

## 4. Place Types

### Introduction

In Albemarle County's Development Areas, the Neighborhood is the fundamental unit of community planning. The County's Neighborhood Model, an adopted part of the Comprehensive Plan, defines a Neighborhood as "a place where people can live, work, shop, and play. Its buildings, streets, and public and private areas relate well to one another by plan, not by happenstance." The Neighborhood "is sized so that an average person can walk from its center to its fringe in five minutes. Development is expected to follow the 12 principles of the Neighborhood Model.

The Places29 Master Plan applies the Neighborhood Model to the four Northern Development Areas located within the more urbanized part of the County. In the Places29 Area, the influence of US 29 North and its profound impact on development patterns, building scale, transportation, and community character creates a specific set of challenges and opportunities for the implementation of the Neighborhood Model. To address both these challenges and opportunities, as well as to achieve the community's goals, this Master Plan illustrates differently some of the concepts presented in the Neighborhood Model.

This Chapter describes how the concept of the Neighborhood is applied to the Places29 Area to create a framework of varied place types. The Place Types used in this Master Plan are Centers and Neighborhoods. Achieving these place types will help to ensure that the area's growth is accommodated as envisioned by the County's Comprehensive Plan, this Master Plan, and the citizens of Albemarle County.

The remainder of this chapter starts off with a brief overview of the structure of neighborhoods, continues with detailed descriptions of Centers and Neighborhoods, then describes the types of open spaces in both place types, and concludes with a discussion of the application of these place types in the Places29 Area.

Additional information about land use types is given in Chapter 5. Design guidelines for Centers and Neighborhoods are given in Chapter 7.

### ***The Structure of Neighborhoods***

The basic structure of a Neighborhood is simple: a Neighborhood is the combination of two Place Types: a Center and a walkable area around the Center. The basic concept behind this structure is that, if a Center is located within a 5- to 10-minute walking distance from homes or workplaces in the area around the Center, then more people will be able to walk or bicycle to the Center. This closer association with the Center helps to create an identifiable character for the Neighborhood.

This Master Plan defines five types of Centers, ranging from the smallest to the largest:

- **Civic Green Center**
- **Neighborhood Service Center**
- **Community Center**

- **Destination Center**
- **Uptown**

This Master Plan distinguishes four types of Neighborhoods and one type of District:

- **Residential Neighborhood**
- **Employment Neighborhood**
- **Mixed Use Neighborhood**
- **Uptown**
- **Airport District**

All Center and Neighborhood types are described in the following section and shown in Figure 4.5.

### ***Center Types***

A **Center** is the focal point of the Neighborhood and, with exception of the Civic Green Center, usually includes a mix of residential and nonresidential uses. Mixed use may be developed as either (or both):

1. Vertical Mixed Use—where uses are mixed in the same building. For example, the first floor may be retail or office, while the upper floor(s) are residential or office
2. Horizontal Mixed Use—where commercial uses are closely commingled with residential uses, either in the same building or in adjacent buildings.

Centers tend to have a higher density than the surrounding neighborhood, include a concentration of amenities, and serve the entire Neighborhood. Community or Destination Centers also serve a larger “market area” beyond their immediate neighborhood. The appearance and character of the Center is designed to have a positive effect on the rest of the Neighborhood. Some of the larger Centers may be high-intensity areas, with a mixture of retail, services, public facilities (including parks), and employment. It is this mix of uses and the activities generated by them that attract residents from the surrounding neighborhood and visitors from beyond. Most importantly, a Center functions as a public space and a destination within the Neighborhood and the larger community. They create dynamic and active places that establish a community identity within the Places29 Area. They also encourage transportation choice, including walking, bicycling, riding transit, and parking once within the center to take care of multiple errands or business. The types and locations of Centers are shown on the Framework Map.

There are five Center Types in the Places29 Area.

### **Civic Green Center**

A Civic Green Center is an urban open space, 1 to 3 acres in size, intended for recreation and civic activities (Figures 4.6 and 4.7). It should contain a formal landscaped area, a multi-purpose lawn area, and/or additional areas for specific activities, such as a tot lot, playground, small basketball court, or tennis court. It should also include a plaza or other gathering place that can be

used for public events. The Civic Green is typically surrounded by streets with buildings fronting onto them. It should be well connected by local streets to the surrounding residential or employment areas. The Civic Green is designed to provide a sense of arrival and “of place,” as well as a sense of identity for the surrounding area. Where appropriate, Civic Greens should have trail or multi-use path connections to adjacent greenways and open spaces; this can provide a valuable link between the green and the larger area.

In some of the existing residential areas in the Places29 Area, the athletic fields and recreational amenities (schoolyards) at the area’s elementary school function as a Civic Green Center for residences within a 5- to 10-minute walking distance from the school.

## **Neighborhood Service Center**

The smallest Neighborhood Service Centers should provide local-serving retail/service uses, such as a drycleaner, florist, convenience store, or coffee shop in a horizontal or vertical mixed use configuration. Neighborhood Service Centers typically range in size between 1 and 10 acres (Figure 4.8). Larger Neighborhood Service Centers may consist of multiple buildings or entire street frontages that stretch for one or two blocks. The upper floors of mixed use buildings accommodate residential or office uses.

There are two basic subtypes of Neighborhood Service Centers with Framework Land Use Categories of either Urban Mixed Use (Figure 4.9) or Employment Mixed Use (Figure 4.11). The differences between the two subtypes are discussed on page 4-5 of this chapter. Although not required, it is recommended that each Neighborhood Service Center include a publicly accessible urban open space. In larger Neighborhood Service Centers this may be an urban park similar in size to that of a Civic Green. Smaller Centers may include a plaza (Figure 4.9) or public green or pocket park (Figure 4.10).

## **Community Center**

Community Centers (Figures 4.12 and 4.13) are intended to provide retail and service uses for the immediate surrounding area and the community beyond. They are typically anchored by a grocery store with additional retail, service, or commercial uses, as well as residences and office uses on upper floors of mixed use buildings. Single use residential or office development may also be part of the mix of uses. The residential and office uses give the Community Center the desired mixed use character and provide the opportunity for broadening the range of residential unit types and jobs available in the Places29 Area. Generally, Community Centers range in size from 10 to 35 acres.

A Community Center is designed with multiple connections to its surrounding Neighborhood. They also need a strong relationship to more major roads, but not necessarily US 29, in order to provide access and visibility for patrons and workers from larger area of the community.

Community Centers should include a Public Green of 2 to 3 acres. These Public Greens should be associated with public or institutional uses (i.e., a local library or community center) or facilities either adjacent to or integrated into the Public Green.

## **Destination Center**

Destination Centers (Figures 4.15 through 4.17) are intended to provide regional-scale destinations for retail, entertainment, service, and employment uses that draw patrons and workers from the entire Places29 Area and beyond. At the same time, the residential and

employment areas that surround Destination Centers can take advantage of these uses, and add to the dynamic activity of the center by increasing pedestrian activity on the Centers' streets. As in Neighborhood Service and Community Centers, Destination Centers include residential or employment uses on upper floors and are designed with multiple connections to surrounding areas and other nearby Centers. A Destination Center is the appropriate location for a hotel, a multiplex cinema, or other retail and entertainment use that requires a bigger building floor plate. The multiple attractions of this center type and its mix of residences, employment, retail, civic, and entertainment uses offer good opportunities for trip chaining—combining several trips to different destinations into a single trip—and make the Center an excellent transit target. Destination Centers also need visibility and access from major roads, although access from US 29 may be limited.

Destination Centers should include a Public Green with a minimum size of 3 acres. It is encouraged that these Public Greens be associated with public or institutional uses (i.e., a local library or community center) or facilities either adjacent to or integrated into the Green.

## **Uptown**

The “Uptown” is a special area—it is both a Center and a Neighborhood. It is planned to be the most urban place in the Places29 Area, with multiple focal points, an intense mix of uses and an environment that caters to a broad range of interests and activities. With a total of 84 acres, it is larger than many of the Neighborhoods in the Places29 area. The Uptown combines the characteristics of a Center and a Neighborhood in one place (see Figures 4.25 and 26 below). Beyond a Public Green (minimum size 3 acres), the Uptown should include plazas, pocket parks, and/or institutional uses associated with publicly accessible outdoor spaces. More detailed information about the Uptown is given under “Neighborhoods” below.

## **Neighborhoods**

Together, the Center and the walkable area surrounding it form a Neighborhood. A well-designed Neighborhood should be pedestrian friendly, but also accommodate bicyclists, transit riders, cars, and appropriate delivery and other larger vehicles. Open space and buildings at a human scale are an integral part of the overall Neighborhood design. Density and land use generally, but not always, vary from the Center to the edge of a Neighborhood's walkable area.

A key prerequisite for a Neighborhood to work is that the area surrounding the Center – and the Center itself – needs to be walkable and designed to accommodate pedestrian needs. Walkable in this context means three things: (1) the presence of sidewalks or multi-use paths that allow safe pedestrian travel to the Center, (2) a high level of connectivity, and (3) a relationship between adjacent uses and the sidewalk or path that creates a comfortable and interesting pedestrian environment. Connectivity is high when multiple access points exist between a Center and its surrounding areas and if routes between surrounding areas and Centers are convenient as opposed to being circuitous. See the sidebar on this page for more information on connectivity [\[sidebar is included in Appendix of Illustrations\]](#).

People live, work, or both in the walkable area surrounding a Center. The distance from the smaller Centers (Civic Green and Neighborhood Service) to the outer edge of the walkable area around them is about 1/4 mile, which an adult can walk in about 5 minutes. The distance from the major Centers (Community and Destination) to the outer edge of their walkable area is closer to 1/2 mile, which an adult can walk in about 10 minutes. (See Figures 4.30-A through 4.30-D).

These larger Centers may encourage people to walk longer distances because they have a more diverse mix of uses that constitute a bigger “draw” and because these Centers provide a pleasant walking environment. The Unified Design Guidelines give further direction for the relationship of Neighborhoods to their Centers and flexibility in terms of walking distance to allow for topography, physical barriers, parcel size, and other potential constraints.

The overall character of the Neighborhood is largely determined by the dominant land use (residential, employment, or mixed use). Because a Neighborhood tends to include different residential types at varying densities, it should provide housing and employment choices that address the needs of a broad range of Albemarle County’s population. Accordingly, there are three types of Neighborhoods in the Places29 Master Plan: Residential, Employment, and Mixed Use Neighborhoods. One of the Centers described above forms the core of each Neighborhood.

## **Residential Neighborhood**

Residential Neighborhoods are residential areas organized around and well-connected to a Civic Green or one of the larger, mixed-use centers. The residences have convenient pedestrian and bicycle connections to the Center (see Figures 4.18 through 4.20). They are generally located within a 1/4 to 1/2 mile walking distance from the Center. The residences may be single-family detached, townhomes, condominiums, or apartments in any of a broad variety of densities and configurations. A mix of residential types is ideal. Other uses, such as schools, places of worship, and civic uses may also be located within a Residential Neighborhood. Some mixed-use development is also allowed, such as live/work units.

## **Employment Neighborhood**

The Employment Neighborhood reflects the importance of the Places29 area as a major employment center for Albemarle County and the larger region. In an Employment Neighborhood, employment uses are organized around a Civic Green Center or a Neighborhood Service Center. (See Figures 4.21 and 4.22 and 4.11 above). A Neighborhood Service Center provides service and retail opportunities to workers employed by businesses located in the Center and in the area around the Center. A Civic Green Center provides opportunities for active and passive recreation for employees of businesses located around the Center.

Organizing employment uses into walkable areas around Centers gives employees the opportunity to be less car dependent. Employees have the opportunity to walk to restaurants during their lunch break or after work, and they can shop for goods and services in the Center without having to make a separate trip. This pattern encourages carpooling, riding a bicycle, or taking transit to work.

The Neighborhood Service Centers in Residential and Employment Neighborhoods differ from one another in the scale of allowed uses and area of building footprints. For instance, in Employment Neighborhood Service Centers the largest allowed building footprint for office uses is 20,000 square feet and for Auto Commercial Service is 7,500 square feet. In Residential Neighborhood Service Centers the footprint of buildings for office uses may only be 15,000 square feet and for Auto Commercial Service only 5,000 square feet. Allowing larger scale buildings within the Employment Center reflects the employment focus of the Center and surrounding area. Another distinction lies in the mix of uses, where Office/R&D uses are allowed in Employment Neighborhoods, but not in Residential Neighborhoods.

Clusters of businesses that support or serve one another are encouraged to locate in the same Employment Neighborhood. Other uses, such as recreational, retail, and public facilities may also

be located in these Neighborhoods to provide services to employees. Residential uses may also be located in the Center of an Employment Neighborhood to provide additional activity during nonworking hours and to create transitions to adjacent Residential Neighborhoods.

## **Mixed Use Neighborhood**

The distinguishing feature of a Mixed Use Neighborhood is that the area around the Center can include the full range of residential and nonresidential uses (see Figures 4.23 and 4.24). While the intensity of uses is higher in the Center of a Mixed-Use Neighborhood, the mix of uses in the area around the Center creates a level of activity that is similar to that of a Center. In Mixed Use Neighborhoods, residential uses are found primarily on the upper floors of mixed use buildings (with offices or retail on the ground floor), but residential uses may also be in blocks of apartments, row houses, and single family homes on small lots. Mixed Use Neighborhoods are also well-suited for live-work units located on the first floor of buildings. The close integration of residential uses with offices, retail, commercial, employment, civic uses, and urban parks creates vibrant places that are active throughout the day and into the evening hours. Mixed Use Neighborhoods provide a unique setting for homes and businesses that satisfy a market niche for those that value a highly active and dynamic urban experience. Because the entire Neighborhood is mixed use, the Center is more fully integrated into the Neighborhood than other Centers in Residential or Employment Neighborhoods.

## **Uptown**

The Uptown is planned to be the most urban place in the Places29 Area. It combines the characteristics of a Center and a Neighborhood by offering a broad range of uses and activities in one location, which may include residential, employment, and institutional, as well as entertainment and unique institutional uses.

The “Uptown” is a special form of the Mixed Use Neighborhood; it is dominated by a mix of uses, but due to its density, these different uses will be predominantly in mixed-use buildings (see Figure 4.25 and Figure 4.26). The Uptown will include multiple focal points, such as public greens, plazas, pocket parks, and institutional uses, that will act as Centers within the larger fabric of the Uptown, and will also complement one another to create a unique place that attracts people from the Places29 Area and beyond.

The Uptown will provide an urban experience that is similar to Downtown Charlottesville; an environment that is more compact, pedestrian-friendly, and features active public spaces. The Uptown will complement the economic and employment opportunities generated by the nearby Charlottesville-Albemarle Airport and the UVA Research Park. Care has been taken in locating the Uptown and in defining its allowed uses and physical characteristics, so that it can thrive and achieve the goal of becoming the urban heart of the Northern Development Areas.

## **Airport District**

As defined in the Neighborhood Model, Districts are single-use areas. Only one District is delineated in the Places29 Area: the Charlottesville-Albemarle Airport. The Airport, which will develop according to the Airport Master Plan, plays a vital role in the future development of the Uptown and Northern Albemarle County. The airport will also serve as a catalyst for surrounding industrial uses that provide services to the airport and benefit from proximity to the airport.

Buffering and accessibility are two particularly important considerations for incorporating the Airport District in to the Places29 area. Due to aircraft operations, it is necessary to create a

physical buffer between parts of the airport and surrounding residential uses. These considerations are addressed in the design guidelines (see Chapter 7.) At the same time, it is important for the airport to be fully integrated into the transportation systems in the Places29 Area, the City of Charlottesville, and the larger region so that the needs of air travelers and freight shippers are met.

### ***Types of Public Open Space in Centers***

The County's Comprehensive Plan recognizes the important role of public open spaces in urban development and their pivotal role in establishing the high quality urban environment envisioned for the Development Areas. Urban parks and open spaces, such as squares, pocket parks, and tot lots, provide an important contrast between built and natural forms within the fabric of the Places29 Area. They also provide opportunities for social and recreational activities in close proximity to residential, commercial, and employment uses. In addition, if designed to provide a sense of arrival and place, open spaces can become community focal points with a strong civic character.

The types of open spaces that complement the place types are described briefly below. Please refer to Chapters 5 and 7 for a more comprehensive discussion of open spaces in the Places29 Area.

#### **Civic Green**

The Civic Green serves as the main feature of a Civic Green Center. The Civic Green is a public open space of 1 to 3 acres in size that is the main focal point for the surrounding residential or employment land uses. It may include a tot lot, playground, or other smaller scale facilities for active recreation, as well as multi-purpose lawns and park areas with ornamental character, dedicated to passive recreation (Figure 4.327).

#### **Public Green**

Public Greens are required in Community and Destination Centers, and in the Uptown. In Community and Destination Centers, they are 2 to 3 acres in size. In the Uptown, they are 3 or more acres in size, and there may include more than one of them. Public Greens have a program very similar to that of Civic Greens. They provide a focal point for the activity in a mixed-use center that should be well integrated into and centrally located in the fabric of these more intense Center Types. Planned developments are encouraged to pair Public Greens with civic or institutional uses, such as libraries, museums, day care or teen facilities, or community centers, in order to broaden the level of public activity and to extend the hours of activity into the evening (Figures 4.328 and 4.29).

#### **The Schoolyard**

Similar to Civic Greens, schoolyards can function as a focal point that is entirely open space, such as playfields, multi-use lawns and other amenities. Schoolyards act as a Center to form a Neighborhood with surrounding residential uses, if these are oriented toward and spatially frame the schoolyard. The schoolyard also must be conveniently accessible from the residential area that surrounds it. The design of the schoolyard should convey a sense of arrival and civic presence. Due to the type of facilities provided, such as active playfields and community meeting facilities, these parks have the potential to attract users beyond the neighborhoods immediately around them. It should be noted that Schoolyards are not open to the public during school hours.

## Other Urban Open Spaces

In addition to the urban open spaces described above, this Master Plan requires smaller scale public open spaces to be integrated into the Neighborhood fabric of mixed-use and residential areas (such as squares, tot lots, and others). These are intended to provide residents with access to some type of open space within 1/8 mile from their residence.

### ***Place Types Applied***

The Framework Map in Chapter 5 (Figure 5.1 A and 5.1 B) shows the distribution of Neighborhood Service, Community, and Destination Centers in the Places29 Area. The approximate locations of Civic Green Centers are shown on the Green Infrastructure Map (Figures 5.29 A and 5.29 B). The organization of land uses into walkable areas around these Centers follows the tenets of the Neighborhood Model. Future development or redevelopment outside of Centers is located either:

1. Within 1/4- or 1/2-mile walking distance from the nearest Neighborhood Service, Community, or Destination Center, or the Uptown (shown on the Framework Map); or
2. Within 1/4-mile walking distance from a Civic Green Center (shown on the Green Infrastructure Map).

### **Defining the Walking Shed of Centers**

This Master Plan requires that all new development be located within a complete Neighborhood, either within the Neighborhood's Center or the walkable area around the Center. The walkable area surrounding a Center is also called its walking shed. This section explains how to determine the extent of the walking shed for each Center. This determination is important where new development is located beyond a 5- to 10-minute walk from a Center and will require an additional Civic Green Center in order to form a complete Neighborhood.

Walking sheds play a key role in deciding where to locate Civic Green Centers, since Civic Greens are required in all areas that lie outside the walking sheds of Neighborhood Service, Community, and Destination Centers, as well as the Uptown. New development in areas located outside of the walking sheds of these Centers can only form a Neighborhood if it is located within walking distance from a Civic Green Center.

The following concepts of how to properly determine the walking sheds around Centers and the locations where a Civic Green Center is required are illustrated in Figures 4.30-A through 4.30-D.

The walking shed of Civic Green Centers and Neighborhood Service Centers is determined by measuring a 1/4-mile radius from their center point. The walking shed of Community Centers, Destination Centers, and the Uptown is determined by measuring the 1/4-mile walking distance from the Center's edges rather than its center point. Initially, all development within the 1/4-mile radius around the Center is considered to be within its walking shed (Figure 4.30-A). However, the presence of physical barriers to pedestrian travel, such as creeks without frequent bridge crossings, steep topography, other barrier-like natural features, protected areas, or the presence of US 29 may reduce the size of the area within the 1/4-mile radius that is considered walkable. (Figure 4.30-B)

In order to allow the flexibility necessary for implementation in a broad range of locations, development located within 500 feet beyond the 1/4-mile radius may be considered within a Center's primary walking shed. This rule is particularly useful when a physical barrier or complex property ownership limits the area outside of the 1/4-mile radius so that it would be difficult to justify the creation of an additional Civic Green Center.

For Community and Destination Centers and the Uptown, development beyond the 1/4-mile radius (and the 500-foot extension area) up to 1/2-mile from the center point of the Center is considered within the Center's walking shed if an easily accessible, direct, and walkable connection between the center of the proposed development and the mixed use Center is provided. A walkable connection is a sidewalk or multi-use path. As with the 1/4-mile radius, a 500-foot extension is applicable beyond the actual radius of 1/2 mile (Figure 4.30-C). The effective walking shed of Centers can also be enlarged by establishing connections to areas within the 1/2-mile radius that were initially cut off from the center by barriers (illustrated by the bridging of the stream near the Community Center in Figure 4.30-D). This may occur when a project's implementation is phased.

Areas of new development or major redevelopment that lie outside the walking sheds of any Center should add a Civic Green Center in order to form a complete Neighborhood (Figure 4.30-D). Figure 4.30-D also illustrates that, after the addition of Civic Green Centers, some smaller areas may remain outside the walking shed of any mixed use and Civic Green Center. Adding Civic Green Centers in order for these small areas to become complete Neighborhoods may pose an undue burden or be considered economically infeasible. In such cases, County Staff should determine whether a combination of pocket parks, tot lots, and playgrounds can substitute for the Civic Green Center in those areas.

## **Relationship to Transect**

The concept of the Transect was introduced with the Neighborhood Model and is discussed in Chapter 5. The Transect regulates allowable land use densities and intensities relative to the location of a parcel within the Places29 area. The density of residential uses is described as dwelling units per acre, and for nonresidential uses as a floor area ratio. The Transect regulates the intensity and density of development from the center to the edge of a Development Area. The Transect's gradient stretches from areas of higher intensities/densities toward less intense/dense areas at the edge. The Transect Map (see Chapter 5, Figures 5.2 A and 5.2 B) illustrates this gradient in the larger Places29 Area. In addition, there is a gradient within Neighborhoods, where the intensity of development generally decreases as one moves away from the Center, reaching its lowest intensity at the edge of the Center's walking shed. This condition is illustrated by the gradually decreasing allowable intensity around the Neighborhood Service Center at the left in Figure 4.31. In the illustration, the change in intensity is expressed by conceptual building elevations of different heights and the intensity gradient line that traces the classification of development across transect zones. In comparison, the right side of Figure 4.31, illustrates that in a condition where Centers are located in close proximity to one another and their walking sheds overlap, the resulting intensity gradient may not reach the lower intensities normally found at the edge of the walking shed (this is illustrated by the Community Center and Uptown in Figure 4.31). Closely spaced Centers with overlapping walking sheds exist in Hollymead and south of the South Fork of the Rivanna, as a result of existing and approved development.