

CHAPTER 9 ACTIVE COMMUNITY PLANNING 10-20-09

9.1 BACKGROUND

In 2007, Eden Prairie received a grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield to develop goals and policies in the Comprehensive plan to create a more physically, socially and environmentally healthy community.

Active living is more possible if environments that support residents' choice to engage in regular physical activity in their day-to-day lives, not just for recreational purposes but also for utilitarian purposes such as errands, trips to the grocery store, commuting to work, etc. The City can influence the choices residents make concerning physical activity in several ways, including land use policies, transportation systems, and availability of walking paths/greenways.

The City has adopted several documents that promote public health.

- Major Center Area Study (January 2006)
- Town Center Design Guidelines (February 2007)
- Active Community Planning Guidebook (December 2007)
- Park and Open Space System Plan (2003)
- Chapter 11 (Floodplain and Shoreland Management Ordinances), City Zoning Code
- Local Water Management Plan (2004)

9.2 GOALS

Public health can be improved by creating additional policies and initiatives relating to the following Active Community Planning topics:

1. Air quality

2. Water quality
3. Pathways and accessibility
4. Open space locations
5. Destinations and land use mix
6. Physical safety and mobility

Active Community Planning Goal One

Promote planning and design that improves physical and mental health in the community.

9.3 AIR QUALITY

Better air quality means better individual health and community-wide physical activity. Air quality can be improved by promoting the use of alternative forms of transportation to reduce emissions and planting trees along major roadways.

Policies:

- Continue development of a trail and sidewalk system that provides a valid transportation alternative.
- Support regional transit initiatives such as High Speed Busways, Light Rail Transit, and Commuter Rail.
- Continue to enforce the tree preservation and landscape ordinances and promote the planting of trees adjacent to all streets.
- Continue to require land use buffers next to major roads.

9.4 WATER QUALITY

Water quality can be improved by continuing to implement the approved local Stormwater Management Plan and adopt policies and plans of Nine Mile Creek, Riley/Purgatory Creek, and Lower Minnesota River Valley Watershed Districts.

Policies:

- Continue to require infiltration basins and rain water gardens.
- Actively enforce existing erosion control ordinances.
- Promote the use of porous pavers, or other materials that allow for water infiltration.

9.5 PATHWAYS AND ACCESSIBILITY

People need direct, accessible, and convenient pathways to destinations that satisfy their daily recreation and transportation needs. The City will encourage walking and biking by requiring redevelopment projects to connect to city-wide sidewalks and trails system.

Policies:

- Support the provision of critical pedestrian amenities for walkable mixed use housing areas, including transit access, shuttle services, street crosswalks, medians, overpasses, timed traffic lights, and benches.
- Plan for, develop, and maintain a system of pedestrian and bicycle trails that service both recreational and transportation uses.

- Ensure that new development provides direct sidewalk and bicycle trail connections between primary entrances and public facilities located in the public right-of-way.
- Ensure that all bicycle trails will be constructed according to design criteria for bikeway/hikeway trails contained in the city's 2003 Park and Open Space Plan (Chapter 5).
- Require public investment in streets, parks, and other amenities to create a streetscape identity that links street system components together.
- Expand and diversify the transportation system that serves the MCA to include a new Light Rail Transit line and stations, improved bus service, and a walking and biking network connecting residents to services, jobs and entertainment.
- Support transit and pedestrian accessibility and connectivity between primary entrances and the public trail/sidewalk system as part of all redevelopment projects.
- Provide year-round maintenance on primary trail routes, as well as trails used by children required to walk to school, and the major trails within community parks.
- Develop a community-wide parkway system with large green medians. The parkways would provide space for landscaping, benches, special lighting, trails and trash receptacles (from Parks and Open Space Plan).

9.6 OPEN SPACE LOCATIONS

Open space such as parks and plazas are key locations for recreation, physical activity, and socializing. Recreation, whether active or passive, has a direct positive impact on physical and mental health. The City should ensure these spaces are of high quality, are geographically distributed to be accessible to all residents, and are diverse enough to respond to the many needs and wants of the citizens.

Policies:

- Continue to work with the Three Rivers Park District, School District 272 and adjacent communities in a coordinated effort to connect trails and develop parkland and open space for the overall benefit of Eden Prairie residents.
- Continue to provide neighborhood or community parks including space for active recreation within a half-mile of all residential development through the use of the park dedication fee.
- Provide programs and services that meet the needs of all residents, including seniors and other special populations.
- Continue to protect open space adjacent to rivers, creeks and wetlands by enforcement existing Shoreland and where possible require dedication of land and or conservation easements.
- Encourage the preservation of permanent open space on the wooded slopes of the creek valleys through scenic easements or public ownership.
- Require public open space areas within the Town Center as identified in the Town Center Design Guidelines.

- Use Planned Unit Developments and setback and densities waivers to promote open space in all developments.

9.7 DESTINATIONS AND LAND USE MIX

A complimentary mix of land uses within walking and biking distance creates an environment that supports active transportation. If people are able to reach their local shops, parks, community centers, and workplaces with a short walk or bike ride through pleasant surroundings, they are more likely to use these methods to reach destinations. The City should work to encourage redevelopment and development that creates a balanced mix of land uses within walking or biking distance.

Policies:

- Promote and support new mixed use development that accommodates housing, particularly senior housing, within walking distance of shops and services that cater to local residents' needs.
- Encourage compact and pedestrian-friendly mixed use developments that offer the type of retail and convenience services that will minimize peak hour traffic demand.
- Create more local attractions and destinations to allow more residents the ability to live, work and play in Eden Prairie and to not have to rely as often on congested regional highways.
- Higher density mixed use housing within walking distance of services (up to 1/2 mile distance of the station) are

expected to surround a future light rail transit station.

- The City will continue efforts to develop the Town Center as a compact, walkable district. The Town Center will support a mix of uses, emphasizing residential, retail and office with a new grid system of streets and urban amenities and a pedestrian-friendly design.
- Encourage development features and components that create a vital Town Center such as protected pedestrian walkways, private open spaces, and space for sidewalk cafes.
- Adopt Town Center Design Guidelines and a Town Center zoning district to assure high quality and variety in building design, a connected and active streetscape and a walkable, lively Town Center character.
- Utilize common elements such as plazas, public structures, streetscape, and pedestrian ways to establish an identity in the Town Center Area.
- Work with private property owners to develop a comprehensive trail and walk system to link commercial developments, public facilities, open spaces and adjoining residential developments.

9.8 PHYSICAL SAFETY AND MOBILITY

Without the ability to move around freely and safely, other efforts to support active community transportation are futile. People need to feel safe on foot along streets, trails, and in parks in order to use them. The City should ensure the safety in the public realm, including public parks and trails, and the methods and site design used by the private sector when adjacent to the public thoroughfares.

Policies:

- Ensure that trails will be maintained to result in safe conditions and minimal high maintenance costs.
- Consider safety and physical limitations when planning senior housing (outdoor lighting that exceeds current City code; buildings that are designed for people with limited mobility, eyesight, and hearing particularly in disaster situations requiring evacuations).
- Ensure the safety of seniors by constructing pedestrian street crossings near senior housing that create longer crossing time, and when possible separate foot traffic from vehicle traffic through the use of underpasses, overpasses, bridges and larger medians.