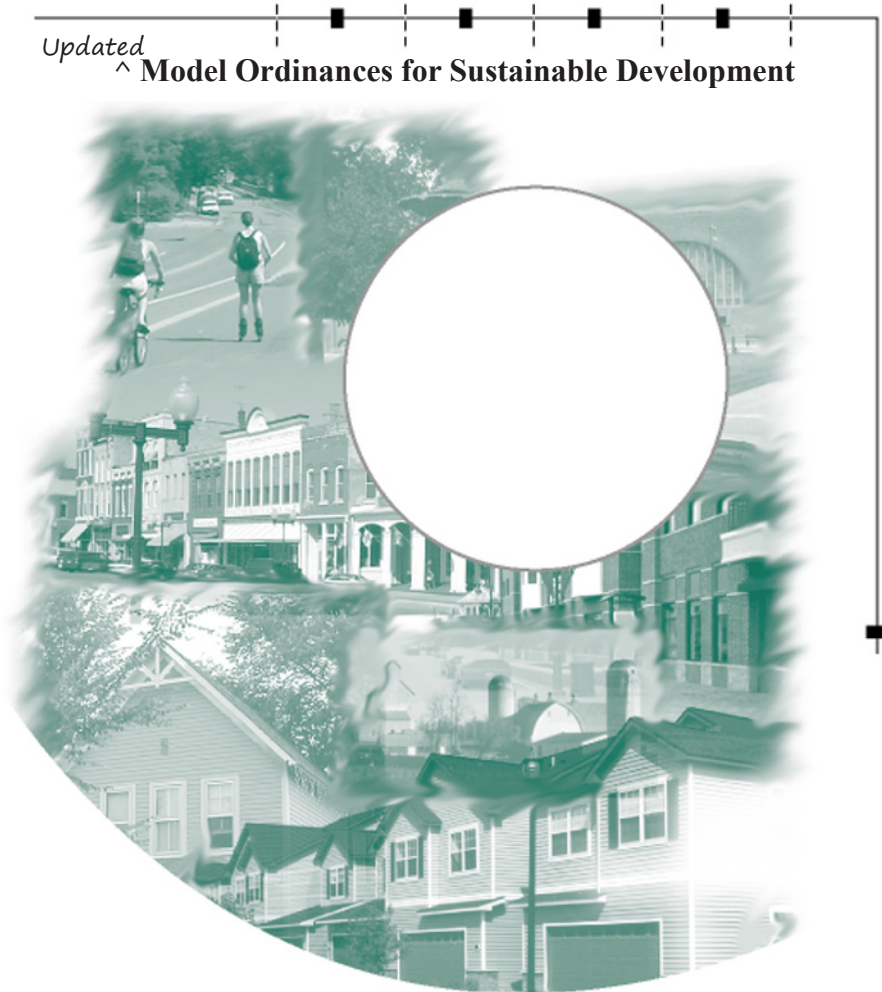


From Policy to Reality



Updated
^ **Model Ordinances for Sustainable Development**

2000
Environmental
Quality Board

2008
Minnesota Pollution
Control Agency

INTRODUCTION

In most communities, highway-oriented commercial development is a common land use pattern. While convenient, its appearance and orientation towards automobile traffic and parking often lacks visual appeal and discourages pedestrian or bicycle movement. Yet highway corridors of this type are often the gateways into – and the places that visitors get their first impressions of – communities. Can this development pattern be made more attractive and walkable? This ordinance draws on recent examples of design standards for “big box” and other highway commercial development to try to achieve this goal.

- I. **Purposes** - The Highway Commercial District is intended for use in locations along Model Community’s primary commercial corridors where automobile-oriented businesses are already present or are planned. Allowed businesses include those that typically benefit from access and visibility from major highway corridors. Businesses that involve outdoor display, storage and/or sales, motor vehicle repair and other intensive or outdoor uses are allowed with appropriate screening. The HC District regulations specifically implement the following goals from the Comprehensive Plan:
 - A. **Goal** – Create more walkable and attractive commercial corridors by scaling streets, blocks and buildings to the needs of pedestrians.
 - B. **Goal** – Encourage buildings with a human scale, which evoke traditional buildings without imitating them, and to create a pedestrian-friendly internal site layout and streetscape.
 - C. **Goal** – Encourage transit use by locating commercial uses so that they are directly visible and accessible from an existing or planned transit route.
 - D. **Goal** – Preserve the functionality of major thoroughfares by controlling access to such streets and incorporating shared internal circulation.
 - E. **Goal** – Minimize the potential for increased traffic congestion, noise, glare, and other negative impacts that may result from commercial development.
 - F. **Goal** – For [Corridor or Highway X], project the image and character of an attractive and distinctive gateway into Model Community.

II. Use Regulations

A. **Table of Uses** - The following table indicates allowed land uses with the following abbreviations: P for Permitted Use, C for Conditional Use, N for Not Permitted.

Because of the primarily commercial nature of the HC district, residential uses are conditional (some residential uses may already exist in the district or be appropriate on large sites where they can be buffered from traffic).

	DMU
Residential Uses	
Single-family dwelling	C
Two-family dwelling	C
Townhouse, rowhouse	C
Dwelling unit located at ground floor	N
Dwelling unit located above ground floor	C
Secondary dwelling	C
Community residential facility	C
Live-work space	C
Civic and Semi-Public Uses	
Libraries, museums, community centers	C
Colleges and universities, commercial schools and professional training facilities	C
Religious assemblies	C
Schools, public and private	C
Day care centers	C
Parks and recreation facilities	P
Hospitals, clinics, nursing homes	C
Transit stations and related parking facilities	P
Commercial Uses	
Retail sales and service establishments, multi-tenant shopping centers, and personal service establishments	P
Services such as beauty shops, barbershops, and dry-cleaning establishments.	P

	DMU
Professional business and general offices such as banks, offices, clinics, medical, dental and doctor's offices, government and public utility office buildings, post offices, opticians' offices and similar uses.	P
Hotels, motels, inns, bed and breakfasts	P
Convention centers and halls, conference centers, exhibition halls	N
Theaters, indoor entertainment facilities, fitness centers, health clubs	P
Sports facilities, arenas, stadium	C
Structured parking facilities	P
Restaurants including open air or sidewalk cafes	P
Food and beverage sales	P
Taverns, lodges or private clubs	P
Art and craft galleries and studios	P
Farmers' markets	P
Mixed-use developments or multi-use developments	P
Drive-through facilities in conjunction with a permitted use	P
Office-showrooms and office-warehouses	C
Agricultural implement sales and service	P
Lumberyards and construction material sales	P
Garden and landscaping sales and service	P
Automotive service stations, including convenience stores with fuel sales	P
Motor vehicle sales and service	P
Recreational vehicles and equipment sales and service	P
Outdoor sales and storage in conjunction with a permitted use	P

Auto-oriented uses are permitted with standards for their siting, screening of outdoor sales and storage, and design of drive-through facilities.

III. Dimensional Standards

	Min. Lot Area, sq. ft.	Min. Lot Width, feet	Min. Front Yard, feet	Min. Side Yard, feet	Min. Rear Yard, feet
Commercial or Mixed-Use Building	20,000	66	20 from right-of-way	10, corner 20	20
Townhouse, Rowhouse, Live-Work Building	2,000/unit	25/unit	20	8 (end unit)	20
Multifamily Building	1,000/unit	60	20	10	20
Other Building Type	To be determined through Conditional Use process				

IV. Density and Height Standards

Minimum FAR	0.3 [1]
Minimum Height	1.5 stories
Maximum Height	4 stories/50 feet
Maximum Building Footprint	75,000 square feet [2]

[1] Public gathering spaces, landscaped areas, public art, and outdoor seating areas may be counted toward building square footage in calculating the FAR.

[2] Larger building footprints may be allowed through the approval of a conditional use.

V. Design Standards

- A. **Intent of this Section** - The intent of this section is to encourage buildings with a human scale, which evoke traditional buildings without imitating them, and to create a pedestrian-friendly internal site layout and streetscape.

The maximum building footprint limit is intended to ensure that buildings with the largest floorplates receive an additional level of public review through the conditional use process.

The building façade standards in this section are rapidly becoming common practice in the design of contemporary shopping centers. The internal circulation guidelines are also being used in more locations to create more pedestrian-friendly (while still auto-oriented) environments. Not all standards will be appropriate in all locations.

- B. **Building Placement** - In order to encourage pedestrian circulation and shared parking among uses:
1. Distances between principal buildings, or between the most distant entrances of a single building, should not exceed 300 feet. This standard can be achieved through the arrangement of free-standing buildings in compact groups, the design of single buildings in an “L” or “I” shape, or similar strategies.
 2. Building entrances should be located as close to abutting streets as possible, and no further than 85 feet from the street right-of-way. This standard may be achieved through the creation of one or more public or private internal streets within a large site.
- C. **Architectural Style** - No single architectural style or styles are required. The contemporary adaptation of elements of historic commercial architectural styles found in Downtown Model Community, including [Italianate, Neoclassical and Early Twentieth Century Commercial], is encouraged. If a particular style is used, it should be used consistently. The combination of elements of a variety of styles in one building is discouraged.
- D. **Building Width and Façade Articulation** - Buildings of more than 40 feet in width shall be divided into smaller increments through articulation of the façade. This can be achieved through combinations of the following techniques, and others that may meet the objective.
1. **Façade Modulation** - Stepping back or extending forward a portion of the façade
 2. Vertical divisions using different textures or materials (although materials should be drawn from a common palette)
 3. Division into storefronts, with separate display windows and entrances
 4. Variation in roof lines by alternating dormers, stepped roofs, gables, or other roof elements to reinforce the modulation or articulation interval
 5. Arcades, awnings, window bays, arched windows and balconies at intervals equal to the articulation interval
 6. Providing a lighting fixture, trellis, tree, or other landscape feature with each interval
- E. **Scale, Proportion and Placement** - In general building elements such as windows, doors, arcades, towers, etc. should be arranged symmetrically across the façade, in a regular and logical manner. Window and door openings should be proportional to façade length and height. Large elements (i.e. clock tower) may be appropriate, but there should be an emphasis on maintaining a human scale at the ground level.

- F. **Building Height and Roof Design** - In order to improve the appearance of uninterrupted facades:
 - 1. Buildings over 100 feet in length shall be at least 1-1/2 stories in height for at least 30% of their length.
 - 2. Roofs shall be designed with one or more of the following:
 - a. Sloping roofs with a minimum roof pitch of at least 1 foot of rise to 4 feet of run.
 - b. Flat roofs with a decorative parapet concealing rooftop equipment. Average parapet height shall not exceed 15 percent of the height of the supporting wall and maximum parapet height at any point shall not exceed one-third the height of the supporting wall.
 - c. Overhanging eaves, extending no less than 18 inches past the surrounding walls.

- G. **Ground-Floor Windows** - In order to allow views into and out of buildings, to enliven the streetscape, increase a sense of security and allow opportunities for display of merchandise:
 - 1. The primary street level façade of large retail or office establishments (over 25,000 square feet) that faces a public street or walkway shall be transparent between the height of 3 and 8 feet above sidewalk grade for at least 40 percent of the horizontal length of the building façade.
 - 2. The primary street level façade of smaller retail or office establishments (25,000 square feet or less) shall be transparent for at least 50 percent of the horizontal length of the building façade, between the height of 3 and 8 feet above sidewalk grade, at minimum.

- H. **Entries** - In order to ensure that entries contribute to the visual attractiveness of the building and are readily visible to the customer, entries to principal buildings shall feature at least two of the following features:
 - 1. Canopy, portico, overhang, arcade or arch above the entrance
 - 2. Recesses or projections in the building façade surrounding the entrance
 - 3. Peaked roof or raised parapet over the door
 - 4. Display windows surrounding the entrance
 - 5. Architectural detailing such as tile work or ornamental moldings
 - 6. Permanent planters or window boxes for landscaping
 - 7. Primary building entrances shall face the primary abutting public street, not a side or rear parking area.

- I. **Number of Entrances** - In order to reduce walking distance from parking areas, adjoining streets and adjacent buildings, and to avoid the appearance of unbroken walls:

1. A retail building accessible by more than one public street shall provide customer entrances on at least two of the street frontages. The entrance facing the secondary street shall be clearly distinguished using the methods listed above under “Entries”.
 2. Each additional retail store within a principal building shall provide at least one exterior customer entrance clearly distinguished using the methods listed above.
- J. **Building Materials** - In order to ensure that high-quality, authentic materials that evoke traditional downtown settings are used in new commercial development, buildings shall be constructed of high-quality materials such as brick, stone or textured, cast stone or tinted masonry units.
1. The following materials are prohibited:
 - Unadorned plain or painted concrete block
 - Tilt-up concrete panels
 - Pre-fabricated steel or sheet metal panels
 - Reflective glass
 - Aluminum, vinyl, fiberglass, asphalt or fiberboard siding
 - Wood siding
 2. Accent materials may be used on up to 15% of the building’s façade. These may include metal, glass block, spandrel glass or similar materials as approved by the Planning Commission.
- K. **Side and Rear Treatments** - In order to ensure continuity of materials and façade treatments on all visible facades, all building facades visible from a public street or walkway shall employ materials and design features similar to those of the front façade.
- L. **Building Colors** - In order to ensure that building colors are aesthetically pleasing and compatible with surrounding buildings, building colors shall consist of subtle, neutral or muted colors, with low reflectance. Recommended colors include browns, grays, tans , beiges, and dark or muted greens, blues and reds. No more than two principal colors may be used on a façade. Bright, white or primary colors should be used only as accents, occupying a maximum of 10 percent of building facades.
- M. **Parking** - In order to improve the appearance and convenience of parking lot circulation for vehicles and pedestrians, parking areas shall be distributed around large buildings in order to shorten the distance to other buildings and reduce the overall scale of the paved surface.
1. No more than 50 percent of the off-street parking area for the entire site shall be located between the front façade of the principal building and the primary abutting street.

2. Alternatively, one or more internal accessways that are similar to streets may be used to divide the site into parking areas no greater than 55,000 square feet.
 - a. Internal accessways must have at least one auto travel lane, curbs, and sidewalks on both sides at least six (6) feet wide. Accessways must be landscaped along their entire length with trees, shrubs and planting beds.
 - b. On-street parking (angled or parallel) must be provided along both sides of the accessway, except within 75 feet of street intersections. Curb extensions that are at least the full depth of the parking stall shall be provided at all internal and external street intersections, as shown.
- N. **Parking Lot Landscaping** - In order to soften and improve the appearance of parking lots when viewed from an abutting street or sidewalk, all parking and loading areas (including drive-through facilities, pump island service areas and stacking spaces) fronting public streets or sidewalks, and all parking and loading areas abutting residential districts or uses, shall provide:
1. A landscaped yard at least 5 feet wide along the public street or sidewalk. If a parking area contains over 100 spaces, the minimum required yard shall be increased to 8 feet in width.
 2. Screening consisting of either a masonry wall, fence, berm or hedge or combination that forms a screen a minimum of 3 feet in height, a maximum of 4-1/2 feet in height, and not less than 50 percent opaque.
 3. One tree shall be provided for each 25 linear feet of parking lot frontage on a public street or accessway (see Figure 19).
- O. **Interior Parking Lot Landscaping** - The corners of parking lots and all other areas not used for parking or vehicular circulation shall be landscaped with turf grass, native grasses or other perennial flowering plants, vines, shrubs and trees. Such spaces may include architectural features such as benches, kiosks or bicycle parking.
1. In parking lots containing more than 100 spaces, an additional landscaped area of at least 300 square feet shall be provided for each 12 spaces or fraction thereof, containing one deciduous shade tree. The remainder shall be covered with turf grass, native grasses, perennial flowering plants, vines or shrubs.
- P. **Placement and Screening of Service, Loading and Storage Areas**
1. Any outdoor storage, service or loading area that faces adjacent residential uses or a public street or walkway shall be screened by a decorative fence, wall or screen of plant material at least 6 feet in height, or a planting screen shall be provided parallel to the property line, street or walkway.
 2. Loading docks, truck parking, HVAC equipment, trash collection and other service functions shall be incorporated into the design of the building so that the visual and noise impacts of these functions are fully contained and not visible/audible from adjacent properties and public streets. Areas for the outdoor storage and sale of merchandise,

where permitted, shall be permanently defined and screened with walls or fences, with materials compatible with and of similar quality to primary building materials.

- Q. **Lighting** - Exterior lighting shall be the minimum necessary for safety and security. Lighting shall be designed to coordinate with building architecture and landscaping. Building-mounted fixtures shall be compatible with the building facades. Overall lighting levels should be consistent with the character and intensity of the surrounding area. All light fixtures shall be shielded or other directed to ensure that light is not directed onto adjacent properties.
- R. **Pedestrian and Bicycle Access** - Sidewalks may be required along some or all public streets that abut the proposed development in order to provide pedestrian connections from all adjacent neighborhoods and activity centers.
1. A well-defined pedestrian path shall be provided from the sidewalk to each principal customer entrance of a building. Walkways shall be located so that the distance between street and entrance is minimized. Walkways shall be at least 5 feet in width, and shall be distinguished through pavement material from the surrounding parking lot. Walkways shall be landscaped for at least 50 percent of their length with trees, shrubs, and planting beds.
 2. Sidewalks of at least 8 feet in width shall be provided along all front building facades that abut public parking areas.
 3. Walkways and sidewalks should be defined by design features such as towers, arcades, porticoes, pedestrian-scale light fixtures, planters, and other architectural elements.
 4. Bicycle parking shall be provided in a convenient and visible location no farther from the principal entrance than the closest automobile parking space, at a ratio of 1 space per 25 automobile parking spaces. Bicycle parking shall consist of a bike rack designed so that the bicycle frame can be locked to the rack, subject to the review of the City Engineer.
- S. **Community Amenities** - Each retail development of over 75,000 square feet in floor area shall provide a patio or outdoor seating area, which may also provide outdoor cafes or dining areas, with the stipulation that at least 50 percent of the area shall be reserved for public use. The outdoor area shall include seating and a water feature, clock tower or other central focal point.