

# CITY OF EL RENO

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## ROUTE TO THE FUTURE



**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
FOR 2040**



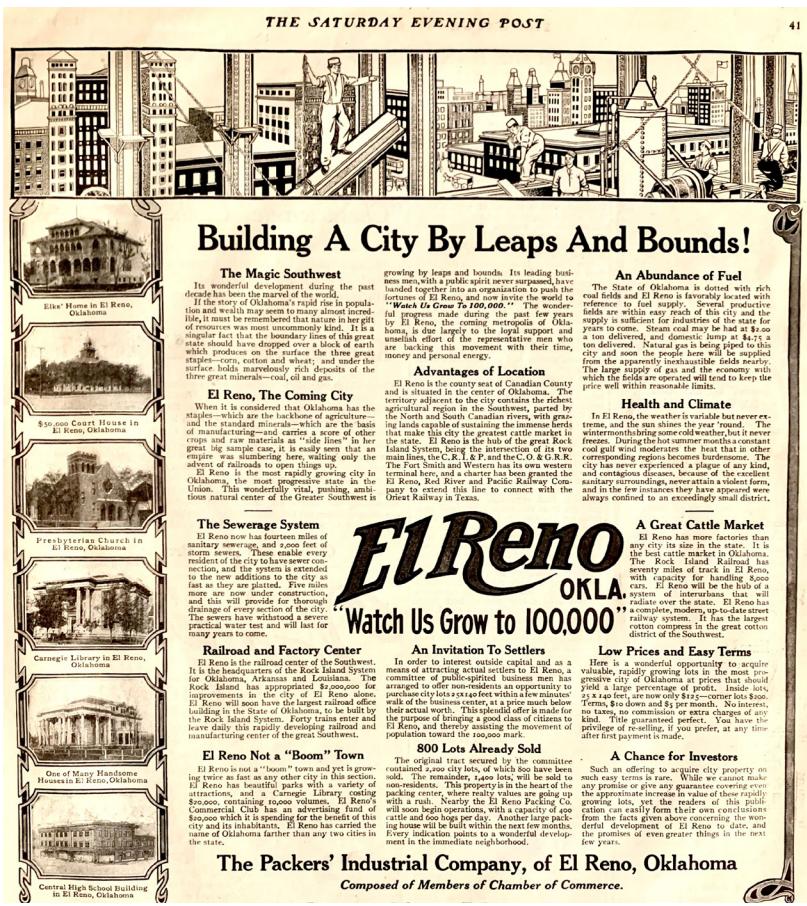
# Railroads and Crossroads

# How Transportation Shaped El Reno's History

El Reno grew quickly as a railroad town. The Rock Island Railroad ran north and south through El Reno, and the Interurban Railroad traveled eastbound to Oklahoma City. This made El Reno a crossroads, transporting people and goods throughout west-central Oklahoma.

Like in other crossroads communities, the traveling people and goods made up a large part of El Reno's livelihood. The original town of El Reno, near the station, filled with shopping, dining, and offices. Houses sprang up around downtown. A full page ad in the Saturday Evening Post on May 21, 1910 called the nationwide audience to "watch [El Reno] grow to 100,000." Over time, the influence of the train was replaced by a different mode of personal transportation.

As the Second World War came to a close, people across the country turned to cars in increasing



fashion. Railways gave way to roadways, and the most uniquely branded in our nation's history was Route 66. Route 66 made El Reno part of its journey east to west from Chicago to Los Angeles. Highway 81 bisected El Reno in the other direction. El Reno was again a crossroads. This spurred more housing growth in the late 1940s and through the 1950s.

Today, Route 66 continues to be a significant cultural and historical presence, both in El Reno and along its path. Millions of people from around the world explore the history of the Mother Road, visiting El Reno, Oklahoma when they do.

In the 1970s, Interstate 40 was built to the south of Route 66, and to the south of the developed community. A portion of Highway 66 became the business loop for El Reno. Three exits were constructed; at US Highway 81 about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile south of Highway 66; at the intersection with Highway 66 west of Fort Reno; and at Country Club Rd. The new interstate highway made trips between towns quicker and brought more long distance travelers through the area, spurring yet another development boom. The Country Club corridor became a hot spot for retail and fast food, and large subdivisions were developed near the highway.

Once an interstate is built, additional exits are hard to come by. Diligent efforts by El Reno leaders and private industry partners throughout the 2010s led to a fourth El Reno exit at Radio Rd. Since construction, the Radio Rd. interchange has enabled development of dozens of acres of industrial property, a new travel plaza, and supported new residential growth in two new large subdivisions across town. Radio Rd. now serves as an easier alternative to truck drivers to those industrial sites, and as access to the rapidly expanding Canadian Valley Technology Center and OKC West Stockyards.

Transportation has fueled our past, and driven us to El Reno's present. Now, this plan serves as the road map for El Reno's Route to the Future.

# Inside Route to the Future

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The four focus areas of the plan are highlighted with different colors for ease of navigation. The four focus areas are:

**Land Use and Zoning**

**Quality of Life**

**Infrastructure and Transportation**

**Environmental and Hazard Mitigation**

OPPOSITE PAGE: A Saturday Evening Post advertisement says "Watch Us Grow to 100,000" - May 21, 1910

# El Reno is Open For Business

## Foreword by Mayor Matthew White

Look any direction in El Reno and you will most likely see some sort of construction project going on.

New houses are being built. The former Webster school is now 19 completed houses, and Wessex continues to build. On the south side of the lake, the new Crimson Lake Estates subdivision is building the first batch of the 193 homes that subdivision will contain. In existing neighborhoods, lots that have set empty for a long time are being built on.

The population of El Reno has grown more in the last 5 years than the 25 before it. As people move to El Reno, new businesses are coming too.

We've seen major industrial growth, the building of the Radio Road corridor of businesses, and multiple hotels built. New restaurants have been built, and more announcements are expected soon.

The development of Crossroads Pointe on U.S. 81 between Historic Route 66 and I-40 will bring incredible changes to that part of El Reno. With the new SSM St. Anthony Healthplex as an anchor, the possibilities in that area are endless.

El Reno, as well as its neighbors, are moving in the right direction. We continue to find new heights that would have been difficult to envision. One of the most special things about El Reno is the way people work in a cooperative spirit. We can't wait to see what happens next.

**"There is plenty of room for growth."**

The Future Land Use Map showcases space for new homes, offices, retail, and industry.

There is plenty of room in El Reno's 86 square miles for growth, development, and ideas. Route to the Future is our city's vision for how that growth should play out.

*- Mayor Matt White is a fourth generation resident of El Reno, Oklahoma who is a tireless advocate for economic development in the community.*



# One Thing El Reno Needs Most

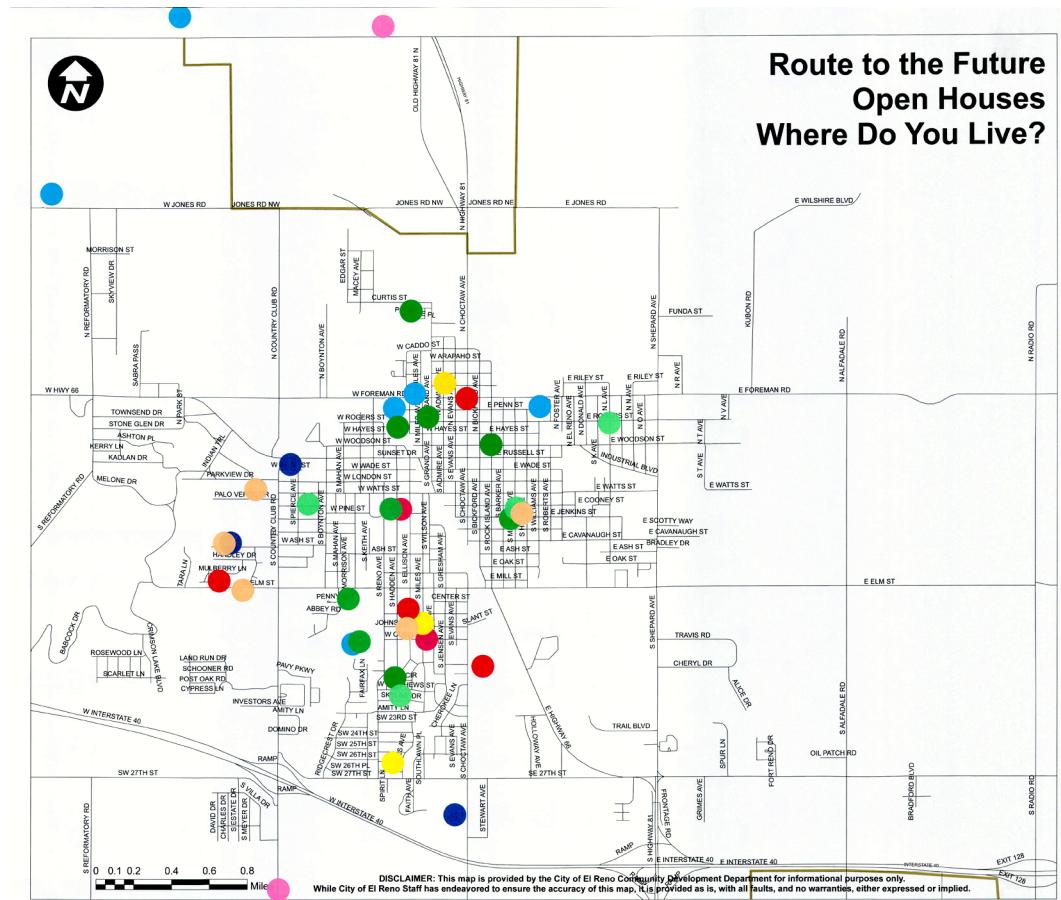
## Surveyed Priorities of El Reno Community Members

Over 400 people contributed to the creation of Route to the Future. Questions ranged from broad to specific, and over several areas of focus. One question was asked at every event. This question allowed people to state their priorities, no matter what else was asked. At each Route to the Future event, the last board or survey question asked "what is the one thing El Reno needs most?" The most common responses are below.

- Restaurants
- Code Enforcement
- Street Repairs
- Places for Kids and Teens
- Park Improvements
- Sidewalks
- Traffic Upgrades

- Retail
- Advertising and Tourism

Route to the Future attempts to set the stage for all of these things. Population growth will spur the development potential for restaurants, retail, and more things for people of all ages to do. Commercial character districts depict what those might look like, and a future Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) will help define how we can get there. CEDS documents are common in municipalities, and showcase the opportunities available to new or potential businesses in El Reno. Infrastructure upgrades for those traveling by car or on foot are discussed in this plan, as well as ways to ensure more places are connected.



RIGHT: A map shows where visitors to the Route to the Future Open Houses live. El Reno residents representing all parts of town were able to attend.

# Who is El Reno?

## Population and Workforce Trends Guiding Growth

El Reno is an independent but connected community; encompassing 86 square miles and surrounded by open space, but only 22 minutes by car from the center of Oklahoma City. Between 1970 and 2010, El Reno's population increased by 2,239. In the 2010s, the population increased by 3,175 – outpacing the previous four decades. Much of the 2010s growth occurred in the last five years. El Reno's historical population and future projections are shown below.

Earlier comprehensive plans forecasted growth for the community, tempering expectations with statements like the following:

The emergence or decline of job centers in El Reno and the western side of the Oklahoma City metropolitan area will have the greatest impact on the growth and development of El Reno. – Catch the Vision: The Plan for El Reno 2003-2013

Sustained residential growth leading up to and throughout the creation of Route to the Future enables staff to be more certain about El Reno's future

population growth projection. Since the start of the American Community Survey in 2009, the U.S. Census Bureau has been able to provide communities with detailed estimates of the population annually, rather than just at the decennial census. This allows population projections to be based on more recent data, and assessed more frequently. Staff should continue to maintain a watchful eye on population data from the American Community Survey and the Census, and make adjustments as necessary.

### *El Reno: Workforce Leader*

Over half of El Reno's workforce (55.6%) works within the El Reno community, rather than commuting elsewhere. Among other Oklahoma City area cities, only university communities Shawnee (68.3%) and Norman (56.5%) have a higher percentage. People who live and work in the same community also tend to spend their free time and money there as well. This generates a higher need for local shops and restaurants, and in turn, leads to higher sales tax collections to fund the recommendations of this plan.

### El Reno Historical Population

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2017*
El Reno Population <sup>^</sup>	11,015	14,510	15,486	15,414	16,212	16,749	18,378

<sup>^</sup>U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census Data

\*U.S. Census Bureau 2017 American Community Survey

### El Reno Population Projection

	2017*	2019	2020	2025	2030	2040
El Reno Population Projection <sup>~</sup>	18,378	19,203	19,924	22,968	25,105	28,024

<sup>~</sup>Projection based on U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2009-2018; Oklahoma Department of Commerce Population Forecast for Canadian County; El Reno Building Permit Data, 2003-2018

<sup>\*</sup>U.S. Census Bureau 2017 American Community Survey

**"The emergence or decline of job centers... will have the greatest impact on the growth and development of El Reno."**

**Catch the Vision: The Plan for El Reno 2003-2013**

Over 50% of survey responses strongly agreed that "quality jobs are important to El Reno's future," compared to about 7% who strongly disagreed. El Reno's comprehensive plan from 1980 discussed quality industries:

As immigration into any community is dependent primarily on the number of jobs available, the future population of El Reno will be most dependent upon the strength of the community's program of attracting manufacturing and the service industries. - An Update to the Comprehensive Plan for El Reno, June 1980

As the 1980 and 2003 plans referenced earlier, ensuring there are adequate jobs for current and future residents will be critical to maintaining the growth pattern El Reno is experiencing. Planned economic growth will be bolstered with a written Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). These strategy documents outline a community's economic potential, and how the community can work with businesses to meet mutual needs.

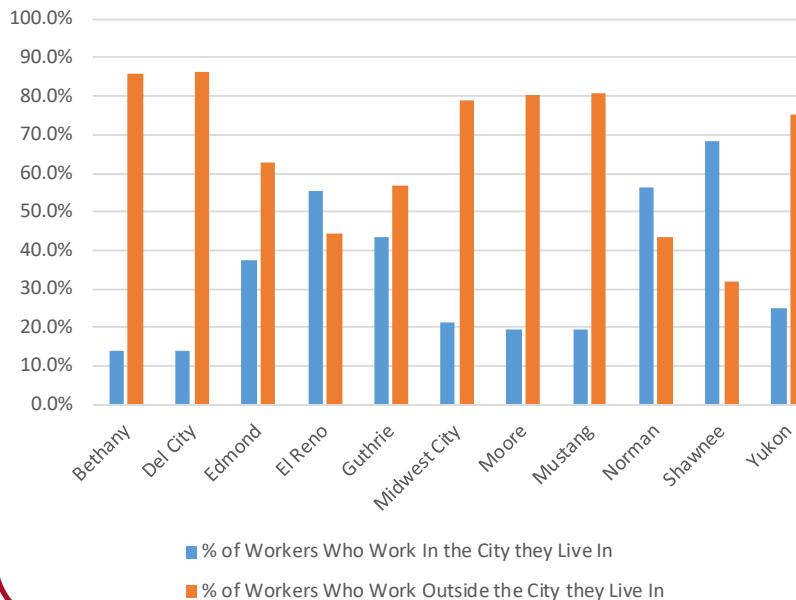
### **Recommendations:**

- Monitor the population closely, comparing El Reno projections with Census and American Community Survey data, and report the comparisons to the MPC annually.
- Draft and approve a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) to highlight El Reno's economic position, define opportunities for growth, and showcase the ways El Reno can work with businesses to develop and expand here.

*OPPOSITE PAGE: Two charts show El Reno's historical population and future population projections.*

*BELLOW: A graph displays the percentage of 11 Oklahoma City area communities' workforces which work in the city they live in.*

**Comparison - Do You Live in the Same City Where You Work?**



# What is Route to the Future?

## Creating this Comprehensive Plan

### *What is Route to the Future, and Why Does it Matter?*

Route to the Future is El Reno's comprehensive plan. A comprehensive plan aggregates the viewpoints, concerns, and ideas of the people of El Reno into a stated vision. Communities throughout the country use comprehensive planning to guide growth and development patterns, budget resources, and improve upon the things that make each place special.

The goal of Route to the Future is to envision the best El Reno in 2040, and to define the actions necessary to achieve that vision. Route to the Future will equip decision-makers, from city staff to elected officials, with the information they need to guide development through ordinances, capital improvement plans, and land use policies that encourage and create the future envisioned in the plan. Earlier comprehensive plans for El Reno were adopted in 1964, 1980, and 2003.

### *Getting Started*

El Reno's Municipal Planning Commission (MPC) discussed the need for a new comprehensive plan in spring and summer of 2018. A voluntary steering committee with members from across El Reno met for the first time in February 2019.

At the first meeting of the steering committee, the group was asked to define critical topics for the future of El Reno. These topics were refined to create four focus areas:

- Land Use and Zoning
- Quality of Life
- Infrastructure and Transportation
- Environmental and Hazard Mitigation

During the spring, the steering committee and staff prepared for the first round of community engagement. Population projections and employment data were generated to gauge the amount of potential growth over the 20-year plan timeline. Surveys, dot boards, a box city exercise, and other activities were created to determine the people of El Reno's needs, desires, and priorities.

Burger Day, A Small Town Weekend, and Smoke on the Water are special community events that draw people to El Reno from across the region. Boat racing, car burnouts, and eating the world's largest fried onion hamburger are the largest attractions. These summertime events presented the perfect opportunity to reach out to both El Reno residents and visitors. Steering committee members and city staff attended all three festivals to gather information about everything from recycling to restaurants.

### *Mapping the Direction*

Armed with the input of the community, the steering committee developed land use maps for future residential, commercial, and industrial development. Staff and the steering committee delved into walking, cycling, parks, and trails to connect the community to its parks, businesses, and housing.

Steering committee members discussed potential infrastructure needs with public works staff. Planning staff reached out to police, fire, engineering, and finance department representatives to gain insight on how these leaders saw the future unfolding. Elected officials were consulted about overarching themes within the plan, and provided input. Local real estate professionals were



## Goals: To Be the Best El Reno We Can Be

The overarching goal of Route to the Future is to define and state El Reno's vision for 2040. This vision statement provides the checklist for things to accomplish during budget and capital improvement processes, and ensures that decisions made by the City move in the direction which citizens want to go. Comprehensive planning allows us to:

- Have community feedback on our current development regulations, so staff, the MPC, and Council have direction in making regulation changes.
- Guide physical growth to locations where it best meets the needs of the community.
- Plan infrastructure growth, like new water wells or replacing sewer lines, so that projects can be done systematically.
- Guide funding to quality of life upgrades which will make the most difference for community members.

Our goals in building the Route to the Future were:

- Study population growth and economic trends to forecast our 2040 land use needs.
- Map future land use growth, ensuring there is enough space for those added people and businesses.
- Discuss with the relevant officials about the effects of population and economic growth on El Reno's water, sewer, street, traffic, public safety, parks, educational, and health systems, and what needs each would have with the projected increase in population and commerce.
- Engage with members of the community to talk about their desires, preferences, and priorities on each segment of the plan.
- Draft a visioning document to showcase the results of this study, and make recommendations for future policy and capital improvement decisions.
- Aggregate the recommendations into an action plan.

interviewed about their perspectives on the market, population growth, and future developments. El Reno Public Schools, Redlands Community College, and Canadian Valley Technology Center shared their visions, and how each system integrated into El Reno's future.

Two important areas were singled out by the steering committee as special planning areas. Historic Downtown El Reno and the Sunset Drive portion of Highway 66 are showcased in this plan with specific objectives to make the most of these important components of El Reno's story.

### Checking the Course

Route to the Future made its way back to the community in five Open House events in early 2020. Community members shared their answers to questions about the special planning areas, floodplain

management, parks, connectivity, and infrastructure growth. Two activities sparked conversation about neighborhood development and how the physical structure of a community effects commerce, accessibility, health, sense of place, and public safety. Finally, a story wall asked participants to say what makes El Reno special, define the single thing El Reno needs most, and help define El Reno's vision in a sentence. Overall, over 400 people participated in the creation of the Route to the Future.

The articles that comprise Route to the Future were placed in front of the steering committee in articles throughout winter and spring of 2020. After review and refining by the steering committee, the MPC and City Council were asked to evaluate and adopt the plan.

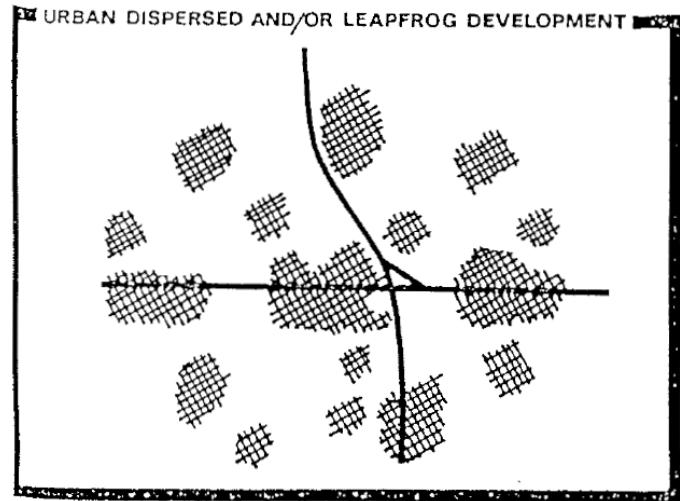
*OPPOSITE PAGE: Community members complete surveys on the trolley at Burger Day - May 4, 2019*

# Urban Service Area

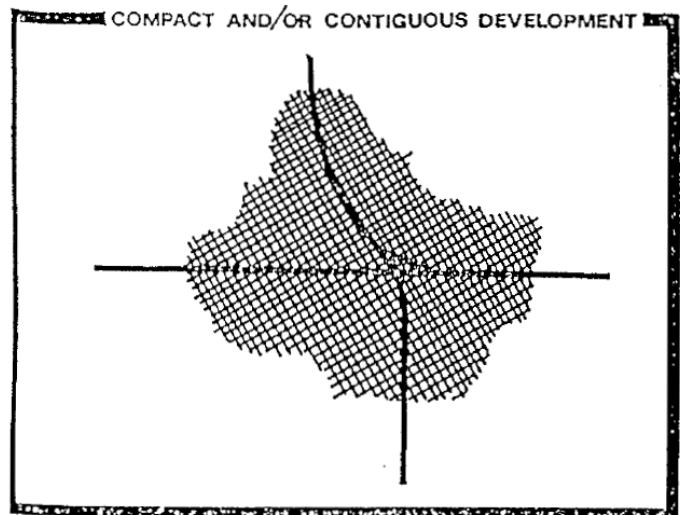
## Preserving Open Space with Contiguous Development

El Reno is a rural community at heart, and is surrounded on all sides by large swaths of farm land. Many communities over time have “built out,” exhausting their available land.

The 1980 Comprehensive Plan depicts the differences between scattered land use placements and compact development patterns. As shown below, land uses in scattered, or “leapfrog,” developments, regardless of intensity, are placed across the map in a piecemeal fashion. In a compact land use map, shown to the right, land uses that require infrastructure, like businesses and neighborhoods, are located closer together. Agricultural uses are maintained outside of the contiguous area of development.



The contiguous development model offers three distinct benefits. First, compact patterns minimize infrastructure placement and maintenance costs, because water and sewer lines would not need to be placed to connect scattered land uses. Scattered development patterns may increase the need for additional fire stations faster than the population suggests to maintain El Reno’s Insurance Service Office (ISO) ratings. Second, this model allows the preservation of agricultural land and the agricultural economy in El Reno. Finally, preserving open space in flood-prone areas and in a ring around the community can help minimize the flooding effects of storms.



### *Expanding Service Reach Responsibly*

While the steering committee and MPC created the Future Land Use Map, the contiguous development model helped to guide decisions. Locations with non-agricultural land uses shown on the Future Land Use Map are aggregated together to create El Reno’s 2040 Urban Service Area. El Reno’s 2040 Urban Service Area maps are shown on pages 12-15. Over the next two decades, this will allow El Reno to focus on placing infrastructure where the greatest needs will be. A Infrastructure Growth and Maintenance Plan should be developed to ensure these areas are where future service extends to. This also gives a reasonable expectation for the development potential of any certain property over the lifetime of this plan.

### *Recommendations:*

- Follow the Future Land Use Map when making decisions concerning a zoning classification change.
- Maintain agriculture or passive land uses in FEMA designated floodplain areas.
- Draft and implement an Infrastructure Growth and Maintenance Plan, which should expand water, sewer, street, and sidewalk upgrades to serve the 2040 Urban Service Area.
- Prohibit growth outside the 2040 Urban Service Area which would require municipal water or sewer service.

# Future Infrastructure Needs

## Systemic Approaches to Avoid Infrastructure Emergencies

### Water

El Reno's water plant increased to its current capacity in 2001. Over the last several years, equipment upgrades have improved efficiency and simplified use of the system. Most of the city's homes and businesses are served by the water tower on Elm St. near the lake. The City must increase capacity to the water treatment plant and drill additional wells to serve a nearly 50% increase in population, according to engineering and public works officials. Major upgrades to the water plant to increase true capacity will require an additional water tower and a water line to serve the new tower. El Reno could also choose to rely more heavily on our connection with Oklahoma City water.

### Sewer

On rain event and high use days, El Reno's sewer system treats up to 1.89 million gallons of sewage per day. Our existing plant is rated to treat 2 million gallons per day. The plant was built with future expansion in mind, and can be expanded twice with existing resources to treat an additional 2 million gallons per day with each expansion. Adding over 9,000 people on the sewage treatment system will require the first of the two expansions.

El Reno can produce a gray water supply from treated sewage. Currently, this water is only available for oilfield uses. Research is ongoing to find out how to filter pharmaceutical remnants from the treated water supply. This is the only remaining contaminant preventing use as potable water.

### Streets and Traffic

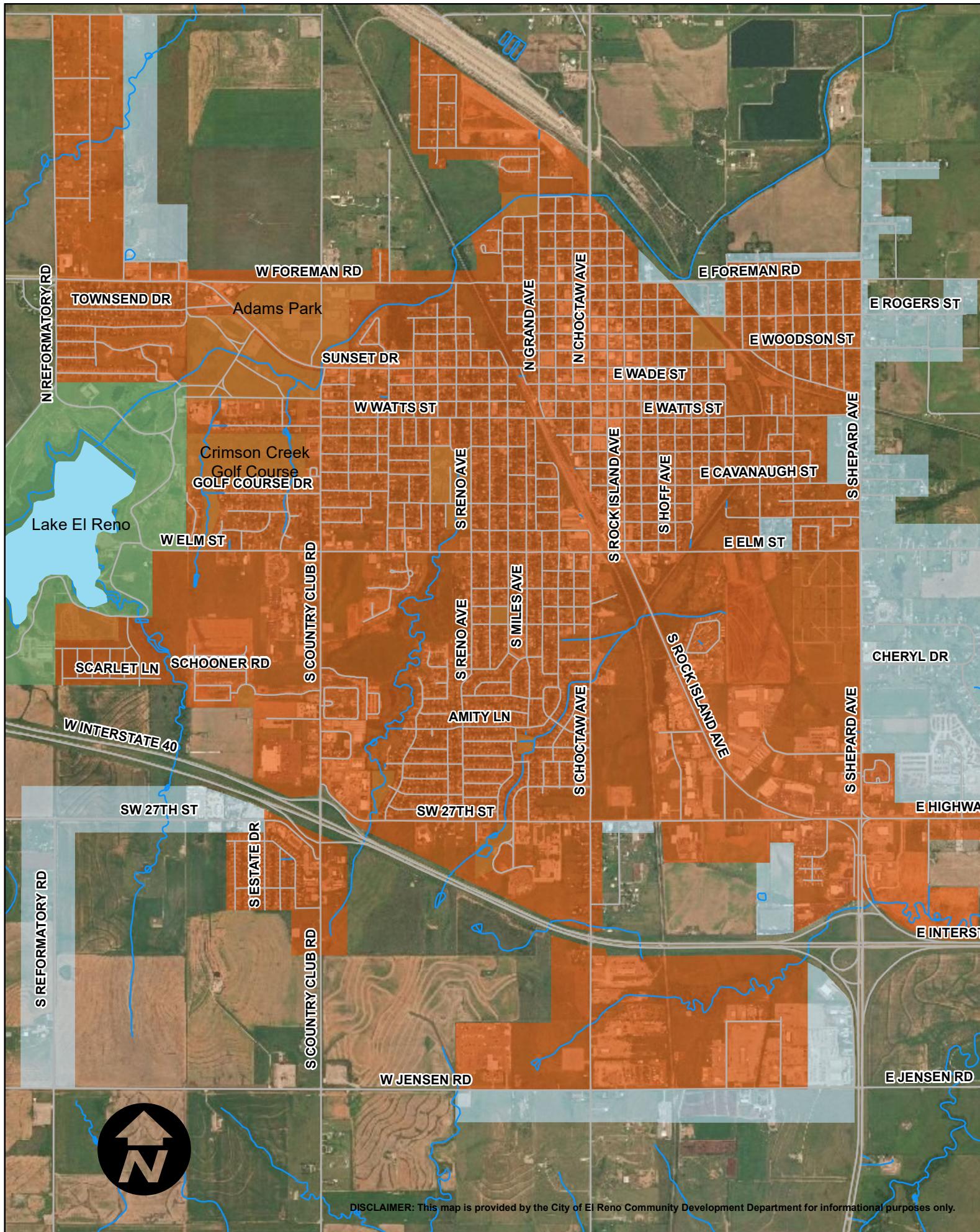
While the number of people who live in El Reno continues to rise, the daytime population is even higher. According to the El Reno Police Department, traffic counts on major streets indicate that during the work day, over 20,000 people are moving about inside the city limits. Vehicle counts are a driving force for economic development, but can also lead to higher risks of vehicle collisions on those streets.

The highest vehicular traffic in El Reno, besides the interstate, is on Country Club Rd., Sunset Dr. (OK 66), and Rock Island Ave. (US 81). Country Club is difficult to navigate because of the number of locations people can make turns. Public works and police representatives both discussed Country Club, with differing opinions on the best course of action. Physical barriers, signalization, and turn lanes should all be considered prior to expansion of the street. Sunset and Rock Island are both maintained by the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT). City staff should be diligent in working with ODOT to make sure that future upgrades work best for both the highway system and the El Reno community.

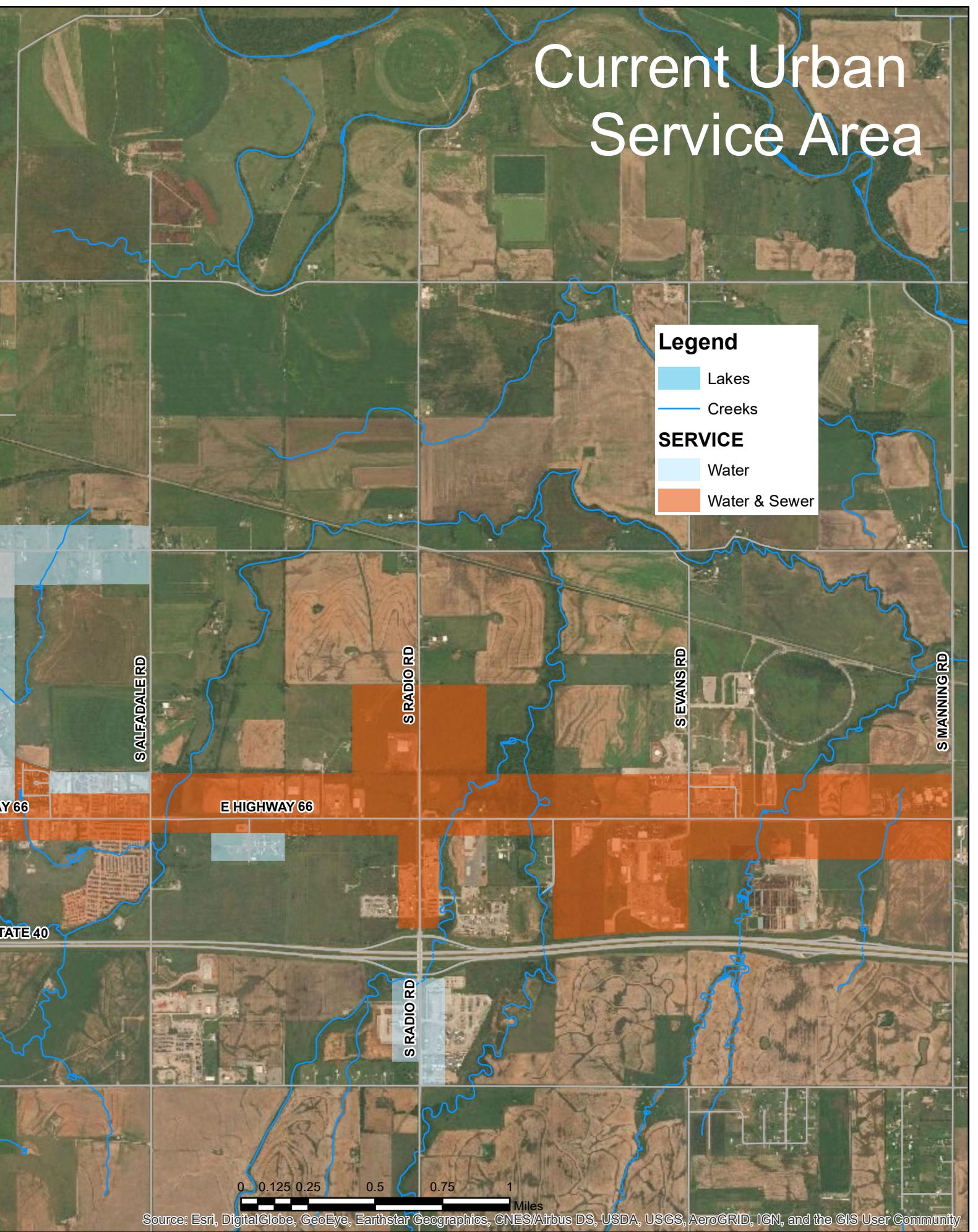
### Recommendations:

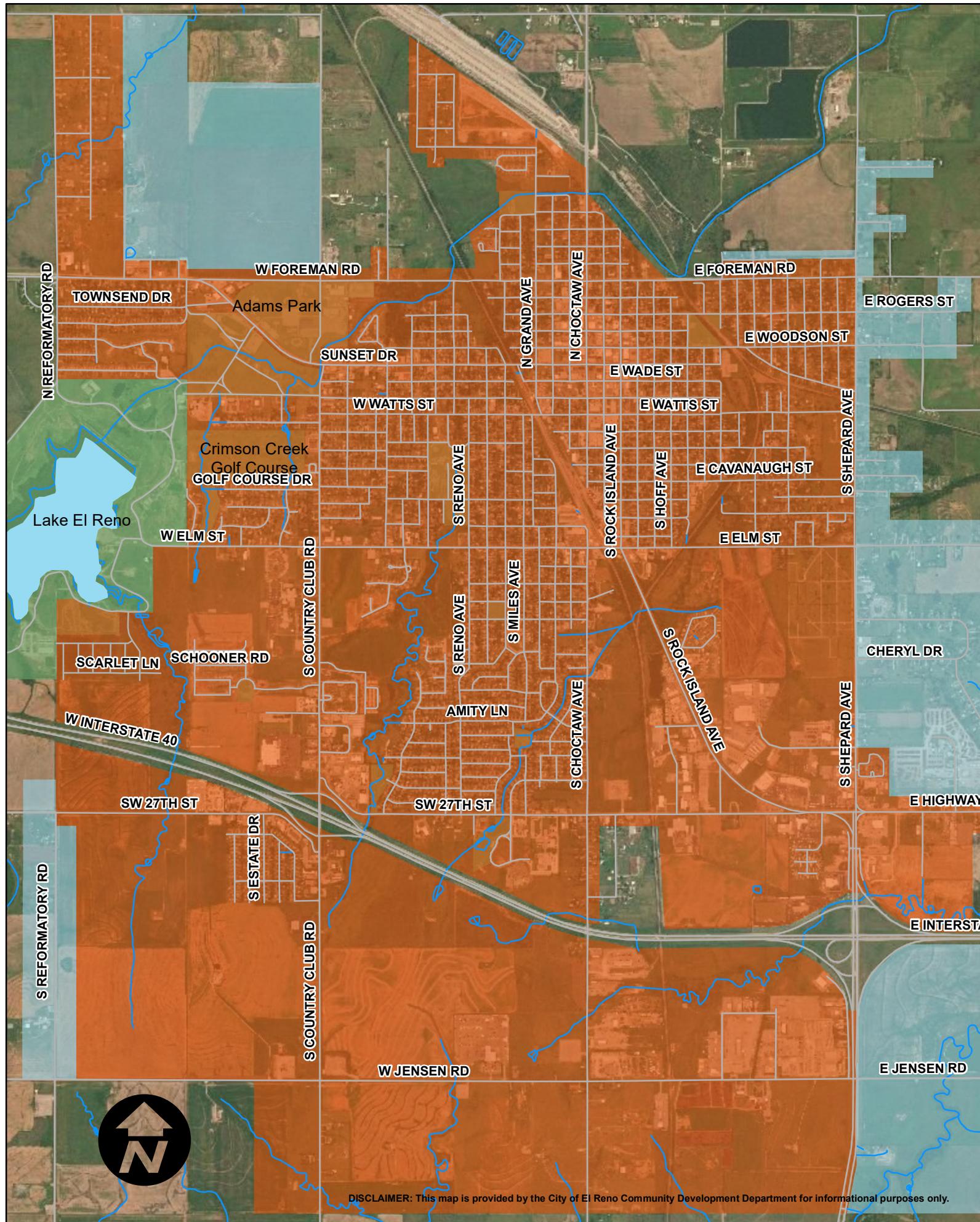
- Build a new water tower and the associated connections, to allow for water plant expansion.
- Expand water treatment plant and add water wells to serve additional population for 2040.
- Construct expansion of sewer plant for 2 million gallons of additional capacity.
- Continue research in wastewater treatment, evaluate alternatives for graywater use.
- Evaluate long term implications of Country Club expansion options prior to construction.
- Work closely with ODOT on future highway projects in El Reno.
- Highlight needed infrastructure projects for budgeting.

LEFT: Images demonstrating the differences between "Urban Dispersed and/or Leapfrog Development" and "Compact and/or Contiguous Development" - An Update to the Comprehensive Plan for El Reno, June 1980



# Current Urban Service Area





# Future Urban Service Area

## Legend

Lakes

Creeks

## Future Urban Service Area

### FUTURE SERVICE

Water

Water & Sewer

S ALFADALE RD

S RADIO RD

S EVANS RD

S MANNING RD

E HIGHWAY 66

766

STATE 40

0 0.125 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles

Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

# Streets and Connectivity

## The Impacts of How Streets are Placed

With the steering committee and at the Open House events, scaled models were utilized to demonstrate the impacts a community can feel from the configuration of area streets. Three types of development were featured: a traditional grid system, a serpentine neighborhood development, and a long, straight, wide road.

### Traditional Grid System

Traditional grid systems are the most valuable for non-motorized traffic, as there are many ways to get from one place to another. Connectivity between streets allows even spread of cars, pedestrians, and cycles across several blocks, rather than only along a primary street. This decreases congestion throughout the network, both on the primary street and at intersections with smaller neighborhood streets.

With short block lengths, vehicle traffic speeds are generally lower. At lower speeds, motorists are more likely to see stores as they pass by, which leads to increased local spending. Short blocks with adequately wide streets allow for emergency vehicles to travel efficiently, while keeping passenger vehicle speeds down. Grid systems improve commerce,

walkability, and quality of life, and should be encouraged when possible.

### Serpentine Neighborhood Streets

The serpentine development shown in each of the models was a long, winding street, with one connection to the rest of the community's street layout. A single connection point pulls all traffic to a single point. This can create unnecessary traffic, and public safety concerns. Should that single point be blocked for any reason, emergency personnel could not reach the subdivision, and residents are held on one side or the other of the blockage. This could be especially dangerous if an evacuation were necessary. In El Reno's current regulations, at least two access points are required. Increased numbers of access points improve connection to the community, and assist with emergency responses. A long street which meanders back to homes decreases walkability, because residents have to walk or bike further to reach their destinations.



*LEFT: Scale models were utilized at all four open house events and at a steering committee meeting to prompt discussions about street networks, and the impact of street design on how people interact with their surroundings. - Open House January 18, 2020. Photo Courtesy Shane Smith, El Reno Tribune*

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** A resurfacing project on Country Club Rd. - April 1, 2020



## Thoroughfares

Long, wide roads serve a single, simple purpose: to move as many vehicles as possible as quickly as possible. These are helpful in several instances. Interstate 40 moves tens of thousands of people through El Reno quickly and safely each day. Highway 66 and Highway 81 bring people into or away from town. These roads work best when the number of places where stopping or turning occurs is minimized.

In the heart of a community, the speeds and designs of larger roads create conflicts with the smaller downtown and neighborhood streets. Most of the focus points El Reno Police referenced concerning traffic safety were at the intersections of these highways and other arterial streets, or as the highways meandered through Historic Downtown El Reno. Where thoroughfares are placed in El Reno, targeted access points for turns, and distinct routes for non-motorized traffic will allow for the most effective use of these roads.

## Improving Connections

Increasing the number of connection points between places increases commerce and walkability, and decreases public safety response times. Connectivity index systems enacted in other communities develop minimum standards for the number of places a development connects within itself, and with the larger community street grid. Implementing a codified measuring system would allow El Reno's Municipal Planning Commission and City Council to ensure that new plats were held consistently to meeting connectivity needs.

Connected streets also require connections for those who walk. All new streets and street widening projects

should require ADA-accessible sidewalks, and should tie into the Sidewalks and Trails Master Plan.

## Recommendations:

- Adopt subdivision regulations which include a connectivity index, or other means to require developments connect to the rest of the community in multiple places, and within themselves.
- Evaluate access points, block lengths, and connectivity for all types of El Reno streets and roads, and for consistency with each character district, and amend existing regulations as necessary.
- Require subdivisions to connect to each other, whenever possible.
- Require sidewalk placement on new streets.
- Require sidewalk placement on expanded streets.

# Routes Without Cars

## Walking and Cycling Infrastructure

El Reno was built near a train station. Early residents generally used the train for out-of-town journeys, and walked in town to do their daily activities. Historic images show sidewalks or other paths constructed in the town's early days, sometimes even before paved streets. As a result, most of Historic Downtown El Reno is still relatively easy to walk.

As cars became a more common means of transportation, buildings became more spread out. With driving as an option, sidewalks were not often installed with new buildings. For decades, El Reno has grown, and only the driving infrastructure has grown with it. Today, we see worn down patches of grass from footpaths on busy streets, because the sidewalks are absent.

Since 2004, new houses and subdivisions have required sidewalks. In 2018, a new ordinance required sidewalk infrastructure for new commercial developments, and implemented a sidewalk master plan. Surveys distributed in June 2019 showed that 100% of respondents would support new sidewalk developments in El Reno. The steering committee evaluated the 2018 sidewalk master plan, and reviewed how other facilities could tie in to the proposed network. Cyclist-specific priorities, such as bike lanes, sharrows, and marked bike routes, should also be considered along priority thoroughfares.



### *Pedestrian Safety*

Improving pedestrian and cyclist safety is a three-phase process, according to the El Reno Police Department. It begins with education and reinforcement. Community involvement is a must, and reminding drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians of their unique responsibilities is vital. The second phase is the physical environment where people walk or cycle. This should include site-specific measures, like signage and street markings. Crosswalks, painted sharrows, bike signage, physical barriers, and flashing signage in their correct locations will increase awareness of others sharing the street. Finally, police presence is an important reminder to adhere to the rules of the road.

### *Schools and Pedestrian Safety*

Many El Reno Public School or Redlands Community College students walk to and from school on the busiest stretches of road in El Reno. Police and school representatives claimed that the areas near El Reno High School, Redlands Community College, and the El Reno Public School campus on SW 27th St. should all be focus points for pedestrian, cyclist, and motor vehicle safety. Each of these locations have high pedestrian counts, and a variety of vehicle and truck traffic, which make them critical locations for pedestrian safety.

### *Connecting to Parks and Trails*

Over three-quarters (75.7%) of residents surveyed stated that they would use trails if located nearby. One of the most effective ways to encourage use of trails is for them to be connected to places people already are, like their home or work.

The proposed Parks, Trails, and Sidewalks map on pages 20 and 21 includes priorities set by the steering committee and confirmed by the community, and will connect residents with schools, businesses, churches, parks, trails, and other parts of the community.

# Sidewalk Planning Priorities

The Parks, Trails, and Sidewalks map showcases all of El Reno's existing sidewalks, the future routes shown in the 2018 Master Sidewalk Plan, additional routes discussed by the steering committee and planning commission, and connection pieces between existing sidewalks to improve the network already on the ground. Locations for pedestrian and cyclist safety upgrades, such as crossing lights, flashing crosswalks, or other amenities, are also displayed.

El Reno should start with sidewalks on Country Club Rd. and Highway 81, according to 46.25% of residents at the Open House events. These two high traffic roads, and their connections via Elm St. and Sunset Dr., were listed as priority one by the steering committee. After these streets, sidewalk prioritization should be in this order, unless grant funding enables a specific project shown on the map more quickly:

- Country Club Rd., Elm St., Sunset Dr. (Highway 66) and Highway 81
- Reno Ave., Miles Ave., and other long-distance projects
- Accessibility upgrades in Historic Downtown El Reno
- Connect existing sidewalk segments to add connected areas
- Extend to sidewalk-served developments

Safety and intersection upgrades should be considered during all sidewalk projects, especially at the safety zones highlighted on the Parks, Trails, and Sidewalks map. These should be completed at the time of sidewalk construction or street upgrades in the area, unless grant funding makes them possible faster.

## Recommendations:

- Strengthen support for sidewalk development in the building code.
- Revisit and consider expanding the Sidewalk Prioritization District.
- Include sidewalk priority projects in upcoming Capital Improvements Projects.
- Utilize fee-in-lieu-of-sidewalk funding to start priority projects. • Work with businesses and schools to improve the sidewalk network.
- Develop a trail network including connections between neighborhoods and natural areas or parks, and a full Lake El Reno trail.
- Apply, where possible, for state and federal grant funding for sidewalks, school crossings, trails, downtown pedestrian improvements, and other active transportation infrastructure.
- Create a physical marker plan with El Reno Police, Public Works, and Public Schools to effectively establish and cycle routes with signs, pavement markings, and other physical markers as appropriate.



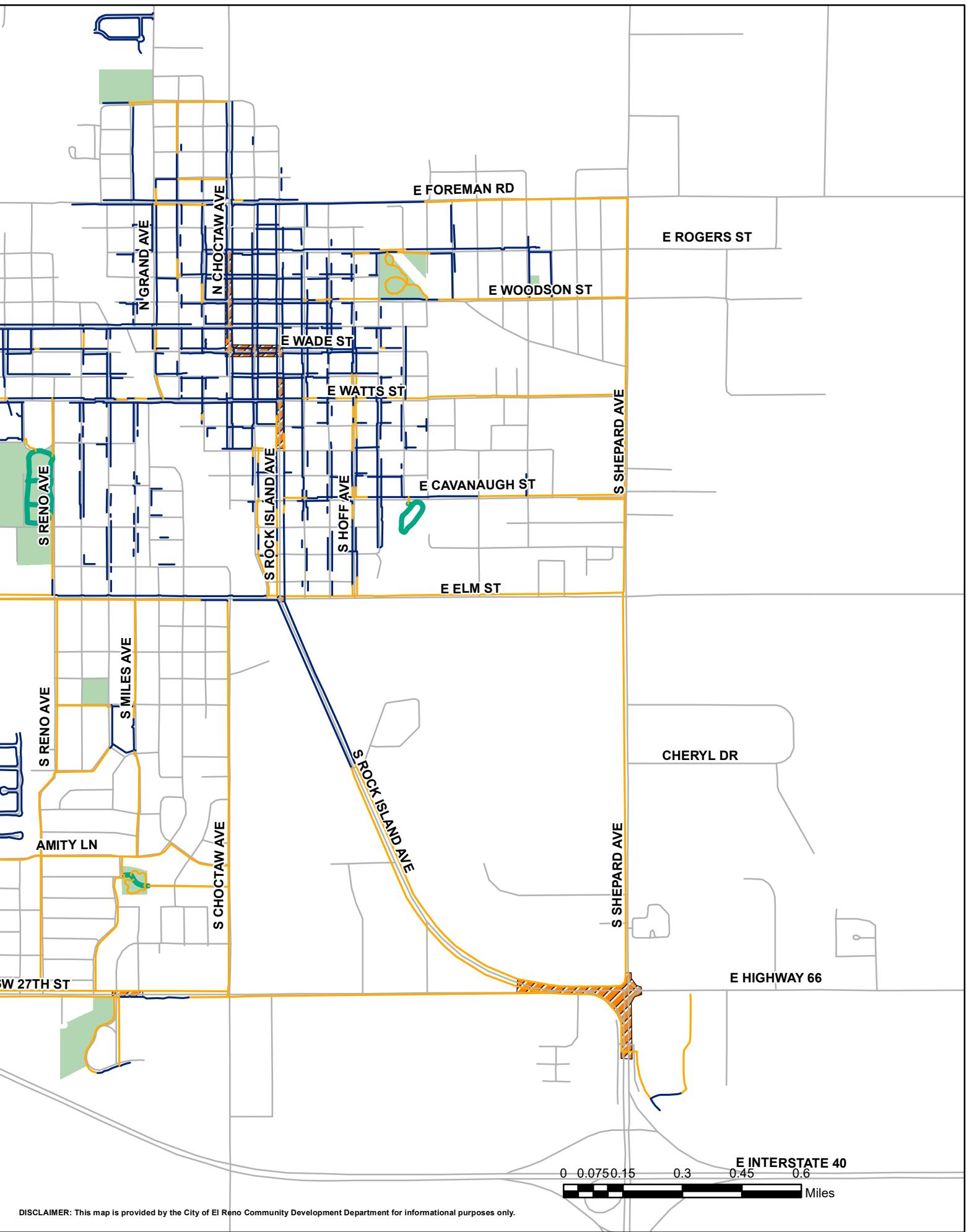
OPPOSITE PAGE: A sidewalk down one of the busiest streets in El Reno abruptly dead ends. - October 2019

LEFT, RIGHT: Sidewalks without ramps make it difficult for mobility challenged residents and visitors to move around the city. - March 2020



# Parks, Sidewalks, and Trails





# Parks and Trails

## Spaces Small and Large for El Reno to Play

Parks are one of the most critical facets in creating a community where people want to live, work, and play. Public spaces for people of all ages improve quality of life, lead to increased activity and public health, and are a popular attraction for people deciding where to live next.

El Reno's city parks and plazas offer a variety of amenities from walking trails to sports facilities, pavilions and playgrounds. Comments at the open house events stated that each park should have a unique amenity, to distinguish that neighborhood's park. Staff members talked about potential amenities, like an amphitheater at the lake, musical instruments at one park, more splashpads, and outdoor class spaces for teachers to bring classes. Picnic areas, additional dog parks, benches and tables for game playing, and outdoor exercise equipment were mentioned as ways to encourage people of all ages to visit the parks and spend time outside. "Parks are for kids, [and] a place for people to get outside and exercise," one staff member said.

### *Recreational Trails*

Recreational trails connect people with nature and the outdoors, improve public health, and can be a tourism driver for the community. Over the summer, 100% of respondents stated they would support sidewalk and trail projects. At the open houses, 72% stated that all parks should have a walking trail, and that the trails should be connected with one another.

Parks and recreation officials added that with the support shown throughout this process, that trails should be included on an upcoming bond issue. "We need to do as much grant writing as possible" for trails, one official said. "It's amazing how many people use trails." Completing a lighted trail around Lake El Reno, connecting that trail with Adams Park, and completing a trail in Gadberry Park were the first focus areas parks staff mentioned when asked about where El Reno should start with trail building.

Recreational trail projects, like a potential loop around the lake, can create other opportunities. Redlands Community College representatives spoke about the



potential for hosting cross country events at a lake trail, and being willing to participate in making the trail happen. Steering committee members discussed the possibilities of being a regional cyclist destination, and potentially hosting running events at the trail.

## Route 66 and Adams Park

Adams Park is located on Historic Route 66, within the Sunset special planning district. Parks and tourism staff agreed, they would "love to see a Route 66 theme" in the park. The park hosts A Small Town Weekend each June, an automotive themed festival that centers around the history and nostalgia of Route 66 and the cars which traveled it. The steering committee recommended a landmark feature along Route 66. Placing that at Adams Park would increase visitors to the park, generate photo opportunities, and give Adams park a unique amenity that adds to its appeal.

## Lake El Reno ATV Park

El Reno is home to a different type of trail as well, at the Lake El Reno ATV Park. Community members have supported the concept of improving the ATV park, and these improvements could achieve grant funding through the Recreational Trails Program. One parks official stated that there was the potential with that location to make changes to where loading and offloading occur, so that ATVs could be within the park for the entire time they are off of the trailer. There may be an opportunity to use a portion of the designated area as a mud bog for trucks as well. Attractions like the El Reno ATV park are not available in all communities, so this could become a regional destination and tourism draw.

## Meeting Future Park Needs

Nearly three-quarters (73.6%) of survey takers strongly agreed that "new neighborhoods should all have parks, sidewalks, and other amenities." The new Settler's Crossing development in western El Reno has a Home Owner Association (HOA)-maintained playground. Staff agreed that there should be parks in each neighborhood, but that developers should be able to choose whether to dedicate park space to the city for a new park, or to install HOA-maintained facilities.

**"The park has to be next to the houses."**

A young box city creator at the Burger Day event



RIGHT: Students from Sacred Heart Catholic School place parks, schools, and other places, in a box city exercise. - May 2019

OPPOSITE PAGE: Dozens of children, and their families, celebrate the ribbon cutting for new park equipment at Lake El Reno.

Parks, by the way they are designed, serve different purposes. Lake El Reno and Legion Park, for instance, are large destination parks with community wide features, such as the Lake El Reno RV Park, Crimson Creek Golf Course, and the swimming pool at Legion Park. Gadberry Park, Burton Park and Frank Knight Park are neighborhood parks, with facilities built to serve the areas nearest them. Rinehart park is designed as a passive park, with only benches and a walking trail. When asked whether El Reno should focus on neighborhood parks or destination parks, over 67% of open house respondents agreed that El Reno should balance between the two.

El Reno Parks and Recreation became a stand alone department during the drafting of Route to the Future. As a task designated to El Reno Public Works, work on parks was focused on making sure that the parks were maintained, and that new infrastructure was placed. Becoming a stand alone department "allows us to build a vision" for the future of El Reno's parks, according to one parks official. "It now has its own bucket," one staff member added.

El Reno has three citizen boards related to parks and recreation. The El Reno Recreational Authority, El Reno Parks and Recreation Board, and the El Reno Recreational Authority Advisory Board each have a different focus in how they work to make sure El Reno offers the best park system possible. All three boards should be involved in drafting a master plan for the future of El Reno's most visible quality of life infrastructure. A parks master plan would discuss our current parks and their amenities, and create an action plan to continue improving park facilities over time.

## Recommendations:

- Develop and implement a Parks and Recreation Master Plan, to establish priorities and timelines for providing additional amenities for all El Reno parks.
- Develop a full trail network including all parks, connections between parks, neighborhoods, and natural areas, and a lighted trail around Lake El Reno
- Pursue grant funding for recreational trails, equipment, and other park amenities.
- Work with Redlands Community College and other local partners, in grant seeking and project building.
- Connect recreational trails throughout El Reno via expansion of the sidewalk network.
- Plan and execute improvements to the Lake El Reno ATV Park.
- Pursue grant funding and local community matches for improvements to the Lake El Reno ATV Park.
- Connect Adams Park to the Sunset special planning district with Route 66 theming.
- Place a landmark Route 66 feature in Adams Park.
- Continue to expand offerings at both neighborhood parks and destination parks.
- Require new developments to either dedicate land to the City for park space, or to install HOA-maintained facilities.



# Residential Land Use Visioning

## Mapping for Growth and Maintaining Our Character

Home building patterns tell the history of a community. El Reno's first vibrant periods of growth are marked by the rings of homes surrounding downtown from the turn of the 20th century through the 1940s. Neighborhoods with hundreds of homes on the city's southwest side show the vitality of the 1970s. New housing developments will show the late 2010s and early 2020s as a time of rapid growth, and the launchpad into sustained building.

El Reno's population is projected to grow by over 9,000 people over the 20-year vision of this plan. Steering committee and municipal planning commission members visualized different ways that growth might happen, and then made decisions on how to best fit the future needs of the community. New neighborhood growth in El Reno can be segmented into three development types: large lot single family, small lot single family, and two-plus family. El Reno's Old Town Residential areas are primed for smaller infill growth projects over time.

### ***Small Lot Single Family***

Most residences in El Reno are single family homes on small lots. These neighborhoods require city utilities, streets connecting the neighborhood to El Reno's street network in at least two places, and adequate drainage detention. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of survey respondents strongly agreed that "new neighborhoods should have parks, sidewalks, and other amenities."



New large developments, and neighborhoods in strategic locations, should be required to have dedicated park space. Sidewalks which comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and connect to the community's sidewalk network are critical to El Reno's connectivity. A connectivity index should be implemented to ensure that neighborhoods have adequate connection points within themselves and to the remainder of the community.

**"There are not enough housing options in El Reno."**

Respondents agreed with this statement more than four times as often as they disagreed.

### ***Large Lot Single Family***

Large lots are defined in this plan as being an acre or larger in size. In the future land use mapping exercise, the need for large lot neighborhoods was discussed at length. With more than an acre per lot, these neighborhoods may be better served by community parks than neighborhood parks. Some of the benefits of connectivity may be diminished due to the size of the lots, so a smaller connectivity index may be appropriate. Homes should not utilize defined arterial streets as a primary frontage.

LEFT: Steering committee and MPC members map future residential growth. - April 2019

OPPOSITE PAGE: A community member and steering committee member talk about neighborhood parks at an Open House event. - January 21, 2020

# Future Residential Mapping Results

	El Reno Housing Stock 2017	MPC, Steering Committee Preferred Pattern	Future Land Use Map Growth Pattern
Large Lot Single Family	10.0%	18.8%	11.85%
Small Lot Single Family	77.2%	74.6%	78.5%
2+ Family	12.8%	6.6%	9.65%

## Two-Plus Family

For this future land use plan, all new developments that are not single family detached homes are considered “two-plus family.” In addition to duplexes and apartment buildings, two-plus family housing could include condominiums, row houses, townhomes, and retirement housing. These areas have the same service needs as the small lot single family areas, and park space is even more critical.

## Mapping for Growth

The steering committee and planning commission were asked what combination of the three housing types shown above would create the most desirable future growth pattern over the next 20 years. Then, in three groups, these volunteers were asked to map El Reno’s projected 9,000 person population growth using scaled foam pieces. The completed maps formed the basis for the Future Land Use Map. The preferences of the volunteers varied slightly from what they mapped. This variation, and El Reno’s housing stock as of 2017, are shown at the bottom of page 25. The Future Land Use Map projection will hold the 9,000 new people projected by 2040, and have room for some flexibility on locations.

## Old Town Residential

A large portion of El Reno’s existing housing does not match well with the three residential categories described in the future mapping exercise. El Reno’s first neighborhoods were platted with long, narrow lots on a tight grid system of streets. Many lots in town are 25’ wide and between 120’-150’ deep. Houses are often located on two or three lots, but some fit on a single lot. Some single lots have been left undeveloped due to zoning issues. Single family homes are the primary land use. However, a large number of duplexes and accessory dwelling units (garage apartments, lofts, and guest houses) are sprinkled throughout the Old Town Residential area.

Neighborhoods in these areas generally feel more compact. Spacing houses on 50’ wide lots, existing mature trees, the presence of neighborhood parks, and straight blocks make spread out structures feel out of character. Especially within the combined residential (R-2) zoned areas, building on vacant small lots should be encouraged, as long as buildings meet minimum setbacks. Accessory dwelling units should be re-addressed in the building code for clarity and effectiveness in creating residences for El Reno.

Throughout the planning process, the community discussed infill and downtown residential development. Over 70 percent of survey respondents said that El Reno should encourage residential

*ABOVE: The future residential mapping chart shows El Reno’s current housing stock, and results from the steering committee and MPC’s map placement.*

*RIGHT: A previously vacant lot being redeveloped in central El Reno. - March 2020*





growth in or near downtown. This will require renovation of existing buildings and construction on undeveloped lots. Dwelling units should be included as uses allowed by right in the Central Business District to encourage that downtown residential development.

## **"All existing lots should be developable, regardless of size."**

Respondents agreed with this statement more than three times as often as they disagreed.

### ***Recommendations:***

- Approve MPC applications consistent with the future land use map and the Recommendations for Zoning Requests chart on page 29.
- Review residential zoning district regulations to ensure that each zoning district allows and encourages development practices in this section, and amend the zoning districts accordingly.
- Encourage infill development within existing neighborhoods in and near downtown by allowing homes to be built on existing platted lots which meet minimum setback requirements.

- Require new residential developments to include dedicated city park space or HOA-maintained park space.
- Establish a connectivity index to improve circulation within and between neighborhoods, and improve public safety response times.
- Expand infrastructure capability to meet the needs of the projected population.
- Amend and clarify language about accessory dwelling units in the zoning code.
- Amend regulations concerning mobile, manufactured, and modular housing, to align each with the appropriate districts, design requirements, and aesthetic requirements.
- Allow dwellings within the Central Business District by right, rather than requiring a Conditional Use Permit.

*ABOVE: Steering committee and MPC members map future residential growth. - April 2019*

# Commercial Land Use Visioning

## Shaping the Built Environment to Improve Quality of Life

A vital economy is critical to a community's ability to live, work, eat, and play in the same space. As El Reno grows, we will need more places to do these things.

El Reno currently has six commercial zoning districts and 275 unique land uses in the permitted uses section of the commercial zoning regulations. Many of these uses are no longer common, and some land uses are not appropriately described.

The Route to the Future Steering Committee created four commercial character districts, and created a vision for each. Appropriate land uses for each district were discussed. The districts do

not overlap perfectly with zoning districts, but should springboard future development regulation discussions.

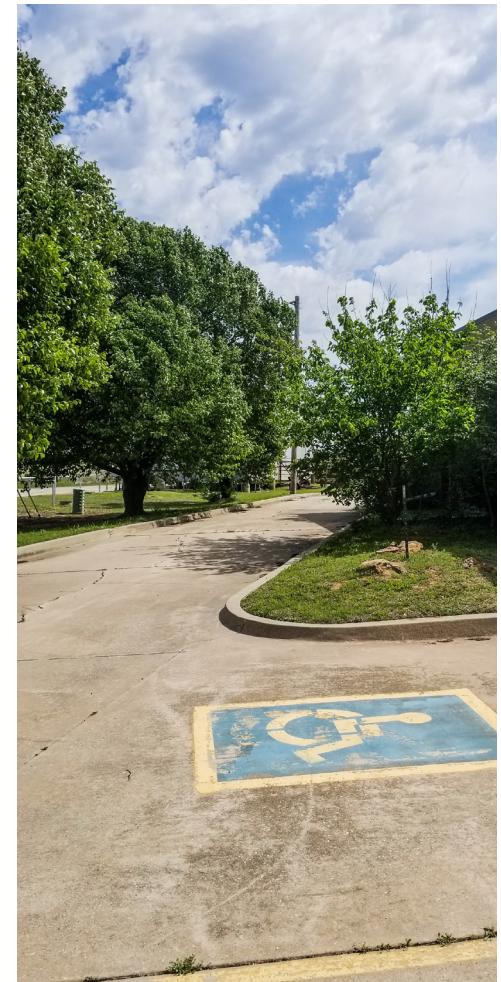
### *Neighborhood Commercial*

Neighborhood Commercial character districts feature small buildings on small lots. As the name suggests, these areas are near neighborhoods and produce little disturbance to the residences nearby. These are places where offices can be found, and nearby residents can take care of daily needs. Because local traffic should be the focus in these areas, neighborhood commercial areas should be walkable with small parking lots, and will not need to be near high traffic roads.

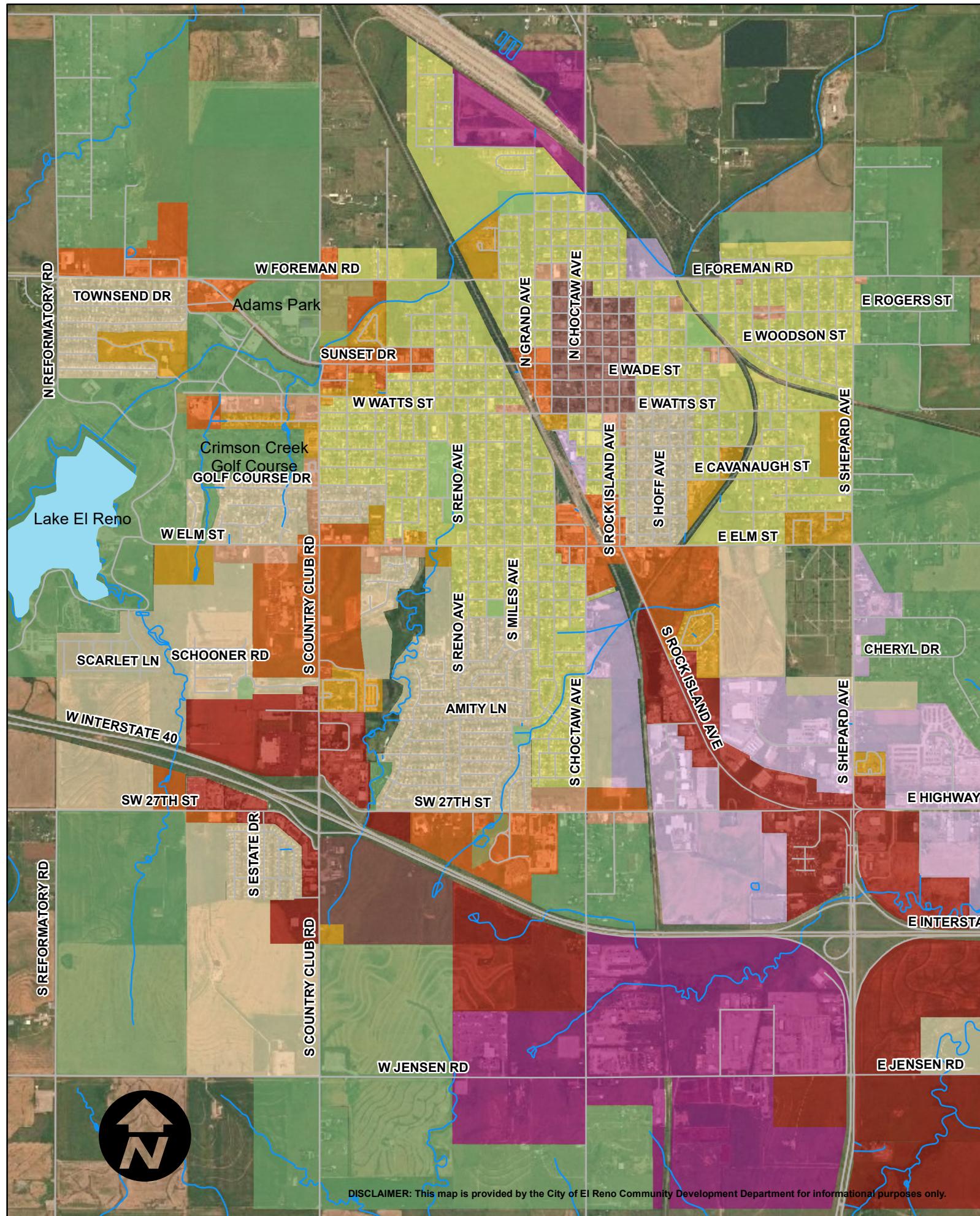
The zoning districts which best align with the Neighborhood Commercial character districts are Commercial Office (CO) and Convenience Commercial (CC). In areas where Neighborhood Commercial is shown on the future land use map, these districts should be considered the highest and best use. The regulations for the Commercial Office (CO) and Convenience Commercial (CC) districts should be evaluated to determine whether they allow and encourage the development of small shops and offices on small, walkable lots.



*SURROUNDING AND  
OPPOSITE PAGE: Images  
selected by the Steering Committee  
to describe the Neighborhood  
Commercial character district.  
These images show landscaping,  
sidewalks, small parking lots and  
occasionally on-street parking,  
brick or stone veneer, and buildings  
generally close to the right of way.*



		Proposed Zoning Classification									
		A-1	R-E	R-1	R-2	R-3	CO, CC	CR	CAR, CSC	CBD, MUB	I-1
Future Land Use Map Designation	Open / Agricultural	Go	Slow	STOP							
	Acre Lot Residential	Slow	Go	Slow	Slow	STOP					
	Single Family Residential	STOP	Slow	Go	Slow	STOP	Slow	STOP			
	Multi-Family Residential	STOP			Slow	Go	Go	Slow	STOP		
	Neighborhood Commercial	STOP				Slow	Go	Slow	STOP		
	Traditional Commercial Intersect	STOP					Go	Go	Slow	STOP	
	Downtown / Mixed Use	STOP			Slow	Go	STOP			Go	STOP
	Highway Commercial	STOP					Go	Go	Go	STOP	
	Light Industrial	STOP				Slow	STOP		Slow	STOP	Go
	Industrial	STOP				Slow	STOP		Slow	STOP	Go



# 2040 Future Land Use Map

## Legend

Lakes

Creeks

## Expanded Land Uses - FLUM

### Land Use Classification

OPEN

Acre Lot Residential

Single-Family

Old Town Residential

Multi-Family

Neighborhood Commercial

Traditional Commercial Intersect

Downtown-Mixed Use

Highway Commercial

Light Industrial

Industrial

SALFADALE RD

S RADIO RD

S EVANS RD

S MANNING RD

66

E HIGHWAY 66

STATE 40

S RADIO RD

0 0.125 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles

Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community



## Traditional Commercial Intersect

Traditional Commercial Intersect character districts feature small to medium sized lots, focused near intersections. Service industries are common in this area, including fast food or gas stations. Businesses in this area create and require more traffic than Neighborhood Commercial areas, but do not require highway traffic access. Development in this area does not have outdoor storage, and signage and displays should cater to slower-moving local traffic.



Restricted Commercial (CR) is the best zoning district match with the Traditional Commercial Intersect character district, and should be considered the highest and best use in locations where Traditional Commercial Intersect is shown on the future land use map. The regulations for the Restricted Commercial (CR) zoning district should be evaluated to determine whether the regulations allow and encourage the development of local scale eating and shopping with the land uses shown in this plan.

## Downtown / Mixed Use

Shops, restaurants, offices, and other businesses are built near or all the way up to the lot line in downtown and mixed use districts. This often leaves just enough space in front for a sidewalk, landscaping, and on-street parking. Storefronts are geared toward walk-up traffic. Buildings here are closer to one another than they may be in other districts, and may even be attached. Ease of walking through and within



*LEFT: Images selected by the Steering Committee to describe the Traditional Commercial Intersect character district. These images show larger buildings, small strip centers, landscaping, and slightly larger parking lots.*



downtown and mixed use areas is crucial. These areas may include non-commercial uses, such as apartments, condominiums, or pocket parks and plazas. Parking lots are not defining features of this district; they are generally either tucked away or absent. Mixed use developments away from downtown may have parking requirements, but not to detract from the building concept.

The Central Business District (CBD) is El Reno's downtown development district. The Mixed Use Business (MUB) zoning district is the best zoning district match in other areas. These two zoning districts should be considered the highest and best use in locations where Downtown/Mixed Use is shown on the future land use map. The regulations for the Central Business District (CBD) and Mixed Use Business (MUB) district should be evaluated to determine whether the type of development shown in this plan is allowed and encouraged.

*LEFT: Images selected by the Steering Committee to describe the Downtown / Mixed Use Commercial character district. These images show on-street parking, buildings up to the property line, sidewalk patios, multiple stories, and a variety of land uses.*

## Highway Commercial

Development in highway commercial areas is typically driven by high amounts of car traffic. Locations near highways and major intersections best suit the needs of these types of businesses. In this district, multiple establishments may share a large parking lot and driveways, to mitigate traffic impacts on nearby streets. This area is also where the tallest buildings and signs are generally located. Because these land uses are large, they require substantial landscaping and runoff mitigation to offset the expanse of disturbed land.

The Automotive and Commercial Recreation (CAR) and Planned Shopping Center (CSC) zoning districts are the best matches for the Highway Commercial character district, and should be considered the highest and best use in locations where Highway Commercial is mapped. The regulations for the Automotive and Recreational Commercial (CAR) zoning district should be evaluated to determine whether highway commercial uses are allowed and encouraged. The Planned Shopping Center (CSC) district should be evaluated for its usefulness as a zoning district.

### Permitted Uses

Each commercial land use category is intentional in how it looks and feels. A major component to delivering that vision is determining which businesses are best suited for each land use district. The steering committee's recommendations for all four commercial character districts are shown on page 35.

### Recommendations:

- Review and amend commercial development regulations and permitted use table to ensure they encourage envisioned character districts.

- Determine the effectiveness of the CSC zoning district as a stand-alone zoning district, and amend as necessary.
- Tie in new and existing commercial developments to the sidewalk and trail network.
- Review driveway and parking requirements for consistency with character districts, and amend accordingly.
- Use Recommendations for Zoning Requests chart on page 29 and Future Land Use Map as a basis for reviewing applications.



*RIGHT: Images selected by the Steering Committee to describe the Highway Commercial character district. These images show complexes of buildings, substantial landscaping requirements, large parking lots, and tall signage at highway access points.*

Recommended Commercial Permitted Use Table	Neighborhood Commercial	Traditional Commercial Intersect	Highway Oriented Commercial	Downtown / Mixed Use
Animal Hospital		X	X	
Art/Dance Studio	X	X		X
Auto Parts Store		X	X	
Auto Repair		X	X	
Bank	X	X		X
Bar		X		X
Bed & Breakfast	X			X
Big Box Store			X	
Candy Store	X	X	X	X
Car Dealer		X	X	
Car Wash		X	X	
Clothing Store	X	X	X	X
Concert Hall	X	X	X	X
Const. Trades			X	
Dwelling Unit				X
Fitness Center/Gym	X	X	X	X
Furniture Store	X	X	X	X
Gas Station	X	X	X	
General Retail	X	X	X	X
Hair	X	X	X	X
Hardware Store		X	X	
Healthcare	X	X	X	X
Heavy Distribution			X	
Hotel		X	X	X
Laundry	X	X	X	X
Light Fabrication			X	
Liquor/Beer/Wine	X	X	X	X
Lumberyard		X	X	
Marijuana Sales		X	X	X
Marijuana Grow			X	
Medical Office	X	X	X	X
Office	X	X		X
Oilfield Services			X	
Outdoor Entertainment		X	X	X
Pet Groomer	X	X		X
Pharmacy	X	X	X	X
Rest Home/Care Facility	X	X	X	X
Restaurant	X	X	X	X
Restaurant w/Drive Through		X	X	
Salvage Yard			X	
Security	X	X	X	X
Small and Specialty Distribution	X	X		X
Storage Facility		X	X	
Theatre	X	X	X	X
Trucking			X	
Tutoring	X	X		X
Wrecker			X	

# Historic Downtown El Reno

## Revitalizing the Community's Foundation

Historic Downtown El Reno is characterized by one, two, and three-story buildings built against one another with no space in between. Home to Heroes Plaza, Youngheim Plaza, and Petree Plaza, downtown hosts many opportunities to play. El Reno is famous for the fried onion hamburger, and each of the three original onion burger joints are in downtown. The annual Burger Day festival is held downtown each May.

El Reno's historic downtown hosts some of the most iconic structures in Canadian County. Many are restored, operational businesses, with functional upstairs offices or apartments. Others are in need of rejuvenation.

In the summer surveys, 70.4 percent of residents agreed with the statement "El Reno should encourage residential development in or near Historic Downtown." Bringing housing units into downtown buildings is not a simple task. Redevelopment of older structures – especially with both housing and business – often requires retrofitting, fire suppression systems, or innovative planning to make sure each portion of the building is safe to use.

### Downtown El Reno is "The Heart or Hub of Our Community"

70.4% stated "El Reno should encourage residential development in or near downtown."

The El Reno Fire Department is acutely aware of what it takes to redevelop downtown buildings. Historic structures have been addressed in the International Existing Building Code to provide some leeway. "At the same time, the number one priority is life safety. That is what the codes exist for," said one representative from the department.

Fire code requirements for a building, particularly an existing structure, can change dramatically on certain factors. Some of these factors are assembly ratings, use categories, and building size. City of El Reno staff should share code-related information, to help potential builders understand what potential risks and requirements are involved in several types of historic restoration projects.

One steering committee member stated that Historic Downtown El Reno is "the heart or hub of our community." The committee evaluated opportunities for this special planning district, and chose four that would potentially make the largest impact, while being responsible to the fiscal goals for El Reno's future. These are:

- Encourage renovation of historic structures
- Streetscaping and continuing with recent outdoor improvements
- Build an identification feature – something that says "this is Historic Downtown El Reno" in a unique and bold way
- Encourage residential development in and near downtown

At the Route to the Future Open Houses, participants were asked which two of these items they would like to see the most, and the renovation of historic structures (appearing on over 78% of responses) and streetscaping (appearing on over 69%) were the most common responses. When asked to build their own cities out of boxes, even told that they were "Anytown, USA," residents almost always started their community with a downtown core.

### "Downtown El Reno needs more things to do."

78.6% of survey responses strongly agreed with this statement.

As the original location of the city, much of the infrastructure is among the oldest in town. Sidewalk connectivity is crucial to and within downtown, because close-by destinations are the most walkable. Downtown's eclectic group of businesses and unique potential locations make it an important quality-of-life asset and economic opportunity.

### **Recommendations:**

- Work with state and local partners to attract downtown developers.
- Include Historic Downtown El Reno in the CEDS.
- Create an easy-to-understand development chart that outlines potential risks and requirements.
- Expand sidewalk renovations and crosswalk improvements to make all of Historic Downtown El Reno ADA-accessible.
- Continue to improve streetscaping and outdoor improvements, potentially including sidewalk cafes as a permitted use within the Central Business District.
- Allow dwelling units by right in the Central Business District to encourage the redevelopment of upper story residences.



*ABOVE: The Former Southern Manor Hotel is brought to new life as Intrada Apartments El Reno. - Top photo courtesy Canadian County Historical Museum.*

*BELOW: El Reno residents discuss Historic Downtown El Reno at an Open House at the Northwest Community Center. - January 21, 2020*



# The Sunset Strip

## America's Mother Road Fosters Tourism Economy

Driving west from historic downtown El Reno, the building pattern changes. Sunset Drive, El Reno's own piece of Route 66, contains sparkles of what the first wave of highway oriented commercial development looked like. Buildings with high and angled awnings, large non-rectangular signs, and wide driveways that morph into parking lots are sprinkled along Sunset Dr. between downtown and the El Reno Federal Correctional Institution.

**"Route 66 is an important part of El Reno's story."**

Over 88% of survey respondents strongly agreed with the sentence above.

makes tourism a potential economic driver for the community. Businesses which cater to customers and potential tourists will encourage travelers to spend more time and money in El Reno on their passage across America. As they did during the height of Route 66, signs in unique shapes and bright neon alerted people of places to stay, eat, and shop along their journey. Today, several Route 66 destinations have used signage as an attraction, and locations like Oklahoma City's Automobile Alley have used small grants and regulations to encourage signage that ties districts together.

Sunset Drive is also where many community members come to get goods and services. The Dollar General and the Lord's Harvest, as well as other area schools, businesses, and churches, make this one of the most walked areas in El Reno. Sidewalks are prevalent in the area, but many do not have ramps at block ends, and are therefore not accessible for wheelchair users. The committee evaluated opportunities for this special planning district, and chose four that would potentially make the largest impact, while being responsible to the fiscal goals for El Reno's future. These are:

Residents and visitors alike stated that Route 66 is an important part of El Reno's story. Travelers from across the world visit El Reno on Route 66, which





- Build a landmark feature at Adams Park that highlights the history of Route 66 and encourages passersby to stop and interact with the feature and the businesses on Route 66.
- Encourage renovation of historic structures
- Create a sign overlay district that would either encourage or require that new signage placed along the Route 66 corridor match the iconic character of old Route 66 signage.
- Improve Route 66 wayfinding with additional signage or small features.

At the Route to the Future Open Houses, participants were asked which two of these items they would like to see the most, and the most common responses were renovation of historic structures (shown on 82.1% of responses) and a landmark feature (61.6%).

Properties on either side of Sunset Drive are classified as Traditional Commercial Intersect, rather than Highway Commercial, on the Future Land Use Map. This means that the bulk, setback, and height requirements of the Automotive and Commercial Recreation (CAR) district may not be the best fit for this stretch of Route 66.

*ABOVE: Travelers on Route 66 stop at the "El Reno 66" sign at Choctaw and Wade to show off their classic vehicles.*

*OPPOSITE PAGE: A Route 66 Gas Station on Sunset Dr., which still stands today. - Photo courtesy of Vicki Proctor*

### ***Recommendations:***

- Work with state and local partners to attract developers to Sunset Drive.
- Include Sunset Drive in the El Reno CEDS.
- Improve sidewalk accessibility and continuity along Sunset Drive and adjoining neighborhoods.
- Facilitate Route 66 renovation projects by creating an easy-to-understand development chart that shows potential risks and requirements.
- Review zoning requirements of area parcels to ensure that the development allowed or encouraged by the zoning district is the correct development for the area.
- Implement a signage overlay to encourage or require new and existing businesses along Sunset Drive to use signage that highlights Route 66.
- Create a landmark or identifying feature at Adams Park, that distinguishes El Reno Route 66 from other locations on the mother road.
- Tie Adams Park to Route 66 with theming, make it a picture destination for travelers.
- Actively promote El Reno Route 66 Tourism, which will bring visitors, commerce, and revenue for the community.

# Industrial Land Use Visioning

## Growing El Reno's Workforce

Over half (55.6%) of El Reno's working population works in El Reno. El Reno is unique among our neighbors. Over 70 percent of Yukon and Mustang's workforces, according to 2017 American Community Survey data, commute to other cities for work.

People who work and work in El Reno are more likely to shop, eat, and play in the community as well. Several industrial businesses have called El Reno home for decades, and as our community grows, more job producers will be necessary.

Placing industrial businesses appropriately encourages businesses to enter the community, and jobs to follow suit. There are three industrial zoning districts in El Reno. Like the commercial character districts, each is designed to allow certain types of business which match better with their surroundings. Each district can be described by what you might see from the side of the adjacent roadway.

### ***Industrial Intensities***

Light industrial is the least intense industrial classification. Business is conducted indoors, and should not look much different than a commercial establishment. Light industrial does not include large lots for storage or truck parking. Moderate industrial allows outdoor storage and business, but still restricts land uses which produce significant noise and odor. Any outdoor activities in moderate or heavy industrial districts are to be hidden from the street by landscaping and sight-proof fencing. Nuisance producing industrial land uses are reserved for the heavy industrial zoning districts.

### ***Sensitive Border Standards***

In response to growth concerns in the early 2010s, El Reno instituted a series of sensitive border standards. These standards require a buffer between new industrially zoned businesses and existing homes. Within the buffer, detention ponds and office parking are allowed. Screening and a substantial amount of landscaping is required in the buffer area. Buildings, outdoor storage, and any nuisance producing work are prohibited in the buffer.

One neighbor of a new industrial complex told community development staff that the sensitive border standards are working. The berm and

landscaping requirements for the new building were "important features, and made it an attractive area," the community member said. "Where the center of town has historical beauty, and the west side of town has the parks and the lake, the east side entryway is important," and the sensitive border standards and Route 66 Overlay District address that entry.

**"Where the center of town has historical beauty... the east side entryway is important."**

**A neighbor of a new industrial building**

### ***East Side Entryway***

The Route 66 corridor on the west side of town was selected by the steering committee as a special planning district, due to its unique history and tourism opportunities. Route 66 hosts several existing and potential industrial sites. The Route 66 Overlay District was created to increase screening and landscaping requirements, with the goal of improving El Reno's eastern front gateway.

### ***Recommendations:***

- Approve MPC applications consistent with the future land use map, which allows for planned future industrial job growth for El Reno.
- Review each industrial zoning district's development regulations to determine whether they reflect the distinctions between the light, moderate, and heavy industrial classifications, and amend the zoning districts accordingly.
- Evaluate landscaping, screening, and special area plans, like the Sensitive Border Standards and the Route 66 Overlay, to find the best way to encourage business growth and improve the appearance of our community from the street.
- Review driveway requirements for industrial establishments to ensure that City standards encourage right-sizing driveway entrances.
- Include a variety of industrial operations in future economic development efforts.

# Safety & Disaster Response

## Preparing for Best Emergency Responses

El Reno's police and fire departments strive to be among the most pro-active in the area. "Unfortunately, we've had a lot of experience" with natural disaster response, one police official stated. With that experience, he added, comes good notification systems, and personnel who are prepared for many situations. When needed, El Reno's emergency managers can reach out for mutual aid from other area public safety departments for extra personnel, technology, or equipment. El Reno is also equipped to provide other departments with technical and emergency expertise.

Most natural disasters come with little warning, so proactive planning has to be general, equipping responders to react to the situation as it comes. Multiple access points for neighborhoods are crucial for responses and evacuations, so that even if one access point is blocked, emergency crews can get in and residents can get out.

### *Impacts of Growth*

El Reno currently has an Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating of 2 out of a possible 10. A lower number corresponds with lower fire risk and lower insurance premiums. The ISO rating is based on the number of fire stations, quantity and placement of hydrants, and a large number of other factors. An increase in the

number of households decreases the effective radii of El Reno's fire stations, according to fire department officials. "Depending on the geographical layout of growth, we may need additional facilities" to maintain the current ISO rating of 2, one fire department respondent stated. This is an additional reason to focus on contiguous growth patterns when building new neighborhoods.

### *Recommendations:*

- Monitor the components of the ISO rating, and be prepared for future infrastructure needs before they arise.
- Minimize development outside of the 2040 Future Urban Service Area, for increased effectiveness of public safety personnel and equipment, and minimized risk.
- Require multiple ways in and out of new developments as part of the connectivity index.
- Monitor space issues with downtown Police Department location, build a new station as necessary.



# El Reno Floods

## Designing to Lower Flood Risk

El Reno has a long history with flooding. Rain events in 1889 caused the entire original townsite of Reno City to move south to what is now Historic Downtown El Reno. Many of the largest and most expensive projects in El Reno's history were designed to lessen the impact of storms on residents and businesses. Lake El Reno was constructed to help mitigate flooding on the west side of town, and the downtown trolley was completed in conjunction with a downtown drainage project. Northeastern El Reno has large drainage ditches. A project to channel stormwater through the area west of downtown is currently being installed in phases.

Improving El Reno's flood resiliency requires two steps. First, flood-prone areas should be reserved for passive use. Second, new developments should have no increase in stormwater runoff.



### Minimizing Flood Risk

The City of El Reno joined the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) in 1984. Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) map out the most flood-prone locations in the community. The floodplain consists of places likely affected by a storm which has a 1 in 100 chance of occurring each year. Central Oklahoma had two of these events in the spring of 2015 alone.

Development within a floodplain is risky business. Structures in the floodplain must be built to withstand the 1% chance flooding event. This leads to increases in engineering and construction costs. Buildings in or near the floodplain also require flood insurance. The best use of areas within a floodplain are agriculture, parks, and passive open land uses.

### Over 98% Supported Joining the Community Rating System

The CRS rewards communities for going above and beyond to minimize flood risk.

The NFIP's Community Rating System is a voluntary program which rewards communities for going above and beyond to minimize flood risk. In exchange for community efforts to protect waterways, limit development in floodplain areas, and educate residents about flood risk; the Community Rating System offers premium discounts for flood insurance policy holders in the community. At Open House events, over 98% of community members supported joining the Community Rating System.

*LEFT: A drainage channel improvement project completed with federal funding west of downtown El Reno. - January 2020*

## What Happens With Rain Water?

Water naturally soaks into the ground over time. When buildings, parking lots, gravel yards, or other structures are built, the area they take up is no longer able to soak up water. This increases the amount of water that runs off the property and downhill when it rains. Commercial developments and residential plats are required to have an engineering study to show that the developers will slow this added runoff, to create no effects on neighboring properties. The most common way to mitigate runoff in El Reno is currently the creation of detention or retention ponds. Bioswales are strategically placed series of plants, which soak up water faster than a standard grass area in a rain event. This decreases the amount of water running from property to property, and eventually increases the amount of clean water charging the water table beneath. Bioswales have been shown to have a major effect on slowing runoff, and improving the quality of water entering the aquifers which we drink from.

In addition to private detention ponds, the city has constructed drainage channels over time. The city's engineering department reports there are locations where the city could excavate additional ponds and widen drainage channels in order to lessen the probability of storm damage. Storm sewer capabilities on collector streets are also an option. According to the City Engineer, amendments to our drainage ordinance could make El Reno less likely to flood when it rains.



## Recommendations:

- Apply to the FEMA regional office for membership in the Community Rating System.
- Review additional floodplain management activities which acquire credits in the Community Rating System for applicability in El Reno, and adopt as appropriate.
- Maintain agriculture or passive land uses in FEMA designated floodplain areas.
- Promote shared parking when possible, and decrease required impervious surfaces.
- Encourage natural drainage pattern options, such as detention ponds, preservation of open space, and bioswales.
- Amend the drainage ordinance to reflect engineering best practices.

**Stormwater and drainage are important issues:**

**80.15% Strongly Agree**

*LEFT: Detention ponds, like this one on E. Highway 66, help mitigate the effects of rain on nearby properties. - April 2020*

# Building for Resiliency

## Going Above Minimum Standards

Building codes provide a baseline of requirements to ensure a construction project withstands certain events, such as the weight of snow on a roof or the pressure of high-velocity straight line winds. Sometimes, small changes to a building can help mitigate negative events. Prior to the adoption of the 2015 International Residential Code (IRC), several communities added requirements for hurricane clips as a way to lessen the likelihood of losing the roof on a home during a tornado. In the 2015 IRC, those requirements were added as a baseline. El Reno's building inspectors have reviewed national best practices, and recommended these items to be added to code requirements as simple ways to build homes that protect from the elements.

### ***Sheathing - A Building's Inner Shell***

Contractors and engineers have started using alternatives to traditional sheathing materials plywood and oriented strand board (OSB). Some alternatives have the same makeup as a traditional OSB sheathing, but have a pre-installed air and water barrier. This creates the necessary barrier to dry in a home without requiring a house wrap system. Other alternatives have replaced the thickness and durability of a traditional sheathing material with an engineered foam board. Without a durable veneer on the outside of the sheathing, city inspectors are worried about the effectiveness of foam sheathing to withstand strong winds, hail, or puncture.

### ***Storm Shelters***

Central Oklahoma is tornado-prone. Storm shelters which have been tested for compliance by either the National Wind Institute Debris Impact Facility, Intertek, or UL have been proven to protect the people inside them during extreme weather events.

There are three predominant types of storm shelters available today: above-ground, underground freestanding, and underground garage shelters. Each of these shelter types has its own benefits. Above-ground shelters allow the highest level of accessibility for people with mobility impairments. Prefabricated freestanding underground shelters are the simplest to place, and can be done in a back yard. Garage shelters are prefabricated, and allow residents to stay

inside the home during the storm.

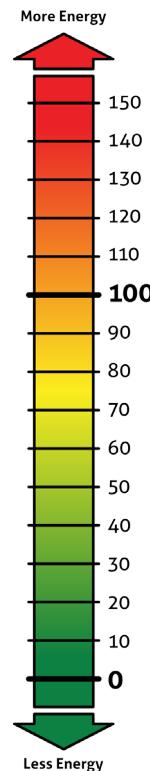
El Reno should continue to issue permits on, and require registration of, storm shelters in the community. Storm shelter registration allows public safety officials to know where to look in the aftermath of a disaster, improving response times and potentially saving lives.

### ***Energy Efficiency***

The Home Energy Rating System (HERS) index measures a home's overall energy performance. The nationally recognized system is often sought by builders to showcase the energy efficiency value of their buildings to purchasers, and to obtain efficiency rebates. Insulation systems in homes and businesses make heating and air conditioning more effective and energy-efficient.

Installation of generators and solar power systems with batteries allow structures to continue serving their purpose during disasters and power outages. Geothermal heating and cooling systems "are the most energy-efficient, environmentally clean, and cost-effective space conditioning system available today," according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Energy efficiency measures, and power backup systems, should be encouraged by our policies, and permit fees kept as low as possible for these upgrades.

Because energy efficiency and independence are benefits for all entities, not just homeowners, city inspectors recommend that these types of upgrades be included in future city facility upgrades.





## Plumbing

Backwater valves allow sewage to leave the house through the sewer line, but prevent backpressure from forcing sewage backwards into the house. A high water table, excessive pressure, or disruption of the sewer line can push untreated sewage up unprotected service lines and into showers, sinks, and tubs. Because the backwater valves prevent a reverse flow, a house with an installed backwater valve is much less susceptible to these events.

## Electrical

Copper wiring is the most common wiring material today, and the most desirable material, according to the International Association of Certified Home Inspectors. Aluminum is also utilized as a wiring material. Aluminum wire, although traditionally cheaper than copper, requires a larger diameter to transmit the same current, and is less ductile than copper wire, which means that it breaks down more easily. Connections between aluminum wires are also more likely to fail, creating a fire hazard. In 1972, aluminum wiring standards were changed to improve their effectiveness. However, the older technology wire still exists in many El Reno homes, and homes wired with this older type of wire "are 55 times more likely to have one or more connections reach 'fire hazard conditions'" than a copper wired home, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

## Recommendations:

- Require backwater valves on all new construction, especially in areas near Lake El Reno, which has an elevated water table.
- Require backwater valves on existing construction when local sewage backups occur.
- Prohibit the use of engineered foam board as a sheathing material without a durable veneer like brick, stone, or block.
- Encourage elevated insulation in new buildings and consider establishing a local minimum insulation standard higher than the minimums established in the adopted building codes.
- Maintain low permit fees on the addition of solar power systems and generators.
- Include generators or solar powered reserve power banks on city facilities, when upgraded.
- Acknowledge the Home Energy Rating System (HERS) in the building code, and consider requiring a certain level of efficiency for issuance of a certificate of occupancy.
- Prohibit the use of aluminum wiring in new housing, and require existing aluminum wiring, when replaced, to be replaced with copper wiring.
- Continue to permit and register storm shelters.

ABOVE: New homes being constructed in the Crimson Lake Estates subdivision. - March 2020

OPPOSITE PAGE: The Home Energy Rating System (HERS) Index describes the relative efficiency of a home. A minimally code compliant new home is rated at 100. - Image courtesy of [hersindex.com](http://hersindex.com)

# Public Health

## Planning for a Healthier Future

Envisioning the future El Reno includes more than the built environment. Planning for the community's needs also covers planning for improved health. The City's role in improving public health should be to develop partnerships and encourage education and participation in healthier lifestyles by leadership, promotion, and making healthful choices easier.

Four major public health indicators are access to healthy food, exercise and activity, time spent outside, and access to preventative and emergency medical care. Programming should address each of these four indicators in tandem. Potential partners in health education and encouragement could include grocery stores, healthcare providers, non-profits, and grant funding providers. Redlands Community College, Canadian Valley Technology Center, the El Reno Carnegie Library and El Reno Public Schools have all acknowledged their part in health education, and have shared some of the ways they are building health into their curricula.

### ***Healthy Food***

Making healthy food choices is a skill best learned young. While our school system is improving in choices offered to students, this remains the best way to reach young people about the importance of choosing food intentionally. One of the intended

consequences of healthy food education for children is for children to encourage their caregivers in turn to make wise eating choices.

One simple method of encouraging healthy eating habits is by making them easier to find. Prominent shelving locations for no-sodium-added or other healthier options of the same foods will be a continuing reminder about the availability of better-for-you options.

An El Reno Public Schools representative stated that "nutrition [is an] integral part of the school process." There is a nutritionist on school staff, and healthful eating choices are options at all cafeterias, and are integrated into discussions at all grade levels. Healthful eating choices are offered at CV Tech and at Redlands. Redlands also integrates conversations about the value of foods in meal prep courses, and the library is looking into how to connect people with quality, up-to-date resources on healthy eating.

### ***Activity and Exercise***

Activity includes exercise, but is not limited to going to the gym or working out. Outdoor fitness equipment, gyms, and recreational facilities are all important to giving community members healthy options. One in five respondents stated that they



*RIGHT: A rendering of the new physicians' clinic side of the El Reno and SSM Health St. Anthony Healthplex.*

*OPPOSITE PAGE: A rendering of the emergency room side of the new El Reno and SSM Health St. Anthony Healthplex.*



would use outdoor fitness equipment at an El Reno park if it was available. Facilities at El Reno Public Schools, Redlands Community College, and Canadian Valley Tech Center are all vital to encouragement of activity for all residents.

Walking for recreation and transportation are both forms of activity. This adds another reason to encourage walking and cycling facilities throughout town. Building future homes and businesses with multiple modes of transportation in mind will encourage active transportation, and improve public health over time. Walking trails for recreational travelers should capture El Reno's nature and incorporate spaces for unstructured activities, like yoga. A robust trail system could host competitive running events, which would improve health and expand the reach of tourism.

The El Reno Carnegie Library is currently offering a Tai Chi course for adults, and is working with the El Reno Senior Citizens Center to provide this course and others like it for the community members the Center serves. Redlands Community College provides wellness classes, like yoga and zumba, for interested community members. El Reno Public Schools requires physical education classes at every grade, for more than the minimum required time.

## *Time Spent Outside*

Outdoor time is valuable to both the physical and mental health of community members. Access to parks and open space is a major contributor in bringing people outside. Steering committee members remarked that El Reno's parks are currently child-oriented. This is important to families with children. Future parks projects should include adult-focused spaces in addition to improving offerings for children.

Redlands representatives remarked about how beneficial a sidewalk or walking trail would be from their campus to Lake El Reno, while parks staff mentioned a connection between the lake and Adams Park. This outdoor path system would connect students, faculty, guests, and community members to El Reno's largest parks, all by walking path.

## *Healthplex*

The City of El Reno and SSM Health St. Anthony are constructing the new SSM Health St. Anthony Healthplex near the corner of Interstate 40 and Highway 81. The Healthplex will include an emergency room, primary and urgent care, a specialist clinic, and emergency medical services facility.

At completion, the El Reno community will have a fully licensed, eight-room emergency department with 24/7 care for life-threatening conditions, as well as four 48-hour observation beds to ensure stabilization of patients. The emergency department will be complimented by ultrasound, stress test, CT scan, digital x-ray and full service lab facilities.



SSM Health St. Anthony will own and operate a primary and urgent care facility with specialist clinic on the site. The clinic will have laboratory services and diagnostic imaging for patient convenience.

A separate EMS facility will house El Reno's new ambulance provider, Pafford Medical Services. This facility will have living quarters for the paramedics and house EMS vehicles.

**"I am encouraged by El Reno's efforts to improve healthcare services."**

90.24% of survey responses agreed with this statement.

The SSM Health St. Anthony Healthplex is expected to open in 2021, at a construction cost to the city of \$6.5 Million. This investment in the healthcare needs of the El Reno community will make a lasting impact on El Reno's future, and potentially spur economic development in the immediate area.

## **Medical Care**

The City of El Reno's partnership with SSM Health to bring a new healthplex and expand the number of qualified doctors practicing in El Reno is essential to the community's future health, as well as the well being of neighbors in Union City, Calumet, Geary, and other area towns. The healthplex and emergency room will secure emergency care for the duration of this plan. Preventative services through SSM Health and other providers are slated to increase. Residents utilizing preventative services at higher rates will lead to lower reliance on emergency services.

Cost is a determining factor for many El Reno residents in choosing whether to have preventative checkups and screenings. Some companies provide wellness clinics, screenings and lower cost clinic visits. The City should encourage low-cost providers.

Both Redlands and CV Tech actively offer education, training, and service learning for future health care professionals, helping to provide the workforce to meet El Reno's future medical needs.

## **Healthy Communities Funding**

Several outlets provide funding and recognition for communities striving to improve public health, including Certified Healthy Oklahoma, and the Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust (TSET). Grants available from these organizations could provide additional funding for capital investments recommended by this plan. TSET funds have provided Oklahoma communities with trails, fitness equipment, and funding for healthy living activities. El Reno's neighbors in Kingfisher, Weatherford, Oklahoma City, Yukon, and Norman have already been accepted as Certified Healthy Oklahoma Communities. Redlands Community College is the only Certified Healthy Oklahoma Campus in Canadian County.

There are base requirements to qualify for Certified Healthy Oklahoma recognition and TSET funding. Steering committee members unanimously agreed that it would be a step in the right direction to make city-wide decisions to become eligible for this grant funding.

## **Recommendations:**

- Partner with El Reno Public Schools, local businesses, and the El Reno Chamber of Commerce to promote healthy eating choices.
- Encourage the prominent placement of healthier options in stores.
- Require park space in new small lot single family and two-plus family developments.
- Provide outdoor fitness equipment in El Reno destination parks.
- Adopt and implement a trails plan to coincide with sidewalk plan development, and connect trails with sidewalks where possible.
- Create adult-focused areas in El Reno parks in addition to child-centered spaces.
- Complete and utilize new Healthplex.
- Continue to work with SSM Health, advocating for skilled doctors and preventative care.
- Partner with SSM Health, local businesses, other physicians to improve access to reduced cost preventative care.
- Become a Certified Healthy Community.

# Education

## Preparing the Next Generation of Leaders

El Reno is a regional education hub. Redlands Community College, Canadian Valley Technology Center (CV Tech), the El Reno Carnegie Library, El Reno Public Schools, and the four dependent school districts in the city's footprint create a network of educational opportunities for students of all ages.

### Connectivity and Flexibility

Connection is a common theme among El Reno's educational partners. The El Reno Carnegie Library's OneCard system automatically provides El Reno and area students a library card, and access to library print and digital resources. El Reno Public Schools' Individual Career Academic Planning program connects students with the pathway to success in a profession they choose, and with Redlands or CV Tech resources to help prepare for future vocational training, college, or the workforce, at the time they graduate.

Redlands and CV Tech both referenced that their structures allow them more adaptability than four year college institutions. That flexibility allows for more appropriate workforce readiness to meet the needs of industry in El Reno now and in the future.

### Route to the Future of Education

El Reno's growth means different things to each of these institutions, but they all view growth as a prime opportunity to continue improving their offerings, and to promote lifelong learning. Redlands hosts classes for the Cameron University bachelors degree in agriculture, so that local students can complete their degree in El Reno. CV Tech is transitioning the Cowan campus in Oklahoma City to be completely health-related training, allowing the El Reno campus

to expand into more offerings, and offering both campuses to El Reno's students. El Reno Public Schools are encouraging digital fluency and online learning with Google Chromebooks in each classroom.

### Outdoor Education

Both El Reno parks officials and Redlands representatives discussed how to integrate education into the park and trail system. Open air classroom spaces would allow certain classes to move outside and among nature. Space for fitness classes could be included along future recreational trails. Outdoor musical instruments expand the range of arts offerings for children, and placards identifying plant species teach passersby as they walk the trail system.

### Library Renovation

In 2019, the El Reno Carnegie Library was renovated to create a welcoming, appealing space with better functionality. Utilizing a hard surface floor in the meeting room allows that space to be utilized for messy programs, like a STEAM activity where students learned how to make slime. Attaching the kitchen to the meeting room also enables more flexible programming. The teen room is used more frequently with the location in the heart of the library.

### Library Planning

The El Reno Carnegie Library referenced the need for a new strategic plan. This plan would include a community needs assessment, so that library officials would be able to know what barriers there are between people and the information they need. With that information, library officials can focus new programming where it will be the most impactful.

### Recommendations:

- Create a new strategic plan for the El Reno Carnegie Library.
- Utilize connections with Redlands and CV Tech to improve the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy to strengthen El Reno's economic future.
- Provide educational opportunities in our park and trail systems.



# To New Heights

## Upgrading Airport Facilities to Spur Economic Growth

The El Reno Regional Airport (RQO) is growing quickly. The El Reno Regional Airport Master Plan, adopted in 2018, identified several key projects to help the airport become an economic development generator and improve our services to existing and future airport users. The plan's Preferred Terminal Area Facilities and Layout map is shown on page 51.

### Airport Projects

There are two major projects underway which will attract new business. The first project adds a new fuel farm system for airport tenants and travelers. This project also included removal of the old fuel system and the surrounding pavement. Secondly, the El Reno Airpark Authority is in the process of constructing a 12 bay T-Hangar to attract new tenants.

One of the largest, most beneficial long-term projects for the airport is a terminal building. The El Reno Airpark Authority will partner with the Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission (OAC) for a special terminal building grant which will encourage substantial future economic growth.

### Ground Leases

The El Reno Airpark Authority is working to establish a new long-term ground lease program and minimum standards guidelines which would enable and encourage businesses to construct their own hangars on airport property. This would increase the number and type of businesses we can support at the airport, and allow for larger aviation companies to locate in El Reno with 50+ employees.

### Recommendations

- Complete existing projects as projected.
- Leverage OAC funds to complete new terminal.
- Implement ground lease procedures and minimum standards which spur local economic growth.
- Utilize the El Reno Regional Airport Master Plan for guidance on future growth.



### Exhibit 4.3 Preferred Terminal Area Facilities and Layout



ABOVE: The El Reno Regional Airport (RQO) Master Plan showcases dozens of additional planned buildings over time.

OPPOSITE PAGE: A view of El Reno Regional Airport from the sky.

# Selected Survey Responses

Community members shared their opinions on several items from restaurants to recycling. Many of the results are shown throughout Route to the Future in sections dedicated to the topic. The results from these questions should also be able to assist the City Council and other City boards and staff as future decisions are made.

On a seven point scale, responses of 6 and 7 were considered "strongly agree", and responses of 1 and 2 were considered "strongly disagree," shown as SA and SD respectively.

## General

I can meet all of my daily needs in El Reno.  
SA: 27.78% SD: 19.44%

## Infrastructure

My neighborhood floods when it rains.  
SA: 13.89% SD: 47.22%

## Recycling

I participate in the El Reno recycling program.  
Yes: 40.00% No: 60.00%

El Reno's recycling program should be expanded to all residents.  
SA: 57.69% SD: 11.54%

## Route 66/Tourism

Tourists would stop in El Reno more often if the buildings highlighted Route 66.  
SA: 65.85% SD: 4.88%

Signage on Sunset Dr. should be designed to highlight Route 66.  
Yes: 97.50% No: 2.50%

## Neighborhoods

There is a park within walking distance of my home.  
SA: 45.65% SD: 25.54%

I could take a 10 minute walk and find something besides houses.  
SA: 54.29% SD: 2.86%

El Reno provides plenty of park space to the people who live here.

SA: 51.85% SD: 3.70%

## New Development

El Reno should encourage tiny houses on small lots.  
Yes: 73.17% No: 26.83%

Small businesses, like offices, hair salons, and shops, should be located near neighborhoods.

SA: 21.43% SD: 4.76%

## Safety

I'm worried about crime in my neighborhood.  
SA: 17.78% SD: 23.33%

My neighborhood is a safe, comfortable place.  
SA: 60.00% SD: 5.26%

## Traffic

It is easy to get from place to place in El Reno.  
SA: 64.12% SD: 4.58%

Traffic is a major concern in El Reno.  
SA: 18.52% SD: 31.48%

## Employment

Quality jobs are important to El Reno's future.  
SA: 51.85% SD: 7.41%

It is important for me to work in my hometown.  
SA: 50.91% SD: 7.27%

## Lake El Reno

I visit Lake El Reno for more than just major events.  
Yes: 65.00% No: 35.00%

## Health

If they were nearby, I would use:

Trails:	75.68%
Outdoor fitness equipment:	21.62%
Gym:	24.32%

# Action Plan

## How Do We Reach This Vision?

The Route to the Future plan makes dozens of recommendations for policy decisions, staff actions, and capital investments. Following these recommendations will help El Reno grow into the vision outlined in the articles.

This action plan aggregates these recommendations, separated by type and time frame to ensure we stay on course on our Route to the Future.

## Policy Actions

### *Zoning Code Review (2020-2021)*

- Review development requirements in residential, commercial, and industrial zoning districts to ensure that each district's regulations allow and encourage the housing and business types referenced in the land use visioning sections, and amend the zoning district regulations accordingly.
- Amend and clarify language about accessory dwelling units in the zoning code.

- Define non-traditional housing types such as manufactured houses or tiny houses, provide appropriate locations in the residential permitted uses chart for each, and establish design, resiliency, and aesthetic requirements as appropriate.
- Encourage infill development within existing neighborhoods in and near downtown by allowing homes to be built on existing platted lots which meet minimum setback requirements.
- Amend the permitted use table in the commercial zoning districts to encourage development which aligns with the commercial character districts.
- Determine the effectiveness of the Combined Shopping Center zoning district as a stand-alone district, and amend as necessary.
- Amend Central Business District regulations to allow dwelling units by right.
- Consider allowing sidewalk cafes as a permitted use within the Central Business District.

*BELOW: A new Love's Travel Plaza near the intersection of Interstate 40 and Radio Rd.*



- Revisit and consider expanding the Sidewalk Prioritization District.
- Evaluate special area plans, like the Sensitive Border Standards and the Route 66 Overlay, to find the best way to encourage business growth and improve the appearance of our community from the street.
- Implement a signage overlay to encourage or require new and existing businesses along Sunset Drive to use signage that highlights Route 66.

## Building Code Review (2021)

- Review driveway and parking requirements for consistency with commercial character districts and industrial districts to ensure that City standards encourage right-sizing driveway entrances, and amend accordingly.
- Promote shared parking when possible, and decrease required impervious surfaces when possible, to improve natural drainage.
- Strengthen support for sidewalk development in the building code.
- Evaluate landscaping and screening regulations to find the best way to encourage business growth and improve the appearance of our community from the street.

- Amend the drainage ordinance to reflect engineering best practices.
- Encourage natural drainage pattern options, such as detention ponds, preservation of open space, and bioswales.
- Acknowledge the Home Energy Rating System (HERS) in the building code, and consider requiring a certain level of efficiency for issuance of a certificate of occupancy.
- Encourage elevated insulation in new buildings and consider establishing a local minimum insulation standard higher than the minimums established in the adopted building codes.
- Prohibit the use of engineered foam board as a sheathing material without a durable veneer.
- Require backwater valves on all new construction, especially in areas near Lake El Reno, which has an elevated water table.
- Require backwater valves on existing construction when local sewage backups occur.
- Prohibit the use of aluminum wiring in new housing, and require existing aluminum wiring, when replaced, to be replaced with copper wiring.



LEFT: Community members place dots on boards to share their priorities concerning several topics at an Open House event. - January 23, 2020

## **Subdivision Regulation Review (2021)**

- Require subdivisions to have multiple vehicle and pedestrian access points, and to connect to other subdivisions, when possible.
- Evaluate access, block lengths, and connectivity for all types of El Reno streets, and for consistency with character districts, and amend as necessary.
- Establish a connectivity index to improve circulation within and between neighborhoods, and to improve public safety response times.
- Establish minimum connectivity index values for each residential, commercial, and industrial development type.
- Require sidewalk placement on new streets.
- Tie in new and existing commercial developments to the sidewalk and trail network.
- Enact a requirement for new residential neighborhood developments to include either dedicated city park space or HOA-maintained park space.
- Encourage natural drainage options, such as detention ponds, open space, and bioswales.

## **Additional Policy Documents**

- Draft and implement an Infrastructure Growth and Maintenance Plan, which should expand water, sewer, street, and sidewalk upgrades to serve the 2040 Urban Service Area.
- Draft and approve a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) to highlight El Reno's economic position, define opportunities for growth, and showcase the ways El Reno can work with businesses to develop and expand.
- Develop and implement a Parks and Recreation Master Plan, to establish priorities and timelines for improvements to all El Reno parks.
- Create a new strategic plan for the El Reno Carnegie Library.
- Continue to utilize the El Reno Regional Airport Master Plan for guidance on future growth.

## **Individual Applications (2020-2040)**

- Review MPC applications for consistency with the FLUM, and approve applications which are consistent with the FLUM.

- Maintain agriculture or passive land uses in FEMA designated floodplain areas.
- Prohibit growth requires water or sewer services outside the 2040 Urban Service Area boundary.

## **Staff Actions**

### **Planning Staff**

- Review all MPC applications for consistency with the Future Land Use Map and Recommendations for Zoning Requests chart.
- Review zoning districts of Sunset Drive parcels, and the zoning requirements, to ensure that the development allowed or encouraged by the zoning district is appropriate for the special planning district.
- Monitor the population closely, comparing El Reno projections with Census and American Community Survey data, and report the comparisons to the MPC annually.
- Work with businesses and schools to improve the sidewalk network.
- Connect community members to parks and trails by expanding the sidewalk and trail network.

### **Economic Development Staff**

- Work with state and local partners to attract businesses to Historic Downtown El Reno, Sunset, and across the community.
- Utilize connections with Redlands and CV Tech to improve the CEDS, so that all three organizations can help build for El Reno's economic future.
- Include a variety of industrial operations in future economic development efforts.
- Implement ground lease procedures at airport which spur local economic development and business growth.

### **Community Development Staff**

- Create a development chart that shows potential risks and requirements for Historic Downtown and Sunset renovation projects that is easy to understand.
- Apply to the FEMA regional office for membership in the Community Rating System.

- Review additional floodplain management activities which acquire credits in the Community Rating System for applicability in El Reno, and recommend adoption as appropriate.
- Continue to permit and register storm shelters.
- Maintain low permit fees on the addition of solar power systems and generators.

## ***Administrative Staff***

- Evaluate long term implications of Country Club expansion options with planning, community development, public works, public safety staff prior to selection and implementation of a project.
- Continue to work with SSM Health, advocating for skilled doctors and preventative care.
- Partner with SSM Health, local businesses, other physicians to improve access to reduced cost preventative care.
- Partner with El Reno Public Schools, local businesses, and the El Reno Chamber of Commerce to promote healthy eating choices.
- Encourage prominent placement of healthier options in stores.
- Become a Certified Healthy Community.

## ***Parks and Tourism Staff***

- Continue to expand offerings at both neighborhood parks and destination parks.
- Develop a trail network including all parks, connections between neighborhoods and natural areas, and a lighted trail around Lake El Reno.
- Provide educational opportunities in our park and trail systems.
- Create adult-focused areas in El Reno parks in addition to child-centered spaces.
- Provide outdoor fitness equipment in El Reno destination parks.
- Tie Adams Park to the Sunset special planning district with Route 66 theming.
- Place a landmark Route 66 feature in Adams Park.
- Actively promote El Reno Route 66 tourism, which will bring visitors, commerce, and revenue for the community.
- Plan and execute improvements to the Lake El Reno ATV Park.

## ***Public Works Staff***

- Highlight needed water and sewer infrastructure maintenance projects for inclusion in budgeting.

*RIGHT: Citizens participate in a box city exercise at an Open House. - January 18, 2020*

*OPPOSITE PAGE: The recently renovated El Reno Carnegie Library continues to find unique ways to serve its community. - April 2020*



- Create a physical marker plan with El Reno Police, Public Works, and Public Schools to effectively mark pedestrian and cycle routes with signs, pavement markings, and other physical markers as appropriate.
- Continue research in wastewater treatment and evaluate alternatives for graywater use.

## Public Safety Staff

- Monitor the components of the ISO rating, and prepare for future infrastructure needs.

# Capital Investments

## Existing Projects

- Complete new Healthplex
- Complete current Airport projects as projected.

## Ongoing (2020-2040)

- Improve accessibility and continuity of sidewalks along Sunset, and into adjoining neighborhoods.
- Require sidewalk placement on expanded streets.
- Expand sidewalk renovations and crosswalk improvements to make Historic Downtown El Reno and the Sunset Planning District ADA-accessible.
- Include generators or solar powered reserve power banks on city facilities, when upgraded.
- Continue to improve streetscaping and outdoor improvements in Historic Downtown El Reno.
- Utilize fee-in-lieu-of-sidewalk funding to start priority projects.
- Monitor space issues with Police Department location, build a new station as necessary.

## Bond Issue Items (2020-2030)

- Build a new water tower and the associated connections, to allow for water plant expansion.
- Construct expansion of the water treatment plant and additional water wells to serve the additional population for 2040.
- Construct expansion of sewer plant for 2 million gallons of additional capacity.

- Include sidewalk priority projects in upcoming Capital Improvements Projects.

## Grant Funding (2020-2040)

- Apply, where possible, for state and federal grant funding for sidewalks, school crossings, trails, downtown pedestrian improvements, and other active transportation infrastructure.
- Pursue grant funding for recreational trails, equipment, and other park amenities.
- Work with Redlands Community College and other local partners, in grant seeking and project building.
- Pursue grant funding and community matches for improvements to the Lake El Reno ATV Park.
- Use FAA funds to complete new airport terminal.



# Reflections

## Aggregating El Reno's Route to the Future

Comprehensive planning is a unique experience. Going into a plan, you might know what questions to start with, but the answers and the follow-up all play out in time. Working through the process and adapting to El Reno's priorities has been exciting.

As we set out to do our first batch of community engagement, I wouldn't have guessed that one comment that spurred much of our future discussion would have come from a group of children building a city with boxes.

"No, the park has to be next to the houses." These words reminded me exactly how simple it is: developments need parks.

Building scale pieces to map out future development patterns, I wondered if the groups would place enough room for all of our new residents over the next 20 years on the map.

They placed more than enough room for new neighbors and friends.

When I walked into the first steering committee meeting to ask this new group of people what the most important things for us to focus on would be, I had no

idea that would lead to talking with our educational partners about public health.

El Reno's school leaders from Redlands, Canadian Valley Technology Center, and El Reno Public Schools were ecstatic to talk with me about public health, and every other piece of the plan I asked about.

We asked the community, "what makes El Reno special?" The top answers were the people and the history. Those two things rang very true in the creation of this plan.

Everybody I asked for help to make this plan work responded with open arms, even as they had their own items to attend to. If it was to try and envision the future of El Reno, everyone was open for business. Their thoughts, their opinions, their expertise – everything was on the table, ready to work together and continue to make this place special.

It's been an absolute pleasure to work with the Municipal Planning Commission, the Steering Committee, and the people of El Reno to find the pulse and learn about this community's future. It is an honor to aggregate this document, and I hope it serves El Reno well on its Route to the Future.

*- Dustin A. Downey is the City Planner for the City of El Reno. In addition to being the lead author for **Route to the Future**, he has been involved in comprehensive planning teams for projects in Goldsby and Blanchard, and has experience with long-term land use, economic, tribal, and individual project planning. Downey holds a Master's of Regional and City Planning and a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism with emphasis in Public Relations from the University of Oklahoma, and is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners.*



# Creators and Thank Yous

## Those Who Made Route to the Future Happen

Route to the Future encouraged the people of El Reno to be the planners, and with over 400 responses, this plan is truly the stated vision of El Reno. Thank you to everyone involved in this process, including:

### *El Reno City Council*

Matthew White, Mayor

J.T. Chronister, Ward I

Tim Robinson, Ward III

Bob Ballhorn, Ward II

Tracey Rider, Ward IV

### *El Reno Municipal Planning Commission*

Vicki Proctor, Chair

Tom Lloyd

Bobby Don Stevenson

Nancy Wise

J.T. Chronister

Mike Murray

Gerardo Troncoso

### *Route to the Future Steering Committee*

Frank Becktol

Heather Brothers

Clara Bushyhead, Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes

Miranda Davis

Fred Koebrick

Paul Patel

Tracey Rider

Gerardo Troncoso

Chris Bromlow

Roman Bugaj

Michael Freeman

Jason Nix

Vicki Proctor

Terry Small

### *Department and Partner Interviews*

El Reno Carnegie Library

Kylie Ingram, Director

Engineering

Steve Fox, City Engineer

Fire Department

Jason Duff, Chief

Jonathan Strahorn, Fire Marshal

Finance Department

Marsha Leck, Finance Director

Inspectors

Mark Earls, Inspector

Darren Koehn, Inspector

### Mayor

Matthew White, Mayor

### Public Works

Chris Smith, Utilities Superintendent

### Parks and Recreation

Jeff Kouba, Director

Katie Gore, Administrative Assistant

Heather Brothers, Marketing/Tourism Coordinator

### Police Department

Ken Brown, Chief

Kirk Dickerson, Assistant Chief

### Canadian Valley Technology Center

Dr. Gayla Lutts, CEO/Superintendent

### El Reno Public Schools

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### Redlands Community College

Jack Bryant, President

Jena Marr, Executive VP of Campus Administration and Finance

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Kyra Escott

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### *City Staff*

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Kent Lagaly, Assistant City Manager

Roger Rinehart, Esq., City Attorney

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