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Chapter 1

BACKGROUND
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About Regional Planning in the Truckee Meadows

Geographic Area

The area covered by the Regional Plan includes all of Washoe County except the portions within the drainage basin of Lake Tahoe (see Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) 278.0288) and the lands of federally-recognized tribes. While the primary planning focus of the Regional Plan is on the southern 25% of Washoe County, the Regional Plan continues to have relevant jurisdiction over the broader area of Washoe County.

Washoe County was established in 1861 and is a political subdivision of the State of Nevada operating under the provisions of the general laws of the State. It has a manager-commission form of government. The County covers an area of approximately 6,500 square miles in the northwest section of the State bordering California and Oregon. The incorporated cities in Washoe County are Reno and Sparks. In 2017, Washoe County’s population was 451,923 (Nevada State Demographer’s Certified Population Estimates, 2017).

Reno is the largest city in Northern Nevada, covering approximately 112 square miles. It is located in the southern part of Washoe County. Reno was incorporated in 1903 and is governed under a council-manager form of government. Reno’s population is 244,612 (Nevada State Demographer’s Certified Population Estimates, 2017). The City of Sparks borders the City of Reno and was incorporated in 1905. It, too, operates with a council-manager form of government. Sparks covers an area of 37 square miles and has a population of 96,928 (Nevada State Demographer’s Certified Population Estimates, 2017).
MAP 1 - REGIONAL JURISDICTION

Detail 1

MAP 1 - REGIONAL JURISDICTION

- Cold Springs
- Silver Knolls
- Stead
- Spanish Springs
- Sun Valley
- Sparks
- Reno-Sparks Indian Colony
- To Warm Springs & Spring Mountain

Scales:
- 73.5 Kilometers
- 45,015 Miles

Locations:
- Washoe Lake
- Silver Lake
- Swan Lake
- White Lake
- Silver Lake
- Swan Lake
- Washoe Lake

Highways:
- 445
- 341
- 659
- 580
- 395
- 80
- 680

Rivers:
- Truckee River
Legend

- Freestanding Communities
- Resort Service Areas
- Major Roads
- Lakes and Rivers
- County Boundaries
- Truckee Meadows Service Area Boundary (TMSA)

Areas of Washoe County outside TMRPA jurisdiction

- Tahoe Hydrographic Basin
- Tribal Lands

The full extent of Regional Plan map data are available for download and viewing at www.tmrpa.org/tmrpa-maps
Legal Framework Of The Agency

A history of jurisdictional conflict and uncoordinated decisions about growth and services led to the recognition that a greater need for cooperation between Washoe County, the City of Reno, and the City of Sparks was warranted.

State Legislators sought to fill this need by creating the Truckee Meadows Regional Planning Agency (TMRPA) during the 1989 Nevada Legislative Session. Nevada law both grants the authority and provides the direction for the regional planning process in the Truckee Meadows. The exact language for regional planning in the Truckee Meadows can be found in Nevada Revised Statutes, (NRS) in sections 278.026 - 278.029. These statutes created the Truckee Meadows Regional Planning Agency, which is charged with developing and maintaining a comprehensive Regional Plan for the jurisdictions of Reno, Sparks, and Washoe County. In 1991, as its initial task, TMRPA adopted the first Truckee Meadows Regional Plan. Since then, as required by state law, the plan has been updated approximately every five years.

Creating and carrying out the Truckee Meadows Regional Plan is a cooperative effort involving a large number of individuals, agencies, and organizations. Reno, Sparks, Washoe County and others implement the Regional Plan through their planning and regulatory efforts, capital improvement programs, and other processes.

Roles and Responsibilities

TMRPA is comprised of the Regional Planning Governing Board (RPGB), the Regional Planning Commission (RPC), TMRPA’s Director, and agency staff. The roles and responsibilities of these bodies with regards to TMRPA are delineated in state statute. Each of the following sections summarizes the roles and responsibilities of the entities in regards to the Regional Plan.

Regional Planning Commission (RPC)

The RPC has nine members, appointed by their respective governing bodies, including three each from the Reno, Sparks, and Washoe County local planning commissions. The members serve three-year terms and may be re-appointed. The RPC elects a chairperson from among its members to a one-year term, which rotates annually among the three jurisdictions.

NRS 278.0272 directs the RPC to develop a comprehensive Regional Plan for physical development and orderly management of growth in the region for the next 20 years and hold public hearings. The statute also directs the RPC to review the plan annually, update it not less than every five years and forward its recommendations to the RPGB for final adoption.
One of the functions of the RPC is to review Projects of Regional Significance (PRS). While NRS provides some thresholds for a PRS, NRS also grants the RPC the authority to adopt guidelines for determining whether a particular project is a PRS and, before a city or the County gives final approval to a PRS, must be found in conformance with the Regional Plan. The RPC also reviews master plans, facilities plans, and other similar plans of local governments and affected entities to determine whether they conform to the Regional Plan. In addition, the RPC reviews plans and plan amendments of state agencies and of public utilities regulated by the Public Utilities Commission of Nevada (PUCN) and offers suggestions regarding their conformance with the Regional Plan. The RPC also reviews for conformance the transportation plan prepared by the Regional Transportation Commission and for consistency the water plan prepared by the Northern Nevada Water Planning Commission. Finally, by interlocal agreement, the RPC serves as the annexation commission for involuntary annexation proposals in the region.

Regional Planning Governing Board (RPGB)

The RPGB has ten members. The Reno, Sparks, and Washoe County governing bodies may appoint members from among their own members, or from the public. Traditionally, the Washoe County Commission appoints three members (two of whom must reside in or represent the unincorporated area), the Reno City Council appoints four members, and the Sparks City Council appoints three members, all from their respective elected bodies. The members serve three-year terms and may be re-appointed. The RPGB elects a chairperson from among its members to a one-year term; the chair rotates among the three jurisdictions.

Upon the recommendation of the RPC, the RPGB adopts the Regional Plan with any amendments that it deems necessary after holding required public hearings. The RPGB has all the powers and obligations that are delineated in NRS 278.0264 and NRS 278.0265.

Local Governments

Reno, Sparks, and Washoe County provide the necessary facilities and money to enable the Truckee Meadows Regional Planning Agency to carry out its functions. To do this, the local jurisdictions have entered into an agreement to share the costs of regional planning, according to how many members each unit of government has on the RPGB. Under NRS, local governments shall amend their master plans, facilities plans and other similar plans to conform to the provisions of the Regional Plan and submit them to the RPC for a finding of conformance. They also submit amendments to these plans for conformance findings. The law also provides that each local government shall review and amend, if necessary, its existing ordinances to ensure their conformance with the provisions of a master plan that conforms to the Regional Plan.

Affected Entities

NRS defines an affected entity as a public utility, franchise holder, local or regional agency, or any other entity having responsibility for planning or providing public facilities relating to solid waste, air quality, transportation, public education, energy generation and transmission, and conventions and the promotion of tourism. However, the term does not include a State agency or a public utility subject to regulation by the Public Utilities Commission of Nevada (PUCN).

Thus, the list of affected entities includes (but is not limited to) Waste Management, the Reno-Tahoe Airport Authority, the Washoe County School District, the Regional Transportation Commission of Washoe County, the Washoe County Health District, the Reno and Sparks redevelopment agencies, and the Re-
Affected entities are responsible for amending their master plans, facilities plans, and other similar plans to conform to the provisions of the Regional Plan. Before adopting or amending a master plan or similar plan, they must submit it to the RPC for a finding of conformance.

The Regional Plan does not have jurisdiction over neighboring counties, or lands managed by other entities (i.e. Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and local tribes). However, TMRPA attempts to monitor impacts of development within the designated plan areas of Washoe County on surrounding counties and entities, and the impact that development in surrounding counties and entities has on the well-being of the region covered by the Truckee Meadows Regional Plan

**Purpose of The Plan**

The purpose of the Regional Plan is to implement the legislative mandate given to the RPC and RPGB. It is an opportunity to put into place a resource for the region with a collaborative structure that will serve the Truckee Meadows well into the future. This plan focuses on the coordination of master planning in Washoe County (less certain areas noted in statute) as it relates to population, regional form and land use pattern, public facilities and service provision, natural resources, and intergovernmental coordination.

The plan also includes the opportunity for a feedback loop that includes annual monitoring and reporting on regional information, data, and statistics that have an effect on land use planning. The reporting process will feed into amendment cycles, local master plans, TMRPA’s work program and the five-year update.

**Relationship to Other Plans**

As described in Chapter 278 of the Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) the master plans, facilities plans, and other similar plans of local governments and affected entities must be found in conformance with the comprehensive Regional Plan.

In addition to the Truckee Meadows Regional Planning Agency, two other entities within the region are designated with planning for region-wide facilities, infrastructure or resources: the Northern Nevada Water Planning Commission, and the Regional Transportation Commission of Washoe County.

**Regional Water Planning**

The Northern Nevada Water Planning Commission (NNWPC) established pursuant to Chapter 531 Statutes of Nevada 2007 of the Nevada Special Acts is required to develop a plan for the:

- quality of surface water;
- quality of groundwater;
- supply of surface water;
- supply of underground water;
- control of floods and drainage of storm water, as it relates to surface water;
- control of floods and drainage of storm water, as it relates to underground water; and
- cost and financing related to facilities, sources of water, or other requirements of the plan.
Chapter 531 Statutes of Nevada 2007 requires that the Regional Water Management Plan (RWMP), developed by the NNWPC and adopted by the Western Regional Water Commission, must also be found to be consistent with the comprehensive Regional Plan. For goals and policies related to these topics please see the adopted Washoe County Regional Water Management Plan. For the purpose of determining consistency, the RPC utilizes the adopted conformance review methodology pursuant to the conformance policies contained in the Regional Plan.

**Regional Transportation Planning**

The Regional Transportation Commission of Washoe County (RTC) is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and pursuant to Title 23 Code of Federal Regulations, part 450, and Title 49 Code of Federal Regulations, part 613, is required to develop and update the Regional Transportation Plan. The 2040 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), adopted November 18, 2004, aims to accomplish the following goals:

- Improve safety;
- Integrate land use and economic development;
- Promote healthy communities and sustainability;
- Manage existing systems effectively;
- Integrate all types of transportation;
- Focus on regional connectivity;
- Promote equity and environmental justice;
- Improve freight and goods movement; and
- Invest strategically.

Pursuant to Chapter 278 of NRS, the RTC is classified as an affected entity; therefore, the Regional Transportation Plan must be found in conformance with the comprehensive Regional Plan.
Developing the 2019 Regional Plan

This plan constitutes the fifth revision of the Truckee Meadows Regional Plan, and represents a major update to the 2012 Truckee Meadows Regional Plan, primarily for two main reasons. First, many of the tenets of the 2012 Regional Plan had been in existence since the 2002 version. Though there have been alterations to this plan, it has not seen a major overhaul in nearly 15 years. Second, the region has seen significant changes since the prior plan was adopted. These regional changes include major growth in population and employment in the area, changes to the region’s demographic makeup, shifts in housing and living preferences, an influx of migration to the area, and the connection of disparate communities in the region due to the growth the area has experienced.

Building Blocks of the Plan

TMRPA used several building blocks to help craft this Regional Plan. A brief description of each of the building blocks shown in Figure 1.1 follows below. For more information and details regarding the development of this plan, please contact TMRPA for a copy of supporting materials that describe these many endeavors in depth.

Figure 1.1 - Plan Development Building Blocks
Supportive Efforts
While development of the plan officially began in the summer of 2017, TMRPA had previously undertaken a variety of projects designed to gather information, research potential policy options, and consider various approaches to land use decision-making. The TMRPA team conducted a review of peer plans both inside and outside of the region to garner a better understanding of best practices, worked with the University of Nevada, Reno, on communication and engagement methods for the agency, and developed both industrial land and residential/housing studies.

In addition to these efforts, the agency partnered with Portland State University on the following items specifically for the 2019 Regional Plan Update:

- A public workshop on transit-oriented development (TOD) practices, as well as a ‘Best Practices’ paper for TODs in our region;
- Various technical analyses of the Truckee Meadows Service Area (TMSA) including the introduction of the concept of tiering or the phasing of development;
- Introduction of the potential to create a system of periodic reviews and reports on the implementation of the updated regional plan;
- The use of historic realities and expert opinions for growth forecasts;
- A complete review of urban service areas in the United States, along with a comparison to the Truckee Meadows; and
- Various specific recommendations for the Truckee Meadows to consider in this update.

Foundational Work
TMRPA staff completed various work items to help lay the foundation of the 2019 Regional Plan. These items assisted the agency in developing an understanding of the various aspects of the Regional Plan that needed discussion and amendment. Specifically, this foundational work showed that a fresh review of the plan contents in comparison to state statute would provide an excellent grounding for the plan.

To that end, TMRPA undertook a complete evaluation of Nevada Revised Statutes and the mandate for regional planning in Washoe County. Staff discovered that there were many opportunities to better align the tenets of the Regional Plan with the requirements of NRS for the 2019 Update. Improvements in both policy and implementation were identified. Chapter 2, entitled “Regional Vision for Growth” provides more detail on this effort.

TMRPA also conducted a strengths and challenges exercise with various jurisdictional and affected entity staff to identify issues and opportunities for improvements to the Regional Planning process in the Truckee Meadows, as well as the Regional Planning Commission and the Regional Planning Governing Board.

Finally, since there was so much visioning and values work done in the Region in recent years, a thorough review of select plans in the region to gain a better understanding of the visioning and values work that had already been accomplished. Examples of plans reviewed include both the Reno and Sparks updated Master Plans, the Washoe County Citizens’ Survey, the 2040 Regional Transportation Plan, the Economic Development Authority of Western Nevada (EDAWN) strategic plan, and the Regional Water Management Plan from the Western Regional Water Commission, among others. The following callout box describes the Vision and Directional Statements which were based on the results of this work and utilized in crafting the 2019 Truckee Meadows Regional Plan.
Regional Vision and Directional Statements

The Truckee Meadows Regional Plan is the foundation for a well-planned and resilient community which supports our unique quality of life and promotes the distinct characteristics of our region.

To achieve this vision, the Regional Plan must:

- Plan for a diverse and growing population in which all can prosper;
- Promote a safe, healthy, and interconnected region to uphold a strong sense of community;
- Manage growth in a way that maximizes resources and minimizes impacts;
- Preserve, protect, and value our natural resources to ensure a vibrant environment today and in the future;
- Efficiently provide public facilities and services that can sustain and support growth in our region;
- Bolster a strong economic base and maintain an economically competitive community;
- Foster coordination and communication among local governments, regional entities, and residents; and
- Measure regional success to ensure thoughtful implementation of the plan.

Policy Evaluation and Development

TMRPA staff and their consultants identified the need for an inclusive policy evaluation of the 2012 Regional Plan to effectively understand the limitations the current policies have, and the opportunities that could exist for the 2019 Regional Plan. TMRPA staff had also recognized the benefits of additional assistance to help guide the update process and provide partner expertise. At the beginning of the update process, TMRPA created the Regional Plan Update Working Group (RPUWG), made up of key planning staff from the local governments and affected entities, to ensure engagement in all phases of the process. This group met regularly throughout the update process, and was deeply involved in both policy evaluation and development tasks.

In order to undertake this comprehensive review, the following tasks were completed:

- Issues identification exercises with the Regional Planning Commission, Regional Planning Governing Board, the Regional Plan Update Working Group, affected entities and the community at large;
- A review of comparable peer plans (which found that TMRPA is unique in its authority and requirements); and
- An overall evaluation of the 2012 Regional Plan for redundancies and effectiveness that helped to create the basis for new policies that have been crafted and included in the 2019 Regional Plan.

To develop the new policies found in this plan, TMRPA staff utilized all of the Supportive Efforts, Foundational Work, and Scenario Planning process and outcomes. Throughout the policy development process, staff also ensured that the NRS mandates were met, and that all of the policies that were found in the 2012 Plan were accounted for.
Scenario Planning
TMRPA staff developed scenarios and criteria to evaluate four possible development futures of the region to inform policy discussions for the Regional Plan. These potential futures were then shared with the community to determine the desires of our region. This was a substantial effort on behalf of TMRPA, and an in-depth discussion of this process and its outcomes can be found in Chapter 2: Regional Vision for Growth.

Data-Driven Decisions
TMRPA is known for its data and analysis. As Jeff Hardcastle, the Nevada State Demographer said in 2017, “...I have found that they provide objective information and analysis across jurisdictional boundaries that no other entity in Northwest Nevada provides.”
This approach was partly the result of a recommendation from IBM. In 2012, Reno participated in the IBM Smarter Cities Challenge, where TMRPA was identified as the right partner to harness the potential of data for the betterment of our region. TMRPA’s Regional Data Warehouse contains various types of information, and continues to grow.

Communication and Engagement
In order to ensure engagement throughout the Regional Plan Update process, TMRPA, in conjunction with M2 Consulting, developed a Communication and Engagement Component (CEC) which outlined the engagement process and methods that were used throughout the Regional Plan update. The CEC was developed in two phases. Phase One was used to obtain a deeper understanding of citizens’ thoughts related to growth, specifically their concerns related to land use, transportation, natural resources, infrastructure, and housing.

Phase Two focused on: 1) determining consensus around the policy choices within these core areas; and 2) understanding how the community would like future regional policies to be implemented and potentially measured. TMRPA took care to gather input from all levels of the community, from the general public and other stakeholders to elected and appointed officials.

A variety of methods were used to accomplish this outreach, including:

- 42 initial roadshow presentations to over 1,150 people;
- Surveys through MetroQuest and Flashvote;
- “Food for Thought” lunch presentations;
- Community Conversations; and
- A variety of social media outreach.

As described above, TMRPA used surveys as a primary source for public engagement. TMRPA mainly used the MetroQuest survey tool, as it produced highly visual and interactive surveys. Due to this, as well as the
ability to push out these surveys efficiently, TMRPA garnered over 3,500 responses to the various surveys that were released.

Finally, as mentioned above, TMRPA formed the Regional Plan Update Working Group (RPUWG) which was composed of key planning staff from the three jurisdictions, the Washoe County School District, the Western Regional Water Commission and the Regional Transportation Commission of Washoe County. This technical project team was created to enhance regional coordination throughout the update process and acted as a sounding board for the Regional Plan Update by providing input on current and proposed policies and reviewing work. TMRPA staff also regularly involved the RPC and/or the RPGB in various aspects of the plan update. This was accomplished through workshops, joint RPC/RPGB meetings and individual meetings with members from each of the entities.

Engagement

TMRPA staff placed a high priority on engagement and partnership during the creation of new policy language. Multiple versions of draft policy language and maps were circulated and discussed by the RPUWG, RPC and RPGB. Notably, TMRPA staff and the RPUWG spent six months reviewing and rewriting the draft policy language and maps. This process was to ensure that the jurisdictions and affected entities were an integral part of envisioning and creating the 2019 Regional Plan.

As previously mentioned, any plan is ultimately about the what, why and how:

- What do we want to achieve?
- Why is this the best choice?
- How do we get there?

The entirety of this plan attempts to answer these questions in relation to regional growth. The ‘what’ is addressed in the following section, the ‘why’ is covered in Chapter 2, and the ‘how’ is featured in Chapter 3.

The What:

As previously mentioned, Nevada Revised Statutes specifically delineate the required contents of the comprehensive regional plan. The main aim of the Regional Plan is to address these requirements. The project team concluded that the best way to be clear about policies is to structure the policy discussion around the requirements of NRS 278.0274, Contents of the Regional Plan. This section of state statute is clear about what the Plan must contain, and the issues its policies must address.

The following is an excerpt of NRS 278.0274:

The comprehensive regional plan must include goals, policies, maps and other documents relating to:

1. **Population**, including a projection of population growth in the region and the resources that will be necessary to support that population.

2. **Conservation**, including policies relating to the use and protection of air, land, water and other natural resources, ambient air quality, natural recharge areas, floodplains and wetlands, and a map showing the areas that are best suited for development based on those policies.

3. **The limitation of the premature expansion** of development into undeveloped areas, preservation of neighborhoods and revitalization of urban areas, including, without limitation, policies that relate to the interspersion of new housing and businesses in established neighborhoods and set forth principles by which growth will be directed to older urban areas.

4. **Land use and transportation**, including the classification of future land uses by density or intensity of development based upon the projected necessity and availability of public facilities, including, without limitation, schools, and services and natural resources, and the compatibility of development in one area with that of other areas in the region. This portion of the plan must:
   a. Address, if applicable:
      1. Mixed-use development, transit-oriented development, master-planned communities and gaming enterprise districts; and
      2. The coordination and compatibility of land uses with each military installation in the region, taking into account the location, purpose and stated mission of the military installation;
   b. Allow for a variety of uses;
c. Describe the transportation facilities that will be necessary to satisfy the requirements created by those future uses; and

d. Be based upon the policies and map relating to conservation that are developed pursuant to subsection 2, surveys, studies and data relating to the area, the amount of land required to accommodate planned growth, the population of the area projected pursuant to subsection 1, and the characteristics of undeveloped land in the area.

5. **Public facilities and services**, including provisions relating to sanitary sewer facilities, solid waste, flood control, potable water and groundwater aquifer recharge which are correlated with principles and guidelines for future land uses, and which specify ways to satisfy the requirements created by those future uses. This portion of the plan must:

   a. Describe the problems and needs of the area relating to public facilities and services and the general facilities that will be required for their solution and satisfaction;

   b. Identify the providers of public services within the region and the area within which each must serve, including service territories set by the Public Utilities Commission of Nevada for public utilities;

   c. Establish the time within which those public facilities and services necessary to support the development relating to land use and transportation must be made available to satisfy the requirements created by that development; and

   d. Contain a summary prepared by the regional planning commission regarding the plans for capital improvements that:

      1. Are required to be prepared by each local government in the region pursuant to NRS 278.0226; and

      2. May be prepared by the water planning commission of the county, the regional transportation commission and the county school district.

6. **Annexation**, including the identification of spheres of influence for each unit of local government, improvement district or other service district and specifying standards and policies for changing the boundaries of a sphere of influence and procedures for the review of development within each sphere of influence. As used in this subsection, “sphere of influence” means an area into which a political subdivision may expand in the foreseeable future.

7. **Intergovernmental coordination**, including the establishment of guidelines for determining whether local master plans and facilities plans conform with the comprehensive regional plan.

8. **Any utility project required to be reported pursuant to NRS 278.145.**

When TMRPA staff and the consultant team really began to dissect this language, staff realized that these obligations could be best expressed as a set of questions related to land use:

1. **What type of growth is the region planning for?** The Plan should forecast population and the resources needed to support population growth (NRS subsection 1).

2. **Where should the region grow, or not?** The Plan should control the footprint of new development with policies that encourage development to occur in older and developed areas before going “prematurely” into undeveloped areas (NRS subsection 3). It should conserve natural areas and natural resources, and direct growth to other areas (NRS subsection 2).

3. **What should that growth (land development) look like?** The Plan should lead to:
a. Different (mixed use) but compatible types of development (NRS subsection 4).

b. Adequate public facilities and services of all types to support that development (as demonstrated by relatively detailed facilities and service plans from all providers) (NRS subsections 5 and 8).

4. **How will the regional governments work together to achieve the Plan’s goals?** The Plan should lead to effective procedures for:

a. Intergovernmental coordination in general (NRS subsection 7)

b. The timing, financing, and delivering of a complete and adequate package of facilities and services to new development (NRS subsection 5, covered in 3.b., above)

c. Annexation, including Spheres of Influence (NRS subsection 6)

These questions, together with their answers, are the foundation of the 2019 Regional Plan. The next sections of this document delve deeper into all of the questions listed above, and discuss how the proposed solutions were developed, as well as how to implement these.