



*Open Space and Natural Resource Plan*

## **Parks Inventory and Assessment**

*Prepared for*

**Washoe County**

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*Prepared by*

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## **CITATION**

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## ACRONYMS

ACEC	Area of Critical Environmental Concern
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
GIS	Geographic Information System
NDOW	Nevada Department of Wildlife
NWI	National Wetland Inventory
PMU	Sage Grouse Population Management Unit
ROSP	Reno Open Space Plan
SRT	Science Review Team
SWReGAP	Southwest Regional Gap Analysis Project
USFS	United States Forest Service
WAPT	Wildlife Action Plan Team



# 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION: PURPOSE AND ROLE OF THE REPORT

From the early history of the region and the promise of a new life in the West, to the captivating beauty of the canyons and mountains, Washoe County has been defined by what the natural world has provided here. For this reason, the Washoe County Open Space and Natural Resource planning effort was initiated in early 2007 to assess and plan for how to manage these resources. It is at once an effort to update the 1994 Open Space Plan and create a new Natural Resource Management Plan for the southern portion of Washoe County.

The planning area covers the southern portion of the County, stretching north from the boundary with Carson City, to the northern shores of Pyramid Lake. Figure 1 illustrates the planning area boundaries. The area includes the communities of Reno and Sparks, as well as tribal lands managed by the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony and the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe, respectively.

The study area includes the county's urban areas and the interface between private lands and the mix of public ownership. The region includes extensive tribal lands as well. This assortment of land ownership and uses has created an increase in competition for resource and open space use. From expanding urban centers and communities, to increased water consumption, and conflicting outdoor activities – the region's open space and natural resources are experiencing more pressure and use than before. This plan strives to both create a way to best share the experiences and values from the landscape, and preserve them for future use. For everyone in the county, the wide open spaces, striking natural skylines, rich natural and cultural history, and unique ecosystems all make Washoe County a special place for those who call it home.

Three inventory and assessment reports were prepared:

- Natural Resources
- Open Space
- Parks and Recreation

Washoe County's Regional Parks and Open Space Department is in the process of updating individual master plans for many of their planning districts, and this assessment is not intended to supplant or replace that effort. Similarly, the City of Sparks has just initiated an update of its existing Parks Master Plan, and the City of Reno has just implemented that City's new Greenways Plan. Given that those efforts are ongoing, the goal of this inventory and assessment report is to describe the resources and facilities that exist, and identify areas where either population growth or emerging recreation trends are suggesting a need for additional facilities.

The reports are based on the best available science and studies at the time. No new data was collected, but local resource managers and academic researchers were consulted to bring the best information to the plan. The three reports are crafted to be stand alone documents that support decision-making and planning on the topics they covered. These reports provide the framework for the plan and by including the detailed assessments here the plan itself is more reader friendly. Because these three reports are meant to be read independently, some overlap occurs between them. Open space, natural resources, and parks and recreation all share some components that are addressed in each, though often through different perspectives.

These reports are intended to help the project team develop scenarios for testing local values about resources and assess management options. These scenarios in turn, will form the basis for policy recommendations and the final implementation strategy.

## 1.2 THE PLANNING AREA

The primary mission of the Washoe County Regional Parks and Open Space Department and the Parks Commission is to provide opportunities to meet identifiable recreation, park and open space needs for the residents of Washoe County. This is achieved, to a large extent, by conserving and enhancing the County's unique features through preservation of lands with scenic, natural, historic and recreational value (*Washoe County Comprehensive Plan, 1992*). As of May 2007, the Department was operating and maintaining approximately 2861 acres of regional parks, 395 acres of community parks, 3748 acres of open space, greenbelt and trail areas, 677 acres of specialized facilities such as shooting ranges, and 495 acres of golf courses. (*Source: Washoe County Geographic Information System, 2007; Regional Parks and Open Space Department Inventory, May 2007*). A more detailed summary of holdings is provided in Section 3.

There are four park construction tax districts in unincorporated Washoe County, which are further divided into 13 subdistricts (see Figure 2). They were created in the early 1970s to collect and apply park construction tax revenue towards the development of community parks. All new residential units constructed in the unincorporated area of Washoe County are assessed at a rate of one percent of the valuation of each building permit issued, or \$1,000 per residential dwelling unit or mobile home lot, whichever is less. The revenue is for acquisition and construction of new parks, not maintenance. As new residential construction occurs, the tax is collected and placed in an interest bearing account until the funds are needed to construct new park facilities in the park district where the funds were collected. The Washoe County general fund is also used to pay for new community park development. Bonds, gifts or other special funding sources may also be used to fund regional parks and special use facility development.

*These four districts have been used as the organizational basis for this current report, and are described in more detail below. The Regional Parks and Open Space Department is presently undertaking an administrative reorganization of these districts into four ranger districts: two that will serve the North Region, one that will serve the Truckee River central district, and one that will serve the south region. A subsequent draft of this report will be organized to correspond to these four new districts, but it should be emphasized that any reorganization does not change the fundamental conclusions presented in this report, regarding where parks may be needed to accommodate future growth.*

Park District 1A lies within the west Truckee Meadows, centered around the Truckee River, and includes Verdi, Mogul, Belli Ranch, Peavine Mountain, and Northwest Reno. This is a rather sparsely populated park district. The potential for heavy population growth is limited, based on the adopted Washoe County land use plans and steep slopes limiting development potential. Future development is occurring primarily as suburban residential on medium and large sized lots. Most of these occur in Mogul, Belli Ranch and Verdi and limited lot development along the Truckee River. Consequently, the anticipated need for traditional active parks is limited. However, the park district includes features of regional recreation interest such as the Truckee

River and Peavine Peak. In addition, the south, west and north boundaries of this park district include the Toiyabe National Forest and the Mount Rose Wilderness.

Park District 1B includes West Truckee Meadows, Hunter Creek, Alum Creek, and Bartley/Anderson Ranch.

Park Districts 1C and 1D include Southwest Truckee Meadows, Arrowcreek, Thomas & Whites Creek, Callahan Ranch, Galena, Montreaux, Davis Creek, and the Slide Mountain / Mt. Rose area. The area is developing as suburban residential on medium to large lots. As growth occurs, it is commonly suburban in character with lots that range from approximately 15,000 square feet to several acres in size.

The North Valleys' Park District 2A consists of eight distinct suburban/rural communities, primarily along and near U.S. Highway 395. Two communities are located south of the highway on the lower elevations of Peavine Mountain: Grandview Terrace and Anderson Acres. On the north side of U.S. 395, five communities, consecutively named Golden Valley, Lemmon Valley, Stead, Silver Knolls and Cold Springs, are separated by low ridges. The remaining two communities, Red Rock Estates and Rancho Haven are located north of the Silver Knolls area and are accessed from Red Rock Road.

Park Districts 2B and 2C include Spanish Springs, East Truckee Canyon, Gerlach, Sparks, and Warm Springs. The Spanish Springs Valley is experiencing rapid growth and has contributed significant resources to the park construction tax fund. Conversely, the Truckee Canyon has a smaller population spread over the length of the canyon, and has not experienced significant growth in recent years.

Sun Valley Park District 2D is located just north of the City of Reno. To the east, the area extends to the Spanish Springs Park District 2C; and the western boundary is defined by its shared boundary with the North Valleys' Park District 2A. Sun Valley is unique because it has traditionally provided entry-level and affordable housing, and the community has a higher than average percentage of mobile and manufactured homes.

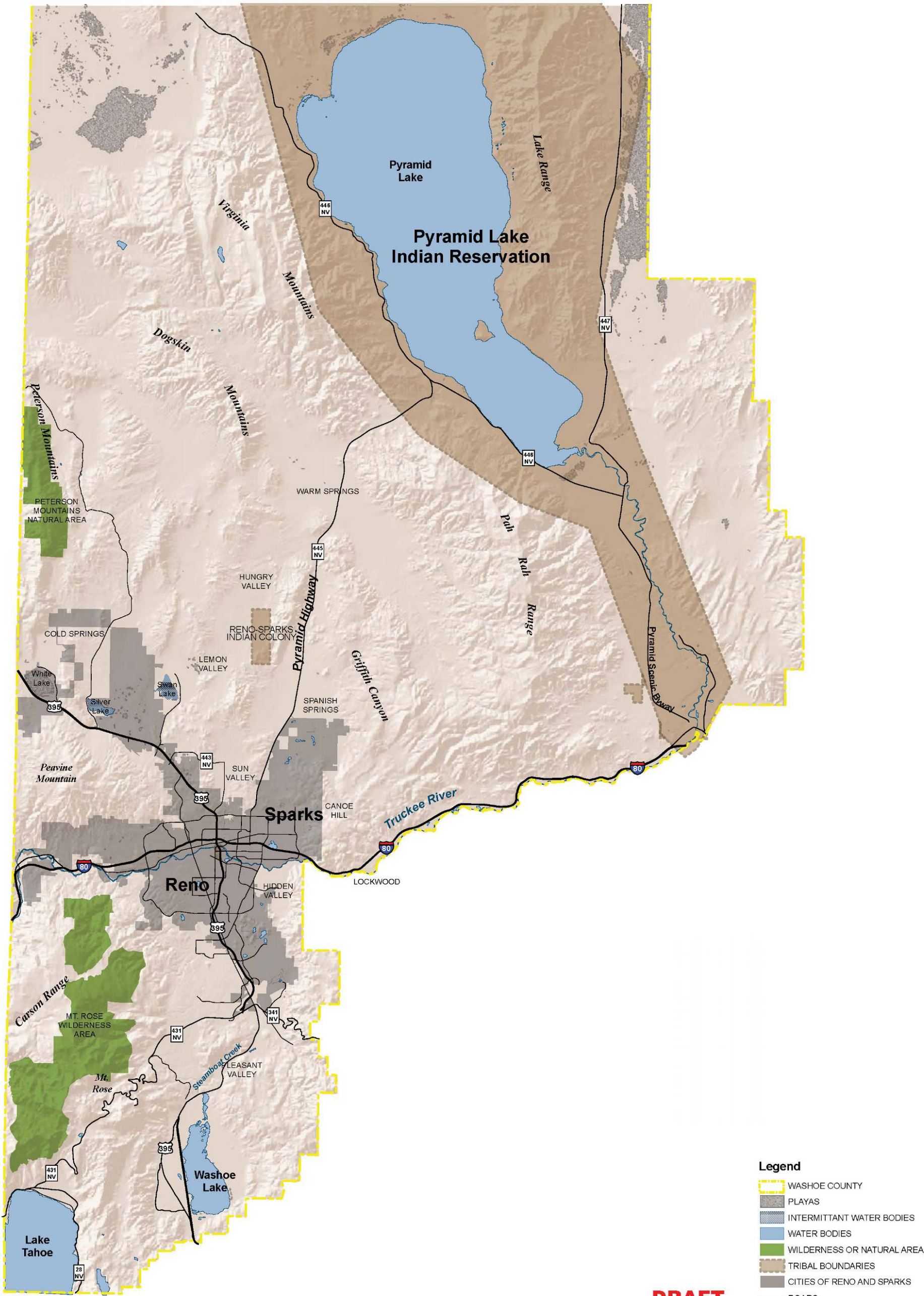
Park Districts 3A and 3B include Hidden Valley, Southeast Reno, Virginia Foothills, Huffaker Hills, Geiger Grade and Toll Road. The Southeast Truckee Meadows is split by a prominent physiographic feature, Rattlesnake Mountain and the Huffaker Hills. When the park districts were established, these features were felt to constrain access and park facilities constructed in one area would have little likelihood of utilization from residents living on the other side of the hill. Consequently, the area was separated into two distinct park districts for the planning for and construction of community park facilities.

Park District 3C includes Washoe Valley, Pleasant Valley, and the Jumbo Grade area.

Park Districts 4A and 4B include Incline Village and East Lake Tahoe. These areas include mostly Federal public lands and wilderness areas, and presently provide only five acres of developed parkland. As a consequence they have not been discussed in this document.

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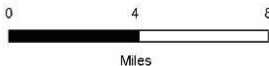


SOURCE: Open Space and Natural Resource Planning

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Figure 1: Project Area Map







## 2. POTENTIAL DEMAND FOR PARK FACILITIES

### 2.1 PROJECTED POPULATION GROWTH AND DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

According to projections from the *Washoe County Consensus Forecast, 2003-2025*, between 2003 and 2025 the County is projected to grow at an average annual rate of 1.4 percent, increasing in population from 383,000 persons in 2004, to close to 500,000 persons.

As suggested in Figure 3, which displays locations of approved residential subdivisions as of May 2007, much of this growth is occurring in the Spanish Springs area to the north, as well as in the Southeast Truckee Meadows. The shifting pattern of growth will influence the amount and location of parks and recreation facilities that may be needed in the future, as well as the potential for future open space acquisitions to accommodate park-type uses.

A second trend of note is the continued aging of the “baby boom” population and its effect on demand for more passive recreation facilities, such as trails. By 2025, over 13 percent of the County’s population is expected to be over age 65, compared to 10 percent in 2003. The percentage of residents who are young children (under age 4) or school aged (age 5-19) is expected to remain roughly constant.

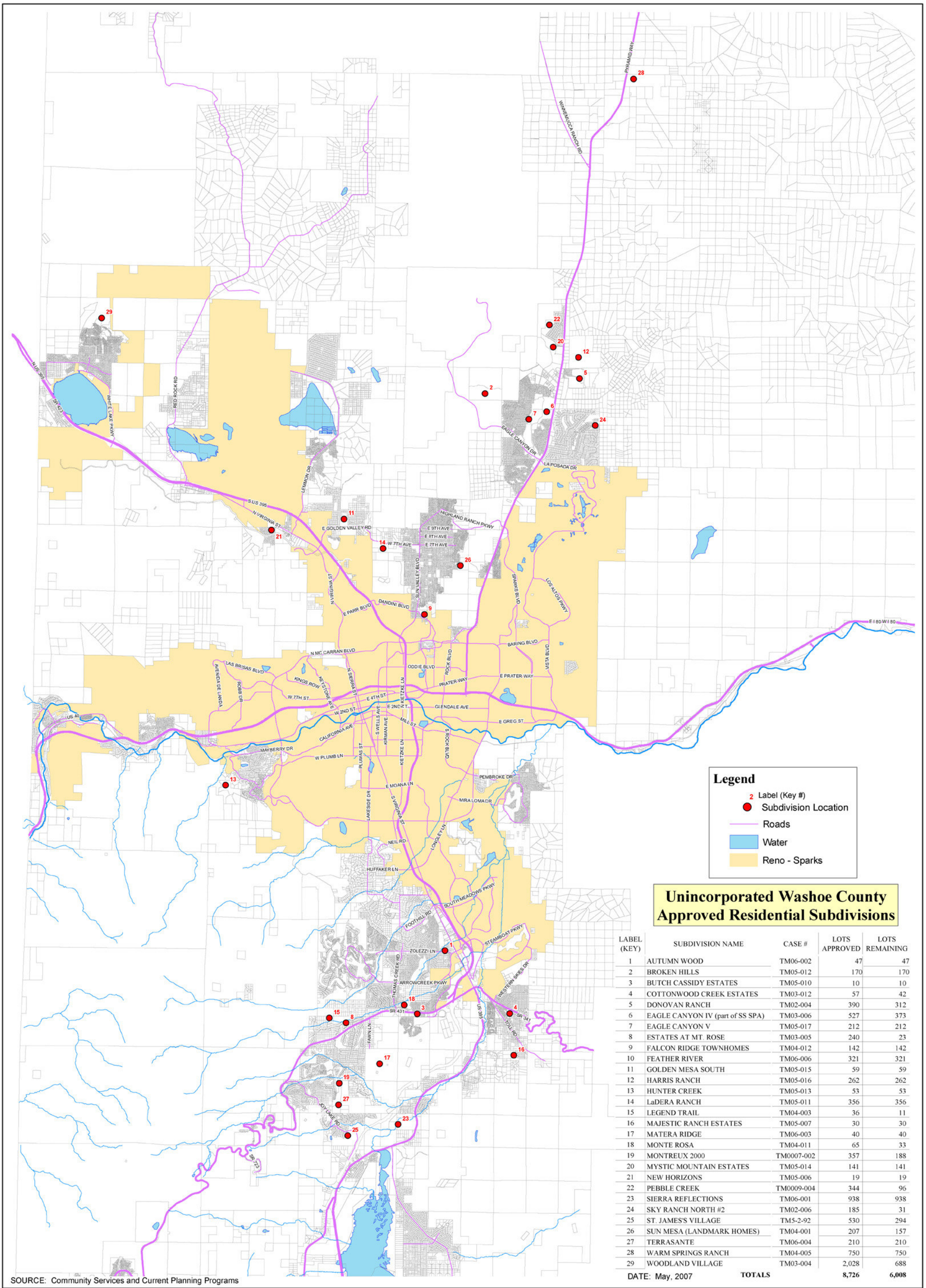
### 2.2 WHAT ARE RESIDENTS SEEKING FROM THEIR PARKS? PARKS AND OPEN SPACE MASTER PLAN SURVEY RESULTS

In summer 2006, the Washoe County Department of Regional Parks and Open Space conducted a survey of residents living within their service areas, as continued input to the updates of the district Master Plans that are presently in progress (*Washoe County Regional Parks and Open Space Park District Master Plan Survey Results, September 2006*). A total of 494 completed questionnaires were received, with representation from all of the 13 districts. Results were tabulated in September 2006, with key findings summarized below.

- A high percentage of respondents – 88 percent – reported participating in at least two hours or more of physical recreational activities per week: about twice the national average.
- Sixty-five percent reported using a park or recreation facility at least one a week – again, a very high level of utilization.
- Sixty-six percent reported being satisfied with the number and variety of recreational facilities in their area, and three-quarters were satisfied with the quality and maintenance of County facilities.
- Preservation of open areas to protect natural resources and wildlife habitat, was rated as the top priority for future funding and projects, by 75 percent of respondents. Providing a high level of maintenance for existing facilities was rated second (72 percent of respondents), followed by acquisition of parkland for passive recreation and trails (71

- percent), an interconnected trails and bikeway system (68 percent), and riparian restoration projects to improve flood control and protect water quality (64 percent).
- Forty-eight percent indicated that acquisition of parkland for active recreation, including playgrounds and ballfields, should be a high priority for future funding.
  - The top ten items that residents expressed additional needs for included:
    - Paved bike trails connecting neighborhoods (60 percent)
    - Paved paths or sidewalks along streets (51 percent)
    - Hiking trails over varied terrain, natural areas for wildlife viewing (49 percent)
    - Nature study with signage (46 percent)
    - Activities that promote neighborhood interaction (45 percent)
    - Cultural events (41 percent)
    - Access to rivers, lakes and ponds for fishing (40 percent)
    - Activities for teens/teen center (37 percent)
    - Historic/interpretive facilities and programs (36 percent)
    - Environmental education programs for children (35 percent)

Results from this survey thus suggest potential acquisition and development of selected sites that could fulfill open space resource protection values as well as provide for compatible recreation.



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Figure 3: Approved Residential Subdivisions, Washoe County, May 2007



### 3. EXISTING PARKS INVENTORY

This inventory section describes the location and extent of park facilities located in the County, including acreage and amenities. Figure 4, attached, below summarizes this information by type of park (neighborhood/community or regional), and park district. Acreage data are derived from the Washoe County Regional Parks and Open Space Inventory (May, 2007) and County-supplied GIS shapefiles.

It is important to note that the above data only include areas designated as parkland, and not open space, greenways, trails, or other special use facilities.

As the pace of development continues, the supply of land with features suitable or desirable for either parkland, or joint acquisition as open space and parkland, continues to diminish. Preservation of lands with significant scenic, natural, and recreational qualities and features, can help to maintain these lands for public enjoyment.

#### 3.1 PARK DISTRICT 1A

This district includes a total of 696 acres of parkland, 652 acres of regional facilities and 44 acres of neighborhood or community parks facilities. Figure 5 illustrates their locations and key amenities for each park are summarized below.

*Rancho San Rafael Regional Park.* This approximately 575-acre regional park was once a working ranch, and was purchased in 1979 by Washoe County and officially opened in 1982. The site contains pastureland, natural sage communities, and manicured turf. Evans Creek, which drains from Peavine Mountain, provides intermittent water to a wetland and pond within the park. Two original ranch house structures remain today. The park is home to several attractions including a museum, arboretum and an adventure play area, along with a variety of picnic pavilions, playgrounds and other picnic sites. The north portion of the park contains a nature hiking trail, a Basque Monument, and a Sports Complex managed by the City of Reno.

*Crystal Peak Park.* This park is located just outside of Verdi and consists of 51 acres. The park site was once part of the town of Crystal Peak, dating back to 1864, which prospered from the construction of the Central Pacific Railroad. In 1939, the original seven acres were deeded to the State of Nevada as a highway park. In 1972, an additional 20 acres were purchased, and in 1993 an additional 24 acres were purchased. The park offers Truckee River access, individual picnic sites with barbecues, horseshoes, restrooms and a riverside trail. It is a popular site for fishing.

*Dorostkar Park.* This 26-acre park is also a popular fishing spot, and features picnic tables, soft-surface and paved trails, and access to the Truckee River.

*Verdi School Park.* This 11-acre park has tennis and basketball courts, a youth baseball field, handball court and playground. The historic Verdi Schoolhouse is located across the street. The Parks Department plans to restore this historic schoolhouse as a community-use facility as funds become available.

*Mogul Neighborhood Park.* This 13-acre park offers a playground, tennis, volleyball and basketball courts, a winter sledding area, a bicycle/walking trail, fitness course and picnic sites. Most of the site is covered with native grasses over rolling hills, with a turf area located near the park entrance.

*Mayberry Park.* Located along the Truckee River, this 16-acre park offers picnic sites, fishing, and access to the Truckee River greenway.

*Ambrose Park.* This four-acre pocket park offers Truckee River access, fishing, and bird/wildlife viewing.

Within this district, the City of Reno also administers approximately 204 acres of parks, based on analysis of GIS data.

### 3.2 PARK DISTRICT 1B

This district includes a total of 128 acres of regional parkland and 31 acres of neighborhood or community parks facilities. Figure 6 illustrates their locations and key amenities for each park are summarized below.

*Anderson Park.* This park offers 62 acres of ranch land interspersed with hiking and equestrian trails, and picnic areas.

*Bartley Ranch Park.* Bartley Ranch Park includes an equestrian center, the historic Huffaker School, which has been restored and available for special occasions, picnic facilities and trails. The 66-acre park also includes the Western Heritage Interpretive Center, Brick House and Hawkins Amphitheater.

*Betsy Caughlin Donnelly Park.* This 30-acre park features walking trails with dramatic views of the Sierra Nevadas.

Rivermount Park, at less than one acre, is one of the newest neighborhood parks in the district.

Within this district, the City of Reno also administers 189 acres of parks.

### 3.3 PARK DISTRICTS 1C AND 1D

This district includes a total of 550 acres of parkland, 436 acres of regional facilities and 114 acres of neighborhood or community parks facilities. Figure 6 illustrates their locations and key amenities for each park are summarized below.

*Galena Creek Regional Park.* This park covers 354 acres and is located on the Mt. Rose Highway. It offers picnic facilities, hiking trails, a snow-play hill and a nature trail. Features include the historic Galena Fish Hatchery, Stone House Visitors Center, an overnight group camping lodge, two group picnic areas and more than 60 individual picnic sites. The park also offers access portals to the Mt. Rose Wilderness Area.

*South Valleys Regional Park.* This 82-acre park was developed through a bond referendum passed in 1990, which awarded Washoe County Parks \$5 million for construction of a number of regional facilities with \$1 million budgeted for this sports complex. The park features youth baseball and soccer fields, and group and individual picnic areas.

*Bowers Mansion Park.* Located on the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada, this 50-acre park offers views of the Washoe Valley. Facilities include a seasonal swimming pool, playground, group and individual picnic areas, and the historic Bowers mansion.

*Ellen's Park.* The park covers four acres and provides covered group picnic facilities, a playground, basketball court and tennis court.

*Thomas Creek Neighborhood Park.* This six-acre park offers playgrounds, tennis, basketball, volleyball and picnic facilities. It affords long views of the Truckee Meadows and Carson Range.

*Saddlehorn Park.* This eight-acre park is a developer built project within the Saddlehorn residential project. Facilities include a picnic shelter, tennis court, basketball half-court, volleyball, and a children's playground. The facility is owned by the County and maintained by the project's homeowner's association. It is also connected to a bikeway that parallels Thomas Creek.

*Philip and Annie Callahan Park.* This 25-acre park offers a group picnic area, a playground, individual picnic sites, water fountains and a paved pathway. It is in close proximity to the Galena Creek trail adjacent to the historic Galena Street schoolhouse.

*Whites Creek Park.* The Parks Department purchased the six-acre park site in 1985. The park is ideally located along Whites Creek and it has mature trees, which provide shade for the playground area. The park also houses a multi-purpose athletic field and individual picnic sites with barbeques.

*Elizabeth Lenz Elementary School/Park.* This 3.5-acre park is a joint use facility with the Washoe County School District. There are sports fields, a softball diamond, basketball courts, and playground equipment. The playing fields are operated and maintained under the jurisdiction of the Parks and Recreation Department with the responsibility for balance of the facilities maintained by the School District.

*Arrow Creek Park.* This 11-acre park includes a playground, group and individual picnic areas, restrooms and a small amphitheater. It also offers access to the Thomas Creek trail and a staging area for equestrian use.

### 3.4 PARK DISTRICT 2A

This district includes a total of 180 acres of parkland, 77 acres of regional facilities and 103 acres of neighborhood or community parks facilities. Figure 7 illustrates their locations and key amenities for each park are summarized below.

District 2A contains Washoe County Parks and Recreation Departments first neighborhood parks. Until the Park Construction Tax fund was created in the early 1970s, Washoe County's park system consisted of large regional parks such as Galena, Bowers and Davis Creek. Black Springs, Lemmon Valley Community Park, Lemmon Valley Horseman's Park and Sun Valley's Gepford Park were built in the mid-1970s using a combination of developer donated land, Park Construction Tax, Land and Water Conservation Funds, and Washoe County staff construction. As the growth of the 1980s and 1990s occurred throughout the county, numerous other parks have been constructed. In the North Valleys, these include Golden Valley, Cold Springs, and Silver Knolls.

*North Valleys Park.* The 77-acre North Valleys Regional Sports Complex was funded by the Nevada Parks and wildlife 1990 bond. Facilities include a large community center, skate park, four youth baseball and six multi-purpose fields, volleyball courts, a playground, walking paths, and picnic sites.

*Golden Valley Park.* Land for the 20-acre Golden Valley Park was acquired by the County in 1968. The park includes a playground, horse arena, youth baseball fields, tennis courts, and a small group picnic area.

*Silver Knolls Park.* Development of this park began in 1982 with the lease of 20 acres from the Bureau of Land Management to Washoe County Parks and Recreation through the Recreation and Public Purpose Act. The park includes a playground, youth baseball fields, a multi-use athletic field, group and individual picnic areas, a small equestrian arena, and hiking trails.

*Cold Springs Park.* In 1977, just under 14 acres was purchased with Park Construction Tax Funds by the County. This neighborhood park features a community center, playground, picnic sites, basketball and volleyball courts, a baseball field, multi-use athletic field, skate park and jogging trail.

*Village Center Park.* Scheduled to open in 2007, this 13-acre park will provide three soccer fields, picnic facilities and a play area.

*Lemmon Valley Community Park.* The Lemmon Valley Land Company donated just under 16 acres of land to the County in lieu of Park Construction Tax in 1972. Adjacent to the Lemmon Valley Elementary School, the park features a playground, three youth baseball fields, a multi-use athletic field, tennis and basketball courts and a shaded group picnic area.

*Lemmon Valley Horseman's Arena and Park.* Land in the amount of just under eight acres was donated in 1965 in lieu of Park Construction Tax. The Arena site includes a full-size and two smaller arenas, an announcer's stand, concessions, playground, and covered picnic area.

*Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Park.* Home to the Westbrook Community Center that can be reserved or gatherings, this six-acre park also has a covered picnic area, playground and basketball court.

*Forest Park.* Located in the Woodland Hills subdivision, this six-acre park provides a playground, picnic area, basketball courts and a multi-use athletic field.

The City of Reno also maintains just over 90 acres of parkland in this district.



### 3.5 PARK DISTRICTS 2B AND 2C

This district includes a total of 229 acres of regional parks (including the Palomino Valley Park site which has not yet been developed) and 67 acres of neighborhood or community parks facilities. Figures 8 and 9 illustrate their locations and key amenities for each park are summarized below.

*Lazy 5 Ranch Regional/Community Park.* This 85-acre park was named for a ranch that previously operated in the area. It incorporates a community center, water play park, playgrounds, picnic areas, volleyball courts, and two multi-use athletic fields. The Orr Ditch provides a lush riparian corridor through the center of the park.

*Palomino Valley Park Site.* An 144-acre site has been acquired for future regional park development.

*Highland Ranch Park.* This 29-acre park offers access to BLM land for hiking and views of the Sierra Nevada and the Spanish Springs Valley. Features include a playground, multi-purpose athletic fields, court sports areas and picnic sites.

*Eagle Canyon Park.* This 19-acre neighborhood park features a playground, youth baseball and multi-use athletic fields, and picnic facilities.

*Desert Winds Park.* This seven-acre neighborhood park includes a playground, horseshoe pits and picnic facilities.

*Gator Swamp Park.* This four-acre neighborhood park is located next to the Alyce Taylor Elementary School and includes a playground, multi-use athletic field, individual picnic areas, court sports facilities, and walking trails. Twenty acres are available for park expansion.

*Sky Ranch Park.* The property consists of just over five acres, and improvements include a multiple purpose athletic field, youth ballfields, youth and junior age play apparatus, a picnic shelter and bar-b-que pit, and supporting facilities. The park was constructed between 1984 and 1986 with major reconstruction and additions occurring since that time.

*Gerlach Park*, and *Sun Mesa Park* are smaller neighborhood parks that together provide about three acres of play space.

These districts also include 47 acres of parkland managed by the City of Reno and 684 acres of parkland managed by the City of Sparks.

### 3.6 PARK DISTRICT 2D

This district includes a total of 377 acres of parkland, 343 acres of regional facilities and 34 acres of neighborhood or community parks facilities. Figure 5 illustrates their locations and key amenities for each park are summarized below.

*Sun Valley Regional Park.* Expected to open by early 2008, this 343-acre regional park will offer expansive views of Mt. Rose and provide hiking, biking and equestrian facilities, picnic areas and restrooms.

*Sun Valley Community Park.* This 26-acre community park provides extensive active recreation facilities, including a skate park, BMX track, playing fields and court sports areas. The park also offers a pool and community center.

*Gepford Park.* At just over eight acres, this park has a playground, three youth baseball fields, court sports areas and picnic facilities.

The City of Sparks also maintains approximately 20 acres of parkland within this district.

### 3.7 PARK DISTRICTS 3A AND 3B

This district includes a total of 507 acres of parkland, 480 acres of regional facilities and 27 acres of neighborhood or community parks facilities. Figure 6 illustrates their locations and key amenities for each park are summarized below.

*Hidden Valley Regional Park.* This 480-acre park was acquired from the Bureau of Land Management in 1968 under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act. It provides a horse arena, dog park, caretaker's residence, playground and baseball/soccer field and tennis courts.

*Hidden Valley Highlands Park.* In 1974, this nine-acre site was acquired for use as a trailhead site. It lies contiguous to the Steamboat Creek and north of the Hidden Valley Elementary School.

*Virginia Foothills Community Park.* This 14.5-acre park was acquired in 1970 but was not developed until 1991. The facility has tennis and volleyball courts, picnic facilities, a playground, and several athletic and multi-purpose fields.

*Bailey Creek Park.* This three-acre neighborhood park currently contains a group picnic shelter, basketball court, lawn play area, and provides access to the Bailey Creek Wash.

The City of Reno also provides and maintains approximately 92 acres of parkland in these two districts.

### 3.8 PARK DISTRICT 3C

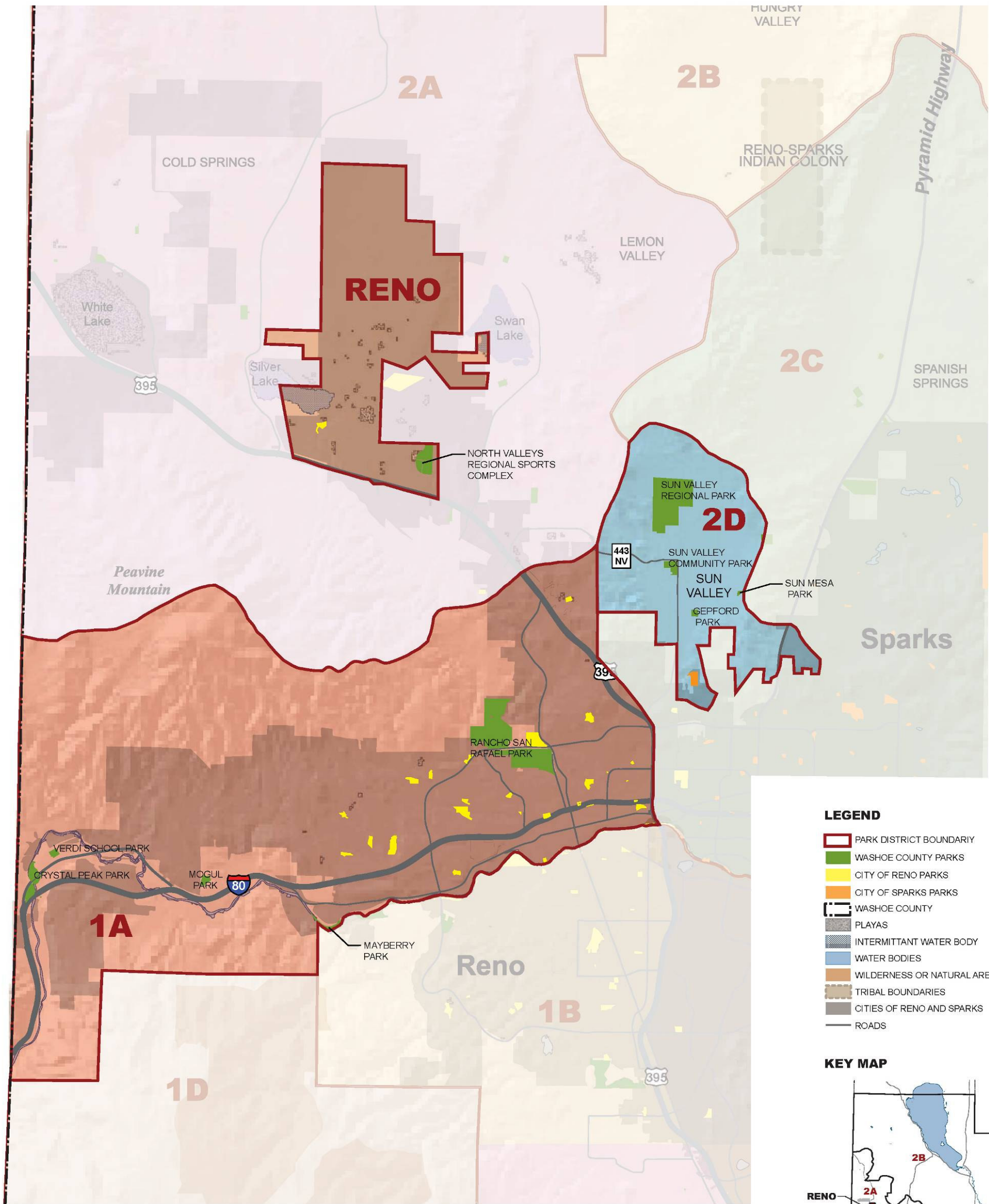
This district includes a total of 207 acres of parkland, 172 acres of regional facilities and 35 acres of neighborhood or community parks facilities. Figure 6 illustrates their locations and key amenities for each park are summarized below.

*Davis Creek Park.* With outstanding views of Washoe Lake and Slide Mountain, this 172-acre park includes a campground and day-use facilities, a small pond for non-motorized boating and fishing, and extensive hiking and equestrian facilities.

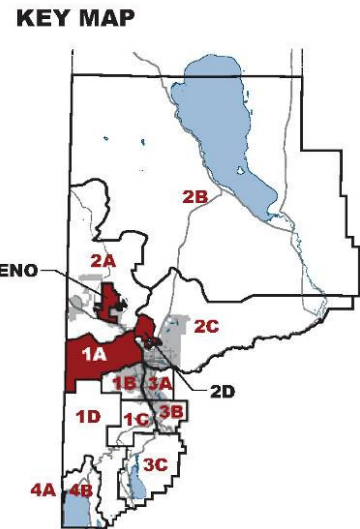
*Wilson Commons Park.* A unique cultural gem, Wilson Commons Ranch was the site of the Washoe Valley's first structure. A 100-year-old barn and ranch outbuildings sit on the 25-acre site, among 20 acres of irrigated pasture, a fishing pond, a group picnic area, horseshoe pits, and a volleyball court. The park offers dramatic views of the Washoe Valley and the Sierra Nevada.

*Pleasant Valley Park.* This six-acre park features a playground, portable restroom and individual picnic areas.

*New Washoe City Park.* Located near the intersection of Lakeshore and White Pine Drives in Washoe Valley, the four-acre park features a baseball field, court sports, a playground and picnic facilities.



- LEGEND**
- PARK DISTRICT BOUNDARY
  - WASHOE COUNTY PARKS
  - CITY OF RENO PARKS
  - CITY OF SPARKS PARKS
  - WASHOE COUNTY
  - PLAYAS
  - INTERMITTANT WATER BODY
  - WATER BODIES
  - WILDERNESS OR NATURAL AREA
  - TRIBAL BOUNDARIES
  - CITIES OF RENO AND SPARKS
  - ROADS



**PARK DISTRICTS  
RENO, 1A, 2D**

**DRAFT**  
May 24, 2007

SOURCE: Open Space and Natural Resource Planning

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**WASHOE COUNTY  
NEVADA**

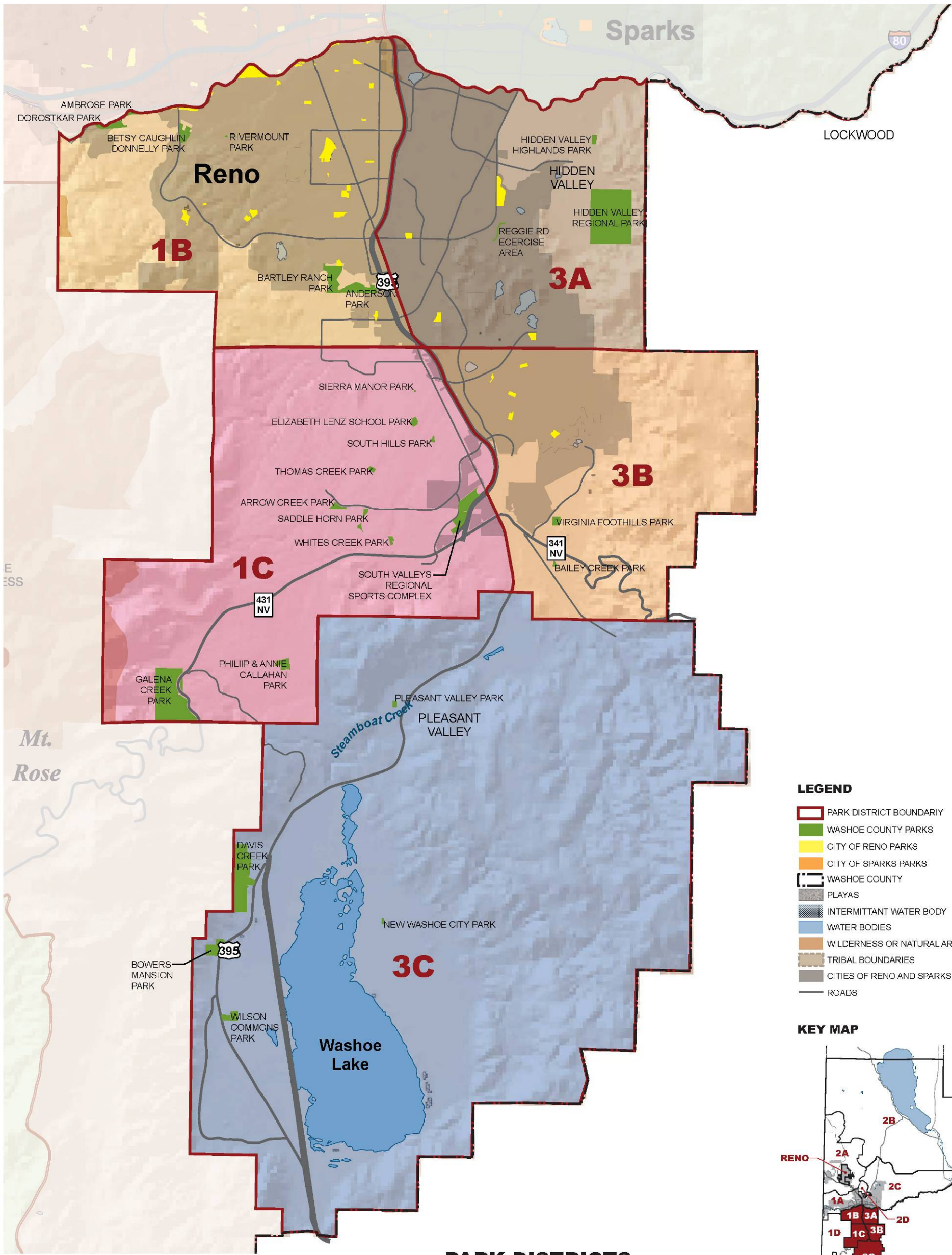
Post Office Box 11130  
Reno, Nevada 89520



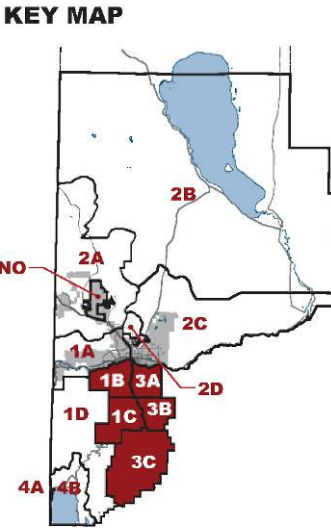
(775) 328-3600

Figure 5: Park Districts Reno, 1A, 2D





- LEGEND**
- PARK DISTRICT BOUNDARY
  - WASHOE COUNTY PARKS
  - CITY OF RENO PARKS
  - CITY OF SPARKS PARKS
  - WASHOE COUNTY
  - PLAYAS
  - INTERMITTANT WATER BODY
  - WATER BODIES
  - WILDERNESS OR NATURAL AREA
  - TRIBAL BOUNDARIES
  - CITIES OF RENO AND SPARKS
  - ROADS



**PARK DISTRICTS  
1B, 1C, 3A, 3B, 3C**

**DRAFT**  
May 24, 2007

SOURCE: Open Space and Natural Resource Planning

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Figure 6: Park Districts 1B, 1C, 3A – 3C



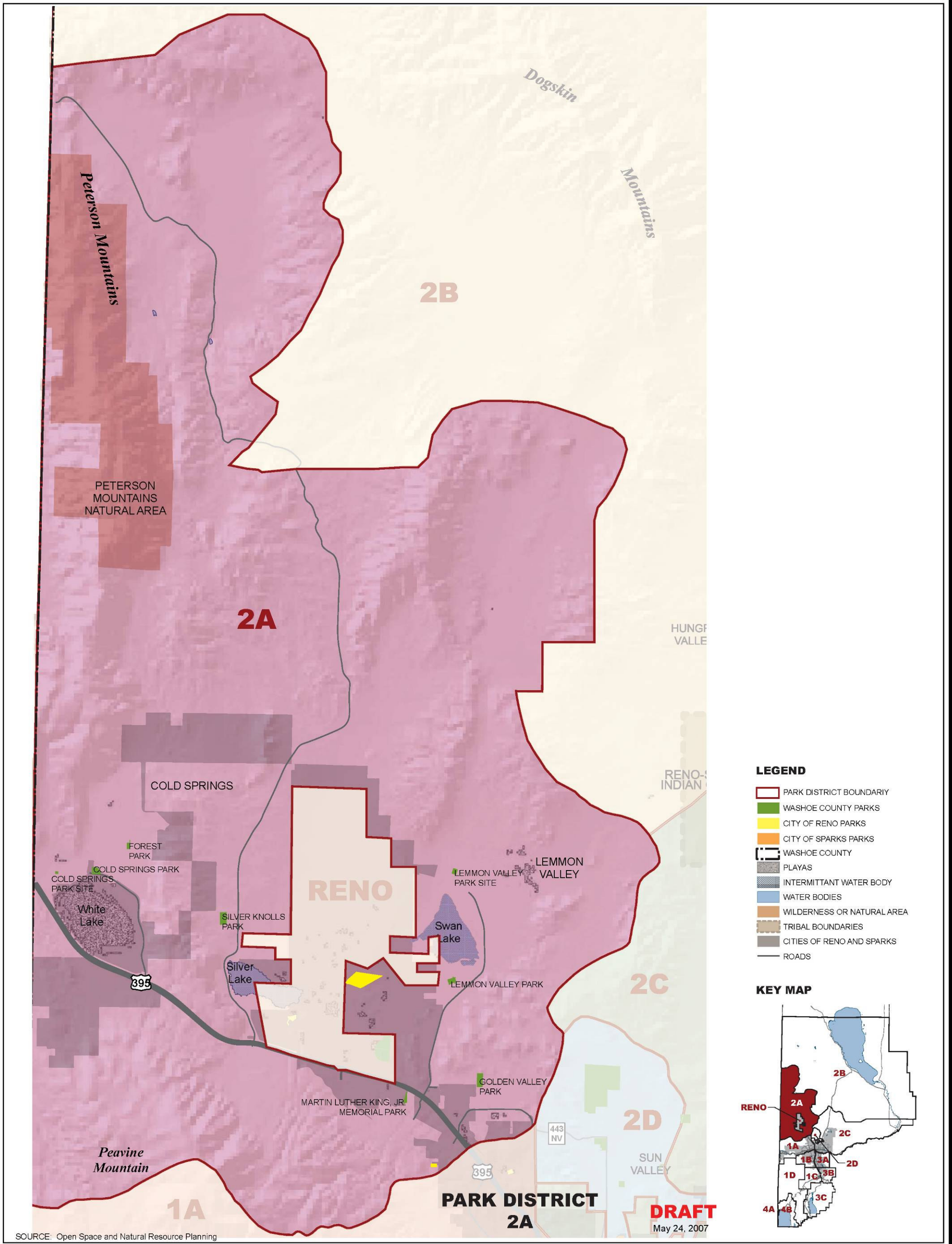


Figure 7: Park District 2A



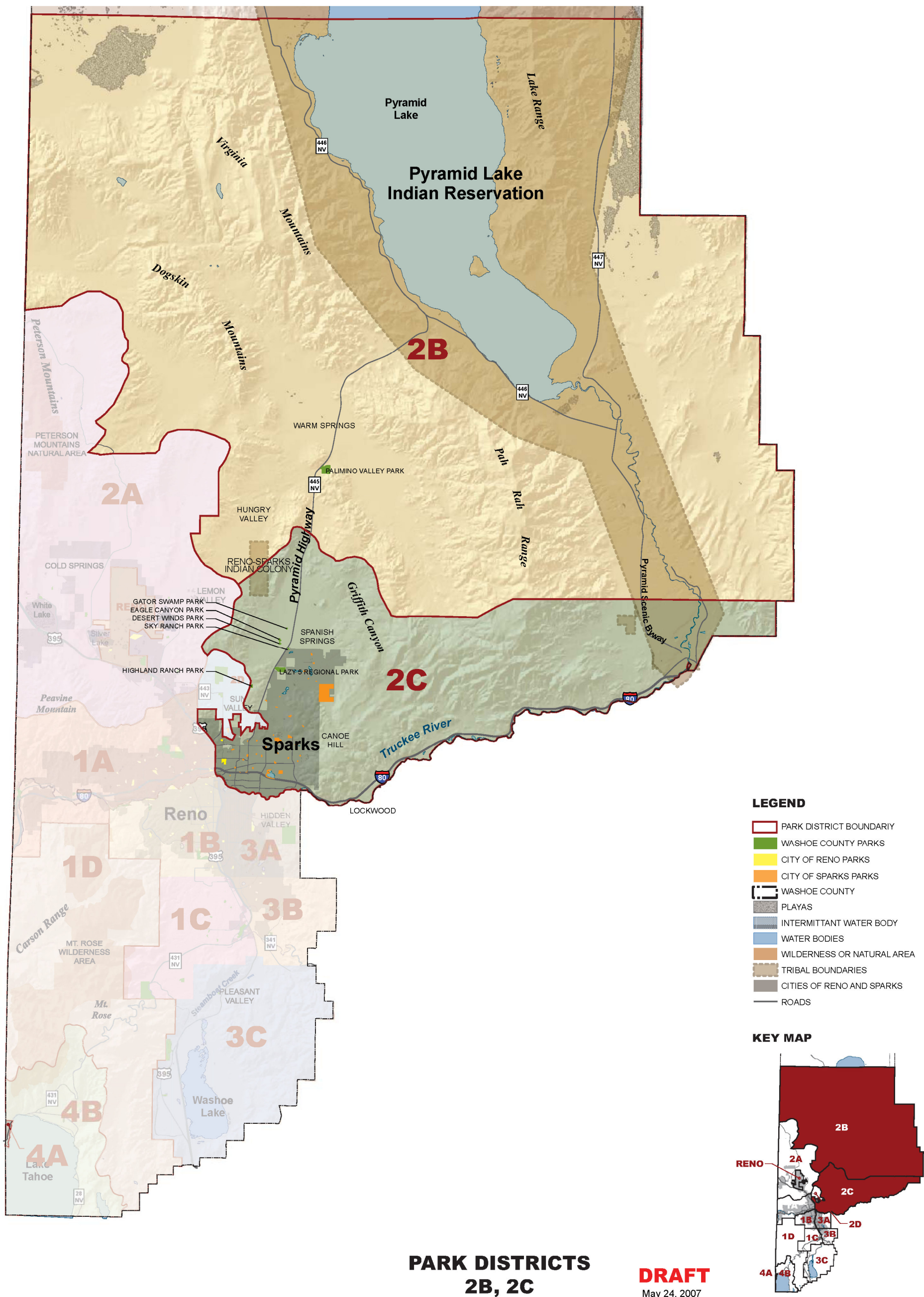
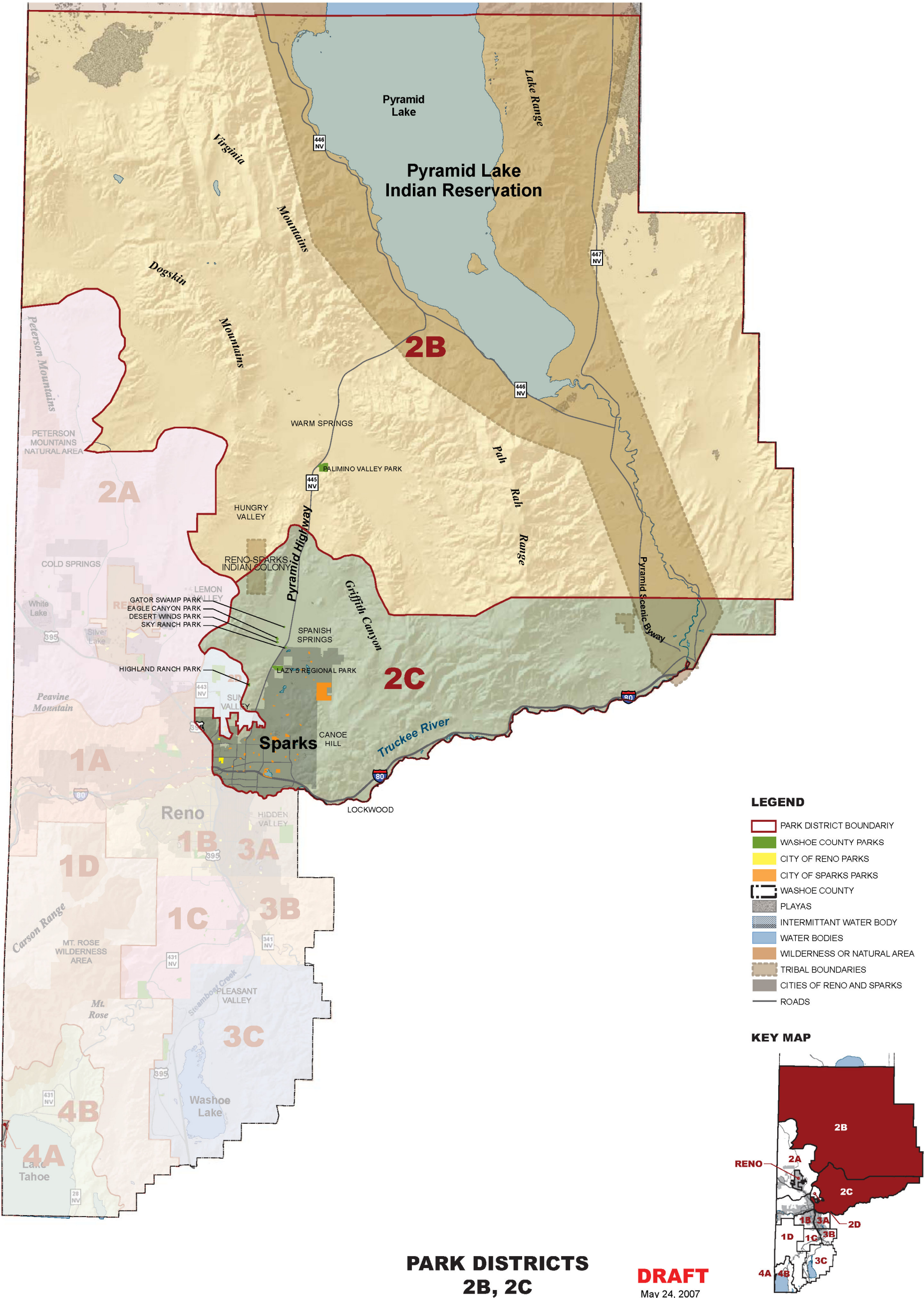


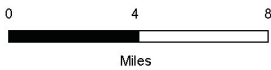
Figure 8: Park District 2B





SOURCE: Open Space and Natural Resource Planning

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Figure 9: Park District 2C

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## 4. ASSESSMENT

This section seeks to assess the degree to which additional parkland may be needed within Washoe County, either to address current mismatches between existing level of service standards and parkland provided, or to accommodate projected future growth. Because the cities of Reno and Sparks also provide extensive developed parks facilities, these holdings are also considered in the assessment.

### 4.1 EXISTING LEVEL OF SERVICE STANDARDS

Washoe County has adopted the following level of service standards for parks facilities.

- Neighborhood/Community Park (5 to 50 acres typical) 7 acres/1,000 persons
- Regional Park (100 acre minimum size) 20 acres/1,000 persons

These standards have been in place since at least the early 1990s and compare favorably with those adopted by other cities of similar density throughout the US. The standards themselves are derived from guidelines established by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) in the early 1990s to provide guidance to municipalities in establishing suitable benchmarks for providing parks facilities.

In recent years, however, the NRPA has moved away from advocating general guidelines, in large part because of intrinsic differences between municipalities in the amount and character of lands that could potentially be developed as parks, as well as in recreational preferences. A “one size fits all” approach does not respond well to communities with mountainous or hilly landscapes, and whose residents may prefer recreational pursuits such as mountain biking and camping, over organized soccer or baseball.

Moreover, as the “baby boom” generation ages, the popularity of low-impact activities such as bicycling, fitness walking, and exercise circuit training has increased. These activities can be accommodated along greenways and trails, or in largely undeveloped open space, and do not always necessitate the development of additional, traditional turf parks. As a result, NRPA recommends that each municipality instead develop service standards that respond to unique community circumstances.

As this plan takes shape, we will consider the extent to which existing service standards fully capture the range of recreational preferences and choices available in Washoe County, especially in view of the extensive Federal and state lands available for public recreation, and the amount of open space and greenway frontage along the Truckee River, that have been acquired by the County and by the Cities of Reno and Sparks, during the past several years. A second reason to revisit the existing standard is to take into account the recreational preferences expressed by those responding to the 2006 Parks Needs Assessment survey, discussed in Section 2.

One possible revision to existing standards might be to incorporate open space and greenways into the calculation, acknowledging that these facilities are meeting more diverse recreational needs that are not necessarily captured through a traditional neighborhood or community park. Many communities are in fact adopting this approach. A second possible revision that could be examined might be to consider whether a “distance from home” standard or guideline might be introduced, especially in the denser and more urban portions of the County.

## 4.2 HOW WELL ARE EXISTING FACILITIES MEETING ESTABLISHED STANDARDS?

With the caveats about existing standards in mind, this section considers how well they are being met by the County's current parks system. Also pertinent to this discussion are the facilities provided by Reno and Sparks, since these facilities are also used by County residents.

Counting parkland only, and not open space, greenways, or special use facilities, the County provides just over 2,800 acres of parkland, and the holdings of Reno and Sparks provide another 1,300 acres.

With the County's population estimated at 383,000 as of 2004 (see Washoe County, Census and Demographic Information, [www.washoecounty.us](http://www.washoecounty.us)), the County and cities are together providing just under 11 acres of parkland per 1,000 persons: comparable to the level of service provided by other lower-density cities, including Denver, Phoenix (excluding two very large preserves from this city's total), Houston, Tampa, and Atlanta (*Urban Land Institute, 2000*). When each jurisdiction's open space and special use facilities are added, as well as the acres of Federal and state holdings, the County would far exceed most low-density cities in per capita open lands provided.

## 4.3 ESTIMATING FUTURE DEMANDS FOR PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

Typically, parks system assessments also examine potential future demands for parks and recreation facilities, based on future year population projections and estimated buildout populations. This analysis can help to assess both the quantity of lands that may be required, as well as where those lands are needed given growth patterns.

Our approach to conducting this additional analysis will necessitate answering the following questions:

1. Given the diversity of recreational preferences and the availability of public lands, what should be "counted" in assessing need? Above we have argued that the early 1990s focus on parks alone may not be sufficient to assess whether the community's diverse recreation needs are being met. We have also argued that a focus on County facilities alone, without considering facilities provided by Reno, Sparks, and Federal and state lands managers, underestimates the options and choices that are currently available to residents, both now and into the future.
2. Are geographic distinctions important to consider, and if so, are the park districts the most appropriate units of measurement? In dispersed communities where residents are used to driving to facilities, geographic equity may be less of an issue than in higher-density urban areas where residents expect parks and trail access closer to their front door.
3. What is a reasonable planning horizon and have buildout population projections been forecast? We considered projections developed through the *Washoe County Comprehensive Plan Parks and Recreation Element (1992)* as well as the individual park district master plans, but the data in each of those plans has likely been superseded with the passage of time, and would most likely generate spurious conclusions.

