

# MASTER PLAN



## **Austin, Nevada**

**An Element of the Lander County Master Plan**

**FINAL DRAFT**

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Prepared by the Austin Chamber of Commerce and the Austin Planning Committee



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	4
What is the Plan?.....	4
Why is an update needed?.....	5
What will the Plan do?.....	6
How do you use the Plan?.....	6
 <b>GOALS AND POLICIES INTRO</b> .....	 6
What are goals and policies?.....	6
 <b>BACKGROUND</b> .....	 7
 <b>HISTORY</b> .....	 9
 <b>ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRAINTS</b> .....	 10
 <b>HOUSING</b> .....	 10
 <b>STREETS AND TRANSPORTATION</b> .....	 12
 <b>PUBLIC SERVICES AND FACILITIES</b> .....	 13
Water and Sewer.....	13
Power.....	14
Law Enforcement.....	14
Schools.....	14
Fire.....	14
 <b>RECREATION, TOURISM AND OPEN SPACE</b> .....	 15
 <b>LAND USE DESIGNATIONS</b> .....	 18
 <b>PUBLIC LANDS</b> .....	 26
 <b>GOALS AND POLICIES</b> .....	 27
1. Conservation and Natural Resources.....	27
2. Land Use.....	28
3. Transportation.....	32
4. Public Services and Facilities.....	33
5. Recreation and Tourism.....	34
6. Open Space.....	34
7. Public Lands.....	35



**LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1 -	Location Map.....	8
Figure 2 -	Assessor’s Map.....	8
Figure 3 -	Planning Area Boundary.....	10
Figure 4 -	Streets and Transportation.....	13
Figure 5 -	Recreation.....	17
Figure 6 -	Land Use Plan Austin Core.....	22
Figure 7 -	Land Use Plan Austin Expansion.....	23
Figure 8 -	Land Use Plan Airport Environs.....	24
Figure 9 -	Land Use Plan Broad Perspective.....	25



## **INTRODUCTION**

### **What is the Austin Plan?**

The Austin Plan ("Plan") has been developed in cooperation with the Austin Chamber of Commerce, Austin Planning Committee and residents.

- The Plan guides the town's growth, management of natural resources, provision of public services and facilities and the protection of the public's health, safety and welfare.
- The Plan is implemented via its policies, which are directly linked to, and consistent with, the zoning and land division ordinances for Lander County.
- The Plan is Austin's vision for its future and is an important mechanism that allows for economic expansion, preservation of community character and dialogue with Lander County, the State of Nevada, the Bureau of Land Management and the US Forest Service.
- The Plan details Austin's unique challenges and opportunities and provides policies that will further the intent of its citizens to maintain Austin's culture, economy and attractiveness to residents and visitors.



Stokes Castle

### **Why is this element of the Lander County Master Plan needed?**

The Lander County Master Plan includes many important general policies that guide growth, protection of natural resources, and provision of public services and facilities.

- The Austin Master Plan provides additional policies that recognize the unique characteristics of town.
- The Plan enables Austin to confront challenges that are unique and not experienced in other areas of Lander County.
- The Plan policies can be implemented through ordinances that will pertain only to Austin.



## **What will the Plan do?**

### **For the public good:**

- States Austin's values, goals and objectives and allows for the creation of ordinances to implement Plan policies.
- Becomes a policy guide for physical development.
- Provides a strong legal basis for land use decision-making.
- Uses public resources more efficiently and effectively.
- Avoids decisions that serve only special interests.
- Discourages isolated decision-making.
- Enables the community to apply for grants and other funding opportunities.

### **For economic development and the environment:**

- Projects future land requirements.
- Ensures that adequate public services and facilities are available for future growth.
- Protects existing and future investments and property values.
- Identifies natural constraints and opportunities for protection or enhancement.

## **How do you use this Plan?**

This Plan has a twenty-year (2009-2029) planning horizon, which means that the Plan looks twenty years into the future and plans for that timeframe. The twenty-year time frame allows for the establishment of short, medium and long term goals and policies. Numerous public workshops and meetings occurred following an open and transparent process.

## **GOALS AND POLICIES**

All Plans contain goals and policies.

The **goals** of the community are fundamental to the planning process. Goals form the basis of community plans, considering alternatives and evaluating results. They provide the means for making choices and affirming decisions. For this reason goals need to be clear, simple declarations of what the county hopes to achieve. The goals do not necessarily have to be fully achievable for a plan to be successful. Goals should instead represent long term targets towards which planning efforts are directed.



**Goals are broad statements on what is ultimately desired and form the basis for the direction of the 2008 Austin Master Plan.**

A **policy** is a course of action adopted and pursued in attaining the goals of the community. Policies guide decision-makers and can be directly linked to an ordinance in the form of standards. Typically a policy in the Plan has a corresponding standard in the zoning and land division ordinances or other related ordinances. Policies use the word "should" and standards use the word "shall".

- Of highest importance, policies are implemented through a corresponding ordinance.

**Policies are the implementation tool for this Plan.**

Each major section of the Plan (i.e. "Conservation", "Land Use and Demographics", "Transportation" and "Public Services and Facilities") contain goals and policies, together which give direction and facilitate the implementation of the plan through an ordinance.

**BACKGROUND**

**Austin Fast Facts:**

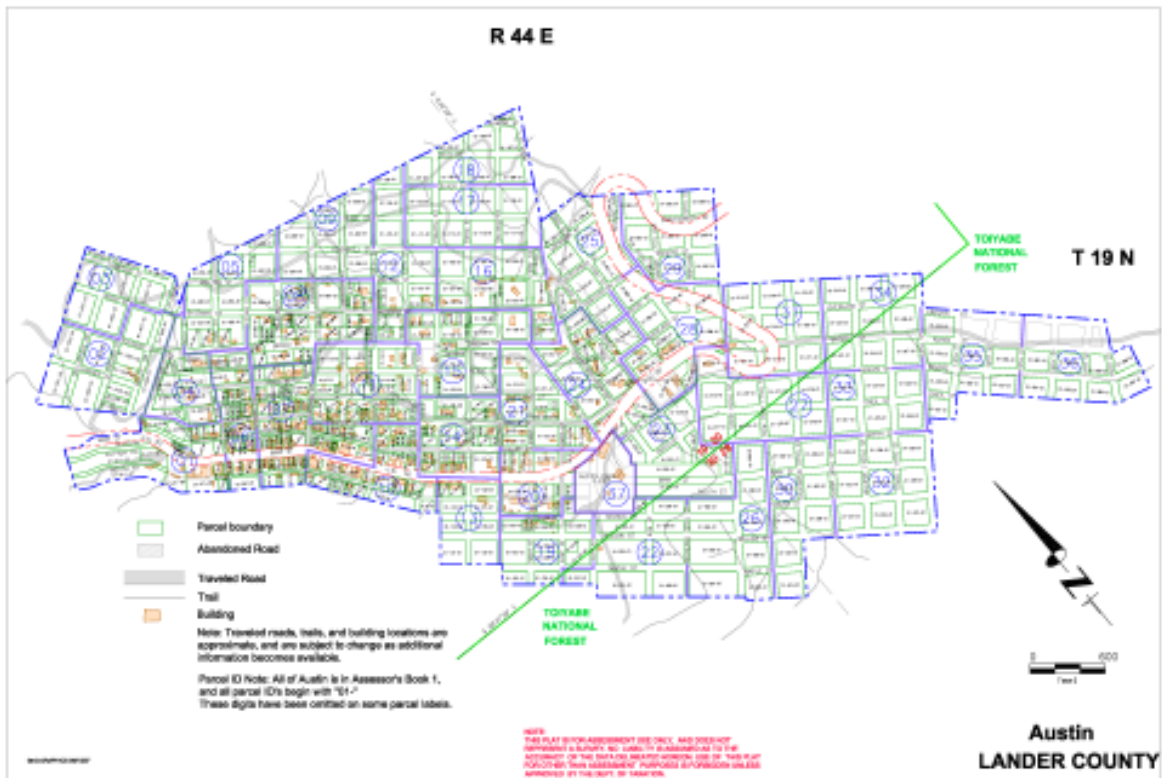
- **Elevation:** 6,656 feet
- **Population:** 309 (State Demographer 2008)
- **Average rainfall:** 13.4 inches of annual rainfall and 89.5 inches of annual snowfall. Growing season = 104 days
- **Average temperature:** July average high of 88°F and low of 54°F, January average high 42°F of low of 19°F.

Austin, a mountain community with vast open vistas, is at the geographic center of Nevada on U.S. Highway 50, 179 miles east of Reno. Its environs include beautiful Reese River Valley to the west. Austin was founded in 1862 when a Pony Express horse kicked over a rock in Pony Canyon and started a rush for the rich silver ore. By the summer of 1863, Austin and the Reese River Mining District had a population of 10,000 persons. In that year, Austin was made the County seat of Lander County, which at that time included Eureka, White Pine, and Elko Counties. In short time a lumber mill had been built along with four hundred homes. There were schools, churches, hotels, stores and, of course, the required number of saloons and pleasure houses. Many of the structures were of stone, adobe and brick, which minimized the damage from fires.

**Figure 1 – Location Map**



**Figure 2 – Assessor's Map**

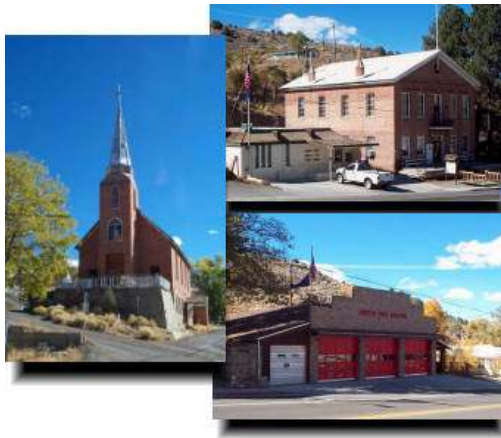




## HISTORY

The Nevada Central Railroad was built in 1881 and aided in mining developments and enhanced Austin's position as a commercial center. When silver production dropped, the area switched to uranium and then tungsten followed by turquoise. Austin has been the center of the turquoise mining industry since 1928. Austin today is the center of a vast cattle and sheep ranching area and offers some of the finest fishing and deer hunting in the west. Austin's population has diminished and many of the old buildings have been removed, but the "spirit" of Austin is much the same today as it was in the 1860s. Austin currently has an area population of approximately 450, which includes the general vicinity in Reese River Valley. Tourism/recreation, ranching and mining are important economic activity in the Austin area. As one of the early mining towns, Austin it is comparatively unspoiled and is an excellent example of things as they were.

Austin is fast becoming a hub for cultural and heritage tourism due to central location and abundance of historic sites. A considerable effort is underway to restore and renovate many of its commercial and residential structures. Austin has eleven sites and building

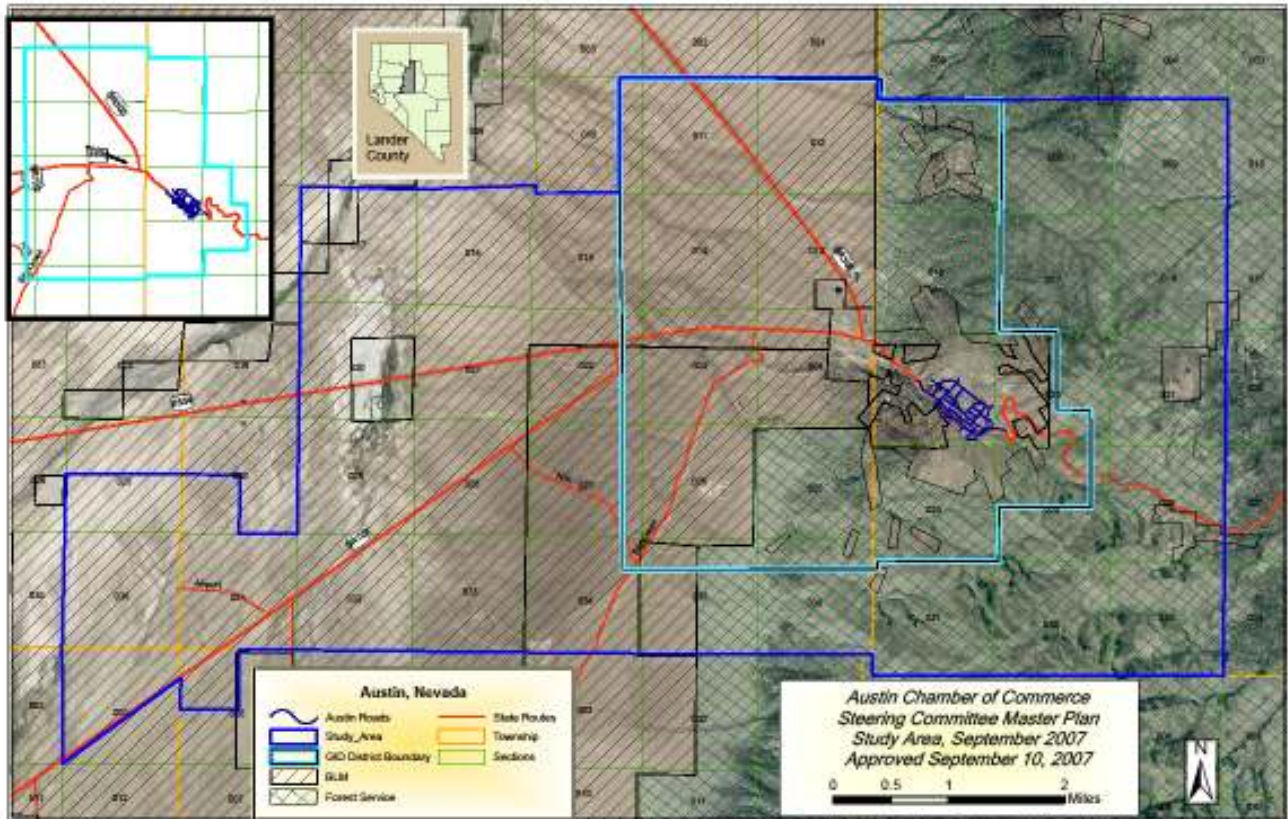


listed on the National Register of Historic Places, some of the most significant historic resources in the County as well as the State of Nevada. The Austin Historical District consists of 37 acres along US 50 Main Street.

Austin is experiencing strong interest in renewable energy. Two sites in close proximity are expected to be producing power in 2010, with several others to follow. The lower Grass Valley area, Smoky Valley, and the Reese River Geothermal areas are being developed.

Austin continues to offer a variety of commercial activities for tourists and residents. The community relies heavily on the tourist trade, ranching, support services, as well as activities associated with the cyclical nature of mining.

**Figure 3 – Planning Area Boundary**



## ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRAINTS

Historically, the major environmental constraint in Austin is its topography. Steep hillsides on both the north and south sides of town present a development challenge as well as a natural view shed that is very important to the character of Austin. Pony Canyon's drainage runs directly through the center of town from east to west, culminating in the Reese River Valley. FEMA has mapped the canyon for flood hazard potential and this has placed a burden on development. The State has developed drainage improvements that should have eliminated the flood potential for Austin. The FEMA maps should be amended to reflect these improvements.

## HOUSING

The town of Austin is located in southern Lander County. The economy of Lander County is based on mining, with cyclical production cycles that influence overall county economic activity and local housing demand and stock. Below are highlights from the Lander County housing gap study. Although the study was county-wide, some aspects can be equated to Austin while others cannot.



- A "gap analysis" is the difference between the current housing stock and projected housing demand in Lander County.
- Approximately 19 percent of housing stock in Lander County was built before 1970. For comparison, 18 percent of the state of Nevada's housing stock and 49 percent of the nation's housing stock was built before 1970.
- From 1970 to 1990, 60 percent of Lander County's housing stock was built as compared to 40 percent and 39 percent for the state of Nevada and the nation, respectively.
- The age of Lander County's housing stock will impact economic development and diversification efforts.
- From 1970 to 2007, Lander County's average population growth was estimated to be 2.11 percent, which ranks Lander County thirteenth among Nevada's seventeen counties.
- Also from 1970 to 2007, Lander County had the fifth largest variability in population growth rates of any county in the state of Nevada.
- The low growth rate and high variability in population growth has inhibited housing development in Lander County.
- However, with recent developments in the local mining industry, Lander County has realized a population increase over the past two years.
- Unemployment in Lander County was 3.6 percent in 2007 which was less than the state unemployment average of 4.8 percent and the national unemployment rate of 4.6 percent.
- Employment and entrepreneurial trends in Lander County have been increasing lately with the increased mineral industry activity.
- Housing supply or stock in Lander County is old in comparison to the state and nation.
- The trend in building new, single-family, detached housing and mobile homes in Lander County has declined from 1970 to 2007. This decrease in home and mobile home building will impact housing stock availability.



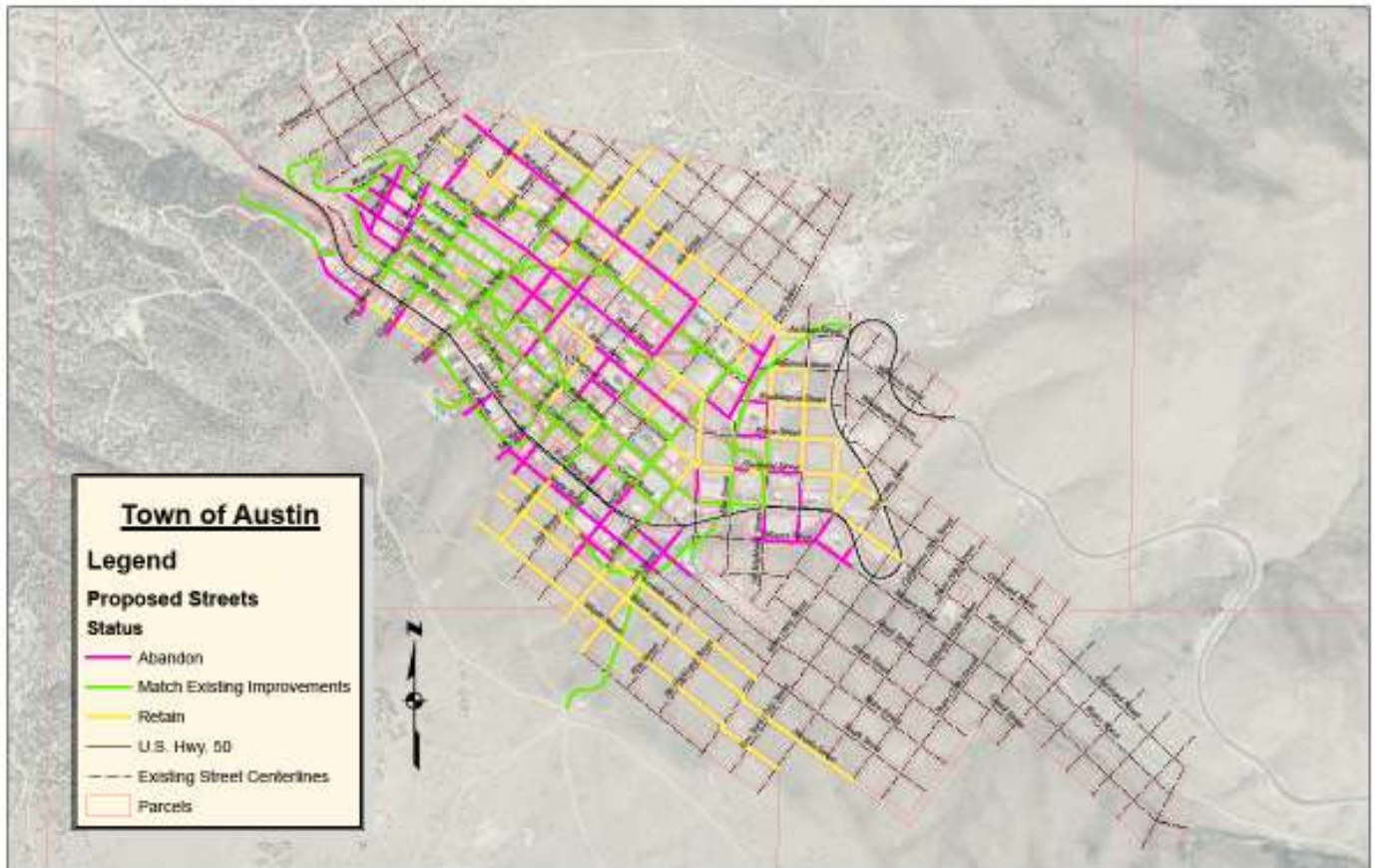
- Housing demand in Lander County will be tied to forecasts of employment growth or decline. If employment grew at 1.9 percent annually, employment in Lander County would be estimated to be 2,802.
- Using factors for population per employee, vacancy rates and the number of uninhabitable house as 129 homes, Lander County is projected to have a housing deficit of 871 homes.
- If all Lander County homes built before 1970 are assumed uninhabitable, the housing deficit grows to 1,269 homes.
- Using Housing and Urban Development procedures, the 2000 Census family income in Lander County indicates 1,027 families or 65.4 percent of all Lander County families could qualify for a single-family home. For manufactured housing, 1,085 families or 69.1 percent of Lander County families would qualify for a mortgage.

Adequate and affordable housing is essential for supporting economic development and diversification in Lander County. A result of the study is that the age of the Lander County housing stock and housing affordability need to be addressed in order to enhance future county economic development and diversification efforts.

## **STREETS AND TRANSPORTATION**

Austin is bisected by US 50, which serves as Main Street. The secondary streets are loosely based on the original Town Plat. As development over more than a century, the street layout did not always follow the originally-surveyed plat lines. These discrepancies have created a challenge for the community as some homes occupy recorded street rights-of-ways and some streets are not in their recorded location. Other undeveloped streets are in illogical or unfeasible locations. There is a community effort underway to rectify this situation. Options include the reversion to acreage process in the undeveloped areas so that property owners can pursue a more realistic development pattern. Another option being pursued is the lot line adjustment process so that the recorded maps match on-the-ground development.

**Figure 4 – Streets and Transportation**



**PUBLIC SERVICES AND FACILITIES**

**Water and Sewer**

Lander County has an adopted Water Resources Plan that describes in great detail the following discussion.

Lander County Sewer and Water District #2 serves a 560-acre area of the Town of Austin. The District currently serves approximately 120 residential and 40 commercial customers. Additionally, there are 93 inactive service connections and 20 standing order fees. The District is in the process of extending its main to serve the US Forest Service offices west of town in the Midas Canyon Road area. The District already serves Austin schools. Future extensions will be needed to the lower valley and airport areas.



The District utilizes primarily groundwater along with small amounts of surface water from two springs under a US Forest Service permit. A groundwater well exists at Reese River Valley, and two horizontal wells exist, one in Pony Canyon and one in Marshall Canyon. The system includes three above ground storage tanks and two underground tanks with a total capacity of 500,000 gallons. Existing customers utilize 74 percent of the water currently under permit for the groundwater wells and 50 percent of all water resources including the water from the local springs.

Austin is located in Basin 56 (Upper Reese River Valley) and the basin is open to further water appropriations. The perennial yield in the basin exceeds existing groundwater rights by approximately 7,000 acre feet. Irrigated agriculture and mining are other important water users in the basin.

Based projections for future growth linked to available land, the existing service area could accommodate approximately 500 connections assuming development at one residential unit per acre. Additional capacity will be required for higher densities and the potential for disposal of BLM land for additional residential, commercial and industrial development.

Austin is served by a gravity-feed sewer running to the sewer ponds west of town. The facility services 200 hookups with a capacity of 800.

## **Power**

The main source of electric power for Austin is the 230,000 volt line running from the Fort Churchill Power Station. The Austin substation distribution line serves Austin, Reese River Valley and the Lander County portion of Big Smoky Valley.

## **Law Enforcement**

Austin is served by the Lander County Sheriff and the Nevada Highway Patrol.

## **Schools**

One K-12 school serves Austin.

## **Fire**

A 12-member volunteer fire department serves Austin and includes a small brush pumper, a fire truck, a former BLM brush truck and a rescue rig with extrication equipment. Austin is a member of the Nevada Fire Safe Council and is working with the Nevada Division of Forestry and the BLM to have a fire crew stationed in the area during the summer. In



addition, Austin has a cooperative fire fighting agreement with BLM and the US Forest Service.

### **Ambulance and Medical Services**

A volunteer ambulance service serves Austin. Several volunteer fire firefighters are first responders. Response time is an issue due to large distances between calls. Patients are transported to Fallon or Battle Mountain.

Medical services are available three days a week. The physician comes from Eureka County and Austin is part of the Rural Nevada Health Department program.

### **RECREATION, TOURISM AND OPEN SPACE**

Austin has a wealth of natural resources to be enjoyed by its residents and visitors. Open space in which to recreate is an important resource for the town. The Plan promotes recreational/open space resources for today's population and future generations.

Residents of the town enjoy a multitude of recreational activities throughout the area. Remote areas as well as those close to town have much to offer. "In-town" opportunities include nicely improved parks, ball fields, a swimming pool and a number of access points to miles of mountain bike, equestrian and OHV trails between key points within and through the community. This system of trails can link together schools, parks, community centers and public lands. Hunting and fishing is a valued experience that many residents enjoy. Camping and off-highway vehicle use are very important for recreational activities for residents and tourists.



Toiyabe Range

An "opportunities inventory" for Austin and its environs includes the following and demonstrates the vital connection between the built community and the natural landscape:

- Riparian corridors.
- Trails, trailheads and public access easements.
- Undeveloped and developed camp grounds.
- Significant wildlife habitat and wildlife migration corridors.
- Unique visual and scenic areas, view sheds, scenic vistas, vista points (Stokes Castle) and scenic roadway corridors (US 50).
- Visually important ridgelines, hills, mountains, rock outcroppings and canyons.
- Historic and prehistoric cultural resources.
- Camping, hunting and fishing opportunities.
- Off-highway vehicle areas.

**Figure 5 - Recreation**

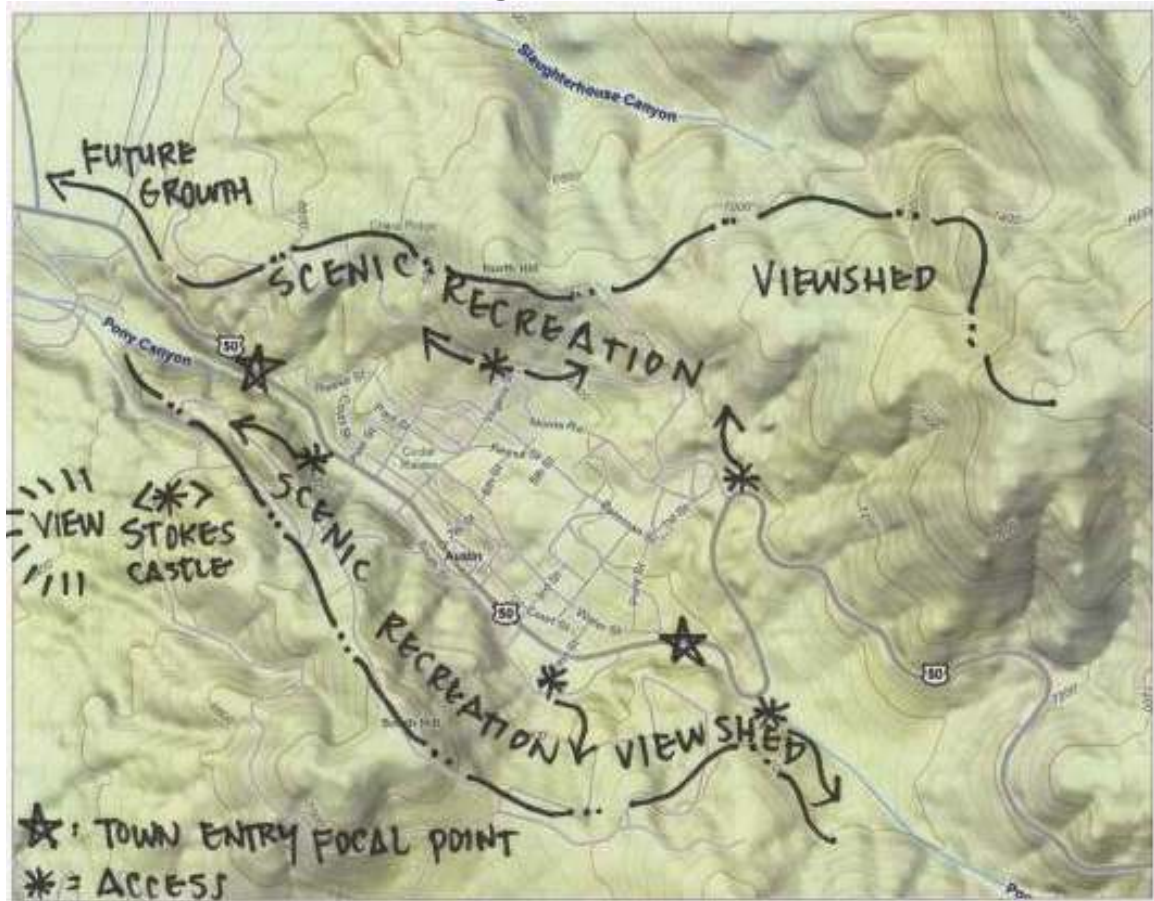


Figure 5 provides a snapshot of recreational and open space potential in the vicinity of Austin. The wide-open spaces of the Reese River Valley are also vitally important in the planning area. Figure 5 graphically illustrates the following key issues important to Austin residents:

- Maintain public access to all existing roads and trails.
- Protect the scenic recreation viewshed by:
  - Sensitive and logical development of private lands.
  - Disposal of BLM lands (application N-79236, Section 19, T19N, R44E), as soon as possible, with preference given to the Town of Austin and Lander County for public purposes uses.
- Protection of Stokes Castle as an important historical landmark and scenic vista point.
- Encourage recreational trail connectivity between Austin Summit, Austin, and the Reese River Valley.



## LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

Currently there are more than 340 parcels in Austin including patented mining claims. There are numerous title discrepancies due to inconsistencies between existing development and the original town plat. Parcels in town are typically small ranging from less than 5,000 square feet to some that are larger than one acre.

Sizable land holdings are available in the lower valley west of Austin. There are 200 acres of lands available including 80 acres owned by the County in the Midas Canyon Road area. Lander County also owns another 100 acres in that area and includes the Roping Arena. There are large tracts of public lands in excess of 20,000 acres administered by the BLM that are available for disposal in the Reese River Valley.

It is recognized that, at this time, most of this land is only suitable for ranching, agriculture and energy development. However, future expansion of community services should occur west of town towards the airport and capitalize on the potential disposal of these lands. The lands surrounding the airport have high potential for industrial and service-oriented commercial development. Approximately 2,000 acres are available around the airport.

- **The intent of the Land Use Plan is to allow flexibility for land owners and the community while protecting and promoting what makes Austin a special place.**

### RESIDENTIAL (R):

The Residential (R) land use designation is for residential uses in both the developed community and surrounding lands in Reese River Valley identified for community expansion. The intent of the Residential land use designation is to allow the property owner flexibility in developing their property and maintain existing uses on the site. Use may include a broad range of non-residential business-oriented uses that are complementary to the character of Austin. The Residential area west of town and north of US 50 may develop sooner than south of US 50 due to planned infrastructure in that area.

It is recognized that some areas may benefit from the allowance of recreational vehicles parked on a lot as the primary use. Time limits may be required for length of stay and the vehicles cannot be rented.



### **COMMERCIAL (C):**

**Land for a variety of commercial uses including: retail sales, professional office space, movie theaters, etc.**

Future commercial uses should be encouraged along US 50, in and around the existing population centers they serve. Tourist and traveler related commercial services should be encouraged. Some commercial uses may be appropriate in Reese River Valley as the town expands to that identified growth area. Commercial uses in the outlying areas should provide for the daily needs of local residents and the travelling public.

### **HISTORIC COMMERCIAL (HC):**

**Specific uses in the downtown historic core as well as appropriate new uses that compliment the character of downtown.**

Austin residents have identified the need to protect the historical character of downtown. New development and additions to existing uses should be carefully scrutinized to ensure their compatibility with Historic Austin. This category, as all others in the Plan, is intended as a guideline with property owners encouraged to participate, but not required.



### **INDUSTRIAL COMMERCIAL (IC):**

**Land designated for a variety of industrial uses including but not limited to: warehousing/storage, manufacturing, and research and development. Commercial support uses typify this designation as well.**

Industrial Commercial land uses are encouraged around Austin airport with a new access point at US 50. The county and town should market land around the Austin Airport as



potential new industrial areas. Depending on the specific use involved and surrounding land uses, buffers to protect neighboring property against noise, glare from lights and other nuisances should be considered.

### **PUBLIC (P):**

**Public facilities, buildings and land owned by the county and for use by the general public including, but not limited to: sewer and water treatment plants, schools, county offices, parks, recreational uses, etc.**

Public land uses are located throughout town and the planning area. These include the airport, the sewer and water treatment plant, schools, post office, governmental facilities, etc.

Playing fields, parks and community facilities are typical of this designation and are also usually part of local school facilities. In addition, trailheads and public access points should be encouraged and designated as such.

### **AGRICULTURE AND OPEN SPACE (A):**

**Lands suitable for agriculture, range, low-density residential uses, other similar uses and/or to remain in their natural state with no development allowed due to their aesthetic value, open space value, historical value, environmentally sensitive land or other constraints preventing improvements of any type.**

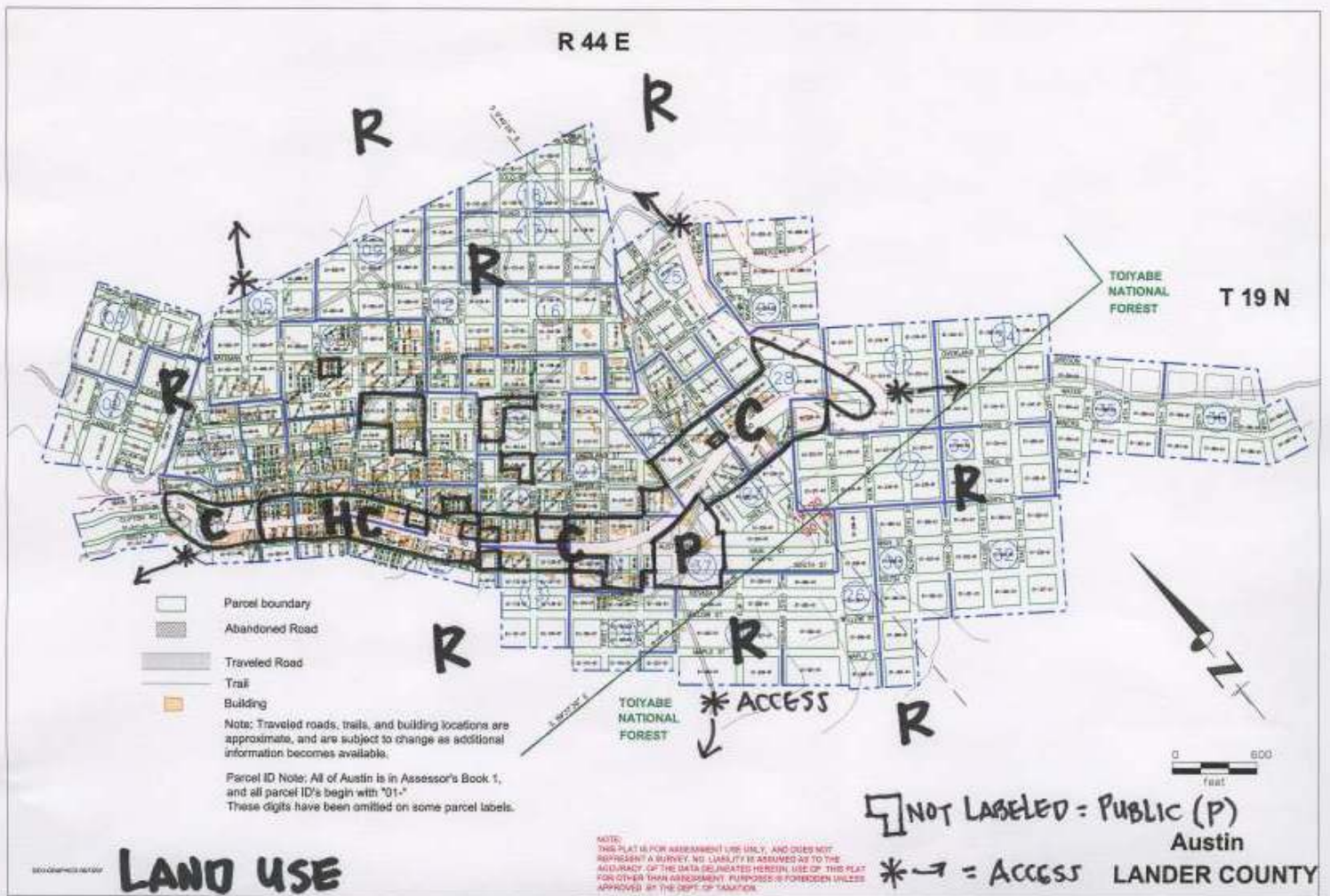


Vast open spaces and scenic vistas are valuable assets for Austin. Many residents choose to live in town because of its remoteness and scenic beauty. Tourists visiting the area are attracted by the high mountains, broad valleys and panoramic vistas. The hillsides above town are a valuable visual resource to the community.

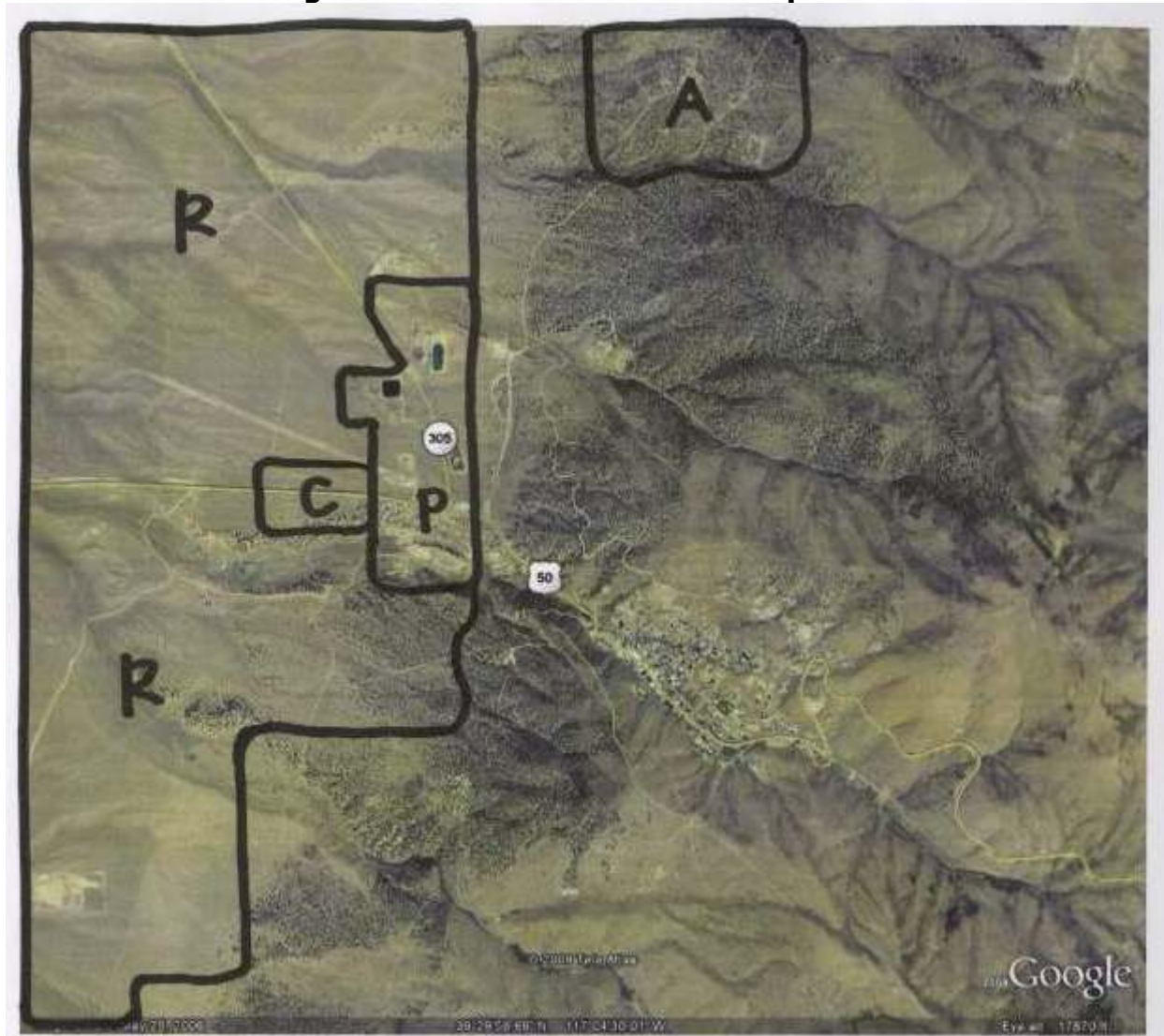


- The following Land Use Maps are guidelines for future development and do not affect existing development or rights in any manner. The land use designations correspond to the descriptions on the previous pages.

**Figure 6 – Land Use Plan Austin Core**



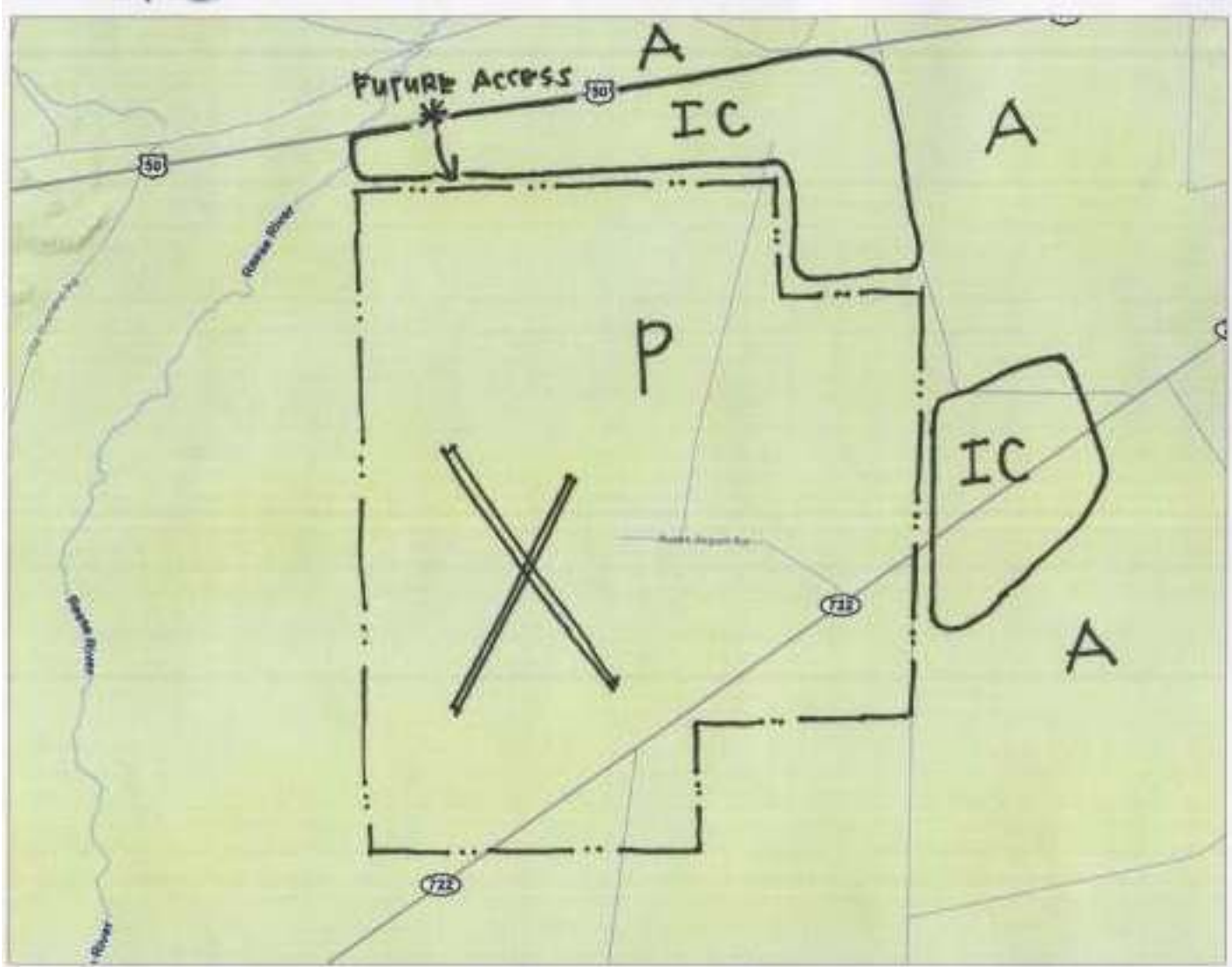
**Figure 7 – Land Use Plan Austin Expansion**



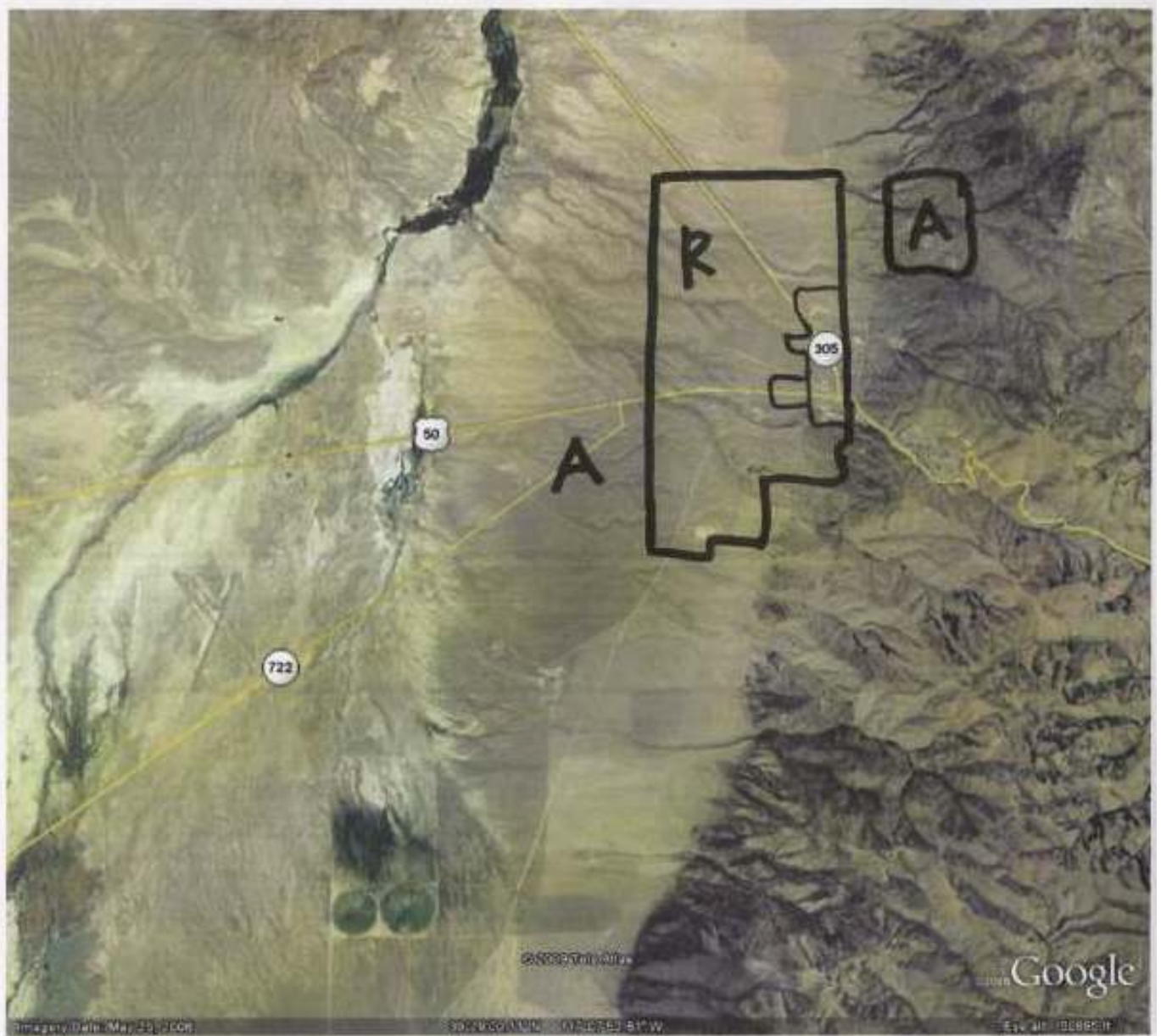
**Notes:**

- The "A" designated area northeast of highway 305 is intended for larger lot quality residential development while also allowing for a wide range of supporting and compatible non-residential uses.
- Residential development is encouraged on disposed BLM lands both north and south of US 50. Services are currently planned in the near term north of US 50 and in the long term south of US 50.

Figure 8 – Land Use Plan Airport Environs



**Figure 9 – Land Use Plan Austin Broad Perspective**





## **PUBLIC LANDS**

Austin is similar to most of Nevada's rural communities. The Town is surrounded by vast amounts of public lands. While public lands offer a large variety of economic and recreational resources, these same lands constrain private development. This Plan provides the policies and vision to accommodate potential BLM land disposals in a prudent manner.



Other large areas surrounding Austin will remain in federal management. It is important to have a strong local voice in how these lands are managed.

- The Plan represents a review of existing and emerging public lands issues that are of importance to Austin as it works with federal agencies under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other public processes.

Within the Plan are descriptions of issues and opportunities relating to public lands and how best to work collaboratively with the federal planning partners, most notably Bureau of Land Management (BLM), US Forest Service, Department of Defense and the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

- The Plan enables the federal land management agencies to better understand and respond to the concerns and needs of Austin.
- Planning, effective communication and coordination by Nevada's governments, in concert with its citizens, can establish a set of policies for the proper use of these lands and to take advantage of the "consistency" language in Section 202(c)(9) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA).



- Section 202(c)(9) governs BLM Planning and directs the BLM to give consideration to appropriate state, local, and tribal lands in the development of land use plans for federal lands.
- The BLM is to provide for meaningful public involvement of state and local government officials in the development of land use plans, regulations and decisions for federal lands.
- The BLM will review each Resource Management Plan (RMP) and proposed federal action for consistency with the Austin Master Plan and will attempt to make the RMPs and proposed actions compatible with the Plan to the extent that the Secretary of the Interior finds consistent with federal law and the purpose of FLPMA.

## **GOALS AND POLICES**

Goals and policies are the tools that are utilized to express a communities voice and vision for the future.

### **1. CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

#### **Goal 1-1: Mitigate environmental impacts related to growth.**

Policy 1-1A: FEMA Flood Insurance maps should be revised for Pony Canyon through Austin to reflect the State's drainage improvements that eliminate flood hazard potential. In all other areas, the FEMA maps should be used as the basis for delineation of floodplains and floodways, unless more recent research and surveys are presented which establish a more accurate delineation.

Policy 1-1B: All new plans for development within or adjacent to a floodplain should show the project's relationship to the floodplain.

Policy 1-1C: Development that lies within all identified floodways should be prohibited.

Policy 1-1D: The County Engineer should review all proposed flood and drainage improvements prior to approval.

Policy 1-1E: The County Engineer should review all proposed development on slopes greater than 15% to minimize excessive grading and other negative visual impacts.



Policy 1-1F Hillside property owners should apply for reversion to acreages so that development can occur in a more logical pattern. Design standards should be utilized as part of the planned unit development process to ensure proper access, grading, drainage are provided as well as the protection of natural features.

Policy 1-1G: All proposed development on slopes greater than 30% should be prohibited unless it can be demonstrated that proper mitigation can be provided to prevent erosion and other negative impacts to the satisfaction of the County Engineer.

Policy 1-1H: Proposed development should be designed to be compatible with riparian areas wetlands and playas to protect wildlife habitat, floodways, water quality and quantity and scenic values. New development should be consistent with adopted guidelines.

Policy 1-1I: Established water rights and ground water supplies should be protected.

Policy 1-1J: The County Engineer/Staff should require any new development near a fault line to provide mapping of the fault line and any mitigation that is necessary to protect property.

Policy 1-1K: Cultural and scenic resources should be protected unless:

1. The site or resource has been reviewed by the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office and Archaeology and it has been found to be insignificant, or
2. There is an overriding public benefit from the project and mitigation measures to offset the loss are made part of the project.

## **2. LAND USE**

**GOAL 2-1: Establish and maintain consistency between the Plan and the County zoning ordinance.**

Policy 2-1A: Pursue the disposal of appropriate public lands between Austin and Austin Airport for community expansion.

Policy 2-1B: Dispose of BLM lands in Section 19, T19N, R44E (application N-79236 – historical townsite district) as soon as possible.



Policy 2-1C: Development proposals and plan amendments should be consistent with the zoning for the parcel, the Land Division Ordinance and the Plan policies prior to approval.

Policy 2-1D: All zoning maps and other appropriate documents should be updated when changes occur and these changes should be highlighted and distributed to all appropriate County agencies.

**GOAL 2-2: Identify lands that are suitable for industrial, commercial and residential development.**

Policy 2-2A: Development should be promoted in close proximity to existing services and roads to ensure that adequate infrastructure is available. Austin should retain existing commercial and industrial uses in these areas and support additional areas where appropriate in Reese River Valley.

Policy 2-2B: New industrial development should be encouraged adjacent to the Austin Airport and where services can be provided. All development should recognize and be consistent with the Austin Airport Layout Plan and the Austin Airport Standards Manual. In addition, "residential airpark" uses should be considered, where appropriate, in the future.

Policy 2-2C: Austin should work with state and federal economic development agencies to identify potential industrial and commercial land uses that are suitable for the town.

Policy 2-2D: Austin should help facilitate the exchange of federal (BLM) lands into private ownership through the BLM's joint selection process as soon as possible. Of highest priority, is BLM application N-79236, Section 19, T19N, R44E.

Policy 2-2E: Austin should prepare marketing material to solicit industrial and commercial interest and highlight the town's positive attributes (climate, location, recreational opportunity, etc.). The most current information about the town should be made available using the latest technology including a new town website.



Policy 2-2F: In fill development should be encouraged where water, sewer and utility services already exist.

Policy 2-2G: The Austin Town boundary should be identical to the water district boundary and all residential uses within this area should be in keeping with the character of Austin. This character allows for flexibility of uses in addition to residential that complement the community.

**GOAL 2-3: Public services and facilities should be financed and constructed concurrently with new development that will use that infrastructure.**

Policy 2-3A: All new projects should be reviewed to ensure that new public infrastructure costs directly associated with new development are paid by the new development. Future residential growth should be coordinated with local sewer and water districts, along with electrical and natural gas providers to ensure there is adequate capacity. The Austin School District should also be consulted when reviewing development applications involving new residential units.

Policy 2-3B: Address future growth corridors to ensure that adequate public services and facilities can be provided and financed.

**GOAL 2-4: Preserve agricultural lands.**

Policy 2-4A: Existing agricultural practices should be protected and encouraged through appropriate zoning and incentives. Non-agricultural development should be located adjacent to, but not within existing agricultural lands.

Policy 2-4B: Agricultural zoning should be maintained or implemented in areas where agricultural activities are to remain or be encouraged.

Policy 2-4C: Austin should work with federal agencies on maintaining rangeland.

**GOAL 2-5: Suitable housing should be available for all residents.**

Policy 2-5A: Develop and coordinate policies in an Affordable Housing Needs Assessment with this Plan to ensure that the Assessment's findings are addressed and implemented.



Policy 2-5B: Plan and zoning designations should promote a mix of housing types.

Policy 2-5C: The Town should seek state and federal funding for housing assistance programs for the purpose of repairing existing housing units and construction of new low income and senior housing units.

**GOAL 2-6: Provide adequate parks and recreational facilities.**

Policy 2-6A: Prepare a plan that prioritizes the types of improved recreational facilities wanted by the residents of the county with a special emphasis on the creation and expansion of youth facilities.

Policy 2-6B: A Regional Development Authority should encourage private recreational facilities by identifying financing alternatives and incentives.

Policy 2-6C: The maps contained in this plan outline recreational and public access opportunities in the planning area. This plan represents Austin's vision for future recreational and open space potential and should qualify Austin for all grants including the State's Question 1 program.

**GOAL 2-7: Preserve Austin's compact rural character and identity.**

Policy 2-7A: Preserve and enhance historic architecture, mixed uses, development in scale with its surroundings and a pedestrian environment in the business district through creative zoning and design standards. The Land Use plan maps should act as a guideline for the historic area and be used on a voluntary basis. Review of historical proposals should stay at the Town level.

Policy 2-7B: Encourage Austin's unique community identity by encouraging trail maintenance, picnic areas, placement of trash receptacles, proactive sign and lighting standards and other mechanisms to make the community a good place to live.

Policy 2-7C: Develop an aggressive marketing program and utilize a maintained town website to advertise the unique attributes of the community and why it is such a great place to live. Explain to residents, would-be residents and visitors why standards and policies are in place and how the character and identity of the community will be protected.



**GOAL 2-8: Austin will have a sustainable year-round economy with increasing employment opportunities for its residents.**

Policy 2-8A: Develop a comprehensive economic development strategy, linked to progressive land use design that will diversify the economy away from solely tourist-based. Traditional local businesses should be promoted and encouraged to diversify.

Policy 2-8B: Seek out and promote the establishment of businesses and industries that improve the character and quality of life, such as high tech industries, arts and education, and more child care facilities.

**GOAL 2-9: Annexation should proceed only when it is in the best interest of Austin and its citizens.**

Policy 2-9A: Develop an annexation plan, in coordination with Lander County through a "sphere of influence", to ensure that the most logical and fiscally reasonable lands are incorporated into the town of Austin. Annexation areas should correspond to areas identified for disposal.

**GOAL 2-10: Encourage in-fill development to support existing infrastructure and community character.**

Policy 2-10A: Develop special zoning, incentives, and design standards to encourage in-fill projects where services and infrastructure already exist.

**3. TRANSPORTATION**

**GOAL 3-1: Improve and preserve access to and within the Austin.**

Policy 3-1A: Correct the mapping discrepancies in Austin as soon as possible. Promote the abandonment of mapped roadways that do not exist and the acknowledgement of roads that do exist to relieve property owners of these discrepancies.

Policy 3-1B: Develop and maintain a roadway capital improvement program to ensure roads are maintained and improved when necessary.

Policy 3-1C: Discourage direct access on and off the highway to neighboring land uses to prevent congestion and accidents from vehicles entering and



leaving the highway. Frontage roads should be encouraged to provide safe egress and ingress. Future driveway cuts fronting on highways should be allowed only after approval by the County Engineer, Nevada Department of Transportation and the Nevada Highway Patrol.

Policy 3-1D: Develop and maintain a roadway access map that identifies the logical location of new access points that can accommodate future hillside development.

#### **4. PUBLIC SERVICES AND FACILITIES**

**GOAL 4-1: Maintain adequate levels of town and county services and infrastructure.**

Policy 4-1A: Austin should coordinate the provision of services with population growth. Provision of water, sanitary sewer, streets and highways and other public services and facilities should be concurrent with new development.

Policy 4-1B: Standardize the provision of public services and facilities town-wide.

Policy 4-1C: Identify current capacity and short-term (5 years or less) needs for water and sewer services.

Policy 4-1D: Require multi-family housing units of four units or more to hook up to community water and sewer systems when available.

Policy 4-1E: Require commercial and industrial development to be connected to community water and sewer systems unless it can be demonstrated to the County Engineer that alternative services are adequate.

**GOAL 4-2: Maintain existing schools and provide for new schools as the need is identified.**

Policy 4-2A: The Town should coordinate with the School District to determine both short and long-term needs concerning classroom space and construction of new facilities.

Policy 4-2B: Encourage the disposal of surplus County and School District land to allow for economic expansion.



**GOAL 4-3: Ensure that medical and health services are accessible to all residents.**

Policy 4-3A: Adequate health facilities should be provided to serve the needs of the residents of the Austin.

**GOAL 4-4: Manage growth through logical and concurrent development of infrastructure and services.**

Policy 4-4A: Rate of development will be regulated through progressive zoning and design standards linked to the ability to provide public services and facilities.

Policy 4-4B: Public drinking water supply, solid waste facilities, wastewater facilities, health services and other services will be designed proactively and provided concurrently with development, and as a condition of development.

## **5. RECREATION AND TOURISM**

**GOAL 5-1: Increase year round recreational and tourism opportunities within and surrounding the Austin.**

Policy 5-1A: Austin should promote recreational opportunities for all user groups and promote overnight visits.

Policy 5-1B: Austin should expand its website and promote tourism opportunities.

Policy 5-1C: Austin should diversify its existing outdoor recreation opportunities.

Policy 5-1D: Austin should develop a "recreational opportunities inventory" that highlights the wealth of natural assets found in the area.

## **6. OPEN SPACE**

**GOAL 6-1: Capitalize on the unique physical topography and environmental resources that surround Austin for the enjoyment of its citizens.**

Policy 6-1A: Develop a comprehensive system of viewpoints and pedestrian trails on and to the hilltops of the community, as well as access points to reach these amenities.



Policy 6-1B: Utilize multiple funding sources including the State's Question 1 funds to develop new trails and improve existing opportunities to enjoy Austin's open space.

Policy 6-1C: Identify public lands surrounding the community that should not be disposed of due to their open space, visual and recreational values.

Policy 6-1D: Access to public lands and open space should be maintained and created through the provision of access easements at the time of new parcelization or subdivisions. Existing historic public access should be maintained wherever possible.

## **7. PUBLIC LANDS**

### **GOAL 7-1: Increase the positive relationships between plan implementation, agency coordination and local voice.**

Agency coordination of planning is mandated by federal laws.

- The Federal Land Policy and Management Act, 43 U.S. § 1701, declared the National Policy to be that "the national interest will be best realized if the public lands and their resources are periodically and systematically inventoried and their present and future use is projected through a land use planning process coordinated with other federal and state planning efforts." See 43 USC §1701 (a) (2).
- 43 U.S.C. § 1712 (c) sets forth the "criteria for development and revision of land use plans." Section 1712 (c) (9) refers to the coordinate status of a county which is engaging in land use planning, and requires that the "Secretary [of interior] shall" "coordinate the land use inventory, planning, and management activities... with the land use planning and management programs of other federal departments and agencies and of the State and local governments within which the lands are located." This provision gives preference to those counties which are engaging in a land use planning program over the general public, special interest groups of citizens, and even counties not engaging in a land use planning program.

Federal land management policies and procedures, land transactions, and compatibility with the local Land Use goals are of critical importance to the Town's residents. As outlined The Austin Chamber of Commerce should be active participants in reviewing proposed land transactions and public land policies, seeks status as a cooperating agency in NEPA processes, and makes every effort to continually review and update its local planning documents to reflect the need for access to and uses of public lands.



Policy 7-1A: All proposed actions on State and Federal lands should be brought to the attention of Austin for purposes of review to determine if the federal program is in conformance with this Plan pursuant to NEPA requirements.

Policy 7-1B: Austin will participate with State and Federal agencies on actions that affect public lands within the county, specifically as they are relevant to Austin. Studies concerning impacts of proposed actions affecting public lands should be conducted by professionals. Copies of resource studies should be provided to the Town as soon as available.

Policy 7-1C: Emphasize consistency between this Plan and all federal land use plans which apply to Austin and its environs.

Policy 7-1E: Austin requests inclusion as a recipient of the appropriate BLM Resource Advisory Council (RAC) meeting minutes and agendas.

**GOAL 7-2: Monitor and actively participate in the management of public lands.**

Policy 7-2A: Support the concept of Multiple Use Management as an overriding philosophy for management of the public lands based on multiple use and sustainable yield concepts, and in a way that will conserve natural resources.

Policy 7-2B: Protect and preserve the quality of the environment, and economic, cultural, ecological, scenic, historical and archeological values; protect and preserve wildlife habitat values compatible with economic opportunities needed to provide for long term benefits for the people of Austin now, and future generations.

Policy 7-2C: Support coordination of public land use policies and actions with all appropriate federal, state, and local entities and the components of the Plan.

**Policy 7-2D:** Promote the development of renewable energy on public lands surrounding Austin while taking a careful look at their cumulative impacts on other multiple uses, aesthetics and the need to preserve open space community character.



### **GOAL 7-3: Federal land transactions should benefit Austin.**

Austin has identified many parcels for public purposes and for economic development. The specific land transaction program is to be guided by the following policies:

Policy 7-3A: Austin recognizes and will weigh carefully the value of public lands for recreation, sight-seeing, hunting, fishing, grazing, hiking, mining, and a wealth of other multiple use activities when supporting or recommending specific land transactions or designations. Disposals of these lands must be carefully weighed against their loss for any perceived short term gains for the Town or to the beneficiaries of such disposals.

Policy 7-3B: Evaluate federal land disposals for private development utilizing the following criteria and priorities and policies:

#### Criteria:

1. Compliance with zoning designations, land use recommendations in the Master Plan, priorities for economic and community development and other community planning efforts; cost of Town and county services including water, sewer, roads, utilities, fire and police protection, weed control, and other infrastructure; and impact to existing commercial, residential, and industrial activities.
2. Adequate assurance of public access to and through disposed lands and to adjacent public lands for recreation and other multiple uses (through the recordation of an easement and deed restriction). If alternative routes of access are required they should be acquired and guaranteed prior to the disposal and loss of any existing access should be of equal value and public benefit.
3. Impacts to existing uses including important wildlife habitat, key seasonal grazing rights, mineral resources, municipal watersheds, flood prone areas, visual values, access, and recreational use of the lands.
4. Availability of water resources to support the proposed use.
5. Compliance with the policies contained in this Plan.

#### Issues:

1. Disposals for private residential and commercial development should be structured so that local residents have a reasonable opportunity to acquire parcels on a competitive basis.
2. As appropriate, and at the request of adjacent land owners and users, encourage preference for direct sale or preferential bid.



3. Encourage disposals including direct sale and preferential bid for land disposals based on a Record of Decision following completion of Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Environmental Assessment (EA) processes where the public has had substantial opportunity to review and comment on the proposed project.
4. When land disposals result in loss of AUM's or range improvements, encourage full compensation and alternatives allowed under the law.

Policy 7-3C: Rights-of-Way: Support designation of corridors for the future transmission of energy, communications, and transportation when they are planned for in harmony with other multiple uses on federally administered lands in accordance with the NEPA processes.

Policy 7-3D: Land Transfers to Local Government and State Government: As requested by local governments and state agencies, lands identified for public purposes should be made available through the R&PP process.

- A. Lands within municipal service areas should be made available for public purposes only when local governments determine that it is an opportune time and the transfer will not burden the local government.
- B. Requests for R&PP transfers should receive preference to disposal for private development.
- C. Preference should be given for land sales and exchanges that consolidate high value public purposes

Policy 7-3E: Specially Designated Lands (i.e., National Recreation Areas, National Conservation Areas, Wildlife Refuges, Wilderness Areas, State Parks, State Wildlife Management Areas, etc.)

- A. Support designation of new specially designated lands near Austin which are suitable and beneficial to citizens, consolidate high value public purposes lands, and are valuable assets to the State and its residents.
- B. Support a balanced review and inventory of all multiple interests prior to designation of any new wilderness areas.

Policy 7-3F: The federal government should continue to evaluate the mineral resources on lands before they are sold or exchanged. The federal agencies are encouraged to continue to manage the presently open, federally-owned mineral estate in near Austin as open to mineral location, sales and leases.

- A. Support withdrawals from mineral entry only after careful evaluation of mineral resources which is documented by a mineral report that adequately describes the mineral potential of those lands.



- B. Support minimal separation of surface and mineral estates in all realty actions.
- C. Encourage federal management policies on existing split mineral estates based on state and local participation
- D. Support limited use of the mineral withdrawal process to protect fragile special lands.

Policy 7-3G: Austin opposes any further military withdrawals of land and restrictions of airspace.

Policy 7-3H: Acquisition of Private Land for Public Purposes: Recognize that the acquisition of some private lands for certain special public purposes is a benefit to its residents.

- A. Recommendations for acquisition of private land for public purposes shall ensure:
  - 1. All transactions must involve a "willing seller".
  - 2. Private land is not acquired unless it clearly benefits the citizens of Austin.
  - 3. Environmental, recreation, and cultural values are protected.
  - 4. Private property interests are protected and enhanced.
  - 5. Socio-economic impacts are duly considered and the local economy is not negatively impacted.
  - 6. Due process is guaranteed to all private parties involved in land use controversies by means that do not demand or create a financial hardship.