

## City of New Prague, Minnesota

### MSA TEAM:

Chris Janson, Principal in Charge [cjanson@msa-ps.com](mailto:cjanson@msa-ps.com)

Claire Michelson, Project Manager [cmichelson@msa-ps.com](mailto:cmichelson@msa-ps.com)

Emily Herold, Project Planner [eherold@msa-ps.com](mailto:eherold@msa-ps.com)



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August 3, 2023

## NEW PRAGUE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

### Community Engagement Update

#### Survey Results

The community input survey received 118 total responses, spanning a range of age groups, household sizes, and lengths of residence in New Prague. While a more thorough presentation of the survey's findings will be included in the Comprehensive Plan document, here are some general themes that emerged:

#### *New Prague's Top 3 Current Qualities*

1. School District
2. Rural Character
3. Adjacency to the Twin Cities

#### *New Prague's Top 3 Suggested Needs*

1. Parks and Recreation Updates/Expansion
2. Expand Retail Shopping Opportunities
3. Decrease Taxes and Fees

The survey included prompts to gather ideas for a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Opportunities, Weaknesses, and Threats) regarding the topics of Beautification, Development, and Mobility. These themes are summarized on the following pages.

PROJECT UPDATE

**BEAUTIFICATION**

Strengths/Opportunities

- 1. Care for parks/open space
- 2. Expand on existing pedestrian and bike trails and ensure they're safe and connected
- 3. Preserve small town character and history of for historic downtown area (including Main Street)
- 4. Plant more trees and improve landscaping
- 5. Offer opportunities to capitalize on beautifying the city (i.e. tourism from Czech heritage, seasonal decorations, bridge/arch for pictures)

Weaknesses/Threats

- 1. Need more spaces for sports recreation (especially soccer)
- 2. Need for more alternative recreation activities (not sports and for all ages)
- 3. Improve road conditions (including better landscaping, less roundabouts)

**DEVELOPMENT**

Strengths/Opportunities

- 1. Opportunity to attract and retain the right businesses (including small businesses)
- 2. Expand recreational opportunities/open spaces/green spaces
- 3. Improve multimodal transportation (bike trails, public transit, pedestrian areas)
- 4. Maintain the current small-town feel
- 5. Continue to balance land uses

Weaknesses/Threats

- 1. Need for more diverse housing options (design, price, tenancy)
- 2. Expand recreational opportunities/open spaces/green spaces
- 3. Need investment to improve infrastructure
- 4. Need to reduce high costs
- 5. City is growing too fast and over building to anticipate growth and attract developers, when residents want to maintain small town feel



## PROJECT UPDATE

## MOBILITY

Strengths/Opportunities

1. Opportunity to expand on existing bike and pedestrian trails (externally to surrounding areas and parks (i.e., Cedar Lake), on residential streets, around water bodies)
2. Need for mountain bike trails
3. Roads are currently in good condition

Weaknesses/Threats

1. Safety improvements are needed on paths and at heavy traffic intersections (especially near schools and highways)
2. Trail system is currently disjointed, non-contiguous, or connects to busy roadways and preferred areas such as parks or recreational amenities, city facilities, grocery stores, and schools
3. ADA compliance (unsafe, uneven paths and untreated in winter) and need public, multimodal transit for elderly and handicapped

Stakeholder Interview Results

The project team has spoken to numerous stakeholders, ranging from business owners and developers within New Prague to representatives from surrounding Counties and Townships. More stakeholder interviews are scheduled for the next few weeks. While many of these conversations highlighted specific issues or circumstances around New Prague, here are a few general themes:

*Development Needs*

- Connected trail system between City to Cedar Lake Farm Park and notable points throughout community
- Condos/apartments/diverse housing
- Workforce housing
- Development-ready industrial and residential sites (especially multi-family residential)

*Challenges for Running/Expanding Business*

- Difficult to find workers – many want to work from home and/or are not skilled enough
- Very little affordable housing and childcare
- Cost of expanding business and development – residential development cost is prohibitive
- Bedroom community (daytime traffic is low, which threaten restaurants and hospitality)

*Suggestions for \$100,000 Improvements*

- Splash pad
- Dog park
- Additional advertising/promotional materials/social media engagement, both to attract non-residents and inform residents of things happening within community

*Suggestions for \$10,000,000 Improvements*

- Indoor sports complex (batting cages, pickleball, hockey rink, etc.)
- Investment into School District

## PROJECT UPDATE

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- Purchase of land and infrastructure completion
- Parks and recreation improvements (connection to Cedar Lake Farm Park, updating park facilities/trails, purchasing land for new parks/trails/open space)

### Czech Out New Prague

Members of the project team attended Czech Out New Prague on August 3, to discuss the existing Parks/Trails map and Future Land Use map with members of the public.

### **Steering Committee Meeting #2**

On July 27<sup>th</sup>, the project team met with the Steering Committee to review the community engagement results provided in this memo, update the document's vision statement, and discuss New Prague's current Future Land Use map. The project team received ideas for edits to the existing Comprehensive Plan's vision statement and Future Land Use map, as well as additional stakeholders to contact.

### **Next Steps**

- The project team will continue developing Community Policies and the Future Land Use Map to bring to the Steering Committee's next meeting (tentatively late August).
- We are working to schedule the next community input workshop (Community Policies and Future Growth) for late August or early September.
- The project team would like to hold a joint Planning Commission/City Council Review Workshop in October to review the drafted community elements and future land use map.