

AUBURN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Future Land Use Guide



Introduction

A future land use plan is an important part of the comprehensive plan. The future land use map is a visual tool that shows where different types of homes, businesses, and amenities should go. Descriptions of the size, scale, and density of development and types of uses in each land use area support the map and provide the basis for future changes to Auburn's zoning ordinance and policy decisions.

The term "land use" refers to the ways that land in Auburn should be used. Land use describes the types of activities and buildings that are allowed – or not allowed – in certain areas.

The future land map:

- Serves as a guide for updates to the City's zoning
- Guides how zoning should align with community needs
- Establishes Auburn's vision for where different types of land uses are located, such as housing, jobs, small businesses, recreation amenities, or open space
- Defines where growth will be directed

The future land use map is NOT:

- A zoning ordinance or policy document

What are growth areas?

High Growth Areas

Where Auburn expects the most change and new development

What are High Growth Areas?

High Growth Areas are parts of the city where Auburn plans for most new development, redevelopment, and investment over time. These areas are intended to accommodate housing, businesses, and services in ways that support a vibrant, efficient, and connected community.

What typically happens here?

- New housing and mixed use development
- Redevelopment of underused or vacant sites
- Improved streets, sidewalks, and infrastructure
- Access to jobs, services, and amenities

Why focus growth here?

Directing growth to specific areas helps:

- Support walkable, active neighborhoods
- Make efficient use of public infrastructure
- Reduce pressure on rural, natural, and low density areas
- Align development with Auburn's long term vision

Moderate Growth Areas

Where Auburn expects a moderate amount of change and high density transitions to low density

What are Moderate Growth Areas?

Moderate Growth Areas are places that sit between high density areas and more rural areas. These areas may see some change over time, but at a slower pace than high-growth areas.

What typically happens here?

- Incremental growth, infill, or redevelopment
- A mix of housing types or small scale commercial uses
- Changes that step down in size, height, or intensity from high growth areas
- Reuse of existing buildings

Why are Moderate Growth Areas important?

They help:

- Create smooth connections between different parts of the city
- Balance new development and protection of rural areas
- Reduce abrupt changes in scale or use
- Provide flexibility as community needs evolve

Low Growth Areas

Where Auburn expects the least amount of change and development

What are Low Growth Areas?

Low Growth Areas are places where Auburn plans to see the least amount of development. These areas often include open space, agricultural and forestry activities, or environmentally sensitive lands.

What typically happens here?

- Minimal new development
- Preservation of natural resources and open space
- Protection of rural or low density form
- Continued use of existing homes, farms, or conservation lands

Why are low growth areas important?

They help:

- Protect natural and environmental resources
- Preserve rural landscapes
- Reduce infrastructure costs
- Direct growth to areas better suited to change

What are land use categories?

Land use categories describe the different kinds of places that exist—or could exist—in a community, based on how land is used, the types of buildings, and how people live, work, and get around in those areas.

These land use categories are reflected on the land use map, and content in the plan can describe characteristics within each category.

Each place type includes a mix of characteristics like:

- The types of homes (like single-family houses, apartments, or town homes)
- Whether there are businesses, shops, offices, or industry.
- How dense or spread out the buildings are.
- What transportation options exist (like sidewalks, roads, or transit)
- Whether there are parks, open spaces, or community facilities.

Instead of focusing just on categories like “residential” or “commercial,” different categories should describe the look and feel of an area—including the broad scale, design, and mix of uses.

Guiding Principles for Growth

At their October 2025 meeting, the Comprehensive Plan Committee outlined principles that should serve as the basis for creating high-growth, moderate-growth, and low-growth areas.

Guiding Principles for High-Growth Areas

- Areas served by water and sewer, and areas with planned water and sewer expansion
- Areas near existing rail
- Areas that have a grid of streets or arterial roads to support traffic flow
- Areas with industrial uses

Guiding Principles for Low-Growth Areas

- Areas in the Agriculture Resource Protection Zone that do not meet the high or moderate growth criteria
- Lake Auburn Watershed Protection Area and most of the Taylor Pond Watershed
- Guiding Principles for Moderate-Growth Areas
- Remaining areas within the Taylor Pond Watershed that are served by water and sewer
- All areas outside of low-growth and high-growth areas

Other Notes

All areas in the shoreland, regardless of growth area designation, will be subject to shoreland zoning requirements.

All areas of permanently conserved land will remain conserved, regardless of growth area designation.

Growth areas highlight where the City should encourage most of its growth, this does not mean that parks, cemeteries, and permanently conserved open space will be developed. These areas provide recreation opportunities and enhance public health and should be considered in land use category descriptions to meet the community's vision.

Recent State Legislative Changes

LD 1829: Housing Density & Growth Areas

Supporting more housing in places planned for growth

What is LD 1829?

LD 1829 is a statewide housing law that changes how much housing must be allowed on residential lots, particularly in high growth areas and areas served by public water and sewer. The law limits how restrictive local zoning can be when it comes to housing **density**.

LD 1829: Omnibus Bill

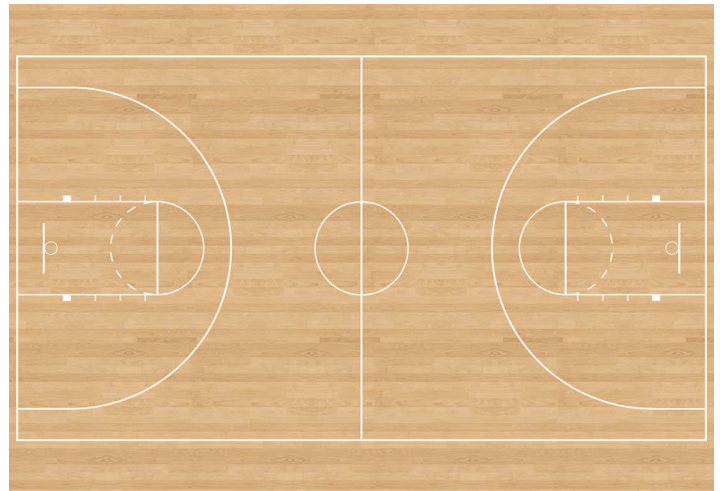
The following requirements relate to growth areas. These requirements establish the largest minimum lot size that can be required in different areas. Should water and sewer be expanded in the future, whether by the City or private developer, the density requirements would apply to future developments and infrastructure expansions.

- **In high growth areas with both water and sewer access**
 - » Minimum lot sizes can be no larger than 5,000 square feet (roughly 1/8 of an acre) for the first four units and no more than 5,000 square feet for each additional unit
- **In moderate growth or low growth areas with both water and sewer access**
 - » Minimum lot sizes can be no larger than 5,000 square feet (roughly 1/8 of an acre) for the first two units and no more than 5,000 square feet for each additional unit
- **In a growth area without both water and sewer**
 - » No smaller than Title 12 septic minimum, typically 20,000 square feet
 - » Municipalities can require lot sizes larger than 20,000 square feet areas that do not have both water and sewer access

What does this look like?

Lot size equivalent

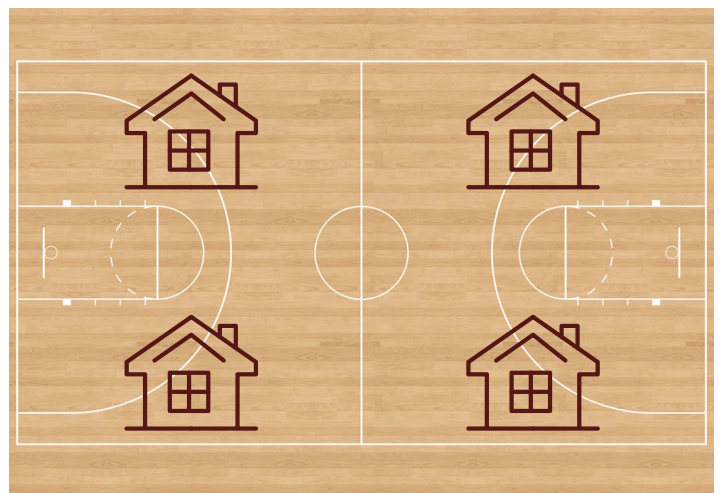
5,000 square feet can be hard to conceptualize. This is roughly 0.11 of an acre. This is slightly smaller than one eighth of an acre (5,445 square feet), and slightly larger than a professional size basketball court (4,700 square feet).



High Growth Areas

In high growth areas with access to water and sewer, this would look like four units on a lot that's roughly the size of a professional basketball court.

State guidance notes that a lot owner with a 5,000 square foot lot in a high growth area with public water and public sewer may construct the following unit types: a quadplex; a triplex; a duplex and an accessory dwelling unit; a duplex and an accessory dwelling unit; a single-family dwelling unit; or a single-family dwelling unit and an accessory dwelling unit.

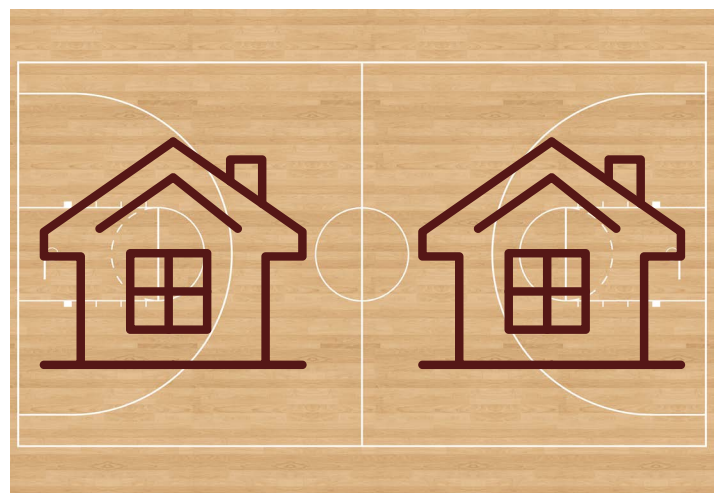


Any area with public water and sewer outside of a high growth area

In areas outside of a high growth area, but with access to water and sewer, this would look like two units on a lot that's roughly the size of a professional basketball court.

Two units on a basketball court could look different across lots:

For example, state guidance notes that a lot owner with a 5,000 square foot lot with public water and public sewer (but outside a high growth area) may construct the following unit types: a duplex; a duplex and an accessory dwelling unit; a single-family dwelling unit; or a single-family dwelling unit and an accessory dwelling unit.



Areas without both public water and sewer

Minimum lot sizes can be no smaller than Title 12 septic minimum, typically 20,000 square feet (or about ½ of an acre)

Municipalities can require lot sizes larger than 20,000 square feet in areas that do not have both water and sewer access

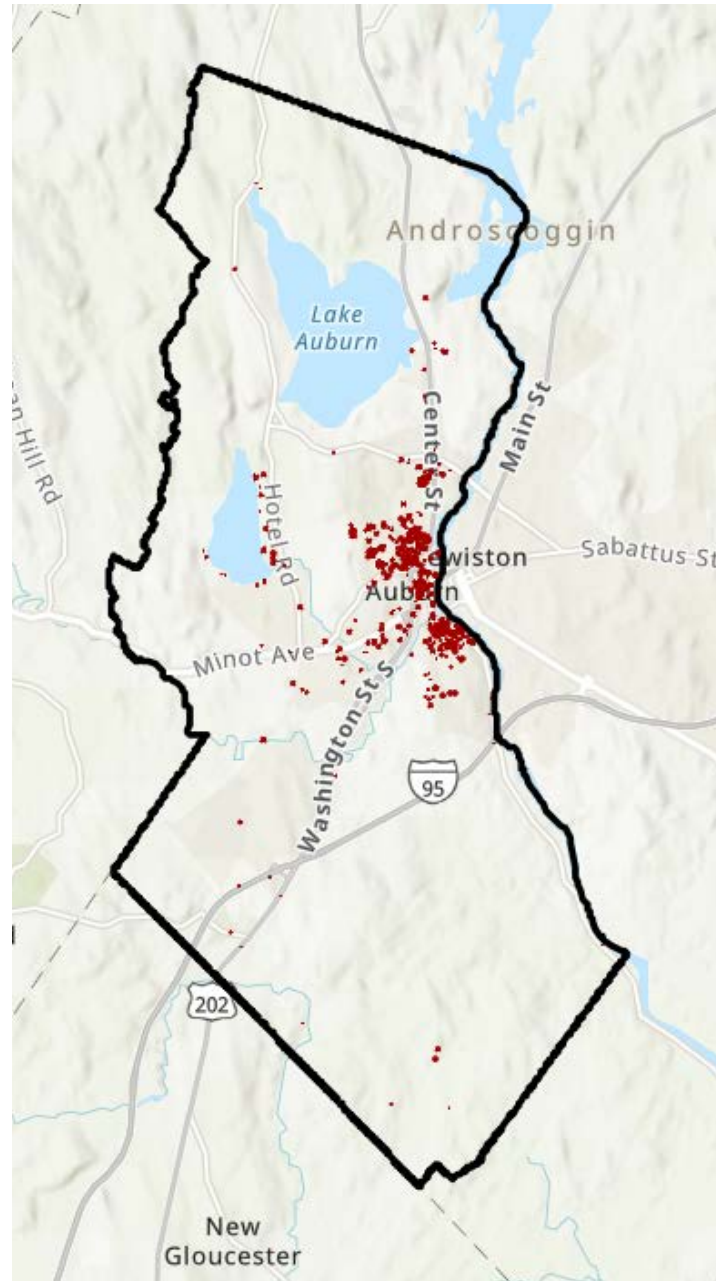
Where does this lot size exist today in Auburn?

In Auburn, there are 851 lots that are roughly 5,000 square feet (0.11 acres or less) in size. These parcels are largely concentrated in the dense, urban neighborhoods surrounding downtown.

There are areas with sparse clusters of 5,000 square foot parcels around Taylor Pond, around Minot Avenue, and just outside of New Auburn. There are singular 5,000 square foot lots scattered throughout the City.

These lots contain a variety of uses, including a variety of residential densities (single family through multi-family) and commercial uses.

Lots that are roughly 5,000 square feet or less

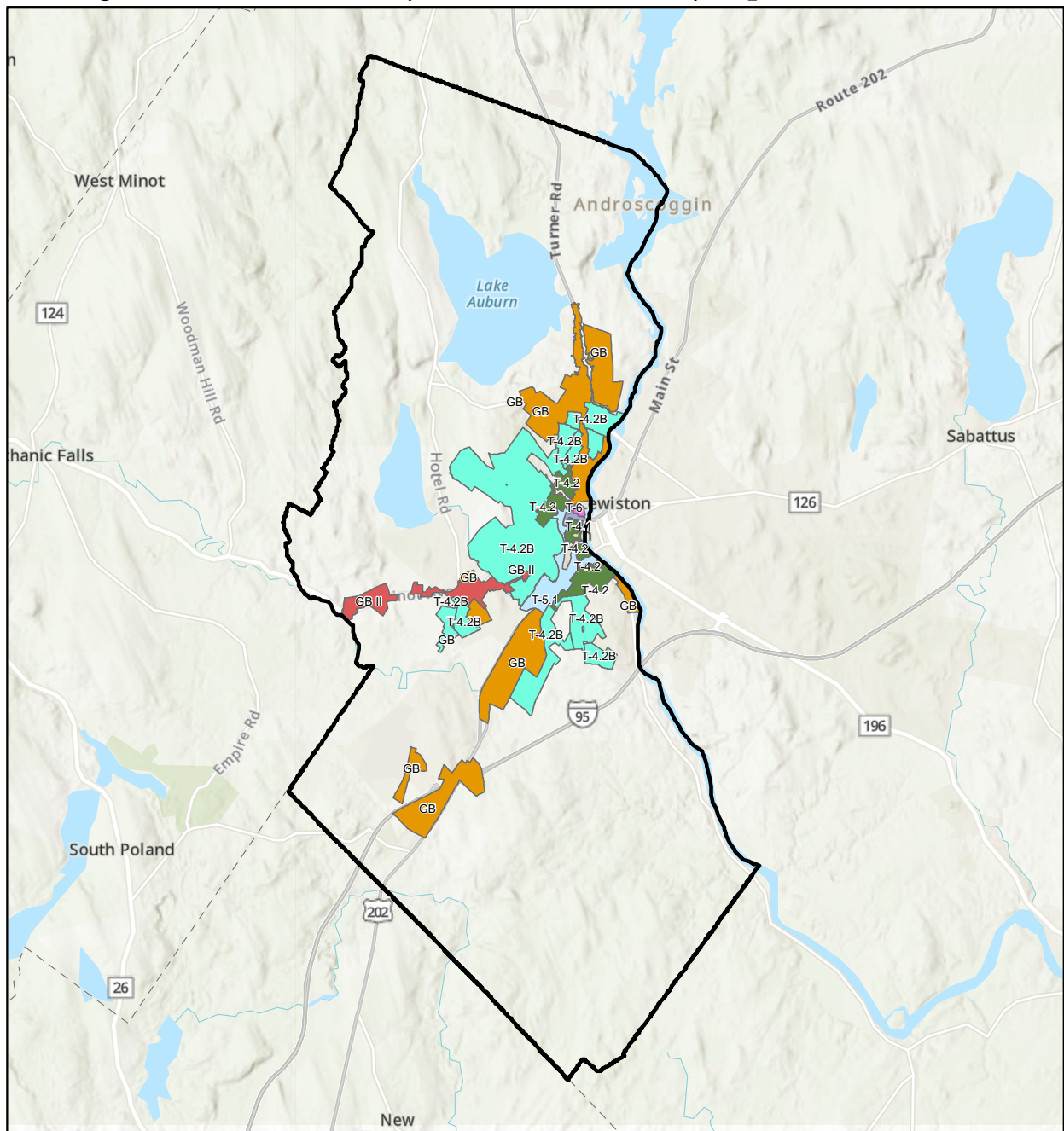


Where is this density allowed today?

Currently, there are several areas in Auburn that allow for the level of density outlined in LD1829.

These include all form-based code districts and the General Business (GB) district and GBII district.

Zoning districts that currently meet the new density requirements



3/27/2026

1:188,742

City Boundary

ZT42B

T-4.2B - Traditional Neighborhood Development District

ZT41

T-4.1 - Traditional Mainstreet Neighborhood

ZT42

T-4.2 - Traditional Downtown Neighborhood

ZT6

T-6 - Great Falls Metropolitan

ZGBII

GB II - General Business II

ZGB

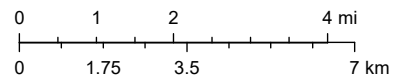
GB - General Business

ZT51

T-5.1 - Downtown Traditional Center

ZT52

T-5.2 - Downtown City Center



Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community, Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS

LD 997: Residential in Commercial

LD 997 requires municipalities to allow residential development in all commercial zones.

Municipalities may limit the number of residential units in a commercial development and can limit ground floors of buildings in commercial zones to be restricted for commercial uses.

Today, this includes areas in Auburn that are in the General Business and General Business II districts.



**Additional information on State Legislation can be found at
<https://smpdc.org/leg>**