

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The City of Green Isle Comprehensive Plan is a forward-thinking document that sets the course for our community's growth and development over the next two decades. This chapter provides an overview of Green Isle, its unique characteristics, and the purpose and process behind creating this comprehensive plan. As we embark on this journey of strategic planning, it is essential to understand the context of our community – its history, its people, and its place within the broader region. This introduction sets the stage for the detailed analyses, goals, and strategies that follow, offering a foundation for the vision we collectively hold for Green Isle's future. Through this plan, we aim to preserve the cherished aspects of our small-town character while embracing opportunities for sustainable growth and enhanced quality of life for all residents.

### OVERVIEW OF GREEN ISLE

Green Isle, located in the southern part of Minnesota within Sibley County, is a small community characterized by its rural setting and agricultural heritage. With a modest population size, the town fosters a close-knit community where residents often share common values and traditions associated with rural living. The surrounding geography contributes to the town's identity, offering a backdrop of fertile lands that historically supported agricultural activities.

Agriculture is a cornerstone of Green Isle's economy, and the town maintains a connection to both traditional and modern farming practices. The local economy is likely a mix of agricultural enterprises, local businesses, and services. The town's economic landscape may reflect the balance between preserving its rural character and adapting to contemporary economic demands.

In addition to its agricultural focus, Green Isle provides essential community services, including schools, and local government services. These services contribute to the well-being and functionality of the community, supporting the needs of its residents.

Smaller communities like Green Isle often have cultural and recreational activities that bring residents together. Local events, festivals, and community gatherings may play a role in celebrating the town's identity and fostering a sense of community pride. The natural surroundings, including farmlands and open spaces, contribute to the town's aesthetic appeal and may offer opportunities for outdoor activities.

THE CITY OFFERS AFFORDABLE HOMES IN A SMALL TOWN, FRIENDLY, CLEAN, AND SAFE ATMOSPHERE, WITH EASE OF ACCESS TO THE STATE HIGHWAYS 5 AND 25, AND TO NEARBY BUSINESSES AND SERVICES. THE LOTS ARE WELL EQUIPPED WITH ONE OF THE NEWEST AND MOST ADVANCED WATER AND WASTEWATER SYSTEMS.

THERE ARE OVER 212 HOUSEHOLDS IN THE CITY WITH AN AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE OF

Community engagement is a key aspect of life in smaller towns, and residents are likely to actively participate in local decision-making processes and community initiatives.

## COMMUNITY PROFILE

Green Isle, a small rural community in Sibley County, Minnesota, is characterized by its agricultural heritage, close-knit community, and potential for growth. Located approximately 45 miles southwest of Minneapolis-St. Paul, our city offers a unique blend of rural charm and proximity to urban amenities.

Key demographics and characteristics include:

- Population: 606 (as of 2021)
- Median age: 37 years
- Population growth: 81.4% since 2000, significantly outpacing the state average of 12.6%
- Racial composition: 86.2% White, 4.8% Hispanic, with a growing diversity
- Median household income: \$68,137
- Homeownership rate: 70.6%
- Median home value: \$165,514

Green Isle's economy is diverse, with major industries including construction, food/agriculture, and retail. The city is home to several key businesses, including Dahlheimer Beverage, which employs about 70 people, making it the largest employer in the city.

Our community boasts excellent educational facilities, including the Green Isle Community School, which serves as a vital center for learning and community engagement. The city also features several parks, including Veterans Park, Lions Park, and the Irish Yard, which offer recreational opportunities and community gathering spaces.

Green Isle's small-town atmosphere is complemented by its commitment to progress, as evidenced by recent infrastructure improvements and the availability of high-speed internet, including fiber-to-the-home services. This blend of traditional values and modern amenities makes Green Isle an attractive location for families, retirees, and businesses alike.

As we look to the future, Green Isle faces both opportunities and challenges. Our significant population growth underscores the need for thoughtful, strategic planning to manage our expansion while preserving our cherished small-town character. This comprehensive plan aims to address these needs, ensuring that Green Isle remains a vibrant, sustainable, and welcoming community for generations to come.

## HISTORY OF GREEN ISLE

Green Isle, situated in Sibley County, Minnesota, has a history deeply rooted in the patterns of European-American settlement in the Midwest. The area, originally inhabited by indigenous Dakota Sioux, witnessed a significant influx of European settlers in the mid-19th century. The area around Green Isle was settled by several families as early as 1855. Green Isle Township was settled in 1857 and

organized on May 11th, 1858. The city received its name referring to Ireland, “The Emerald Isle” by suggestion of Christopher Dolan, an Irish immigrant. Early settlers were drawn to the region by the prospects of agriculture. The fertile lands surrounding Green Isle became the foundation for farming and dairy activities, establishing the town's agricultural heritage.

The development of Green Isle was significantly influenced by the expansion of the railroad during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The railroad not only facilitated the transportation of agricultural products but also connected the town to regional markets, playing a pivotal role in the town's growth. In 1891, Green Isle was officially incorporated as a city, marking a period of increased economic and civic development. Agricultural trade and services became central to the town's identity. The Minneapolis and St Louis railroad with the station came through in 1881. The city of this name, in the adjacent section 18 of Washington was platted in August 1881 and incorporated as a village on December 8, 1883. The city had a station of the Minneapolis and St Louis railroad and has had a post office since 1866.

Agriculture continued to be the backbone of Green Isle's economy, with the town evolving into a hub for agricultural commerce and services. The community established essential institutions such as schools, churches, and social organizations that contributed to the fabric of local life. The town's history reflects the resilience and close-knit nature of its community.

Over the 20th century, Green Isle, like many rural communities, witnessed changes in agriculture due to technological advancements and shifts in farming practices. These changes impacted the local economy and community dynamics. However, Green Isle remained steadfast in preserving its agricultural heritage and adapting to the evolving needs of its residents.

In more recent times, Green Isle has faced both opportunities and challenges that are characteristic of small towns. Efforts to preserve and celebrate its historical heritage have been ongoing, with a focus on maintaining the community's unique identity. Today, Green Isle stands as a testament to the enduring spirit of rural communities, navigating changes while holding onto the rich history that has shaped its character. Exploring local archives, historical documents, and engaging with the community provides a more nuanced understanding of Green Isle's distinct and evolving history.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Green Isle</b>	<b>Minnesota</b>
<b>Population (2021)</b>	<b>606</b>	<b>5.7 million</b>
<b>Population change since 2000</b>	<b>+81.4%</b>	<b>+12.6%</b>
<b>Median age</b>	<b>37.0 years</b>	<b>38.8 years</b>
<b>White population</b>	<b>86.2%</b>	<b>83.8%</b>
<b>Hispanic population</b>	<b>4.8%</b>	<b>5.6%</b>

## REGIONAL CONTEXT

Green Isle, a small but vibrant community in Sibley County, Minnesota, plays a unique role in the broader regional context of south-central Minnesota. Located approximately 45 miles southwest of the Twin Cities metropolitan area, Green Isle benefits from its proximity to urban amenities while maintaining its distinct rural character.

**Geographic Setting:** Green Isle is situated in a predominantly agricultural region, characterized by gently rolling plains and fertile farmland. The city is bordered by Green Isle Township to the north and east, and Washington Lake Township to the south and west. This location places Green Isle at the intersection of rural agricultural traditions and growing suburban influences from the expanding Twin Cities metro area.

**Regional Transportation:** The city's accessibility is enhanced by its proximity to major transportation corridors. State Highway 25 runs through the heart of Green Isle, connecting it to larger regional centers such as Norwood Young America to the north and Arlington to the south. This strategic location along a state highway provides Green Isle with crucial links to broader regional markets and employment centers.

**Economic Relationships:** While Green Isle maintains a distinct local economy, it is intricately connected to the larger regional economic ecosystem. Many residents commute to nearby cities for work, including Arlington, Glencoe, and even the Twin Cities metro area. Conversely, Green Isle's industrial park and local businesses attract workers from surrounding communities, contributing to a regional flow of labor and commerce.

The city's agricultural heritage aligns with the broader regional economy, with many local businesses and services supporting the agricultural sector. This connection to the regional agricultural economy provides both opportunities and challenges as the sector evolves.

**Natural Resources and Recreation:** Green Isle shares in the stewardship of regional natural resources, particularly in relation to water management. The city falls within the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District, necessitating cooperation with neighboring communities and regional entities in water quality and flood management efforts.

The development of trails and recreational amenities in Green Isle has the potential to connect with broader regional trail systems, enhancing recreational opportunities not just for local residents but for the wider region as well.

**Intergovernmental Cooperation:** Green Isle actively participates in regional planning efforts and collaborates with neighboring jurisdictions on issues of mutual concern. The city is a member of the Minnesota Valley Council of Governments, which facilitates regional cooperation on planning, economic development, and public services.

**Future Growth and Development:** As the Twin Cities metropolitan area continues to expand, Green Isle may experience increasing development pressures. The city's comprehensive planning

efforts must balance local desires for growth with regional trends and the preservation of its rural character.

**Challenges and Opportunities:** Green Isle faces both challenges and opportunities due to its regional context. The city must navigate the complexities of maintaining its small-town atmosphere while leveraging its strategic location for economic growth. Balancing agricultural preservation with potential development pressures from the expanding metro area will be a key consideration in the coming years.

By understanding and embracing its role in the regional context, Green Isle can position itself to capitalize on regional strengths while preserving its unique local identity. This comprehensive plan aims to guide Green Isle's development in a way that harmonizes local goals with regional realities, ensuring a sustainable and prosperous future for the community.

## **PURPOSE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

The purpose of our Comprehensive Plan is to serve as a vision and roadmap for where the community of Green Isle is headed. The ideas and goals expressed in this plan are proposed to reflect the community's values and the desire for what Green Isle is to become.

Each chapter of the Comprehensive Plan provides the “big picture” of several important areas that are interwoven and have an impact on quality of life in Green Isle.

It is the intention that this plan will be used on a day-to-day basis by city staff, the City Councilmembers, and stakeholders to drive important policy decisions, such as decisions involving infrastructure and development, the acquisition and sale of public land, capital improvements, zoning, and regulatory changes, and communicating a consistent vision.

It is anticipated that residents may use the plan to determine property use, understand decisions made by the City, and make improvements to regarding investment into the community.

**Green Isle values:**  
Safe – Close-knit rural community  
Engaged – Community members coming together  
Environment – Balance of people, buildings, nature  
Developing – Increasing prosperity for the community  
Success – Self-sustaining community

## **AUTHORITY TO PLAN**

Communities are given the legal authority to adopt a Plan according to Minnesota State Statute 462.353 subd. 1. The statute enables cities to promote the “public health, safety, and general welfare” of the community. The following describes in detail the State’s Municipal Planning and Development Policy Statement (462.311).

## 462.351 MUNICIPAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT; POLICY STATEMENT.

The legislature finds that municipalities are faced with mounting problems in providing means of guiding future development of land so as to insure a safer, more pleasant and more economical environment for residential, commercial, industrial and public activities, to preserve agricultural and other open lands, and to promote the public health, safety, and general welfare. Municipalities can prepare for anticipated changes and by such preparations bring about significant savings in both private and public expenditures. Municipal planning, by providing public guides to future municipal action, enables other public and private agencies to plan their activities in harmony with the municipality's plans. Municipal planning will assist in developing lands more wisely to serve citizens more effectively, will make the provision of public services less costly, and will achieve a more secure tax base. It is the purpose of sections 462.351 to 462.364 to provide municipalities, in a single body of law, with the necessary powers and a uniform procedure for adequately conducting and implementing municipal planning.

### PLANNING PROCESS

The comprehensive planning process is a structured and iterative approach that involves several key stages in developing a roadmap for the future of a community. It typically begins with initiation and preparation, where the need for a comprehensive plan is identified, and an understanding of the legal framework governing planning in the jurisdiction is established. This stage sets the foundation for the entire process, laying the groundwork for subsequent steps.

Stakeholder engagement is a critical aspect, emphasizing the importance of involving the public and key community stakeholders from the outset. Through community workshops, surveys, interviews, and meetings, planners gather diverse perspectives, ensuring that the comprehensive plan reflects the values, priorities, and concerns of the community. This participatory approach fosters a sense of ownership among residents.

The analysis of existing conditions follows, where comprehensive data is collected on demographics, land use, infrastructure, transportation, and other relevant factors. A SWOT analysis helps assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing the community. This thorough examination provides a factual basis for decision-making and goal setting.

Visioning becomes a pivotal stage as the community works together to articulate a shared vision for its future. This vision becomes the guiding star for subsequent planning activities. Goal setting follows, translating the community vision into concrete objectives across key areas such as land use, housing, transportation, economic development, and environmental sustainability. These goals form the foundation for the comprehensive plan's content.

Land use planning involves the development of land use maps that designate different areas for various uses, integrating zoning considerations to align with the overall vision and goals. Simultaneously, action plans are formulated, detailing specific strategies, policies, and projects to achieve the established goals.

This includes setting a timeline and prioritizing initiatives based on community needs and available resources.

Policy development is a crucial aspect of the planning process, encompassing the formulation of policies that guide decision-making related to growth, development, and community services. This stage often involves recommending updates to zoning codes, development regulations, and other policies to ensure alignment with the comprehensive plan.

With the plan taking shape, the document preparation stage involves compiling all components, including analyses, goals, objectives, and action plans, into a cohesive document. This draft plan is then shared with the community, local officials, and stakeholders for review and feedback. The iterative nature of this process allows for refinements based on input received.

The approval and adoption stage involve public hearings to gather input on the final plan and presenting it to relevant governing bodies for approval. This may include city councils, planning commissions, or other decision-making bodies. Once adopted, the comprehensive plan enters the implementation and monitoring phase, where oversight mechanisms are established to track progress regularly. Monitoring and evaluation ensure that the plan remains dynamic and responsive to changing conditions, fostering sustainable and resilient communities over time.

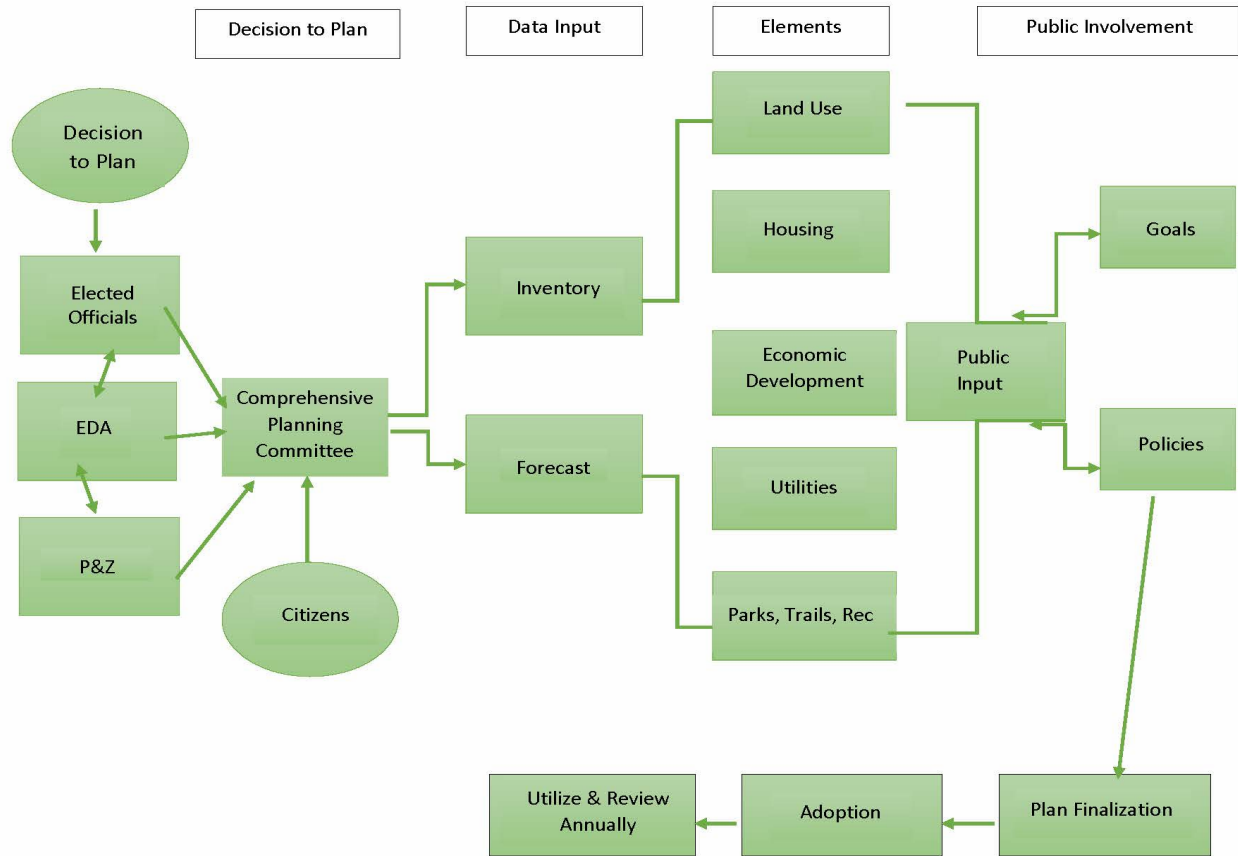
The Comprehensive Plan process began in the summer of 2022 and is the first Comprehensive Plan for the City of Green Isle. At the beginning of the process, a team of varied individuals was created, known as the Comprehensive Plan Working Group.

Relevant background information was collected and reviewed including demographic data, zoning and subdivision regulations, and housing and building permit data.

Valuable input was also gathered from those in the community. A community open house was held early in 2023 for resident and business input on the plan. The plan was shared during the summer's music series as well as with the local school to gather input from local stakeholders.

As each chapter of the plan was developed, drafts were available on the City's website and were individually presented and commented on at the City Council meetings. Comments were also received via the City's website and Facebook page. The plan was reviewed by the Planning Commission, Economic Development Authority, and the City Council at their respective meetings in December of 2023. A public hearing was held before the City Council in January of 2024 and was henceforth adopted by the Green Isle City Council.

FIGURE 1-1 PLANNING PROCESS FLOW CHART



## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

The City of Green Isle is committed to ensuring that this Comprehensive Plan reflects the values, needs, and aspirations of all community members. To achieve this goal, we implemented a robust public participation process throughout the development of this plan.

Key elements of our public participation process included:

1. **Monthly Public Meetings:** Regular monthly meetings were held throughout the planning process. These meetings were open to all members of the public, providing ongoing opportunities for community input and engagement.
2. **Housing Survey:** A comprehensive housing survey was mailed to all households in Green Isle. This survey gathered valuable feedback on current housing conditions, future housing needs, and preferences of our residents.



3. **Implementation Strategy Survey:** We conducted a survey focused on short-term, mid-range, and long-term implementation strategies. This allowed community members to provide input on prioritizing actions and shaping the future of Green Isle.
4. **Stakeholder Presentations:** The draft plan was presented to key stakeholder groups including the Economic Development Authority (EDA), Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z), and City Council. These presentations provided opportunities for detailed review and feedback from these important civic bodies.
5. **Public Review Period:** The draft plan was made available for public review, allowing all community members the opportunity to provide comments and suggestions.

This multi-faceted approach to public participation ensured that a diverse range of voices and perspectives were incorporated into the planning process. The feedback received through these various channels has been instrumental in shaping the vision, goals, and strategies outlined in this Comprehensive Plan.

We are grateful to all community members who participated in this process. Your input has been invaluable in creating a plan that truly reflects the aspirations of Green Isle.

This section provides a clear overview of the public participation process and emphasizes the city's commitment to community engagement. It also helps to establish the credibility and community-driven nature of the plan.

## **ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN**

The Comprehensive Plan provides a “big picture” look at several important areas that impact the quality of life in Green Isle. The Comprehensive Plan covers the following chapters:

**Chapter 1: Introduction** – This chapter provides an overview of what the Comprehensive Plan is and its purpose. It discusses the process for developing the plan and how it is organized.

**Chapter 2: Vision** – This chapter outlines the vision for the community that is intended to be expressed through all other chapters.

**Chapter 3: Land Use** – This chapter established an existing and future land use for all property in the City.

**Chapter 4: Housing** – This chapter provides an overview of existing housing conditions and a plan for maintaining and developing a quality future housing stock.

**Chapter 5 Economic Development** – This chapter provides an analysis of the existing economic climate and opportunities for economic growth and redevelopment areas.

**Chapter 6: Utilities** – This chapter examines the existing system and future improvements to public utilities as it relates to water, wastewater, and stormwater systems.

Chapter 7: Parks, Trails, and Recreation – This chapter examines the existing park and trail system, as well as recreational opportunities and establishes planning criteria, guidelines, and standards for future development of these amenities.

Chapter 8: Implementation – This chapter will address the plan elements, action items, priority of action items, short and long-term actions, as well as ongoing action items to make the Comprehensive Plan workable.

## USE OF THE PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan presents a vision for the future of Green Isle. It is based on locally established visions, goals and policies derived through public participation. The individual chapters outline in more specific terms the goals and policies to ensure Green Isle grows in a way that supports the values of the community. The plan is designed to be a working document that defines the future and provides a working program for realizing the City's future potential.

A comprehensive plan, often referred to as a master plan or general plan, serves as a long-term guiding document for the development and growth of a community, city, or region. The purpose of a comprehensive plan is multifaceted, encompassing social, economic, environmental, and physical considerations. Here are the key purposes of a comprehensive plan:

- **Long-Term Vision and Goals:** A comprehensive plan establishes a community's long-term vision and goals, outlining the desired future state. It provides a roadmap for decision-makers and stakeholders to work towards a shared vision of the community's development.
- **Land Use Planning:** One of the primary purposes is to guide land use planning. It defines how different areas should be used—residential, commercial, industrial, recreational, etc. This helps create a cohesive and organized spatial structure for the community.
- **Infrastructure Planning:** The plan addresses the needs for infrastructure development, including transportation, utilities, parks, and public facilities. It ensures that the necessary infrastructure is in place to support current and future population needs.
- **Economic Development:** Comprehensive plans often incorporate strategies for economic development. This may involve identifying areas for commercial or industrial growth, fostering job creation, and supporting a diverse and sustainable local economy.
- **Housing Strategies:** The plan outlines housing strategies, addressing the types of housing needed, affordability, and distribution. It ensures a balanced and inclusive approach to housing that meets the needs of various demographic groups.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Comprehensive plans often include considerations for environmental sustainability. This may involve strategies for conservation, open space preservation, and promoting environmentally friendly practices in development.
- **Community Engagement:** It provides a platform for community engagement and involvement in the planning process. Public input is often sought to ensure that the plan reflects the values and priorities of the residents.

- **Zoning and Development Regulations:** A comprehensive plan sets the stage for zoning and development regulations. Zoning ordinances and regulations are aligned with the goals and vision outlined in the plan.
- **Resilience and Adaptation:** In the face of changing circumstances, such as population growth, economic shifts, or environmental challenges, a comprehensive plan provides a framework for resilience and adaptation, allowing the community to respond effectively to changes.

In summary, a comprehensive plan serves as a foundational document that guides the physical, social, and economic development of a community over an extended period. It aims to create a sustainable, vibrant, and well-functioning community that meets the needs of its residents.

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