

3.0 Vision

3.1 OVERVIEW

The West Landing Specific Plan will direct the development of a comprehensively planned new community in the City of Ceres. The WLSP represents a significant opportunity for the City of Ceres, landowners and stakeholders, public agencies and decision-makers, and citizens of the City to have a marked influence on the City's future character and image, and to establish a benchmark and precedent for future development not only in Ceres proper, but surrounding areas as well. The individual elements of this plan all serve to fully realize this opportunity, an opportunity that is expressed in the community vision for the WLSP. The community vision is identified in this chapter, while the details for how this vision shall be carried forward are contained in the chapters that follow.

3.2 WEST LANDING'S PLACE WITHIN THE REGIONAL CONTEXT

With the initial vision of improving and expanding housing opportunities, integrating a variety of land uses with an emphasis on updated planning philosophies which take into account quality of life, livable community, motorized and non-motorized circulation, mixed housing types, balanced economic development and job creation, the City initiated the Specific Plan process for West Landing. The location of the Plan Area within the regional context both inspired this vision and makes it possible.

The location of the Plan Area, immediately south of the City of Modesto, presents an opportunity to establish a unique community identity for the City of Ceres, with a distinctive gateway entrance into the City at the intersection of Whitmore Avenue and Crows Landing Road. Crows Landing Road, an established commercial corridor in the City of Modesto, is partially built-out within the WLSP area. Consistent with the General Plan vision for major corridors within the City, future development along Crows Landing Road will contribute to a distinctive and inviting place that is uniquely Ceres. As such, the

transportation function and aesthetic image of Crows Landing Road will be unified through street trees, landscaping, walkways and street furniture.

To accommodate new growth, the City of Ceres focused on areas south and southwest of the current City boundaries, like the West Landing Specific Plan area. The virtues that make the south and southwest areas more suitable for new growth than areas to the north and east include: infrastructure availability; larger vacant parcels that are better suited for mixed-use development programs; and opportunity to improve jobs/housing balance. These virtues enable the WLSP to become a mixed-use community composed of unique neighborhoods within walking or cycling distance of parks and recreation, shopping, jobs and services.

3.3 THE WEST LANDING PLAN

The vision for West Landing is to create a new community inspired by the elements that make traditional small towns desirable places to live: a diverse mix of quality homes in different shapes, sizes, materials and colors located near civic uses, public spaces, open spaces, parks, neighborhood shopping opportunities and jobs—a place of readily accessible amenities, attractive neighborhoods and a strong sense of place throughout. This mixed use, pedestrian friendly, compact community is expected to be a positive addition to the City of Ceres, because it is one that embraces and implements the City's core values as expressed in its General Plan.

Residential neighborhoods of the Plan Area are intended to be open, accessible, and inviting. Centrally located schools and parks will serve as the focal points for each neighborhood, reinforcing the strong sense of place established by high-quality architecture, landscaping and public spaces. Neighborhoods ranging in form and character, from the more urban townhomes, condominiums and apartments of the Central





District, to the lower density traditional homes and cottages of the Western District, are organized around a centralized community park, and share the common characteristics of safe, shaded, tree-lined walkways and paths connecting them to employment, shopping and social center of the community.

The parks and open spaces of West Landing form an inter-connected network by which the land uses and the circulation system of the community are organized. The parks system includes a large community park and two neighborhood parks adjacent to the schools. In keeping with the desire to create traditional neighborhoods that promote Ceres' small-town character, these parks are organized to be focal points of each district—Eastern, Western and Central. As focal points, these gathering areas become a source of pride and character-defining element for each district. To promote walking and cycling, a network of paths are designed throughout the community, connecting the network of parks and linking neighborhoods to recreation, schools, jobs, shopping and community services.

The Crows Landing Road corridor is the commercial and employment core of the community. Along this corridor is the Village Center for West Landing. Located west of the intersection of Crows Landing Road and Hackett Road, the Village Center is envisioned as a pedestrian-friendly streetscape, with buildings adjacent to tree-lined



sidewalks, where visitors can enjoy a range of shopping and can relax, eat at the cafes, and enjoy outdoor dining. The Village Center will provide a pedestrian-scale mix of retail shops, services, offices, housing, community facilities, and entertainment, uses that will complement the larger-format regional and community commercial centers to the north.

As a community with a range of transportation choices, the WLSP includes a network of roadways with adjoining multi-use bicycle and pedestrian paths that link to the local and regional transportation system. The multi-use paths also connect to existing bus transit stops at the intersection of Hackett Road and Crows Landing Road. To encourage the use of existing transit and promote the expansion of service to the Plan Area, the WLSP is designed to locate the most dense and intense commercial and residential land uses within walking distance of Crows Landing Road, the location of existing transit routes and stops—and the likely location of additional routes and stops as the Plan Area develops.

3.4 DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

The WLSP establishes development principles which seek to create a strong sense of place, to improve quality of life, and create better places to live. They are as follows:

- Protect adjacent farmland and provide transitional buffers sensitive to the character and function of adjacent land uses.
- Promote a mixed-use, compact development pattern linked to regional transportation systems.
- Promote a balance of uses – housing, employment, schools, parks, recreation, and shopping that support a healthy balance of jobs and housing in the City.
- Create a livable, walkable, and safe environment with a distinct community identity and sense of place.
- Encourage an efficient use of energy and resources through sustainable design practices.
- Provide a diversity of recreational opportunities.
- Create friendly and inviting streetscapes through landscaping and design elements that reflect a high quality development.

- Encourage high quality architecture and urban design.
- Provide a diversity of housing choices, types, styles, densities, and cost.
- Provide a range of transportation choices – streets, paths, trails, and links to public transportation systems.
- Reinforce existing commercial corridors. Designate sufficient commercial and employment oriented land uses to create job opportunities and improve the jobs to housing balance.
- Create safe and accessible links between neighborhoods, community facilities and shopping within the plan area and to the surrounding community.

3.5 WEST LANDING PLANNING AND DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The planning and design principles that follow provide the overarching themes that establish the vision and physical framework of the West Landing community. These elements are intended to implement the Development Principles, focusing on the inter-relationship of community, district and neighborhood elements. These elements are divided into three overarching themes: sustainability elements, community elements, and district and neighborhood elements.

3.5.1 Sustainability Elements

The West Landing Community strives to be a leader in “sustainable” practices. As such, the sustainability elements that follow provide a framework and guidance for minimizing environmental impact of development and its operations; promoting energy efficiency; using less finite fuels; walking more and driving less; and employing eco-friendly techniques. The elements defined here as sustainable are also key components of community, district and neighborhood elements discussed later in this chapter.

The sustainable practices framework is divided into community and landscape design:

A. Sustainable Community Design

i. Compact Development

Conserve land. Promote livability, transportation efficiency, and walkability.

ii. Bicycle Network

To promote bicycling and transportation efficiency.

iii. Reduced Automobile Dependence

Encourage development in locations that exhibit superior performance in providing transportation choices or otherwise reduce motor vehicle use. Locate development on a site with existing or future transit service.

iv. Open Community

Promote communities that are physically connected to each other. Foster community and connectedness beyond the development. Designate all streets and sidewalks in the WLSP area as available for public use and not gated.

v. Street Network

Encourage the design of projects that incorporate high levels of internal connectivity, promote multimodal transportation and promote public health through increased physical activity.

vi. Walkable Streets

Provide appealing and comfortable pedestrian street environments in order to promote pedestrian activity. Promote public health through increased physical activity. The following features should be incorporated into the Plan Area:

- Principal functional entries of buildings should have a front façade that faces a public space such as a street; and
- Continuous sidewalks and/or trails shall be provided within the Plan Area.

vii. School Proximity

Promote public health through physical activity by facilitating walking to school. Promote community interaction and engagement. Design the project such that at least 50% of the project's dwelling units are within 1/2 mile walk distance of a planned school.

viii. Access to Active Spaces

Provide a variety of open spaces close to work and home to encourage walking, physical activity and time spent outdoors. Design the project such that an open space facility (e.g., general playfields, soccer, baseball, basketball and other sports fields) of at least 1 acre lies within 1/2 mile walk distance of 90% of the dwelling units and business entrances in the project.

ix. Diversity of Housing Types

To enable citizens to form a wide range of economic levels and age groups to live within a community.

B. Sustainable Landscape Design

i. Reduced Water Use

Minimize water use for landscape irrigation to reduce the impact to natural water resources and reduce burden on municipal water supply and wastewater systems.

- Use high efficiency irrigation systems; and
- Install landscaping that does not require permanent irrigation.

ii. Irrigation

Water-conserving irrigation systems, including automated rain sensors and programmable irrigation controllers, should be used to provide coverage to irrigated areas. Emitters, bubblers, or drip irrigation systems and other such devices shall be used wherever feasible and/or practical to encourage deep-rooted plantings. In areas where especially drought-tolerant and native planting is employed, irrigation systems should be used to establish new young plantings with the goal and intent of discontinuing a majority of the irrigation as the trees/shrubs are able to survive without introduced irrigation.

iii. Water Reuse

Use municipal water, or offset central water supply through the capture and controlled reuse of rainwater and/or graywater, if feasible.

iv. Stormwater Management

Reduce adverse impacts on water resources by mimicking the natural hydrology of the region on the project site, including groundwater recharge. Reduce pollutant loadings from stormwater discharges, reduce peak flow rates to minimize stream channel erosion, and maintain or restore chemical, physical, and biological integrity of downstream waterways.

v. Heat Island Reduction

Reduce Heat Islands to minimize impact on microclimate and human and wildlife habitat.

vi. Paving and Hardscape

Consider using permeable surfaces that allow water to percolate into the soil. For driveways, walkways and patios, utilize gap-spaced unit pavers, decomposed granite, gravel or grass-stabilization systems. Allowing storm water percolation reduces the volume of storm water runoff and sheet flow, while replenishing local

aquifers and reducing soil erosion. Additional benefits include reducing irrigation requirements and lowering the risk of flooding. These permeable surfaces may be effectively used in combination with biofiltration, bioswales, and even invisible (subsurface) detention systems.

3.5.2 Community Elements

Community elements unify the Plan Area by providing common features that tie the different districts and neighborhoods together. These community-wide elements, including parks and open space, streetscapes and gateways, provide a continuous visual thread that defines the community identity of West Landing.

A. Parks and Open Space Network

The parks and open space network describes the systems of parks, stormwater retention areas and open space, which are connected by a network of paseos. The park system provides a variety of active and passive facilities, including a community park and two neighborhood parks. The open space system provides bicycle and pedestrian access to major destinations within the plan area, along shaded, tree-lined pathways. This community-wide system links neighborhoods, schools and commercial areas – promoting walking and cycling as an alternative to the automobile.

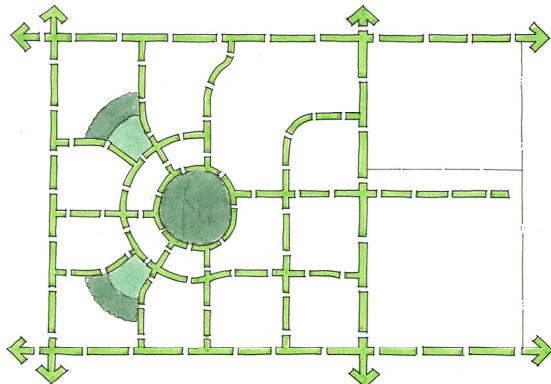


Figure 3.1: Open Space and Park Network

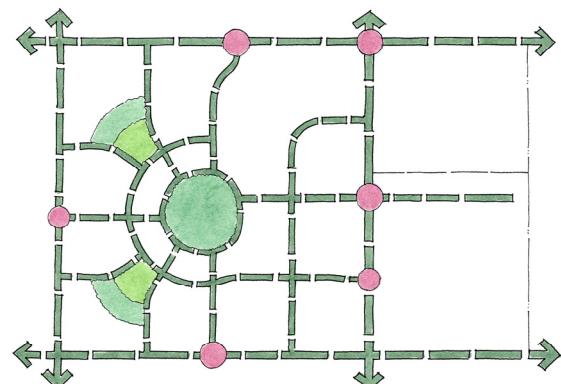


Figure 3.2: Gateways, Streetscape and Landscaping

B. Gateways, Streetscape and Landscaping

The WLSP provides the opportunity for Ceres to physically and visually distinguish itself from the City of Modesto, with landscaping and gateway features along Whitmore Avenue and Crows Landing Road. These landscapes define the form and character of the public realm, and will also be applied to street corridors, intersections, entries, landscape buffers, and public spaces throughout the Plan Area. The landscape design of the public realm establishes a distinct sense-of-place while creating people-friendly places throughout West Landing.

C. Transportation Choices

West Landing will provide residents with a variety of transportation choices – including walking, cycling, public transit or carpooling.

i. Grid of Streets

The Plan Area is surrounded by arterial streets organized on a one-mile grid system. Internal to the plan area, a network of collector streets are organized on an approximately quarter-mile grid, providing efficient access and circulation for residents, shoppers and employees. This system provides multiple routes within and through the community, insuring that traffic is evenly distributed on safe, pedestrian and bicycle-friendly streets.

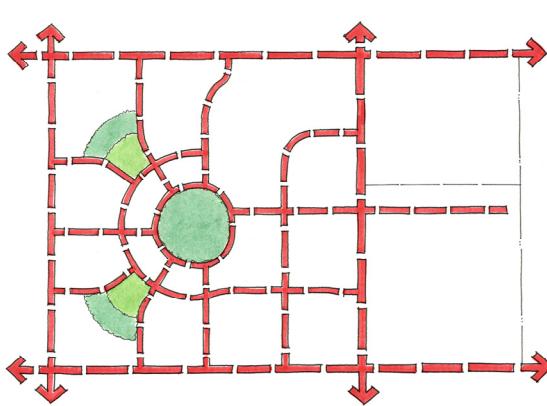


Figure 3.3: Transportation Choices—Grid of Streets

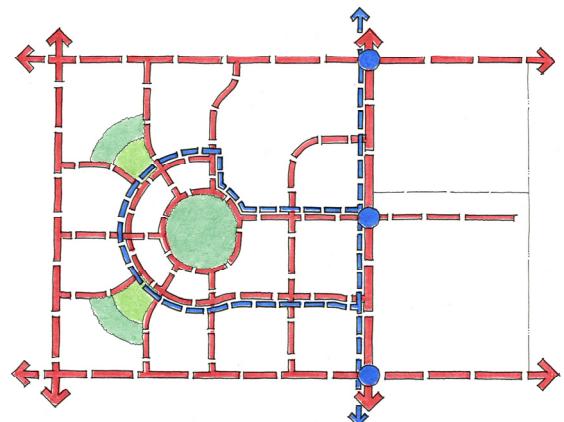


Figure 3.4: Transportation Choices—Transit Linkages

ii. Transit Linkages

Existing public transit is integrated into the circulation system. The specific plan includes the provision for future bus stops at the intersections of Crows Landing Road and Whitmore Avenue, Crows Landing Road and Hackett Road and Crows Landing Road and Service Road. Bus turn-outs, benches and shelters are envisioned at these locations to accommodate expansion of service along the existing routes provided by Modesto Area Express, Ceres Area Transit, and Stanislaus Regional Transit.

iii. Connecting Paths

Pedestrian and bicycle paths and routes are integrated into the community-wide street network. The system of pathways adjoin internal and perimeter roadways, offering direct connections to amenities throughout the community.

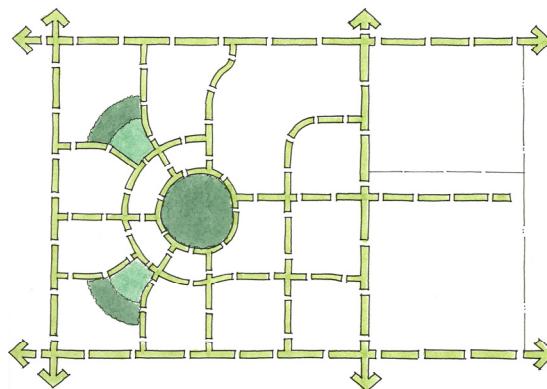


Figure 3.5: Connecting Paths

3.5.3 District and Neighborhood Elements

District and neighborhood elements are organized within the framework of community elements. These elements range in scale from district-defining land use arrangements to neighborhood focal points and gathering areas. Development Principles encourage mixed-use, compact development, jobs/housing balance, and sense of place—all of which are programmatic features of the Plan. The careful arrangement of the mix of uses surrounding focal points and gathering areas is intended to create a vibrant community where social interaction and physical activity are promoted by locating the daily needs of residents within a short walk or bike ride of their homes.

A. Mixed Use Commercial District

A series of commercial, office, and industrial uses are located along Crows Landing Road, providing jobs, shopping and services in close proximity of the residential neighborhoods of West Landing. At the intersection of Hackett Road and Crows Landing Road is the Village Center (neighborhood commercial), which is envisioned as the mixed-use heart of the community. The provision of mixed-use development—including housing with office and retail—is encouraged in the Village Center due to its proximity to adjacent jobs,

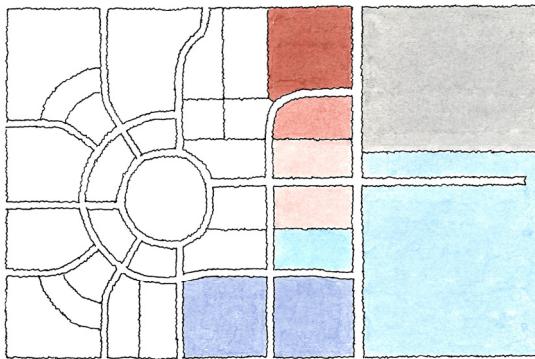


Figure 3.6: Mixed Use Commercial District

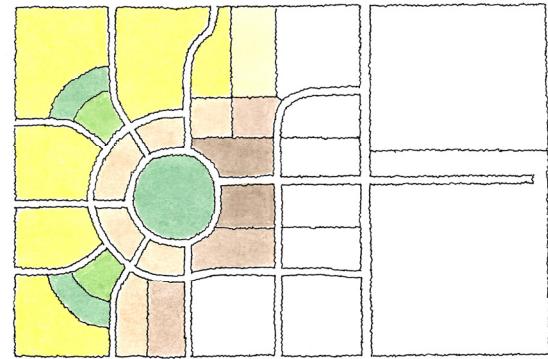


Figure 3.7: Distinctive Neighborhoods Focused on Public Spaces

B. Distinctive Neighborhoods Focused on Public Spaces

The plan provides for compact, pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods with a diversity of housing types and unique sense-of-place as fundamental components of small-town character and the vision for West Landing. Contributing to interesting neighborhoods are a variety of housing types and densities, which in turn results in a diverse mix of residents of varying income, age, race and household size. West Landing' housing is generally organized into three distinct neighborhoods, each designed with its own character and unique sense of place. A range of housing types and densities within each neighborhood enable flexibility to meet market demands. Neighborhoods are each focused on public spaces, such as a park or elementary school.

C. Unifying Features of Districts and Neighborhoods

The districts of West Landing, as described in the Executive Summary of this document, are defined by a mix of uses, character, and function. Adjacent districts are connected by unifying features, such as the Eastern and Central District, which are linked by their interface with the enhanced Crow Landing Road corridor. Additionally, the Central and Western Districts are connected by orientation around the community park. The community park also unites the three residential neighborhoods of West Landing. The unifying feature across the three districts and associated neighborhoods is the arrangement of land uses, transitioning from highest density and intensity uses on the eastern boundary to the lowest density and intensity on the western boundary.

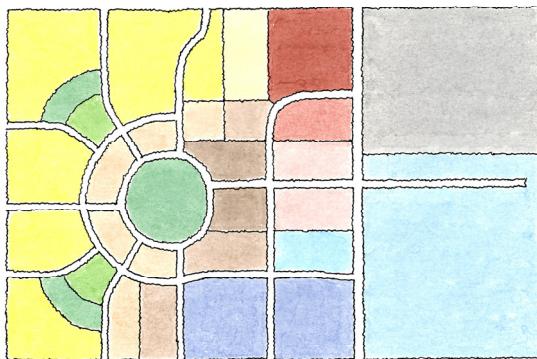


Figure 3.8: Unifying Features