



Crossroads Resource Center

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Tools for Community Self-determination

Minneapolis Sustainability Roundtable

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Long-term Vision for Sustainability

Suggested by participants in the Roundtable

Vision 1: A city that protects environmental resources

Our vision is that Minneapolis becomes the number one city in nation for clean air and water. The air *tastes* good! The EPA measures zero toxic emissions from the city. All beaches are clean and open for swimming. Rivers are clean. We have an adequate supply of drinking water. Storm water is re-used. The soil is free of lead and other contaminants. Households do not need personal water filters. Residences are plumbed for gray water use. Recycling is a way of life. We have devised water-efficient cleaning systems. Minneapolis has zero population growth. Hooved animals have returned to the city. Citizens who pursue truly ecological lifestyles are rewarded for it.

How will we know when we get there?

- Anyone can safely drink from the Mississippi River.
- People know as many native birds and flowers as they do entertainers.
- EPA measures zero toxic emissions from Minneapolis.

Vision 2: A city that reduces resource impacts

2a. Minneapolis fundamentally alters its transportation mix.

"Transportation is the key aspect of urban life to be changed."

[Roundtable participants Judy Sharken-Simon, Michael Orange, Vicki Bork, Gary Hesser, Walker Smith, & Diane Loeffler]

The single most important change Minneapolis can make to become a more sustainable city is to drastically reduce its reliance on the automobile. Automobiles inflict a variety of negative impacts: on air quality, water quality, personal health, household expenses, wealth disparities, land use, the quality of residential and commercial life, and social connections in the city. Further, autos embody a dependency on other global regions and corporations that is unhealthy as well as exceptionally expensive.

Changing the transportation system changes the urban grid. When we are no longer encapsulated in private cars, we can make connections with each other in different ways. Our transit system can bring us together, rather than divide us.

We envision a city where most everyone can walk or take public transit to every place needed to fulfill our daily life needs. Minneapolis has fewer streets. Freeways have been converted to transit corridors. Roadways that were once impermeable surfaces have been converted into greenspace, pocket parks, walking paths, community gardens, gathering spots with permeable cover. The streets that remain are semi-permeable (since they handle lighter vehicles than they used to) and free of congestion. Human-powered vehicle riders share these streets without fear. Minneapolis is a national leader in ensuring safe, efficient public transit that offers easy access to riders in all parts of the city. Green energy sources fuel our transit system, and its infrastructure is environmentally friendly.

Transit supports all levels of employment, from home-based businesses to larger-scale firms. It is easy for anyone to work wherever they choose whether in an urban or a rural area. Recreational opportunities are benefited by having easy access.

To achieve this kind of transportation network, we must also reconfigure land use. We envision communities that are built to a human scale. People can live, work and play in same area. Residents can meet all daily needs within limited geographic boundaries, but also have the ability to travel economically to other neighborhoods and cities in the region.

People have a variety of safe travel options. "I can bike by myself from my house to a State Park on bike trail," was the vision of one female participant.

Issues still to be resolved:

Some Roundtable participants suggested:

- Fossil fuel vehicles should be banned from city.
- Buses should only travel to the edges of downtown, leaving the core area for walking, LRT, biking, and taxi use.
- I can take my dog to the dog park via LRT.
- I would like to see commercial trains running through downtown again.
- We could develop hybrid motorcycles.

How will we know when we get there?

- *Headline:* "Minneapolis becomes the second city in nation to prohibit car traffic in downtown area."
- *Headline:* "Biking, walking and LRT become the preferred methods of travel."
- Transit use to 90%: 90% of people who live and work in city use public transit.
- No cars are used.
- *Headline:* "20% Bike Share sets record."

2b. Minneapolis will reduce its energy use and rely on green energy sources

Minneapolis has become a leader in reducing energy consumption, and uses renewable energy sources whenever possible. Residents have invested in businesses that create a new grid of decentralized energy production. Minneapolis buys only green energy produced in the region,

which includes hydro power on the Mississippi, neighborhood go-generators and municipal systems from nearby towns. Smaller scale co-generators are scattered throughout the region. All sell power to the electric grid.

Multiple strategies have been adopted to reduce energy consumption. Minneapolis has become the nation's capital of energy-friendly businesses. Office computers are now shut down when not in use. Street lights are powered by solar collectors that store up energy during the daylight hours and power the lamps at night. Hydrogen fuel options have been developed.

How will we know when we get there?

- Minneapolis buys 100% green energy.
- Wind energy is the source for all electricity.
- All buildings run on 80% self-generated energy.

2c. Minneapolis protects soil ecology.

Soil in the Minneapolis area is free of lead and other contaminants. Superfund sites have all been remediated. No new pollution poses any risks.

Minneapolis, working with other partners in the region, has assured itself of a healthy food supply by ensuring there is sufficient farmland in both the cities and in surrounding counties to raise the foods Twin City residents need. These lands are permanently allocated to agriculture.

How will we know when we get there?

- All institutions compost.
- *Headline:* "Last of all blighted sites is cleaned up."

2d. Minneapolis reduces noise pollution.

Vehicle noise is limited. Loud music is never inflicted on any resident.

How will we know when we get there?

- *Headline:* "Noise pollution levels fall to zero."

2e. Minneapolis no longer produces waste materials.

All used materials will be recycled. No waste will be generated.

How will we know when we get there?

- There will be no need for garbage trucks.
- Garbage containers are everywhere.

Vision 3. Minneapolis enhances ecological conditions

"I can walk to the train station so my grandchildren and I can take the train to Chicago to see relatives & friends. There are many trees along the route. The air is clear. There are few cars. Many other people are walking. There are nearby markets and sidewalk cafes."

T. Williams

Minneapolis increases the leaf cover throughout the city, with strong urban forests in all neighborhoods, including low-income areas. Communities are linked through green space. Streets have been turned into gardens, and alleys into transport paths. Pavement and sidewalks are more permeable. Truly affordable housing is clustered with urban gardens, walkable stores, and nearby parks and recreational facilities. Everyone in the city has walking access to a healthy, vibrant park, most likely centered around a healthy water feature, with recreational features that have been selected by neighborhood residents. Household food waste is composted. Workplaces are closer to people's homes. Residential and commercial properties alike reflect ecologically sound building design guidelines.

The City has increased the recharge capacity for storm water by redesigning storm sewer systems, increasing the amount of permeable surface cover, and returning organic matter to the soil. The impact of human life (our "footprint") has been reduced.

Environmental justice is a fact of life. New residents embrace an environmental ethic because they are welcomed by longer-term residents who are knowledgeable, and who share their expertise.

Wild spaces are conserved, with buffer zones along the river. The Mississippi River and city lakes are viewed as valuable natural resources, not simply as consumer amenities, but lots of residents use city waterways for canoeing and kayaking. Individuals know their connection to the river and lakes. Prairies have been replanted. Mining is done sustainably.

New production systems are designed not to create toxins. All systems self-sustainable. All grocery stores carry organically raised produce. Energy companies promote urban gardens since raising food in the city saves energy.

There are no longer air quality alerts, beach closings, or fish advisories. No salt is used in winter. There is less water-borne illness or mosquito-borne illness.

How will we know when we get there?

- Minneapolis has more fresh produce stores than gas stations.
- Augsburg and the U of M vie for recognition as the most environmentally friendly institution of higher education in the region.
- City becomes first in U.S. to require product suppliers & service providers to meet sustainability requirements.

Vision 4. Minneapolis becomes a national leader in community wealth creation, and reduces disparities.

"Every citizen in Minneapolis can be trained for living wage jobs—including public service—within a two-mile radius (or a 30-minute public transit ride) of their affordable residence."

The objective of community economic development is not simply building tax base, nor merely a count of the proposed number of jobs to be created, but rather the amount of wealth, broadly defined, that is held by community residents. Community wealth creation encompasses earning enough to save, building one's skills and talents, nourishing strong connections with neighbors, having the ability to effectively mobilize to take action democratically, having access to suitable public space, and living as part of a thriving natural environment.

Huge disparities of wealth that once plagued the city, leading to social tension, ill health, and public financial burdens, have been eliminated. Minneapolis has an honorable level of income, and distribution of resources. Extremes have been eliminated. Life styles reflect systemic stewardship and diversity.

Every able worker earns a livable wage. Moreover, livable wages are understood to be important to the entire region's quality of life. People are fully employed and challenged in work. Every worker enjoys five weeks of vacation time.

Every person who is disabled, or unable to work due to temporary circumstance, is taken care of adequately and respectfully.

Everyone has meaningful work. Minneapolis has created a highly positive business climate for small businesses. Increasingly, corporations doing business in the city are locally owned and responsive to citizen needs and environmental concerns. Minneapolis has full employment. The workweek has been shortened, and flexible work arrangements are commonplace.

Telecommuting is viewed as a common professional life. More people are working from home. People are rewarded economically for contributing to community. The economy rewards activities that were not formerly honored—such as parenting, and creating art. Parents are encouraged to work part time.

Nobody makes more than 15 times what the lowest income person makes. All groups have equal access to job training. People can work wherever they choose, in urban or rural areas and in any neighborhood, with similar opportunities and easy access to transportation.

No one is poor. All neighborhoods are diverse. All residents have their basic needs met. Affordable housing has been built in all neighborhoods. Convenient housing for seniors and families, accessible to transit, is found in all areas of the city. Neighborhood nodes thrive, where health care and social services are accessible and close to transit. Street markets flourish every ten blocks.

A variety of investment funds offer residents an opportunity to invest in green economic activity. Investments sustain those who are involved. Everyone has equal access to opportunity including bank accounts, loans, investment, and infrastructure.

How will we know when we get there?

- *Headline:* "Last homeless shelter closes."
- Honorable income and distribution of resources.
- Extremes of income and wealth are eliminated.

Vision 5. Minneapolis strengthens its business sector by clustering a strong group of locally owned, sustainable-production firms.

"Minneapolis is Capital of Environmentally Friendly Business and Manufacturing."

"We are in a local environmental development park. We are workers who have living wage jobs because resources that were being thrown away are now being made into products. There is a demand for locally produced products that make us feel valued contributors to our community."

"Distribution of resources is a circle that values community. An investment in any neighborhood produces the same value."

"Bidders are encouraged to impact costs of services due to increased ecological concern. This attracts sustainable contracts, businesses, and partnerships, making Minneapolis a leader both ecologically and economically."

Minneapolis becomes the national capital of environmentally friendly businesses. The city is a model for other urban areas. Using a mixture of public and private investment, it creates a cluster of the most vibrant industries, businesses and services in the U.S. This work builds upon the strength of existing industry clusters (printing and publishing, health care, computers and technological industries, and food). New clusters are also created that produce green energy, build sustainable products and production systems, and re-use the "waste" products of one firm as raw materials for another nearby. No factories produce any materials that cannot be recycled. Materials that once were tossed provide living-wage work in neighborhood firms. Local ownership of corporations once again becomes the norm. A renewed ethic of corporate responsibility makes the City stand out as a national leader. Employees are invested in profit-sharing plans. Local firms purchase as much as possible from local vendors. A spirit of sharing resources has supplanted the habit of extreme competition. Downtown thrives as a center of green commerce, healthy residential life, arts and culture.

The city's infrastructure promotes renewable economic activities instead of extractive economic relationships. We have built an efficient, vital, no-growth economy that builds wealth in our communities. Minneapolis has enhanced its long-term economic stability by reducing the environmental, social and economic costs its citizens endure to work. The city has created infrastructure that makes it more likely that residents can live, work, shop and play in the same area. Workplaces are safe and environmentally friendly. An increasing percentage of residents walk to work, creating a sense of vibrancy and safety in all communities.

Sustainability implies local choice and local control. Most Minneapolis neighborhoods have a formal plan they are achieving to become more self-sustaining. Neighborhoods host a cluster of local marketplaces such as Mercado Central. Cooperatives flourish. Small stores thrive at neighborhood nodes. Neighborhood restaurants, coffee houses and shops provide gathering places for residents to

meet each other. Economic relationships will be built that strengthen local businesses and marketplaces that are accessible to every person who wants to use them. Big-box stores are ignored by shoppers. The city holds an annual small business fair.

How will we know when we get there?

"Sustainable vehicle industry employs record number of people; build world's strongest economy."

"An investment in any neighborhood produces the same value."

Vision 6. Minneapolis enhances its tax base through green taxation.

Minneapolis has become a national leader by adopting green tax policies in which taxes:

- create incentives that protect environmental health and encourage renewable resource use.
- foster community wealth creation by clustering local firms of all sizes for mutual partnerships.
- place more burden on those with greater means and offer incentives to low-income residents to build wealth.

How will we know when we get there?

- Fossil fuel use is taxed.
- Carbon use is taxed.

Vision 7. Minneapolis becomes a national leader in maintaining health and in reducing health disparities.

"My nephew's children do not have asthma, are not afraid of swimming in the water, and do not worry about mosquito-borne diseases."

"Minneapolis becomes the first city in the country to assure every citizen the right to freedom from hunger. I am on the Phillips neighborhood of Minneapolis school board with low income neighbors, gardens, and farmers celebrating the 50-year project to assure each citizen has access to a healthy diet with the majority of food being locally and organically grown."

Every Minneapolis resident has affordable access to preventive health services and medical care. Health providers focus on health rather than medicine, with "100% support for healthy families." Health benefits are portable so that employees are free to make healthy job choices. Medical care costs have been reduced. Residents develop a more mature understanding of self, adopting healthier behaviors.

The link between proper nutrition, regular exercise and health is appreciated by residents, and shapes the texture of daily life. Most residents walk to work, schools, and stores, as well as engaging in regular physical activity. Urban gardens and greenhouses, combined with block-level canning

kitchens, baking, processing and storage facilities, have become a significant source of healthy food. Most Minneapolitans eat food produced by local growers and processors. Neighborhoods have formed partnerships with farmers and rural communities, exchanging volunteer labor, investment, and insights. Large agriculture is not dominant.

Respiratory problems due to pollution have been eliminated. More buildings take advantage of natural light, and less use artificial light.

How will we know when we get there?

- *Headline:* "Asthma rates lowest ever"
- No child in Minneapolis goes hungry.
- Minneapolis plans assure long-term access to food, just as it does for water, waste and sewage systems.

Vision 8. Minneapolis strengthens educational attainment for all students

Some Roundtable participants felt that education was important enough it merits status as the fourth "E" of sustainability, along with Ecology, Equity and Economy.

Minneapolis public schools rival private schools. Students of color have the same graduation rates and achievement scores as White students. Teachers are well-paid and well-respected. Schools both train and educate for useful work and full participation in citizenship. Service learning is built into the school curriculum. The school climate is safe and successful.

Schools become a primary place where both the values of sustainability and the practice of protecting local environments are developed and passed on to new generations. Principles and practices of sustainability are taught in public schools. Newer residents are welcomed to join into active citizen's circles that maintain a strong ethic, and solid practices, of resource planning and conservation that integrate sustainable economic principles.

All people are active, life-long learners. Higher education is affordable to all. Adults and youth can take advantage of mentoring. Professional colleagues and neighbors share experiences with each other openly.

Schools ensure that students develop complex skills for analyzing ecological relationships, and systemic social forces. Educational institutions play a strong role in building a culture in which citizens think systemically, and develop a more mature sense of self that sees itself as an integral part of the natural and social worlds. Most residents, of all ages, know several languages.

How will we know when we get there?

- "All Minneapolis kindergarteners show up to great schools healthy, secure, and well-prepared to learn and succeed."
- "Public schools rival private schools."
- "My grandchildren have learned to speak 3-5 different languages."
- "Schools produce thoughtful, creative compassionate students with critical interdisciplinary analysis skills."

Vision 9. The city achieves a secure climate of public safety

"I feel safe and do not have to worry about time of day."

"I can bike from my house by myself to a State Park on bike trail."

All parts of city are safe. People leave their doors unlocked. Police are consistently viewed as keepers of the peace.

How will we know when we get there?

- *Headline:* "Zero murders in Minneapolis."
- People leave their doors unlocked.

Vision 10. Minneapolis maintains its position as one of the cities with strongest social connections in the U.S., extending this to people of all colors and to all new immigrants.

Minneapolis is a city of *integrity* on every level. Families are respectful units. All citizens are valued as important. Cross-cultural invitations are frequent. Disabled people feel included and participate fully. People know each other, there are no "good" or "bad" neighbors. Neighborhoods are well-organized and economically integrated. It's hard to distinguish one neighborhood from another except by historic housing styles. Local spaces encourage residents to gather and connect with each other. The gap between high and low-income residents is closed; there is no class hierarchy. All residents enjoy five weeks of vacation time, with additional time off work for family care. People share tools and meals, and cooperate to address neighborhood issues. Neighborhoods have direct ties with rural areas.

Minneapolis is known for its lively celebration of its connection to nature. All citizens aware of city's "Sustainability Score." Green amenities foster interactions between all generations of residents. Streets and sidewalks are free of trash.

Many languages spoken in the city and many people speak multiple languages. Volunteerism rates continue to be high. People are engaged intergenerationally. Every young adult is involved in community service. There is consistent public support to strengthen families that are split by capitalism. When people talk about diversity they mean all types of diversity. Public documents are routinely translated into other languages. Diversity is understood to bring economic benefit as well as social.

The Twin Cities news media considers citizen initiatives newsworthy. Less time is spent on marketing and aggressive selling, and more is spent on the work of citizenship. All groups share resources.

People have come to a more mature sense of self. Interactions are respectful. Discrimination has ceased. Society is stable and equitable. Worry is not a chronic condition. People choose to be involved and feel their ownership of the city. Communities are strong and integrating -- taking responsibility for own and watch out for other communities. The city is a healthy, fun place to live.

Everyone is nurtured to contribute to the development of their greatest potential. People reach out to under-represented groups to get them involved and active. Everyone is honored.

How will we know when we get there?

- *Headline:* "Media reports citizen-initiated victories."
- "Is isn't a luxury to spend Saturday night talking about sustainability."
- "Our biggest problem? Everyone wants to live here now."
- "In 50 years this meeting is a celebration!"
- *Headline:* "Celebration at Lake Harriet Peace Garden draws diverse group to mark end of nuclear war."
- America sheds its tendency to think it is better than other peoples.

Vision 11. Arts & Culture are a vital core of daily learning and expression for all residents.

Most Minneapolis residents engage in self-discovery, self-expression, and social, ecological, spiritual, and cultural learning by producing art of their own choosing.

A culture of local self-reliance, informed by historical ethnic cultures (that express people's relationships to other places), flourishes. More community celebrations have integration of cultures as the theme.

Minneapolis continues to gain a national reputation for the quality of its professional artists. Economic cycles do not reduce public commitment to arts organizations.

How will we know when we get there?

- Most Minneapolis residents engage in self-discovery, self-expression, and social, ecological, and cultural learning by producing art of their own choosing.
- Cross-cultural celebrations are strong and frequent.

Vision 12. The city coordinates its sustainability efforts with the entire Metro region and the rest of the world.

Increased density in the urban core is balanced with new, denser growth in suburbs. Less desirable land uses (e.g., landfills) are dispersed so that no one population is more likely to be impacted by them.

City sustainability efforts are closely coordinated with similar efforts throughout the Metro region, nationally and globally.

How will we know when we get there?

- Increased density in the urban core is balanced with new, dense growth in suburbs.
- City sustainability indicators mesh with national and global indicators.

Vision 13. Minneapolis housing is green and affordable

Minneapolis becomes a center for quality sustainable housing construction. Buildings conserve resources and use renewable and recyclable materials. More natural materials are used, especially in home interiors. Diverse life-cycle housing options abound. There are no blighted properties. No one needs to sleep outdoors.

Home ownership is affordable to people of all income levels. Rental buildings look as good as owned homes. Co-housing is increased.

How will we know when we get there?

- No one needs to sleep outdoors.
- Rental buildings look as good as owned homes.

Vision 14. Minneapolis has an increasingly transparent process of governance

Minneapolis is a city of *integrity* on every level. Sustainability is achieved by creating a transparent process of governance that engages citizens in a full manner. Most residents have become active. Citizens are encouraged to participate in the vision-creating and governance of their community, and action is based on learning from community members what the community needs. Citizens will behave in manner that takes into account impact on future generations. Sustainability requires smaller-scale initiatives. Taxation is equitable. Human rights are upheld.

Fully diverse groups engage in ongoing conversations about sustaining the city and its resources, using indicators based on all three "E's" as an assessment tool prior to policy decisions. Information from each of the three circles is integrated into a common whole. Minneapolis focuses on stewardship of entire systems, using complex information. Policies incent voluntary action toward sustainability (persistent stewardship is rewarded), rather than enforcement of rules. Nevertheless, public policies attach real consequences to polluters, since we all live downstream.

Minneapolis residency required for all city administrators. Local residents have equal voice to outside investors. Civic infrastructure is distributed equitably throughout neighborhoods. Council members place their calendar of appointments on-line so voters know which lobbyists are they listening to.

How will we know when we get there?

- Minneapolis has a systematic set of indicators reflecting all three "E's," that are actually used in city budget decisions.
- 98% turnout in city elections.
- Meetings are representative of population.
- Resident surveys express full confidence in the transparency of government.

Vision 15. Physical design of the city augments the potential for sustainability.

"I am with my friends having a picnic in an area that once was a street and now is a park."

Minneapolis has become a "Cosmopolitan utopia." Neighborhoods are distinctive but welcoming. Residents have easy access to daily needs. Green amenities foster interactions between all generations. Pocket parks flourish in neighborhoods on land that once was devoted to streets. Open space connects to lakes and rivers. Older buildings are preserved to remind us of where we came from, and new development fits into this historical aesthetic. All new development, including ballparks, the convention center, and commercial centers, reflects conscientious attention to living green. Zoning, building, energy codes for all building emphasize the environment. The needs of various geographic levels, from neighborhood to regional, are considered in the design environment, with each serving different functions. Climate change has not affected the beauty of our city.

How will we know when we get there?

- Green space has been developed on land that was once devoted to streets.

Issues to keep on the City's radar:

- Changing the mindset requires structures that change the mindset (e.g. progress in recycling over 20 years came as a result of structuring systems that made it convenient to recycle).
- Global warming may affect our options.
- Globalization will shape the city's options.
- SEC should be totally revamped, with new rules to promote the sustainability dynamic.
- Impacts of capitalism should be measured.