Introduction
Comprehensive Plan Overview & Organization

The City of St. Paul Park is updating its Comprehensive Plan in response to local needs and as required by Minnesota State Statute. The primary purpose of this Comprehensive Plan update is to guide land use planning through the year 2040. Beyond the desires and needs of the local community, as well as adjacent communities and units of local government, the Metropolitan Council’s Thrive 2040 document also establishes a regional context in which the City of St. Paul Park must define its role and direct its future. The Thrive 2040 plan mandates specific regional criteria that must be addressed in the City’s 2018 Comprehensive Plan Update.

The St. Paul Park Comprehensive Plan consists of the following information:

- **Introduction**: Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan, planning history of the City of St. Paul Park.
- **Land Use**: Goals, policies and plans to guide land use decisions in the City of St. Paul Park.
- **Housing**: Plans, policies and programs to meet current and future needs of residents.
- **Economic Development**: Policies and strategies to strengthen both the City and region’s ability to compete and prosper.
- **Natural Resources**: An inventory of current natural resources in the City and policies for their protection.
- **Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area Plan**: comprehensive analysis of the areas in the city around the Mississippi River and how development will be shaped around it.
- **Transportation**: Existing and planned transportation infrastructure designed to meet St. Paul Park’s traffic needs as well as maintain and enhance connections to the regional system.
- **Parks**: Planning for existing and proposed local and regional parks and trails.
- **Water Supply**: Summary of water supply policies and plans.
- **Wastewater**: Summary of wastewater (sewer) policies and plans.
- **Surface Water Management**: Summary of surface water management policies and plans.
- **Implementation**: Tools and strategies that the City of St. Paul Park will use to achieve the goals identified in the Comprehensive Plan.

Background & Vision

St. Paul Park has prepared this comprehensive plan to comply with the requirements of the Metropolitan Land Planning Act and other statutes.

St. Paul Park has also prepared this comprehensive plan to describe, in an organized fashion, the issues it faces, the strengths and opportunities it has, and the action steps it can pursue to realize the vision its residents and elected officials have articulated.

The City retains the character it developed in the latter years of the 1900’s, grounded in residential neighborhoods and industry. Its distinct small-town character distinguishes it from many other communities in Washington County and the Twin Cities. As a well-established small town, it faces opportunities and needs for future vitality.
Key strengths and opportunities of St. Paul Park were identified through the process of this comprehensive plan update:

- It has stable single-family residential neighborhoods.
- There are opportunities for a range of additional residential development.
- The vast majority of its housing is affordable.
- It lacks housing for senior citizens.
- A strong industrial base exists, care should be taken to lessen conflicts between uses.
- It lacks most essential commercial products and services that its residents need but there are development opportunities near the Highway 61 interchange.
- The downtown area is a key community asset and the City should invest in its health and vitality.
- The city is accessible by major highways.
- It has varied and rich park, trail and recreation resources.
- A portion of the city lies within the Critical Area for the Mississippi River.
- The City should capitalize on the Mississippi River and foster connections to the rest of the community.
- The City has a unique small town atmosphere that should be preserved.
- There are opportunities for development and redevelopment that may enhance the City’s character.

The comprehensive plan gives St. Paul Park the opportunity to deal with these issues and protect these strengths and to prepare for and manage change for the benefit of the city.

Through the planning process, the City identified a general vision statement and theme for the community:

“The City of St. Paul park is a unique and historic community on the Mississippi River with an authentic small town character.”

This vision statement identifies the key themes of the City. The City’s unique character as a small town in the metro area is to be preserved into the future. This Plan seeks primarily to maintain St. Paul Park’s “Sense of Place” by retaining the small town character of the community.

The Comprehensive Plan Process

Preparation of the comprehensive plan began with a discussion of overarching goals that city Council and Planning Commission members perceive as important for St. Paul Park and its future.

The Planning Commission held Comprehensive Plan Update Committee meetings that included Planning Commission members, other city Commission Chairs, members of the City Council, residents, and staff. These meeting were held over a ten-month period in preparation of the first draft document. The draft document was made available to the community and sent to adjacent jurisdictions and the school district for review. The Planning Commission held two open houses and a public hearing to receive input. Comments were considered and the final draft was prepared for the Planning Commission and City Council consideration to forward to the Metropolitan Council for review. The text of the comprehensive plan reflects many months of discussion and input, as well as the most recent information about issues typically included in a comprehensive plan.

Information in the comprehensive plan came from county, regional, state and federal agencies, as well as field surveys of the community. The text of the document reflects the requirements of the
The Metropolitan Land Planning Act and the Metropolitan Council’s regional growth strategy. The regional growth strategy and systems plans for sewers, transportation, parks, and airports, were described in the Metropolitan Council’s Thrive 2040 documents with the intention of assuring that future growth of communities and these regional systems are compatible with each other. Lastly, the document reflects plans for the Critical Area, and the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area Comprehensive Management Plan.

Each chapter of the comprehensive plan generally is divided as follows:
- Introduction.
- A description of existing conditions.
- A description of issues, research and analysis on the issues, and options for projects and programs.
- Goals, policies and implementation action steps.

The goals, policies and action steps are the legal mechanism of the comprehensive plan and the link to the ordinances which, under state law, must be consistent with the plan. The preceding sections of each chapter are intended to describe and define how the goals, policies and action steps were shaped.

The content of the comprehensive plan chapters and the goals, policies and action steps reflect two broad elements:
- The issues and options discussed by City Council and Planning Commission members during the preparation of the comprehensive plan.
- The requirements of legislation, the Metropolitan Council’s regional growth strategy and guidelines in other documents (i.e., the MNRRA plan).

Planning History

The City of St. Paul Park, Minnesota is a nearly fully developed community five miles downstream of St. Paul in Washington County. St. Paul Park was founded in 1887 and became a city by state statute in 1974. St. Paul Park’s location on the river lead to a complex pattern of large and small industrial areas, low-density residential, apartment and condominium complexes, small commercial development, and designated park and open space.

Previous planning efforts that are referenced in this document are, as follows:

- Washington County Transit Station Small Area Plan, 2018
- Updated Rivers Edge AUAR, 2014
- St. Paul Park Annexation Area Visioning Plan, 2005
- St. Park Park Growth Area Study, 2005
Regional Planning

As part of the mandated comprehensive planning process, St. Paul Park is required to coordinate its comprehensive plan in a manner consistent with the Thrive 2040 plan as adopted by the Metropolitan Council (Met Council). As shown in the following map, St. Paul Park has been classified as a “Emerging Suburban Edge” community within the Thrive 2040 growth strategies. The regional objectives of an Emerging Suburban Edge community include:

Emerging Suburban Edge communities are cities or townships that are in the early stages of transitioning into urbanized levels of development. These communities are located between suburban and rural communities, offering both connections to urban amenities and the proximity to open space that characterize a rural lifestyle. They typically have a mix of residential, rural, and agricultural areas. The growth patterns in these communities demonstrate the challenges of changing from rural to suburban. The Metropolitan Council’s focus on this type of community is on greenfield development. Greenfields present unique opportunities to integrate natural resource preservation into the site planning process.

History of St. Paul Park

It was St. Paul Park’s location -- on the Mississippi River and on rail lines connecting it to St. Paul -- that led to its founding in 1887. Prior to that time, it was a farming community that was part of Newport Township.

Old maps showed four distinct districts in the river town. The manufacturing district laid the entire length of the riverfront. Immediately east of the factory sites, there was a residential district set aside for factory workers and, further east, a suburban residential district. More housing was planned for the Pullman Addition. Houses cost as little as $500 and as much as $2,000.

A historic map drawn by the St. Paul Park Improvement Co. boasted that the city’s “streets are graded and sidewalks laid, and (the city) has over 200 beautiful residences, a large and well kept hotel and numerous stores. . .” More importantly, the river town had factories, making woolen goods, silk and flax, carriages and sleighs, mattresses, windows and doors, brooms and boilers, as well as agricultural equipment and lumber. These early factories were located in the northern part of the town, between Second Street and the river.

Employees commuted to St. Paul Park on the Burlington Motor; depots were located on Broadway and on Pullman Avenue. Many workers lived in the town, at one of the six hotels and boarding houses located south of Broadway.

St. Paul Park also had a college, St. Paul Methodist College and Dormitory; it closed in 1918, when students were drafted for service in World War I. The Opera House stood at Broadway and Third Street. Stores and other businesses, including a livery stable and a blacksmith’s shop, were located on Broadway.

However, the economy of the early boom years dissipated and many of the factories and hotels were destroyed by fire. Some speculated that factory owners burned their factories to collect on their insurance.
The railroad was not the only way to get to St. Paul Park. For many years, there was a boat landing at the end of Broadway, now the location of the oil refinery barge dock. When the Rock Island Bridge was constructed in 1895, ferry service across the river was discontinued. The bridge has since been removed.

The town continued to grow, however. When it was incorporated in 1909, it had a population of approximately 1,200. In the years before World War I, electric lines and cement sidewalks were added. In the mid-1950s, sewers and water mains, as well as asphalt streets, were constructed. In the early 1960s, the population grew above 3,000, when additional housing was constructed in the eastern part of the city. The population grew yet again in the late 1980s, when the Stevens Ridge Addition was built.

The characteristics of St. Paul Park that emerged during its early years, industry and housing, remain until the present day.

St. Paul Park circa 1957, source: UMN Minnesota Historical Aerial Photographs Online