs to take place. These principles guided the development of the future land use map, Plan policies and the recommended implementation strategies. As the foundation of the Comprehensive Plan the principles will serve as a constant reminder and guide for land use decisions and future planning. The principles can provide direction when the details of the Plan are insufficient to clearly resolve issues or make decisions. Continual reference to the principles will make sure that the concepts of the Comprehensive Plan are held in place over time.

The Comprehensive Plan Committee worked for several months in the design and wording of the following twelve principles. The work began with a review of principle language from other communities as well as Duluth's past visioning exercises. The draft principles were then viewed through alternative development scenarios. The scenarios were designed to assess the range of development and preservation opportunities within the principle language, and provide guidance to how the principles should be reflected in Duluth's natural and developed landscapes. Through this work the Committee strengthened the principle language to maximize opportunities and minimize risks associated with land use decisions.

Since the principles serve as the foundation for the Plan, it was important to the validity of the remaining process to have the City Council approve the principles before building the Comprehensive Plan's other elements (future land use map, policies, and strategies). The principles were formally adopted by the City Council on October 24, 2005.

The number of the principles is for reference and does not imply a rank order.

05-0730R

RESOLUTION ADOPTING GOVERNING PRINCIPLES FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN.

BY COUNCILOR GILBERT:

WHEREAS, a foundational element of the comprehensive plan process is to formulate governing principles to guide plan development; and

WHEREAS, the comprehensive planning committee, in conjunction with the planning consultant and city planning staff, have developed 12 governing principles; and

WHEREAS, these principles have been reviewed by the comprehensive planning committee and approved by the planning commission;

RESOLVED, the principles set forth in Public Document No. 05-1024-025 are adopted for the purpose of guiding the city as it proceeds with the development of a comprehensive plan.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE: This resolution adopts planning principles prepared by the comprehensive planning committee, consultant and staff. The principles were presented to the planning commission at its September 21, 2005, meeting. The planning commission recommends approval.

Principle #1 - Reuse previously developed lands

Reuse of previously developed lands, including adaptive reuse of existing building stock and historic resources, directs new investment to sites which have the potential to perform at a higher level than their current state. This strengthens neighborhoods and is preferred to a dispersed development pattern with attendant alteration of natural landscapes and extensions of public services. Site preparation or building modification costs are offset by savings in existing public infrastructure such as streets, utilities, and transit, fire and police services.

Previously developed lands include a range of sizes, locations, with and without structures: large 'brownfield' sites such as U.S. Steel; smaller industrial sites in a neighborhood context such as Clyde Iron; vacant 'infill' sites with streets and utilities, commercial buildings no longer in viable service, residential structures suitable for rehabilitation, (creates individual improvement as well as contributes to neighborhood vitality) and scattered vacant parcels.

Principle #2 - Declare the necessity and secure the future of undeveloped places

Undeveloped areas are an essential part of Duluth's municipal fabric - urban plazas, neighborhood parks, large tracts of public ownership and private lands zoned for minimal development. These minimally or undeveloped areas collectively create an open space system. These areas contribute to Duluth's cultural, health, recreational, and economic value and community identity. This open space system provides vistas, encourages active recreation, provides natural infrastructure as storm water retention, plant and animal habitat and water quality, and is the strongest visual element defining Duluth's sense of place.

Duluth contains a great diversity of land form. Areas where construction is less challenging have largely been developed. Much of Duluth's open areas were private lands, now tax forfeit. Areas often presumed to be public parks are tax forfeit lands and are subject to possible auction and sale. Other lands presumed to be public, are private. Legal status, common usage and public perception frequently do not match. Securing the future for key parcels of open space is critical to Duluth's identity and economic base.

Principle #3 - Support traditional economic base

Supporting Duluth's traditional economic foundation maintains jobs, tax base, and opportunity. Economic activity with specific location requirements may be subject to displacement or site competition with changes in real estate values. This traditional economic activity faces change as result of global economic patterns, changing markets, new regulation and aging of extensive infrastructure. Nevertheless, fundamentals remain and the economic contribution, sometimes taken for granted, is significant.

The traditional economic base includes port operations, transportation services, manufacturing, bulk commodity handling and related support services. Locational considerations include docks, shipping channels, railroad rights-of-way, Interstate highway and airport.

Governing Principles

Growth sectors can be as small as a new sole-proprietorship or as large as a medical complex or UMD. What they share in common is a contribution to Duluth's economic diversity which did not exist thirty years ago. Changes in technology and transportation allow business location here attracted by a disciplined work force, Lake Superior, natural landscapes, relatively low real estate prices and cultural features. Linkages between these emerging sectors and the traditional economic base will strengthen both.

Support neighborhood scale commercial areas, neighborhood parks with links to the larger city-wide parks and trails system, varieties of housing, both in cost and building types and a street pattern which places arterials on the edges of neighborhoods rather than bisecting them. Avoid large scale, non-neighborhood based activity within the core of a neighborhood.

Climate-specific materials and design; repair and use of historic walls, bridges and buildings; Lake Superior, St. Louis River and streams; walkable scale neighborhood commercial districts, parks and residential areas; cultural references and traditional events are all defining elements that reinforce the place-specific.

Principle #4 - Support emerging economic growth sectors

Emerging economic sectors add economic, cultural and social diversity. These include higher education, medical, value-added manufacturing, commercial outdoor recreation, historic resources interpretation, arts and music, information technology and visitor services.

Principle #5 - Strengthen neighborhoods

The present city is an historical amalgam of villages and other independent units of government, contributing to the present condition of Duluth being strongly defined by its neighborhoods. This condition should be reinforced through land use, transportation and public service delivery patterns which strengthen neighborhood identity. New institutional expansions, major public infrastructure or large commercial or industrial uses should not divide historic neighborhood patterns.

Principle #6 - Reinforce the place-specific

Public and private actions should reinforce cultural, physical and economic features which have traditionally defined Duluth, its open space and its neighborhoods. This includes commercial areas providing neighborhood goods and services, ravine parks and other natural features that define neighborhood edges and view corridors to the Lake or River which serve to provide location and context.

Principle #7 - Create and maintain connectivity

Connectivity is established through our streets and highways, transit system, sidewalks, bike-ways and trails, (local and regional). The non-vehicular modes should be considered more than recreation. They are important components of an overall transportation system. Winter maintenance of sidewalks and other public ways is critical to creation of usable pedestrian systems.

The dominant system of streets, roads and highways; historic parkway and trail systems such as Skyline, Lincoln Park, Chester Park, Lester-Amity Park; regional trails such as Munger, Superior Hiking Trail and snowmobile trails; and the transit system. Not always viewed as a system but increasingly so, are sidewalks, stairs, ramps and facilities for pedestrians and the disabled which need to be maintained all year to create a system which will grow in usage.

Principle #8 - Encourage mix of activities, uses and densities

Cities have evolved as a mix of land uses, building types, housing types, and activities. Accommodating choice while protecting investment is a balance to strike in land use regulation. Mixed uses provide opportunity for a diversity of activity that segregated, uniform uses do not provide.

Examples of mixed development include integration of housing, commercial, entertainment and recreational uses. Business and light industrial can blend with residential in larger complexes. Mix also refers to residential building types and income ranges, which can provide housing choices for persons who may wish to stay within a neighborhood throughout their lifetime. Neighborhood-oriented commercial uses reinforce local identity in ways that regional commercial or auto-oriented commercial centers do not.

Principle #9 - Support private actions that contribute to the public realm

Private building construction and site design influences activity in adjacent public areas. Building form, height, setbacks and detailing effect the adjacent areas. The uses and activity contained in the buildings directly impacts the surroundings. Public areas should benefit from adjacent private investment.

Blank walls, undirected lighting, parking areas right at sidewalk line, loading areas in a public way, are examples of features which detract from public areas. Standards are appropriate to apply in areas where private actions about public areas so that these actions not only do not detract, but enhance the public areas.

Governing Principles

Building types and materials that reduce resource consumption and load on the waste stream such as used at Hartley Nature Center are becoming mainstream. HRA's Hawk Ridge development preserves tree canopy and requires building materials and design to consider raptors. Fuel for transportation and space heating come from outside our region and reduction in consumption in this area improves our regional "balance of payments."

Neighborhood-based schools promote walkable, safe communities and reduce transportation expense. School closings or consolidations changes community connectivity. Creation of new neighborhoods can either strain or relieve transportation budgets. The number of K-12 students in the city will dictate the total facilities required but where the students live should influence which schools are in service. For higher education, housing opportunities that integrate students into the larger community are generally desirable however, the impacts of badly integrated student housing can be very destructive to established neighborhoods.

Utilizing existing water, wastewater, and storm sewer system capacity before expanding the system; when replacing aging infrastructure add additional capacity in location where development is encouraged and consideration of the cost of extending emergency service to undeveloped area. Tax base alone does not off-set the cost of these services, therefore, the pattern of development, and resultant public service costs, are important considerations.

Principle #10 - **Take sustainable actions**

Initiate land use, site design, transportation, building design and materials policies which reduce consumption of finite resources, generation of solid waste and introduction of toxic materials to land, air or waters.

Principle #11 - **Include consideration for education systems in land use actions**

For K-12 and higher education both, there is a connection between land use patterns and educational facilities. School locations in neighborhoods and housing opportunities for higher education students require consideration of impacts on transportation systems, housing densities, parking and non-student uses.

Principle #12 - **Create efficiencies in delivery of public services**

The costs of public service must be considered in land use decisions. Street construction and maintenance, utilities, libraries, fire, police, snowplowing and recreation facilities are services directly related to the physical location of development. Infrastructure should help prescribe development location rather than react to it.