



## Chapter 1

# Community Profile

- Introduction
- Community Profile



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## Welcome Statement



The City of Golden Valley believes in and stands for the values of social equity, inclusion, and justice.

We embrace diversity and recognize the rights of individuals to live their lives with dignity, free of discrimination, fear, violence, and hate.

We welcome individuals to Golden Valley regardless of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, immigration status, gender, gender identity, marital status, age, disability, economic status, sexual orientation, familial status, or cultural background.

We strive to provide fair and unbiased services and programs, giving opportunities for all.

We are dedicated to being a supportive and united community, strengthened by the diversity of our residents and visitors.

## Vision Statement



Through the implementation of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan, Golden Valley will continue to be a vibrant and dynamic first-ring suburb that evolves to adapt to community preferences and shifting market forces in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. It will maintain a healthy balance of residential neighborhoods, open spaces, commercial nodes, and office and industrial parks, and it will provide a full range of housing choices that meet the needs of people of all life stages and economic means.

The City will create a multi-modal transportation system that supports those who walk, bike, drive, or take transit, will celebrate and protect its natural resources, and will promote sustainability in its infrastructure in order to remain resilient in the face of climate change.



PHOTO BY ANDREW FITZSIMMONS, 2014 VIEWS OF THE VALLEY

## Section 1: Introduction

### What Is A Comprehensive Plan?

A Comprehensive Plan reflects a community's vision for the future. It guides decision-makers over time by providing a series of goals, objectives, and implementation actions to ensure a logical and cohesive pattern of development and investment in the city.

Minnesota State Statute requires that all government units in the seven-county metro area have a Comprehensive Plan in place to ensure that growth and redevelopment is consistent with regional plans and systems. Before adopting its Comprehensive Plan, a City Council is required to take input from the public, surrounding cities, and relevant agencies. All Comprehensive Plans are ultimately reviewed and approved by the Metropolitan Council.

Once adopted by a City Council, the Comprehensive Plan becomes the basis for enacting land use decisions that shape development and redevelopment. In addition to providing direction regarding possible growth, the Comprehensive Plan also guides officials in regulating and administering a number of other community elements, such as housing, local transportation systems, parks and open spaces, water and sanitary sewer infrastructure, and more.

As demographics and trends change over time, the Comprehensive Plan must be reviewed and revised to ensure it remains relevant to the conditions and the community vision. This typically occurs every 10 years. Because the Comprehensive Plan affects each resident and business in Golden Valley, public participation is necessary with every update.



PHOTO BY CITY OF GOLDEN VALLEY

*Residents shared their ideas for Golden Valley's future at a 2040 Comp Plan Open House.*

## Why Does Golden Valley Need One?

Comprehensive Plans generally conceive of a vision 20 to 30 years in the future. Golden Valley implemented its first Comprehensive Plan in 1959. Since then, the plan has been updated several times, with the last revision taking place in 2009. Through careful planning and with community participation, the City initiated redevelopment of a downtown hub at the crossroads of Winnetka Ave and Golden Valley Rd, facilitated reconstruction of roads and highways, and completed many parks and infrastructure projects that make Golden Valley a desirable place to live.

The Comprehensive Plan helps ensure Golden Valley remains a dynamic city that offers a wide range of amenities and services while implementing goals and objectives that work to preserve and upgrade infrastructure. It helps support the sustainability of the region by encouraging reinvestment in targeted areas while simultaneously protecting the environment through regulation and preservation.

## What Goals Were Included In Past Plans?

The Comprehensive Plan the City adopted in 1977, which planned through 1990, focused on coordinating land uses and new devel-

opment with transportation improvements and community facilities to ensure anticipated growth could be accommodated. Many of the goals included in that document remain relevant today and are listed below.

- Develop a transportation system in which highways are designed to facilitate rapid movement while local streets accommodate slower moving traffic.
- Provide a safe and convenient means to reach all areas by foot, bicycle, or public transportation.
- Set aside a large proportion of land for wildlife and maintain high air, noise, and water quality.
- Provide a recreation facility convenient to each neighborhood resident.
- Develop an attractive community focal point that provides an optimum mix of shopping and community facilities (between Bassett Creek, the Golden Valley Golf Course, and Hwy 55).
- Provide housing opportunities for residents of all income and age levels.

The Comprehensive Plan adopted in 1982, while maintaining many of the same goals for 2000, acknowledged that Golden Valley was

approaching full development and that it lacked sufficient affordable housing. In addition, it stated that overseeing the sanitary sewer system was becoming a matter of preservation and revitalization rather than expansion.

A plan adopted in 1999 was meant to anticipate land use needs through 2030, while other chapters developed goals for 2020. The language of that document centered on finding the proper balance between different uses, between quality and diversity, between development and redevelopment, between nature and humans, and between local and regional interests.

Beginning in 2002, Golden Valley went above and beyond the usual community participation involved in revising a Comprehensive Plan by preceding the formal process with a wide-spread and inclusive community-led visioning exercise called Envision Golden Valley. Through this multi-year engagement process, more than 600 people weighed in to provide their thoughts on the city's future. The two core ideas that emerged were Creatively Connecting People and Places and Inspiring Care for Community

Though developed 15 years ago, these ideas continue to guide much of the approach to civic life in Golden Valley today, and the basic themes are woven throughout the goals and objectives of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

## Creatively Connecting People And Places

Golden Valley's location at the axis of urban density and suburban tranquility makes us acutely aware of our connections to a greater whole. We enjoy the access afforded by the highway system that intersects our community but want to reduce its impact on our neighborhoods and natural spaces. "Connecting" isn't just about getting from place to place. It's also about bringing people together—by fostering inviting public spaces, vital businesses, and community institutions where people work and play, encounter their fellow citizens, and discover common interests.

## Inspiring Care For The Community

True community is defined not by borders, but by its common ground. As individuals, families, neighborhoods, and organizations, our actions protect and enhance the public assets for which we share responsibility:

- air, water, wildlife, and landscape
- playgrounds, parks, streets, and pathways
- good government, education, and public services
- safety and welfare of our fellow citizens





PHOTO BY STAN WALDHAUSER

*The annual Ice Cream Social and Concert In The Park is one of Golden Valley's most popular community events.*

## Section 2: Community Profile

### Who Are We?

#### Places

Golden Valley is an inner-ring suburb located just four miles to the west of downtown Minneapolis. Its 10.5 square miles encompass large areas of single-family neighborhoods, concentrations of commercial and industrial activities, scattered educational and religious facilities, and generous swaths of open space in the form of parks, golf courses, and other natural areas. The city is bisected by two major transportation corridors while two others sit on the western and southern borders.

Originally settled as farmland in the mid-1800s, Golden Valley was established as a village in 1886. Pockets of commerce sprang up along the railroads that crossed the area, and local highways became the backbone for new residential growth. Post-war

expansion in the 1950s and 1960s brought significant growth in single-family neighborhoods.

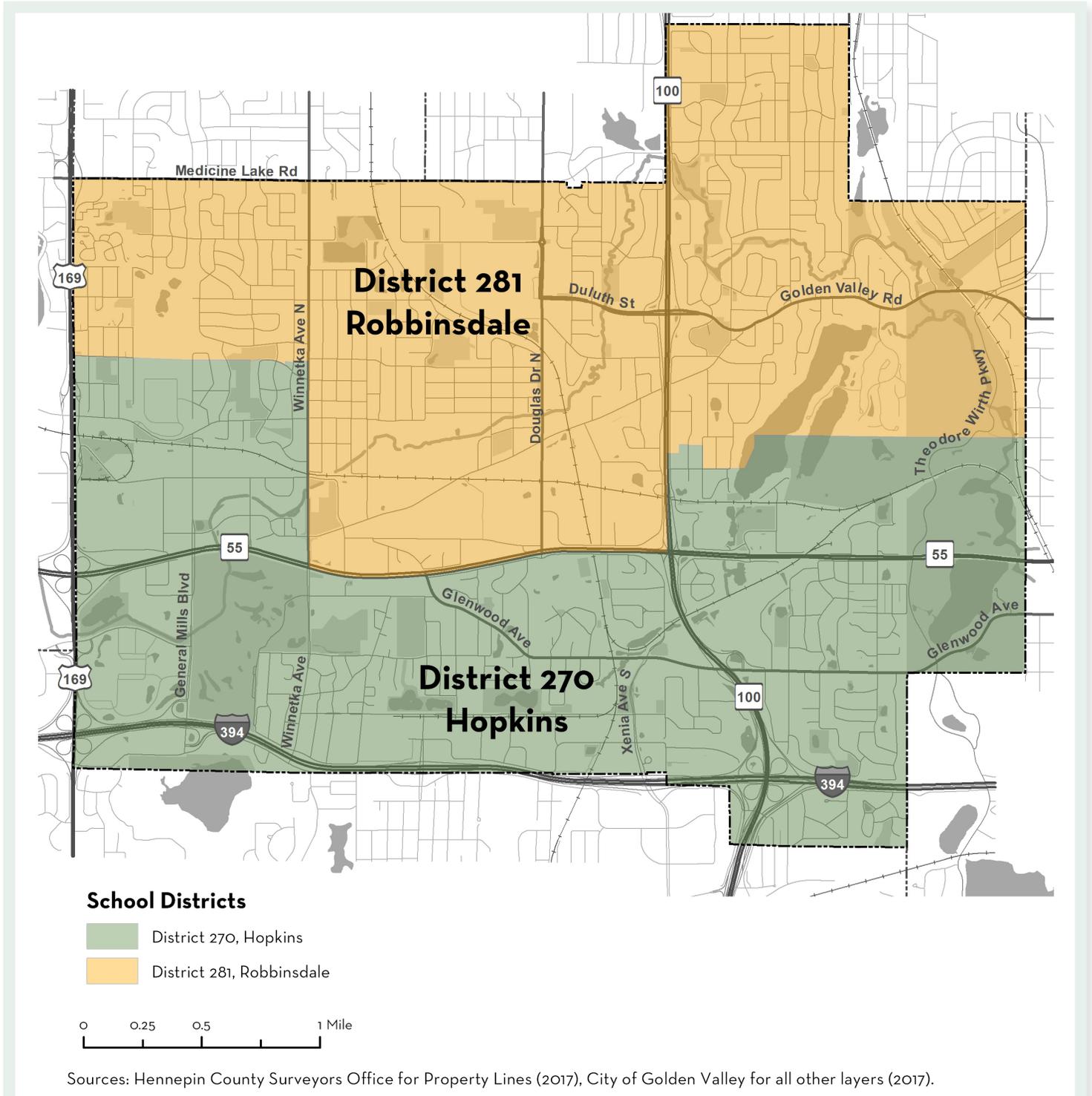
By the 1970s, the City began to explore ways to encourage redevelopment of tired and underused properties. A Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) was created to acquire and prepare land for redevelopment. These significant undertakings paved the way for establishment of the current downtown at Winnetka Ave and Golden Valley Rd and the business district north of the new I-394 at Xenia Ave.

By the late 1980s, most of the vacant land in the city had been developed. The last large residential project, the Hidden Lakes development, was approved and constructed in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Golden Valley is fortunate to have more than 1,100 acres of parks, wetlands, and other protected natural areas spread throughout the city. In addition, Sweeney, Twin, and Wirth Lakes, as well as Bassett Creek and numerous ponds, provide attractive and ecologically important water features. There are three golf courses (two public and one private) within the city limits. Brookview

offers a gathering place for residents and visitors as well as a focal point for senior activities. Two school districts—Hopkins and Robbinsdale—split the city north and south (see Figure 1.1), and other public and private elementary and high schools are spread throughout the area. Religious institutions and other non-profits offer opportunities for fellowship and social services.

**Figure 1.1: School Districts**



A number of international corporations call Golden Valley home, including General Mills and Tennant Company. Other businesses that have a significant presence in the city are Honeywell, Allianz Life, Mortenson Construction, and Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute.

Commercial nodes in the downtown, along Hwy 55, at the intersection of Hwy 100 and Duluth St, and north of I-394, provide space for restaurants, shopping, auto sales and auto-oriented services, and other retail destinations. Three industrial areas continue to support manufacturing and warehousing enterprises that contribute to the city’s tax base.

**Areas Of Cultural Significance**

As an older first-ring suburb, Golden Valley contains many buildings, neighborhoods, landscapes, and archaeological sites of cultural significance. Due to considerable development in the 1950s and 1960s, there are many examples of mid-century modern architecture throughout the city. The design of the new Brookview Community Center celebrates this identity. The City

recognizes these resources and the role they play in grounding the community in its history.

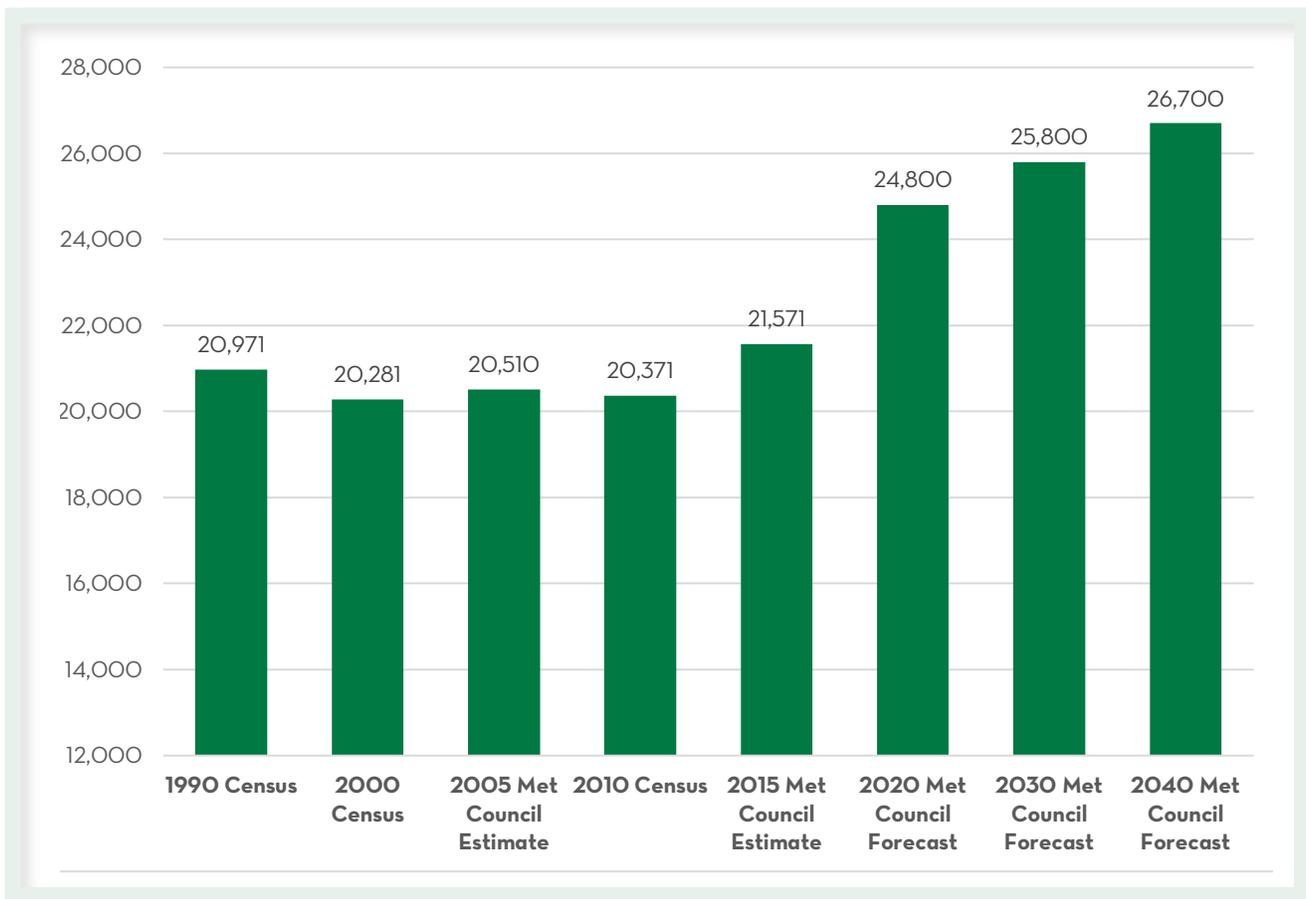
**People**

Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, the city’s population hovered at just over 20,000, dipping in 2000 due to decreasing household sizes and a stagnation in the housing market. Pent up demand caused by the Great Recession resulted in a number of new apartments being approved in the 2010s and a corresponding surge in population.

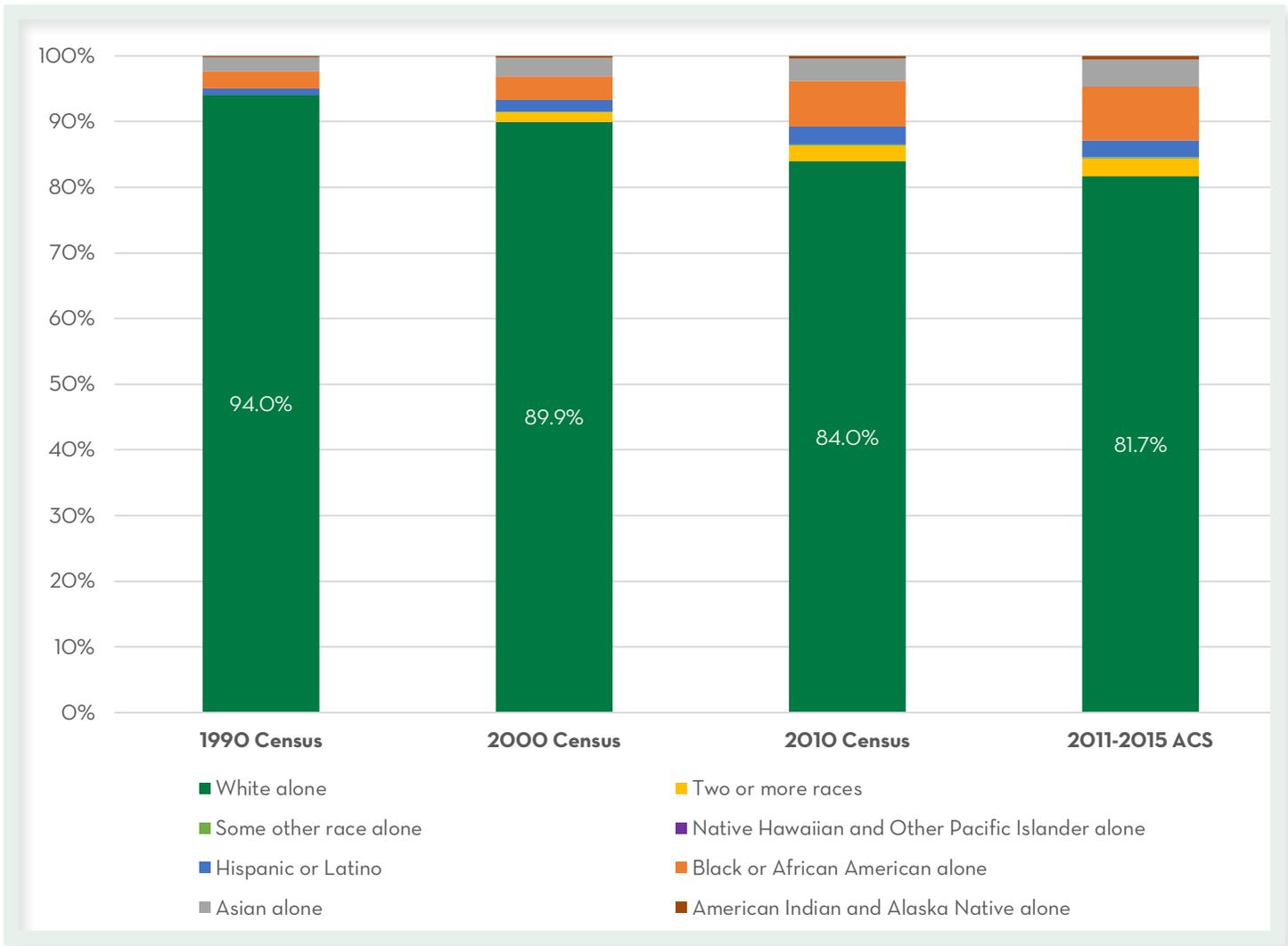
Because of this relatively sudden increase in units, the Metropolitan Council now predicts a population of 24,800 by 2020 and 26,700 by 2040 (see Figure 1.2). This increase is consistent with the larger demographic trends in the Twin Cities, which anticipate a 27 percent increase in population between 2010 and 2040.

On average, Golden Valley’s population is aging. The 2010 Census showed a significant segment of residents reaching their 60s. This trend will require necessary shifts in thinking by the City to pro-

**Figure 1.2: Golden Valley Population, 1990–2040**



**Figure 1.3: Population By Race And Ethnicity, 1990–2015**



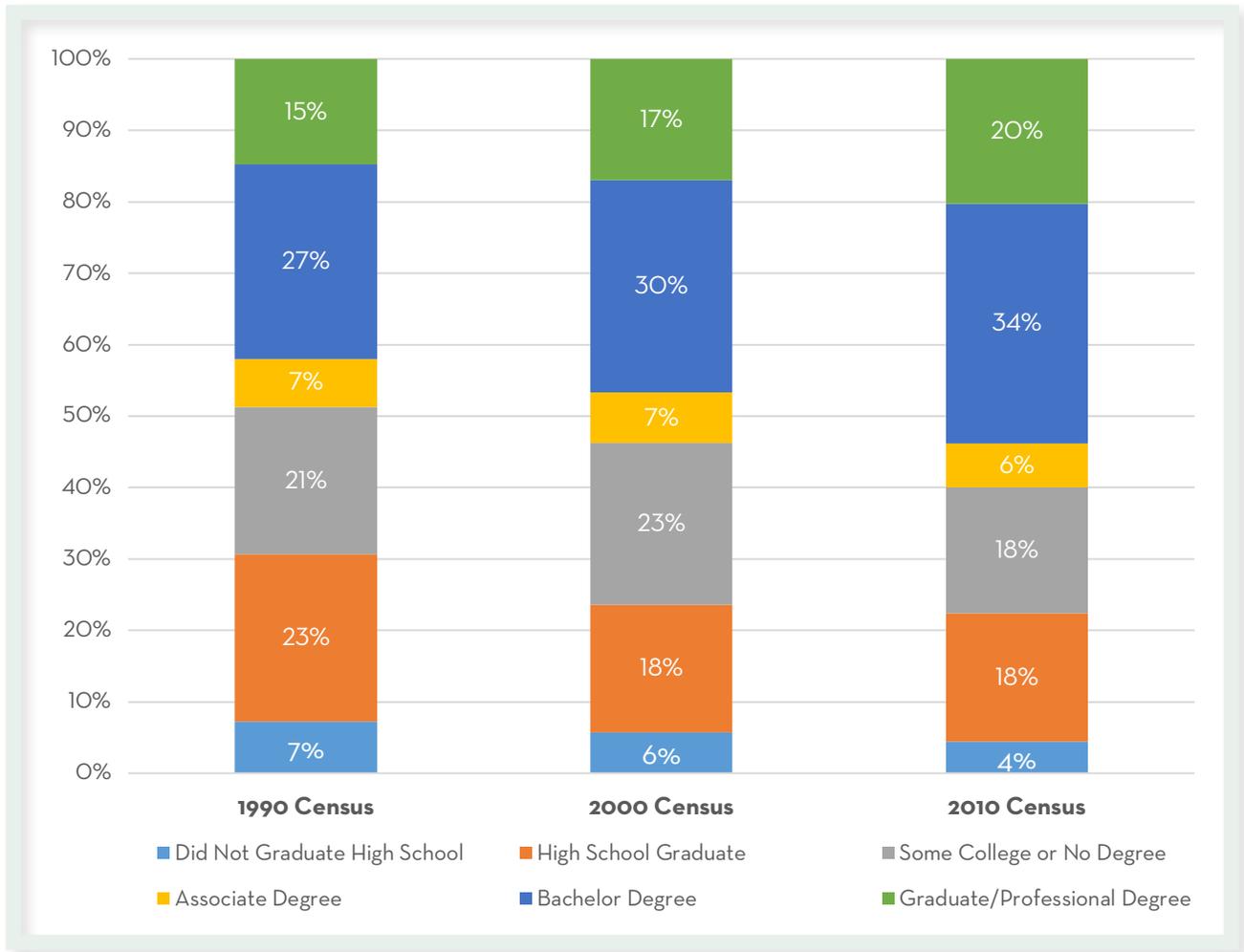
vide the services and meet the needs of a growing senior population. However, 2015 census data hinted at a sizable segment of residents in their late 20s and early 30s, suggesting a wave of younger families may be on the horizon.

Overall, the population of Golden Valley is less diverse, more highly educated, and has lower levels of poverty than other inner-ring suburbs in the metro area. Consistent with regional trends that show a significant increase in the percentage of persons of color by 2040, recent local trends show that diversity is increasing, with a shift from 6 percent non-white in 1990 to 18 percent in 2015 (see Figure 1.3). Education levels remain high (Figure 1.4), but the percentage of the population living below the poverty line has almost doubled from 4.3 percent in 1990 to 8.2 percent in 2015.

Golden Valley residents have consistently demonstrated a high level of civic and social engagement. Voter turnout, as measured by the percentage of eligible voters who participate in a given election, is typically among the highest in the state. In 2016, turnout was measured at 87 percent, while the state total was only 75 percent. Residents have historically been very active in participating in planning processes for significant City investments, such as the new Brookview or the proposed METRO Blue Line Extension.

Golden Valley has many well-attended social events throughout the year, ranging from Run The Valley in the spring to the Arts & Music Festival in the fall. A farmer’s market occupies the City Hall campus parking lot every Sunday over the summer, while the Golden Valley Pride Festival takes place in Brookview Park in

**Figure 1.4: Educational Attainment, 1990–2010**



June. Other popular events include the Fire Relief Association Street Dance, the Public Safety Open House, and the Kelly Drive Pumpkin Festival.

**Housing**

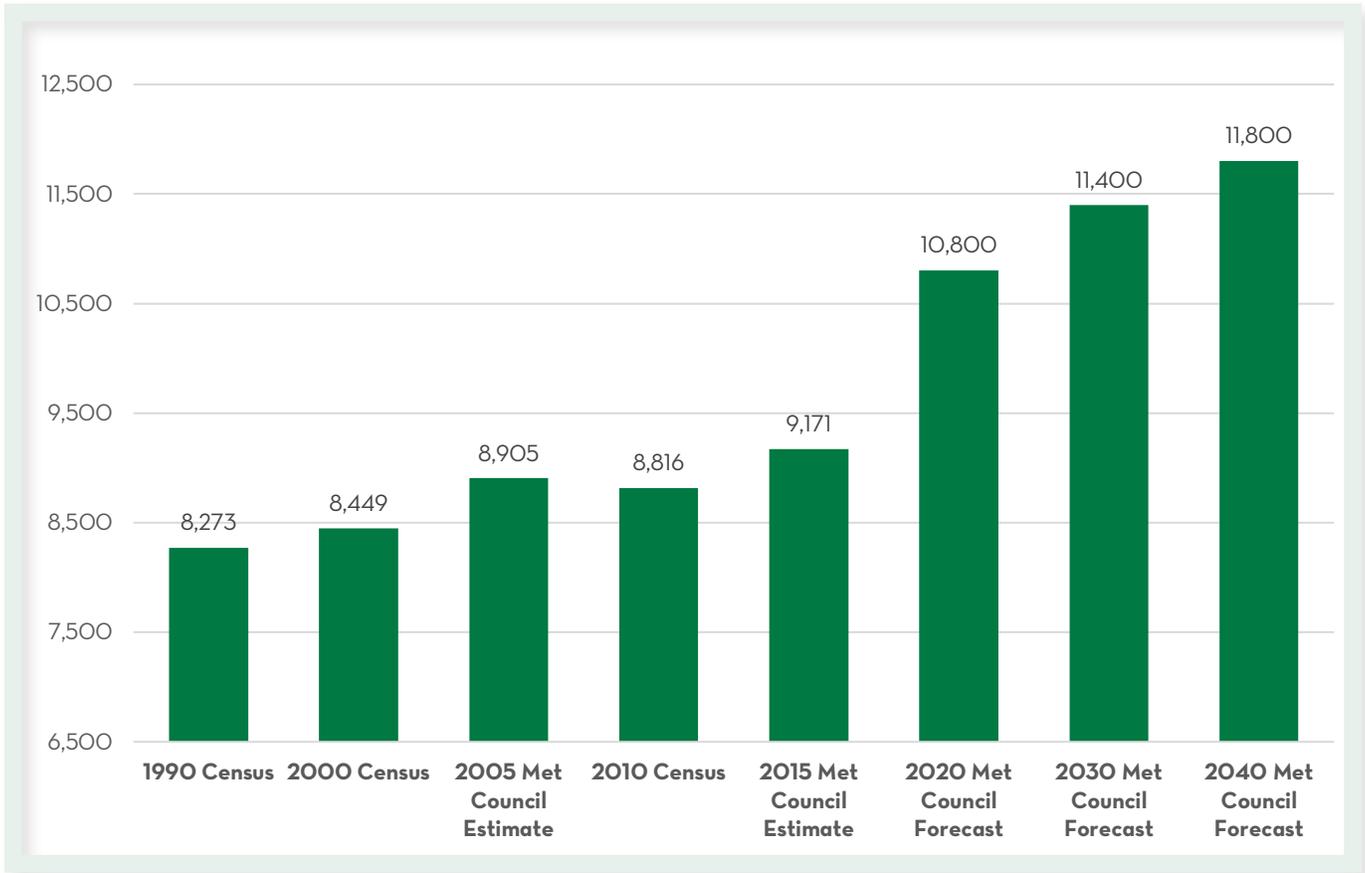
Over recent decades, Golden Valley has shown steady though incremental housing growth. The approval of several new multi-family projects in the 2010s resulted in a sudden sharp rise in new households, with more anticipated in coming years. Due to the number of multi-family projects in the pipeline and additional opportunities for redevelopment in the future, the Metropolitan Council forecasts a household count of 11,800 by 2040 (Figure 1.5).

The combination of rising housing costs and a flattening of income has resulted in a significant increase in the percentage of Golden Valley households facing a high cost burden, defined as paying more than 30 percent of a household budget for housing. There has been a slight shift from home ownership to rental living (Figure 1.6), and this is expected to continue with the construction of new apartments. Vacancy rates are low and contribute to high housing prices. This trend is consistent with data from across the metro area, and housing affordability continues to be an issue that must be addressed regionally, not just locally.

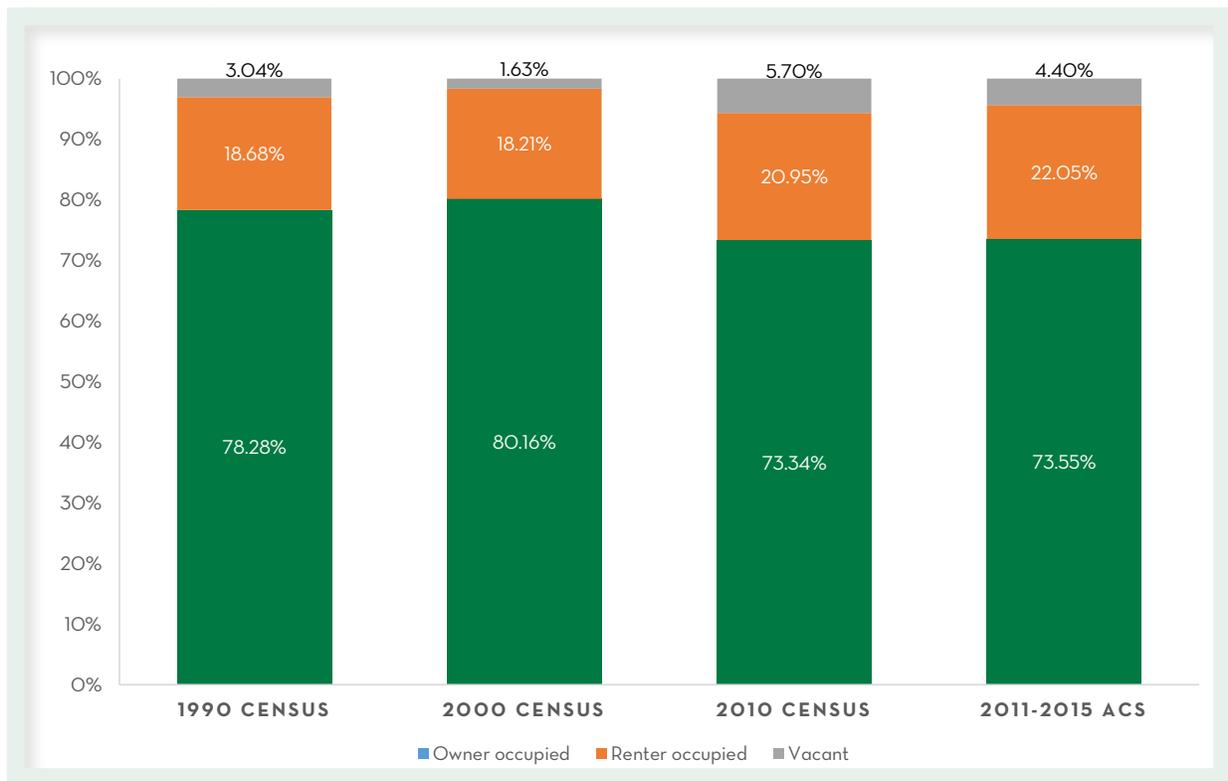
**Jobs**

Employment in Golden Valley—the number of jobs located in the city—has consistently increased throughout the 1990s and early

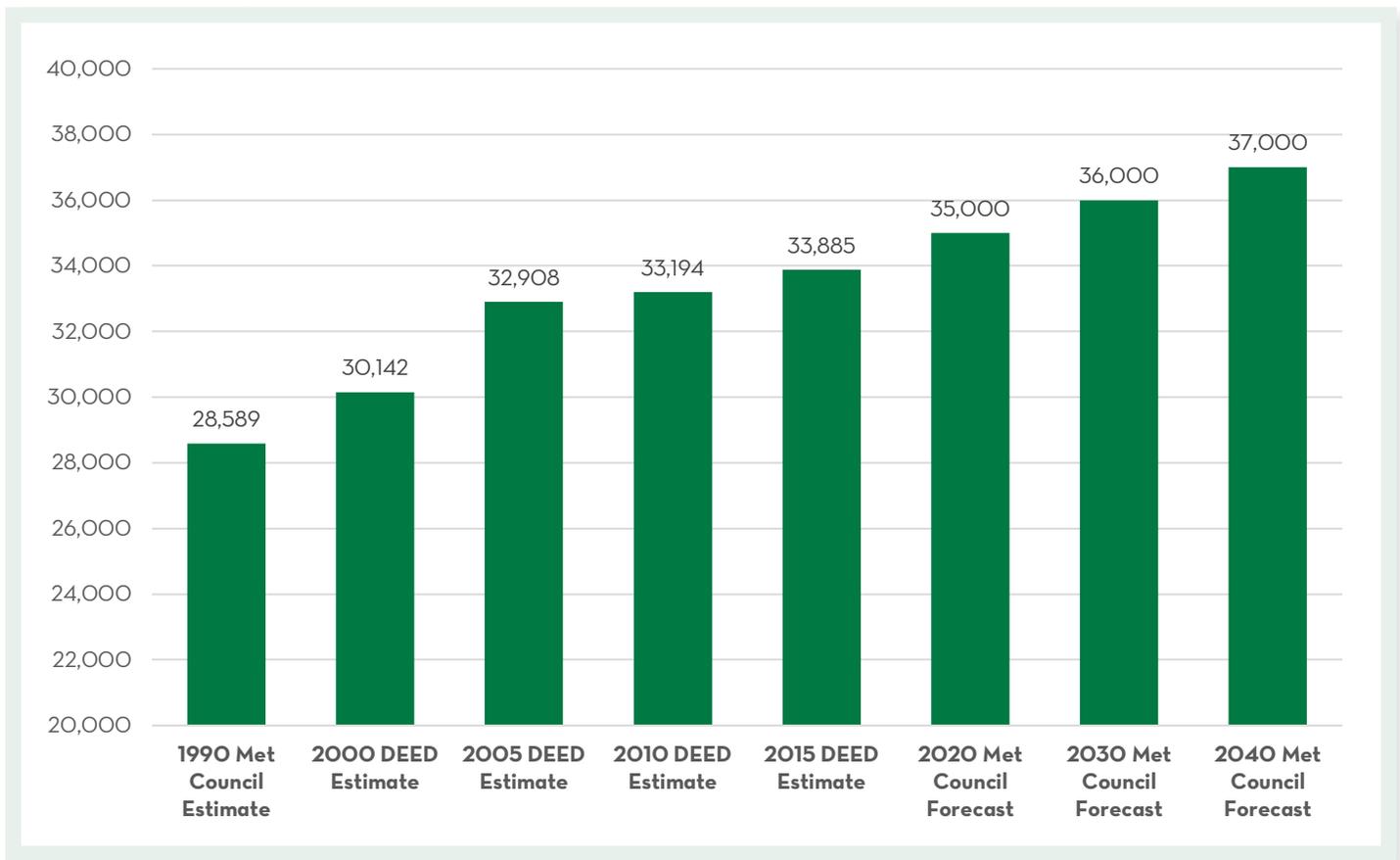
**Figure 1.5: Golden Valley Households, 1990–2040**



**Figure 1.6: Housing Tenure And Vacancy, 1990–2015**



### Figure 1.7: Employment Within Golden Valley, 1990–2040



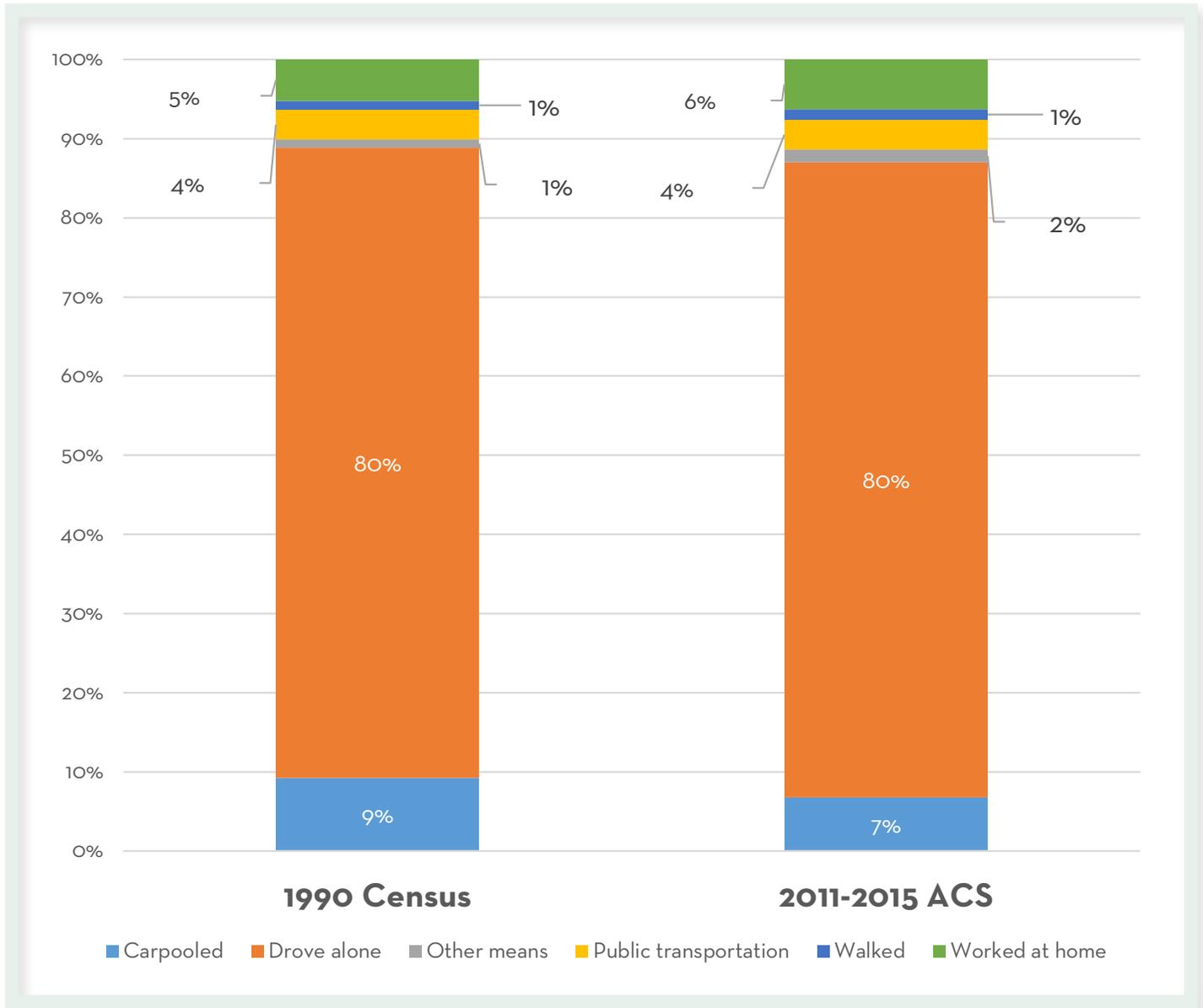
2000s (Figure 1.7). Recent trends for office and retail uses and a greater demand for housing than for other types of redevelopment suggest growth of around 3,000 additional jobs by 2040.

Although Golden Valley boasts the greatest per capita job numbers in the metro area due to the large inflow of employees each work day, only around 3 percent of employees who live in the city also work here. This results in added congestion of the transportation system. Eighty percent of Golden Valley workers drive to work alone—a number that has remained unchanged in 25 years (Figure 1.8). With very little ability to increase roadway capacity, the City will be looking for opportunities to increase transit service (both bus and light rail) as well as to support new bicycle and pedestrian options in the future.

## What Do We Want To Be?

To help inform the goals and objectives of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan, the City gathered feedback from the community and incorporated it into the theme of the document. A community survey, conducted in summer 2016, provided information about numerous aspects of City services as well as various systems, including transportation, housing, parks, economic development, and environmental issues. This statistically valid random sample survey showed an overall satisfaction with City services and the perceived value received for the level of taxes paid, concerns regarding aging infrastructure, and continued interest in expanding opportunities for outdoor activities such as community gardens, off-leash dog areas, and off-street trails. While 88 percent of respondents felt the city is moving in the right direction, a handful of characteristics were identified as seeming to be somewhat

**Figure 1.8: Means Of Transportation To Work, 1990–2015**



lacking, including sufficient affordable single-family housing, starter homes, housing for seniors, and entertainment establishments.

Through an open house held in September 2016 and via an online questionnaire posted on the City’s website, the City collected additional comments and ideas from residents. Participants were asked to provide words that described what they value about Golden Valley today and how they would like Golden Valley to be described in 10 or 20 years. The results were organized into two word clouds, with the size of the text proportional to the frequency with which the words were used (Figures 1.9 and 1.10).

A quick comparison of the two images reveals that while many of the impressions of Golden Valley today carry over to an envisioned Golden Valley of the future (Safe, Quiet, Green, Parks, Friendly), other new ideas and priorities for 2040 begin to emerge. Phrases such as Diversity, Transit Friendly, Light Rail, Vibrant Downtown, and Targeted Density—in addition to the prominent presence of a Bicycle and Pedestrian Network—rise to the top of the list. While this exercise lacks the statistical weight of the community survey, it does help demonstrate the ideas of those who are actively thinking about the city’s priorities and who were engaged enough to attend the open house or participate in the online questionnaire.





belonged to the inner-ring suburbs, including large, affordable, residential lots and access to new job centers.

For those cities that are caught unprepared or lack the resolve to compete in this new reality, these changes can lead to a downward spiral of flight and disinvestment. Those that are able to capitalize on their assets, reinvest in their infrastructure, and reinvent themselves as appealing alternatives to both the urban core and the developing edge can evolve into suburbs that remain attractive and relevant and provide a high quality of life to residents and the business community.

Golden Valley is well-positioned to capitalize on its advantages—desirable location, ease of access, robust single-family neighbor-

hoods, abundant open space, and high resident satisfaction—in order to remain strong and to continue to flourish over the coming decades.

Given these challenges and the priorities identified by those participating in the comprehensive planning process, what specifically can Golden Valley do to ensure it remains on a carefully considered and advantageous path forward? The City's 2040 Comprehensive Plan attempts to provide answers by using the theme of Suburban Evolution—described as the willingness and ability of a community to adapt to conditions common to aging suburbs—to evaluate issues and advance implementation actions within each of the chapters that follow.