

**CITY OF EL PASO, TEXAS
AGENDA ITEM
DEPARTMENT HEAD'S SUMMARY FORM**

AGENDA DATE: July 7, 2021
PUBLIC HEARING DATE: July 20, 2021

CONTACT PERSON(S) NAME AND PHONE NUMBER: Philip F. Etiwe, (915) 212-1553
Karina Brasgalla, (915) 212-1604

DISTRICT(S) AFFECTED: All

STRATEGIC GOAL: #3 Promote the Visual Image of El Paso

SUBGOAL: 3.1 Provide business friendly permitting and inspection processes
3.2 Improve the visual impression of the community

SUBJECT:

An Ordinance amending the City of El Paso's Comprehensive Plan, "Plan El Paso".

BACKGROUND / DISCUSSION:

This is a proposed addendum to *Plan El Paso*, the City's Comprehensive Plan, intended to address the growing demand for trade-supportive uses in the Mission Valley region. This document would supplement existing guidance and policies related to the O-3, Agriculture designation of the Future Land Use Map. City Plan Commission recommended 8-0 to approve the proposed amendment on June 3, 2021. See attached memo for additional information.

PRIOR COUNCIL ACTION:

City Council initially adopted *Plan El Paso* on March 6, 2012.

AMOUNT AND SOURCE OF FUNDING:

N/A

HAVE ALL AFFECTED DEPARTMENTS BEEN NOTIFIED? YES NO

PRIMARY DEPARTMENT: Planning & Inspections, Planning Division

SECONDARY DEPARTMENT: N/A

*****REQUIRED AUTHORIZATION*****

DEPARTMENT HEAD:

Philip Etiwe

(If Department Head Summary Form is initiated by Purchasing, client department should sign also)



Planning and Inspections

MEMORANDUM

MAYOR

Oscar Leeser

TO: City Council

CITY COUNCIL

District 1

Peter Svarzbein

FROM: Karina Brasgalla, AICP
Lead Planner
Planning and Inspections Department

District 2

Alexsandra Anello

DATE: June 29, 2021

District 3

Cassandra Hernandez

RE: *Plan El Paso* Addendum: O-3, Agriculture Land Use Designation Recommendations, Goals & Policies

District 4

Joe Molinar

Mayor and Council,

District 5

Isabel Salcido

Attached for your consideration is a draft addendum to *Plan El Paso*, the City's Comprehensive Plan. This document would supplement existing guidance and policies related to the O-3, Agriculture designation of the Future Land Use Map. The addendum is specifically to address the growing demand for trade-supportive uses in the Mission Valley region.

District 6

Claudia L. Rodriguez

District 7

Henry Rivera

District 8

Cissy Lizarraga

A public meeting was held virtually on May 6, 2021 with residents of the Mission Valley Planning Area, including representatives from the Mission Valley Civic Association and Corridor 20 Civic Association. The proposed amendment was presented. Feedback was positive with many residents noting that the area is in transition and that industrial development would bring in much needed jobs. Primary concerns expressed were related to traffic and noise. Additional comments noted a desire to protect remaining farmland and existing residential developments.

CITY MANAGER

Tommy Gonzalez

Attachment: 2021 *Plan El Paso* Addendum

Philip F. Etiwe, Director

Planning and Inspections Department | 801 Texas Ave. | El Paso, TX 79901
Office: (915) 212-0104 | FAX: (915) 212-0084



ORDINANCE NO. _____

**AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE CITY OF EL PASO'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN,
"PLAN EL PASO".**

WHEREAS, Plan El Paso, as subsequently amended, was initially adopted by the El Paso City Council on March 6, 2012 pursuant to provisions of the Texas Local Government Code as the Comprehensive Plan for the City; and

WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Plan provides a basis for the City's regulations and policies that directs its physical and economic development; and

WHEREAS, the Future Land Use Map is one of the policies adopted by the El Paso City Council contained within the Comprehensive Plan which identifies desired land use patterns; and,

WHEREAS, the City's Future Land Use Map serves as a guide to the type and manner of future development for the City of El Paso; and,

WHEREAS, changing conditions in the City necessitate an amendment to the guidance provided for properties designated O-3, Agriculture on the City's Future Land Use Map; and,

WHEREAS, under the provisions of Chapter 213 of the Texas Local Government Code, the city may amend a comprehensive plan by ordinance following a hearing at which the public is given the opportunity to give testimony and present written evidence and after review by the municipality's planning commission; and,

WHEREAS, on June 3, 2021 a public hearing was held by the City of El Paso City Plan Commission, and the public was given the opportunity to give testimony and present written evidence; and,

WHEREAS, after review of the proposed amendment to the comprehensive plan the City Plan Commission recommended approval of the amendment and forwarded their recommendation to City Council; and,

WHEREAS, after publication in the City's official newspaper and after posting the agenda at City Hall more than seventy-two (72) hours before the public hearing, the El Paso City Council conducted a public hearing where the public was given the opportunity to give testimony and present written evidence;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF EL PASO:

1. That the addendum attached herein as **Exhibit "A"** be incorporated by reference into the City's Comprehensive Plan, Plan El Paso, for all purposes.

2. That Plan El Paso and its related documents, as herein modified, shall remain in full force and effect as to the long-range general policies for guiding growth and development in the City.

ADOPTED this ____ day of _____, 2021.

THE CITY OF EL PASO

ATTEST:

Oscar Leeser
Mayor

Laura D. Prine, City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM:



Russell Abeln
Assistant City Attorney

APPROVED AS TO CONTENT:



Philip Etiwe, Director
Planning & Inspections Department

EXHIBIT “A”

PLAN EL PASO ADDENDUM: O-3, AGRICULTURE LAND USE DESIGNATION RECOMMENDATIONS, GOALS & POLICIES

Plan El Paso Addendum: O-3, Agriculture Land Use Designation Recommendations, Goals & Policies

Adopted July 21, 2021

Overview

This addendum to Plan El Paso serves as an update to language in the Plan regarding the preferred future use of existing agricultural lands throughout the City. Plan El Paso was adopted in March of 2012. In the ensuing years, development trends involving farmland outside of the City, particularly in the area of the Ysleta Port of Entry (POE) in El Paso County and the City of Socorro, have resulted in new priorities for the City, requiring a more nuanced approach to farmland management near the ports of entry. The updated goals and policies in this addendum reflect these shifting priorities.

Background

Plan El Paso as adopted includes several goals and policies on preferred future conditions for existing agricultural lands throughout the City. These goals and policies generally call for the preservation of existing agricultural land and protection from conversion of such land for more intense development:

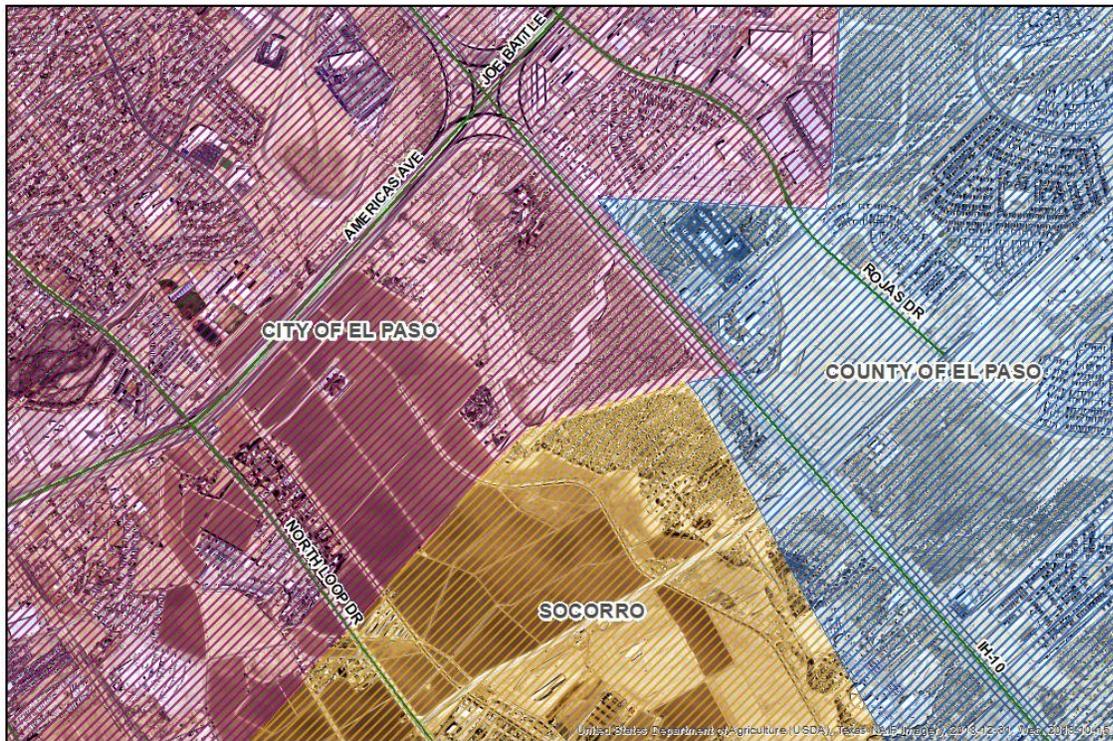
Policy 1.5.2: This plan discourages urban development of irrigated farmland along the Rio Grande, which is designated in the O-3 “Agriculture” open-space sector. The City and EPWU-PSB should ensure that their individual regulations are complementary and do not encourage unnecessary development of irrigated farmland. Consideration needs to be given to incentivizing preservation of agricultural lands, including conducting a full evaluation of best practices that could mitigate their full development.

- a. Examples to consider when dealing with irrigated farmland inside the City include:
 - i. Providing a density bonus for development of formerly active farmland when at least 50% of the lots allow for small-scale farming, the bonus being proportional to the area being reserved for farming.
 - ii. Discouraging the rezoning of agriculture land except where a percentage of small-scale farming has been reserved.

(Plan El Paso pg. 1.40)

In the years since the Plan's adoption, the City has made progress on implementing this policy:

- In 2017 City Council amended the Northwest Upper Valley Plan, which includes much of the remaining active farmland on the City's west side, to require development proposals to set aside a minimum 30% of the development parcel for agricultural, open space, or related uses.
- Staff in the Planning & Inspections Department has consistently referenced Plan El Paso guidance in making recommendations to City Plan Commission and City Council on requests to change development entitlements for O-3 designated properties, helping to preserve agricultural activities on some such properties.



Ysleta Port of Entry Area with Municipal Boundaries

Development Trends in the Mission Valley Area

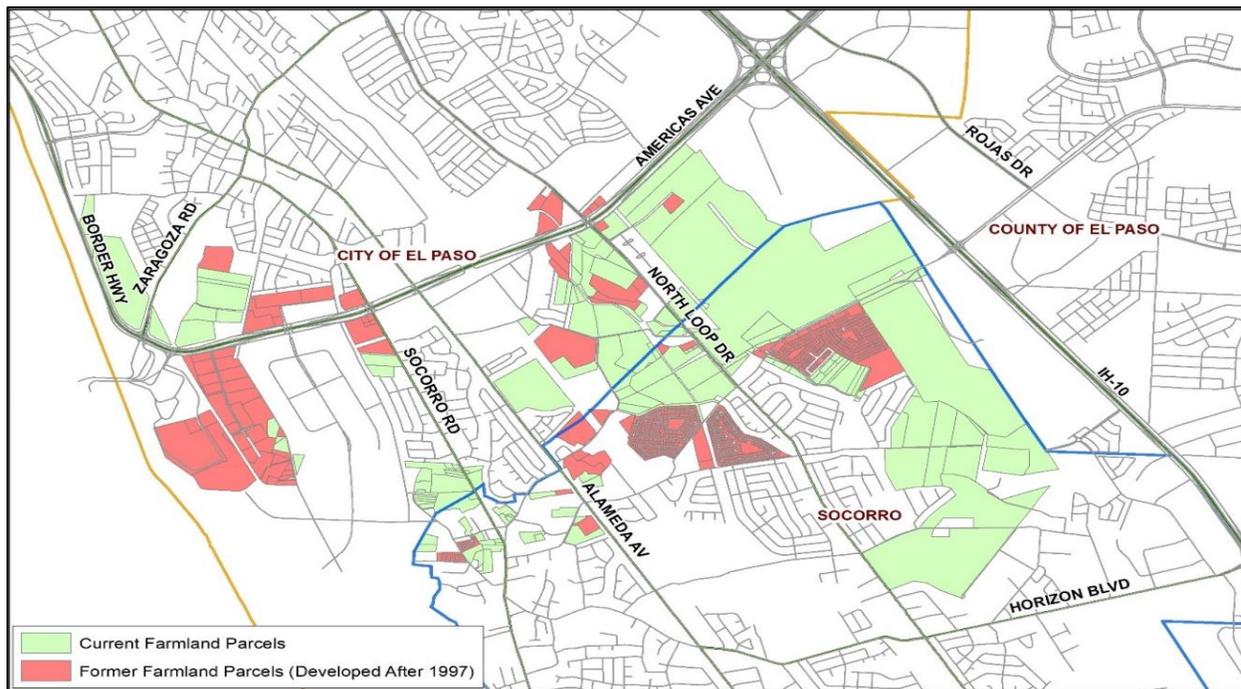
The Mission Valley area, including land in the extreme southeast of the City of El Paso and extending further southeast into El Paso County and through multiple other municipalities, has been a predominantly agricultural area for a century owing to its access to the Rio Grande. However, the amount of farmed land has been shrinking both in this area, and across El Paso County:

	1987	1992*	1997	2002	2007	2012	2017
Number of Farms	422	438	415	600	590	657	656
Irrigated Land Acres	40,662	41,983	41,447	37,197	37,788	24,914	31,629
% of Farms Under 5 acres	41.2	45.7	44.8	50	59.2	59.5	70.1
Value of Products Sold (in millions)	\$66.065	\$88.06	\$76.673	\$67.884	\$47.464	\$45.535	\$46.739
Total Farm Acres	236,667	N/A	243,684	113,948	168,556	209,393	142,675

Source: United States Department of Agriculture

The reduction in agricultural land use is a result of multiple factors:

- Population growth in the El Paso metropolitan area, particularly from the 1960s to 2000, led to the sales of farmland for conversion to single-family residential development and associated commercial services.
- National economic trends that disincentivize the continuation of multi-generational family owned and operated small farms, including the globalization of the consumer product supply chain and increased corporatization of all sectors of the national and international economy.
- The aging of individuals operating small farms, combined with the lack of personal security regarding retirement, incentivizes the sale of small farms to development interests.
- The North American Free Trade Agreement, enacted in 1994, transformed Ciudad Juarez into a manufacturing center of goods for international sale, leading to increased cross-border commerce in El Paso, particularly in the immediate vicinity of the Ysleta POE (also known as the Zaragoza Bridge).



Farmland Transition in the Mission Valley Area Between 1997 and 2019. Most of these conversions occurred prior to 2010.

Over the past 5 years, the Ysleta POE has experienced steady growth in the number of commercial crossings. This trend is expected to continue into the future, necessitating trade-supporting uses proximate to the bridge. The nearby Amazon fulfillment center located along Rojas Drive and I-10 is set to open in 2021. The center is expected to drive additional demand for shipping and logistics development in the immediate area. In anticipation of these changes, on August 20, 2020, the City of Socorro adopted an amendment to their Master Plan to allow industrial and heavy commercial uses. This was accompanied by a 283.86-acre rezoning to IC-MUD (Industrial/Commercial-Mixed Use District).

The Plan El Paso policies as adopted in 2012 no longer align with the City's conception of the best future use of farmland properties in this area. There are substantial economic benefits of farmland conversion in this area. Potential industrial and commercial uses can help diversify the local economy, increase commercial tax base, and lead to job creation.

Amended Design Guidance for O-3 – Agriculture

Inactive farmland may be converted to commercial and industrial uses when there is a clear economic benefit to the City. As the area is in transition, care should be taken to protect remaining farmland and existing residential development from negative externalities. New development should be encouraged to make provisions to maintain a landscaped buffer along any property line that abuts residential uses and along any irrigation canals, spurs and drains, to include native plants and trees. Industrial and commercial developments should implement thoughtful design that mitigates the noise, light, and traffic impacts on surrounding areas to the greatest extent possible.