

A Vision for St. Cloud

The Vision Statement is an inspirational narrative describing what St. Cloud could achieve following the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan. It is high-reaching, ambitious, and enthusiastic. It is a snapshot of the collective desires of the community, which serves as the foundation for the goals, objectives, and technical recommendations within the Comprehensive Plan. The Vision Statement is written as a retrospective, depicting the St. Cloud community 20 years in the future.

In 2035...

The City of St. Cloud is the economic, social, and cultural hub of Central Minnesota. Twenty years after the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, St. Cloud has firmly cemented itself as a state leader in economic development, intellectual capital, and art and cultural diversity. The City has effectively harnessed its historic character and leveraged new growth to create a thriving local economy. The high quality of life afforded by St. Cloud, in addition to the community's "can do" attitude, continues to make St. Cloud one of the most desirable places to live in the country.

Continued growth of St. Cloud has increased both the population and size of the community. Nevertheless, the City has grown in a fiscally sound and managed manner, developing vacant properties within the City Core and expanding into the Primary Growth Area. St. Cloud has grown in a balanced fashion, increasing housing opportunities and supporting existing businesses, while encouraging new commercial and employment areas. This approach has allowed the City to incrementally expand infrastructure, while preserving high levels of maintenance and services.

Downtown St. Cloud has strengthened its role as the heart of the Granite City. The Paramount Theatre attracts nationally-renowned performances while the River's Edge Convention Center continually hosts large conferences and events. Companies seeking Class A office space have occupied and restored historic buildings and continue to drive new development and investment, such as the successful development of the Lady Slipper and Swan Lots. Downtown has transformed into a place where people not only work, but now live. New mixed-use development at the Northwest Corner Lot and North Riverfront Lot has spurred renewed interest in urban living, which gives residents access to shopping, entertainment, and transit all within walking distance.

Residential growth has not only occurred in Downtown, but also throughout the City Core. Residential subdivisions that stalled during the Great Recession are now complete, while new residential areas to the south are designed to preserve the natural environment and extend the City's trail system. Perhaps the most striking transformation has occurred within the City's Core Neighborhoods. The City and residents have invested capital and sweat equity to stabilize and beautify St. Cloud's founding residential areas. Block by block, the Core Neighborhoods have become some of the most desirable real estate in the City for their historic charm, well-maintained streets, and proximity to Downtown and St. Cloud State University.

Division Street continues to serve as a significant economic engine for the City; however, it now stands as a welcoming gateway into the community. No longer just a roadway, but now with increased landscaping, street-scaping, and pedestrian amenities, Division Street has transformed into an attractive and welcoming distinct place. The roadway supports a variety of businesses, including the Crossroads Mall, which draws consumers from the six-county region. The transformation of Division Street is further highlighted by the Cooper Avenue development, which has set a new standard for landscaping and building design along the busy corridor.



Local commercial and industrial districts throughout the City have taken cue from the success of Division Street, utilizing high quality design and landscaping to maximize employee and business recruitment and retention. St. Cloud has managed to improve the aesthetics of its commercial areas while maintaining its “business-friendly” reputation. Public art and high quality design have been key components to the success of business districts. In addition, the City has effectively worked with the private-sector partners to develop strong industrial business parks that provide quality job opportunities. Additional partnerships have supported the creation of several workforce development programs that provide “cradle-to-career” opportunities.

The local job market is supported by the City’s quality schools and local services. The St. Cloud Police Department and Fire Department have adjusted staffing and service to respond to increased growth while increasing safety. The St. Cloud Area School District stands as a diverse and high-achieving public school provider, and higher educational institutions of St. Cloud State University and St. Cloud Technical and Community College and produce civic, social, and professional leaders. Growth of the healthcare sector, including CentraCare and the VA Hospital continue to provide jobs, provide high quality care, and have served as key community health partners.

Interspersed throughout the City’s residential and employment districts are several hundred acres of city parkland and natural areas. St. Cloud parks continue to serve as prized community assets that are easily accessible from all residential neighborhoods. The Whitney Park Aquatic Center and Neenah Creek Park, as well as the City’s many neighborhood and community parks, provide an assortment of programming and recreational amenities promotes healthy and active lifestyles for residents of all ages. The City’s natural areas are highlighted by the Mississippi River, which is easily accessible through the extension of the Beaver Island Trail. The extended Beaver Island Trail; however, is just one component of a now extensive trail network. St. Cloud is connected to the Lake Wobegon Trail, and the system is supplemented by pedestrian infrastructure and on-street bicycle facilities.

Since the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, the City of St. Cloud has worked to link its parks, community facilities, and neighborhoods through a highly-connected roadway network. The growth of St. Cloud prompted a need to improve and expand the capacity of the City’s roadway network. New roadway extensions and wider roads have improved local and regional mobility, providing increased access to both older and emerging neighborhoods and destinations. The roadways are designed with safety and efficiency in mind, accommodating alternative modes of transportation, such as walking, biking, and transit.

Improvements in local and regional mobility have been complemented by enhanced travel options to areas outside of St. Cloud. The establishment of Northstar Commuter Rail service has provided a direct transit route to the Twin Cities region and improved employment opportunities throughout the City. And with commercial passenger flight service restored, residents and businesses from throughout the regional can also use the St. Cloud Regional Airport to access destinations well beyond central Minnesota.

In the twenty years since the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, St. Cloud continues to rank as an exciting and desirable place to live and work. It is a destination for businesses, families, professionals, and students. The wealth of parks, educational providers, employment opportunities, high quality housing, and entertainment and retail opportunities afford St. Cloud residents a high quality of life. Understanding the link between health quality of life, St. Cloud has prioritized positive health outcomes and supported good health by ensuring residents are able to access health care, are physically active, and have access to safe, affordable and healthy food. The character of St. Cloud has much improved and the City has undergone significant change, but the strength of the Granite City community has managed to a remained a consistent and thriving asset.