

El Centro General Plan Update 2040

Land Use Element

June 2021

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1. Introduction

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE LAND USE ELEMENT

State law requires all jurisdictions in California to prepare and adopt a General Plan as a tool to manage growth and development. The Land Use Element is a mandatory element of the General Plan. The primary purpose of the Land Use Element is to establish the policy foundation that will direct future land use decision-making for El Centro and its Sphere of Influence (SOI) to achieve the community's long-range goals. It functions as a guide to policy makers, decision makers, the general public, and planners in the City regarding the desired pattern of land use and development through the 2040 planning period.

To assist local governments in preparing general plans and the public in participating in that process, the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) is required to develop and adopt guidelines for the preparation and content of the mandatory elements in general plans (Gov. Code § 65040.2) and periodically revises them. OPR adopted a comprehensive update of the guidelines in 2017, upon which this update is based. The General Plan Guidelines provide an excellent synopsis of the purpose of a Land Use Element and its long-term value to a community:

The land use element requirements provide an opportunity to determine the future of a community. By ensuring thoughtful, equitable, and accessible distribution of different densities, intensities, and land uses and by aligning with other general plan elements, the land use element can address long term environmental issues such as climate change, enhance local economies, reduce infrastructure costs, facilitate healthy lifestyles, improve air quality, increase transportation choices, create community resilience, also address emerging developments in technology, such as connected and autonomous vehicles, and resulting changes in land use, and promote quality housing for all residents of the community. (OPR General Plan Guidelines, pg. 53)

1.2 LEGAL BASIS AND REQUIREMENTS

California Government Code Section 65302(a) states that a land use element must designate the proposed general distribution, location, and extent of land uses for:

- Housing (including sites identified in the Housing Element to meet the City's fair share of regional housing needs at all income levels), business, and industry

- Open space, including agriculture, natural resources, recreation, and enjoyment of scenic beauty
- Recreation facilities and opportunities
- Educational facilities
- Public buildings and grounds
- Future solid and liquid waste disposal facilities,
- Greenways (as defined in Section 816.52 of the Civil Code)
- Timberland Preserve Zone lands, if applicable
- Areas subject to flooding, identified by either flood plain mapping prepared by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) or the Department of Water Resources or mapped flood areas adopted by the local community on Flood Insurance Rate Maps
- Military land use compatibility and impacts to military readiness, if applicable
- Other categories of public and private uses of land

The Land Use Element also must include a statement of the standards of population density and building intensity recommended for the various districts and other territory covered by the plan.

1.3 SCOPE AND CONTENT OF THE LAND USE ELEMENT

The City of El Centro Land Use Element complies with the requirements for land use elements mandated in Government Code Section 65302(a) and the General Plan Guidelines. The Land Use Element is comprised of three chapters: 1) Introduction, 2) Issues and Citywide Goals and Policies, and 3) the Land Use Plan, which includes the Land Use Policy Map that graphically identifies the planned land uses within El Centro and the SOI for the 2040 planning period. Specific implementation programs for the Land Use Element are located in the General Plan Implementation Program (Appendix A).

1.4 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; although not an exhaustive list, key plans and programs are summarized below.

California Environmental Quality Act

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) is a state statute that requires state and local agencies to identify the significant environmental impacts of their actions and to avoid or mitigate those impacts, if feasible. CEQA applies to certain activities of state and local public agencies. A public agency must comply with CEQA when it undertakes an activity defined by CEQA as a "project." A project is an activity undertaken by a public agency or a private activity which must receive some discretionary approval from a government agency which may cause either a direct physical change in the environment or a reasonably foreseeable indirect change in the environment.

Most proposals for physical development in California are subject to the provisions of CEQA, as are many governmental decisions which do not immediately result in physical development (such as adoption of a general or specific plan). Every development project which requires a discretionary governmental approval will require at least some environmental review pursuant to CEQA unless an exemption applies.

Southern California Association of Governments

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) is a Joint Powers Authority under California state law, established in 1965 as an association of local governments and agencies that voluntarily convene as a forum to address regional issues. SCAG is responsible for the regional planning in Southern California, within the SCAG region of counties, which 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 forecasts and growth policies at intervals

The SCAG region encompasses six counties (Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Ventura) and 191 cities in an area covering more than 38,000 square miles. Under federal law, SCAG is designated as a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and under state law as a Regional Transportation Planning Agency and a Council of Governments.

The agency develops long-range regional transportation plans, including the region's sustainable communities strategy, growth forecasts and growth policies for the SCAG region, regional transportation improvement programs, regional housing needs allocations for the Housing Element, and a portion of the South Coast Air

Quality management plans. SCAG adopted the 2020-2045 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS)—a plan know as Connect SoCal—in September 2020. Connect SoCal sets the framework for how

OVERALL LAND USE GOAL

A Land Use Plan that:

- Promotes the community's quality of life, health, and safety and meets the needs of El Centro's residents
- Supports multiple modes of transportation
- Fosters economic prosperity
- Provides a range of affordable housing options
- Is sustainable and environmentally responsible
- Encourages social cohesion and equity
- Reflects and celebrates El Centro's unique character, culture, identity, and traditions

transportation tax dollars will be spent in the SCAG region over the coming years and decades. SCAG's Imperial County Regional Office is located in El Centro.

El Centro *Vision 2050*

In 2015 the City Council adopted a strategic plan, called the *Vision 2050 Strategic Plan* (hereinafter referenced in this document as *Vision 2050*). *Vision 2050* presents the broad goals and strategies necessary to achieve the community's overall vision, which was expressed in a vision statement that was adopted by the El Centro City Council in 1998 and restated in *Vision 2050*. The vision statement (see the Executive Summary for the 2040 General Plan update) and *Vision 2050* provided a policy framework for this Land Use Element.

El Centro Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan

The City's Parks & Recreation Master Plan (2008) serves as a guide to the future development and improvement of parks and recreational facilities in El Centro. Its recommendations include increasing the parks and recreation standard (park acreage per 1,000 people) from three acres per 1,000 residents to five acres per 1,000 residents. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan also provides specific recommendations regarding the Civic Center and other cultural facilities.

1.5 RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER GENERAL PLAN ELEMENTS

State law requires internal consistency among the various elements of the General Plan. As a part of the 2040 General Plan update, the Mobility Element also is being updated and a new Environmental Justice Element is being prepared in accordance with Government Code Section 65302(h)(2); the policies for both documents are being directly coordinated with the update of the Land Use Element.

Housing Elements are required to be updated according to a state-mandated schedule, commonly referred to as "cycles." The City's 6th Cycle Housing Element is due in October 2021. While not technically a component of the 2040 General Plan update, the timing of City's 6th Cycle Housing Element provides the City the opportunity to coordinate that update with the Land Use, Mobility, and Environmental Justice Elements to accommodate the City's share of the RHNA in a

manner that ensures new residential development occurs in a sustainable manner and incorporates environmental justice policies. The policies of the other General Plan elements also have been considered to ensure consistency.

2. Issues, Opportunities, and Citywide Goals & Policies

2.1 OVERVIEW

Goals and policies provide the framework for the Land Use Element and guide future decision-making for the 2040 planning period. Goals are general statements of desired outcomes which reflect the community's aspirations for the future of El Centro. Policies serve as operational actions the City will take to achieve the goals. The overall land use goal (see sidebar) serves as a snapshot of the desired future and provides context for the individual goals and policies.

This chapter has been organized by topic. Each topic includes a summary of associated issues and opportunities, followed by related goals and policies that have been established to address these issues and opportunities at the citywide level. The issues, opportunities, goals, and policies have been developed based on public input, input from the Community Advisory Committee, and direction from the City Council; a community survey; and the Existing Conditions Report (March 2020, under separate cover) that was prepared for this update.

The Land Use Plan (Chapter 3) includes a section that focuses on Opportunity Areas (see Section 3.4). Each Opportunity Area (OA) also has policies that are tailored to the particular OA, which are in addition to the citywide goals and policies provided in Chapter 2.

2.2 CITYWIDE GOALS AND POLICIES

Balance of Land Uses

Achieving and maintaining a balanced mix of land uses has long been a priority for El Centro. A diverse range of land use types is necessary to generate public revenues to ensure the City's fiscal stability and provide needed public services and facilities, while creating a healthy, aesthetically pleasing community that meets the social and economic needs of El Centro's residents. For example, an appropriate balance of land uses helps allows people to live and work in the same community (also known as a jobs/housing balance). Not only does this improve residents' quality of life and reduce the cost burden of a long commute, but it also reduces travel time, which in turn reduces the level of air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions (GHG).

The Land Use Element provides a diverse mix of residential, commercial, industrial, mixed use, public and civic, and park, recreation, and open space opportunities for people to live, work, shop, and play. Achieving and maintaining the ideal balance of these land uses to achieve the community's overall vision is a fundamental goal of the Land Use Element. In addition to the goal, this section provides policies organized by land use category.

LUE GOAL 1: A balanced, sustainable, and equitable mix of land uses based on Smart Growth Principles to meet the social, economic, housing, health, educational, and quality of life needs of El Centro's residents.

Residential

Providing a variety of residential land uses that accommodate a range of housing types offers residents options to meet their particular personal and financial needs, whether it is a stand-alone single-family house, an apartment or townhouse, or a unit in a senior-oriented development. While many of the existing neighborhoods in El Centro are built out, others—especially in the low-medium and medium density designations—have unique lot sizes and shapes that have not been developed to their full potential. The city also has experienced sluggish rates of housing construction in recent years, and desires to encourage home-building to attract new residents. Housing affordability is another issue in El Centro, as approximately 24.6 percent of residents are considered to be in poverty.¹ The City's Housing Element will be

¹ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/elcentrocitycalifornia>

MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING

“A range of house-scale buildings with multiple units—compatible in scale and form with detached single-family homes...”



Duplex (side-by-side)



Duplex (stacked)



Fourplex (stacked)



Courtyard Building



Cottage Court

Source for definition & images:
www.missingmiddlehousing.com

updated several times within the planning period of the Land Use Element, which will require the City to demonstrate how it will accommodate the regional housing needs assessment (RHNA) and affordability targets provided for in the Housing Element, pursuant to state housing element law.

The Land Use Element provides opportunities to address these issues and help fulfill the community’s vision through a variety of methods, such as facilitating “Missing Middle”² housing in both existing and new neighborhoods to provide housing options along a spectrum of affordability (see sidebar); encouraging infill housing; correlating residential policies with other General Plan policies to encourage housing that is walkable, close to local services, parks and recreation facilities, and is adequately served by the City’s infrastructure and services; and accommodating anticipated population projections for the planning period.

LUE Policy 1.1: Provide for a variety of housing opportunities at a range of densities, housing types, and affordability levels to meet the needs of the community and implement the Housing Element.

LUE Policy 1.2: Protect and enhance existing residential neighborhoods by supporting safe, well-maintained housing, adequate parks and recreation facilities, and complete sidewalks and pedestrian/bike paths that connect to parks and recreation and neighborhood-serving uses.

LUE Policy 1.3: Facilitate a diverse range of house-scale buildings with multiple units, compatible in scale and form with detached single-family homes (also known as “Missing Middle” housing) in existing residential land use designations, new mixed use land use designations and overlays, as part of infill strategies, and in future development within the City’s SOI.

LUE Policy 1.4: Encourage developers to provide infill housing options in or near existing commercial centers and on or near commercial corridors to facilitate transition to a neighborhood-serving mix of uses that support walkability, alternative transportation options, and a reduction in vehicle miles traveled.

LUE Policy 1.5 Facilitate housing options that appeal to the community’s senior citizens and that attract retirees.

² <https://missingmiddlehousing.com/>

ARTISAN PRODUCTION

“Several converging trends indicate that demand in the artisan sector will continue to expand, including . . . interest in sourcing locally produced artisan goods, greater international and domestic tourism, increased global interest in home decorating, and increased willingness to pay a premium for distinctive (as opposed to mass-produced) goods.”



Pottery/Ceramics



Kitchen Incubator



Furniture Making

Source for quote: *The Alliance for Artisan Enterprise: Bringing Artisan Enterprise to Scale*
www.aspeninstitute.org

LUE Policy 1.6:

Continue to implement policies and programs for the El Dorado Colonia (see Section 3.7) that improve the quality of life for the residents, the infrastructure, and the visual appearance of the area, while preserving the unique history of the neighborhood.

LUE Policy 1.7:

Encourage construction of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) through measures such as streamlined permit processing, reduced fees, pre-approved model ADU plans, education, and other methods.

Commercial

A variety of types and sizes of commercial land uses are necessary to serve the day-to-day needs of the community's residents as well as support El Centro's role as a shopping and entertainment destination in the region. However, the changing nature of retail that has resulted from the growth in online sales, as well as the movement toward online services, is a national trend that could lead to an oversupply of commercial development in El Centro. Other trends noted throughout the Land Use Element and in the Existing Conditions Report provide El Centro an opportunity to be strategic during the Planning Period regarding the type, quantity, and location of commercially designated land in El Centro and the SOI and flexible regarding how commercial land uses are defined. For example, the rise in artisan production uses—which provide entrepreneurial opportunities and can help stimulate reinvestment in areas that have been suffering from disinvestment—is blurring the lines between traditional small-scale manufacturing land uses and commercial land uses (see sidebar). The Land Use Element encourages these uses through redesignation of properties in strategic locations in El Centro to a Heavy Commercial designation and adding them as allowable land uses in Downtown El Centro.

LUE Policy 1.8:

Achieve and maintain an appropriate balance, variety, and distribution of commercial uses that provides for the retail, business, professional, medical/dental, and other commercial and service needs of the City's residents and will attract customers and visitors from the region and beyond. Prioritize infill commercial development before redesignating non-commercial property to commercial land uses.

LUE Policy 1.9:

Encourage the development of local-serving commercial uses in proximity to adjacent residential neighborhoods to serve the day-to-day needs of El Centro's residents.

- LUE Policy 1.10:** Maintain and enhance the role that Downtown El Centro plays in distinguishing the City’s uniqueness through implementation of policies that capitalize on its strengths and embrace opportunities. Refer to Opportunity Area 2 for specific policies.
- LUE Policy 1.11:** Continue to be the regional destination for shopping, entertainment, and tourism.
- LUE Policy 1.12:** Monitor commercial land use trends during the Planning Period to position El Centro to be strategic regarding the type, quantity, and location of commercially designated land in the city and the SOI and to be flexible and responsive regarding commercial land uses to support El Centro’s economic prosperity.

Industrial

Industrial development historically drives economic growth, diversifies the local economy, and creates good-paying jobs. For these reasons, El Centro had a significant amount of industrially designated land; however, as noted in the Economic Development Element, there is an oversupply of industrially designated land in the city that remained vacant over the last planning period, some of which had a land use designation that was too restrictive. To address these issues, the updated Land Use Element streamlines the industrial land use designations, expands the types of allowable uses to provide the flexibility to respond to changes in the market, and reduces the overall amount of industrially designated land to be more reflective of anticipated demand.

- LUE Policy 1.13:** Ensure that industrial land use designations accommodate a variety of traditional, innovative, and creative industrial and technological land uses, with standards and incentives that enable El Centro to attract new jobs and revenues without compromising the environment or negatively impacting quality of life.
- LUE Policy 1.14:** Retain an appropriate amount of industrially designated land to ensure long-term opportunities for a range of employment opportunities that support a diverse economy and provide livable wages for El Centro’s residents.
- LUE Policy 1.15:** Allow the integration of compatible uses that complement the industrial uses and serve the needs of the employees, such as restaurants, health clubs, business service uses, etc.

MIXED USE

“Mixed-use makes for three-dimensional, pedestrian-oriented places that layer compatible land uses, public amenities, and utilities together at various scales and intensities. This variety of uses allows for people to live, work, play and shop in one place, which then becomes a destination for people from other neighborhoods.”



Vertical Mixed Use (Photo credit: Doug Dun/BAR Architects)



Horizontal Mixed Use



Live-Work Mixed Use

Source for quote:
<http://www.placemakers.com/2013/04/04/mixed-up-on-mixed-use/>

LUE Policy 1.16: 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.

LUE Policy 1.17: Protect existing residential neighborhoods that are in proximity to industrially designated land from potential impacts, such as noise, odors, and hazardous materials.

Mixed Use

As described in the sidebar, “mixed use” is not just a building type or development; it is a land use pattern that offers many social, economic, environmental, and quality-of-life benefits for a community such as: implementing smart growth and sustainability principles; supporting active transportation; providing the opportunity to add Missing Middle, affordable, and higher density housing without impacting existing neighborhoods; and lowering infrastructure costs. It also promotes infill development, allows for more efficient delivery of public services and infrastructure, supports a variety of mobility choices, and is another way to provide for a variety of housing opportunities within proximity of employment centers, grocery stores and other local-serving uses, and transit. Mixed use strategies are also highly effective to help redefine and reinvigorate areas that may be suffering from disinvestment, because the flexibility can encourage reuse and infill, and allow the community to respond to changing economic conditions.

While the Land Use Element encourages mixed use via a new land use designation and a new overlay, the mixed use concept can be applied in existing and new development and via city-wide policies (below) and targeted policies in Opportunity Areas (see Section 3.4).

LUE Policy 1.18: Utilize mixed use designations, overlays, and mixed use master plans and specific plans to promote compact, walkable, bikeable, and transit-oriented village-like developments and activity centers with a variety of active and passive open spaces that encourage social interaction and support community-enhancing events.

LUE Policy 1.19: Employ mixed use concepts and policies to encourage infill development, redevelopment, and revitalization of underutilized sites.

LUE Policy 1.20: Encourage intensification of development with a mix of complementary uses at or near key locations and intersections of key arterials, such as in identified Opportunity Areas (see Figure LUE-2), along certain corridors, and within walking distance of existing activity centers and neighborhoods.

**POCKET PARKS,
PARKLETS, &
PARCOURSES**

Parcourses can be added throughout the city along pathways & key corridors, through neighborhoods, in commercial and employment nodes, and in parks. Pocket parks/mini-parks and parklets, whether public or private, can be incorporated in certain commercial, neighborhood, and civic locations where conditions are appropriate.



Covered Parcourse



Parklet



Pocket Park

Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

Parks, recreation, and open spaces (collectively called parkland) provide social, health, environmental, economic, and cultural benefits to a community, and improve the quality of life for residents of all ages. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2008) calls for parks and recreational facilities to be within ½-mile of residential uses and includes the parkland standard of five acres/1,000 residents.

While parkland will be provided in new developments that occur on vacant property in the city and within the SOI, creative and innovative methods to expand the number of parks, recreation, open space, and public gathering spaces within developed areas of El Centro are needed to achieve the goals called for in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The Land Use Element supports the City’s Conservation and Open Space Element Parks and the Recreation Master Plan by designating parkland on the Land Use Policy Map and through overall policies and Opportunity Areas policies (see Section 3.4). Parkland policies in the Land Use Element also support the Mobility Element, the Active Transportation Plan (2018), and sustainability principles by emphasizing linkages between and through new and existing neighborhoods and developments via trails, linear parks, and pedestrian connections. Expanding parkland in existing neighborhoods also promotes equity and supports the Environmental Justice Element.

- LUE Policy 1.21:** Continue to implement the Parks and Recreation Master Plan as a guide for planning new parkland facilities and improving existing ones to meet the needs expressed by the community.
- LUE Policy 1.22:** The Land Use Element incorporates the developed parkland standard recommended in Parks and Recreation Master Plan of 5 acres per 1,000 residents.
- LUE Policy 1.23:** Utilize creative and innovative methods to expand opportunities to add parks, recreation facilities, open spaces, public gathering places, and community gardens into existing and new developments, especially in areas where existing facilities and uses are currently limited.
- LUE Policy 1.24:** In underserved areas, capitalize on opportunities to incorporate small parks, recreation, and open space facilities where possible as a way to expand parkland in a cost-effective manner and increase its access (see sidebar).

LUE Policy 1.25: Provide incentives for existing underutilized properties to redevelop around plazas that offer flexible urban spaces that provide opportunities for gathering, outdoor dining, food truck courts, pop-up retail, and music venues. Encourage new developments to incorporate these spaces and amenities in their original site designs. Incorporate amenities such as shade structures, shade trees, seating, and community art.

LUE Policy 1.26: Where possible, incorporate pedestrian connections within and through new and existing developments to link up with adjacent sidewalks and pedestrian and/or bike paths, and nearby developments and neighborhoods.

Public and Civic

Public and civic uses provide for the facilities, services, and infrastructure owned and/or operated by governmental or other public and quasi-public that are necessary to support and protect the community. They also guide and influence the manner in which a community grows. Public and civic uses include governmental offices, libraries, police and fire stations, schools, civic centers, court houses, hospitals, flood control channels, and other public uses of land. (Public parks, recreation facilities, and open space, which are also public and civic uses, are addressed above.) Ensuring that public and civic uses are distributed or available in an equitable manner promotes environmental justice (see EJ Element).

LUE Policy 1.27: Ensure that there is adequate land for new and existing state-of-the-art medical facilities to support the needs of the population as it grows and changes over time, inclusive of the El Centro Regional Medical Center, outpatient and preventative care, and other complementary health care services.

LUE Policy 1.28: Evaluate the need for and provide, as appropriate, additional public and civic land and resources to ensure public facilities, services, and infrastructure are available to serve the needs of the community in an equitable manner as the City grows.

LUE Policy 1.29: Continue to respond to the changing needs of the population, including age, family composition, economic and social factors, health, and environmental impacts. Ensure that the housing, transportation, health, education, and social needs of vulnerable populations (including seniors, children, youth, and the homeless) are considered in land use policies and decision-making.

SUSTAINABLE PLANNING PRINCIPLES

- Walkable, compact neighborhoods with a mix of land uses
- A variety of mobility choices
- Coordinated land use & transportation planning
- A range of affordable housing options in proximity to shopping, recreation, employment, & services
- Infill development to preserve open space, farmland, & environmental resources, & make efficient use of public infrastructure
- Building and site design that utilizes techniques to reduce energy consumption, conserve natural resources, & reduce pollution & mitigate GHG production



LUE Policy 1.30: Incorporate environmental justice (EJ) policies into land use and development decision-making at all levels.

Sustainability

Sustainable planning principles (see sidebar) , also known as “Smart Growth,” provide the framework for the Land Use Element and support *Vision 2050* for land use and development. In addition to the specific sustainability policies below, sustainable land use principles are incorporated in many policies throughout the Land Use Element and have been directly correlated with the Mobility Element. In addition to the benefits noted in the sidebar, land use that is based on Smart Growth principles also results in more equitable communities and promotes environmental justice.

LUE Goal 2: Land use and development patterns, policies, and practices that are sustainable and consistent with Smart Growth principles, conserve natural resources, and reduce pollution and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

- LUE Policy 2.1:** Coordinate the land use and mobility plans and policies to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and emphasize walking, biking, use of transit, and other types of low-emission, local-use modes of transportation as viable and affordable alternatives to the use of the personal automobile.
- LUE Policy 2.2:** Encourage the provision of multi-modal access to activity centers, such as public and civic facilities, commercial centers and corridors, employment centers, schools, parks and recreation facilities, tourist attractions, and transit stops.
- LUE Policy 2.3:** Encourage new and redeveloped projects to incorporate facilities that support bicycle use.
- LUE Policy 2.4:** Require new subdivision and development proposals of 40 acres or more to prepare a specific plan to ensure that site design is sustainable and incorporates and integrates appropriate General Plan goals and policies.
- LUE Policy 2.5:** Collaborate with developers to ensure the preservation of open space, farmland, and natural resources.
- LUE Policy 2.6:** Promote sustainable site design and building construction practices.
- LUE Policy 2.7:** Incorporate sustainable and Smart Growth principles in all new developments and, to the extent possible,

when updating existing developments to minimize adverse impacts of build-out on air quality, traffic, open space, water quality, energy, and other resources and optimize walkability, quality of life, and community vitality.

LUE Policy 2.8: Encourage installation of solar panels in new development, such as on rooftops and parking covers.

LUE Policy 2.9: Encourage new industrial development to use best available control technology to limit GHG emissions from stationary sources.

LUE Policy 2.10: Ensure that development projects are designed to divert waste from landfills to the extent possible, such as providing adequate space to accommodate adequate storage for recycling, green waste, food waste (as appropriate), etc.

LUE Policy 2.11: Adopt guidelines to incentivize new buildings to maximize energy conservation designs to promote passive solar energy generation, natural ventilation, effective use of daylight, and on-site electricity generation.

Balanced Growth Strategy

Directing where and how growth will occur during the planning period is a key function of the Land Use Element, as growth affects the community's quality of life, environmental implications, such as air quality and GHG emissions, and its economic well-being. It also impacts the ability of the City and other agencies to provide infrastructure and needed services in an efficient and cost-effective manner. The goals, policies, and Land Use Plan work together to direct and control anticipated growth within the city and SOI to achieve the community's vision. The growth strategy is twofold: 1) to encourage infill development; and 2) direct new growth to the Opportunity Areas (see Section 3.4) identified in this plan. Because land use and mobility are interdependent, the update of the Land Use Element has been correlated directly with the Mobility Element update. Refer to Section 3.9 for additional information regarding growth, development capacity, and the City's Urban Development Program.

LUE GOAL 3: A balanced and sustainable growth strategy consistent with El Centro's General Plan and the development capacity identified in the Land Use Plan.

LUE Policy 3.1: Encourage infill development within the City limits before expanding new development into the City's SOI to the extent feasible to make efficient use of land and

ENCOURAGING ENTREPRENEURSHIP

“As traditional economic development models shift from attracting outside corporations to fostering local entrepreneurship, pop-ups provide a way to highlight and energize makers’ spaces, small business incubators, and local artisans and restaurateurs.”



Pop-Up Market using PODS



Pop-Up Restaurant

Pop-Up Shop Marketplace
(Photo Credit: WWMТ/Mike)

Source for quote: Pop-Up Placemaking Toolkit,
<https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/livable-communities/tool-kits-resources/2019/pop-up-tool-kit/Pop-Up-Placemaking-Tool-Kit-112110w.pdf>

existing facilities and services and preserve open space and agricultural land.

LUE Policy 3.2:

Direct and control growth within the City boundary and SOI in coordination with the provision of public facilities and services through the application of the City’s Urban Development Program (UDP).

LUE Policy 3.3:

Direct focused change, revitalization, and/or growth in Opportunity Areas (see Section 3.4), both within the City and within the City’s SOI, to support a balanced and sustainable growth strategy.

LUE Policy 3.4:

Continue to require the preparation of Community Facilities Studies, at the expense of the project applicant, for certain projects consistent with the UDP to address existing conditions, anticipated needs, and financing plans for City public improvements, including but not necessarily limited to Mobility Element roadways affected by the proposed development, sidewalks, curbs and gutters, storm drains, and water and sewer lines, to ensure that new development pays its fair share of the cost of growth.

LUE Policy 3.5:

Coordinate with the County and Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) during review and development of projects within the City’s SOI to ensure that new development is compatible with existing development and occurs in appropriate locations when adequate public services and facilities are or can be made available.

LUE Policy 3.6:

Ensure that all undeveloped property that is annexed to the City pays for costs associated with providing required public improvements and services, unless the City determines there are demonstrated benefits to the City that outweigh some or all of the associated costs.

LUE Policy 3.7:

Pursue a variety of funding strategies, such as reimbursement agreements, improvement districts, and other finance strategies, to cost-effectively provide needed infrastructure, as deemed necessary by the City Council.

LUE Policy 3.8:

Update the City’s Service Area Plan (SAP) as needed to ensure that public facilities and services are anticipated, planned for, developed, and funded adequately and in a timely manner.

Economic Prosperity

Although the General Plan includes an Economic Development Element, it was not updated as a part of the 2040 General Plan update. While the existing Economic Development Element remains an active and relevant guide for El Centro's economy, the 2040 update of the Land Use Element considers recent economic issues and trends that could affect land use and addresses them via goals, policies, and changes to the Land Use Plan. The intent is to support the goals and policies in the Economic Development Element to promote a healthy and diverse local economy and help the City maintain a reliable revenue base. For example, the Land Use Element encourages economic growth with land use policies that retain and expand existing businesses; promote the emergence of new businesses, both small and large, in locations that provide optimal benefits to the community while protecting the environment; encourages entrepreneurship; directs growth to key Opportunity Areas; and capitalizes on El Centro's unique character and history by promoting cultural tourism.

LUE GOAL 4: A prosperous and vital economy with well-paying employment opportunities for current and future El Centro residents, a diversified and sustainable tax base, and a destination for shopping, tourism, healthcare, and opportunities for recreation, leisure, arts, and culture for the community, region, and beyond.

- LUE Policy 4.1:** Support El Centro's economic development strategies by providing an appropriate mix of land uses that supports growth industries in the Imperial Valley and is flexible enough to respond to changes in market conditions and accommodate innovative and creative uses, such as co-working spaces that combine industrial, commercial, and office uses.
- LUE Policy 4.2:** Balance the need to support existing businesses and encourage infill and reuse of existing underutilized or vacant properties within the City with need to position the City to attract new commercial, industrial, and tourism-focused uses.
- LUE Policy 4.3:** Update the Zoning Code to allow uses that both support entrepreneurship and activate and revitalize key areas of the city by incentivizing infill development and reuse of existing structures through small-scale, artisan manufacturing; maker-spaces and co-working uses; and pop-up retail, including food trucks.
- LUE Policy 4.4:** Conduct periodic economic analyses to ensure that land use plans and policies are aligned with local, regional, national, and international economic factors.

- LUE Policy 4.5:** Encourage infill development, redevelopment of under-utilized sites and re-use of existing buildings, especially those with interesting architectural features or historical significance, and private efforts to consolidate small, developmentally and economically constrained properties into larger sites. Provide incentives, such as: density and/or intensity bonuses, parking reductions, and other zoning incentives; and reduction of fees, expedited permit processing, improvement bonding, grants, and other economic development strategies.
- LUE Policy 4.6:** Promote cultural tourism by incorporating the arts, culture, and entertainment into El Centro’s economic development strategy. Promote public and/or private sponsored arts and cultural events and festivals and encourage public art installations on public and private property and incorporate it in the City’s capital improvement projects.
- LUE Policy 4.7** Position El Centro to be an attractive and affordable destination for retirees, whether they are “snowbirds” who only spend winters in the city or those who want to retire in an area that is affordable while still being close to large Southern California cities, Mexicali and the Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area.
- LUE Policy 4.8:** Consider allowing expansion of home occupation uses or creating a second tier of home occupation permit, which would allow for more intensive commercial activity while still retaining residential as the primary use.

Quality of Life, Health, Safety, and Compatibility

El Centro’s *2050 Vision* emphasizes the importance that quality of life, health, safety, and compatible development have on the type of future the community desires. For example, the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic, which began during the update process of the 2040 General Plan update, illustrates how significant an impact community health has on the well-being of residents and how so many facets of community life can be disrupted quickly, including medical services, education, employment, the availability of food and other goods that are necessary for day-to-day living, and gathering together to socialize, celebrate, play, and worship. Issues

related to environmental justice also have an impact on quality of life, health, and safety of the community. While people often think “bricks and mortar” when they think of land use, the goals, policies, and Land Use Plan have direct impacts on the

qualities that make a community a desirable place to live and work, and the degree to which the residents feel connected to and safe in their city.

LUE GOAL 5: A safe city where community members are healthy, have a high quality of life, and where environmental justice goals are routinely considered in land use policies and decision-making.

LUE Policy 5.1: Require developments to mitigate impacts on adjacent residential uses, such as making sure the uses and scale are compatible, installing vegetation and/or block walls at property lines, using setbacks, and ensuring site and building design mitigates potential noise-generation.

LUE Policy 5.2: Encourage the transition of existing impactful land uses that abut residences to local-serving uses that are compatible with residential and other sensitive uses, such as schools, recreation facilities, day care, etc.

LUE Policy 5.3: Utilize vegetation to help mitigate the impact of air pollution, including wind-born pollution and particulates. Require the installation of trees and/or vegetative buffers along the property lines of new development that is adjacent to and/or expands the City's boundary, between existing areas of incompatible uses, and in and near activity areas where people gather. Ensure that use of vegetation to mitigate impacts considers the safety factors addressed in LUE Policy 5.7.

LUE Policy 5.4: Require new subdivisions and development projects that are adjacent to existing agricultural operations to develop and implement buffering techniques to mitigate potential adverse impacts that may accompany agricultural activities and operations, including dust, chemicals, insects, odors, rodents, and noise.

LUE Policy 5.5: Ensure that future development in areas impacted by aircraft operations is consistent with the Imperial County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan, when it is updated; until then; applicable proposed actions will be analyzed pursuant to the Caltrans Handbook to enable the Imperial County Airport Land Use Commission to determine if they comply with current Caltrans regulations.

LUE Policy 5.6: Incorporate methods to provide shade and help mitigate heat impacts in public and private

PROVIDING SHADE IN A DESERT CLIMATE

Examples include:



Installing shade structures over outdoor seating/dining areas, walkways/sidewalks, & bus stops, and in public and private plazas, parks, & other gathering spaces



Employing building design to reduce the effect of heat, such as colonnades, light roofs, solar reflective pavement, building orientation, awnings, & misters



Planting desert-appropriate trees and other vegetation

development and facilities to the extent possible (see side bar).

LUE Policy 5.7: Encourage accessible, safe, shaded, and aesthetically pleasing pedestrian connections between residential and non-residential uses wherever possible and feasible.

LUE Policy 5.8: Emphasize safety considerations for existing and proposed public and private projects, including lighting, keeping vegetation trimmed (keep tree canopies trimmed up and shrubs trimmed low for improved visibility), and require the incorporation of CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) safety design techniques in all new and renovated developments.

LUE Policy 5.9: Continue El Centro's agricultural heritage and support healthy eating by encouraging "urban agriculture," such as small-scale horticulture, community gardens, and greenhouses. Allow urban agriculture to count toward minimum open space requirements.

LUE Policy 5.10: Require new development that is proposed adjacent to existing agricultural operations to develop and implement buffering guidelines to mitigate potential land use interface impacts related to odors, dust, insects, rodents, chemicals, and noise that may accompany the existing agricultural activities and operations.

LUE Policy 5.11: Support and provide opportunities for residents to participate in the arts, festivals, and community events that celebrate El Centro's identity, history, and heritage as ways to foster community involvement and enhance social cohesion and enhance quality of life.

Aesthetics, Design, and Community Character

How a community looks, from its neighborhoods and businesses to its streets, sidewalks, parks, and civic spaces, has an impact on its livability and ability to attract investment. While health and safety issues take precedence, ensuring that a community is attractive, well maintained, and distinctive, with a strong "sense of place," is also an important consideration, as these factors reflect the community's history, culture, and traditions and encourage residents to take pride in their city. Quality design that reflects a community's unique character also supports economic development in many ways, such as encouraging private investment and promoting cultural tourism. The Land Use Element recognizes the importance that aesthetics,

design, and community character have on strengthening El Centro’s cultural uniqueness, its long history of agriculture, and its American and Mexican traditions.

LUE GOAL 6: A distinctive identity and attractive, well-maintained appearance that reflects El Centro’s community pride, history, culture, and traditions.

- LUE Policy 6.1:** Promote new development that is compatible and consistent with El Centro’s community character and identity.
- LUE Policy 6.2:** Create an appealing community image and desirable quality of life to attract and retain businesses and institutions.
- LUE Policy 6.3:** Require that new development is designed to be distinctive and attractive with a strong sense of place.
- LUE Policy 6.4:** Create and implement cohesive design themes within identified Visual Enhancement Areas (see Section 3.8), which are intended to establish or improve the visual quality of particular areas, such as corridors, activity centers, new major developments, and opportunity areas.
- LUE Policy 6.5:** Implement a unified and coordinated gateway and wayfinding program that incorporates design features that highlight El Centro’s unique identity, including design themes developed for Visual Enhancement Areas as appropriate (see LUE Policy 6.4). Incorporate public art to the extent feasible.
- LUE Policy 6.6:** Establish partnerships between property owners, businesses, and the City to develop, fund, and implement public and private improvements within Visual Enhancement Areas, and actively pursue grant funding.
- LUE Policy 6.7:** Encourage and develop incentives for façade improvements.
- LUE Policy 6.8:** Through public-private partnerships, develop a plan to promote the arts, culture, and entertainment as an integral element of El Centro’s community identity, including ways the City can support and incentivize its implementation. Ensure the plan incorporates all forms of art, including visual, performing, cultural, industrial, culinary, entertainment and literary arts.
- LUE Policy 6.9:** Continue to implement the Single-Family Residential Overlay (see Figure LUE-2) to help preserve

neighborhoods that were developed in the early part of the 1920s and represent an important example of the historical character of El Centro.

LUE Policy 6.10:

Ensure properties are adequately maintained, both for safety and aesthetic reasons, by encouraging voluntary compliance whenever possible, and utilizing Code enforcement, as necessary.

3. Land Use Plan

3.1 OVERVIEW

A wide range of factors provided the framework for the update of El Centro's Land Use Plan, including the City's *2050 Vision*, community input, the nature and character of existing development, El Centro's setting within the larger region, environmental considerations, and correlation with the public infrastructure, with a focus on the interrelationship of land use and mobility. The Land Use Plan establishes clear and logical patterns of land use as well as provides direction to guide future development in a manner that will preserve and enhance El Centro's quality of life and enhance its economic viability.

The Land Use Plan includes the following sections:

- The Land Use Policy Map and Classification System
- Land Use Designations
- Opportunity Areas (OAs)
- Relationship with Zoning
- El Dorado Colonia
- Imperial County Airport Land Use Plan
- Visual Enhancement Areas
- Accommodating Future Growth

Terminology

The land use designations depicted on the Land Use Policy Map identify the type and nature of development allowed for a particular location. The land use designations, which are described in greater detail in Section 3.3, use certain urban planning terminology to define the extent to which the land use types can be developed—they are described by the terms *density* and *intensity*.

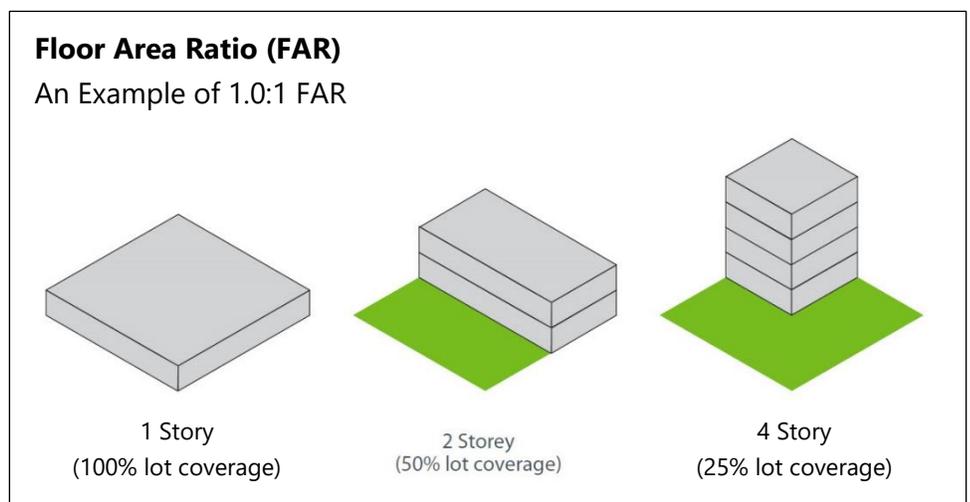
Density – Density is used for residential uses and refers to the development capacity of residential land. Within the Land Use Element, density is described in terms of dwelling units per acre of land (du/ac), exclusive of existing and proposed streets and rights-of-way. For example, 50 dwelling units occupying 5 acres of land is a density of 10 dwelling units per acre. The density that is applied to the various

land use designations controls the number of dwelling units that can be constructed on a parcel. Where a density range is provided, the larger number controls the maximum number of parcels while the smaller number controls the minimum number of parcels that can be constructed on the property. It is also used to describe the population capacity of land by multiplying the density by the average number of persons per household.

Intensity – Intensity is used for non-residential development and refers to the extent of development on a lot. Although most often used to describe non-residential development levels, in a broader context, intensity also can be used to describe overall levels of both residential and non-residential development types. In this Land Use Element, floor area ratio (defined below) and building floor area square footage are used as measures of non-residential development intensity.

Floor area ratio – Floor area ratio (FAR) expresses the intensity of development on a lot. FAR is expressed as a ratio between the total gross floor area (total square footage) of all buildings on a lot by the total land area of that lot. For example, a 20,000 square foot building on a 40,000 square foot lot yields an FAR of 0.5:1. The FAR standard controls the maximum floor area allowed regardless of the number of stories in the building. For example, a 1:1 FAR describes a single-story building that covers the entire lot, a two-story building covering 50 percent of the lot, or a four-story building covering 25 percent of the lot (see Figure LUE-1). Other development standards in the Zoning Code, such as maximum lot coverage, minimum setbacks, and maximum building height, will dictate how the allowable FAR is translated in the building's form.

Figure LUE-1: Illustration of FAR



3.2 LAND USE POLICY MAP AND CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

The Land Use Policy Map (Figure LUE-2) illustrates the intended use and distribution of land in the El Centro Planning Area, which includes all property within both the city limit and the SOI, during the 20-year planning period of this Land Use Element. The color-coded land use designations on the Land Use Policy Map are organized via a classification system that has 15 land use designations and four overlay designations. This classification system provides an ordered approach to land use development and maintenance of public uses and open space by identifying the types and nature of uses and development allowed in particular locations throughout the planning area.

The land use designations are grouped according to the following general categories: residential, which has four land use designations; commercial, which has five land use designations; mixed use, which has one land use designation; industrial, which has two land use designations; community facilities, which has two land use designations; and overlays, which has four specific types of overlays. A special study area also is included. Each land use designation provides general categories of permissible uses and development densities and intensities allowed. The maximum allowable development on individual parcels is governed by these indicators of density or intensity (as described in Section 3.1), which provide policy-level guidance for future development within the city and SOI.

General Plan Land Use

- City Limits
 - Sphere of Influence
 - Opportunity Area (OA)
- Land Use**
- Rural Residential
 - Low Density Residential
 - Medium Density Residential
 - High-Medium Density Residential
 - Master Planned Mixed Use
 - Mixed Use 1
 - General Commercial
 - Heavy Commercial
 - Tourist Commercial
 - Downtown Commercial
 - Neighborhood Commercial
 - Office Commercial
 - General Industrial
 - Light Industrial
 - Civic
 - Public
- Overlays**
- Mixed Use 2 Overlay
 - Single Family Overlay
 - Medical Office Overlay
 - El Centro Regional Medical Center Overlay

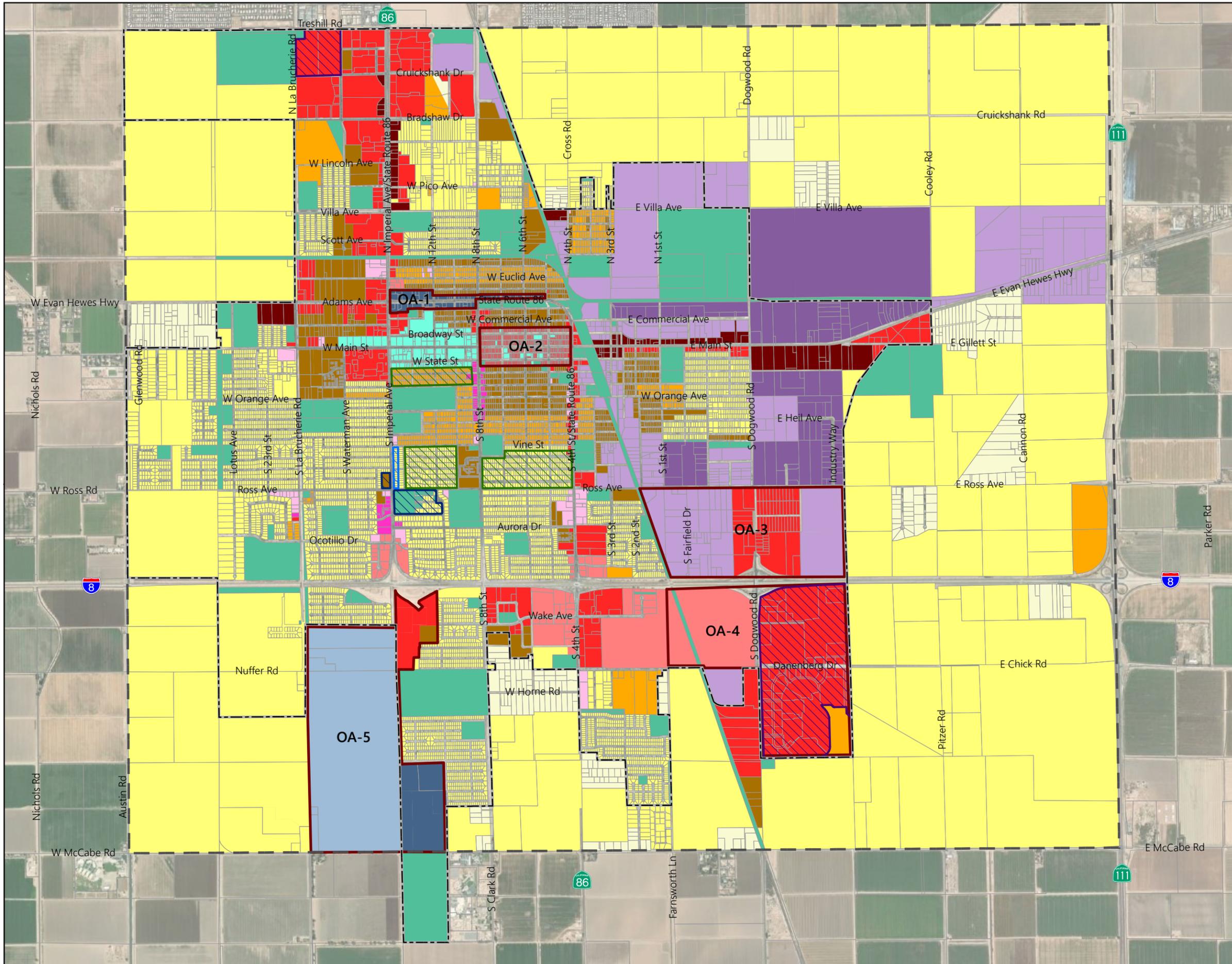


FIGURE LUE-2
 0 1,500 3,000 Feet
 NORTH

A summary of the land use designations with their corresponding density/intensity indicators is provided in Table LUE-1. Section 3.3 describes the 15 land use designations within the El Centro Planning Area in greater detail.

Table LUE-1: Land Use Classification System

Land Use	Maximum DUs/Net Acre	Maximum FAR/Net Acre	Summary Description of Land Use Designations ³
Residential Land Use Designations			
Rural Residential	2 DU ⁴	N/A	Single-family detached dwelling units and ADUs ⁴ ; small agricultural operations & rural-oriented residences and out-buildings
Low Density Residential	6 DU ⁴	N/A	Single-family detached dwelling units, ADUs, & accessory buildings
Medium Density Residential	12 DU ⁴	N/A	Single-family detached dwelling units, ADUs, mobile home parks, duplexes, or multiple-family units
High-Medium Density Residential	25 DU ⁴	N/A	Variety of multiple-family units
Commercial Land Use Designations			
General Commercial	N/A	0.4:1	Retail, light service, and general business, as well as large-scale planned shopping districts serving the local and regional area; where appropriate, motel/hotel & public assembly uses
Neighborhood Commercial	N/A	0.25:1	Retail & service-oriented uses serving the needs of local neighborhoods
Office Commercial	N/A	0.40:1	Professional, administrative, & medical/dental offices, medical care centers, & ancillary services
Heavy Commercial	N/A	0.50:1	General commercial uses, business & consumer services, & light manufacturing
Tourist Commercial	N/A	1.0:1	Motels, resort hotels, related commercial & tourist oriented uses, retail & freeway-oriented uses; multiple-family residential may be permitted
Downtown Commercial	N/A	3.0:1	Commercial, entertainment, & office uses
Mixed Use Land Use Designation			
Mixed Use 1:			Multiple-family residential, live/work, & retail & service-oriented uses serving the needs of local neighborhoods; allows mixed use, stand-alone residential, stand-alone commercial developments
• Commercial only	N/A	0.3:1	
• Residential only	25 DU ⁵	N/A	
• Mixed Use	25 DU ⁵	1.0:1	
Industrial Land Use Designation			
Light Industrial	0.40:1	N/A	Fabrication, manufacturing, assembly or processing of materials in refined form, select business & related establishments
General Industrial	0.45:1	N/A	Development of manufacturing processes, fabrication, & assembly of goods

³ See Section 3.3 for a more detailed description of allowable land uses

⁴ Accessory dwelling units allowed per Government Code Section 65915

⁵ Allows a maximum of 32 DU/AC for senior-only projects or senior portion of a project

Community Facilities Land Use Designations			
Civic		1.5:1	Local governmental offices, state & federal facilities, privately owned & operated property including professional offices, financial institutions, & restaurants located within the City's Civic Center area
Public		0.4:1	Parcels owned by the City of El Centro, Imperial Irrigation District, school districts, or El Centro Regional Medical Center containing police & fire departments, libraries, sewer facilities, flood control basins, parks & recreation facilities, cemeteries, museums, etc.
Overlays:			
Single Family Neighborhood Overlay	As per base land use designation		Single-family detached dwelling units and ADUs
El Centro Regional Medical Center (ECRMC) Overlay	Per Master Plan for ECRMC		El Centro Regional Medical Center providing for expansion of the existing campus in accordance with an adopted Master Plan; existing single-family residences remain conforming uses
Medical Office Overlay	6 DU	0.5:1	Allows existing single-family residences to remain as legal conforming or transition to medical office; allows live/work (combined residential & medical office uses)
Mixed Use 2 Overlay:			Multiple-family residential, live/work, & retail & service-oriented uses serving local community, & regional needs; allows mixed use, stand-alone residential, stand-alone commercial developments
• Commercial only	0.4:1	N/A	
• Residential only	30 ⁶ DU	N/A	
• Mixed Use	30 ⁶ DU	1.5:1	
Special Planning Area—Master Planned Mixed Use	TBD via a specific plan if/when property is annexed into the City		Applies to property within a portion of OA-5 in the SOI; anticipates a wide range of residential, commercial, public, and/or civic uses in an integrated, walkable, village-like setting

3.3 LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

Residential Land Use Designations

The Land Use Plan provides for a wide variety of housing types, densities, and affordability options to meet the personal and financial needs of El Centro's existing and future residents. The Land Use Plan includes four residential land use designations, which are geographically indicated on the Land Use Policy Map. The residential designations range from single-family to multi-family units of varying densities and development types, including Missing Middle housing. In addition to identifying the distribution of residential uses in El Centro, the residential land use designations also implement housing policy in the City's Housing Element, which should be considered in association with the Land Use Element. Note that wherever residential uses are allowed, maximum density may be exceeded in accordance with

⁶ Allows a maximum of 38 DU/AC for senior-only projects or senior portion of a project

density bonus provisions of Section 65915 of California Government Code and Article IV, Division 4, of Title 29 of the ECMC). The residential designations are described below.

Rural Residential (RR)

Purpose and Intent: Provides for large lot rural residential uses. A maximum of one detached single-family dwelling unit is permitted as the primary residence, with accessory dwelling units permitted consistent with the requirements of the City's Zoning Code and Section 65915 of the California Government Code. Uses such as mobile and modular homes, accessory buildings, public facilities, and other uses that are compatible with and oriented toward serving the needs of rural single-family neighborhoods also may be allowed.

This designation originally provided 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. With this Land Use Element update, the only locations of RR-designated land are within the area designated as "extended approach/departure zone" under the Imperial County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (see Figure LUE-9) where risk factors have been identified that result in the need for restricted density; and within the SOI.

Maximum Density: 2 dwelling units per net acre

Low Density Residential

Purpose and Intent: Provides for the preservation of existing single-family residential neighborhoods and the establishment of new ones.

A maximum of one detached single-family dwelling unit is permitted as the primary residence, with accessory dwelling units permitted consistent with the requirements of the City's Zoning Code and Section 65915 of the California Government Code. Uses such as mobile and modular homes, accessory buildings, public facilities, and other uses that are compatible with and oriented toward serving the needs of low-density single-family neighborhoods also may be allowed.

Maximum Density: 6 dwelling units per net acre

Medium Density Residential

Purpose and Intent: Provides for the development of single-family detached and attached dwelling units, duplexes, mobile home parks, and multi-family dwelling units, such as townhouses and condominiums. Accessory dwelling units are permitted consistent with the requirements of the City's Zoning Code and Section 65915 of the California Government Code. Uses such as mobile and modular homes, accessory buildings, public facilities, and other

uses that are compatible with and oriented toward serving the needs of medium-density residential neighborhoods also may be allowed.

Maximum Density: 12 dwelling units per net acre

High-Medium Density Residential

Purpose and Intent: 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 uses which are compatible with and oriented toward serving the needs of high medium density residential neighborhoods may also be allowed.

Maximum Density: 25 dwelling units per net acre

Commercial Land Use Designations

Five commercial land use designations (described below) are provided for in the Land Use Element and geographically indicated on the Land Use Policy Map. The commercial land use designations provide for a variety and intensity of goods and services to serve the needs of El Centro residents, as well as support the City's economy by attracting shoppers from the surrounding region and beyond. Both the various types of commercial land use designations and their geographic distribution take into consideration the impact on adjacent land uses, with an emphasis on protecting more sensitive land uses from externalities such as excessive noise, light, smells, potentially hazardous materials, and traffic, while encouraging pedestrian and bicycle access in all commercial districts.

General Commercial (CG)

Purpose and Intent: Provides for general business, light service, and retail uses, as well as large-scale planned shopping districts serving the local and regional area and population and, where appropriate, motel/hotel and public assembly uses.

Maximum Intensity: 0.40:1 FAR

Neighborhood Commercial (CN)

Purpose and Intent: Provides for retail and service-oriented business activities serving a neighborhood and local community area to increase convenience and reduce vehicle miles travelled. Other uses that are determined to be compatible with primary uses, such as public facilities, also may be allowed.

Maximum Intensity: 0.25:1 FAR

Office Commercial

Purpose and Intent: Provides for the establishment of professional and administrative offices, and medical/dental care offices and centers and ancillary services, with appropriate landscaping and development standards that provide compatibility for such uses near residential areas.

Maximum Intensity: 0.40:1 FAR

Heavy Commercial (CH)

Purpose and Intent: Provides for general commercial uses, business, and consumer services, and artisan production/manufacturing with associated retail. Operations within this designation are to be conducted within enclosed buildings when adjacent to residential uses.

Maximum Intensity: 0.50:1 FAR

Tourist Commercial (CT)

Purpose and Intent: Provides for commercial, service, and amusement uses serving both local and long-distance travelers and tourists, including motels, resort hotels, and related commercial and tourist uses, such as service stations, sit-down restaurants, and fast-food restaurants with drive-in or drive-through service. Local- and regional-serving amusement and entertainment uses, theme parks, and a variety of sports uses, such as indoor and outdoor golf courses and driving ranges, rock climbing, and indoor raceways, are also appropriate. Recreational vehicle (RV) resorts, active senior residential communities, multi-family residential development, 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.

Maximum Intensity: 1.0:1 FAR

Downtown Commercial (CD)

Purpose and Intent: Provides for the urban form and mix of land uses that create an energized, revitalized downtown that is a destination magnet for visitors and residents alike, and supports entrepreneurship, innovation, arts, and culture which celebrate the history and spirit of El Centro. Appropriate uses include retail; entertainment; dine-in and take-out restaurants and indoor and outdoor cafés; markets and delis; brew pubs; small craft breweries and distilleries with tasting rooms; individual and shared artist studios (including production and retail/galleries); individual and shared artisan production/manufacturing with associated retail space (includes makerspaces and incubators, such as kitchen incubators); performing arts spaces; personal services, and office uses. Temporary uses that activate underutilized spaces, such as pop-up businesses and events and food trucks and food courts, are

appropriate in the Downtown. Development in this area shall comply with the City's Downtown El Centro Design Standards. Refer to Opportunity Area 2 in Section 3.4 for additional guidance and policy direction.

Maximum Intensity: 3.0:1 FAR

Industrial Land Use Designations

The Industrial category includes two land use designations: Light Industrial and General Industrial, which are geographically defined on the Land Use Policy Map. Industrially designated land provides employment opportunities and supports long-term economic viability and revenue generation.

Light Industrial

Purpose and Intent: 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, or produce products that pose a danger when located in proximity to residential uses (such as explosives). Also provides for breweries and distilled spirits manufacturers, and warehouses and warehouse distribution centers, and commercial production greenhouses. This designation also allows for other employment-intensive uses, such as campus-style office and business parks, research and development, medical office campuses, and makerspaces, co-workspaces, and incubator spaces. Most operations within this designation are conducted within enclosed buildings.

Maximum Intensity: 0.4:1 FAR

General Industrial (IG)

Purpose and Intent: 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 detectible beyond the boundary of the land use designation borders. Allows the processing of materials that are not in refined form but 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. Allows large and community-scale composting and anaerobic digestion operations, and other similar operations. Certain outdoor operations are permitted with this land use, except when adjacent to residential uses.

Maximum Intensity: 0.45:1 FAR

Mixed Use Land Use Designation

Mixed use land use designations allow and encourage a variety of compatible residential and non-residential land uses in proximity to one another to create or reactivate vibrant areas for living, working, shopping, and recreating. Mixed use principles can be applied to new development on vacant property, which allows the benefits of mixed use to be incorporated into the original design to create a well-integrated project.

The typical land uses are a combination of residential with commercial, light industrial, civic, and public/quasi-public. The mix of uses can occur within a single structure, on a single parcel but not within a single structure, or within an area of multiple individually owned parcels, such as along a corridor and in a node. Mixed use development may be vertical (residential above non-residential uses) or horizontal (residential behind or beside non-residential uses).

While the Land Use Plan has only one mixed use land use designation (Mixed Use 1), which is described below, the mixed use concept is being implemented via the Mixed Use 2 Overlay and a Special Planning Area for certain property within the City's SOI, both of which are described later in this section. The City may determine in the future that other areas within the Planning Area would benefit from additional mixed use land use designations.

Mixed Use 1 (MU-1)

Purpose and Intent: Provides for a mix of multi-family residential, live/work, and non-commercial uses to support an active, neighborhood- and local-serving corridor, area, or activity center. A variety of housing options along a continuum of medium to high-medium densities are encouraged to provide affordable housing for a range of household types. It provides for smaller-scale commercial uses that serve and are compatible with residential neighborhoods, such as retail, grocery stores, pharmacies, financial institutions, cafes and restaurants, offices, personal service uses, and dry cleaners/laundromats. Artisan manufacturing and small motels/hotels also may be appropriate. This designation encourages, but does not require, an integrated mix of residential and commercial uses on the same parcel. Stand-alone multi-family residential development is permitted, as is stand-alone non-residential development. Outdoor dining and gathering spaces are encouraged.

Design should support walkability within an individual project and throughout the mixed use corridor area, with an emphasis on facilitating pedestrian, bicycle, and transit connections. Along roadways with alleys, vehicle access and parking should be taken from the alley and curb cuts should be minimized to the extent possible.

Because mixed use development includes both residential and non-residential uses, the designation includes both density and intensity standards.

Maximum Intensity: Stand-alone commercial: 0.3:1 FAR
Mixed use (including live/work): 1.0:1

Maximum Density: Stand-alone residential or the residential portion of a mixed-use development: Minimum 12 dwelling units per net acre to a maximum of 25 dwelling units per net acre; allows up to a maximum of 32 DU/AC for senior-only projects or senior portion of a project

Community Facilities Land Use Designations

The Community Facilities category includes two land use designations—Civic Center and Public Community Facilities. They are described below.

Civic Center

Purpose and Intent: Provides for the development of public and private facilities within the City’s civic center area. This designation includes major local government offices, State and federal facilities, as well as privately owned property, including professional offices, financial institutions, and restaurants. The Civic Center 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 in governmental activities of the entire Imperial County region.

Maximum Intensity: 1.5:1 FAR

Public Community Facilities

Purpose and Intent: Includes parcels under public or quasi-public ownership, such as parcels owned 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, library, sewage facilities, parks and recreation facilities, community centers, 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; noncommercial community gardens; 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 may be required to underground the drains and canals, or other alternatives may be considered, to promote public safety with the approval of the IID. The covered ROWs along drainage

facilities should be developed for pedestrian and bicycle corridors where appropriate.

Maximum Intensity: 0.40:1

Overlay Designations

An overlay designation is a designation that is applied over another “base” or underlying land use designation to promote or encourage certain uses and/or types of developments identified in the particular overlay. The El Centro Land Use Plan has four overlays (shown on Figure LUE-2): Single-Family Neighborhood, El Centro Regional Medical Center, Medical Office, and Mixed Use 2. The Single-Family Neighborhood Overlay does not impact the allowable base use; instead, it provides policy guidance for design if properties recycle during the planning period. The remaining three overlays allow, but do not require, additional land uses beyond those allowed by the base designation. The intent is to provide opportunities for land use and/or site design flexibility, to meet unique community needs, and to further implement policy guidance provided in the Goals and Policies section of the Land Use Element. (Note: The El Centro Regional Medical Center, Medical Office, and Mixed Use 2 overlays will require additions to the Zoning Code for implementation.)

Single-Family Neighborhood Overlay

Purpose and Intent: The area depicted by the Single-Family Neighborhood Overlay (see Figure LUE-2) consists of older residential neighborhoods that were developed in the early 1920’s. 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, contemporary homes or multiple-unit housing. To help preserve these neighborhoods, property designated with the Single-Family Neighborhood Overlay will need to be maintained as single-family units. In the event that an existing 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.

Maximum Density: Refer to the base land use designation for the density

El Centro Regional Medical Center (ECRMC) Overlay

Purpose and Intent: The El Centro Regional Medical Center, located within El Centro, is a 161-bed, acute-care medical center serving the health care needs of the Imperial Valley. As the ECRMC has grown over the years, its campus has expanded to accommodate new services and facilities and associated parking. The constraints of the existing location have necessitated the expansion of the campus into the residential neighborhood to the east, which requires redesignation and rezoning of property to allow the change in use.

Rather than continue to expand in a piecemeal manner, the ECRMC Overlay (see Figure LUE-2) anticipates continued expansion during this planning period and provides an overlay to guide the growth. The underlying land use designations remain the same, so that all property within the ECRMC Overlay retains legal conforming status.

The ECRMC will be implemented by a master plan, which requires review and approval consistent with the City's procedures for discretionary review.

Maximum Intensity: As provided pursuant to an approved master plan.

Medical Office Overlay

Purpose and Intent: Provides options for property in the Medical Office Overlay (see Figure LUE-2) to transition to medical office, remain single-family residential, or allows a combination of both uses in a live/work project. The high traffic volumes and this area's proximity to the ECRMC provides an opportunity to allow the residences to transition to a medical office use that is compatible with the ECRMC to the south. The underlying single-family residential land use designation remains in place to provide legal conforming land use status. Parcels that are redeveloped to medical office and live/work (medical office use) are encouraged to take access from the alley to the east of the overlay area and to close existing driveways that take access from Imperial Avenue to improve traffic flow and safety.

Maximum Intensity: Stand-alone medical office: 0.5:1 FAR
Live/work: 1.0:1

Maximum Density: Single-family residential or live/work: 6 dwelling units per acre

Mixed Use 2 Overlay

Purpose and Intent: Provides for a mix of Missing Middle, multi-family residential, and non-commercial uses to support an active, community- or regional-serving serving corridor, area, or activity center. A variety of housing options along a continuum of high-medium to higher densities are encouraged to provide affordable housing for a range of household types. It provides for medium- to large-scale commercial uses that serve local, community, and regional needs, consistent with general and tourist commercial type uses. Because more intensive commercial uses are allowed, sensitivity to adjacent residential uses is a key priority. This overlay (see Figure LUE-2) encourages, but does not require, an integrated mix of residential and commercial uses on the same parcel. Stand-alone multi-family residential development is permitted, as is stand-alone non-residential development. A wide variety of types and sizes of community gathering spaces are encouraged, and recreational and natural open spaces should be fully

integrated within and throughout the development. Design should support walkability within an individual project and throughout the mixed use area, with an emphasis on facilitating pedestrian, bicycle, and transit connections.

Because mixed use development includes both residential and non-residential uses, the designation includes both density and intensity standards.

Maximum Intensity: Stand-alone commercial: 0.4:1 FAR
Mixed use (including live/work): 1.2:1

Maximum Density: Stand-alone residential or the residential portion of a mixed-use development: Minimum 21 dwelling units per net acre to a maximum of 30 dwelling units per net acre; allows up to a maximum of 38 DU/AC for senior-only projects or senior portion of a project

Special Planning Area

Master Planned Mixed Use

Purpose and Intent: The Land Use Plan (see Figure LUE-2) includes a Special Planning Area that is proposed for a portion (Area C) of Opportunity Area 5 (see Section 3.4 which describes Opportunity Areas). While much of the land within the City's SOI is designated Low Density Residential until it is annexed, the future extension of Imperial Avenue during the planning period is expected to put development pressure on this currently undeveloped area. Leaving approximately 400 acres of land designated Low Density Residential in Opportunity Area 5 was not a realistic assumption. The intent of the Master Planned Mixed Use Special Planning Area is to provide guidance for how future development should occur if the area is annexed, with an emphasis on sustainability and Smart Growth principles. It replaces the former Low Density Residential land use designation for this area the Special Planning Area—Master Planned Mixed Use, as summarized below and described further in OA-5 (see Section 3.4).

Use, Density, and Intensity Assumptions: A potential build-out assumption was made for the Special Planning Area to guide future land use decisions and to ensure that the traffic modeling that was done for the 2040 General Plan update considered both the type and intensity of potential development. While actual density and intensity standards will be established for this area if it is annexed within the planning period, the following density and intensity thresholds provide the City the opportunity to be proactive in anticipating and planning for potential growth and to consider potential build-out in the CEQA review for this General Plan update. (Note that, for

planning and modeling purposes, the build-out assumption assumes 85 percent net area.)

- Assumes approximately 20 percent of net area will develop with a combination of commercial/office/services and other compatible uses at .25 FAR (average).
- Assumes approximately 60 percent of net area will develop with at an *average* density of 8.5 du/ac across the entire area. The expectation is that a full range of residential types and densities will be provided, including but not limited to attached and detached single-family residential, small-lot single-family residential, cottage/court style housing, townhouses, duplexes, triplexes, quads, stacked flats (apartments), accessory dwellings, live/work units, and senior housing (anticipates higher density).
- Assumes approximately 10 percent of net area will be developed with a combination of open space and recreation.
- Assumes approximately 10 percent of net area will be developed as public/quasi-public use, such as school, medical facility, governmental use, etc.

Other Land Use and Development Tools

Specific Plans

A specific plan is a tool allowed for by State law (Government Code Section 65450-65457) that establishes a link between implementing policies of the General Plan and individual development proposals in a defined area covered by the General Plan. The specific plan process provides for a more comprehensive planning process for the target area and improved correlation between land use and mobility; ensures that site design is sustainable and incorporates and integrates appropriate General Plan goals and policies; and allows for flexibility in the design of development plans

while addressing unique site issues and opportunities. The specific plan process also can 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. The City encourages developers to utilize specific plans when designing new projects, especially those that will include larger areas of land. LUE Policy 2.4 would require a specific plan to be prepared for development of 40 acres or more.

Planned Unit Developments

The City encourages the use of Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) 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, such as agricultural land and open space. To offset this flexibility in development standards, PUDs are required to incorporate amenities and features not normally required of standard residential developments.

3.4 OPPORTUNITY AREAS

Opportunity Areas (OAs) identify locations where the City wants or anticipates land use change or growth to occur during the planning period (see LUE Figure 2). Several OAs are areas of existing development that can benefit from targeted plans and policies to help guide transformation, while others are proposed for property that either has not yet been developed and/or where growth is expected or proposed to occur.

Each OA has a vision and policies to guide future planning, which emphasize the principles of Smart Growth, sustainability, community identity, placemaking, and creating physical and social connections. A key element of each OA is the correlation of land use and site design with proposed improvements to the mobility infrastructure, including right-sizing existing roadways, adding new roadways, improving sidewalks, adding multi-use trails and bicycle facilities, and facilitating transit.

OA-1 CONCEPTS



Mixed Use



Live/Work



Restaurant w/outdoor dining



Laneway housing (off an alley)



Multi-family housing

OA-1: Adams Avenue Mixed Use Village District

Vision: The Adams Avenue Opportunity Area (see Figure LUE-3) is a lively, compact, walkable and bikeable, transit-accessible, mixed-use area that provides a variety of new housing options and neighborhood commercial uses and services for existing and new residents. Revitalization will capitalize on the proximity to the Civic Center District, Downtown El Centro (OA-2), the Aquatic Center, and the Skate Park by orienting new development to the street to take advantage of an enhanced pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and attractive streetscape. Innovative land uses and development types, flexible development standards, emphasis on quality building and site design, and creation of a Visual Enhancement Area plan for the Adams Avenue OA will encourage infill development and re-use of under-utilized properties and stimulate investment. Buildings will be encouraged to be oriented toward the street and to incorporate paseos and open spaces for gathering and dining to create a lively environment for patrons and residents.

OA-1 Policies

- Policy OA-1.1:** Update the Zoning Code to establish new allowable land uses, development standards, and design guidelines to implement the vision and policies for this OA. Allow commercial-only, residential-only, live/work, and mixed-use development. Allow mixed-use development to be vertical (above) and horizontal (behind or next to, attached or detached) the non-residential portion of the development. Allow density and/or FAR for this OA to exceed the density and intensity standards for the Mixed Use 1 land use designation if the project demonstrates superior design features, amenities, and/or other benefits to the community.
- Policy OA-1.2:** Encourage a mix of housing types, such as rowhouses, apartments, lofts, live/work units, laneway housing, senior housing and accessory dwelling units/junior accessory dwelling units. Existing motels can become residential-only or mixed-use projects. New detached single-family units are not permitted as a primary use.
- Policy OA-1.3:** Orient all new development to front on Adams Avenue with limited setbacks, except for courtyards, outdoor dining spaces, and other public or private open spaces.
- Policy OA-1.4:** Locate parking lots, garages, and parking structures off alleys where possible. Minimize new curb cuts/driveways on Adams Avenue to the extent feasible.

- Policy OA-1.5:** Consider reducing parking requirements in this OA due to the proximity to the transit center in Downtown El Centro, improved pedestrian access, and new bike lanes.
- Policy OA-1.6:** Improve the alleys to facilitate alley access, encourage laneway housing, and improve public safety. Consider implementing “green alley” infrastructure if feasible.
- Policy OA-1.7:** Develop a Visual Enhancement Area plan for this OA. Incorporate planned public improvements and design guidelines for private development to achieve an attractive theme for the OA.
- Policy OA-1.8:** Ensure that linkages to downtown, (including the transit center), Civic Center District, adjacent neighborhoods, Aquatic Center, etc., are emphasized and incorporated into a wayfinding plan for the area.
- Policy OA-1.9:** Adams Avenue, which traverses through Opportunity Area 1, is designated as a Four-Lane Arterial with cycle tracks (Class IV) planned on both sides. With the mixed uses planned for the area, implementation of pedestrian treatments is a priority to improve pedestrian safety and overall walking experience. Adams Avenue is also a truck route, so providing buffers between the roadway and pedestrians and pedestrian-oriented uses is a priority. See Pedestrian Treatment Toolbox in Section 3.1 of the Mobility Element.

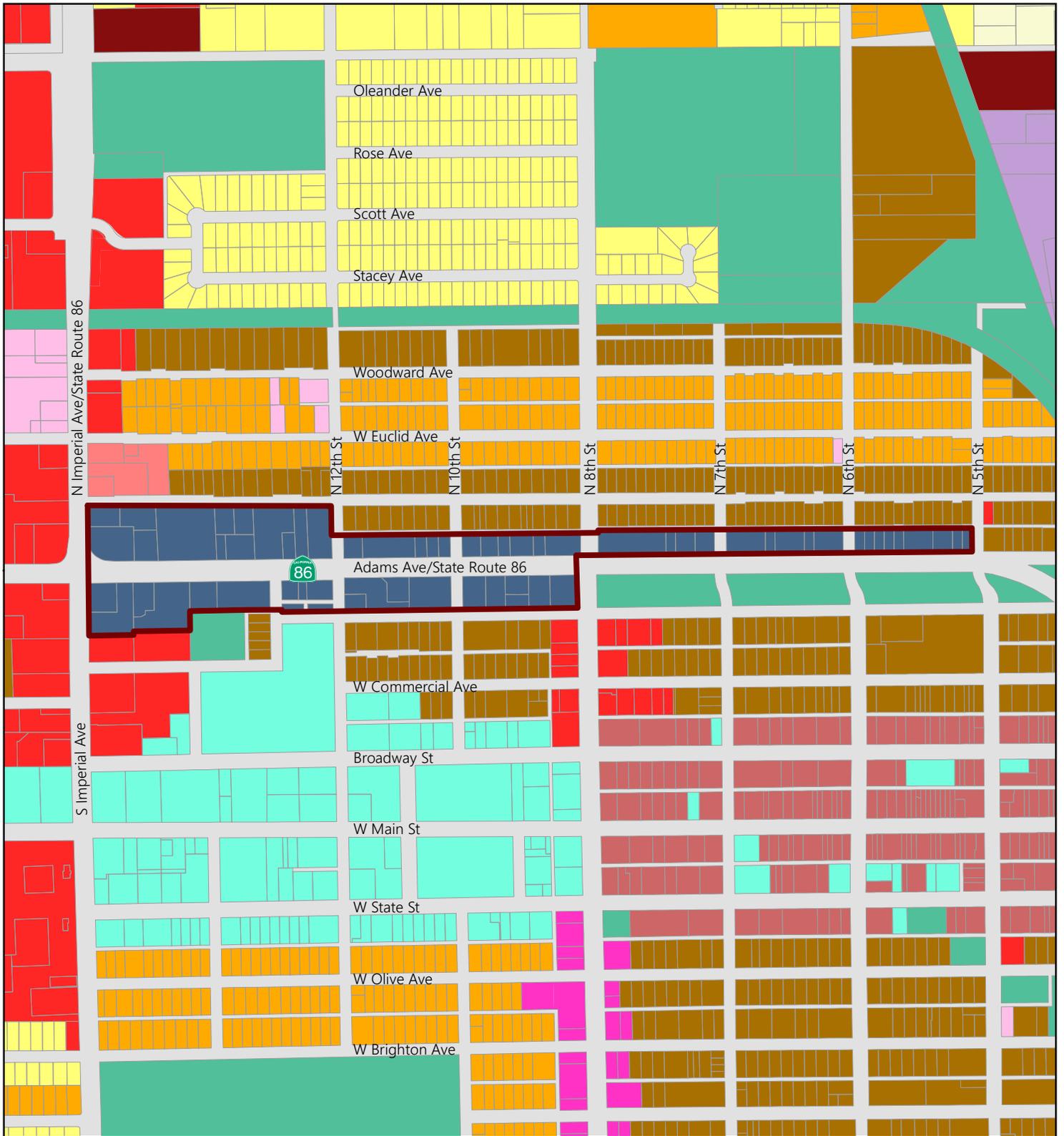
Adams Avenue at Imperial Avenue, looking east



Existing view



Rendering of proposed view



- | | |
|---|---|
|  Opportunity Area 1 |  Heavy Commercial |
| Land Use |  Tourist Commercial |
|  Rural Residential |  Downtown Commercial |
|  Low Density Residential |  Neighborhood Commercial |
|  Medium Density Residential |  Office Commercial |
|  High-Medium Density Residential |  Light Industrial |
|  Mixed Use 1 |  Civic |
|  General Commercial |  Public |

Opportunity Area 1



FIGURE LUE-3

0 350 700 Feet

OA-2 CONCEPTS



Food trucks & courts



Attractive & active alleys



Festivals and events



Breweries w/outdoor seating



Murals on buildings

OA-2: Downtown El Centro

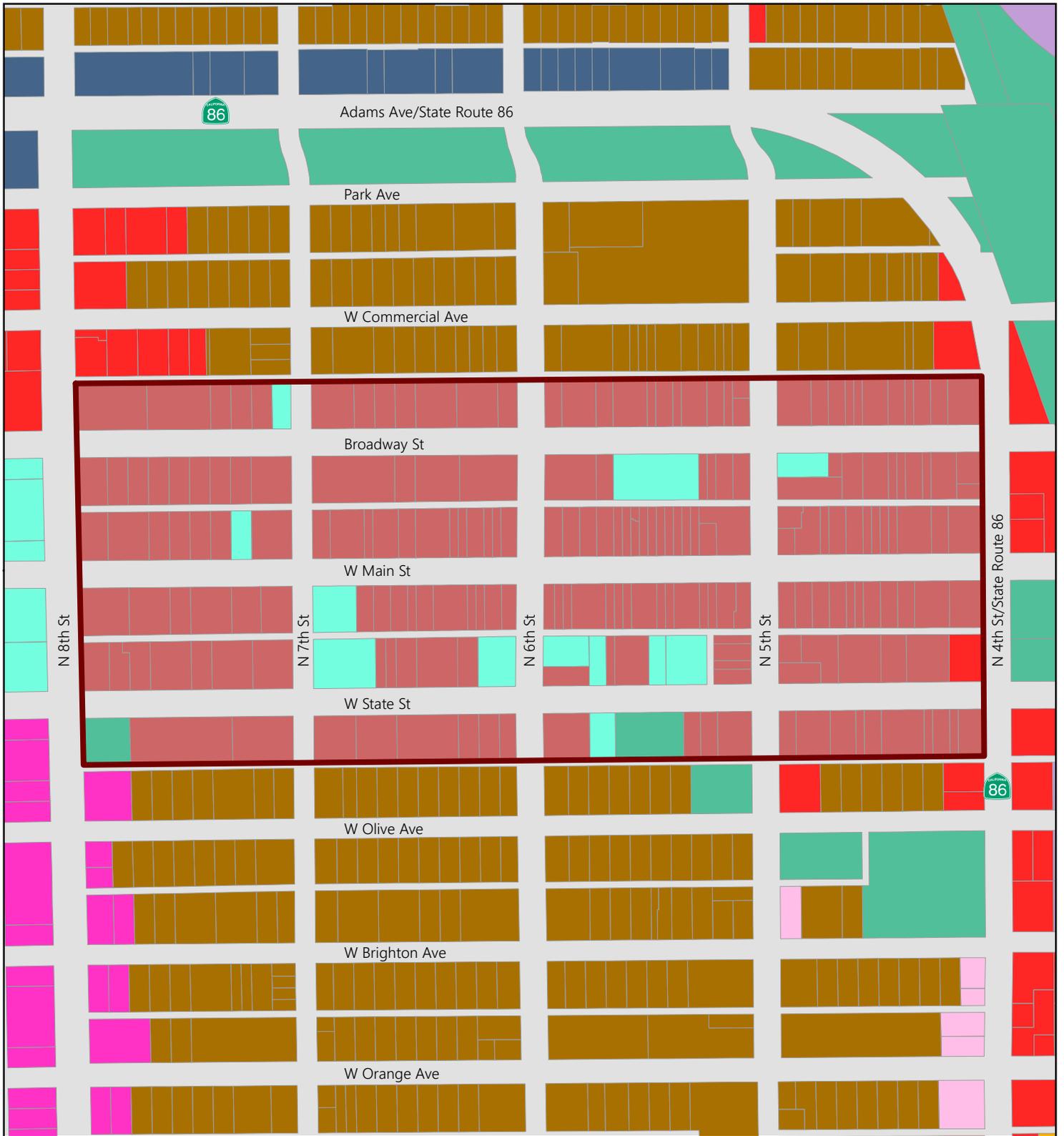
Vision: Downtown El Centro (see Figure LUE-4) is a thriving, vibrant destination for arts, culture, creative industries, community-serving businesses, entertainment, and festivals, offering products, services, and fun for locals and visitors alike. It is the cultural and social activity center for El Centro, where festivals, pop-up placemaking events, public art, and other cultural amenities flourish in a unique, pedestrian-scale environment. Pop-up retail, outdoor dining, food trucks, and other innovative uses and venues activate the area, providing opportunities to creatively utilize vacant lots and buildings as transformation occurs. New artisan manufacturing uses, breweries, arts-based enterprises, and specialty food production with associated retail and dining showcase the talents of local entrepreneurs and artists and draw residents and visitors alike to enjoy Downtown El Centro's energy, heritage, and character. The centrally located mobility hub provides a wide range of ways for people to visit Downtown, and supports connections to surrounding neighborhoods, the Civic Center district, and the Adams Avenue OA, with its opportunities for new housing.

OA-2 Policies

- Policy OA-2.1:** Revise the Zoning Code to allow artisan/small manufacturing uses, maker-spaces, and other types of cultural production uses as permitted uses in Downtown, as long as they meet safety and performance standards that ensure compatibility with other allowable uses. Encourage artisan manufacturing uses to locate at least a portion of the production space in locations where passers-by can see into the business and watch the fabrication/creation process. Examples include:
- Culinary arts, food production, "grocerants" (part market/part restaurant), and kitchen incubator(s), with retail sales allowed in association with production, breweries, etc.
 - Artisan production (with retail sales allowed), such as furniture and cabinet makers, woodworking, upholstery, clothing production, glass blowing, ceramics/pottery, welding (such as for sculpture and exterior and interior design products), and other similar types of cultural production.
- Policy OA-2.2:** Revise the Zoning Code to reduce or eliminate the requirement for discretionary permits for many uses that currently require them.
- Policy OA-2.3:** Reduce or eliminate City requirements that act as barriers to the establishment or expansion of certain uses, such as restaurants.

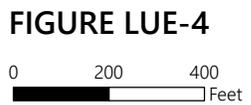
- Policy OA-2.4:** Encourage and/or incentivize the establishment of a kitchen incubator in Downtown and support associated spin-off businesses, such as retail, restaurants, cafes, markets, one or more food truck courts near the kitchen incubator, etc.
- Policy OA-2.5:** Incorporate public art in public improvements and spaces and encourage/incentivize its inclusion on private property. Encourage both temporary and permanent art of all types, such as murals, sculpture, light fixtures, benches and trash receptacles, utility boxes, banners, and on crosswalks and sidewalks. When feasible, involve the community in its design and/or implementation, especially when it will be included in public spaces.
- Policy OA-2.6:** Relax or eliminate the requirement for additional parking for existing buildings, regardless of the use. Develop a range of parking options to accommodate parking demands for new buildings in a manner that supports a “park once” concept to emphasize walking instead of driving.
- Policy OA-2.7:** Allow/encourage sidewalk cafes and develop creative solutions to allow them in the public ROW as conditions warrant, such as on sidewalks and in alleys, by repurposing existing planters, locating them in on-street parking spaces (parklets), and potentially closing portions of streets on a temporary basis. Develop expedited review procedures to facilitate their establishment.
- Policy OA-2.8:** Make alley improvements and consider allowing alleys to function as extensions of adjacent businesses/uses, such as outdoor seating for cafes and restaurants. Prohibit storage or any type of construction/production of goods.
- Policy OA-2.9:** Allow/encourage “pop-up” shops, restaurants, and/or events on vacant lots and in vacant store-fronts. Develop expedited City review and business licensing for pop-up shops and restaurants.
- Policy OA-2.10:** Encourage façade and property improvements to help revitalize Downtown, while retaining and enhancing the character, history, and charm of the buildings and area.
- Policy OA-2.11:** Explore passive and active methods to provide shade or mitigate heat throughout Downtown, such as colonnades/arcades, misters, awnings, trees, and other shade structures.

- Policy OA-2.12:** Actively involve the Downtown business/service/arts community to identify and work on priorities for Downtown, such as safety, maintenance, marketing, and business attraction and retention. Collaborate to develop and fund implementation plans.
- Policy OA-2.13:** Hold small and large events and festivals through public/private partnerships. Encourage private businesses to host temporary events and celebrations on private and public property.
- Policy OA-2.14:** Main Street, which traverses through Opportunity Area 2, is designated as a Two-Lane Arterial with a bicycle boulevard. Bicycle boulevards are streets with low vehicular speeds and volumes, designed to give bicycle travel priority. Traffic calming measures are often utilized to assist with speed and volume management. Implementation of pedestrian treatments is a priority to improve pedestrian safety and overall walking experience in this area. See Pedestrian Treatment Toolbox in Section 3.1 of the Mobility Element.



- | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|---|-------------------------|
|  | Opportunity Area 2 |  | Downtown Commercial |
| Land Use | |  | Neighborhood Commercial |
|  | Medium Density Residential |  | Office Commercial |
|  | High-Medium Density Residential |  | Light Industrial |
|  | Mixed Use 1 |  | Civic |
|  | General Commercial |  | Public |

Opportunity Area 2



OA-3: North Dogwood Opportunity Area

Vision: The redesignation of a portion of OA-3 (see Figure LUE-5) that fronts on Dogwood Road to General Commercial and the redesignation of the remaining properties to Light Industrial, coupled with its size, easy freeway access, and proximity to the Union Pacific Railroad, offers many opportunities to develop the North Dogwood Opportunity Area in a manner that provides employment opportunities while supporting regional and tourist-serving commercial demands. Motels, fuel stations, restaurants, big-box retail, and other similar general commercial uses are appropriate for Dogwood Avenue, whereas warehouse and distribution facilities and other light industrial uses are ideally suited for the industrially designated areas east and west of the commercially designated properties.

The future extensions of Aurora and South Fairfield Drives through the OA, along with associated infrastructure improvements, makes properties within OA-3 attractive to developers, while enhancing access to the rest of El Centro and eastward to Pitzer Road in the SOI. The proposed multi-use path along the east side of Dogwood and the proposed cycle track along the west side provides visitors, employees, and residents the option to walk or bicycle throughout the area and link up to the greater non-motorized network. New gateway and wayfinding signage, landscaping, streetscape, and public art provide an attractive and welcoming entrance to El Centro.

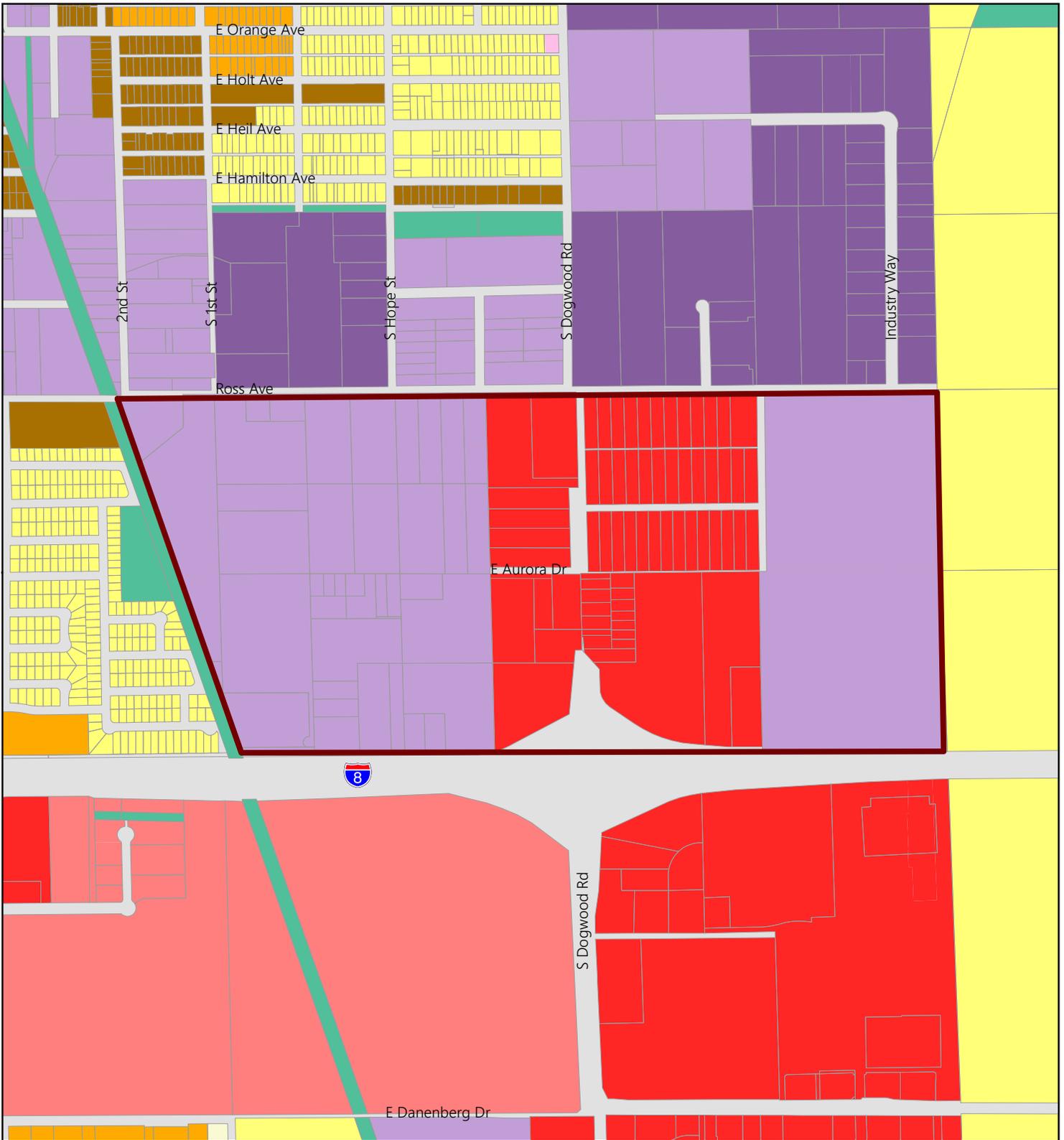
OA-3 Policies

- Policy OA-3.1:** Promote lot consolidation and consider incentives to encourage it.
- Policy OA-3.2:** Stimulate investment by identifying methods to fund construction of infrastructure in OA-3 (refer to El Centro Service Area Plan).
- Policy OA-3.3:** Develop a Visual Enhancement Area plan for OA-3, with special emphasis on landscape and streetscape along Dogwood and at the entry to City from I-8; include Ross Avenue and the extensions of Aurora and South Fairfield Drives in the Visual Enhancement Area plan. Coordinate it with the Visual Enhancement Area plan for OA-4, especially in terms of gateways and wayfinding. Incorporate public art to highlight El Centro's character and heritage.
- Policy OA-3.4:** Require new development on property adjacent to the eastern City border to install vegetation along the east

property line to help reduce fugitive dust and mitigate impacts from agricultural operations to the east.

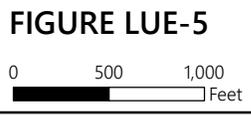
Policy OA-3.5: Establish design guidelines for OA-3 and evaluate and update development standards as appropriate. Coordinate design guidelines and development standards and the Visual Enhancement Area plan to provide consistency and attractive, quality development.

Policy OA-3.6: Ross Avenue, Aurora Drive, Dogwood Road, and Industry Way are the four major Mobility Element roadways providing access and circulation to Opportunity Area 3. Ross Avenue, Aurora Drive, and Industry Way are designated as Two-Lane Arterials, while Dogwood Road is a Four-Lane Arterial. Ample bicycle facilities are planned in this OA, with cycle tracks (Class IV) along Ross Avenue, buffered bike lanes (Class II) along Industry Way, and both a multi-use path (Class I) and cycle tracks (Class IV) along Dogwood Road. To accommodate and encourage the anticipated pedestrian activities in this area, implementation of pedestrian treatments is a priority to improve pedestrian safety and overall walking experience. See Pedestrian Treatment Toolbox in Section 3.1 of the Mobility Element.



- | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|---|-------------------------|
|  | Opportunity Area 3 |  | General Commercial |
| Land Use | |  | Tourist Commercial |
|  | Rural Residential |  | Neighborhood Commercial |
|  | Low Density Residential |  | General Industrial |
|  | Medium Density Residential |  | Light Industrial |
|  | High-Medium Density Residential |  | Public |

Opportunity Area 3



OA-4: South Dogwood Opportunity Area

Vision: The South Dogwood OA (see Figure LUE-6) is a mixed use activity center that continues to be a regional shopping destination within a walkable village of higher density residential, recreational, and other compatible uses that attract locals and visitors alike. The area provides a variety of housing choices that appeal to seniors, from local residents who are ready to downsize, to snowbirds, to retirees seeking an affordable community in a location that benefits from its proximity to San Diego, Los Angeles, and Mexicali. New retirement communities allow recreational vehicles and/or permanent housing within walking and biking distance of stores, restaurants, and entertainment, while the proximity to the Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area and other nearby natural and recreational opportunities attracts vacationers and campers of all ages to El Centro's motels, campgrounds, recreational and entertainment venues, shopping, and restaurants.

Interconnected pathways and promenades with landscaping and shade structures connect the Imperial Valley Mall, The Plaza shopping district, and other nearby shopping, lodging, and activity centers with each other and make direct connections with the system of public sidewalks and bike paths within the South Dogwood OA. The new interconnected pathway system reduces the amount of asphalt and creates walkable "blocks" within existing and new developments that provide sites for new residential buildings situated around common plazas, open spaces, and courtyards. The transit stop at the Imperial Valley Mall provides convenient access to Downtown El Centro and the rest of the community, while easy freeway access makes the location an ideal stop for travelers and vacationers.

OA-4 Policies

For the Entire OA-4:

- Policy OA-4.1:** Encourage pedestrian/bicycle and visual connectivity within and between established and new development through the introduction of wide, multi-use pathways and open spaces that offer shade via landscaping and shade structures.
- Policy OA-4.2:** Develop a Visual Enhancement Area plan for Dogwood and Danenberg, with special emphasis on landscape and streetscape along Dogwood and at the gateway to City from I-8. Coordinate it with the Visual Enhancement Area plans for OA-3 and OA-5, especially in terms of gateways and wayfinding. Incorporate public art to highlight El Centro's character and heritage.
- Policy OA-4.3:** Wake Avenue, Danenberg Drive, Dogwood Road, and Industry Way are the four major Mobility Element

roadways in OA-4, providing access and circulation throughout the area. Wake Avenue and Industry Way are designated as Two-Lane Arterials, while Danenberg Drive and Dogwood Road being Four-Lane Arterials. Ample bicycle facilities are planned in this OA, with cycle tracks (Class IV) along Danenberg Drive west of Dogwood Road, buffered bike lanes (Class II) along Industry Way and Wake Avenue, and both a multi-use path (Class I) and cycle tracks (Class IV) along Dogwood Road. To accommodate and encourage the anticipated pedestrian activities in this area, implementation of pedestrian treatments is a priority to improve pedestrian safety and overall walking experience. See Pedestrian Treatment Toolbox in Section 3,1 of the Mobility Element.

For OA-4 Area (A):

- Policy OA-4.4:** Encourage master planning or a specific plan for the property designated CT to set the stage for integrated, multi-modal, sustainable infrastructure and site design. Encourage a variety of local- and tourist-serving uses, such as amusement, recreational, and indoor and outdoor entertainment uses. Also consider including a variety of temporary or permanent housing, such as retirement communities catering to temporary and/or permanent residents, developments with spaces for RVs, park models, tiny homes, and campsites, and associated recreational and social amenities. Require outdoor recreational uses to utilize treatments to mitigate dust.
- Policy OA-4.5:** Incorporate internal pedestrian and bicycle pathways throughout the area and link them to the future pathway on Dogwood.
- Policy OA-4.6:** Develop design guidelines to provide a consistent and high quality appearance from public rights-of-way and to coordinate with the Visual Enhancement Area plan for OA-3.
- Policy OA-4.7:** Establish a landscaped buffer along the northern boundary of the site adjacent to the I-8 freeway to help mitigate noise and air pollution and provide an attractive appearance from the freeway.

For OA-4 Areas (B) and (C):

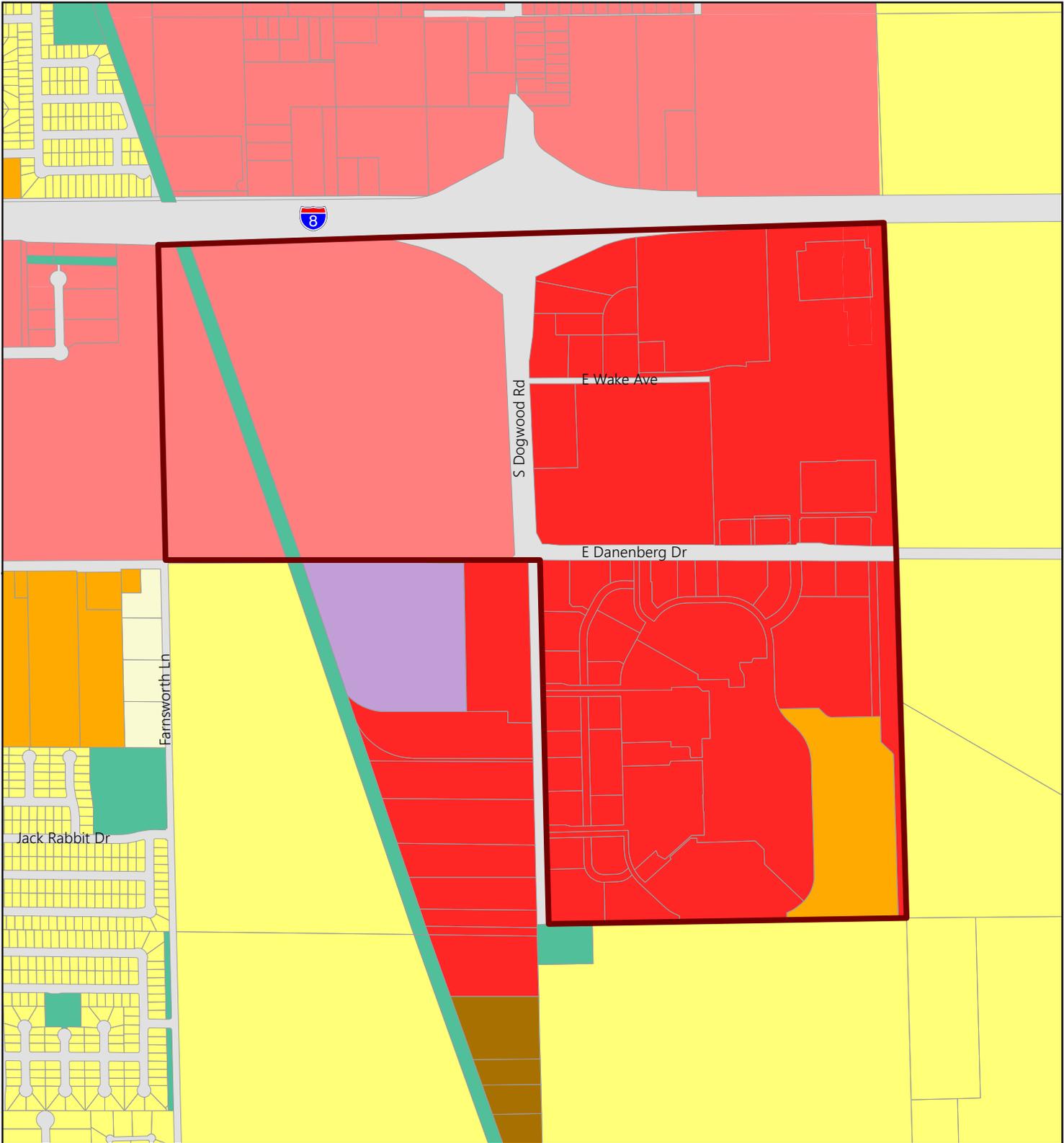
- Policy OA-4.8:** Implement the Mixed Use 2 Overlay land use designation for OA-4 through establishment of a mixed use overlay zone to encourage the Imperial Valley Mall, The Plaza,

and surrounding retail and lodging uses in OA-3 to be transformed into a walkable, bicycle-friendly, inter-connected mixed-use activity center/village.

Policy OA-4.9: Allow a variety of local and visitor-serving uses, such as retail, amusement/recreation/entertainment, housing, lodging, open space, day care, private and public educational uses, and other compatible uses. Allow for a variety of high-medium to higher density housing options that are integrated into the village-like setting.

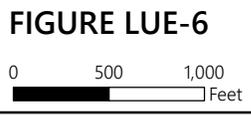
Policy OA-4.10: Incorporate the following design features into all new development and into existing development as sites are reconfigured and new uses are added:

- Interconnected sidewalks and pedestrian/bicycle paths, and roadways, both internally to the site and to the public mobility infrastructure;
- Buildings oriented around common plazas, courtyards, paseos, open spaces, and walkways;
- On- and off-site wayfinding that makes it safe, attractive, and convenient for walkers, bicyclists, and motorists to circulate throughout the area;
- Climate-appropriate landscaping that provides shade, promotes pedestrian activity, helps mitigate wind-blown particulates, and beautifies the area;
- Benches, tables, banners, public art, decorative hardscape, and other site amenities that enhance the area and create or support a memorable design theme;
- Parking locations that are convenient without physically or visually dominating the site.



- | | |
|--|---|
|  Opportunity Area 4 |  High-Medium Density Residential |
| Land Use |  General Commercial |
|  Rural Residential |  Tourist Commercial |
|  Low Density Residential |  Light Industrial |
|  Medium Density Residential |  Public |

Opportunity Area 4



OA-5: South Imperial Avenue

***Vision:** The vision for OA-5 (see Figure LUE-7) promotes implementation of the mixed-use village concept both for individual projects and for the area as a whole as El Centro expands to the south. The new interchange at Imperial Avenue and I-8 and the extension of Imperial Avenue south to McCabe will open hundreds of acres of vacant property within both the City and the SOI to development. This provides the City with the opportunity to guide future development in this area in a manner that is sustainable and promotes the benefits of a mixed-use village concept, rather than allowing continuation of a “strip commercial” development pattern backing up to new traditional single-family subdivisions. This guidance ensures that the proposed mobility network and land uses and development patterns will be integrated from the start; infrastructure and services will be sized and coordinated efficiently; there will be a range of types, sizes, and prices of mixed housing in closer proximity; and the overall development pattern will minimize adverse impacts of build-out on air quality, traffic, open space, water quality, energy, and other resources.*

***OA-5 Area (A):** While Area (A) is an already approved subdivision, its location just south of the I-8 freeway on South Imperial Avenue provides an opportunity for its design to help establish an attractive gateway to South Imperial Avenue and “set the example” for future growth in this OA.*

***OA-5 Area (B):** Area (B), which is located within the City boundary, had single-family, public, and general commercial land use designations prior to adoption of the updated Land Use Element. Redesignating this area to Mixed Use-1 is intended to provide continuation of those existing designations in a mixed-use framework that allows greater land use flexibility, with an emphasis on providing a variety of higher density housing within the overall residential mix. Rather than perpetuating the traditional urban form of segmented uses and “strip commercial” development, the Mixed Use-1 land use designation will encourage those uses to be organized into a compact, integrated, walkable, mixed-use neighborhood that will provide needed goods and services to local residents, new and existing, while serving the needs of the surrounding area. The proposed extension of Imperial Avenue along the west side of the site and Valleyview along the north side will provide opportunities to design the project area to connect with the new mobility network.*

***OA-5 Area (C):** With a total of approximately 400 acres, Area (C) is located within the City’s SOI. The Master Planned Mixed Use Study Area designation replaces the previous single-family land use designation to indicate the type of development the City would expect if any or all of the property were to be annexed into El Centro during the planning period. The site’s size provides the opportunity to design an integrated project with commercial, office, public, recreational, open space, and other neighborhood, community, and regional-serving uses in walkable and bikeable proximity with residential development. In addition to the extension of Imperial Avenue, the proposed mobility network includes the east-west extensions of both Danenberg and Valleyview through the site.*

OA-5 Policies

For the Entire OA-5:

- Policy OA-5.1:** Develop a Visual Enhancement Area plan for OA-5, with special emphasis on landscape and streetscape along Imperial Avenue and at the entry to City from I-8; including gateway design and wayfinding. Coordinate it with the Visual Enhancement Area plans for OA-3 and OA-4, especially in terms of gateways and wayfinding. Incorporate public art to highlight El Centro's character and heritage.
- Policy OA-5.2:** Wake Avenue, Danenberg Drive, Valleyview Avenue, McCabe Road, La Brucherie Road, and Imperial Avenue all provide access and circulation to Opportunity Area 5. Wake Avenue and Valleyview Avenue are designated as Two-Lane Arterials, while Danenberg Drive, McCabe Road, La Brucherie Road and Imperial Avenue are designated as Four-Lane Arterials. A variety of bicycle facilities are planned in this OA, with buffered bike lanes (Class II) along Wake Avenue, cycle tracks (Class IV) along Danenberg Drive and McCabe Road, standard bike lanes (Class II) along Valleyview Avenue, both a multi-use path (Class I) and cycle tracks (Class IV) along La Brucherie Road, and a multi-use path (Class I) along Imperial Avenue. To accommodate and encourage the anticipated pedestrian activities in this area, implementation of pedestrian treatments is a high priority to improve pedestrian safety and overall walking experience. See Pedestrian Treatment Toolbox in Section 3.1 of the Mobility Element.

For OA-5 Area (A):

- Policy OA-5.3:** Coordinate landscaping and other site design features with the Visual Enhancement Area plan for OA-5.
- Policy OA-5.4:** As the project builds out, it should get developed in a manner that facilitates internal walkability, provides clear and convenient connections to the mobility network, and incorporates attractive landscaping, and quality architecture. Encourage an integrated design throughout the subdivision rather than allowing development on stand-alone pads to be developed without consideration to the surrounding project.
- Policy OA-5.5:** Ensure that the multi-family portion of the subdivision is designed to foster connections with the remainder of the site via walkways, orientation, landscaping and positioning of open space.

For OA-5 Area (B):

- Policy OA-5.6:** Implement the Mixed Use 1 land use designation for this area via a Specific Plan, master plan, planned development, or other discretionary application that establishes an integrated, walkable, mixed-use village concept with common open space.
- Policy OA-5.7:** Include a hierarchy of residential densities and housing types within Area (B) consistent with the Mixed Use 1 land use designation. Encourage a variety of “Missing Middle” residential types that meet the needs of the community and provide affordable housing options.
- Policy OA-5.8:** Consider extending the surrounding existing residential street network through the project area to provide direct pedestrian and bicycle connections to neighborhood-serving uses that may be proposed for Area (B), and to the proposed pathway and future transit stops along Imperial Avenue.
- Policy OA-5.9:** Encourage non-residential uses to be located in nodes, such as at key future intersections (e.g., Imperial and McCabe, and/or Imperial and Valleyview); discourage “strip commercial” development.
- Policy OA-5.10:** Incorporate the following design features into all new development and into existing development as sites are reconfigured and new uses are added:
- Interconnected sidewalks and pedestrian/bicycle paths, and roadways, both internally to the site and to the public mobility infrastructure;
 - Buildings oriented around common plazas, courtyards, paseos, open spaces, and walkways;
 - On- and off-site wayfinding that makes it safe, attractive, and convenient for walkers, bicyclists, and motorists to circulate throughout the area;
 - Climate-appropriate landscaping that provides shade, promotes pedestrian activity, helps mitigate wind-blown particulates, and beautifies the area;
 - Benches, tables, banners, public art, decorative hardscape, and other site amenities that enhance the area and create or support a memorable design theme;
 - Parking locations that are convenient without physically or visually dominating the site.

For OA-5 Area (C):

Policy OA-5.11: Require preparation of a specific plan for this area for annexation. Require the area to be designed as a pedestrian scale, master-planned “village” type development with an integrated mix of neighborhood, community, and regional-serving serving uses, a wide range of residential types, and recreational and open space, consistent with the potential build-out scenario.

Policy OA-5.12: Include a mix of housing types that appeal to a wide variety of households and incomes. Include “Missing Middle” and higher density residential in proximity to each other and to neighborhood-serving uses.

Policy OA-5.13: Encourage non-residential uses to be located in nodes, such as at key future intersections; “strip commercial” development is strongly discouraged.

Policy OA-5.14: Incorporate a wide, vegetated buffer along the west side of the site to help mitigate impacts from, and on, existing agricultural operations in the area. Integrate the vegetated buffer into a cohesive system of parks, open space, and trails for the area. Consider including urban agricultural opportunities to support healthy eating and provide a transition between agricultural operations and new development.

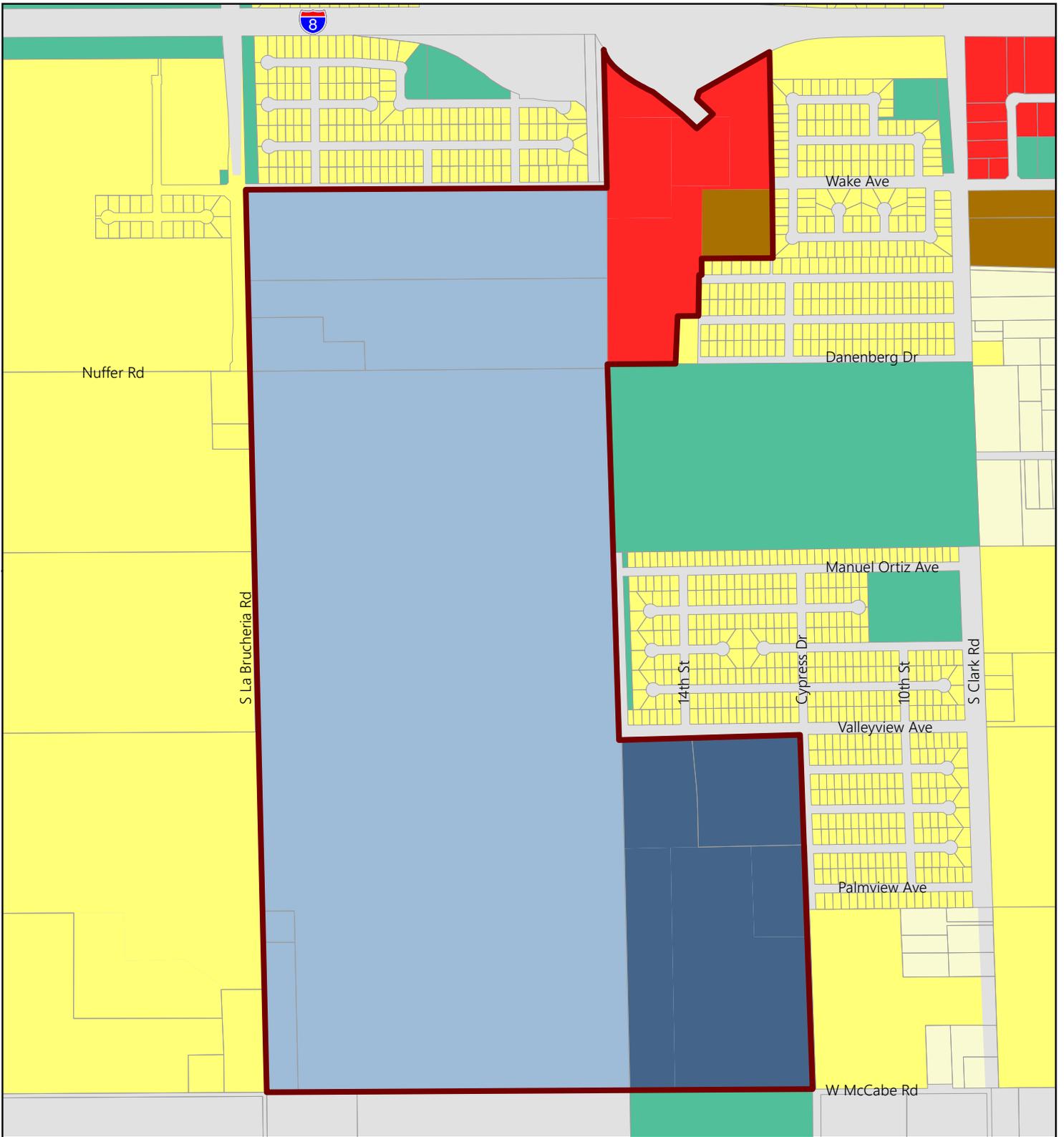
Imperial Avenue at Wake Avenue, looking south



Existing view



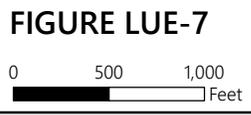
Rendering of proposed view



-  Opportunity Area 5
- Land Use**
-  Rural Residential
-  Low Density Residential
-  High-Medium Density Residential

-  Master Planned Mixed Use
-  Mixed Use 1
-  General Commercial
-  Public

Opportunity Area 5



3.5 RELATIONSHIP WITH ZONING

Zoning is the primary regulatory instrument for implementing a jurisdiction's Land Use Element. Zoning divides a community into zoning districts (zones) that specify the permitted, special, and prohibited uses within those zones. Land uses in each zone can be regulated according to type, density, height, lot size, placement, building bulk, and other development standards.

The Land Use Plan is implemented through the City's Zoning Ordinance. Under California law (Cal. Gov't Code § 65860), zones are required to be consistent with General Plan land use designations; the same requirement is not true of charter cities unless a city has adopted a consistency requirement by charter or ordinance (Cal. Gov't. Code § 65803). As a charter city that has not adopted a consistency requirement, El Centro's Zoning Code and zoning map are not required to be consistent with its General Plan land use designations. However, since the Land Use Element guides policy and the zoning ordinance is the main tool cities use to implement land use policy, it is prudent for the zoning map to be consistent with the Land Use Policy Map.

Table LUE-2 shows the relationship between the land use designations in the Land Use Element and the existing Zoning Map. Adoption of this Land Use Element will require updates to the Zoning Code and Zoning Map for consistency and implementation. Table LUE-2 identifies new zones that will be required, while other changes to the Zoning Code may be needed to implement certain policies. These are described in greater detail in the Implementation Program.

Table LUE-2: Relationship Between Land Use Designations and Zoning Districts

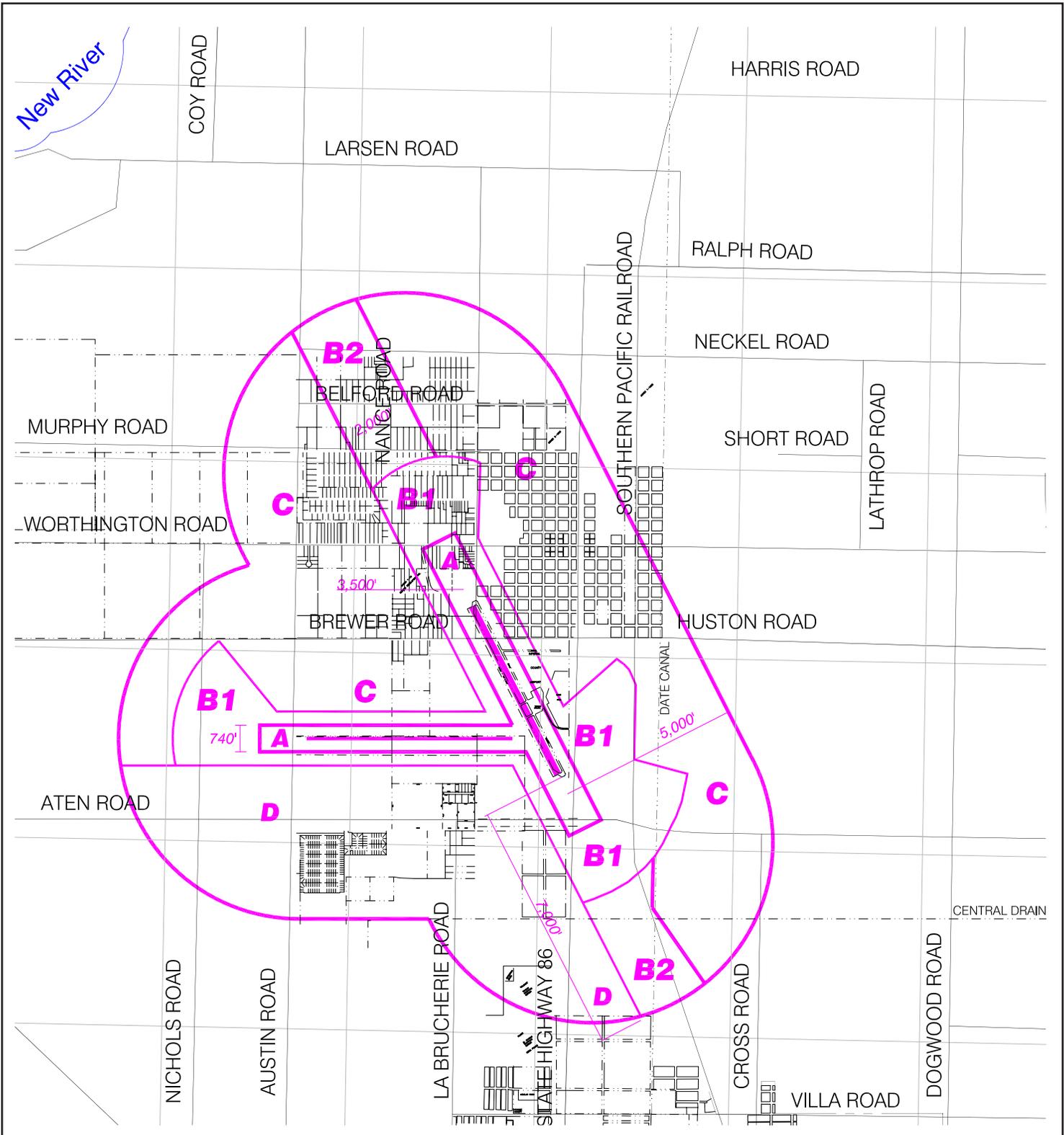
Land Use Designations (Land Use Element)	Zone (Zoning Code)
Residential Land Use Designation:	Residential:
Rural Residential (maximum 2 du/ac)	RAP—Residential Airport (maximum 1 du/ac)
Rural Residential (maximum 2 du/ac)	RR—Rural Residential (maximum 2 du/ac)
Low Density Residential (maximum 6 du/ac)	R1—Single-Family Residential (maximum 6 du/ac)
Medium Density Residential (maximum 12 du/ac)	R2—Variable Density Residential (maximum 12 du/ac)
High Medium Density Residential (maximum 25 du/ac)	R3—Multiple Family Residential (25 du/ac)
Commercial Land Use Designation:	Commercial:
General Commercial (maximum FAR of 0.40:1)	CG—General Commercial
Neighborhood Commercial (maximum FAR of 0.25:1)	CN—Neighborhood Commercial
Office Commercial (maximum FAR of 0.40:1)	CO—Office Commercial
Heavy Commercial (maximum FAR of 0.50:1)	CH—Heavy Commercial
Tourist Commercial (maximum FAR of 1.0:1)	CT—Tourist Commercial
Downtown Commercial (maximum FAR of 3.0:1)	CD—Downtown Commercial
Mixed Use Land Use Designation:	Mixed Use:
Mixed Use 1 (0.3 – 1.0 FAR; 25 du/ac)	TBD (Implementation Program)
Industrial Land Use Designation:	Manufacturing:
Light Industrial (maximum FAR of 0.40:1)	ML—Light Manufacturing
General Industrial (maximum FAR of 0.45:1)	MG—General Manufacturing
(N/A—to be deleted as part of Implementation Program)	MBP—Manufacturing Business Park
Community Facilities Land Use Designations:	Special/Other:
Civic (maximum FAR of 1.50:1)	CC—Civic Center
Public (maximum FAR of 0.40:1)	LU—Limited Use
Overlays:	Overlays:
Single Family Neighborhood Overlay	SF—Single-Family Neighborhood Overlay Zone
El Centro Regional Medical Center (ECRMC) Overlay	TBD (Implementation Program)
Medical Office Overlay	TBD (Implementation Program)
Mixed Use 2 Overlay	TBD (Implementation Program)

3.6 IMPERIAL COUNTY AIRPORT LAND USE PLAN

The Land Use Element must be consistent with airport land use compatibility plans where applicable (Gov. Code § 65302.3). The Imperial County Airport Land Use Commission is responsible for preparing an Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP) for each of the seven airports within Imperial County. The purpose of an ALUCP is to protect the general welfare of people and property within the vicinity of airports, as well as the public in general, by providing information regarding airport operations and guidance on appropriate land uses surrounding airports. An ALUCP addresses a defined area around an airport, called an Airport Influence Area (AIA). An AIA is determined by the airport's size, current and future airport operations, and compatibility criteria (including noise, safety, airspace protection, and overflight) that may affect land uses and/or necessitate restrictions on those uses. Each ALUCP includes a compatibility map that identifies zones (Zones A, B1, B2, C, and D, which range from high risk [Zone A-Runway Protection Zone] to negligible risk [Zone 6-Other Airport Environs]) and policies for the compatibility criteria, which include land use and maximum residential density. The Imperial County Airport Land Use Commission has review authority over certain actions of jurisdictions that fall within one or more ALUCPs, including (but not limited to) review of adoption or modification of general plans, specific plans, spheres of influences, zoning codes, zone changes, and development proposals which affect the Commission's geographic area of concern.

The ALUCP sets forth the criteria and policies that the Airport Land Use Commission use to assess the compatibility between the primary airports in the County and proposed land use development in the areas surrounding them. Airports affected by this plan located near El Centro are the Imperial County Airport and the Naval Air Facility at El Centro. Due to the proximity of the Imperial County Airport, which is located less than a mile north of El Centro, a portion of northern El Centro is within Zones B1, B2, C, and D (see Figure LUE-8); consequently, land use policy and development actions (cited above) are subject to review by the Imperial County Airport Land Use Commission.

The ALUCP for the Imperial County airports was approved in 1982 and last revised in 1996. The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Airport Land Use Planning Handbook (Caltrans Handbook) was revised in 2011, and identifies modified geometrics, naming conventions, and evaluation criteria for ALUCP map zones. Until the ALUCP is revised to reflect the most current Caltrans Handbook, applicable proposed actions are analyzed pursuant to the Caltrans Handbook to enable the Imperial County Airport Land Use Commission to determine if they comply with current Caltrans regulations.



Imperial County Airport Land Use Plan

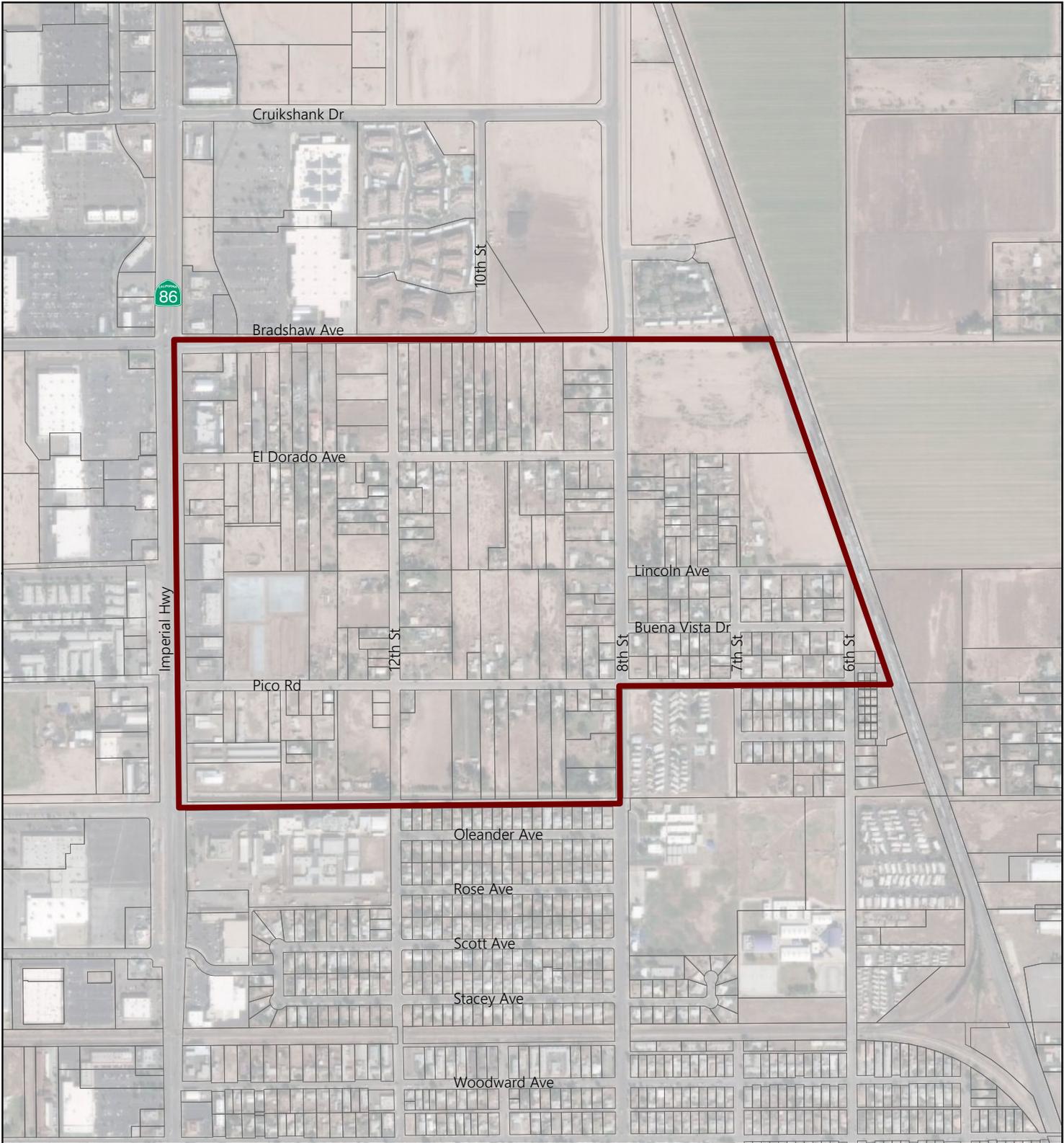


FIGURE LUE-8

Source: Imperial County Airport Land Use Compatibility Map 2004

3.7 EL DORADO COLONIA

El Centro contains an area known as the El Dorado Colonia (shown in Figure LUE-9) that previously was a recognized colonia. The City has been working to construct needed infrastructure improvements in the El Dorado Colonia in a manner that is consistent with the rest of the city and will continue to do so during the planning period. The El Dorado Colonia is characterized by large lot, rural character residential development. While no longer considered a colonia, the El Dorado Colonia retains a unique character and history, and the City acknowledges the importance of ensuring its future will be protected and enhanced (see LUE Policy 1.6).

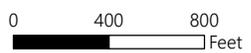


 El Dorado Colonia

El Dorado Colonia



FIGURE LUE-9



Source: City of El Centro March 2021

3.8 VISUAL ENHANCEMENT AREAS

As noted throughout the Land Use Element, the appearance, character, and quality of the city is important for improved livability and community pride, to celebrate the unique character of El Centro, and to stimulate private investment. One of the tools the City uses to accomplish this goal is by establishing Visual Enhancement Areas and developing plans and strategies for implementation. Visual Enhancement Areas (VEA) are areas such as corridors, districts, gateways, and other activity nodes that would benefit from a coordinated design plan for streetscape improvements, amenities, and elements in the public rights-of-way (see Figure LUE-10).

VEAs can serve a variety of purposes, including:

1. Visually define, enhance, and/or unify the identity of the particular area, as well as create cohesion with a citywide design or theme that reflects the history and character of El Centro;
2. Improve the safety and comfort of pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users;
3. Help the City to develop and implement a more systematic and cost-effective approach toward streetscape design

Both the design and the elements for each VEA will depend on a variety of factors, such as the function of the street or area (i.e., whether it is pedestrian or auto oriented) and whether it involves retrofitting an existing corridor or district or establishing the design concept for a new roadway and associated public infrastructure. Taking into account the unique circumstances of the particular VEA, plans typically include one or more of the following elements:

- **Landscape** – street trees and trees and other vegetation in planters and planting strips, landscaped medians, curb bulbs, bioswales, and other public areas, with an emphasis on the use of water-wise and native plants
- **Hardscape** – such as paving, walls and fences, and other permanent or non-vegetative treatments
- **Signage** – includes monument or other entry signs into the city, district signs, wayfinding signage, and street signs
- **Streetscape amenities and furnishings** – such as lighting, banners, outdoor seating and tables, transit shelters, bike racks, waste receptacles, shade structures, and public art

Incorporating public art into the design of VEAs has the added benefit of promoting cultural tourism and enhancing community involvement and civic pride.

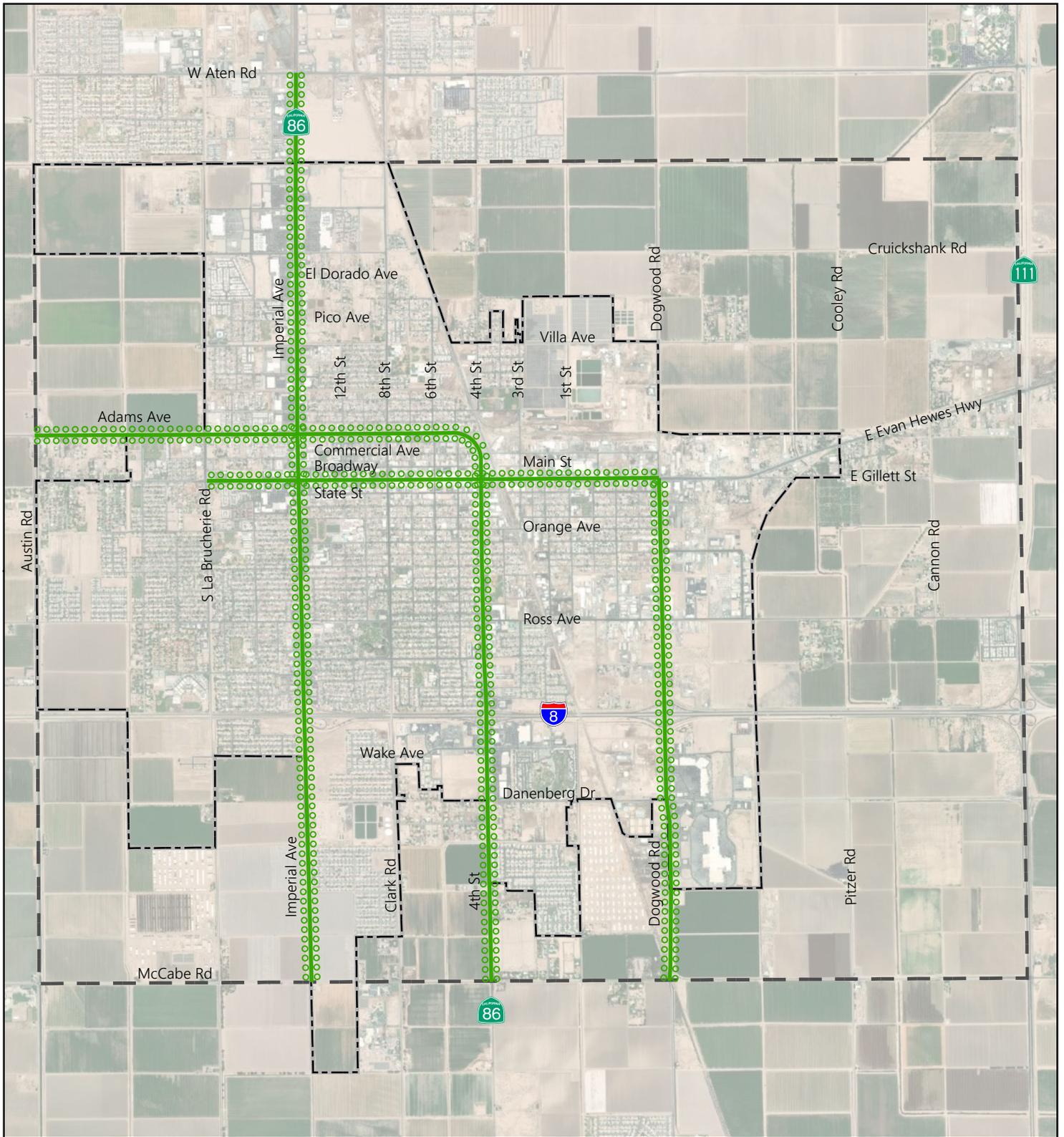
Example of Visual Enhancements (at Aurora/Imperial Avenues)



Existing view



Rendering of proposed view



-  City Limits
-  Sphere of Influence
-  Landscaped Medians and Rights-of-Way

Visual Enhancement Areas



FIGURE LUE-10

0 2,000 4,000 Feet

3.9 ACCOMMODATING FUTURE GROWTH

The Land Use Element directs where and how growth will occur in the future at a policy level through goals, policies, and the Land Use Plan. This growth must be correlated with the other General Plan elements to ensure that quality of life, safety, economic prosperity, and environmental protection are maintained and enhanced, and the provision of the public infrastructure and services necessary to accommodate the growth are provided in the most efficient and cost-effective manner possible.

This Land Use Element continues the City's long-standing policy of encouraging infill development within the boundaries of existing developed areas first, before expanding into vacant or agricultural lands within the SOI. That being said, it is assumed that the land within the City's SOI eventually will be annexed and become part of El Centro proper when the City Council determines it is appropriate and in accordance with the City's vision and overall goals and policies.

One of the tools the City uses to prepare for the population, development, and employment increases in both the city and the SOI anticipated by the Land Use Element during the 2040 planning period is the application of the City's Urban Development Program, as described below. Various City plans and programs, such as the Service Area Plan, Parks and Recreation Master Plan, Master Plan of Drainage, Wastewater Treatment Plan, and Water Master Plan, also provide guidance and assists the City in estimating current and future demand for public facilities and services.

This section provides an overview estimated growth, a description of the Urban Development Program, and the Community Facilities Study requirements and exemptions, which address how the City proposes to accommodate the growth anticipated by the Land Use Element during the 2040 Planning Period.

Land Use Element 2040 Build-Out Projections

Impacts of growth on communities are typically evaluated using projections based on potential build-out of the community's land use plan. Land Use Elements are required provide build-out projections, including the projected number of housing units, projected population (using the potential number of dwelling units multiplied by persons per household), and the projected square footage of non-residential development. Table LUE-3 provides the estimated build-out projections for the 2040 planning period. Note that total build-out of the Land Use Plan at maximum capacity is not expected during the Planning Period; therefore, for planning purposes, an average of the maximum number of dwelling units per acre and average FAR are used to calculate potential development capacity.

Table LUE-3: 2040 Build-Out Projections

Land Use Designations	Number of Dwelling Units ¹		Non-Residential Square Feet (thousands) ²	
	City	SOI	City	SOI
Residential				
Rural Residential	12	531	---	---
Low Density Residential	9,079	28,004	---	---
Medium Density Residential	2,509	481	---	---
High Density Residential	6,552	302	---	---
Commercial				
General Commercial	---	---	5,337	570
Neighborhood Commercial	---	---	440	---
Office Commercial	---	---	254	---
Heavy Commercial	---	---	1,585	---
Tourist Commercial	---	---	2,838	---
Downtown Commercial	---	---	See OA-2	---
Industrial				
Light Industrial	---	---	5,831	3,545
General Commercial	---	---	5,272	4,801
Mixed Use				
Mixed Use 1	See OA-1 & OA-5	---	See OA-1 & OA-5	---
Community Facilities				
Civic	---	---	1,857	---
Public	---	---	10,087	1,264
Overlays				
Single-Family Neighborhood Overlay ³	NA	NA	NA	NA
El Centro Regional Medical Center Overlay	---	---	275	---
Medical Office Overlay ⁴	4	---	17	---
Mixed Use 2 Overlay (not in Opportunity Areas)	598	---	104	---
Opportunity Areas				
OA-1	166	---	227	---
OA-2	---	---	1,565	---
OA-3	---	---	5,543	---
OA-4	1,021	---	2,718	---
OA-5	829	1,739	488	742
Total	20,770	31,057	44,438	10,923

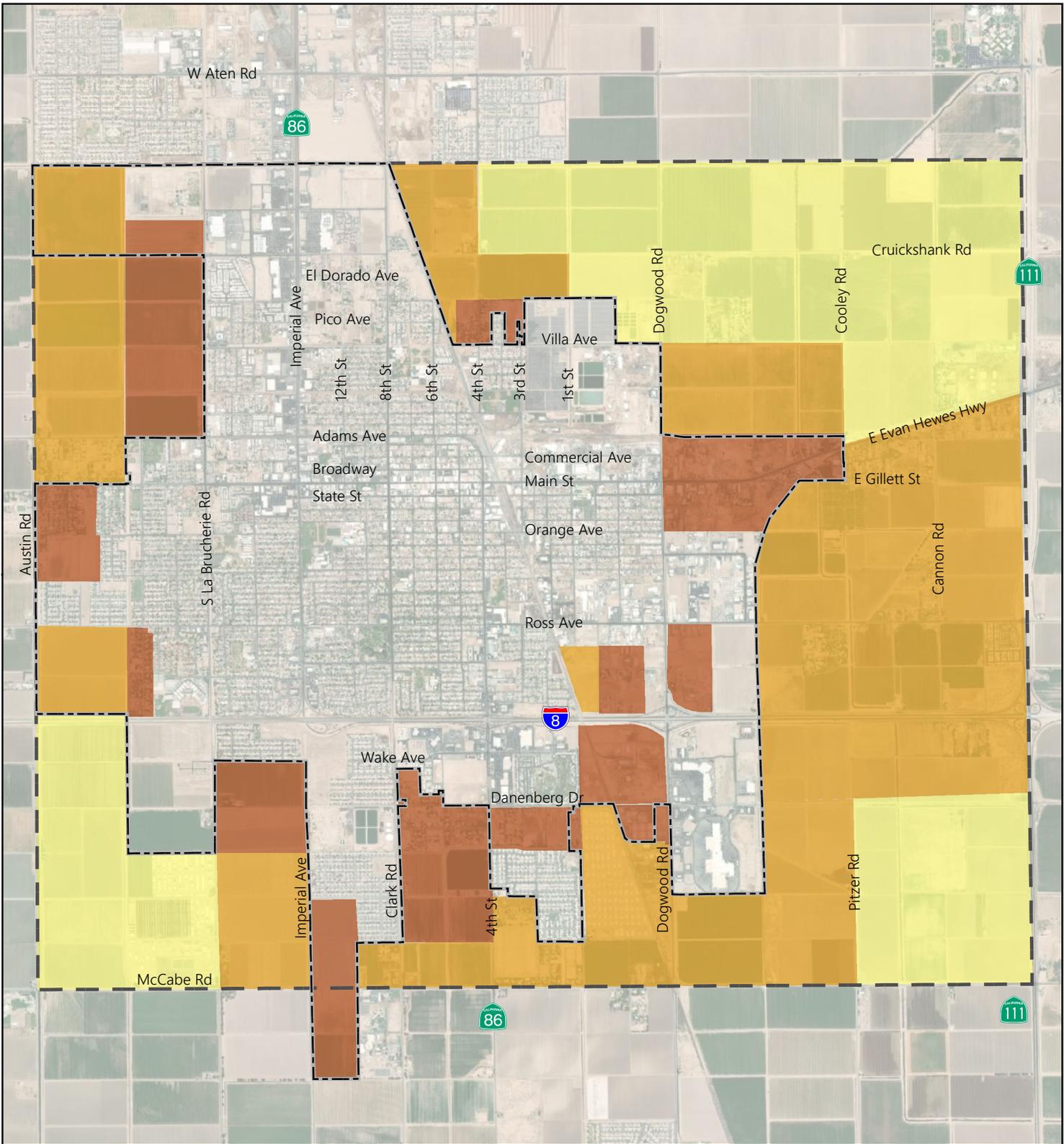
Notes: City = City of El Centro; SOI = Sphere of Influence; NA = Not Applicable

- ¹ The number of dwelling units is based on average density at build-out, not maximum allowable density
- ² Shown in thousands of square feet. The non-residential development square footage is based on average intensity (average FAR) at build-out, not maximum allowable intensity
- ³ Single-Family Neighborhood Overlay is for design purposes only and is not a factor in build-out projections
- ⁴ Per build-out assumptions

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 LUE-11) based on existing and planned public facilities, existing land use, and transportation corridors or other physical barriers. Within these geographical areas, the coordinated efforts of City government, other public agencies, 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 locations 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.

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 also may 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.



- City Limits
- Sphere of Influence
- Development Tier Areas**
- Tier I Growth Areas
- Tier II Growth Areas
- Tier III Growth Areas

Urban Development Program Development Tier Areas



FIGURE LUE-11

NORTH
 0 2,000 4,000
Feet

Source: City of El Centro March 2021

Community Facilities Study Requirements and Exemptions:

Unless otherwise exempted, subdivision of land and commercial, industrial, or mixed use development within Tiers II and III require that a Community Facilities Study be prepared. The Study is required to address existing conditions and needs for City sewer, water, drainage/flood control; Mobility Element roadways and pedestrian and bicycle facilities affected by new development, including circulation improvements such as traffic signals; and services and other facilities, such as police, fire, library, medical, and parks and recreation. Public facility financing plans for new development also need to be evaluated. Typically, Community Facilities Studies are prepared at the expense of a project applicant.

A Community Facilities Study is not required when:

1. An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) or Initial Study leading to a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) will be prepared for the project and the EIR or MND will incorporate all applicable elements of the Community Facilities Study;
2. The project is a subdivision of five or fewer lots or a commercial, industrial, or mixed use 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.

Development Tiers

Development Tier I – Current Urban Service Area: Development Tier I includes land within and adjacent to the present City limits (see Figure LUE-11). 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 facilities and services also are 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, industrial, and mixed use development within Development Tier I generally would 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 (see Figure LUE-11) 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 for force mains. New schools, parks, roadway, pedestrian, and bicycle improvements, and fire stations also may be required to adequately serve development of Development Tier II areas. As with Development Tier I, additional service capacity for police, library, medical, and other services also may be needed to accommodate new development. Preparation of a Community Facilities Study is required for most development within Development Tier II areas, including residential subdivisions, multi-family projects, and commercial, industrial, or mixed-use development, unless 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 10 years (see Figure LUE-11). If development other than agricultural and related business or residential subdivisions of five or fewer parcels is proposed within currently unincorporated portions of Development Tier III areas, the developer or subdivider will be required to obtain concurrence of the City to allow the project, and the improvement of all public facilities will be required to 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, industrial, and mixed-use development within this area will require that a Community Facilities Study be prepared, unless otherwise exempted as described in the Community Facilities Study Requirements and Exemptions. 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 will be required to 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 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 Mobility Element.