

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Incorporated in 1951, the City of Arden Hills lies approximately eight miles north of downtown Saint Paul and downtown Minneapolis in the northwestern portion of Ramsey County. The City covers 9.4 square miles and, in 2016, was home to an estimated 9,966 people. The residents of Arden Hills enjoy a high quality of living with access to neighborhood and regional parks and trails; superb access to regional road transportation; nearby commercial services; and stable neighborhoods.

In addition to the City's high quality neighborhoods, Arden Hills is home to a number of large corporations, many small businesses, two private colleges, a high school, an elementary school, and more than 11,000 jobs<sup>1</sup>. Arden Hills is a strong community that attracts residents and businesses because of its close-knit neighborhoods, parks, responsible government, and open spaces. Additionally, the Twin Cities Army Ammunition Plant (TCAAP) property provides the City with an opportunity for new development to help service the City's current and future residents.

While Arden Hills is a stable community with a bright future, the City does face some challenges. The median age has risen dramatically in recent years, a large percentage of the City's land area is tax-exempt, fewer families with children are able to afford a home in the City, and the regional transportation infrastructure is at or beyond capacity in many places. With 824,000 new residents expected in the Twin Cities area between 2010 and 2040, Arden Hills will undoubtedly feel the pressure for development and the impact of development in other communities.

### **1.1 COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING**

The Comprehensive Plan is a policy document that asks: where are we now, where do we want to go, and how do we get there? This document reflects the City's value system and creates a framework for the future by providing an overall vision for the City. As a guiding tool, the Plan provides a system for measuring progress, direction for day-to-day and long-term decision-making, and a framework for setting priorities in several key areas that are vital to the successful and efficient functioning of the community. Each of the chapters in this Plan is examined in a comprehensive and community-wide manner in order to take advantage of opportunities, increase efficiency, and work toward building a stronger community.

The City recognizes the importance of planning and setting community-wide goals; however, this Plan is also being prepared as a requirement of the Metropolitan Land

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<sup>1</sup> Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2017 QCEW Data

Planning Act. Arden Hills completed its first Comprehensive Plan in 1966 with updates in 1976, 1980, 1998, and 2008. It is anticipated that the next Comprehensive Plan review will take place in 2028.

While this Plan is a guide for development through 2040, it is intended to be a flexible and responsive document that can be amended to acknowledge changing conditions and new opportunities. To best achieve the City's vision, this Plan must be continually referenced, updated, and used on a regular basis. This document provides a path for the City but does not dictate specific activities or absolute decisions; instead, this Plan is intended to help City leaders in developing policies, programs, ordinances, capital improvement plans, and budgets that reflect the overall values and priorities of the residents and businesses.

## **1.2 THRIVE MSP 2040**

On May 28, 2014 the Metropolitan Council adopted the *Thrive MSP 2040* to guide growth in the seven county metropolitan area through 2040. Thrive MSP 2040 includes regional growth policies based on community designation for achieving these policies. Arden Hills is identified as Suburban. Some of the Suburban policies that are applicable to Arden Hills include:

- Integrate natural resource conservation and restoration strategies into the comprehensive plan.
- Implement best management practices to control and treat stormwater as redevelopment opportunities arise.
- Designate land in the comprehensive plan to support household growth forecasts and address the community's share of the region's affordable housing need through development and redevelopment at a range of densities.
- Use state, regional, and federal sources of funding and/or financing and development tools allowed by state law to facilitate the development of new lifecycle and affordable housing.
- Develop local policies, plans, and practices that improve pedestrian and bicycle circulation, including access to regional transit services, regional trails, and regional bicycle corridors.
- Seek opportunities to improve local street and pedestrian connections to improve access for local trips.
- Plan for land uses that support the growth of businesses that export goods and services outside the region, important regional economic clusters, and living wage jobs.

The City of Arden Hills supports these policies. The vision, goals, and policies identified in the City's Comprehensive Plan seek to advance the Metropolitan Council's Thrive MSP 2040 where applicable to Arden Hills.