

mercial uses and development into residential areas are discussed in the following section.

### Policy Three: Facilitate Neighborhood Planning

One of the most controversial issues in land use allocation is development and redevelopment in established neighborhoods, also known as **infill development**. It can be particularly challenging when commercial uses are proposed in or near residential neighborhoods. Traditional land use planning has resulted in a landscape of homogeneous and segregated land uses. As Columbia strives to achieve a greater mixture of uses, it is important to recognize and respect unique neighborhood characteristics.

How can the City achieve successful integration of commercial uses into established neighborhoods? There are two strategies that help create a climate where residential neighborhood stakeholders become more accepting of infill redevelopment. The first strategy is early neighborhood engagement. The second is addressing land use compatibility issues.

Early neighborhood engagement means involving neighbors in the process well before specific development proposals are submitted, to **identify potential infill sites** in their neighborhoods and to discuss how these properties could and should be used. Early engagement provides an opportunity to evaluate options without the immediate threat of change. It allows neighbors to contribute ideas, **build consensus**, and prepare for the fact that a vacant lot or dilapidated building may be a sign of change to

come. Neighbors may also identify business types of benefit to residents and seek to match desired uses with ideal locations.

Creating **neighborhood land use plans** may be the best method of identifying what transitional parcels should be used for in the future. City staff should work with established neighborhood and homeowners' associations to develop neighborhood plans—especially in areas where older housing stock or poor building conditions may present opportunities for redevelopment. The goal is to create neighborhood land use plans that identify site-specific redevelopment concepts and outline conditions that mitigate particular land use compatibility concerns of neighbors. This represents a proactive approach to infill development and mixed use and was a strong recommendation that emerged from public input.

Public input also indicates considering **historic preservation** and community character, as well as property maintenance and aesthetic considerations, is important in neighborhood planning. This may be achieved through regulatory policy, incentives, or guidance, such as design compatibility standards developed by neighborhoods themselves.

Planning will also help neighborhoods encourage attainable and diverse housing and home ownership options while preserving their neighborhood's character. Residents can identify goals for their neighborhood—perhaps flexible zoning options or overlays to encourage or incentivize certain housing options or mixed-use

**Infill development** refers to the development or redevelopment of vacant or underutilized land in established areas. It is the opposite of sprawl.

#### *Principle: We value historical character.*

The vibrancy, historic integrity, and eclectic character and composition of the greater downtown will be preserved and enhanced. Neighborhoods and historic areas with a unique character will be protected by promoting **historic preservation** of significant structures rather than demolition. Sensitive redevelopment will be supported within historic neighborhoods.

#### *Principle: We value neighborhood planning.*

Columbia citizens will celebrate a sense of community through strong neighborhood planning. **Neighborhood land use plans** should be prepared to support positive development and redevelopment in both new and old neighborhoods. The personality and character of established neighborhoods should be preserved. School enrollment needs should be anticipated with new residential development, and schools should continue to be the focal point of new neighborhoods.

Many of the ideas expressed in this section closely align with **smart growth principles**:

1. Mix land uses
2. Take advantage of compact building design
3. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices
4. Create walkable neighborhoods
5. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
6. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas
7. Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities
8. Provide a variety of transportation choices
9. Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective
10. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions

Source: U.S. EPA, "What is Smart Growth?" 2010.

strategies (multigenerational housing, **accessory dwelling units**, urban agriculture, etc.), district or destination branding (such as seen in the East Campus Historic District or the North Village Arts District), or infrastructure upgrades. These plans can enhance the amenities and identity of neighborhoods. Neighborhood planning is as much about promoting desired changes as protecting existing neighborhood character from undesired changes. Successful neighborhood plans can serve as good examples for new policies, incentives, and regulations that could be considered for city-wide adoption.

Neighborhood plans can define how **affordable housing** can be integrated into the neighborhood and how to work with private, nonprofit organizations that develop, purchase, and manage affordable housing units. Neighborhood plans can help coordinate maintenance and **rehabilitation** of deteriorating housing stock, as well as retrofit older houses so they are more **energy efficient**. In the planning process, the neighborhood will get to build consensus about its collective values and what direction it would like to develop in the future.

