

6. Placemaking / Urban Design

The West Main Street Area is a community with strong cultural and historic ties to the area. The purpose of this plan is not only to provide for the increased needs of the community, but also to create a place that will continue to represent its people and community.

The West Main Street Area community takes pride in its heritage and community members proudly refer to it as their “secret place”. This plan strives to provide elements that further strengthen such sense of belongingness to the area and builds upon community values and identity.

This section contains: an **introduction** of the section purpose, a description of the **benefits** from implementation, a set of **policies** to guide community, staff and developer decisions and an ongoing **program** to contribute towards the fulfillment of the community vision.



Introduction

This section identifies the elements of placemaking that should be incorporated in the plan to enhance the sense of place. This section also identifies broad policies that act as guiding principal while formulating detailed policies for various elements of this plan.

Benefits

Incorporating the placemaking elements and policies in the plan would result in benefits such as:

- Build upon the existing fabric and protect the community values
- Enhance the identity and elements unique to the area
- Enhance opportunity for community interaction and thus, establish sense of belongingness

Elements of Placemaking

Incorporating the following placemaking elements in the plan is key to re-establishing the West Main Street Area as a diverse, livable place rich in historical and cultural context, with appealing street life and a pedestrian-friendly environment.

People and Values

Placemaking is about making our built environment safe, comfortable, attractive and identifiable for people. Placemaking is about enhancing the existing environment that evolves out of the community's culture and identify, rather than creating an entirely new one. The West Main Street Area has many unique elements that are iconic representations of the community and it's past. These unique elements include but are not limited to signage along Main Street and historic sub-divisions. Such elements should be able to co-exist with the newer development expected in the area. Recognizing opportunities for expressing community values is the foundation of placemaking.

Integrated Land Uses

The character of any urban place is defined by what happens there; that is, the activities and purposes of the people who occupy and move through it. These activities and purposes derive from the uses of buildings that enclose the space, particularly their ground floors. For instance, the experience of a public place surrounded by single-family residential buildings, (as is the case in the well-established neighborhoods of West Main Street Area) is far different from the experience of a place surrounded by office buildings with shops on the ground floor. Each has its own character, cycle of use, age of population, predominant activities, and role in the area character at large. This plan intends to build upon existing activities and enhance new development by combining the uses in a mixed-use setting.

Venues and Common Places

Placemaking is not just about making a place appealing; rather, it is more about creative venues where people of the community can relate and feel part of the community. Providing public spaces for interaction is critical to enhancing sense of place. However, it is important to create places that provide opportunities for community interaction in a safe and energized environment. Location, use and design of public places should be such that it is incorporated in the daily lives of the people of a community. They should be the places people use and enjoy as part of their normal routine of the day. To be a great neighborhood asset, these spaces depend on the purposeful selection and placement of materials and opportunities for activity. Attention to their maintenance and management is also key. These spaces don't define the community, but do help to cultivate the identity of the place. Such places can be community parks, pocket parks, plazas and other unique places located strategically throughout the area. Connectivity of such public destinations by use of pedestrian pathways and amenities like shade is important.

Street Life

Because of their prevalence, streets more than any other single public element define the character of a community. Their landscape materials reflect climate, the character of street furnishings and building facades evokes history and culture, quality of design and maintenance conveys civic pride and prosperity. In addition, the elements of design, when properly applied, project the neighborhood identity that makes our communities our own. Key elements of streetscape include paving, plantings, lighting, and street

furniture including benches and bike racks. A unified streetscape along major corridors like Main Street is critical for identity of the area as a whole. However, it is essential to connect these areas to well-established neighborhoods, employment centers and other parts of the area so as to create flow as opposed to islands of different land-uses.

Integrating New and Old

Integrating new with the existing is another critical element of place making that ensures growth without compromising the identity of the area. Protection of established neighborhoods from the impacts of surrounding high-density development is highly important while welcoming new high-density, mixed-use development along the corridor. To accomplish, those existing neighborhood features that help bring identity and a sense of place to area residents need to be identified.

Community Involvement

Community involvement is the key to placemaking. The Community has been instrumental in establishing a vision for the area and identifying the elements they would like to incorporate in their community. Based on the community's vision, the West Main Street Area Plan attempts to incorporate these principals in the Plan elements with the hope to create a unique and livable place.

Policies

The following guidelines aim at enhancing the livability and sense of place in the West Main Street Area. These guidelines form the basis of policies provided in various elements of this plan document.

PMP1: Future development should include elements to enhance sense of place through unique elements.

PMP2: Efforts should be made to protect and/or build upon those buildings, locations and events that have special meaning to West Mesa in order to enhance the sense of place and continue its role as a diverse and exciting neighborhood.

PMP3: The streetscape along arterials and collectors in the area should have a high degree of urban design and pedestrian comfort.

PMP4: An eclectic mix of architecture that reflects the history and cultural diversity of the area should be encouraged.

PMP5: Venues for community interactions such as parks, open spaces and plazas should be developed and maintained to enhance the sense of community.

Programs

Plan Review: Review of all development proposals, beginning with pre-submittal stage, in the West Main Street Area should be performed in accordance with the policies and projects identified in this section.