

3 Community Direction

The Richfield Comprehensive Plan embodies the ideas and vision of the community. In order to be reflective of the community, every effort was made to make the planning process both participatory and transparent. During the preparation of the plan, information was regularly updated on the City's website. A specific project email address was established to provide a direct conduit for comments and suggestions. In addition to these newer electronic means of communication, the planning process also included a series of community meetings, the purpose of which was to allow the direct presentation and discussion of ideas. The following is a summary of the direction provided by the community at the public meetings.

Kick-off Meeting – February, 2007

The first formal opportunity for public participation in the process of updating Richfield's Comprehensive Plan took place on February 15, 2007. Approximately sixty people gathered to learn about the planning process and to provide guidance about the future of the community.

Public input from this meeting came in two forms - a survey of participants and group discussion exercises.

Participant Survey

Everyone at the meeting was asked to complete and return a two-page survey. Fifty-two people submitted survey forms. These surveys were designed to learn about the meeting participants and their views on several community development issues. The survey results offered some interesting insights about the involved participants:

- The participants represented an older segment of Richfield's population. 85% of the people were 45 years of age or older. No one at the meeting was 25 years or younger.
- This age corresponds with smaller households. Over three-quarters of the people had only one or two people in their home.
- The participants were primarily long-term residents of Richfield. Over half had lived in Richfield for more than 20 years. Only 15% were newcomers, living in town for five years or less.
- The meeting did not attract renters. Only two participants reported living in rental housing.

- Only 13% of the participants worked at a job located in Richfield. 35% were retired individuals.
- The quality of life in Richfield received high marks. 71% rated the quality of life over the past ten years as excellent or good. Only 18% thought that it “needs to be better”.
- 90% agreed or somewhat agreed that development of Best Buy corporate campus has been positive for Richfield.
- The need for more affordable housing received mixed results. Roughly the same percentages agreed and disagreed with the presumption of need.
- There was stronger sentiment on the need for “move up” housing. 55% agreed or somewhat agreed with this need. 19% of the surveys did not have a response to this issue.
- The participants were supportive of taller buildings and greater residential densities at appropriate locations, such as along I-494 or Cedar Avenue. 69% agreed or somewhat agreed with this concept.

The Richfield Game

Additional public input came in the form of the “Richfield Game”. The meeting participants formed eleven different groups. Each group was given a “game board” to complete. The game board contained 16 questions for discussion and response by the groups. The following highlights input received from the Richfield Game.

Figure 3.1 Richfield Game Board



Why do you live in Richfield?

Of the 55 total responses, the most common factors reported by the groups were:

- Affordability
- Location
- Parks

A variety of other factors influenced people’s decisions to live in Richfield.

What are the best qualities of your neighborhood?

The 40 responses to this question suggest that people view Richfield neighborhoods as good places to live. Well maintained homes and mature trees are some of the defining physical characteristics. People (friendly,

good neighbors) play an important role in the quality of a neighborhood.

What things could be done to make your neighborhood better?

The groups offered 37 ideas on how to improve Richfield neighborhoods. Common themes involved promoting better property maintenance and improving walkability.

List the most important things that define Richfield's identity.

No single thing dominated the list of 53 items reported by the groups. Some of the defining characteristics of Richfield include the housing stock and neighborhoods, location and the Wood Lake Nature Center.

What is not in Richfield today that you would like to see here in the next 20 years?

The groups were asked to think about what Richfield should be like in the future. The groups provided 46 suggestions of what to add to the community. Many of the groups identified new businesses and jobs as an important need. More sidewalks and a community center or gathering space were also listed by several groups.

Find your favorite park in Richfield.

Veterans Park and Wood Lake were clearly the favorite parks. These parks were also identified by the groups as the top gathering places in Richfield.

What are your biggest concerns about the future of Richfield?

The Game collected 55 responses to this question. No single area of concern was a common thread between the groups. Safety, property maintenance, affordability and school quality were among the most frequently cited concerns about the future.

How would you use \$10,000,000 to make improvements in Richfield?

The groups were asked the hypothetical question of how to spend \$10,000,000. They made a variety of interesting suggestions on how such an amount could be spent to improve Richfield. Many of the ideas dealt with undertaking improvements listed in response to other questions:

- Improvements to sidewalks and trails
- Incentives for property maintenance and business development
- Creation of community center or other community gathering place



Quadrant Meetings – May – June, 2007

Over a two month period, four community meetings were held to seek public input on ideas and concepts that were assembled based on initial community input. The concepts were intended to allow a testing of some of the “big ideas” being considered as part of the plan. Information was presented in two categories, general community ideas and specific park and recreation ideas. Results related to parks and recreation are included in the parks chapter of this plan. The following general community ideas were explored.

Enhanced Connectivity

Should Richfield improve community and neighborhood street character?



The appearance and character of streets and neighborhoods is important to Richfield residents. Almost 90% of the people that responded felt that it was appropriate to consider enhanced aesthetics for roadways

and neighborhoods. Sample comments from residents attending the meetings include:

“More landscaping and decorative street lighting would add character to the community.”

“But be realistic.”

“When you are dressed up you feel and act better. The same goes for our neighborhoods. If they are well kept, people will take more pride in their homes and workplaces.”

Enhanced Connectivity

Should Richfield improve sidewalks and trails?



Richfield currently has sidewalks along approximately 25% of its roadways. The sidewalks that do exist are generally found along high volume roads such as 66th Street and along some lower volume roads near schools. Higher energy costs, health concerns and contemporary planning and development ideas have resulted in a heightened interest in walking. Richfield residents

overwhelmingly (91%) responded that it is appropriate that Richfield improve its sidewalk and trail system. Sample comments from residents attending the meetings include:

“A definite yes! There is a lot available within walking/biking distance if it was made safer.”

“I would support more bikeways. We should improve sidewalks on busy streets. I am opposed to adding sidewalks to the quiet residential streets. Retrofitting sidewalks could be devastating to the urban forest.”

“Need better grid of sidewalks such as every 4th street. Dangerous walking at night without sidewalks. Also, drivers do not expect people walking without sidewalks – I was almost hit on my walk to the meeting.”

Enhanced Connectivity

Should Richfield work to expand transit opportunities and improve transit stops?



73% **Appropriate** to consider for Richfield
 20% **Not Appropriate** to consider for Richfield
 7% **No Answer**

Almost three quarters of the respondents stated that they feel it is appropriate for Richfield to consider expanding transit opportunities and improving existing transit stops. Many respondents felt that transit will be even more important in the future than it is today due to rising fuel costs and general environmental concerns. Sample comments from residents attending the meetings include:

“As gas goes up and the population grows – this will be the new transportation.”

“Inner City and City to City transit is needed. Need to get from Richfield to Bloomington and Edina.”

“Public transportation is a great need in this entire metro area, especially with the traffic and energy concerns for the future.”

Neighborhood Stabilization/Revitalization

Should Richfield work to expand housing maintenance and improvement programs?



89% **Appropriate** to consider for Richfield
 8% **Not Appropriate** to consider for Richfield
 3% **No Answer**

At the initial public meeting, many of the participants stated that they live in Richfield because of its attractive, quite neighborhoods. Not surprisingly, 89% of the people that attended the quadrant meetings felt that it is appropriate for Richfield to consider expanding housing maintenance and improvement programs. Sample comments from residents attending the meetings include:

“Help to improve the older homes is needed. More redevelopment like Morgan and 68th is needed throughout the City.”

“Richfield looks like a run-down, tired, old, un-cared-for town. Included in maintenance programs: need for higher expectations that residents maintain yards.”

“Yes, use grants and low interest loans.”

Neighborhood Stabilization/Revitalization

Should Richfield implement additional traffic calming measures?



- 68% **Appropriate** to consider for Richfield
- 13% **Not Appropriate** to consider for Richfield
- 19% **No Answer**

In 2007 and 2008, Richfield constructed its first two roundabouts along 66th Street. At the time of the quadrant meetings, the City was in the process of a public information campaign that provided people with information about roundabouts. As a result, meeting attendees were fairly well versed in traffic calming measures, particularly roundabouts. Of those attending, 68% felt that Richfield should consider adding additional traffic calming measures. Sample comments from residents attending the meetings include:

“Whatever will help traffic flow, I’m in support of.”

“Not sure about roundabouts yet. I’m not too worried about single-lane roundabouts but I think double lane roundabouts will not be good for citizens.”

“These typically are streetscape improvements that are aesthetically pleasing.”



66th Street Roundabout

Neighborhood Stabilization/Revitalization

Should Richfield expand housing opportunities (affordable housing)?



67%	Appropriate to consider for Richfield
25%	Not Appropriate to consider for Richfield
8%	No Answer

Richfield residents recognize the need for affordable housing as part of the community's total housing supply. Of those attending, 67% felt that it is appropriate that Richfield consider expanding affordable housing opportunities. Sample comments from residents attending the meetings include:

"We already have a lot of affordable housing."

"Do we meet the requirements as the need arises? I suggest making small pockets of affordable housing rather than locating all in one area."

"With the increase in our diversity, affordable housing will only increase in its need."

Neighborhood Stabilization/Revitalization

Should Richfield expand housing opportunities (move-up housing)?



60%	Appropriate to consider for Richfield
29%	Not Appropriate to consider for Richfield
11%	No Answer

Much of Richfield's housing has similar characteristics; smaller, one story homes that are moderately priced. Throughout the planning process, a number of Richfield residents stated that they felt that as young families grow, they leave Richfield for communities with larger, move-up housing. Accordingly, residents were asked to comment on the need for additional move-up housing. Approximately 60% of those that responded favored adding move-up housing opportunities in Richfield. Sample comments from residents attending the meetings include:

"We need housing for growing families. We need to retain young families instead of making them flee to new suburbs."

"OK as long as we don't allow mega homes in inappropriate places."

"Trust that those that cherish Richfield will find a way to improve existing homes."

Neighborhood Stabilization/Revitalization

Should Richfield expand housing opportunities (medium density housing)?



- 63% **Appropriate** to consider for Richfield
- 25% **Not Appropriate** to consider for Richfield
- 12% **No Answer**

Richfield consists of predominately single-family detached homes. Most of the City’s existing multi-family housing is classified as high density, generally having densities in excess of 24 units per acre. Most of this high density housing is in the older apartment buildings that are adjacent to major freeways or are in newly redeveloped areas such as the Lakes at Lyndale (Lyndale Avenue and 66th Street). Over the past ten years, substantial amounts of medium density housing have been built in developing Twin Cities suburbs. The common form of this housing is the attached townhome, commonly in a row-type configuration. Very little of this type of housing exists in Richfield, primarily since it was not a strong residential housing form in the 1960s and 1970s when most of the housing in Richfield was constructed.

When participants at the quadrant meetings were asked about their interest in seeing more medium density housing in the City, 63% responded favorably. Sample comments from residents attending the meetings include:

“Keep it balanced with neighborhoods (homes both small and medium in size).”

“Condos and townhomes are needed for young professionals and families. City has too high of a concentration of senior housing.”

“Keep it affordable and well maintained.”

Neighborhood Stabilization/Revitalization

Should Richfield expand housing opportunities (high density housing)?



- 44% **Appropriate** to consider for Richfield
- 40% **Not Appropriate** to consider for Richfield
- 16% **No Answer**

Residents that think Richfield should expand its supply of high density housing only slightly outnumbered those that do not favor more of such housing (44% as compared to 40%). Newer high density housing in Richfield has

been constructed in redevelopment nodes such as the Lakes at Lyndale area and the Lyndale Gateway area at 76th Street. In these areas, the decision to build higher density housing was partially due to market interests and largely the product of economics. Land values have risen to the point where higher density housing is required to amortize the investment necessary to make a project successful. The economics of land development are not likely to change in the future. Accordingly, Richfield is likely to see more high density housing proposals in the future. Sample comments from residents attending the meetings include:

“It will be an increasing necessity, the planet has 6.5 billion people.”

“We have enough. It creates too much traffic.”

“Only in selected areas, not everywhere. Don’t take more houses out to make another high rise.”

Targeted Redevelopment/Expanded Opportunities

Should Richfield continue to pursue redevelopment in selected areas and expand business opportunities (major redevelopment opportunities)?



76%	Appropriate to consider for Richfield
11%	Not Appropriate to consider for Richfield
7%	No Answer

Richfield has seen a number of major redevelopment projects in the past ten years, not without controversy. Projects like the Best Buy Corporate headquarters were built through a public/private partnership. Such projects can change the face of the community. Development around Lyndale Avenue and 66th Street is much different today than it was twenty years ago. Because of its close-in location and excellent access to regional roadways, Richfield is likely to see more large scale redevelopment opportunities in the future.

At the quadrant meetings, the majority of attendees (76%) stated that they favored the consideration of future major redevelopment efforts. Key to that response was the fact that the question referenced selected areas,

not redevelopment that would displace existing single-family neighborhoods. Sample comments from residents attending the meetings include:

“Absolutely! This should be a top priority. Rebuild the Hub.”

“I think we have enough of these already.”

“Develop gateway areas. Draw more people into Richfield. Develop a new downtown at the Hub site with mixed use and pedestrian friendly housing to the sidewalk – parking in the rear.”

Targeted Redevelopment/Expanded Opportunities

Should Richfield continue to pursue redevelopment in selected areas and expand business opportunities (local business opportunities)?



91% **Appropriate**
to consider for
Richfield

3% **Not Appropriate**
to consider for
Richfield

6% **No Answer**

In the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, commercial development in Richfield included a significant number of smaller, locally owned businesses. More recently, national chain retailers have become the prominent face of retail in Richfield as

in most other communities in this country. Richfield residents still have a fondness for local businesses and would like to see opportunities for local businesses to become established or expand.

Of all of the survey questions posed at the quadrant meetings, expansion of local businesses had the highest positive response rate (91%). Although the reality of retail today makes it sometimes hard for such businesses to compete, residents favor continuing to look for places in which such businesses could be successful. Sample comments from residents attending the meetings include:

“We need small businesses for their uniqueness. They help keep the hometown feel of Richfield. We are an interesting place to live and shop.”

“But accomplished by insuring that existing small businesses can make improvements without fear of displacement.”

“Now you’re talking!”

Targeted Redevelopment/Expanded Opportunities

Should Richfield continue to pursue redevelopment in selected areas and expand business opportunities (expanded retail and office opportunities)?



69%	Appropriate to consider for Richfield
12%	Not Appropriate to consider for Richfield
19%	No Answer

The final general development question posed at the quadrant meetings sought to gauge people's thinking on expanding retail and office opportunities. In general, attendees favored such expansion with 69% being affirmative responses. Again, perhaps key to the response was the term "selected areas" that was part of the question. Sample comments from residents attending the meetings include:

"The right kind of development, living wage jobs along Cedar."

"No cookie cutter architecture, it comes off looking like every other suburb."

"Would help attract jobs and shoppers to the area."

Community Open House – November, 2007

Using input on the ideas and concepts obtained at the quadrant meetings, a series of planning initiatives related to land use, housing and transportation were developed. The open house held in November provided a forum for testing the initiatives and getting specific feedback from Richfield residents. Based on the input received, all of the initiatives were incorporated into the plan and are found in the respective sections that follow. The following is an overview of the specific initiatives that were reviewed.

Land Use

Changes to the land use categories were proposed to better define the range of residential and non-residential land uses in Richfield. For example, the single-family residential classification that was used in the 1997 plan was relabeled as low density residential, a change that reflects the range of densities allowed in the category that will also accommodate lower density attached housing such as duplexes. Similarly, the single-family high density category that was used in the 1997 plan was renamed medium density residential, again a better reflection of the unit types allowed within the density range. Changes to the commercial categories also occurred as discussed below. Major initiatives presented included the following:

Single-Family High Density Residential

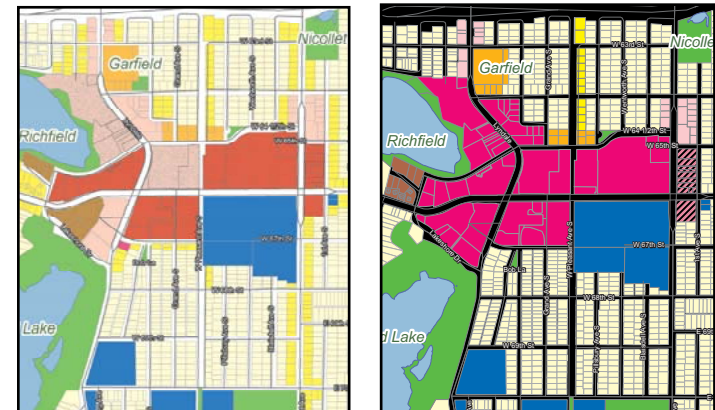


The 1997 plan contained a residential category labeled “High Density, Single-family”. The intent of this category was to allow densities up to 12 units per acre in “areas that are selected on the basis of existing use, adjacent non-residential use or multiple land uses, street access, available public and private services and related planning and economic factors.” The future land use map contained in the 1997 plan established a one lot deep pattern of High Density, Single-family along major north/south roadways including Penn Avenue, Nicollet Avenue and Portland Avenue as well as along portions of 66th Street. The concern at the time of the drafting of the 1997 plan was that in these areas, traffic volumes were so substantial that they would contribute to a deterioration of the single-family detached homes that line most of these streets. Ten years of history has shown that this has not occurred. There is no discernable difference in the maintenance and

upkeep of the single-family detached homes along these corridors compared to the rest of Richfield’s residential neighborhoods. Additionally, the one lot depth of this category does not create enough land to meaningfully convert many of these single-family homes to higher density, townhouse-type of developments.

The public was supportive of the proposed change. On the written survey used at the meeting, one resident noted, “*Fantastic, thank you for bringing a sense of relief regarding plans for my neighborhood.*”

Mixed Use



The area generally encompassed by the Lakes at Lyndale Plan extending east to the Hub Shopping Center was overlaid with a variety of commercial categories in the 1997 Comprehensive Plan. Land use categories found in the area included Regional Commercial – Office,

Community Commercial – Office and Neighborhood Commercial. This area is generally regarded as the core of the community and many people consider it to be Richfield’s downtown.

Development in the area over the past ten years has not been reflective of the specific land use designations. Much of the newer development in the area has a vertical mixed use component with residential located above first floor retail and office. The character of the area is becoming truly mixed use, rather than the horizontal mix of commercial uses articulated in the 1997 land use categories.

Accordingly, one of the planning initiatives was to consolidate all of the various commercial and residential land use categories into one category of mixed use. In this area, mixed use would allow an intermingling of commercial, office and residential uses. Subsequent zoning ordinance revisions will need to establish standards for the mixed use area. At the community meeting, residents generally acknowledged the uniqueness of this area and supported the land use change. One resident provided a comment about both the form of the area and its accessibility saying, “*Welcomed, as long as it doesn’t become a yuppie center – out of reach of a large population of the City.*”

Commercial Uses



The 1997 Richfield Comprehensive Plan contained five different land use categories that allowed commercial uses. The application of these categories in an intermixed manner was confusing. For example, regional commercial was located next to neighborhood commercial along 66th Street. Neighborhood commercial designations were also found along major freeway corridors.

To bring some order to the commercial property designations, the idea of the three tiered commercial categories was explored at the quadrant meetings and again at the November open house. The proposed change involved three categories: 1) neighborhood commercial accommodating uses that are of a scale and type of business that serves predominately neighborhood needs; 2) community

commercial accommodating a range of commercial uses that are marketed primarily to Richfield residents; and 3) regional commercial uses that are as the name implies, larger scale retailers and service businesses that draw customers from a wide ranging area. Examples of the regional commercial users are Target and Home Depot along the Cedar Avenue corridor and Menards and Richfield-Bloomington Honda along the I-494 corridor.

The future land use plan found in the land use chapter incorporates the three tiered system of commercial land use designations. This approach was supported by those in attendance at the community meeting. There was particular enthusiasm for enhancing and improving smaller, neighborhood commercial areas.

Richfield's Western Border

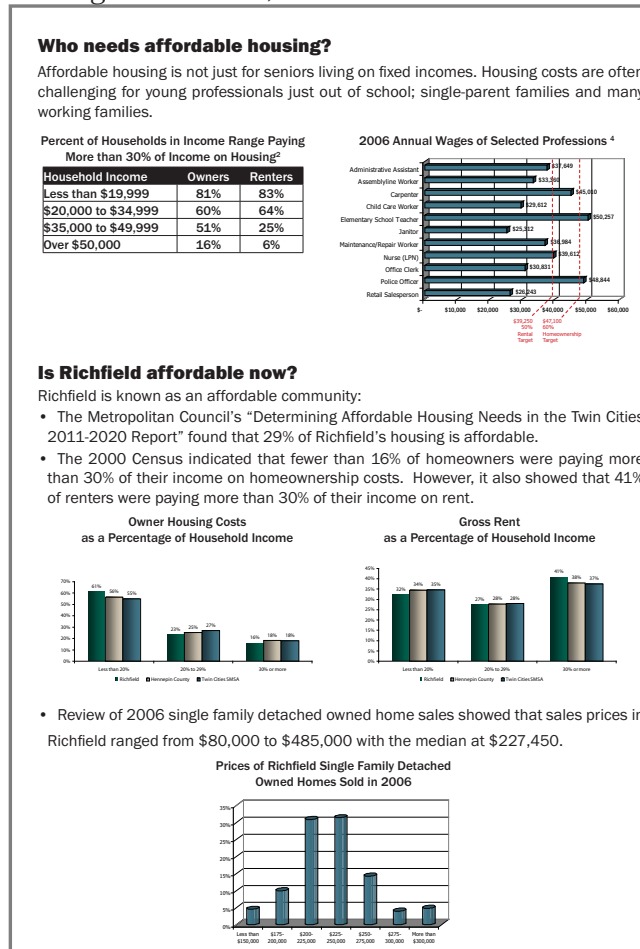


On the west side, Richfield shares its border with the City of Edina. The intensely developed Southdale area is immediately west of York Avenue. This area, which is the home of the Southdale and the Galleria shopping centers has also recently seen significant proposals for new residential development. Some of that residential development has been along 69th Street at the Richfield border. With the City limits running down the middle of Xerxes Avenue South, portions of the Edina side of the street may see four to five story residential development which would be immediately across the street from single-family homes in Richfield.

In order to provide a land use transition, one of the planning initiatives explored changing the land use designation of a four block long area from low density residential to medium density residential. The medium density residential would allow townhomes or similar development in the future should property owners have an interest in redevelopment. In designating this area as medium density, the only intention of the plan is to accommodate a change in use if deemed appropriate by the land owners. This area is not a redevelopment priority for the City of Richfield.

Housing

Figure 3.2 Housing Affordability presented at public meeting November 15, 2007



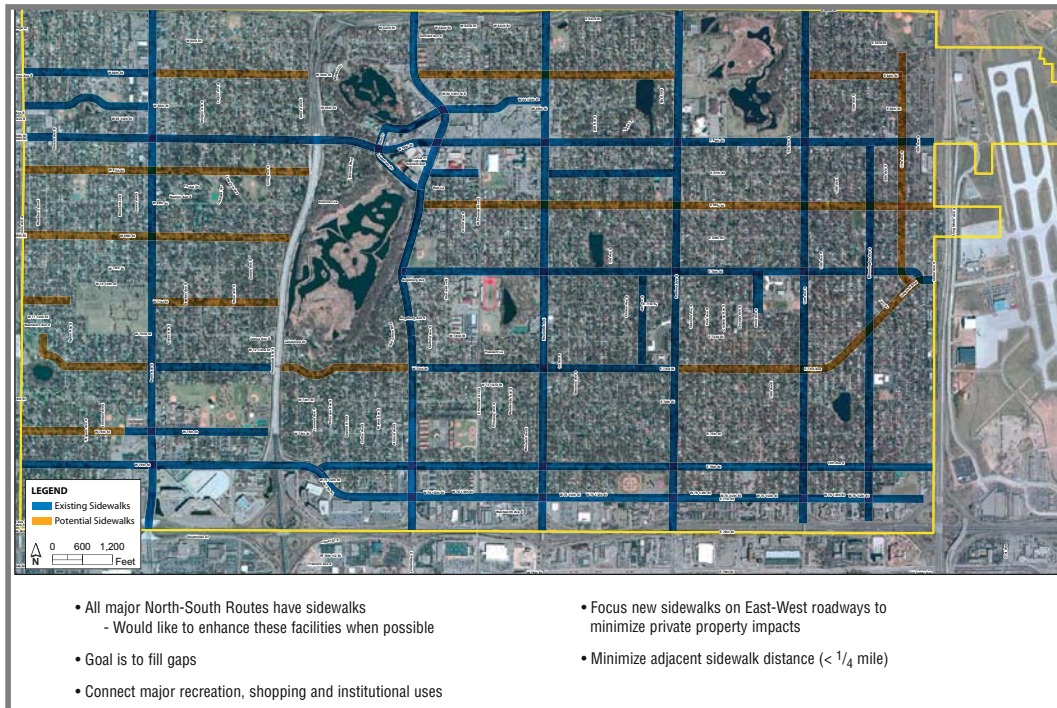
maintenance. Background information was provided for attendees that sought to define affordable housing. Based on the information presented and the positive reaction of Richfield residents at the meeting, the following initiatives were incorporated into the housing chapter of the plan.

- Maintain the integrity and desirability of existing single-family neighborhoods.
- Encourage ongoing maintenance and upkeep of residential properties.
- Accommodate the development of up to 5,400 new housing units by 2030.
- Support the renovation and expansion of single-family homes which fit the character of their surrounding neighborhoods.
- Promote continued affordability in Richfield, including the development of new low and moderate income housing units.
- Focus new multi-family housing in Lakes at Lyndale and along major transportation corridors like Cedar Avenue and I-494.

The November community meeting also featured information on housing and tested a series of initiatives designed to address housing affordability and

Transportation

Figure 3.3 Transportation Issues



Information about Richfield's transportation system including existing and projected traffic volumes was presented at the November open house. Based on responses at the quadrant meetings, one of the transportation initiatives shown involved the implementation of a new sidewalk system on a limited basis. The goal of the sidewalk concept was to provide a connection between neighborhoods, shopping and parks.

In addition to the sidewalk initiative, other transportation initiatives presented and ultimately included in the transportation chapter of this plan included:

- Coordinate transportation investments with land use objectives to encourage development at key nodes.
- Encourage a multi-modal transportation system including bicycles, pedestrians, roadway vehicles and transit.
- Plan a cost-effective, safe, multi-modal regional highway system that reflects the needs of a growing population and economy.
- Incorporate landscaping alternatives and aesthetics in all transportation improvements.
- Tailor transit services to the City's diverse market conditions, improve ridership on transit services, and work with regional transportation authorities to develop a regional network of transitways on dedicated rights-of-way.
- Work with transit providers in order to establish local or circulator bus routes within Richfield and from Richfield to other places in the metropolitan area.
- Encourage behavior and land use changes that will result in fewer vehicle trips, particularly during the peak rush hours (travel demand management).
- Reduce roadway widths to allow for sidewalk and/or bike lanes. This may also reduce vehicular speeds.
- Improve non-motorized and pedestrian travel in the City (sidewalks and/or bike paths).