

## 2.0 INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF MIXED-USE CENTERS

The Mixed-use Center encourages the development of compact, urban buildings that compliment the surrounding neighborhoods and are supported by existing and planned transportation networks constructed to support the traffic demands of both the auto and the pedestrian. Mixed-use Centers should be designed around a square, plaza, or other urban open space that can serve as a focal point for community activities.

Mixed-use Centers are historically formed near the convergence of large, coherent neighborhoods and near the intersection of major City streets.

This runs counter to the current Comprehensive Plan where most Focus Areas are designated at the intersection of thoroughfares. Unless a substantial investment is made to redesign these roads to permit the pedestrian traffic that Mixed-use Centers generate, the location of the Core should be moved to the mid-block away from the intersection. This slight shift in the Focus Areas will permit the Mixed-use Centers to function as true pedestrian-friendly environments as well as maintain the efficiency of the intersections.

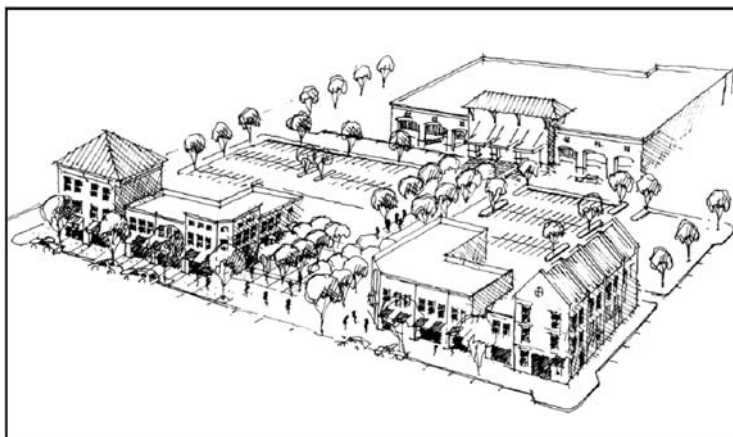
The Mixed-use Center is typically defined by three organizing elements: the Core, a Transition, and the Edge.

The Core of a Mixed-use Center is finite in size, typically radiating 1/8 to 1/4 mile (or a five-minute walk for the average adult) from the “Main-Main” intersection or a primary focal point such as a significant urban open space (e.g. Moore Square Park). The Core consists of the most intense urban buildings in both massing and use and is the center of pedestrian activity. Buildings in the Core are often vertically mixed-use, providing opportunities for housing and office uses above ground-level retail. Like most successful Main Streets across the United States, the retail and restaurant uses should be physically concentrated in the Core to provide a critical mass of shopping and pedestrian activities that identifies it as a destination. Corridors of predominately mixed-use buildings typically form the entryways into the formalized Core.

The Transition area, due to its physical proximity to the Core, is the ideal location for medium- to



*Images of pedestrian-scaled Neighborhood Centers*



*A Typical Neighborhood Center*

high-density (where appropriate) housing. The housing is therefore supported by the Core and vice-versa along a fine network of well-connected, pedestrian-scaled streets. In addition, where transit stops are located within the Core, there is a significant user population within walking distance. The Transition area, by its name, serves as a transition from the intensity of the Core to its surrounding, supporting neighborhood areas. The size of Transition area is largely a function of its walking distance to the Core. For Neighborhood and Village Centers, this distance is typically 1/8 mile and 1/4 mile respectively, though this distance may be increased to 1/2 mile around a rail transit station.



*Rendering courtesy of Shook*

The Edge is typically not a part of the Mixed-use Center as it is typically comprised of predominately single-family housing. While these areas should be seamlessly connected to the Core by pedestrian-oriented streets, transitions from the “neighborhood” to the “center” should be accomplished through the proper design of the public realm of the street (including the use of traffic calming features on existing streets) as well through appropriate massing, scale, and architectural design of the buildings.

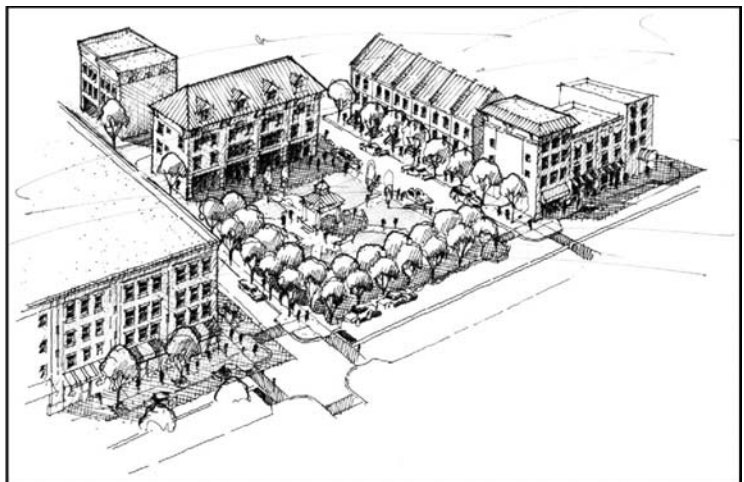


*Images of a new Village Center  
(Birkdale Village in Huntersville, NC)*

For the purposes of these Guidelines two Mixed-use Centers have been identified: the Neighborhood Center and the Village Center. While both share basic urban design principles, the size (acreage) of the Core area and the permitted height of buildings is differentiated.

In general, Neighborhood Centers have a maximum distance from the center of the Core area to the Edge of 1/4 mile or a five-minute walk for the average adult. The Five Points and Glenwood South areas are an example of a historic Neighborhood Center. Neighborhood Centers are most often comprised of uses similar to a typical Grocery Store-anchored shopping center, though they front on a pedestrian-friendly grid of streets rather than a large parking lot.

Village Centers typically radiate 1/2 mile (10-minute walk) from the center of the Core to the Edge. Examples of Village Centers include Hillsborough Street and Cameron Village. An excellent model of a new Village Center is Birkdale Village, located in Huntersville, NC.



*A Typical Village Center with urban open space as focal element*