

# Neighborhood Center — NC

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 NC, as one of six prototype commercial districts.

## Location and Characteristics

Neighborhood Centers are larger than Neighborhood Convenience Centers. They range from 3 to 20 acres and serve between 5,000 and 15,000 people. There are few in the Sierra, but with growth NCs are increasingly being incorporated into new master-planned communities. NCs are Mixed Use commercial developments surrounded by residential neighborhoods designed to serve local families. Individual land uses tend to range from 10,000 sf of leasable floor area to over 35,000 sf, with a maximum development of 100,000 sf. NCs provide more extensive services than NCCs and usually contain an anchor tenant or community facility. Successful NCs include residential units, live / work opportunities, and a transit stop. They are located at busy intersections, are easily accessible to residential areas, and attract both pedestrians and drive-by traffic. Most NCs aim for 5,000 or more passing vehicles per day and are located on the “drive home” side from work.

## Intent

Neighborhood Centers contribute to vibrant neighborhoods by meeting the daily retail, community, social, entertainment, and athletic needs of residents close to where they live. NCs are primarily supported by local residents, with additional revenue from drive-by visitors. NCs in established communities

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A Streetscape rendering with retail at street level and residential lofts above in a proposed NC for Gray's Crossing, Truckee.

should be new infill developments incorporated into new master plan developments. They should have well-conceived bright and open outdoor spaces such as plaza areas and patios interacting with the indoor spaces.

## Land Use



### Appropriate Uses — Ready, Set, Go

- Retail sales and service under 10,000 sf
- Residences in upper stories, live / work situations, or non-storefront ground floors
- Government use (e.g. library, community center, postal kiosk)
- Clubs and religious institutions
- Restaurants / bars / lodging
- Offices / clinics / daycare
- Upper-story commercial storage
- Services (e.g. dry cleaners, ATM) under 2,500 sf
- Entertainment (e.g. theater)
- Civic parks, playgrounds, village greens
- Transit stop



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

- Schools
- Manufacturing over 5,000 sf with retail outlet or wholesale
- Retail sales and service between 10,000 sf. and 35,000 sf. (e.g. anchor market)
- Vehicle fuel sales
- Neighborhood serving production facility less than 5,000 sf with retail outlet (e.g. food packaging)



### Non-Appropriate Uses — Stop

- Vehicle sales and service
- Drive-through services (e.g. restaurant, bank etc.)
- Outdoor commercial storage
- Manufacturing and production over 5,000 sf or with open storage yards
- Freight and distribution facilities



General guidelines are discussed in Chapter 3 with sample guidelines for NCs included in Appendix A.

## Standards

### Lot

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- Floor area ratio (floor space to land area) — minimum 0.25 to 1.
- Site frontage — 70% 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.
- Rear yard setbacks — allow for parking wherever possible.

### Building

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- Building height — minimum 25 ft. to maximum 40 ft. to accommodate up to 3 stories in center of NC.
- Building width — minimum 30 ft. to maximum 100 ft.
- Building transitions — height transitions or stepdowns should be provided adjacent to residential development.
- 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 to 6 a.m. to 9:30 p.m.

### Streetscape / Landscape

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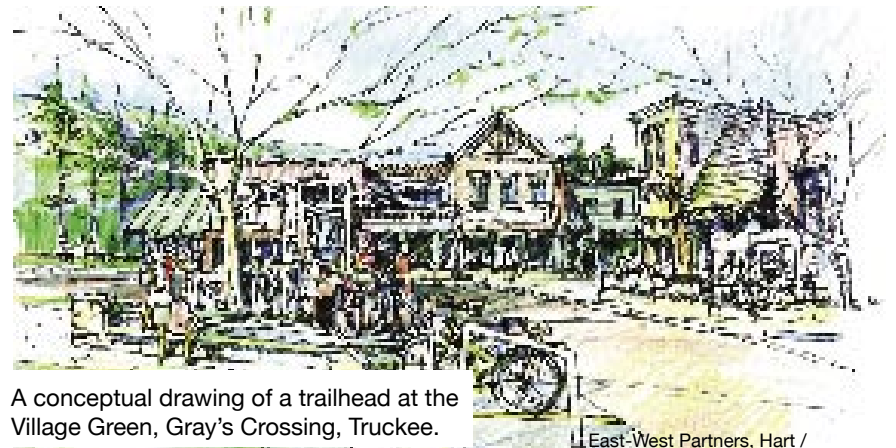
- Traffic — two-lane bi-directional streets with narrow lane widths and other traffic-calming techniques such as removable pylons.
- Bicycles — Class III bicycle lanes each direction on the street, also serving as parking / traffic lane buffers.
- Sidewalks — wide sidewalks with patterned surfaces. Minimum 8 ft. to maximum 20 ft. with outdoor dining / display areas linked to the building façades / uses. Bench seating at every 100 ft.
- Crosswalks — different pattern and heavier texture than traffic lanes.
- Plaza — provide plaza spaces with gathering areas, seating, tree canopy, planters, bicycle racks.
- Trees / Planters — tree canopy required in sidewalk cut outs 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 one foot-candle 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 in coordination with storm water detention.

### Parking

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- 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 or placed in a garage (e.g. underground). Small clusters of surface parking may be used.
- On-street parking should be provided on at least one street adjacent to the main building entry, and be 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) to 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.



A conceptual drawing of a trailhead at the Village Green, Gray's Crossing, Truckee.

East-West Partners, Hart /

# The Loma Rica Village Center – A NC Case Study<sup>1</sup>

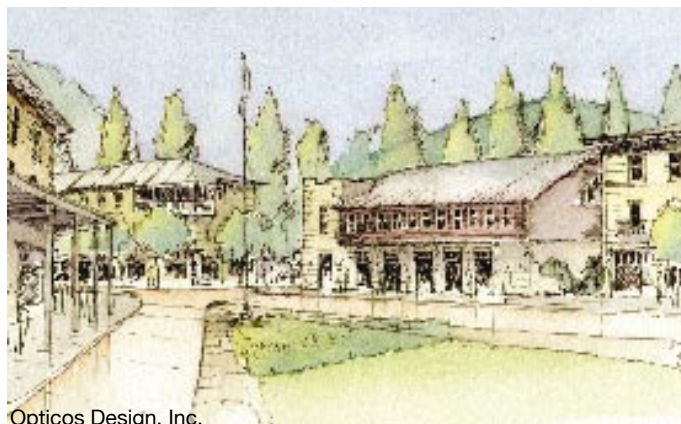
For this case study we have chosen a planned vs. built neighborhood center, given that there are few current NCs within the Sierra. With population growth, a number of large new planned communities are incorporating the NC concept.

## Location and Characteristics

Loma Rica is a large-scale planned foothill development in Grass Valley that is based on traditional neighborhood patterns. The 450-acre site comprises five distinct neighborhoods on approximately 140 acres with over 300 acres dedicated to parks and open space. An NC is planned to service the entire development. Located for easy pedestrian access within one of the four neighborhoods, the NC will be used by the wider Loma Rica community as they drive by, given its location on an arterial road. The site abuts a creek and public trailhead and has a Native American midden and meadows. The NC, planned for up to 93,000 sf, includes an anchor store, a health center, and smaller retail establishments along with offices and residences. The plan is to incorporate a minimum of 50% retail and a minimum of 10% public use. At buildout, as many as 197 upper-story units are planned for residential use above commercial and office areas.

## Intent

The NC is planned to be a vibrant centerpiece to the community, balancing retail, social activities, residences, and public uses. The setting is designed



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The proposed Loma Rica Neighborhood Center and Village Green.

to attract pedestrians through tree-lined streets and sidewalks from homes as well as a business park and health center. The small-footprint buildings are expected to serve as incubators for local businesses. The architecture is designed to reflect the historic town character of Sierra communities. The NC site is set aside for commercial and mixed use, and will grow incrementally over an 8-to-12-year period, as the wider development grows.

## Land Use

### Planned Uses

- Retail sales and service
  - 20,000 sf anchor store
  - Coffeeshops, restaurants
  - Pharmacy / theater / lodging
  - Services (e.g. drycleaners) under 2,500 sf
  - Retail sales under 5,000 sf
- Residences in upper stories, live / work situations, or non-storefront ground floors
- Government use (e.g. library, meeting hall, post office annex or kiosk)
- Village green, plaza, trailhead, connections to cemetery and community garden
- Health club with day-care facilities
- Offices and clinics
- Adjacent employment center (light industrial and office)

## Planned Standards

### Lot

- Floor area ratio (floor space to land area) — minimum 0.25 to 1.
- Site frontage — 100% of façades within the minimum and maximum setback along principal street.
- Front yard setbacks — minimum 0 ft. to maximum 10 ft.
- Side yard setbacks — minimum 0 ft. to maximum 5 ft. between buildings.
- Side street setbacks — minimum 0 ft. to maximum 10 ft. with 60% of façades within setback on side streets.
- Rear yard setbacks — allow for parking and small buildings with 20 ft. width to hide parking lane.
- The site will be subdivided into irregular lot sizes to encourage the preferred building massing and scale.



## Building

- Building height — no more than 50% of buildings can be one-story (e.g. 15 ft.) while the area can accommodate up to 4 or 5 stories for senior living and affordable housing.
- Building width — minimum 18 ft. to maximum 120 ft.
- Building transitions — taller buildings near core of NC. Transition to lower buildings at edge of NC and residential development.
- Building projections — galleries and awnings will be allowed to cover the sidewalk and particularly encouraged along south-facing streets.
- Architectural features — upper-story bay windows and balconies can extend 4 ft. into right-of-way.
- Building massing — property-lines will be set at various scales to ensure various size buildings. Small-footprint buildings will fit neighborhood scale but NC will allow up to 5 stories.

## Streetscape / Landscape

- Traffic — two-lane bi-directional streets. Grid system neighborhood with careful planning of feeder and arterial roads. Narrow lane widths and bulbouts with crosswalks to slow traffic.
- Bicycle trails, racks and usage will be accommodated, connecting the NC to other bike trails and a technical mountain bike course.
- Sidewalks — wide sidewalks. Minimum 5 ft. to maximum 20 ft.
- Crosswalks — different pattern and heavier texture than traffic lanes and varying with street type.
- Plaza — a gateway square at main intersection. There is also a village green area for informal meetings at the heart of the NC.
- Trees / Planters — tree canopy will be established along all neighborhood streets and featured in the NC.
- Lighting — pedestrian pathways to be illuminated by one foot-candle 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 — not needed in this foothill area.

The size of new planned communities necessitates NCs.

## Parking

- Parking — create a “park once” environment.
- Off-street parking — in small lots behind buildings with drive-through from one side street to the next for easy entrance and exit. Parking easements will be shared in rear of lots.
- On-street parallel parking will be provided and credited toward the minimum parking requirement.
- Transit stop — required and part of Transportation Element of the General Plan.
- Density — Within the NC, 2 spaces / 1,000 sf fixed requirement, with 1 additional space per residential, guest room, or live / work unit.
- Special events — small parking courts double as plazas with shuttle availability.
- Services / Deliveries — in rear or during non-peak hours. Utilities, dumpsters, etc. located in rear with parking.



# 6 Implementing CMU Approaches in Loma Rica

## Community

- Loma Rica incorporated CMU concepts into an NC in a new proposed master plan from the start. A large health club and employment center (light industrial and office) will be adjacent to the NC site attracting further activity.
- The overall design with the strong presence of parks and trails, proximity of the health center, and public facilities should help ensure that this retail area remains vibrant and attracts residents from throughout the community. Its location ensures easy pedestrian access and contributes to a less automobile-dependent community.
- While the initial 77-acre neighborhood is planned for 300 homes, substantial new units will be added in upper stories (up to 197 new residences) as the NC grows.
- The NC has plenty of room to evolve and expand as the development matures.
- The NC is being designed to respect the scale, proportion, forms, and patterns of the existing historic downtown Grass Valley.
- This NC is close to a classic Sierra DMS. Guidelines need to ensure that the goal of complementary functions evolves and this new retail area does not hurt the Grass Valley DMS.

## Buildings

- Building designs complement the wider community design. The one anomaly is the creation of a 5-story building as compared to the DMS 3-story maximum building height. This is designed to incorporate senior and affordable housing.
- Community buildings are being placed in prominent view corridors, consistent with historic patterns.
- Upper-story balconies overlook the streetscape and stream behind the NC creating attractive residences or outdoor restaurants etc. that use the views.
- Building materials including local quarried stone will be used in building base and siding materials, while fiber-cement siding is used predominantly in upper stories to enhance local character and beauty.
- Gabled and hipped roof forms dominate the building designs. Roofs will be varying types of metal with some composition shingle.
- Small-scale vertically oriented windows are consistent with the historic downtown pattern.
- Southern exposure is respected with appropriate glazing orientation and shading. Western shading with rooflines and awnings will also be needed. Tree planting must respond to solar control for buildings on eastern and western façades.



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Regional design standards are used to enable the NC to fit into the existing community character.



## Walkways

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- A street tree canopy is planned for the full NC area as well as awnings and galleries along southern-exposed streetscapes.
- Buildings encourage pedestrian access. Ground floor commercial / retail is oriented toward the principal street with appropriate canopies and awnings for weather.
- The NC is nicely connected to the residential neighborhood through streets with tree canopy and trails.

## Landscaping

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- The NC takes into account existing native vegetation, a buffer for the creek and a Native American archeological site. It further enhances the sense of open areas by encouraging a community garden and orchard.

## Parking and Services

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- To ensure that this NC does not evolve into a commercial corridor (CC), parking is established in the rear. It uses many side streets, is close to residences, and has clear zoning distinctions as it transitions to the neighborhood edge.
- The NC will need to provide parking for shuttles to downtown and shopping districts to help mitigate new population pressures on DMS parking.
- Parking lots will be screened from view in rear with design features or small buildings in rear corner lots to shield the parking lane. The small buildings of 20-ft. widths will be placed in rear corner lots with 0 ft. to maximum 10 ft. setbacks to enclose parking behind the building façades.
- Blocks and building footprints have been designed to accommodate shared parking and easy access from side streets.
- All utilities, garbage, transformers, etc. are specifically directed to the rear parking areas.



This proposed NC places residences and businesses in close proximity.