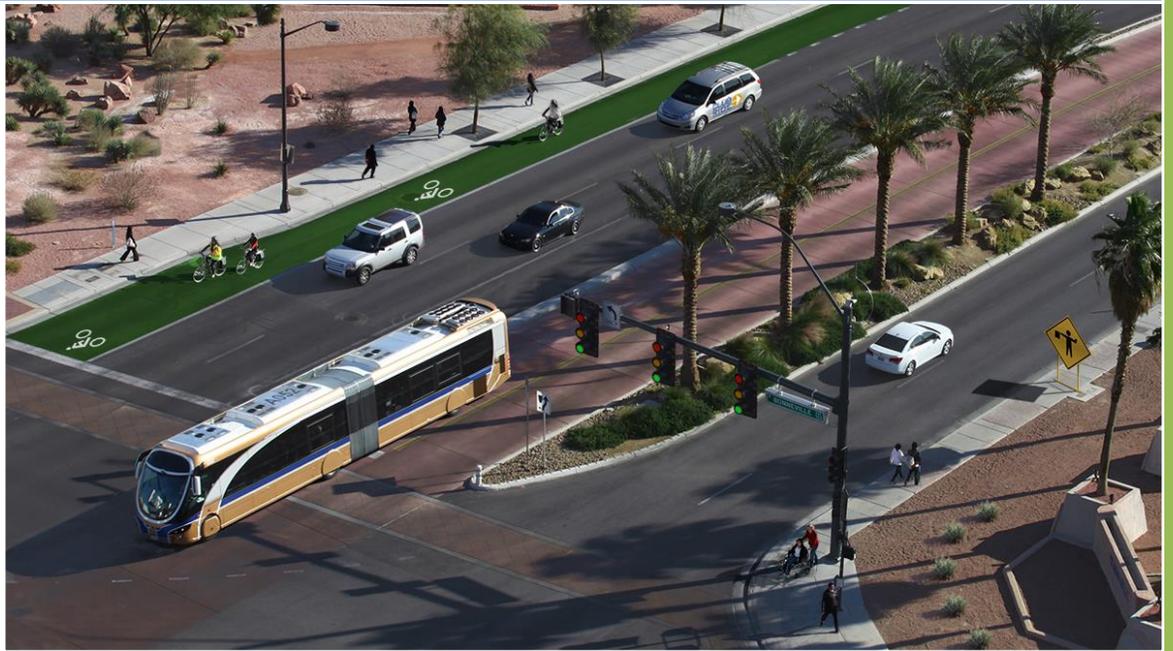


2013

Comprehensive Planning in Southern Nevada: A Livability Assessment



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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

APA	American Planning Association
ED	Economic Development
EPA	US Environmental Protection Agency
DOT	US Department of Transportation
<i>fbi</i>	Fact Based Indicator
FY	Fiscal Year
<i>gbi</i>	Goal Based Indicator
HUD	US Department of Housing and Urban Development
<i>lp</i>	Livability Principle
NDOT	Nevada Department of Transportation
<i>rls</i>	Regional Livability Score
RPSD	Regional Plan for Sustainable Development
RTC	Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada
SNRPC	Southern Nevada Regional Planning Coalition
TOD	Transit Oriented Development
USDOT	US Department of Transportation

Cover Photo:

Courtesy of the Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada

INTRODUCTION

PROJECT BACKGROUND

IN NOVEMBER 2011, THE SOUTHERN NEVADA REGIONAL PLANNING COALITION (SNRPC) WAS AWARDED A \$3.5 MILLION GRANT FROM THE PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES – A JOINT EFFORT BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT (HUD), THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (DOT), AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA). The Partnership seeks to help communities nationwide take an integrated approach to improving livability. The project, Southern Nevada Strong, will provide a comprehensive regional framework for growth and development in Southern Nevada by integrating economic development, employment, housing, transportation, the environment, and community health components. For the purpose of the Regional Plan for Sustainable Development (RPSD), the Southern Nevada region includes 4 incorporated cities and Clark County, listed below in Table 1.1.

<i>Table 1.1 – Jurisdictions of Southern Nevada included in the RPSD*</i>	
<i>Entity</i>	<i>Document Name</i>
City of Boulder City	Boulder City Master Plan
City of Henderson	City of Henderson Comprehensive Plan
City of Las Vegas	City of Las Vegas 2020 Master Plan
City of North Las Vegas	City of North Las Vegas Comprehensive Plan
Clark County	Clark County Comprehensive Plan

*City of Mesquite not included

One of the activities of Southern Nevada Strong is to implement a regional scenario planning tool to provide local governments and stakeholders with an innovative visualization tool to promote quality design and encourage implementation. Scenario Planning models a range of potential futures at a variety of scales, whether for regional visioning, comprehensive planning, or site planning. The tool provides decision makers, experts, and the public more information on what these futures might mean for their communities. Informed by public outreach, groups of scenarios are created in a range between a “no action scenario” which represents the status quo and a variety of alternatives based on specific priorities. The alternative scenarios explore the impacts of policy options such as diversifying housing choices and improving transit service. These scenarios are created by analyzing available data relevant to the geographic area being studied (Lincoln Institute, 2012). This livability assessment will be part of the data used in determining the scenarios.

For the purposes of this document, livability is based on priorities determined by the Partnership for Sustainable Communities, including lowering household transportation costs, reducing air pollution and stormwater runoff, decreasing infrastructure costs, preserving historic properties and sensitive lands, reducing the time spent in traffic, being more economic resilient, and meeting market demands for different types of housing at different price points. Degrees of livability are assessed based on the quality and comprehensiveness of policies explicitly identified by the local government’s comprehensive plan.

In order to provide valid data for the scenario planning effort, a necessary early step is to evaluate how well each of the jurisdictions' planning policies align with livability. The comprehensive or master plan (herein referred to as comprehensive plan) from each of the five jurisdictions listed above will be analyzed for strengths and challenges to sustainable practices. The Partnership for Sustainable Communities created six livability principles to assist in the coordination of federal agencies. The livability principles are listed in the section below. These livability principles were used to create criteria to assess each jurisdiction's comprehensive plan. While each jurisdiction within Southern Nevada can work individually to improve livability in the region, there are many issues that require regional collaboration – the more our local policies align, the higher the potential for regional benefit.

HUD'S LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

1. Provide more transportation choices.

Develop safe, reliable and economical transportation choices to decrease household transportation costs, reduce our nation's dependence on foreign oil, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote public health.

2. Promote equitable, affordable housing.

Expand location- and energy-efficient housing choices for people of all ages, incomes, races and ethnicities to increase mobility and lower the combined cost of housing and transportation.

3. Enhance economic competitiveness.

Improve economic competitiveness through reliable and timely access to employment centers, educational opportunities, services and other basic needs by workers as well as expanded business access to markets.

4. Support existing communities.

Target federal funding toward existing communities—through such strategies as transit-oriented, mixed-use development and land recycling—to increase community revitalization, improve the efficiency of public works investments, and safeguard rural landscapes.

5. Coordinate policies and leverage investment.

Align federal policies and funding to remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding and increase the accountability and effectiveness of all levels of government to plan for future growth, including making smart energy choices such as locally generated renewable energy.

6. Value communities and neighborhoods.

Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods—rural, urban, or suburban.

METHODOLOGY

Content Analysis

Analyzing each comprehensive plan was done utilizing the widely used method captured in Richard Norton's (the chair of the Urban and Regional Planning Departments at the University of Michigan) article on evaluating master plans and zoning codes, content analysis. According to Norton, the approach for content analysis is similar to developing a set of close-ended questions for a survey and then administering the survey; specifically, it, "involves preparing an evaluation protocol by defining categories for analysis and then having one or more evaluators or

'coders' use that protocol to read and score the written communication" (Norton, 2008, p. 433). This Livability assessment uses selected indicators, described in the section below, as the evaluation protocol to be analyzed.

Content analysis has historically been utilized as a means to analyze novels, journal articles, and other written media in order to assess the message being expressed by the respective document. Content analysis is a, "set of methods for analyzing the symbolic content of any (written) communication. The basic idea is to reduce the total content of a communication...to set a set of categories that represent some characteristics of a research interest" (Singleton & Straights, 1999, p. 383).

Two members of the project team scored each document independently using the above criteria. The research team then convened to compare scores. The scores of the research team were compared to create a reliability score. A reliability score is calculated by adding up the indicators the research scored the same on and dividing that by the total number of indicators. A reliability score, (the percentage of time that the two researchers scored the indicators the same way), of 80% or above is considered acceptable (Miles & Huberman, 1994). When a reliability score of 80% was not achieved while coding each respective plan, the research team convened and discussed their dissimilarities until they came to an agreement on each of the indicators where they differed (Evans-Cowley & Gough, 2009). The reliability score of 84.2% was achieved by the research team for this assessment.

Once the plans were scored by the research team, the scores from each of the indicators were standardized by dividing the sum of scores by the maximum possible score and multiplying by 100, creating a percentage score. A high regional score represented a higher level of community commitment toward achieving that given indicator. The final steps involved creating regional livability scores. The first step was to create a score for each of HUD's six Livability Principles (LP¹ through LP⁶) by summing the percentage scores for each of the fact based indicators (*fb*) and goal based indicators (*gb*) and dividing it by the number of indicators within each livability principle (four); the second step was to create an overall regional livability score (*RLS*) by adding the percentage scores for each livability principles (LP) and dividing it by the total number of livability principles overall (6) (See Figure 1.1 below) (Conroy & Berke, 2004).

FIGURE 1.1—CALCULATING REGIONAL LIVABILITY SCORES

$$\text{Step 1 : } LP^1 = \{[fb^1 + fb^2]\} + [gb^1 + gb^2] \div 4$$

$$\text{Step 2 : } RLS = [LP^1 + LP^2 + LP^3 + LP^4 + LP^5 + LP^6] \div 6$$

Indicator Selection

To date, the APA has recognized two entities for their work on similar assessment efforts, the Mississippi Gulf Coast region and the East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission. This assessment is modeled after those efforts. Using the Mississippi Gulf Coast and the East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission Comprehensive Plan review documents for guidance, a total of 24 indicators were chosen—four for each of HUD's six livability principles—to be used to evaluate each plan. For each livability principle, there are two "fact" based indicators and two "goal" based indicators. The fact based indicators are measurable and, assist in providing adequate information upon which goals can be set. The goal based indicators are more general and deal with goals and policies that are included in comprehensive/master plans (Evans-Cowley, 2011).

A total of 36 indicators were originally selected for this assessment (three fact based and three goal based for each livability principle). The project team selected two fact based and two goal based indicators for each of the six livability principles, for a total of 24 indicators. Table 1.2 and 1.3 list the selected indicators.

Appendix A provides a complete breakdown on the reference documents from which each of the indicators were selected.

Table 1.2 – Fact Based Indicators	
HUD Livability Principle	Fact Based Indicators
Provide More Transportation Choices	Vehicle Miles Traveled
	Proportion of Households within ¼ mile of Public Transit
Promote Equitable, Affordable Housing	Allocation of Affordable Housing Stock
	Demographic Analysis of Residents
Enhance Economic Competitiveness	Location of Current Job Centers
	Unemployment Rates
Support Existing Communities	Existing Housing Data
	Standards that Allow Redevelopment of Formerly Single-Use Buildings into Multi-Use
Coordinate Policies & Leverage Investments	Regional Sustainable Infrastructure Practices
	Identify Benefits of Coordinated Investments
Value Communities & Neighborhoods	Establish or Reduce Block Lengths or Perimeters to Produce Better Connections & Increase Walkability
	Require New Developments to Connect to Existing or Planned Walkway, Greenway, and/or Hiking Trail

Table 1.3 – Goal Based Indicators	
HUD Livability Principle	Goal Based Indicators
Provide More Transportation Choices	Encourage Transit Oriented Design (TOD) and Transit Friendly Development
	Create Safe Environments for Walking and Biking
Promote Equitable, Affordable Housing	Provide Energy-Efficient Housing Options for All Incomes
	Offer Density Bonuses and Flexible Zoning Standards to Encourage Construction of Affordable Housing
Enhance Economic Competitiveness	Expand Economic Opportunities to Spur Redevelopment or Infill
	Diversify Economic Competition
Support Existing Communities	Differentiate Policies for Infill & Redevelopment Versus New Development to Minimize Natural Resource Destruction & Provide Energy Economies
	Encourage Structured Incentives for Urban Infill and/or TOD

<i>Table 1.3 – Goal Based Indicators</i>	
<i>HUD Livability Principle</i>	<i>Goal Based Indicators</i>
Coordinate Policies & Leverage Investments	Encourage Multi-Jurisdictional Approaches to Redevelopment and Energy Efficiency
	Integrated Regional Approach to Transportation
Value Communities & Neighborhoods	Promote Districts with Distinct Characters & a Diverse & Rich Mixture of Uses
	Create Walkable Neighborhoods

Comprehensive Plan Scoring System

The comprehensive plans were scored using a point-scoring method found in multiple plan evaluation documents. Each plan was scored in relation to the selected indicators on a scale of zero to two. A score of zero was given if the indicator was completely absent in the plan. A score of one was given if the indicator was present in the plan but not described in detail; and a score of two was given if the indicator was discussed in detail or was mandated by the respective plan. For example, if a plan did not mention “vehicle miles traveled” a zero would be entered in the score sheet. If the plan briefly mentions the goal of reducing vehicle miles traveled, then a one would be scored. If the plan has a detailed description of how the reduction of vehicle miles traveled can be achieved, then a two would be scored (Norton, 2008; Berke & Conroy, 2000; Evans-Cowley & Gough, 2009).

Data Limitations

One of the limitations of this method of analysis is the scope and selection of regulatory documents that are assessed. The general goals and policies of the comprehensive plan for each jurisdiction were evaluated in this study. If the jurisdictions have a special area plan (such as a downtown plan) or plan that deals with a single topic (such as transportation) that address specific livability principles separately, it is not captured in this assessment. Each of the jurisdictions has specialized plans that either cover a small geographic area within the entity or a specialized topic. For example, North Las Vegas also has a “Downtown Master Plan” to complement its comprehensive plan; and Clark County has a Transportation Plan within Volume 2 of the Comprehensive Plan. Volume 1 in the Clark County Comprehensive Plan is titled “General Subjects” and is part of this analysis. Volume 2 includes geographically specific Land Use Plans and the Transportation Plan. The City of Las Vegas 2020 Master Plan is considered Phase 1 of a two phase preparation. Phase 1, which is analyzed below, is the policy document that drives the content of Phase 2. Phase 2 is a series of elements, special area plans, and long-term land use designations that are updated individually on an annual basis. Plans such as the North Las Vegas Downtown Master Plan, Volume 2 of the Clark County Comprehensive Plan, and Phase 2 of the Las Vegas 2020 Master Plan were not included because they have a narrower focus than the comprehensive plans and may only highlight a single livability principle.

An additional limitation to this method is that it does not assess the accuracy or timeliness of data reflected in the Comprehensive Plans. This can result in a higher score if a plan maintains a particular principle, but may not be an accurate or relevant policy in the current environment.

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SCORECARD RESULTS

INTRODUCTION

THIS CHAPTER SHOWCASES THE REGION'S SUCCESS IN PROMOTING SOUND PLANNING PRACTICES WITHIN LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMPREHENSIVE PLANS. The following results include a regional scorecard for each of the Livability Principles and successful examples. This section also includes an analysis of the gaps between the local government comprehensive plans and the indicators.

PROVIDE MORE TRANSPORTATION CHOICES

<i>Table 3.1 – Livability Principle #1: Provide More Transportation Options</i>		<i>Average Regional Score Per Indicator (0 min -- 100 max)</i>	<i>Livability Principle Regional Score (0 min – 100 max)</i>
Fact Based	Vehicle Miles Traveled	30	57.5
	Proportion of Households Within ¼ Mile of Public Transit	30	
Goal Based	Encourage TOD and Transit Friendly Development	90	
	Create Safe Environments for Walking and Biking	80	

North Las Vegas Promotes TOD

Chapter 5 of The North Las Vegas Comprehensive Plan focuses on both principles of design and residential density evaluation criteria. Within the chapter is a section specifically dedicated to TOD located around proposed and future transit station locations for both Bus Rapid Transit and Light Rail Transit development. Included in the TOD section are numerous photos of successful existing TOD developments located in different parts of the United States.

The TOD section also includes five principles to be applied to TOD and each principle includes an action plan detailing how the principle can be achieved. For example, Principle #3 is titled The Station Area Development Plan Focuses the Most Dense, Compact Development Closest to the Station and the action plan states that, “The development within a designated station area is compactly designed with higher densities closer to the station area. Typically, the most intense activity is focused within a ¼ mile of a station.”

Boulder City Creates a Safe Environment for Walking & Biking

There are multiple instances within the Boulder City Master Plan where policies promote the safety of pedestrians and cyclists. For example, in Chapter 2, a section titled “A Balanced Multi-Modal Transportation System” states that the City should strive for a balanced transportation system which will allow for safe and efficient facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists. This will be achieved by addressing current and future mobility needs through appropriate land use decisions.

Later in the document, the section on Special Planning Area Policies presents a list of policies for the Highway 93 Corridor-West (Uptown) area. Policy U5: Pedestrian Circulation and Linkages, on page 92, promotes pedestrian safety:

As sites within the corridor redevelop, the city should encourage the incorporation of detached sidewalks and planting buffers to establish a safe and inviting environment for pedestrians. Detached sidewalks will improve pedestrian safety, encourage pedestrian activity, and reduce the need for business patrons to drive from business to business thereby reducing traffic. Providing adequate pedestrian connections to future existing and future residential areas south of Nevada Highway should also be addressed.

PROMOTE EQUITABLE, AFFORDABLE HOUSING

<i>Table 3.2 – Livability Principle #2: Promote Equitable, Affordable Housing</i>		<i>Average Regional Score Per Indicator (0 min – 100 max)</i>	<i>Livability Principle Regional Score (0 min – 100 max)</i>
Fact Based	Allocation of Affordable Housing Stock	60	51.3
	Demographic Analysis of Residents	60	
Goal Based	Provide Energy-Efficient Housing Options For All Incomes	30	
	Offer Density Bonuses and Flexible Zoning Standards to Encourage Construction of Affordable Housing	55	

North Las Vegas Provides Detailed Data on Affordable Housing Stock

Appendix B is the Existing Conditions section of the North Las Vegas Comprehensive Plan. This section contains a breakdown of the homeownership versus home rental rates in North Las Vegas and how that relates to home affordability. It is pointed out that in 2000 32% of homeowners and 40% of renters in North Las Vegas have exceeded the HUD recommended 30% of monthly income dedicated to housing costs.

Later in Appendix B is a section that presents an inventory of the affordable housing in North Las Vegas. To ensure that the data is up to date, this specific section is updated every 5 years. The affordable housing section includes population projections, current and prospective need for affordable housing, an analysis of characteristics of land most suitable for development of affordable housing, and references the HUD Consolidated Plan Consortium FY 2010-2014 Strategic Plan for a full inventory of affordable housing in North Las Vegas.

Henderson Promotes Density Bonuses & Flexible Zoning Standards to Encourage Affordable Housing

Chapter 2 of the City of Henderson Comprehensive Plan lists 5 principles for building community through balanced land use. Policy 3.D. is titled Community Workforce Housing as a Viable Option and promotes incentive programs such as density bonuses, streamlined development permit processes, inclusionary programs, allowances for “granny flats”, and administrative approvals in an effort to ensure that workforce housing is available in various locations throughout the city. The plan defines workforce housing as housing suitable for working families and individuals for households earning between 80% and 120% of an area’s median income. An incentive program for workforce housing is also promoted later in the document, under Priority Actions in the Action Plan chapter. Policy 3.E. promotes similar incentives for affordable housing.

Adopting these incentives would create an opportunity for workforce and affordable housing to be incentivized to make it more viable to private sector developers and would allow for a more streamlined permitting process for developers.

ENHANCE ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS

<i>Table 3.3 – Livability Principle #3: Enhance Economic Competitiveness</i>		<i>Average Regional Score Per Indicator (0 min – 100 max)</i>	<i>Livability Principle Regional Score (0 min – 100 max)</i>
Fact Based	Location of Current Job Centers	40	52.5
	Unemployment Rates	30	
Goal Based	Expand Economic Opportunities to Spur Redevelopment or Infill	80	
	Diversify Economic Competition	60	

The City of Las Vegas Identifies the Location of Existing Job Centers

Providing a detailed description of job center locations within each respective jurisdiction provides important information to developers. It also helps planners estimate job and population growth and provides other local government agencies information to assist them in providing the best possible services to their constituency. In the opening chapter of the Las Vegas 2020 Master Plan, there is a section dedicated to existing conditions, which includes a map and a discussion regarding the location of current job centers within the city.

The map identifies job center locations among traffic analysis zones and shows that the primary locations for employment in the city are in downtown Las Vegas and Summerlin. The plan estimates that 28% of all jobs in the city are with the City of Las Vegas. Furthermore, the plan anticipates growth in the northwestern portion of the city, along with downtown and Summerlin. While providing this information in such a detailed manner meets the selected indicator, this section has not been updated since 1999 and is outdated.

Boulder City Supports the Expansion of Economic Opportunity by Promoting Redevelopment & Infill

Southern Nevada's economy is primarily dependent on the service industry and other industries ancillary to the service industry. Diversifying the local economy is viewed as an important way to help the region recover from the downturn experienced during the great recession. One way that land use planning can assist in the effort to expand economic opportunity is to promote redevelopment and infill development. Redevelopment and infill can promote economic opportunity in two ways. First, promoting infill and redevelopment can capitalize on Generation Y's lifestyle desire for mobility while fitting into the existing urban framework without requiring new infrastructure. Second, it provides additional variety of housing types. Companies looking to relocate typically look for locations that offer a wide variety housing choices, including higher density residential housing with close proximity to proposed or existing transit lines.

The Economic Development chapter of the Boulder City Master Plan, Policy ED 3: Encourage Infill and Redevelopment, promotes infill and redevelopment activities in targeted areas as a means for spurring reinvestment and stabilizing declining or underutilized properties; particularly in the Central Business District, the Highway 93 corridor and the city's manufacturing district. Policy ED 4: Redevelopment Area, furthers these efforts by encouraging and assisting in redevelopment areas to include a broader variety of businesses that appeal to both tourists and residents.

SUPPORT EXISTING COMMUNITIES

<i>Table 3.4 – Livability Principle #4: Support Existing Communities</i>		<i>Average Regional Score Per Indicator (0 min – 100 max)</i>	<i>Livability Principle Regional Score (0 min – 100 max)</i>
Fact Based	Existing Housing Data	60	45
	Standards That Allow Redevelopment of Formerly Single-Use Buildings into Multi-Use	15	
Goal Based	Encourage Structured Incentives for Urban Infill and/or TOD	50	
	Differentiate Policies for Infill and Redevelopment Versus New Development to Minimize Natural Resource Destruction and Provide Energy Economies	55	

Clark County Promotes Standards that Allow Redevelopment of Formerly Single-Use Buildings into Multi-Use

The transitioning of single-use buildings into multi-use (also referred to as mixed-use) buildings can assist in lessening the dependence on automobiles, stimulating economic development in areas that were previously underutilized, and allows people to work, shop and enjoy recreation close to where they live. Allowing residential uses in buildings that were historically commercial and allowing commercial and retail uses on the street level of existing multi-family development achieve this goal.

The Growth Management section of the Clark County Comprehensive Plan presents policies which promote mixed-use standards, and promote transitioning single-use developments into multi-use. Policy #10 encourages the redevelopment of infill sites with new and additional uses that allow them to function as walkable, mixed-use districts. Policy #14 encourages mixed-use development that provides the ability to revitalize older commercial corridors with infill residential uses.

North Las Vegas Encourages Differentiating Policies for Infill and Redevelopment versus New Development to Minimize Natural Resource Destruction

Supporting development within the urban core by promoting infill and redevelopment in areas with existing infrastructure is a tool by which local governments can reduce development on natural lands. This type of development could produce a significant reduction in regional stormwater runoff, take advantage of existing roads and utility infrastructure, and leave large areas of open space undeveloped for both recreational opportunities and open space protection.

The North Las Vegas Comprehensive Plan encourages development within established areas of the city throughout the document. Goal 5.4 Infill Policies and Design Guidelines in the Guiding Principles section states that the city will establish infill policies to address barriers to redevelopment activity within existing, established areas of the city and will discourage non-contiguous development.

COORDINATE POLICIES & LEVERAGE INVESTMENT

<i>Table 3.5 – Livability Principle #5: Coordinate Policies and Leverage Investments</i>		<i>Average Regional Score Per Indicator (0 min – 100 max)</i>	<i>Livability Principle Regional Score (0 min – 100 max)</i>
Fact Based	Regional Sustainable Infrastructure Practices	10	42.5
	Identify Benefits of Coordinated Investments	40	
Goal Based	Encourage Multi-Jurisdictional Approaches to Redevelopment and Energy Efficiency	40	
	Integrated Regional Approach to Transportation	80	

Clark County Recognizes the Benefits of Regionally Coordinated Investments

Aligning federal policies and funding at the regional level helps remove barriers to regional collaboration, assists in leveraging funding and increases accountability and effectiveness at all levels of government. Coordinating investments throughout Southern Nevada is only successful with buy-in from all local governments.

The Clark County Comprehensive Plan has multiple instances where regional coordination is promoted with federal, state, and local governmental entities. Policy #3 in the Species Protection section states that Clark County should coordinate land uses and disposal areas with Federal agencies to reduce environmental and habitat impacts within protected areas. Policy #3 in the Growth Management section promotes pursuing coordination of development policies between the entities of the region. Policy #5 in the Natural and Man-Made Hazards section states that local, regional, state, and federal governments should coordinate investments to provide protection against natural and man-made hazards.

The City of Las Vegas Promotes an Integrated Regional Approach to Transportation

Advancing regional transportation planning through the development of regional transportation networks and the expansion of transportation choices supports long-term regional success and community livelihood by providing citizens multiple integrated transportation options consistent throughout the entire region.

Goal #7 in the Las Vegas 2020 Master Plan, within the Regional Coordination chapter, promotes coordination by the City of Las Vegas with other government entities and agencies regarding issues of regional significance. Policy 7.3.5 states that the City must work with the Southern Nevada Regional Transportation Commission (RTC), the Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT), and local governmental entities in the region to ensure that the roadway network is planned and developed to meet the needs of the anticipated population growth in the region, and provide for multimodal transportation opportunities.

VALUE COMMUNITIES & NEIGHBORHOODS

<i>Table 3.6 – Livability Principle #6: Value Communities and Neighborhoods</i>		<i>Average Regional Score Per Indicator (0 min – 100 max)</i>	<i>Livability Principle Regional Score (0 min – 100 max)</i>
Fact Based	Households Within 1 Mile of Healthy Food	0	67.5
	Require New Developments to Connect to Existing Or Planned Walkway, Greenway, and/or Hiking Trail	75	
Goal Based	Promote Districts With Distinct Characters and a Diverse and Rich Mixture of Uses	100	
	Create Walkable Neighborhoods	95	

The City of Henderson Requires New Development to Connect to Existing or Planned Walkways

Requiring new development to connect to existing or planned walkways, greenways, and hiking trails benefits all people within a community. A compact, walkable neighborhood encourages physical activity and helps protect the environment by conserving fossil fuel when we reduce the miles we drive. Walkable neighborhoods are also safer for children, allowing them to walk or bike to school, the park, and library. Walkable neighborhoods allow seniors access to daily exercise by walking. Walkable neighborhoods also have been proved to create more opportunities to get to know people in the neighborhood.

The City of Henderson Comprehensive Plan has multiple policies that call for new development to connect to existing walkways, greenways, and hiking trails. This includes policies for commercial, residential and public open space planning. Principle 3 within the chapter titled Quality Development states that commercial areas will be vibrant and attractive places; Policy 3.C Transit-Supportive Design states that new development should include transit-supportive design features, including amenities to enhance the pedestrian environment and clearly marked pedestrian routes between buildings, transit facilities and stops. Principle 5 within the same chapter declares that mixed-use development be thoughtfully designed and of high quality. Policy 5.F Pedestrian Connectivity encourages mixed-use developments to be designed to allow for a continuous pedestrian system. Later in the chapter, Principle 7 promotes public spaces designed to accommodate people. Policy 7.B Connected Public Spaces states that trails and walkways connect public spaces as destinations for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Boulder City Promotes Districts with Distinct Character and a Mixture of Uses

Promoting the unique characteristics of districts within a community gives residents of these communities a strong sense of place by having a unique district within a region. Providing a mixture of uses within these unique districts allows residents the opportunity to live, work, shop, and recreate all within their existing communities. Therefore, having districts with distinct character and a mixture of uses can instill local pride as well as stimulate economic development in the region.

The Boulder City Master Plan promotes districts with distinct character and a mixture of uses. There are unique policies included in the plan for a variety of existing districts located in the city. These districts include the Central Business District, The Historic District, The Downtown District, The Commercial District, and The Old Airport Subarea District. In the Land Use chapter of the plan there is a table that lists land use categories, primary and secondary uses within the category, and characteristics of the category. The Central Business District lists a variety of civic, cultural, retail, commercial, business, hotel, professional offices, and financial institutions as primary uses; and lists

characteristics such as traditional downtown urban fabric in a compact, vibrant setting with a pedestrian-friendly scale.

Policy #2, titled Mix of Uses, in the Central Business District section states that a mix of uses including retail, restaurant, employment, commercial, office, and civic uses should continue to be encouraged in the downtown; and that retail and restaurant uses be encouraged at the street level to promote pedestrian activity and vitality.

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STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

REGIONAL LIVABILITY SCORE

USING THE FORMULA ESTABLISHED IN FIGURE 1.1, A REGIONAL LIVABILITY SCORE OF 52.7 WAS ATTAINED FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE PLANS OF SOUTHERN NEVADA. A more detailed breakdown of the scorecards found in Chapter 2 indicate there is a wide variation by which the livability principles are represented in the comprehensive plans of the region. Some of the indicators are represented throughout the region, while one of the indicators was not represented in any of the plans analyzed (food security). Below is a breakdown of the existing strengths of the region's comprehensive plans and an examination of the areas where the plans could be improved to more closely represent the Livability Principles.

EXISTING STRENGTHS

Promoting Districts with Distinct Character and Diverse Mixture of Uses

The region's comprehensive plans scored a perfect 100 in regards to promoting districts with distinct character and a diverse and rich mixture of uses. Each of the analyzed plans addresses this indicator in detail by providing names of existing districts within the respective jurisdiction and promoting a mixture of uses within these districts.

Encouraging the Creation of Walkable Neighborhoods

With a score of 95, the creation of walkable neighborhoods is a clearly stated goal in the region's comprehensive plan. As the region rapidly developed, planning for and creating pedestrian friendly development was sometimes an afterthought, but the region's comprehensive plans now have in place numerous goals and policies which encourage new development to create walkable neighborhoods and provide a network of connections between these neighborhoods.

Supporting TOD and Transit Friendly Development

Promoting TOD and transit friendly development is a constant theme throughout the plans of the region. The region scored 90 out of 100 in promoting TOD in the comprehensive plans. Excluding Boulder City, the included jurisdictions scored perfectly on this indicator. The outlying location of Boulder City, outside of the Las Vegas Valley, makes the promotion of transit friendly development less of a requirement.

Goal Based Indicators

As stated in Chapter 1, the goal based indicators are more general and deal with goals and policies that are included in comprehensive plans, and overall the regional plans scored very high on the goal based indicators. The overall average score of all indicators is 52.7, but the goal based indicators scored 67.9, 15% higher than the average. This means that the regional comprehensive plans do a good job in promoting the Livability Principles through goal based policies.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

Promoting Access to Healthy Food

One of the stated goals that HUD encourages through the Sustainable Communities program is increasing the proportion of housing units that have high access to quality fresh foods. In December 2012, the American Planning

Association (APA) published a study titled, "Healthy Planning, An Evaluation of Comprehensive and Sustainability Plans Addressing Public Health". The study stated that "food access" is one of the top 10 most-cited public health topics identified in sustainability plans. The results of the APA study showed that a major weakness of the 22 plans that were analyzed is the weak coverage of policies promoting access to food. Only 8.8% of the comprehensive plans analyzed and 22.2% of the Sustainability Plans analyzed had policies relating to food access, food safety, food security, healthy eating, and nutrition (American Planning Association, 2012). Therefore, a goal based indicator about households being within one mile of healthy food was selected.

None of the comprehensive plans analyzed had any policies regarding access to healthy food; and moving forward it is recommended that policies be drafted to promote access to healthy food. The APA study had a list of policies relating to food access from jurisdictions around the country; some of these policies could be incorporated into the local comprehensive plans.

Encouraging Regional Sustainable Infrastructure Practices

The scenario planning effort that follows this exercise will provide a variety of economic growth possibilities and anticipated responses to each of them. This will be done by showing current and projected land uses, as well as infrastructure investments. So analyzing the current state of the regional comprehensive plans in encouraging regional sustainable infrastructure practices is important data to collect. Only two of the comprehensive plans analyzed had any policies or goals related to regional sustainable infrastructure practices, and neither of those plans had very detailed goals and policies in this regard; therefore the plans scored only a 10 on this indicator.

Outdated Demographic, Employment, and Housing Data

Many of the factual based indicators that were selected for this analysis required quantifiable data such as a demographic analysis of residents, unemployment rates, location of current job centers, and existing housing data. The scoring of the plans on these indicators was around average, but the data provided in most of the plans has not been updated since the comprehensive plan was originally published. Southern Nevada had a period of massive growth in the 1990s and early-to-mid 2000s, and a well documented economic downturn in the late 2000s which saw the population decline for the first time in almost 90s years. In a region with such extreme growth followed by the first population decline in decades, this type of data can become outdated quickly. Much of the outdated demographic, employment and housing data included in the regional comprehensive plans was from the late 1990s and early 2000s. Only the North Las Vegas Comprehensive Plan had updated the information, in 2009, provided within the document since the date of original publishing (2006). One of the plans provided a map showing where the job centers were located, a demographic analysis of residents, and information regarding unemployment rates. The jobs map and demographic data were from 1999 and the unemployment data was from 1990, making it all severely outdated. It is suggested that each entity impose a regulation that data such as this be updated at least every 5 years, if not more often.

Fact Based Indicators

While the goal based indicators scored high, the fact based indicators scored much lower. As stated above, the fact based indicators are used to assess factual basis issues, which in turn assist in providing adequate information upon which goals can be set. Fact based indicators scored 37.5 overall, 15% below the overall average of all indicators. This low score is partially due to the outdated data, detailed in the section above, included in many of the plans. Updating the demographic, employment, and housing data within the plans would help increase the overall fact

based indicator score, as would including goals and policies in the two lowest scoring indicators—access to fresh food and regional sustainable infrastructure practices.

CONCLUSION

As detailed above, there is a wide variety in the scoring of the indicators. Some indicators are included in each of the regional comprehensive plans and some of the indicators were completely absent from the plans. This means that there is an opportunity to improve the promotion of the Livability Principles through revision of each of the comprehensive plans analyzed and through the Regional Plan for Sustainable Development.

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