



LAND USE PLAN

THE CITY OF GULF SHORES

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2014 LAND USE PLAN UPDATE

In 2014 a Planning Commission committee led by Chairman Robert Steiskal, Jr. and made up of Commissioners Hartly Brokenshaw, Jim Eberlein, Billy Eubank, and Frank Malone, along with Planner Andy Bauer performed a comprehensive review of the Land Use Plan in order to update the plan to current physical, social, political, and market conditions and to make sure the plan remains focused on Gulf Shores' vision for its future. The 2014 Land Use Plan Update was presented and adopted by the Planning Commission and endorsed by the City Council at Public Hearings.

Re-Adopted by the Planning Commission Following Revision: January 27, 2015

For copies of this document:

<http://www.gulfshoresal.gov>

CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAN	1
II. USING AND REFINING THE PLAN	1
2014 LAND USE PLAN UPDATE	2
III. MAJOR DEVELOPMENT THEMES	2
IV. FUTURE LAND USE MAP	4
V. MAJOR LAND USE COMPONENTS, POLICIES & IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES	5
GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE	5
Green Infrastructure Policies	6
Implementation Opportunities	7
RESIDENTIAL USES	8
Residential Use Policies	9
Implementation Opportunities	10
COMMERCIAL, CIVIC, INSTITUTIONAL & MIXED LAND USES	11
Commercial, Civic, Institutional & Mixed Use Policies	13
Implementation Opportunities	13
TRANSPORTATION AND ACCESSIBILITY	14
Transportation & Accessibility Policies	15
Implementation Opportunities	15
COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND LIVABILITY	16
Community Character and Livability Policies	17
Implementation Opportunities	17
VI. CONCLUSION	19
VII APPENDIX	20
HIGHWAY 59 CORRIDOR REDEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS	20

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAN

The Land Use Plan illustrates and provides an overall strategy for how Gulf Shores intends to shape itself over time and serves as a comprehensive strategy to guide planning and design for land development and resource conservation.

The plan is also intended to help Gulf Shores' residents, property owners, merchants, builders and developers invest in the city by providing a reasonable expectation of the city's future. The plan is long-range, general, and focused on physical development. Consequently, the community may be assured that the plan is a living document whose relevance will continue even as circumstances change over time.

Through the Gulf Shores Land Use Plan, city officials wish to:

- *Provide a guide to development decisions and a basis for making and revising zoning and other regulations regarding type, intensity and timing of development that will help to balance the city as a family-oriented tourist destination and a neighborhood-oriented community.*
- *Coordinate land use recommendations with those for infrastructure improvements as indicated in the Vision 2025 plan and measure development against the Land Use Plan to see if it fits the desired fabric of the city as expressed within the plan.*
- *Visualize what type and scale of land use may reasonably be expected to occur in Gulf Shores in appropriate locations to provide reasonable assurance and security regarding development investment decisions.*
- *Prepare additional plans as needed to identify, protect, develop and integrate land use and development. Examples of plans can be specific area plans for, activity centers, neighborhoods, bikeways and sidewalks, parks and recreational and master streetscaping plans.*
- *Keep the Land Use Plan up to date and in harmony with supporting ordinances and regulations as needed to ensure compatibility with the citizens of Gulf Shores and their desired vision for the city.*

II. USING AND REFINING THE PLAN

The Land Use Plan is a combination of vision, maps, development policies and implementation opportunities. It provides a framework for guiding public and private decisions that will affect the growth, development and redevelopment of Gulf Shores. The Land Use Plan is intended to be a living document, to evolve and grow in response to changes in public values and to market and physical conditions. The plan will be implemented through the actions and enforcement of various parts of the city's growth management system: development regulations, capital improvement planning and budgeting, specific plans, transportation plans and decisions about the appropriateness of development proposals. Only through continuing use, evaluation, detailing, reconsideration and amendment can the plan fully serve Gulf Shores, and only then can

the people of Gulf Shores use it wisely as a creative tool toward achievement of its comprehensive vision for the community.

Land use planning is an activity generally overseen by the Planning Commission. In an effort to keep the Land Use Plan updated, the plan should be reviewed, refined, detailed and revised on a regular basis through preparation and adoption of plan amendments. At a minimum of five (5) years the Planning Commission shall perform a comprehensive review of the Land Use Plan to insure the plan is consistent with the development visions and goals of the City.

2014 LAND USE PLAN UPDATE

In 2013 the City of Gulf Shores Planning Commission initiated a comprehensive review of the 2008 Land Use Plan to make sure the goals and policies are up to date with current City visions and to streamline the document to make it more user friendly. Strides have been made to address some of the items missing from the 2008 Gulf Shores Land Use Plan. Major themes and elements of the below accomplishments are reflected in the 2014 Land Use Plan Update.

- Citywide Branding – *Small Town, Big Beach*
- Implementation of a Wayfinding Signage Plan
- Master Plans for the Public Beach & Lagoon Pass
- Adaptive and Responsive Traffic Signals
- Economic Development & Environmental and Recreational Project Plans
- 2025 Vision for Sustainability Plan
- Waterway Village District
- Gulf State Park Lodge & Convention Center Plan
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Update
- Cultural Center purchase

III. MAJOR DEVELOPMENT THEMES

In 2014 the City Council adopted its 2025 Vision for Sustainability Plan to include five areas of development focus including:

Medical (Coastal Alabama Medical Complex) - The city supports the development of a prestigious medical facility invested in people, patient and family-centered care, medical discovery and education. The complex, located within the coastal Alabama region, will be impressive in scope, innovation and medical specialties.

Education (Coastal Alabama Center for Educational Excellence) - The city and its partners will build a first-rate academic campus incorporating a powerful dual-enrollment model

proven to promote access to higher education. The campus will feature a leading-edge design incorporating the latest technology into a new high school and a new additional Faulkner State Community College location complete with on campus housing and student life activities. This innovative campus will encourage affiliations with four-year universities to complete the higher education model by offering bachelor's and master's programs.

Waterway District – Continue to develop Waterway Village into a compact, walkable, pedestrian scaled mixed use neighborhood district located along the Intracoastal Waterway. Waterway Village is envisioned to become a secondary tourist destination that is well connected the north and south sides of the Intracoastal Waterway and the east and west sides of Highway 59.

Gulf State Park Restoration - The city will support projects to provide better access from the Baldwin Beach Express to the beach in an effort to help connect visitors to Gulf State Park. The opportunity to be immersed in Gulf Shores unique natural resources will help to inspire the conservation and preservation of our environment. Environmental improvements include an environmental research and education facility for Alabama students, trail development and enhancement in the park, dune restoration along the park's beachfront and the establishment of a coastal ecosystems interpretive center.

Gulf Beach District – Develop the beachfront into a family friendly destination that serves as a catalyst for economic growth and which reinforces this area as the traditional center of beach oriented tourism. Development shall be quaint, pedestrian scaled with landscaped boulevards that will reroute tourism traffic further from the coastline with access to beachfront dining, shopping and entertainment and that provides pedestrian and bicycle connections to Waterway Village.

Gulf Shores intends to strategically focus population concentrations around activity centers, supported by residential neighborhoods, all interconnected by a variety of accessibility options intended to require less automobile travel, provide better opportunities for future transit, and decrease adverse environmental effects. Development and reinvestment should be planned, sited and designed in a manner that is compatible with the city's green infrastructure and natural environment, promotes sustainability, resiliency, and economic diversity and enhances the city's character. The Gulf Shores Land Use Plan is organized into four major themes to recognize and capitalize on those assets and opportunities for the community at large.

1. Protect Gulf Shores' Green Infrastructure

Gulf Shores is blessed by a beautiful and bountiful coastal natural environment. Gulf Shores intends to protect, preserve and enhance important and fragile ecosystems and wildlife habitats by acquiring land and utilizing conservation tools and environmental regulations to promote a system of accessible publicly owned lands which provide for a broad range of educational, interpretive, and recreational opportunities to meet the needs of the community.

II. Provide a balanced pattern of land use and development with a geographically and economically diversified tax base to support desired facilities and services that supports the City's Vision 2025 Plan.

Activity centers—commercial, civic, institutional and recreational—are intended to serve as magnets for activity and development to support and complement residential neighborhoods of Gulf Shores in ways that will positively affect the quality of life, the natural environment, and local and regional transportation networks.

III. Expand Transportation and Accessibility Opportunities

Gulf Shores intends to improve all aspects of transportation (vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle and public transportation) by considering transportation opportunities and impacts in all development decisions and future planning and design documents.

IV. Maintain and Enhance Community Character and Livability

Gulf Shores intends to conserve and enhance its special qualities — natural coastal environment, beachfront and waterways, , neighborhoods, small town scale, parks and recreation areas —promote sustainable development and foster an equitable and resilient economy. Maintaining and enhancing the physical qualities that make Gulf Shores an authentic place is an overarching consideration of the plan.

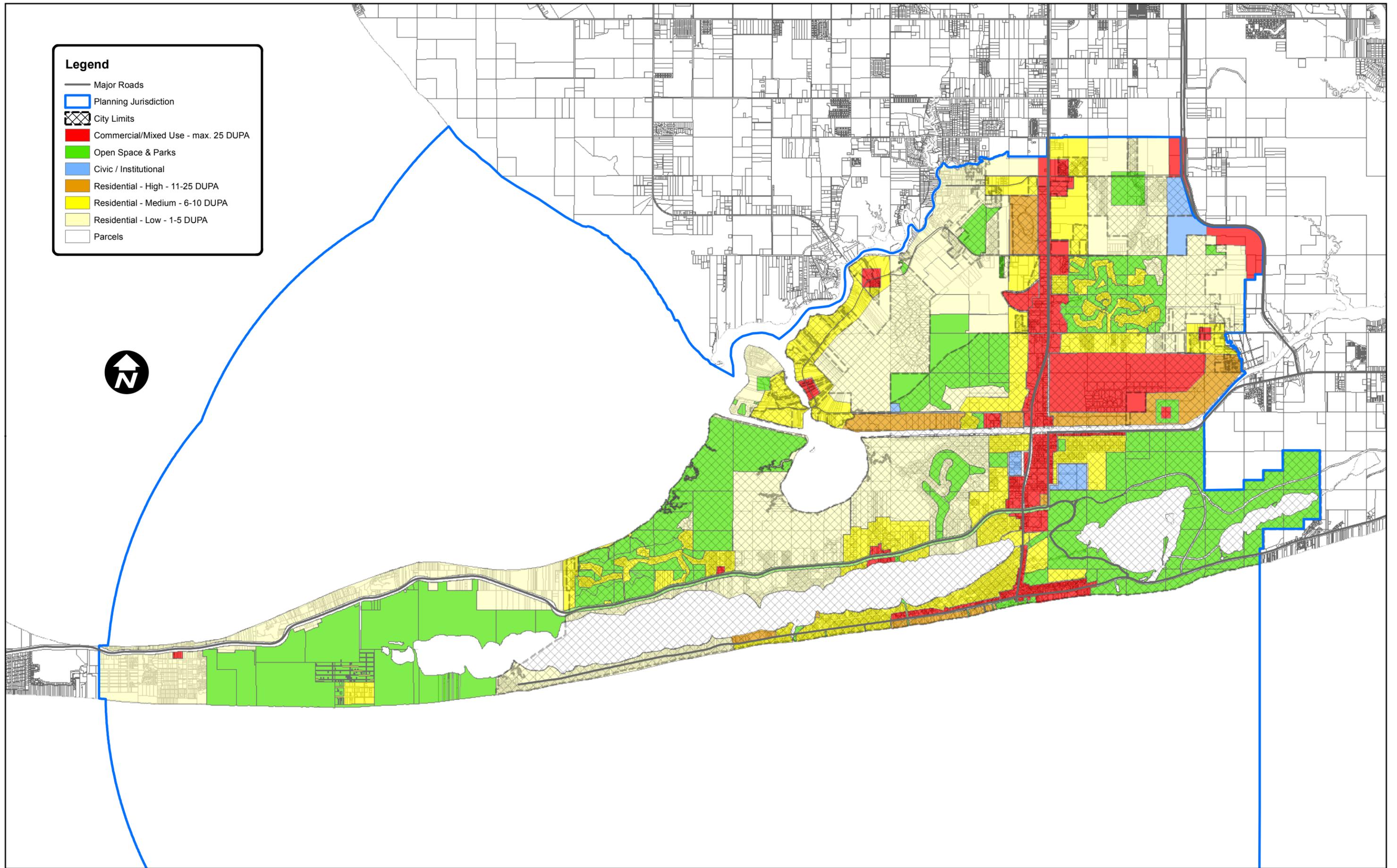
IV. FUTURE LAND USE MAP

The Future Land Use map illustrates how different parts of the community should function and relate to one another— in other words, the overall physical structure of the city.

The land use categories indicated on the Future Land Use map *should not be viewed as equivalent to zoning districts*, but rather as general guidelines indicating desirable land use patterns for Gulf Shores. It should be noted that designation of land uses on the map should not be interpreted to propose, approve, deny nor preclude any particular action without full consideration of all policies, principles, standards or intentions expressed in this plan document and its implementing regulations. Site considerations relating to green infrastructure, plus topography, geology, soils, habitats, wetlands, and flood prone areas will be of major importance when locating any particular new development and planning and designing its uses and density. These realities, plus attitudes toward development on the part of public officials, other agencies, area residents, property owners and developers will play a large part in making decisions regarding appropriate development location and design. Similarly, the presence of adequate streets as well as schools, parks and other community facilities should be assured before making any significant development proposals or decisions.

Legend

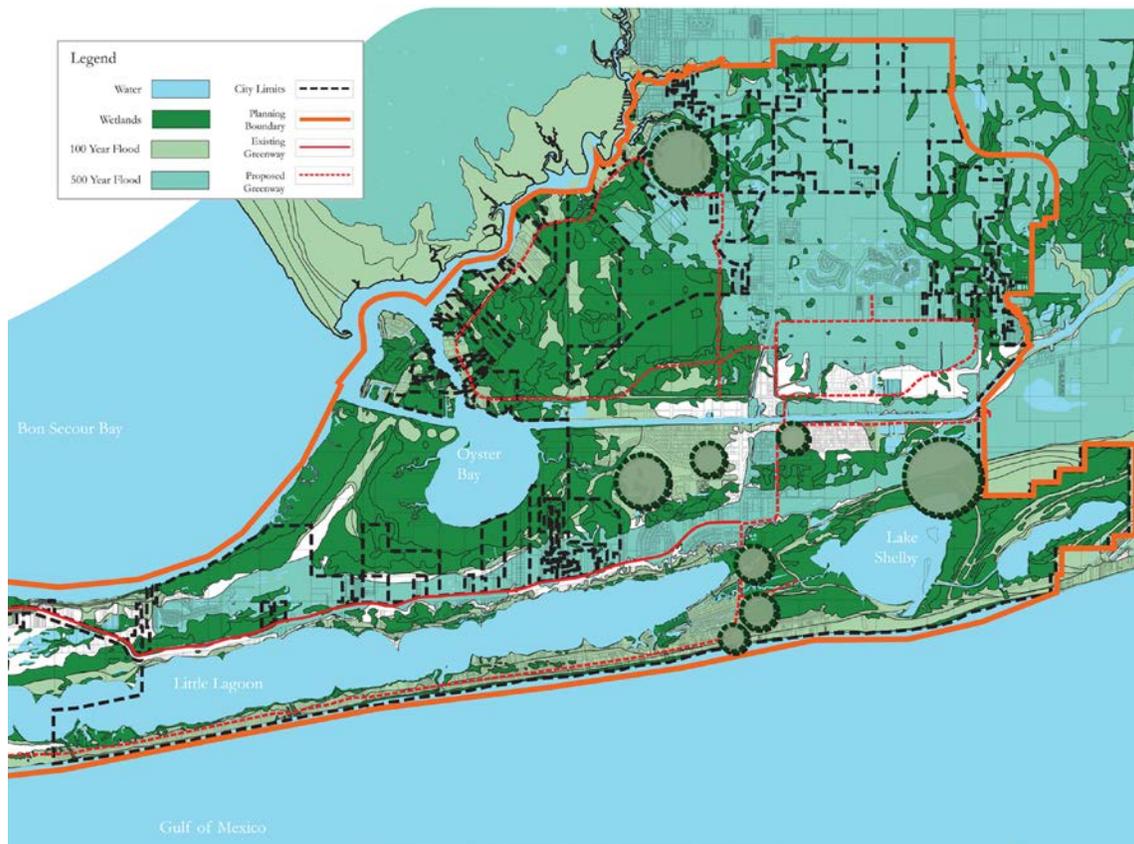
- Major Roads
- Planning Jurisdiction
- ▣ City Limits
- Commercial/Mixed Use - max. 25 DUPA
- Open Space & Parks
- Civic / Institutional
- Residential - High - 11-25 DUPA
- Residential - Medium - 6-10 DUPA
- Residential - Low - 1-5 DUPA
- Parcels



V. MAJOR LAND USE COMPONENTS, POLICIES & IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES

Development patterns for Gulf Shores are composed of several major components, Green Infrastructure, Residential Uses and Neighborhoods, Commercial, Civic, Institutional & Mixed Uses, Transportation & Accessibility, and Community Character Livability.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE



Gulf Shores and its surrounding area enjoy a wealth of natural resources from the fresh water system of the Bon Secour River to the marine environment of the Gulf. Brackish estuaries and marshes, maritime forests, coastal dune habitats, pine savannas, upland forests, and a unique system of coastal lakes all lay within the City's boundary. The City is also home to the Gulf State Park and adjacent to the Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge. The wetlands associated with these areas are critical to water quality and fisheries in the region. These natural resources are critical to human well-being, whether the particular resource affects the economy, overall quality of life or the health and safety of residents. If the city's green infrastructure is not respected—if its critical

elements are allowed to be surrounded, diminished or depleted—the quality of life in Gulf Shores will suffer.

Land use decisions must consider environmental impacts in order to protect our way of life. Environmentally responsible buildings and infrastructure, the preservation of open space and parks, and the development of a sense of stewardship are attainable goals that will result in a healthy, economically vibrant community.

The mutual impacts of development and natural resources have been considered for purposes of protection, production, health and safety, parks and recreation and how these natural resource areas together form a logical green infrastructure that may provide a framework or structuring system within which to organize, locate and interconnect development. Green infrastructure and open space needs and standards are to be considered in all land planning, design, and development actions and performed at the outset of the planning, design and review process.



Green Infrastructure Policies

- *Protection, Conservation and Enhancement of Green Infrastructure.* Preserve, protect, and enhance the City’s natural resources and values directing development away from sensitive natural features – such as wetlands, coastal marshes, sand dunes, riparian areas, native vegetation and wildlife habitat – and hazard zones – areas susceptible to flooding, high winds, wildfires and other areas prone to damage.
- *Accessible and well maintained.* Promote the provision and maintenance of access to public open land areas – walking and biking trails, beach and waterfront access, restroom facilities, educational and interpretive tools, pedestrian signage and furniture– are necessary to make natural areas more accessible and usable.
- *Public Open Space.* Provide and promote development of a range of functional open space and recreational areas at neighborhood and community wide levels for active and passive recreation including but not limited to greenways, small and large scale parks, public plazas, and sidewalk gathering places, focused on the needs of neighborhoods to meet the needs of the city’s growing population. The type, design, and function of open space shall be appropriate to the locational context.
- *Conservation Tools and Low Impact Design (LID) Strategies.* Use a variety of means to protect and preserve the natural environment – conservation easements, pervious parking, low impact storm water management systems, wetlands and tree preservation regulations, etc.



- *Promotion and Education.* Promote a system of publicly owned open lands to preserve outstanding examples of Gulf Shores' diverse natural heritage, and provide a broad range of opportunities for educational, interpretive, and recreational programs to meet community needs. Strategic placement of restrooms and informational kiosks will be necessary to make the natural areas more useable.
- *Connections.* Provide a variety of recreational opportunities in the form of an interconnected framework of open lands including parks, trails, natural areas, open space corridors and major streets, there by linking neighborhoods, parks, activity centers, commercial centers, and schools.

Implementation Opportunities

- Expand waterfront access by developing accesses at city owned properties and right-of-ways that abut the beach and waterways – West 10th Street, West 12th Street, East 2nd Street, West 3rd Street, West 4th Street, and West 5th Street.
- Work to preserve and enhance the unique flora and fauna and water quality of the Little Lagoon by obtaining designation as an Outstanding Alabama Water body.
- Acquire and/or preserve large expanses of wetlands surrounding Oyster Bay and north of Waterway West Boulevard. These properties contain valuable coastal marsh habitats important to fishery and wildlife and will protect/enhance fresh and estuarine water quality of the Mobile Bay Estuary.
- Revise the City's Storm Water Management Regulations to incorporate low impact design strategies such as bio-retention facilities, rain gardens, etc. Low Impact Design (LID) principles and practices, manage water in a way that reduces the impact of built areas and promotes the natural movement of water within an ecosystem or watershed.
- Expand recreational boating opportunities by developing public boat launches along the north side of the Intracoastal Waterway and/or Plash Island area of the City.
- Explore ways to implement additional nature based programing and activities to take advantage of the lush natural environment of Gulf Shores. Partnerships with the Gulf State Park, Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge and the possibility of Jean-Michel Cousteau's Ocean Futures Society would provide heightened educational and eco-base recreational opportunities for residents and tourists.

- Establish “Blueways”, kayak and canoe paddling trails in and around the Little Lagoon and at Oyster Bay/ Bon Secour River. A blueway is a water path or trail that is developed with launch points, signage and points of interest for canoeists, paddle boarders and kayakers.
- Utilize the Wetland Protection Ordinance to preserve and protect wetland properties and other lands marginally suited for development at the initial land development stage.

RESIDENTIAL USES

Gulf Shores envisions its population growth living in neighborhoods that focus upon and complement the city’s green infrastructure and reflect the human scale and pedestrian orientation of the community. Neighborhoods, embraced by the city’s green infrastructure, together with citywide open space and circulation systems, and the various activity centers, form the city.



The scale, density and mix of housing types of a neighborhood should reflect its location in the community. More dense residential development should be focused toward commercial centers and corridors providing a logical and comfortable transition between those non-residential areas and single family neighborhoods. This also allows higher density residential neighborhoods to take advantage of the road, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure provided in more central locations. Residential density should decrease in locations further away from activity centers.

Low-density residential uses are typically single family detached houses and duplexes on large and medium sized lots located away from the city’s core and its major arterials. The character of these areas varies between suburban, estate subdivisions and more rural residential neighborhoods.

Medium-density residential uses are characterized by apartments, condominiums, townhouses, and single family detached, duplex housing on smaller lots. These uses are intended to be adjacent to activity centers, including existing, central neighborhoods near the beach, lagoon, and canal. Medium-density neighborhoods are highly connected to the city street network and have relatively short block lengths.

High-density residential uses are mostly multi-family condominiums located within the beach area and in more limited instances adjacent to the larger commercial, institutional and employment activity centers and corridors. This pattern provides a logical transition between mixed-use or non-residential areas and lower density residential uses. High-

density residential areas have a high level of connectivity to the city street network, incorporating short block lengths.

Recreational Vehicle

developments are a land use type that requires special consideration on the part of the City to determine whether proposed locations are appropriate and what design elements are needed to successfully integrate them into the surrounding community. These developments are a unique form within a broad category of lodging uses and typically occur as RV parks and subdivisions. In resort locations such as Gulf Shores, there is interest in developing RV subdivisions, in which users own individual lots within the overall development, though they retain the transient characteristics of lodging uses.

Recreational Vehicle Development Review Criteria:

For the purposes of reviewing these uses, the following criteria shall be considered when determining appropriate locations:

- Considered on a case-by-case basis and should be avoided where the development would be surrounded on all or most sides by areas planned or zoned for single family residential use.
- The size of proposed RV developments and impacts on existing levels of public services and utilities shall be considered. Public services and utilities shall be available at a level to meet the required demand without placing hardships on the continued availability of existing services.
- Have direct ingress/egress to an arterial or higher classification thoroughfare of an adequate level of service and condition. The thoroughfare shall have the capacity for the addition of decel, turn, and accel lanes as may be required by the City.
- Consideration shall be given to the type(s) of RV vehicle, size of lots, and amount and quality of amenities incorporated into RV development design. Assurances shall be provided to the City for the continued nature and viability of the development through the use of covenants and restrictions.

Residential Use Policies

- *Housing Diversity & Affordability.* Provide, a range of housing types and price levels to bring together a diversity of people into daily interaction, strengthening the personal and civic bonds that are essential to Gulf Shores.
- *Neighborhoods should be designed for children and retirees.* Places for children to play safely—and for older citizens to get about on foot—should be a staple item of all neighborhoods. Circulation and open spaces add to the value of property and help to create a more livable community.
- *Neighborhood Focal Point and Gathering Place.* All neighborhoods should contain a focal point of a type and size appropriate to the needs of residents should be included to add a sense of place to the neighborhood—for example, a park or usable community facility or open space. The focal point should be pedestrian oriented and provide for easy vehicular access and include both passive and active recreational uses.
- *Design neighborhoods with safe, walkable, interconnected streets that accommodate the needs of all users.* The pedestrian network can be greatly improved, and walking distance and infrastructure costs substantially reduced, by

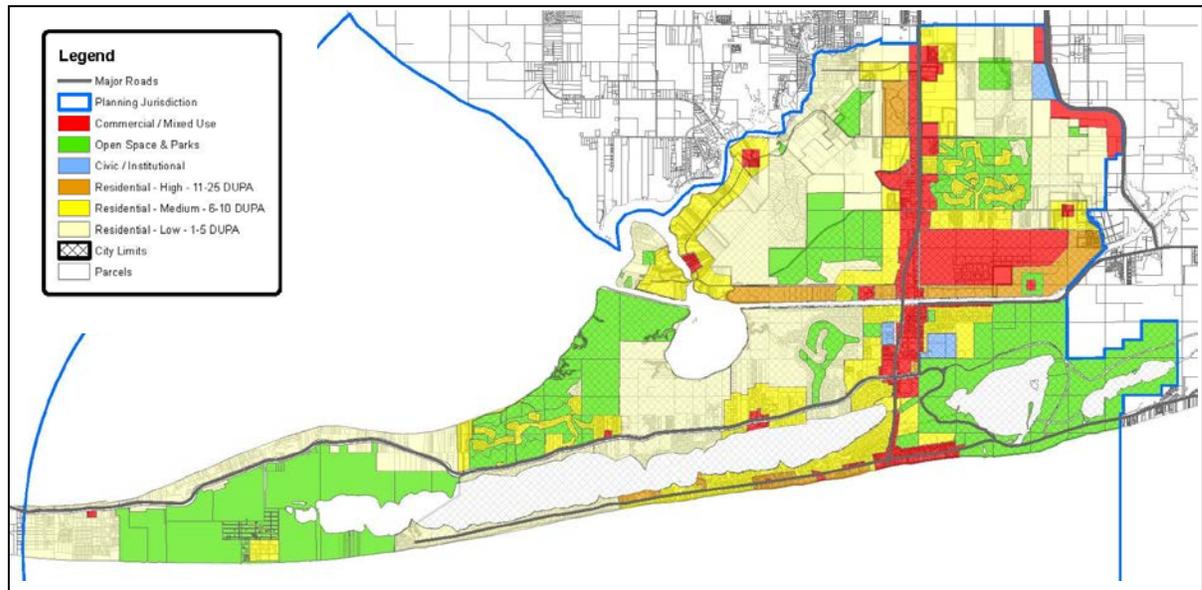
requiring internal vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle connections within neighborhoods and between adjacent land uses.

- *Design streets appropriate to the scale and character of the neighborhood.* Neighborhood streets should be designed to enhance the neighborhood and to positively influence driver behavior. They should be relatively narrow and include sidewalks, street trees, bike lanes, multi-use paths, and street lighting and furniture as appropriate. The desired carrying capacity and vehicle speed should be the determining factors in neighborhood street width and design.

Implementation Opportunities

- Encourage conservation and cottage subdivision techniques (single family condominium), through which a neighborhood is designed to conserve its natural systems. Conservation and cottage subdivisions typically maintain or provide less gross densities and require less capital investment for earthwork, clearing and drainage, streets and utilities.
- Amend the Subdivision Regulations to require street trees, street furniture and pedestrian amenities to be installed in the right-of-way of all new streets appropriate to the type, size and location of the subdivision.
- Require new subdivisions to connect to any off-site pedestrian and bicycle trails, multi-use paths, sidewalks, greenways or other open space areas.
- Encourage new subdivisions to incorporate a variety of housing types and styles within the development to promote population and housing diversity (e.g. single family, duplexes, townhouses, workforce housing, etc.).
- Encourage Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for Neighborhood Development (LEED-ND) development principles by offering incentives (reduced application fees, administrative subdivision review, etc.) for developments who take advantage of this program. LEED-ND encourages smart growth and new urbanism and recognizes development projects that successfully protect and enhance the overall health, natural environment and quality of life.

COMMERCIAL, CIVIC, INSTITUTIONAL & MIXED LAND USES



Gulf Shores intends to focus citywide and regional commerce, recreational and institutional services into concentrated, highly accessible activity centers and corridors served by its highest-capacity arterial roadways.

Commercial and office is a broad category of uses that typically includes beach tourism, community and neighborhood retail, office, restaurant, hospitality, accommodations, and light manufacturing businesses. Commercial and office uses are currently located along the Highway 59 corridor, at Gulf Place and the beach, and Waterway Village.

Civic and institutional uses are a traditional land use category typically including Institutional, Academic, Medical, Governmental and Community Service uses and lands.

Mixed use development is encouraged by the City of Gulf Shores. This is a development type in which various primary uses—for example, Office, Civic, Institutional, Retail and Residential—may be combined (horizontally and/or vertically) in the same building or within separate buildings on the same site or nearby sites. Mixed use development is encouraged in or adjacent to activity centers .

Activity Centers. Significant nodes or concentrations of people, activity and development are designated in this plan as activity centers. The intent is that each of these be located, planned and designed to relate to, support and positively affect urban form, environmental quality, adjacent residential neighborhoods and the transportation network in a positive way. Activity centers may be large scale or small scale but should be designed to meet the daily “convenience” goods and service needs of adjacent residential neighborhoods and in certain cases tourists. Activity centers serve as a social

and recreational focal point for the neighborhoods and should be planned, designed and constructed as such. Concentrated nodes of development better support regional transit services and allow for greater pedestrian and bicycle access from nearby neighborhoods.

Gulf Place and the Beach



The intersection of Beach Boulevard and Highway 59 is the city’s traditional center of beach-oriented tourism and its primary image in the minds of many visitors.

Commercial development should focus on the key pedestrian streets, and capitalize on visibility and walk-in trade. Scattered or strip patterns of commercial development around Gulf Place and the beach shall be strongly discouraged. Development planning and design should serve to reinforce the design standards of the Zoning Ordinance, to assure that Gulf Place and the Beach will offer a positive image and experience to visitors and residents alike. The City should consider new an updated zoning regulations that support the desired scale and development for a mixed use, walkable, pedestrian oriented beach front.

Waterway Village

Waterway Village is located along the Intracoastal Waterway and is envisioned to become a dense, compact, walkable, mixed use, neighborhood downtown district that encourages an active working waterfront with a network of waterfront and neighborhood greenways and open spaces. Waterway Village is envisioned to become a secondary tourist destination to the beachfront which will geographically diversify the economy of Gulf Shores.



Business & Aviation Park

Business compatible with Gulf Shores’ tourist driven economy such as light manufacturing, research, technology, aviation, and wholesale businesses which are

clean, quiet, free of hazardous and objectionable emissions, and have low impacts on the environment shall be located in and adjacent to the city's Business & Aviation Park.

Commercial, Civic, Institutional & Mixed Use Policies

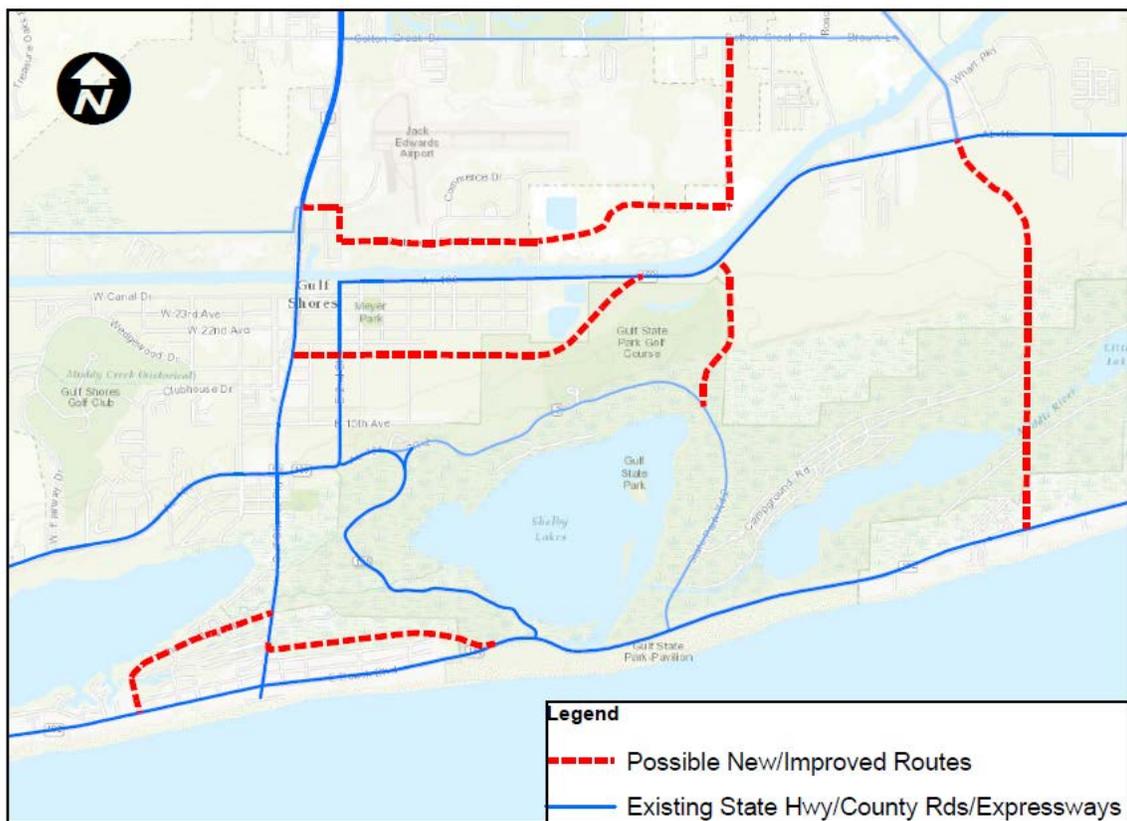
- *Land Use Variety and Density.* Encourage a variety of land uses, types and densities, including mixed-use developments. Balanced land use offers transportation options, provides efficiencies of service and improves fiscal sustainability.
- *Encourage Mixed Use.* This land use type tends to increase the types of spaces available for both living and working; encourage a mix of compatible uses, allow shared parking and promote the upgrading of existing developed areas with buildings designed to provide a high quality pedestrian-oriented street environment.
- *Infill Development.* Plan for and promote development and redevelopment of undeveloped or underdeveloped properties in developed areas of Gulf Shores, in order to capitalize on existing infrastructure and services. Infill sites are usually served by or have ready access to existing infrastructure and services.
- *Create discernable, compact activity centers.* Each activity center should be planned and designed to be densely developed, have a sense of identity and place, distinguishable from one center to the next, with well-defined edges.
- *Design activity centers to relate to its context.* Each activity center should have an appropriate scale and mix of uses defined by its type and the population it serves—regional, citywide or neighborhood.

Implementation Opportunities

- Capitalize on the City's gulf front location by developing Gulf Place and the beach front into a family friendly destination that serves numerous activities and interests. The redevelopment of Gulf Place will serve as a catalyst for economic development and a means for Gulf Shores to be identified as a world-class beach resort.
- Develop the city's 2 acre parcel north of Gulf Place into a mixed use building containing uses such as retail, restaurants, conference space, vacation rental units and parking. Development design, landscape and streetscaping should include green building principals to establish the image and sense of place for the Gulf Place neighborhood.
- Continue to promote and attract investment and partners, both public and private for Waterway Village. The city's main goals are the creation of an Intracoastal waterfront pedestrian promenade, recruitment of waterfront seafood restaurants and shops, the development of a waterfront seafood market and a mix of uses.

- Develop an advanced educational activity center in northeastern Gulf Shores near County Road 8 and the Foley Beach Express that capitalizes on its highly visible and accessible location. The educational center’s design should respect its location and value to the community and opportunities exist to provide vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle connections to the site.
- The City shall strive to take advantage of the Business and Aviation Park as an Alabama Advantage site in order to recruit businesses that are compatible with the city’s tourist driven economy. Classification as an Alabama Advantage site better positions the Business and Aviation Park for economic development.

TRANSPORTATION AND ACCESSIBILITY



As a resort community, the economy of Gulf Shores is reliant on tourists. The improvement and expansion of the City’s transportation system is a major challenge for the City of Gulf Shores because the physical layout of the city offers limited potential for expansion of existing roadways since the three major roadways are state highways. Currently, travel demand exceeds roadway design capacity on Gulf Shores’ main roadway, Highway 59, during the summer tourist months. The city, working with traffic consultants, seeks to offset continued vehicle demand by implementing numerous projects to improve the efficiency and carrying capacity of the existing roadway network. In order for Gulf Shores to remain viable as a beach resort, the threats

vehicular traffic pose to the City's small town character and tourist driven economy must be addressed.

Another key element of the Transportation and Accessibility component is to reduce the impacts of automobiles on the environment by encouraging development that will improve accessibility options for pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists such as compact interconnected development. A walkable and bikeable configuration is characterized by urban design features that facilitate safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle access among uses. Characteristics that enhance walkability and bikeability include a highly interconnected street network; buildings placed close to the street with parking lots in the back; housing in close proximity to everyday destinations such as shops, schools, civic places, and workplaces; and the presence of street furniture and facilities designed for pedestrians and bicyclists and avoidance of strip commercial development. Strip development tends to generate excessive amounts of traffic on Highway 59 for local trips, absorbing available capacity and eventually causing delays during peak hours.

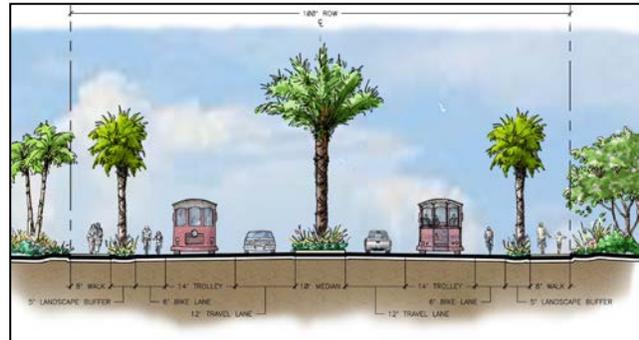
Transportation & Accessibility Policies

- *Land Use Patterns.* Strip commercial development should be avoided because of its negative effects on traffic generation, transit and pedestrian accessibility and the image of the community. Gulf Shores will support and encourage land use patterns such as compact mixed use activity centers.
- *Roadway Capacity.* Conserve capacity and ensure safe travel through access management practices on major roads.
- *Accessibility.* The city should be designed to safely accommodate people traveling by all modes of transportation.
- *Connectivity.* Interconnect activity centers, neighborhoods, schools, recreation, and cultural facilities with complete streets and bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Creating interconnected neighborhood streets and providing alternate routes will help to diffuse automobile traffic, thus lowering traffic volumes on many city streets.
- *Multi-Modal Transportation.* Gulf Shores will place great emphasis on improving its pedestrian, bicycle and multi-modal facilities citywide and will strive to link activity centers and mixed use corridors with mass transit.

Implementation Opportunities

- Implementation of the City's Highway 59 Access Management Plan and Adaptive and Responsive Traffic Signals.
- Pursue and support construction of new roadways such as Waterway East Boulevard Extension to Cotton Creek Drive, East 20th Street Extension, State Highway 182 East & West Bypass, and Foley Beach Express extension to State Route 182.

- Implement the City’s 2014 Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.
- Develop the Gulf Place and Waterway Village into mixed use activity centers that can support future mass transit such as a trolley system.
- Redevelop State Highway 182 into a pedestrian friendly roadway consisting of a landscaped median, 2 vehicular travel lanes, two trolley travel lanes bikelanes, and separated sidewalks.
- Partner with the rental management industry to encourage staggered check-in, check out times.
- Develop and implement land development policies to limit strip commercial development such as restricting access to major roadways, shared use driveways, interconnectivity between developments, and construction of frontage and backage roads.
- Connect the Gulf Shores Municipal complex with Waterway Village via West 1st Street. The existing layout, two roadways bisected by a ditch, of West 1st Street offers a great opportunity to connect the two areas with safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle paths.



COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND LIVABILITY

Gulf Shores intends to conserve and enhance its special qualities, including natural areas, beaches, neighborhoods, activity centers, and gateways and image corridors that make it a special authentic place by placing an emphasis on community character and livability.

The physical layout of a city greatly influences quality of life measures such as community appearance, diversity, health, sustainability, safety, social equity and resiliency. Planned well, cities can expand the possibilities for economic growth, innovation and social development, and improve people’s access to work, education, healthcare, housing and other services. Gulf Shores intends on implementing numerous policies to make it a highly livable city – preservation and enhancement of the natural environment, a mix of housing types and densities, mixed use development, interconnected transportation networks – and include land development policies that promote quality design, human interaction, socio-economic wellbeing, health, and natural disaster mitigation and recovery.

Maintaining and enhancing the physical qualities of the city is an overarching consideration of the plan. Development planning and design should incorporate the

following strategies to assure that Gulf Shores will offer a positive image and provide better wellbeing and quality of life opportunities for the all citizens of Gulf Shores.

Community Character and Livability Policies

- *Design Gulf Shores to maximize human activity.* The design of the physical environment can influence rates of physical activity and benefit health. Human scale should be created through building mass and form, as well as scale and detail. Building locations, setbacks and orientation should frame, encourage, and enhance pedestrian comfort, as should lighting, signage and landscape design.
- *Development Scale & Context.* Land uses should look and feel as if they have been designed, or at least considered, as a whole, in accord with their scale, density, context and location within the city. Promote new construction and redevelopment that contribute positively to the type of natural environment, neighborhoods, activity centers, roadways and corridors described in the plan while emphasizing the special identity of each area.
- *Community Appearance.* Plan, design, build and maintain gateways to the city, neighborhoods, activity centers and commercial corridors to maintain the character and unique appearance of Gulf Shores. The economy of the city is tightly linked to its physical character, and its image must be enhanced to remain sustainable.
- *Improvement of Disadvantaged and Underserved Populations.* Plan for the physical, environmental, and economic improvement of disadvantaged and underserved populations. Disadvantaged and underserved populations are residents that have reduced access to resources and capital due to factors including high levels of poverty and underemployment and low levels of education attainment.
- *Encourage climate change adaption, green building design and energy conservation.* Climate adaptation strategies reduce community vulnerability and minimize adverse effects on the environment, economy, and public health. The goals of green building design are energy and resource efficiency, waste reduction, and pollution prevention, and occupant health and productivity.
- *Efficiency of providing services.* Provide and maintain infrastructure capacity in line with growth or decline demands. Land development shall be reviewed against the impact on public facilities location, capacity, and possibility of services inefficiencies caused by the demands of development.

Implementation Opportunities

- The preparation and adoption of neighborhood specific plans such as the one developed for Waterway Village. Examples of future specific plans include zoning and streetscape master plans for Gulf Place, Gulf Shores Parkway, Beach

Boulevard, and Waterway Village North. Specific plans should promote sense of place, be pedestrian scaled, utilize native vegetation, and promote active living and healthy lifestyles.

- Develop a proactive annexation policy to regularize the city’s boundaries with Orange Beach and the County Road 6 and 8 areas. Annexation supports the planned image, health, safety, and welfare of the City.
- Expand community recreational, cultural, programs (e.g. Music at Meyer Park, Smores on the Shore, purchase of 10 acre property and Cultural Arts building, etc.) to promote social interaction between all classes of people.
- Reduce the allowable densities and building heights at Gulf Place and the beach and the Plash Island/County Road 6 areas of the city. Densities and building heights shall be compatible and enforce the city’s image as a small town.
- Proactivley use code enforcement to and maintain an appropriate appearance and use of open, vacant and unimproved properties.
- Promote capital improvement projects for areas such as the 2010 Ft. Morgan annexation to improve access to public services and quality of life for residents of this area of the City. Warranted improvments include paved roads, enforcement of property maitenance codes, access to public water and sewer systems, street lighting, etc.
- Review and modify the Zoning Ordinance architectural regulations to require appropriate placement and design of new buildings. Buildings should be designed to form part of a larger physical composition of the area in which it is located, provide human scale, reinforce pedestrian circulation, maximize building street frontage and relate to adjacent buildings in scale, height and configuration.



VI. CONCLUSION

This is a long-range plan. The plan does not provide “quick fix” solutions, nor should it be viewed simply as an economic development platform. Rather, this Land Use Plan is intended to strengthen the quality of life in Gulf Shores over the long term. As such, the plan must remain a living document, able to grow and change as local conditions change. To do so, it must be updated and amended on a regular basis as described in the plan.

Plan implementation will take time and goodwill. Gulf Shores must strive to interest and involve even more people in setting and implementing the community vision. City government must continue to gather other agencies, public and private, onto the same team. The city must continue to prioritize and take direct action on various recommendations of this plan by spending local tax dollars. Further, city officials must help shape the action of others with not just more regulation, but more *effective* regulation. The city must be willing to provide selected incentives to encourage others to take the lead in development activities that would further implementation of the plan’s policies. And finally, city officials must strive to use every power they have under the law in concert with every public investment they make to support plan implementation.



