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Maple Grove

A great place to live, work, and play.

Grand Avenue, Fiftieth and France, Uptown, Linden Hills: These names conjure images of quaint shops, wide boulevards with strolling pedestrians, and an architecture that is both attractive and unifying for the neighborhood. For decades, Twin Cities residents in search of small-town charm and convenience have turned to long-established neighborhoods featuring town centers. But there's a new approach to main street charm, and you may be surprised to learn that it's in the suburbs.

Maple Grove is redefining community through modern planning and development with a touch of nostalgia. What makes this suburb unique—and increasingly attractive to new residents and businesses—lies in its methodical approach to growth and its emphasis on quality of life for current and future residents.

From 1990 to the fall of 2001, Maple Grove's population has grown from almost 39,000 to nearly 56,000. By 2010, the population is expected to reach 63,000.

Residents are well-educated and young, with a median age of thirty-four. Maple Grove offers them lifestyle housing options, recreational opportunities, and a range of services from retail to health care. Residents have little need to leave the city for socializing, shopping, errands, or exercise. In some cases, they don't even need a car.

"We can go biking with the kids and get an ice cream. We always run into people we know. It's a well-thought-out community in terms of growth," says Tony Sjolander, who has lived in Maple Grove about thirteen years.

Community Vision



Welcome to Maple Grove

In this first-of-its kind section, we'll help you discover the growing city of Maple Grove. From shopping to dining and communing with nature, you'll find it all in this city focused on the return of main-street charm and building a sense of community.

Careful planning and an eye for detail have created a unique experience for residents and visitors alike. "We want something unique... We don't want the same old, same old." With these words, Maple Grove City Administrator Al Madsen set the tone for the collaborative long-term approach to development.

In 1997, Opus Northwest and a team of retail experts, led by the architectural firm of KKE, collaborated with the city of Maple Grove and majority landowners Gary Sauer, president of the Tiller Corporation; and Charlie

The vision of Maple Grove as we know it was born more than a decade ago. Mined for the gravel that underlies Minnesota's highway system, Maple Grove was left with four man-made lakes in what is called the Gravel Mining Area Special Plan. Land owners Gary Sauer and Charlie McCrossan wanted to do something special with the mining area that would benefit Maple Grove for generations to come. When a task force formed in 1994 to discuss reuse after areas were mined-out, a major interest surfaced in creating a downtown environment.

"We've had a lot of opportunities to sell over the years, but our idea was to create something with character that people could enjoy for a long time," says Sauer, who took ownership of Barton Sand and Gravel in 1981.

Only one hundred of the two thousand acres in The Gravel Mining Area Special Plan have been developed. So the master plan is designed for long-term growth. "As an area is mined out, we'll make it ready for development; probably over the next twenty years," notes Sauer. "This is one of the last major pieces of open land on the freeway system," says Tim Murnane, vice president and general manager of Opus Northwest in Minnetonka, the Arbor Lakes development partner. "It's fortunate that we are working with landowners and city officials who want to create a lasting legacy for this community."

The Heart of the City

The result of the collective vision is Arbor Lakes, an area that successfully incorporates new concepts of retail, services, recreation, and housing that many suburban communities desire today, says Murnane.

"This has been a hot topic for at least five years. But Maple Grove was actually able to pull it off because they were flexible enough to know you couldn't just build five blocks of small shops in the middle of a gravel pit without larger tenants nearby," Murnane says.

Originally zoned for office space, Maple Grove's Main Street now offers broad sidewalks lined with two-story structures, detailed with brick masonry. Retail such as shoe stores, salons, and florists as well as dining options from Mexican and Chinese to Italian, beckon at street level. Perched above is second-floor office space for dental, real estate, and other traditional downtown services. The sidewalks are decorated with attractive light posts and planters with seasonal flower arrangements.

Although some street parking is available, the unique design of Main Street allows back-door entrances to shops from large parking lots. Surrounding the lots are many familiar retailers.

On the north end of Main Street, the new government center and public safety facility houses city offices, meeting spaces, and police and fire departments. This complex replaced the old city hall off Fernbrook Lane more than a year ago. "Relocation of such city services was a crucial component when developing the town center," explains Al Madsen, city administrator. The facility draws residents downtown for city

McCrossan, president of C.S. McCrossan, to create something different in what has become Arbor Lakes. As one of the Twin Cities largest and most successful retail developments, the first phase of Arbor Lakes is more than 500,000 square feet. It is more than just a large shopping center; it is the center of Maple Grove's downtown and helps define the community. City offices, a community center, and local and national retailers blend to create a vibrant and exciting main street experience. A variety of restaurants are situated in a pedestrian-friendly environment, and the new sixteen-screen Megastar Cinema is the only cinema in the Twin Cities with private screening rooms.

Two buildings are scheduled to open on Main Street in April. And this June, Opus will break ground on the new 400,000 square-foot lifestyle center, The Shoppes at Arbor Lakes, that will be home to more than fifty upscale stores.

Opus Northwest is also planning more than 1,500 new rental and for sale housing units that will be located across Main Street from the new City Hall. Plans for a new County Library are also under way on Main Street, and restaurants are still waiting in line to find a site in Arbor Lakes.

Discover why Maple Grove and Arbor Lakes are not the same old, same old.

Timothy W. Murnane
Vice President & General Manager of Development
Opus Northwest L.L.C.

services, and city planners hope they'll stay to do their shopping.

"We'll never get people to stop driving their cars, but if we can provide goods and services in a relatively close area, they can walk if they wish," Madsen says.

Sjolander's wife, Diane, says she can easily run five or six errands in a short time with the convenient location of the government center relative to other services.

A series of walking trails is also planned in the downtown area. For example, a lighted trail already circles West Arbor Lake linking Main Street with the Maple Grove Community Center off Weaver Lake Road. A community center, built five years ago as part of the town center master plan, is an anchor for the community, according to Lisa Jost, community center manager.

"It took a lot of foresight to identify this as a central area. We're in an ideal spot," Jost says. As if all that is not enough to create a bustling downtown, Opus developed an 80,000-square-foot medical arts building just east of Main Street overlooking Arbor Lake. And soon, a larger library is planned across from the government center to replace the one off Elm Creek Boulevard.

Finding a Home

Town centers historically are the breath of community life, the gathering places for shopping, civic functions, and socializing. But Maple Grove's center is also the breath of residential development for people of all ages.

Pending city approval, Opus would like to break ground on the first phase of a two hundred-acre residential area east of downtown in 2002. Working closely with land owner Tiller Corporation, Opus proposes up to six hundred units of townhome, rowhouse, and apartment housing on more than fifty acres, a portion for rental and a portion for sale. The overall housing plan calls for interspersed parkways and neighborhood parks to maintain green spaces. This phase would be completed in late 2003. Future phases of residential development would also include single-family detached housing, Murnane says.

Big-city Benefits

Current housing options provide a range of attractive choices. ChapelWood, a campus-style community just north of Arbor Lakes is scheduled for completion this spring. The neighborhood's first phase is 129 market-rate luxury apartments called Amberly Garden. The second phase is a fifty-five-and-older community called Rose Arbor that includes fifty-five independent living suites and forty assisted living suites. The facility is staffed twenty-four hours, and also offers many services.

Rose Arbor is connected by an enclosed walkway to the third phase, a community for people with memory disorders called Wildflower Lodge that arranges residents in home-like clusters of five to seven suites with common living and dining areas. Linking the campus is architecture reminiscent of the North Woods with its open beams, exposed wood, and fireplaces.

"What sets ChapelWood apart is this intergenerational, village feel," says Toby Mullenger, director of marketing for Farr Development. "We have people in Amberly Garden, for example, who are volunteering or working in Rose Arbor."

On the same campus, but being built by a separate contractor, are 120 for-sale townhomes, which add to the intergenerational opportunities, Mullenger says.

Those searching for a more traditional suburban neighborhood can consider Nottingham just north of County Road 10. This extensive residential neighborhood near county parkland and wetlands offers a

range of single-family homes and detached for-sale townhomes. Two neighborhood parks feature outdoor pools, whirlpools, basketball courts, and picnic areas.

Urban dwellers who want to be close to the action could also look for opportunities in the Lifestyle series at Nottingham Haven, which offers one-level, association-maintained townhome living. Or there is Just Off Main and Just Off Main East, a popular rental townhome community by Hans Hagen in the new downtown area. Twenty percent of this community is designated for affordable rents.

The friendly, communal atmosphere of Maple Grove has been a plus for Brian and Mary Beth Mann, who moved there eight years ago and have two children in grade school. “We had a network of neighbors instantaneously, lots of new young people starting out with families. We have block picnics and we’ll meet people after church downtown,” says Brian, a teacher in Anoka.

Some of the concepts espoused in the 1970s of higher density neighborhoods that accounted for different lifestyles and incomes are showing up in Maple Grove’s newest neighborhoods. But this time around, creative architecture and more green space is preserving privacy while encouraging interaction.

Community Life

Maple Grove offers many opportunities for gathering. The Maple Grove Community Center off Weaver Lake Road has an indoor playground, pool, drop-in teen center, computer lab, meeting and banquet facility, and senior programs.

In the summer, an outdoor playground and picnic shelter, sponsored by the local Lion’s Club, is open to the public, as is a sand volleyball court and skate park. The community center also has partnered with nearby Northwest Athletic Club to share resources, such as Northwest Athletic Club’s outdoor pool.

For residents looking to get around, Maple Grove makes it easy to commute through its extensive transit system. Commuter express bus service from Maple Grove to downtown Minneapolis is available during the morning and afternoon rush hours. A special Dial-A-Ride service is also available six days a week within the city limits. With several free park-and-ride lots and a new full-service transit station planned for the Arbor Lakes area, the city is encouraging residents to sit back, chat, and let someone else drive.

“We have a lot of neighbors who work in Minneapolis and use the transit system,” Mann says. “They love it.”

There are many employment opportunities within the city, too. One company, Boston Scientific SciMed, is a manufacturer of devices that help the medical community treat cardiovascular disease. Founded in Plymouth, the company established a site in Maple Grove in 1993 and expanded with a second building in 1999.

Today, Boston Scientific SciMed employs 1,900 people here. “We appreciated how much the city helped us through site location, approvals and building our facilities,” notes Nan Upin, spokesperson in Maple Grove. “They have been really great partners.”

Of course, no community is complete without its educational system. District 279 traces its roots to the early 1850s. Today, Maple Grove offers eight public elementary schools, a junior high school, and a high school, along with top-notch gifted and talented and special needs programming, and a few parochial schools. The ratio of computers to students in the public elementary schools is five to one, and average student scores across the district are a full year ahead of the national average. Young families can select from Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) classes, public-health services, and quality preschools in Maple Grove.