



# DESTINATION MINNEAPOLIS

Charting the Future of Minneapolis Tourism



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# Land & Water Acknowledgment

Meet Minneapolis acknowledges and honors the Dakhóta Oyáte (Dakota People), who are the original stewards of the magnificent land and vibrant waterways of Minneapolis. The Dakota, as well as Ojibwe and other Indigenous people cared for the land, lakes and the Haha Wakpa (Mississippi River) for thousands of years before the arrival of Europeans.

Today, this place continues to hold significant spiritual and cultural importance for the strong, resilient and growing Indigenous community in Minneapolis and Minnesota.

This acknowledgment is just the start of our journey as we continually strive to tell the rich and diverse story of Minneapolis.

We invite you to learn more about the Dakota, Ojibwe and other Indigenous people of our area, as well as the non-colonial history of Minneapolis and Minnesota.

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# A Letter from Mayor Jacob Frey

Today, we are excited to unveil a bold vision for the future of our city: **“Destination Minneapolis: Charting the Future of Minneapolis Tourism.”**

This 10-year destination master plan is designed to guide our community over the next decade, ensuring Minneapolis remains competitive as a top-tier destination for visitors and optimize our visitor economy for year-round vibrancy, an excellent downtown, and radiant cultural hubs that attract visitors and residents.

Tourism is essential to our local economy. It fuels our businesses, supports public services, and creates jobs that allow families to thrive. As we compete for our share of business, customers, entertainment, and investment, we must harness the power of tourism to bolster our community.

Big, bold ideas are needed as the world around us evolves. This strategic outline provides tangible ideas and actions to ensure we remain a top choice for travelers, businesses, conventions, and sporting events that will drive local economic development and investment.

Minneapolis has a proven track record of hosting large events successfully. From the Super Bowl to the U.S. Gymnastics Olympic Trials, the Taste of Minnesota, and Pride Festivals, we have demonstrated our ability to welcome thousands safely and joyfully. This destination plan will help us to continue showcasing our great city through future events.

Over the past year, guided by Meet Minneapolis and MMGY NextFactor, we gathered input from more than 900 community members and stakeholders. The collaborative approach has shaped the development of this long-range plan that will enhance tourism, strengthen our local identity, and reflect the needs of our community while offering opportunities for new growth, innovation, and change.



This is not just a document—it is a living, evolving framework for action. The strategic goals identified are:

- Create a nationally competitive convention center district
- Develop new, and enhance existing, festivals and events year-round
- Establish Minneapolis as a national leader in equity and reconciliation
- Increase downtown vibrancy and expand mixed-use riverfront development
- Expand and diversify lifestyle experiences

These initiatives will help support economic growth, attract visitors and events, create new opportunities for local businesses, and enhance the quality of life for our residents.

Realizing the full potential of this plan will require the support of our entire community, including residents and businesses, private and public sector champions, and all who are willing to help implement these big ideas. Together, we can ensure the future of Minneapolis is that of a city full of opportunity and inclusivity for residents and visitors alike.

**Mayor Jacob Frey**  
City of Minneapolis



# Board/Steering Committee

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**Michael Clark** – Secretary / Treasurer  
Renaissance Minneapolis – The Depot

**Melvin Tennant** – President & CEO  
Meet Minneapolis

**Lester Bagley** – Immediate Past Chair  
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Minneapolis Convention Center

**Mike Logan**  
Minneapolis Regional  
Chamber of Commerce

**Brian Ryks**  
Metropolitan Airports Commission

**Mike Vekich**  
Minnesota Sports Facilities Authority

## Project Team



**Meet Minneapolis**  
City by Nature

**Melvin Tennant**, CAE, President & CEO

**Bill Deef**, Senior Vice President of Public Affairs

**Charlie Carlson**, Public Affairs Program Manager

**Meet Minneapolis Executive Leadership Team**



**NextFactor**

**Cassandra McAuley**, Managing Director

**Paul Ouimet**, Founder

**Anna Tanski**, Executive Consultant

**Jé-Vonna Sampson**, Director, Destination Planning

**Teresa Allan**, Senior Manager, Client Success

**Dinete Kollanur**, Manager, Destination Development

# Executive Summary

Under the leadership of Meet Minneapolis, this Destination Master Plan was initiated to advance alignment between tourism stakeholders, industry partners, and residents of Minneapolis with the goal of increasing the positive benefits of the visitor economy on the community.

Chaired by Mayor Jacob Frey, and supported by the Meet Minneapolis Board of Directors, “Destination Minneapolis: Charting the Future of Minneapolis Tourism” brought together over 900 residents and stakeholders to chart the course of this long-term plan.

Developing a long-term plan for Minneapolis could not have been done effectively without the input of residents. To enable this, Meet Minneapolis made available an online resident survey, which garnered 734 responses, and partnered with Rainbow Research to facilitate focus groups with residents from the African American, Hmong, Native American, Somali, and Spanish-speaking communities.

The feedback from all residents was consistent in many respects, from the importance of further embracing the cultural diversity of Minneapolis, to the need to ensure all residents and visitors feel safe and welcome. The feedback from the community was also an important reminder that our residents can - and should be - the city’s greatest champions, and further work is needed to foster that support and give residents the tools they need to explore and enjoy all of the experiences available to them and visitors in Minneapolis.

Advancing this Destination Master Plan will require commitment by ambitious, thoughtful, and collaborative-minded people across all sectors and communities of Minneapolis who want to champion and lead specific initiatives. As a plan for the next decade, it needs leaders today with the will to build coalitions of people who are passionate about the city’s future.



In Minneapolis, rich history and dynamic communities meet stunning natural features. We honor our roots, amplify culture, celebrate growth, and embrace all as a top-tier travel and events destination. Founded on this shared vision, the strategic goals identified in this plan are:



**Create a nationally competitive convention center district**



**Develop new, and enhance existing, festivals and events year-round**



**Establish Minneapolis as a national leader in equity and reconciliation**



**Increase downtown vibrancy and expand mixed-use riverfront development**



**Expand and diversify lifestyle experiences**

A number of initiatives have been identified to support the achievement of each strategic goal. It is important to note that, over time, these initiatives may change. With progress and momentum, new initiatives may be identified and added to align with the success of the strategic goals.

The intended outcome of this Destination Master Plan is shared success for stakeholders, residents and businesses in Minneapolis. The plan is not simply a document, it is a living process evolving with local priorities and involvement by all stakeholders, from local businesses to government, community groups and individual residents. The plan is also not intended to be tactical, but rather a high-level framework from which the industry and stakeholders can build.

**Everyone is invited to participate in this exciting direction for Minneapolis. Join us!**





# Purpose of the Plan

Development of this plan leveraged the ideas and perspectives from an intentional cross-section of individuals and organizations throughout the region. Likewise, implementation of the strategies captured here will require strong coalitions of committed people, including representation from tourism and government agencies, businesses, nonprofits, and community organizations.

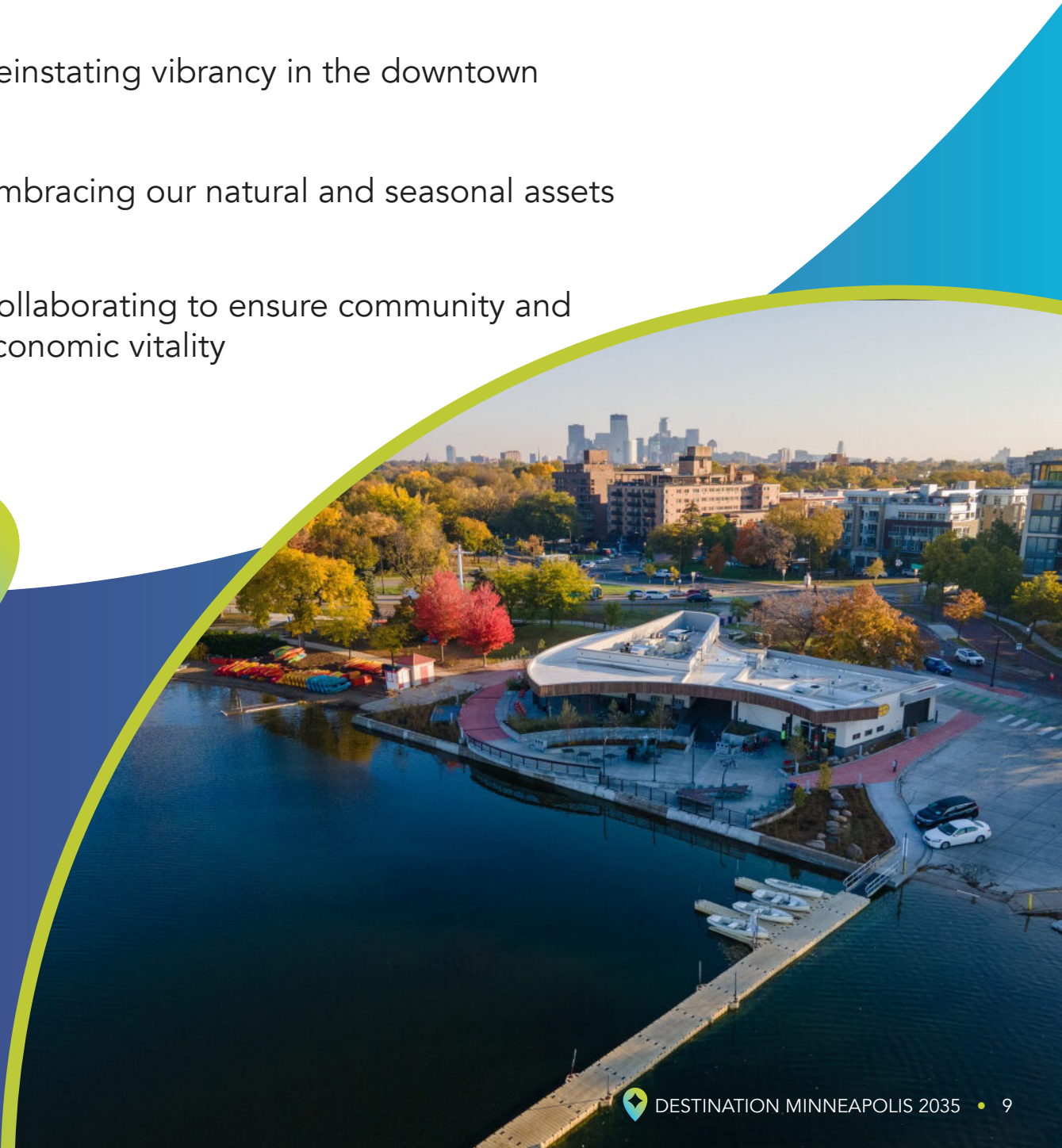
As such, the objective for this Destination Master Plan is to optimize Minneapolis' visitor economy to ensure year-round vibrancy, a thriving downtown, and radiant cultural hubs.

The continued alignment of stakeholders will lend to highlighting the significance of Minneapolis' distinct charm and appeal, ensuring the city is a vibrant, attractive destination for both residents and visitors throughout the year.

# Guiding Principles

These principles have provided direction for community engagement and will serve as a guide for implementation.

- 1 Inclusion and representation
- 2 Reconciliation of the past while working toward an equitable future
- 3 Reinstating vibrancy in the downtown
- 4 Embracing our natural and seasonal assets
- 5 Collaborating to ensure community and economic vitality



# Introduction: Imagine It's 2035

Over the past decade, Minneapolis significantly transformed, emerging as a city where urban vitality harmonizes with Midwestern hospitality.

Strategic investments in tourism and community-driven initiatives breathed new life into cultural districts, creating a safe and welcoming environment for both residents and visitors. Today, Minneapolis stands as a beacon of sustainable urban development, proving that growth can be achieved without sacrificing the city's unique character or displacing its long-standing residents.

Downtown is a vibrant hub of energy, with new residents and businesses infusing life into Nicollet Mall, making it feel like a game day every day. The area boasts an array of new dining options, amenities, and social media-worthy experiences that draw people in and keep them coming back. Previously empty storefronts pulse with activity, serving as economic engines and platforms to showcase local artisans.

The skyways evolved through collaborative management into seamless, intuitive pathways filled with seasonal programming and boutique retail experiences you won't find anywhere else.

Every season in Minneapolis offers something unforgettable: winters celebrated with Nordic flair and bustling indoor markets, and summers alive with outdoor concerts and festivals at the redeveloped riverfront.

As Minneapolis grows, so does its legacy. After a decade of transformative change, it is a city that lives up to its promise—a city for all, where past and present come together to create a future full of opportunity and inclusivity.





# Global Industry Trends

The national tourism industry has seen significant shifts since the global pandemic. The Destinations International 2023 Futures Study, outlined on the following page, identified those shifts based on surveys with more than 800 tourism organizations and led to the development of 50 industry trends and 50 DMO strategies.

**Of the 50 trends identified through the extensive process of the Futures Study, the following are six global industry trends that were identified as most relevant to Minneapolis:**

## **UNEVEN RECOVERY:**

Not every destination recovered as quickly or as robustly as others in the aftermath of the pandemic. While outdoor destinations fared better than others, recovery has largely been uneven.

## **TECHNOLOGY IMPACTS:**

Technology is changing how visitors choose and book vacations; how meeting and event planners source destinations; and how Destination Marketing Organizations, experience and accommodation providers market and engage with customers. The impacts and opportunities for AI and other digital technologies will continue to evolve.

## **PURPOSEFUL TRAVEL:**

Travelers are increasingly seeking experiences that support personal improvement. Offering these types of experiences for different audience segments will be key to attracting new visitors.

## **RESILIENCY OF MEETINGS:**

Amid the global pandemic and in the early stages of recovery, there was speculation that meetings and conferences would not return to the large-scale events they had been, and that virtual meetings would overtake the industry. However, delegates continue to seek the in-person experience. Meetings and conferences have been a resilient segment of the tourism industry with forecasts predicting this will continue.

## **OUTDOOR EXPERIENCES:**

The global pandemic spurred a significant interest in outdoor experiences, and that trend is not dissipating. Visitors are still seeking opportunities to be outdoors, whether for adventure, walking and sightseeing, or dining. The trend today is to continue to innovate outdoor experiences to help differentiate them.

## **FIERCE COMPETITION:**

Travel has returned in a significant way. Not only are Americans traveling more, but international visitation to the United States has also returned. This is driving fierce competition among destinations globally, and a critical reason to be focused on experience development and staying aligned with consumer trends.

# 2023 Futures Study

In partnership with Destinations International, MMGY NextFactor conducted the largest global survey of tourism industry leaders ever to produce the DestinationNEXT 2023 Futures Study, with participation from 837 tourism executives in 62 countries. It is a strategic roadmap and global survey that helps destination leaders navigate today's highly fluid visitor economy to optimize their organizations' relevance and value.



Four transformational opportunities emerged from the Futures Study that directly relate to Minneapolis' 10-Year Destination Master Plan and the future of the destination:

- 1** Customers are increasingly seeking a unique, authentic travel experience.
- 2** Communities expect to be more engaged in destination, product and experience development for locals and visitors.
- 3** Destinations are looking at sustainability and regeneration more broadly, encompassing economic, social and environmental impacts.
- 4** Greater industry, community and government alignment is driving destination competitiveness and brand.

# Regional Plan Alignment & Context

Existing plans, policies and regulations from city, county, regional and national perspectives were used to inform this Destination Master Plan. The project team recognizes and respects the work that has already been done in this region and considers it a solid foundation to build upon.

minneapolis | **2040**



**Minneapolis**  
Park & Recreation Board

**Metro Transit**



Minneapolis 2040 The City's  
Comprehensive Plan

Parks for All: Minneapolis  
Park & Recreation Board  
Comprehensive Plan  
2021–2036

Stronger, Better - Metro  
Transit's 2023 Strategic Plan

Minneapolis-Saint Paul  
International Airport  
2040 Long-Term Plan  
(June 2023 Draft)



Hennepin County 2040  
Comprehensive Plan



Downtown Next: An Action  
Strategy for Downtown  
Minneapolis



Intersections: The  
Downtown 2025 Plan -  
Minneapolis Downtown  
Council



The Falls Initiative -  
Owámniyomni Okhódayapi





# Industry & Community Stakeholder Engagement

The project team engaged more than 900 community and industry stakeholders from various sectors to ensure that this plan effectively accomplishes the aspirations of Minneapolis' diverse communities.

The primary objective of this engagement was to pinpoint key opportunities and challenges for shaping Minneapolis' future as both a sought-after destination for visitors and a thriving environment for residents.



## Stakeholder Focus Groups

Eight stakeholder focus groups were conducted, four virtual and four in-person, with 87 participants ranging from community leaders, residents and industry stakeholders from the public and private sectors.

- Hotels & Accommodations
- Professional/Amateur Sports & Recreation
- Restaurants & Culinary
- Arts & Culture
- Attractions & Museums
- Festivals & Events
- Meetings & Conventions
- Government
- Chambers of Commerce

# Community Focus Groups

Facilitated by Research Rainbow Inc., Meet Minneapolis hosted five focus groups to ensure the voices and experiences of African American, Hmong, Native American, Somali and Spanish-speaking communities were represented in this Destination Master Plan.

The feedback from the 44 participants of these sessions was extremely helpful in understanding gaps these communities are experiencing, notably, communication mechanisms specifically for diverse communities, affordability in their downtown experience and safety (particularly on LRT), the desire among residents for more community events, and the need for more youth and family-friendly experiences.

There was strong alignment with other feedback related to the need to amplify and celebrate the cultural diversity within Minneapolis, the need to ensure everyone feels safe and welcome and the need to support a more positive narrative about the city.

“There are a lot of places to visit (in Downtown Minneapolis) but there is no information in Spanish...many people do not know where to get information (about events)...it is also very expensive.”  
- Spanish-speaking Resident

“Of course I would recommend my relatives to visit Minneapolis. It is Dakota land. Why wouldn't they... there are a lot of things to do.”  
- Native American Resident

“It is a very diverse (city). I like that you see Hmong people, Black and Hispanic people, Asian (people), you feel comfortable. I like that because sometimes in places that are not as diverse you feel out of place.”  
- Hmong Resident

“There are a couple reasons that make (Minneapolis) desirable. The diversity in general...the parks and recreation, places that you can take your family...”  
- Somali Resident



# Resident Sentiment Survey

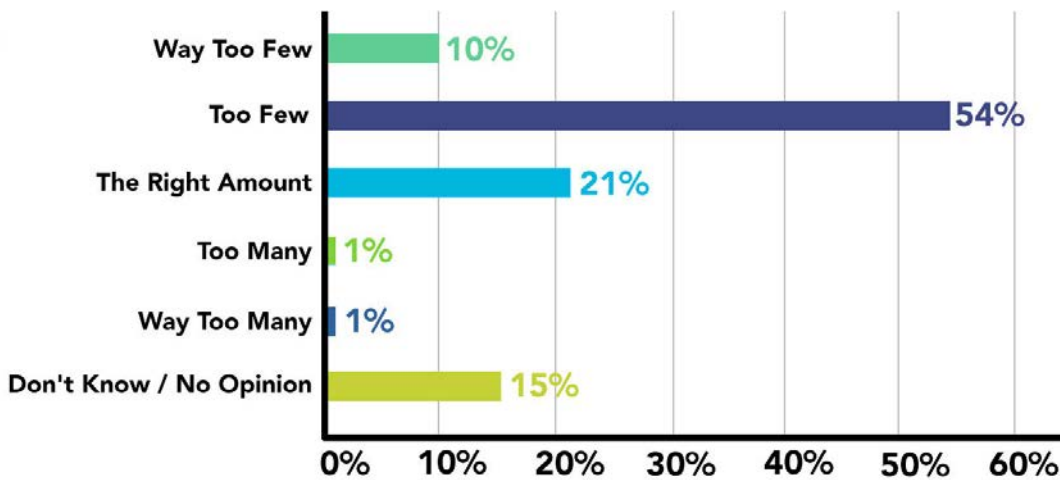
In the spring of 2024, MMGY NextFactor deployed an online survey to gather insights from residents about enhancing the community's appeal and boosting tourism growth in the region.

The survey was provided in English, Hmong, Somali, and Spanish to allow for the diverse thoughts and sentiments of the community. Over the course of two months, 734 resident responses were collected.

The value of a resident sentiment survey is that it establishes benchmarks for future surveys to help evaluate the success of industry strategies year-over-year. Tracking changes from one survey to the next provides empirical evidence to inform changes in strategic direction.

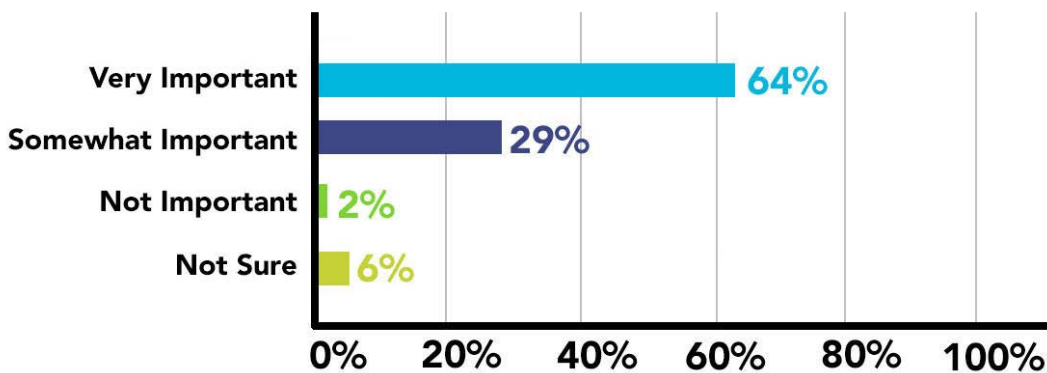
The following is a sample of the key results in the 2024 resident sentiment survey:

**In your opinion, does the city of Minneapolis attract too many, too few, or just the right amount of visitors?**



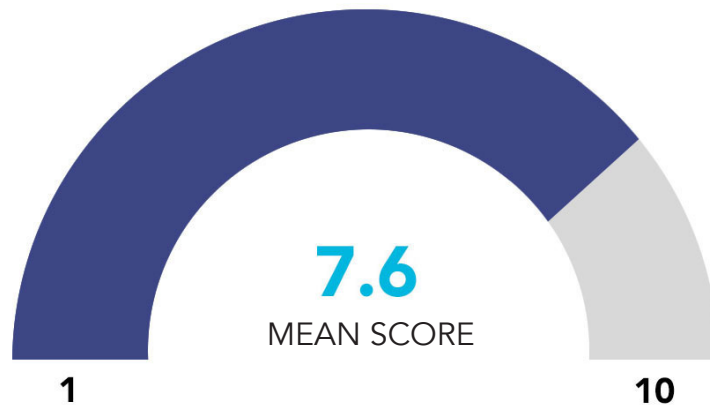
Residents recognize the importance of the visitor economy, over 60% of them indicate that the city could benefit from welcoming more visitors.

**How important are visitors and tourism to Minneapolis' economy?**



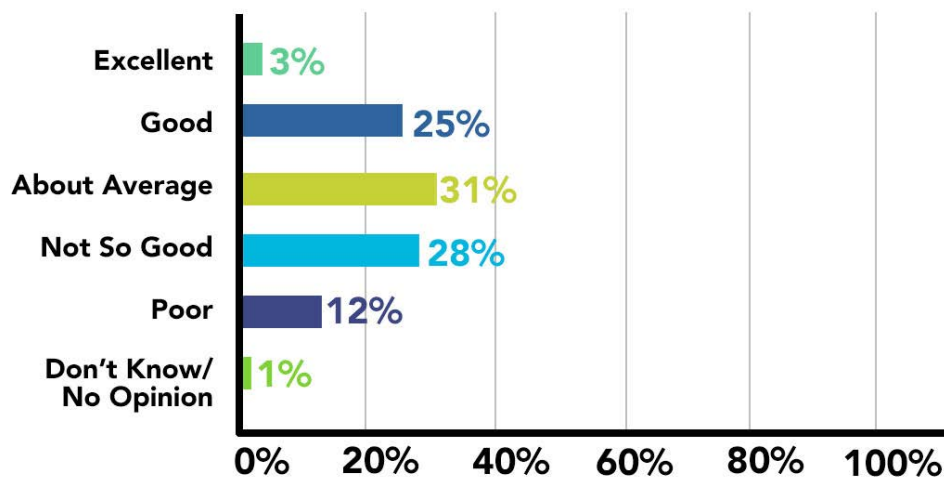


On a scale of 1-10 how likely are you to recommend Minneapolis as a place to visit when talking to friends and family members?



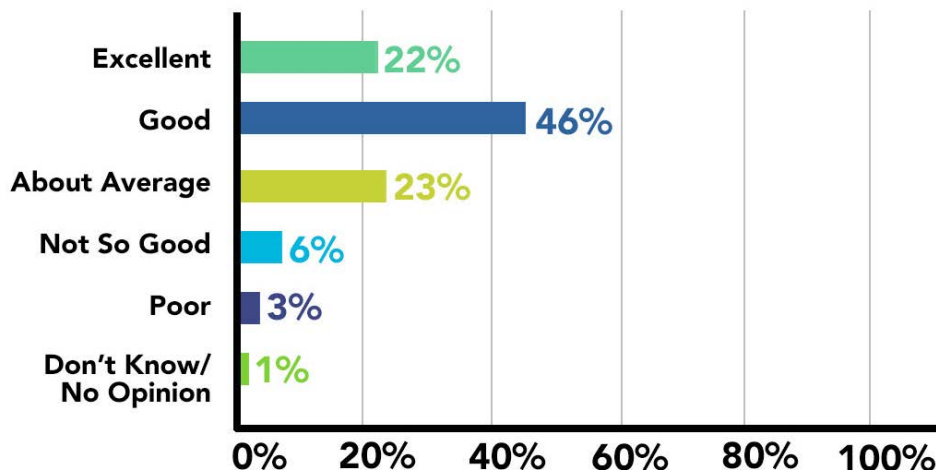
Most residents are likely to recommend Minneapolis as a destination to friends and family, despite lingering questions about public safety.

How would you rate the overall quality of the Downtown Minneapolis experience?



Visitation to downtown Minneapolis is notably higher than previous conversations might suggest. Over half of respondents still view downtown experiences positively.

How would you rate the overall quality of life in Minneapolis?



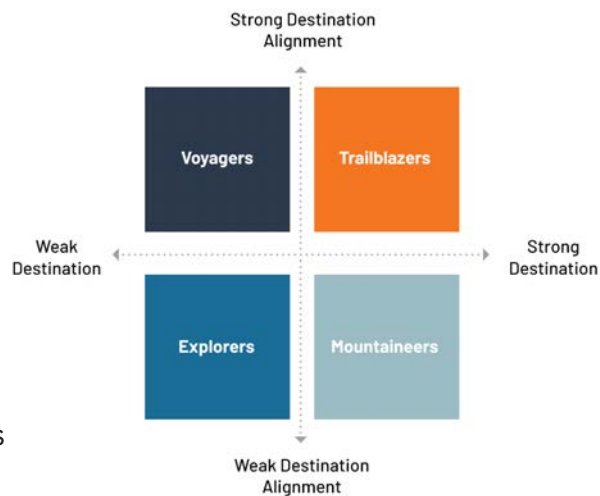
More than two-thirds of residents surveyed feel that the quality of life in the city is good or excellent and believe Minneapolis is moving in the right direction.

# DestinationNEXT Assessment













Powered by Destinations International and developed by MMGY NextFactor, the comprehensive DestinationNEXT Assessment tool is a global tourism industry standard designed to empirically measure how a specific destination's visitor economy is performing across a wide spectrum of indicators.

The methodology incorporates an in-depth survey of government officials, tourism leaders, community organizations, business owners and other key stakeholders. The survey questions focus on 24 different variables related to overall destination strength in products and services, including visitor industry infrastructure, experiences and services, and overall destination alignment, focusing on how well government, community and industry leaders work together.

The survey data is then plotted into a 4-quadrant scenario model that compares the destination with more than 350 DestinationNEXT assessments in other communities. The results provide valuable business intelligence identifying the greatest opportunities and most significant challenges for the area's visitor economy.



Destination Alignment Variables

 <b>Attractions &amp; Experiences</b>	 <b>Art, Culture &amp; Heritage</b>	 <b>Dining, Shopping &amp; Entertainment</b>	 <b>Outdoor Recreation</b>	 <b>Conventions &amp; Meetings</b>	 <b>Events &amp; Festivals</b>
 <b>Sporting Events</b>	 <b>Accommodation</b>	 <b>Local Mobility &amp; Access</b>	 <b>Destination Access</b>	 <b>Communication Infrastructure</b>	 <b>Health &amp; Safety</b>

Destination Strength Variables

 <b>Business Support</b>	 <b>Community Group &amp; Resident Support</b>	 <b>Government Support</b>	 <b>Organization Governance</b>	 <b>Workforce Development</b>	 <b>Hospitality Culture</b>
 <b>Equity, Diversity &amp; Inclusion</b>	 <b>Funding Support &amp; Certainty</b>	 <b>Regional Cooperation</b>	 <b>Sustainability &amp; Resilience</b>	 <b>Emergency Preparedness</b>	 <b>Economic Development</b>

# DestinationNEXT Assessment Results

A total of 115 local and community stakeholders participated in the survey for the DestinationNEXT Assessment. These participants included Minneapolis tourism partners, the Meet Minneapolis team and Board of Directors, customers, and community and government leaders.

Minneapolis is in the Trailblazer quadrant. The results place the region as slightly above the industry average in terms of both destination strength (in products and services), and destination alignment (with the local

community and industry). The results show modest improvements in both areas since the assessment was last conducted in 2016 despite the introduction of new variables.

The 2024 results reflects the destination’s easy access, the diverse range of assets from sporting to cultural offerings, and the strong alignment between governing bodies in the region. Health & Safety and Workforce Development represent the lowest-scoring variables; improving them will require continued collaboration from all stakeholders.



## The following are the highest and lowest ranked variables in Minneapolis’ 2024 DestinationNEXT survey of community and industry stakeholders:

### Highest Ranked

#### Destination Strength Variables (out of 5)

Sports	4.34
Destination Access	4.32
Arts, Culture & Heritage	4.25
Outdoor Recreation	4.20
Conventions & Meetings	4.09

### Lowest Ranked

#### Destination Strength Variables (out of 5)

Health & Safety	3.38
Local Mobility & Access	3.56
Events & Festivals	3.76
Dining, Shopping & Entertainment	3.77
Accommodation	3.79

### Highest Ranked

#### Destination Alignment Variables (out of 5)

Sustainability & Resilience	4.02
Organization Governance	4.01
Economic Development	3.97
Government Support	3.82
Regional Cooperation	3.81

### Lowest Ranked

#### Destination Alignment Variables (out of 5)

Workforce Development	3.12
Funding Support & Certainty	3.22
Community Group & Resident Support	3.42
Emergency Preparedness	3.56
Equity, Diversity & Inclusion	3.70



# DestinationNEXT Takeaways

1

Stakeholders consistently mentioned safety and crime as a key factor impacting the city's appeal as a visitor destination. They specifically want Meet Minneapolis to continue to play a role in addressing both the perception and reality of crime and safety concerns in downtown Minneapolis.

2

The skyways connecting buildings in downtown are seen as a positive and unique feature, but inconsistent hours and access are a major drawback, particularly in the evenings and on weekends.

3

Many stakeholders noted that Minneapolis would benefit from developing iconic, large-scale festivals and events as well as signature attractions that would serve as major visitor draws.

4

Many respondents believe there is much to be gained by leveraging your unique assets and neighborhoods. Some of the items mentioned include parks, riverfront, cultural districts, the arts scene, and seasonal experiences.

5

Individuals mentioned the need for better wayfinding, signage (including multi-language), an entertainment district downtown, and better connectivity between the convention center and other areas.



# Engagement Summary

Following the completion of the in-depth interviews, focus groups, resident sentiment survey and DestinationNEXT Assessment, the following key opportunities and challenges emerged:

## Key Opportunities

- Cultural Diversity
- Urban Park System
- Expanded Convention District
- Professional Sports
- Skyways Activation
- Civil Rights/Advocacy
- Musical Legacy of Prince
- Riverfront

## Key Challenges

- Public Safety Perception
- Public Transportation
- Affordable Housing
- Downtown Vibrancy
- Workforce Development



## Visioning Workshop

The results and insights gleaned during the engagement phase of the project were then used in a visioning workshop with the Steering Committee to envision the ideal future of tourism management in the City of Minneapolis and to develop priorities for the plan.

## Validation Workshop

The workshop findings were consolidated into a comprehensive Destination Master Plan, which was subsequently shared with the Steering Committee, Meet Minneapolis staff, and other key stakeholders for review and input.

# 6 Key Engagement Takeaways

- 1** Safety and crime are consistently mentioned as key factors impacting the city's appeal as a visitor destination. Meet Minneapolis can continue to play an important role in addressing the perception and realities of crime and safety in the downtown through programs, activations and public awareness.
- 2** Minneapolis has a meaningful opportunity to position itself as the destination for modern-day civil rights movement through collaborative social justice programming.
- 3** Developing a true convention campus/district with amenities that convention goers desire like close, large scale hotels, activated streets and connection to the riverfront and other parts of downtown will create vibrancy and a draw for locals and visitors.
- 4** Connectivity in and around the downtown must be addressed. This includes the skyways, downtown to the riverfront and around the convention center.
- 5** Minneapolis would benefit from developing local, iconic, large-scale festivals and events as well as signature attractions for families that would serve as major draws for visitors. Support for event development and growth, funding, permitting, security, etc. is critical.
- 6** Minneapolis can be a leader in amplifying the community's unique cultural assets and neighborhoods. This includes parks, the riverfront, cultural districts, the arts scene and seasonal experiences. Expand the cultural district model to other well defined arts and cultural districts in the city to better position them as a tourist destination is a key opportunity.







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rich history and dynamic  
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roots, amplify culture, celebrate  
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as a top-tier travel and  
events destination.**

## Destination Vision

After months of meticulous assessments, research and invaluable input from stakeholders and residents, the Steering Committee crafted this shared vision for Minneapolis. It is designed to guide and inspire the strategic direction of this 10-year Destination Master Plan.

The purpose of defining a long-term vision is to imprint an image of what is possible. That mental picture must be realistic to ensure buy-in. At the same time, it also must stretch the imagination to highlight what will be possible when local leaders and residents rally around the plan's strategic framework and work together on its implementation. Ultimately, the destination vision is designed to motivate and encourage people to contribute to making the vision a reality.

### Our vision was designed to impart:

- 1. Inspiration.** A vision that the community is motivated to achieve.
- 2. Aspiration.** A vision that reflects bold possibilities for our future.
- 3. Continuity.** A vision that builds on the key priorities, progress and values of our region.

The collective effort of diverse stakeholders—including tourism leaders, government officials, and a broad spectrum of residents—came together in focus groups and through the resident sentiment survey to shape a shared vision for the city. This destination vision reflects the committee's unified commitment to honoring the city's history while embracing an optimistic outlook for its future.



# Strategic Goals & Initiatives

The framework for this Destination Master Plan consists of five high-level strategic goals with complementary, actionable initiatives for achieving those goals.

These goals and initiatives were crafted under the guidance of Meet Minneapolis and the Master Plan Steering Committee, ensuring they effectively capitalize on the region's unique opportunities and help mitigate regional challenges.

The five strategic goals are interrelated and designed to be addressed both individually, from a tactical economic development lens and holistically from a quality-of-life perspective.



**Create a nationally competitive convention center district**



**Develop new, and enhance existing, festivals and events year-round**



**Establish Minneapolis as a national leader in equity and reconciliation**



**Increase downtown vibrancy and expand mixed-use riverfront development**



**Expand and diversify lifestyle experiences**



# The 6 Big Ideas

The big ideas outlined below represent the transformative opportunities to uniquely position Minneapolis as a premier destination, fostering a thriving tourism economy and significantly enhancing the quality of life for its residents.

- 1 Embrace Minneapolis as a catalyst of the modern-day civil rights movement
- 2 Develop an iconic event that showcases Minneapolis' commitment to social justice
- 3 Modernize the Minneapolis Convention Center to enhance the competitive advantage and create a signature convention center district.
- 4 Improve connections to the central riverfront near the Post Office site and Upper Lock and Dam
- 5 Enhance Minneapolis' nightlife scene to be a vibrant, thriving night economy
- 6 Establish Minneapolis as the "#1 city for women's sports"







# STRATEGIC GOAL

## Create a nationally competitive convention center district

Meetings and conventions are vital in bolstering Minneapolis' economy as it accounts for a sizable portion of its annual visitors. Advocating for significant investment in the convention center through a planned modernization project and the addition of hotels with at least 500 rooms concentrated within two blocks of the convention center will significantly enhance the city's appeal as a premier destination for conventions and large-scale events and will undoubtedly drive substantial economic growth.

Amidst a fierce competition for meetings and conventions, cities across the nation are investing billions to upgrade their facilities, hotels, and entertainment districts. Supporting the modernization of the building through an expansion of ballroom space, creating a safe and welcoming arrival space, and providing better connections to the city is crucial for Minneapolis to remain a competitive player in the rapidly evolving landscape of the meetings and conventions industry.

The presence of a lively, integrated convention center district has become the new standard, arguably as crucial as the size of a ballroom or exhibition space. These districts, featuring dining, retail, entertainment, and green spaces, function as extensions of the community. This is particularly relevant for destinations facing connectivity and walkability issues.

An established convention center district means conventioners aren't relegated to coach buses in search of experiences but steps away from it all.

The goal is to incentivize attendees to explore the city during and after their meetings, thereby increasing foot traffic and supporting local businesses. Additionally, a vibrant convention center district, buzzing with locals and visitors, is a key selling point for meeting planners when selecting destinations for their events.

By developing a nationally competitive convention center district, Minneapolis can solidify its reputation as a premier destination for major events, fostering long-term economic growth and elevating its status on the national stage.







# INITIATIVES

## Create a nationally competitive convention center district

### Convention Center Development

- a. Support the convention center modernization plan and advocate for public private partnerships in creating a more vibrant convention center district/campus
- b. Create a convention center district by activating streets and businesses in the surrounding area through dining, retail, entertainment, greenspace and services for convention attendees and community members
- c. Add additional hotel rooms within a 6-block radius of the convention center





## STRATEGIC GOAL

### Develop new, and enhance existing, festivals and events year-round

Winter in Minneapolis is an experience that must be witnessed firsthand. The city doesn't shut down; instead, it embraces the climate and thrives outdoors.

Minneapolis' Nordic heritage plays a significant role in shaping its winter culture. This influence is evident in the cozy warmth of local saunas, lively winter markets, and beloved events like the Great Northern Festival and Holidazzle. The tradition of saunas offers a welcoming retreat from the cold, providing a unique way for residents and visitors to relax and socialize. Winter markets, inspired by those in Nordic countries, create bustling hubs of activity where people can sample local crafts, foods, and holiday cheer.

These unique offerings amplify Minneapolis' festive winter spirit and enhance the city's appeal as a vibrant and culturally rich winter destination.

Moreover, Minneapolis can leverage its rich cultural heritage and commitment to social justice to create a world-class event that celebrates the enduring legacy of Prince. By transforming his visionary spirit and activism into a multi-day festival, the city can generate significant economic impact, attract visitors, and inspire positive change. Through music, art, and education, this event will foster community engagement, raise awareness of critical social issues, and solidify Minneapolis' reputation as a leader in both arts and activism.

Centering the festival around Prince's legacy will not only honor his incomparable talent but also harness the power of his music to drive meaningful action.

This plan aims to emphasize the drawing power of develop new and enhance existing festivals and events year-round, particularly events that celebrate local arts and culture. These events attract visitors from all over, support small businesses, and inject vitality into local communities during the shoulder season. Critical to the success of these events is the establishment of a sustainable events fund, ensuring consistent, scalable events that drive economic benefits year-round.





# INITIATIVES

Develop new, and enhance existing, festivals and events year-round

## Events & Seasonal Activities

- a. Establish The Great Northern Festival as a city-wide multi-month program to promote unique winter events and experiences that embrace and celebrate Minneapolis' climate (e.g. Holidazzle, winter markets/ice castles, Winter Jazz Festival, Winter Arts Festival Light show, Sauna Village)
- b. Develop an iconic event that showcases Minneapolis' commitment to social justice by leveraging the community's diversity, arts, innovation, musical heritage, etc.
- c. Establish Minneapolis as the "#1 city for women's sports" (e.g. 2031 FIFA Women's World Cup bid, 2033 Women's Rugby, etc.)
- d. Secure ongoing funding for consistent scalable events and address costs associated with permitting, securing, and staffing public events and festivals





## STRATEGIC GOAL

### Establish Minneapolis as a national leader in equity and reconciliation

The murder of George Floyd catapulted Minneapolis into the global spotlight and placed it at the epicenter of the modern-day civil rights movement.

This pivotal event merged the city's historic racial struggles with its current fight for justice, creating a powerful and enduring legacy comparable to monumental moments like the March on Selma, the Montgomery bus boycott, and the March on Washington.

As Minneapolis continues to learn and heal from the tragedy that unfolded on May 25, 2020, the city is moving toward a path of reconciliation with a renewed focus on solidifying and preserving the cultural legacies that have shaped it. These legacies have laid the foundation for the seven recognized cultural districts (38th Street, Cedar Avenue South, Central Avenue, East Lake Street, Franklin Avenue East, Lowry Avenue North, and West Broadway). With further development and investment, these districts could be not just passing attractions but vital destinations for visitors and residents. They serve as meeting places and are cornerstones of community and cultural exploration.

Throughout the engagement phase of this project, stakeholders and residents shared a range of hopes and sentiments for these districts. Many advocated for sustainable funding to enhance and expand organizations like the Midtown Global Market, which directly promotes Minneapolis' economic, social, and cultural assets and supports the community that anchors them. This amalgamation of culture and commerce is a testament that cultural tourism can be a powerful catalyst for equitable community and neighborhood development.

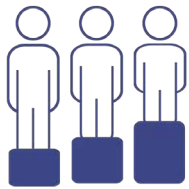
While platforms like Midtown Global Market are essential to strengthen the local economy, there is a demand for formalized tourism readiness training to equip small businesses with the skills and resources needed to thrive, enabling them to offer authentic and enriching experiences to visitors.

Others have expressed a desire to see the districts evolve into cooperative communities "where families of all backgrounds can gather, where kids can play and get help with homework, and have meals together, and social services support is readily available for those who need it". As Minneapolis' cultural landscape continues to broaden, cultivating safe and inclusive communities are paramount to promote a positive quality of life and attract visitors.

Regardless of the sentiment, what remains clear is that Minneapolis has a rich history that needs to be shared. Organizations like Owámniyomni Okhódayapi have done their fair share to drive awareness and tell the story of the land, Dakhóta Oyáte, and Ojibwe who steward it, but there is more to be done.

By establishing itself as a national leader in equity and reconciliation, Minneapolis can both honor its past and pave the way for a brighter, more inclusive future for generations to come. Prioritizing these values enables the city to address historical injustices, foster social cohesion, and build a more equitable and welcoming community for all.





# INITIATIVES

## Establish Minneapolis as a national leader in equity and reconciliation

### Cultural & Commercial Districts

- a. Build on the existing Cultural District framework to amplify the 7 Cultural Districts and share the city's cultural diversity (African American, Native American, Somali, etc.)
- b. Incorporate tourism-ready training for small businesses incubating at the Midtown Global Market to provide them with education and additional opportunities for exposure
- c. Support the initiatives of Owámniyomni Okhódayapi to develop and promote Native American tourism product
- d. Provide hop-on-hop-off public transportation (trolley, bus, etc.) to make transit from downtown to neighborhoods accessible and prevent traffic/parking congestion in neighborhoods
- e. Advocate for the reinstatement of a bike-share program to aid connectivity and exploration of established biking trails





## STRATEGIC GOAL

### Increase downtown vibrancy and expand mixed-use riverfront development

“The future of downtown will not look like its past—and that’s a good thing,” Sarah Harris, author of *Downtown Next: An Action Strategy for Downtown Minneapolis*.

Like many cities across the nation, downtown Minneapolis is experiencing an evolution. Destination planning is critical in shifting from a corporate-centric 9-to-5 design to a revitalized community-centric hub for living. Resident survey responses highlight this need, as the majority indicated they visit downtown only once every few months for non-work-related reasons.

Transitioning Nicollet Mall to a pedestrian-only zone and repurposing vacant commercial buildings are the most significant opportunities to establish downtown Minneapolis as a central convenor. The adoption of an open streets model has seen success in downtowns and main streets across the nation by establishing a sense of place that transforms the area from a throughway to a destination. The investment in physical infrastructure for public events and entertainment, unique retail and dining, and other ancillary amenities elevates the location and further aids leisurely exploration, allowing visitors to stay longer and ultimately generating greater spending. Additionally, consistent programming on the street level, skyway, and various rotating pop-up experiences can create anticipation and drive the overall appeal of coming downtown outside of game days and visits to the office.

As beneficial as these tactics are, they are only worthwhile if safety concerns are addressed. Ensuring the safety of residents and visitors is paramount to the success of our revitalization efforts and repeat visitation. While the notion of increased police presence has received mixed reception, a more balanced approach involving

trained and informed downtown ambassadors working in tandem with the Minneapolis Police Department can provide the necessary uniform presence and local insight. These ambassadors can act as welcoming guides, offering assistance and information while enhancing the sense of security. Their collaboration with law enforcement ensures a coordinated effort to maintain safety, address concerns promptly, and create a welcoming environment. This strategy not only helps to mitigate safety issues but also fosters a positive perception of downtown, encouraging more frequent visits and contributing to the overall success of the revitalization efforts.

This plan envisions downtown Minneapolis as a dynamic hub, with neighboring cultural districts, the New Nicollet Redevelopment, the Post Office, and the Riverfront as equally vibrant spokes. The goal is not only to develop these sites through thoughtful placemaking on and around the river but also to ensure a seamless and intuitive transition to these destinations through comprehensive wayfinding strategies. This includes well-placed physical signage, QR codes that provide additional information, integrated maps, and detailed itineraries. By enhancing both physical and digital navigation tools, visitors can easily explore and connect with various attractions, fostering greater connectivity and engagement throughout the urban landscape.

By integrating downtown revitalization with mixed-use riverfront development, cities can cultivate thriving urban centers that are both economically sustainable and culturally dynamic. These initiatives not only breathe new life into neglected areas but also enhance residents’ quality of life and attract significant new investment.



# INITIATIVES

## Increase downtown vibrancy and expand mixed-use riverfront development

### Future of Downtown & Nicollet Mall

- a. Remove buses from Nicollet Mall and transition to an open streets/pedestrian mall model to establish a place to gather and to serve as a venue for public events (festivals and events, art installations, live music, expanded outdoor dining, etc.)
- b. Repurpose empty commercial buildings in unconventional ways (indoor BMX park, indoor golf, pickleball, etc.)
- c. Support office-to-residential conversions in downtown to allow for population growth and increase foot traffic
- d. Increase unique retail offerings to support the local maker community (e.g., chameleon shops, small/local luxury vendors, rotating pop-up shops)
- e. Increase frequency of downtown events (concert series, film screenings, block parties, sporting competitions, etc.)
- f. Address concerns and optics regarding public safety by increasing, ambassadors, and lighting at key areas downtown (e.g. light rail stations, surface parking lots, etc.)
- g. Support the New Nicollet Redevelopment (10-acre former Kmart site) to allow for more integration and connectivity between downtown and south Minneapolis

### Skyway Activation

- h. Engage Skyway committee to establish universal governance to allow for consistent hours of operation, beautification (public art installation, live music, greenery, etc.), and maintenance
- i. Incorporate responsive digital wayfinding communication to aid navigation and serve as an additional security measure
- j. Create a seasonal strategy to activate both Skyways and street-level through pop-ups retail and culinary, events, contests, etc.

### Central Riverfront Redevelopment

- k. Work with appropriate stakeholders to consider the future of the Post Office (possibly as a premier venue with both indoor and outdoor facilities, capable of hosting large-scale events and festivals year-round with a seamless connection from downtown to the river)
- l. Develop and promote digital and physical wayfinding to allow for a seamless and experiential transition to the waterfront (interactive signage, QR codes, etc.)
- m. Enhance year-round placemaking around the entire river (retail, dining, Instagramable signage/public art, green space, etc.)
- n. Develop new water-based experiences (water taxi service, swimming, kayaking, paddleboarding, river tubing, zipline/gondola across the river, etc.)



## STRATEGIC GOAL

### Expand and diversify lifestyle experience

Families represent a substantial portion of the tourism market, and their spending power is significant. These travelers often prioritize destinations with diverse experiences that engage all age groups, creating a ripple effect on the local economy. By investing in family-friendly attractions and amenities, cities can capture a larger share of this lucrative market.

Investment opportunities in family travel range from large-scale projects like interactive children's museums to more feasible initiatives like enhancing Minneapolis' parks system. Additionally, the city's strong arts, culture, and dining scene significantly boosts its appeal to families. However, underfunding threatens the sustainability of cultural assets like the Cowles Center for Dance. Consistent investment in nurturing local talent and preserving cultural treasures is essential for maintaining a vibrant arts community and a unique cultural identity.

Minneapolis is already gaining recognition as a culinary destination, with a growing number of James Beard Award-winning chefs and restaurants. Attracting and funding the Michelin Star program would solidify the city's global culinary status. This elevated culinary scene not only benefits food lovers but also contributes to the overall appeal of the city for families.

Minneapolis undeniably boasts a vibrant nightlife scene, anchored by its rich musical heritage and thriving beer culture. The city's iconic venues, such as First Avenue and the Armory, are synonymous with live music, but the spotlight often overshadows local talent. This imbalance hinders the development of new artists and limits the city's potential to cultivate a diverse and dynamic music scene.

While Minneapolis offers a plethora of entertainment options, it lacks a cohesive strategy to maximize its nighttime economy. A Night Economy Manager or Night Ambassador could play a pivotal role in coordinating efforts, addressing challenges, and promoting the city as a premier nightlife destination. This approach has proven successful in other major cities and could significantly enhance Minneapolis' appeal.

The city's robust beer industry contributes substantially to the economy, yet stakeholders express a need for standardized regulations and operational guidelines. Establishing a clear framework for operations and promotion would streamline processes, foster growth, and create a more supportive environment for breweries and bars.

To broaden its appeal, Minneapolis should explore opportunities beyond alcohol-centric nightlife. By expanding offerings to include sober-friendly options, the city can cater to a wider demographic, including the city's significant Muslim population and individuals embracing a healthier lifestyle. This approach can also contribute to a more inclusive and welcoming night-time environment.

By expanding and diversifying Minneapolis' lifestyle experiences, the city can not only attract a broader range of visitors but also cultivate a more loyal customer base. Families, in particular, will be drawn to a destination that offers a variety of activities and attractions, creating a ripple effect of positive word-of-mouth and contributing to the city's reputation as a welcoming and inclusive place.





# INITIATIVES

## Expand and diversify lifestyle experience

### Family Attractions & Experiences

- a. Develop new experiences and assets to effectively leverage Minneapolis' United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Child-Friendly City designation (Downtown Children's Museum, amusement park, inclusive playgrounds, etc.)
- b. Promote the quality of the city's parks system as a unique local asset for outdoor recreational experiences (accessible to all)

### Night Economy

- c. Consider installing a Night Economy Manager / Night Ambassador to allow for a more vibrant, viable, safe, and well managed nightlife environment
- d. Develop a mechanism to allocate resources (through grants, public and private opportunities) to nurture and develop the talent pipeline for local entertainers and musicians, focusing on training programs, mentorship opportunities, and performance platforms
- e. Develop alcohol-free nightlife options to accommodate the city's large Muslim population and visitors living a sober lifestyle
- f. Expand the "Ale Trail" to showcase and promote brewery assets in the city
- g. Work with Metro Transit to extend public transportation service hours to accommodate late-night patrons

### Arts & Culture

- h. Advocate for funding sources to support Arts & Culture Impact Fund
- i. Develop a cultural asset map to identify funding needs and product development opportunities
- j. Expand Minneapolis' public art program to ensure there is an equitable distribution of art across the city
- k. Develop a connected self-guided visual and experiential arts and culture "trail"
- l. Promote the award-winning culinary scene and consider initiatives such as vertical urban farms to supply restaurants and Michelin Star designation to raise the city's culinary profile



# Implementation Plan & Next Steps

A plan is only as effective as its execution.

This Destination Master Plan is a roadmap that captures and prioritizes the collective aspirations for community and industry stakeholders for the next 10 years. However, executing the actionable initiatives outlined in the plan is a complex undertaking that will require intentional collaboration among the public, private and civic sectors.

Implementing this long-term Destination Master Plan (DMP) will require ambitious, thoughtful and collaborative-minded people across all sectors to champion and lead specific initiatives proposed in the plan. The realization of these ideas needs leaders who are passionate about the future, and who will drive investment and ongoing attention to optimizing the visitor economy and quality of life for residents.

Continued Steering Committee engagement on DMP priorities, plus the efforts of effective working groups to help move master plan strategies forward, will ensure an ongoing focus on plan implementation.

To achieve shared success, the project team will develop implementation work plans to help guide the execution of all the various action items in this document. Work plans are basically flow charts that include the main strategic goals and all their respective initiatives. Those work plans are designed to be updated on a regular basis to define the specific initiatives that should be prioritized in the near term and the coalition of organizations responsible for their implementation. The work plans will also track accomplishments to ensure accountability and maintain momentum.

The initiatives in this plan will require funding to implement. Adequate and timely availability

of financial and organizational resources are imperative to achieve the full potential of this plan. Options for funding of these community initiatives may include, but are not limited to, grants, a tourism marketing district, philanthropic donations, state and local government support, private investment and public/private partnerships.

As the implementation of this plan is pursued, a Future Needs Assessment should be undertaken to identify funding opportunities, technology needs, and the infrastructure required to fully implement the plan.

The overall implementation strategy will highlight short-, medium- or long-term time frames for each initiative, their intended outcomes, and any relevant key performance indicators. That chronological structure is key for identifying where there are the greatest opportunities in the short-term with the highest ROI requiring the least resources. As well, it will also define the time frames and coalition building required for longer-term, more complex and more capital-intensive initiatives.

By providing a living and transparent document that remains relevant on a day-to-day basis, the implementation work plans ensure that the goals and initiatives of the Destination Master Plan remain agile and can evolve with ongoing developments in Minneapolis and overall tourism marketplace.



# Short-Term Priorities

With so many opportunities, strategies and action items in this Destination Master Plan, it helps to have a final list of takeaways that sum up the major short-term deliverables to provide direction and build momentum. The following are geared to help identify shared goals and inform investment decisions as community and industry stakeholders begin to embark on implementing this plan.

- ◆ Engage Skyway committee to establish universal governance and address all aspects of user experience
- ◆ Advocate for development of convention center expansion plan and thoughtful district development
- ◆ Develop and promote digital and physical wayfinding to allow for a seamless and experiential transition to the waterfront (interactive signage, QR codes, etc.)
- ◆ Expand the Cultural District investments and build upon existing framework to amplify awareness of the city's cultural diversity
- ◆ Capitalize on Minneapolis' unique winter climate by establishing The Great Northern Festival as a city-wide multi-month program
- ◆ Consider installing a Night Economy Manager / Night Ambassador to allow for a well managed nightlife environment





# Meet Minneapolis' Role in Implementation

Meet Minneapolis, as the champion for the city, will continue to shepherd the plan through implementation to ensure positive momentum. The organization will bring together community leaders and stakeholder groups with the desire and ability to lead and get things done. All regional businesses, governments, community organizations, groups and individual residents are invited to get involved in advancing the recommendations of this plan, ensuring Minneapolis achieves its long-term vision.

Each strategic goal in this plan is supported by subsequent initiatives that, to be successful, will require collaboration and collective support from the tourism industry, multiple partners, stakeholders and organizations across the city.

When successfully implemented, these goals and subsequent initiatives will make a positive impact on the quality of life, quality of experience and quality of the economy in Minneapolis.

Meet Minneapolis does not own the assets and experiences related to the local visitor economy, and therefore, it cannot single-handedly advance the strategies and initiatives of this plan. Its role in implementing the Destination Master Plan will be different for each initiative and will be articulated in a corresponding implementation work plan to help guide this work.

**Roles will include one of the following:**

## Lead

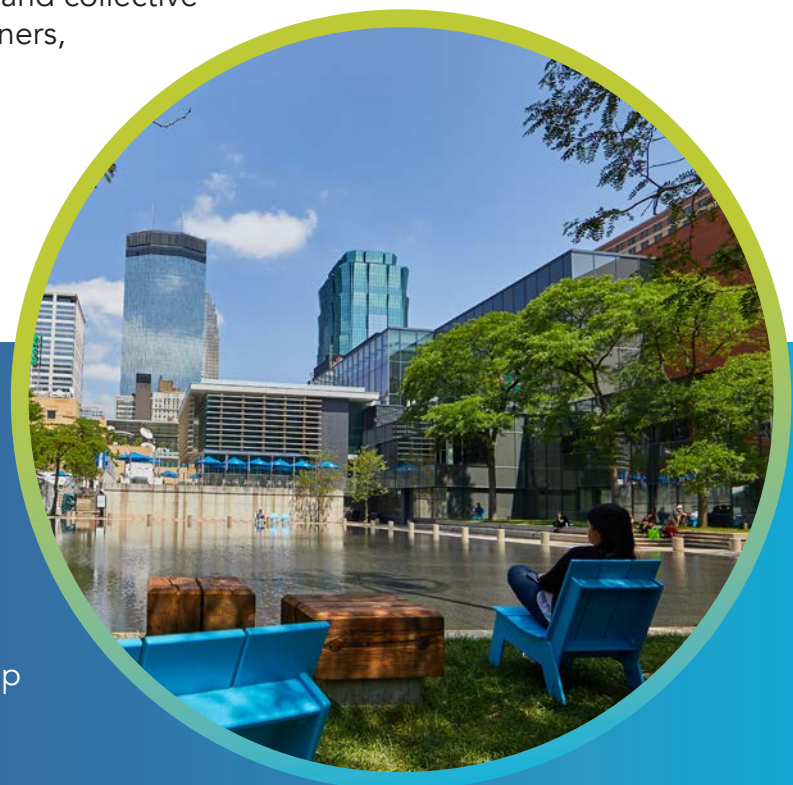
Meet Minneapolis takes the lead as the organization to advance initiatives.

## Advocate

Meet Minneapolis advocates for strategic initiatives that will advance Minneapolis for the benefit of visitors and residents.

## Partner & Support

Meet Minneapolis may partner with other organizations to support their efforts to achieve shared goals.



## Convene

Meet Minneapolis may be the conveners of groups and those in positions to advance initiatives.

## Monitor

Meet Minneapolis connects with other organizations who are leading the advancement of initiatives to track progress against the plan.

Progress and additional plan details will be available on [Minneapolis.org](https://www.minneapolis.org).



**DESTINATION  
MINNEAPOLIS**

Charting the Future of Minneapolis Tourism

**2035 DESTINATION MASTER PLAN**



Meet **Minneapolis**  
City by Nature