



TWO HARBORS PLANNING COMMISSION

Serving the People of Two Harbors

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To: Two Harbors Planning Commission
From: Josh Bergstad, Planner, ARDC
Date: July 19, 2010
Re: Comprehensive Plan Report (Revised)

1999 Comprehensive Plan Review

The Two Harbors 1999 Comprehensive Plan is an impressive and thorough document covering environment and land use, housing and neighborhoods, economic development, and transportation. After reviewing the plan and filling out the Action Plan it appears that many of the recommendations and strategies were followed up on after adoption of the plan. Many were implemented while others were abandoned outright after exploring the options. Others still were not acted upon at all or put off until changing conditions made them outdated or difficult to address.

The City had the most success implementing zoning ordinance and map changes and other action items that required only City action. Recommendations that required collaboration with governmental and private partners and big-ticket capital projects that needed to be executed over the long run were less likely to be fully implemented.

The City successfully followed up on recommended zoning changes, although some of the changes had limited success in reaching the desired outcomes. The 7th avenue B-1A design district is an example. (This is partially due to the fact that the streetscape and other recommendations were not enacted.) The plan talked at length about a conservation subdivision approach to residential development but never made any recommendations to enact such a tool. The maps in the plan are very important since they quickly convey desired outcomes of the plan in a graphic format, but the maps are not always clear on which are strong recommendations and what are just options and include terms and ideas that are not explained in the plan. The future land use maps are good examples of this.

The Plan recommended several short and long term strategies for housing. The City did follow-up on targeted rehabilitation of existing housing stock (and downtown business rehabilitation) with a Small Cities Development Grant program. The Lake County HRA recently participated in a smaller, similar program. Development occurred at the 10th and 11th additions, and on portions of the THDC land. THDC completed a concept plan for the rest of the housing preserve land between 15th Street and CSAH 26.

On the other hand, some recommendations were not followed through on. The plan recommends that the City buy the tax forfeit land north of Segog and prepare it for development. This did not occur but the Lake County HRA is exploring a similar proposal that would achieve what the plan

was trying to accomplish. The Golf Course housing project is still just a concept. Many neighborhoods still exhibit problem properties despite the plan's recommendations to target these areas for improvement and enforcement. The Small Cities Development Grant rehabilitation program was a good start but did not fully meet the City's goals.

The economic development section of the plan diverted from land use and zoning policies of the City and focused on program activities for THDC to implement. Many of the recommendations were pursued and some implemented such as the semi-annual local business survey, partnering with regional groups to identify and provide skill training, and implementing business, recruitment, retention and expansion programs.

The City has followed up on several of the transportation recommendations contained in the 1999 Comprehensive Plan including developing a non-motorized trails plan, and connecting 8th Street to CSAH 26.

The largest component of the transportation section focused on 7th Avenue. Many of these issues still exist today. The City will need to reassess 7th Avenue and work with Mn/DOT to resolve issues relating to traffic flow, pedestrian safety, and aesthetics.

Another recommendation of the plan that the City has not been able to implement is recommendations for Lighthouse Point. Plans for Lighthouse Point hinged on the City buying the property from the Rail Road. This did not happen and the property was sold to a private developer. The Minnesota DNR was able to buy the boat launch and property for the proposed marina from the developer. The City did attempt to address development of the waterfront in a 2005 planning process. Many of the future land use and zoning recommendations for Light House Point and the Agate Bay waterfront will be subject to the Cave – City legal settlement agreement and will conform to city zoning standards.

The City completed planning for a city-wide non-motorized trail system in 2005. This plan is currently being implemented and has undergone several small revisions since it was adopted. The future development of the system should be addressed in the new comprehensive plan.

The 1999 Plan contained many good elements. The Planning Commission should consider adapting the goal statements of each section for the new plan, since much of the goals remain relevant, and then develop new strategies and recommendations to achieve those goals.