

CITY OF HEATH 2025 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

SUMMARY OF UPDATES

Presented to the Planning and Zoning Commission on May 21, 2025

The following portions of text were updated or added to the 2018 Comprehensive Plan to create the 2025 Comprehensive Plan:

UPDATED VISION STATEMENT:

A premier outdoor lifestyle community of spacious, upscale neighborhoods, open spaces, parks and trails, cultural amenities, an exemplary educational system, and distinctive economic development to provide the highest level of public services – a place to call home for a lifetime.

UPDATED GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

Goal 1. Unique Development

Objective 1.1. Maintain a residential density of no more than one dwelling unit per a minimum of one acre of developable land, as defined herein.

Objective 1.2. Encourage large tracts of undeveloped land to develop according to the SFE 3.0 Residential Estate District regulations, especially along the main corridors into and out of Heath.

Objective 1.6. Promote appropriate building height, mass, impact (lights, traffic, safety, security), and scale with respect to non-residential development and the surrounding properties.

Objective 1.7. Require sidewalks and trails to connect to other existing trails. Ensure the trail plan and ordinances are aligned with this objective.

Goal 2. Community Image

No changes.

Goal 3. Livable Community

Objective 3.6. Require pedestrian access throughout newly developed and redeveloped areas.

Objective 3.7. Require the dedication of parkland, trails, and open space for new residential development proportionate to the parkland, trails, and open space available to existing residents.

Goal 4. Bike and Pedestrian Connectivity

Objective 4.4. Build upon the connectivity concepts in the City’s adopted Master Parks Plan and concentrate on connecting existing trail segments and providing connections from neighborhoods to schools, retail, civic buildings, and recreation facilities.

Goal 5. Identity

Maintain the City’s development quality, low residential density, low commercial intensity, openness, and hometown atmosphere.

Objective 5.3. Require residential developments to preserve open space and reinforce the feeling of openness while maintaining a density of no more than one dwelling unit per acre of developable land, as set out in Objective 1.1 with a preference to develop large tracts of land in accordance with the SFE 3.0 zoning district as set out in Objective 1.2.

Goal 6. Rural By Design

Maintain the City’s Rural by Design character. Rural by Design is defined as infilling existing neighborhoods, strengthening the Towne Center, pursuing Heath’s vision statement (see Page 3), and only allowing development that maintains open spaces, low residential density, low commercial intensity, and low impact on infrastructure.

Objective 6.1. Implement Rural by Design concepts when amending ordinances and creating or amending plans

Objective 6.2. Non-residential development should be small in scale and minimize infrastructure impact, guided by the Towne Center Overlay District Design Manual throughout the entire City.

Objective 6.3. New public plans, non-residential developments, and residential developments should include open spaces such as outdoor rooms with shade and seating and lawns for public gatherings that encourage lingering and camaraderie and cultivate a sense of community.

Goal 7. Land Use Mix

Encourage a balance of land use to serve citizens' needs, minimize infrastructure impact, and provide a more diversified local economic base.

Objective 7.3. Ensure that Heath’s land use policies adequately allow for uses that will support the sales tax and property tax bases to support existing and future residents.

Objective 7.4. Establish ways to transition between residential and non-residential development as development occurs. For example, but not limited to: buffer zones, landscaping berms, and soft-scaping elements.

Objective 7.5. Ensure that development standards for non-residential uses are the highest possible so that a positive visual perception of Heath continues to be projected to citizens and visitors while minimizing infrastructure impact.

Goal 8. Resource Protection

Require future development to respect and preserve the environment.

Objective 8.4. Follow a year-round water conservation schedule that allows homeowners to irrigate their landscapes.

Objective 8.5. Encourage self-sustaining amenities, including, but not limited to: irrigation, water systems, and other infrastructure.

Goal 9. Lakefront

No changes.

Goal 10. Maintenance

Objective 10.1. Identify and implement strategies that balance convenient and efficient auto access with safe, well-designed pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

Objective 10.3. Investigate and offer ways in which public and private funding can be directed toward roadway and trail system improvements.

Goal 11. Planning

Objective 11.5. Amend the Subdivision Ordinance to reflect the Comprehensive Plan, Thoroughfare Plan, and Parks, Recreation, and Trails Master Plan.

Goal 12. Coordination

Objective 12.4. Collaborate with surrounding cities as appropriate.

Objective 12.5. Coordinate and seek alignment of state elected officials regarding legislation impacting the city.

Goal 13. Towne Center

Encourage the development of the Towne Center Overlay District as a special and unique area in the heart of Heath, consistent with the Towne Center Overlay District Design Manual.

Objective 13.2. Encourage distinctive and quaint businesses that generate sales tax and improve the quality of life for Heath citizens.

UPDATED STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Land Use Strategy:

- A balance of land uses is needed, as are policies to ensure Heath remains a highly livable and sought-after community with the ability to handle the infrastructure impacts of growth.
- Not burden existing citizens with the impacts of future growth.
- Heath maintains a **Rural by Design community** with a high ratio of open space and an intentionally low ratio of retail land use to total land area and total population. An average ratio is 0.5 retail acres per 100 persons; less than 0.4 generally indicates that citizens are going elsewhere for goods and services, and greater than 0.6 usually indicates that citizens from elsewhere are coming into the community to buy goods and services. Heath's ratio is 0.09 acres per 100 persons, which is intentionally low, and means people who live in the City are going to other areas, such as Rockwall or Dallas, to meet their retail needs. This ratio of retail land use reflects Heath's identity as a Rural By Design community. The balance of residential and non-residential uses is discussed further in later sections of this chapter.
 - o In summary, important facts about Heath's existing land uses include the following:
 - o Approximately 90 percent of the developed land within the City is consumed by Single-Family land uses, Rights-of-Way, or Public/Semi-Public land uses.
 - o The percentage of developed land uses in Heath has declined since 2008 because the City annexed undeveloped land faster than it was developed.
 - o The percentages of non-residential land uses—retail, commercial, and office—have remained extremely low, especially compared to residential development and the number of people living in Heath.
 - o The acreage of Parks and Open Space land use has also increased over the years, a significant quality of life feature that is very positive for Heath.
 - o Heath's ratio of retail acres to population is 0.09 acres per 100 persons. This is an intentionally low ratio and indicates that citizens are traveling outside of the City for goods and services, a convenience available to Heath's citizens due to its close proximity to larger cities.
- Heath's vision for the composition and location of mixed uses has not changed over the past decade, with the continued preference for non-residential development that is small-scale, pedestrian-oriented commercial, office, and retail uses around the Towne Center.
- Economic sustainability is key to discussing retail land uses. Heath desires limited retail development. Heath is afforded this luxury of specificity for small-scale boutique retail uses due to its proximity to larger Cities and their numerous goods and services.
- To ensure sustainability over time, any retail development in Heath must be well designed and of very high quality. Retail development must also be pedestrian-friendly. Heath's vision for local retail development is defined in the Heath Towne Center Design Book and further described in the following Towne Center section. While the design book was created to guide development in the Towne Center Overlay District, its guidelines should be implemented in all retail development in the city.

Recommendation 1. Develop retail sites with high-end character, lasting value, and sustainability.

- Use the Heath Towne Center Design Book as a guideline for all retail development in Heath.
- Require all retail developments to be in Planned Development districts with features that include, but are not limited to a combination of the following:
 - o Towne Center design guidelines
 - o Ample open space
 - o Modest signage
 - o Dark Sky compliant lighting
 - o Noise buffering
 - o Non-disturbance/Preservation zones to protect forested areas and natural landscape screening
 - o Amenitized common areas and outdoor gathering areas
 - o Trails that serve the neighborhood and connect to adjacent trails
 - o Gray water/irrigation well
 - o Drought-tolerant landscaping of lots
 - o Uniform wrought iron fencing
 - o Curvilinear streets to prevent a grid-like, monotonous layout of development
 - o Cul-de-sacs
 - o Variety of building designs to reduce monotony
 - o Ponds, water features, floodplain preservation, etc.

Towne Center:

After the City Council adopted the 2018 Comprehensive Plan, the Heath Economic Development Corporation / Heath Municipal Benefits Corporation funded the creation of the Heath Towne Center Overlay District Design Book. The Towne Center Overlay Project included a series of public engagement methods to understand the area's local character and desired improvements. The project website hosted several digital engagements, including an architectural style preference survey. Additional outreach methods included a series of stakeholder interviews with local property and business owners within the Towne Center Overlay District boundary.

A Steering Committee was formed as well to provide direction to the project team at three key points in the project. The project team also held two Design Focus Group Workshops. Through the outreach methods, the project team was able to review and synthesize the feedback received and create a unified vision for the Heath Towne Center. The Design Book presents the details of this vision and is incorporated into the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update by reference. Following the adoption of the Heath Towne Center Design Book, the Towne Center Overlay District zoning regulations were amended to implement the design concepts.

Recommendation 2. Implement the Heath Towne Center Design Manual in the Towne Center Overlay District and in the Local Retail District.

- Update the Heath Towne Center Design Book as needed to reflect the community's vision and preferences for development in the Towne Center Overlay District.
- Update the Towne Center Overlay District zoning regulations and the Local Retail District regulations to implement the guidelines in the Design Book
- Update the Towne Center Overlay District zoning regulations to address trails, open spaces, and connectivity.

Residential Uses:

Recommendation 3. Require residential subdivisions and individual residential properties to provide unique amenities.

- Enforce the City's established residential Appearance Code / Anti-Monotony Standards.
- Require trails and trail connectivity

Recommendation 4. Require uniqueness in the layout of each development.

- Update the Open Space Standards in the Subdivision Regulations as needed to continually implement the community's priority to retain open space.
- Require open space within neighborhoods to be amenitized with benches, shade, recreation equipment, trails, fishing docks, and/or other amenities that enhance the use and enjoyment of the open space.
- Discourage straight and grid-like road layouts within a development.

Recommendation 5. Require a residential density of no more than one dwelling unit per a minimum of one acre of developable land, and encourage a residential density of no more than one dwelling unit per three acres of developable land as the preferred residential density

Recommendation 6. Encourage all future residential zoning changes to be Planned Developments that facilitate Heath's vision of premier neighborhoods.

- Require Homeowner Associations (HOAs) to maintain common areas and neighborhood amenities. Identify factors such as the placement of open space toward the front of developments and the maximization of usable open space.
- Amend the Planned Development District regulations to require residential Planned Developments to provide unique features that enhance the neighborhood and the city. Features should include, but not be limited to, a combination of the following:
 - o Ample open space
 - o Landscaped entry features
 - o Landscaped buffers along exterior roads,
 - o Non-disturbance/Preservation zones to protect forested areas and natural landscape screening

- o Amenitized common areas such as pocket parks and outdoor gathering areas
- o Trails that serve the neighborhood and connect to adjacent trails
- o Outdoor warning siren
- o Potable water well
- o Gray water/irrigation well
- o Drought-tolerant landscaping
- o Uniform wrought iron fencing
- o Curvilinear streets to prevent grid-like, monotonous layout of development
- o Cul-de-sacs
- o Variety of lot sizes to reduce monotony
- o Ponds, water features, floodplains, etc.

Recommendation 7. Review and update as needed SF-43, SF-E3.0 to ensure they reflect recommendations 3, 4, and 5.

Recommendation 8. Ensure the sustainability of existing neighborhoods.

- Use the Capital Improvement Program to prioritize and allocate funds for maintaining and improving existing parks and infrastructure.
- Encourage HOAs and property owners to plant drought-tolerant landscaping conforming to the city's landscape ordinance.
- Encourage HOAs to beautify entryways, medians, and common areas
- Encourage all HOAs to adopt restrictions prohibiting more than one accessory dwelling unit (ADU) per lot, require all accessory dwelling units to conform to the city's Zoning Ordinance, and prohibit rental, lease, or sale of the ADU.
- Encourage all HOAs to prohibit short-term rentals, Airbnb, VRBO, and similar.

Rezoning Decisions:

The City should engage in the state legislative process to gain visibility and influence any proposed state legislation that adversely impacts Heath's ability to retain local zoning control.

- Consider the following questions related to concepts within this Comprehensive Plan prior to approving rezoning requests.
 - o Does the development provide something unique for Heath?
 - o Is the development within walking distance of public uses, parks, and open spaces?
 - o Does the development provide off-street pedestrian, bicycle, and/or equestrian connections to existing and future development?
 - o How does the development proposal impact the City fiscally and functionally– tax revenue, infrastructure, public services, and other public considerations (such as parks, schools, etc.)?

- How does the development proposal impact the City's traffic and public safety?
- How does the development respect environmentally significant areas like floodplains and wooded areas – are these areas preserved and used as an amenity? Is the proposed development of a type and quality that will be acceptable and maintain its value and condition for the long-term, especially if immediate development of the property is not intended to occur upon the granting of the proposed rezoning?
- Does the proposal establish sufficient irrigation to provide for the needs of the development?
- Is the development in line with and does it further enhance Heath's low-density, distinctive, and rural character?

Effective Use of the Future Land Use Map:

The Future Land Use Map is an important visualization of the citizens' input for future land development and should be rigorously preserved and conformed with.

It is important to recognize that development proposals contrary to land uses recommended on the Future Land Use Map could improve the uses shown within a particular area; however, they should be highly scrutinized.

- Make any zoning changes in conjunction with the Future Land Use Map, or amend the Future Land Use Map to match zoning changes.
- Consider the amendment to the Future Land Use Map on the City Council agenda before the agenda item to consider the related rezoning.
- Regularly review the Future Land Use Map to ensure that the City's zoning regulations are as consistent as possible. The Map should reflect all zoning amendments made after its initial adoption.

Ultimate Population Capacity:

- Proactively seek partnership opportunities with current and alternative water suppliers.
- Require new development to conform to the City's landscape ordinance.
- Consider how to incentivize existing properties to retroactively conform to the Landscape Ordinance.
- Review the Thoroughfare Plan every three years to meet the needs of the citizens of Heath and collaborate with neighboring cities, counties, and states.

Livability Strategy

What does the term “livability” mean in Heath? It means a sense of peace and tranquility, a respite from the commotion of typical urban and suburban development. Many intangibles make a city livable, such as a sense of community, a strong sense of place in particular areas, city pride, and the friendliness of neighbors. Heath is a premier outdoor lifestyle community.

- Creation of walkable, bikeable, and equestrian-friendly spaces;

Natural Drainage Courses:

- Ensure that the City’s Subdivision Regulations include provisions to ensure a minimum of 20 percent of the gross land is designated as open space, of which a minimum of 50 percent of the open space is not in a flood plain.
- Increase the allocated funds to improve drainage issues relating to floodplain areas within developments.

Recommendation 3. Recommend buildings and structures to be set back at least 30 feet from the 100-year flood plain.

- Establish a reasonable distance from creek edges to platted lots.

Welcoming and Safe Streets:

The City of Heath Thoroughfare Plan is a standalone document that, among other factors, considers the recommended goals and land use planning information contained in the Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The Transportation Plan is updated periodically to verify its consistency with the Comprehensive Plan and development trends that have occurred since the last update.

Recommendation 4. Consider how Heath’s image and adjacent property values will be affected as streets are newly constructed, maintained, or widened.

- Amend the Subdivision Ordinance to require new subdivisions to comply with all requirements of the revised Comprehensive Plan, Transportation Thoroughfare Plan, and Park Master Plan.
- New subdivisions shall require driveway access to an adjacent local street for each new lot. Shared residential driveways with cross-access easements are not prohibited but should only be permitted to limit the number of driveway openings onto roadways with high traffic volume.
- Design gently curved roadways to create views for people traveling along them. This will provide indirect views of various attributes of Heath, such as local homes, open spaces, creeks, trails, ponds, and the lake. Update the Engineering Standards of Design to require curvilinear streets.
- Homes should face or side onto streets.
- Design new neighborhoods to minimize or eliminate the need for retaining walls along streets.

- Require the establishment of certain streetscape elements along all new streets. Such elements should include trees, lighting, and medians.
- Develop a streetscape plan for existing roadways in Heath. Such plans should prioritize roadways and consider how trees, pedestrian amenities, lighting, etc., can be integrated retroactively, accounting for utility locations and easements.
- Work with the Texas Department of Transportation, our county commissioners, and the county judge to implement these recommended actions regarding streets that are not under the city's direct management or control.
- Prioritize sidewalk and trail “connectors” to make a network of paths, sidewalks, trails for non-auto travel throughout the city. This must include paths and connectors through commercial projects with appropriate sidewalks and trails.
- Require trail and sidewalk connectivity to existing trails and sidewalks for any new development.
- Separate the sidewalks and trails from the back of curbs by a distance that increases with the speed and capacity of the street to ensure pedestrian safety.
- Revise and revisit the throughfare plan to account for an increase in traffic along our state, city, and county roads.

Recommendation 7. Ensure that new public buildings are designed to project a positive image of Heath.

- Ensure that new and improved public buildings will be architecturally distinctive and in accordance with the Texas historic style depicted in the Towne Center overlay district design manual.

Design with Nature:

Recommendation 10. Minimize the negative impact on water quality and use from new development.

- Encourage the use of non-potable water for irrigation.

Recommendation 11. Proactively reduce the “heat island effect.”

- Amend regulations and standards to require parking lots to have trees that shade paved areas
- Establish a parking lot landscaping ordinance.

Energy Efficient Building Designs:

Recommendation 13. Be more environmentally sensitive and sustainable.

- Promote standards for efficient building designs, alternative energy, and water conservation techniques.
- Preserve trees and natural landscaping elements in property development.
- Require energy-efficient design and LEED certification for commercial properties.

Implementation Strategy

Plan Amendments:

Plan amendments such as but not limited to water, transportation, infrastructure, land use, residential requirements, and commercial requirements, may be made after a thorough analysis of immediate needs, as well as consideration for the long-term effects of proposed amendments.

Public Education and Public Involvement:

Updating a comprehensive plan is a crucial step in shaping the future of our community. To ensure this process is effective and inclusive, we encourage all residents to actively participate. Comprehensive Plan creation and updates should include a combination of elected, appointed, and at-large citizen participation. Further citizen participation should be actively solicited during the update and review process.

Best practices for updates include thorough community engagement and awareness - providing opportunity for citizen input. This feedback is essential in identifying community needs and priorities. Clear and timely citizen notifications are vital. Utilizing various channels like local media, social media, and direct mail (or inclusion and reference in city newsletters) ensures that everyone is informed about upcoming meetings, proposed changes, and opportunities to provide input. The following actions maximize citizen engagement and plan effectiveness:

1. Provide plan access on the City Website: This centralized hub should house all plan documents, meeting schedules, survey links, and contact information, ensuring easy access for residents.
2. Utilize multiple communication channels: Don't rely on just one method. Combine traditional methods like those mentioned in our community newsletter with digital strategies like social media posts, email newsletters, and local government website updates to reach a broader audience.
3. Offer diverse engagement opportunities: Cater to different preferences and schedules by offering a mix of in-person public forums, virtual meetings, online surveys, and interactive feedback tools.
4. Provide clear and concise information: Avoid jargon and technical language. Present plan information in a user-friendly format, using visuals, summaries, and translations where necessary.
5. Actively solicit and incorporate feedback: Demonstrate that public input is valued by clearly explaining how community feedback is being used to shape the final plan. Provide summaries of public comments and how they influence decision-making.

By working together and using these input and education tools, we can create a comprehensive plan that reflects the collective vision for our city's growth and development and ensure it appropriately reflects the needs and interests of our citizens. Furthermore, making the plan available to everyone easily keeps the plan active as the guiding direction for our city.

Regulatory Ordinances:

Zoning Ordinance

Specific changes that need to be addressed are noted in Table 7 and Table 8 and include the following immediate priorities for amendments should be:

1. Reviewing retail design standards to align with the Towne Center design manual.
2. Requiring amenities for residential lots.
3. Requiring adequate water infrastructure for domestic and irrigation uses.
4. Requiring adequate sanitary sewer infrastructure.
5. Requiring adequate transportation infrastructure.

Other Ordinances to Revise or Create

Consider ordinance amendments to address:

- Parking Lot Design (shade, space dimensions, cart corals, curbside pickup, etc.)
- Food Trucks
- Car Washes (Require Conditional Use Permit) and other High Water Land Uses
- Short Term Rentals
- Outdoor Storage
- Sign consistency within commercial developments
- The Reserve Overlay District
- Rural street standards
- Collection and donation bins
- Trail connector plan and program
- Sidewalk replacement program
- Water for new neighborhoods
- Codifying residential development amenities in planned developments and straight zoning districts.
- Codify design standards for concrete and natural trails.





Future Land Use Map

The residential land use types were updated to define Rural Estate as a minimum of 3 acres of developable land per lot.

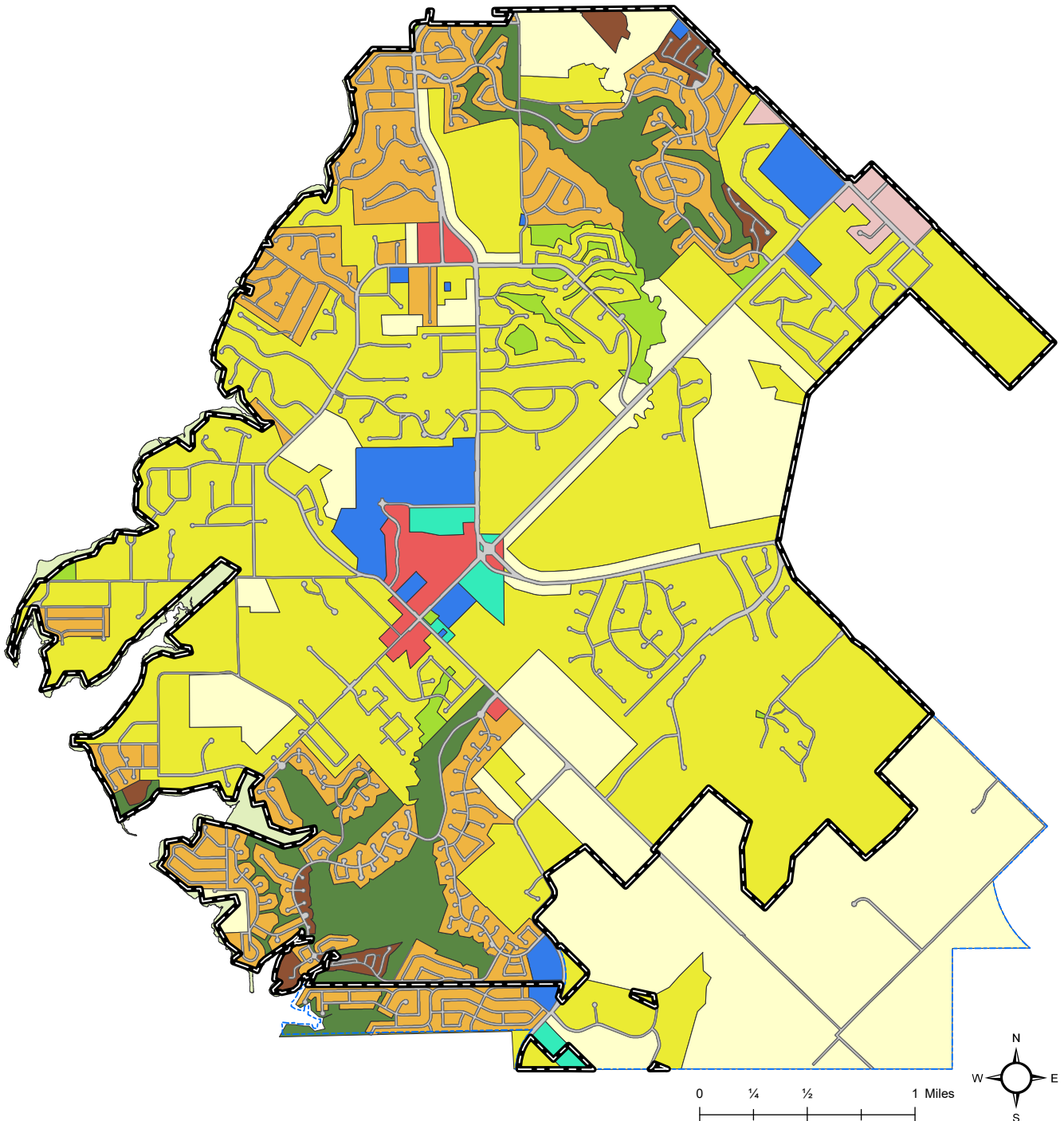
Medium Density Residential is a minimum of 1 acre of developable land per lot.

High Density is a minimum of 1/3 acres per lot and corresponds to the inactive zoning districts of SF-15 and SF-22.

Table 3. Residential Land Uses

Land Use Type & Map Color		Description	Density	Corresponding Zoning District(s)	Example Image
Rural Estate		Estate lot, single-family residential, large estate development	Minimum 3-acre lots	Agriculture, SFE-3.0	
Medium Density Residential		Medium-sized lot, single-family residential development	Minimum 1-acre lots	SF-43	
High Density Residential		Small lot, single-family residential development	Minimum 1/3 acre lots	SF-15, SF-22	
Townhomes		Multi-family residential development	Maximum of 8 units per acre	Townhouse (TH), Duplex (D), Multi-Family (MF-8)	

Future Land Use



- Rural Estates
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Residential - Townhouse
- Mixed Use

- Office
- Retail
- Parks and Open Space
- Private Recreation
- Public/Semi-Public Transition

- Lake Edge
- City Limits
- ETJ

Updated: May 7, 2025