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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
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Mid-America Regional Council (MARC)

Partner Jurisdictions: Participation from staff and stakeholders from the following partner jurisdictions contributed to the Model Sustainable Development Code Website and individual jurisdiction development code audits:

• Fairway, KS
• Gladstone, MO
• Grandview, MO
• Independence, MO
• Mission, KS
• Prairie Village, KS
• Raytown, MO
• Roeland Park, KS

Consultant Team:
**Introduction**

This code audit was completed as part of the Mid-America Regional Council Model Sustainable Development Code project. It was made possible by a Sustainable Communities Planning Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities. The Model Sustainable Development Code project is part of MARC’s Creating Sustainable Places initiative. For more information on the entire initiative, see [http://www.marc.org/Regional-Planning/Creating-Sustainable-Places](http://www.marc.org/Regional-Planning/Creating-Sustainable-Places).

**Approach**

The Creating Sustainable Places initiative promotes a vision for VIBRANT, CONNECTED, and GREEN communities throughout the Kansas City Region. This 3-year program began in 2010 and involved more than 60 regional partners of local governments, state agencies, and civic, business and development organizations. A 40-member coordinating committee developed the 7 key principles for sustainable development in our metropolitan area.

The Model Sustainable Development Code project builds off of this vision and these principles. Through facilitated discussions with our stakeholder jurisdictions, 22 “Sustainable Development Concepts” were identified under these principles. While other sustainability issues may also be important to our region these concepts were identified as issues most impacted by our local development codes. With emphasis on these 22 concepts, the model sustainable development code website and development code audits are focused on the most pressing regulatory issues that are important to our region.
This project involves 2 main components – a model sustainable development code website and code audits of eight local jurisdictions.

**Model Sustainable Development Code Website**

The model code website is established as a resource for code examples from other jurisdictions – most outside of our region – that address the sustainable development concepts identified by our stakeholder jurisdictions. Rather than jump directly to regulatory language, the website first establishes the policy supporting each concept, lists benefits and outcomes from the policy, and identifies a range of regulatory strategies that implement each concept. Example codes are then provided as a resource for jurisdictions that support those policies. [http://codes.sustainable-kc.org/](http://codes.sustainable-kc.org/)

The model code website is organized under 3 main frameworks:

- **LEARN** – organizing the development code strategies and code examples around the 7 main principles and 22 sustainable development concepts.
- **CODE** – organizing the development code strategies around the table of contents of a model development code.
- **EXPLORE** – demonstrating the types of projects and project metrics that support the principles and concepts from the model sustainable development code.

The model code website is also part of a larger suite of on-line resources, including the Regional Indicators that help track our progress towards a more sustainable region with real time access to important data; a Natural Resources Inventory which includes highly refined data at various scales documenting existing resources and restoration opportunities that can allow natural systems to support development in our communities; and Envision Tomorrow and Visualization Tools that can help program and implement concepts within specific contexts. This suite of resources is intended to promote LOCAL ACTIONS, with IMPACTS ON PLACES, that produce REGIONAL OUTCOMES.

**Code Audits**

Eight of our stakeholder jurisdictions also participated in a code audit – evaluating their development code against the 22 sustainable development concepts. To initiate this process, each prepared a “policy profile”, ranking the sustainable development concepts from a 1 – high priority, to a 4 – lowest priority. This profile gives an order of magnitude gauge on which issues are most relevant to each community’s context and current planning priorities, and it helps tailor an action plan for code updates to each jurisdictions needs.

Evaluating how development regulations impact sustainability goals requires a two-part analysis. First, consider whether the regulations present barriers – provisions that prohibit or limit the application of “best practices” towards any specific sustainability objective. Second, and perhaps most importantly, consider how effectively the regulations limit, close loopholes or prohibit other competing practices that undermine broader sustainability issues. This two-part analysis can result in a more integrated code by identifying...
where the development code is strong, silent, or weak on certain principles, and identifying where some sections may undermine other related principles and concepts.

This report is a summary of the Independence audit. The audit was conducted through an independent review and separate discussions with key staff. The audit represents a snapshot of the current regulations, highlights strengths and weaknesses with regard to the 22 Sustainable Development Concepts, and identifies an action plan to address the cities’ specific sustainability priorities as development and redevelopment occurs.

The audit organized under the 7 key principles for sustainable development: Reinvestment; Transportation Choice; Housing Choices; Corridors and Activity Centers; Design for Healthy Lifestyles; Unique Community Characteristics; and Resource Conservation and Energy Efficiency. Under each topic, this report contains:

• **Principles & Concepts** - a summary of each Principle and how the Sustainable Development Concepts impact common sustainability metrics for comprehensive planning and development;

• **Opportunities and Applicability** – a quick observation of how the each Principle and the supporting Concepts could apply to the jurisdictions’ physical and planning context.

• **Code Analysis** - Analysis of how well the development code relates to each concept and typical regulatory objectives, including identification of barriers or loopholes.

• **Potential Action Steps** – Options to consider for future updates to the regulations (note: more information and examples of these action steps can be found on the Model Sustainable Development Code website.)

An action plan is also provided that prioritizes some of the potential action steps based on those that are most easily achievable under the cities current plans and policies (as opposed to those that need broader programs and community input to support them) and those that are most aligned with the cities “policy profile” filled out at the beginning of the audit process. A section by section list of raw comments used to evaluate the code, guide the analysis and determine the rating is included as an appendix to this report. These sections can be used by staff to help prioritize potential action steps, address emerging issues, and improve the Codes performance on certain sustainability concepts.
SUMMARY
Each section – and sometimes specific sub-sections – of the City’s development regulations was scored against the 22 Sustainable Development Concepts. Sections that had no real impact on the principle were given no score. The rating system ranged from 1 to 5, with one being a direct conflict with sustainable development principles, and a 5 being directly supports sustainable development principles. Also, staff and stakeholders filled out a relative priority policy profile” to indicate which of the 22 concepts were most important to the City (using a 1 to 4 scale), considering its physical context, issues and opportunities, or current planning and policy positions. In this way the raw objective scores of the code audit can be compared to the issues that are most important to the city currently, as well as identify any emerging or long-range issues to be concerned about.

Independence’s development code scored in the mid-range for several categories (2.7 to 3.4 - neither directly supports nor directly conflicts with sustainable development concepts and CSP principles). The highest scores were Strong Suburban Downtown (4.1), Infill / Rehab Housing (3.7), Access to Healthy Food (4.5), Natural Resource Protection (4.0), and Renewable Energy (4.5) (all in the “somewhat supports” or “directly supports” range). These are high or moderate priorities on the relative priority ranking, reflecting a good correlation between the regulations and the priorities or policies of the city, although some improvements in these categories are still possible and indicated in the report and specific sections of the UDO that scored low in the comment log. However some of the City’s high or moderate priorities issues did score low. The lowest scores include Complete Streets (2.3), Context Appropriate Streets (2.3), Diverse Housing Types (2.9), Pedestrian Oriented Public Realm (2.6) (all in the “indirect conflicts” or “direct conflicts” range). In general, the concepts under the Transportation Choice and Housing Choice principles and any concepts that dealt with the urban design and pedestrian characteristics of the public realm (streets and open spaces) scored lowest in the analysis of specific code sections and should be an area of focus. The Purpose statements at the introduction of the UDO are succinct and very plainly stated, and they invoke many of the CSP principles. However, the standards in many sections are dis-associated with these purpose statements.
## Rating Key:
1. Creates direct conflicts that likely prohibit best practices that meet sustainable development concepts and principles.
2. Creates indirect conflicts, somewhat undermines sustainable development concepts and principles.
3. Neither directly supports nor conflicts with sustainable development concepts and principles, but may miss an opportunity where these topics typically would be regulated.
4. Somewhat supports best practices and/or limits other practices that could indirectly undermine sustainable development concepts and principles.
5. Directly supports the best practices and prohibits other practices that could undermine sustainable development concepts and principles.

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<th>Rating Key</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Directly supports the best practices and prohibits other practices that could undermine sustainable development concepts and principles.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Creates indirect conflicts, somewhat undermines sustainable development concepts and principles.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Neither directly supports nor conflicts with sustainable development concepts and principles, but may miss an opportunity where these topics typically would be regulated.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Somewhat supports best practices and/or limits other practices that could indirectly undermine sustainable development concepts and principles.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Directly supports the best practices and prohibits other practices that could undermine sustainable development concepts and principles.</td>
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### Overall Rating

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<th>Category</th>
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<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
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#### Relative Priorities

- **High Priority**: This is currently in our existing policies.
- **Moderate Priority**: This is not currently in our policies, but is a direction our community is interested in, or it is currently in our policies, but other items are more important currently.
- **Low Priority**: This is not currently in our policies, and our community has not discussed this, or our community is interested in this direction but it is a long-term aspiration due to physical, political or practical hurdles that must be addressed.
- **Not a Priority**: This is not in our current policies -- it has either been discussed and decided against, or it is not applicable to our context within the region.

### Note

The Thoroughfare Plan is a map-based exclusively on functional classifications with no specific cross sections. The thoroughfare section of the comprehensive plan has 6 basic cross sections, but they are also based exclusively on functional classifications and they all start with 2? lanes as a basis. According to AASHTO, 2? lanes are only appropriate for high-speed arterial or highway conditions. They are not appropriate for neighborhoods, walkable thoroughfares, or urban contexts where mult-modal or lower vehicle speeds are desired. This, combined with a lack of urban design features for the variety of contexts that different street classifications results in a low score for the Transportation Choice and Corridors and Activity Centers scores. The other document the UDO refers to — the Public Works Manual — was not available for on-line review, but it is assumed that it will reflect a similar high-speed, traffic flow / volume bias that undermines the CSP principles and sustainable development concepts.
**REINVESTMENT**

Reinvesting in existing communities and neighborhoods ensures they remain or become vibrant, connected, green places.

**CONCEPTS**

**Infill / Rehab Housing**

Infill development and rehabilitation of existing buildings helps find space for new homes within our established communities. Designing infill developments in ways that work well with their surroundings and retool property for productive use and modern needs keeps our neighborhoods, corridors and activity centers strong.

**Repair Strip Corridors**

Strategic investments and better land use transitions can restore value to our corridors. Car-oriented corridors reach a point of diminishing returns as each additional business competes for the visibility, access, and space needed to capture traffic and accommodate cars on high-volume streets. Coordinating public and private investments to create places for people, and connecting these places to supporting land uses can repair our declining corridors.

**Strong Suburban Downtown**

Strong downtowns attract investment, create a community identity, and provide a place for people to gather and walk. A vibrant and connected downtown increases the resiliency of our communities and adds diversity to our economy.

**INDEPENDENCE SCORE**

3.7

4.1

2.4
Independence: Opportunities and Applicability

Independence has a strong traditional downtown that has a very walkable and compact format. Accommodations for cars – both in streetscape design and site design (buildings setback and surface parking lots) has eroded some of the historic and walkable character. Infill housing opportunities and development code issues exist primarily in older areas of the community – neighborhoods surrounding downtown and areas on the west side of the city. The city will need to balance infill opportunities in these areas of aging housing stock with newer growth areas to the east and north. The city also has large areas of aging strip corridors that suffer from the disinvestment patterns brought on by large-scale car oriented development, built along major high-speed / high-volume roads. (Noland Road between I-70 and 23rd, 23rs street west of downtown, Truman Road west of downtown, 39th street and HWY 40 near I-70 and I470, and HWY 24 west of downtown and east of 291). The city will need to be careful not to repeat these development patterns with new growth to the east side of the city.

CODE ANALYSIS:

Through a review of the Independence Zoning Ordinance, based on the sustainability principles and concepts identified, the following issues have been identified:

- Parking standards that require additional parking are not clear exactly when they apply; potential interpretations could trigger parking requirements in many infill development situations that may limit the practicality and/or increase expenses.
- The Residential Infill Development Standards are a good approach and intent for infill / rehab housing; the deficiencies may lie in the practical or enforcement options with some of the standards. However, this issue is often highly contextual, and a city-wide standards may be difficult.
- Some of the pedestrian-oriented commercial design standards that can help repair corridors may be too generic and/or become watered down since they are not appropriate for all contexts (then they work well for neither – car-oriented or pedestrian-oriented).
- The Historic Square Overlay district generally does a good job to reflect the compact walkable pattern of downtown. Some greater attention to smaller scale and typical building types may be necessary to build expectations for both developers and decision makers.

POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS:

To address the sustainability issues identified the City of Independence should consider the following actions:

- Consider more flexible parking triggers to accommodate infill and rehabilitation and/or give waivers or exceptions to accommodate existing conditions on infill lots.
- Review the track-record on the Residential Infill Development standards or monitor past applications; make adjustments if necessary to facilitate the intent of the district.
- Strengthen the P-street Overlay approach and broadening it for wider application; do not compromise the standards when compared to areas that will remain car-oriented for the foreseeable future.
- Coordinate the P-street Overlay with public works standards specifically geared for walkable streets and public realm design.
- Consider implementing a “building type” approach in the Historic Square Overlay; make distinctions in the design or development standards by building type or by block within this district.
- Update the PUD district standards and discretionary site plan approval process to have more criteria tied explicitly to the CSP Principles and Sustainable Development Concepts.
- Revise or replace the R-12, R-18 and R-30 district, or supplement with a new district, that allows more small-scale, multi-unit buildings dwellings to support walkable centers and for infill along corridors.
**TRANSPORTATION CHOICE**

Varied transportation options help reduce family travel costs, reduce air pollution, and connect families to jobs and services.

**CONCEPTS**

**Connected Street Networks**

Connected street networks improve our access to daily needs and establish more valuable and efficient development patterns. Greater connections provide more direct routes, allow options for different routes, and make our communities more adaptable to long-range change.

**Complete Streets Design**

Well-designed streets provide a setting for commerce, a place for social interaction and offer a variety of transportation options. Streets and rights-of-way are one of our most valuable assets and one of the largest single landholdings in most communities. Designing these spaces to meet as many needs as possible and to better support abutting property will maximize the value to our communities.

**Context Appropriate Streets**

Context appropriate streets fit the physical setting and better support our distinct places. Varying street designs, even on a block-by-block basis, to account for different environmental conditions, different urban design goals, and different development patterns improves transportation choices.

**Optimized Parking**

Optimal parking solutions respond to the context and development patterns to improve access for people. Too much parking can be as big of a detriment to quality development as too little. When we mandate parking requirements, but fail to balance this with similar mandates that ensure access for people on foot, bicycles or transit, we limit choices.
Independence: Opportunities and Applicability

The City has large future growth and development areas where long-range plans, capital programming and development regulations and review processes will be coordinated to implement street patterns, street design and transportation options. In established areas, capital improvement policies and priorities will be largely responsible for influencing change on these topics. Coordination of development standards with these policies and investments will be important to improve transportation choices in Independence.

CODE ANALYSIS:

Through a review of the Independence Zoning Ordinance, based on the sustainability principles and concepts identified, the following issues have been identified:

- Reliance on the functional classification system as the planning framework (arterial, local and collector), combined with access standards that prioritize vehicle flow and volume regardless of the planning context will result in highly car-oriented development patterns and street designs.
- Most street and sight design standards have a heavy focus on traffic volumes and flow, and the standards will undermine other competing interests of multi-modal transportation and pedestrian-scale urban design.
- There are good exemptions from parking standards for the historic square ant P-street overlay; however the city-wide general parking rations are high and do not have mitigating design standards or clear options for flexible parking in other contexts.
- The alternative compliance parking plan adds some options but it seems cumbersome and process-intensive, and it is unclear what could be approved.
- The requirement for street trees is good, however the location standards will not provide the desired urban design, traffic calming, or environmental effects (i.e. out of right-of-way along frontages).
- The City-wide sidewalks standards for R districts is minimal, and may not be appropriate for all districts (one-side) [note: it was not clear what the Public Works Manual requires for width and location.]

POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS:

To address the sustainability issues identified the City of Independence should consider the following actions:

- Coordinate the P-street Overlay with public works standards specifically geared for walkable streets and public realm design.
- Upgrade the Thoroughfare Plan and integrate complete street policies; consider a wide range of street design types for different planning and development contexts.
- Consider broadening parking flexibility to all contexts, or at least identify opportunities to mitigate the impacts of too much parking in other pedestrian scale contexts beyond the historic square of P-street overlay district. Consider administrative credits, waivers or other basic defaults for flexibility.
- Consider incorporating outside references as guidance to street design using more multi-modal and urban design approaches (use National Association of City Transportation Officials Guidance and/or ITE Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares.)
- Specify street trees in the right-of-way – at least on certain street types.
- Adjust sidewalk standards (currently generic city-wide requirement that may be too much in some context and too little in others) to reflect or defer to the different street types; in the absence of creating different street types allow other context-based considerations for sidewalk design, location and width.
Housing choices for all ages, lifestyles, and income levels help support diverse communities and a healthy housing industry.

CONCEPTS

Diverse Housing Types
A greater range of housing types: affordable, market-rate and workforce housing makes our neighborhoods more stable and resilient to outside influences. Increasing the variety of housing options can better meet the changing housing demands of our population and supplies the broad range of housing needed for more complete communities.

Age In Place
Age in place communities allow people to live where they want despite changes in their housing needs. Diverse housing options allow people to remain in their neighborhoods, stay engaged in familiar environments and established relationships, and contribute to the broader community.

Mixed-density Neighborhoods
A wide variety of housing types within the same neighborhood strengthens community diversity and increases the number of amenities available to residents. Integrating a similar scale of lots, building footprints, heights and frontages allows different housing types to mix compatibly despite wide ranges of density, and establishes the distinct characteristics of our neighborhoods.
Independence: Opportunities and Applicability

The City has a wide variety of housing types reflected in 3 distinct development patterns—“traditional” neighborhoods in and around downtown; “first tier” suburban housing of primarily 1950s and 60s era single family subdivisions, primarily on the east side; and conventional suburban subdivisions that reflect neighborhood patterns prevalent in the 1970s through present. The different types of housing options available are largely determined by these patterns, with the first two patterns more accommodating to smaller-scale multi-unit housing types that fit well within neighborhoods and contribute to compact walkable patterns. The suburban pattern tends to accommodate housing options (alternatives to single-family subdivisions) mainly through large-scale apartment complexes. As development occurs in new growth area, and appropriate balance of different neighborhood patterns will need to be carefully planned to best accommodate housing options and compact walkable neighborhoods.

CODE ANALYSIS:

Through a review of the Independence Zoning Ordinance, based on the sustainability principles and concepts identified, the following issues have been identified:

- The household living use group category initiates a positive “building type” approach to residential uses, however some important potential distinctions in building type, scale and context are not emphasized (these could be better correlated to the distinct housing and neighborhood contexts in Independence.)

- There are some acknowledgements of unique housing needs for aging populations, however there are not clear standards on how to best fit these types of uses into different contexts and there is the potential that these are implemented more through larger-scale projects that tend to become isolated and car-focused.

- There is evidence of addressing different housing needs in different contexts (conventional, open space, and conservation), but the development standards end up with very similar housing options arranged differently.

- Even with the flexibility added by open space, conservation or PUD options, the housing standards are still focused primarily on density, and some artificially low densities will limit small-scale, multi-unit building types that can fit in well in certain contexts and/or direct non-single family housing into larger, isolated and internally focused projects where the density cannot compliment nearby transit or walkable centers.

- The Residential Infill Development Standards are a good approach and intent for infill / rehab housing.

POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS:

To address the sustainability issues identified the City of Independence should consider the following actions:

- Revise or replace the R-12, R-18 and R-30 district, or supplement with a new district, that allows more small-scale, multi-unit buildings dwellings to support walkable centers and for infill along corridors. The current standards will push multi-family into larger scale projects (to meet buffers, setbacks and density) and result in automobile oriented sites and areas.

- Create some higher-density zoning districts that do not rely on the PUD process.

- Revise the “development type” standards to reflect clearly distinct development patterns (i.e. different densities, different public realm design patterns); and consider adding one for compact, mixed-density neighborhoods.

- Consider enabling accessory dwelling unities (either as a limited use or discretionary use); options include only in specified districts, only adjacent to transit or compact walkable centers, or other planning criteria that direct density and housing options to where it provides the most benefit.

- Revisit all of the terms and uses associated with housing geared towards aging population, and consider whether development standards are directing these project to locations and site designs that create the types of places seniors or aging populations want to live.
CORRIDORS & ACTIVITY CENTERS

Vibrant corridors connecting activity centers encourage new developments and public transportation while making efficient use of public and private assets.

CONCEPTS

Compact Walkable Centers

Concentrating more small-scale and diverse uses in compact patterns allows people to walk to shopping, school, jobs and entertainment. Arranging a greater mix of uses around a well-connected, pedestrian-scaled public realm builds valuable and enduring places, and it improves the overall economic and environmental performance of development.

Transit-Ready Corridors -

Connecting our most common trip origins and destinations along strategic corridors will better support local and regional transit lines. More housing choices, increased employment options, and direct connections to more walkable places prepare our corridors for better transit service.

Retail / Rooftop Relationships

A strong, well-connected and accessible market makes retail more successful. Improving the proximity and relationship between neighborhoods and the amount and types of commercial development they demand makes our corridors and activity centers vital and worthy of long-lasting investments.

INDEPENDENCE SCORE

3.0

3.2
Independence: Opportunities and Applicability

Downtown is the primary walkable center for the community. Some smaller scale nodes such as the Englewood area (Winner Rd. between Sterling and Appleton Ave.) and other smaller neighborhood nodes exist as an anomaly against the larger scale, car-oriented strip corridors. Some of the older corridors do contain remnants of older, more compact non-residential nodes (such as near HWY 24 and Ash Ave.), but these areas are being marginalized by the disinvestment brought on my strip corridor patterns. The more recent and stronger large-scale retail and office areas are primarily in non-walkable patterns that will not easily be accommodated by transit and do not enjoy a tight relationship with housing that can be served by these areas. Current transit services are thus organized around downtown and the more densely populated and better connected corridors east of downtown, or on park and ride options for major highway corridors that promote little corresponding development investment.

Through a review of the Independence Zoning Ordinance, based on the sustainability principles and concepts identified, the following issues have been identified:

• The Historic Square Overlay district generally does a good job to reflect the compact walkable pattern of downtown. Some greater attention to smaller scale and typical building types may be necessary to build expectations for both developers and decision makers.

• The commercial use group fails to make meaningful distinctions on the scale or intensity of different use types – particularly retail uses, where many smaller and divers retail uses are essential to walkable centers, and where larger footprint uses undermine compact, walkable places.

• The street designs and access standards will not support walkable places or transit –read places (which need to be pedestrian oriented) very well and will force car-oriented scales and site designs.

• While the C-1 district does allow smaller and compact formats appropriate for neighborhood centers, it does not require it. Further, the limit on scale (15K) may be too large for general applicability (1K to 3K best for neighborhood walkability), yet could also be too restricting for some specific applications (i.e. a neighborhood grocery in the 25K to 35K range can often be a good anchor.)

• The Historic Square Overlay and P-street overlay provide good options for compact walkable development (including parking flexibility) for those limited contexts. However each could be undermined by lack a appropriate street standards in the Public Works Manual.

To address the sustainability issues identified the City of Independence should consider the following actions:

• Consider implementing more of a “building type” approach to development in the Historic Square Overlay, and make distinctions in the design or development standards by building type or by block within this district.

• Coordinate the P-street Overlay with public works standards specifically geared for walkable streets and public realm design.

• Update the PUD district standards and discretionary site plan approval process to have more criteria tied explicitly to the CSP Principles and Sustainable Development Concepts

• Revise or supplement the C-1 district to require smaller scale buildings and uses in a compact and walkable pattern. Currently the standards will create automobile oriented sites.
DESIGN FOR HEALTHIER LIFESTYLES
Places designed for active lifestyles with access to healthy foods can improve the health of residents, reduce health-care costs and contribute to vibrant neighborhoods.

CONCEPTS

Active Transportation / Living
Making walking and bicycling a safe, fun and convenient way to reach our daily needs improves public health. Active modes of transportation offer a combination of recreation, exercise, and transportation. Incorporating more social and physical activity into daily routines increases our quality-of-life and reduces environmental impacts of our lifestyle and transportation choices.

Access to Healthy Foods
The design of our communities impacts how we access and distribute food and what we eat. Better integrating a range of different food production and distribution options into our communities can increase our public health, strengthen our local economy and make better use of our landscapes.

Integrated Trail System
Trail systems connect our communities and natural areas, enhance our transportation networks and promote recreational systems. Integrating trail systems into our development patterns makes us more active and more engaged in our community.
Independence: Opportunities and Applicability

Historic development patterns in the city were fairly compact and walkable, centered on downtown, aiding Active Transportation / Living. However more recent periods of growth and development reflect primarily automobile-oriented patterns, and integrating walkable development patterns or integrating trail systems into this context is a challenge in these areas. The city trails are largely within the parks, and are primarily recreational. There are some opportunities for a broader, connected system through the Little-Blue Trace, McCoy Park to Mill Park Trails, and the downtown historic walking trail. However there is little development focused around these assets meaning they are not capitalized on for transportation purposes. Future growth or redevelopment or capital improvements may focus on these aspects of integrating trails, walking, and transportation into development patterns and more complete networks.

CODE ANALYSIS:

Through a review of the Independence Zoning Ordinance, based on the sustainability principles and concepts identified, the following issues have been identified:

- The community garden provisions have good standards for enabling food production in a variety of neighborhood contexts.
- The bicycle parking provisions are a good gesture to active transportation, however it is not specifically tailored to contexts or uses where bicycle transportation is likely.
- The street standards in general do not provide adequate design standards for a variety of contexts where active transportation should be a priority, and instead prioritize vehicle volume and flow over all other street design considerations.
- The P-street overlay begins to establish design and development criteria for more walkable and active areas, but there are not corresponding street design standards.
- Incorporation of Parks Master Plan into consideration for subdivision standards is a good strategy for integrating parks and trails as part of the overall public realm design, however there are not many standards specifically on how to integrate trails as part of the transportation network and open space systems (i.e. similar to the way streets area).

POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS:

To address the sustainability issues identified the City of Independence should consider the following actions:

- Coordinate the P-street Overlay with public works standards specifically geared for walkable streets and public realm design.
- Consider incorporating outside references as guidance to street design using more multi-modal and urban design approaches (use National Association of City Transportation Officials Guidance and/or ITE Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares.)
- Upgrade the Thoroughfare Plan and integrate complete street policies; consider a wide range of street design types for different planning and development contexts.
- Update the bicycle parking standards to (a) emphasize it or require it in contexts where bicycle transportation is viable (i.e. along bicycle routes or uses that are common bicycle destinations); and (b) allow a corresponding reduction in vehicle parking where bicycle parking is provided.
- Develop a wide range of open space/civic space types to meet the open space requirement for a variety of context, ranging from natural areas to compact civic spaces; coordinate planning for trail systems with the street types/complete street policies and the open space system for subdivision regulations.
Distinctive communities and historical, cultural and natural assets increase the vibrancy of a region and contribute to its overall economic health.

### Concepts

#### Pedestrian Oriented Public Realm

A public realm designed for people establishes our most memorable and enduring community characteristics. The design of our rights-of-way and civic spaces, and the relationships of buildings to these spaces, shapes how we experience and perceive our communities.

#### Natural Resource Protection

Parks, open spaces and natural areas are defining features of our communities. Arranging our built environment in ways that emphasize valuable natural landscapes as a focal point of development enriches our communities and builds distinct, desirable places.

#### Tree Preservation

Maintaining our well established trees and planting the right tree in the right place builds long-term value in our communities. The urban forest does more than make our streets, parks and neighborhoods pretty; it provides valuable ecosystem services that reduce energy use, clean our air and water, and keep our communities vibrant, comfortable and healthy.
Independence: Opportunities and Applicability

The City has many unique attributes in reflected in its historic development patterns (downtown and surrounding neighborhoods). It also includes some interesting natural areas within and immediately surrounding the city. More recent growth and development patterns have been primarily automobile-oriented, and these areas do not clearly reinforce the concepts under the Unique Community Characteristics principle. However, with large future growth and development areas, the development regulations can implement many strategies associated with these concepts – both in the unique natural attributes that exist in future growth areas and/or through the investments in places that replace existing natural features.

CODE ANALYSIS:

Through a review of the Independence Zoning Ordinance, based on the sustainability principles and concepts identified, the following issues have been identified:

- The city-wide sidewalk provisions for residential districts are fairly generic; they may not be appropriate for all areas, and may insufficient in many contexts.
- The street standards (in the Thoroughfare Plan) and site access standards are very traffic-focused which will compromise pedestrian-oriented design; the P-district overlay creates pedestrian-oriented design but lacks a complimentary street and streetscape design to support it.
- The “outdoor display” limits could prohibit sidewalk related business activities that are vital to pedestrian-oriented places.
- The intent of the different development types (conventional, open space, and conservation) presents opportunities to implement unique places, but the standards lack substantial distinctions in development scale, form, intensity and design to carry out the intent.
- The natural resource and stream buffer standards identify natural features and systems as an organizing element for development. However, some weaknesses exist in procedures and lack of coordination with the subdivision standards and open space systems.
- The tree preservation sections provide a comprehensive approach to trees, but procedural weaknesses and lack of good design standards for landscape trees and street trees could limit the effect.
- The recommended tree list for landscape design includes many inappropriate species – particularly for shade trees.

POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS:

To address the sustainability issues identified the City of Independence should consider the following actions:

- Coordinate the P-street Overlay with public works standards specifically geared for walkable streets and public realm design.
- Revise the development standards within the different development types (conventional, open space, conservation) to clearly reflect distinct development patterns; consider a fourth type of “walkable, compact neighborhoods and centers.”
- Strengthen the criteria of natural resource preservation, coordinate criteria with different types of open spaces in the subdivision regulations.
- Create specific pedestrian-oriented street types for use in centers and transit corridors.
- Develop a wide range of open space/civic space types to meet the open space requirement for a variety of context, ranging from natural areas to compact civic spaces.
- Develop clear specifications for increased street trees (location, spacing and species).
- Update standards for “outdoor display” to clearly enable sidewalk oriented businesses and business-related activities – even if initially just in the P-Street Overlay and the Historic Square Overlay.
CONCEPTS

Green Infrastructure
Using natural systems to serve development and designing development to incorporate natural systems can reduce costs and increase environmental performance of our communities. Green infrastructure preserves valuable ecological functions of our landscapes and emphasizes distinct characteristics of our communities.

Energy Efficient Buildings and Sites
More efficient building and site designs can improve environmental performance, increase our health, and reduce the life cycle costs of property investments. Building orientation and siting, landscape and site design, material selection, operation and maintenance practices, and the adaptability of our buildings and sites to future reuse all impact how much resources and energy we consume.

Renewable Energy
Development patterns and policies of our cities impact both our sources of energy and our use of energy. Retooling our cities for renewable energy – from the regional scale to the site scale – helps reduce our energy demand, increase our energy supply and efficiency, and make our communities more resilient, affordable and healthy.
Independence: Opportunities and Applicability

The city has large future growth and development areas where green infrastructure may be a framework element to arrange development around. Green infrastructure and “green street” designs may also be incorporated into city capital projects based on stormwater master planning. The development regulations can also impact site-based green strategies to complement these larger-scale systems. The region as a whole is continuing to monitor the impact of the rapidly evolving green building practices.

CODE ANALYSIS:

Through a review of the Independence Zoning Ordinance, based on the sustainability principles and concepts identified, the following issues have been identified:

- The open space and conservation development types, and the natural resource and stream buffer design standards, present opportunities to integrate green infrastructure systems into development at a large scale. However, the standards do not emphasize benefits or incentives for this advanced level of planning.
- Many car-oriented site standards (access and parking) will expand the footprint of development and impervious surface.
- There is not a clear indication of policies or preferences for green infrastructure or low impact BMPs, or priorities for larger-scale solutions in lieu of site-by-site strategies for stormwater. (standards defer to public works manual: two things to guard against are not prioritizing more natural or “low impact” BMPs in appropriate context, and redundant site-based stormwater requirements compromising the ability to do compact, walkable development patterns in other contexts.)
- Provisions for small-scale, site-based renewable energy systems as an accessory use supports emerging practices for renewable energy.

POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS:

To address the sustainability issues identified the City of Independence should consider the following actions:

- Emphasize larger-scale natural stormwater system management in specific development contexts (conservation development, stream buffer sections, etc.)
- Better integrate the Public Works Manual with planning and development goals and standards in the UDO regarding stormwater management; (two things to guard against are not prioritizing more natural or “low impact” BMPs in appropriate context, and redundant site-based stormwater requirements compromising the ability to do compact, walkable development patterns in other contexts.)
- Emphasize flexibility with site level BMPs and prioritize strategies or give administrative waivers that eliminate unnecessary impervious surfaces. (rebalance competing goals of prioritizing car-oriented site design vs. green infrastructure.)
- Update the PUD district standards and discretionary site plan approval process to have more criteria tied explicitly to the CSP Principles and Sustainable Development Concepts.
The following action steps reflect “quick fixes” or updates that can be easily incorporated into the current development code structure and which may not need substantial planning or policy discussions.

- Incorporate outside references as guidance to street design using more multi-modal and urban design approaches (use National Association of City Transportation Officials Guidance.)
- Develop a specific street section(s) to support the P-Street Overlay District.
- Add a new residential district focused on small-scale, multi-unit buildings; use building type standards rather than density standards; base building type standards on local precedents so this district can be used to supplement the Residential Infill Development standards.
- Consider enabling accessory dwelling unities (either as a limited use or discretionary use.
- Update the PUD standards—create default standards and/or decision criteria based on the CSP principles and Comprehensive Plan policies.
- Adjust city-wide sidewalk standards to reflect different design standards for priority routes and walkable neighborhoods and centers. (consider width, location, relationship to traffic and speeds of traffic, and landscape/amenity).
- Update standards for “outdoor display” to clearly enable sidewalk oriented businesses and business-related activities with little or no procedural or administrative burdens – even if initially just in the P-Street Overlay and the Historic Square Overlay.
- Add flexibility to reduce on-site parking and loading requirements city-wide; borrow from concepts already used in some limited districts; emphasize site design standards that minimize the visual and stormwater impact of larger surface parking areas.
- Adjust the C-1 standards to prioritize smaller scale uses (2-3 K square feet max instead of 15K), but allow flexibility for limited “anchor uses” such as a small format grocery (35K s.f.)
- Develop clear specifications for increased street trees (location, spacing and species). See http://www.gouldevans.com/treelists/GreatTrees.pdf
- Improve site-specific application and standards for natural BMPs to address stormwater.

The following action steps are important to fully implement the Sustainable Places principles and concepts, but may require significant re-structuring of the development regulations and/or require more detailed planning and policy discussion prior to full implementations.

- Revise or replace the R-12, R-18 and R-30 district, or supplement with a new district, that allows more small-scale, multi-unit buildings dwellings to support walkable centers and for infill along corridors.
- Revise the “development type” standards to reflect clearly distinct development patterns (i.e. different densities, different public realm design patterns); and consider adding one for compact, mixed-density neighborhoods.
- Strengthen the criteria of natural resource preservation, coordinate criteria with different types of open spaces in the subdivision regulations, and consider integrating the MARC, Natural Resource Inventory data to improve criteria or initial data as a resource for developers.
**LONG TERM (cont.)**

- Revisit all of the terms and uses associated with housing geared towards aging population, and consider whether development standards are directing these project to locations and site designs that create the types of places seniors or aging populations want to live.

- Consider implementing more of a “building type” approach to development in the Historic Square Overlay, and make distinctions in the design or development standards by building type or by block within this district.

- Update the C-1 standards to require more pedestrian oriented sites and building formats; coordinate with P-street approaches.

- Update the thoroughfare plan and improve street design standards with a wide variety of street design types for different contexts using complete street and multi-modal network policies as a guide.

- Update the access standards and remove requirements that compromise pedestrian and bicycle interests in certain contexts.

- Revise or replace the R-12 through R-30 zoning with a new districts with standards for compact, small-scale, multi-unit building types;

- Develop a wide range of open space types, with different standards for different contexts ranging from larger and more natural open spaces, to smaller and more compact civic spaces; integrate these options into the requirements for open space in the subdivision regulations.

**LONG TERM (cont.)**

- Create additional design standards (building types, street types, civic space types) as default standards for the Historic Square Overlay and P-Street Overlay.

- Better integrate the Public Works Manual with planning and development goals and standards in the UDO regarding stormwater management with different strategies and scales of solutions necessary for different planning and development contexts.

Completed as part of the Creating Sustainable Places initiative for MARC: