

1. Plan Introduction

Background

The Mesa General Plan is a vision of the community for the entire City of Mesa that covers approximately 172 square miles. The General Plan recognizes that the entire area in the City of Mesa is not homogeneous and has, thus, identified seven sub-areas that need specific attention. The General Plan calls for sub-area plans to be developed for each of these areas to allow for more focused evaluation and planning than can be provided through the General Plan.

“Mesa Grande” and “Central Broadway” are two of seven community sub-areas identified in the Mesa 2025 General Plan as areas with unique physical, historic, or demographic characteristics (Refer to Appendix B). Covering approximately 2.5 square miles, the West Main Street Area includes portions of both of these sub-areas.

The need for a plan for this area was recognized during the Mesa 2025 General Plan adoption process. Additional interest in the potential for redevelopment for this area grew with the pending development of the light rail line into Mesa. In 2005, the City Council directed staff to begin this plan process as a way to help facilitate future transit-oriented development (TOD) along the light rail line. The plan boundaries were then identified with the input from the members of Mesa Grande Association and West Mesa Community Development Corporation. The Staff has

worked with the Community through Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) meetings, community wide meetings, expert panel workshops and community forums to understand the community’s vision and make strategies and policies towards its fulfillment.

Intent

The intent of the West Main Street Area Plan is to identify and pro-actively guide the emerging forces of change in the West Main Street Area in a way to take advantage of the changes. Those changes include, but are not limited to the arrival of light rail, departure of some automotive dealerships and new development. The plan provides recommendations and strategies that reflect the community's vision while guiding the physical development of the area in the coming years. The plan recommendations are embedded in measures that would direct future land uses, infrastructure planning and community facilities towards the community's shared vision of the future.

Plan Boundaries

The West Main Street Area Plan boundaries include a portion of the Mesa Grande Sub-Area as well as the Central Broadway Sub-Area. The West Main Street Area Plan boundaries include portions of Council Districts 3 & 4.

The West Main Street Area Plan boundaries extend to University Drive on the north, Broadway Road on the south, Country Club Drive on the east, and the Mesa/Tempe city limits on the west. (Refer to Figure 1.1) The plan area covers over 2.5 square miles of West Mesa. The plan area is approximately three miles long (east-west) by one mile wide (north-south).

Transit-Oriented Development

The upcoming light rail line in Mesa is expected to create changes in terms of development patterns, uses and intensities generally along Main Street and specifically at the transit stations. When done correctly, the increased intensity of development can make the Light Rail Transit (LRT) more successful and surrounding neighborhoods a more inviting and sustainable place to live, work and play. Transit-oriented development (TOD) establishes the type and development pattern that supports transit use. TOD principals and guidelines help to create a transit and pedestrian-friendly environment around the transit facilities.

Transit-oriented development is expected to have the following elements/characteristics:

(1) Mixed-Use Development: Mixed-use developments are characterized by a number of mutually supporting significant revenue-producing uses (such as retail/entertainment, office, residential, hotel, civic, institutional/cultural and recreational) placed together. Such developments essentially have significant physical and functional integration of project components (uses) that are generally supported by uninterrupted pedestrian

connections and a relatively close-knit and intensive use of land. Development is generally in conformance with a coherent plan that stipulates the type and scale of uses as well as the densities. These characteristics distinguish mixed-use developments from multi-use developments that may include a number of significant revenue producing uses but do not integrate them.

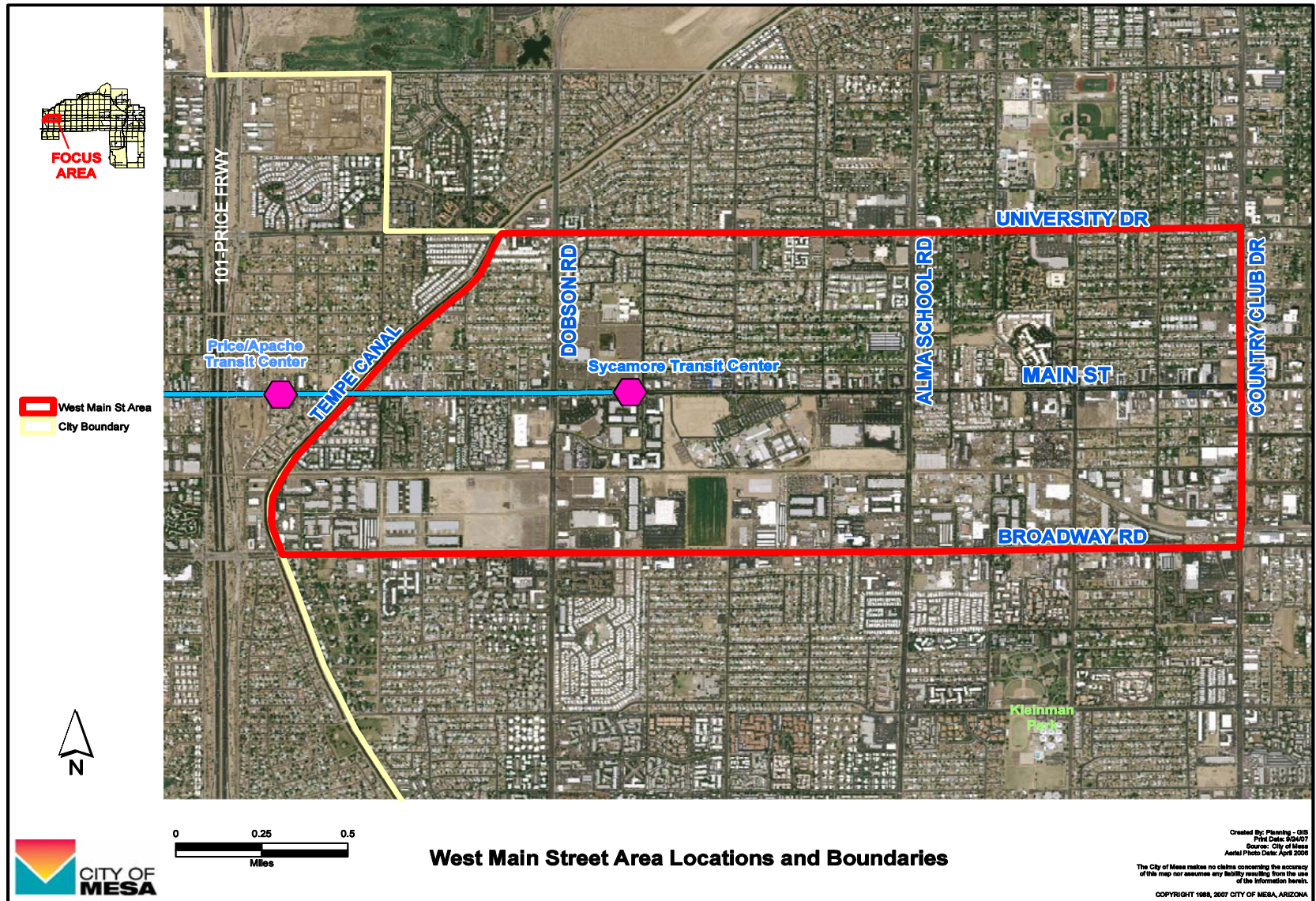
In a mixed-use development, integration can take many physical forms:

- ❑ a vertical mixing of project components into a single mixed-use building;
- ❑ careful positioning of key components (placed horizontally) around central public spaces; and/or
- ❑ inter-connection of project components through pedestrian-friendly pathways.

(2) Transit Supportive Densities: Transit supportive densities are very critical to realize the compact and livable environment around the transit stations. In general, transit supportive density has three elements:

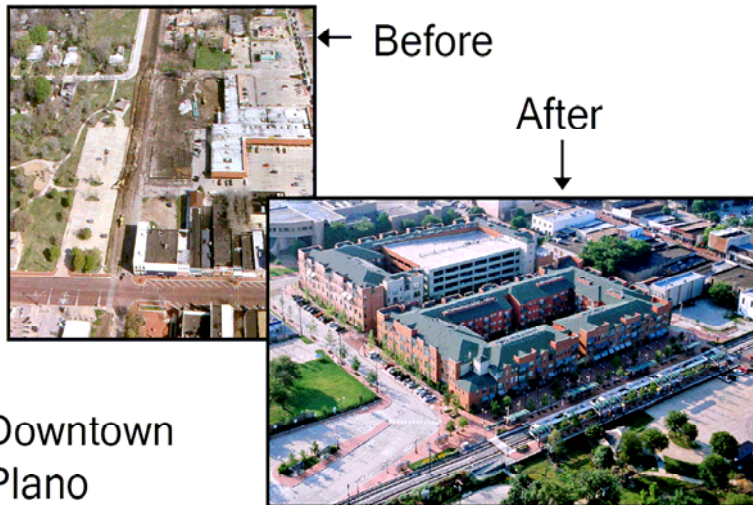
Site form, which relates to the organization of buildings and the layout of the site. Transit supportive density involves a site form that creates a comfortable and pleasing pedestrian experience. It also provides convenient pedestrian access to all internal and external parts of a development. Transit supportive densities also allow for a variety of activities to co-function at one place.

Figure 1.1: West Main Street Area Location and Boundaries



Building form, which relates to the bulk, height, and type of buildings. Transit supportive density creates building forms quite different from the typical suburban development. For example, the residential portions of developments can include town homes, row houses, cluster subdivisions, residential lofts above businesses and live-work structures built to one or more lot lines.

Densities for enhanced ridership and street life in a TOD environment. Greater densities help to create a compact development around the transit. Such development when supported by pedestrian links and other amenities can help enhance pedestrian-friendly environment. Greater densities have the potential to increase ridership and therefore, help ensure the fiscal soundness of a light rail line.



Downtown Plano

Mixed-use (retail and residential), high-density TOD project along light rail in Downtown Plano



Cedars Station

Mixed-use high-density development at Cedar Station, Texas

Pedestrian-Oriented Design: Pedestrian circulation and orientation are critical elements in TOD because, without them, the development will not achieve the desired synergies and sense of place that are the hallmarks of good transit-oriented development. A pedestrian-friendly environment not only enhances sense of place, but also makes walking to transit an attractive option.

(3) Transit Stations: Transit-oriented development becomes successful when uses are closely placed around the transit stations. TOD is most successful when the

transit stations are within 5 minutes (approximately 660 feet) walking distance of such uses. TOD can also be successful for greater distance, up to 10 minutes (approximately 1330 feet) walking distance, provided such development is contiguous to other TOD developments and is supported by a pedestrian environment.

(4) Inter-Modal Transfer Facilities: The development of an effective transit district around any transit station with a terminal function (any station that serves an end-of-the-line function or where a significant number of riders transfer at the station from one transit mode to another) is complicated by the fact that such stations require space for the operation of transfer services. Station area planning needs to resolve the tension between accommodating access (by car and by bus) from a larger area and accommodating access (by walking or bicycling) from the area within a half-mile of the station. The design of successful terminal stations requires paying attention to the effects of building form and land use pattern on the travel patterns of transit patrons within and near the station area.

Transit-oriented development is a different form of development than what has previously occurred in the City of Mesa. Understanding elements and impacts of TOD, ways to use it properly and integrate it into established neighborhoods and other existing areas, are important aspects of this planning process.