



# Economic Development Strategic Plan 2018

*Optimizing our  
Development and  
Redevelopment Potential*

**Prepared by:  
Woodbury Economic Development Commission**

## Introduction

---

In the last two economic development strategic plans, the City of Woodbury focused on positioning itself as a premier business location (2010) and securing its status as a premier business destination (2014). This 2018 Economic Development Strategic Plan (the Plan) builds off of the positive momentum of the previous plans and seeks to leverage the strong economy in order to optimize Woodbury's development and redevelopment potential.

The City needs to be aware of and respond to economic trends and the changing needs of the business community by periodically reviewing and revising its strategies and tactics. This Plan sets forth an ambitious, yet achievable, economic development agenda for the City of Woodbury over the next three to four years. The Plan identifies two specific goals which build upon the community's unique strengths and distinct character. Each goal includes action strategies which factor into the economic prosperity and enhanced vitality of Woodbury's business climate. The Plan also articulates a set of measurable actions to facilitate continued growth, investment and new opportunities. The Plan is not an exhaustive outline of the City's economic development agenda, but rather is intended to provide guidance and direction for future economic development efforts as well as resource allocation.

## Historical and Planning Context

---

Woodbury's close proximity to the interstate system has proven highly desirable for businesses seeking a suburban setting that is accessible to urban core as well as the MSP International Airport. The City's geographic setting also provides businesses with an excellent means of distributing goods and services, as well as access to both customers and employees.

The community recently celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of incorporation as a city in 1967. Home to more than 70,000 residents, Woodbury is the ninth largest city in Minnesota. The City has been successful in developing a strong commercial tax base and has a sound history of financial management including a AAA bond rating since 2009. This has allowed the City to provide an exceptional level of municipal services to a growing residential and business population. Woodbury has an enviable array of restaurants, destination retail, and professional services which serve not only City residents and employees, but attract diners, consumers, clients and patients from a broader regional market. The City has had a long-term and consistent desire to increase the level of non-retail development in our community, to ensure that it has quality 'places to work' and to balance, strengthen and diversify the local property tax base. Woodbury has been able to retain its competitive edge by facilitating improvements to infrastructure in order to improve site readiness. This facilitative approach to economic development has allowed Woodbury to optimize its development and redevelopment potential.

This Plan recognizes the economic success that Woodbury has experienced over the past five years, and the recent level of commercial and residential construction suggests economic confidence. Given the cyclical nature of the economy, it is appropriate timing to assess, project and plan for the future. This Plan is critical to the continued strength and prosperity of the City not only for the near future, but also for decades to come.

In addition to providing strategic guidance, the Plan is also one of the implementation tools of the City's 2040 Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan provides broad policy guidance for the City and includes policies, goals and calculations of land use and infrastructure needs. The Comprehensive Plan also identifies the areas in the community guided for future residential development, places to shop and places to work, as well as parks and open space. Economic

development is an important component of the Comprehensive Plan, not only because it helps expand and diversify the property tax base, but it also expands employment opportunities and creates more choices for residents to both live and work in Woodbury, creating a more resilient community.

Final approval of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan is anticipated in mid-2019. The Economic Development chapter identifies nine economic development guiding principles. Although the Strategic Plan has a much more focused timeline than the 20-year horizon of the Comprehensive Plan, these guiding principles provide a broader context that brings together the City's long-term and short-term economic development goals.

1. Optimize development and redevelopment opportunities by ensuring there is an adequate supply of sites and buildings to meet the demand for commercial and industrial development, redevelopment and reinvestment.
2. Retain existing industrial and commercial businesses and assist companies with their expansion needs where appropriate.
3. Attract quality businesses to further expand employment opportunities and tax base in the City.
4. Increase awareness of Woodbury as a premier destination for business.
5. Support reinvestment in and redevelopment of properties including the reuse or removal of vacant buildings to spur investment in the community.
6. Encourage a variety of housing opportunities to support the workforce needs of existing businesses and attract new industry to the community.
7. Identify and prioritize infrastructure improvements to prepare for and accommodate economic growth.
8. Utilize a context-sensitive, solutions-based approach to providing infrastructure to meet the needs of current businesses and provide for future growth opportunities.
9. Serve as a resource to businesses and commercial property owners on local programs to support energy efficiency, renewable energy, waste reduction and recycling.

## Process

---

The Economic Development Commission (EDC) initiated the strategic planning process in June of 2017. The planning process began with the review and analysis of the City's existing strategic plan, which was approved in 2014. The EDC also reviewed:

- A labor market analysis, completed by Cushman and Wakefield, which identified both the strengths and challenges of Woodbury's labor market.
- A survey of Woodbury Area Chamber of Commerce members;
- The City's business retention and expansion program;
- Strategies for facilitating development and policies related to business subsidy tools;
- Economic development marketing strategies; and
- Metrics for measuring progress on the Plan.

With this information in hand, the EDC drafted the strategic goals and action strategies for the Plan which were presented to the City Council seated as the Economic Development Authority on March 14, 2018.

## Strategic Goals

---

This Plan commits to the long-term future of the City, but has been deliberately focused toward a three- to five-year timeframe. To focus maximum effort and value on Woodbury's economic development resources and priorities, this Plan identifies two primary strategic goals, each with a number of strategies and action steps.

### GOAL 1: PROMOTE WOODBURY AS A COMMUNITY OF CHOICE

#### A. Increase awareness of Woodbury as a premier destination for business.

1. Develop and promote key messages regarding the economic development potential of Woodbury.
  - a. Convenient location
    - Easy access to major freeways, MSP Airport and the urban core
  - b. Highly educated and diverse workforce
  - c. Growing residential base
    - Minnesota's ninth largest city, seventh in the metropolitan area
    - Diverse housing options
    - Consistently recognized on a national level as a great place to live
    - Regional recreation amenities; great schools; safe neighborhoods
    - Increased residential development in adjacent communities
  - d. Healthy business climate
    - Medically sophisticated community
    - Strong regional retail sector
    - Growing small business/entrepreneurial sector
2. Enhance Woodbury's visibility and potential to attract business investment through comprehensive and coordinated communications and marketing strategies.
  - a. Coordinate and align social media, website, video, press releases, etc.
    - Improve the City's on-line search profile.
  - b. Continue to develop, nurture and foster relationships with the brokerage and development community.
    - Enhance the Woodbury Business Connect and expand its reach to provide information regarding development opportunities.
    - Tailor marketing efforts with ancillary events and materials to attract specific sectors.

#### B. Encourage growth and expansion of existing businesses.

1. Enhance the City's business outreach program to include new businesses, as well as those that are poised for growth or facing contraction.
  - a. Anticipate and respond to needs of existing businesses.
    - Develop needs survey to be distributed to businesses periodically.
  - b. Establish and/or strengthen partnerships and relationships with stakeholders.
    - Continue leadership role in Woodbury Area Chamber of Commerce.
  - c. Identify trends or issues and ensure follow-up is conducted.
  - d. Enhance the manner in which Woodbury welcomes new businesses.
    - Implement a Welcome to Woodbury program for new businesses.

- Explore the possibility of partnering with the Chamber on an annual joint venture small/new business event.

### **C. Stimulate new business investment.**

1. Build and nurture relationships with targeted business sectors, reinforcing the positive perceptions and proactively addressing challenges to ensure Woodbury remains a premier business destination.
  - a. Continue to promote development of a broad array of office uses.
  - b. Leverage the 2017 Labor Market Assessment findings to attract light manufacturing, office/showroom, and warehouse/ distribution/logistics businesses.
2. Recognize industry trends, identify sectors with growth opportunity, and leverage or realign resources as appropriate to adapt to economic changes.
  - a. Identify additional opportunities for partnerships that advance economic development goals.
3. Integrate prospecting efforts with partners and other stakeholders to reach a broader audience for potential business investment and to increase awareness of Woodbury.
  - a. Utilize interactive and collaborative proposals to respond to requests for information regarding development opportunities.
  - b. Adapt and modify approaches in response to changing market conditions and needs of a prospective business.
4. Facilitate entrepreneurial opportunities within the community.
  - a. Collect and disseminate information regarding the resources available to small businesses.
  - b. Leverage the resources that the Washington County CDA has for small businesses, including the Open to Business program.
  - c. Develop a packet with resource information for small business.

## **GOAL 2:**

### **OPTIMIZE DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

#### **A. Enhance development readiness of vacant parcels.**

1. Work with property owners and brokers to understand the unique challenges and opportunities of vacant or underutilized parcels.
  - a. Determine what resources, financial and non-financial, may be available to facilitate development and analyze the fiscal implications of doing so.
2. Identify and prioritize infrastructure improvements to prepare for and accommodate new development.
  - a. Utilize a context-sensitive solutions approach in regard to infrastructure sizing and design decisions.
3. Meet with private utility and telecommunication providers annually to enhance their understanding of the timing of development in order to ensure that optimal, economical and sustainable service is available to meet the demands of future development.
4. Monitor evolving development and technology trends.
  - a. Ensure appropriate review of City ordinances, plans, policies and processes to identify and remove unintended barriers to private development while ensuring that community standards are maintained.

**B. Encourage economic reinvestment.**

1. Recognize and acknowledge existing businesses for their reinvestment efforts.
2. Publicly acknowledge significant milestones and achievements of local businesses.
3. Understand early indicators of property maintenance decline using code enforcement educational tools to identify opportunities for reinvestment.
4. Evaluate policies, regulations and tools to encourage timely reinvestment.
5. Serve as a resource on energy efficiency, water conservation and recycling which can improve economic competitiveness for businesses.

**C. Identify and support redevelopment opportunities.**

1. Monitor potential redevelopment sites within the City and be prepared to respond to opportunities.
2. Work with owners of aging commercial sites to better understand their perspectives and any unique challenges or opportunities these sites have.
3. Identify and prioritize infrastructure improvements that are needed to accommodate redevelopment.
  - a. Utilize a context-sensitive solutions approach in regard to infrastructure sizing and design decisions.
4. Review ordinance requirements, internal plans, policies and processes to identify and remove unintended barriers to private redevelopment efforts while ensuring that community standards are maintained.
5. Evaluate the potential public costs and benefits associated with redevelopment.
  - a. Determine what resources, financial and non-financial, may be available to facilitate redevelopment.

**D. Plan for appropriate public infrastructure improvements to prepare for economic growth and serve business needs.**

1. Determine what funding resources are available to provide the necessary infrastructure needed to facilitate development.
2. Partner with MnDOT, Washington County, and Metro Transit and other stakeholders to improve transportation and transit systems.

## Implementation and Metrics

---

This 2018 Economic Development Strategic Plan positions Woodbury both for near-term and long-term success. The strategies and action steps outlined in the Plan should be evaluated on a regular basis to determine effectiveness and to prioritize limited City resources. Implementation will require ongoing cooperation and coordination across city departments, Washington County, other agencies and organizations. These ongoing partnerships will be essential to successful implementation of the Plan.

The years ahead will continue to include rapid and dramatic changes in technology and business practices. As such, the City will need to be adaptive, aware and forward-thinking, as it implements this Plan, in order to optimize its development and redevelopment potential.

### **Metrics**

The metrics used to monitor the implementation of this Plan mirror the metrics used in the City's Performance Measurement and Critical Success Factors programs.

## 2018 Economic Development Strategic Plan Key Participants

---

### **Economic Development Commission**

Gina Kazmerski, Chair  
Robert Bankers  
Troy Blakestad  
JoAnn Champagne  
Ross Dahlin  
Dave Hoelzel  
Pam Morke  
Jennifer Santini  
Manali Shah  
Radhika Upadrashta  
Gregory Waibel  
Lisa Crain\*  
Julie Fett\*  
Fred Dempsey-Hess\*  
Inn Hee Lee\*  
Julia Miller\*  
Nancy Wagner\*

*\*Former EDC members' terms expired before adoption of EDSP*

### **Economic Development Authority**

Mary Giuliani Stephens, President  
Christopher Burns  
Andrea Date  
Julie Ohs  
Amy Scoggins

### **Staff & Consultants**

Clint Gridley, City Administrator  
Dwight W. Picha, Community Development Director  
Janelle Schmitz, Assistant Community Development Director  
Karl Batalden, Housing & Economic Development Coordinator  
Bette Thomas, Administrative Assistant  
Jason Aarsvold, Ehlers & Associates  
Stacie Kvilvang, Ehlers & Associates