Development Plan

New development in Central City should be focused in those areas designated by the Development Concept and Future Land Use Plan. A disciplined approach of this nature will ensure cost-effective, efficient land use patterns that maximize the benefits of development to the community. Additionally, development should occur within the context of the transportation and open space framework proposed by the Plan.
DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES AND LAND USE CONCEPT

This section presents land use strategies that will enable Central City to plan successfully for projected growth and respond both to the pressures of internal land use change and to external developments. Overall development patterns should reinforce the functional and aesthetic values and traditions of the community, even as new development extends into the surrounding landscape. New development should generously accommodate pedestrian and vehicular mobility. In addition, Central City’s growth program should take maximum advantage of existing resources and community characteristics. Central City’s growth program should:

- Designate growth areas for residential development that are affordable to a range of incomes, designed to provide the appropriate amount of land for urban conversion.
- Use existing subdivision plats and infrastructure investments as toward meeting the city’s development needs and objectives.
- Ensure that new development maintains continuity and linkages among neighborhoods.
- Use Central City’s special city assets and features to best advantage in framing the character of existing and new neighborhoods.
- Encourage adequate commercial growth to respond to potential market needs in Central City.
- Steer commercial development to downtown and contiguous along the
- Provide adequate land to support economic development efforts that capitalize on Central City’s historical, educational and environmental attractions, and transportation access.
- Prevent or discourage uncontrolled development that can siphon energy and investment away from already established areas.

Development Structure

Map 4.1: illustrates Central City’s development concept, and is best described by separating the structure of the city into eight major elements, including:

1. Downtown
2. Highway Corridors
3. West Growth Area
4. East Growth Area
5. Industrial Uses
6. Community Services District
7. Park, Trails, and Greenways
8. Community Branding
Map 4.1: Development Concept, 2030

Source: RDG Planning & Design, 2011
1. **Downtown Concept**

The vision for downtown emerges from interviews and discussions during the planning process. This section proposes an development program for the city’s town center, presents a multi-faceted development program that includes the public environment, functional circulation improvements, and redevelopment opportunities to improve the area. It is designed to create opportunities for additional business, and to improve the functioning and financial success of the area.

Maps 4.2 and 4.3 illustrate the existing and proposed transportation concept for improving downtown, while Maps 4.4 illustrates a Development Plan that illustrates the concepts in the plan. The components of this vision include:

- Downtown Mobility
- Major Projects
**Downtown Mobility**

Downtown’s location at the crossroads of US Highways 30 and 14 had undoubtedly established the commercial and retail base of the area. The early street grid system, from 13th to 22nd Streets and between 17th and 23rd Avenues, are oriented to the railroad, while the other streets in the city are oriented north/south. The crossroads of the highways is, coincidentally, also where the two street grid systems meet, creating an awkward intersection called the Triangle.

Often only one or two vehicles are able to pass through the intersection during each light cycle, particularly if one of the vehicles is a truck. This results in a significant amount of stacking and issues with mobility through the downtown district. Strategies for improving the circulation through the district include:

1. **Highway 14 Redirect and Pedestrian Crossing.**
   Map 4.3 shows Highway 14 realigning from 17th Street to C Avenue in downtown. The railroad crossing at 17th Street would close, reducing the number of crossings and focusing on C Avenue as the primary crossing. The concept illustrates the realignments of the major pathways and the adjustments to the routes for turning traffic. The realignment of the highway will eliminate some of the awkward intersections and expand the Triangle into a usable open space in downtown.

2. **Close Railroad Crossing.** Redirecting highway traffic from 17th Street to C Avenue allows for the railroad crossing at 17th Street to close.

3. **Quiet Crossing at C Avenue.** Upgrading the crossing at C Avenue to a quiet crossing will eliminate the need for trains to sound their horns through the City. Installing medians to prevent vehicles from weaving through barricades and placing speakers that imitates and directs the sound of trains towards the intersection will improve the safety and limit the level of ambient sound throughout the community.

4. **Highway Crossroads.** Redirecting highway traffic to C Avenue will necessitate that the intersection at Highway 30 to be upgraded to meet NDOR standards. Turning movements from (and to) Highway 14 South should occur prior to the intersection.
Downtown’s Major Projects

Projects are self-contained actions that, together, create a transformed district and help redefine the future of Central City’s principle commercial district.

1. **Triangle Plaza.** Closing 17th Street from 16th to 17th Streets allows for the small triangle island to expand and become a usable downtown open space for public use.

2. **Lone Tree Plaza.** Highway 30 curves at 17th Street. Redirecting Highway 14 traffic from 17th Street allows for the area immediately to the north to be closed for a new pedestrian plaza. Be defining the edge of the street, motorists have a logical path to follow.

3. **B Street Development and Parking.** Redeveloping the private park adjacent Lafayette Beauty Salon will offer new commercial space closer to downtown, rather than on the fringe of the city. The entrance to the building could be oriented to a new surface parking lot, and could be separated into small bays.

4. **B Street Shared Parking.** Converting B Avenue (north of Highway 30) to parking will effectively convert the street into an expanded parking lot.

5. **Alley Parking.** The space behind the buildings and railroad lines can be converted for additional parking for businesses.

6. **Parking.** The building with the mural on its side is in very poor condition. The building needs to be immediately stabilized or demolished for safety reasons. If removed, the site should be redesigned for surface parking to area businesses.

7. **Pedestrian Overpass.** A new pedestrian walkway over the railroad tracks will connect the north and south sides of the Central City. The walkway’s gradual inclines should have resting places where people can overlook the railroad tracks and the city.

8. **Railside Greenway.** Planting trees, shrubs, and grass between E Street and the railroad tracks will act as a natural buffer between the residential neighborhood and the railroad tracks. Building a trail in the green space establishes the space as a linear park leading to downtown.

9. **Forced Turn.** Realigning Highway 14 from 17th Street to C Avenue may require that the intersection at E Street become a forced turn. Allowing full turning movements may incidentally misdirect travelers into the neighborhood. Also, the forced turn eliminates the need for vehicles to stop, other than to wait for a passing train.

10. **New Development.** Some of the buildings along Highway 30 between C and D Avenues are in very poor condition. Assembling these properties and redeveloping a series of these buildings for new construction will improve the appearance and quality of the district. The concept shows a gap between the new development and existing building.

11. **State Theater Renovation.** The State Theater is a landmark business in Central City and the only movie theater in town. Participants in the planning process indicated that the waning condition of the theater may result in its closure, leaving residents with traveling to another communities. The plan recommends preparing a private/public partnership to assist the theater in updating its interior.
**Transportation Concepts**
T1: Highway 14 Redirect & Ped Crossing
T2: Close Railroad Crossing
T3: Quiet Crossing at C Avenue
T4: Highway Crossroads

**Development Concepts**
1. Triangle Plaza
2. Lone Tree Plaza
3. B Street Development
4. B Street Shared Parking
5. Alley Parking
6. Parking (building demo)
7. Pedestrian Overpass
8. Railside Greenway
9. Forced Highway Turn
10. New Development
11. Theater Renovation
12. Parking (Possible Fire Station)
13. Streetscape Enhancements
14. Facade Upgrades
15. Civic Passageway
16. Green Parking
17. Housing Development
18. City Services Campus

Map 4.4: Downtown Development Concept

**Proposed Site for City Services Campus**
12. Parking (Possible Fire Station). Landscaping the parking lot along Highway 14 between 17th and 18th Streets will improve the approach to downtown. The lot’s central location in the community makes it a good candidate for being redeveloped for a new Fire Station. The layout of the site could adapt to Highway 14 designated on either side of the block. The fire station should have drive through bays. The old fire hall can be used for storage of apparatus stored in various locations in the City.

13. Streetscape. Upgrading the streetscape along Highway 30 should coincide with the planned replacement of its underground water mains. Elements of the streetscape should include:
   ○ Lighting
   ○ Pavement materials and patterns
   ○ Planters
   ○ Graphics (banners)
   ○ Interpretative panels
   ○ Stormwater management
   ○ Triangle improvements.

14. Facade Upgrades. Central City’s downtown has several buildings from the early 20th Century that add character to the community and establish the district as the historic heart of the city. The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Historic Rehabilitation offers guidance on improving building facades. Notable suggestions for Central City include:
   ○ Signage
   ○ Awnings
   ○ Upper-story windows and coverings.
   ○ Windows and displays.
   ○ Painting

15. Civic Passageway. Community and county services are clustered within a few blocks, yet are disconnected from each other. The Central City Library and City Hall act as a north bookend to the passageway, while Merrick County Courthouse is south bookend.

The pathway could have interpretative panels that describe the history of the region, including the significance of Lone Tree, transportation, culture, and the Platte River.

16. Green Parking. The edge of city hall’s parking lot and sidewalk are undefined. The curb should be rebuilt to define the street and the space in the parking should be reconstructed to provide space for landscaping for shrubs, grass, and trees. Stormwater from the surface parking should be managed on site, rather than directed into the street.

17. Housing Development. Housing options are limited in Central City, particularly in downtown. The buildings on the block between city hall and the courthouse are somewhat distressed and could be redeveloped for new housing (townhouse and duplexes) facing the school.

18. City Services Campus. The planning process identified the possibility of a new City Services Campus that would include a new City Hall, Police Station and Fire Department. The block between 17th and 18th Streets, east of Highway 14, is centrally located in the community and in downtown. Also, the block’s proximity to the County Courthouse, Senior Center, and Elementary School begins to establish a strong Civic District. The facility should be designed to allow for future additions.
View looking south on 17th Street. Proposal shows vacating 17th Street to become a pedestrian plaza (Lone Tree Plaza) north of Highway 30 and the Triangle becoming a new downtown open space for activity. The median acts as a refuge for pedestrians crossing the street to visit other businesses.
2. Highway Corridors Concept

Highways 30 and 14 should be linked closely to the community, supporting the downtown while creating more economic development opportunities for the city. Enhancing Highway 30 is a tool for economic development, and involves functional improvements and beautification. Strategies include:

- **Create a positive impression on everyone.** The function of Highway 30 goes beyond being a conduit for traffic to flow; it makes a statement about what the community values are held in the community. A corridor that has a personality and that compliments the values of the city creates an impression on passersby. The corridor needs to create a positive and memorable experience for everyone to attract visitors to the downtown and other areas of the community. Clean streets, trees, ornamental lighting, appealing business fronts, landscaping, community graphics, art, and a strong pedestrian environment help influence the perception of the corridor, and thus the overall perception of the community.

- **Redevelop property.** Underused, vacant buildings, and open sites create noticeable gaps along the street that distract from the quality of the corridor. Map x.x identifies sites along Highway 30 that can be redeveloped. Property along these corridors experience the highest level of traffic and attract retail spending from travelers going through the city. Central City should guide new development to vacant sites within its existing jurisdiction. Building on the fringe of the City continues to decentralize the city’s services, and should be avoided when eligible sites are available within the city.

- **Direct people to destinations.** Installing wayfinding signs along the highway will increase people’s awareness for Central City’s assets, including the parks, pool, downtown, and Lone Tree Monument.

- **Improve the experience of the crossroads.** Downtown is perceived as an obstacle for motorists rather than a destination for services. Navigating through the crossroads of Highways 30 and 14 is challenging at all times. Motorists often seek to get through the district without getting caught by a red light, which encourages vehicles move through the district. Strategies for improving circulation and experience of visiting downtown, include:
  - Short-term strategy: Redirecting Highway 14 to C Avenue.
  - Long-term strategy: Redirecting Highway 14 to the old railroad right-of-way that would then align with a new overpass.
Map 4.5: Highway Redevelopment Sites
3. West Growth Area

The West Expansion area is located north of the railroad tracks and west of the existing built area. The concept for developing the land relies on preparing a master plan for redevelopment. The sequence for developing this area for residential uses follows the complete build-out of the east expansion area, which is projected to absorb residential growth beyond the next 20 years. Principles for development (in order) include:

- **Transportation and Connectivity.** The concept prepared as part of this plan uses A Street as the principle route connecting the older and newer areas of the community. B Street could be an alternative, yet either extension will require phased development and improvements to the stormwater management system.

- **Land Use.** Extending the existing northside neighborhood to the west expands the available housing options in this area of the city. Existing houses should be integrated in the design of the master plan or be redeveloped for additional lots. Ribbons of greenways should connect the old and new parts of the northside to unify the neighborhoods.

- **Trails, Parks, and Open Space.** Drainageways should be used as an amenity to attract private investment. Trails can be placed near waterways and trail access should be defined to North Park.

- **Infrastructure and Utilities.** The land is serviceable by infrastructure and out of the 100-year flood plain.
4. EAST GROWTH AREA

The East Growth Area, located south of the railroad tracks and east of the proposed realignment of Highway 14 (13th Avenue), is Central City’s most logical location for expanding residential development. The market demand and the land’s availability for new residential housing is south of the railroad tracks.

- **Land Use.** Residential uses should be the principle form of development that surrounds a signature amenity. The development of the Lake View Subdivision established the city’s first housing project overlooking a lake with walkout basements. This concept of creating a signature amenity to appeal to investors should continue in the East Expansion area. Major intersections should be planned for commercial use or higher density residential.

- **Amenity.** The project should consist of more than just residential lots, but also a park, trails, connections to the school, and possible water features to encourage purchasing of units.

- **Public/Private Partnership.** Developing the project will require public involvement. Similar to the Lake View subdivision, the City will likely have to lead the project through completion rather than wait for a private developer.

- **Stormwater Management.** Improving stormwater drainage is critical to the development project. Redirecting the channel through the site will allow for a greater yield of lots.

- **Phased Development.** Developing the project in phases will stabilize housing demand and not saturate the market or place the City at significant risk. Planning street alignments and future park/trail placements will unite the individual phases into a whole project.
5. **Industrial Uses**

Central City should remain active in initiating economic development, stimulating job growth opportunities, and providing attractive sites for future industrial development.

Industrial development in Central City is linked to the proximity to access, including Highway 30, Highway 14, and the railroad. Clustering industries that have similar intensity on the land and near compatible uses limits the controversy for their development.

The Development Concept identifies industrial development on the east edge of Central City along 17th Road. The land is well-situated for future industrial development, and already serviced by water and sewer. Its access to Highway 30 and the railroad also make it a marketable area for investment.

Allowing industrial uses to develop south of 20th Street should be discouraged. The land to the southeast of 17th Road and 20th Street could become a later expansion of the residential neighborhood. However, the development of this potential expansion is beyond the 20-year housing demand. In the event of such development, a buffer should be reserved for the space between industrial and residential uses.
6. Community Services District

Participants in the planning process indicated that the Litzensburg Memorial County Hospital will likely expand in the next 20 years. While its current site is hemmed in by residential homes, the land immediately to the south of Central City’s High School is vacant and available for development. A portion of the property would develop for the hospital; the remaining balance will be turned over to the City to be likely developed for senior housing.

Elements of the master plan should include:

- **Reserving the northeast portion of the property for senior housing.** Housing should not be isolated to the south edge of the site, rather it should be placed closer to developing neighborhoods to the east and encourage seniors to use the trail system. Often senior’s primary means of traveling in a small community is by walking.

- **Designing the principle access to the hospital should be designed to be flexible from the west or east side of its site.** This plan identifies Highway 14 as possibly shifting from its current alignment to the old railroad right-of-way. The circulation for emergency vehicles should not be obstructed if the alignment of Highway 14 were to move.

- **Defining a Wellness Walk on the south edge of the school grounds.** The site plan must allow for pedestrians to easily move from the school to the neighborhood to the east or to the pool to the west. The pathway should be integrated into the regional trail system and hospital campus, creating a wellness walk for recovering patients, visitors, and staff. This linear park could have fitness stations placed throughout the space.
FUTURE LAND USE

Map 4.10 shows the future land use of Central City, which includes current land use and the proposed uses from the development concept previously outlined.

Table 3.1 identifies the compatibility of uses adjacent to each other, while Table 3.2 defines the characteristics of each of the land use categories specified in the Development Concept and Future Land Use Plan.

Land Use Compatibility

Some of the most difficult issues in plan implementation arise when more intensive uses are proposed adjacent to less intensive uses. Table 3.1 is a land use compatibility guide that indicates which land uses are typically compatible, and which land use combinations may create significant conflict. This chart can be used as a starting point to assess the relationship between land uses and provide a basis for development proposal review. However, individual proposals will need to be assessed on a case by case basis to determine compatibility with surrounding land uses.

Compatibility Rating Key

5: Uses are completely compatible. Development should be designed consistent with good planning practice.

4: Uses are basically compatible. Traffic from higher intensity uses should be directed away from lower intensity uses. Building elements and scale should be consistent with surrounding development.

3: Uses may have potential conflicts that may be resolved or minimized through project design. Traffic and other external effects should be directed away from lower-intensity uses. Landscaping, buffering, and screening should be employed to minimize negative effects. A Planned Unit Development may be advisable.

2: Uses have significant conflict. Major effects must be strongly mitigated to prevent impact on adjacent uses. A Planned Unit Development is required in all cases to assess project impact and define development design.

1: Uses are incompatible. Any development proposal requires a Planned Unit Development and extensive documentation to prove that external effects are fully mitigated. In general, proposed uses with this level of conflict will not be permitted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.1: Land Use Compatibility Matrix</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parks, Greenways, Open Space</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low Density Residential</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medium Density Residential</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mobile Home</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
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<tr>
<td>Downtown Mixed Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corridor Commercial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited Industrial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Map 4.10: Future Land Use Map
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Use Category</th>
<th>Use Characteristics</th>
<th>Features and Location Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Parks and Greenways/Open Space      | - Traditional park and recreation areas including both passive and active recreation uses.  
- Environmentally sensitive areas should be preserved and possibly incorporated into the city's trail system.  
- Areas essential for stormwater management using best management practices and natural systems. | - Parks should be centrally located with easy access for both pedestrian and auto users.  
- Residents should be within approximately a half mile of a neighborhood park.  
- All parks should be connected through the city’s trail and greenway system.  
- Environmentally sensitive areas, including native plant communities (e.g., prairies) and aquatic resources (e.g., wetlands), should be protected. |
| Low Density (Single Family) Residential | - Restrictive land uses, emphasizing single-family detached development, although innovative single-family forms may be permitted with special review.  
- Civic uses are generally allowed, with special permission for higher intensity uses.  
- Developments will be provided with full municipal services. | - Primary uses within residential growth centers (East and West).  
- Should be insulated from noise, smell, air pollution, and light pollution.  
- Should provide a framework of streets and open spaces.  
- Typical densities range from 1 to 4 units per acre, although individual attached projects may include densities up to 6 units per acre in small areas. |
| Medium Density Residential          | - Restrictive land uses, emphasizing housing.  
- May incorporate a mix of housing types, including single-family detached, single-family attached, and townhouse uses.  
- Limited multi-family development may be permitted with special review and criteria  
- Civic uses are generally allowed, with special permission for higher intensity uses. | - Applies to established neighborhoods of the city which have diverse housing types, and in developing areas that incorporate a mix of development.  
- Developments should generally have articulated scale and maintain identity of individual units.  
- Tend to locate in clusters, but should include linkages to other aspects of the community.  
- Typical maximum density is 4 to 12 units per acre, typically in a middle range.  
- Innovative design should be encouraged in new projects.  
- Projects at this density may be incorporated in a limited way into single-family neighborhoods. |
| High Density Residential            | - Allows multi-family and compatible civic uses  
- Allows integration of limited office and convenience commercial within primarily residential areas | - Locate at sites with access to major amenities or activity centers  
- Should be integrated into the fabric of nearby residential areas, while avoiding adverse traffic and visual impacts on low-density uses  
- Traffic should have direct access to collector or arterial streets to avoid overloading local streets  
- Requires Planned Unit Development designation when developed near lower intensity uses or in mixed use developments  
- Attractive landscape standards should be applied  
- Typical density is in excess of 10 units per acre  
- May be incorporated into mixed use projects and planned areas |
| Commercial (East Growth Area)       | - Includes a range of low impact commercial uses, providing a variety of neighborhood services.  
- Accommodates service related commercial uses.  
- Allows residential units above commercial development.  
- Includes low to moderate building and impervious coverage. | - Should be located along major streets and in areas close to residential growth centers.  
- Should emphasize pedestrian scale and relationships among businesses.  
- Traffic systems should provide good internal traffic flow.  
- Negative effects on surrounding residential areas should be limited by location and buffering.  
- Good landscaping and restrictive signage standards should be maintained.  
- Good pedestrian/bicycle connections should be provided into surrounding areas.  
- The dominance of automobiles should be moderated by project design. |
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<tr>
<th>Land Use Category</th>
<th>Use Characteristics</th>
<th>Features and Location Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Downtown Mixed Use</td>
<td>- Traditional downtown district</td>
<td>Establishment of mixed use pattern in the traditional city center.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Includes mix of uses, primarily commercial, office, and limited upper level residential.</td>
<td>- Recognizes downtown development patterns without permitting undesirable land uses.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Should be the primary focus of major civic uses, including government, cultural services, and other civic facilities.</td>
<td>- District may expand with development of appropriately designed adjacent projects.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>- Developments outside the center of the city should be encouraged to have “downtown” characteristics, including mixed use buildings and an emphasis on pedestrian scale.</td>
<td>- New projects should respect pedestrian scale and design patterns and setbacks within the district.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Establishes mixed use pattern in the traditional city center.</td>
<td>- Historic preservation is a significant value.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>- Recognizes downtown development patterns without permitting undesirable land uses.</td>
<td>- Good pedestrian and bicycle links should be provided, including non-motorized access to surrounding residential areas.</td>
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<td>- District may expand with development of appropriately designed adjacent projects.</td>
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<td>- Good pedestrian and bicycle links should be provided, including non-motorized access to surrounding residential areas.</td>
<td>- Establishes mixed use pattern in the traditional city center.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Corridor (Highways 30/14)</td>
<td>- Include auto-oriented, primarily retail/service/office commercial and high density residential areas that serve consumers.</td>
<td>Typically located along major transportation corridors, lining both sides of the street.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>- Typically contains small scale retail and personal services as well as community uses such as major grocery stores and office buildings.</td>
<td>- Pedestrian traffic should be encouraged and neighborhood scale retained where applicable.</td>
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<td>- Signage and site features should respect neighborhood scale.</td>
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<td>- Commercial and office development in mixed-use areas should minimize impact on housing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Light Industrial</td>
<td>- Limited industrial provides for uses that do not generate noticeable external effects.</td>
<td>Limited industrial uses may be located near office, commercial, and, with appropriate development standards, some residential areas.</td>
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<td>- Business parks may combine office and light industrial uses.</td>
<td>- Strict control over signage, landscaping, and design is necessary for locations nearer to low intensity uses.</td>
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<td>- Zoning regulations should encourage business clusters, including office and office/distribution uses with good development and signage standards.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>- Provides for a range of industrial enterprises, including those with significant external effects.</td>
<td>General industrial sites should be well-buffered from less intensive use.</td>
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<td>- Sites should have direct access to major regional transportation facilities, without passing through residential or commercial areas.</td>
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<td>- Developments with major external effects should be subject to review.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Civic</td>
<td>- Includes schools, churches, libraries, and other public facilities that act as centers of community activity.</td>
<td>May be permitted in a number of different areas, including residential areas.</td>
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<td>- Individual review of proposals requires an assessment of operating characteristics, project design, and traffic management.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Facilities/Utilities</td>
<td>- Includes facilities with industrial operating characteristics, including public utilities, maintenance facilities, and public works yards.</td>
<td>Industrial operating characteristics should be controlled according to same standards as industrial uses.</td>
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<td>- When possible, should generally be located in industrial areas.</td>
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<td>- Facilities like the wastewater treatment plant should be well buffered from residential uses.</td>
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PARKS, TRAILS, & GREENWAYS

Central City’s neighborhoods, destinations, and commercial areas should be linked by a comprehensive and continuous greenway and trail system that serves both transportation and recreational purposes.

Incorporation of on- and off-street trails into all areas of the city is an important component of future development in Central City. The segments of the system that traverse the city’s future growth areas should be designated in advance and incorporated into individual project design. The trail and greenway plan are depicted in Map 4.11 and are described in detail in Chapter 6 of the Plan. Central City’s future trails and greenways should include:

- **Completion of the city-wide trail system.** The city has a looped trail system that extends throughout the entire community.
- **Greenways.** Future trails could develop parallel to the canals and help connect areas of the community.
- **An interior trail system.** A system of on-street trails and signed shared routes should connect the city’s outer loop trail.
- **Preserve open space, farmland, and critical environmental areas.** Applying smart-growth principles encourages the incorporation of water bodies, wetlands, parkland, and farmland into the city’s overall growth concept. Good development practices encourage the preservation of these features.
- **Sustain special ecosystems for natural habitat and recreation.** By preserving open spaces, Central City can ensure an adequate balance between the built and natural environment. It is also important to preserve environmentally sensitive areas such as floodplains in order to prevent adverse environmental impacts.
COMMUNITY BRANDING

Central City’s culture and historical relics define its image. One of the city’s icons is the Lone Tree, which was a giant, solitary cottonwood standing on the north side of the river some three miles southwest of present Central City during the 1800’s. The tree was visible at great distance - 20 miles away - and was especially prominent since timber was rare on the Nebraska prairies except in stream valleys. The tree also gave its name to a stage station and a town, later renamed Central City.

The Lone Tree monument is an icon for the community, yet many residents are unaware of the relevance of the tree to the City’s history or the monument’s location. This plan recommends to elevate the prominence of the Lone Tree by replicating of the monument in a series of public art installations throughout the community. Engravings in the monuments would reflect a series of layered stories from the community. Stories may reflect the historical events and culture of the community, and may include:

- **Old Lincoln Highway.** During the early 1900’s, the alignment of the Lincoln Highway followed Highway 30 through Central City. The road was a the first coast-to-coast route from New York City to San Francisco.

- **Mormon Trail.** The Mormon Trail passed through Central City. In 1911 residents of Merrick County erected a stone in the shape of a tree trunk on the site once occupied by Lone Tree.

- **Railroad.** The Union Pacific Railroad passes through Central City, and was one of the critical features that led to growth in commerce and development.

- **Agriculture and the Land.** Merrick County has a strong agriculture economy, while the Platte River is a region’s most significant physical feature.

- **Central City Schools.** The City’s commitment to its youth and education could be expressed in activities occurring at the school. Music, athletics, and art are among possible themes. Students could be engaged to design the art.

- **Community Pride.** Participants in the planning process indicate that the People of Central City is its greatest asset. The City is tremendously successful in supporting community initiatives and having a quality neighborhoods.

- **Native American Heritage.** During the region’s early settlement, travelers would meet and trade with Native Americans under the Lone Tree. The stacked stories is indicative of totem poles.
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