

Comprehensive Plan – Generalized Future Land Use (GFLU) Map Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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The following are some frequently asked questions relating to the Generalized Future Land Use (GFLU) Map.

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1. What is the Generalized Future Land Use (GFLU) Map?

The GFLU Map makes recommendations for future land uses and development intensities to guide the physical development of Madison. The future land use categories guide what types of zoning can be applied in different parts of the City. The GFLU Map is one of the most-used sections of the [Comprehensive Plan](#) because state law (Wis. Stats. Sec. 66.1001) says proposed development must be consistent with the Plan. The GFLU Map is used to analyze rezoning requests. Rezoning, which is often part of a development proposal, needs to be consistent with the GFLU Map. For example, a parcel of land specified for “Medium Residential” land use could not be rezoned to allow for industrial uses, but could be rezoned to allow for a multifamily residential building. The Growth Framework chapter of the Comprehensive Plan includes details on GFLU categories.

2. Are future land use and zoning the same thing?

No. The Comprehensive Plan establishes broad future land use categories, such as “Neighborhood Mixed Use” (NMU) and “Low Residential” (LR). Zoning implements the GFLU categories. For example, a zoning district such as TSS (“Traditional Shopping Street”) *implements* a Neighborhood Mixed-Use (NMU) GFLU designation. The [zoning code](#) and [zoning map](#) are *specific* tools to implement *general* Comprehensive Plan future land use recommendations. The chart at the end of this document summarizes which zoning districts implement which GFLU categories.

Proposed development must be allowed by a property’s zoning to proceed. A property owner or developer may request rezoning of a property if a proposed development does not conform to zoning. The City’s Plan Commission refers to the GFLU Map when considering rezoning requests. Rezoning requests that the Plan Commission finds consistent with the GFLU Map may be approved. Requests that are not found to be consistent cannot be approved. For example, the Knickerbocker Place development at 2701 Monroe Street is within a NMU area on the GFLU Map. It is zoned “Traditional Shopping Street” (TSS). If a developer wanted to redevelop the site as a warehouse, they would need to request rezoning to the “Commercial Center” (CC) zoning district because a warehouse is not allowed under TSS zoning. However, the Plan Commission would have to deny the rezoning request because the area is mapped NMU. Rezoning to CC is inconsistent with the NMU future land use designation.

Please see [this video](#) for more details on the difference between land use and zoning. Please refer to the [Zoning District Summary document](#) for more information about Madison’s zoning districts.

3. Why do GFLU categories emphasize building height and form, rather than only density?

Most people interact with the urban environment based on what buildings look like and how large they are. Dwelling unit density can be very misleading. Two identically-sized buildings can have very different densities if one contains 10 three-bedroom units and the other has 30 one-bedroom units. Two buildings with the same number of units could also have different densities if one has underground parking on a small lot and the other has a large lot with surface parking. A three-story building in a certain neighborhood could be appropriate because it fits within the context of the neighborhood regardless if it is 10 dwelling units per acre or 30 dwelling units per acre. Development height and form better dictates how it will interact with its surroundings.

4. What does each of the land use categories mean?

- **Low Residential (LR)** - Predominantly single-family and two-unit housing types (1-2 stories; ≤15 dwelling units (DU) per acre).
- **Low-Medium Residential (LMR)** - Mix of single-family homes, two-, three- and four-unit buildings, row/townhouses, and small apartment buildings (1-3 stories; 7-30 du/acre).
- **Medium Residential (MR)** - Generally larger multifamily buildings or multifamily complexes, sometimes interspersed with other smaller housing types (2-5 stories; 20-90 du/acre).
- **High Residential (HR)** - Predominantly larger and taller multifamily buildings (4-12 stories; 70+ du/acre).
- **Neighborhood Mixed-Use (NMU)** - Node or corridor containing housing, shopping, and services that generally serves surrounding neighborhoods (2-4 stories; up to 70 du/acre).
- **Community Mixed-Use (CMU)** - Relatively high-intensity mix of residential, retail, office, institutional, and civic uses, generally located adjacent to a major transportation corridor (2-6 stories; up to 130 du/acre).
- **Regional Mixed-Use (RMU)** - Intensive mix of region-serving retail, office, service, entertainment, civic, institutional, and high density residential uses (2-12 stories).
- **Downtown Mixed-Use (DMU)** - Downtown areas that are appropriate for intensive mixed-use development, but generally focused on residential, retail, and service uses.
- **Downtown Core (DC)** - The nucleus of downtown, accommodating a mix of uses in large scale buildings that comprise the most intensely developed part of the city.
- **General Commercial (GC)** - Predominantly retail and service businesses selling a wide range of goods and services.
- **Employment (E)** - Predominantly office, research and development, medical, and specialized employment, with some low-impact manufacturing.
- **Industrial (I)** - Industrial, manufacturing, storage, distribution, and warehousing uses.
- **Park and Open Space (P)** - Parks, recreational facilities, conservation areas, stormwater management facilities, cemeteries, and other open space.
- **Special Institutional (SI)** - College campuses, schools, and larger places of assembly and worship.
- **Airport (A)** - Airport.
- **Neighborhood Planning Areas (NPA)** - Potential, but currently unplanned, future neighborhood growth areas that are generally expected to develop after 2040.

5. What can be built in the residential and mixed-use categories?

Residential Categories

Residential Building Form	Low Residential (LR)	Low-Medium Residential (LMR)	Medium Residential (MR)	High Residential (HR)
Single-Family Detached Building				
Civic/Institutional Building				
Two-Family, Two-Unit				
Two-Family – Twin				
Three-Unit Building	*			
Single-Family Attached	*			
Small Multi-Family Building	*	**		
Large Multi-family Building		**		
Courtyard Multi-Family Building		**		
Podium Building				
Number of Stories	1-2 ¹	1-3	2-5	4-12 [~]
General Density Range (DU/acre)	≤15	7-30	20-90	70+

* Permitted in select conditions at up to 30 DU/ac and three stories, generally along arterial streets or where these types of buildings are already present or planned within an adopted sub-area plan as part of a pattern of mixed residential development.

** Appropriate in select conditions at up to 70 DU/ac and four stories. Factors to be considered include relationships between proposed buildings and their surroundings, natural features, lot and block characteristics, and access to urban services, transit, arterial streets, parks, and amenities.

~ Or taller, if specified by an approved sub-area plan or PD zoning.

¹ Dormers or partial third floors are permitted.

Mixed-Use Categories

Mixed-Use and Commercial Building Form	Neighborhood Mixed-Use (NMU)	Community Mixed-Use (CMU)	Regional Mixed-Use (RMU)
Commercial Block Building			
Civic or Institutional Building			
Residential - Commercial Conversion			
Live-Work Building			
Single-Family Attached Building			
Small Multi-Family Building			
Courtyard Multi-Family Building			
Large Multi-Family Building			
Parking / Liner Buildings			
Free-Standing Commercial Building			
Podium Building			
Flex Building			
Number of Stories	2-4	2-6*	2-12**
General Residential Density Range	≤70	≤130	--

Note: Architectural features that create the appearance of an additional floor do not count towards the minimum number of floors.

* One-story anchor retail is allowed as part of a larger, comprehensively planned mixed-use project or as part of a project transitioning from a suburban car-oriented layout to a more urban, pedestrian-oriented layout.

** Or taller, if specified by an approved sub-area plan or by PD/MXC zoning approval. One-story anchor retail is allowed as part of a larger, comprehensively planned mixed-use project or as part of a project transitioning from a suburban car-oriented layout to a more urban, pedestrian-oriented layout.

-- Indicates that the residential density is governed by the building height limit.

6. What zoning districts will be used to implement the GFLU Map categories?		LR	LMR	MR	HR	NMU	CMU	RMU	DMU	DC	GC	E	I	P	SI	A	NPAT
		Low Residential	Low-Medium Residential	Medium Residential	High Residential	Neighborhood Mixed Use	Community Mixed Use	Regional Mixed Use	Downtown Mixed Use	Downtown Core	General Commercial	Employment	Industrial	Parks & Open Space	Special Institutional	Airport	N-hood Planning Area
Zoning District																	
SR-C1	Suburban Residential - Consistent District 1	●												○	○		
SR-C2	Suburban Residential - Consistent District 2	●												○	○		
SR-C3	Suburban Residential - Consistent District 3	●	●											○	○		
SR-V1	Suburban Residential - Varied District 1	●	●	○	○									○	○		
SR-V2	Suburban Residential - Varied District 2	●	●	●	○									○	○		
TR-C1	Traditional Residential - Consistent District 1	●												○	○		
TR-C2	Traditional Residential - Consistent District 2	●												○	○		
TR-C3	Traditional Residential - Consistent District 3	●	●											○	○		
TR-C4	Traditional Residential - Consistent District 4	●	●											○	○		
TR-V1	Traditional Residential - Varied District 1	●	●	○	○									○	○		
TR-V2	Traditional Residential - Varied District 2	●	●	●	○									○	○		
TR-U1	Traditional Residential - Urban District 1		○	●	●									○	○		
TR-U2	Traditional Residential - Urban District 2		○	○	●									○	○		
TR-R	Traditional Residential - Rustic District	●												○	○		
TR-P	Traditional Residential - Planned District	●	●	●	●									○	○		
LMX	Limited Mixed-Use.	○	○	○	○	●									○		
NMX	Neighborhood Mixed-Use District					●	●				○				○		
TSS	Traditional Shopping Street District					●	●	○			○				○		
MXC	Mixed-Use Center District					○	●	●			○	○			○		
RMX	Regional Mixed Use						○	●			○	○					
CC-T	Commercial Corridor - Transitional District					○	●	●			●	○			○		
CC	Commercial Center District						○	○			●	○			○		
TE	Traditional Employment District			○	○	○	●	●			○	●	○		○		
SE	Suburban Employment District										○	●	○		○		
SEC	Suburban Employment Center District											●			○		
EC	Employment Campus District											●			○		
IL	Industrial - Limited District											○	●				
IG	Industrial - General District												●				
DC	Downtown Core								●	●					○		
UOR	Urban Office Residential								○	○					○		
UMX	Urban Mixed-Use								●	●					○		
DR1	Downtown Residential 1			○	○				○	○					○		
DR2	Downtown Residential 2			○	○				○	○					○		
A	Agricultural District													○	○		
UA	Urban Agricultural District													○	○		
CN	Conservancy District													●	○		
PR	Parks and Recreation													●	○		
AP	Airport District															●	
CI	Campus Institutional District														●		
PD ‡	Planned Development District																
PMHP	Planned Mobile Home Park District	●	●												○		
ME	Nonmetallic Mineral Extraction District												●				

● Primary zoning districts most appropriate within this future land use district.

○ Secondary zoning districts somewhat appropriate within this future land use district, zoning changes may require further review.

† NPAs are potential, but currently unplanned, long-term future growth areas. Appropriate zoning districts would be identified after these areas are planned.

‡ Planned Development Districts could allow most, if not all of the listed land uses.