



# 02. COMMUNITY DIRECTION

The Comprehensive Plan embodies the ideas and vision of the community. In order to be reflective of the community, every effort was made to make the planning process equitable, participatory and transparent. The Community Direction Chapter summarizes the public engagement activities that occurred throughout the planning process and the key findings. This chapter also highlights past plans and studies that helped inform the update.



## Richfield, The Urban Hometown

"The Urban Hometown, is a community that reflects the characteristics of living in a close-knit community, while surrounded by the amenities and resources of a broader metropolitan area. The urban hometown feeling is rooted in the personal connections cultivated within our neighborhoods, parks, schools and streets. These connections are reinforced by quality housing, local commercial centers, recreational opportunities, and the cultural diversity found within our city. Our proximity to the Twin Cities only serves to expand the opportunities available to our residents, providing the best of both small town living and urban life. Our goal is to embrace these characteristics, and take steps to maintain and enhance the culture and community that makes us an urban hometown."

## THE PLANNING PROCESS

The overall planning process was guided by a Comprehensive Planning Advisory Committee (CPAC). The CPAC was appointed by City Council and was comprised of 14 residents with varying backgrounds. Each committee member served as a "champion" of the process by promoting the public engagement activities and recommending changes to the Comprehensive Plan.

## The Public Engagement Process

Every effort was made to make the planning and public engagement processes accessible to all Richfield residents. A larger part of this effort was directed at reaching underrepresented populations. This was achieved by targeting public engagement activities in specific parts of the community. For example, pop-up events were held at transit stops, Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), and at a charity (Loaves and Fishes) providing free and healthy meals. Materials were translated into Spanish and a Spanish translator was on hand at all scheduled events.

Overall, the public outreach efforts included a series of pop-up events, open houses and online engagement. The public engagement process was broken into several phases and documented in a series of Community Briefs and documents (see Appendix B). The first phase occurred over a three-month period between April and June of 2017. This phase included pop-up events and online engagement tools. This phase served as an opportunity to "Listen" and "Discover" the community's issues and needs. The second phase occurred in September of 2017, and included an open house event to showcase draft elements of the plan (e.g., goal statements and concept ideas). The purpose of the

open house was to allow staff to directly present ideas to residents and to allow the public to openly discuss ideas pertaining to the Comprehensive Plan. The final phase occurred in March and gave residents an opportunity to review the draft plan prior to adoption.



*2040 Comprehensive Plan Open House*



*2040 Comprehensive Plan Pop Up Events*

## Key Themes

Key themes emerged throughout the public engagement activities. These themes provided the CPAC direction for updating various elements of the Comprehensive Plan. However, these themes were not always easy to distinguish by topic. For example, the community was split on various topics related to housing, density and community character. This led to the question of what the term “Urban Hometown” means to the community. Using public input, the CPAC defined the term “Urban Hometown (see sidebar - page 12).” This definition is used as a vision statement and informs the Goals and Policies that are presented in Chapter 4.

The following section highlights some of the key themes discovered throughout the public engagement activities.

### *Urban vs. Suburban*

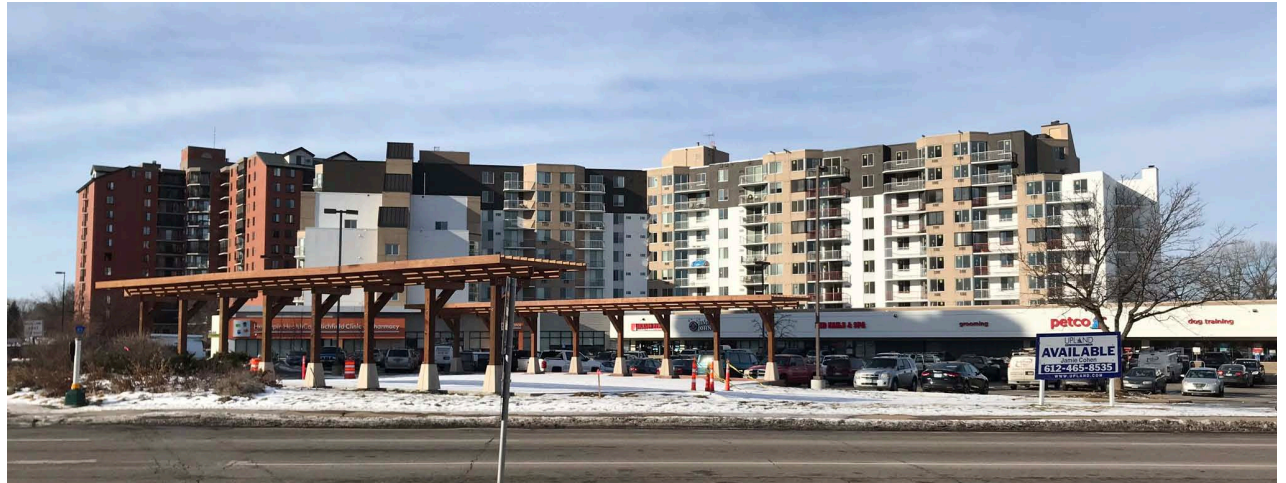
Responses showed a divide between residents who see Richfield as an urban extension of South Minneapolis and those that view the community as more suburban and, in some respects, a bedroom community. Most respondents valued Richfield’s proximity and convenient access to the airport, Mall of America and downtown Minneapolis. Many praised the fact that Richfield feels more suburban, but offers the urban benefits of a larger city.

### *Higher Density vs. Lower Density*

Some participants favored higher density residential and commercial development patterns, leaning more towards an urban footprint for Richfield. Others view Richfield as a primarily single family residential community, and feel that it should remain this way in the future. Most expressed the need to preserve and maintain the existing housing stock.

### *Affordable Housing Needed vs. Too Much*

Affordable housing was noted as one of the community’s biggest concerns. The reason for this concern was



split, with some participants indicating that there is too much affordable housing and others calling for more. Participants’ definitions of affordable housing ranged from single-family homes for first time home buyers to poorly maintained apartment buildings. Overall, residents value the affordable options that exist today.

### *Redevelopment*

There is a strong desire to see investments made on the east side of town. Comments focused on redevelopment efforts along 66th Street (east of Nicollet Avenue), including enhancing the aesthetics along the corridor. Responses related to the west-side of the community (west of Lyndale Avenue) focused on the need for beautification efforts along Penn Avenue as well as improved traffic and pedestrian safety in the area.

Larger redevelopment concern focused on the Lyndale Avenue/Nicollet Avenue Area (also known as the HUB). Many responses focused on the need to redevelop the area and provide better aesthetics. Some responses were directed at the need to attract and provide more diverse shopping options. However, it is important to note that underrepresented populations (e.g., low income, transit riders, and non-white residents) and many seniors value

the HUB’s existing businesses (e.g., pharmacy and grocery store) and its proximity to transit. Various redevelopment concepts were presented to the public. Participants preferred a redevelopment scenario that included more commercial uses with some residential in a mixed use format. This concept is further discussed on page 19.

### *Valued Characteristics*

Respondents valued several things about Richfield. Common words used to describe the City included “diverse,” “friendly,” “proximity,” “small town,” “nice,” and “quiet.” These types of words were used to help define the term “Urban Hometown.”

### *Valued Amenities*

Responses showed that residents value the parks in the community. Woodlake Nature Center, Augsburg Park, and Veterans Park emerged as some of the highest valued amenities. The diversity of Richfield was also noted and highly regarded as a valued amenity for the community.

Desired community amenities include a dog park, better bike connections, and the beautification of commercial corridors, such as 66th Street and Penn Avenue.

## Past Planning Efforts

Long range planning is part of Richfield's core activities. Past planning efforts have ranged from sub area studies, housing plans, and corridor studies. These efforts provide greater detail and insight on topics that may not be typically addressed or discussed in length within a comprehensive plan. Therefore, it is critical to recognize some of these past planning efforts as they provide additional guidance and community direction.

## 2008 Comprehensive Plan

Most of the content from the 2008 Comprehensive Plan is still applicable and reflects the community's direction for the future. In that respect, the 2018 Comprehensive Plan is primarily an update of the 2008 Plan. Major revisions to the plan reflect regional policy changes (e.g., Thrive 2040) and slight modifications to the planned land use categories (see Chapter 5). The update also recognizes the community priorities that were identified as part of the 2008 public engagement activities. These priorities still hold true today based on recent community input. These priorities are discussed to some degree throughout the various chapters and include:

- » Neighborhood Stabilization and Revitalization Needs
- » Developing Complete Streets
- » Establishing a Connected Trail Network
- » Define Differing Scales of Commercial Development
- » Targeting Redevelopment in Key Parts of the City
- » Expanding Business Opportunities

## Lakes at Lyndale Master Plan

The Lakes at Lyndale area is generally regarded as Richfield's downtown (see Figure 2-1). The area serves as the center of commerce in the community and it contains one of Richfield and the region's most important park

facilities, the Wood Lake Nature Center. It is also the home of Richfield Lake, a body of water that had been largely neglected over the years, but has been the focus of redevelopment efforts as of late.

The Lakes at Lyndale Master Plan was designed to create new housing opportunities, upgrade commercial and retail properties and provide enhanced recreational opportunities around Richfield Lake. Although the master plan covered a broad area, the starting point for change was the centrally located intersection of 66th Street and Lyndale Avenue. New construction on the southwest and southeast corners of the intersection created a signature corner in the community. Smaller scale aging one-story retail was replaced by new buildings offering new housing choices, medical services, convenience services.

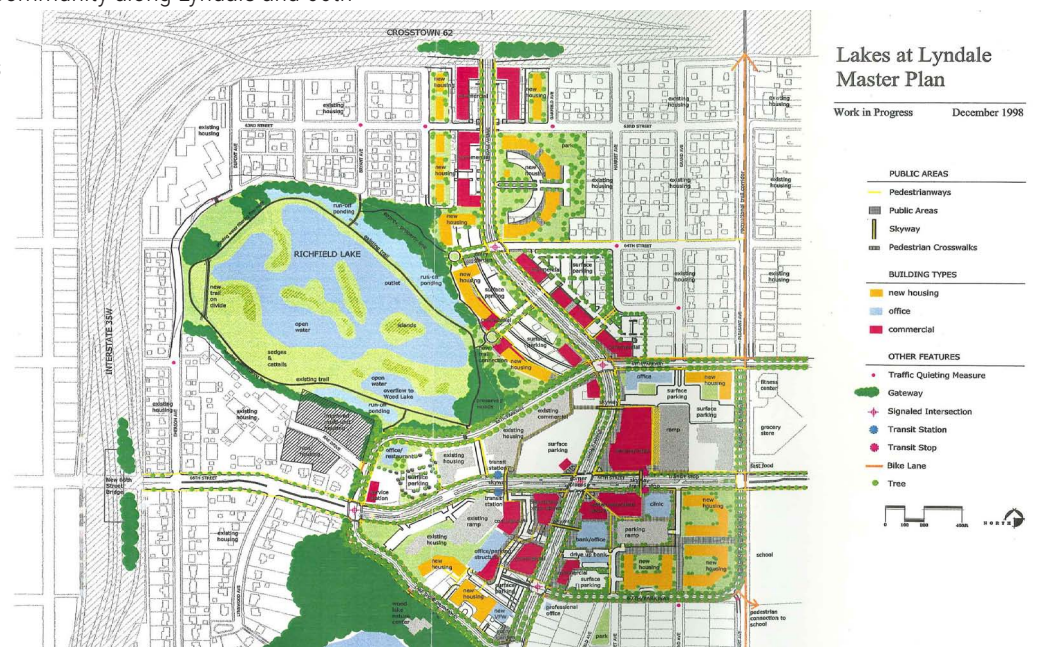
Much work has been done to develop the area in recent years. New projects include the Lakewinds Food Co-op, Lyndale Plaza along 64th Street, Lyndale Station between 65th Street and 66th Street, as well as renovations to Village Shores Senior Community along Lyndale and 66th St. These projects have helped to fill gaps within this crucial node at the heart of the city and were built in such a way as to serve as an attractive gateway to the community, provide a distinctive character and identity to the area, and encourage business investment and increased housing choice for Richfield.

## Cedar Avenue Corridor

Cedar Avenue defines the eastern boundary of Richfield. Land uses along the roadway corridor, all of which face the Minneapolis St. Paul International Airport, include a mix of single-family homes, apartments and several freestanding businesses. In 2004, the City completed a redevelopment master plan (see Figure 2-2.) for the Cedar Avenue Corridor area. The plan, whose focus was primarily from 72nd Street north to the Crosstown, called for a mixture of multi-family housing, office and retail development. Much of the area encompassed in the plan was impacted by noise generated from a new north/south runway built at the adjacent airport.

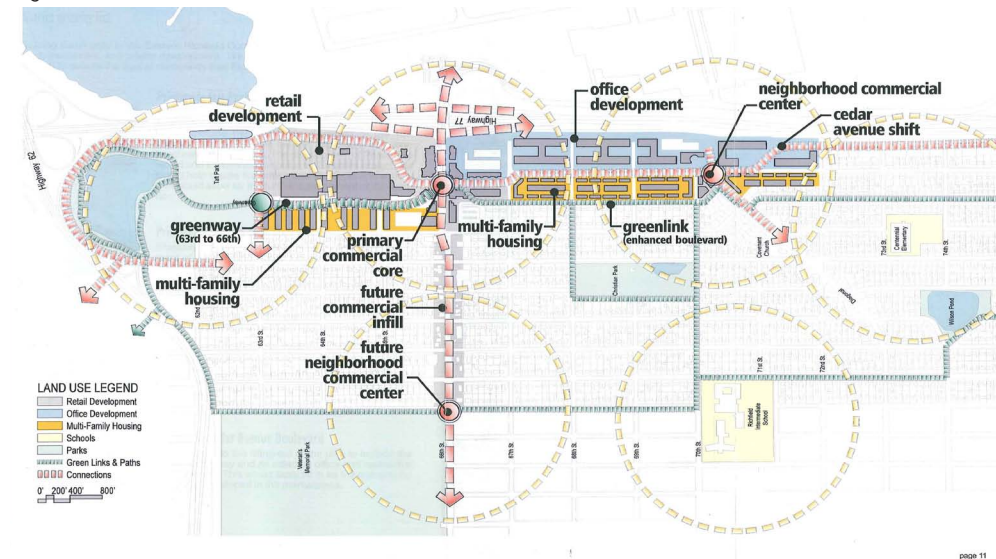
In 2007, a new retail development opened on 66th Street, just west of Cedar Avenue. This development is looked at as being the first phase of more extensive redevelopment in the area. It includes two large format retail stores and several smaller pad retail sites. A new round-about, the first built in Richfield is part of this development at 66th Street.

Figure 2-1. Lakes at Lyndale Master Plan



Since the 2008 Comprehensive Plan, development in the corridor has continued. In 2014, 17th Avenue between 63rd and 65th Streets was reconstructed to become a “complete street,” now known as Richfield Parkway. An update to the redevelopment master plan was undertaken in 2016. This update describes how the corridor has changed in recent years. It outlines development goals for the corridor, focusing on housing diversity and affordability and mixed-use development patterns, as well as extending Richfield Parkway and capitalizing on its importance as a community asset and transitional land use element. On September 27, 2016 the City Council approved the Cedar Avenue Corridor Master Plan Update and adopted a resolution to amend the Comprehensive Plan accordingly. The Comprehensive Plan amendment was approved by the Metropolitan Council on January 25, 2017. Since that time, new commercial development has been built at the intersection of 66th Street and Richfield Parkway and additional commercial and multi-family housing approved. The first extension of Richfield Parkway, from 66th to 68th Street, will be constructed in 2018, alongside the new multi-family project.

Figure 2-2. Cedar Avenue Corridor



## Penn Avenue

In 2008, the City of Richfield completed a revitalization master plan (see Figure 2-3) for the Penn Avenue corridor between 68th Street and Highway 62. This area was one of the few remaining commercial nodes in the community without a clear vision. The purpose of the Penn Avenue Revitalization Master Plan is to establish a 20-year vision for change in the corridor including:

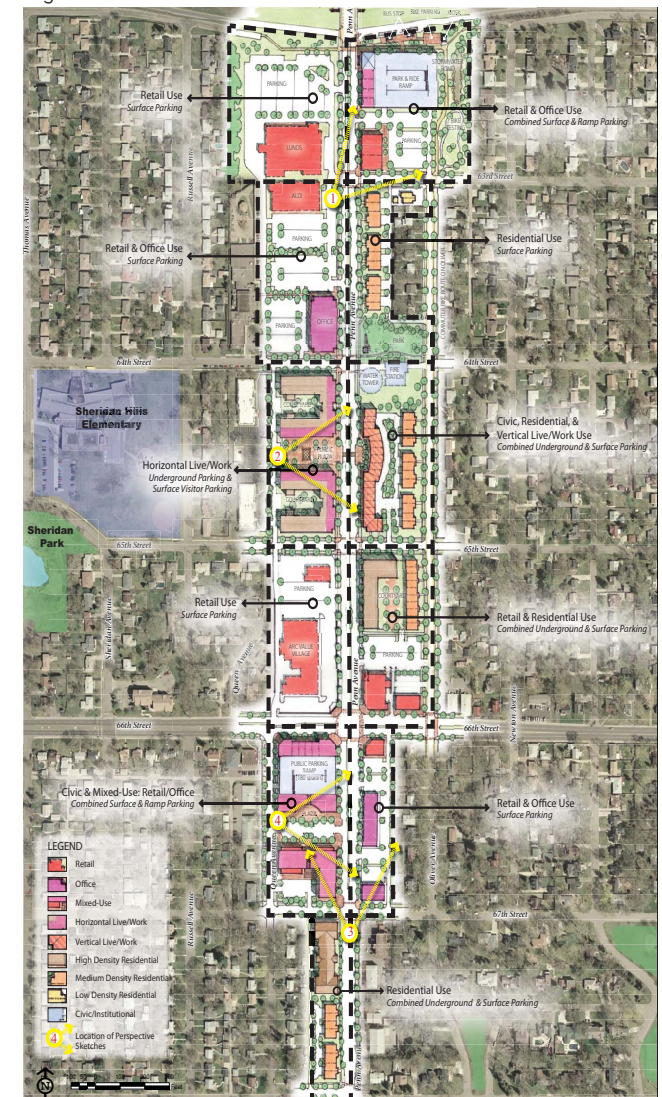
- » Establish tools to guide future public and private investments.
- » Establish a distinctive identity.
- » Maintain respect for the physical and social environment.

Accompanying the master plan for the Penn Avenue corridor are a set of design guidelines. These guidelines focus on how Richfield and businesses can develop the corridor using carefully determined categories of street and building frontage types. Street types range from something as small as an alley to a fully developed mixed-use corridor with space for vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic. The

frontage types are further defined by how they are designed to interact with an adjacent street type, which may include parking yards, porch yards, or commercial storefronts.

The purpose of these guidelines is to demonstrate how a street type and building frontage can create a safe and enjoyable environment for residents and pedestrians, while

Figure 2-3. Penn Avenue Corridor Master Plan



fostering economic prosperity. A design guideline matrix allows for a quick and easy comparison of these benefits allowing staff and local stakeholders to easily comprehend potential paths forward in the development of the corridor.

## 66th Street and Nicollet Avenue

### Market Analysis and Concepts

Historically, the land uses surrounding the 66th Street and Nicollet Avenue created a regional destination for shoppers. Since the early 1950's, this area has been anchored by the



*The HUB Shopping Center*

HUB Shopping Center, a 573,500 sq. ft. commercial and retail center. Over time, the HUB and surrounding area has seen a change in tenants and businesses. These land uses now serve the area more as a community destination. This shift from a regional to community destination is a result of changing markets, consumer habits, and more retail services locating along the Cedar Avenue and I-494 corridor. In that respect, a 2017 Market Analysis (see Appendix C) was prepared to help inform future land use decisions in the



area. Some findings from this study include:

- » The area will likely remain as a neighborhood oriented retail area. Due to the arrival of additional retail space along Cedar Avenue and other retail projects near the I-494 corridor, the area may never regain the retail dominance it had (in terms of size) in the 1950s and 1960s. Larger format retail uses (including junior boxes and bigger boxes) will likely continue to migrate to the I-494 and Cedar Avenue corridors.
- » Retail offerings in the area may be able to reposition to serve more upscale household types based on more "buying power" being brought into the community. The introduction of the Lakewinds Food Cooperative on Lyndale Avenue reflects this trend. Thus, the area may be able to offer more attractive eating and drinking establishments and unique retail shops. However, the area will continue to serve some everyday needs (for pharmacies, some groceries, and casual dining).
- » The local housing market in Richfield remains very strong and is changing to serve a higher income demographic. The area will likely be able to attract additional multi-family construction, as well as potentially townhomes or similar forms of attached housing.
- » The area could develop a relatively small amount of additional office space, geared to professional services and other local uses, as part of mixed-use development.
- » As part of the Comprehensive Plan's public engagement activities, residents provided input on the area.

In general, residents expressed concerns about the future of the area from a development perspective. Many responses focused on the aesthetics of the HUB area, current vacancies, and perceived safety concerns. Some responses were directed at the need to attract and provide more diverse shopping options in the area. However, as mentioned previously in this chapter, typically-underrepresented populations (e.g., lower income, transit riders, and non-white residents) and seniors in the immediate area value the HUB's existing businesses (e.g., pharmacy) and its proximity to transit.

### Plan Elements

Redeveloping the area may take decades to realize; however, the input received provides direction for a vision. This vision was interpreted through various redevelopment concepts and took into consideration various plan elements.

#### 1. Lifestyle Retail/Shopping Center

A lifestyle center is a shopping center or mixed-used commercial development that combines the traditional retail functions of a shopping mall with leisure amenities and landscaped park-like pedestrian areas. Lifestyle centers are often anchored by specialty stores, a collection of restaurants, or a movie theater. The HUB redevelopment concept calls for transforming the existing auto-oriented traditional shopping mall into a more pedestrian-friendly mixed-use district focused on the retail experience.

#### 2. Pedestrian-Friendly "Main Street"

At the heart of the HUB District, the redevelopment concept identifies a pedestrian-friendly "Main Street", oriented perpendicular to W. 66th Street. Main Street should be designed with the pedestrian in mind, providing traffic calming measures such as narrow traffic lanes, on-street parking, street trees, street-oriented architecture, wayfinding

and signage, pedestrian-scaled lighting and site furnishings. The Main Street should be seen as an opportunity to get people out of their cars and onto the sidewalks, and provide a strong sense of place to the HUB District.

### 3. Placemaking Features/Public Art

The redevelopment concept identifies opportunities to incorporate placemaking features such as public art, particularly at the intersection of 66th Street and Nicollet Avenue. Placemaking can also be achieved through well-designed buildings and outdoor spaces that create a unique sense of identity within the district.

### 4. Outdoor Plaza Spaces

Outdoor plaza spaces for social gathering, seating and dining, and venues for public art and landscaping are key features of the redevelopment concept. The plan identifies opportunities for outdoor plazas at the intersection of 66th Street and Nicollet Avenue, and near potential restaurants.

### 5. Pedestrian & Bicycle Amenities

Pedestrian and bicycle amenities such as sidewalks, trails, pedestrian crossings, bike lanes, bike parking, pump stations and bike lockers can create a more vibrant outdoor environment for residents, employees and shoppers, as well as augment the public transportation facilities along 66th Street and Nicollet Avenue.

### 6. Street-Oriented Architecture

The redevelopment concept illustrates a development pattern of street-oriented architecture, where buildings face 66th Street, Nicollet Avenue and Main Street. Buildings that face the street and sidewalks create more friendly and interesting places for people to walk and shop.

Figure 2-4. 66th Street and Nicollet Avenue Concept



#### Precedent Examples



## 7. Reduction in Parking

Current parking supplies are based on an auto-centric, single-story retail and commercial environment at the HUB. The redevelopment concept identifies a broader mix of land uses developed in a more compact and vertical way, adjacent to public transportation facilities. These factors, coupled with the potential for shared parking supplies could lead to a reduction in parking needs per square foot of building development.

## 8. Development Scale (size) that Considers Adjacent Neighborhoods

It is important to consider the scale of future development at the HUB relative to the surrounding scale of neighborhood development. The scale of new development should be sensitive to the scale of existing development and provide transitions in scale where appropriate.

## Findings & Guiding Principles

The concepts were presented to the public and CPAC for input. Based on input, a preferred concept emerged (Figure 2-4). This concept embraces the plan elements above and depicts a mixed use format that includes commercial or retail uses (50%) with some form of residential (50%). The concept and plan elements can be further achieved through a set of guiding principles (see sidebar).

The guiding principles are intended to serve as a starting point for achieving a described vision and redevelopment concepts for the area. By leveraging these guiding principles, the City can evaluate potential development concepts and ideas for the area and help create an environment that represents an attractive destination for surrounding neighborhoods, and for all of Richfield.

## Guiding Principles (66th Street & Nicollet)

The HUB redevelopment concept and key plan elements can be further achieved through the following guiding principles:

- » **Building Uses:** A mix of building uses should be promoted in the HUB District with a focus on retail and/or entertainment uses. Where feasible and parking can be accommodated, either underground or within a structure, vertical mixing of building uses, with active ground level uses, is encouraged. Upper stories should be developed with residential, office, or service uses.
- » **Building Orientation:** Orientation of buildings toward 66th Street, Nicollet Avenue and Main Street is highly encouraged in order to create a more attractive, pedestrian-friendly, and vibrant streetscape environment within the HUB District. Buildings should be developed to front the street rights-of-way as much as possible, minimizing setbacks unless it's being done to provide plaza spaces in front of buildings for outdoor dining or landscaping.
- » **Building Scale and Character:** Building scale and character should be sensitive to the surrounding context of the built environment. If multi-story buildings are being proposed at the HUB, and adjacent buildings are single-story, then bulk reduction strategies should be considered to reduce negative impacts to neighboring development patterns. The character of proposed buildings should be attractive and complement surrounding building character.
- » **Parking Type and Configuration:** Surface parking facilities should be located behind or to the side of the primary structures they serve as much as possible to reduce the negative visual impacts of large areas of surface parking lots along roadways. Parking lots should be landscaped and well signed to orient visitors. Underground and structured parking supplies are encouraged in order to reduce the negative impacts of large parking lots within the development and to serve multi-story building development. Parking ramps should be screened or incorporate active ground level uses when facing primary roadways.
- » **Access and Circulation:** Provide a safe, convenient, attractive and well-designed circulation system that accommodates and encourages pedestrian and bicycle movement, and provides connectivity to all land uses and major destinations within the HUB district. Vehicular access and circulation should be clear, well organized, and functional without compromising the ability for pedestrians and bicyclists to move conveniently and safely throughout the district. Provide adequate sidewalks, trails and pedestrian-friendly streetscape elements to encourage walking within the area. Bikeways and bicycle parking should be provided to encourage bicycle transportation within, to and from the HUB District. Enhanced crosswalks at intersections that incorporate highly visible markings, lighting, signage, and countdown traffic signals are encouraged.

- » **Public Transportation:** Public transportation is currently provided along Nicollet Avenue and 66th Street. Bus dropoff and pickup facilities should be incorporated into any redevelopment of the district. Transit shelters, signage, and wayfinding should be included to enhance the transit user experience and encourage public transportation use. Bicycle parking should be provided at bus stops to encourage multi-modal transportation alternatives.
- » **Public Spaces:** Public spaces are an important element to the success of the redevelopment concept. Attractive and pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, plazas, and landscaped areas are encouraged. A well-designed public realm can serve to attract visitors, businesses and residents to the district. Public spaces should incorporate special paving, plantings, lighting, site furnishings, landscape structures, and focal elements such as public art and/or water features.
- » **Landscaping:** Street trees and landscaped planting areas are highly encouraged. Well-designed landscaping will enhance the pedestrian environment, improve air and water quality, reduce heat island effect, and strengthen the identity of the HUB District. Landscaped areas can also help to mitigate stormwater runoff by providing infiltration areas within the development. The use of low maintenance, native plant species, and plant materials that can withstand harsh urban environments is highly encouraged.
- » **Site Furnishings:** Promote the implementation of a unified set of site furnishings that provide comfort and convenience for the public, help keep the public realm a clean and safe place, and lend identity to the HUB district. Site furnishings should be unified through design by sharing common characteristics of style, materials and color. Public seating, bicycle racks and waste receptacles should be provided to serve public transit stops, building entry areas and public spaces such as plazas and parks.
- » **Lighting:** Promote a safe and identifiable public realm in the HUB district by providing well designed lighting systems for streets, sidewalks and public spaces. A consistent standard for district lighting should be developed and approved by the City. Unique and pedestrian-scaled lighting should be provided in pedestrian areas along public sidewalks and within public gathering areas. Pedestrian light fixtures should be installed at regular intervals and frequent enough and of such illumination levels to provide safe levels of light on public sidewalks and plazas, without negatively impacting adjacent residential uses.
- » **Signage and Wayfinding:** Provide a high quality, comprehensive, and attractive signage and graphic design system to provide district identity, information and understandable wayfinding in the HUB. Signage lighting, typography, color and materials should reflect the character of the use, the identity and character of the district. The public signage system should provide information and wayfinding for all users (vehicles, transit, bicycles and pedestrians).

## Precedent Examples



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