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LAND USE ELEMENT

E I C E N T R O G E N E R A L P L A N

INTRODUCTION

The Land Use Element is a guide to land use planning within the City of El Centro and directly relates to many issues addressed in other General Plan elements. The Land Use Element identifies the type and location of future land uses within the City. The specific land uses and their location within the community in turn affect the remaining General Plan elements. For example, the location and type of land uses outlined in the Land Use Element affect the circulation system that is identified in the Circulation Element, and the open space facilities identified in the Land Use Element affect the Conservation/Open Space Element policies. The land uses identified in the Land Use Element also reflect the community's goals for its future form and character.

Purpose of the Land Use Element

As a city, State law requires that El Centro prepare and adopt a General Plan as a tool to manage growth and development. The Land Use Element is a mandatory element or chapter of the General Plan.

The purpose of the Land Use Element is to describe present and planned land use activity which has been designed to achieve the community's long-range goals for the future. The Land Use Element identifies the proposed general distribution, location, and extent of land uses such as open space and recreation, residential, commercial, industrial, and public/institutional. The Element consists of text, maps, and diagrams that outline the future land uses within the City and how these uses are integrated with the other General Plan elements and policies. The Land Use Policy Map is a particularly important feature of the Element since it shows the location and types of development within the City. The Element also describes the intensity or density of development planned for the community.

The Land Use Element also addresses the relationship between development and environmental quality, potential hazards, and social and economic objectives.

The Land Use Element of the El Centro General Plan represents the City's desire for long-range changes and enhancements of land uses. The current Element and its policies form a continuation with policies and goals to create a future in which the traditional character of the City is preserved and enhanced by new development. Finally, the goals and policies contained in this Element establish the constitutional framework for future land use planning and decision making in El Centro.

Scope and Content of the Land Use Element

The Land Use Element complies with the requirements of the General Plan Land Use Element mandated in Government Code Section 65302 (a). The Element is comprised of three sections: (1) Introduction, (2) Issues, Goals, and Policies, and (3) the Land Use Plan. In the Issues, Goals, and Policies section, major land use issues are identified and related goals and policies are established to address these issues. The goals, which are overall statements of the community's desires, are comprised of broad statements of purpose and direction. The policies serve as guides for reviewing development proposals, planning facilities to accommodate anticipated growth, and accomplishing community development strategies. To achieve the goals and policies, a logical, organized land use pattern is established in the Plan with standards for future community development. The Plan contains the Land Use Policy Map that graphically identifies the planned land uses within El Centro. The land use designations are described, including the type and density of allowed uses and a statistical summary of the future land use composition is provided. Neighborhood areas which may involve more focused planning efforts are also identified. Specific implementation programs for the Element are located in the General Plan Implementation Program (Appendix A).

Related Plans and Programs

There are a number of related plans and programs that are considered in the formulation, adoption and implementation of local land use policy. Related plans and programs are both local and regional in nature. Regional planning agencies, such as the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) and the Imperial Valley Association of Governments (IVAG) recognize that planning issues extend beyond the boundaries of individual cities. Efforts to

address regional planning issues such as air quality, transportation, affordable housing and habitat conservation have resulted in the adoption of regional plans. The form and distribution of development in El Centro are affected by regional plans. Relevant local and regional plans related to the Land Use Element are discussed briefly in the following sections.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Guidelines

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) was adopted by the State legislature in response to a public mandate for thorough environmental analysis of projects that might affect the environment. The provisions of the law and environmental review procedure are described in the CEQA Statutes and the CEQA Guidelines. Implementation of CEQA ensures that during the decision making stage of development, City officials and the general public will be able to assess the environmental impacts associated with private and public development projects to the environment.

City of El Centro Zoning Ordinance

El Centro adopted its first Zoning Ordinance in 1962 and adopted the current Zoning Ordinance in 1989. The ordinance has since been updated to incorporate changes within the community and to the General Plan. The Zoning Ordinance is the primary implementation tool for the Land Use Element. Together, the Zoning Ordinance and associated Zoning Map identify specific types of land use, intensity of use, and development and performance standards applicable to specific areas and parcels of land within the City. The Zoning Ordinance is required by law to be consistent with the General Plan and is one of the major implementation tools for the General Plan.

SCAG Regional Plan

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) is responsible for much of the regional planning in this area of Southern California. SCAG has been preparing long range growth and development plans for the Southern California region since the early 1970s as part of the ongoing Development Guide Program. This program provides a framework for coordinating local and regional decisions regarding future growth and development. An important component of this process is the preparation of growth forecast policies at intervals ranging from three to five years.

The adopted growth forecast policies become the basis for SCAG's functional plans (transportation, housing, air and water) for the region. The population totals and growth distribution are used in planning the future

capacity of highways and transit systems, quantity and location of housing, water supply, and siting and sizing of sewage treatment systems.

SCAG Growth Management Plan

The SCAG Growth Management Plan recommends methods to direct regional growth to minimize traffic congestion and better protect environmental quality. The goals of the Growth Management Plan include balancing jobs and housing. While SCAG has no authority to mandate implementation of its Growth Management Plan, principal goals have implications for the land use composition of El Centro.

Redevelopment Implementation Plan

El Centro has adopted a Redevelopment Project Area that encompasses a majority of the City to the south of Interstate 8, along Imperial Avenue north of State Street, the downtown area, and the non-residential area to the east of the railroad tracks. With the adoption of Assembly Bill 1290, which came into law in 1994, the El Centro Redevelopment Agency prepared a five year implementation plan for the Redevelopment Project Area. The Redevelopment Implementation Plan is one of the tools that the City uses to implement policies included in the Land Use Element.

El Centro Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan

In 2008, the City adopted a Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan to further develop the projects, programs and investments necessary to implement General Plan goals. The Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan focuses primarily on park and recreation facilities and joint use with the schools. The Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan recommended increasing the park acreage per 1,000 people in El Centro and provides specific recommendations around the Civic Center and other Cultural Facilities.

Relationship to Other General Plan Elements

In accordance with State planning law, the Land Use Element must be consistent with the other General Plan Elements. While each element is independent, all the elements together comprise the General Plan. All elements of the General Plan are interrelated to a degree, and certain goals and policies of each element may also address issues that are the primary subjects of other elements. The integration of overlapping issues throughout

the General Plan elements provides a strong basis for implementation of plans and programs, and achievement of community goals.

All elements of the General Plan relate closely with the Land Use Element. This Element establishes the planned land use pattern for El Centro based on the historic formation of the City and the community's vision for the future. Alternatively, the other General Plan elements ensure that infrastructure and public facilities are available to accommodate planned land uses, and that the unique qualities of El Centro are safeguarded and enhanced.

For example, the Housing Element of the General Plan provides the basis for establishing housing stock that meets the affordability requirements and other special needs of the community. The Circulation Element provides a Circulation Plan to accommodate increased traffic from planned development. The use of alternative transportation modes and reduction of automobile trips are addressed in the Circulation Element to meet the transportation demands from new development and to mitigate the impact of development on regional air quality and traffic conditions. The Economic Development Element establishes a plan that includes a balance of land uses facilitating economic and fiscal growth.

The Safety and Noise Elements ensure that planned land uses identified in the Land Use Element are compatible and will not result in public safety hazards or exposure of people to excessive noise.

A number of the areas are designated for parks and open space on the Land Use Policy Map for recreational and aesthetic purposes. The Public Facilities and Conservation/Open Space Elements provide for policy and plans that maintain and enhance existing parks and recreational facilities and to develop new facilities to meet new demand from population growth. The Conservation/Open Space policies are also designed to protect natural resources.

Additionally, the Public Facilities Element addresses the availability of utilities and services for planned development including law enforcement, fire protection, public schools, community and cultural centers, libraries, water, and sewer. This Element assures that adequate utilities and services are available for planned development identified in the Land Use Element.



ISSUES, GOALS, AND POLICIES

Balance of Land Uses

El Centro contains a fairly balanced mixture of land uses. While the City requires revenue generated by commercial and industrial uses to support the needs of the existing community, these non-residential land uses must be compatible with the existing community. Land uses such as open space areas can be used to buffer residential areas from non-residential uses. Land use designations can also limit the types of industrial and commercial activities to those which are most compatible with residential areas.

Land Use Goal 1: Provide planning and strategies for physical land use to create a healthy and aesthetically pleasing environment that balances the social and economic needs of the community.

General

Policy 1.1: Ensure that new development is consistent and compatible with the existing character of the community and meets City development standards.

Policy 1.2: Prevent the intrusion of incompatible land uses into existing developments, such as incompatible non-residential development in residential areas.

Residential

Policy 1.3: Ensure that new residential development is compatible with surrounding existing residential development.

Commercial

Policy 1.4: Achieve a balance of commercial uses that provides for the retail, business, professional and other service needs of City residents and which will attract customers from the greater Imperial Valley and other areas.

Policy 1.5: Balance new commercial development elsewhere in the City with the need to maintain a financially viable downtown.

Policy 1.6: Allow for commercial uses on the first floor and residential uses on the second floor in the downtown district on a project-by-project basis if the project will:

- Be compatible with the surrounding area;
- Provide appropriately designed entrances for the commercial and residential uses; and
- Comply with other requirements set forth by the City's conditional use permit.

Policy 1.7: Encourage the development of neighborhood convenience shopping centers to serve the needs of adjacent residential neighborhoods.

Policy 1.8: Improve the relationship between commercial areas and adjacent non-commercial uses through the use of landscape buffers and masonry walls for separation.

Industrial

Policy 1.9: Prevent the intrusion of all incompatible uses that would negatively affect industrial areas and opportunities for industrial growth.

Policy 1.10: Use lower intensity industrial uses as a transition between heavier industrial use and non-industrial use.

Policy 1.11: Require new industrial development to provide adequate circulation and access that does not negatively impact adjacent residential areas. Where needed, industries should have access to railroad lines.

Community Facilities

Policy 1.12: Ensure that facilities and services of public agencies are coordinated with City growth in their timing, location, and levels of service.

Policy 1.13: Develop and expand public facilities in a manner that is compatible with existing and planned development.

Policy 1.14: Continue to use the Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan as a guide for improvement of existing facilities and for the development of new facilities.

Policy 1.15: Require new development adjacent to open drains and canals to underground these facilities to ensure the public safety. The undergrounding of facilities shall be done in concordance and coordination with the Imperial Irrigation District.

Direct and Control Growth

El Centro, as well as the surrounding region, has experienced considerable growth over the past 25 years. New development brings change, and a changing community character. While recognizing that change is inevitable, the community is still able to plan and guide future development so that it complements the existing community, and enhances the existing character and found in El Centro.

Land Use Goal 2: Control and direct growth so that new development is compatible with existing development and occurs in appropriate locations when adequate public services and facilities are available.

Policy 2.1: Continue to direct and control growth in the City and sphere of influence through the application of the City’s Urban Development Program.

Policy 2.2: Ensure that development corresponds with the provision of public facilities and services.

Policy 2.3: Coordinate with the County and LAFCO during review and development of projects within the City’s sphere of influence to ensure that compatible development occurs and adequate public facilities are provided.

Policy 2.4: Ensure that future development in areas impacted by aircraft operation is consistent with the airport land use plan to allow for the continued operation of local airports.

Policy 2.5: Encourage infill development to occur within the urbanized community before expanding new development onto agricultural lands surrounding El Centro.

Community Design

In an effort to enhance the City’s beauty and assure the quality and appearance of future development, adherence to urban design principles is

necessary. El Centro's buildings and structures are primarily in good physical condition; however, a number of residential and commercial structures are in need of rehabilitation or replacement.

Land Use Goal 3: Improve the visual appearance of the community by targeting areas in need for rehabilitation and beautification.

Policy 3.1: Develop and implement a city-wide enhancement plan that identifies target areas for beautification, enhancement, maintenance, and redevelopment.

Policy 3.2: Encourage the improvement and maintenance of older residential areas in order to prevent decay, blight, and decline in property values.

Policy 3.3: Promote and encourage an overall improvement in visual appearance for all commercial and industrial areas.

Related Goals and Policies

The goals and policies found in the Land Use Element are related to and support subjects included in other General Plan elements. Likewise, many goals and policies from other elements are supportive of the subjects included in the Land Use Element. These supporting goals and policies are identified in Table LU-1.

Table LU-1
Related Goals and Policies by Element

General Plan Elements	Land Use Issue Area		
	Balance of Land Uses	Direct and Control Growth	Community Design
Land Use			
Economic Development	1.5, 1.8, 2.1, 2.2	1.4, 1.6, 1.8, 2.1, 2.2	1.7
Housing			
Circulation	1.1, 1.8, 4.2	1.2, 4.2	1.7, 1.8, 1.9
Public Facilities	1.1, 1.3, 2.1, 5.2, 9.1, 10.1	1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 4.1, 9.1, 9.2, 10.1	
Conservation/Open Space	1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 3.1, 3.4, 6.3	1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 3.4, 7.2	
Safety	1.2, 1.3	1.2, 1.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 3.3,	1.1, 1.4
Noise	1.1, 2.1, 3.1	1.1, 3.1	1.3, 2.3, 3.2



LAND USE PLAN

Introduction

With a strong agricultural base, the Land Use Plan has been designed to protect agricultural lands by concentrating growth within the current sphere of influence, as well as ensuring a healthy economy and good quality of life within El Centro to support the agricultural industry. The Land Use Plan has been designed to locate compatible land uses adjacent to each other, such as lower density residential uses next to existing lower density neighborhoods and using industrial and commercial uses to buffer residential area from potentially hazardous or noisy uses, such as the railroad and steam plant.

The following Land Use Plan focuses on the location of various land uses, as well as growth management techniques, and community design. The other elements within the General Plan expand on how the Land Use Plan will be implemented to create a compact and livable community.

Balance of Land Uses

The variety of land uses within El Centro affects the important balance between the generation of public revenues and the provision of public services and facilities. Achieving and maintaining a balance of land uses can ensure fiscal stability and also create a desirable community in which people can work, shop, reside, and recreate.

Implementation of the Land Use Plan will also assist in creating a balance between jobs and housing units within the City. A balance between jobs and housing allows people to live and work within the same community, and often within the same neighborhood. This results in a reduction of traffic, thereby reducing the level of air pollution and improving the quality of life for the community.

The City will provide planning and strategies for physical land use to create a healthy and aesthetically pleasing environment that balances the social and economic needs of the community. The resulting urban development will provide necessary support for the regional agricultural economy by providing housing and agricultural related industrial services, as well as other necessary uses. Ensuring that affordable housing is available for those lower income households working within the agricultural, retail, and service industries of El Centro is important, especially as local workers increasingly compete with higher paid workers.

Land Use Classification System

The Land Use Policy Map (Figure LU-1) illustrates the various types and distribution of land uses planned for El Centro. The proposed land use classification system has 11 General Plan land use designations. There are also two overlay zones. These land use designations serve to provide a rational and ordered approach to land use development and maintenance of public uses and open space by identifying the types and nature of development allowed in particular locations throughout the Planning Area. The General Plan land use designations are grouped according to the following uses: Residential, Commercial, Industrial, and Community Facilities. The land use categories also provide guidance for identifying and analyzing alternatives for the future land uses within the Planning Area.

Table LU-2 provides a description of the 11 General Plan land use designations and five subdesignations within the Planning Area and a corresponding indication of maximum density or intensity of development. The maximum allowable development on individual parcels is governed by these measures of density or intensity, which are intended as policy-level guidance for future development within the City. These and other General Plan land use policies are implemented through the City's Zoning Ordinance. The City will revise its Zoning Code to ensure consistency with the land uses described in this Element.

The Residential categories include four designations that allow for a range of housing types and densities, including Rural Residential, Low Density Residential, Medium Density Residential, and High-Medium Residential. These designations provide a range of densities to ensure compatibility with existing residential development; provide a range of housing types and prices; and allow for appropriate densities around areas that are not appropriate for higher population densities, such as the area around the sewer plant.

The non-residential land use categories include a variety of designations such as Commercial, Industrial, and Community Facilities. The General Commercial designation includes three subcategories: Neighborhood Commercial, Office Commercial, and Heavy Commercial, which are defined geographically on the Zoning Map. The General Industrial category includes two subcategories: Light Manufacturing and General Manufacturing, both of which are also geographically defined on the Zoning Map. The Downtown Commercial applied in the downtown area. This designation is included to ensure that the land uses occurring in the downtown area are appropriate to support the continued commercial viability of the area. The Community Facilities designations include Civic and Public, which allow for the provision of important public facilities.

Figure LU-1
Land Use Policy Map

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Table LU-2
Land Use Classification System

Land Use	Maximum DUs/Net Acre or Maximum FAR/Net Acre	Average DUs/Net Acre or Average FAR/Net Acre ¹	Summary Description of Land Use Designation
Residential Land Use Designations			
Rural Residential	2 DU	1 DU	Single-family detached dwelling units, small agricultural operations and rural-oriented residences.
Low Density	6 DU	4.5 DU	Single-family detached dwelling units and accessory buildings.
Medium Density	12 DU	8.5 DU	Single-family detached or attached dwelling units, mobile home parks, duplexes, or multiple-family dwelling units.
High-Medium Density	25 DU	16 DU	Variety of multi-family dwelling units such as apartments and condominiums.
Commercial Land Use Designations			
General Commercial			
▪ <i>Neighborhood Commercial</i>	0.25:1	0.20:1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retail and service-oriented uses serving the needs of local neighborhood • Professional and administrative offices, medical care centers and ancillary services • General commercial uses, business and consumer services, and light manufacturing
▪ <i>Office Commercial</i>	0.40:1	0.30:1	
▪ <i>Heavy Commercial</i>	0.50:1	0.3:1	
Tourist Commercial	1.0:1	0.4:1	Motels, resort hotels, related commercial and tourist oriented uses, limited retail and freeway-oriented businesses. Multiple-family residential may also be permitted.
Downtown Commercial	1.5:1	0.8:1	Commercial, entertainment, residential, and office uses that promote the continued viability of the downtown area.
Industrial Land Use Designations			
General Industrial			
• <i>Light Manufacturing</i>	0.40:1	0.30:1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fabrication, manufacturing, assembly or processing of materials in refined form. • Development of manufacturing process, fabrication, and assembly
• <i>General Manufacturing</i>	0.45:1	0.35:1	

**Table LU-2
Land Use Classification System**

Land Use	Maximum DUs/Net Acre or Maximum FAR/Net Acre	Average DUs/Net Acre or Average FAR/Net Acre ¹	Summary Description of Land Use Designation
			of goods.
Planned Industrial	0.45:1	0.35:1	Range of industrial, manufacturing, select business and related establishments of park-like setting.
Community Facilities Land Use Designations			
Civic	1.5:1	0.70:1	Local governmental offices, state and federal facilities, privately owned property including professional offices, financial institutions and restaurants located within the City's civic center area.
Public	0.40:1	0.25:1	Parcels owned by the City of El Centro, Imperial Irrigation District, school districts, or El Centro Regional Medical Center containing police and fire departments, libraries, sewer facilities, flood control basins, parks and recreation facilities, cemeteries, museums, etc.

¹ Average values for Dwelling Units per Net Acre and FAR per Net Acre are used for purposes of estimating population and employment capacity of land use alternatives. They are for planning purposes only.
Sources: Cotton/Bridges/Associates and City of El Centro, 2002.

For various reasons, many parcels in the community have not been developed to their maximum density or intensity. In the future, maximum development as described in this Element can be expected to occur only on a limited number of parcels. Therefore, the overall future development of the City is anticipated to occur at the average level of development intensity or density indicated in Table LU-2. This does not mean that developers can only develop at the average density and intensity, but the average development projection allows the City to plan for future public services to support anticipated future development.

Land Use Density and Intensity

This Element uses certain terminology to describe land use designations. The term *density* is used for residential uses and refers to the population and development capacity of residential land. Density within this Element is

described in terms of dwelling units per net acre of land (du/acre), exclusive of existing and proposed streets and rights-of-way.

Development *intensity*, which applies to non-residential uses, refers to the extent of development on a parcel of land or lot. Intensity is often used to describe non-residential development levels; but in a broader sense, intensity is also used to describe overall levels of both residential and non-residential development types. In this Element, floor area ratio and building floor area square footage are used as measures of non-residential development intensity.

Floor area ratio (FAR) expresses the intensity of use on the lot (see Figure LU-2). The FAR represents the ratio between the total gross floor area of all buildings on a lot and the total land area of that lot. For example, a 20,000 square foot building on a 40,000 square

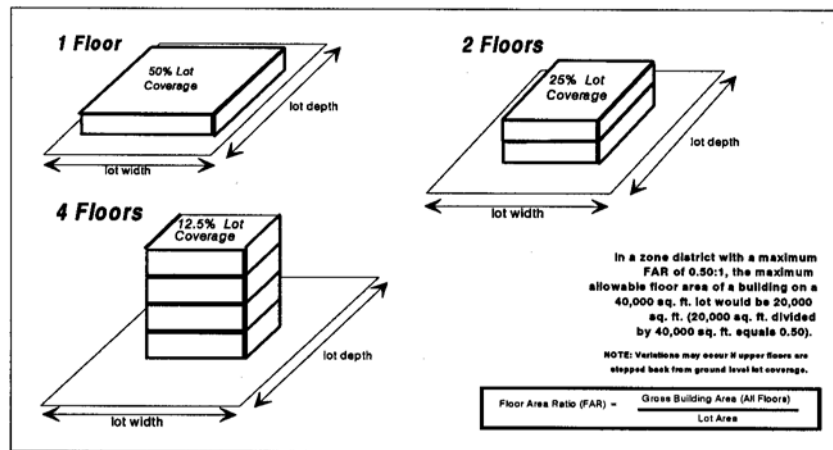


Figure LU-2
Floor Area Ratio Illustrated

foot lot yields a FAR of 0.5:1. A 0.5:1 FAR describes a single-story building that covers half of the lot, a two-story building covering approximately one-quarter of the lot, or a four-story building covering one-eighth of the lot.

Land Use Designations

The various land use designations for El Centro are described below in greater detail. These designations are organized into the four major land use groupings identified previously: Residential; Commercial; Industrial; and Community Facilities.

Residential Land Use Designations

Rural Residential: The Rural Residential land use designation provides for the preservation of existing low density detached single-family dwelling units and accessory buildings that were developed in the County, on lots larger than the City minimum lot size, prior to annexation into the City. This designation is generally most suitable in areas that consist of small agricultural operations and rural-oriented residences. Horses and other farm animals are allowed in

these areas. Uses such as mobile and modular homes, accessory dwelling units, public facilities, and other uses which are compatible with and oriented toward serving the needs of rural single-family neighborhoods may also be allowed.

This designation allows a maximum of 2 dwelling units per net acre. The maximum density may be exceeded to complement General Plan Housing Element policy in accordance with the density bonus provisions of Section 65915 of the California Government Code.

Low Density Residential: The Low Density Residential land use designation provides for the development of single-family home and accessory buildings. Uses such as mobile and modular homes, accessory dwelling units, public facilities, and others which are compatible with and oriented toward serving the needs of low density single-family neighborhoods may also be allowed.

This designation would allow a maximum density of 6 dwelling units per net acre. The maximum density of this land use designation may be exceeded to complement General Plan Housing Element policy in accordance with the density bonus provisions of Section 65915 of the California Government Code.

Medium Density Residential: The Medium Density residential designation provides for the development of single-family detached and attached dwelling units, duplexes, mobile home parks, and multi-family dwellings, such as townhomes and condominiums, as well as accessory buildings. Uses such as mobile and modular homes, accessory dwelling units, public facilities, and other which are compatible with and oriented toward serving the needs of medium density single-family neighborhoods may also be allowed.

This designation allows a maximum density of 12 dwelling units per net acre. The maximum density of this land use designation may be exceeded to complement General Plan Housing Element policy in accordance with the density bonus provisions of Section 65915 of the California Government Code.

High Medium Density Residential: The High Medium Density residential designation provides for a variety of multi-family housing types, including: garden style units, apartments, condominiums, townhouses, and mobile home parks. Uses such as mobile and modular homes, accessory dwelling units, public facilities, and other which are compatible with and oriented toward serving the needs of high medium density single-family neighborhoods may also be allowed.

This designation allows a maximum density of 25 dwelling units per net acre. The maximum density of this land use designation may be exceeded to complement General Plan Housing Element policy in accordance with the density bonus provisions of Section 65915 of the California Code.

Commercial Land Use Designations

General Commercial: The General Commercial category contains the following three land use categories. A general description of the allowable uses is provided for each category. The actual geographic location of each commercial subcategory use is determined on the Zoning Map.

Neighborhood Commercial: The Neighborhood Commercial land use designation provides for retail and service-oriented business activities serving a local community area and population. Other uses that are determined to be compatible with primary uses, such as public facilities, may also be allowed. A maximum floor area ratio of 0.25:1 is allowed.

Office Commercial: The Office Commercial land use designation provides for the establishment of professional and administrative offices, medical care centers and ancillary services with appropriate landscaping and development standards that provide relative compatibility for such uses near residential areas. A maximum floor area ratio of 0.40:1 is allowed.

Heavy Commercial: The Heavy Commercial land use designation provides for general commercial uses, business and consumer services, and light manufacturing. A maximum floor area ratio of 0.50:1 is allowed.

Tourist Commercial: The Tourist Commercial land use designation provides for the development of motels, resort hotels and related commercial and tourist oriented uses. Multiple-family residential and freeway-oriented uses, such as auto-parks, may also be compatible with this category; however, such uses should incorporate comprehensive site, architectural, and landscape design, and not be detrimental to other Tourist Commercial uses. A maximum floor area ratio of 1.0:1 is allowed.

Downtown Commercial: The Downtown Commercial land use designation provides for the development and operation of land uses that support the continued success of the downtown core area. Appropriate uses include retail, entertainment, restaurant, residential, and office uses. Uses such as churches, that do not attract shoppers and business-related traffic to the downtown are not allowed. A maximum floor area ratio of 1.5:1 is allowed.

Industrial Land Use Designations

General Industrial: The General Industrial category contains the following two land use categories. A general description of the allowable uses is provided for each category. The actual geographic location of each use is determined on the Zoning Map.

Light Manufacturing: The Light Manufacturing land use designation provides for the development of industrial uses that include the fabrication, manufacturing, assembly or processing of materials that are in refined form and which do not, in their transformation, create smoke, gas, odor, dust, noise, vibration of earth, soot or lighting to a degree that is offensive when measured at the property line of subject property. Most operations within this designation are conducted within enclosed buildings. A maximum floor area ratio of 0.40:1 is allowed.

General Manufacturing: The General Manufacturing land use designation provides for the development of manufacturing process, fabrication, and assembly of goods and materials which do not in their operation or maintenance create offensive, obnoxious, or dangerous conditions which are detectable beyond the boundary of the land use designation borders. Certain outdoor operations are permitted with this land use. A maximum floor area ratio of 0.45:1 is allowed.

Planned Industrial: The Planned Industrial land use designation provides for the development of a wide range of industrial, manufacturing, select business and related establishments in a park-like setting and which do not in their operation or maintenance create offensive, obnoxious, or dangerous conditions. A maximum floor area ratio of 0.45:1 is allowed.

Community Facilities Land Use Designations

Civic: The Civic Community Facilities land use designation provides for the development of public and private facilities within the City's civic center area. This designation includes major local governmental offices, State and federal facilities, as well as privately owned property including professional offices, financial institutions, and restaurants. The Civic land use category is intended to permit the continuation of these uses in a manner which is compatible with and supportive of the area's unique role to governmental activities of the entire Imperial County region. A maximum floor area ratio of 1.5:1 is allowed.

Public: The Public Community Facilities land use designation includes parcels under public or semipublic ownership. The designation most often includes parcels owned either by the City of El Centro, Imperial Irrigation District, school districts, or El Centro Regional Medical Center. Facilities owned by the City include police and fire departments, the library, sewage facilities, parks and recreation facilities, and museums. Other land uses include flood control or irrigation channels and basins; schools, parks or other public facilities; existing or future highways, railways or other modes of transportation; cemeteries; or facilities for the production and transmission of electrical, gas, geothermal or other forms of energy. Where new development is located adjacent to open canal and drainage facilities, new development will be required to underground the drains and canals to promote public safety with the approval of the Imperial Irrigation District. The covered right-of-ways along the drainage facilities should be developed for pedestrian and bicycle corridors where appropriate. A maximum floor area ratio of 0.40:1 is allowed.

Overlay Zone

In addition to the various land use designations described above, the Land Use Plan also includes the following overlay zone.

Single Family Neighborhood Overlay: The Single Family Neighborhood Overlay is depicted in Figure LU-3. The areas depicted by this overlay consist of older residential neighborhoods that were developed in the early part of the 1920s. They represent an important example of the historical character of El Centro. As infill development occurs, the character of these neighborhoods has the potential to change, as older, smaller bungalows are replaced with larger, modern homes or multiple unit housing. To help preserve these remaining neighborhoods, property designed with the Single Family Neighborhood Overlay will need to be maintained as single family units.

In the event that a unit needs to be replaced, such as in the event of a fire, owners are encouraged to reconstruct in a similar style and scale as the original home.

Specific Plan Use

While specific plans are not required as a prerequisite to development within the planning area, the City encourages developers to utilize the specific plan process when designing new projects, especially those that will include larger areas of land. The specific plan process allows for a more comprehensive planning process for the target area, as well as allowing for flexibility in the design of future land uses. The specific plan process can also be developed in conjunction with the Community Facilities Study required under the Urban

Development Program to better plan for the provision and financing of public facilities and services.

Planned Unit Developments

The City encourages the use of Planned Unit Developments by allowing flexibility in the application of development standards (including minimum lot sizes) to facilitate creative and innovative site planning and/or for the protection of desirable resources. To offset this flexibility in development standards, planned unit developments are required to incorporate amenities and features not normally required of standard residential developments.

Figure LU-3
Single Family Neighborhood Overlay

Development Capacity

The Land Use Plan for El Centro includes average levels of residential and non-residential development, where all land in the Planning Area is developed according to the Plan. The average levels of development establish a capacity for the Land Use Plan that is expressed as estimates of total dwelling units, total population, and total square footage of non-residential development in the future. Average values for dwelling units per net acre and FAR per net acre are used for purposes of estimating population and employment capacity of land use alternatives.

Table LU-3 summarizes the development capacity of the Land Use Plan. This table provides a breakdown of land uses within El Centro for purposes of identifying the estimated development capacity of the Land Use Plan. For the El Centro Planning Area, the projected population is approximately 134,227 persons at buildout.

Direct and Control Growth

Understanding that growth will occur in the future, directing how and where growth will occur is important, as it will have a great impact on the quality of life and economic well-being of the community as a whole. To prepare for population increases in the next 20 years, El Centro will continue to direct and control growth in the City and sphere of influence through the application of the City's Urban Development Program, as described below, to create a community that is compact and pedestrian and transit-oriented, avoids removing from production more valuable agricultural land than necessary, and is able to meet the public service and infrastructure needs of existing and future residents. The City will control and direct growth so that new development is compatible with existing development and occurs in appropriate locations where adequate public services and facilities are available. Additionally, future development in areas impacted by aircraft operation is consistent with the applicable airport land use plans.

Urban Development Program

El Centro has adopted an Urban Development Program to facilitate residential, industrial, and business growth in those areas where public services are available and to provide a variety of growth locations so that an adequate supply of developable land will maintain reasonable housing costs and promote economic development. Specific geographic areas have been delineated for new development (as shown in Figure LU-4) based on existing or planned public facilities, existing land use, and transportation corridors or other physical barriers. Within these geographic areas, the

coordinated efforts of City government, other public agencies and districts, private developers, landowners, and existing residents will be needed to ensure that adequate public service and quality of life standards are maintained. Specific locations for needed public facilities, such as future schools and parks, have not been identified in the Land Use Policy Map since the best location for these facilities is not known at this time. The Community Facilities Study, described below, ensures that these facilities will be planned for as future development occurs.

**Table LU-3
Development Capacity
Tier I**

Land Use Designations	Assumptions				Acres			Projected Dwelling Units/Households			Projected Capacity Non-Residential Square Feet (Thousands)			Projected Capacity Population		
	Maximum Du/Acre		Average Du/Acre		City	Tier I	Total	City	Tier 1	Total	City	Tier 1	Total	City	Tier 1	Total
<i>Residential</i>																
Rural Residential	2		1		0	45	45	0	38	38				0	112	112
Low Density	7		4.5		1,050	873	1,923	4,016	3,338	7,354				11,792	9,802	21,594
Medium Density	12		8.5		226	76	302	1,633	548	2,181				4,795	1,609	6,404
High-Medium Density	25		16		385	36	421	5,236	490	5,726				15,375	1,439	16,814
<i>Commercial</i>																
General Commercial*		0.4		0.25	492	68	560				4,554	629	5,184			
Neighborhood Commercial**		0.25		0.2												
Office Commercial**		0.4		0.3												
Heavy Commercial**		0.5		0.3												
Tourist Commercial		1		0.4	220	0	220				3,258	0	3,258			
Downtown Commercial		1.5		0.8	60	0	60				1,780	0	1,780			
<i>Industrial</i>																
General Industrial*		0.4		0.3	501	0	501				5,565	0	5,565			
Light Manufacturing**		0.4		0.3												
General Manufacturing**		0.45		0.35												
Planned Industrial		0.45		0.35	23	4	27				298	52	350			
<i>Community Facilities</i>																
Civic		1.5		0.7	61	0	61				1,578	0	1,578			
Public		0.4		0.25	633	57	690				5,859	528	6,387			
Total					3,651	1,158	4,809	10,885	4,413	15,298	22,894	1,209	24,102	31,962	12,961	44,923

*For planning purposes, an average maximum and average FAR is used to calculate General Commercial & General Industrial anticipated FAR.

**The Zoning Ordinance will determine the location of the General Commercial and Industrial subcategories. The maximum FAR for each subcategory will be used when analyzing projects for consistency with the General Plan.

1 household = 1 dwelling unit; 3.23 persons per household; When calculating buildout in City and Tier I, only 85% of the acreage is used, the remainder is assumed for streets.

City = area within the current City limits; FAR = floor are ratio. When calculating population capacity, a 10% vacancy rate is assumed.

Figure LU-4
Urban Development Program
Development Tier Areas

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**Table LU-4
Development Capacity
Tiers I & II**

Land Use Designations	Assumptions				Acres			Projected Dwelling Units/Households			Projected Capacity Non-Residential Square Feet (Thousands)			Projected Capacity Population		
	Maximum Du/Acre	Average Du/Acre			City	Tiers I&II	Total	City	Tiers I&II	Total	City	Tiers I&II	Total	City	Tiers I&II	Total
<i>Residential</i>																
Rural Residential	2	1			0	686	686	0	583	583				0	1,712	1,712
Low Density	7	4.5			1,050	4,269	5,319	4,016	16,329	20,345				11,792	47,948	59,740
Medium Density	12	8.5			226	159	385	1,633	1,149	2,782				4,795	3,374	8,169
High-Medium Density	25	16			385	36	421	5,236	487	5,723				15,375	1,430	16,805
<i>Commercial</i>																
General Commercial*	0.4	0.25			492	288	780				4,554	2,666	7,220			
Neighborhood Commercial**	0.25	0.2														
Office Commercial**	0.4	0.3														
Heavy Commercial**	0.5	0.3														
Tourist Commercial	1	0.4			220	0	220				3,258	0	3,258			
Downtown Commercial	1.5	0.8			60	0	60				1,780	0	1,780			
<i>Industrial</i>																
General Industrial*	0.4	0.3			501	743	1,244				5,565	8,254	13,819			
Light Manufacturing**	0.4	0.3														
General Manufacturing**	0.45	0.35														
Planned Industrial	0.45	0.35			23	186	209				298	2,410	2,708			
<i>Community Facilities</i>																
Civic	1.5	0.7			61	0	61				1,578	0	1,578			
Public	0.4	0.25			633	104	737				5,859	961	6,820			
Total					3,651	6,471	10,122	10,885	18,548	29,433	22,894	14,291	37,185	31,962	54,464	86,426

*For planning purposes, an average maximum and average FAR is used to calculate General Commercial & General Industrial anticipated FAR.

**The Zoning Ordinance will determine the location of the General Commercial and Industrial subcategories. The maximum FAR for each subcategory will be used when analyzing projects for consistency with the General Plan.

1 household = 1 dwelling unit; 3.23 persons per household; When calculating buildout in City and Tiers I & II, only 85% of the acreage is used, the remainder is assumed for streets.

City = area within the current City limits; FAR = floor are ratio. When calculating population capacity, a 10% vacancy rate is assumed.

**Table LU-5
Development Capacity
Tiers I - III**

Land Use Designations	Assumptions				Acres			Projected Dwelling Units/Households			Projected Capacity Non-Residential Square Feet (Thousands)			Projected Capacity Population		
	Maximum Du/Acre	Average Du/Acre			City	Tiers I-III	Total	City	Tiers I-III	Total	City	Tiers 1-III	Total	City	Tiers 1-III	Total
Residential																
Rural Residential	2	1			0	763	763	0	648	648				0	1,903	1,903
Low Density	7	4.5			1,050	8,507	9,557	4,016	32,539	36,556				11,792	95,546	107,342
Medium Density	12	8.5			226	159	385	1,633	1,149	2,782				4,795	3,374	8,169
High-Medium Density	25	16			385	36	421	5,236	490	5,726				15,375	1,439	16,814
Commercial																
General Commercial*	0.4	0.25			492	288	780				4,554	2,666	7,220			
Neighborhood Commercial**	0.25	0.2														
Office Commercial**	0.4	0.3														
Heavy Commercial**	0.5	0.3														
Tourist Commercial	1	0.4			220	0	220				3,258	0	3,258			
Downtown Commercial	1.5	0.8			60	0	60				1,780	0	1,780			
Industrial																
General Industrial*	0.4	0.3			501	743	1,244				5,565	8,253	13,818			
Light Manufacturing**	0.4	0.3														
General Manufacturing**	0.45	0.35														
Planned Industrial	0.45	0.35			23	521	544				298	6,752	7,050			
Community Facilities																
Civic	1.5	0.7			61	0	61				1,578	0	1,578			
Public	0.4	0.25			633	57	690				5,859	528	6,387			
Total					3,651	11,074	14,725	10,885	34,826	45,711	22,894	18,198	41,092	31,962	102,262	134,227

*For planning purposes, an average maximum and average FAR is used to calculate General Commercial & General Industrial anticipated FAR.

**The Zoning Ordinance will determine the location of the General Commercial and Industrial subcategories. The maximum FAR for each subcategory will be used when analyzing projects for consistency with the General Plan.

1 household = 1 dwelling unit; 3.23 persons per household; When calculating buildout (City and Tiers I - III), only 85% of the acreage is used, the remainder is assumed for streets.

City = area within the current City limits; FAR = floor are ratio. When calculating population capacity, a 10% vacancy rate is assumed.

To identify those areas that will require more extensive planning, ensuring the provision of adequate levels of public services and facilities, the undeveloped portion of the Planning Area has been divided into three development tier areas, as described below. Designation of an area in one of the three tiers does not determine the sequence of development within the Planning Area, but rather, delineates those areas that, due to a lack of public facilities, may require more detailed planning prior to development. For example, development in Development Tier II and III may require a greater cost for infrastructure improvements than would the same development if located within the Development Tier I area since Tier I has greater access to existing public services and facilities. Tier II and III areas may also require that facilities be sized, at developer expense, to accommodate additional development within an entire Tier Subarea (described below), or such larger area as may be required by the City. Reimbursement agreements, improvement districts, and other public finance strategies may be used to cost-effectively provide needed public infrastructure, as deemed necessary by the City Council.

Development Tier I – Current Urban Service Area: Development Tier I includes land within and adjacent to the present City limits. In most cases, new development within this area can be served by gravity sewer lines to existing trunk sewers. Generally, water lines and reservoirs are also adequate to serve new development; however, easements and financial contributions to improve the ultimate sewer and water systems may be required. Fire, police, schools, parks, library, medical, roads, and other City services are also in proximity to these areas, though service capacities are likely to be limited and improvements to existing facilities and/or new facilities may be needed to adequately accommodate new development. Subdivisions of land and commercial or industrial development within this area would generally follow standard zoning, subdivision, and environmental review procedures and would not require a Community Facilities Study.

Development Tier II – Planned Urban Service Area: Development Tier II includes land both within and adjacent to the City limits, but differs from Development Tier I in that public infrastructure to serve new development is more limited. Essential required improvements may include sewer and water pump stations, water storage reservoirs, and sewer trunk lines or force mains. New schools, parks, roadway improvements, and fire stations may also be required to adequately serve development of Development Tier II areas. As with Development Tier I areas, additional service capacity for police, library, medical, and other City services may also be needed to accommodate new development. Preparation of a Community Facilities Study shall be required for most development projects within Development Tier II areas, including

residential subdivisions, multi-family projects, and commercial or industrial development, unless as otherwise exempted as described in the Community Facilities Study Requirements and Exemptions.

Development Tier III – Future Urban Service Area: Development Tier III encompasses unincorporated lands that are not anticipated to be developed for at least ten years. If development other than agriculture and related businesses or residential subdivisions of five or few parcels is proposed, within currently unincorporated portions of Development Tier III areas, the developer or subdivider shall be required to obtain concurrence of the City to allow the project, and the improvement of all public facilities shall be provided by the developer to City standards. Uses that do not require treated water from, or disposal of sewage to City systems, may be permitted. Subdivision of land and commercial or industrial development within this area would require that a Community Facilities Study be prepared, unless otherwise exempted, as described below. In addition, if a project is proposed within the Development Tier III area, a Development Tier Subarea shall be established by the City for which a Community Facilities Study shall be prepared, as described below.

Development Tier Subarea: A Development Tier Subarea will be established for development projects proposed in the Development Tier III area to allow for the planning for water and sewer services through the preparation of a Community Facilities Study. This is not required for development in the Development Tiers I and II areas since the City's Water and Sewer Master Plans delineate water and sewer improvements needed to serve those areas.

The Water and Sewer Master Plans shall be used to evaluate the project's water and sewer needs and the impact of those needs on the City's water and sewer systems. The project drainage and flood control facilities shall be evaluated using whatever master plans are available from the City or other agency having jurisdiction over such matters. The project needs and impacts related to local and regional roadways shall be evaluated using the Circulation Element.

Community Facilities Study Requirements and Exemptions: Unless otherwise exempted, subdivision of land and commercial or industrial development within Development Tiers II and III would require that a Community Facilities Study be prepared. Typically, Community Facilities Studies are prepared at the expense of a project applicant. The Study shall address existing conditions and needs for City sewer, water, drainage/flood control, and Circulation Element roadways affected by new development, including

circulation improvements such as traffic signals. Public facility financing plans for new development would also need to be evaluated. A Community Facilities Study shall not be required when: 1) an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) or Initial Study leading to a Mitigated Negative Declaration will be prepared for the project and the EIR or Mitigated Negative Declaration will incorporate all applicable elements of the Community Facilities Study; 2) the project is a subdivision of five or fewer lots or a commercial or industrial development of five acres or less and the owner or subdivider does not own or control other contiguous property within the same Development Tier Subarea; and 3) the Initial Study for the project does not conclude that the project may have a significant impact of public services and facilities or the project does not require sewer or water facilities.

Airport Land Use Compatibility Criteria

As described in more detail in the Safety Element, airport operations present potential safety hazards to surrounding land uses. As a result, the City will continue to review proposals that are located within the noise and safety impact areas of public and private airports and airstrips to ensure that the proposed uses are compatible with the existing airport operations.

Due to the close proximity of the Imperial County Airport, land use options are limited in a portion of northern El Centro. The Imperial County Airport Land Use Commission has established a set of land use compatibility criteria for lands surrounding the County's airports (Table LU-6). As shown in Figure LU-5, portions of northern El Centro are located within the D zone, representing negligible risk from airport activity, whereas other areas are in the extended approach and departure zone (B2) and are subjected to significant risk and noise exposure. A small strip of land south of Threshill Road is located within the Approach/Departure Zone (B1) subjecting development in this area to substantial risk and noise as a result of aircraft activity. In addition, there is a private airstrip, Douthitt Strip Airport, located at the easternmost end of Olive Avenue, which has the potential to impact surrounding land uses.

Community Design

The City of El Centro contains some areas that are design sensitive since they provide major thoroughfares and destination points for the community. These areas include: Main Street between Imperial Avenue and the Union Pacific Railroad; Adams Avenue; Imperial Avenue and 4th Street; and the Industrial/Commercial area on the eastern portion of the City along Commercial Avenue and Main Street (Figure LU-6). The City will continue to

improve these important areas in the community, visually linking the areas through enhancements such as landscaping and façade improvements. These improvements will help promote a healthy economic setting for these prime commercial areas.

The City will also continue to encourage the use of creative design for new development, especially in new residential and commercial areas. Design features that serve to promote a traditional pedestrian-focused residential community, such as garages setback from the street or otherwise reduced in visual appearance, are encouraged to retain the traditional community character found within the older neighborhoods. Walkable commercial areas that encourage people to walk from store to store, such as in the downtown, are also supported by the City.

Downtown Revitalization

The City Redevelopment Agency has developed a *Façade Improvement Program*, which enables business owners located within the Redevelopment Project area to receive cash rebates for improvements made to the storefront of their buildings. Additionally, The City will encourage the improvement and maintenance of older residential areas in order to prevent decay, blight, and decline in property values. The Redevelopment Agency will also continue to implement the Downtown Revitalization Plan to establish a lighting and maintenance district and business improvement district to help increase property values, jobs, and successful businesses in the downtown.

Figure LU-5
Imperial County Airport Land Use Compatibility Map

Table LU-6
Imperial County Airport
Land Use Compatibility Criteria

Zone	Location	Impact Elements	Maximum Densities		Required Open Land	Additional Criteria		Examples	
			Residential (du/ac)	Other Uses (people/ac)		Prohibited Uses	Other Development Conditions	Normally Acceptable Uses	Uses Not Normally Acceptable
A	Runway Protection Zone or within Building Restriction Line	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High risk High noise levels 	0	0	All Remaining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All structures except ones with location set by aeronautical function Assemblages of people Objects exceeding FAR Part 77 height limits Hazards to flight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedication of aviation easement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aircraft tiedown apron Pastures, field crops, vineyards Automobile parking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heavy poles, signs, large trees, etc.
B1	Approach/Departure Zone and Adjacent to Runway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Substantial risk – aircraft commonly below 400ft AGL or within 1,000 ft of runway Substantial noise 	0.1	100	30%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools, day care centers, libraries Hospitals, nursing homes Highly noise-sensitive uses Above ground storage Storage of highly flammable materials Hazards to flight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locate structures maximum distance from extended runway centerline Minimum NLR of 25 dBA in residential and office buildings Dedication of aviation easement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses in Zone A Any agricultural use except ones attracting bird flocks Warehousing, truck terminals Single-story offices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residential subdivisions Intensive retail uses Intensive manufacturing or food processing uses Multiple story offices Hotels and motels
B2	Extended Approach/Departure Zone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant risk – aircraft commonly below 800 ft. AGL Significant noise 	1	100	30%				
C	Common Traffic Pattern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited risk – aircraft at or below 1,000 ft AGL Frequent noise intrusion 	6	200	15%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools Hospitals, nursing homes Hazards to flight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedication of overflight easement for residential uses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses in Zone B Parks, playgrounds Low-intensity retail, offices, etc. Low-intensity manufacturing, food processing Two-story motels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large shopping malls Theaters, auditoriums Large sports stadiums Hi-rise office buildings
D	Other Airport Environs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negligible risk Potential for annoyance from overflights 	No Limit	No Limit	No Requirement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hazards to flight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deed notice required for residential development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All except ones hazardous to flight 	

Source: Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan – Imperial County Airports, Airport Land Use Commission 1996.

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Figure LU-6 Visual Enhancement Areas

El Dorado Colonia

El Centro contains one recognized colonia, the El Dorado Colonia, shown in Figure LU-7. Colonias typically are communities in mainly rural within 150 miles of the U.S.-Mexico border that lack adequate infrastructure and frequently lack other basic services. These areas typically have high rates of poverty and often have been developed without the level of public facilities associated with newer development that meets governmental regulations. The El Dorado Colonia is characterized by large lot, rural character residential development. The City has been working to improve the infrastructure within this area and will continue to implement programs that improve the quality of life for the residents and visual appearance of the area, while preserving the rural character of the neighborhood. To assist in the rehabilitation of the area, the City will create and implement a circulation plan for the area, including the potential for subdividing the large lots into smaller parcels and installing additional streets to improve the local circulation system.

Figure LU-7
El Dorado Colonia Area