



Great Places

Iconic, inviting streets, spaces and buildings create a sense of place

What strategies are working?

WE'RE CARING FOR AND IMPROVING OUR COMMUNITY.

- Nicollet Mall will be reconstructed, and we're seeing more development throughout the city.
- The Downtown Improvement District (DID) is successful.
- The number of Special Service Districts is increasing. Special Service Districts are learning from the successes of the DID and doing more to bring the community and stakeholders into the process.

WE'RE IMPROVING AND SIMPLIFYING OUR PROCESSES.

- Proactive coordination between Public Works and Community Planning and Economic Development is helping us enhance and maintain the public realm and ensure that livability is a consideration during the capital improvement process.
- We are applying higher standards during the site plan process, and we're more willing to enforce requirements that are on the books.
- We are simplifying our permitting process. Simple changes — such as making sidewalk merchandising easier — are helping businesses, while also creating a more engaging streetscape.

WE'RE DOING A BETTER JOB OF ENGAGING THE PUBLIC.

- The City is doing a better job of planning because internal and external partners are working together to agree about projects. Long range capital planning is getting better because we're asking different questions to get agreement. Our public engagement process focuses on what people care about.
- We're putting more effort into helping people see the connections between the built environment and health.
- We are launching the Downtown Public Realm Framework that, when adopted, will enable the City to map and understand our infrastructure, guide an enhancement of the pedestrian experience and build upon Access Minneapolis.
- The Convention Center is focusing on its external space and engaging the community around the facility.
- We are redesigning the City's website to better communicate with residents.

WE'RE MORE CREATIVE AND OPEN TO NEW APPROACHES.

- We're allowing for more creativity in the public realm. Pop-up parks are just one example.
- The Creative CityMaking initiative is helping people connect with the City in new ways — it's not just about meetings anymore. Using Legos is an example of using a tactile approach to engage people in planning and envisioning what a street could look like.
- Requests for temporary activities are surging.

What strategies are not working?

OUR PLANNING PROCESS IS INCOMPLETE AND HAMPERED BY A LACK OF RESOURCES.

- We aren't doing enough to incorporate environmental review into our planning process.
- Our planning process doesn't focus enough on sustaining the projects we build. It's not enough to build a beautiful place if we don't have money to maintain it.
- Using the arts for community engagement isn't happening early enough in the process.
- We have devoted zero resources to preparing a new comprehensive plan.
- There aren't enough funding resources for urban design. There's so much to do that it's overwhelming.

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- We have over promised and under delivered on some streetscaping projects.
- Data about public assets are incomplete, difficult to obtain or scattered among different entities.
- Most neighborhood organizations aren't doing proactive planning. They're reacting to development plans and getting upset. Many of these organizations don't have urban planning knowledge or a citywide focus.
- We don't do enough with developers to encourage better public realm amenities.
- The public realm and our transit system aren't integrated. For example, a traveler with a suitcase coming from the airport on the train won't find a taxi stand at the train station.
- There is no visible connection to the skyways from the sidewalk. Wayfinding is lacking.

WE ARE NOT INCLUSIVE ENOUGH AND INEQUITIES PERSIST.

- We do a terrible job on how we work with youths. Kids have a different perspective of what a park should be, but we aren't pulling them into the process.
- Our community engagement process could be improved. For an open dialogue, residents – especially in communities of color and disadvantaged neighborhoods – need to see people they can relate to. We need to do a better job of explaining why doing iconic design makes sense for a neighborhood where people are struggling to get food on the table. Otherwise, these projects are seen as over the top.
- The Special Service District funding model presents a huge equity issue. Special Service Districts can't be the universal model for projects.
- The City gives money to neighborhood organizations for small area planning, but these organizations are often managed by boards that aren't inclusive. There's a lot of conflict and little resolution.
- We lack equity in public spaces. Many downtown transit shelters are not inviting.

OUR BUREAUCRACY, RULES AND REGULATIONS ARE BURDENSOME.

- The administrative burden and lack of flexibility associated with the park dedication fee reduces our ability to collaborate with other entities or combine funds to pay for larger projects.
- We aren't coordinating the programming of temporary and, as a result, the Convention Center, the Downtown Improvement District and other entities are duplicating work.
- Event planners are frustrated with the City's complex permit process. Much of the complexity and delay is due to the legal system and liability worries.
- The City's contracting process and associated insurance requirements are overwhelming to individuals in the arts community.

Working in partnership, what strategies could we pursue?

DEVOTE TIME AND MONEY TO IMPROVE OUR PLANNING PROCESS.

- Recognize that the upcoming comprehensive plan isn't just an update, and devote resources to ensure thorough planning that will make Minneapolis competitive. The plan must address livability, transit, climate, demographic changes, an aging infrastructure, people moving back to the city, evolving technology, public engagement and a changing downtown.
- Make the community engagement process less time consuming so that people don't get burned out.
- Pull young people into the planning process. Make them feel valued by giving them opportunities to participate in planning and see us build projects they can enjoy.
- Create citywide plans that emphasize the public realm rather than focusing so much energy and money on divisive small area planning.

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- Include maintenance in our planning process so that public realm enhancements are sustainable. It's not enough to build a beautiful place if we can't maintain it.
- Re-examine and improve our policies. For example, take a broad look at our street bench policy.
- Manage expectations during the community engagement process so we don't over promise and under deliver on our projects.
- Develop an alternative to the Special Service District model to ensure we can deliver quality services citywide.

PAY MORE ATTENTION TO DESIGN.

- Create a higher standard for transit corridors and provide clear guidance for consistent design.
- Incorporate consistently compelling streetscaping everywhere in the 2025 plan, not just on transit corridors. If we prioritize corridors, some areas lose out.
- Stop giving so much priority to cars. We need a road diet. We won't make strides if we keep turning over so much space to moving vehicles quickly through the city.
- Revamp the site planning process to require more public realm amenities from developers. Or move this function to design plan review and strengthen guidelines for materials, greening amenities, etc. The City should touch projects earlier in the process so we can help developers offer distinctive amenities that set their projects apart. This service will help both the community and the developer.
- Find ways to help developers in challenged areas provide amenities that may be beyond their reach.
- Change the requirements for using park dedication fees to allow for more flexibility and enable us to collaborate with other entities or pool resources for larger City-Park Board projects.

MAKE MINNEAPOLIS A MORE INTERESTING PLACE.

- Create a process to create ethnic or cultural districts or corridors. Then brand and market these areas. Look at how other cities have streamlined the dedication process.
- Develop a winter city plan so Minneapolis can use public spaces to embrace and celebrate snow and winter. Focus on lighting, art and programming.

MAKE IT EASIER TO HAVE EVENTS.

- The City should coordinate more programs and themed events.
- Simplify our permitting process for temporary activities, special events and block parties. Explore options for law changes that would give the City more protection from liability using European countries as a model; they aren't as bound by legal constraints so they allow more activities.

LOOK FOR NEW REVENUE SOURCES.

- Look at new strategies to let public resources pay for enhancements. For example, consider using a portion of parking revenue to pay for streetscaping.
- Identify new revenue streams to pay for special events. Look at revenue from park concessions. Use the City's enormous land holdings to generate funds. For example, maybe a wide median could be leased to a coffee kiosk that generates funds for City events.

EXPAND OUR USE OF TECHNOLOGY.

- Make data more accessible and useful by digitizing Public Works records and integrating City and Park Board public asset data.
- Go beyond a redesign of the City's website and take advantage of apps, mobile phones and crowd sourcing to create more opportunities for community engagement and proactive communication. For example, consider offering a mobile phone app that would allow the user to hold the phone up at a development site to see what the finished project will look like.

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This conversation had representatives from Minneapolis City Council, Mayor's Office, Public Works, City Coordinator's Office, Traffic and Parking Services, Community Planning and Economic Development, Planning Commission, Minneapolis Downtown Council/Downtown Improvement District, Minneapolis Park Board, Native American Community Development Institute, Minneapolis Bike Coalition and the Urban Design Lab.