

Section 1 • Introduction

The *Forward 2040 Comprehensive Plan* establishes a framework of goals and strategies to achieve the desired future vision for the City. The plan describes the City's current characteristics and expresses our aspirations for the future. It recommends actions to achieve our stated vision and goals and address challenges and opportunities the City will face in coming years. The plan functions to guide decision making and provides a foundation for more detailed planning efforts. The plan is implemented through the City Code, Capital Improvement Program, annual budget, smaller scale plans, day-to-day operations, and through the efforts and resources of private citizens, businesses, and organizations.

In Minnesota, the Comprehensive Plan is a legal document that satisfies numerous statutory requirements. The plan must be approved by the Metropolitan Council and must be consistent with adopted regional system and policy plans. The plan also serves as a good general introduction to and repository of information about the City for use by residents, business owners, staff members, commissioners, and City Council members.

1.1 Forward 2040 Vision and Values

The vision and value statements defined below reflect the City's future aspirations. They were created to guide the comprehensive planning effort and form the foundation of the goals and strategies described in each plan element.

Vision: Bloomington is a community of choice. A place people seek out to live, work, conduct business, and recreate. We foster vibrant, safe, and accessible neighborhoods, amenities and destinations. We work together to ensure everyone feels welcomed and engaged in opportunities that foster community life and a sense of belonging.

Values:

- **Bloomington is forward thinking.** We are intentional in managing change and shaping growth. We embrace innovation and proactively explore opportunities to leverage and enhance our natural, physical, cultural, and economic assets.
- **Bloomington is connected.** We aim to provide an accessible and multi-modal transportation network that supports all residents, businesses, and visitors in their daily activities and recreational endeavors.
- **Bloomington is a community of neighborhoods.** We value the individual character and amenities our neighborhoods offer and recognize their role in establishing Bloomington's sense of community. We promote neighborhood revitalization to strengthen community identity, vitality and pride and support activities that welcome engagement in community life.



Community Overview

Bloomington, Minnesota, is a 38 square mile suburban community located in the southwestern portion of the Twin Cities metropolitan area. The City was incorporated in 1858 but remained primarily agricultural for another century. In the 1950s, Bloomington became the classic American “boom town” and its population soared from 9,900 in 1950 to 50,500 in 1960. The City's central location in the metropolitan area and proximity to major transportation routes and an international airport resulted in a strong and diverse economy. Land use is well balanced among residential, commercial, and industrial uses. Located along the Minnesota River, almost a third of the City has been preserved for conservation, public and recreation uses. Today, Bloomington is home to slightly more than 88,000 residents and 93,000 jobs.

Looking forward, the City is well positioned to continue to thrive and be a municipal leader. While the city is fully developed, growth will continue through redevelopment. Bloomington's excellent location and many assets will continue to drive growth and demand.

Local System Statements

The Metropolitan Council prepares “system statements” for each local unit of government within their jurisdiction. Local system statements provide community-specific information regarding demographic forecasts, affordable housing allocation, and highlight changes to the regional system policy plans that may have local implications. The System Statement for Bloomington was issued September 17, 2015 and designates Bloomington as an “urban” community, which applies to inner-ring suburbs that experienced significant development between the end of WWII and the mid-1970s.

- **Bloomington is inclusive, safe, and welcoming.** We are a community that continues to become more diverse – demographically, economically, and culturally. We celebrate these changes and the opportunities they present. We place a high value on equity and strive to understand and accommodate diverse perspectives and needs so all people feel welcomed, safe, and supported.
- **Bloomington supports its wide-ranging business community.** We value the broad array of businesses that call Bloomington home and strive to create opportunity for all businesses to succeed and provide quality jobs, goods, and services.
- **Bloomington is a steward of its natural and cultural assets.** We value and promote preservation of our many natural and cultural resources. We recognize the contribution they make to community livability and distinctiveness and proactively foster efforts to enhance access to and awareness of these amenities.
- **Bloomington is sustainable and resilient.** We believe proactive management and renewal of our natural, social, and economic resources is vital to maintaining a high quality of life for present and future generations. We continually strive to increase our environmental consciousness and are committed to preserve and renew our ecological, land and energy resources through the use of operational best practices.
- **Bloomington offers stability.** We provide collaborative, progressive, and responsive leadership that works to authentically engage with our community and stakeholders. We invest our resources strategically to protect city assets and maintain confidence in local government.

1.2 Outcomes

The Met Council describes five outcomes in its regional development framework (*Thrive MSP 2040*) that reflect a shared vision for the region and encourages local communities to address these in their comprehensive plan updates. To do that, definitions of the outcomes were modified to be relevant to Bloomington. Like the vision and value statements, the outcomes are intended as touchstones for the goals and strategies and are woven through all of the elements of the plan.

Livability: Livability focuses on how places, services, and infrastructure create and enhance the quality of life that makes Bloomington a great place to live, work and play. Bloomington’s abundant parks and open space, active arts community, range of housing and employment options, and reasonable cost of living are the foundation of its livability. Equally important and critical to maintaining livability, are the social networks and connections that foster a sense of community identity and belonging.

Equity: Equity connects all residents, employees, and visitors to opportunity; regardless of personal characteristics, especially those protected under Chapter 363A of Minnesota Statute. Equity involves maximizing access to economic opportunities, stable housing, convenient transportation, recreation, healthy choices, and high quality education. Our city and region are stronger when all people live in neighborhoods that offer attainable opportunities for success, prosperity, and quality of life.

Sustainability: Sustainability fosters a balanced and resilient future. Sustainability involves protecting and investing in our natural, fiscal, and social resources over the long term and considers the everlasting consequences of our current actions.

By preserving our capacity to maintain and support our environment, people, and economy, we secure firm and lasting prosperity, equity, and livability for future generations.

Stewardship: Stewardship advances responsible management and strategic investment in our resources and assets. Stewardship involves reinvesting in our aging housing stock, public facilities and infrastructure to maximize their potential. It also means taking steps to enhance the integrity of our natural resources and protect them from negative impacts.

Prosperity: Prosperity thrives when investments in infrastructure, amenities, and human capital advance the city's economic competitiveness, thereby attracting and retaining successful businesses and a talented workforce. Economic competitiveness results from strategic, long-term decisions that build on and grow our city's economic strengths and assets. Providing great public amenities, services, institutions, and infrastructure lays the foundation for prosperity.

1.3 Forward 2040 Highlights

Forward 2040 aims to address the challenges and opportunities Bloomington will experience over the next 20 years. It ensures coordination with the region and adjacent communities on public infrastructure investments and management. It builds on the direction provided in previous planning efforts and strives to advance the City Council's One Bloomington Strategic Plan initiatives. Key themes highlighted in Forward 2040 are depicted in Figure 1.1 and include:

Being strategic about redevelopment by:

- Redeveloping older neighborhood commercial areas;
- Supporting reuse of older industrial areas while protecting viable industrial areas;
- Focusing mixed use development in key areas;
- Encouraging transit-supportive development in station areas; and
- Fostering housing choices and affordability.

Manage change and transitions by:

- Meeting needs of the changing resident population;
- Supporting regulatory flexibility;
- Utilizing new technologies to increase efficiencies; and
- Engaging in prototyping to test new approaches.

Enhancing community image and identity by:

- Fostering community and neighborhood events;
- Expanding creative placemaking efforts;
- Strategically investing in neighborhood renewal and community facilities; and
- Promoting the City's natural, cultural, institutional, and recreational amenities.



Change Management

Long-range planning involves identifying strategies to manage anticipated changes. Two important changes that will significantly impact Bloomington over the next 20 years include:

Meeting the needs of a changing resident population –

Bloomington's resident population is aging and becoming more racially and culturally diverse. Forward 2040 proposes strategies to accommodate these changes and embrace the social and cultural opportunities they create.

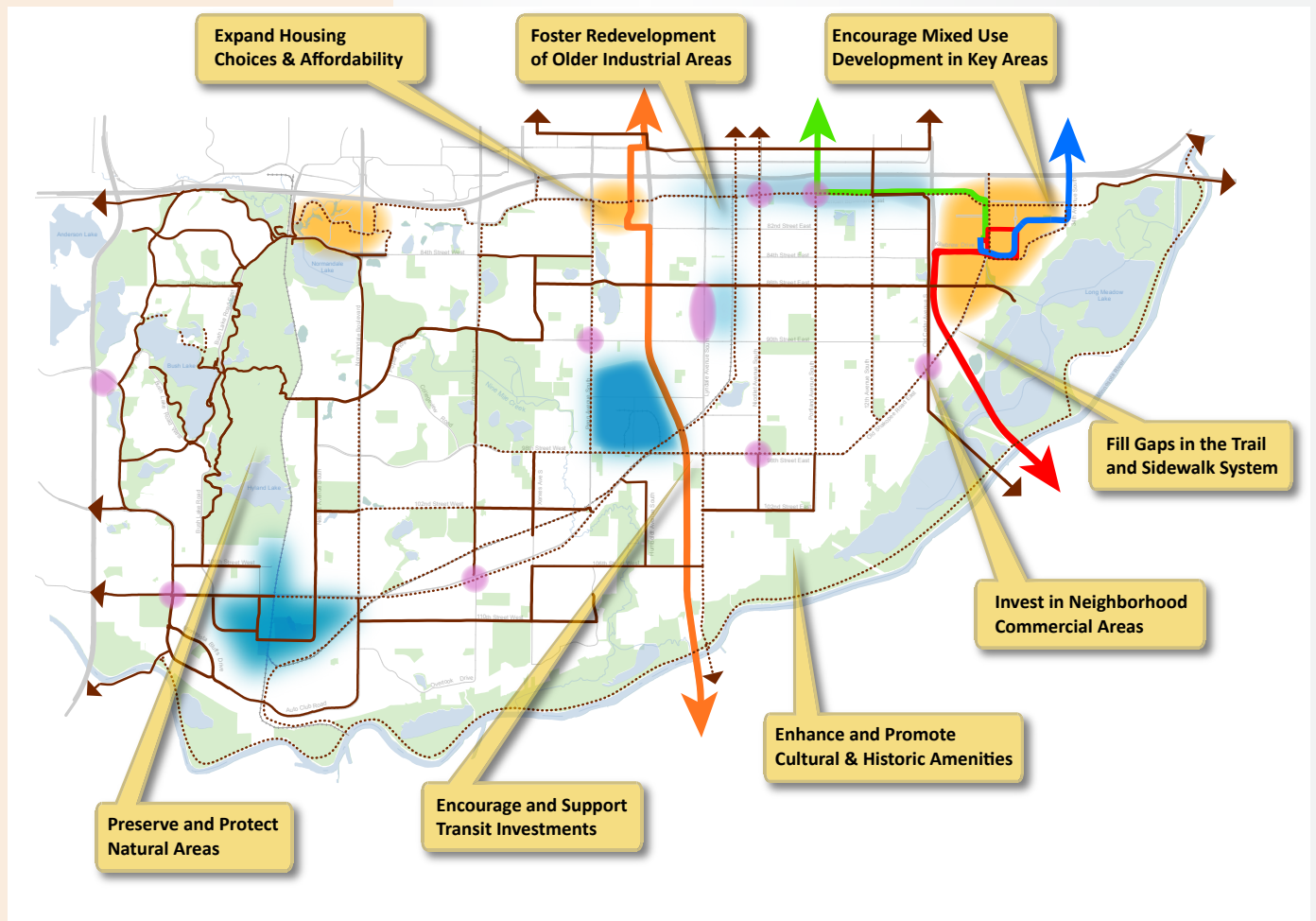
Managing technological and economic transitions –

Rapid advances in technology are profoundly changing the way we communicate, do business, and get around. While the full impact of these changes is unclear at present, Forward 2040 recommends managing this transition by maintaining a high level of awareness, remaining flexible, and utilizing new technology to increase efficiency and improve access to opportunities.

Enhancing sustainability and resilience by:

- Preserving natural areas and managing invasive species;
- Filling gaps in the trail and sidewalk network;
- Expanding the Safe Routes to Schools network;
- Encouraging recycling and waste reduction;
- Supporting energy conservation and alternative technologies; and
- Enhancing emergency preparedness and response.

Figure 1.1: Key Themes



1.4 Why Update the Plan?

In accordance with the Metropolitan Land Planning Act (MLPA), local units of government within the Twin Cities metropolitan area are required to update their comprehensive plans every ten years to align with the Metropolitan Council’s regional development guide and system plans, which are also updated every ten years following each decennial census. The regional development guide – called Thrive MSP 2040 – was adopted in May 2014. It sets the overarching development direction for the region and serves as the foundation of the more specific regional system and policy plans that address transportation, water resources, regional parks, and housing. Local comprehensive plans must be consistent with these plans.

Beyond meeting this statutory requirement, the City recognizes the value of periodically reviewing and updating its city-wide vision, goals and priorities to ensure we remain responsive to changing needs and trends and position ourselves to effectively harness new opportunities. The comprehensive plan is not a fixed document; it's part of an ongoing planning and implementation process. Because conditions and circumstances are constantly changing, plans must be routinely reevaluated and adjusted.

1.5 Plan Update Process

From the outset, the Forward 2040 comprehensive plan update process made community engagement a priority. Multiple community engagement approaches were used throughout the update process including:

- **Citizen Advisory Committee** – This committee was established to assist staff in drafting the vision, policies, and priorities for the comprehensive plan update. The committee was comprised of residents and/or local business owners and representatives of existing City commissions and boards. The committee met monthly for 14 months.
- **Town Hall and Community Meetings** – Facilitated workshops were conducted throughout the plan update process and were held in locations around Bloomington. Early in the process, workshops focused on defining overarching issues and priorities to address in the update. Midway through the process, community feedback was solicited on the draft vision, goals, and strategies. Community meetings were also held to get input on the draft plan, prior to official public hearings.
- **Social media and online surveys** – Various methods were used to inform and collect public comments throughout the planning process. A project webpage was established as a repository of information on planning status and activity, online surveys were posted on the project webpage, update articles were regularly provided in the City's quarterly newsletter, and comments were received via the City's Facebook and Twitter accounts. In addition, interested community members joined an e-serve list to receive alerts about public meetings, online surveys, and other opportunities to provide feedback.
- **Community events** – Information about the comprehensive plan update was provided at multiple community events throughout the planning process, including: Bloomington farmers markets, Summer Fete, and Heritage Days.
- **Affected Jurisdiction Review** – As required, a draft of the Forward 2040 comprehensive plan update was distributed to affected jurisdictions for review and comment over a six month period (May-October 2018.) The few comments received were aimed at providing clarification on technical items and have been incorporated into the final plan.

Summaries of input received during the plan update process are available on the City's website at blm.mn/forward2040.



Trends Overview

To assist with the City Council's strategic planning efforts in 2016, a "data book" was compiled analyzing how the City has changed over the past 40 years and identifying broad trends that will influence the City's future growth. The document is available online at this link: Blm.mn/databook.

