

8 Commercial Corridor — CC

We use the same sample approach as in the other five prototype commercial districts, as CCs exist throughout the Sierra. However, CCs do not add value to Sierra communities in the same way that other commercial districts do. Therefore, this chapter is oriented toward transitioning existing linear corridors into nodal mixed use developments wherever possible.

Location and Characteristics

Commercial Corridors (CCs) are strip commercial developments that have evolved in a linear pattern along our highways or arterial streets and outside our downtowns, often serving as gateways to our communities. Existing corridors in the Sierra vary in length from one block to several miles. They are automobile-oriented, characterized by multi-lane roads to accommodate traffic turns. They attract “big box” stores, fast food, automobile retail, and gas stations. They provide limited or no easy pedestrian access and encroach on valued open space and scenic vistas. They degrade our historic town patterns and town character. Corridors as gateways to our communities affect our travel experience, viewsheds, and sense of place.

Intent

Commercial Corridors should be avoided, and where possible, converted into nodal mixed use developments with attractive and functional streetscapes. New corridor zones should not be designated. Communities should provide



Auto-oriented strip malls diminish the unique character of Sierra communities and create seas of asphalt.

incentives for infill and redevelopment in existing CCs to encourage more compact use of the area. Higher design quality standards should be set for the auto-dependent retail establishments to integrate them into nodes of development subject to Shopping District (SD) standards and prioritized along the main axes from the DMS.

Land Use



Appropriate Uses — Ready, Set, Go

- Retail sales and service under 35,000 sf
- Residential units in upper stories and in transitional buildings linking residential areas to the nodal retail areas
- Offices and clinics
- Restaurants / bars
- Lodging and entertainment (e.g. theater)
- Vehicle fuel sales
- Drive-through services (e.g. restaurant, banks) in nodal development
- Public plazas, pedestrian connections, parks and open space
- Transit stop for regional and local shuttles



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

- Retail sales and service over 35,000 sf
- Wholesale and light industrial under 20,000 sf
- Manufacturing less than 10,000 sf with retail outlet
- Vehicle services (e.g. lube shops, parts stores) — preferred in light industrial zone
- Vehicle sales (encourage consolidation in one node — automall concept)
- Government uses (e.g. DMV, secondary post office, emissions testing)



Non-Appropriate Uses — Stop

- Schools, daycare, clubs and religious institutions
- Large outdoor commercial storage, freight and distribution
- Processing of raw materials
- Town hall, main post office, prominent civic uses



Suggested guidelines are discussed in Chapter 3 with specific guideline recommendations for converting commercial corridors into nodal mixed use developments included in Appendix A.

Standards

Standards are designed to encourage conversion of CCs into nodal retail and mixed use centers.

Lot

- Floor area ratio (floor space to land area) — minimum 0.3 - 0.5 to 1.
- Site frontage — create internal street frontage and streetscape. Require 50% of façades to face dominant street and maximize internal façade frontage for retail display and pedestrian access.
- Front yard setbacks — minimum 0 ft. to maximum 30 ft.
- Side yard setbacks — minimum 0 ft. to maximum 60 ft. to create flexible parking options and pedestrian walkways.
- Rear yard setbacks — as needed in nodes or multi-story parking.

Building

- Building height — minimum 25 ft. to maximum 50 ft.
- Building width — minimum 15 ft. to maximum 100 ft. per retail establishment.
- Building transitions — height transitions adjacent to residential development.
- Building projections — balconies, canopies, or awnings to create protected walkways.
- Articulated façades. Architectural treatments should respect the historic character of the authentic downtown.



Generic commercial strip design detracts from our Sierra heritage and sense of place.

- Orient to the dominant street and build around internal streetscape with walkways and pedestrian amenities.

Streetscape / Landscape

- Traffic — rezone highway lands for nodes instead of linear frontage. One- or two-way streets, narrow lane widths and speed bumps to slow traffic in network of internal public streets with maximum block length of 250 feet.
- Bicycles — accommodate circulation and parking.
- Sidewalks — minimum 8 ft. to maximum 30 ft. with outdoor dining / retail display areas. Bench seating at frequent intervals.
- Crosswalks — slow traffic for pedestrians with different pattern and heavier texture than traffic lanes. Landscaped walkways accessible to all parking nodes.
- Plaza — provide plaza spaces with gathering areas, seating, and bicycle racks.
- Trees / Planters — street tree canopy with surrounding planter areas following walkways.
- Lighting — eliminate external street lighting and attract cars into internal grid with softer lighting. Articulate pedestrian walkways and provide minimum safe lighting for parking areas — see www.darksky.org.
- Signage — monument signage on the main street directs drivers and lists services. Internal signage is pedestrian-oriented with concealed light sources directed downward. CC signage is dominated by auto-oriented backlit signage; convert to signage of higher design quality than suburban standards to be authentic in Sierra communities.
- Snow storage — designated storage on or off site. Coordinate on-site storage with storm water detention facilities.

Parking

- Parking — create a “park once” environment in small nodes oriented to internal streetscape and connected to walkways or multi-tiered structure.
- On-street parking should be provided on at least one street adjacent to the main building entry and credited toward the minimum parking requirement.
- Transit stops — required and part of Transportation Element of the General Plan to link with DMS, SD, and NC shuttle services.
- Density — minimum 2.5 spaces / 1,000 sf to maximum 3.5 spaces / 1,000 sf
- Orientation — nodal off-street parking in rear or side, public garage.
- Special events — internal street and parking area closure.
- Services / Deliveries — in rear or on side and removed from internal traffic orientation.

8 The Village Center in South Lake Tahoe — A CC Conversion Case Study¹

Location and Characteristics

The City of South Lake Tahoe is upgrading the image created by the development patterns and structures following the 1960s Olympics in nearby Squaw Valley. While development slowed after the formation of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) in 1972 — created to oversee development within the Lake Tahoe watershed — the city was left with a corridor of shopping strips bordering Highway 50. The 13-acre site known as the Crescent V shopping center was typical of grocery-store-anchored commercial projects in the late 1960s with smaller retail shops as linear infill spaces all set behind a large parking area. The buildings and asphalt paving combined covered approximately 97% of the site with a mere 3% in site landscaping. Defined pedestrian areas were absent. Stormwater runoff drained directly into the City storm drain system and ultimately into Lake Tahoe with no pre-treatment.

With tourism as the key economic driver of the community, improving South Lake Tahoe's image is critical for maintaining and expanding the visitors to the City. Redevelopment efforts are targeted toward improving existing impacts



A McDonald's in South Lake Tahoe conforms with appropriate design elements.

to the environment, incorporating architectural design that reflects the Tahoe mountain style, and encouraging greater pedestrian use of the streets and commercial areas.

Intent

The 13-acre Crescent V site has been redesigned as the Village Center with four critical objectives:

- 1) Improve the shopping experience by providing public amenities and defined pedestrian circulation throughout the site;
- 2) Reorganize the parking and introduce landscaping throughout the property to reduce the visual impact of the automobile;
- 3) Reuse the existing buildings, yet upgrade the architecture to reflect mountain design while adding covered arcades; and
- 4) Allow existing businesses to remain in operation while site and building improvements occur.

Land Use

Actual Uses

- Grocery store as key anchor to the Village Center
- Retail sales and service under 35,000 sf
 - Coffeeshop / bookstore
 - Sports store
 - Offices and clinics
 - Restaurants / bars
 - Art shops / gallery
- Public plazas, pedestrian connections, parks and open space
- Transit stop for regional and local shuttles
- Public restrooms



Standards in Place

Lot

- Floor area ratio (floor space to land area) — minimum 0.3 - 0.5 to 1.
- Site frontage — internal street frontage created with façades relating to the street and maximize internal façade frontage for retail display and pedestrian access.
- Front yard setbacks — maximum 30 ft.
- Side yard setbacks — maximum 60 ft. to minimize pedestrian exposure to vehicular areas.

Building

- Building height — maximum 50 ft.
- Building width — minimum 15 ft. to maximum 100 ft. per retail establishment.
- Building projections — balconies, canopies, or awnings provide protected walkways.
- Articulated façades. Architectural treatments respect mountain style architecture and adjacent properties.
- Buildings create internal streetscape with walkways and pedestrian amenities.

Streetscape / Landscape

- Bicycles — are accommodated in circulation and parking.
- Sidewalks — minimum 8 ft. wide at storefronts and a 10 ft. wide multi-purpose path wraps the perimeter of the property. Bench seating / seat walls provided throughout the project.
- Crosswalks — pedestrian walks are denoted with consistent striping and visibility. Walkways accessible to a majority of parking spaces.



Parking in the rear, new buildings on the streetfront, and improved landscaping are all part of redeveloping The Village Center.

- Plaza — plaza spaces with gathering areas, seating, tree canopy, planters, bicycle racks located within the project area.
- Trees / Planters — street trees and landscaping create a linear park with ample walkways and seating.
- Lighting — lighting for pedestrian and parking areas provide safety, and the use of cut-off fixtures minimizes light pollution.
- Signage — monument signage along the street directs driver and lists services. Internal signage is pedestrian-oriented with concealed light sources directed downward. Signage of higher design standards is consistent with the architecture.
- Snow storage — snow is stored at the rear of the property where parking is underutilized in the winter. In large snow situations it is hauled to a nearby snow storage area.

Parking

- Parking — a “park once” environment in small nodes oriented to the internal streetscape.
- Transit stops — part of the overall Coordinated Transit System (CTS) for the City. CTS includes state-of-the-art computer screens to summon transit vehicles and provides information on the area and the environment.
- Orientation — nodal off-street parking in rear and on side.
- A new multi-story city public parking structure has been built within 100 yards of the Village Center.
- Services / Deliveries — in rear or on side and removed from internal traffic orientation.

8 Converting a Commercial Corridor into South Lake Tahoe's Village Center

Community

Upgrading the commercial strips along Highway 50 is a high priority for South Lake Tahoe.

- The redevelopment partnership between the City and private businesses is working out from a central commercial area near the Heavenly ski resort gondola. This major pedestrian area, with a multi-story garage nearby, creates a vibrant hub for the wider community. The Village Center SD is adjacent to this resort oriented gondola / retail area.
- Conditions of approval require that existing impacts to the environment be addressed – the improvements to storm drainage and reduction of impervious surfaces were designed to substantially reduce sediments entering the storm drain system.
- The City is investing heavily in a Coordinated Transit System (CTS) – the Village Center is tied into a key node for this system located directly across the street.
- A visually critical part of the conversion was the addition of a new commercial building along Highway 50. It attracts pedestrians while also screening the internal parking area to the shopping center. The overall visual impact is no longer of a commercial corridor.

Buildings

- Buildings were renovated rather than demolished, which reduced the construction debris and minimized the use of new material.
- A complete overhaul of the architecture reflects a design vocabulary compatible with the mountain environment.
- Large covered walkways were incorporated along the front of the buildings to provide shelter during unsettled weather and snow.
- A coffeehouse / bookstore was placed on the streetfront, blocking the view of the parking area from Highway 50. The choice of retail store attracts pedestrian movement from the nearby hotels and gondola area.

The Village Center in South Lake Tahoe incorporates a wide multi-purpose path that wraps the perimeter of the property.



Walkways

- The perimeter of the site was redesigned to include a pedestrian promenade. A 10-ft.-wide multipurpose path was built with street trees, pedestrian lighting, and a 5 ft. minimum landscaped separation from the adjacent highway.

Landscaping

- The parking area was redesigned to include street trees and understory planting.
- The parking was more clearly organized around the landscaping to facilitate pedestrian circulation within the site.

Parking and Services

- The amount of impervious site coverage was reduced from 97% to 70%.
- All stormwater has been collected and distributed into an on-site detention basin to remove sediment prior to entering the storm drain system.
- Service and delivery areas were completely enclosed to screen the facilities from the adjacent streets and neighborhoods.

This rendering shows that the renovated SD reduces the visual impact of the automobile and provides over 25% more natural ground cover than the previous site plan.

