



5. QUALITY OF LIFE

Direction for public services and facilities, education, and public health.

INTRODUCTION

The topic of quality of life provides a different perspective on how to plan for the future of Hopkins. Rather than focusing on the physical growth and development of the community as this plan has in many other elements, it considers the city from the perspective of how it impacts the lives of individual people and households. It makes it clear that the core purpose of the city is to ensure the well-being of its current and future residents. As such, this section covers many of the core functions that government provides – including public safety, social support, and education.

Of course, it is well beyond the scope of the City of Hopkins to address all issues related to quality of life. Responsibility for these issues is broad, and the policy direction in this element will demonstrate that. While this plan only guides City direction specifically, it does call out important partnerships with other jurisdictions and organizations that are key in providing essential guidance and services in Hopkins.

TRENDS AND CHALLENGES



CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS

The changing composition of the population in Hopkins has significant implications. Newer residents are less familiar with how services are provided, and there may be unintended consequences regarding whether people have full and equal access to public services. Furthermore, demographic changes such as the overall aging of the population impact what type of services are needed.



CONVENIENCE AND ACCESS

In addition to technological change, modern life is busier and fuller than ever – with multiple demands on everyone’s time. The rise of dual earner households has meant that there are fewer residents with flexibility in their schedules to take care of personal business and participate in public events and activities. Survey data show that one of the biggest barriers to more participation in activities is simply lacking the time to do so. The City may need to find ways to make participation more convenient, easy, and accessible.



HOLISTIC APPROACH TO WELLNESS

Bringing public health and planning together provides an opportunity to take a holistic look at how the community contributes (or detracts from) human well-being. The recommended concept of “health in all policies” suggests that a plan should consider impacts on health and wellness across all topics in the plan.



EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESILIENCE

With climate change and other global dynamics, the likelihood of a major incident (natural or human-made) has been increasing. Developing a resilient city that is responsive to this is important. Particularly important will be identifying vulnerable populations that will be disproportionately impacted and may need additional assistance during and after an incident.

MAJOR FACTORS

Major factors to consider while planning for quality of life in Hopkins include:

- **Strong foundation for quality of life.** Survey data and feedback from residents in Hopkins show that – in general – people feel good about their community and how it contributes to their quality of life. Most feedback suggests a high level of satisfaction with current public services and facilities. This doesn’t mean there aren’t issues to address, but the City starts from a solid position to move forward.
- **Substantial community assets.** Assets enjoyed by the community include the park and recreation system, public school system, and overall walkability and bikeability via sidewalks and trails. Most improvements suggested by the community are incremental improvements to existing facilities and places, rather than completely new features.
- **Public health points towards opportunities to improve.** In general, public health metrics in Hopkins are typical for a community in Hennepin County and Minnesota. However, there are opportunities to improve around physical activity, access to healthy food, and mental health that could be supported through City policy. Additionally, there are some disparities among groups in the community that need to be understood and addressed.



GOALS AND POLICIES

Public Health

The vision of public health in this plan is a holistic one, so that almost all goals and policies can be seen in terms of how they contribute to public health. With that in mind, this section includes guidance for elements that are not covered more explicitly elsewhere – namely, access to healthy food and health care, active living opportunities, and environmental health.

Policies:

- Support the goal that adults and children of all income levels have physical and economic access to fresh and healthful food and have opportunities to learn about nutritious eating and food safety.
- Support the provision of high quality local health systems that are accessible and responsive to community needs.
- Assist adults and kids in maintaining healthy, active lifestyles by providing a range of recreational facilities and programming that are accessible and convenient.
- Work in partnership to restore and maintain a clean and healthy environment, with particular attention to impacts on vulnerable populations.
- Support investments in infrastructure that encourage the incorporation of physical activity into daily routines, such as walking or bicycling to destinations.
- Support the destigmatization of mental illness through education and outreach.

GOAL 1

Support the vision of a community where everyone has access to the resources and opportunities needed to live healthy, active lives.

Social Services

While the City of Hopkins typically does not have an active role in providing social services to its residents, it is the location of several agencies that do. Additionally, through other ongoing work in the community, City staff will come into contact with people who may benefit from a referral to social services. Maintaining partnerships with social services agencies and being able to provide timely information and referrals can help support residents, particularly those facing challenges.

Policies:

- Maintain information sharing and referral partnerships with social services providers who provide assistance to people in Hopkins.
- Where appropriate, provide referral information to Hopkins residents seeking assistance.

Property Standards

Maintaining property standards in Hopkins has multiple objectives. The primary goal is promoting public health and safety through enforcement of regulations, including the building code, fire code, heating and plumbing code, and environmental health guidance. Additionally, inspections can help maintain community livability, appearance, and value by enforcing property maintenance standards and other regulations.

Policies:

- Continue to enforce applicable regulations on buildings, properties, businesses, and building systems to support public health, safety, and community livability.
- Educate the public, developers, property owners, business owners, and other stakeholders on applicable city and state regulations.

Facilities and Infrastructure

The City of Hopkins maintains its system of public infrastructure, buildings, equipment, and open space primarily through its Public Works Department. In addition to maintaining existing elements to established standards, the City must consider what new and/or improved elements will be needed to accommodate future growth, development, and change.

Policies:

- Maintain and improve existing public infrastructure, buildings, equipment, and open space to established standards.
- Identify facility and infrastructure needs associated with future development, as well as changes in the population, to ensure that investments are consistent with longer term community goals.
- Make efficient use of space in the city through partnerships and co-location of public functions, where feasible.
- Collaborate with Hopkins Public Schools on mutually beneficial projects and initiatives, to strengthen both institutions.

GOAL 2

Use partnerships to ensure that residents are connected with necessary services to meet health, economic, and practical needs.

GOAL 3

Maintain property standards and enforcement to ensure that neighborhoods and buildings remain safe and livable.

GOAL 4

Maintain public infrastructure, buildings, equipment and open space that meets the demand of future community needs.

GOAL 5

Support educational opportunities for Hopkins residents that support basic education, lifelong learning, and economic opportunity.



Education

The City of Hopkins benefits directly from having high quality public and private educational opportunities, particularly for its children. While not directly involved in the governance of either the schools or library, the City can help support these institutions in a variety of ways. A strong educational system helps in promoting economic opportunity by preparing future employees with the skills and training needed. It also strengthens the city overall by helping to attract families, enhancing the tax base through increased value of property in the district, and contributing to quality of life.

Policies:

- Educate residents regarding how the city functions, and how they can be involved, via educational programs such as Hopkins Academy.
- Support the presence of a public library system that provides a range of reading materials and related resources free of charge to the public.
- Support the presence of an educational system that meets the needs of school children, job seekers, and lifelong learners.
- Explore ways the city can pursue job training programs to meet the needs of area employers.

Public Safety

Protecting and promoting public safety is an essential element of quality of life in Hopkins. Through the work of city staff, and cooperative partnerships with other agencies, there is continued work to reduce both the incidence and perception of crime. In recent years, the Police Department in particular has focused on a crime prevention strategy that involves a cooperative partnership with the community and proactively seeks to inform and involve a diverse range of residents.

Policies:

- Continue to build community trust and strengthen partnerships with diverse communities.
- Cultivate and continue to foster relationships with youth in the community through new and current programs.
- Continue to promote transparency through community academies and educational forums.
- Support officer development through ongoing training, formal education, and career enhancement opportunities.
- Research and implement new recruitment efforts for department personnel.

GOAL 6

Prevent and reduce crime and increase perceptions of safety through interagency collaboration and coordination with residents as empowered partners.

Emergency Response

Emergency response is another core function of government. Through the Fire Department and a range of other partners, Hopkins responds to numerous fire, medical, and other emergency incidents annually. In addition to incident management, planning for future disaster response and recovery is a key component in the vision of a resilient city.

Policies:

- Maintain and improve public safety infrastructure in order to improve response times, incorporate technological advances, and enhance interagency communications.
- Maintain an Emergency Operations Plan for emergency preparedness, including needed facilities, equipment, staffing, and training.
- Conduct appropriate training to enhance readiness for emergencies, including table top and simulation trainings.
- Support community emergency response through training volunteers to assist with basic disaster response.
- Maintain partnerships with other emergency response agencies, including Hennepin County.
- Prioritize firefighter safety, especially in relation to the health hazards of the profession.

GOAL 7

Reduce harm to people and property by utilizing collaborative approaches to increase capability and capacity to respond to emergency incidents.