Community Form

The Comprehensive Plan Vision provides a broadly painted horizon for the community's future. This section offers further detail as to how to shape the form of the community in order to achieve the vision for the future. The following principles and strategies provide guidance for individual land use decisions and other actions that collectively will determine the future of Lincoln and Lancaster County.

Guiding Principles from the Comprehensive Plan Vision

The following principles are based on the main sections of the Comprehensive Plan Vision. Each principle describes the desired end state.

The One Community Vision

All of the communities and people of Lancaster County work together to implement a common plan providing for mutual benefit.

An important relationship exists between the urban, rural, and natural landscapes. Urban and rural development maximizes the use of land in order to preserve agriculture and natural resources.

Policies of managing urban growth, maintaining an "edge" between urban and rural land uses, and preserving prime agricultural land, form a distinctive and attractive built environment for Lincoln and Lancaster County.

Lincoln remains a single community. The policies of A single public school district, drainage basin development, and provision of city utilities only within the city limits continue to be a positive influence and help shape the City for decades to come. These policies are sustained in order to preserve our ability to move forward as one community.

Quality of Life Assets

Preservation and enhancement of the many quality of life assets within the community continues. For a true "good quality of life," a community has more than jobs, shelter, utilities and roads — there are numerous service, education, historic and cultural resources which are fundamental to enriching lives.

The community continues its commitment to neighborhoods. Neighborhoods remain one of Lincoln's great strengths and their conservation is fundamental to this plan. The health of Lincoln's varied neighborhoods and districts depends on implementing appropriate and individualized policies. The Comprehensive Plan is the basis for zoning and land development decisions. It guides decisions that will maintain the quality and character of the community's established neighborhoods.

Economic Opportunity

Existing businesses flourish and there are opportunities for new businesses within Lincoln and the incorporated communities. The Plan provides new employment locations and supports retention of existing businesses.

Residential, commercial, and industrial development take place in the City of Lincoln and within incorporated towns. This ensures that there are convenient jobs and a healthy tax base within the communities to support the public safety, infrastructure and services within the community. While location in the cities and towns of the county is a priority, unique site requirements of a business may necessitate consideration of other suitable and appropriate locations in the county.

The community has adapted and thrived in an ever changing world economy. A strong information technology infrastructure exists to support business growth and the community's information demands. New technologies have led to new modes of living and working. A skilled workforce continues to adapt to economic and cultural changes.

Environmental Stewardship

Natural and environmentally sensitive areas are preserved and thrive. Wetlands, native prairies and stream (riparian) corridors are preserved to ensure the ecological health of the community.

Other natural features, such as tree masses, in areas for future development, are integrated into new development to provide for green spaces within the built environment.

Downtown Lincoln - the Heart of our Community

Downtown Lincoln continues to serve its role as the central location for commerce, government, entertainment and the arts. Views to the State Capitol have been preserved, as they have in the past, as part of our community form.

Interaction between the Comprehensive Plan and the Citizens

The Comprehensive Plan continues to be updated regularly with extensive citizen participation. The Plan is a successful guide, shaping development, yet remaining responsive to changing conditions.

Guiding Principles for Community Form

In addition to the principles from the Vision Statement, there are further divisions of the principles into statements that are more specific to the rural and urban environments. The following core principles for the development of the rural and urban environment are further expanded upon within the various sections of the plan.

Guiding Principles for the Rural Environment

Acknowledge the fundamental "Right to Farm." Preserve areas throughout the county for agricultural production by designating areas for rural residential development — thus limiting potential conflicts between farms and acreages.

Ensure that acreage and rural development preserve and protect environmentally sensitive areas. In the City and County, develop a strategy to maximize the preservation of our nonrenewable resources, such as land and fossil fuels.

Preserve areas for the future growth of incorporated towns in the county, including areas outside of the current one mile zoning jurisdiction of certain towns.

Support new commercial, residential, and industrial development within the incorporated towns in the county.

Provide for about six percent of the total population in the County on acreages.

Guiding Principles for the Urban Environment

Overall Form

Lincoln's future urban growth should generally occur in multiple directions around the existing city. Lincoln will continue to have managed and contiguous growth. Lincoln's sense of community has been based on incremental, compact growth built on the foundations of established neighborhoods. Future growth will continue this traditional pattern and be linked to both the level of demand in the market and to the orderly extension of public improvements and services. Lincoln will continue to contain approximately 90 percent of the County's population.

Maximize the community's present infrastructure investment by planning for residential and commercial development in areas with available capacity. This can be accomplished in many ways including encouraging appropriate new development on unused land in older neighborhoods, and encouraging a greater amount of commercial space per acre and more dwelling units per acre in new neighborhoods.

FOOTNOTE: *Some principles based on "The Principles of New urbanism" from the Congress for the New Urbanism, including both verbatim text and paraphrased material. The "Principle of New Urbanism is © Copyright 1998 by Congress for the New Urbanism. All rights reserved. May not be reproduced without written permission.*

In the City and County, develop a strategy to maximize the preservation of our nonrenewable resources, such as land and fossil fuels.

Near and long term growth areas for the City of Lincoln should be preserved in order to facilitate future urban development. Acreage areas will be directed to areas outside of the future urban growth areas in order to minimize conflicts between urban and acreage uses and so that the City may provide urban services as efficiently as possible.

Preservation and renewal of historic buildings, districts, and landscapes is encouraged. Development and redevelopment should respect historical patterns, precedents, and boundaries in towns, cities and existing neighborhoods.

Natural and environmentally sensitive areas should be preserved within neighborhoods. Conservation areas and open lands should be used to define and connect different neighborhoods.

Streams, trees, open space, and other environmentally sensitive features should be preserved within new development as design standards allow. The natural topography and features of the land should be preserved by new development to maintain the natural drainageways and minimize land disturbance.

Parks, recreation, and open space corridors should be connected. Salt Creek Heritage Greenway should begin at Wilderness Park and be extended to the south. Natural and environmentally sensitive areas should be preserved along Interstate 80 and Little Salt Creek to the north, and a new "green space" should be developed along Stevens Creek to the east. Care should be taken that adequate future crossings of such corridors for roads, utilities, and other community facilities are ensured.

Residential Neighborhoods

Home ownership is the foundation upon which successful neighborhoods and communities are built. Citizens should be able to afford to buy a safe and decent home. The plan should recognize the impact of policies and programs on community housing costs.

Affordable housing should be distributed throughout the region to be near job opportunities and to provide housing choices within every neighborhood.

Encourage different housing types and choices, including affordable housing, throughout each neighborhood for an increasingly diverse population.

Elementary and middle schools should be sized and located to enable children to walk or bicycle to them. Child care centers should be located within neighborhoods and near schools and parks when possible.

A range of parks and open space, from tot-lots to ballfields, should be distributed within neighborhoods and be within walking distance of the residents.

Construction and renovation within the existing urban area should be compatible with the character of the surrounding neighborhood.

Encourage mixed-use redevelopment, adaptive reuse, and in-fill development including residential, commercial and retail uses. These uses may develop along transit routes and provide residential opportunities for persons who do not want to or cannot drive an automobile. Promote residential development, economic development and employment opportunities throughout the City.

Transportation

Many activities of daily living should occur within walking distance. Neighborhoods should include homes, stores, workplaces, schools and places to recreate. Interconnected networks of streets, trails and sidewalks should be designed to encourage walking and bicycling, reduce the number and length of automobile trips, conserve energy and for the convenience of the residents.

Transit, pedestrian, and bicycle networks should maximize access and mobility to provide alternatives and reduce dependence upon the automobile.

"Transit Corridors", oriented to transit stops, when properly planned and coordinated, can help organize urban development and revitalize existing commercial centers. Transit corridors should be developed by providing transit stops and greater concentrations of commercial and residential uses along corridors, such as particular arterial streets, in order to minimize transit travel times and maximize ridership.

Mixed-use centers, with higher residential and commercial densities, should provide for transit stops — permitting public transit to become a viable alternative to the automobile.

Linear open space should be developed along major transportation corridors such as the Beltway (all portions) and Antelope Valley.

The Beltways should become multi-use corridors which will include four lanes of roadway, trails and pedestrian facilities, linear open spaces integrated into development and open space patterns in the development of Lincoln, utility corridors, and a potential route for alternative transportation modes. The beltway will not dictate the future – it is the community through its adopted plans that determines future growth patterns and form.

Streets and public spaces 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. The street network should facilitate calm traffic conditions, provide multiple connections within and between neighborhoods, using neighborhood development aspects such as four way intersections of residential streets, multiple connections to arterial streets, and reduced block lengths.

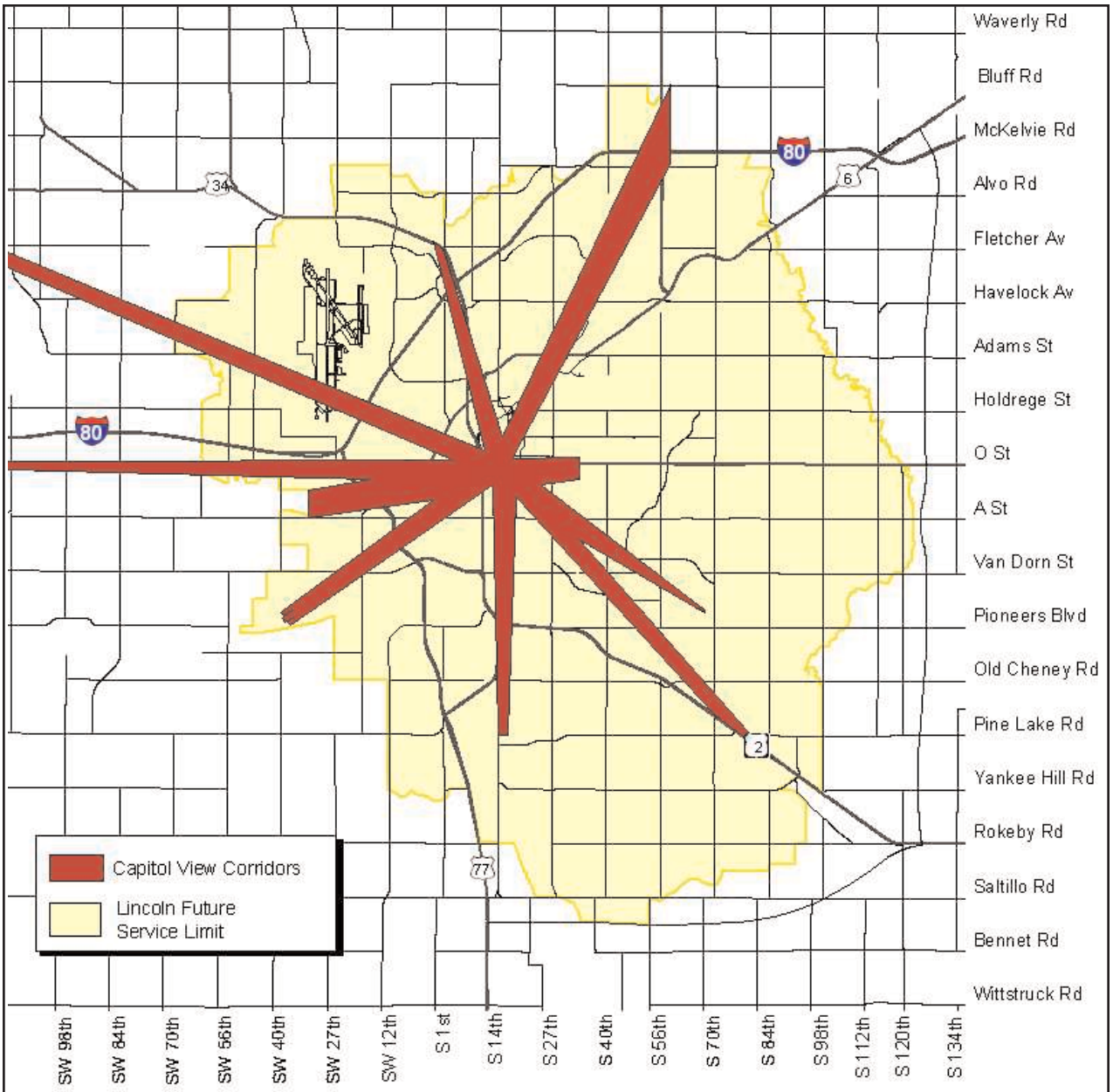
Strip commercial development along transportation corridors is discouraged.

Preserve and enhance entryway corridors into Lincoln and Capitol View Corridors.

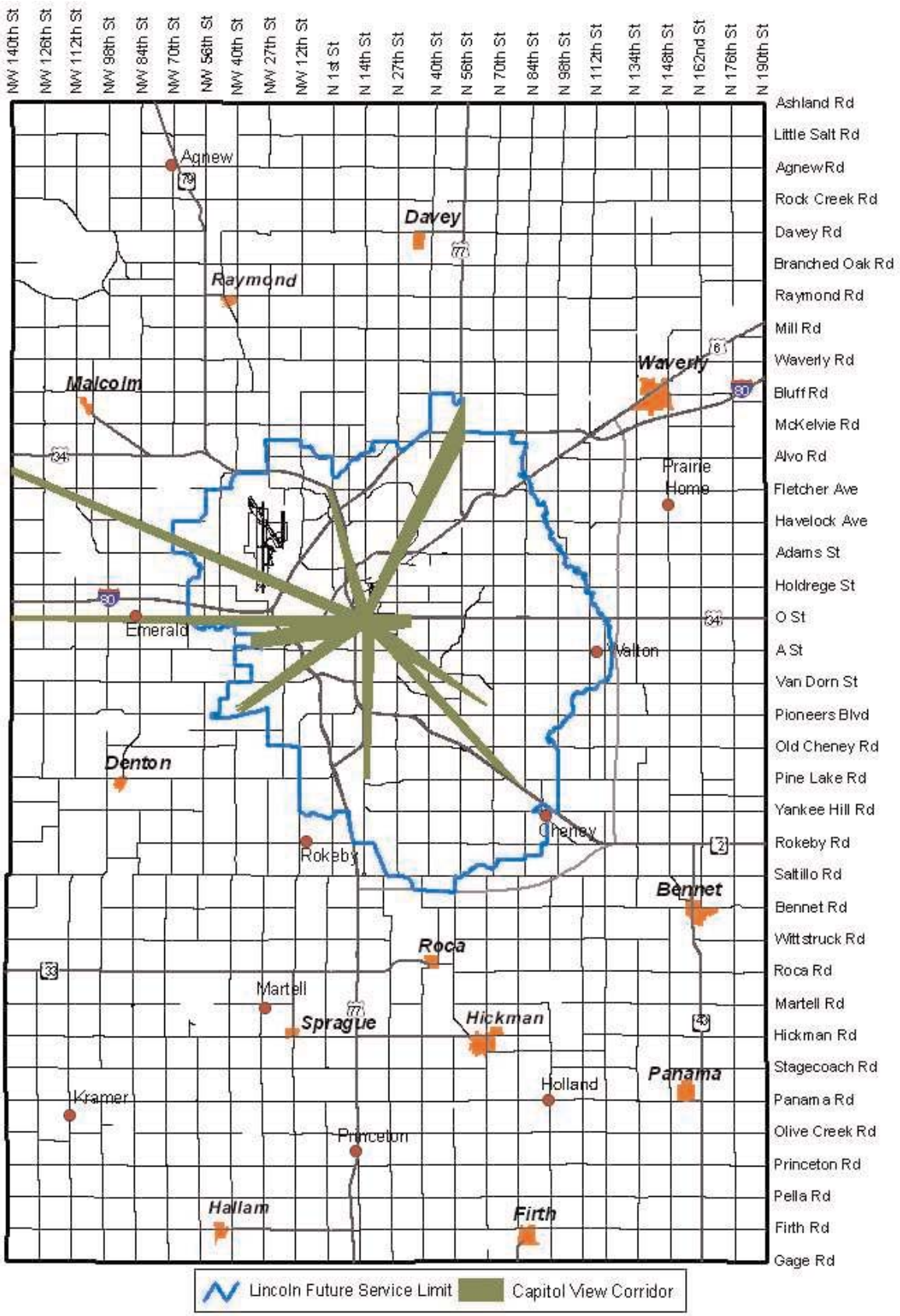
Urban Design and Public Art

The American cities generally regarded as especially attractive, such as Charleston, Boston, San Francisco, Savannah, and New Orleans, are older communities with a strong sense of cohesiveness and space. These cities had the advantage that distinctive parts of their fabrics were constructed in previous eras where there were fewer building materials and techniques available, and stronger architectural traditions. In Lincoln, Haymarket and several older neighborhoods demonstrate similar cohesiveness. Today, technology offers much more variety in building materials and techniques. Many contemporary buildings are thought of as "products" that have a more limited economic life. The automobile has generated huge new space and functional demands. All of these factors make it more difficult for communities today to develop and redevelop in an attractive, cohesive manner.

Most cities, including Lincoln, protect their cultural/architectural heritage through formal historic preservation efforts. Lincoln has taken further steps to protect and promote a positive physical character through special design requirements that protect the environs and views of the State Capitol Building -- our community's signature urban design asset -- and that encourage compatible infill in its older neighborhoods. The Capitol Environs Commission is unique in that its membership includes city and state appointees, and its authority extends to all public and private projects within its district, including State projects. Its authority to identify and project important public vistas to the Capitol should be strengthened.



Capitol View Corridors: City Perspective



Capitol View Corridors: County Perspective

The accompanying image displays how these multiple development principles can be integrated together. It includes principles such as:

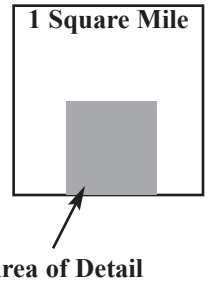
1 Mix of office, retail and service uses

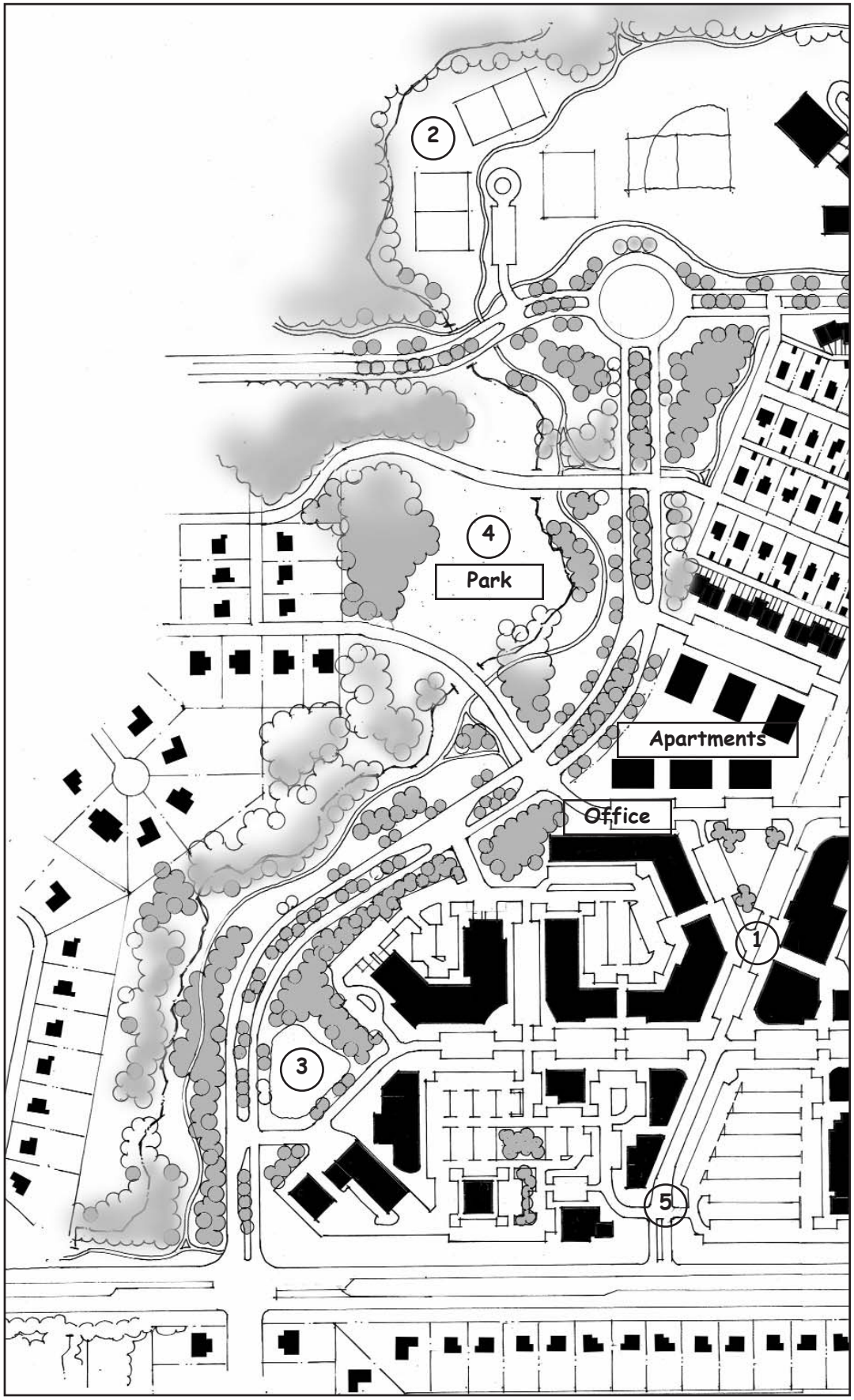
2 Floodplain preserved as open space, ballfields, trails, conservation areas

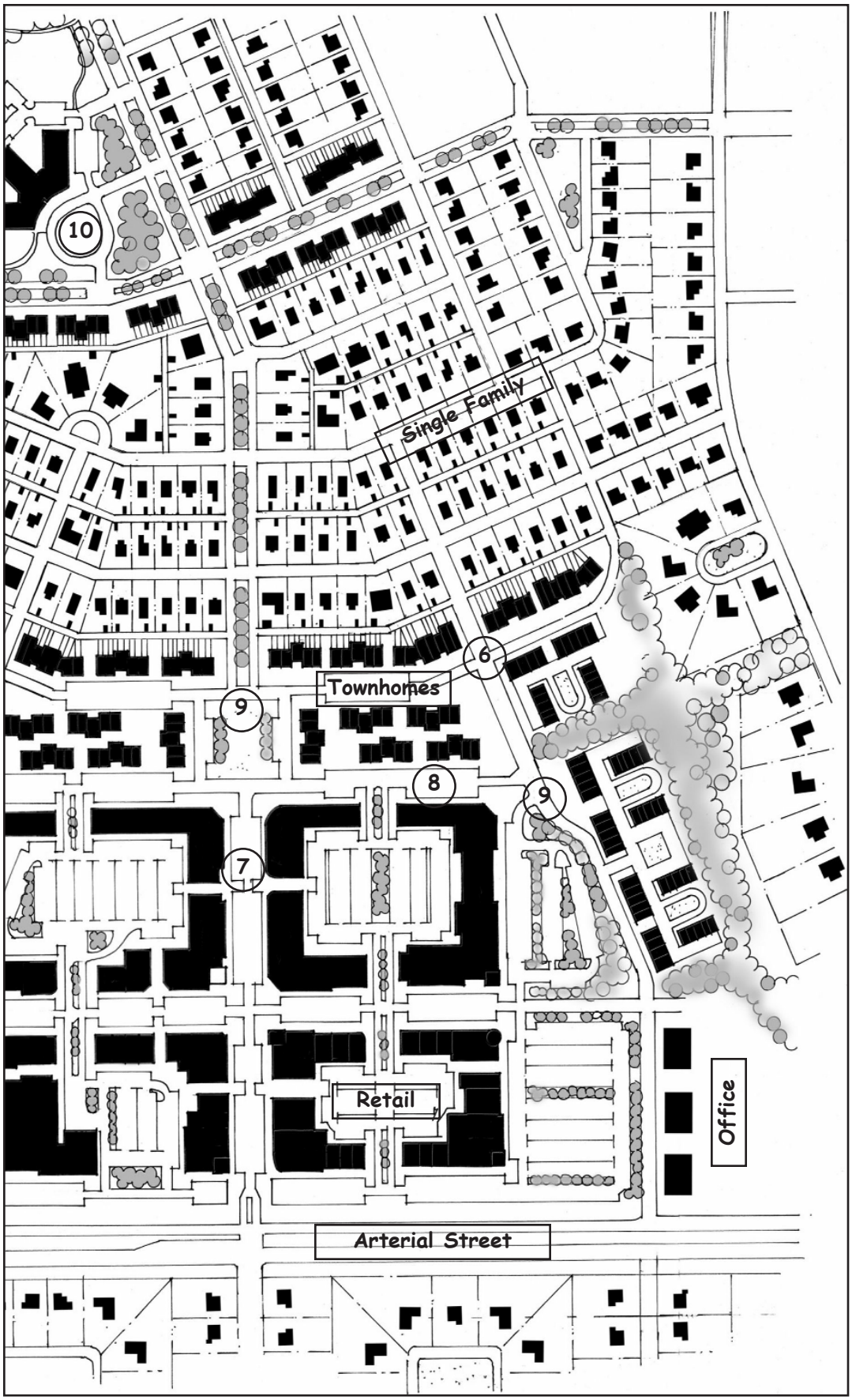
3 Natural environmentally sensitive areas preserved such as existing wetlands preserved & integrated into the development

4 Connected green space; encourage linear connected green spaces as much as possible

5 Transit stops integrated into commercial center, near arterial and near area







6 Mix of housing types — single family, townhomes, apartments, elderly housing — all within one area

7 Pedestrian orientation with parking at rear, multiple pedestrian routes, and buildings and uses close to each other

8 Transition of uses; less intense office uses near residential areas

9 Multiple vehicular connections between residential neighborhood and commercial center and multiple access points in and out of area

10 Public uses (such as elementary schools) serve as centers of neighborhood

IMPLEMENTATION

The guiding principles are the basis for decision making within the community. The challenge is turning these visions and principles into reality. Implementing these guiding principles requires additional details that come in three distinct forms:

1. the **specific strategies** found in later sections of this Plan in the "Future Conditions" Chapter;
2. the **land use relationships** of community in the land use plan; and,
3. the **timing** of development found in the future urban growth tiers.

The land use plan for Lincoln and Lancaster County contains several general categories of land use types that are listed below. The maps displaying the land use plan are but one aspect of the Comprehensive Plan. The entire Comprehensive Plan should be referenced and considered when viewing the land use plan maps and for judging the appropriateness of the land uses they may display.

Agricultural: Land principally in use for agricultural production. Agricultural land may be in transition to more diversified agribusiness ventures such as growing and marketing of products (e.g., horticulture, silvaculture, aquaculture) on site.

Commercial: Areas of retail, office and service uses. Commercial uses may vary widely in their intensity of use and impact, varying from low intensity offices, to warehouses, to more intensive uses such as gas stations, restaurants, grocery stores or automobile repair. Each area designated as commercial in the land use plan may not be appropriate for every commercial zoning district. The appropriateness of a commercial district for a particular piece of property will depend on a review of all the elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

Green Space: Areas predominately used for active recreational uses, such as parks, golf courses, soccer or ball fields, and trails. Green space areas may be either public or privately owned. While some isolated environmentally sensitive features may be within these areas, they are predominately for active recreation, with some passive recreation uses also possible.

Industrial: Areas where railroads, manufacturing, trucking and transportation facilities are the dominant land use. Some commercial activities may also take place in predominately industrial districts, such as office, retail or warehouses.

Lakes and Streams: This category includes the larger stream corridors, lakes, and ponds.

Environmental Resources: Land and water masses which are of particular importance for maintenance and preservation, such as saline wetlands, native prairie, and some floodway and riparian corridors. Such areas may be either publicly or privately owned.

Agricultural Stream Corridor: Land intended to remain in open space, predominately in agricultural use, but that may also include parks, recreation fields, or parking areas when near future commercial, industrial, or public uses. Such areas will be primarily privately owned, but may also include some public ownership or easements. These areas are mostly in the 100 year floodplain, outside of the existing Lincoln urban development.

Public and Semi-Public: Areas of public or semi-public land use and/or structures that serve the general public. Only the largest facilities are shown on the land use plan. Some small scale public and semi-public land uses may be found within all land use designations. Highways and interstates are also included in this category.