City of Needles

Land Use & Transportation Element

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Funding Sources

The City received a $160,000 from the State of California in 2020 through the SB 2 Planning Grants Program and $203,987 from Caltrans in 2020 through the SB 1 Sustainable Communities Grants Program to update its existing Land Use and Transportation Elements to bring the City into compliance with state law and create a better community for residents, businesses, and visitors of Needles. The City supplemented this funding with local match dollars and staff resources.

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BACKGROUND

Purpose

The Land Use and Transportation Element provides the long-term planning direction on the orderly growth and management of Needles through a series of goals, policies, maps, and tables. This Element addresses the physical pattern of development, the location and interaction of various land uses, and the design and extent of transportation networks to foster a more enjoyable and prosperous life in Needles.

Planning Context

The broader planning context for Needles spans across three states in the southwest US: the vast stretches of undeveloped desert land in California; the Colorado River as the eastern border and primary resource for economic development, water, and energy; the Mojave Valley and nearby cities and towns in Arizona and Nevada; and, from a regulatory and economic perspective, the whole of Southern California.

The City's official planning context is referred to as its sphere of influence (SOI) and represents the land area where future urbanized development will most likely be serviced by the City of Needles. The SOI includes both area within the incorporated boundaries and adjacent unincorporated areas and represents over 350,000 acres (556 square miles) of land.

The vast majority of the unincorporated SOI is owned and controlled by the federal government and is unlikely to be urbanized through conventional development within the next 20 to 50 years. The incorporated SOI is large enough to provide opportunities for urban development for decades to come, with city boundaries encompassing nearly 20,000 acres (31 square miles), of which roughly 2,200 acres are currently used for urban activities and the balance is vacant.

Accordingly, the City's General Plan focuses its attention on the incorporated boundaries. From a planning perspective, the City considers the County of San Bernardino's Policy Plan to be the guiding planning document for the entirety of the unincorporated SOI.

Citywide Vision

Needles is a prosperous, safe, full-service city along the Colorado River amidst the beauty of the Mojave Desert. Housing options range from large and secluded rural homes to clusters of single family and multifamily homes in neighborhoods to higher density options along the water and in the downtown. With continual population growth, a greater number and variety of retail stores choose to locate in Needles and enhance local access to essential goods and services. The vibrant and walkable downtown is where the community comes to shop, dine, gather, and celebrate its history and culture. The City coordinates closely with the primary and secondary school districts to enhance educational and training opportunities for those growing up and continuing to learn in Needles. People of all ages and abilities can move around Needles safely and efficiently along citywide networks that support those traveling by car, bus, bike, or foot.

Economic opportunities include jobs for the local community, the ability to start a small business and expand a growing business, and the entrepreneurial spirit to support pioneering industries that can leverage Needles' unique location and access to plentiful water and low-cost energy. Daytime and overnight visitors enjoy incredible access to the River, the surrounding desert, and convenient shops and restaurants.

The City maintains and improves the quality of life for and safety of its residents, workers, and visitors through ongoing and strategic public improvements to essential infrastructure, public services, and community facilities. Underlying all City decisions is an approach to governance that embraces flexibility while adhering to tenets of fiscal sustainability and incorporating long-term thinking into short-term decision-making.

Note: The above vision statement is intended to be inspirational and set the direction for the General Plan's goals, policies, maps, and tables, as well as implementation programs, City Council Goals, and other long-term planning efforts.

LAND USE

Goals & Policies

GOAL LU-1 A COMPATIBLE AND BALANCED MIX OF LAND USES THAT ENABLE PEOPLE TO LIVE AND WORK IN NEEDLES

Policy LU-1.1 **Growth management.** Encourage new development to take place in areas that are already served by existing utilities, expanding and improving systems and capacity as appropriate and fiscally sustainable. Discourage development and extension of services outside of the City's incorporated boundaries.

Policy LU-1.2 **New housing construction.** Promote and facilitate residential development to provide housing opportunities for those working in Needles and to help attract and retain key commercial services within Needles. Expand opportunities for multifamily and mixed-use residential development into General Commercial areas.

Policy LU-1.3 **Compatibility with existing uses.** Require that new development be located, scaled, buffered, and designed to minimize negative impacts on existing conforming uses and adjacent neighborhoods. Require new residential development to be located, scaled, buffered, and designed so as to not hinder the viability and continuity of existing conforming nonresidential development.

Policy LU-1.4 **Compatibility with planned uses.** Require that new development and proposed general plan amendments are located, scaled, buffered, and designed to minimize negative impacts both on and from adjacent areas as designated on the Land Use Map.

Policy LU-1.5 **Land use buffers.** Require appropriate buffering between commercial, manufacturing, and other land use/zoning designations, considering noise, odors, vibration, emissions, and vehicular traffic.

Policy LU-1.6 **Cannabis dispensaries.** Limit retail cannabis dispensaries to General Commercial areas that are outside of the downtown core and adjacent to residential neighborhoods.

Policy LU-1.7 **Environmentally sensitive development.** Require new development to maximize its compatibility with the natural environment and avoid expansions or encroachments into environmentally sensitive areas.

Policy LU-1.8 **Public facilities.** Plan and coordinate to locate land and size facilities dedicated to open space, parks, education, and other public uses as appropriate to serve existing and future residents.

GOAL LU-2 A DIVERSIFIED LOCAL ECONOMY THAT CREATES JOBS AND A SUSTAINABLE REVENUE STREAM

Policy LU-2.1 **Business attraction and investment.** Expand economic investment and high quality job opportunities through reinvestment by existing businesses and new investment from new businesses, particularly those that will provide jobs for Needles residents.

Policy LU-2.2 **Workforce development.** Facilitate engagement between local businesses and the Workforce Development Board, the community college, and school district to support hiring, training, and retention of workers.

Policy LU-2.3 **Energy and water advantages.** Conduct marketing and economic development activities to attract new businesses that can leverage Needles' energy and water advantages.

Policy LU-2.4 **Rivers Edge.** Promote management of the Rivers Edge Golf Course to a fiscally sustainable format.

GOAL LU-3 EXPANDED AND IMPROVED PUBLIC ACCESS AND USE OF THE COLORADO RIVER

Policy LU-3.1 **River improvements.** Promote the public and seasonal use of the River through public improvements.

Policy LU-3.2 **New development.** Leverage public property to facilitate hotel and resort development and expand public access to and use of the Colorado River.

Policy LU-3.3 **Open space and recreation.** Seek to expand or create large public open space and recreation space along the Colorado River.

GOAL LU-4 A PEDESTRIAN AND EXPERIENCE-ORIENTED DOWNTOWN CORE THAT SERVES AS A LOCAL GATHERING PLACE AND REGIONAL DESTINATION

Policy LU-4.1 **Downtown core.** Promote the development of higher intensity residential, commercial, and mixed-use development in the downtown core, with building and site designs that facilitate a walkable, experience-oriented atmosphere.

Policy LU-4.2 **Downtown spaces and programming.** Establish, design, maintain, and program public spaces in the downtown core for public gathering, community activities, and tourism-generating events, particularly along or connecting to Broadway and Santa Fe Park.

Policy LU-4.3 **Adaptive reuse.** Encourage the adaptive reuse of existing structures in the downtown core, especially those that are of local historic and/or architectural value.

Implementation

Action LU-1 **New housing.** Coordinate with the Southern California Association of Nonprofit Housing, the California Department of Housing and Community Development, and other agencies and organizations to identify funding and programs that would incentivize the construction of new housing in Needles.

Action LU-2 **Grocery store.** Explore marketing, funding, and financing opportunities to facilitate the location of a full-service grocery store in Needles.

Action LU-3 **Business development and workforce training.** Coordinate with the Inland Empire Small business development center, Workforce Development Center, and community college district to expand opportunities for business startups and training programs in Needles, both for those that serve existing businesses and industries that can leverage Needles' location and resources.

Action LU-4 **Rivers Edge Golf Course.** Explore potential alternatives designs for the Rivers Edge Golf Course that could improve fiscally sustainability, such as different hole formats, a driving range, and/or hotel.

Action LU-5 **Programming downtown and Broadway.** Identify partners and opportunities to program the Downtown Core and a redesigned Broadway for community and seasonal events and festivals.

Action LU-6 **Historic survey.** Identify and pursue funding to conduct a historical survey of downtown Needles.

Action LU-7 **Adaptive reuse and rehabilitation.** Identify and pursue funding to facilitate adaptive reuse and rehabilitation of residential and commercial businesses, either to abate blighted conditions or facilitate reuse by a new occupant or business.

TRANSPORTATION

Goals & Policies

GOAL TR-1 A SAFE, EFFICIENT, AND FISCALLY SUSTAINABLE NETWORK OF STREETS THAT ARE ADEQUATE FOR RESIDENTS, BUSINESSES, VISITORS, AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Policy TR-1.1 **Comprehensive network.** Plan, design, operate, and maintain transportation networks that promote safe and convenient travel within and through Needles to and from key destinations as appropriate for all users: pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, freight, and motorists.

Policy TR-1.2 **Level of service.** Maintain level of service (LOS) "D" or better along and at intersections of Broadway between J Street and Needles Highway, Needles Highway between Broadway and North K Street, and North K Street between Needles Highway and the Arizona state line. Maintain LOS C at all other public roadways and intersections during peak hours.

Policy TR-1.3 **Fair share of improvements.** Require new development to pay a fair share of needed transportation improvements based on a project's impacts to the multimodal transportation network.

Policy TR-1.4 **VMT reduction.** Promote new development and transportation improvements that will reduce household and employment vehicle miles traveled (VMT) relative to existing conditions.

Policy TR-1.5 **Road maintenance.** Regularly update the pavement management plan and maintain roadways to ensure safety and functionality, as an investment strategy, and to improve the City's image and quality of life.

Policy TR-1.6 **Roadway configuration.** Maintain existing roadway rights-of-way dimensions and the number of existing vehicle travel lanes to preserve Needles' small town atmosphere and manage ongoing maintenance costs. Allow expansions in roadway configuration when necessary and fiscally sustainable in order to meet desired levels of service.

Policy TR-1.7 **Medians.** Avoid the installation of medians to enhance access and response times for emergency vehicles and to minimize the proportion of ROW dedicated to travel lanes. Allow medians for roadways if necessary to enhance safety, provided pedestrian and bicycle crossings are not expected.

Policy TR-1.8 **Downtown parking.** Create and support flexible parking requirements and centralized parking options for downtown businesses.

Policy TR-1.9 **Truck routes.** Plan and designate routes where trucks are prohibited to avoid overlaps or conflicts with safe routes to schools, residential neighborhoods, noise-sensitive uses, and roads that are not designed and paved to accommodate trucks.

Policy TR-1.10 **Scenic highways.** Comply with state requirements regarding scenic highways along Interstate 40, maintaining the rights-of-way to protect and enhance the City's scenic resources.

Policy TR-1.11 **Colorado River Bridge.** Pursue and support options to fund maintenance and improvements to the bridge across the Colorado River in a manner that is fiscally sustainable.

Policy TR-1.12 **Vehicular crossings at railroads.** Encourage the installation, modernization, and improvement of grade separations at rail crossings to facilitate more convenient access for cars, trucks, and emergency vehicles.

GOAL TR-2 A MULTIMODAL NETWORK THAT PROVIDES FOR THE SAFE AND CONVENIENT MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE OF ALL AGES AND ABILITIES

Policy TR-2.1 **Nonmotorized networks.** Establish and maintain citywide networks of nonmotorized travel ways that create pedestrian and bicycle linkages between neighborhoods, recreational amenities, schools, employment centers, and commercial areas.

Policy TR-2. 2 **Multimodal design.** The design of the overall transportation network, individual roads, and pedestrian/bicycle facilities should consider the comfort, convenience, and safety of pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists of all ages and abilities. Within public road rights-of-way, prioritize the design and use of the space outside of travel lanes and parking areas to serve pedestrians, bicycles, and transit service.

Policy TR-2.3 **Context-sensitive design.** Design vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle facilities and networks based on a combination of their land use and roadway context to promote safety and efficiency for all users.

Policy TR-2.4 **Pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly streets.** Create and maintain pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly public streets within residential neighborhoods and the downtown core; around schools, parks, and public facilities; and along neighborhood and general commercial centers. Promote dedicated facilities instead of shared facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Policy TR-2.5 **Pedestrian and bicycle crossings at railroads.** Coordinate with BNSF and pursue funding to modernize existing and establish new grade-separated railroad crossings to enhance connectivity for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Policy TR-2.6 **Electric bikes.** Support and encourage the use of electric bicycles to reduce resident and employee reliance on cars, resulting in greater mobility while lowering vehicle miles traveled and associated emissions.

Policy TR-2.7 **Transit service.** Maintain and enhance transit services to provide residents and workers with accessible and convenient service between residential neighborhoods, commercial centers, employment nodes, and medical facilities. Expand transit service as feasible to facilitate access to the Colorado River for residents and tourists.

Policy TR-2.8 **Safe routes to school and recreation.** Provide pathways and facilities that encourage and facilitate safe travel between schools, parks, recreation facilities, and residential neighborhoods on foot and by bike.

Policy TR-2.9 **Traffic calming.** Use traffic calming measures in residential areas and activity centers, where warranted and appropriate, to enhance the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists.

Policy TR-2.10 **Needles Airport.** Coordinate with the County to maintain Needles Airport for general aviation services.

Implementation

Action TR-1 **Broadway street design.** Redesign and maintain Broadway between A Street and J Street as a two-lane roadway with angled parking and pedestrian-friendly sidewalks.

Action TR-2 **Railroad crossings.** Coordinate with BNSF to improve the underpass at K Street for pedestrians, bicycles, and emergency vehicles. Coordinate with BNSF to evaluate and plan for an overpass or underpass suitable for vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle travel at Smith Road/Park Drive.

Action TR-3 **Parking in the Downtown Core.** Identify other publicly accessible lots in downtown that can be used for centralized business parking, event parking, and/or overflow parking. Explore opportunities to expand on-street parking through street redesigns and parking restrictions that reserve parking for retail businesses.

Action TR-4 **Safe routes improvements.** Coordinate with Needles Unified School District to install multi-modal improvements along the Multimodal Loop and other roadways/routes that are used by students to access primary and secondary schools by walking and biking.

Action TR-5 **Electric bike options.** Identify and explore grants and other funding programs for lower income residents to obtain an electric bicycle and expand their mobility options.

Action TR-6 **Off-highway motor vehicles.** Continue to implement the OHMV Trail Pilot Program to evaluate the options, costs, benefits, and drawbacks of linking City roadways with OHMV recreational-use areas, trails, and trailheads in federally controlled lands. Cross reference the General Plan exhibits depicting roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian networks with maps showing points where BLM routes of travel interface with the City limits and the roads within.

Action TR-7 **K Street Bridge.** Identify and pursue funding opportunities to maintain and repair the K Street Bridge, as well as opportunities to leverage financial and governmental partnerships with Caltrans and agencies in Arizona.

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: Land Use and Zoning Designations

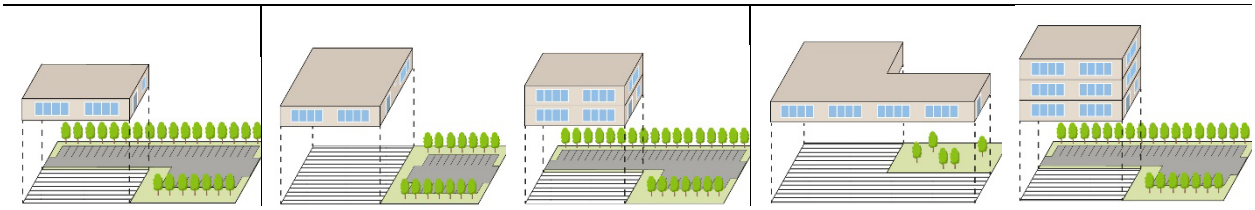
Land Use/Zoning Designation [1]	Density/Intensity [2]	Typical Uses [3]
RESIDENTIAL DESIGNATIONS		
Single Family (R-1)	1 to 7 units	Low-density, single-family residences
Two-Family (R-2)	8 to 17 units	Medium-density, two-family residences
Multifamily (R-3)	18 to 30 units	High-density multiple family units, such as apartments, condos, or townhouses
COMMERCIAL AND MIXED USED DESIGNATIONS		
Planned Unit Development (PD)	Up to 30 units Up to 2.0 FAR	Master planned developments that combine residential, commercial, and/or manufacturing activities in a manner that maximizes a property's potential and promote unique site designs and clustering to provide and preserve open space and ensure land use compatibility with adjacent uses
Commercial, Residential, Resort (CRR)	Up to 30 units Up to 2.0 FAR	A diversity of land use types along the Colorado River, catering to the resort atmosphere, which may include a full range of residential and commercial densities
Neighborhood Commercial (C-1)	Up to 0.50 FAR	Commercial retail and services that address the daily or frequent food and convenience needs of Needles residents, located next to or within close proximity to neighborhoods, with typical uses such as markets, drug stores, barbers and beauty shops, and laundry and cleaning services
General Commercial (C-2)	Up to 1.0 FAR Up to 30 units	A wide range of commercial uses that can serve Needles residents as well as visitors passing through or staying overnight. Typical examples include hotels/motels, restaurants, and clusters of retail stores. Residential uses such as duplexes and multifamily apartments are also permitted
General Commercial (C-2) ***Downtown Core***	Up to 2.0 FAR Up to 30 units	A mix of medium-density, high-density, and mixed-use residential and commercial uses, with building and site designs that are pedestrian oriented and reflect and celebrate the historic downtown along and around Broadway
Highway Commercial (C-3)	Up to 1.0 FAR	Commercial uses that benefit from exposure along the freeway and primarily attract customers traveling by motor vehicle. Typical examples include automobile sales and services, gas/charging stations, shopping centers, restaurants, and hotels/motels
INDUSTRIAL DESIGNATIONS		
Light Manufacturing (M-1)	Up to 0.75 FAR	Low-impact industrial uses where operations are totally enclosed in a structure, such as research and development facilities, technology centers, corporate offices, and clean industry. Limited outdoor uses may be permitted with a conditional use permit.
General Manufacturing (M-2)	Up to 0.75 FAR	Industrial uses where all or part of operations take place outside and activities that generate odor, noise, vibration, truck traffic, or are otherwise incompatible with neighborhoods and other sensitive areas

Exhibit 1: Land Use and Zoning Designations

Land Use/Zoning Designation [1]	Density/Intensity [2]	Typical Uses [3]
PUBLIC AND OPEN SPACE DESIGNATIONS		
Public Facilities (P)	n/a	Public facilities such as schools, parks, civic centers, medical centers, and government operations
Open Space (OS)	n/a	Land that should remain undeveloped and maintained as open space to preserve the ecological and aesthetic desert setting

1. *The City uses a single set of land use designations and one map to designate general plan and zoning to promote clarity and ensure consistency on a parcel level.*
2. *All measures of density and intensity are based on a net acre. FAR = floor area ratio (see graphic below).*
3. *A listing of typical uses is provided to communicate the general intent of the land use designation. A more detailed listing of permitted uses can be found in the City Zoning Code. Clarification on uses not listed are subject to the provisions of the City Zoning Code and direction by the Director of Development Services.*

FAR = 0.25 **FAR = 0.50** **FAR = 0.75**



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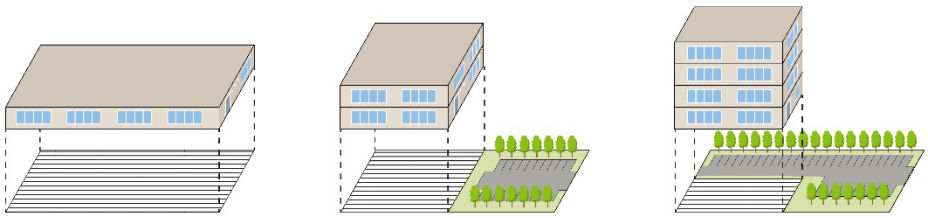

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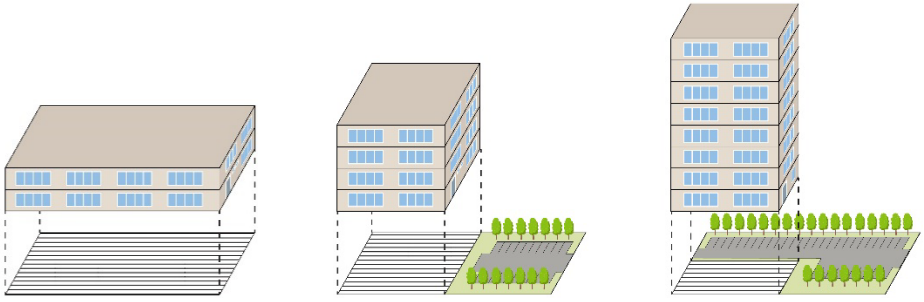
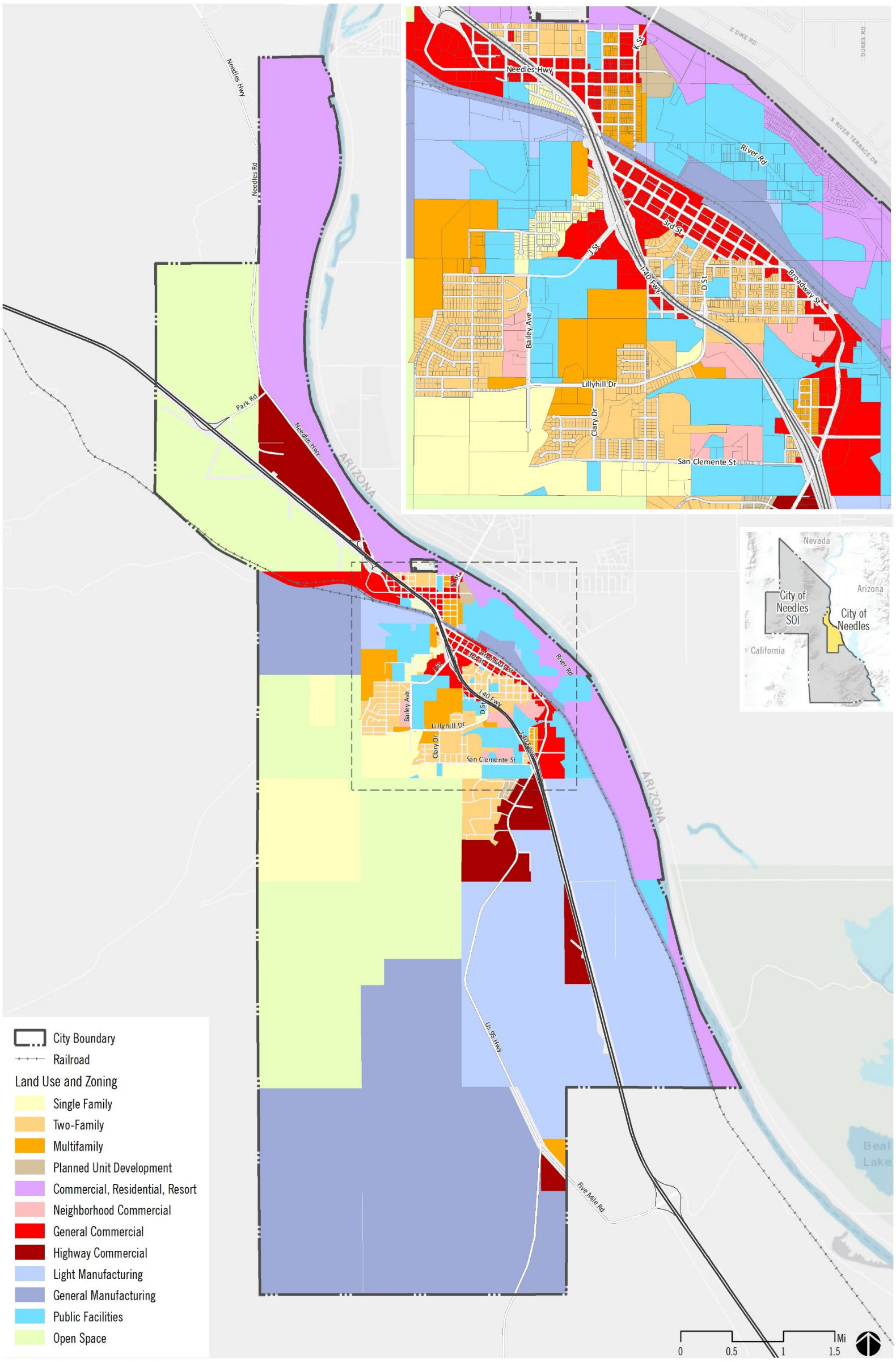




Date: 2/28/2023 Source: City of Needles 2023

Exhibit 2
Land Use and Zoning

Note: For land use planning and regulation, the City considers the County of San Bernardino's Policy Plan to be the guiding document for the entirety of the unincorporated SOI.

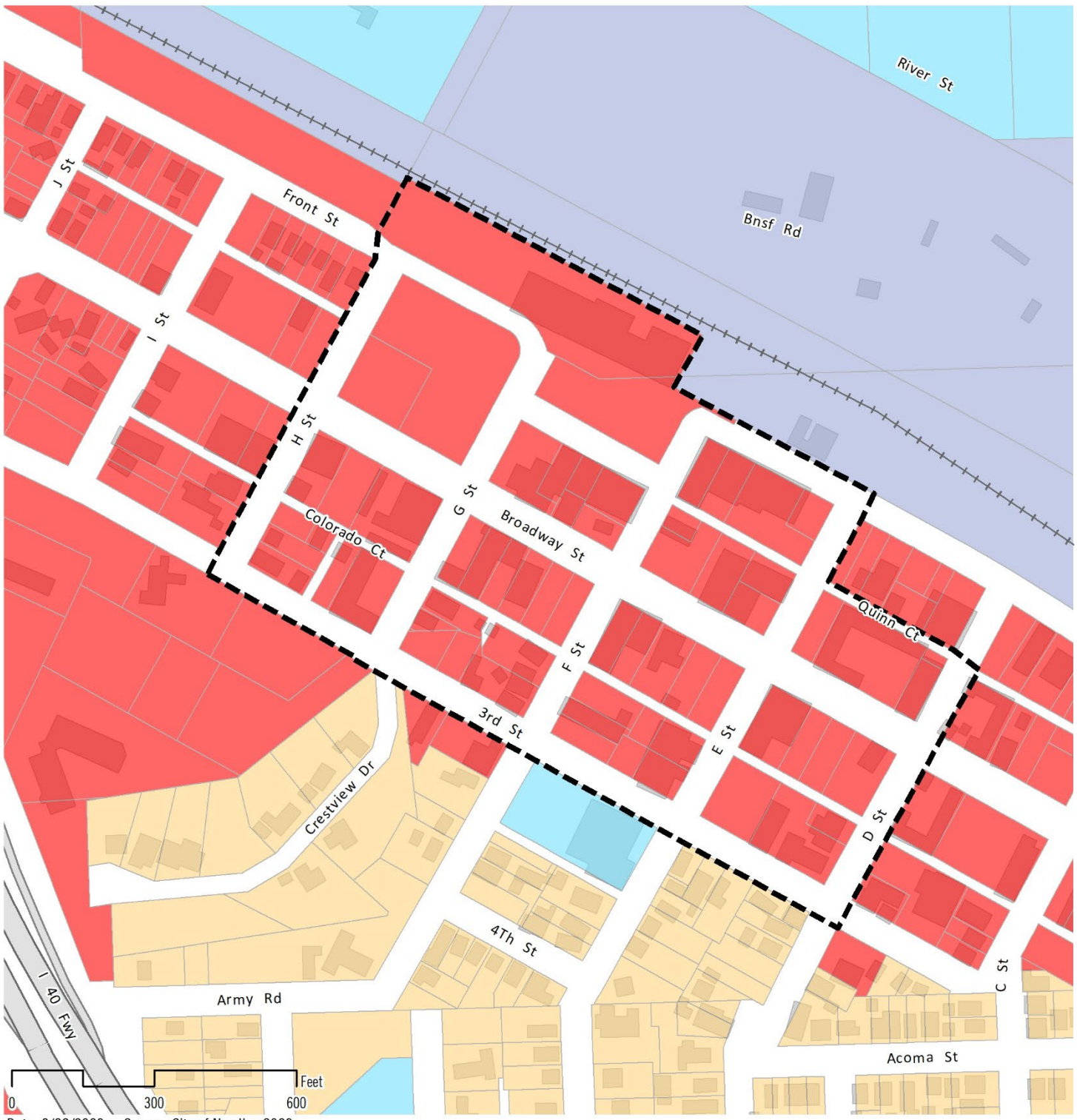
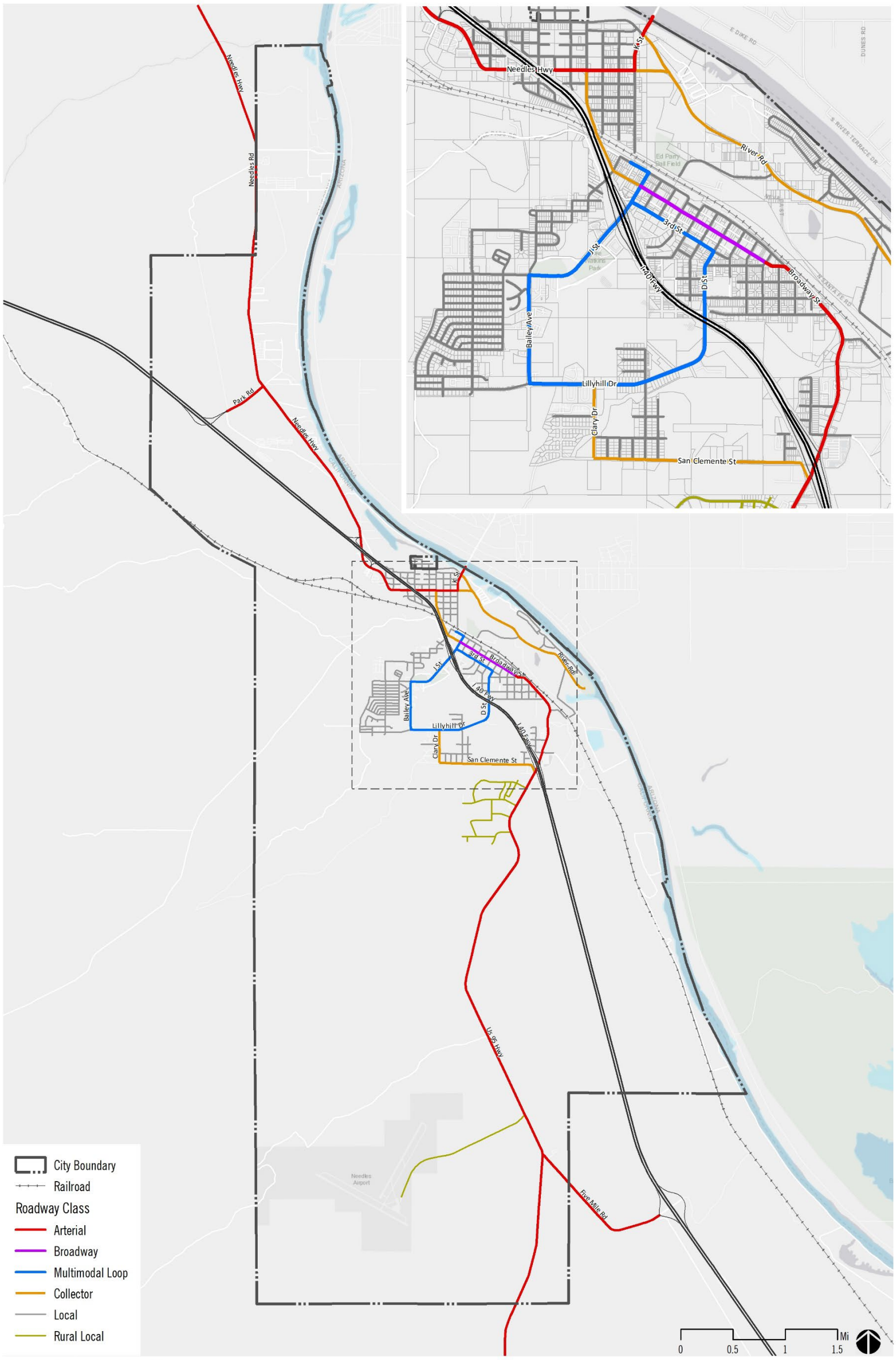


Exhibit 3
Downtown Core Boundary

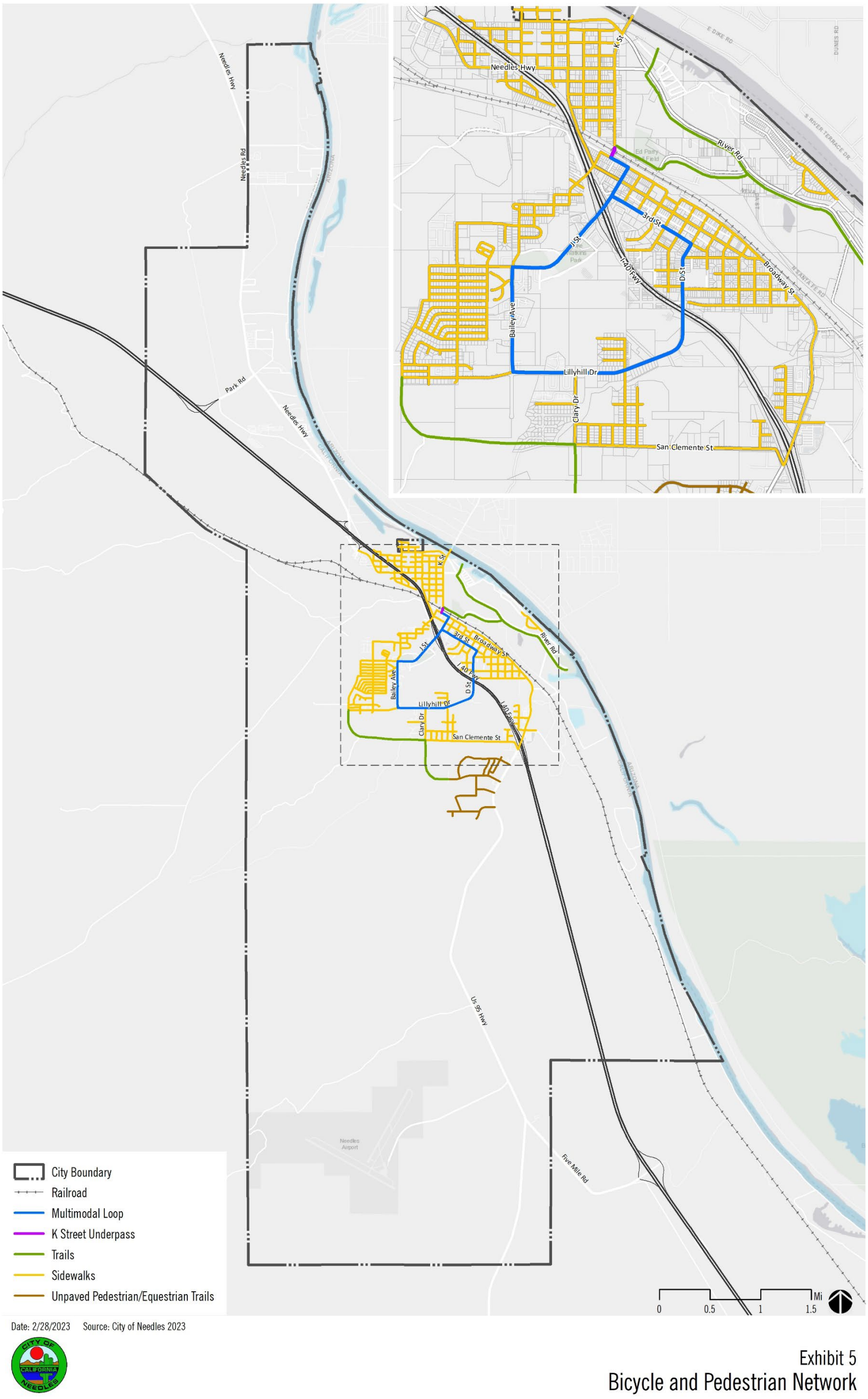
Notes: The "Downtown Core" is defined by the following boundaries: from the west side of H Street to the east side of D Street and extending to the north side of Front Street (including El Garces) and to the south side of 3rd Street. This area is intended for a pedestrian- and experience-oriented downtown that serves as a local gathering place and regional destination.

As shown in Exhibits 4 & 9, the design of Broadway is intended to create a more pedestrian-friendly and vibrant downtown environment, while expanding on-street parking adjacent to businesses. The current (as of 2023) four-lane facility between J Street and A Street (both inside and adjacent to the Downtown Core) would be changed to a two-lane facility (one travel lane in each direction) and on-street angled parking.



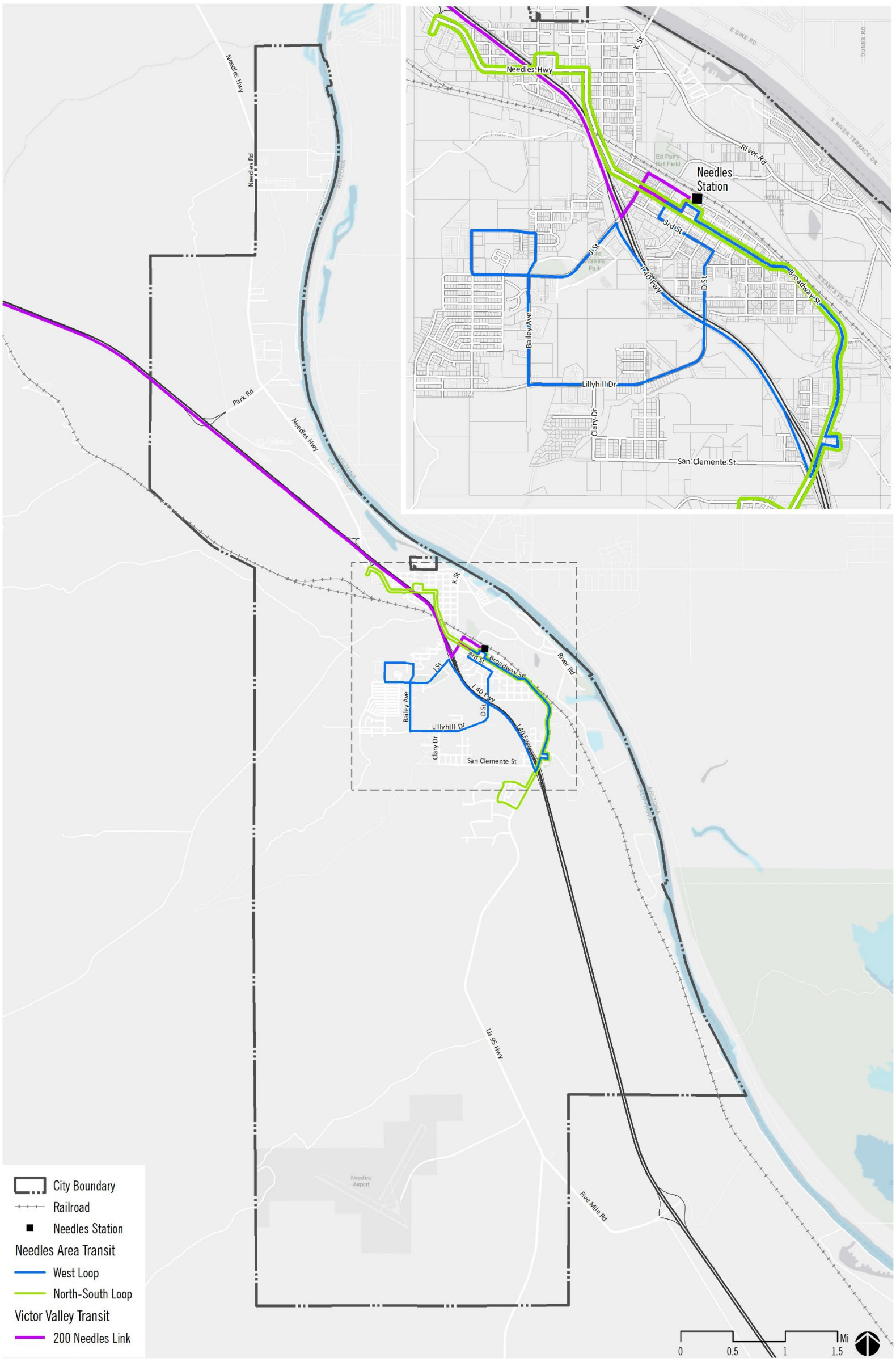
Date: 2/28/2023 Source: City of Needles 2023

Exhibit 4
Roadway Network



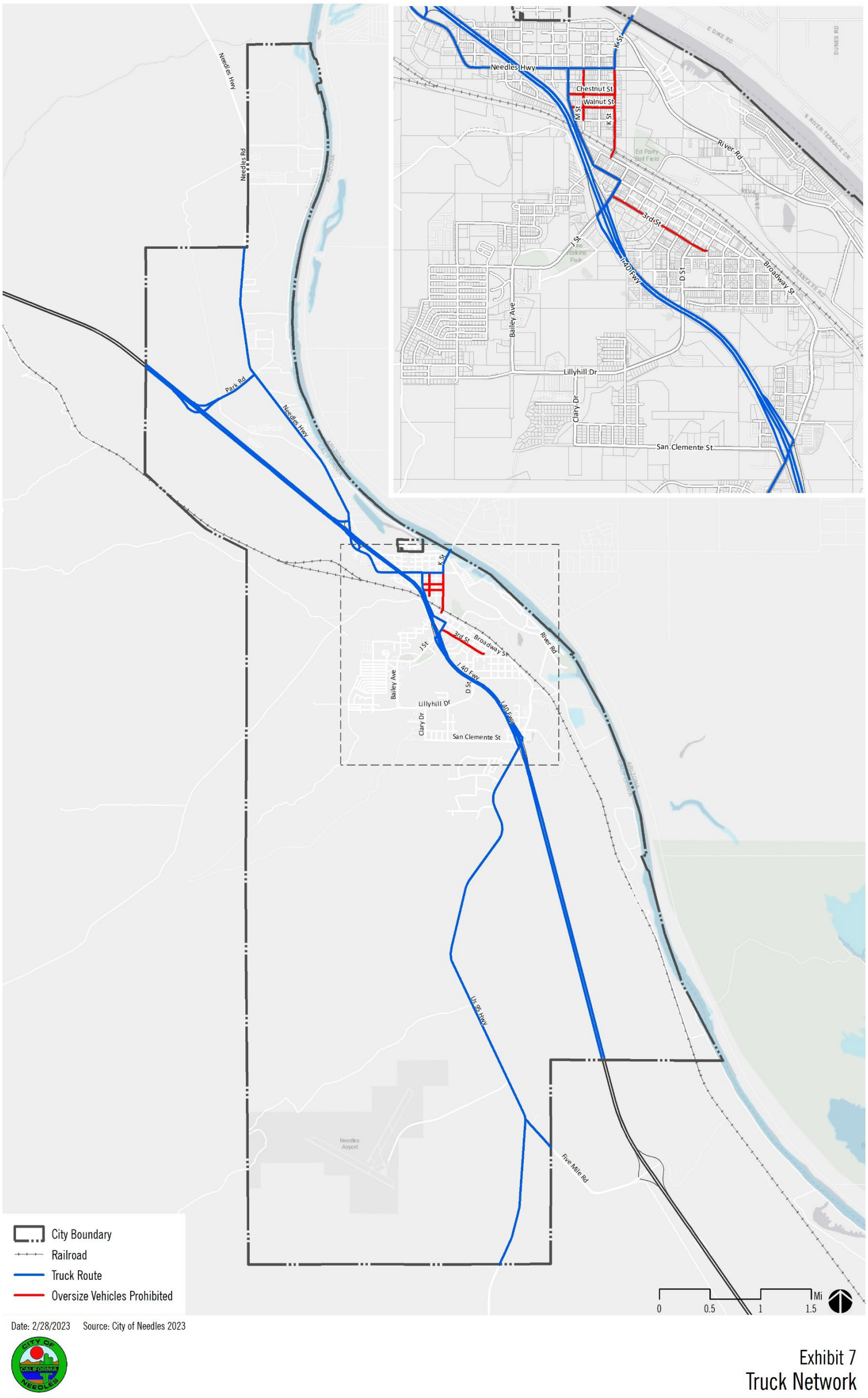
Date: 2/28/2023 Source: City of Needles 2023

Exhibit 5
Bicycle and Pedestrian Network



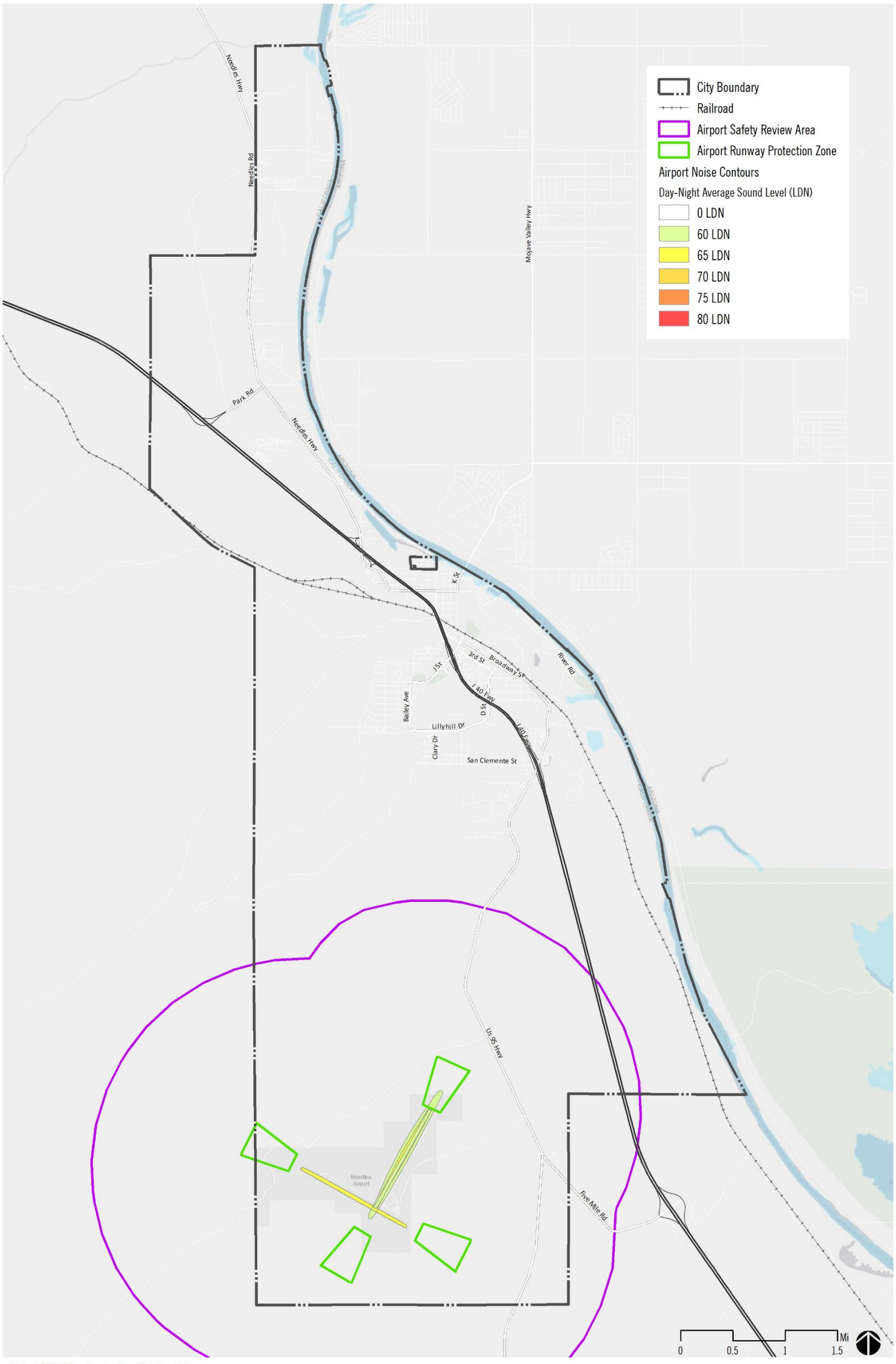
Date: 2/28/2023 Source: City of Needles 2023

Exhibit 6
Transit Network



Date: 2/28/2023 Source: City of Needles 2023

Exhibit 7
Truck Network



Date: 2/28/2023 Source: City of Needles 2023

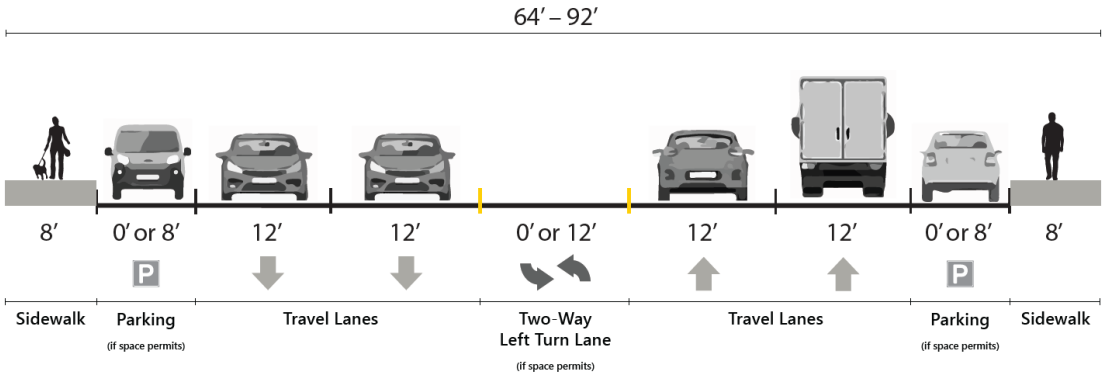
Exhibit 8
Airport Planning Area

Note: The airport and surrounding area is designated for General Manufacturing, which is considered an industrial area. Consistent with the Noise Element, the maximum exterior noise level is 75 LDN or dBA.

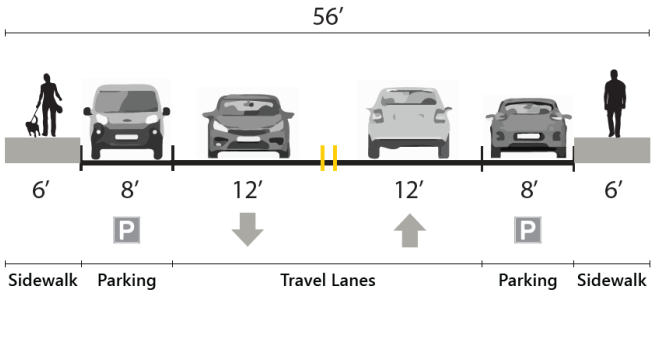
Exhibit 9: Street Sections

Note: street sections are typical right-of-way designs; design may be adjusted by the City based on constraints that are unique to specific locations.

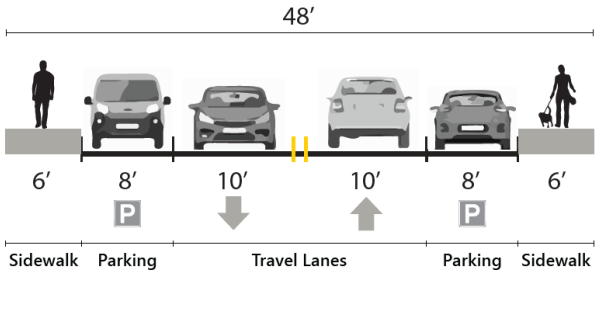
Arterial Road



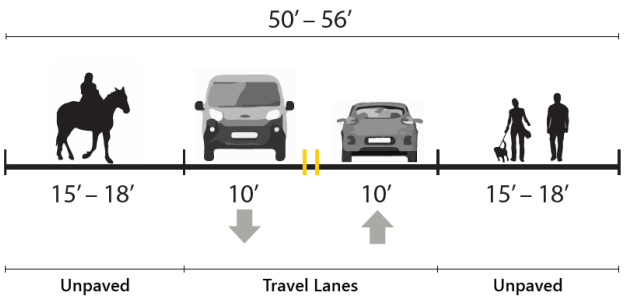
Collector Road



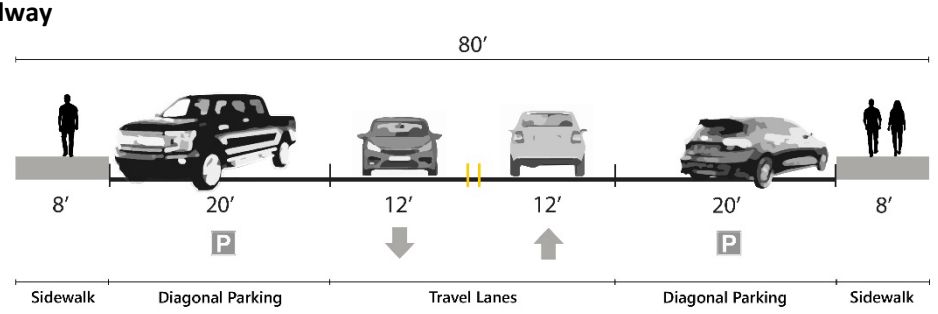
Local Road



Local Rural Road

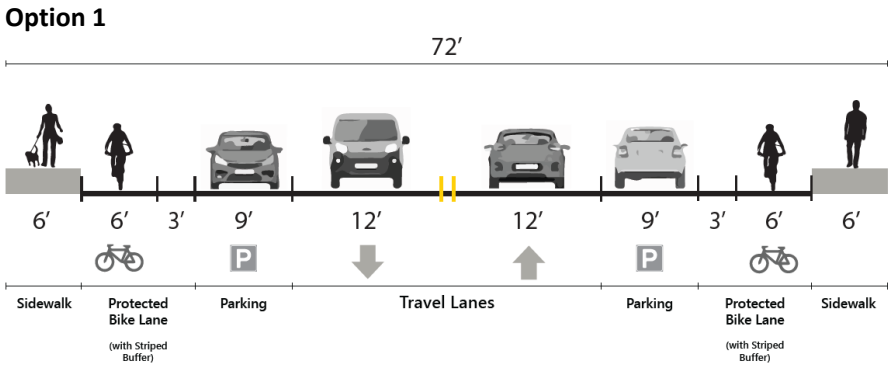


Broadway

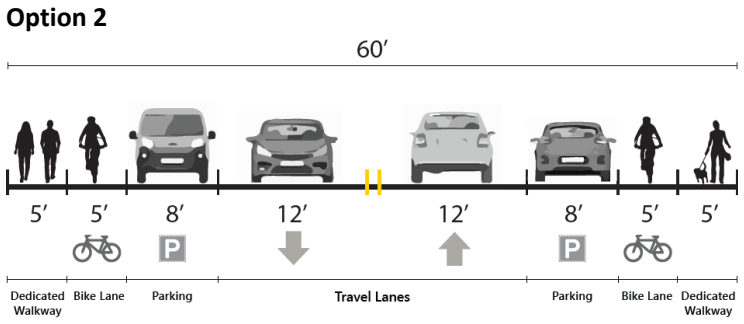


Multimodal Loop – design may vary by location

Option 1



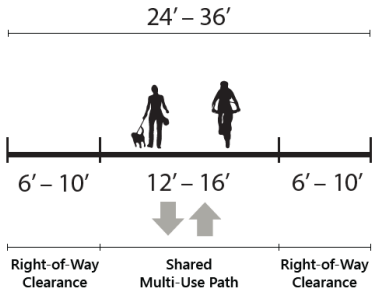
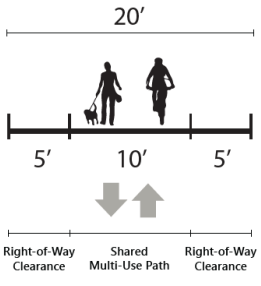
Option 2



K Street Underpass

Multimodal Trail

Option 1



Option 2