

# 5 Neighborhood Convenience Center — NCC

The following sample approach is designed to encourage a community to describe its location and characteristics — its unique local assets. Based on these assets and the community's goals for the future, an intent / vision statement can be crafted. Land uses, guidelines, and standards are then suggested to support a vision specifically oriented toward the NCC, as one of six prototype commercial districts.

## Location and Characteristics

Many Sierra communities have existing corner stores that have historically served local needs. These Neighborhood Convenience Centers (NCCs) have a mix of commercial services and, on occasion, residential uses. Location and convenient pedestrian and vehicular access to surrounding residences are critical to their success. The site, typically ranging from 1 to 3 acres, must be located at a pedestrian-friendly corner, have frontage onto a collector or arterial street, and service a population of approximately 2,500 to 5,000 people. NCCs can provide limited housing options, serve as incubators for small businesses, and provide a place for neighbors to run into each other. The most successful NCCs include a bus stop, postal drop, newspapers, bike racks, and even locations to tie up dogs. NCCs are usually greater than 1,000 sf and less than 20,000 sf. Sierra NCCs serve nearby residences, second-home owners, and drive-by traffic within limited commercial hours.

## Intent

NCCs encourage pedestrian activity, increase convenience, and reduce vehicle trips, by meeting the daily needs of neighborhood residents, with staples such as milk, bread, newspapers and coffee. They serve as a place for neighbors' paths to cross while doing errands. Standards control the number, size, location and hours of operation of these uses, in order to prevent undesired competition with the downtown, maintain neighborhood scale and compatibility, and establish a framework for future expansion into a full-fledged Neighborhood Center (NC).



A local favorite, Donner Pines Kitchen is a vibrant meeting spot.

## Land Use



### Appropriate Uses — Ready, Set, Go

- Retail sales and services under 5,000 sf (e.g. deli, coffee shop, salon, video rental)
- Rental units in upper stories or owner work / live situation
- Offices and clinics
- Daycare
- Restaurants
- Public phones, community notice boards, postal kiosk, walk-up ATM
- Civic parks, playgrounds, village greens
- Transit stop



### Conditional Uses — Proceed with Caution (Appropriate Design Solution Required)

NCCs may evolve into NCs – the following uses would signal demand for that evolution.

- Retail sales and service between 5,000 and 15,000 sf
- Neighborhood serving production facility less than 5,000 sf with retail outlet (e.g. food packaging)
- Lodging and services (e.g. cleaning and repair)
- Government use (e.g. recreation center, schools)
- Clubs and religious institutions
- Entertainment (e.g. theater)



### Non-Appropriate Uses — Stop

- Vehicle fuel, sales and service
- Bars
- Wholesale or outdoor commercial storage
- Manufacturing and production
- Freight and distribution
- Drive-through services (e.g. restaurant, bank)



General guidelines are discussed in Chapter 3 with specific guideline recommendations for NCCs included in Appendix A.

## Standards

### Lot

---

- Floor area ratio (floor space to land area) — minimum 0.25-1.
- Site frontage — 60% of façades within the minimum and maximum setback (maximized for retail display toward the street).
- Front yard setbacks — minimum 0 ft. to maximum 20 ft.
- Side yard setbacks — minimum 0 ft. to maximum 20 ft. (wider setback where parking is provided).
- Rear yard setbacks — allow for parking wherever possible.

### Building

---

- Building height — minimum 15 ft. to maximum 25 ft. for 1-2 story character.
- Building width — minimum 30 ft. to maximum 60 ft.
- Building transitions — already at residential scale.
- Building projections — balconies, canopies, or awnings should be used to create protected, covered sidewalks.
- Architectural features — doors, windows, siding, and trim should fit neighborhood context.
- Building massing — to fit neighborhood scale.
- Hours of operation: Commercial hours limited — 6 a.m. to 9:30 p.m.

### Streetscape / Landscape

---

- Traffic — two-lane bi-directional streets, narrow lane widths and bulbouts with crosswalks to slow traffic.
- Bicycles — Class III bicycle lanes each direction, also serving as parking / traffic lane buffers.
- Sidewalks — wide sidewalks with patterned surfaces (minimum 8 ft.-maximum 20 ft.) with outdoor dining / display areas linked to the building façades / uses. Bench seating at each use.
- Crosswalks — different pattern and heavier texture than traffic lanes.
- Patio — provide patio spaces with gathering areas, seating, tree canopy, planters, bicycle racks.
- Trees / Planters — tree canopy required in sidewalk cutouts where on-street parking is provided and in landscape parkway strips where on-street parking is not provided.

- Lighting — pedestrian pathways to be illuminated by 1-foot candles while parking lots and outdoor display areas should have a maximum lighting level of three-foot candles — recommend [www.darksky.org](http://www.darksky.org) standards.
- Signage — to fit residential neighborhood character.
- Snow storage — designated storage on or off site. Coordinate on-site storage areas with storm water detention facilities.

### Parking

---

- Parking — create a “park once” environment. Mixed parking types are preferred. Where appropriate, parallel or diagonal parking is desired to keep pavement widths narrow. Parking structures could be appropriate if site restrictions permit.
- Off-street parking — lots, garages, driveways, etc. should be oriented to a side or rear yard. Small clusters of surface parking may be used.
- On-street parking — provided on at least one street adjacent to the main building entrance, and credited toward the minimum parking requirement.
- Transit stop — required and part of Transportation Element of the General Plan.
- Density — minimum 3 spaces / 1000 sf (shared use), maximum 4 spaces / 1000 sf.
- Special events — small parking courts double as plazas with shuttle availability.
- Services / Deliveries — in rear or during non-peak hours.



This community market / deli is a busy anchor in a mixed use Truckee neighborhood.

# 5 Dutch Flat – A NCC Case Study<sup>1</sup>

## Location and Characteristics

Dutch Flat is a Gold Rush community made up primarily of residences in rolling foothill topography. The Neighborhood Convenience Center (NCC) is on the main street and surrounded by residential streets with other key community institutions within easy walking distance – school, cemetery, church, etc. Established in the 1850s, Dutch Flat grew rapidly as hydraulic mines provided rich yields. It also became the foothill base for planning the transcontinental railroad and housing numerous Chinese laborers. The legacy of the Gold Rush includes today's pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods characterized by small wood-framed Victorian-style historic homes and mature shade trees.

The NCC services this local community and houses the historic hotel that continues to welcome travelers to the area. The hotel houses a B&B for guests, a small store, and an outdoor garden for family gatherings and events. The recent detailed and high-quality restoration of the hotel is expected to draw increased tourism.

## Intent

Provide convenient services to the neighborhood of Dutch Flat. Maintain current ease of pedestrian access, safety for children, small community character, and neighborhood meeting space. The challenge is to maintain the historic character and charm as density increases in the area. One possibility is to plan the growth of the NCC to become an NC or DMS by converting more residences on this section of Main Street to commercial and mixed uses and infilling vacant parcels.

## Actual Uses

- Retail sales and services under 5,000 sf
  - General Store
  - Hair salon
  - Real estate office
  - Gift shop – antiques, cards
- Lodging – historic hotel B&B
- Post office
- Residences alongside NCC and between commercial buildings
- Garden and “wedding site” for music or other events behind hotel

- Community notice board and newsstands
- Clubs
  - Historic Odd Fellows building (I.O.O.F.)
  - Mason building
  - Museum run by local historical society

## Actual Standards in Place

As opposed to recommended standards, this describes what was actually seen in site visits.

### Lot

---

- Floor area ratio (floor space to land area) — historic standards maintained.
- Site frontage — 90% of façades are right on the street front.
- Front yard setbacks — minimum 0 ft. to maximum 20 ft.
- Side yard setbacks — minimum 0 ft. to maximum 20 ft.
- Rear yard setbacks — shallow rear yards back up to other residences.

### Building

---

- Building height — minimum 15 ft. to maximum 45 ft. Historic hotel is high 3-story with gabled roof.
- Building width — minimum 15 ft. to maximum 60 ft. All small buildings with the exception of hotel.
- Building transitions — radical transition from the 3-story hotel to small 1-2 story buildings.
- Building projections — porch roofs extend over sidewalk in front of all commercial buildings. The hotel has a boardwalk covered by balconies.
- Architectural features — doors, windows, siding, and trim to fit neighborhood context. Some commercial establishments retrofitted from historic homes.
- Building massing — fit neighborhood scale. Two historic buildings (the hotel and I.O.O.F.) are the largest buildings and serve as the visual anchors for the NCC.



## Streetscape / Landscaping

- Traffic — bi-directional streets with narrow lane widths and parallel parking.
- Bicycles — no visible accommodations.
- Sidewalks — wide sidewalks in front of commercial buildings are discontinuous along the street, forcing pedestrians into street in some locations. Limited bench seating provided.
- Patio — covered patio spaces provided. Hotel has 3 balconies and provides public gathering area in the rear garden.
- Trees / Planters — Mature tree canopy is maintained.
- Lighting — no street lighting. Building lighting provides safe pedestrian access to commercial fronts.
- Signage — fits residential neighborhood character with wooden painted signs throughout the NCC and historic interpretive plaques. One interior neon beer sign is sole anomaly.
- Snow storage — not needed in this foothill community.



The market and post office in Dutch Flat serve the local community and passing tourists. Buildings sited close to the street reflect the historic patterns of this Sierra town.



An important landmark, the historic Dutch Flat Hotel continues to welcome travelers to the area and provides a gathering spot for locals.

## Parking

- On-street parking — parallel parking provided along both sides of the road serves locals and narrows the street to slow traffic.
- Off-street parking — one small side lot for parking near market as well as rear parking for hotel.
- Transit stop — not evident in this community.
- Density — parking is somewhat haphazard as buildings are historic structures, so on-street parking is the main source of spaces.
- Special events — held on the street itself.



The friendly walk into the Dutch Flat Market goes down rural streets and under overhanging trees that create a sense of intimacy.