Appendix J:
Community Center Design Guidelines

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STREET "A"

J. Community Center Design Guidelines

Riverside County Integrated Project

Appendix J
Community Center Guidelines
April 05, 2002

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INTRODUCTION

Communities are more than a collection of urban conveniences and necessities; they are a major source of identity for their residents.

People want to live in or have access to communities they consider special, communities that provide a unique identity, create a sense of place, enhance social interaction, and foster civic pride. Indeed, many jurisdictions throughout California are attempting to face the challenge of how to enhance the livability of their communities. The impacts created by sprawl and auto-oriented developments, including civic disenchantment, have lead many municipalities to re-think their current land use policies and place an emphasis on orderly development of land and the creation of focal points and a sense of place for their residents. The growing popularity of revitalized downtowns, new mixed-use urban villages, walkable neighborhoods and communities provides ample testimony to this growing desire for special places. These community centers are intended to be special places that will provide unique and diverse environments and opportunities for working, shopping, living and interacting, while establishing a focal point and source of identity for those unincorporated communities they currently serve or will serve in the future.

Landscaped public plaza amidst multiple uses.

The County of Riverside has embarked upon an exciting and ambitious journey in the evolution of its urban environment. It has become one of those jurisdictions ready to meet the challenge of preserving and enhancing the livability of its family of unique communities. It recognizes that that in order to accommodate a rapidly growing population, ensure efficient and orderly growth, protect its natural resources, and otherwise preserve its quality of life, unique and innovation solutions are in order.

Through its Vision Statement and General Plan processes, the County has selected the establishment of strategically located Community Centers as a means of accommodating population growth, enhancing quality of life, providing orderly development, and creating special places for its residents and visitors.

GUIDE FOR PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY CENTERS

This document is designed to serve as a guide for the physical development of community centers within Riverside County. As such, the guidelines presented here are intended to be illustrative in nature rather than prescriptive. They establish a flexible framework for design while allowing great latitude for innovation. Each guideline should be considered in terms of how it applies to a given project. They are not intended to impose limitations on innovation or initiative, but rather to ensure that these community centers develop into diverse and vibrant urban places. These guidelines are also written to compliment and reinforce policies identified in the General Plan, including those located in the Housing and Circulation Elements.

A critically important aspect of the Community Center concept is the need to reinforce and stimulate these centers by means other than land use designations and other regulatory development policies. One of the primary implementation tools resulting from the General Plan process is the development of a voluntary incentives program to stimulate desired land uses, development intensities and design standards that will contribute to community identity and focus. The Incentive Program augments standard provisions of the General Plan to assist both in facilitating development within these community centers, and in acquiring open space land that can define community edges. These guidelines are intended to serve as a precursor to the Incentives Program.
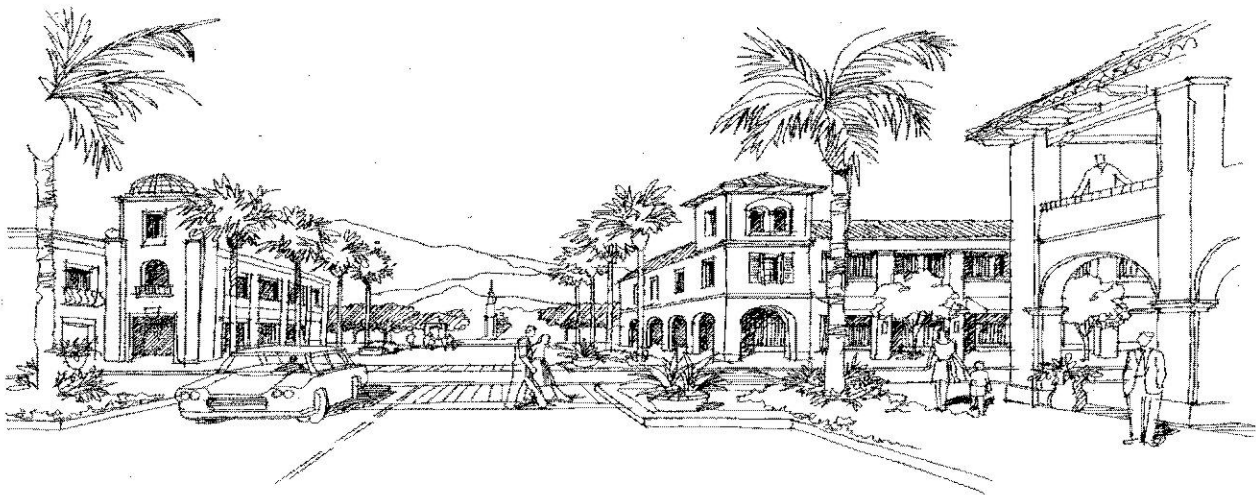
"Through its Vision Statement and General Plan processes, the County of Riverside has selected the establishment of strategically located Community Centers as a means of accommodating population growth, enhancing quality of life, providing orderly development, and creating special places for its residents and visitors."

COMMUNITY CENTER CHARACTERISTICS

Community Centers are specially designed urban areas that facilitate a dynamic pedestrian-oriented environment by providing a compact and intimately scaled mix of uses and minimizing the dominance of the automobile.

Community Centers generally consist of the following characteristics:

- Superior design elements that establish character and a sense of place, preserve aesthetic value of development, promote walk-ability and pedestrian orientation, and contribute to a vibrant, engaging and aesthetically pleasing environment.

- A diverse and unique horizontal and vertical mix of uses, including residential, commercial, office, open space and civic, that promotes a lively and dynamic urban setting.

Streetscape and road design encourage pedestrian usage

- A diverse multi-modal circulation network of roads, multi-use trails, sidewalks, transit facilities and parking areas designed to facilitate pedestrian movement, provide linkages between adjacent and remote uses and areas, and accommodate efficient vehicular access while minimizing the impacts of the automobile.

- Buildings and structures are; located close to the street, enhancing the intimacy of the local streetscape; and designed at a scale that encourages pedestrian activity.

- A network of open space features such as pocket parks, plazas, paseos, village greens, and other passive and active open areas. These open spaces serve as transitions between neighborhoods, establish pedestrian linkages between uses, and provide areas for gathering and recreation.

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- A dynamic streetscape consisting of pedestrian activity, sidewalk amenities, detailed landscaping, traffic-calming devices, and intimately scaled mix of uses.

- Developed at a scale, mix, intensity and level of detail that distinguishes itself from adjacent uses and enhances them by virtue of design quality.

Building design oriented towards the sidewalk

- Contain both a centralized **core area** where the concentration and intensity of uses is highest, and an adjacent **core support** of residential, civic, open space and employment-generating uses that lessen in density and intensity as development radiates away from the core.

- Though different in scale and design quality from adjacent uses, Community Centers are not isolated "mini-cities." With careful site planning and strategic use of landscaping and open space areas, Community Centers can be relatively seamless areas that easily transition into adjacent neighborhoods and communities.

- Use indigenous materials and design features that promote a strong sense of place.

- Provide several opportunities for social interaction, including public spaces, open spaces, streetscape amenities, and civic uses that facilitate community activities.

This mixed use project is located adjacent to single family homes. Quality architecture and building design make the project compatible with the neighborhood.

BENEFITS
Community Centers:

- Use land more efficiently by accommodating increased densities and intensities of use within concentrated areas, thus minimizing sprawl and consuming less open space land.

- Create a walkable, pedestrian-friendly environment that enhances community vitality.
- Reduces automobile reliance and vehicular trips by providing a variety of transit and pedestrian facilities, and a mix of amenities and uses in close proximity.

- Establish sufficient density to support some form of bus or rail transit.Provide a more efficient use of infrastructure.

- Conveniently accommodates automobile use, yet is designed to both prevent vehicular traffic from dominating the urban fabric, and enhance pedestrian activity.

- Provide additional housing choices and opportunities for local residents and workers.

- May reduce vehicle miles traveled by locating employment and residential uses in close proximity.

- Create a strong sense of place through superior design elements.

- Promote economic vitality and job creation by providing areas for employment uses, and establishing a population base to support retail and office uses.

Many new and revitalized town and village centers throughout the country are centered on substantial commercial retail developments, most of which are anchored by regional-serving national tenants. While these types of uses are important components, Community Centers should also feature commercial and civic uses that cater to local residents. An emphasis on local shopping and services sustains urban activity over longer periods and allows the Community Center to withstand the cyclical nature of retail uses. A prominent mix of locally-owned businesses and unique civic uses adds a certain urban "flavor' to the community that is typically absent from traditional, corporate, chain-dominated shopping malls.

Though retail uses serve an important focus and help promote activity throughout the day and evening hours, the presence of people is what comprises Community Center vitality. A substantial residential component is a critical element to the success of a Community Center. Residential uses provide the population base that maintains retail and civic vitality. Other uses such as schools, parks, office complexes, and recreational facilities also enhance activity.

Community centers not only enhance the physical environment of a community, they also create opportunities for social interaction. These areas provide places that people want to be a part of and can easily be recognized by other. Community Centers are the places where communities can relate with one another in an environment outside of their homes, and the experiences occurring there can sometimes make a more lasting impression than the architecture and landscaping. They are places that are comfortable to and familiar to the communities they serve and truly can be the "heart" of the community.

CHALLENGES TO CREATING COMMUNITY CENTERS

The growth of our urban environment over the last several decades, generally in the form of suburban style development, has several roots, primary among them the desire to escape the numerous urban and social ills associated with dilapidated, crowded downtown living. Suburban style development, with its expansive areas of low-rise, low density, and segregated land uses, was seen as a perfect antidote for minimizing or eliminating the impacts of incompatible land uses, and for establishing a more safe, more secure and less intimidating urban environ. Suburbs have afforded their residents and businesses numerous benefits. Despite the apparent benefits of suburban communities, the predominant style of development has resulted in several unintended negative consequences that are the topics of much debate:

- Inflexible zoning and general plan regulations governing land use have often resulted in the design and layout of similar-looking residential subdivisions, business parks and strip commercial developments that have made many communities virtually indistinguishable from one another.

- The segregation of uses such as job centers, commercial malls and residential neighborhoods has lead to congested local roads and regional highways, long commutes, poor air quality, and other degradations of the environmental and social fabric of communities.

- Arterial highways are often lined with poorly designed or deteriorating commercial centers, which may consist of antiquated building designs, underutilized parking lots, and a preponderance of unsightly signs, utility poles, and other supporting infrastructure.

- Due to the low-density nature of suburban development, it has used up a tremendous amount of open space, permanently altering the landscape and often resulting in irreparable damage to habitat lands and other natural resources.

- Zoning regulations have typically been written in such a manner that they prevent the development of a Community Center project.

LOCATION OF COMMUNITY CENTERS

Community Centers may generally be located in areas consisting of one or more of the following characteristics:

- A locally recognized center of an existing community.

- The historical focal point of an area.

- Potential for attracting new and more diverse uses because of certain physical characteristics or synergy of existing development.

- The lack of an identified "center" or demonstrating a need for a focal point to help create a sense of place.
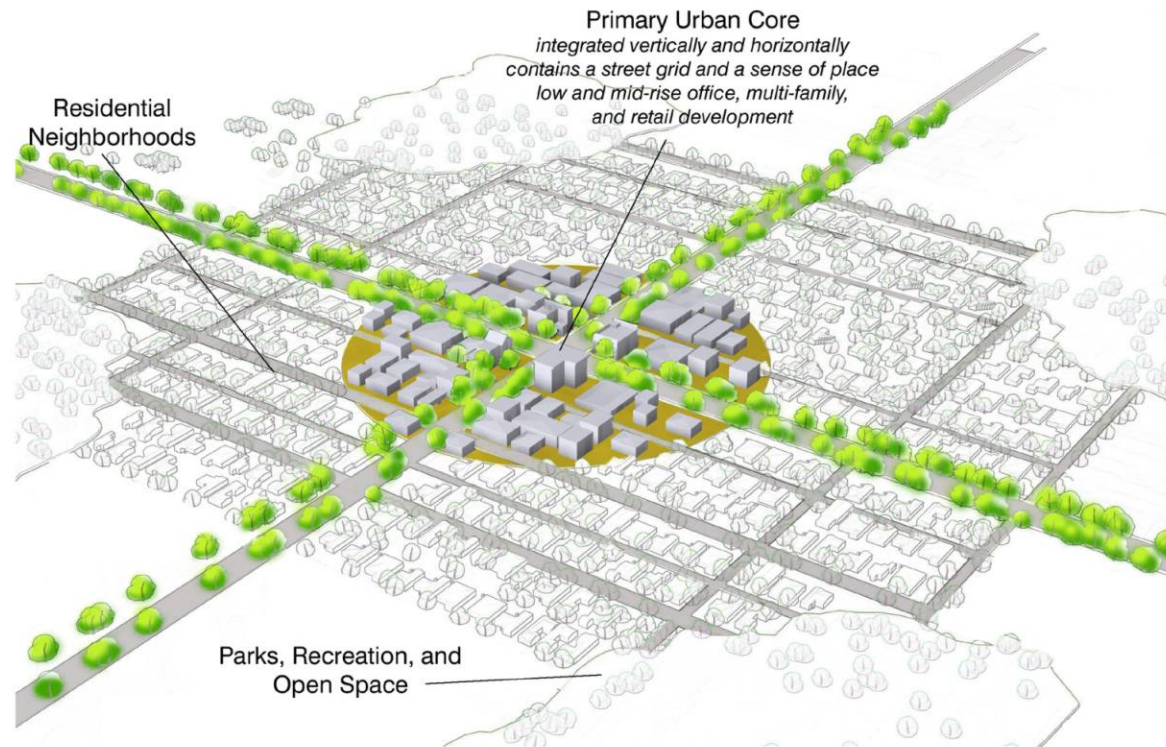

The combination of residential above retail uses helps to create activity and a sense of place.

- Location within an existing "greenfield" area where urbanization is rapidly occurring or is planned to occur.

- Proximity to existing or planned major transportation corridors and other supporting infrastructure.

- An aging urban area in need of revitalization.

COMMUNITY CENTER STRUCTURE

Community Centers generally consist of two distinct sub-areas: a centralized **Core Area**, which accommodates the highest levels of urban activity and building development; and a **Core Support Area**, which is an area that is contiguous to the central core, but accommodates a more gradual yet distinguishable decrease in development intensity and


Primary Urban Core
integrated vertically and horizontally
contains a street grid and a sense of place
low and mid-rise office, multi-family,
and retail development

Residential Neighborhoods

Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

COMMUNITY CENTER CORE

The core is the "heart" of the Community Center. It is the center of public activity and because of its design characteristics has a distinct sense of place. Core areas typically range in size from 10 to 60 acres. The form of development and mix of uses within the core are more compact and intimately scaled, resulting in a environment that is tailored for pedestrian use. The core promotes density, compactness, centrality, proximity and continuity of land-forms and uses.

Public spaces developed within the Community Center core can help to create an identity for an area by establishing unique environments that are different from any other community. Open spaces create a "sense of place" that allows the public to quickly identify with and participate in the community that they are in. Landmark water features, gathering places, walkways, community activities, and landscape treatments can provide an identity to the area that would not be as prevalent if these features did not exist. Public spaces help to distinguish one community from another; users are exposed to unique experiences that are unlike those in other areas. Sidewalks are a critical public component of the Community Center core since the majority of the activity will occur in these spaces (sidewalk cafes, window shopping, etc).

Community Center core areas combine ground-floor retail uses with higher density residential uses and/or professional office located above. This allows the retail uses to be easily accessible to residents and reduces the use of the automobile for routine shopping trips. In addition, many successful stores operate during hours before 8:00 am and after 5:00 pm. Since community centers are meant to create "hubs" of activity, extended business hours can encourage the use of public spaces for longer periods of time.

properties located outside
of Community Center Boundry

core

core support

Community Center Boundary
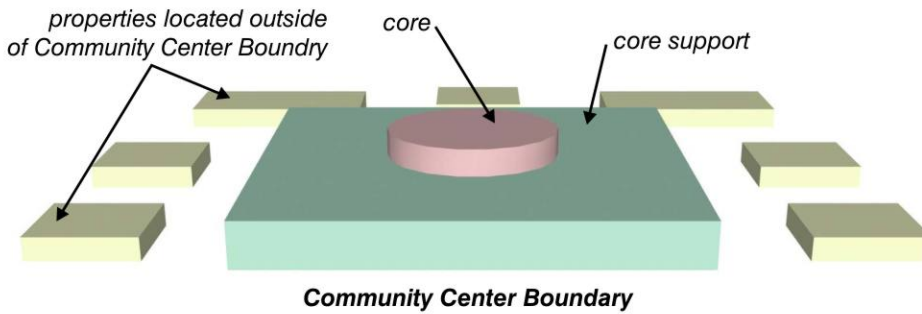
Automobiles have a presence in the core, but are secondary to the pedestrian. On-street parking is available in limited quantities, as the majority of parking is provided behind buildings or within structures to minimize their impact on the pedestrian activity found on the street. Major thoroughfares are not located within the core. Streets located outside of the periphery of the Community Center accommodate the majority of through-traffic; vehicular paths within the core are limited and speeds are greatly reduced to support the pedestrian friendly and walkable characteristics of the area. Wider streets that accommodate higher levels of traffic create vehicular and pedestrian conflicts and as a result they should be located outside of the immediate core area.

CORE SUPPORT

The areas located within Community Center boundaries immediately outside of the core are classified as the core support. The core support is ancillary to the Community Center core, but is a critical component as it supports the vitality of core activity. These areas generally consist of a mix of single-family and multi-family residential neighborhoods, clustered business parks and professional offices, and neighborhood commercial uses at densities less intense than those found in the core, but greater than densities found in typical suburban neighborhoods. Unlike the core area where the urban fabric is compact, the core support of is appropriate for public uses such as schools, day care facilities, houses of worship, community buildings, and recreational fields that generate significant amounts of activity.

The vitality and longevity of a Community Center core is heavily based upon a network of linkages connecting the core support area to the core. This creates a circulation pattern that provides efficient access to activities and amenities, and allows a constant flow between the core support area and the core. These networks bring life to the heart of the community.

Although development intensity becomes gradually less dense, many of the design characteristics exhibited by the core also apply to these outlying areas:

- Unique mix and blending of uses.

- Superior architectural and site design elements.

- Walkable, and intimately scaled residential neighborhoods, commercial centers and office/business complexes.

- Distinguishing gateways into the community center area.

- A network of open space areas.

- A system of pedestrian walkways and multi-use trails.

- Well landscaped streetscapes.

- Location and design of roadway and parking facilities that de-emphasizes the presence of the automobile.
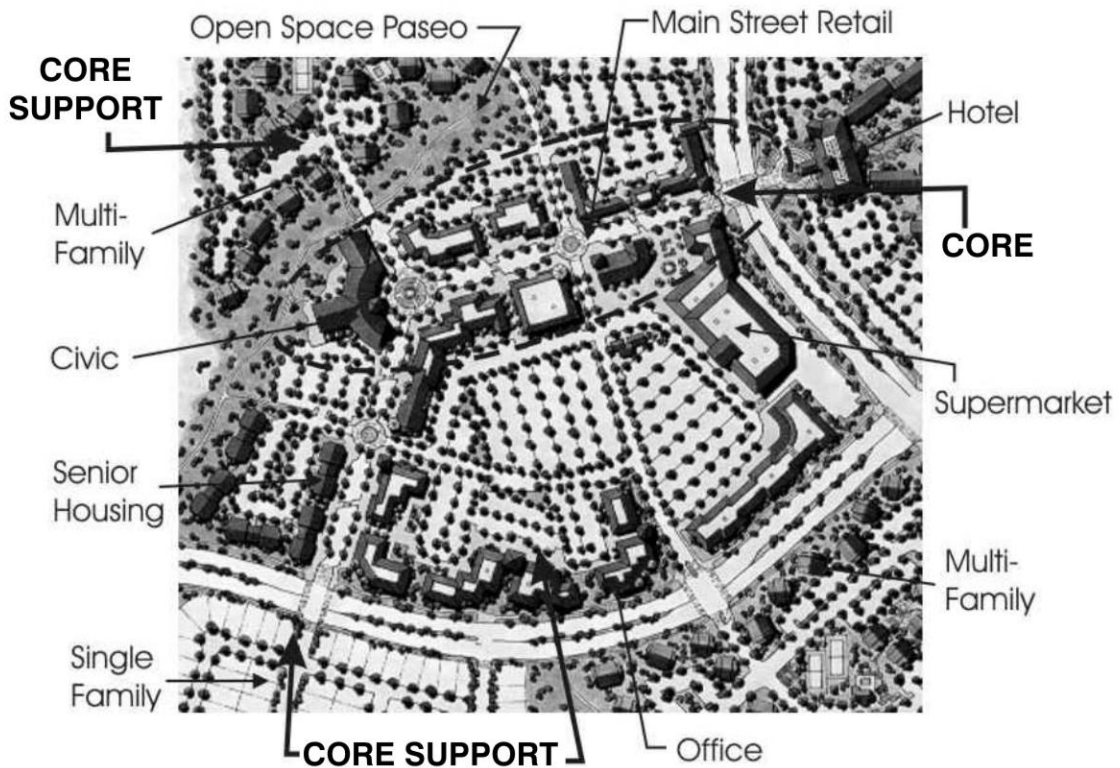
The following table provides a summary comparison of development characteristics between the Community Center core and outer ring, and outlying suburban areas.

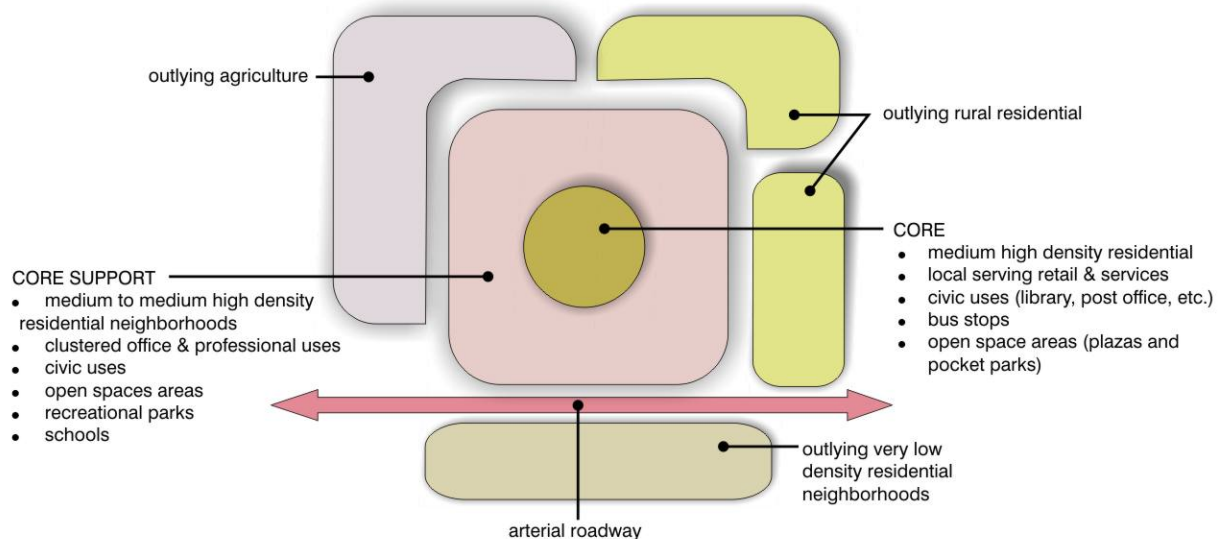| Table 1: Development Characteristics Comparison			
Development Characteristic	Core	Core Support	Areas outside of Community Center
Mix of Uses	High	Good	Minimal
Density	High/Medium High	Medium	Low
Pedestrian Orientation	High	Good	Low
Quality of Design	High	High	Medium
Spatial Separation	Very Low	Low	High
Auto Dominance	Very Low	Low	High
Parking Facilities	Parking Structure/ Surface Lots/On-street	Surface Lots/On-Street	On-street/Surface Lots
Transportation Choices	High	Good	Minimal

COMMUNITY CENTER TYPES

The General Plan Land Use Element identifies four types of Community Centers, each differentiated by size, scale and land use emphasis: Village Centers, Town Centers, Employment Centers, and Entertainment Centers. The design principles detailed in this document can be applied to all the community center types. However, the distinction of types is seen in the intensity and unique distribution of land uses within each community center type.

VILLAGE CENTERS

Village Centers are the smallest in form and scale of all community center types, and are generally designed to serve the immediate local population in adjacent and nearby residential neighborhoods rather than a regional area. This type of development is typical to that of a small, intimately scaled hamlet or rural village.

outlying agriculture

outlying rural residential

CORE
- medium high density residential
- local serving retail & services
- civic uses (library, post office, etc.)
- bus stops
- open space areas (plazas and pocket parks)

CORE SUPPORT
- medium to medium high density residential neighborhoods
- clustered office & professional uses
- civic uses
- open spaces areas
- recreational parks
- schools

outlying very low density residential neighborhoods

arterial roadway

Typical uses may include:

- Small-lot single family detached residential units, clustered and/or attached single-family and multi-family residential units such as apartments and townhouses.

- Neighborhood-serving retail uses such as a grocery store, drug store, and commercial services.

- Office uses such as doctor, financial and similar professional services.

- Small-scale lodging uses such as inns and bed & breakfast establishments.

- Public uses such as schools, post offices and other civic or cultural uses.

- Recreational open space such as parks and trails.

core area centered around a village green

TOWN CENTERS

Town Centers are larger in scale and accommodate a more intense mix of land uses than any of the other Community Center types. They accommodate regional attractions and facilities in addition to those uses that serve local residents and workers. The scale and mix of uses resembles that of more "traditional" downtown areas. They will typically have one or more "anchor" uses such as a major department store, cultural facility, or public building.
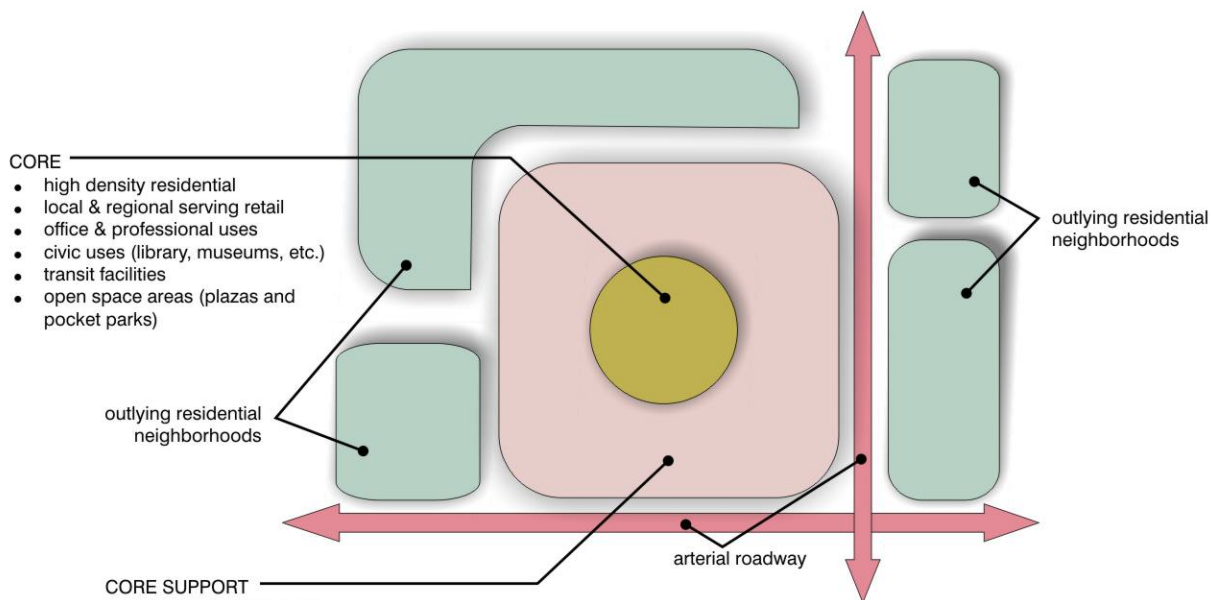
CORE
- high density residential
- local & regional serving retail
- office & professional uses
- civic uses (library, museums, etc.)
- transit facilities
- open space areas (plazas and pocket parks)

outlying residential neighborhoods

outlying residential neighborhoods

arterial roadway

CORE SUPPORT
- medium to high density residential neighborhoods
- clustered office & professional uses
- civic uses
- transit stops
- open spaces areas
- recreational parks
- schools

Typical uses may include:

- Multi-family residential units such as mixed-use lofts and apartments, condos and townhouses.

- Local and regional serving retail uses such as restaurants, specialty stores, bookstores, department stores, and hotels/inns.

- Office complexes and other ancillary office and business support uses.

- Hospitals, day care centers

- Public uses such as libraries, post offices, community centers, theaters, hospitals, and day care centers.

- Recreational open space such as urban parks, and plazas.

A typical town center core. Note the placement of buildings directly adjacent to the sidewalk, narrow street widths, wide sidewalks, provision of outdoor seating, and the placement of attractive streetscape elements such as street trees, decorative light posts and bollards.
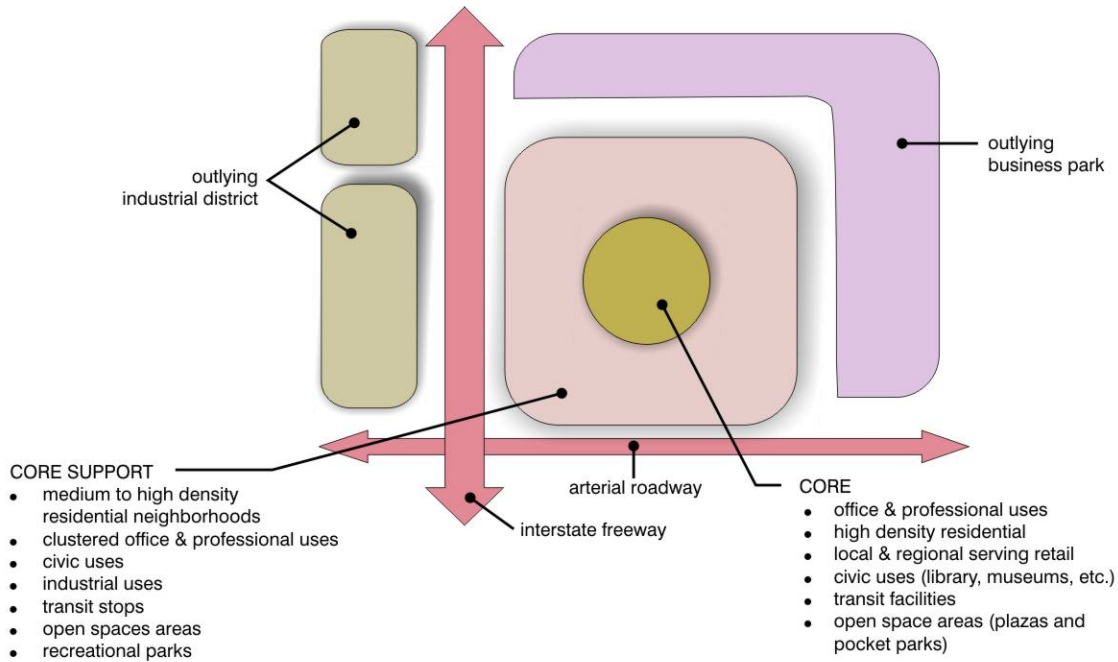
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JOB CENTERS

Job Centers are another type of Community Center that provides an area nfor intensive business and employment-generating uses, resulting in the strengthening of the job base for the region. These include a clustered mix of business park and office uses, light industrial and commercial uses, and higher density residential uses.

outlying industrial district

outlying business park

arterial roadway

interstate freeway

CORE

CORE SUPPORT
- medium to high density residential neighborhoods
- clustered office & professional uses
- civic uses
- industrial uses
- transit stops
- open spaces areas
- recreational parks

CORE
- office & professional uses
- high density residential
- local & regional serving retail
- civic uses (library, museums, etc.)
- transit facilities
- open space areas (plazas and pocket parks)

Pedestrian linkage connecting to employment center use.

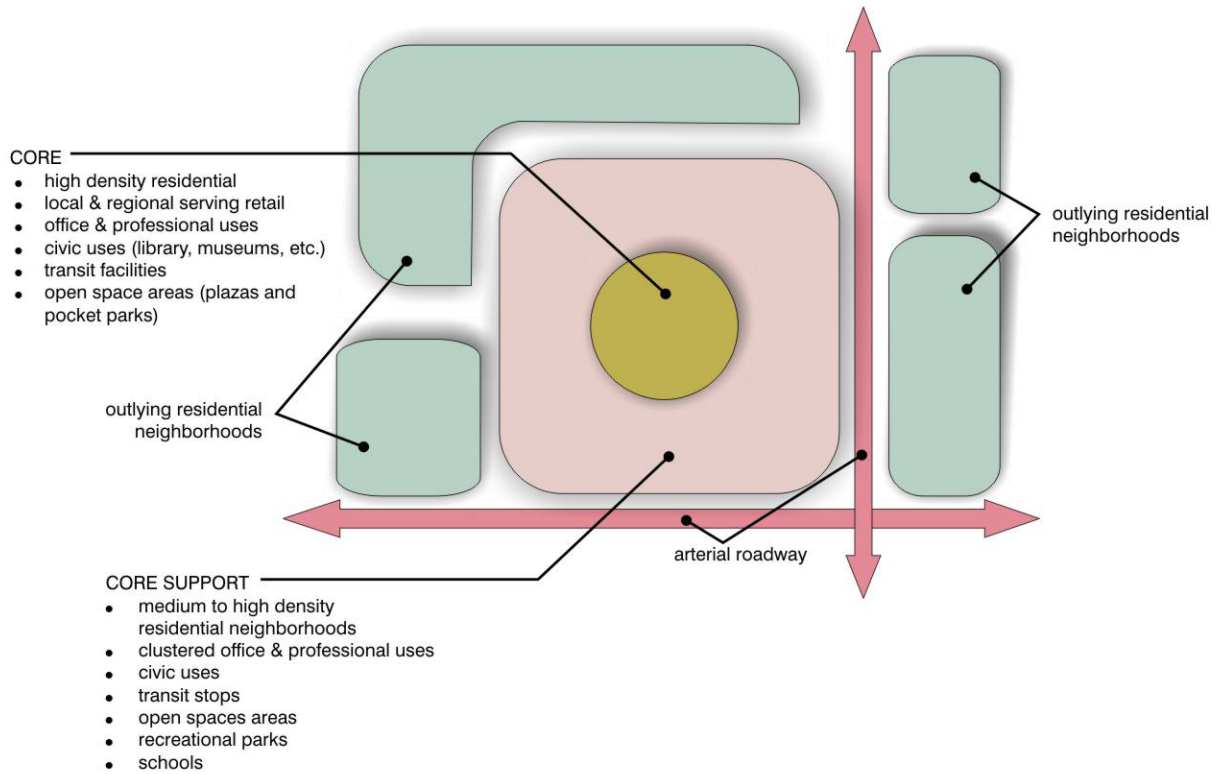Typical office use, with extensive landscaping and public area.

Primary uses consist of:

- Employment-generating uses such as mid-rise office and professional complexes and research and development centers.

- Support commercial uses such as restaurants, dry cleaners, copy centers and health clubs.

- Residential uses such as mid-rise apartment and condominium complexes, and attached townhouses.

- Recreational open space such as urban parks and trails.

- Industrial uses.

- Civic uses including educational and cultural facilities.

ENTERTAINMENT CENTERS

Entertainment Centers cater to a regional area and allow the greatest variation in intensity, from resort communities to high-use recreational centers and tourist destinations.

CORE
- high density residential
- local & regional serving retail
- office & professional uses
- civic uses (library, museums, etc.)
- transit facilities
- open space areas (plazas and pocket parks)

outlying residential neighborhoods

outlying residential neighborhoods

arterial roadway

CORE SUPPORT
- medium to high density residential neighborhoods
- clustered office & professional uses
- civic uses
- transit stops
- open spaces areas
- recreational parks
- schools

Primary uses consist of:

- Tourist-oriented recreational and entertainment facilities, including golf courses, water parks, hotels, athletic fields, and amusement parks.

- Local and regional serving retail uses such as restaurants, specialty stores, theaters, hotels and motels.

- Business support services and ancillary office uses such as financial institutions.

- Small-lot detached residential units, attached single-family units and multi-family units.

- Public/civic uses such as a visitor's center, cultural center, or museum.

- Recreational open space such as parks and trails.

Pedestrian linkage within entertainment center core area.

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DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

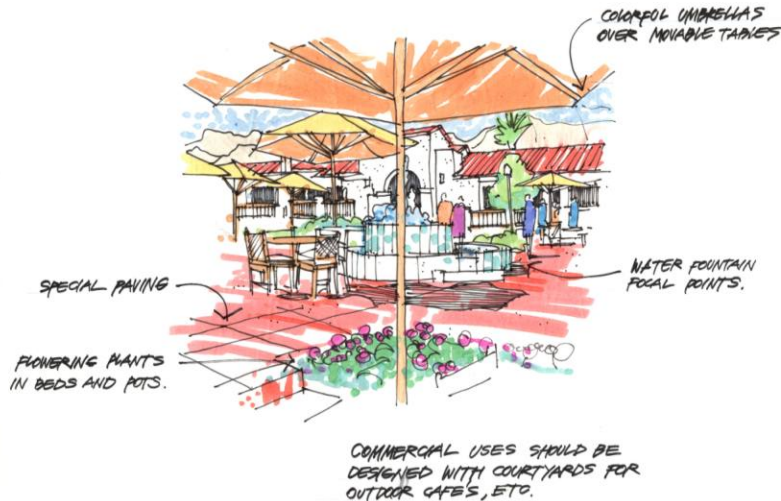| Table 2: Recommended Development Standards				
	Village Center	**Town Center**	**Job Center**	**Entertainment Center**
RESIDENTIAL DENSITY (DU/AC)				
Core	8-14	20-40	20-40	14-20
Core Support	5-14	5-20	5-20	8-14
NON-RESIDENTIAL INTENSITY (FAR)				
Core	0.5-0.8	0.5-1.0	0.5-1.0	0.5-0.75
Core Support	0.3-0.5	0.35-0.5	0.3-0.5	0.35-0.5
MAXIMUM NO. OF FLOORS*	3	6	6	4
DISTRIBUTION OF USES*				
Commercial	20-30%	20-40%	10-20%	20-40%
Office & Professional	10-20%	20-40%	50-70%	10-20%
Open Space	10-20%	10-15%	10-15%	10-20%
Residential	50-80%	40-80%	40-60%	60-80%

CORE GUIDELINES
LAND USE

The key element of the dynamic and lively nature of Community Centers is a unique mix of complementary uses in close proximity to one another. Mixing of uses encourages people to get out of their cars and participate in a pedestrian experience, because residential, commercial, and public uses are within a short walking distance of one another. Variety of use results in extended periods of urban activity and leads to a synergy that simply cannot happen in an environment of spread out, segregated uses. Though some uses may be inherently incompatible with one another, several design and siting treatments can be applied to minimize or eliminate negative impacts while preserving the intimate pedestrian feel of these mixed-use centers.

- Incorporate a dynamic and diverse mix of uses that promote care vitality.

- Allow a mix of attached multi-family housing, retail, offices, hotels, civic, educational, entertainment and recreational uses. Concentrate these diverse uses to promote pedestrian activity.

- Integrate a horizontal mix of compatible uses within a single lot or project area, including some combination of residential, retail, office, and public uses.

- Integrate a vertical mix of uses into a single structure, with retail and/or office uses on the lower level, and office and/or residential uses on upper levels.

- Be selective about the size, distribution and types of uses that are permitted within the Community Center core.

- Incorporate public uses that promote pedestrian activity, such as libraries, adult education facilities, university extensions, cultural centers, museums, Community Center facilities, and government annexes into the mix of uses encouraged in the core.

- Integrate open space plazas, green spaces and similar community gathering spaces within project developments. These uses are integral parts of Community Centers as they provide opportunities for social interaction and passive recreation, serve as transition areas between uses, and provide visual relief.

- Locate uses that require a substantial amount of acreage, such as golf courses or recreational parks outside of the core area. The design of these uses would destroy the pedestrian feel of the Community Center because they require large amounts of land.

- Utilize well designed open space areas as a buffer to provide a seamless transition between the Community Center core and adjacent neighborhoods. Surrounding neighborhoods are typically less intense in scale and activity as compared to the core. Open space areas soften the transition between these adjacent and differing intensities, and can serve as pedestrian access routes.

COLORFUL UMBRELLAS OVER MOVABLE TABLES

WATER FOUNTAIN FOCAL POINTS.

SPECIAL PAVING

FLOWERING PLANTS IN BEDS AND POTS.

COMMERCIAL USES SHOULD BE DESIGNED WITH COURTYARDS FOR OUTDOOR CAFE'S, ETC.

- Accommodate live-work spaces such as artist studios/lofts that combine residential and office/commercial uses within the same unit.

- Balance concentrations of governmental or office uses with commercial and residential uses to prevent the creation of a core that contains only weekday activity during daytime hours. Excessive concentrations of office or government uses often result in "dead" areas and/or extended periods of inactivity, thus detracting from the pedestrian vitality of core areas.

- Avoid industrial or warehousing/distribution uses within the core.

RESIDENTIAL USES

- Ensure a healthy mix of residential uses within core areas. Residential uses are a critical component of community center vitality. They provide a critical mass of people for the support of commercial and public uses, as well as the viability of transit facilities. They help ensure constant activity within Community centers.

- Locate residential uses within mid-block areas to minimize exposure to roadway intersections.

- Do not locate residential units above restaurants, taverns or similar uses that cater to a nighttime clientele.

- Minimize exposure of residential units to loading docks, storage areas, and other ancillary commercial uses. Locate these areas away from residential units, or provide some type of screening that minimizes their nuisance.

CLUSTER ACTIVITY

- Within core areas, segment activity clusters on blocks no longer than 600 feet in length. Break up continuous rows of development through the location of side streets, pedestrian linkages, public plazas and green spaces at regular intervals to provide visual relief and places for relaxation and rest.

- Ensure that the mix of uses creates constant daytime and evening activity.

Mixed use project with residential units located over ground floor retail businesses.

COMMERCIAL USES

- Establish commercial and public "anchor" or "destination" uses that promote core focus and vitality. Anchor uses include department stores, post offices, coffeehouses, grocery stores, libraries and restaurants.

- Locate commercial uses along the ground floor to enhance visibility and viability. In addition, locate intense commercial uses such as restaurants, taverns and other entertainment oriented uses at or near street intersections.

- In Job Centers, Entertainment Centers and Town Centers, provide

Mixed use office and retail building with adjacent pedestrian plaza.

a mix of retail uses to service both a local and regional clientele. Everyday uses such as dry cleaners, copy centers, medical offices, delis, grocery stores, and similar uses serving the day-to-day needs of local residents, as well as regional serving uses such as specialty shops, department stores, and bookstores, provide flexibility and variety within .retail areas, thus ensuring their long-term viability. Village Center commercial uses should serve primarily local neighborhoods.

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

Architectural design of the built environment greatly impacts the way that a Community Center is experienced aesthetically. Community Center design requires an understanding of building form, scale, orientation, setbacks, and existing terrain. Attention to design detail is critically important in the creation of community centers. Well-designed, aesthetically pleasing structures constructed of high quality materials reflect a community that is willing to invest in itself and in the longevity and sustainability of its environment. This discussion of structures includes buildings, walls and fences, and ancillary structures such as storage areas.

- Achieve architectural excellence and superior quality of development.

- Define, for each Community Center, the attributes that constitute "architectural excellence" and identify themes that will be promoted in the community.

- Integrate detailed architectural treatment on all building exteriors. Provide the same level of detail on rear-facing building facades as with front and side elevations.

- Avoid repetitive structures that will produce monotonous street scenes.

Detailed architectural facade treatment with third story setback, awnings, recessed entryways, arches, and color variety.

- Utilize differing but complimentary forms of architectural styles and designs. Creative architecture establishes the feeling of a unique place, and contributes to a community's "personality."

- Utilize architectural styles that incorporate representative characteristics of a given area

- Discourage the development of overly themed or "cartoonish" environments.

- Provide special building form elements such as towers and archways and other building massing elements to help distinguish the core and establish landmarks within the community fabric.

The balconies, columns archways and bright colors contribute to the charm of this Community Center.

- Integrate stairs, balconies, porches, awnings and patios into the overall design of the building. Provide private open space areas such as interior patios, courtyards or balconies, for each residential use.

- Provide windows, doorways and other architectural elements at frequent intervals along ground floor elevations. Storefront windows create interesting displays that draw activity from open space areas inward.

BUILDING ORIENTATION

Building orientation addresses the relationships of structures to the street. The position of the building and surrounding elements can be just as important as the design of the building. Building facades were traditionally oriented parallel to the street, with shallow setbacks and architectural details intended for pedestrians walking past on the sidewalks. Postwar development and the domination of the automobile, however, has led to increased setbacks and buildings facing the parking lots or away from the street. Community Centers utilize varied setbacks and landscaping to appeal to pedestrians, increase public safety, and enhance street activity.

- Orient structures and landscaping to preserve significant view and enhance the vitality of public spaces such as plazas and paseos.

- Locate structures along front and side property lines, adjacent to sidewalks and open space plazas.

- Orient and design buildings and public spaces to maximize views between uses. Techniques such as the use of balconies, porches, and windows facing public areas aids in keeping "eyes on the street," enhances the visibility of public areas, encourages community interaction and heightens a sense of security.

- Preserve, protect, and create interesting views from pedestrian areas.

Large prominent windows create visual interest along building facades.

STREETSCAPES

Streetscapes consist of many of the elements described in this guidelines section, including structures, land uses, public spaces, and streets. Sidewalks are another key element to streetscapes, serving as the dynamic interface where these structural elements come together. The multi-functional nature of sidewalks makes them one of the most vital components of community centers, as they facilitate a tremendous amount of urban activity. Another important element in the design of streetscapes is the distribution of numerous pedestrian amenities such as benches, water fountains and trash receptacles. These elements, if well designed and distributed, provide great convenience for pedestrians, enhance visual aesthetics, and promote streetscape vitality. They also create a functional, comfortable and interactive street scene for pedestrians. It is these streetscape components plus the relationship between the various elements described throughout these guidelines that give Community Centers their zest.

STRUCTURAL VARIATION

Building characteristics such as façade design, height, and entrances should be varied to prevent monotonous streetscapes. Such techniques can encourage people to explore the streets scene and enhance the views for automobiles. Community Centers encourage the construction of unique and creative structures that beautify the streetscape.

Varied building heights, window treatments and building setbacks create appealing streetscapes.

- Provide facade variation that will create a unique and visually stimulating environment.

- Encourage varied building setbacks. Buildings constructed using the same setback distances can often be uninteresting and monotonous. Varied setbacks create character and allow for creative building design.

- Allow for visual relief and avoid large expanses of blank walls. Wall surfaces should contain a variety of articulations, such as offsets, projections, step-backs and penetrations, and surface textures.

- Provide variations in building heights and rooflines. These variations can lead to a more visually interesting street scene.

- Include variation in colors, materials and texture treatments to enhance visual aesthetics.

- Provide a variety of defensible spaces for pedestrian use, such as arcades, overhangs and recessed storefront entries.

- Design exterior windows utilizing varying elements such as size or facade treatment, or by creating interesting patterns.
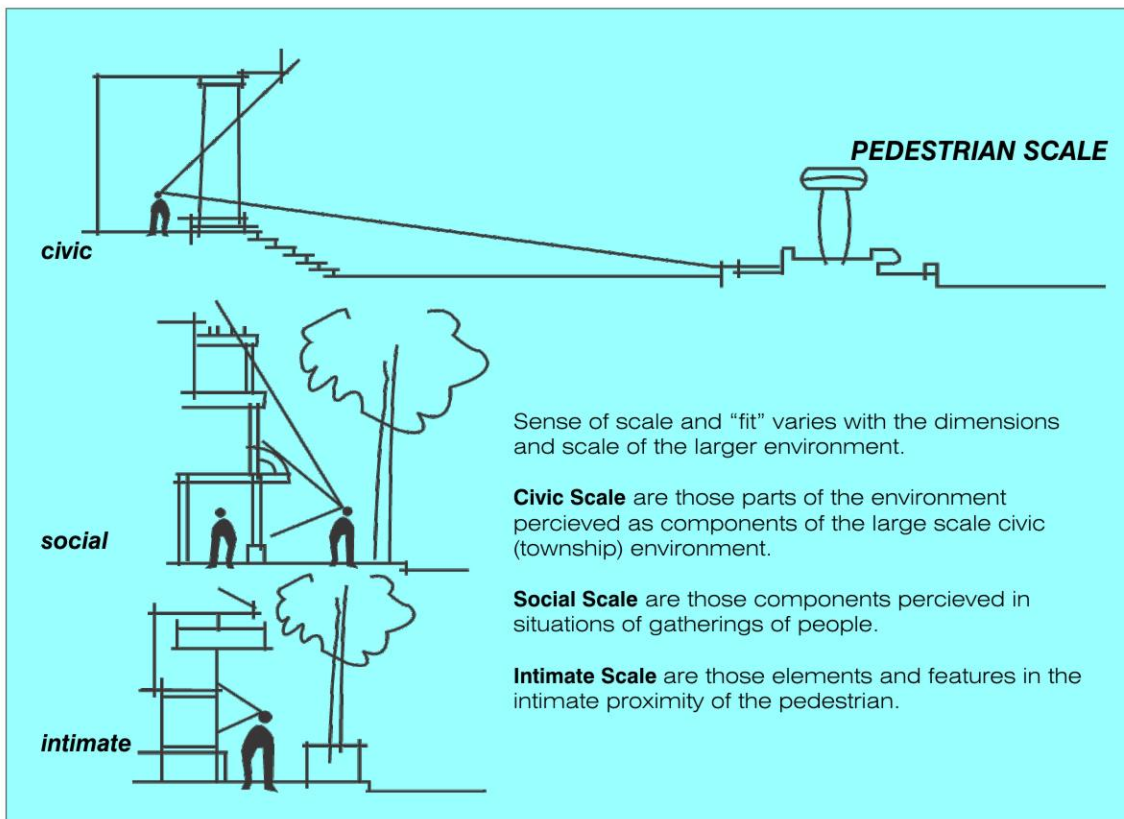

Note variations in building facade treatment including awnings, trellises structures, pilasters, and display windows.
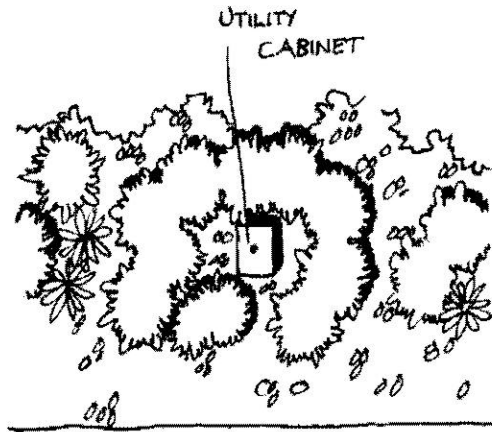
SCALE

The scale of a development concerns the relationship of the buildings, streetscape, and activities. In a prosperous community, the development is not overbuilt or overused and is sensitive to the existing natural, historical, and cultural environments. Community Centers should develop at a scale appropriate to the surrounding environment and intended activity.

● Locate and design structures at a scale and function that enhances pedestrian activity.

● Create structures at a scale that promotes intimacy of activity, and ensure that building mass does not dominate the streetscape; buildings with substantial mass can be intimidating to the pedestrian.

● Create building facades that are architecturally interesting and in scale with the pedestrian.

● Ensure that infill projects are compatible with the scale and design of neighboring structures.

● Respect the scale and character of adjacent uses. Development should not overwhelm or detract from the character of an existing neighborhood or district. This is especially important in areas with significant historical resources.

● Set back upper levels of structures above the second floor to maintain pedestrian scale.

PEDESTRIAN SCALE

civic

social

intimate

Sense of scale and "fit" varies with the dimensions and scale of the larger environment.

Civic Scale are those parts of the environment percieved as components of the large scale civic (township) environment.

Social Scale are those components percieved in situations of gatherings of people.

Intimate Scale are those elements and features in the intimate proximity of the pedestrian.

ACCESSORY STRUCTURES

Accessory structures such as mechanical equipment, storage areas, garbage bins, loading docks, parking structures, security fences, telecommunications equipment and similar uses are essential for the operation of community centers. Though their use is often taken for granted, poorly located or designed accessory structures can visually detract from what otherwise may be a quality development. It is essential for accessory uses to receive the same quality design and siting detail as primary structures. Utilize architectural and landscape treatments to minimize visual impact of accessory structures.

UTILITY CABINET

- Design accessory uses, to look as if they are a logical extension of existing structures. Integration of accessory uses into main structures preserves the consistency and integrity of architectural and streetscape design.

- Any screening constructed for accessory structures should be designed in a manner that maintains the functionality and accessibility of the equipment.

- Orient service and storage areas away from public views.

- Provide ornamental screening for utility boxes, trash bins and outdoor storage areas.

- Locate utility lines underground.

Unsightly trash receptacles or mechanical equipment should be screened from view utilizing landscaping or screen walls that compliment the main structure. The enclosures in this photo could be further enhanced by additional landscaping.

PUBLIC SPACES

Community Centers concentrate activities and mix uses to provide a more focused development pattern. Public spaces are used as the "common threads" that tie differing uses together by creating a central location for activity. The activity generated within public spaces plays a significant role in sustaining the vitality of the Community Center. It is in these public arenas that interaction with the community is encouraged and welcomed. Public spaces create "hubs" of activity within the Community Center, and the integration of open space areas into the heart of the Community Center provides a common ground for people to gather and interact outside of their home environment. The activity created by these features will generate onlookers. Interesting, activity-generating elements create memorable places that encourage the public (members of the community and visitors) to return to the space to relive a positive experience.

The colorful banners in this public space contribute to its liveliness and interest.

- Integrate public spaces throughout the Community Center.

- Orient development toward plazas, parks, village greens, outdoor eating areas, and other public gathering places.

- Locate public spaces adjacent to areas with high concentrations of activity.

- Provide convenient access between public spaces and core uses. By accommodating these spaces within the core, the public can be encouraged to linger while waiting to conduct personal business.

- Locate public spaces in visible, well-lit areas that provide a heightened sense of safety and security.

The water-features in this courtyard provide an element that can be enjoyed by uses on the ground floor and provide appealing views to the residential uses above.

- Create public spaces that can be used by all age levels.

- Provide amenities in public spaces that can be easily used by children, such as child-sized seating and tables.

- Ensure that areas that are heavily used by children are readily visible to their caretakers.

- Integrate trails, transit, sidewalks and other non-motorized transportation facilities within public spaces.

- Enhance accessibility to and from transit and non-motorized transportation facilities.

- Provide ample seating opportunities and ease of access to public spaces.

- Ensure that all public areas meet ADA access requirements and are also easily accessible by the elderly and small children.

- Design public spaces that contain unique features or elements that encourage activity.

- Incorporate design features that encourage interaction, such as fountains, outdoor seating areas, small amphitheaters or staging areas, and terraced walkways and patios.

Active public space that provide areas for gathering, resting, and people-watching.

This well-landscaped plaza provides sitting areas and shade trees that provide a respite from the sun. Mature trees also provide a sense of longevity and permanence reinforcing the importance of this space.

PUBLIC ART

The most successful public spaces are consistently used; the people who utilize them feel a sense of ownership in them or they connect to them in a special way from past experiences. Public art is instrumental in creating this connection between the public and a community; public art allows people to quickly identify which community they are experiencing. Public art makes a space interesting; landmark water features, sculptures, and murals are all forms of public art that can be used to tell a story or make a statement about a community's history or character. In addition, art in public places also helps to distinguish one community from another by creating landmarks that are easily recognizable and create a unique experience.

- Integrate civic art into public spaces.

- Utilize art to attract attention and stimulate interest in a particular location.

- Create art that is functional and interactive such as park bench sculptures or chess tables. Reflect the personality of the   community in the art that is chosen.

- Use art to make a statement about where the community has been and what it envisions for its future.

- Create civic pride through the establishment of a prominent, visible art collection.
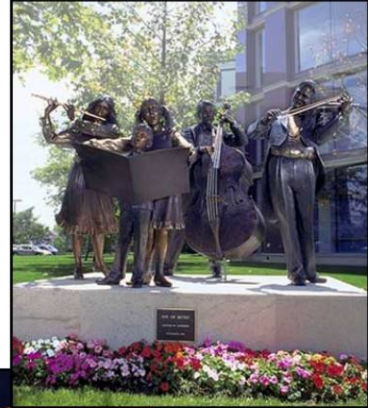
LANDSCAPING

Mature trees provide valuable shading that creates a comfortable pedestrian experience. Trees and landscaping can also soften harsh building lines that are created by more intense uses. Mature trees give the feeling of an established place and a feeling of longevity, and they narrow the perceived width of streets giving spaces identity, dignity, and character.

- Utilize creative parkway landscaping or sidewalk design, such as patterned or textured paving materials, ornamental lighting and street furniture, and natural vegetation. Attention to detail encourages continuity and vitality throughout the core area.

- Provide extensive natural landscaping such as street trees and shrubs along roadways. The use of vegetation serves to shape urban spaces, provide scale, frame the street scene, and provide shade for pedestrians, while enhancing the scenic qualities of the community core.

- Emphasize well-planned vegetative landscape elements that enhance interest, provide tranquility and shade, and accentuate aesthetic design.

- If available, incorporate specimen trees into the landscape of the Core.

The landscaping in this public space provides a focal point for the street and emphasizes the importance of this space.

- Provide landscaping and open space areas as a linkage between the core and adjacent neighborhoods or other potentially sensitive uses. Utilize landscaping to visually connect separate neighborhoods or districts at the street level.

- Use landscaping, screening, open space uses and architectural features to minimize impacts between uses.

- Soften blank walls with vertical plantings.

- Provide an abundance of landscaping and natural vegetation, including shade trees in public spaces. Trees and landscaping can soften harsh building lines that are created by more intense uses. Mature trees provide valuable shade and give the feeling of a well-established place.

AMENITIES

Streetscape amenities includes benches, kiosks, fountains, telephones, display areas, public art, outdoor eating spaces, clocks, trash receptacles, restrooms, bollards, tree and drainage gates, bike racks, and magazine/ newspaper racks. These amenities should be compatible in design to adjacent uses, establish community identity, enhance the pedestrian experience, and contribute to the liveliness of the community.

- Install streetscape amenities that are durable and easy to maintain.

- Liberally locate trash receptacles along heavily traveled pedestrian paths.

- Ensure that the distribution of amenities and uses along street scenes creates continuity and flow, and help lead pedestrians to the next venue.

- Provide bicycle racks, benches, and other amenities that encourage use of non-motorized transportation.

Benches and trash receptacles that are easily accessible from the sidewalk make the pedestrian experience more enjoyable.

SIDEWALKS AND PAVING

Textured sidewalks and streets provide direction to key destination points and highlight major intersections or entry points of the Community Center. Standard paving and sidewalks that are uniform in size and texture facilitate high-speed auto traffic and do not encourage pedestrian usage. Community Centers employ a number of paving treatments on both streets and sidewalks to slow traffic, increase pedestrian safety, and improve streetscape appearance.

- Utilize a variety of special paving treatments such as colored and/or stamped concrete, and stone or brick pavers, to identify and visually enhance sidewalks, intersections and pedestrian crossings.

- Explore creative alternatives to the standard sidewalk.

- Construct a sidewalk area wide enough to accommodate comfortable and leisurely pedestrian activity.

- Create sidewalk dining/drinking venues with proper security and access controls.

Mid-block pedestrian crossing with textured pavement, along with landscaped center median. Narrow street widths help to maintain traffic speeds through core area.


The paving treatment and decorative tree grates of this sidewalk are examples of the attention to detail that is typically found in Community Center streescapes.

SIGNS

Because of their high visibility, signs are prominent elements of the physical environment that can help people navigate through the Community Center. Interesting sign designs contribute to the unique identity of a community and also contribute to the creation of a sense of place.

- Use signage that is visually compelling and informative, and that adds interest to the pedestrian experience.

- Create visually interesting, unique and original signage that identify areas and guide users from one venue or area to another.

- Place well-designed monument signs and landscaping at roadway entries into the core area.

- Require signs to be compatible with building and site design in terms of color, material and placement.

- Design noticeable signs utilizing materials and color palettes that are compatible with the architecture and designs of the surrounding environment.
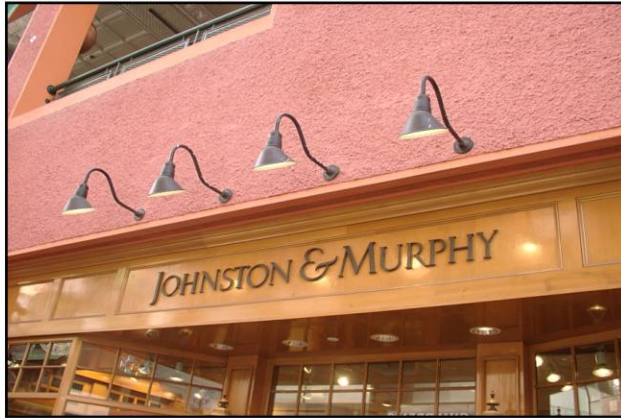

LOCATION MARKER

SERVICE SIGNS
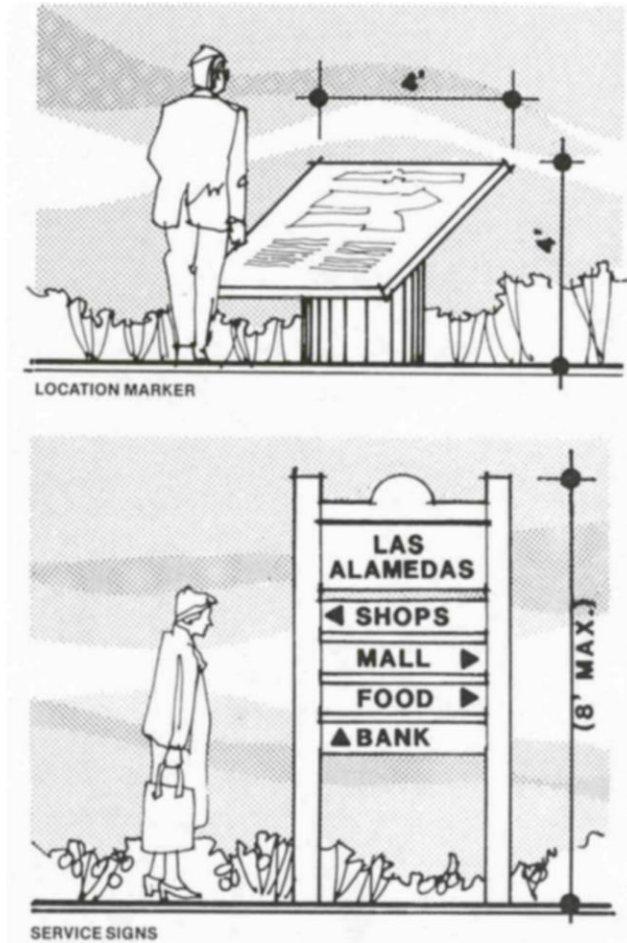
Pedestrian-scale signs

- Utilize materials that complement established architectural features and themes.

- Carefully design and place signs so as not to dominate and detract from the visual aesthetics of the core.

This sign is at an appropriate scale and compliments the building.

The lighting associated with this sign accentuates the text without over powering it

- Ensure that signs are properly maintained.
- Minimize the amount of text placed on commercial signs. Busy signs tend to make an area look cluttered or unorganized.

- Integrate lighting elements into sign designs. Conceal lighting mechanics so that they do not detract from sign aesthetics

- Discourage the use of flashing, moving or audible signs.

- Eliminate temporary signs posted in store windows, as they can detract from the visual quality of the a streetscape. Instead place emphasis on window displays and visibility of merchandise inside of stores.
- Create street signs that clearly identify street name and community. Street signage contributes to the identification of the core and the development of a sense of place.

- Utilize a neighborhood icon or graphic in street signage it immediately identifies the neighborhood in which the street is located.

- Use banners and flags to define districts and neighborhoods, enhance aesthetics, serve as visual markers, establish character, enhance civic pride, and provide information.

- Provide landscaped and decorative monument signing at key core gateway entries.

- Provide directional signs that are easy to read.

This sign has a dual purpose: it serves as a neighborhood identifier and transit stop sign. Combining signs minimizes the amount of sidewalk space used for uses other than pedestrian traffic flow.

Commercial signs that blend well with the structure

LIGHTING

The liberal distribution of lighting throughout the Community Center contributes significantly to the design and function of streetscapes. It is essential for the safety and convenience of pedestrians and drivers. Lighting is also a critical element in creating nighttime vitality. Lighting opportunities can include street lighting, trail and pedestrian pathway/plaza lighting, sign and building illumination, light fixtures and accent lighting.

- Install lighting that provides a desirable level of security and illumination.

- Minimize the glare of lighting on adjacent uses.

- Provide ornamental lighting fixtures that are compatible in style with adjacent uses.

- Integrate lighting and fixtures with the design and layout of the urban environment.

A low decorative fence with accent lighting combine to create a barrier that is aesthetically appealing. This fence successfully separates spaces without creating a "walled off" appearance.

Decorative pedestrian-scale lighting attached to gateway entrance
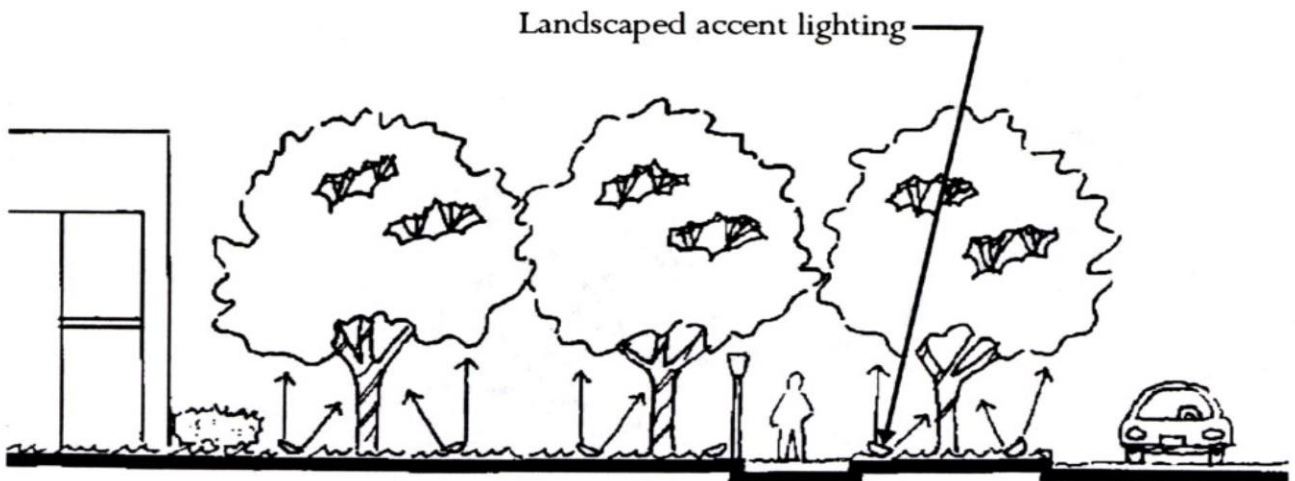
Decorative lighting with banners

- Relate the scale of lighting to the human scale.

- Encourage the use of lighting as both a decorative and functional feature of the streetscape.

These bollards not only serve as a deterant for vehicular traffic; they also provide an opportunity to create attractive lighting elements.

Landscaped accent lighting

Lighting can also be used to enhance mature landscaping or significant landmarks.

ADAPTATION OF HISTORICAL BUILDINGS

Historical or socially significant structures can play an important role in the development of a Community Center. Over time, communities develop around uses that are important to their residents, including churches, businesses, or civic buildings. The original uses of historic structures may no longer be desirable in the core of the Community Center, however, new uses can be integrated into the fabric of the Community Center by adapting the structures to accommodate new uses.

This prominent structure was once used as a church. Instead of eliminating the structure completely, it was converted into a mixed use project containing retail businesses and a community theatre.

- Whenever possible, historic structures located in the core of the community should be preserved and incorporated into new development.

- Utilize historic buildings to help define the town center. They can serve as locally recognizable landmarks within a community and represent the sustainability of the area.

- Enhance special attributes of existing streets using existing historic structures as focal points around which new projects will be constructed.

LANDMARKS

Landmarks serves a prominent visual marker of a town or community. Landmark structures are easy to recognize, and they define areas of importance or interest. Each Community Center should contain a landmark feature which can be natural like a stream or physical structure that reflects the character of the area and it's history.

- Utilize landmark structures such as towers, couplas or other prominemt architectural features to help identify the Community Center.

- Create axial view lines to selected landmarks and distinctive features.

Prominent visual landmark.

This fountain is a landmark centrally located within this mixed use project.

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PARKING

Parking areas are essential facilities for most types of uses. Simply put, automobiles need a place to stay while people conduct their business and run their lives. Unfortunately, the amount of land devoted to accommodating motor vehicles is generally so excessive that roadway and parking facilities inhibit pedestrian orientation and detract from the aesthetics of urban areas, particularly when plagued by poor design or location. In terms of parking as well as other auto facilities, the compact and pedestrian nature of community centers mandates that unique and innovative solutions be applied to sufficiently accommodate vehicular traffic, while concurrently utilizing land more efficiently, maintaining the pedestrian feel of the area, and creating aesthetically pleasing yet less intrusive parking areas.

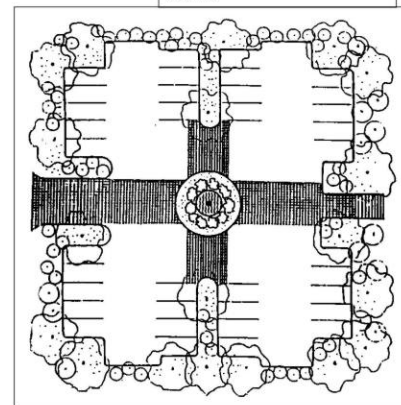Well landscaped surface parking lot.

COMMUNITY CENTER PARKING LOTS SHOULD NOT BREAK UP THE CONTINUITY OF STREET ACTIVITY— INSTEAD LOTS SHOULD BE LOCATED BEHIND BUILDINGS

PEDESTRIAN ACCESS TO PARKING LOT

RESTAURANTS ALONG MID-BLOCK ACCESS PASSAGE

DEAD ZONE PARKING

THIS   AVOID THIS

ACTIVITY CORRIDOR

OFF-STREET PARKING

- Ensure ease of accessibility by providing plentiful, free parking.

- Size parking to meet a reasonable demand.

- Create parking districts to plan and manage for greater efficiency.

- Provide several pedestrian walkways connecting lots with adjacent uses.

Plan view of a lot. Note the pedestrian pathways that minimize conflicts between pedestrians and vehicular traffic.

- Create surface lots with length of stay in mind. Parking lots should be convenient, short walks to activity centers and adjacent uses. No space should be greater than 300 feet from any activity access point.

- Do not allow off-street parking lots to dominate the street scene or urban fabric of the community.

- Locate surface parking lots to the rear of businesses fronting main streets. Surface parking lots directly fronting onto main streets interrupt the continuity of building structures and pedestrian walking experience and should be discouraged within the core.

- Treat surface parking lots as detailed landscape elements.

- Utilize landscaping treatments to minimize the visual obtrusiveness of surface parking lots. Techniques such as the use of landscaped berms, vegetation, and decorative fencing can alleviate potential visual dominance of surface lots.

- Plan for shared parking among adjacent uses to minimize the amount of underutilized parking area.

- Cluster parking areas rather than create large expansive parking lots. Larger lots, particularly in commercial areas, tend to have several "dead" areas where parking is seldom utilized.

- Provide extensive vegetated landscaping between sections and rows of stalls, along the perimeter of lots, and at lot entryways. Landscape surface lots so that their visual appearance is one of "cars are in a park" rather than trees in a parking lot.

- Provide ample shade through the generous distribution of large-canopied trees.
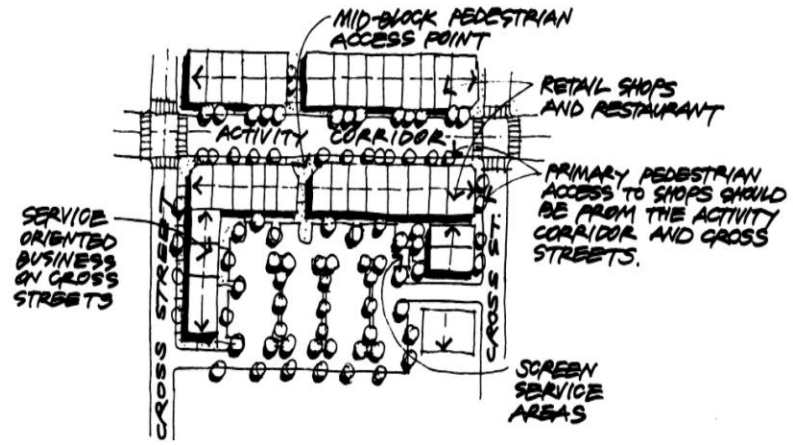
- Use decorative paving materials to define walkways and parking bays.

- Provide carports for long-term parking especially in desert zones. Encourage design treatments on end walls and roofs that are compatible with the architecture of the uses that the carports serve.

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STRUCTURED PARKING

- Provide structured multi-level parking to provide ample parking adjacent to activity centers while minimizing land consumption for parking.

- Ensure that multi-level parking structures and subterranean parking facilities are safe, convenient, and well integrated with surrounding uses.

This parking structure is located adjacent to residential properties. Note the minimal height of the parking structure and land-scaped transition area between the uses

- Create aesthetically appealing parking garages, with variations in facade treatment and extensive landscaping to soften their appearance. Architectural style of structures should be compatible with adjacent uses.

- Place retail or office uses along the bottom floor frontage of parking structures to promote a more lively and interactive street scene.

This parking structure was designed to compliment surrounding architecture and as a result, it's visual prominence is minimized.

- Design parking structures with safety and convenience in mind. They should be well-lit, provide several linkages to adjacent uses, and be located next to high-use areas.

- Provide wide, prominently displayed garage entryways to eliminate confusion and reduce traffic congestion on main streets.

- Provide segregated residential-only parking within structures that service a mix of uses such as residential and commercial.

ON-STREET PARKING

The paved roadways, sidewalks and crosswalks contribute to the character and identity of this area.

- Provide areas for diagonal or parallel parking, particularly near high-activity uses. On-street parking provides a protective barrier between auto traffic and pedestrians, and serves as a traffic-calming technique, as drivers must consider this element when negotiating the roadway.

- Provide limited on-street parking as part of the core streetscape.

- Utilize parkway landscaping to minimize the visual impacts of on-street parking on the pedestrian experience.

- Allow ample ingress/egress bays for transit vehicles.

On street diagonal parking with adjacent parkway landscaping and center median.

WALLS AND FENCES

Walls and fences are important structural and design elements within community centers that serve several functions. They provide security and privacy, shape open spaces and the flow of activity, enhance visual aesthetics, retain sloping terrain, and in some instances provide areas for people to sit and engage in leisure activities.

The whimsical design of this fence clearly delineates boundaries, but does not eliminate visibility to the activity on the other side.

- Strategically locate fences and walls. Excessive distribution of walls can inhibit the flow between uses.

- Design walls and fences that are well integrated in style with adjacent structures and terrain.

- Provide variations in color, texture, materials, articulation, and architectural treatments. Avoid long expanses of blank, monotonous walls or fences.

- Utilize landscaping and vegetation materials to soften the appearance of walls and fences and enhance their integration with adjacent uses.

This ornamental stone retaining wall helps shape the walkway and provides a pleasant visual aesthetic.

CIRCULATION

Though one of the major purposes of community centers is to establish a pedestrian friendly environment, accommodation of vehicular traffic remains an essential component. This is particularly important for those community centers that serve as regional destinations, such as Town, Job and Entertainment Centers. Despite the necessity of this component, it remains vital that the design and character of community centers be distinctly pedestrian in orientation. In fact, there are several useful design techniques that can be applied to roadway design and function to minimize conflicts between pedestrians and automobiles, ensure efficient movement of vehicles throughout the community center, and enhance pedestrian scale and comfort.

- Design roadways to minimize street widths, travel lanes and travel speeds to encourage a more pedestrian friendly and walkable area, while efficiently accommodating automobile traffic.

- Do not allow accommodation of the automobile to dominate the community fabric.

- Evenly distribute traffic loads throughout the core area.

- Require wide sidewalks along all core roadways to facilitate pedestrian movement and core vitality.

Creative fountain median

TRAFFIC CALMING

Traffic calming uses a number of techniques to reduce traffic speeds, volume, and noise. Traffic calming also improves the aesthetics of the street, and increases safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles. Three techniques are illustrated below, all of which provide visual and textural cues for vehicles to slow down and be aware of pedestrian or bicycle traffic.


raised crosswalk

speed bump

raised intersection

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- Allow on-street parking to buffer pedestrians from roadway traffic.

- Create safe, interesting roadway intersections.

- Minimize the radius of corners where pedestrian walkways cross at intersections.

- Provide handicap accessible ramps at all corners.

- Apply special paving at major intersections and crosswalks it creates a visual cue to slow traffic speeds.

- Consider alternative intersection controls such as traffic circles to maintain traffic flow without stop signs or lights.

- Maintain clear sight lines at intersections.

- Prominently display intersections with off-road trails by incorporating signs, striping or special paving, and signalized lights.

- Keep truck traffic in its place and do not allow through truck traffic within the core area or in residential neighborhoods.
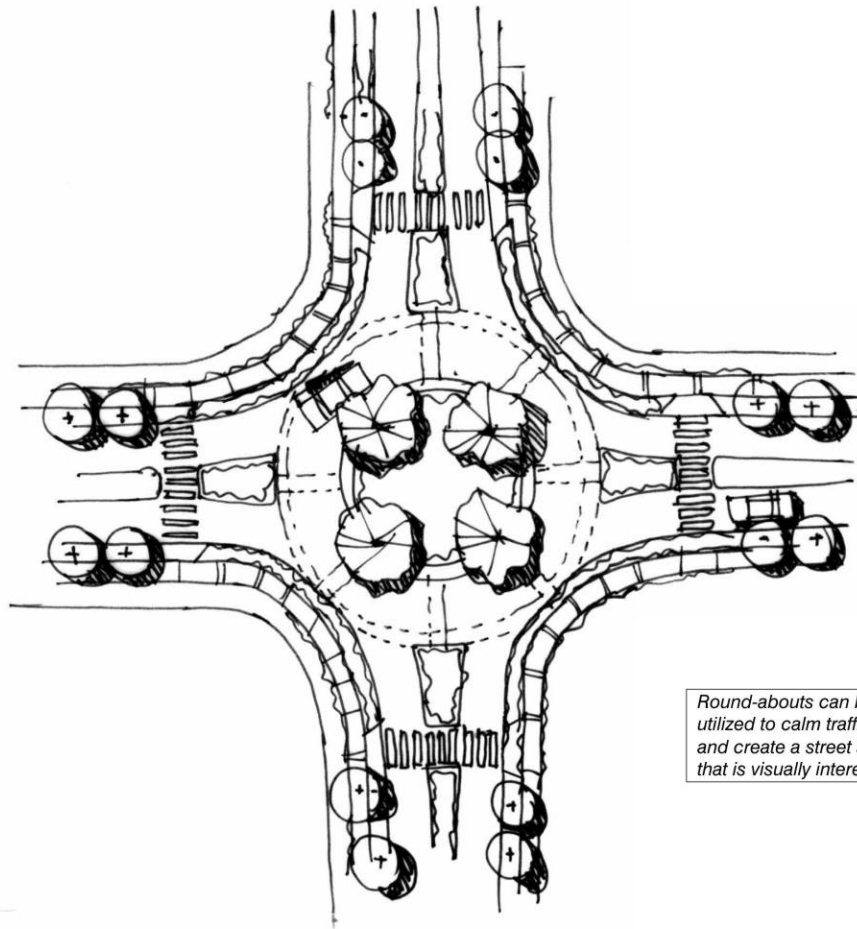
Round-abouts can be utilized to calm traffic and create a street scene that is visually interesting.

Roundabouts, medians and neck downs

- Orient development around a single main street that serves as the primary roadway into the Community Center core. A Main Street serves as thread that brings a mix of differing uses and public spaces together, and provides a focal area within the core. Community Center activities not limited only to the main street; often activity areas flow over onto secondary streets or roadways.

- Locate loading and bays to the rear of development, away from primary vehicular routes so that they do not open directly onto the street.

- Minimize the number of curb cuts within a particular block of development. This will reduce the areas where pedestrians and automobiles cross paths.

- Utilize landscaping to buffer pedestrians from vehicular street traffic.

- Do not allow large-capacity arterial highways that carry regional through-traffic to bisect community centers. These types of auto facilities destroy the intimate fabric and pedestrian feel of Community Centers. Use traffic calming techniques such as bulbouts, mid-block intersections, roundabouts, landscaped medians and street trees to reduce traffic speeds and ensure compatibility with pedestrian circulation.

- Ensure sufficient roadway width to accommodate bicycle lanes.

The median island and narrow street widths.

MULTI-USE TRAILS

Off-road trails that accommodate a variety of pedestrian, leisure and recreational activities greatly add to the livability and function of community centers. When networked together, they serve to link activity centers, residential neighborhoods, open space areas, and transit facilities, serving as a crucial feature that greatly enhances pedestrian accessibility within community centers. Attention to detail is important here to ensure safety among multiple types of users and to minimize conflicts with vehicular roadway intersections.

Open space pedestrian linkage at transition between core support area and uses in the core. Note textured pavement at this trail/roadway intersection.
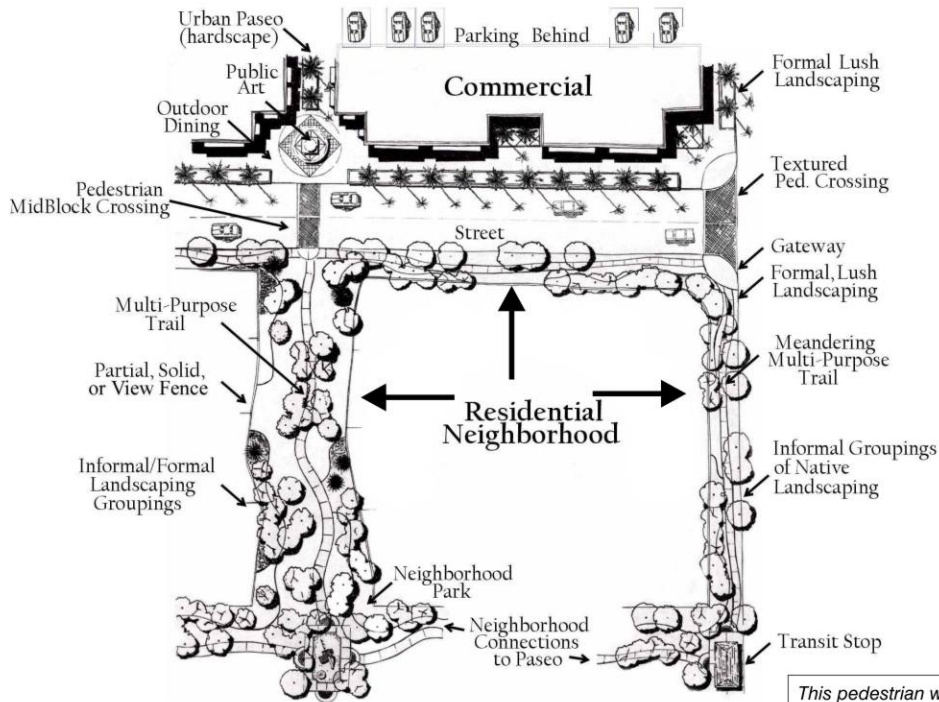
- Provide a network of sidewalks, paseos, and off-road trails throughout the core, linking activity centers, commercial uses, recreation and open space areas, and residential uses. This network of trail facilities promotes pedestrian activity within community centers and encourages people to get out of their cars.

- Allow a variety of non-motorized travel modes, including bicycling, walking, jogging, and roller-skating.

- Vary the "pace" of off-road trail configurations to allow users places to enjoy views, rest, etc.

- Create berms within trail corridors to afford vistas, panoramas, and interesting vertical movement to trails. Create interesting trail experiences by changing planes, altering landscapes, etc.

- Design trails to minimize conflicts between pedestrians and bicyclists.

- Provide signage and other directional markers to facilitate orientation.

This trail is clearly identified and can serve as a vital link between the Community Center core and adjacent uses.

Urban Paseo (hardscape)
Public Art
Outdoor Dining
Pedestrian MidBlock Crossing
Multi-Purpose Trail
Partial, Solid, or View Fence
Informal/Formal Landscaping Groupings
Parking Behind
Commercial
Street
Residential Neighborhood
Neighborhood Park
Neighborhood Connections to Paseo
Formal Lush Landscaping
Textured Ped. Crossing
Gateway Formal, Lush Landscaping
Meandering Multi-Purpose Trail
Informal Groupings of Native Landscaping
Transit Stop

This pedestrian walkway facilitates pedestrian activity and circulation within the Community Center

- Provide amenities such as benches and lighting to enhance safety and ensure a pleasant experience for users.

- Provide extensive landscaping such as plant materials and fencing to shape trail spaces, influence climates, and buffer adjacent uses.

- Ensure a minimum clearance of vegetation to maintain pedestrian flow.

Meandering trails through neighborhood park

- Design trails to prevent ponding and silt accumulation from rain storms.

- Provide special paving and signage at intersections with roadways and other trails.

- Provide secure bicycle storage facilities and lockers near transit stations and other high-use areas.

TRANSIT FACILITIES

The provision of transit facilities within community centers affords residents and visitors with another option of moving within and outside of the core without the use of an automobile. Transit facilities should be attractively designed, easily accessible, safe, clean and convenient to use. When designed with these ideas in mind, transit facilities provide another element in the vitality and function of community center core areas.

- Locate transit facilities such as transit stations and bus stops within activity centers and highly desired destination points. This close proximity between uses enhances the viability and convenience of transit.

- Orient high-use developments around transit facilities to enhance transit ridership.

This roadway contains vehicular and transit lanes and has been designed at a scale that is friendly to pedestrians

- Create transit stations that are visually appealing and fit in well with the design of adjacent uses.

- Provide extensive landscaping treatments of transit stops and their linkages to enhance visual compatibility.

- Within Town Centers and Job Centers, designate sufficient right-of-way to accommodate future light rail facilities.

- Ensure that transit facilities are linked with the greater County transit network.

Transit lines adjacent to commercial center

Transit typical of those that can be found in Community Centers.

A Word on Transit

A common element found within each Community Center type is the accommodation of some mode of transit to supplement use of the automobile. Community Centers are designed at a scale and compactness that would reinforce and benefit from transit service. Depending upon the size and intensity of uses of each Community Center, transit stations and/or bus stops are well-integrated into the core and adjacent areas. Within some of the larger Town Center and Employment Center designated areas of the County, a transit concept known as the Oasis Transit System has been developed to fit some of the more unique transportation needs associated with these uses. This system entails a localized transit loop centered within the core of the Community Center, which in turn is connected to the regional transportation system, including Metrolink. For the foreseeable future, the system would consist of rubber-tired vehicles resembling small rail cars, and would connect to adjacent residential neighborhoods and high-use activity centers through transit stations integrated into the surrounding development.

This transit station serves as a an architectural gateway as well as transportation hub for this area of concentrated uses and activity.

- Include amenities such as benches, directional maps, information kiosks, bicycle racks, lockers, and pay phones within transit centers. A variety of amenities enhance the convenience of transit facilities.

- When transit routes are routed through a public plaza or park, utilize paving materials that distinguish the route from surrounding surfaces, especially if the route is constructed at level with existing surfaces.

- Provide bicycle facilities, passenger drop-off areas and structured park-and-ride lots adjacent to transit centers.

- Link multi-purpose/bicycle/pedestrian trails with transit facilities to enhance pedestrian access.

Bicycle storage area next to transit stop.

Streets can be designed to accommodate both automobile and transit uses.

CREATING COMMUNITY CENTERS

OVERVIEW

Dynamic, sustainable Community Centers don't "just happen" as the result of designating them on a land use map; they require proactive efforts from the government, private investors, and the public to create a framework that promotes creative planning and the production of unique communities. The successful implementation of a Community Center project is largely due to the political will of a community to create this type of a development as well as the success of the public/private partnerships that are formed as the project evolves.

Implementation strategies are a critical component of the success of a Community Center; they enable communities to establish new policies as well as make modifications to existing policies that may be preventing the establishment of quality, sustainable developments. It is particularly important to generate implementation strategies that can weather scrutiny from a variety of sources, since the Community Center concept will introduce a type of development that has not been attempted in many communities.

Decision-makers are much more likely to support a Community Center project if they are aware that key players of the community have been involved in the process from the very beginning and have had the opportunity to contribute to the shaping of the final product. Establishing an open dialogue with the public and key players will provide the opportunity for jurisdictions to work out any prevailing issues before the project is reviewed by any decision making body. These positive relationships embody a true collaboration between the public and the private; this partnership will give the Community Center concept the momentum it needs to be accepted politically.

Previous chapters discuss the specific characteristics that comprise viable Community Centers. This section focuses on implementation strategies and working relationships that are necessary for the development and long-term viability of a Community Center.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Preliminary research must be completed that analyzes the feasibility of a Community Center development within a particular location. It is important to "do your homework" to understand the specific market forces at work in the location of the community center, and to tailor the Community Center program according to the unique circumstances that pertain to the area. Each jurisdiction should understand the relationship between land values, densities, market demographics, and access capabilities as these factors will determine the most appropriate land use ratios for the Community Center core and outer ring. Jurisdictions need to know what uses their community would benefit from most and which uses that the public is going elsewhere to find.   With this information, a strategy can be created that attracts appropriate uses to the Community Center core that will best fit the community's needs and help to retain sales tax dollars. Uses must not conflict with the circulation and design components that the Community Center has outlined.

Zoning analyses of existing and proposed land use designations should include properties located outside of the Community Center boundaries. It is important to understand the types of existing uses that are located in close proximity to the Community Center and what potential impacts they will have on the uses that could locate within the Community Center core and outer ring. A synergistic relationship exists between the uses within the Community Center boundaries and those outside of it, and jurisdictions should take special caution to carefully select uses that will compliment one another. For example, commercial development in proximity to (in same market area as) the proposed Community Center, particularly strip commercial development along arterial highways and big boxes, should be controlled and regulated. Strip center commercial developments draw commercial customers away from the commercial uses that are located within the Community Center core, and therefore should be regulated to ensure that their placement does not detract from the vitality of the Community Center. In addition, jurisdictions need to be careful that they do not over-concentrate commercial uses in the Community Center core because the remaining uses may not be able to support them.

GENERATE PUBLIC SUPPORT

Form a partnership with business and property owners when developing the Community Center concept. Involving special interest groups in the process can help jurisdictions gain valuable insight from the community while simultaneously building valuable working relationships. Additionally, jurisdictions should generate support and acceptance of the Community Center concept by the public. Hold public workshops, take the time to listen to community concerns, and find ways to educate those involved about the true impacts and features of a Community Center development.

CHANGE ATTITUDES ABOUT HIGH DENSITY DEVELOPMENT

Jurisdictions are frequently confronted with changing negative attitudes from the public related to dense development. High density residential units are perceived to be the cause of many undesired elements found in communities. Community Centers must overcome negative image that has been associated with mixed-use developments in the past in order to gain public support. It is critical to promote the advantages of the development of a Community Center to the public. If feasible, jurisdictions should consider providing guided tours of local examples of Community Center projects that have successfully integrated a compact and intense mix of uses.

CREATE A VISION

A Community Center Vision should be created by local citizens, stakeholders, civic leaders and government agencies to memorialize a positive description of the characteristics that comprise a successful, sustainable Community Center. Visioning can involve special interest groups such as business associations as well as members of the general public. Participation from a variety of sources allows the public to take an active role in shaping the future of their community. A Community Center vision statement molded by the key players of a community serves as a foundation for the Community Center concept and also ensures that all parties are working to achieve the same end.

GENERATE INTERGOVERNMENTAL SUPPORT

Once a solid understanding of the issues surrounding the development of a Community Center is obtained, the next logical step is to generate intergovernmental support for the Community Center concept. Get all agencies and departments together on the same page. Communal support from public safety, public works, water districts, economic development, housing, school districts, local and regional agencies, or state and federal agencies can make a powerful statement when it comes time to promote the Community Center concept.

CREATE EFFECTIVE REGULATORY TOOLS

Most jurisdictions have builders, not community developers; this makes it more difficult to obtain support of the Community Center concept by the public and decision-makers. Community Centers require much more planning and preparation than the standard subdivision; the mix of uses and the policies required to create the Community Center area need to be carefully balanced so that they are complimentary of one another.

Inflexible zoning and general plan regulations governing land use have often resulted in the design and layout of similar-looking residential subdivisions, business parks and strip commercial developments that have made many communities virtually indistinguishable from one another. Local jurisdictions have at their disposal several tools to govern and plan the distribution and development of land uses within their boundaries. Among them, the use of general plans, specific plans, zoning and subdivision ordinances are the most commonly used regulatory tools. In fact, most jurisdictions mandate that all development comply with the rules and policies contained within their respective plans and ordinances. Far too often, public agencies create regulatory documents that are so strict that they do not grant flexibility to the developer. Governmental agencies can facilitate the implementation of Community Centers by creating specialized regulations that provide detailed, clear direction to government agencies, developers and the public. Community Center policies or guidelines should be written to motivate potential developers to create inventive solutions to the standard development product.

MIXED USE ZONING REGULATIONS

One regulatory option is the development of mixed-use zoning regulations. Standard zoning development codes generally do not have the flexibility to accommodate a mix of uses on the same property. Amendments to zoning ordinances to allow for a horizontal and vertical mix of uses are necessary to implement a Community Center. The application of mixed use zoning encourages the development of a community where businesses can benefit from the residential uses located in the same proximity and vice versa. Community Centers strive to be walkable environments, the application of mixed-use zoning supports that principle.

IMPACT-BASED REGULATIONS

An alternative approach to development standards can include a shift from use-based regulation of development to design-based or impact based regulations that are much more flexible. Incompatibilities that occur between neighboring properties are often a function of the design of the project verses a difference in land uses. These regulations are more accommodating to mixed-uses as long as a logical transition is made between projects or properties. Flexibility in regulations can also motivate a project proponent to create more interesting architectural designs or projecting features.

OFFER FINANCIAL AND REGULATORY INCENTIVES TO DEVELOPERS AND BUILDERS

The traditional approach to development and the urbanization process does not lend itself to the development of community centers in some jurisdictions. Community Centers are community-building ventures first and foremost, but they also must be an investment opportunity for developers. Jurisdictions should expand the use of implementation tools such as transfer of development rights (TDRs), business improvement districts (BIDs), eminent domain, tax abatement policies, density/intensity incentives, vertical zoning and accelerated approval processes.

Many areas that can be designated as Community Centers are comprised of small parcels that are owned by different property owners. Local jurisdictions should provide regulatory options and incentives that encourage land assembly for areas with multiple property owners. The consolidation of fragmented parcels is critical to the implementation of the Community Center concept. Without large consolidated parcels, development can be piecemeal and unorganized, detracting from the guiding principle of a Community Center that identifies a centralized, intensified core.

Many jurisdictions approve the use of these tools; however, many times they are not fully utilized due to lack of political will to implement, lack of knowledge by potential developers of the available streamlined processes, or lack of support by staff to undertake a process that is different from "the norm." It will be critical to ensure that once these tools are in place, that they will be utilized by the jurisdictions and understood by the decision making bodies that will ultimately be responsible for reviewing and approving the projects.

Formal planning and management entities that are subordinate to, but separate from, responsible government agencies are an integral part of implementation strategies. Development Corporations or business improvement districts or a combination of the two should:

- Participate in the development of the vision of what the Community Center should be at its maximum potential;

- acquire, assemble, and parcelize land to encourage new forms of Community Center development;

- coordinate and participate in real estate development and infrastructure financing;

- collect and disseminate market, economic, social, demographic and traffic data and information to perspective investors, developers, retailers, consumers and public agencies; and

- handle marketing and promotion of the Community Center project.

STRONG LEADERSHIP IS CRITICAL

Development of creative guidelines and policies requires decision-makers to think "outside of the box" and to take action supporting new approaches to community building. Decision-makers can be leery of taking risks especially if it is not politically prudent to do so. Visionary leadership is required from elected officials and staff so the integrity of the Community Center vision is not compromised. Key officials need to commit to the Community Center concept so that the ultimate development will not be compromised by the personal agendas of a select number of influential parties or property owners. Jurisdictions must take ownership of the Community Center vision and put measures in place so the true intent of the vision will be carried out long after the original authors are no longer involved in the process.

MARKETING AND PROMOTION

It is not enough to merely attract users to Community Centers in the preliminary development stages. Existing businesses as well as future business candidates for the Community Center need to be courted and informed of the benefits of locating within a Community Center project. Emphasis needs to be placed on the Community Center as hub of activity that is pedestrian friendly and will be conducive to a steady stream of business traffic. Programs established through agencies such as Economic Development Departments or Chambers of Commerce can introduce potential candidates to the benefits of the Community Center from a business owner's perspective. Market the Community Center well so that public will take pride in their community and also take responsibility for implementing the Community Center. Continual promotion of activities occurring within the Community Center core keeps the concept in motion.