"Optimizing Our Activity Centers"

Activity Centers

Activity Centers come in a **variety of shapes and sizes**, but there are similarities generally based on size and economic characteristics. Here's a graphic summary of some of those similarities based on **scale and attributes**.



Foundations

There are several **underpinning values** embedded in this Activity Centers concept, reflecting comments generated in the studio and in conversations with community members, agency representatives and business owners. Here are some.

You can suggest others for us to consider, too!

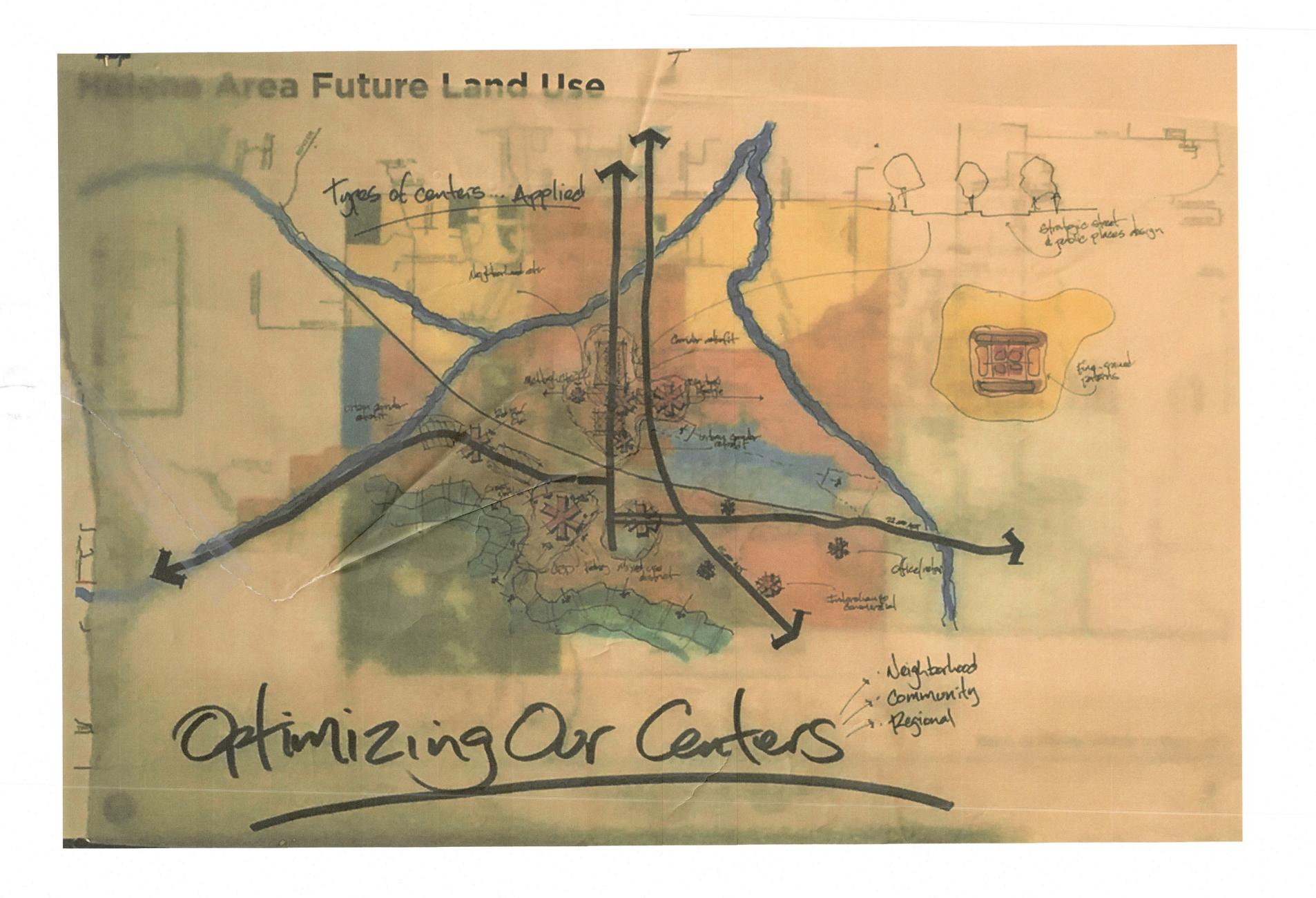
- Helena should develop its land resource efficiently, considering more compact forms that mix a variety of uses and intensities.
- Helena should accommodate a diversity of residential housing types, including a range of urban, suburban and near-rural development patterns.
- Helena should facilitate residential development to make housing more affordable for the community's workforce and families.
- Helena should be mindful of the environmental consequences of its growth policies and development patterns, minimizing impacts and conserving resources to the extent practical.
- Helena should collaborate with the County to ensure the City's fiscal stability and ability to sustain its role as a regional center for employment, culture, recreation, and commerce.
- Helena should provide an environment that nurtures its children and their desires to explore, develop independence, and grow up in safety.

Quick Spatial Take

Not all Activity Centers are created equally. For example, there are at least four centers on the diagram below that could be considered. The downtown core, the large-format retail development on Montana near Custer, the commercial intensity at Custer and the Interstate, and the proposed mall redvelopment all could be considered "regional" in scale and attributes. But they're all different, fulfilling a whole spectrum of functions and taking advantage of different economic conditions and opportunities.

The diagram suggests how Activity Centers might **locate and take shape** in Helena. Centers located at Euclid and Country Club or at Custer and McHugh could develop at a **"community"** scale, establishing **identity** at Helena's western entry and enhancing **access to services** for northern neighborhoods, respectively. More effective incorporation of **housing** could enlive a **"neighborhood"** Activity Center along Rodney Street near downtown, for example.

Are there other Activity Centers that you can identify? Indicate them here, and explain what they might look like or achieve.





| Policy shift The left column presents existing direction a Policy. The right column indicates how the poly "Optimizing Our Activity Centers" plan concept. if you love it, don't know, or think we should protell us how to fix it. | licy may need to shift in response to the Consider the possible change and let us know | | ? | 0 | Implementation Actions Great policy needs great implementation, too, to make sure that the plan's promises get fulfilled. Here are several implementation suggestions. We need to know if they make sense to you. And we need to know if you have some better ideas! | | ? | 0 | Willingness to Pay It costs money to make things happen, and the City now has a budget deficit. Some actions are less expensive than others. But do you like these ideas enough to help pay for them? |
|--|---|--|---------------------------------------|----------------|---|----|----------------|----------|--|
| Activity Centers | | | | | | | | | |
| Encourage new development of dense and intense land uses that are contiguous to or near existing development and infrastructure to ensure efficient expenditure of public funds. | Encourage compact, mixed-use development of activity centers and neighborhoods that are contiguous to existing infrastructure. | -1 | | | Create mulitple-use activity center zoning districts and assign to places where infrastructure is available. | W | | | It may be easier to simply amend the ordinance to create this option, then allow property owners to ask for the designation if they so choose. Maybe No |
| N/A | Promote development of a variety in type of activity center to enhance neighborhood identity, serve community need, and support a local lifestyle. | - / | | | Develop model activity center master plans in collaboration with property owners and the development community, exploring ways to create effective, functional, and attractive mixed-use projects. | 41 | | A Re | A few early successes at this may be all that's neede |
| Support infill development of additional housing that harmonizes with the character of existing neighborhoods. | Support infill development of additional and varied housing that harmonizes with the character of existing neighborhoods and complements activity centers. | 1// | | | Adopt design standards for attached housing projects like fourplexes, townhouses, and apartments. | | 77. 6 | Jr. Jack | This can be controversial and require staff to make some difficult design-related decisions, but it can resign better design almost immediately. Yes Maybe |
| Development | | | | | | | | | |
| Implement the mixed-use areas and urban standards boundary identified on the Future Land Use Map, making mixed-use areas a priority for neighborhood plans. | Focus new development into a hierarchy of neighborhood, community, and regional-scaled activity centers that integrate a mix of live, work, play, and learn functions. | 5 | | | Program public improvements in strategic areas to stimulate private investment in the most visible activity center areas. | | | | The City already produces programs like this. This approach might suggest a reordering or priorities. Yes Maybe |
| Provide pedestrian-friendly environments with connected transportation linkages with walkable block lengths or pedestrian corridors for connectivity. | Promote small blocks to ensure good connectivity and reduced walking distances between residences and schools, parks, and services. | | | | Amend zoning to require development in Activity Centers to provide pedestrian connections at 300 to 660 foot intervals & vehicular connections at no more than 660 foot intervals. | ~ | ? | | This could be accomplished relatively quicklyunless property owners have other ideas. Yes Maybe No |
| N/A | Promote the redevelopment of vacated commercial properties with a vertical and/or horizontal mixture of uses. | 7 | | | Craft and adopt form-based design standards that emphasize attractive block frontages and welcoming pedestrian connections. | | ? 1. | | This is best accomplished as part of a larger reexamination of the zoning ordinance. Yes Maybe |
| Frameworks | | | | | | | | | |
| Promote transportation choices and efficient land use patterns. | Promote transportation choices and efficient land use patterns, making cycling and walking a practical transportation alternative. | </td <td></td> <td></td> <td>Evaluate the "complete streets" ordinance on a regular basis and amend as appropriate based on its performance to achieve multimodal objectives.</td> <td>1</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>Requiring sidewalks and landscaping may not be enough to ensure "walkability" on its own. Yes Maybe</td> | | | Evaluate the "complete streets" ordinance on a regular basis and amend as appropriate based on its performance to achieve multimodal objectives. | 1 | | | Requiring sidewalks and landscaping may not be enough to ensure "walkability" on its own. Yes Maybe |
| Plan a logical, long-range arterial system, including interstate access, that promotes a compact, highly interconnected urban land use pattern and can be systematically implemented by ROW reservations. | Plan a logical, long-range arterial system, including interstate access, that promotes a compact, highly interconnected urban land use pattern and can be systematically implemented by ROW reservations. | < | 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 | The Seal Heary | Prepare and update a regional transportation system plan identifying planned roadway corridors throughout the urban service area. | 1 | The sale | 1500 | The plan is pretty straightforward, but acquisition of ROW isn't cheapunless it occurs as part of a subdivision. Yes Maybe |
| N/A | Differentiate arterial roadway design treatments to emphasize activity centers as points of focus linked by arterial corridors. | >1 | | | Design and improve different sections of arterial roadways differently, manipulating lane widths, landscaping, lighting, and other features to distinguish corridors from activity centers. | 1 | 7 peed morriso | | Enhancing roadways would be pricey. There might be opportunities to share the cost, though, but the City would pay for the bulk of it. Maybe No |