PLAN 2040

Comprehensive Plan

Doña Ana County, New Mexico

Image Credit: NMSU

Values | Why

Aspirations for our future

Decisions | What

Balancing the tradeoffs

Strategies | How

Implementing the vision

AUGUST 25

2015

VALUES | WHY

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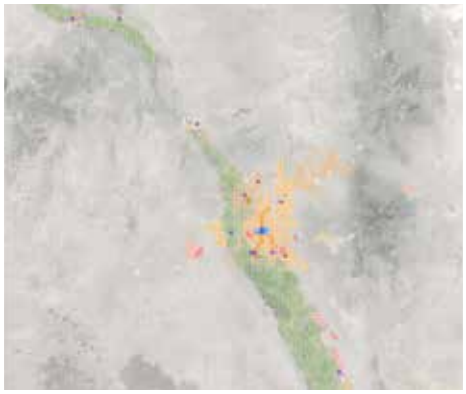

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The Camino Real Consortium recommended Plan 2040 to the Board of County Commissioners for adoption through the Camino Real Consortium Resolution No. 2015-02 and is located on page 146.

The Doña Ana Board of County Commissioners adopted this plan on August 25, 2015 by Doña Ana County Resolution 2015-54 and the resolution is located on page 148.

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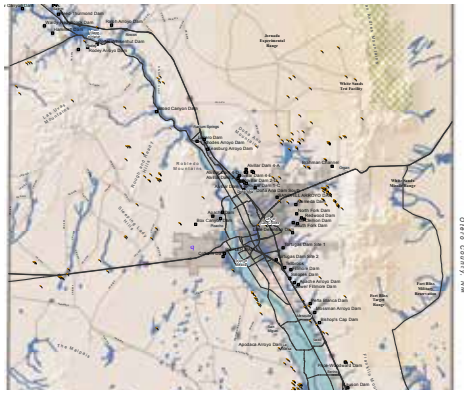

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The residents and businesses of Doña Ana County, including all of the local communities and municipalities were active participants and authors of this Plan.

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT FUNDING

The Viva Doña Ana planning initiative was supported by funding under an award with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The substance and findings of the work are dedicated to the public. The author and publisher are solely responsible for the accuracy of the statements and interpretations contained in this publication. Such interpretations do not necessarily reflect the views of the Federal Government.

Image Credit: Dennis Quintana

INTRODUCTION

HISTORY OF THE VIVA DOÑA ANA INITIATIVE

In 2012, a consortium of partners was awarded a highly competitive Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant to undertake the Viva Doña Ana Initiative. The Consortium has grown in the number of members since then, but the original members consisted of Doña Ana County, the City of Las Cruces, New Mexico State University, the Mesilla Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization, the El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization, the South Central Council of Governments, the Colonias Development Council, and Tierra del Sol Housing Corporation. Since the establishment of the Consortium, their staff members, elected officials, volunteers, various consultants, and members of the communities that comprise Doña Ana County have engaged in ongoing data gathering, numerous meetings, focus groups, walking tours, workshops, and listening sessions as they worked together to develop this Comprehensive Plan along with many other specialized planning projects.

The Viva Doña Ana Initiative is an ongoing collaborative effort to advance and integrate regional planning by bringing together planning for housing, transportation, workforce, economic development, and the environment. Planning collaboratively across agencies and disciplines creates opportunities to better support and accomplish common goals and projects, as opposed to planning done in silos that too often results in an array of disjointed, and contradictory projects, that may unintentionally harm one another.

OVERVIEW OF PLAN 2040

Most analysts agree that the population of Doña Ana County is likely to increase over the next 25 years. Development generated by this influx can strengthen the qualities valued by residents or erode them.

For the most part, change will be gradual, driven by countless decisions and many people for a multitude of reasons. The effects will be cumulative. Over time our area will evolve into a better place consistent with local values or it will change into an unrecognizable landscape disconnected from our environment, heritage, and aspirations.

This Comprehensive Plan outlines a number of ways that county residents and community leaders can use growth to strengthen Doña Ana County. A common theme throughout Plan 2040 is that development choices should be intentional and value-based.

Plan 2040 contains three types of information:

- Documentation of the process used to prepare this Plan
- Information that is relevant to community planning in Doña Ana County
- Policy recommendations that would be used to guide future development in the region.

Plan 2040 is organized into three major parts: Values, Decisions, and Strategies.

Values provide the motivation behind all regional planning activity. In this Plan they are presented in two ways. A Vision Statement describes in broad terms the kind of future residents would like to see in Doña Ana County. The Livability Principles present these aspirations in more detail and provide a basis for evaluating our progress over time.

The second part, **Decisions**, describes the process of creating and evaluating future development scenarios.

The third part, **Strategies**, provides an outline of specific goals and actions that will help achieve the County's vision of a desirable future. Recommendations are organized into four major strategies, as follows:

- Guiding Future Development Patterns
- Broadening Economic Opportunity
- Prioritizing Infrastructure Planning & Investment
- Enhancing Public Services

Each strategy begins with an introduction to the topic, explains how associated goals support the Livability Principles, suggests ways that the goals could be achieved, and identifies responsible parties for those actions.

Image Credit: Angela Roberson

PLAN 2040 AND OTHER PLANS

Plan 2040 has been specifically developed to address the values and interests of people living and working in Doña Ana County. Plan 2040 establishes priorities for public action that in turn will direct private decisions.

As the Comprehensive Plan for Doña Ana County, this document provides policy-level guidance for County government. Planning within the incorporated areas of the county is governed by comprehensive plans adopted by their respective elected bodies. Relevant sections of Plan 2040, in part or whole, may be incorporated in these other plans. At a minimum, Plan 2040 should serve as a broad reference for all planning done within the county.

Implementation of Plan 2040 will establish a living framework of policies and regulations that will shape physical and economic development for

years to come. To stay relevant and increase its effectiveness, the Plan will be reviewed, revised, and updated on a regular basis.

Plan 2040 should be reviewed and amended annually, and revised to reflect the changing, economy, environment, and development patterns. Updates should occur, at a minimum, every five years. The Sector plan (p. 52) should be considered to be under active edits, and revised as communities expand or new communities develop.

Plan 2040 is closely aligned with other work done as part of the "Viva Doña Ana!" regional planning initiative, particularly the Unified Development Code (UDC). The UDC will be the primary method of implementing Plan 2040 and should be regularly updated over time.

Plan 2040 builds on the ideas initially developed in "Vision 2040" and will, in turn, provide a foundation for more detailed area plans and implementation strategies. The Plan also incorporates information, ideas, and proposals contained in a number of existing plans. Plan 2040 does not supplant these other plans but will serve as a complement to them.

Image Credit: Dennis Quintana

Plan 2040 establishes a living framework for Doña Ana County's regulations and policies that will shape physical and economic development for the next generation.

HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

The primary product generated by this planning framework is a Preferred Scenario. The Preferred Scenario depicts the way development should evolve in order to optimize the values embodied in our Livability Principles. Comparisons between this desired future and on-going development activity should be used to monitor progress, update plans, and refine implementation Strategies.

In summary,

The Vision Statement and Livability Principles explain **WHY** planning is important, provide a basis for choosing among development options, and ground evaluation of conditions within the county.

The Preferred Scenario and Strategic Goals describe **WHAT** needs to be done in order to align development with broadly held values.

Actions outlined in the four Strategies outline **HOW** desired future conditions can be realized.

THE CHALLENGE: DEFINING DESIRABLE CHANGE

AN OVERVIEW OF CONSENSUS-DRIVEN PRINCIPLES

Common Concerns

A series of discussions over the better part of a decade led leaders and residents of Doña Ana County to a shared understanding of common concerns associated with future development in the region. The highest priority concerns follow.

(Headings refer to sections in this Plan where additional information can be found.)

Image Credit: Google Earth

- **Types of Community** (p. 53) Preserve the types of communities that have served residents throughout Doña Ana County's history and that show promise of adaptability in the future.
- **Flooding and Hydrology** (p. 100) Respond to the need for storm water management strategies that are customized for effectiveness at the scale of each community type.
- **Water Supply** (p. 100) Ensure long-term access to clean water for all community types.
- **Prioritize Infrastructure Planning and Investment** (p. 98) Prioritize new infrastructure (roads, water, sewer, broadband) and maintenance to align with strategies appropriate at the scales of the community types.
- **Fair Housing** (p. 68) Enable a broader range of affordable housing choices, including rentals and for-sale homes, in preferred locations.
- **Transportation** (p. 118) Expand transportation choice for the broadest possible range of residents.
- **Broaden Economic Opportunity** (p. 80) Align infrastructure investment strategies in support of quality job creation.
- **Enhance Public Services** (p. 120) Seek opportunities to leverage policies and investments to support community health and education goals.
- **Civic, Agricultural & Natural Lands** (p. 60) Support continued stewardship of farmland and farming opportunities.

Image Credit: Dennis Quintana

A series of discussions over the better part of a decade led leaders and residents of Doña Ana County to a shared understanding of common concerns & agreed upon solutions.

SHARED SOLUTIONS

This Comprehensive Plan identifies a preferred development scenario and strategies that would best address these concerns and the values that underpin them. Major features of the Preferred Scenario include:

- Development within or close to existing communities
- Emphasis on:
  - Flood management
  - Infrastructure maintenance & expansion
  - Transportation choices
- High consideration for:
  - Economic development
  - Community health
  - Education

TOWARD A BETTER FUTURE

VALUES, VISION, AND LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

A Vision Statement

We want to maintain the unique qualities of our region even as we seek to create a better future for all.

We value the variety and character of our communities, our multi-cultural heritage, and the many pathways that bring people together in this special place.

We treasure the mountains and the desert that surround us, acknowledge their limitations, and understand that we may be entering a time of great change in the natural world.

We want to live in vibrant communities that are safe, promote health, and offer expanded choices in housing and transportation.

We require government services, utilities, and other infrastructure that meet essential needs as efficiently and effectively as possible.

We support creation of conditions favorable for robust business activity, good-paying jobs, and expanded economic prosperity.

We believe that every development decision is an opportunity to create a more desirable future while protecting personal rights, community interests, and the environment.

We will confront the challenges inherent in future development in a responsible, democratic, and inclusive manner.

Image Credit: Angela Roberson

The preceding Vision Statement is drawn from values reflected in two primary sources:

The "Guiding Principles" adopted by the Doña Ana County Board of Commissioners as part of the County Strategic Plan, and The Vision Statement contained in "One Valley One Vision 2040: A Regional Plan".

Doña Ana County Livability Principles

Establishment of planning strategies for Doña Ana County began with discussions about broad goals that embody our shared values and concerns, as summarized on p. 01.

While every community has its own unique characteristics and values, there is remarkable consensus throughout the country around a set of development goals known as the Livability Principles. While the goals were developed by three federal agencies, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Department of Transportation (DOT), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), to encourage better integration in community planning and development, County residents worked diligently to revise them to fit the local context. The six Livability Principles, as revised and prioritized by County residents, include those listed to the right.

Over the past two and a half years county residents have refined these Principles to emphasize values specific to Doña Ana County and its communities. (See detailed report in the Appendix, beginning on p. 30.)

On the following pages these goals are described in more detail. The Principles are presented according to the priorities set by participants in dozens of meetings, focus groups, workshops, listening sessions, walking tours, charrettes, and other events conducted throughout the region.

Image Credit: Dennis Quintana

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE 1: SUPPORT EXISTING COMMUNITIES

The most important goal of County residents is to support their existing communities. This was the priority throughout all the regions, from north to south, and from urban to rural.

The goal will prioritize safe, cost-effective development to achieve the following:

1. Keep new projects out of the pathway of storm water.
2. Look for opportunities to utilize or expand existing water and sewer systems rather than having to fund and maintain new ones.
3. Coordinate transportation and land use planning to get the most out of infrastructure investment.
4. Anticipates future needs for safe drinking water.
5. Leverage the advantages of time-tested patterns of settlement and development by focusing first on infill opportunities and on expansions of existing neighborhoods, as opposed to new development in distant, undeveloped sections of the County.
6. Protect important agriculture land from encroachment.
7. Expand communication and education programs to ensure community residents and business people have opportunities to better understand and to participate in refining priorities that protect and enhance community assets and cultures.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE 2:

PRESERVE OUR HERITAGE

Image Credit from Top to Bottom: NMSU, PlaceMakers, Dennis Quintana

Residents often talked about the value of their cultural heritage and diversity, their appreciation for the small-town feel, the historic farming communities, and the rural, open character of the region. This goal will do the following:

1. Encourage continuing community dialog.
2. Respect and enhance existing local networks for identifying important issues and for getting things done.
3. Recognize and integrate generations-old traditions and local culture into planning goals and processes.
4. Value and protect natural resources and agricultural lands. Support local farmers markets and craft markets with training, communications and marketing help. Incorporate more urban agricultural approaches.
5. Protect, rehabilitate and promote historical sites and resources.
6. Ensure funding for regular maintenance of parks, plazas, community centers, trails and other community assets.
7. Prioritize environmental stewardship through holistic stormwater management.
8. Manage new growth to reflect constraints related to water and climate change.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE 3:

PROVIDE MORE TRANSPORTATION CHOICE

The lack of public transportation came up in most community conversations. Pursing the goal will include the following:

1. Broaden the range of choices beyond exclusive reliance on privately owned automobiles.
2. The County should plan for expanded transit, for pedestrian paths and bicycle routes, for ride sharing and for other alternatives for getting around.
3. Transportation planning should connect with other goals, including those that address, for instance, affordability, community health and economic development.
4. County-wide transportation education programs could introduce more people to transit, ride sharing and other options while building support for expanding services.

Image Credit: Dennis Quintana

Image Credit: Dennis Quintana

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE 4: PROMOTE AFFORDABLE COMMUNITIES

In the northern part of the County in particular, expansion of housing options was one of the top three priorities. This goal will accomplish the following:

1. Design housing policies to deliver safe, dignified, affordable choices for the broadest possible cross-section of residents.
2. Policies should address needs of potential home buyers and renters. And they should explore opportunities for manufactured housing as well as for conventional site-built homes.
3. Develop a range of tools to enhance community affordability – not just low-cost housing. For example: Programs to lower energy and transportation costs, innovations in housing design and construction, zoning that lowers barriers to a full range of residential and commercial alternatives within walking distance.
4. Plan with an eye to integrating equity and affordability goals with other Livability Principles, including those aimed at improving employment opportunities and expanding transportation choice.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE 5:

ENHANCE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

The need for jobs and more educational opportunities, especially for young people was another recurring theme. This goal will accomplish the following:

1. identify likely employment categories for the future and prepare and motivate the workforce for opportunities (including those in the trades professions) through improved and better-coordinated workforce development strategies.
2. Coordinate efforts with current and prospective employers, and co-design training programs with community colleges and other educational institutions to target those opportunities.
3. Promote tourism assets, including the Camino Real and other regional attractions.
4. Look for opportunities to support innovative agricultural opportunities, particularly local, commercial agriculture.
5. Streamline permitting and other County regulatory policies in ways that ensure equitable treatment of businesses and predictability of processes.
6. Better coordinate economic development strategies with state departments – as well as neighboring counties, the State of Texas and the Republic of Mexico.

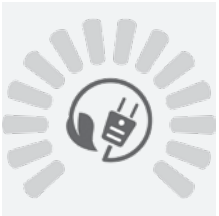
"Recognize natural market forces exist that are best left alone; however, opportunities to use, respond to, or guide these forces should be pursued to better manage the region's resources."

- "*One Valley, One Vision 2040*"

Image Credit: NMSU

Image Credit: Dennis Quintana

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE 6: COORDINATE POLICIES AND INVESTMENT



Fulfillment of the prior goals result in this goal. In order to maximize funding opportunities and to better align policies, we should seek ways to plan collaboratively with agencies, departments and organizations at every level, from the federal, state and regional levels to communities, private sector businesses and non-profits within Doña Ana County. This goal will accomplish the following:

1. Build accountability into the process.
2. Involve community members and business leaders in refining alignment strategies and in monitoring the process.
3. Streamline processes and rules so everyone understands the goals and expectations.
4. Build fairness and predictability into rule making and enforcement.
5. Use the enhanced alignment of policies and processes to identify opportunities for coordinated promotion of the County, the local municipalities, and community assets.
6. Make continuous, open communication between elected officials, staff, residents and business people a priority.
7. Empower staff to take more ownership of planning and outcomes.

Summarized notes from public discussions can be found in the Appendix, pp. 5.

PURPOSEFUL COLLABORATION

Few dispute the need for engaging community members in planning.

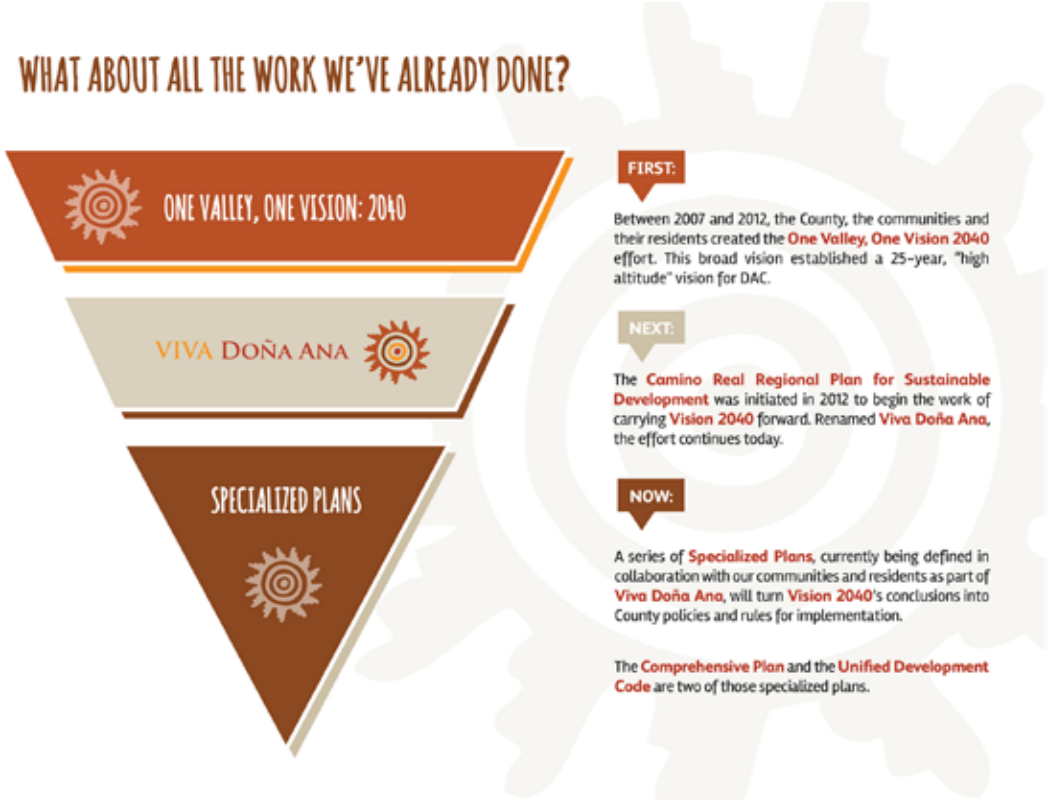
The desire for continuing, meaningful participation emerged in each conversation under each component of the Livability Principles. Achieving the "meaningful" part of that mandate requires going beyond merely providing opportunities for comment in public hearings. Residents, businesses and community organizations have to be partners in the planning process.

It's more than a feel-good exercise. It's a pragmatic strategy that is effective in two ways:

- First, people who live and work in a region are the true experts on what's working and not working. Their knowledge strengthens the information base of planning and helps refine the assumptions planners make about long-range goals.
- Second, and just as important, is the need to build broad-based support for the process that shapes the Plan and, ultimately, for the policies required to implement it. It's far easier to achieve buy-in for a Plan that's co-produced by the people most affected by it than to have to sell them on something produced without their involvement.

Complete coverage of the entire Viva Doña Ana process can be found on the project website:

www.vivadonaana.org



Community outreach efforts for the One Valley, One Vision 2040 study helped focus goals under categories of people, place and prosperity. Then, beginning in 2012 with Viva Doña Ana, goal-setting conversations became steadily refined under the six Livability Principles.

A key stage in goal refinement came in July of 2014, when community focus groups met to identify components of the Livability Principles they wanted to stress.

The bottom line: Goals implied by the Livability Principles are interdependent. Which means strategies based on the Principles have to recognize and respond to that.

Collaborative Doña Ana County planning began even before the language of Livability Principles came into play and before the Comprehensive Plan process was officially underway. The Comprehensive Plan is one of seven Specialized Plans under the umbrella of the Viva Doña Ana initiative that grew from the One Valley, One Vision 2040 plan.

The Vision 2040 plan's intent is "To serve as a platform for use in developing more detailed comprehensive, master and site plans" and to "serve as guidance on policy, programming and capital improvement decisions to local elected and administration officials." (Vision 2040, p. 3)

The Comprehensive Plan process is one of the ways to fulfill that mandate.

"What you have to have is hope. And what you have to have are dreams. What we did here is an exercise in hope.

We may be here. We may not . . The next generation is coming. And we're going to find out it's those people who we can really do something for..."

– Rafael Ramos-Lacen, President

The Southern New Mexico Project

Image Credit: PlaceMakers

VISION-TESTING STRATEGIES

THE PREFERRED GROWTH SCENARIO

Working with the residents of Doña Ana County resulted in a refinement of the Livability Principles, tailoring them to local needs and setting goals for the County planning effort. To get from goals to strategies, the residents engaged in community discussions in order to test various approaches to growth against those goals.

The result is the "preferred growth scenario" that integrates those approaches most likely to respect and leverage the assets and traditions of Doña Ana County and to adapt to an uncertain future.

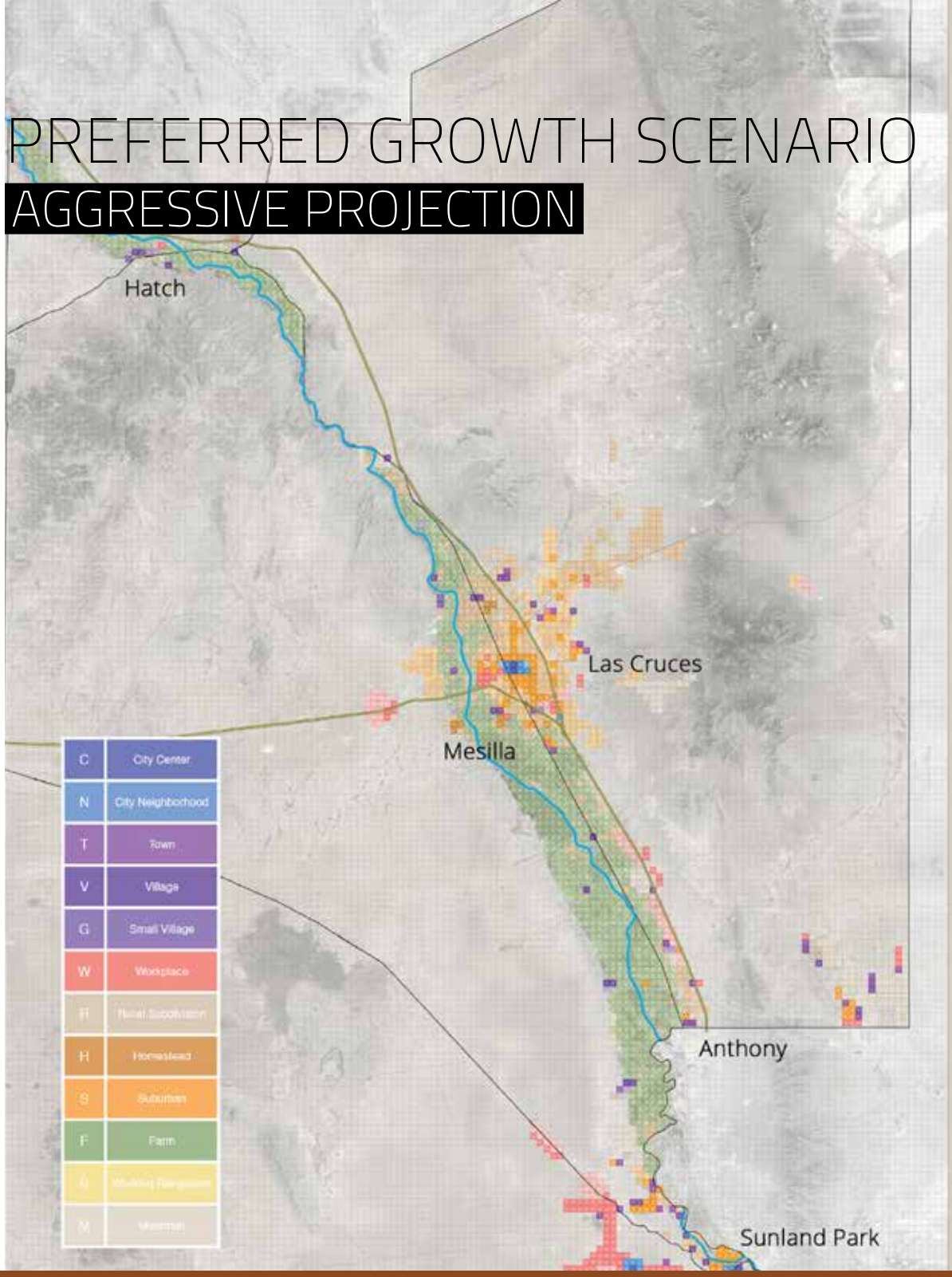
The combination scenario that emerged from community workshops was one that focused on the following:

- Development within or close to existing communities,
- Prioritized flood management,
- Infrastructure maintenance and expansion,
- Transportation choice and
- Farmland stewardship.

Economic development, community health and education were also highly ranked. (See detailed discussion, Alternatives For the Future on p. 22)

PREFERRED GROWTH SCENARIO

AGGRESSIVE PROJECTION



EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED.

In the process of refining broad Livability Principles into Doña Ana County-specific goals, it didn't take long to understand how many of the Principles' components are overlapping and interdependent.

Community affordability depends upon expanding transportation access as well providing for a range of housing opportunities. Transportation planning, in turn, has to include concerns about preserving existing communities and supporting economic development. Economic opportunity requires a healthy workforce with the skills future employers need. The ways in which water is managed for irrigation, safe drinking and flood control affects the economy, the health of families, and the sustainability of communities.

The provision of public services shapes where and how people want to live and work. Different types of communities in different locations impact the environment in different ways. Decisions about how, where and when to conserve or develop open space affects the character and economies of nearby communities.

DECISIONS: CHOOSING A DESIRABLE FUTURE

Image Credit: Dennis Quintana

The goals for this plan were developed by the work of residents, businesses, and community organizations, which were partners in the planning process.

A CONTEXT FOR DECISION-MAKING

But those goals cannot be just a wish list. To be a goal-setting guide that endures, a vision's ambitions must be informed by what is known about a place and its people. And, as much as possible, it must anticipate changes likely to require adaptive strategies.

WHERE WE LIVE

The ways in which Doña Ana County communities have organized themselves in response to geographical realities over the centuries have contributed to the character of the County. Preserving that character is one of the standards against which new adaptive strategies have to be measured.

Geography

Like most of New Mexico, the County is statistically rural, yet with substantial percentages of its population concentrated in urban areas. Las Cruces, the County seat, holds 47% of the population on two percent of the County's land area, with most of the remainder of the population clustered along the Rio Grande river valley. Yet with the federal government owning 85% of the land, the feeling of near endless, open range framed by mountains on the near horizon shapes the County's character and its appeal to many who visit and migrate.

Image Credit: Angela Roberson

Image Credit: Dennis Quintana

Image Credit: Angela Roberson

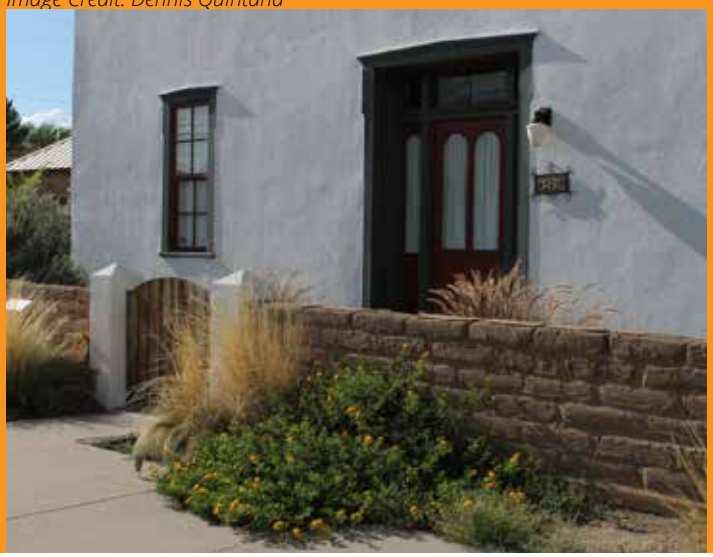


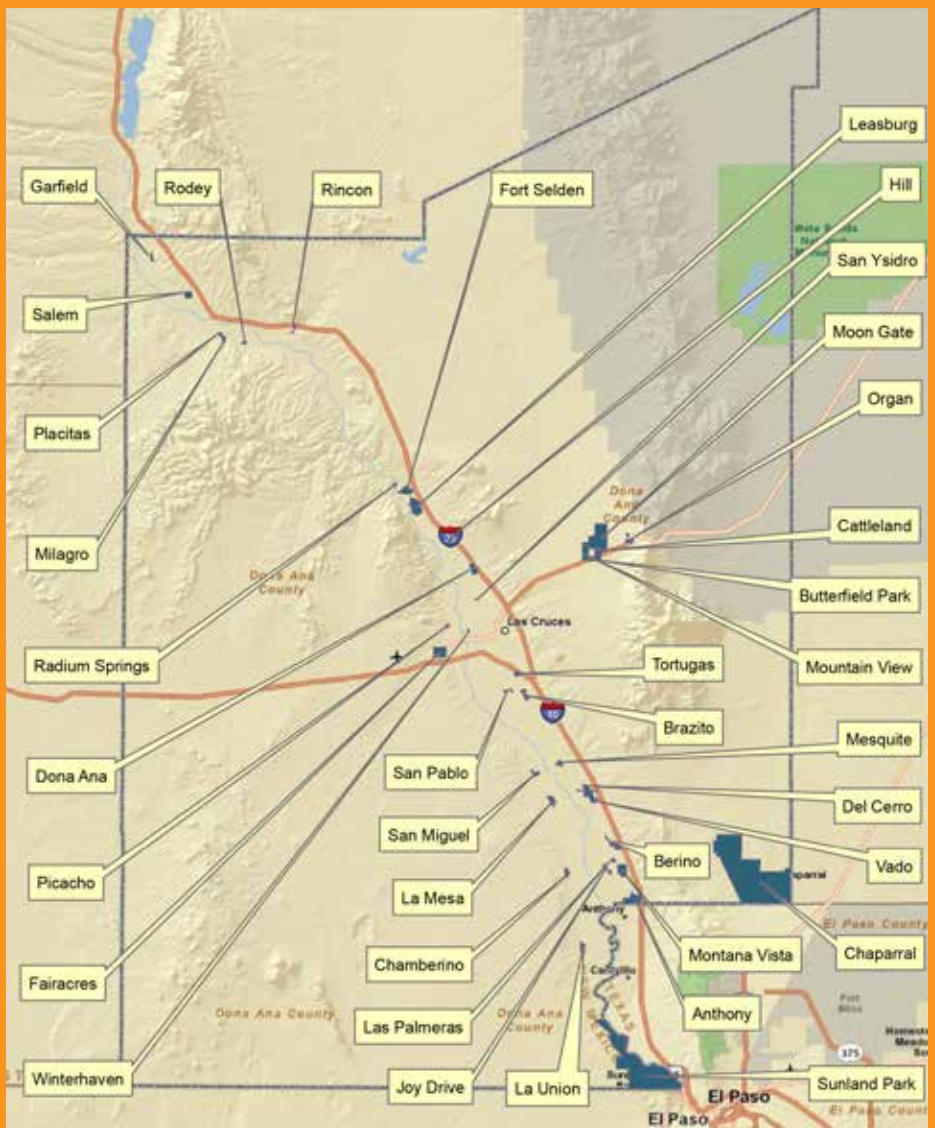
Image Credit: Andrew von Maur

Historical Context

Centuries-old adaptations to both the natural environment and to evolving economic trends have served the County well and can provide models for responding to 21st century influences.

For almost five hundred years the Mesilla Valley has been the route from Mexico City to Santa Fe via El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro. The land, with some of New Mexico's prime soils and access to the Rio Grande water supply, has long supported some of the most active farms in the state which created the opportunity to develop a number of supporting communities. More urbanized settlements also grew to take advantage of the Spanish, then US, trade routes.

Most of these communities are U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) designated colonias with special challenges and needs. And they have many forms – some are historic and some were developed in the 20th century, some are rural communities and some are neighborhoods within cities. To properly respond to their individuality, this Plan categorizes them further see p. 53, Types of Community.



The Colonias of Doña Ana County

Listed by Planning Area from north to south. See Appendix, p. 151, Planning Areas Map.

Garfield	Winterheaven
Salem	Fairacres
Placitas	Tortugas
El Milagro	Brazito
Rodey	San Pablo
Rincon	San Miguel
Radium Springs	Mesquite
Ft. Selden	La Mesa
Leasburg	Del Cerro
Hill	Vado
Organ	Berino
Moongate	Las Palmeras
Butterfield Park	Montana Vista
Mountain View	Joy Drive
Cattleland	Chamberino
Doña Ana	Chaparral
San Isidro	Anthony
Old Picacho	La Union
	Sunland Park

Colonias

Thirty-seven of the rural communities and municipalities in the County are designated colonias by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. They are diverse in scale and settlement patterns. But they share similar challenges, relative to the more urbanized areas, of higher levels of poverty, more sub-standard infrastructure and housing, and fewer choices when it comes to access to transportation, education and health services.

However, the colonias enjoy certain advantages, as well. Many of these communities are among the oldest in the Lower Rio Grande Valley and among the richest in history and culture. And many were settled in the latter part of the 19th Century and are home to families that have lived there for generations. Though challenges strain their limited resources, they can point to long traditions of self-reliance and to community bonds and networks capable of attracting strategic partners.

It's essential that this Plan identify strategies that help the colonias leverage those traditions, and potential opportunities, going forward. Promising strategies include:

- better connections between historical and cultural institutions and state and regional tourism programs;
- agricultural tourism;
- community-based economic development, often related to adjacent farmland.

HOW WE LIVE

While the physical landscape and human settlement patterns have contributed to the region's social and economic resilience over centuries, the process of adapting to change is never ending.

Thanks to a significant extent to its cross-border relationships with El Paso, Texas, and the Republic of Mexico, Doña Ana County has enjoyed population and job growth patterns stronger than New Mexico as a whole and, in some periods, stronger than the nation's.

Development Patterns
Housing

Almost half the population of Doña Ana County is scattered among small towns and rural communities, often distant from job centers, education and medical centers.

Remoteness complicates access to water and sewer and to cost-effective transportation options. There is strong consensus for expanding the range of housing choice to include both manufactured homes and site-built structures and owner-occupied as well as rental housing. Still, discussions about assuring dignified, safe, affordable places to live should be as much about locating housing out of harm's way and about respecting time-tested community clustering as about what types of construction serve families' needs.

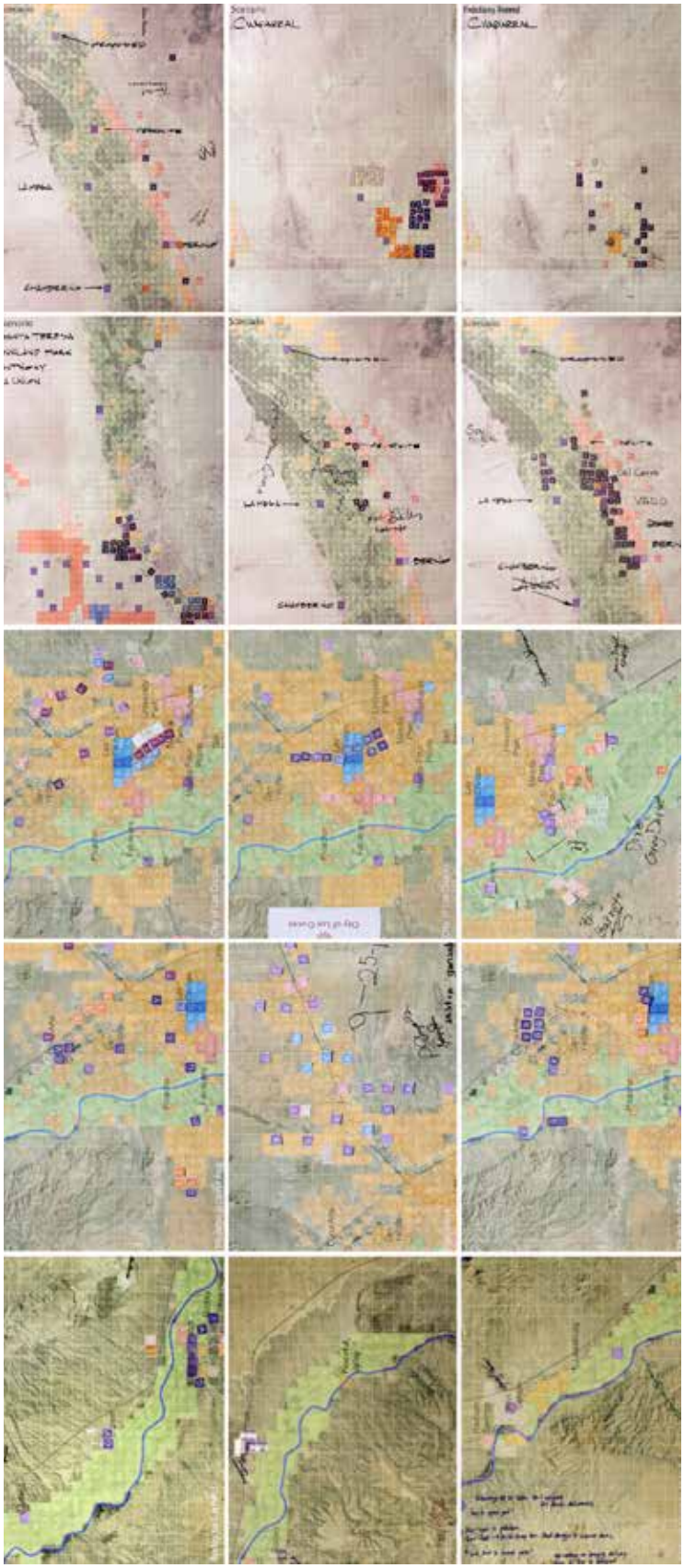
That expanded conversation about affordability fits with preferences for encouraging new development and redevelopment within existing communities or close enough to take advantage of existing infrastructure.

Development Patterns
Civic, Agricultural, and Natural Lands

Preserving and enhancing public space, both in terms of the more urban parks and plazas and the more rural working agricultural and rangelands, are essential to protecting the historic character of Doña Ana County and the tourist and agricultural economies built around that character.

It's hard to imagine the region without its most identifying characteristics. But paying attention in planning to civic and open space has even more practical positive outcomes.

Historic plazas and other community civic space are



Scenario mapping by residents: September, 2014. South, Central, and North from top to bottom

All Images Credit: Dennis Quintana

the day-to-day meeting places for social interaction and commerce. They are where a community's conversations take place. Future enterprises are often launched as a result of those conversations, and relationships are formed that blossom into family formation and into partnerships in projects and programs that knit together community networks.

As pressures for communities' self-reliance grow, responsible leveraging of agricultural lands – perhaps for crops and cultivation methods not yet fully developed – become ever more important. Assuring access to those lands and developing irrigation and flood control strategies to sustain future crops are crucial components of planning for growth.

Economic Opportunity

The advantages of population and job growth are not shared equally throughout Doña Ana County. Many who live in the rural communities beyond the social, economic and political orbits of Las Cruces and El Paso, Texas, share similar challenges to those who live outside metro areas throughout the United States. Good jobs are hard to come by. And those that are available may require long commutes that put even more pressure on household budgets and family members' time.

All of these challenges come at a time of deep contraction of funding resources at the federal and state levels, a political reality unlikely to change for the foreseeable future. That puts enormous pressure on government agencies, non-profits and the private sector to identify and partner on strategies likely to leverage available funds to achieve cost-effective results on the scale required.

Infrastructure

Problems of delivering and maintaining basic infrastructure in a 3,800 square-mile county are especially acute in the sparsely settled unincorporated regions. Managing storm water, providing access to safe drinking water, building and maintaining adequate transportation options are all budget-straining challenges.

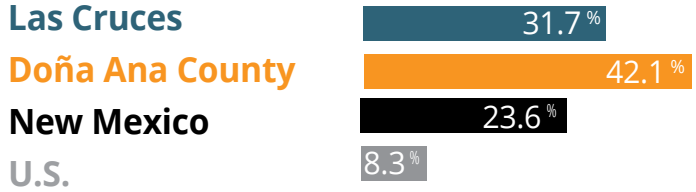
Residents recognize both the challenges and the complexities of coming up with satisfactory solutions – or at least workable compromises. Infrastructure issues were among top discussion topics during workshops to refine the Livability Principles.

Percentage, population speaking language other than English at home (2008-2012)

Percentage, persons below poverty level (2008-2012)

Per capita annual income, in 2012 dollars (2008-2012)

Percentage, hispanic-owned businesses (2007)



Source: U.S. Census

Image Credit from top: Dennis Quintana, Angela Roberson, Dennis Quintana, Dennis Quintana

Public Safety

Closely aligned with concerns about infrastructure are issues related to public safety. The enormity of the County strains the resources of fire, sheriff, and emergency departments. Residents expect greater clarity about how and where those resources will be invested. With goals of reducing response time, and the pressures of anticipated growth, the extension of services will be strained if the growth isn't managed in an efficient manner.

Even more directly connected with infrastructure planning are the dangers of flash flooding, especially in rural areas distant from immediate help. With more unpredictable and more intense weather events likely, the priority for flood control planning is high, and topics related to storm water management are likely to be part of many aspects of future land use planning.

Health and Education

Participants in the Livability Principles workshops stressed the need to incorporate goals for improving community and family health and access to educational opportunities. Although not specifically listed among the six Livability Principles, health and education aspirations are nonetheless implied.

Community health is strengthened when residents have access to safe drinking water, but threatened by the overreliance on automobiles for daily tasks, by the difficulty of adding fresh, healthy food to family diets, by the inability of children to walk to neighborhoods schools, and by parks that are undeveloped. So by planning infrastructure in ways that ensure access to drinkable water and transportation alternatives that include walking and biking, health benefits are among likely outcomes of planning. Similarly, preserving options for local agriculture and supporting farmers markets serve both the local economy and community health goals.

Access to educational opportunities, including job training, are part of the economic opportunity goals for raising wages and attracting quality jobs. Educational access, like community health priorities, are better served by planning that enables more convenient and cost-effective connections between where people live, where the jobs are and where they can access medical services and educational opportunities.

ALTERNATIVES FOR THE FUTURE

Image Credit: PlaceMakers

The interdependence of goals complicates planning. If the point is to guide growth in ways that acknowledge reality and address long-range goals, merely redefining and reshaping the Livability Principles appropriate to Doña Ana County and acknowledging their connections only gets us part of the way there.

Strategies have to be prioritized. That means sorting through competing aspirations and assigning emphasis to potential solutions in appropriate locations and in appropriate conditions.

Scenario Planning

Between September 22 and September 27, 2014, some 300 community members participated in three sets of two-day workshops in the south, central and north regions of the County. On the first day in each location, participants discussed questions designed to help with sorting potential strategies:

> *What if a Plan prioritized this approach over this other alternative?*
>
> *Then, if these are the results from pursuing that approach, do they satisfy enough of our goals to be worth the trade-offs?*

A detailed report describing the workshops' response is in the Appendix – p. 36.

PRELIMINARY SCENARIOS

WHERE & HOW TO GROW

Prior to the public workshops, preliminary scenarios were constructed based upon existing trends as a baseline to determine the advantages of types and locations for growth. The baseline included:

- Business as Usual
- Within Existing Communities
- Community Extensions
- New Communities

MEASURING SUCCESS

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

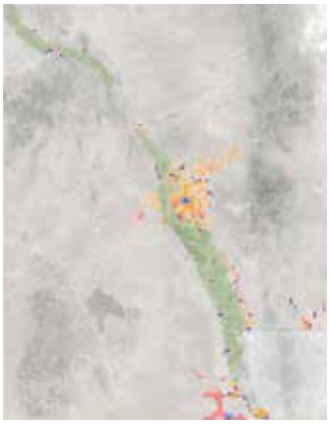
The data from each growth scenario was evaluated and used to rate it's effect on five of the six Livability Principles. Each of the ratings is indicated with a gauge that shows a range of performance from very poor to very good – see the images to the left.

Because of the rural context, some gauges are difficult to move. For example, because of the low density, transit is hard to support except with the City of Las Cruces, so Transportation Choice can't perform at the optimum level.

PREFERRED

SCENARIO

The preferred scenario was a blend of the initial baseline options. While preferring growth in existing places, a number of community extensions and new communities were envisioned. Residents planned for greater growth than projections, so both options are shown.



SCENARIO RATINGS KEY

Ratings for each scenario are calculated across the data that is available in the County for each Livability Principle as compared to national and state standards and is then adjusted for the population and size of Doña Ana County. For example, because the County is so rural, it will likely never reach national standards for transit availability. So the standards had to be adjusted to reflect the rural context.

Because the County is so diverse in character from north to south, many of the ratings are further analyzed just for the specific region. Las Cruces is much denser, and therefore can support bus services more efficiently than smaller communities like Hatch or Chaparral. A detailed report describing the scenarios is in the Appendix – p. 91.

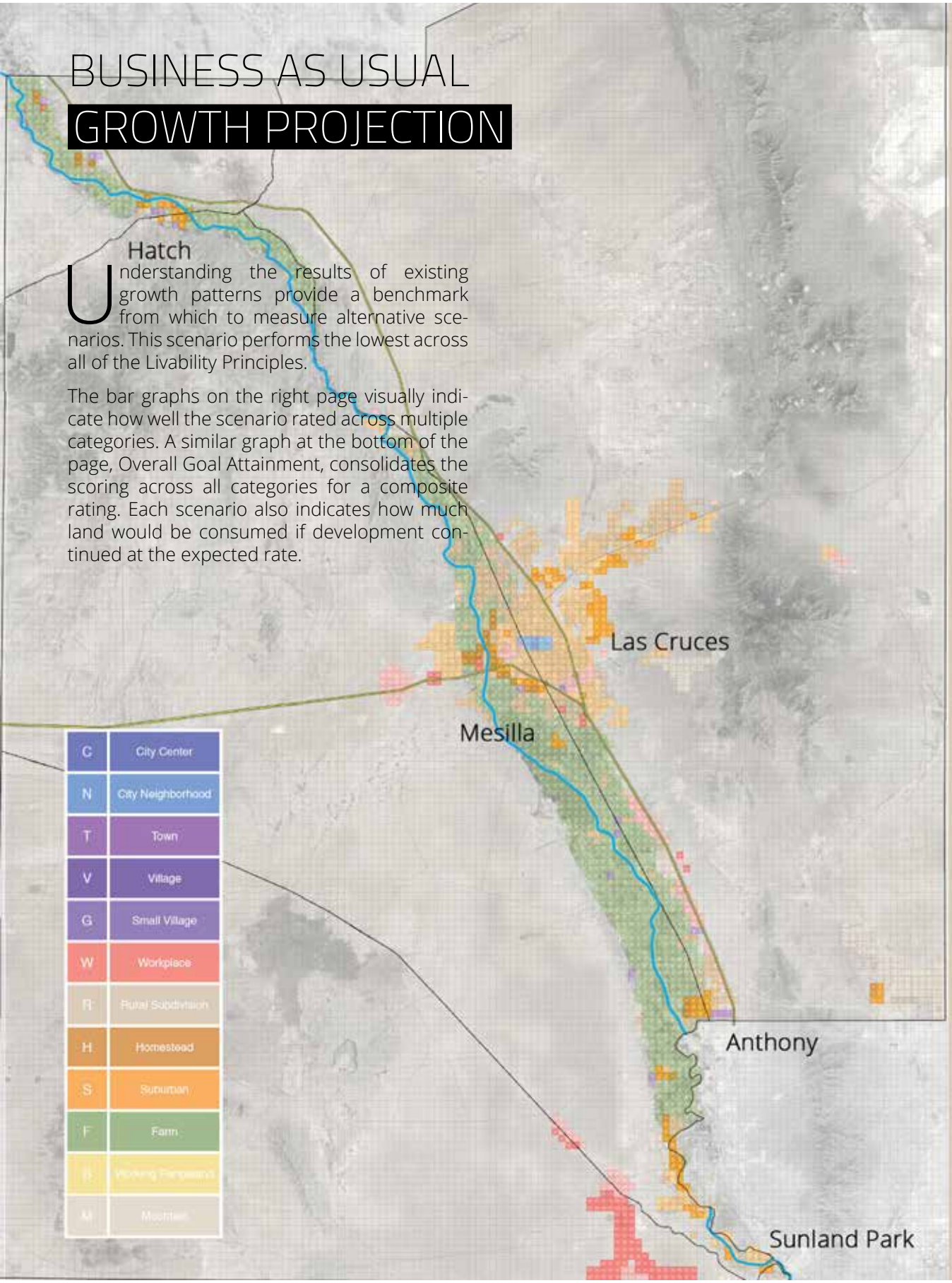
Because multiple standards and numeric systems are used for the ratings, they are simplified here with a range of excellent, very good, good, fair, and poor. The gauges for the Livability Principles are illustrated on the left.

BUSINESS AS USUAL
GROWTH PROJECTION

Hatch

Understanding the results of existing growth patterns provide a benchmark from which to measure alternative scenarios. This scenario performs the lowest across all of the Livability Principles.

The bar graphs on the right page visually indicate how well the scenario rated across multiple categories. A similar graph at the bottom of the page, Overall Goal Attainment, consolidates the scoring across all categories for a composite rating. Each scenario also indicates how much land would be consumed if development continued at the expected rate.



SCENARIO RATING

Support Existing Communities

Preserve Heritage

Transportation Choice

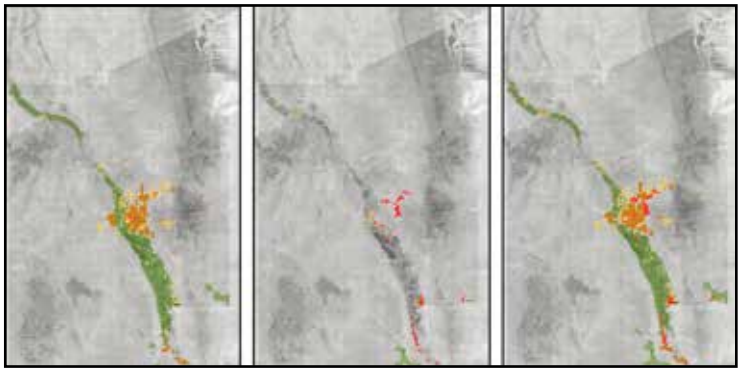
Community Affordability

Economic Opportunity

Policies & Investment

Business As Usual

Understanding the results of existing growth trends provides a benchmark from which to measure alternative scenarios.



Existing Settlements | New Growth | Future Condition

This growth strategy is largely a low intensity suburban format that concentrates around Las Cruces and the border. It replicates the people per household and houses per acre that have been built over the last twenty years along with the amount of commercial and industrial that has been historically developed in proportion to the residential.

The Business as Usual strategy performs the poorest in four out of the five categories that can be rated by scenarios. It's strongest performance is in economic opportunity as development is in proximity to jobs.

Farmland Developed **9,800 acres**

Rangeland Developed **13,800 acres**

Livability Principle Data Rating

Transportation Choice
- Non-car based commuters
- Transportation access
- Vehicle miles traveled
- Household transportation costs

Community Affordability
- Housing costs
- Household transportation costs
- Diversity of housing options
- Domestic water use

Economic Opportunity
- Access to employment
- Diversity of employment
- Jobs / housing balance
- Commercial diversity

Preserving Heritage
- Infill of existing places
- Preservation of rural viewsheds
- Preservation of agriculture

Communities & Neighborhoods
- Diversity of population
- Diversity of land use
- Walkability
- Housing + transportation costs

Overall Goal Attainment

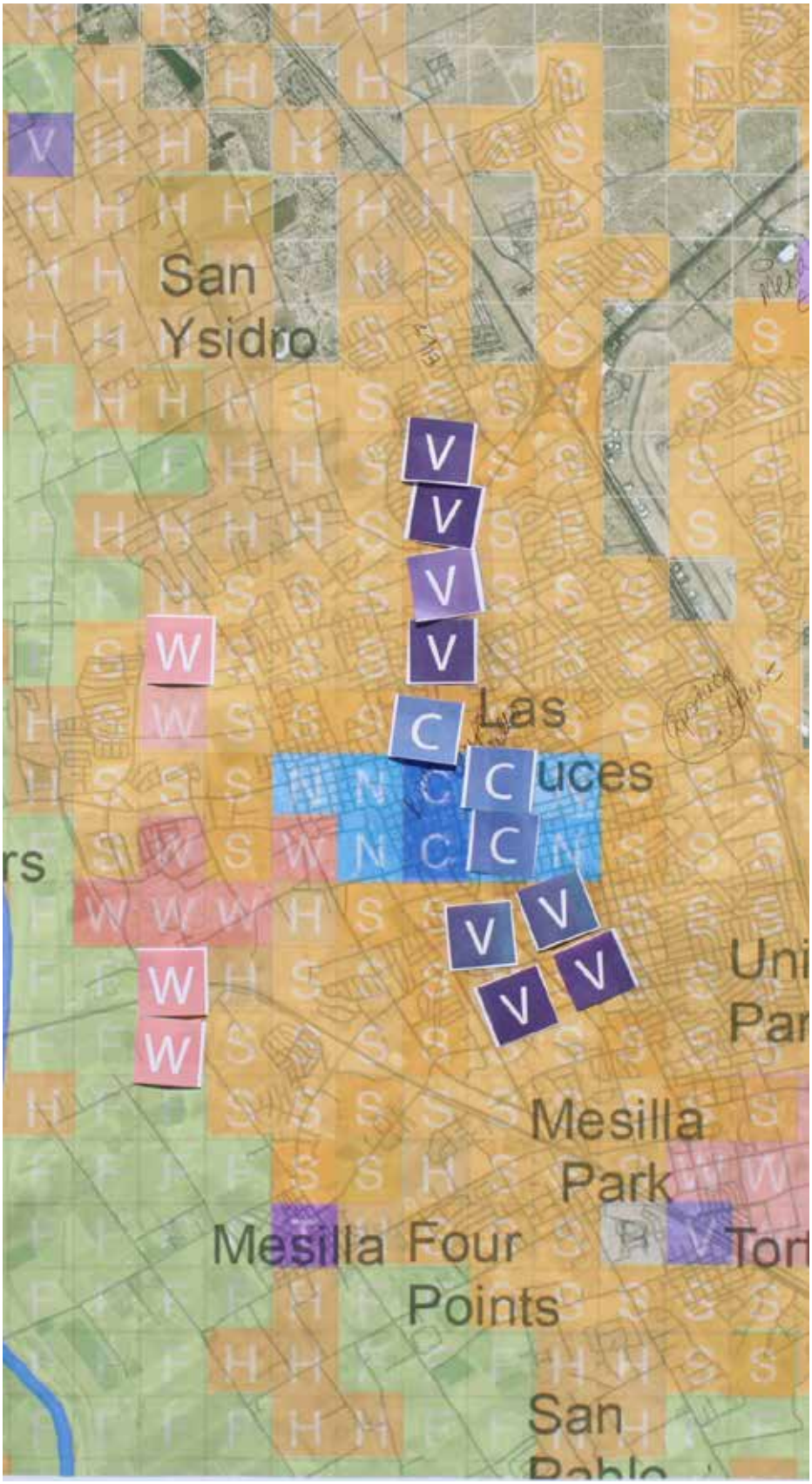
24%

ALTERNATIVES FOR GROWTH

Future conditions may follow any number of potential paths. In order to determine which policies and actions are required and to tailor them to the diversity of conditions in Doña Ana County, growth conditions were simulated and evaluated by the community.

The alternatives included:

1. **Business as Usual**, or the current trend as based upon existing development patterns.
2. **Growing within Existing Places**: Absorbing the majority of new growth within existing communities and urbanized areas through infill development.
3. **Extending Existing Places**: Allocating the majority of new growth at the edges of existing communities.
4. **Growing in New Places**: Allocating the majority of new growth in new communities separate from existing places.
5. **Preliminary Preferred Scenario**: A preliminary scenario was created to reflect community preferences. The community edited this draft to better capture their aspirations for future growth. The result of this edit is the Aggressive Growth Scenario, see p. 28.



All Images Credit: PlaceMakers

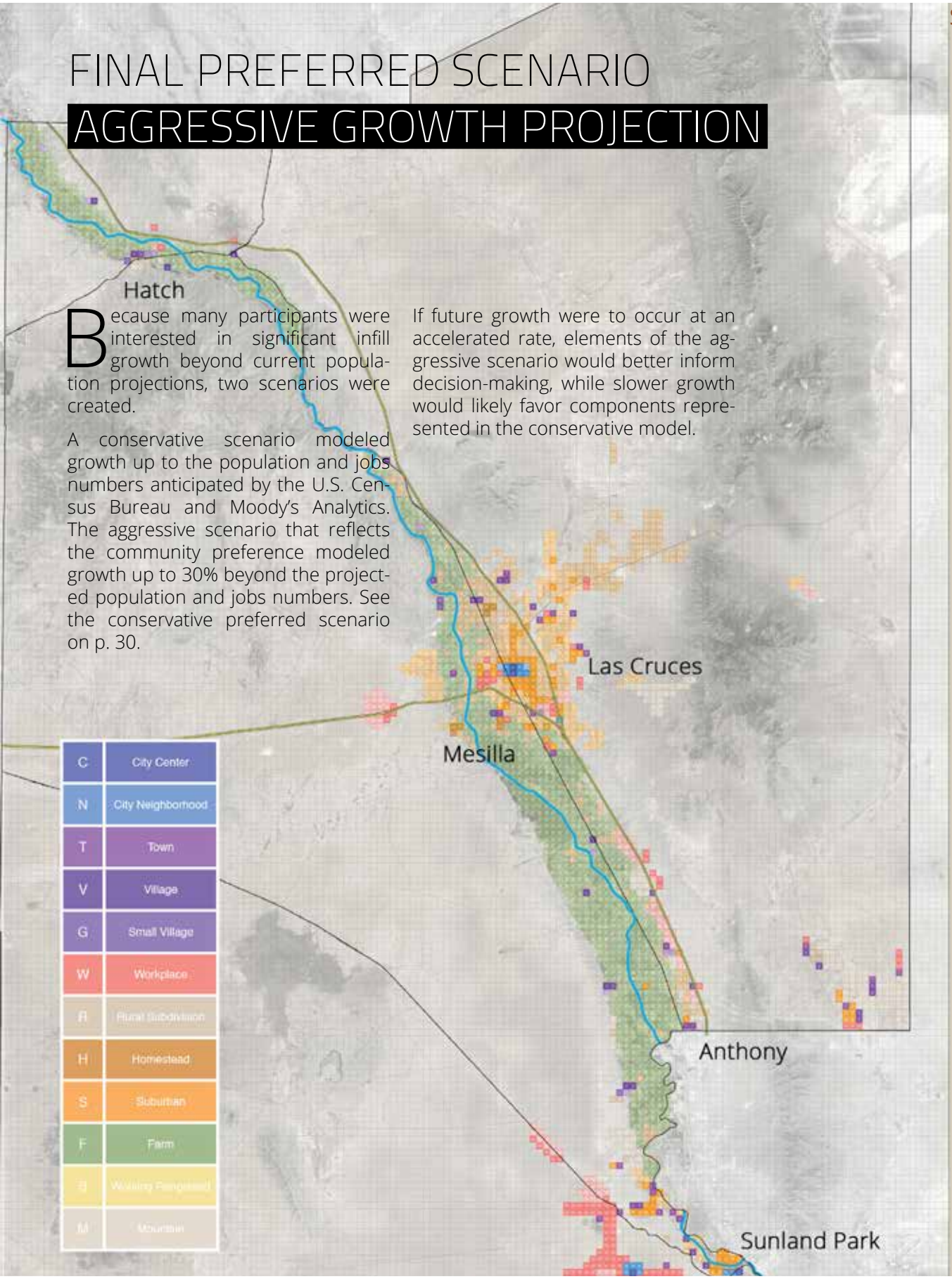
FINAL PREFERRED SCENARIO

AGGRESSIVE GROWTH PROJECTION

Because many participants were interested in significant infill growth beyond current population projections, two scenarios were created.

A conservative scenario modeled growth up to the population and jobs numbers anticipated by the U.S. Census Bureau and Moody's Analytics. The aggressive scenario that reflects the community preference modeled growth up to 30% beyond the projected population and jobs numbers. See the conservative preferred scenario on p. 30.

If future growth were to occur at an accelerated rate, elements of the aggressive scenario would better inform decision-making, while slower growth would likely favor components represented in the conservative model.



SCENARIO RATING

Support Existing Communities

Preserve Heritage

Transportation Choice

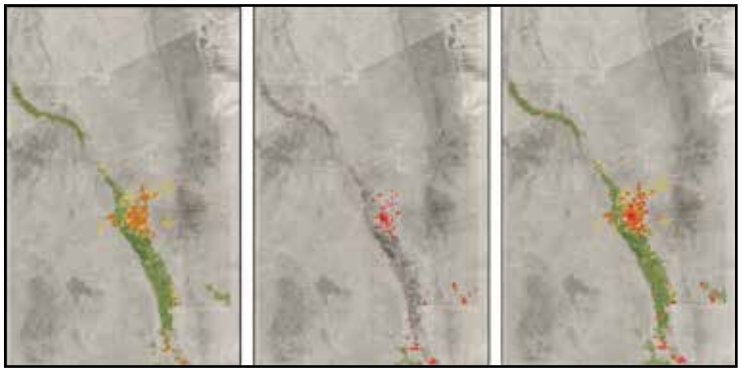
Community Affordability

Economic Opportunity

Policies & Investment

Aggressive Growth Scenario

An adjustment to the preliminary preferred scenario following public feedback while projecting for aggressive growth in both population and jobs.



Existing Settlements | New Growth | Future Condition

This scenario reflects input received from participants at workshops held in the north, central, and south valley. Generally, public input supported infill development over development in new places, and enthusiasm for growth overall. Growth in farmland and rangeland exceeded that anticipated by the preliminary preferred scenario following a general public interest in growth, however at controlled and specific locations.

This aggressive plan exceeds the current population and jobs growth projections, a future which may be realized given the impact of Santa Teresa. Growth locations follow public input with the greatest growth occurring in Las Cruces, Sunland Park, and Santa Teresa.

Farmland Developed **2,100 acres**

Rangeland Developed **13,900 acres**

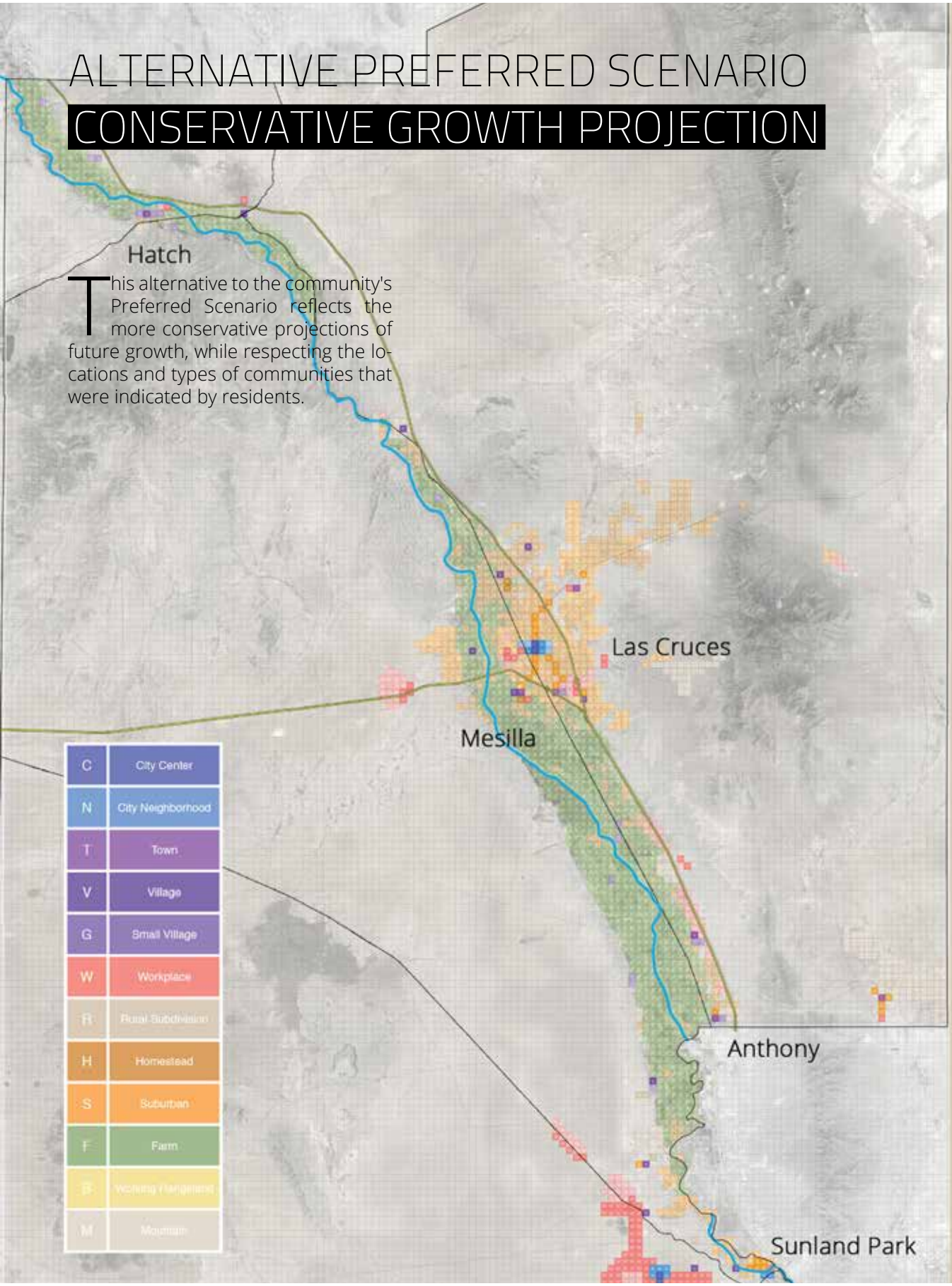
Livability Principle Data Rating

Transportation Choice	
Non-car based commuters	
Transportation access	
Vehicle miles traveled	
Household transportation costs	
Community Affordability	
Housing costs	
Household transportation costs	
Diversity of housing options	
Domestic water use	
Economic Opportunity	
Access to employment	
Diversity of employment	
Jobs / housing balance	
Commercial diversity	
Preserving Our Heritage	
Infill of existing places	
Preservation of rural viewsheds	
Preservation of agriculture	
Support Existing Communities	
Diversity of population	
Diversity of land use	
Walkability	
Housing + transportation costs	

Overall Goal Attainment

67%

ALTERNATIVE PREFERRED SCENARIO
CONSERVATIVE GROWTH PROJECTION



This alternative to the community's Preferred Scenario reflects the more conservative projections of future growth, while respecting the locations and types of communities that were indicated by residents.

SCENARIO RATING

Support Existing Communities

Preserve Heritage

Transportation Choice

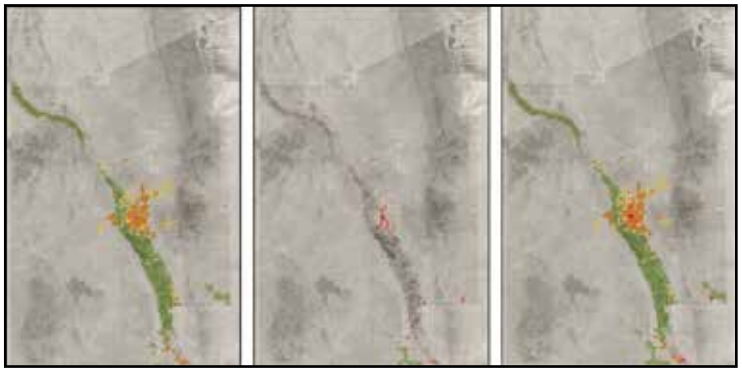
Community Affordability

Economic Opportunity

Policies & Investment

Conservative Growth Scenario

An adjustment to the preliminary preferred scenario following public feedback while projecting for conservative growth in both population and jobs.



Existing Settlements | New Growth | Future Condition

This scenario reflects a reduction to the input received from the community workshops. It respects their preferred locations, but reduces intensity of community types to reflect current growth projections. However, it also respects the character residents selected in each location. For example, if a village was indicated, it might be replaced with a small village, and it a subdivision was selected, it might be replaced with a homestead.

Per the projections, the greatest growth occurs in Las Cruces, Sunland Park, and Santa Theresa.

Farmland Developed 500 acres

Rangeland Developed 9,000 acres

Livability Principle Data Rating

Transportation Choice	
Non-car based commuters	
Transportation access	
Vehicle miles traveled	
Household transportation costs	
Community Affordability	
Housing costs	
Household transportation costs	
Diversity of housing options	
Domestic water use	
Economic Opportunity	
Access to employment	
Diversity of employment	
Jobs / housing balance	
Commercial diversity	
Preserving Heritage	
Infill of existing places	
Preservation of rural viewsheds	
Preservation of agriculture	
Communities & Neighborhoods	
Diversity of population	
Diversity of land use	
Walkability	
Housing + transportation costs	

Overall Goal Attainment

59%

Image Credit: Andrew von Maur

ACKNOWLEDGING THE TRADEOFFS

Generally, the final scenarios perform well across the Livability Principles. But they also demonstrate unavoidable trade-offs.

Higher growth in jobs and population numbers might allow for expanded transportation choices and a broader range of housing, neighborhoods and communities. But accelerated growth would also challenge the preservation of community character and the allocation of scarce resources (such as water).

Livability Principle scoring for both preferred scenarios do not achieve a perfect score due to the following:

- **Supporting Existing Communities**: A lack of walkability and population diversity holds this score back. Despite a significant amount of infill development, the majority of the County would remain tied to automobiles for their daily needs, again because of the region's rural character.
- **Preserving Heritage**: The preservation of rural view sheds scores lowest of the heritage metrics due to anticipated growth in Sunland Park, Santa Teresa and around Chaparral. Because public participants deemed development in these locations desirable, the lower score on this metric is acceptable.
- **Transportation Choice**: Despite growth in infill areas and policy addressing transportation access, a significant percentage of the population will continue living in areas not well transit served. This is simply a reflection of Doña Ana County's rural character.
- **Community Affordability**: Similar to transportation choice, affordability may be improved by regional policy, but new growth cannot correct existing conditions. Transportation costs associated with living in a rural environment as well as the limited housing types that are available in the rural setting constrain community affordability.
- **Economic Opportunity**: Access to employment significantly increases due to intensive growth at Santa Teresa and resulting from transportation investments connecting the southern sub-region with Las Cruces but could be threatened by the concentration in the government and education sectors.

MEASURING SUCCESS
THE DASHBOARD

A vision is realized only by continually testing strategies against goals over time.

The process that ensures adaptability as the unforeseen becomes increasingly foreseeable is similar to the process that shaped this Plan.

Policies and programs must demonstrate both effectiveness and accountability to earn the trust and support of families and businesses. Performance must be measured, and the measurements must take place in plain sight, for all to see the effects of decisions.

In the action section to follow, a comprehensive to-do list lays out tasks ahead, as well as the Livability Principles they're designed to address. To ensure progress is measured in ways that are easy for all to see, the Plan includes a performance monitoring "dashboard."

Dashboard Indicators

Imagine how dangerous it would be to drive a car with no dashboard. It would provide no feedback on progress and no warnings to make sure things are going right. Similarly, Doña Ana County should not move forward in implementing its Comprehensive Plan without a way to assess progress. The Livability Dashboard does just that.

The web-based Dashboard provides key indicators responding to one or more of the six Livability Principles. Each Livability Principle is assigned a trend icon to summarize the direction the metrics in that category are headed: The gauges used to measure the performance of the various scenario alternatives will be used to show how well the County is performing.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE: SUPPORTING EXISTING COMMUNITIES

Goals: Supporting existing communities means making places that we enjoy being in, such as great walking paths, parks, plazas, markets, and community gardens.

Measurement:

High School Graduation Rate

Nearly 77% of adults in Doña Ana County have graduated from high school, which is an increase from the 75.5% rate in 2009, but significantly lower than the U.S. rate of 86%.

Other Measurements:

- **Adult Obesity Rate:** Nearly 31% of adults in Doña Ana County are obese, which is higher than the New Mexico rate of 26%.
- **Fruit and Vegetable Consumption:** Only 20% of adults in Doña Ana County eat at least 5 servings of fruit and vegetables per day.
- **Teen Birth Rate:** There were 35 births per 1,000 teenage girls in Doña Ana County in 2012, a rate more than twice the national average of 17.
- **Child Asthma Hospitalizations:** Doña Ana County had 9 asthma hospitalizations per 10,000 children in 2012, a rate much lower than the statewide value of 17, indicating the County has relatively clean air.

Doña Ana County Diversity

Group	Number	Percent of Total
Total Population	209,233	100.0%
One race	202,889	97.0%
White alone	154,989	74.1%
Black or African American alone	3,656	1.7%
American Indian	3,147	1.5%
Asian alone	2,227	1.1%
Pacific Islander alone	185	10.0%
Some other race alone	38,685	18.5%
Two or More Races	6,344	3.0%
Hispanic or Latino (any race)	137,514	65.7%
Not Hispanic or Latino	71,719	34.3%
White alone	62,992	30.1%

Source: UNM Bureau of Business & Economic Research (BBER), 2015

To track how the communities and neighborhoods in the County are supporting their residents with livable places the County may want to develop data sets to measure tree canopy, sidewalks, multi-use paths, and community gardens. Tracking this data would be possible through Engineering Department and Facilities and Parks Department, but would require funding.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE: PRESERVE HERITAGE

Goals:

Concentrate growth and funds for investment in established communities.

Measurement: Population Diversity

Doña Ana County has remained diverse from 2009 to 2012 while population grew.

Measurement: Commercial Farming Acres

Doña Ana County has lost acres in farmland since 1974.

Other Measurements: In the future, the County may choose to track other elements of heritage preservation, such as preservation of historical assets, languages spoken, and traditional festivals.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE: TRANSPORTATION CHOICE

Goals:

Develop safe, reliable, and affordable transportation choices to decrease household transportation costs, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and promote public health.

Measurement:

Share of workers not driving alone to work

The share of Doña Ana County workers biking, walking or taking transit to work remained steady from 2010 to 2012, but carpooling and working from home fell slightly, so the overall share of workers not driving alone fell from 20% to 18%. Workers with transportation choices other than driving alone can save time and money while reducing congestion and pollution.

Measurement:

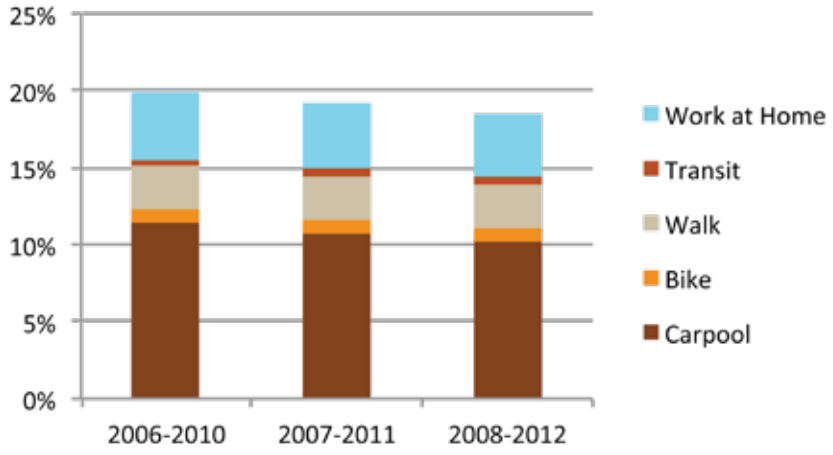
Vehicle Miles Traveled Per Household

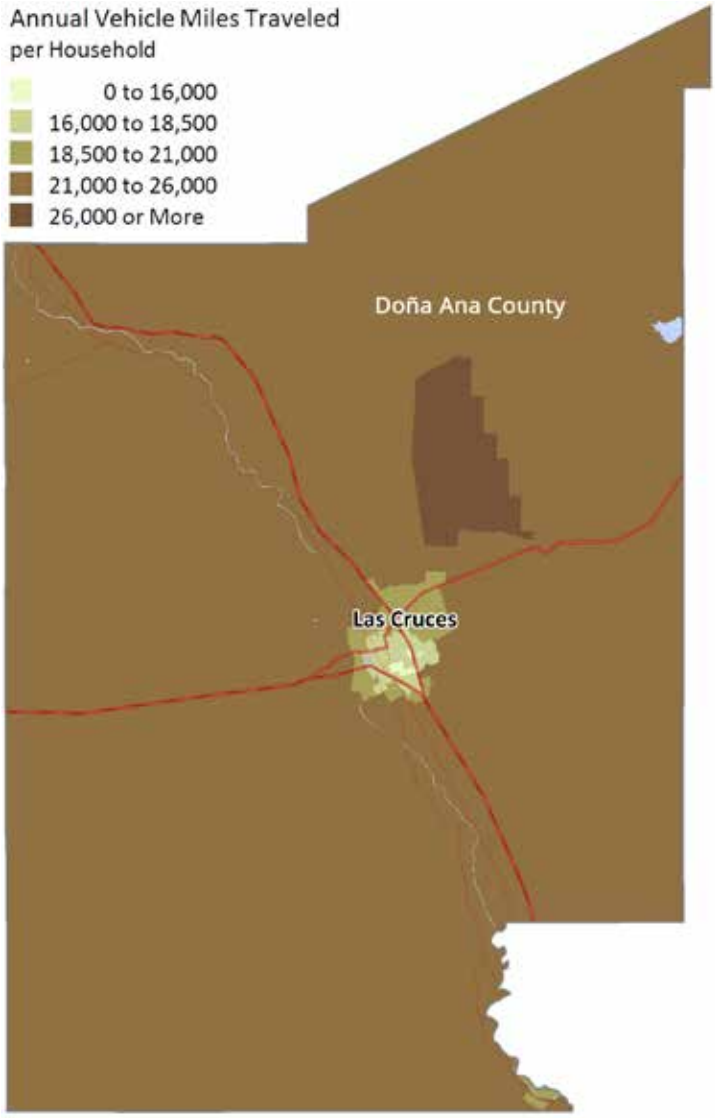
A typical regional household living in Doña Ana County drove 20,000 miles in 2011, much more than households living in walkable areas with transportation options.

Other Measurements:

- **Transit Connectivity Index:** Transit access in Doña Ana County is very limited, scoring just a 3 on a scale of 0 to 100.
- **Metric Tons of Carbon Dioxide from Household Driving:** Households in Doña Ana County emitted 646,000 metric tons of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide in 2011 by driving.

SHARE OF WORKERS NOT DRIVING ALONE TO WORK





Source: Center for Neighborhood Technology, 2015

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE: COMMUNITY AFFORDABILITY

Goals:

Make decisions that support more diverse and affordable communities across the region.

Measurement:

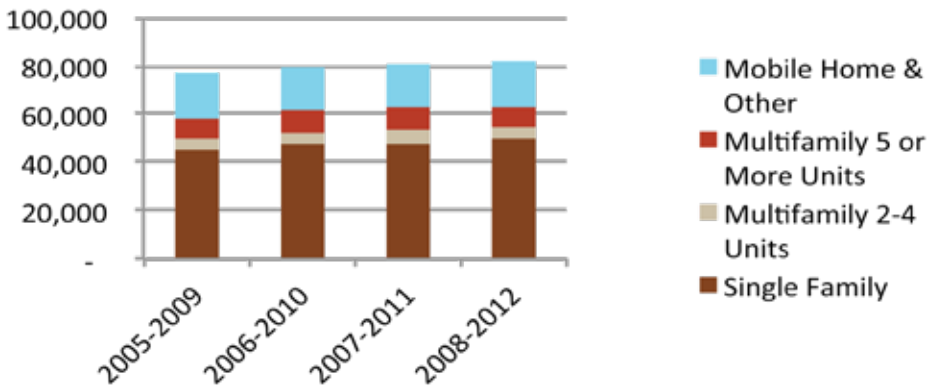
Median monthly housing costs

Median monthly housing costs in Doña Ana County grew 7% from 2001 to 2012 from $674 to $718, but remain lower than the New Mexico median of $771.

Other Measurements:

- **Residential Density:** Doña Ana County has only 1.6 households per residential acre, a much lower density than Las Cruces (2.7) or Albuquerque (4.3).
- **Housing + Transportation Costs as Share of Regional Median Income:** A typical household in Doña Ana County spends 60% of their income on housing and transportation combined, much higher than the 45% level considered affordable.
- **Diversity of Housing Types:** The types of housing in Doña Ana County became slightly less diverse between 2009 and 2012, with growth focused in single family homes.
- **Other affordable communities indicators:** Affordability has other elements for which data are not yet available on a county wide basis, but would be worth tracking, including affordable housing developments, workforce housing near jobs, utility costs, and infrastructure costs.

DIVERSITY OF HOUSING TYPES



Source: U.S. Census

Image Credit: Andrew von Maur

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE: ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Goals: Ensure access to education and quality jobs for all.

Measurement:

Jobs in Doña Ana County

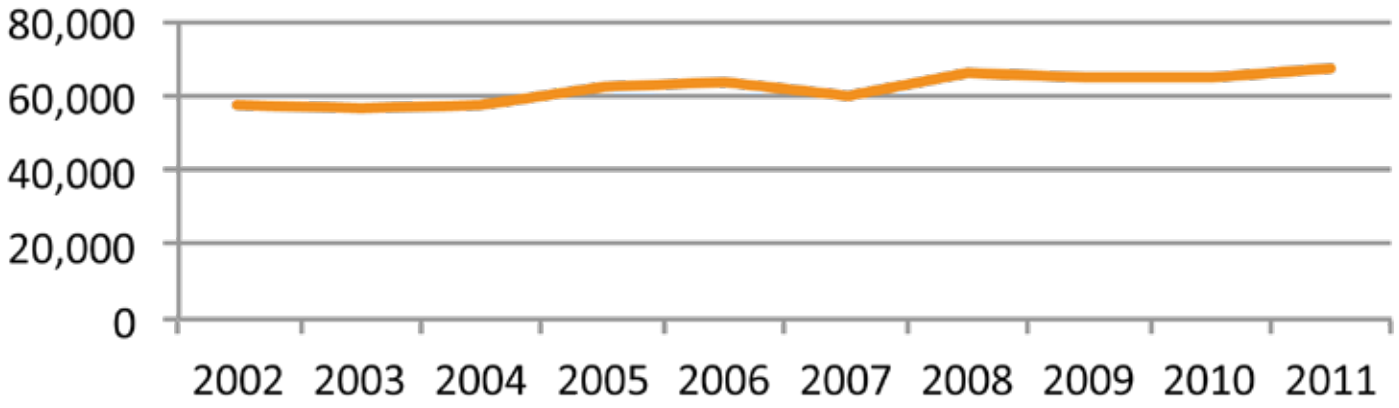
Doña Ana County had 67,612 jobs in 2011, an addition of nearly 10,000 jobs since 2002.

Other Measurements:

- **Median Household Income:** The median household income in Doña Ana County has risen nearly $3,000 between 2009 and 2012 from $35,500 to $38,500.
- **Percent of Population in Poverty:** Doña Ana County has had a steady poverty rate of 25% to 26% of the population from 2009 to 2012.
- **Percent of Population Under 18 in Poverty:** The poverty rate for children in Doña Ana County has grown from 35% to 37% from 2009 to 2012.
- **Percent of Population 25 and Older with Bachelor's Degree or Higher:** The share of Doña Ana County adults with college degrees remained steady at about 26% from 2010 to 2012, which is slightly lower than the U.S. rate of 29%.
- **Transit Access Shed:** One can only travel 7 square miles of Doña Ana County within 30 minutes on transit.
- **Employment Diversity:** A healthy economy has a diversity of employers and employment options. The diversity of employment in the County stayed relatively even between 2002 and 2011. However, the County has a far greater share of Educational Services jobs and a lower share of manufacturing jobs than is typical for the U.S.

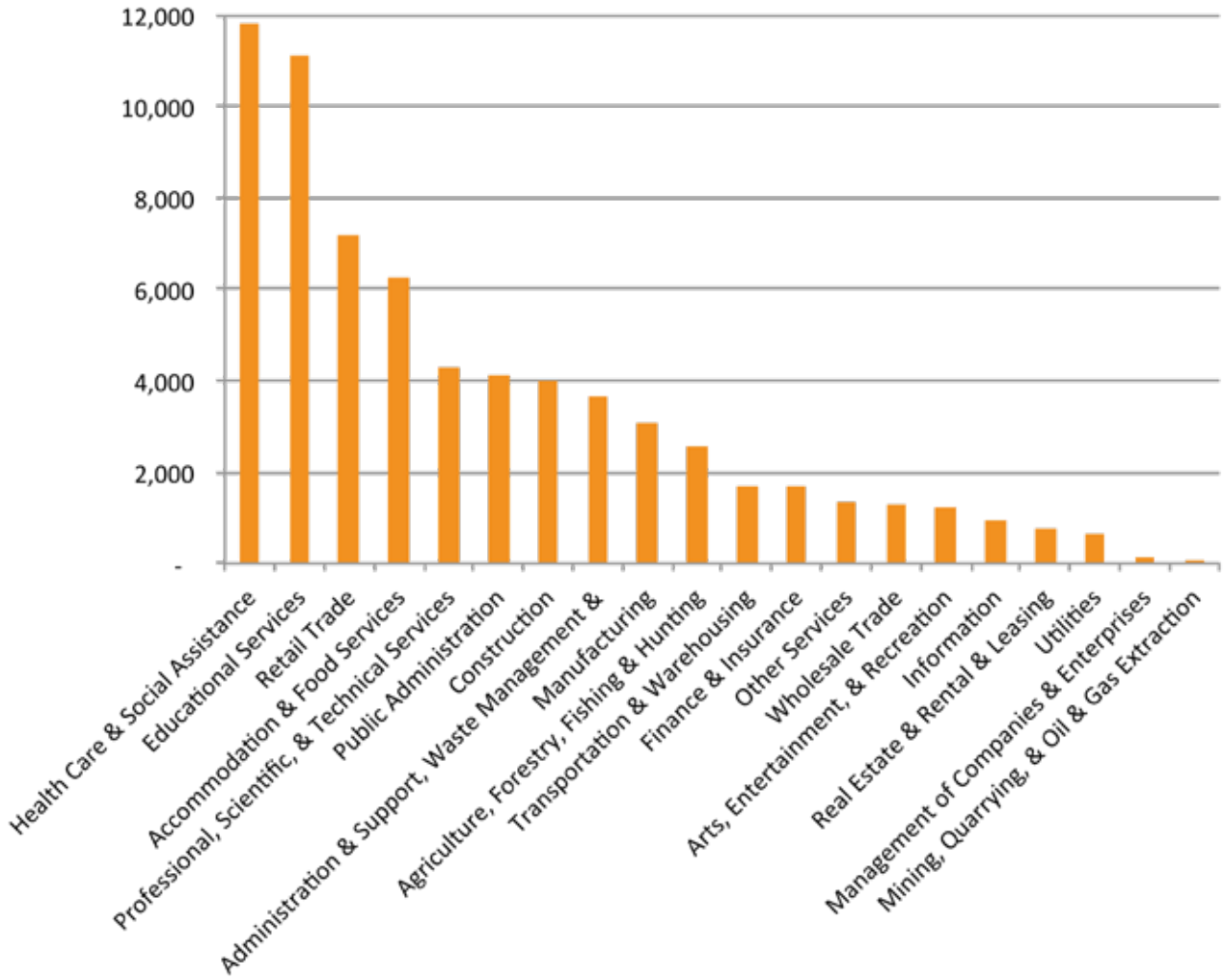
It is important the County track the economic outcomes it wants. There are other trends the County can track in the area of economic opportunity as data are available – including business start-ups, business success rates, and sales totals.

JOBS IN DOÑA ANA COUNTY



Source: U.S. Census

JOBS BY INDUSTRY SECTOR, 2011



Source: BBER, 2014

Both Images Credit: Dennis Quintana

EVALUATING THE GROWTH ALTERNATIVES

With the importance of economic development and improving living conditions within the County, the cost of growth is extremely important. Should population growth occur in line with either the community's aggressive preferred scenario or the alternative conservative scenario, the public sector cost saving would be significant.

The conservative, or census-based, **alternative scenario** is projected to create an annual net fiscal impact of almost **$2 million annual savings** over the business as usual scenario, in today's dollar. The aggressive **preferred scenario** would create a **$4 million savings per year** in fiscal impact over the business as usual scenario.

This analysis considers the cost of utilities, roads, school transportation, and maintenance of infrastructure. It assumes a consolidated water/wastewater utility based upon the cost and revenue structure of the Las Cruces utility. This estimate does not make assumptions about rising rates for utilities nor taxation.

Net Fiscal Impact on Doña Ana County Government

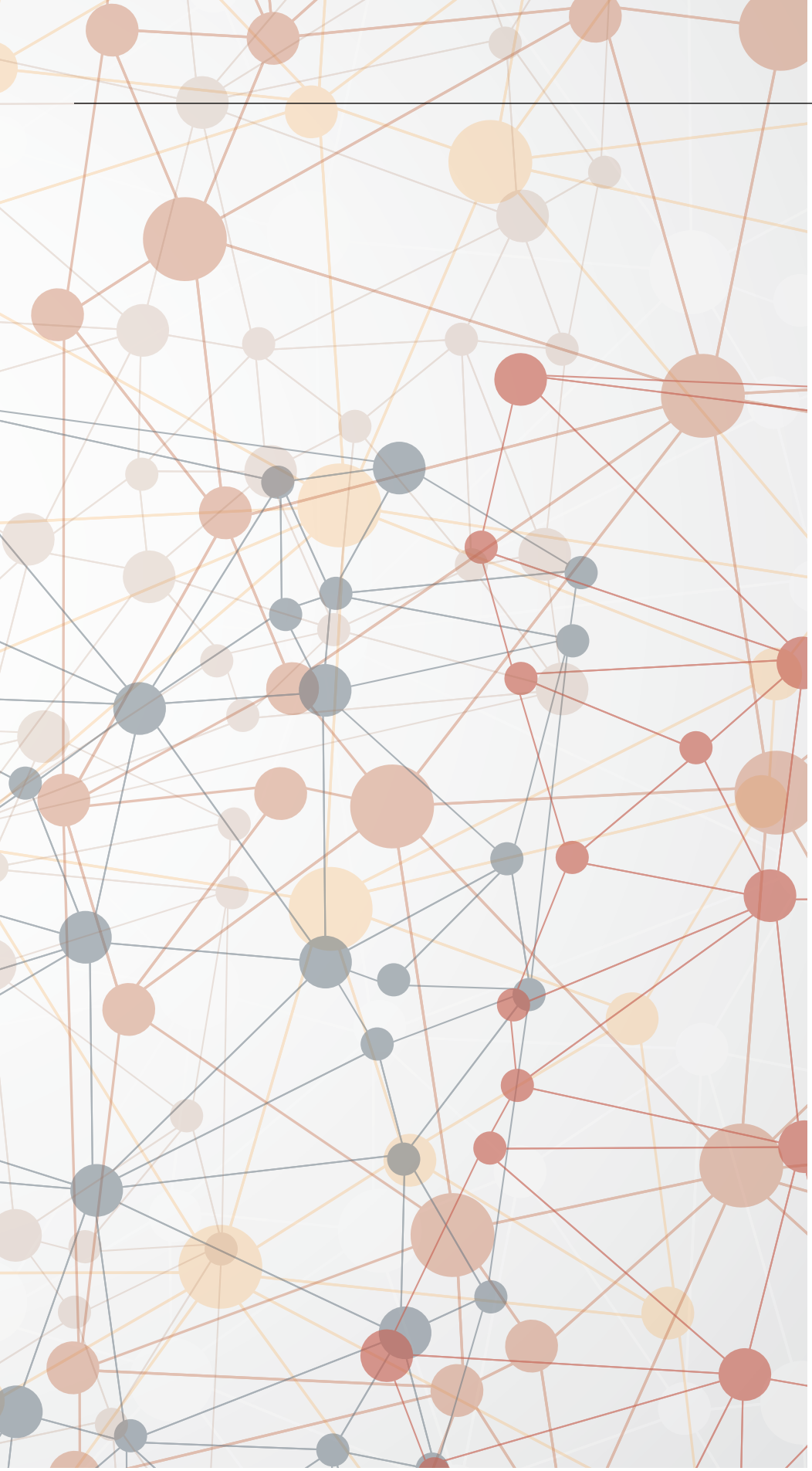
SCENARIO	TOTAL	PER CAPITA	PER ACRE
BUSINESS AS USUAL	$ (2,050,000)	$ (6)	$ (19)
CONSERVATIVE PREFERRED	$ (80,000)	$ 0	$ (1)
AGGRESSIVE PREFERRED	$ 1,900,000	$ 4	$ 19

Net Fiscal Impact on Water/Wastewater Utilities

SCENARIO	TOTAL	PER CAPITA	PER ACRE
BUSINESS AS USUAL	$ (6,900,000)	$ (19)	$ (64)
CONSERVATIVE PREFERRED	$ (4,746,000)	$ (14)	$ (50)
AGGRESSIVE PREFERRED	$ (1,946,000)	$ (4)	$ (19)

Source: Smart Growth America (SGA) and RCLCO

BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE **STRATEGIC ACTIONS**



INTER-RELATIONSHIPS

Writing about future development issues is like pulling the thread on a knitted sweater – everything is connected to everything else.

Even though this plan is organized according to key strategies, we know that every one of these topics is intrinsically linked to all of the others. The following four strategies cover elements for which the Plan can establish policy that will achieve the Doña Ana County Livability Principles.

Infrastructure provides the framework for development, and the location and type of infrastructure shapes the location and type of development. Different patterns of development place different demands on infrastructure and public services. The provision of public services shapes where and how people want to live and work. In this region, the availability and quality of water is a key issue shaping growth patterns, and different growth patterns affect water supply and quality in different ways.

Because of the nature of the interrelationships between actions, it's not always clear which depends on which. For example, greater transit access and more intense development make each other more feasible. It is impossible to say which should be done first, or which depends on the other. Like the Livability Principles, the to-do items all relate to each other to some degree.

USING THIS SECTION
BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE

Support Existing Communities

Preserve Our Heritage

Transportation Choice

Promote Affordable Communities

Enhance Economic Opportunity

Coordinate Polices and Investments

SECTION STRUCTURE

Throughout this Strategic Actions section, you'll find sections organized by **Strategies**, **Goals**, **Actions**, and **Responsible** parties. Each Strategy has subsections that are introduced by narrative and followed by Goals and Actions for implementation. With each Action, you'll see which **Livability Principles,** above, are addressed by the Action, as well as **who's responsible** to get it done.

STRATEGIES

The **Strategies** include the various threads in the sweater and all directly impact the Livability Principles. Each sub-section will begin with a detailed description of the **Strategy** and the context within Doña Ana County. Following the narrative there will be a number of pages with the goals and actions that are included under the **Strategy**.

GOALS

Each **Goal** describes the desired result for a particular topic based on the community's vision. Within each strategy, there are multiple **Goals** that work together to support the Livability Principles.

ACTIONS

Every goal is followed by **Actions** that will implement the goal. Each of the pairs of goals and actions has a set of tags representing the Livability Principles to which it most applies. These are represented by the icons on the facing page and described on p. 13 The Livability Principles. Since many of the items apply to all of the Livability Principles, the list is capped at three tags in order to keep the focus on the most important Livability Principles for each item.

RESPONSIBLE

For the actions to be accomplished, the Plan must identify the individuals or organizations that are **Responsible** to complete each action. Many of these will require coordination across department, agencies, organizations, and governments. Coordinating the actions will be critical to the successful implementation of the Plan.

STRATEGY 1
GUIDE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

Image Credit: Google Earth

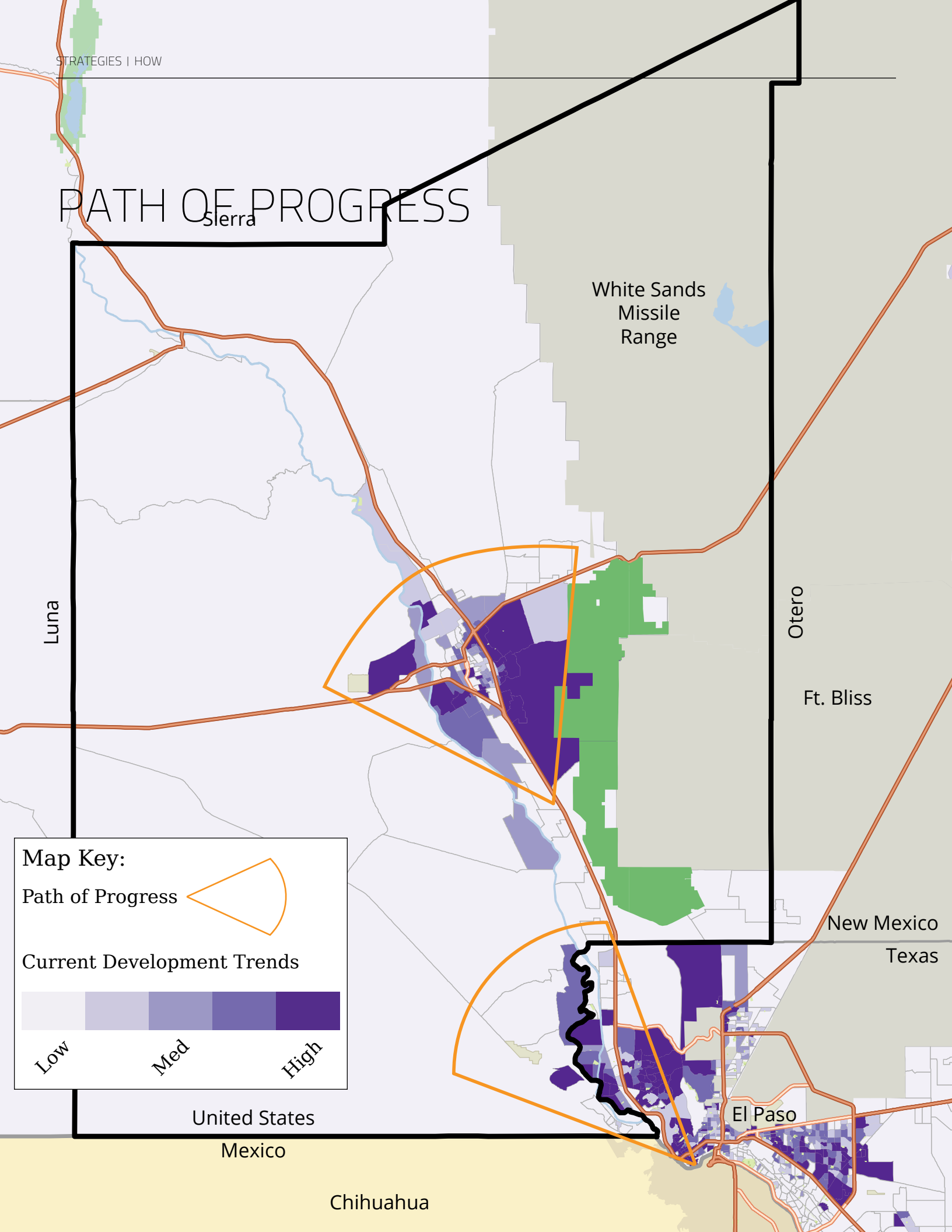
POPULATION & EMPLOYMENT

The County is on the brink of significant employment and population growth that can change it's commercial and residential markets.

Doña Ana County is a gateway for international trade and a hub of retail transportation – and trade offers opportunities for growth. In 2010 Doña Ana County had a population of 210,000. It can expect to grow by about 85,000 people over the next 25 years. This is a significant, but not an overwhelming rate of growth: about 1.1% per year. It will likely also add about 42,000 jobs in the next 25 years.

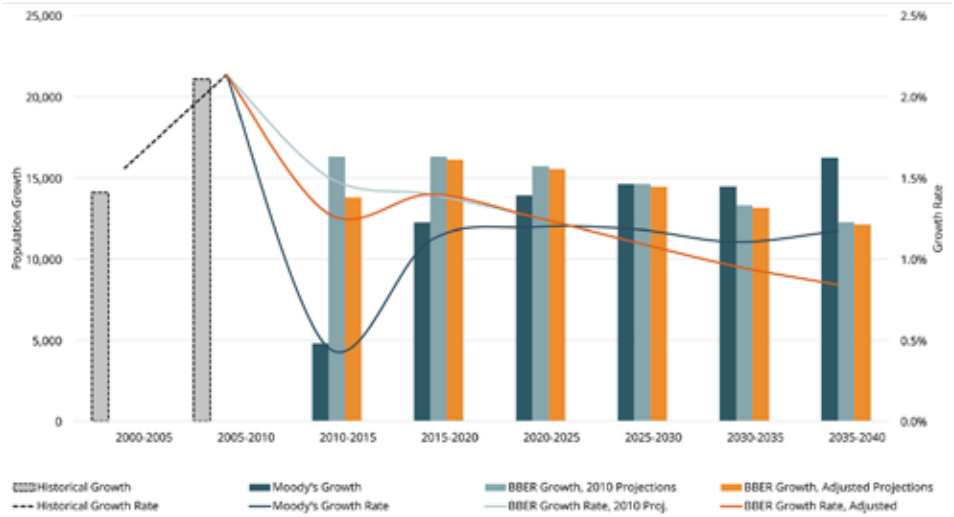
Doña Ana County felt the effects of the Great Recession. It lost jobs and job growth. While New Mexico is currently 4.4% below its peak of total jobs in 2007, Doña Ana County has fared slightly better than the State. The County lost fewer jobs during the recession and has seen positive, though slower, job growth since 2010. As of 2014, Doña Ana County has 71,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs. Employment is expected to grow by 42,000 jobs in the next 25 years, resulting in 113,000 full time jobs by 2040. The industries of leisure and hospitality, information, construction, and manufacturing are expected to have the highest rates of growth over the next 25 years. (RCLCO, 2014) The detailed report is in the Appendix, see p. 167 Economics & Land Development.

PATH OF PROGRESS



Historical and Projected Population Growth and Growth Rates

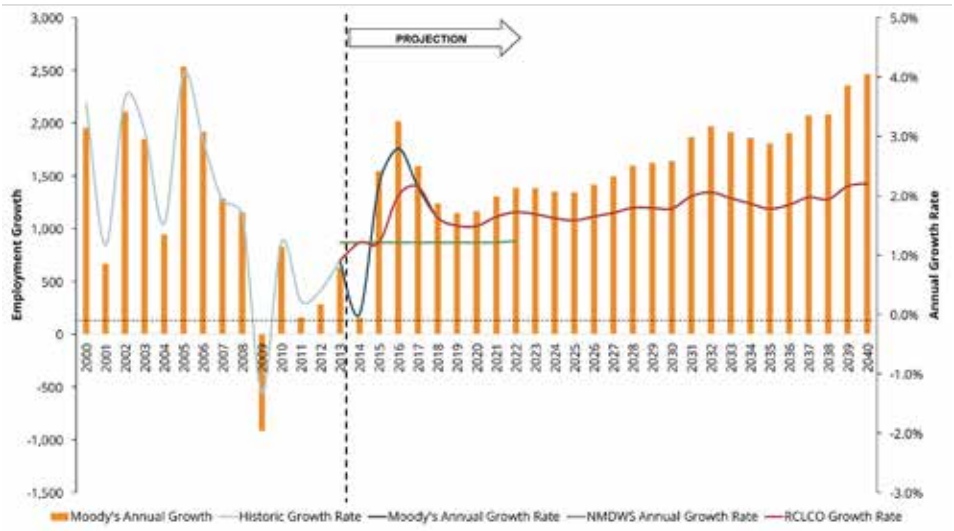
Doña Ana County, NM 2000 – 2040



Sources: Moody's Economy, University of New Mexico BBER

Projected Employment Growth

Doña Ana County, NM 2000 – 2040



PATH OF PROGRESS

Map identifies where future development is likely to occur

A "path of progress" where future development will most likely occur was developed. This is based on current household density, employment density, income per person, and new retail centers. New jobs and dwellings have most recently developed in the darkest purple areas on the map to the left, with likely growth moving out from those areas in the orange wedges.

Las Cruces is likely to remain the hub for development activity, which offers the opportunity to develop efficiently — with more infill development than new development on open land. The east side of the City of Las Cruces will likely grow more quickly.

El Paso also has its own path of progress heading northwest from Downtown, and into Doña Ana County. Sunland Park will likely enjoy a significant uptick in growth spurred by border-area industrial activity and the synergy from the growth in NW El Paso.

Image Credit: Dennis Quintana

POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G1.1 Plan Communities for New Population

The County needs to decide where to make investments to prepare for the 85,000 new residents by 2040. People coming to work can help build the economy, but they also need services. If those services' costs are more than matched by the new taxes, then the County will be better able to serve all its citizens. If development is too costly and inefficient, then it will face belt-tightening just as the new residents arrive.

ACTIONS

A1.1 Develop Scenarios for Growth

Develop, and continue to update, well-coordinated scenarios for absorbing new growth, so Doña Ana County can provide adequate services for everyone. The growth should generally be compact, so that it can be serviced in an economically sustainable manner and should support integrated water resources as outlined in the Infrastructure Strategy beginning on p. 98.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Provide More Transportation Choices

Enhance Economic Competitiveness

Support Existing Communities

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
Planning & Zoning Commission (P&Z)

POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G1.2 Avoid the Business as Usual Scenario

The County should establish policies to avoid the Business as Usual Scenario. If trends in Doña Ana County follow the business as usual rather than the Preferred Scenario, this will likely happen:

- Santa Teresa will have significant business, manufacturing, and industrial development near the border crossing and north to the rail yards. However, housing for those new jobs will be mostly in El Paso rather than in the County.
- There will be some growth between Sunland Park and La Union, including some housing to serve the jobs in Santa Teresa. Development will be segregated into different uses and grades, in the usual suburban way.
- Anthony will continue to grow in a suburban and rural pattern at its edges, as an extension of El Paso.
- Las Cruces will continue to grow east on the mesa and into the foothills, west towards the river and further west near the airport. It will also grow haphazardly in a rural fashion toward the north.
- Radium Springs and the north valley will grow a small amount, following suburban and haphazard rural settlement patterns.

All of this type of development is expensive, for private developers, the school districts, the utility providers, and Doña Ana County. See p. 39 Evaluating the Growth Alternatives for further detail.

ACTIONS

A1.2 Limit Infrastructure Extensions to Support the Preferred Scenario

Since the services and infrastructure cost of business as usual is excessive, the County should establish policies to minimize the cost of extensions to infrastructure by ensuring that each investment is justified by need. This way, the County can take advantage of growth trends without succumbing to developments' tendency to leapfrog.

POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT
GOALS | ACTIONS

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

G1.2 Continued

Support Existing Communities

Enhance Economic Competitiveness

Promote Affordable Communities

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
Planning & Zoning Commission (P&Z)
Community Development Department (CDD)

POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G1.3 Identify the Locations Where Development Will Tend to Go

The "path of progress," includes likely locations for development in Doña Ana County. These consider historic household and employment density, per capita income, and new retail centers. The center of Las Cruces is likely best for job growth, and areas for new development are to the east of Las Cruces and northwest of El Paso. The path of progress for industrial growth is mainly around Santa Teresa and on the outskirts of Las Cruces.

ACTIONS

A1.3 Incorporate the Path of Progress into the Comprehensive Plan

Incorporate the Path of Progress into the Sector Plan for Doña Ana County, including the likely location for industry near the border and Las Cruces.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Provide More Transportation Choice

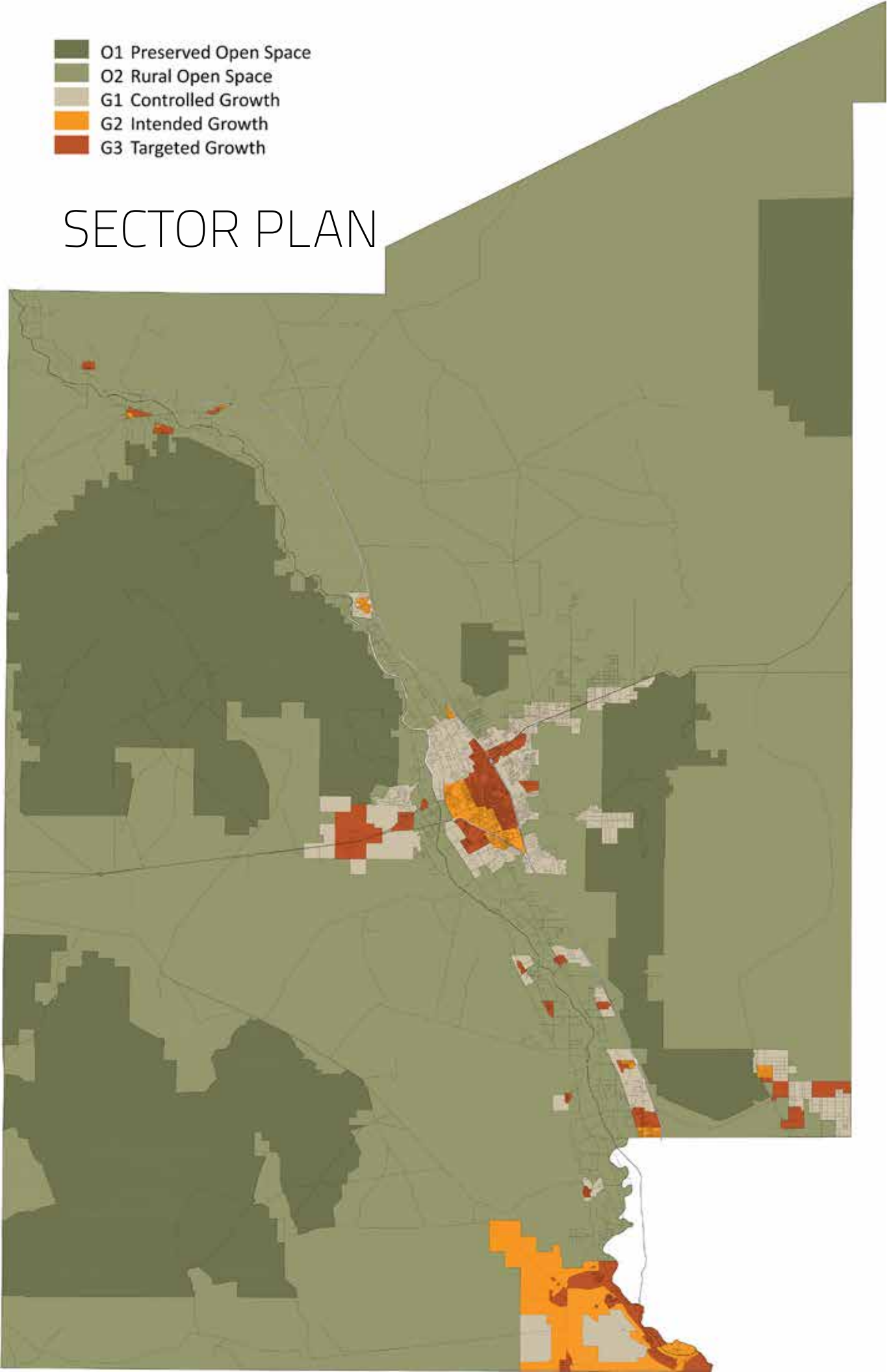
Enhance Economic Competitiveness

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
Planning & Zoning Commission (P&Z)

SECTOR PLAN


O1 Preserved Open Space
O2 Rural Open Space
G1 Controlled Growth
G2 Intended Growth
G3 Targeted Growth

SECTOR PLAN

REFLECTING THE PREFERRED SCENARIO

This Plan includes a "Sector Plan" on the facing page. It considers the various development scenarios for Doña Ana County, and charts the path that is both predictable enough to direct public and private investment effectively and conservative in that it prioritizes stronger existing communities through infill and continuous development. It considers the physical attributes of the land and its current patterns of development — including proximity to existing infrastructure and limitations on water supply.

- Physical attributes
- Existing community patterns
- Proximity to existing infrastructure

The plan shows sectors. Distinct from land use or intensity, these sectors express whether or not a particular area is intended for growth and what type of growth is expected: controlled, intended, or targeted.

These sectors are not permanently mapped. They should be updated periodically so that the County can keep track of which areas are protected from development, which areas have been developed since the last mapping, and so forth. If land that is in the intended growth sector is developed, for instance, the updated map will reflect that, and map it into the targeted growth sector.

SECTOR COMMUNITY TYPES

Sector	Color	Name	Character
O1		Preserved	Legally preserved open space. Private property within the Organ Mountains National Monument is eligible for development.
O2		Rural	Working lands and small communities.
G1		Controlled	Rural communities, or homesteads adjacent to communities with limited infrastructure.
G2		Intended	Areas that have potential for employment, infill or new towns.
G3		Targeted	Existing developed areas that may be intensified or maintained with their current character.

TYPES OF COMMUNITY

Given this Plan's intention to build complete communities, the Sector Plan locates where types of communities should be built. Thus, this plan has a series of community types that indicate not just a specific intensity of development, but a certain kind of community. Since each of these has its own character, it will have its own pattern of zoning districts within the continuum of intensity.

The community types vary in size and intensity. A small village is smaller and less intense than a village, and a village is less intense than a city center. Each type has a different physical form, so that a village has a distinct center, usually formed around a civic open space. See Appendix, p.111.

Rangeland, Farm, and Workplace are also located since they form the economic power of the County. They are not specifically a complete community with housing and retail, but as employment centers, they should be located convenient to housing. This will reduce transportation costs and increase community affordability for the workforce.

Image Credit: Dennis Quintana

CONTINUUM OF INTENSITY
THE IMPLEMENTATION DEVICE

NATURAL **RURAL** **LOW INTENSITY** **MEDIUM INTENSITY** **HIGH INTENSITY**

The Unified Development Code (UDC) will guide development by using specific types of zoning districts that are based on intensity along with conventional districts based on use.

In conventional zoning, land is regulated by use. In the case of the continuum of intensity, and the historic development patterns in the County's colonias, villages, towns, and cities, all zones permit some residential and some commercial uses. However, both types of use are graduated by intensity so they remain compatible. For example, a quiet home office may be permitted by right in low intensity, but not storefronts. Dwellings will be permitted up to the highest intensity: houses and cottages at the lowest intensity, and apartments in the highest-intensity. Unlike the zoning practices of the last fifty years, this practice also extends to the streets and roads, so that downtown streets and rural roads will be designed to suit their surroundings.

The intensity districts won't apply to all of the County. Many areas are suburban in character and will remain under use zoning.

NATURAL

Image Credit: Ken Stinnett

RURAL

Image Credit: Andrew von Maur

LOW INTENSITY

Image Credit: Andrew von Maur

WORK PLACE – INDUSTRIAL

Image Credit: New Mexico State University

Image Credit: PlaceMakers

Image Credit: PlaceMakers

SECTOR PLAN
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G2.1 Provide a Predictable Way to Allocate Development

The biggest distinctions in where land should be developed are between the places that should be maintained as open space (either in a natural or an agricultural use), places that should develop because of proximity to infrastructure. The plan should designate sectors for open space and land for growth. These should be assigned according to the general type of development that should happen in them. Compact, complete communities in harmony with County character should be encouraged.

ACTIONS

A2.1 Map Sectors to Prioritize Future Development

Designate land in sectors. Codes and other policies should permit or encourage development according to those sectors.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Support Existing Communities

Coordinate Policies and Leverage Investment

Preserve Our Heritage

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
Planning & Zoning Commission (P&Z)

SECTOR PLAN
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G2.2 Ensure Regulations Support the Plan Requirements

Doña Ana County is revising its zoning and other ordinances into a Unified Development Code. This code should address a number of issues:

- Safeguard and extend desirable neighborhood character.
- Safeguard open space.
- Develop in existing locations with existing infrastructure, and extend as necessary.
- Locate industry where it will be convenient for workers.

ACTIONS

A2.2 Update Codes to Provide Tools to Support an Appropriate Physical Structure

The Unified Development Code shall do the following:

- Preserve the existing neighborhoods' character by tailoring the zones to match it, and by blending extensions with the existing communities and neighborhoods.
- Zone for and create incentives for development within the existing neighborhoods and communities — and as extensions of those communities.
- Encourage a variety of building types — particularly for affordable housing — and allow a variety of uses where they are compatible with each other.
- Designate locations for industrial uses where they would be convenient to residents.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Promote Affordable Communities

Enhance Economic Competitiveness

Support Existing Communities

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
Planning & Zoning Commission (P&Z)

SECTOR PLAN
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G2.3 Prioritize Colonias' Infrastructure Improvements

Many Doña Ana County communities suffer from deficits in streets and sidewalks, street lighting, water and wastewater, parks, and stormwater management structures. A priority should be placed on completion of infrastructure within existing colonias.

ACTIONS

A2.3 ICIP Project Updates Should Prioritize Colonia Deficits

The Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan (ICIP) should prioritize investment as directed by the Sector Plan. The Targeted Growth Sector (G3) should be the highest priority for project listing.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Support Existing Communities

Coordinate Policies and Leverage Investment

Preserve Our Heritage

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
County Manager (CM)
Engineering Services Department (ESD)
Regional Utility Providers

SECTOR PLAN
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G2.4 Develop and Redevelop Land Through Well-Coordinated Types of Neighborhoods, District, and Corridors.

Doña Ana County has a range of types of communities. This diversity contributes to the historic and cultural richness of the region and the tourism economy. New communities and redevelopment should reinforce the patterns that have worked in the region.

ACTIONS

A2.3 Develop Specific Types of Communities and Districts With Benchmarks For Infrastructure and Services

The UDC will define specific types of communities that are permitted according to existing infrastructure and proximity to existing development. The benchmarks should be revised periodically, but should for the basis for planning decisions.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Support Existing Communities

Enhance Economic Competitiveness

Preserve Our Heritage

RESPONSIBLE

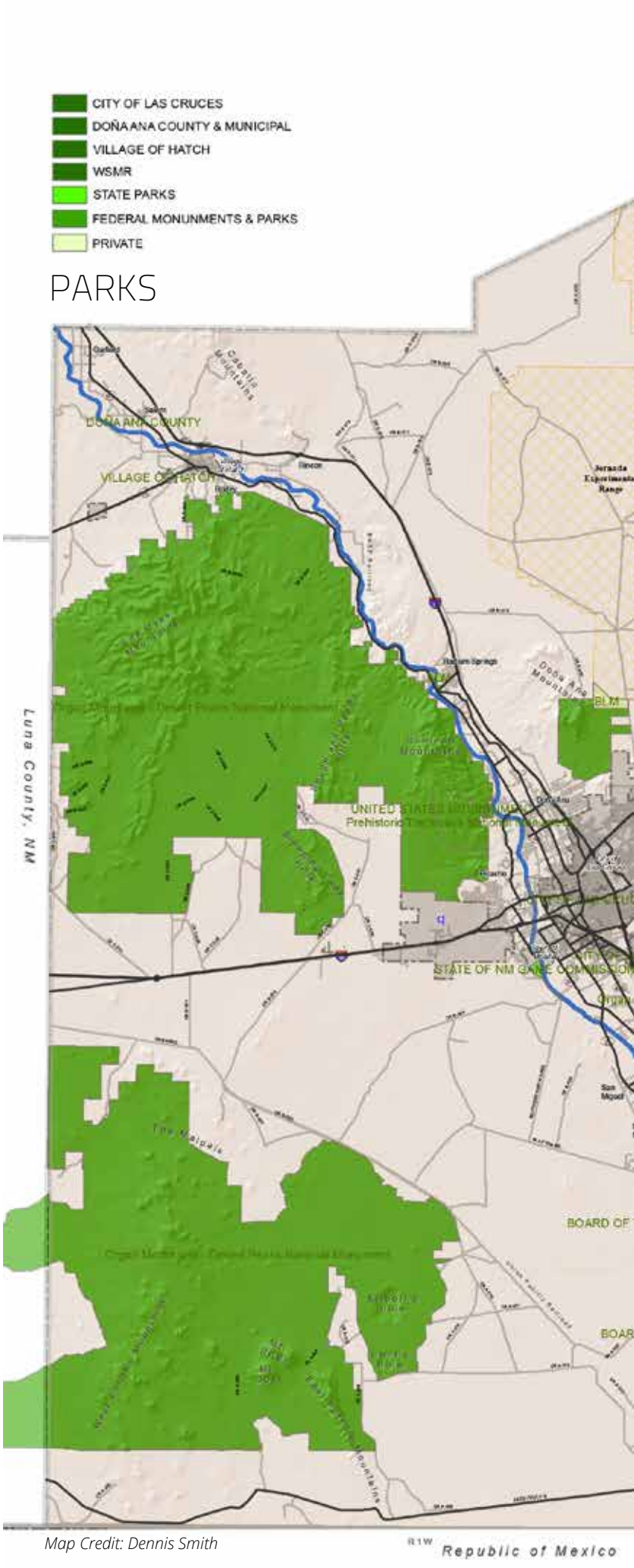
Responsible Entities

Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
Planning & Zoning Commission (P&Z)

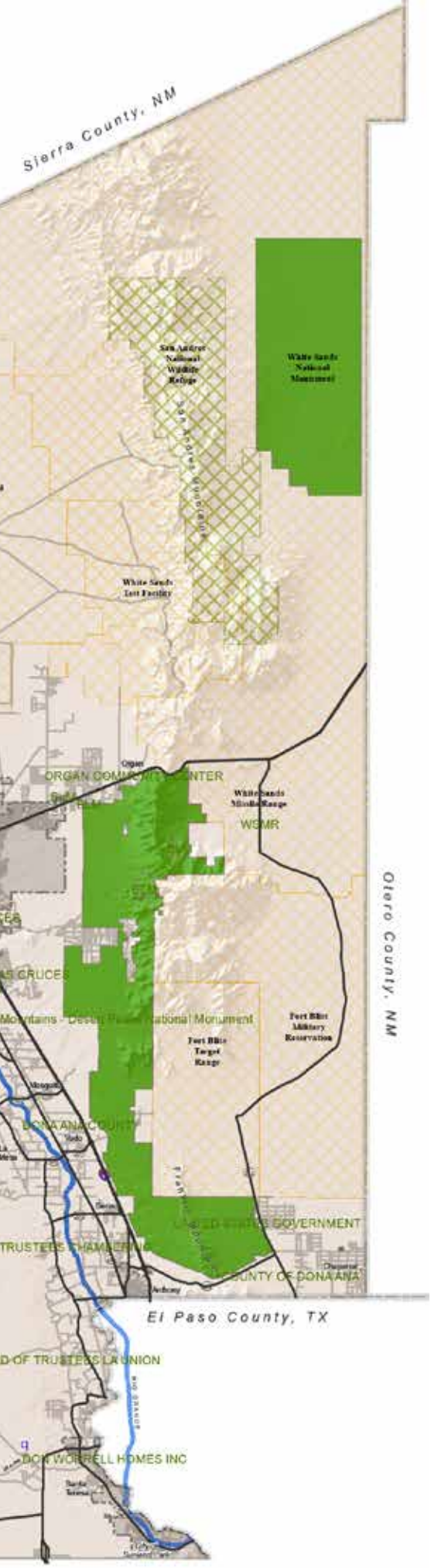
CIVIC, AGRICUL-TURAL & NATURAL LANDS

Various types of open space, including land owned by BLM, and working farmland, create the very special rural character of Doña Ana County. The mountains, the river, and much of the federal and state lands create an undeveloped, natural character. Along the river, the historic farmlands have long provided a green corridor for the region. Whether open fields, dairies, orchards, or pastures, farming has been in the valley since Doña Ana was settled in 1843, and flourished since the arrival of the railroad in the 1880s and 90s. (Wilson, Hordes, Walt, & Division, 1989) The civic spaces throughout the County are the urban contribution to the open space network.

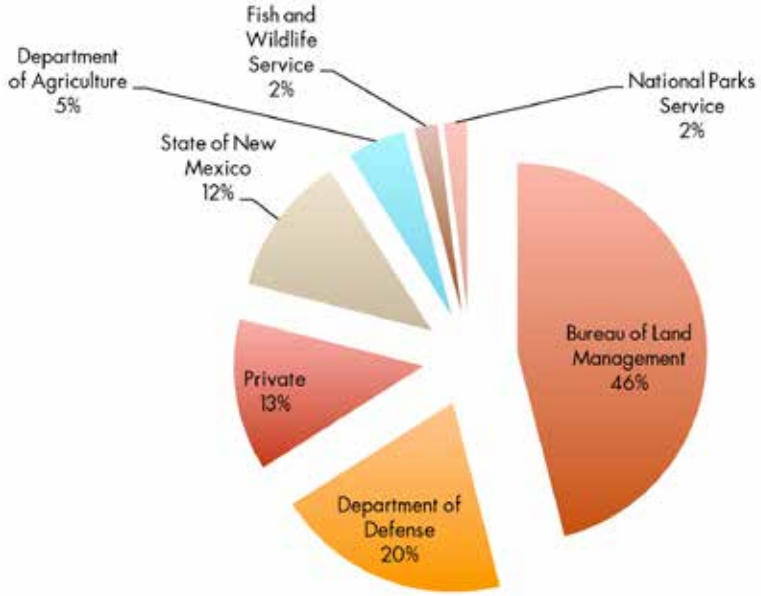
One of the most important characteristics of the region's historic development patterns is that communities center on civic spaces and are separated by open spaces. Civic spaces, like plazas, usually have nearby civic buildings, such as a church. Some communities sit surrounded by countryside. Therefore, in every community type not only does development occur in the continuum of intensity (see p. 54 Continuum of Intensity, but also open space is found on a similar continuum. So this Plan recommends that communities be built with a traditional relationship with surrounding land.



Map Credit: Dennis Smith



Land Ownership



NATURAL LANDS

The New Mexico Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) 2010 – 2014 (New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department, 2009) notes that New Mexicans have increasingly sedentary lifestyles and are disconnected from nature. This results in alarming declines in health, and also a diminished ethic of conservation. The report defines four priorities and recommendations:

1. Promote the livability of all communities through health and fitness;
2. Enhance economic vitality;
3. Properly use and conserve natural resources; and
4. Develop a statewide trail system.

Most open space in Doña Ana County falls under the jurisdiction and management of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the State of New Mexico, see Land Ownership chart above. In addition to existing federal designations for types of open space, the County contains parks on BLM land. There are also State parks and a number of local parks.

The One Valley, One Vision 2040 Regional Plan (Doña Ana County & The City of Las Cruces, 2011) suggested a targeted approach to protecting open space on privately-owned lands, in addition to the protections for federal and state open space areas. It would protect these areas:

- The Rio Grande corridor;
- Scenic vistas and visible hillsides;
- Working agricultural areas in or near communities; and
- Linkages for trails, trail heads, and connection of open space parcels.

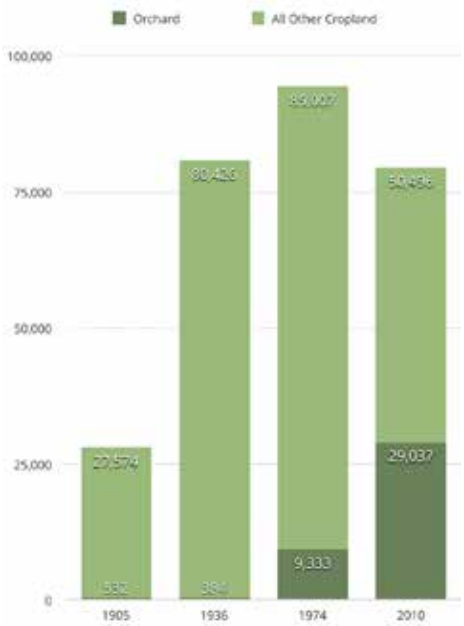
Doña Ana County adopted a County-wide Open Space and Trail Vision Plan in 2005, which includes an array of Core Natural Areas and River Valley Projects. These are linked together by a network of open lands and trails. Six Core Natural Areas are on lands already managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), while other open space areas have yet to be acquired.

TRAILS AND ROUTES

In order that residents can enjoy these rural lands, this Plan proposes a trail system for recreation, health and fitness, and transportation. This offers numerous opportunities for recreation, and should link open spaces and civic spaces together.

As mentioned earlier, the SCORP recommends a state-wide trail network to promote both economic development via tourism, and health via increased activity. The Open Space and Trail Vision Plan should be implemented to align with the State of New Mexico's goal.

Doña Ana County Cropland in Acres



Source: Dennis Smith, County GIS

FARM LANDS

Doña Ana County's rural landscape includes both farmland and rangeland. This Plan differentiates between the different types of open land where they are important to rural character. It pays close attention to the need to develop policies to help keep working rural land in economically viable use.

Doña Ana County Population and Agricultural Land by Sample Year

Farm land stewardship was of very high priority to residents of the central valley.

Despite the fact that commercial agriculture is so important to Doña Ana County, it now has less cultivated land than a generation ago. Nevertheless, the crops' cash value has increased dramatically, partly from foreign demand, including from China. From Hatch chile to Mesilla Valley pecan groves, commercial agriculture is central to the identity and the economy of Doña Ana. However, from 1974 to 2010, land in agricultural production shrank by over 14,000 acres. Cultivation of feed crops and vegetables decreased by 35,000 acres from 1974 to 2010 (a 41% decrease), while orchards increased by almost 20,000 acres (a 211% increase). Some of the loss is attributable to increased residential development in the valley, mainly near Las Cruces.

The County should preserve both its agricultural heritage in aesthetic terms and crops' economic value in business terms. While some landowners may opt to subdivide their land and change it from agricultural use to residential or commercial, there are other factors that make it harder than it needs to be to farm in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. For instance, the lack of a predictable source of water threatens the resiliance of crop production. Yet the value of crops produced in the County increased by over 50% from 2002 to 2007. Crops, including pecans, cotton, chile, and other vegetables make up 45% of the total value of commercial agriculture in the County, even though they use only 16% of the total land in agricultural production. The majority of the land is used for grazing and cattle production. (Viva Doña Ana, 2013)

One of the most uniform desires expressed throughout the public engagement process was to preserve the existing farmlands.

PARKS AND GATHERING PLACES

Parks range from larger areas of land for recreational use and often for the preservation of wildlife to smaller neighborhood gathering places. They should be designed so that they fit with their surroundings. There are both urban and rural types, ranging from pocket parks to large lands set aside mainly for conservation.

There are three main kinds of parks:

- Recreational – for both passive and active recreation (such as strolling or playing ball);
- Urban – plazas, pocket parks, gardens, and other specialized kinds of urban open spaces; and
- Conservation – large open spaces including parks and preserves as large wildlife habitats, as well as arroyos, floodplains and their buffers, steep slopes.

These lands are all important, and although the County has a wide variety and a great deal of acreage in them, it isn't always distributed so that every community has its fair share, nor are the parks furnished in a manner that encourages active use.

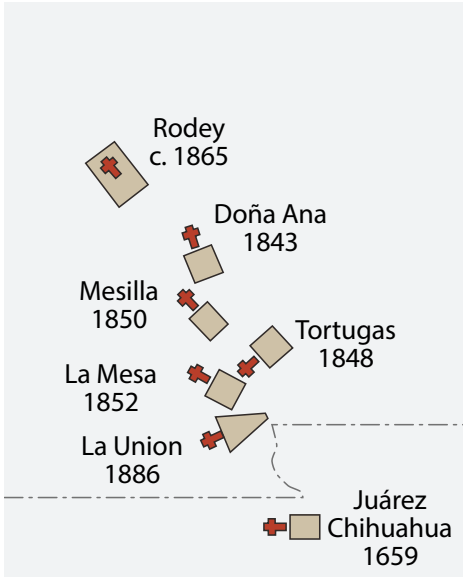
The National Recreation & Park Association (NRPA) Standards have not been updated since 1995, nor are they applicable to the County scale. (National Recreation and Park Association, 2014) The New Mexico SCORP addresses participants' priorities but does not include recommendations for parks and facilities. (New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department, 2009) The County should develop a set of goals for facility acquisition and maintenance. The County should continue to expand upon an open space network comprised of a variety of parks, natural lands, and neighborhood civic spaces linked by a network of thoroughfares, trails, bikeways and other open space connectors.

Plazas

Distinct from other forms of town squares across the Southwest, New Mexico's plazas are the spiritual, commercial and governmental hearts of Spanish-Mexican settlements. During the Viva Doña Ana engagement process, residents said they appreciated regional plazas, and wanted to preserve and enhance them.

Through all phases and projects of the Viva Doña Ana process, residents expressed appreciation for the regional plazas.

The older Spanish-Mexican plazas are both the hearts of their communities and also potential tourist draws. These are civic centers that can be used for fiestas, important events in peoples' lives, and just ordinary living. There are five Spanish-Mexican plazas that serve as the hearts of the towns and rural communities of Doña Ana County. These communities followed the planning guidance of the Laws of the Indies. The Laws required new settlements to have a plaza as the starting point of the community, and the plaza was sized to fit the projected population. The church, government buildings, and shops were located around the plaza, and all sides except the church were to be united with portales. The illustration to the right shows the spread of Hispanic settlement from El Paso del Norte (Juárez) with plaza and church configurations. Churches were oriented east or south to capture morning light onto the altars. (Wilson et al., 2011) Other communities have undeveloped plazas that need restoration. These include Berino, Chamberino, La Union, and Rincon. Today, the UDC offers the County an opportunity to engender neighborhoods with similar civic places sized to fit their communities.



Spread of Hispanic plazas in Doña Ana County

Image Credit: Dennis Quintana

Parks can contribute to the health and fitness of County residents.

CIVIC, AGRICULTURAL, & NATURAL LANDS
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G3.1 Develop in Appropriate Areas

Doña Ana County has several reasons to manage development — and to keep it out of arroyos and flood zones. If people develop in flood zones, they endanger themselves and risk worsening any floods to properties below. The County has also learned that it is difficult to serve far-flung developments. If development is spread out too much, the County won't be able to serve all its residents.

Farmers often rely on their future ability to subdivide the land at a profit in order to finance their farms today. If the County were simply to prohibit development on those farms, it could make them harder to farm, defeating the purpose. Therefore, the County should explore ways to develop financial incentives for farmers. One option is to work with land trusts such as the New Mexico Land Conservancy to keep land in agricultural use by purchasing development rights while enabling commercial farming to continue.

ACTIONS

A3.1 Set Aside Hazardous, Important, and Fragile Open Spaces

Doña Ana County should adopt policies to minimize developments in fragile or hazardous open space. Some of these policies should be land use controls, some should direct the Community Development Department to work with land trusts such as the New Mexico Land Conservancy, and some should be by helping farmers to get credit. The County should also refrain from obligating itself to extend services to hazardous, important, and fragile open spaces.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Enhance Economic Competitiveness

Coordinate Policies and Leverage Investment

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
Planning & Zoning Commission (P&Z)
Community Development Department (CDD)
Farm Owners and Farmer Associations

CIVIC, AGRICULTURAL, & NATURAL LANDS
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G3.2 Provide Usable Civic Space and Protect Sensitive Areas

The County should maintain a network of civic spaces and other open spaces. This network should incorporate bicycle and walking trails within parks, and connect them to existing and projected trails. The County should also ensure that small civic spaces such as plazas are within a quarter mile of most dwellings. Larger civic spaces — parks and other large open spaces — should be located around and between communities. Inside towns, they should be located between neighborhoods. These larger spaces can usually incorporate un-buildable land such as arroyos, bosques, and steep slopes.

ACTIONS

A3.2 Coordinate the Location, Scale, and Use of Civic Spaces

Doña Ana County should coordinate the location, scale and use of civic spaces and open spaces through updates to County and municipal plans, through zoning updates, and policies for acquiring and maintaining open space. It should update its own plans and help convene municipalities in order to coordinate the following:

- Small civic spaces such as plazas are gathering places and should be located in the centers of communities.
- Large open spaces and civic spaces for recreation should be located at the edges of small villages, villages, and neighborhoods. They should incorporate bosques, steep slopes, and arroyos.
- All of the civic spaces and open spaces should provide a range of recreational and civic opportunities for citizens of all age groups. Community centers should be associated with structured outdoor recreation facilities, even if they are not under the same ownership or management.
- Where possible, the open spaces and civic spaces should be linked together with bicycle and walking trails. This will require significant coordination between municipalities and the County.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Support Existing Communities

Preserve Heritage

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
Planning & Zoning Commission (P&Z)
Community Development Department (CDD)
Elephant Butte Irrigation District (EBID)
Farm Owners

CIVIC, AGRICULTURAL, & NATURAL LANDS
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G3.3 Ensure that Civic Spaces are Cared For

The County has little ability to take on the maintenance of the large numbers of civic spaces that residents need. While small parks and plazas are important to neighborhood life, they are difficult for a centralized authority to maintain. Larger facilities usage will increase if equipment is provided and maintained.

ACTIONS

A3.3 Plan for Civic Space Maintenance

Where small civic spaces are planned, the County should ensure that there is a plan for their maintenance. One option for commercial areas is to put such civic spaces under a Business Improvement District's purview. The County should develop a specific plan for maintenance of facilities and equipment at parks and multi-use trails. Plans should include equipment replacement schedules.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Coordinate Polices and Investments

Preserve Heritage

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Facilities and Parks Department (FPD)
County Manager (CM)

CIVIC, AGRICULTURAL, & NATURAL LANDS
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G3.4 Encourage Active Recreation Options to Improve County Health

Usage of parks and multi-use trails can help people manage stress and increase physical activity levels, which can improve weight management and health issues tied to obesity, like diabetes and heart disease.

ACTIONS

A3.4 Improve County Trail Network

Leverage new funding source for design and construction of multi-use paths. Funds are available from the Mesilla Valley and the El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organizations. Update the Doña Ana County Open Space / Trails Master Plan and develop a County-wide Civic and Open Space Master Plan. Improve inter-agency cooperation to utilize irrigation service routes as a part of the network.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Provide More Transportation Choice

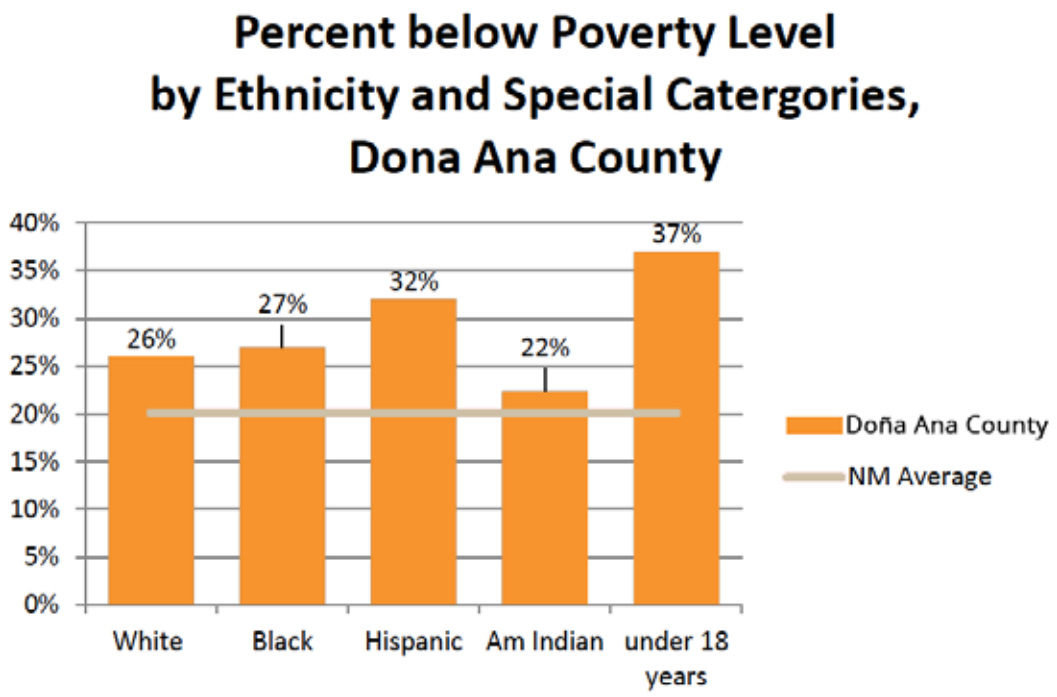
Enhance Economic Competitiveness

Support Existing Communities

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Community Development Department (CDD)
Facilities and Parks Department (FPD)
Elephant Butte Irrigation District (EBID)
U.S. International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC)



Source: New Mexico Alliance of Health Councils, 2008-12 American Community Survey, 5 year Estimates Table S1701

FAIR HOUSING

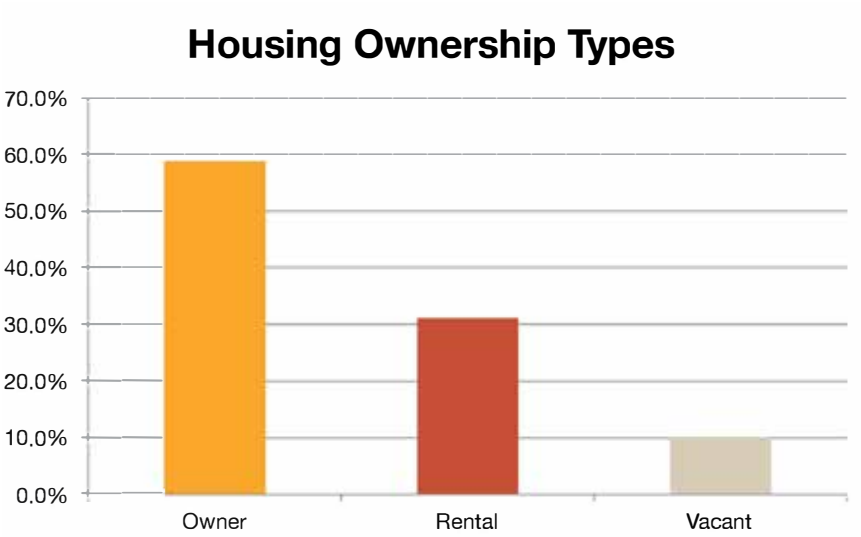
RESIDENTS PRIORITIZED FAIR, AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The *One Valley, One Vision 2040* plan calls for a range housing types that will provide "residents of all socioeconomic levels with safe, sanitary, and affordable living options."

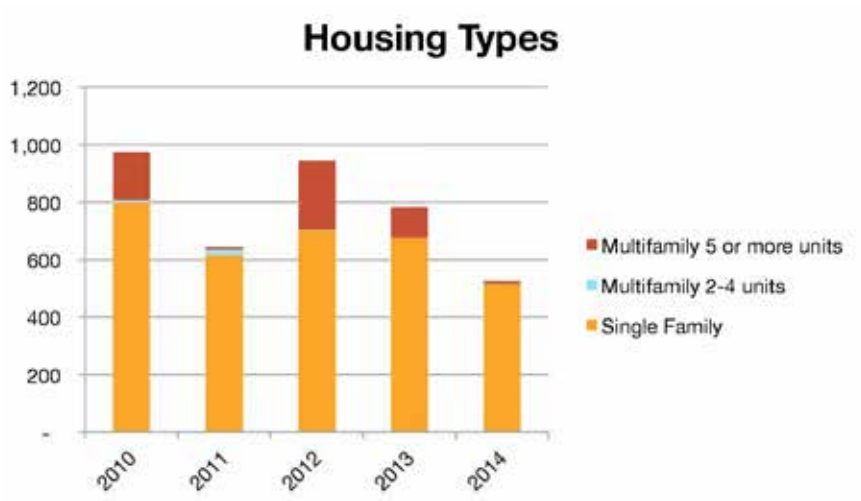
The goal of fair housing is to eliminate housing discrimination and develop diverse, inclusive communities. The 2013 Doña Ana County Fair Housing Equity Assessment and Regional Analysis of Impediments Draft Report for Public Review (Viva Doña Ana & Western Economic Services, LLC, 2013) found that residents in the County face frequent discrimination due to disability, and also discrimination by national origin and familial status. Minorities have more difficulty getting loans, and the stock of assisted rental properties are concentrated in selected areas. The County should follow the suggested actions of this report. Of particular relevance for this plan is that the County should establish a Fair Housing entity to educate the public, real estate professionals, and landlords about fair housing. This entity may also help draft legislation regarding fair housing.

HOUSING BASICS

In 2012, the County had 82,920 households with 17.3% multi-family structures, and an average household size of 2.8. This is higher than the state average of 2.55 and the national average of 2.58. Doña Ana County also has



(United States Census, n.d.)



(U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, n.d.)

Image Credit: Dennis Quintana

Image Credit: Angela Roberson

Image Credit: Andrew von Maur

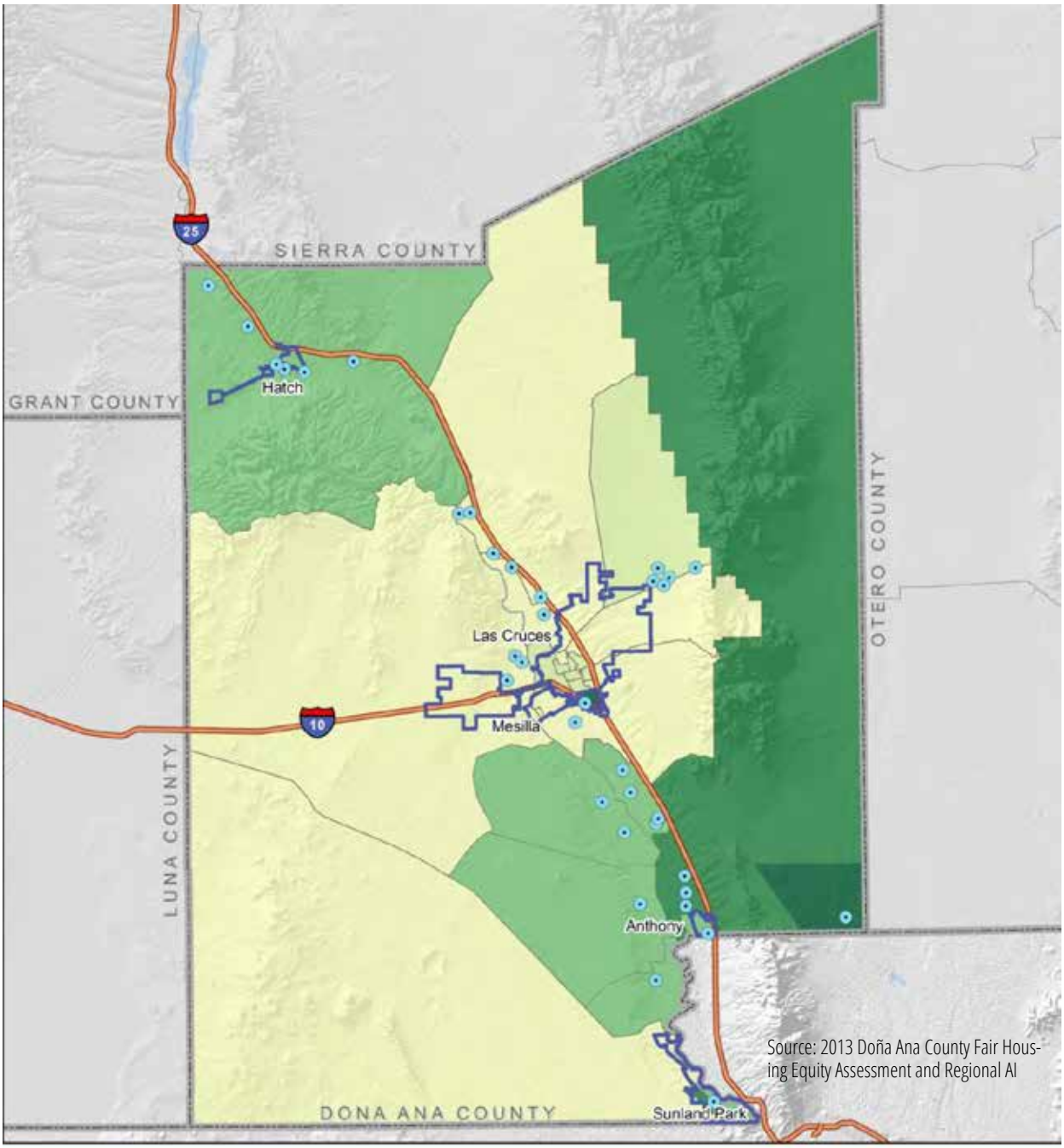
a lower home ownership rate (64.2%) than the state as a whole (68.5%).

Residential permit activity in the City of Las Cruces increased almost 20% over the past decade while permits in the unincorporated County decreased by 24%. Half the population lives in Las Cruces, with only 19% in the rural County, and the remainder in the other municipalities. (Sources: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development – SOCDS Database; 2010 American Community Survey)

Given the market trends over the last decade as well as the Path of Progress data, see p. 47, it appears the greatest demand for housing will cluster around the incorporated areas of the County, particularly Las Cruces and the border area adjacent to El Paso.

AFFORDABILITY

Families paying more than one third of their income on housing may be constrained in critical items like food and medicine. In the County 35.2% of owners with a mortgage paid 30% or more of their income for housing, while 48% of renters had excessive housing costs. (American Community Survey, 2008-12. Table ACS_12_5Yr_DP04)



Source: 2013 Doña Ana County Fair Housing Equity Assessment and Regional AI

A Camino Real Consortium Project
VIVA DOÑA ANA
Building a Sustainable Future | Construyendo un Futuro Sostenible

0 2.75 5.5 11 16.5 Miles

NORTH

2004–2011 Loan Denial Rate Distribution

2004–2011 Average Denial Rate in Doña Ana County = 20.9%

Disproportionate Share Threshold = 30.9% (A disproportionate share exists when the share of a population in a given area is at least 10 percentage points greater than the study area average.)

- Colonias
- City, Town, and Village Boundaries
- Major Roads
- Census Tract Boundaries
- County Boundaries

Denial Rate

- 9.8 - 20.9
- 21.0 - 30.9
- Disproportionate Share Threshold
- 31.0 - 45.0
- 45.1 - 60.0
- 60.1 - 80.0

Data Source: 2004-2011 HMDA Data

FAIR HOUSING
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G4.1 Provide Marketable and Affordable Housing

The County's population is expected to grow by about 85,000 people, or approximately 23,000 new housing units by 2040. In order to accommodate residents affordably, Doña Ana County should consider encouraging a greater mix of housing units and sizes, including small lot single-family, accessory units, duplexes, townhouses, and small apartment buildings. Further, the County should consider the range of future residents, from students, farm workers, and individuals just entering the housing market to seniors downsizing from larger homes.

ACTIONS

A4.1 Zone for 23,000 Housing Units in a Variety of Types

Adjust codes so that the approximately 23,000 housing units can be allocated where their communities will welcome them. No place will have all the variety the County needs to plan for, but every type should be permitted where it is welcome.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Promote Affordable Communities

Preserve Heritage

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
Planning & Zoning Commission (P&Z)

FAIR HOUSING
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G4.2 Permit and Encourage Low-Cost Housing

The County needs more affordable housing, despite having a heritage of modest, yet dignified dwellings. The Unified Development Code and County policies should permit and encourage low-cost housing that fits in.

ACTIONS

A4.2 Encourage Low-Cost Housing Types

Doña Ana County should encourage low-cost dwelling types:

- The Unified Development Code should be drafted to permit housing lots that are typical for each location — not so large to be unaffordable.
- The Code should allow low-cost building types, particularly near employment and in farming communities for seasonal workers.
- The County should adopt policies to guide low-cost housing development toward employment centers and farming communities, but without concentrating poverty.
- The County should adopt policies and codes that permit low-cost and small-scale housing types drawn on historical precedents.
- Provide rules allowing mobile and manufactured housing where it is appropriate.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Promote Affordable Communities

Enhance Economic Competitiveness

Preserve Heritage

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
Planning & Zoning Commission (P&Z)
Community Development Department (CDD)Community Development Department (CDD)

FAIR HOUSING
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G4.3 Ensure that Everyone has an Equitable Choice of Housing

Doña Ana County needs to continue to encourage fair housing practices. There have been incidents of steering and discrimination, and the County can help to make housing policy fairer.

ACTIONS

A4.3 Follow Fair Housing Recommendations

The County should follow the suggested actions of the 2015 Doña Ana County Fair Housing Equity Assessment including:

- Work with State legislature to develop an exemption from the Antidonation Clause of the New Mexico Constitution (Art. IX. Sec/ 14) for affordable housing.
- Establish a fair housing entity to educate the public, real estate professionals, and landlords about fair housing (AFFH, a HUD guideline).
- Draft fair housing policies and ordinances.
- Ensure that social and governmental services are easier to reach from all parts of the County.
- Ensure that land use regulations and policies provide for a mix of housing types everywhere, including subsidized housing and housing with rental assistance.
- Expand public transit's reach.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Promote Affordable Communities

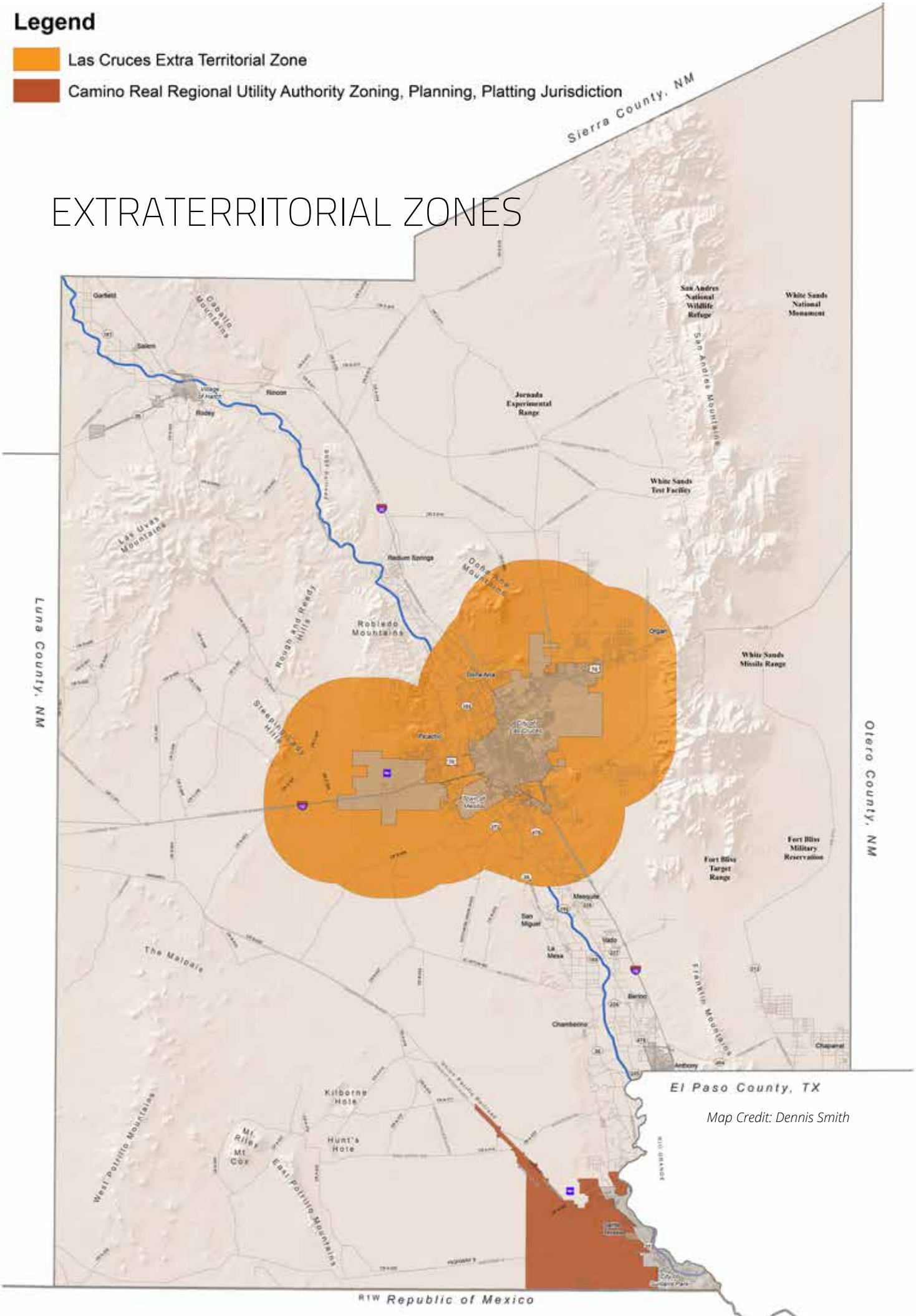
Coordinate Policies and Investments

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
County Manager (CM)
Health & Human Services (HHS)
Regional Metropolitan Planning Organizations
RoadRunner
South Central Regional Transit District (SCRTD)

EXTRATERRITORIAL ZONES



Map Credit: Dennis Smith

DEVELOPMENT IMPLEMENTATION

In order for this Plan to make the vision of the Viva Doña Ana process a reality, it must use tools for implementation.

ZONING & SUBDIVISION

Residents have expressed their appreciation for the character and culture of the region, and the UDC can help to maintain it and even enhance it. This is not just a concern for heritage, but includes the need, for example, to enjoy plazas and to enjoy what the communities do for people today. It could also be useful for the tourism envisioned in the Economic Opportunity Section. The UDC's subdivision article can help to ensure that the physical layout of new and existing communities has a character appropriate to Doña Ana County. It can help to ensure that the physical character is consistent in each location — and consistent with local models where appropriate.

In particular, the zoning and subdivision articles can help to enhance community character by the following:

- Preserving and completing existing places;
- Helping to coordinate development of housing and jobs close to each other;
- Helping to keep communities compact in form;
- Enabling development to occur in the form of complete neighborhoods with dwellings, businesses, and amenities that are easy to reach from each other — and not in isolated pods;
- Promoting affordable and low-cost housing;
- Encouraging development near transit — intense enough to support it — and transit near development; and
- Encouraging manufacturing and other industry to locate within the County, appropriately buffered from communities.

EXTRATERRITORIAL ZONES

Doña Ana County pursues a number of very important collaborations. A large percentage of land within the County is controlled by other governmental jurisdictions.

One of the most important collaborations is in two zones around Las Cruces (extending five miles) and Sunland Park. Both of those are Extraterritorial Zones (ETZs). Within these zones, Las Cruces and CRRUA have the ability to coordinate development outside the municipal boundaries in order to help manage community development, control urban sprawl, and address zoning issues. In these areas, applications are reviewed by an ETZ Commission composed of City and County residents. The Commission's decisions can then be appealed to the ETZ Authority, which is made up of City and County officials. The Authority's decisions can be appealed to the district court. This process is somewhat lengthy, and the City of Las Cruces will be transferring their ETZ into the jurisdiction of the UDC upon its adoption.

ANNEXATION

Municipalities can annex land under the County's jurisdiction. The County's role is to act as a trustee on behalf of the state until and unless a municipality can be formed or can annex the land.

There is an opportunity to improve intergovernmental coordination to make the annexation process more orderly and to help municipalities deliver services more efficiently. Such a cooperative effort should consider the fiscal impacts of annexation, so that municipalities can both physically extend service and maintain it over time without having to raise tax rates.

Both One Valley, One Vision 2040 and the City of Las Cruces Comprehensive Plan 2040 consider conservative, physically adjacent, extensions of infrastructure and utilities' service areas. (Doña Ana County & The City of Las Cruces, 2011) (City of Las Cruces, 2013) Land that has not been annexed should not receive the level of service a city customarily enjoys, but once annexed, the residents and businesses newly incorporated into a city should enjoy its customary level of service.

SERVICE EXTENSIONS

Capital improvements must be prioritized for the greatest return on the County's investment

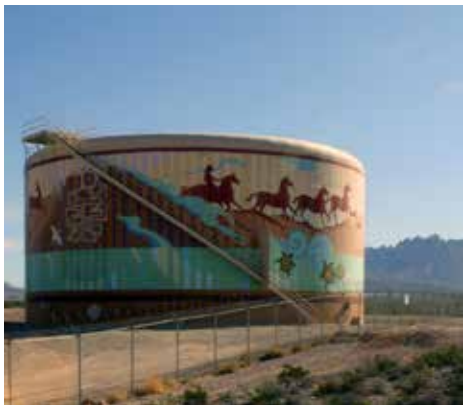
The extension of services and infrastructure is a challenging problem. While most residents of the County desire paved roads, sidewalks, lighting, water, and sanitary sewer, the services become much more expensive as the population drops. A ¼ mile of a street in one of the municipalities has exponentially higher population than a ¼ mile of rural road. However paving the road and extending the water and sewer costs the same in both conditions. In the city, that ¼ mile may serve over 10,000 residents and in the most rural condition, it may only serve a handful.

Capital improvements must be prioritized in areas where they serve the greatest number of residents to avoid premature extensions that lead to unsustainable growth.

Predictable Enforcement

The County has a difficult role, in that it wants to promote development by creating a predictable environment for residents and businesses without stifling innovation or over-regulating businesses. While many of these issues are outside the purview of the Plan, this balance is essential to its effectiveness.

Doña Ana County should make its regulations strict enough to be effective, and simple enough that small businesses and homeowners can comply with them.



All Images Credit: Dennis Quintana

DEVELOPMENT IMPLEMENTATION
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G5.1 Ensure that Annexations do not Create Burdens

The current process of annexation is not well coordinated. There are three legal paths to annexation, and none of them involve the type of coordination required to extend services, infrastructure, and transportation in an orderly fashion. Governments in the region should develop a regional strategy for collaboration.

ACTIONS

A5.1 Coordinate Annexations for Efficient Services

The County should work with municipalities and infrastructure providers to develop a coordinated strategy for annexation. This policy should combine the following:

- Planning future growth so that municipal services and infrastructure can be extended efficiently;
- A process that requires the deliberate assessment of the fiscal impacts of extending and maintaining services; and
- A clear priority for annexation, so that the level of service customary for a city is only extended to municipalities, and so that the improved services justify such an extension.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Enhance Economic Competitiveness

Support Existing Communities

Coordinate Policies and Investment

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Local Municipalities
Camino Real Regional Utility Authority (CRRUA)
Regional Utility Providers

DEVELOPMENT IMPLEMENTATION
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G5.2 Support Industry with Transportation Options

The County needs to ensure that major centers of employment and commercial farming areas will be well connected to transportation. Rail is an important transportation mode, so those employment centers should be highly accessible to rail.

ACTIONS

A5.2 Assign Industrial Sites near Transportation Choices

Doña Ana County should coordinate with Sunland Park, the Camino Real Regional Utility Authority, Anthony, Mesilla, Las Cruces, and Hatch to identify sites for industry within the County. Then it should maximize rail access to them. It should also upgrade the thoroughfare and utility networks to support the industrial, agricultural, and food production areas.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Enhance Economic Competitiveness

Coordinate Policies and Investments

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Community Development Department (CDD)
Local Municipalities
Camino Real Regional Utility Authority (CRRUA)
New Mexico Border Authority
Union Pacific (UP)
BNSF Railway (BNSF)

DEVELOPMENT IMPLEMENTATION
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G5.3 Increase Services to Colonias and other Rural Areas

Despite the fact that rural areas are too expensive to justify extending full municipal services and expensive streets to reach, they are potentially livable areas that can enjoy appropriate infrastructure and services. For example, a road can be built that is less costly to maintain than a full street with curbs. The type of infrastructure should match the intensity at which its surroundings are developed.

ACTIONS

A5.3 Design the Extension of Services to Fit the Context

The County should help to coordinate the extension of services with the appropriate type of infrastructure for each location. The process should be transparent to each community so that it can help to prioritize local infrastructure. This process should be revisited as communities intensify in use, since increases in intensity and population can justify greater investment.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Coordinate Policies and Investments

Preserve Heritage

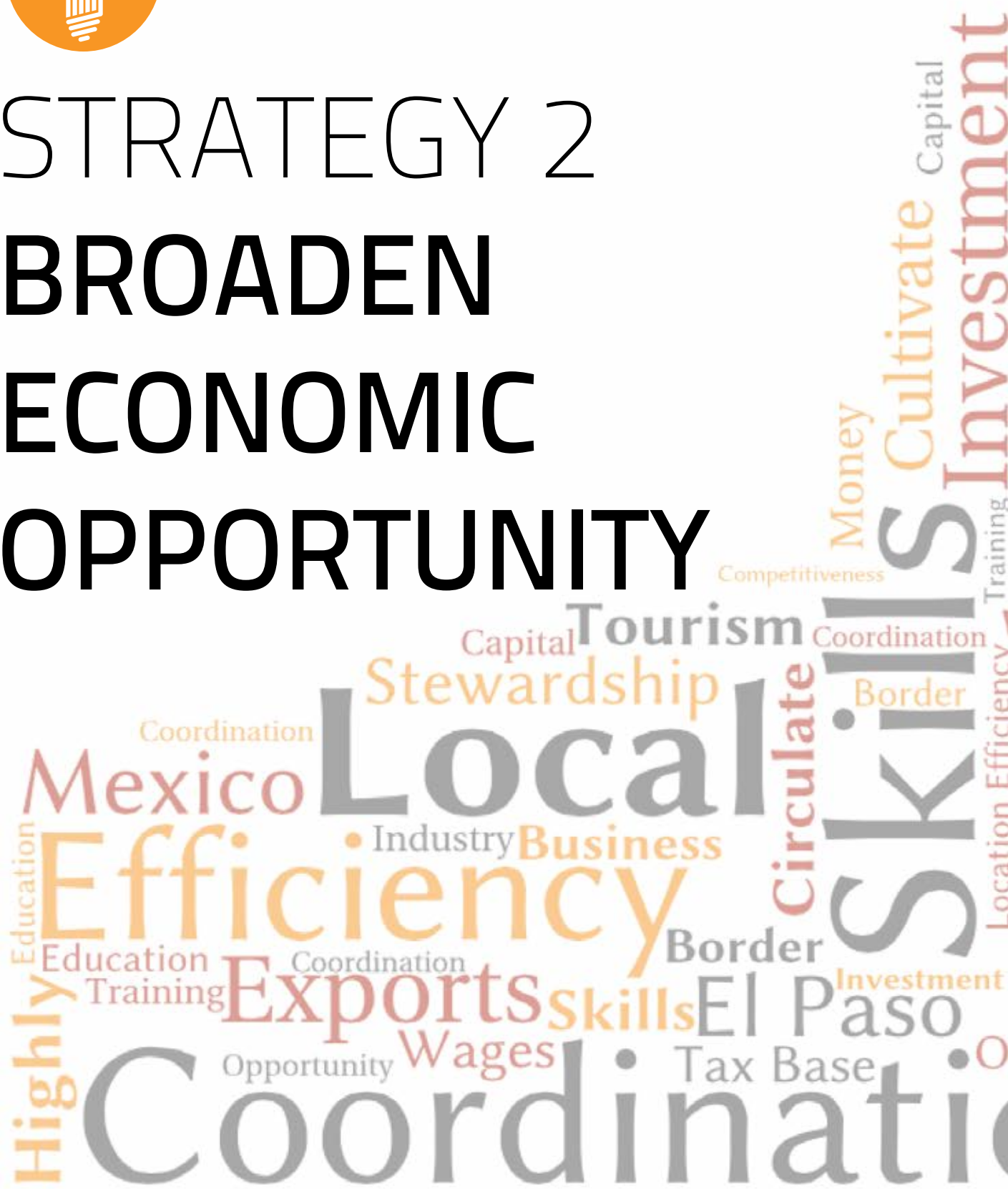
RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Coordinated County government offices
County Manager (CM)
Local Municipalities
Regional Utility Providers

STRATEGY 2

BROADEN ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY



DEFINING OPPORTUNITY

85,000 new residents and 42,000 new jobs by 2040 require coordination and strategy

The influx of about 85,000 people and 42,000 jobs by 2040 will significantly change the economic environment in the County, so this section of the Doña Ana Comprehensive Plan discusses strategies to accomplish the physical development it contemplates, and to allow the County to coordinate with itself, its municipalities, and its neighboring jurisdictions better. It also includes a discussion of new entities that it should establish (and finance — see details in the Appendix beginning on p. 154). The County needs to bring in investment and invest in itself: it must be entrepreneurial.

Doña Ana has a number of needs that can be met or partly met through economic development:

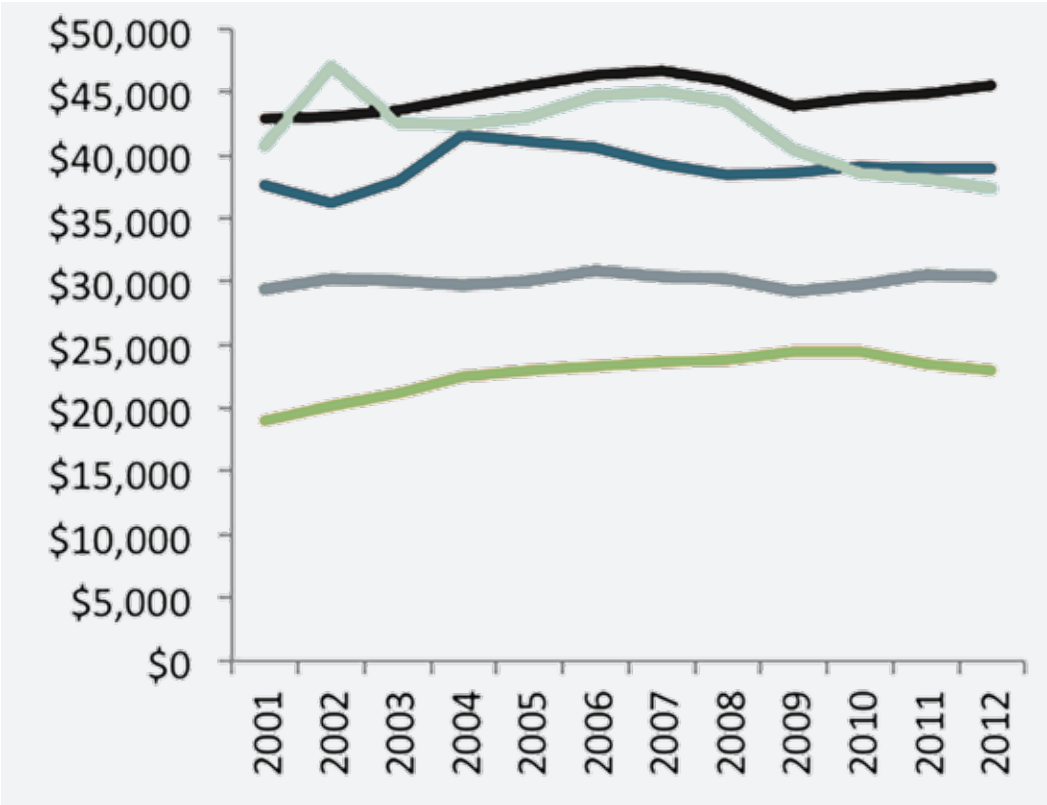
- Low wages
- Business startup success rate
- High consumer expenditures
- Structural economic leakage
- Economic bypass
- Competition with El Paso and Chihuahua
- Economic pressures on farm lands
- Changing demographics
- Poor distribution of income and equity
- Low returns on public investment

Economic development as a strategy to enhance livability requires some investment, which pays for itself with increased employment, better use of assets, higher wages, better ability to afford the cost of living and the cost of doing business, better access to capital, and a better reputation as a place to do business.

In order to do this, economic development uncovers hidden or poorly utilized resources and coordinates them, aligns them, and pursues social and ecological goals as well as financial ones. At the same time, the different strategies can't rely on each other in such a way that if one fails it causes others to fail. In this sense it must be a number of efforts moving together, but untethered to each other – like birds flying together in a flock. It also requires coordination across organizations that are not in the same organizational chart.

This Plan recognizes that the normal measurements using Gross Development Product (GDP – not to be confused with Gross Domestic Product), Gross Metropolitan Product (GMP), or Gross Regional Product (GRP) only measure the "gross." They do not measure the negatives that come from pursuing policies single-mindedly. Instead, Plan2040 establishes a much more nuanced set of goals in order to get more money to circulate, relocate, and flow in from outside of the County.

During the Viva Doña Ana community workshops, some of those trade-offs were discussed and evaluated with the residents of the County, which became a guide for economic development policy. GDP is good for measuring gross value creation, but it is poor at identifying the net value that is captured locally in ways that benefit everyone. The Viva Doña Ana Dashboard will be tracking these indicators to determine performance. See the Dashboard discussion beginning on p. 33.



Gross Domestic Product Per Capita (Bureau of the Census, n.d.)

ECONOMIC OBJECTIVES

Instead of GDP, the Viva Doña Ana Dashboard measures a more nuanced set of outcomes for an economic development strategy broken into three categories:

1. Get More Money to Circulate in the Local Economy;
2. Bring Money into the Local Economy; and
3. Get Investment in the Local Economy.

OBJECTIVE: Get More Money to Circulate and Cultivate Local Economies

Like a household, the County can save money by keeping more of it in the family. That means that it needs to keep money circulating, support local business growth, and help keep money from leaking out of the County. This means improving the County's retail offerings, training workers for the jobs that are coming, and helping businesses within the County find each other. When something is grown or manufactured within the County, then it creates value that circulates throughout the County.

There are approximately 11,000 commuters traveling from Doña Ana County to El Paso and 8,000 people commuting from El Paso to Doña Ana County for employment (US Census, Journey to Work, 2006-2010).

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT?**

Deliberate, planned actions that result in increased production of goods and services.

OBJECTIVE: Bring Money in from Outside and Increase Exports

Like a household, Doña Ana County needs to bring in money from outside. This Plan identifies two main methods: supporting manufacturing and local industry; and improving the tourist economy.

1. Ensure that Cross-Border Trade Enhances the Local Economy

   In order for cross-border trade to be beneficial, the County needs a more proactive strategy that prepares the Border Area for upcoming business opportunities.

2. Encourage & Nurture Tourism and Accelerate Stewardship

   Both the County's most rural areas and the historic Rio Grande corridor offer significant opportunities for tourism. The region is rich in history and culture and has many stories to tell that connect Doña Ana's cities, towns, and colonias with potential visitors. It also has significant opportunities to invite people to its wilderness areas, to space and military installations, and to the Spanish heritage along the Camino Real.

   The case for tourism is uncomplicated in the sense that if people can be brought to the County, they will spend money. However, it is important to avoid an approach that favors only urban tourism or natural tourism. The approach must be balanced.

OBJECTIVE: Get Investment to Locate in the County, and Attract New Business

By attracting new businesses, Doña Ana County can get more money into its household, so to speak. The County government can help itself directly by building capacity for grant applications and administration to bring in more money from government programs, as well as help businesses fund initiatives for their common good. The New Mexico Green Chamber of Commerce has helped with the Oregon Mountains Desert Peaks National Monument.

This is a local economic driver that is estimated to generate $7.4 million in revenue per year. Already, some interesting local products are developing, such as the OMDP Cocktail at the Azul Lounge, Beck's OMDP coffee blend, and massages at sunset at the OMDP. All of these nurture the outdoor economy.

Businesses look not just for low-cost workers, but higher-skilled workers. Thus, any initiative to improve workers' skill level will make Doña Ana County look more attractive. In particular, any support that the County can give for their own internal training efforts will help reduce their costs.

Doña Ana County today has a more "low-wage/high-waste" economy than a "high-wage/low-waste" economy. Its incomes lag both New Mexico and the United States.

Increase Wages

As a center for low-wage unemployment, Doña Ana County does attract some business, however, low wages don't provide an adequate tax base, and they insure that the County leaks money whenever an industrial or agricultural process requires higher skills than the County currently provides. Although by standard measures the County weathered the recession better than certain other places, its GDP per capita is fairly low, as are its incomes. (Bureau of the Census, n.d.) The Doña Ana Community College Workforce Development & Training Division is equipped to meet training needs, and is convening employer round tables to be share specific employment needs and concerns.

Las Cruces is the County's urban economic engine, for example, but it lags behind both New Mexico and the United States in wages. The City's five highest-wage employment sectors are mining, manufacturing, wholesale trade, information, and government. Las Cruces lags New Mexico in four of these five categories. The exception is government employment. The sixth highest is transportation and utilities, which is closer to parity. (Occupational Outlook Survey and Handbook, 2012) The County's economy isn't diverse enough to avoid being vulnerable to market fluctuations — particularly as government employment is under pressure. Its industrial diversity index is 0.61, which is somewhat diverse compared to other similar regions, but is still too exposed to fluctuations in employment sectors. (Tyler Case, 2012) For these reasons, workforce development will be essential to bringing the County up to parity or better. The County will benefit from investments in high schools, vocational training, community college apprenticeships, union-led training, employer-based training, and four-year degrees. These can pay off in higher wages. (New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions, n.d.)

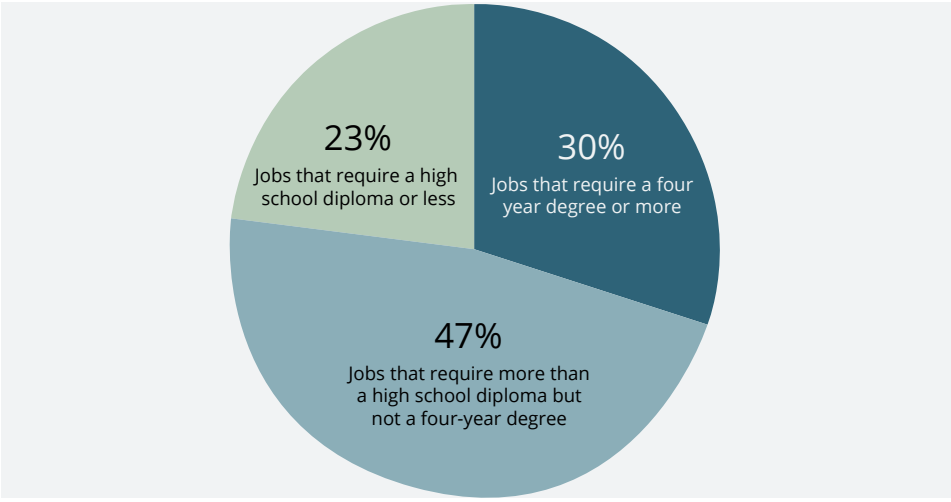
COMPARATIVE EMPLOYMENT

	% of Total Employment		
	CLC	NM	US
Mining	0.0%	3.2%	0.6%
Construction	4.9%	5.2%	4.3%
Manufacturing	3.9%	3.6%	8.8%
Transportation/Utilities	2.6%	2.9%	3.7%
Wholesale Trade	1.7%	2.7%	4.2%
Retail Trade	10.8%	11.3%	11.1%
Information	1.3%	1.6%	2.0%
Financial Services	3.6%	4.1%	5.8%
Professional and Business Services	10.2%	12.1%	13.6%
Education and Health Services	18.7%	15.2%	15.5%
Leisure and Hospitality Services	11.0%	10.8%	10.4%
Other Services	2.1%	3.5%	4.0%
Government	29.1%	23.8%	16.0%

Sources: Moody's Analytics & BLS

DIVERSIFY EMPLOYMENT TO DEVELOP RESILIENCY

Diverse employment sectors create a local economy that is more resilient to fluctuations in the national economic cycles



New Mexico Total Job Openings by Skill Level, 2011 – 2021 (Calculated by National Skills Coalition from NM Department of Workforce Solutions Data)

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G6.1 Coordinate Economic Development Across Agencies

As a good steward of a healthy economy, Doña Ana County should coordinate planning and economic development within a single entity, to set policy and strategy to create incentives and tools to attract and grow businesses within the County as well as work with El Paso and Mexico on the general integration of mutually-beneficial economic interests.

ACTIONS

A6.1 Establish an Office of Economic Development

The County should establish a new office within the Doña Ana County Community Development Department – the Office of Economic Development – to coordinate the various economic development efforts in the County. It would coordinate with MVEDA without duplicating functions.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Enhance Economic Competitiveness

Coordinate Policies and Investment

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

County Manager (CM)
Mesilla Valley Economic Development Alliance (MVEDA)

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G6.2 Make the County's Economy More Efficient

The County should provide resources and support to help households and businesses lower monthly expenses, save (and bank) money, create wealth, weather a volatile economy, and increase business and homeownership.

ACTIONS

A6.2 Support Financial and Resource Efficiency

Doña Ana County's Office of Economic Development should lead the development of a prosperity initiative to help residents and businesses increase efficiency in five main areas:

- Financial Efficiency
- Building Efficiency
- Water Resource Efficiency
- Location Efficiency
- Transportation & Communications Efficiency

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Provide More Transportation Choice

Enhance Economic Competitiveness

Preserve Heritage

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Office of Economic Development (OED)

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G6.3 Help Businesses and Residents Improve Financial Efficiency

Doña Ana County can help support entrepreneurship by providing a resource center for financial education and coaching in both basic and advanced financial literacy. These resources can also include organizations providing aid.

ACTIONS

A6.3 Coordinate Resources for Financial Education

The County's Office of Economic Development should connect people and businesses to the governmental, nonprofit, and business resources available to them. The County should partner with the following groups:

- Doña Ana Community College (DACC)
- The Colonias Development Council (CDC)
- Banks and Credit Unions
- United Way
- Literacy Volunteers of DAC
- Church-based & justice coalitions

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Enhance Economic Competitiveness

Support Existing Communities

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Office of Economic Development (OED)
The Colonias Development Council (CDC)
Mesilla Valley Economic Development Alliance (MVEDA)
Doña Ana County Cooperative Extension Serivce of NMSU

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G6.4 Build Energy Efficient Buildings

The County can pursue several energy strategies in order to reduce the amount of money wasted by County residents on inefficient buildings.

ACTIONS

A6.4 Support Building Efficiency

The County should adopt and use an energy efficiency plan, and it can take advantage of opportunities for marketing energy alternatives.

- Doña Ana should upgrade its County codes to incentivize better energy performance.
- It should organize County services to support energy efficiency along with private services.
- It should take advantage of its own policies, and use state and federal policies to support this conservation.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Enhance Economic Competitiveness

Coordinate Policies and Investments

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
Coordinated County Government Departments

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G6.5 Improve Water Resource Efficiency

Doña Ana County can help to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, reduce water withdrawals, reduce flooding, and mitigate heat islands through education and by connecting private, public, and utilities to best practices and resources for water use efficiencies. Persistent drought conditions could lead to competition for water between agriculture, industry, and communities and municipalities without more progressive efficiencies.

ACTIONS

A6.5 Support Water Resource Efficiency Throughout the County

Doña Ana County itself and property owners can benefit from resources, education, and incentives encouraging the following programs:

- Research and pilot project on irrigation efficient methods in commercial agriculture, including drip and drip-tape, and other options, as well as education of farmers in these methods.
- A community needs assessment to prioritize the process of providing resources;
- Native landscaping and xeriscape;
- Green infrastructure and the retention of rainwater;
- Tracking water usage and losses and incentivizing water conservation and reuse; and
- Financial incentives (tax credits, fee reductions, etc.) and expedited permitting for efficiency and flood mitigation.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Enhance Economic Competitiveness

Support Existing Communities

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Coordinated County Government Departments
Regional Water Utilities
Elephant Butte Irrigation District (EBID)
New Mexico State University (NMSU)
Soil and Water Conservation Districts
NM Department of Agriculture
Doña Ana County Extension Office

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G6.6 Maximize the Value Added to Agricultural Production

The County should act as advocate and partner for promoting vertical integration and processing of agricultural commodities grown in the County.

ACTIONS

A6.6 Facilitate Agricultural Processing Enterprise

Facilitate establishment and/or expansion of food processing enterprises that add value to agricultural produce and provide expanded employment opportunities for skilled and semi-skilled workers. Such actions include:

- Creation of tax incentives for start-up and expanding food processing businesses.
- Coordinate utility and transportation infrastructure to facilitate the operation of businesses.
- Encourage training in business management, financial planning and food processing.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Enhance Economic Competitiveness

Coordinate Polices and Investments

Support Existing Communities

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
Mesilla Valley Economic Development Alliance (MVEDA)
NM Economic Development Department
Local State Legislators
NM Department of Agriculture
Doña Ana County Extension Office
New Mexico State University (NMSU)
Doña Ana County Community College

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G6.7 Support Regional Small-Scale Businesses Including Agriculture

The County is already pursuing constructive initiatives and working with such entities as the Mesilla Valley Economic Development Alliance (MVEDA), the Green Chamber of Commerce and the City of Las Cruces Department of Economic Development. Yet, Doña Ana County lacks a strong environment for small businesses. It can establish a community network to build capacity within cities, towns, and colonias – via business incubation and microloans.

ACTIONS

A6.7 Establish an Agricultural Community Group

The County should establish an Agriculture Community Group that can lend expertise and support to the following initiatives:

- Establish and manage community incubators to help entrepreneurs succeed, and join the National Business Incubator Association.
- Community Supported Agriculture platform for farms (including marketing) in which residents pay for an allotment of food from small farmers.
- A food innovation center with a commercial kitchen, food lab, testing facilities for farmers' soils, market-testing, and similar resources.
- Cooperative facilities for local crops and livestock, including research into water efficiency.
- Community and school gardens, local farmers markets, and education in small-scale food processing

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Enhance Economic Competitiveness

Coordinate Policies and Investments

Support Existing Communities

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Office of Economic Development (OED)
Mesilla Valley Economic Development Alliance (MVEDA)
Local Agricultural Groups
NM Department of Agriculture
Doña Ana County Extension Office
New Mexico State University (NMSU)
Doña Ana County Community College
Arrowhead Center

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G6.8 Coordinate Development and Transportation

The County can support efficient location for development. Developers and builders don't always choose their development sites according to what is most efficient for transportation, and transportation agencies don't always locate their routes where they will serve the community most efficiently. The County can provide incentives to encourage both efficiencies at the same time.

ACTIONS

A6.8 Support Location Efficiency

Doña Ana County should create incentives to build near places with multiple choices of transportation modes – and especially those providing transit. These incentives can include Low Income Housing Tax Credits, and financial incentives and infrastructure that enhance property value.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Provide More Transportation Choice

Enhance Economic Competitiveness

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

County Manager (CM)
Coordinated County Government Offices
Mesilla Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)
El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)
South Central Council of Governments (SCCOG)

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G6.9 Help Residents get to Work

The County's residents use many different transportation modes, but the County should support transit and express bus service to assist in providing an available workforce.

ACTIONS

A6.9 Support Transportation Efficiency

Doña Ana County should set aggressive targets for expanded RoadRunner, NM DOT and SCRTD express bus service, even though funding is scarce now. It should also create a Transportation Management Association as a clearinghouse for funding transportation as well as for coordinating transportation.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Provide More Transportation Choice

Enhance Economic Competitiveness

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
County Manager (CM)
New Mexico Department of Transportation (NM DOT)
RoadRunner
South Central Regional Transit District (SCRTD)
Mesilla Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)
El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)
South Central Council of Governments (SCCOG)

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G6.10 Keep Money from Leaking out of the County

Doña Ana County loses retail sales and some service offerings to El Paso and Chihuahua. It needs to strengthen its retail sales and business-to-business sales and services in order to keep money from leaking out of the County.

ACTIONS

A6.10 Plug the Leaks in Sales and Services

The County should do three main things to support local retail and business-to-business sales and service:

- Develop policies to enable businesses to locate in neighborhoods so that the customers are always at the retailers' doorsteps.
- Use a Get Local Campaign coordinated by the Office of Economic Development to provide management for community center retail.
- Work with the chambers of commerce to create a Get-Local Campaign to encourage businesses as well as residents to procure goods and services locally.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Enhance Economic Competitiveness

Support Existing Communities

Preserve Heritage

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Office of Economic Development (OED)
Mesilla Valley Economic Development Alliance (MVEDA)
Chambers of Commerce
Local Agricultural Groups

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G6.11 Protect and Enhance the County Market for Goods and Services

The differences in tax structure between New Mexico and Texas, and the proximity of the El Paso market makes it difficult for retailers and professional service providers to be competitive.

ACTIONS

A6.11 Work to Establish a Tax-Neutral Zone and Develop Regional Marketing for Goods and Services

The County should work with local State legislatures to develop a tax-neutral zone along the border with Texas to assist local business with remaining competitive. The County should work with local chambers of commerce to market Doña Ana County goods and services.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Enhance Economic Competitiveness

Support Existing Communities

Leverage Policies and Investments

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
Local Municipalities
Chambers of Commerce
Office of Economic Development (OED)

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G6.12 Make the Border Area More Attractive to Industry

In order to make the border area more attractive to industry, the County could provide incentives to locate there. Ideas include using shopping visas to smooth international trade, improving the speed and attractiveness of ports of entry, and the use of a free trade permit for Santa Teresa.

ACTIONS

A6.12 Provide Incentives to Locate in the Border Area

The County should pursue the following policies:

- Encourage the use of LASER shopping visas to 55 miles inside the County, and support the MVEDA / International Business Accelerator (IBA) EB-5 visa program.
- Upgrade Points of Entry with the equivalent of EZ Passes for toll highways and with coordinated inter-regional border inspections.
- Accelerate the use of the Free and Secure Trade Program permit granted to Santa Teresa's Point of Entry.
- Doña Ana County should establish regional manufacturing incubators in Santa Teresa and in the West Mesa Industrial Park in Las Cruces to complement the Arrowhead Center and Small Business Development Center at NMSU.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Enhance Economic Competitiveness

Coordinate Policies and Investment

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Office of Economic Development (OED)
Border Industrial Association (BIA)
Mesilla Valley Economic Development Alliance (MVEDA)
International Business Accelerator (IBA)
South Central Council of Governments (SCCOG)

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G6.13 Match Job Skills to Businesses' Needs

Doña Ana County needs to expand the high wage sectors by retaining, expanding, and attracting businesses, as well as by improving the workforce's skills by training and workforce development. The new Office of Economic Development to support the efforts of the MVEDA and DACC to expand the skills of the County workforce.

ACTIONS

A6.13 Upgrade Skills Through Workforce Development

The County needs to ensure that K-12 learning is robust enough to support vocational schools, community colleges, independent colleges, and universities that offer on-the-job training. This will require coordination between the levels of education and employers who wish to participate, including:

- Vocational Educators/High Schools;
- The Doña Ana Community College Apprenticeships Program;
- New Mexico State University;
- The University of Texas at El Paso, and
- Employers.

This may include Lifelong Learning through the NM Department of Workforce Solutions, with a key partner being Doña Ana Community College (DACC) Workforce Development & Training Division.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Enhance Economic Competitiveness

Coordinate Policies and Investments

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Office of Economic Development (OED)
Southwestern Area Workforce Development Board
Doña Ana Community College (DACC) Workforce Development & Training Division
Mesilla Valley Economic Development Alliance (MVEDA)
New Mexico State University (NMSU)
Public and Private Educational Entities
South Central Council of Governments (SCCOG)

STRATEGY 3
PRIORITIZE INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING AND INVESTMENT

Image Credit: Dennis Quintana

WATER MATTERS

Infrastructure and flood management was the highest priority in every region of the County.

RETHINKING WATER

Green infrastructure uses natural systems to provide service in an economically efficient manner, compared to conventionally engineered infrastructure. For years rigid solutions dominated infrastructure and we are now realizing that greener infrastructure is more appropriate. A major shift is occurring on this subject in the US, and Doña Ana County could benefit by participating in it.

Green infrastructure is a holistic approach aimed at addressing climate resiliency on a county-wide scale by:

- Keeping natural lands preserved;
- Protecting rivers, arroyos, irrigation channels, and flood control systems;
- Continued stewardship of agricultural lands,
- Parks and community gardens that serve multiple uses;
- Integrated rainwater management, rain harvesting, and water reuse into a balanced water cycle;
- Providing multiple benefits through green streets and roads that include street trees, bioswales and raingardens; and providing for renewable energy production.

Green infrastructure provides for human benefits such as better quality open spaces, increased health benefits, cleaner water, improved recreation and connected shade and amenities in our County's spaces.

The **ISSUES** below came up in focus groups, stakeholder meetings, and other forms of public engagement. Following the Issues section will be Strategies and Implementation Steps to address the Issues.

FLOODING AND HYDROLOGY

The single greatest concern of residents in every region of the County is flood management.

Extensive flooding of existing crops, structures and roads poses a hazard since much development has occurred in floodplains and over active arroyos. Not only are some developments inadequately flood-proofed, but they can also block water from draining out of the flood plains – worsening the problem. See the flood map to the right that illustrates the extent of dams and diversion structures in the County.

Over 100 flood control structures were built as sediment control structure for farm fields and weren't designed for a flood event. These structures are under the ownership or jurisdiction of numerous entities, including the County, EBID, the Caballo Soil and Water Conservation District, the Doña Ana Soil and Water Conservation District, IBWC, BLM and many private land owners, and most of these structures are in need of expensive upgrades.

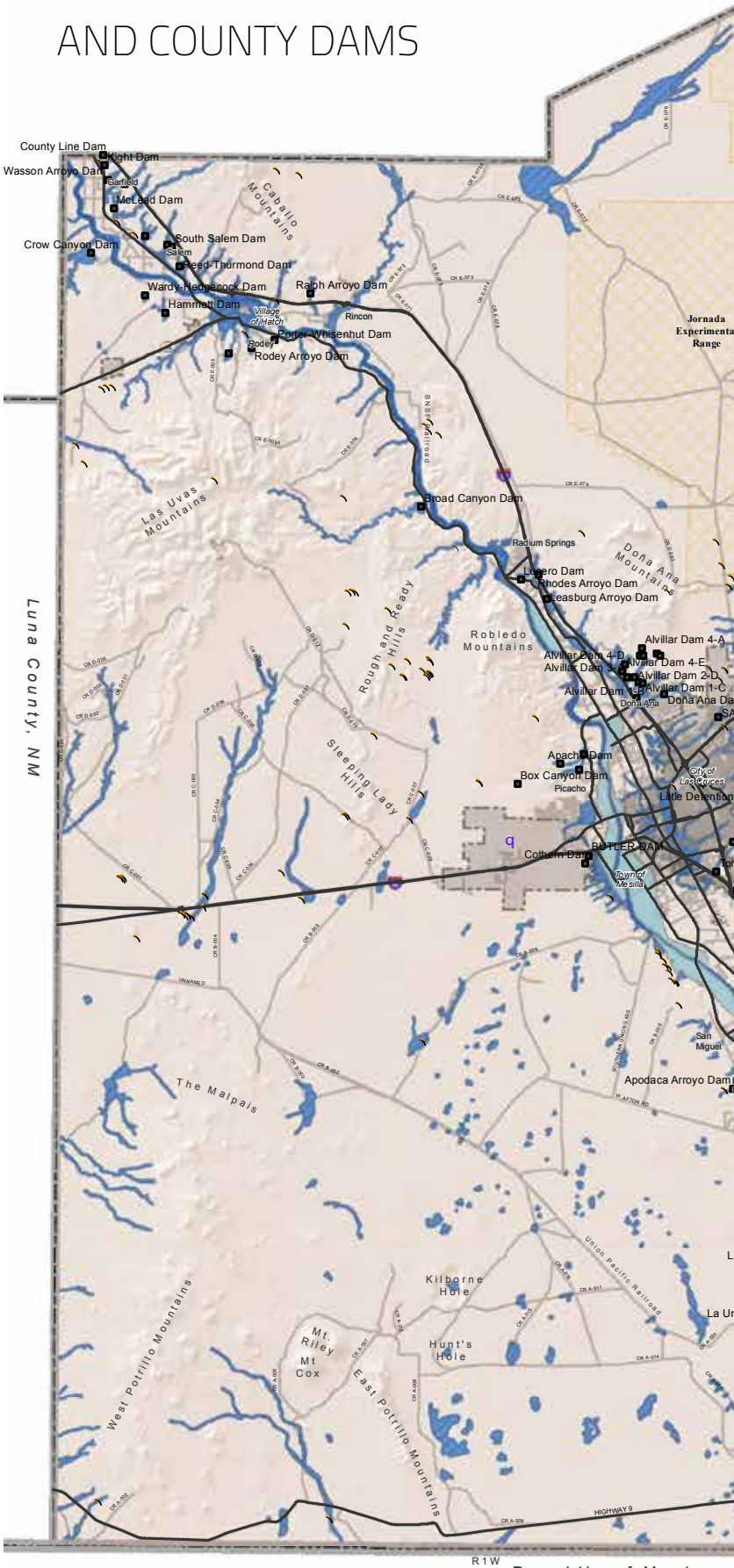
While new development in hazardous areas can be prevented, ongoing infill is anticipated to occur within existing communities that are susceptible to flood events. A coordinated prioritization of flood control and growth targets is needed across multiple ownerships.

WATER SUPPLY

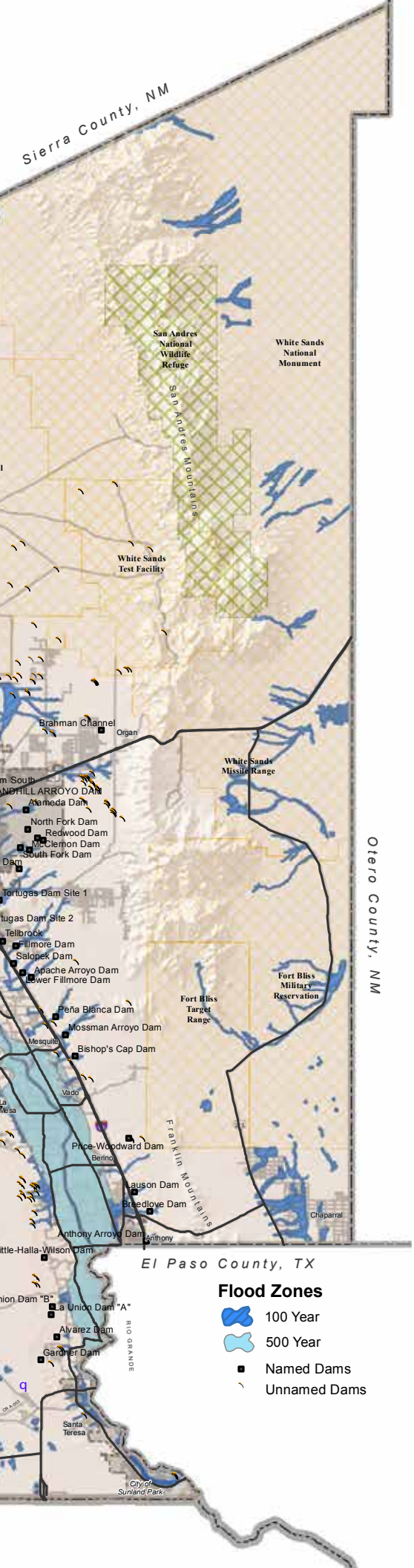
The Rio Grande river flows through the County, with storage at the Elephant Butte and Caballo Reservoirs. The river collects stormwater runoff, municipal wastewater effluent, and agricultural irrigation return flows. However, the supply of surface water in the region is extremely variable and subject to drought.

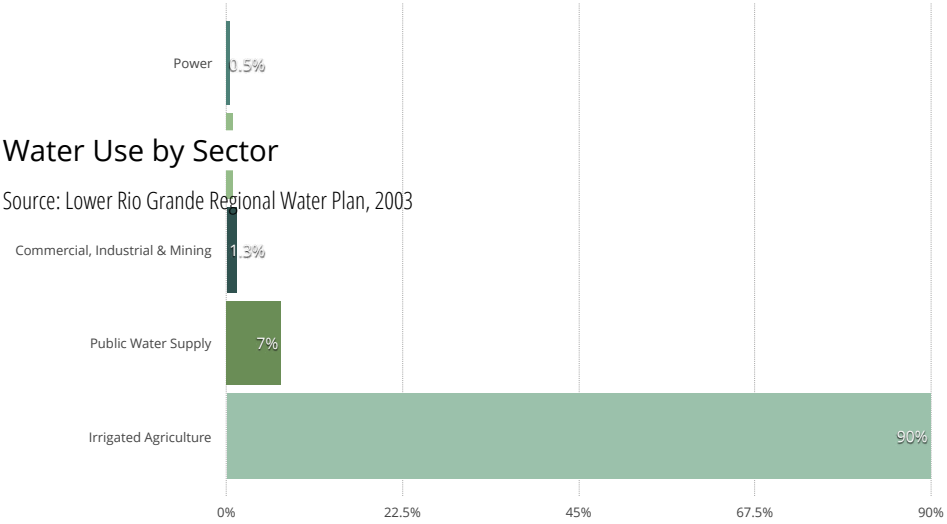
The entire allocation of surface water in the County is used by the Elephant Butte Irrigation District to irrigate agricultural land. Seventy-six

EFFECTIVE FLOOD MAP AND COUNTY DAMS



Map Credit: Dennis Smith





percent of all the water diverted for use in the County as of 2004 was for irrigation.

The rest of the water supplied to the County, and the bulk of the water that is used for human consumption and landscaping, comes from groundwater aquifers and is delivered to the population via some 40 mutual domestic water suppliers, plus co-ops, private operators, and neighborhood water associations, totaling 110 systems (NMED, 2014). The groundwater basins are Mesilla, Jornada del Muerto, Hueco Bolson, and Rincon Valley.

Reuse of treated wastewater does occur in some of the water districts, but is not a general practice.

Rainfall is scarce. The County gets 10" of rainfall a year, but it has an annual evaporation rate of 93" a year. Less water is getting into the Rio Grande when the arroyos and ravines that supply it are blocked by development. Other jurisdictions are also making legal claims on the groundwater and the surface water giving cause for concern to Doña Ana County.

The per capita rate of water usage is high at 182 gallons per capita per day. This is higher than the State of New Mexico's average at 161 gallons per capita per day and 145 gallons per capita per day for the nation. (Lower Rio Grande Regional Water Plan, 2003)

All of this puts pressure on long-term groundwater supplies, since agricultural users have to make up shortages in surface supplies by pumping groundwater. Though reports and studies, such as the NM OSE/ISC Lower Rio Grande Regional Water Plan (LRGRWP), show the groundwater supplies are extensive in comparison to the demands placed on them, aquifer drawdown is unsustainable unless recharged over the long term.

"Agriculture provides the major source of ground-water recharge... and in return the aquifer provides water to the river under certain conditions." (Lower Rio Grande Regional Water Plan, 2003)

Future water demands will be affected by the anticipated growth of industry at the border and in Las Cruces, the anticipated population increase, and

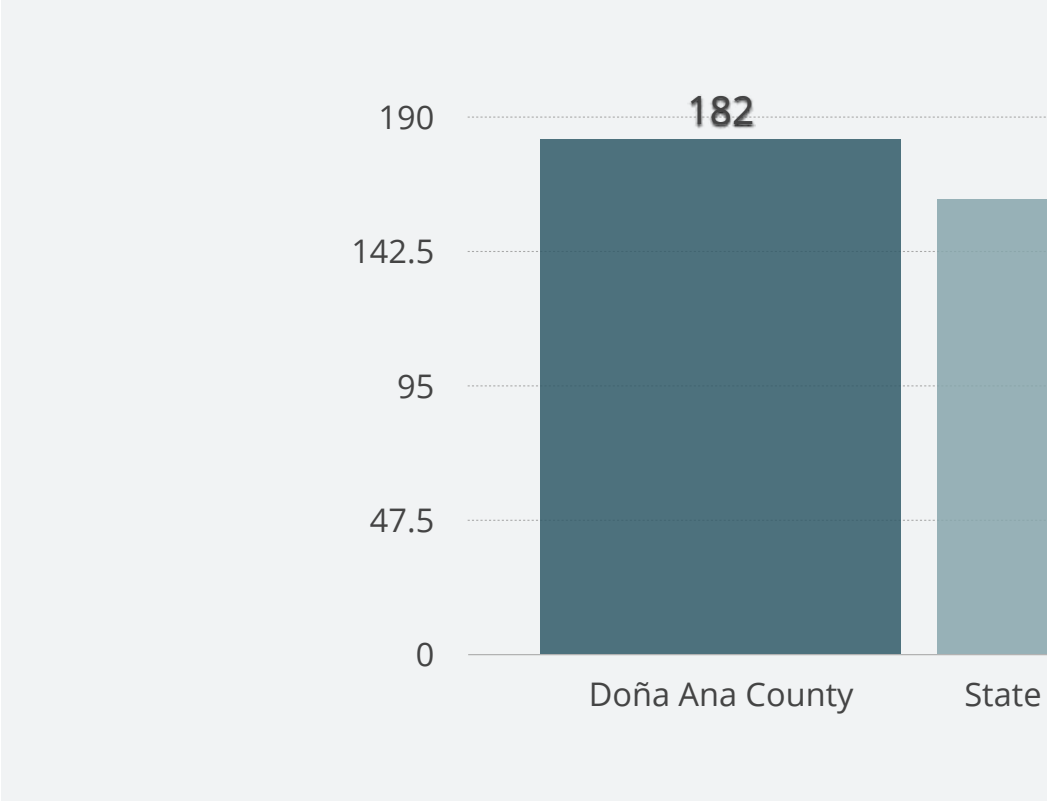
changes to types of irrigated crops and irrigation methods. The County must plan for this growth while considering the impacts on the limited water resources. The ongoing updates to the New Mexico State Water Plan, particularly the Lower Rio Grande Regional Water Plan, will help shape strategies for resiliency of water supply. As local planning progresses, the citizens of Doña Ana County should actively participate in the process to ensure progressive policies are established at the State level and that the projections made for the County's growth reflect local knowledge of the region.

WATER QUALITY

Probably more critical than aquifer drawdown is the fact that much of the groundwater of the County is high in natural arsenic and salinity, and may be subject to contamination from a significant number of sub-standard septic systems as well as agricultural by products and other sources of contaminants. Water contaminants can be expensive to treat — especially for high volume agriculture uses.

Additionally the LRGRWP from 2003 reports that the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Circular 1162 identifies seven of the eight largest pesticide concentrations found in the Rio Grande Valley study were located at seven sampling areas within the County. While the domestic supply is closely monitored and managed, residents using private wells are exposed to ground water contamination.

The 2003 projections for future water demands indicate 523,000 to 576,000 AC-FT/YR by 2040. (LRGRWP, 2003)



Average Per Capita Daily Water Use (GAL) (Lower Rio Grande Regional Water Plan, 2003)

Water Depletion (Ac-ft)

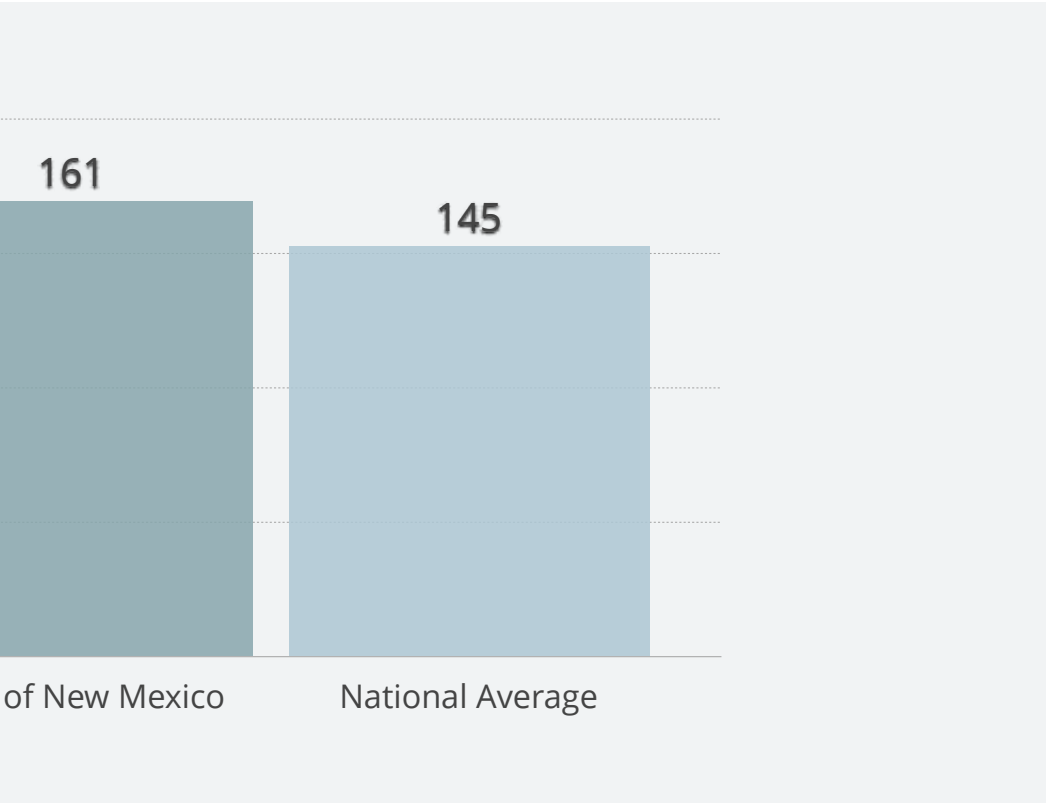
	1985	1990	1995	2000
Public & Domestic	14,995	18,797	22,254	22,440
Irrigated Agriculture	172,599	220,154	220,306	226,574
Livestock	1,712	2,756	3,426	4,590
Commercial, Industrial & Mining	4,529	3,240	3,127	3,891
Power	1,601	1,332	2,440	2,775
Total Water Withdrawal	**195,436**	**246,279**	**251,553**	**260,270**

(Source: Lower Rio Grande Regional Water Plan, Table 7.14, 2003)

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Most energy consumed in Doña Ana County is currently imported and electricity dominates at 86% of the total energy costs. Some renewable energy facilities are located within the County, but the high resource potential for solar generation has not been fully leveraged.

The County should coordinate and incentivize the development of renewable energy to achieve greater efficiency, capitalize upon the region's solor energy resources, and leverage other assets, such as agricultural waste and NMSU's biofuels research.



SYSTEM WIDE ISSUES
AN INCLUSIVE STRATEGY

Sprawling infrastructure is difficult to support, puts undue pressure on the economy and challenges resilience.

Doña Ana County is vast, with scattered settlements. Nevertheless, water, wastewater, power, gas, and telephone enterprises are in relatively good shape and enjoy an impressive breadth of service, given the rural character and size of the County. This spread is partly enabled by subsidy programs that set funds aside for the County to support the economy and to service colonias.

NATURAL WATER CYCLE: Long dry spells can require more groundwater use, and more intense storms can lead to worse flooding. This creates a need for conservation and a holistic approach to the entire water balance.

THOROUGHFARES AND FLOOD CONTROL SYSTEMS: The deterioration of roads, streets and dams is outpacing the capacity for upgrades. Since the infrastructure is sprawling across large areas, each taxpayer is responsible for more of its upkeep. The tallies on infrastructure costs for the alternatives are discussed on p. 49

A SYSTEMS APPROACH

A number of studies and plans are in progress, or have been done, that require minor updates, funding and political support to implement. These efforts could be better coordinated across organizations and jurisdictions. While there is a genuine intention to work together, differing stakeholders have their own priorities that may conflict with others.

Image Credit: Dennis Quintana

The County should encourage cross-agency coordination to holistically harness the various disciplines and agencies across "silos," network them, and align their purposes and activities. It would work to capture and manage rainfall in a more holistic way so that it does not cause damage, and so that it can serve multiple purposes. Rainfall could then benefit the urbanized area and the natural environment, as well as address water conservation and reuse comprehensively.

An integrated green infrastructure strategy looks for opportunities to collocate facilities and uses in a synergistic fashion. A diversion structure could be upgraded to provide better flood control detention while also facilitating infiltration and water storage or bio habitat. Streets and roads can be upgraded to green streets by narrowing paving and adding street trees, sidewalks and bioswales. Parks can be designed to capture, store and infiltrate rainwater in joint-use facilities.

WATER MATTERS
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G7.1 Coordinate the Many Silos of Water Management

The County has numerous agencies and entities that manage water supply and flood control. Each has its own focus and priorities, but the goal of the various agencies is the reduction of flood hazards and control of stormwater and flooding affecting community and urban infrastructure and agriculture. A coordinated effort could reduce redundancy, inefficiencies, and stretch limited funds.

ACTIONS

A7.1 Encourage Regional Water Resources and Flood Control Coordination Accross Agencies

Doña Ana County should prioritize coordination of the cross-agency efforts to capture and manage rainfall in a more holistic way so that it does not cause damage either to agriculture or community, and so that it can be used in multiple ways. The County should assure the dialogue across agencies also addresses water conservation and reuse in a comprehensive manner.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Coordinate Policies and Investments

Preserve Heritage

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
Office of the Flood Commission (FC)
U.S. International Boundary & Water Commission (IBWC)
Elephant Butte Irrigation District (EBID)
Soil and Water Conservation Districts
NM State Land Office
NM Office of the State Engineer
U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

WATER MATTERS
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G7.2 Assess the Scope and Prioritization of Flood Hazards

FEMA is developing updated Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) that include updated flood studies, realignment of flood zones to better match topography and digital orthophotographs. The FIRMs have not been adopted at the time this plan was written however the FIRMs expected to be formally adopted within the next year. See Preliminary Flood Map on the next page.

ACTIONS

A7.2 Use FIRMs to Avoid Development in Flood Zones

The County should proactively prohibit development in floodplains and arroyos. Doña Ana County should adopt policies and update its plans to steer development away from hazardous areas. The mitigation of development impacts on tributaries to the Rio Grande would help the County weather droughts better, and may help gird itself against potential water rights losses.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Enhance Economic Competitiveness

Coordinate Policies and Investments

RESPONSIBLE

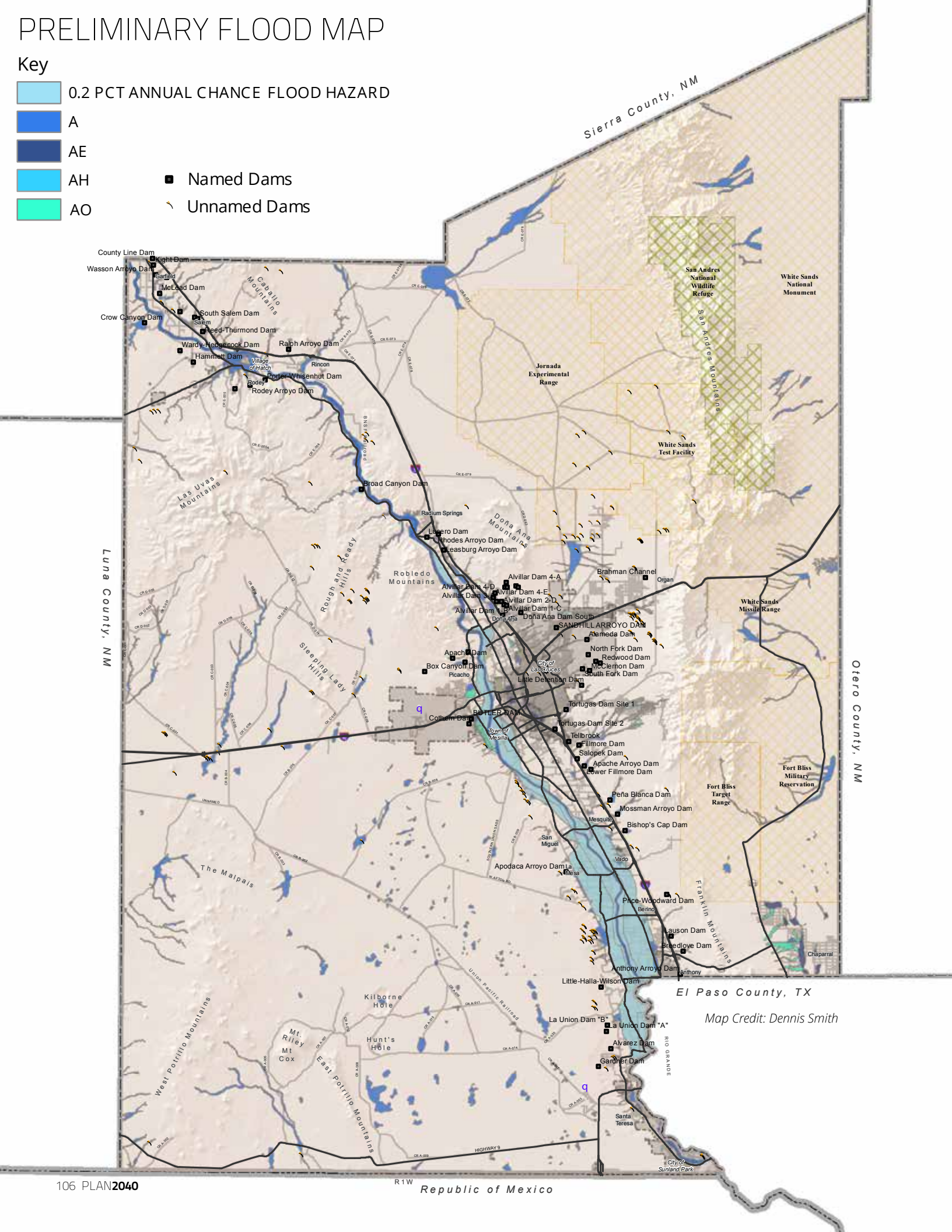
Responsible Entities

Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z)
Office of the Flood Commission (FC)
U.S. International Boundary & Water Commission (IBWC)
Elephant Butte Irrigation District (EBID)
Soil and Water Conservation Districts
NM State Land Office
NM Office of the State Engineer
U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

PRELIMINARY FLOOD MAP

Key

- 0.2 PCT ANNUAL CHANCE FLOOD HAZARD
- A
- AE
- AH
- AO
- Named Dams
- Unnamed Dams



Map Credit: Dennis Smith

WATER MATTERS
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G7.3 Harvest More Rainwater and Flood Flows

The County should work with partner institutions to bolster natural processes by harvesting rainwater and flood flows in the Rio Grande and its tributary arroyos through green streets, joint-use agreements, flood control infrastructure, and water management in agriculture and open space.

ACTIONS

A7.3 Use County Systems to Harvest Rainwater

The County should foster projects that encourage watershed rehabilitation upstream of development to aid in aquifer recharge and reduce storm water runoff through developments The County should build and retrofit facilities so that they can harvest rainwater for reuse and aquifer recharge — while also providing habitat for people, animals, and plants. The first facilities to tackle are parks and open spaces, and the regional transportation network to provide facilities for rainwater harvest and aquifer recharge.

The County Should also utilize integrated-use dams, reservoirs and diversions to catch floodwaters from arroyos and the Rio Grande to reduce local and regional flooding and for gradual release to the Rio Grande and EBID mains and laterals for agricultural use.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Coordinate Policies and Investments

Enhance Economic Competitiveness

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Elephant Butte Irrigation District (EBID)
Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Engineering/Roads Department (ERD)
Facilities & Parks Department (FPD)
Office of the Flood Commission (FC)
U.S. International Boundary & Water Commission (IBWC)
NM State Land Office
NM Office of the State Engineer
U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

WATER MATTERS
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G7.4 Reuse More Water

Wastewater should be treated as an asset, not a waste product, and it should be reused as much as practicable before releasing it to the river or aquifer.

ACTIONS

A7.4 Implement Multiple Solutions for Water Reuse

Water recycling should be achieved through purple pipe systems that reuse treated wastewater for construction, landscape irrigation, industrial uses, green streets that use rainwater for street tree irrigation and aquifer recharge, flood control systems that slowly release runoff from large events into irrigation systems. Recycling should be considered across multiple systems.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Enhance Economic Competitiveness

Coordinate Policies and Investments

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Elephant Butte Irrigation District (EBID)
Engineering/Roads Department (ERD)
Office of the Flood Commission (FC)

WATER MATTERS
GOALS | ACTIONS

ACTIONS

A7.5 Conserve Water

Conduct an enhanced water conservation program for homes, yards, offices, industry, government and agriculture. Set a goal to reduce per/capita water use to below 150 gallons per day by 2025 and then update it for 2040. The plan should address efficient landscape irrigation strategies, water use management in building operations, expanded agricultural irrigation goals, incentives for xeriscape conversions and low-water fixtures, and an education and engagement plan.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Coordinate Policies and Investments

Enhance Economic Competitiveness

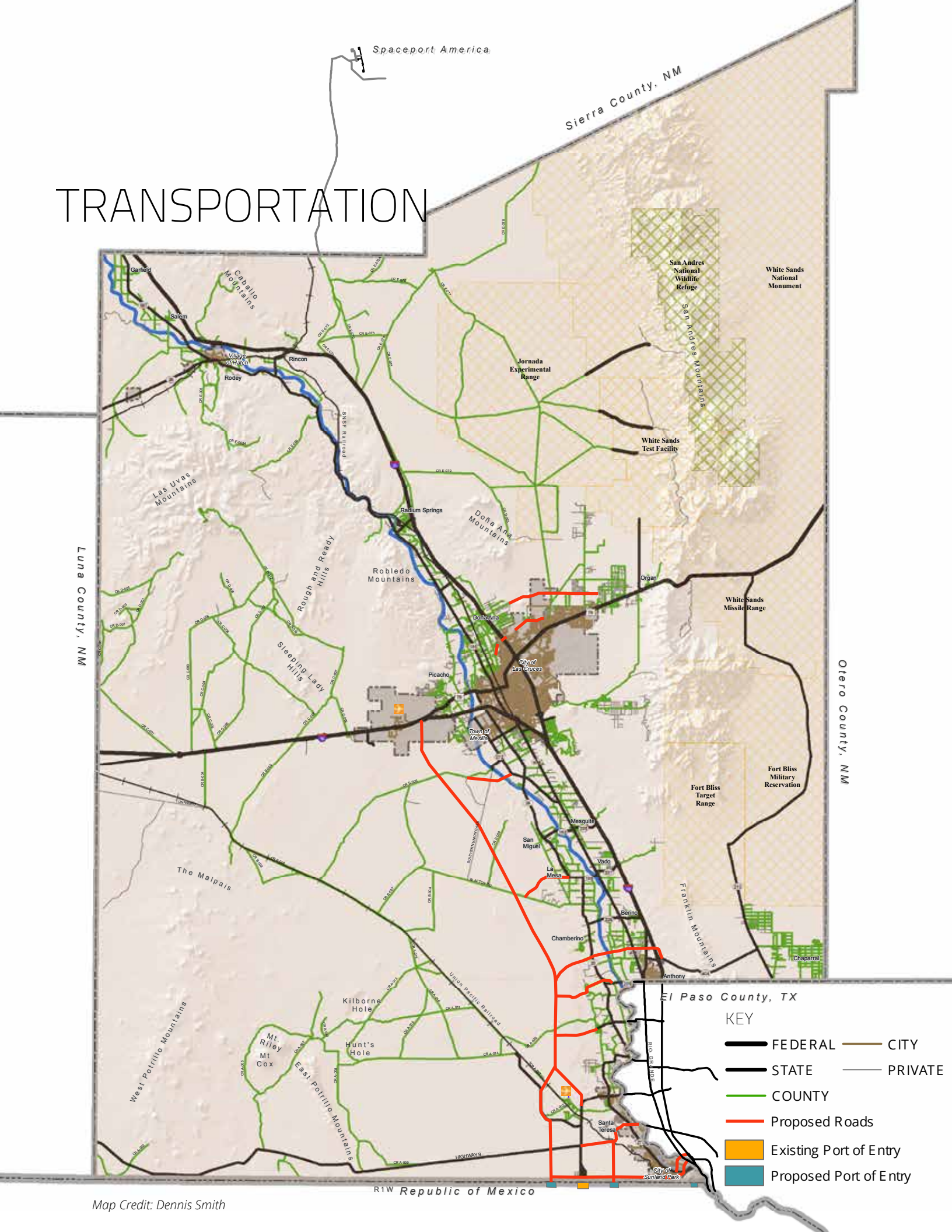
Support Existing Communities

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
County Manager (CM)
Community Development Department (CDD)

TRANSPORTATION



Map Credit: Dennis Smith

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

The New Mexico Department of Transportation, Doña Ana County, and the local municipalities manage the transportation system within Doña Ana County. The Mesilla Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization, the El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization, and the South Central Council of Governments provide planning support — but they have complex responsibilities too.

There are approximately 11,000 commuters traveling from Doña Ana County to El Paso and 8,000 people commuting from El Paso to Doña Ana County for employment. (United States Census, n.d.). Within Doña Ana County, the average commuter drives for 21 minutes. This produced approximately 646,000 metric tons of greenhouse gas in 2011, compromising health issues and accelerating climate change. Not only does the goal of reducing vehicle miles traveled help make it easier to get to work and school, but it would also help align the County with any forthcoming Greenhouse Gas targets – and funding as it becomes available. (Viva Doña Ana, 2013)

TRAFFIC DEMAND MANAGEMENT

The scenario-modeling tool predicts that the Business as Usual Scenario will generate 19,900 vehicle miles traveled per household per year while the Conservative Preferred Scenario will generate only 15,920 vehicle miles traveled per household per year. This reduction in VMT is supported by the table on p. 114 from a 2005 study by Todd Litman of the Victoria Transport Policy Institute. It demonstrates why compact urban form is an effective way to reduce traffic volumes, helping to negate the need for more traffic lanes even while adding more population density. This approach is applied throughout this Plan.

Emergency Response

In addition to the observations of the Public Services section, emergency response improves when the service area of stations is compact. This reduces driving times, and there is a trade-off between the walkable streets and smaller service areas enabled by a fine-grained thoroughfare network and the wide streets that many fire departments require for fighting fires.

THE THOROUGHFARE NETWORK

Many of the areas that are most pivotal for regional economic growth are not readily accessible. The thoroughfare network extends primarily north and south, with inadequate east/west linkages. The network does not serve the new Santa Teresa industrial area adequately, nor the other proposed Ports of Entry. In the north, there is no direct connection to Spaceport America.

Residents strongly supported actions to manage flooding and improvement to roads, sidewalks, and lighting, especially in underserved areas.

VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED

In transportation, Levels of Service (LOS) give letter grades for the degree of congestion, which is to say the degree to which drivers must slow and interact with other vehicles. Simply by placing the free flow of vehicles at the top of the LOS hierarchy and labeling it with them "A" grade like a school assignment, this privileges rural locations and overbuilt roads. California provides a case study for changing the traffic generation criteria for a project from LOS to Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT).

When a transportation project's impacts are judged against delay rather than vehicle miles traveled, it is harder to justify environmental goals. When LOS is the main criterion, it is usually easier and cheaper to build projects in outlying areas where individual intersections would show less delay resulting from new development. At the same time, LOS usually makes it much harder and more expensive to build in dense areas where there is already a lot of traffic. However, using VMT as a criterion, locations where higher density would make transit, walking, and bicycling viable, projects can often easily justify themselves. While much of the debate between LOS and VMT occurs in engineering terms, it has significant implications for a place like Doña Ana County — which needs to grow together rather than apart.

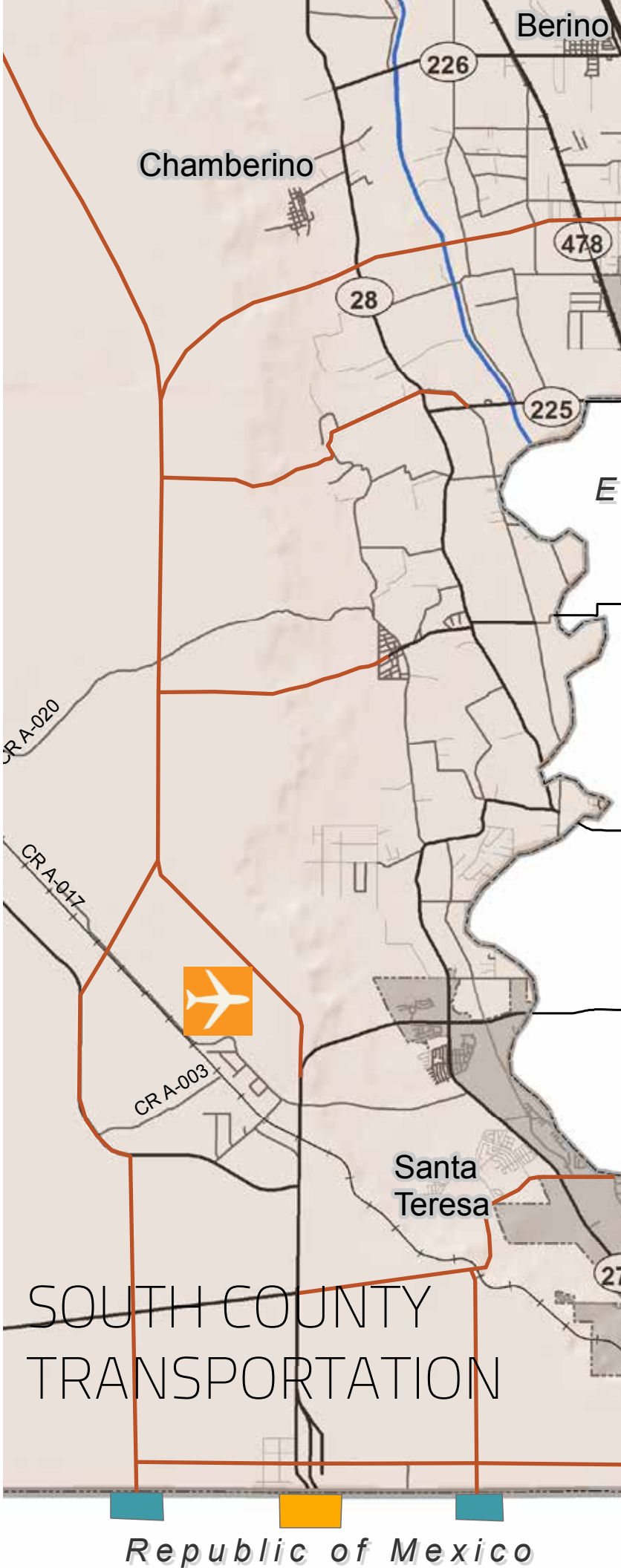
PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE ROADS

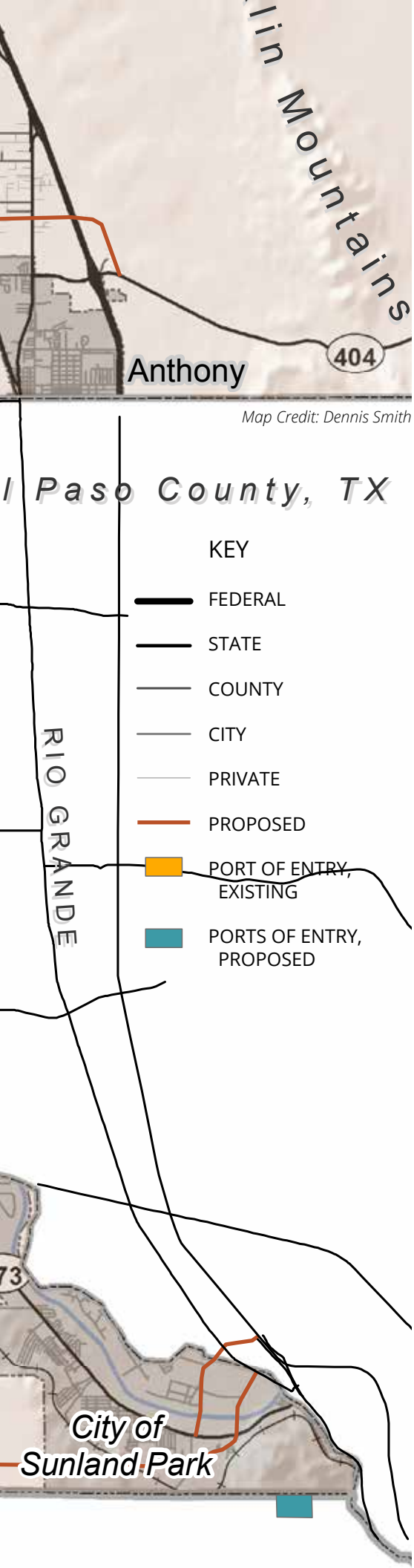
Even where it is justified for reasons of equity, adopting existing infrastructure into the County system incurs significant costs — especially since maintenance costs can dwarf the capital costs of improvements over time. The County's Resolution number 05-22 makes the case and sets requirements for requesting County road maintenance. While this is positive, when enforced, another similar resolution could enforce a requirement that any new roads not only be built to an acceptable standard, but that they must be an important enough part of the County transportation network to justify the cost of maintenance.

An Infrastructure Asset Management Plan would analyze and classify roads not just for their physical build-out, but also for their value to the overall network, in coordination with the COGs and MPOs. When streets and roads are built or upgraded, the County has the opportunity to retrofit them as complete green streets that capture and infiltrate water and provide shade to reduce the urban heat island (UHI) effect. It also has the opportunity to align the Infrastructure Capital Improvements Plan with the Asset Management Plan.

BORDER CROSSINGS AND THE SPACEPORT

Better access to the Spaceport and to the Ports of Entry (POE) would provide significant benefits both to workers and to the County. The Border Area Economic Development Strategy (BAEDS), completed by AECOM as part of the Viva Doña Ana process, noted concern over the number of roads in the Border Area for which Doña Ana County is responsible for maintenance. With anticipated growth in use of the overweight truck corridor along Pete Domenici Blvd, the secondary roads were not built to the level needed to sustain higher truck weights. This plan proposes an additional north/south route from the proposed commercial POE connecting to 478 at the Anthony gap. See map to the right.





Map Credit: Dennis Smith

OTHER TRANSPORTATION MODES

Doña Ana County has diverse modes of transportation even though most of the existing infrastructure is in service to the automobile. Cycling is popular in the region and transit exists in the urban areas. The extensive Union Pacific facility in Santa Teresa is a major multi-modal hub for international freight, and the two small regional airports at Las Cruces and Santa Teresa have capacity to grow.

While the diversity of the transportation options are great, pedestrian and bicycle facilities are constrained, and transit is very limited because of the rural environment. Coordination across jurisdictions and state and international borders will be necessary to maximize the potential at Santa Teresa at the regional level. And the recommended Infrastructure Asset Management Plan will also focus on the small scale community needs.

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

As noted in Civic, Agricultural, and Natural Lands on p. 60, the New Mexico Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department, 2009) states that sedentary lifestyles are worsening health outcomes for New Mexicans. Biking and walking have health benefits, but just as importantly they can reduce dependence on driving, along with transit. This Plan calls for walking, biking, and transit throughout — but this requires coordination through an Infrastructure Asset Management Plan which accounts for how close destinations are to each other, and how direct the routes are. Usually, the best walking and cycling routes will be via main thoroughfares. The Infrastructure Asset Management Plan would map not just which routes have sidewalks and bicycle lanes, for example, but which routes are the most logical for upgrades. These routes would likely be the routes most appropriate for Safe Routes to School programs. This map should guide decisions about where to site schools. See p. 142 School Sizing and Siting.

TRANSIT

The County has only two fixed-route transit providers, and some provided by work destinations. The South Central Regional Transit District (SCRTD) will begin providing service in September of 2015. These systems can be better coordinated, and interlinked to form a more comprehensive network via the SCRTD Coordinated Mobility Action Plan.

Doña Ana County's public transit offerings are limited: nine fixed routes provided within Las Cruces by RoadRUNNER, and a single line running into Sunland Park from El Paso by Sun Metro. RoadRUNNER had almost 700,000 annual riders in 2012. RoadRUNNER provides some Dial-A-Ride service in rural areas, and estimates this has increased to 60,000 annual riders in 2013. Sun Metro had over 160,000 riders into Sunland Park in 2014. Ben Archer provides "on-demand" transit service from Hatch to Las Cruces. New Mexico State University students have enjoyed fair-free bus service since 2012, and ridership numbers have increased by about 10%. (Viva Doña Ana, 2013) The SCRTD service will add seven additional fixed routes with two service hubs in Las Cruces and Anthony.

LAND USE IMPACTS ON TRANSPORTATION

Source: Victoria Transport Policy Institute

This table summarizes the effects of land use factors on travel behavior. Actual impacts will vary depending on the specific conditions and the combination of factors applied

FACTOR	DEFINITION	TRAVEL IMPACTS
Regional accessibility	Location of development relative to regional urban center.	Reduces per capita vehicle mileage. More central area residents typically drive 10 – 40% less than the rural condition.
Density	People or jobs per unit of land area (acre).	Reduces vehicle ownership and travel, and increases use of alternative modes. A 10% increase typically reduces VMT 0.5 – 1% as an isolated factor, and 1 – 4% including associated factors (regional accessibility, mix, etc.).
Mix	Proximity between different land uses (housing, commercial, institutional)	Tends to reduce vehicle travel and increase use of alternative modes. particularly walking. Mixed-use areas typically have 5 – 15% less vehicle travel.
Centeredness (centricity)	Portion of jobs and other activities in central activity nodes (e.g. downtowns)	Increases use of alternative modes. Typically 30 – 60% of commuters to major commercial centers use alternative modes compared with 5 – 15% of dispersed locations.
Network Connectivity	Degree that walkways and roads are connected	Increased roadway connectivity can reduce vehicle travel and improved walkway connectivity increased non-motorized travel.
Roadway Design	Scale, design and management of streets	Multi-modal streets increase use of alternative modes. Traffic calming reduces VMT and increases non-motorized travel.
Active transport (walking and cycling) conditions	Quantity, quality and security of sidewalks, crosswalks, paths, and bile lanes	Improved walking and cycling conditions tends to increase non motorized travel and reduce automobile travel. Residents of more walkable communities typically walk 2 – 4 times more and drive 5 – 15% less than in more automobile-dependent areas.
Transit quality and accessibility	Quality of transit service and access from transit to destinations	Increases ridership and reduces automobile trips. Residents of trans oriented neighborhoods tend to own 10 – 30% few vehicles, drive 10 – 30% few miles, and use alternative modes 2 – 10 times more than in automobile-oriented areas.
Parking supply and management	Number of parking spaces per building unit or acre, and how parking is managed	Tends to reduce vehicle ownership and use, and increase use of alternative modes. Cost-recovery pricing (users finance parking facilities) typically reduces automobile trips 10 – 30%.
Site design	Whether oriented for auto or multimodal accessibility	More multi-modal site design can reduce automobile trips, particularly if implemented with improvements to other modes.
Mobility management	Strategies that encourage more efficient travel activity	Tends to reduce vehicle ownership and use, and increase use of alternative modes. Impacts vary depending on specific factors.
Integrated smart growth programs	Travel impacts of integrated programs that include a variety of land use management strategies	Reduces vehicle ownership and use, and increases alternative mode use. Smart growth community residents typically own 10 – 30% fewer vehicles, drive 20 – 40% less, and use alternative modes 2 – 10 times more than in automobile-dependent locations, and even larger reductions are possible if integrated with regional transit improvements and pricing reforms.

This table describes various land use factors that can affect travel behavior and population health.

Image Credit All Others: Dennis Quintana

Image Credit: Andrew von Maur

AIR AND RAIL

The Santa Teresa Union Pacific Rail Facility is a 2,200 acre intermodal terminal that enhances the international freight network. The regional rail infrastructure provides future potential commuter rail options between Las Cruces and El Paso.

Both of the County airports, the Las Cruces International Airport and the Doña Ana County International Jetport in Santa Teresa are general aviation airports with capacity for growth. The Las Cruces airport has three runways and the Doña Ana airport has one that supports small jets and cargo planes.

TRANSPORTATION
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G8.1 Improve Access to Market, Jobs and Education

Transportation to market and to jobs generates a large number of long driving trips. The County should link job sites and transportation facilities together better and assure commercial farming is linked to market. In particular, Doña Ana County should provide good access to the Spaceport and farming communities, and a good transportation network and transit to the Ports of Entry. It should also complete east-west linkages. See p. 110 Transportation and p. 112 South County Transportation. Broadband access should be considered a critical point of access to jobs and education.

ACTIONS

A8.1 Target Specific Areas to Improve Transportation Network

The County should include upgrades to transportation infrastructure linking major transportation routes and job destinations within the Infrastructure Asset Management Plan, and carry them out in order of priority for access to jobs and education, and to meet these priorities:

- Connect the County together better in an east-west direction;
- Provide improved access to the Spaceport and farming communities in the north; and
- Provide better access to the existing and proposed border crossings in the south.
- Work with national and local broadband providers to improve and extend infrastructure throughout the County.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Provide More Transportation Choice

Promote Affordable Communities

Coordinate Policies and Leverage Investment

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
County Manager (CM)
Engineering/Roads Department (ERD)
South Central Regional Transit District (SCRTD)

TRANSPORTATION
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G8.2 Allocate Road and Maintenance Funds Strategically

The network of thoroughfares in Doña Ana County is both expensive and sometimes poorly coordinated with travel patterns. Today, the network favors drivers at the expense of bicycle riders and pedestrians. The County should coordinate with nearby governments to manage the network as a whole.

ACTIONS

A8.2 Develop an Infrastructure Asset Management Plan

Doña Ana County should develop an Infrastructure Asset Management Plan that classifies thoroughfares according to their importance to the whole network. This would be coordinated with the Infrastructure Capital Improvements Plan.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Enhance Economic Competitiveness

Support Existing Communities

Coordinate Policies and Investment

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Community Development Department (CDD)
Engineering/Roads Department (ERD)
Local Governments

TRANSPORTATION
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G8.3 Prioritize Urban Streets Along With Rural Roads

State and Federal criteria for funding projects generally use Level of Service (LOS) as a major criterion for funding and approval. Unfortunately, this tends to lower urban projects in ranking. There is a different criterion which should replace LOS - Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) which is more appropriate for judging projects where origins and destinations are likely to be closer together, and where people are more likely to walk, take transit, and bicycle. Another criterion to consider is based on the importance of roads as they relate to economic activity in the County, including farm-to-market roads and roads connecting industrial sites.

ACTIONS

A8.3 Base Project Decisions n VMT Rather Than LOS

Although State and Federal resources often privilege LOS over VMT, the County should use VMT as its major criterion — at least in community areas. While it may not be able to change projects' ranking at higher government levels, it can at least use VMT for its own internal decisions, and push back against the one size fits all approach of LOS.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Provide Transportation Choice

Support Existing Communities

Preserve Heritage

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Community Development Department (CDD)
Engineering/Roads Department (ERD)

TRANSPORTATION
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G8.4 Limit the Roads the County Accepts

The County accepts many roads and streets, thus incurring substantial maintenance costs. This practice should be limited to those that contribute to the entire network so that the costs do not rise excessively.

ACTIONS

A8.4 Only Accept Roads that Contribute to the Network

Enforce the County's Resolution number 05-22, and establish whether a given road or street is important to the County's overall network, considering its contribution to economic development, level of use/vehicle miles traveled, and public safety. The Infrastructure Asset Management Plan should establish this, in consultation with County departments, local municipalities and the Colonias Development Council.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Coordinate Policies and Investment

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Community Development Department (CDD)
Engineering/Roads Department (ERD)
Local Municipalities
The Colonias Development Council

STRATEGY 4
ENHANCE PUBLIC SERVICES

Image Credit: New Mexico State University

PUBLIC SERVICES

There are 20 departments and over 800 employees serving the residents of Doña Ana County.

County services support day-to-day life. They create and convey many of the necessities of modern life and help define and shape the County. Doña Ana County's services include approximately 20 departments and over 800 employees that provide direct services to residents and other departments.

Services provided directly by Doña Ana County include sheriff, fire, emergency, parks, community centers, solid waste, and roads. This strategy will also discuss other important public services provided by other organizations including education, health, and access to healthy food. Many of these services are constrained within the County, and that will be discussed within each section, however concerns of social equity arise when the impoverished and under represented groups have limited access to the most important regional services.

This strategy will specifically address:

- Public Safety
- Health
- Education

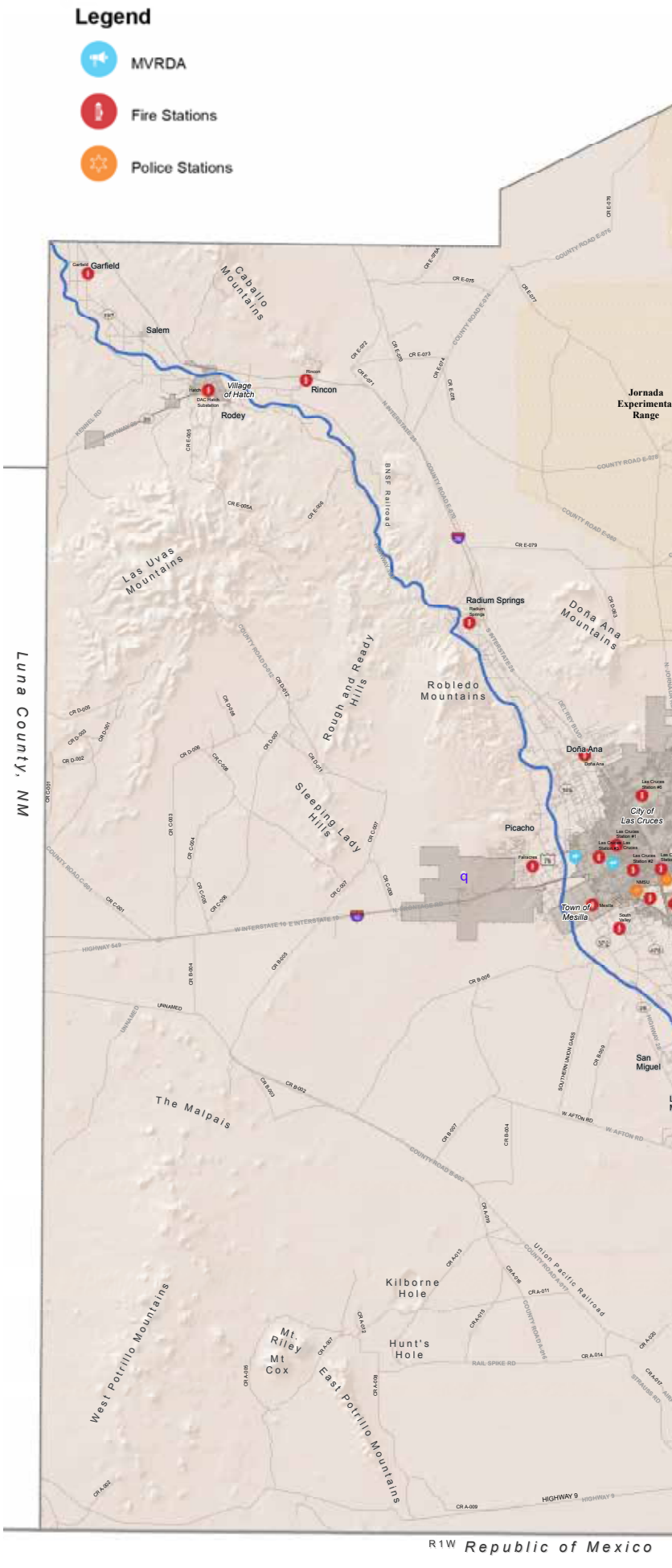
PUBLIC SAFETY

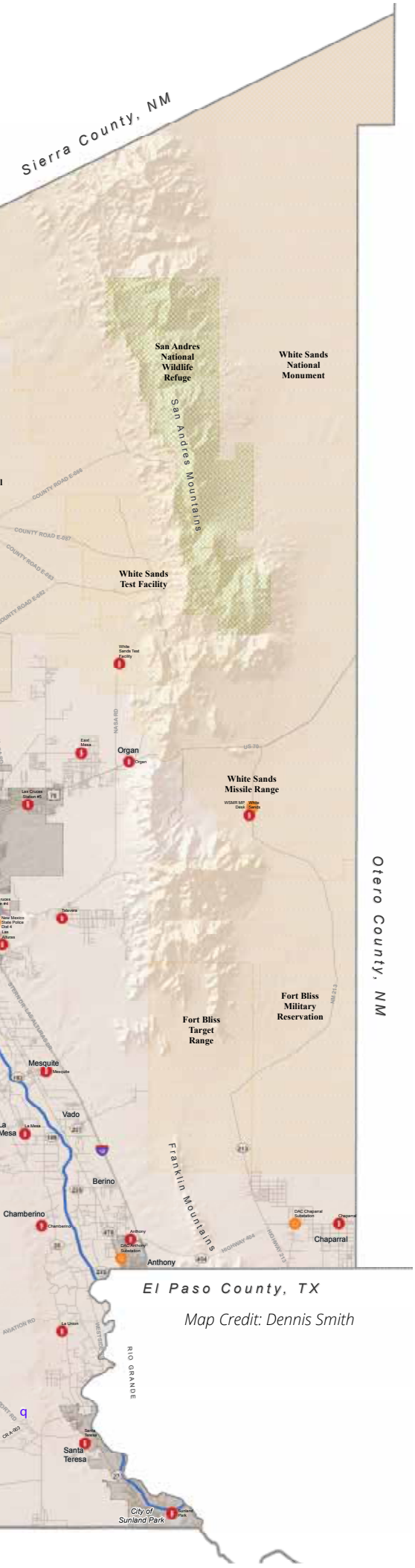
LAW ENFORCEMENT, FIRE, AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

There are three levels of law enforcement in Doña Ana County – municipal, County, and State. Anthony, Hatch, Las Cruces, Mesilla, and Sunland Park all have municipal police departments providing service primarily within their jurisdictions. The Doña Ana County Sheriff serves the unincorporated areas and the New Mexico State Police has jurisdiction throughout the state.

Further low-density rural development can strain the County's public safety budget, since it will require the County to build more sheriff and fire stations to ensure adequate response times. As noted in the Green Infrastructure section, the physical layout and level of capacity of the infrastructure needs to be shaped to keep emergency response efficient.

The covered area should be relatively compact so that keeping response times reasonable doesn't require the County to build more stations than the new residents and businesses can support. This will be a factor in planning the Santa Teresa area, and may be one justification for building the additional east-west connections called for in the Transportation section. See Public Safety Map to the right.





Map Credit: Dennis Smith

The Sheriff's Office is the second largest staff in the state. As growth occurs, compact development will help to prevent overextension of staff and equipment.

Image credit: Dennis Quintana

Public safety growth must keep up with population growth.

Sheriff

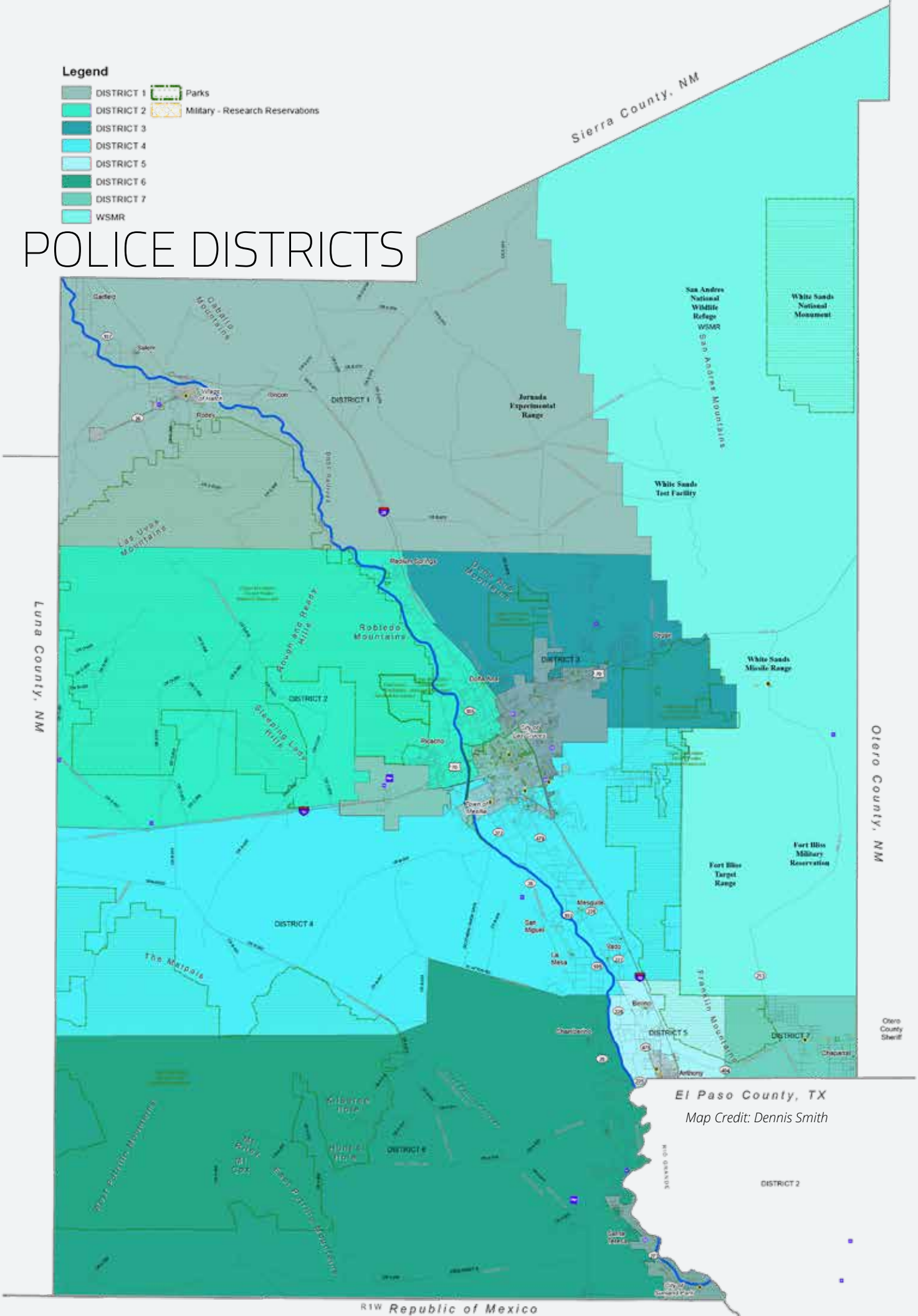
The Doña Ana County Sheriff Office (DASO) is second in number of employees only to Bernalillo County in the State of New Mexico. With offices in Las Cruces, Hatch, Anthony and Chaparral, the Sheriff's Department has jurisdiction over 3,804 square miles and as of December 2014 had 133 sworn officers with 81 support staff. The DASO serves approximately 84,000 residents of the unincorporated County as well as providing mutual aid to the municipalities.

Fire and EMS

Emergency services are coordinated with the Doña Ana County Flood Commission, the Office of Emergency Management and the New Mexico Environment Department. The Fire Department operates 19 local stations staffed largely by volunteers. The Fire Department provides first responders in addition to fire management.

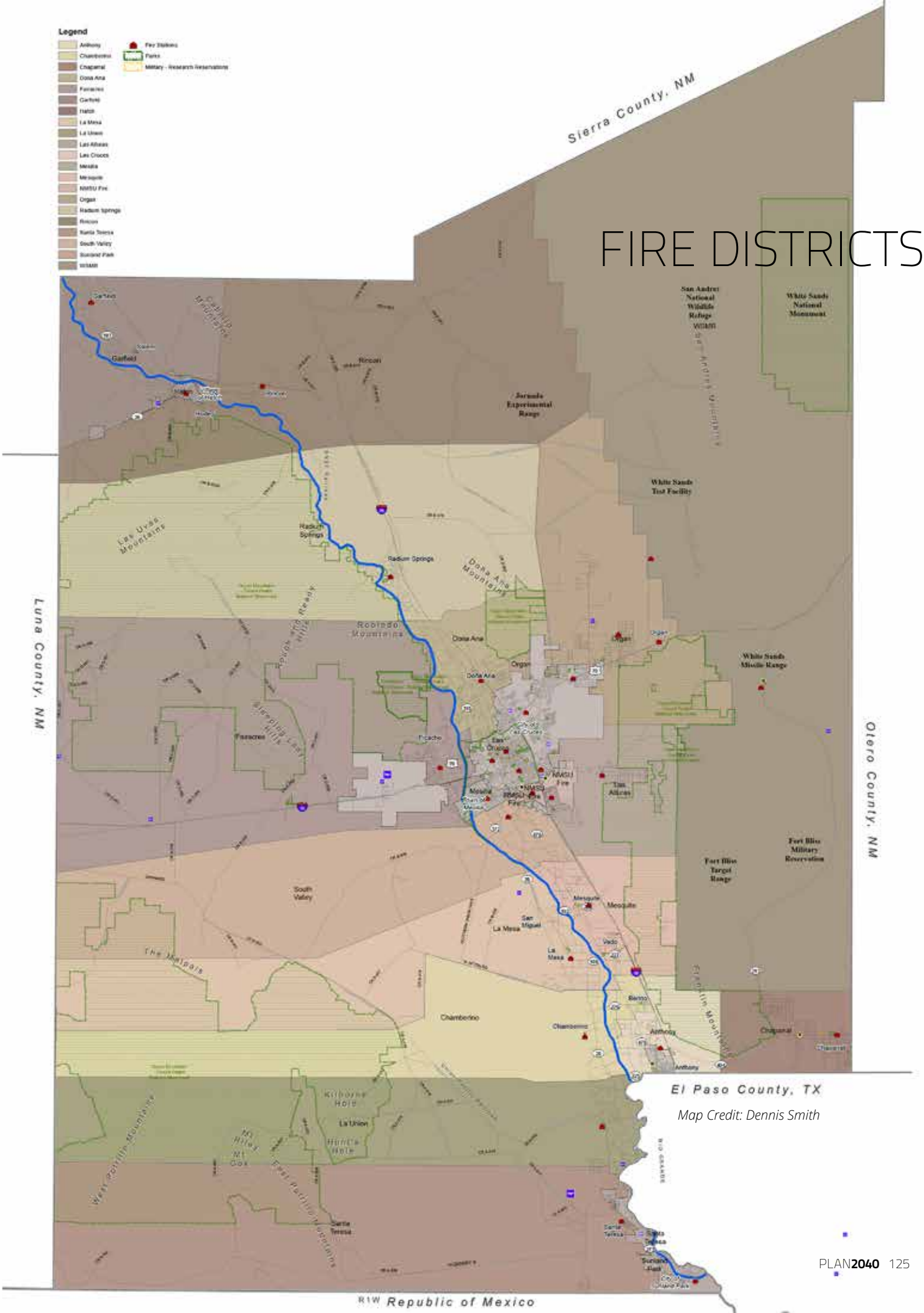
Image Credit: Dennis Quintana

POLICE DISTRICTS



Map Credit: Dennis Smith

FIRE DISTRICTS



Map Credit: Dennis Smith

PUBLIC SAFETY
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G9.1 Maintain Public Services While Keeping Them Affordable

As a large County, response times from emergency services are highly dependent on distance. As the County's population grows, the County has to be able to deploy police, fire, and EMS services efficiently.

ACTIONS

A9.1 Build Public Safety Stations on Connected Networks

Multiple factors can affect how quickly emergency services can reach emergencies. First, physical distance on roadways can affect response times. Another factor is how well connected the thoroughfares are. The County should not only ensure that the thoroughfare network is compact, but also ensure that it is highly connected together so that as much as possible there are always two routes to get to every address. It should also ensure that police, fire and EMS facilities are located so that they can reach a number of destinations without taking too many turns.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Enhance Economic Competitiveness

Support Existing Communities

Coordinate Policies and Investments

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)

Community Development Department (CDD)

Engineering/Roads Department (ERD)

Fire And Emergency Services of Doña Ana County

PUBLIC SAFETY
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G9.2 Meet or Exceed National Standards of Service in the Sheriff's Office.

Employ two deputies per 1,000 residents in the County, or a minimum of 168 based upon the 2014 population.

ACTIONS

A9.2 Provide Funding to Optimize Sheriff's Office Capabilities

The County should ensure adequate funding is available to the DASO for staffing and infrastructure. Facilities and staffing levels must be improved as the population increases.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Support Existing Communities

Coordinate Policies and Investments

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)

County Manager (CM)

PUBLIC SAFETY
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G9.3 Continue to Support Fire, Rescue & Emergency Services

Appropriately located and staffed facilities are crucial to reducing response times. New facilities in new locations will likely be required as the population increases.

ACTIONS

A9.3 Optimize Fire and Emergency Service Capabilities

Ensure new development balances adequate and quick fire access with narrow streets that do not promote speeding. Do this by designating key thoroughfares for direct travel from fire and emergency facilities, and allow the balance of the streets to be narrow enough to discourage fast driving through communities.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Support Existing Communities

Coordinate Policies and Investments

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
Community Development Department (CDD)
Engineering/Roads Department (ERD)
Fire And Emergency Services of Doña Ana County

All Images Credit: Dennis Quintana

HEALTH

Good health can result from planning for active recreation, walking and cycling, and access to health care and healthy food.

The Doña Ana County FY14-18 Strategic Plan sets a goal that everyone "living in Doña Ana County will have access to affordable health care and medical services that focus on emergencies, preventative strategies, and eliminating injury and disease that lead to premature death and disability." Health equity varies in the County across location, race, and income levels, and impacts education and economic opportunity for the County as a whole.

Healthy communities depend on easy, safe access to walking, biking, recreation, healthy and nutritious food, quality healthcare, schools, police, and other community services. Doña Ana County can reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by promoting community health, encouraging walking, biking, and other daily exercise – and making fresh, local food accessible.

The State of New Mexico Department of Health (DOH) has established priority areas that can improve community-wide health. These indicators include:

- Adolescent obesity
- Adult smoking,
- Adult immunizations
- Annual dental visits
- Teen birth rates
- Fall deaths in older adults
- Drug overdose deaths
- Alcohol-related deaths
- Diabetes hospitalization
- Children living in poverty
- Minority populations.

Within these areas, comparisons can be made for the County with the State and the U.S.

Indicators causing the most concern within Doña Ana County are:

1 Teen Birth Rate;

2 Children Living in Poverty, and

3 Adolescent Obesity.

The County is performing worse than the state for the first two indicators and adolescent obesity is a risk factor for the future health of the County's residents.

TURNING THE CURVE ON HEALTH

THE HEALTH SCORECARD

Indicator	County	Compared to NM	NM	US
RISK AND RESILIENCY FACTORS				
Adolescent Obesity, 2013 (Percentage of Students)	13.6%	≈	12.6%	13.7%
Adult Smoking Prevalence, 2012 (Percentage of Adults)	18.1%	≈	19.4%	DNA
HEALTH CARE SERVICES AND SYSTEMS				
Health Insurance Coverage, 2013 (Percentage Uninsured)	25.2%	!	21.9%	16.8%
Immunization: Influenza Vaccination, Adults Age 65+, 2006-2010 (Percentage of Adults Age 65+)	67.6%	≈	69.0%	67.5%
Percentage of New Mexico Adults Age 65+ Who Have Ever Had a Pneumonia Vaccination, 2006-2010 (Percentage of Adults 65+)	64.2%	≈	66.0%	68.8%
Percentage of Adults Who Had a Dental Visit in the Past 12 Months, 2006, 2008, 2010 (Percentage of Adults)	64.1%	≈	66.0%	71.3%
HEALTH OUTCOMES				
Teen Birth Rate, 2009-2013 (Births per 1,000 Girls, Age 15-17)	30.1	!	26.3	15.4
Fall-related Death Rates Among Adults 65+ Years of Age, 2009-2013 (Deaths per 100,000 Population)	73.2	≈	87.0	55.4
Deaths due to Drug Overdose, 2009-2013 (Deaths per 100,000 Population)	17.9	+	23.4	DNA
Alcohol-related Deaths, 2009-2013 (Deaths per 100,000 Population)	36.4	+	52.2	DNA
Hospitalizations with Diabetes, 3-Year Rolling Averages (Hospital Discharges per 10,000 Population)	11.7	+	13.7	DNA
POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS				
Children Under Age 18 Living in Poverty, 2013 (Percentage of Children)	37.6%	!	30.1%	22.2%
Percentage American Indian + Asian + Black + Hispanic, 2012 (Percentage of the Population)	68.5%	n/a	58.6%	DNA

Key to Symbols	
The County is performing BETTER than the state, and the difference is statistically significant	+
The County is performing ABOUT THE SAME as the state. Differences are not statistically significant	≈
The County is performing WORSE than the state, and the difference is statistically significant	!
Either the comparison value or confidence interval data are not available	DNA
Not Applicable: This indicator has no target direction	n/a

Source: NM-IBIS, Community Snapshot for Doña Ana County

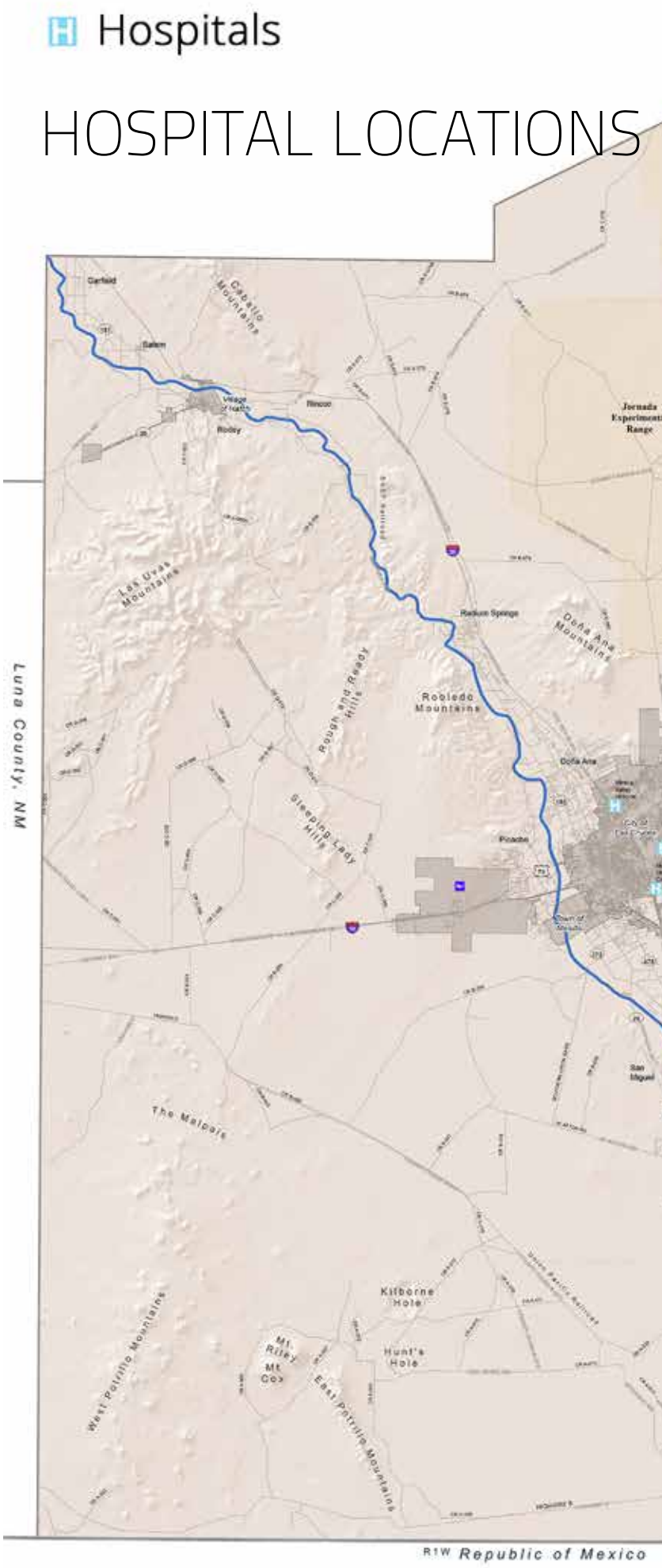
IMPROVING THE SCORE CONNECTIONS

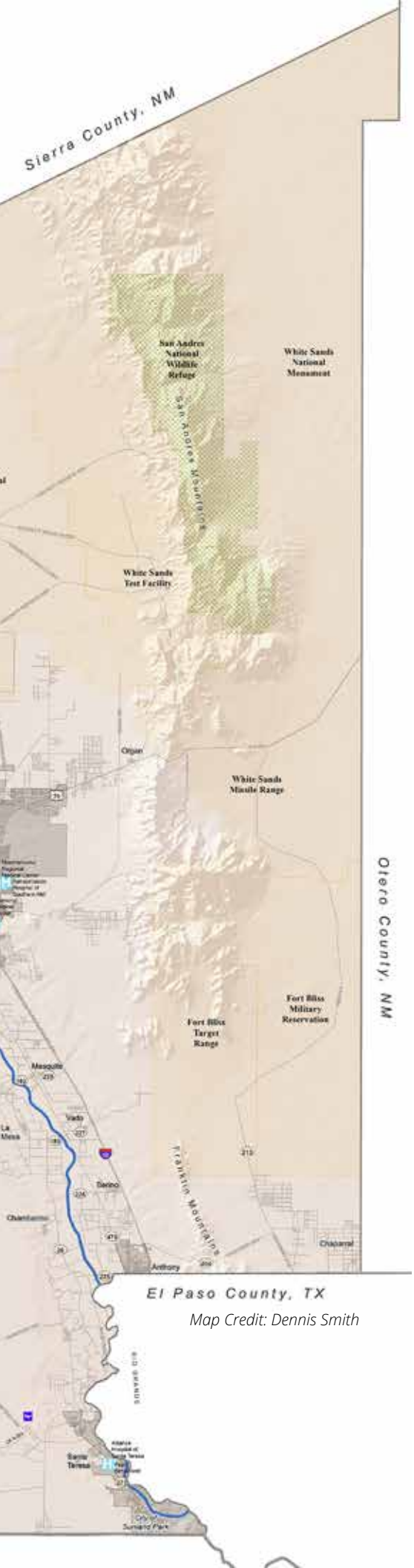
Most of the strategies within this Plan are connected to each other and affects on multiple Livability Principles. The health indicators on the State of New Mexico Department of Health Scorecard are also tightly connected to one another, and deficits in one category cause problems in others.

Childhood poverty can create life-long health problems, lead to teen pregnancy, substance abuse, and educational deficits. Because a lack of affordable, healthy food is often associated with obesity, poverty may also result in diabetes and heart disease. (NM DOH, 2015)

Access to Services

Adolescent obesity has increased in the U.S. by over 10% in the last thirty years, and while the County's rates are the same as the U.S., the State lists it as "improvement needed," and can be directly affected by how communities are developed. The Economic Opportunity and Infrastructure strategies set policies that can reduce adolescent obesity by improvements in safe routes to schools, access to parks, open space, bike trails and sidewalks. Poverty reduction goals are supported by affordable housing, transportation choice, workforce training, and microloan initiatives recommended in the Economic Opportunity section. (Community Snapshot for Doña Ana County - Turning the Curve on Health Scorecard, 2014)


Hospitals
HOSPITAL LOCATIONS
Garfield
Caballo Mountains
Salem
Rincon
Rincon
Rincon



Map Credit: Dennis Smith

The majority of health services and urgent care facilities are clustered in Las Cruces.

Image Credit: Dennis Quintana

The north and south are classified as Health Care Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA)

Health Care

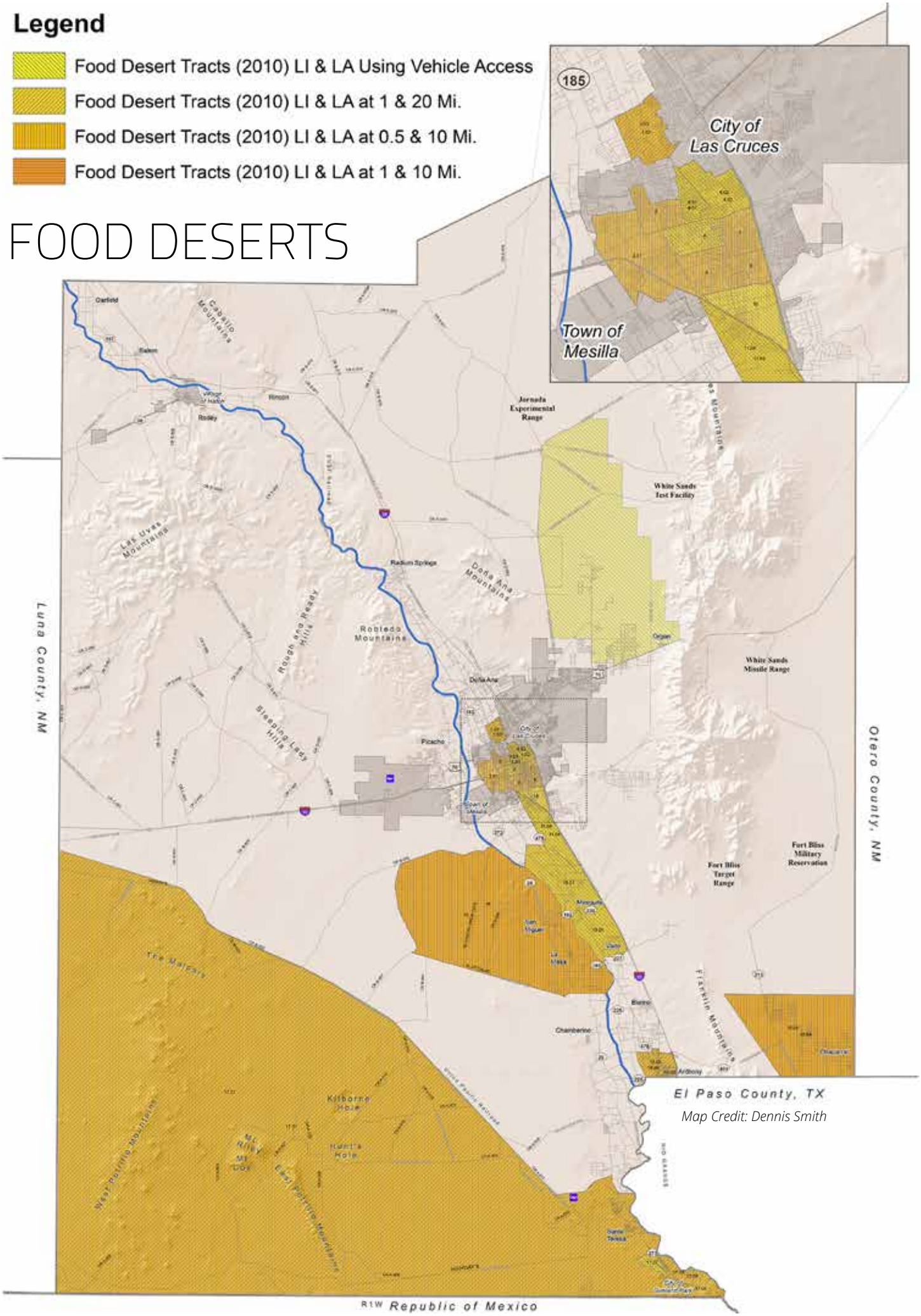
Large areas of the County lack access to emergency and urgent care. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services classifies both the southern portion of Doña Ana County and Hatch as Health Professional Shortage Area(s) (HPSA). Four of the five hospitals in Doña Ana County are located in Las Cruces with one in Santa Teresa. The North Valley and South Valley are both under-served for urgent care. (HPSA by State & County, 2014) With limitations on transportation choice, the cost of health care increases because of the cost of transportation.

Healthy Food

Access to healthy foods is limited in many parts of the County. Many people live too far away from food sources, and have to pay too much of their budgets for it. The U.S. Department of Agriculture provides a Food Access Research Atlas that identifies food access indicators for low-income census tracts with limited supermarket accessibility. (Ver Ploeg & Breneman, 2014) See p. 134 Food Deserts.

While many communities are too small to support a full-service grocery, community-based solutions like co-ops, community gardens, and mobile markets are scalable to rural communities. Local initiatives may also contribute to community-building and activation of civic space. These types of initiatives are being implemented locally with success by La Semilla Food Center, and their work should continue to be supported by the County and local governments.

FOOD DESERTS



Map Credit: Dennis Smith

HEALTH
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G10.1 Support Communities that Promote Healthy Eating

Obesity and the diseases associated with it may be reduced by healthy diets. Communities that provide local access to fresh, affordable food, contribute to healthy lifestyles.

ACTIONS

A10.1 Develop Policies that Encourage Healthy Food Options

Increase availability of lower cost healthy food and beverage options in community centers, County buildings, hospitals, and schools.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Support Existing Communities

Coordinate Policies and Investments

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Doña Ana County Health & Human Services (HHS)
County Manager (CM)
La Semilla Food Center (LSFC)
Doña Ana County Cooperative Extension Serivce of NMSU

HEALTH
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G10.2 Make Healthy Food More Accessible to Residents

Large areas of the southern part of the County are too far from affordable food. (See p. 134 Food Deserts.) The County should help ensure that people can shop for healthy food at affordable prices and nearby.

ACTIONS

A10.2 Bring Food to Residents: Markets and Gardens

Consider the feasibility of opening mobile farmers' markets, which could potentially cover several locations in a week. Such markets might also be combined with food subsidies so that people with tight budgets could purchase food nearby easily. Consider also the feasibility of encouraging residents to grow their own food where it is practical given water availability. Ensure County commercial farmers have good access to regional markets.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Support Existing Communities

Coordinate Policies and Investments

Preserve Heritage

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

La Semilla Food Center (LSFC)
Agriculture Community Group (ACG)
Get Local Campaign (GLC)
Health & Human Services (HHS)
The Colonias Development Council
Engineering Services Department (ESD)

HEALTH
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G10.3 Enable Residents to Reach Healthcare

There are great distances between many residents and facilities for urgent care. (See p. 132 Hospital Locations) Healthcare facilities are expensive and require institutional support.

ACTIONS

A10.3 Deploy Clinics in the North and South Valleys

Consider encouraging County hospitals to open clinics in under-served areas so that residents can get basic and preventative care nearby, and so that urgent health matters can be attended to quickly.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Coordinate Policies and Investments

Support Existing Communities

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Health & Human Services (HHS)
Hospitals in Doña Ana County

HEALTH
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G10.4 New Communities Should Enable Active Lifestyles

Obesity and the diseases associated with it may be circumvented through active lifestyles. Communities that provide places to walk and participate in active recreation, as well as sidewalks and bicycle facilities contribute to healthy lifestyles.

ACTIONS

A10.4 Develop Ordinances and Policies that Encourage Pedestrian and Bicycling Facilities

Require complete streets in new developments and incentivize trail networks and parks within walking distance of residential developments. This contributes to a broader transportation network and a reduction in carbon emissions, as well as improving the health of the community.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Support Existing Communities

Coordinate Policies and Investments

Provide More Transportation Choice

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Community Development Department (CDD)
Engineering/Roads Department (ERD)
Facilities & Parks Department (FPD)

HEALTH
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G10.5 Improve Walkability Within Existing Communities

Many of the existing communities with Doña Ana County do not have sidewalks or paths. To enable active lifestyles and improve sociability within existing areas, the County should continue to work toward improving this infrastructure.

ACTIONS

A10.5 Develop a Walkability Improvement Plan

The County should develop a 5-year Walkability Improvements Plan that will help inform the Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan. This Plan will include improvements to, and installation of multi-use paths and sidewalks.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Provide More Transportation Choice

Support Existing Communities

Coordinate Policies and Investments

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Community Development Department (CDD)
Engineering/Roads Department (ERD)

EDUCATION

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

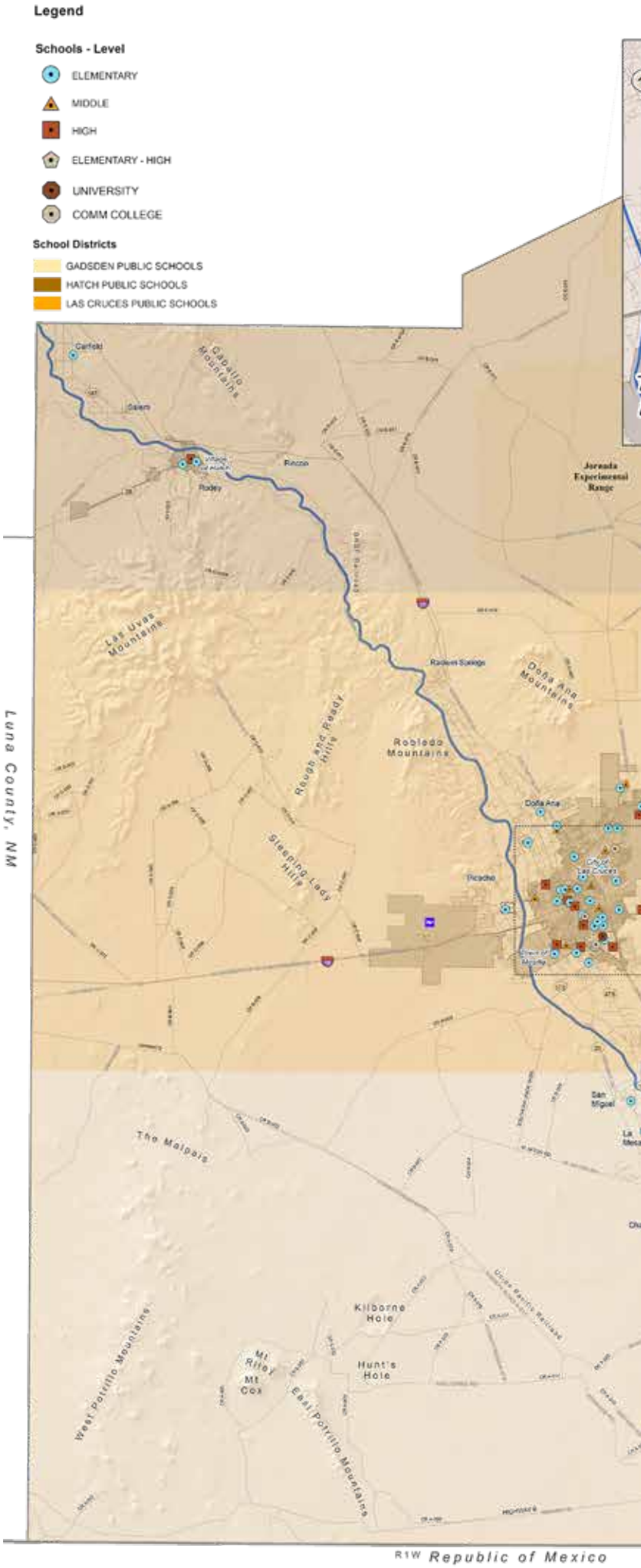
> Access to education was a major concern of many residents throughout the engagement process and is tied to both economic development and supporting local communities.

There are three school districts in the County – Hatch Valley, Las Cruces, and Gadsden Independent Schools, from north to south. The three school districts include a total of 70 facilities as listed in the School Facilities table on the facing page. Doña Ana County Community College and New Mexico State University provide higher education for County residents. All these schools are located on the map to the right.

GRADING EDUCATION

The State of New Mexico Public Education Department grades its schools on how well students performed in the most recent school year, how much improvement has been observed over the last three years, growth of the highest performing students, growth of the lowest performing students, attendance, and instructional methods. The score offers bonus points for student and parent involvement. While only one school in the County received an F for 2014, fifty percent of the schools received Cs or Ds. However, the County performed better on some statistics than the State as a whole. Of all the schools in the state, 62% received a C or better, and within Doña Ana County, 77% received a C or better. (Nikolewski, 2012)

While only 3% of the State schools met the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) standards of No Child Left Behind in the 2011-2012 school year, 6% of the County schools met AYP and 15% of them are designated as Progressing. Graduation rates in the State for the 4-year period ending in



Map Credit: Dennis Smith

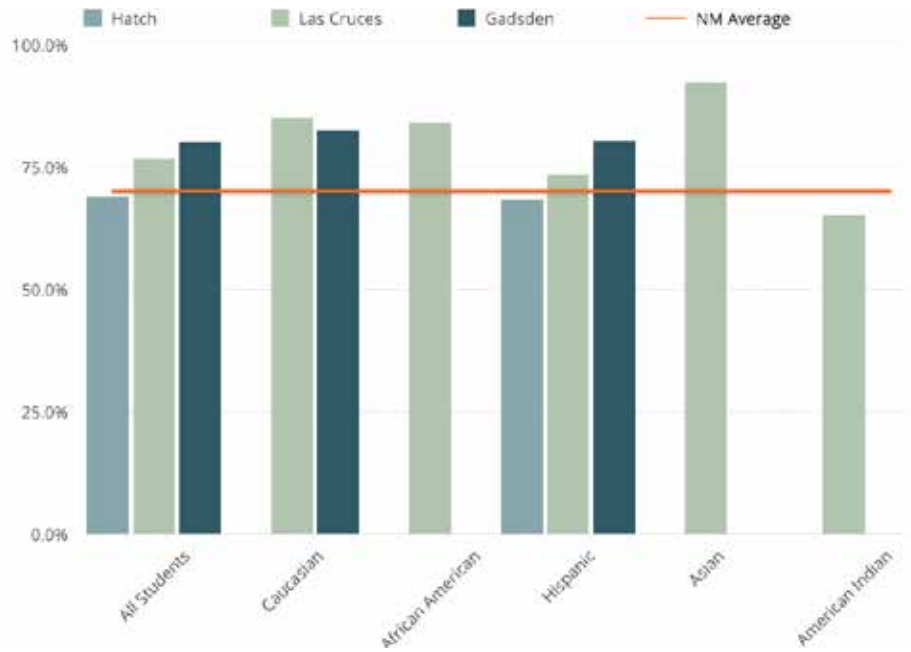
SCHOOL FACILITIES	
School District	**Number of Facilities**
HATCH VALLEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	
Elementary	3
Middle	1
High	1
LAS CRUCES PUBLIC SCHOOLS	
Elementary	26
Middle	9
High	7
GADSDEN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS	
Elementary	15
Middle	3
High	5

2014 were 69.3%, down from 2013. The Doña Ana County combined districts scored better than 70%. (Graduation: Data & Statistics, 2013)

Graduation Rates - 2014

Gadsden	80.1%
Las Cruces	76.6%
Hatch	68.9%

Across all three districts and throughout the state, Caucasian graduation rates were higher than Hispanic, African American and American Indian rates. See the Graduation Rates for the 2014 cohort below. (NM Public Education Department, 2014)



Graduation Rate by District, 2014 Cohort (http://ped.state.nm.us/Graduation/index.html)

SCHOOL SIZING AND SITING

Schools are an essential resource for a community or a neighborhood. Besides their direct education function, schools can provide a venue for community events, share playgrounds and sports fields with the community, and help connect different demographics within a community. Because of the rural character of Doña Ana County, not all communities have easy-to-reach schools.

Many school districts across the United States are pursing policies to site schools so that public parks and school facilities can be shared. These schools have greater support from their communities because they are near their homes. (McDonald, 2010)

Research shows that physical activity improves students' academic performance, and community schools have a greater chance of engaging families in the learning process. Moving schools into communities may help improve the County's 6% AYP. (Sibley & Etnier, 2003)

Unfortunately, the national trend over the last 60 years has been to build fewer, larger schools rather than neighborhood-based schools. Since 1945, school numbers have declined by 70% and are located further from the children they serve. (McDonald, Brown, Marchetti, & Pedroso, 2011) The impact on health, environment, and quality of life is significant. Most children can no longer walk or bike to school, which contributes to adolescent obesity, which is a concern within Doña Ana County. Increased traffic and emissions from school trips is also a burden to health and the environment, and less affordable as car ownership becomes more expensive. (McDonald, Salvesen, Kuhlman, & Combs, 2014)

The State of New Mexico's requirements for minimum size of school sites have been reduced. In the 1960's, New Mexico had the highest requirements in the United States. Today, the state sets no minimum acreage. It simply requires that the space be adequate to provide the needed resources safely. (Chapter 27 Public School Capital Outlay Council, Section 6.27.30.10, 2012) Since the State doesn't set onerous regulatory constraints, the three Doña Ana County school districts have an opportunity to follow national best practices on school size and location. This opportunity has four main facets as described below.

Image Credit: Dennis Quintana

Best Practices in School Locations

1. **COLLABORATIVE PLANNING**: work across district lines and with local governments to ensure that the best sites are selected. Build partnerships between school districts and County and local government planning offices.
2. **CONSIDER ALL COSTS**: consider both the capital expense and long-term maintenance of infrastructure extensions; the public and private transportation costs to reach schools, and the long-term costs associated with poor health and educational attainment.

Image Credit: Dennis Quintana

The Smart Growth America (SGA) Fiscal Impact Analysis, see pp. 226 of the Appendix, indicates an annual cost saving of $2 million in school transportation costs alone with the Preferred Scenario over Business as Usual. This considers not just the immediate capital expense associated with new schools, but the long-term expenses associated with transporting students to remote locations.

3. **SHARE FACILITIES**: develop policies with municipalities and school districts to enable them to share libraries, gymnasiums, parks, and sports facilities by locating them near each other and by creating joint-use agreements.
4. **WALKABLE LOCATIONS**: work with school districts to develop and support existing schools that allow students and staff to walk, bicycle, and take public transportation. Establish ordinances and policies that create incentives for developers to provide school sites within communities.

The Preferred Growth Scenario would reduce school transportation costs by $2 million per year over the Business as Usual Scenario.

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOLS

There is a national focus on the multiple benefits associated with an active commute to school for students, their parents, and teachers. Having the choice of an active mode of travel ensures reduced traffic, reduced emissions, more active and healthier children, and more active and engaged parents. (National Center for Safe Routes to School, 2015)

The Las Cruces MPO adopted Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) policies in 2005, but with schools located away from neighborhoods and in remote locations, it is challenging to establish a route that is accessible and safe for pedestrians and cyclists.

Different contexts require diverse strategies. In neighborhood schools, community awareness and engagement needed, such as Walk to School Day or bicycle rodeos. In areas where schools are located on highways or arterials, road diets or pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure may be required to provide safe routes.

Image Credit: Dennis Quintana

Funding for SRTS programs is available through the New Mexico Department of Transportation, foundations, and Federal programs like MAP-21 that target transportation alternatives, congestion mitigation, air quality improvement, and health.

EDUCATION
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G11.1 Ensure That Communities Have Their Own Schools

Doña Ana County has too many large schools too far from residents, yet the State does not have excessive requirements for siting schools. Community schools contribute to many Livability Principle goals and contribute to economic competitiveness, community affordability, improved health, reduction in carbon emissions, and transportation choice.

ACTIONS

A11.1 Invite Schools into Neighborhoods

The County should prioritize sites for schools according to their location, and should help communities to incorporate schools.

The County should work across district lines and with local governments to select the best sites for schools. These should be easy to reach via safe routes and surrounded by their communities.

The County should also develop policies to allow school districts to share facilities with municipalities and the County, so as to ensure that both the school facilities and the public facilities are well used. When making decisions about school sites, consider both the capital and maintenance expense, as well as the health effects of long school commutes combined with inactivity.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Provide More Transportation Choice

Enhance Economic Competitiveness

Support Existing Communities

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
School Districts in Doña Ana County
New Mexico State University (NMSU)
Local Municipalities
Regional Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)
Facilities & Parks Department (FPD)
Community Development Department (CDD)

EDUCATION
GOALS | ACTIONS

GOALS

G11.2 Ensure Communities Have Safe Routes to Schools

New Mexico has funded more than 50 local SRTS projection and the Las Cruces MPO was a leader in developing local safe routes. The County work to ensure children can safely use active modes of transportation to increase health, educational attainment, community engagement, and traffic management.

ACTIONS

A11.2 Work with Local Government to Develop Action Plans

Doña Ana County should work with the MPOs and municipalities to develop location specific Safe Routes to Schools Action Plans to leverage federal, state and non-profit funding sources.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Provide More Transportation Choice

Promote Affordable Communities

Support Existing Communities

RESPONSIBLE

Responsible Entities

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO)
Community Development Department (CDD)
Engineering/Roads Department (ERD)
Regional Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)
Local Governments

CAMINO REAL CONSORTIUM RESOLUTION NO. 2015-02

RESOLUTION RECOMMENDING THAT THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF DOÑA ANA COUNTY NEW MEXICO APPROVE PLAN 2040 (DOÑA ANA COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN) FOR THE UNINCORPORATED AREA OF DOÑA ANA COUNTY

WHEREAS, the Camino Real Consortium was created to oversee the programmatic activities of the $2 million Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant; and

WHEREAS, this grant has supported seven (7) planning projects known collectively as the "Viva Doña Ana!" planning initiative; and

WHEREAS, the Camino Real Consortium consists of the City of Las Cruces, New Mexico State University, the South Central Council of Governments, the Mesilla Valley and El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organizations, the Colonias Development Council, Tierra del Sol Housing Corporation, the Town of Mesilla, the City of Sunland Park, the South Central Regional Transit District, La Semilla Food Center, and Doña Ana County; and

WHEREAS, the Camino Real Consortium has approached regional planning as an effort that is both practical and inspired, that it is grounded in broadly advertised and supported public engagement, and that it is part of an ongoing process that advances and integrates other planning work; and

WHEREAS, the Camino Real Consortium authorized preparation of a "Comprehensive Plan" to provide direction for future development throughout Doña Ana County; and

WHEREAS, extensive public outreach over three and a half years involved County residents, businesses, and other important stakeholders in decisions that clarified shared values, defined desirable future conditions and determined how the County should develop; and

WHEREAS, the shared values and desired future conditions includes orderly and sustainable development, increased economic competitiveness, affordable and healthy communities, sensitivity towards the historic and cultural identity of the region, and protection of the natural environment; and

WHEREAS, Plan 2040 (Doña Ana County Comprehensive Plan) sets out recommended strategies to support shared values and desired future conditions throughout Doña Ana County; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Camino Real Consortium hereby recommends that the Board of County Commissioners of Doña Ana County, New Mexico, approve "Plan 2040" (Doña Ana County Comprehensive Plan).

RESOLVED this 26th day of June 2015.

CAMINO REAL CONSORTIUM, OF THE VIVA DOÑA ANA INITIATIVE

Doña Ana County:
For/Against Absent/Abstain

City of Las Cruces:
For/Against Absent/Abstain.

Town of Mesilla:
For/Against Absent/Abstain

Colonias Development Council:
For/Against Absent/Abstain

South Central Regional Transit District:
For/Against Absent/Abstain

El Paso MPO:
For/Against Absent/Abstain

City of Sunland Park:
For/Against Absent/Abstain

South Central Council of Governments:
For/Against Absent/Abstain

New Mexico State University:
For/Against Absent/Abstain

Tierra del Sol Housing Corporation:
For/Against Absent/Abstain

Mesilla Valley MPO:
For/Against Absent/Abstain

La Semilla Food Center:
For/Against Absent/Abstain

07/01/15

Billy G. Garrett, Chair **Date**

DOÑA ANA COUNTY RESOLUTION NO. 2015-54

A RESOLUTION ADOPTING PLAN 2040 (DOÑA ANA COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN) FOR THE UNINCORPORATED AREA OF DOÑA ANA COUNTY AND SUPERSEDING THE EXISTING COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR DOÑA ANA COUNTY

WHEREAS, the Board of County Commissioners of Doña Ana County has authority to adopt a comprehensive plan for land use development for the planning, zoning, and platting of the County as authorized by NMSA 1978 § 3-21-1 et. Seq.; and

WHEREAS, "Plan 2040" (Doña Ana County Comprehensive Plan) is in accordance with New NMSA 1978 § 3-21-5 and is designed to:

1) lessen congestion in the streets and public ways;
2) secure safety from fire, flood waters, panic and other dangers;
3) promote health and the general welfare;
4) provide adequate light and air;
5) prevent the overcrowding of land;
6) avoid undue concentration of population;
7) facilitate adequate provision for transportation, water, sewerage, schools, parks and other public requirements; and
8) control and abate the unsightly use of buildings or land; and

WHEREAS, Doña Ana County is a member of the Camino Real Consortium and the fiscal agent for a $2 million Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant awarded to the Consortium; and

WHEREAS, the grant supports seven (7) planning projects known collectively as the "Viva Doña Ana!" planning initiative; and

WHEREAS, the Consortium has approached regional planning as an effort that is both practical and inspired, that it is grounded in broadly advertised and supported public engagement, and that it is part of a ongoing process that advances and integrates other planning work; and

WHEREAS, the Camino Real Consortium authorized preparation of a "Comprehensive Plan" to provide policy direction for future development throughout Doña Ana County; and

WHEREAS, extensive public outreach over three and a half years involved County residents, businesses, and other important stakeholders in decisions that clarified shared values, defined desirable future conditions and determined how the County should develop; and

WHEREAS, shared values and desired future conditions includes orderly and sustainable development, increased economic competitiveness, affordable and healthy

communities, sensitivity towards the historic and cultural identity of the region, and protection of the natural environment; and

WHEREAS, the Board of County Commissioners of Doña Ana County commits to actively support the policies and recommendations contained in "Plan 2040" and pledges to do so in the spirit of partnership with other stakeholders and interested parties who live and work in the region.

WHEREAS, "Plan 2040" sets out recommended strategies to support shared values and desired future conditions throughout Doña Ana County; and

WHEREAS, The Planning and Zoning Commission approved the consideration of the following recommended amendments to Plan 2040:

Content Amendments

1) Section A7.1 (pg. 104) - Remove this "action". Remove the position of the coordinator
2) Strategy 3 (pg. 98) -Add renewable energy as appropriate in this section
3) Sections G6.3 and G10.1 (pg. 87 and 135) - Add "Doña Ana County Cooperative Service of NMSU" as a Responsible Entity
4) Section G6.7 (pg. 91) - Add "Arrowhead Center" as a Responsible Entity

Mechanical Amendments

1) Pg. 62 - Last paragraph on page – Correct incomplete sentence
2) Pg. 84 - Correct "Comparative Employment" table – "Mining" has no percentage figures

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of County Commissioners of Doña Ana County, New Mexico, that:

1) "Plan 2040" is hereby approved, superseding the 1995 Doña Ana County Comprehensive Plan; and
2) "Plan 2040" is a working document, subject to annual review and may be amended as conditions change upon approval of the Board of County Commissioners; and
3) The effective date of "Plan 2040" shall coincide with the adoption and effective date of the Unified Development Code

RESOLVED this 25th day of August 2015.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF DOÑA ANA COUNTY, NEW MEXICO

Billy G. Garrett, Chair, District 1 — For / Against

Wayne Hancock, Vice-Chair, District 4 — For / Against

Dr. David Garcia, District 2 — For / Against

Benjamin L. Rawson, District 3 — For / Against

Leticia Duarte Benavidez, District 5 — For / Against

ATTEST:

Lynn J. Ellins
County Clerk

COUNTY OF DONA ANA)
STATE OF NEW MEXICO) ss

RESOLUTION
PAGES: 3

I Hereby Certify That This Instrument Was Filed for Record On SEP 15, 2015 02:49:07 PM
And Was Duly Recorded as Instrument # 1519893
Of The Records Of Dona Ana County

Witness My Hand And Seal Of Office,
Lynn J. Ellins, County Clerk, Dona Ana, NM

Deputy Alexandra Chavarria

PLAN**2040**