

City of Plano COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

MIXED-USE POLICY STATEMENT 5.0

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Legacy Town Center

Mixed-Use Policy Statement

Policy Statement 5.0

Description

The intent of this policy statement is to define mixed-use development and its role in Plano. This includes both how this development form can be used to create large scale projects like urban centers and smaller scale mixed-use projects. The policy statement defines what is meant by the term “mixed-use” and describes the characteristics of appropriate locations. It also expounds upon the expected benefits of mixed-use projects and describes the key components necessary for creating those benefits. This information is intended to provide guidance to developers and decisions makers considering mixed-use projects.

This policy statement also addresses the following objectives and strategies already in the Comprehensive Plan:

Objective B.3 Ensure land use compatibility by grouping complementary land use activities, especially those that are mutually supportive, and continuing to implement policies that minimize the impact of potentially incompatible activities.

Strategy C.2 Consider the use of creative and alternative suburban land use concepts, including mixed-use development in appropriate infill and redevelopment areas of the City. Review requests to rezone properties for mixed-use development in accordance with the following:

- Finding that the conversion of nonresidential property for residential or another nonresidential use would not adversely impact the planned land use pattern for the surrounding area.
- A plan that provides for the integration of vehicular and pedestrian circulation systems, parking, building location, and architectural design into a cohesive development.

Strategy C.5 Work with developers to ensure that infill and redevelopment occur in appropriate locations. In particular, the location and design of urban centers should be consistent with the guidelines established by the Urban Centers Study.

Strategy A.3 Continue to facilitate the development of Transit Oriented Developments (TODS) such as those recommended in the Urban Centers Study.

Objective A.3 Provide Plano residents with a variety of transportation options.

Housing Density Policy Statement 3.0 which provides guidance regarding the density of housing in Plano.

Background

Although not specifically called mixed-use, a mix of uses - work, home, and commerce - has been commonplace in communities throughout the United States and Europe. Prior to World

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War II, towns were, out of necessity, designed on a pedestrian scale. In many ways, the combination of uses all within walking distance of each other provided natural synergies that enhanced daily life. In fact, it wasn't until the "modern" zoning code, also referred to as Euclidian zoning, came into common use that land uses were so strictly separated. In doing so, many of the great synergies that come from mixing uses were lost. Mixed-use development can contribute to a variety of objectives, including housing provision, revitalized town centers and more sustainable urban environments. The benefits of mixed-use include:

- **Creating a local sense of place.** Although difficult to quantify, mixed-use areas can create a vibrant sense of place and community. This can be not just on a city-wide scale, but it can also be a tool that helps to differentiate neighborhoods. And, as mentioned above, by supporting pedestrian movement, these areas provide increased opportunities for neighbors to meet and interact. They also provide a wider variety in the types of environments to be found in the city, adding interest and diversity.
- **Creating areas that are active throughout the day.** A mix of uses eliminates the problems of residential areas that are largely unpopulated during the day, and commercial areas that are desolate after business hours. Mixed-use areas have populations and activities that take place throughout the day, making them more vibrant and safe.
- **Increasing housing options for diverse household types.** Mixed-use areas often have higher density housing types, such as apartments and townhouses, close to amenities and add to the variety of housing options available within the city which is especially important to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population.
- **Reducing auto dependence.** Mixed-use areas provide a variety of services and activities within a walkable distance of

housing, allowing residents to conduct more of their daily activities without depending on automobiles. Reduced auto dependence especially provides greater independence for seniors and children who can often be marginalized simply because they cannot drive.

- **Increasing travel options.** Mixed-use areas, if well designed, can comfortably support pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and automobile traffic.

Analysis

As Plano begins to incorporate mixed-use into what historically has been a suburban land use pattern, it is important to define how and where this type of development fits within the city. Successful mixed-use projects can be created on many scales and in many locations - in an individual building, a series of buildings grouped together, or as a predominant characteristic across an urban area (urban center). Whatever the scale, there must be a readily identifiable mix of functions which jointly activate the urban form. The effect must be more than just an aesthetic one.

Policy Statements

The following guidelines are intended to assist with the evaluation of proposals for mixed-use projects. These guidelines cannot address all of the issues relating to a particular site and therefore are not the sole determinants of zoning decisions. However, they do provide a framework for evaluating mixed-use proposals. Also, within the City, there are a variety of environments where mixed-use projects can be successful from a neighborhood from a corner store serving a neighborhood to a large urban center. This checklist addresses characteristics that generally are achievable in both small - and large-scale mixed-use projects and some specific considerations based on location. It may be possible to fulfill the intent of this policy statement without meeting every guideline.

Mixed-Use Guidelines Checklist

Location and Context Sensitivity - *The project must be sensitive to surrounding developments with regard to height, density, scale and character. Mixing land uses often means developing commercial uses next to or within residential areas. It can also mean developing housing at relatively high densities outside of a traditional neighborhood setting. This can raise concerns about traffic, parking, noise, building design, and other compatibility issues. The site layout and building design should mitigate these issues wherever possible.*

Mixed-use projects can work in a variety of settings throughout the city. However, careful consideration must be given to the character of the area and surrounding land uses. The following areas of Plano (as described in the Land Use Element and corresponding Land Use Map) are the most likely locations for mixed-use development. Considerations specific to these areas are noted below, followed by more general city-wide guidelines.

Neighborhood Centers

Designated on the Land Use Map as Neighborhood Commercial, Community Commercial, General Commercial and Major Commercial these areas are adjacent to the residential districts that they are intended to serve. They are typically located at major intersections, contain roughly 10-15 acres on each corner and include businesses such as grocery stores, drugstores and small retail and service uses. The center should be oriented to existing or planned pedestrian amenities, such as wide sidewalks, street tree cutouts, pedestrian-scale lighting, and street furnishings. These locations should also support transit stops, where applicable.

Urban Centers

These are large districts (50 or more acres) of mixed-use development provided at urban densities. They serve both a local and regional population and may include a wide-range of uses from office and commercial to residential. These areas generally have strong internal circulation (transportation networks) and contain

a variety of mutually supportive uses (such as restaurants, residential and office). Because these areas are large enough to form a distinct district, they can generally support higher density and higher intensity uses.

Major Corridors

Designated on the Land Use Map as Major Corridor Development and Freeway Commercial these areas are located along major highways. Uses in these areas can vary but will tend to be more auto-dependant than either neighborhood centers or urban centers. The character of these districts is focused on allowing office, commercial, and residential uses to be combined in a single development.

Location and Context

General Guidelines:

- If they were to be considered alone, outside of a mixed-use setting, would each use (residential, office, retail etc.) be appropriate in this location? (Also, see residential development guidelines below.)
- Is the development a natural fit with the larger surrounding area? Is the project designed in such a way that it is well-integrated with adjacent land uses?
- Does the project connect to surrounding developments?
- How does the project relate to/impact surrounding development?
- Is the juxtaposition of uses complementary? For example, are lower density residential areas buffered from more intensive uses?
- Are transitions in building heights (setbacks) provided, especially when adjacent to residential development?

Note: In many locations, mixed-use development will be a departure from the existing development form. It is advised that early in the project development, proposals are

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discussed with neighborhood groups and other stakeholders. Where appropriate, the Planning Department can facilitate these efforts.

Multiple Uses/Integration of Uses - *Land uses are mixed on-site or are mixed in combination with adjacent uses (existing or planned). The combining of land uses promotes easy access among services, stores and other amenities especially by pedestrians.*

General Guidelines:

- Is there a variety of uses? Are the uses complementary/synergistic? For example, do the non-residential activities in the development enhance the livability of the residential parts?
- Are the uses in a fine grain either vertically and/or horizontally so that the complement of buildings and uses is well integrated?
- Are buildings tightly connected or grouped?
- If the development is phased, is the first phase sufficient to stand on its own as a mixed-use development?
- Are residential uses integrated within the development and not isolated, so that the range of amenities such as shops, restaurants and public spaces are available and easily accessible to residents?

Density - *Mixed-use development generally requires increased density, which allows for more compact development. Higher densities increase land-use efficiency and housing variety while reducing energy consumption and transportation costs. The mixed-use buildings that result can help strengthen or establish neighborhood character and encourage walking and bicycling.*

General Guidelines:

- Is the site developed at an urban density rather than suburban?

- Are the majority of buildings two to three stories or higher?
- Do the second story and higher floors contain useable space, instead of being included just for aesthetic effect?
- Does the site layout create clusters of buildings to promote a variety of transportation options (pedestrian, bike, automobile, mass transit etc)?
- Is the majority of the land area within each block used for buildings and not for surface parking, open space or landscaping?

Pedestrian Orientation - *All portions of the development are accessible by a direct, convenient, attractive, safe, and comfortable system of pedestrian facilities, and the development provides appropriate pedestrian amenities. The design of buildings supports a safe and attractive pedestrian environment.*

General Guidelines:

- Is the development sufficiently compact? Can people comfortably walk between major uses without being tempted to move their car?
- Do the physical arrangement and design of the buildings support the pedestrian environment?
- Are there pedestrian walkways through sites, connecting entrances, buildings, and the public sidewalk? Do they form a comprehensive network?
- Are the street crossings, drives, and parking areas clearly marked?
- Are the sidewalks wide enough to accommodate pedestrians as well as street life (for example a sidewalk café)?
- Is landscaping or other buffering provided between parking lots and adjacent sidewalks or streets?

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- Are the buildings close to the street? Do the buildings help define the street edge?
- Do the sidewalks include street furnishings such as street trees, space for outdoor seating, bus waiting areas, trash cans, newspaper vending machines, mail boxes, sidewalk displays, etc.?

Connectivity - *An interconnected street system provides linkages to local shopping, services, housing, and amenities, as well as linkages between adjacent developments. Streets that are disconnected isolate land uses and force all trips, whether by car, foot or bicycle, onto the arterial street system without regard for their ultimate destination.*

General Guidelines:

- *Is there a grid of streets with relatively short blocks and lots of intersections?*
- *Is the development part of a connected street system that serves not just vehicles but pedestrians and bicycles as well?*
- *Is the development connected to the surrounding areas?*
- *Is the project served by mass transit?*

Parking - *Surface parking lots often cover more ground than the buildings they are intended to serve, particularly in suburban centers and commercial corridors. This unfortunate reality is often a barrier to building compact, pedestrian friendly places.*

General Guidelines:

- *Is parking designed in an urban form? Is more than 50% of the parking in garages with the remaining surface parking located behind buildings and/or on land scheduled for future development as structured parking or for future buildings?*
- *Is on-street parking available on the majority of internal streets?*

- *Are the parking and vehicle drives located away from building entrances, and not between a building entrance and the street?*
- *Is surface parking, where proposed, located behind or to the side of a building when possible? Are good pedestrian connections provided?*
- *Are street trees or landscaping provided between surface parking lots and the adjacent sidewalks?*
- *Does the project appear to take advantage of opportunities for shared parking? ("Shared parking" means that multiple uses share one or more parking facilities).*

Public Spaces - *Public social contact shapes our personal identity, fosters learning and influences our social behavior. Creating public spaces where people have the opportunity to formally organize, such as for a public outdoor market or festival, or informally gather, such as to pursue leisure or social activity, are both necessary and desirable. For example, social greetings, conversations and passive contacts, where people simply see and hear other people, are those social activities that shape our personal identity. This type of activity is dependent on the presence of people in the same physical environment, whether it is a sidewalk or a public plaza. For this to be a positive experience, public spaces need to be safe, attractive, and comfortable. With growth and new development, public spaces must be protected and new spaces created to support the social and cultural fabric of our communities.*

General Guidelines:

- Does the arrangement of buildings, streets, and open space create public spaces?
- Does the development contain "place making" qualities that distinguish it from traditional development?

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- Does the project provide public space that will realistically be used? For example, the “function” of a public space may include transportation, in the case of the sidewalk; or recreation and socialization, in the case of a plaza or park.
- Does the site design enhance and support the public space?
- Do the public spaces provide social and leisure activities similar to those provided by parks, schools and libraries in a traditional, suburban Plano neighborhood?

Human Scale - *Although the world is large, we perceive it piece by piece. In urban design, details count. Things look different close up walking at 2 mph than they do from behind a windshield at 30 mph. Everything seen and experienced from the sidewalk - building fronts, signs, lighting, open space should be designed for human interaction at a pedestrian's perspective.*

Note: While much of this information is not typically required for a zoning petition to be filed, these items are especially important to the success of mixed-use projects, and additional information and details should be provided for the evaluation of mixed-use projects.

General Guidelines:

- *Do the buildings contain windows and doors on all or most sides?*
- *Does the design of the street space include trees, light standards, benches and other amenities to give the development a human scale?*
- *Are the building façades designed to a human-scale, for aesthetic appeal, pedestrian comfort, and compatibility with the design character of the district or neighborhood?*
- *Does the design reflect the context of its surroundings or create its own distinct look and identity? This does not mean that it*

needs to copy or mirror the architectural style of the surrounding buildings (unless that is critical to the historic character of an area).

Elements to look at:

- *Existing architectural character of the neighborhood/district*
- *Continuity of the building sizes*
- *How the street-level and upper-level architectural detailing is treated*
- *Roof forms*
- *Rhythm of windows and doors*
- *General relationship of buildings to public spaces such as streets, plazas, other open space, and public parking*
- *Signage*