



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

METROPOLITAN LAND PLANNING ACT

The Metropolitan Land Planning Act made comprehensive planning mandatory for all of the local units of government within the 7-county metropolitan region. Plans are reviewed to determine that they are “not in conflict” with the Regional System Plans issued for each metropolitan community. The Metropolitan Council reviews the Comprehensive Plans every ten years based on the Metropolitan Land Planning Act, state and federal guidelines, and the comprehensive development guide (Thrive MSP 2040). The Metropolitan Council serves as the regional planning agency charged with accommodating growth through its planning for Metropolitan Systems in the following plans:

- *Water Resources Policy Plan (Sewer, Water Supply, Surface Water Management)*
- *Transportation Policy Plan (Surface and Air Transportation)*
- *Regional Parks Policy Plan*
- *Housing Policy Plan*

WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

A Comprehensive Plan implements a community’s long-range vision for the future. This includes multiple aspects of how the City evolves and supports its residents in areas such as transportation, development, water systems, housing, parks and trails, and the overall vitality of the City. The plan also serves as a guide for elected officials to use when making decisions. A large effort goes into the planning process to create the document making it a trusted and key resource for the community to draw upon when facing issues such as redevelopment or locating a new park.

The document also functions as a legal foundation for rules and regulations adopted by the community, such as the zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations. The Comprehensive Plan has the power to influence the zoning code and improve land uses to fit the community’s changing needs. In order to create the document the community is fully engaged from the public to City staff and commissions.


To plan effectively the City needs a clear and comprehensive understanding of current conditions and an understanding of how current conditions came to be (influences) and understand rational future projections (trends). Community planning within the Comprehensive Plan is a systematic, ongoing, forward-looking process of analysis of opportunities and constraints, for the purpose of formulating a plan to accomplish the community’s goals and objectives.



EMERGING TOPICS

The region has encouraged cities to integrate strategies into their comprehensive plans to be more resilient in the face of a changing climate. As communities adjust to increasingly extreme weather events, stress on public facilities, and higher costs of services, there is growing need to not only plan for these events, but to also reduce the impacts through conscious climate adaptation and resilience planning.

Other areas of encouragement include topics around sustainability, equity, and public health. These areas range greatly and can cover all aspects from solar energy, food access, noise and air quality, stormwater, and walkability. The term resilient can also be linked to a community’s ability to adapt to changing markets and economies.

Columbia Heights’ Comprehensive Plan has started to introduce these topics by identifying best practices or strategies for future consideration. This narrative is sprinkled throughout the comprehensive plan. Look for various call-out boxes in the plan that use the “” icon. These call-out boxes provide ideas to help inform the City’s ongoing conversations around resiliency, sustainability, and public health.

REGIONAL SETTING

The City of Columbia Heights is located within the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area in Anoka County, immediately north of the City of Minneapolis. Other adjacent communities include the Cities of Fridley, New Brighton, and Saint Anthony Village. The City of Columbia Heights completely surrounds the City of Hilltop.

Over the next twenty years, Columbia Heights will see modest growth. This growth is summarized in Table 1-1, which is consistent with Metropolitan Council’s forecasts. These forecasts serve as a foundation for the plan elements discussed throughout this Comprehensive Plan.

TABLE 1-1. SOCIOECONOMIC FORECASTS

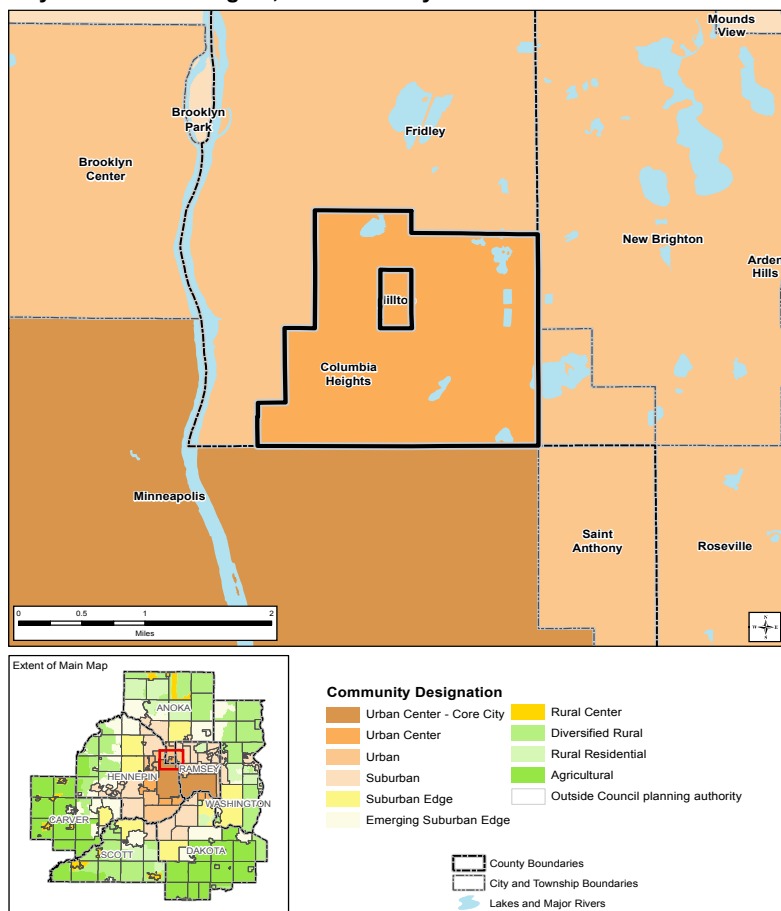
Year	Population	Households	Employment
2016 (est.)	20,158	8,155	4,181
2020	20,500	8,400	4,280
2030	21,800	8,900	4,440
2040	23,100	9,300	4,600

Source: Metropolitan Council

Community Designation

The Metropolitan Council assigns a community designation to each city and township on the basis of existing development patterns, common challenges, and shared opportunities - all of which may evolve as future development patterns change. The designation represents the dominant character of each community. Columbia Heights falls within the Urban Center designation. Cities in the Urban Center share similar development characteristics such as street grids planned before World War II. Because of more limited automobile use during their initial development, communities in the Urban Center are more conducive to transit use and walking for daily needs. Urban Center communities are experiencing redevelopment attracted to their vitality and amenities. Besides Minneapolis and St. Paul, other communities that share the Urban Center designation and have similarities to Columbia Heights include Hopkins, Richfield, Robbinsdale, and St. Louis Park.

FIGURE 1-1. COMMUNITY DESIGNATION



Source: Metropolitan Council



40th Avenue Looking East in 1921

CITY HISTORY

The first homestead in Columbia Heights was established in 1863 in a mainly agricultural area. For many years, the area was farmed. It continued to grow to include a short lived brick factory and stone quarry. The Village of Columbia Heights was formed in 1898. The City witnessed a short-lived steel industry and developed primarily as a streetcar commuter community in the early 1900's. The City was chartered in 1921.

High ground in the community was developed for housing, while low-lying areas were left for parks. Land uses evolved over the many years. In the beginning stages (mid 1800's - 1940's) land was considered mostly new frontier and semi-rural. The community continued to grow and turned into an urban fringe post WWII community in the early 1950's. At this time the population doubled as the community became a 1st ring suburb. In the late 50's/1960's the community was a growing suburban community. In the 1970-1980's Columbia Heights turned into a fully developed community. The population then started to decline. In the recent past, housing redevelopment has occurred and the community continues to see a culturally diverse population.

As the City developed, major influences affected the pattern of development. Initially these factors included the landscape, topography, water bodies, soils, vegetation, and climate. As the City progressed, the close proximity to Minneapolis has had a major impact on the rapid growth the community witnessed in the 1950's and 1960's. Today the accessibility and major transportation infrastructure such as Central Ave, University Ave, and I-694 provide a quick commute to downtown or a link to a continually growing Anoka County. Market forces and a large concentration of affordable housing have also affected the population and diversity of the community.



SOCIAL EQUITY

Each chapter presents a different plan element (e.g., land use, housing, transportation and parks), in addition to a series of supporting goals and policies for that element. The goals and policies were reviewed by the City and the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee to help advance equitable opportunities for all.

In many communities, including Columbia Heights, there are barriers that prevent all residents from having the same opportunities to thrive. For instance, race, ethnicity, and age continue to be predictors of health, education, income, housing, and recreation. It is important to note that a focus on equity does not mean providing equal access to the same amount of resources. Equity is focused on making sure everyone has the resources they need to lead a healthy, productive life.

The Columbia Heights' Comprehensive Plan is committed in advancing equitable opportunities for all.