

Chapter 6: Livable Neighborhoods & Activity Centers

Carson City strives to be a city known for its safe, attractive and diverse neighborhoods, compact mixed-use activity centers, and its vibrant, pedestrian-friendly Downtown. Access to parks, pathways, open space, and recreational facilities will be emphasized and the incorporation of thoughtful design and site planning techniques will be encouraged in all development. New commercial development will be focused in pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use activity centers located along major thoroughfares where they will be readily accessible to surrounding neighborhoods and may ultimately be served by transit. New higher-density housing will be encouraged as part of the overall land use mix along the City's major gateway corridors and within the Downtown area to provide a more diverse selection of housing types and price ranges for residents within walking distance of the City's primary job and activity center.

Principles for achieving Livable Neighborhoods & Activity Centers focus on:

- Increasing the quality of development citywide;
- Encouraging infill and redevelopment that blends seamlessly with established areas of the City;
- Establishing a hierarchy of mixed-use activity centers to serve the community;
Re-establishing Downtown as a vibrant center for the community;
- Creating a more diverse mix of housing and neighborhood options for residents;
- Providing connectivity to surrounding land uses; and
- Protecting and enhance the City's historic resources.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 6: QUALITY DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

Carson City will project a positive image for the community by promoting a high standard of design and the use of durable long-lasting materials for all development and by ensuring that infill and redevelopment is of a scale and character that is compatible with and



Activity centers may include a vertical or "stacked" mix of uses (top) or a horizontal or "side-by-side" mix of uses (bottom). Housing will be an important component of most activity centers.



A high standard of design will be promoted for all development.



Compatible infill and redevelopment will be promoted through the use of height and density transitions, similar setbacks and other neighborhood specific design considerations.

enhances the surrounding development context. These policies should be reviewed and applied in conjunction with the detailed Land Use Policies contained in Chapter 3.

GOAL 6.1—PROMOTE HIGH QUALITY DEVELOPMENT

6.1a—Durable Materials

Require the use of durable, long-lasting building materials for all new development.

6.1b—Neighborhood Design

Promote variety and visual interest in the design of new neighborhoods through the incorporation of varied lot sizes, building styles and colors, garage orientation, and other features, as consistent with the land use policies contained in Chapter 3 of this Plan.

6.1c—Variety and Visual Interest

Promote variety and visual interest in the design of new development through the incorporation of well-articulated building facades, clearly defined entrances and pedestrian connections, landscaping, and other features as consistent with the City's Development Standards.

6.1d—Gateway Corridors

Encourage the renovation of existing commercial centers not located within designated activity centers that are unlikely to redevelop in the short to mid-term through the use of façade improvement programs, design assistance programs, tax credits, or similar strategies to promote more attractive gateway corridors for the City.

GOAL 6.2—PROMOTE COMPATIBLE INFILL AND REDEVELOPMENT

6.2a—Neighborhood Compatibility

Ensure that infill and redevelopment is of a scale and character that is compatible with and enhances the surrounding development context through the use of appropriate height and density transitions, similar setbacks and lot coverage, garage and loading area location and configuration, connectivity to surrounding development, and other neighborhood specific design considerations.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 7: COMPACT, MIXED-USE ACTIVITY CENTERS

Carson City will encourage the creation of compact, mixed-use activity centers in easily accessible and highly visible locations of the community to promote the efficient use of available commercial lands and concentrate retail services in pedestrian and transit-oriented development nodes that may be easily accessed from and serve surrounding neighborhoods. Activity centers will vary in size and composition (i.e., vertical or “stacked” mixed-use or horizontal or “side-by-side” mixed-use), depending upon their location, context, and level of priority; however, Downtown will be largest and highest priority center and is addressed separately to highlight its unique characteristics and policy needs (See Guiding Principle 8 and accompanying policies). Detailed land use policies for each of the underlying mixed-use land use categories are contained in Chapter 3.



GOAL 7.1—ESTABLISH COMPACT, MIXED-USE ACTIVITY CENTERS TO SERVE THE COMMUNITY

7.1a—Mixed-Use Activity Centers

Multiple Mixed-Use Activity Centers are identified on the Land Use Plan. Activity centers are intended to serve as convenient places for the community to shop, work, live, or simply gather, within a compact, pedestrian-friendly environment. Downtown represents the largest, and most established of these activity centers and is addressed by the Downtown Mixed-Use (DT-MU) policies contained in Chapter 3 of this document and by policies contained under Guiding Principle 8. Outside of Downtown, activity centers have been designated along major gateway corridors where they are easily accessible to adjacent residential and employment uses and may be more readily served by existing and future transit. General locations are as follows:

- College Parkway and North Carson Street;
- Fairview Drive and Saliman Road;
- Graves Lane and Highway 50 East;
- Carson City Freeway and Highway 50 East; and
- Highway 50 East and V&T Terminal Location.

The size, mix of land uses, and density of each activity center will vary; however, they will typically include a mix of office or hotel uses (top); retail/commercial (center); and high-density residential development organized in a compact, pedestrian-oriented pattern.

7.1b—Size/Mix of Uses

The size, mix of land uses, and density of each activity center defined in policy 7.1a above will vary depending upon the availability of vacant or redevelopable land, access, the surrounding development context, and market limitations; however, a general range of 30-60 acres in size is appropriate to help ensure a critical mass of activity. Activity centers outside of Downtown should be consistent with the applicable mixed-use policies contained in Chapter 3.

Case studies for two of the mixed-use activity centers identified above were prepared to illustrate how activity centers could potentially be implemented within the context of existing development patterns. These case studies are presented on the pages that follow and highlight a variety of key concepts.

MIXED-USE ACTIVITY CENTER CASE STUDY: HWY 50 & GRAVES LANE

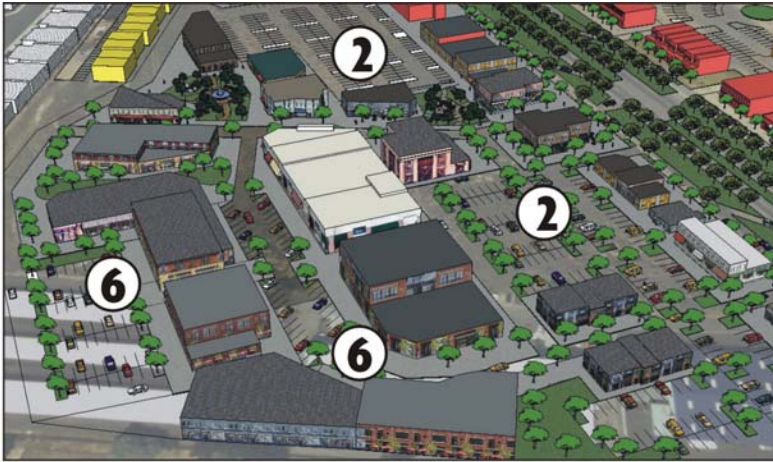
EXISTING CONDITION



CONCEPTUAL MIXED-USE ACTIVITY CENTER



- ① Medium to high-density residential (low-rise) provides transition to surrounding neighborhoods.
- ② Parking is broken into a series of smaller lots and is located centrally to serve multiple uses.
- ③ Buildings are pushed close to the street, creating a more pedestrian-oriented environment at the street edge.
- ④ Buildings are oriented to frame an internal network of streets, allowing business patrons and residents to easily walk between uses.
- ⑤ Frontage road buffers uses from Hwy 50, enhancing the appearance of the corridor and allowing for enhanced access, circulation, and parking configurations.
- ⑥ Urban character of medium to high-density residential units is served by a series of smaller plazas and pocket parks. These outdoor gathering spaces also serve as recreational amenities for the existing neighborhood north of the activity center.
- ⑦ Continuation of Highway 50 East multi-use pathway.



- ② Primary parking areas are broken into a series of smaller lots and are located centrally to serve multiple uses.
- ⑥ Parking is provided using a combination of surface lots, on-street parking, and structured parking to support a more compact pattern of development.



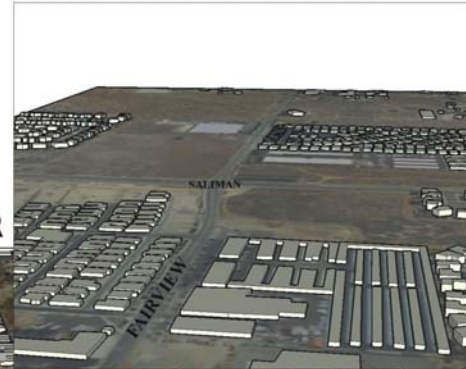
- ④ Buildings are oriented to frame an internal network of streets, allowing business patrons and residents to easily walk between uses.
- ⑦ High-density residential units are incorporated above and adjacent to retail storefronts allowing for easy access to services and employment.



- ③ Buildings are pushed close to the street, creating a more pedestrian-oriented environment at the street edge.
- ⑤ Frontage road buffers uses from Hwy 50, enhancing the appearance of the corridor and allowing for enhanced access, circulation, and parking configurations..

MIXED-USE ACTIVITY CENTER CASE STUDY: FAIRVIEW DRIVE AND SALIMAN ROAD

EXISTING CONDITION



CONCEPTUAL MIXED-USE ACTIVITY CENTER



- ① Medium to high-density residential (low-rise) provides transition to surrounding neighborhoods.
- ② Parking is broken into a series of smaller lots and is located centrally to serve multiple uses.
- ③ Buildings are pushed close to Fairview, enclosing the street and creating an attractive gateway into Downtown.
- ④ Larger commercial uses are located close to Carson City Freeway where visibility and access are greatest. Smaller retail and residential uses are integrated into the surrounding neighborhood further from the freeway.
- ⑤ Activity center occupies as many quadrants of the intersection as possible to create a dense node of activity.



6 Small-scale retail uses line Fairview, creating an attractive, pedestrian-oriented gateway into Downtown.

7 High-density residential units are incorporated above and adjacent to retail storefronts allowing for easy access to services and employment and to provide a transition to the adjacent neighborhood.



4 Buildings are oriented to frame an internal network of streets, allowing business patrons and residents to easily walk between uses.

8 High-density residential units have an urban character and are served by a series of smaller plazas and pocket parks rather than large open spaces traditionally found in suburban apartment complexes.



9 Buildings are organized to frame corners, creating an inviting, pedestrian-oriented character.

10 Parking and landscape buffers are used to buffer incompatible uses on surrounding sites, such as these storage units.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 8: A VIBRANT DOWNTOWN CENTER FOR THE COMMUNITY

Over the past decades, traffic in Downtown has increased dramatically—in large part due to Carson Street’s role as a state highway—changing it from a once pedestrian-friendly “main street” for the community to a busy thoroughway. However, with the completion of the Carson City Freeway to Fairview Drive anticipated in 2008 and to South Carson Street by 2010, Downtown will again be subject to change. The freeway is projected to divert approximately 1/2 of the current traffic volume from Carson Street, giving the City an opportunity to reclaim its former pedestrian-friendly environment in Downtown. In light of this opportunity, Carson City will continue to promote infill and redevelopment activities along Carson Street and throughout Downtown to support the community’s goal of re-establishing Downtown as a vibrant center for the community. Specific development opportunities (in terms of use and scale) will vary according to their location within Downtown, but opportunities are addressed at a more broad level in the policies that follow.

GOAL 8.1—PROMOTE DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

8.1a—Mix of Uses

The integration of a broader mix of uses (including housing) is encouraged throughout the Downtown area. However, higher-intensity uses that tend to generate significant amounts of pedestrian and vehicular traffic (e.g., hotel/casinos, convention space, retail) should be concentrated along Carson Street and in area 3 highlighted on the Downtown Character Areas diagram that follows this section. Grouping active uses in these key locations within Downtown will



The integration of a broader mix of uses (including housing) is encouraged throughout the Downtown area.



The scale and character of future development within the Downtown should respect the area's historic context through the use of height transitions and other means (top). Future development should also incorporate a pedestrian-friendly environment and the street level (bottom).

scale and pattern of development in some locations with Downtown, while encouraging increased development intensities where significant opportunities exist. Height limitations, development transitions, and other specific design criteria are established for each character area within the new Downtown Mixed-Use (DT-MU) zone district.

help establish a series of “destinations” for Downtown residents and the surrounding community, while helping to preserve the more residential character of the surrounding neighborhoods.

8.1b—Scale of Development

Most buildings in the historic core of Downtown today have a relatively modest scale that ranges from 2 to 4 stories in height. Traditionally, building heights have been kept lower to maintain the visual prominence of the State Capitol building and its landmark dome. In recent years, however, available land in the City has become more limited and vacant lands within Downtown are increasingly being considered desirable for more intense development. To address this issue, the Downtown area has been divided into a series of character areas, as illustrated by the diagram on the following page. Character areas are based on the need to maintain the established

8.1c—Enhanced Pedestrian Environment

Create a more pedestrian-friendly environment in Downtown by evaluating the feasibility of reducing traffic from 4 to 2 lanes along Carson Street following the completion of the Freeway and by identifying necessary streetscape enhancements and parking strategies to coincide with the potential reduction in lanes (e.g., re-introduce on-street parking, incorporate pedestrian cross-walks, landscaping, bulb-outs, and street furniture). In addition to providing a safer pedestrian environment, these enhancements will visually enhance Downtown and create a more inviting environment.

8.1d—Public Spaces/Recreational Amenities



The incorporation of public gathering spaces, such as this outdoor plaza, is encouraged to enhance the Downtown pedestrian environment.

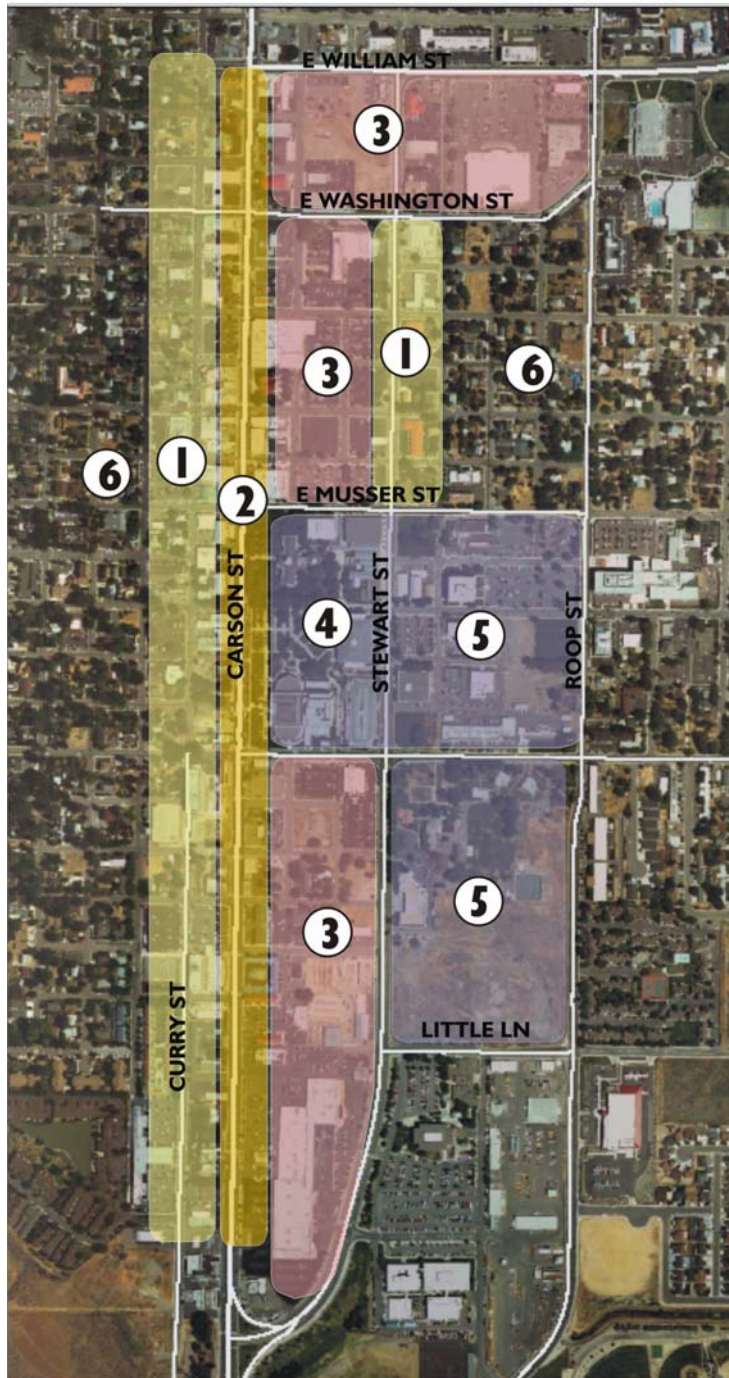
The incorporation of public gathering spaces, such as outdoor plazas, pocket parks, and other amenities, including landscaping, is encouraged to enhance the pedestrian environment within Downtown, to create opportunities for outdoor concerts and events, and to create passive recreational opportunities for Downtown residents.

8.1e—Large-Scale Infill/Redevelopment

Large-scale infill and redevelopment projects (such as the planned State Office Complex expansion, future civic facilities, convention space, or similar projects) that involve the consolidation of multiple blocks within the Downtown Area can have a significant visual and physical impact on the character of Downtown. Careful consideration should be given to projects of this magnitude to ensure they are designed to complement Downtown's urban, pedestrian-friendly context by incorporating clear pedestrian connections to the surrounding area, establishing strong relationships between buildings and the street, and to minimize the impacts of parking on primary street frontages.

DOWNTOWN CHARACTER AREAS

DOWNTOWN CHARACTER AREAS



1 NEIGHBORHOOD TRANSITION

- Height of buildings steps down towards surrounding residences (typically 3 stores max.)
- Massing of buildings becomes less blocky and "urban"--more residential character
- Primarily mix of office, residential, and small-scale retail uses

2 MAIN STREET MIXED-USE

- Retain traditional "main street" character
- Infill and redevelopment encouraged in keeping with established core area
- Vertical mixed-use required to encourage pedestrian activity
- Heights may "step-up" away from Carson Street, but will generally be limited to 3-4 stories. Limited areas of increased height allowed where already established (e.g., Adjacent to Ormsby House)

3 URBAN MIXED-USE

- High concentrations of vacant or underutilized land with significant infill and redevelopment opportunities
- Building heights will vary, but may go as high as 8-10 stories on some blocks
- Concentrations of active uses such as convention space, casinos, hotels, urban residential, and supporting retail encouraged
- Vertical mixed-use buildings encouraged along major street frontages or public spaces

4 CAPITOL COMPLEX

5 STATE OFFICE COMPLEX

6 DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOODS

- These neighborhoods are not included within the Downtown boundary but play an important supporting role in promoting Downtown revitalization efforts
- Infill and redevelopment encouraged provided it is compatible with the scale and historic character of the surrounding area

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 9: STABLE, COHESIVE NEIGHBORHOODS OFFERING A MIX OF HOUSING TYPES

Carson City will promote new neighborhoods that contain a mix of land uses and diversified housing options that meet the varying functional and pricing needs of its residents, including single family, attached homes (duplexes, townhomes), multi-family dwellings, accessory dwellings, and housing included as part of mixed-use developments. The City has prepared an Affordable Housing Plan, which can serve as a guide towards meeting the housing needs of the community’s residents. The City will also work to maintain the quality and character of established neighborhoods and ensure that infill and redevelopment is designed in a manner that minimizes impacts on existing neighborhoods, including rural neighborhoods located within the City’s urbanizing areas.



A mix of housing types will be encouraged within new neighborhoods.

GOAL 9.1—PROMOTE A MIX OF LAND USES AND HOUSING TYPES WITHIN NEW NEIGHBORHOODS

9.1a—Mix of Housing Types

Encourage a mix of housing models and densities for projects within the urbanized area based upon their size, location, surrounding neighborhood context, and applicable land use policies, as contained in Chapter 3. In general, larger neighborhoods should incorporate the largest variety while a smaller site surrounded by existing housing may be more limited by required transitions, etc.



High density housing will be encouraged within designated activity centers and along major gateway corridors where it can be served by future transit.



The City will encourage the development of energy efficient housing to lower average monthly housing costs.

9.1b—Activity Center Housing

Establish incentives, such as density bonuses or parking reductions, for the incorporation of higher-density housing within designated activity centers and along major gateway corridors where they may be served by future transit.

GOAL 9.2 PROMOTE THE EXPANSION OF AFFORDABLE AND WORKFORCE HOUSING OPTIONS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

9.2a—Affordable Housing Plan

Identify public lands, including City-owned properties that would be appropriate for affordable housing development and create a plan for the development of affordable housing.

9.2b—Workforce Housing

Create workforce ownership housing opportunities for working families and individuals earning between 80 percent to 120 percent of the median area income. Workforce housing should be located within or adjacent to major employment centers such as downtown and the Regional Medical Center to the extent possible.

9.2c—Energy-Related Housing Costs

The City should encourage a reduction in energy-related housing costs by:

- Providing housing rehabilitation and weatherization programs and or direct assistance to households with a particular emphasis on fixed-income elderly residents of Carson City;
- Encouraging the development of new energy efficient housing and retrofitting for existing housing stock for energy efficiency to lower average monthly housing costs;
- Encouraging the use of site design techniques for residential development that ensure and promote solar and wind efficiency; and
- Ensuring the economical and efficient processing of development applications and building permits to minimize housing development costs.

9.2d—Rehabilitation of Existing Housing Stock

Promote local, state and federal programs to encourage rehabilitation of existing housing stock and preservation of neighborhoods to ensure continued availability of affordable housing units. Explore the hiring or

designation of a City housing coordinator to actively assist with housing affordability programs.

9.2e—Code Enforcement

Enforce appropriate standards for safe and decent affordable housing in Carson City, such as length of stay limits for recreational vehicle parks, motels, and hotels.

9.2f—Regional Housing Opportunities

Encourage and support efforts to create more affordable housing on a regional basis.

GOAL 9.3—MAINTAIN THE QUALITY AND CHARACTER OF ESTABLISHED NEIGHBORHOODS

9.3a—Existing Housing Stock

Develop strategies and incentives such as low-cost loans and design assistance programs to increase home ownership opportunities for residents and to promote regular maintenance and renovation within the City’s established neighborhoods.

9.3b—Compatibility of Infill and Redevelopment

Ensure that infill and redevelopment is designed in a manner that minimizes impacts on and is compatible with existing neighborhoods through the use of appropriate height and density transitions, similar setbacks and lot coverage, garage and loading area location and configuration, the development of park and recreational facilities, connectivity to existing neighborhoods by a pathways system, and other neighborhood specific design considerations.



The quality and character of established neighborhoods will be maintained.

GOAL 9.4—PROTECT THE CHARACTER OF EXISTING RURAL NEIGHBORHOODS

9.4a—Infill and Redevelopment

Ensure that infill and redevelopment is designed in a manner that minimizes impacts on the character and function of rural neighborhoods. Establish guidelines for the incorporation of higher density residential at the fringe of existing rural neighborhoods, as well as on individual lots within them (although this pattern will be discouraged). Guidelines should address issues such as density and height transitions, open space buffers, lighting, fencing, etc.



The character of existing rural neighborhoods will be protected.

9.4b—“Spot” Rezoning

Discourage “spot” rezoning of parcels within established rural neighborhoods that have not been identified as higher density on the Land Use Map and/or that are not contiguous with lots zoned for a comparable density.



The city will seek to preserve and enhance its historic resources.

**GUIDING PRINCIPLE 10:
PROTECTION OF HISTORIC
RESOURCES**

Carson City will seek to preserve and enhance its historic resources by enforcing its existing preservation regulations and ordinances and updating them as needed and by encouraging historic preservation efforts through the use of financial, building, and related incentives for the restoration and rehabilitation of historic structures and facilities.

GOAL 10.1—PRESERVE AND ENHANCE HISTORIC RESOURCES

10.1a—Adaptive Reuse

Encourage the adaptive reuse of historic buildings not eligible for designation on the Local, State, or National Register of Historic Places, but which have historic features and contribute to the overall character of the neighborhood. Establish financial, building and related incentives for the restoration and rehabilitation of historic structures and facilities.

10.1b—Consistency with Standards and Guidelines

Ensure that the rehabilitation and renovation of historic structures occurs according to the City’s adopted Historic District and Downtown Business District Guidelines. Continue to review rehabilitation and renovation proposals for compliance with adopted guidelines.

10.1c—Historic Properties Inventory

Continue to maintain an inventory of historic properties within the City.