

What Is Future Land Use?

Adopted on the future land use map in a local jurisdiction's comprehensive plan, future land use categories designate the general location, distribution, and extent of land uses within a community. The purpose of the future land use categories is to guide the growth and development of a community by planning the location and character of mixed-use centers, neighborhoods, commercial areas, office and professional areas, industrial areas, public services, infrastructure, and environmental assets. By planning how land is used, future land use policies ensure compatibility between adjacent land uses, provide for anticipated growth, ensure the availability of public facilities, services, and resources, and protect vital environmental resources and community assets.

What Is Zoning?

Adopted on the zoning map with a local jurisdiction's land development regulations, zoning designations define the specific development standards for each land use designation. Zoning designations are specific and detailed. Zoning standards establish regulatory requirements pertaining to unit types and numbers, building square footage, lot size, architectural design, buffering, screening, and/or landscaping, transportation systems, utilities, recreation facilities, signage, lighting, length or type of occupancy, and construction materials and phasing.

By creating these site-specific, detailed regulatory requirements, zoning standards do not just give a general description of how a community is to be developed, but specify how each piece of land is to be developed consistent with the community's overarching future land use policies.

The Connection between Future Land Use and Zoning

Future land use policies and zoning regulations work in tandem to create a full picture of how land will be used. Future land use categories help guide the growth and development of a community while zoning designations define the specific standards for how land is to be developed.

Communities are not static entities and change with time. This also means the needs of the community might change in a way that warrants a change. Future land use categories may be changed through amendments to the adopted comprehensive plan and zoning designations may be changed through changes to the zoning map. The process to amend the comprehensive plan and change the zoning map is completed through a public process that considers the effects of the proposed change on the surrounding land uses, availability of public services, and community goals. Zoning changes also consider the compatibility of the change with the adopted future land use category. If a zoning map change would create an inconsistency, a change to the future land use map must be done as well.

Land Use Toolbox



Comprehensive Plan describes the future vision of the community and how to achieve that vision.

Zoning Ordinance regulates land use, density, and dimensions of lots and structures.

Land / Subdivision Ordinance regulates the division of land, street and lot layout, and improvements.