

Understanding the Land Use Element & The Overlay Process

1. What is Land Use?

Land use refers to how land is actually used or designated to be used. For example, whether a piece of land is used for homes, farming, businesses, or open space.

In community planning, the **Land Use Element** is the section of the plan that:

- **Identifies existing conditions** – maps and describes current land uses (residential, agricultural, open space, etc.)
- **Establishes a future vision** – articulates what we want our village to look like
- **Provides a policy framework** – sets goals and policies to guide decisions on development, density, and services

A key part of the Land Use Element is the **Future Land Use Map**, which shows where different types of land uses should (or shouldn't) go and provides a framework for zoning.

2. What is Zoning?

If the Land Use Element is the **vision**, zoning is the **tool** that makes it happen.

Zoning is a set of local laws that divides a community into districts (zones) and specifies what kinds of buildings, development, and activities can take place in each zone. Zoning regulations specify the **type, scale, and intensity** of development that may occur in each district.

Zoning is a **legal document** with the force of law. Zoning:

- Separates conflicting land uses
- Protects public health, safety, and welfare
- Ensures development happens in appropriate places

A community's zoning ordinance is the principal legal tool for implementing its land use policies

There are 6 **different zoning districts** within the Cañada de Los Alamos planning area:

- **Traditional Community (TC)**
- **Residential Estate (RES-E)**
- **Residential Fringe (RES-F)**
- **Rural Residential (RUR-R)**
- **Rural Fringe (RUR-F)**

- Rural (RUR)

3. How Do Land Use and Zoning Work Together?

Land Use Element (The Vision)	Zoning Ordinance (The Tool)
Advisory (not law)	Regulatory (law)
Sets long-range goals and policies	Sets specific rules for each property
"What should go where?"	"What is allowed here?"
Includes a Current and Future Land Use Map	Includes an Official Zoning Map

4. How This Works in Practice: Examples from Nearby Communities

- **San Marcos Community Plan (2019)**
 - Vision: "Strategy 5.1: Support agriculture, arts and rural commercial throughout the San Marcos Community District Overlay in the SLDC" (page 50)
 - Zoning: Added the "Independent artist, writer, or performer studio" use in the San Marcos Community District Overlay (SLDC Section 9.14) Use Table.
- **Tesuque Community Plan (2022)**
 - Vision: A policy vision for fences and walls that preserves Tesuque's historic character while recognizing the privacy concerns of property owners.
 - Zoning: Creation of a "Fences and Walls" design standards subsection of the Tesuque Community District Overlay (SLDC Section 9.5) regulating the locations, setbacks, heights, transparency, and materials of fences and walls along two roads in the community.
- **Village of La Bajada Community Plan (2025)**
 - Vision: In their Future Land Use Map, the community envisions a "Rural Commercial Overlay" upslope from the community acequia to allow residential and small-scale non-residential uses to support agricultural production and small-scale home businesses.
 - Zoning: Planning Staff are working with the community to create a Village of La Bajada Community District Overlay (will be SLDC Section 9.19) where we will create a Rural Commercial Overlay sub-section. The entire community is zoned

Traditional Community (TC), but the Rural Commercial Overlay will allow more commercial uses than the base TC zoning.

5. Community Vision Statement (with land use-related visions highlighted)

<u>Preliminary Ranking of Broad Community</u>	Community Vision Statement & Implementation Framework:
Visions (via the initial Survey results): 1. Protect Natural Environment 2. Strengthen Emergency Preparedness 3. Preserve Rural Character 4. Limit and Guide Development Thoughtfully 5. Enhance Road and Traffic Safety 6. Keep Zoning Simple and Local 7. Ensure Community Voice and Communication 8. Foster Community Togetherness	Community Vision Statement ∨ Goals (<i>element/topic-specific</i>) ∨ Strategies/Actions (<i>for each Goal</i>)

Words on the Whiteboard 3.11.26:

rural culture

natural environment

rural character

National Forest

historical significance

respect + diversity

foster united community

residential

Land Grant

sustainability for families

Intergenerational

Dee Blanco – 3.19.26

Cañada de los Alamos is a community located adjacent to the SF National Forest and is rooted in its love and desire to protect the residential, rural lifestyle that is affordable and intergenerational; is strengthening emergency preparedness; able to guide limited development for its residents while optimizing robust communication throughout the diverse community residents.

Dawn Wingard – 3.25.26

Canada de Los Alamos, nestled in the SFNF, a traditional community along the old ancient trail, aspires to preserve, protect, support, and safeguard the environment and traditional cultural, character, through thoughtful use of natural resources and simple growth, in the spirit of respectful communication, collaboration, and connection with nature and each other, for generations to come.

6. Land Use Goals

Examples of Land Use Goal:

- “Protect the Planning Area’s rural character and natural and historic resources, while ensuring land use regulations are not burdensome for residents” (2026 La Cienega/La Cieneguilla Communities Plan)
- “Promote land uses appropriate for the Village of La Bajada to maintain the Traditional Community characteristics” (2025 Village of La Bajada Community Plan)

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