



4646 Dakota St. SE  
Prior Lake, MN 55372

Feb. 19, 2014

# A Message from the Mayor

---

## Downtown Investments

Many residents have told me how much they like the new intersection at Main Ave./Ridgemont/44/13. It flows much more smoothly and safely; it opens up a beautiful panoramic view of Lakefront Park; it presents an attractive, well-lit entrance into downtown from the north. But, other residents feel the City Council spent too much money on the lighting and signage. Downtown has been the focus of investments going back to the early-2000s. While the more recent votes have been 3-2, most councilors have supported investments in downtown over the past 10 years or so.

Has it paid off? In the late-90s, downtown suffered through a steady and frightening exodus of nearly 20 businesses. Downtown was dying. Today, private and public investments in Downtown now support 80 distinct businesses employing over 400 people. Downtown is filled with bustling traffic of residents and visitors shopping, dining and using available services.

I'm proud of our downtown and both the residential and business communities that thrive there. Our 2030 Vision and Strategic Plan, last updated in 2012, includes the following statements describing what downtown will look like and include by 2030:

"The residents of Prior Lake reinforce a warm, small-town feel by welcoming visitors with courtesy and hospitality. Prior Lake's downtown serves as the hub of the city, offering a walkable destination, specialty shopping, dining, entertainment and services that meet the needs of residents and visitors alike.

"Downtown Prior Lake offers all the aspects of the 'town' part of our recreation and entertainment community: rooftop restaurants, music, a theater and art venues, shops, a grocery and wine store, VFW, dance studio, Edelweiss Bakery, parking and all of the everyday amenities - all conveniently located near the park and the lake where more recreation and outdoor activities are available.

"Hwy. 13 is a welcoming and attractive entry into and through Prior Lake. Pedestrians and cyclists travel safely along trails with streetscaping and boulevards. Business exteriors and signage face the road welcoming and guiding visitors."

These paragraphs capture an important point: most residents of Prior Lake want an attractive, welcoming downtown, retaining a quaint small-town feel. The words have been edited and adjusted over time, but the core themes have been present through five revisions of the Vision and Strategic Plan going back to 2002, and involving over 500 residents in those updates. Please consider joining the next update on Tuesday, April 22, 2014, at 5:30 p.m. We will once again engage as many residents as possible in extending our Vision and Strategic Plan out to 2040.

The lighting upgrades and signage began over ten years ago with the north-half downtown street reconstruction and streetscaping. Our decisions to continue these programs are appropriate investments in support of the community we want in the future. Rest assured, we still have more investments facing us over time, including determining and building an appropriate road network, constructing streetscaping in

the south part of downtown, providing for additional public parking (lots and/or ramps), and likely others as well.

Most decisions of the council affect the city for many years into the future. We must take the long term picture of our city into consideration. We know that Prior Lake will end up with 40,000 to 45,000 residents, with the only question being, "By when?" In the mid-90s, long range projections indicated full build-out in the 2030-2040 timeframe. In the mid-2000s, the projections indicated 2030 for full build-out. Our latest projections now project full build-out by sometime shortly after 2040. Our most important job in representing all residents, is to think seriously about what Prior Lake will be like when we reach a population of 40,000 - 45,000, and make decisions that ensure we will still have a healthy, attractive community, including our Downtown, when we get there.

Make your voice heard. The future of downtown and our entire city will be shaped by your input. Join us for the 2040 Vision and Strategic Plan update on Tuesday, April 22, 5:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m. Just let Lori Folie at City Hall know if you want to attend, at (952) 447-9800.

**Sincerely,**  
**Mayor Ken Hedberg**