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Lyon County features a rich mosaic of communities, residents, and physical attributes. Residents and property owners have expressed considerable interest in maintaining their many diverse communities and improving community aesthetics. A community's character is defined by its design, its viewsheds, its gathering places, and its historic and cultural resources, as well as by environmental characteristics such as natural quiet and dark night skies. Maintaining this character is important—not only for promoting economic development and diversification, but also for protecting our living spaces, quality of life and open lands. In addition, preserving rural character is a core value of a majority of Lyon County residents.

This Chapter describes the factors that combine to create community character in our county. It also discusses the Guiding Principle, goals, policies and other mechanisms that help us to protect the community characteristics we value. This Community Character and Design Chapter seeks to define, preserve, and enhance the quality of the places where we live, work, and enjoy our leisure time. Its goals include protecting the unique characteristics of our communities.

Each community has distinct features that contribute to its physical character. Many of these features reflect common values for preserving a community's rural character, appearance, natural resources, open spaces, recreation areas, scenic views, vegetation, historic architecture, development patterns, and activity centers. These features promote quality of life and economic well-being. Preserving them should not prohibit development; however, the County needs to consider them to ensure that new development fits into the existing community fabric.

County residents have expressed a desire for well-designed communities through their participation and comments throughout the preparation of this Plan.

Community Character and Design

Lyon County will respect and promote the distinct character and heritage of its communities, strive to retain its rural and agricultural culture and promote cohesive and high quality development to improve the overall image and function of its communities.

County-wide Goals, Policies and Actions

Goal CC 1: Quality Design

New development in Lyon County will improve the appearance and function of our communities.



Policy CC 1.1: Quality New Development

New development in the communities of Lyon County should create inviting places for locals and visitors to live, shop, eat, visit, and do business.

Strategies:

- ◆ Develop minimum residential design standards that address quality and variation in housing types in new subdivisions in community core and urbanizing areas.

- ◆ Develop non-residential design standards to improve the image of Lyon County communities and to enhance property values.
- ◆ Revise road width and improvement design standards for traffic calming.



Policy CC 1.2: Pedestrian Friendly Communities

As Lyon County communities grow, new development will be designed to be pedestrian friendly, and to connect with community attractions.

Strategies:

- ◆ Update County development standards to require that all new development in the community core and urbanizing areas include basic pedestrian-friendly features such as adequate sidewalks and lighting.
- ◆ Revise subdivision standards to include efficient pedestrian access to public services and gathering places such as schools, libraries, parks, and trails.
- ◆ Require that new commercial development provide amenities such as shade structures, seating areas, benches, and bicycle racks, landscaped parking, and location of parking to rear and sides.



Policy CC 1.3: Design Tailored to Communities

New development in Lyon County should address and respect the unique character of communities within the county.

Strategies:

- ◆ Develop Community Plans to identify typical or desirable design elements that maintain or promote the community's desired image.
- ◆ Adopt county-wide standards that allow the flexibility to address specific design needs for individual communities in Lyon County.

Goal CC 2: Rural Character

Outside of the community core and urbanizing areas, Lyon County will be primarily rural in appearance and function.

Policy CC 2.1: Rural Land Uses and Structure

Lyon County will maintain rural, low-density land use patterns outside of community core areas.



Strategies:

- ◆ In the Land Use section of the comprehensive plan, designate land uses in appropriate locations and patterns to maintain rural appearance and function of lands outside the community core and urbanizing areas.
- ◆ Develop design standards for clustered development in rural areas that encourage western/agricultural building forms, such as deeper setbacks from main roads, traditional designs and colors, and preservation of rural/scenic character.

Goal CC 3: Heritage

Historic places, structures, and landmarks in the county will be preserved and will provide an opportunity for resident and visitors to learn about and celebrate our heritage.

Policy CC 3.1: Maintain and Restore Historic Resources



Lyon County will encourage and support efforts to preserve and restore registered historic structures, and landmarks, and districts.

Strategies:

- ◆ Revise zoning to encourage historic use and development patterns including mixed-use structures and districts.
- ◆ Support organizations in the county that apply for historic designation or grant funding for inventory or rehabilitation of historic structures, efforts to identify receiving sites for historic structures that cannot be maintained in their original locations, and similar historic preservation purposes and efforts.
- ◆ Work with knowledgeable organizations and individuals to ensure that building and development standards allow for adaptive reuse of valued historic structures, including those without official historic designation.
- ◆ Within historic districts, promote historic design elements, features and context, and prohibit building design that compromises the integrity of the historic community character.
- ◆ Within historic districts, limit new land uses that would pose a risk to historic structures or the historic character of the district.
- ◆ Promote the preservation of historic landscape features to maintain historic settings and the integrity of historic resources within historic districts.





Goal CC 4: Agricultural Character

Through the continuing presence of active, irrigated agricultural lands, and undivided ranch and range lands the County will maintain its agricultural character.



Policy CC 4.1: Viable Agriculture

Lyon County will work to create conditions that encourage property owners to maintain irrigated farmland in productive, agricultural use.

Strategies:

- ◆ Continue to educate new residents in rural and semi-rural subdivisions about living near working agriculture and the County's Right to Farm ordinance.
- ◆ Address maintaining and expanding agricultural businesses and support services as a key aspect of the County's economic development strategy.
- ◆ Adopt land use regulations that increase private land owners' choices and ability to continue agricultural uses, such as allowing clustered rural housing, agricultural easements, transfers of development rights, and similar voluntary mechanisms.
- ◆ Work with property owners to keep water in the Carson and Walker River Basins available for agricultural uses, including irrigation.
- ◆ Facilitate and support cooperative efforts of independent farmers or ranchers that seek to retain agricultural support services in the county, to reduce costs, and to increase profitability.
- ◆ Encourage alternative agricultural operations such as hydroponic and geothermal agricultural applications, specialty and niche products.
- ◆ Lyon County will work to ensure that federal land management policies continue to support and encourage active agricultural uses, including preservation of grazing allotments and access to traditional water sources.

Principles for Design and Development

Mixed-Use Centers

Intent and Locational Criteria

A key direction of this Plan is to develop mixed-use centers as a focus for economic and social activity in the county and its communities. The intent is that different kinds of centers will serve different needs in the community. Centers will range from small-scale local community-oriented centers to regional centers.

These will all be places with high quality site design, containing a mix of complementary land uses, such as retail and some higher density housing. Depending on the character district, site design also should include some public or quasi-public spaces such as plazas, natural open space, or outdoor seating associated with restaurants. Site and building design should be cohesive and designed with people in mind. Finally, the location of mixed-use centers must be coordinated with the street system and transportation, as defined in the criteria that follow.



Mixed-Use Centers will contain a mix of retail and services and will be pedestrian-oriented and relate to surrounding neighborhoods.

The intent of the designation on the Character Districts map is to provide a general framework for mixed-use centers organized around a roadway network and near neighborhoods. Community mixed-use centers are anticipated within each of the character districts described earlier in this chapter. Specific locations will be determined during the Community Plan process and will be located in close proximity to higher density residential development and major arterial and collector roadways.

All proposals for development of mixed-use centers will be considered using the following criteria:

Regional Mixed-Use Centers

Regional Mixed-Use Centers are located in several locations throughout the county to serve the day-to-day commercial needs of nearby communities. This type of center should:

- Be located in a city or within the county on one to two quadrants of a highway interchange or on one quadrant of a major highway intersection.
- Range in size up to 100 acres.
- Serve a trade area up to 20 miles.
- Typical format consists of one to two anchor stores, such as a supermarket or drug store, or can consist of regional shopping, “lifestyle” centers, outlet mall, and “big box” configurations.
- Contain amenities such as a pedestrian plaza and landscaping as well as sign and access control to create a cohesive development.

Local Mixed-Use Centers

Not all local Mixed-Use Centers are designated on the Character Districts Plan. The intent is to locate them to serve the convenience shopping needs of a suburbanizing neighborhood or nearby rural areas.

Local Mixed-Use Centers in Rural Districts

Local Mixed-Use Centers in Rural Districts are meant to serve the day-to-day needs of nearby communities and rural settlement areas. The county will use the following criteria in determining the location of this type of center. This type of center should:

- Occur in an area designated for Commercial Mixed-Use.
- Have frontage on an arterial or collector road
- Serve a trade area up to 5 miles.
- Contain landscaping amenities as well as signs and access control to create a cohesive development.
- Ensure that commercial development is integrated with and enhances the surrounding rural area. It may also include some housing.
- Additional Local Mixed-Use Centers can be located in the rural district provided that traffic impacts are mitigated and transitions are provided for nearby areas.

Local Mixed-Use Centers in Suburbanizing Districts

Mixed-Use Centers are located throughout the county to serve the day-to-day commercial needs of surrounding neighborhoods. The county will use the following criteria in determining the location and design of Local Mixed-Use Centers in Suburbanizing Districts. This type of center should:

- Occur in an area designated for Suburbanizing Residential or Commercial Mixed-Use.
- Be located on one quadrant of a highway or arterial roadway intersection or in places designated for “Mixed-Use Center” on the Character Districts map.
- Vary in size depending on the mix of uses.
- Serve a trade area up to 10 miles.
- Typical format consists of one anchor store, such as a supermarket or drug store, and smaller retail and services. The project could also contain some residential development (either vertically or horizontally mixed).
- The main part of the development should contain amenities such as a pedestrian plaza, sidewalks, and landscaping as well as sign and access control to create a cohesive development.
- Additional Local Mixed-Use Centers can be located in the suburbanizing district provided that traffic impacts are mitigated and transitions are provided for nearby residential areas.

Highway Corridor Mixed-Use

Locational Criteria

The Highway Corridor Mixed-Use designation generally applies to lands along Highway 50 and along Highway 95A. However, lands are designated along other State Highways and significant County Roads.

General Character

Outside of centers, much of the region’s existing commercial development is located along highways and roads in a “strip” development pattern. The Highway Corridor Mixed-Use category encompasses a mix of lands either developed for commercial purposes or vacant. It is intended that over time these areas have a higher percentage of residential and office uses and that lots and parcels could be consolidated to

prevent multiple entrances onto highways — to improve circulation and access to these sites. The intent is that overall intensity of commercial and residential development will be lower than in the Mixed-Use Centers.

Rural District Character

The Highway Corridor Mixed-Use designation will be applied to limited areas within the Rural Character Districts. Rural area Highway Corridor Mixed-Use designations are limited to arterial/major collector roadways that have existing commercial development or commercially zoned land.

Suburbanizing Districts

The Highway Corridor Mixed-Use designation will be applied to those areas within suburbanizing districts characterized by limited depth commercial zoning (less than 400' on either side of a major arterial highway) and limited commercial development. The Highway Corridor Mixed-Use designation may be applied to limited areas of arterial/major collector roadways with existing commercial development and commercially zoned land.

Neighborhood Design Principles

Neighborhoods in Suburbanizing Districts

The following principles apply to all new residential developments in suburbanizing areas:

- Incorporate a variety of home styles, models, setbacks, lot sizes, elevations, and location of garages to avoid visual monotony (e.g., “cookie cutter subdivisions”).
- Provide a focal point in new neighborhoods, such as a school, park, or community center.
- Interconnect local streets, sidewalks, bicycle paths, and trails to allow for ease of mobility with built in “open space” design elements, such as detached and meandering sidewalks, streetscape, planted buffer yards along major streets, and open fencing.
- Protect natural features (such as river corridors, wetlands, steep slopes, and ridgelines), visual amenities, and open space through the strategic placement of open space within the development.
- Provide a range of housing types to allow for varied incomes, lifestyles, and age groups.

Neighborhoods in Rural Districts

If development is to occur in agricultural or rural areas, it should minimize its impacts on natural areas and on nearby ranching and agricultural operations. The following design principles are appropriate for all rural residential development:

- Minimize cut and fill for roads and site grading.
- Use native plants for landscaping.
- Steer development away from geologic features, such as rock outcroppings or steep slopes.
- Use appropriate setbacks, and placement of structures that are compatible with adjacent agricultural activities.
- Design buildings that reflect the architectural heritage.
- Incorporate wildlife friendly fencing or “rural” open fencing rather than solid fencing.
- Preserve existing ranch buildings and other features of the site, when appropriate.