



### Contents - Chapter 1

---

About This Comprehensive Master Plan .....	1.2
Plan Use .....	1.2
Comprehensive Master Plan Components .....	1.2
Planning Area.....	1.3
Lyon County Map .....	1.4
The Need For This Plan .....	1.5
Express the County's Vision for the Future.....	1.5
Establish a Consistent County-wide Policy Framework and Unify Existing Master Plan Documents .....	1.5
Determine Where and How the County Should Grow.....	1.5
Recognize the Diversity and Character of Communities.....	1.7
Who Is This Plan For?.....	1.7
The Plan's Scope .....	1.8
About Master Plans Generally .....	1.8
How Are The Goals And Policies Of The Master Plan Implemented? .....	1.8
How Does Zoning Relate To The Master Plan? .....	1.9
The Relationship to Private Property Rights .....	1.9
Compliance With Nevada Revised Statutes .....	1.9
Consistency Between the Master Plan And Zoning .....	1.10
Process for Plan Development and Adoption .....	1.10
Reconciling Conflict in the Planning Documents .....	1.11
County-wide Component Organization .....	1.11



Throughout most of the County's past, growth has been gradual and slow and the County has remained predominantly rural in character. In recent years development within Lyon County increased in response to the development and expansion of the Northern Nevada region. As the County grows and changes over the next 20 or so years, it can benefit from forethought, planning and a guide for making public and private decisions regarding the character of Lyon County's growth and development.

Will Lyon County have a future without planning? Of course it will — the future will come regardless of whether or not the county has a plan. However, planning allows the county, its residents and businesses, to make conscious, deliberate choices about the future. The Lyon County Comprehensive Master Plan provides direction for making such decisions.

This Plan represents a future vision of Lyon County along with recommendations for achieving that vision. The ideas of the Plan are a distillation of the community's many desires, tempered by what seems necessary, feasible, and reasonable. This Plan is not intended to be a static document. It should be reviewed and updated periodically to reflect new development trends, shifts in the economy, or changes in the community's goals and objectives.

### ***About This Comprehensive Master Plan***

---

#### **Plan Use**

The Comprehensive Master Plan will be used as a decision-making tool by residents, landowners, developers, the County Planning Department, Planning Commission, and Board of Commissioners. The Plan does not change existing zoning or solve all of the county's problems; instead, it serves as a handbook for implementing the county vision. It specifies policy guidelines that respect the individual, reinforce community values, support healthy functioning communities, and advocate quality of life.

The Plan is a catalyst and guide to the establishment, or revision, of mechanisms to implement the selected goals and policies. These mechanisms include development codes and other planning tools such as zoning and subdivision codes, zoning maps, capital improvements programs, Community Plans for the eight identified communities within the County, and other specific "action items."

#### **Comprehensive Master Plan Components**

Lyon County's Comprehensive Master Plan is organized in two tiers: a County-wide Component and several more specific Community Plans.

- ◆ County-wide Component – This portion of the Comprehensive Master Plan provides the overall foundation and framework for directing the County's future growth and development. The County-wide Component is the umbrella document that applies to all of the unincorporated area of Lyon County. It presents the overall vision, goals and policy direction, generalized land use patterns for the entire County, and the land use designations for lands outside of defined communities. The County-wide Component provides guidance for the preparation of the more specific Community Plans.
- ◆ Community Plans – Community Plans present the specific vision, goals and policy direction, and land use pattern for each identified community as determined through a community planning process. Community Plans are designated for existing, established communities. These maps provide detailed views of the community's desired growth and development for the future taking into consideration each community's unique character, opportunities and constraints. The County will work with the communities to complete Community Plans, including Community Land Use Plans, in each community.



### Planning Area

Lyon County covers almost 1.3 million acres (or 2,013 square miles) and has over 30,000 parcels of land. It includes two incorporated cities: the City of Fernley and the City of Yerington. The county is adjacent to Storey and Washoe counties on the north, Mineral and Mono counties on the south, Churchill and Mineral counties on the east, and Douglas County and Carson City on the west.

Approximately 6 percent of the county’s total land area is currently developed with a majority of the development within the eight communities identified during preparation of the Comprehensive Master Plan.

Like many Nevada and western counties, three quarters of Lyon County is public land. Almost 73 percent of the county is federal land, with 44 percent managed by Bureau of Land Management, Carson City Ranger district, and 21 percent managed by the US Forest Service — the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest. Tribal and Reservation land cover almost 4 percent of the county.

The private land that covers 25 percent of the county generally follows the river valleys or is located in the agricultural Smith and Mason Valleys. The private land in the Fernley area is checkerboarded between public lands (state and federal). These private lands are the areas that are either already developed for homes and businesses and other uses, or that may develop in the future. It is this private land that is the primary focus of the Lyon County Comprehensive Master Plan. The Plan also addresses potential changes to federal land ownership patterns over time and what should or could occur on those lands.

The county has 133,450 acres of agriculture (10.4 percent), 41,270 acres of residential development (3.2 percent), and 21,440 acres of commercial and industrial uses, including mining (1.7 percent). Ten percent of the county is vacant private land (135,100 acres), and 66 percent is “vacant” public land (847,630 acres).

Lyon County saw a steady rate of building permit issuance over the 10 years prior to 2006. During that period the County was one of the 10 fastest growing counties in the United States. Most of this development has been occurring in the Central area of the county.

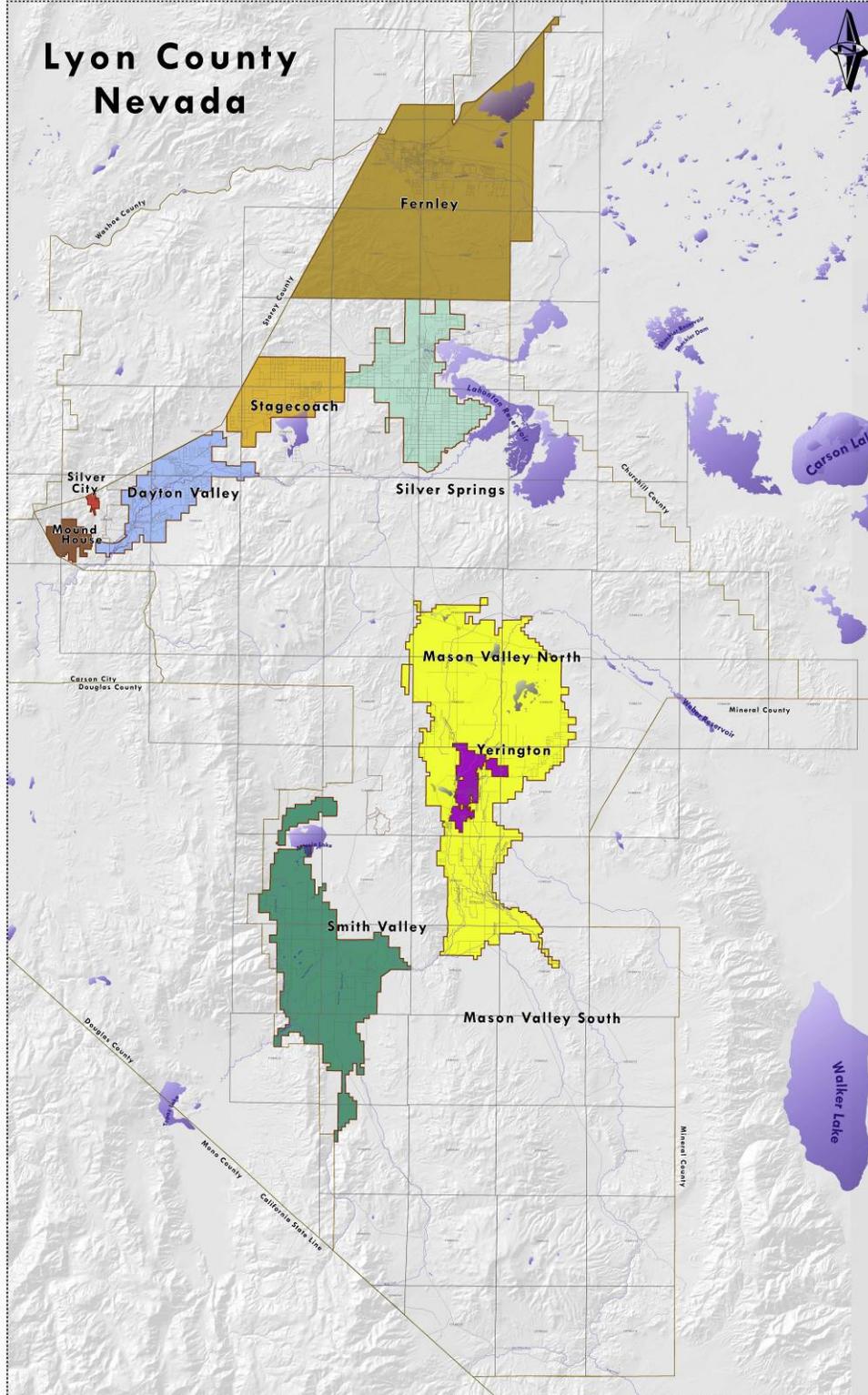
The vacant and partially developed lands in Lyon County could accommodate over 51,000 new residential units, with 23,000 of them in Rural Residential-zoned districts, 10,500 in the Estate-zoned districts, and 9,500 in population centers. This is a rough idea of what the current land use and vacant lands could accommodate should all lands develop according to current zoning. It does not take into account other constraining factors, such as water or topography. In reality, much lower amount of development could occur.

The following map depicts Lyon County and its communities.

#### KEY FACTS AND TRENDS

- 75 percent of Lyon County is public land; 25 percent of the county is privately-owned.
- 10 percent of the land use is agricultural.
- The county has over 135,000 acres of private vacant land. A lot of the large intact parcels are near Silver Springs and Stagecoach areas.
- Over 90 percent of the county is zoned for Rural Residential (1 unit per 20 acres). Private lands zoned for residential uses could accommodate over 50,000 new residential units.

### Lyon County Map



### The Need For This Plan

Planning allows us to make conscious, informed choices about our future. The Comprehensive Master Plan offers guidelines for making such choices and policies for helping us determine the future locations, forms, and acceptable impacts of development. The adoption of this plan signifies that all land use decisions must be consistent with the plan's goals and policies.

#### Express the County's Vision for the Future

Prior to the preparation of this "Comprehensive Master Plan," the county did not have a single, coherent expression of a vision for Lyon County or its communities. Most communities revisit and update their comprehensive plan every five to seven years to ensure that it continues to meet the community's vision and goals for the future. The last countywide Master Plan was adopted in 1990. Since then, substantial growth and change has occurred and the West Central Lyon County Land Use Plan was adopted in 2002.

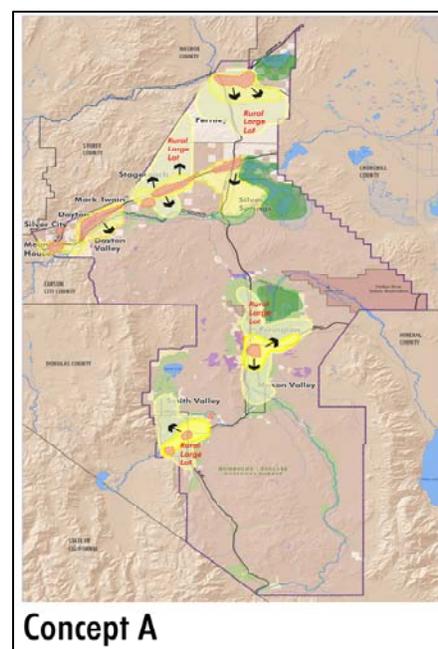
#### Establish a Consistent County-wide Policy Framework and Unify Existing Master Plan Documents

Prior to the preparation of this "Comprehensive Master Plan," the county did not have a "comprehensive" and consistent Master Plan that was applicable county-wide and incorporated the various Master Plan documents — adopted at different times over the years — into one policy document, making it a challenge to understand and use. This Comprehensive Master Plan provides the community with a single, user-friendly document that serves as a source of information and as a policy guide to direct future growth within the county.

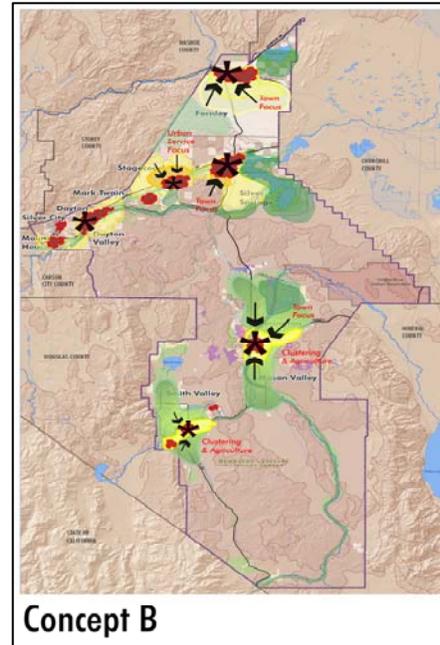
#### Determine Where and How the County Should Grow

In recent years Lyon County had grown in a classic pattern of sprawl, leaving the County and its taxpayers with higher costs for infrastructure and services, an inefficient road network, an insufficient drainage system and a lack of marketable commercial and industrial properties. As part of the planning process, the community's options for future growth were tested in the form of the three growth concepts outlined below:

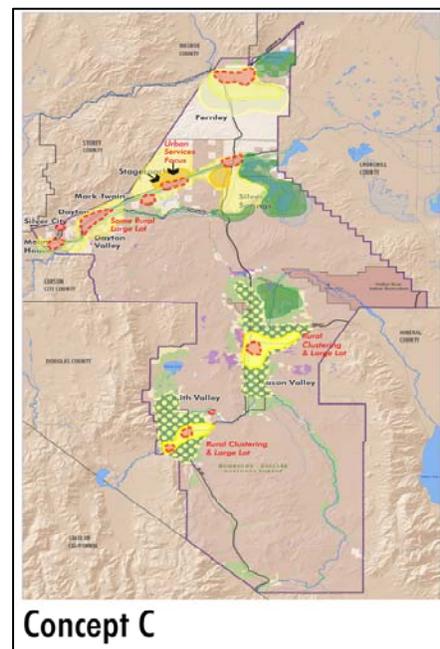
- **Concept A: Present Trends** – Concept A represents development patterns allowable by current zoning in Lyon County and current market trends. Under this concept, Lyon County by 2026 may have a larger share of its development occurring in the unincorporated county outside of community core areas as part of subdivisions and rural lot splits. Residents are likely to see commercial development that extends along highways in the North and Central part of the county. Very limited environmental quality and design quality standards would continue to determine how site plans occur.

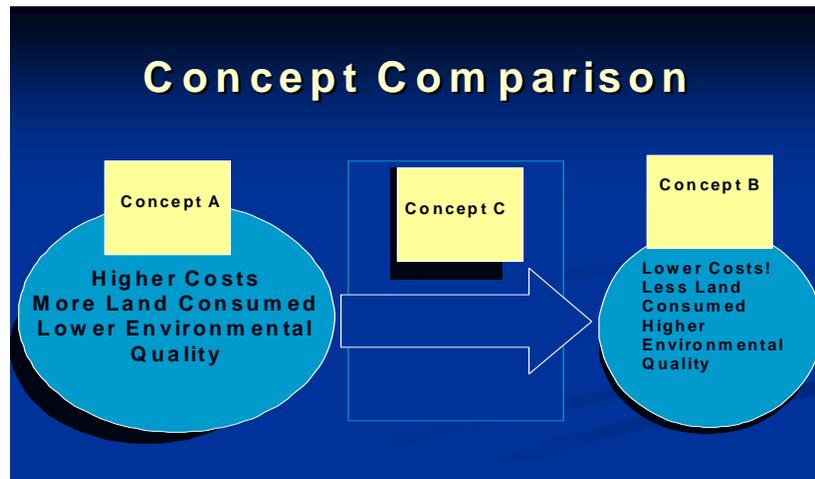


- Concept B: Community Core Focused – With Concept B, Lyon County in 2026 would see growth that is more compact and development occurring in and around the community cores with more focus on balancing residential, employment, and retail land uses. The concept encourages limited growth in the remote unincorporated areas (outside of community cores) than Concepts A and C. The agricultural areas around Smith and Mason Valleys would primarily continue for agricultural production, but would allow some residential development especially in alternative rural patterns such as clustering. In addition, the concept promotes alternative development and conservation approaches for areas with sensitive resources or hazardous features, such as steep slopes, wetlands, or floodplains.



- Concept C: Moderate Change – With Concept C, development patterns in 2026 would retain some of the characteristics of today, but growth would continue to disperse in some parts of the unincorporated county (outside of community core areas), with a slight increased emphasis on alternative development patterns (such as clustering) to help conserve agricultural lands, “raising the bar” on site planning and development quality, and focusing development in areas where it can better be served by water and sewer.





Based on community feedback, the goals and policies contained in this Comprehensive Master Plan represent Concept B, Community Core Focused, above.

### Recognize the Diversity and Character of Communities

Prior to the preparation of this “Comprehensive Master Plan,” the county did not have a way of recognizing and celebrating the diversity and character of the communities that make up the County. The last Master Plan did not differentiate between rural and suburbanizing areas, their needs or opportunities. The eight communities that are recognized in this Plan are listed below.

1. Dayton
2. Fernley
3. Mason Valley
4. Mound House
5. Silver City
6. Silver Springs
7. Smith Valley
8. Stagecoach

### Who Is This Plan For?

This Comprehensive Master Plan benefits county residents and landowners by ensuring that land use decisions are rational, democratic, and predictable. It helps landowners, private interest groups, and individual county residents by providing the information they need to evaluate how these decisions fit the county’s goals. Likewise, it helps residents and landowners determine how to achieve their interests in a way that is consistent with these goals. The Comprehensive Master Plan forms the basis for other County plans and regulations.

Public and private agencies, property owners, developers, community groups, and County staff use this Comprehensive Master Plan in many ways. First, it guides County officials in making decisions about zone changes and developments. Second, residents can use it to understand the County’s position on proposed changes in land use, zoning, development regulations, and broader policy issues. Finally, the Comprehensive Master Plan sets policies that promote the County’s role as a model for actions related to capital improvements, road construction and maintenance, land use, and other matters.



### **The Plan's Scope**

Although our vision extends to the next two decades and beyond, the goals and policies of this Comprehensive Master Plan are intended to serve for about 10 years or so. The plan covers all areas of the County except Native American reservations and incorporated cities. Additionally, many policies support the collaborative efforts necessary to protect the integrity of the public lands managed by agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

This Comprehensive Master Plan does not address areas that lie outside County jurisdiction. For example, it does not outline a plan for new schools in the school district; it does, nevertheless, touch on issues such as the effect of new growth and development on schools. The goals and policies of the plan have applicability limited to areas of County influence.

### **About Master Plans Generally**

The Comprehensive Master Plan is an official public document adopted by the Lyon County Planning Commission and Board of Commissioners. The Plan is a general, long-range, policy and implementation guide for elected and appointed officials in making choices concerning the overall needs, growth and development of the county and its communities. It outlines Lyon County's vision and goals for the future.

The Plan is comprehensive because the elements cover a broad range of development and growth issues which can be influenced significantly by the County Planning Commission, Board of Commissioners and other governing authorities and agencies. The Plan is general because the recommendations are broad. The plan is long-range because consideration is given to the problems and opportunities which may arise over the next twenty or so years. The Plan is dynamic because there will be amendments to adapt to new situations and meet new challenges over time.

The written guiding principles, goals, policies and strategies, in combination with the Land Use Map, provide guidance for decisions affecting growth, the use and development of land, preservation of open space and the expansion of public facilities and services. The Comprehensive Master Plan written policy recommendations and maps should be used together when making decisions. It is also recognized that this document should be reviewed annually at a public hearing and revised as needed to reflect the availability of new implementation tools, changes in State and Federal law, changes in funding sources, the results of monitoring the effectiveness of existing policies and the impacts of past decisions, as well to reflect changes in the community's vision for the future.

### **How Are The Goals And Policies Of The Master Plan Implemented?**

In addition to the goals and objectives identified in the Comprehensive Master Plan, implementation strategies have been suggested that are designed to achieve the stated goals and objectives. These strategies are recommended as a menu of actions that can be undertaken by the County. While it would be difficult to accomplish all of these strategies to their fullest extent over a short period of time, they provide the County with specific direction that can be followed over the life of the Plan.

Although the Master Plan is a general policy document to guide the physical development of the county, it does not have the force of law as a regulation or ordinance for the enforcement of its goals and policies. Zoning maps and ordinances must be adopted to create the regulations and enforcement authority to implement the Master Plan. Lyon County, through this Comprehensive Master Plan, has taken the approach that incentives should be used where possible to effect desired changes. Implementation is discussed in Chapter 11 of this County-wide Component to provide a "roadmap" as to how the goals and policies should be implemented.

### ***How Does Zoning Relate To The Master Plan?***

County zoning regulations consist of both a zoning map and a written ordinance that divides the county into zoning districts, including various residential, commercial, and industrial districts. The zoning regulations describe what type of land use and specific activities are permitted in each district, and also regulate how buildings, signs, parking, and other construction may be placed on a lot. The zoning regulations also provide procedures for re-zoning and other planning applications.

The zoning map and zoning regulations provide specific requirements for development of property, while the Master Plan provides a guide for the future development of the property. When changing the zoning of a particular property, it must be consistent with the Master Plan Land Use Map. That is to say, the Land Use Map contained in this Master Plan should guide future re-zoning decisions.

### ***The Relationship to Private Property Rights***

Although the Comprehensive Master Plan's policies direct the future development of private lands, they pose no limits on what landowners can do with their properties under their existing zoning. For example, many rural areas lie within a zoning district with a minimum parcel size of 20 acres; these landowners can continue to develop in accordance with that zoning. Although this plan does not encourage such development, it recognizes that owners are entitled to those development rights. The same approach holds true for existing commercial and industrial zones. Where the Comprehensive Master Plan recommends a change to existing land use patterns, it attempts to provide incentives and alternatives that benefit both the property owner and the county over the long term. The goal of the Comprehensive Master Plan is to provide more certainty in the development process, thereby maintaining or enhancing the economic viability of private property.

### ***Compliance With Nevada Revised Statutes***

This Master Plan has been prepared in response to Nevada Revised Statutes 278.150 through 278.170 which state that a Planning Commission and Board of Commissioners shall prepare and adopt a comprehensive, long-term general plan for the physical development of the county. According to these statutes, the plan is to be referred to as the Master Plan and is to be prepared so that the below listed elements may be adopted by the governing body, as appropriate. Any ordinance pertaining to the use of land or the growth and development of the County should conform to the goals, objectives, and policies as they are presented in this Plan.

- Community Design
- Conservation Plan
- Economic Plan
- Historical Properties Preservation Plan
- Housing Plan
- Land Use Plan
- Population Plan
- Public Buildings
- Public Services and Facilities
- Recreation Plan
- Rural Neighborhoods Preservation Plan
- Safety Plan



- School Facilities Plan
- Seismic Safety Plan
- Solid Waste Disposal Plan
- Streets and Highways Plan
- Transit Plan
- Transportation Plan

The extent to which each of the elements listed above is addressed by this Master Plan varies according to their direct relevance to Lyon County. Where elements have been addressed by separate plans, reference to the appropriate document has been provided. This plan replaces the County's 1990 Master Plan and the 2002 West Central Lyon County Land Use Plan, and shall be used as a guide in conjunction with Community Plans and other elements or to update other Master Plan elements as appropriate.

The Statutes also indicate how the Master Plan is to be adopted. In the preparation of the Master Plan and in the subsequent public hearings, the Nevada Revised Statutes were followed.

### ***Consistency Between the Master Plan And Zoning***

---

Master plan land use category designations shown on a Land Use Map are not the same as zoning. The adoption of a master plan and Land Use Map does not change a property's zoning.

Master plans are advisory in nature, serving to guide the community at a policy level and to guide future development decisions. Zoning is regulatory in nature, generally serving to implement the master plan and specify permitted uses, allowed densities and development standards.

In many instances, land use category designations on a Land Use Map may not directly correspond to a property's underlying zoning. Unless the County chooses to pro-actively re-zone properties that are not consistent with the Land Use Map, properties retain their underlying zoning. If a property owner desires to change zoning to be consistent with the Land Use Map, the property owner will be required to request re-zoning of the property as part of the development process to bring it into compliance with the Master Plan. There is no requirement in Nevada State law requiring that the zoning of properties be brought into compliance with the Master Plan and its Land Use Map.

Underlying zoning was reviewed and considered throughout the development of this Master Plan to ensure that consistency between planned land uses and zoning could be maintained to the maximum extent feasible. In some instances, land use designations do differ, however, as was necessary to meet the broader objectives of the Master Plan. Re-zoning may be required should the properties develop or redevelop in the future. It should be noted that in many of the cases where inconsistencies do exist, planned land use categories (e.g., mixed-use land use designations) and zoning that would subsequently be required, would allow a much broader range of uses than are allowed today.

### ***Process for Plan Development and Adoption***

---

This County-wide Component of the Comprehensive Master Plan is the culmination of four years of dialogue and analysis that has included a wide array of participants including the Board of Commissioners, the Planning Commission, community advisory councils, County staff and the community at large. A series of community meetings, open house events and workshops were held throughout the county to obtain citizen input and recommendations, including eight meetings on issues identification in March 2007, eight community meetings and 2 joint Planning Commission/Board of Commissioners sessions on

community vision in April and September 2007, six meetings in November 2008 in goals and policies, fourteen meetings in January, April and May 2009 on land use maps, six meetings in July 2009 on land use goals and policies, and finally eleven sessions in October 2009 and March 2010 on the overall County-wide Comprehensive Plan.

### ***Reconciling Conflict in the Planning Documents***

---

Community Plans for the various areas of the County serve as a more detailed plan for guiding the future form of development. In the event there is a conflict in the adopted Community Plan and the County-wide Component, the adopted Community Plan prevails.

### ***County-wide Component Organization***

---

This County-wide Component of the Comprehensive Master Plan is organized into twelve chapters. These chapters deal with a wide range of topics that influence or are influenced by growth and development in the County. Each chapter provides goals, policies, and implementation strategies pertaining to the topic area that is the subject of the chapter.

The Comprehensive Master Plan is organized around eight broad topics, which serve as a framework for the implementation of the community's vision and the guiding principles, goals, and policies contained in each chapter. In addition to this introductory chapter, the County-wide Component is comprised of the following:

- *Chapter 2: Vision and Guiding Principles* — contains a statement of the community's Vision for the future, along with an overview of the broad themes and guiding principles which serve as a framework for the rest of the Plan.
- *Chapter 3: Land Use, Economy and Growth* — contains goals and broad policy statements pertaining to the community's desire for a community core focused growth pattern, economic development, a definition of land use categories contained in the Plan, the Land Use Plan map, and detailed land use policies.
- *Chapter 4: Transportation* — contains goals and policy statements to reflect the broad objectives of the County related to the County's Transportation System, Roads, Public Transportation, Distribution Routes, Airports and their roles in the County's land use policy decisions.
- *Chapter 5: Community Character and Design* — contains goals and broad policy statements pertaining to Quality Design, Rural Character, Heritage, Agricultural Character, and the creation of a series of mixed-use activity centers to serve the community.
- *Chapter 6: Natural Resources and Environment* — contains goals and broad policy statements pertaining to Public Access, Wildlife, Clean Water, Clean Air, Renewable energy, Natural Hazards, Open Space, Views, and ways to guide both the preservation and development of the county's natural assets.
- *Chapter 7: Parks, Recreation and Open Space* — contains goals and broad policy statements regarding Recreation in Communities, Recreation in Rural Areas, Trails, and a Capital Improvement Plan for parks, recreation and open space needs.
- *Chapter 8: Public Facilities and Services* — contains goals and broad policy statements pertaining to the Provision of Services, Public Safety, Schools and Libraries.
- *Chapter 9: Regional Coordination* — contains goals and broad policy statements regarding Cooperation with Agencies, Tribes, Regional Water Districts and Special Districts.
- *Chapter 10: Communities and Planning* — contains goals and broad policy statements Supporting Diversity, Facilitating Cooperation, creating Community Plans and recognizing Advisory Councils, and guidance for the development of Community Plans.



# CHAPTER 1

## Plan Overview

ADOPTED – December 23, 2010

- *Chapter 11: Implementation* — contains a discussion of recommended priority actions to be taken to implement the Plan, as well as an Action Plan Matrix that summarizes policies and assigns the priority and timing of the actions so the appropriate resources may be allocated.
- *Glossary* — contains a list of acronyms and definitions of terms used in the Lyon County Comprehensive Master Plan.
- *Appendix A: Land Use Maps* — contains County-wide Land Use Maps.
- *Appendix B: Integrated Roadway Network Maps* — contains County-wide Integrated Roadway Network Maps.
- *Appendix C: Background and Context* — contains “snapshots” of relevant background data used to develop the Plan.