7.0

LAND USE ELEMENT

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Introduction



The Land Use Element is a guide to future land use within Avenal and affects many of the issues addressed in the 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 land uses identified in the Land Use Element also reflect the community's goals for its future form and character, as outlined in the Community Design Element. In addition to land uses, the Land Use Element also addresses how growth will occur, with special attention given to public services and facilities and economic development.

Purpose of the Land Use Element

As a city, state law requires that Avenal prepare and adopt a General Plan as a tool to manage growth and development. The Land Use Element is one of the seven mandatory elements of the General Plan.

The purpose of the Land Use Element is to describe present and planned land uses and their relationship to 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 residential, commercial, industrial and public/quasi public. The element consists of text and a map (reference map pocket) 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 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 general location of future growth is also defined in the element.

The Land Use Element of the Avenal General Plan represents the City's desire for long-range changes and enhancements of land uses. Finally, the goals, objectives and policies contained in this element establish the framework for future land use planning and decision making in Avenal.

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 five sections: the Introduction, Purpose of the Land Use Element, Scope and Content of the Land Use Element, Goals, Objectives and Policies, and Land Use Map. In the Goals, Objectives 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 community desires, are comprised of broad statements of purpose and direction. Policies serve as guides for reviewing development proposals, planning facilities to accommodate anticipated growth, and accomplishing community economic development strategies. To achieve the goals, objectives and policies, a logical, organized land use pattern is established with standards for future community development. The Land Use Map graphically identifies the planned land uses within Avenal.

Goal 1:

Preserve and enhance Avenal's unique character and achieve an optimal balance of residential, commercial, industrial and open space land uses.

7.1 Community Identity

Objectives

A. Strive to keep Avenal separate and distinct from nearby communities.

B. Maintain and enhance Avenal's physical diversity, visual qualities and small-town characteristics.

C. Maintain the core area (Kings Street) as the City's geographic center.

Policies and Standards

1. Develop design review standards for structures, landscaping and related development to facilitate compatibility with surrounding uses and the overall character of the community.

2. Gateways to Avenal and the downtown shall be designated and identified by well-designed landscaped entrances to enhance access corridors. Land uses in the vicinity of Gateways should be of high quality design which reflects favorably on the image of the community.

3. Emphasize pedestrian amenities in the downtown area, including landscaped open space areas, street furniture, lighting and signage.

4. Develop a City-wide street tree and landscape master plan to delineate neighborhoods, master and specific plan areas.

5. Develop/maintain scenic entryways (gateways) and roadway corridors into the City through special setback and landscape standards, entry signage, open space and park development, and/or land use designations. These corridors shall also have enhanced landscape standards. Gateways and entryways to be considered should include:

   Gateways:

   North:

   Highway 269/Hydril Road

   West

   Highway 33/W. San Joaquin Street

   South:

   Highway 33/ South 7th Avenue

7.2 *Residential Land Use*

Objectives

A. Ensure adequate land area is available for future housing needs.

B. Provide new residential areas that offer a variety of housing densities, types, sizes, costs and locations to meet projected demand throughout the community.

C. Identify locations for multi-family developments which are accessible to transportation routes, commercial areas, schools and recreation facilities.

Policies and Standards

1. Give priority consideration to infill development of vacant and underutilized land within the City limits. Consideration shall be given by financially assisting such development through special infrastructure financing programs, if available.

2. Consider annexations that are consistent with the extension of public services and facilities and other City policies and plans. The City shall maintain at least a 10-year supply of zoned land in the City for all residential land use types, and a minimum five-year supply of "ready to go" zoned land served by infrastructure. Designate an adequate amount of residential land in the General Plan for a 30-year supply of single-family and multi-family land uses.

3. In reviewing proposals for changes in land use to or from a residential land use, a fiscal/economic impact analysis shall be completed to ensure that the change is fiscally and economically beneficial to the City. The City shall also determine if the change will result in a residential land use inventory that is insufficient to meet the City's Regional Housing Needs Allocation.

4. The City may consider entering into development agreements, whereby residential developers would be assured of a specific number of permit allocations over a multi-year period in return for providing infrastructure improvements and other public amenities.

5. Encourage the use of site development techniques which ensure that a good mix of housing types is provided through such methods as inclusion of duplexes on corner lots in low-density areas where they can be made to be compatible with surrounding development.

6. Plan and coordinate residential development in close proximity to planned urban facilities and services such as schools, parks, sanitary sewer, water, storm drainage, circulation network, transportation facilities and commercial centers.

7. Promote comprehensively planned and high quality building and site design for multi-family developments with the following criteria:

   - Exterior Elevations – Use design features such as offsets, balconies, projections, landscaping or similar elements to preclude large expanses of uninterrupted building surfaces.

   - Building, Parking, Walkway Separation – Provide privacy, light, air, and access to dwellings within the development by ensuring adequate distances among buildings, parking lots and driveways, and walkways.

   - Open Space, Landscaping, and Screening – Designate private open space exclusive of required setbacks, right-of-way, and easements within each development for the use of residents. Open space, landscaping and screening should provide outdoor space for the residents and mitigate negative impacts related to land use compatibility between the development and adjacent land uses, noise, lighting, parking (screening and shading), on-site traffic circulation, and preservation of natural features.

   - Energy Efficiency – Encourage the following measures: 1) appropriate landscaping materials to provide shade in the summer and protection from the weather in winter; 2) eaves, canopies, awnings, along south and west elevations; and 3) secured bicycle storage areas with lock-up capabilities.

8. Advocate the distribution of low and moderate income housing throughout the community and on smaller sites.

9. Encourage development of housing for seniors and other special populations (i.e., developmentally disabled and physically handicapped). Locational criteria for these development proposals, at a minimum, should include proximity to health care, recreation/cultural, and/or commercial facilities; and, aesthetic quality of area, including noise impact compatibility and open space.

10. In order to avoid over concentration of multifamily dwelling units, they should be spread throughout the community, integrated as part of overall neighborhood planning, and be in concentrations consistent with Policy 20.

11. Encourage planned unit residential developments according to the following criteria:

    - For mixed-use developments which include a Convenience Center or a Neighborhood Center, the minimum site area shall be 10 acres. Sites less than 10 acres may be considered upon recommendation of the Planning Commission.

    - Common usable open space, exclusive of right-of-way and required setbacks shall be encouraged to the greatest extent possible for recreation and open space purposes.

    - Existing natural features shall be preserved and enhanced consistent with the Conservation, Open Space, Parks and Recreation Element.

    - Density shall not exceed the underlying zoning provisions. Density increases may be granted in accordance with the Zoning Ordinance such as density bonuses, infill projects or affordable housing.

12. Identify residential areas adjacent to roadways and other noise-sources. (i.e., railroads, airport, industry) which require setbacks and/or special soundproofing to reduce negative noise-related impacts, as identified in the Noise Element. Mitigation measures shall include the following:

    - The performance standards of the City's Noise Element.

    - Noise mitigation "packages" including the use of setbacks to ensure that the exterior noise levels at the closest building façade do not exceed 65 dB Ldn and interior noise exposure of 45 dB Ldn or below.

    - For multifamily development, site design techniques shall be used to reduce the need for supplemental noise mitigation requirements. Also, investigate the feasibility of requiring greater setbacks for multifamily residential development along arterials and collectors as an alternative to walls and fences.

13. Develop design measures to buffer residential development from non-residential land uses. These measures should, at a minimum, include setbacks; roadways; community waterways; landscaping; and landforms such as berming, fences and walls.

14. Encourage higher density residential development near employment centers, commercial development and parks.

15. Provide for the continued viability of existing single-family areas in the downtown of the community and encourage medium and high-density residential development in the central business district where such uses do not conflict with existing neighborhoods.

16. Require special site development standards for proposed non-residential or more intensive land uses adjacent to established residential areas to minimize negative impacts on abutting properties.

17. Rural Residential areas shall be designated to provide opportunities for residential dwelling in conjunction with small-scale farming and animal husbandry or in a semi-rural setting. Rural Residential development (6 persons per acre - up to 2 dwelling units per gross acre) shall be directed to areas where:

    - All urban services (i.e. storm drainage, schools, sidewalks, lighting) may not be required;
    - Adjacent to long-term agricultural areas where more intensive future urban development is unlikely because of public safety conflicts such as the airport protection area;
    - Boundaries between dissimilar land uses (i.e., industrial to residential in the northeast and agriculture to residential in the south); and
    - In areas where the viability of large-scale agriculture may ultimately be threatened due to the encroachment of non-agricultural uses, and which do not warrant designation to a higher density.

    Subject to the following minimum conditions:

    a. Full road, sewer, and water improvements shall be installed.

    b. Development setbacks and buffering will ensure that there will be no conflicts with adjacent rural residential uses.

    One half-acre lot shall be allowed in the Residential Estate (R-E) zone through the approval of a conditional use permit if the city determines that the size or shape of the site limits the development of a standard size subdivision or the approval of 1/2-acre parcels would facilitate infill development.

18. Continue to encourage comprehensively planned Low Density Residential development (up to 21 persons/acre - 2 to 10 dwelling units net acre). Developments in excess of 7 units per acre may be permitted through the PD process.

19. Promote Medium Density Residential development (up to 40 persons per acre - 10 to 15 dwelling units per net acre) which typically consists of duplex, triplex and four-plex development for in-fill or new development at Local/Collector and/or Collector/Collector intersections to a maximum

of 50 units in one contiguous development on sites ranging from 3.5 to 5 acres. Medium Density Residential developments on sites less than 3.5 acres at arterial/collector intersections may also be considered. Medium density developments may be permitted on corner lots in single-family zones where they can be provided in conformance with Policy 18. Medium density residential developments may also be used in infill areas where they can be made to be consistent with adjacent properties through the PD process and contract zoning.

20. Locate High Density Residential development (up to 58 persons per acre - 15 to 29 dwelling units per net acre) throughout the City at arterial and Collector locations according to the following criteria:

    - Arterial intersections - 100-unit maximum on sites ranging from 3.5 to 5 acres;
    - Arterial/collector intersections - 75-unit maximum on sites ranging from 2 to 5 acres;
    - Mid-block arterials - 50-unit maximum on sites ranging from 1 to 3 acres;
    - Downtown - at in-fill locations, which do not jeopardize the viability of existing single-family areas; and
    - High-density residential developments may also be used in in-fill areas where they can be made to be consistent with adjacent properties through the PD process and conditional zoning. Consistency and compatibility with adjacent properties shall be evaluated based on issues including but not limited to: adjacent zoning, adjacent land use, proposed building mass, and the adequacy of public facilities available to the site.

    Densities in excess of 20 units/acre will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and may be approved through the PD process where measurable community benefit is demonstrated and where infrastructure, including mass transit facilities, is available (or can be made available) to accommodate impacts of increased density.

7.3 Commercial Land Use

Objectives

A. Ensure the continued viability of Avenal's existing commercial areas.

B. Designate appropriate and sufficient commercial land for Avenal's needs to the year 2025 with appropriate phasing.

C. Investigate and implement methods of accelerating the project review process for commercial and industrial development proposals which generate employment opportunities.

Policies and Standards

1. Ensure that future commercial development is concentrated in shopping districts and nodes to discourage expansion of new strip commercial development.

2. It shall be a priority of the City to develop commercial land along Skyline Boulevard.

3. Encourage convenience commercial development in residential areas that serve the needs of the area and include site development standards which minimize negative impacts on adjacent properties.

4. Development standards for the interface between commercial or office uses and residential uses shall be as follows:

   - A landscaped setback of at least ten feet wide containing deciduous and evergreen trees shall be planted and maintained along the property line between commercial or office uses and residential properties that have a common property line.

   - A masonry wall eight feet in height shall be erected along the property line where commercial and office uses have a common property line with residentially designated properties.

   - A masonry wall three and one-half feet in height or landscape berm shall be erected along the front setback line, parallel to, and ten feet from the local streets abutting planned residential uses.

   - Commercial loading and storage areas shall be screened from view of adjoining residential property by a combination of landscape planting and a masonry wall. Loading areas shall be located so that there are no noise impacts to adjacent residential properties. All storage shall be within an enclosed structure.

   - Roof-mounted and detached mechanical equipment shall be acoustically baffled to prevent noise from the equipment from exceeding 55dB (A) measured at the nearest residential property line.

6. In order to encourage the integration of Neighborhood and Community Commercial uses into neighborhoods, designs should de-emphasize the usage of walls as buffers where they create barriers to pedestrian access. Continuous block walls shall be discouraged and offsets, landscaping pockets and openings shall be encouraged.

7. In order to promote non-vehicular modes of transportation, and to limit the unnecessary usage of Collectors and Arterials for vehicular access, commercial development shall provide direct pedestrian and vehicular access to adjoining residential areas through Minor Collectors, Local Streets and/or through pedestrian access points.

8. Designate Convenience Centers for personal and convenience goods and services for nearby residential areas. Such centers may be in new, in-fill, and/or consolidated existing strip commercial developments and at a scale which is compatible with surrounding residences. Special site design standards shall be imposed on these facilities, including high quality architecture, landscaping, signage and lighting to ensure that they are aesthetically pleasing.

   Convenience Centers may be approved by a planned development permit on the corner of arterial/collector intersections on sites of three acres or less, and at least one-half mile away from neighborhood shopping centers. Where possible, such centers are to be developed as part of specific plans or master plans.

9. Designate Neighborhood Centers for shopping centers with a major grocery store as an anchor and supporting businesses which serve a one square mile residential area. Location shall be at one corner of arterial/arterial or arterial/collector intersections on sites of approximately 10 acres in area. Centers shall be located no closer than approximately one mile from other General Plan-designated neighborhood centers, from existing Grocery stores, or from General Plan-designated community centers.

   The center's scale and site design must be compatible with the surrounding residential area with an emphasis on access, circulation, parking, signage, noise, and landscaping. Where possible, these facilities should be planned and integrated into neighborhoods as part of a specific plan or master plan.

10. Preserve and enhance the Central Business District (CBD) as the community's historic services center. Promote retail commercial, specialty retail, professional/administrative office, personal services, professional services, public and community facilities and urban residential uses.

7.4 Industrial Land Use

Objectives

A. Promote industrial sites which are functional, have adequate public services and have access to major streets.

Policies and Standards

1. Promote a mix of industrial uses that provide the City with a sound, diverse industrial base.

2. Provide adequate land for a wide range of industrial uses. In order to increase the capture rate of industries in the community, industrial areas should be master planned to expedite processing of applications and aggressively marketed (along with the industrial park) to targeted industries, including the I-5 Industrial Park.

3. Industrial development should not create significant off-site circulation, noise, dust, odor, visual, and hazardous materials impacts that cannot be adequately mitigated.

4. Prepare a specific plan for the industrial area near Interstate 5 to provide for an adequate mix of parcel sizes, identification of needed infrastructure and transportation routes.

5. In order to achieve a high-quality natural environment, it shall be the policy of the City to encourage industries which demonstrate minimum air and water quality impacts and to discourage air and water quality impacts which cannot be offset.

7.5 Public and Institutional Land Use

A. Provide sites for adequate public facilities to serve projected growth.



Policies and Standards

1. Update the water, wastewater and storm drainage master plans, and any other specific or master plans related to infrastructure development on a periodic basis.

2. Annually monitor the need for law enforcement, fire and other emergency services personnel as the City grows.

3. Implement a recycling and source reduction program to promote recycling.

4. Continue to plan and provide efficient public safety and leisure/cultural facilities and services for the community.

5. In considering development proposals which have the potential to affect school capacity, the City shall refer such proposals to the Reef-Sunset Unified School District for review and comment to ensure that adequate school facilities are implemented to serve the proposed developments. Developers should mitigate impacts to schools in accordance to School District plans.

Objectives

A. The City shall coordinate the location of school sites in the community with the school district in an effort to assist the school district in providing school facilities at the optimum locations and in a timely manner.

B. Provide transportation and recreation opportunities near schools.

C. Promote schools as focal points for neighborhood areas and as planning elements for new growth areas.

Policies and Standards

1. Coordinate school location and site design with the school district according to the following guidelines to ensure that adequate facilities are available.

   Elementary Schools

   Description: Facilities for 500 to 750 students in grades K through 5.

   Location: Interior residential areas at a collector/local intersection. Additional street frontage is desired for transition area to adjacent residences. Abuts neighborhood park with adjacent development backing or siding onto school. Maximize pedestrian and bicycle access and on/off circulation.

   Service Area: ½-mile radius to serve a population of 5,000 to 8,000.

   Site Area: 15 to 20 acres.

   Facilities: Approximately 20 classrooms, administration building, library, multi-purpose building (lunches, recreation, and community meetings), multi-purpose recreation/open space with hard-court play areas and equipment, off-street parking, bus loading/unloading area, and bicycle storage area. Security fencing separates buildings from play areas. Public use of play areas is encouraged.

   Middle Schools

   Description: Facilities for 700 to 1,000 students in grades 6 through 8.

   Location: Residential areas with central location for surrounding elementary schools at collector/ collector or collector/local intersections. Additional local street frontage desired for transition to adjacent residential areas. Maximize pedestrian and bicycle access and on/off-site circulation.

   Service Area: Approximately six elementary schools.

   Site Area: 25 to 30 acres.

   Facilities: Approximately 30 classrooms and labs; administrative center, library/media center; multi-use buildings, (cafeteria, band, chorus, shops, labs); athletic facilities for football, baseball, track; off-street parking; bus loading/unloading area; and bicycle storage area. Security fencing separates buildings from athletic fields. Public use of athletic fields is encouraged.

High Schools

Description: Facilities for 1,000 to 1,400 students in grades 9 through 12.

Location: Arterial-collector intersection with additional frontage on two other streets. Prefer same collector as area middle school.

Service Area: Coincides with district service boundaries.

Site Area: 50 to 60 acres.

Facilities: Approximately 40 classrooms and labs; library/media center; administration building; gym; cafeteria; standard outdoor athletic facilities; off-street parking, bus loading/unloading; bicycle storage area. Security fencing separates buildings from athletic fields/facilities. Public use of athletic areas is encouraged.

2. Discourage and restrict commercial development that conflicts with school facilities.

3. Restrict development of High Density Residential complexes abutting school sites.

4. Work with the school district and other area schools to develop and administer land use planning curriculum.

5. The school district shall coordinate its school location, facility construction and phasing with the City's development guidelines contained in the General Plan and the City's Capital Improvement Program to ensure that school facilities are located in areas where there are planned and programmed streets, sewerage, storm drainage systems and other necessary infrastructure.