

Comprehensive Plan Forums: April-May 2007 Urban Design Notes

April 28 Forum

Question #1: Why do you think it is important for the city to grow? How can the city accommodate growth through increased density in a way that protects the character of existing neighborhoods?

- More businesses, start-ups, higher tax base, more sway with legislature.
- What is the premise behind the question? How do we want to grow?
- Housing was built originally to accommodate more people than what it now tends to accommodate. Inverse migration – retiring couples grow weary of commute so they are returning to the city.
- In what way does the lottery system of the schools influence population migration? Is there any data on this?
- Schools play a very important part in the composition of neighborhoods. At one time, downtown never had children.
- Park systems influence the make-up of neighborhoods as well.
- The underlying structure of neighborhoods should be taken into account. We need a scalable housing stock that goes across the whole cycle of family – from starter house with one or two children to other models of families. Housing needs to reflect the different or changing forms of the family over time. And if this is not addressed, it can keep us from growing.
- We are asking in what way we should grow – without posing the question as to *whether* it is good to grow. The suburbs are attracting more businesses and jobs. Empty housing stock could possibly be replaced with commercial businesses to allow for new jobs.
- Small area planning. Where big parking lots are underused, we can accommodate more housing on the street front.
- Can we design neighborhoods in a way to allow the workplace to be within walking distance of neighborhoods? What existing locations in the city would be most adaptable to this?
- Some companies are experiencing such a rate of growth as to compel them to leave their existing locations in the city; and if we can attract and maintain this kind of business, the jobs and housing it sustains will be preserved.
- We need a broad spectrum of available space from small business to large.
- In order to support higher density populations while at the same time preserving the historic nature of neighborhoods, we should consider adjusting zoning requirements to allow for more vertical development.
- There seems to be a correlation between the decrease in population and the increase in parking lots and garages. So much of the city is being “eaten up” by parking. Instead of saying how we should grow, we should say, “Should we grow.” I think the answer is in the affirmative – we should grow. The city had a larger population at one time.

- To sustain growth, we need a mass transit system which can support it.
- We can build the city for cars or we can build it for people. Clearly we should put people first.
- Our policies regarding parking encourages people to drive to the city.
- The target location for higher density development should focus on proximity to transit stops.
- Much development in the city crowds the sidewalk and doesn't allow for trees or a pedestrian-friendly area.
- Some high-density development doesn't fit in with the existing character of the neighborhood. It's important that as we build higher density developments, we consider the impact and sustainability on the neighborhood as a whole.
- Mixed-use is crucial in addition to high density design.
- We are looking for more downtown residents to increase pedestrian presence on the streets during the day and night as well. We can just put a large building on a street which cannot accommodate that scale.
- Mixed use can be done horizontally or vertically. There is not a one-size-fits all mixed use.
- How do we avoid a surplus of big box retailers and how can we encourage development of small businesses and entrepreneurs?

Question #2: Where should auto-oriented businesses and large-scale (big box) retail be located, and how should their design be regulated?

- After looking at multiple locations, our business moved to a spot on Hennepin Avenue which was actually a cheaper space; so the market economics itself influenced our business to remain in Minneapolis.
- We have to consider WHO we are planning for.
- Office, light-industrial, etc – we can focus on a mix of commercial and not only one kind.
- What is the kind of company we are trying to attract, and what kind are we not a good match for, (i.e. distribution center)? Some companies are attracted to super high density zones. We need to leverage the advantages of high density in order to attract the kind of business that could flourish in that environment.
- Companies which use toxic chemicals (to use one example), are not those we would want to attract to Minneapolis.
- Who are we planning for? Understanding the current population of each neighborhood is very important. We should establish the individual needs of the specific populations in different city neighborhoods.
- A lot of people are vehemently opposed to drive-through businesses in their neighborhoods. We obviously will not eliminate cars 100 percent, so we will need businesses to support cars somewhere, but many people are opposed to such businesses in their own neighborhoods.
- Also, what of big-box companies that require a lot of parking? How can we accommodate them in a way that the vast parking use is not a detriment to good land use?

- We need more design regulations in order to set priorities vis-à-vis car use and people. We can put buildings at street level and parking behind it. We need more flexible parking requirements in order to assess what the market requires.
- The code currently speaks to that exact thing – to require buildings to be built to the street, and parking regulations are under revision as well – in favor of reduction of parking.
- The city has a dearth of major chain groceries stores (and the higher quality food they offer). Having them in the city would be advantageous.
- In a mixed-use scenario, businesses in residential areas have to fit in with the residential requirements. Big box companies cannot exist in smaller neighborhoods (for logistical reasons). Noise and traffic should be taken into account in terms of impact on residential areas. Some businesses which don't have customer walk-in traffic after hours could make good citizens in a mixed-use neighborhood.
- Some world class cities have no drive-through businesses. In such cities, people walk to work, there are minimal parking lots, people get around. So we need to look at alternatives to car-dependent designs.
- We should give tax subsidies to those manufacturing businesses that could be good urban citizens.
- Parking is a serious problem – 27th and Lake for instance. Target on Lake street has a parking lot which is scarcely used by 50 percent. So what impact does this have on the flow of rain water? Can we adapt these parking lots in some way?
- In urban design, should we consider global economic justice?
- All new parking lots, all cars must be within 50 feet of a tree, according to new code.
- The majority of historic buildings along one transit corridor (Central Ave in NE Minneapolis) are gone. Getting development help from the city in this area is problematic. CPED has the capacity to be more proactive in development rather than to be merely reactive.

Question #3: Beyond the park system, what publicly accessible open spaces in the city do you most value? What are your favorite gathering places, and why? What can be done to protect and enhance these places?

- Golfing and trails – we would like to see trail and bike systems be improved on north side of the river.
- We need more open/green spaces in downtown.
- More areas along sidewalks.
- People should not be so provincial in regard to their own jurisdiction. We need to have a strong CENTRAL vision we can organize around; if we don't have that, it's hard to proactively go out and implement myriad visions which are not part of a cohesive whole.
- We are not lacking for open space; we just need to make it safer for people.
- One example of open space need is Fujiya site downtown.
- Neighborhood based streets.
- Neighborhood centers which break down divisions between neighborhoods and schools should be fostered and used more effectively – including green space.
- Bus stops need better signage and other design changes to be safer.

- Community Gardens and Milwaukee Avenue.
- Peavey Plaza and Loring Greenway are treated less as open space than as streets. They are burdened by too much asphalt.
- Not enough space or facilities for youth.
- Neighborhood restaurants within walking distance. Business planning should include this. A tie-in between this and green space.
- Public roof-top gardens and dog parks. Places where people convene.
- Streets and sidewalks need attention.
- The city requires new owner of property to put in green space of twenty percent. This requirement drove Kowalski's out of Minneapolis. So the value of green space should balance need of business and jobs.
- Downtown streets lack space for pedestrians. Use the space to our advantage – such as closed off streets which could be better used.
- Allow neighborhoods to retain and preserve their character even as we pursue policies of growth.
- Parks with better facilities and landscaping.

Main Ideas:

- Life-cycle housing and variety of business which balances in neighborhoods.
- Greater collaboration and synergy across departments.
- Plan for people – not cars (mass transit).
- Integrate! Parks, jobs, people, etc.
- Cities are an eco-system. Growth rests on pillars of economy, open space, schools, etc.

May 1 Forum

Question #1: Why do you think it is important for the city to grow? How can the city accommodate growth through increased density in a way that protects the character of existing neighborhoods?

- Compete with other cities
- keep political clout with legislature, for schools and libraries, too
- limit sprawl, more energy efficient (with increased fuel costs)
- infrastructure can accommodate more population
- Density of uses should be near infrastructure
- Keep humane (in some areas, nothing over 5 stories, for example). Keep open spaces, too, need that as well as places for people to live (don't block out people's sun light)
- Reweave: need to figure out new ways to accommodate cars in some neighborhoods (bigger homes being divided up, creates more users, more drivers. Neighborhoods aren't all able to accommodate that trend)
- Integrate transit that brings it in with older formed neighborhoods
- City subsidized parking structures (Chicago example). Helps address some of these use conflicts

- Other side: find ways to limit car users: Hour Car, encourage transit, etc. Help people get out of their cars, bike paths, etc.
- Want to design our communities that give people the option to live without car (links between jobs and housing)
- Design for families, too!
- Buildings need outdoor space, too (balconies)
- Density is 4-story condos, but also family-sized infill housing
- More people more connections more diversity. City is a great engine for creativity, and we should nurture that
- Make more density not equal more cars. Need to break this auto addiction (street redesign matters here, too)
- Need for affordable family housing
- Need to be more welcoming to those who don't have (not just go after those with money)
- We should grow because it's a great place to be
- Better use of industrial areas: disconnect over Hiawatha (Longfellow – Corcoran)
- More local neighborhood node services that are bike-able, walkable
- Think beyond the nuclear family: allow for different family types. Housing that accommodates other family structures
- Market is flooded with condos, housing values have dropped, all sending message that Minneapolis isn't so great to invest in. thinks developers/city built without doing market analysis first. Be strategic about development
- Want homeowners, not rental.
- Other side: need a variety of housing choices for people, including rental
- Denser the population, the more neighborhoods can support small retail stores
- Allow for smaller homes on smaller lots (like Milwaukee Ave)
- Family housing along bus routes.
- More garden space (esp. for denser developments)
- We've chased growth, thinking that it was better than nothing. Sometimes we need to just say no and wait for better/best development
- Neighborhood design guidelines: good
- Courtyard-style developments; allow accessory units
- Shared green spaces-yes!
- Get rid of parking requirements: lots of unused parking spots in big lots (barb s. says it's in the works, will have lots of public discussion)
- Green the streets, too. Landscaping requirements, help make great public, walkable, comfortable safe spaces. Green streets would encourage non-auto use

Question #2: Where should auto-oriented businesses and large-scale (big box) retail be located, and how should their design be regulated?

- Put parking in back; I don't want to walk across a big parking lot to get there
- Put parking under (like at Ikea, some North Side of Chicago examples; St. Paul Menard's). might need more density to get that

- Signage helps
- Quarry is good location for that kind of development
- Drive thrus: where people want pedestrian feel are also the places where drive thru businesses want to go. Sprinkled throughout? Clustered at larger auto use areas (like the quarry). Works at the McD's in Uptown (still has a good street presence. Starbucks in Edina near 50th & Hwy 100).
- It is more about urban form rather than use: design can accommodate drive thru without imposing surface parking on street front.
- Auto business condos, example from St. Paul
- Alternatively: Corcoran example of little small auto, businesses, mixed in throughout works
- Example of aging couple moving to Portland after retirement because they can live without a car. Part availability of mass transit. Streetcar, trams, LRT and car sharing. Portland limits big box
- Maybe design / urban form can be regulated more as a way to help address concerns about typical auto drive thru uses
- Pay attention to all sides of development – not just front (Target example)
- Need for city-wide design standard?? Have some good neighborhood ones, maybe could be connected together?
- More round buildings, more color. Copenhagen!

Question #3: Beyond the park system, what publicly accessible open spaces in the city do you most value? What are your favorite gathering places, and why? What can be done to protect and enhance these places?

- The Somali mall: one building, but lots of small places to buy your stuff
- Milwaukee Ave: do this more! (streets as green fingers)
- Near park, with a coffee shop near by
- More community uses in vacant retail spaces
- Neighborhood nodes where you can do more than one thing (38th St & 42nd Ave example)
- Community meeting spaces, for film show for example. More hours at the libraries, Sabathani is great
- From a rec. point of view: stone arch bridge, Mill City Museum area
- Parks and community centers
- Nicollet Island, Main Street along river. Farmers Market for people
- St. Anthony Park: library, restaurant, bank, 4th of July parade
- Any street that has activity beyond auto uses
- Urban people populated places
- More places with activities that allow you to interact with others in new surprising ways (places you trip upon)
- Community gardens

Main Ideas:

- Don't develop just for the sake of developing

- Keep families in mind
- Pay attention to design: for pedestrians, all sides
- Design beyond buildings, include the spaces around them, too

May 17 Forum

Question #1: Why do you think it is important for the city to grow? How can the city accommodate growth through increased density in a way that protects the character of existing neighborhoods?

- Most Minneapolis residents are second-generation farmers, many of whom are uneasy about density.
- Minneapolis is focusing more on professional, affluent people, and we need to focus more on making the city good for children – including a focus on schools.
- Schools, libraries, and parks must work together. The riverfront is a good space but feels more suited for people 50 and above – excluding children. So a neighborhood should not be carved into areas where older people are one place and children/families are another.
- Communities of poverty are ignored. Don't solve race; let's solve poverty. We can move to solutions of human beings quicker and cheaper than the policies of the federal government which props up poor people. All federal housing is clustered in neighborhoods already poor and this only compounds the poverty in these places.
- These areas are part of the city. When poverty moves into the inner city...
- Some people have moved to a victim and entitlement mentality. The library board didn't budget for inflation, and libraries suffered and neighborhoods consequently suffered.
- Crime: I have young black men walking in the neighborhood...
- We must have stiffer penalties for people convicted of crime. There has to be a way to move people in these families to a solution. We need to connect the dots. Allen Page will give people a scholarship to come back into the community and use their brain power.
- Equip citizens with transportation.
- There are four ways out of poverty in America. Inheritance. Crime. Play the market to wealth. Hard work. So guys running around with guns, doing crime to get wealthy...
- We need affordable housing in these neighborhoods. After pursuing education and hard work, one should be in the middle class.
- Work programs to clean up neighborhoods would help moderate crime.

Question #2: Where should auto-oriented businesses and large-scale (big box) retail be located, and how should their design be regulated?

- I love the new post office (located just before 394 between 11th and 12th). You can easily park and be served.

- Preferably we would not have the big boxes, but if we must have them, they should be aligned with other uses so they somewhat conceal the big box impact on the street presence and on pedestrians.
- You need to have appropriate uses beyond the big box store alone. It should be part of other stores and uses.
- The downtown Target store is perhaps the best example of a big box – right in the heart of high density. To integrate Target with a tower above it is a good example of diminishing the impact of the box – and yet making the most use of it.
- Lunds in the northeast adds great value to the community, but it is accompanied by other stores in the area.
- By providing neighborhoods with amenities people need, you will then draw people back to those neighborhoods (like the small village concept or regions within the metro area overall). How do we compact these amenities and bring people together. Safety is a key ingredient to the neighborhood design – friendly, lighter, more people clustered in the area.
- Also transportation is a crucial part of this equation. How do we reconnect the city that makes it possible for an individual to do without a car, and to live and make use of the amenities in their area.
- One cannot take a bus across the Broadway bridge. North Minneapolis and Northeast are not readily accessible by bus or mass transit. One must go first to downtown and then transfer in order to make this trip.
- The lack of a bus across Broadway is simply institutionalized racism. This was a deliberate policy impact. This must be corrected.
- Demographics and infrastructure. Small regions within the bigger city need to account for different demographics. Sometimes integration can take place but other times we must respect the demographics. If we put too many businesses in a small area, what will that do to traffic flow? If our goal is to sustain communities, you want to put businesses along the freeways and not directly in the communities.
- Chicago is an example of a city which has big retailers on the ground level and towers above.
- We should not let the Vikings dictate plans for a major part of downtown now occupied by the Metrodome.
- We have an opportunity now (such as along Broadway) to do additional development which would include more robust mass transit.
- City Center was built without regard for larger plan along Hennepin, and the result was a blank façade with retail chain stores which have since moved out (to a great degree), and the lack of inter-relationship with the larger neighborhood is what largely doomed this development (which turned its back on the neighborhood).
- The city needs to look at the larger picture – such as Hennepin from 12th down to the river.
- Transit is very important. We don't need more big box stores; we need trolleys to bring us back to the city core. People don't go to their local businesses when they can save some money at the big box stores. Neighborhood stores suffer as a result.
- Southdale set the precedent for this – all over America. Drive your car across the region, and buy all products you need in a single effort. The alternative was more

civically engaging, whereby people would go to different stores in their neighborhood.

- The city historically was based on the trolley system and we are now trying to get back to that. Institutional racism is one obstacle to this. The new system is run by a regional entity which values Eden Prairie as much as Minneapolis.
- We have a system based on the center core. There is no wheel; just spokes. The importance of city growth will be totally dependent on a transit system which gives priority to the city core.
- We don't need a city versus suburbs war; but we need a system characterized by equity.
- I'm interested in affordable housing issues. How do we balance growth with affordable housing (to say nothing of adding green houses). One cannot sustain any neighborhood if you don't all the necessities of infrastructure in place.
- On the north side of town we are considering moving schools and libraries at the same time we are planning for growth. How can we do this? If we move to a regional library and education system, you will start losing the value of living in a neighborhood. How can we expect people to buy into and sustain their neighborhoods under these conditions – absent sufficient infrastructure. Kids are being bussed across town and lose their identity with the neighborhood of their homes.
- This comes back to institutional racism. South Minneapolis would not be subjected to this same reduction of infrastructure as the north is now being subjected to.
- Every 10-15 block radius has to have libraries, grocery stores, schools, etc. Otherwise, you get no buy-in and people have no tie-in to their community.
- Chicken and egg is involved here; do people follow development or does development follow people? It's important that the city step up in this regard. The city should have a leadership role regarding development.
- The city needs to re-evaluate what infrastructure consists of. It's not only streets and sewers and power; it's also schools, stores, and other community assets.
- The scope of a comprehensive plan is not sufficiently broad; there is no reason Minneapolis should not be consider all components of the city – parks and schools have separately elected boards, and this encourages a lack of integration with a larger plan.
- In St Paul, zoning regulations/policies allow for a lot more mixed-use. If you are going to increased density, then include mixed-use in the plan.

Question #3: Beyond the park system, what publicly accessible open spaces in the city do you most value? What are your favorite gathering places, and why? What can be done to protect and enhance these places?

- Franklin Av and Hennepin is one example of cluster of small businesses which are friendly as gathering places for pedestrians – for meeting places and conversation.
- Washington Av has turned around in the last decade – small restaurants, coffee shops – a mixed-use corridor which complements the development along the riverfront.
- Northeast – Central and 4th is a site which has experienced positive development of small shops. Essential services available in this neighborhood.

- Near North – Willard-Hay, Jordon, Hawthorn, (West Broadway) – unique structure of shops and restaurants; great use of compacted space and yet ample amenities.
- Walkability of a neighborhood is key. Strong street presence, houses with porches, low crime, and trees.
- Sidewalks along streets with low auto traffic. Neighbors in their gardens. Concert series at Mill City – open and free to the public. Schools can be great public space. Libraries enhance neighborhoods.
- Folwell neighborhood – characterized by coffee shops, parks. Lowry development. Outdoor dining. The river. Theodore Wirth Parkway. Green space, benches, places to spend time outdoors. Places to sit and rest.
- Urban experience is important; proximity to buildings, facades, windows, streets, etc. Density of people, mixing with people, watching people. Benches, places to sit in the shade. Street and sidewalk amenities (such as gates).
- Loring Park, Dunn Bros Coffee is great gathering place. Many institutions around the park are supportive of neighborhood goals. Sculpture Garden is an asset to the area.
- North Minneapolis has lost over a quarter of its population of older adults. One reason has been lack of walking distance of key places such as grocery store, library, etc. The goal is to do without a car.
- Social places outdoors, such as coffee shops with patios where people can gather. This city needs more small places of commerce, such as what Linden Hills now has. The more modest neighborhoods should have this asset as well.
- Dowling Community Garden (Longfellow, Seward neighborhood) is an excellent place to “hang out.” This venue is in great demand. The people who garden there now are families with children. It excels for its “sociability”. An heirloom festival is held there annually. We accommodate people of all ages – including people with disabilities. The people know and interact with each other.
- Community gardening is in trouble in Minneapolis and in the Twin Cities in general. People don’t understand that people who move in condos have a great need for green space.
- A community garden provides a good site for mixing with people of different backgrounds, (such as an international picnic). A garden is welcoming and provides a bond for a sense of community among people.
- Penn and Lowry – hope to get a grocery store and hope to get other stores and benches and green space, trees, bicycle paths, etc. We used to have a school nearby and many organizations hold events in the area during the year.
- We have a bus line in the neighborhood, but it was necessary to fight to keep it. Nice parks, hospital is nearby, and a restful place to linger is important.
- Some negative aspects of neighborhoods include foreclosures, crime, prostitutes, etc.
- We need to keep schools open and populated with Minneapolis children, using schools for other events in the neighborhood – used for public space. Bring the parents in and have more programs for them and have more family growth and keep our people here.
- Minneapolis taxes are getting too high for senior citizens. If we are going to have new stadiums, let’s have everyone in Minnesota pay equally – with the highways

coming in and providing easy access to the stadiums – let others help to fund them as well.

- In northeast Minneapolis, we have trees and parks, but the main issue here is safety. We have citizen patrols of walking groups at night which involve the neighbors. Certain parks have been known as places for drug deals.
- My focus is on the inner core of the city where the problems really are. I use the analogy of holistic health in urban design. You don't really treat the crisis but instead you treat the whole body. You bring the body into alignment – all the body systems relate. And this paradigm should be applied to our neighborhoods and metro areas.
- Our metro areas were based on a post-WWII model.
- Minneapolis should be using its assets to go to the Met Council and Hennepin County and say that we need to redistrict voting as it pertains to the metro area. We can't have different municipalities voting separate from each other on region-wide issues.
- We can't be taking public money for facilities which would be convenient for people in outlying areas for ease of access to city core. Minneapolis should think of alliances and holistic view as foundation for its urban design plans.
- Broadway in Minneapolis is a disaster. It has continued to decline over the years – mostly because of neglect. There is no long-range plan; instead there are only short-range solutions. This approach is emphasizing a shopping district over other needs of the neighborhood.
- Empty lots and decaying buildings could be the site of future upgraded housing. What has happened to renters?
- We should re-engineer an urban park to accommodate an aging population. In many cases there is not enough real estate to do what needs to be done. So integrating parks with senior centers, children centers, etc, should be a priority.
- Let's develop partnerships between public and private sector to avoid duplication of development in the city.
- For the north side I would like to see what I call "small villages" where you have areas suitable for walking and biking. You can get so many things done in a three-block radius – dry cleaning, animal hospital, video store, work-out place, library, etc. Amongst that you have trees, water, flowers, etc. These areas are self-contained and near housing, (homeowners, renters alike) – without making it necessary to drive vast distances to shopping malls.
- These small villages can be supported by the youth and as well as older people. Youth need to be brought into the planning process. We need them to be involved in the plan.
- Hopkins is an example of a small village model. Housing is integrated there amid the commercial. Robbinsdale is another example of this.
- I like the Loring Greenway. The plan was to put more access points or signs. Not enough people are aware of its access points.