Northwest Upper Valley Plan

Approved by the City Council:
January 13, 2004

PLANNING, RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

Published by authority of the Mayor and City Council

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Northwest Upper Valley Plan

Concept Analysis Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide alternative policies and guidelines for development, examine proposed development impacts, and review existing zoning regulations applicable to the study area in order to make recommendations to amend the City's comprehensive plan, *The Plan for El Paso*. The report reviews the land development trends in the area and proposes three alternative growth patterns that could occur depending on the actions taken by the City. The alternatives and their consequences are described in detail so that the public and City Council will be able to make an informed decision to amend *The Plan for El Paso*.

The Mayor and City Council voted on September 16, 2003 to direct the Planning, Research and Development Department to examine a portion of the Upper Valley at the northwesterly edge of the city limits and analyze the effect of a Comprehensive Plan amendment. The area has been predominantly low-density residential and agricultural use. Since the year 2000, however, several large parcels of land were rezoned and subdivided to allow higher density residential development, leading to concern by the established residents that the rural ambiance is deteriorating.

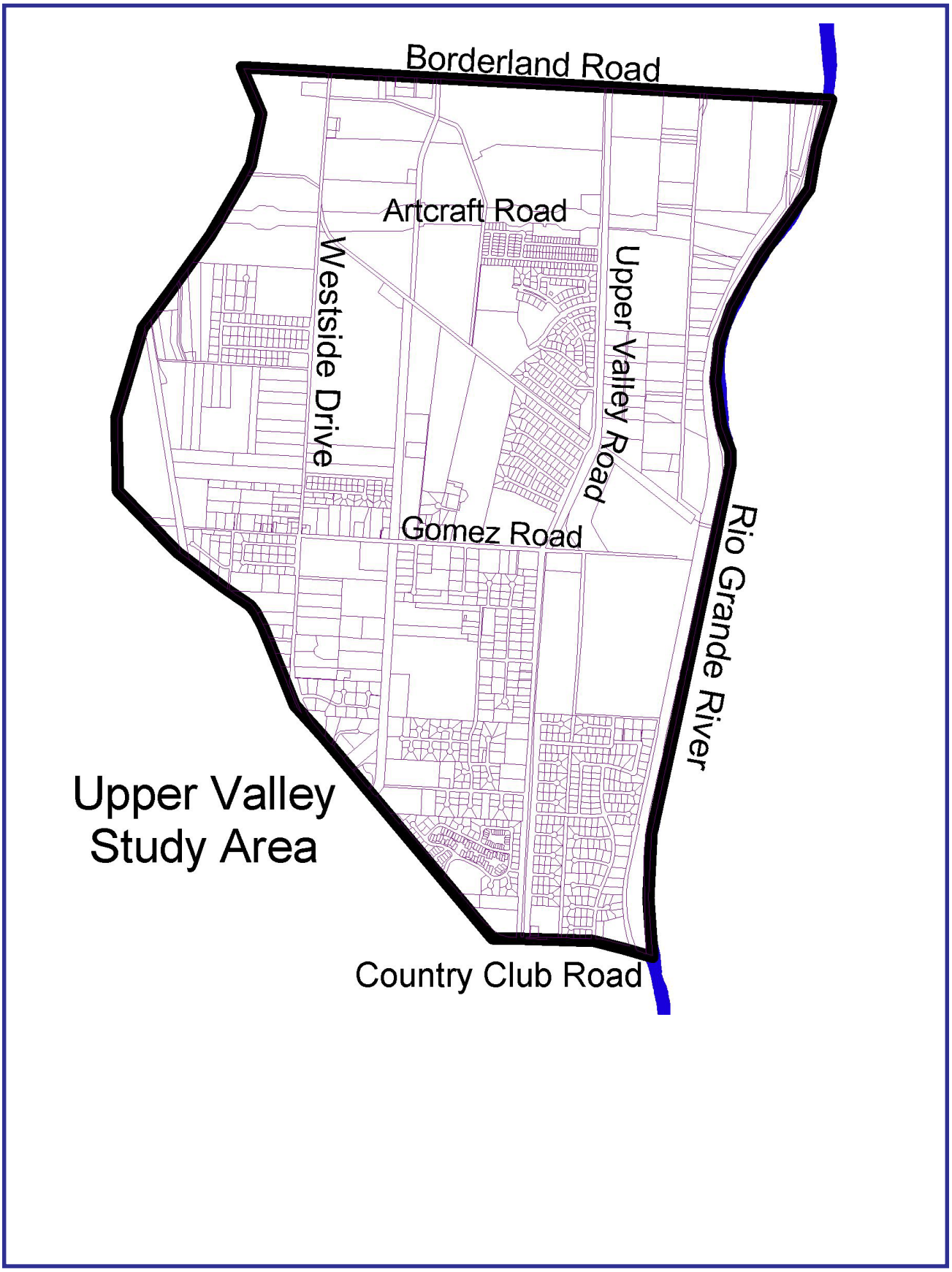
After meeting with groups of residents, the City Council directed the Department to "prepare an amendment with public input, as provided for in *The Plan for El Paso*, of the City's comprehensive plan, to modify the goals, policies and land use recommendations for a portion of the Upper Valley Study Area within the Northwest Planning Area referred to as Policy Area #5A…." The Council then included a general list of policies that the proposed amendment should incorporate. A second motion directed staff to review the Major Thoroughfare Plan status of Gomez Road (Redd Road extension), one of several thoroughfares passing through the study area that are planned for widening and includes an extension connection across the Rio Grande to Redd Road.

Description of area

The subject area of the Upper Valley consists of approximately 2,500 acres, or about 3.9 square miles. It is bounded on the North by Borderland Road, on the East by the Rio Grande, on the South by Country Club Road and on the West by the Texas/New Mexico state line as noted in Map 1. From North to South the area is about 2 ¾ miles in length and it is about 1.9 miles at its widest point from the river to the New Mexico Border. Geographically it is a flat river flood plain containing rich soil for agriculture. A network of irrigation canals and drains criss-crosses the area.

The existing land use is primarily low density residential. Some large agricultural tracts exist as well, mostly north of Gomez Road. There is one elementary school, in the Canutillo School District, and no police or fire stations within the study area. There are no completed parks, but one park is currently under construction and the Rio Grande Trail System River Park along the river is under development. Except for a small store at Gomez Road and Westside Drive, commercial uses exist only on Country Club Road within the area.

Map 1. Study Area - *Northwest Upper Valley*



The super arterial Artcraft Road goes east-west across the top quarter of the area providing access to Interstate Highway 10 and New Mexico. All other roads are two lanes at this time. Country Club Road provides IH-10 access; Borderland Road crosses the river but does not reach the freeway. The only way traffic in the study area can reach these east-west arterials is on two north-south roads, Westside Drive and Upper Valley Road. All other roads provide strictly internal circulation to the area.

History

1950-1980

Prior to 1954 the study area was under El Paso County jurisdiction. It was mostly farmland with scattered houses serving the agricultural residents. Small portions were annexed into the City of El Paso on three occasions: The City annexation of 1954 included 52 acres north of Country Club Road within the current study area. More importantly, this annexation brought the whole of the study area into the extraterritorial jurisdiction of the City. The annexation of 1968 specifically added a small 6-acre area adjacent to the previously annexed area. Another annexation in 1978 was mainly east of the river, but it included about 13 acres of the current study area.

Subdivision records indicate 246 acres were subdivided from 1970 to 1980. A total of 452 lots were created by the new subdivisions. The gross density is calculated to be 1.8 lots/acre. No zoning information is available since the vast majority of the area was under the County, which has no zoning authority.

1980-1990

A major annexation in 1987 of over 2,400 acres brought the entire study area into the City and established the current boundaries. During the 1980's a total of 89 acres was subdivided. The total number of lots in those subdivisions was 118 lots for an average gross density of 1.3 lots per acre.

By the year 1990 the total population was 1,982 living in 578 dwelling units according to the U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 Census.

1980-1990 Re-Zoning Cases

New	*Old*	*TotalAcres*	*Total Parcels*
C-1	*R-3*	*5.17*	*1*
PR-1	*R-3*	*47.94*	*165*
R-1	*R-3*	*294.62*	*179*
R-2	*R-3*	*256.33*	*501*
R-3	*R-F*	*2.30*	*1*
R-F	*R-3*	*1,239*	*372*
S-D	*R-3*	*4.30*	*2*
		1,849.66	*1,221*

In 1987 all Upper Valley annexed land was initially zoned R-3 (Residential) as required by ordinance. However, soon thereafter the City prepared a zoning plan, as also required by ordinance, in order to determine and apply the most appropriate zoning The vast majority of land was rezoned from the R-3 designation to lower intensity uses during this period. The only cases of up zoning were the Tennis West Planned Residential project, which required PR-1 zoning and a small subdivision that went from R-F back up to R2A -sp.

1990-2000

The Upper Valley Plan was approved in 1996 and is still referenced in the 1999 Plan for El Paso. The Upper Valley Plan divided the Upper Valley into several policy areas and each had specific policy recommendations. The study area between Borderland Road and Country Club, bounded by the Rio Grande and the City limits was designated Area 5A.

The 1996 Upper Valley Plan recommended that Area 5A remain "low density residential" with "medium density residential and neighborhood commercial" to be allowed as nodes at four major intersections. The proposed nodes were to be at the intersections Westside Drive makes with Artcraft and with Gomez as well as at the intersections Upper Valley Road makes with Artcraft and Country Club.

The policy recommendations of the Upper Valley Plan were made in qualitative terms; no numerical densities or zoning categories were recommended. However, a section titled "Justification" stated that large lot single family residences (R-1, R2 and R2-A) represent the dominant land use in this area … and are expected to remain in the future." The intent of the plan was to restrict rezonings to R2-A or less except at the proposed nodes.

1990-2000 Re-Zoning Cases

New	*Old*	*TotalAcres*	*TotalParcels*
C-1	*R-3*	*12.8*	*4*
R-1	*R-F*	*10.4*	*14*
R-2	*R-F*	*107.79*	*7*
R-2	*R-1*	*152.2*	*285*
R-2 c	*R-2*	*96.7*	*1*
R-2	*R-3*	*93.9*	*247*
R3	*R-F*	*60.17*	*4*
S-D	*R-3*	*4.3*	*2*
		538.26	*564*

The 1996 Upper Valley Plan envisioned several future roadway expansions, which were also reflected in the Major Thoroughfare Plan. Artcraft was shown as a super arterial between New Mexico and IH-10. The plan also included the connection of Gomez Road to Redd Road via a new bridge across the River. Gomez and Westside Roads were planned as major arterials and Upper Valley Road planned as a minor arterial. A network of hike and bike trails is proposed to take advantage of the canal network.

During the 1990's 169 acres of land were subdivided. The total number of lots was 237 with an average density of 1.4 lots per acre. Some R-1 subdivisions and a private park in another subdivision cause this low average; most of the new developments had a somewhat higher density.

The 2000 U.S. Census counted a population of 2,184, a 10% increase from 1990. Dwelling units were counted to be 698, an increase of 20%, which shows a reduced number of persons per household in the area. Family income went up by 75% during the same time. The 1990 median family income was $50,557 and the 2000 median family income was $88,553. In conjunction with population increases the Damian Elementary School opened in 1992 at the extreme northern end of the study area.

The zoning change requests recorded during this decade contrast with the previous decade in that most were for up zoning to more intensive use. The first R3-A request was approved during this time.

2000-present

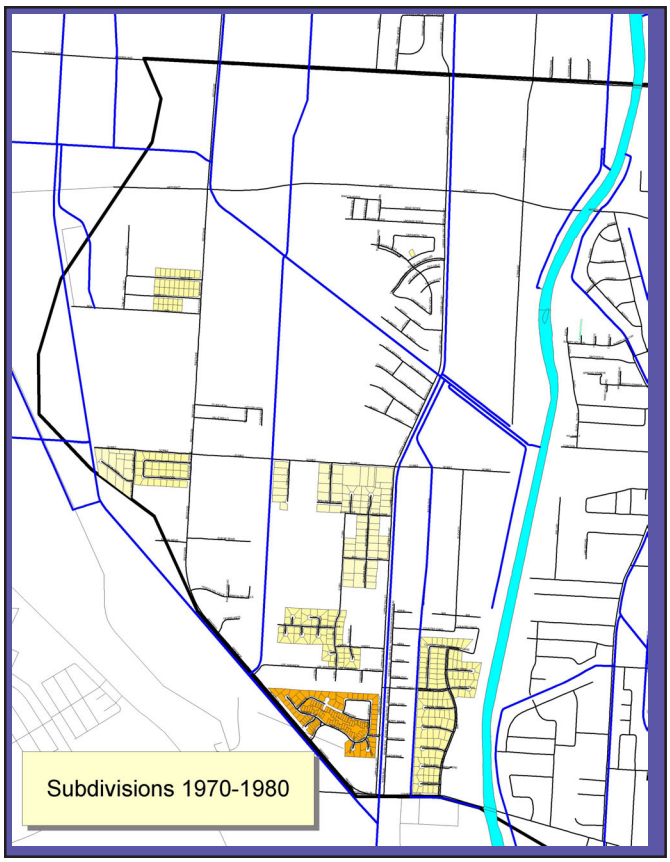
The construction of Artcraft Road was completed in 2000. Previously, residents had to use congested Country Club Road to get to other parts of El Paso. Artcraft Road is a super arterial that provides a direct link from the study area to IH-10. The 1999 update of the Plan for El Paso recognized that this improved access would stimulate growth. The Plan, approved by City Council, included specific policies for the Artcraft Corridor in the Upper Valley. These policies designated the entire corridor for "mixed use", including office parks and apartment complexes. The accompanying maps showed medium density residential and mixed use in the corridor.

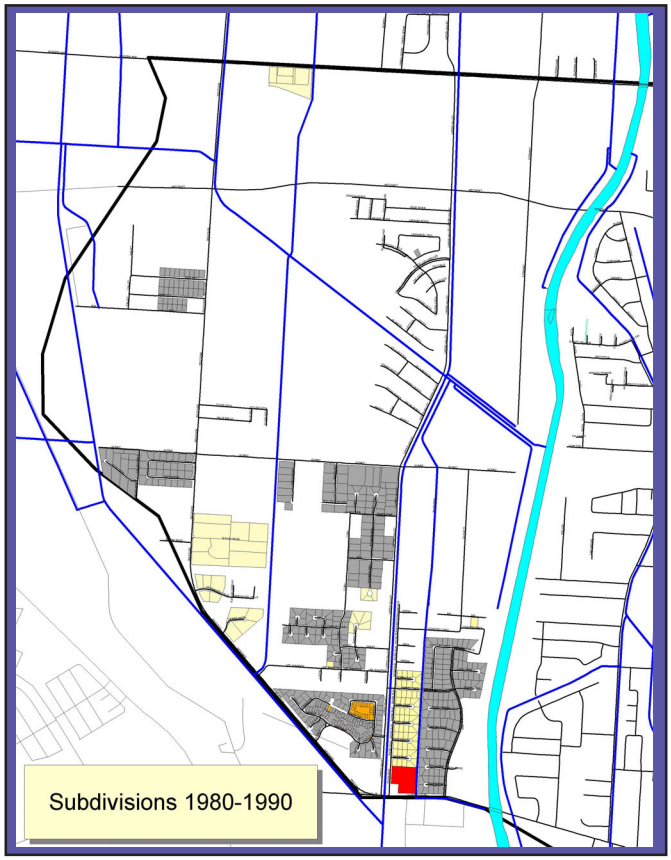
2000-Nov. 2003 Re-Zoning Cases

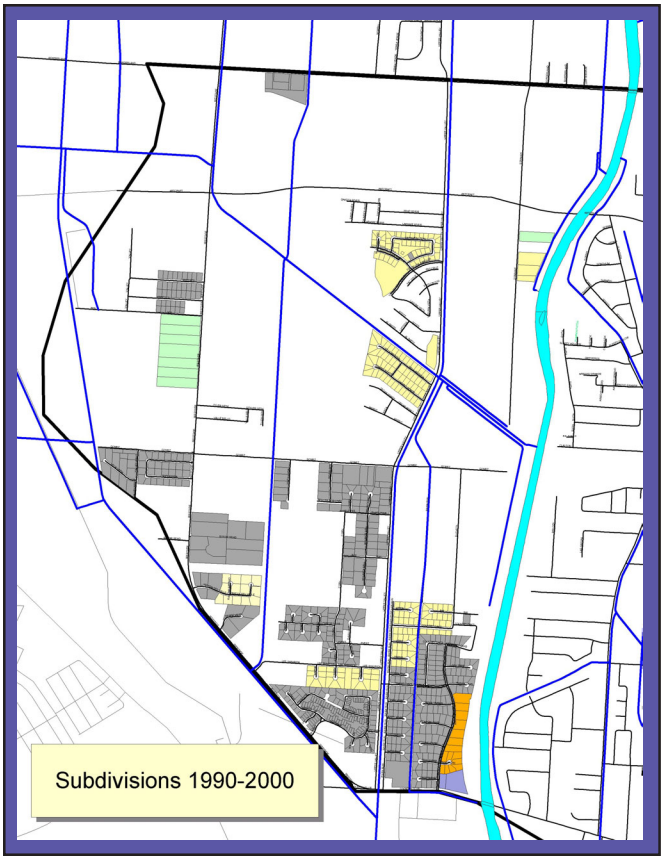
New	*Old*	*TotalAcres*	*TotalParcels*
C-2	*R-F*	*1.95*	*1*
R-2	*R-F*	*79.86*	*55*
R-2	*R-3*	*35.1*	*3*
R-3A	*R-F*	*105.94*	*141*
		220.9	*199*

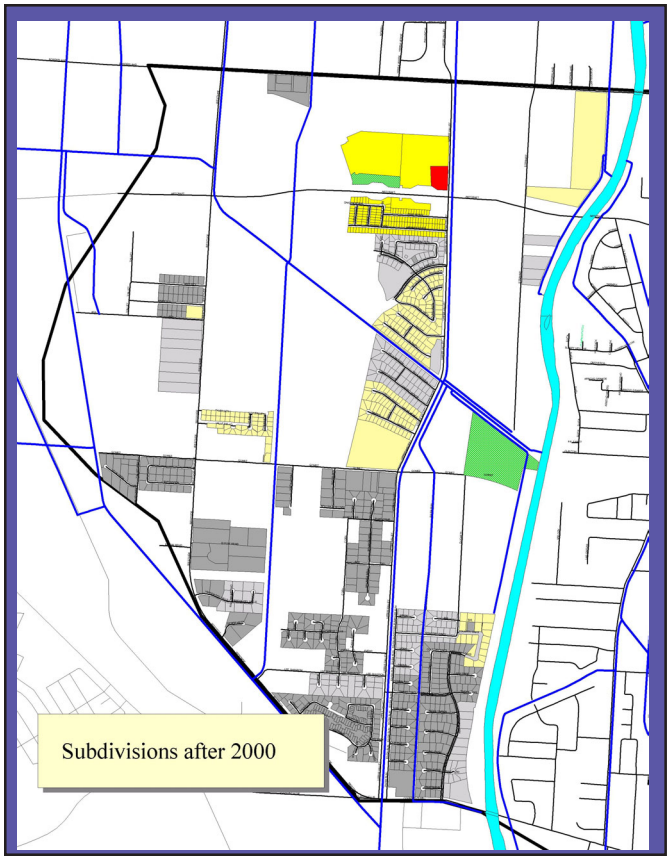
In the three years between the opening of Artcraft Road and this report, the Planning department has received subdivision applications covering 220 acres. At the latest count, the number of lots in these requests total 713 for a calculated net density of 3.4 per acre. Among these subdivisions were the first R3-A projects within the study area. Building all 713 new home sites would more than double the number of dwelling units in the study area since the 2000 census, which counted 698.

Maps 2 to 5. Subdivision Growth - *Time Series Analysis, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2003*

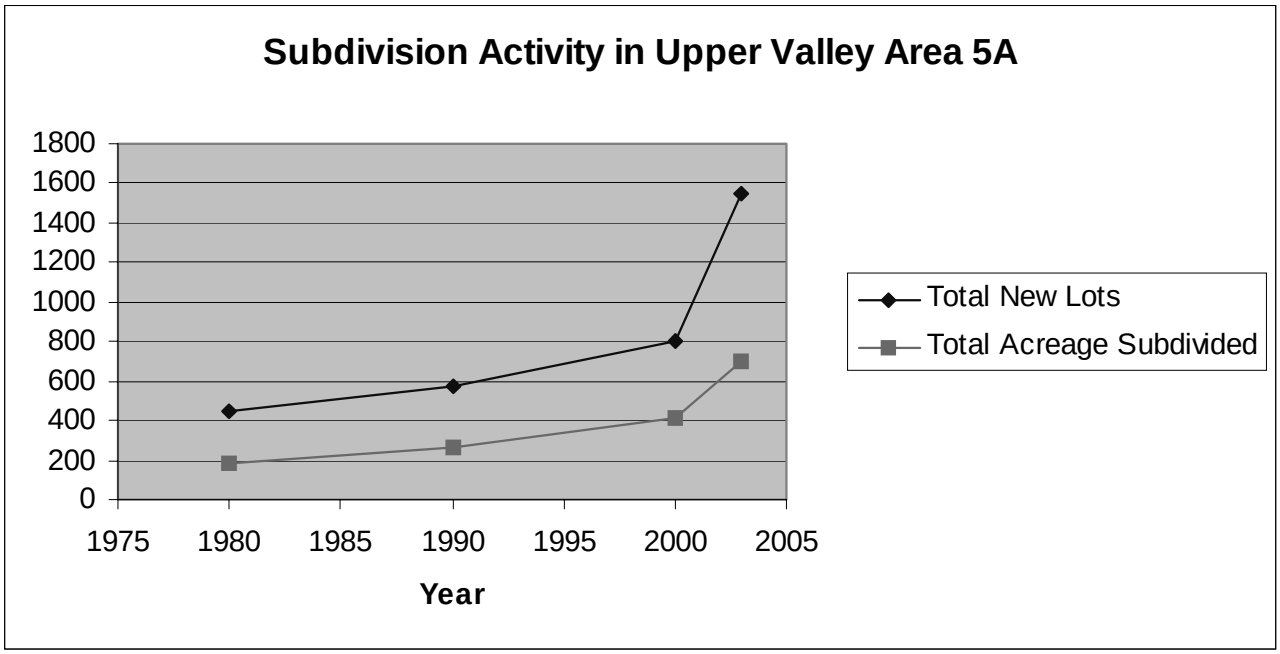








Graph 1. Subdivision Growth Over Time



All but one zoning change since 2000 has been to up zone R-F (Ranch Farm) to more intensive residential or commercial uses, including over 100 acres for R3-A. The areas rezoned to R3-A are all part of subdivisions abutting the Artcraft corridor.

Use	*Number of Parcels*
Single Family	*800*
Ranch/Farm	*153*
Vacant	*368*
Commercial	*10*
Other	*19*

Two new parks have been dedicated for a total acreage of 40 acres. This equals 1.6% of the total study area. No new schools, police stations or fire facilities have been added although new facilities have been built outside of the area that provide additional service. According to EPISD criteria, an elementary school should be constructed when 600 students are available, with the corresponding number rising to 1000 for a middle school and 2000 for a high school. The current student population is accommodated within existing schools at this time.

Current Zoning	***Total Acres***	***Total Parcels***
C-1	*12.75*	*4*
C-2	*1.95*	*1*
PR-1	*47.94*	*165*
R-1	*303.01*	*198*
R-2	*435.68*	*845*
R-2A	*119.05*	*6*
R-3A	*244.15*	*146*
R/F	*958.37*	*145*
S-D	*4.3*	*2*
Totals	***2,127.20***	***1,512***

Current Conditions

Existing land uses

The Planning Department field checked the existing land use of all parcels during the year 2002. At that time the most common land use in the study area was single family residential. Eight hundred parcels had single-family homes on them and an additional 153 parcels were identified as having Ranch-Farm uses. Vacant parcels totaled 368 and 10 had commercial uses. The remaining 19 parcels had other uses including 2 churches and 2 industrial uses.

Existing Zoning

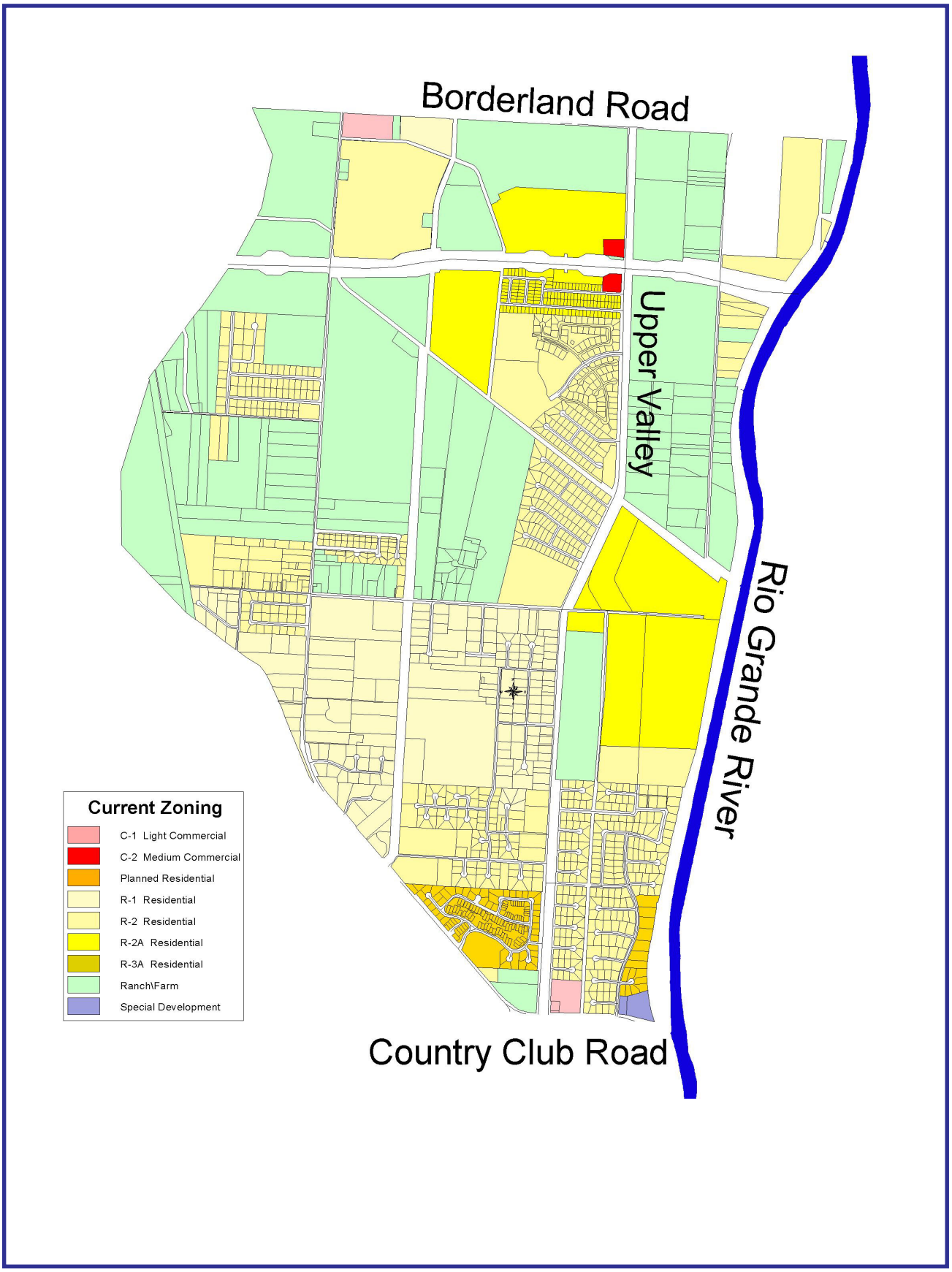
The predominant zoning designation in the study area at the time of this study, November 2003, is R-F (ranch farm), with nearly 40% of land zoned as such. R-1 makes up another 12% so the existing zoning is over 50% very low density residential. R-2 and R-2A are now over 20%. With the exception of 60 acres rezoned in 1996, most of the R-3A rezoning has occurred in the past three years to now constitute nearly 10% of the study area. The table below does include the area of the streets and the canals that occur within districts.

Short Range Planned Projects

Some new public services are planned in the short-term for the area. Two new parks have been dedicated, the 36 acre Valley Creek park next to the river at the extension of Gomez Road and a 3.4 acre unnamed park just north of Artcraft Road. The Rio Grande Trail System is under construction within the levee banks of the river. It consists of a hike and bike trail within the flood plain of the river.

Gomez Road will be extended, as a two-lane road, to provide access to Valley Creek Park. Right of way is also being acquired to accommodate four lanes on Upper Valley Road sometime in the future. The future connection of Gomez Road to Redd Road across the river is not planned until sometime between 2015 and 2025.

Map 6. Current Zoning - ***November, 2003***



No new schools are known to be planned at this time within the study area. The area north of Gomez Road is in the Canutillo school district and the area south of Gomez Road is in the El Paso school district. Typical school district policies state that an elementary school should house 600-850 students, a middle school 1,000 – 1,200 students and a high school 2,000 – 2,300 students. A school district uses a "student per population" index to estimate the future need for new schools. Each dwelling unit is assumed to produce 0.2384 elementary aged children, 0.0993 middle school pupils and 0.1369 high school students.

The Fire department bases the need for new stations first on the distance from existing stations and second on the number of calls they receive per day. The study area is served by two fire stations outside the area but within the maximum distance requirement. Since the call rate at the two stations in the upper valley is still very low, no new stations are being planned at this time.

Alternative futures

Two questions need to be considered when charting the future of an area: "How many people should live there and how should they be accommodated?" These are policy questions to be decided by the City Council. Depending upon the policy choice, planning controls can be implemented to attempt to direct growth toward or away from the area. A certain amount of growth is inevitable in the study area as the regional population pressure grows, but the density and impact on city services can be guided by policy.

The City's existing answer to the first question has been made in the form of a growth projection. A projection is an educated guess based on certain assumptions such as density of development and attractiveness of an area. By incorporating a given growth projection into the City Plan the policy decision has been made implicitly that the projected amount of growth will be acceptable.

How many people: MPO Projections

The El Paso MPO and the Planning, Research and Development Department work together to develop projections of population growth for over 660 separate zones in the region. These projections are based on regional control figures, which estimate the total growth in the region. The total new growth is then distributed to the zones deemed most likely to experience growth. Zones with low densities close to existing development are assumed to be prime candidates for growth. The final built-out density is assumed to match the average of recent, nearby growth.

According to this methodology, growth in the study area is projected to climb dramatically after the year 2000. The growth between 1990 and 2000, according to the census, was only 10% but the projected growth between 2005 and 2015 is estimated by the MPO to be 81%. The bottom line is that the over 2200 new dwelling units are expected to be constructed in this area between the year 2000 and the year 2025. In fact, 713 new lots have already been created in proposed new subdivisions since that time, so actual growth may exceed projections if the current trend is continued.

Another way of looking at how much growth an area should accommodate is by examining the portion of the whole region that the area holds. The percentage of the county's population in the study area in 1990 was 0.33 % According to the 2000 census that percentage had dropped slightly to 0.32% of the County. The growth projections suggest that in 2005 that number will increase to 0.5 percent and by 2025 the study area's share will be 0.8 percent.

Such increases in population in an area must result in increased average housing densities. In 1990 there was one dwelling unit on the average for every four acres. In 2000 there was one household for every 3.5 acres. If the projections are correct, in 2025 there will be a household on every .8 acres on the average.

The MPO also projects employment growth. They project a total of 1091 employees will find jobs within the study area by the year 2030. Of course, these estimates are based on regional totals and may or may not actually occur.

	Year			
New dwelling units needed to meet growth projection	*2005*	*2015*	*2025*	*2030*
	none	*995 du*	*1542 du*	*2526 du*
Gross density	*Total Acres Needed for Housing*			
1.5 du/acre	*none*	*663 ac*	*1028 ac*	*1684 ac*
2.5 du/acre	*none*	*398 ac*	*617 ac*	*1010 ac*
3.5 du/acre	*none*	*284 ac*	*441 ac*	*722 ac*

How should new growth be accommodated: Alternative Urban Forms

The second question that needs to be answered is what the urban form should be to accommodate the future population in the study area. If the projected numbers of new dwelling units are accepted as the appropriate share that study area should hold, it means that 1515 new du's will need to be accommodated by 2025, in addition to the 713 already on the way.

One dimension of urban form is the gross density, how many houses per acre of land. Gross density means the overall average number of houses per every acre, including acreage set aside for parks, roads (often 30%) and all other uses. Net density counts only the actual lots that the houses sit on. The total acreage required to accommodate the projected growth at different gross densities is shown below. As can be seen in the table, the 713 lots in the new and proposed subdivisions surpass the projected need for 2005.

Land zoned R-F or R-1 is most likely to be subdivided to accommodate growth in the future. Currently there remain 958 acres zoned R-F (ranch farm) and 303 acres zoned R-1 (residential), so any average density in the above table requiring more than 958 acres would require rezoning existing R-1 as well as all the R-F. Rezoning additional acreage for commercial uses would also be required to accommodate development.

Gross Densities of Typical Existing Subdivisions

Name	*Actual Zoning*	*Size in Acres*	*Number of Sites*	*Gross Density*	*Comments*
River Park West	*R-3A*	*31.2*	*137*	*4.4*	*Includes a park, pond and commcl*
Los Nogales	*R-2A*	*15.4*	*57*	*3.7*	*East of river (outside area)*
Laguna Meadows	*R-2*	*64*	*156*	*2.4*	*Includes a park and pond*
Rancho Sereno	*R-1*	*11.47*	*14*	*1.2*	
Tennis West	*PR-1*	*45.9*	*130*	*2.8*	*Incl tennis courts and ponds*

It is unrealistic to assume a uniform density over all the new growth as the table does above. The gross density of a typical subdivision depends on the zoning, which determines the size of the residential homesites, and on the amount of land devoted to non-residential uses. Non-residential uses include roads, which all subdivisions have, parks, schools, drainage structures and possibly even commercial parcels. Subdivisions can vary in their gross density even within the same zoning district. Nevertheless, the table below shows a typical gross density for zoning districts, in dwelling units per acre. These were obtained from subdivisions already built within or nearby to the study area.

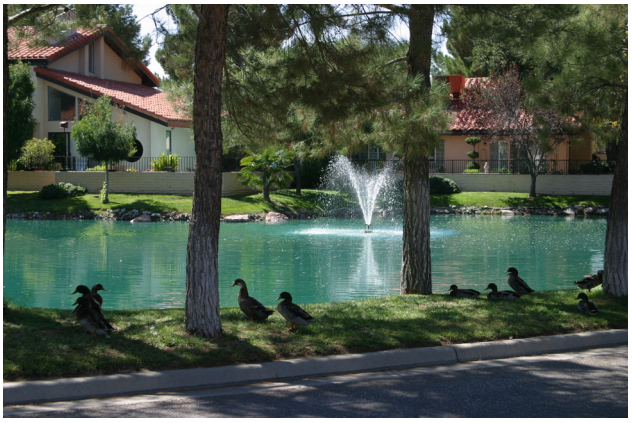
Since zoning ultimately creates urban form, various combinations of zoning districts and their typical densities were combined in different ways to develop the three alternative concepts discussed next.

R-1 sp 1.2 units per acre

R-3A 4.4 units per acre incl. park and ponding area

R-2 sp 2.4 units per acre including ponding area

R-F .14 units per acre



PR-1 2.8 units per acre including parks and ponds

Alternative Plan Analysis

Alternative A Analysis

The first alternative was created to represent a continuation of current trends. It assumes all R-F land will eventually be rezoned to R-3A or R-2A. Most R-1 land is assumed to be rezoned to R-2A or R-2. The locations of the imagined future land uses are suggested in the concept map labeled "Alternative A."

Land Required for housing

Using the sample densities as a guide, this scenario would be able to accommodate nearly 4000 new dwelling units in addition to those subdivided at the time of this writing.

Schools, Parks

The number of new dwelling units allowed would generate an estimated 939 elementary, 391 middle and 539 high school students. This is enough students to fill more than one new elementary school, depending on the age of the students. At the mandated ratio of one acre of park per 200 dwelling units this plan should provide 20 new acres of parkland.

Pros and Cons of Alternative A

Pros

- Requires no change in plan or policy
- Understood by development community
- Increases tax base
- Higher densities require less land per DU

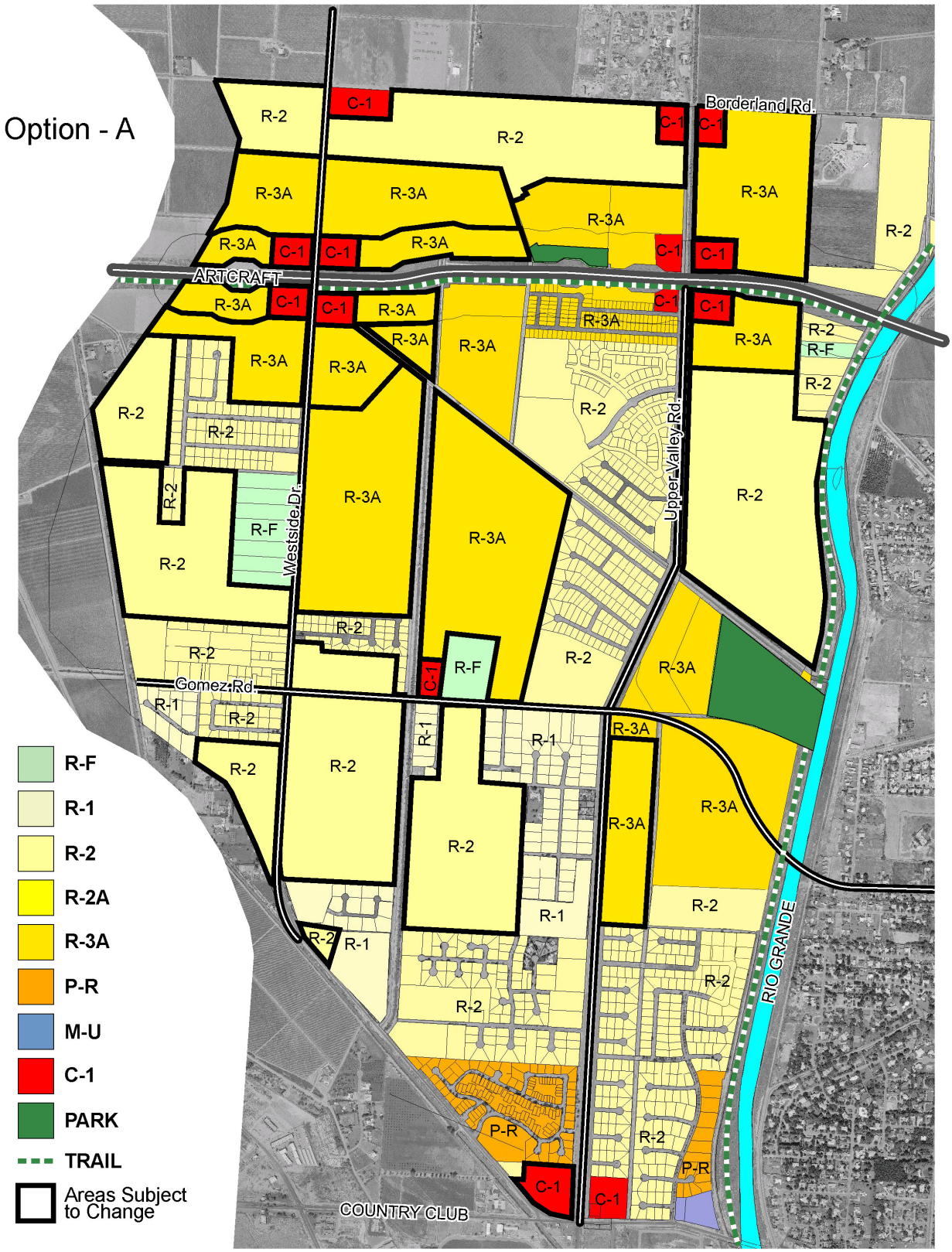
Cons

- Allows growth far exceeding projected numbers
- Changes rural ambience
- Diminishes agricultural land reserve
- Requires extensive public services

Zoning	*Available Land (Acres)*	*Density*	*Possible New DU's*
C-1	*34.5*		
R-2	*851*	*2.3*	*1957*
R2-A, R-3	*426*	*3.8*	*1618*
R-3A	*79*	*4.3*	*339*
Total			*3914*

Possible Future under Alternative A

Map 7. Alternative A Scenario - *Conceptual Future Growth*



Alternative B

This concept is illustrated in the map "Alternative B." The Council motion of September 16, 2003 listed the following as directions as to how the Plan should be amended:

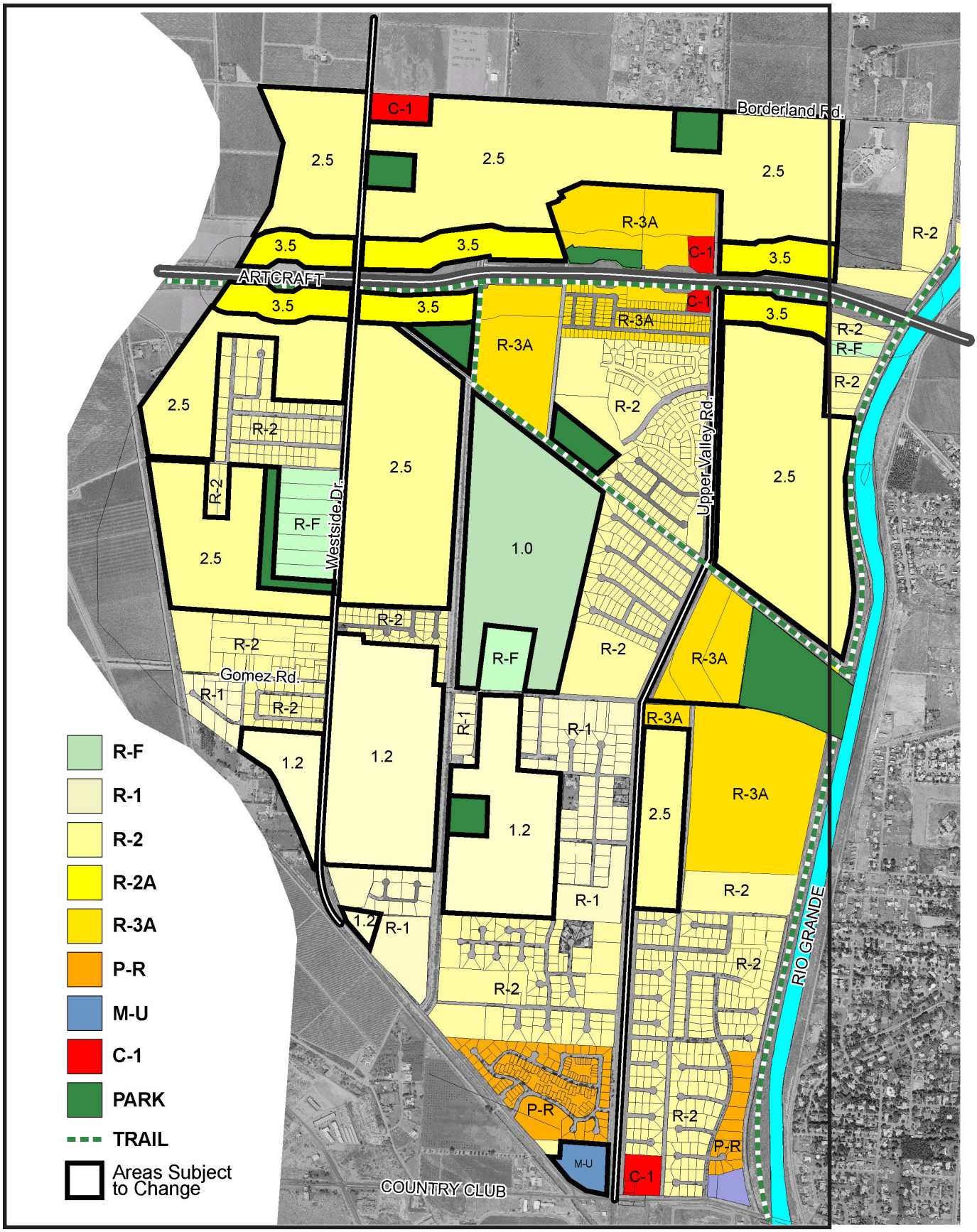
1. Along the Artcraft Road corridor:
   - Define the "Artcraft Road Corridor" as the area extending 400 feet on either side of the Artcraft right-of-way lines;
   - Restrict the density for any new residential development along the Artcraft Road Corridor to no more than five (5) dwelling units to the gross acre;
   - Require that developers provide and maintain a landscaped strip of property along Artcraft Road acceptable to the City and TxDOT;
   - Restrict commercial and mixed-use development to the "nodes" of the following intersections (with the "nodes" defined as the area extending 300 feet each way from the rights-of-way making the following intersection) as follows:
     - Artcraft Road at Upper Valley Road for commercial
     - Artcraft Road at Westside Drive for mixed-use
   - Restrict such commercial development to neighborhood-compatible uses with ample parking provided on-site;
   - Require a detailed site development plan for any commercial zoning requests;
   - Restrict commercial signage to neighborhood scale as allowable under law;
   - Prohibit on-street parking on any street crossing Artcraft Road;
   - Strictly enforce litter ordinances from any authorized commercial development.

2. For areas outside of the Artcraft Road corridor:
   - Large lot single-family residences should continue to be the dominant use in this area, consisting of a mix of R-2 and R-1.
   - Until such time as a comprehensive drainage study and flood plan for this area has been performed by the City, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or a similar agency, the density for any new residential development to no more than four (4) dwelling units to the gross acre;
   - Discourage the use of Park Fees and require open and green space areas be planned and implemented wherever possible within a development;
   - For large tract developments (40 acres or more) of this region, encourage a layered approach to zoning and development, with buffers insulating less intensely developed properties from higher developed parcels, unless not possible by reason of acreage configuration or other reasons.
   - Encourage uses that accommodate the keeping of horses and plan for safe passage of horses and bikers along all arterials, collectors and sub-collectors through the use of horse trails, bike trails and/or ditch banks as well as access to the river park.

Zoning	*Available Land (Acres)*	*Density*	*Possible New DU's*
Commercial	*29*		
R-1	*210*	*1.2*	*258*
R-2	*849*	*2.3*	*1952*
R2-A, R-3	*219*	*3.8*	*835*
Total New			*3045*

Possible Future under alternative B

Map 8. Alternative B Scenario - *Conceptual Future Growth*



Alternative B Analysis

Alternative B attempts to imagine how amending the comprehensive plan in this way would control growth. No rezonings that conflict with the plan are contemplated, only rezonings from landowners taking full advantage of the maximum allowed by the wording are projected.

Land Required for Housing

Using the densities typical for the zoning which is likely to result based on this plan could allow up to 3045 new dwelling units in addition to those already subdivided at the time of this writing. This plan could accommodate the MPO projections through the year 2030.

Schools, Parks

The number of new dwelling units allowed would generate an estimated 725 elementary, 302 middle and 416 high school students.

At the mandated ratio of one acre of park per 200 dwelling units this plan should provide a minimum of 15 new acres of parkland.

Pros and Cons of Alternative B

Pros

- Understandable by development community
- Allow economic return to landowners
- Maintains lower densities
- Mandates horse trails

Cons

- Requires more land per DU
- Changes rural ambience
- Does not preserve substantial amount of open space

Alternative C Analysis

This alternative plan was designed as a way to preserve more open space by taking advantage of the Planned Residential zoning category. Under such a zone, development is clustered around areas of open space and built at densities that are not permitted under regular residential zoning. Properly designed planned developments could accommodate the same number of dwelling units as conventional subdivisions while clustering the acreage that would otherwise be used as larger side and backyards into open space.

The concept map labeled “Alternative C” illustrates a possible way that new housing development could be planned to allow landowners to a similar return on their properties and still preserve open space for recreational or specialized farm uses.

Land Requirements

This scenario could also accommodate the 2025 growth projections but not the 2030 projections.

Schools, Parks

The number of new dwelling units allowed would generate an estimated 533 elementary, 222 middle and 306 high school students.

Substantial amounts of open space would be retained under this plan. If the City purchased the land outright it would then be city parkland. This option is prohibitively expensive. Another option would be for developers to donate the land to a land trust, which could then transfer it to the City. If the developer retained ownership of the open space the cost of creating recreational opportunities would be the responsibility of the developer. However the City could assist in improving the open land to minimum standards for certain types of recreation such as biking, hiking or wildlife preserves if they were available to the public.

Studies have shown that cost of conserving open space can be offset by the benefits of not having to provide public services to the area.

Pros and Cons of Alternative C

Pros

- Requires less land per DU
- Allow sufficient economic return to landowners
- Maintains rural ambience
- Could preserve some farmland
- Less expensive to provide services

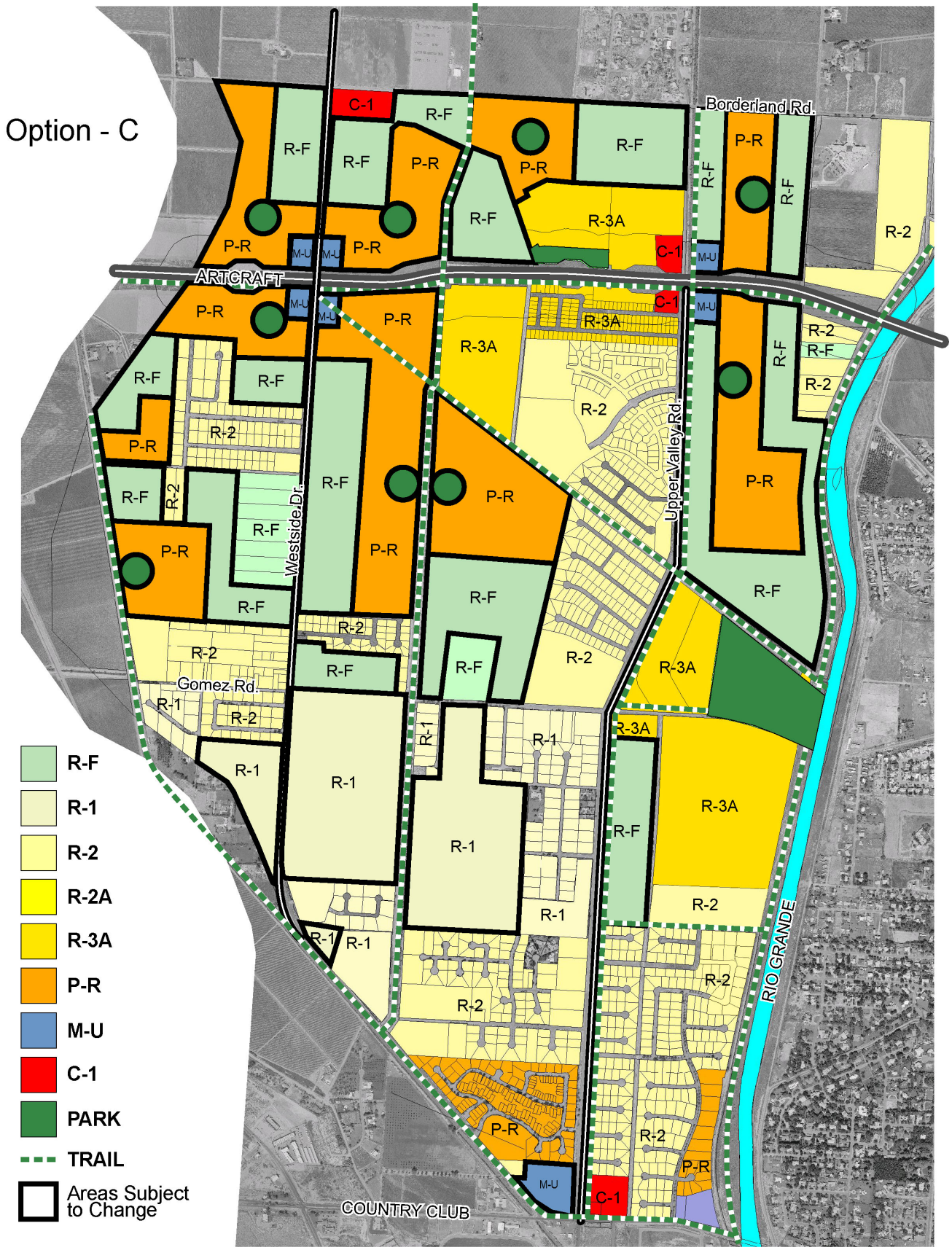
Cons

- May require changes in ordinances
- Marketability not proven in El Paso
- Requires consolidation of properties

Zoning	*Available Acres*	*Density*	*Dwelling units*
Commercial	*29*		*0*
PR-1	*445*	*2.8*	*1248*
R-3A	*79*	*4.3*	*340*
R-2A	*85*	*3.7*	*315*
R-2	*42*	*2.3*	*99*
R-1	*174*	*1.22*	*213*
Open or R-F	*452*		*0*
Total			***2215***

Possible Future under Alternative C

Map 9. Alternative C Scenario - *Conceptual Future Growth*



Transportation infrastructure Analysis

Alternative A:

Since this concept is essentially the one analyzed by the MPO their recommendations can be examined first. Virtually all new capacity would be in the form of roadway widening.

- Artcraft – super arterial
- Westside Dr. – Major arterial-with-bike-lane cross section 120'
- Gomez Rd. – Major arterial-no-bike-lane cross section 110' connecting to a bridge across the Rio Grande and thence to Redd Road.
- Upper Valley Rd. minor arterial-no-bike-lane cross section 110'

Alternative modes

A bike path is shown in the Plan for El Paso on Westside Drive. Artcraft Road already has a bicycle path. Transit service will be in the area but at long headways.

Gomez/Redd connection

If the planned connection to Redd Road via a new river crossing is not built the level of congestion and delay drivers experience on other roads would increase. The road that would be impacted most would be Upper Valley Road, which would approach its maximum capacity if Gomez was not connected but would be well under capacity if Gomez were connected.

Some other roads would show increases in traffic, but traffic on Borderland and Westside roads could actually decrease. The increases on Artcraft would be easily accommodated by that super-arterial. Country Club Road, however, is projected to be well over capacity irregardless of the Gomez connection construction.

The table below shows the expected traffic on roads in the area for the year 2025. It also shows the volume to capacity ratio, which is simply how much of the roads comfortable capacity will be used up. Numbers less than one (1.00) show that the road could handle the expected traffic. Numbers close to or exceeding one (1.00) show that the traffic would be too much for the road in question.

Predicted Daily Traffic and V/C ratio

	Network with Gomez Road		*Network without Gomez Road*	
Artcraft	*33,582*	*0.55*	*43,696*	*0.71*
Westside	*5,579*	*0.8*	*6,535*	*0.51*
Upper Valley	*9,985*	*0.69*	*13,996*	*0.94*
Borderland	*5,065*	*0.93*	*5,622*	*0.8*
Country Club	*20,582*	*1.62*	*19,731*	*1.76*
Gomez	*12,977*	*0.83*	*2,991*	*0.50*

Comparison of Traffic with and without Gomez/Redd Road Connection

Alternative B:

Analysis will be done when land uses are solidified.

Alternative modes

This concept calls for horse trails to be maintained "wherever possible". The bike paths of the Plan for El Paso would continue to be part of the plan.

Alternative C: Clustered Plan

Analysis will be done when land uses are solidified.

Alternative modes

This alternative shows a more comprehensive network of walking, bicycle and equestrian trails along the canals and drains. Studies from other cities suggest this may reduce the number of short trips to the commercial uses that are made by automobile.

Implementation Strategies

Alternative A:

This concept will be implemented if no changes are made to the Plan for El Paso land use and thoroughfare sections. Zoning change requests to R-3A, R3 or R-2A would also be approved on a case-by-case basis. The planned widening and new construction of the thoroughfares shown on the Major Thoroughfare Plan will also need to take place.

Alternative B:

This plan would require amendment of the Plan for El Paso by adding a sub area plan that explicitly incorporates gross density limits, requirement for site plans, landscape buffers, and parking and signage restrictions. These requirements could then be added to any zoning change requests, perhaps as special contract conditions.

Park and/or thoroughfare plans would need to be amended to encourage open space and equestrian trails.

Alternative C:

This concept could be implemented in differing ways but each would require several actions to occur. Any Planned Residential projects following this plan would need to be fairly large and thus cover property that is currently under different owners. In order to ensure equitable treatment of property owners and avoid potential takings, a mechanism would need to be set up to prevent takings claims by landowners whose property remains open space.

One way of implementing this concept would be to allow transfer of development rights between property owners. This would permit low intensity uses to continue while allowing economic gain to the landowners. The State of Texas has not passed legislation enabling transfer of development rights so a City ordinance would be required. Purchase of development rights is another concept that could be investigated.

A third option would be creating a mandatory open space zoning district. Open space zoning, or cluster zoning, allows the same number of units as is permitted under the regular zoning. The units are clustered and about half of the site is consolidated into a large open space. There is a precedent for this concept in the Planned Mountain Development district.

Existing Planned Residential zoning requires that all land be under "unified control" so properties would need to be consolidated prior to applying for review of development plans. Current Planned Residential zoning rules state that the minimum size for a PR project is three acres, but in the Upper Valley that minimum may need to be raised.

The standards for design review would need to be defined in the sub-area plan so that Planned Residential projects would adhere to the goals of providing open space and rural ambience. Park plans and thoroughfare plans would need to be amended to reflect the goal of the sub area plan.

Zoning changes for increased density would need to be recommended against if they did not incorporate Planned Residential projects that met the standards of the plan.

Recommendation: Amendment to *The Plan for El Paso*

In formulating the recommendations given in this section the Planning , Research and Development Department attempted to balance three major goals:

1. The need for land to accommodate future population growth in the El Paso region, including a range of income levels.
2. The desires of existing residents to preserve the quality of life in the study area.
3. The rights of landowners to achieve reasonable economic return on their property.

Fiscal goals were not included. Such analysis could not be performed within the short time frame of the study. It was assumed that the tax revenue would balance the cost of servicing new growth.

Goal 1:

According to MPO projections, if the study area is to accommodate its fair proportion of regional growth, the total number of housing units in the study area in the year 2030 should be 3,939. The census found 698 housing units in the year 2000. Subdivision records indicate that since that time approximately 700 new home sites have entered the subdivision process. Therefore any plan should permit at least 2,541 new homes to be built. Moreover, the range of lot sizes and prices should reasonably accommodate many income levels.

Under the recommendations, over 3,000 additional new homes would be possible. Although the amendment would discourage any new R3A zoning, an overall total of approximately 950 housing units could result within areas already zoned R3A. About 300 new units would also be possible in areas already zoned R2A.

Goal 2:

The Planning, Research and Development Department and the City Council held well-attended public hearings before drafting these recommendations. Sixty-five surveys were returned after a meeting held within the study area. The vast majority of comments received stated that low density, large lot housing was preferred if new development were to occur at all. A vociferous segment of the public was strongly biased against the most recent R-2A rezoning case.

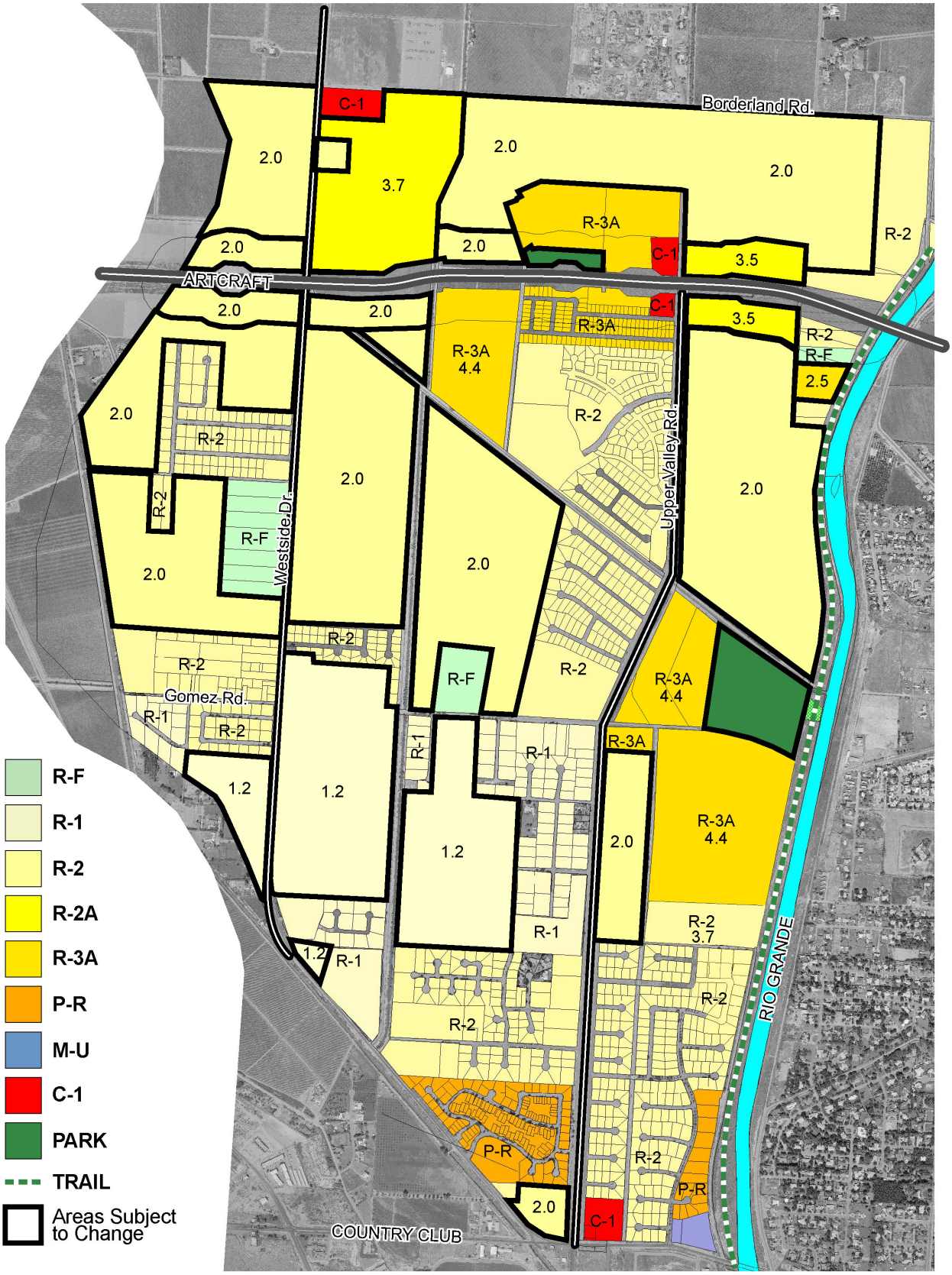
In the early meetings the Department put forward a concept for clustered development to preserve larger contiguous areas of open space. This concept was given due consideration by the participating public but was ultimately rejected in favor of large lot development. Reasons given included the lack of institutional structure to manage the open space and distrust that the open space would actually be preserved from future development.

The representatives of the resident group with which the Department had contact support the recommendations.

Goal 3:

Forty one percent of the land in the study area is already zoned such that higher densities than 2 units/acre are grandfathered in. Another 14% is zoned R-1 and is already developed at densities of less than 2 units/acre.

Map 10: One possible result of the proposed amendments
3144 new dwelling units



Approximately 900+ acres land in the study area (45%) remain zoned R-F (ranch farm). This is the land for which reasonable economic expectations most need to be met. Some of this land has been purchased by land developers, while most remains in agricultural use. Drought conditions have affected the profitability of farming in recent years so sale or development can be an attractive option. During the nineteen nineties, before the opening of Artcraft Road/Gary Ord Highway, the average density of farmland conversion development was about 2 units per acre.

Gated, large lot subdivisions have found a market on Westside mountain areas. Properly designed projects in the study area would have a reasonable expectation of selling as well.

Text of Amendment:
(Approved by City Council January 13th, 2004)

Northwest Planning Area

The recommendations of The Plan for El Paso adopted in 1999 serve as guidelines for development and redevelopment for the City of El Paso and its extra territorial jurisdictions. Within the Northwest planning area, the recommendations of the Northwest Upper Valley Plan adopted in 2004 will serve as guidelines for development and redevelopment of the area bounded by the Rio Grande, Country Club Road, the Texas/New Mexico State line and Borderland Road. *Land included within a valid land study and subdivision or zoning applications on file as of January 12, 2004 are specifically exempted from the provisions of this Plan Amendment for so long as the project that necessitated such application is continued.*

Artcraft Road Corridor

- The Artcraft Road Corridor shall be defined as the area extending 400 feet on either side of the Artcraft Road right-of-way from Doniphan Drive to the New Mexico State line.

Recognizing that there will be increased interstate heavy traffic on Artcraft Road, new development along the Artcraft Corridor should be planned in such a way as to promote the welfare, beauty and comfort of the area along the Artcraft Corridor and in the remainder of the Northwest Upper Valley Study Area.

Residential development:

- Any new residential development within the Artcraft Road Corridor should be low density no more than five (5) dwelling units per gross acre.

- New development should be encouraged to provide and make provisions to maintain a thirty-five foot (35’) landscaped strip of property along Artcraft Road measured from the edge of TxDOT right of way to include native plants and trees.

Commercial development:

• New commercial development should be restricted to the western side of the intersection of Artcraft Road at Upper Valley Road in an area extending 300 feet from the rights-of-way making the intersection.

• Commercial development should be restricted to neighborhood-compatible uses.

• A detailed site development plan should be encouraged for all commercial zoning requests.

Remainder of Northwest Upper Valley Study Area

This area--between the Rio Grande and the New Mexico State Line and between Country Club Road and Borderland Road, but excluding the Artcraft Road Corridor-- is characterized by the following:

• The area is a mix of agricultural use and very low-density large-lot single-family residences (a mix of R-1 and R-2), providing substantial open space and greenery. Residents have consistently expressed an interest in promoting the continuation of only agricultural and very low-density single family uses.

• Only a few collector roads serve the area and traffic circulation is hampered by the need to cross the Rio Grande on bridges at Country Club, Artcraft Road, and Borderland Road. Growth to the west in New Mexico and to the north in El Paso County will continue to funnel more people onto the routes for these bridges.

• Because of continuing agricultural use, the area is criss-crossed by irrigation canals and drains and their access roads that fall under the jurisdiction of the El Paso County Irrigation District #1.

• Most existing residential developments front onto the few collector roads and back onto irrigation ditches, leaving interior tracts of land that are accessible only by ditch-bank roads or by long or irregular routes to the collector roads.

• The area has unique features that attract many people to use the area for recreational activities such as bird watching, cycling, and horseback riding.

• The area lies in the Rio Grande flood plain, providing the potential for flooding, and there is not an up to date comprehensive drainage study or flood plan for this area.

As a result,

- New residential development should be very low density (a maximum of two and one half (2.5) dwelling units per gross acre) and on large lots.

- Buffering uses should be encouraged between areas of less-compatible uses.

- New street lighting should be encouraged to conform with recognized dark sky standards in order to preserve rural ambience. If dark sky standards are adopted by the City of El Paso they will take precedence.

- Within residential developments, open areas and green space areas should be planned and implemented wherever possible and developers should be discouraged from providing Park Dedication Fees in lieu of land for parks.

- The City, the El Paso County Water Improvement District No. 1, and developers should work together to plan for the safe passage of horses and cyclists along all arterials, collectors and sub-collectors and keep the area and the Rio Grande River Park accessible and compatible for these uses through the use of horse trails, bike trails and ditch banks.

The 2025 Projected General Land Use Map for the area is amended as shown on Map 11.

Map 11. Plan Amendment Recommendation- ***Year 2025 Projected General Land Use***

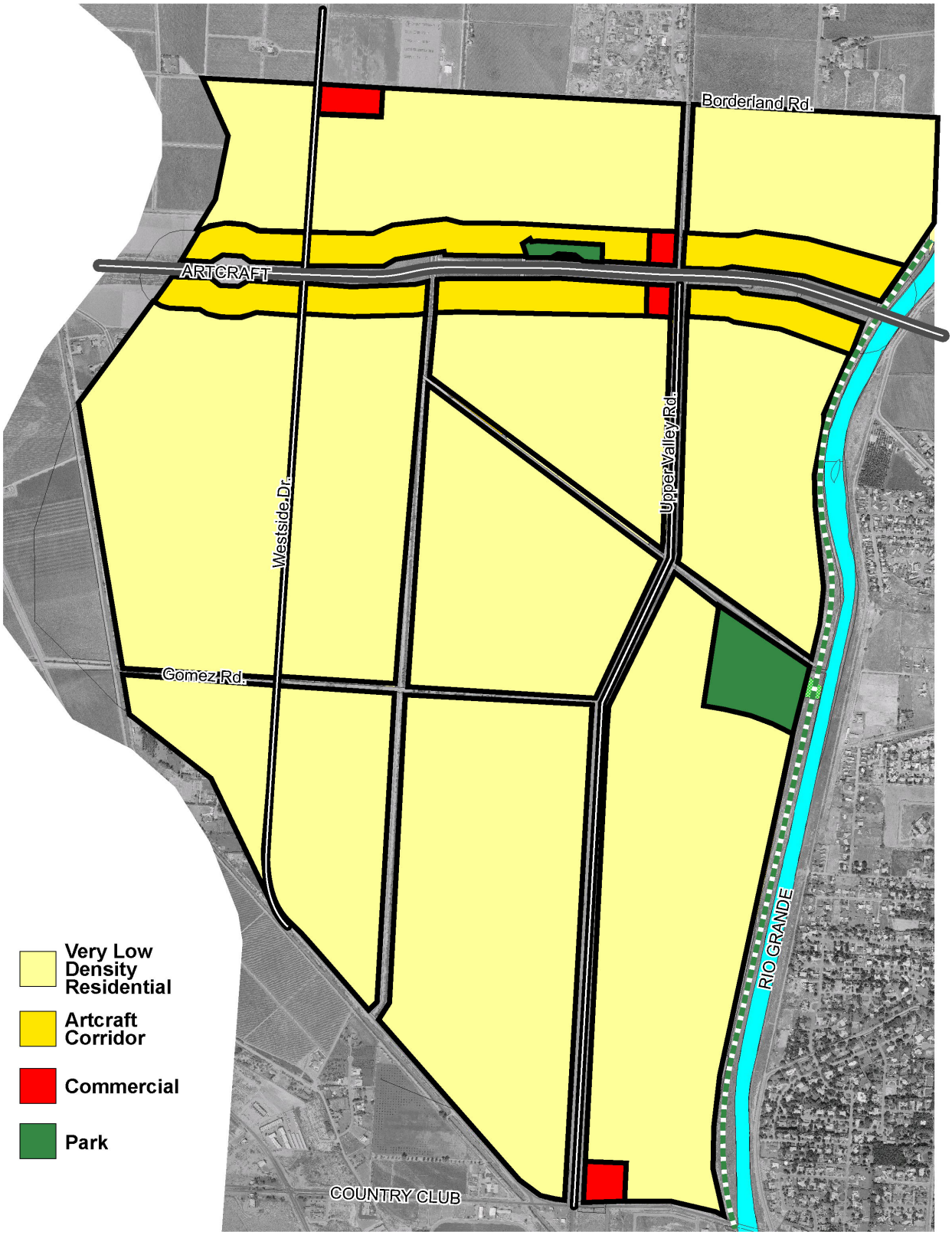


Exhibit 1

Results of Survey Given at Public Meeting on Upper Valley Plan

Survey from Meeting on Upper Valley Study – November 13, 2003

The most important factors to me for "quality of life" in the Upper Valley: **RANK (1= most important)**

1.9 points	Keeping the density of housing low
2.1 points	Keeping the size of the lots large
2.9 points	Keeping the value of the homes high
3.3 points	Preserving public open space, parks, and trails
3.6 points	Maintaining rural uses such as for horses and farms
4.0 points	Avoiding traffic and roadway problems
4.4 points	Avoiding overcrowded schools

From this meeting, I believe:	**Agree**	**Disagree**	**Uncer-tain**
A revision of the Plan for the Upper Valley is needed	59	2	2
The Council Revision will generally accommodate demand thru 2025	10	21	20
Most of the growth with be north of Gomez, in Canutillo ISD	12	10	13
Canutillo ISD will need to build 1 or more schools in the area	49	4	6
Valley Creek Park (37 acs) will be heavily used by Upper Valley residents	31	10	14
River Park trail will be heavily used by Upper Valley residents	31	8	15
Several smaller parks are also needed	27	18	9
Hike, bike, and horse trails should be included, with access to canal roads	51	5	1
I'd prefer a network of connecting trails rather than small parks in subdivisions	34	12	8
I'd accept tracts with smaller lots in exchange for more public open space	6	45	4
The Council Revision is fair toward landowners and developers.	7	34	13
The Revision to the Plan adequately describes the land use guidelines by referring to limits of 5 units per acre (Artcraft) and 4 units per acre	10	20	18
Away from Artcraft, the overall area should include a mix of R-1 and R-2, rather than each rezoned tract including both R-1 and R-2.	17	13	6
Currently, R-1 comprises 26% of all non-RF acreage; I want this % maintained in future.	38	12	4
R-1 zoning on existing tracts should be maintained; RF tracts should be rezoned R-1 or R-2 depending on surroundings.	38	15	1
R-1 should be mandated on tracts with certain characteristics; other tracts could be zoned R-1 or R-2, at landowner's option.	6	30	14
City should seek legal way to require that each RF tract rezoned include both R-1 and R-2.	40	11	3
Gomez Road should not cross the Rio Grande before year 2015	2	54	7
Gomez Road running West from Upper Valley Road should stay 2 lanes	5	51	5
Gomez Road running East from Upper Valley Road can be 4 lanes	10	42	7

The MPO should study and make recommendations for after year 2015	48	2	4

Survey Concerns

1. No R3A. (3)
2. Need for emergency assistance, fire & police substations. (4)
3. Why does City Council ignore CPC recommendations?
4. Repair the northern portion of Upper Valley Road starting on Gomez Road. (2)
5. Need to widen Country Club Road and install streetlights. (2)
6. Need streetlights on Upper Valley Road and Westside Drive. (2)
7. Make sure park fees are used for parks.
8. Why was Gomez Road paved if there is no money?
9. Water concerns. (7)
10. Do not need rezoning. (2)
11. Heavy construction trucks are tearing up the roads and are only being patched up instead of putting a base under the asphalt, which in turn would be able to handle heavy trucks.
12. Concerns about increased density, lack of infrastructure, drainage, and infringement on irrigation rights. (8)
13. Survey could be clearer, and questions are confusing. (3)
14. Gomez Road should not cross the River.
15. Primary zoning should be RF & R1 with irrigation. (12)
16. RF could be zoned for 3-acre Ranchettes.
17. Current Master Plan already references maintaining rural quality of life in the Upper Valley. How will a new plan be enforced any differently in the face of pressure from developers?
18. Development must stop until roads are repaired.
19. The City is only interested in developers. (2)
20. Concerned about traffic flow to Damian Elementary School and new High School at Transmountain & I-10. Borderland Road cannot handle traffic now.
21. Taxes being raised.
22. Over population. (4)
23. New Schools needed. (5)
24. The Valley is unique, desert is not. Schwartz can build in the east, north, etc. (3)
25. Heavy traffic. (5)
26. We must do all we can to enhance and preserve the natural greenery and beauty of the Valley. (7)
27. Afraid of losing home to Gomez Road expansion.
28. Need a Drainage Study.
29. Do the right thing. (2)
30. Will irrigation ditches be maintained so that water allotment from the Rio Grande River will continue?
31. Land has better uses than houses.
32. What is being done to preserve the animals; skunks, raccoons, owls, herons, etc. (4)
33. If Gomez Road is expanded, it will need constant repair due to the high water table.
34. Representative Austin said the Community wanted streetlights, but it does not want them.
35. Ensure mix of R1 & R2 outside of corridor, and ensure compliance with plan. (4)
36. Concerned that roadways have adequate passage for safe crossing of pedestrians and horses.
37. A traffic light at Upper Valley Road will make it very difficult to get out of Country Place Estates.
38. Would like a public horse arena.
39. Horses are not compatible with bike trails.
40. Willing to help work on plan. (2)

**** Number after comment is the number of times it was commented. If there is no number, comment was only made once.**

Exhibit 2

Ordinance Amending the Comprehensive Plan

ORDINANCE NO. _____

AN ORDINANCE APPROVING THE NORTHWEST UPPER VALLEY PLAN AS A SPECIFIC STUDY AREA PLAN TO BE INCORPORATED INTO THE CITY'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, THE PLAN FOR EL PASO, AND WHICH PLAN SHALL AMEND THE PLAN FOR EL PASO AND THE YEAR 2025 GENERAL LAND USE MAP INCORPORATED THEREIN.

WHEREAS, *The Plan for El Paso* was adopted by the El Paso City Council on April 27, 1999, and further ratified on February 18, 2003, pursuant to the provisions of Section 219.002 of the Texas Local Government Code as the comprehensive plan for the City; and

WHEREAS, the comprehensive plan serves as a general guide for the future growth and development of the City to promote public health, safety and welfare; and

WHEREAS, a specific recommendation of *The Plan for El Paso* is the creation of specific study area plans that will serve as a separate policy documents that give general support to the objectives of the City's comprehensive plan; and

WHEREAS, the El Paso City Council on September 16, 2003 directed the Planning, Research and Development Department to prepare amendments to the *The Plan of El Paso* to modify the goals, policies and land use recommendation for a portion of the Upper Valley with public input and to present these amendments to City Council within ninety (90) days; and

WHEREAS, the City Planning, Research and Development Department has developed a study area plan for the Northwest Upper Valley which identifies the impacts of growth and new development and proposes guidelines aimed at protecting the existing characteristics of the Northwest Upper Valley; and

WHEREAS, the El Paso City Council finds that the adoption of the Northwest Upper Valley Plan as herein enumerated will have no negative impact upon the public health, safety, morals and

general welfare of the City, and that the study area plan will carry out the purpose and spirit of the policies expressed in *The Plan for El Paso.*

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF EL PASO:

1. **THAT**, the El Paso City Council hereby adopts the Northwest Upper Valley Plan as a specific study area plan, and that same shall be incorporated into *The Plan for El Paso* for all purposes, including amending the Year 2025 Projected General Land Use Map for the long-range development of the Northwest Upper Valley

2. **Except** as herein modified, *The Plan for El Paso* and its related documents shall remain in full force and effect as to the long-range general policies for guiding growth and development in the City.

PASSED AND APPROVED this _____ day of _____, 2004.

THE CITY OF EL PASO

_____
Joe Wardy
Mayor

ATTEST:

_____
Richarda Momsen
City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

_____
Matt Watson
Assistant City Attorney

APPROVED AS TO CONTENT:

_____
Patricia D. Adauto
Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
Building & Planning Services

ORDINANCE NO. _____