

# CHAPTER 2: Land Use Element

## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Land Use Element addresses the general location and distribution of land uses within the City of Des Moines (City), the design and quality of the built environment, and provides the framework for other Plan Elements that guide aspects of land use such as Transportation, Conservation, Capital Facilities, Utilities, Public Services, Parks, Recreation, Open Space, Housing, Economic Development, and neighborhood subareas. The goals, policies, and strategies listed in this element are meant to promote land use decisions and zoning to create future development opportunities in suitable locations for the next 20 years.



Des Moines needs to plan for an additional 3,800 housing units, 726 new permanent Emergency Housing units, and 2,380 new jobs by 2044<sup>1</sup>. As planning for the future takes place, we need to consider how to grow in ways that promote economic development and family wage jobs; create strong neighborhoods with a range of housing, commercial, and transportation options; and foster healthy communities and a clean environment.

Des Moines is a highly developed community with established patterns of land use. Primarily developed as a residential community, the City is poised to evolve into a vibrant suburban center and fulfill its role as a High Capacity Transit Community pursuant to Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC) VISION 2050. Diversifying our local economy and attracting new

development will enable Des Moines to sustain itself in the future by providing a range of jobs, housing, business, and lifestyle choices within our community as well as the broader Puget Sound Region. This will help to strengthen the financial health of our community and reduce the tax burden on residential property owners.

Residential neighborhoods provide a range of housing type, size, style, and affordability. The Marina District and Pacific Ridge Neighborhoods serve as the City's primary mixed-use commercial centers while the North Central Neighborhood and the Pacific Highway South Corridor provide opportunities for larger scale commercial and light industrial development.

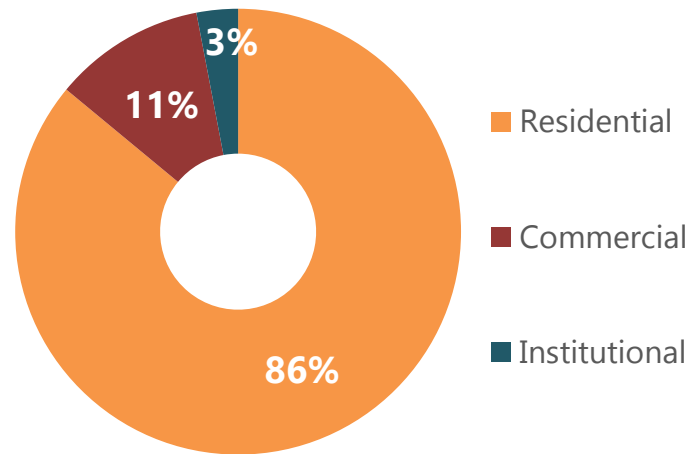
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<sup>1</sup> Number of new housing units needed between 2019 and 2044

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The Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map (Figure 2-1), identifies the land use classifications and densities recommended for each area of the City. The Zoning Map and Zoning Code establish the corresponding zoning classifications and associated development regulations. These designations help to achieve the City's vision for sustainable growth that provides housing choices; locates population centers adjacent to transit and services; provides areas to grow businesses, services, jobs and entertainment; includes appropriate transitions between uses with differing intensities; safeguards the natural environment; and maintains Des Moines' sense of community.

Figure 2-2 summarizes the percentage of the City's land area allocated to these land use designations, among broad categories. Land use assumptions were developed utilizing the PSRC growth targets and Des Moines Urban Growth Capacity data provided in Appendix A. As indicated by the 2021 Urban Growth Capacity Study (King County), Des Moines has adequate capacity to accommodate the City's 2044 housing and job targets with a remaining surplus capacity. The City of Des Moines Zoning Map and Zoning Code establish the zoning and associated development regulations.



**Figure 2-2: Distribution of Land Uses**

Land use arrangements and mixes that promote complete communities with access to employment, shopping, and leisure activities in a safe, inviting, and walkable environment, have been shown to positively influence the health of our local economy as well as the health of residents. Targeting the type and location of new growth also allows us to enhance areas of the City that need improvement, such as the Marina District, Business Park, Pacific Ridge, and Pacific Highway South Corridor, and add needed jobs and housing while minimizing increases in traffic and protecting quality of life in these neighborhoods. Similarly, parks and open space should be planned for and targeted to those areas where the need is greatest and where there will be increased housing densities. With this growth, the City expects the quality of development to celebrate and enhance the City's history and identity. Sound Transit is constructing the Federal Way Link Extension project that extends light rail from Angle Lake Station in the City of SeaTac to the Federal Way Transit Center. The 7.8-mile extension includes three stations – Kent/Des Moines Station near Highline College, Star Lake Station on South 272nd Street at I-5, and the Federal Way Transit Center. The Kent–Des Moines and Star Lake Stations will provide opportunities for transit-oriented development and the creation of jobs and housing that will benefit the immediate neighborhoods and the City as a whole. Portions of the Pacific Ridge, South Des Moines, and Woodmont Neighborhoods that are located along Rapid Ride transit lines will also provide similar opportunities.

## GOALS

**Goal LU 1** Actively guide and manage growth in a way that:

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- Preserves and enhances the quality of life and the diverse residential neighborhoods of the community, and serves them with vibrant business districts, open space, recreational facilities, affordable housing, and other supportive land uses;
- Protects environmentally critical areas and shorelines;
- Protects private property rights (RCW 36.70A.020(6));
- Promotes economic development; and
- Promotes financially sustainable growth.

- Goal LU 2** Promote a land use mix that helps to diversify the local economy, reduce poverty, and enhance the community by attracting new businesses, family wage jobs, new city revenues, and a variety of housing choices.
- Goal LU 3** Establish a land use pattern, scale, and density that supports walking, biking, and using transit to access goods, services, education, employment, and recreation as well as provides convenient and safe automobile usage.
- Goal LU 4** Maintain regulations and procedures that allow for siting of essential public facilities.

## POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

**LU 1.1 Utilize the Comprehensive Plan as the policy basis for preparing and updating neighborhood plans, establishing development regulations, prioritizing capital improvement construction, reviewing individual development proposals and making other decisions affecting the growth and development of Des Moines and the surrounding area, where feasible.**

LU 1.1.1 Plan for and regulate development to enhance the quality and maintain the unique character of Des Moines' neighborhoods and business districts.

LU 1.1.2 Establish and equitably enforce development standards that are clear and predictable, that simplify the review process and adapt to varied site conditions.

LU 1.1.3 Coordinate planning activities and development review with state, regional, and local governments, tribes, and institutions to ensure compliance with established plans and regulations affecting Des Moines, as required by law.

LU 1.1.4 Monitor and seek to influence planning activities and development decisions of neighboring jurisdictions affecting Des Moines neighborhoods and seek to influence those decisions consistent with the City of Des Moines Comprehensive Plan through collaboration.

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## **LU 1.2 Manage community growth to ensure that overall public benefits exceed public cost and that adequate public facilities and services are available or can be provided concurrently with new development.**

LU 1.2.1 Evaluate capital improvement proposals for consistency with the Comprehensive Plan.

LU 1.2.2 Prepare standards for new development to provide on- and off-site roadways, utilities and other public facilities as necessary to serve the additional demand generated by the development.

LU 1.2.3 Consider additional impact fees, such as for Police, Parks, and Trails, for new development to ensure sufficient funding for capital improvement to public facilities are sufficient with new growth.

## **LU 1.3 Monitor, review, and update the Comprehensive Plan as needed to reflect current community values, economic conditions, and technologies.**

LU 1.3.1 The plan should be amended at least once every ten years, or as required by law, but no more frequently than once per year, except in emergency situations when the City Council determines it is necessary and in the public interest.

## **LU 1.4 Provide opportunities for public involvement in updating the Comprehensive Plan, preparing development regulations, and reviewing major development proposals.**

LU 1.4.1 Involve citizens in the process of preparing and amending the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations by using techniques such as a project website, social media, mailings, surveys, advisory committees, newspaper articles, public hearings, and public workshops.

LU 1.4.2 Encourage and solicit the input of stakeholders, such as residents; property and business owners; non-motorized transportation advocates; environmental preservation organizations; and transit, affordable housing, and public health agencies.

LU 1.4.3 Ensure that community outreach efforts engage different ethnic and minority populations and a diversity of age groups and utilize culturally responsive practices and policies that meet the needs of traditionally underrepresented ethno-racial groups.

LU 1.4.4 Conduct public hearings on all development proposals that seek changes from existing development regulations (e.g., rezones, variances and planned unit developments) or which are potentially incompatible with neighboring development (e.g., conditional and unclassified uses) prior to city approval of those proposals, as required by law. Provide an opportunity for public comment on all development proposals subject to SEPA review, as required by law.

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## **LU 1.5 Seek a harmonious blend of living, working, shopping, recreational, and cultural land uses.**

LU 1.5.1 Recognize the need for public and quasi-public facilities (parks, schools, churches, and day care facilities) that play an important role in maintaining viable neighborhoods and develop standards for these uses for compatibility and to minimize impacts to neighborhoods.

LU 1.5.2 Require that new development maintain and enhance on-site open spaces, and provide on-site recreation facilities in new subdivisions and multifamily developments or pay appropriate in-lieu fees as required by the Des Moines Municipal Code (DMMC).

LU 1.5.3 Apply development standards and strategies that address land use transitions in order to manage impacts on residents and businesses, including but not limited to the following: site access and circulation; structure height, bulk, and scale; separation of buildings; landscaping; density; and noise buffering.

LU 1.5.4 Regulate the siting of incompatible uses adjacent to the Sea-Tac Airport, as defined in Federal Regulation 49 CFR Part 77 that establishes standards and notification requirements for objects affecting navigable airspace; RCW 36.70.547; the Washington State Department of Transportation's Airports and Compatible Land Use Guidebook, M 3074.00 (January 2011); and PSRC's Airport Compatible Land Use Program (December 2011).

## **LU 1.6 Preserve open spaces where appropriate and feasible to:**

- 1. Protect environmentally critical areas and shorelines;**
- 2. Protect endangered and threatened species;**
- 3. Provide visual separation between different land uses, neighborhoods and city boundaries; and**
- 4. Moderate the environmental and visual impacts of new development.**

LU 1.6.1 Integrate responses to the listings under the Endangered Species Act into future planning and economic development efforts and resource management programs to achieve a balance between environmental, social, and economic goals and objectives.

## **LU 1.7 Balance the expansion of housing options with the preservation of existing neighborhoods.**

LU 1.7.1 Expand housing options such as middle housing, as required by law, while developing standards to preserve neighborhood character.

LU 1.7.2 Create higher density housing options around high-capacity transit, as required by law.

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**LU 1.8 Recognize the Comprehensive Plan Figure 2-1: Land Use Map, as the official land use map of the City of Des Moines, providing a geographic representation of the Land Use Element. Recognize the City of Des Moines Zoning Map as the official zoning map. Undertake all planning activities to implement and support the designated land use pattern.**

LU 1.8.1 Create consistency between the uses designated in the City of Des Moines Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map with those designated on the City of Des Moines Zoning Map, as required by law. The zoning map shall officially designate land use and density in the City.

LU 1.8.2 Zoning should be brought into conformance with the City of Des Moines Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map.

LU 1.8.3 All zoning changes should conform to the land use pattern designated on the City of Des Moines Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map. All rezones should consider, among other relevant considerations, the following:

1. The effect upon the physical and biological environments;
2. The effect on the economic, social, and cultural environments;
3. The impact on adjacent land uses and neighborhoods; and
4. The impact on community and regional facilities, utilities, and transportation.

**LU 2.1 Enhance and improve the economic health of existing business districts and recognize each district's special attributes.**

LU 2.1.1 Promote new development and redevelopment within the Marina District to create a vibrant commercial center with a quality mix of businesses that will enhance the waterfront, and serve as a destination for local residents and visitors.

LU 2.1.2 Ensure that new construction contains and exhibits high-quality building materials and design elements as outlined in the Marina District Design Guidelines.

LU 2.1.3 Promote new development and redevelopment within Pacific Ridge to create a district with a broad range of uses, serving a local and regional clientele and using the Pacific Ridge Neighborhood Design Guidelines and Pacific Ridge Neighborhood Improvement Plan to reduce crime and create a better working and living environment.

LU 2.1.4 Encourage improvement of the Marina District and Pacific Ridge Neighborhood by working with the business community and other representative organizations to achieve the goals of the City of Des Moines Comprehensive Plan.

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LU 2.1.5 Facilitate the buildout of the North Central Neighborhood as a primary employment center that provides new family wage jobs and new revenues for the City, where feasible.

## **LU 2.2 Support the revitalization of declining commercial areas and obsolete facilities through redevelopment, rehabilitation, and other available means to provide long-term economic vitality.**

LU 2.2.1 Seek to abate existing incompatible uses and nuisances when such abatement is consistent with public health, safety, and welfare.

LU 2.2.2 Encourage the assembly and redevelopment of key, underdeveloped parcels through incentives and public/private partnerships.

LU 2.2.3 Facilitate implementation of the *Marina Capital Improvement Plan* objectives to develop the City's waterfront.

LU 2.2.4 Recognize that the existence of associated agreements, contract rezones, development agreements and similar restrictions may limit the degree to which properties may be developed. Such restrictions established by the City should be given substantial weight during consideration of requested amendments.

LU 2.2.5 Use a range of strategies to mitigate potential business displacement.

## **LU 3.1 Support the efforts of Sound Transit and King County Metro to develop a transit system that connects all areas of the city to existing and high capacity transit using a multi-modal approach.**

LU 3.1.1 Work with Sound Transit, the Cities of Kent, SeaTac, and Federal Way, and Highline College to adequately prepare for the extension of light rail through Des Moines.

## **LU 3.2 Establish Light Rail Station Area Planning framework goals and strategies for transit supportive development to occur within a one-half mile radius of any light rail stations.**

LU 3.2.1 Explore zoning amendments and design guidelines for the light rail stations to be located in close proximity to the South Des Moines, Pacific Ridge, and Woodmont Neighborhoods, considering the joint planning efforts with the City of Kent and Sound Transit on the Midway area.

## **LU 4.1 Ensure land use decisions on essential public facilities meet the following criteria to be made consistent with the process and criteria set forth in the DMMC:**

- 1. The facility meets the Growth Management Act (GMA) definition of an essential public facility, as defined in RCW 36.70A.200(1) and as amended; or**
- 2. The facility is on the statewide list maintained by the Office of Financial Management, ref. RCW 36.70A.200(4) or on the countywide list of essential public facilities; and**

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## **3. The facility is not otherwise regulated by the DMMC.**

LU 4.1.1 Recognize and use criteria to site essential public facilities as regulated by the DMMC, the GMA, and Policy PF-24 through PF-27 of the Public Facilities and Services Chapter of the 2021 King County Countywide Planning Policies. These policies include methods for siting and expanding public facilities as well as disaster preparedness and emergency management.

LU 4.1.2 Consider social equity and health issues when siting essential public facilities, to provide protection from exposure to harmful substances and environments.

LU 4.1.3 Allow and plan for the siting of organic materials management facilities in areas in accordance with RCW 70A.205.040 and as regulated by House Bill 1799 (2022).