MINNESOTA EXPERIMENTAL CITY AUTHORITY
An Inventory of Its Records

OVERVIEW OF THE RECORDS

Agency: Minnesota Experimental City Authority.
Series Title: Records.
Abstract: Records documenting the unsuccessful attempt to build a planned city in northeastern Minnesota in the early 1970s.
Quantity: 10.5 cu. ft. (11 boxes; 1 oversize folder).
Location: See Detailed Description section for box/folder locations.

HISTORY OF THE MINNESOTA EXPERIMENTAL CITY AUTHORITY

In 1969, the legislature, by joint resolution, authorized the study of the Minnesota Experimental City [MXC] concept, a plan to develop a totally planned city that would have an urban core surrounded by less densely crowded areas that would serve as residential plots. A buffer area would surround the entire city for green space and prevent the city from the usual patterns of urban sprawl. The city would be built in a non-metropolitan area of the state in the hope that it would provide greater direct employment and training opportunities for unemployed or underemployed citizens, increase the general level of economic activity, reduce outmigration, and improve the quality of life of all residents. It would also test an alternative to increasing densities and megalopolitan growth, new approaches to pollution control and the protection of the total environment, new methods of land use and development, and construction techniques; hopefully serving as a model for the solution of the social problems of urban life.

A national steering committee was established to begin the study. In 1971, the Minnesota Experimental City Authority [MXCA] was created [Laws 1971 c849], charged with planning the various needs of the city and selecting a site. Its members were appointed by the governor. An advisory committee was also appointed to make recommendations or comment on any matter of planning or policy relating to MXC. A federal grant of $250,000 was secured as well as $670,000 from private corporations and foundations. Various studies were carried on, some in conjunction with the University of Minnesota, in such areas as transportation, urban design, telecommunications, climate, education, healthcare, and energy and waste water treatment.
A 75,000 acre area in northwestern Aitkin County and northeastern Cass County, the Swatara area, was chosen as the site. A growing protest to MXC, however, particularly by the people in the site area, led the 1973 legislature to question the concept. The request of the MXCA for money for land acquisition and further planning was not funded by the legislature and on June 30, 1973, the MXC effort died.

**SCOPE AND CONTENTS OF THE RECORDS**

Mainly files kept by Otto A. Silha, Co-Chair of the Minnesota Experimental City steering committee; they include his personal correspondence and speeches, steering committee and Minnesota Experimental City Authority [MXCA] minutes, James A. Alcott, MXCA general manager and executive director’s correspondence, site selection files, subject files, and published records and reports. The records cover all aspects of the steering committee and MXCA’s actions and activities in planning for the MXC, including research, legislation, funding, site study and selection, promotion and public relations, the international new city movement, private business and foundation partners, the University of Minnesota’s involvement, and their relations with various state and federal government agencies. There are also files documenting two Twin Cities planned communities, Cedar-Riverside and Jonathan; steering committee member Buckminster Fuller; and involvement with the National Science Foundation and the Upper Great Lakes Regional Commission. Included in the records are maps, drawings, and photographs of the site and city concept.

**INDEX TERMS**

*This collection is indexed under the following headings in the catalog of the Minnesota Historical Society. Researchers desiring materials about related topics, persons or places should search the catalog using these headings.*

**Topics:**
- City planning—Minnesota.
- Garden cities—Minnesota.
- New towns—Minnesota.

**Persons:**
- Alcott, James A.
- Fuller, R. Buckminster (Richard Buckminster), 1895-1983.
- Silha, Otto A.

**Places:**
- Cedar-Riverside Area (Minneapolis, Minn.).
- Jonathan (Chaska, Minn.).
- Minnesota Experimental City.
- Swatara (Minn.)—Photographs.
Organizations:
  National Science Foundation (U.S.).
  Upper Great Lakes Regional Commission (U.S.).
  University of Minnesota.

Types of Documents:
  Maps
  Photographs.
  Site plans.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Preferred Citation:
  [Indicate the cited item and folder title or volume and page here].  Minnesota Experimental City Authority.  Records.  Minnesota Historical Society.  State Archives.  See the Chicago Manual of Style for additional examples.

Accession Information:
  Accession number(s):  2007-55

Processing Information:
  Catalog ID No.:  6694174

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE COLLECTION

  Note to Researchers:  To request materials, please note the location shown below.

Location
              Minnesota Experimental City Project Steering Committee Co-Chair.
              Arranged chronologically; many were given to more than one audience, and may be replicated among several of the folders.  Includes minimal correspondence.
              International Conference of Building Officials, September 27, 1967.
              Interim Report to Sponsoring Companies, March 6, 1968.
              Minneapolis Rotary Club Program, June 6, 1969.
Location
117.H.1.1B

Public Conference on Minnesota Experimental City, June 6, 1969.
Meeting of Senate and House Committees, December 19, 1969.
Women’s Division Chamber of Commerce, March 10, 1970.
Presentation to Subcommittees of the Minnesota Senate and House, September 28, 1970.
Minnesota Department of Economic Development, October 21, 1970.
House Governmental Affairs Committee, March 2, 1971.
Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce, February 17, 1972.
Alexandria Rotary Club, November 30, 1972.
University of Minnesota Conference on New Urban Systems, December 5, 1972.

Steering Committee files, 1966-1978.
Meeting minutes and agendas, May 19, 1966 - August 2, 1973. 2 folders.
Incomplete set.

Dinner meeting, Minneapolis, June 5, 1969.
Includes unidentified photographs and negatives and correspondence.

Meeting, April 14-15, 1970.
Meeting, September 29, 1970.
Katharine Graham’s reception; also referred to as the White House Task Force Meeting. Includes minutes and meeting transcript.

Reports, [ca. 1969-1972].
Location

117.H.1.2F  
Meeting minutes, October 1971 - April 1973.  18 folders.  
   Includes photographs of the Swatara site.  
MXCA Legislative bill signing, June 4, 1971.  
   Includes photographs and a copy of the bill.  
   Correspondence, 1972 and minutes and agendas, 1972-1973.  
   MXC General Manager, then Executive Director; includes  
   materials from the New Communities Conference, Miami, July  
   Analysis, [undated].  
   Camp Ripley, Morrison County Site, [undated].  
   Climatological Reports, [ca. 1972].  
      Bruce F. Watson, consulting meteorologist.  
   Early Site Selection Work, State Planning and Conservation, 1968.  
   Foothills, 1972.  
   Houston County, Southern, 1972.  
   Local support, agricultural extension, 1970-1972.  
   Maps, [undated].  4 folders.  
      Foothills Finals.  
      Lakes Region Finals.  
   Maps.  
      Includes transparencies.  
   Pine Moraine Region Analysis.  

A3/OV5 D11,F3  
Maps and drawings, [undated].  1 oversize folder.  
   Maps of possible MXC site in Pine County and drawings  
   relating to MXC design; labeled MXC-A-43 – MXC-A-70  
   (incomplete).  

117.H.1.2F  
Phase I, maps, scoring, [undated].  
Phase II variables, [undated].
Location

117.H.1.2F
Pine County, 1972.
Site descriptions, [undated].
Site maps, Phase II, [undated].
Site Selection Committee, 1971-1974. 2 folders.
Includes transparencies and images.

117.H.1.3B
Site Selection Variables: Phase II, [undated]. 24 folders.
1-2. Distance from Cities.
3. Existing rail lines.
5. Manpower resources.
6. Land value.
7. Present development.
8. [Missing]
9. Potable water.
11. Interface.
12. Views.
13. Topography.
15. Water recreation.
16. Land recreation.
17. Percent of good and fair soils.
20. Tolerance of ecosystems.
21. Compatibility of site to multiple land use.
22. Existing and surrounding land use.
23. Environmental impact.
24. Linkages, economic areas.
25. Expansion constraints.
26. Recreational resource.
27. Sand and gravel on site or close.

Arranged in alphabetical order by topic, name of person, or organization.

Science research and consulting firm.
Location

117.H.1.3B

Aerospace Technology for the MXC, [undated].
Aitkin County Commissioners, March 8, 1973.
Douglas-Ottertail site information.
American City Corporation, 1966-1973.  2 folders
   Includes articles on new cities, Columbia, Maryland, and
   Reston, Virginia, and an image of Reston.
   Includes grant agreement.
   Includes Conceptual Study for the Minnesota Experimental
   City by University of Minnesota student, Bruno Erat.
American Rehabilitation Foundation, 1972.
   Attorney for the MXC Steering Committee; includes
   Minnesota Experimental City Corporation articles of
   incorporation, November 16-17, 1971.
   MXC Director of Educational Planning and Professor of
   Experimental Studies at the University of Minnesota
   Experimental Studies Program, Mankato State College.
   Includes Progress Report on Large City Design, November
   1972, and First Quarter Progress Report on Research on
   Large City Design to Battelle Institute, March 30, 1973.
Birds, 1972.
   Concerns disrupting eagle’s nests and other lake birds at
   potential MXC sites.
   Includes grant application and monthly financial reports to
   the Bush Foundation.
Location


- Materials documenting the Cedar-Riverside development and housing project in Minneapolis; designated a new community. Some of the major participants in the MXC project, particularly James Alcott, and Otto Silha, were also involved in Cedar-Riverside.

- Correspondence, 1974-1976.
- Correspondence, comments, and recommendations from the Metropolitan Council, 1974.
- Newspaper clippings, 1974-1975.
  - Consideration for Amended Riverbluff Housing Program, January 30, 1974.
  - Preliminary Draft: The Development Potentials of a Hotel and a Racquet Club in Cedar-Riverside, Minneapolis, May 1974.
  - Retail Market Analysis and Development Program, Cedar-Riverside, Minneapolis, Minnesota, May 1974.
  - Preliminary Proposal, July 1, 1974.


Location

117.H.2.1B

   Includes grant proposal and monthly financial reports to the
   Cowles Foundation.

Dayton Hudson Corporation Contributions for Community
   Improvement, Report for the Year 1969, February 1, 1969 -

Design Ideas, [ca. 1972]. 2 folders.
   Includes various reports and diagrams.

   Includes The Experimental City Project, September 29, 1970.


      The Eden Prairie school district requested information to
      explore the possibility of using MXC as the model for
      their school system.

   Education, Position Papers-Proposals, [ca. 1968-1971].

   Solar energy, Aitkin County, 1974.


Environmental planning methodology, 1972.

117.H.2.2F

Environmental statements, 1972.

Experimental projects, [ca. 1971-1972].

   Correspondence, 1966-1976. 3 folders.


   Includes images of automobiles.

Location

117.H.2.2F

Fuller, Buckminster, 1967-1978. 2 folders.
   MXC Steering Committee member.
   Professor of Economics, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, Wisconsin; includes two papers Gaffney wrote on land value and finance for the MXC.
Goals and Objectives, MXC, [undated].
   Director of the Urban Design Institute, Law School of Harvard University.
   Telecommunications, [undated].
   Deputy Assistant to the President for Urban Affairs, then National Chairman of the White House Conference on Children and Youth.
   Includes grant proposal.
Holt, John, [undated].
   U. S. Vice President.
   Information on international new towns and cities.
In 1965, the Jonathan New Town Project, which resulted in the creation of the Jonathan Development Corporation, was begun. Jonathan was conceived as a multi-purpose community providing housing, employment, and services for 50,000 people on an 8000 acre site located in Chaska, Minnesota. In 1969-1970, the Minnesota Experimental City applied for a grant from the Ford Foundation to fund a study of the evolution of Jonathan.

Kennedy, Senator Edward, 1975.
Keynes, Milton, 1970.
A New Learning Movement System, [undated].

House and Senate Subcommittees on Study of the Minnesota Experimental City meeting minutes, September 1969 - November 1970. 2 folders.
Legislative Briefing Sheet, [undated].
Legislative Presentation Draft, 1971.
Minnesota Legislature, General, 1969-1975. 5 folders.
   MXC Steering Committee member.
   Includes photographs and sound recording of the dinner.
Minnesota Department of Economic Development Conference, October 21, 1970.
Minnesota Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1972.
Location

117.H.2.3B

The Experimental City Project, [undated].
Innovative City Project, Multi-Housing World Conference,
Silha spoke at this Conference about the MXC Project.
Minnesota Highway Department, 1971-1972.
Minnesota Metropolitan State College, 1972.
Minnesota state government (governors, officials, legislators, etc.),
National Center for Appropriate Technology, 1976.
National Goals staff, 1970.
National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, 1971-
1972.
Includes correspondence and materials of Charles Thiel
worked for the Division of Advanced Technology
Applications, National Science Foundation.

117.H.2.4F

New towns, other cities, etc., 1964-1978. 3 folders.
Information on international and national new towns and
cities.
OSTI [Organization of Science and Technology Innovation], 1970-
1972.
Location
117.H.2.4F

    Public Relations Counsel, MXCA.
    Director of Design, MXC.
Public Relations Counsel, MXCA.
    Director of Design, MXC.
Pollution Problems, AFL-CIO Conference in Duluth, April 25-26, 1970.
    Includes meeting minutes.
Real Estate Research Corporation, 1969.
Speech, Economic Development Conference, James Alcott, [undated].
Telecommunications reports, [undated].
Theobald, Robert, 1972.
    Includes images.

117.H.2.5B

Transportation reports, [ca. 1970-1973].
Location

117.H.2.5B

University of Minnesota [U of M], 1967-1975.

MXC Workshops, 1967-1968. 5 folders.
The MXC Steering Committee convened a number of workshops at the university to study the concept of an experimental city.

117.H.2.6F

MXC Project Director and University of Minnesota professor.

Correspondence, 1968-1974.
Proposal: The Role of an Experimental City in the Economic Development of the Region, [undated].

Urban Institute, 1972.
Architect.

What is the Minnesota Experimental City?, [undated].
Arranged in chronological order.

MXC articles, 1966-1976. 2 folders.
Mainly newspaper clippings.
Location
117.H.2.6F

   Co-Chairman of the MXC Steering Committee.

Fuller, Buckminster, 1967.
Kleeman, July 31 - August 11, 1967.
MXC: A City with a Taste of Tomorrow, Northwestern Bell
   Magazine, Special Issue, Volume 53, Number 1, 1972.
Mankato State Daily Reporter, Special Projects, Turning to the
Aitkin and Douglas County Sites, Minneapolis Star, November
   18, 1972.
   By Roy Close.

Douglas County Site, Minneapolis Tribune, November 21,
   1972.
Aitkin County Site, Swatara, Minneapolis Tribune, November
   22, 1972.
Charles Whiting Editorial, Not Just a Dream City, Minneapolis
   Star, November 22, 1972.
Planned New City Choices Explored, Minneapolis Star,
   December 6, 1972.
MXC’s Time Will Come, Editorial, Minneapolis Star, April 6,
[Minneapolis] Tribune and the [Minneapolis] Star, May 24,
   Publication of Northern States Power Company.
Location
117.H.2.6F

General publications.
Arranged chronologically.

Undated. 1 folder.

Appendix A: A Proposal for a Communications Study, A Proposal for the Minnesota Experimental City, Phase 2, [undated].
Submitted by the University of Minnesota.

Appendix A: A Proposal for Energy Management, A Proposal for the Minnesota Experimental City, Phase 2, [undated].
Submitted by the University of Minnesota.

A New City's Approach to Urban Education to U.S. Office of Education, [undated].

1966. 1 folder.

By Max L. Feldman, General Electric Company.

By Max L. Feldman, General Electric Company.

Preliminary Draft, A Proposal for an Experimental City Project, University of Minnesota Institute of Technology, School of Architecture, July 13, 1966.

1967. 1 folder.

Application for Funding, Experimental City Project, February 15, 1967.

University of Minnesota.
Location
117.H.2.7B

1968. 1 folder.
Walter K. Vivrett, Director.

A Joint Proposal to Provide Consulting Services in the Planning and Development of the Minnesota Experimental City, September 1968.
Submitted by DMJM and ABT Associates, Inc.

1969. 1 volume, 8 folders.
Presented to the University of Minnesota by Gruen Associates.

Presented to the University of Minnesota by Gruen Associates.

Progress Report, May 1969. 1 volume.

Presented to Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Proposal for Minnesota Experimental City Pollution and Waste Management, September 18, 1969.
Presented to Department of Interior Federal Water Pollution Control Administration.
Location
117.H.2.7B


Proposal for Minnesota Experimental City Site Survey Experiment, October 21, 1969. Presented to Department of Commerce.


DMJM HUD Revision Statements, November 4, 1969.


DMJM HUD Revision Statements, November 7, 1969.


Location
117.H.2.7B

A Proposal for the Minnesota Experimental City Project,
Phase 2, Draft, November 17, 1969.
Submitted to the U.S. Department of the Interior.

A Proposal for the Minnesota Experimental City Project,
Phase 2, Draft, November 17, 1969.
Submitted to the U.S. Department of Transportation.

A Proposal for the Minnesota Experimental City Project,
Phase 2, Draft, December 3, 1969.
Submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor.

A Proposal for the Minnesota Experimental City Project,
Phase 2, Draft, December 17, 1969.
Submitted to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

1970. 2 folders.

A Proposal for the Minnesota Experimental City Project,
Phase 2, Draft, January 20, 1970.
Submitted to the Office of Economic Opportunity.

Pollution Control and Associated Studies for the Energy
Utilities in Cities of the Early Seventies, A Proposal
Prepared for the Edison Electric Institute by the
University of Minnesota, Minnesota Experimental City
Developmental Project, March 12, 1970.

Pollution Control and Associated Studies for the Energy
Utilities in Cities of the Early Seventies, A Proposal
for the Minnesota Experimental City Project, Phase 2,
May 25, 1970.
Submitted to Edison Electric Institute.

Report to the 67th Session of the Minnesota Legislature
by the Senate and House of Representatives
Subcommittee on the Study of the Minnesota
Experimental City, November 1970.

1971. 4 folders, 1 volume.

New Community Development: Planning, Process,
Implementation and Emerging Social Concerns,
Volume I, Planning for People: Minnesota
Experimental City, February 1971. 1 volume.
By Walter K. Vivrett.
Location

117.H.2.7B

Proposal to Assist in Analyzing the Appropriate Economic Base for the Minnesota Experimental City, February 12, 1971.
Submitted by Booz, Allen, Public Administration Services, Inc.

Research Applications for the Experimental City: A Proposal to the National Science Foundation RANN Program, September 1971.

Submitted to Edison Electric Institute.


Submitted to Edison Electric Institute.

Report on Survey of Some Recent Literature Relevant to Factors Which May Affect the Supply of Manpower in the Minnesota Experimental City, Volume 1, November 1, 1971.

117.H.2.8F

Report on a Summary of Interviews About Factors that may Affect the Supply of Manpower in the Minnesota Experimental City, Volume 2, November 1, 1971.


1972. 4 folders.

Submitted by Booz, Allen, Public Administration Services, Inc.

Economic Base Study for Minnesota Experimental City, March 1972.
Summary of Economic Base Study for Minnesota Experimental City, March 1972.
Location
117.H.2.8F

A New City’s Approach to Urban Education to the Bush Foundation, Saint Paul, Minnesota, May 1972. Submitted by Ronald E. Barnes, Director of Educational Planning, Minnesota Experimental City.


1973. 3 folders.

MXC, Minnesota’s Experimental City 1973.
By Carol A. Buckmann.


By Marlys Soderberg.
Location

117.H.2.8F

Includes Supplemental Report on Site Selection.

Includes The United States Experience: Minnesota, by James Alcott, General Manager, Minnesota Experimental City.