

CITY OF COOK COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

December 2015

Creating a Community Vision



2015 City Council Members:

- Harold Johnston, Mayor
- Elizabeth Storm, Councilor
- Kim Brunner, Councilor
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- Jody Bixby, Councilor
- Theresa Martinson City Administrator-Clerk/Treasurer

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Summary

The City of Cook Comprehensive Plan development process was conducted between May 2014 and October 2015. The process included a Public visioning meeting and several City Council work sessions. The process created a community vision, goals, and action steps. The process was facilitated by the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC), a regional planning organization whose jurisdiction includes St. Louis County, Minnesota. After a public review and comment period, the City Council adopted the Comprehensive Plan by resolution on December 17, 2015. The City will use the Plan to guide decisions and to support fund seeking efforts.

City of Cook Demographics

Population (US Census 2010)

The City of Cook key population data was gathered from the US Census Bureau and the American Community Survey (ACS). According to the 2010 Census, Cook has an estimated population of 574. There is a slightly higher population of females (52.4%) than males (47.6%). Since the 2000 US Census, Cook's previous population was 622 and has decreased by 7.7%.

Age/Race (US Census 2010)

Other key findings concluded that the City of Cook is predominantly Caucasian (92%) with the next largest racial groups of people that are American Indian (4.9%) and people that two or more races (2.4%). The City's median age is 47 years old (median means the number that is in the middle of the oldest and youngest persons in Cook). The median age for males are 40.8, yet 48.9 is the median age for females. The following are top largest age groups in Cook:

1. 60-64 years of age (8.9% of population)
2. 30-34 years of age (8% of population)
3. 50-54 years of age (7.8% of population)
4. 85 years age and over (7.8% of population)

Definition of a Family (US Census Bureau):

Family is a group of two people or more (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together; all such people (including related subfamily members) are considered as members of one family.

Household (US Census 2010)

There are an estimated total of 268 households in Cook, which include 134 family households. The average household size is 2.04 while the average family size is 2.84. The City has 306 housing units, which include 268 occupied units. Out of the total amount of occupied units, approximately 63% are owner-occupied, while 37% are renter-occupied. 12% of the City's housing units are vacant, comprising of most of these units that are available for rent (4.6%); for sale only (2.6%); and for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use (2.3%).

Industry/Income (ACS 2013)

According to the 2013 American Community Survey (ACS), The City of Cook has 260 employed residents that are at least 16 years of age or older. The following are the top industries of employers in Cook:

1. Educational services, and health care and social assistance (25% of population)
2. Arts, entertainment, recreation, and accommodation and food services (20.4% of population)
3. Retail trade (13.1% of population)
4. Construction (8.5% of population)

Community Vision

A community visioning session was held on June 10, 2014 at the LaCroix District Ranger Station. Many members of the public attended and participated in an ARDC facilitated exercise. Participants stated what they thought were Cook's physical assets, unseen assets, and what assets they'd like to see in the future. The exercise resulted in a list of issues that went on to be addressed in this plan. It also was used by the City to create the following community vision:

The City of Cook will be a beautiful, rural, clean, safe, accessible destination for a diverse, healthy population of residents and visitors. The City will have safe roads, sidewalks, and trails that connect residential neighborhoods, businesses, amenities, lakes, and services to one another. The City will host year-round attractions, activities, and events that are entertaining for all ages and utilize both outdoor and indoor facilities. The City will contain diverse, affordable housing. The economy in Cook will be thriving with an array of local businesses that will provide residents and visitors with necessary goods and services and offering diverse employment opportunities. Cook will remain one of the few remaining full-service rural communities in Minnesota and will be well endowed with opportunities.



Recommendations

Transportation

The City of Cook has several assets involving transportation, including Highway 53. It is the City's major traffic carrier, passing through the community on its western edge. It is a paved thoroughfare connecting residents and visitors south to the Iron Range and Duluth and north to International Falls and Canada. It accesses many homes and businesses. Other roads serving the community include multiple St. Louis County State-Aid Highways. These facilities connect Cook to Lake Vermilion and other destinations.

The City has its own street transportation as well. Many streets in the City have sidewalks adjacent to them and all streets are paved.

Cook is served by Arrowhead Transit, a rural provider that (as of September 2015) can bring residents and visitors to Virginia and Duluth on the second Friday of the month. Big Woods Transit, an enterprise of the Bois Forte Band of Ojibwe, is also available for use by Cook residents and visitors.

The City of Cook operates an airport on the southwest side of the City. It is an important community asset with a main runway of 4,000 feet and a smaller crosswind runway. The site includes several hangars and associated buildings. The City is currently working with a consultant to update the Airport Master Plan for the facility. That plan will recommend future improvements that can be added to the City's Capital Improvement Plan and this Comprehensive Plan.

Cook, in collaboration with other government entities, will have a safe, high quality and well maintained transportation system. Cook supports a high quality and well-maintained airport that is connected to the community. Cook facilitates active transportation modes that promote tourism and good health.

Recommended actions include:

1. **Improve Safety on Highway 53.** The City of Cook recognizes that Highway 53, particularly since its completion as a four lane roadway south the City, has safety concerns. Traffic speed and pedestrian crossing safety are often cited by the public. There is a high number of driveways and cross streets. Pedestrian facilities are limited. The City should start a formal communication process with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) and collaboratively seek ways to improve highway safety in Cook. PRIORITY: Short-Term (0 to 5 years)
2. **Strive to make the transportation network of Cook safe for all.** The City's roads should be usable by everyone from eight to eighty, whether they are walking, biking, or rolling. The City should watch for opportunities to create and/or maintain sidewalks in its neighborhoods and business areas. Bike racks should be placed in priority locations, such as parks and the library. Crosswalks should be created and/or maintained where appropriate. Property owners should be encouraged to keep adjacent sidewalks cleared of snow. Sidewalks should be required as part of new development. The City should consider creating "Vest Pocket Parks" at key locations by placing benches and plantings in a small park-like setting. PRIORITY: Ongoing

3. **Support the Cook Airport.** The City should continue to support and advocate for the maintenance and improvement of the Cook Airport. The City supports the development of an Airport Master Plan (underway in 2015) and will strive to implement that plan. PRIORITY: Short-Term (0 to 5 years)
4. **Continue to maintain and update a five year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).** The plan should address all City infrastructure systems, facilities, and interests. The plan should review needs and recommend specific improvement projects. One potential need is the replacement of the North Street bridge. The CIP should be done by a qualified engineer. PRIORITY: Ongoing
5. **Communicate with the St. Louis County Highway Department as needed.** As issues arise, the City should communicate desired improvements on County Roads. One potential concern is the safety of the Highway 24 and 115 intersection. PRIORITY: Ongoing
6. **Promote public transit.** Cook should keep information about Arrowhead Transit and Big Woods Transit available for potential users. Information should be provided at the library and city hall, as well as the City web site. PRIORITY: Ongoing
7. **Support and participate in efforts to create bicycle facilities in the Cook/Lake Vermilion area.** Bicycling is a popular resident and visitor activity. It is particularly enjoyed by families with children and adults over 50. Mountain biking is increasing its interest level every year, particularly for adults under 50. Cook should look to take economic advantage of bicycling and should designate a City Councilor to participate in meetings and discussions of the Lake Vermilion Regional Trail steering committee. That group is seeking ways to connect Cook to Lake Vermilion via a paved trail. Other trails and rustic road systems oriented to mountain bikers should also be explored. PRIORITY: Short-Term (0 to 5 years)
8. **Communicate Safety Issues to CN Railway as identified.** Cook should observe and communicate any perceived safety issues associated with the CN Railway system that bisects the community. This issues could be observed by the City Council, City staff, residents or visitors. PRIORITY: Ongoing
9. **Clarify All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) rules regarding use on City streets and rights of way.** ATV riding is growing in popularity in the Cook area and a new riding club has formed. The City should examine ATV use in the community and set rules for riding on City Streets and in ditches. The City is not against ATV use, but needs ensure it is done in a fashion that does not negatively impact the City's maintenance of streets and ditches and does not greatly affect quality of life.
10. **Support Northwoods School and Field Township's efforts to construct trails.** These ADA compliant trails would be used for educational purposes as well as providing an opportunity for area residents, regardless of abilities, to exercise and be outdoors.

Public Utilities, Facilities/Services, Recreation

Utilities

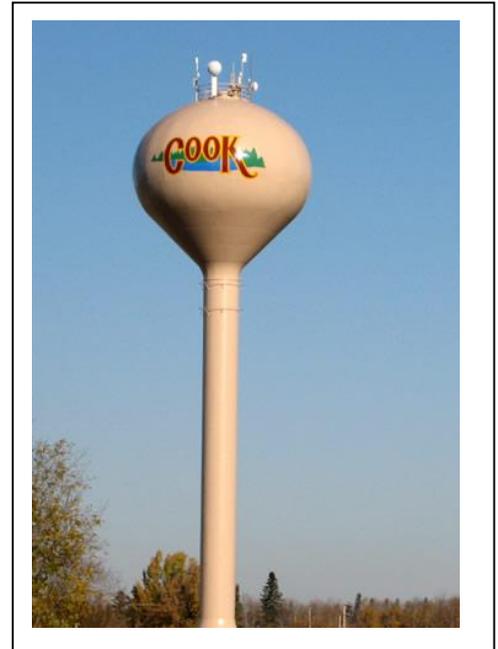
The development and maintenance of Cook's utility infrastructure is shared between the City and private utility companies. Utilities include water, storm water, sewer, communications, and waste collection.

From 2004 to 2006 the City replaced a majority of the water, sewer and storm water lines in Cook. With the major improvements, approximately 95% of the City's water infrastructure is new since 1991, including the water tower that was installed in 2010.

Cook also replaced most of its sewer lines from 2004 to 2006. The sewer pond system was created in 1988. Storm water systems are also fairly new.

Cook has telephone service (Century Link), cable television, mobile phone service, and high speed internet. There is available space on the Cook water tower for additional cell phone receivers. The City has a website to inform the public about City services and events.

The City of Cook waste collection is provided by Udovich Garbage Service. Waste collection includes garbage and recycling.



Public Facilities

Cook City Hall is located in downtown Cook on River Street and contains a small meeting/work room, offices, and a rest room. It is next to the community park which features murals of Cook and a community gazebo that is used for events. The existing City Hall is small with little room for public meetings including City Council and Planning Commission meetings. There is a lack of privacy for the City Administrator and Deputy Clerk/Treasurer. A new or improved City Hall could include meeting rooms and private offices for staff.

The Cook Public Library offers several resources to the community such as wireless internet, books, periodicals, DVDs, high-speed networked public computers, seating areas, gathering space, and test proctoring. The Library is a part of the Arrowhead Library System (ALS). One of the benefits of ALS is that the Cook Public Library has the ability to have materials from around the state delivered to Cook. There is an active Friends of the Library group and volunteers help staff the facility. One of the relevant community plans that was reviewed as part of this Comprehensive Plan process was the *Cook Public Library Strategic Plan 2012-2016*.

In 1995 the City developed its current municipal off-sale liquor store. The store is profitable enough to provide funding to the City that is used to develop and maintain City facilities and infrastructure.

The Cook City Ambulance and Fire Hall was built in 1991. The building houses the City owned ambulance and fire trucks. Surrounding townships share in the cost of the Ambulance and Fire Department services. Cook Fire and Emergency services also partner with the Lake Vermilion Fire Brigade which provides boats and emergency services on nearby Lake Vermilion. The Fire and Ambulance Services consists of volunteer Firemen and Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT). **Volunteers receive free training. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, please contact the Fire Department: (218) 666-2866**

Parks and Recreation

The City of Cook has public spaces for the purpose of parks and recreation, including the Doug Johnson Recreation Center, River Street Park, Riverfront Park, and recreational trails (e.g. cross-country ski, snowmobile). Friends of the Parks is a non-profit organization offering assistance to all City Parks. Park and recreation facilities are maintained and improved through partnerships between the City, non-profit groups, and volunteer community groups. The City Beautification Committee oversees all city park areas with recommendations from the City Recreation Commission in regards to the Recreation Center.

Named for the long standing State Senator, the Doug Johnson Recreation Center (established in 1985) provides several recreational facilities including a ball field, children's play area, basketball court, park shelter-log pavilion, 3 baseball fields, sandbox, and a Community Center building (in development). The Recreation Commission anticipates that the Community Center building will be completed in December of 2015. The hockey rink has been closed in recent years. The Recreation Commission anticipates that there will be ice at the rink for the winter of 2015-16.

The City also maintains a park in the heart of downtown on River Street. It contains a wooden gazebo, picnic tables, benches, murals, and flags. Music in the park is held at the park during the summer months. Recent improvements to the River Street park include: benches, custom flags (by Gustafson's Motors), flower beds, and mural improvements.



Education

Northwoods School, located approximately 4 miles north of Cook, was constructed and occupied in 2012-2013. The new school (Independent School District 2142) houses classrooms for Grades K-12 and a variety of other school and community facilities. The school serves the community and region Post-Secondary and Open Enrollment options, Little Beginnings Preschool, and community education programs.

Cook will have quality, well-maintained utilities, community facilities and community structures.

11. **Continue to maintain and update a five year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).** The plan should address all City infrastructure systems, facilities, and interests. The plan should review needs and recommend specific improvement projects. PRIORITY: Ongoing
12. **Construct a new city hall.** The City of Cook city hall is too small to function as a proper community meeting space and staff offices are not adequate. A new city hall should be sought that offers proper space for regular City meetings, but also for public meetings and events. The hall could include food service facilities and community displays. A public process should be conducted to determine how the new building would function. PRIORITY: Mid-Term (5-10 years)
13. **Improve the Ambulance and Fire Hall.** The Town should seek to address issues with the emergency services building. Potential improvements could include roof replacement, exterior sealing and painting, and west wall reinforcement. PRIORITY: Mid-Term (5-10 years)

14. **Maintain and improve the Public Library.** Increased hours and a larger space could be considered. Implement the Library's Strategic Plan. PRIORITY: Long-Term (10-20 years)
15. **Complete improvements to the Doug Johnson Recreation Area.** The building should be completed, the ice rink opened, and the parking lot paved and/or improved. The playground should be maintained and enhanced if appropriate. PRIORITY: Ongoing
16. **Consider the consolidation of public works facilities into one building.** The City should consider working with St. Louis County and MnDOT to create efficiencies by housing the area's public works and road maintenance staff and equipment into a single facility. These arrangements have occurred elsewhere, including in Hibbing and Pike Lake. PRIORITY: Mid-Term (5-10 Years)
17. **Explore ways to make the Littlefork River a community recreation asset.** In Cook, the Littlefork River is not highlighted. The City should consider ways to provide public access to the river's banks through parks and/or trails. A control structure that improves the river's flow and helps to prevent flooding may be needed. The City should work with the Army Corps of Engineers to accomplish these items. PRIORITY: Long-Term (10-20 years)
18. **Construct toilets for public use near River Park.** The toilets would serve residents and visitors during events at the park, including the Farmers' Market. The facility could also serve as a wayside rest for travelers and could be paired with community promotions and information. PRIORITY: Mid-Term (5-10 years)

Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources

Access to healthy food is a major contributor to overall health. In Cook, major food distribution sources include Zup's Grocery, Ruby's Pantry (reduced food once a month), meals on wheels and the Cook Community Food Shelf in cooperation with the Northern Second Harvest Food Shelf. Local farmers and bakers provide goods during summer and fall at the Cook Farmer's Market. St. Louis County also provides a nutrition site in Cook.

Passing through Cook, the Little Fork River is designated as a State Water Trail by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MnDNR) from a point 15 miles east of Cook to its terminus at the Rainy River. Lake Vermilion is located just north of Cook and is a valued natural resource to the community. Many anglers and other tourists pass through Cook to access Lake Vermilion each year. Other natural resources include forested lands used for hunting, birding, or exploring. Wakemup Hill north of Cook is a high point that offers long views of the Cook area.



Cultural resources include both physical assets such as archaeology, architecture, paintings and sculptures and also intangible culture such as folklore and interpretative arts, such as storytelling, music and drama. Cultural resources also include education and community events that foster social capital and positive social interactions between children and adults. Social interactions can lead to healthy collaboration, friendships, and good will toward our fellow neighbor. Cultural resources can help reduce crime and support a healthy lifestyle.

Cook hosts a variety of community events. These social gatherings offer residents and visitors an opportunity to meet their neighbors and friends and socialize. Events include Music in the Park, Timber Days, Shake a Leg 5K Run, Bike event (Border to Border), sled-dog race, Easter and Halloween parties for kids, Cook's Country Christmas, and Lion's Club Million Dollar Garage Sale (Collect items and gives back proceeds to community).

The Comet Movie Theatre is a historic structure located in downtown Cook. The building is said to be the longest continuously operating movie theater in the State (built in 1939). The movie theatre is operational and also sells crafts and goods. A theatrical mural is painted on the outside of the building which decorates Cook's downtown. Northwoods Friends of the Arts is a non-profit organization that offers studio space and retail space for artists and offers programs for all ages. Its twice yearly festivals bring noted musical groups into the community. Another cultural resource exists outside of Cook-the Flint Creek Farm Historic District (west of Cook) is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Cook will strive for well-maintained park and recreation facilities and natural areas that support habitat for native animal species. Cook promotes its current facilities for community and cultural events. The City hosts year-round attractions, activities, and events that are entertaining for all residents and visitors, and utilize both outdoor and indoor facilities.

19. **Continue to support the Cook Farmers' Market.** The market is a great source of healthy foods and locally created items. The City should promote the market through signage and its website when appropriate. PRIORITY: Ongoing
20. **Explore ways to enhance the Littlefork River in Cook.** See Recommendation 16.
21. **Improve Cook's connection to Lake Vermilion.** The City should continue to explore ways to create a visual and economic connection to Lake Vermilion. Embracing itself as the Gateway to Lake Vermilion, the City can improve its tourism economy. Consideration should be given to signage, trail connections, and visual themes. A trail and overlook at Wakemup Hill would give visitors an additional resource to explore. Also see Recommendation 7. PRIORITY: Mid-Term (5-10 years)
22. **Encourage and support community events.** The City should help promote community events when appropriate. Events that support resident interaction and health should be given particular attention. PRIORITY: Ongoing
23. **Embrace the State Health Improvement Program (SHIP).** Cook encourages residents and visitors to be active in their daily lives and make healthy food choices. The City will support healthy community initiatives, such as the Farmers Market, when appropriate. The City could look into promoting community education programs that instruct residents and visitors to grow, preserve, and prepare healthy foods. The City also should explore ways it can encourage the local school and hospital to work with local farmers to provide some of their meal ingredients.

Economic Development

Economic Development can be defined as the sustained, concerted action of policy makers and communities that promotes the standard of living and economic health of an area. The Cook City Council acts as the City's public Economic Development Authority. The City has an A+ long-term Standard & Poor's rating which reflects an assessment of the City's very strong reserves as a percentage of expenditures; and low to moderate overall debt.¹

Two major Commercial districts exist in Cook, including the Highway 53 commercial area and the River Street/1st Street (downtown) area. Major employers in Cook include the Hospital/Clinic (about 140 employees), Hill Wood Products (about 55 employees), Zup's grocery, and the United States Forest Service.

The City can support economic development efforts through grants and funding opportunities. For example, the Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board (IRRRB) awarded a grant to the City of Cook to provide infrastructure, utilities and site work for the redevelopment of the Vermilion Motel, which was damaged by fire in 2013. The new facility will be constructed at the same location as the previous motel. The \$1.5 million project is forecasted to create 10 construction jobs and six permanent jobs.



The Cook area has a local Chamber of Commerce that touts the City as the “Gateway to Beautiful Lake Vermilion.” The Chamber supports an online presence for the community at the following website: www.cookminnesota.com. Visitors to the website can find a list of current businesses in town and their locations.

The tourism industry in Cook largely depends on the surrounding natural resources including: Lake Vermilion, Boundary Waters Canoe Area (Forest Service issues permits), and recreational trails that meander through the forests and wilderness areas. Other elements of the tourist industry include community events, services, and recreation centers such as lodges, golf courses, and the nearby Fortune Bay Casino.

The City of Cook was largely developed around the timber industry. Today, Hill Wood Products utilizes timber in its wood manufacturing and biomass products. Hill Wood's biomass products help other wood producers by accepting 100,000 tons of wood waste per year for processing into usable biomass fuel.² The US Forest Service has an office in Cook and the agency regulates logging on Forest Service lands. Although the Mesabi Range just to the south is known for mining, no active mines exist in or adjacent to Cook.

The Cook Library Plan goals in the Strategic Plan (2012-2016) suggest that the City diversify the industries in town. The Cook Public Library Strategic Plan listed the following needs or goals that are relevant to Economic Development in Cook as follows:

¹ City of Cook Standard and Poor's Bond Rating. 2012.

² Hill Wood Products website. Biomass/Biofuel. Online at: <http://www.hillwoodproducts.com/biofuel/>

Community Needs: What needs to be done to make progress toward the vision? ³

- Economic development to diversify industries and encourage the creation of nontraditional small businesses.
- Identify what are the emerging industries that would be a fit with our community.
- Offer marketable skills courses at the high school level based on current and emerging industries.
- Market our community's assets to encourage people to live here.
- Joint promotion of Cook and Orr as a tourist destination.

The economy in Cook will thrive with an array of local businesses that provide residents and visitors with necessary goods and services and offer diverse employment opportunities.

24. **Create marketing materials for Cook.** The City should have materials prepared that describe Cook's assets and resources. The materials should be provided to prospective entrepreneurs. PRIORITY: Short-term (0-5 years)
25. **Consider joint promotions.** The City should explore marketing partnerships with Orr and Lake Vermilion businesses. Combining efforts can demonstrate a broader base of area resources (more lakes, more trails, more businesses) and create funding efficiencies. Short-term (0-5 years)
26. **Prioritize current business retention and expansion in Cook.** The City should support local businesses that already exist in Cook and assist those businesses with initiatives when possible, such as was done for the Vermilion Motel. The University of Minnesota has resources to help business plan for retention and expansion. PRIORITY: Ongoing
27. **Develop a list of available properties in Cook.** The City should know what empty properties and unused buildings exist in Cook. The City can work with the properties' owners to promote the sites for development or redevelopment. The list should include information about each site's size, zoning, and infrastructure. PRIORITY: Short-term (0-5 years)
28. **Create a list of desired businesses in Cook.** A list of what types of businesses that are not located in Cook should be developed. The City can match up desirable new businesses with available properties and seek out ways to encourage entrepreneurship in the community. PRIORITY: Short-term (0-5 years)
29. **Seek to bring fiber optic broadband to every home and business in Cook.** The City should seek to provide the best connectivity possible to Cook. This level of broadband can encourage business startups and allows professionals to live in Cook and work from home. PRIORITY: Mid-term (5-10 years)

³ Cook Public Library Strategic Plan 2012-2016. Appendix B: Community Focus Group Summary, February 2012.

Land Use

Cook's zoning includes classifications such as residential, commercial and industrial. The zoning code is enforced by the City's planning commission and city council. The City of Cook is responsible for enforcing the proper zoning around its airport in order to meet safety standards.

Land use trends show movements to more mixed use zoning types, which can add flexibility for land owners and allows more efficiency by having residential uses integrated with commercial uses. This creates a compact land use footprint and establishes close customers for downtown businesses. Often, small residential units on the second floor of a commercial business, for example, are more affordable than standalone housing.

Cook has a Planning Commission that addresses land use issues and makes decision recommendations to the City Council.

Cook will strive for compatible, enforced, existing and future land use classifications which include well-defined districts and specifications to preserve and enhance the community's character and health.

30. **Develop a new and modern zoning code and set of zoning districts in Cook.** The Planning Commission should seek to develop a zoning system that encourages mixed uses when appropriate, allows for affordable housing options, creates infrastructure minimums for subdivisions, is easy to understand and administer, and is easy to enforce. It should address flood plain concerns. PRIORITY: Short-term (0-5 years)
31. **Create checklists and summary forms to assist property owners and administrators with their understanding of the zoning code.** The Planning Commission should create "cheat-sheets" for each of its zoning districts and common zoning processes, such as sub-division, variances, and conditional use reviews. On outline of the zoning enforcement process should be outlined. PRIORITY: Short-Term (0-5 years)

Housing

Multiple methods were used to collect data about housing in Cook, including US Census data and the 2014 community survey. According to the US Census, housing in Cook is predominantly single-family detached homes (228 units, 64.8%) and housing structures with 20 or more units (11.9%) are the second largest housing type group in Cook. The predominant housing type (by number of bedrooms) is three bedroom homes (38.1%) with the second largest type being 2-bedroom homes (24.4%). There are very few one bedroom homes and no studio homes in Cook. Overall there is a lack of housing diversity. It is also noted that Cook's population is aging and senior oriented housing should be accounted for.

The City of Cook strives for diverse, affordable, well-maintained housing for residents' entire life-span.

34. **Conduct a housing assessment.** The City should meet with housing agency representatives to discuss ways of assessing housing needs and determining courses of action to improve and diversify housing. The City should collaborate with the Cook HRA on these efforts. Agencies include the Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency (AEOA), Minnesota Housing, Greater Minnesota Housing Fund, USDA Rural Development, St. Louis County HRA, Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines, Corporation for Supportive Housing, and others. PRIORITY: Short-Term (0-5 years)
35. **Create a plan to address the needs identified in the assessment.** Cook should connect with housing resources to identify funding opportunities for developing new housing and renovating existing housing. A focus of the new and improved housing should be affordability and senior friendliness. Identified blighted properties should be a part of the plan for redevelopment. PRIORITY: Short-Term (0-5 years)
36. **Provide housing funding opportunities to property owners or potential property owners in Cook.** Cook should work to ensure that property owners know about housing funding programs offered by area agencies. Information should be available at City Hall and on the City website. This information should include items on home buying assistance programs and housing subsidy opportunities. Resources include AEOA, Clean Energy Resource Team, the Minnesota Project, Lake Country Power, State Energy Offices in Commerce and Agriculture, and others. PRIORITY: Short-Term (0-5 years)
37. **Consider hosting a community energy day.** Cook should explore holding an "energy day" event for residents, businesses, and visitors. Representatives from the agencies listed in Recommendation 36 and other interested parties could be invited to present their programs and products at the event. PRIORITY: Short-Term (0-5 years)
38. **Seek to allow and promote second floor housing in commercial districts.** Cook should adjust zoning codes (see Recommendation 29) to allow second floor housing downtown. This could create affordable housing opportunities as well as income opportunities for property owners. PRIORITY: Short-Term (0-5 years)
39. **Consider the creation of a rental registry.** Not a rental ordinance, the registry would simply track which houses in Cook are rented or offered for rent, who the renters are in homes along with contact information, and who the property managers are and their contact information. This information will allow the City to help potential new residents find housing and to easily communicate with renters and managers when issues or opportunities arise. PRIORITY: Short-Term (0-5 years)

Intergovernmental Cooperation

In a rural community like Cook, intergovernmental cooperation is imperative. The City of Cook already practices cooperation with other jurisdictions to provide necessary services including law enforcement.

Intergovernmental Cooperation Goal: Cook will work cooperatively with neighboring communities and public and private entities to provide cost effective public services, events and programs and will seek opportunities when appropriate for shared equipment, personnel and services.

40. Identify existing boards and committees at which Cook officials and residents could serve.

Cook should seek out opportunities to have representatives on a variety of boards and commissions around the community, County, and region. Establishing ties with a variety of potential funders, educators, or forums can help Cook to learn about programs, identify potential opportunities, and contribute to the betterment of the area. PRIORITY: Short-Term (0-5 years)

41. Attend area meetings and education opportunities. Forums on housing, economic development, community health, and many other subjects are held around the Arrowhead Region somewhat regularly. Cook officials should attend such events when possible and appropriate in order to stay in tune with new trends and opportunities. If a city official cannot attend, the City should seek out an interested citizen to attend if possible and appropriate. PRIORITY: Short-Term (0-5 years)

42. Be open to sharing and other cooperative ventures as they arise. Cook should consider opportunities for equipment, staffing, facility or other sharing ideas with surrounding governments when feasible and appropriate. PRIORITY: Ongoing

Implementation

A community plan needs to be regularly reviewed and revisited in order to be effective. Cook is committed to review the Community Plan regularly and to update it as needed.

43. **Regularly review the Comprehensive Plan.** Cook should conduct a formal plan review annually. Action steps should be designated as completed, in progress, still needed, or no longer needed. Cook should update the plan when the majority of the action steps have been completed or been deemed as no longer needed. PRIORITY: Short-Term (0-5 years)

This planning process was funded in part by the Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board (IRRRB).

Updates on the project can be viewed on ARDC's website:
<http://www.arrowheadplanning.org/Cook>

For more information please contact:

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