Orange County, Florida

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
2010 - 2030

DESTINATION 2030

Urban Design Element

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Adopted June 16, 1998

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Orange County Comprehensive Policy Plan
ORANGE COUNTY URBAN DESIGN ELEMENT
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INTRODUCTION

Recognizing that most planning decisions have design implications, Orange County Government proposes to incorporate design principles into the planning process by introducing an Urban Design Element into the Comprehensive Policy Plan.

The Urban Design Element is substantially derived from *Introduction to a Community Design Plan for Orange County,* prepared by the Orange County Urban Design Task Force. Created to make recommendations “to improve the aesthetic quality of the physical environment in Orange County,” this voluntary organization constructed the underpinnings for active public policy in urban design.

On August 6, 1996, the Orange County Board of County Commissioners approved the recommendations of the Urban Design Task Force to establish an Urban Design Commission and create an Urban Design Element. In 1997, the Urban Design Commission was established to recommend aesthetic guidelines for new development; develop incentives that reward good aesthetic design, construction and maintenance; support current programs to enforce aesthetic codes; and oversee the preparation and implementation of the Urban Design Element. By establishing the Urban Design Commission, the Board of County Commissioners has made a commitment to protect and enhance Orange County’s built environment.
**Vision Statement**

To improve the aesthetic quality of the physical environment in Orange County and to create a stronger sense of place and community identity.

Developing effective policies, design guidelines, or regulatory controls requires extensive public participation. To be in the public interest, all urban design initiatives must meet the objectives of the community at large. The following community building systems are used to establish objectives for achieving this vision. The last objective describes the need for strategies and policies to implement these objectives.

1. To provide a more pleasing sense of open space by visual and aesthetic enhancements that maximize the value of open space in the public realm.

2. To create attractive neighborhoods that serve residents with a variety of housing types and provide convenient access to adjacent neighborhoods, parks, schools and neighborhood shopping.

3. To create public buildings and spaces that inspire community pride.

4. To create streets that are more pedestrian friendly and serve as visual assets to the community.

5. To allow development of distinct urban design plans that can be applied to an area within the community. These guidelines will recognize the unique characteristics of the area to which they are applied.

6. To encourage the development of mixed-use, pedestrian friendly activity centers at the regional, community, and neighborhood level that include attractive public space on both private and public lands.

7. To develop the strategies for implementing a comprehensive urban design plan for Orange County.
ANALYSIS OF COMMUNITY BUILDING SYSTEMS

It is essential that all of Orange County’s building systems make a positive contribution to the composite view.

Urban Open Spaces

Urban Open Spaces consist of major natural systems, parks, recreation areas, stormwater systems, and open areas at public spaces, such as schools and water bodies. An inventory of existing open spaces includes the following components:

- Wetlands and other environmentally sensitive lands can strengthen community identity and focus.

- Parks are visual amenities and ecological resources available to everyone. Orange County has 37 public parks comprising approximately 13,500 acres of land.

- Much of a school’s property is devoted to play areas and other open spaces; some are available to recreation and all can be a visual asset. Co-location of parks and schools is an important public policy.

- Stormwater systems contribute to the visual environment, comprising 15-25% of new development sites in Orange County. There are at least 850 stormwater ponds owned and maintained by Orange County; about 725 are in residential subdivisions, and another 125 ponds are associated with the County road system. These ponds, both wet and dry, are functionally necessary and highly visible. Ponds can be designed as community assets rather than community eyesores.

- There are 711 named lakes in Orange County. Some are available, physically or visually to the public while others are inaccessible.

- Bike trails, utility corridors, drainage canals, golf courses, and conservation areas offer tremendous opportunities for combining resources and creating greater benefits.

The open space experience in Orange County should optimize aesthetics and recreational opportunities, while creating a strong sense of community pride and identity. Open space is an important component of the Urban Design Element. Parks, schools, and stormwater systems, with connections, are the core features of this urban open space system.
Neighborhoods

Neighborhoods include homes, local shops, small offices and public uses including day care centers, post offices, libraries and schools. Neighborhoods are the building blocks of our community. An idealistic vision for residential areas includes attractive, pedestrian friendly neighborhoods, each having an identity. Neighborhoods should provide residents with a variety of housing options and convenient access to adjacent neighborhoods, parks, schools and neighborhood shopping.

The aesthetic quality of single family, multi-family, and mixed neighborhoods is one factor that strengthens the feelings of commonality and community. Citizens identify their neighborhoods as home and this identity is strongly influenced by the following elements.

- Entrances. Neighborhood identification establishes a sense of pride and ownership. Well designed entrances help create a greater desire of the residents to upkeep their property, defend common areas and maintain the community.
• **Open Spaces.** Open spaces can create a park-like environment within the community. Low-maintenance landscaping should be part of the open space design as well as maintenance sensitive furniture and other points of comfort (i.e. water fountains and walking trails).

• **Village Centers.** Neighborhood shopping, schools, local offices, and parks combined in a single physical space can create a village center. Safe, convenient, and walkable access to a village center can be a valuable community asset.

• **Neighborhood Streets.** Design concepts used in contemporary residential development, include curvilinear design with cul-de-sac streets and traditional neighborhood design with narrower streets that disperse traffic through neighborhoods with a community orientation. The strong points of both approaches should be appreciated and used to create family oriented neighborhoods.

• **Product Design.** Diversity of architectural styles is critical to the visual enhancement of new neighborhoods. A blending of different designs can complement the overall sense of place and provide for a more sustainable community.

• **Densities.** Good urban design is not dependent upon high or low density. The mix of uses at a small scale with pedestrian systems, scaled structures and low intensity traffic are critical. Traditional Neighborhood Developments (TNDs) generally incorporate residential densities of 5 to 8 dwelling units per acre. This is higher than the densities of most Orange County residential subdivisions, which are usually 2 to 3 dwelling units per acre or planned developments as low as 1 dwelling unit per acre.

• **Landscaping.** Landscaping the public realm is critical to creating a strong neighborhood framework. Street trees that create shaded residential streets with canopy trees are of prime importance.

• **Connectivity.** Mixed use, connected communities, with easy access to neighborhood shopping and schools, provide a stronger sense of community than disjointed isolated developments.
Public Buildings and Spaces

Public buildings and spaces have historically been sources of inspiration to citizens. Each can inspire community pride through appropriate design and public art. In Orange County, the Orlando International Airport, the Courthouse, the Arena, and the Convention Center evoke civic pride. The County recognizes that the qualitative aspects of all public buildings, especially schools, can be community assets.

Streets and Highways

Streets and highways provide a strong impression about the community. Thus, distinguishing neighborhood streets from collectors and arterials is important.

- Neighborhood streets are for people with accommodations for vehicles.
- Suburban corridors serve as the community’s connectors, not only for transportation but also for communication and social interactions.
- Arterials are for vehicles, with accommodations for pedestrians. Streets can be visual assets with powerful impacts on the overall community image.

The Orange County Comprehensive Policy Plan, Traffic Circulation Element states the following.

Goal 3: Orange County roads shall, where possible, be designed in such a manner as to make them compatible with the surrounding environment, complement adjacent development, and provide an aesthetically pleasing visual experience to the user and adjacent areas.

Many efforts are underway to create more appealing roadways in Orange County, including the following.

- The OrangeScope highway beautification program.
- On-going changes to the sign and billboard regulations.
- The Orange County Community Enhancement Grant Program.
- The U.S. Small Business Administration Tree Planting Grant Program.
- The Florida Highway Beautification Council Grant Program.
- Orange County’s Residential Tree Planting Program.
ORANGE COUNTY URBAN DESIGN ELEMENT

• A program for the advanced acquisition of right-of-way.

• A comprehensive design approach regarding buffers, bike/pedestrian systems, signs and signals, pavement widths, underground utilities, and tree planting.

• An effective process for exploring alternatives with the public prior to preparing engineering plans.

• Exploration of alternative modes of transportation.

Distinct Urban Areas

Neighborhood streets are basic building blocks of the community and should have safe, aesthetically pleasing designs, that provide visual interest. Above all, successful residential streets are pedestrian friendly.

There is a variety of proven design techniques to meet these objectives. With creative thought and sensitive thinking, design parameters can be used to enhance the attractiveness of neighborhood streets, increase lot yield and reduce development costs.

A strong network of arterials and collectors is also critical a community’s continued success of the. Traffic circulation plans should include the following.

• An identification of existing and future arterial roadway corridors.

• A program to inform the public of long-term expansion plans.

Orange County is a complex system comprising many different and distinct communities. The “character” of these differing urban areas within Orange County gives each one its own identity and sense of place. By identifying distinctive characteristics, the community may then develop a unique vision for preserving or enhancing unifying elements.

Gotha Rural Settlement
Residential Communities

Historic development patterns are characterized by interconnected streets, mixed lot sizes, schools, parks, and commercial activities located near intersections. These neighborhoods are generally found near the central area of the City of Orlando, such as Orlo Vista, Holden Heights, and the north Conway area.

A more sub-urban development style has also developed near the central area of Orlando. These communities are characterized by many smaller neighborhoods with internalized circulation systems that contain curvilinear streets and cul-de-sacs. Examples include the communities of Pine Hills, Goldenrod, Dr. Phillips, and University Boulevard area.
The County includes several rural communities that developed in conjunction with agrarian districts. These communities often include a small commercial core to serve the surrounding residential and rural areas. Bithlo, Christmas, Zellwood, Gotha, and Clarcona have been recognized in the Future Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Policy Plan for preservation and protection of their rural character.

Large Planned Developments have helped to shape the character of Orange County’s the southeastern portion. Developments such as Hunters Creek, Southchase, and Waterford Lakes comprise a considerable amount of the housing stock in this area. The design and development of these communities is typically controlled by a master developer. Land use patterns, densities, phasing, and public facilities are part of the master planning effort.

Natural or man-made features also provide distinguishing characteristics to residential communities. These features define lakefront communities such as Conway, Windermere, and Lake Hart/Lake Mary Jane.

Efforts to preserve and protect these features will enhance the community’s value.

Each type of residential community contains characteristics that are often vastly different from each other, rendering countywide design initiatives less effective. Tailoring public policy to meet each distinct community’s needs can help to preserve positive elements and shape its future. Such public policy is best initiated from within the community.

Innovative development concepts including mixed-use villages, garden districts and neighborhood centers can help to add value and establish a sense of place.

The pending Neighborhood Element of the Comprehensive Policy Plan sets the framework for identifying the unique characteristics of the many communities in Orange County.
Commercial Districts

Many of the traditional business centers in Orange County lie within the boundaries of one of the thirteen local municipalities. In unincorporated Orange County, significant centers have developed around major transportation corridors such as Colonial Drive, Orange Blossom Trail and Orange Avenue. These major business corridors set the tone for the visual quality of the surrounding community.

Often smaller in size than the major corridor districts, commercial districts have also developed around intersections. These commercial districts are located throughout the County, such as Alafaya Trail, Sand Lake Road, and Silver Star Road.
Regional Activity Centers

Regional activity center districts contain a mix of uses and intensities that attract people and business from more than one county. Lighting, movement, and color are often important atmospheric elements of regional activity centers, as well as streetscapes, landscaping, and commercial diversity. These mixed use areas can be well designed, pedestrian friendly centers of activity which include attractive public space on both private and public lands. Regional activity center districts have one or more large core uses, such as the following.

- Regional Shopping Mall
- Downtown
- Airport
- Convention Center
- University
- Regional Office Park
- Tourist Attraction
- Housing
- Large Scale Business/Employer

Activity centers are an important part of central Florida's urban development framework, serving as focal points for specific attractions. Important concerns include parking, walkability, and transit access.

Orange County is pursuing the establishment of development guidelines in conjunction with a new zoning classification specific to the International Drive Activity Center. Currently, the intent of the guidelines are implemented through the development review process. All Planned Developments in the Activity Center follow a standard list of guidelines which address, landscaping regulations, pedestrian access, lighting standards, and sign standards. Although these guidelines have not been adopted in final format, they are applied consistently to all new development in the area. Applicable details of these guidelines are outlined in developer's agreements and are enforced through conditions of development approval.
Local governments generally encourage growth and development in regional activity center districts. These districts represent major urban form components that attract millions of people and strongly influence public perception of the community's aesthetic quality. Creating a feeling of substance and centrality, these districts have highly valued property and are the economic engines of the region. A "host" mentality can be used to design the systems required to make each visitor's stay convenient, productive, safe, and fun.
CHAPTER 2

Review of the Urban Design Process

BACKGROUND

As a rapidly developing urban area, Orange County is increasingly faced with issues and conflicts regarding urban design. The effects of planning decisions are cumulative, ultimately affecting the overall quality of the built environment, and as such, every decision is important. Attention must be given to shaping the built environment, creating systems that tie places together, and recognizing the social implications of planning decisions.

The absence of a clear definition of design undermines policy effectiveness. As a consequence, urban design must be seen as an on-going process rather than a collection of answers to specific problems. The Urban Design Element’s purpose is to provide strategies for overcoming existing policy limitations and to undertake new urban growth approaches. Beginning this effort requires research to:

- Recognize the existing urban system, including countywide unifying elements, as well as distinct communities;
- Define broad principles of urban design that can be evaluated systematically;
- Create a contextually relevant design framework and development control guidelines that spell out the full range of design considerations based on the objectives of the entire County or a particular community after careful consideration of community participation.

DESIGN OBJECTIVES

The primary source of improving the appearance of the community include both public programs and aesthetic land development codes. The Urban Design Element provides design objectives and a basis for performance guidelines rather than prescriptive codes.
“Prescriptive codes” are based on design principles and as a result are only as good or bad as those principles. The “prescriptive process” for specification is based on the idea that regulations can prescribe solutions. In this sense, the guidelines are intended to determine what kind of pattern is required of the built environment. Designs based on prescriptive guidelines are easier to evaluate.

“Performance guidelines” are accompanied by advice on how to achieve the end product. The “performance process” identifies the objective of the guideline and leaves the final implementation open to the uniqueness of the situation. Individual urban design components are implemented through applying an objective to a particular design or engineering specification, with requirements for achieving agreed upon results rather than prescribed methods. Performance guidelines are more subject to challenge and require more effort in ensuring that objectives are met.

Planned developments, buffer requirements and compatibility issues are often left to interpretation by elected and appointed officials in accordance with their performance toward meeting certain objectives. Since many situations are unique or different from our past experiences, processes that specify performance guidelines may be more helpful than prescriptive ordinances. The role of the Urban Design Element is to begin to establish design objectives and performance guidelines.
**CURRENT GUIDELINES**

Most policies in the Comprehensive Policy Plan affect design and aesthetics of the built environment. Policies that guide land use patterns, densities, provision of public facilities, and growth boundaries influence the County's urban form. Policies directly related to the urban design and physical appearance of our community fall into three general categories: (1) performance-based guidelines, (2) distinct geographical guidelines, and (3) development code requirements.

**PERFORMANCE-BASED GUIDELINES**

Performance-based guidelines such as compatibility requirements, buffer provisions and character preservation, in the design and development of private spaces or public facilities are found throughout the Comprehensive Policy Plan.

The Future Land Use Element contains policies aimed at protecting the character of certain areas or providing compatibility between various land uses. The Future Land Use Element policies addressing these guidelines include: (1) the Traditional Neighborhood Development Policies under Objective 1.6; (2) Rural Settlement Policies under Objective 2.1; (3) Special Area Policies under Objective 3.1 (Urban Villages, Activity Centers, Convention Plaza District and Community Village Centers); and (4) the Horizon West and Lakeside Village Objectives and Policies under Goal 6.

The Traffic Circulation Element provides for design and construction of road facilities that are sensitive to adjoining residential areas and create a visually pleasing experience. The Recreation Element and Open Space Element contain policies directing recreation and open space facility design to better serve the community’s needs. The Housing Element includes policies ensuring the provision of affordable housing that is compatible with the surrounding area.

**DISTINCT GEOGRAPHIC GUIDELINES**

The second type of design related policies are those that set design guidelines for a specific area or development type. Future Land Use Element Policies addressing these guidelines include: (1) the Traditional Neighborhood Development Policies under Objective 1.6; (2) Rural Settlement Policies under Objective 2.1; (3) Special Area Policies under Objective 3.1 (Urban Villages, Activity Centers, Convention Plaza District and Community Village Centers); and (4) the Horizon West and Lakeside Village Objectives and Policies under Goal 6.

The International Drive Activity Center Objectives and Policies contain guidelines for establishing an aesthetic and well organized character in the center. These requirements reflect an effort to apply urban design concepts to a distinct area. Within the County, these are created after an extensive public participation process for each concept.

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1 Future Land Use Element Policies 2.3.1, 3.1.33, 3.2.12, 3.2.14, 3.2.25 and 4.32.

2 Traffic Circulation Element Policies 1.4.4, 1.4.5, 3.1.3 and 3.1.10.

3 Recreation Element Objectives 1.4 and 1.5 and Open Space Element Objective 1.1.

4 Housing Element Policies 1.1.7, 1.1.10, 1.1.11, 1.1.13, 1.1.17, 1.1.18, 1.1.20, 1.1.21 and 1.1.23

5 Community Facilities Element Policies 2.1.1, 2.1.5, 2.2.2, 6.1.1, 6.1.2, 6.1.3, 1.1.11 and 1.9.1.
DEVELOPMENT CODE REQUIREMENTS

The third category of design related policies is those requiring the County to examine and amend the Land Development Code concerning specific design goals. These policies are found throughout the Future Land Use Element, as well as the Traffic Circulation, Stormwater, Conservation, Open Space, Housing, and Community Facilities Elements.

Various required amendments to the Land Development Code have not been implemented or have been addressed in a manner other than required by the policy.

The County's Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) of the 1990-2010 Comprehensive Policy Plan will determine which policies have been implemented and create a strategy for addressing any unfulfilled or new requirements. The proposed Development Framework, to be presented during the process, offers the opportunity to examine how the County's current growth management efforts have affected the community's urban form.

The Horizon West Study and Village Land Use Classification is the result of a public-private planning partnership between Orange County Government and property owners in the southwestern portion of the County. This concept is a market responsive long-range vision that utilizes the neighborhood as a building block to achieve growth in a complete, compact, and integrated form.

The Garden District land use concept was created to preserve the unique features of northwest Orange County, while allowing for responsible future development to take place in the area. This Garden District will remain and expand the existing agricultural and ornamental nursery business and carefully integrate them into the future development pattern of the area.
The Public School Facilities and pending Neighborhood Elements offer additional opportunities to apply good urban design practices. The Public School Facilities Element includes policies for co-location with other public facilities, and the recognition of schools as important activity centers in our communities. The Neighborhood Element offers opportunities to reinforce community and neighborhood identity through urban design/beautification programs, and crime prevention through environmental design principles.

The County is currently engaged in several urban design efforts. Master plans were recently created for Parks and Recreation, Bikeways, Greenways and Trails, and Community Centers. The Vision Northwest Study is based on creating a vision for the future urban form of northwest Orange County. The Lee Road Corridor Study incorporates urban design to address the needs in that particular area. In addition, the Strategic Neighborhood Action Plans (SNAP) and Targeted Community Initiatives (TCI) each offer an opportunity for the community to explore design solutions. In keeping with the Citizens First! initiative, each of these efforts includes an extensive public participation process.

The following chapter presents the goal of this element, with objectives and policies.

**Parks Master Plan**
CHAPTER 3

Implementation

Strategies

VISION STATEMENT

GOAL 1 To improve the aesthetic quality of the physical environment in Orange County and to create a stronger sense of place and community identity.

URBAN OPEN SPACE

OBJECTIVE 1.1 To provide a more pleasing sense of open space by visual and aesthetic enhancements that maximize the value of open space in the public realm.

POLICY 1.1.1 An on-going public participation process is utilized to inform, educate and build consensus for high quality open space. This public participation process includes property owners, and citizen groups as plans are developed for the use and maintenance of public open space.

POLICY 1.1.2 Private and public open spaces in Orange County should be designed to accomplish the following.

- Bring nature into the urban environment.
- Enable passive and active recreation.
- Encourage community and family gatherings.
- Stimulate private investment in the community.
- Be a source of beauty.

POLICY 1.1.3 The Land Development Code should be amended to implement existing stormwater management policies regarding open space and ensure that required open spaces are designed as visible, usable and valuable spaces that conform to the principles of this Urban Design Element.

POLICY 1.1.4 In accordance with the Public School Facilities Element and the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the co-location of facilities should be pursued at all levels. Educational facilities should be located as near as possible to existing and proposed community facilities, including parks, recreational centers, community centers, galleries, libraries, and health centers.

POLICY 1.1.5 Master Drainage Basin Plans should reflect and reinforce Goal 1.1 and should be prepared with consideration of the following principles.
• Fewer, bigger ponds serve the community better that many, smaller ponds.
• Individual stormwater retention ponds should be constructed and maintained as visual amenities.
• Unfenced stormwater facilities are critical to enable ponds to be amenities rather than eyesores.
• Establish dedicated revenue sources, to properly design and maintain stormwater facilities and co-locate them, as aesthetic features, with roadways, parks, open spaces and public buildings.
NEIGHBORHOODS

OBJECTIVE 1.2 To create more attractive, family oriented neighborhoods that serve residents with a variety of housing types and provide convenient access to adjacent neighborhoods, parks, schools and neighborhood shopping.

POLICY 1.2.1 The pending Neighborhood Element of the Comprehensive Policy Plan outlines some of the community outreach efforts that impact Orange County neighborhoods. These efforts are an excellent framework to explore some of the design issues regarding existing and future neighborhoods. The public participation process should include property owners, developers and citizen groups to develop the policies and regulations for implementing Objective 1.2. Community programs should be targeted to achieve more attractive, pedestrian friendly neighborhoods that serve the needs of the existing and future residents.

POLICY 1.2.2 The Neighborhood Element of the Comprehensive Policy Plan includes a variety of tools available to neighborhood organizations to improve the quality of life. MSBU's (Municipal Services Benefit Unit), CBDG (Community Development Block Grants), Community Enhancement Grants and the Residential Tree Planting Program are among the tools available to community organizations for improving aesthetics and safety. The County should continue to assist neighborhoods in pursuing these and other tools for enhancing physical appearances and quality of life.

POLICY 1.2.3 Every new and existing neighborhood should have a name and an identity with an entrance or gateway to establish a sense of place.

POLICY 1.2.4 Elementary schools, adjacent neighborhoods, parks and neighborhood shopping should be accessible to neighborhood residents by tree-lined sidewalks and bikeways.

POLICY 1.2.5 Vehicular and pedestrian connections should be provided between adjacent neighborhoods, with measures to prevent excessive cut-through traffic and excessive speeds on neighborhood streets.

POLICY 1.2.6 The County should continue and, if possible, expand the residential tree planting program with the ultimate goal to provide canopy street trees along all neighborhood streets.

POLICY 1.2.7 The Urban Design Commission should coordinate with the Orange County Sheriff's Office to ensure incorporation of appropriate CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) principles in neighborhood design.
PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND SPACES

OBJECTIVE 1.3 To create public buildings and urban spaces that inspire community pride.

POLICY 1.3.1 A study should be undertaken by the Urban Design Commission to determine the appropriate percentage of all public building construction projects, including schools, to be earmarked for aesthetic features including trees, art, interior galleries, plazas, fountains, murals, or clock towers. This study should include various interest groups to inform, educate and build consensus for public buildings that inspire community pride.

POLICY 1.3.2 A study should be undertaken by the Urban Design Commission to determine the appropriate amount of all capital improvement projects, especially street and highway projects, to be earmarked for sidewalks, bikeways, signs, landscaping, lighting, and related aesthetic improvements. This study should include various interest groups to inform, educate, and build consensus for public spaces that inspire community pride.

POLICY 1.3.3 The Urban Design Commission will provide a review of plans for public buildings, facilities and improvements (including the Orange County School Board, Orlando/Orange County Expressway Authority, municipalities, state and federal agencies) and provide comments to the County Chairman toward meeting the design objectives of the Urban Design Element.

POLICY 1.3.4 The Urban Design Commission will coordinate with the Orange County Sheriff’s Office to ensure incorporation of appropriate CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) principles on all public buildings and spaces.

POLICY 1.3.5 The County will continue to pursue the co-location of public buildings, spaces, and natural features.
OBJECTIVE 1.4 To create streets that are more pedestrian friendly and serve as visual assets to the community.

POLICY 1.4.1 The Urban Design Commission will evaluate existing neighborhood street standards and recommend changes to the Land Development Code based on the following design principles:

- Preferential treatment for pedestrians instead of vehicles.
- Design speeds that match function of roadway.
- Control devices usable in retrofitting existing thoroughfares to regain their neighborhood qualities.
- Street and pedestrian way lights that enhance safety.
- Brick pavers and other traffic calming techniques in key locations to enhance and reduce speeds in residential areas.
- Signs for streets, speed limit, and neighborhood names that reflect the neighborhood character.
- Flexibility in right-of-way use, such as with mailboxes and landscaping.
- Landscaped entrances, medians or gates with well designed plants and irrigation.
- Curb and gutter street sections with clean edges.
- Where densities are such that there is a need for additional parking in the right-of-way, the paved area should be expanded to facilitate street parking and improve spatial appearance.
- Sidewalks, a minimum of 5 feet in width, should be used to accommodate pedestrian activity within neighborhoods.

POLICY 1.4.2 The County should encourage flexibility of design regulations and innovation for quality projects to develop an appropriate mix of the following elements: pavement widths, curb and gutter, mailboxes, landscaping, sodding, entrance signs, street and pedestrian way lights, signs, brick pavers, and sidewalks. Thoughtful consideration of right-of-way width, function and the blending of aesthetic elements should be pursued. If necessary, additional easements areas could be considered to supplement the right-of-way width.

POLICY 1.4.3 The Land Development Code should be amended to include incentives for providing canopy street trees between sidewalks and vehicular travel lanes along all proposed residential streets at a minimum of every fifty (50) feet.

POLICY 1.4.4 Arterial and collector roads should be designed using performance criteria, rather than prescriptive standards, for traffic movement, safety and beauty. Arterial and collector roads in Orange County should be designed, or redesigned, with a comprehensive cross-section that includes building setbacks appropriate to the structural environment and right-of-way sufficient for the following:

- Street trees.
- Berms, landscaping, hardscape.
- On-street parking at selected locations.
• Specialty paving at selected locations.
• Traffic signals of a standard mast-arm design.
• Street and pedestrian way lights.
• Utilities and drainage.
• Medians.
• Driveways and access limits on high volume roadways.

POLICY 1.4.5 The County should continue highway beautification efforts, and the necessary maintenance. The systematic improvement of major roadways in Orange County, year after year, will achieve dramatic results.

POLICY 1.4.6 Sidewalks, bikeways, lighting, crosswalks, narrower pavement widths, signs and signals should be used to help slow traffic, encourage walking and return the streets to pedestrian-friendly uses.

POLICY 1.4.7 In accordance with the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Policy Plan, expansion of highways to six (6) or more lanes should be carefully scrutinized and only considered when all other solutions, including parallel facilities, and transit fail.

POLICY 1.4.8 The County should strive to improve the overall appearance of roadways by reducing clutter caused by poorly designed and located signs, fences, curb cuts, wiring, poles, mismatched street lights, and signals.

POLICY 1.4.9 Tree canopies and mid-story tree planting should be used to reduce the visibility of clutter.

POLICY 1.4.10 Visible utilities in street rights-of-ways contribute to clutter. Overhead utility lines, backflow preventers, fenced retention ponds, drainage conveyance systems, power substations and a variety of miscellaneous structures should be designed to reduce clutter without diminishing the function of these utilities.

POLICY 1.4.11 Establish standards for above ground utility structures in the public road right-of-way and front yard setback areas to be blended into the landscape, completely screened, or relocated to other areas.

POLICY 1.4.12 Discourage the use of above ground utility structures from being located in the front yard setback area, except for aesthetically designed, non-fenced stormwater retention ponds.

POLICY 1.4.13 The Land Development Code should be amended to prohibit fenced stormwater retention ponds in front yard setback areas along public streets unless completely screened from public view.

POLICY 1.4.14 The County should continually evaluate the signage regulations in order to provide a balance between aesthetic and information considerations.

POLICY 1.4.15 Bikeways and pedestrian systems should be planned as transportation facilities, as well as recreation facilities.
DISTINCT AREA URBAN DESIGN PLANS

OBJECTIVE 1.5 To allow development of distinct area design plans that can be applied to a specific area within the community. These guidelines will recognize the unique characteristics of the area to which they are applied.

POLICY 1.5.1 Orange County may establish specific design guidelines for sub areas. Each of these specific area urban design plans shall be evaluated against the vision for the County. The purpose is to achieve a high quality of life and a more attractive urban environment such as the Convention Center Plaza Overlay District, Horizon West, Vision Northwest, and the Four Corners Community Village Center.

POLICY 1.5.2 Based on the initiative of property owners, the development community, or other community organizations, the County will assist in development of specialized design standards for the identified area.

POLICY 1.5.3 Existing and proposed planning efforts that focus on a particular community should include an optional urban design component. An urban design process should be incorporated into such planning initiatives as Strategic Neighborhood Action Plans, Targeted Community Initiatives, Community Redevelopment Agency plans, or other efforts, such as the Lee Road Corridor Enhancement Plan, Horizon West, and Vision Northwest.

POLICY 1.5.4 Each distinct area urban design plan should include the following basic process.

- Define the area/community and establish the need for special design consideration.
- Conduct an analysis/appraisal of the area.
- Establish a public involvement strategy.
- Define broad principles and goals.
- Evaluate the goals against the Orange County Comprehensive Policy Plan.
- Develop principles of compatibility, not conformity, in architecture and design.
- Develop comprehensive, user-friendly design guidelines.
- Provide a process for implementation and evaluation of the plan.
**Activity Center Districts**

**OBJECTIVE 1.6** To encourage the development of mixed-use, pedestrian friendly activity centers at the regional, community, and neighborhood level that include attractive public space on both private and public lands.

**POLICY 1.6.1** The County should establish definitions and criteria for activity centers and qualify such places, based property owner initiatives, to enable the use of activity center design standards and selected public finance tools.

**POLICY 1.6.2** The County should prepare urban design plans for each regional activity center district that include the following.

- Improved streetscapes in terms of pedestrian access, aesthetic quality, landscaping, and commercial development.
- Commercial signs as art and entertainment; understanding that lights, movement and color are important atmospheric elements of many regional activity centers.
- Infrastructure systems (including utilities, stormwater, sidewalks, crosswalks, lighting, signs, landscaping) oriented to walking districts.
- An extensive street tree planting program.
- Regulations regarding mixed-use development.
- An organization proposal that addresses governance and funding systems within each center.

**POLICY 1.6.3** The County should prepare a catalogue of public finance tools such as Municipal Services Taxing Units/Municipal Services Benefit Units, Community Development Districts, Tax Increment Financing, and other programs available to private interests to assist with the development of public functional and aesthetic infrastructure in the activity center.
IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

OBJECTIVE 1.7 To develop the strategies for implementing a comprehensive urban design plan for Orange County.

POLICY 1.7.1 The Urban Design Element shall serve as a visionary tool to educate and inspire the community on the value of high-quality urban design. To implement the vision of improved aesthetics and a stronger sense of place, a considerable public participation process is necessary to build consensus. This public participation process shall include property owners, developers and a wide range of citizen groups to further develop the strategies for implementing this goal.

POLICY 1.7.2 The Urban Design Commission shall serve as the driving force for promoting, evaluating and updating the various urban design initiatives of the County.

POLICY 1.7.3 The Land Development Code shall be amended to provide for more performance-based design guidelines. These design guidelines shall promote architectural and site design treatments that enhance the visual appearance of development within the community.

POLICY 1.7.4 Each distinct area urban design initiative shall become part of the framework for the community vision of urban design in Orange County.