

7 COMMUNITY FORM

7.1 PLANNING FOR SMART GROWTH

Fundamental to the concept of a General Plan is the notion that a city can be “planned”. “Plan” in this context refers to the process of gathering ideas and input from many sources and creating an overall layout and general system of development that will bring about orderly growth—that avoids placing incompatible land uses next to each other, that will not place undue financial burdens (on the City or the neighborhood), and still assures that adequate public services and amenities are in place to create a livable community.

The common impression is that our neighborhoods, towns or regions evolve organically and that we should let “market forces” dictate the form of community. In actuality, most cities in the U.S. indeed in the world, are governed by plans. Planning, and zoning, regulations have evolved over the years as a response to the impacts, and at times abuses, of development practices.

The original form of St. George was carefully laid out by the original pioneer settlers of the 1860's. They followed the pattern established by Brigham Young. Brigham Young, who understood the importance of civic association, encouraged a compact central community surrounded by farmland so that the farmers could live in the city and commute out to their farms each day. The broad, grid system of tree-lined streets, Worthen Park, beautiful pioneer-era homes and striking downtown buildings are their legacy to us.

Throughout most of St. George's history, as with most older American cities, the downtown was the focal point of the community. The gradual rise of suburban development evolved out of concepts



Figure 7-1: An aerial view of St. George's core area.

that were created in the 1930's by Frank Lloyd Wright's Broad Acre City plans and Clarence Stein's Greenbelt towns¹. These concepts were adapted and codified into HUD “minimum property standards” of the 1950's that became the ‘bible’ of architects and planners that laid out subdivisions. Traditional town planning gave way to ‘modern’ concepts of specialization, standardization and mass production.

Suburban development was greatly aided by the explosion in automobile ownership and concomitant growth of the highway system throughout the U.S. In St. George, Bloomington was one of the first suburban developments, enabled by the construction of I-25 and other local roads to St. George.

As these bedroom communities progressed to suburbs, shopping malls became popular and the focus of commerce and creative enterprise gradually began to shift away from cities and to sap the vitality of the downtown area. Suburban development expanded outward at low densities, covering the land in much greater proportion than the actual increase in population. Zoning, which started as a remedy to the impacts of industrial

¹, The high-rise buildings that began to dominate large cities at about the same time were based on concepts advocated by Le Corbusier and other European architects.

uses in residential areas, eventually evolved into a whole pattern of single use districts. Specialization meant that each land use—residential, commercial, offices, civic—was isolated and developed by experts that optimized for a particular kind of development, often without any consideration of the whole. The result, over time, was suburban sprawl, a sameness in neighborhoods and urban decay.

The problem is not that our communities lack planning, but rather that they have been planned and designed according to principles that we are now beginning to realize have flawed implications.

Many communities, including a number of Wasatch Front communities², are beginning to realize that there are alternatives to conventional development patterns that cause suburban sprawl, eat up open lands, siphon vitality from existing communities and create gridlock traffic. There are many different names for this new form of development: Smart Growth, New Urbanism, Sustainable Development. Whatever it is called, it represents compact, human-scaled development that fosters healthy, diverse, balanced communities. Since there are few opportunities and resources for building whole new communities, and since sprawl often leap-frogs over many vacant and dilapidated areas, much of this new development focuses on infill development.

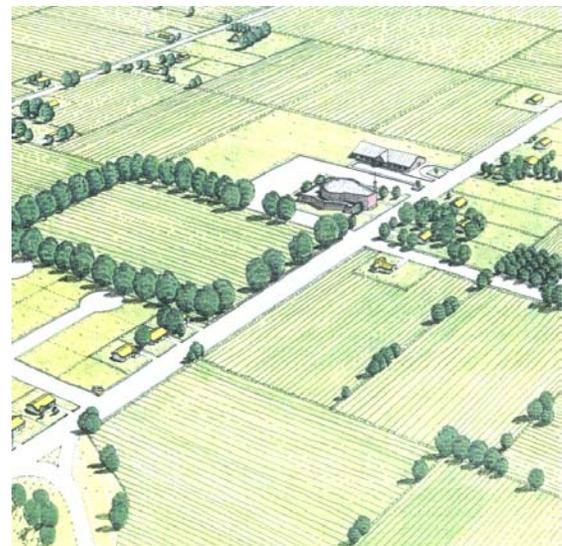
7.1.1 PLANNING PRINCIPLES FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT

The following planning principles are particularly oriented toward “smart growth” or the efficient use of resources. They can be equally applied to new development as well as redevelopment of existing St. George areas.

1. **Compact Self-sufficient communities.** New development (such as the South Block) as well as redevelopment of existing areas should

bring about diverse and self-sufficient sub-communities (not as bedroom suburbs) with a mix of land uses that reduce driving needs — residences are within a short walk of shopping, jobs, and entertainment. Each area will have a pattern of connected streets, tree-lined that promote walking, parks and civic amenities (schools, post office, etc.). Affordable housing is distributed throughout the community to match job opportunities and to avoid concentrations of poverty.

A comparison of alternative approaches to suburban development.

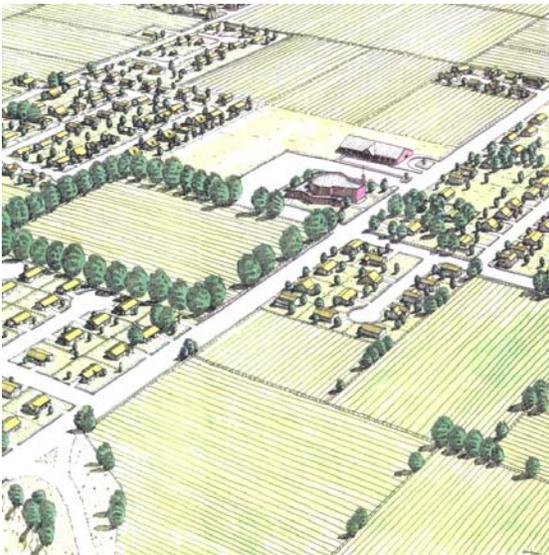
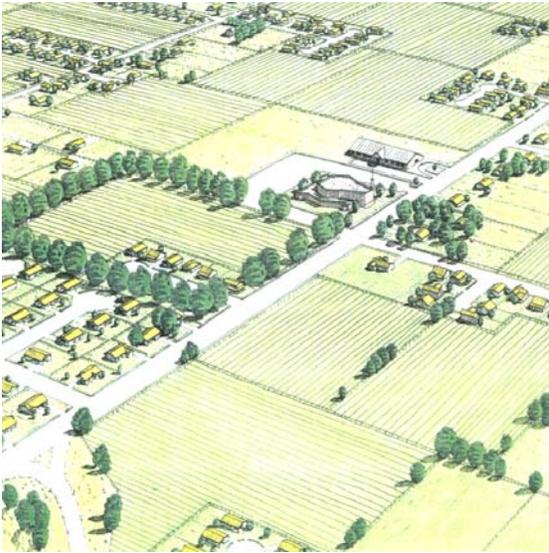


*Sketches by Ken Last

Figure 7-2: Compact Development Approaches

Above: Pre-development condition. Following: the three development scenarios that reflect the same number of dwelling units, but are arranged in different densities and development types.

² See Envision Utah. Urban Planning Tools for Quality Growth, 2002.



2. **Mixed-use centers.** Commercial centers contain housing, shopping, entertainment, work places, parks, and civic facilities essential to the daily life of the residents. When attractively designed, residential development in commercial areas provides built-in customers, activity that attracts other activity, and “eyes on the street” at all hours that promote safety.
3. **People-Oriented Streetscape.** Rather than a long row of garage doors, windows, balconies, doors and porches face the street, allowing residents to watch over their neighborhood.
4. **Neighborhoods.** Compact, pedestrian-friendly, and diverse neighborhoods should offer a range of housing types and price levels. This brings people of diverse ages, races, and incomes into daily interaction, strengthening the personal and civic bonds of community. New development should help repair existing neighborhoods or create new ones, and not take the form of an isolated “project”.
5. **Street network.** Streets accommodate automobiles, but in ways that respect the pedestrian and the form of public space. Local and Collector streets are designed to discourage high speed traffic. An interconnected network of streets with walks will encourage walking and reduce the number and length of automobile trips, and conserve energy. Walkable streets enable neighbors to know each other and allow independence to those who do not drive, especially the elderly and the young. Pedestrian and bike paths form a system of fully connected and interesting routes to all destinations.
6. **Parking.** Parking will be accommodated, but not in gigantic parking lots. Rather, parking is provided in convenient, smaller lots broken by shade trees and landscape islands.
7. **Public facilities.** Civic, institutional, and commercial uses should be embedded in neighborhoods and districts, not isolated in remote, single-use complexes. Schools should be sized and located to enable children to walk or bicycle to them. Civic buildings and public gathering places require important sites to

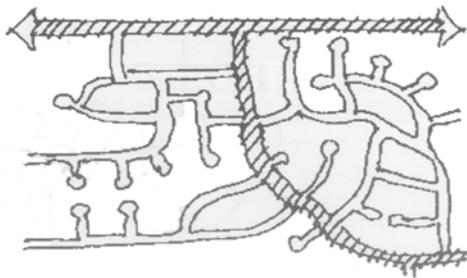


Figure 7-3: An interconnected grid (above) preferred to the cul-de-sac street pattern (below)

neighborhoods and districts. The natural terrain, drainage and vegetation of the community should be preserved with superior examples contained within parks or greenbelts.

7.2 DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT

In 1976, City officials recognized that a healthy community needs a healthy “heart” and established a 15-block Redevelopment District in the downtown area. In 1980, improvements were made to a one-block section of Main Street. The innovative Ancestor Square was created at approximately the same time. In 1987, a six-block Historic District was created within the redevelopment district.

In a variety of downtown worksessions over a number of years, advisory groups, the City Planning Commission and the City Council have envisioned a downtown that has the following characteristics:

- reinforce community identity and the culture of democracy. They deserve distinctive form, because their role is different from that of other buildings and places that constitute the fabric of the city.
- 8. **Historic preservation.** Development and redevelopment respects historical patterns, precedents, and boundaries. Preservation and renewal of historic buildings, districts, and landscapes affirm the continuity and evolution of urban society.
- 9. **Parks.** There is an ample supply of specialized open space in the form of squares, greens and parks whose design and placement encourages frequent use, and presence of people at all hours of the day. A range of parks, from tot-lots and village greens to ball fields and community gardens, should be distributed within neighborhoods.
- 10. **Open Space.** The city has a well-defined edge, to the north, with the habitat preserve, and less-well defined edge elsewhere. Conservation areas and open lands should be used to define and connect different

- developed around an historic theme
- pedestrian friendly with attractive walks, planted medians and street 'furniture'
- ample, convenient parking
- low profile buildings, generally not exceeding three stories
- a center for government and financial institutions
- attractive shops, restaurants and art galleries
- well landscaped, with an identity distinctive from other commercial centers in the City.

The overall objective is a downtown that generates pride in St. George and appeals to tourists through its historical buildings, shops and restaurants and overall beauty.

Advisory boards were established for both the Redevelopment and Historic areas to advise the City Council on downtown revitalization. The City's primary revitalization strategy was to emphasize and build upon the nucleus of pioneer-era buildings in the downtown area. The Green Gate Village project is an example of

economic development combined creatively with historic preservation. In the first seven years, grants to improve storefronts, and the efforts of volunteers and the City, produced the following results:

- landscaped areas with a historic "white picket fence" theme in various high profile locations
- Historic District entry and directory signs
- storefront improvements of approximately 20 buildings
- a promotional video and other materials about the Historic downtown and storefront program
- new Zion's Bank and adjacent public plaza
- renovation of old Pioneer Opera House Square into a multi-use community center complex

However, in spite of these efforts the downtown is still struggling. Vacancy rates have improved only slightly. We have learned that although individual landscape improvements and refurbished storefronts are important, they alone will not guarantee a healthy and vibrant downtown.

- The downtown area can continue its strong comeback only by working to achieve common objectives centered around a comprehensive downtown strategy.

7.2.1 DOWNTOWN STRATEGIES

Today, shopping is as much recreation and socialization as it is obtaining goods. Since the downtown is in competition with shopping malls for patronage, it is helpful to understand why shopping malls succeed. In part, shopping malls succeed because they are attractive, lively environments. All of the shops operate as a single business with regard to hours and costs of capital improvements and maintenance.

Malls also succeed because of a less obvious design concept that fosters impulse shopping. Shopping malls are carefully designed to lead patrons past numerous stores strategically located between the large anchors. This greatly stimulates

impulse buying. By contrast, in the typical downtown, one parks reasonably close to the destination store and is able to come and go with relatively little exposure to other storefronts. The basic shopping mall principle is that people on foot spend much more money than those in cars.

To compete effectively with shopping malls, the downtown needs to develop some of the social activities that make shopping malls successful, such as:

1. Install uniform hours of operation for all merchants, including evening hours;
2. Create an attractive, entertaining environment, with amenities for all ages (benches, play areas, gathering areas) all linked together in a continuous experience;
3. Provide a high level of maintenance (cleanliness, repair, snow removal, flower beds, etc.)
4. Sponsor regular promotional activities (sales, art shows, entertainment, etc.) to bring the community to the downtown for entertainment as well as shopping;
5. Develop an overall identity (name, graphic symbol);
6. Facilitate tour buses stopping in the downtown — for lunch, shopping and the enjoyment of historical presentations created for tourists. Coordinate "package" tour stops with the Tuachan Center, Zion Factory Stores, and the Temple Visitors Center.
7. Promote both day and night activities in the downtown area. Downtown plaza lectures and musical performances should be promoted on a frequent and on-going basis.



Figure 7-4: A proposed new office building for Main Street in downtown St. George

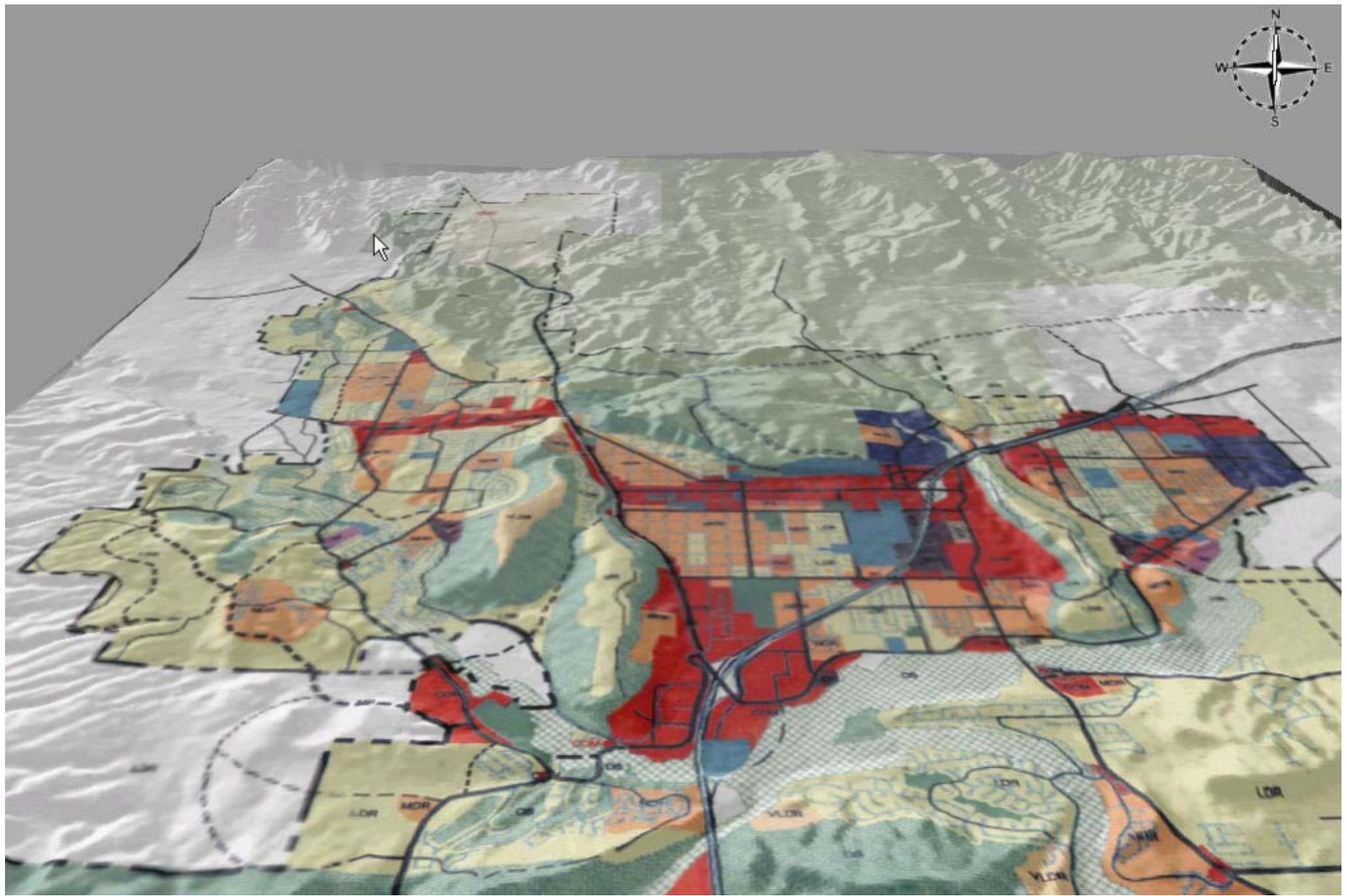


Figure 7-5: A land use model of St. George

Other possible physical downtown revitalization improvements might include:

8. Re-install on-street parking throughout the downtown—possible in conjunction with a one-way couplet to accommodate traffic capacities.
9. Provide zoning incentives to encourage office and residential development in the downtown, particularly along the western end of St. George Boulevard.
10. Enhance off-street parking with a multi-level parking structure that is convenient, free to the public and safe;
11. Encourage the development of the downtown as an office center, including: government and business offices, office-related services, financial institutions, specialty retail shops and restaurants.
12. Emphasize historic landmarks the downtown. Continue to follow the Historic District design guidelines for renovation and new construction within the Historic District.
13. Improve the maintenance and upgrading of downtown properties.
14. Promote a pedestrian-friendly downtown atmosphere through the use of neck-downs at street corners, sidewalk paving accents, coordinated street furniture (lights, benches, trash bins, etc.), awnings, and street trees or shrubs in or adjacent to sidewalks.
15. Develop a landscaped median in the core section of St. George Boulevard.
16. Install a traffic signal at 100 East St. George Boulevard to facilitate better crossing of St. George Boulevard for both cars and pedestrians.

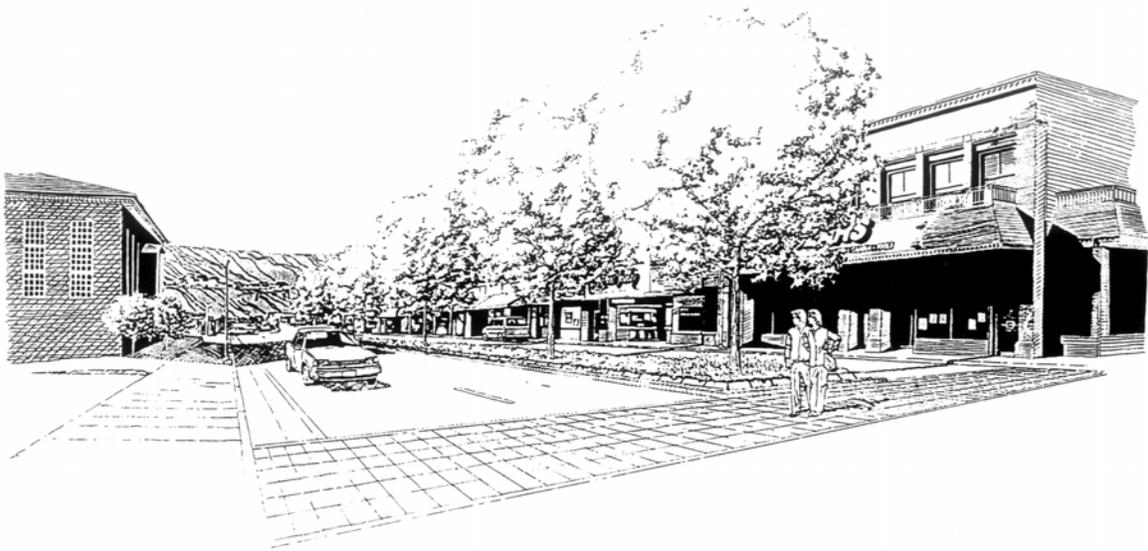


Figure 7-6: Illustration of St. George Boulevard before/after proposed median.

17. Encourage the use of ground level space for shop, service, or restaurant space, with upper floors used for office space or residential uses.

All of these actions are best accomplished through coordinated management and a willingness, even obligation, to contribute financial resources to capital improvements and maintenance.

This is not to suggest that the downtown must emulate a shopping mall in every way. Successful downtowns have their own unique characteristics, such as historic charm, an open air experience, and a wider mix of uses (offices, government, etc.) that attracts patronage. These advantages, when combined with the measures described above, can

indeed produce a vibrant, healthy community centerpiece.

7.2.2 DOWNTOWN POLICIES

1. The City strongly supports preserving St. George's downtown as the primary business and government center for St. George.
2. Achieving and maintaining a healthy, vibrant downtown will require both public and private efforts. The City will support downtown merchants and property owners in this effort, and will help plan and participate where appropriate.

7.3 COMMUNITY APPEARANCE

The physical appearance of a community conveys an impression about the values and pride of the community. In spite of overwhelming hardships and adversity, from the earliest days the residents of St. George have taken pride in the appearance of the community. One need not look further than the Temple grounds, the Tabernacle, and the stately homes of the pioneer settlers to appreciate the long-standing relationship between the physical appearance of the community and community pride, security and sense of well-being. Even today, the majority of homes in St. George exhibit care and attention to appearance.

The impact of first impressions is obviously felt most acutely by visitors. We have all had the experience of visiting a city for the first time, or revisiting a city after a long absence. We are immediately struck by the images we see: Are there street trees to give shade? Are the parks orderly and well-maintained? Are the streets in good repair? Is the downtown attractive and busy? Are the storefronts and signs tastefully done? Are the street and directional signs simple to follow and can I find my way easily?

In former times, the few building materials available in the region, in the hands of relatively few artisans, naturally led to coherent community design — signs, lights and even architecture tended to be consistent within each community. Today, with a wide choice of materials and a multitude of design influences, community appearance can easily become chaotic. For instance, some feel that the plethora of advertising signs on St. George Boulevard is a good example of variety taken to excess.

St. George, however, has been making strides. Attractive, xeriscape landscaping has been installed at the Bluff St. and St. George Boulevard exits from I-15. The Department of Leisure Services has been upgrading landscape planting along I-15. The tallest signs on St. George Boulevard have been removed. Historic buildings

in the downtown have been restored, and street corner furnishings with a historic theme have begun to give the downtown its own identity.

Additional areas for improvement include:

Signage - continue to reduce the visual congestion of St. George Boulevard by encouraging fewer, more modest signs.

Entryways - upgrade the other entryways into St. George to give a pleasant first impression of the community.

I-15 Corridor - continue to upgrade the appearance of the I-15 corridor and to screen out undesirable views.

Downtown - develop a cohesive plan for downtown improvements.

The challenge now is to apply the guidelines consistently, on both new development and re-development throughout the community.

7.3.1 COMMUNITY APPEARANCE POLICIES

1. The City will continue to improve the appearance of the community through landscaping, signage improvements, lighting, street tree planting, street furnishings, etc.
2. The Community Design Guidelines Manual will be used to promote good design throughout the community.



Figure 7-7: Entry landscaping into the City