

**Step D: Future Land Use Map**

The previous sections have described several different tools that are available to manage El Paso’s outward growth:

- El Paso regulates the subdivision of land in the ETJ, up to five miles beyond the City limits.
- The Comprehensive Plan’s Major Thoroughfare Plan includes a network of future roads throughout the ETJ.
- El Paso’s authority to annex, or decline to annex, can strongly influence growth patterns.
- EPWU-PSB has been granted a certificate of convenience and necessity to provide utilities everywhere within the City and considerably beyond in several directions.
- EPWU-PSB can provide, or decline to provide, water and sewer service outside the City limits.
- The City now charges impact fees for water and sewer service; the rate structure can be a growth management tool and might be able to recover the cost of water rights.
- The City could charge transportation impact fees to generate revenue and influence growth patterns.

Each of these tools is complex in its own right, being subject to State law, court decisions, technical analyses, and prior vesting decisions. It is not surprising that the results of these efforts sometimes conflict with one another. Now that El Paso has experience with each tool, the tools need to be refined in a coordinated fashion to more efficiently carry out the City’s planning and fiscal policies.

A “Future Land Use Map” is an ideal means by which to precisely formulate City growth policy and definitively map the results so later implementing actions, including refinements to the tools listed above, can be guided by a consolidated vision of the City Council.

A Future Land Use Map is an integral part of this comprehensive plan. This map is a replacement for the “General Land Use Map” in El Paso’s 1999 comprehensive plan. The 1999 map provided very little guidance as to outward expansion because it used detailed zoning-like designations even on already-developed land. Most of the undeveloped land within the City also received these designations (except for the Franklin Mountains, some parts of Fort Bliss, and City-owned lands in the far northwest). Some land in the ETJ also received designations, but the comprehensive plan did not indicate how those areas were selected. The 1999 map did not address the timing of potential development beyond indicating that some amount of development was expected by the year 2025.

To provide a clear guide to the form, direction, and timing of future growth, the new Future Land Use Map contains two separate but related components. The first is a base map that defines distinct sectors for all of El Paso County. There are two types of sectors: seven “O” or open-space sectors where growth is delayed or not anticipated, and nine “G” or growth sectors, where urban development is encouraged immediately.

The boundary of the “O-6” sector is a defining factor in managing outward growth because O-6 means “Potential Annexation” – developable land not in a growth sector today but which may be needed for outward expansion at some point. City decisions about annexations, ETJ regulations, impact fees, and utility expansions should be based on the boundaries between the nine growth sectors, the O-6 Potential Annexation sector, and the other open-space sectors.

The seven open-space sectors can be described as follows:

- **O-1 – Preserve:** Publicly owned land such as the Franklin Mountains and Hueco Tanks State Parks, all City and County parks and public drainage areas, and cemeteries (even if private). These lands will not be developed due to their ownership and current use.
- **O-2 – Natural:** Foothills, bosques, wetlands, critical arroyos, and other natural features owned by private or public entities but currently without protected status. Examples include the Castner Range and private tracts in and around the Franklin Mountains and Hueco Tanks State Parks. City regulations and policy decisions should help keep these lands in their natural state for drainage, natural habitat, and scenic protection. Public acquisition should be considered especially when key drainage features can be protected.
- **O-3 – Agriculture:** Active farmland in the Rio Grande Valley. Changes to City codes and policies may limit plat and utility approvals beyond the City limits in a coordinated effort to protect significant portions of farmland.
- **O-4 – Military Reserve:** Fort Bliss training areas north and east of the main cantonment, Biggs Army Air Field and East Fort Bliss. To the extent possible, these lands should not be developed because they are needed for military training.
- **O-5 – Remote:** Remote land in the desert and mountains. Except where vested rights are in place, City regulations and policy decisions should not encourage urban development during this planning period, which extends until 2030. It is not known at this time whether O-5 land will be needed for development further in the future.

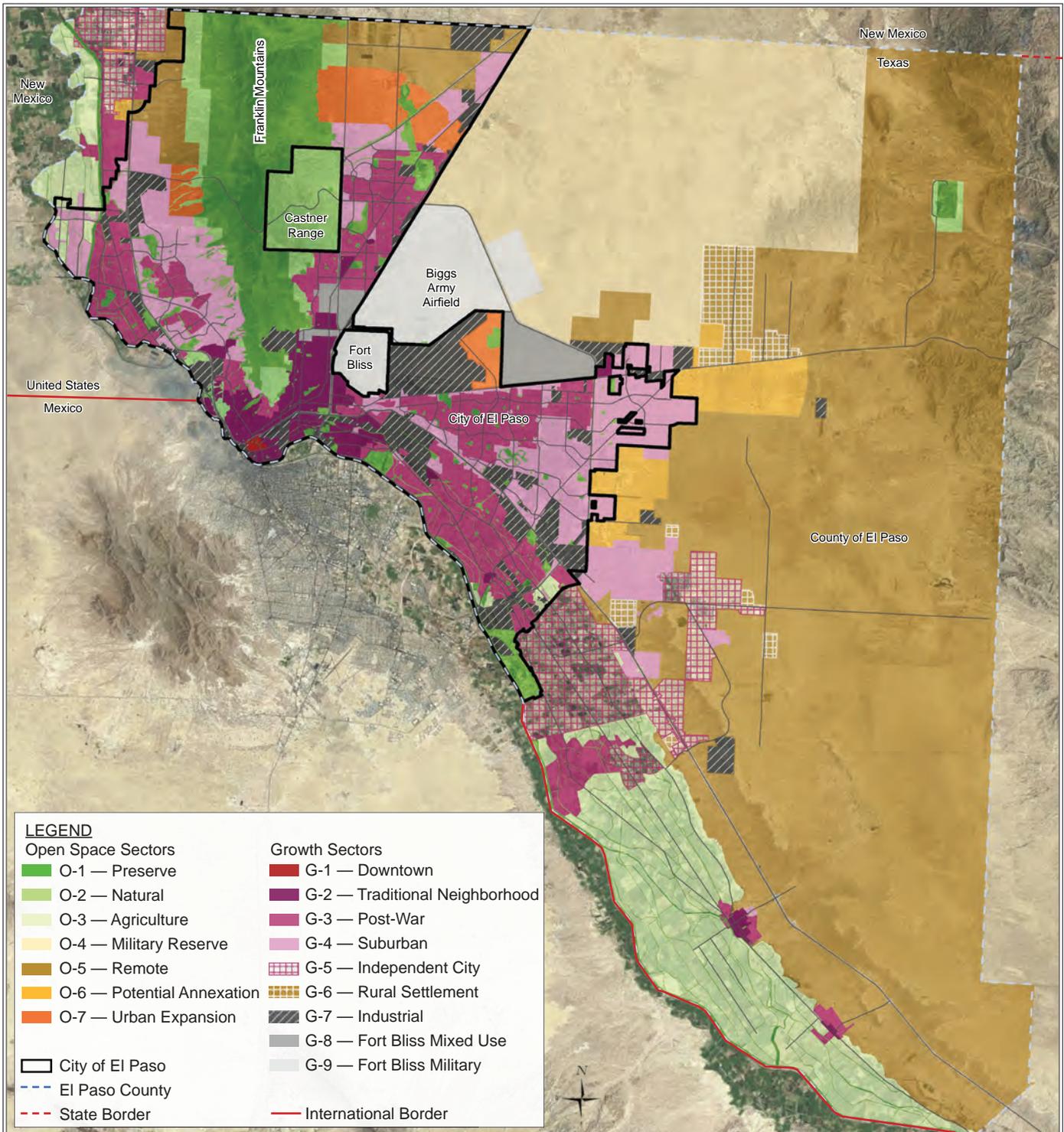
- **O-6 – Potential Annexation:** Potentially developable land that is not needed for urban expansion at this time but is available if expansion is needed. Land can be re-designated from O-6 to a growth sector through a formal amendment to the Future Land Use Map.
- **O-7 – Urban Expansion:** Developable land currently owned by the City of El Paso where master planning is underway for potential urban expansion before 2030 using Smart Growth principles.

The seven open-space sectors are applied to land that is not currently part of the El Paso's urban economy. In contrast, the nine growth sectors are applied to urbanized or urbanizing land. No attempt has been made in *Plan El Paso* to determine if or how much additional land may be needed for outward expansion after 2030.

The nine growth sectors can be described as follows:

- **G-1 – Downtown:** This sector includes the historic core of Downtown plus the larger Downtown area from Paisano Drive north to I-10, including the arts and convention center, Union Depot, City Hall, County Courthouse, United States courthouse, and Mexican Consulate. El Paso's "Invest First in Downtown" policies apply in this sector.
- **G-2 – Traditional Neighborhood:** This sector includes the remainder of central El Paso as it existed through World War II. Blocks are small and usually have rear alleys; buildings directly faced streets; schools, parks, and small shops are integrated with residential areas. This sector is well-suited for use of the SmartCode as a replacement for current zoning when planned in conjunction with specific neighborhood plans or identified in this Comprehensive Plan.
- **G-3 – Post-War:** This sector applies to transitional neighborhoods typically developed from the 1950s through the 1980s. Streets were laid out with curvilinear patterns without alleys and shopping centers are located at major intersections behind large parking lots. This sector is generally stable but would benefit from strategic suburban retrofits to supplement the limited housing stock and add missing civic and commercial uses.
- **G-4 – Suburban:** This sector applies to modern single-use residential subdivisions and office parks, large schools and parks, and suburban shopping centers. This sector is generally stable but would benefit from strategic suburban retrofits to supplement the limited housing stock and add missing civic and commercial uses.
- **G-5 – Independent City:** This sector identifies the incorporated cities of Anthony, Clint, Horizon, Socorro, and Vinton. El Paso plans and regulations have no effect in these cities.
- **G-6 – Rural Settlement:** This sector applies to existing scattered subdivisions in non-urban locations. Some rural settlements are becoming suburbanized but most are still rural in character with a large percentage of vacant lots and very limited public services. Additional rural settlements are neither needed nor desirable due to excessively long commutes, difficulty in providing services to scattered homes, and an enormous surplus of existing vacant lots.
- **G-7 – Industrial:** This sector applies to industrial parks, large free-standing industrial uses, refineries, non-military airfields, trucking terminals, and mines, all on large tracts in areas dominated by vehicles. This sector is essential to El Paso's economy; however, when an industrial use becomes obsolete, there can be potential for mixed-use redevelopment of the site. This sector also includes the existing rail yards which could be redeveloped as mixed-use communities if the rail yards were moved out of town.
- **G-8 – Fort Bliss Mixed Use:** This sector identifies non-military portions of Fort Bliss that are or can become integral parts of El Paso. Non-military development should be eligible for annexation into the City of El Paso provided it meets the Smart Location Principles and the Neighborhood Patterns contained in policies of the Urban Design Element of *Plan El Paso*.
- **G-9 – Fort Bliss Military:** This sector identifies the main cantonment of Fort Bliss, Biggs Army Air Field, and East Fort Bliss, all located outside the El Paso City limits. Despite El Paso's lack of jurisdiction, healthy development at Fort Bliss is as important to El Paso as any other economic sector.

In addition to these sixteen base sectors, the Future Land Use Map contains a series of overlays that define key generators of movement and economic activity, plus prime locations for development and redevelopment. These overlays are described on the following pages.



Future Land Use Map - Base Sectors

Note: Under Texas law, a comprehensive plan shall not constitute zoning regulations or establish zoning district boundaries.

In addition to the base open-space and growth sectors, the Future Land Use Map contains a series of overlay designations. These overlays define key generators of movement and economic activity, prime locations for new compact neighborhoods, and protection zones.

Nine types of overlay designations are shown on the Future Land Use Map. The first five are specific geographic points of movement and activity:

- **Border Crossings:** The four international ports of entry between El Paso and Juárez are key regional links for the movement of people and freight, including raw materials and finished products traveling to and from maquiladoras in northern Mexico.
- **Colleges:** Campuses of the University of Texas at El Paso and El Paso Community College are major activity centers for students, teachers, and staff.
- **Hospitals:** Hospitals are major activity centers for patients, doctors, and staff.
- **Regional Transportation Hubs:** The El Paso International Airport and the Union Depot are major regional transportation hubs, supplemented by numerous bus terminals between the border and Downtown El Paso.
- **Local Transfer Centers:** The eight transfer centers operated by Sun Metro are key links in daily movement through El Paso.

The sixth and seventh overlay designations are geographic areas where compact walkable neighborhoods are a key goal of City policy:

- **Rapid Transit System (RTS) Stops:** Four bus rapid transit lines are planned by Sun Metro. Each will terminate at a designated transfer center while also offering additional stops at approximately one-mile spacing. Each stop is designated on this map by a circle with an indeterminate outer edge. This circle indicates a presumed area of influence around each RTS stop where passengers will be arriving and departing as pedestrians. Each of these stops has the potential to generate or reinforce compact walkable redevelopment due to increased pedestrian activity. Each stop is also a highly desirable location for future residents and businesses who will be able to depend on regularly scheduled, high-quality public transportation.
- **Future Compact Neighborhoods:** A larger series of future compact neighborhoods are also designated on this map, including one surrounding each local transfer center. El Paso has only a limited number of areas where compact walkable development or redevelopment can take place with convenient access to existing services and facilities.

Each of these areas provides an excellent opportunity for El Paso to grow without the constant outward expansion of past decades.

Illustrative plans in other elements of *Plan El Paso* visualize the future physical context of each future compact neighborhood and many RTS stops and transfer centers

The eighth and ninth overlay designations are protection zones that identify land that deserves special attention in the planning and development process:

- **Arroyos:** Many arroyos have been destroyed or replaced by engineered channels. Other arroyos are already being protected by public ownership or private covenants. Arroyos as identified in this overlay have neither been destroyed nor protected and would likely be endangered by careless development practices in the future. The edges of the arroyos shown on this map are generalized.
- **Military Buffer:** In certain locations, new neighborhoods and other noise-sensitive land uses would be subject to potentially severe noise impacts from training activities at Fort Bliss. These uses should not be introduced into the designated military buffer zones.

### Compact Urban Areas

The designation of base sectors and overlays allows the City of El Paso to group together a series of designations where special incentives, policies, or regulations should apply.

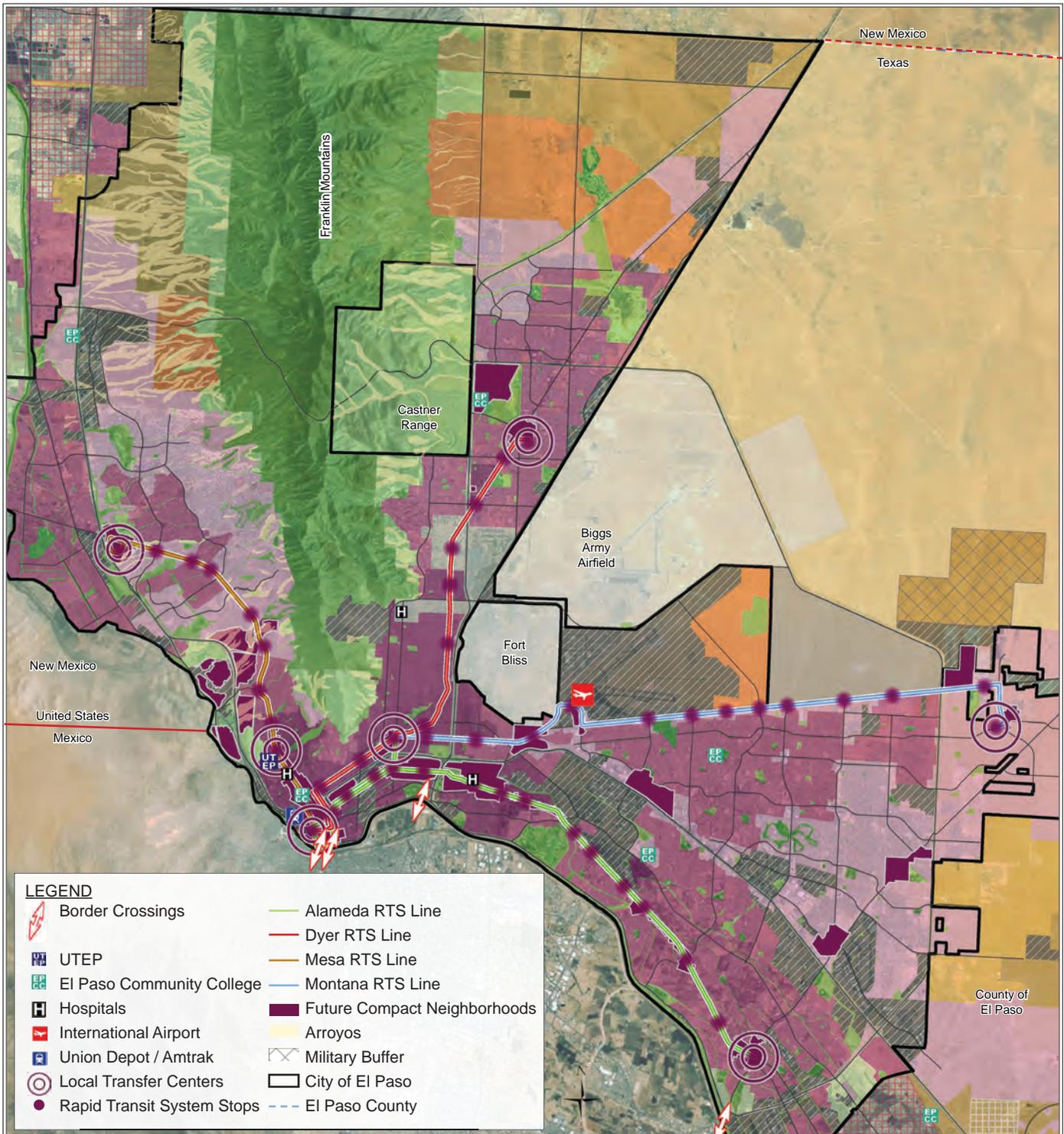
The Urban Design and Transportation Elements of *Plan El Paso* use this technique by defining as “Compact Urban” all land in the following designations:

- Base Sectors: G-1, G-2, and O-7.
- Overlays: Local Transfer Centers, RTS Stops, and Future Compact Neighborhoods.

In Compact Urban areas, the Transportation Element indicates that more walkable thoroughfares are anticipated, as discussed in “Compact Urban, Drivable Suburban” on page 4.36.

The Urban Design Element indicates that the preferred locations for higher density development are sites in Compact Urban areas (see policies under Goals 2.1 through 2.5), though additional locations are not precluded.

Those policies are carefully worded to make it clear that a different set of standards will apply to thoroughfare design, new development, and redevelopment outside of Compact Urban areas, such as in the remainder of the G-3 “Post-War” and the G-4 “Suburban” sectors, while not precluding this approach elsewhere.



Future Land Use Map - Overlays

Note: Under Texas law, a comprehensive plan shall not constitute zoning regulations or establish zoning district boundaries.