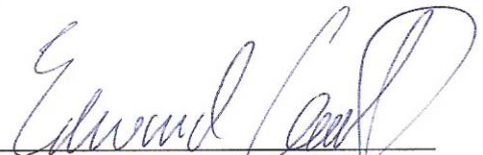


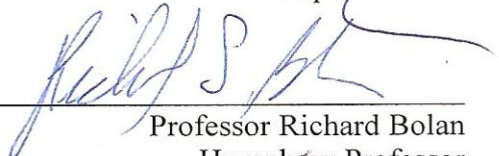
**New Town Centers
Excelsior and Grand, St. Louis Park and Heart of the City, Burnsville:
Adapting New Urbanist Principles to Meet Suburban Realities**

A MURP Professional Paper
In Partial Fulfillment of the Master of Urban and Regional Planning Degree Requirements
The Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs
The University of Minnesota

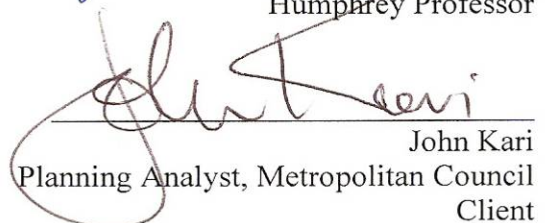
Gregory R. Schweser
April 28, 2008



Professor Ed Goetz
Paper Advisor



Professor Richard Bolan
Humphrey Professor



John Kari
Planning Analyst, Metropolitan Council
Client

5/6/08

Date

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Sprawl and New Urbanism.....	4
New Town Centers.....	6
Excelsior & Grand and Heart of the City.....	8
The Neighborhood, the District, and the Corridor.....	11
The Block, the Street, and the Building.....	16
Factors Potentially Affecting Design.....	19
Conclusion.....	27
Works Cited.....	29
Appendix A: Charter for the New Urbanism.....	31
Appendix B: Interviews.....	35
Appendix C: Excelsior and Grand Map and Concept Plan.....	43
Appendix D: Heart of the City Map and Concept Plan.....	45
Appendix E: Land Use and Neighborhood Context Maps of E & G and HOC.....	47
 Figures:	
Figure 1: Households in Proximity of Excelsior and Grand and Heart of the City, 2007.....	19
Figure 2: Traffic near E & G, 2006.....	20
Figure 3: Traffic near HOC, 2006.....	20
Figure 4: Selected Demographic Characteristics.....	22
Figure 5: Burnsville Age Cohorts.....	22
Figure 6: St. Louis Park Age Cohorts.....	22
Figure 7: Means of Transportation to Work.....	24
Figure 8: Commute Times.....	24

In America, the main battles for a sustainable urban future will be fought in the suburbs, as they pose the most difficult political terrain for design and environmental improvement.

—David Walters and Linda Luise Brown (2004)

Introduction

The creation of new town centers based on New Urbanist principles has increased in the United States throughout the past decade as suburban areas seek to revitalize themselves and create a sense of place. While New Urbanism offers design principles intended to counter the trends of urban sprawl, in suburbia the practice must often conform to the realities of existing incongruous patterns of development, political, and market forces. Two suburban new town center developments within the Twin Cities, Excelsior and Grand in St. Louis Park and Heart of the City in Burnsville are nearing completion and exemplify ways in which New Urbanist principles have been adapted to conform to the suburban context. As additional suburbs in the Twin Cities seek to implement new town center plans they should carefully analyze New Urbanist principles in the context of their own existing suburban fabric. Strict adherence to New Urbanist principles may not be advisable if such principles threaten the viability of a project. However a balance must be attained in order to achieve economic success while also providing the benefits to the urban fabric that is exemplified in New Urbanist goals. Analysis of Excelsior and Grand and Heart of the City may be useful to understand how this balance may be achieved. Excelsior and Grand and Heart of the City will be critiqued here based on relevant New Urbanist principles of The Neighborhood, The District, and The Corridor and The Block, The Street, and The Building. Deviations from these principles will be examined based upon existing demographic, market, and land use factors that apply to each specific case.

Sprawl and New Urbanism

After World War Two urban settlement patterns in the United States changed drastically as urban areas decentralized and mass produced housing developments enabled returning veterans to buy homes on the urban fringe (Duany et al., 2000). In his book *Crabgrass Frontier*, Jackson (1985) describes how government highway and housing policies led to mass disinvestment in central cities further spurring suburban expansion. As central cities declined, suburbs continued to grow ever further outward, some morphing from bedroom communities into 'edge cities' where massive retail and job centers provided all of the necessities for daily life (Garreau, 1991). While decentralization continued throughout the 20th century, critics began to decry the negative effects some of these development patterns began to inflict.

The concept of urban sprawl has become a buzz word that incites the passions of environmentalists, urbanists, and social critics alike. Ewing defines sprawl as “a form of urbanization distinguished by leapfrog patterns of development, commercial strips, low density, separated land uses, automobile dominance, and a minimum of public open space” (in Gillham, 2002, p. 4). This type of development is often decried for the environmental, social, fiscal, and aesthetic harms it imposes on the built environment (Gillham, 2002). Among other things, auto oriented low density development on the urban fringe is charged with diminishing air and water quality, destroying wildlife habitats, diminishing prime agricultural land, and diminishing public health as large highways and parking lots separate housing from work and retail opportunities. (Walters and Brown, 2004).

In 1993, the Congress for New Urbanism (CNU) formed in reaction to the problems sprawl pose for existing cities. The CNU supports the “configuration of sprawling suburbs into

communities of real neighborhoods and diverse districts, the conservation of natural environments, and the preservation of our built legacy” (CNU, 1997-2007). New Urbanists promote compact mixed use developments that are walkable in scale and neighborhood units that are regionally interconnected through transit as well as the automobile (Duany, 2000). The Charter for New Urbanism lays out twenty seven principles of development divided into three scales of development: the region, metropolis, city and town; neighborhood, district, and corridor; and block, street, and building (Duany, 2000) (see Appendix A). New Urbanists contend that communities should be compact, mixed use urban spaces that create a sense of place; streets should be pedestrian friendly and use a grid layout to shorten trips; communities should be designed at the half-mile village scale (Berke et al, 2006).

While New Urbanist theory attempts to create an urban form antithetical to sprawl, it is not without its critics. St. Antoine (2007) points out that New Urbanist projects compete with the suburbs for middle class home buyers without addressing the desires these individuals have for suburban lifestyles. Additionally, early New Urbanist projects including The Disney Corporation’s Celebration and DPZ’s Seaside have perpetuated the same suburban auto-oriented lifestyle that New Urbanist critics oppose. Both developments are high-end greenfield developments located far from adequate retail and job centers and are only accessible by car. The exclusivity of many New Urbanist projects in practice is denounced by Clarke (2005) who has noted that as New Urban developments are often large in scope in order to establish credible developments worth emulating. Affordable housing elements are often left out while non-profit and housing advocate groups are marginalized (Clarke, 2005).

Early New Urbanist developments may lack many of the purported aims of the movement but such projects may be restrictive by necessity in order to create prototypes

necessary for future projects to obtain support and funding. Political and financial institutions may be unwilling to support new projects that deviate from the time tested standards of development (Leinberger, 2005). The tide, however, may soon be turning. In a speech delivered to the Minnesota Chapter of the American Planning Association on September 27, 2007, Reid Ewing stated that market research done by the Smart Growth Institute has revealed that demographic trends may be leading to an increased demand for housing products other than the suburban standard single family detached home. Additionally, Robert Charles Lesser & Co. and Zimmerman-Volk has shown that up to 50 percent of target populations want to live in mixed-use walkable places (Leingberger, 2005). Changing local and global factors such as shifts in demographics, increasing gas prices may pave the way for New Urbanism to become a viable alternative to modern development practices.

New Town Centers

The development trend to create new town centers in existing suburbs that lack traditional downtown areas is a potential solution to many of the critiques New Urbanist projects have faced. Greenfield developments such as Seaside and Celebration may have brought New Urbanism into the spotlight but they do not address issues of declining cities and suburbs or increase pedestrian and transit opportunities for existing auto-oriented areas. The creation of new town centers is a broad movement to reshape existing suburbs into places with a core and identity (The Planning Center, 2005). McMahon (1999) identified suburban town centers as the number one smart growth trend claiming that they represent “a hopeful shift from the sprawling, segregated land use pattern that has predominated since the end of World War II (p 4). He notes

that in the Washington D.C. area alone there are more than twenty town center developments under construction. This increased visibility as well as media attention placed on mixed-use walkable neighborhoods may make such development patterns less foreign among the population and more likely to be developed in the future.

In recent decades the ubiquitous suburban strip mall along arterial thoroughfares has declined as a viable retail destination due to the emergence of alternative retail facilities located along highway interchanges (Freedman, 2005). What remains of failed strip developments are often blighted corridors full of small retail buildings surrounded by surface parking. Creating new town centers on failed retail strips offers an opportunity to increase an area's vitality and provide a sense of place that can both reinvigorate a community and begin to alter the existing urban fabric into pedestrian friendly mixed-use compact areas.

In order to successfully redevelop an area into a new town center, careful attention must be placed on the existing suburban reality (The Planning Center, 2005). Each suburb will have differing demographic characteristics as well as different existing land use patterns. Many early new town center projects did not address these realities and failed, often because they were placed in the middle of a development and away from a main road (Metropolitan Institute at Virginia Tech, 2005). A mixed use development that contains residential units and retail itself may not create a market large enough to sustain itself. Lacking street accessibility or parking may also discourage use by those who do not live in the development. New Urbanist principles should be modified as necessary to meet the needs of the specific new town center site.

Pedestrian orientation, for example, might be an overall goal of New Urbanism but may need to be compromised somewhat if a site is mainly accessible by car and there is limited access from

nearby neighborhoods. Each new town center will have to be tailor fit and crafted to meet the needs of its specific location and market.

Excelsior & Grand and Heart of the City

Within the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area there are several new town center projects that are in various planning stages. Harvey Rockwood notes in the November 14, 2007 edition of the Minnesota Sun community newspaper that even Bloomington, the home to the Mall of America, has recently considered embarking on a new town center project to create a sense of place in this inner-tier suburb. Excelsior and Grand in St. Louis Park and the Heart of the City in Burnsville are two examples of new town center projects that are in advanced stages of development. These two developments have each utilized New Urbanist principles to a degree relevant to their specific locations. Excelsior and Grand could be considered more of a traditional New Urbanist town center with compact mixed-use development and limited surface parking whereas Heart of the City is more of a hybrid as it incorporates a large, auto-oriented, big box strip development.

Excelsior and Grand

The development at Excelsior and Grand is a fifteen acre mixed-use project developed by TOLD Developers that contains 91,000 square feet of retail, 660 residential units, and a 1.6 acre town green that links to a city park (CNU, 2007, Allegro Realty Advisors, 2007). Approximately half of retail units are rental apartments and the other half are condominiums with price ranges

from \$890/month to \$625,000 (Allegro Realty Advisors LTD, 2007). Retail on site includes a Trader Joe's, Starbucks, Panera, Pier 1 Imports, McCoy's Public House and Brew Kitchen, and several small boutiques and specialty shops. There is on-street parking throughout the development and 850 parking stalls located in two parking garages (Metropolitan Council, n.d.). The development is located on a major arterial road approximately 3 miles from Uptown Minneapolis to the East. Three regular bus routes serve Excelsior and Grand along Excelsior Boulevard and also connect to employment and housing centers (Metropolitan Council, n.d.).

Excelsior and Grand (E & G) sits in the north side of Excelsior Boulevard about a half mile to the east of Highway 100. The development is surrounded by traditional strip style development to the east and west. Directly to the west of E & G on the north side of Excelsior Boulevard are large big box retail developments and the Park Nicollet clinic. Neighborhoods with traditional street grids are located directly to the south (behind the strip developments) and to the west (across Highway 100). Along Excelsior Boulevard E & G consists of four story buildings that come directly up to the sidewalk containing boutique shops. These buildings open up at Grand Avenue into a pedestrian friendly town green lined with restaurants and outdoor seating that leads into Wolfe Park.

Heart of the City Burnsville

Heart of the City Burnsville (HOC) is a 54 acre master plan designed by Dahlgren, Shardlow, and Uban Incorporated with individual built projects created by different developers. HOC contains several existing projects including two high density mixed use retail and residential units along Nicollet Avenue, Dakota County Community Development Agency

affordable town home units, upscale town home villas, and a traditional, suburban, big box strip development containing a Cub Foods supermarket. Nicollet Commons Park lays in the center of HOC adjacent the site of Burnsville's future performing arts center. The site also includes a parking ramp, a stand-alone liquor store, one of three proposed Uptown Landing condominiums, and one of Nicollet Plaza's two proposed mixed-use buildings that will eventually box in Cub Foods and hide the parking lot from the street.

Many housing types are available in HOC including 84 affordable housing units in town homes and apartments, 63 additional studio through two bedroom apartments, and approximately 150 condominiums (City of Burnsville, n.d.). Prices range from affordable at 60% of the median income for rentals to \$360,000 for condos with several prices in between (City of Burnsville, n.d.). Members of the Heart of the City Design Review Committee noted in an interview that future development projects may include office buildings, a hotel, and another mixed use retail-residential-office building (see Appendix B).

HOC is bordered on the north by Highway 13 and the south by Burnsville Parkway. A minor collector road, Nicollet Avenue, runs right down the center of HOC. Interstate 35W runs parallel to Nicollet Avenue approximately one half mile to the west. Between 35W and HOC is a secondary portion of the Heart of the City that consists primarily of office/commercial uses in stand-alone buildings surrounded by surface parking. This portion is part of the HOC plan but is separate from the town center portion of the development and is reserved for more traditional suburban uses (Dahlgren, Shardlow, and Uban, Inc., 1999). A major Metro Transit park and ride station is located on Nicollet Avenue directly north of Highway 13. There are five bus lines through Heart of the City that have limited schedules connecting the area to downtown Minneapolis, the Hiawatha Light Rail line, and nearby suburbs (Metro Transit, 2007).

New Urbanist Principles, Excelsior and Grand, and Heart of the City

While both E & G and HOC seek to create a sense of place by establishing pedestrian friendly, vibrant, mixed-use, town centers—goals consistent with New Urbanism—each varies somewhat from New Urbanist principles in part due to the conditions specific to the project sites. E & G and HOC will be evaluated based on applicable New Urbanist principles of The Neighborhood, The District, and The Corridor and The Block, The Street, and The Building laid out in the Charter for New Urbanism (CNU, 1997-2007) (see Appendix A for a complete list of these principles). Following this evaluation, demographic and physical characteristics of their respective areas will be examined to determine how each project has adapted to, or deviated from New Urbanist principles in order to meet the needs of their specific sites.

The neighborhood, the district, and the corridor

Principle: Neighborhoods should be compact, pedestrian-friendly, and mixed-use. Districts generally emphasize a special single use, and should follow the principles of neighborhood design when possible. Corridors are regional connectors of neighborhoods and districts; they range from boulevards and rail lines to rivers and parkways.

E & G is compact and pedestrian friendly. The majority of the street activity in E & G takes places on Grand Avenue where pedestrian walkways are extended and outdoor seating for restaurants is available. There is a roadway with a sidewalk that extends west to the Park Nicollet clinic. Access is limited, however, to residential units northeast of Monterey Drive which acts as a physical barrier to the E & G site. While E & G lacks office and institutional uses, it does include residential, park, and retail uses. While a greater land use mix can create increased vibrancy by providing many reasons for people to populate an area during different times of the

day, E & G is well populated in its own right due to its location along a heavily trafficked regional corridor that links Uptown Minneapolis to the western suburbs.

HOC has a moderate mix of uses and several pedestrian friendly elements but is currently not compact. The wide street widths of Nicollet Avenue and Travelers Trail provide an open feel that can make buildings seem further away than they actually are. The fact that there are still undeveloped portions of the project exacerbates this character. While this will change over time, the street widths within HOC may still lead an environment that is not as compact as a traditional downtown. Despite HOC's lack of compactness, there are pedestrian amenities available. The Nicollet Plaza area has a walkway that leads from Cub Foods to the rest of HOC. An elevated pedestrian arcade around the Grande Market Place leads to a large decorative public courtyard complete with public art and furniture. HOC also has a moderate mix of uses including park, retail, residential, and office. The future Performing Arts Center and office buildings will add to this mix. This is vitally important for HOC as, unlike E & G, it does not lie on a heavily trafficked major arterial street. Though larger streets exist to the north and south of HOC, its limited direct visibility from passing traffic could be compensated by additional primary uses that may attract visitors to the site. (See appendices D and E for maps of E & G and HOC).

Principle: Many activities of daily living should occur within walking distance, allowing independence to those who do not drive, especially the elderly and the young. Interconnected networks of streets should be designed to encourage walking, reduce the number and length of automobile trips, and conserve energy.

E & G contains places to live and shop but does not contain employment centers within its boundaries. The size constraints of the location may be prohibitive of its ability to include this function. E & G is located near medical clinics, however, providing walkable workplaces nearby. Additionally, proximity to Uptown and Highway 100 provide access to employment centers but

these are by no means within a walkable distance. Trader Joe's, the several restaurants, and boutiques do provide a wide assortment of necessary shopping amenities within the neighborhood. Wolfe Park and Bally's Swim and Fitness on site also provide recreational activities. A Kinder Care Learning Center provides daycare facilities and two primary schools are within a reasonable walking distance from E & G. Business owners have praised E & G for its safety and 'hometown feel' creating an environment where driving everywhere is unnecessary (See Appendix B). Additionally, the accessibility of E & G and its close proximity to employment centers and shopping have made it a good location for many restaurants and retail businesses.

While Cub Foods exists on the HOC site providing groceries for residents, many other retail amenities are currently lacking. An HOC business owner expressed that the area lacked many primary retail types including a drug store, a card store and a book store. Residents seeking these amenities will likely have to drive off site. A recent proposal to construct a mixed-use building on Nicollet Avenue will include a drug store and other retail units indicating that retail amenities that the site currently lacks may be provided in the future. There are some limited office facilities on site and other commercial office uses nearby within a walkable distance.

Burnsville's Economic Development Coordinator Skip Nienhaus indicated in an interview that although it is possible to live, work, and shop in the area it is doubtful that anyone actually does. Additional office facilities, however, are also proposed in future development projects indicating that HOC may soon provide a viable opportunity for a resident to live, work, shop, and play. The collapse of the housing market may hasten office development. Nienhaus notes that some developers have suggested they want to change their concept plans to accommodate the changes in the market. "While we are open to new ideas, we want all

development to be in accordance to the design framework.” Changing market conditions may add great potential for HOC to come to fruition. A significant increase in office space on the site would provide an additional customer base for HOC cafés, restaurants, and businesses as well as bring people out to the site throughout the day. If new office developments conform to the design guidelines, the sense of place at HOC can be maintained enhancing the pedestrian environment and contributing to the ability for individuals to live, work, and play in HOC.

Principle: Within neighborhoods, a broad range of housing types and price levels can bring people of diverse ages, races, and incomes into daily interaction, strengthening the personal and civic bonds essential to an authentic community.

Only 18 of the 660 housing units in E & G are considered affordable. Current available rental units, however, do have a wide price range—from 554 square foot studios for \$860 per month to penthouse apartments at \$3,530 per month (Excelsior and Grand, 2007). According to zillow.com, condos recently sold in the vicinity of E & G for around \$100,000 while condos for sale within E & G range from \$300,000 to \$800,000. This indicates that while the price range within E & G may be inhibitive to some, properties within a quarter mile of E & G may be more affordable allowing individuals to live near E & G and take advantages of its amenities.

Within the HOC site, many affordable options exist through the Dakota County Community Development Agency town home developments. Other rental units in the Grande Market Place are affordable to individuals or families earning 60% of the median income (City of Burnsville, n.d.). Other condos and villas prices range upward into the \$300,000 range. HOC does a good job of mixing housing ranges and prices. While no detached units exist on site, there is a single family residential neighborhood directly to the south across Burnsville Parkway.

Principle: Appropriate building densities and land uses should be within walking distance of transit stops, permitting public transit to become a viable alternative to the automobile.

The Metropolitan Council (2006) has determined that effective transit locations will be areas of compact development, contain a mix of uses, be pedestrian oriented, and contain attractive transit interfaces. The minimum residential density to serve an area with bus transit is three units per acre (Metropolitan Council, 2006).

While most of these conditions are adequately met in E & G and HOC, each site lacks adequate transit interfaces. Both E & G and HOC contain bus but there are no shelters to provide transit riders a comfortable location to wait for a bus. A park and ride facility in HOC located in the parking garage behind Grande Market Place serves commuters but casual transit users looking to go to and from HOC are left to wait on the street.

Principle: Concentrations of civic, institutional, and commercial activity should be embedded in neighborhoods and districts, not isolated in remote, single-use complexes. Schools should be sized and located to enable children to walk or bicycle to them.

Neither E & G nor HOC contains civic or institutional uses. Both locations lack such amenities as libraries, schools, city administration offices, or churches. Burnsville's civic center, however, is located a half mile away from the center of HOC but the pedestrian walkway to this facility is aesthetically marred by fast moving traffic and bland landscapes along Nicollet Avenue.

Both developments do contain commercial activity embedded within the neighborhoods among residential units and parks. HOC, however, contains a large single use big box style strip development containing a Cub Foods and several chain stores and restaurants. Although two large mixed use buildings will eventually line Travelers Trail in front of the Cub Foods, this commercial unit is similar to traditional suburban retail as it is a one story single use facility

fronted by a large surface parking lot. Walking trails, however, do connect Cub Foods to the rest of HOC integrating the development within the overall HOC concept.

The block, the street, and the building

Principle: Individual architectural projects should be seamlessly linked to their surroundings. This issue transcends style.

The proportions of E & G buildings are much larger than neighboring units. Excelsior Boulevard contains several strip mall developments and stand-alone single structure commercial units surrounded by surface parking. The four story E & G buildings appear as if they were dropped from space and landed semi-randomly along the strip. While there is architectural continuity within E & G, the development seems vastly out of proportion within the neighborhood.

HOC does a better job at creating edges between neighboring uses. On either entrance point along Nicollet Avenue architectural features provide a feeling that one is entering somewhere important. Large scale buildings visible from Highway 13 provide an attractive view creating a noticeable edge between the monotonous highway landscape and HOC. From the south, the Grande Market Place utilizes architectural style and decorative rooftops to signal entrance into downtown. Gradual building bulk and density from the I35W exit toward Nicollet Avenue along Burnsville Parkway contributes to the sense of place leading up to this entrance point. Housing density and bulk gradually decreases along Travelers Trail to provide a seamless transition into the existing neighborhood.

Principle: The revitalization of urban places depends on safety and security. The design of streets and buildings should reinforce safe environments, but not at the expense of accessibility and openness.

The pedestrian apex of E & G is at the intersection of Excelsior Boulevard and Grand Avenue. As Grand Avenue continues on into the development, single lanes, on-street parking, and intentional landscaping create a safe environment for pedestrians from cars. Even along Excelsior Boulevard, fast moving traffic is muted by a berm, trees and shrubs, and public furniture. The continuous building wall of storefronts provides ‘eyes on the street’ and enhances the sense of security.

While Nicollet Avenue is the main thoroughfare of HOC, its fast moving two lanes of traffic inhibit the sense of safety for pedestrians. Large unregulated crosswalks are difficult to cross and may pose a danger to people looking to go from one side of the street to the other. A particular issue is the crosswalk leading from Nicollet Commons Park to the ice cream store across the street. While HOC contains on-street parking on side roads, the lack of parking along Nicollet Avenue to provide a buffer between the sidewalk and the street creates a rough pedestrian environment. Both mixed use buildings along Nicollet Avenue contain elevated pedestrian arcades that create blank walls at the street level. The result for the pedestrian is a barren no man’s land with a hard cement block wall on one side and fast moving traffic on the other.

Other areas of HOC perform much better. A path from Nicollet Commons Park leads to an attractive courtyard in the center of the Grande Market Place where people can relax amid benches and public art. Soon a proposed restaurant adjacent to this courtyard may provide outdoor seating and ‘eyes on the street’ enhancing the feel of safety for patrons and park users. While the Cub Foods commercial unit is located amid a vast parking lot, ample separated

walkways create an environment where people can walk safely from one side of HOC to Cub Foods without encountering excessive auto traffic.

Principle: In the contemporary metropolis, development must adequately accommodate automobiles. It should do so in ways that respect the pedestrian and the form of public space.

Two large parking lots on either side of Grand Avenue provide parking accessibility for E & G. Additional on-street parking is available as well. In interviews, however, business owners noted that parking has become a problem specifically because the Trader Joe's parking lot is too small. Frequent minor accidents have occurred in the lot to the extent that they have had to hire traffic police to direct traffic during busy times. Additionally, business owners have contended that the parking ramps frequently fill up during the day as commuters utilize them as park-and-ride facilities. While E & G may have problems adequately accommodating automobiles, neither the pedestrian environment nor public space is compromised.

As previously mentioned, Nicollet Avenue bisects HOC at the expense of the pedestrian environment. HOC has done a good job, however, incorporating auto-oriented development within the overall framework of the neighborhood. Because Cub Foods brings in shoppers from around the region, auto accessibility is necessary. The placement of the Cub Foods at the northern edge of HOC potentially limits excessive through traffic along Nicollet Avenue. Additionally, the construction of four story mixed-use buildings in front of Cub Foods will enhance the pedestrian environment as well by providing building facades at the street level instead of a vast surface parking lot.

Principle: Civic buildings and public gathering places require important sites to reinforce community identity and the culture of democracy. They deserve distinctive form, because their role is different from that of other buildings and places that constitute the fabric of the city.

While both E & G and HOC currently lack civic buildings, they both contain attractive parks. In E & G, the landscaped pedestrian pavilion along Grand Avenue opens up into Wolfe Park. The amphitheater at the entrance of Wolfe Park is framed by the buildings of E & G invoking a sense of importance. A performing arts center under construction in HOC and Nicollet Commons Park will complement each other and provide an important civic function. The park currently provides a focal gathering point in the center of HOC and its streams and public sculptures create an attractive environment and provide a sense of meaning and history for Burnsville.

Factors that potentially affect E & G and HOC design

Although each project attempts to create environments that share New Urbanist goals, each project’s execution is confined by various locational constraints. Analysis of local physical and demographic conditions may shed light on how and why these projects diverge from New Urbanist principles.

Market Demand

Figure 1: Households in Proximity of Excelsior and Grand and Heart of the City, 2007

	E & G	HOC
One Mile	4,117	1,647
Three Miles	37,720	14,749

Source: Metro GIS

As Freedman (2005) notes: “urban designers, public officials, and property owners tend to envision successful cafes and street life at the base of every new commercial building. In truth, a given community can support only a

limited amount of retail activity (p 61).” While these images are definitely something public officials would want to associate with E & G and HOC, they may or may not be feasible in their current conditions. Leinberger (2005) claims that to be viable, a neighborhood retail center needs to be located on a highway that carries 25,000 cars a day and serve 20,000 households in a two to

three mile radius. The 660 and approximately 300 housing units currently available in E & G and HOC respectively will be nowhere near enough to sustain regional retail on their own. While E & G has more than enough households within a three mile radius, HOC falls short by over 5000 households. Perhaps this proximity to housing can partially explain the wider variety of flourishing cafes and restaurants located in E & G compared to HOC.

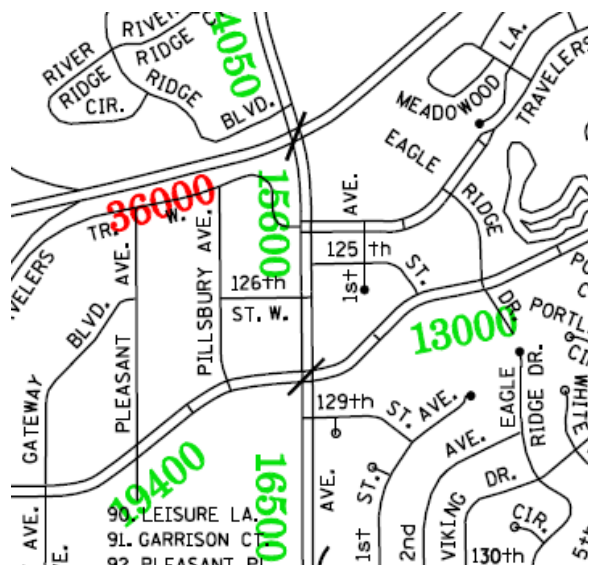
Traffic patterns near the two projects also reveal potential limitations. While Excelsior Boulevard had 20,000 average daily car trips in 2006, its excess of necessary households within

Figure 2: Traffic near E & G, 2006



Source: Minnesota Department of Transportation

Figure 3: Traffic near HOC, 2006



Source: Minnesota Department of Transportation

proximity may make it a viable retail center. HOC, however, had neither enough average daily auto trips on Nicollet Avenue (15,600) nor an adequate number of nearby households (14,749). The 36,000 average daily trips on Highway 13 just north of HOC, however, indicates that a significant number of people drive near the site. HOC, then, may need an anchor store like Cub Foods that can pull people off the highway and bring them into the area. This, however, may

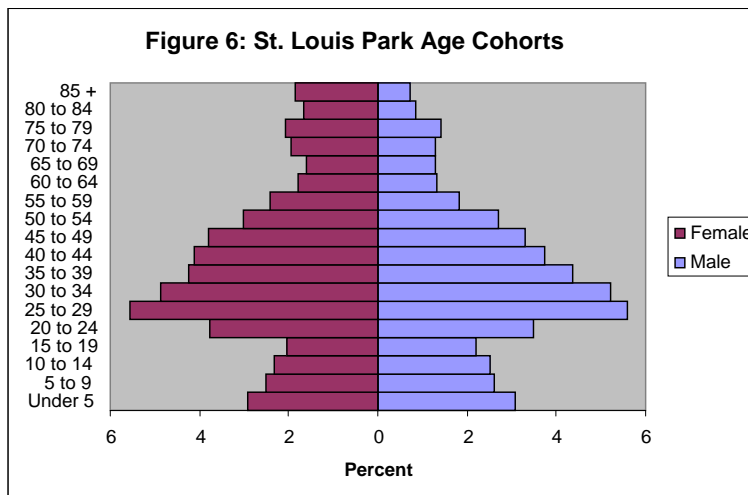
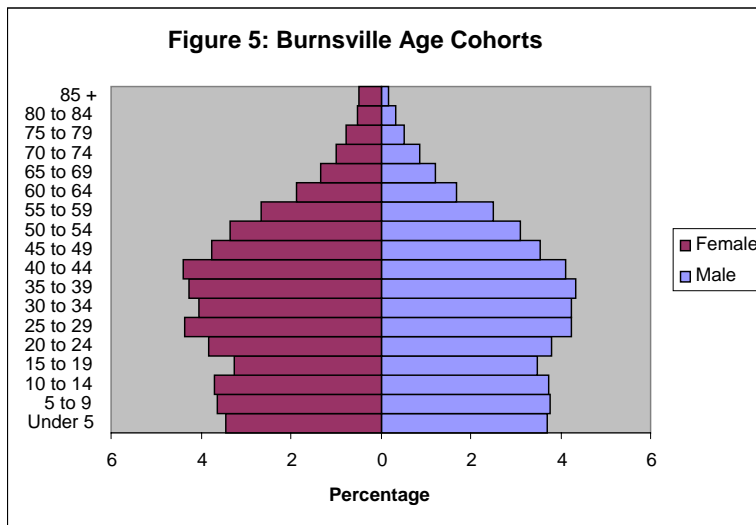
necessitate an auto-oriented layout and somewhat inhibit the ability to become overly pedestrian friendly. It may be precisely this auto-oriented Cub Foods development that pulls people into HOC on a regular basis increasing the visibility and viability of the entire site.

Demographics

Figure 4: Selected Demographic Characteristics

	Burnsville		St. Louis Park		Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
1-person household:	5,862	25	7,832	38	302,739	27
Married-couple family:		0		0		0
With own children under 18 years	6,277	27	3,344	16	304,147	27
No own children under 18 years	6,392	27	4,930	24	300,771	26
Median household income in 1999	57,965		49,260		54,304	

source: US Census Bureau 2000



Source: US Census Bureau 2000

While Burnsville has a median household income greater than the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area, the median household income in St. Louis Park is somewhat less than the metro median. Consequently, St. Louis Park also has a much lower proportion of school aged residents and a higher proportion of young adults and people over 60. Burnsville appears to have a greater proportion of school-aged children and residents of parenting age. Despite this appearance, census data reveals that Burnsville also has approximately 57% of its population living either in one person households or in married families with no children. This figure for St. Louis Park is 62%.

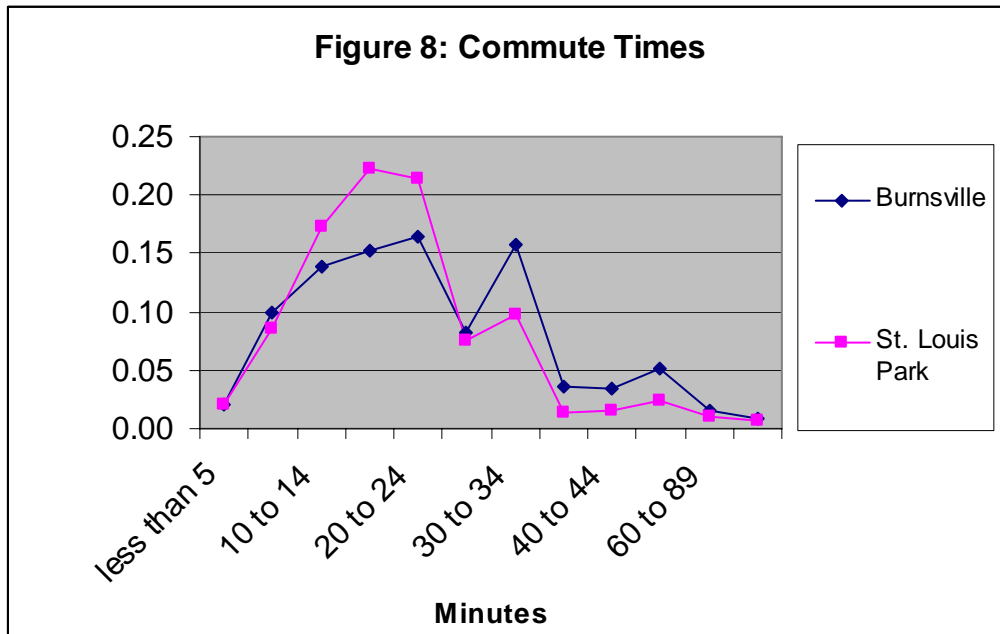
If married couples without children and single adults serve the market for condominiums, then both Burnsville and St. Louis Park would appear to have a high demand potential. HOC also has a high proportion of family-style housing in its affordable town home units that St. Louis Park lacks. This is consistent with the age cohort demographics of Burnsville. An interesting factor revealed in this census data is that lower than average median incomes of St. Louis Park seem to correspond to higher priced condos as E & G appears to be much more expensive than HOC. Perhaps the larger proportion of 20 to 30 year olds in St. Louis Park contribute to the lower than average median income if these groups, as newer arrivals in the labor market, earn less than their older counterparts.

Commuting and Transit Use

Figure 7: Means of Transportation to Work

	Burnsville		St. Louis Park		MSP MSA	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Car, truck, or van:	32,311	92	23,036	87	1,409,937	88
Drove alone	28,744	82	20,746	78	1,249,939	78
Carpooled	3,567	10	2,290	9	159,998	10
Bus	1,011	3	1,519	6	69,427	4
Walked	368	1	557	2	38,897	2
Worked at home	1,292	4	1,064	4	60,611	4

source: US Census Bureau 2000



source: US Census Bureau 2000

Burnsville residents spend more time commuting than do St. Louis Park residents. They are also more likely to drive to work. Six percent of St. Louis Park residents bussed to work in 2000 compared to only four percent of metro residents and three percent of Burnsville residents. While it is clear that more St. Louis Park residents bus to work than overall metro residents, it is somewhat surprising that E & G does not contain transit features such as bus shelters.

Additionally, in HOC although there are park and ride facilities, there are also no bus shelters. Whereas it may make sense not to provide these facilities at first, in order to increase the feasibility of transit ridership to and from HOC and E & G in the future, such amenities should be provided.

It is also clear from the census data that 92 and 87 percent of Burnsville and St. Louis Park residents respectively drive consistently to and from work. While these numbers are not necessarily surprising, they do indicate that residents of these cities are used to the automobile as a primary means of transportation. New Urbanists may idealize regional cities with limited auto use but car culture is a current reality. This is more apparent in the design of HOC than E & G. Such new town centers would hardly be viable if they did not consider that the majority of visitors would come by car. By providing a hub of activity amid dense mixed-use facilities, however, new town centers can become destination points on their own and allow for the increased feasibility of transit. Both E & G and HOC help to create this paradigm that can begin to facilitate change.

Neighborhood Context

The maps in Appendix F reveal that land use patterns and neighborhood street layouts may play a role in the ability of E & G and HOC to sustain certain types of neighborhood design. E & G, with its limited surface parking and lack of excessive auto-oriented design elements, may be able to draw on the extensive local residential neighborhoods both for pedestrian traffic and the ability to utilize transit as a means for casual use of the area. Song and Knaap (2004) note that critics of sprawl contend that higher degrees of connectivity and accessibility lead to

increased walking and fewer vehicle miles traveled. Connectivity is related to the number of street nodes and intersections while accessibility is characterized as the distance to various uses including bus stops, retail, and parks (Song and Knaap, 2004). E & G contains four direct access nodes from the residential neighborhood directly to the south and access to residential neighborhoods, commercial areas, and industrial areas (north of Wolfe Park). For these reasons, E & G may be less reliant on automobile accessibility than HOC.

The map of HOC reveals that the area is isolated amid several large lot institutional, high density residential units. While it may be important to have higher density residential units near a town center, the connectivity of the site is severely limited due to lack of access points. Burnsville Parkway acts as a major barrier to access from the south of HOC and large parking lots of developments to the east may act as barriers as well. Due to its relative isolation, then, HOC must rely on automobile traffic to bring in the majority of its patrons. The feasibility of narrowing Nicollet Avenue to provide a more pedestrian friendly environment may be seriously limited by this fact. In addition, the importance of providing easy auto accessibility to Cub Foods may further diminish the willingness of local officials to entertain such a notion.

The City of Burnsville must continuously balance the need to bring visitors to HOC by auto with the ability to provide pedestrian friendly streets. The popularity of Nicollet Commons Park and the future performing arts center may add to the perceived need to allow the auto to dominate. While streetfront shops may benefit from walkable streets, customers will undoubtedly arrive by auto. The HOC Design Framework Manual even notes that in order to be successful, HOC will have to draw from a customer base of more than three miles (Dalhgren, Shardlow, and Uban, Inc., 1999). With Nicollet Avenue acting as the main automobile access point to HOC, the pedestrian environment is compromised.

Conclusion

E & G and HOC are both trailblazers in the Twin Cities as early experiments in new town center creation. The existing physical and demographic attributes of their prospective locations may inhibit to varying degrees their ability to conform to strict New Urbanist principles.

Although New Urbanism's intention is to be the antithesis to urban sprawl, strict adherence to its principles in a suburban context must be weighed against the realities specific to project location.

In Burnsville, for example, biking, walking, and transit will by necessity be restricted by the location, size, and layout of street patterns. The lack of sufficient population surrounding HOC may also necessitate the inclusion of land use types like the Cub Foods development that may be decried by New Urbanists as typical of sprawl. Changing the paradigm of land use patterns and auto usage in a suburb like Burnsville, however, cannot be done overnight.

HOC Burnsville does facilitate the possibility for future projects to contribute to its design elements. Future redevelopment of parcels directly west of HOC, for example, may provide an opportunity to create increased auto access and reduce the need to use Nicollet Avenue as the main thoroughfare. Should this occur, the possibility of implementing traffic calming strategies may become a viable option. Additionally, if future nearby development projects bring buildings up to the street and continue the street grid, the groundwork laid by HOC will enable Burnsville to build on New Urbanist principles to a degree that may currently be unfeasible.

Excelsior and Grand, on the other hand, can take advantage of its location along a major arterial strip, its surrounding population, and its older suburban street pattern to create a project with design elements that better align to New Urbanist principles. While it may lack many elements such as affordable housing and a wide variety of land uses, it does provide accessibility

to nearby housing units that are more affordable. The size limitations of E & G, however, may prohibit the possibility to include such uses as schools or civic facilities. Again, like HOC, E & G enables St. Louis Park the possibility to expand its scope by continuing design elements into future adjacent properties. Future redevelopment efforts to the south on Excelsior Boulevard could enable E & G to blend more seamlessly into the area. Construction of office facilities, for example, could buffer the high intensity activity center of E & G from the residential neighborhood to the south.

While many factors may affect the degree to which New Urbanist principles can be implemented, adaption of these principles as necessary to ensure project success is an important starting point for communities that are interested in creating new vibrant public spaces. Should initial project success occur, opportunities may arise to further implement design principles with the intention of expanding or enhancing town centers projects. As the Charter for the New Urbanism proposes important place making guidelines that have been lacking in many suburban environments, it is definitely a useful starting point. The ability to fully implement New Urbanism, however, may take time. Initial project success will depend on the ability for municipalities to incorporate the guidelines into current context.

To reiterate The Planning Center's (2005) contention, successful redevelopment of new town centers must take suburban realities into account. Those seeking to redevelop suburban areas within a New Urbanist context must be willing to adapt the principles in order to create places that will work in reality. Although some aspects may be compromised, the potential option of a failed project does not bode well for New Urbanism or a hosting municipality. If successful, as E & G and HOC evolve, they will reinforce the viability of a new paradigm for planning in the suburban environment.

Works Cited

- Allegro Realty Advisors, Ltd. (2007). *Case study: Excelsior and Grand*. Retrieved November 20, 2007, from <http://www.clevelandheights.com/upload/newsletter/TopoftheHill.pdf>
- Berke, P.R., Godschalk, D.R., & Kaiser, E.J. (2006). *Urban land use planning*. Urbana, IL. University of Illinois Press.
- City of Burnsville. (n.d.) *Heart of the City Burnsville, Minnesota USA*. Retrieved December 8, 2007, from <http://www.burnsvilleheartofthecity.com/projects.htm>
- Clarke, P.W. (2005). The ideal of community and its counterfeit construction. *Journal of Architectural Education*, 58 (3), 43-52.
- Congress for the New Urbanism (1997-2007). *Excelsior and Grand*. Retrieved November 20, 2007, from <http://cnu.org/node/869>
- Congress for the New Urbanism (1997-2007). *Charter of the New Urbanism*. Retrieved November 20, 2007, from <http://cnu.org/charter>
- Congress for the New Urbanism (1997-2007). *CNU History*. Retrieved November 20, 2007, from <http://cnu.org/history>
- Dahlgren, Shardlow, and Urban Inc. (1999). *City of Burnsville Heart of the City design framework manual*.
- Duany, A., Plater-Zyberk, E, & Speck, J. (2000). *Suburban nation: the rise of sprawl and the decline of the American dream*. New York. North Point Press.
- Excelsior and Grand (2007). *Pricing Information*. Retrieved December 8, 2007, from <http://www.excelsiorandgrand.com/apppricing.cfm>
- Freedman, M. (2005). Restructuring the strip. *Places*, 17 (2), 60-7.
- Garreau, J. (1991). *Edge city: life on the new frontier*. New York. Doubleday.
- Gillham, O. (2002). *The limitless city: a primer on the urban sprawl debate*. Washington D.C. Island Press.
- Jackson, K. (1985). *Crabgrass frontier: the suburbanization of the United States*. New York. Oxford University Press.
- Leinberger, C.B. (2005). Retrofitting real estate finance: alternatives to the nineteen standard product types. *Places*, 17 (2), 24-9.
- McMahon, E.T. (1999). Smart growth trends. *Planning Commissioners Journal*, 33, 4-5.

Metro Transit (2007). *Twin Cities Metropolitan Area transit system map*. Retrieved December 8, 2007, from <http://metrotransit.org/serviceInfo/mapSystem.asp>

Metropolitan Council (n.d.). *Transit-oriented development project profile: Excelsior and Grand, St. Louis Park*. Retrieved December 9, 2007, from www.metrocouncil.org/planning/TOD/Excelsior&Grand.pdf

Metropolitan Council. (2006). *Guide for Transit Oriented Development*. Retrieved December 8, 2007, from <http://www.metrocouncil.org/planning/tod/tod.htm>

Metropolitan Institute at Virginia Tech. (2005). *From Wall Street to your street: new solutions for smart growth finance*. Coral Gables, FL.: Lang, R.E., LeFurgy J., & Hornburg S.

The Planning Center. (2005). *The new suburbanism: a realist's guide to the American future*. Costa Mesa, CA.: Kotkin, J.

St. Antoine, Thomas J. (2007). Making heaven out of hell: New Urbanism and the refutation of suburban spaces. *Southern Communication Journal*, 72(2), 127-144.

Song, Y., & Knaap, G. (2004). Measuring urban form: is Portland winning the war on sprawl?. *Journal of the American Planning Association* 70 (2), 210-225.

Walters, D., & Brown, L.L. (2004). *Design first: Design-based planning for communities*. Amsterdam. Architectural Press.

Appendix A: Charter for the New Urbanism

CNU members ratified the Charter of the New Urbanism at CNU's fourth annual Congress in 1996. Applying valuable lessons from the past to the modern world, it outlines principles for building better communities, from the scale of the region down to the block.

The Congress for the New Urbanism views disinvestment in central cities, the spread of placeless sprawl, increasing separation by race and income, environmental deterioration, loss of agricultural lands and wilderness, and the erosion of society's built heritage as one interrelated community-building challenge.

We stand for the restoration of existing urban centers and towns within coherent metropolitan regions, the reconfiguration of sprawling suburbs into communities of real neighborhoods and diverse districts, the conservation of natural environments, and the preservation of our built legacy.

We recognize that physical solutions by themselves will not solve social and economic problems, but neither can economic vitality, community stability, and environmental health be sustained without a coherent and supportive physical framework.

We advocate the restructuring of public policy and development practices to support the following principles: neighborhoods should be diverse in use and population; communities should be designed for the pedestrian and transit as well as the car; cities and towns should be shaped by physically defined and universally accessible public spaces and community institutions; urban places should be framed by architecture and landscape design that celebrate local history, climate, ecology, and building practice.

We represent a broad-based citizenry, composed of public and private sector leaders, community activists, and multidisciplinary professionals. We are committed to reestablishing the relationship between the art of building and the making of community, through citizen-based participatory planning and design.

We dedicate ourselves to reclaiming our homes, blocks, streets, parks, neighborhoods, districts, towns, cities, regions, and environment.

We assert the following principles to guide public policy, development practice, urban planning, and design:

The region: Metropolis, city, and town

1. Metropolitan regions are finite places with geographic boundaries derived from topography, watersheds, coastlines, farmlands, regional parks, and river basins. The metropolis is made of multiple centers that are cities, towns, and villages, each with its own identifiable center and edges.

2. The metropolitan region is a fundamental economic unit of the contemporary world. Governmental cooperation, public policy, physical planning, and economic strategies must reflect this new reality.
3. The metropolis has a necessary and fragile relationship to its agrarian hinterland and natural landscapes. The relationship is environmental, economic, and cultural. Farmland and nature are as important to the metropolis as the garden is to the house.
4. Development patterns should not blur or eradicate the edges of the metropolis. Infill development within existing urban areas conserves environmental resources, economic investment, and social fabric, while reclaiming marginal and abandoned areas. Metropolitan regions should develop strategies to encourage such infill development over peripheral expansion.
5. Where appropriate, new development contiguous to urban boundaries should be organized as neighborhoods and districts, and be integrated with the existing urban pattern. Noncontiguous development should be organized as towns and villages with their own urban edges, and planned for a jobs/housing balance, not as bedroom suburbs.
6. The development and redevelopment of towns and cities should respect historical patterns, precedents, and boundaries.
7. Cities and towns should bring into proximity a broad spectrum of public and private uses to support a regional economy that benefits people of all incomes. Affordable housing should be distributed throughout the region to match job opportunities and to avoid concentrations of poverty.
8. The physical organization of the region should be supported by a framework of transportation alternatives. Transit, pedestrian, and bicycle systems should maximize access and mobility throughout the region while reducing dependence upon the automobile.
9. Revenues and resources can be shared more cooperatively among the municipalities and centers within regions to avoid destructive competition for tax base and to promote rational coordination of transportation, recreation, public services, housing, and community institutions.

The neighborhood, the district, and the corridor

1. The neighborhood, the district, and the corridor are the essential elements of development and redevelopment in the metropolis. They form identifiable areas that encourage citizens to take responsibility for their maintenance and evolution.
2. Neighborhoods should be compact, pedestrian-friendly, and mixed-use. Districts generally emphasize a special single use, and should follow the principles of neighborhood design when possible. Corridors are regional connectors of neighborhoods and districts; they range from boulevards and rail lines to rivers and parkways.

3. Many activities of daily living should occur within walking distance, allowing independence to those who do not drive, especially the elderly and the young. Interconnected networks of streets should be designed to encourage walking, reduce the number and length of automobile trips, and conserve energy.
4. Within neighborhoods, a broad range of housing types and price levels can bring people of diverse ages, races, and incomes into daily interaction, strengthening the personal and civic bonds essential to an authentic community.
5. Transit corridors, when properly planned and coordinated, can help organize metropolitan structure and revitalize urban centers. In contrast, highway corridors should not displace investment from existing centers.
6. Appropriate building densities and land uses should be within walking distance of transit stops, permitting public transit to become a viable alternative to the automobile.
7. Concentrations of civic, institutional, and commercial activity should be embedded in neighborhoods and districts, not isolated in remote, single-use complexes. Schools should be sized and located to enable children to walk or bicycle to them.
8. The economic health and harmonious evolution of neighborhoods, districts, and corridors can be improved through graphic urban design codes that serve as predictable guides for change.
9. A range of parks, from tot-lots and village greens to ballfields and community gardens, should be distributed within neighborhoods. Conservation areas and open lands should be used to define and connect different neighborhoods and districts.

The block, the street, and the building

1. A primary task of all urban architecture and landscape design is the physical definition of streets and public spaces as places of shared use.
2. Individual architectural projects should be seamlessly linked to their surroundings. This issue transcends style.
3. The revitalization of urban places depends on safety and security. The design of streets and buildings should reinforce safe environments, but not at the expense of accessibility and openness.
4. In the contemporary metropolis, development must adequately accommodate automobiles. It should do so in ways that respect the pedestrian and the form of public space.
5. Streets and squares should be safe, comfortable, and interesting to the pedestrian. Properly configured, they encourage walking and enable neighbors to know each other and protect their communities.

6. Architecture and landscape design should grow from local climate, topography, history, and building practice.
7. Civic buildings and public gathering places require important sites to reinforce community identity and the culture of democracy. They deserve distinctive form, because their role is different from that of other buildings and places that constitute the fabric of the city.
8. All buildings should provide their inhabitants with a clear sense of location, weather and time. Natural methods of heating and cooling can be more resource-efficient than mechanical systems.
9. Preservation and renewal of historic buildings, districts, and landscapes affirm the continuity and evolution of urban society.

© 1997-2007 Congress for the New Urbanism. Opinions posted in CNU Salons and in comments are those of their respective authors, not of CNU.

Appendix B: Interviews

Skip Nienhaus, Director of Economic Development, Burnsville

What are the greatest successes of HOC?

The idea of HOC is to establish (or reestablish) a downtown area for Burnsville. The downtown area disappeared after the development of Burnsville Center (shopping mall).

HOC incorporates components of residential, commercial, and office space.

The office and commercial sectors are doing well. *Theoretically* one could live work and shop in HOC. I'm not sure anyone actually does that though.

Cub Foods is the most popular as far as attendance goes.

As HOC developed, the idea was to create something that would drive people to the area. To this end, we hold all types of events in the park which also happens to be extremely well maintained. If you don't count the retail aspect, the park is the most popular extension of HOC.

As far as residential goes, both the Grand Market Plaza and the CDA townhomes, which are both rental facilities, are full.

Condos and Townhomes

Uptown Landing has sold 22 out of 25 units. This however, was done after the reduction in price. This project has recently been foreclosed (in March of 2007) resulting in the liquidation of units. Up to that point, 3 or 4 units had been sold. (from website: The owner of the project lost the rights to sell these units at the beginning of the foreclosure process in 2005(?) shortly after the building was constructed).

Parkcrest: 60 of 90 units (6 units are commercial) have sold at the original pricing.

Nicollet Plaza: 7 of 12 sold.

Nicollet Plaza Townhomes: 4 of 8 constructed

Nicollet Plaza Villas: 4 of 10 constructed.

Parkcrest has had the same seller throughout its duration and has been the most successful of the condos/townhomes. This project is also the latest finished development.

What have been some challenges?

Commercial

There have been three retail/restaurant establishments that have gone out of business.

In Nicollet Plaza there was a drycleaner. This business had a second establishment in Lakeville as well. Both went out of business at the same time.

In the Highland Bank building there was a driving school—I don't know why they wanted a driving school in HOC in the first place—that closed.

In the Grand Market Place there was a day spa that operated for a year. It closed last month. They complained that they often saw people exiting their cars and walk right by the spa to go to the adjoining businesses but never came into the spa.

What businesses are destinations and which are convenience oriented businesses?

Jensen's Restaurant, Cub Foods, and the Culinary School are all destination businesses. All of the other retail businesses are not necessarily destinations. People will go to Cub then drive to the liquor store. They may also drive to Cub and notice the coffee shop and decide they will go there the next day.

When does the area have the highest amount of pedestrian traffic?

During events (at the park (?)) there are high amounts of pedestrian traffic.

Are there any new developments coming or anything happening in the future that might indicate that HOC is changing?

On the corner of Burnsville Parkway and Nicollet, Wellington Management bought the TCF bank building. They are going to demolish the building and build a mixed use office building with first floor retail including a pharmacy. They have already had 10 inquiries about retail space in just the first month after announcing their plans.

Additionally, the performing arts center—which is really an extension of the park—has recently been approved and will be constructed soon.

North of the performing arts center on what we call the AAA Property Anderson Development plans to construct two office buildings with combined 125,000 square feet. This will include a parking lot that has shared parking with the rest of HOC.

Among the Andersen and Wellington developments, there will be an additional 150 to 160,000 new square feet of office space.

What have been some of the concerns the public has had regarding HOC?

There are some individuals who are opposed to the performing arts center.

In 2006 we finalized many of the developments that had started in previous years. This created a feeling of apprehension about what will happen with the rest of HOC? Whether it will be completed. Announcements of the Andersen and Wellington projects have alleviated some of these fears. Some people may be wondering if this process is moving too fast.

Additionally, people are worried about the housing market. Some developers have suggested that they want to change their concepts due to the housing downturn. While we are open to new ideas, we want all development to be in accordance to the design framework so we are maintaining communication with developers.

Can you comment on the Cub Foods development. How has this big box development contributed to or distracted from the overall design framework?

The design elements haven't changed. We struggle with the major North-South roadway going right through the center of HOC. We have suburban motorists who are used to driving where they go and not worrying about pedestrians. They are only used to stopping for stop lights or stop signs, not crosswalks. So we have a sort of educational campaign. We put up big yellow signs in an attempt to get people to drive slower.

Cub Foods is a huge draw, but people need to drive there to get their food. We would like to have stores like Stillwater does but we just aren't there yet. We have different markets and an existing town pattern that makes it hard to replicate that. Stillwater's business is mostly tourist's shopping for antique furniture. We are a downtown area for an existing suburb.

Wayne Huelskoetter and Ed Delmoro, members of the HOC Design Review Committee

Can you comment on the Cub Foods development and how that fits into the Heart of the City concept?

Cub foods did not compromise our design guidelines. We recognized that the need for a grocery store in the area was huge so getting Cub Foods in HOC was huge. They were willing to work with us on the design. We restricted the big parking lot. Opus, the developer, came to the design review committee with the typical design—a building surrounded by a large parking lot. Judy Tschumper looked at it and said ‘no way’ and almost threw Opus out of the meeting. Wayne mentioned that we needed the grocery store and Tina Goodroad, who was the planner at the time, said.... “what if we put the building here, the parking here, and wrap it with other buildings. Cub also compromised to maintain the integrity of guidelines by agreeing to build a multiple story building.

The Cub Foods brings in business to HOC and adjacent stores. It draws people into this part of Burnsville who might otherwise have no reason to come here.

What was the political climate surrounding HOC?

There were some people who were against the project. Most of them just didn’t understand what was going on here and feared unknown consequences. Charlie (Creighton) was against the project. He was concerned about taxes going up and blew the whole thing out of proportion. We needed four out of five votes in city council to change the ordinances and create a special district and we got it.

The project evolved from a streetscape improvement project to a major development. We needed reasons for people to come to the area, so we knew that we needed shops and needed people living here.

Burnsville Parkway was the first streetscape to be improved, then Nicollet. We got the pavers in but it was still ugly above ground. There were these big power lines. The opposition was still concerned about taxes. We needed about one dollar per resident. Nobody even noticed when the additional tax expired.

The opposition was most notable from the businesses that would be displaced. Three were the most vocal, led by the owner of Red Lion Liquors. Originally he was vehemently opposed to the project. Under the old city ordinance, though, he wasn’t allowed to expand his business because of setback regulations. He wanted to expand but didn’t understand that the HOC district would enable him.

Next to the liquor store, there was an auto-repair shop and a Bumpers Bar and Grill. They would come in and complain, they were worried about their businesses. The Auto parts store got a buy-out offer from the city and he took it and retired. Bumpers got a great deal from the city and moved about three blocks right off of the freeway. Now their business is booming.

Red Lion, ironically, was the first to come in with an application to expand. He didn’t have to because he was a pre-existing use. But after he realized that we would be building condos and apartments all around him, he realized it would benefit his business.

Other than that, there were not many protesters...Just Charlie. When we established a new TIF district, Charlie approved.

The city employees and staff were all excited and the majority of people began to understand the importance of this project during the inauguration of the Aims sculpture. We had a tent set up with drawings and pictures. People could see what was evolving. We had the holiday lighting up and busses came in from the Twin Cities for the event.

The project is currently bogged down a bit with the housing market.

The PAC has been the most controversial aspect of HOC. I think the process of that is the problem. Not enough people have been involved and educated about the importance of the PAC.

Now that the PAC has been approved, there is a renewed interest in a restaurant on the park. There are also new office buildings and hotels coming in. The art center was part of the plan from the beginning.

We recently had an interesting survey about quality of life. When asked if people would attend PAC events, 65% said yes. Despite all this, the PAC has been the most painful part of HOC.

Can you explain how the process of approval for a building's design? How did the process work for Park Crest?

First you get an interested developer. They work with city planning and engineering and get the guidelines that define architecturally what is going on. When the design is far enough along, they meet with the design review committee (and we have sent more than one back to the drawing board). We make suggestions, for example, if we don't like the building materials. Then the design is brought before city council in a 'work session.' The council then gives its opinions, like for Park Crest, about the amount of retail on the lower level. For Park Crest, the developer's bias was for more residential, he wanted to limit retail. The council was adamant, however, that this is a main street and the idea is to have shops. Then the design goes to the planning commission, then city council approves or denies. For Park Crest elevation was a challenge. Nicollet is on a very steep hill. Elevation was the reason that businesses don't front up to the street.

In the Grand Market Place, there are two buildings. One is all business and the other has retail and apartments on the first level. That was part of the balance of the design –to give it a mix. This could potentially be replicated across the street but there will be pressure to put more retail on the first level.

The project directly north of the parking lot was originally residential. Now because of the housing market, the developer wants to put an office building in. We support the change but we will also suggest that they consider retail.

How have the retail and residential units done in HOC?

Both the rental residential and CDA units have been very popular. Uptown Landing was the first major disappointment. That project had poor internal design and quickly ran into financial problems. It can be difficult with these condo projects. You attempt to pre-sell units but the buyer doesn't know what it will look like until it is done. In Uptown Landing they tried to pre-sell but failed to close on any of the units. People didn't like the way it looked.

With commercial, its too early to say. There is not too much retail yet but it is like the chicken-egg thing. In the Cub Foods area, businesses are doing well. Jensen's is very successful. They tried dinner but it didn't work. Maybe they'll try it again soon. Ficus and Fig, a gift shop, has flourished and done very well. The ice cream place is very busy in the summer. There is a problem with that though: the park is across the street and traffic moves fast. We are talking about the possibility of a traffic light there to make it safer.

Heart of the City Business Owners

Note: a representative of one of the businesses who I interviewed requested to remain confidential. Because of the limited number of businesses in Heart of the City, I decided to withhold the names of all interviewees in order to protect identities.

Why did you choose Heart of the City?

Heart of the City was chosen as a location because it is centrally located for a wide variety of ages. There are apartments, condos, and townhomes in the area as well as lots of commuters. It is centrally located. They are trying to make it like a main street and infuse a sense of community in the area. I think this business adds to the sense of community so HOC is relevant to us.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the location?

Our business is in direct competition with other neighboring businesses. But we know what kind of people are in the area and we knew that we wanted to be involved with what is going on here. We like the diversity of ages the area provides. Business events and the senior center provide lots of diversity.

The area used to be vacant. There was no housing nearby so the new development is both good and bad. Some of the new housing is higher end condos. It has been slow filling in the surrounding businesses. The biggest weakness is the new building standards and codes. New buildings must be 25 feet tall and they kicked out some other existing businesses.

Parking is a huge issue. There is enough of it but you have to retrain suburbanites to learn to use parking garages when they are used to parking right in front of a store.

Signage is also a problem. They have very strict sign codes and we can't afford pylons or awnings. People think we are a condo and not a business and we can't get good signage.

The overhang of the building works for us because we can have outdoor activity in front of the shop but it also hampers the visuals and makes it difficult for people to see us.

What kind of mix do you have between pedestrian businesses and auto-oriented business?

Pedestrian business makes up less than 5% for us. People are still driving even if they live close by. Often people will stop in on their way home from work.

A lot of our business is drive/park business but not all. I'd say its about half and half (half drive, half pedestrian).

What are your busiest times?

I can't really figure that one out. Sometimes Wednesdays are dead, for example. Other times they can be really busy. When the park is busy, businesses tend to be busy too.

Other businesses around us affect us as well. Cub Foods is busy all the time and that has helped us the most.

Do your customers come from the neighborhood or from far away?

A handful we know come in that work in the area but the majority come from outside of the direct area.

We have lots of Burnsville people but we also have lots of people from Lakeville, Apple Valley, and Bloomington too. This is a central meeting location for commuters and a lot of other people.

Do people shop the whole area at one time, or do they just come to the area to visit your shop?

People mostly just come in to the area for one thing then leave. There still aren't a whole lot of shops in the area yet so there's not a whole lot of shopping to be done.

We have people coming in just to check us out. We like to promote other businesses in the area too in order to promote the whole area. Currently there are not a lot of people strolling around though. There is not a call for that here. That is another drawback. Halloween, for example, was dead here. The suburbs really haven't caught on to that concept yet (pedestrian shopping) but the people living in the condos here really like it.

Is Cub Foods and that style of big box development good for your business or does it detract from your business?

Cub does not benefit me directly but it could be bringing in people who otherwise might not see me. There are some businesses that have left that were near Cub. The drycleaner is gone.

The Cub Food area has mostly strip mall—fast food—quick serve types of businesses. The area here is missing a card shop, for example—people have to go to Cub for that kind of thing. We could have a packaging store or a book store or that kind of thing. HOC should try to get interesting stores like that rather than the chain stores we have.

Cub Foods has been good for us. I can't speak for other businesses though.

Is there anything else about HOC that you think I should know?

The process has been slow. It seems to be paying off for us though.

Heart of the City is a great way to revive these spread out cities. In Bloomington, people left for Burnsville. Now people in Burnsville move out to Lakeville. Where do people go to come together? Burnsville is recognizing that and trying to do something about it. Now we have the farmers market here and we are getting the Performing Arts Center—which will be beautiful. People will support it once they realize they don't have to drive to Minneapolis or St. Paul anymore. The mayor has done so much to make this project happen.

Excelsior and Grand Business Owners/Managers

Why did you choose Excelsior and Grand as a location?

Brix Bistro: The owners also own McCoy's so they knew this would be a good location.

Lulu & Luigi: This was a new development. It was the biggest redo St. Louis Park has seen. We were looking for this home town feel and this location provided that. It is nice here too because you don't have to drive everywhere you go.

Chez Bloom: It was already chosen for me. I purchased the business from the previous owners. They did a lot of market research though. This area had the right median income level for their business. It is a really safe neighborhood. Also, there is really good freeway access which is important because we do a lot of deliveries.

What are the strengths of the location?

Brix: This has become the center of St. Louis Park – the downtown. And while we are still in St. Louis park, we are close to Minneapolis and Uptown.

Lulu & Luigi: All those wonderful condos with empty nesters. They all have pocket pets now that their kids are gone. The area is really well kept. There are people out here working on it every day. There is never any trash on the street or sidewalk and it is really clean. It is also really safe here.

Chez Bloom: It is new and there are lots of people moving in. The area is safe and there is low crime. We have easy access from anywhere in the Twin Cities. There is lots of other retail that compliments our business as well. We are located right between two big hospitals where we do lots of business.

What are some of the weaknesses of the location?

Brix: A lot of people don't know about the area. They don't know it has changed. Slowly people are learning about the redevelopment but its not something that happens overnight.

Lulu & Luigi: Sometimes I wish there wasn't so much traffic on the street. We could also use more parking. We do have the two parking garages but E & G doesn't have authority over them. A lot of people use them as a Park and Ride facility. So people arrive in the morning and take up all the parking spaces and leave at night. There would be plenty of parking if we could get those people to stop.

Chez Bloom: The rents are too high. Traffic can be excessive and parking could be better. At least there is free parking, that is nice. But the ramps fill up fast and a lot of people don't realize that it is free. Trader Joe's built a small parking lot. Now we find shopping carts all over the neighborhood. They have so many parking problems they need a traffic cop on the weekends to manage the parking lot.

What kind of mix do you have between pedestrian business and auto-oriented business?

Brix: There is lots of parking so it is hard to say. We do get a lot of regulars that live in the buildings. I'd say 80 – 20. 80 percent auto traffic and 20 percent foot traffic.

What are your busiest times of day?

Brix: We are pretty steady year round. Evenings after 4 are usually our busiest. E & G as a whole is really varied.

Lulu & Luigi: There is no predicting. Sometimes a Wednesday will be busy all day long. Other times, there will be no one in most of the day. E & G is really busy throughout the day.

Chez Bloom: Most of our business is over the phone. Customers may not even necessarily be in Minnesota so foot traffic doesn't necessarily apply to us as much. Mornings from 9 to 11 are usually our busiest times for phone-in orders. Evenings from around 4 to 7 are our busiest walk-in times.

Do most of your customers come from the neighborhood or from further away?

Brix: A good majority of customers are from the area. Probably 60 percent of them.

Lulu & Luigi: We draw from all over. We are one of the premier dog boutiques in the state. My dog is known in the tri-state area. There are also lots of customers who live in the condos.

Chez Bloom: Starbucks lets us advertise so we get lots of their customers over here. We do get lots of local people in the shop. We do weddings too and we do a lot of that business over the web site.

Do people shop the whole area at one time, or do they just come to the area to visit one shop?

Brix: We are definitely a destination location.

Lulu & Luigi: Trader Joe's is a really big pull. So is McCoy's and Max's. We are another big draw to the area.

Chez Bloom: Trader Joe's customers are focused on Trader Joe's. People don't go from there to here but we aren't really an impulse buy kind of place. People going to Starbucks, Brits and McCoy's are shopping around and going from place to place.

Is there anything else about E & G you want to say?

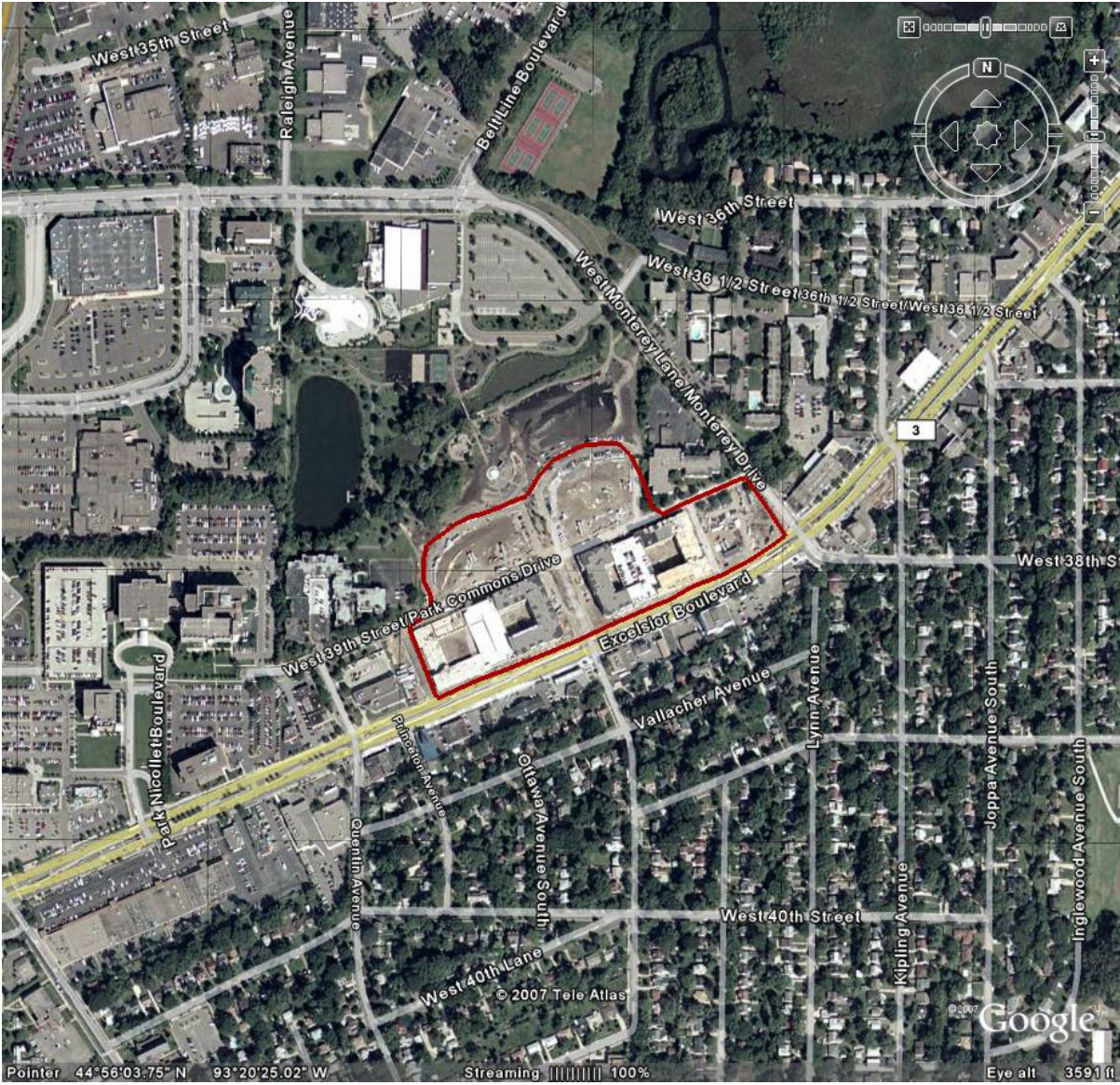
Lulu & Luigi: The demographic here is around 30 and up. There are a lot of 28 -34 year olds in the area and lots of empty nesters. Businesses that cater to these two groups do pretty well. Sometimes there are events in the park in the summer. We have live music and a 'Girls Night Out' party.

Chez Bloom: E & G is the 'New Uptown' but people here have more money. Lulu and Luigi's does very well, McCoy's does well. We do OK but its improving every month. One gift shop went out of business but the area is definitely successful. Trader Joe's helps E & G a lot.

People who live here and bought condos are happy and this is becoming a close knit community. The Grand already sold out its units and it just opened. People really like it here. Wolfe Park has events. Once a month they have Doggie-Palooza and summer concerts. They get a fairly good turn-out for those events.

Appendix C: Excelsior and Grand Map and Concept Plan

Excelsior and Grand



Source: Google Earth

Excelsior and Grand Concept Plan



Source: City of St. Louis Park

Appendix D: Heart of the City Map and Concept Plan

Heart of the City Burnsville



Source: Google Earth

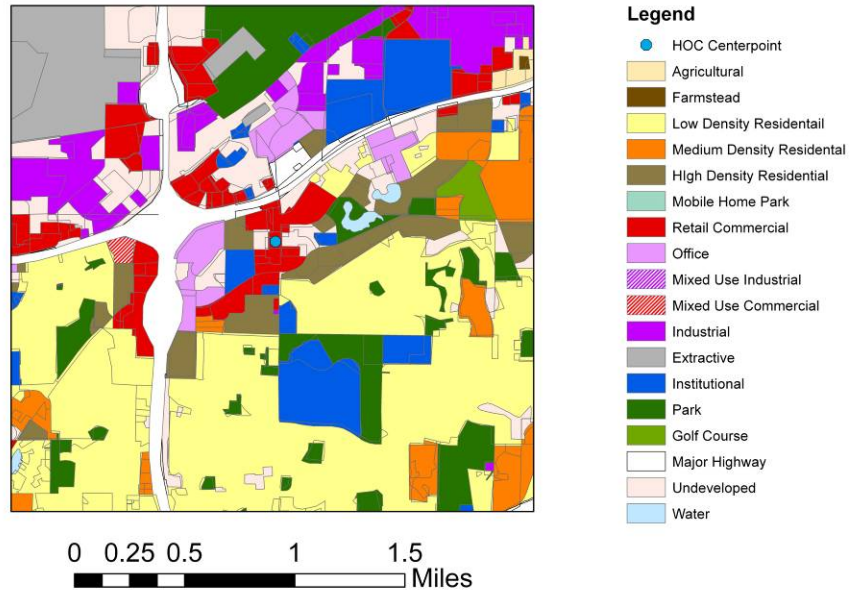
Heart of the City Burnsville Concept Plan



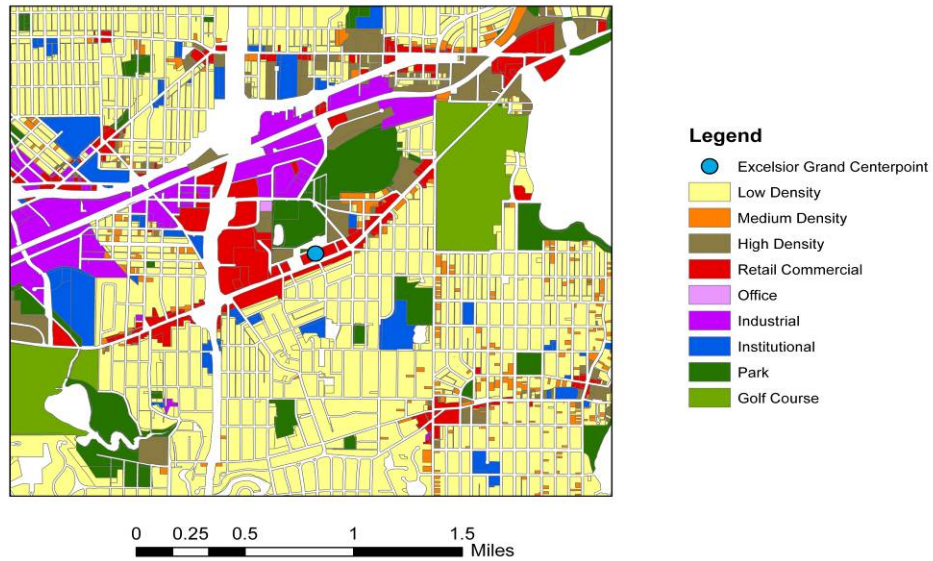
Source: Dahlgren, Shardlow, and Uban Inc. (1999)

Appendix E: Land Use and Neighborhood Context Maps of E & G and HOC
Maps created by Greg Schweser

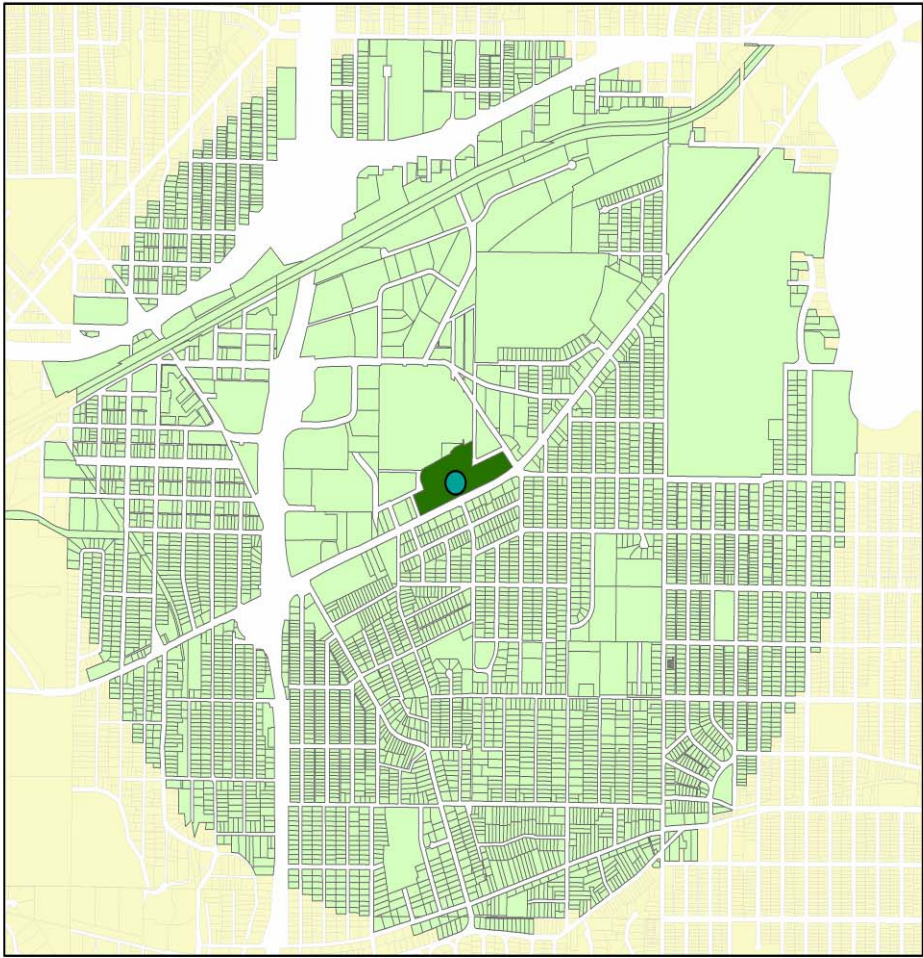
Land Use near Heart of the City 2000



Land Use near Excelsior and Grand 2000



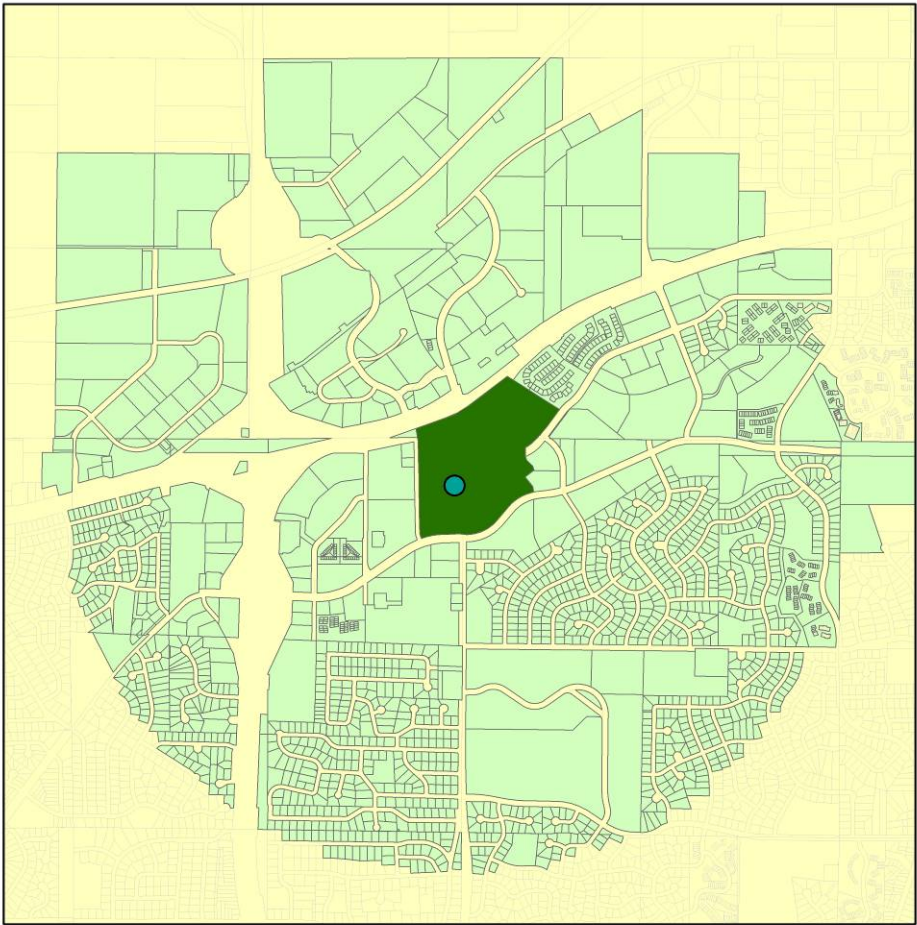
One Mile Radius of Excelsior and Grand



Legend

- Excelsior Grand Center Point
- Excelsior Grand Outline
- Parcels within 1 mile

One Mile Radius of Heart of the City



Legend

- HOC Center Point
- HOC Outline
- Parcels within 1 mile