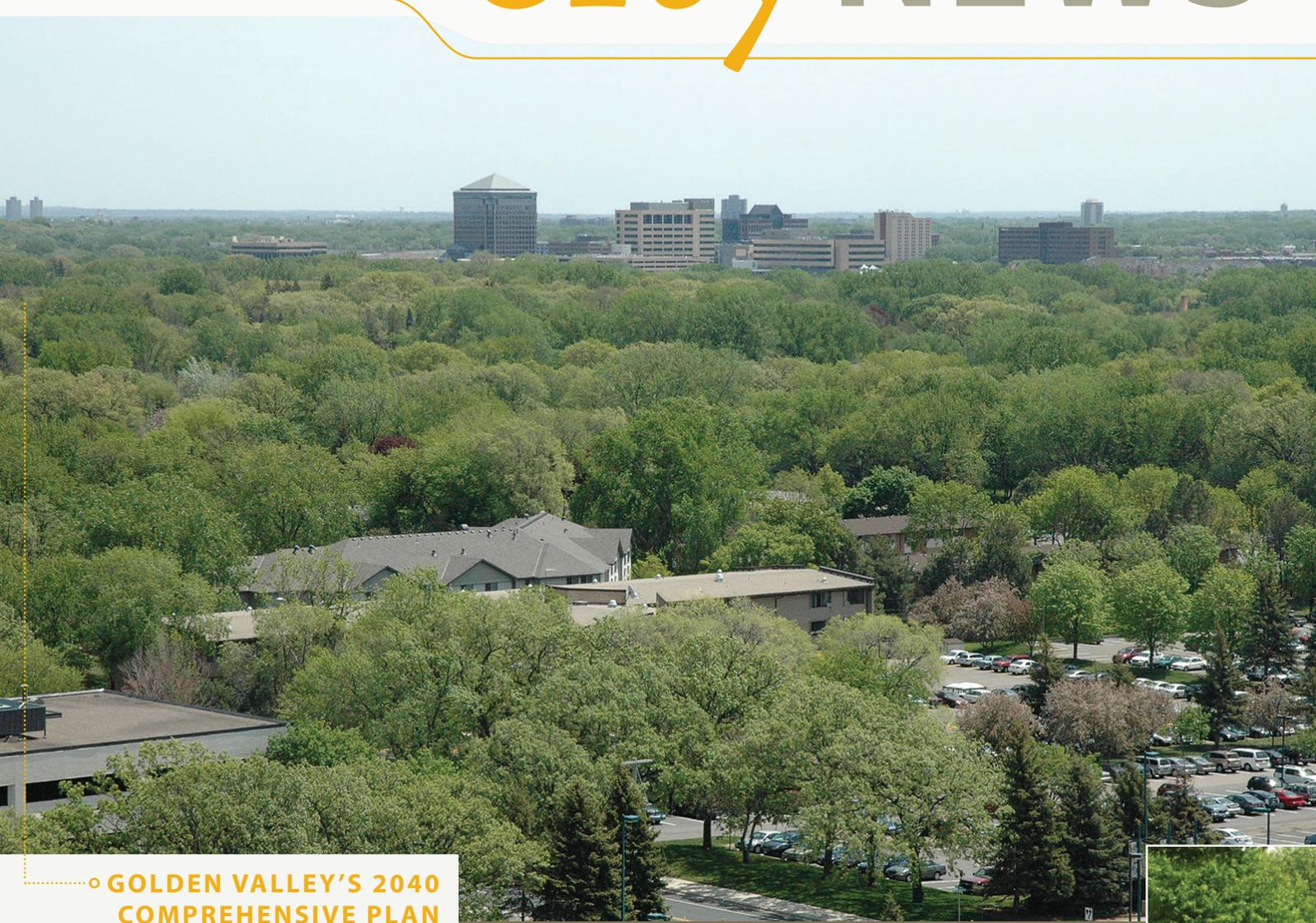




cityNEWS



GOLDEN VALLEY'S 2040 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

As Golden Valley plans for the future, land use and housing play a major role in its ability to evolve and meet changing needs and trends. Citizen input is important.

SEE PAGES 8-9

OUTDOOR STORAGE

The City's outdoor storage ordinance serves both community safety and aesthetics.

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Online Homesteading Now Available

Homestead is a classification granted to properties that are owner-occupied, and depending on the value of the home, lowering taxes on that property. Any Minnesota resident who occupies a property as his or her primary residence may apply. New this year, homeowners may file homestead applications online at www.hennepin.us/homestead.

To be eligible, you must own and occupy the property as your primary residence by Dec 1 in order for taxes payable the following year to be classified as homestead.

State law also provides for the homestead classification to be extended to properties occupied by a qualifying relative of the owner. Special application is required and must be made in person by the owners and relative occupying the property. (For more information on the relative homestead classification, contact the homestead clerk at 763-593-8020.)

Homestead applications are due by Dec 15 of the calendar year for property owners who own and move into their home on or before Dec 1. The City recommends filing shortly after you occupy your house.

How To Apply

Apply online at www.hennepin.us/residents/property/homestead and set up your own account and password on the Hennepin County secured website. Before you apply you will be asked a series of questions to see if you qualify. The assessor will email you if additional information is needed, and you'll get an email when your application is approved or denied. You will also be able to check your homestead status online.

You can also apply in person or by mail. Bring a copy of your Warranty Deed, Contract for Deed, Quit Claim Deed, or

personal Representative Deed to General Services at City Hall (second floor). Or, mail your completed application with a copy of your deed (including the legal description) to City of Golden Valley General Services, 7800 Golden Valley Rd, Golden Valley, MN 55427.

Homestead Facts

The homestead classification is not automatic or transferred to you by the seller at the time of sale. You must apply after you purchase your home and move in.

Submitting a homestead application may qualify you for a homestead market value exclusion on your 2017 property taxes and may affect your eligibility for a 2016 property tax refund

Once homestead is granted, annual reapplication is not necessary. In some circumstances, verification may be requested by the assessor's office. If you sell, move, or for any reason do not qualify for the homestead classification, you are required to notify the county assessor within 30 days of the change in homestead status.

For more information about the benefits of homesteading, go to www.revenue.state.mn.us, look under "For Individuals," then click on "Property Tax Refund" and then select "Homestead Credit Refund (for Homeowners)." 

Property Valuation Notices Will Be Mailed In March

The City of Golden Valley contracts with Hennepin County to work with property owners on the estimated market value of their property. Each year in March, Hennepin County mails valuation notices to property owners that show the market value that will be used to determine property taxes payable in the following year.

Property owners who have questions about their property valuation notices can call the assessor (763-593-8025) or come to the Open Book meeting April 25, 4-6 pm, at the City Hall Council Chambers. The Open Book meeting provides an opportunity for property owners to discuss this estimated market value with County officials.



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Visit www.facebook.com/cityofgoldenvalleymn

If you want to learn more about the process or have questions, call 763-593-8025 and ask for the Hennepin County assessor. 

SIGN UP TO RUN THE VALLEY APRIL 29

New Location For 2017 @ Davis Community Center

With the new Brookview under construction, Golden Valley's 23rd annual Run the Valley will move to Davis Community Center at Meadowbrook School, 5430 Glenwood Ave. The 5K/10K fund-raising event will be April 29, with the first race starting at 7:45 am (see box).

In 2016, Run the Valley drew 526 participants and multiple volunteers, and netted nearly \$11,000 for the Golden Valley Human Services Fund, which allocates the money to local human service organizations that benefit the community (see story below).

How To Register

- Online by April 27 at www.goldenvalleymn.gov/events/run-thevalley (click "Registration")
- In person, by mail, or by fax (763-512-2344) by 3 pm April 28 at Brookview Community Center, 200 Brookview Parkway, 55426 (must include payment)
- On race day from 7–7:45 am at Davis Community Center

Entry fee is \$30 by Feb 28, \$35 March 1–April 28 (by 3 pm), and \$40 on race day. Includes long-sleeved moisture-wick T-shirt, race number, and chip timing. Fee is \$25 for walkers and \$20 for children 12 and under when accompanied by an adult entry (youth fee includes T-shirt and race number only). To be eligible for a medal, chip timing must be used. For the 0.2K Kids Fun Run the fee is \$5, which includes a race number and a ribbon. All proceeds are allocated to non-profit organizations that serve Golden Valley residents in need.

Last year's sponsors were Park Nicollet Clinic-Golden Valley and City of Golden Valley (gold); Bassett Creek Dental, Max Loff Real Estate, TruStone Financial (silver); Channel 12/NWCT, Gary Metchnek Edina Realty, Valley Pastries (bronze); and Al's Coffee, Caribou Coffee, Finken Water Solutions, General Mills Yoplait USA, Go Health Chiropractic, Lunds/Byerly's-Golden Valley, Old Fashioned Donut Shoppe, Perkins Family Restaurant–Hwy 55, Perkins Family Restaurant–I-394, and Road ID.

For more information or to volunteer, visit www.goldenvalleymn.gov/events/runthevalley or call Parks and Recreation at 763-512-2345. ✓



2017 RUN THE VALLEY

- 7:45 am: 0.2K Kids Fun Run
 - 8 am: 10K race
 - 8:15 am: 5K race
 - 8:20 am: 5K walk
- (5K and 10K races will be chip-timed)
- Start and finish at Davis Community Center, 5430 Glenwood Ave. Course runs through residential Golden Valley. Water stops and post-race complimentary snacks donated by area businesses.

GVHSF Allocates \$60,000 For 2017

Since 1992, the Golden Valley Human Services Fund (GVHSF) has worked to support organizations that serve Golden Valley residents, providing more than \$1.5 million in funding.

Each year, this board of citizen volunteers reviews requests and allocates funds raised by the GVHSF through various annual fundraisers such as April's Run the Valley and July's Golden Valley Golf & Lawn Bowling Classic.

For 2017, the GVHSF allocated 60,000 to 12 local human service organizations: Canvas Health/Crisis Connection (\$2,000), Crisis Nursery (\$2,500), HUG (\$5,000), Northwest Suburban Dinner at Your Door (\$8,000), PRISM (\$11,000), ResourceWest

(\$4,450), Senior Community Services HOME Program (\$5,000), Senior Community Services Outreach (\$3,000), Sojourner Project (\$7,000), The Bridge For Youth (\$5,000), Tree House (\$2,050), and YMCA-New Hope (\$5,000).

For more information about GVHSF activities, events, and funding criteria, or to join the list of contributors and volunteers, go to www.goldenvalleymn.gov/boards/gvhsf or call 763-512-2345. ✓



BEFORE TRASHING ORGANICS, CONSIDER COMPOSTING

Organic material like food waste makes up one third of all trash. Instead of ending up in a landfill, your kitchen scraps and yard waste can be put to better use through composting or organics recycling.

GreenCorps member Hannah Garry, Hennepin County, and the Golden Valley Environmental Commission offer the following options to improve your organics disposal.

BACKYARD COMPOSTING

Home composting can reduce the amount of garbage your household produces and the amount of water and fertilizer you need for your yard and garden. It can also improve the quality of your soil while encouraging plant growth. Gardeners have used compost for centuries to improve their soil and supply essential nutrients for plants.



You can purchase a compost bin from the Hennepin County drop-off facility in Brooklyn Park or construct your own using planks of wood and wire mesh. You may also be able to find lightweight plastic bins that can be rotated easily in garden stores or from online shopping sites, Garry says.

Choose a place in your yard where the bin is easily accessible but not an eyesore. Think about accessing your bin year-round so you can continue composting in the winter.

Compost structures must be placed in the rear yard of the property at least 5 feet from property line (35 feet if property line is also a street line) and no closer than 40 feet to any habitable building other than your own home.

It's a good idea to start your pile with a 6-inch layer of "brown" materials, such as twigs or cornstalks, to elevate it and allow air to circulate at the base. You'll need to maintain your compost pile with turning and watering if it becomes too dry.

Take note: Composting that results in objectionable odors or includes prohibited materials is considered a public health nuisance.

DROP-OFF FACILITIES

The Hennepin County drop-off facility in Brooklyn Park (8100 Jefferson Hwy, Brooklyn Park, MN 55445) accepts organics for no charge. Bring organics in closed, BPI-certified compostable plastic bags (look for the BPI compostable logo). Limit of five bags per person. Organics are not accepted on Saturdays.

CURBSIDE COLLECTION

Some residential garbage haulers offer organics recycling collection. Contact your hauler or other haulers licensed to serve Golden Valley and ask about their organics recycling program.



BOKASHI AND VERICOMPOSTING

Vermicomposting is done indoors using worms, which is ideal in the winter. Garry says it's easy to set up a bin. Learn how at www.pca.state.mn.us/living-green/composting-food-scraps-indoors. "It's also a good way to make some super-strong fertilizer for your garden come springtime," she says.

Bokashi uses microbes to ferment the food waste. Cost for materials ranges from \$26–56 per year, depending on household size.

Golden Valley Recycles

GRAY Holiday Schedule

Holiday Week	Pick-Up Date
July 4	Sat, July 8
Thanksgiving	Sat, Nov 25
New Year's	Sat, Jan 6, 2018

BLUE Holiday Schedule

Holiday Week	Pick-Up Date
Memorial Day	Sat, June 3
Labor Day	Sat, Sept 9
Christmas	Sat, Dec 30

Missed Pick Ups

If your recycling is missed, call Republic Services at 952-941-5174, Option 5, before noon on the following Monday. If you have specific recycling questions, call 763-593-8030.

The Golden Valley Recycling Program is partially funded by the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners.



To sign up to receive emailed recycling updates and reminders, go to www.goldenvalleymn.gov/news/subscribe.

Now Is Best Time To Prune Trees

Proper pruning benefits not only trees, but the entire urban landscape. It helps direct growth by slowing or eliminating unwanted branches, and it improves safety and aesthetics. But pruning can also cause severe damage, so it should be done with care and know-how.

City Forester Tim Teynor and the International Society of Arboriculture offer the following tips for pruning.

- Try to complete pruning before trees bud and leaves begin to expand in the spring. It is usually best, however, to wait until the coldest part of winter has passed before you begin. This is when the City of Golden Valley prunes many of its public trees. Winter pruning can result in new growth in the spring. Some species, such as maples, walnuts, and birches, may “bleed” when the sap begins to flow. This is not harmful and will stop when the tree leafs out. Never prune oak trees between April 15 and July 1. Evergreens should be pruned in June only.
- While it’s generally best to prune between fall and spring, remove dead, diseased, broken, or weak branches as soon as possible.
- Proper pruning helps a young tree’s structural integrity. Pay attention to lopsidedness, and try to keep the tree to a single leading limb. Two main base limbs forking off from each other create a structural weakness (called codominant leaders) and higher likelihood of the tree breaking in a storm or splitting down the middle.

“Most people don’t realize how important it is to prune young trees,” Teynor says. “If it doesn’t get a good start with strong branch structure, it will cause problems decades out.”

- Cut a branch just outside its collar (the wider section of the branch that attaches to the trunk), not the collar itself. Remember, each cut can influence a tree’s growth for years to come. Never remove a branch without a clear reason for doing so, and be wary of over pruning. Smaller branches lower on the tree help it produce energy.
- The removal of large or high-up branches is dangerous and should probably be done by a professional. If you plan to cut large branches yourself, do it in three steps to prevent displaced weight damage. First, make a partial undercut about 12 inches from the trunk, and then make a partial above cut slightly further from the trunk. When the limb gives way, there will be a stub 12 to 18 inches long that can be cut at the branch’s collar, but be careful not to cut the collar itself.
- Don’t prune a transplanted tree (with the exception of dead or broken branches) for two years after it’s been replanted.
- Use clean, sharp tools. This should be treated like surgery, Teynor says.
- If you don’t do your own tree pruning, late winter is an excellent time to solicit bids from professional tree trimming and removal contractors. Since contractors may use heavy equipment to access your trees, the frozen ground can help minimize damage to your sod and landscaping. ✓

Help Keep Waterways Clean, Use Less Salt

Ice is a winter hazard. But the chloride in salt used to melt ice on roads and pavement harms plants and animals, contaminates drinking water, damages buildings, and corrodes vehicles, roads, and bridges. According to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, it takes only one teaspoon of road salt to permanently pollute 5 gallons of water.

Be judicious when managing snow and ice on non-public roadways, driveways, parking lots, and sidewalks. Salt should be sprinkled very lightly, not dumped. Better yet, the area should

just be shoveled. Most salts stop working at or below -15° F, and sand can be used instead.

On public roadways, the City began reducing salt use several years ago to improve conditions in local waterways, including calibrating trucks to drop less salt and using a sticky salt brine that stays on roads better and longer. City crews also use technology to stay on top of weather forecasts. If it’s going to warm up soon, for example, salt may not be necessary.

For more information on salt reduction methods, visit www.pca.state.mn.us. ✓

Recreation Highlights

See complete list of activities at www.goldenvalleymn.gov/recreation.

Youth

Superhero Date Night (K–5 with female adult)—Feb 10, 6:30–8:30 pm. Dress as your favorite superhero and participate in super power skill stations. Register by Feb 6. Davis, \$29/couple.

Youth Archery (ages 8–15)—Feb 21–March 14, 6–7:30 pm. All levels, instruction and equipment provided. Register by Feb 14. Robbinsdale Community Gyms, \$65.

Adult

Men's Softball Leagues—Team registration is open! Register online or download packet.

Ballroom Dancing For Beginners—Sundays, Feb 12–March 5, 4–5:30 pm. For beginners and those with experience. Learn steps in swing, hustle, and more. Register by Feb 10. Brookview, \$55.

Seniors

Coffee Talk— Feb 22: “New Orleans: Melting Pot of American Music.” March 22: “Back To Basics,” by the Golden Valley Police Department. 9:45–11:15 am, Brookview, \$2 at door.

Money Matters— Feb 16: “Investing 104–Market Update 2017.” March 16: “Retirement Planning Strategies.” 10–11:15 am, Brookview, free.

For more information or to register, call 763-512-2345 for Youth and Adult and 763-512-2339 for Seniors (M–F, 8 am–4:30 pm). Register in person, by mail, fax, or online.



Isaacson Park Ballfields To Get Lights, Upgrades

City Receives Grant Funding For Improvements

One ballfield at Isaacson Park will get new lights and replacement dugouts and bleachers this year, thanks in part to a \$100,000 capital grant from the Hennepin Youth Sports Program and a \$15,000 grant from Minnesota Twins Community Fund.

“These improvements will provide more efficient and expanded use of the baseball fields at Isaacson Park, which will open up other fields in our park system to programs like the Golden Valley Girls Slow Pitch Association,” says Rick Birno, parks and recreation director. “It will also allow Golden Valley to attract more local, regional, and statewide tournaments to support our area programs and businesses.”

The City, in partnership with the Golden Valley Little League Baseball Association, began planning for the improvements in 2013. These include reconstructing the old block dugouts (built in the early 1960s), improving drainage issues, upgrading electrical capacity, and replacing the deteriorating lights on Field #1; adding lights to Fields #2 and #3; and replacing all bleachers not ADA or safety compliant.

The construction on the ballfields will begin this spring.

About The Grants

In partnership with Golden Valley Little League and with support from the Golden Valley Girls Slow Pitch Association, the City successfully applied for grants from the Hennepin County Youth Sports Program and the Minnesota Twins Community Fund. The City applied for one additional grant for the facility improvements through the Major League Baseball “Baseball for Tomorrow” grant program. Notification of that grant award is not until April.

The Hennepin Youth Sports Program awards capital grants to local governments to build, repair, renovate or expand youth sports facilities in Hennepin County. It also funds additional hours at 15 Hennepin County Library locations. Up to \$4 million annually is dedicated between the programs, which is funded by the Target Field sales tax, approved by the State of Minnesota in 2006. Since 2009, the Hennepin Youth Sports Program has awarded \$19.6 million in youth sports grants to 122 capital projects (facilities) and 221 equipment and small asset projects, including multi-purpose fields, soccer fields, baseball fields, playgrounds, lighting, tennis courts, and more.

In 2010, a \$400,000 Hennepin Youth Sports Program grant helped expand the former Honeywell Field into Isaacson Park. Golden Valley also received \$10,000 in 2013 for soccer goals at Lions, Wesley, and Perpich School Parks, \$50,000 in 2014 to replace playground equipment at Wildwood Park, and \$325,000 in 2015 for athletic facility improvements at Sandburg Learning Center. 

City To Explore Issues Of Race And Equity

The City of Golden Valley will participate in a 2017 cohort of governmental jurisdictions working to systematically advance racial equity. The focus will be on in-depth learning about racial disparities and developing a comprehensive action plan for the community.

The program is sponsored by the League of Minnesota Cities in partnership with the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE).

GARE is a national network of government agencies working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all. Its work involves:

- supporting other jurisdictions that are working to advance racial equity
- helping new jurisdictions begin doing racial equity work
- providing tools and resources to put theory into action

Building A National Movement

GARE believes if governments work proactively to leverage significant change, it sets the stage for achieving racial equity in communities. Its goal is to build a national movement. Currently, GARE is in 30 states and more than 100 cities at all levels of government.

Over the last decade, a solid field of practice has developed that advances racial equity and transforms government. Based on the experiences of early adopters, cities and counties across the country have developed and are implementing racial equity initiatives or agendas.

The 2017 Minnesota cohort will include teams from government jurisdictions that make a one-year commitment to attend monthly sessions covering skill building, strategy development, peer-to-peer networking, and problem solving. Minnesota's 2016 cohort included 11 cities, one county, and several state agencies.

Speaker Series

A highlight of the program is an "Advancing Racial Equity" speaker series that is open to the community. Golden Valley's Human Rights Commission will be promoting the 2017 speaker segments to Golden Valley residents. Locations have not yet been determined, but dates and topics include:

- **Feb 22, 3-5 pm**—"Expanding Knowledge and Organizing for Actions"
- **May 24, 6-8 pm**—"Organizing for Power - Inside and Outside Strategies"
- **Aug 23, 6-8 pm**—"Moving Elected Leadership to Advance Racial Equity"
- **Dec 6, 5:30-8 pm**—"Celebrating Our Success, Facing New Challenges"

Check the City website at www.goldenvalleymn.gov/boards/humanrights/hrc-conversations.php for updated information as details become available. 

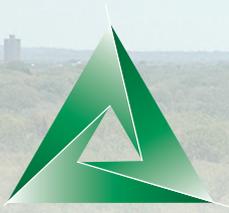
City Seasonal Jobs

The City of Golden Valley hires almost 100 seasonal employees each year to help with Brookview Golf Course, parks and recreation, athletics, and maintenance. These positions work well for students looking to find summer work and for those looking to supplement other employment.

Positions will be posted in January so people can apply and have a chance to interview over spring break, says Chantell Knauss, assistant city manager.

To see the job descriptions, and to apply, visit www.goldenvalleymn.gov/jobs (several positions have more than one opening). 





2040 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

As the 2040 Comprehensive Plan takes shape, CityNews will spotlight its sections in a six-part series. First up is Land Use and Housing.



LAND USE

&



HOUSING

Land use and housing are vital starting points in the planning process, and both play a major role in a suburb's ability to evolve and meet changing needs and trends.

A city as developed as Golden Valley won't likely see any drastic changes when it comes to land use and housing, but that's not to imply nothing will change, or that things don't need fixing, says Jason Zimmerman, City planning manager.

"With land use planning, we want to create a complete community," Zimmerman says. "We want places for people to live, places for them to shop and do business, a strong industrial base, social gathering places, and a full range of opportunities, while at the same time minimizing conflicts and impacts of change."

With housing, the goals are to maintain housing quality, expand the variety of housing options, increase affordability, encourage environmentally sustainable development, and ensure equity in all housing practices and policies.

Realities Of An Aging City Shape Goals

Golden Valley's infrastructure is aging. So is its population. Some buildings are reaching the end of their practical lifespans, and a lot of them are reaching that point at the same time, Zimmerman says. Meanwhile, as more residents retire and want to stay in Golden Valley, the demand has increased for condos, townhouses, and single-level homes.

Planners hope to identify areas where higher density housing or commercial and office developments could be built with minimal impact on single-family residential neighborhoods. They are also looking at how to make more efficient use of land. Flexible redevelopment of underutilized lots, perhaps with a mix of uses, could help fill gaps and support the complete community concept. This will happen gradually, over several decades, Zimmerman says.

That's the thing about the Comprehensive Plan. It's about the long haul. And it's about balance.

While planners look for ways to promote new development, another of Golden Valley's primary goals is to maintain the quality of the City's open spaces, including Brookview Golf Course, and encourage more open space use by enhancing the trail system and easing residents' ability to bike or walk from one open space to another.

"Land use is critical, it sets the stage for all other Comp Plan topics we'll be diving into," Zimmerman says. "As you set up your land use and housing plans, you have to consider how different types of land use have different impacts on water and sewer, roads, trails, and utilities."

Share Your Ideas

Help shape Golden Valley's future by participating in the 2040 Comp Plan process. Details at bit.ly/GV2040CompPlan.

- Complete our **online questionnaires**.
- Host your own **Comp Plan In A Box** input meeting.
- Attend an informal **Comp Plan Conversation** session, 6–6:30 pm (followed by presentations, discussion, and Planning Commission meetings).
 - March 13: Land Use
 - April 12: Housing
 - May 8: Sustainability and Resilience
 - June 12: Water Resources
 - July 10: Transportation
 - Aug 7: Parks and Nature Areas
 - Sept 11: Economic Competitiveness
- Sign up for **2040 Comp Plan updates and reminders** at www.goldenvalleymn.gov/news/subscribe.

Resident Feedback Helps Set Priorities

The City kicked off the 2040 Comprehensive Plan in September with an open house and online surveys to take input from residents about what they think is important for Golden Valley's future. Here are a few of their priorities.

Support A Dynamic Town Center—

Public feedback has shown a strong desire for a vibrant downtown, something that's easily identified as a town center, somewhere to be able to shop and socialize, that's easy to access, and supports small businesses and new restaurants, Zimmerman says.

"We're looking at what we can do to promote the vibrancy of this town center through renovation, through redevelopment, through zoning changes, and by building off of what we already have," he says.



Showcase Golden Valley As A Green Community—

People value Golden Valley's parks, open spaces, trees, vegetation, and environmental awareness, and they don't want to lose that, Zimmerman says.

"We want to look at promoting native vegetation, more pollinators, more solar energy, more sustainability, vibrant parks and nature areas, and as redevelopment happens, looking to mitigate environmental impacts and minimizing the amount of impervious surfaces to prevent erosion and run-off."



Emphasize A Multi-Modal Transportation System—

People also want more bike and pedestrian options, Zimmerman says. Planners will look at where transportation gaps are and address those issues to better help people get between destinations by bike, foot, bus, or light rail. A major planning goal is to reduce people's dependence on automobiles.

This ties into the City's goals to promote healthy lifestyles through active living by design.



Strive To Be More Inclusive—

There is a need for housing to allow for a variety of populations, family sizes, ages, physical challenges, and cultures. Planners will be keeping an eye on demographic trends to best prepare for future population shifts.



Make Important Investments In Infrastructure—

This is more of a basic requirement, Zimmerman says. Planners have to look at the City, see where the age is showing, understand how new development leads to utility and transportation challenges, and keep Golden Valley operating smoothly on all fronts. ✓



PROTECT YOURSELF FROM CYBER CRIMINALS

Cyber criminals and phishing scams are getting savvier by the day. Golden Valley IT Technician Adam Knauer offers tips for keeping yourself and your digital data safe from online threats.

Your behavior online, and off, is a key element in your level of protection. Being aware of a few things up front and developing good cyber habits can save you headaches later.

ONLINE ACTIONS



Think Before You Click—Phishing scams are getting more and more refined. What may look exactly like an email from a friend, or from Amazon or Apple, can be a trick. Never click on a link in an email unless you're positive it's from a safe source, Knauer says. If the email is claiming to be from a business like Amazon, call the business or login to your account to double-check authenticity.

Once you click on a phishing scam link or download a malicious attachment, your computer is compromised. If you're lucky, the link will lead you to a page asking for personal information, which gives you one last chance to stop right there and delete the email. But more often, once you click on the bad link, you'll immediately download a virus onto your computer that could secretly scan your files, or register your keystrokes when you visit other websites, or encrypt your data and hold it for ransom.



Use Secured Networks—Don't send information over a non-secured network, like a coffee shop wi-fi. Those kinds of connections leave your computer vulnerable to hackers.

PASSWORD PROTOCOL

Be Complex—We know. It's not easy remembering if you need to capitalize part of your password, or use special symbols, numbers, or punctuation. It's much easier going with something simple, like 12345 or just the word "password," which, believe it or not, are actually fairly common passwords, Knauer says.

But going with the simple password means crooks can easily guess it. The strength of your password is often the only thing between a crook and your private data and financial records.



Knauer suggests using an entire phrase as your password. If it's a whole sentence, then it's easy to remember that the first character should be capitalized and the last character is a punctuation mark. Also, entire phrases are incredibly hard for crooks to crack, Knauer says.

Don't Reuse—Again, we know this isn't easy. Not only are you expected to use a complex password, but you're also not supposed to use the same password twice. This strains the memories of the best of us.



But it's worth the headache, Knauer says. If crooks crack one password, say, on your email account, they will then try it on your banking account. In other words, if you use the same password across different accounts and crooks crack one, they've cracked them all.

If remembering several passwords is difficult for you, there are password managers and other services you can look into for keeping track of it all. Just be sure never to have a file, such as a Word document, saved on your hard drive that lists your passwords. If crooks hack into your computer and find that file, then they have everything.

Change Frequently—Over time, the longer you use a certain password, the higher the chance it's been compromised. To protect yourself from this, change your passwords frequently.



Or, even though it's a pain, you can also just reset your password every time you visit an account. If you click "forgot my password," sites will send you a link to update your password, and you can just do that every time, Knauer says.

DIGITAL HOUSEKEEPING

Back Up Your Files Often—Frequently back up your computer files and keep them stored on a device that is not connected to the Internet. If someone does get into your computer and encrypts your files for ransom, it won't be so bad if you have recently saved your files elsewhere.

Use Anti-Virus Protection And Keep It Updated—Make sure you have up-to-date anti-virus software. Just don't rely on it too much, Knauer says. New viruses are being created every day with the explicit purpose of outsmarting anti-virus software.



"The number one anti-virus protection is the person using the computer," Knauer says. "Be a little paranoid. Use common sense." 🐱

Cross-City Cooperation Improves Firefighter Training

A partnership among five fire departments enters its 11th year this season and is stronger than ever.

The West Suburban Fire Academy is a cooperative training program that combines municipal resources to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of firefighter education. It is designed specifically to prepare new recruits to meet National Fire Protection Association standards, says Stephen Baker, Golden Valley battalion chief.

Firefighters from Golden Valley, Plymouth, Maple Grove, and the West Metro Fire Rescue District attend two four-hour courses a week for four-and-a-half months, with courses and teachers rotating city to city.

“The value of this partnership is immeasurable,” Baker says. “The level of training we can provide our firefighters, the resource sharing, the camaraderie among departments, working with our neighbors—that has all increased since the Academy started.”

It’s a great example, he adds, of the importance of cooperation across municipal boundaries.

“Since starting the Academy in 2007, we do more joint events together than we did in the past,” Baker says. “The partnership has helped build relationships between us and our neighboring departments, which improves things for everybody.”

This year, the Academy will see the largest number of new recruits in its history, with 37 firefighters going through training in a single season. That includes nine recruits from the Golden Valley Fire Department (GVFD).

After completing the Academy, firefighters will have earned three state certifications (Firefighter I, Firefighter II, and Hazardous Materials Operations).

Tough, But Rewarding

Before entering the West Suburban Fire Academy, Golden Valley recruits will already have gone through five training sessions orientating them to the policies and specifics of the GVFD.

“What people may not know is how hard paid on-call firefighters work, what it takes to become one, and how committed they have to be just to get through the hiring and training process,” Baker says. “But firefighters get a lot out of it, too. They learn vital skills that can be beneficial at any time in their lives. It’s very rewarding.”

After passing the state exam and graduating from the Academy, firefighters never stop training, Baker says. Golden Valley firefighters train three Wednesdays a month, three hours at a time. Training session specifics change each year based on the requirements of the Minnesota State Fire Certification Board.

If you have questions about the GVFD or are interested in becoming a paid on-call firefighter, contact Baker at 763-593-3977, or visit www.goldenvalleymn.gov/fire/firefighters.



WEST SUBURBAN



FIRE ACADEMY

SHOVEL IT

Help keep your community safe by shoveling out fire hydrants on your block. This prevents firefighters from having to dig out the hydrants when responding to a fire, saving vital time.



Outdoor Storage

City Inspections Aim To Boost Safety And Maintenance

When private properties abut each other as closely as they do in city and suburban areas, standards are necessary to keep neighborhoods safe and liveable for everyone. Golden Valley's outdoor storage ordinance serves both community safety and aesthetics. The City will consider updates to the ordinance in coming months.

The update considerations are prompted by a number of complaints from neighbors about storage eyesores, says Jason Zimmerman, City planning manager.

"We're looking at what you can store, particularly vehicles, like boats, how long it can be there, does it need to be screened from view, those kinds of questions," he adds.

A recent fire also brought the issue of safety front and center. Excessive flammable liquids located on and around the property caused the fire to grow quickly and created even more hazards for responders and neighbors. Several firefighters returned with their protective gear permanently damaged by the hazardous materials on site, and investigators found propane tanks and drums of oil, which can explode, says Steve Baker, Fire Department battalion chief.

Such hazardous materials are not only an environmental threat. If they catch fire, they can produce toxic fumes, causing harm to firefighters and citizens.

"Unfortunately, not everyone does the right thing regarding safe disposal of hazardous materials, and some of these things can be found in neighborhoods," says Baker. "The City has a responsibility to monitor safety issues posed by dangerous flammables in residential areas."

"Updating the storage regulations and enforcement is mostly about preventing the potential threat to other homeowners," says Zimmerman. "It's a public safety issue."

Another problem that caught the City Council's attention, he says, is car dealerships expanding their storage of overflow inventory onto properties not attached to the dealerships themselves.

"One issue is aesthetics, and what the storage looks like from the street, and the other issue touches on health and safety concerns," Zimmerman says. "If you're storing hazardous materials, or flammables, or have a vehicle parked off paved surfaces, causing erosion and other environmental problems, these are all things we have to address."

Outdoor Inspections

Citywide outdoor property inspections, which started in 2006, have helped keep violations down, but there's still work to do, says Dave Gustafson, fire and property maintenance specialist.

"Golden Valley's approach is to help residents become aware of and take care of violations before they get out of hand," says Gustafson. "Well-maintained properties bring potential home buyers to Golden Valley, keep neighborhoods safe, and keep the community viable. It's part of being a good neighbor." 🐾

Boost Golden Valley's Resilience And Sustainability

Resilience is the capacity to respond, adapt, and thrive under changing conditions. Sustainability aims to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

To help plan for a more resilient and sustainable future, the City has developed a survey for residents in a quest to better understand its strengths and weaknesses with respect to environmental, economic, and social stresses. "Want to see more renewable energy? Increased native landscaping? Improved surface water quality? Take this short survey at www.survey-monkey.com/r/resilientgv. 🐾

Spring Is Near— Get Permits Now

The bitter cold of January may make your summer construction project feel like a lifetime away, but the warm months will arrive quicker than you think, and permits can take weeks to process. Don't let your home improvement project get sidelined. Apply for your permits now.

Building permits ensure construction in Golden Valley meets local, state, and federal building standards and codes. They provide a way for City building officials and inspectors to review design and inspect construction to ensure minimum standards are met and appropriate materials are used. This helps protect the health, safety, and welfare of the community and the investment of property owners.

One of the easiest ways to make sure things go smoothly on your project is to plan ahead. Contact Golden Valley Inspections first thing to get complete information about how long it takes to obtain required permits, inspections, or variances before you hire and schedule contractors.

This saves you money on two fronts. First, you won't face any future problems resulting from going forward without a permit. Second, it will guarantee your projects are properly inspected, so you won't find out too late that they're not up to code. No one wants to tear down a project and start over again because of a few oversights.

The steps for getting a building permit depend on the project. For a list of permits by project and to get other tips, go to www.goldenvalleymn.gov, click on "Your Home & Yard," then click on "Home Projects & Permits."

Questions? Call Golden Valley Inspections at 763-593-8090. 



Gutted Bathroom Takes 2016 Rescue Room Prize

Mere months after buying their home in Golden Valley, Dave and Emmylou Grosser watched as 2014 flood waters filled up the in-slab heating ducts in their basement, creating a slew of problems.

Dave Grosser described it as an "initiation to home ownership." To fix the damages, Grosser says, construction workers had to jackhammer through a 1959 tile shower to install drain tile, exposing a moldy shower frame overdue for repairs and leaving a large opening in the wall that provided a straight-line view from the basement window to the toilet.

"We had to put a sheet up for privacy," Grosser says. "If the sheet wasn't there, people can just sort of walk by and look in."

The Grossers realized this gutted bathroom was a perfect candidate for the West Metro Home Remodeling Fair's Operation Rescue Room contest (see page 16).

"We didn't feel we had much to lose," Grosser says. "We figured it was so comical, our entry would at least entertain somebody even if we didn't win."

But the Grossers and their pink sheet-affixed bathroom did win, taking the 2016 prize for worst room in the West Metro and the

\$1,000 check that comes with it.

Up to that point, the Grossers didn't have the spare cash to finish repairs on the project, but with the prize money, they now plan to redo the room, complete with a new shower and fully functioning walls, after three years of waiting.

Grosser said he absolutely recommends that people enter the contest, even if they feel embarrassed about their particularly shabby room. 



Don't Try To Beat A Yellow Light

“Before you cross on a green, look to your left and look to your right. There could be an oncoming car. Some people don't stop for red lights.”

Jeff Johnson, Golden Valley police sergeant

Every day Golden Valley police pull over drivers who tried to get through an intersection on a yellow light but failed to enter the intersection before it turned red.

“We'll be waiting at a stoplight, and the light will turn green for us, and we'll see another car come through the cross street, and we know they went through on red,” says Jeff Johnson, Golden Valley police sergeant.

Technically, if you've entered the intersection on a yellow light, that's OK, but once it flips to red, that's a moving violation. The problem, Johnson says, is that drivers don't know exactly how long a light will stay yellow, and it may flip to red before they get there.

Unless you're already at the intersection and have to slam on your brakes, you should stop at a yellow light, Johnson says. Trying to beat the yellow light doesn't just put you at risk for getting a ticket. You also risk a serious accident.

“If you try to beat the light and don't make it, that's when crashes happen,” Johnson says. “Once a light turns red, it only takes two to three seconds for the light to turn green the other direction.”

With that in mind, Johnson says, people driving through a green light should never assume they're clear to go. There could be a car trying to beat a yellow light, or someone who's just not paying attention.

Optical Based Preemption

Sometimes when you're approaching an intersection, you'll see a white light next to the other lights.

These are optical based preemption signals. It will either be flashing or it will be solid. This is a signal that an emergency vehicle is approaching.

If the white light is flashing, it means the emergency vehicle is coming from an opposing direction, Johnson says. If it's solid, it means it's coming up behind you or adjacent to you. Either way, if you see that white light, slow down and be cautious. An emergency vehicle is fast approaching.

Leave Room For Braking

Sometimes people need to brake suddenly at intersections or elsewhere. To give yourself enough time to stop, remember to keep one car-length of space between you and the vehicle in front of you for every 10 MPH you're driving.

So, if you're driving at 55 MPH, you should have five and a half car lengths between you and the next car, Johnson says. Anything less than that, and you'll have insufficient time to stop if something goes wrong up ahead. 



WINTER PARKING REMINDER

Parking in Golden Valley is prohibited on public streets and alleys Nov 1–March 31 from 2–6 am daily. Vehicles may be parked on private property in parking lots and driveways.

Parking is also prohibited on public streets after a snowfall of at least two inches until the snow has stopped falling and the street has been plowed to the curb line. Vehicles in violation are cited by patrolling police. Vehicles found to be obstructing traffic or snowplows, and those still in violation after 24 hours, may be towed.

For more information, go to www.goldenvalleymn.gov/streets/parking. Sign up for Golden Valley winter parking reminder email alerts at www.goldenvalleymn.gov/news/subscribe. 

UPCOMING events

Operation Rescue Room Contest Deadline

Mon, Feb 6 | 11:59 pm
(see page 16)



West Metro Home Remodeling Fair

Sun, Feb 12 | 10:30 am–3 pm
(see page 16)

2040 Comp Plan Conversation Session: Land Use

Mon, Mar 13 | 6–6:30 pm
(see page 8)

2040 Comp Plan Conversation Session: Housing

Wed, April 12 | 6–6:30 pm
(see page 8)

SPRING BRUSH PICK-UP

April 24–May 12

The annual curbside brush pick-up gives homeowners the opportunity to place tree limbs and brush at their curbs for collection and disposal. See the 2017 pick-up schedule at www.goldenvalleymn.gov/homeyard/yards/brush-pick-up.php.

Run The Valley

Sat, April 29 | 7:45 am
(see page 3)

2040 Comp Plan Conversation Session: Sustainability and Resilience

Mon, May 8 | 6–6:30 pm
(see page 8)

STEP TO IT CHALLENGE KICK-OFF

May 1–26

Twenty-three cities compete to see which one has the most active residents. More information at www.steptoit.org.

Bike Rodeo

Wed, May 3 | 6–8 pm

Golden Valley City Hall Campus
7800 Golden Valley Rd

Free event for kids ages 12 and under with an adult. Get a bike safety check, ride through a skills course, have your helmet fitted properly, enjoy music and complimentary refreshments, and register to win prizes! The goal is to educate kids about bike safety and introduce them to local law enforcement in a fun environment.

COFFEE WITH A COP

Tue, May 23 | 8:30–10 am

Starbucks
7802 Olson Memorial Hwy

Drop in for a visit with Golden Valley police officers.



More event information at: www.goldenvalleymn.gov/calendar

STATE OF THE CITY COMMUNITY UPDATE

Tues, Feb 7 | 6:30 pm
Thur, Feb 23 | 7:30 am
City Hall Council Chambers
7800 Golden Valley Rd

The annual State of the City reports the City's accomplishments of the past year and previews goals for the coming year. All members of the community are invited to

attend. Replays can be viewed on GV 16, the City's government access cable channel, and on the City website.



7800 Golden Valley Road
Golden Valley, MN 55427

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763-593-3968 TTY

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WEST METRO HOME REMODELING FAIR 25th Anniversary

Sun, Feb 12
10:30 am–3 pm
Eisenhower Community Center
1001 Hwy 7, Hopkins

Free admission & parking
Activities for Kids

HRF SEMINARS

- Kitchen And Bath Remodeling 2017: Small Innovations To Total Renovations
- Square Foot Gardening
- Entrance Doors
- Everything You Need To Know About Windows
- Hardy And Easy Plants For Home Landscaping
- What To Expect When You're Expecting...Your Remodeling Project

HOME REMODELING FAIR CELEBRATES 25TH

The goal: Boost the quality of housing stock in two aging communities. The objective: Create an event to stimulate residents' interest in making improvements to their property. The result: The Home Remodeling Fair, a cooperative effort by the Cities of Golden Valley and St Louis Park and St Louis Park Community Education. Since the first fair in 1993, the concept remained the same but the event grew to include Hopkins and Minnetonka.

Today the West Metro Home Remodeling Fair still features seminars and demonstrations (see sidebar) and more than 70 exhibitors, including architects, landscapers, designers, electricians, roofers, lenders, city inspectors, and more. You can also get no-obligation advice from architects and interior designers in the Idea Center (bring your photos, sketches, and questions) and vote for the Operation Rescue Room winner (see below). Food concessions and children's activities will be available as well.

So if you're in the market for home improvement resources, or even if you're just thinking about getting started, don't miss this free event. It's set for Feb 12, 10:30 am–3 pm, at Eisenhower Community Center, 1001 Hwy 7, Hopkins.

For more information, go to www.homeremodelingfair.com or contact the City of Golden Valley at 763-593-8099.

Sponsors are the Cities of Golden Valley, Hopkins, Minnetonka, and St Louis Park, and Hopkins, Minnetonka, and St Louis Park Community Education. Exhibiting sponsors at press time include Bluestem Construction; Building Arts Sustainable Architecture + Construction LLC; DreamMaker Bath & Kitchen; Elegance Custom Cabinetry; Hoffman Weber Construction; JW Williams Construction Inc; Neighborhood Building and Remodeling Co; Sicora, Inc; The Home Depot; and White Crane Construction.

OPERATION: RESCUE ROOM

The 2017 West Metro Home Remodeling Fair is looking for ugly rooms that need rescuing.

The sixth annual Operation Rescue Room contest will give \$1,000 to the homeowner whose room is voted most in need of help by visitors to the Home Remodeling Fair on Feb 12, 2017.

Get rules and entry forms at www.homeremodelingfair.com/fair-day-activities/operation-rescue-room/. Deadline to enter is Feb 6, 2017.

Do you have the baddest bathroom in the west metro?



The cruddiest kitchen in the county?



This document is available in alternate formats upon a 72-hour request. Please call 763-593-8006 (TTY: 763-593-3968) to make a request. Examples of alternate formats may include large print, electronic, Braille, audiocassette, etc.

