

## Chapter 5 - Downtown Hopkins

### Introduction

Downtown Hopkins has changed substantially over the past 20 years. Noteworthy improvements include construction of the Hopkins Center for the Arts and the Hopkins 6 movie theater complex. These two developments have dramatically changed the visual appearance of the downtown core, and they bring substantial numbers of visitors into the community. Additionally, the east end of Mainstreet is seeing significant mixed-use development involving retail uses and housing. The Marketplace Lofts project was significant since it was the first to establish contemporary urban-form housing in downtown Hopkins. Other similar projects are expected in the future.

### Analysis of Downtown Hopkins

Future improvements in downtown Hopkins will seek to capitalize on the assets of the area while working to address identified liabilities. The following is an overview of each:

#### Assets

- Downtown Hopkins presents a strong sense of place. It is the quintessential downtown that many suburban communities are trying to duplicate today.
- Downtown serves as a significant shopping destination.
- There is a strong base of existing establishments including special purpose retailers and auto dealers who draw people from outside of the immediate Hopkins area.
- There is a strong local employment base that draws people to the city.
- There is strong community support for the continued improvement of downtown.
- The business community is service oriented.
- Downtown Hopkins cuts across a broad range of lifestyle and income groups.
- Local residents are supportive of local business establishments.
- The City government is active in community development.



Movie Theater and Restaurant Development  
Completed in 1997

### **Liabilities**

- The district lacks a critical mass of store types and sizes.
- Downtown Hopkins does not operate as a unified business district.
- Shopping activity is not always continuous along Mainstreet and, therefore, can be perceived as lacking the continuity to support a strong pedestrian environment.
- Downtown faces significant retail competition in surrounding communities.

Recent public and private projects in downtown Hopkins have strengthened the area's assets and improved issues that have been identified as past liabilities. The strong employment base in Hopkins and surrounding office development has always served as a means to attract people into the downtown area. The private and public theater developments bring substantial numbers of visitors into the central business district, expanding the base of customers for local businesses.

In recent years, other improvements have also served to help further unify the business district. New retail construction on the east end of Mainstreet and renovations of old buildings have allowed business expansions as well as opportunities for new retail and service businesses.

The success of recent developments in downtown Hopkins has caused an increase in the need for additional parking. With events in the Hopkins Center for the Arts and Friday and Saturday evening crowds at the movie theaters, parking is in short supply. Overflow parking from these events could impact the surrounding neighborhood areas.

---

## Monitoring and Assessing

Based on past marketing studies, current conditions, and ongoing strategic planning initiatives, the following general recommendations are offered for downtown Hopkins:

- Development efforts should be targeted toward encouraging growth and expansion of commercial establishments that address two market orientations: (1) the destination specialty market, and (2) the local convenience and specialty market. Hopkins

Center for the Arts helps make Hopkins a true destination. Specialty commercial uses can capitalize on the draw and the success of the arts and entertainment components of downtown Hopkins.

- Assess the market’s perception of downtown Hopkins. Determine types of businesses needed and identify sites for appropriate new businesses.
- Foster communication between the City, Hopkins Business and Civic Association (HBCA), and owners and managers of commercial properties.
- Attract specialty retail and destination uses including arts, entertainment, recreation, antiques, hobbies and crafts, gifts and family-oriented uses.
- Encourage the adoption of uniform downtown store hours and consistent management to improve customer service.
- Encourage commercial development to be clustered close to the central core of the business district where it reinforces and is consistent with existing establishment types.
- As funding is available, offer financial incentives to retain and attract commercial businesses.
- Initiate a comprehensive review of long-term parking needs and formulate a plan to address those needs. Attempt alternative solutions to employee parking problems.
- Build upon the area’s strong sense of place, and improve the surrounding market area’s awareness of the community.
- Expand joint advertising and promotions for the businesses in the district. Promote Mainstreet via special events.
- Adopt design guidelines for the areas of Mainstreet from Shady Oak Road to 12th Avenue and 7th Avenue to the east.



Hopkins Center for the Arts

## Physical Plan

Downtown Hopkins is planned to continue its tight-knit pattern of commercial development along either side of Mainstreet. Commercial activity is targeted in the vicinity of, but not limited to, the five-block-long core area from 7th to 12th Avenues.

The Comprehensive Plan envisions that the present pattern of commercial, residential, and public land uses will be largely continued.

Longer term, the construction of the Southwest LRT line through Hopkins will create new opportunities and could eventually change the dynamics of downtown. Long-term changes to land uses along 8th Avenue could better connect Mainstreet to the LRT. Additional information on the potential impacts of LRT is found in the land use chapter of this plan.

---

## Urban Design Guidelines

The following guidelines will be used by the City in reviewing new development and redevelopment. The overall intention is to maintain the appearance and character of the historic buildings throughout the commercial area, both in the historic core and in the supportive nearby areas.

### **Buildings**

- Buildings should be constructed at a scale consistent with the historic downtown.
- Building heights in the historic core should match those of adjacent structures, with two or three stories being the desired height in that area.
- Maintain as much building line along Mainstreet as practical. Where buildings must be setback, a strongly landscaped edge should be established to maintain some visual line along the street.
- A window line should be maintained in the building facades along Mainstreet.
- All commercial buildings along Mainstreet should have rear entries designed to be attractive, functional, and identifiable.
- All building entries, front and rear, should make provision for the protection of users from the elements by overhangs, recessed doorways, and/or awnings.
- New buildings along Mainstreet should attempt to imitate the window proportions and placement established in the Downtown Overlay District.
- Exterior building colors along Mainstreet should be in the red-brown spectrum so as to be consistent with those of the historic core.

## Parking

- The City should continue to monitor and assess the Downtown Parking Plan. The Parking Plan should be utilized whenever development or redevelopment occurs and its recommendations should be continuously pursued.
- Parking lots should be kept small and close to the businesses served. Larger parking lots should have visual breaks of four-season landscaping treatments.
- Parking areas directly abutting the rear of commercial buildings should be paved and landscaped. These spaces should be reserved for customers and not occupied by employees. Emphasis should be placed on easy and pleasant customer use in all seasons.
- All parking lots should have perimeter landscaping consisting of trees and shrubs selected to withstand the harsh conditions.
- All parking lots must be paved with asphalt or concrete and properly maintained, striped, and landscaped.
- Wherever possible, east-west rear alleys should align with one another so that circulation parallel to Mainstreet is promoted.
- The exterior design of any new parking ramps should be supportive of the appearance of the Downtown Design Overlay District. No parking ramp should be allowed to abut Mainstreet.

## Identity

- Downtown Hopkins will continue to be identified through entry monuments, street lighting, and street landscaping.
- Continue to emphasize the link between the eastern and western portions of Mainstreet. The focus in the western area should be on the expansion of traditional downtown businesses and on improving the appearance of existing automotive repair service businesses.



Future Parking Needs May Require Construction of an Additional Parking Ramp



Figure 5.1 - Downtown Area Land Use Plan