



# CITY OF LAGUNA WOODS

## GENERAL PLAN

### LAND USE ELEMENT

**NOVEMBER 2024**





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## INTRODUCTION

California Government Code Section 65300 requires each city to adopt a comprehensive, long-term general plan to guide physical development. The Laguna Woods General Plan reflects the City of Laguna Woods' intentions about land use and its relationship to conservation, housing, mobility, noise, open space, and safety. This element identifies priority land use issues in Laguna Woods and sets forth goals and policies to achieve balance between the needs of the community and future development.

## PURPOSE AND SCOPE

State law requires that general plans include a land use element, as follows:

**California Government Code Section 65302(a):** [The general plan must include] a land use element that designates the proposed general distribution and general location and extent of the uses of the land for housing, business, industry, open space, including agriculture, natural resources, recreation, and enjoyment of scenic beauty, education, public buildings and grounds, solid and liquid waste disposal facilities, greenways, [...], and other categories of public and private uses of land.

California Government Code further requires land use elements to establish standards for population density and building intensity.

The identification of areas that are subject to flooding identified by floodplain mapping prepared by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) or the California Department of Water Resources is included in this General Plan's Safety Element.

This element addresses the following priority issues:

- Community character
- Commercial development
- Fiscal health and viability



## LAND USE PLAN

### LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

This General Plan establishes seven base land use designations, each with a unique set of use characteristics, density and intensity limitations, and land use standards. Land use designations are intentionally broad and are intended to guide the development patterns of specified areas. Using the guidance established for each land use designation, the Laguna Woods Zoning Code sets forth more specific land use regulations, standards, and procedures.

One of the following base land use designations is applied to each parcel. As a matter of policy, and in the interest of clarity, the City does not generally allow more than one base land use designation on a single parcel. In instances where separate uses on a single parcel may logically be applied differing base land use designations, lot line adjustment or subdivision may be considered.

- **Commercial (C):** The Commercial land use designation allows for a broad range of non-residential and non-industrial uses, including administrative and professional offices, entertainment venues, hotels, motels, restaurants, and retail and service businesses. The Commercial land use designation also allows for public agency facilities.
- **Community Facilities (CF):** The Community Facilities land use designation allows for public, institutional, and private uses that provide a variety of government and social services to the community, including churches, temples, places of worship, cultural venues, hospitals, public agency facilities, and schools.
- **High Density Residential (HDR):** The High Density Residential land use designation allows for single- and multi-family housing with a density of 13 to 35 dwelling units per acre.
- **Low Density Residential (LDR):** The Low Density Residential land use designation allows for single- and multi-family housing with a density of fewer than 10 dwelling units per acre.
- **Medium Density Residential (MDR):** The Medium Density Residential land



use designation allows for single- and multi-family housing with a density of 10 to fewer than 13 dwelling units per acre.

- **Open Space (OS):** The Open Space land use designation allows for active and passive recreation facilities, as well as undeveloped and minimally developed areas intended for natural resource conservation or visual enhancement. Clubhouses, gardens, greenbelts, golf courses, parks, tennis courts, and waterbodies are examples of allowable uses within the Open Space land use designation. The Open Space land use designation also allows for public agency facilities.
- **Residential Community (RC):** The Residential Community land use designation allows for housing within the Laguna Woods Village planned unit development at densities consistent with the Rossmoor Leisure World Planning Community District Regulations. The Residential Community land use designation also allows for open space, recreation facilities, and other amenities serving the planned unit development.

## LAND USE MAP

**Figure L-1** identifies the application of land use designations by location.

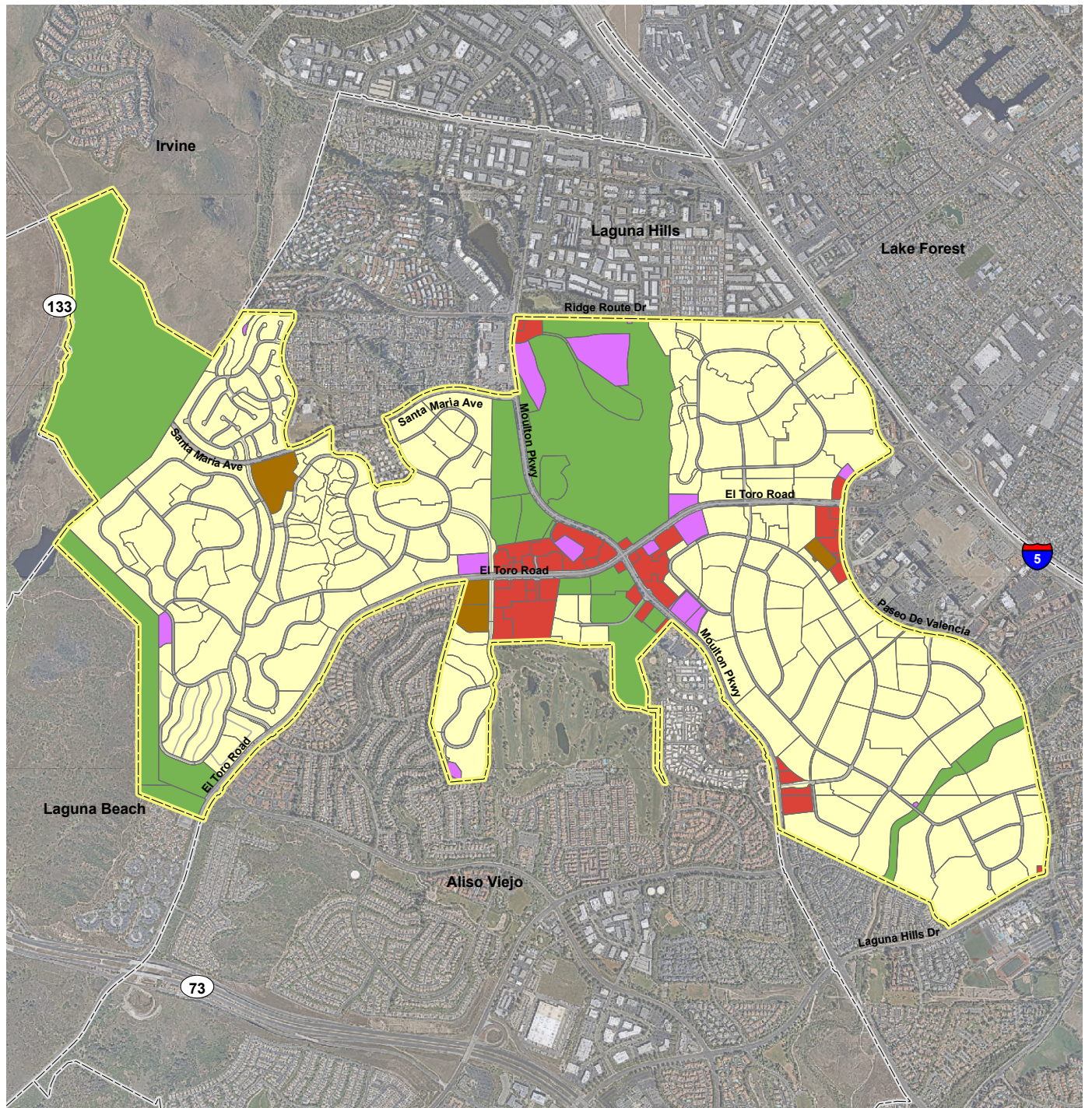
## LAND USE DENSITIES AND INTENSITIES

Each land use designation is assigned a maximum density and/or intensity to control the amount of development that can occur in any given area.

“Density” applies to residential land use designations and identifies the number of dwelling units that can be accommodated within one net acre of land [dwelling units per net acre (du/ac)]. As a secondary calculation, density can also refer to the population that can be accommodated within one acre of land [persons per acre (per/ac)].

“Intensity” applies to non-residential land use designations and describes the relationship between the total area of a development and the area of the parcel where the development is located [floor-to-area ratio (FAR)]. FAR is calculated by dividing the gross floor area of all buildings on a parcel by the net ground area of the parcel (developable ground area after accounting for





### Legend

Laguna Woods Boundary

### Land Use Type

- High Density Residential (HDR)
- Residential Community (RC)
- Commercial (C)
- Community Facilities (CF)
- Open Space (OS)



0 1,250 2,500  
Feet

Source: Nearmap 2023

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## Land Use Map

Figure L-1

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right-of-way dedications and easements). FARs are typically expressed as a single number rather than a ratio (e.g., 0.5:1 is expressed as 0.5 FAR).

The planned and actual density or intensity of a parcel is usually less than the maximum, and may be influenced by access and infrastructure limitations, compatibility with surrounding uses, historical development trends, market factors, and physical characteristics of the parcel.

Maximum development within the open space land use designation is guided by maximum building area and maximum building height limitations.

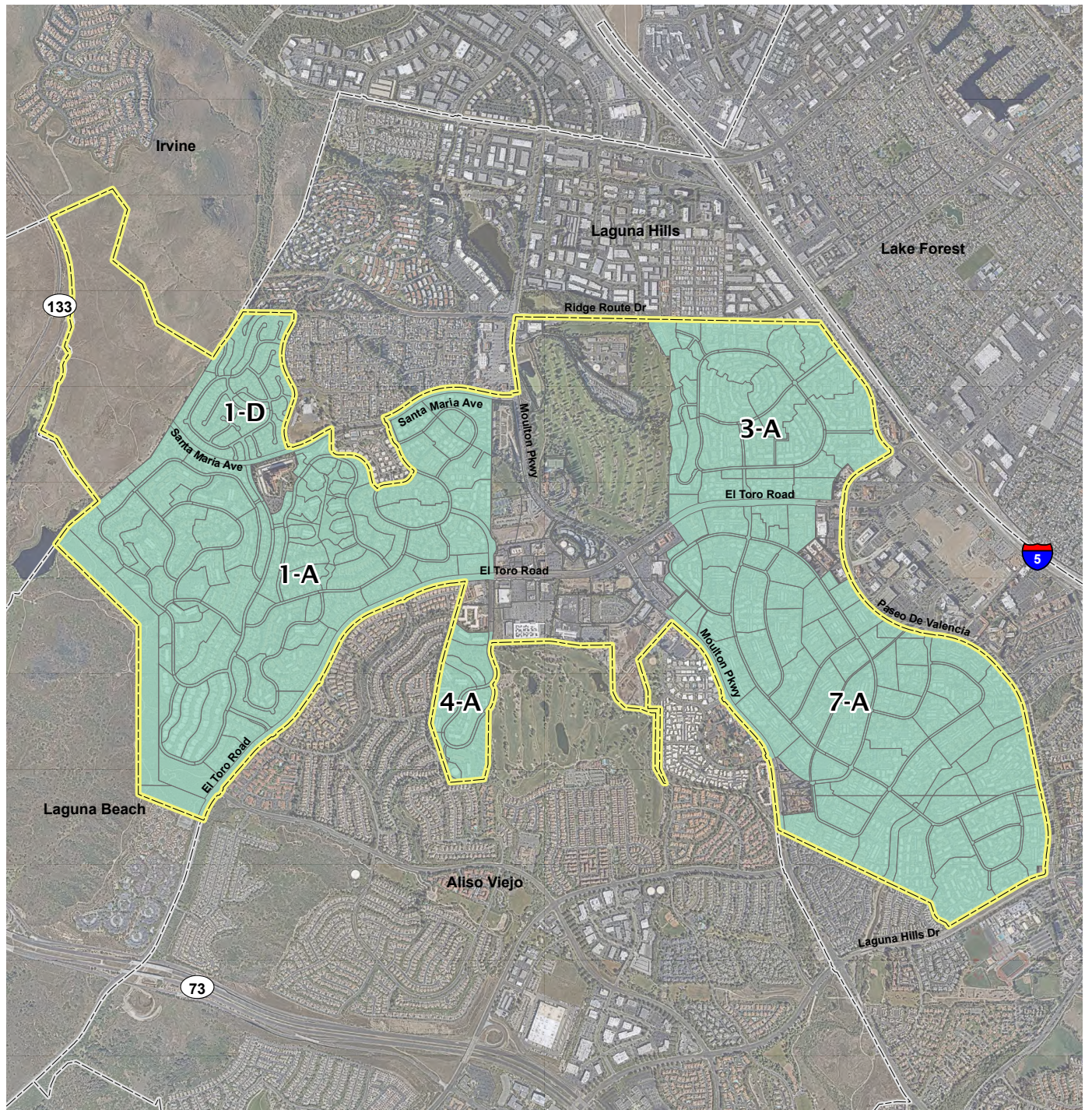
**Table L-1** summarizes land use designation densities and intensities. References to “planning units” should be interpreted using **Figure L-2**.

**Table L-1: Land Use Densities and Intensities<sup>1</sup>**

Land Use Designation	Density/Intensity	Assumed Population Density
Commercial (C)	FAR: 0.3 maximum	-
Community Facilities (CF)	FAR: 0.3 maximum	-
High Density Residential (HDR)	13 to 35 du/ac	42 per/ac
Low Density Residential (LDR)	Fewer than 10 du/ac	12 du/ac
Medium Density Residential (MDR)	10 to fewer than 13 du/ac	15 du/ac
Open Space (OS)	Building Area: 25,000 square foot maximum; Building Height: 35-foot maximum	-
Residential Community (RC) – Planning Units 1-A, 1-D, and 4-A	Fewer than 10 du/ac	12 per/ac
Residential Community (RC) – Planning Units 3-A and 7-A	10 to fewer than 13 du/ac	15 per/ac

<sup>1</sup> Program H-1.1.1 in the Laguna Woods General Plan’s Housing Element calls for the creation of four new overlay zoning districts (Residential High Density, Residential Low Density, Residential Medium Density, and Residential Medium-Low Density) and the adoption of minimum density and development standards for each. For the purpose




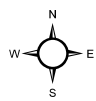


### Legend

 Laguna Woods Boundary

### Planning Units

 Adult Single & Multiple Family  
(1A, 1D, 3A, 4A, 7A)



0 1,250 2,500  
Feet

Source: Nearmap 2023

## CITY OF LAGUNA WOODS • GENERAL PLAN Residential Community (RC) Land Use Densities

Figure L-2

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of developing housing units, the standards adopted for those overlay zoning districts shall prevail over the land use densities and intensities set forth in **Table L-1**.

## **GOALS AND POLICY OBJECTIVES**

This element is organized to be consistent with the other elements of the Laguna Woods General Plan. Goals and policy objectives provide declarative statements that set forth the City's approach to each of the priority issues.

**Goals:** General statements of desired outcomes.

**Policy Objectives:** Specific commitments to support decisions and actions consistent with a stated goal. Policy objectives provide guidance to the City Council, City advisory committees, and City staff when reviewing development applications and making other decisions that affect growth, conservation, and development.

### Priority Issue 1. COMMUNITY CHARACTER.

*Goal L-1. Maintain a residentially focused land use pattern.*

*Policy Objective L-1.1. Allow for the development of housing on a majority of total non-open-space acreage within Laguna Woods.*

*Policy Objective L-1.2. Allow for the development of maintenance and operational support facilities related to the development and preservation of planned unit developments within Laguna Woods.*

*Policy Objective L-1.3. Encourage development projects to provide open spaces, recreation facilities, and other areas that create opportunities for community-building and the personal enrichment of residents.*

*Policy Objective L-1.4. Prohibit heavy-industrial-type land uses except as may be pre-empted by federal or state law.*

Note: State law requires the City to zone sufficient land to allow for the construction of new housing units to meet a housing needs allocation assigned as part of the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) process. For more



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information on the RHNA process and potential housing sites, please refer to the Laguna Woods General Plan's Housing Element.

*Goal L-2. Promote unique, but visually cohesive development.*

*Policy Objective L-2.1.* Establish and apply standards for development projects to be designed and constructed in a manner that embraces Laguna Woods' aesthetics, character, and sense of place.

*Policy Objective L-2.2.* Establish and apply standards for development projects to plant new trees and provide shade from trees in a manner that embraces the abundance of trees throughout Laguna Woods.

*Policy Objective L-2.3.* Establish and apply standards requiring properties and the facilities and improvements on them to be kept clean, complete, and in good structural and functional working order, and to not be allowed to fall into a state of disrepair, damage, or decrepitude.

*Policy Objective L-2.4.* Encourage development projects to incorporate public art and distinctive landscape and design features.

*Policy Objective L-2.5.* Develop identifiable city entries and streetscapes through the use of landscaping, signage, and other treatments.

Note: Program H-2.3.1 in the Laguna Woods General Plan's Housing Element could have a direct impact on property maintenance. Program H-2.3.1 calls for the formalization of a proactive code enforcement program that focuses on housing-related rehabilitation needs and results in repairs.

Priority Issue 2. COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT.

*Goal L-3. Minimize the need for residents and workers to travel outside of Laguna Woods for commercial purposes.*

*Policy Objective L-3.1.* Allow for commercial development that meets local needs and interests, particularly as it relates to the ability for residents to obtain a diversity of high-quality goods and services close to home.





*Policy Objective L-3.2.* Encourage the availability of high-speed internet connections, wireless networking technologies, and other utility services to support the operation of local businesses, including through collaboration with utility providers when necessary.

Priority Issue 3. FISCAL HEALTH AND VIABILITY.

*Goal L-4.* Ensure that development allows the City to maintain and enhance its programs, projects, and services to meet local needs.

*Policy Objective L-4.1.* Pursue development strategies that enhance the diversity of the City's revenue sources.

*Policy Objective L-4.2.* Require the preparation of fiscal impact analyses and/or economic market studies by qualified third party professionals for development agreements and non-governmentally initiated applications for specific plans and zone changes.