

SUMMARY

Managing growth and addressing the challenges it presents to a community in terms of land use, transportation, housing, and economic development is often difficult, particularly for those that have enjoyed a primarily rural status. The City of East Bethel, located in northern Anoka County, is becoming an increasingly attractive location for a variety of new development types, including commercial and residential, as growth trends continue to move further beyond the metropolitan area and immediate suburbs.

Communities like East Bethel have the opportunity to be proactive in shaping their future by developing well-planned, thoughtful growth strategies designed to ensure that the important features and characteristics which make the community unique are protected and preserved. This is an overriding theme throughout the Comprehensive Plan. These strategies help to position the City to guide versus react to new development opportunities that will enhance the economic vitality and overall quality of life residents have come to expect and enjoy.



A fundamental challenge for the future is how the City can best manage change and plan for future growth in a way that promotes the overall well-being of the community and protects the existing natural resources.

The Comprehensive Plan is designed to respond to that challenge by setting a well-thought out and widely accepted course of

action for East Bethel's future. Based on an analysis of the community today, the desires of community leaders and residents for the future, and the anticipated growth over the next 25 years, the Comprehensive Plan articulates a vision and direction in which the community wants to move. It suggests ways in which investments can be made and focuses on specific policies and actions that will enable East Bethel to achieve its goals and create a community that best reflects the interests and characteristics that are most important to those who live there.

The Comprehensive Plan is organized around major themes and community values that together make up an "identity" for the community and help shape the direction and manner in which growth, development, and change should occur. Each major theme is presented as a separate chapter providing an overview of existing conditions followed by future plans and growth strategies. These major themes include the following:

- **HOUSING**
Provide and maintain an adequate supply of safe, affordable, and diverse housing with a range of values to accommodate the present and future needs of all residents.
- **ENVIRONMENTAL/NATURAL RESOURCES**
Utilize natural resources and environmental quality as part of the foundation for planning for future growth and development of the City.
- **LAND USE**
Strategically plan growth areas while maintaining the “non-urbanized” character of the City.
- **PARK, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACES**
Create, maintain, and protect an interconnected system of athletic areas, parks, trails, and green spaces throughout the City and enhance the quality and contribution of lakes and other designated natural areas to the long-term aesthetic character of the City.
- **COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES**
Pursue and implement feasible, affordable, and effective means to provide city facilities and services that benefit members of the community as a first priority; continue to provide the highest quality public services and safety to residents of the community; identify and provide state-of-the art infrastructure and services that support the changing needs and challenges of today’s markets.
- **TRANSPORTATION**
Integrate land use and transportation planning to create a land use pattern and a transportation system that enhances the livability of the community.
- **COMMUNITY IDENTITY**
Implement controls that promote a positive community image and support quality of life and economic vitality.
- **IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM**
Develop strategies to address fiscal issues and appropriate funding in the most responsible manner and in the best interest of the community.

These themes serve as a foundation for the Comprehensive Plan, and each is presented in a separate chapter. Each chapter includes an overview of the subject area in the present, future plans, and activities underway, and a set of goals, objectives, and specific actions that describe how and what the City intends to accomplish in years to come.

When compared to the 2000 Comprehensive Plan, this update includes some significant new ideas and policies, and proposes that new processes be developed as a means for the City to review progress, prioritize planning activities and projects, and ensure fiscally sound decision making in the short- and long-term.

For example, the Comprehensive Plan proposes that the City of East Bethel implement a process to manage growth of the community in tandem with provision of municipal services. The City is considering the development of an annual report to be submitted to the City Council that reviews the community's growth patterns and an assessment of the capacities of the City's public infrastructure which would assist in implementing this process. The report will include updated projections and help to anticipate future demands on public facilities and services. Coupled with the annual review of the City's budget and long-term Capital Improvements Plan, East Bethel can accommodate a balanced and sustainable level of growth for years to come. This annual report will provide a basis for future Comprehensive Plan updates.

The implementation of municipal services is a large component of the updated Comprehensive Plan, and is in response to the anticipated commercial growth and rising environmental concerns within portions of the community. Another major element identified in the revised Comprehensive Plan is the City's desire to move forward with a "City Center." A City Center Plan has been developed in an effort to create a location within the community that will be strongly identified as the commercial and civic heart of East Bethel. The plan has been created as a potential model for other development along the Trunk Highway 65 (TH65) corridor within the community.

Finally, pursuing innovative funding strategies that support new services and development opportunities in East Bethel is a critical element to ultimately implementing the concepts, plans, and ideas identified in the revised Comprehensive Plan. Funding for the construction of a municipal wastewater treatment plant and water and sewer infrastructure, transportation improvements surrounding Coon Lake in tandem with the implementation of utilities and a trail system connecting major parks and development areas, are other examples where the City intends to focus on all available local, regional, state, and federal resources to successfully implement responsible, manageable, and sustainable growth strategies.

Successful implementation of the Comprehensive Plan will require an aggressive approach to planning as well as creating a sustained momentum that will generate the necessary support, assistance, and consensus among neighboring communities, partner agencies, business owners, residents, and other stakeholders alike. Implementing the Comprehensive Plan requires a full community effort – an effort that has an already solid foundation to build upon today.