



4646 Dakota Street SE  
Prior Lake, MN 55372

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## A Message from the Mayor

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### Visions

I strongly support the 2040 Vision and Strategic Plan. Its content paints a picture of where Prior Lake could be in 24 years, and the themes are consistent with every update going back 13 years. More importantly, the annual process of prioritizing and updating reengages the city council and hundreds of residents in the vision, helping keep it alive. Every resident should read the document and participate in the public workshops, next scheduled for the spring of 2017.

But why do it? I know dozens of reasons, but I think recounting some of the history of perhaps our greatest visionary mayor illustrates why better than any arguments I might make.

Wally Stock was mayor of Prior Lake from 1969 through 1985. For those who don't know Wally, he's one of the nicest guys you ever could know; he's an even-keeled, unassuming leader. Today, Wally and his wife have moved out of their lake home into a senior residence and both are struggling with health challenges. As mayor, I often think of Wally and wish him the best. Back in the day, he guided Prior Lake through a critically important time. Wally was fortunate to serve with council members who shared his visionary view of Prior Lake.

(I apologize in advance for any errors or omissions in these history musings.)

In 1969, Prior Lake was a village, occupying only a couple of square miles around downtown. In 1973, Eagle Creek and a portion of Spring Lake townships were partitioned and annexed into Prior Lake. Our city suddenly spread over roughly the geographical range it now occupies, and Prior Lake was reconstituted as a statutory city of 18 square miles. The new, bigger Prior Lake had a population of only about 3,500 people, along with thousands of woodland, wetland and farmland acres. Wally and the council understood that Prior Lake was becoming a suburb with a very different future, and took the steps to set the framework for the following 40 years and beyond.

Wally led the city council through the extremely difficult and costly decision to install sanitary sewer around the lake. The project took place in two phases, one in the late-1970's and the second in the early-1980's. Some lakeshore owners were unfortunately forced to sell; they simply couldn't afford the special assessments. It was so controversial in Prior Lake that after the second phase was complete, Wally and the entire council were

unelected and replaced. Yet, can you imagine what Prior Lake would be today without sanitary sewers? It was a visionary and courageous decision, and the correct one.

Wally looked at the Watzl and Kop properties and imagined what a Lakefront Park could add to the quality of life in Prior Lake. With the city staff, the whole council led the effort to acquire those properties, including seeking out state and federal grants, and got it done despite resistance from the landowners. Once again, this was controversial, especially because there was no promise of when the parkland could develop. It took nearly 25 years before we could afford to make Lakefront Park the jewel it is today. That decision required vision, creativity and courage. Can we even imagine Prior Lake without Lakefront Park today?

I could highlight many other decisions, but these three make my point. What's common among them? An ability to "look over the horizon" and imagine Prior Lake decades into the future; a commitment to make decisions for the common good, even when some individual property owners faced negative changes; a willingness to make large investments to achieve large benefits; and finally, the leadership courage to do the right thing in the face of intense pressures. Wally, despite his quiet unassuming nature, demonstrated these visionary qualities to a remarkable degree.

I cannot express enough my deep admiration and appreciation for Wally's leadership in those bygone days. I can only strive to try to live up to the approach and accomplishments Wally and the councils that served with him demonstrated in Prior Lake's formative years as a city. Our Vision and Strategic Plan document and process are the tools we've used for 13 years. Get involved; help reaffirm the direction and tone!