

Chapter 3: LAND USE POLICY

A. OVERALL LAND USE STRATEGY (APPLIES TO ALL LAND USES)

Goal: The Overall Land Use Strategy is intended to reinforce and reassert traditional patterns of development characteristics of older Milwaukee neighborhoods. These patterns form the relationship of the public and private realms, the layout of streets and blocks, the physical character of sites and buildings, and those tangible and "intangible" elements that create sense of place. Where neighborhood character has been eroded, new development or redevelopment should return these areas to an improved state of health and well-being, and in doing so, restore a sense of belonging and a sense of place.

Use Policies

- Follow current zoning unless a specific zoning change is identified within the District and Corridors and/or Catalytic Project Chapters of this Plan.
- Do not make radical departures from existing densities (height, area, and/or placement).
- Discourage additional high intensity or concentrations of social services and community based residential facilities.

Form Policies

- Preserve the overall neighborhood character as a compact, interconnected and walkable community.
- Place buildings to create proximity of residences to workplace, services, and shopping and to sharply define the street frontage.
- Create transitions to minimize conflict between uses. The transitions may be use, building typology, design (scale, massing, height, and area), or landscaping.
- Minimize the intrusion of automobiles into the public realm, and more specifically that part of the public realm reserved for pedestrians.
- Maintain good visibility between buildings and their surroundings.

Redevelopment Strategies

- To strengthen the tax base, encourage additional taxable uses over additional non-taxable uses.
- Consider historic buildings, sites and districts as valuable irreplaceable assets to be used as key pieces of larger redevelopment efforts. For rehab or additions, maintain historic character of the existing building whenever possible.
- Protect historic buildings so their eventual redevelopment potential can be realized. Support the creation of National Register Historic Districts in order to make owners eligible for federal and state tax credits.
- Permit selective demolition of structures that serve as a blighting influence on the neighborhood, or can no longer be feasibly restored to contribute to the immediate or surrounding area.
- Cluster new development to have the greatest positive impact on surrounding property values.
- Couple new construction with rehab, renovation and preservation of surrounding properties to maximize benefit to the neighborhood.

B. RESIDENTIAL

The following residential policies address: (1) land use compatibility; (2) design for the redevelopment, rehabilitation and preservation of existing housing stock; and (3) the development of new residences to increase owner-occupancy throughout the neighborhood.

Goal: Increase quality and maintain diversity of housing types that are compatible with and build upon the existing scale and character of the neighborhood. Reinforce and build upon the historic development patterns and assets of the neighborhood when designing new structures and rehabilitating existing structures.

Use Policies

Appropriate Types/Mix

- Discourage the conversion of a purely residential structure in a residential zoning district into a non-residential use (such as day care centers, community living arrangements, etc.)
- Vary building types to include single-family homes, granny flats, row houses, town homes, duplexes, and multi-unit mid-rises. Transition building types to increase density from single-family residences in residential areas up to multi-unit buildings in mixed-use areas.
- Encourage residential above retail on commercial corridors and between intensively developed commercial nodes
- Encourage live/work units.

Density

- Maintain the broad range of dwelling unit densities to allow for a mix of single-family homes, starter homes, townhouses, condominiums and apartments.
- Support a decrease in the number of studios and one-bedroom apartments in areas with existing high concentrations.

Location

- Locate residential land uses to ensure compatibility with adjacent non-residential land uses. Discourage locating single-family structures adjacent to commercial/industrial uses generating excessive noise, traffic, lighting, or other incompatible characteristics. Encourage locating medium and high-density residential categories near commercial areas and public open spaces and on sites with good access to major arterials and transit routes.
- Encourage a range of housing types and opportunities in proximity to employment centers to achieve a balance between housing and job opportunities and to ease commuter travel.
- Encourage residential town homes and row houses along commercial corridors in areas where retail and commercial activities as the primary uses are no longer supported by the surrounding residential densities.

Form Policies

Block

- Design typical residential blocks to be short and narrow with an alley in between.
- Infill development and new construction should blend in with the existing scale and massing design.
- Within predominately residential neighborhoods, design streets after the existing Milwaukee neighborhood patterns including on street parallel parking, limited curb-to-curb pavement widths, and off-street parking to the rear of residential structures with access from the alley.

Parcel

- Maintain original platted lot sizes for single family and duplex lots, typically 30 or 40 feet in width and 120 feet in depth. Larger lots for larger single-family homes or multiple family structures are allowed as long as they do not exceed the typical lot size by more than 50% of the typical lot size.
- Size of structures in relationship to the lot size and placement of the building on the lot should generally complement the existing modulation of other structures on the block face.
- Lot and building proportions should be similar. Buildings, which are smaller in scale, should be placed on appropriately sized parcels. For example, small lots are appropriate for small houses.
- Keep building setbacks consistent with the existing conditions of the block and/or area. Make front yard build-to lines and rear yard setbacks for all construction equal to the average of the adjacent, block, or neighborhood structures, whichever is the most compatible.
- Where alleys exist, access rear garage or parking area by means of the alley. In terms of infill development, if no alley exists, design the least obtrusive curb cut onto the front or side street.
- Limit driveways in number and minimize in width to the greatest extent possible. Driveways should cross the sidewalk at right angles so as to limit the impact on pedestrians.

Building and Site Elements

- The number of units in a building (particularly multi-family buildings) should be balanced with the amount of on-site and/or nearby safe, and accessible outdoor play area for children.
- Keep building heights close to (within 50% plus or minus) what is typical for the area unless the building is being utilized to transition a residential area into a more intense non-residential area.
- For all residential rehabilitation and new development, blend with existing context. Include architectural elements that are compatible with the character of the area. Include front porches, connecting sidewalks, rear garages, windows facing the street, and traditional articulation of facades.
- A garage whether attached or detached, shall not be the front most building, or portion of a building, on a residential property.
- Exterior entrances and walkways should be well lit at night.

Redevelopment Strategies

Acquisition/Demolition/Rehab

- Encourage conservation of existing structures along with infill housing. Renovation is preferred over demolition.
- Discourage demolition of residential units for the purpose of building surface parking lots.
- Use spot acquisition when code enforcement actions accumulate or a property is deemed a nuisance to the neighborhood.
- Support existing and encourage additional programs that grant dollars or provide tax breaks to home owners for rehabilitation.

Concentration

- Avoid concentrating residential special uses, as defined in zoning code, within individual neighborhoods.

Public/Private Housing Mix

- Increase owner occupancy.
- Undesirable or undersized vacant city-owned lots shall be offered for sale to adjacent owners, except when there is a greater priority for the land, such as creating infill development that adds to the tax base, or land assembly for a project that will benefit the surrounding neighborhood.
- Develop mixed income housing (in addition to existing public housing units) at public housing developments and new areas throughout the neighborhood.
- Continue to reduce the density and isolation in all public housing developments.
- Place subsidized family housing on scattered sites; design should conform to existing neighborhood character.

C. COMMERCIAL

The following commercial policies enhance and create retail destinations by utilizing the existing infrastructure while allowing for new compatible buildings when appropriate. The policies focus on development of high quality, well designed, and needed uses.

Goal: Concentrate commercial uses at corridors and nodes while increasing the marketability to meet the needs of residents and attract commuters within the greater Milwaukee area.

Use Policies

Appropriate Types/Mix

- Encourage street level, pedestrian-oriented commercial uses. Encourage offices to locate on the second floor above retail, and allow at street level in areas where there is no negative impact on the street vitality. Encourage residential apartments and condominiums above retail uses.
- Allow residential uses along commercial corridors in areas where retail and commercial activity as the primary uses are no longer supported by the surrounding residential densities. Residential uses along commercial corridors should be multi-story, densely developed, with minimal curb cuts along the commercial corridor.

Location

- Existing corner commercial uses within residential blocks are permitted as long as they are economically viable and physically well maintained, and as long as their use does not become automobile-oriented or otherwise detrimental to the neighborhood.
- Incorporate large single tenant uses in commercial corridors when the use supports smaller uses by acting as an anchor or draw for the corridor. These uses should add to the commercial/retail mix in a positive way, providing a greater range of goods and services or better price structure than already exists, similar to the way a large department store anchors a mall of boutiques and smaller specialty stores.
- Discourage the expansion of commercial uses into surrounding residential neighborhoods. Permit limited commercial expansions if the uses are compatible in scale and intensity with residential neighborhoods, if they provide a service to adjacent residents, and the traffic, noise, hours of operation, lighting and building mass are compatible. Locate commercial uses within residential neighborhoods on street corners and not within a neighborhood block.
- Commercial day care facilities are encouraged to locate in existing commercial buildings that have land adjacent to them for the purpose of outdoor play areas.

Form Policies

Block

- On vacant lots along commercial facades, discourage surface parking and rather promote buildings. Locate off-street parking behind buildings where possible.
- Maintain the existing street wall of commercial buildings. Building should be built-out to the street so that, collectively, the buildings on a block work together to define the pedestrian area and the street itself.
- Encourage streetscape elements that unify the area: benches, lighting, entry markers, planters, and/or paving patterns.
- Design commercial districts and corridors with on-street parallel parking, two-way traffic, and a maximum speed limit of 30 miles per hour. Keep curb cuts to a minimum and shared when possible.

- Maintain the traditional street grid pattern of the area, and provide alleys for off-street deliveries.
- Make walking attractive, easier, and convenient.

Parcel

- Promote development of commercial and office center with shared road access rather than linear patterns with individual driveways.
- Encourage connections between parking lots.

Building/Site Elements

- Encourage single large tenants to locate in multi-story buildings rather than occupying a single-story spanning large portions of the street front. Mixed-use multi-tenant, multi-story buildings are preferred over single-tenant, single story buildings.
- Incorporate large single tenant uses in a commercial corridor with the principal façade located along the commercial corridor, storefront windows, sheltered entry, and the landscaped/ screened parking areas or structure located to the rear of the building.
- Preserve the historic façade of a building during adaptive reuse, rebuilding, or redevelopment of commercial buildings.
- Face the front façade of the principal building onto a public street.
- Provide a clear entrance facing the primary street frontage. The main entrance shall have a direct connection to the public sidewalk. Additional corner entrances are encouraged.
- Use landscaping to screen the perimeter of surface parking, structured parking (where other ground floor activities are not present), and service areas where visible from the street.
- Encourage outdoor seating areas. Large grassy areas, unless formally constructed as part of an urban park should not be included in a commercial corridor.
- Include large windows along all street facades of a building.
- Prohibit blank walls along street frontages.
- Locate gas station buildings along the primary street frontage with pumps located to the side or behind the building.
- Encourage mixed-use parking structures over single use parking structures and surface parking lots. Encourage parking structures to have street level retail use, storefront windows, level decks, and veneer, such as bricks or finished concrete, compatible with the surrounding buildings. Prohibit single use parking structures fronting on commercial corridors.
- Place surface parking lots to the side of commercial buildings, not facing street intersections, and limit their size. When parking must be along a street frontage, use a landscaped setback buffer containing a decorative fence treatment or other gesture to maintain the definition of the street edge.
- Restrict parking to the minimum number of spaces required to accommodate customers/visitors to the commercial corridor.

Redevelopment Strategies

Demolition/Rehab/Infill

- Discourage residential demolition for building commercial surface parking lots.
- Preservation, adaptive reuse, and infill of context-compatible buildings (in that order) are preferred approaches to vacant buildings and lots on commercial corridors.

Concentration

- Avoid over concentration of commercial uses such as gas stations, daycares, and check cashing/pay day loan establishments.

Taxable/Non-Taxable Uses

- Encourage new taxable over new non-taxable uses, unless a strong case can be made that the non-taxable use supports the surrounding tax base or spurs economic development.

D. OPEN SPACE

The following policies for open space create destinations and gathering places for residents, create identifying features for visitors, and increase the sense of security in the public areas of the neighborhood.

Goal: Use neighborhood open space as an economic development tool. Use different types of open space to meet the needs of diverse groups of people. Use varying sizes and treatment to enhance streets and provide places of refuge on busy commercial corridors. Use dispersed locations to serve different parts of the neighborhood.

Use Policies

- Encourage public spaces within a comfortable walking distance of every residential home.
- Locate public plazas or spaces in the most intensely planned/developed districts and corridors.
- Allow conversion of environmentally remediated or unremediated sites as neighborhood open space, provided they have been certified as safe for all residents.

Form Policies

- Include parks or plazas that meet the need of area residents, visitors, and workers as part of the site design for new construction and/or renovation
- Maintain and improve visibility between parks and surrounding properties.
- Create pedestrian and bike paths through park space that connect to the surrounding street and block system.
- Encourage identity signage, landscaping, art sculptures, and way-finding elements to create community gateways at appropriate locations.
- Ensure institutional public spaces (such as school recreational areas) are green and visibly accessible to the public. Fencing should be minimal in height.

Redevelopment Strategies

- Public open space is not appropriate unless a formal administration and financing structure can be created to support maintenance of such space.
- Use open space to create value or add value to districts and corridors.
- Use open space to add balance to densely developed blocks.

E. CIVIC AND INSTITUTIONAL

The following policies for institutions and civic spaces increase the compatibility between institutions and adjacent land uses.

Goal: Create or redevelop civic and institutional uses as welcoming places for people to gather and as visual landmarks for the community at large.

Use Policies

- Locate institutional uses with high traffic generation, at the intersections/nodes of commercial corridors rather than in stable residential areas.
- Encourage decentralized institutional uses rather than large centralized uses that require customers (users of the service) to drive and park.
- Create school/library/park connections that make it easier for children to walk between places.
- Consider parking as an accessory use, that should not exceed what is necessary to accommodate visitors and employees.

Redevelopment Strategies

- Encourage new taxable uses over new non-taxable uses, unless a strong case can be made that the non-taxable use supports the surrounding tax base or spurs economic development.
- Locate tax-exempt uses in buildings previously occupied by tax-exempt uses or on the upper floors of buildings along commercial corridors. Discourage tax-exempt tenants on the first floor along commercial corridors.
- Discourage concentration in number and intensity of social service providers in the neighborhood in proportion to the county/region.
- Support expanded primary care capacity delivered by target area facilities (such as community health centers).

F. TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The following transportation policies provide safe and efficient access to all land uses by enhancing and in some instances recreating the historic neighborhood traffic patterns. The policies also maximize route alternatives and improve the viability of alternatives to automobiles.

Goal: Create a hierarchy of public right-of-ways and blocks to successfully accommodate public transit, automobiles, bicycles, and pedestrians.

Use Policies

- On major and minor arterials, create an effective multi-modal public right of way including space for pedestrians, bicycles, automobiles, and mass transit.
- Maintain the street system based on the one-mile grid, clearly differentiated into major and minor arterials supported by collector and access streets.

Form Policies

- Design cross sections and dedicate right-of-way for mass transit, automobiles, bicycles and pedestrians based upon the needs, character, and intensity of adjacent land uses.
- Provide pedestrian connections between local neighborhood workplaces, shopping areas, recreational/open space, civic/institutional sites, and other lands.

Redevelopment Strategies

- Prohibit increasing the traffic capacity of right-of-ways if expansion would negatively impact the majority of the adjacent land uses. Use scarce infrastructure dollars wisely by prioritizing reinvestment over expansion.
- Emphasize the movement of more people, rather than the movement of more vehicles, when making investment decisions.
- Maintain and promote two-way travel.
- Remove cul-de-sacs and street closures when they improve the public safety and increase transportation alternatives. Development should maintain the existing street grid, where present, and restore any disrupted street grid where feasible.
- Encourage all proposed development projects near an existing or planned major transit corridor to incorporate site design measures that enhance access to the transit system.
- Encourage Intelligent Transportation System Technology to be placed in bus stations along key transit routes. This technology includes monitors that identify the time of arrival of the next bus.

