

GOVERNING PRINCIPLES



Governing Principles serve as the foundation for the comprehensive plan. The 12 Principles from the 2006 Comprehensive Land Use Plan were carried forward, with 2 new Principles added.



Previously developed lands include a range of sizes and locations, with and without structures: large brownfield sites such as U.S. Steel; smaller industrial sites in a neighborhood context such as Clyde Iron; vacant infill sites; commercial buildings no longer in viable service; and residential structures suitable for rehabilitation.

Much of Duluth's open areas were private lands, now tax forfeit. Areas often presumed to be public parks are tax forfeit lands subject to possible auction and sale. Other parcels are privately owned. Securing the future for key parcels of open space is critical to Duluth's identity and economic base.

The traditional economic base includes port operations, transportation services, manufacturing, bulk commodity handling, and related support services. Locational considerations include docks, shipping channels, railroad rights-of-way, Interstate highway, and airport.

PRINCIPLE #1

Reuse previously developed lands.

Reuse of previously developed lands, including adaptive reuse of existing building stock and historic resources, directs new investment to sites which have the potential to perform at a higher level than their current state. This strengthens neighborhoods and is preferred to a dispersed development pattern with associated alteration of natural landscapes and extensions of public services. Site preparation or building modification costs are offset by savings in existing public infrastructure such as streets, utilities, and transit, fire, and police services.

PRINCIPLE #2

Declare the necessity and secure the future of undeveloped places.

Undeveloped areas are an essential part of Duluth's municipal fabric—urban plazas, neighborhood parks, large tracts of public ownership, and private lands zoned for minimal development. These minimally or undeveloped areas collectively create an open space system. These areas contribute to Duluth's cultural, health, recreational, and economic value and community identity. This open space system provides vistas, encourages active recreation, provides natural infrastructure such as storm water retention, plant and animal habitat and water quality, and is the strongest visual element defining Duluth's sense of place.

PRINCIPLE #3

Support existing economic base.

Supporting Duluth's existing economic foundation maintains jobs, tax base, and opportunity. Economic activity with specific location requirements may be subject to displacement or site competition with changes in real estate values. This traditional economic activity faces change as a result of global economic patterns, changing markets, new regulation, and aging of extensive infrastructure. Nevertheless, fundamentals remain and the economic contribution, sometimes taken for granted, is significant.

PRINCIPLE #4

Support economic growth sectors.

Emerging and growing economic sectors add economic, cultural, and social diversity. These include higher education, medical, value-added manufacturing, commercial outdoor recreation, historic resources interpretation, arts and music, information technology and visitor services. Encourage and foster locally owned and entrepreneurial ventures to enhance economic base.

Growth sectors can be as small as a sole proprietorship or as large as a medical complex. What they have in common is a contribution to Duluth's economic diversity which did not exist thirty years ago. Linkages between these emerging sectors and the traditional economic base will strengthen both.

PRINCIPLE #5

Promote reinvestment in neighborhoods.

Duluth is strongly defined by its neighborhoods. This system should be supported through land use and transportation that fosters neighborhood reinvestment. New development or redevelopment should maximize public investment that strengthens neighborhood commercial centers or diversifies residential opportunities that fit the character.

Support neighborhood scale commercial areas, neighborhood parks with links to larger parks and trails systems, a variety of housing, and a street pattern that contributes to the neighborhood identity. Avoid large scale, non-neighborhood based activity within the core of a neighborhood.

PRINCIPLE #6

Reinforce the place-specific.

Public and private actions should reinforce cultural, physical and economic features which have traditionally defined Duluth, its open space and its neighborhoods. This includes commercial areas providing neighborhood goods and services, ravine parks and other natural features that define neighborhood edges and view corridors to the Lake or River which serve to provide location and context.

Defining elements that reinforce the place-specific include climate-specific materials and design; repair and use of historic walls, bridges, and buildings; Lake Superior, St. Louis River, and streams; neighborhood commercial districts, parks, and residential areas; cultural references; and traditional events.



This includes the system of streets, roads, and highways; historic parkway and trail systems; regional trails; pedestrian sidewalks, stairs, and ramps; and the transit system.

Examples of mixed development include integration of housing, commercial, entertainment, and recreational uses. Business and light industrial can blend with residential in larger complexes. Mix also refers to residential building types and income ranges.

Blank walls, undirected lighting, parking areas right at the sidewalk, and loading areas in a public way are all examples of features which detract from public areas. Standards are appropriate to apply in areas where private actions abut public areas so that these actions not only do not detract, but enhance the public areas.

PRINCIPLE #7

Create and maintain connectivity.

Connectivity is established through our network of streets and highways, transit system, sidewalks, greenways, bikeways, and trails (local and regional). Non-vehicular transportation should be considered as an important component of the overall transportation network. Winter maintenance of sidewalks and other public ways is critical to creation of usable pedestrian systems.

PRINCIPLE #8

Encourage mix of activities, uses, and densities.

Cities have evolved as a mix of land uses, building types, housing types, and activities. Accommodating choice while protecting investment is a balance to strike in land use regulation. Mixed uses provide opportunity for a diversity of activity that segregated, uniform uses do not provide.

PRINCIPLE #9

Support private actions that contribute to the public realm.

Private building construction and site design influences activity in adjacent public areas. Building form, height, setbacks, and detailing affect the adjacent areas. The uses and activity contained in the buildings directly impacts the surroundings. Public areas should benefit from adjacent private investment.



PRINCIPLE #10

Take actions that enhance the environment, economic, and social well-being of the community.

Initiate land use, site design, transportation, building design, and materials policies which reduce consumption of finite resources, generation of solid waste, and introduction of toxic materials to land, air or waters. Also implement resiliency in design and operation with City systems and infrastructure that serves both public and private land uses.

Support building types and materials that reduce resource consumption and load on the waste stream, and fuel for transportation and buildings that is more local and renewable. Becoming more sustainable improves our overall resiliency.

PRINCIPLE #11

Consider education systems in land use actions.

There is a connection between land use patterns and all level of educational facilities. School locations and housing opportunities for students and families require consideration of impacts on transportation and infrastructure systems, housing densities, parking, and non-student uses.

Neighborhood-based schools promote walkable, safe communities and reduce transportation expenses. Where students live should influence location of schools. For higher education, housing opportunities that integrate students into the larger community are generally desirable; however, impacts of badly integrated student housing can be destructive to neighborhoods.

PRINCIPLE #12

Create efficiencies in delivery of public services.

The costs of public service must be considered in land use decisions. Street construction and maintenance, utilities, libraries, fire, police, snowplowing, and recreation facilities are services directly related to the physical location of development. Infrastructure should help prescribe development location rather than react to it. The integration of public services to maximize efficiencies with all related use decisions should be evaluated.

Utilize existing water, wastewater, and stormwater system capacity before expanding the system, and when new development occurs, consider the cost of extending emergency service to undeveloped areas. Tax base alone does not off-set the cost of these services, so the pattern of development and resultant public service costs are important considerations.



While access to medical care is important, social and economic factors, along with the physical environment, have a greater impact on health. Priorities identified in Duluth also include mental health, reduction of chronic diseases such as diabetes, and tobacco and alcohol use.

PRINCIPLE #13

Develop a healthy community.

Supporting health and well-being is a priority. The City will actively promote access for all to health resources, quality food, recreation, social and economic opportunities, and a clean and secure environment. Investments and policies will advance and maximize health and healthy equity in the city.

PRINCIPLE #14

Integrate fairness into the fabric of the community.

Barriers identified during Imagine Duluth 2035 include housing discrimination and availability, access to government, lack of transportation, economic barriers, park and trail disparity, and health outcome disparities.

All people will have equitable access to resources and opportunities that stabilize and enhance their lives. The City recognizes historical and current disparities and will actively promote inclusive and participatory decision-making that addresses systemic barriers to success.

Investments and policies will advance and maximize equity in the City.

CURRENTLY, ONE'S ZIP CODE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN ONE'S GENETICS AS A PREDICTOR OF HEALTH AND LIFE EXPECTANCY.