

THE TRANSECT-BASED NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT CODE

The proposed code for Sarasota will be based on supporting the positive about the existing urban fabric. The general criteria for judgement of what is positive being determined by the level of diversity and walkability. Diversity is assessed in terms of a mixed use: civic, retail, workplace and residential, with the residential ideally having a range such that the poorer and richer, the older and younger, would be able to find housing. Walkability is assessed in terms of the proximity of the diverse uses, made accessible primarily through the pedestrian quality of the streets. Every element specified by the code is to be made in support of these concepts of walkability and diversity.

What is currently positive about Downtown Sarasota and its adjacent neighborhoods was assessed through visual observation, then confirmed through analysis and in conversation with residents. Nevertheless, the perceived reality of the city involves not only the existing buildings, but the hypothetical buildings allowed by the existing code which are vested now as property rights.

This existing code was understood to be dysfunctional as it allows a degree of slack that upsets the expectations of the residents, consuming too great a portion of the public discussion while not particularly encouraging the creation of a walkable environment. The basic thrust of the City of Sarasota Downtown Master Plan is therefore, to replace the code with a new one and to inscribe it into the City's Comprehensive Plan as an amendment.

From the analytical stage two conclusions could be drawn. The first is that only certain streets have the potential to achieve a first-rate pedestrian quality within a reasonable time frame. The selection of these streets was determined by an analysis of frontage quality (see Illustration Quality of Frontages) and extended by the reconnection of the principal sectors of the currently fragmented Downtown to itself and to the adjacent neighborhoods (see Illustration Street Types). The new code will support the completion of these streets as pedestrian-oriented, while the rest become secondary, support streets. The implication is that a building that is not pedestrian-friendly (say, a drive-through restaurant) need not be banished from the Downtown, but merely allocated to a support street.

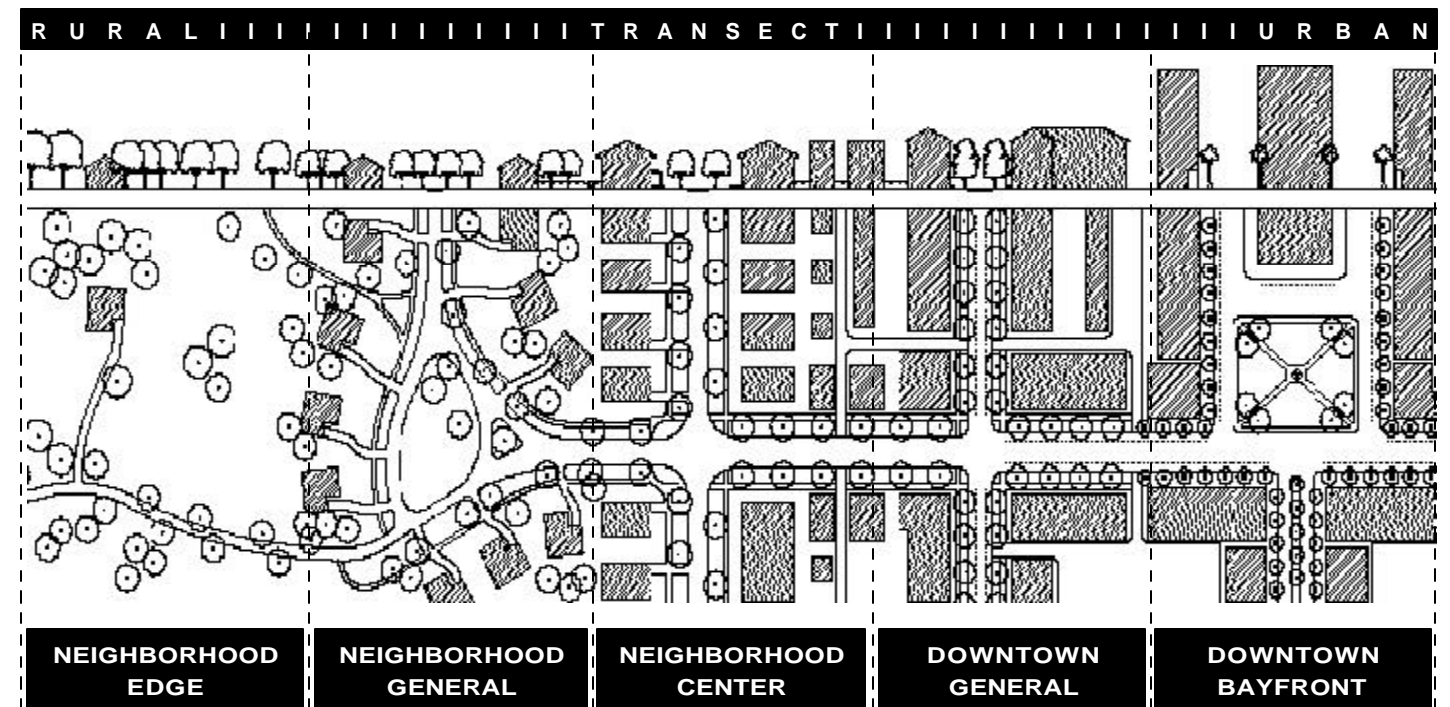
The second aspect that emerges from observation of the existing is that there is a great variety of building sizes, uses, densities and streetscapes in the Downtown. In fact, a full urban range is available, from the very tall buildings of the Downtown core to the single family houses of the neighborhoods with every urban condition in between.

This is all to the good, as it provides a real choice of lifestyle for the residents of Sarasota, and such variety is in support of the ideal of diversity. This range can be rationalized and designated by the proposed code as Downtown Bayfront, Downtown General, Neighborhood Center, Neighborhood General and Neighborhood Edge. For each, the code would support and intensify the existing condition towards creating what is called an "immersive" environment. Only by having all of the component elements, including the buildings, frontages, streetscapes and thoroughfares reinforcing each other can Downtown Sarasota develop its true character, which is actually a range of environments rather than the current condition of creeping suburbanization throughout.

Pervasive but weak suburbanization is one of the problems of the existing urban fabric of Downtown Sarasota. There are high rise buildings that have suburban berms at their base, for example, creating an area that is neither downtown-like, nor rural. At the same time, some of the more rural areas are undermined by parking lots. The new code intends to sort this out by supplying zoning categories based on the existing transect with the names: Downtown Bayfront, Downtown General, Neighborhood Center, Neighborhood General and Neighborhood Edge. There is also a district category for those zones primarily on support streets that must absorb those elements that society needs, but that nevertheless are not supportive of either diversity or walkability.

The proposed code must be intelligible to the non-professional participant. As such it must be succinct, an attribute achievable only if it is very precise. Future development is accurately envisioned by the Master Plan that, when coded, creates a predictable environment. Within it, developers who follow the rules can be guaranteed time-certain approvals, while residents can live in a city where surprises are minimized. A public discussion and assessment by elected officials need only occur in the event that a variance is required.

There are several elements of the proposed code that should be brought to public attention. The first is the density which will be based on both the existing building fabric and the entitlements already provided by the current code. However, the bonus provisions that create unexpected problems are eliminated. Thus, there will be additional tall buildings where they are currently allowed, but they will not be unexpectedly larger as a result of complex formulas. The second is that the code will have a tendency to encourage mixed-uses



wherever possible, albeit in a graduated and controlled manner. There is thus a requirement for mandatory commercial in certain first-floor frontages Downtown, while it is allowed elsewhere in the Downtown. Any plan that proposes to support pedestrian qualities must provide destinations that are within walking distance. Besides, any plan that envisions a future must acknowledge that a new type of decentralized small-scale residentially-based workplace is being catalyzed by the new electronic economy. Downtown Sarasota and its neighborhoods will be left behind if the new code precludes mixed uses. Carefully graduated – particularly in terms of size, parking and signage – mixed-use will be permitted in some measure everywhere from the Downtown Bayfront to the Neighborhood General Zones.

The Master Plan envisions a society that is in transition between an automobile-based and a pedestrian urbanism. Thus, while the number of parking spaces will continue to be determined as in the present code, there will not be a requirement that they be provided in adjacency to the building they serve. In fact, it is advantageous for the vitality of the streets and shops that people walk between their parking places and their habitual destinations. In addition, the dispersal of parking allows the existing smaller lots, that cannot typically accommodate parking to be developed individually. This will maintain the attractive small-scale quality of a traditional American downtown, rather than forcing the agglomeration of smaller lots into large devel-

opable ones. The required parking will be purchased from municipally-provided parking lots. Parking in the future must become a public utility, no less than electricity or streets.

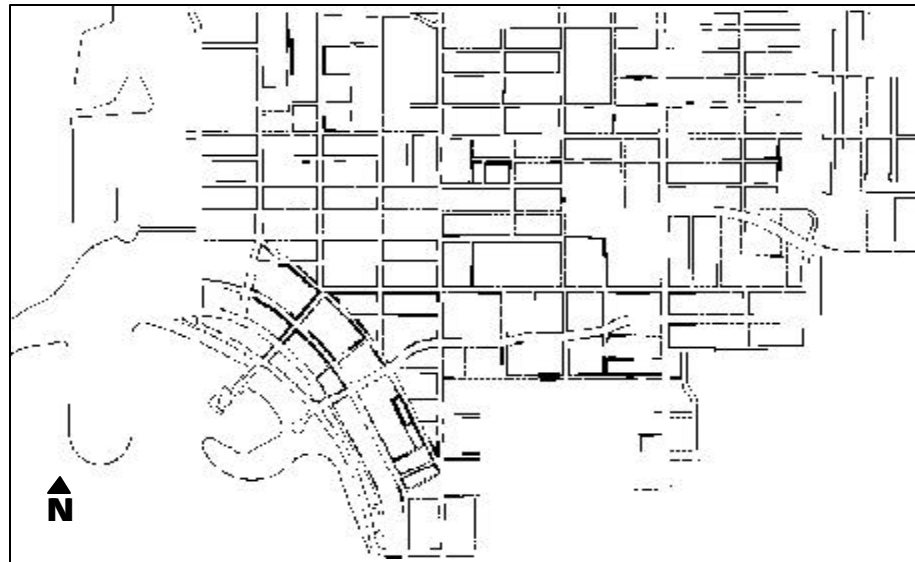
Another aspect of the transition period is that, even as it redevelops, Downtown Sarasota will continue having a mixture of smaller two-to-five story buildings adjacent to taller ones up to eighteen stories (the existing maximum). Visually, this situation, while not permanent, does condemn an entire generation of citizens to an awkward built environment. The proposed code does therefore provide for a setback at the fourth story so that, when seen from the ground, the shorter and taller buildings will be substantially more harmonious.

A third aspect of the transition provisions is that certain roads that were once residential become primarily vehicular in nature. Principal among these is Fruitville Road. It is not possible to retain the buildings on Fruitville Road in the use and the scale of the houses they once were. A new building type must be introduced that both permits the evolution of these lots to commercial, and yet buffers the adjacent houses with liner buildings. This is detailed in the section "Neighborhoods-Gillespie Park".

The diagrams which follow represent the result of the urban analysis of the Downtown and will become the basis for the regulatory framework of the code.

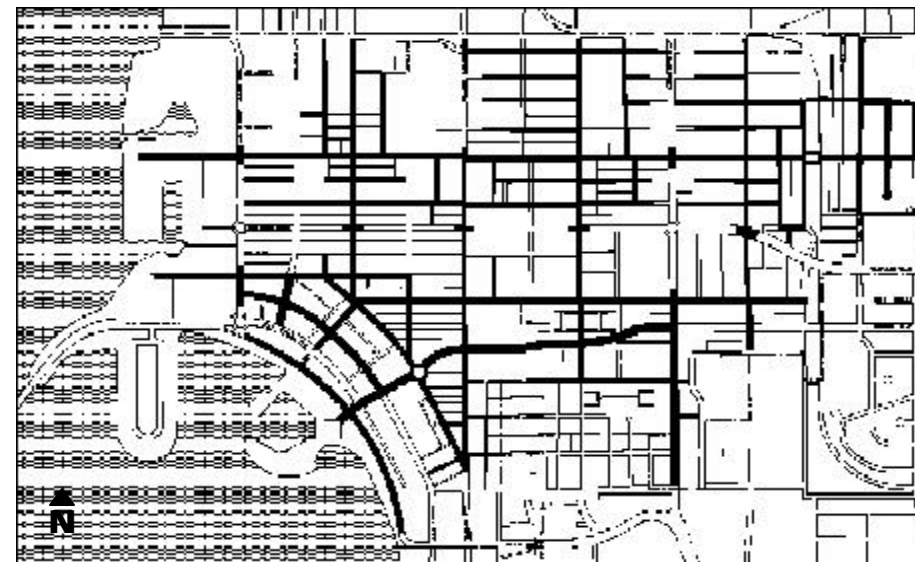
These diagrams together with the Transect Zones Diagrams, will become part of the Regulating Plan for Downtown Sarasota. The Regulating Plan is a document assigning the various zoning categories to the Study Area, as well as shows the locations of public spaces, destinations, civic reservations "sleeves", required retail frontage, arcades, etc. For more details on these drawings, please see Section "General" of this Master Plan.

The Transect Zones outlined in this plan are diagrammatic in nature. The precise delineation of these districts in the City's comprehensive plan and code should be done to match existing parcel lines where practical and when consistent with the principles of this Plan. At the time of adoption of this Plan new zoning district regulations designed to implement this Plan have not been adopted. Because the adoption of these new zone district regulations will require staff review and analysis and consideration of public comments received, future zone district boundaries and substantive content cannot be stated with certainty at this time.



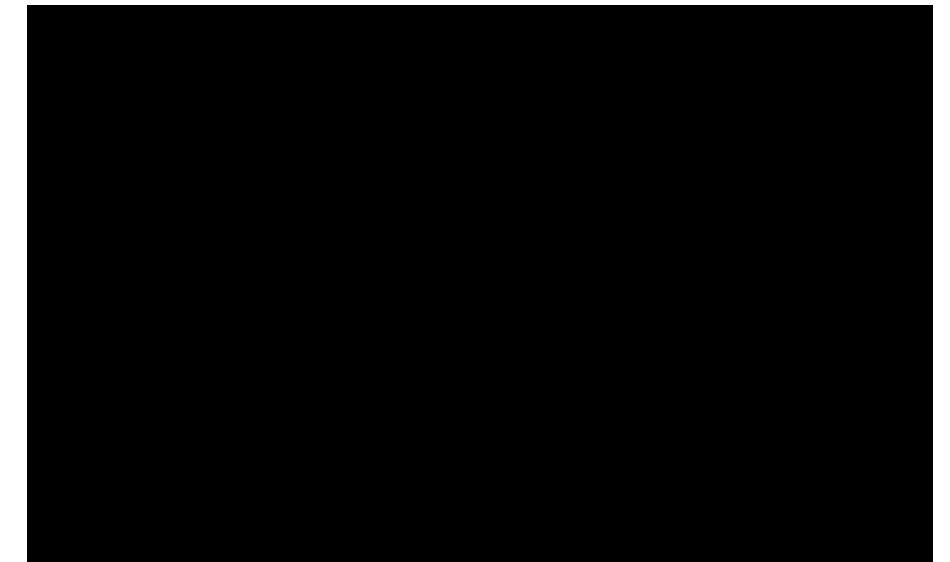
QUALITY OF FRONTAGES

- EXCELLENT
- == GOOD
- - FAIR
- ... POOR



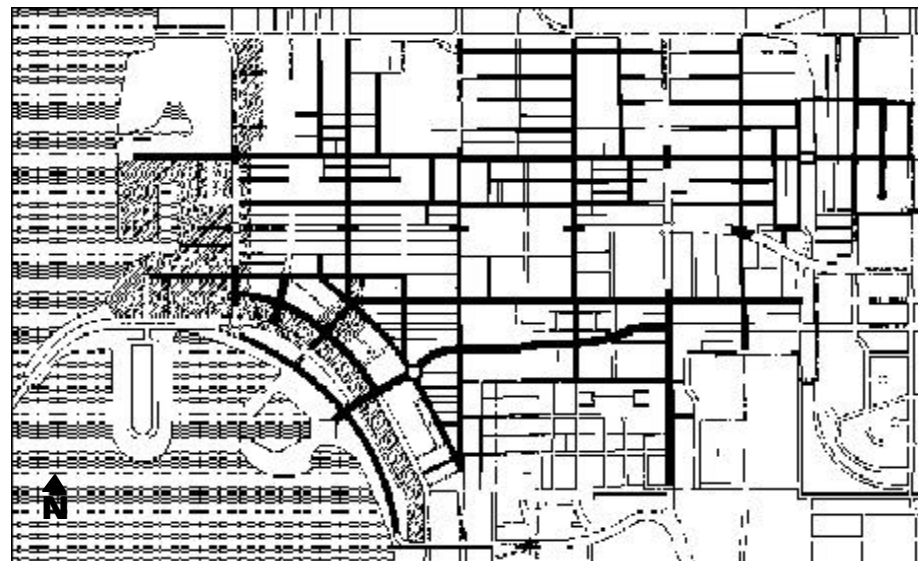
STREET TYPES

- PRIMARY STREETS *A*
- == SECONDARY STREETS *B*



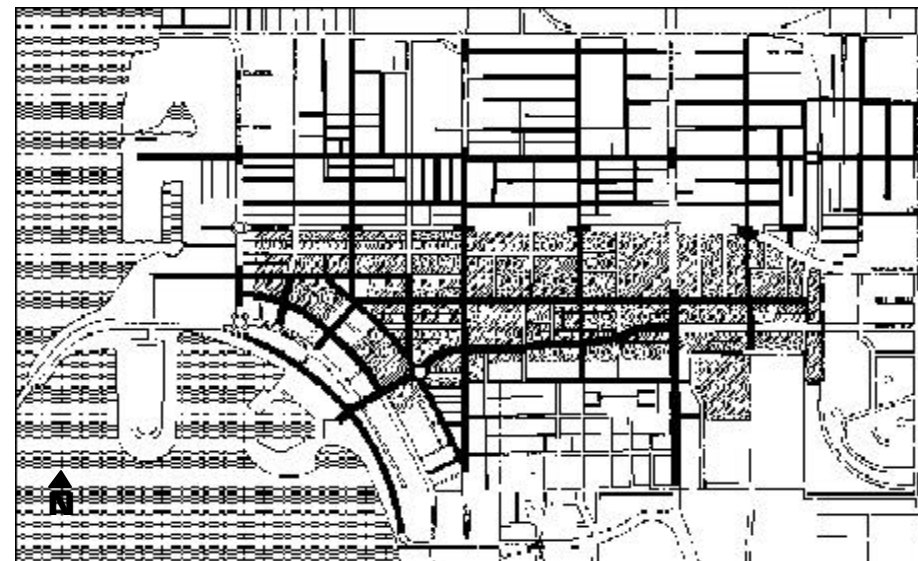
PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS, DESTINATIONS AND SLEEVES

- CONNECTIONS
- DESTINATIONS
- SLEEVES



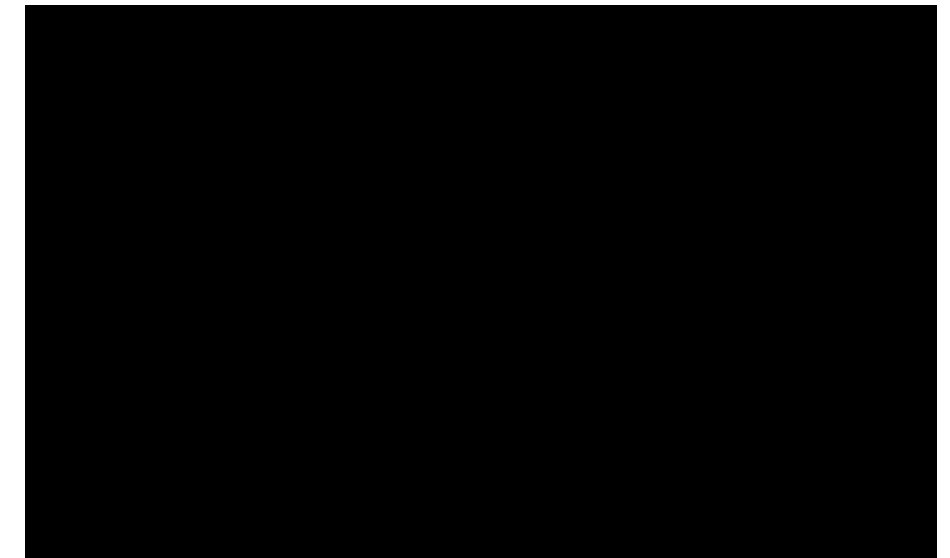
DOWNTOWN BAYFRONT ZONE

This Transect Zone includes the Waterfront District, the development along US 41, along the Bayfront and Main Street up to Five Points. Buildings in this Zone are allowed the maximum building height - eighteen stories, if the use is predominantly residential. This Zone is important for the character of the whole Downtown, especially along the Bayfront. In future redevelopment the massing and architecture of these buildings should comply with the new Code requirements.



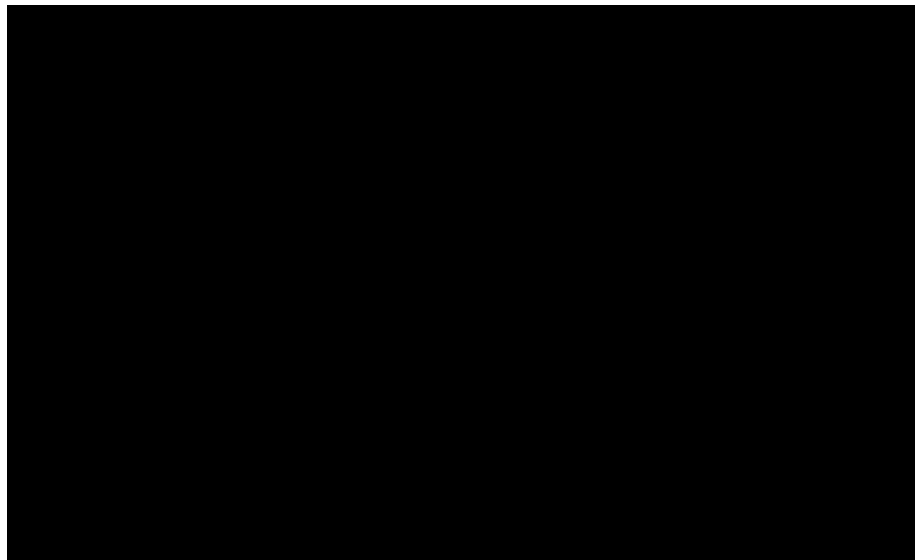
DOWNTOWN GENERAL ZONE

This is the largest Transect Zone in the Downtown Proper. Buildings are mixed-use, up to ten stories in height. Parking is required on site if buildings are more than five stories, otherwise they will have access to municipal parking and are exempt of the parking requirement.



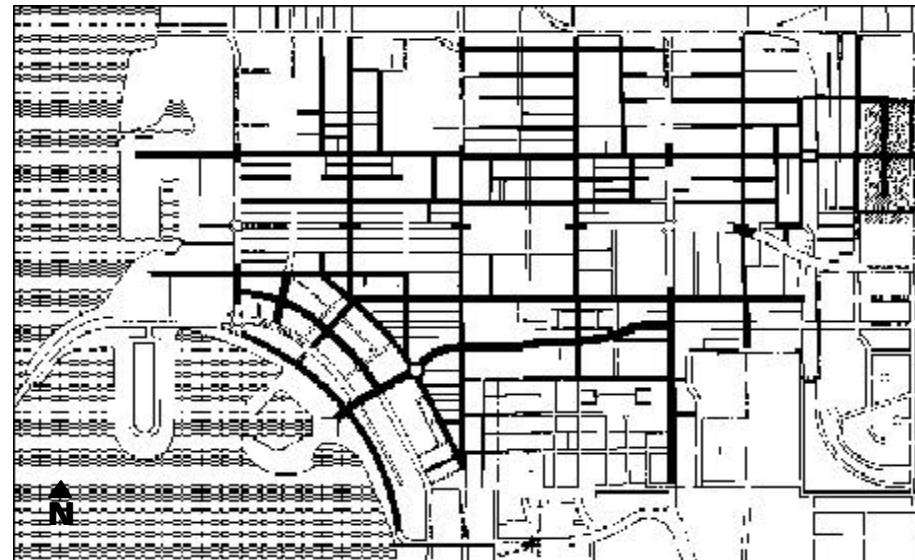
NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER ZONE

The areas designated as Neighborhood Center form fingers leading into each of the three "walk-to-town" neighborhoods, generally along the streets that form the center of each neighborhood as well as along the perimeter streets that separate one neighborhood from the other. In addition, almost all of the neighborhood frontage on the north side of Fruitville Road is designated as Neighborhood Center. This is the densest and most urban of the neighborhood designations; buildings are to be built to the edge of the right-of-way and are to form continuous street-walls as much as possible. Parking is relegated to the rear of the structures, which are to be two- to four-stories in height and can be mixed-use. Trees are planted along the streets to create a formal effect, but not necessarily at the same density as within the Downtown Zones.



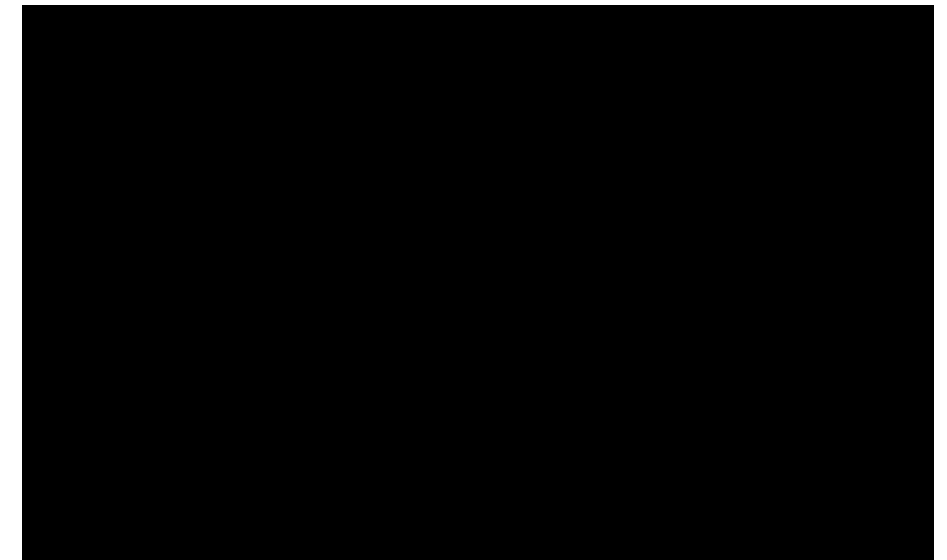
NEIGHBORHOOD GENERAL ZONE

In all three "walk-to-town" neighborhoods, almost all of the area that is not designated as Neighborhood Center is designated as Neighborhood General. This is in keeping with the generally orthogonal street system and the continuous setback lines that are currently in effect. Buildings are oriented towards the street to enhance its formal continuity and to help create friendly and safe pedestrian environments. Buildings tend to be stand-alone structures, maximum three stories in height, some of which can be mixed-use. Parking can be found at the rear of structures, generally off of alleyways, or in controlled settings at the front of the buildings. The density of structures is less than in Neighborhood Center but still high enough to create a lively, pedestrian-based neighborhood.



NEIGHBORHOOD EDGE ZONE

This is the most rural condition which happens only in a small portion of the Park East Neighborhood. Buildings are setback from the street frontage more than in the other Neighborhood Zones. Houses tend to be larger, maximum two stories in height, and the streetscape treatment is more informal. Alleys are not required and parking can happen from the street frontage, but the garages are required to be setback minimum 20 feet from the facades of the houses.



CIVIC RESERVATIONS

- C-P CIVIC PARKING RESERVATION
- C-B CIVIC BUILDING RESERVATION
- C-S CIVIC SPACE RESERVATION
- ★ PUBLIC ART LOCATION