

VISION St. Louis Park

discover dream design



This book represents the dreams of each of our Vision Action Teams. It is their idea of how St. Louis Park should look in 2016. These are big dreams. St. Louis Park has always been a city of big dreams and powerful visions. However, these two things alone are not enough. In the words of Joel Barker, “Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes the time. Vision with action can change the world.” This Book of Dreams is significant because it provides the foundation for the strategic goals and objectives developed by the action teams. These goals and objectives will be reviewed by the Partners, City Council, and staff. They will be presented to the community in a future document.

Thank you to the hundreds of residents, workers, businesses and organizations that were involved in making the Vision St. Louis Park a success. We are just beginning; we hope you will continue on this journey into the future with us.

discover



vision

*"Vision without action
is merely a dream.
Action without vision
just passes the time.
Vision with action
can change the world."*

— Joel Barker

Dear St. Louis Park Community:

Let us begin by saying that you can be proud to be a part of a community that is as responsive as St. Louis Park. A community that is not just willing to dream, but one that is willing to step out and bravely take the initiative to turn dreams into a way of life. The original vision for this initiative – “A Community of Choice for a Lifetime” is as true today as when it was drafted back in 1995. In 1995 we had two choices:

1. Wait for things to happen
2. Make things happen

And, we began the journey.

The last decade has presented many challenges that we as a community have successfully mastered. Some of the results have included: the Rec Center/Aquatic Center, Wolfe Park, the Amphitheatre, Excelsior and Grand, the parks and trails plan, housing opportunities, stronger neighborhoods and a move toward determining our own destiny.

As you can see, we did make things happen. In fact, we have been so successful the community has decided to continue the journey.

Though a community-wide process utilizing the theme of Discover-Dream-Design and a methodology of Appreciative Inquiry, and involving over 1200 people and representatives from government, schools, businesses, community organizations, religious institutions, and neighborhoods, we gathered information and opinions. Using the strategic planning process, those ideas were discussed, debated and priorities were established in a town meeting held earlier this year. From that process and a number of meetings, eight areas of focus have been identified. A steering Committee has been working hard for the past several months to look ahead at the next ten years to present to you Vision St. Louis Park – A Book of Dreams. Each one of the dreams also includes objectives and action plans. They will be presented to the later in a report to the community.

We encourage you to read the entire book.



Here's what you can look forward to over the next decade:

- **Arts and Culture** – St. Louis Park is a destination for those with an interest in the arts and culture, a place to learn about one another and to celebrate commonalities. In St. Louis Park we have developed our own culture – a culture that embraces a little piece of everyone that passes through and a bigger piece of those who stay.
- **Community Events** – Celebrating is a way of life. The fun thing is that almost all of our citizens are involved in one or several events at some time during the year. All of our homes have a calendar on the refrigerator marked with “not to miss” events.
- **Environment** – St. Louis Park is known by the Metropolitan Area and by North America for its beautiful architecture, lively pedestrian and bicycle activities, and incredible indoor and outdoor parkland that surrounds three environmentally integrated light rail stations.
- **Gathering Places** – We have many places throughout our town where people can feel a sense of belonging. There are many hubs everywhere that fulfill the needs of all segments of our community. Everywhere is a destination.
- **Housing** – Neighborhoods are urban-like villages of clustered housing that attract senior citizens, young families, singles and couples with mixed income households and diverse backgrounds.
- **Sidewalks and Trails** – There are pedestrian overpasses. Walkers and bicyclists get around town with ease. We have a citizen's advisory board to promote non-motorized transit. Everywhere is a destination.
- **Diversity** – We are a model in the state and in the nation as an international community that is inclusive to all.
- **Transportation** – We are now a light rail hub, Highway 100 is easy to navigate and our circulator bus system's schedule can be accessed over our Wi-Fi network. Everywhere is a destination.

Please take a few minutes to read through our Book of Dreams. This is a document that is unique, creative, and above the cut of normal local governance.

*Let us continue
the journey...
Come along and
join the ride.*



arts & culture

Arts and Culture Action Team

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The young woman wearing a hijab is holding her son's tiny hand in hers as she walks into the newly opened St. Louis Park arts center. She was only a junior in high school when she learned about the arts and culture task force for the first time. She couldn't believe when they invited her to be a youth representative – she'd never been asked to do anything so important before and at first it was kind of scary.

Ten years ago the city engaged the public in a process of taking a look at the arts and culture, and ways in which the city and its public and private partners could develop spaces throughout the community, into everyday life, that feel inclusive and welcoming, and can be used by participants and spectators. There needed to be a strong youth voice involved in the process, young people who had not previously been involved – untapped energy and leadership.

This public process successfully reached out to diverse community, developed relationships, and created that which reflects not only our needs and wants, but also a safe, welcoming environment. The arts center is where you go whether you are interested in Chinese Calligraphy, practicing strokes as a meditative process; or the environmental arts; or traditional Mexican cuisine. It is an inviting, multicultural, and accessible facility where a universal language draws us together. Everything here today reflects our global community, yet it remains flexible to adapt to new times so we can keep it fresh for this young woman's son, with whom she so proudly shares this experience, and future generations.

While the arts center is the bricks and mortar, the humanities and creative productions exhibited throughout the community ideally define who we are collectively. Arts and culture is now used to reflect the character of various neighborhoods. St. Louis Park has beautifully maintained gardens and city incentives entice property owners and developers to include in building plans the installation of public art. Local businesses are encouraged to allow artists to display or create art in storefronts and office space. Arts and culture activities are financially stable, with non-profits, government, business, and community collaborating to identify and attain sustainable funding sources. The city and schools (private and public) work together to promote and support the arts by sharing their facilities and resources. Strong relationships exist with organizations that serve diverse populations, and grant programs promote diversity in the arts.

St. Louis Park is a destination for those with an interest in the arts and culture, a place to learn about one another and to celebrate our commonalities. In St. Louis Park we have developed our own culture, a culture that embraces a little piece of everyone who passes through -- and a bigger piece of those who stay.

community events

The inviting lights of St. Louis Park are brightly shining and everyone throughout the city feels a welcome and comforting feeling of finally being at home.

Celebrating who we are and what we do is a way of life in St. Louis Park, Neighborhood associations, local employers and their employees, service organizations, youth groups _ a good cross-section of people who visit, work and live in St. Louis Park have found a comfortable and rewarding way to get involved in community activities and events.

Community-wide events provide people with inviting, diverse, artistic, educational, active, and leisure options. All the events offered throughout the year are designed with everyone in mind – all ages, interests, backgrounds, and cultures. Local residents are actively involved in planning, organizing, marketing, and implementing all community gatherings.

Volunteers work hand in hand, and once a year their own calendars are marked “don’t miss” as a reminder of a well-deserved annual event co-sponsored by the City and School district, recognizing and thanking all community volunteers.

New information-sharing tools, expanded and improved marketing, and wonderful sponsorships and partners have successfully connected every resident to common ground, creating a vibrant and healthy community.



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environment

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The dream of our action team is to connect our City with continuous greenways between a series of green developments, each being a small village promoting local businesses with residents living above these businesses. The green villages would incorporate sustainable living practices, landscaping and green energy production & conservation. The greenways would meander through existing single family dwelling areas and improve the quality of life for all City neighborhoods.

Creating a Neighborhood Village Space

We are traveling to the dedication of the grand opening of the Villas on Minnetonka Boulevard. This development is located off of Minnetonka Boulevard just west of Texas Ave South. This mixed use development is the city's first all green Eco-district development. This development celebrates neighborhood living, through environmentally conscious lifestyles, and the use of limited motorized travel, with nearly 70% of us traveling to the dedication via the people mover, the light rail, bicycle, or walking.

As we travel along the Minnehaha Creek Greenway, one of the many people mover links we have in the city, we are impressed with the 600' wide corridor complete with walking paths, bicycle paths, and auto parkway, with constructed wetlands to filter all run-off from the neighborhoods. We are enjoying the ride, knowing that this is just the first phase of a 50 year master plan for the Minnehaha Creek Greenway corridor.

Just outside this corridor is one of the many Green Parks; industrial parks which contain a consortium of interdependent environmentally friendly manufacturing businesses. All of the businesses produce no air pollution, conforming to the City's new air quality standards, while stressing waste reduction and recycling.

Upon arrival at this new village space, we are dropped at an outdoor, sustainably designed gathering area. This area contains limited motorized vehicle parking, native trees, shrubs and wildflowers designed in optimum growing conditions, within patterns to minimize energy usage for the building (s). Raingardens, infiltration basins and pools gather rain and potential runoff for use by the native plants, so no runoff flows into the city stormwater system.



The buildings of this development have won many architectural and energy efficiency awards, with the designs incorporating the beauty of nature, integrated into the environment and accessible by all. The first floor of this complex contains local retailers, coffee shops and bistros. A farmer's market is held weekly, with people of all walks of life enjoying the experience. Included in this area is an indoor, self-sustained biosphere reflecting our Minnesota and St. Louis Park heritage and geography.

The second through sixth floors are residential units, which include condominiums, apartments, assisted living spaces and penthouses. Each unit is LEED certified, like all new construction currently is in St. Louis Park, and includes all green construction, recycled building materials and rated appliances. At the top of the building is a green roof, solar panels for energy and wind resources. The entire complex is powered as a portion of the Biomass Cogeneration Power District. This District converts biomass to clean, low emission, cheap energy, and will eventually provide energy for the entire city.

Within the complex is an underground parking area, with an extensive in-house recycling and compost center. This center collects all recycling and compostable materials, which cut back dramatically the non-recyclable materials collected from all the tenants. Each floor has at least one collectable area that when utilized correctly, will collect and separate items immediately for collection and composting.

St. Louis Park is known by the rest of Metropolitan Area, and the rest of North America, for it's beautiful architecture, lively pedestrian & bicycle activities, and incredible indoor and outdoor parkland that surround's three environmentally integrated, light rail static





gathering places

Gathering Places Action Team

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When we moved to St. Louis Park ten years ago, we wanted a convenient Twin Cities location and good schools. Those are still excellent reasons to live here, but we've stayed because of something else: We are part of a great community. The gathering places that have been developed over the last decade have drawn people out of their houses and places of business and encouraged them to meet, talk, play, relax, think, and connect.

Let me explain.

Yesterday, we decided to stop by the global market in the old Knollwood Mall for dinner. The prices are reasonable and we always run into friends and neighbors there. I saw on the City's Web site that there was a band playing Russian folk music. The place was busy, the food was superb, and the music was terrific!

Before dinner we picked up the kids at our local community center. They like to walk to the center when they get off the bus after school. The sidewalk in front of our house now connects with a trail that takes them right to the center, so we don't have to worry about crossing busy streets. They like to play games and hang out with their friends, and even do a little homework. Every Tuesday night, my husband and I play cards at the community center for a couple hours. It's a good way to meet neighbors in our part of the city.

Of course, our neighborhood's SuperPark provides similar opportunities for those who live nearby. We frequently walk to the park for lawn games in the summer and bonfires in the winter, and we've gotten to know a lot of the folks who live around us. It's amazing how many casual conversations start up among people using the many benches and chairs in the park or standing in line at the coffee or ice cream carts. The SuperParks have become the hubs of St. Louis Park's neighborhoods, just as the community centers are the hubs of the different regions of the city and the Civic Center is the hub for the entire city.

The new Civic Center has really transformed the Wolfe Park area into a town square. The restaurants and shops in Excelsior & Grand have made it easy for people to browse or get a bite to eat. Enough small eateries have cropped up around the park that you can get almost anything you want, quickly and affordably. One diner has become a popular hangout for teenagers.

At the north end of the park, the Civic Center offers something for everyone. Kids now play basketball in addition to hockey, and families use the expanded Aquatic Park. The new Arts Center displays the work of local artists as well as delightful sculptures that adults can sit on and children can climb all over. An indoor theater complements the amphitheater in Wolfe Park, providing a home for winter concerts and plays and a convenient spot for local bands and teen dances. Our favorite addition has to be the enclosed Park Green, especially the bushes and flowers and the waterfall; it's such a peaceful place to sit and read in the winter or relax after a workout in the fitness center. And we envy people who can take their small children to the new playpark to slide, bounce, climb, crawl, and run, any time of year.

We enjoy all of the gathering places in St. Louis Park. They help us feel connected, like we're part of a great community, and that's a really important quality of life issue for us. We're proud to call Park our home!



*Housing
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A decade ago a group of people gathered to talk about their vision for housing in St. Louis Park, a community on the cusp of reinventing itself. Present was a young man who grew up in the Brookside neighborhood. He signed up for the Vision Process because this was his hometown, and it was where he dreamed of raising his family and spending his life. He never imagined that the goals and action steps that a group of citizens and city staff worked so hard on would truly come to life!

Eric and his wife purchased a starter home close to his childhood neighborhood, near “Nana’s” house so his children would grow up as he imagined, in a loving, intergenerational setting. Around the time Eric’s family started outgrowing their 900 square foot home, the city announced its creative zoning codes and Catalyst Homes program – an exciting incentive-driven program offering homeowners the opportunity to get creative with their home expansion projects. With help from the city’s advisory architectural review board and the use of environmentally friendly design and materials, tiny houses are being transformed into homes for growing families, and garages have expanded to include greater storage space and cozy studio apartments for extended families and guests.

Creative zoning has enhanced housing options and provides move up housing opportunities for families to grow. Newly developed neighborhoods provide rowhousing along arterials for people from all walks of life. Affordable housing options have multiplied and are present in every neighborhood, and a wide-range of innovative programs assist potential and existing homeowners purchase homes, maintain existing homes, and stay in those homes when times are difficult.

Several neighborhoods offer urban-like villages of clustered housing that attract senior citizens, young families, and upwardly mobile singles and couples with mixed income households and diverse backgrounds. Front porches face streets lined with trees and landscaped lawns. There is an inviting sense of community where people gather and get to know their neighbors while chil-

dren safely play tag down the block in one of many neighborhood parks, small but efficient and welcoming areas of green space, and laughter wafts through open windows well into the early evening hours.

Within walking distance are gathering places that encourage that long-ago sense of connectivity, and in most parts of the city streetcars transport people to major community hubs. Every place in St. Louis Park is a destination, and easy to get to and home again with LRT. Sidewalks connect safely from one destination to another, with carefully designed trails for walking and biking. With the city's circular system, people often times leave their cars at home and transportation issues have been mostly solved because there is an alternative way to get where one needs to go.

St. Louis Park was recently designated as a national model first ring community, one that celebrates diversity, open-minded and inclusive city governance, public process, and exciting and thoughtful innovations – and Eric is still very proud to call St. Louis Park his hometown





sidewalks and trails

Sidewalks and Trails Action Team

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St. Louis Park has a connected network of safe sidewalks and trails with informational stopping points of interest to ensure a fit city[, and removing obstacles to bicycle and pedestrian commuting]. – Steering Committee Vision Statement [brackets added by Action Team]

It's a beautiful, crisp Minnesota morning and walking safely across Wooddale and Highway 7 on the pedestrian overpass and listening to the rush hour traffic below, one can't help but think how progressive St. Louis Park is compared to 10 years ago.

There is a citizens' advisory board dedicated to working with a city staff person whose sole responsibility is to develop and promote non-motorized transit in St. Louis Park. Residents can now conveniently and safely cross by bike, or on foot, almost every obstacle, including highways, railroads, and even many busy local streets. Commuters can easily transition from LRT or other mass transit to walking or bicycling, because of the many amenities offered at the public stations, even lockers, showers and bike storage!

The city has come up with a number of creative solutions to difficult crossings; raised crosswalks, tunnels, bridges, pedestrian activated controlled crossings, some even mid-block! Crossings have dedicated lanes for multiple user types. Existing crossings have been rebuilt or repaved as part of the city's resolution that all transportation projects include both pedestrian and bicycle accommodations (on road bike lanes) in major north/south, east/west routes, and along significant connections to points of interest. Along the major Three River trails, these crossings even give users priority over the motorists. What a great way to designate the importance of our urban trail corridors.

Intersections and trails are well lit and the police have necessary resources to proactively enforce laws designed specifically to protect the rights of pedestrians and bicyclists. The police and trail maintenance departments worked with the citizens' advisory board to identify concerns, resulting in a policy that requires appropriate follow-up on all incidents involving trail-users.



With input from the citizens' advisory board, the city continues to work on its acquisition of land for several new trails, in addition to the Minnehaha Creek and Meadowbrook Lake trails. The Minnehaha Creek trail is nearing completion; and, the Meadowbrook Lake trail is under construction, thanks to the participation of Park Nicollet Health Services who partnered with the city to expand the trail and canoe area into its private property.

New nature trails complement our city's environmental plan with plantings that help maintain water quality. A new type of permeable paving connects us to many of St. Louis Park's unexplored natural areas. Private landowners receive city incentives to include non-motorized transit and natural trail preservations that complement those of public development plans. Further, these nature and transportation trails are well connected to and are developed and managed cooperatively with neighboring municipalities.

"I used to think of getting around via how to get around the obstacles (Highways 100, 394, 7). Now I can just get on my bike and go." –Marc Berg



*Diversity
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St. Louis Park is a city where everyone feels and experiences a sense of belonging. Our city is free of institutional oppression, according to race, ethnicity, class, age, gender, sexual orientation, and disability. People of all backgrounds and faiths are free to live, work, and play according to their beliefs and values.

St. Louis Park is a vibrant community, proud of its diversity as a model in the state and in the nation. We are an international community where people of diverse cultures live harmoniously, sharing our cultural traditions and beliefs and enriching our lives through understanding and mutual respect.

Celebrating our diverse traditions is a hallmark of our community. Citizens are enriched through the participation and educational experiences that incorporate a sense of history and our social transformation as a community.



Traveling from Eden Prairie to my job in St. Louis Park, I hop on the SW LRT line with my bike and ride to the Beltline Station where I exit and take a short bike ride along a tree lined trail to the bank where I work. My associate arrives at work on foot from her condo across the street from the bank with fresh bagels to share that she bought at the shop on the first floor of her building.

At mid-morning, we check the availability of an SLP Shared Car online for a trip to visit a client in Crystal. We pick up the car in the public parking ramp next to the bank and travel, congestion free, on the recently renovated Hwy 100 to our meeting, returning in time for lunch el fresco at the Wolfe Park Amphitheatre. We enjoy a free concert sponsored by our bank with kids and parents and retired folks and shoppers, and fellow workers from the businesses in the area.

Another coworker uses one of the new North-South connectors to get from the Elmwood area to the Blackstone neighborhood to do errands over her lunch break.

After work, I log onto the SLP Wi-Fi network to check the SLP circulator bus schedule. I use the bike rack on the bus and take a ride to the Blackstone neighborhood hub to meet friends for refreshments at a local restaurant. The bus uses local streets avoiding the rush hour congestion on the freeways and easily traverses the barrier created by the TC&WRR tracks by using the new trail/transit bridge.

Finally, I bike back to the LRT station after picking-up a loaf of bread at the grocery store in the neighborhood hub and zip home on the LRT while reading the newspaper.

Transportation Action Team

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