



City of Tacoma
Planning and Development Services Department

Agenda Item
D-2

TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Brian Boudet, Comprehensive Planning Division
SUBJECT: Annual Amendment #2013-06: Development Intensity Designations
DATE: January 10, 2013

At the January 16th meeting, the Commission will continue its discussion regarding the Comprehensive Plan's land use designations and potential modifications thereto. The intent for this project is to revise and update the Plan's land use designation approach, from the current Land Use Intensities to a more simplified and easily understood classification system.

As discussed previously, since this project could result in the modification of the Comprehensive Plan's land use designations for all properties within the City, it may be necessary to complete this work in phases. The first phase, to be completed this year, would include general approval of the new designation framework and some limited redesignations. The second phase, to be completed next year, would involve a comprehensive review of the existing and proposed land use patterns against the new designation framework.

Attached for the Commission's review and discussion is background information on the Growth Management Act's requirements for land use designations, the City's existing designation system (based on land use "intensities"), land use designation systems from other area jurisdictions, and the proposed new land use designation framework.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (253) 573-2389 or bboudet@cityoftacoma.org.

c: Peter Huffman, Interim Director

Attachments



2013 Annual Amendment Application No. 2013-06 Development Intensity Designations

BACKGROUND – GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT
January 10, 2013

Introduction

Washington cities and counties have prepared comprehensive plans for many years; however, growth management in Washington took on new meaning with the passage of the Growth Management Act (GMA) by the Washington Legislature in 1990. The GMA was enacted in response to rapid population growth and concerns with suburban sprawl, environmental protection, quality of life, and related issues. The GMA has been amended several times, and is codified in many chapters but primarily in Chapter 36.70A RCW.

The GMA requires the fastest growing counties and the cities within them to plan extensively in keeping with [state GMA goals](#) on:

- sprawl reduction
- concentrated urban growth
- affordable housing
- economic development
- open space and recreation
- regional transportation
- environmental protection
- property rights
- natural resource industries
- historic lands and buildings
- permit processing
- public facilities and services
- early and continuous public participation
- shoreline management

In addition to the 13 original GMA goals, the legislature added the goals and policies of the shoreline management act as the fourteenth GMA goal. (See [RCW 36.70A.480.](#)) The shoreline goals may be found at [RCW 90.58.020.](#)

The GMA provides a framework for regional coordination, and counties planning under the GMA are required to adopt county-wide planning policies to guide plan adoption within the county and to establish urban growth areas (UGAs).

The GMA establishes the primacy of the comprehensive plan. The comprehensive plan is the starting point for any planning process and the centerpiece of local planning. The comprehensive plan is the guiding policy document for all land use and development regulations in the jurisdiction, and for local and/or regional services including transit, sewers, parks, trails and open space.

Development regulations (zoning, subdivision, and other controls) must be consistent with comprehensive plans (see separate page on [development regulations](#)). State agencies are required to comply with comprehensive plans and development regulations of jurisdictions planning under the GMA. For information on plan updates, see [GMA Plan/Development Regulations Updates](#) page.

Required Components

Local comprehensive plans must include the following elements: land use, housing, capital facilities, utilities, transportation, and, for counties, a rural element. Shoreline master program policies are also an element of local comprehensive plans. Implementation of required parks and economic development elements is on hold until adequate state funding is available.

The first listed component required of a comprehensive plan is to include a land use element that designates various land uses and shows, generally through maps, the geographic distribution of those planned land uses.

RCW 36.70A.070(1): Comprehensive Plans – Mandatory Elements

Each comprehensive plan shall include a plan, scheme, or design for each of the following:

(1) A land use element designating the proposed general distribution and general location and extent of the uses of land, where appropriate, for agriculture, timber production, housing, commerce, industry, recreation, open spaces, general aviation airports, public utilities, public facilities, and other land uses. The land use element shall include population densities, building intensities, and estimates of future population growth. The land use element shall provide for protection of the quality and quantity of groundwater used for public water supplies. Wherever possible, the land use element should consider utilizing urban planning approaches that promote physical activity. Where applicable, the land use element shall review drainage, flooding, and storm water run-off in the area and nearby jurisdictions and provide guidance for corrective actions to mitigate or cleanse those discharges that pollute waters of the state, including Puget Sound or waters entering Puget Sound.

Note: this information was compiled, in part, based on excerpts from the Municipal Research Service Center (mrsc.org)



2013 Annual Amendment Application No. 2013-06 Development Intensity Designations

BACKGROUND – EXISTING TACOMA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
January 10, 2013

Existing Tacoma Comprehensive Plan Growth Strategy and Land Use Designations

The current Comprehensive Plan land use designations are based on a development “intensity” concept. The following excerpts from the Growth Strategy & Development Concept and Generalized Land Use Elements describe the various land use intensity designations and the type of future land uses that those designations represent. In addition, the current Generalized Land Use Map is provided showing the distribution of these development intensities throughout the city.

Development Intensities

The amount and type of development allowed in an area is determined by designating development intensities on the Generalized Land Use Plan Map. Development intensities are an indication of how much influence a development has over the surrounding area. Conventional land use plans separate developments according to categories of uses such as residential, commercial and industrial. The development intensities approach in the comprehensive plan recognizes that different types of land use may be located in the same area as long as the character of the area remains consistent. This approach permits greater flexibility in land use arrangements and encourages innovative techniques of land development.

Factors that determine the intensity level of a development include size, scale, bulk, nuisance level, amount of open space and traffic generation. For example, a ten-story apartment complex and high traffic generation would be viewed as a high intensity use while a typical, single-family detached home is regarded as a low intensity development.

Although land use intensity and density are somewhat related, they are not the same concept. Density is the number of people or housing units per unit of land. The type and size of housing units and the number of occupants in these units can widely vary; therefore, density does not accurately indicate the degree of impact a given development asserts over surrounding land uses. The concept of density is further limited in that it only applies to residential development and cannot be used to assess the impacts of commercial or industrial development. Development intensities, on the other hand, apply to all land uses and provide a more accurate account of the character and nature of a given development.

Development intensities are classified as high intensity, medium intensity and low intensity.

High Intensity Development

High intensity development generates high activity patterns and high traffic generation. High-density residential development, major employment centers and commercial and industrial developments of regional significance are all examples of high intensity development. These include two of the City's designated mixed use centers: Downtown and the Tacoma Mall area and the regionally designated Port Manufacturing/Industrial Center.

Medium Intensity Development

Medium intensity development generates moderate activity patterns and traffic generation. Commercial or industrial activity of community-wide significance and medium density residential development are examples of medium intensity development. Mixed use centers other than Downtown and the Tacoma Mall area are further examples of medium intensity areas.

Low Intensity Development

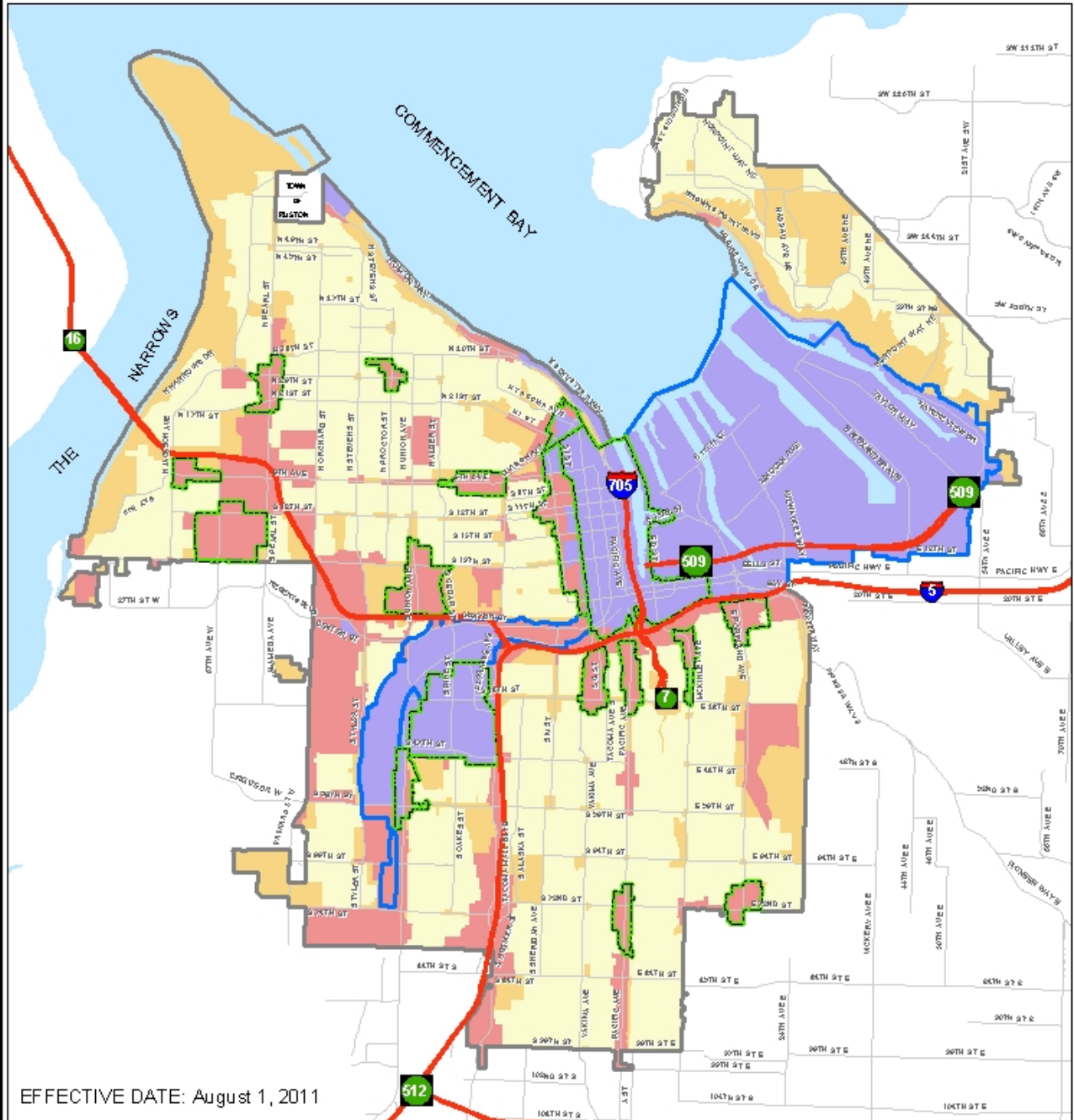
Low activity patterns and traffic generation characterize low intensity development. Low intensity development is predominantly single-family residential development, but can include duplexes, triplexes, and small-scale multifamily development. Supportive neighborhood convenience commercial establishments and community facilities such as churches, schools, libraries and fire stations also are considered low intensity uses. Open space areas may also be considered a low intensity use and can include recreational areas and parks. To better differentiate the range of uses within low intensity areas, single-family detached housing areas are delineated separately.

Low Intensity - Single-family Detached Housing Areas

Single-family detached housing is the preferred housing structure type for many of Tacoma's citizens. Qualities associated with single-family neighborhoods are generally viewed as desirable and include: low noise levels, limited traffic, compatible building styles and uses, and low-density development. Much of the city's land is strongly committed to single-family development and has been determined to be deserving of special protection from incompatible land uses.

Single-family detached housing areas have consequently been identified and a series of specific policies established to provide for this protection. The Generalized Land Use Plan Map delineates these single-family detached housing areas. These areas were identified on a citywide basis, using the criteria as described later. These criteria provide that single-family areas include not only areas that are presently predominately developed with single-family detached houses, but those areas that are proposed or can reasonably be anticipated to develop in a like manner and, therefore, should be preserved for eventual development of single-family homes. It should be noted that these single-family detached housing areas lie within low intensity areas as depicted on the Generalized Land Use Plan Map.

Generalized Land Use Plan Map



EFFECTIVE DATE: August 1, 2011

- City Boundary
- Mixed Use Centers
- Manufacturing / Industrial Center

- Land Use Intensity
- Single Family
 - Low
 - Medium
 - High



City of Tacoma
Community & Economic Development
GIS Analysis & Data Services



0 0.5 1 2 Miles

NOTE: This map is for reference only.





**2013 Annual Amendment Application No. 2013-06
Development Intensity Designations**

BACKGROUND – BENCHMARKING
January 10, 2013

Comprehensive Plan Land Use Designations - Benchmarking

The following chart provides some selected regional examples of Comprehensive Plan land use designations. As can be seen here, the approach and framework varies significantly by jurisdiction, with some cities utilizing relatively simple schemes with few designations and some cities using very detailed and complex systems with many, very detailed designations.

City	Comprehensive Plan Land Use Designations
Tacoma	High Intensity (outside of mixed use centers) Medium Intensity(outside of mixed use centers) Low Intensity Single Family Detached Housing Area Downtown Mixed-Use Center Urban Mixed-Use Center Community Mixed-Use Center Neighborhood Mixed-Use Center Manufacturing/ Industrial Center
Bellevue	Single Family Low Density-1.8 acres Medium Density-3.5 acres High Density- 5 acres Urban Res.-7.5 acres Multi Family Low- up to 10 per acre Med.-up to 20 High up to 30 Retail Neighborhood Business Community Business General Business General/ Community business Office Professional Office Office Office, Limited Business Office, Limited Business- Open Space Industrial Light Industrial Medical Institution Medical Institution

City	Comprehensive Plan Land Use Designations
Seattle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urban Center Hub/ Residential Urban Village Manufacturing/ Industrial Center City- Owned Open Space Single Family Residential Areas Multi-Family Residential Areas Commercial / Mixed Use Areas Downtown Areas Industrial Areas Master Planned Communities Major Institutions
Renton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residential Designations Residential Low Density Residential Medium Density Residential Single Family Residential Multifamily Commercial Designations Commercial Corridor Commercial Neighborhood Commercial -Office –Residential Center Designations Center Village Urban Center Downtown Urban Center North Employment Designations Employment Area Valley Employment Area Industrial
Spokane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residential Designations Residential Low Density Residential Medium Density Residential Single Family Residential Multifamily Commercial Designations Commercial Corridor Commercial Neighborhood Commercial -Office –Residential Center Designations Center Village Urban Center Downtown Urban Center North Employment Designations Employment Area Valley Employment Area Industrial
Redmond	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single Family Constrained Single Family Urban Multi-Family Urban Neighborhood Commercial General Commercial Downtown Mixed Use Business Park Manufacturing Park Design District Urban Recreation Semi-Rural Park and Open Space Agricultural(Outside of UGA) Rural (Outside of UGA)

City**Comprehensive Plan Land Use Designations*****Yakima*****Current**

Single Family Detached
Single Family Attached (2-4 units)
Multi –Family Mobile home
Manufacturing Industries
Transportation, Communication, Utilities
Wholesale
Retail Trade/Service
Offices
Public/ Semi Public
Parks& Recreation
Agriculture, Forest
Vacant Underdeveloped

Future

Low Density Residential
Medium Density Residential
High Density Residential
Professional Office
Neighborhood Commercial
Large Convenience Center
Arterial Commercial
CBD Core Commercial
Regional Commercial
Industrial

Olympia

Low-Density Housing
Medium-Density Housing
Mixed Residential
Neighborhood Centers
Residential Mixed Use
Planned Developments
Professional Offices & Multifamily Housing
Urban Waterfront
Urban Corridors
Central Business District
General Commerce
Auto Services
Medical Services
Industry

Federal Way

City Center Core
City Center Frame
Community Business
Commercial Enterprise
Commercial/Recreation
Corporate Park
Multi-Family
Neighborhood Commercial
Office Park
Parks and Open Space
Professional Office
Single Family, Low Density
Single Family, Medium Density
Single Family, High Density

City**Comprehensive Plan Land Use Designations*****Edmonds***

Retail Core
Arts Center Corridor
Downtown Mixed Commercial
Downtown Convenience
Downtown Mixed Residential
Downtown Master Plan
Shoreline Commercial
Downtown Residence-Office
Single Family- Urban 1
Single Family- Urban 2
Single Family- Urban 3
Single Family Resource
Single Family Master Plan
Multi Family- Medium Density
Multi Family- High Density
Neighborhood Commercial
Community Commercial
Planned Business/ Neighborhood Business
Mixed Use Commercial
Highway 99 Corridor
Edmonds Way Corridor
Hospital/ Medical
Master Plan Development
Public
Park/ Open Space

Puyallup

POC - Pedestrian Oriented Commercial
AOC - Auto Oriented Commercial
LC - Limited Commercial
MUC - Mixed Use Commercial
LM/W - Light Manufacturing/Warehousing
B/IP - Business/Industrial Parks
MDR - Moderate Density Residential
HDR - High Density Residential
WHNP - West Hills Neighborhood Plan
LDR - Low Density Residential
RBR - Rural Buffer Residential
PF - Public Facilities
MED - Medical Facilities
FAIR - Fair
OS/PP - Open Space/Public Parks

City

Comprehensive Plan Land Use Designations

Everett

Residential

- Single Family Detached, 3-5 Dwellings per gross acre
- Single Family Detached, 5-10 Dwellings per gross acre
- Single Family Detached, 10-12 Dwellings per gross acre
- Single Family Detached, 12-15 Dwellings per gross acre
- Multiple Family, 15-20 Dwellings per gross acre
- Multiple Family, 20-29 Dwellings per gross acre
- Multiple Family, 30-50 Dwellings per gross acre
- Multiple Family, 50+ Dwellings per gross acre

Institutional

- Parks/Public Open Space
- Schools/Churches
- Colleges/Universities
- Cemeteries
- Hospitals
- Clinics, Medical and Professional Offices, Multiple Family
- Professional Office, Multiple Family
- Clinic, Medical Related Uses, Multiple Family
- Public/Quasi-Public Facilities

Metropolitan Center

- Central Business District

Commercial

- Neighborhood Business
- Community Business
- Office
- Mixed Use Commercial - Multiple Family
- Waterfront Commercial

Industrial

- Heavy Industrial
- Maritime Service
- Light Industrial
- Office and Industrial Park
- Light Industrial Everett Station

Agricultural

- Agriculture
 - Aquatic
 - Watershed Resource Management
-



**2013 Annual Amendment Application No. 2013-06
Development Intensity Designations**

PROPOSED FRAMEWORK
January 10, 2013

Existing Designations and Zoning Framework

The present version of Tacoma’s Comprehensive plan is broken into four classifications, although it also incorporates other classifications such as Mixed-Use Centers and Manufacturing/Industrial Centers in a confusing, overlapping system of classifications. This can be tricky when determining appropriate zoning within a land use area. Determining if a use fits within an area’s vision can also be a time consuming and costly process for developers and the community. The following chart from the Growth and Development Strategy Element lays out the existing Plan designations and the associated zoning classifications.

Comprehensive Plan Designations	Typical Zoning Classifications
High Intensity(outside mixed-use centers)	R-5 HM
Medium Intensity (outside mixed-use centers)	R-4L R-4 C-2 PDB M-1 M-2
Low Intensity	R-3 R-4L HMR-SRD T C-1
Single Family Detached Housing Area	R-1 R-2 R-2SRD
Downtown Mixed-Use Center	DR DMU WR DCC UCX-TD
Urban Mixed-Use Center	UCX RCX URX
Community Mixed-Use Center	CCX RCX HMX URX

Comprehensive Plan Designations	Typical Zoning Classifications
Neighborhood Mixed-Use Center	NCX RCX CIX HMX URX NRX
Manufacturing/ Industrial Center	PMI M-2 M-1

Proposed New Framework for the Comprehensive Plan's Land Use Designations

The intent for this project is to revise and update the Plan's land use designation approach, from the current Land Use Intensities to a more simplified and easily understood classification system. The chart below outlines the proposed designations and the existing zoning classifications that would fit within each designation. Following the chart are general descriptions of each of the designations.

Comprehensive Plan Land Use Designations (proposed)	Corresponding Zoning
Single Family Residential	R-1 R-2 R-2SRD
Multi-Family	R-3, R-4L HMR-SRD T R-4 R-5
Commercial	C-1 C-2 PDB HM
Open Space*	(see bullet 2 below)presently park/open space or greenways done by site specific permitting
Industrial	M-1 M-2 PMI
Shoreline *	Refer to SMP
Downtown Mixed- Use Center	DR DMU WR DCC UCX-TD

Comprehensive Plan Land Use Designations (proposed)	Corresponding Zoning
Urban Mixed- Use Center	UCX RCX URX
Community Mixed- Use Center	CCX RCX HMX URX
Neighborhood Mixed- Use Center	NCX RCX CIX HMX URX NRX

General Land Use Concept for Each Proposed Designation

Single Family Residential

Single-family detached housing is the preferred housing structure type for many of Tacoma's citizens. Qualities associated with single-family neighborhoods that are generally viewed as desirable include: low noise levels, limited traffic, compatible building styles and uses, and low-density development. Much of the city's land is strongly committed to single-family development and has been determined to be deserving of special protection from incompatible land uses.

Multi-Family

Other types of housing such as duplexes, triplexes, apartments, townhomes and condominiums are also needed and desired by large segments of the population. Housing choices are influenced by income, family size, age, lifestyles, and other factors which can change during a person's lifetime. Consequently, A wide variety of housing types are needed within a community to serve the varied needs of residents

Commercial

Pressure can be expected for additional retail and service uses to support the growing population. It is anticipated that this demand can be accommodated through redevelopment and intensification of uses within established commercial areas

Commercial development involves a wide variety of uses and can range in scale from small neighborhood convenience shops to regional shopping centers. Commercial areas are the activity centers of the community. Commercial areas should be safe, well designed, appropriately scaled, and integrated into the fabric of the community. Commercial establishments must be properly located and easily accessible for the convenience of their customers. Commercial developments should be located within mixed-use centers, in concentrations within areas of similar character, or in nodes at intersections of major traffic corridors. Such locations should lessen traffic congestion, increase consumer convenience, reduce utility and service installation and maintenance costs and encourage joint use of parking facilities. Infill development and intensification of existing commercial areas will aid their continued economic viability. In some limited instances, physical expansion of existing areas may be permitted; however, linear expansion is to be strictly limited.

Public Open Space

The Public Open Space designation will operate as a means by which to identify and conserve wildlife and manage natural resources within the urban environment. Being a highly urbanized area Tacoma can benefit from putting additional standards on some of its remaining natural areas like steep slopes, wetlands and streams, and upland habitat areas as described in the Open Spaces and Recreation Element of the Comp Plan (Shoreline will be addressed separately because of its many distinct uses). This designation should be less of a limit on types of development but on how one develops and would focus on publicly owned open space and habitat properties instead of privately owned, undeveloped properties. In some cases, if this designation is applied to private properties, property owners could either build to the present zoning limits following "green" practices or opt for less development as an alternative. Requirements could include clustering, a technique used to preserve larger areas of natural habitat and allow for greenways.

Industrial:

Manufacturing/industrial centers are concentrations of manufacturing, industrial and related uses and are major employment areas. These areas need good access to local and regional transportation systems.

Industrial facilities vary in size and function. Heavy industrial uses usually consist of larger scale buildings with adjacent large storage areas. These uses generally are associated with high nuisance levels. Light industrial development consists of smaller scale, non-manufacturing and manufacturing uses. Generally, light industries are located on smaller sites and have lower nuisance levels. The function and the location of industrial establishments are highly related to convenient access to major transportation facilities and other manufacturers, as well as suppliers and distributors in the urban area. Potential adverse influences associated with industrial developments include noise, glare, vibration, air and water pollution, traffic congestion and safety hazards. Generally, heavy industrial developments are considered incompatible with other land uses because of their high nuisance level. However, some newer, technical types of industry produce few adverse effects. "Clean" industrial uses may be located in centers and near residential areas, provided that compatibility is maintained and proper controls are applied to limit any adverse influences on surrounding areas.

Shoreline Designation:

A single shoreline designation could be used to recognize the unique nature of the shoreline environment and the fact that it contains its own set of guiding policy documents. In addition, the Shoreline Master Program already contains its own set of environment designations, which serve much the same role as generalized land use designations except with a greater focus on shoreline issues, making it unnecessary to provide both shoreline designations and separate generalized land use designations. A single designation would allow for quick reference to the general land use intent and guidance and a quick refer to the SMP for greater details as to what types of shoreline uses are allowed in individual portions of the shoreline.

Mixed-use Centers:

Mixed-use centers are compact, self-sufficient areas, identifiable as the focus of the surrounding area. The mixed-use center is a dense, well-integrated variety of development types, combined in such a way that it is pedestrian-oriented and transit supportive.

Downtown Mixed- Use Center:

The downtown center is the highest concentration of urban growth found anywhere in the city. It is the focal point for the city, the center of government, cultural, office, financial, transportation and other activities. This variety of day and night activities attracts visitors from throughout the city and region. The interstate freeway, major arterials, provides access and the center has both local and regional transit connections. Larger, often historic, buildings fronting on the sidewalk characterize the area. Pedestrian orientation is high. Parking is found along the street and within structures.

Urban Mixed- Use Center:

The urban center is a highly dense concentration of urban development. Buildings can range from one to twelve stories and activity is greater than in most areas of the city. It is an area of regional attraction and a focus for both the local and regional transit systems. Many major city arterials connect to the urban center and nearby freeway access is present. Parking is provided both in surface lots and within structures. Internal streets and pathways provide connections among the developments within the center.

Community Mixed- Use Center:

The community center is a concentration of commercial and/or institutional development that serves many nearby neighborhoods and generally includes a unique attraction that draws people from throughout the city. Some residential development may already be present, and there is a goal to have more residential development. It is directly accessible by arterials and local transit. Pedestrian accessibility is important within the center, but because of its focus on larger scale commercial development, the community center continues to provide for automobile parking, preferably within structures.

Neighborhood Mixed- Use Center:

The neighborhood center is a concentrated mix of small- to medium-scale development that serves the daily needs of center residents, the immediate neighborhood, and areas beyond. Development contains a mix of residential and commercial uses, and the majority of parking is provided within structures. Buildings are generally up to six stories along the commercial corridors, up to three stories at the periphery of the centers near single-family districts, and up to four stories in areas between the core and the periphery. They are designed with a compatible character to adjacent residential neighborhoods. The design of the neighborhood center encourages pedestrians and bicyclists and its location on a major arterial makes it a convenient and frequent stop for local transit. The regional transit network also may directly serve some neighborhood centers.