



# Route 66 Business Corridor

DOWNTOWN BUSINESS AND CULTURAL DISTRICT SPECIFIC PLAN



July 2016



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## Table of Contents

1.	Introduction . . . . .	1
2.	Existing Conditions, Opportunities and Constraints . . . . .	3
3.	Specific Plan Framework . . . . .	21
4.	Downtown Pedestrian Improvements . . . . .	25
5.	Design Guidelines . . . . .	37
6.	Branding, Wayfinding and Interpretation. . . . .	47
7.	Circulation and Public Infrastructure . . . . .	59
8.	Implementation Action Plan . . . . .	61



# Chapter 1. Introduction

## PURPOSE

In 2015, the City of Barstow initiated development of the Route 66 Business Corridor / Downtown Business and Cultural District Specific Plan (the Specific Plan), an effort to reenergize historic Route 66 through Barstow, also known as Main Street, between State Route 58 (SR-58) and Interstate 40 (I-40). The Specific Plan identifies wayfinding and branding, land use and urban design guidelines for the corridor, with specific focus on increasing tourism in the original Downtown area between Otis and 7th Avenues. The Specific Plan aims to:

- Improve the overall visitor experience
- Identify opportunities for events and activities for tourists and residents
- Create a compelling identity that draws on the history of Route 66
- Develop interactive materials that highlight the historic gems along the corridor
- Support established businesses and increase economic development
- Identify tools and techniques needed to keep Downtown Barstow's historic authenticity while enhancing visitor experience
- Discover potential funding sources to achieve the City's goals

## Project Vision

The community-based vision for the Route 66 Corridor was developed through businesses, community organizations and input from residents. It provides the foundation for the Specific Plan implementing actions. The Specific Plan's vision supports directed policies and strategies to guide development, particularly in the Downtown area; improve wayfinding along the corridor; and identify branding and interpretive elements that will boost tourism interest and provide economic opportunities for residents and businesses.

## BACKGROUND

In 2014, the Barstow City Council passed a resolution designating a portion of Route 66 from I-40 to SR-58 as the "Route 66 Business Corridor" and the portion of Route 66 from Otis Avenue to 7th Avenue as the "Downtown Business and Cultural District." The City's designations offer the combined benefits of demonstrating its interest and commitment to maintaining and enhancing the corridor, raising awareness of the Route 66 and Downtown, and improving the prospects of securing grants and other funding sources to support the business enhancement, historic preservation, infrastructure improvements and cultural enrichment efforts in these areas.

The City's General Plan includes several policy statements that reflect the need to focus on Route 66 as a key tourist corridor. Additionally, the *California Historic Route 66 – Needles to Barstow Corridor Management Plan* (BLM, 2015) also identified several issues related to Route 66 in Barstow.

The outcomes and policy guidance of both the General Plan and the *California Historic Route 66 – Needles to Barstow Corridor Management Plan* have been incorporated into this document.

### *Specific Plan Vision*

**Route 66 in Barstow celebrates the romance of Americana by providing opportunities to explore, stop and experience the area's rich natural, cultural and travel history, supporting existing and future businesses and interest in Downtown Barstow and the larger business corridor.**

## PLANNING AREA

Route 66 traverses the length of Barstow, a major transportation hub within San Bernardino County and the Mojave Desert. With several major highways and railroad lines converging in the city, its strategic location afforded Barstow a rich and long history shaped by settlers, travelers, railroad workers, miners and businesspersons. Route 66 in Barstow is also known as Main Street and is home to the city's original Downtown and center of commerce. The planning area, illustrated in Figure 1.1, encompasses parcels abutting Route 66 and areas up to approximately one block on both sides of the corridor, spanning from SR-58 to I-40.

### Subareas

The planning area has four distinct subareas along the corridor from SR-58 to I-40. The subarea boundaries were developed by assessing the existing development pattern, topography and architectural styles along the corridor. Chapter 2 provides additional description of each subarea.

### Terms used in this Plan

**Downtown:** Portion of Route 66 and adjacent land uses between Otis Avenue and 7th Avenue (Subarea 2) (also known as Downtown Business and Cultural District)

**Planning Area:** Portion of Route 66 and adjacent land uses between SR-58 and I-40

**Route 66 Historic District/Corridor:** Portion of Historic Route 66 within the City of Barstow. "Route 66," as used in this document, refers to the State-designated "Historic Route 66"

## APPLICABILITY

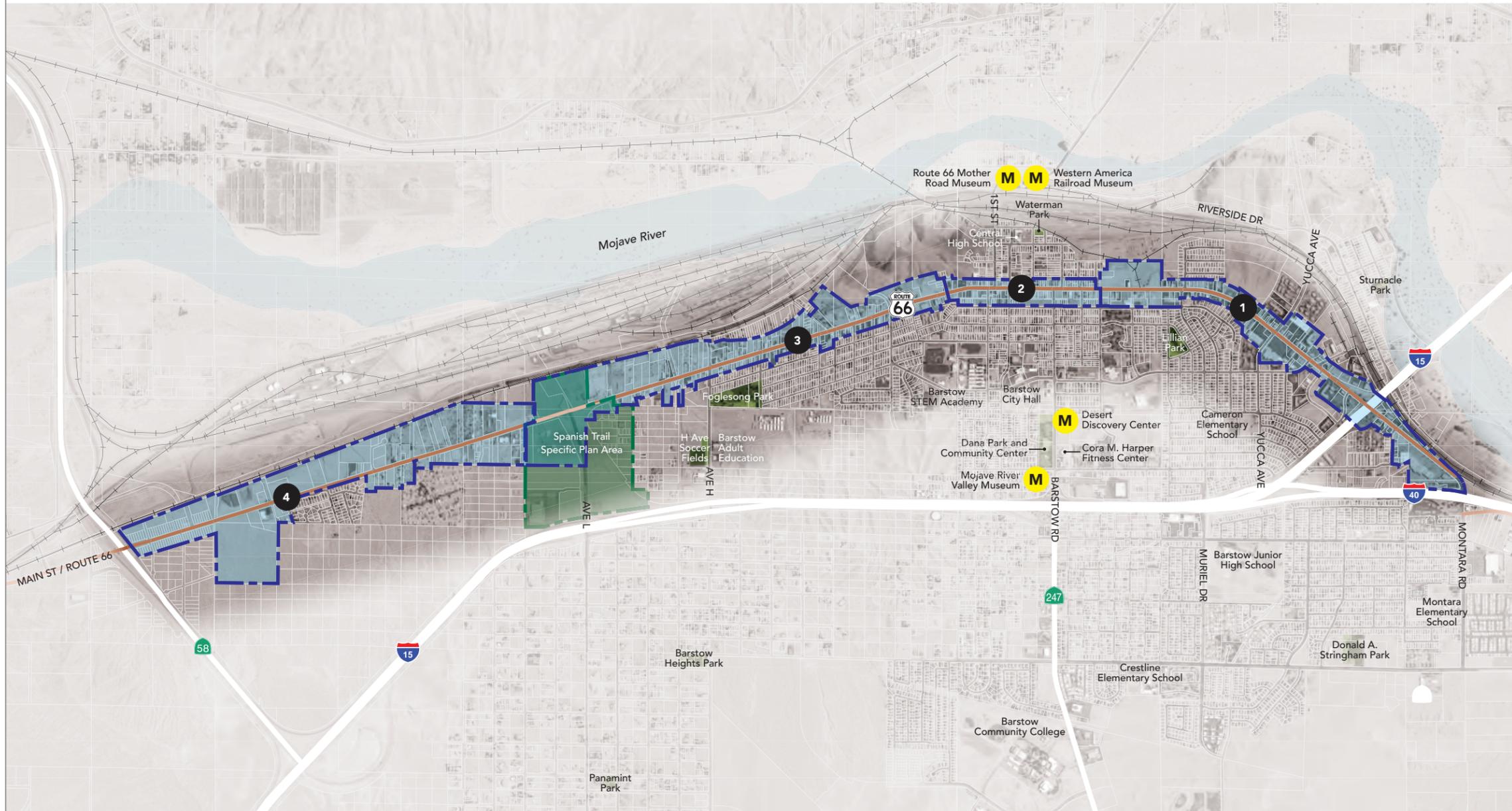
California Government Code 65450 establishes the authority for a Specific Plan to serve as the zoning for the properties within the Specific Plan area. Development plans, site plans and use permits must be consistent with the Specific Plan for the area.

The City crafted this Specific Plan to be consistent with the land use policy directives and build-out assumptions in the General Plan, which were addressed in the 2015-2020 General Plan Master Environmental Impact Report (EIR). A key objective of the General Plan Master EIR is to reduce the need for future detailed planning and environmental review procedures related to development within the planning area. The Specific Plan provides the necessary development and design guidelines for future development and reuse proposals. Development proposals could proceed without a requirement for new or additional environmental documentation.

California law requires that a specific plan be consistent with a local jurisdiction's general plan. To ensure consistency, City staff conducted a thorough analysis of goals and policies of the 2015 Barstow General Plan as part of the planning process for this plan. Goals, policies and strategies related to this plan are incorporated into the implementation measures. No General Plan amendments are needed to implement this Plan. This Plan implements Land Use POLICY 1.B, specifically STRATEGY 1.B.1: "Prepare Specific Plans...for the Route 66 Historic District along Route 66."

specific plan **ROUTE 66**  
**BARSTOW**  
downtown

Figure 1.1



**VICINITY**  
Subareas 1-4

**BASE MAP FEATURES**

- Barstow Downtown Specific Plan Project Area
- Subarea Boundary
- Subarea Number
- Spanish Trail Specific Plan Area
- Parks and Open Space
- Route 66
- Passenger and Freight Rail
- Highways
- Freeways
- Parcels
- Museum

SOURCES: GIS files provided by the City of Barstow, City of Barstow website: <http://www.barstowca.org/>, Google Maps

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# Chapter 2. Baseline (2016) Conditions, Opportunities and Constraints

## REGULATORY CONTEXT

Several plans and studies affect the planning area. The foundation for this Plan is based on these past efforts and is intended to complement and add additional detail to this regulatory context.

### Barstow General Plan

The *Barstow General Plan* provides development guidance to the City, as required by State law. The City updated its General Plan in 2015 for 2015-2020, incorporating a new land use designation called "Downtown Business and Cultural District." The General Plan Land Use Element sets forth policies, goals and strategies specific to Downtown and other parts of the planning area including:

- Preparing specific plan(s) for Route 66
- Improving the Downtown core as a viable and attractive destination for tourists by relocating museums (including military museums) and cultural attractions to Downtown, preventing incompatible uses from proliferating and pursuing funding support to develop and implement a marketing strategy for the Downtown Business and Cultural District and the Route 66 Business Corridor
- Other policies, including pursuing funding from state and federal agencies toward designation, enhancement and marketing of a Route 66 Historic District in Downtown Barstow

The General Plan Circulation Element notes that Barstow has an above average percentage of commuters who walk, bike or carpool to work despite having no official policy promoting alternatives to single-occupancy vehicle travel. The Circulation Element proposes bike and pedestrian pathways along the length of the planning area on Route 66. The street hierarchy assigned to most of Route 66

outside Downtown is "Arterial," which is designed to have a 100-foot right-of-way to accommodate speeds of 30 to 50 miles per hour. Within the Downtown area, Route 66 is designated "Secondary Arterial" with an 80-foot right-of-way that primarily serves to distribute local traffic.

In 2015, one of the major construction projects identified in the Circulation Element, the construction of the 1st Avenue Bridge, had its funding approved. The North First Avenue Overhead Bridge Project will replace an existing two-lane bridge and link Downtown Barstow to the Harvey House/Amtrak station and its museums.

In 2014, the City received an Active Transportation Program grant from the California Department of Transportation to create goals and policies for its pedestrian corridors, bicycle routes, safe routes to schools and other alternate transportation/non-motorized transportation pathways. The City adopted an Active Transportation Plan to implement facilities serving pedestrians and cyclists, such as the creation of designated pathways and bike lanes.

### Spanish Trail Specific Plan

The *Spanish Trail Specific Plan* applies to a planning area along Route 66 and Avenue L. It is a proposed mixed-use/retail project on 110 acres of land, including approximately 700,000 square feet of commercial development, a mid-luxury hotel and restaurant, medium-density housing for seniors and an interpretive pathway celebrating the history of the Old Spanish Trail. The Specific Plan envisions a mix of land uses centered on serving both the needs of travelers and local residents. Planned uses consist of large commercial stores, fueling stations, fast-food restaurants, lodging, health and wellness,

entertainment, residential development, a park-and-ride lot, markets and public storage. Along the Route 66 corridor, planned uses include large format retail, health and wellness, markets, storage and housing. The Spanish Trail Specific Plan incorporates design guidelines for the envisioned commercial area largely inspired by a contemporary interpretation of Spanish and Mediterranean architecture.

### California Historic Route 66 – Needles to Barstow Corridor Management Plan (CMP)

The federal Bureau of Land Management developed the *California Historic Route 66 – Needles to Barstow Corridor Management Plan* (May 2015) to set up the segment of Route 66 between the desert California cities of Needles and Barstow for nomination as a National Scenic Byway. The Corridor Management Plan (CMP) establishes several plans related to stewardship, enhancing the visitor experience, improving visitor safety and road experience, and marketing.

The CMP identifies policies and practices to preserve and restore historical properties along Route 66. Several of the CMP recommendations are also recommendations as part of this Plan, including:

- Branding and wayfinding to enhance the visitor experience
- Improving museum and visitor facilities in Barstow such as the Desert Discovery Center and the Mojave River Valley Museum
- Establishing a consistent visual and graphic identity throughout Route 66, including roadway design, improved roadway signage and accommodation of non-vehicle uses in the corridor

- Marketing the route through social media, targeting international travelers and catering to niche markets

The CMP identified several important historical and cultural sites, scenic features and resources on the route within Barstow, including the El Rancho Motel, the Harvey House, the BNSF railroad and the Old Spanish Trail. The CMP suggests nominating to the National Register of Historic Places multiple motels in Barstow along Route 66, including the El Rancho Motel, Sage Motel, Sands Motel, Cactus Motel, Desert Lodge Motel, Dunes Motel and Skyview Motel.

An important part of the CMP focuses on enhancing the visitor experience along Route 66 between Needles and Barstow. Recommendations specific to Barstow include:

- Establishing the Harvey House in Barstow, located just north of the planning area, as the Mojave Desert visitor information center for Route 66
- Establishing walking tours and driving itineraries highlighting Barstow murals, historical motels, motel neon signage and interpretive sites along the Old Spanish Trail/Route 66 where they share the roadbed with Barstow's Route 66
- Establishing interchange visitor orientation kiosks at the Barstow end of the corridor to introduce I-40 travelers to Route 66 sites

## Barstow Beautiful Design Guidelines

The *Barstow Beautiful Design Guidelines* provide general guidelines for the City of Barstow and private developers to reference for public and private projects. The design guidelines address signage, site amenities and landscape planting. Each section refers to locations in which the features should occur.

The suggested locations were derived mainly from a community mapping activity, during which feedback was compiled and consistent patterns revealed where improvements were needed. City staff members provided additional insight regarding appropriate locations for implementation, although the proposed locations were only suggestions, and a final determination of when and where the improvements will be installed would happen at another time.

## Zoning

The planning area is zoned primarily for commercial uses, with pockets of industrial and residential. Zoning is illustrated in Figure 2.1. Zoning districts by subarea includes:

- Subarea 1 is primarily zoned Commercial (C) uses that permit auto-oriented uses such as large-format retail, drive-through facilities and other auto-oriented commercial uses. Parking for these uses is the defining feature within this subarea.

- Subarea 2 is primarily zoned C, with a small portion of vacant land located on the eastern boundary of the subarea zoned for light industrial uses. The DU Zone permits a combination of commercial and residential uses. Within this zone, a parcel or parcels that have a combination of residential and non-residential uses are considered mixed use.
- Subarea 3 is mostly zoned C, with the exception of parcels that are zoned DU. As with other areas, the C zone allows for general commercial uses, but much of the area is vacant.
- Subarea 4 has the largest amount of industrial zoning of any subarea. Industrial (I) is located mainly west of Avenue L on the north side of Route 66; the I zone is typified by vehicle repair and salvage services. There are also pockets of DU zoning located along both the north and south sides of Route 66.

The Public Facility Zone (PF) Overlay is another zoning district applied near the planning area and was created to activate compatible uses around the various government buildings of Barstow while maintaining consistency with the General Plan. The PF zone is located one block south of Downtown Barstow. Government buildings include Barstow City Hall, the local San Bernardino County Sheriff's Station, the Superior Court, the California Highway Patrol, the Barstow Library and the U.S. Post Office.



View of Main Street, circa 1940



View of Main Street, circa 1950

## BASELINE (2016) LAND USES

Baseline land uses are illustrated in Figures 2.2 to 2.4. Commercial services and retail uses such as retail, fast food, fueling stations, offices and shopping centers comprise the largest existing land use acreage facing Route 66 at approximately 45 percent (197 acres). Approximately 62 acres are devoted to auto/truck commercial uses (automobile dismantling, scrap processing and junk, rag and metal salvage, plus recycling operations and auto repair service). Motels, including several that could be candidates for historic designation due to their association with Route 66, occupy about 26 acres along the Route 66 corridor. Light industrial acreage take up nine percent (40 acres).

The remaining 41 acres are mostly residential uses, parking lots and public facilities. Properties behind the Route 66 corridor but within the planning area have a mix of low-to-mid density residential neighborhoods, including mobile-home subdivisions west of Downtown, toward SR-58.

### Vacant Land and Buildings

Building vacancy rates for two of the major components of the city's commercial areas—retail and office—are above average for the High Desert market region (Victorville, Adelanto, Apple Valley, Hesperia and surrounding rural areas). The retail vacancy rate as of 2016 in Barstow was 11 percent, with 22 percent of these vacancies occurring on Route 66. Barstow's office vacancy rate was the highest in the High Desert region, at 10 percent. Most of the parcels located along Route 66 are zoned for diverse use, but vacant land and buildings comprise approximately 39 percent (174 acres) of the existing land use acreage of parcels facing Route 66.

Vacant parcels (see Figures 2-2 through 2-4) within the planning area have the following characteristics:

- **Large and contiguous.** A typical vacant parcel exceeds more than one acre and tends to be adjacent to other vacant parcels. Infill opportunities for smaller vacant parcels are available within the more developed portions of the planning area. Large vacant areas present more of a challenge for activating development since they require more extensive, comprehensive efforts such as the large-scale, multi-acre catalytic opportunities identified in the Spanish Trail Specific Plan or through implementation and consolidation of multiple small-scale projects.
- **Vacant land at gateways.** Large vacant parcels are located in major gateways, and their presence tends to discourage visitors from venturing further into town toward Downtown Barstow. Large tracts of vacant properties exist between L Street and SR-58. Additionally, parcels north of Route 66 are significantly less developed than the southern portion. The Spanish Trail Specific Plan would function as a catalytic development along this western portion by driving development of some of the largest vacant parcels within the planning area. The presence of light to heavy industrial uses within the gateway areas to Downtown discourage visitors from entering Downtown Barstow.

### Museums

Several museums in Barstow provide historical narratives related to the Route 66 and the city itself. The Route 66 Mother Road Museum is located in the Harvey House. The Western America Railroad Museum is located in the Harvey House. Another museum, the Desert Discovery Center, is located on 831 Barstow Road. The Mojave River Valley Museum is located on 270 E. Virginia Way. None of these museums are located within the corridor but instead are dispersed throughout the city. Linking these via a cultural corridor or relocating them to the Downtown area may attract tourists and local residents to Downtown.

### Parks and Community Facilities

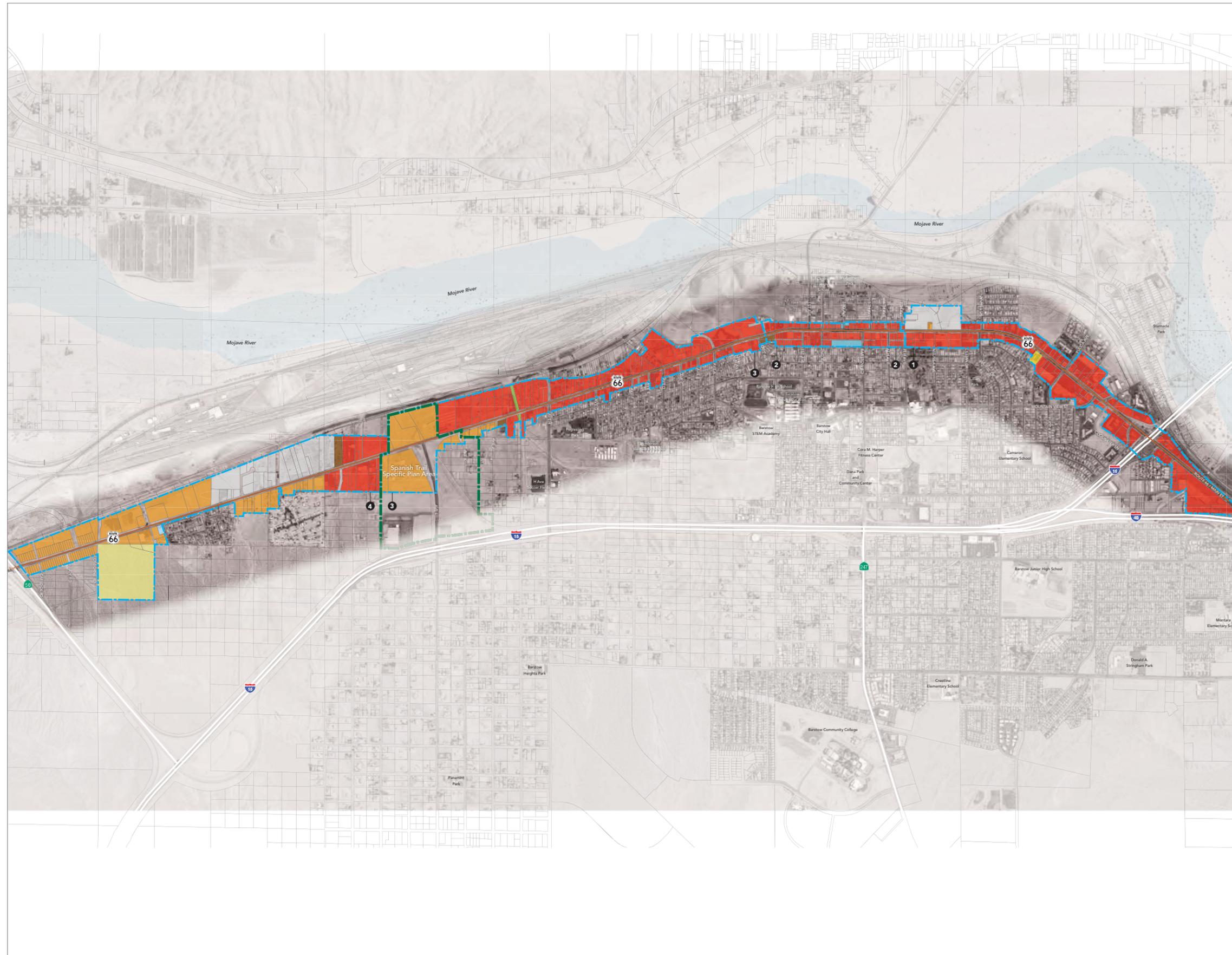
The City operates 13 parks and community facilities, but none are located within the planning area. The city has a small "pocket park" located at N. 3rd Ave and E Main Street. The west side has a small plaza and the east side has trees and area where a community Christmas tree lighting is held. Barstow lacks any other civic infrastructure Downtown, such as a City Hall, parks or recreations centers. The General Plan Recreational Element does not identify new locations for future parks and community facilities, but indicates that the current system adequately serves community needs. New parks will be created on both sides of L Street, south of Main Street due to impending acquisition.

### Schools

Barstow Unified School District offices are located on Avenue H south of Main Street (Route 66). Barstow High School is located about 4 blocks south of Main Street at First Avenue. Central High School is located two blocks north of Downtown Barstow, along 2nd Avenue and Hutchison Street. The Mojave River Academy, a K-12 charter school within the Oro Grande School District, is located on 2151 Route 66, close to L Street. Greater Hope Preparatory School is a private institution serving children up to five years of age. It is located on 1121 W. Route 66 between Avenue E and Avenue F.

specific plan  
**BARSTOW**  
 downtown

Figure 2.1



**ZONING**

**ZONING DESIGNATIONS**

- Low Density Residential
- Single Family Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- Diverse Use
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Public Facility
- Open Space

**BASE MAP FEATURES**

- Subarea Boundary
- Subarea Number
- Spanish Trail Specific Plan Area
- Route 66
- Parcels

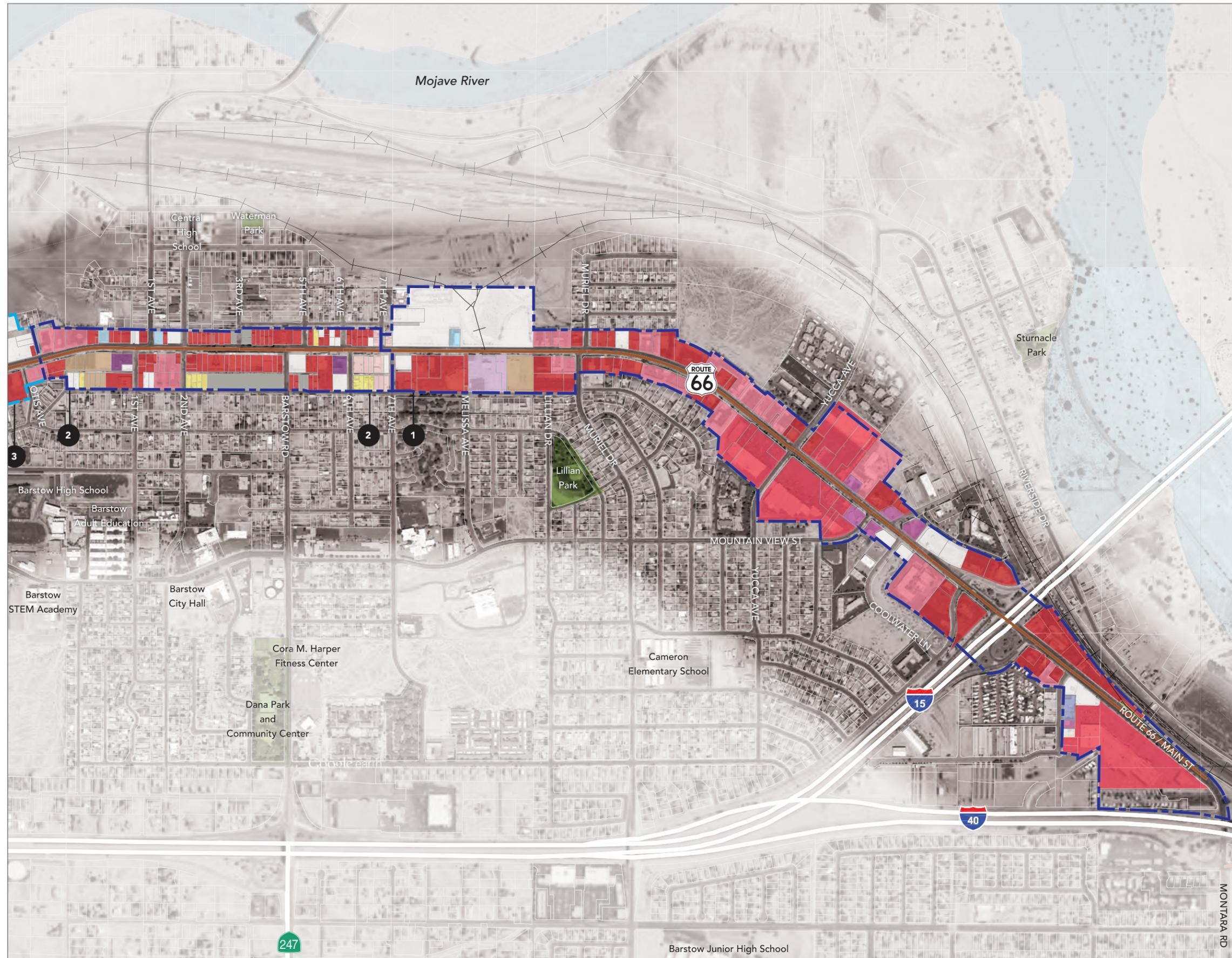
SOURCES: GIS files provided by the City of Barstow, City of Barstow website: <http://www.barstowca.org/>, Google Maps

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specific plan **ROUTE 66**  
**BARSTOW**  
 downtown

Figure 2.2



**BASELINE LAND USE**  
 Subareas 1 and 2

**BASELINE LAND USE**

- Single-Family
- Mobile Home Park
- Multi-Family
- General Commercial
- Shopping Center
- Motel
- General Office
- Auto/Truck Related Commercial
- Fueling Station
- Public Storage
- Light Industrial
- Parking Lot
- School
- Public Facility/Utility
- Religious Institutions
- Vacant

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