Land Use

INTRODUCTION

Parker has evolved and grown since its founding in 1862 and its incorporation in 1981. Starting as a small residential community sprinkled with dairy and cattle farms, through growth cycles that affected the entire Front Range, annexations of large areas of unincorporated lands and preservation of natural environments.

Parker has become a community that has maintained its’ hometown feel as we’ve grown, balancing residential and commercial development with open space and parks. Today, Parker boasts a healthy mix of land uses, as illustrated below (see Figure 6A).

Continuing to perpetuate this balance is essential as we grow. As of 2010, there were 5,179 acres of vacant or underdeveloped land in the Town and future Planning Area boundary. The General Land Use Plan (see Figure 6B) sets forth the basic framework for how this land should grow and evolve through 2035.

Figure 6A: Parker Land Use, 2010
Source: Town of Parker
We listened...

Growing Smart

When asked about growth during the public participation process, citizens consistently supported a ‘managed/planned/controlled’ scenario over ‘unlimited’ or ‘no’ growth. Tied to that was the importance of establishing the appropriate balance between housing, commerce and open space, limiting the negative impacts on the community and directing development to appropriate locations. The Plan embraces a controlled growth scenario and implements strategies that reflect citizen priorities.
GOALS AND STRATEGIES

1. Growth shall be appropriately directed and site-planned to sustain our community’s needs as we grow.

1.A. Strengthen the identity of Parker by encouraging a balance of land uses that supports a high quality of life and contributes to the hometown character of our community.

1.B. Ensure that growth occurs in a manner that balances the pace of development with the ability of the Town and special districts to provide quality services and capital improvements, such as utilities, transportation, parks and open space and police protection.

1.C. Ensure adequate opportunities for future expansion of our economic base in appropriate locations in the community.

1.D. Increase the amount of open space using the criteria set forth in the Open Space, Trails and Greenways Master Plan which emphasizes supporting a regional greenway network that provides a community separation buffer from development in neighboring jurisdictions while maintaining the viability and connectivity of the natural ecosystem.

1.E. Encourage transitions between different land uses and intensities.

1.F. Develop land use patterns that are compatible with and support a variety of transportation opportunities and/or choices.

1.G. Sensitively integrate the built environment with the natural environment in order to protect the native landscape and topographical features naturally occurring throughout our community.

1.H. Encourage land uses that create a sense of community among those who work, live and play within appropriate neighborhoods.

1.I. Ensure that open space and parks are dedicated and made available to meet the needs of the community today and into the future.

1.J. Continue to review our Land Development Ordinance to assure that it is fair, consistent and understandable.

1.K. In order to preserve the inventory of commercial and light industrial properties within the Town, amend the Land Development Ordinance to not permit self storage, mini-warehouses, outdoor storage and related storage uses within the Town including in existing Planned Development zone districts.
GENERAL LAND USE PLAN

The General Land Use Plan (see Figure 6B) is an important element of the Master Plan, intended to clarify how we move toward a clear plan for the Town’s future. The General Land Use Plan is focused primarily on the physical form and development pattern of the Town and sets forth a basic framework, showing how Parker should grow and evolve through 2035.

Planning Area
The General Land Use Plan includes a ‘Planning Area’ as one means of managing our community’s growth. The Master Plan assumes that the Planning Area boundary will generally remain as presently configured. However, the Planning Area boundary needs to be flexible in order to provide for minor amendments to accommodate changing conditions. Modifications to the Planning Area must be reviewed by the Planning Commission and approved by the Parker Town Council.

Open Space, Parks and Sensitive Natural Areas
The Town values our open space, parks and sensitive areas. Direction for determining the appropriate location, type and amount of land that is required to be dedicated as open space and public parks in association with development is embodied in the ‘Open Space, Trails and Greenways Master Plan’ and the ‘From Values to Visions: A Strategic Action Plan for Parker’s Parks and Recreation’. Specific provisions for protecting, preserving and enhancing open space, parks and sensitive natural areas are found in the regulatory requirements of the Town’s ‘Land Use Code’.
A Framework

The General Land Use Plan provides the framework for making zoning decisions, but does not itself zone land. The Master Plan indicates only broad categories of land use for future development, whereas the Zoning Map delineates the exact boundaries of zone districts and establishes specific, detailed regulations, which apply within them.

Neighborhood and Community Centers depicted on the Plan are not intended to indicate the exact boundaries, but to illustrate the intersections in which these areas are located.

Parks and Open Space

Parks and open space are defining attributes of the Town. Our community will have a balanced system of open lands, natural areas, recreational spaces and parks, including trails and urban open areas. Development and redevelopment will be required to preserve lands for parks and open space. Guidance for preservation of these lands is provided in the "Open Space, Trails and Greenways Master Plan" and "From Values to Visions: A strategic Action Plan for Parker’s Parks and Recreation."

Disclaimer: The property boundaries, titles, legends, scale, reference to individual parcels and any and all other data shown or depicted on this map is for visual representation only and may not be accurate. Further studies and surveys, on a site-specific basis, are required to verify this data.
General Land Use Plan Designations
Two major types of designations are illustrated in the General Land Use Plan; ‘Character Areas’ and ‘Centers’.

Character Areas
The areas contained on the General Land Use Plan are grouped into twelve kinds of places, or ‘Character Areas’ that make up our Town; E-470 Corridor, Central Commercial District, Light Industrial District, Mainstreet Master Plan Area, Mixed Use Residential Emphasis, Mixed Use, Medical District, Regional Retail District, Employment District, Medium Density Residential and Low Density Residential. These Character Areas are described below.

E-470 Corridor
E-470 is a toll highway that acts as an eastern beltway for the Denver Metropolitan Region. This beltway, which bisects Parker near its northern boundary, connects the Town to the regional transportation network and provides easy access to the Denver International Airport. The location of this highway through Town allows for higher intensity uses without significantly impacting our transportation system or the character of our community.

Each of the Character Areas within the E-470 corridor has distinct characteristics and therefore development in this corridor should be contemplated in a cohesive and thoughtful way to ensure the long term land use compatibility and viability of the corridor. This corridor will develop as a series of interconnected places that serve regional retail, medical, employment and higher density residential needs.

Character Areas within the E-470 Character Area are listed and described below:

Mixed Use
This Character Area will allow residents to walk and bicycle to their daily needs including retail, employment and recreation through a blend of compatible land uses, public amenities and an integrated multimodal transportation system. Land uses appropriate within this Character Area include a variety of higher intensity uses including multifamily, senior housing, assisted-living facilities, office, retail and restaurants. No one land use will dominate the overall development pattern within this Character Area. Single family detached residential uses and residential at less than 10 dwelling units per acre are not appropriate in this area. Densities may be reduced as a transition to adjacent residential development.
Medical District
Located at the eastern most end of the emerging E-470 medical corridor, the Parker Adventist Hospital and the supporting uses serve as an anchor and catalyst for this Character Area. The Character Area will focus on state of the art medical care, preventative health care and wellness to create an industry synergy that ensures a successful business environment. Appropriate uses include hospitals, medical offices, health care clinics and facilities, rehabilitation centers and hotels. Retail uses are appropriate where they provide an ancillary service in size, scale and purpose to the medical uses.

Regional Retail District
The Parker Road and E-470 intersection is a significant gateway into the community and the only opportunity for E-470 traffic to enter and exit the tollway for free from both directions. This Character Area will provide more intense retail including large format retail (big box) and restaurant uses focused on serving both local and regional needs. Other commercial uses such as office and entertainment may be appropriate on a limited basis.
The E-470 Corridor will develop as a series of interconnected places that serve regional retail, medical, employment and higher density residential needs.
Employment District
Primary jobs and higher educational opportunities are essential for the success of our community. The E-470 corridor’s easy access to regional employment centers and regional transportation facilities including DIA and Centennial airport along with its location near hospitals and other medical industries make it an attractive location in Parker for businesses to locate. Primary uses appropriate in this Character Area include professional, medical and corporate offices, light industrial uses, flex office, research and development facilities and a higher educational campus. Light industrial uses will be focused on light manufacturing with ancillary warehousing and distribution. Light industrial uses in this Character Area are not intended to include primary use warehousing, outdoor storage or ministorage uses.

The primary uses in this district attract a variety of complementary uses, such as business and personal services, convenience retail, child care and restaurants. These complementary uses may be located near the intersection of Chambers and Compark Blvd. but should be clearly ancillary in scale and purpose of the character area.

Mixed Use – Residential Emphasis
This Character Area is located adjacent to regional and locally significant commercial areas. These multifamily residential areas will be interconnected and provide easy and direct pedestrian and bicycle access to nearby commercial and employment areas. Uses appropriate in this Character Area include higher density residential housing, senior housing, assisted-living facilities and mixed use developments that include a commercial component. Commercial uses are encouraged when they are part of a mixed use development, are of a scale that serve the needs of the area residents or provide support to adjoining uses. Single family detached residential uses and residential developments at less than 10 dwelling units per acre are not appropriate in this area.
Central Commercial District
The Central Commercial District encompasses the commercial core of the Town. Due to its central location, with access to Parker Road, Dransfeldt Road and Twenty Mile Road and current land uses, growth in this Character Area should focus on core retail, services, offices, lodging, restaurants, entertainment and, to a lesser extent, higher density residential uses as part of a development with a mix of uses and a design that focuses on vehicular and pedestrian connectivity between uses. Vertical mixed use is highly encouraged where appropriate.

Light Industrial District
The Light Industrial District is centrally located with spaces that generally serve smaller local light industrial businesses that supply local, regional and sometimes national markets. This character area is intended to provide a location for a variety of work processes such as manufacturing, machine shops, production facilities, distribution facilities, flex office, commercial services and other uses of similar research and development, high tech and medical device manufacturing firms that have a synergistic relationship. Processes and land uses within this character area will be low impact in nature and not create or cause fumes, odor noise, vibration or other impacts which are detrimental to abutting properties or land uses. Special care should be taken to ensure that uses not compatible with the light industrial uses proposed within the character area are located in other more appropriate areas of Town. Public Facilities are appropriate within the character area.

Mixed Use- Residential Emphasis, Outside of the E-470 Character Area
This Character Area is located between the Light Industrial area and Cherry Creek. This multi-family residential area will be interconnected and provide easy and direct pedestrian and bicycle access to nearby commercial and employment areas. Uses appropriate in this Character Area include higher density residential housing, senior housing, assisted-living facilities and mixed-use developments that include a commercial component. Commercial uses are appropriate when they are part of a mixed-use development, are of a scale that serve the needs of the area residents or provide support to adjoining uses. Single family detached residential uses and residential developments at less than 10 dwelling units per acre are not appropriate in this area.
Mainstreet Master Plan Area
The Mainstreet Master Plan envisions future development for the Mainstreet corridor as a pedestrian-friendly environment that supports a vibrant and sustainable downtown area. Building upon this vision, new development and redevelopment strategies for the larger Mainstreet corridor will strive to encourage active pedestrian-oriented ground floor uses for buildings and parcels adjacent to Mainstreet, while directing office and residential uses to upper floors. Focus will be placed on filling in physical gaps between existing buildings and increasing development intensity and critical mass.

Land Use
Appropriate land uses in the Mainstreet Master Plan Area emphasize three distinct themes as further described below.

Ground-Floor Active Uses
Ground-floor active uses will be promoted to support a walkable pedestrian environment with interactive storefronts for Mainstreet and abutting buildings and parcels throughout Downtown. Active ground-floor uses will include retail, restaurants, boutiques, coffee shops, art galleries, personal services and other similar uses.

Mixed-Use Housing
Higher density multi-family housing through a mixed-use environment will be encouraged throughout the plan area. Increasing residential housing units in a mixed use development fosters a more walkable, pedestrian-friendly environment in Downtown.

More Daytime Activity
Actively pursuing employers to the Downtown area will create a higher intensity of office jobs and higher education uses that support a daytime economy. By transitioning vacant parcels located within the Mainstreet plan area into a higher intensity of daytime uses, under-utilized land within Downtown will be revitalized into developments that will contribute to Parkers local economy and job growth.

Character
Creating a unique character for the built environment in Downtown involves creating high quality, appropriately scaled development, buildings and great public spaces for people to gather. Urban design will focus on buildings that work together to create a sense of place, great streets and connectivity between spaces and places, public art and streetscape (street trees, lighting, furnishings), without limiting a particular style or period of architecture. Appropriate urban forms that contribute to the character of the Mainstreet Master Plan Area emphasize three distinct themes as further described below.

Streetscape
Creating character, shade, and visual interest for the built environment in Downtown will emphasize the installation of a continuous line of street trees, public art, street furnishings, and hardscape along both sides of Mainstreet.

Building Heights
New development within the Mainstreet Master Plan Area must be a minimum of two stories, with up to five stories permitted in certain areas of downtown, creating a higher intensity of development that supports more activity, a vibrant street life and will attract a larger customer-base for existing and future businesses.

Architecture
To promote and enhance the Downtown character, emphasis will be placed on using high quality building materials in the design of authentic and diverse architecture.

Additional guidance on the type and character of development within the Mainstreet Plan Area can be found in the Parker Mainstreet Master Plan which was adopted in 2015 as an element of this Master Plan.

The Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) classifies the entire downtown area as an Urban Center through their Metro Vision 2035 Plan, as amended.
Neighborhoods

Neighborhoods serve as the primary building blocks of our community and focus on a range of mostly residential classifications, with an emphasis on single-family detached homes. Other community assets such as places of worship, schools and parks, are allowed within our neighborhoods. Pedestrian oriented small (less than 10,000 s.f. of building area per neighborhood) commercial uses may be appropriate where uses are focused on serving the immediate area. Such uses should not include gas, storage or drive through uses or repurposing of a residential home. Typical uses within neighborhoods include small retail, restaurants and personal service businesses. Uses and architecture should focus on compatibility with the surrounding residential area. These small commercial uses will be contemplated during the development review process as a part of a master-planned community.
In Parker, neighborhood developments are primarily master-planned. Within these master-planned developments, a variety of residential densities and/or dwelling types may be developed; however, the overall density, on a gross acreage basis, must reflect the densities shown on the General Land Use Plan. Individual lot sizes may vary in master-planned developments due to clustering of dwellings and the preservation of sensitive environmental features and open space. Special care should be taken to provide adequate transitions between uses that have different intensities of development.

For calculation purposes, the gross density excludes the 100-year floodplain as mapped by FEMA and slopes of 20% or greater.

The General Land Use Plan describes two neighborhood Character Areas: Medium and Low Density Residential.

Medium Density Residential
The Medium Density Residential Character Area will consist of an overall gross density of 3.5 dwelling units per acre. Higher densities for housing for older adults may be considered as long as impacts are comparable to other uses permitted within this Character Area.

Low Density Residential
The Low Density Residential Character Area will consist of an overall gross density of 2.2 dwelling units per acre. Higher densities for housing for older adults may be considered as long as impacts are comparable to other uses permitted within this Character Area.
Community, Neighborhood and Highway Commercial Centers

Neighborhood Centers and Community Centers are located within Medium Density and Low Density Residential Character Areas and are generally situated at major intersections. These Centers must be carefully planned and coordinated to avoid negative impacts to traffic capacity and adjacent land uses. Development within these Centers should transition into the surrounding neighborhood, both in terms of land use and design features. These Centers, created to protect and serve residential neighborhoods, are defined below.

The physical characteristics of Community and Neighborhood Centers includes the concentration of commercial development near the intersections of major arterials or collector streets. Preserving key commercial corners of these intersections is necessary to ensure adequate locations for commercial development to serve visitors and residents of the Town.

Important commercial/retail corners should be accessible to transit, are walkable, have good automobile access, are visible from the roadway and have the potential to connect to a neighborhood.

It is important that Neighborhood Centers and Community Centers incorporate multi-modal access to existing residential neighborhoods and, where planned, higher density residential use is integrated into the Center design as a secondary element.

Mixed-Use Planning Areas within Neighborhood Centers and Community Centers shall have no less than 33 percent of their total land area developed for commercial use. Limited exceptions may be made for vertical mixed-use development, clustering to address environmentally sensitive areas or improve urban design.

Neighborhood Centers

Neighborhood Centers should be planned to serve the basic needs of the surrounding residents. Typical uses within Neighborhood Centers include convenient retail and personal/business services, generally anchored by a grocery store. Other compatible uses such as small offices, recreational uses and restaurants are also permitted.

Generally, the total Gross Leasable Area (GLA) for the commercial/office components within an entire Neighborhood Center should range from 50,000 to 250,000 square feet combined.

In general, a Neighborhood Center shall have no less than 33 percent or eight (8) acres, whichever is greater of its total land area zoned and developed for commercial use with corner located parcels zoned and developed principally for commercial, retail, service and restaurant use. Residential use shall be a secondary element unless part of a vertical mixed-use.

Higher density residential is appropriate in these Centers as a transition between less intense residential areas and non-residential areas when developed as part of a mixed-use development and when the design encourages residents to walk or bicycle to obtain goods and services. Massing and scale of higher density residential development shall respect the scale and massing of adjoining land uses and shall reflect an integrated neighborhood feel. Typical garden style apartment designs are not appropriate.
Community Centers
Community Centers are areas that are larger than Neighborhood Centers and have a larger market area, serving multiple neighborhoods. Typical uses within Community Centers include retail and personal/business services. Other compatible uses such as small offices, recreational and restaurants are also permitted. Generally, the total Gross Leasable Area (GLA) for the commercial/office components within an entire Community Center should range from 250,000 to 500,000 square feet combined.

In general, a Community Center shall have no less than 33 percent or 20 acres, whichever is greater of its total land area zoned and developed for commercial use with corner located parcels zoned and developed principally for commercial retail, service and restaurant use. Residential use shall be a secondary element unless part of a vertical mixed-use development.

Highway Commercial Center
Located at major intersections along E-470 these Centers overlay other Character Areas and the land uses may also focus on the demands of the traveling public and the needs of residents returning to or leaving Parker. Appropriate uses in these areas include those of the underlying Character Areas, but also contemplate uses such as convenience retail with gas stations and hotels.