



**Department of  
Community Development**

# **Master Plan High Desert Area Plan**

**WASHOE COUNTY  
NEVADA**



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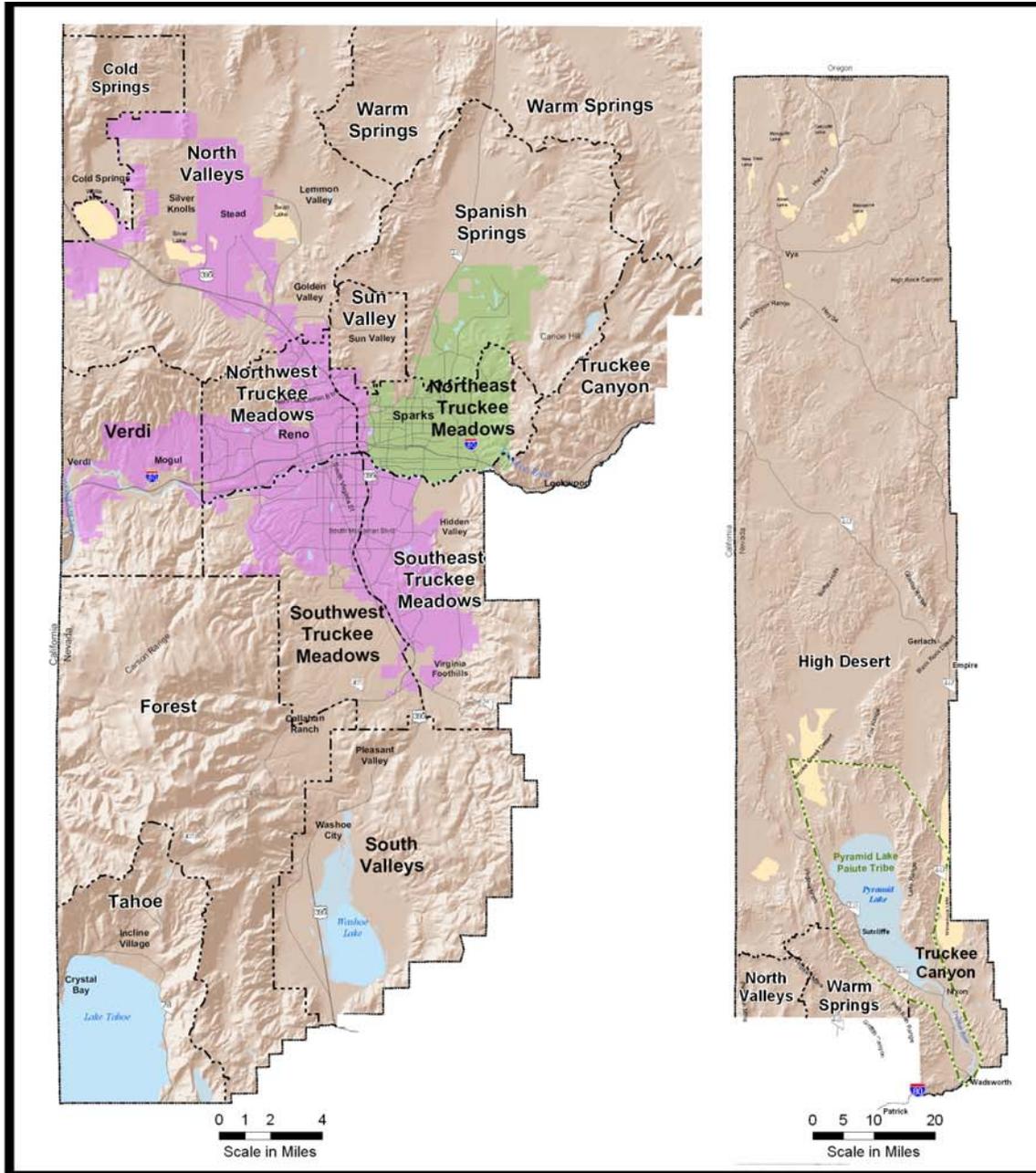
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# **Master Plan High Desert Area Plan**

This document is one of a series that, as adopted, constitutes a part of the Master Plan for Washoe County, Nevada. This document is available for \$10.00 from the Washoe County Department of Community Development. If you have a copy of the Washoe County Master Plan notebook, please place this behind the High Desert Area Plan tab. The Washoe County Master Plan can also be found on our department's website.

This printing of the High Desert Area Plan reflects amendments adopted as part of Comprehensive Plan Amendment Case Number CP10-002. In accordance with Article 820 of the Washoe County Development Code, the amendment was adopted by Resolution Number 10-11 of the Washoe County Planning Commission on May 20, 2010, by the Washoe County Commission on July 13, 2010, and found in conformance with the Truckee Meadows Regional Plan by the Regional Planning Commission on September 8, 2010. The adopting resolution was signed by the Washoe County Commission Chairman on September 9, 2010.

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### WASHOE COUNTY PLANNING AREAS

--- Planning Area boundary	☐ Dry Lakes
--- Washoe County boundary	☐ Water Bodies
--- Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe boundary	☐ Hillshade, 10 meter elevations
☐ City of Reno	
☐ City of Sparks	

Source: Community Services Date: June 2006

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Scale Bars are shown below each map



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## **Introduction**

The High Desert Area Plan responds to a citizen-based desire to identify, implement and preserve the community character that has evolved throughout the High Desert area over time.

Upon direction from the Washoe County Planning Commission, the Department of Community Development worked to identify the distinguishing characteristics of the High Desert communities. The result of this effort is the development of a comprehensive vision for the High Desert planning area that identifies separate community character areas and establishes the existing and desired future character of each of these areas. The High Desert Area Plan implements and preserves this community vision and character.

The purpose of the High Desert Area Plan is to act as a guide for the Board of County Commissioners, the Washoe County Planning Commission, and the community on matters of growth and development within the High Desert planning area. The plan outlines the existing pattern of development and provides a guide for growth. The plan guides growth by recognizing critical conservation areas, establishing existing and future land use and transportation patterns, and identifying current and future public services and facilities needs. This plan was prepared to carry out Nevada Revised Statutes, Sections 278.150 to 278.230, inclusive, and other related sections.

In 2008, the High Desert Area Plan upholds the mission of the Board of County Commissioners as well. The Washoe County Development Code will be amended as necessary to ensure the implementation and preservation of the vision and character described in this Area Plan.

## **Vision**

Through cooperation with the Washoe County Board of County Commissioners and the Washoe County Planning Commission, the communities of the High Desert planning area will maintain and apply objective standards and criteria that serve to manage growth and development in a manner that:

- Respects the heritage of the area by encouraging architectural and site design standards that are responsive to this heritage;
- Respects private property rights;
- Provides a range of housing opportunities;
- Provides ample open space and recreational opportunities;
- Promotes the educational and scientific opportunities inherent in the area's natural history and rural character;
- Addresses the conservation of natural, scenic and cultural resources;
- Ensures that infrastructure is coincident with development and appropriate in scale and character to the community character articulated below; and,
- Coordinates resource availability with the construction of infrastructure through the implementation of facilities and resources plans.

The primary vision of this plan is to maintain, preserve, and facilitate the planning area's desired character. The Washoe County Planning Commission will consider an update to this plan every five years in order to ensure that the planning area's desired character is appropriately addressed over time. Management guidelines and policies for private, commercial, residential and public lands will be implemented in a fashion that respects the rights of wildlife, residents, land owners and business owners; herein identified as the major stakeholders in this essential planning document.

## **Character Statement**

The High Desert planning area comprises the northern two thirds of Washoe County. The planning area is bounded on the north by the Oregon-Nevada state line, on the south by the North Valleys planning area and the Pyramid Lake Indian Reservation boundary, on the west by the California-Nevada state line, and on the east by the Pershing and Humboldt-Washoe county line. It includes the communities of Gerlach and Empire. The planning area is approximately 4,408 square miles in size.

Most residents of the High Desert planning area reside in the communities of Gerlach and Empire. These communities are the focal points for long-term residential development in the planning area. Gerlach consists primarily of high density suburban residential development interspersed with small amounts of medium density suburban residential development, mainly on the fringes of the town. Future development in Gerlach should match existing high density suburban land use in the already developed center of town and transition to medium density suburban land use along the periphery of town. Residents of the area have expressed a desire for the possibility for residents to live and work in a downtown mixed-use community. The Downtown Gerlach Overlay District has been identified in order to facilitate economic development, promote tourism, enable community character, and assist in the preservation of historic structures. This Overlay District will focus on design and community coherence rather than density.

Empire consists of a mix of high density and medium density suburban residential development owned by U.S. Gypsum and in support of extraction operations. Land uses in Empire also consist of General Commercial along Highway 447 and Industrial.

Mixed-use areas that are specifically designed to promote neighborhood are a component of the area's character that is just beginning to evolve as of the adoption of this plan. They contribute to a sense of place that is founded in the quality of life that comes with neighborhood scale commerce and environmental and community responsibility. The location and nature of commercial and mixed-use development must be carefully managed. Washoe County encourages and promotes a mix of uses in Gerlach that will provide quality residential and commercial services tailored to the growing needs of local residents and visitors to the High Desert area.

Included in the long range vision for the High Desert planning area is the promotion of affordable housing through a variety of housing options. The Gerlach/Empire Citizen Advisory Board has acknowledged that the planning area is an appropriate location for all types of site-built and fabricated housing. There is a strong desire in this community to improve the aesthetic appearance of the planning area without incurring excessive on-site development costs.

No additional subdivisions or expansion beyond the boundaries shown on the Character Management Plan map is recommended for either Gerlach or Empire. Countywide policies state that growth and development should be consistent with available resources and that intensification of land use occur in and around existing urban areas where there can be an orderly extension of public services and facilities. Any expansion of the utility service area shall be accompanied by a facility plan and finance mechanism. Residential development associated with short-term industrial and commercial uses, such as alternative energy production and the annual Burning Man event may be acceptable provided the development does not require community facilities or services and it satisfies applicable health and safety requirements.

The High Desert Area Plan recognizes the cultural and economic impacts of the annual Burning Man event. This unique use occurs within the planning area, creating economic opportunities for the towns of Gerlach and Empire as well as a significant employment base. Burning Man is a key factor for economic development within the planning area as well as a provider of cultural and artistic opportunities that are showcased on an international level.

Outside of the communities of Gerlach and Empire there remain vast amounts of undeveloped or sparsely developed areas that are truly rural in nature. The planning area is characterized by

spectacular mountain vistas, vast playas, abundant wildlife, and a prevalent feeling of openness. Residential and commercial opportunities in the area are founded on respecting and carrying forward this character. In fact, these unique and sensitive habitats provide paralleled educational, scientific, and recreational opportunities, making the area an attractive place in which to work and live. The recreational, educational, scientific, and lifestyle opportunities afforded by the natural resources of the High Desert planning area contribute greatly to the area's character and to its quality of life. Issues involving habitat and access to public land predominate. Growth in the planning area is to be managed in such a way as to minimize negative impacts on the area's character, particularly those impacts related to light, air, and water pollution; public health; wildlife and wildlife habitat; and the blending of new development with any existing development. The High Desert Area Plan is intended to serve as a guide for growth and development while protecting the area's unique natural resources as well as its scenic and rural heritage.

In the rural character areas, large contiguous public land holdings by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) support this underlying character. Washoe County and the BLM have successfully worked together to improve wilderness access. These lands are used by residents throughout Washoe County as well as local residents. Ready access to these areas adds to a proliferation of outdoor recreational opportunities. The pressure on these public lands to accommodate all of the various uses and users will require an ongoing effort to effectively manage these important areas to prevent degradation of the resources they contain, to mitigate potential negative impacts on residents, and to lessen the burdens placed on public services such as EMS.

Private land within the High Desert planning area that contains a natural or man made feature of unique and significant interest may be considered for more intense development (not to exceed one dwelling unit per five acres) when a development agreement is approved and the unique feature is protected and preserved for public enjoyment.

The scenic value of the planning area is an important component of the High Desert community. Panoramic mountain and desert views dominate the view shed and provide a cohesiveness that defines the area's visual character. The juxtaposition of diverse landscapes provides striking and unique views. State Highway 447, as it passes through the High Desert planning area, provides views of rugged mountain terrain offset by wide expanses of desert floor. Contrasts of color and elevation make these mountains and deserts an important visual resource. Scenic resources of the High Desert planning area include many natural heritage sites as inventoried in the Nevada Natural Heritage Plan. Additionally, Down Redwood fossil sites are found in Duck Flat, Forty-nine Camp and the George Lund Petrified Forest. Geothermal areas in the planning area include Wards Hot Springs, Gerlach Hot Springs and San Emidio Desert Hot Springs. These sites have both recreational and scenic appeal.

The High Desert planning area is composed of a number of unique habitats that provide for a diverse population of wildlife and plants. Mule deer, pronghorn antelope, California bighorn sheep, and wild horses can be found in this region. The federal list of threatened and endangered species indicates that the endangered Peregrine falcon and Southern bald eagle occur in the planning area as well. Wildlife habitat and migratory routes are a key component of the area's character. In 2006, The Nevada Natural Heritage Program ranked Wall Canyon and Fly Geyser as "Highest Priority Conservation Sites." These sites are characterized as currently requiring protection in order to conserve a significant assemblage of at-risk species and to prevent the loss of one or more species in the immediate future. Due to the High Desert's sensitive environmental conditions, it is essential to protect the natural balance that has evolved in the area over time. Careful stewardship of this rich natural environment is fundamental to maintaining and preserving this valuable component of the High Desert area character.

In all of the planning area's character areas, future development activities are to be conducted in such a manner as to maintain open space and provide connections to existing and planned recreational areas. Whenever feasible, grading is to complement the original contours of the landscape and minimize disruption to the natural topography. Assertions that this type of grading is not feasible are strongly questioned and before alternatives are permitted, feasibility is

reviewed by all applicable agencies within Washoe County. Clustering residential development, without increasing density, is encouraged in this area. This serves to reduce the visual impact of development, preserve as much open space as possible, and decrease the cost of building and maintaining required infrastructure.

The threat of periodic natural hazards including floods, avalanche, earthquake, vector-borne disease outbreaks, and wildland fires is a danger in much of the planning area. Washoe County works in close collaboration with other agencies to reduce these threats through the application of development standards and practices and through education programs.

Throughout the High Desert planning area many residents rely on domestic wells for water service. Drinking water for Gerlach is sourced from two springs on the western slope of the Granite Mountains, the Garden and Railroad Springs. Uranium concentrations in these springs have been found to be several times the maximum limit established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. In 2006, the Gerlach General Improvement District, which provides water service to approximately 127 residential and commercial properties in Gerlach, has responded to this issue by installing an ion exchange water treatment facility for the removal of uranium from the water supply. Consequently, the price of water service is relatively expensive for many Gerlach residents. Development in the planning area is to meet the strict sustainability requirements of the Regional Water Management Plan. New development activities are to be planned and conducted in such a manner as to enhance water recharge, fully utilize treated wastewater, and minimize the amount of water required for landscaping and amenities.

Infrastructure has been identified as a priority for the Gerlach area. A comprehensive study of infrastructure needs and the development of an infrastructure program would be appropriate.

Though most residents report that they enjoy living in Gerlach and are satisfied with the lifestyle afforded to them by the High Desert planning area, they do have a number of concerns:

- More local-serving commercial businesses are needed to support the residents of Gerlach.
- Tourism does not often contribute to the local economy. More opportunities for tourism related businesses would help to resolve this issue. Eco-tourism is desired.
- More effective weed abatement measures are needed due to the increased incidence of invasive species.
- Historic buildings are dilapidated. Although the desire to preserve historic buildings in Gerlach is evident, the funds to do so are not.
- The fragile desert ecology needs to be protected as it is becoming increasingly more popular with recreational users.
- Medical services are insufficient, as the medical clinic is staffed only part time.
- Utilities are disproportionately expensive as many residences are highly energy inefficient and drinking water requires treatment for high levels of uranium.
- Opportunities are needed for young people who would like to live and work in the Gerlach area after graduation from high school.

It is often said in the High Desert area, "Where the pavement ends, the West begins." Residents are proud of their Western heritage and often describe the character of their community in terms of its seclusion, natural beauty, clean air, and independence. An unusual balance exists here between old and new. The High Desert planning area sits at the crossroads of railroad/mining tradition and a more recent Burning Man inspired culture brought about by the increasing popularity of the annual event.

Due to the planning area's unique location, its key natural assets, and its ability to contribute to the sustainability goals of the Land Use and Transportation Element, the High Desert planning area's valuable character is to be carefully managed and preserved through the thoughtful and deliberate pursuit of the following goals and policies.

## Vision and Character Management

### Land Use

**Goal One: The pattern of land use designations and the specific allowed land uses in the High Desert Area Plan will implement the Land Use and Transportation Element of the Washoe County Master Plan, and the community character described in the Character Statement.**

#### Policies

- HD.1.1 The High Desert Character Management Plan map shall identify the Gerlach Suburban Character Management Area (GSCMA), the Empire Suburban Character Management Area (ESCMA), the Squaw Valley Reservoir Rural Character Management Area (SVRRCMA), and the High Desert Rural Character Management Area (HDRCMA).
- HD.1.2 Policy Growth Level: In order to manage the conservation of the High Desert planning area's distinctive character, future amendments to this plan which seek to intensify growth opportunities will be carefully reviewed by the community and staff for their potential impact to the sustainable management of the area's natural resources, including but not limited to water and wildlife habitat. The resource management policies and procedures articulated in this plan must ensure that all growth in the High Desert planning area occurs within the limits of sustainable resource management.
- HD.1.3 The following Regulatory Zones are permitted within the Gerlach Suburban Character Management Area (GSCMA):
- a. General Commercial (GC).
  - b. Tourist Commercial (TC).
  - c. Neighborhood Commercial (NC).
  - d. High Density Suburban (HDS).
  - e. Medium Density Suburban (MDS).
  - f. Parks and Recreation (PR).
  - g. Public/Semi-Public Facilities (PSP).
  - h. Downtown Gerlach Overlay District.
  - i. Industrial (I).
  - j. General Rural (GR).
- HD.1.4 The following Regulatory Zones are permitted within the Empire Suburban Character Management Area (ESCMA):
- a. General Commercial (GC).
  - b. Industrial (I).
  - c. High Density Suburban (HDS).
  - d. Medium Density Suburban (MDS).
  - e. Low Density Suburban (LDS).
  - f. Parks and Recreation (PR).
  - g. Public/Semi-Public Facilities (PSP).

- HD.1.5 The following Regulatory Zones are permitted within the High Desert Rural Character Management Area (HDRCA):
- a. General Rural (GR).
  - b. Medium Density Rural (MDR).
  - c. Low Density Rural (LDR).
  - d. Parks and Recreation (PR).
  - e. Public/Semi-Public Facilities (PSP).
  - f. Open Space (OS).
  - g. Industrial (I).
- HD.1.6 Squaw Valley Reservoir Rural Character Management Area: This private land containing a feature of unique and significant interest may be considered for more intense development (not to exceed one dwelling unit per 5 acres) when a development agreement is approved and the unique feature is protected and preserved for public enjoyment. This development agreement may include without limitation the following:
- a. Opportunities for residential development of mixed housing types.
  - b. Opportunities for local serving non-residential uses.
  - c. Opportunities for enhancement of tourism.
  - d. Development will be sited to blend with the surrounding developed and open space lands.
  - e. Development will minimize and mitigate its impacts on key resources.
  - f. Development will be compatible with and enhance the scenic quality of the High Desert planning area.
  - g. Development will promote the sustainable development goals of Washoe County.
  - h. Development will contribute to the community character, promote neighborhood, and create a sense of place founded in the quality of life that comes with environmental and community responsibility.
  - i. Development will provide for public access to its feature of unique and significant interest.
- HD.1.7 Temporary residential development associated with short-term commercial uses, such as the annual Burning Man event, may be acceptable with a special use permit provided the development does not require community facilities or services and it satisfies applicable health and safety requirements as stipulated by the Washoe County District Health Department and the Department of Community Development to ensure compliance with federal, state, and local health regulations.
- HD.1.8 This plan shall be interpreted to ensure that all existing entitlements as of the adoption of this plan are fully recognized.

**Goal Two: Common Development Standards in the High Desert planning area. Establish development guidelines that will implement the Land Use and Transportation Element of the Washoe County Master Plan and preserve the community character commonly found within the High Desert planning area.**

**Policies**

- HD.2.1 When feasible, given utility access constraints, grading for residential purposes after the date of final adoption of this plan will:
- a. Minimize disruption to natural topography.
  - b. Utilize natural contours and slopes as specified in the Washoe County Development Code.
  - c. Complement the natural characteristics of the landscape.
  - d. Preserve existing vegetation and ground coverage to minimize erosion.
  - e. Minimize cuts and fills. Cut and fill slopes greater than eight (8) feet in height are prohibited. Grade changes greater than eight (8) feet in height shall be stabilized using one or more engineered retaining wall. Wall colors shall blend with the adjacent undisturbed hillside.
  - f. Large construction activities that support the development of new subdivisions or commercial and civic projects shall stabilize areas not developed within 60 days and shall be required to obtain a dust control permit.
- HD.2.2 Site development plans in the High Desert planning area must submit a plan for the control of noxious weeds. The plan should be developed through consultation with the Washoe County District Health Department, the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension, and/or the Washoe-Storey Conservation District. The control plan will be implemented on a voluntary compliance basis.
- HD.2.3 Applicants required to present their items to the Citizen Advisory Board (CAB) must submit a statement to staff regarding how the final proposal responds to the community input received from the CAB.
- HD.2.4 During review of tentative maps and other development proposals, staff will review the adequacy of the minimum standards established under this plan; and upon a finding that a standard is inadequate to implement these goals, may recommend to the Planning Commission other similar standards as necessary to implement the relevant goal. Said similar standards may include, but are not limited to, perimeter parcel matching and alternative construction materials.
- HD.2.5 Any lighting proposed must show how it is consistent with current best practice "dark-sky" standards. In subdivisions established after the date of final adoption of this plan the use of street lights will be minimized.
- HD.2.6 Street lights, security lights, and other outdoor lighting should be powered by solar or other renewable energy sources whenever possible. Proposals to utilize traditional energy sources must explain why alternative sources are not possible.
- HD.2.7 Whenever feasible, new homes, commercial buildings, and public facilities should be located in a manner that facilitates the immediate use of, or future conversion to, renewable energy technologies. This includes home orientation to solar and wind exposure and geothermal resources. Proposals to orient buildings inconsistent with this goal must explain why it is not feasible to do so.
- HD.2.8 All landscape designs will emphasize the use of native and low water requirement vegetation, with non-native and atypical vegetation integrated sparingly into any landscaped area.
- HD.2.9 Prior to their incorporation into the Development Code, the standards established in policies HD.2.1-HD.2.15 will be implemented through tentative map conditions, improvements plans, CC&Rs, deed restrictions, or other methods deemed as appropriate by the Director of Community Development. When appropriate,

- Washoe County staff shall establish the implementation measures as conditions of tentative map approval.
- HD.2.10 The impact of development on adjacent land uses will be mitigated. The appropriate form of mitigation may include, but will not be limited to, open space buffering or parcel matching and should be determined through a process of community consultation and cooperation. Applicants shall be prepared to demonstrate how the project conforms to this policy.
- HD.2.11 Development activities should be designed to support the efficient use of infrastructure and the conservation of recharge areas, habitat, and open vistas.
- HD.2.12 Proposals for special use permits to establish non-residential uses in a residential regulatory zone will be subject to a Public Health Impact Review (PHIR), to be conducted jointly by Community Development staff and Washoe County District Health Department Staff. The specific content and methodology of the PHIR will be determined by the Washoe County District Health Department with the cooperation of the Washoe County Community Development Department, on a case-by-case basis.
- HD.2.13 The approval of all special use permits and administrative permits must include a finding that the community character as described in the Character Statement can be adequately conserved through mitigation of any identified potential negative impacts.
- HD.2.14 Washoe County is working with regional partners to ensure that the County's Development Code reflects best practices for wildland fire prevention and management for development activities in the wildland/suburban interface. Prior to the amendment of the Development Code to incorporate the relevant codes and practices, applicants for any discretionary approval must show how their project will manage the potential threat of wildland fire. Plans that propose the use of defensible space must include a maintenance plan for that space that demonstrates how that area will be maintained and managed for the life of the project.
- HD.2.15 Consistent with the Goals and Policies of the Land Use and Transportation Element, Common Open Space Development practices should be utilized for all densities equal to or greater than one unit per acre. Landowners who seek to create new parcels but choose not to utilize common open space practices should be able to demonstrate how habitat, recharge areas, and open space will be preserved.

**Goal Three: Manage the location, intensity and mix of uses for Commercial Regulatory Zones in a manner that implements the goals and policies of the Washoe County Land Use and Transportation Element, ensures the unique character of the High Desert planning area is preserved and improved, and realizes the desire of the community to support opportunities for the promotion of local tourism.**

#### **Policies**

- HD.3.1 Commercial and mixed-use development proposals will be consistent with the Goals and Policies of the Washoe County Land Use and Transportation Element.
- HD.3.2 The Washoe County Development Code will further incorporate and describe this overlay district within the Gerlach Community Character Management Area. See Appendix A – Downtown Gerlach Overlay District.

#### Downtown Gerlach Overlay District Development Criteria:

1. To promote a sense of neighborhood, to promote the functional and aesthetic integration of commercial uses with the community, and to promote the efficient use of resources and

- infrastructure in the High Desert planning area, commercial development proposals should include a residential component, or be closely integrated with nearby residential development. In order to facilitate this policy, special use permits to establish residential uses in commercial regulatory zones will not be required in the Downtown Gerlach Overlay District. The Development Code shall be amended to allow residential uses on parcels designated General Commercial in the Downtown Gerlach Overlay District.
2. Commercial and mixed-use development proposals must show how the unique character of the Gerlach Community will be preserved or improved, and must be consistent with all Goals and Policies and Development Code provisions relating to the High Desert planning area.
  3. Residential properties located within the boundaries of this overlay district shall be allowed Neighborhood Commercial uses without the requirement of a special use permit.
  4. Site development plans, including landscape plans, must be reviewed by Department of Community Development staff for consistency with the standards and guidelines established under this goal.
  5. A consistent architectural style shall be used to unify these parcels. This unifying style should recognize the unique character of the Gerlach community. Building materials shall be chosen for their ability to blend with the landscape and should emphasize the use of wood, stone, stucco or related materials.
  6. The view of the property shall create a sense of place that is scenic, compatible with the local environment, and establishes a safe and welcoming neighborhood atmosphere.
  7. Prior to their incorporation into the Development Code, the policies established under Goal Three will be implemented through development agreements, tentative map conditions, improvements plans, CC&Rs, deed restrictions, or other methods deemed as appropriate by the Director of Community Development. When appropriate, Washoe County staff shall establish the implementation measures as conditions of tentative map and site plan approval.

## Transportation

**Goal Four: The regional and local transportation system in the High Desert planning area will be a safe and efficient system providing access to commercial services, public lands and recreational opportunities and efficient connections to the greater region. Policies set forth under this goal are intended to implement the goals and policies set forth in the Land Use and Transportation Element. The system will contribute to the preservation and implementation of the community character as described in the High Desert Vision and Character Statement and to preserving and enhancing scenic and recreational areas for visitors to enjoy.**

### Policies

- HD.4.1 Washoe County will work with the RTC and neighboring jurisdictions to ensure that the mitigation of potential development impacts in neighboring jurisdictions and planning areas is consistent with the intent of Goal Four above.
- HD.4.2 The necessary right-of-way and intersection requirements identified in the Regional Transportation Plan will be protected through dedication, setback or other method deemed adequate and appropriate by the Regional Transportation Commission and Washoe County.
- HD.4.3 Washoe County will ensure that the details of all new road construction that implements the adopted Regional Transportation Plan will be subject to a comprehensive public review and comment process.
- HD.4.4 Washoe County will work with the Regional Transportation Commission to ensure that the design of all road improvements identified in the RTC Regional

Transportation Plan provide for the safe intersection of any trail or proposed trail identified on the Recreational Opportunities Plan map.

## Resources

**Goal Five: Resources key to the preservation and implementation of the character described in the Character Statement will be protected and, where possible, enhanced.**

### Policies

- HD.5.1 Washoe County will continue to pursue opportunities for the public acquisition of lands in the High Desert planning area that contain key resources necessary for the long term preservation and enhancement of the area's character.
- HD.5.2 Washoe County will cooperate with other agencies, institutions, and local residents to ensure that recreational, educational and scientific activities based on the area's key resources will be supported and encouraged, particularly where those activities contribute to the character of the local community and are beneficial to the broader region. The County will explore alternative funding sources for acquisition, maintenance and operation.

## Scenic/Recreational/Cultural Resources

**Goal Six: Maintain open vistas and minimize the visual impact of hillside development in a manner that implements the community character described above.**

### Policies

- HD.6.1 The Washoe County Departments of Community Development and Public Works will establish and oversee compliance with design standards for grading that minimize the visual impact of all residential and non-residential hillside development, including road cuts and driveways. See Policy HD.2.1 regarding grading under Goal Two.
- HD.6.2 The grading design standards referred to in HD.6.1 are intended to, at a minimum, ensure that disturbed areas shall be finished, fill slopes will not exceed a 3:1 slope, and that hillside grading will establish an undulating naturalistic appearance by creating varying curvilinear contours.
- HD.6.3 When necessary to mitigate the impact of road cuts, driveways and similar features on prominent hillsides, staff may require the installation of landscaping that will significantly soften the visual impact within three years of installation. Maintenance plans for these landscaped areas may be required.
- HD.6.4 County will review its revegetation policy, require additional funds be set aside for revegetation, and mandate eighty percent (80%) reestablishment of vegetation prior to release of the bonds.

**Goal Seven: Public and private development will respect the value of cultural and historic resources in the community.**

### Policies

- HD.7.1 Prior to the approval of master plan amendments, tentative maps, or public-initiated capital improvements in the High Desert planning area, the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office will be contacted and, if the department requests, an appropriate archaeological investigation will be conducted.

- HD.7.2 Washoe County will cooperate and participate with state, federal and Native American agencies in the planning and conservation activities of those agencies related to cultural and historic resources.
- HD.7.3 Washoe County will pursue funding opportunities for the identification, conservation, and interpretation of natural, cultural and historic resources. Displays may be provided at parks and trailheads to provide the public with pertinent information regarding these resources. Interpretive displays will take into consideration current best practices for archaeological preservation.

**Goal Eight: The High Desert planning area will contain an extensive system of trails that integrates other recreational facilities and public lands; and contributes to the preservation and implementation of the community character.**

**Policies**

- HD.8.1 Updates to the Parks District Master Plan for the High Desert planning area will look to this goal and the following policies for direction.
- HD.8.2 New trails will be designed to accommodate multiple uses including equestrian, pedestrian and bicycle traffic, unless severe technical, environmental, or economic hardships warrant consideration of a more limited use.
- HD.8.3 Trails that provide links to the facilities listed in Goal Eight should receive priority for funding, planning, and construction.
- HD.8.4 Parking will be provided at all trailheads unless technical or safety issues prevent the construction of parking facilities or it is determined that the parking facility cannot be adequately screened or buffered from adjacent residential properties. Points of access other than trailheads may be depicted on the Recreational Opportunities Plan map but do not require parking facilities.
- HD.8.5 As new residential and commercial properties develop in the High Desert planning area, the Washoe County Department of Regional Parks and Open Space will review development proposals for potential trail connections and request any necessary trail easements.
- HD.8.6 Access to existing trails will be protected and improved whenever possible. During the process of development review, the Washoe County Departments of Community Development and Regional Parks and Open Space will request dedication of property and/or easements when appropriate trail alignments have been identified that link significant nodes within the High Desert planning area or connect existing trails or otherwise implement Goal Eight. Proposed trail easements must be field checked to determine if the slope and landscape will allow the construction of the trail. The location of driveways, drain covers, or other utilities shall not impede the trail construction or pose a hazard to the user.
- HD.8.7 Development proposals and population trends will be evaluated on their impact to an established community standard of seven acres of Neighborhood/Community Park per 1,000 residents. When warranted, the Washoe County Department of Regional Parks and Open Space will request the dedication of an appropriate amount of community park acreage as property develops within the planning area.

**Goal Nine: Washoe County will cooperate with state and federal agencies in the management of public lands in the planning area.**

#### **Policies**

- HD.9.1 Washoe County recognizes a growing pressure on public lands brought on by an increasing demand for outdoor recreational activities. Washoe County will work with the BLM to ensure that Management Plans for federal lands in the planning area consider the growing impact of recreational activities on residents of the area.
- HD.9.2 Washoe County will cooperate with the community and with other local agencies to explore establishing new funding sources and to enlist volunteers to help in the maintenance and operation of local recreation facilities.

### **Natural Resources**

#### **Air Resources**

**Goal Ten: The High Desert planning area will maintain or exceed federal, state and local carbon monoxide, ambient particulates (pm10, pm2.5) and ozone air quality standards. The vistas of the surrounding ridges and more distant mountain ranges will not be obstructed by man-made pollutants.**

#### **Policies**

- HD.10.1 Washoe County will ensure that the Regional Transportation Commission gives significant consideration to issues of air quality in the creation of any regional transportation plan that may have the ability to positively or negatively impact air quality in the High Desert planning area.
- HD.10.2 Development in the High Desert planning area will comply with all local, state and federal standards regarding air quality.
- HD.10.3 The granting of special use permits in the High Desert planning area must be accompanied by a finding that no significant degradation of air quality will occur as a result of the permit. As necessary, conditions may be placed on special use permits to ensure no significant degradation of air quality will occur. The Department of Community Development will seek the advice and input of the Air Quality Division of the Washoe County Health District in the implementation of this policy.

#### **Land Resources**

**Goal Eleven: The built environment will minimize the destructive potential of any identified natural hazard, including but not limited to wildland fires, earthquakes and land slides. (See Goal Fifteen for flood related policies.)**

#### **Policies**

- HD.11.1 Development proposals, with the exception of single family homes and uses accessory to single family homes within the High Desert planning area will include detailed soils and geo-technical studies sufficient to:
- Ensure structural integrity of roads and buildings.
  - Provide adequate setbacks from potentially active faults or other hazards.
  - Minimize erosion potential.

- HD.11.2 Development proposals in areas with identified geological hazards will follow the recommendations of any geo-technical study conducted pursuant to Policy HD.11.1
- HD.11.3 Washoe County is working with regional partners to ensure that the county's Development Code reflects best practices for wildland fire prevention and management for development activities in the wildland suburban interface. Prior to the amendment of the Development Code to incorporate the relevant codes and practices, applicants for any discretionary approval must show how their project will manage the potential threat of wildland fire. Plans that propose the use of defensible space must include a maintenance plan for that space that demonstrates how that area will be maintained and managed for the life of the project.

**Goal Twelve: Public and private development will respect the value of wildlife and wildlife habitat to the community.**

**Policies**

- HD.12.1 Prior to the approval of master plan amendments, tentative maps, public initiated capital improvements, or any project impacting 10 or more acres in the High Desert planning area, the Nevada Department of Wildlife will be contacted and given an opportunity to provide conservation, preservation, or other wildlife and habitat management input to the project.
- HD.12.2 Any development that has the potential to negatively impact an established wildlife migration route or critical habitat, including but not limited to traditional mule deer migration routes, deer winter range, federally classified Threatened and Endangered Species and their associated habitat must demonstrate how that project will protect the integrity of the migration route or habitat.

**Goal Thirteen: Mining in the High Desert planning area will be compatible with existing residential, agricultural, ranching and educational uses.**

**Policies**

- HD.13.1 Mining activities in the High Desert planning area must be adequately screened and/or buffered from residential and educational land uses and from roadways designated arterials or highways on the High Desert Streets and Highways System Plan map.
- HD.13.2 Proposals for mining activities will be subject to a Public Health Impact Review (PHIR), to be conducted jointly by Community Development Staff and Washoe County District Health Department Staff. The specific content and methodology of the PHIR will be determined by the Washoe County District Health Department with the cooperation of the Washoe County Community Development Department, on a case-by-case basis.

**Goal Fourteen: The use, extraction and development of geothermal, wind, and solar resources will be managed in a sustainable and compatible way that protects both the resource and the surrounding land uses of the High Desert Rural Character Management Area.**

**Policies**

- HD.14.1 Washoe County will promote geothermal development, except where mitigation measures will not protect the existing air and water quality standards.

- HD.14.2 Washoe County will apply adequate standards to govern all phases of geothermal exploration and development, including the restoration of all such areas once the resource becomes nonproductive.
- a. The Washoe County Department of Community Development, in conjunction with existing or newly created public and private agencies and individuals will identify and document standards for use of geothermal resources, disposal of any resulting waste, and reclamation of geothermal sites. Until such standards are available, the Washoe County Department of Community Development will review all proposals for geothermal resource development to encourage full use of the potential and to ensure that adverse environmental impacts are avoided.
  - b. The Washoe County Department of Community Development will require the developer of geothermal resources to comply with local, state, and federal laws and regulations governing the disposal of geothermal fluids. Before approval is given for resource development, a disposal plan must be submitted to and approved by the Washoe County Board of County Commissioners.
- HD.14.3 Washoe County will encourage the development of wind energy collection and production infrastructure.
- HD.14.4 Proposals for wind turbines shall address, through appropriate design, the unique High Desert Rural Character Management Area character.
- HD.14.5 Proposals for wind energy development shall address significant impacts caused by wind turbine wake effects upon existing and approved downwind wind turbines.
- HD.14.6 Other renewable resources such as solar generators, energy storage, distributed generation and cogeneration should complement wind energy uses. Limited industrial and commercial uses, serviced by alternative energy, where appropriate and consistent with existing residential uses, should develop within portions of existing and future wind parks.
- HD.14.7 Where feasible, orientation of all structures shall maximize the use of passive solar energy. Site orientation should be consistent with visual impact policies.

### Water Resources – Flooding

**Goal Fifteen: Personal and economic losses associated with flooding will be minimized. Development in the High Desert planning area will mitigate any increase in flood peak, flood stage, flood velocity, and volume of runoff to ensure that the flood hazard to existing developed properties is not exacerbated.**

#### Policies

- HD.15.1 Development within the High Desert planning area will conform to Regional Water Plan Policy 3.1.c, "Flood Plain Storage Outside the Truckee River Watershed," as well as locally specific flood control requirements as adopted by Washoe County.
- HD.15.2 Development in the High Desert planning area will be protected from damage caused by a one percent chance flood event, either by elevation above or avoidance of the regulatory floodplain. Washoe County will utilize the best available data to identify the extent of the one percent chance floodplain.
- HD.15.3 Washoe County will work to ensure that the action of one property owner does not adversely impact the properties and rights of other property owners, as

measured by increased flood peaks, flood stage, flood velocity, volume of runoff, erosion, and sedimentation.

### Water Resources – Supply

**Goal Sixteen: Water resources will be supplied to land uses in the High Desert planning area according to the best principles/practices of sustainable resource development. Whenever possible, future water supply systems will be designed to avoid or mitigate unreasonable impact on existing municipal and domestic systems.**

#### Policies

- HD.16.1 Development proposals must be consistent with Regional Water Plan Policies: 1.3.b, "Protection and Enhancement of Groundwater Recharge"; 1.3.d, "Water Resources and Land Use"; 1.3.e, "Water Resource Commitments"; and 1.3.g, "Groundwater Resource Development and Management of Water Quality."
- HD.16.2 Tentative subdivision maps will be approved for development after the infrastructure and resource needs of that development have been evaluated by the Department of Water Resources and found consistent with all applicable water and wastewater resources and facilities plans.
- HD.16.3 Washoe County will ensure that water projects in the High Desert planning area identify social, economic, and environmental impacts and address mitigation measures for the transfer of water rights.
- HD.16.4 Water rights shall be dedicated to Washoe County, in accordance with Article 422 of the Washoe County Development Code and the High Desert Area Plan, for all parcel maps and subdivision maps, as well as all new civic, commercial and industrial uses in all hydrographic basins; with the additional water rights dedication for all maps of divisions into large parcels within the Honey Lake Basin.
- HD.16.5 Landscaping that makes use of drought tolerant plants and plants native to the high desert is encouraged.
- HD.16.6 The use of Low Impact Development (LID) design concepts to minimize storm water runoff is encouraged.

### Water Resources – Quality

**Goal Seventeen: The quality of water from the High Desert Hydrographic Basins will be protected from further degradation resulting from human activities.**

#### Policies

- HD.17.1 The Washoe County Department of Water Resources will implement and maintain a Wellhead Protection Plan for Washoe County's municipal well facilities in the High Desert Hydrographic basins and encourage other purveyors to develop and implement plans for the protection of groundwater resources.
- HD.17.2 The use of new production wells for future development must not create water quality degradation at existing production and domestic wells.

**Goal Eighteen: Watershed protection and groundwater recharge will be prime considerations towards future development activities.**

**Policies**

- HD.18.1 Natural groundwater recharge areas will be protected from development when possible. When planned development does impose on natural recharge areas, mitigation measures will be taken.
- HD.18.2 The use of curb and gutter will be minimized. The use of Best Management Practices is encouraged to promote groundwater recharge, minimize land disturbance, control erosion, and decrease the incidence of public health insect nuisances.

**Goal Nineteen: Maintain and enhance the value of wetlands and their associated habitats for their groundwater recharge, aesthetic, environmental, educational, recreational, stormwater runoff and flood control purposes. Washoe County will act to ensure the best possible balance between these wetland area uses.**

**Policies**

- HD.19.1 All development will meet or exceed the standards for wetland development and impact established by state and federal agencies responsible for wetlands management.
- HD.19.2 Land use proposals that include wetlands areas must demonstrate how they are consistent with Goal Nineteen.
- HD.19.3 Development proposals that impact any area designated "potential wetlands" on the Development Suitability map must conduct a wetlands delineation study and obtain Army Corps of Engineers certification of the proposed wetlands and comply with vector-borne diseases regulations.
- HD.19.4 Washoe County will work with state, federal, and private agencies to support the development and implementation of programs and initiatives that are consistent with Goal Nineteen.

**Water Resources – Service/Wastewater**

**Goal Twenty: Water resources and wastewater treatment and disposal will be provided to residential and non-residential uses in a manner that implements and preserves the community character as described in the High Desert Vision and Character Statement.**

**Policies**

- HD.20.1 Tentative subdivision maps will not be approved for any development until the infrastructure and resource needs of that development have been evaluated by Washoe County and found consistent with all applicable water and wastewater resources and facilities plans.
- HD.20.2 Washoe County will encourage alternative wastewater treatment technologies that are demonstrated to release effluent of improved quality, providing protection against further degradation of surface and groundwater quality and contributing to groundwater recharge. These technologies should not contribute to the incidence of vector-borne diseases by ponding water longer than any seven day period between the months of April and October.
- HD.20.3 Washoe County will evaluate any proposal for community wastewater treatment facilities for its impact on water quality. Appropriate mitigation will be required for any identified potential negative impacts to water quality.

- HD.20.4        Developments served by on-site sewage disposal systems must comply with current regulations, protect surface and groundwater from contamination, and prevent the spread of disease with regard to sewage disposal and water quality and supply.
- HD.20.5        The use of treated effluent for construction dust control purposes is encouraged.

### **Plan Maintenance**

**Goal Twenty-one: Amendments to the High Desert Area Plan will be for the purpose of further implementing the Vision and Character Statement, or to respond to new or changing circumstances. Amendments will conform to the High Desert Vision and Character Statement. Amendments will be reviewed against a set of criteria and thresholds that are measures of the impact on, or progress toward, the Vision and Character.**

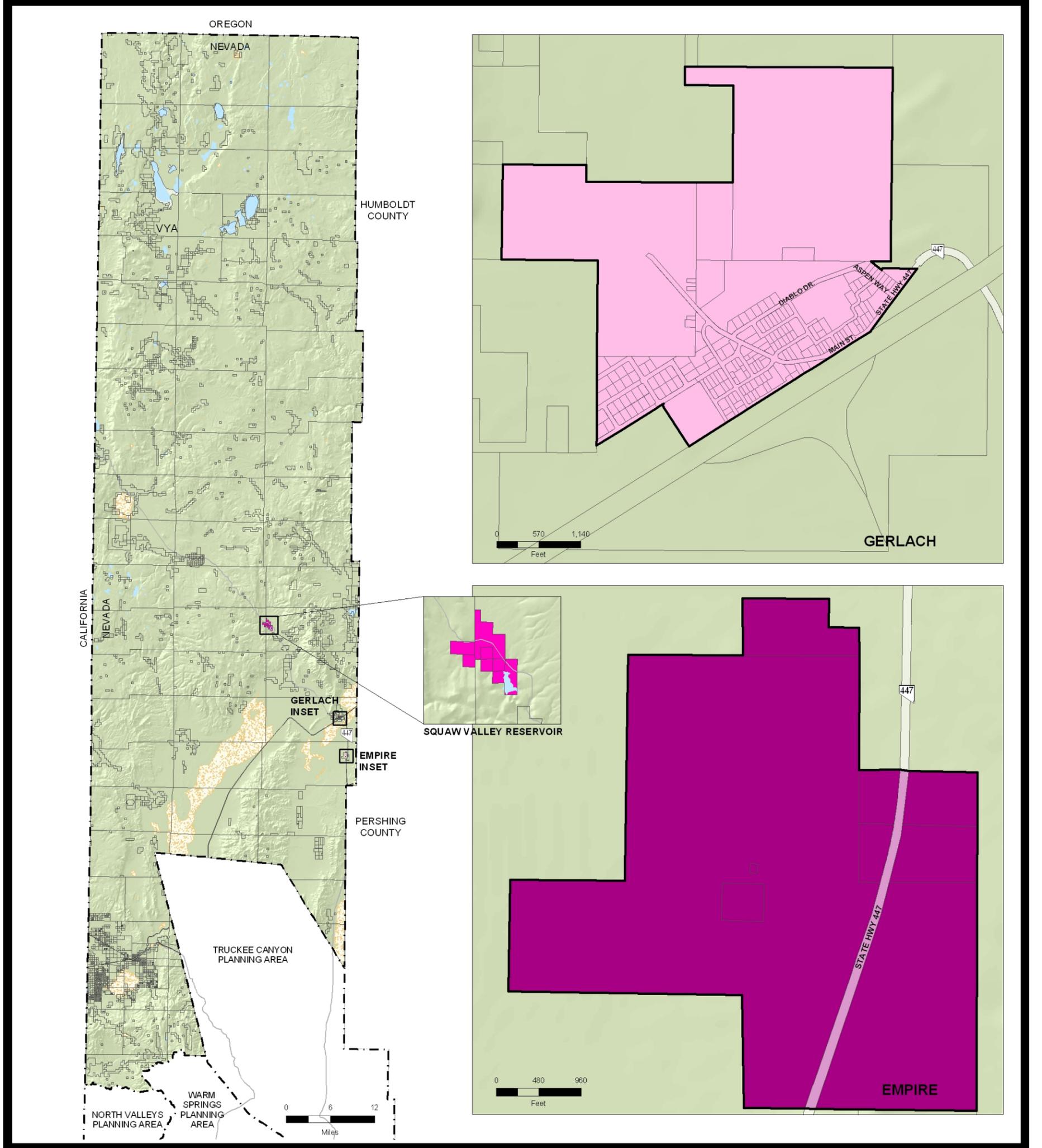
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## Appendix A - Maps

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# HIGH DESERT CHARACTER MANAGEMENT PLAN

- GERLACH SUBURBAN CHARACTER MANAGEMENT AREA
- EMPIRE SUBURBAN CHARACTER MANAGEMENT AREA
- SQUAW VALLEY RESERVOIR RURAL CHARACTER MANAGEMENT AREA
- HIGH DESERT RURAL CHARACTER MANAGEMENT AREA

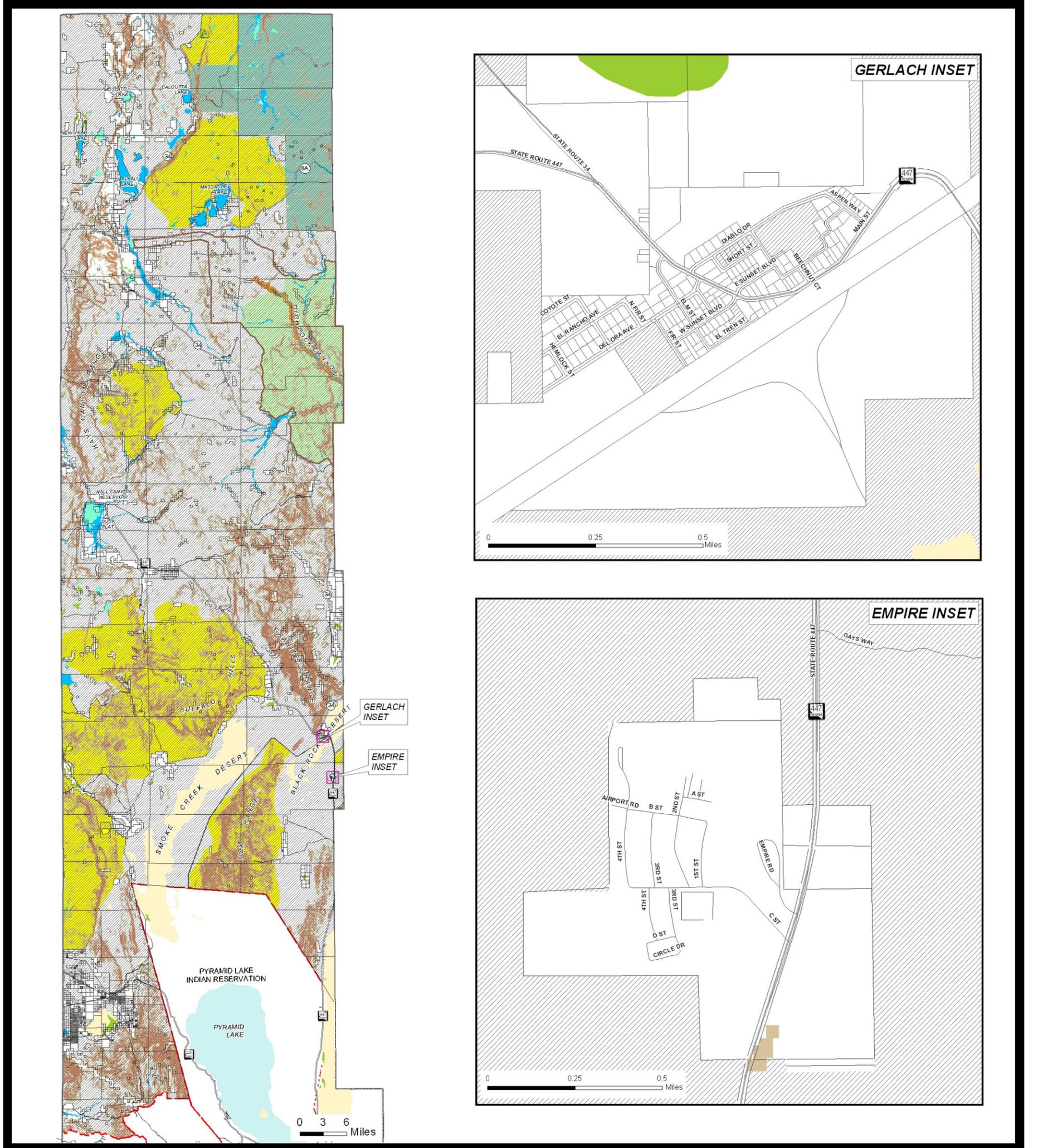
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## HIGH DESERT DEVELOPMENT CONSTRAINTS / SUITABILITY

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| INTERMITTENT LAKE / ISLANDS               | WILDLIFE REFUGE (SHELDON)                      | 100-YEAR FLOOD HAZARD   |
| WATER BODY                                | AREAS OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN (ACEC) | FLOODWAY (FEMA)   |
| PUBLIC LAND                               | WILDERNESS AREAS (WA)                          | POTENTIAL WETLANDS  |
| UNCONSTRAINED                             | WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS (WSA)                   | BOTH POTENTIAL FLOOD HAZARD AND POTENTIAL WETLANDS                                  |
| NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA (NCA) BOUNDARY | SLOPES GREATER THAN 15%                        | U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS C.W.A. SECTION 404 WETLANDS (Limited / Known Coverage) |
| ROADS                                     | SLOPES GREATER THAN 30%                        |   |
| COUNTY PLANNING AREA BOUNDARY             |  |   |

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SEE ABOVE VIEWS FOR SCALE



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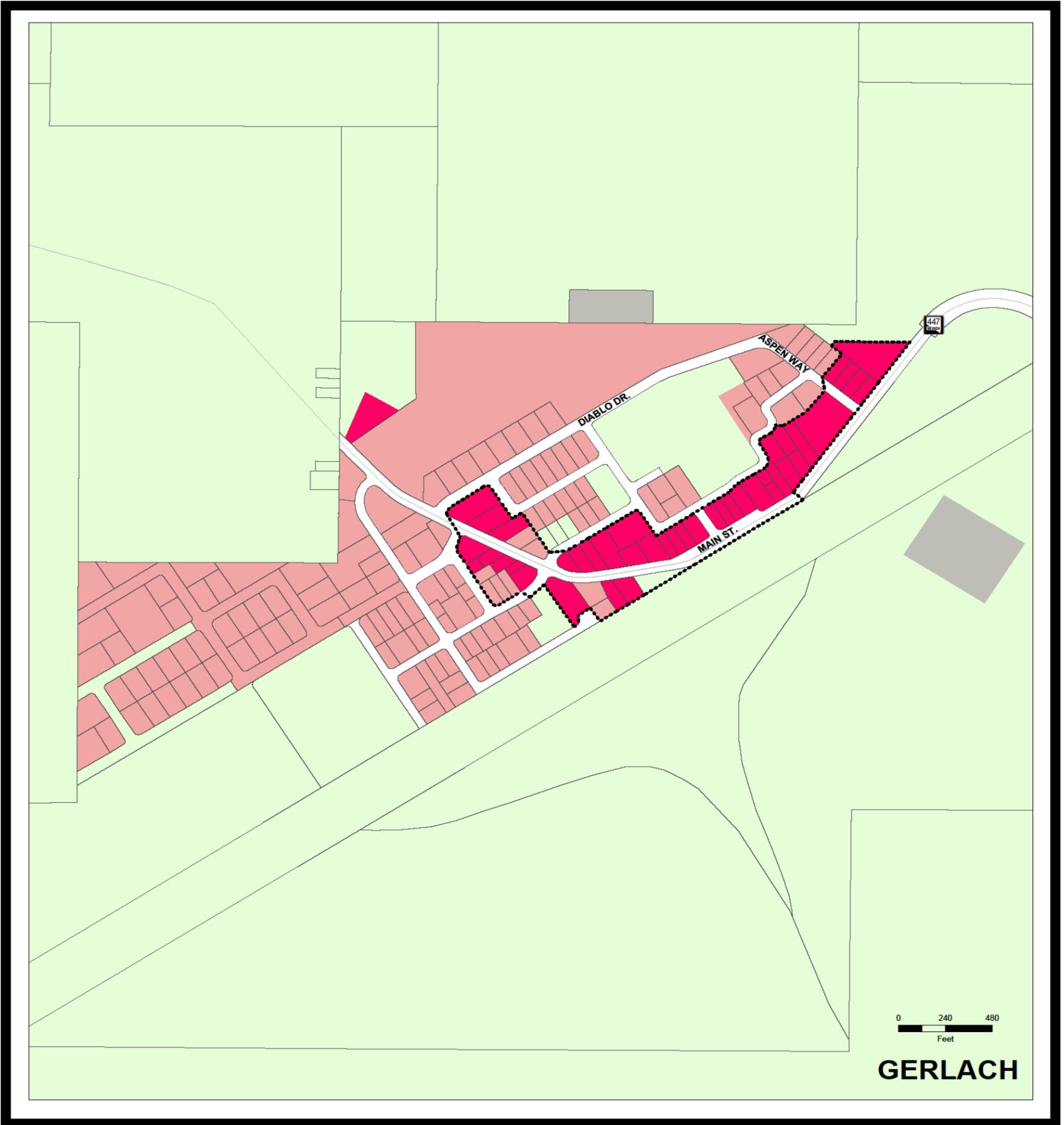
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NOTE: The wetland data depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. The data should be used to identify areas where more detailed analysis and delineation should occur. Please refer to the National Wetlands Inventory website at <http://wetlands.fws.er.usgs.gov/NWI/data-uses.html> for a detailed explanation of the data limitations and uses.

WCPC ADOPTION DATE: November 5, 2008  
BCC ADOPTION DATE: January 13, 2009

SOURCE: Community Services/Bureau of Land Management (BLM)/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service/US Forest Service/National Wetland Inventory

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HIGH DESERT - Downtown Gerlach Overlay District  
**MASTER PLAN MAP**

- RURAL
- RURAL RESIDENTIAL
- SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL
- URBAN RESIDENTIAL
- COMMERCIAL
- INDUSTRIAL
- OPEN SPACE

DOWNTOWN GERLACH OVERLAY DISTRICT

SOURCE: Community Development

WCPC ADOPTION DATE: August 2, 2016  
 BCC ADOPTION DATE: September 27, 2016  
 RPC ADOPTION DATE: December 7, 2016

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 DATE: 12/7/16 DIRECTOR: William Whitney

**Community Services  
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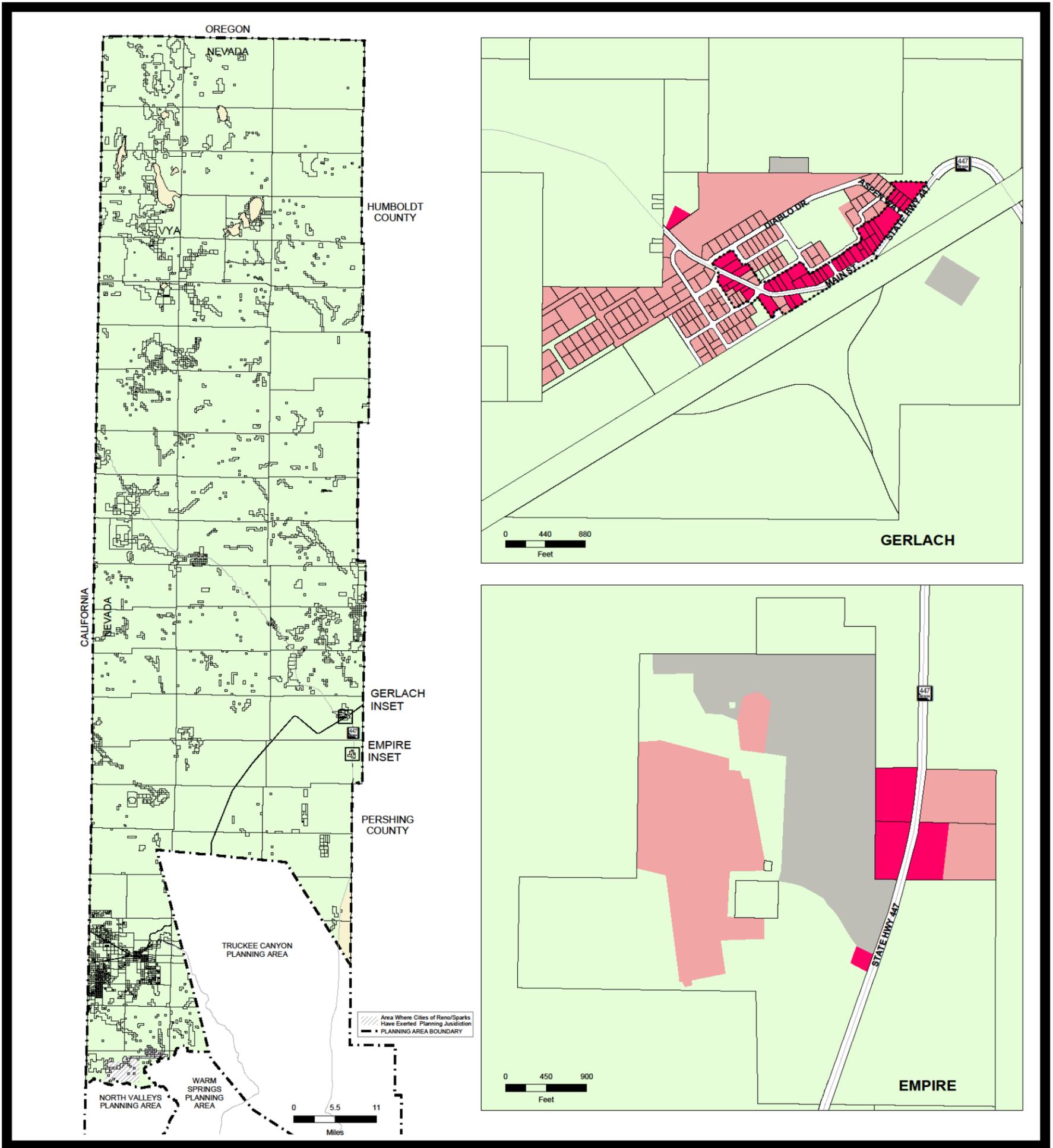
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### HIGH DESERT MASTER PLAN MAP

- RURAL
- RURAL RESIDENTIAL
- SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL
- URBAN RESIDENTIAL
- COMMERCIAL
- INDUSTRIAL
- OPEN SPACE
- DOWNTOWN GERLACH OVERLAY DISTRICT

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

PC Date: August 2, 2016  
 BCC Date: September 27, 2016  
 RPC Adoption Date: December 7, 2016

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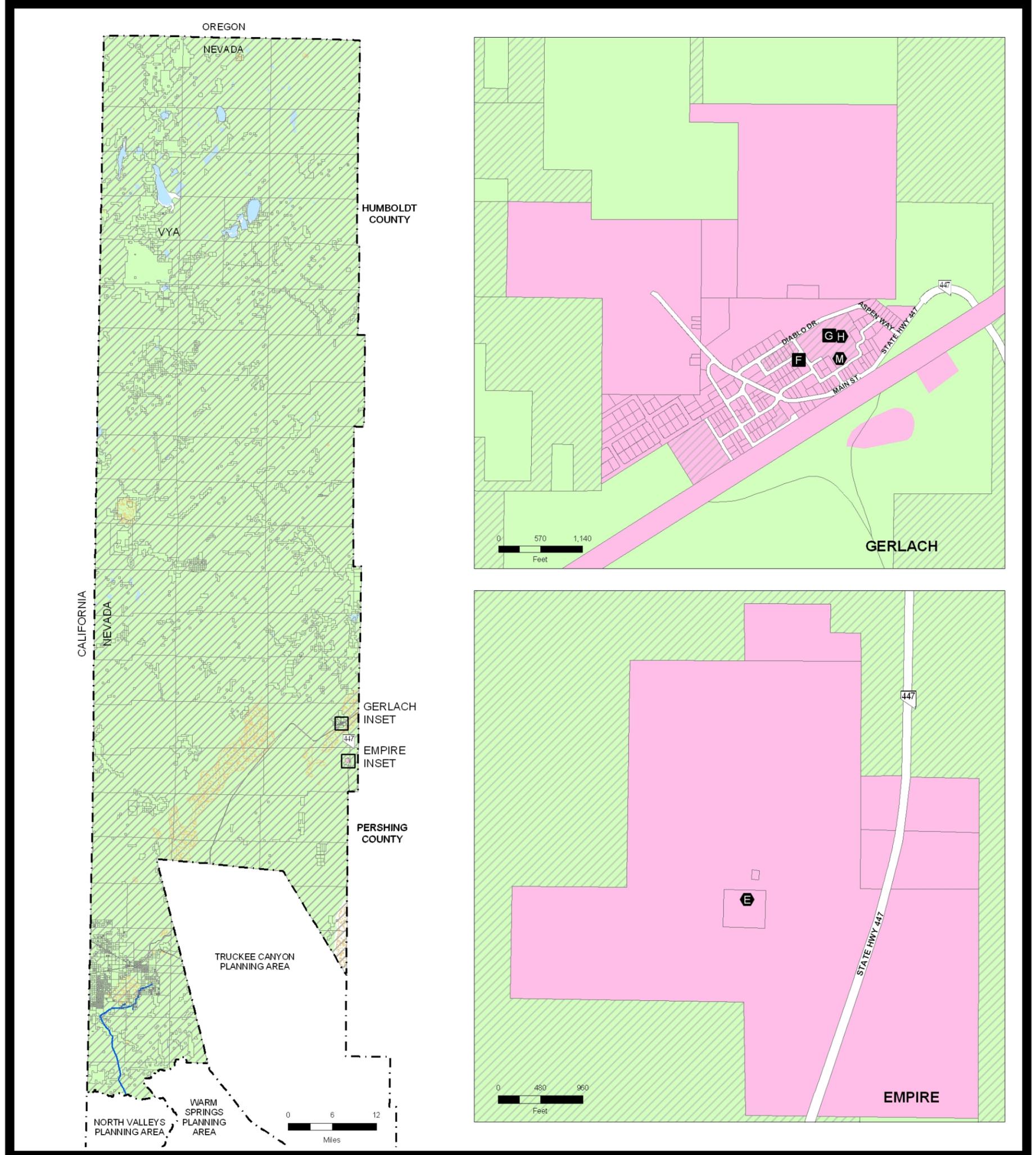
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## HIGH DESERT PUBLIC SERVICES & FACILITIES PLAN

**PUBLIC SERVICES**

- SUBURBAN COMMUNITY WATER AND SANITARY SEWER SERVICE AREA
- RURAL SERVICE AREA (NOT PLANNED FOR COMMUNITY WATER AND SANITARY SEWER)
- COMMUNITY WATER LINES
- COMMUNITY SANITARY SEWER LINES
- PUBLIC LAND

**PUBLIC FACILITIES (Existing)**

- F FIRE STATION
- E SCHOOL (E-Elementary, M-Middle, H-High)
- G GOVERNMENT BUILDING (Libraries, Administration Buildings, etc.)
- C PARK (C-Community, R-Regional, N-Neighborhood, S-Special Use)

Please also refer to the adopted Park District Master Plans.

WCPC ADOPTION DATE: November 5, 2008  
BCC ADOPTION DATE: January 13, 2009

SOURCE: Community Development

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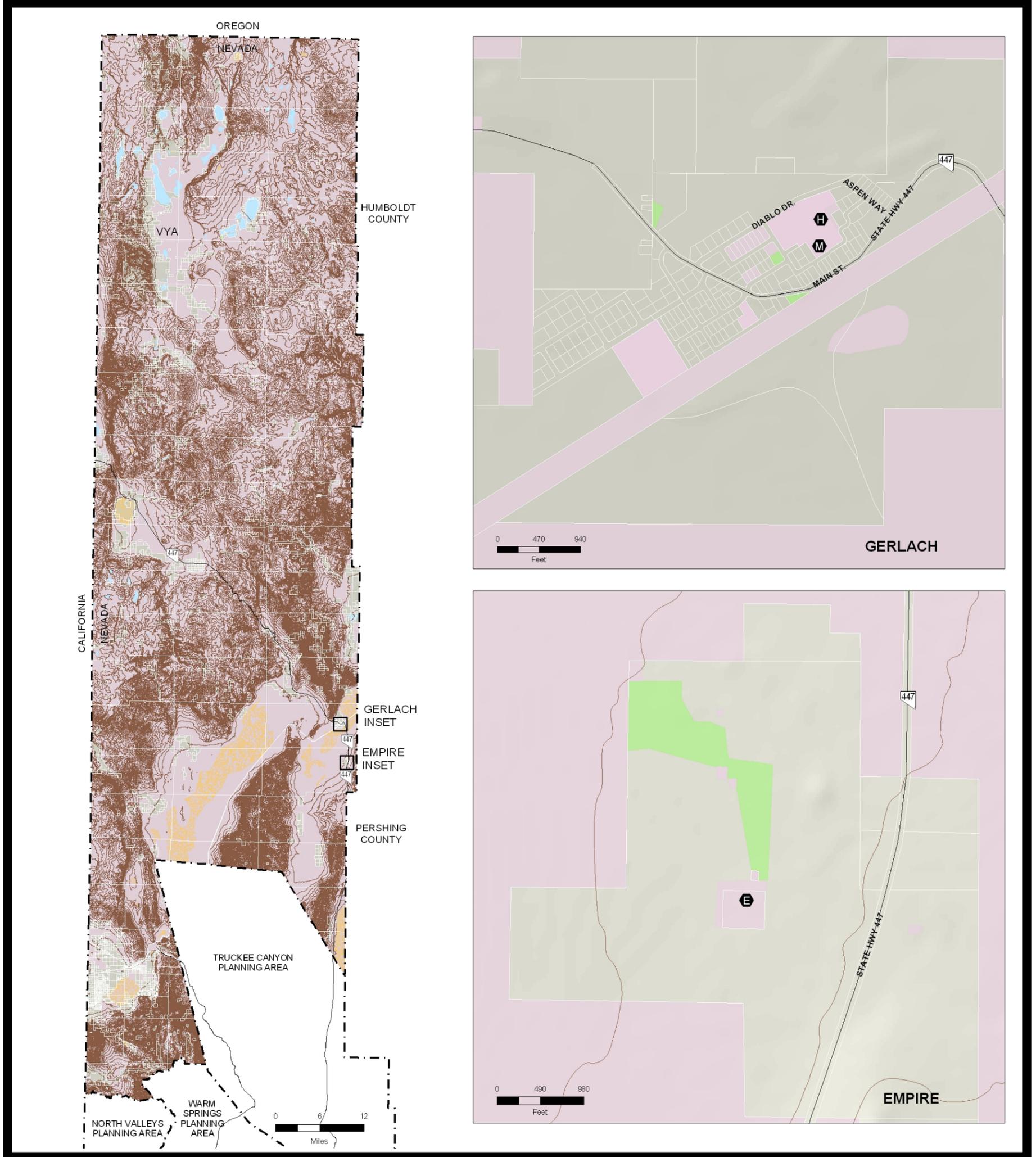
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# HIGH DESERT RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES PLAN

- |   |                                |   |          |   |          |  |   |  |
|---|--------------------------------|---|----------|---|----------|--|---|--|
|  | RECREATIONAL AREAS             |  | Existing |  | Proposed |  | TRAIL HEAD  |  |
|  | OPEN SPACE, PUBLIC             |  |          |  |          |  | SCHOOL<br>(E-Elementary, M-Middle, H-High)              |  |
|  | PUBLIC LANDS                   |  |          |  |          |  | TRAIL<br>Bike / Pedestrian                              |  |
|  | WATER BODY                     |  |          |  |          |  | TRAIL<br>Multipurpose                                   |  |
|  | PLAYA                          |   |          |   |          |  | Please refer to the adopted Park District Master Plans. |  |
|  | CONTOUR LINES, 100 FT INTERVAL |   |          |   |          |  |   |  |

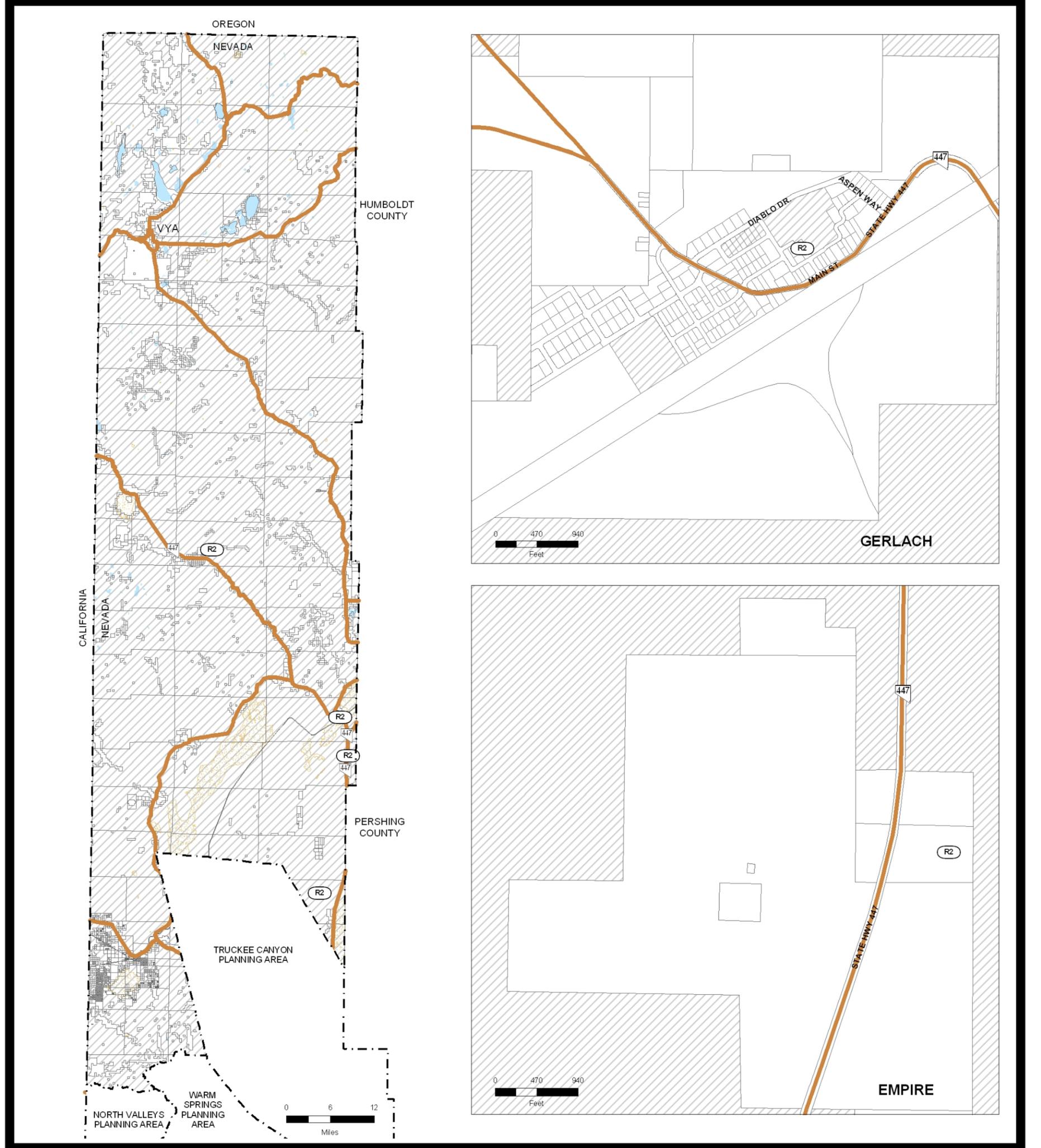
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# HIGH DESERT STREETS AND HIGHWAYS SYSTEM PLAN

- | EXISTING | PROPOSED |                             |
|----------|----------|-----------------------------|
|          |          | FREEWAY                     |
|          |          | ARTERIAL                    |
|          |          | RURAL HIGHWAY               |
|          |          | COLLECTOR                   |
|          |          | GRADE SEPARATED INTERCHANGE |
|          |          | SIGNALIZED INTERSECTION     |

- PLANNED GEOMETRIC DESIGN**
- DEGREE OF ACCESS CONTROL
    - H - HIGH CONTROL
    - M - MODERATE CONTROL
    - L - LOW CONTROL
    - U - ULTRA LOW CONTROL
  - NUMBER OF TRAFFIC LANES
  - FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION**
    - F - FREEWAY
    - A - ARTERIAL
    - C - COLLECTOR
    - R - RURAL
    - L - PRIVATE/LIMITED ACCESS
    - E - EMERGENCY

SOURCE: Community Development

WCPC ADOPTION DATE: November 5, 2008  
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