

Richfield Comprehensive Plan

Volume Three: Plan Elements

I-494 /Corridor Land Use Plan

Purpose

The I-494 Corridor Land Use Plan is founded in the patterns of Richfield's past, an understanding of its current conditions and opportunities, and a look into possible futures. This plan is more a prescription for desired change, than an explicit solution; it recognizes existing assets, qualities and character, and strives to add new features that can fulfill the community's vision for a unique and economically viable place where people live, work, play and shop.

This kind of change will not happen overnight and it will not likely happen on its own. The plan envisions a pace of incremental change over a period of twenty years or more. The existing land use pattern did not appear in the corridor overnight; rather, it has taken years or even decades, for those patterns to become evident, and it will likely take years or decades to achieve the vision the community has articulated. To move forward, it is important that the community commit itself to a sense of planned evolution. It will also take a commitment of continued partnerships, without which the vision may not be realized.

The vision is aimed at helping the community shape future development in the corridor to be more unique and identifiable, urban in character, pedestrian-friendly, economically sustainable and ultimately, more livable. Central components of this vision plan include the definition of a land use plan and recommendations for future development in the corridor. Elements in the plan should be used to frame regulatory tools, such as zoning overlays or ordinances, to convey what is desired for public improvements, and to convey the community's goals for a desired development pattern to prospective developers, investors, property owners, architects and planners.

Vision

The Richfield/I-494 Corridor is envisioned as an exciting and complete community that is self-sufficient, with a diversity and range of affordability of housing types, shops, services, and amenities typical of many traditional "urban villages". Traditional urban villages have long enjoyed the benefits of having compact, walkable centers that offered resident's places to live, work, shop, and dine. Often, the identity of these neighborhoods was established by the scale, character and set of uses in these centers. Urban villages typically include multiple story buildings that are more densely developed than the surrounding neighborhoods achieving a greater mix of land uses and drawing more pedestrian activity.

One of the benefits of mixed-use urban villages is that they offer new choices in a supportive environment. This appeals to a sizable segment of the population that seeks convenient transportation to work, a pedestrian friendly environment, and proximity to entertainment, restaurants and other amenities provided in these mixed-use villages. Similar forces attracting young professionals to these living environments are motivating the empty nester generation of baby boomers. Studies indicate that many will pay a premium to live in a vibrant, attractive mixed-use center.

More densely developed villages also benefit the region as the compact development patterns typical of them consolidates growth and diminishes the effects of sprawl on the metro area. Walkable neighborhoods and urban centers are emerging as socially desirable, environmentally sound, and economically affordable and profitable. Once segregated land uses are being connected by strategic mixed-use projects on infill and redevelopment sites. Richfield is adjacent to millions of square feet of regional shopping, jobs, an international airport, major transportation systems and nearby natural amenities. The Richfield/I-494 Corridor offers a tremendous opportunity to create a vibrant and unique urban village,

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complete with diverse and affordable housing choices, shops, services, offices, restaurants, hotels, and park spaces for its residents.

Plan Components

Several key strategies are promoted to achieve the plan's vision of creating a vibrant urban village environment, including the following:

District Identity

One of the hallmark strategies of the plan calls for the creation of a unique district identity that will positively distinguish the Richfield I-494 corridor from its neighboring areas. Where that occurs is primarily along the edges of the corridor and at key nodes, or gateways. The overall goal of the plan is to create a place that is identified by its garden theme and mix of building types, sizes and uses. It should not look like a collection of stand alone, single-use buildings that take advantage of its strategic location, but a place filled with variety, vitality and greenery. Few places like this exist in the metro area today.

The Interstate-494 edge should read like a rich and green landscaped border with a handsome mix of building types peering above. These buildings should include upper story residences and offices, designed to create a sophisticated skyline with surrounding views for its inhabitants. The plan proposes a landscaped buffer along the south border of the corridor to create the garden edge.

The plan anticipates future reconstruction and improvements along I-494 as proposed by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), suggesting mixed-use nodes as gateways into and through the district at key intersections located along the corridor. Lyndale and Portland Avenues will be the primary full intersections under the future MnDOT plans. These intersections are seen as critical sites and gateway opportunities to create a sense of place by encouraging a

greater mix of land use and building density that may attract users from the larger metro region for shopping, working and/or living needs. Nicollet and 12th Avenue nodes are also seen as significant places to create district identity on more of a community level. Here, mixed-use buildings with ground level retail serving the local community, with residences and office above are envisioned.



Public art can help establish district identity.

Compact Mixed-Use Development Patterns

Mixed-use development refers to the integration of residential, commercial, retail, employment, civic, recreational, and educational uses; the integration is accomplished in such a way as to reduce traffic congestion and contain urban sprawl. The mix of land uses in a compact area not only supports and enhances each element in the development but also provides residents a rich and diverse environment in which to live, work, shop, play and learn.

The recommended land use plan (Exhibits D-7a – D-7d) for the Richfield/I-494 Corridor identifies mixed use areas at the primary nodes located at Lyndale, Nicollet, Portland and 12th Avenues. The mixed use designation supports the idea that these nodes continue to develop in a manner that integrates several uses in a vertical and horizontal pattern, integrating ground level retail with upper story residential and/or office uses.

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Mixed Use – residential over retail service uses.



Mixed Use – office and health club over retail uses.



Mixed Use – residential over retail and entertainment.

Housing Diversity

Housing is the cornerstone of developing new residential and supporting existing residential neighborhoods in the corridor. The Richfield community has expressed a desire for a range of affordable housing options to meet the demands of a diverse population and life cycle changes. There are many benefits to including a mix of housing types in any future development scheme in the Richfield/I-494 corridor:

- One, it provides living options for those of diverse economic and social backgrounds seeking an urban lifestyle with easy access to surrounding amenities such as premier shopping and working environments and major transportation systems such as the adjacent interstate and the Mpls/St. Paul International Airport;
- Two, a neighborhood that offers a balanced mix of housing types and prices mirrors the community. A variety of building types, plans, and prices enhances value by broadening the market for development, increasing absorption while creating an attractive, aesthetically diverse neighborhood. Studies have indicated that the addition of new housing choices increases the value of all homes. Many buyers will pay a premium for urban living options set in a diverse community. Richfield meets its housing goals and objectives when the choices also address lower income and workforce housing needs;
- Three, multiple generations are choosing to live near each other. Instead of being isolated in retirement communities, many older people prefer to live in the same area as their children and grandchildren, creating more demand for multi-family housing, and;
- Four, offering a diverse mix of housing types and densities can help achieve

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the regional goal of containing urban sprawl and providing growth opportunities within the City of Richfield.

The future land use plan suggests primarily housing uses located between the mixed use nodes with some housing mixed into those nodes located at Nicollet and 12th Avenues. Many of these sites already contain a mix of multi-family housing. Future development on these sites should continue this trend and incorporate new building technologies and development patterns that utilize courtyards, open space connections and structured parking in order to provide greater densities.

Pedestrian-Friendly Environment

Promoting future mixed-use development in the corridor is critical to creating a vibrant, urban village because it produces the density, variety and ground level activity needed to encourage a pedestrian-friendly environment. Moreover, mixing residential and commercial uses adds vitality to neighborhoods by extending street activity beyond the typical nine-to-five work day. It's this activity that will create a sense of place within the corridor and provide the interest that will encourage pedestrian use.



The plan strives to create a pedestrian friendly environment.

The presence of people should be the litmus test to determine if the Richfield/I-494 Corridor has been successfully planned and designed. This should be a hallmark of the district's

identity. Shop windows should invite passers by and restaurants and cafes should spill out onto the sidewalks with activity. People of all ages and types should feel comfortable walking, shopping, living, working and playing in the district.

To achieve the goal of creating a pedestrian-friendly environment, the plan promotes the following strategies:

- Promote the design of buildings that vertically mix uses and front streets with entries and interesting shop windows incorporated into the buildings ground level to lure pedestrian activity, particularly at key gateways.
- Avoid blank spaces along sidewalks that interrupt the level of pedestrian interest such as surface or structured parking facilities or service areas. Instead, promote the continuity of a strong and interesting building edge along key sidewalks.
- 77th Street should be seen as a district edge and a great street to be addressed with active building uses and a well designed streetscape.
- Design a streetscape system that incorporates elements designed to encourage pedestrian use such as street trees, wide sidewalks, seating, pedestrian-scaled light fixtures, bike parking, signage, trash receptacles, and transit shelters.
- Provide pedestrian connections within the corridor, as in the form of a pedestrian-scaled trail or sidewalk system internal to development sites or to destinations off-site by improving the safety and visibility of crosswalks at key intersections, particularly at Lyndale, Nicollet, Portland and 12th Avenues.

Public Spaces

One of the key features of successful communities is the variety of attractive public

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and pedestrian spaces they contain. Public spaces consist of parks and open spaces, plazas, trails and streets. These places provide the public realm for everyday social life. Future development activity in the Richfield/I-494 Corridor will create a need to integrate more open, green space, trails and pedestrian-friendly streets to enhance the livability for workers, residents and visitors. Securing the land for open space and constructing new parks in the corridor may be difficult due to the relatively high cost of land values.

The City will need to monitor growth in the corridor and balance increased density with open space needs. As growth in the corridor evolves, sites should be identified for potential open space acquisition or incentives should be considered to ensure open space is developed as a component of increased housing development.

Alternative Modes of Transportation

“Location, location, location” is still the mantra of real estate, but as traffic and congestion erode people’s quality of life, the marketplace is reevaluating the definition of what is a premium location. While people still value convenient access to freeways, airports, and regional trail systems, more and more, people are looking to live in places where job opportunities, shops and services are within easy walking distance. Walkability is enhanced by wide sidewalks, convenient and safe pedestrian crossings, and pedestrian connections between neighborhoods. When such an environment is layered with transit options, livability is further enhanced because people are presented with additional choices for mobility. The most successful communities of the future will be those that understand the importance of mobility choices and the choices that resident’s are willing to make to recapture their commuting time.

77th Street should be seen as a primary transit route, providing east/west access through the corridor. The west anchor is Edina’s

Southdale/Centennial Lakes area. The east anchor is Bloomington’s Mall of America. Transit lines along the cross avenues should also be addressed where they intersect with 77th Street. Easy access, visibility, transit identity, signage, shelter and seating should be promoted at each bus stop. Specific transit stop locations should be coordinated with Metro Transit in order to incorporate transit improvements with future development projects. In addition, bike routes that intersect with transit routes should be provided with safe and accessible bicycle parking facilities and informational signage.

Parking

While parking is critical to the success of any future development in the corridor, it should not be a dominant land use seen from the public environment. Parking should be configured and located to insure that buildings and pedestrian areas are the focus of the corridor. The following recommendations are made with regards to parking in the corridor:

- Parking should be located behind or beneath buildings. Minimal parking should be located alongside buildings.
- Underground or structured parking within each block should be encouraged to achieve greater density and reduce the amount of surface parking seen within the corridor.
- Parking lots at street corners should be prohibited. An exception to this rule would allow for a parking structure to be located at the intersection with ground level uses within the structure that support pedestrian activity.
- Parking maximum ratios, rather than minimum ratios, should be applied within the district to encourage more use of transit services and to reduce excess parking.
- Encourage the development of uses that creatively share parking by time of day

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amongst a variety of uses in order to reduce the total amount of land dedicated to parking.

- Surface parking areas should be screened from the sidewalk and/or adjacent residential uses.
- On-street parking is encouraged whenever feasible. Alongside 77th Street, it may be necessary to create on-street parking by acquiring additional right of way and building on-street parallel parking lanes along the south side of the roadway.



Parking needs to be convenient and visually attractive.

Applying Green Community Concepts

Utilizing green community concepts in the I-494 corridor will lead to healthy, sustainable, and affordable environments for living, working, and recreating. Paying particular attention to where and how buildings are sited, designed, and operated can minimize negative impacts on the natural environment and human health. Using quality products and superior technology while paying attention to natural systems can create durable, efficient, and sustainable buildings that will remain healthy and vibrant for generations to come. The following green community principles should be encouraged in new development within the I-494 corridor:

- Optimize site potential – Use sites to their fullest potential by increasing density, creating opportunities for alternative transportation (public transit, walking, cycling), considering microclimate effects on buildings, and using native species in landscape plantings.
- Protect and conserve water and soil – Stormwater runoff should be minimized and managed through a stormwater runoff plan. To reduce water consumption, consider the use of water-conserving appliances, fixtures, and landscaping. Steps should be taken to minimize the loss of soil and sediment during construction and occupancy to reduce storm-water sediment and air pollution.
- Minimize energy consumption – Reduce energy consumption by taking advantage of natural heating, cooling and day lighting, and by using energy efficient appliances (Energy Star), equipment and lighting.
- Enhance indoor environmental quality – Given the amount of time spent indoors, indoor environmental quality proves especially important to human health. To create a healthy indoor environment for occupants, consider the use of non-toxic materials, ventilation and exhaust systems, and moisture control products and systems.
- Use environmentally preferable materials & resources – Consider the use of materials healthy for both occupants and the environment such as locally produced, salvaged and/or remanufactured materials, products with recycled content or from renewable sources, materials that can be recycled or reused, and low VOC-emitting materials.
- Reduce waste – Reduce and manage wastes generated during the construction process and operation of buildings. When demolition occurs, consider the sorting and recycling of leftover materials and debris.
- Optimize operations and maintenance – Inform and educate building occupants as to what they can and need to do to maintain and improve their green community.

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Consider ongoing support and shared services.

Land Use Types

The Proposed Land Use Plan recommends land uses and locations that will promote strategies established in the future vision for the corridor. While many of the land use types may include a mix of uses, whether horizontally or vertically mixed, the following land use types promote a primary use type located within specific areas. The following land use types are proposed:

Regional Commercial (RC)

The Regional Commercial land use designation implies that the primary land uses located within this area be commercial uses attracting users from the larger metropolitan region. Examples of uses located in this category might be large-scale anchor retail tenants, mid-sized retailers or a collection of specialty retail tenants fashioned in a lifestyle center. These land use types are located at Lyndale Avenue and where I-494 and Cedar Avenue intersect.



Regional Commercial example.



Regional Commercial example.

Regional Commercial/Office (RC/O)

The Regional Commercial/Office designation would suggest more of the types of tenants mentioned above for RC plus the presence of office uses, perhaps located above retail uses or situated in stand-alone building developments. These land use types are located at the Lyndale and Portland Avenue nodes. Residential uses are also expected to be part of the RC/O district.

Community Commercial/Office (CC/O)

The Community Commercial/Office land use category would include retail uses, shops, services and office uses that cater primarily to the local community. Multi-family residential uses may also be located within this zone as part of a mixed-use development. These land use types are located at the Nicollet and 12th Avenue nodes.

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Community Commercial example,

Office (O)

The primary land use envisioned for the Office category would be office uses. An example of this would be an office campus type of land use development. The land use is located at the intersection of I-35W and I-494.



Office example.

Multi-Family Residential (MFR)

The Multi-Family Residential land use areas are located between the gateway nodes and include primarily residential uses offering a range of residential densities and types, from townhomes to multi-story condominium flats. The MFR zones may also contain small amounts of ground level retail uses at strategic sites where feasible for retail to survive. This retail would most likely serve local residents.

Multi-Family Residential/Office (MFR/O)

The Multi-Family Residential/Office land use areas provide transitions between commercial/mixed-use areas and residential areas. The primary use is intended to be multi-family residential use but would incorporate commercial uses such as office and/or ground level retail uses.

Public (P)

Linear Public land uses are located along the south adjacent to I-494 to provide a landscaped edge along the freeway. A linear landscaped interior core is also envisioned to connect various land uses east and west throughout the corridor. This greenway is likely to assume a number of forms as it meanders through the area. In some locations, it might be a pedestrian only greenway. In others, it might be a local street while in others; it might actually pass through buildings as part of a courtyard area or true galleria.



Richfield has excellent examples of multi-family housing.

Additionally, two small park areas are envisioned to be incorporated into future development in the corridor to serve the residents in the area. Locations for the parks suggested between Lyndale and Nicollet and near 12th Avenue, however, final locations are to be determined by city officials.

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Church (CH)

Two church sites and a cemetery are located in the corridor and identified for future integration within the land use designations.



Church of the Assumption is one of two churches in the corridor area.

Land Use Tabulations

The following tabulation includes the uses shown on the I-494 Corridor Land Use Plan.

I-494 Corridor Land Use Plan	Acres
Community Commercial/Office	74.2
Church	36.1
Multi-Family Residential	65.7
Multi-Family Residential/Office	74.4
Office	14.6
Park	5.7
Regional Commercial	42.2
Regional Commercial/Office	51.8
Total Acres (not including ROW)	364.8