

PLANNING FRAMEWORK

A Comprehensive Plan is intended to guide the growth and (re) development of the City, not only taking into consideration where the city develops, but how it develops. In order to ensure the vision of the community is represented within the guiding principals and within goals and objectives, a variety of techniques were employed to ensure public input in the planning process. The 2004 Comprehensive Plan is the product of several processes including:

- A community survey available to the public at City Hall and available to the public from the Municipal Development Group website (www.municipaldevelopmentgroup.com);
- One-on-one interviews to discuss the survey and other pertinent issues with approximately eighteen (18) community leaders including department heads, and various community business leaders.
- Historical data from the City of New Prague, Scott County, Le Sueur County, the MN Workforce Center, MN State Demographer's Office and the U.S. Census;
- Review of City Ordinances and specific studies;
- Public meetings, including community and business input sessions and an open house, all which allowed input from a cross section of the residential, business and developer communities;
- Review of the 2000 New Prague Comprehensive Plan;
- Inventory of pertinent information, statistical data, and existing structures;
- Input from adjacent townships and meetings with the Helena Town Board and Lanesburg Town Board.
- Input from owners of land and developers anticipating future platting of land adjacent to the city; and
- City staff participation.

Vision Statement

The City of New Prague has adopted a Vision Statement which addresses various aspects of the community as it grows. As a part of the 2004 Comprehensive Plan update, participants were asked to provide input on the current vision statement to ensure it is consistent with their vision for the future development of the community. The Vision Statement reads,

“New Prague will be a community that maintains a unique identity by recognizing its heritage while providing opportunities for residents to share and enjoy both rural and urban lifestyles.

The City will maintain a traditional “Mainstreet” which will be a vibrant destination for residents and visitors and the focal point of commerce and government.

Parks and open space will be important features of the community landscape-offering people of all ages and abilities places to recreate and play.

Economic development efforts will help create a sustainable economy by balancing tax base and providing a wide range of employment, goods and services.

Public utility and transportation systems will be planned to support the community's current and future residents and businesses in an efficient and economical manner.”

I. Community's Unique Strengths and Opportunities

Through a written survey and during community and business meetings facilitated by MDG, Inc. participants were asked to identify the best aspects of day-to-day living in New Prague, or the most positive attributes. Following are the most common responses received during the public input process:

- 12 Small town atmosphere.
- 5 Friendly, helpful people.
- 5 Excellent school system.
- 4 Progressive, positive growth, yet conservative.
- 4 Peaceful, beautiful, safe, positive, energizing place.
- 4 Sense of community/pride of the community
- 3 Close proximity to the Twin Cities
- 3 Affordable, quality and efficient.
- 3 Provides basic needs/community-based businesses.
- 1 Expectations are a little bit greater than most cities.

In addition at the Community Meeting, the nineteen participants were asked to list the best aspects of New Prague. Following are the items listed:

- Small town feel
- Convenience to city life/proximity to metro
- Safe community – safety with police/fire/ambulance
- Parks
- School system
- Medical facilities
- Upkeep of the town

A “Business Meeting” was conducted to obtain a business person’s perspective on the community. The following were listed as positive aspects of doing business in New Prague by the approximate 20 participants:

- Community based life-style
- New Prague is in a rapid growth area
- New Prague serves as a regional hub
- Quality school system in the community
- Low crime area
- Personal service provided to customers/clients
- Employment base is broad
- In-town loyalty provided to businesses
- High levels of traffic on Main Street
- Good promotion of the city (web site, Chamber, etc.)

As the City continues to grow and change, residents and businesses believe the community will be faced with a number of challenges or opportunities. Survey respondents and neighborhood meeting participants concurred a major challenge facing the community is growth management. The majority of respondents indicated they would like to see steady growth in the community over the next ten years. Following are additional challenges meeting and survey participants identified:

- 14 Growth management
- 3 Industrial diversification – growing companies.
- 3 Property taxes, keeping our City affordable to live in.
- 2 Infrastructure Improvement
- 1 Long Range Planning

- 1 Increased crime
- 1 Need to supply facilities and education for new residents.
- 1 Sanitary sewer upgrade.
- 1 Street reconstruction.
- 1 Maintain New Prague's character as it grows. Helps promote the town. Sustain old-time music and the artistic presence.
- 1 Traffic
- 1 Change management approach –become pro-active rather than reactive.
- 1 Road accessibility from the Twin Cities.
- 1 Need emergency routes other than through downtown.
- 1 Downtown parking

Participants at the Community Meeting also identified challenges facing the community. Following is a summary of the comments provided by these 19 individuals:

- Maintaining the school system
- Maintaining public safety (low crime)
- Planning and zoning issues
- Traffic through town/keeping the downtown area (2)
- Managing growth
- Fair tax base
- Risk of losing retailers to the cities

Business Meeting participants were asked to identify challenges to doing business in New Prague. Following is a summary of comments.

- Transportation – the City does not have direct access from major corridors (I-35/Hwy 169)
- Retail must compete with the malls and attempt to keep shopping local
- Heavy truck traffic on Main Street, not pedestrian friendly
- Parking and local access, especially difficult to make left turns
- Government regulations at all levels of government
- Need more business to support the tax base
- Wages need to be higher in New Prague to retain employees who could drive farther north for higher paying jobs
- Lack of financial incentives for Downtown (Re)Development

When asked what one major improvement would make living in New Prague better for them, survey respondents noted the following items:

- 4 More retail stores such as clothing, shoe & grocery stores
- 3 No comment.
- 3 More commercial development
- 1 Community Recreational Center
- 1 More industrial development
- 1 More employment
- 1 Improve telephone service with progressive business practices & attitudes.
- 1 We let Scott County run the City – building code – 10 years ago. This prevented an expansion so our company expanding in another community where we felt appreciated.
- 1 Reduce the overall cost of wages, taxes, health insurance & other costs of doing business in the global market place.
- 1 Outdoor performing arts center, band shell.
- 1 Continuous walking loop.
- 1 Controlled growth – do not exceed resources.
- 1 Deeper penetration of specialty health care services.
- 1 More affluent, upscale services.
- 1 Downtown parking.
- 1 Access to more high-tech jobs.
- 1 City needs to do a better job at attracting a diverse business culture.

Other comments received through the survey process, neighborhood meetings, from city staff members and consultants and from planning commission meetings are contained within the various chapters of this Plan.

II. Guiding Principals

Based on the above, the following Guiding Principals have been established.

2004 Guiding Principals

- An atmosphere that captures the spirit of a small town
- Housing that reflects a full range of choices
- Downtown ~A place for people to gather and preserve as the city's central core.
- A well balanced tax base
- A proactive position on future growth
- An identify that reflects the place
- Efficient infrastructure
- Recreation for residents and visitors
- A caring, learning environment
- An atmosphere that encourages business (re) development
- A safe and efficient transportation system