

# Minnesota Planning Enabling Law Reform

## Statement of Purpose and Need

Minnesota Chapter of the American Planning Association and  
Minnesota Association of County Planning and Zoning Administrators

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### **PURPOSE**

To initiate reform of Planning Enabling Laws in Greater Minnesota.

- Enhance coordination and cooperation in planning decision making at all levels of government
- Achieve accountability, consistency, and transparency of planning decisions at all levels of government
- Set minimum standards for local comprehensive plans
- Effectively integrate comprehensive planning with land use regulation, and public investment in infrastructure and transportation, to improve the effectiveness of regulation and the cost-effectiveness of public investments.
- Eliminate inconsistencies and ambiguities in planning statutes as they apply to cities, counties and townships
- Foster healthy communities and protect the environment and natural resources

### **NEED**

Minnesota's planning laws date from the 1950s and 1960s (and are based on models dating from the 1920s), when most development occurred in cities, and when townships and unincorporated parts of counties were largely agricultural, rural or undeveloped. Since that time:

- Our population has expanded from three million to five million. Development has spread far from the core cities, and year-round housing is common in areas previously natural or used for agriculture, forestry, or recreation.
- The number of governmental units and their relationships has become more complex.
- We understand a great deal more about impacts of human activity upon the natural environment.
- The body of law surrounding planning and land use regulation has changed considerably, become more complex, and state planning laws have accreted over time.
- Public expectations for meaningful involvement in public decisions have risen dramatically.
- Demands on public infrastructure have increased, and public investments have not kept pace with the public's expectations for maintenance and improved performance.

The public can no longer be assured of orderly and efficient patterns of development. Expensive and divisive conflicts between jurisdictions and individuals have occurred. Natural and historic resources are threatened, and environmental quality is more difficult to achieve. Trust in government declines when the public feels disenfranchised by decisions about development. Inefficient land use patterns can result in unintended consequences, which in turn can drive up the costs of services, infrastructure, and transportation improvements. For these reasons, the Minnesota Chapter of the American Planning Association and Minnesota Association of County Planning and Zoning Administrators believe efforts must begin to reform our planning enabling laws.