



## Introduction

The Lyon County Master Plan update is being prepared in a series of distinct tasks. The initial tasks are intended to identify and verify key issues and conditions that will form the foundation for the updated Plan. This document is intended to help citizens appreciate the diversity and complexity of issues and opportunities that will impact the future of the County and region. It will also help to focus the process on the relative key issues and opportunities for each of the major elements of the Master Plan update, as well as the physical, social, and economic consequences to consider.

The topics identified represent the planning team's initial observations based upon personal interviews and discussions with community resource persons, elected and appointed officials, and county staff. This list of issues will be used to expand the framework for the planning process and for the development of goals and policies to guide future growth and development in the County.

The issues listed below are grouped under the following categories: Land Use and Growth Management; Natural Resources and the Environment; Parks, Recreation, and Open Space; Public Facilities and Services; Transportation; Regional Coordination; Community Character and Design; and Community and Culture. Note that modifications to the County-wide issues and issues specific to each of the County's planning areas will be documented and factored into the planning process when an initial round of community open houses is conducted by County staff early in 2007. The key County-wide issues are summarized below.

## Land Use, Economy, and Growth Issues

### Land Use and Growth Management #1: Projected Rate of Growth

Historically, Lyon County's population has grown steadily, at an average rate of 3.5 percent annually between 1980 and 2000. However, the total population has increased very sharply to an estimated 54,031 persons in July 2006, from a population in 2000 of 34,893. This growth denotes a change of more than 54 percent, with an average annual increase of more than eight percent. The County is poised to continue to grow significantly over the coming decades, with a projected population of 68,000 by 2010 to nearly 90,000 in 2026. This will pose many challenges and opportunities for the County over the coming decades.

### Land Use and Growth Management #2: Distinct Differences in Different Areas of the County

Lyon County is large (2,016 square miles) and physically diverse, with rapidly urbanizing areas in the north and west, and ranch and farm lands in the south as well as in the central and northern areas. Each of the communities in the County, both incorporated and unincorporated, is distinctly different. The Comprehensive Master Plan process must recognize and address these differences if the Plan is to be reflective of the entire County.

### Land Use and Growth Management #3: Urban vs. Rural Development

The County contains a variety of types of development, ranging from urban in its "towns" to rural in its traditional ranching and agricultural areas (e.g., Smith Valley). The Plan will need to recognize these differences in terms of characteristics, impacts, and service requirements.



## **Land Use and Growth Management #4: Fiscal Implications of Growth**

With growth continuing to occur in the County as well as surrounding region, the County will be challenged to keep up with and pay for necessary improvements. Additional policy direction at the Master Plan level should be considered to support the community's ability to maintain and provide for desired levels of facilities and services for both existing and new residents. The County will need to expand its sales tax revenue to pay for necessary services.

## **Land Use and Growth Management #5: Land Use Mix and Balance**

Since much of the growth that has occurred in the County is residential, the planning process will place increasing emphasis on economic development opportunities in order to provide for a more balanced land use pattern and reduce commuter pressures on the road system. Economic development should include employment opportunities (jobs) as well as retail and services to meet local resident's needs.

## **Land Use and Growth Management #6: Agricultural Lands**

Agriculture is still an important part of the County's economy and landscape. However, it is changing due to local, regional, and national trends. The Plan will need to consider how changes in agriculture over time and development might affect overall County land use patterns, community character and agricultural characteristics.

## **Natural Resources and Environment**

### **Natural Resources Issue #1: Floodplain and Riparian Area Preservation**

Lyon County is fortunate to include two major rivers within its boundaries; the Carson River in the north, and Walker River in the south, as well as irrigation canals and ditches built to serve agricultural lands. Protection of these waterways and of the surrounding floodplain is a key issue for the County and its communities, in terms of protecting residents and property from flood hazards as well as retaining the valuable wildlife habitat and natural water filtration associated with riparian areas. Another key issue is the protection of irrigation ditches and canals so that they can continue to serve their important role in agricultural water supply.

### **Natural Resources Issue #2: Domestic Well Water Quantity and Quality**

Outside of municipal service areas that are served by central water systems (e.g., Mound House, Dayton, Stagecoach, Silver Springs and Yerington), most all areas of the County are served by individual wells. This raises concerns about the long-term viability of the County's water resources to meet resident's needs in a sustainable manner. It also raises the issue of how to mitigate the impact of septic systems on groundwater quality. The Plan will also need to coordinate with the Nevada Division of Water Resources and Nevada Department of Environmental Protection (NDEP).

### **Natural Resources Issue #3: Wildlife Habitat Protection**

Residents and visitors alike value the wildlife resources found throughout the county, whether simply for viewing and enjoyment or for hunting. An example of wildlife resources commonly valued by County residents are the wild horses. Recognizing that important wildlife resources and areas have not been identified, the Plan will need to address (a) how to identify important resources, (b) how growth might affect these resources in the County, and (c) whether and how they might be protected for the future.



## **Natural Resources Issue #4: Wildfire Interface**

Many areas of the County are adjacent to public lands, forest and range areas, and undeveloped lands that are subject to naturally occurring wildfire activity. The Plan will need to address how development occurring in these interface areas can be carefully planned to minimize risks from wildfires.

## **Natural Resources Issue #5: Air Quality**

Strong winds can pick up dust and wreak havoc on air quality due to land disturbance, playas, and development. In arid Lyon County, dust is becoming more of a problem. Along with the new growth of housing and commuters vehicle miles traveled has increased, contributing to potentially diminishing air quality. The plan should address air quality conditions including dust and vehicle emissions.

## **Natural Resources Issue #6: Federal Agency Oversight**

Federal agencies manage almost 70 percent of the land in Lyon County (including the Bureau of Land Management (B.L.M.), U.S. Forest Service (U.S.F.S), and Bureau of Reclamation). It will be important for the Plan to address coordination with these agencies, and with their plans and activities that affect Lyon County.

## **Natural Resources Issue #7: Sustainable Water Supply**

The County is seeing increased pressure on its water resources as development occurs, water values go up, water rights are lost, or their use is changed, and with continuing pressures on water around the west. What are long-term implications of removing water rights from the land? Does it affect the aquifer replenishment? How does it affect agricultural operations and domestic use? This plan should address the issues of water rights reductions, changes in use of water rights, and talking water out of the area.

## **Parks, Recreation and Open Space**

### **Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Issue #1: Protection and Provision of Recreation Amenities**

Lyon County contains a number of outdoor recreation amenities. These include, but are not limited to such areas as the Lahontan Reservoir, Fort Churchill State Historic Park, Dayton State Park, Carson and Walker Rivers, public lands and Wilson Canyon. Many of these are State Recreation Areas. Working with State, federal and other agencies to maintain these amenities and the access to them will be important for the Plan to address.

### **Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Issue #2: Ability to Meet Future Parks and Recreation Facility Needs**

As Lyon County continues to grow over the coming decades, maintaining the quality of life will require additional park facilities, both parks within neighborhoods and larger parks to serve community-wide needs (ball fields, passive parks, etc.). There is a sense in the County that rapidly-growing areas may already be underserved, leading to increased pressure on existing facilities and demand for new facilities in the future. The Plan needs to identify requirements and mechanisms for meeting both current and future recreation demands, and determine how the County will maintain existing facilities as well as meet the needs of the future.



## **Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Issue #3: Need for a County-Wide Trails System**

The County has some elements of a trails system in place primarily in Central Lyon County along the Carson River Corridor. However, it has no overall trails plan nor are mechanisms in place to complete a system. Also, a number of agencies play a role in the provision of trails, locally and regionally, but little coordination has occurred. The Master Plan is an appropriate vehicle to establish the basis for the County's trails efforts and to coordinate those efforts with other agencies, neighboring jurisdictions, and the public to develop a recreational trails system connecting communities and amenities within the County. The effort should consider the complete range of users, including hiking, mountain biking, equestrian use, as well as motorized off-road users.

## **Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Issue #4: Retention of Public Lands Access**

Many areas of the County are bordered by public lands that have been used historically by residents for recreation as well as resource extraction, and/or grazing. As development continues to occur, a number of issues will need to be addressed during the planning process, including appropriate uses on public lands, location of access roads and historic access points, and opportunities for expanded public use for recreation (both motorized and non-motorized). Impacts of grazing activities may also need to be considered.

## **Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Issue #5: Retention of Open Space, Viewscapes, Hillside and Foothills.**

Much of the developing areas of the County are bordered by open views of undeveloped lands, hillsides and foothills that have historically provided a sense of place and beauty for residents. As development continues to occur, the open vistas and lands, both within and adjacent to communities, will diminish. A number of issues will need to be addressed during the planning process, including appropriate amounts and locations of open space, appropriate uses and development controls on hillsides and foothills, and opportunities for retaining viewscapes.

## **Public Facilities/Services**

### **Public Facilities/Services Issue #1: Adequate Public Facilities – Timing and Financing**

One of the challenges facing the community is the ability to anticipate, plan for, and fund needed infrastructure and public facilities and services. The Master Plan will need to establish a policy direction for the County to ensure that its land use plan and capital facilities planning are aligned to meet the County's needs. This will also require coordination with municipalities and service districts that currently provide many of the services to county residents.

### **Public Facilities/Services Issue #2: Water Supply/Capacity**

Like all communities in Nevada, Lyon County will need to carefully consider its long-term commitments and needs to serve existing and future residents of the County with a reliable and quality water supply.

### **Public Facilities/Services Issue #3: Storm Water Drainage**

Lyon County recently updated its drainage guidelines (September 2006); however, overall the County lacks stormwater master plans and central drainage facilities.



## **Public Facilities/Services Issue #4: Adequate Sewage Disposal Facilities**

The Lyon County Wastewater Division provides sewer service to the Dayton Valley area, and the Willow creek GID area east of Yerington, via four separate treatment facilities. The Wastewater Division may provide sewer service to portions of Mound House in the future. The amount of new development projected in the County will require a coordinated approach to wastewater treatment, and clear policies on when central treatment facilities will be required. The planning process will also need to address State regulation of septic systems.

## **Transportation**

### **Transportation Issue #1: Reliance on Highway 50**

Lyon County has four communities along the US 50 Corridor: Moundhouse, Dayton Valley, Stagecoach, and Silver Springs. In addition, schools, a State prison, a county library, a hospital, an industrial park, and a county airport all have direct access to US 50. Currently, all interstate and intrastate traffic on US 50 must go through these four communities due the lack of another east/west roadway causing peak period congestion. Traffic can come to a standstill because of accidents, dust storms, or other natural disasters. NDOT has completed a Draft Final US 50 East Corridor Study which will be presented to the public. The County will need to develop a plan that defines potential future transportation alternatives along the corridor.

### **Transportation Issue #2: Roadway Congestion**

At present, virtually all local and regional travel within the County is dependent on Interstate 80 (through Fernley); Highway 50 (east/west from Carson City to Fallon and points east), Highway 95A (running north/south, through Yerington), and State Route 208 (east/west from Highway 395 to Highway 95A in Yerington). In the future, all of these roadways will be subject to increasing levels of congestion due to lack of alternative travel corridors and significant projected traffic volume increases. The Transportation Element of the Plan will need to address these concerns.

### **Transportation Issue #3: Potential for Long-Term Transit and Alternative Transportation Opportunities**

At the present time, fixed-route transit service is not available in the County. However, as population centers continue to develop in the Fernley and Dayton areas (with increasing numbers of workers commuting to Reno, Carson City and other areas), and as travel between communities within the County increases, opportunities for transit service and other alternative transportation measures may arise in the future. The Plan will need to acknowledge and address this likelihood, and consider how new development can be shaped to accommodate possible transit service in the near-term and longer-term future. Other measures, such as park n ride facilities, may be considered as well.

### **Transportation Issue #4: Development of Cohesive Circulation/Transportation System**

One of the key opportunities of this planning process is the ability to prepare, for the first time ever, a comprehensive transportation system plan for the County. This element should address county-wide needs for vehicle, rail, pedestrian, and bicycle travel. One important consideration will be identification of alternative routes connecting different parts of the County for emergency access, in case major corridors are cut-off due to flooding, dust storms, etc. Another consideration will be the timing and alignment of the USA Parkway connection between I-80 and Highways 95A and 50. Additionally, consideration of rail facilities, including their use, impact and affect on economic development and land use, should be incorporated.



## **Transportation Issue #5: Lyon County Airport Access**

There are five general aviation facilities in the County: Silver Springs Airport (county-owned), Yerington Municipal Airport, Dayton Airpark (private), Rosaschi Airpark (privately owned public facility), and Farias Wheel Airstrip (private). Other private airstrips for individual use are located on several parcels in the County. The role of these facilities, and compatibility of land uses, will need to be considered during the planning process.

## **Regional Coordination**

### **Regional Coordination Issue #1: Coordination and Cooperation with Regional Counties**

The County's planning area abuts six Nevada counties (Carson, Douglas, Churchill, Mineral, Washoe, and Storey) and the State of California to the southwest. Close coordination with all of these entities is necessary to ensure that the long-term goals of each can be incorporated into the overall needs of the community and region.

### **Regional Coordination Issue #2: Coordination with Incorporated Communities**

Two incorporated communities (Fernley and Yerington) are within the County's boundaries. Both communities recently updated their Master Plans—Fernley in 2005 and Yerington in 2006. The County will work with each community during the planning process to ensure that our efforts are coordinated.

### **Regional Coordination Issue #3: Coordination and Cooperation Regarding the Carson River**

The County is a participant in the Carson Water Subconservancy District a multi-county, bi-state agency dedicated to establishing a balance between the needs of the communities within the Carson River Watershed and the function of the river system. The County will need to consider the efforts of the District during the Plan update process, as well as ongoing regional issues.

### **Regional Coordination Issue #4: Coordination with Tribes**

There are more than 50,000 acres of tribal lands located within the boundaries of Lyon County, primarily northeast of Yerington. As a sovereign nation, the Paiute Tribe is responsible for their governance and land use decisions. However, it is appropriate for the County to coordinate with tribal leadership during the planning process.

## **Community Character and Design**

### **Community Character and Design Issue #1: Protecting Rural Character**

Many County residents, particularly those in the Smith and Mason Valley areas, care deeply about their agricultural/rural setting and visual beauty. The Plan will need to incorporate strategies that allow for planned growth and development while maintaining these desired attributes of the region.

### **Community Character and Design Issue #2: Preserving and Promoting Historic Character**

The County has a rich and colorful past, with a westward settlement and mining history dating to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. This is particularly evident in Old Dayton & Silver City. The Plan will need to address how to retain and enhance these aspects of the County's history.



## **Community Character and Design Issue #3: Improving Community Design and Development Quality**

As the County continues to grow, it is important to ensure that new development places increasing emphasis on improving the quality of the built environment with improved guidelines/standards, while recognizing the difference in character between urbanizing and rural areas. Some of the communities in the Central Lyon County are operating as “Bedroom Communities,” meaning that they do not necessarily have community centers or distinct economic engines of their own or public spaces.

## **Community and Culture**

### **Community and Culture Issue #1: Changing Demographics – Fewer Want to Farm**

Many younger generation people are opting to not continue farming and ranching. Many of the younger generation commute to work to Douglas and Washoe counties and to Carson City. This trend may contribute to potentially declining and changing agricultural lands in the county, and may eventually occur more in the Smith and Mason Valleys.