

1.1 Neighborhood Design

This section on *Neighborhood Design* primarily addresses areas of new development, particularly in Southwest and Southeast Santa Rosa where the majority of large scale new development will occur over the next 20 years. New development in these areas will be expected to incorporate the guidelines below. Smaller projects and infill projects in all parts of Santa Rosa will be expected to strengthen the patterns described below, to the extent they are consistent with General Plan requirements.

I. GOALS

- A. To promote the development of new “neighborhoods” that incorporate a variety of uses as opposed to subdivisions that feature single-family homes exclusively.
- B. To create well defined neighborhoods with both a center and an edge.
- C. To promote neighborhoods that feature a variety of housing types (both single-family and multiple-family) as well as a variety of price ranges.
- D. To develop neighborhoods with interconnected street networks to diffuse traffic and provide easy access for residents both within and between neighborhoods.
- E. To encourage neighborhood design that supports pedestrians, bicyclists and use of public transit as well as automobile use.



Fig. 1.1.1 This diagram from Western Australia depicts preliminary planning for an area of new growth. It illustrates many concepts fundamental to good Neighborhood Design. New neighborhoods are plotted based on existing constraints and opportunities. They are sized based on a 1/4 mile radius from center to edge. Circulation connects the neighborhood centers.



Fig. 1.1.2 As the planning is refined each neighborhood is provided with a neighborhood center at the intersection of the connecting streets. This helps to support limited retail. Schools, large parks and industrial areas are located at the edges or between neighborhoods as they are large land users and tend to disrupt walking access within the neighborhood center.



Fig. 1.1.3 The Town and Country Center is a good example of small scale neighborhood serving commercial center that fits architecturally and has been successful financially.

- F. To design neighborhoods that take advantage of existing natural features such as trees, creeks and topography.
- G. To create neighborhoods that are safe and support Police and Fire Department efforts to promote public safety.

II. GUIDELINES

A. NEIGHBORHOOD STRUCTURE

1. Design neighborhoods to be limited in area with a defined center and edge.
2. Design neighborhood and community shopping centers to include or, at a minimum, accommodate the following:
 - a. Buildings that house a variety of private sector uses such as: higher density residential (refer to General Plan for density range) small 'Mom & Pop' food stores, restaurants, day care, and other neighborhood serving commercial businesses;
 - b. Some form of open space, such as a small park or a plaza where neighbors can gather;
 - c. Civic uses, such as a police mini-station, a post office, a branch library, a community room, and houses of worship;
 - d. A public transit stop.
3. Define neighborhood edges with natural features, such as creeks, or large streets, such as avenues, parkways or boulevards.
4. Limit the distance from neighborhood edges to centers to not much more than 1/4 mile.
1/4 mile (a five minute walk) is the generally accepted distance that people are willing to walk to a neighborhood center. Limiting the neighborhood size in this way helps to create an identity for a neighborhood as well as support pedestrian activity.

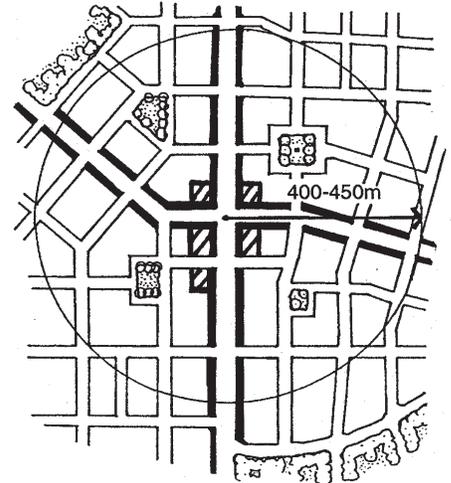


Fig. 1.1.4 Schematic diagram of the neighborhood unit based on a +/- 1/4 mile radius or 5-minute walk.

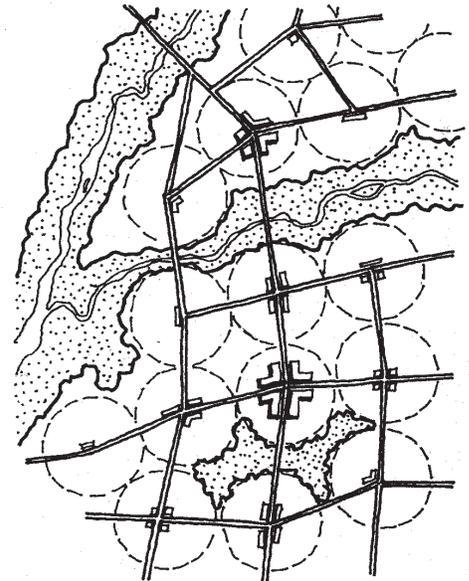


Fig. 1.1.5 This diagram illustrates the concept of using natural features, in this case drainage and open space, to define neighborhood edges.

5. Incorporate a range of residential densities and price ranges within a neighborhood.
While remaining consistent with General Plan density requirements, providing a range of housing opportunities supports affordable housing goals as well as creating more interesting neighborhoods.
6. Locate higher density housing within the neighborhood center, where the residents can better support the commercial establishments, access public transit, and easily take advantage of parks or plazas.
7. When Neighborhood or Community Shopping Center is indicated in the General Plan, provide design of the shopping center at the initial project submittal.
Leaving the design for the Neighborhood or Community Shopping Center to a later time creates the potential for a commons that is not integrated or coordinated with the surrounding development.

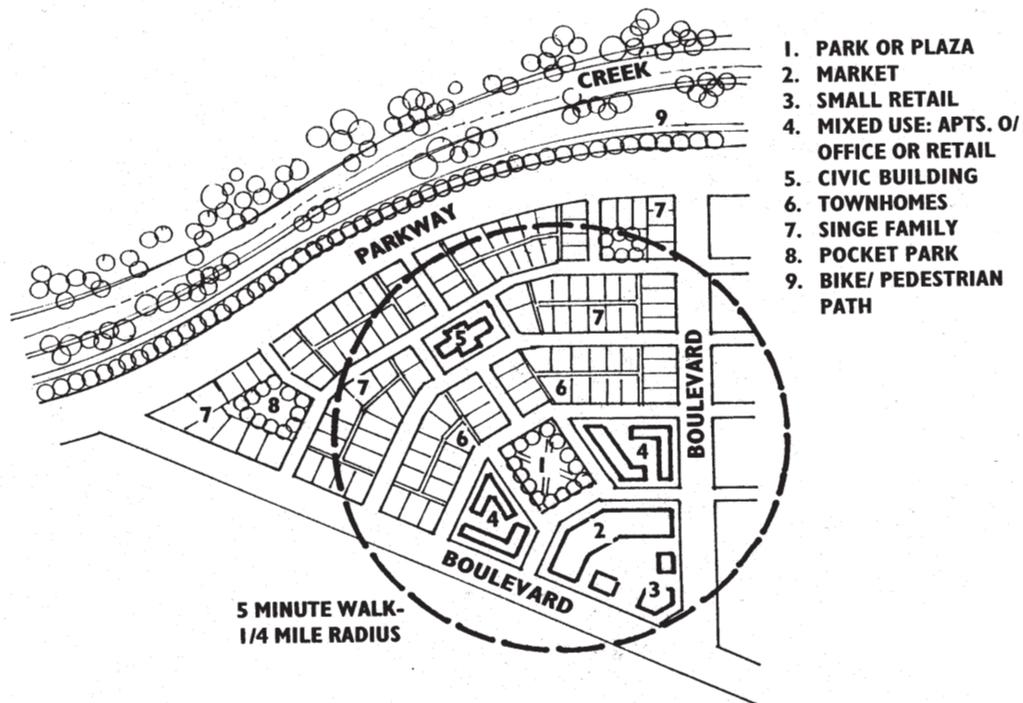


Fig. 1.1.6 This model plan illustrates many features that create liveable and walkable neighborhoods. While cars are accommodated, many daily trips can be made on foot. Developments with the structure and variety of uses depicted in the diagram will be more likely to develop a strong sense of identity and cohesiveness than a strictly residential subdivision. They will have the opportunity to develop into a true "neighborhood".

B. BLOCK AND STREET PATTERN

Refer to Section 3.1 - 3.4 for guidelines on individual building types.

1. Serve neighborhoods with an interconnected street system that will diffuse traffic. Minimize the use of cul-de-sacs. See Figures 1.1.7 and 1.1.8.
2. When vehicular connection is not possible to an adjacent street, provide pedestrian and bicycle connections where legally permissible.

3. Select streets based on using the minimum width standard applicable to the given circumstances (such as number of homes served, number of access directions, uses, General Plan Transportation Element, etc.)

Reducing pavement width slows traffic speeds and decreases storm water runoff, both desirable goals in single-family neighborhoods. Refer to Section 1.2 for additional information on street selection.

4. Link adjoining neighborhoods with indirect (vs. long straight) street connections to discourage “shortcut” traffic through neighborhoods.

5. Design streets to accommodate the pedestrian as well as bicycle and automobile use. A planter strip with street trees should be provided between the street and the sidewalk (see Section 1.3). Provide on-street parking as the parked vehicles provide a buffer between traffic and the pedestrian and slow traffic. On local neighborhood streets, bicycles share the travel lane with automobiles. The provision of dedicated bike lanes is generally reserved for streets that have faster moving traffic.

Providing dedicated bike lanes on local neighborhood streets is counterproductive. One of the goals in a residential neighborhood is to slow traffic. When dedicated bike lanes are added, the perceived width of the roadway increases and drivers increase their speed.

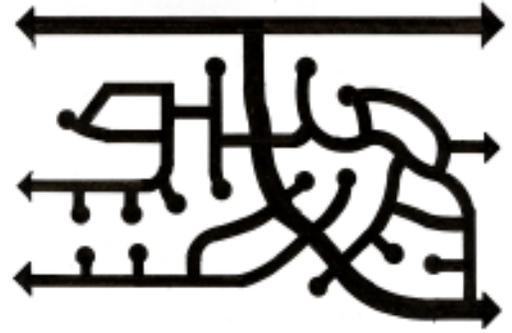


Fig. 1.1.7 Street systems that do not permit connections isolate neighbors and force all traffic to concentrate on collectors. This type of street circulation should be avoided.

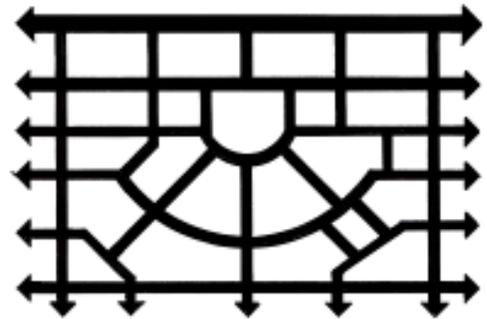


Fig. 1.1.8 The City's preference is for interconnected street systems which permit pedestrians and vehicles many choices in navigating through their neighborhood.



Fig. 1.1.9 36 foot wide street with 25 foot corner radii creates long pedestrian crossing and encourages speeding.



Fig. 1.1.10 This 30 foot street with a neck down slows traffic and shortens the crossing distance.



Fig. 1.1.11 Alley at Courtyard Village in Santa Rosa with second dwelling units above garage.

6. Use the smallest curb radii permitted at intersections in order to minimize the crossing distance for pedestrians. See Section 1.2 for appropriate radii in residential neighborhoods. A larger radius may be needed where Local streets connect to Transitional or Regional streets.
7. Use traffic calming devices such as neck downs, speed tables, mini-circles and tree bulb outs in order to slow traffic. (Refer to Section 1.2 (IV) for additional information and techniques.)
8. Limit block length to approximately 600 feet.
9. Use of alleys in at least a portion of new developments is encouraged.
The use of alleys with garages shifted to the rear of the lots can make a dramatic improvement to the quality of the streetscape. This most significant development approach also can facilitate the development of second dwelling units above the rear loaded garages.
10. Retain and improve existing alleys.
11. Orient streets toward vistas, such as surrounding mountains or landmark buildings, in order to provide a terminated view along the street corridor and help residents orient themselves within their neighborhood.



Fig. 1.1.12 Orienting streets to vistas help residents orient themselves within a neighborhood.