

City of Hutchinson Comprehensive Plan

Appendix A Strengths and Weaknesses Exercise

APPENDIX A

Halos (Strengths)

As part of the Community Visioning Process, the City of Hutchinson hosted a Planning Kick-off session on May 1, 2001 at the Hutchinson Middle School. Despite the hard and uncomfortable chairs, many area residents worked with the Consulting Planners to develop a Prioritized Statement of Community Strengths. The Strengths can be broken into four (4) major categories as follows:

SMALL TOWN COMMUNITY SPIRIT:

Large Volunteer Base (13)
Active / Diverse Churches (4)
Low Crime Rate (3)
Community is Caring for those in Need (1)
Nice Neighbors
People/Work Ethic
Clean City
Active Civic Groups
Wine Club / Social Organizations
Reputation Around State

Many residents felt that the sense of community in the Hutchinson area is important to its health and vibrancy. The Community is defined in many ways by its residents, community groups and work ethic.

The Community is blessed with many economic and geographic advantages that will help to ensure a positive future for Hutchinson. Not the least of which was the location of the community in relation ship to the Twin Cities and the presence of solid local employers.

ECONOMY / LOCATION:

Strategic Location Close to Twin Cities (9)
Progressive Attitude/Business Community (4)
Industrial Base (4)
Close to Metro, but still Rural (4)
Above Average Income (2)
Good Business Base (2)
Good Employment (2)
Regional Shopping Center (2)
Stable Economy
Stable Downtown
Large Employers



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PARKS / OPEN SPACE:

Lots of Parks / Recreation
[Community Development] (9)
Trees (1)
Library/Library Square (1)
Good Fishing Area (1)
Extra Curricular Activities for Adults/Children
Scenic Beauty
River/Lake
Close to Lakes
Good Green Space

Hutchinson can be viewed as an oasis within the prairie and farm fields. Much of the beauty of the area is represented by the amount of open space, parks and natural beauty. The river and Otter Lake make for an enjoyable backdrop to the vibrant city. The City will need to address maximizing the utilization of the existing open space and designing appropriate additional parks and recreational facilities for the future.

The City of Hutchinson is a progressive community with significant investments in public infrastructure. The City is responsible for the maintenance of city streets, sanitary sewer, flooding, and police and fire. In addition the City operates a health care facility, public library and liquor store. The community appears to be satisfied and pleased with the services and facilities that are available. The comprehensive plan will help to set forth goals and policies that continue to allow for the provision of adequate services for the residents.

CITY SERVICES:

Low Cost Utilities (3)
City Services that are Available (3)
Schools/Education (3)
Well Maintained Streets/Winter and Summer (2)
Airport (2)
Police and Emergency Services (1)
Health Care (2)
Utilities (1)
Strong Infrastructure
Senior Center with Wide Variety of Activities
Minimal Flood Impacts
Fairgrounds
Liquor Store
Snow Removal
Planning/Mitigation



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Pitchforks (Negatives)

While the residents seem to be proud of the accomplishments and strengths of the community, there are several concerns that need to be addressed by the comprehensive plan.

TRANSPORTATION:

Congested Downtown / Traffic (8)
Highway 7 / Turning Lanes (7)
No 4-Lanes to Hutchinson/ Transportation (5)
Loss of Rail (5)
Limited Bike Trails (2)
No Ring Road (1)
No Railroad (1)
Potholes
Pedestrian Traffic Infrastructure
Street Lights

By far the greatest concern expressed by the group was the inadequate traffic flow and transportation to Hutchinson and within the community. Adequate transportation infrastructure hinders economic development efforts and cause “small-town road rage”. The impacts of congestion on downtown were also noted as a major concern for the future health of the community.

The Community is concerned that growth is not managed in an appropriate manner. Participants recognize that the costs of growth are significant both to the developer and to the community. The city must also address environmental issues as it sees additional growth. The comp plan will address these issues as it examines future growth boundaries capital improvements and an Urban Assessment Review of future City Improvement Projects.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT:

Cost of Growth (9)
Sprawl (7)
Development with Few Ecological
Pre-Thoughts (4)
High Cost of Adding Infrastructure (2)
Lack of Infrastructure on North Side (2)
Cap on Taxes /. Keep Taxes Balanced (1)
Expensive Community Taxes (1)
Rural Overtaken by Urban



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SOCIAL CONCERNS:

Cultural Diversity / Preparation to Handle (5)
Not Maximized Shared Vision Between
City, Schools, Healthcare, County (3)
Possible Future Gang Problems (2)
Need Long Range Planning for Schools (2)
Youth and Senior Center Facilities (1)
Negative People (1)
High Healthcare Costs
Lack of Education Choices
Lack of Things to do for 14-30 year olds

Nothing is so constant as Change. As the community celebrates its successes, it must also address new social concerns. The community recognizes the changing demographics for most Minnesota Communities and desires to address it. The community also recognizes the inter-relationship between community development and an effective educational system.

The residents recognize the need to provide a variety of economic opportunities, including pedestrian and automobile oriented commercial development for large and small businesses. There is interdependence between a healthy downtown and a vibrant retail community. The residents also desire more opportunity and choices when it comes to specific retail services that are available in Hutchinson. The plan will work to further define these local needs and establish action steps for the City.

DOWNTOWN AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT:

Empty Storefronts Downtown (9)
Struggling Downtown (7)
Too Many Grocery Stores
Empty Cub Food Store
Inadequate Restaurants
Limited Retail / No Good Department Stores
Big Box Retail
Drab Retail Downtown
High Consolidation of Employment
2 Major Employers

