



## Introduction to Land Use and Design

The Land Use Element is a guide to land use planning in Lake Forest and provides a framework for the environmental and infrastructure issues examined in the other General Plan elements. The Land Use Element identifies how land will be used in the future—for housing, commercial, and business centers, public facilities, parks, open space, and transportation. The Land Use Plan is designed to:

- encourage economic development in strategic focus areas located adjacent to major roadways and transportation corridors,
- preserve and protect the City's existing residential neighborhoods,
- support expanded housing and employment opportunities,
- and promote a strong sense of place and identity in Lake Forest.

### *Organization of Element*

The Land Use Element goals and policies will address each of the following topics as they relate to Lake Forest:

- Land Use Mix
- Compatible Development
- Placemaking
- Streetscapes
- Focus Areas for Economic Growth

### **Contents:**

- + Land Use Mix
- + Compatible Development
- + Placemaking
- + Streetscapes
- + Focus Areas for Economic Growth

## GOAL LU-1 LAND USE MIX

A community with a balanced land use pattern that meets the City's long-term housing, employment, and civic needs.

### Policies

- LU-1.1 **Land Use Pattern.** Promote an appropriate land use plan that fosters and enhances community livability and public health; supports economic development; promotes efficient development and multimodal choices; reduces pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and the expenditure of energy and other resources; and ensures compatibility between uses.
- LU-1.2 **Exceptional Projects.** Consider development intensity up to the maximum identified in the Land Use Element for development projects that provide exceptional design quality, important public amenities or benefits, or other factors that promote the goals and policies of the General Plan.
- LU-1.3 **Future Development.** Accommodate future economic growth and development in strategic locations throughout the community near major roadways and transportation facilities.
- LU-1.4 **Density and Intensity.** Allow sufficient density and intensity to enable new development to support all required infrastructure, community facilities, and open space.
- LU-1.5 **Housing Choices.** Expand the range of housing types and density ranges to meet the diverse demographic, economic, and social needs of the community.
- LU-1.6 **Mixed-Use Activity Centers.** Ensure that new mixed-use activity centers are well-integrated with existing surrounding development.
- LU-1.7 **Fiscal Sustainability.** Maintain a fiscally sustainable land use plan with balanced residential and nonresidential developments.
- LU-1.8 **Consistent Standards.** Require projects to adhere to the City's Municipal Code.

## GOAL LU-2 COMPATIBLE DEVELOPMENT

A community where new development blends harmoniously into the existing neighborhood fabric.

### Policies

- LU-2.1 **Physical Characteristic Compatibility.** Ensure that new development fits within the existing community setting and is compatible with surrounding land uses and public infrastructure availability.
- LU-2.2 **Sensitive Uses.** Locate residences away from areas of excessive noise, smoke, or dust and ensure that adequate mitigation measures, including buffers or transitional uses, are made to ensure the health and well-being of existing and future residents.
- LU-2.3 **Existing Residential Neighborhoods.** Preserve, protect, and enhance the City's existing residential neighborhoods.
- LU-2.4 **Scale and Character.** Ensure that the scale and character of new development is appropriate to the setting and intended use.
- LU-2.5 **Visual Compatibility.** Require new development projects to blend into the existing area through building, site, or design techniques, such as landscaping and architectural design, to achieve visual compatibility.
- LU-2.6 **Commercial Development.** Ensure that commercial uses are built and operated in such a way as to complement, but not conflict with, adjacent sensitive uses.
- LU-2.7 **Interface with Residential Areas.** Promote compatibility of adjacent land uses along the interface of different residential density and non-residential intensity categories by paying special attention to buffering and transitional methods.
- LU-2.8 **Public Agency Impacts.** Encourage affected public agencies to provide necessary facilities and services to support the impact and intensity of development in Lake Forest.
- LU-2.9 **Code Enforcement.** Require property owners to maintain homes, structures, and property at high standards; implement a code enforcement program to address nuisances that detract from the City's health, safety, and community image.
- LU-2.10 **Heliports.** Ensure that development proposals including the construction or operation of a heliport or helistop comply fully with permit procedures under State law, including referral of the project to the Orange County Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC) by the applicant, and with all conditions of approval imposed or recommended by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), ALUC, and Caltrans, including the filing of a Form 7480-1 (Notice of Landing Area Proposal) with the FAA. This requirement shall be in addition to all other City development requirements.

## GOAL LU-3 PLACEMAKING

A distinct community image and identity that promotes Lake Forest as a desirable place to live and do business.

### Policies

- LU-3.1 **Branding.** Enhance the city's identity through the use of distinct city graphics in the design of gateways, street signs, city signage, public facilities and public gathering spaces, and other areas where appropriate.
- LU-3.2 **Sense of Arrival.** Highlight major arrival and departure points along the community's edge by encouraging distinctive building design elements, streetscapes, decorative signage, landscaping, and/or other enhancements at strategic gateway locations.
- LU-3.3 **Physical Attributes.** Maintain the physical attributes of Lake Forest, such as its streetscapes, parks, trails, and scenic vistas, to preserve an identifiable and distinct community within Orange County.
- LU-3.4 **High-Quality Design.** Promote high-quality design for all public and private development projects, including building form, site design, landscaping, lighting, signage, and other components which impact the visual quality of a project.
- LU-3.5 **Nonresidential Area Revitalization.** Promote rehabilitation of older commercial and industrial properties and buildings to enhance their quality and competitive advantage.
- LU-3.6 **Architectural Styles.** Promote architectural styles that emphasize the established community identity while allowing for the introduction of other appealing architectural design strategies that are compatible with their surroundings.
- LU-3.7 **Public Gathering Spaces.** Encourage the provision of both formal and informal public gathering spaces through pedestrian-oriented street design; sidewalk furniture and pedestrian-oriented development; well-designed, multi-use public spaces of different sizes including pocket parks, plazas, and monuments; and community events.
- LU-3.8 **Public Art.** Consider including public art at key gateways, major projects, and public gathering places.
- LU-3.9 **Public Landscaping.** Ensure that all public landscaping in public right-of-ways is attractive, adequately maintained, and utilizes California native, drought-tolerant, and/or other sustainable plant material.

## GOAL LU-4      STREETSAPES

A community with streetscapes that enhance the economic vitality and overall visual quality of the City, support the circulation network, and encourage pedestrian-scale streets and patterns of activity.

### Policies

- LU-4.1    **Major Corridors.** Enhance the streetscape along the City’s major corridors through coordinated public and private improvements to convey a positive image of the City, contribute to its economic vitality, and improve visual and physical transitions into adjacent neighborhoods and developments.
- LU-4.2    **Walkability.** Enhance walkability on a citywide scale by improving or adding sidewalks, landscaping, benches, wayfinding signage, and pedestrian-scaled lighting, where appropriate and feasible.
- LU-4.3    **Visually Appealing Environment.** Promote streetscape improvements that provide for an environment that offers a visually appealing experience for motorists, pedestrians, and transit riders.
- LU-4.4    **Building Massing.** Reduce the bulk and perceived size of large buildings by dividing their mass into smaller parts, stepping down to adjacent structures, recessing openings for doors/windows, and using pedestrian-scale features; single-plane massing is discouraged.
- LU-4.5    **Building Footprint.** Require and enforce appropriate residential and nonresidential development standards, including adequate building setbacks, to ensure that a building’s footprint does not negatively affect adjacent uses or the visual quality of the area.
- LU-4.6    **Connectivity.** Provide convenient pedestrian and transit access throughout commercial and mixed-use corridors, including an interconnected network of high-amenity streetscapes and multiple walkways that connect activities and uses.
- LU-4.7    **Street Trees.** Recognize the importance of planting and maintaining trees consistent with the image of Lake Forest. Provide for the consistent use of street trees to identify city streets, residential neighborhoods, commercial and employment districts, and gateways.
- LU-4.8    **Medians.** Encourage medians where feasible pursuant to the mobility element with water-conserving, California-native landscaping where the right-of-way exists; where it does not exist, condition the improvement or development of projects on providing appropriate right-of-way for medians or other offsets.

## GOAL LU-5 FOCUS AREAS FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

A community featuring mixed-use activity centers located along the City's major roadways and transportation facilities which allow for the co-location and harmonious development of housing, shopping, jobs, and public uses.

### Policies

- LU-5.1 **Focus Areas.** Promote El Toro Road, Lake Forest Drive, Civic Center, Foothill Ranch Towne Center, and the Light Industrial/Rail Corridor as focus areas for economic growth.
- LU-5.2 **Differentiation of Focus Areas.** Establish and maintain distinct identities for Lake Forest's focus areas by customizing uses, scale, form of development, and amenities.
- LU-5.3 **Focus Area Revitalization.** Encourage revitalization of the focus areas by evaluating and pursuing, when possible, programs, policies, and financing mechanisms to spur local investment and foot traffic.
- LU-5.4 **Development Scale.** Establish development standards to ensure that a sufficient scale and footprint of any single use is achieved in mixed-use areas to establish a cohesive environment that minimizes impacts attributable to the adjacency of differing uses.
- LU-5.5 **Housing Element Consistency.** In the City's focus areas, allow for residential development at or above densities of 32 dwelling units per acre to meet the objectives of the Housing Element.
- LU-5.6 **Variety of Uses.** Allow for a variety of uses and activities in the City's Focus Areas to encourage an economically strong, lively, and social environment.
- LU-5.7 **Design Integration.** Require that residential and nonresidential portions of mixed-use buildings and sites be integrated through site and building design to ensure compatibility among uses.
- LU-5.8 **On-Site Amenities.** Require that residential/commercial mixed-use projects provide on-site gathering spaces (plazas, courtyards, etc.) and other pedestrian-scale amenities, such as benches, fountains, and landscaping, that contribute to the living environment of residents.