

Section 3: Housing Technical Appendix

Comparison with Surrounding Communities

The Metropolitan Council recommends that cities use Livable Communities data in their comprehensive plans to compare their housing with other communities in the metropolitan area to

help clarify housing needs. Such a comparison between Bloomington, neighboring communities, and other cities in the metropolitan area is provided in *Tables A3.1 and A3.2*.

A comparison of Bloomington with its neighboring communities reveals that Bloomington is the

only city of the seven to fall within the adopted Metropolitan Council benchmarks in each of the six categories, a sign that Bloomington provides a healthy mix of housing options. Each of Bloomington's neighbors deviates from the adopted benchmarks for cities in their stage of development and

Table A3.1 Housing Comparison with Neighboring Communities

City	Affordable		Life Cycle			Density/Acre	
	Owner Occupied	Rented	Non-Single Family Detached	Percent Owner Occupied	Percent Rental	Single Family	Multi-Family
Bloomington	69%	33%	41%	70%	30%	2.4	11.38
Edina	31%	14%	43%	71%	29%	2.3	16
Richfield	97%	64%	36%	65%	35%	3.6	21
Eagan	62%	22%	46%	69%	31%	1.8	9
Burnsville	69%	52%	52%	65%	35%	2.2	10
Savage	78%	40%	14%	85%	15%	1.9	14
Eden Prairie	42%	11%	42%	73%	27%	1.9	9

Shaded cells represent areas in which the community deviates from "Livable Communities" benchmarks.

Source: Metropolitan Council

Table A3.2 Housing Comparison with Other Cities in the Metropolitan Area

City	Affordable		Life Cycle			Density/Acre	
	Owner Occupied	Rented	Non-Single Family Detached	Percent Owner Occupied	Percent Rental	Single Family	Multi-Family
Bloomington	69%	33%	41%	70%	30%	2.4	11.38
Brooklyn Park	91%	57%	44%	67%	33%	2.3	12
Golden Valley	60%	45%	28%	79%	21%	2.2	11
Plymouth	42%	15%	39%	74%	26%	1.8	8
Roseville	76%	47%	41%	68%	32%	2.2	17
St. Louis Park	82%	38%	44%	63%	37%	3.8	18
Minneapolis	88%	67%	56%	45%	55%	6.2	20
St. Paul	90%	68%	51%	54%	46%	4.6	29

Shaded cells represent areas in which the community deviates from "Livable Communities" benchmarks. Minneapolis and St. Paul were not assigned benchmarks.

Source: Metropolitan Council



location, whether above or below, in at least three of the categories.

In comparison with cities elsewhere in the Metropolitan Area, Bloomington’s percentage of affordable housing is generally higher than younger communities but lower than older communities. The fact that Bloomington lies in between these extremes is a reflection of the city’s mix of housing prices, with both entry level and move-up housing. “Life Cycle” and “Density” measures are comparable between Bloomington and the five other suburban communities. Among the compared suburban communities, Bloomington is the only city to fall within the adopted Metropolitan Council benchmarks in each of the six housing categories.

Regional Plans and Policies

The Metropolitan Council’s **Regional Blueprint** (1996) outlines regional housing policies it believes will help sustain and improve the livability of the region. The policies and approaches set out by the Metropolitan Council are similar to those identified by the City of Bloomington.

A main focus of both the **Regional Blueprint** and the **Housing Element** of the **Bloomington Comprehensive Plan** is the vitality of individual neighborhoods. Both plans encourage investment in housing maintenance and rehabilitation, aspire to increase neighborhood confidence, and strive to strengthen neighborhood ties. Bloomington, like the Council, hopes to encourage transit and pedestrian oriented development and believes that affordable and life cycle housing opportunities should be available in all communities.

The Metropolitan Council recommends that cities evaluate the impact of the following local controls on housing costs and life-cycle housing opportunities:

- The amount of land zoned and guided for medium and high density development or redevelopment;
- Planned unit, mixed use, and cluster development ordinances offering residential density bonuses;
- The flexibility to employ zero lot line development or other innovative site planning techniques;
- Environmental regulations that are stricter than those required by state law or regional policy;
- Minimum lot size requirements;
- Minimum floor area requirements;
- Garage and off-street parking requirements;
- Setback requirements;
- Inclusion of private streets in subdivision development;
- Sidewalk requirements;
- Park and trail dedication requirements;
- Minimum right-of-way and pavement width requirements;
- Storm sewer design requirements;
- Street lighting requirements;
- Landscaping and tree replacement requirements;
- Building materials and exterior surface requirements;
- Accessory apartment requirements;
- Required development fees for off-site public improvements; and,
- The length and complexity of the local approvals process.

The impact of these local controls and requirements on housing have been evaluated in conjunction with the preparation of the comprehensive plan and in the context of the city’s housing status as a fully developed community with a diverse housing stock that meets Metropolitan Council benchmarks for affordability, density, and life cycle housing. A discussion of the local controls appears below. Many Metropolitan Council’s recommendations have actually been in place for several years in Bloomington.

In its land use guide plan, Bloomington has designated existing low density residential areas for redevelopment to medium and high density residential use. These areas lie close to commercial service areas or along existing transit corridors such as Nicollet Avenue.

Bloomington’s zoning ordinance provides for a high degree of flexibility in lot sizes. The standard minimum lot size of 11,000 square feet can be reduced through the City’s planned development and neighborhood unit development process. These processes also allow for density bonuses and flexibility in subdivision design and setbacks.

Bloomington’s current minimum residential floor area requirements and off street parking requirements do not represent an impediment to low cost housing. Minimum floor area requirements are 1,040 square feet for a single family detached home, 840 square feet for a two family dwelling, and 750 square feet for a townhouse. Floor areas can be reduced through the planned development or neighborhood unit development approval process. For multi-family dwellings, 2.2 parking spaces per unit are required,

one of which must be a garage space. For single family detached dwellings, two off street parking spaces are required, but the spaces are not required to be within a garage.

With over 28 percent of the city set aside as conservation areas or parkland, Bloomington prides itself on environmental preservation. The Metropolitan Council recommends that cities consider the reduction of housing costs through removal of environmental regulations that are stricter than state or regional regulations. When Bloomington's environmental requirements exceed state or regional requirements, it is to protect important natural features such as shorelines or river bluffs in areas which are not appropriate for development. Moreover, given the lack of vacant land, removal of environmental regulations in Bloomington would have little to no affect on housing costs.

The City of Bloomington's technical design standards, including sidewalk, right-of-way, storm sewer, street lighting, landscaping, and building material requirements, have served the city well over the years. Since it is desirable to maintain consistency as redevelopment occurs in established neighborhoods, the City will retain technical design standards in their present form. Changes to the technical standards would have a minimal impact on housing costs given the city's stage of development. Bloomington already allows the use of private streets.

Regarding fees for off-site public improvements, the City does charge a fee for park dedication. The fee has been set below the level permitted by state statute and is necessary for the continued development of a high quality

Table A3.3 Livable Communities Act Benchmark Indicators

Affordability	Ownership	64 - 77%
	Rental	32 - 45%
Life-Cycle	Type (Non-Single Family Detached)	38 - 41%
	Owner / Rental Mix	64 - 70%/30 - 36%
Density	Single Family Detached	2.3 - 2.9 units/acre
	Multi-Family	11 - 15 units/acre

Source: Metropolitan Council

park system. Regarding the placement of accessory apartments or homes on single family lots, Bloomington currently allows two dwelling units on lots larger than 15,000 square feet in size.

Bloomington's quick response to residential development applications supports affordable housing by minimizing the length and complexity of the approval process. The vast majority of residential development applications are processed in less time than required by state statute.

Livable Communities Act

The Livable Communities Act sets benchmark affordability and life-cycle housing indicators for communities of similar location and stage of development. *Table A3.3* shows the benchmarks Bloomington has adopted as affordable and life-cycle housing goals for the period 1996 to 2010.