

MEMORANDUM

TO: City of Reno – City Council and Planning Commission
FROM: Matt Goebel and Charlie Brennan, Clarion Associates
DATE: January 18, 2019
RE: Zoning Code Renovation: January 29th Code Direction Workshop

This memorandum provides background information and discussion items for the January 29, 2019, joint meeting of the Reno City Council and Planning Commission.

BACKGROUND AND PROJECT OVERVIEW

The City of Reno's recently initiated "Zoning Code Renovation" project involves a complete rewrite of the City's zoning regulations, located in Title 18 of the Reno Municipal Code. The project goals are to implement the recently adopted Master Plan, make the code more user-friendly, and improve the predictability and transparency of the review process. To assist in this effort, the City has retained Clarion Associates, the Denver-based consulting firm that also served as the lead consultant on the Master Plan project.

The project is just getting underway, and the January 29, 2019, workshop is intended to provide City Council and Planning Commission members with an opportunity to offer additional input at an early stage prior to the start of the detailed drafting. The workshop is intended to:

- Provide a review of the major code issues and revisions to be addressed in this project; and
- Identify specific topics for further Council and Commission feedback prior to beginning the detailed drafting.

The discussion at the January 29 meeting will be structured to follow the following three focus areas:

- Zoning Districts and Land Uses
- Development Standards
- Administration and Procedures

This memorandum addresses key issues and priorities within each of these focus areas, as identified by City staff, the consultant, the public, the technical working group, planning commissioners, and City Council members during earlier stages of this project. This memo expands upon recommendations initially set forth in the Annexation and Land Development Code Targeted Assessment Report (the "Assessment Report"), which was the final step in the Master Plan update process. Staff and the consultant team are seeking to confirm City Council and Planning Commission support for the recommended updates in the Assessment Report.

At the January 29 workshop, City Council and Planning Commission members will be encouraged to weigh-in on these issues and either confirm the direction or provide further feedback.



ZONING DISTRICTS AND LAND USES

The first category of issues deals with Reno’s zoning districts and the land uses allowed within those districts. The Assessment Report recommended revisions to the City’s line-up of zoning districts to implement the new Master Plan and improve the organization and function of the code. These recommended changes should better position the City to achieve the types of development envisioned in the Master Plan, as informed by community discussions during the *ReImagine Reno* process.

1. Streamline and Simplify the Mixed-Use Districts and Overlays

The current code contains a single base mixed-use district (MU) and numerous overlay districts intended to implement the regional centers and transit-oriented development (TOD) corridors identified in the Truckee Meadows Regional Plan. This structure is repetitive and challenging to use, and does not reflect the Master Plan’s new direction regarding regional centers and TOD corridors. Many of the previous regional center plans and TOD corridor plans did not provide policy direction or guidance that justified individual plans.

The simplification of the mixed-use overlays has been a longstanding city goal, in part to help encourage and direct infill to appropriate areas. In the new Master Plan, the various overlapping mixed-use plans were merged and centers and corridors were classified based on similar characteristics. The regional centers and TOD corridors became: Downtown regional center, convention center, community/neighborhood centers, urban corridors, suburban corridors, neighborhood corridors, greenway corridors, light industrial/logistic areas, innovation areas, and airport transportation areas. Each type of center, corridor, and area has a set of design principles in the Master Plan (Chapter 3) that provide specific direction on the character and types of development desired in these parts of the city.

The Assessment Report recommended adding additional mixed-use base districts to implement the Master Plan, in addition to reducing the number of overlay districts. Many of the current mixed-use overlay districts are repetitive, and the system of overlays is complicated and confusing for code users.

Adoption of new mixed-use base districts to replace the mixed-use overlays, as shown in the table below, is recommended to bring the code into conformance with the Master Plan, establish a more intuitive and user-friendly structure, and encourage and facilitate infill and redevelopment activity in centers and corridors.

The table below summarizes the changes proposed to the mixed-use and overlay districts. Additional changes may be necessary as the consultants begin drafting this part of the updated code. The intent is to ensure that standards that are necessary to retain unique characteristics of neighborhoods remain or are developed and generally applicable standards that effectively apply across the community are incorporated into the code. Specific recommendations regarding zoning map changes will be made at a later stage in the code update process.

Current District	Proposed District	Comments
<i>Mixed-Use Districts</i>		
MU Mixed-Use	MD Mixed-Use – Downtown	New district to apply to current DRRC Downtown Reno Regional Center Overlay, with codified subdistricts (Entertainment, University, Innovation, Riverwalk, Northwest Quadrant, and Powning).
MU Mixed-Use	MU Mixed-Use – Urban	New district for areas designated “Urban Mixed-Use” in Master Plan.
MU Mixed-Use; AC Arterial Commercial; CC Community Commercial	MS Mixed-Use – Suburban	New district that combines Arterial Commercial and Community Commercial and will apply to areas designated as Suburban Mixed-Use in the Master Plan, except for those areas currently zoned MF30 or located within a neighborhood center (and zoned NC).
MU Mixed-Use	MA Mixed-Use – Airport	New district to implement Airport Transportation Areas in Master Plan.

Current District	Proposed District	Comments
MU Mixed-Use; NC Neighborhood Commercial	NC Neighborhood Center	Carries forward the Neighborhood Commercial district with new name, incorporating elements from MU.
Other Overlay Districts		
HL Historic or Landmark	Historic or Landmark (HL)	Evaluate this property-specific district in the context of streamlining procedures related to historic preservation. Consider adopting a consolidated process for listing on the City Register of Historic Places and applying the overlay district (currently two separate processes).
MH Mobile Home	Mobile Home (MH)	Consider retiring this district and moving the regulations contained in the overlay to a use-specific standard for mobile homes/parks. Develop nonconforming use standards for existing mobile homes/parks.
AFP Airport Flight Path	Airport Flight Path (AF)	Carry forward. Review AF and AN to ensure restrictions remain in-line with FAA requirements/best practices to preserve the long-term viability of Reno-Tahoe International Airport.
ANE Airport Noise Exposure	Airport Noise Exposure (AN)	
CPA Cooperative Planning Area	Cooperative Planning Area (CP)	
N/A	Wellhead/Source Water Protection (WP)	New overlay district to implement sustainable development goal 2.1F (Water and Wastewater Systems) and 7.1D (Hydrologic Resources) of the Master Plan designed to protect wellhead and other sources of drinking water from potentially harmful land uses or development-related impacts.

2. Create a New Neighborhood Overlay

To maximize the City's limited resources and promote a more user-friendly Master Plan, some neighborhood plans were retired with the adoption of Reno's new Master Plan. However, this does not mean that protections for Reno's neighborhoods have gone away.

Chapter 3 of the Master Plan ("Area-Specific Policies") sets forth policies to preserve neighborhood character through both general design principles and also design principles for specific types of neighborhoods: central, outer, and foothill. These principles draw ideas and concepts from both carried-forward and retired neighborhood plans and apply them more broadly across the City, providing guidance on topics such as community character and design, neighborhood character, and infill and redevelopment-- even in neighborhoods that did not previously have their own plans. Through Zoning Code RENOVation, these principles will be codified in the new code. In addition, six of the City's most substantive Neighborhood Plans have been carried forward as part of the new Master Plan (i.e., Country Club Acres, Greenfield, Mortensen-Garson, Northeast, Wells Avenue, and West University).

To further support strengthened code standards for specific types of neighborhoods, establishment of a new neighborhood overlay is recommended. Neighborhood districts would apply to areas identified for their unique characteristics or historic values, and are suitable for specific processes, design guidelines, and/or standards adopted through zoning. The neighborhood overlay would be appropriate for conservation districts already identified in the City's Master Plan and other neighborhoods where the establishment of unique standards is warranted. The neighborhood overlay is a flexible tool that can be tailored to fit different neighborhoods, but should be applied after 1) Master Plan design principles for the specific neighborhood type have been amended or a new Conservation District is established, and 2) unique design guidelines and/or standards adopted are justified.

Current District	Proposed District	Comments
Identified Neighborhood Overlays*		
N/A	Wells Avenue Conservation Overlay (WA)	Convert the Wells Ave Planning Area into the new neighborhood overly district
N/A	Newlands Heights Conservation Overlay(NH)	Create the NN overlay as it is identified as a conservation district in the Master Plan
N/A	PowningNeighborhood Conservation Overlay (PN)	Create the PN overlay as it is identified as a conservation district in the Master Plan

*The current overlay districts associated with neighborhood plans that were carried forward in the Master Plan will be reviewed in conjunction with the code update to limit duplicative requirements and ensure consistency. Overlay districts associated with retired neighborhood plans will not be carried forward in the updated code.

3. Minimize the Use of PUDs in the Future

As discussed in the Code Assessment, dozens of PUDs have been approved in Reno to provide greater flexibility from code standards for larger projects. While this has been a valuable tool for addressing unique projects and areas, the long-term administration and enforcement of multiple PUDs has proved challenging. Moving forward, the new code should reduce the need for new PUDs in the future by offering an improved lineup of base districts, better development standards, and additional tools for flexibility.

For new PUDs that are proposed, the new code will:

- **Establish a Two-Step Approval Process.** For new PUDs, the code would provide a two-step process for approval: first, a preliminary approval of a conceptual plan for the PUD, followed by a more formal approval process. Such an approach would allow for developers to be more flexible in making changes to their designs or plans for PUDs before time and money has been spent developing detailed plans.
- **Establish Clear Public Benefit Requirements.** The intent of PUDs is not only to provide flexibility, but to also elevate the quality and creativity of a development beyond what would be possible under current zoning. The current code is only partially successful at identifying and setting standards for the types of public benefits that should be provided in PUDs. To create a more level playing field (and a more predictable approval process), additional specificity is needed to clarify the types of public benefits that must be provided in exchange for the opportunity of gaining approval. Desired benefits do not need to be specified with mathematical precision, but they should be described with enough specificity so that it is clear what qualifies as a public benefit, and what should be required for major changes (e.g., those that add density).
- **Require a Fiscal Impact Analysis.** A standard approach, factors, and process for measuring the fiscal impacts of new PUDs (or major amendments to existing PUDs) should be established in the code. This can simply be an authorization; the detailed submittal requirements and thresholds could be included in a supplemental manual outside the code. The intent will be to provide an additional tool for a better understanding of the consequences of departing from the current zoning code and applying a PUD zoning in a given situation.
- **Require Use of Master Plan Land Uses.** Previous practice in Reno allowed developers to create their own land use designations within PUDs, and apply a unique set of standards to these designations (which in effect act as sub-districts within the PUD zoning district for that project). Under Master Plan policy, land uses identified in new PUD handbooks should be required to conform with (or nest within) the Master Plan land use categories in regards to types of development and/or ranges of development density. This change is intended to simplify the administration and evaluation of PUDs, and allow City staff to better track the supply of different types of land uses approved in PUDs throughout the city and SOI.

- **Require a Greater Mix of Housing Types.** Reno has a significant supply of approved (but unbuilt) single-family detached housing that potentially exceeds anticipated future needs of residents. The Master Plan recommends new requirements to ensure the mix of housing types in future PUDs is more closely aligned with anticipated demand, as well as the goals and policies in the Master Plan. In addition, the creation of parameters to encourage developers to re-evaluate existing PUDs as they build out and adjust the mix of housing proposed to be more in-line with anticipated future demand are also recommended.
- **Establish a Process to Convert SPDs and PUDs to Base Zoning.** The City should also consider establishing a process by which an existing SPD or PUD may be converted to one or more base zoning districts if desired by a property owner. Through this process, the SPD or PUD could be re-designated as an existing zoning district but the conditions attached to the SPD or PUD could be carried forward or supplemented. In many cases, the original reason for flexibility that necessitated the creation of a SPD or PUD may be allowed through more inclusive zoning districts, more flexible development standards, administrative adjustments, or other new tools introduced in the code update. While this may not be worthwhile or feasible for large, complex PUDs that involved significant customization, but could make sense for smaller PUDs. Over time, elimination of SPDs and at least some PUDs through such a process could help simplify the process of tracking and enforcing the various SPD and PUD approvals.

4. Make Targeted Revisions to Other Zoning Districts

The following table summarizes other major changes recommended to other zoning districts, beyond those mentioned above. (This is an abbreviated version of Table 2 in the Code Assessment Report, which includes additional detail on each proposed new district). Generally, the following types of changes are proposed:

- Consolidate similar districts, eliminate obsolete districts, or create new districts needed to implement the Master Plan.
- Revise district purpose statements to better describe the district and intent and align with Master Plan land use categories.
- Review the uses allowed in each district and revise as needed to allow for the types of development and uses envisioned in Master Plan.
- Update names of residential districts to reflect the maximum densities allowed in the district.

Current District	Proposed District	Comments
Residential Districts		
LLR2.5 Large Lot Residential (2.5 acres)	LL2.5 Large Lot Residential (2.5 acres)	Carry forward; naming and abbreviations maintained to reflect maximum lot sizes, which are more intuitive than maximum density
LLR1 Large Lot Residential (1 acre)	LL1 Large Lot Residential (1 acre)	
LLR.5 Large Lot Residential (0.5 acres)	LL0.5 Large Lot Residential (0.5 acres)	
SF15 Single-Family Residential (15,000 sf)	SF3 Single-Family Residential (3 units per acre)	Carry forward, but revise allowed uses to allow for a wider range of housing types and complementary neighborhood uses. Revise names to reflect maximum allowed density (rounded up) allowed. Under this proposed naming and abbreviations system, all single-family and multifamily residential districts will be based on the maximum allowed density for consistency (previously, SF districts were named by lot size and MF districts were named by density).
SF9 Single-Family Residential (9,000 sf)	SF5 Single-Family Residential (5 units per acre)	
SF6 Single-Family Residential (6,000 sf)	SF8 Single-Family Residential (8 units per acre)	
SF4 Single-Family Residential (4,000 sf)	SF14 Single-Family Residential (14 units per acre)	

Current District	Proposed District	Comments
MF14 Multi-Family (14 units per acre)	MF14 Multi-Family (14 units per acre)	
MF21 Multi-Family (21 units per acre)	MF21 Multi-Family (21 units per acre)	
MF30 Multi-Family (30 units per acre)	MF30 Multi-Family (30 units per acre)	Carry forward, but revise uses to allow for a wider range of housing types and complementary neighborhood uses, as encouraged in the Master Plan. Maximum height regulations (45 feet; three stories) should also be revised to 65 feet to allow for the construction of taller structures in this district.
Commercial Districts		
PO Professional Office	N/A	Retire this zoning district. Replace with standards controlling office uses in single-family neighborhoods.
HC Hotel Casino	N/A	This district, which allows for non-restricted gaming uses associated with a hotel or motel, is rarely used and was removed from the lineup of zoning districts specified in the Master Plan. Currently HC zoning only exists in the Verdi area (eight parcels). While further discussion is needed, our recommendation is to replace this district with a gaming overlay district for properties entitled or permitted for non-restricted gaming (as is in the approach taken by a number of communities in Southern Nevada).
Employment/Industrial Districts		
I Industrial	IN Industrial	Carry forward. Review use list.
IC Industrial Commercial	IC Industrial Commercial	Carry forward and merge with IB district.
Special Districts		
OS Open Space	PG Parks, Greenways, and Open Space	Revise name and purpose statement to align with PGOS land use category in Master Plan.
PF Public Facilities	PF Public Facility	Carry forward. Parks zoned as any other zoning districts should be changed to PGOS.
PUD Planned Unit Development	PUD Planned Unit Development	See item three (3) in this section of the memo for more details on the proposed changes to PUDs.
UT5 Unincorporated Transition (5 acres)	UT5 Unincorporated Transition (5 acres)	Carry forward; adjust minimum lot sizes to align with district names
UT10 Unincorporated Transition (10 acres)	UT10 Unincorporated Transition (10 acres)	
UT40 Unincorporated Transition (40 acres)	UT40 Unincorporated Transition (40 acres)	
SPD Specific Plan District	N/A	This district is already retired and has been included in the code only to recognize existing SPDs and allow for modification. Attempt to transition areas within these to base zoning districts where possible. It may be necessary to retain this district even though this district is not being applied to new areas.
TRD Truckee River Corridor Downtown Riverfront	N/A	Retire this district as it is not used on the zoning map. Merge the standards from the district to inform district-specific standards for the Mixed-Use – Downtown district.

ZONING DISTRICTS AND LAND USES

QUESTIONS FOR CITY COUNCIL AND PLANNING COMMISSION:

- Do you have questions or concerns about the recommended changes to the zoning districts?
- Is anything missing from these recommendations?
- Should the staff and consultant team move forward with these

DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

This category of issues deals with Title 18 standards for development quality, which address issues like protection of sensitive site features, development of effective and connected transportation networks, and requirements for off-street parking, landscaping, and buffering. Generally in this part of the code, the update project will consolidate and update standards, and also ensure that all standards are clear and objective. Improvements to these standards should also allow the City to rely less on the special use permit process for issues by setting forth clear, objective standards for development quality.

Some of the general goals of this part of the project will include:

- **Implement Master Plan design principles through district-specific standards where possible.** Chapter 3 of the Master Plan provides design principles to guide new development in different areas of the city. The code standards should be reviewed and revised to align with these design principles.
- **Distinguish between infill/redevelopment and greenfield development.** Infill and redevelopment standards are already included in the code, but are found in different chapters and vary based on types of development or location. These standards should be consolidated where possible, and reorganized depending on whether the standards should apply generally to all infill/redevelopment, or apply as a district-specific standard.
- **Encourage flexibility.** A one-size-fits-all approach to implementing a design principle may not always be desirable, particularly where a design standard in the code will result in outcomes that are counter to the intent of the design principle. In such cases, a range of possible options for meeting a design standard should be given, especially when such options would provide greater flexibility and allow for creativity in the application of the standard.
- **Provide more certainty and consistency.** During conversations with City staff, it emerged that certain design standards and/or the ways in which the standard can be met are not clearly stated in the code. As a result, staff is forced to use their judgment to determine whether a development proposal is in compliance with the code. This approach has led to inconsistent application of design standards, as each standard is interpreted differently. This is hard both on City staff, and developers, who are unsure how they will be expected to meet the standard. Existing standards should be reviewed and revised where possible to ensure a clear and objective set of criteria for meeting the standard is provided.

Many specific topics will be reviewed and revised as needed in this part of the project to implement Master Plan policies and current best-practices. A complete list and more detailed recommendations are in the Assessment Report. Some of the more significant topic areas include:

- **Natural Resource Protection:** Consolidate and update the wildlife protection, tree protection, and other sensitive area standards, most of which are scattered in the current code. Establish site design standards

for development in order to preserve wildlife habitats, prominent ridgelines, natural or scenic resources, and other environmentally sensitive lands. Review and update existing regulations related to tree protection, hillside development, flood hazard areas, wetlands and stream protection, and drainage way protection to align with Master Plan design principles.

- **Grading and Drainage:** Consolidate standards related to grading, erosion prevention, sedimentation control, and drainageway protection.
- **Access, Connectivity, and Circulation:** New section describing the requirements for internal circulation within a site, connections between development sites, and both vehicular and pedestrian/bicycle access to and throughout the site. It would include provisions for when and where sidewalks are required and requirements for driveways and access. Develop standards to encourage the integration of infrastructure, facilities, and other site design features that support alternative modes of transportation.
- **Off-Street Parking and Loading:** Carry forward and update the off-street parking and loading requirements. Prepare a master summary table of parking requirements. Review all minimum off-street parking requirements and update as necessary. Introduce additional tools allowing for flexibility in meeting parking requirements. Update and illustrate parking area design standards. In the urban core, parking standards will be evaluated in the context of Downtown capacity and availability and to encourage common versus individual parking need solutions.
- **Landscaping, Buffering, and Screening:** Consolidate standards for landscaping required on a development site, buffers required at transitioning uses and/or zone districts, and screening devices such as fences and wall standards. Review landscaping standards and processes in relation to tree canopy goals.
- **Site and Building Design:** Establish site and building design standards, such as architectural character and building form. Include revised standards for infill/redevelopment, with new standards for central neighborhoods based on existing district-specific standards for the Wells Avenue Neighborhood Planning Area and the West University Neighborhood Planning Area. Review and update existing regulations related to stormwater management, low impact development, lighting, and landscaping to implement the design principles for sustainable development.
- **Exterior Lighting:** Describe the purpose and applicability of exterior lighting standards, and distinguish between types of lighting (e.g., residential, commercial, pedestrian, decorative, parking lots, and streets). Update illumination standards currently in the code (Article XIII of Chapter 18.12), and include standards on spillover lighting (currently included as part of the residential adjacency standards in Section 18.12.304). Consider opportunities to strengthen Dark-Sky standards and balance them against public safety desires.
- **Historic Preservation:** Reno staff is working to finalize a path forward for the updates to the historic preservation sections of Title 18. Any changes will be coordinated with the broader update process to ensure seamless integration and strive to provide more predictability to all parties of interest.

Updates to the City's sign code will be handled as part of a separate process to this process to update Title 18.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

QUESTIONS FOR CITY COUNCIL AND PLANNING COMMISSION:

- Do you have questions or concerns about the recommended approach for reviewing and revising the development and design standards?
- Is anything missing from the recommendations?
- Should the staff and consultant move forward with the recommendations?

ADMINISTRATION AND PROCEDURES

This category of recommendations deals with Title 18 procedures for reviewing and deciding upon development applications. This category of issues is not directly tied to implementation of the new Master Plan; however, the need to consider procedural streamlining and efficiency is another major goal of the Title 18 rewrite. Staff and the consultant team are seeking to confirm City Council and Planning Commission support of the recommended updates in the following areas.

1. Additional Procedural Streamlining to Improve Efficiency

The code assessment made a number of recommendations related to improving the efficiency of the development review procedures—in particular, by streamlining the approval process for relatively minor decisions, so that policy makers can spend more time focused on relatively bigger projects with more specific impacts. A key tool for streamlining in many communities is delegation of minor decisions to staff. However, in Reno, staff already is responsible for many types of decisions, including all site plan reviews. Yet there may be other opportunities to increase overall efficiency. Specific recommendations from the report include:

- *Reduce reliance on Special Use Permits (SUPs):* Reno uses the SUP process more extensively than many other communities. It is being used not just to evaluate the appropriateness of uses in specific locations, but also to evaluate site and building design issues (which are more typically reviewed through site plan reviews in other communities). For example, SUPs are required for major grading projects that exceed certain thresholds, and also for projects within certain distances of residential districts. Similarly, SUPs are used for restaurants with alcohol service, something that is more typically handled as a use-specific standard.

The Code Assessment recommends limiting the use of the SUP tool by establishing new objective standards that would allow some projects to be approved by staff subject to compliance with the code rather than require most projects to go through the full SUP process. Improvements to the zoning districts, development standards, and use-specific standards should collectively provide more clarity as to the types of projects and level of quality that are expected, and thus allow for a more streamlined approval process by increasing the number of projects that can be approved by staff without a SUP. In addition, a better differentiation between use-specific issues and building and site design-related issues (which should be addressed through the site plan review process instead of the SUP process) will reduce the need to use SUPs.

- *Distinguish between major and minor site plan review:* To help distinguish big projects from small and better allocate resources, many communities define “major” and “minor” site plans, with more substantial submittal requirements and also a longer review time allotted to larger and/or more complex projects. Reno’s code should include specific thresholds for distinguishing major versus minor projects in order to expedite the review process of site plan reviews for minor, less complex projects. A shorter maximum review period than 30 days might actually be feasible for smaller projects (and no public notice), but a longer one should be considered for major projects. Importantly, the thresholds dividing major and minor applications should be written as specific as possible in the text of the code to minimize ambiguity about what is a major versus a minor project. The city had thresholds for major versus minor SUPs in the past that were not tightly drafted in this regard.

2. New Tools for Design Alternatives and Flexibility

While at the same time that the City of Reno and residents would like to see a more predictable pattern of development throughout the city, there may be times when deviation from design standards and other requirements is necessary to encourage creative, unique, and beneficial development. In these cases, the Code Assessment recommends potential new tools and approaches for design alternatives and flexibility. Communities use a range of tools to achieve this, including:

- **Minor deviations:** State law authorizes the granting of minor deviations (less than 10 percent) without conducting a hearing. Notice to surrounding property owners is required. In Reno, this authority is being used already, but it could be used more broadly to allow deviations from a broader range of standards than currently in place. As part of the code update, additional deviations should be considered, and the effectiveness and clarity of the notification process should be reexamined. This could be an especially helpful tool to provide flexibility (especially for infill sites) as new site and building design standards are introduced to implement the Master Plan.
- **Design Review Committee (DRC):** The Code Assessment discusses a possible creation of a DRC to approve any deviations from the code's design standards, such as those in place for the Wells Avenue neighborhood. This would allow developers and designers to pursue creative projects while still fitting in with the character of the surrounding neighborhood. In addition, a larger role for the design review committee could be considered, involving the committee in the approval of any project that is subject to design standards. Communities take a range of approaches to their design review committees, tailoring the committee's membership, powers and duties, and procedures to their specific needs.

These tools can be combined in a variety of ways in order to achieve the right level of flexibility. For instance, the City could opt to only pursue changes to the minor deviation regulations. Or, the City could go further and introduce a new alternative equivalent compliance tool to allow for even more deviations from the code's standards, with decisions made by staff. Or, a design review committee could be established to approve alternatives. The right approach for Reno will ultimately depend on the answers to two questions: how much flexibility should be given to deviate from the code's standards; and who gets to approve or decide what deviations are acceptable.

3. Amendments to Entitlements

The new code should clarify the process for amending existing entitlements (e.g., PUD, SUP, SPR). Specifically, the Master Plan recommends reviewing possible approaches for allowing amendments to PUDs, particularly ones that were approved a long time ago, and might not make sense given changes in the community's housing needs. The current code does not distinguish between major and minor amendments to approved projects, thus treating all changes to approved plans, permits, and or conditions of approval the same and essentially requiring a new application. We recommend establishing thresholds for minor amendments to project approvals that could be approved at the staff level. For example, some codes allow the planning administrator to approve minor amendments to approved PUD plans if they meet the following criteria:

- The amendment shall not change the ratio of residential units to square feet of non-residential building square footage by more than 10 percent.
- The number of residential units shall not be increased by more than allowed in the underlying Master Plan land use.
- The gross square footage of non-residential building area shall not be increased by more than 10 percent.
- The amendment shall not change the allowed uses listed in the approved PUD plan.
- The number or location of vehicular access points shall not be changed in a way that negatively impacts public safety or the flow of traffic onto public streets.

Similar thresholds should be developed in the new Reno code for all types of permits and approvals.

ADMINISTRATION AND PROCEDURES

QUESTIONS FOR CITY COUNCIL AND PLANNING COMMISSION:

- Do you have questions or concerns about the recommendations for delegating and streamlining?
- Do you have questions or concerns about the recommendations for allowing design alternatives/flexibility?
- Do you have questions or concerns about establishing new thresholds for major versus minor amendments to approved permits and approvals?
- Is anything missing from these recommendations?
- Should the staff and consultant move forward with these recommendations?