

Community-based planning process for a Small Area Plan

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Edina's Comprehensive Plan identifies several "Potential Areas of Change" where a Small Area Planning process could shape directions for future development based on consultation with residents, property owners, and business owners. The Small Area Plan study could be initiated by request of community groups, business groups, the Planning Commission, or city staff; the authority to initiate a Small Area Plan resides with the City Council. The Comprehensive Plan highlights planning principles that might be applied to those areas identified with the potential for change:

- Area or neighborhood land use pattern and design that encourages walking and transit use;
- High degree of connectivity to existing and new public (and active private) spaces to encourage physical activity, social interaction, and optimal land use;
- Smaller parking footprints;
- Reduction in impervious surfaces and associated storm water runoff;
- Water quality-water conservation measures- reuse of graywater, wastewater management;
- Potential for creating lifecycle housing; and
- High quality of community design, with a system for measuring excellence, not just compliance with design guidelines.

The Potential Areas of Change amount to less than ten percent of the total acreage of land in the city, but represent significant opportunities for change. The areas include:

- North France Avenue (West 54th Street to TH 62);
- Neighborhood commercial nodes (Morningside commercial area, Valley View and Wooddale, 70th and Cahill);
- Community commercial nodes (50th and France, Grandview Heights);
- Southdale Area (the northern portion of the "Greater Southdale Area Land Use and Transportation Study); and
- Commercial/office corridors (along I-494 and locations along the edges of the Southdale and Cahill Industrial areas).

This document outlines a general approach to conducting a portion of the Small Area Plan—that part of the plan that engages residents and stakeholders, and results in a definition of principles that would guide further planning and development efforts. The Planning Commission envisions a process founded in interaction with the community, lead by representatives of the community, with design direction provided by volunteer planning and design professionals who live in Edina. It is intended that the process occur during a short, but intensive period—essentially one month, with numerous meetings with the public and among a Community Advisory Team charged with guiding this part of the Small Area Plan process.

This process offers the community several benefits:

- Interested residents and affected stakeholders are directly involved in framing the key parts of the Small Area Plan, through engagement during public meetings or participation in a Community Advisory Team; as with other recent efforts by the Planning Commission, the public is invited to be present during any planning activities;
- Resident experts, in the form of a Design Team, are involved in shaping the Small Area Plan; in the past, residents have noted that Edina has a wealth of talent in its population, and that those with special expertise might welcome the chance to be more directly involved in planning their community;
- The expectations of the city and other agencies are incorporated into the process through a Technical Advisory Group; their role is balanced by the Community Advisory Team, who must recognize the primary expectations of the agencies represented in the Technical Advisory Team as the Small Area Plan is formulated;
- This process is short in duration, with results defined within about one month of the start of the planning process; while other tasks remain upon completion of this part of the process, these first steps lay the foundation for all future planning work, in a process that is focused and intensive;
- The cost to the community is limited, as the process is driven by community volunteers—but more important than the cost, the key directions of the planning process are determined by the work of people who are invested in the Edina community.

A final plan cannot be expected with this process or this time frame. While illustrations of potential change might result from the work of a volunteer Design Team, they serve more as demonstrations of the application of the guiding principles framed during engagement of the public and stakeholders. Quite simply, a complete plan cannot be expected in the course of one month—but it is reasonable to assume that key directions can be formed based on areas of agreement during this kind of process. Ultimately, these steps are the central feature of a sound, legitimate planning process, and allow

subsequent tasks to be conducted in the context of an accepted vision for areas identified by the city as having the potential for change.

The planning process that is demonstrated in this document should be seen as a framework for the initial steps of a planning effort, with the exact tasks, schedule, and involvement determined specific to the planning area. While it is somewhat generic, its application to any of the areas identified in the Comprehensive Plan would result in useful engagement and initial planning activities, and would augment and refine planning directions found in the Comprehensive Plan for areas of the city where change is seen as a possibility. As a result, the Planning Commission requests the City Council initiate a Small Area Plan for at least one “potential area of change” using this process as a demonstration of a community-based planning approach.