

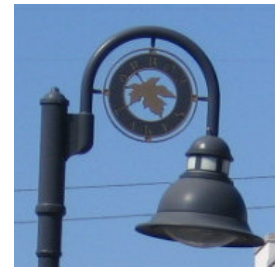


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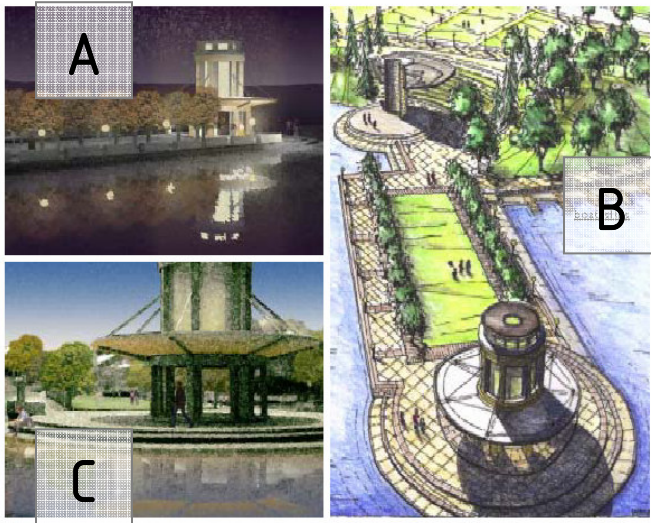
A n a l y s i s o f

< M a p l e G r o v e & A r b o r L a k e s

URBAN STUDIES 3202-003 SUBURBAN DOWNTOWNS



< 1) MAKE IT BETTER WITH A VISION



THE PLAN > To left: Artist rendition by BKV Group called “vignettes of event gazebo and pier” on West Arbor Lake from the **Vision Plan**. Graphic A romantically envisions a night time theme of the pier, a focal point for the public realm. Graphic B is the full plan of the gazebo area as it relates and connects back to the land. Architecture elements from the amphitheatre to the pier have a unified identity. There is possibility of boasting use because of immediate access to water. Graphic C shows the day time view revealing steps which lead into the lake allowing people near the water.

Issues identified and addressed:

- Create identity
- Allow people near water
- Public realm
- Adaptability and future use

VISIONING > Vision played a key role in the development of Arbor Lakes. The city of Maple Grove was presented with the challenge of creating a City Center area. With neo-traditional movements calling for community building, not suburban sprawl, master plans were needed to understand and drive the goals of what the area would look like.

The Public Spaces of Arbor Lakes, or the **Vision Plan**, was the primary document created by BKV Group and a committee from the City of Maple Grove. It split the Arbor Lakes area into three distinct interconnected regions each with a list of issues that needed to be addressed by the architecture or elements within that region. The intent was to set the standard for high-quality development that related these regions to each other, eventually defining Maple Grove as a city. The lakes themselves also served as a focus, the plan hopes to guide encroaching developments to maintain the same standards.

Accompanying this, the **Civic Campus and Arbor Lakes Management Plan** adopted by the city in April of 2002 provides guidelines for planning, development and management of the three lakes. Its goal was to set standards for the central park which was to link all three lakes together into one recreational and civic space.

The initial 1985 Gravel Mining Area Plan by **Bonestroo and Associates** served as the catalyst for all projects which analyzed the gravel mining area’s properties and features for the best way to reclaim the area when mining finished.

IMPROVEMENTS > In reference to other visioning processes across the Twin Cities, the plans adopted by the City of Maple Grove could have included a more diverse range of input. The *Vision Plan* seems to have disregarded community guidance or opinion. Design charrettes which allow existing residents to choose from sets of pictures their ideas of acceptable development would be beneficial in determining what high-*value* architecture was wanted. The palette of the street and park’s facades, features, and amenities also seemed to be designer chosen rather than emerging from the already established businesses or residential development of Maple Grove. Economic review was nearly absent in terms of feasibility and what would be attractive to residents of Maple Grove. This might have determined if big box was even necessary.

< 2) APPLY THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIPS



A

FOR SALE > To left: **(Picture A)** Sign for office space in the northwest side of the Gravel Mining Area and a few miles from Main Street. In the Vision Plan, there is no large scale business development other than upstairs office space which has been slow selling.
Below: **(Picture B)** Trailers for OPUS, the major developer for most of Arbor Lakes and Main Street. Pictured below are town houses north of current retail.



B

PARTNERS > The scale of Arbor Lakes as proposed in the vision plan required a collaborative approach in order to construct and realize the various public and private structures. Two entities which were important in realizing the City Center area were the City of Maple Grove and OPUS development.

The City of Maple Grove initiated the idea of creating a town center in the former Gravel Mining Area. Most of the suburb is filled in with typical sprawl. As the mining operations were soon to cease and land was knowingly to become available, the city put out a request for proposals to create a new commercial retail area within mostly residential Maple Grove. It's collaboration with BKV Group to determine the vision was important to finally deciding what kind of development would go into Arbor Lakes.

OPUS Northwest LLC was then chosen to create appropriate market-driven development. It's Main Street and Shoppes at Arbor Lakes proposal was chosen after many submissions with the city. This concept with support of the city has allowed the Arbor Lakes area to become attractive for retailers and almost all tenant space is filled. It would be Opus' decision to incorporate the big box and demand surrounding parking which makes the area commercially sustainable and have a regional pull.

NEXT STEPS > The city responded after initial success by also placing its City Hall on Main Street, solidifying the city's support of the development. Continuing the Vision Plan, it hopes to further develop its lakes into an attractive wooded trail with its gazebo and pier idea. A library is also in the works.

OPUS continues to be favored for development even for residential. In **Picture B**, OPUS is developing a town home community with a pedestrian feel and tight spaces just north of Arbor Lake.



> Above: Park bench dedication to a loved one. All benches along West Arbor Lake allow residents to dedicate a bench, inviting citizen investment in the project.



> Above: **Maple Grove City Hall by BKV Group.**

< 3) THINK DEVELOPMENT WHEN THINKING ABOUT TRANSIT

TRANSIT > Pictured below is the only identified bus stop looking feature on Main Street.

A > This lamp post is the only lighting source for the bus stop. The bus pavilion itself is merely a plastic box. Ambient lighting from stores will do nothing.

C > Architectural elements and height above overshadow and encroach on the bus pavilion. This tends to blend the bus stop to be unnoticeable and insignificant.

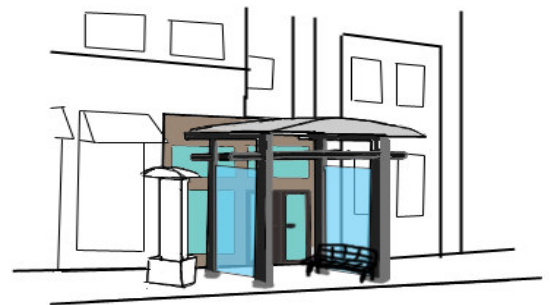
B > The intersection is on this side of the photo just a few feet from this lamp post. Chipotle Mexican Grill winds the corner.

D > On bus pavilion: No signage of bus routes, schedule, times, etc. No advertisement or even identification of its use.

E > There is little room for a bus to stop on this turn lane without disrupting traffic.

F > Close up of the information kiosk monument. It is the only one on Main Street and its location next to this bus pavilion indicates transit use is expected. The monument's glare and small text also indicate this is expected for pedestrians to utilize. Without lighting, it is impossible for people to read this from a car.

ACCOMMODATE > Transit in this area could be significantly improved. The bus stop pavilion (**D**) must be given focus and attention physically for transit to actually take hold. The Uptown Minneapolis' transit station is a good example. Both sides of the street have an overhang with ample lighting, architectural seating elements, a wide sidewalk, and an indoor waiting area. This includes a visual theme of beige concrete and aluminum awnings. For this stop, a dedicated bus stop lane must be included or demarcated (**E**). The waiting area must be improved with lighting and provide comfortable seating (**D**). There is also great tension between the stop and the business behind it (**C**). The business should be replaced with a transit office or lobby where people could wait. More signage with architecture change is needed to indicate what this is.



> Above: Rendition of how the stop could be improved. Enlarged waiting area reflects other awning hubs on the street. Windows connect to the lobby at back.

< 4) GET THE PARKING RIGHT



GOOD PARKING > *To left:* Good parking situation. Row parking is fast and efficient allowing quick identification of parking spaces for customers to get in and out. This area can serve many more customers and accommodate larger vehicles. This kind of parking matches with current needs and lifestyle of consumer.



GOOD PARKING > *To left:* This is a transition street from the parking area above to the stores revealing a short walk to Main Street. These parking spaces present another example of good parking--a compromise of row and street parking. Side by side spaces can easily be driven in. Identification of open spots is also relatively easy. This also utilizes space more efficiently, fitting more cars than if parallel.



BAD PARKING > *To left:* On-street parallel parking limits customer potential. Controlled situations such as Arbor Lakes fits even less cars than typical neighborhood parallel parking. On-street parking also inhibits traffic and motorists in suburbs are not familiar with back-up etiquette.



BAD ELEMENTS > *To left:* Street parking limits the sizes and abilities of cars. SUVs have difficulty backing up. Street curb is sloped to prevent tire burns but encourages sloppy parking and encroachment of sidewalk. This presents potential hazard to pedestrian. Expensive fixtures, trees and sidewalk elements are also at hazard from cars.

< 5) BUILD A PLACE NOT A PROJECT

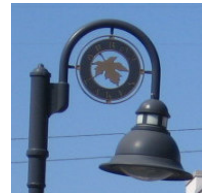
URBAN DESIGN PATTERN, RHYTHM AND TRANSITIONS



MAIN STREET > To left: Long range shot of near center Main Street. The cross street has no stop light and is more so a private-public drive to gain access to rear parking. On maps, no streets are listed off of Main Street.

A > The cross streets have distinct light red concrete which mark crossing intersections. The coloring also adds visual attraction and matches with the brick sidewalks and buildings.

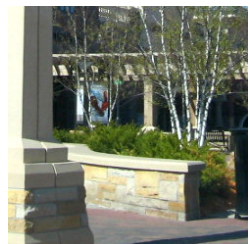
B > Repetition of sidewalk lamps (see close up *at right*) with red Arbor Lakes banners indicate and unify this area as unique.



PLEASANT FOR PEDESTRIAN > The attraction of Maple Grove Arbor Lakes and Main Street is the neo-traditional focus on developing something that people can enjoy on foot. Both Main Street and Shoppes of Arbor Lakes offer pleasant places to experience.



> Above: Building #3 in the north side of Main Street offers a relaxing stop where the community can gather. Picture at left invites the community in with its center focal point of benches and plant features. Picture at right shows curved sitting features which make it visually enticing to explore.



> Above: Shoppes at Arbor Lakes offers pleasant Greek-influenced plazas with unique concrete and sandstone elements that enhance the civic gathering quality.

UNIQUE FEATURES > The Main Street area follows a combination of characteristics in which to define itself. The building facades, sidewalks, amenities and elements all follow a similar style of materials, colors, textures, architectural designs, awnings, signage and more.

> OUTDOOR SEATING Gathering hubs (**A**) have benches facing each other and offer a place for residents to sit and chat along the sidewalk. These nifty spots let people sit and watch the urban life of the street. They're also architecturally interesting with its iron overhang grid and arch beams, signaling the gravel mining past. Likely vine plants will be integrated to improve the amenity. Benches are also placed throughout Main Street.

> MATERIALS The tones of Main Street are set in brick browns, light brick reds, and sandstone like beiges. Overall the theme seen in daylight is very light and soft rather than the darker hues of typical small towns. These colors likely recall the traditional suburban roots of Maple Grove where white siding is dominant. Near black benches, lines and ornamentation recall the mining roots and emphasis spaces.



A > Above: One of several gathering hubs along Main Street. They go right up to the street edge.

< 8) ENCOURAGE EVERY PRICE POINT *TO LIVE AROUND TRANSIT*



> At left: The only housing found near the City Center is just south of City Hall.

HOUSING > Housing found around the City Center are mostly town homes. There are no condominiums or apartments found anywhere in Arbor Lakes. There are no housing units near transportation facilities. Unfortunately there is no housing located anywhere near the transit station. Bus lines or bus stops were not visible throughout the region. While Main Street may be designed like an urban center, its actual function is a suburban lifestyle center that is still geared towards cars.

< 9) ENGAGE CORPORATION ATTENTION



> At left: **(Picture C)** Signature plate left by OPUS on a building in the south end of Main Street. The plate says 1999 – the date it was finished. These are commonly found.

CORPORATE ATTENTION > OPUS corporation has been probably the only major player in Arbor Lakes since the City of Maple Grove approved their development proposal. As a result almost all of the buildings in the Arbor Lakes area bear an OPUS plate. By recognizing a market-driven developer like OPUS, the city had geared itself to develop a unique regional pull without creating a regional mall. Similarly by adopting the Vision Plan, the city engaged the community to recognize that Main Street wasn't simply an idea but a horizontal mixed-use idea that would generate not just a new town center but economic development. The integration of housing, civic space, a park, upscale vendors, parking, and other factors, the city enabled market driven development that would be attractive to future clientele.