

WELLS AVENUE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Location.....	1
Time Frame	1
Plan Background and Summary.....	1
Plan Development	1
Summary of Key Issues.....	1

Vision and Policy

Neighborhood Stability and Character.....	3
Mixed Use Corridors.....	4

Land Use and Zoning Conformity 5

Tables

Table 1 Master Plan/Zoning Conformity	6
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Maps

Map 1 Land Use Framework	8
Map 2 Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities	9

INTRODUCTION

Location

The Wells Avenue Neighborhood is roughly defined by Holcomb Avenue and South Virginia Street on the west, Kietzke Lane on the east, Plumb Lane on the south, and Ryland Street on the north. Precise boundaries are illustrated on the figure below.

Time Frame

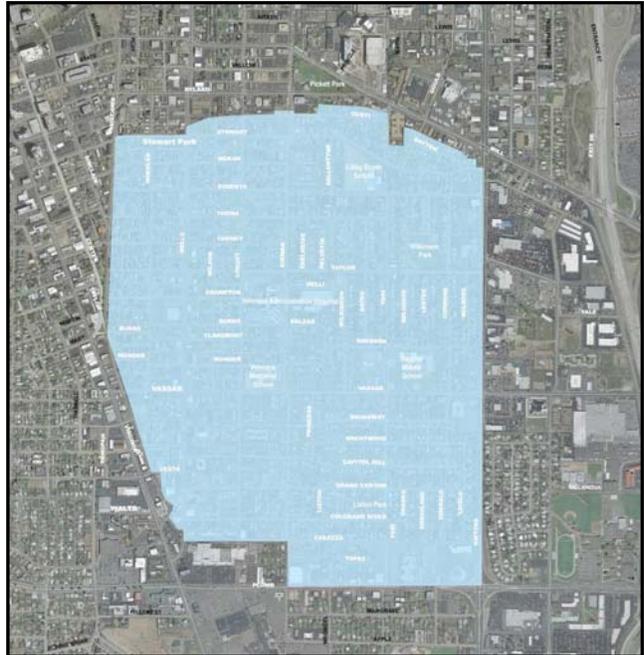
This plan forecast horizon is twenty years.

Plan Background and Summary

Plan Development

In 2006, the City of Reno provided funding to develop a neighborhood plan for the Wells Avenue Neighborhood. This Plan reflects the current vision and policies for the neighborhood.

Community interest and involvement in the Wells Avenue Neighborhood has been high in recent years. It has been particularly high for the South Wells Avenue Corridor, which was the subject of a community outreach and planning effort that was completed in early 2001. From these meetings a number of the streetscape improvements were recommended and have recently been implemented.



Summary of Key Issues

The following summary contains an overview of the key Land Use issues affecting the Wells Avenue Neighborhood as identified by residents and stakeholders in the planning process. These issues served as the foundation during plan development and helped shape the vision statements created in the process. Other issues not pertaining to Land Use were also identified and have been forwarded to the appropriate departments for review and inclusion into that department's action plan.

Issue #1: Neighborhood Character and Identity

- **Neighborhood in Transition:** The Wells Avenue Neighborhood is in a state of transition. Some areas within the neighborhood have experienced a period of gradual change (in some cases decline) over the past 30 or more years with the introduction of higher-density residential infill and a broader mix of non-residential uses, while much of the neighborhood's eastern half is well-maintained and appears relatively stable. Desired changes for the neighborhood need to be

identified and clearly reflected by this process and subsequently reconciled with City regulations to ensure the feasibility of their implementation.

- **Character and Compatibility of Residential Infill:** Much of the residential infill that has occurred within the neighborhood is not compatible with surrounding residences in terms of its style, scale, and intensity and is detracting from character of the neighborhood. Incompatible residential infill such as this, combined with the perception that many units are not compliant with City codes has left many residents with a poor perception of multifamily development.
- **Lack of Protection for Historic Structures:** West of Wells Avenue, many of the neighborhood's original historic homes remain and have been restored in recent years. Others have been converted to offices or small retail shops, creating mixed-use districts that retain the residential character of the neighborhood as found along Vassar Street. However, despite these positive attributes, incompatible residential infill detracts from the appearance of many blocks, particularly west of Wells Avenue.

Issue #2: Continued Stabilization and Enhancement of the Wells Avenue Corridor

The local business corridor along Wells Avenue is a central feature of the neighborhood, providing jobs, goods, and services to residents. The corridor was the focus of an intensive planning effort in 2000 aimed at improving the safety, appearance, and multi-modal character of the neighborhood's "main street." Extensive streetscape enhancements were recently implemented, resulting in a significant reduction in the width of Wells Avenue traffic lanes in order to accommodate additional on-street parking, intersection enhancements, benches, landscaping, and other pedestrian amenities, along with new pedestrian-scaled lighting, banners, and other unifying design elements. Although the appearance and function of the corridor have been dramatically improved, work remains to be done:

- **Business Number and Mix:** There is a need for critical mass and necessary mix of businesses to promote day and night activity.
- **Appearance and Design:** Appearance and renovation of commercial storefronts is needed to foster attractive environment for activity and investment—however, many residents expressed a desire to retain the diverse visual character of the corridor as well.

VISION AND POLICY

Neighborhood Stability and Character

The **Vision** is of a Wells Avenue Neighborhood where pride in the neighborhood's history and character is clear and evident by the area's well-maintained homes and yards and ongoing property-owner investment in the restoration and adaptive reuse of historic homes and structures. The diversity of the neighborhood is further enhanced through the integration of infill and redevelopment that is in keeping with the established character of the neighborhood.

Policy N-1: Establish Targeted Residential Design Standards and Guidelines to Ensure Compatible, Renovation, Infill, and Redevelopment



(Left) Traditional residential character found in many areas of the Wells Avenue Neighborhood. (Center/Right) Infill and redevelopment examples from an urban neighborhood in Denver, CO, demonstrating how new uses can be incorporated within a historic context, such as Wells Avenue.

Major renovations and infill development that is out of scale or character with the existing homes in a neighborhood can detract from the overall identity of the area. Wells Avenue Neighborhood residents value and wish to protect the historic flavor of their neighborhood. This can be accomplished, in part, through the creation and application of a set of design standards and guidelines, specific to the characteristics of the neighborhood that will help to ensure major renovation, infill, and redevelopment activities that create compatible structures that enhance, rather than detract, from the neighborhood.

Policy N-2: Establish Additional Protective Measures for Historic Resources as Appropriate



A modern and comprehensive historical survey should be prepared to form the basis of discussion regarding potential preservation efforts for the area. This should be completed in conjunction with the Historic Resource Commission. Upon completion of the historic inventory, the findings should be used to determine whether additional protective measures for particular structures or areas within the neighborhood are warranted. Protective measures may include nominating significant structures or groups of structures for the City, State, or National Registers of Historic Places, and application of the City's Historic Overlay District (HL), which is available to properties or structures that have been successfully listed. The appropriate measure, or a combination of measures, should be selected to best meet neighborhood objectives.

Mixed-Use Corridors

*The **Vision** is of the continued enhancement of the Wells Avenue neighborhood's mixed-use corridors as centers of neighborhood activity and as regional destinations. The Wells Avenue corridor's "eclectic" character is complemented by a set of flexible design guidelines and standards that guide infill and redevelopment and the renovation of existing structures. An increase in density along the corridor, including the incorporation of additional residential dwellings, supports local businesses and spurs an increasingly diverse selection of retail, grocery, and dining options over time. Outdoor gathering spaces are incorporated in visible locations to accommodate neighborhood events and enhance the area's sense of community. The continued adaptive reuse of historic homes along the Vassar and Holcomb corridors reinforce the area's blooming arts-based commercial district, drawing visitors to the neighborhood and complementing the Wells Avenue Mixed-Use District.*

Policy MUC-1: Maintain a Broad Mix of Neighborhood-Supportive Uses along the Corridor, Including Residential.

The Wells Avenue corridor is the heart of the neighborhood, providing restaurants and shops used by residents. Expansion of the number and variety of businesses along the corridor should continue to be supported by the Wells Avenue Merchants and Property Owners' Association and the Reno-Sparks and Hispanic Chambers of Commerce. Additional residential development along the commercial corridor should also be included within mixed-use developments as it will serve to increase overall day and night activity, increase resident base for local businesses, and create additional housing options within the neighborhood.

Policy MUC-2: Establish Design Guidelines and Standards for Mixed-Use and Commercial Development

To ensure that future infill and redevelopment activity along the Wells Avenue corridor is compatible with the corridor's unique character, a set of design guidelines and standards should be established. Standards and guidelines should address appropriate scale, massing, setbacks, building materials, landscaping, and signage, among other attributes. The use of a combination of advisory and regulatory language will be important in order to allow for creativity in design. This should be completed through the creation of an overlay zoning district for the area.

Policy MUC-3: Encourage Façade Improvements

The Wells Avenue Merchants and Property Owners Association should work with the City to seek participation in the Redevelopment Agency’s recently established Façade Improvement Program. The program offers low or no-interest loans or grants to local businesses to finance façade improvements for commercial buildings within a defined area.

Policy MUC-4: Foster a Pedestrian-Oriented Commercial Corridor

Recent investment along the Wells Avenue corridor has significantly improved the pedestrian environment. As new infill and redevelopment activity occurs, particular attention should be given to the design of buildings to ensure they promote a pedestrian-friendly atmosphere in their design and orientation. Improvement efforts along Wells Avenue should continue to add amenities such as benches, trash receptacles, sidewalk widening, and trees where possible to foster an attractive and comfortable streetscape for pedestrians.

Policy MUC-5: Protect the Established Character of the Vassar Street District

Many of the historic homes along Vassar Street west of Wells Avenue have been converted to commercial use and house a variety of independent, art-based businesses. The area has emerged as a unique and recognizable business district that blends well with adjacent neighborhoods. Tailored design standards and guidelines should be established to ensure the distinct scale and residential character of the district is maintained. In addition, the continuation of decorative lights used along the Wells Avenue corridor should be considered to further unify the district with the surrounding neighborhood.

LAND USE AND ZONING CONFORMITY

The Citywide Land Use Plan addresses land use categories at a broad level, allowing for the accommodation of a wide range of uses and residential densities within a particular category. For example, much of the residential development within the neighborhood is currently classified as Mixed Residential which allows for densities ranging from 3 to 21 dwelling units per acre. In order to establish physical parameters for the implementation of the goals and policies outlined in the sections above, it is necessary to establish a more clear distinction between residential densities within the neighborhood and to establish opportunities for mixed-use development in key locations. To establish these distinctions, this plan utilizes variations on the citywide land use designations.

Proposed land use designations for the Wells Avenue Neighborhood are illustrated on the accompanying Land Use Framework Map (Map 1). Table 1 provides a comparison between the Wells Avenue Neighborhood Plan Land Use Designations and conforming zoning districts.

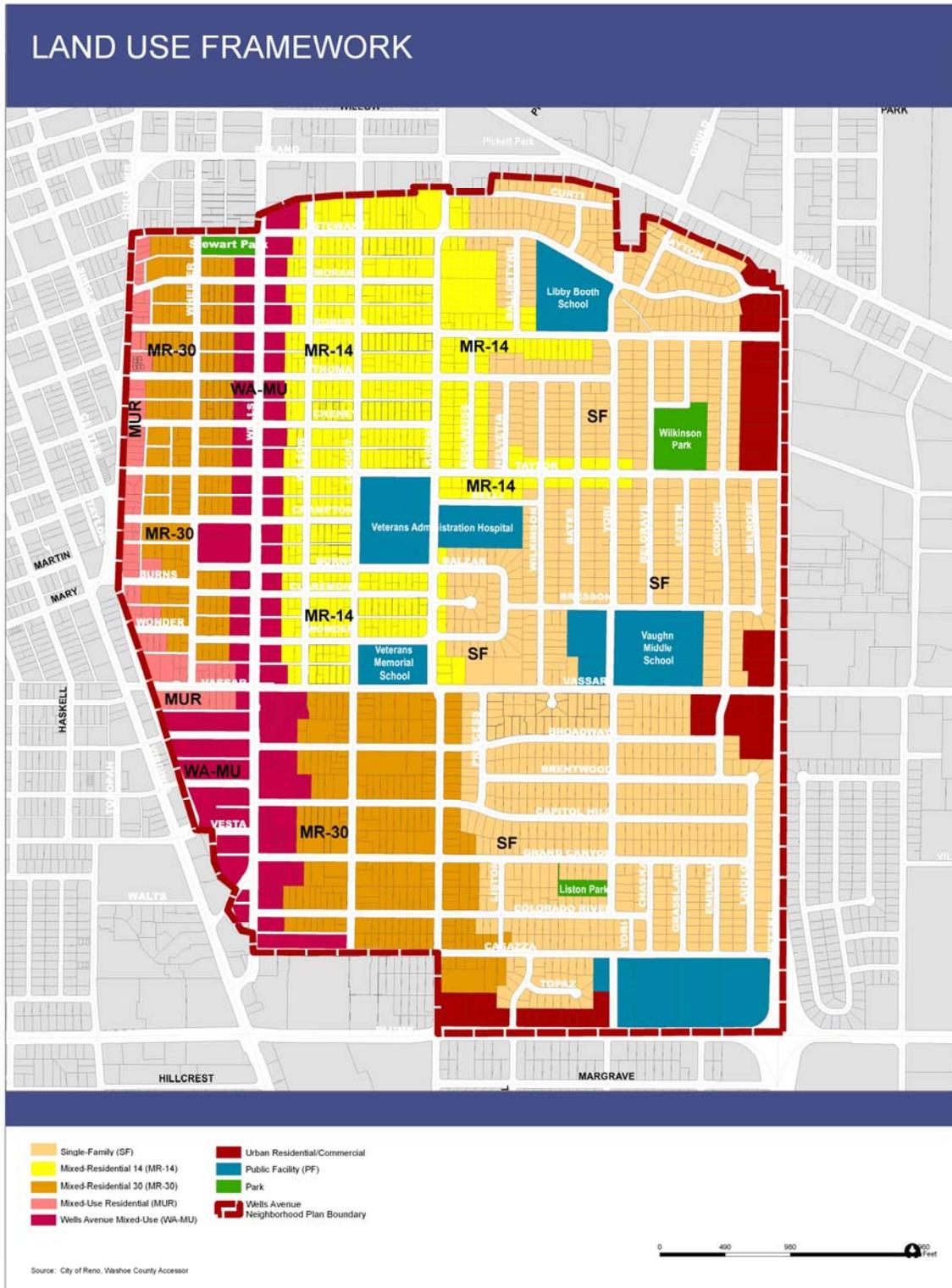
Table 1—Master Plan/Zoning Conformity

Proposed Wells Avenue Neighborhood Plan Designations	Conforming Zoning Districts—Wells Avenue Neighborhood Plan
Mixed-Residential 30 (MR-30)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Multifamily-14 dwelling units/acre (MF-14) ▪ Multifamily-21 dwelling units/acre (MF-21) ▪ Multifamily-30 dwelling units/acre (MF-30) ▪ Professional Office (PO) ▪ Public Facility (PF)
Mixed-Residential 14 (MR-14)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Multifamily-14 dwelling units/acre (MF-14) ▪ Single Family Residential 6,000 (SFR-6) ▪ Professional Office (PO) ▪ Public Facility (PF)
Single-Family (SF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Single Family Residential 6,000 (SFR-6) ▪ Public Facility (PF)
Wells Avenue Mixed-Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community Commercial (CC) ▪ Neighborhood Commercial (NC) ▪ Multifamily-30 dwelling units/acre (MF-30) ▪ Multifamily-21 dwelling units/acre (MF-21) ▪ Multifamily-14 dwelling units/acre (MF-14) ▪ Professional Office (PO) ▪ Public Facility (PF)
Mixed-Use Residential (Holcomb & Vassar)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community Commercial (CC) ▪ Neighborhood Commercial (NC) ▪ Multifamily-30 dwelling units/acre (MF-30) ▪ Multifamily-21 dwelling units/acre (MF-21) ▪ Multifamily-14 dwelling units/acre (MF-14) ▪ Professional Office (PO) ▪ Public Facility (PF)
Urban Residential/Commercial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Arterial Commercial (AC) ▪ Community Commercial (CC) ▪ Neighborhood Commercial (NC) ▪ Multifamily-30 dwelling units/acre (MF-30) ▪ Multifamily-21 dwelling units/acre (MF-21) ▪ Multifamily-14 dwelling units/acre (MF-14) ▪ Professional Office (PO)

Proposed Wells Avenue Neighborhood Plan Designations	Conforming Zoning Districts— Wells Avenue Neighborhood Plan
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ General Office (GO) ▪ Public Facility (PF)
Public Facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Public Facility (PF)

The Wells Avenue Neighborhood Plan Land Use Framework sets in place the desired character and density for the neighborhood. The designated land uses and conforming zoning districts above are considered correct and appropriate for the neighborhood. Any proposed zoning map amendment after the plans adoption should conform to the Land Use Framework Map (Map 1). The new densities in this plan will facilitate a more consistent growth pattern that respects the character of the neighborhood.

Map 1: Land Use Framework



Map 2: Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

