

## **GreenStep Cities Best Practice # 9** **- final draft for comment through May 2010 –**

- ❖ ***Efficient Highway-Oriented Development:*** Adopt commercial development and design standards for highway road corridors.

**Optional** for all cities

**Category:** Land Use

### **Summary**

In most communities, highway-oriented commercial development is a common land use pattern. Typical highway commercial development is totally oriented towards automobile traffic, often lacks visual appeal, creates a linear development pattern rather than clusters, and reduces highway functionality by creating intersections. Highway development is typically lower density, using more development acres, fragmenting habitat and imposing higher costs onto cities. As gateways into – and the places that visitors get their first impressions of – communities, highway commercial development can be made more attractive, ecological, efficient and walkable.

### **Best Practice Actions**

- For all cities: complete at least one of the following Actions if you choose to implement this best practice.
- (1) Conduct a visual preference survey with community members and establish design goals for highway corridors.
- (2) Participate in regional economic development planning with representatives from surrounding townships, cities and the county to:
  - a. Estimate commercial/industrial needs among all jurisdictions.
  - b. Jointly implement recommendations to stage highway commercial development in order to avoid overbuilding and sprawl.
- (3) Adopt transportation infrastructure design standards that accomplish at least one of the following:
  - a. Improve the ecologic functions of land adjacent to highway corridors.
  - b. Facilitate clustering of commercial highway development.
- (4) Adopt, with modifications as necessary, at least one of the following from Minnesota's 2009 *Model Ordinances for Sustainable Development*:
  - a. Highway Commercial District
  - b. Adequate Public Facilities ordinance that stages highway commercial development concurrently with infrastructure expansion.
- (5) Require decommissioning in development agreements for big box stores should they remain vacant for several years.

See also actions under the *Complete Green Streets* best practice.

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### **Implementation Resources**

(tied to the relevant Action by number)

- (1) Minnesota Design Team planning charrettes often address highway corridor design:  
<http://www.minnesotadesignteam.org>

- (1) Community engagement and visioning assistance is available from a number of organizations in Minnesota, such as regional initiative foundations: <http://www.greaterminnesota.net>
- (1) Training workshops, consultation and local assessments from U-Connect at the University of MN Extension: <http://www.extension.umn.edu/u-connect>
- (1) and (2) Regional development organizations work with cities on transportation and economic issues common to multiple units of government, and are all linked to from the Minnesota Regional Development Organization (MRDO) website: <http://www.mrdo.org>
- (3a) PlantSelector tool for roadside planting from the MN Dept. of Transportation: <http://dotapp7.dot.state.mn.us/plant>
- (3a) *Conservation Buffers: Design Guidelines for Buffers, Corridors, and Greenways* (USDA, 2008): <http://www.unl.edu/nac/bufferguidelines>
- (3b) Access management is the planning, design and implementation of land use and transportation strategies in an effort to maintain a safe flow of traffic while accommodating the access needs of adjacent development: <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/accessmanagement>
- (3b) Lakeland Shores, MN, for example, uses 3 serial roundabouts along a highway-oriented commercial district. Details on roundabouts: [http://www.nextstep.state.mn.us/res\\_detail.cfm?id=1964](http://www.nextstep.state.mn.us/res_detail.cfm?id=1964)
- (4a) Use the Highway Commercial District ordinance from Minnesota's 2009 *Model Ordinances for Sustainable Development*, and for small cities not in metropolitan areas, create or modify a zoning district that permits only traffic-dependent commercial land uses, or those businesses not appropriate for downtown: <http://www.crplanning.com/susdo.htm>
- (4b) Use the Adequate Public Facilities ordinance, most appropriate for cities outside of or on the fringe of metropolitan areas, from Minnesota's 2009 *Model Ordinances for Sustainable Development*: <http://www.crplanning.com/susdo.htm>
- (5) For example, the conditional use permit granted by Inver Grove Heights to WalMart states that if the store closes, WalMart has two years to remarket the store or return the site to its pre-development condition.

## Benefits

- Improved flow of highway traffic, lowered risk of accidents.
- Long-term reduction in vehicle miles traveled due to more compact development.
- Less leap-frog development, lowering costs of extending and maintaining infrastructure.
- More synergy for clustered retail businesses.
- More development pressure for infill sites.
- Higher quality, more aesthetic development that retains its property value.

## Connection to State Policy

- The MN Dept. of Transportation lists ten access management principles, which include:
  - 5. *Avoid strip development. Promote commercial nodes. Commercial development can be located adjacent to and visible from the highway, but should be accessed via a system of parallel local roads and side streets that complement the state highway system requirements.* (See <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/accessmanagement/manageaccess.html> )
- The MN Dept. of Transportation has developed mobility performance targets for interregional corridors, which comprise 2,960 miles of highways that represent 2% of all roadway miles in the state and that account for 33% of all vehicle miles traveled in the state. (See [http://www.dot.state.mn.us/planning/program/regional\\_new.html](http://www.dot.state.mn.us/planning/program/regional_new.html) )