

**EDEN PRAIRIE  
MAJOR CENTER AREA STUDY  
PLANNING PRINCIPLES**



**January 6, 2006**

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## I. PURPOSE AND INTENT

The realization of a long term vision for the Major Center Area (MCA) should be carefully orchestrated and should adhere to sound planning principles. This section identifies a balanced set of statements that embody the future intent of land use, transportation, urban design and other fundamental systems within the MCA. Their purpose is to provide elected and appointed decision makers, along with staff, with guidance regarding initiatives to be undertaken. They should be consulted on a regular basis to assist in describing the long term vision for the study area. In particular, the planning principles should be of assistance in guiding incremental change as improvements are made.

The planning principles should also be embraced by the private sector to assist in understanding the City's vision and how private development will be expected to complement public infrastructure. The principles should serve as one of several sets of criteria in evaluating private sector development proposals and their compatibility with the vision cast for the area.

Residents, businesses and other stakeholders will also see benefit in consulting the principles. MCA residents will find interest in the future vision for their neighborhood. Businesses may find references to guide reinvestments and their role in supporting the area's economy and continued growth.

The MCA planning principles are intended to provide a set of descriptive statements, providing supportive detail for the vision graphic. Philosophical in nature, they provide rationale for basic elements, systems and physical recommendations arrived upon during the planning process. It is expected that the principles will be revisited over time with constructive changes made as supplementary information is made available and other studies are completed.

The Planning Principles are designed to help implement and guide actions to achieve the future land use plan, transportation and transit improvements, park, recreation, sidewalk, and trail enhancements and wayfinding system.

## 1.0 LAND USE

Future land use in the MCA is envisioned as a mix of complementary uses that enhance the area's role as Eden Prairie's center and as a regional destination. The land use mix will consist of retail commercial, service, residential, entertainment, employment, medical, recreation and civic uses. A Town Center area is planned as a walkable district that focuses on creating a mix of shopping, entertainment, housing, employment and civic uses in a compact traditional downtown form. Development outside of the Town Center is also likely to change over time toward a more compact mixed-use form. This will increase walkability and civic amenities. Eden Prairie Center will continue to evolve in its regional role. Land use intensity and traffic generation should be balanced with the planned transportation capacity and sensitive to potential adverse impacts on existing nearby neighborhoods. Open space amenities and green fingers of landscaping, trail and civic space will be used to spur redevelopment and to provide pleasant pedestrian connections.

A goal is to increase the efficiency of land uses within the MCA over time. This is to be accomplished by:

- Relocation of low intensity uses,
- Redevelopment of larger parcels to more intense uses,
- Mixed use development (such as housing over shops),
- Use of structured and shared parking to free up parking areas for new development,
- Development of complementary uses which do not create as many new vehicle trips,
- Development of uses that use bus and light rail transit.

The Land Use Principles include assumptions for density and floor area ratio (ratio of building size to lot size) increases for parcels forecast to either change land use type or to significantly increase intensity in the future. Other parcels and buildings in the MCA are also likely to redevelop, but significant increased intensity is not forecast for those other parcels. The purpose of these intensity assumptions is to guide where and how land use change will occur and to assure that density increases are balanced with the planned transportation system capacity as well as adequate parks and other public services (police, fire, etc.) The MCA study traffic forecast followed these same assumptions for land use change and intensification.

### 1.1 LAND USE MIX

A thriving mix of uses is an important characteristic of the MCA. In general, this means a mix of land use types such as employment, shopping, services, entertainment, civic/park, restaurants, lodging, medical and housing. Relocation of some uses, more efficient use of parking and re-development are expected to free up land for new mixed-use development.

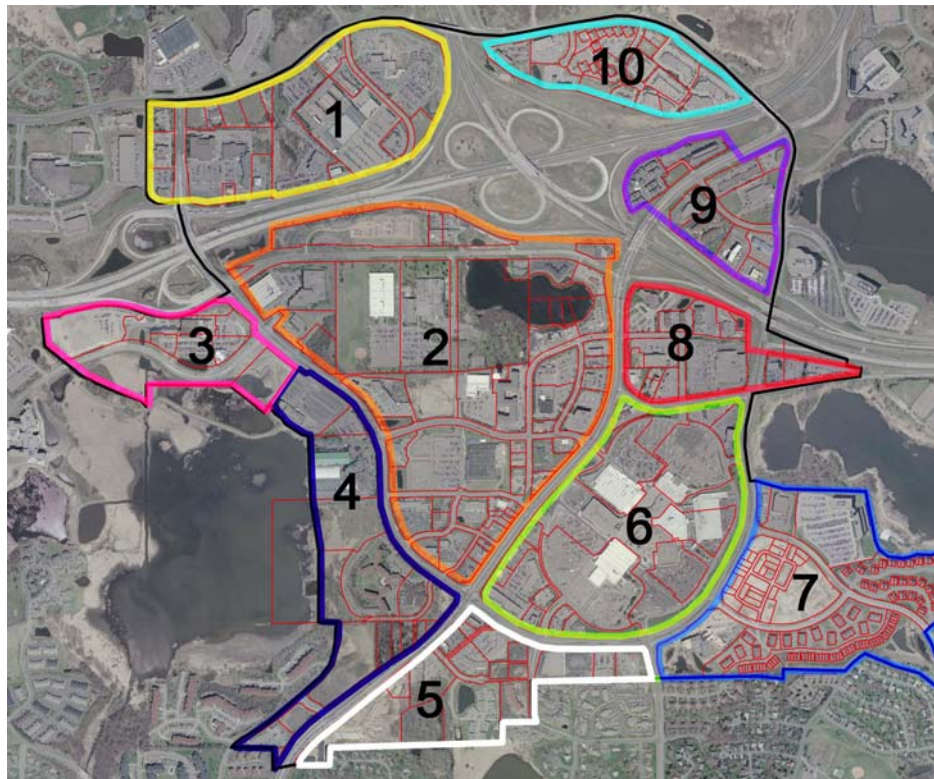
Uses may be mixed within areas and multiple uses may occur on individual parcels or within one building. Emphasis should be placed on building and site design and relationships and connections between uses. Large parcels with low intensity uses should be relocated to the fringe of the MCA (sub area 1) or in the Golden Triangle Area as opportunities arise (see Figure 1 for sub area locations).

1.1.1 A mix of land use types should continue to evolve toward more integrated uses (through shared access, circulation, parking, and pedestrian connections) and new vertically integrated mixed-use development (i.e., residential or office above shops).

1.1.2 MCA land use intensities should emphasize and support the Town Center.

1.1.3 Lower intensity uses on larger parcels (such as industrial, car dealerships and big box retail) should be relocated to the Golden Triangle Area or to sub areas 1 or 8 as opportunities arise (see Figure 1 for sub area locations).

**Figure 1: MCA Sub areas**



## 1.2 TOWN CENTER

A walkable Town Center should be created in the center and eastern portion of MCA sub area 2. The Town Center should be a compact area with a vibrant mix of land uses (live, work, play). The land uses should contribute to day/evening and year round use. The Town Center area focus will be on the intersection of Singletree Lane and a new north-south street to be created just east of the NSP power line corridor. These streets will act as the “Main Streets” of the Town Center. Uses fronting on the intersection of the Main Streets should be vertical mixed use development (residences over ground floor shops). It is envisioned as an open air design with buildings of mixed heights along a grid of pedestrian friendly, landscaped streets. Significant and unique open space/civic amenities (Lake Idlewild Park, plazas, town green, public art, etc.) should be focal points and attractions. The civic amenities should support community and event uses and may include indoor space to encourage year round use. Substantial density (40-75 dwelling units per acre and 0.35 floor area ratio for non-residential uses) should be encouraged to enhance identity and to allow sufficient density to help pay for important civic elements. Building height will range from three to six stories with taller multi-family buildings (up to 10 stories) south of Technology Drive and west of Lake Idlewild. Parking will primarily be located in underground and above ground structures integrated into the buildings and in on-street spaces. The Town Center should have high quality transit service through bus, LRT and/or circulator buses.

### 1.2.1 Town Center Relationship to Other MCA Uses

The Town Center should be a unique and supportive element of the MCA. Its retail uses should not detract from Eden Prairie Center or other area uses. The open space and civic amenities and the “Main Street” character will be different from the rest of the MCA and the density and activity in the Town Center will be higher.

1.2.2 The Town Center should act as an additional new attraction for workers, residents and visitors.

### 1.2.3 Town Center Land Use

The intent is to create a live/work/play environment. Development density is expected to be greater in the Town Center than elsewhere in Eden Prairie.

1.2.4 A mix of shopping, housing, restaurant, entertainment, office and park and open space uses is envisioned. Where feasible, new development should occur in multi-story mixed use buildings with strong pedestrian orientation.

1.2.5 Multi-family dwellings over ground floor shops and restaurants should front on the intersection of the “Main Streets”.

#### 1.2.6 Amenity Elements

Civic amenities such as a town green, Lake Idlewild Park, linear greenways and possibly an indoor recreation space should be focal points of the Town Center. Refer to sections 2.3, 6.0, 7.0, 8.0 and 9.0 elsewhere in the document for additional guidelines.

#### 1.2.7 Pedestrian Focus

Circulation in the Town Center should emphasize pedestrian movement while accommodating vehicle movement to/from parking and delivery access. Structured parking should be located at convenient locations at the edges of the Center to minimize vehicle/pedestrian conflicts. Auto uses such as drive-up facilities should not be located in the Town Center.

#### 1.2.8 Design, Building Placement and Massing

The intent is to create an area that has the feel and function of a traditional town center. The primary components of the Town Center form are:

**Sidewalks** should be the primary means of movement and access to the area.

**Wide sidewalks** should be located next to the street curb edge.

**Build to line.** The primary building facade should be parallel to the sidewalk and street and be located at or very near the inside edge of the sidewalk. This promotes a sense of enclosure and frames the street. There should be some flexibility to allow residential porches, stoops, sidewalk cafes and gardens.

**Street level interest** should occur through first floor transparent display windows, outdoor dining areas, public art, fountains, courtyards, plazas, and pedestrian-scale signage, lighting, plantings, etc.

**Parking should be located primarily in structures** behind or under buildings and never between the sidewalk and the building. Parking access should be designed to minimize conflicts with the pedestrian environment. Mechanical and service areas should be out of public view.

**Building height should range from three to ten stories** with height transitions at the edges of the district adjacent to single-family neighborhoods. High-rise buildings (7-10 stories) should be clustered in areas identified as appropriate.

**Minimum heights, lot coverage and floor area ratios** should be established to ensure an adequate scale and concentration of uses commensurate with a Town Center.

**Buildings should provide horizontal and vertical relief** (no long unbroken walls). Street building facades should include human scale architectural detailing and try to achieve traditional modules of 25 to 50 feet wide.

There should be a traditional **grid street pattern**.

### **1.3 LAND USE CATEGORIES AND FACTORS**

A range of land uses called for in the MCA preferred concept are described here.

#### **1.3 Retail**

Retail uses seek to locate in areas with good visibility, access and convenient parking. There are some variations in the need for visibility, access and convenient parking among retailers due to their size, scale and market orientation. Concentrations of retail shops allow customers to shop for various goods within a defined area. For these reasons and others, retail uses are the dominant existing use in the MCA. Most retail uses generate a high volume of traffic, but have a traffic pattern that peaks during non-rush hour times.

#### **Regional Mixed Use/Regional Retail**

##### **1.3.1 Eden Prairie Center**

Eden Prairie Center attracts local and regional visitors and is a positive influence on area property value and development. The mall has evolved significantly since it was built in response to changing retail and economic trends. That evolution will continue as the mall enhances its retail and restaurant mix to ensure competitiveness. Additions of appropriate non-retail uses should be considered. Other potential uses may include more diverse entertainment and perhaps hospitality uses, increased access and use of transit and consideration of housing and other complementary uses on the mall site. The large surface parking areas present opportunities for building expansion and redevelopment. This may require consolidation of parking into structured ramps to free up land for redevelopment. The Future Land Use Plan assumes a modest amount of new development and redevelopment

will occur within the Eden Prairie Center area. The MCA traffic model assumed a 15% increase in vehicle trips between 2005 and 2030 due to new development in the Eden Prairie Center area (sub area 6).

### **Neighborhood/Convenience Retail/Service**

- 1.3.2 Neighborhood retail, including neighborhood services and restaurants, is a core element that should be located convenient to residential uses and commuters (e.g., near transit stops). It does not rely on automobile traffic to the same extent that community, regional or big box retail does. Neighborhood retail/service should be considered in high-density residential and office buildings to serve occupants without significant increases in vehicle trips. No significant increase in intensity is anticipated in the stand alone neighborhood retail areas.
- 1.3.3 Drive up and drive through uses should be limited to retail areas designated for neighborhood, community or big box retail. Land uses with drive through elements should not be located in the Town Center area nor should they abut residential, office, institutional or similar sensitive uses. Edge buffering and internal siting of the drive through should be addressed.

### **Community Retail/Service**

- 1.3.4 Community retail attracts shoppers and customers from Eden Prairie and the adjacent communities. It can include service uses as well as restaurants. Community retail relies on high visibility from major streets and proximity to other complementary uses.
- 1.3.5 Boutique/specialty uses supporting local entrepreneurs should be added along with potential new anchor stores that are not present in the Eden Prairie area.
- 1.3.6 Community retail uses in the Town Center area should be higher intensity (multi-story buildings with office or other uses allowed in upper levels) compared to community retail uses outside of the Town Center.

### **Big Box Retail**

- 1.3.7 Big box retail uses typically are larger stores that attract local and regional customers. They have high visibility needs and may include other support services, restaurants, etc.

- 1.3.8 Big box retail uses in sub areas #1 and #8 are forecast to redevelop at a higher intensity (0.35 floor area ratio). This means redevelopment that increases the building area on the lot through use of a multi-story building, structured or underground parking and other complementary uses.
- 1.3.9 Existing big box retail uses in the Town Center area have lower property values, and their lower intensity does not support Town Center goals or image. They are important elements to the community and should be relocated to sub area 1 or 8 or to the Golden Triangle Area.
- 1.3.10 Should the Costco big box retail property in Sub area 2 redevelop it should change land use to a high density residential use.

### **Ground Level Retail with Medium Density Housing**

- 1.3.11 Multi-family housing over ground floor retail shops and restaurants is envisioned at the intersection of the Town Center "Main Streets." The shops and restaurants will have significant street front presence (storefront windows, sidewalk dining, etc.) The floor area ratio is forecast to be approximately 0.5 and residential density is up to 45 dwelling units per acre.

### 1.4 Office

- 1.4.1 Corporate identity office is typically a single use facility with high visibility needs. The east part of sub area 1 and the north part of sub area 9 are forecast for future redevelopment to office use at a floor area ratio of 0.50.
- i. Professional offices can be integrated into mixed use development with retail and service uses on the first floor. These uses should occur in sub areas 2, 3, 4 or 9.
  - ii. The portion of sub area 1, south of Valley View Drive and east of Prairie Center Drive is forecast to redevelop as mixed use office at a floor area ratio of 0.30. Small scale retail is also appropriate provided the existing limited access is acceptable.
- 1.4.2 High tech uses and incubator office/manufacturing are appropriate in sub area 10 and the Golden Triangle area.

### 1.5 Medical/clinic

Medical uses will continue to increase in importance and may be associated with senior housing and care facilities or freestanding clinics and hospitals.

1.5.1 Medical Clinic uses are appropriate as part of any mixed use development and as stand alone uses in certain designated portions sub areas 2 or 5.

## 1.6 Industrial

The larger parcels, lesser job density (fewer jobs per square foot compared to office) and lower overall intensity of industrial uses are an under-utilization of MCA land. Industrial properties tend to interrupt the walkability of an area due to large, private buildings, surface parking and truck traffic.

1.6.1 Industrial uses should be relocated to the Golden Triangle Area, as opportunities arise.

## 1.7 Entertainment, Restaurant and Services

Restaurants are an important local and regional attraction. Other entertainment uses such as theaters, museums, cultural and fine arts, etc. should be located within mixed use developments and the Town Center. Many entertainment uses have the ability to share parking with office/employment uses.

1.7.1 The City should continue to encourage new restaurants to locate within mixed use development and within the Town Center.

## 1.8 Hospitality/Lodging

1.8.1 A full service hotel with conference and banquet facilities should be located within the MCA. Potential locations are sub areas 2, 4, 6 or 9.

## 1.9 RESIDENTIAL

Residential development seeks convenient locations, quality housing, generally quieter surroundings, views and access to open space, parks, neighborhood retail/services and community facilities (schools, library, etc.).

### High-rise High Density Residential

1.9.1 This category includes multi-family residential dwellings with a density range of 60-75 dwelling units per acre and a height of 7-10 stories. These taller structures should be located to take advantage of views of amenities and in areas where significant shading of lower structures will not occur.

19.2 High-rise residential uses are appropriate for the area south of Technology Drive just west of Lake Idlewild (Town Center portion of sub area 2) and along the east shore of Purgatory Conservation Area immediately south of Columbine Rd. (sub area 4).

### **Mid-rise High Density Residential**

1.9.3 This category includes multi-family residential dwellings with a density range of 40-60 dwelling units per acre and a height of 3-6 stories.

1.9.4 Mid-rise residential development is forecast for the area Southwest of Lake Idlewild, the area south of Singletree Lane and east of Prairie Center Drive (sub area 2) and the portion of sub area 4 located at the south east edge of Purgatory Conservation Area.

### **Medium Density Housing with Ground Level Retail**

1.9.5 Multi-family housing over ground floor retail shops and restaurants is envisioned at the intersection of the Town Center "Main Streets." The shops and restaurants will have significant street front presence (storefront windows, sidewalk dining, etc.) The floor area ratio is forecast to be 0.5 and residential density is up to 45 dwelling units per acre.

#### *Variety of Housing Needs*

A variety of residential uses should be encouraged in the MCA. Lifecycle housing offers housing options to people at different stages of their life, with varying incomes and family and living arrangements.

Demographic trends indicate increased demand for senior housing. Senior housing takes many forms, from market rate independent living to care facilities. Access to health care is an important factor for seniors and others. Integrated health care, senior housing and mixed use centers are an emerging trend that the City should consider.

1.8.1 Housing should meet a continuum of life cycle needs in terms of types, affordability, ownership, rental, co-op, etc.

#### *Economic Conditions*

Due to high land values, the ability to develop affordable housing involves the use of higher density and/or treating housing as a bonus or value-added element in commercial areas.

1.8.2 At the Town Center crossroads location, new residential development should be part of a mixed use development with non-residential uses on the ground floor (Medium Density with Retail at Ground Level).

*Locations Suited to Higher Density, Taller Buildings*

- 1.8.3 Taller structures should be located to take advantage of views of amenities and in areas where significant shading of lower structures will not occur. High-rise residential uses are appropriate for the area south of Technology Drive just west of Lake Idlewild (Town Center portion of sub area 2) and along the east shore of Purgatory Conservation Area (sub area 4) just south of Columbine Rd.
- 1.8.4 Residential density should be higher within the Town Center, within one-quarter mile of a transit hub and along transit and circulator routes.

*Protect Existing Residential Areas*

There is a large amount of existing housing in or near the MCA. Much of the housing in the area surrounding the MCA is in low rise buildings.

- 1.8.5 New development and re-development should be sensitive to existing housing.
- 1.8.6 There should be appropriate landscaped transitions and site layouts to manage the physical relationship between new and existing uses. Significant shading of adjacent structures should be avoided and new development should not have a significant affect upon views from existing uses.
- 1.8.7 Adequate public safety resources should be maintained with increasing density to ensure a high level of services continues to be provided to existing neighborhoods.

1.9 Density

Greater density is necessary to provide a funding source for civic amenities and to create the critical mass and activity level desired in the Town Center.

- 1.9.1 Density should be balanced with transportation capacity and availability of parks and other public services and will need to minimize impact on existing residential areas.
- 1.9.2 Greater residential density should be allowed in the Town Center, near transit and to take advantage of open space and views, specifically in the area west of Lake Idlewild, the area south of Single Tree Lane and east of Prairie Center Drive in sub area 2 and the portion of sub area 4 located at the south east edge of Purgatory Conservation Area.

### 1.10 Building Height and Massing

Building height and massing will vary across the MCA.

1.10.1 Modest height and massing should be the norm for the bulk of the MCA, with a range of 3-6 stories. Higher buildings may be compatible in specific locations (see section 1.10.3).

1.10.2 Height and floor area bonuses should be granted for mixed use projects when they have appropriate transitions to existing residential.

1.10.3 Additional height should be allowed in the Town Center, near transit and to take advantage of open space and views (sub areas 2, 3 and 4). Seven to ten stories could be acceptable depending on the design and the specific project. Appropriate locations for buildings of this height have been designated at the NW quadrant of the new Town Center close to Lake Idlewild, and at the SW corner of Prairie Center Drive and Columbine Road, overlooking Purgatory Creek Recreation Area.

### 1.11 Other Regional Attractions

The regional role of the area is important to long term success and economic sustainability. Regional use allows greater diversity of shops, services, restaurants and entertainment. In addition to the new Town Center, these may include lodging, cultural, arts, medical and other facilities.

1.11.1 The City should work to attract other regional uses to complement the regional role of Eden Prairie Center.

### 1.12 Relationship to Amenities

See Sections 3.1, 6.0, 8.0, 9.0 10.0 for additional principles.

Amenities are important to the MCA's future because they create attractive, popular places for people to meet and use regularly. These well used places shape character and identity and are invaluable to the overall vitality of a place like the Major Center Area.

1.12.1 Parks, trails, civic uses and "green corridors" should be focal points and unifying elements of new development.

1.12.2 Multiple-use civic spaces should be created that can be used for farmers markets, performing arts, community events, restaurant seating, etc. Such spaces should be located within the Lake Idlewild Park and on or adjacent to the Town Center Main Street intersection shown on the future Land Use Plan.

1.12.3 Complementary private uses should be considered within parks and civic plazas to add activity nodes, bathrooms and security.

### 1.13 Land Use – Transportation Relationship

While land use and transportation capacity should be in balance, these principles recognize that some traffic congestion should be accepted as a sign of a vital and desirable area. No business wants to be located on a low volume street. Efficient use of roadways is important and mobility on key through movement roadways should be protected. One aspect of efficient road use means a mix of land use that spreads peak use and direction more evenly across the day. This can be accomplished by mixing housing, employment and retail. Another element of efficiency is creating a transit and pedestrian friendly land use pattern. This means a compact form, services near housing and a walkway network.

## 2.0 TRANSPORTATION

Transportation conditions are seen as integral to the overall vitality and success of any developed area. However, congestion, lack of transportation options and other obstacles to convenient travel cause stress and disrupt patterns of daily life. In crafting a vision of the Major Center Area for 2030, it became clear that changes to the transportation system should be made to serve people's interests and needs. Direct, easy access and an attractive convenient environment for all modes of travel quickly surfaced in the course of the planning process as important attributes that should be incorporated into the final vision plan.

Getting around in the Major Center Area in the future should be improved by focusing efforts on three primary objectives: a) improved access (from regional road systems as well as to specific land use); b) more easily understood circulation networks (roads, trails, paths and sidewalks); and c) more efficient management of traffic flow.

The hierarchy of roads that determine the present day character of the area have been defined over time by road function, access patterns (to other properties and other roads) and design as well as signal timing. Due to the nature and timing of growth in the area, most roads have grown in size and scale and some have taken on a greater role in the road hierarchy. Transportation elements lower in the hierarchy (local streets, paths, trails and sidewalks) have not been as prevalent in the area because the predominant transportation needs have come from automobile traffic.

The future livability of the MCA relies on continued management of existing road network as well as additional investment in roads, trails, paths and transit. This will create a balanced multimodal transportation system in the MCA.

## 2.1 Regional Roads and Highways

- 2.1.1 Improvements to TH 212 are desirable to correspond to the road's future role and function as a future County roadway that balances access and mobility.

Improved access along TH 212, south of I-494 should be sought through signal coordination; consideration of grade separated ramps and roadways, and improved connections to the regional mall.

Identify a timeline and criteria for future renaming of TH 212 when it transfers jurisdiction to Hennepin County from MN/DOT to assist the private sector wayfinding, parcel identity and business recognition.

- 2.1.2 Grade separating existing TH 212 with Prairie Center Drive and/or future LRT service is desirable to accommodate access in the southeast quadrant of the Major Center Area.

This approach helps minimize conflicts between regional trips and local traffic, transit, and pedestrian/bicycle movement. (also see Section 2.26).

- 2.1.3 Longer regional trips passing through the area should be facilitated on I-494 and TH 5, involving coordination and simplified access to the local road system.

- 2.1.4 Additional access to the area from the I-494 corridor north of the MCA is desirable to improve regional movements to and from the MCA area.

New ramps and structures providing more direct access to northbound I-494 and from southbound I-494 would make travel much more direct and easily understood. Improved I-494 access would benefit abutting parcels and provide improved access to the regional mall and the Town Center.

- 2.1.5 Improved access from existing TH 212, northeast of I-494, is desirable to simplify regional trips to and from the MCA.

Regional access is important on this roadway. New bridge structures may be needed to achieve desired growth of the area, to maintain its economic vitality and promote a variety of land uses.

## 2.2 Collector Roads

Existing and new collector roads should be improved to enhance north-south and east-west movement, capacity, connections and access throughout the area.

- 2.2.1 A strong east-west connection is desired in the MCA, via aligning Singletree Lane with West 78th Street.
- 2.2.2 Evaluate the feasibility of a new north-south corridor through sub area 2. This could be combined with improved access to/from I-494.
- 2.2.3 Define the needed backage, frontage and parking lot connections to provide reasonable access to signalized intersections.
- 2.2.4 Develop an access management and traffic signal plan to improve the efficiency and safety for all road users in the study area.
- 2.2.5 Eliminate roadways with minimal service areas as redevelopment occurs, if technically feasible.
- 2.2.6 Improve pedestrian safety and comfort at collector street crossings by using grade separate crossings at limited but critical areas, as well as traffic improvements throughout the area.
- 2.2.7 Intelligent transportation system technologies should be employed to increase the capacity, flow and safety of existing roadways.

## 2.3 Local Streets System

New local streets and redevelopment of existing local streets should provide adequate local circulation and parcel access. Design features should emphasize pedestrian scale (two or three lane design, where feasible, with on-street parking in some locations), landscape plantings and other amenities.

- 2.3.1 Strengthen street boulevard treatment with street tree and other appropriate plantings, pedestrian level lighting, streetscape enhancements, and other pedestrian amenities.

- 2.3.2 Provide on-street parking wherever possible to improve parking capacity and separate the traveled way from sidewalk areas.
- 2.3.3 Access to land uses with drive through components should be limited to local commercial streets outside of the Town Center rather than arterials, collectors, the other ring road or mall ring road. Site configuration to accommodate the drive through should separate parking functions and be sensitive to adjacent edge land uses and the pedestrian/bicycle environment. Access limitations should occur to promote traffic flow and safety.

### **3.0 OUTER RING ROAD (Prairie Center Drive/Valley View Road)**

The outer ring road circuit of Prairie Center Drive and Valley View should provide direct access to regional roads and promote an efficient, easily recognizable route for getting to and around the Major Center Area.

- 3.1 The image and identity enhancements of the outer ring road should be distinctive, reflected in the physical character of the street, including intersection green space, boulevard character, lighting, landscaping and building or parking lot setbacks.
- 3.2 Signage identifying the outer ring road should be distinctive and placed in such a way that drivers unfamiliar with the area can easily navigate around the circuit.
- 3.3 Access points along the outer ring road should be consolidated in order to promote efficient movement. New frontage and backage roads that serve as local roads and connect to collector roads should be constructed as development occurs to achieve this goal.
- 3.4 Intersections should be consolidated wherever possible and as redevelopment occurs. Signed coordination and geometric improvements should be implemented to improve overall operations for vehicular/pedestrian/bicycle traffic.
- 3.5 Pedestrian and bicycle traffic should be accommodated parallel to the outer ring road in easily accessible facilities. Enhancements to pedestrian/bike crossings of the outer ring road (such as grade separated crossings, medians and adjusted signal timing where appropriate) should be considered at critical locations.

## 4.0 MALL RING ROAD

Internal ring road intersections at the Eden Prairie Center should be reconfigured to improve traffic circulation, access by all modes of travel and identity/wayfinding for visitors. One-way vehicle circulation offers efficiency of movement and reduces potential conflicts. Two-way circulation could result in more frequent conflicts between vehicles or other modes.

- 4.1 Redesign primary access points to the mall to improve driver visibility and operation with public roadways By constructing traffic islands and reducing the width of entry intersections.
- 4.2 Direct pedestrian and bike connections to the mall should be built to reduce conflicts with vehicles.
- 4.3 Signage posted on the Mall ring road should ensure quick readability, visual consistency and strategic placement for customers wishing to access the mall by all modes (car, bike and walking), as well as directions to regional roadways for customers leaving the mall.
- 4.4 Implement modifications to circulation patterns on the mall ring road as necessary or recommended in the future to reduce queing impacts and improve pedestrian access and safety (one-way traffic flow is recommended and expected to be necessary at some point in the future).

## 5.0 TRANSIT

### 5.1 Transit-LRT

By 2030, Light Rail Transit (LRT) service is likely to be a key feature of the MCA. The location of LRT station(s) will have a long term impact on design, siting and land uses in the immediate vicinity of the station(s).

Transit oriented development (TOD) is a principle that seeks to locate the highest density uses closest to transit service, with a strong emphasis on designing pedestrian oriented environments closest to transit access points. Typically a half-mile radius closest to the station is considered walking distance (approximately a ten minute walk), and a preference for housing or high job-generating workplaces is found in land use guide plans for such areas. Supportive retail goods and services are also a component of TOD but these uses are typically small in size and clustered within a mixed use (vertical integration) or multiple use (clustered alongside) environment.

Walk-to transit stations follow traditional transit oriented development principles. Another approach that takes advantage of LRT service with vastly different results on the built environment is the park and ride station. This station would be located at the existing Southwest Transit Station and serve rider who drove or arrive by bus. Land uses are likely to be high density due to the need to accommodate park and ride transit customers in parking garages as seen in current conditions. Nevertheless, some supportive retail goods and services can coexist with this type of transit station.

- 5.1.1 The primary location for a walk-to LRT station in the MCA should be within the Town Center, south of Lake Idlewild in the vicinity of the new north-south “main street”. The secondary location for a walk-to LRT station, which would also serve as a park and ride station, should be at the site of the current day Southwest Transit Station, integrated with bus transit service.
- 5.1.2 The highest and most intense land uses, particularly mixed use projects, should be located within a half-mile radius of a centrally located LRT station to support the Town Center concept.
- 5.1.3 Development located within the half-mile radius to the transit station should meet specific development standards that result in a high-amenity pedestrian environment. These standards should address build to lines, treatment of parking lots/facilities, pedestrian-scaled design features, landscaping, lighting and signage.
- 5.1.4 Transit ridership should be supported by combining the Southwest Transit bus station with a park and ride LRT station and thus retain a critical transportation alternative for commuters.
- 5.1.5 LRT transit service should minimize impacts on adjacent street and pedestrian/bicycle network, such as by constructing grade-separated crossings at major intersections.

## 5.2 Transit-Bus Circulator

Regional bus service should continue to be an important component of the MCA transportation system. However, the Southwest Transit Station’s location on Technology Drive west of Prairie Center Drive is remotely located from many of the MCA’s key destinations for walking trips. A bus circulator service will be ever more important to the success of the area as the density and mix of land uses (retail commercial, office and residential) increases over time.

A future bus circulator will be invaluable to the continued growth of the MCA. As traffic congestion in the area increases over time, offering a bus circulator as a means to move people between popular destinations can contribute to slower growth in the number of vehicles on the road, and also limit the size of intersections that would otherwise expand in width and complexity to handle increases in traffic.

An MCA circulator service can offer advantages to all uses located in the area, shuttling residents, customers, workers and visitors to and from large scale parking reserves such as those located in the Southwest Transit Station. It can deliver passengers door to door without long trips from outer parking areas to entrances, as can sometimes be the case on busy days at regional shopping destinations like the Eden Prairie Center.

- 5.2.1 The feasibility of a bus circulator should be evaluated that would serve office, retail, and residential destinations within the MCA from the Southwest Transit Station.
- 5.2.2 The Southwest Transit Station should continue to be used as a terminal and intermodal connector in order to take advantage of existing regional and local bus service.
- 5.2.3 The outer ring road (Valley View Road and Prairie Center Drive circuit) should be emphasized as the primary route for the service to reinforce ease of circulation and navigation in the MCA.
- 5.2.4 Parking reserves (such as existing park and ride spaces) should be used as shared parking with compatible uses that have staggered peak demand times, and make use of a circulator service to connect drivers with their ultimate destinations.

## **6.0 PEDESTRIAN/BIKE FEATURES AND FACILITIES**

Over the course of the planning process, participants clearly expressed an interest in better walking and biking conditions. Citizens are seeking a pleasant, effective way to get around the area other than in their cars. In an environment dominated by vehicle travel, the overall livability of the MCA now and in the future can be vastly improved by investing in walk/bike features that create a safe, attractive and efficient environment.

Increasingly, larger numbers of residents and workers walk for purposes of recreation and physical activity as well as to make daily trips between destinations. The demand for walking space therefore should meet recreational needs as well as daily transportation needs, which suggest two different planning design approaches.

As development density increases in the MCA and more residents, workers and shoppers spend part of their daily routine in the area, increased demand and presence of walkers and cyclists will result. This will make an interconnected system of paths, sidewalks and trails increasingly successful and usable, in turn making it easier to choose walking or biking to get around.

- 6.1 The existing trails and paths system should be expanded to include sidewalks and landscaping/greening in areas currently underserved by such features.
- 6.2 New private paths/walkways should connect with existing city trails and paths.
- 6.3 Trails, sidewalks and other walk/bike paths should be planned and developed that ensure safety, reducing conflicts with vehicles where necessary and provide direct access to important destinations.
- 6.4 Pedestrian and cyclist conflicts with major roads (collectors, regional access points) should be minimized by improving street crossings, for both on-street and grade-separated crossings, at key locations. Key locations may be at places where existing systems cross roadways and therefore affect a large number of system users. Other important locations may be where traffic conditions (volume and speed of travel) necessitate special consideration for pedestrians.
- 6.5 Seasonal use of paths, trails and walkways should be expanded to include winter use wherever possible. Maintenance costs and workforce availability should be directed to promote all-season use by walkers and cyclists.
- 6.6 Design and implementation of trails, sidewalks and paths should conform to Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines and be responsive to individuals with mobility limitations.

## 7.0 WAYFINDING

A wayfinding system should be implemented that will help Major Center Area visitors find their desired destination within the Major Center Area and also assist them in navigating back out to the regional highways.

- 7.1 Wayfinding should be broken into a series of decision points providing pertinent information when needed, starting at the regional highways and providing more detailed information as the visitor moves closer to their destination.
- 7.2 The wayfinding system should be predominantly a signage based system. Along with assisting with navigation through the use of colors and icons, the style of the signage should create a distinctive image for the Major Center Area.
- 7.3 The Major Center Area should be broken into distinct sub areas to assist MCA businesses and residents describe where they are within the MCA.
- 7.4 The outer ring road will play a critical role in the wayfinding system as it provides a consistent roadway that passes through all of the Major Center Area sub areas.
- 7.5 The wayfinding hierarchy should consist of:
  - The Major Center Area
  - Sub areas within the Major Center Area
  - Streets, sidewalks and trails
  - Building addresses and other key destinations (parks, etc.)
- 7.6 The wayfinding system should provide information for all users (vehicles, transit, bicycles and pedestrians).

## 8.0 URBAN DESIGN/STREETSCAPE

The relationship of buildings to streets, and the experience of drivers, walkers and bicyclists as they travel the public streets, sidewalks, paths and trails in the MCA are important to the area's overall sense of place.

A positive sense of place, one that defines a distinct identity and recognizable features, landmarks and patterns of development and open space, is something that has high value for the future of the MCA.

Whenever feasible, buildings should be located close to the public streets, and parking lots should be located to the rear or side of buildings. Particularly in the Town Center district of the MCA, the dominant impression should be attractive buildings rather than parking. Pedestrians should be able to walk with comfort and a sense of security beside interesting buildings with windows and doors facing the sidewalk rather than along parking lots.

On each block, all new buildings should be generally set the same distance from the public street right-of-way with some flexibility to allow residential porches, stoops, sidewalk cafes, gardens, and to provide visual relief (no long, unbroken walls). This distance, called a “build-to” line, is considered a maximum setback distance, meaning that buildings must abut this line with only those exceptions noted. This maximum distance should be considered in relationship to the building’s height.

- 8.1 The Town Center district within the MCA should be connected by continuous sidewalks and provide an inviting pedestrian environment.
- 8.2 The pedestrian environment should be made attractive as a result of building scale, orientation and entrances to buildings.
- 8.3 Sidewalks should be included in site layouts for all parcels with street frontage.
- 8.4 Boulevards with street trees and other appropriate plantings and amenities should be included on key pedestrian routes and on important collector roads within the MCA.
- 8.5 Pedestrian-level, theme lighting as well as overhead street lights should be provided in the MCA.
- 8.6 Pedestrian travel across major roads (such as TH 212, Prairie Center Drive) must receive special design treatment to ensure safety and ease of access.
- 8.7 Public art should be encouraged in the MCA area.
- 8.8 Public amenities should be integrated into public and private developments, (streets, plazas, open spaces) such as landscaped spaces, seating areas, pedestrian elements, seasonal features and appropriate interests for young and old.

## 9.0 GREEN SYSTEMS

The connection of private and public green systems is an important framework that will ensure the long term beauty of the MCA as development intensifies and transportation needs alter the landscape significantly.

Unique open space features are important to solidifying the MCA's role as a highly attractive destination for all city residents. Possible uses could be active recreational, passive open space or joint public-private facilities.

The plan concepts show a combination of linear corridors that penetrate the area, providing access to and connection between existing green spaces, lakes, wetlands and other park facilities, such as the Purgatory Creek Recreation Area, Lake Idlewild, and Emerson Technologies' open space.

- 9.1 Major Center Area parks, open spaces and natural resources should be physically connected wherever possible through the use of greenways, trails, boulevard plantings and other open space elements.
- 9.2 Development should be sited to be sensitive to remaining natural resources.
- 9.3 New 'pocket parks', linear green ways and other civic spaces should be incorporated into development projects. Private-public partnerships are encouraged to build these spaces, operate and maintain them over the long term.
- 9.4 Public investment in trails and greenways should be evaluated in the context of relationship to the community's existing system.
- 9.5 Pedestrian crossing of major roadways such as TH 212 should be included in future public or private projects. Grade-separated crossings may be required where significant traffic conflicts exist.
- 9.6 Differing land uses within the MCA should be 'greened' and buffered through the use of street trees and plantings. Parking lot edges, outdoor storage and other objectionable views should be screened by the use of plantings and other means.
- 9.7 Hardy plant species should be chosen for resistance to drought, road salt, disease, extreme temperatures, and limiting irrigation needs (xeriscape principles). Plantings should be chosen to create seasonal color and reflect seasonal change. Native prairie plants should be considered to reflect the City's heritage.
- 9.8 A maintenance district, common to all properties if possible, should be studied as a means to maintain the integrity of urban landscape amenities.

- 9.9 A variety of flexible park spaces should be developed responding to the needs of MCA residents, employees and guests. Park size and design should emphasize the wide variety of recreation programming, civic events and festivals likely to be hosted. Passive spaces should also be developed, complementing land use mix and density.
- 9.10 Greenways and open spaces should incorporate stormwater runoff and treatment in creative, aesthetic ways.

## 10.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SYSTEMS

Preservation and stewardship of the natural environment including existing woodlands, wetlands and other natural resource features furthers the MCAs identity and strengthens its appeal for housing, business, hospitality, entertainment and civic/cultural uses. As urban conditions are adopted with more intense development, connections to relatively undeveloped natural areas become ever more important.

Treatment of stormwater is one aspect of development that traditionally results in minimum benefit to existing environmental systems (water quality, soil erosion, etc). Innovative treatment of stormwater through the application of best practices can bring significant advantages to the natural systems that must accommodate new development. Creative solutions can also be more aesthetic and potentially reduce management costs.

Some stormwater treatment and careful avoidance of wetland and floodplain impact is required by city and watershed ordinance. Development in the MCA has a greater responsibility to improve quality measures within these systems given the concentration and intensity of new development anticipated in the area.

## 11.0 PARKING

In the future, many of the land uses located in the MCA will continue to need highly visible and ample parking. However, other options such as shared parking and the addition of circulator service could contribute to a change in the physical environment, such that large-scale, single user surface parking lots are less common.

Over the long term (up to 2030), the likely appreciation in land values will also encourage alternative methods of accommodating parking for specific land uses. Parking structures are likely to become more commonplace as costs of land increase.

- 11.1 The feasibility of a parking district should be studied to manage available parking resources.
- 11.2 Parking in the MCA should be accessible and sufficiently meet MCA land use needs.
- 11.3 A combination of on-street and off-street parking should be required to meet demands generated by different land use types.
- 11.4 Shared parking should be promoted in mixed use developments.
- 11.5 Bus circulator service should be considered as part of shared parking arrangements. The Southwest Transit Station could be employed as a parking resource in a joint private/public partnership.
- 11.6 Structured parking should be located adjacent to, or within building massing.
- 11.7 Parking should be made accessible (although access will be managed by a network of routes that connect collector roads in the MCA).
- 11.8 Parking should be made accessible from local streets in the area.
- 11.9 The overall parking supply should be managed to meet the needs of both short- and long-term users.
- 11.10 On-street (curbside) parking should be included where appropriate in the MCA and wherever possible in the Town Center area.

- 11.11 Within the Town Center district of the MCA, the emphasis on compact development and an attractive walkable environment suggests that parking lot or structure location and design treatment should receive additional attention. Specific design standards for new structures within the Town Center district should apply.
- 11.12 Parking should be located primarily behind or beside buildings rather than between buildings and the public street.
- 11.13 Outside of the Town Center district, some portion of parking lot frontage may abut a street right-of-way, as long as separation is provided by a landscaped setback and and/or architectural screening treatments.
- 11.14 Outside of the Town Center district, the view to each parking lot should be softened by landscaping, which may include grassy berms (low hills), shrubs, trees, low brick or stone walls, and opaque fences.
- 11.15 Screening such as fences should be used to separate dissimilar and incompatible land uses such as commercial buildings or parking lots from housing.