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Forward

Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan

In 1976, the Minnesota Legislature passed the Metropolitan Land Planning Act. This Act was passed in response to the need for the adoption of coordinated plans, programs, and controls by all local governmental units and school districts. This type of planning effort was deemed necessary by the legislature to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the residents of the metropolitan area and to ensure coordinated, orderly economic development.

The Metropolitan Land Planning Act was amended in 1995 and imposed a time restriction on all communities to update their Comprehensive Plans by December of 1998. Local communities are to review and if necessary, to revise their plans and submit them to the Metropolitan Council. The amendment also included a requirement for a review of local plans to ensure local fiscal devices and local controls are consistent with the local plan, and the regional system plans.

The purpose of the Robbinsdale Comprehensive Plan is to guide public and private land use decisions involving development, redevelopment, and preservation. The plan is intended to serve as a reference for residents, non-residents, elected officials, and City staff. It contains policies that address the character, quantity, location, and rate of growth in Robbinsdale. It indicates how these policies are to be achieved. It will ensure that the City complies with all requirements of the Minnesota State Statutes with respect to Planning and Zoning. The plan allows the City to state formally what it wants and expects to accomplish today and into the 21st Century.

The plan is intended to accomplish the following:

- Sets forth the social and economic values that will guide the physical development of Robbinsdale;
- Provides a better understanding of the relationships between land resources and development;
- Reveals existing conditions and forecasted trends in land use and public facilities;
- Serves as a stimulus for active public interest and participation in the physical, social, and economic issues of the City.
- Acts as a tool used to encourage private investment and guide public investment.

Required Plan Content

The Metropolitan Land Planning Act defines three major components required in this Comprehensive Plan:

- **Land Use Plan**: consists of existing and proposed Land Use, Environmental Resources, Housing, Surface Water Management, Historic Site Preservation, Solar Access Protection.
- **Public Facilities Plan**: discusses Parks and Open Space, Transportation, Wastewater Plan, Water Supply, and Aviation.
- **Implementation**: describes public programs, fiscal devices, and other official controls needed to implement the Comprehensive Plan. This section also provides a capital improvement program and a housing implementation program.

Metropolitan Council Review

The Land Planning Act directs the Metropolitan Council to review all comprehensive plans to determine compatibility with each other and conformity with the *Regional Blueprint*. In addition, the Metropolitan Council reviews and comments on the apparent consistency of local government comprehensive plans with the adopted chapters of the revised *Metropolitan Development Guide*. The Council may require a local governmental unit to modify any comprehensive plan or part thereof, which may have a substantial impact on or contain a substantial departure from metropolitan systems plans.

Metropolitan Council has a Growth Strategy for the Region

The *Regional Blueprint* sets forth growth strategy for the Metropolitan Area. The *Regional Blueprint* also contains the selection of an urban growth and development pattern for the seven-county Metropolitan Area as well as the identification of policies and actions needed to carry the plan out. The Plan identifies the need to accommodate for 330,000 additional households and 650,000 more people in the region by the year 2020. The Regional Blueprint Strategy for the region includes the following characteristics:

- Preservation of agricultural areas.
- Creation of an urban reserve of identified land for future development
- Promotion of higher overall housing density.
- Focus on job concentrations and transportation corridors.
- Reinvestment in the urban core of the region.
- Clean up of polluted industrial sites.

Mission of the *Regional Blueprint*

The mission of the *Regional Blueprint* is to create an action plan for the Metro region and develop strategies that meet the challenges and goals stated below:

- Encourage economic growth, increased productivity and job creation through a regional economic strategy.
- Foster reinvestment in distressed parts of the region, with a focus on supporting and improving local business.
- Expand life cycle housing opportunities and housing choices for lower-income people throughout the region.
- Strengthen the sense of community.
- Preserve the natural environment and incorporate environmental features into the development and redevelopment of the region.
- Provide financially sound public facilities that support business growth and overall regional development.
- Acknowledge the role of first ring suburb.

Overview

Public Participation

The success of the Comprehensive Plan depends on adequate public participation. Public participation increases awareness about the City, increases the knowledge of issues, and increases the effectiveness of the Plan by assuring that the Comprehensive Plan is in touch with the needs and desires of the people of Robbinsdale. The City of Robbinsdale held meetings with the public and the Task Force throughout the duration of the Comprehensive Plan process.

The public process started out with a Visioning Session. The Robbinsdale Visioning Session was held on June 4, 1998 at 6:30 P.M. in the Community Room of the Public Safety building. Approximately 70 residents, businesspersons, landowners, and interested people attended and participated in the Visioning Session. The purpose of the Visioning Session was to hear and share in people's hopes, dreams and concerns for the future of Robbinsdale. The Visioning meeting left behind positive and negative comments regarding the progress of the City. **(See Appendix A for Public Participation and Community Visioning.)**

The City Council at their June 16, 1998 meeting appointed a 15 member Comprehensive Plan Advisory Task Force composed of Robbinsdale residents, whose duty was to oversee the Comprehensive Plan process, provide insight and guidance, and ensure that City Staff understood the residents' needs. Most importantly, the Advisory Task Force identified realistic and supportable goals, objectives and policy.

Citizens Vision a Future Robbinsdale

After the previously mentioned process, a vision statement was developed. The statement below is what Robbinsdale is hoped to become in the year 2020 by its residents.

ROBBINSDALE 20/20 VISION STATEMENT

When people look at Robbinsdale in 2020 they will see a place that is different than it once was but is still very familiar. It is a safe place. It is a clean place. It is a place that knows what it is and what it is not. Robbinsdale is a place that reflects the past yet embraces the future.

The charm of its neighborhoods is still very evident. Residential neighborhoods are friendly places filled with pride that is evident in the well-kept housing, street corridors, and parks. People are comfortable to stop and meet others along its tree-lined streets. Housing architecture and design respects the past and integrates the new in a manner that is compatible and pleasing.

Another source of community pride is the downtown, which has continued to evolve without losing touch of its rich history. People describe the downtown as functioning like a much larger downtown but with a small town feel. Accessibility and convenience are key elements even with the improvements that have occurred. West Broadway continues to be the spine of downtown providing support to an integrated network of cross streets. Downtown Robbinsdale is a hub for activity with a mix of interdependent uses including housing, restaurants, offices, retail and service commercial and public facilities. Multi-modal transportation facilities bring people and a new respect to this pedestrian scale downtown.

Once a cause of concern, County Road 81 is now better integrated into the community. This once divisive roadway is more pedestrian friendly connecting neighborhoods and adjacent communities. Traffic has calmed to acceptable levels and safe street crossings are more accessible and identifiable to pedestrians and vehicles.

Terrace Mall and North Memorial Medical Center fit in with the surrounding neighborhood. Improvements in this area have allowed for better relationships and connections between land uses. Residents have embraced these changes while understanding the importance of these areas within the community.

Residents embrace the improved park and trail system. Connections to the system and to the surrounding area have been made. The quality of park facilities will have improved to keep pace with changing lifestyles. Water quality of the lakes will have increased making them a more enjoyable resource.

A second outcome of the Visioning Process was the creation of guiding principles, which have become the underlying policy that supports the 20/20 Vision Statement and this Robbinsdale Comprehensive Plan. The Guiding Principles are as follows:

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- **Promote the community as an attractive and safe place to live** – The community will continue to emphasize an attractive and safe environment that affords residents the opportunity to interact with their neighbors. Public and private gathering spaces located throughout the community will accommodate formal and informal gathering which help support a strong sense of community. People will feel comfortable enjoying the beautiful city streets at any time of the day or night.
- **Create a vibrant and prosperous downtown** – Downtown Robbinsdale is a favorite place of many people who live in the community. The community prides itself on those qualities that make it an identifiable place to shop and do business. Continued public and private efforts should be made to secure it as the focal point of the community. Streetscape improvements should be continued to further define downtown and its relationship with the community.
- **Protect natural resources to promote a healthy environment** – The residents of Robbinsdale are blessed with the unique resources offered by Crystal Lake, Twin Lake, and Ryan Lake. Their proximity within an urban setting subjects them to a number of external influences that potentially jeopardize their natural qualities. Robbinsdale must continue to recognize the importance of these features as they relate to community identity and ecological values, and find ways to ensure they remain significant features within the community without compromising their qualities.
- **Facilitate a strong business community** – To ensure a future downtown is successful, retaining and supporting existing businesses and attracting quality new businesses that compliment the existing businesses is key to its health. Stakeholders must join together with courage and conviction and be proactive to drive the design of redevelopment areas of the downtown. A cohesive business community must set standards for business owners and those frequenting the downtown.

- **Ensure a balanced mix of quality lifecycle housing** – Residents will have more opportunities to live in Robbinsdale as they pass through various life stages. Emphasis should be placed on continuing to provide and maintain quality affordable housing supply for young families and seniors that meet their needs and contributes positively to the community as a whole. Rehabilitation of viable homes and redevelopment of obsolete and deteriorated homes should continue to be a preferred approach to maintain neighborhood character.
- **Create an integrated park and trail system** – Parks and trails are an important part of Robbinsdale when emphasizing the natural features of the landscape and connecting waterways, neighborhoods, and people. The City should continue to improve the parks and trails to provide for the changing needs of the residents. Local and regional connections should continue to be made where possible to further expand recreational opportunities. Parks and trails have been a source of pride for residents and a continued City commitment will ensure they will remain as such well into the future.
- **Enhance the community’s image** – Robbinsdale has a unique character that can be found in the downtown and surrounding residential neighborhoods. New building and rehabilitation projects must continue to recognize the character that exists in the built environment, natural landscape, the community’s history, and its people to find a proper fit. Desirable features should be expanded and used to attract high quality development. This standard should also apply to all redevelopment areas in the community.
- **Support public education** – Public education facilities in the City provide a comprehensive range of programs to meet the needs of all Robbinsdale citizens, children, as well as adults. Residents embrace the continued presence of public schools in the City and continue to work cooperatively to achieve that end.

Issues through the year 2020

Issues through the year 2020 which are based on the Guiding Principles and the Visioning Process are identified as follows:

- Create a vibrant, safe, strong and prosperous Downtown
- Protect natural resources to promote a healthy environment
- Maintain a balanced mix of quality lifecycle housing
- Enhance and integrating a park and trail system
- Enhance the community's image through land use

The following are discussions of the above-identified issues:

Create a vibrant, safe, strong, and prosperous Downtown:

Through redevelopment, zoning, and other efforts, Downtown Robbinsdale will become even higher in density and a more compact mixed-use area. The concept of mixed use is not new to Robbinsdale and will continue to be used in the future. Providing flexibility for the Downtown will allow the City to promote housing opportunities, business development, retention, and expansion. The goal is to continue to create a livable, traditional, hometown main street that can serve as Robbinsdale's commercial core.

Guidelines for Downtown Robbinsdale were created to provide assistance to owners making changes to their buildings and to developers proposing new development projects. Any new development, exterior remodeling or renovation of existing buildings, or signs within the area requires architectural design review. The Downtown Robbinsdale Architectural Design Guidelines will be used to assist in the design review.

The City of Robbinsdale believes that in a traditional downtown, the highest concentration of pedestrian activity takes place on the main street. Vibrant main street retail requires a seamless or continuous frontage of shops, entrances and shop windows. These street front design features are critical to maintain pedestrian interest. The application of guidelines will allow West Broadway/Old Downtown ("Old Town") area of Robbinsdale to become a distinct place into the future.

The City continues to develop and improve multi-modal regional and sub-regional transportation links within the community between activity centers, employers, parks, and neighborhoods. The City is also improving its connections to large employers and educational opportunities in other parts of the region with transit and pedestrian/bicycle links.

Protect natural resources to promote a healthy environment:

Robbinsdale places primary emphasis on assuring the conscious management of the environment that will enhance and protect Robbinsdale's natural resources from development that may generate adverse effects.

To achieve this, the City of Robbinsdale intends to cooperate with the respective water management organizations. Hennepin County and the State and Federal government units address all aspects of environmental protection including the protection of lakes, wetlands, flood plains, and the maintenance of water related scenic and aesthetic qualities.

Vital aspects of environmental quality are to manage stormwater runoff, control erosion and sedimentation, treat stormwater, protect ground waters, minimize vegetation losses, encourage energy efficiency, and promote sound waste management practices.

Maintain a balanced mix of quality lifecycle housing:

Housing is the single most important component of the quality of life experienced by Robbinsdale residents. To a City, its housing is not only the largest user of land, but also the largest user of City services and the most significant base for local taxes. Housing, for the most part, is the determining factor by which a City is initially judged and thereby reflects the characteristics of the City's resident population.

Robbinsdale's existing housing stock is predominantly single family homes in which 97% are affordable ownership units. The City of Robbinsdale has been facilitating the preservation of this precious resource by implementing a variety of programs including scattered site redevelopment, housing rehabilitation programs, housing maintenance code, and nuisance code enforcement efforts. The City of Robbinsdale will continue efforts to preserve and maintain its current housing stock and neighborhoods with the same strategy it has used over the last 25 years using public investment to spur massive private investment. The City will continue to use education to encourage the private sector to participate in its efforts toward neighborhood preservation.

Robbinsdale's diverse housing stock provides residents with the option of staying in Robbinsdale after they have outgrown the traditional single family home. As a family matures, its members have different housing needs. The children of Robbinsdale residents should have affordable rental or ownership opportunities available to them when they are ready to leave home. Older residents should be able to find low maintenance and/or specially designed housing when the single family home becomes too much for them. Such "life cycle" housing considerations promote stability within the community. Robbinsdale hopes to expand its housing options in the future by providing larger single family homes, market rate townhomes, market rate rowhouses, and market rate apartments and condominiums. These needs have been identified in the housing section of this Comprehensive Plan.

Enhance and integrate the park and trail system:

Robbinsdale will see little, if any, additional parkland added to its inventory. A strategy for a Community Center must be considered. Consequently, walkway/bikeway trail connections will become very important. The City must take advantage of opportunities to make these connections, as it will become very difficult as time goes on. Trail connections must be required with the final development of Trunk Highway 100. Trail connections must also be considered on all County Roads as they are redeveloped and improved.

Existing parks and facilities must periodically be evaluated to improve their function. Capital outlay to make improvements must be addressed. Parks were identified as some of the most important and favorite places in the Visioning process.

Enhance the community's image through land use and design:

Future residential and commercial development density will increase in areas of the City such as Terrace Mall and Downtown. The change in density and design is part of a larger plan to create mixed-use districts, which will allow compact development in a certain area. Mixed use is a concept of "New Urbanism" that promotes commercial and residential mixed development designed in a pre-suburban form. This form is one that is intense, compact, and friendly to alternative modes of transportation such as walking, bicycling, and transit (light-rail or bus).

Underutilized lands that may be available to the City for development have been identified as sites for single and multiple family housing developments. In mixed-use areas such as the Downtown and Terrace Mall, higher-density residential units will be considered. Residential property that is being redeveloped through the City's Scattered Site development program is mainly low density single-family units and will continue to be developed as low density single-family. The City is trying to lower its overall density in single family areas by combining properties when possible to create lots so that home designs that meet today's needs can be constructed.