



## LAND USE



# Introduction

The Land Use Chapter guides the overall physical layout and organization of Saint Paul. Policies set forth in this chapter promote development patterns that strengthen neighborhoods; improve walkability; increase access to housing, jobs, schools, parks and services; promote equitable access to neighborhood centers; help to reduce carbon emissions; and accommodate growth by leveraging transit investments.

As Saint Paul has developed, land uses have changed in conjunction with transportation trends, and evolving zoning regulations and market forces. The land uses that have developed over time have a close relationship to natural forms and systems in Saint Paul, including the Mississippi River. The overall composition of these natural and built characteristics influences how people live, move and do business in Saint Paul (Figure LU-1).

This chapter provides guidance by land use type and is illustrated by the Future Land Use Map (Figure LU-2), which determines where the uses are to be located over the next 20 years. The land use types are described throughout the chapter, followed by policies per land use. Household and employment growth over the next two decades is focused in Downtown, Mixed-Use areas and Neighborhood Nodes, creating compact urban development in areas with a high level of services and amenities. Ongoing investment in Urban Neighborhoods is also supported.

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## The following goals guide the Land Use Chapter:

1. Economic and population growth through focused growth around transit.
2. Neighborhood Nodes that support daily needs within walking distance.
3. Equitably-distributed community amenities, access to employment and housing choice.
4. Strong connections to the Mississippi River, parks and trails.
5. Infrastructure for all ages and abilities.
6. Efficient and adaptable land use and development patterns and processes.
7. Quality full-time jobs and livable wages.
8. People-centered urban design.

## City-wide

City-wide land use policies cover a broad range of topics. Generally, the city-wide goals are to increase density and land use diversity at Neighborhood Nodes, focus investment along transit corridors and promote high-quality urban design. Mixed-use clusters anchor neighborhoods, provide convenient access to local services and employment, and promote vibrancy, which supports walking and reduces the amount of driving needed to satisfy daily needs. The following policies apply across the City regardless of land use category:

**Policy LU-1.** Encourage transit-supportive density and direct the majority of growth to areas with the highest existing or planned transit capacity.

**Policy LU-2.** Redevelop Opportunity Sites as higher-density mixed-use development or employment centers with increased full-time living wage job intensity (Figure LU-3).

**Policy LU-3.** Prioritize equitable public investments relative to areas of concentrated poverty as defined by the Metropolitan Council.

**Policy LU-4.** Invest in measures that minimize displacement in neighborhoods where the proximity to high-frequency transit has increased redevelopment pressure and/or housing costs.

**Policy LU-5.** Encourage flexible building design to ensure ongoing functionality and viability, and to respond to new market opportunities.

## Benefits of Higher-Density Development

Underlying the targeted growth strategy is the assumption that higher-density development, well-designed and integrated into an existing community, will produce tangible benefits for residents, employers and employees, and the municipality in which it is located. This concept is supported by policies in this chapter.

The Urban Land Institute, in *Higher Density Development: Myth and Fact* (2005), describes the benefits of higher-density development:

- Multi-family housing is attractive for demographic groups that comprise an increasingly larger part of the Saint Paul's population – married couples without children, many of them empty nesters; single people; and other types of households. They are more likely to want to live in an urban community, close to shopping and community amenities and to their workplaces.
- Higher-density development, with more residents and more business owners, broadens the city's tax base.
- Infrastructure and public services are used more efficiently. The costs of both are lower because they are spread over more properties.
- Higher-density development brings together concentrations of people, which supports more frequent transit service and increases use.
- Higher-density, transit-oriented development often means less traffic congestion because residents make fewer and shorter non-commuting automobile trips, as shopping and amenities are close to their homes.

## 2040 Residential Land Use Density Ranges

Land Use Type	Base Range	At Neighborhood Node
Semi-Rural	1-4 units/acre	n/a
Urban Neighborhood	5-30 units/acre	15-55 units/acre
Mixed-Use	15-75 units/acre	20-200 units/acre
Downtown	30-300 units/acre	

**Policy LU-6.** Foster equitable and sustainable economic growth by:

1. facilitating business creation, attraction, retention and expansion;
2. supporting family-sustaining jobs and enhancing workers' skills to excel at those jobs;
3. growing Saint Paul's tax base in order to maintain and expand City services, amenities and infrastructure;

4. proactively directing new development to high-priority geographies, such as Neighborhood Nodes and Opportunity Sites;
5. encouraging cultural and arts-based businesses and business districts, such as Little Mekong, Little Africa, Rondo and the Creative Enterprise Zone;
6. supporting business, real estate and financial models that keep more money locally, such as locally-owned businesses,

local-prioritized employment, employee-owned businesses and commercial land trusts;

7. building and expanding neighborhood economic and cultural assets through the development of the local micro-economies of our Neighborhood Nodes; and
8. enhancing vibrant downtown neighborhoods and connecting them to the Mississippi River.

## Areas of Racially Concentrated Poverty

The Metropolitan Council defines Areas of Concentrated Poverty (ACPs) as census tracts where 40% or more of the residents have family or individual incomes that are less than 185% of the federal poverty threshold. To identify areas where people of color experience the most exposure to concentrated poverty, the Met Council further differentiates Areas of Concentrated Poverty where 50% or more of the residents are people of color (ACP50s). The City of Saint Paul is using ACP50 geography as a lens to guide our approach to equitable development within the city. This approach may require investing within ACP50 areas in some cases, while investing outside them in other instances. In any case, equitable investment will require ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure success.

The Metropolitan Council's Thrive 2040 includes a "Statement on Equity" that lays out the Council's goals and action steps to achieve those goals. The Metropolitan Council will promote equity by:

- Using our influence and investments to build a more equitable region.

- Creating real choices in where we live, how we travel, and where we recreate for all residents, across race, ethnicity, economic means, and ability.
- Investing in a mix of housing affordability along the region's transit corridors.
- Engaging a full cross-section of the community in decision-making.

Examples of actions the Metropolitan Council will take that relate to the City's Land Use Chapter include:

- Work to mitigate Areas of Concentrated Poverty and Racially Concentrated Areas of Poverty by better connecting their residents to opportunity and catalyzing neighborhood revitalization.
- Work with communities to create more income-diverse neighborhoods, including strategically targeted subsidies to develop market-rate housing in areas that lack market-rate options.
- Use Livable Communities Act resources to catalyze private investment in Areas of Concentrated Poverty and Racially Concentrated Areas of Poverty.

- Conduct a regional inventory of industrial land that considers the location of industrial land relative to the potential workforce eager to access nearby higher wage job opportunities.
- Encourage preserving existing housing where rehabilitation is a cost-effective strategy to maintaining housing affordability.
- Invest in and encourage new affordable housing in higher-income areas of the region, particularly in areas that are well-connected to jobs, opportunity, and transit.
- Prioritize transportation investments that connect lower-income areas to job opportunities.
- Engage neighborhood residents in transit planning to understand how to most effectively use transit service and investments to promote access to opportunity.
- Promote transit-oriented development that ensures a mix of housing affordability in transit station areas.
- Collaborate and consult with members of the community, especially historically underrepresented populations. Work toward making decisions with people, not for people.

**Policy LU-7.** Evaluate land and zoning use flexibility to respond to social, economic, technological, market and environmental changes, conditions and opportunities.

**Policy LU-8.** Ensure that zoning and infrastructure support environmentally and economically efficient, resilient land use development.

**Policy LU-9.** Promote high-quality urban design that supports pedestrian friendliness and a healthy environment, and enhances the public realm.

**Policy LU-10.** Activate streetscapes with active first-floor uses, street trees, public art, outdoor commercial uses and other uses that contribute to a vibrant street life.

**Policy LU-11.** Preserve significant publicly-accessible views through the regulation of structure placement, height, bulk and scale (Figure LU-4).

**Policy LU-12.** Support airport safety by prioritizing compatible land uses and ensuring that building heights do not unreasonably interfere with airspace operations close to Saint Paul Downtown Airport and Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport.

**Policy LU-13.** Support strategies, as context and technology allow, to improve off-street parking efficiency, such as shared parking agreements, district ramps, car sharing and reduced parking minimums.

**Policy LU-14.** Ensure that stand-alone parking uses are limited, and that structured parking is mixed-use and/or convertible to other uses.

## The Urban Forest

Most people know that trees provide the oxygen we need to breathe, but did you know that trees also:

- Capture fine particles on leaf surfaces, reducing the circulation of airborne particulate matter
- Provide shade, reducing the impacts of daytime heat and production of ozone
- Reduce the urban heat island effect (the tendency for built-up urban areas to retain more heat)
- Increase stormwater absorption and groundwater recharge
- Reduce rates of crime and stress
- Increase property values
- Promote outdoor exercise
- Provide natural habitat
- Enhance the landscape
- Offer an effective strategy for climate adaptation

A comprehensive list of recommendations of how Saint Paul can maximize its tree canopy are in the full HIA report, but key recommendations include:

1. City of Saint Paul should identify neighborhoods with lower canopy cover and higher rates of vulnerable populations, and target these neighborhoods for new tree planting and increased assistance.
2. The City of Saint Paul Mayor's Office should declare the stability of the urban forest a City priority.
3. Saint Paul Forestry should develop and implement a five-year community forestry master plan with measurable goals.
4. Saint Paul Forestry and Saint Paul Chamber of Commerce should work together to provide incentives to businesses and property management companies to reduce heating and cooling costs.
5. Saint Paul Planning and Economic Development should incorporate urban forestry approaches into plans for climate resilience and/or disaster preparedness as a temperature buffering and flood management strategy.

## 2040 Employment Density Ranges and General Land Use Mix

Land Use Type	Employment FAR	Commercial/Office/ Residential
Urban Neighborhood	0.3-2.0	5%/5%/90%
Mixed-Use	0.3-6.0	30%/30%/40%
Downtown	0.0-8.0	20%/50%/30%
Industrial	0.0-6.0	80%/15%/5%

**Policy LU-15.** Encourage the equitable spatial distribution of community food assets, including urban farms, community gardens, food markets, healthy retail food options and food hubs.

**Policy LU-16.** Promote access to sunlight for solar energy systems while accounting for the development rights of adjacent properties.

**Policy LU-17.** Support facilities outside public rights-of-way to support pedestrian and bicycling activity, such as sidewalk access to building entrances, adequate lighting, trails and bicycle parking/storage.

**Policy LU-18.** Prioritize measures to achieve a long-term goal of 40% tree canopy coverage in all neighborhoods.

**Policy LU-19.** Encourage private landowners to provide public access to privately-owned open spaces, and facilitate joint use of athletic fields and school playgrounds.

**Policy LU-20.** Support efforts to enhance biodiversity, restore native plants and protect unique natural resources.

## Downtown

Downtown is the mixed-use core of Saint Paul, encompassing all the B4 and B5 Zoning Districts and most of Planning District 17. It is the oldest developed part of the city, and currently and historically has had the greatest employment and housing density in Saint Paul. Downtown is intended to continue growing and diversifying while building on its great neighborhood, commercial and cultural assets, especially its location on the Mississippi River. Improved infrastructure will enliven vitality, and safely connect people within downtown and to adjacent neighborhoods. For more detailed

guidance on the future of downtown, see the Downtown Development Strategy. The following policies apply to the Downtown land use category:

**Policy LU-21.** Continue to invest in Downtown and promote a broad mix of uses that attract greater numbers of people and employers to ensure Downtown's vitality as the civic, cultural and employment center of the East Metro.

**Policy LU-22.** Strengthen neighborhood connections to and within Downtown Saint Paul through development and improvements that support and complement Downtown businesses and urban villages.

**Policy LU-23.** Prioritize public and private investments in infrastructure that:

1. improve technology access to enhance conditions for a growing tech economy;
2. maintain and improve the public realm to encourage street-level pedestrian activity; and
3. support parks, green space and recreation.

**Policy LU-24.** Continue to strengthen Downtown as a residential neighborhood that provides services and amenities for people of all ages.

**Policy LU-25.** Support office and commercial development that takes advantage of Downtown's position as the office Center of the East Metro, that maximizes jobs, business and tax base growth; and meets the needs of a dynamic region.

## Mixed-Use

Mixed-Use areas are primarily along thoroughfares well-served by transit. The main distinguishing characteristic is a mix of land uses within the same building or in several buildings within walking distance of one another. Historically, these areas developed in easily-accessible locations, and they will continue to be the most dynamic areas of Saint Paul. These areas are vital for the ongoing growth and economic development of the city by providing the highest densities outside of downtown. The following policies apply to the Mixed-Use land use category:

**Policy LU-26.** Provide for land use change and rezoning of land adjacent to Mixed-Use areas to allow for redevelopment fronting arterial and collector streets.

**Policy LU-27.** Support pedestrian-friendly streetscapes and visual interest through commercial building design.

**Policy LU-28.** Ensure that building massing, height, scale and design gradually transition to those permitted in adjoining districts.



## Neighborhood Nodes

Neighborhood Nodes are compact, mixed-use areas that provide shops, services, neighborhood-scale civic and institutional uses, recreational facilities and employment close to residences. They may be neighborhood centers, transit station areas or urban villages, and have often developed adjacent to major intersections or at former street car stops. Neighborhood Nodes serve a neighborhood's daily needs, including access to food; reduce public infrastructure disparities; improve livability; and accommodate growth. The intent is for Neighborhood Nodes to be denser concentrations of development relative to the adjacent future land use categories. Neighborhood Nodes foster an equitable system of compact, mixed-use and commercial centers across the city to increase access to community services (such as health care) and businesses, and support pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods. Investment in Neighborhood Nodes will tap the economic, cultural and human assets of Saint Paul's diverse neighborhoods, and can foster micro-economies that celebrate those assets. The following policies apply to a range of land uses within the Neighborhood Nodes land use category:

**Policy LU-29.** Focus growth at Neighborhood Nodes using the following principles:

1. Increase density relative to underlying Future Land Use Map categories.
2. Prioritize pedestrian-friendly urban design and infrastructure that emphasizes pedestrian safety.
3. Cluster neighborhood amenities to create a vibrant critical mass.
4. Improve access to jobs by prioritizing development with high job density.

## Neighborhood Node Locations

The Neighborhood Node designation is based on locations already planned for higher-density, mixed-use development in adopted small area, neighborhood and master plans; community feedback on locations with market potential and neighborhood support; review of current zoning designations; analysis of current and future land use; and locations of existing or planned transit. Analysis included reviewing historic land use maps for persistent commercial nodes and mixed-uses; comparing amenities proximate to potential nodes; and identifying public anchors such as schools, parks and libraries. A final analysis ensured that, generally, there would be a Neighborhood Node within 20-minute (or less) walk of any residence in Saint Paul. This is based on the urban design concept of "20-minute cities," where many daily services and amenities are within a 20-minute walk from the vast majority of residences. Neighborhood Nodes are designated in the following general locations, as identified in the 2040 Future Land Use Map:

- Arlington Hills/Maryland-Payne
- Baker-Smith
- Cathedral Hill
- Como-Arona
- Como-Front-Dale
- Dale Station Area
- District Del Sol
- E. 7th Street-Arcade
- Earl Station Area
- Etna Station Area
- Fairview Station Area
- Fitzgerald Park Urban Village
- Grand-Fairview
- Grand-Victoria
- Grand-W. 7th / Seven Corners
- Hamline Station Area
- Highland Village/Ford Site
- Hillcrest Golf Course
- Iowa-White Bear
- Larpenteur-Lexington
- Lawson-Payne-Wells
- Lawson-Rice-Front
- Lexington Station Area
- Lower Afton-McKnight
- Lowertown Urban Village
- Marshall-Cleveland
- Maryland-Dale
- Minnehaha-Milton/Frogtown Farm
- Mounds Station Area
- Mounds Station Area
- Phalen Village
- Randolph-Hamline
- Randolph-W. 7th/Schmidt
- Raymond Station Area
- Rice Park Urban Village
- Rice Station Area
- Riverview
- Selby-Dale
- Selby-Milton
- Selby-Snelling
- Shepard-Davern / Sibley Manor
- Snelling Station Area /Minnehaha-Snelling
- St. Anthony Village
- St. Clair-Cleveland
- St. Clair-W. 7th
- Stillwater-Iroquois
- Sun Ray Station Area
- Victoria Park
- Victoria Station Area
- Wacouta Commons Urban Village
- West Side Flats
- Western Station Area
- Westgate Station Area
- Wheelock-Arcade
- Wheelock-Rice-Larpenteur
- White Bear Station Area

## Neighborhood Nodes Policy Approach

The most frequent comments received from the community for the Land Use Chapter expressed a desire to have amenities within walking distance of home, such as neighborhood businesses and grocery stores, parks, playgrounds and open space, and libraries. This goal is related to equity in that amenities and basic public infrastructure are not evenly distributed throughout the city. Increasing the number of Neighborhood Nodes from those designated in the previous 2030 Comprehensive Plan is a direct policy response to this. Over time, public and private investment in new development that increases the mix of uses and pedestrian amenities in these Neighborhood Nodes will increase amenities city-wide.

Having amenities within walking distance of home throughout the city is consistent with the way Saint Paul was planned and developed generations ago. The city was organized into “Communities” (precursors to the current District Council system) and “Neighborhoods” in the mid-20th century. Guiding design principles for Communities were “to have a set of facilities which are designed, primarily, for service to children aged 12-17 and, secondly, for service to adults.” The primary design principle for Neighborhoods (sub-sections of Communities) was that “young children aged 5-12, generally will be safe from traffic and other hazards.” (*Plan for Public Education, Recreational and Cultural Facilities, City of Saint Paul, 1960*)

There is also an increasingly rich amount of research quantifying the positive benefits of this type of development pattern. Benefits include:

- improved health;
- increased walking;
- reduced vehicle miles traveled; and
- positive equity outcomes.

(More Great Research Quantifying Smart Growth Benefits, Todd Litman, <https://www.planetizen.com/node/70261>)

These benefits show the close relationship between land use and transportation, and illustrate how we can grow in a way that achieves the improvements people want to see in their communities. Neighborhood Nodes are linked to the streets that host them. Jan Gehl points out in his book *Cities for People*:

*“there is more life in urban neighborhoods when people move slowly. The goal of creating cities where more people are invited to walk and bike will bring more life to the streets and a greater wealth of experience because fast traffic will be converted into slower traffic” (p.71).*

Creating a land use mix and high-quality urban design that invites pedestrians to linger at Neighborhood Nodes will make the city more walkable.

**Policy LU-30.** Invest in Neighborhood Nodes to achieve development that enables people to meet their daily needs within walking distance and improves equitable access to amenities, retail and services.

**Policy LU-31.** Establish or enhance open space close to Neighborhood Nodes, such as public parks, publicly-accessible private open spaces, and school playgrounds.

**Policy LU-32.** Promote amenities that support those who live and work in Neighborhood Nodes, including frequent transit service, vibrant business districts, a range of housing choices, and neighborhood-scale civic and institutional uses such as schools, libraries and recreation facilities.

## Urban Neighborhoods

Urban Neighborhoods are primarily residential areas with a range of housing types. Single-family homes and duplexes are most common, although multi-family housing predominates along arterial and collector streets, particularly those with transit. Multi-family housing, schools, neighborhood parks, religious institutions and cemeteries may also be scattered throughout Urban Neighborhoods. Limited neighborhood-serving commercial may also be present, typically at intersections of arterial and/or collector streets. Urban Neighborhood is the largest land use area in Saint Paul. The following policies apply to the Urban Neighborhoods land use category:

**Policy LU-33.** Encourage medium-density housing that diversifies housing options, such as townhouses, courtyard apartments and smaller multi-family developments, compatible with the general scale of Urban Neighborhoods.



**Policy LU-34.** Provide for multi-family housing along arterial and collector streets to facilitate walking and leverage the use of public transportation.

**Policy LU-35.** Promote neighborhood-serving commercial businesses within Urban Neighborhoods that are compatible with the character and scale of the existing residential development.

**Policy LU-36.** Facilitate partnerships between public and private institutions for joint use of recreational fields, playgrounds and other community facilities and hubs to economically provide equitable access to services while minimizing the reduction of tax base.

**Policy LU-37.** Direct the location of new secondary schools and post-secondary educational institutions along transit routes and bicycle and pedestrian networks to provide options for students and staff, and decrease traffic congestion in adjacent neighborhoods.

**Policy LU-38.** Direct the location of new elementary schools to locations with safe pedestrian and bicycling networks.

## Semi-Rural

Semi-Rural land is primarily large-lot, low-density residential, with more limited public infrastructure than elsewhere in the city. Development is limited by the river bluffs; preservation of green space, including the tree canopy, is emphasized. The Semi-Rural land use category is limited by geography, and is expected to remain static or even shrink over the next 20 years as properties are connected to public utilities and infrastructure. The following policies apply to the Semi-Rural land use category:

**Policy LU-39.** Maintain large-lot residential development with private utilities that preserves the natural ecosystem along the river bluffs.

**Policy LU-40.** Allow for cluster development with public utilities that preserves the natural ecosystem along the river bluffs.

## Industrial

Industrial land uses are a major source for employment in Saint Paul. They have traditionally been defined as manufacturing, processing, warehousing, transportation of goods and utilities. More contemporary uses, driven by technological advances, include medical tech and small-scale production. The intent is for this land use type to remain adaptable, relevant and supportive of well-paying jobs with low barriers to entry and a growing tax base. The following policies apply to the Industrial land use category:

**Policy LU-41.** Identify and assemble industrial sites within close proximity to logistics networks, including river terminals, rail and other cargo/commodity shipping facilities.

**Policy LU-42.** Support and encourage brownfield redevelopment that increases tax base, job creation and job retention.

**Policy LU-43.** Retain and protect current industrial land from conversions to residential or institutional uses unless guided otherwise in a City of Saint Paul adopted plan.

**Policy LU-44.** Preserve the long-term tax base by evaluating the impact of tax-generating industrial land, as well as compatibility with adjacent land uses and infrastructure.

**Policy LU-45.** Consolidate surface parking in older industrial districts.

**Policy LU-46.** Pursue partnerships to improve public open space access along the Mississippi River.

**Policy LU-47.** Support efforts to convert former industrial buildings to complementary productive uses.

**Policy LU-48.** Support efforts to combine small parcels in industrial zones in order to allow for uses requiring larger building footprints.

**Policy LU-49.** Encourage investment in new employment uses, such as medical technology, maker space, and small-scale or custom production.

## Major Parks and Open Spaces

Major Parks and Open Space land use includes regional parks, City parks larger than 200 acres, City parks adjacent to the river and parkways. This land use designation helps to connect the city's neighborhoods and acts as its "lungs," contributing to environmental quality, and providing space for recreation and respite. The Parks, Recreation and Open Space Chapter guides the City's park system.

## Civic and Institutional

Civic and Institutional land use includes buildings and open space for major institutional campuses. As the host of the State Capitol and many high-quality educational institutions, Saint Paul has rich resources in this land use category. It is important to cultivate conditions that allow these uses to thrive, connect to neighborhoods and feed into the local economy. The following policies apply to the Civic and Institutional land use category:

**Policy LU-50.** Pursue partnerships with area colleges and universities that strengthen connections to the community and adjacent neighborhoods; and support workforce development, business creation and innovation, and retention of youth and young professionals.

**Policy LU-51.** Ensure institutional campuses are compatible with their surrounding neighborhoods by managing parking demand and supply, maintaining institution-owned housing stock, minimizing traffic congestion, and providing for safe pedestrian and bicycle access.

**Policy LU-52.** Encourage the redevelopment of surface parking lots within the Capitol Area into projects that contribute to the tax base and public realm.

## Transportation

Saint Paul is a city with a rich infrastructure of multi-modal transportation systems. The Transportation land use category includes streets, walking and biking pathways, light rail and bus rapid transit routes, highways, railroads, the Mississippi River and the Saint Paul Downtown Airport. These uses are essential for interstate commerce and contribute to the local and regional and global economies. As such, it is important to provide for these uses while ensuring minimum negative external impacts to adjacent land uses. The following policies apply to the Transportation land use category:

**Policy LU-53.** Lessen the negative impacts of interstate highways by supporting design interventions, such as "freeway lids" and landscaping and liner buildings on new bridges, that improve connectivity, hide the road and/or reduce pollution.

**Policy LU-54.** Protect intermodal operations and freight railways from encroachment of other land uses that conflict with their safe operation.

**Policy LU-55.** Use the least amount of land practicable for transportation uses in order to maximize land for urban development.

**Policy LU-56.** Protect and expand river shipping terminals to strengthen the role of Saint Paul as a logistics hub of the Upper Mississippi.