

INTRODUCTION

MRCCA plans must identify and protect those public river corridor views and other scenic views deemed important by the community.

Specifically, each community must identify Public River Corridor Views (PRCVs):

1. Views toward the river from public parkland, historic properties, and public overlooks. These are views from “specific places” where views can be mapped and described, and
2. Views toward bluffs from the ordinary high water level (OHWL) of the opposite shore, as seen during the summer months.
3. Other scenic views that are valued by the community may be identified. Views from specific places that are accessible to the public can also be mapped and described.

MINIMUM MRCCA PLAN REQUIREMENTS

1. Map and Describe

Map and describe these PRCVs in your community. Community values are critical to selecting PRCVs and thus each community must select PRCVs that they value – No PRCVs or maps have been prepared for download from your community page.

1. For views toward the river from public places, map at least one view from each public parkland and public overlook, if any, located in the community that has a view toward the river. Also, map views toward the river from those historic properties with views most important to the community. Document each view with the following:
 - Photo taken during leaf-on conditions. View of river should be in the frame.
 - Map showing the location the photo was taken from with two arrows indicating the general boundaries of the view as depicted in the photo and point in the direction of the view.
 - Description of what makes the view valuable. The guidance document “Framework for identifying and selecting PRCVs” provides information on how to discuss and describe views.
 - Description of what changes would negatively or positively impact the view.

(Note: If there are no public parklands or public overlooks in your community, this requirement does not apply.)
2. For views toward bluffs from the OWHL of the opposite shore:
 - Map and describe areas along the OWHL in your community where there are highly valued views of bluffs across the river (these may be in another community). For these areas with valuable views describe what makes them valuable. This may include photos and identifying what makes the view valuable and what would negatively or positively impact the view.
 - Identify bluffs in your community where the views of those bluffs from across the river may be of value to other communities or river users.
 - As part of the Met Council’s 6-month adjacent community plan review process, consider providing comments on views to bluffs across the river in adjacent communities valued by your citizens, and consider comments from other communities about the views they value in your community.

(Note: If there are no bluffs in your community or bluffs visible from your community, this requirement does not apply.)
3. Map and/or describe other views important to your community - Optional

2. Policies

A. Required Policies

These can be used verbatim or customized as appropriate:

- Protect and minimize impacts to PRCVs from public and private development activities.
- Protect and minimize impacts to PRCVs from public and private vegetation management activities.
- Protect PRCVs located within the community and identified by other communities (adjacent or across the river).

B. Examples

The following example policies are from existing MRCCA plans, and are meant to provide ideas for developing policies to protect Public River Corridor Views:

- Prohibit installation of billboards or other advertisement signs that are visible from the river or its opposite shores. (Fridley)
- Evaluate possibilities for removal of billboards within the corridor when there are opportunities to do so. (South St Paul)
- The City will continue to enforce the controls on billboards that exist in the zoning ordinance. Specifically prohibited are off-premises advertising signs and billboards that would be visible from the river, with the exception of signs designated by the Heritage Preservation Commission. No advertising sign or billboard shall be located within 300 feet of a parkway or a public park of three acres or more. (Minneapolis)
- Structure site and location shall be regulated to ensure that riverbanks, bluffs and scenic overlooks remain in their natural state, and to minimize interference with views of and from the river, except for specific uses requiring river access. (Brooklyn Park)
- The City will prevent development that blocks or has a significant negative impact on key scenic views and encourages design which preserves, enhances, or creates key scenic views. Walls of tall buildings along the river corridor should be avoided. (Minneapolis)
- The City shall preserve existing scenic vistas and cultural landscapes of the Mississippi Rivers through such techniques as subdivision and development design, easement acquisition and land/ easement dedication. (Hastings)
- New development shall be designed to allow for off-site views to the Mississippi River and associated natural features. (Hastings)
- The city will work with the river corridor neighborhoods to identify additional river views or view corridors. River views and overlook points should be linked to the city's walking paths and trail system, whenever feasible. (St. Paul)
- Public views from the uplands or terrace to the water edge of the opposite side of the river should be maximized. (St. Paul)
- Promote preservation and creation of natural screening and buffering of existing and new commercial/ industrial development areas. (South St Paul)
- The scenic quality of the shorelines should be improved by:
 - Insisting on high quality urban design and site planning.
 - Minimizing shoreline parking and outdoor storage.
 - In the Upper River and Lower Gorge sections, screening buildings structures (other than historically designated buildings or structures), roads, parking, and outdoor storage with landscape, and in the Downtown section as appropriate.
 - Aiding the rehabilitation or removal of obsolete and visually blighted structures.
 - Creating linear parks along the Upper River.
 - Use of native vegetation appropriate to the ecology of the site. (Minneapolis)
- In general, structures within the Critical Area should be shorter when located closer to the river. Taller structures are possible within the Critical Area as distance from the river increases or measures are taken to provide some level of screening, buffering and/or enhancement of views of and from the river. (Minneapolis)
- In lowland areas, new development should employ building envelopes that heighten the experience of the river corridor by preserving public views to the top of the High Bluff. (St. Paul)
- The city supports maintaining building heights that maximize public views of the high bluff lines from the high water mark on the opposite side of the river. (St. Paul)
- In upland areas, the general character of the existing silhouette of lower-profile buildings along the edge should be maintained. Development should also respect the mature tree canopy at the bluff edge of the uplands with building forms that do not dominate the canopy's natural height. However, occasional, modest exceptions to the silhouette with medium-scaled landmark buildings are allowed. (St. Paul)
- Planning for terrace redevelopment sites should be careful to consider views of the terrace from Fort Snelling as referenced in the design criteria for the Shepard-Davern zoning overlay. (St. Paul)

3. Implementation Actions

A. Required Implementation Actions

These can be used verbatim or customized as appropriate:

- Ensure that information on the location of PRCVs is readily available to property owners to understand how PRCV-relevant ordinance requirements, such as vegetation management and land alteration permits, apply to their property for project planning and permitting.
- Establish procedures for processing applications with potential impacts to PRCVs, including:
 - identifying the information that must be submitted and how it will be evaluated,
 - developing visual analysis approach for CUPs for additional height in the RTC and UM districts

- (if applicable), as well as for proposed PUDs and variances, and
 - determining appropriate mitigation procedures/methods for variances and CUPs.
- (**Note:** Application procedures will be a required element of MRCCA ordinance review and approval).
- Actively communicate with other communities to protect views other communities have identified in your community that are valuable, and vice versa.

B. Examples

None available from existing plans.

MRCCA ORDINANCE REQUIREMENTS

Following is a summary of ordinance requirements that pertain to the protection of PRCVs. Understanding these requirements will help guide development of the MRCCA plan for effective ordinance administration.

Variations and CUPs

1. Negative impacts to PRCVs must be evaluated for variances and CUPs.
2. If impacts, then mitigation is required and must be proportional, have a relationship to, and offset the impacts

Project Information

1. Relevant project information must be submitted to LGUs to evaluate how development complies with MRCCA plans and ordinances. Relevant information includes maps, plans, visual impact assessment and other materials that identify and describe PRCVs and evaluate impacts to PRCVs.

Wireless Communication Facilities

1. Placement must minimize impacts on PRCVs.

Structure Design and Placement in the RTC, UM and the UC Districts

1. Placement must minimize impacts on PRCVs.
2. Tiering of structures away from the river and blufflines is prioritized.
3. For buildings in RTC district, taller buildings are allowed with consideration of the relationship of building height to the mature treeline, where present, and existing surrounding development, as viewed from the OWHL of the opposite shore and from PRCVs. Buildings taller than the maximum height in the RTC and UM district require a CUP.
4. CUP Criteria for buildings exceeding height limits in RTC and UM Districts must include:
 - A visual impact assessment on PRCVs including PRCVs in other communities.
 - Identification and application of techniques to minimize building bulk.
 - Identification of techniques for preserving PRCVs identified in the plan.
 - Opportunities for creation or enhancement of PRVCs.

Public Facilities

Ordinance requirements and questions related to each requirement:

1. All public facilities must be designed to minimize visibility consistent with the purpose of the facility.
2. Trails, paths and viewing areas must be designed and constructed to minimize visual impacts on PRCVs.
3. Public signs and kiosks are allowed in BIZ/SIZ if they avoid impacts on PRCVs

Subdivision

In reviewing and approving permit applications, permit conditions must ensure that vegetative clearing is the minimum necessary and designed to blend with the natural terrain and minimize visual impacts to PRCVs.

MORE INFORMATION

Please contact Matthew Bauman (matthew.bauman@state.mn.us) at the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for additional information.

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LOCAL PLANNING
HANDBOOK

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