La Plaza Vieja is historically a single family neighborhood, however, many homes have been reconfigured over the years to accommodate more than one dwelling unit. There are several apartment buildings in the neighborhood that are non-conforming to the current zoning code. While preserving single family houses is appropriate in this neighborhood, duplexes are also permitted. When duplexes are constructed as building types that are complementary to the existing single family homes, they fit into the neighborhood’s smaller lot sizes and meet the heightened demand for rental housing. The site plans and photos below show different ways of combining 1-4 units on one parcel with designated onsite parking.

Duplex Options

Above is an existing front and back duplex in La Plaza Vieja which, from the street, looks like a house with an accessory dwelling unit in back but they share a wall. Stacked duplexes are two story and have one unit on each floor.

Single Family

Here are examples of typical single family houses in the La Plaza Vieja neighborhood. There is often a separate garage or dwelling unit in the back, which can be accessed differently on a corner or interior lot. New single family housing construction could be required to follow similar site planning.

RESIDENTIAL DESIGN & ARCHITECTURE

What would make new buildings fit in better with the neighborhood?

front porches? gates? pitched roofs? landscaping? orientation?

The Townsite Neighborhood developed their own architectural and design guidelines in 2007. They identified the following as integral to the “feel” of their neighborhood and created standards based on typical characteristics: front door and driveway orientation, architectural style, maximum building height, pitched roofs, and natural building materials.
- Transition Area -

POSSIBILITIES

The scale of development within the Transition Area could be compatible with existing commercial buildings and nearby homes. The 2-3 story commercial and mixed use buildings here are “neighborhood-scaled” to create a transition from Route 66 into the residential neighborhood.

Larger multi-family buildings and townhomes could help with additional housing needs in the neighborhood, while buffering commercial activities from single family residential areas. The Highway Commercial zone only allows residential as part of a mixed use project, so the High and Medium Density Residential zones are needed to achieve multi-family residential uses in the Transition Area.

MITIGATING TECHNIQUES

The zoning in the Transition area would allow for 60 foot commercial and mixed use building. However, the floodway and floodplain currently restrict or increase the cost of that intensity of development. If a property owner wanted to increase the intensity of uses on their property, they would also have to mitigate impacts from increased traffic. The interior transportation network does not have road connections to adjacent neighborhood and so the difficulties in providing access in and out of the neighborhood would need to be mitigated as traffic generated inside the neighborhood increased.

Example of recent townhome infill project in Southside

Larger multi-family buildings and townhomes could help with additional housing needs in the neighborhood, while buffering commercial activities from single family residential areas. The Highway Commercial zone only allows residential as part of a mixed use project, so the High and Medium Density Residential zones are needed to achieve multi-family residential uses in the Transition Area.

The townhomes above have elevated first floors with staircases that buffer the homes from the sidewalk. This housing type is a balance between a detached single family house and a multi-family building.

MITIGATING TECHNIQUES

These images show a potential repurposing of the building, playing off the fire house history but adding architectural features such as patios, telli, low walls and other features that make it relate better to human scale and the new uses. It also shows the possibility of a second floor that contains four residential units. This space could potentially be offices if parking could be secured.
Mitigation Techniques

Architectural techniques can be used to improve the appearance of large commercial and mixed use buildings. Large structures with long, unbroken facades and box-like forms have a negative impact on the pedestrian environment. Variation in roof forms and heights, and in planes of walls and facades improve the aesthetics of large buildings. A sense of entry and pedestrian scale can be enhanced by stoops, awnings, street trees, and landscaping. Authentic local building materials at street level can further improve the appeal of these buildings.

The illustration below shows how large sidewalks and minimal building setbacks create an urban neighborhood environment. Placing windows and entries along sidewalks better integrates these commercial buildings with the nearby neighborhoods.

The above commercial developments are typical of the Highway Commercial zone, and would likely occur along Route 66 or Milton Road. Ingress and egress from a major arterial like Route 66 requires more space than is found further into the neighborhood.