

Building Vibrant Sierra Communities: A Commercial and Mixed Use Handbook

In the Sierra Business Council's ten years of working to fulfill our mission to secure the social, natural, and financial health of the Sierra Nevada for this and future generations, we have learned a great deal about our Sierra communities and the people who live and do business in them. We share in the belief that there is an excellent opportunity, as population pressure continues, to promote a diverse, creative, and enduring economy in the Sierra. Thanks to the beauty of the surrounding areas, the outdoor recreational opportunities, our charming historic towns, and the high quality of life that attracts talented workers and entrepreneurs to the Sierra, we enjoy far more assets than do many regions. However, to capitalize fully on those assets and to enjoy a prosperous future, we must make wise planning decisions.

Time has shown us that the historic downtowns and neighborhoods have been the social, cultural, and economic centers of our communities for over a hundred years. These compact, pedestrian-friendly towns are unique to our region and have proven to be of enduring value. SBC believes they provide an excellent model for how to plan and enhance future development while we preserve what is best from our past.

Historically, Sierra towns have thrived with a combination of both commercial and residential development, what is referred to as commercial and mixed use (CMU). Given that there is no single reference to which builders, planners, or citizens can turn for information on successful mixed use approaches in the Sierra, the Sierra Business Council has invested in this publication. *Building Vibrant Sierra Communities: A Commercial and Mixed Use Handbook* brings together useful tools — language and code concepts — that communities can use to reinforce or catalyze CMU development; innovative, real-life projects in the Sierra that can be used as models; and valuable information about traditional Sierra town patterns. Join us in planning sustainable, vibrant commercial and mixed use centers that complement our Sierra environment, sustain our communities and honor our heritage.

To order more copies of this Handbook
visit www.sbcouncil.org
or call the Sierra Business Council at (530) 582-4800.

To Our Supporters

The Sierra Business Council is especially grateful to a number of donors whose contributions have allowed us to invest in the research and writing time that this project merited.

Our sincere thanks to:

The Henry M. Jackson Foundation

National Endowment for the Arts

The Compton Foundation

The National Trust for Historic Preservation

The Teichert Foundation

Design Workshop

For investing in the Sierra Business Council's core operations and our capacity to promote the social, natural, and financial health of the Sierra Nevada, we profoundly thank:

The 650+ members of the Sierra Business Council

The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

The James Irvine Foundation

Surdna Foundation, Inc.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	6
Chapter 1 The Renaissance of Commercial and Mixed Use Development in the Sierra.....	8
Introduction	
How the CMU Handbook Is Organized	
Additional Tools	
Chapter 2 The Roots of Sierra Commercial Development.....	12
Characteristics of the Sierra’s Historic Town Patterns.....	12
Topographic Variety, Mixed Use, Narrow Streets, Zero Lot Lines, Building Elevations, Building Materials, Pedestrian-Oriented	
Twentieth Century Changes	14
Where Are the Sierra’s Commercial Districts Today?	14
Compact but Limited Service, Compact and Full Service, Mixed Modern and Traditional, Traditional Surrounded by Modern, Strips and Malls	
The Future of Sierra Commercial Development.....	16
Back to the Future	18
A Diversity of Commercial Districts	19
Chapter 3 Encouraging Commercial and Mixed Use in the Sierra.....	20
Implementing CMU Approaches in Commercial Districts Throughout the Sierra.....	20
Setting a Clear Vision.....	21
Setting Guidelines and Standards that Enhance Our Historic Patterns	22
Community Design Guidelines	
Street Layout, Pedestrian Walkways, Public Spaces, Parking and Services	



Chapter 3 (continued)	
Site Design Guidelines	25
Building Position, Landscaping	
Building Design Guidelines	26
Building Scale, Building Materials, Architectural Features	
Learning from CMU Approaches Throughout the Sierra.....	27
 Chapter 4 Downtown / Main Street — DMS.....	28
Location and Characteristics, Intent, Land Use, Standards	
The Arbors in Murphys – A DMS Case Study	30
 Chapter 5 Neighborhood Convenience Center — NCC	32
Location and Characteristics, Intent, Land Use, Standards	
Dutch Flat – An NCC Case Study	34
 Chapter 6 Neighborhood Center — NC	36
Location and Characteristics, Intent, Land Use, Standards	
The Loma Rica Village Center – A NC Case Study.....	38
 Chapter 7 Shopping District — SD.....	42
Location and Characteristics, Intent, Land Use, Standards	
The Rock in Truckee – A SD Case Study	44

Chapter 8 Commercial Corridor Conversion — CCC.....	48
Location and Characteristics, Intent, Land Use, Standards	
The Village Center in South Lake Tahoe – A CC Conversion Case Study.....	50
Chapter 9 Rural Community Center — RCC.....	54
Location and Characteristics, Intent, Land Use, Standards	
Sierraville – A RCC Case Study.....	56
Appendices	
Appendix A: Sample Design Guidelines for Six Commercial Districts	60
Appendix B: Sierra Planning Directors’ Survey	66
Appendix C: Resources.....	70
Appendix D: Endnotes.....	72
Appendix E: Photo and Illustration Credits.....	73





Acknowledgments

Building Vibrant Sierra Communities: A Commercial and Mixed Use Handbook was brought into being thanks to the talent and hard work of many Sierran leaders who contributed greatly to this book. We are especially grateful to:

Craig F. Threshie, AIA, ASLA, Alpen Environs Architecture and Environmental Design, for his thorough engagement with writing and editing Chapters 4-9;

Steve Noll and Aaron Souza of Design Workshop for their help in design and composition; and

Janice Forbes of *Sierra Heritage Magazine* for her indispensable editing.

Many people contributed to this work and the Sierra Business Council particularly thanks the following architects, developers, photographers and businesses for their gracious willingness to share their ideas, plans, concepts, renderings, photos, and other creative work with SBC to help create this handbook:

Anderson Lamb & Associates — John Anderson

Andregg Geomatics, Inc. — Dennis Meyer

Beckering Photography — Thomas Beckering

Dave Carter Photography

Carville Sierra Inc. — Phil Carville

Dinsmore Sierra — Darin Dinsmore

Foxswrld Studio — Danny Goeschl

Downtown Grass Valley Association

East-West Partners, Hart / Howerton — Rick McConn

Ecologically Sustainable Design — Chip Coffman

Gibbs Planning Group — Robert Gibbs, President

Silverleaf Studio — Cesar A. Lopez

Mogavero, Notestine & Associates — Mike Notestine and David Mogavero

MWA Architecture and Engineering — Michael Mason

Opticos Design Inc.— Daniel Parolek and Stefan Pellegrini

Oregon Transportation and Growth Management — Gloria Gardner
Ortega & Associates, Inc. — Rudy Ortega
Placer County — Fred Yeager, Placer County Planning Director
RACESTUDIO — Bruce Race
Stroud Photographic — James Stroud
Swift & Associates — Peter Swift
Alpen Environs Architecture and Environmental Design — Craig F.
Threshie, AIA, ASLA
Teichert Land Company — Randy Sater, Senio Vice President and
Chairman of the Sacramento Chapter of the Urban Land Institute
Winter & Associates — Noré Winter

Ideas expressed in this publication evolved from conversations with
planning directors throughout the Sierra. We particularly acknowledge
the following for responding to our survey (*see Appendix B*) and
providing early feedback on this CMU Handbook:

Alpine County — Brian Peters
Amador County — Susan Grijalva
Calaveras County — Kim Hansen
Inyo County — Chuck Thistlethwaite
Lassen County — Bob Sorvaag
Mariposa County — Eric Toll
Mono County — Scott Burns
Nevada County — Mark Tomich
Placer County — Fred Yeager
Plumas County — John McMorrow
Sierra County — Julie Griffith
Town of Truckee — Tony Lashbrook
Town of Mammoth Lakes — Mike Vance
Tuolumne County — Bev Shane
Truckee Meadows Regional Planning Agency — Emily Braswell

SBC held four planning workshops across the Sierra to garner local
opinion on commercial and mixed use development. We are grateful
to the many participants, consultants, and planners who, through
their active participation, helped develop these guidelines and
strategies for implementation.

To determine the major current trends in commercial and mixed use
development, many representatives of chambers of commerce and
businesses responded to our survey. Our appreciation is extended to:

Amador Economic Development Corporation — Ron Mittelbrunn
Auburn Chamber of Commerce — Bruce Cosgrove
Big Pine Chamber of Commerce — Mike Valenzuela
Bishop Area Chamber of Commerce — Joe De Aguero
Calaveras County Chamber of Commerce — Diane Gray
Eastern Plumas Chamber of Commerce — Betty Heck
El Dorado County Chamber of Commerce — Laurel Brent-Bumb
El Dorado Hills Chamber of Commerce — Cheryl Dworman
Grass Valley / Nevada City Chamber of Commerce — Mary Ann
Mueller
Independence — Arlene Grider
Lee Vining — Nancy Boman
Lone Pine Chamber of Commerce — Kathleen New
Mariposa County Chamber of Commerce — Dorothy Kuhnel
Paradise Ridge Chamber of Commerce — Ed Salome
Shingle Springs / Cameron Park Chamber of Commerce — Carolyn
Doty
Sierra Economic Development District — Betty Riley
Tuolumne County Chamber of Commerce — George Segarini

For their work on this project, the Sierra Business Council thanks
Paquita Bath, Darin Dinsmore, Brandy Fox, Dioni Rey, and Jim Sayer.

