

10. Urban Design

Minneapolis will be an attractive and inviting city that promotes harmony between the natural and built environments, gives prominence to pedestrian facilities and amenities, and respects the city's traditional urban features while welcoming new construction and improvements.



A range of building types and forms intermingle near Downtown

Urban design combines aspects of architecture, landscape architecture, public works, transportation systems and public art to create dynamic urban environments. Urban design and urban form affect movement of people, goods and services, human interactions with the built and natural environments and human health. This chapter provides a design framework for community development and guidelines for new construction and redevelopment.

Traditional Urban Form

Urban form is a term that describes the physical attributes of a traditional city: Rectangular blocks connected by avenues, streets, and ribbon-like arterials along which people move about and commerce bustles. These connections, combined with presence of sidewalks, transit and urban amenities like parks and buildings from different eras of a city's history comprise a dynamic urbanism. Traditional urban form is the overarching policy that will drive the design of new developments, streets and public realm in the City of Minneapolis.

“The traditional city is the sublime, complex and popular manifestation of civility and conviviality. It is the perfect synthesis between territory, culture and human communities. It is stable and stimulating for individuals, for locals and strangers, for residents and hosts, for industry, business, crafts, art, for communication and interaction, for social, cultural, intellectual and commercial exchanges, activities and inventions. Despite quick and dramatic and unprecedented changes and innovations in the past century, the traditional city has remained a good and desirable place to live. It has proven to be perfectly compatible with modern life... it is both an experiential reality and a realistic project of contemporary civilization”

--Prince Of Wales Urban Design Task Force, 1996

Traditional urban form for Minneapolis consists of a network of streets with a pattern of lower-density residential neighborhoods with higher-density, mixed-use corridors and nodes. It includes pedestrian-scale buildings and street designs that reflect the presence of pedestrians as well as automobiles, transit and bicycles. Our urban form also reflects the fact that Minneapolis is a Winter City. Utilizing climate sensitive design strategies adapted to our northern environment can create and enhance year round urban livability by making the winter environment more safe, comfortable and enjoyable at the pedestrian realm. Snow removal for safety and active winter transportation (walking and biking), minimizing the shadowing of pedestrian spaces used in the wintertime, as well as landscaping for winter visual interest and wind screening are important. These elements of the built and natural environment give the city a unique identity and present unique challenges.

The urban neighborhood pattern resulted from the days of Minneapolis' growth as a streetcar city that created residential neighborhoods built at a scale measured in “walking time”. Most residents can reach the shops and services they need within a few blocks of their homes and workplaces. People are not required to drive every time they leave their home in search of goods, services or entertainment, and the purpose of many trips can be accomplished by traveling to a single location.

The pattern and scale of the streets, open spaces and buildings that make up the city fabric have a direct and daily impact on how residents and citizens move about, patronize local shops and businesses, meet their neighbors and enjoy the city's amenities. In parts of the city, the network of streets and blocks, the gridlike neighborhood, is efficient. Pedestrians can walk relatively directly between any two points. However, in other parts of the city, suburban style cul-de-sac development impedes that efficiency, or the street grid has been blocked off by artificial barriers. Still other parts of the network have been transected by obstacles—interstate highways or LRT crossings. In these areas urban form is impacted and the network needs healing. Urban design can contribute to that by providing the policy framework and preferred standard for new development and built form that is subsequently implemented through the regulatory framework of the City's Zoning Code.

Traditional urban form in residential areas

Neighborhood architecture forms a varied backdrop to the experience of place that impresses on sidewalk stroll in Longfellow or Lowry Hill or Northeast Minneapolis. Porches, gables and attic windows punctuate the housing landscape. A combination of the brand new and the old exist side by side on many city streets and are good examples of accommodating and encouraging the new while preserving and appreciating the old. The shape and feel of neighborhoods can be impacted by the width of a road, the height of a building, the distance a structure is set back from the property line, window design and pattern, and the orientation of buildings in relation to the street.



Residential areas in Minneapolis often are identified as having large front yard setbacks, consistent heights, front porches, and a healthy tree canopy.



Traditional urban form in commercial and mixed-use structures and areas

Good design must be used to ensure that mixed-use developments are functional, attractive, and withstand the test of time. Successful mixed-use buildings and areas attract pedestrians by bringing their storefronts to the sidewalk's edge, orienting building design to the street and respecting traditional urban form by providing transitions to adjacent structures, keeping building heights to a scale compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

Commercial and mixed-use areas should be designed in order to be accessible from a balanced variety of transportation modes, including pedestrian, automobiles, transit and bicycles. Responding to the demands of traditional urban form requires design solutions that prioritize the appeal of the pedestrian environment, emphasize diversity in form and materials, and promote a distinctive identity for an area.

Downtown

Skyline



The height of buildings conveys a sense of the type and intensity of use of the building or area, and it also symbolizes the importance of the use within the broader community. With respect to Downtown, the height of buildings contributes to an understanding of how Downtown is organized and the importance of its various functions. The Downtown skyline also is a source of civic pride. As such, it should be considered a community asset.

Policy 10.1: Promote building designs and heights that enhance and complement the image and form of the Downtown skyline, provide transition to the edges of Downtown and protect the scale and quality in areas of distinctive physical or historical character.

- 10.1.1 Concentrate the tallest buildings in the Downtown core.
- 10.1.2 Building placement should preserve and enhance public view corridors that focus attention on natural or built features, such as landmark buildings, significant open spaces or water bodies.
- 10.1.3 Building placement should allow light and air into the site and surrounding properties.

The Pedestrian Environment

Streets and sidewalks serve as the primary pedestrian network and are Downtown Minneapolis' greatest opportunity for improving the public realm. Streets designed for pedestrian use contribute to Downtown's public nature, vibrant image and synergy by encouraging pedestrian circulation and activities and by integrating Downtown's various attractions. To foster this type of environment at the street level the first floor of buildings need to be designed with the pedestrian in mind.

Policy 10.2: Integrate pedestrian scale design features into Downtown site and building designs and infrastructure improvements.

- 10.2.1 The ground floor of buildings should be occupied by active uses with direct connections to the sidewalk.
- 10.2.2 The street level of buildings should have windows to allow for clear views into and out of the building.
- 10.2.3 Ensure that buildings incorporate design elements that eliminate long stretches of blank, inactive building walls such as windows, green walls, architectural details, and murals.
- 10.2.4 Integrate components in building designs that offer protection to pedestrians, such as awnings and canopies, as a means to encourage pedestrian activity along the street.
- 10.2.5 Locate access to and egress from parking ramps mid-block and at right angles to minimize disruptions to pedestrian flow at the street level.
- 10.2.6 Arrange buildings within a site in order to minimize the generation of wind currents at ground level.
- 10.2.7 Locate buildings so that shadowing on public spaces and adjacent properties is minimized.
- 10.2.8 Coordinate site designs and public right-of-way improvements to provide adequate sidewalk space for pedestrian movement, street trees, landscaping, street furniture, sidewalk cafes and other elements of active pedestrian areas.



This active pedestrian area accommodates active and passive users with interesting paving, separation of uses, as well as lighting and other amenities.

Skyways

Skyways play an integral role in the movement of pedestrians in Downtown Minneapolis. Because skyways connect office buildings, retail stores, parking structures and residential structures to one another, priorities should be placed on maintaining uniform hours of operation, consistent directional signage, and convenient and easily accessible vertical connections between street and skyway levels. All new internal skyways should be designed in such a way that allows pedestrians to maintain a visual connection with the street in order to help them orient themselves while navigating through the system.

Policy 10.3: Use skyways to connect buildings Downtown.

- 10.3.1 Provide maximum transparency of skyway walls in order to provide views to the outside that help users orient themselves.
- 10.3.2 Maintain uniform skyway hours of operation wherever possible.
- 10.3.3 Provide consistent and uniform directional signage and accessible skyway system maps near skyway entrances, particularly along primary transit and pedestrian routes.
- 10.3.4 Provide convenient and easily accessible vertical connections between the skyway system and the public sidewalks, particularly along primary transit and pedestrian routes.
- 10.3.5 Maintain functional links in the skyway system while adjoining properties undergo redevelopment or renovation.
- 10.3.6 Limit skyway expansion to the downtown core and at other key sites with high-intensity uses in order to minimize low-usage skyways and maximize street-level pedestrian activity in growing downtown neighborhoods and historic areas.

Multi-Family Residential

New housing development provides an opportunity to reinforce the urban character of specific areas of the city. Building more housing close to or within commercial developments is the key to stronger commercial and other mixed-use markets. The location of new housing developments within close range of amenities such as shopping, cultural or recreational facilities, job targets, or transportation corridors focuses the city's growth into specific areas, as designated in this plan. At all times, multi-family residential development needs to have a clear connection to the street with adequate windows, architectural details and landscaping. The scale of the development should be compatible with the character of the surrounding area.

The character of Minneapolis' urban neighborhoods is a great asset to the city and is

highly valued by residents. Good development enhances its surroundings and adds to the dynamism of the city. While renovations and redevelopment are necessary and often desirable, care should be taken that the new development does not detract from the character of its surroundings. As shown in this illustration, this does not mean buildings must always remain exactly as they have been, or that new neighborhoods need to mimic their neighbors, but it does require consideration of compatibility through attention to building form, scale, massing, and architectural detail.



The Wellstone is Phase III of the Franklin-Portland Gateway project and features mixed uses that meet the street, use of vegetation to beautify the pedestrian realm and revitalize an underused and undervalued corner. The articulated mass and façade enhance the visual effect of the project.

Photo courtesy of Minnesota Green Communities

Policy 10.4: Support the development of residential dwellings that are of high quality design and compatible with surrounding development.

10.4.1 Maintain and strengthen the architectural character of the city's various residential neighborhoods.

10.4.2 Promote the development of new housing that is compatible with existing development in the area and the best of the city's existing housing stock.

10.4.3 Advance the understanding of urban housing and retail design among members of the design and development community.



The street-level commercial at 26th & Nicollet draws pedestrians in by use of windows. Residents of owner-occupied condominiums in this medium-scale mixed use development benefit from having retail close by.



This infill development in downtown Minneapolis is an example of how new development can be sized and scaled to maximize compatibility with adjacent structures.

Policy 10.5: Support the development of multi-family residential dwellings of appropriate form and scale.

- 10.5.1 Smaller-scale, multi-family residential development is more appropriate along Community Corridors and Neighborhood Commercial Nodes.
- 10.5.2 Medium-scale, multi-family residential development is more appropriate along Commercial Corridors, Activity Centers, Transit Station Areas and Growth Centers outside of Downtown Minneapolis.
- 10.5.3 Large-scale, high-rise, multi-family residential development is more appropriate in the Downtown Minneapolis Growth Center.

Policy 10.6: New multi-family development or renovation should be designed in terms of traditional urban building form with pedestrian scale design features at the street level.

- 10.6.1 Design buildings to fulfill light, privacy, and view requirements for the subject building as well as for adjacent properties by building within required setbacks.
- 10.6.2 Promote the preservation and enhancement of view corridors that focus attention on natural or built features, such as the Downtown skyline, landmark buildings, significant open spaces or bodies of water.
- 10.6.3 Provide appropriate physical transition and separation using green space, setbacks or orientation, stepped down height, or ornamental fencing to improve the compatibility between higher density and lower density residential uses.
- 10.6.4 Orient buildings and building entrances to the street with pedestrian

amenities like wider sidewalks and green spaces.

10.6.5 Street-level building walls should include an adequate distribution of windows and architectural features in order to create visual interest at the pedestrian level.

10.6.6 Integrate transit facilities and bicycle parking amenities into the site design.



Crescent Trace Condominiums in Sheridan Neighborhood are an example of development that takes advantage of nearby open space for natural light.

Single-Family and Two-Family Residential

Each neighborhood in the city possesses a distinct character, made up of the houses, commercial buildings, open spaces, streets and alleys that organize patterns of activity happening in their midst. The elements that make these places special are similar, but their details vary tremendously. While this section addresses urban design of single and two-family residential areas, these policies may also apply to urban neighborhoods with a mix of higher density housing and appropriate non-residential land uses.

The roots of any neighborhood's physical character are found in its housing stock, streets and history. Recognizing these elements and using them to fortify neighborhood livability is central to revitalization efforts throughout the city.



Policy 10.7: Maintain and preserve the quality and unique character of the city's existing housing stock.

- 10.7.1 Rehabilitation of older and historic housing stock should be encouraged over demolition.
- 10.7.2 Encourage the use of high quality and durable materials for construction and historic preservation.
- 10.7.3 Encourage adaptive reuse, retrofit and renovation projects that make the city's housing stock competitive on the regional market.
- 10.7.4 Renovation of housing should reflect the setbacks, orientation, pattern, materials, height and scale of surrounding dwellings.
- 10.7.5 Provide the flexibility in the city's ordinances to improve and maintain existing structures.

New housing development, or infill development, is an opportunity to reinforce the urban character of specific areas of the city. Low density residential redevelopment in Minneapolis can occur on a grand scale such as the Humboldt Greenway or Heritage Park redevelopments.



Humboldt Greenway is a partnership between Hennepin County and the City of Minneapolis to construct a new greenway and housing on Humboldt Avenue North. The houses sit close to the street, on narrow lots, to create a comfortable, pedestrian-scaled environment. To accommodate the expectations of the new housing market, the houses are larger than typical older houses in Minneapolis, as well as the houses of the surrounding neighborhood. Shared side lots provide outdoor space, in lieu of larger backyards. Alleys and garage placement replicate the typical neighborhood feel of the city.

*Photos courtesy of Metropolitan Design Center University of Minnesota
www.designcenter.umn.edu*

More often, redevelopment of single family homes and duplexes is a result of demolition of obsolete or dilapidated structures. Even when redevelopment happens on a small scale, the new home has great potential to impact the surrounding neighborhood.

The size, scale and materials of new housing are vital to compatibility with existing homes and neighborhoods. The desirability of Minneapolis neighborhoods is enhanced when new homes are incorporated with the design of their neighborhoods.



Each of these pictures illustrates a design concept of traditional urban form. In the picture above, note the materials and style of the house in relation to the others pictured. This is an example of design not contributing to neighborhood character. The small home in the upper right picture illustrates building form and image being out of context with the surrounding structures. The picture to the immediate right is an example of building organization and function not serving traditional urban form. The attached garage breaks up back yard site lines and creates a scale of massing that breaks up the neighborhood context.

Policy 10.8: Strengthen the character and desirability of the city's urban neighborhood residential areas while accommodating reinvestment through infill development.

- 10.8.1 Infill development shall reflect the setbacks, orientation, pattern, materials, height and scale of surrounding dwellings.
- 10.8.2 Infill development shall incorporate the traditional layout of residential development that includes a standard front and side yard setbacks, open space in the back yard, and detached garage along the alley or at back of lot.
- 10.8.3 Building features of infill development, such as windows and doors, height of floors, and exposed basements, shall reflect the scale of surrounding dwellings.
- 10.8.4 Detached garages are preferred over attached garages and should be accessory in size and use to the primary residential structure.
- 10.8.5 New driveways should be prohibited on blocks that have alley access and no existing driveways.
- 10.8.6 Traditional setbacks, orientations, pattern, height and scale of dwellings should be created in areas where no clear pattern exists.
- 10.8.7 Low density residential development proposals should be evaluated and compared to the form and density of the neighborhood.
- 10.8.8 Appropriate non-residential land uses, such as institutional, public and suitable commercial uses, should be integrated into low density residential areas through proper building location and design, landscaping, and other site improvements.

Mixed-Use and Transit-Oriented Development

The term mixed-use can apply to a single structure or a set of buildings massed together as a unit. A mixed-use development in one building accommodates more than one use vertically, such as a multi-family residential building with office or retail on the ground floor. A mixed-use development may be horizontal; a series of single-use buildings, some commercial or office and others residential, next to each other. Transit-oriented development almost always includes mixed-use development and most mixed-use developments or areas will be transit-oriented. Transit-oriented development should be located not only in station areas along the regional LRT or BRT transitways, but also along the local Primary Transit Network corridors. Many of the urban design standards for mixed-use and transit-oriented development are the same as those found in other sections of this chapter – especially those for commercial and multi-family development – and should be utilized where relevant.



The location of the LRT station, such as this rendering of a station along the Hiawatha Corridor, provides an opportunity to complement its activity with a mix of housing and commercial activity. Higher density new development and rehabilitation of existing buildings will reinforce the station as a focal point for the neighborhood.

Policy 10.9: Support urban design standards that emphasize traditional urban form with pedestrian scale design features at the street level in mixed-use and transit-oriented development.



This mixed use development illustrates good built form and image. Pedestrian access to and from the building are clearly identified. Balconies are inserted and windows are oriented towards the park across the street. Shared parking and loading docks are located in the interior of this building.

- 10.9.1 Encourage both mixed-use buildings and a mix of uses in separate buildings where appropriate.
- 10.9.2 Promote building and site design that delineates between public and private spaces.
- 10.9.3 Provide safe, accessible, convenient, and lighted access and way finding to transit stops and transit stations along the Primary Transit Network bus and rail corridors.
- 10.9.4 Coordinate site designs and public right-of-way improvements to provide adequate sidewalk space for pedestrian movement, street trees, landscaping, street furniture, sidewalk cafes and other elements of active pedestrian areas.

Commercial

Commercial buildings and uses provide needed amenities and services to communities. Their design and placement should be strategic so that negative impacts on surrounding uses, especially residential, are mitigated. A new commercial structure will be considered in terms of its size, scale, intensity of uses and relationship to the street, to users and to its neighbors. Consultations with project proponents combined with site plan review and other city regulatory tools help ensure that an intensive commercial development is well designed, attractive and pleasant, and withstands the test of time.

Successful commercial buildings and areas attract pedestrians by bringing their storefronts close to the sidewalk's edge, providing adequate sidewalk space for pedestrian movement and four season amenities, orienting building design to the street, and respecting traditional urban form by keeping building heights to a level that is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. Auto-oriented uses will successfully manage the interests of vehicles, transit, and pedestrians, with safety and appropriate siting in mind. Auto-oriented uses will be discouraged where adjacent to single family neighborhoods, in areas targeted for pedestrian-oriented development, and on sites incapable of supporting the requirements of a successful auto-oriented use.



Note the use of lighting, plantings and the placement of storefronts close to the sidewalk edge. These features contribute to active and dynamic commercial areas.

Large-scale, big-box retailers can have a place in an urban environment as long as their design adheres to urban principles. Support for large-scale commercial at city locations like the downtown core, activity centers, transit station areas, and commercial corridors can be accomplished in three ways: 1) through adaptive reuse of existing structures; 2) through new construction of multi-level and multi-use buildings with structured, underground parking; and 3) through incorporation of traditional urban design principles in the renovation and redevelopment of older, existing suburban-style shopping areas. Through these approaches traditional big-box retailers can gain a foothold in the urban market without imposing a suburban, car-dependent model.

Policy 10.10: Support urban design standards that emphasize a traditional urban form in commercial areas.

10.10.1 Enhance 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 four season public spaces and infrastructure.

10.10.2 Identify commercial areas in the city that reflect, or used to reflect, traditional urban form and develop appropriate standards and preservation or restoration objectives for these areas.



1101 West Broadway - Before



1101 West Broadway -After

10.10.3 Enhance pedestrian and transit-oriented commercial districts with street furniture, street plantings, plazas, water features, public art and improved transit and pedestrian and bicycle amenities.

10.10.4 Orient new buildings to the street to foster safe and successful commercial nodes and corridors.

10.10.5 Limit the visual impact of existing billboards in neighborhood commercial areas.

10.10.6 Require storefront window transparency to assure both natural surveillance and an inviting pedestrian experience.

10.10.7 Encourage the renovation of existing commercial buildings.

Policy 10.11: Seek new commercial development that is attractive, functional and adds value to the physical environment.

10.11.1 Require the location of new commercial development (office, research and development, and related light manufacturing) to take advantage of locational amenities and coexist with neighbors in mixed-use environments.

10.11.2 Ensure that new commercial developments maximize compatibility with surrounding neighborhoods.

10.11.3 Continue to curb the inefficient use of land by regulating minimum height, setbacks, build-to lines and parking through master planning methods and zoning code regulations.

10.11.4 Maximize the year round potential for public transit, biking, and walking in new developments.

Industrial

Industrial land uses have their place in the city and are encouraged to locate in geographic areas designated as Industrial Employment Districts so as to minimize conflicts with residential uses. These districts are located close to major transportation corridors so as to minimize noise and traffic disruption. Industrial building design should adhere to the same principles as other development in having adequate windows, quality materials, architectural features and green space. Consolidation or shared parking between industrial users is encouraged to reduce surface water runoff and improve aesthetics. There should be a pedestrian connection between the industrial building and the sidewalk via walkways, and entrances should be oriented to the street.



Coloplast's North American Headquarters in north Minneapolis illustrates many concepts of urban industrial building design.

Policy 10.12: Design industrial uses with appropriate transitions and other design features which minimize negative impacts on surrounding residential uses.

10.12.1 Provide appropriate physical transition and separation using green space, fencing, setbacks or orientation between industrial uses and other surrounding uses.

10.12.2 Encourage site planning for new developments that orients the “back” of proposed buildings to the “back” of existing development.

10.12.3 Require additional screening and buffering for new developments next to residential areas.

10.12.4 Design industrial sites to ensure direct access to major truck routes and freeways as a way to minimize automobile and truck impacts on residential

streets and alleys.

10.12.5 Promote quality design and building orientation of industrial development that is appropriate with the surrounding neighborhoods.

10.12.6 Use the site plan review process to ensure that lighting and signage associated with industrial uses do not create negative impacts for residential properties.

Institutional and Public Buildings

As educational institutions, public buildings, hospitals and corporations change, expand and increase their presence in city neighborhoods, residents and business owners have grappled with the challenge of accommodating these changes in a compatible, mutually advantageous way. Vital, healthy institutions bring stability and presence to any city neighborhood. Attention to transitions is one way to balance the location and expansion of these institutions, the scale and character of pedestrian or other street level activity and neighborhood livability.

The design of public buildings and facilitates can inspire, transform and catalyze communities. Institutions and public buildings and facilities should set the standard for urban design in Minneapolis, utilizing quality materials and site planning that are reflective of their prominence and importance to the community.



Large scale institutions, like Wells Fargo and the University of Minnesota can contribute to the quality of life in adjacent communities through sensitive design.

Policy 10.13: Work with institutional and public partners to assure that the scale and form of new development or expansion will occur in a manner most compatible with the surrounding area.

- 10.13.1 Concentrate the greatest density and height in the interior of institutional campuses with stepped-down building design as it transitions to the neighborhood.
- 10.13.2 Develop building forms on the edges of institutional property which are most reflective of neighboring properties as the preferred option, while recognizing that in certain circumstances greater bulk and density may be preferable to expansion beyond existing campus boundaries.
- 10.13.3 Encourage institutional uses and public buildings and facilities to incorporate architectural and site design that is reflective of their civic importance and that identifies their role as focal points for the community.
- 10.13.4 Promote active uses at the ground floor level.

Public Spaces

Public spaces in Winter Cities are successful when they are designed with people in mind for year round use. Those spaces tend to be popular and well-used because they are proximate to residences, like a city park, or businesses, like a downtown plaza. Maintaining and improving existing public spaces is essential to their continued use. New public spaces must be created with careful attention to location, accessibility and sustainability. New public spaces should be encouraged proximate to where there is already a lot of activity or where there is no public space currently available and where multiple forms of access are possible. A variety of uses and amenities for the public space should be explored to maximize interest and functionality. Public spaces may also be green spaces, valued not only for the respite they provide for city residents and workers, but also for the ecological functions they serve in terms of stormwater management and improving air quality. These spaces can be large-scaled, such as Gold Medal Park or smaller, green niches.



This green space on the roof of the Crown Plaza building is an example of a green niche. Greening in downtown provides a welcome respite from concrete and provides an ecological function by reducing the heat island effect.

Policy 10.14: Encourage development that provides functional and attractive gathering spaces.



Peavey Plaza in downtown Minneapolis is an example of a popular plaza and gathering space in the city.

Peavey Plaza photo by PD Larson

10.14.1 Increase resident access to and use of facilities and meeting spaces in parks, libraries, schools, and not-for-profit institutions and places of worship.

10.14.2 Investigate existing gathering spaces on publicly owned land that are underutilized and make recommendations about how they could be improved.

10.14.3 Encourage the creation of new parks and plazas.

10.14.4 Emphasize improving public access to and movement along the riverfront.

10.14.5 Views of the river should favor vistas that try to give longer views of the river.

10.14.6 Develop public plaza standards that give specific guidance on preferred design and maintenance of seating, lighting, landscaping and other amenities utilizing climate sensitive design principles.



Broad sidewalks showcasing interesting land features or public art can be enhanced through strategic placement of seating, lighting and other amenities. Esther Short Park in Vancouver, WA is example of a public space attractive for family gatherings and special community events.

Streets and Sidewalks

Street and sidewalk design is shaped by the relationships of land use, buildings, parking areas, sidewalks, landscaping and street furnishings. Recognizing that traditional street grid designs can result in a positive, greater impact to the economic vitality of a community, policies are developed to bring pedestrians and bicyclists back to the streets and reduce the impact of auto-oriented streets. It is the city's goal to provide these amenities and improve mobility, livability and sustainability through high-quality designs, adequate capacity, and reduced impervious surfaces.

Policy 10.15: Wherever possible, restore and maintain the traditional street and sidewalk grid as part of new developments.

- 10.15.1 Consider street vacations as a last resort to preserve the network of city streets and arterials.
- 10.15.2 Integrate and/or reuse historic pavement materials for streets and sidewalk reconstruction, where appropriate.
- 10.15.3 Reduce street widths for safe and convenient pedestrian crossing by adding medians, boulevards, or bump-outs.
- 10.15.4 Improve access management and way-finding to and from all streets, sidewalks, and other pedestrian connections.
- 10.15.5 Explore options to redesign larger blocks through the reintroduction and extension of the urban street grid.

Policy 10.16: Design streets and sidewalks to ensure safety, pedestrian comfort and aesthetic appeal.

- 10.16.1 Encourage wider sidewalks in commercial nodes, activity centers, along community and commercial corridors and in growth centers such as Downtown and the University of Minnesota.
- 10.16.2 Provide streetscape amenities, including street furniture, trees, and landscaping, that buffer pedestrians from auto traffic, parking areas, and winter elements.
- 10.16.3 Integrate placement of street furniture and fixtures, including landscaping and lighting, to serve a function and not obstruct pedestrian pathways and



Historic cobblestone materials integrated in sidewalk construction

pedestrian flows.

- 10.16.4 Employ pedestrian-friendly features along streets, including street trees and landscaped boulevards that add interest and beauty while also managing storm water, appropriate lane widths, raised intersections, and high-visibility crosswalks.

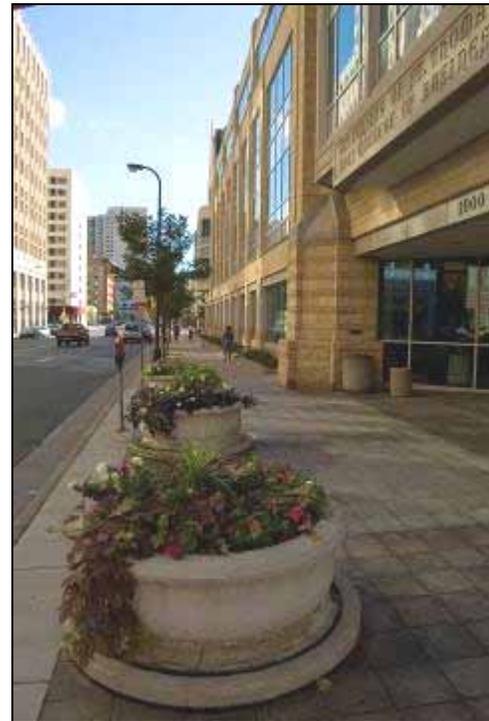


Plantings buffer pedestrians from adjacent traffic and add visual interest to the streetscape.

Lighting



Over 40,700 street lights illuminate the City of Minneapolis. Different types of street lights include ornamental, shoebox, parkway, wood pole and those on state, county, or private property. City policy intends to provide positive social, economic and equitable benefits to residents, businesses and transportation users.



Lighting is an important element in the urban environment. The quality and quantity of lighting affects public health, safety, comfort, productivity and economy. The City, along with other public partners, owns and maintains lighting in the public realm. Additionally, the City regulates lighting produced on private property, particularly in relation to impacts on surrounding uses. The overall goal is to create a safe, comfortable, and attractive environment for residents, businesses, and visitors.

Policy 10.17: Provide sufficient lighting to reflect community character, provide a comfortable environment in a northern city and promote environmentally friendly lighting systems.

- 10.17.1 Provide high-quality lighting fixture designs that are appropriate to street types and land use, and that provide pedestrian friendly illumination, but minimize glare and dark sky conditions, and other unnecessary light pollution.
- 10.17.2 Require circuit installations below grade for new developments.
- 10.17.3 Encourage pedestrian scale lighting throughout neighborhoods as well as in areas such as waterfronts, pathways, parks and plazas, and designated historic districts.
- 10.17.4 Ensure that all site lighting requirements and directional signs have

appropriate illumination levels to comply with zoning and industry illumination standards.

- 10.17.5 Integrate exterior building lighting design to attune with building designs and landscaping.
- 10.17.6 Provide sufficient lighting for better way-finding and safe circulation within and around a development.
- 10.17.7 Encourage additional pedestrian-scale, exterior lighting in growth centers, activity centers, commercial nodes, pedestrian overlay districts and transit station areas.
- 10.17.8 Update city zoning code to reflect best available practices related to dark skies and the environmental benefits of strategic lighting management.

Parking Facilities

Certain areas of the city generate demand far beyond their immediate boundaries, and need to accommodate significant automobile traffic through the provision of parking facilities. While clearly a necessary element in an urban setting, parking facilities can have serious negative visual effects on their surroundings if not designed carefully. Any parking facility, regardless of whether it is a surface parking lot or a structured parking ramp, should be designed so as to blend in with its surroundings.



A landscape buffer around a parking lot, as illustrated in the picture on the left, creates visual interest, preserves the streetscape, and adds a sense of safety for pedestrians. Parking lots without landscaping, such as those pictured on the right, are not visually appealing and do not provide an attractive or secure pedestrian environment.

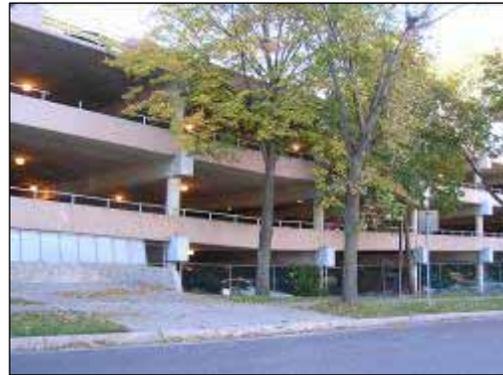


Buffalo Rising is a uniquely urban LEED certified parking structure in Santa Monica that utilizes environmentally-friendly building materials. It's street level retail, Zen garden and translucency encourage pedestrian activity.

Photo courtesy of BuffaloRising.com



This parking structure use of materials, window fenestration, screening and active ground floor uses minimizes the visual impact



The impact of this parking structure is magnified by its sloped floors, lack of fenestration and lack of automobile screening

Policy 10.18: Reduce the visual impact of automobile parking facilities.

10.18.1 Require that parking lots meet or exceed the landscaping and screening requirements of the zoning code, especially along transit corridors, adjacent to residential areas, and areas of transition between land uses.

10.18.2 Parking lots should maintain the existing street face in developed areas and establish them in undeveloped areas through the use of fencing, walls, landscaping or a combination thereof along property lines.

10.18.3 Locate parking lots to the rear or interior of the site.

10.18.4 Provide walkways within parking lots in order to guide pedestrians through the site.

10.18.5 Design parking structures so sloping floors do not dominate the appearance of the walls.

10.18.6 The ground floor of parking structures should be designed with active uses along the street walls except where frontage is needed to provide for vehicular and pedestrian access.

10.18.17 Minimize the width of ingress and egress lanes along the public right of way in order to provide safe pedestrian access across large driveways.

10.18.18 Encourage appropriate land uses to share parking lots to reduce the size and visual impact of parking facilities.



Creative, yet simple landscaping softens this storefront commercial area.

Landscaping

A well-designed landscape will create and define spaces while softening the built environment. Landscaping provides beauty and visual interest, shade and environmental benefits, as well as screening and buffering of uses. It is important to consider the types of plants and trees and how they will tolerate and impact their surrounding environment. Design and maintenance of the landscaped areas are important factors as well. The following policy and implementation steps provide guidance for landscaped areas in the city.

Policy 10.19: Landscaping is encouraged in order to complement the scale of the site and its surroundings, enhance the built environment, create and define public and private spaces, buffer and screen, incorporate crime prevention principles, and provide shade, aesthetic appeal, and environmental benefits.

10.19.1 In general, larger, well-placed, contiguous planting areas that create and define public and private spaces shall be preferred to smaller, disconnected areas.

10.19.2 Plant and tree types should complement the surrounding area and should include a variety of species throughout the site that include seasonal interest. Species should be indigenous or proven adaptable to the local climate and should not be invasive on native species.

10.19.3 Landscaped areas should include plant and tree types that address ecological function, including the interception and filtration of stormwater, reduction of the urban heat island effect, and preservation and restoration of natural amenities.

10.19.4 Landscaped areas should be maintained in accordance with [Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design \(CPTED\)](#) principles, to allow views into and out of the site, to preserve view corridors and to maintain sight lines at vehicular and pedestrian intersections.

10.19.5 Landscaping plans should be designed to facilitate future maintenance including the consideration of irrigation systems, drought and salt-resistant species, ongoing performance of storm water treatment practices, snow storage, access to sun, proximity to buildings, paved surfaces and overhead utilities.

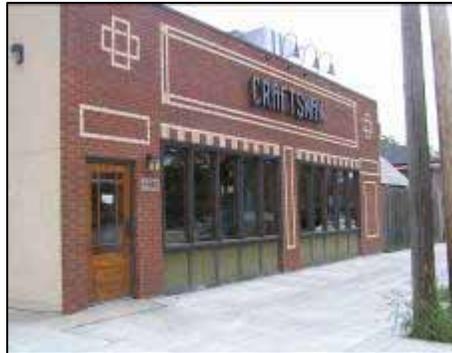


Example of landscaped median in a parking lot.

10.19.6 Green roofs, living walls, and porous pavement are encouraged but are not meant to be a substitute for ground-level landscaping of sites as landscaping provides both a natural amenity and aesthetic beauty to the urban landscape.

10.19.7 Boulevard landscaping and improvements, in accordance with applicable city polices, are encouraged.

Signs



Example of signage that is appropriate to the scale and style of buildings.

Sign design needs to balance the desire to convey information with a need to maintain visual aesthetics so that signage is not intrusive. The scale of signage should be geared towards the pedestrian and less to the automobile. Unique signage that incorporates unusual materials or designs is encouraged.

Policy 10.20: Promote an attractive environment by minimizing visual clutter and confusion caused by a proliferation of signage.

10.20.1 Location, size, height and spacing of off-premise advertising signs and billboards shall be regulated to minimize their visual blighting effects.

10.20.2 Master sign plans shall be submitted for multi-tenant buildings to ensure a complementary relationship between signage and the architecture of a building.

10.20.3 Develop incentives for exceptional sign design and style, including a special review process to ensure appropriate location, size, height and compatible design to the architecture of the building and other signage.

10.20.4 Develop a consistent, city-wide wayfinding signage design and maintenance plan for neighborhoods, trails, etc.

Policy 10.21: Unique areas and neighborhoods within the city should have a special set of sign standards to allow for effective signage appropriate to the planned character of each area/neighborhood.

10.21.1 Supporting the regional draw of Downtown entertainment areas, larger scale signage shall be allowed in appropriate places (such as the Hennepin Avenue Downtown Entertainment Area and Nicollet Mall Overlay District).

10.21.2 To promote street life and activity, signs should be located and sized to be viewed by people on foot (not vehicles) in order to preserve and encourage the pedestrian character of commercial areas that have traditional urban form.

10.21.3 Encourage effective signage that is appropriate to the character of the city's historic districts and landmarks, and preserves the integrity of historic structures.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Principles

The four elements of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) are: natural surveillance and visibility; lighting; territorial reinforcement and space delineation, and natural access control. The City of Minneapolis requires all new development to be designed using CPTED principles. This includes development projects that are both publicly and privately owned as well as those that impact the public realm such as open spaces and parks.

CPTED orients buildings, entrances, and circulation or movement patterns to the street to function as “eyes” that watch over street activity. The success in this approach often lies in the kind of activity that looks out over the street. For example, small scale neighborhood commercial uses located up to the sidewalk provide the most vigilant and alert security force available; owners have a vested interest in watching over their immediate surroundings. The daily presence of a manager or owner brings the stability and security of commercial activity to a neighborhood. Stores or services can turn isolated areas into hubs for local neighborhood residents.

Features of CPTED building design include incorporating lighting strategically into site and structure design, providing unobstructed views across the property and to and from the public realm, and unobstructed windows for visual surveillance. Expanses of blank walls are avoided and parking is placed behind the building, so as not separate the building from the street.



CPTED in open spaces and parks—the picture on the left exhibits characteristics of a CPTED site. There are clear sight lines, eyes on the street from nearby residences and fencing to secure the area from adjacent uses. The picture on the right (courtesy of the Metropolitan Design Center) illustrates conditions considered unsafe according to CPTED guidelines: poor lighting, hiding spots and isolation.



CPTED in commercial and residential areas—Factors that enhance safety include activity on the street and pedestrian-friendly environments, signage and access to help. As shown in the picture on the left conditions that contribute to unsafe places include poor lighting and isolation.

Policy 10.22: 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.

10.22.1 Integrate “eyes on the street” into building design through the use of windows to foster safer and more successful commercial areas in the city.

10.22.2 Orient new housing to the street to foster safe neighborhoods.

10.22.3 Design the site, landscaping, and buildings to promote natural observation and maximize the opportunities for people to observe adjacent spaces and public sidewalks.

10.22.4 Provide on-site lighting at all building entrances and along walkways that maintains a minimum acceptable level of security while not creating glare or excessive lighting of the site.

- 10.22.5 Locate landscaping, sidewalks, lighting, fencing and building features to clearly guide pedestrian movement on or through the site and to control and restrict people to appropriate locations.
- 10.22.6 Use innovative building designs and landscaping to limit or eliminate the opportunity for graffiti tagging.
- 10.22.7 Locate entrances, exits, signs, fencing, landscaping, and lighting to distinguish between public and private areas, control access, and to guide people coming to and going from the site.

Minneapolis, Winter City

Minneapolis, as a winter city, can use urban design to make winter into a community asset. Showcasing year-round livability and vibrancy is important for community health, sustainability and economic vitality. Urban design can be utilized to celebrate the winter months. By paying attention to patterns of wind and sunshine, buildings and public spaces can invite year-round activity, extending the seasons for things like public markets or concerts in public plazas. Some cities clear snow from sidewalks and bike lanes before clearing streets as a means of encouraging active lifestyles and for getting people out of their cars. Lighting is an effective means of creating ambience and framing a streetscape or business district that invites activity through the dark months of winter.



This picture illustrates a number of aspects of urban design in a winter city: lighting to create ambience and visual interest, and building design. Lighting on bridges creates visual interest. Note the Federal Reserve Bank on the right, that takes advantage of sun patterns and minimizes the effects of blustering winter winds with curved building faces.

One climate-sensitive design principle is preserving solar access so that pedestrian spaces remain sunny, even when the sun is at its lowest by locating taller buildings on the north side of streets or stepping them down to reduce shaded areas. A second climate-sensitive design principle is providing shelter from the wind; tall, isolated buildings increase wind speed at ground level. By stepping down buildings and

grouping them with others of similar heights, effects of winter winds are minimized. In addition, south-facing setbacks are opportunities for pocket parks that provide comfortable seating. Streetscaping, screens and buffers, as well as vegetation can also provide wind barriers. Appropriate colors, materials and lighting are climate-sensitive design considerations that can enhance winter living. Color can be introduced with plantings or temporary features such as banners, as well as through materials like colored cement and construction materials, street lighting and public art.

Policy 10.23 Promote climate-sensitive design principles to make the winter environment safe, comfortable and enjoyable.

- 10.23.1 Consider solar access, shelter from wind and snow storage and removal in site design.
- 10.23.2 Locate pedestrian places on the sunny sides of streets and buildings to shelter from the wind and utilize the sun's warmth.
- 10.23.3 Consider building context, placement, and height to manage wind speeds.
- 10.23.4 Encourage snow removal and storage practices that promote pedestrian and bicycle activity and safety.
- 10.23.5 Utilize pedestrian lighting, seasonal lighting, and furniture to increase comfort and safety so that streets become places for people.
- 10.23.6 Encourage street tree plantings to reduce wind speed and provide separation between pedestrians and cars.
- 10.23.7 Consider topography and site grading so that snowmelt is directed away from roads and pedestrian areas to avoid icy conditions and from basements to avoid snowmelt infiltration.
- 10.23.8 Develop guidance that encourages climate-sensitive design for residential and commercial buildings, parking lots, and open spaces and parks.



By installing gas heaters and wind screens, business owners can extend their outdoor seasons, and residents and visitors can enjoy the cool, crisp fresh air during a Minneapolis winter.



Wider sidewalks, like those pictured on Nicollet Mall consider pedestrian movement as well as snow storage. Effective and efficient snow removal encourages pedestrian activity, and promotes safety for bicyclists and motorists.



Encourage outdoor activity with special events that draw participants and spectators.

Rivers, Lakes and Natural Features

Minneapolis (meaning “city of waters”) got its name from the abundance of creeks, rivers, lakes, ponds and wetlands found within its boundaries. Since the city’s first settlement and the work of the original parks designers, the lakes and creeks in particular proved to be important identifying features for the city.

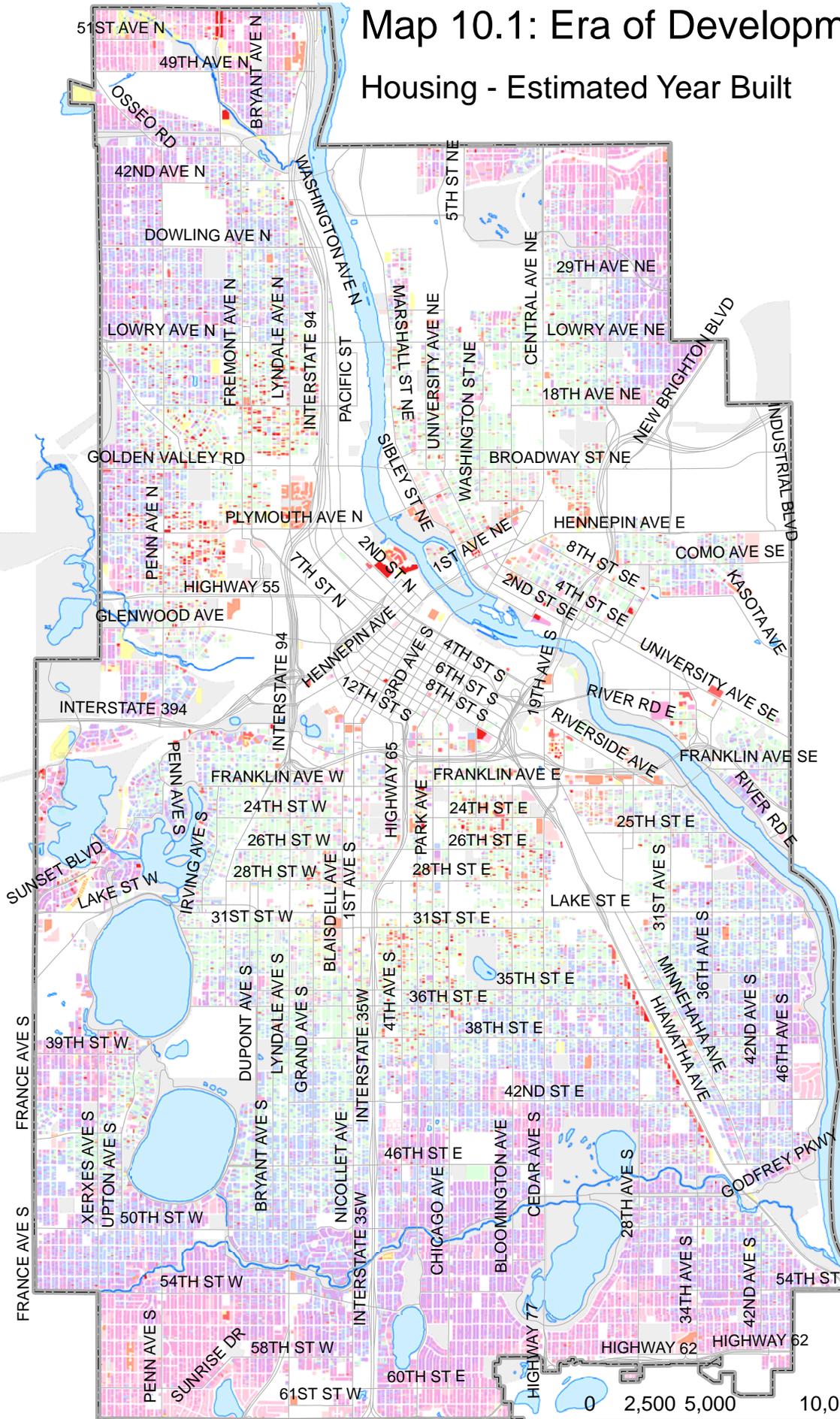
The Mississippi River connects the entire city from Camden in the north to the Nokomis and Longfellow communities at Minnehaha Falls. It is playing a changing role in shaping the city’s identity as the main modes of transportation and economic growth have shifted from river travel to freeway travel. Access to the river and its recreational uses varies considerably, based primarily on historic patterns of urban development. Planning and redevelopment activities along the river are also framed in the context of required planning, through the [Mississippi River Critical Area Plan](#) and are further enhanced by Minneapolis’ participation in other multi-jurisdictional planning activities, such as the National Parks Service’s Mississippi National River and Recreation Area Comprehensive Management Plan.

Policy 10.24: Preserve the natural ecology and the historical features that define Minneapolis’ unique identity in the region.

- 10.24.1 Incorporate natural features and historic sites into planning and development in order to link the city with the river, the lakes and creeks.
- 10.24.2 Continue to revitalize the Central Riverfront and Upper River area as a residential, recreational, cultural and entertainment district.
- 10.24.3 Increase public access to, along and across the river in the form of parks, cyclist/pedestrian bridges, greenways, sidewalks and trails.
- 10.24.4 Ensure that future riverfront development will be consistent with the city’s Mississippi River Critical Area Plan.
- 10.24.5 Improve land use aesthetics along the river.
- 10.24.6 Develop new housing near amenities located along the riverfront, lakes and creeks.
- 10.24.7 Complete the North Mississippi regional parks system and its connections to North Metro communities.

Map 10.1: Era of Development

Housing - Estimated Year Built



Legend

- Major Roads
- City Boundary
- Housing Year Built**
- 1-4 Unit Residential**
- Pre 1889
- 1890 - 1899
- 1900 - 1916
- 1917 - 1927
- 1928 - 1944
- 1945 - 1954
- 1955 - 1967
- 1968 - 1976
- 1977 - 1989
- 1990 - 1999
- 2000 - 2004
- Water
- Parks

Source:
City of
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