New Urbanism: What it Is and Isn't

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Response to a Problem

Since World War II, **cities have been spreading ever-outward.** Strip malls, parking lots, highways, and housing tracts have sprawled over the landscape.

The Principles of New Urbanism

The principles of the New Urbanism are defined by a **Charter,** which was developed between 1993 and 1996 by a broad range of architects, planners, interested citizens, scholars, elected officials, and developers. It was ratified at the fourth annual Congress, the annual meeting sponsored by CNU.

Charter of the New Urbanism

The Congress for the New Urbanism views disinvestment in central cities, the spread of placeless sprawl, increasing separation by race and income, environmental deterioration, loss of agricultural lands and wilderness, and the erosion of society's built heritage as one interrelated community-building challenge.

We stand for the restoration of existing urban centers and towns within coherent metropolitan regions, the reconfiguration of sprawling suburbs into communities of real neighborhoods and diverse districts, the conservation of natural environments, and the preservation of our built legacy.

We recognize that physical solutions by themselves will not solve social and economic problems, but neither can economic vitality, community stability, and environmental health be sustained without a coherent and supportive physical framework.

We advocate the restructuring of public policy and development practices to support the following principles: neighborhoods should be diverse in use and population; communities should be designed for the pedestrian and transit as well as the car; cities and towns should be shaped by physically defined and universally accessible public spaces and community institutions; urban places should be framed by architecture and landscape design that celebrate local history, climate, ecology, and building practice.

We represent a broad-based citizenry, composed of public and private sector leaders, community activists, and multidisciplinary professionals. We are committed to reestablishing the relationship between the art of building and the making of community, through citizen-based participatory planning and design.

We dedicate ourselves to reclaiming our homes, blocks, streets, parks, neighborhoods, districts, towns, cities, regions, and environment.

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The Principles of New Urbanism

Its principles are divided into three categories:

- The Region: Metropolis, City and Town
- The Neighborhood, the District, and the Corridor
- The Block, the Street, and the Building

We assert the following principles to guide public policy, development practice, urban planning, and design:

The region: Metropolis, city, and town

1. Metropolitan regions are finite places with geographic boundaries derived from topography, watersheds, coastlines, farmlands, regional parks, and river basins. The metropolis is made of multiple centers that are cities, towns, and villages, each with its own identifiable center and edges.

2. The metropolitan region is a fundamental economic unit of the contemporary world. Governmental cooperation, public policy, physical planning, and economic strategies must reflect this new reality.

3. The metropolis has a necessary and fragile relationship to its agrarian hinterland and natural landscapes. The relationship is environmental, economic, and cultural. Farmland and nature are as important to the metropolis as the garden is to the house.

4. Development patterns should not blur or eradicate the edges of the metropolis. Infill development within existing urban areas conserves environmental resources, economic investment, and social fabric, while reclaiming marginal and abandoned areas. Metropolitan regions should develop strategies to encourage such infill development over peripheral expansion.

5. Where appropriate, new development contiguous to urban boundaries should be organized as neighborhoods and districts, and be integrated with the existing urban pattern. Noncontiguous development should be organized as towns and villages with their own urban edges, and planned for a jobs/housing balance, not as bedroom suburbs.

6. The development and redevelopment of towns and cities should respect historical patterns, precedents, and boundaries.

7. Cities and towns should bring into proximity a broad spectrum of public and private uses to support a regional economy that benefits people of all incomes. Affordable housing should be distributed throughout the region to match job opportunities and to avoid concentrations of poverty.

8. The physical organization of the region should be supported by a framework of transportation alternatives. Transit, pedestrian, and bicycle systems should maximize access and mobility throughout the region while reducing dependence upon the automobile.

9. Revenues and resources can be shared more cooperatively among the municipalities and centers within regions to avoid destructive competition for tax base and to promote rational coordination of transportation, recreation, public services, housing, and community institutions.

The neighborhood, the district, and the corridor

1. The neighborhood, the district, and the corridor are the essential elements of development and redevelopment in the metropolis. They form identifiable areas that encourage citizens to take responsibility for their maintenance and

young. Interconnected networks of streets should be designed to encourage walking, reduce the number and length of automobile trips, and conserve energy.

4. Within neighborhoods, a broad range of housing types and price levels can bring people of diverse ages, races, and incomes into daily interaction, strengthening the personal and civic bonds essential to an authentic community.

5. Transit corridors, when properly planned and coordinated, can help organize metropolitan structure and revitalize urban centers. In contrast, highway corridors should not displace investment from existing centers.

6. Appropriate building densities and land uses should be within walking distance of transit stops, permitting public transit to become a viable alternative to the automobile.

7. Concentrations of civic, institutional, and commercial activity should be embedded in neighborhoods and districts, not isolated in remote, single-use complexes. Schools should be sized and located to enable children to walk or bicycle to them.

8. The economic health and harmonious evolution of neighborhoods, districts, and corridors can be improved through graphic urban design codes that serve as predictable guides for change.

9. A range of parks, from tot-lots and village greens to ballfields and community gardens, should be distributed within neighborhoods. Conservation areas and open lands should be used to define and connect different neighborhoods and districts.

The block, the street, and the building

1. A primary task of all urban architecture and landscape design is the physical definition of streets and public spaces as places of shared use.

2. Individual architectural projects should be seamlessly linked to their surroundings. This issue transcends style.

3. The revitalization of urban places depends on safety and security. The design of streets and buildings should reinforce safe environments, but not at the expense of accessibility and openness.

4. In the contemporary metropolis, development must adequately accommodate automobiles. It should do so in ways that respect the pedestrian and the form of public space.

5. Streets and squares should be safe, comfortable, and interesting to the pedestrian. Properly configured, they encourage walking and enable neighbors to know each other and protect their communities.

6. Architecture and landscape design should grow from local climate, topography, history, and building practice.

7. Civic buildings and public gathering places require important sites to reinforce community identity and the culture of democracy. They deserve distinctive form, because their role is different from that of other buildings and

The Region

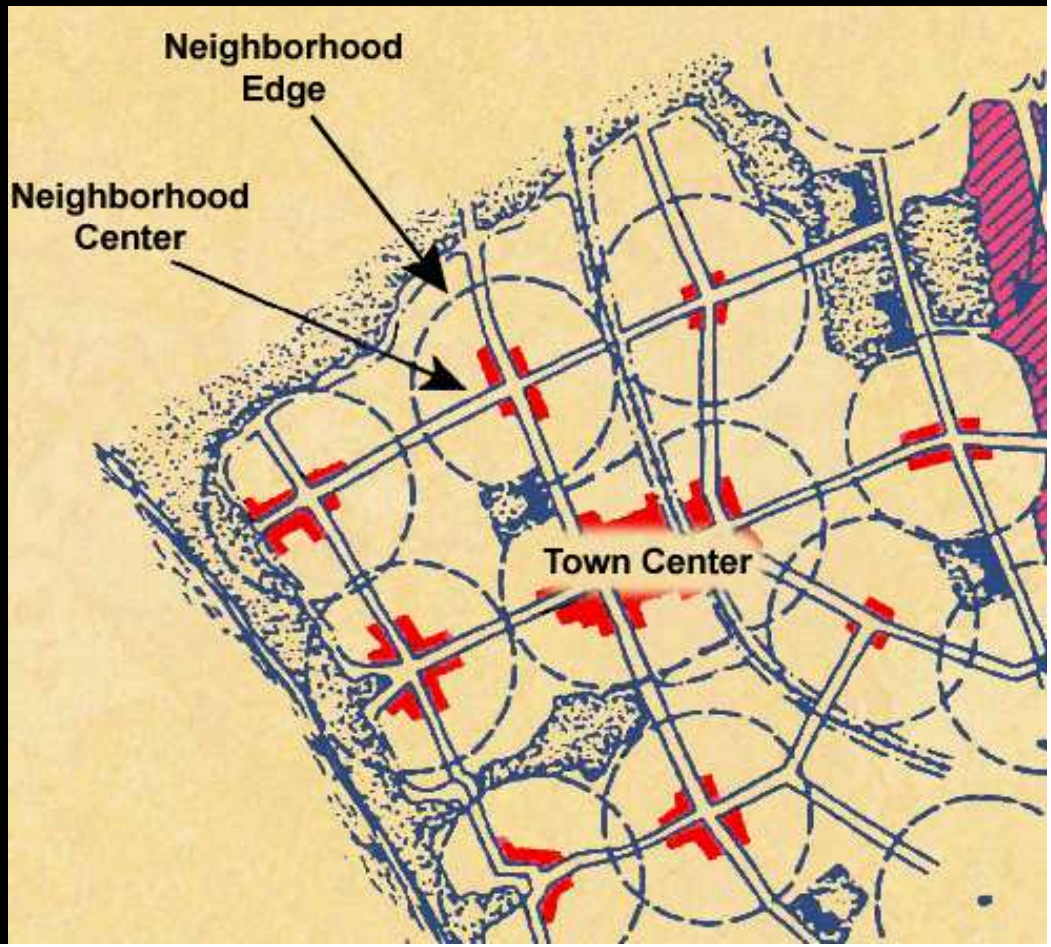
For new urbanists, the region is the overall context for all planning. That means planning must often **cross traditional jurisdictional lines** in order to create a healthy region.

The Neighborhood

Diverse, walkable neighborhoods are what distinguish New Urbanism from other modern development styles.

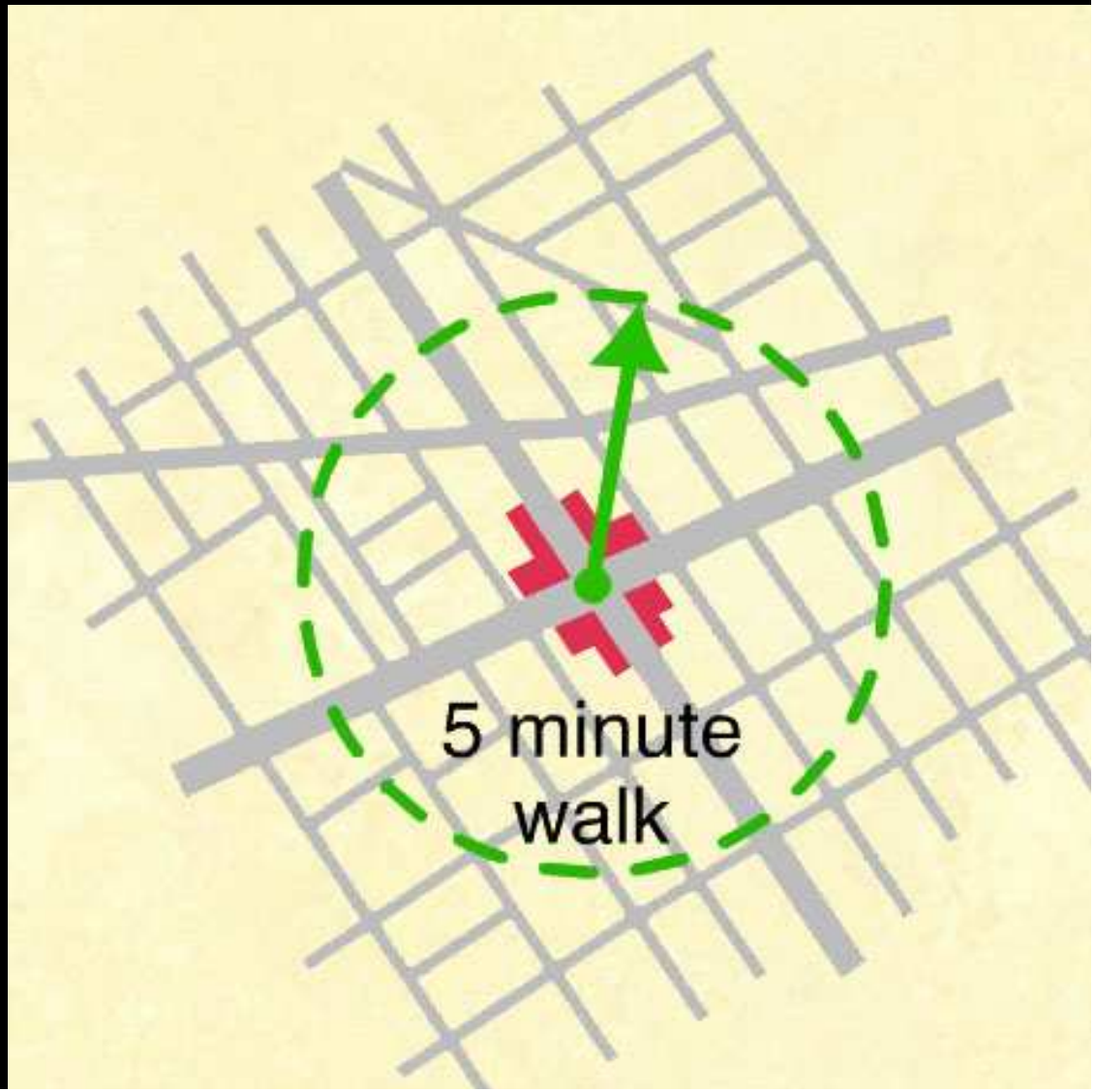
The Neighborhood

The word “neighborhood” gets tossed around a lot in real estate brochures, so it is important to be clear what it means. **Each neighborhood has a center and an edge.** The center should be a public space, whether a square, a green, or an important intersection.



The Neighborhood

The optimal size of a neighborhood is a quarter-mile from center to edge. For most people, a quarter mile is a **five-minute walk.** For a neighborhood to feel walkable, many daily needs should be supplied within this five-minute walk. That includes not only homes, but stores, workplaces, schools, houses of worship, and recreational areas.



The Block, Street, and Building

If there is one thing that reduces the livability of most postwar suburbs, it is the fact that streets do not feel like pleasant, shared spaces.

The Block, Street, and Building

In New Urbanism, streets are **safe, comfortable, interesting places for people to walk and meet.** Buildings open onto sidewalks, rather than parking lots. Windows and doors facing the sidewalk make streets safer, and more interesting, for everyone.

The Block, Street, and Building

New Urbanist streets can **accommodate cars** while also providing comfort and convenience for **pedestrians, bicyclists, and wheelchair users.**

Early Efforts

In the early 1990s, the movement was often termed “neo-traditional” planning. However, that term was a misnomer. As the New Urbanism evolved, its proponents recognized that good urbanism is possible with **many types of architecture, town layouts, and densities.**

Progress in the Suburbs

In new suburban developments, new urbanists are including an **ever-wider range of architectural styles.** While many new urbanist developments have been built with colonial-style architecture, recent projects include neighborhoods of contemporary homes and adobe.

Cities Get It

In 1990, most older American cities were neglected and deteriorating. New home buyers were almost exclusively interested in living on the urban fringe.

Cities Get It

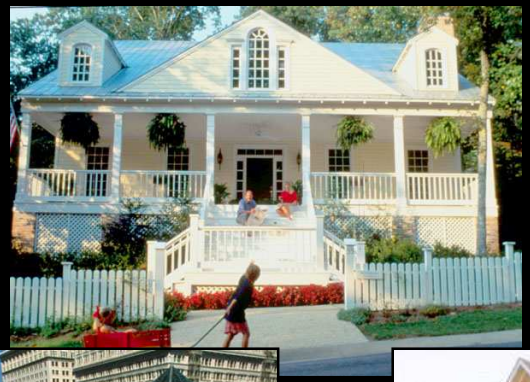
Today, young childless households and empty nesters are jostling for urban real estate. **Urban reinvestment is paying off.** Older cities have become America's hottest real estate markets.

Summary

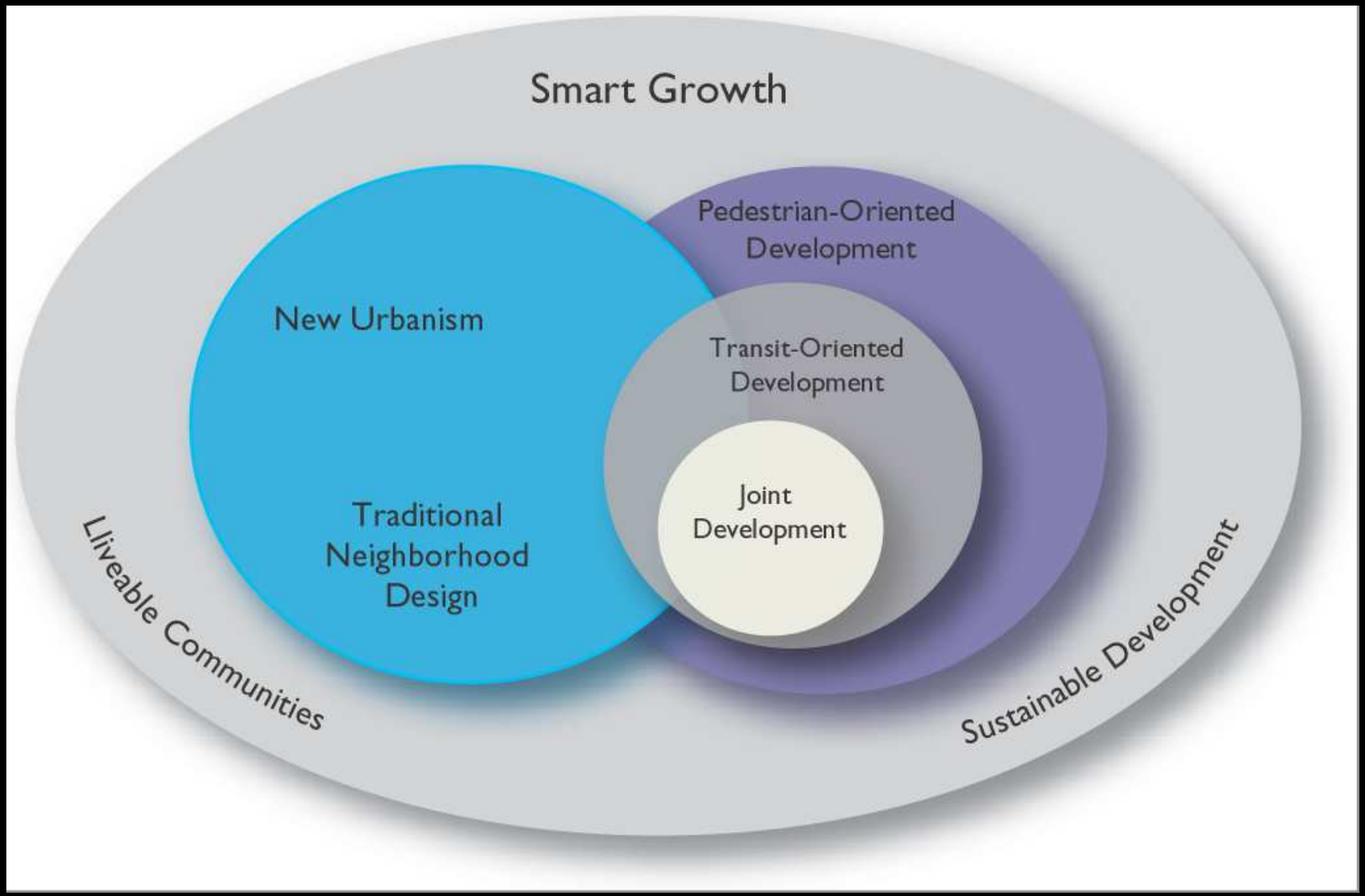
Today, real estate investors are withdrawing from sprawl development. Every year, it grows clearer that **there is a tremendous market demand** for real neighborhoods, for lively cities, and for regions with plenty of protected open space.

Summary

New Urbanism is inspiring **political leaders** eager to solve social, economic, and traffic problems all at once — while making cities and towns more beautiful and dignified. Popular "Smart Growth" policies promote New Urbanism while reducing subsidies for sprawl. These policies are now at the top of the agenda for the nation's mayors and governors.



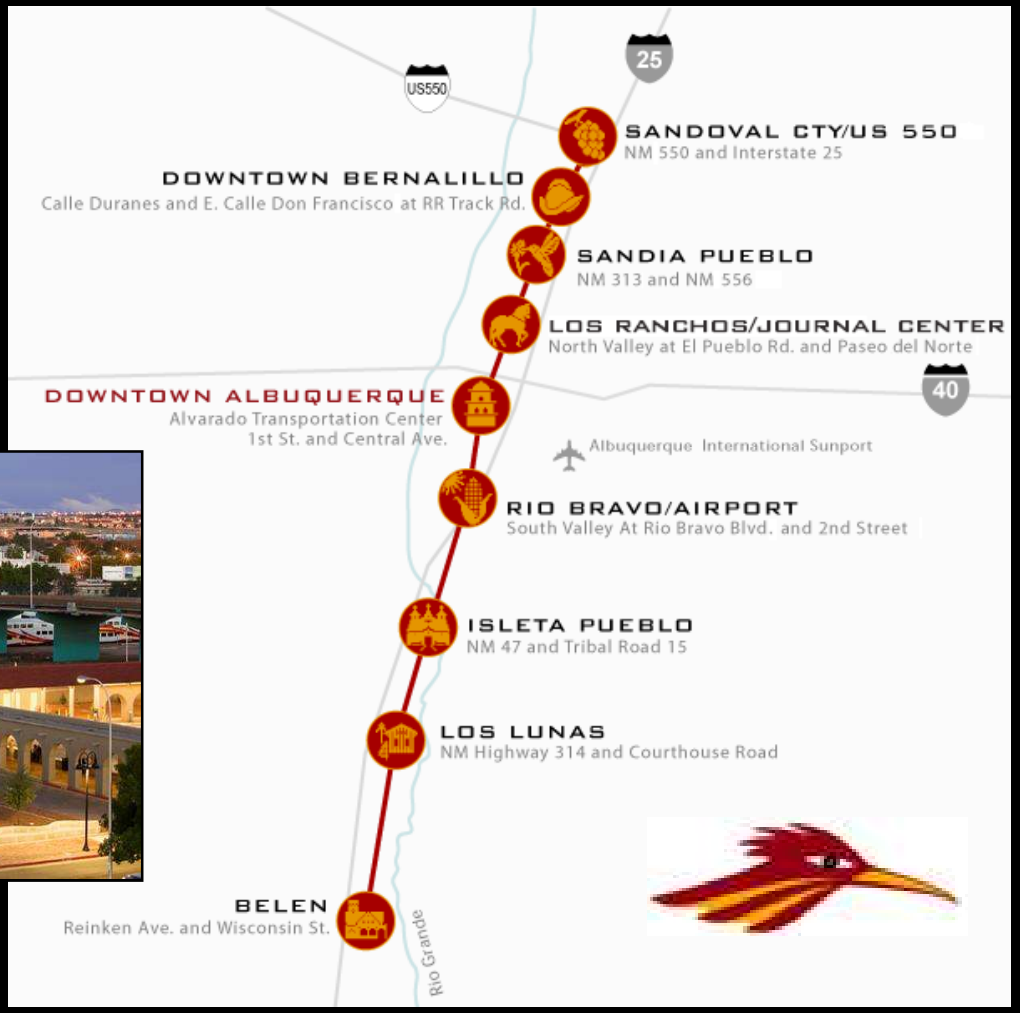
Smart Growth to TOD – A Planning Continuum



Transit-Oriented Development

Rail transit stations are natural focal points for walkable, mixed-use districts.

But different station areas can and should play different roles in a region's economy.



TOD: One Size Does Not Fit All

TOD Type	Land Use Mix	Typical Project Housing Density	Regional Connectivity	Frequencies
Urban Downtown	OfficeCenter Urban Entertainment Multifamily Housing Retail	>60 units/acre	High Hub of Radial System	<10 minutes
Urban Neighborhood	Residential Retail Class B Commercial	>20 units per acre	Medium Access to Downtown Subregional Circulation	10 minutes peak 20 minutes offpeak
Suburban Center	Primary Office Center Urban Entertainment Multifamily Housing Retail	>50 units/per acre	High Access to Downtown Subregional Hub	10 minutes peak 10-15 offpeak
Suburban Neighborhood	Residential Neighborhood Retail Local Office	>12 units/acre	Medium Access to Suburban Centers and Access to Downtown	20 minutes peak 30 minutes offpeak
Neighborhood Transit Zone	Residential Neighborhood Retail	>7 units/acre	Low Access to a Center	25-30 minutes Demand Responsive

TOD Place Typology
Center for TOD

Each region is different

Hierarchy of place types from rural to urban

Stations can play different roles along a corridor:
- Central city downtown
- Suburban job center
- Transit-oriented neighborhood
- Park and ride

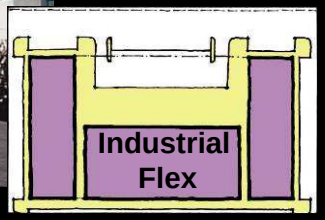
Each community needs to identify its own goals for the transit station area

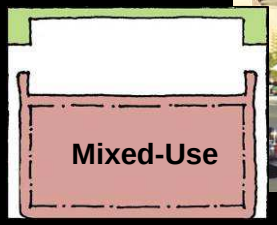
What is Successful TOD?

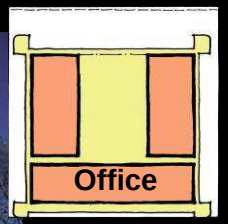
TOD is more than just development placed next to transit

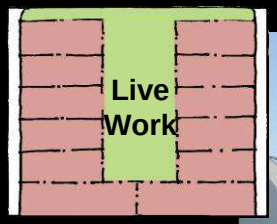
Elements of TOD - A Mix of Uses

Variety of uses depending upon market support









Pedestrian-oriented Design

Success of TOD can be gauged
by the pedestrian experience:
Retail patrons walk between shops
Transit riders walk to destinations
Neighbors walk to local services

Elements of TOD - Housing Density

Learning from Historic
Housing Types

Apartments - 50 du/ac

Multi-Family - 30 du/ac

New Courtyard Single-Family in Irvine,CA

Single-Family - 18 du/ac

Transit-Supportive Land Uses - Housing

Fear of Density - design makes a difference

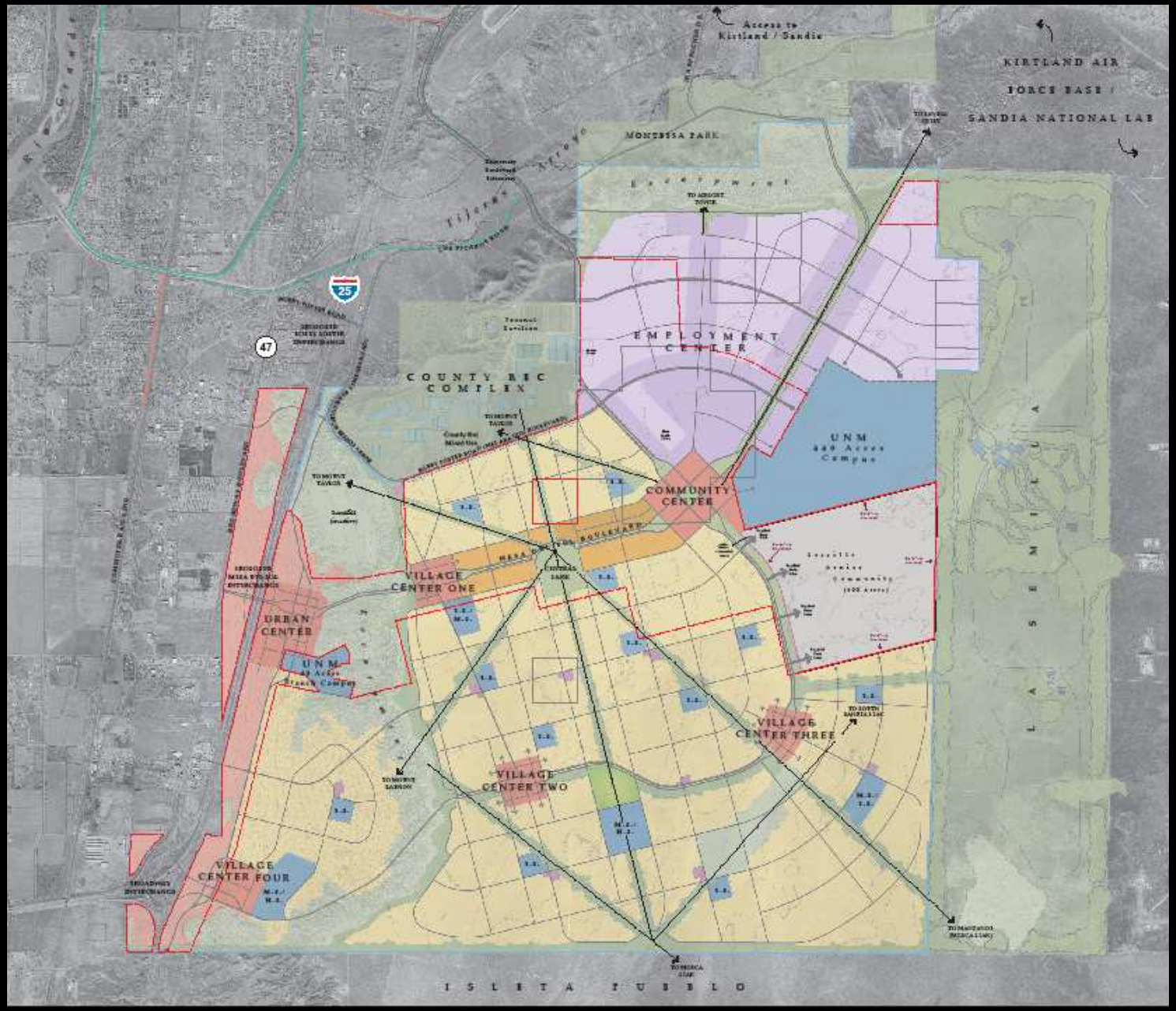
Both of these developments are 12 units to the acre

Transit-Supportive Design – Context and Character

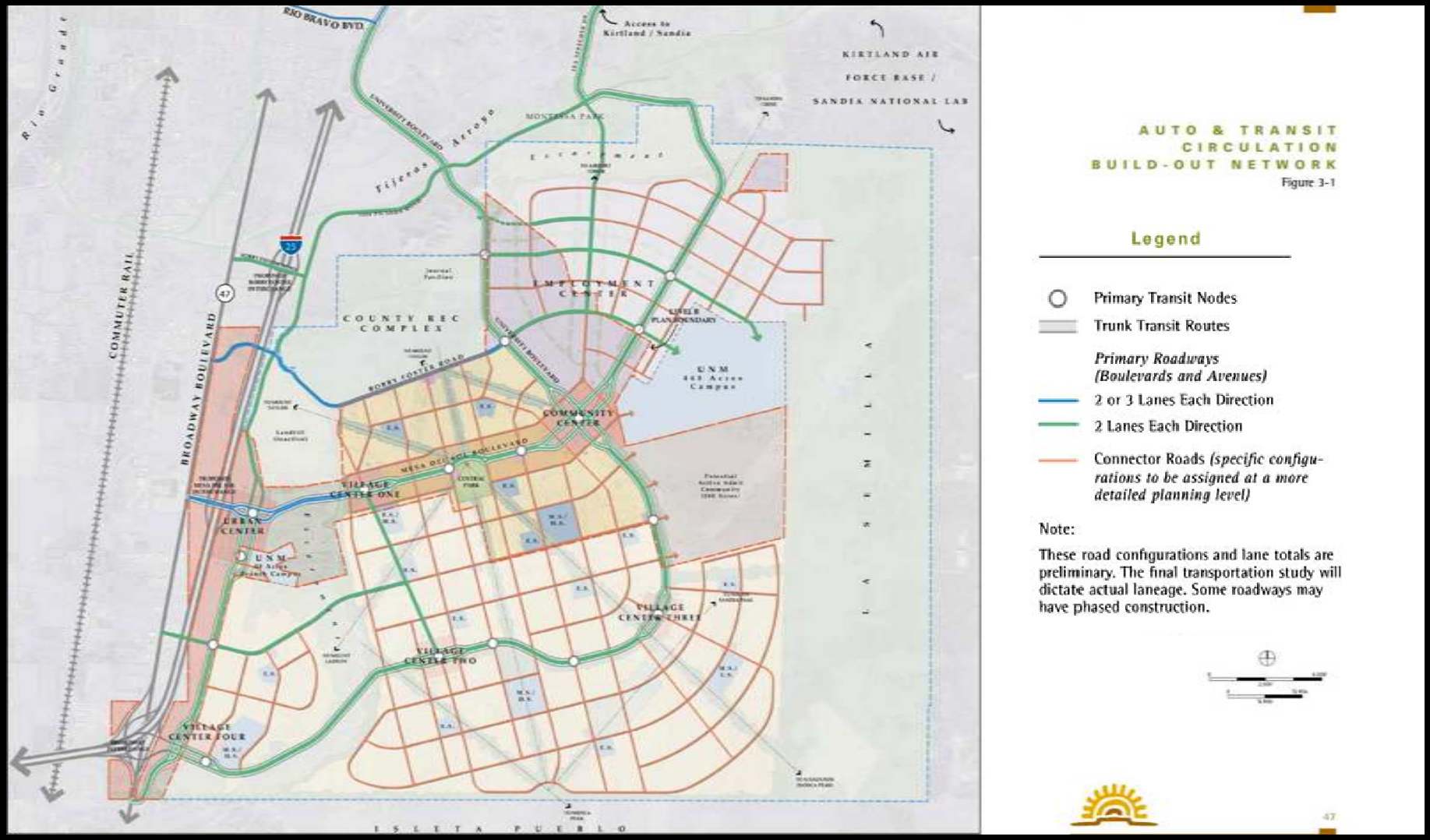
Avoid Blank Walls
Blank walls, vacant lots & street-facing parking lots provide little visual interest and “strand” pedestrians in an auto-dominated environment

Orient Doors and Windows Towards the Street
Frontage onto street provides surveillance, activity, visual interest, & social interaction

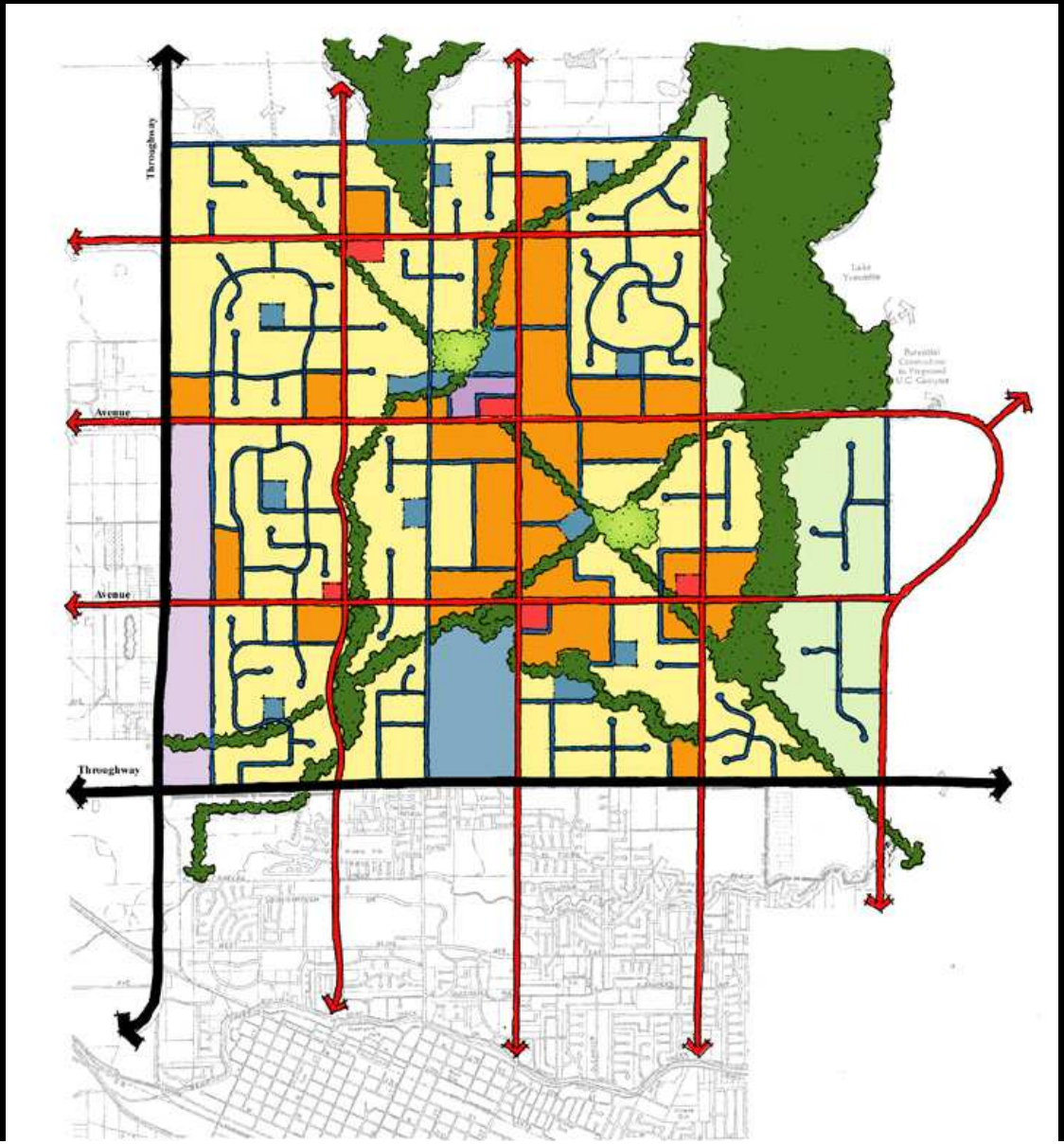
Mesa del Sol Master Plan



Auto and Transit Circulation Network



Conventional Hierarchical Street Network



Connected Street Network

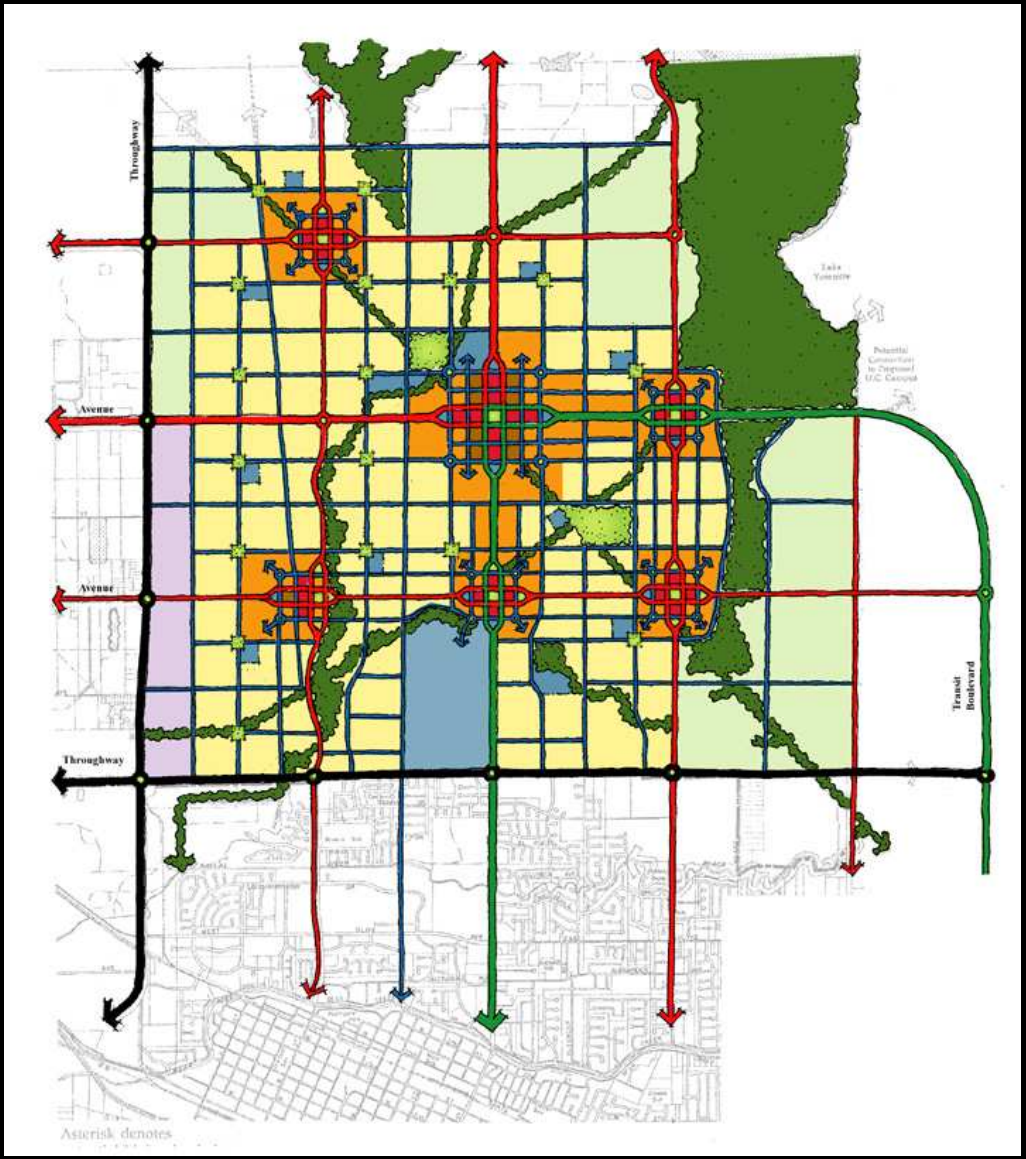
Avenues and Boulevards for regional travel

“Connector” streets link neighborhoods to centers

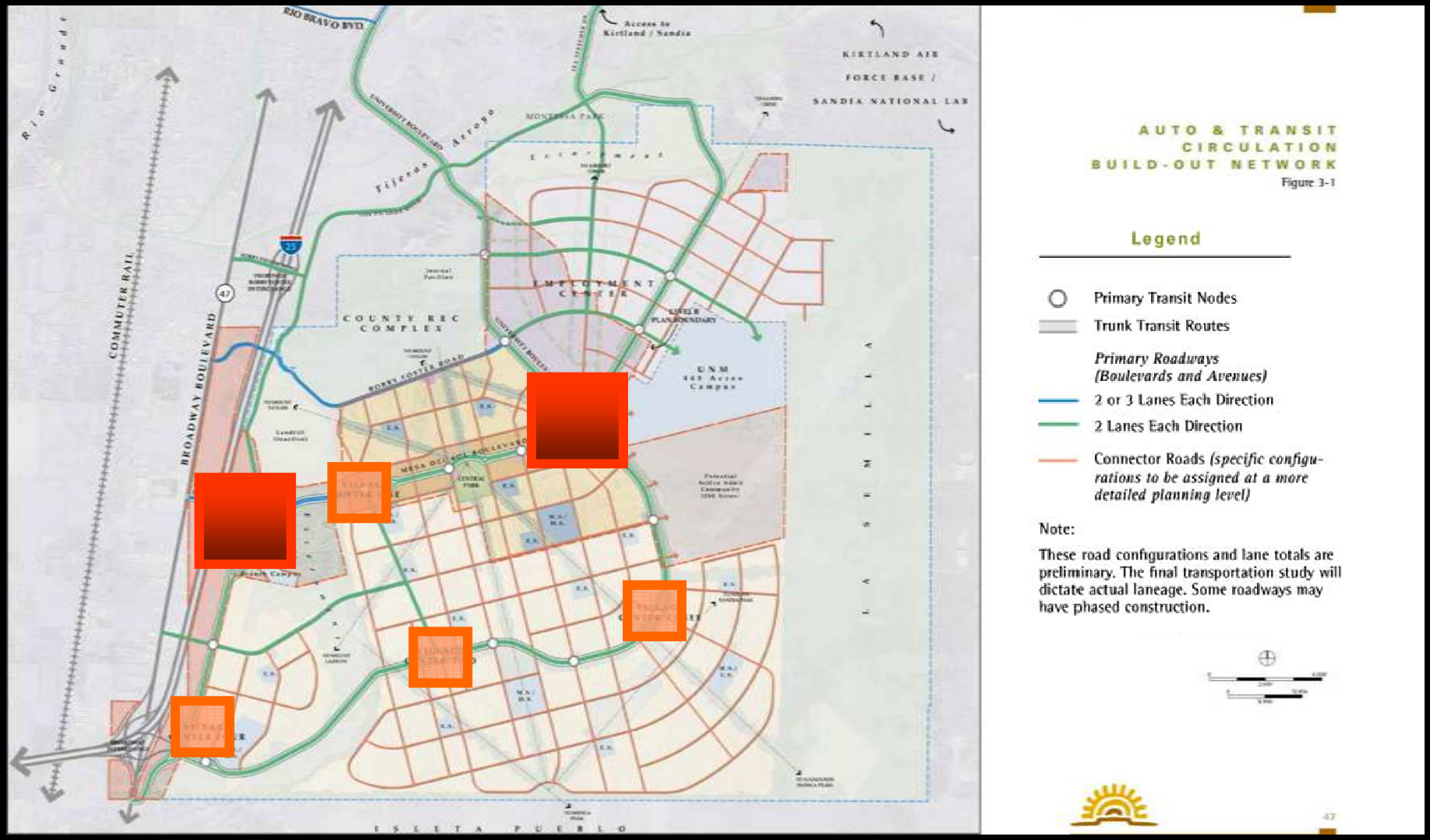
Traffic calming along local streets

Special intersection treatments

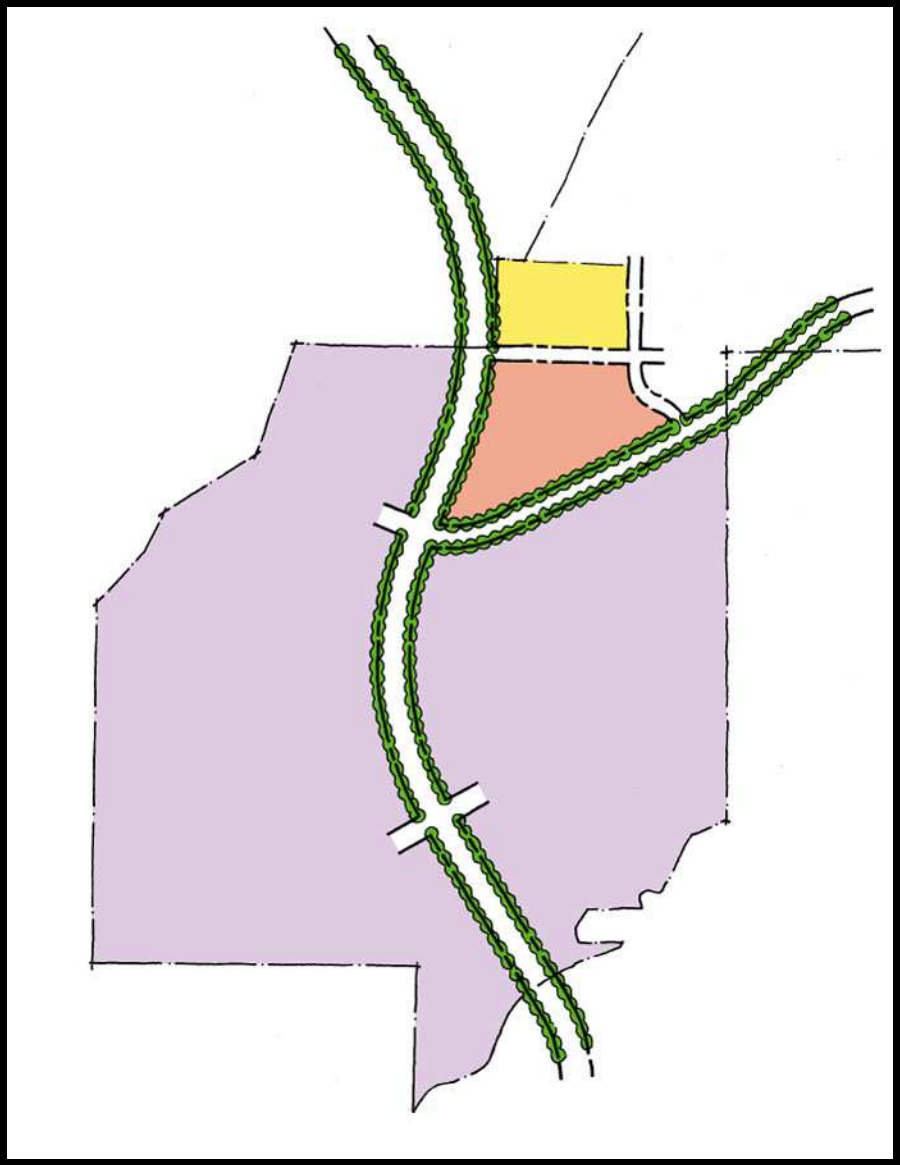
Reduces VMT by 12-15% compared to conventional network



Mixed-Use Centers

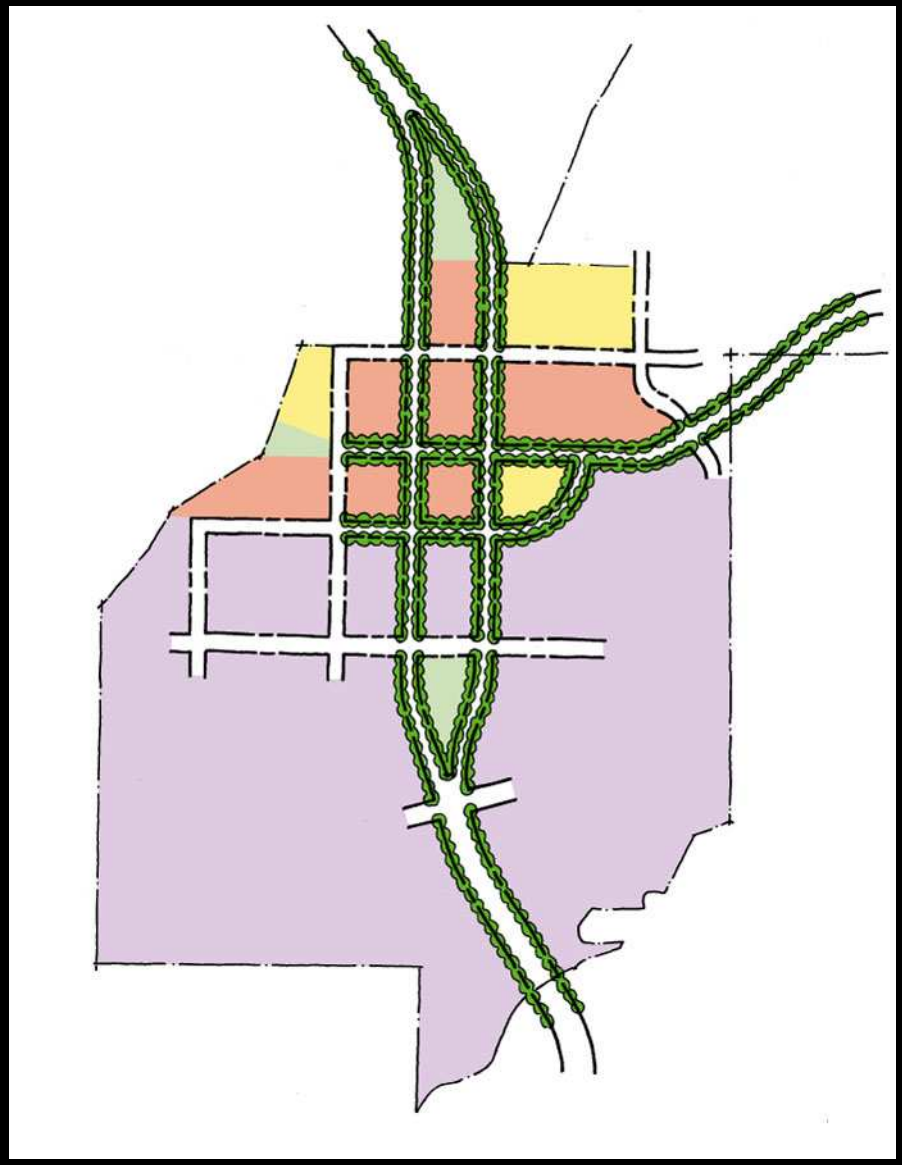


Conventional Arterial-Arterial Intersection Treatment



Conventional Arterial-Arterial Intersection Treatment

Couplet Intersection Treatment within Walkable Center



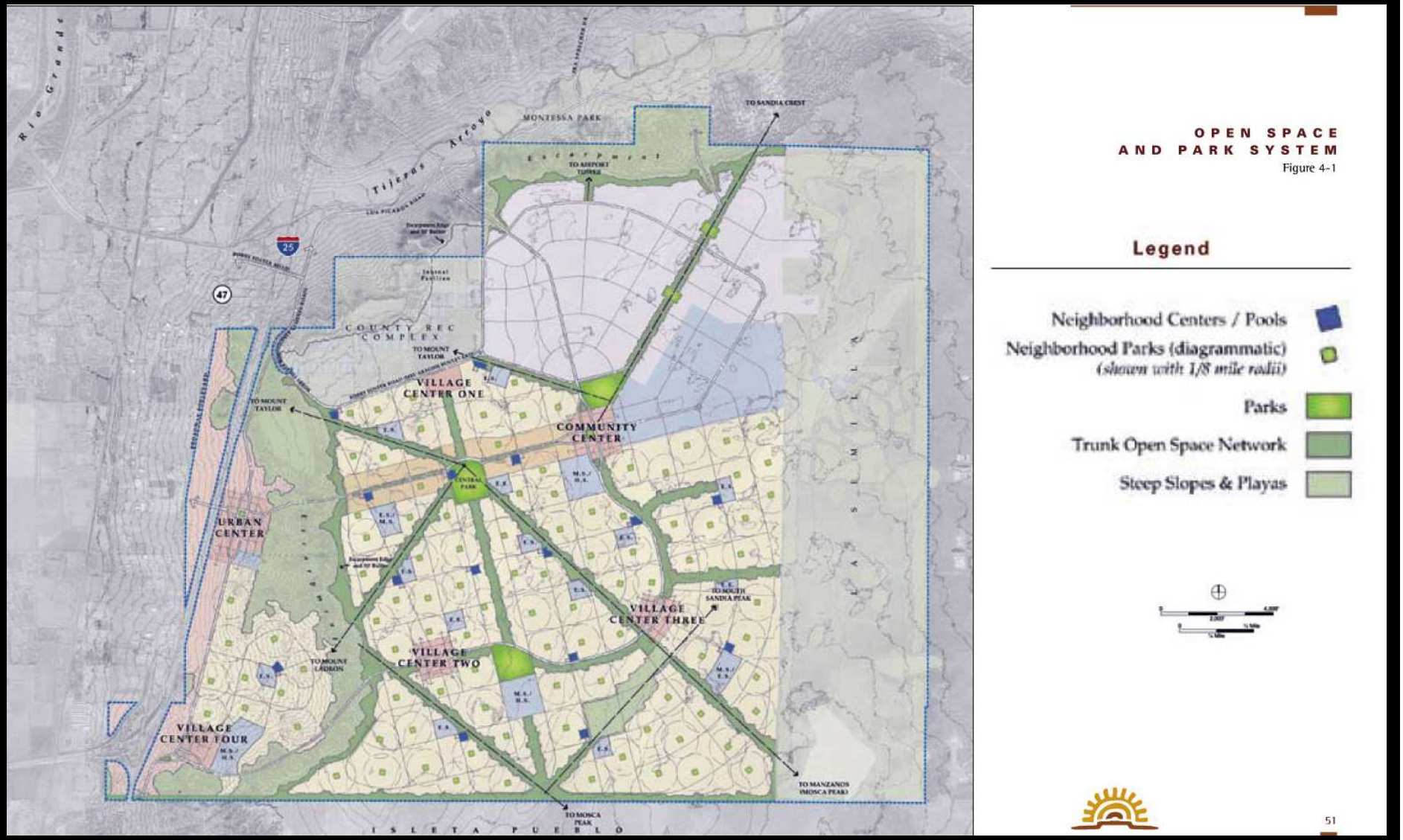
Couplet Intersection Treatment within Walkable Center

San Elijo Village Plan, San Diego County, CA

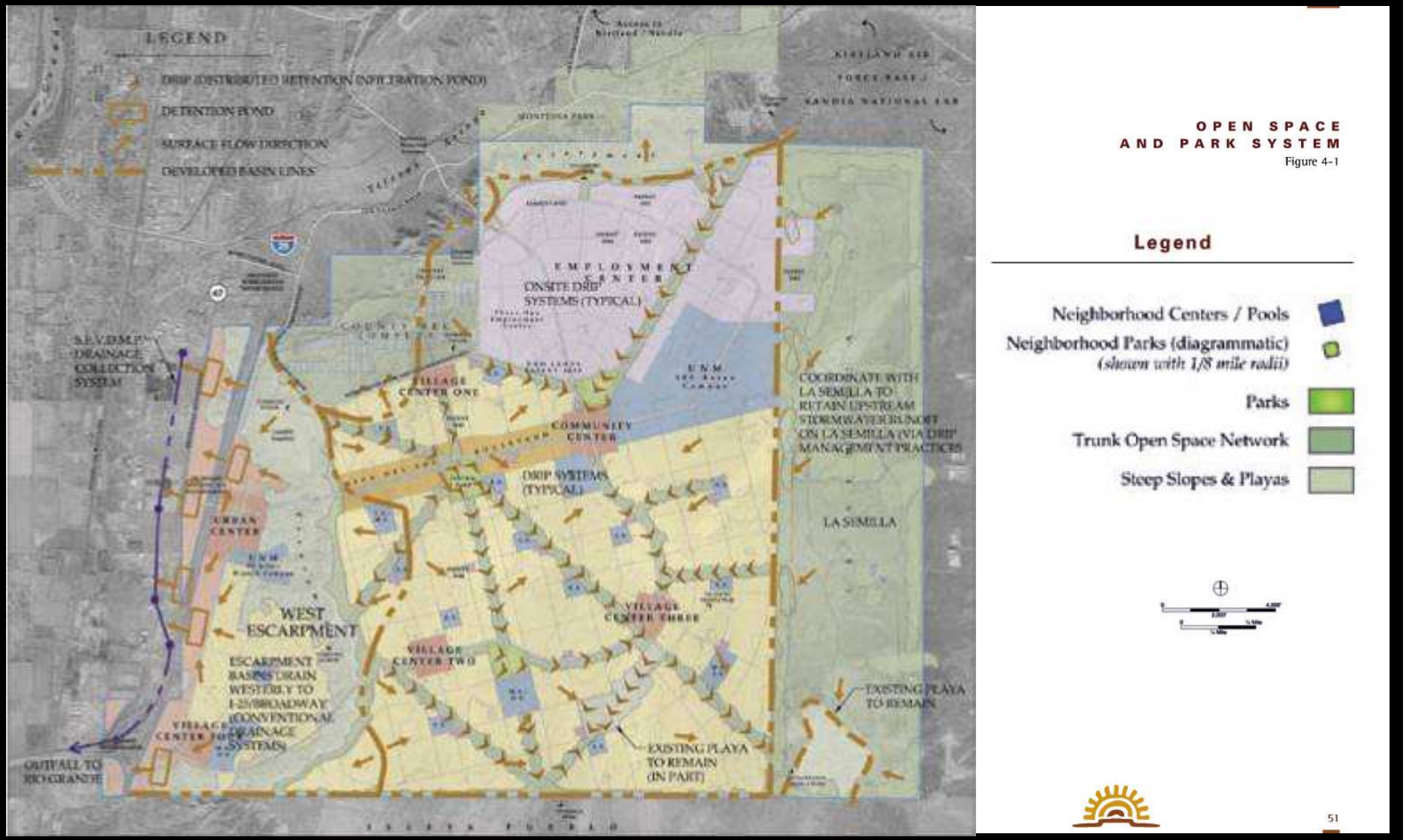
Couplet Intersection Treatment within Walkable Center

San Elijo Village Plan, San Diego County, CA

Open Space Plan and Neighborhood Structure



Stormwater System Uses Natural Open Space Corridors



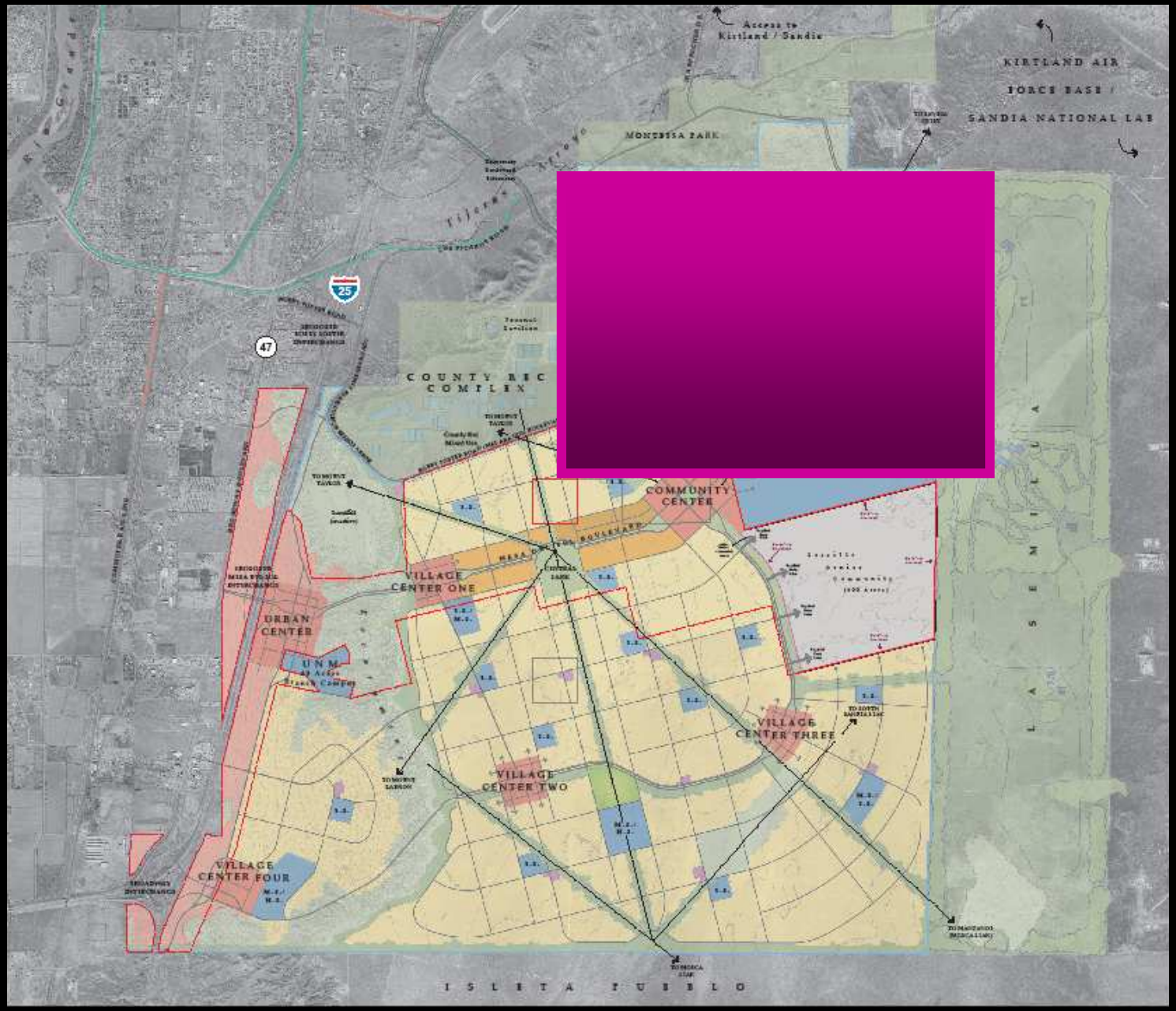
OPEN SPACE AND PARK SYSTEM

Figure 4-1

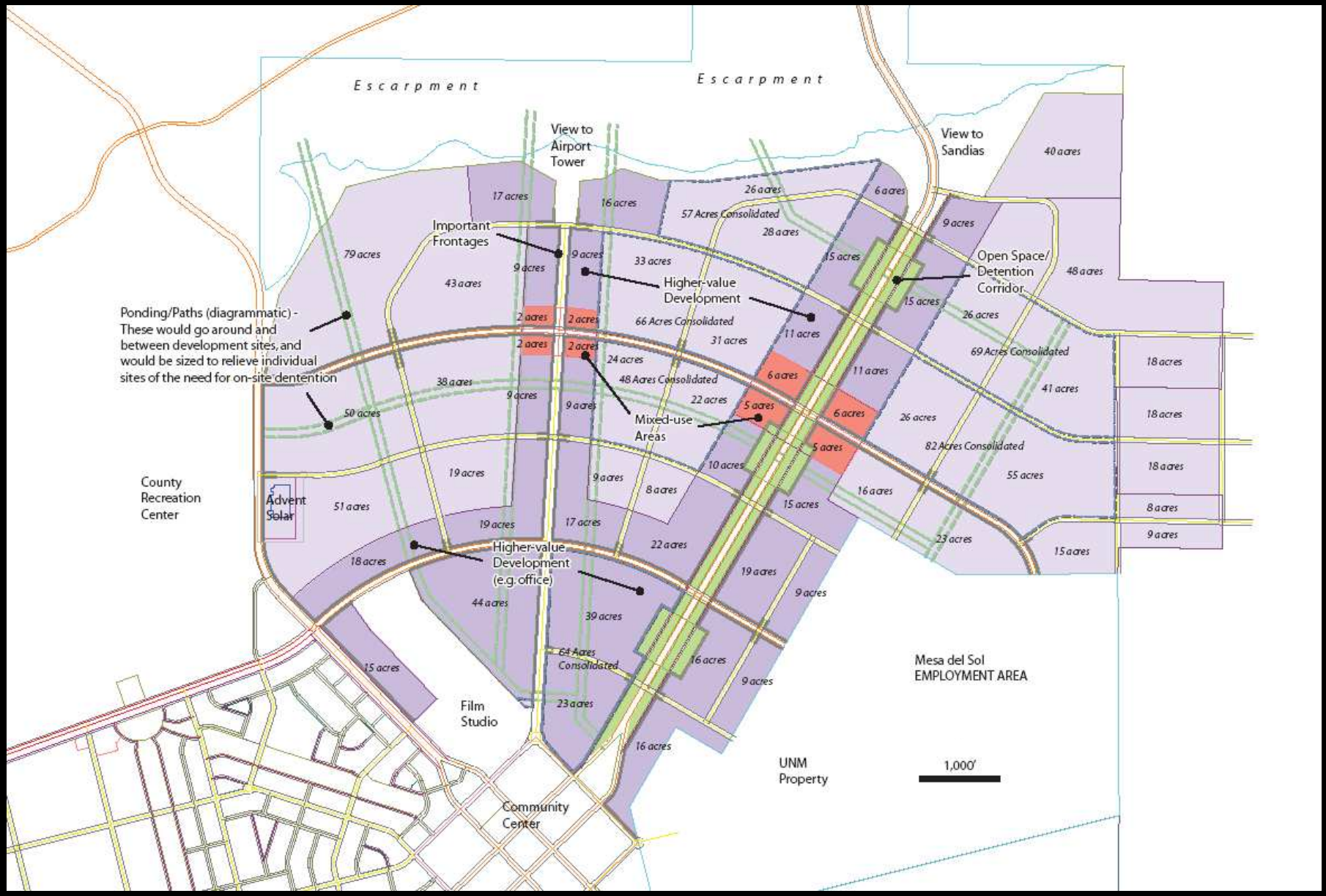
Legend

- Neighborhood Centers / Pools
- Neighborhood Parks (diagrammatic) *(shown with 1/8 mile radii)*
- Parks
- Trunk Open Space Network
- Steep Slopes & Playas

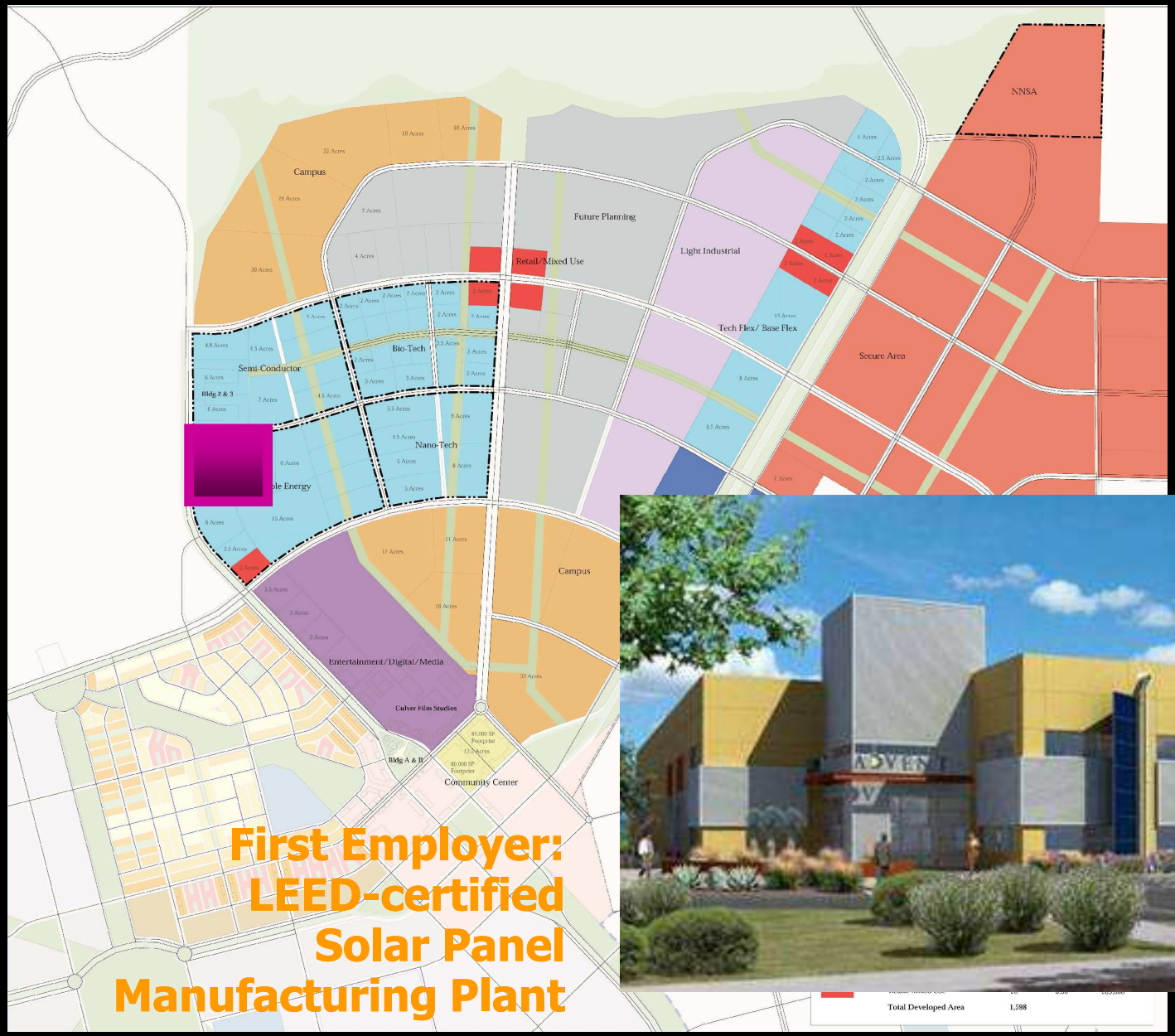
Regional Employment Center – 1,500 acres, 9M sq. ft.



Employment Center Showing Mixed-Use Nodes



Employment Center Showing Industry Clusters



First Employer: LEED-certified Solar Panel Manufacturing Plant

Mixed-Use Community Center Links Employment, Housing and UNM Campus

Community Center Showing Connections to Employment