

Infill Housing

“Purposeful” infill growth, in the form of well-planned and managed development, can play a critical role in enhancing existing neighborhoods and strengthening downtown—in large part by supporting their ability to adapt to the community’s changing needs and opportunities. Addressing three key questions provides clear direction for identifying the right kinds of infill development, shaping it to enhance the quality and character of our community, and ensuring that its benefits outweigh its costs.

How do we plan for redevelopment and revitalization of our existing community to meet the needs of the future?

Infill development is not a goal, but a powerful tool Lee’s Summit can use to manage the accelerating pace of demographic, economic, and similar changes in ways that enhance quality of life and opportunity for the entire community. The community can use infill development to:

- Expand opportunities to enable people to “age in place”, welcome younger folks to become part of our community, and enhance economic diversity by providing appropriately located and designed accessory dwelling units in residential neighborhoods and a variety of missing middle housing options in Downtown.
- Focus infill investment in strip retail, outmoded office or industrial sites, and other places that today do not enhance the quality and character of our neighborhoods and downtown.
- Adapt to changing housing preferences—and markets (shaped by a growing number of households without kids)—for more diverse housing options in existing neighborhoods and downtown.

- Provide the growing local housing necessary to preserve and expand neighborhood center and downtown retail vitality amid a rapidly changing market environment that places growing importance on residents within walking distance.

How do we enhance the community’s design and appearance?

Getting the character, quality, and fit—in terms of use, design, and a broad array of impacts—is particularly important not just for making infill acceptable, but for achieving its full potential to meet the community’s changing needs and aspirations. The following points illustrate priorities for infill development that inform the Design Principles for the entire community located at the end of this chapter:

- **Mobility & Connectivity.** Infill development downtown can fill gaps, animate sidewalks, invite greater walkability. While infill development rarely generates noticeable traffic, it is critical to ensure that any associated parking is well managed and does not convey a sense of crowding in neighborhoods to overtax existing facilities downtown.
- **Parks & Open Space.** Infill development downtown can offer opportunities to create small public spaces—perhaps a small plaza to sit outside with a cup of coffee and meet a friend or a small garden fronting new housing. In neighborhoods it is rarely appropriate to use front lawns or other green spaces to accommodate accessory dwelling units or other new infill housing.
- **Building & Site Development.** In neighborhoods, there are many examples of successful approaches to adding accessory dwelling units that include a new backyard building, a small apartment located over a garage, a new unit carved within an existing

house by a family seeking to downsize, or similar approaches that invite new neighbors and address affordable housing challenges without making a noticeable change to neighborhood scale or character. For downtown, the goal is generally to respect existing—or desired—character through the use of appropriate materials, design details, and massing while adding new street facing retail or other uses that enliven the pedestrian experience. In neighborhoods and downtown, special consideration should be given to preserving the context and integrity of historic buildings and places.

- **Strip Commercial Development.** In neighborhoods and downtown alike, infill development can replace auto oriented and strip commercial development with buildings and uses that enhance the pedestrian experience, invite walkability, and enhance the sense of community character and quality.

Is there a process in place to determine the cost-benefit of future development and redevelopment? What is the process or tool?

For infill development, this question is often far easier to answer than for larger-scale developments. The fiscal costs and benefits, traffic impacts, infrastructure costs and benefits, and similar questions can be readily determined. But these are generally not the critical questions for these small-scale projects. The real questions focus on the adaptability and value infill development can add in terms of the ability to contribute toward addressing community challenges—the ability to age in place, provide affordable housing for younger residents, support economic and other types of diversity, contribute to downtown vitality, and meeting similar goals that make Lee’s Summit a more complete community. And can it add this value in ways that respect Lee’s Summit’s qualitative goals for the character and quality of the community.

