

City Form

"The Minneapolis Plan" brochure series

The Minneapolis Plan brochures illustrate the policies and actions that guide the City in its efforts to make Minneapolis a city that people choose – to live, work, learn, and play.

It is intended that these brochures will provide neighborhoods with:

- information about City policy
- a citywide context in which to do their planning
- ideas about the challenges and opportunities that are present in their communities
- guidance on the actions they can take to create change

There are brochures for each of the 11 communities in the city, and there are three topic specific brochures – housing, city form, and transportation.

The Built Environment: Traditional Urban Form

There is a strong emphasis in *The Minneapolis Plan* on preserving the "traditional urban form" of our city. Structures and sites that consider how people will use the space exhibit traditional urban form. Design elements that support traditional urban form include wide sidewalks, shade trees, well-marked crosswalks, good lighting and visibility, buildings that have windows facing the street, and stretches of storefronts uninterrupted by parking lots. Traditional urban form is important in residential, commercial, street, and open space environments and is critical to creating attractive, appealing urban places.

Residential Areas

Incorporating elements of traditional urban form into new construction is essential to the continuing appeal of our residential areas. Building materials, and height are two obvious elements that contribute to the character of a residential area. But road width, the distance a structure is set back from the property line, windows, and the orientation of the building in relation to the street also determine the shape and feel of city neighborhoods. Building a livable community for the future relies on the ability of planners, developers, and neighborhoods to attend to the details of design that preserve and enhance our residential areas.

Minneapolis will maintain and strengthen the character of the city's various residential areas.

- Encourage the rehabilitation of older and historic housing stock over demolition.
- Ensure that city grants and programs are targeted to housing development or rehabilitation that reflects the traditional architectural character of residential areas.
- Prohibit new driveways on block faces with alley access and where there are no existing driveways.
- Infill development standards must reflect the setbacks, orientation, pattern, materials, height and scale of surrounding one and two family dwellings.
- Create traditional setbacks, orientations, pattern, height and scale of dwellings in areas where no clear architectural pattern exists.

The Minneapolis Plan, Policy 9.8

Commercial Areas

As in residential areas, successful commercial areas must be designed with their surroundings and users in mind. Successful mixed use buildings and areas attract pedestrians by bringing their storefronts to the sidewalk's edge, orienting buildings to the street, and respecting traditional urban form by keeping building heights to a maximum of four or five stories.

Maintaining traditional urban form in commercial areas while providing both pedestrian and automobile access is an essential, but challenging task. Accommodating the car is important to the viability of businesses. However, heavy auto traffic can reduce safety and make the environment unpleasant for pedestrians. Locating parking lots behind buildings or in the interior of a block, creating shared parking facilities, and landscaping parking lots can help mitigate some of the negative effects of automobile traffic.



What is *The Minneapolis Plan*?

The Minneapolis Plan is the City of Minneapolis' comprehensive plan.

The comprehensive plan:

- analyzes trends in the city's population, economic growth, and neighborhood livability
- proposes a vision for the physical development of the city
- identifies steps that the city must take in order to achieve that vision

State law requires Minneapolis to develop a comprehensive plan and to ensure that the Minneapolis Zoning Code (a tool that regulates land development) is consistent with the plan. The vision of *The Minneapolis Plan* is realized when the city approves development projects that are consistent with the plan and Zoning Code.

The Minneapolis Plan is also implemented through the development of neighborhood and other city plans. Neighborhood experience in developing action plans in the first phase of the Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP) helped to shape priorities in *The Minneapolis Plan*. As a result, *The Minneapolis Plan* can serve as a useful starting point for neighborhoods in NRP Phase II. It provides citywide context for neighborhood issues and can help bring neighborhoods together to develop shared solutions to issues that transcend neighborhood boundaries.

Minneapolis will support urban design standards that emphasize a traditional urban form in commercial areas.

- Enhance unique characteristics of the city's commercial districts by encouraging appropriate building forms and designs, historic preservation objectives, site plans that enhance the pedestrian environment, and by maintaining high quality public spaces and infrastructure.
- Identify commercial areas in the city that reflect traditional urban form and develop appropriate standards and preservation objectives for these areas.
- Enhance pedestrian and transit-oriented commercial districts with street furniture, tree planting and improved transit amenities.
- Orient new buildings to the street to foster safe and successful commercial nodes and corridors.
- Limit the construction and visual impact of billboards in neighborhood commercial nodes.
- Require storefront transparency to assure both natural surveillance and an inviting pedestrian experience.

The Minneapolis Plan, Policy 9.11

Streets: Maintaining the Traditional Street Grid

The residential street grid laid onto the city from its earliest days provides a powerful organizing force in our neighborhoods. The grid is easily understood and allows those unfamiliar with the area to find their way. Whenever possible, new development should correspond to the historical street grid pattern.

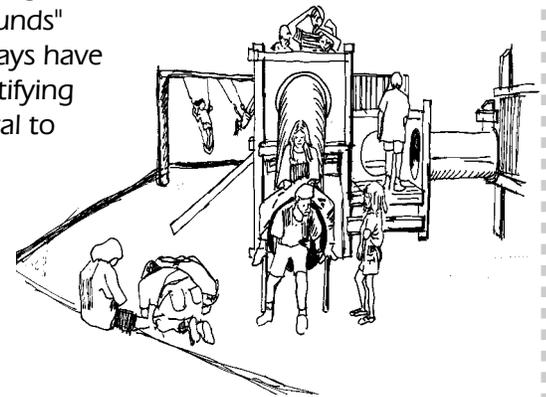
Minneapolis will restore and maintain the traditional street grid.

- Maintain the street grid as the preferred option while evaluating new development of potential street changes.
- Restore the street grid whenever possible.
- Restore the historic connectivity of street corridors by working with property owners and city agencies on reopening streets such as Nicollet at Lake.
- Pursue the reclamation of air rights above freeways so that through the use of land bridges, neighborhoods can be reconnected and land can be used more productively.

The Minneapolis Plan, Policy 9.13

Open Space

Since the city's first settlement and the work of the original parks designers, the lakes and the "Grand Rounds" system of parks and greenways have proven to be the major identifying feature for the city and central to its viability and attractiveness. *The Minneapolis Plan* strongly supports the preservation and enhancement of the city's open spaces and suggests improved connections among them.



Minneapolis will support the preservation and expansion of the existing open space network, including greenways.

- Support the Park Board's "no net loss" of parkland policy.
- Prioritize the expansion of the park system in ways which increase connections and linkage between different areas of the city.
- Encourage new development projects to incorporate open spaces and green spaces through land use regulations and other regulatory tools.
- Promote the development of financing, maintenance and community involvement tools that encourage the greening and improvement of transportation corridors and public spaces.

The Minneapolis Plan, Policy 9.3

City History and Historic Structures

The city has been shaped by geological features and historical events, many of which are closely related. For instance, the falls at Saint Anthony created the hydropower to support sawmills and then flour mills on the banks of the Mississippi River. These industries shaped the architectural character of downtown and the riverfront. Another example is the streetcar system which helped shape the layout of our residential neighborhoods and commercial areas.



The Minneapolis Plan prizes the character of our city that has resulted from this history. Today, for example, the three to five story brick warehouse structures that housed early industry are being converted into housing, office, entertainment, and retail space. Through such re-use, the city's history and traditional urban form live on. The city is committed to preserving and integrating these ties to the past with the community's expectations for growth and change in the future.

Minneapolis will promote preservation as a tool for economic development and community revitalization.

- Promote the city's high quality, architecturally interesting, readily available and affordable housing stock as a market advantage over suburban competitors.
- Identify, designate and protect sites, buildings and districts in the city with historic or architectural significance.
- Protect potentially significant historic structures from demolition until the city can determine the significance of the structure and explore alternatives to demolition.
- Continue surveys and studies of property in Minneapolis in order to maintain and periodically update the inventory of Minneapolis' potentially significant historic resources.
- Develop creative economic incentives in the public and private sector to promote the rehabilitation, maintenance and reuse of the city's historic resources.

The Minneapolis Plan, Policy 9.4

The Physical Character of Minneapolis

The physical character of Minneapolis is comprised of many elements. Its natural features, climate, sunlight, views, parks, buildings, and streets set it apart from other cities. People choose to live in Minneapolis because it's convenient (shops, schools, and restaurants are only short walk away), because they can take advantage of nearby lakes, parks, and green space, and because it's a place where they can get to know their neighbors.

This brochure identifies those elements that define the physical character of Minneapolis and highlights *The Minneapolis Plan* policies that help us preserve and enhance these features in our neighborhoods.



Safety and Security through Design

The *Minneapolis Plan* stresses the importance of incorporating the needs of pedestrians into building, site, and street designs.

Safety is one of the primary needs of pedestrians.

An environment that is safe and comfortable attracts pedestrians, raises the activity level of an area, and, as a result, attracts more pedestrians.

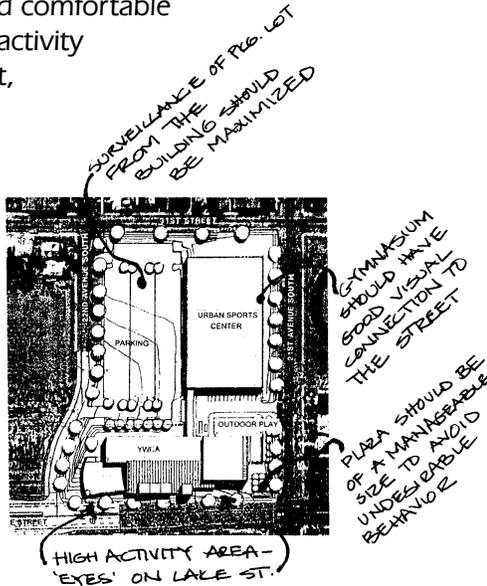
Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is an urban design practice that increases feelings of safety and reduces crime through proper design and effective use of the built environment. Several techniques can help to create safe pedestrian environments. These include incorporating street level windows on

buildings to create "eyes on the street", providing appropriate levels of lighting, carefully planning the location and type of landscaping and fencing to maintain lines of sight, and clearly defining areas for pedestrian and vehicular travel.

Minneapolis will build on recent initiatives to use Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles when designing all projects that impact the public realm, including open spaces and parks, on publicly owned and private land.

- Integrate "eyes on the street" design principles into site plan review to foster safer and more successful commercial areas in the city.
- Orient new housing to the street to foster safe neighborhoods.
- Encourage private developers to incorporate CPTED-oriented open spaces in new developments to facilitate the creation of spaces that maximize positive behavior from users.

The Minneapolis Plan, Policy 9.17



source: Architectural Alliance/YWCA

Whom can I contact for more information?

The *Minneapolis Plan* contains many more policies on topics such as urban form, transportation, residential, commercial, and industrial land use, the environment, and community building.

For more information, contact:

Minneapolis Planning Department
350 South Fifth Street, Room 210
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Web: [http://](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/citywork/planning/index.html)

www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/citywork/planning/index.html

The *Minneapolis Plan* and brochures are available on the web site.

If you have special needs, please call the Planning Department. Please allow a reasonable amount of time for accommodation.

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