

July 15, 2014



Small Area Planning Guide:

Amendment 1 to the 2001 Hermantown Comprehensive Plan

## **What is a Small Area Plan?**

A small area plan is a detailed plan for a neighborhood or portions of the city with similar issues. Small area plans provide recommendations for economic development, land use, housing, transportation, parks and recreation, environmental preservation, community heritage and other topics. Small area plans actively bring together local government and citizen stakeholders to create and implement a shared vision for the planning area.

### **Relationship to the Comprehensive Plan.**

Small area plans will serve as a complement to the 2001 Hermantown Comprehensive Plan by providing a finer level of detail to address each area's unique needs and opportunities to develop strategies and tools to achieve the overall vision for the city. When completed, a small area plan may be adopted as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan. A positive working relationship between City government and citizen stakeholders is critical to the success of a small area plan. The stakeholders must commit to not address their issues at the expense of other areas of the city and plan creatively for changes in their neighborhood through public and private investments. Similarly the City must agree to actively support the plan's vision by working to implement the recommendations through policies and investments in the area, subject to the relative need and competitiveness of the City's overall operational and budget needs.

### **Purpose and Benefits of Small Area Plans.**

Small area plans are an opportunity for City government to work with residents, property owners, and other stakeholders to identify and assess the unique challenges and opportunities of each planning area in more detail than is possible in a city-wide planning process. Benefits of small area plans include:






- Develop plans and strategies specific to each area that will help achieve the vision and goals of the City government and planning area stakeholders, most particularly local citizens, business owners, and employees working in the area.
- Detailed study of the relationship between subjects such as landscape, infrastructure availability and land use to develop a clearer picture of the planning area's potential.
- Enable neighborhoods to be proactive and visionary in making land use and development plans for their surroundings.
- Identify priority capital improvements and possible resources for implementation.

- Help guide the policy and investment decisions of local, regional, and state government.
- Provide greater predictability in land use and development.
- Allow for opportunities for preservation or creation of valued neighborhood amenities.

City of

## **HERMANTOWN**

### **Small Area Plans**

-  Adolph in 2014
-  Gateway Commercial Corridor in 2015
-  Housing Opportunity Areas in 2016
-  Airport Commerce in 2017
-  Small Economic Activity Centers in 2018



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## **Planning Areas.**

The Comprehensive Plan makes clear that Hermantown is a unique and varied community. Its landscape, neighborhoods, commercial developments and history vary across the city. This creates unique challenges and opportunities that are best addressed at a finer grain than can be accomplished in a city wide planning process. Potential planning areas are identified below along with a suggested order of completion and some of the major issues in each area.

### **Adolph in 2014.**

Adolph got its start as an early community center in 1892 when a depot was built to serve the Duluth, Missabi and Northern Railroad. Shortly after, a general store was built in the area. A post office, sawmills and a school and houses followed, creating a distinct early community center. Transportation continues to play a key role in shaping the Adolph area via access to Highway 2 and Midway Road. Issues facing the area include balancing residential, commercial and light industrial uses, protecting and providing access to the Midway River watershed, and considering the desire of stakeholders to preserve the area's historical identity as distinct community center.

### **Gateway Commercial Corridor in 2015.**

The Highway 53 corridor is a large highway-oriented commercial district that is closely associated with Hermantown's identity amongst many in the region. The Comprehensive Plan envisions "a distinctive stretch of urban highway" characterized by commercial nodes with safe and efficient transportation access and attractive landscaping, buildings, and signage. A goal of this plan could be to enable new infill development and redevelopment to increase commerce and employment in the City. This plan is expected to include close collaboration with the Minnesota Department of Transportation, given the key imperative of highway access and changing traffic patterns within and through the City.

### **Housing Opportunity Areas in 2016.**

By 2010 Hermantown had exceeded the 2020 population projections used to develop the Comprehensive Plan. The Housing Opportunity Areas small area plan should assess opportunities to encourage the development of attractive neighborhoods with quality housing for the next generation of Hermantown residents. The study will assess how to best create new housing opportunities for families and evaluate the importance of creating new senior housing to allow residents to remain in Hermantown as they age. Areas with easy access to city water

and sewer, parks and trails, and transportation should be reviewed for inclusion in this small area plan. The residentially zoned land near Keene Creek Park is one such area.

### **Airport Commerce in 2017.**

The Airport Commerce planning area is located southeast of the Duluth International Airport between Highway 53 and Haines Road. The area is zoned for a mix of commercial and light industrial uses. The proximity to the airport and the growth of the region's aviation sector suggest that there will be new economic development opportunities for the city in this area. The study should evaluate the many wetland and floodplain issues in the area, to ensure opportunities are maximized and that these important environmental characteristics function as a net positive within the study area.

### **Small Economic Activity Centers in 2018.**

The city contains several small areas where commercial and industrial activity occurs in relative proximity to residential uses. A goal for small neighborhood commercial areas could be to define the scope and nature of non-residential uses which are compatible with the neighborhood. A goal for the Hermantown Enterprise Center could be to determine the strategies and investments needed to increase development while maintaining compatibility with nearby residential lands.

## **Plan Contents.**

Each small area plan should follow the same basic planning process to help ensure consistency in administration and integration into community development programs. However the process and format of the planning document should be flexible enough to address each area's distinct issues and vision.

Each small area plan will incorporate maps, pictures, illustrations, charts, graphs and textual summaries in the planning process and document to provide a clearer idea about the impacts of existing conditions and proposed recommendations.

The basic format and contents of each plan is described below.

### **Introduction.**

The purpose of this section is to concisely inform the reader of the fundamentals of each small area plan. It should identify the planning area boundaries, include the vision for the planning area, describe the planning process, and summarize the plan's recommendations.

### **Community Participation.**

Small area planning is designed to implement the City's vision for community development in each planning area in part by improving the connection between city government and stakeholders. The Planning Commission will lead the development of each plan with assistance from the Community Development Department. Citizens, city departments, city committees, and regional partners will be included as an important function of the planning process. This will help to minimize potential conflicts by creating predictability about future development. The type of community participation will vary with the scope and complexity of each small area plan. Participation methods may include a citizen advisory committee, planning charrette, or open house meetings. As appropriate, the City will combine traditional media with digital communications to keep citizens informed and actively participating in the process. Relevant city, county, state, and federal agencies, non-profits, and other stakeholders will be included. A public review by the Planning Commission and City Council, including an official public hearing, will be held prior to adoption of any of the small area plans into the City's official Comprehensive Plan.

### **Existing Conditions.**

This section of the plan will inform and direct the development of a vision and recommendations for the planning area. Subject areas examined should include economic

development, land use, environment and landscape, housing, transportation and parks and recreation.. Each planning area is likely to have special issues such as community heritage and neighborhood context that should be included. In some cases, additional detailed study may be included for certain areas, most particularly in areas with complex or sensitive wetland, transportation, or economic issues.

### **Vision.**

This section will answer the question: “What do we want this area to look like in 10 or 20 years?” The vision will be developed from the analysis of existing conditions, City development goals, and stakeholder input. This section will surpass a simple vision statement by creating guiding principles and development concepts for each subject area that are necessary achieve the vision.

### **Recommendations.**

This section will contain recommended actions and strategies for attaining the plan’s vision. This section should include big picture goals, policy and action steps to achieve those goals, and an implementation matrix identifying the specific steps, partnerships, and further planning needed to carry out the policies and action steps.

### **Appendix.**

This section should contain supplemental information from the planning process and Community Development Department that add context to the plan.