

Statement of Support
Minneapolis 2040 Comprehensive Plan
July 21, 2022

As leading environmental and planning organizations and advocates, we support the Minneapolis 2040 Comprehensive Plan because we believe it is good for the environment and for people.

We urge the city to vigorously defend and continue implementing this plan.

The 2040 Plan advances several action steps to reduce environmental harm to residents and our natural systems. These steps include:

- Prioritizing infrastructure improvements, contamination cleanup, and community engagement in neighborhoods affected by environmental injustice.
- Reducing single-occupancy vehicle use by expanding other transportation options.
- Expanding the city's tree canopy.
- Prioritizing sustainable building design elements such as bird-safe glass, energy efficiency, and solar power.
- Improving soil health, reducing impervious surfaces, and promoting landscapes that provide ecological functions such as stormwater filtration and heat reduction.

In addition, the 2040 Plan's action steps to increase housing density, including allowing two- and three-family homes in all neighborhoods, are environmentally beneficial in several ways:

- *Habitat preservation:* Density reduces the need to build more housing in pristine wildlife habitat areas on the edges of the metro. Many endangered and threatened species, including metro-area birds, depend on large contiguous natural areas. Our built neighborhoods can preserve wildlife habitat by welcoming more housing into areas whose habitat value is already largely lost or significantly compromised, rather than forcing those homes to be built in increasingly threatened natural areas.
- *Air quality:* People in urban areas produce significantly fewer carbon emissions per capita compared to those on the suburban fringe. They are more likely to walk, bike and take transit, and when they do drive, they drive shorter distances. The 2040 Plan is essential for climate because denser housing reduces vehicle emissions, noise, and traffic. And with a larger customer base, businesses can locate more broadly throughout the city to bring necessities such as grocery stores, doctors' offices, and childcare centers within walking distance of more people.
- *Water quality:* Denser development can reduce stormwater runoff by providing more homes on the same footprint as single-family houses without expanding impervious surfaces or removing green space. Reducing the need to drive also

reduces the demand for roads and parking lots, which are significant sources of stormwater runoff.

- *Efficient housing & infrastructure:* Multi-family housing requires significantly fewer building materials and uses substantially less energy to heat and cool. When buildings are closer together, the transportation infrastructure and utilities needed to move people and provide them essential services are significantly less extensive, and therefore less polluting.

The lack of sufficient housing to meet our population's needs is a city, regional, and national problem that can only be addressed by building more homes. Prohibiting density in Minneapolis pushes this expanded housing out into critical wildlife habitat areas and perpetuates car-centric, resource-intensive development patterns. These development patterns of the past are damaging our future.

Creating more and denser housing also increases housing access and affordability in all neighborhoods, which is a crucial response to our region's enormous racial and economic inequities.

Our city, state, and country are facing a climate crisis, an affordable housing crisis, and an equity crisis. We cannot afford to ignore these crises, and we cannot afford to delay our response; we need to act now. The 2040 Plan is part of the solution and it must be upheld.

Signed,

Friends of the Mississippi River
Sierra Club North Star Chapter
American Planning Association - Minnesota Chapter
Cooperative Energy Futures
CURE (Clean Up the River Environment)
Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light
MN350
Move Minnesota
Neighbors for More Neighbors
Sustain St. Paul
University of Minnesota Planning Student Organization

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