

**A Policy for  
Implementing Certain Architectural  
Design and Land Use Guidelines  
which  
Encourage Active Living Principles  
for the  
City of Brooklyn Center**



## INTRODUCTION

During the past 50 years, road building has focused on moving as many cars as possible, as quickly as possible. Safety and accessibility for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders have too often been left out or addressed inadequately. “Complete Streets” is a term used to describe transportation planning and design policies and processes that emphasize safety and accessibility for all users. In conjunction with this Complete Streets policy, the City of Brooklyn Center wants to ensure that the needs and safety of pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities are taken into account not only in the overall design and operation of its roads, but also in the design and layout of any new future development or redevelopment site within the City.

The implementation of an Active Living Program for a community is due to an outgrowth of recent trends, such as the following:

- About 40 percent of Minnesotans do not drive, including children, seniors, people with disabilities, and people who cannot afford a vehicle. Complete streets helps to ensure that everyone has safe access to transportation options to lead active and independent lives.
- Minnesota has an aging population. As people age, their dependence on transportation modes beyond vehicles increases. Roads that can support biking and walking to community destinations and transit will help an aging population meet its transportation needs.
- The population of the United States is increasingly concentrated in urban areas with this trend projected to increase into the future, which will result in increased transportation demand that can be efficiently served through a multi-modal transportation system.
- Governmental agencies are required to bring the transportation system into compliance with the ADA to facilitate safe and convenient access for those with disabilities.
- An increased number of Minnesotans are overweight or obese. If left unchecked, obesity will add another \$3.7 billion in health care expenses for Minnesotans by 2020. By building infrastructure that support more walking and biking, communities can help create opportunities for people to be more physically active, while improving public health and reducing health care costs.
- Gas prices are increasing, causing people to move to alternative modes of transportation beyond the single occupancy vehicle.
- Government agencies need to do more with less. Roadways need to be planned and designed using a comprehensive process to ensure that costly future roadway retrofits are avoided.

Active living policies should encourage the integration of physical activity into daily routines through activities such as biking, walking and/or taking transit. Such activities promote active living which has the following benefits:

- Improves physical and mental health
- Decreases risk of chronic disease
- Reduces medical costs associated with chronic disease
- Reduces transportation costs
- Reduces pollution and improves air quality
- Builds safer, stronger communities
- Increases quality of life

The City of Brooklyn Center joined Active Living Hennepin County (ALHC), a partnership of cities, businesses, state and local agencies, and the county. The goals of ALHC members are; increasing opportunities for active living in their communities through policy change, infrastructure planning, marketing and communications, mentoring new and potential organizations, and hosting workshop events. The funding provided by ALHC through Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota and the State Health Improvement Program (SHIP) was instrumental in the development of this policy which was considered and adopted through City Council Resolution on July 22, 2013.

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## **BACKGROUND**

### ***History***

Brooklyn Center was primarily developed in the 1950's, 1960s and 1970s during a time in which the personal automobile dominated land use and transportation planning practices and policies. As a result, the city is highly auto-oriented and some areas lack adequate connections to adjoining neighborhoods, parks, commercial areas and community institutions.

Since then, our economy, demographics and personal attitudes have changed drastically - we face rising gas prices, growing senior and immigrant populations, and large proportions of the population want to live in bicycle friendly and walkable neighborhoods. We must therefore ensure our design practices address or reflect active living designs and principles in future land use decision-making.

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## POLICY

This policy includes the following elements:

***Vision.*** Active Living is a way of life that integrates physical activity into daily routines through activities such as biking, walking and/or taking transit. The City of Brooklyn Center hereby recognizes that the location and design of buildings and public spaces influence Active Living. Brooklyn Center will strive to locate sites in areas that are linked to community destinations and accessible by all modes of transportation. Moreover, Brooklyn Center will integrate active living elements into the design of building infrastructure and spaces while continuing to ensure the safety and security of customers, visitors, workers, citizens and city property.

These architectural design guidelines are provided to encourage a high standard of design of buildings proposed for new commercial, office, multi-family residential, civic and industrial development in Brooklyn Center. A new or improved development, especially the building's size, shape, height, mass color, materials, texture, window and entry placement and amenities provide users a specific image of a development and the community as a whole. Implementing or incorporating these guidelines or features into a new development or redeveloped site will offer an opportunity to the developers and/or owners of such sites to provide lesser site requirements than normally prescribed under City Code.

A text amendment of these and similar architectural guidelines may be incorporated into the City Code for Brooklyn Center, and may be applicable to only the Central Commerce District (CCD) and all new proposed Planned Unit Development (PUD) areas.

### **BUILDING ORIENTATION**

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1. Buildings frontages should be encouraged to be built as near to the front street (ROW) line wherever possible, with entrances situated or located along this front edge.
2. Buildings containing restaurants and adjacent to water features shall maximize opportunities for outdoor patios, internal views of the water and pedestrian relationships with other recreational interactions.
3. Buildings should be encouraged to be sited in ways to make the entries or intended uses clear to and convenient for pedestrians.
4. Buildings should be connected to public streets via sidewalks.
5. Public safety should be encouraged during building location and site connectivity decisions using CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) principles, including connection to well-lit sidewalks that are buffered by street trees or other amenities.
6. Pedestrian level building windows front the street and entrances are well-lit for user security.
7. Developments should be encouraged in which parking lots are designed to facilitate shared parking between businesses. Consideration will be given when designing parking lots as multi-use spaces for off-hour activities.

**BUILDING DESIGN**

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***Building Mass***

1. Varying scale of buildings shall be encouraged.
2. Varying rooflines to create interest in design styles shall be encouraged.
3. Multiple buildings on the same site should be designed with a visual relationship among buildings while providing for pedestrian plazas, open space and view corridors.
4. Buildings that create a visually interesting “rhythm” by varying form, volume, massing, heights and site orientation are encouraged, while maintaining a visual relationship to adjacent structures.
5. Buildings over 40’ in height are encouraged to employ a step-back design so as to not seem as imposing from the street or pedestrian walkways.
6. Developments should encourage vehicle parking behind or under buildings.

***Facade Design***

1. Windows and doors or openings should comprise at least 50% of the length of a building and at least 30% of the area of the ground floor along arterial and collector street facades.
2. Facades should utilize recessed entryways and windows, groupings of windows, horizontal and vertical offsets and reveals on surface planes to break up long continuous flat walls.
3. Masonry detailing such as soldier coursing, plane changes, or patterning shall be encouraged.
4. The use of cornices, ornamental lights, graphics, tenant blade signs, and other architectural details shall be encouraged.
5. On-story buildings shall reflect a two-story appearance with the use of upper windows, roof forms, and undulated skylines. Storefront glass shall dominate each façade. Where true, clear storefront glass is not feasible due to tenant functions, the use of spandrel glass is acceptable.
6. Multi-tenant buildings shall break up the rhythm of the façade for individuality of shops to reinforce a “main street” theme of architecture.

***Doors and Windows***

1. Canopies are to be encouraged at entry ways.
2. A minimum of 8’ clear space shall be provided from sidewalk elevation to the lowest point of a canopy and or suspended sign.
3. Window and doors should be glazed in clear glass for retail buildings. Mirrored windows are discouraged.

**LANDSCAPE AND SITE TREATMENT**

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***Landscape design***

1. Plant material should be utilized within the master plan as an aid to provide continuity within the site and provide a recognized definition of its boundaries.
2. Over-story trees shall be utilized along external and internal roadways to reinforce roadway pattern but, placed so as to not block visibility of pedestrians and bicycles.
3. Plant materials are to be utilized within parking lot islands, grouped massing of landscape is encouraged in parking lots versus individual planting to maximize landscape impact and allow functional snow removal. Some islands may be paved as pedestrian walk areas to meet pedestrian circulation requirements.

4. Loading, service, utility and outdoor storage areas that are visible from public roadways shall be predominantly screened with fencing, walls, landscaping or berms. When natural materials are used as principal screening, 75% opacity must be achieved year round through the use of evergreen trees.
5. Plant materials shall be selected with regard to its interesting structure, texture, color, seasonal interest, climate zone durability and its ultimate growth characteristics.
6. Where building sites limit planting, the placement of plant materials in planters, pots, or within paved areas is encouraged.
7. Perennial/shrub planting beds, trees and turf areas shall be irrigated with an automatic irrigation system to provide optimal plant establishment and long-term plant health.

#### ***Lighting***

1. Energy efficient lighting should be encouraged to provide continuity and consistency throughout a development and area. All parking lot lights should be uniform in style, color, and height.
2. Pedestrian lighting should be encouraged and of pedestrian scale height (12'-18') and be uniform in style and color.
3. Light poles, fixtures, and bases should be a consistent dark color (i.e. bronze, black, or brown).
4. Exterior wall lighting should be encouraged to enhance the building design and the adjoining landscape.
5. Lighting styles and building fixtures shall be of a design and scale compatible with the building and adjacent areas. Dark sky and cutoff style fixtures shall be used for safety reasons and environmental purposes. Shoe or hat-box style fixtures are acceptable for taller parking lot lighting. More detailed ornamental style fixtures shall be encouraged for pedestrian impact.
6. Light levels that promote a safe environment are required. Excessive brightness should be prohibited.

#### ***Pedestrian Connections***

1. Parking facilities should be designed to accommodate pedestrian and bicycle access to the buildings.
2. Developments should have sidewalks and crosswalks to connect parking to allow for safe pedestrian movement through the parking lot.
3. Pedestrian connectivity should be incorporated to link buildings within the site.
4. Pedestrian connections should be made to the existing public sidewalk system.
5. Benches or seating should be provided for pedestrians.
6. Striping and signage of crosswalks shall be required at intersections.
7. Outdoor seating areas and outdoor sales areas should be encouraged or incorporated where appropriate. Such areas shall utilize a unified theme and approach to the defining elements (structural elements, railings, shading, paving, lighting, landscaping) for the creation of these exterior spaces.

#### ***Bicycle Connections***

1. Bike parking should be provided in close proximity to primary building entrances or in prominent areas that serve multiple businesses.
2. Bike parking or storage should be located in the back of buildings unless there is an entrance near the location.
3. Bike racks shall be of a type that supports the wheel and frame of the bike.
4. Indoor bicycle racks, controlled-access bicycle storage room, bicycle lockers, and bicycle corrals are secure parking options.

5. Trail connections should be maintained and connected to any existing overpass system.
6. City will consider and support an adjustment to the required parking standards or required number of vehicle spaces if a development demonstrates or provides on-site bicycle parking.

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## Implementation

### ***Planning***

Establishing plans and protocols is a critical step in creating well-designed and reasonably planned developments. Effective planning results in design guidance and implementation clarity that allows the developers and project designers to efficiently move forward on individual projects in a collaborative and cost-efficient manner.

The implementation of certain design guidelines as proposed herein must be integrated throughout the City, and may be institutionalized through ordinance amendments, planning documents and checklists, and design manuals. Land Use Design Guidelines and criterion may be incorporated into specific planning documents, including the city's comprehensive plan, neighborhood plans, active living plans, and transportation plans. A community's zoning ordinance, subdivision ordinances, and/or design policies should be updated to reflect the community's supportive approach to active living design elements.

### ***Development Resources***

The implementation of this Land Use Policy will require city resources and staff time. A summary of anticipated activities along with their timing and frequency is present in the table below:

<b>Process Element</b>	<b>Timing / Frequency</b>
Staff training	Continuous
Adopt design standards	Update periodically
Amendments to the City Code & Comp Plan	Consider when updating code & plan
Implement and evaluate performance measures	Periodically
Coordinate with other jurisdictions	Continuous
Regularly apply for grants	Continuous
Review feasible funding sources and adopt revisions to city CIP	Annually with CIP update