



City of Sparks **2021 Federal Platform**

The City of Sparks's federal priorities address public land management, create new wastewater treatment infrastructure, improve flood resiliency, support first responders, and provide community-wide solutions for homelessness. Advancing these legislative and regulatory priorities are vital to our city and regional development.

Truckee Meadows Public Land Management Act

The City of Sparks's first priority is the Truckee Meadows Public Land Management Act. This legislation will redefine growth in our region while simultaneously providing vital protections to environmentally and culturally sensitive areas in Washoe County. Currently, 83% of land in Washoe County is owned by the federal government, with much of it "checkerboarded," preventing both development and adequate environmental protection. The greater Truckee Meadows area, which includes the City of Sparks, is expected to grow by 100,000 new residents by 2030, meaning that comprehensive public lands management legislation is desperately needed to allow development closer to existing infrastructure and reduce the potential for future sprawl. This legislation would designate new preserved wilderness areas and expand recreational opportunities on public land for hiking, hunting, and camping. Such legislation would also ensure that revenue from the sale of land in Washoe County remains in the county to be used to fund local governments, the State of Nevada's General Education Fund, and other local, regional, and state-wide programs and initiatives.

Truckee Meadows Water Reclamation Facility

The City of Sparks must also prioritize expanding the Truckee Meadows Water Reclamation Facility (TMWRF), which is jointly owned by the neighboring cities of Sparks and Reno. TMWRF is the regional facility that receives, treats, and manages wastewater from all of the City of Sparks and the majority of the City of Reno. TMWRF's treated effluent is discharged into the Truckee River, which flows to Pyramid Lake, a terminal lake of cultural significance to the Pyramid Lake Piute Tribe. The Truckee River is also home to a listed endangered species (*Chasmistes Cujus*) and a listed threatened species (*Oncorhynchus Clarki Henshawi*). Because TMWRF discharges treated effluent into this critical watershed, strict nutrient discharge limits apply. TMWRF already discharges approximately 80% of its permitted total nitrogen and 65% of its total dissolved solids (TDS) on an average day. If excess nitrogen is discharged into the Truckee River, that nitrogen will feed algae and other aquatic plant life, undermining water quality and disrupting delicate ecological systems. The recently completed TMWRF Facility Plan estimates a new nitrogen treatment process will be needed by 2050 and additional TDS treatment will be needed by 2060. The costs of these improvements are estimated to be in excess of \$300 million. The cities of Reno and Sparks must identify new funding avenues to complete these essential improvements in order to provide wastewater treatment for anticipated residential, commercial, and industrial development.

Truckee River Flood Management Authority

Nevada has more flood insurance claims than any other non-coastal western state, and 75% of those claims occur in the Truckee Meadows. The Truckee River Flood Management Authority (TRFMA) is a regional flood management agency consisting of representatives of Washoe County and the cities of Reno and Sparks that is responsible for mitigating the risks and reducing the impacts of flooding in the Truckee Meadows. Over the last 15 years, the City of Sparks has spent more than \$40 million toward projects to reduce flooding and its impacts. While this expense is significant, the region desperately needs additional flood mitigation infrastructure estimated at \$600 million. Both TRFMA and the City of Sparks lack the funding for these critical investments. A significant flood event could result in an estimated \$2.4 billion in damage. Federal investment in TRFMA is essential, not only for the Truckee Meadows region, but for the entire State of Nevada.

Investing in Housing

A wave of economic growth in the Truckee Meadows has caused considerable housing challenges in the region. Since 2010, the employment in the region has increased by approximately 30,000 jobs, most of which are in the construction, transportation and warehousing, administrative services, and tourism and service industries. This significant growth in employment has led to rising home prices and rents, but median income has remained relatively stagnant, leaving people near the bottom of the income spectrum without suitable or reliable shelter. These issues have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The City of Sparks is working with regional partners to identify and implement community-wide solutions to the worsening housing shortage, but like so many other cities in our state, systemic deficiencies in Nevada's unique property tax system leave the City of Sparks with little ability to generate adequate funding to address housing insecurity. Federal and state assistance for renters has been vital during the pandemic, keeping individuals and families in their homes during the crisis. Federal investment in affordable housing is essential for a full economic recovery and continued growth.

Addressing Mental Health in Sparks

The City of Sparks is looking to embed additional mental health clinicians with Sparks police officers to provide crisis intervention as part of the Mobile Outreach Safety Team (MOST) program. MOST clinicians are valuable where officers do not have the training and experience necessary to assist people experiencing mental health crises. MOST clinicians are trained to assess a person's mental health status and needs and provide access to appropriate resources. By intervening in cycles of mental illness, MOST clinicians promote medication compliance and help reduce calls for service, the time spent on each call for service, and costly emergency room visits and incarceration. Finally, because MOST clinicians have expertise that police officers do not, MOST clinicians create a safer environment for officers and those experiencing mental health crises and resolve calls for service without over-dependence on the criminal justice system. Currently, MOST clinicians contribute approximately forty hours per week to Sparks Police Department. This means MOST clinicians are with Sparks police officers for only 35% of calls for service regarding mental health crises or suicidal subjects, approximately 1,116 calls for service per year. Sparks Police Department estimates that the MOST program, as currently implemented, saves approximately 4,464 hours of service time annually, which equates to roughly \$450,000 in savings on salaries and benefits alone. Increasing funding for MOST would allow MOST clinicians to spend more time with Sparks police officers and respond to more calls for service related to mental health issues. This increase would provide the benefits of the MOST program to more persons experiencing mental health crises.