Chapter 4—Community Development Principles

The Arvada Comprehensive Plan sets the direction for future land use decisions and helps accomplish the goals of this Plan. It builds on older Comprehensive Plans and reflects extensive discussions and review with citizens and appointed and elected officials about the community character desired for Arvada, and analysis of likely future needs. The previous chapters have presented the City’s vision and general goals. This chapter includes principles for several key concepts that are touched on throughout this Plan—for example, in the Vision and Goals chapter and later in the Land Use Plan. This chapter describes the focused concepts that can aid the City in ensuring that future developments are lively, livable, and sustainable. It provides detailed principles to help guide land use and development in Arvada addressing the following concepts:

- Redevelopment and Infill;
- Transit-Oriented Development;
- Mixed-Use Development;
- Areas with Rural Characteristics;
- Residential Site Development; and
- Commercial Centers (including large-format, “Big Box” retail).

Redevelopment and Infill

One of the City’s primary goals is to encourage a more efficient land use pattern. The renewal and enhancement of targeted redevelopment areas and the encouragement of infill development is a means of achieving economic revitalization and improving physical conditions in the City’s mature areas. Infill means the development of new housing or commercial buildings on scattered vacant sites in a largely built-up area. Redevelopment means the replacement or reconstruction of buildings that are in substandard physical condition, or that do not make effective economic use of the land on which they are located. This Plan identifies current redevelopment areas and potential future redevelopment areas (see Goal L-7, and Goal L-8 and Figure 1: Redevelopment Map).
Chapter 4—Community Development Principles

Transit-Oriented Development

The City recognizes that redevelopment and infill could negatively impact existing neighborhoods if not carefully designed or if impacts are not reasonably mitigated. Therefore, this Plan includes the following principles for redevelopment and infill.

**Provide Compatible Redevelopment and Infill**

Infill development and redevelopment that occurs in or adjacent to existing developed areas should complement the character and visual qualities of the area and existing development. New developments should adhere to the following design principles:

- The overall scale, size, and setbacks of new buildings should be similar to or compatible with those found on adjacent properties (e.g., to provide a transition, the new building should not be more than two stories taller than an adjacent building).
- Redevelopment and infill should preserve existing mature street trees and significant landscape features to the extent possible.
- New landscaping materials should be mature enough to visually integrate the new infill with the existing neighborhood within ten years.
- Useable parks, trails, and open space should be incorporated into infill and redevelopment projects to the extent possible.

**Transit-Oriented Development**

The Land Use Plan identifies locations for future Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) in Arvada related to the RTD Gold Line (see Figure 3: Land Use Plan). These TOD areas will each have a unique identity and different mix of commercial, industrial, or residential development. The City has begun to plan for the areas and will continue to engage in collaborative planning for the areas. In particular, Arvada will:

- Continue to coordinate with Regional Transportation District (RTD), Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), and the public to ensure that transit stations shown on the land use and transportation plans are implemented.
- Actively involve the public in designing future transit stations and surrounding areas.
- Coordinate planning, design, and investment with nearby projects such as urban revitalization and historic preservation areas.
TOD areas should be pedestrian-oriented, provide opportunities for local services and connections to regional and local transit systems, and function as a gathering place for area workers, residents, and visitors. The following design principles will help accomplish these objectives.

**Design areas surrounding transit stations as distinctive, pedestrian-friendly places.**
To become great places for people, TOD areas should:

- Include an economically sustainable mix of land uses, such as retail goods and services, offices, and a range of housing types;
- Be compactly designed with short blocks (e.g., 400 feet or less is preferred) with buildings that relate to the streets and walkways;
- Be focused around at least one distinctive and attractive public space (e.g., mini-parks or plazas), near the transit station;
- Include pedestrian facilities and amenities such as wide sidewalks, seating, designated crosswalks, trees and landscaping, ground level retail, and other features that help foster a unique identity and encourage walking;
- Limit driveway access across walkways; and
- Incorporate existing unique features, such as historical buildings, to foster areas that are unique and attractive.

**Link TOD areas to the larger community with convenient multi-modal transportation options.**

- Manage parking in TOD areas to allow for convenient vehicular access, while reducing conflicts with pedestrian walkways. Parking facilities and driveways should not impair pedestrian access between the station and other development.
- Include facilities for feeder bus transit.
- TOD areas should incorporate uniform signage to assist with navigation and connections to other transit.
- Provide connected and convenient streets, sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and trail linkages from the TOD to surrounding areas.
**Provide Residential and Employment Density in TOD Areas to Support Transit.**

To provide a critical mass of people to support transit, TOD Areas should:

- Contain enough nearby residential units to generate activity to support transit at a high enough density to allow the residents to walk to the transit station (*e.g.*, DRCOG recommends a minimum average density of 20 units per acre); and
- Contain employment densities (where appropriate) sufficient to generally meet recommended DRCOG employment densities for transit (*e.g.*, DRCOG recommends a net employment density of at least 25 employees per acre).

**Mixed-Use Development**

The Land Use Plan (Figure 3) designates two types of future mixed-use development areas (one with general flexibility, and one with a residential emphasis). These mixed-use areas should contain a variety of activities, such as offices, retail, and different housing types. New mixed-use developments should be designed according to the following principles.

**Design for Pedestrians**

- Site plan and building designs should be pedestrian-oriented by incorporating wide and detached sidewalks and paths, seating, low-level lighting, and signs that are scaled for pedestrians in high activity areas.
- Residential neighborhoods should be compact and walkable with short blocks (typically less than 400 feet in length).

**Include Community Facilities and Services**

- Mixed-use sites should include schools, parks, and open space, and other community facilities, where appropriate, to serve the needs of neighborhood residents.
- Concentrate commercial and office development in “nodes” (around intersections of arterial and collector streets). Commercial development should not expand along arterial streets. Commercial uses should be adjacent to public spaces to make the public realm livelier.
Include neighborhood commercial to provide services to surrounding residential neighborhoods and designed to be connected to adjacent neighborhoods with streets and sidewalks.

Include Housing

- Cluster high density residential development around commercial centers, providing opportunities for residents to walk to shops, services, and jobs. The apartments, lofts, or townhomes should provide transitions between commercial and lower density residential areas.

Transition from and Connect to Surrounding Areas

- Mixed-use developments should be developed to provide transitions for existing neighborhoods, and help revitalize older neighborhoods when possible.

- Mixed-use developments should be compatible with adjacent pre-existing and planned land uses, and where possible jointly planned to ensure a compatible pattern and mix of land uses.

Designed for Multi-modal Access

- Provide for interconnected block and street patterns.

- Provide access to the arterial street system and transit if possible.

- Provide connections to trails and greenways.

Environmentally Sensitive Design

- Protect and enhance environmental quality (for example, provide views, access to open space, and preserve open space corridors and natural features).
Areas with Rural Characteristics

Arvada has two types of rural characteristics as described below.

First, are Stable Rural Developments—those areas that are already largely developed (see Figure 2: Stable Rural Developments). Common characteristics of these areas are: large lots, open fencing, a variety of residential styles, and barns and other outbuildings, such as stables or silos. Properties also frequently have farm animals, such as horses or goats.

Second, are Low Density Residential Areas—those areas shown on the Land Use Plan (see Figure 3). These are large undeveloped parcels of land primarily in Western Arvada that will likely develop in the future. Development in these areas should have an open feel and incorporate rural characteristics, especially for new development that abuts existing rural development. The City will provide a density bonus incentive for developers who cluster lots and conserve more than 20% open space on a site. Principles for traditional and clustered development in these areas are described in the following sections.

Maintain the Qualities of Stable Rural Developments

New development within stable rural developments should be consistent with the established character, and adhere to the following principles:

- Site planning and building design should be generally consistent with features of surrounding areas such as: building height, massing, setbacks and spacing of structures, orientation and placement of garages, and roadway design.
- Development should aim to preserve as much of the existing vegetation as possible.
- Large animals generally should be permitted if allowed by surrounding zoning.
- Building design should incorporate rural architectural elements, such as a variety of building styles, massing, and roof forms that respond to the site topography.
- Building materials should be of durable materials (such as stone, masonry, and wood) and be predominantly of earth-tone colors.
- Site materials should consist of open or unobtrusive fencing, natural drought-tolerant landscaping, and low level lighting.
New development adjacent to stable rural developments should respect the unique quality of these areas by:

- Providing adequate buffering, or
- Utilizing techniques to provide compatibility such as similar setbacks, lot sizes, spacing of structures, building heights, building materials, fencing, landscaping and lot coverage at the edge of the new development.

**Use a Site-Sensitive Approach for Low Density Residential**

The following principles apply to all development proposed in the Low Density Land Use classification.

- Preserve important environmental features, including but not limited to: floodplains, steep slopes, ridgelines, healthy trees and vegetation masses, water bodies, natural meadows, historical or archaeological features, wetlands, riparian areas, and critical wildlife habitat or corridors;
- Locate large blocks of contiguous open space that link to adjacent open lands;
- Locate open space to benefit both residents of the proposed development and adjoining development and public spaces (e.g., it can be visually accessible from public streets or parks, or it could be publicly accessible open space);
- Design lots within a clustered development to abut or link directly to designated open space within the development;
- Avoid developing slopes that range between 15% and 25% and preserve slopes 25% or greater;
- Avoid scarring of the landscape by locating streets, driveways, and development sites to work with the natural topography;
- Design the development to consider the context of surrounding properties.

Examples of traditional and clustered developments in the Low Density Residential Category are shown on the following page.
Chapter 4—Community Development Principles

**Traditional Low Density Residential Development with 20% Open Space**
Example on 40 Acres yields 26 units with a gross density of 0.65 dwelling units per acre (single family detached homes). Lots are one acre in size.

**Option A: Clustered Development with 50% Open Space**
Example on 40 Acres yields 48 units on a variety of lot sizes with a gross density of 1.2 dwelling units per acre (single family detached homes). No minimum lot size is prescribed. The lots shown average 10,800 square feet in size.

**Option B: Clustered Development with 70% Open Space**
Example on 40 Acres yields 60 units on a variety of lot sizes with a gross density of 1.5 dwelling units per acre (single family and attached homes). No minimum lot size is prescribed. The lots shown average 5,000 square feet in size.
Residential Site Planning and Design

The following principles apply to all new residential developments.

Design new residential developments to allow for and encourage variety, connectivity, recreation, and unique community identity.

- Developments should incorporate a variety of home styles, models, setbacks, lot sizes, elevations, and location of garages to avoid visual monotony (e.g., “cookie cutter subdivisions”).
- New neighborhoods should contain a focal point, such as a school, park, lake or water feature, or community center.
- Local streets, sidewalks, bicycle paths, and trails should be interconnected to allow for ease of mobility and contain “open space” design elements, such as detached and meandering sidewalks, streetscape, planted buffer yards along major streets, and open fencing.

Encourage new residential developments to preserve and protect natural features, visual amenities of the community, and open space.

- Environmentally sensitive areas such as stream corridors, drainageways, wetlands, steep slopes, and ridgelines should be protected through the strategic placement of open space within the development.
- To the extent feasible, development should be clustered to preserve contiguous and permanently designated public or private open space.
- Building large homes on small lots should be avoided unless the lots in the overall development abut or are linked to permanently designated public or private open space.

Provide a range of housing types.
One of the major goals of this Plan is to continue to provide opportunities for different housing types to be developed to allow for varied incomes, lifestyles, and age groups. Opportunities for affordable housing should also be provided.
Large Format (Big Box) Commercial Centers

Arvada neighborhoods and citizens are concerned about the location and quality of retail development. This Plan recognizes that while retail development is important to the City’s fiscal health, it limits Large Format (Big Box) Retail (any store over 100,000 square feet, except grocery stores) to Large Format (Big Box) Commercial Centers (as shown on Figure 3: Land Use Plan). This Plan also promotes avoidance of strip commercial development strung out along arterial roadways.

New large format retail should incorporate the following design and locational principles.

Large Format Retail development should incorporate design elements to provide for visual appeal, pedestrian safety, and appropriate landscaping.

- Façade walls, including sides and backs of buildings, and rooflines should be articulated to reduce the scale and uniform appearance of the building and clearly define entrances.
- Building construction should use high-quality materials so that buildings are long-lasting, attractive, and durable (e.g., sandstone, brick, masonry units). Building colors and materials should be of low reflectance. Wood and metal should be limited to secondary materials.
- Parking areas should provide safe, attractive, and clearly defined pedestrian routes. Parking should be well distributed around buildings with landscaped islands and medians.
- Pedestrian access to the site should be provided on all sides of the lot that abut public streets.
- Site lighting should be designed to provide uniform, safe, and efficient lighting while preventing glare from reaching adjacent properties.
Large Format Retail establishments should be located to minimize negative impacts on neighborhoods and traffic congestion, and where possible or appropriate, be integrated with other uses.

- Large format retail establishments should be located on at least one major arterial or a highway to promote visibility and access to the site and reduce impact on neighborhood roadways.
- New large retail should be located on sites that are adjacent to existing or proposed commercial, office, industrial, or mixed-use. Where sites also abut residential development, additional screening and buffering measures should be taken to transition the uses.
- Large format retail establishments should be designed and integrated as part of a mixed-use center that includes a mix of smaller retail establishments and services, employment uses, and where possible or appropriate, residential uses.
THIS PAGE BLANK
Remove This Page - Insert Figures:

Figure 1: Redevelopment Areas
Figure 2: Stable Rural Developments