

LAND USE
ELEMENT



5. LAND USE

5.1. INTRODUCTION

Planning for the overall future growth and development of the City is the core function of the Comprehensive Plan. The Land Use element is intended to provide general, citywide land use guidance for future growth by identifying and proposing the location of different types of development, or land uses.

Land use planning, in general, affects all facets of development. The other elements of the Comprehensive Plan support the Land Use element by thoroughly planning certain components of development. Different types of land uses have different implications on infrastructure needs, traffic circulation, recreation needs, the environment, community and neighborhood character, and the City's overall economic viability.

For example, if a particular intersection within the City is planned for a high-intensity growth node, it creates different planning implications for traffic circulation than if that same intersection was planned for low-density, single-family residential development. Thus, plans regarding future transportation needs included in the Transportation element would be impacted by this land use decision. As such, all elements of the Comprehensive Plan are impacted by the Land Use element.

However, the Land Use element itself has several components that collectively guide the City's future growth: Existing Conditions; an explanation of the different types of plans that affect land uses; the Generalized Land Use Map; a template of land use categories to guide future Land Use Plans; and Land Use Policies. Together, the components of the Land Use element provide the framework for the City's future and the various elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

5.2. EXISTING CONDITIONS

Rio Rancho has a current land area of approximately 105 square miles. Of this land area, the majority is undeveloped. The amount of undeveloped land affords the City the opportunity to plan for future growth.

However, a planning challenge for the City also exists in addressing antiquated platting. Off-site improvements were not required as part of antiquated platting. The lack of infrastructure, such as streets, curbs, gutters, sidewalks, sewer and water lines, and proper drainage

facilities makes it difficult for the City to provide modern subdivision designs. Creative planning is necessary to address this lack of infrastructure.

Land use can have an integral role in addressing the challenges associated with antiquated platting. Generally, larger, planned developments, such as retail shopping centers and subdivisions, will be required to include the necessary infrastructure to address issues such as drainage and traffic circulation. However, because of the existing platting throughout the City, many property owners are able to develop individual lots without installing off-site infrastructure. When this phenomenon repeats itself, neighborhoods are created without planned infrastructure, or commercial developments may gain access from single, small lots creating potential traffic issues. Land use plans can be developed to require the installation of infrastructure through planned developments.

5.2.1 EXISTING LAND USE

Of the one third of the City that is developed, the largest land use is residential. The next largest land use is Civic and Institutional uses, which is primarily comprised of large tracts of land that are occupied by Rio Rancho schools.

Well-established neighborhoods near Southern Boulevard and east of Pat D'Arco Highway (NM 528) have been consistently developed at a medium density (lots generally no larger than one quarter of an acre). Other neighborhoods vary in their composition. Planned developments such as Cabezon and Loma Colorado provide a variety of housing through consistent and compatible neighborhoods. These developments have a street network that provides limited access onto major roads. Individual lot development, on the other hand, for example in the northwest portion of Unit 11, produces an assortment of single-family homes on the existing grid-like street network.

Commercial development (non-residential) comprises less than 2% of all of Rio Rancho's land area. In general, commercial development is concentrated along major roads in the southern portion of the City near older and more established development. The majority of this area is developed as retail strip centers. Commercial uses are particularly concentrated along Pat D'Arco Highway

and Southern Boulevard. Industrial development can be found concentrated just south of the Pat D'Arco Highway and Northern Boulevard intersection in an area known as Industrial Park.

Overall, the majority of existing development is found in the southern part of the City and along major roads to the east and northeast. Much of the City's opportunity to grow is to the north and northwest. The City's overall growth is depicted in Map LU-1: Existing Land Use.

5.3. GENERALIZED LAND USE MAP

The Vision 2020 Preferred Land Use Scenario (previously adopted) was adopted with the *Vision 2020 – Integrated Comprehensive Plan* as the preferred development scenario. This scenario adopted the concept of nodal development and identified areas that were intended to foster higher-intensity land uses.

An updated Generalized Land Use Map has been developed that maintains the concept of nodal development and accounts for updated existing development. The Generalized Land Use Map accounts for existing development, adopted land use plans, and expected future growth. MAP LU-2: Generalized Land Use (Existing and Planned) depicts an updated conceptual development scenario for the City's future growth.

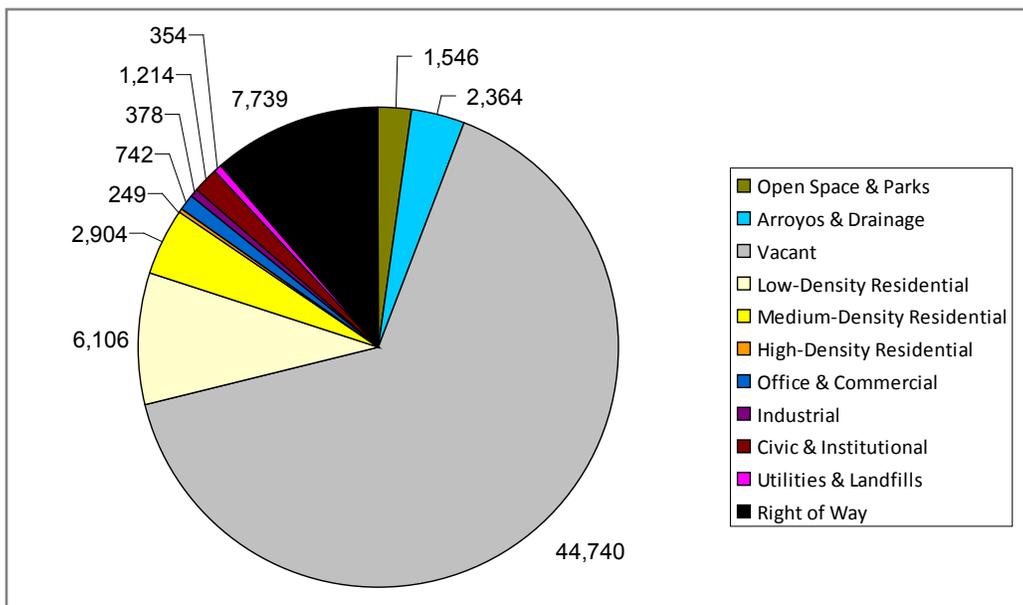
5.3.1 VISION 2020 PREFERRED LAND USE SCENARIO

The previously adopted Vision 2020 Preferred Land Use Scenario was developed through the visioning process of the *Vision 2020 – Integrated Comprehensive Plan*. The City's Vision Statement and the results of the community survey provided the impetus for organizing policy work groups to define general policy statements for the Comprehensive Plan. A Fiscal Land Use Analysis report grew out of concerns by members of the *Public Works & Infrastructure* and *Growth & Economic Development* policy work groups. They recognized the need to systematically evaluate the feasibility and cost effectiveness of different land use development patterns or scenarios for the future growth of the City to the year 2020.

A preliminary growth scenario that was part of the annexation study conducted in 1998 became the broad model for developing three alternative land use scenarios. *Downtown/Infill*, *Growth Nodes*, and *Trends* were the alternatives that were presented for public review and comment at a land use workshop. The Fiscal Land Use Analysis evaluated the Preferred Land Use Scenario on three criteria: land use assumptions, the cost of growth, and the timing of development.

The three scenarios were evaluated at the workshop in terms of land use and development patterns, infrastructure and public facilities costs, and addressed policy questions such as affordable housing, economic growth and revenue generation.

Figure L-1: Citywide Existing Land Use Acreage



The *Downtown/Infill* scenario assumed the development of a centralized, compact, urban core area surrounded by relatively dense, multi-family housing with high land costs and limited open space.

The *Trends* scenario projected the existing low density, suburban-style development into the future, with limited economic opportunities based primarily on strip commercial development.

The *Growth Node* scenario included economic development focused in master-planned activity centers surrounded by multi-family and single-family housing, with large-lot development in outlying areas. The scenario was modified to include infill and a downtown or government node to serve as an urban center. This scenario was the preferred land use pattern as a result of the Vision 2020 visioning process.

Therefore, the concept of growth nodes was maintained in the updated Generalized Land Use Map that is included in this Comprehensive Plan.

5.3.2 UPDATED GENERALIZED LAND USE MAP

The Generalized Land Use Map is the updated conceptual development scenario for the City’s future growth. It is a conceptual representation of existing and planned land use. Together three layers make up the Generalized Land Use Map: existing land use; planned land use; and conceptual development nodes.

Existing land use identifies development that already exists as being either *Open Space*, *Civic*, *Low-Density Residential*, *Medium-Density Residential*, *High-Density Residential*, *Non-Residential* (Office, Retail, etc.), *Industrial*, *Utility*, or *Vacant*.

Planned land use is a consolidation of land uses adopted in existing Specific Area Plans and Master Plans. Land uses in these plans vary and have been dissolved into collapsed categories. Planned land uses have been categorized as either *Open Space*, *Future Planning*, *Low-/Medium-Density Residential*, *High-Density Residential*, *Civic*, *Non-Residential* (Office, Retail, etc.), *Industrial*, or *Utility*.

Conceptual Development Nodes have also been identified to areas that may foster higher-intensity development, such as higher-density residential developments, office complexes, or shopping centers. A general time frame has been symbolized with Conceptual Development Nodes to provide a theoretical outlook for the development of these areas.

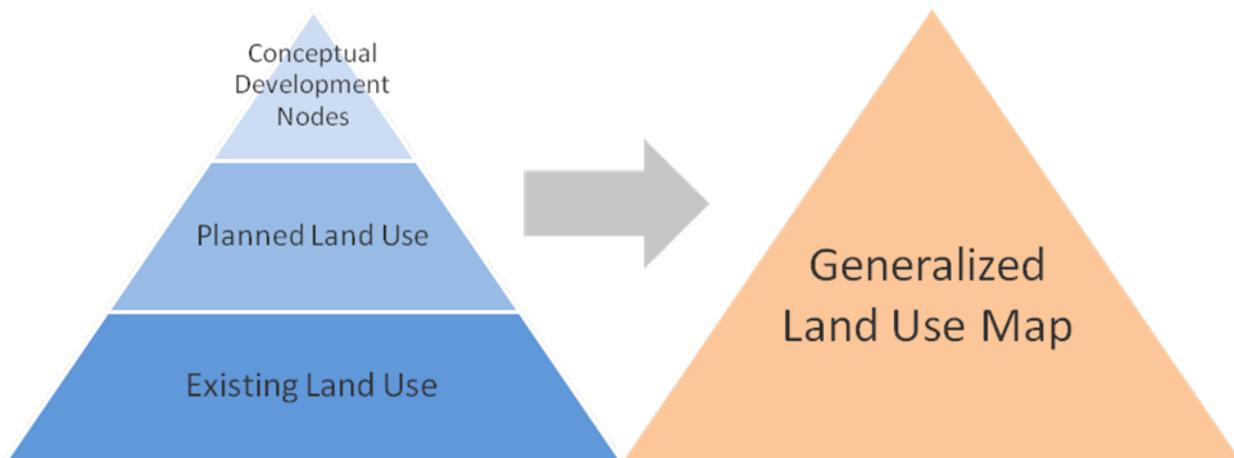
Together these layers create an overall vision of the City’s existing and future development. Map LU-2: Generalized Land Use (Existing and Planned) is the City’s citywide vision for the future. Land Use is conceptualized in the following categories on the Generalized Land Use Map.

5.3.2.1 PARK, OPEN SPACE, DRAINAGE

Areas that are either parks, open space, or drainage features that are generally at least one acre in size.

5.3.2.2 FUTURE PLANNING

Areas that do not currently have Specific Area Plans in place and are generally undeveloped. Development will usually be limited to low-density residential development until a Specific Area Plan can be adopted.



5.3.2.3 LOW/MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

Areas that have either existing single-family residential development, or are generally planned for single-family residential uses.

5.3.2.4 HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

Areas that have either existing higher-density or multi-family residential development, or are generally planned for higher-density or multi-family residential uses.

5.3.2.5 CIVIC

Areas that have either existing public facilities, such as schools or churches, or are generally planned for public facilities.

5.3.2.6 OFFICE, COMMERCIAL

Areas that have either existing non-residential development, such as office complexes or shopping centers, or are generally planned for non-residential uses.

5.3.2.7 WAREHOUSING, INDUSTRIAL

Areas that have either existing warehousing or industrial development, or is generally planned for existing warehousing or industrial uses.

5.3.2.8 UTILITY

Areas that generally have some type of utility, such as an electric substation, sewer treatment facility, or landfill.

5.3.2.9 CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT NODES

Areas that have a concentration of higher-intensity uses, such as higher-density residential or shopping centers, or are generally planned for higher-intensity uses. A general time frame has been symbolized with Conceptual Development Nodes to provide a theoretical outlook for the development of these areas.

5.4. PLANS

The overall development of the City is guided by an integrated mix of plans. Each plan addresses different types of issues at different scales and capacities. Generally, land use plans are developed to guide future growth and development. Some land use plans are conceptual and address citywide growth. More specific land use plans offer more detailed guidance within a designated area. Together, the City's different land use plans provide the necessary guidance and justification to manage development.

Land use plans evaluate criteria such as topography, existing development, current zoning, and circulation. Land use plans generally use categories to conceptualize and distinguish between different types of development. A land use map will spatially display a proposal for future development using land use categories. Symbols such as dots, asterisks or flags may also be used to generally indicate possible growth nodes or other conceptual focal points. Land use categories are usually categorized by type, such as *Low-Density Residential*, *Office*, or *Industrial*. However, land use categories are **not** zoning districts.

Zoning is the tool that is used to implement the vision developed in land use plans. Zoning is lot-, parcel-, or tract-specific. Although multiple lots, parcels or tracts can be rezoned at one time, a zoning designation is adopted, by ordinance, for a specific property. The City's zoning ordinance specifically outlines regulations for zoning districts, such as its *Purpose*, *Permissive Uses*, *Conditional Uses*, *Area*, *Height*, *Setbacks*, *Off-Street Parking*, *Landscaping*, and *Buffer Zone*.

5.4.1 TYPES OF PLANS

There is a hierarchical approach to land use planning that is discussed in detail in this section. The City generally refers to five types of plans to implement land use planning. These five types of plans vary in scope. The five types of plans are:

- Strategic Plan
- Comprehensive Plan
- Specific Area Plans
- Master Plans
- Development Plans

These five types of plans vary in scope—from broad, citywide goals to site-specific development planning. For example, the City's broadest plan, the Strategic Plan, is a citywide goal-setting document. On the other hand, a Development Plan is a site-specific plan and addresses many on-site and off-site development issues.

In addition to these plans, other City Departments and collaborative entities adopt Master Plans for their areas of emphasis.

5.4.2 STRATEGIC PLAN

The City of Rio Rancho developed its Strategic Plan to establish priorities for City government for 2009 to 2014. It represents the consensus that emerged from the collaborative efforts of the City leadership over a period of several months.

5.4.2.1 COMPONENTS OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

This Strategic Plan is for the period 2009 to 2014. It contains the following elements:

- Mission
- Vision
- Values
- Goals
- Strategies

5.4.2.2 MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

At the joint Governing Body-Staff workshop participants engaged in visioning exercises. Following the workshop, a subcommittee of staff and Governing Body members met to create mission, vision and values statements.

The mission statement for Rio Rancho is:

The City of Rio Rancho's mission is to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the community by providing excellent service to achieve a high quality of life for residents, businesses, and visitors.

The vision statement for Rio Rancho is:

A diverse, sustainable, family-friendly community that is safe, vibrant and attractive to residents, businesses and visitors.

The overarching values of Rio Rancho are:

- Service
- Accountability
- Respect

The values statement for Rio Rancho is:

A philosophy of service, accountability and respect shall govern our interactions with citizens and with each other.

5.4.2.3 GOALS

The Strategic Plan promotes the City of Rio Rancho's vision by establishing goals and strategic directions for each of the issue areas identified during the planning process. The following six goals have been created to reflect the character of the community that is envisioned in the future. The goals are multi-year in nature.

5.4.2.4 GOAL 1: INFRASTRUCTURE

Ensure that the City develops new and has well-maintained infrastructure that fosters a quality community, supports a strong economy and meets the needs of current and future residents.

5.4.2.5 GOAL 2: DEVELOPMENT

Ensure the City has plans and policies in place to attract and create well-planned high-quality, stable, residential, commercial and industrial development.

5.4.2.6 GOAL 3: FISCAL HEALTH

Ensure that the City's fiscal health is strong with a growing tax base, sound financial policies and economically diverse funding solutions.

5.4.2.7 GOAL 4: PUBLIC SAFETY SERVICES

Provide services to ensure the safety and health of the community through quality police, fire and emergency medical services.

5.4.2.8 GOAL 5: GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Deliver quality services to meet community needs, assuring that the City is sufficiently staffed, trained and equipped overall.

5.4.2.9 GOAL 6: QUALITY OF LIFE

Provide quality of life services to meet community needs, assuring that there are strong relationships with all sectors of the community and ample opportunities for citizen engagement.

5.4.3 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The City's *Comprehensive Plan* is more detailed than the *Strategic Plan*. The *Comprehensive Plan* provides a thorough analysis of existing citywide conditions and provides policies to guide land use and development decisions. The *Comprehensive Plan* provides two important components of land use planning. It outlines land use categories and provides a conceptual Generalized Land Use Map.

5.4.4 SPECIFIC AREA PLANS

Specific Area Plans further implement the Generalized Land Use Map described in the previous section. Thus, Specific Area Plans are part of the Land Use Element of the *Comprehensive Plan*. Specific Area Plans are developed by the City and further define land uses within a specific area. Specific Area Plans provide policies and propose land uses based on existing development, existing zoning, neighborhood input and sound land use planning methodology. These plans usually identify infrastructure and facility projects that may be planned in the area. However, these plans do not provide implementation strategies for specific types of infrastructure. Specific Area Plans usually further define specific growth nodes that are intended to harvest more intense land uses.

5.4.5 MASTER PLANS

Master Plans are detailed development plans that are often created by a developer. Master Plans are generally smaller than Specific Area Plans, but larger than subdivisions. Examples of Master Plans within the City include Cabezon and Loma Colorado. These areas are usually referred to as “master-planned communities” because they address land use, transportation, drainage and utilities in the planning document. These communities usually plan for a mix of housing and non-residential uses throughout the area—land uses included in the Comprehensive Plan are preferred.

Master Plans may fit within a Specific Area Plan or may provide sufficient planning detail that they may be developed in unplanned areas and stand in place of a Specific Area Plan. Sufficient planning detail usually addresses the overall site, land use, grading and drainage, circulation, utilities, design standards, and phasing and financing.

5.4.6 DEVELOPMENT PLANS

A Development Plan is a plan for a site-specific development project. This type of Plan may develop as a residential subdivision, office park, retail shopping center, or some other type of single or multi-lot site. A subdivision requires the review of a plat map. A non-residential development, such as an office park or retail shopping center, would require the review of a site plan. Development Plans are similar to Master Plans, however they are smaller in acreage and typically do not plan land uses.

5.5 LAND USE CATEGORIES

The building blocks of a land use plan are land use categories. Land use categories generally outline land uses that are considered appropriate in certain areas. Land use planning allows the City, developers and property owners to conceptualize where different types of development may occur. This concept institutes some predictability between land uses which creates well-planned neighborhoods. The land use categories in

Table L-1: Types of Plans

Plan	Description	Components	Acreage
Strategic Plan	The City’s Strategic Plan establishes citywide priorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission • Vision • Values • Goals • Strategies 	Citywide
Comprehensive Plan	Provides a holistic analysis of City conditions, and provides goals policies and actions to guide future growth and development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land Use • Population & Housing • Public Facilities • Transportation • Recreation • Conservation & Natural Environment • Urban Design • Economic Development • Antiquated Platting, Annexation & Addressing • Implementation 	Citywide
Specific Area Plans	Provides specific goals, policies, and actions; and proposes land use throughout a specific area within the City.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing Conditions • Proposed Land Use • Transportation & Access Management • Implementation 	Generally At Least 1,000 Acres
Master Plans	Provide a comprehensive development plan for a large area within the City. Must comply with applicable Master Plans and/or Specific Area Plans, and the Comprehensive Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site Analysis • Land Use • Grading & Drainage • Circulation • Utilities • Design Standards • Phasing and Financing 	Preferably At Least 100 Acres
Development Plans	Provide an adequate development plan for a specific site within an existing land use plan. Must comply with applicable Master Plans and/or Specific Area Plans, and the Comprehensive Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site Analysis • Grading & Drainage • Circulation • Utilities • Design Standards • Phasing and Financing 	No Minimum Acreage

the Comprehensive Plan are intended to be the model framework from which land use categories in future plans are to be created.

5.5.1 LAND USE HIERARCHY

The idea of land use planning is built around the assumption that different types of land uses are more or less impactful on surrounding land uses. Thus, a hierarchy of land uses can be identified and planned for accordingly. In general, low-density, residential development is considered to be a low-intensity land use. An example of a high-intensity land use would be an industrial facility.

In land use planning, land uses are arranged to provide compatibility as much as possible. For example, low-density residential development is generally located near other types of residential development, offices, or light retail developments. More intense uses such as large shopping centers and warehousing will typically be planned near commercial and industrial areas. Thus, the building blocks of land use planning regulate how different types of development may be arranged geographically to produce well-integrated communities.

The Comprehensive Plan establishes the following land use categories to provide a consistent framework when future Specific Area and Mater Plans are developed.

These categories are based on density and permissive uses prescribed in the City's Zoning Ordinance. Residential densities are based on the gross density of a site. The categories are conceptual in nature and must be adaptable to changing development needs and amendments to the City's Zoning Ordinance.

5.5.2 LOW-DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

The Low-Density Residential land use category is intended to provide opportunities for large-lot, single-family residential development. Additional uses that may be integrated into low-density residential development include community uses such as schools, parks, and churches.

Density: Maximum 4 DU/AC

5.5.3 MEDIUM-DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

The Medium-Density Residential land use category is intended to provide opportunities for higher-density, single-family development. Additional uses that may be integrated into medium-density residential development include community uses, such as schools, parks, and churches.

Density: Maximum 16 DU/AC

Density restrictions should be adjusted to be compatible with surrounding development.

5.5.4 HIGH-DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

The High-Density Residential land use category is intended to provide opportunities for small-lot, single-family residential and multi-family residential development. Additional uses that may be integrated into high-density residential development include community uses, such as schools, parks, and churches.

Density: Maximum 32 DU/AC

5.5.5 OFFICE

The Office land use category is intended to provide opportunities for a variety of office uses. Appropriate uses may include financial, services or public administration. Office development is intended to provide a buffer between residential uses and more intense commercial uses.

5.5.6 MIXED-USE

The Mixed-Use land use category can often provide a dense, vertically-integrated blend of land uses allowing people to live and work in the same place. Mixed-use development seeks to decrease the use of automobiles and encourage alternative modes of transportation, including walking.

5.5.7 NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL

The Neighborhood Commercial land use category is intended to provide neighborhood-scale retail centers that serve the immediate residential areas. Uses for a Neighborhood Commercial may include small-scale restaurants, retail stores, or offices. Adult uses and more intense uses requiring a conditional uses permit are deemed to be inappropriate within the Neighborhood Commercial land use category.

5.5.8 COMMUNITY COMMERCIAL

The Community Commercial land use category is intended to provide community-scale retail nodes that serve surrounding residential areas. Uses for a Community Commercial may include large-lot, anchor businesses, commercial mixed-use buildings, restaurants, retail stores, or offices.

5.5.9 BUSINESS PARK INDUSTRIAL

The Business Park Industrial (BPI) land use category is intended to provide opportunities for visually-contained warehousing and light manufacturing. The BPI land use category prohibits outside storage. Uses within the BPI

land use category may include concealed storage, research and development, manufacturing assembly, printing, or the manufacturing or storage of food products. Uses shall not create offensive noise, vibration, smoke, dust, lint, odors, heat or glare because this land use category is intended to allow for less intense industrial land uses.

5.5.10 INDUSTRIAL

The Industrial land use category is intended to provide opportunities for heavy commercial and light manufacturing uses that are compatible with neighboring uses.

5.5.11 CIVIC

The Civic land use category is intended to identify land that is either developed or owned by a church, Rio Rancho Public Schools, a private school, a public utility company, the City of Rio Rancho, or other governmental or quasi-governmental entity for the purpose of providing community and/or public facilities. Uses within the Civic land use category will be subject to restrictions defined by any applicable land use plans or zoning that applies to that area.

5.6. IMPLEMENTATION

5.6.1 DISCUSSION

The land use element of the Comprehensive Plan is the dominant element within the plan because it establishes the direction of growth within the City. Moreover, the land use element also sets the policy direction for other elements within the Comprehensive Plan. Therefore, the goals, policies and actions within the land use element must be developed so as not to conflict with the goals, policies, and actions in other elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

5.6.2 GOALS

Goal L-1: Encourage mixed uses – retail, office, and residential centered on pedestrian-oriented developments along principal arterial roads.

Goal L-2: Encourage consolidation of lots to promote a variety of land uses in a planned manner.

Goal L-3: Maintain a balance of land uses throughout the City.

Goal L-4: Support development within City Center that is consistent with development commonly found within a dense urban core.

5.6.3 POLICIES

Policy L-1: Encourage the master planning of developments that establish a community character that considers circulation, landscaping, open space, storm drainage, utilities, and building location and design in the master plan.

Policy L-2: Promote and support neighborhood scale retail activities that are consistent with residential development.

Policy L-3: Promote and support development that incorporates walkability.

Policy L-4: Encourage adequate pedestrian connections to future transit facilities in all residential site development.

Policy L-5: Incorporate suitable developments that can provide an immediate revenue benefit to the City of Rio Rancho within City Center, recognizing land values will drive the pace of making City Center a dense urban core.

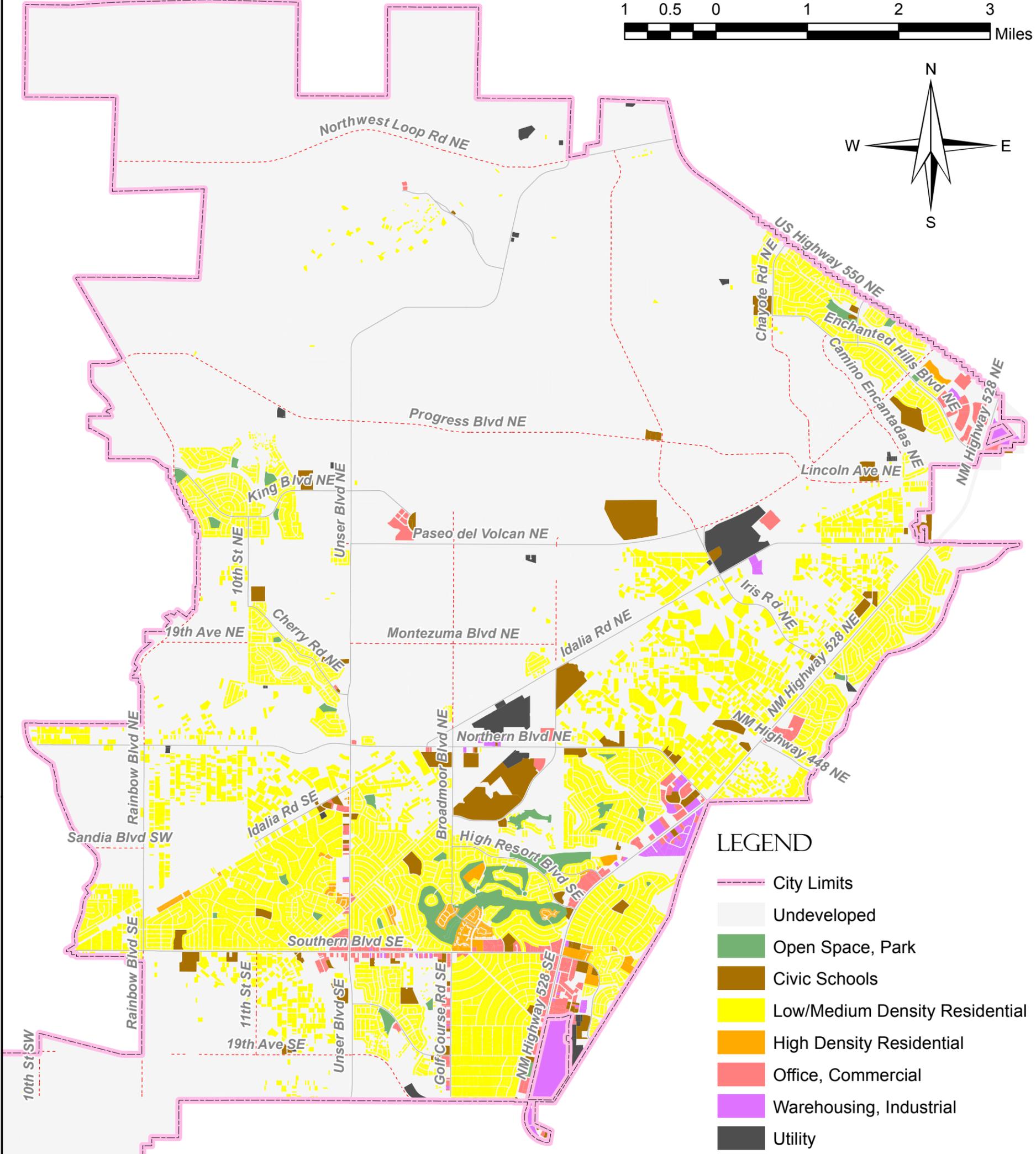
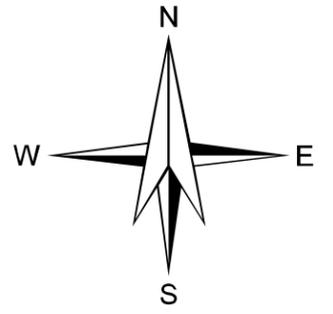
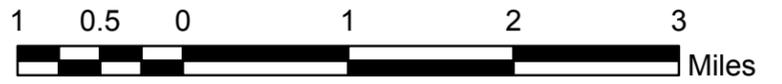
5.6.4 ACTIONS

Action L-1: Identify areas within the City where locating large-scale light industrial businesses such as light manufacturing, warehousing and research facilities are appropriate.

Action L-2: Amend the zoning ordinance to establish specific criteria necessary to establish master plans by developers.

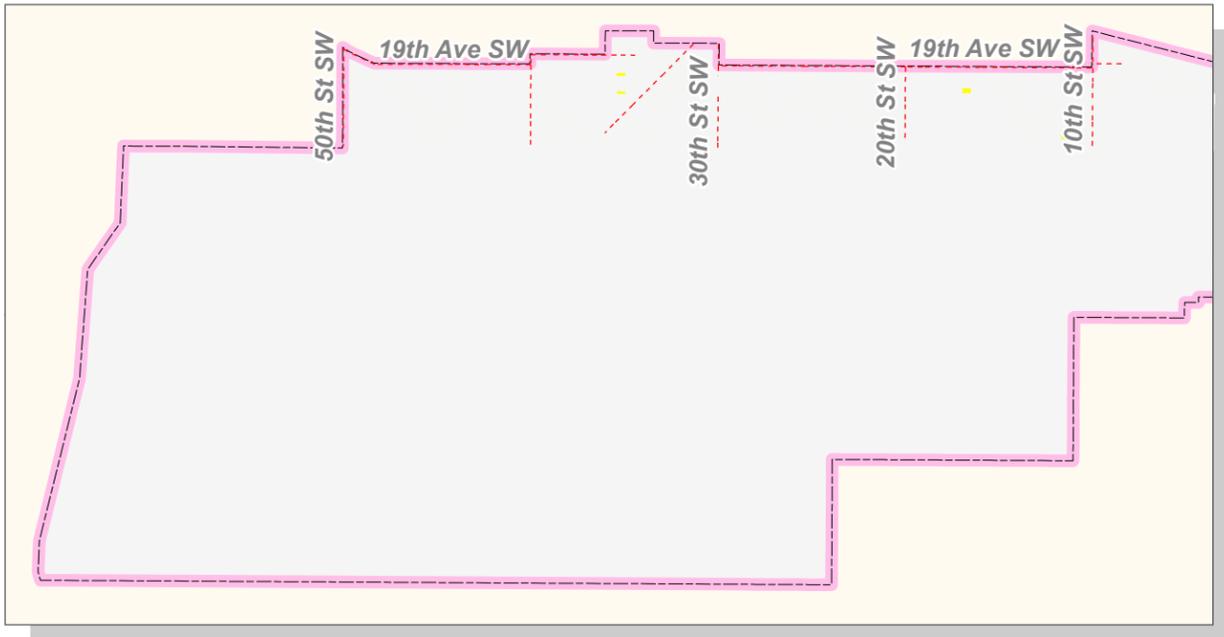
Action L-3: Amend the zoning ordinance so it supports and implements the comprehensive plan.

Action L-4: Offer incentives to land owners that have contiguous lots totaling at least five acres to consolidate their lots.



LEGEND

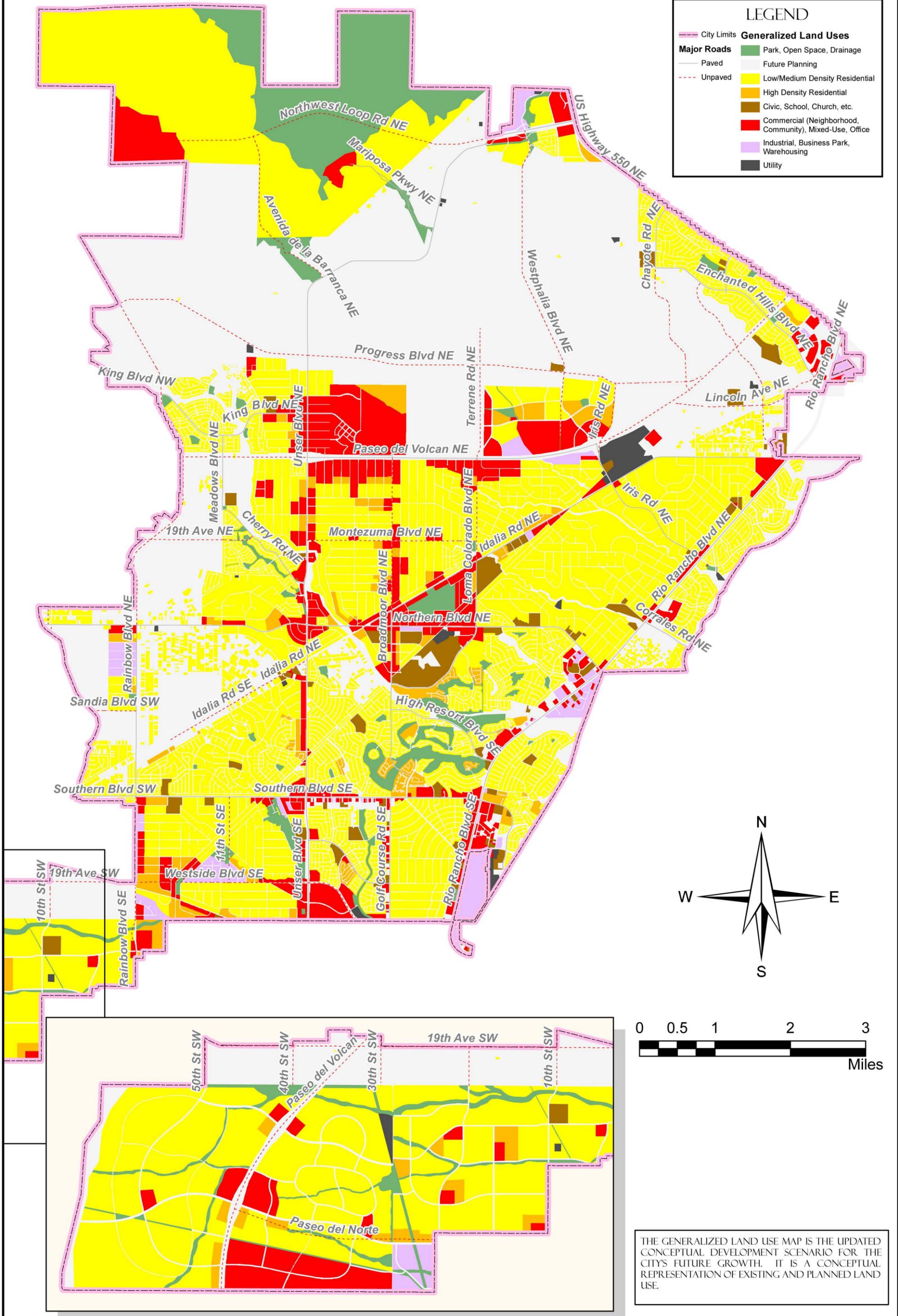
- City Limits
- Undeveloped
- Open Space, Park
- Civic Schools
- Low/Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Office, Commercial
- Warehousing, Industrial
- Utility



MAP L-1: EXISTING LAND USE

MID-REGION COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS 2010 DRAFT PROJECTION

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THE GENERALIZED LAND USE MAP IS THE UPDATED CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT SCENARIO FOR THE CITY'S FUTURE GROWTH. IT IS A CONCEPTUAL REPRESENTATION OF EXISTING AND PLANNED LAND USE.

MAP L-2: GENERALIZED LAND USE (EXISTING AND PLANNED)

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