



# ACTIVE COMMUNITY PLANNING: SITE PLANNING GUIDE

AIR QUALITY



SAFETY



CONNECTIVITY



SITE DESIGN



MIXED-USE



WATER QUALITY



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## Goal

The purpose of this guide is show property owners and developers how to prepare plans that incorporate the following Active Community Planning principles into plans for development in the City. By incorporating changes to site plans prior to the approvals stage of a project's timeline, Eden Prairie believes it can achieve healthier neighborhoods and districts across the City.

## Guide Contents

The following six topics are explained in this guide as they are considered the foundation of Eden Prairie's approach to Active Community Planning.

1. Destinations and Land Use Mix
2. Open Space Locations
3. Pathways and Accessibility
4. Air Quality
5. Water Quality
6. Physical Safety and Mobility

Each of the six topics provides an overview discussion of the City's policy objectives. Guidelines establish the City's specific expectations. Within each of the topic areas, a checklist describes key questions that developers and designers should consider in preparing site plan submissions so that projects meet the City's policy objectives and satisfy the guidelines.

## What is Active Community Planning?

Active Community Planning is the result of work done by Design for Health, a collaboration of the University of Minnesota and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota and the City of Eden Prairie to develop policies and initiatives to improve physical and mental health through better land use planning and site design. To learn more about this topic review the references at the end of this guide.

## Active Community Planning Guide Contents

The guidebook is organized into the following sections:

- Health Standards for Development Plans
- Destinations and Land Use Mix
- Open Space Locations
- Air Quality
- Water Quality
- Physical Safety and Mobility
- References



# Proximity to Destinations, Land Use Mix, and Site Design

The physical proximity of daily destinations, the mix of land use types and site design that supports non-motorized traffic all promote pedestrian activity. Each of these three aspects contributes to pedestrian friendly neighborhoods and districts that foster active transportation choices.

When physical safety, site accessibility and visual interest at the street level are provided; people will walk  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  of a mile to daily destinations such as home, work, limited shopping and entertainment. Land use location decisions that capitalize on this proximity and connecting pathways within walking distance of homes or employment centers will encourage people to walk for a portion of their daily trips.

Land use mix occurs when a variety of residential, workplace and retail uses are found in close proximity to each other. Mixed uses are most successful when the various types of activity complement each other and allow people the opportunity to combine trips to meet multiple needs. Reducing the overall number of trips and increasing the density of residential, employment or commercial activity supports ‘people on the streets,’ a vibrant district character, that reinforces the physical and social appeal of these places.

While the type and mix of activity proposed for a specific redevelopment project may vary widely, there are a series of guidelines that address how a site is organized. Finer planning details are important, such as how the buildings relate to the streets, facades articulation, entrance orientation and scale, parking lots or structures, landscape features, and general circulation have a direct impact on the pedestrian experience. These details are needed to reinforce a human-scaled environment and support pedestrian or bicycle travel.

Development sites within  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile of current or proposed LRT stations should be planned with the idea that people will be arriving from and departing to the LRT station, and therefore should be focusing site design on pedestrian-oriented, higher density, mixed use buildings with shared and efficient parking structures. Plans should also consider other destinations within this LRT radius and provide direct routes to them as station areas contain the highest level of pedestrian activity and therefore require the most complete network of sidewalks and pathways.



Residential uses above retail creates an opportunity to reduce daily car trips

High visibility into ground floor

Outdoor dining provided next to restaurant

## Guidelines:

- Sites within  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile to a current or future transit station should provide direct pathway connections.
- Proposed residential areas within  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile to a current or future transit station should have at least 4-7 units per acre to support transit.
- Sites within  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile to the nearest park or open space should provide direct pathway connections.
- Site within  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile to community activity centers, such as the Eden Prairie Center, libraries, schools, parks, etc. should provide direct pathway connections.
- Projects should complement the adjacent mix of uses.

## Checklist

- ☐ Are there clear paths to prominent buildings, public areas, and other likely destinations?
- ☐ How does the project enhance surrounding land use diversity?
- ☐ Does the plan enhance the street connectivity?
- ☐ Does the site design enhance or frame focal points and view corridors?
- ☐ Does the plan include mixed uses?

Plazas enhance main entryways

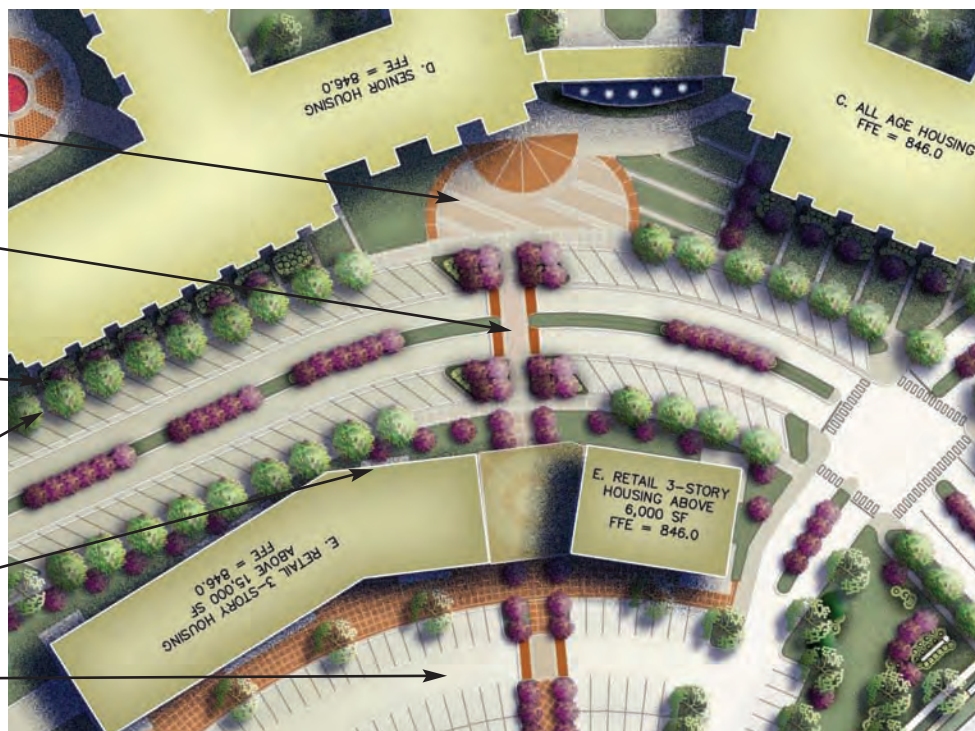
Pedestrian connections are provided to break up longer blocks

Sidewalks are provided along the street

Trees provide shade and shelter along sidewalks

Buildings front side

Parking is to the rear of buildings





## Open Space Locations

Community gathering places can be publicly accessible or private, providing a space for people to meet, interact, or relax. Open space must be easily accessible for walkers and bikers and plans need to incorporate safe, direct, convenient, and visually attractive access separate from parking lots and drive aisles. Open space should contain water features, public art, and seating areas with sunny, shaded, and wind protected locations.



Open space should be easily accessible on foot and visible at prominent locations.



Open spaces should be designed for use by a diverse population.



## Guidelines:

- Open space should be near a center of pedestrian activity.
- There should be active building uses throughout the day adjacent to open spaces.
- Open spaces in mixed-use and commercial areas should be located near primary building entrances and accessible by the public from a sidewalk or public open space.
- Open spaces should be designed for use by young and old.
- Shop windows and interior activity should be visible from public areas.
- Street frontage should be primarily buildings, not parking.
- Buildings should be located adjacent to the public streets and parking lots should be located to the rear or side of buildings.
- Primary entrances of non-residential buildings should face a public sidewalk or open space.
- Building facades should create an attractive pedestrian environment as a result of building scale, orientation, and entrance spacing.

## Checklist

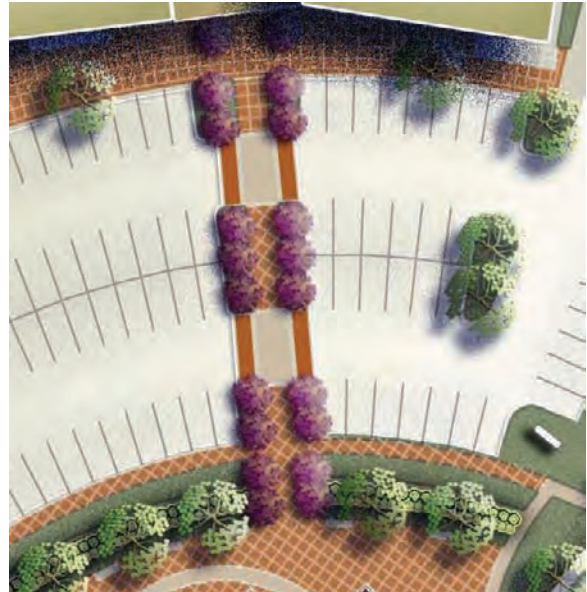
- ☐ Does proposed open space include shaded areas?
- ☐ Does proposed open space differentiate itself from the current supply of parks and open space, in terms of use and program?
- ☐ Do larger residential areas include recreational open space or special trail connections?
- ☐ Are there public art elements, water features, and/or landscaping proposed for pocket parks?
- ☐ Are outdoor eating areas provided adjacent to proposed restaurants?
- ☐ Are there easily accessible bike racks or storage provided near main building entrances?
- ☐ Are wayfinding signs provided in high activity areas?
- ☐ Are trash bins provided near building entrances?
- ☐ Are street trees and other plantings provided for pedestrian comfort?



# Pathways and Accessibility

People need direct, accessible, and convenient pathways to destinations that satisfy their daily recreation and transportation needs. Development plans should encourage walking and biking by with connections to city-wide sidewalks and trails system, home, shopping, work, open space, and recreation areas.

Sidewalks should be designed for pedestrian traffic, and trails or paths should accommodate other non-motorized travel. In most situations both types of facilities are desired to improve safety and create a comfortable environment for all users.



Pathways with special treatments including pavers and trees should connect buildings and destinations across parking lots.



Pathways should connect neighborhoods to common destinations, such as bus stops and community activity centers.



## Guidelines:

- Make connections to existing pedestrian and bicycle pathways and trails.
- Sidewalks should be provided adjacent to roadways.
- Projects should maintain continuous routes to planned or current transit stations.
- There should be direct connections from building entrances to sidewalks.
- Sidewalks and pathways should be made from high quality, durable materials.
- Trees should be provided to make a canopy over sidewalks and paths.
- Curb cuts (driveways) should be combined to limit disruptions to sidewalks and pathways.
- Accessibility ramps should be provided at intersections.
- Provide a landscaped boulevard in the area between streets and sidewalks.
- Plans should include pedestrian amenities for walkable mixed-use housing areas, including transit access, shuttle services, street crosswalks, medians, overpasses, timed traffic lights, and benches.

## Checklist

- ☐ Do pathways take in to account the directions and destinations from which pedestrians and cyclists will arrive?
- ☐ Are there any obstructions to pedestrian or bicycle throughways?
- ☐ Are paths, trails and walkways designed to promote all-season use by walkers and cyclists?
- ☐ Do pathways and trails accommodate a variety of age groups and fitness levels?
- ☐ Are benches provided at gathering areas and at regular intervals for projects housing elderly populations?
- ☐ Is on street parking provided to buffer pedestrians from traffic?



Pathways provided along retail storefronts as well as to central gathering areas

## Air Quality

Better air quality means better individual health and community-wide physical activity. Air quality can be improved by promoting the use of alternative forms of transportation to reduce emissions and planting trees near major roadways. The average person is willing to walk up to  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile to a transit station. All sites within a half mile of the proposed LRT stations should be planned with the idea that people will be arriving from and departing to the LRT station. Plans should focus on pedestrian pathways, higher density, mixed use development, and shared and reduced parking requirements. Plans should include shade trees adjacent to all public roads, sidewalks and trails.



Regularly spaced trees lining streets help improve air quality.



Shade trees along sidewalk provide relief from the sun, protection from passing cars and help to improve air quality.



## Guidelines:

- Plans should include trees, plants and shrubs within outdoor gathering areas.
- Plans should include trees along sidewalks and trails that will provide at least a 50% shade canopy.
- Plans should include pathways to light rail stations and bus stops and accommodations and amenities for transit users.

## Checklist

- ☐ Does the plan include street tree varieties with adequate canopies?
- ☐ Does the plan include provisions for tree preservation and replacement?
- ☐ Does the plan include details about plant locations, and species?
- ☐ Are current and future transit locations accounted for in the plan?

Pedestrian oriented lighting

Planted edge reduces runoff

Textured sidewalk produces visual interest



# Water Quality

Access to clean drinking water and the ability to use streams, lakes and rivers for recreational purposes (swimming or fishing) are the primary goals of managing water quality in redevelopment conditions. In support of these goals, the City will continue to implement its Local Water Management Plan (2004) and also adopt policies and plans of Nine Mile Creek, Riley/Purgatory Creek, and Lower Minnesota River Valley Watershed Districts.

Efforts at improving water quality at the site development level are grouped into two main categories:

- a) reducing runoff volume (by using more pervious surfaces in construction); and
- b) reducing contamination (sediment, litter, road salt, motor oil, pet or livestock waster, other toxic particulates) from existing and future development.



Permeable paving reduces runoff and filters stormwater.



Filtration ponds and rain gardens should be designed as community amenities.



## Guidelines:

- Plans should limit disruption to and pollution of water quality by managing stormwater runoff.
- Plans should limit disruption to water quality by reducing impervious cover, increasing on-site infiltration, reducing or eliminating pollution from stormwater runoff, and eliminating contaminants.

## Checklist

- ☐ Does the plan contain design details of infiltration basins and rain water gardens?
- ☐ Does the plan include plant species for infiltration basins and rain water gardens?
- ☐ Does the plan include erosion control?
- ☐ Does the plan contain design details including performance standards of pavers, or other materials that allow for water infiltration?



Stormwater retention elements such as this treat water on site and provide a pedestrian amenity.

# Physical Safety and Mobility

Recognizing the role of the automobile in shaping the design of current development, the emphasis of Active Community Planning site layout is to support non-motorized travel and safety. In order to balance the attractiveness and benefits of moving around on foot or by bike, basic safety standards must be exceeded. Creating a comfortable, attractive environment for these populations is expected.

Pedestrian scale lighting and universal design principles that ensure sidewalks, trails and sites are easily navigated by people of all ages and abilities are baseline thresholds for achieving safety and mobility.



Attractive pedestrian oriented lighting helps to create a safe environment.



Pedestrian crossings are indicated with enhanced design and materials

Bulb-outs at corners shorten crossing distance and enhance pedestrian safety

Street trees and on street parking provide a buffer between pedestrian and traffic



## Guidelines:

- Lighting along pathways and in open space should be adequate to see another pedestrian from ½ mile away.
- Proposed streets should have speed limits 35 mph or less.
- Key pedestrian crossings should be clearly indicated with materials, design, and lighting.
- There should be pedestrian refuges on street medians for wider streets.
- Bulb-outs at intersections should be provided to aid in safe pedestrian crossing.

## Checklist

- ☐ Is there pedestrian lighting along sidewalks and pathways?
- ☐ Are there active and visible ground floor uses to provide “eyes on the street”?
- ☐ Are there clear sightlines at driveways for both pedestrians and drivers?
- ☐ Does the plan provide for adequate light of trails and sidewalks?
- ☐ Does the plan separate pedestrian and vehicle traffic?

Pedestrian crossings are indicated with enhanced design and materials

Site design provides clear paths to destinations



Streets are narrow to provide shorter crossing distance for pedestrians

# References for Additional Information

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