

CHAPTER 1

LAND USE

INTRODUCTION

The Land Use Element, one of seven mandatory elements of the General Plan, has been required since 1955. It serves as the central element for the general plan and, in essence, brings together most of the concerns addressed in the other elements. It is the principal tool for guiding community growth and development and does so by designating the proposed general distribution, location and intensity of the use of land for both urban and non-urban activities. Although the Land Use Element is most closely related to the physical development of the city, it also addresses social, economic and environmental issues through its policies.

BACKGROUND

ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

1. The lack of comprehensive, future planning has resulted in lost opportunities from the fiscal, environmental and aesthetic points of view.
2. The total incorporated area, with over 44 percent vacant and 13% designated open space, is expected to be built out by the year 2010.
3. The appropriate intensity, scale and density of development on vacant parcels requires clear definition for the future.
4. Achieving the appropriate amount and location of land for each type of land use needed to create a balanced community is a dynamic process involving property rights, available land and community interests.
5. The majority of population growth in the Indian Wells Valley is expected to occur within the current city limits. Higher density land uses develop adjacent to incorporated areas resulting in pressures to annex so city services can be extended.
6. The population growth in Ridgecrest has resulted in significantly increased demands for municipal services, infrastructure, facilities and housing in Ridgecrest.
7. Ridgecrest is predominately residential land uses with a low percentage of industrial uses. This results in a disparity in the housing and job balance.

8. Some owners of centrally located large parcels have chosen not to develop their land at this time.

OPPORTUNITIES

1. Establish growth guidelines and encourage and set priorities for desired intensities, types and locations of new development.
2. Consideration of local environmental and economic resources in land use planning such that significant resources are protected and preserved.
3. Encourage compatible infill development.
4. Coordinate public services and infrastructure development with planned growth.
5. Identify carrying capacity of the environment as a basis for managing growth.
6. Encourage development of available Naval Air Weapons Station and Bureau of Land Management lands compatible with adjacent community needs and character if and when such lands become available.
7. Encourage county land uses compatible with adjacent city uses.
8. Evaluate population growth and monitor for acceptable levels of quality of life.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

GOAL 1.1:

Establish a concentrated and efficient urban form for Ridgecrest.

OBJECTIVES:

- o Achieve urban growth in an orderly manner responsive to economic, environmental and social needs of the community.

POLICIES:

- 1.1.1 Encourage development which emphasizes infill of vacant parcels.

- 1.1.2 Establish an optimum population size for the Ridgecrest area, based on environmental factors, as a guide for planning.
- 1.1.3 Provide easily accessible retail commercial services in order to encourage pedestrian shopping and energy conservation.
- 1.1.4 Encourage very low density development in adjacent unincorporated areas where acceptable and found necessary for orderly development.
- 1.1.5 Seek to meet an increased portion of local housing needs through multi-family housing, both tenant and owner-occupied. Work with developers and the Housing Corporation to meet the City's regional share of low and moderate income housing.

GOAL 1.2:

Achieve compatibility of land use in the Ridgecrest community through management of land use resources.

OBJECTIVES:

- o Through working directly with the NAWS Navy Command, and the Bureau of Land Management develop and begin implementation, of a strategy for the redevelopment and/or rehabilitation of excess Federal property as such lands become available.

POLICIES:

- 1.2.1 Continue to participate in the Land Use Policy Coordinating Committee to integrate Ridgecrest and NAWS into a single community through joint land use planning.
- 1.2.2 Encourage expansion of shopping and leisure time opportunities in the community.
- 1.2.3 Locate medium density residential in close proximity to existing or future commercial centers.
- 1.2.4 Promote development of environmentally compatible industries in Ridgecrest through improvement of existing and development of new industrial parks.
- 1.2.5 Designate areas, such as the downtown Balsam Street/Ridgecrest Boulevard area, for preparation of specific plans which will direct area revitalization and integration with the surrounding community.
- 1.2.6 Establish permanent procedures for citizen participation in the annual review of land use planning and plan implementation.

- 1.2.7 Develop a policy to encourage large parcels of land to be developed as planned unit developments or specific plans.
- 1.2.8 Develop new subdivision standards, or revise as appropriate, for each type of residential development including rural density lots, low density and medium density.

GOAL 1.3:

Provide for a city of the future that values people involvement with their community, their government and their quality of life.

OBJECTIVES:

- o Through community involvement, provide for a well integrated city with recreational areas which are adjacent to commercial and industrial areas.

POLICIES:

- 1.3.1 Encourage development of business areas adjacent to residential and recreational areas.
- 1.3.2 Work to promote a diversity of recreational uses to meet all community needs.
- 1.3.3 Attract new businesses to the area to provide for the availability of a growing work force.
- 1.3.4 Encourage development within the community to attract an older retired populace.
- 1.3.5 Work with the Sierra Sands Unified School District to provide for well integrated housing, school and recreational uses.
- 1.3.6 Provide for additional parks and trail systems linking recreational, housing, and schools.

IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

LAND USE PLAN

Overall Concept - The Land Use Plan depicts in a two dimensional form, a balanced distribution of land use which is consistent with community values, as expressed in this General Plan. The three overall principals followed in developing the Land Use Plan are:

- o Provide a guide to public and private investment; and

- o Reflect the issues, problems and opportunities affecting land use which are identified in each of the general plan elements; and
- o Reduce the potential for loss of life, injuries and damage to properties from hazards including flooding, seismic activity and aircraft operations.

The Land Use Plan reflects existing land use patterns which have resulted in a linear character for the City. Within this linear framework, the plan provides opportunities for future development to create various focal points for service and employment activities such as commercial centers, the civic center and industrial parks. As these focal points are developed and residential development occurs around them, a greater efficiency of land use and movement of people and goods can be achieved.

Efficiency of land use and movement is further enhanced by setting forth the concept of concentrating the most intensive uses in the urban centers and locating the less intensive uses on the fringe of these centers and within the Sphere of Influence. Intensive land uses include: the three nonresidential classifications, commercial and office, civic and institutional, and industrial; the residential categories of medium density and low density, and recreational uses are limited to the urban area while the less intensive uses including rural residential and natural open space make up the fringe areas west, south and east of the community.

Nonresidential land uses including commercial, office, civic, institutional and industrial are largely concentrated in a linear manner along Inyokern Road, China Lake Boulevard, Ridgecrest Boulevard, Norma Street, and Downs Street. Within this linear urban form are located existing and potential commercial focal points. Focal points within the linear pattern are located at intersections of arterial streets. Additional nonresidential uses are shown outside the dominant linear pattern characterizing these uses where they serve a neighborhood service function.

Residential, open space, and recreational uses comprise the remaining areas within the Land Use Plan. Inside the urban areas, low and medium density residential uses are shown. Medium density is shown adjacent to nonresidential uses in order to locate the highest concentrations of population near to services and the work place. Low density residential is indicated for the remainder of the urban area, and represents the major land use within the city. Also located inside the urban area are parks and schools, both of which provide for educational and recreational uses.

Outside the urban area, residential uses are designated as very low densities which do not require as great a level of urban services. Natural open space for hazard protection, habitat preservation and scenic enhancement is shown for the remainder of the non-urban area.

The Land Use Plan represents the proposed total development or "build-out" condition for the entire study area (the City and its Sphere of Influence). Continued growth and development at the historic rate could result in a total build-out of the incorporated area in the foreseeable future.

Table 1-1 gives a land use summary, in acres, of each land-use category as of June 1990. These figures are also depicted in Figure 1-1.

Rural Residential - The rural residential designation applies to portions of the area within the Sphere of Influence which have not been designated urban by Kern County. This concept applies to properties that provide for residential living as well as limited agricultural pursuits within the City limits. Housing within this designation would be located on individual lots with a minimum area of one gross acre to five gross acres and would reflect a lifestyle requiring a minimum of urban services.

Estate Residential - The estate residential designation is a single family residential designation used within city limits. This classification allows the development of large lots that range from 7,500 sq. ft. to 40,000 sq. ft. Estate residential homes are typically more expensive due to the size of the lots.

Low Density Residential - The low density residential designation is designed to provide for single family housing located on lots ranging in size from 6,000 square feet to 5 acres. The extreme low range of the densities is intended to meet the need for housing on large lots within reasonable proximity of a full range of urban services as well as serving as a transitional land use between the very open and sparsely populated rural areas and the various urban land uses of the city. The upper density residential ranges provides for housing on smaller lots within a density range of one to six units per gross acre. Besides providing for "traditional" single-family homes, this designation also provides for mobile homes and other forms of manufactured housing which meet the density standard and applicable development standards. Low density housing is currently the dominant housing type in Ridgecrest and is expected to continue as such in the future.

Medium Density Residential - The medium density residential designation provides for various forms of attached housing, both tenant and owner occupied. The designation permits densities up to twenty-five units per gross acre. Densities above this level are considered not in keeping with the "small town" character of the community.

TABLE 1-1

**LAND USE PLAN SUMMARY
(Gross Acres - June 1990)**

Total Build-Out

<u>Land Use Category</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>NAWS</u>
Residential			
Rural	664	4438	0
Estate	700	1805	0
Low Density	2659	550	500
Medium Density	675	0	190
Nonresidential			
Commercial and Office	2101	227	80
Civic & Institutional	1213	30	380
Industrial	210	966	320
Open Space			
Parks & Schools	717	410	420
Natural Open Space	2420	1210	7590
TOTAL	11,359	9636	9480

Commercial and Office - The commercial and office designation includes all types of retail stores and professional and personal service shops and offices. Commercial uses include: retail sales stores which provide a community-wide service such as restaurants, automobile sales, repairs, etc. as well as those which may provide service to a single neighborhood or portion of the city such as convenience markets and major shopping centers. Office uses include both personal services and professional services such as barber shops, medical offices, law offices and research and development not involving hazardous materials.

Civic and Institutional - The civic and institutional category includes offices of different levels of government and other agencies as well as public or private health and welfare facilities such as hospitals, community centers and convalescent homes. Public schools are not included in this category. However, included within this category is the civic center site.

Industrial - The industrial designation provides for various industrial and warehousing uses compatible with local design and environmental standards. Research and development activities involving the use of hazardous materials would be located within the industrial designations as well.

Parks and schools - This designation includes all public park and recreation facilities and public schools.

Open Space - This designation provides for open space which has been left, essentially, in a natural state. Lands to be included would be open space trails for non-motorized travel between major destinations within the city, habitat areas, and undeveloped BLM lands.

STANDARDS

Residential Density - The following standards for residential density will serve as guidelines for development:

- o Rural - 1 dwelling unit [DU]/1 gross acre to 1 DU/20 gross acres
- o Estate - 5 DU/gross acre to 1 DU/gross acre
- o Low Density - 1 DU/gross acre to 6 DU/gross acre
- o Medium Density - 6 DU/gross acre to 25 DU/gross acre

IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

The following actions will be pursued by the City as part of an overall effort to achieve the goals, objectives and policies of this element.

SHORT-TERM 1991 - 1995

1. Initiate continuous monitoring of current planning activity.
2. Revise zoning and subdivision ordinances.
3. Adopt annexation policies and requirements.
4. Participate with the NAWS in joint planning for the disposal and future use of potential excess properties that may be identified by NAWS in the future.
5. Evaluate and recommend revisions to designated urban area boundaries within the Sphere of Influence.

MID-TERM 1996 - 2000

6. Establish a neighborhood planning program.

LONG-TERM 2001 - 2010

7. Prepare Specific Plans for appropriate areas in Ridgecrest.

PUBLIC SERVICES & FACILITIES

INTRODUCTION

The Public Services and Facilities portion of the Land Use Element provides policy and development direction for public buildings, grounds and facilities essential to meet community needs. Services and facilities discussed include public buildings, solid waste collection, sanitary sewer, water, schools and medical service. Other public services and facilities including parks, storm drains, public transit, fire service and police service are treated in other elements. Since several of the services and facilities covered by this element are not operated by the City, an important part of implementing the element will be strong coordination between the City and individual purveyors.

BACKGROUND

ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

1. The City's sprawling urban form has resulted in extension of services through vacant land to reach populated areas on the urban fringe.
2. Developing additional public buildings and spaces may entail removal of more land from the tax rolls in a city where much of the potential tax base is on federal land.
3. Several services and facilities are provided to meet regional needs, but at local expense, because of the city's role as a regional center.
4. The rapid increase in population in recent years has severely strained many services and facilities.
5. Public administrative buildings are scattered throughout the city.
6. The current patterns of water consumption are wasteful of this limited resource.

OPPORTUNITIES

1. Development of the Civic Center as an administrative, recreational, and cultural center.
2. Encouragement of infill development to increase efficiency and cost effectiveness of services and facilities.
3. Sizing of services and facilities to correspond to the population that is reflected in this plan.
4. Development of water conservation programs for public buildings and spaces.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

GOAL 1.4:

Provide necessary public facilities and services that are convenient, economical and reinforce city and community identity.

OBJECTIVES:

- o Improve delivery of City services to all neighborhoods.
- o Coordinate long-range planning for all public utilities, services and facilities in order to achieve more efficient and cost-effective service.
- o Develop with other public agencies a comprehensive strategy for improving the City's sewer service including ultimate facility sizing and plans for reuse of wastewater and recycling of other waste products.

POLICIES:

General

- 1.4.1 Use the increase in costs to the City for providing public services and facilities as a factor for evaluating proposed development or annexations during the review process.
- 1.4.2 Encourage new development to occur as infill in areas already adequately served by existing public services and facilities.
- 1.4.3 Coordinate with appropriate agencies the expansion of all public services and facilities (sewer, police, fire, water, schools, solid waste) with a desired population level for the Ridgcrest area and the City's capital improvements budget.

Public Buildings

- 1.4.4 Ensure that public buildings are easily identifiable in the community, support community design goals, and are easily accessible by all modes of transportation to all residents or visitors to Ridgecrest.

Sewerage

- 1.4.5 Prohibit extension of sewer service beyond the city limits.
- 1.4.6 Ensure the longevity of existing sewer facilities through their systematic inspection and maintenance.
- 1.4.7 Require all new developments within the city to connect to the sewer system.

Other

- 1.4.8 Support efforts by local providers of medical and emergency services to maintain an adequate level of these services for Ridgecrest residents.
- 1.4.9 Support educational master planning programs as they are consistent with the General Plan.

IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:

The following actions will be part of the overall City effort to achieve the goals, objectives and policies of this element.

SHORT-TERM 1991 - 1995

1. Set priorities for public services and facilities programs within the capital improvement fund.
2. Maintain up-to-date standards for public services.
3. Update the sewer facilities master plan.
4. Participate in water system improvement plans with development and appropriate agencies.
5. Coordinate education facilities master planning with development.
6. Evaluate the cost/benefits of establishing improvement districts development fees and issuing City bonds to finance improvements.

COMMUNITY DESIGN

INTRODUCTION

The Community Design portion of the Land Use Element describes the various visual features that comprise the physical image of the city and its parts, and the patterns of activity that create interesting and diverse lifestyles. The presence or absence of these visual elements and the patterns of activity can determine the structure and character of the urban environment citywide and within neighborhoods. They can also influence people's feelings about their environment and, hence, the quality of life in the city. In establishing guidelines for visual features and activity patterns, Community Design takes into consideration constraints and opportunities imposed on the city by the desert environment.

BACKGROUND

ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

1. Ridgecrest has developed as a group of unrelated subdivisions with no established urban form.
2. The desert climate requires large quantities of water for non-compatible landscape irrigation, a resource of limited supply in the Indian Wells Valley.
3. Entry points to the community have received little special design treatment or attention.
4. The City has not maintained comprehensive design guidelines for public and private buildings and spaces.
5. Bicycle and pedestrian travel are generally confined to street rights-of-way.
6. Indiscriminate use of block walls adjacent to major streets has created urban canyons that can be visually offensive and create traffic hazards by obstructing the vision of motorists entering from side streets.
7. The block wall conditions have created 5' landscaping strips that currently have no way of being maintained. A landscaping and lighting district should be established to maintain these 5' landscaping strips.

OPPORTUNITIES

1. Enhance panoramic vistas of Sierra Nevada Mountains.

2. Develop the character of Ridgecrest as a "progressive, community-oriented" city.
3. Define neighborhoods through land use patterns and circulation systems.
4. Design structures and spaces to take advantage of desert environmental conditions.
5. Coordinate efforts to inform city residents about landscaping and watering techniques compatible with the desert environment.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

GOAL 1.5:

Use community design to enhance the identity of Ridgecrest as a community characterized as a "modern, progressive community," with a sense of open space and spectacular views of surrounding mountains.

OBJECTIVES:

- o Develop and implement programs to protect scenic resources.
- o Develop a Scenic Corridor Plan to provide for and enhance the aesthetic visual experience of travelers using the city's highway system.

POLICIES:

- 1.5.1 Enhance North and South China Lake Boulevard, East Ridgecrest Boulevard, West Bowman Road, College Heights Boulevard, West Drummond Avenue, Jack Ranch Road, and Inyokern Road as scenic corridors.
- 1.5.2 Refine the city's program to limit the size, appearance and number of outdoor advertising signs and billboards.
- 1.5.3 Establish the civic center as a major focal point for the community for the purpose of design.
- 1.5.4 Pursue the undergrounding of all utilities.
- 1.5.5 Coordinate scenic highway planning and implementation with Kern County and the State of California.
- 1.5.6 Integrate scenic corridors into the city's Circulation/Transportation Plan and urban design programs.

- 1.5.7 Give special consideration to the design of street lighting, signs and other street furniture along streets designated as scenic corridors.

GOAL 1.6:

Make Ridgecrest an efficient and aesthetically appealing community through citywide community design.

OBJECTIVES:

- o Involve local merchants in developing a program for phased improvement of the appearance of commercial areas.
- o Develop guidelines for landscape and paving treatment of arterial, collector and other major commercial and industrial streets. Coordinate installation of improvements with phased street improvements.

POLICIES:

- 1.6.1 Establish programs to upgrade the city's image and promote architectural unity of its commercial and industrial districts, including the downtown area, Ridgecrest Boulevard and China Lake Boulevard.
- 1.6.2 Emphasize the advantages of a positive community image for the economic growth and stability of Ridgecrest.
- 1.6.3 Pursue a low-maintenance, low-cost streetscape design program to provide visual identity to neighborhoods and a pleasurable visual experience citywide.

GOAL 1.7:

Achieve a high level of visual design quality which is responsive to our desert environment in both public and private development.

OBJECTIVES:

- o Develop and adopt design criteria for evaluating building design, site planning, landscaping, signs, maintenance planning and other design features.

POLICIES:

- 1.7.1 Establish neighborhoods as fundamental units of community design, and increase their identity through conscious design.
- 1.7.2 Establish design criteria to objectively evaluate design merits of development proposals.
- 1.7.3 Pursue the feasibility of establishing minimum aesthetic design criteria for active solar energy systems in all new construction.

IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

STANDARDS:

The following standards for community design serve as guidelines for implementing the provisions of this portion of the Land Use Element. More specific standards will be developed by the City as needed.

SITE DESIGN

- o Projects should be designed to fit a site's natural conditions, requiring minimum site alteration to accommodate the building plan.
- o Projects should be designed to minimize interference with the safety, privacy, quietness and scenic views of the neighborhood.
- o A project's various uses and activities should be logically located so that it operates efficiently and traffic problems, on- and off-site are minimized.
- o Grading contours should be used to promote capture of runoff on-site, create variety and interest in land forms and establish harmony and continuity within the project and with surrounding properties.
- o Screening along arterial and collector roads should make maximum use of berming and landscaping and use fences and walls only when justified by site or safety constraints. Where block walls are unavoidable at street corners, additional setbacks should be required to protect the visual corridor of motorists and pedestrians.
- o Exterior lighting, when used, should be subdued, enhance building design and landscaping and provide for safety and security. Lighting should not create glare for project occupants or neighboring properties.

- o Trash containers should be provided in a convenient location away from public streets and store entrances. Containers should be completely screened with materials compatible with building exteriors.
- o Mechanical and utility service equipment, including meter boxes, should be designed as part of a structure and usually should be screened. Solar heating equipment requiring full access to the sun need not be screened but must be as unobtrusive as possible. Satellite dishes shall also be placed as unobtrusive as possible.

LANDSCAPING

- o Native desert species or other drought tolerant plants should be used for landscaping to minimize maintenance, especially irrigation.
- o Decomposed granite, crushed rock, cinder or other suitable aggregate should be used for ground cover to enhance retention of water in the soil and for beauty. Use of plants for ground cover, including lawns, should be selective in the interest of water conservation.
- o The amount of landscaping provided must be in proportion to a whole development, be integrated with building design, enhance the appearance and enjoyment of a project and soften the effects of buildings and pavement.
- o An appropriate irrigation system must be provided for plants requiring irrigation. The system must be designed for conservative efficient use of water. Automatic water systems are encouraged.
- o Develop a long range plan for the distribution of waste water to be used in place of fresh water where applicable.

SIGNS

- o The materials used for and the size, color, location and arrangement of signs must be an integral part of the design of a site and building and must be compatible with their surroundings.
- o Signs should be simple, restrained and subordinate to an overall project design.
- o Signs should be consistent in location and design throughout a development, including those for shopping centers.
- o Signs shall conform to standards for type, size and location established by City ordinance.

IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

The following programs will be enacted by the City as part of an overall effort to achieve the goals, objectives and policies of this element.

SHORT-TERM 1991 - 1995

1. Develop landscape guidelines for arterial and collector streets.
2. Initiate landscaping of arterial and collector streets.
3. Continue efforts for undergrounding of utilities wherever feasible.
4. Establish landscaping guidelines, emphasizing energy and water conservation.
5. Establish landscaping guidelines for public buildings, large residential projects and commercial and industrial developments.
6. Evaluate yearly and update, as needed, the existing sign ordinance.
7. Establish design criteria for commercial and industrial development, emphasizing compatibility with the desert environment.

MID-TERM 1996 - 2000

8. Promote upgrading of building facades in existing commercial and industrial areas.
9. Establish guidelines for "street furniture," including benches, refuse receptacles, special paving, and lights.
10. Review the use of block walls along arterial and collector streets and provide for varied approaches that eliminate the existing "canyon" effect.