



Re: Minneapolis 2040 Plan

December 5, 2018

Dear Minneapolis City Council Members, and Mayor Frey:

The Great River Coalition (GRC) is a member-supported 501 c3 nonprofit organization. Our mission is to advocate for preserving, protecting and promoting the historic, commercial and environmental vitality of the Mississippi River, the Metropolitan area and its relationship to the people and our communities. GRC appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Minneapolis 2040 Plan draft.

The GRC has a successful history of collaborating with multiple community organizations and government entities to develop and implement effective programs that protect the riparian environment while enhancing the livability of riverfront neighborhoods. It is in this context that we write to communicate our concern policies incorporated in the current draft of the Minneapolis 2040 Comprehensive Plan under review by the Minneapolis City Council.

As one of those community advocates, the GRC recommends that a holistic approach to development be employed which strongly considers the probable impacts on the natural resources that are wonderfully unique to our city. By definition, greater density is likely, unless carefully guided, will reduce current city greenspace and present additional obstacles to many species of birds, insects and animals that either reside in or migrate through the metro area.

The New York Times Magazine dated December 02, 2018, titled, "The Insect Apocalypse is Here", features the head lining article by Brooke Jarvis, "What a Decline of Bugs Means for the Rest of Life on Earth." A quote: "Nature's Resilient, But We Are Pushing Her to Such Extremes that eventually it will Cause a Collapse of the System."



Current research strongly supports the criticality of maintaining quantity and quality thresholds of greenspace urban areas ('habitat stepping stones') as a means of supporting wildlife residency and flyover/migration efficacy. Note for instance from S. Saura, O. Bodin and M.-J. Fortin:

"Our results stress that stepping stones must be of sufficient size and/or quality to be of conservation value, [and] highlight the need to ensure a durable protection for the mosaics of suitable patches scattered in the intermediate landscapes to allow for species movements between reserves. Stepping-stone networks can play a crucial role for species persistence at wide spatial and temporal scales by alleviating the isolation of large habitat blocks embedded in increasingly modified landscapes, which is a major concern in modern conservation biology."

Stepping Stones are Crucial for Species' Long-distance Dispersal and Range Expansion Through Habitat Networks, Journal of Applied Ecology, 2014

They also note that habitat patches that are decreasing in size negatively impact genetic diversity with negative implications for species survivability. Several other recent studies (for example: Baldock KCR et al. 2015 '*Where is the UK's pollinator Biodiversity? The Importance of Urban Areas for Flower-visiting Insects*', Proceedings of the Royal Society, 2015) have pointed out the importance of urban green space for maintaining the viability of pollinator species, given the increasing conversion of wild spaces to farmland.

Other environmental and social consequences of large scale and indiscriminate densification could be listed, such as the expansion of impervious surfaces and the attendant impacts on runoff, e.g., erosion, pollution, overflow and other stresses on utility systems.



Unless very competently and collaboratively managed, an urban densification strategy that rushes ahead with densification on a broad front risks turning the city, and specifically the Mississippi river corridor, into a sterile environment lacking the attributes that set our city apart and which have, in point of fact, driven the economic, cultural and environmental development historically endemic to our community. We should not rely on unmanaged market forces to somehow magically achieve a complex end state of multiple and sometimes conflicting desired objectives.

The Great River Coalition requests that the Minneapolis City Council considers that the plan be built based on solid data that identifies *all* relevant impacts of proposed policies. The 2040 Plan under consideration points out the necessity of using research and data to guide and underlie development decisions. However, it is silent about any data other than that related to housing ("rates of tax delinquency and foreclosure, building permit activity, vacant property lists, sales prices and ownership tenure"). This single-threaded approach is a recipe for failure without considering relevant environmental data, how will a densification program successfully coordinate with the Action Plan for the 'Clean Environment' Goal / 'Ecology & Habitat' Policy (70.g) which reads:

"Strive for interconnected riparian areas as habitat corridors and for flood protection and recreation, and create additional "steppingstone" areas for habitat."

As the multi-dimensional format of the Plan Draft tacitly reflects, the comprehensive plan Goals are interdependent and will have to be balanced and connected in order to be successful.



The GRC appreciates the complexity involved in developing a strategic plan for such a large and long-established metropolitan area. We and our coalition partners stand ready to work with Minneapolis officials in order to define a plan that will attain the multiple goals laid out for Minneapolis 2040, while at the same time preserving and enriching an environment that will foster a rich, varied and sustainable ecosystem along the river corridor and throughout the rest of our city.

At this critical juncture in our city's evolution, let us strive to emulate the vision and determination that our forebears exhibited and which was so evocatively laid out in Horace Cleveland's remarks to the Minneapolis Park Commission on June 2nd, 1883:

"Look forward for a century, to the time when the city has a population of a million, and think what will be their wants. They will have wealth enough to purchase all that money can buy, ***but all their wealth cannot purchase a lost opportunity, or restore natural features of grandeur and beauty, which would then possess priceless value, and which you can preserve for them if you will but say the word and save them from the destruction which certainly awaits them if you fail to utter it.***"

Let us work together to ensure that our descendants have the same cause for gratitude as we, when they look back at our efforts through the long lens of the years.

Diane Hofstede

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Diane Hofstede". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

President Great River Coalition
Former Third Ward Minneapolis City Council Member