

Frequently Asked Questions

Grandview Green

October 18, 2018

What is the ‘Grandview Green’ concept?

The Grandview Green is the name given a future concept to utilize existing Minnesota Highway 100 right-of-way to enhance sustainability, better connect adjacent neighborhoods, create new outdoor green space and promote future economic growth in Edina.

What is a ‘lid?’

Commonly called a “lid,” “land bridge” or “cap,” it is infrastructure that covers portions of a roadway that has been depressed into the natural topography. The ‘lid’ spans over and across the roadway to better connect the land on either side. In some cases, the lid is used to support a building (for example A-B-C Parking Ramps in Minneapolis), but more typically, the lid serves as the structural platform for pedestrian circulation or outdoor recreation areas (for example Fort Snelling Park).

In short, a lid is similar to a traditional bridge, but much wider to allow recreational use in addition to the utilitarian use of the bridge.

How is a lid different from a tunnel?

A tunnel typically bores through an obstacle like a mountain or a hill. A lid covers a depressed area located between two higher points.

Has a lid been done before?

Yes. Several cities have included lids as elements of highway and other transportation projects. Existing locations include Phoenix, Arizona; Columbus, Ohio; Saint Louis, Missouri; Madison, Wisconsin; Chicago, Illinois; Dallas, Texas; Los Angeles, California; Seattle, Washington; Boston, Massachusetts; and several more.

The Washington Department of Transportation includes the ‘lid’ as a common element in most new highway projects in urbanized areas like greater Seattle.

Has a lid been done in cold-weather climates like Minnesota?

Yes. The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) constructed four lidded segments of Interstate Highway 35 in Duluth in 1989-1992. The Longfellow Gardens lid was constructed as part of the original Hiawatha Light Rail project near Minnehaha Falls in Minneapolis. The A-B-C Parking Ramps and portions of the Target Field pedestrian plaza are constructed on lids above I-394 in downtown Minneapolis. The circulation and access drive at Fort Snelling State Park spans over Highway 5 just south of Saint Paul. Most recently, Bloomington constructed a lid over Lindau Lane at the entrance to the JW Marriot hotel.

What makes the Grandview Green concept different?

Most lids have been constructed as part of a major road or rail expansion project. The costs are absorbed into the overall project cost and considered a mitigation expense typically paid for with state or federal funds. There is infrequently revenue associated with these projects.

The Grandview Green concept strives to be self-financed to avoid overburdening the taxpayer.

The existing interchange was built in the early 1970s and was designed to prioritize highway access. This auto-centric design includes multiple entrance and exit ramps. This layout is an inefficient use of land and sacrifices local connectivity for highway access. If the on and off ramps are reconstructed in a more modern and efficient manner, an additional 8 acres of “buildable” land can be created from the existing MnDOT and City right-of-way. MnDOT could generate revenue from the sale or long-term lease of this land. New construction could create new property tax revenue on land that has been tax-exempt for more than 40 years. This new revenue could be used to fund the infrastructure in a manner that restores balance to local connectivity and highway access.

Why consider lids in Edina?

Edina is fortunate to be served by three major highways that provide convenient access for residents, employees and commerce. Since these three highways have limited access points, they have the unfortunate side effect of splitting Edina into four distinct quadrants. It can be difficult for residents to access neighborhoods and amenities on the other side of these highways since bridge crossings are limited.

Some areas in Edina are marked by rolling hills and changing elevations. While most of the highways are located “at grade,” some portions of the highways were constructed by excavating the original hillside. At these locations, the highway is at a lower elevation while the edges of the hill (on one or both sides of the highway) remain.

As a land-locked suburb surrounded on all sides by adjacent municipalities, Edina’s future growth must occur within its existing boundaries. Lids are one way of more efficiently using the land within Edina’s borders in a way that better connects neighborhoods and enhances the quality of life through the creation of new green space.

How will revenue be generated to pay for the infrastructure?

Several funding mechanisms have been explored as part of the preliminary studies. Revenue could potentially come from private investors, local taxpayers, Hennepin County, Metropolitan Council, State or federal programs.

Since significant new value could be created by this type of infrastructure improvement, a value-capture strategy, such as Tax Increment Financing, is considered a very likely source of funding. Millions of dollars in new property taxes could be generated from property that has been tax-exempt for more than 40 years. These new dollars could pay for the construction of the Grandview Green infrastructure while new dollars generated from surrounding properties could be added to the overall property tax base.

Financial support from private investors and available government resources could also be pursued when the concept is ready for implementation.

What are the potential benefits to the community?

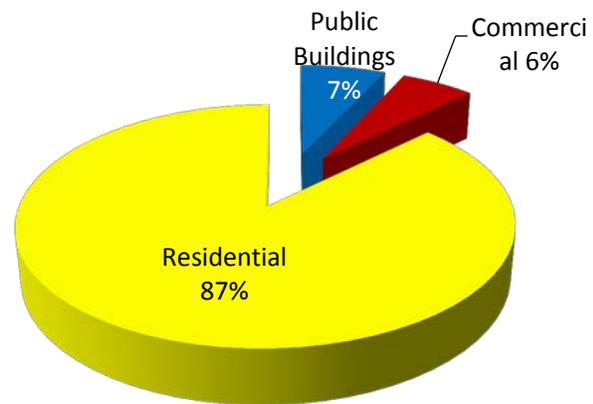
This future concept strives to deliver many benefits to the local community and general public. The anticipated benefits could include:

	Edina Residents	Edina Businesses	General Public	City of Edina	Edina Public Schools	MnDOT
1. Creation of new green space for public use	X	X				
2. Return 8 acres of tax-exempt land to the property tax rolls	X	X		X	X	
3. Generate revenue for MnDOT through sale or lease of property						X
4. Generate revenue for the City through sale or lease of property	X	X		X		
5. Create safe and convenient routes for pedestrians and bicyclists	X	X	X			
6. Better connect neighborhoods on east and west sides of highway	X	X	X			
7. Improve access into and out of Sunnyslope neighborhood	X		X			
8. Retain or improve access to Highway 100	X	X	X			
9. Retain or improve transit options	X	X	X			
10. Create opportunity for new civic campus (public services)				X	X	
11. Create new business opportunities		X				
12. Create new residential living options	X					

What is the anticipated intensity of development?

The preliminary concept renderings for Grandview Green illustrate 1.2 million square feet of new construction. Due to the preliminary nature of this future concept, specific land uses have not been established.

The actual amount of new construction would be determined based on market conditions in the future and the ability of the future road network to adequately serve the community. The preliminary concept renderings include new residential with convenience retail and services along with new public/civic uses.



Height and density limits have also not been established for this future concept. Based on input received from the community in 2017/2018, future development in this area should be designed to avoid disruption to the surrounding neighbors and excessive traffic congestion.

The concept renderings illustrate two-story buildings near Edina City Hall. The height and density could increase on sites located further to the south and west. The greatest intensity could be located adjacent to the highway where mid-rise and small high-rise buildings are not disruptive to the surrounding neighbors. Taller buildings are suggested in these general locations in order to limit the footprint of each building.

A range of height has been suggested for each parcel of land. The preliminary renderings illustrate conceptual buildings at the high-end of the range. Members of the Housing and Redevelopment Authority have stated that they do not support the highest end of the range based on concerns raised in the early rounds of public input.

If this concept becomes viable in the future, further study will be necessary to determine the most appropriate combination of land uses and the appropriate level of intensity for each of the parcels near the Grandview Green.

What is the timeframe for construction?

The Grandview Green is deemed a “far-term” concept. As such, no specific construction date has been established. Full design is likely several decades in the future and is dependent on many variables. No further studies are anticipated at this time.

The timeframe for a variety of potential infrastructure improvements are described in the 2016 Grandview Transportation Plan. This plan was created to supplement the 2012 Grandview Development Framework and classifies potential transportation-related infrastructure projects according to their scope and complexity.

Short-Term – 0 to 5 years: These potential projects tend to be low-cost improvements that can be implemented with minimal construction, and a simple regulatory approval processes that consists of a single transportation agency.

Mid-Term – 5 to 15 years: These potential projects are intended to re-establish multi-modal connections and are more complex in nature. They could take several years to arrange a funding strategy and involve a more complicated engineering design and regulatory approval process due to the involvement of local, regional and state transportation agencies.

Long-Term – 15 to 30 years: These potential projects are intended to complete the vision contained in the 2012 Grandview Development Framework. The culmination of these improvements support the long-term scale of redevelopment and achieve the neighborhood character by providing transportation options for movement within the District, to and from the District from surrounding neighborhoods and to and from the local neighborhoods to and from Highway 100. Like the mid-term projects, the potential long-term projects involve complex engineering design, funding from multiple sources and a complex regulatory approval process to the involvement of multiple transportation agencies.

Far-Term – likely beyond 30 years: These potential projects are predicated on the assumption that the full vision of the Grandview Development Framework has been substantially achieved and that the land-locked City of Edina seeks to include new green space and new development within its fixed borders. The previous completed (short-, mid- and long-term) improvements, if designed with a far-term vision could set the stage for future growth opportunities.

Why is this future concept being studied now?

During the many Grandview District planning meetings from 2010-2012 and 2015-2016, many members of the Task Force and community suggested improvements to provide better pedestrian connections in the Grandview District and to give people travelling on local streets equal priority to vehicles traveling on and off Highway 100. The Grandview District was also identified as a likely “area of change” and a desirable location for a neighborhood commercial center that takes advantage of its regional connections via the highway.

In 2010, the City adopted seven guiding principles as the future vision of the Grandview District was established. These principles were affirmed in 2012 when the City Council unanimously adopted the Grandview Development Framework.

Seven Guiding Principles – Grandview District, 2012	
1) Leverage publicly-owned parcels ... to create a vibrant and connected District that serves as a catalyst for high-quality integrated public and private development.	<i>The Grandview Green concept could transform 8-acres of highway right of way into space that is usable and buildable. This might stimulate 8-acres of adjacent privately owned land to be redeveloped.</i>

Seven Guiding Principles – Grandview District, 2012	
2) Enhance the District’s economic viability as a neighborhood center with regional connections ...	<i>The Grandview Green concept could encourage and promote new economic activity; it could also create a new neighborhood center that transitions to surrounding neighborhoods.</i>
3) Turn perceived barriers into opportunities. Consider ... taking advantage of natural topography of the area.	<i>The Grandview Green concept could transform the existing highway from a barrier into a connector by taking advantage of the topography along the east and west edges.</i>
4) Design for the present and future by pursuing logical increments of change ...	<i>Short and mid-term projects could be designed to lay the ground work for long-term and far-term projects to encourage the most effective long-term outcome for the community.</i>
5) Organize parking as an effective resource ...	<i>The Grandview Green concept is rooted in the idea of shared parking. Shared parking has increased efficiency and reduced individual costs in other locations.</i>
6) Improve movement within and access to the District for people of all ages by facilitating multiple modes of transportation	<i>This concept is also rooted in multiple modes of transportation so that people and vehicles can peacefully co-exist in a desirable high-quality environment.</i>
7) Create an identity and unique sense of place ...	<i>This concept holds the potential to deliver a world-class public amenity in a cost-effective and sustainable manner.</i>

Due to the cost of the roadway infrastructure and complexity of working with local, county, State and possibly federal programs, preliminary planning has been conducted so that the efforts of each agency can be coordinated so that individual improvements are designed and built in a manner that delivers greater value and benefit to the community.

If the short-, mid- and long-term infrastructure improvements are designed with a far-term outlook, new opportunities could be created for future generations.

What is the process to evaluate?

To date, two very high-level preliminary concept studies have been completed. The 2017 study indicated that the Vernon/Eden location is a realistic place to implement a lid concept and estimated that new revenue generated from future development is likely to exceed the cost to construct the infrastructure. The 2018 study began to explore the general feasibility of the future concept. With input from technical experts, government agencies and the general public, no fatal flaws were identified that would prevent this preliminary concept from being fully studied, evaluated and implemented at some point in the future.

At this point, there is no specific timeline to implement this future concept. A complete process for community engagement, technical studies and financing strategies could be prepared in the future, if the concept becomes viable. Anticipated future work would typically include:

- Community engagement
- Small Area Plan including massing, height, density, parking, open space and land uses
- Transportation study including local roads, highway access, and transit improvements

- Market study and identification of investors
- Intergovernmental agreements
- Detailed financial strategy
- Detailed phasing strategy
- Selection of partners
- Engineering design and design review

What are the challenges that will have to be addressed in the future?

The preliminary technical and financial studies indicate that this Grandview Green concept could be achieved with typical engineering solutions and a public/private funding mechanism. The technical studies and comments from neighbors and other concerned stakeholders identified important issues that will require additional study before the concept could be implemented. Some key challenges to be resolved include:

- Acceptable height and density for new parcels created by the Grandview Green
- Impact to and the role of Edina Public Schools
- Uses for potential new public facilities and public recreational amenities
- Funding for construction of future public facilities
- Strategy to fund operations and maintenance costs of new public facilities and amenities
- Preferred land uses for future private development
- Design guidelines to shape the public realm and future development parcels
- Traffic delays on 50th Street east of Highway 100
- Type and location of rapid transit to serve the Grandview District
- Rush-hour access into and out of the Sunnyslope neighborhood
- Scope and responsibilities for MnDOT, the City of Edina and Hennepin County
- Strategy to address ongoing maintenance costs of new transportation infrastructure
- Market timing so that new real estate investments have the strongest possibility of success

What are the next steps for this far-term concept?

In 2018, the general concept is anticipated to be introduced in the City's Comprehensive Plan as a "far-term concept." There are not intended to be any specific details in the Comprehensive Plan since no specific plans have been approved.

When market conditions and the Edina community appear ready for this type of infrastructure improvement, the concept documents can be refreshed and updated with input and guidance from the local community, technical experts, real estate investors and regulatory agencies.