



# THE GOTHENBURG PLAN

## A COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR GOTHENBURG, NEBRASKA



Prepared with the Citizens of Gothenburg by  
RDG Planning & Design in association with  
SmartSolutions, Inc.

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# **GOTHENBURG COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2007**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE	CHAPTER	DESCRIPTION
11	1	<b>A Profile of Gothenburg</b>
23	2	<b>Strategic Planning Process</b>
35 48	3	<b>Growth and Land Use</b> <i>Development Principles and Land Use Plan</i>
71 81	4	<b>Access for the Community</b> <i>Transportation Policies and Actions</i>
89 96	5	<b>A Recreation Lifestyle</b> <i>Park Development Policies</i>
103	6	<b>Quality Public Services</b>
113 122	7	<b>Housing and Neighborhoods</b> <i>Housing and Development Policies</i>
129	8	<b>Strategic Business Plan</b>
149	9	<b>Implementation</b>





## INTRODUCTION

*Gothenburg is a vibrant community in a strategic location for future growth.*

*These prospects present both exciting challenges and opportunities.*

*Gothenburg is a city of rich history established as a railroad town during the westward movement and growing as an agricultural and retail center. The city can use its special features, including transportation access, historic resources, and parks and recreation facilities, to grow and prosper in the new century.*





*The Gothenburg Plan is designed to provide a comprehensive vision of the city's future, based on taking community actions that will improve the lives of the city's residents and make the city uniquely attractive for potential growth.*

This plan focuses on five underlying issues to Gothenburg, including:

- **A New Vision.** Gothenburg developed and acted on a strong vision for its future after its very successful 1985 planning process. It now must develop a new, shared vision to define its future in a new century.
- **Retail Retention and Growth.** Downtown Gothenburg (and its link to I-80) are critical to its perceptual and economic health. The city has experienced retail leakage and loss – but the road runs both ways. The plan must establish strategies that retain existing retailing and expand the customer base.
- **Economic Development and New Markets.** Gothenburg has a relatively diversified economic base – but new markets and growth are essential to the city's continued vitality. The plan should identify and use major community assets to expand economic opportunity.
- **Population Retention and Investment Attraction.** The ability to retain population, attract new households, and increase community investment is fundamental to Gothenburg's future. The Plan for Gothenburg must propose practical steps to accomplish these overriding goals.
- **Community Quality.** Ultimately, Gothenburg's quality and assets are the keys to its future. The plan should show how maintaining and enhancing its strengths will help accomplish other goals.

## **THE ROLE OF A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

The comprehensive development plan for Gothenburg has two fundamental purposes. The first provides an essential legal basis for land use regulation such as zoning and subdivision control. Secondly, a modern comprehensive plan presents a unified and compelling vision for a community, derived from the aspirations of its citizens; and establishes the specific actions necessary to fulfill that vision.

### **Legal Role**

Communities prepare and adopt comprehensive plans for legal purposes. Nebraska State Statutes enable cities to adopt zoning and subdivision ordinances to promote the “health, safety, morals, or general welfare of the community.” Land use regulations, such as zoning ordinances, recognize that people in a community live cooperatively and have

certain responsibilities to one another. These regulations establish rules that govern how land is developed within a municipality and its extraterritorial jurisdiction.

However, under Nebraska law, a city may not adopt land use ordinances without first adopting a comprehensive development plan. This requirement derives from the premise that land use decisions should not be arbitrary, but should follow an accepted and reasonable concept of how the city should grow. Under state statutes, a comprehensive development plan must address, at a minimum, the following issues:

- Land use, or the planned distribution of activities and uses of land in the community.
- Transportation facilities.
- Community facilities, including recreation facilities, schools, public buildings, and infrastructure.
- Annexation, identifying those areas that may be appropriate for annexation in the future.

The Gothenburg Plan provides the ongoing legal basis for the city's authority to regulate land use and development.

### **The Community Building Role**

A comprehensive development plan has an even more significant role in the growth of a community. The plan establishes a picture of Gothenburg's future, based on the participation of residents in the planning of their community. This vision continues to be crucial, as challenges related to population growth and economic changes affect the character of Gothenburg. Beyond defining a vision, the plan presents a unified action program that will implement the city's goals. The plan is designed as a working document – a document that both defines the future and provides a working program for realizing the city's great potential.

### **The Comprehensive Plan: Approach and Format**

The comprehensive plan takes a thematic and goal-oriented approach to the future development of Gothenburg. The plan is laid out in nine chapters or themes, corresponding to the city's most important strategic issues. The traditional sections of a comprehensive plan, such as land use, housing, infrastructure, and transportation, are organized as leading components of each chapter. This enables the plan to tell the story of the city's future development and presents an integrated program for the city's growth.



The plans chapters include:

### **1. A Profile of Gothenburg**

This chapter considers Gothenburg's population characteristics and growth, its role in the region, and its emergence as a vital center for government, services, residential development, education and recreation. Through population and land use analysis this theme considers the future growth and development needs of the city.

### **2. Strategic Planning Process**

This section summarizes the findings of the community participation process and identifies key issues and perspectives identified by stakeholders. Based on this process the plan's goals and guiding principles are established. The chapter identifies "Development Principles," the general principles and ideas that guide the more detailed elements of the plan.

### **3. Growth and Land Use**

This chapter considers one of Gothenburg's most critical issues - how to accommodate growth and in what direction that growth should occur. It provides a detailed strategy to guide future growth in new development areas, while strengthening existing development patterns.

### **4. Access for the Community**

The development of a reliable, interconnected transportation system fosters future growth and can create a more livable city. Providing a multi-modal transportation system and strong regional connections can create exciting opportunities for Gothenburg.

### **5. A Recreation Lifestyle**

This section describes Gothenburg's parks and sports facilities and outdoor recreation as a part of the regional recreation opportunities available to Gothenburg residents. It presents improvement plans for new and existing parks and trails to be integrated into the city's growth, housing, and regional tourism efforts.



## **6. Quality Public Services**

This chapter examines the quality of public facilities and infrastructure within Gothenburg. All of the city's facilities are vital to the city's ability to support growth and serve present and future residents. It includes a detailed assessment of each public facility and provides specific programs for infrastructure and facility development.

## **7. Housing and Neighborhoods**

This chapter examines housing demand characteristics and presents strategies to assure that each area maintains a state of health. Important issues include the preservation of the city's older and historic housing stock, and provisions for additional rental and affordable housing opportunities.

## **8. Strategic Business Plan**

This chapter reviews the business situation and proposes a business and marketing-sales plan for Gothenburg. It identifies goals and objectives for the three years following the adoption of this plan.

## **9. Implementation**

This chapter draws together the analysis and policies of the plan into a program for implementation. It summarizes the recommendations and development policies of the plan, and presents an Implementation Schedule, listing proposed projects and the time frame for their completion.

