



BROOKLYN CENTER

Comprehensive Plan Update 2040

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CHAPTER 1:
Community & Planning Context





COMMUNITY & PLANNING CONTEXT
City of Brooklyn Center Comprehensive Plan 2040

INTRODUCTION

The City of Brooklyn Center is a first-ring suburb of the Twin Cities metropolitan area and is one of the best positioned, and most accessible communities in the region. Most of the community's neighborhoods were developed in the Post-World War II era between the 1950s and 1970s, with the community fully built-out by the 1980s. Once defined by the Brookdale Mall, the City was an active hub of regional retail activity for decades that provided a shopping destination for not only local residents but the northwest region of the Twin Cities. The presence of the mall played a significant role in shaping the physical development of the community as supporting retailers, service providers and offices soon began to co-locate near the mall creating a vibrant and active city center. Soon the 'center city' was bustling with activity, jobs, and eventually new residents in nearby multi-family developments.

For decades the presence of an indoor mall was an important differentiator of cities in the region – there were not many of them, so if your city was lucky enough to have a mall it was as close to a guarantee of success, not only the mall, but for all of the supporting small shops, offices and other destinations in the City. No one would have suspected that retail would change so drastically over the course of such a short period of time, but that is exactly what happened over the past decade and Brooklyn Center experienced the worst decline of any other City with a regional mall in the region. Brooklyn Center's core began to experience pressure and decline more than 15-years ago as adjacent communities like Brooklyn Park and Maple Grove began to develop. In conjunction with new residential development came new service and retail platforms that slowly replaced the demand for a regional, enclosed mall. The new, larger homes coupled with more modern retail environments in nearby communities would ultimately prove to be fatal to the success of Brookdale and the 'center city' that was once so vibrant.

For the better part of the past decade the 'center city' has slowly evolved into what is now a large national big box store and other local retail destinations that have replaced the once regional retail hub. Though some new users have started to emerge, there remains significant areas of under-developed and underutilized properties which present opportunities to Brooklyn Center that are unparalleled at this time within the region.

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As this area began to decline, the City slowly began to shift its focus from ‘saving Brookdale’ to looking for new opportunities to redefine the City through redevelopment. For the past decade the City has methodically and strategically acquired properties within the center city to assemble a larger, contiguous area of land that would be available for redevelopment. The City’s leaders and policy-makers have been proactive to support a new vision for the center city, one that once again will define Brooklyn Center as a resilient and vibrant community for generations to come.

This 2040 Comprehensive Plan Update (Plan) is not just about redevelopment in the center city, but it is about redefining and reimagining the community as whole as change takes hold over this planning period. While redevelopment of the center city has the potential to physically impact and define the community, equally important is its relationship and connectivity to existing neighborhoods. This Plan works to establish strategies that integrate and connect new and established parts of the community together – the concept that existing areas can benefit by improvements and investments of new areas thereby contributing to the long-term sustainability and resiliency of the community as a whole. Like many other first-ring suburbs, the City’s early years were focused on single-family neighborhoods where residential uses dominated the landscape. That dominance remains today and as such housing continues to be at the forefront of the City’s planning efforts within this Plan. Whether existing or new, housing stability, affordability and diversity will continue to be central to any planning and redevelopment efforts in the community.

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However, before we can begin to develop the plan for the community’s future it is important to describe the City’s context within the region and understand the framework from which subsequent Chapters of this Plan are derived. The following sections of this Chapter provide a snapshot of the community’s context that summarizes a more detailed set of data which can be found in the Background Report Appendix C. This Chapter is intended to provide context regarding the following:

- Summary of current demographic and socio-economic trends
- Current market snapshot (local and regional)
- Planning context:
 - Regional context and requirements - Metropolitan Council
 - Local context and objectives guiding Plan development



Community Demographics and Socio-Economic Conditions

The City of Brooklyn Center is a moderate size community comprising approximately 5,360-acres, and is bordered by the Cities of Minneapolis, Brooklyn Park, and Crystal. The full extent of the City's eastern border is along the Mississippi River, with intermittent public access and views to the river corridor. Brooklyn Center is considered a first-ring suburb to the City of Minneapolis, and is geographically positioned just 10-minutes from downtown Minneapolis. The community is highly accessible by car to the larger region from I-94, Highway 252, and Highway 100, and within the City by an extensive network of county and local roadways. The City's population in 2016 was estimated at 31,231 and approximately 11,300 households. Other key 2016 demographic statistics compiled from the American Community Survey and US Census that were used to inform Plan development include:

- Age
- Household tenure
- Race
- Median income

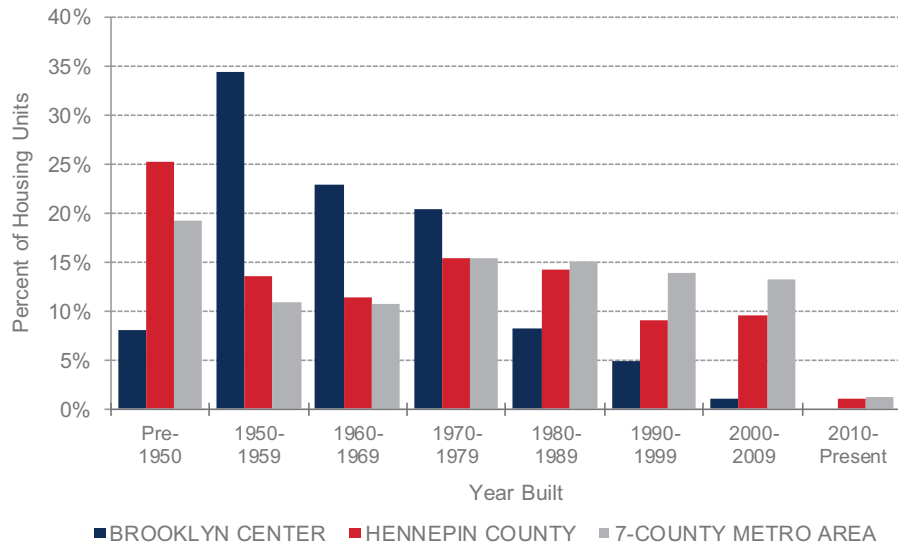
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Market Snapshot

A critical component to planning for the City's future is to understand the current market dynamics in the community and compare those to the larger region. This is an important aspect of the planning process because it provides context from which the City's vision for its future can be derived. The purpose of this Plan is to be aspirational, but also to consider and be rooted within market reality so that the community can evolve and grow over this planning period.

As shown in the following Figure 1-1 and Table 1-1 the City's existing housing stock is diverse and includes single-family, condominium, townhome and multi-family products. While the housing stock is diverse, most of the product was developed more than 40-years ago, and much of the single-family housing was developed more than 50-years ago.

Figure 1-1. Year Housing Structure Built 2015



Source: US Census: 2011-2015 American Community Survey

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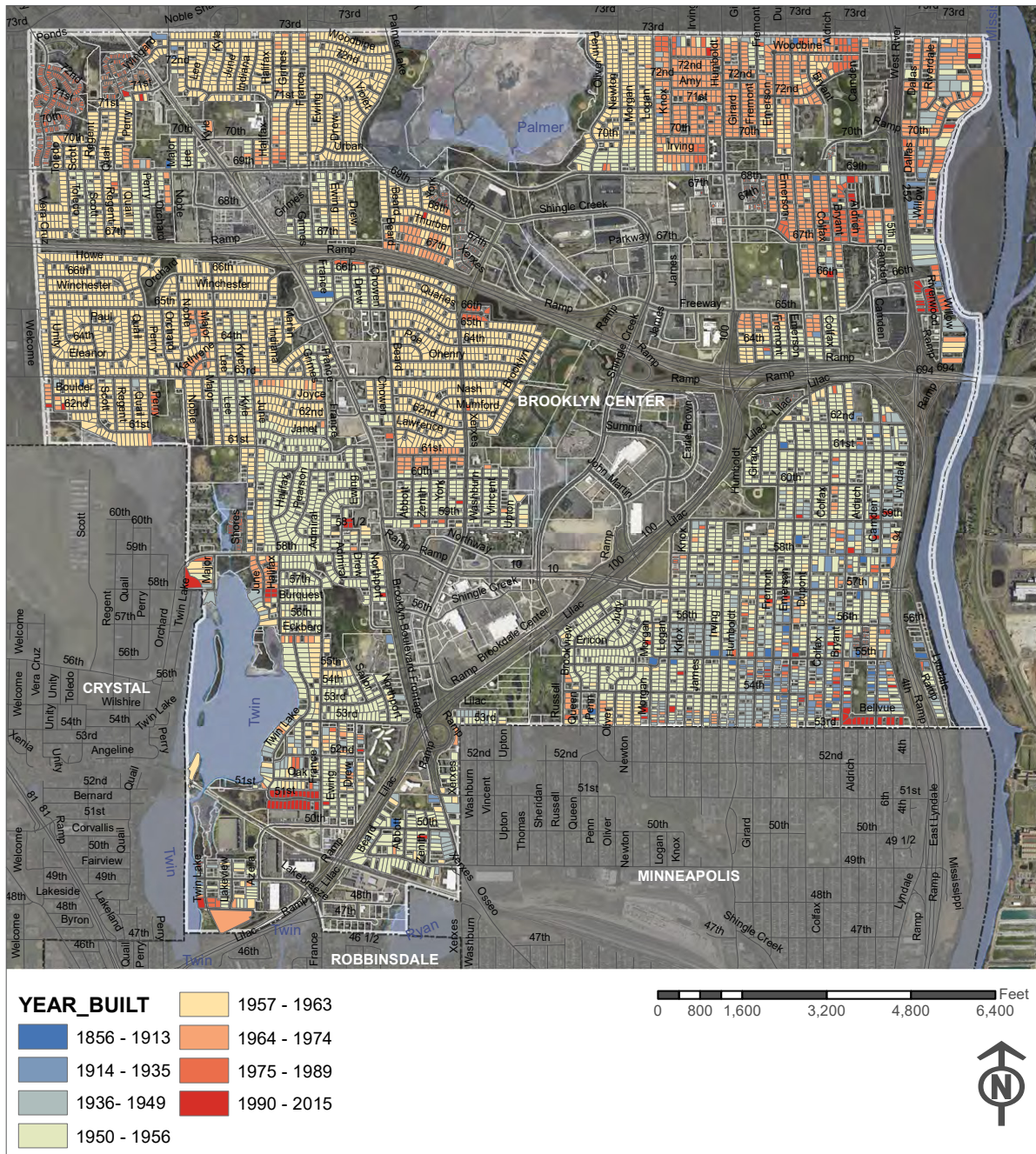
Table 1-1. Housing Structure Type 2000-2015

Housing Type	2000	2010	2015	Change 2000-2015		Distribution		
				No.	Pct.	2000	2010	2015
BROOKLYN CENTER								
Single Family Detached	7,180	6,696	6,872	-308	-4.3%	62.9%	63.5%	62.5%
Single Family Attached	929	965	884	-45	-4.8%	8.1%	9.1%	8.0%
2-Units	97	83	94	-3	-3.1%	0.8%	0.8%	0.9%
3-4 Units	142	105	105	-37	-26.1%	1.2%	1.0%	1.0%
5 or more Units	3,048	2,678	3,033	-15	-0.5%	26.7%	25.4%	27.6%
Other Unit Types	28	26	8	-20	-71.4%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%
Total	11,424	10,553	10,996	-428	-3.7%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
HENNEPIN COUNTY								
Single Family Detached	260,349	265,319	271,200	10,851	4.2%	57.1%	56.0%	55.3%
Single Family Attached	32,477	41,925	42,701	10,224	31.5%	7.1%	8.8%	8.7%
2-Units	20,555	17,579	16,841	-3,714	-18.1%	4.5%	3.7%	3.4%
3-4 Units	11,816	10,795	11,554	-262	-2.2%	2.6%	2.3%	2.4%
5 or more Units	129,411	136,607	146,411	17,000	13.1%	28.4%	28.8%	29.9%
Other Unit Types	1,521	1,631	1,489	-32	-2.1%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%
Total	456,129	473,856	490,196	34,067	7.5%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
7-COUNTY METRO AREA								
Single Family Detached	624,734	669,718	682,595	57,861	9.3%	61.2%	60.3%	59.3%
Single Family Attached	84,436	123,763	130,366	45,930	54.4%	8.3%	11.1%	11.3%
2-Units	35,054	29,435	29,780	-5,274	-15.0%	3.4%	2.7%	2.6%
3-4 Units	24,416	22,573	23,891	-525	-2.2%	2.4%	2.0%	2.1%
5 or more Units	236,350	250,059	268,930	32,580	13.8%	23.1%	22.5%	23.4%
Other Unit Types	16,464	15,169	14,592	-1,872	-11.4%	1.6%	1.4%	1.3%
Total	1,021,454	1,110,717	1,150,154	128,700	12.6%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: US Census, 2011-2015 American Community Survey



Map 1-1. Homestead Properties - Year Built



Housing Market Trends

The Brooklyn Center housing market was hit particularly hard in the housing bust of the late 2000s that resulted in a high number of foreclosures and declining median home values. The great recession was officially over by the late 2000s, but after-effects lasted far longer and impacted housing prices into the mid 2010s. By 2015 many communities within the region had recovered to pre-bust prices, but Brooklyn Center lagged slightly behind as indicated within the Background Report prepared in the fall of 2017. The market is slowly recovering, and finally in 2018 updated data indicates that the City has now surpassed pre-bust pricing for single-family homes.

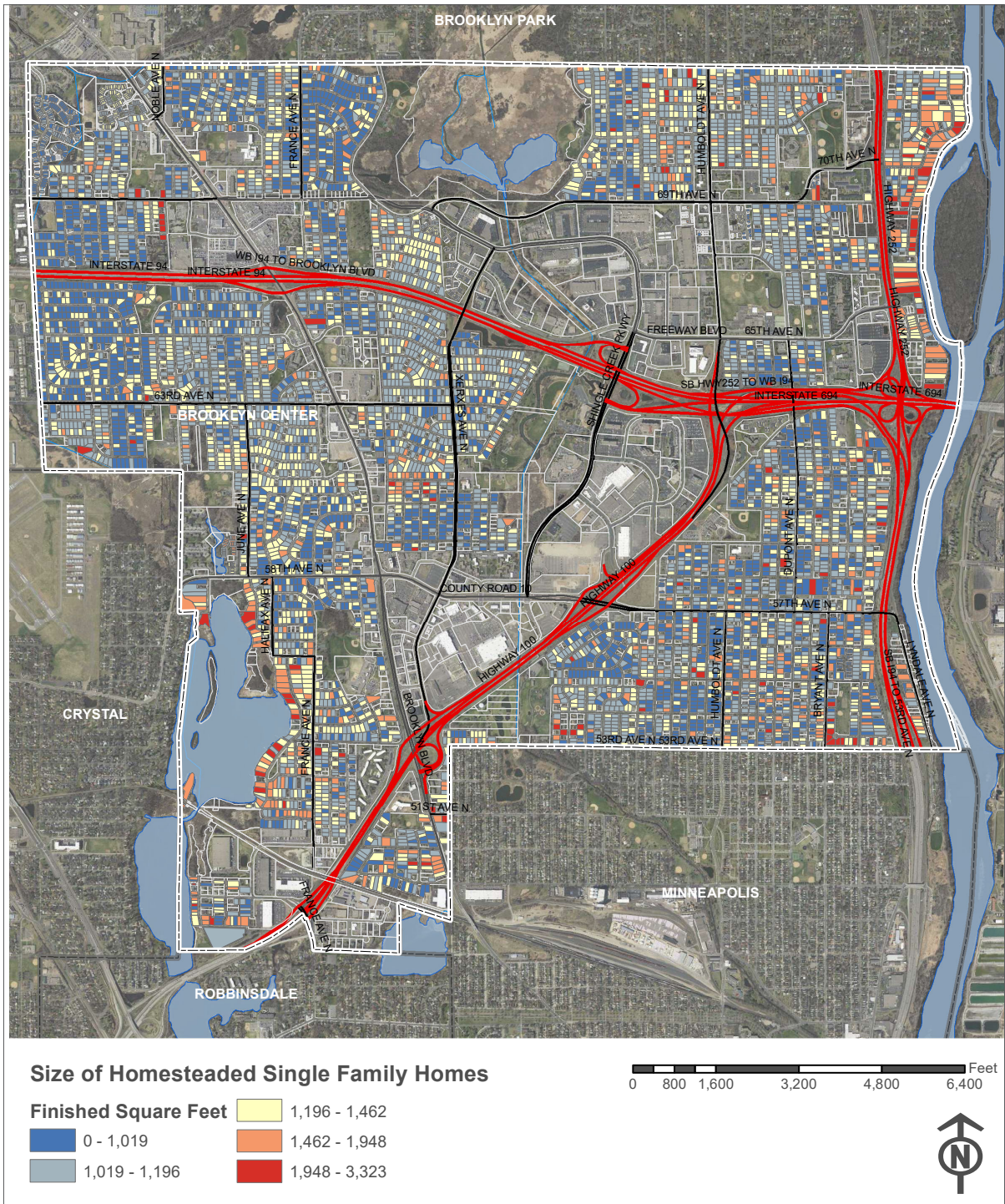
Despite the modest recovery, the City's median home prices continue to be well below that of the metropolitan area. According to the Minneapolis Association of Realtors, the median sales price of homes in Brooklyn Center is \$186,125 as compared to \$247,900 in the metro area. As discussed in subsequent chapters, much of this price difference can be associated with the age of structures in the community, relatively small square-footage of structures (Map 1-2) and lack of neighborhood and structural diversity.

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Nearly a third of the City's housing stock is renter occupied, and most is contained within larger multi-family structures and complexes. The majority of the multi-family housing is located adjacent to major roadway corridors and near the former regional mall site. The City's rental product is considered to be affordable, but it is naturally occurring due to age of buildings, units, and level of finish of existing units. This is an important distinction because no new multi-family housing or large-scale apartment product has been developed in the community for more than 40-years which may signal potential issues with deferred maintenance, unwanted conversions or wanted conversions to higher market-rate product, deteriorating quality and lack of options that meet changing demographic demands of the City's residents. The recent apartment boom in adjacent communities such as Saint Paul and Minneapolis bring new product to the market place that is renting at substantially higher rates, thus further contributing to the disparity between the region and the City. Part of this Plan is to evaluate and understand how pricing in new multi-family development will compare to the larger region, and to address affordability as a component of new development to ensure economic diversity within newer areas of the community is planned and strategies are developed to ensure a range of affordability into perpetuity.



Map 1-2. Square Footage of Single-Family Homes



Employment and Commercial Trends

This Plan acknowledges and identifies the significant change in retail, office and employment that has occurred in the City since the 2030 Plan was prepared and adopted. Peak employment in the City occurred around 2000 when there approximately 16,700 jobs which then began to decline steeply as Brookdale closed leaving a little more than 11,000 jobs in the community by 2010. Since 2010, the City has slowly begun to add jobs back into the community and that trend is expected to continue through this planning period as redevelopment efforts take shape and come to fruition.

Throughout this planning process residents, commissioners and policy-makers have emphasized that the City should capitalize on the entrepreneurial attitudes of new residents. Repeatedly this process revealed a passion, interest and commitment of residents and stakeholders to renew, reimagine and reinvigorate the city center with new business uses that could benefit from new nearby residences. From local restaurants, cafes, start-up business/office spaces to larger specialty shops and services residents are eager to create a more dynamic and mixed-use environment in the community.

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This objective is consistent with regional trends provided new residences are also planned for so that vibrant, mixed-use areas are developed. At both a regional and national level, market trends suggest that creating experienced-based places with diverse services, work opportunities and retailers in an accessible location is most desirable for redevelopment. As described in subsequent chapters of this Plan, Brooklyn Center is uniquely positioned to capitalize on this trend because underdeveloped and undeveloped land is available with key regional adjacencies such as the new C-Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) which will open in 2019. The presence of key infrastructure, coupled with proximity to the major employment centers, provides an exceptional opportunity for the City to not only add new households to the region but to add new jobs and create a new identity for employment in the City.



Planning Context

The planning context of this Plan is also an important consideration to understand how and why the subsequent chapters of this planning document were created. While the City's location in the regional and current market dynamics provide context to where and why certain characteristics are emphasized within this Plan, the Planning Context establishes the requirements of this planning effort that must be addressed and also describes who was involved at the local level in the creation of this Plan. The following sections will define the planning context of the following:

1. Regional context and requirements - Metropolitan Council
2. Local context and objectives guiding Plan development

Regional context and requirements – Metropolitan Council

Cities often wonder when, and why, they should prepare an update to their Comprehensive Plan. While cities are able to amend or update their Plans at any time, the Metropolitan Land Planning Act requires all cities and counties in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area (seven-county) to adopt a Comprehensive Plan, and to update and amend those plans on a minimum of a decennial basis for consistency with the regional systems. The Plan update may address a broad spectrum of issues and opportunities important to the City, but at a minimum the Plan must be updated for conformance with the Metropolitan Council's regional system plans that include transportation (highways and transit), water resources (wastewater services), airports, parks and open space.

To clearly define how a City must establish conformance with the Metropolitan Council's requirements the Metropolitan Council issues a System Statement to each community in advance of the decennial Plan update period. Within the System Statement, the Metropolitan Council outlines and details the key areas that Brooklyn Center must update for compliance with the regional system. The following information provides a summary of the System Statement requirements that were considered and planned for within subsequent sections of this Plan update.

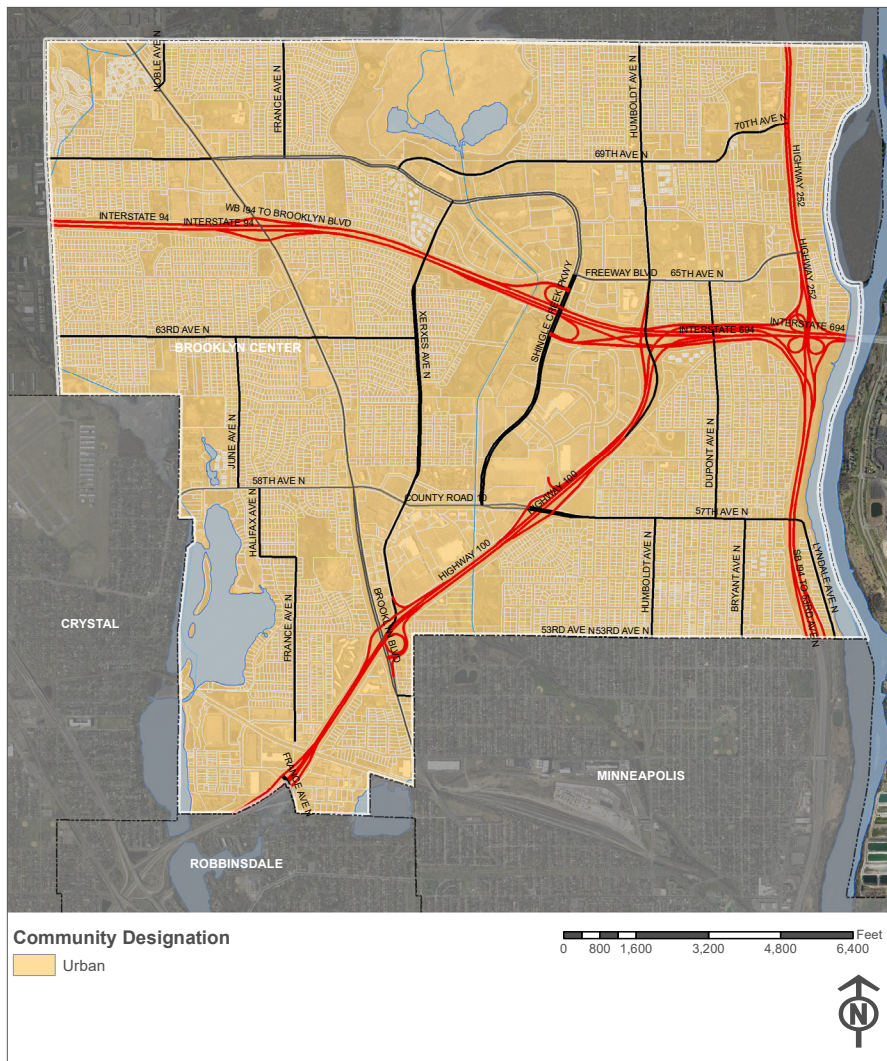
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Community Designations

The Metropolitan council groups cities and communities with similar characteristics into Community Designations for the application of regional policies. The entire community of Brooklyn Center is designated as an Urban community. This designation acknowledges and recognizes that the City is fully developed but may include redevelopment opportunities, and has been primarily developed with a fairly compact development pattern. It is also a recognition of the City's proximity to both Saint Paul and Minneapolis and is a nod to the dominant time period in which the community was developed. One of the primary objectives in establishing Community Designations, is to ensure that communities plan for development and corresponding infrastructure in a sustainable and fiscally responsible way that will support the objectives of the designation. (See Map 1-3. Community Designation).

Map 1-3. Community Designation

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More detail regarding the community's roles and responsibilities as an Urban designated community can be found in Chapter 3: Land Use and Redevelopment. Some of the key highlights of the City's role are as follows:

- The City should plan for any redevelopment, or new development, to achieve average densities of no less than 10 dwellings per acre.
- Targeted redevelopment should be considered at key transportation corridors, or where regional transit investments are known.
- Focus should be placed on local infrastructure needs of current and future development in the community – including sidewalks, roadways, sewer, water and surface water management.

Forecasted Growth

To plan for the City's future the Metropolitan Council provided forecasted population and household projections that the City is required to consider as it prepared this Plan update. As stated within Chapter 3, the City believes it may grow beyond what is identified within the 2015 System Statement given current redevelopment expectations but is generally within the range of what the Metropolitan Council has forecasted. As the City contemplates redevelopment it is important that the City considers the following:

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- Allow development that is consistent with this Comprehensive Plan, which includes revised household and population projections based on redevelopment plans.
- Promote redevelopment of key areas that provide the greatest access to existing transportation and transit lines.
- Consider redevelopment that incorporates sustainable and resilient infrastructure design standards to ensure adequate infrastructure is available to new areas.

If the areas identified for change and growth are redeveloped there is the potential to add more than 2,200 new households to this area of the region. While this represents a small portion of the overall expected growth, it would be first time the City has added that number of households and population since it first experienced its development boom in the 1950s and 1960s. The expected change is why this Plan emphasizes thoughtful and integrated planning of the redevelopment areas to ensure that new developments are interconnected with existing neighborhoods and that as areas are reimagined that they are seamlessly integrated into the City's existing fabric.

Local Planning Context & Objectives Guiding Plan Development

In part, the City has prepared this Comprehensive Plan Update to fulfill the requirements of the Metropolitan Council; however, the City also viewed this process as an opportunity to further refine its goals and aspirations for the future of Brooklyn Center.

2040 Plan Update Objectives

The following objectives were established to help guide the Plan update process:

1. Update the Comprehensive Plan to meet the Metropolitan Council's requirements for compliance with the four regional systems, while tailoring the Plan to meet the City's long-term goals and aspirations.
2. Simplify this Plan to more clearly define the City's aspirations so that residents, stakeholders, developers and policy-makers understand the objectives of the community through this planning period.
3. Create dimension within the Land Use Plan through incorporation of new land use designations that are clear, concise, and more responsive.
4. Establish an appropriate mix of uses that balance market realities with the aspirations and vision of the community.
5. Create a Plan that is easy to use and understand. The Plan should be helpful to staff, residents, stakeholders and policy-makers.
6. Engage the public, commissions, staff and policy-makers throughout the process to help guide Plan development.

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Engagement Process

An important component of this Plan update process is to solicit public input to ensure that the Plan accurately reflects the goals and objectives of the residents and stakeholders. This public engagement process was specifically tailored to this Plan development and included:

- Meeting the public where they were – this included booths at both Holly Sunday and Earle Brown Days to solicit feedback from a broad cross-section of residents and stakeholders of the community.
- Regular Planning Commission Meetings – the Planning Commission held regular monthly work sessions (open to the public) to guide the plan development process.
- Joint work sessions of the Planning Commission and City Council – The joint work sessions allowed for both bodies to work together to develop the contents of this Plan.
- On-line public comment surveys to ‘check the plan’ – this included online surveys to ‘check’ the contents of the draft Plan to ensure it responds to the aspirations of the community through this planning period.

The intent of the public engagement process was to create opportunities for meaningful feedback and to gain consensus on the direction for the future of Brooklyn Center over this planning period.

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Plan Development & Changes from the 2030 Plan

This 2040 Plan is a re-write of the previously adopted Plan, however, it is still informed by previous planning studies which served as a foundation to this effort. Some of the key highlights of this Plan are as follows:

- This Plan embraces transit, and introduces new land use designation that emphasizes compact and walkable redevelopment that capitalizes on the new Bus Rapid Transit C-Line which is planned to open in 2019.
- The ‘center city’ was expanded to not only address redevelopment of the former Brookdale site, but to encompass a ‘central spine’ that bisects the community along highway 100. The expanded area of consideration leads to increased opportunities for larger scale redevelopment with a greater mix of uses.
- Current market trends and projections were used to help inform the types of land use changes identified within this Plan. Integration of housing within the City’s redevelopment efforts is identified as a critical component to success. This Plan carefully balances market dynamics with the goals and aspirations of the community.

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This Plan identifies implementation strategies and steps to reinforce resilient, and sustainable redevelopment plans that focus on a more compact, connected system of transit, trails, and open spaces in City’s identified redevelopment areas.

The Chapters that follow are the culmination of efforts of the Planning Commission, stakeholder and resident feedback, staff and the City Council. This Plan is intended to serve as a guide for the community’s land use, redevelopment, housing and infrastructure planning through this planning period. The City acknowledges that the community relies on this Plan to understand where and how things may change and evolve in Brooklyn Center over the next decade, and where things are projected to stay the same. This Plan is intended to clearly describe to potential developers where the City is interested in redevelopment, and how those areas can be reimagined to redefine the image of Brooklyn Center for future generations. While this Plan makes every effort to lay out a path forward for the next 20 years, it is also intended to be a living document that should be reviewed, updated, and changed when necessary.

