

# Northern Socorro County Comprehensive Plan

February 2006

Prepared by:



## **Acknowledgements**

### ***The County of Socorro***

Box K  
Socorro, NM 87801

### ***Socorro County Commissioners***

Laurel Armijo, District 3  
Charles Gallegos, District 5  
Stanley Herrera, District 2  
Jay Santillanes, District 4  
Rosalind F. "Rosie" Tripp, District 1

### ***Matejka Olguin, County Manager***

### ***Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee***

Leo Mendoza  
Brian O'Connor  
Ken Armijo  
Delores Varela-Phillips  
Les Crowder  
Warren Reynolds  
Linda Chavez  
Betty Robertson  
John Carangelo

### ***Sites Southwest LLC***

Planning, Landscape Architecture and Urban Design Consultants  
121 Tijeras NE, Suite 3100  
Albuquerque, NM 87102  
Phone: 505-822-8200 Fax: 505-8282

Phyllis H. Taylor, AICP, Principal  
Barbara S. Herrington, AICP, Project Manager  
Mikaela Renz, Planner  
Robert McCabe, Community Designer  
Candice Kjobech, GIS Specialist  
Shelly Homer, Administrative Assistant

This comprehensive plan was prepared through a State Small Cities Community Development Block Grant from the Local Governments Division of the New Mexico Department of Finance and Administration (Ken Hughes, Chief, Regional Planning and Development Section.)

This document supplements the 2003 Socorro County Comprehensive Plan and, as such, retains some of the language and recommendations of that plan. The work of the citizens and county staff involved in that prior effort is gratefully acknowledged. We also are grateful for the assistance of staff of the South Central Council of Governments, particularly Glenda Chavez and Delbert Fraissinet.



# Table of Contents

Executive Summary .....	1
<b>1.0 Introduction .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2.0 Community Profile .....</b>	<b>5</b>
Study Area .....	5
History .....	5
Relevant Plans, Ordinances, Reports .....	7
Demographics .....	10
Planning Process and Public Participation .....	15
<b>3.0 Land Use .....</b>	<b>18</b>
Existing Land Use Conditions .....	18
Land Use Issues and Opportunities .....	25
Desired Land Use Conditions and Goals .....	26
<b>4.0 Community Facilities and Services .....</b>	<b>30</b>
Education .....	30
Medical Care and Social Services .....	32
Senior Citizens .....	34
Community Centers .....	35
Parks and Recreation .....	36
Library Services .....	36
Community Facilities and Services Goals .....	37
<b>5.0 Public Safety Services .....</b>	<b>39</b>
Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Services .....	39
Law Enforcement .....	41
Public Safety Goals .....	41
<b>6.0 Economic Development .....</b>	<b>43</b>
Existing Economic Conditions .....	43
Economic Development Issues and Opportunities .....	47
Future Desired Economic Development and Goals .....	49
<b>7.0 Infrastructure .....</b>	<b>52</b>
Water Resources and Services .....	52
Wastewater Disposal .....	54
Solid Waste Disposal .....	56
Stormwater Drainage .....	58
Infrastructure Goals .....	58



<b>8.0</b>	<b>Transportation.....</b>	<b>62</b>
	Existing Transportation Conditions .....	62
	Transportation Issues and Opportunities .....	62
	Desired Future Transportation Conditions and Goals.....	63
<b>9.0</b>	<b>Housing .....</b>	<b>66</b>
	Existing Housing Conditions .....	66
	Housing Issues and Opportunities .....	67
	Desired Future Housing Conditions and Goals.....	67
<b>10.0</b>	<b>Implementation.....</b>	<b>68</b>
	Land Use.....	68
	Community Facilities And Services.....	69
	Public Safety.....	70
	Economic Development.....	71
	Infrastructure .....	72
	Transportation .....	74
	Housing .....	75
	<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>76</b>
	Appendix A. Bibliography.....	76
	Appendix B. Public Input 2005 .....	78
	Appendix C. Techniques for Preserving Agriculture and Open Space.....	81
	Appendix D. Resources.....	86
	Appendix E. Draft Maps of the Belen School Bus Routes into Socorro County .....	103

**Tables**

Table 1. Historic Population by North Socorro County Subarea, 1990 to 2000 with Change Rate....	10
Table 2. Population by Age Group, Northern Socorro County .....	13
Table 3. Percent (%) Population by Age Group, Northern Socorro County .....	14
Table 4. Population Projections by Subarea, 2005 and 2010, and Average Annual Rate .....	15
Table 5. Housing Needs in Northern Socorro County, 2000, 2005 and 2010.....	67

**Figures**

Figure 1. Location Map with Study Area Boundary.....	6
Figure 2. North Socorro County Study Area Subareas.....	11
Figure 3. Population Clusters within the Study Area .....	12
Figure 4. Median Household Income Comparison .....	14
Figure 5. Land Use Map .....	19
Figure 6. Current Special Zoning Districts.....	24
Figure 7. Local Features .....	31
Figure 8. Transportation.....	65



## **Executive Summary**

The 2005 Northern Socorro County Comprehensive Plan describes the community's vision for the physical development of the north central part of the County over the next 20 years. Its boundaries encompass the Socorro/Valencia County line to the north, Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge to the south, NM 47 to the east and the power line west of I-25 on the west. This vision has been developed with significant input from County residents and business owners, a Steering Committee with expertise in the various topic areas, elected and appointed officials, and County staff. The plan is intended to be used by County officials and staff as a general policy guide concerning the location, character, and type of growth in the community.

The Comprehensive Plan focuses in detail on a number of key elements of the north central part of the County that pertain to its growth and development, including private land use, community facilities and services, public safety services, economic development, water and wastewater, transportation, and housing. For each of these elements, the plan documents existing conditions in the community, identifies issues and future desires and preferences, and presents goals and strategies to bring about the desired development of Northern Socorro County.

### ***Key Issues and Future Desired Conditions***

#### **Area Population**

The Northern Socorro County population reached more than 2,600 people in the 2000 Census count. It grew 55 percent over the past decade, from 1,167 to 2,622 persons, at an average annual growth rate of nearly 8.5 percent. This contrasts with an annual average growth rate of a little over 2 percent for all of Socorro County.

#### **Planning Process**

Sites Southwest consultants held the first public meeting in April 2005 to describe the Comprehensive Plan content and purpose and ask residents what they valued about the area, issues or problems, and what they envisioned for the future. Subsequently, they visited and photographed the area, conducted phone interviews with Steering Committee members to gain a greater understanding of issues and then met with them to develop draft goals, objectives and strategies. At final public meeting in September, public participants reviewed the draft, revised and added to goals, and voted on priorities. The draft was posted on Sites Southwest's website and at the Veguita Trading Post.

#### **Plan Highlights**

With direction from the community, consultants developed recommendations in seven areas: Land Use, Community Facilities and Services, Public Safety Services, Economic Development, Infrastructure, Transportation, and Housing. Implementation of these recommendations is covered in the last chapter.

## **Land Use**

Residents desire to preserve their rural landscape and open space and to keep agriculture as a viable industry. They plan to pursue this through voluntary means as well as implementing the zoning codes in their two Special Zoning Districts. They also would like to protect historic buildings and develop signs and other displays to interpret the history of the villages for residents and tourists.

## **Community Facilities and Services**

Residents would like to expand the availability of health care and social services in northeastern Socorro County. The plan calls on the County to assist in developing a medical and social services clinic in phases, perhaps starting with an office for the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program.

Northern Socorro County also plans to continue to establish or renovate community centers and parks in the area:

- Construct a new community center near Abeytas.
- Renovate the old gym in La Joya into a Community Hall and commercial kitchen.
- Relocate the La Joya library to a more central location and seek an ongoing source of funds to pay phone bill.
- Develop playgrounds on the 12-acre abandoned ball field in Veguita and the land next to the Community Hall in La Joya.

## **Public Safety Services**

The plan seeks to locate a County Sheriff's substation in the area, perhaps near La Promesa Elementary School. Other projects include constructing a new fire station north of Sabinal, a new fire substation near the elementary school, and purchasing a new engine for La Joya.

## **Economic Development**

Economic development will be solicited in a number of ways. Residents will seek to establish a Farmer's Market/Visitor Center at the intersection of I-25 and NM 60 with the aid of the NM Department of Economic Development. They may also develop a map/brochure publicizing a 304/116 visitor tour loop and places to stop for various foods, arts and crafts, and other products to draw tourists. Residents and the County will work with the Rural Economic Development through Tourism Project at NMSU to help implement County tourism initiatives and tie into promotions for El Camino Real Historic Trail.

- *Agriculture:* Area residents would like to increase the production of specialty or value-added crops such as organic foods, berries, and "designer hay," as well as encourage value-added processing operations such as a cheese or ice cream plant.
- *Telecommuting:* The plan calls for encouraging the availability of high-speed internet connection service in area.

## **Infrastructure**

The plan seeks to continue to clean up nitrate in the ground water in the Veguita area and inform prospective residents of the problem. It also seeks the clean up and prevent illegal dumping, particularly of tires, which is a problem County-wide. Two potential sources of funds are proposed a) grants from NM Environment Department to develop a program to recycle used tires in the County,

and b) funding waste disposal through property taxes rather than the optional annual fee. The plan calls for securing a steady source of electricity (particularly crucial for the dairies) and investigating sources of natural gas for heating. It also recommends ways to reduce storm water flooding.

### **Transportation**

The plan calls on Socorro County to grade roads more frequently, upgrade NM 304 south of US 60 to meet adequate highway safety standards for a bus route, and to apply for State school bus route funds to pave roads in Abo Valley. Recommendations also address residents' desire to slow traffic and decrease trucks on Rt. 304 north of US 60, as well as adding van service, bike lanes and trails or wider road shoulders when roads are paved.

### **Housing**

Northern Socorro County will seek to establish standards for mobile homes in the County based on age and condition. The plan calls on the County to bring existing substandard subdivisions into compliance with existing subdivision design standards.

### **Implementation**

The last chapter on implementation presents a chart for all the chapters listing the implementation action, the responsible agency or organizations, specific tasks, and potential funding sources.

### **Appendix**

The appendix contains the bibliography, documentation of public input, techniques for preserving agriculture and open space, and summaries of available funding resources.

## 1.0 Introduction

A comprehensive plan is designed to draw on citizen values and opinions as well as data about existing and future population and economic growth to help shape how a county or municipality will look and develop over the next 20 to 30 years. It is adopted by a local government to guide decisions primarily about the physical development of a community. It analyzes current conditions and sets future goals and policies in such areas as land use, housing, roads, water supply and use, natural resources and economic development.

New Mexico statutes enable county planning commissions to carry out and promote county planning. This includes making reports and recommendations for the planning and development of the county as well as recommendations for public improvements to county officials. Comprehensive plans serve these purposes. While there is no statutory description of what elements should be in a comprehensive plan, it may address streets and other infrastructure, parks and playgrounds, floodways, airports, public schools and other buildings, public utilities, community centers and re-planning of blighted districts. To be in effect, it must be adopted by resolution by the governing authority after at least one public hearing.

Socorro County, which updated its county-wide Comprehensive Plan in 2003, undertook this supplementary comprehensive planning process in 2005 for the north central part of the County in response to requests from residents in that area. The North central area, roughly west of I-25 and north of Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge, has been subject to increasing population growth due to its proximity to Albuquerque, Los Lunas and Belen. The area is primarily agricultural and residential, flanked by two wildlife refuges. Some areas, such as Abo Valley, have severe water pollution problems from nitrates in the groundwater and deficient wastewater systems and wells. The area is badly in need of a medical clinic which could treat medical disorders locally as well as the widespread social issues of drug abuse, alcoholism and domestic abuse.

The proposed construction of a power plant on 50 acres along the Rio Grande in 2002 galvanized area residents to organize in opposition to preserve their rural way of life. They formed the Northern Socorro County Historical Neighborhood Association (NSCHNA), brought 200 residents to the County Commission meeting for the hearing on the power plant, and eventually defeated the proposal. Feeling unprotected due to the County's lack of zoning and land use policy, community residents petitioned the State of New Mexico to create two special zoning districts, one east and one west of the river, and created zoning to better control land uses along the river.

This new comprehensive plan illuminates and elaborates on what residents feel are the critical issues in this part of the County. It serves to focus attention on the actions necessary to address these issues and to bring about their desired future vision.

## 2.0 Community Profile

Northern Socorro County is located in the north central portion of Socorro County, which lies in the center of the State of New Mexico. The area comprises a number of small communities nestled among the rich farmland that flanks the Rio Grande. It also encompasses newer, sparsely developed subdivisions that fan out to the more arid prairie to the east. Residents delight in the rural atmosphere, quiet, and dark skies, but are feeling the pinch of development pressure from the more urbanized centers to the north, Albuquerque, Belen and Los Lunas.

### **Study Area**

The area covered by the Comprehensive Plan lies along the Rio Grande valley from Valencia County on the north to La Joya and the Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge on the south. The study area stretches east to Route 47 and west beyond I-25 to the power line. (See Figure 1, page 6).



### **History**

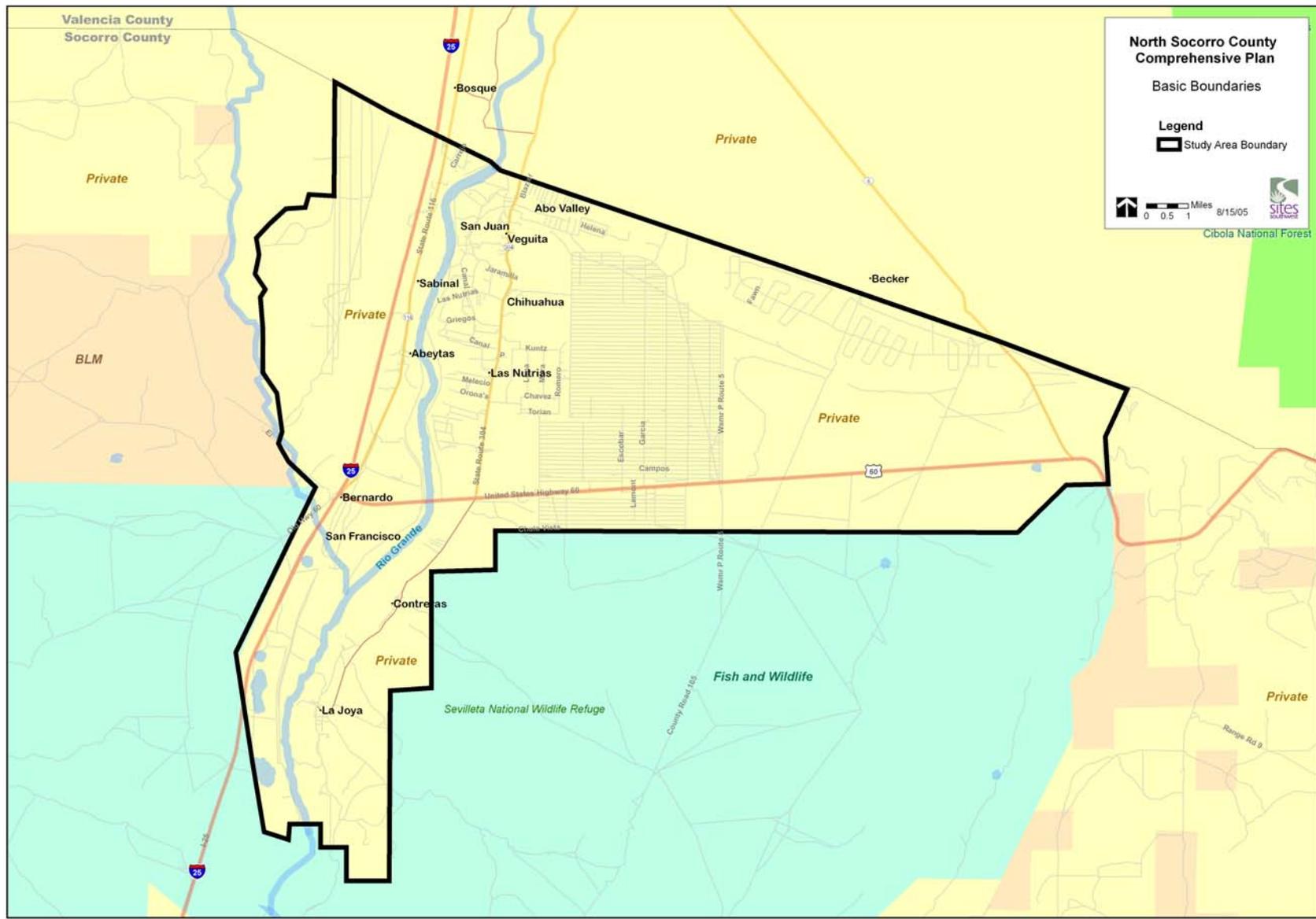
The history of Northern Socorro County traces what happened to the lands along the Rio Grande in the study area and the settlement of various communities along its banks. This area of the County contains numerous small villages and enclaves located along the Rio Grande corridor including La Joya, Contreras, San Francisco, Bernardo, Las Nutrias, Abeytas, Chihuahua, Sabinal, Veguita, San Juan, Abo Valley, Ranchos de Veguita and Rio Grande Estates.

Socorro County as a whole was created by the Territorial Legislature in 1852 and was once the largest county in New Mexico. As is common in arid regions, the water from the Rio Grande drew settlers because it ensured better chances of survival and successful agriculture. Northern Socorro County began developing in this fashion as a cluster of small pueblos, towns and villages.

Among the earliest known inhabitants of Northern Socorro County were the Piro Indians who came into the region in the 1200s and lived in the area between La Joya and San Marcial. The 1600s brought Spanish missionaries who built many historic adobe mission churches in this area, many of which are still being used today.

This area was home to both Pueblo Indians and Spanish settlers until Governor Diego de Vargas came into office in 1692 and changed the area forever. The broad powers of the Franciscan missionaries were greatly reduced, and the governor began to use his ability to create land grants. Local pueblos and towns began to receive formal title to specific tracts of land for their use.

Figure 1. Location Map with Study Area Boundary



While the Pueblo Indians and the Spanish settlers at times coexisted peacefully, there were numerous clashes between them. Nomadic Indians sometimes raided and destroyed these little settlements.

The Northern Socorro area began an era of stronger development after Albuquerque was founded in 1706. Since Albuquerque was located along the Rio Grande, one of the richest and most developed farming corridors in the area, settlements continued to expand southward through the 1800s. Villages developed through a process of homesteading. Families farmed a few acres, scraped together money for a church, then a school. These settlements have continued to slowly develop to the present where the area consists primarily of agricultural uses – small farms, cattle ranches, horse farms, and dairies which now populate the region. As couples married from different villages, families moved around to different locations.

Each of the towns in the Northern Socorro County area has its own unique history, little of which is written down. The villages and their histories are tied to the irrigation ditches, which carried the lifeblood of the communities—water. Longtime resident Leo Mendoza, who lives across the street from the home of his birth, filmed interviews with 11 “old timers” with an average age of 83 several years ago about the history of the area. Transcription and translation of the video tapes, which are in Spanish, could create the core of an oral history project for the area and could be updated with more recent history to form a more complete historical record.

As such, little historical information was readily available for this report, beyond a few anecdotes. For example, **Sabinal** is a small community that was formerly a fortified settlement established in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> Century. The only post office in the area for many years was in Sabinal. One resident would paddle his canoe west across the river three times a week to pick up the mail in Sabinal, carry it back to the east side, then deliver it by horseback.

**La Joya** is a tiny community located in the Rio Grande bottomlands. Most inhabitants are semi-retired and farm part time. La Joya, “the jewel” in Spanish, was so named because back in the 1500s the area reminded Don Juan de Onate and his party of their home in Seville, Spain. Originally part of the La Joya de Sevilleta land grant, La Joya and nearby communities have carved their own area out of the enormous Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge that surrounds them. Landowners who left for jobs or the military, heirs, and new residents have settled in La Joya in recent years and started farming, mainly alfalfa and grass. The La Joya Acequia, the only acequia in the Mid-Rio Grande region, is being rehabilitated. It is a modern, automatically controlled, efficient water conveyance system which can serve 1,350 acres of irrigable land.

### ***Relevant Plans, Ordinances, Reports***

The following general plans contain policies that apply to Northern Socorro County. Specific ordinances and other reports are reviewed in topical chapters.

### **2003 Socorro County Comprehensive Plan**

This plan, completed in 2003, updated the 1998 Comprehensive Plan. It includes information, goals and implementation strategies related to land use, infrastructure, community facilities and services, transportation, housing, economic development, natural and cultural resources, and the custom and culture and community character of the entire County. Relevant information from the 1998 plan was incorporated into this plan and augmented with more detailed information about the goals and priorities of residents and property owners in the communities of Northern Socorro County.

### **1998 Socorro County Comprehensive Plan**

Socorro County adopted its first comprehensive plan in July 1998 with the caveat that it should be an interim guide to development that would be reviewed in five years. The plan demonstrated a desire by the community to encourage economic development such as jobs and small businesses while preserving the largely rural landscape and lifestyle. A number of goals aimed at preserving existing farms and ranches and retaining agriculture as an industry.

Several goals provided guidance for future zoning in the County, noting that zoning should reflect the land use goals and objectives of residents in each area. Other goals were designed to protect and preserve the County's groundwater as well as to prevent and remediate flooding. The plan encouraged protection of the Rio Grande Bosque, air quality and the night sky. It also called on the community to take an active role in ensuring public access to the approximately 70 percent of the County that is public land and to be involved in how the federal and state agencies manage their lands. To these ends it called for the development of a number of plans and laws. The following lists the major actions and progress made to date.

### **Previous Comprehensive Plan Recommendations**

Since the Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1998, the County moved to develop and adopt several of these plans and ordinances, including a Right-to-Practice Agriculture Ordinance (2001), a Public Nuisance Ordinance (2002) and an Infrastructure Capital Improvements Plan (ICIP). In the case of standards to mitigate dust on streets, it was determined that the State of New Mexico already has air quality standards concerning particulates, so it did not need to be addressed in the nuisance ordinance. The County also developed a regional water plan with Sierra County sponsored by the Socorro and Sierra Soil and Water Conservation Districts through a grant from the Interstate Stream Commission. The northern part of the County also accomplished its goal of constructing an elementary school.

A number of goals remained to be addressed, however. They include the following:

#### In Progress

- Revise the Emergency Preparedness Plan.

#### Not Yet Addressed by 2005

- Prepare an Economic Development Plan.
- Develop an ordinance to require local input for location of enterprises in areas not zoned for that use.
- Establish commercial and industrial zones and separate them from housing zones.



- Regulate locations and types of manufacturing industries.
- Develop standards for the location and licensing of businesses.
- Develop actual and predicted land uses on a map.
- Develop an Impact Fee Ordinance.
- Adopt strict standards for billboards.
- Develop a Junk Car Ordinance.
- Prepare a Transportation Plan.
- Conduct a Social Service Needs Assessment.
- Prepare a Wellhead Protection Plan.
- Identify 100-year flood areas.
- Develop policies and procedures to ensure County participation in all Federal land management acts that affect the County and ensure current levels of access to public lands.

### **Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan**

The ICIP identifies capital improvement projects for Socorro County for a five-year period. It is updated each year and is the means to identify capital projects in Socorro County that should be funded through the County. The ICIP currently does not contain any projects located in Northern Socorro County.

## Demographics

### Population

The population of the communities in Northern Socorro County has been increasing, similar to other communities along the Rio Grande valley. Population within the study area grew from 1,167 in 1990 to 2,622 in 2000 as shown in Table 1. This growth represents an average annual increase of 8.43 percent. The study area grew at a rate over four times faster than Socorro County overall, which had a 2.05 percent average annual growth rate, likely due to growth pressure from the northern areas of Belen, Los Lunas, and Albuquerque. Both the study area and Socorro County grew faster than the 1.85 percent average annual rate reported for the State.

Population numbers are reported below by each of the six subareas within Northern Socorro County. A map of these subareas is shown in Figure 2. Subarea boundaries are:

1. West of I-25 almost to the BLM lands and from the county line south to US 60
2. River area between I-25 and NM 304 and between the county line and US 60
3. East side of river area between the Rio Grande and NM 304
4. West side of river area between the Rio Grande and I 25
5. East of NM 304 between the county line and the Sevilleta Refuge just east to the intersection of NM 47 and US 60
6. South of US 60 to the Sevilleta Refuge boundary between I-25 and southern Rio Grande Estates.

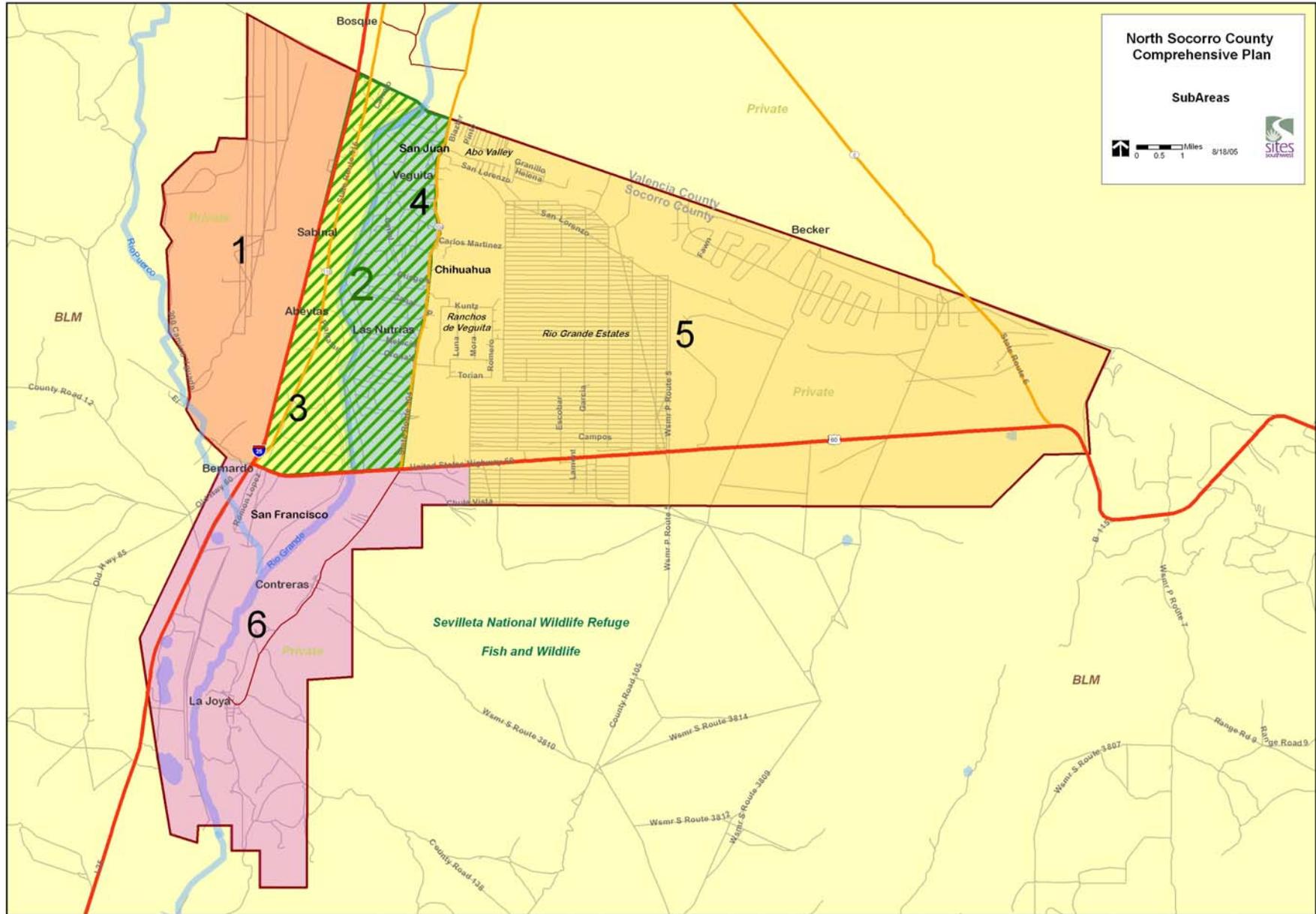
Table 1. Historic Population by North Socorro County Subarea, 1990 to 2000 with Change Rate

	Historic Population		
	1990	2000	Average Annual Rate
Subarea 1: West*	0	48	-
Subarea 2: Entire River Corridor	635	870	3.20%
Subarea 3: West River Corridor	276	378	2.19%
Subarea 4: East River Corridor	359	492	3.20%
Subarea 5: East	458	1,503	12.62%
Subarea 6: South	74	201	10.51%
North Socorro County	1,167	2,622	8.43%
Socorro County	14,764	18,078	2.05%
State of New Mexico	1,515,069	1,819,046	1.85%

Source: U.S. Census; UNM, BBER \* The 2000 Census Count in this subarea is disputed as too low by local residents

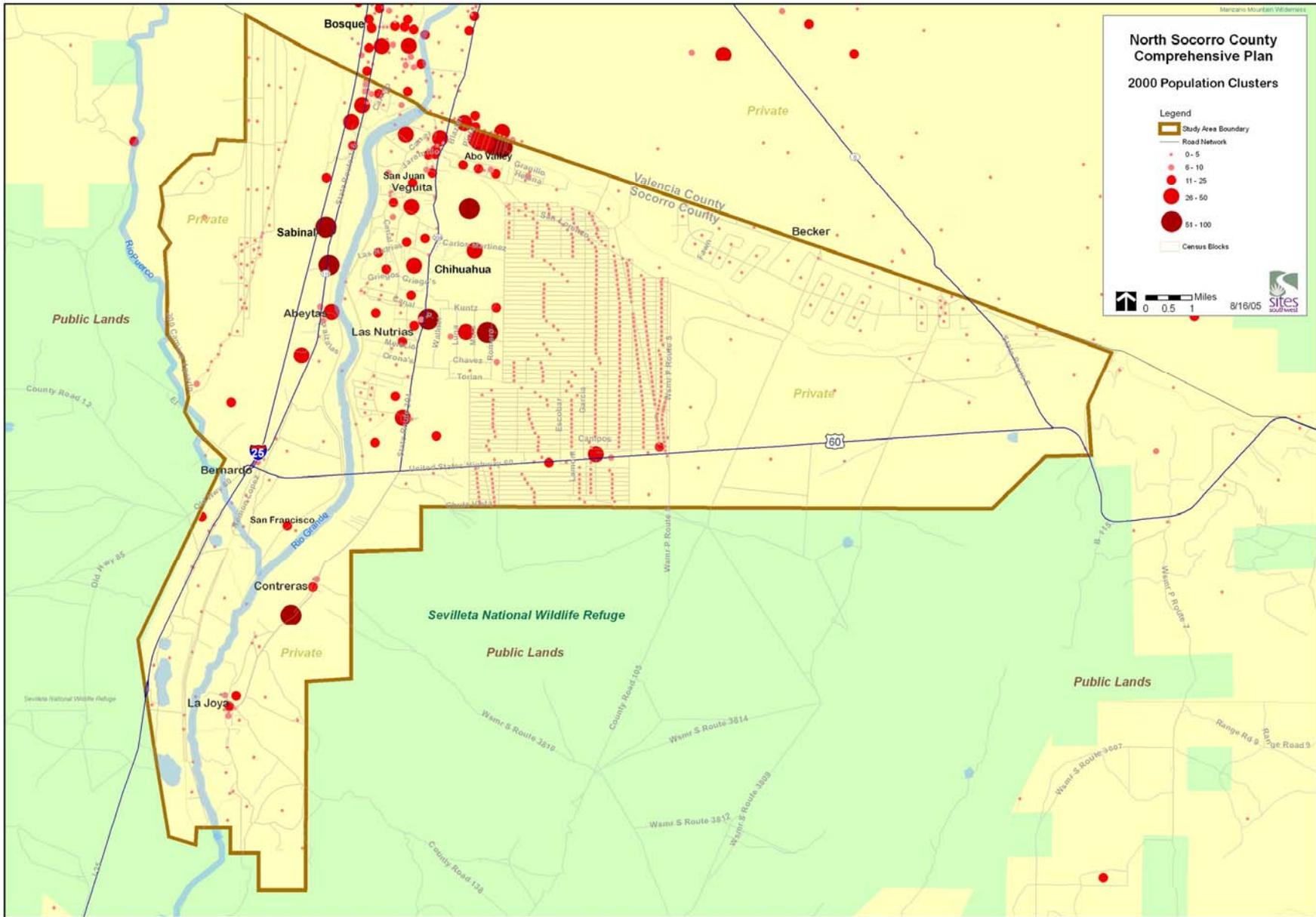
Residents originally settled along the river corridor, clustering in the villages of Veguita (Chihuahua/San Juan), Las Nutrias, Sabinal, Abeytas, Contreras, La Joya, Bernardo and San Francisco. Annual population growth of nearly 13 percent during the past decade in the subarea east of NM 304 has outstripped growth along the northern river corridor. The East subarea now is home to 60 percent of the population in Northern Socorro County.

Figure 2. North Socorro County Study Area Subareas



Source: U.S. Census, 2000

Figure 3. Population Clusters within the Study Area



Source: U.S. Census, 2000

**Age, Gender and Ethnicity**

The median age of Northern Socorro County is 32.5 years, nearly identical to the 32.4 years recorded for Socorro County but younger than the Statewide median age of 34.6 years. The adult population aged 18 years and older comprises 1,778, or 67.8 percent of study population, compared with the child and youth population aged 0 to 17 years which totals 844, or 32.2 percent. The percentage of people aged 65 years old and older in Northern Socorro County – 8.7 percent – is noticeably lower than in either the County as a whole (10.9 percent) or the State (11.7 percent).

Children over three years of age constitute 26.5 percent of the population of Northern Socorro County. This is somewhat higher than the 22.7 percent recorded within both Socorro County and the State of New Mexico.

There are slightly more males (51.4 percent) than females (48.6 percent) in the study area. This is comparable to the 50.8 percent male to 49.2 percent female ratio for Socorro County. The State of New Mexico has a lower male-to-female ratio: males comprise 49.2 percent and females 50.8 percent of the total population.

**Table 2. Population by Age Group, Northern Socorro County**

Age Cohort	Population by Cohort by Area						Northern Socorro County
	Subarea #1	Subarea #2	Subarea #3	Subarea #4	Subarea #5	Subarea # 6	
0-4	3	70	31	40	122	12	208
5-9	4	89	39	50	153	17	262
10-14	5	77	34	43	132	18	232
15-19	2	82	35	46	141	13	238
20-24	1	50	22	29	87	8	147
25-34	5	107	47	61	185	22	319
35-44	8	130	56	73	225	30	391
45-54	7	113	50	64	195	33	349
55-64	8	80	34	45	138	23	248
65+	6	72	30	41	123	27	227
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>870</b>	<b>378</b>	<b>492</b>	<b>1,503</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>2,622</b>

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

One sector of the population significant for its potential impact on health care and the schools is women of child-bearing age. This group of women, which includes those ages 15 through 44 for this study, make up 533 or 20.3 percent of the total study area population.



Table 3. Percent (%) Population by Age Group, Northern Socorro County

Age Cohort	Percent (%) Population by Cohort by Area						Northern Socorro County
	Subarea #1	Subarea #2	Subarea #3	Subarea #4	Subarea #5	Subarea #6	
0-4	6.0%	8.1%	8.2%	8.2%	8.1%	5.9%	7.9%
5-9	8.0%	10.2%	10.3%	10.1%	10.2%	8.3%	10.0%
10-14	10.0%	8.8%	9.0%	8.8%	8.8%	8.8%	8.9%
15-19	4.9%	9.4%	9.3%	9.3%	9.4%	6.7%	9.1%
20-24	3.1%	5.8%	5.8%	5.8%	5.8%	4.1%	5.6%
25-34	10.0%	12.3%	12.4%	12.3%	12.3%	10.8%	12.2%
35-44	16.0%	14.9%	14.8%	14.8%	15.0%	14.7%	14.9%
45-54	14.0%	13.0%	13.2%	13.1%	13.0%	16.2%	13.3%
55-64	16.0%	9.2%	9.0%	9.2%	9.2%	11.3%	9.5%
65+	12.0%	8.3%	7.9%	8.4%	8.2%	13.2%	8.6%
Total Population	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

People of Hispanic ethnicity made up 57.3 percent of the population of Northern Socorro County in 2000, higher than the County figure of 48.7 percent and the statewide figure of 42.1 percent. The White race comprised 70.4 percent of total population within the study area, slightly higher than the 62.9 percent recorded in Socorro County and 66.8 percent recorded statewide. People of American Indian ethnicity constituted only 2.0 percent of total population, noticeably less than the 10.9 percent within the County and 9.5 percent within the State.

### **Households and Income**

The 2000 average household size in Northern Socorro County was 2.86 people, slightly higher than the County figure of 2.62 people and the statewide figure of 2.63 people.

The 2000 median household income in Northern Socorro County was \$24,083. Median household incomes within the six subareas ranged from \$22,767 to \$31,119 as shown in Figure 4.

Generally, incomes were lower than the Socorro County median of \$23,439. All of these figures were significantly lower than the statewide median household income of \$34,133.

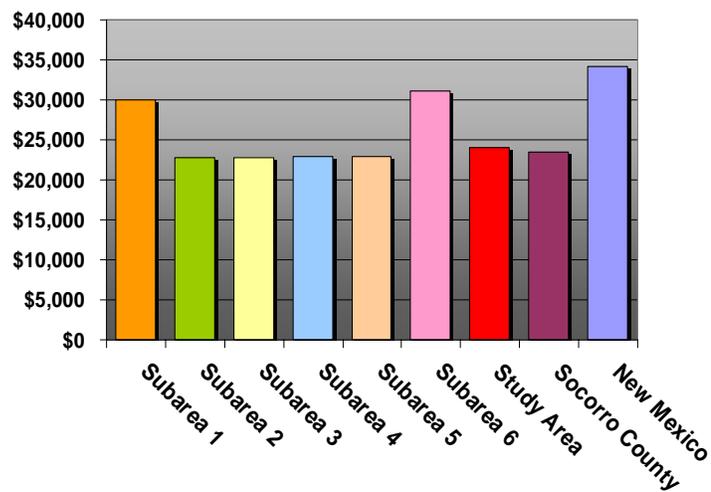


Figure 4. Median Household Income Comparison



Despite this, the poverty rate for individuals in Northern Socorro County (27.1 percent), was lower than for the County as a whole (31.7 percent). It was significantly higher, however, than the statewide poverty rate of 18.4 percent. It is possible that poorer, non-English speaking individuals were missed by the Census count, however.

## **Population Projections**

Using data from the US Census, the Bureau of Business and Economic Research (BBER) at the University of New Mexico, the Mid-Region Council of Governments and 2005 ESRI Market Reports, current population estimates and projections have been developed for the study area, Socorro County and the State of New Mexico. (See Table 4)

Population within Northern Socorro County has grown from 2,622 in 2000 to an estimated 2,777 in 2005, reflecting a 1.16 percent average annual rate of growth. This is a somewhat slower rate than the 1.84 percent average annual growth for Socorro County as a whole and 1.62 percent statewide.

**Table 4. Population Projections by Subarea, 2005 and 2010, and Average Annual Rate**

	Population Projections and Rate				
	2000	2005	Average Annual Rate %	2010	Average Annual Rate %
Subarea 1: West*	48*	48	0.00%	48	0.00%
Subarea 2: Entire River Corridor	870	927	1.28%	957	0.64%
Subarea 3: West River Corridor	378	403	1.29%	416	0.64%
Subarea 4: East River Corridor	492	524	1.27%	541	0.64%
Subarea 5: East	1,503	1,599	1.25%	1,655	0.69%
Subarea 6: South	201	203	0.20%	206	0.29%
North Socorro County	2,622	2,777	1.16%	2,866	0.63%
Socorro County	18,078	19,801	1.84%	21,421	1.59%
State of New Mexico	1,819,046	1,970,983	1.62%	2,112,986	1.40%

Source: U.S. Census, MRCOG, BBER at UNM, 2005 ESRI

\* The 2000 Census Count for this area is disputed as too low by local residents.

## ***Planning Process and Public Participation***

### **First Public Meeting**

The first public meeting for the Northern Socorro Comprehensive Plan in April 2005 was combined with a presentation by Kleinfelder Associates on a demonstration project to clean up nitrates in the area groundwater. At the meeting, Sites Southwest project staff explained the contents and function of a comprehensive plan and divided the audience of approximately 35 into two groups to provide the

opportunity for more people to comment. Participants were asked what they valued about Northern Socorro County, what issues or problems existed, and what they envisioned for the future. Their responses were very similar to comments received during the public meeting for the 2003 Socorro Comprehensive Plan (See Appendix ). Several people also filled out a written questionnaire that posed the same questions.

### **What do you value about Northern Socorro County?**

In general, participants said they valued the fresh clean air, open space, and rural community in the area. The lack of traffic, beautiful countryside, and quiet were assets. They also appreciated the cultural heritage of the area as well as the wildlife refuges and flyways. Residents expressed a strong desire to preserve these characteristics.

### **What issues or problems need to be addressed?**

Overall, residents perceived that the area was ignored by Socorro County, although there were some instances that this situation was changing. The area's sheriff substation was closed, leaving residents with little or delayed law enforcement. Piles of tires, trash and other junk along the highway and on some residential sites continue to proliferate. The population continues to increase, generating concerns about managing growth to ensure the area develops in an orderly fashion.

The area lacks transportation other than the private automobile. Some residents called for more secondary roads, particularly an east-west connection between NM 304 and NM 47 as well as more paved surfaces and better road maintenance. La Joya residents have to travel north to US 60 to get onto I-25. Residents complained that semi-trucks and cars speed along 304 where many homes are built close to the road, killing animals including family pets. It is also dangerous for children waiting for the bus to go to school.

Few community services are available in the area. Residents have to travel to Belen or Socorro for medical care, social services counseling, most purchases, and dining out. There are serious issues such as drug abuse, alcoholism, and domestic violence among families that need to be addressed. There are mobile home fires due to faulty heating and other causes. The Abo Valley mobile home development has serious nitrate pollution in the ground water due to former agricultural practices and lack of or faulty septic systems.

Few jobs exist other than at the dairies, the gravel pit, and the few community facilities such as the school, Senior Citizens Center, Boys' Ranch, the post offices. Most residents work in Belen, Los Lunas, Albuquerque or Socorro or engage in agriculture or arts and crafts sold from their homes. The elementary school provides space for community meetings on the east side of the river, but such a facility is lacking on the west side.

### **What do you envision for the future?**

Managing growth to preserve their existing rural way of life and open space ranked high among the participants' desires. Additional community services they would like are a medical clinic that includes a social worker or counselor, a sheriff's substation, a fire station in Sabinal, and a community center on the west side of river where they could hold meetings, receptions and other

events. Safe playgrounds in each community were desired. Participants would like to preserve the existing historic buildings such as the schoolhouse in Contreras and add interpretive historic signs. They called for better law enforcement to respond to calls for aid; clean-up of the junkyards, tires, and weeds; and an end to illegal activities such as methamphetamine labs in the area. Slowing the traffic and perhaps removing large trucks from NM 304 was also desirable. Others pointed out that it would be difficult to encourage farming and dairies, however, if large trucks were excluded.

They favored limiting economic development to clean industries such as a cheese plant, windmill farms, ice cream, and cottage industries while retaining their agricultural base. A DSL line was viewed as necessary, given their remote location. Any manufacturing should be placed farther to the east, beyond residential areas. Meeting participants also favored tourism, capitalizing on their location along El Camino Real. A small local restaurant and a grower's market were also suggested.

### **Work Process and Second Public Meeting**

The project team conducted phone interviews with various members of the Advisory Committee and Special Zoning Districts to obtain more details about the area and desires of the residents. They also toured and photographed the area for a day.

At a subsequent meeting with the Advisory Committee, consultants elicited input from attendees on the first draft of the plan and goals, which had been distributed prior to the meeting. A revised draft report was presented and revised draft goals and objectives were posted on the wall at a general public meeting Oct. 2, 2005. Approximately 15 people attended that meeting and offered comments and suggestions. The draft plan was posted on the consultant's website, which inspired further suggestions that were submitted by email and fax to the consultants.

### **Priorities**

Attendees at the October meeting also had the opportunity to vote on what they considered the most important goals and objectives by using dot stickers. The top priorities were more frequent road grading, clean up of trash and tires and addressing the solid waste disposal issue, better fire protection, and promoting tourism through a visitor center/farmer's market at the juncture of I-25 and US 60 and a tour loop along NM 304 and 116. The next highest priorities included seeking a source of natural gas and high speed internet, constructing a health care facility, locating a sheriff's substation in the area, attracting clean industry to the area, cleaning up dead and down wood in the Bosque, and creating bike lanes and trails.

### 3.0 Land Use

The land use element of the comprehensive plan addresses the overall physical form of the community. It considers the location of the principal land uses, including residential, commercial, office, institutional and public land uses as well as the amount of land they occupy. It also examines how the community is growing and suggests strategies to accommodate that growth.

#### ***Existing Land Use Conditions***

The North central part of Socorro County covered by this comprehensive plan is in private ownership. Land use in the area is primarily agricultural and residential with a few industries, such as the dairies and the sand and gravel mines, and several public facilities. The only strictly commercial activities are the grocery store and gas station in San Juan along NM 304, although there are some home-based businesses, particularly along NM Routes 304 and 116.



**Acequia**

Irrigated agriculture—including alfalfa and sorghum fields, a dairy, beekeeping, and a vineyard—fans out along both sides of the river to approximately NM 304 on the east and I-25 to the west. It extends to the county line on the north and past La Joya to the south. There also are a number of horse farms in the area. Agricultural parcels range from a few acres to 40 acres and even up to 160 in the river valley, according to the County Assessor’s Office (farms in La Joya, for example, were as large as 63 to 127 acres). Those on the open prairie are much larger. Parcels are becoming smaller and smaller as growth pressures build, however.

Even though agricultural production has declined in Socorro County in recent years, agriculture continues to be an important industry in the County, providing eight percent of the jobs. Local residents remember that some 15 years ago, the northern area received funds to reroute the irrigation ditches underneath the arroyos and roads in several places where the arroyos washed out the ditches during rains. The more reliable supply of irrigation water revived the flagging villages along the river.

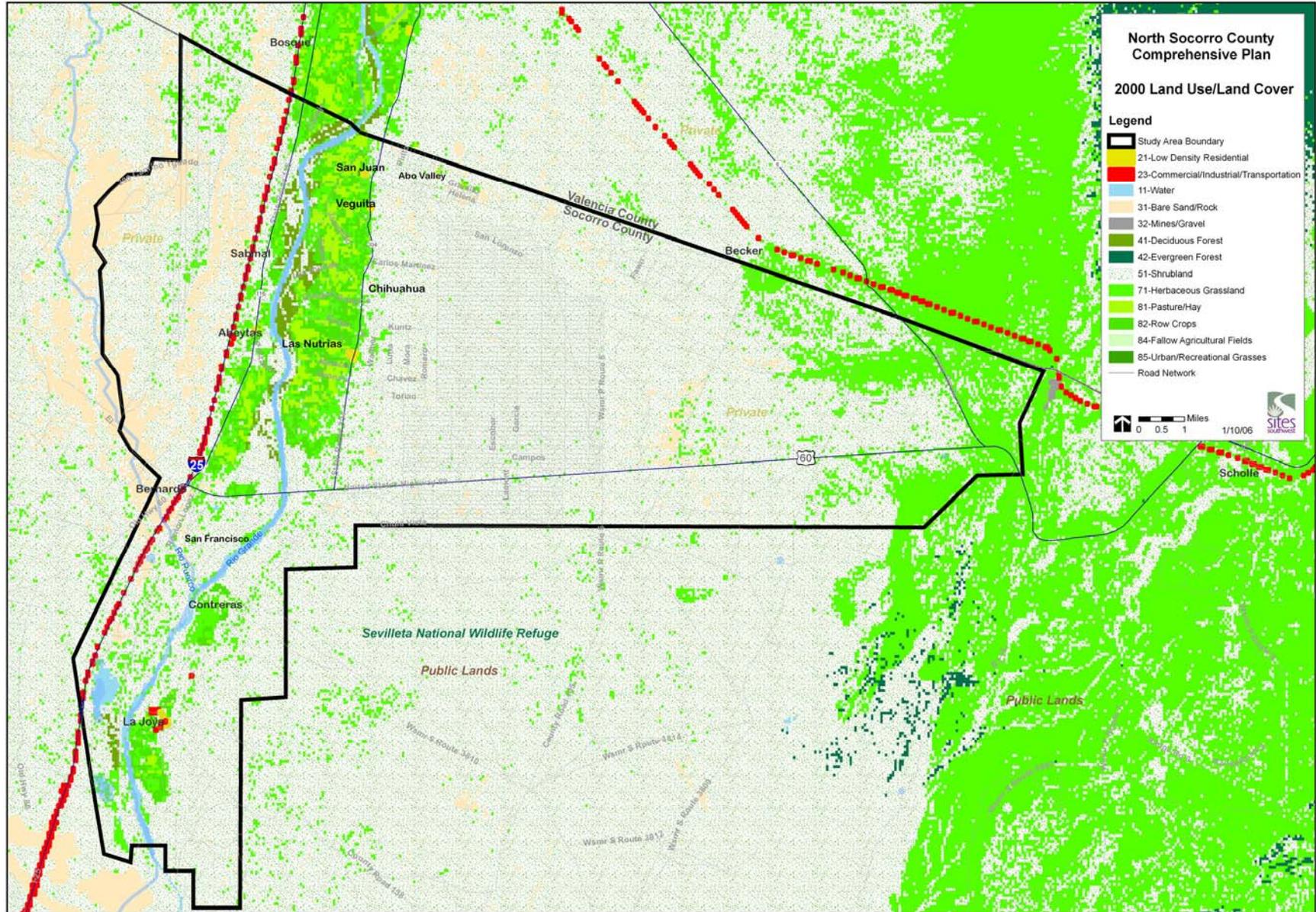


**Farm along the River**



**Abandoned Vineyard**

Figure 5. Land Use Map



Source: MRCOG and US Census

East of the Rio Grande, single family homes line stretches of NM 304, clustering around the Villages of Veguita (San Juan and Chihuahua), Las Nutrias, San Francisco, Contreras and La Joya. Some residents sell arts and crafts and food items from their homes as well as alfalfa, propane and other items. La Promesa Elementary School in Las Nutrias, the Parish Center and other churches in each village provide a focus for community life as they offer space for public meetings, wedding receptions, classes and other events. The area north of Route 60 also is also home to the Boys Ranch, the Northern Socorro County Senior Center, a County transfer station, and a fire station. Post offices are found in Veguita (the named post office, although some local residents view it as being in the Village of San Juan). The abandoned sheriff's substation and an overgrown ballfield also are located in Veguita.



**House along NM 304**



**House along NM 304**

East of NM 304 in the prairie lie two large but sparsely developed subdivisions, Rio Grande Estates (one-acre parcels) and Tierra Grande (5-acre parcels), both of which extend north nearly to the Valencia County line and south to the Seville Wildlife Refuge. The smaller but also sparsely developed Ranchos de Veguitas (20-acre parcels gradually being subdivided into 5 acres) is sandwiched between NM 304 and Rio Grande Estates. It is these areas that experienced the highest growth rate—12.6 percent—over the last decade. Among the residences, especially along NM 60, large piles of old tires and decaying trailers testify to the land's use as an illegal dumping ground.



**Abo Valley Mobile Home**

Along the Valencia County line is also the Abo Valley mobile home subdivision, which has issues of water contamination by nitrates and wastewater disposal as well as three or more mobile homes on one lot.

Residential development along the west side of the river tends to cluster near Sabinal and Abeytas. Along NM 116 are the Abeytas fire station and water tank, a dairy, vineyard/winery and a bee-keeping farm. Plans are in the works to build a community center on an acre of land between Sabinal and Abeytas to serve potentially as a visitor center, gym, commercial kitchen, youth center, and space for community meetings, private receptions, and concerts.



La Joya Home



La Joya Home

Residential development is more sparse and dispersed between the villages south of Route 60 until La Joya, although the entire southern part of the plan area added more than 100 residents over the past decade. La Joya offers a community library, fire station, and post office as well as Our Lady of Sorrow church. Contreras has an historic schoolhouse that residents would like to preserve and renovate.



Contreras Church



Old Contreras School House

## **Existing Land Use Policies and Regulations**

### **State Statutes**

**New Mexico law (NMSA 1978 3-21-18)** permits special zoning districts to be created in counties that have no general zoning ordinance and are in areas that are outside incorporated municipalities. The districts may cover a maximum of 20,000 contiguous acres (~ 30 square miles).

**Night Sky Protection Act (NMSA 1978 74-12-1)** regulates outdoor night lighting fixtures to preserve and enhance the state's dark sky while promoting safety, conserving energy and preserving the environment for astronomy. It requires all outdoor lighting fixtures installed after January 1, 2000, with several exceptions, to be shielded so that emitted light rays project below a horizontal plane running through the lowest points on the light fixture—essentially preventing light from spilling off the site. Exceptions include incandescent fixtures of 150 watts or less and other sources of 70 watts or less; as well as outdoor lighting fixtures necessary for worker safety at farms, ranches, dairies, feedlots, or industrial mining or oil and gas facilities. The provisions do not apply within a county or municipality that has adopted light pollution restrictions equal to or more stringent than the State statute.

### **County Ordinances**

The County's existing **Subdivision Ordinance 97-006** (which mirrors the State statute) sets forth general subdivision regulations for the unincorporated parts of Socorro County. Within the portions of the planning and platting jurisdictions of the County's incorporated municipalities that extend beyond the city boundaries, it has joint authority with the municipal subdivision ordinances.

Among other provisions, the ordinance requires the submittal of the following plans for subdivision:

- A water quality and availability plan
- A liquid waste management plan
- A solid waste management plan
- A terrain management plan (which must be reviewed by the Socorro Soil and Water Conservation District)

As required by the State statute governing county subdivision ordinances, the Socorro County ordinance exempts 13 types of subdivisions from the regulation, including:

- The sale of one parcel of agricultural land 35 acres or larger per tract within a one-year period
- The sale or gift of one parcel of land per tract per immediate family member within the period of one year
- The sale of land that creates no parcel smaller than 140 acres
- The sale of a single parcel from a tract of land within any five-year period

In addition, **Ordinance 01-001, Establishing That the Right-to- Practice Agriculture is a Primary Right within Socorro County**, ensures that agriculture practices or facilities as described cannot be determined to be a private or public nuisance by any changed condition in or near where it is located if it was not a nuisance at the time operations began. It also prevents zoning from being a basis for reduction or elimination of the right to practice agriculture. If a court decides that such a nuisance challenge is frivolous, it may award reasonable costs and attorney's fees to the defendants. It should be noted that as Socorro County is an open-range county, it is the responsibility of property owners who do not want cattle grazing on their land to fence them out. (An exception to this is the La Joya Acequia Irrigation Ditch that runs from NM 60 south to 2.5 miles south of La Joya, which is by State law and ordinance a closed range.)

**Ordinance 01-002, Public Nuisance Ordinance of Socorro County**, prohibits creation of a public nuisance and gives the County sheriff's department the authority to enforce it. It defines what constitutes a nuisance in four activity areas: noise, lighting, odor, and vermin, and lists exceptions to each. It also gives the Socorro County Board of County Commissioners authority to grant a variance from the requirements if they would result in an arbitrary and unreasonable taking of property or cause undue economic burden so long as the activity would not injure public health or safety.

### **Local Laws**

Residents in Northern Socorro County took advantage of the State enabling legislation to create two special zoning districts along the Rio Grande corridor, one on the west side and one on the east side. The catalyst was the proposed construction of a power plant on 50 acres along the Rio Grande in 2002. As noted in the introduction, this proposal galvanized area residents to organize in opposition to preserve their rural way of life. They formed the Northern Socorro County Historical Neighborhood Association (NSCHNA), brought 200 residents to the County Commission hearing on the power plant, and eventually defeated the proposal. Feeling unprotected due to the County's lack of zoning and land use policy, community residents petitioned the State of New Mexico to create the two special zoning districts and created zoning to better control land uses along the river. (See Figure 6)

Creation of a third district farther to the east failed due to some opposition. The two zoning districts contain similar language; below SZD II is summarized:

**Special Zoning District II** encompasses land to the east of the river, embracing the villages along NM 304 as well as Abo Valley, but carves out the Ranchos de Veguitas and Rio Grande Estates subdivisions. A Zoning/Land Use Ordinance filed in 2003 for the District provides policies and standards for development and commercial uses. It is administered by an elected SPD Commission.

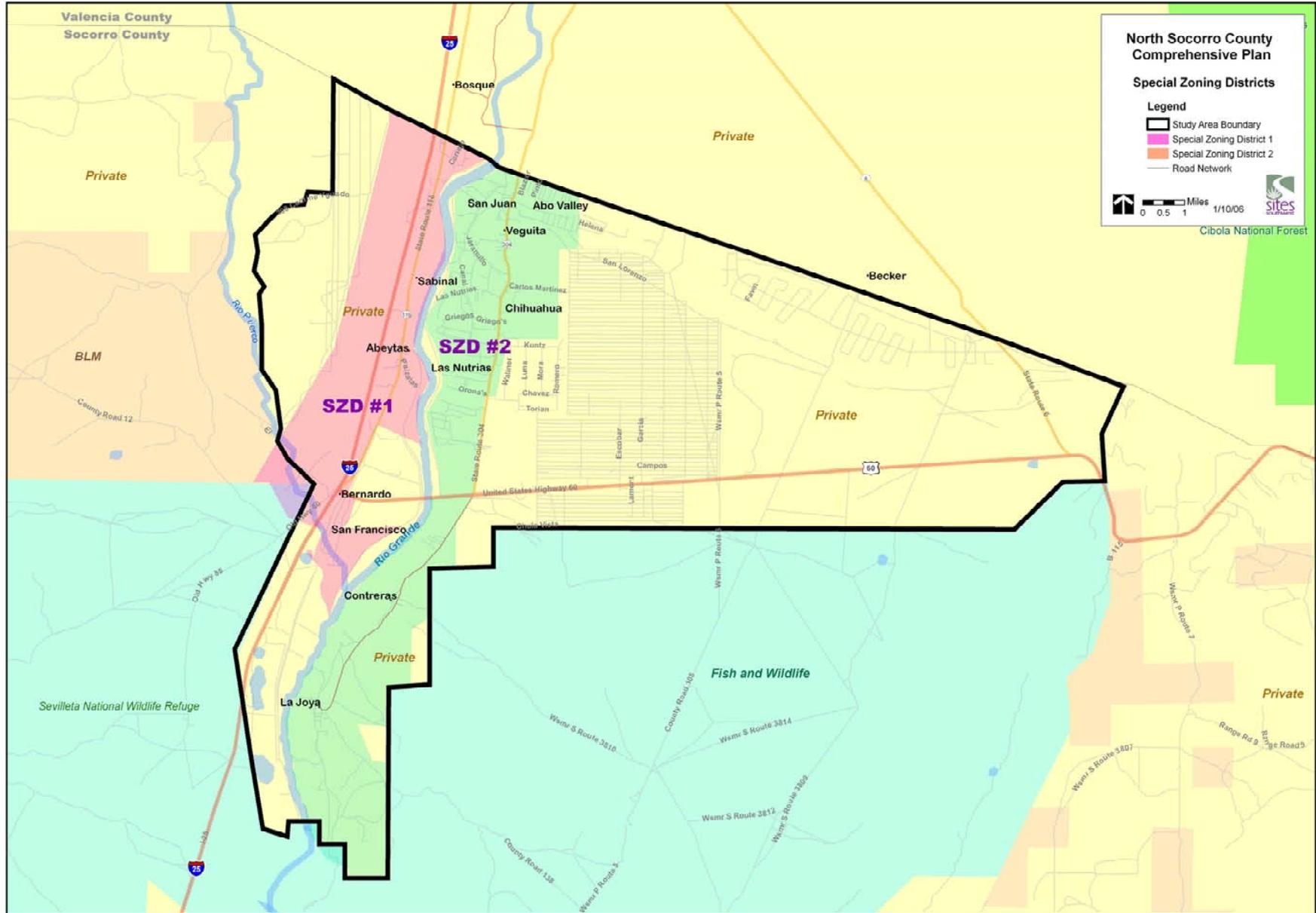
The Zoning Ordinance for Special Zoning District II zones all the land in the district as agricultural and rural residential. Uses allowed under this are:

- A single family residence or dwelling on no less than one acre of land;
- Agricultural uses (defined as all methods of raising, harvesting and marketing livestock, crops, vegetation, and soil, as well as handling their by-products);
- Cottage Industries (A small, individually-owned business or concern located in a generally residential area which functions without altering the residential character of the neighborhoods or significantly impacting public health, safety and general welfare. It employs no more than five persons not members of the immediate family and is customarily carried out as an accessory use of a dwelling unit. It excludes auto wrecking/dismantling yards, junk yards, or additional dwellings for rent).



Under restricted uses, it lists retail, commercial, industrial, multi-family residential, or mixed-use development which has the potential to impact the neighborhood or area for which it is proposed. In addition, it prohibits the expansion or change in usage on any tract of land on which current usage is non-compliant with the ordinance unless a variance or zoning change is requested from the District Commissioners.

Figure 6. Current Special Zoning Districts



Source: Sites Southwest LLC, MRCOG and US Census

## ***Land Use Issues and Opportunities***

As the Special Zoning District Ordinance II states clearly, there has been significant and unmanaged growth in private residences and commercial activities in the area during the past years. The growth has affected existing land uses, traditional villages, irrigated farmland, and water quality and quantity. District residents wish to strike a balance between preservation of the district's unique and historical cultures and agricultural economy and the inevitability of growth and its accompanying cultural and economic diversity. They are particularly concerned about the impacts of unmanaged development on the availability of water, water quality, air quality, roads and transportation, and their effects on the overall quality of life. The Special Zoning Districts will go a long way toward achieving the quality of life that resident's desire.

### **Preservation of Agriculture and Open Space**

Farming and ranching in the area is being threatened both by economic conditions and residential encroachment. As it becomes more difficult to make a living raising livestock or selling crops, subdividing the land and selling off parcels for development becomes more attractive. The area is close enough to commute to Belen, Los Lunas, Albuquerque or Socorro for work, which attracts new residents to the area. The new commuter rail station will soon be open in Belen to transport people as far as Albuquerque, Bernalillo, and Santa Fe, making the area even more accessible.

At the same time, the area has few land use controls in place to prevent or even discourage this future growth scenario. The County subdivision ordinance fosters unplanned land divisions by exempting certain land divisions from the subdivision requirements. A landowner can effectively split a tract into any number of 140-acre parcels and sell off one 35-acre or larger parcel a year, a smaller parcel every five years, and a parcel to each immediate family member without triggering the threshold for subdivision review and its accompanying requirements for proof of water availability and ability to fulfill liquid and solid waste disposal requirements. The Zoning Ordinance in SZD II permits one dwelling unit per acre throughout the district, which could lead to the division of the larger parcels needed for agriculture into one-acre lots. Socorro County has few funds available to purchase open space and there are no requirements for developers to provide it.

A County right-to-farm ordinance provides some protections for the industry from nuisance lawsuits. Moreover, the Rio Grande Agricultural Land Trust (RGALT) has some Federal funds available through the USDA's Farm and Ranchland Protection Program to purchase development rights on private agricultural lands, if 50 percent is matched locally. Feasibility depends on the appraised land price of the property and its location. The RGALT has submitted applications for 2006, and applications for 2007 will be submitted in Fall of 2005. Landowners willing to place conservation easements on their property can also take advantage of federal and state income tax deductions.

### **Examples from Other Places**

Other states and counties in the country are also facing the loss of farmland and open space and have come up with various solutions to preserve their land for agriculture. For example, Carroll

County, Maryland, located between Baltimore and Washington, D.C., has one of the most successful farm preservation programs in the country. Their strategy incorporated the following steps. The first two actions set the stage for their program while the last was implemented to ensure farmland permanent protection, with adequate compensation to farmers.

- Carroll County adopted agricultural zoning that allowed one dwelling unit per 20 acres with a minimum lot size of one acre.
- The county created an agricultural district with a minimum of 100 acres of good quality soils where the land would stay in agriculture for five years and not be subdivided except for homes for children or farm laborers.
- The county instituted a purchase of development rights program. The State of Maryland annually appropriates funds for purchasing development rights from farmers whose land is in agricultural districts. Carroll County also contributes to this. The county's goal is to eventually permanently protect 100,000 acres of farmland, which is the critical mass they calculated was needed to insure a viable agriculture industry.

While funding purchase of development rights might be difficult in New Mexico and Socorro County, which have smaller tax bases, the northern area could consider requiring lower density zoning outside the village centers on farmland it wants to retain. It could require five, ten or more acres per dwelling unit there, or allow clustering of residences on one or two acres while preserving the remaining acreage as open space. It could also zone certain areas for agriculture, requiring a public hearing for a change in use. (See Appendix for matrix of agricultural land preservation techniques.)

### **Lack of Development Standards or Enforcement**

Failure to enforce the subdivision ordinance and building or mobile home codes has resulted in substandard subdivisions of run-down trailers placed too close together with unapproved septic systems and wells, and even cesspools, particularly in parts of the Abo Valley area.

The lack of standards or designated land areas for potential industries that might seek to enter Socorro County, however, creates obstacles and uncertainties for new industry as well as County residents. Designating zones for particular land uses has traditionally been used to solve many of these issues by preventing incompatible uses from locating next to each other. Zoning can be based on the suitability of soils, slopes, and other land characteristics. For example, land with a certain slope and good soils has been zoned for agriculture. Less desirable soils with similar slope near major transportation routes may be particularly suitable for industry or commercial uses. Zoning also has been used to regulate the number of dwellings allowed per acre as well as the size of the structures.

### ***Desired Land Use Conditions and Goals***

While residents in Northern Socorro County desire to preserve their rural landscape, open space, and agriculture as a viable industry, they prefer to concentrate on voluntary methods of doing this. Residents are also interested in preserving the character and flavor of the historic villages of Veguita (San Juan/Chihuahua), Las Nutrias, Sabinal, Abeytas, San Francisco, Bernardo, Contreras, and La

Joya. The Steering Committee felt the new zoning ordinances would go a long way toward accomplishing this, but viewed development of design guidelines as possibly too prescriptive. They recommended efforts to preserve historic buildings, such as the old Contreras Schoolhouse, and focusing on signage design, lighting to preserve the dark skies, and addressing noise issues.

**LU Goal 3-1: Preserve agricultural and open space lands in Northern Socorro County.**

**Objective 1. Determine the critical mass of farmland and parcel sizes needed to retain the agricultural land and industry in Northern Socorro County.**

Strategy a. Work with the County Agricultural Extension service to map the important agricultural land in the County based on such factors as soil type, slope, salinity, proximity to water, and elevation.

Strategy b. Determine the amount of contiguous land and average parcel size necessary to retain a viable agricultural industry in the area.

**Objective 2. Consider a number of possible strategies to preserve a critical mass of farmland to retain a viable farming area.**

Strategy a. Encourage farmers to work with the Rio Grande Agricultural Land Trust program to purchase development rights or to donate conservation easements on all or part of their property in return for income tax deductions.

Strategy b. Promote a State/County program to purchase development rights from farmers and ranchers.

Strategy c. Form voluntary agricultural districts where commercial agriculture is encouraged and protected. Common benefits of enrollment in such districts include automatic eligibility for differential tax assessment, protection from eminent domain and municipal annexation, enhanced right-to-farm protection, exemption from special local tax assessments and eligibility for state purchase of development rights programs.

Strategy d. Work with other organizations that are striving to protect farm and ranch land, such as the Socorro Soil and Water Conservation District, the local Quivera Coalition, the Sonoran Institute and the American Farmland Trust and educate area farmers about various programs available to them for preserving their farmland.

Strategy e. Work with the Rio Grande Agricultural Land Trust to institute a program to link farmers who would like to sell their farm to young farmers who wish to purchase a farm.

Strategy f. Eliminate some of the exemptions for subdivisions in the County subdivision ordinance.

**LU Goal 3-2. Ensure orderly growth and development of land to protect the valued rural characteristics of Northern Socorro County.**

**Objective 1. Implement the zoning code in the two Special Zoning Districts.**

Strategy a. Develop a process for application and review of development by the Special Zoning District boards.

Strategy b. Set application fees to cover the cost of project review.

**Objective 2. Enforce the zoning codes of both Special Zoning Districts**

Strategy a. Establish an ongoing relationship with the rural electric cooperative to prevent illegal development by coordinating requests for electric service with zoning/subdivision approvals.

Strategy b. Coordinate with Socorro County to alert officials to illegal subdivision activity.

**LU Goal 3-4. Preserve the dark skies and quiet atmosphere of Northern Socorro County.**

Strategy a. Educate residents and business owners about the requirements of the NM Night Sky Protection Act and the noise restrictions of the Socorro County Public Nuisance Ordinance and encourage compliance and enforcement of these laws.

**LU Goal 3-5. Protect historic buildings and interpret the history of the villages for residents and tourists.**

Strategy a. Contact State historic preservation authorities for assistance in defining the historic landscape and exploring the benefits and disadvantages of registering historic places and structures.

Strategy b. Educate private owners about the availability of tax credits, grants, low interest loans and other incentives for restoring historic buildings.

Strategy c. Seek funding or volunteers through the schools or universities to translate and record the videotaped oral histories of old-timers in the area to establish a permanent historical record for the area.

Strategy d. Determine historic events or buildings that need historical interpretation through signs and other displays and seek funding to implement.

**LU Goal 3-6. Develop design guidelines for signage to help establish a sense of place in the villages and promote tourism efforts.**

Strategy a. Draw on the talents of local artists to create guidelines that could be promoted in the area.

## 4.0 Community Facilities and Services

An area's community facilities make an important contribution to the overall quality of life and often are the focal points of community social interaction. They provide places for recreation and relaxation, medical care and social services, learning, cultural activities, and gatherings with family and friends. The Community Facilities element of the Comprehensive Plan examines the existing inventory of community facilities and the services they provide and recommends additional facilities and services.

### ***Education***

#### **Existing Education Services**

The northern Socorro County area falls within the Belen Public School District, rather than the Socorro District. Middle-school (grades 7 and 8) and high-school students (grades 9-12) ride the bus to schools in Belen. Based on school bus records from 2004/2005, approximately 129 students from Northern Socorro County are enrolled in the Belen School District middle and high schools.

Active residents in the northern part of the County recently were successful in raising funds to build a new elementary school in their area, La Promesa, which is also part of the Belen School District. The school enrolled 250 students from grades K-6 for the 2004-05 school year. The largest class size is 25 students, and kindergarten classes are kept under 15 students. Diane Bustos is the current principal.



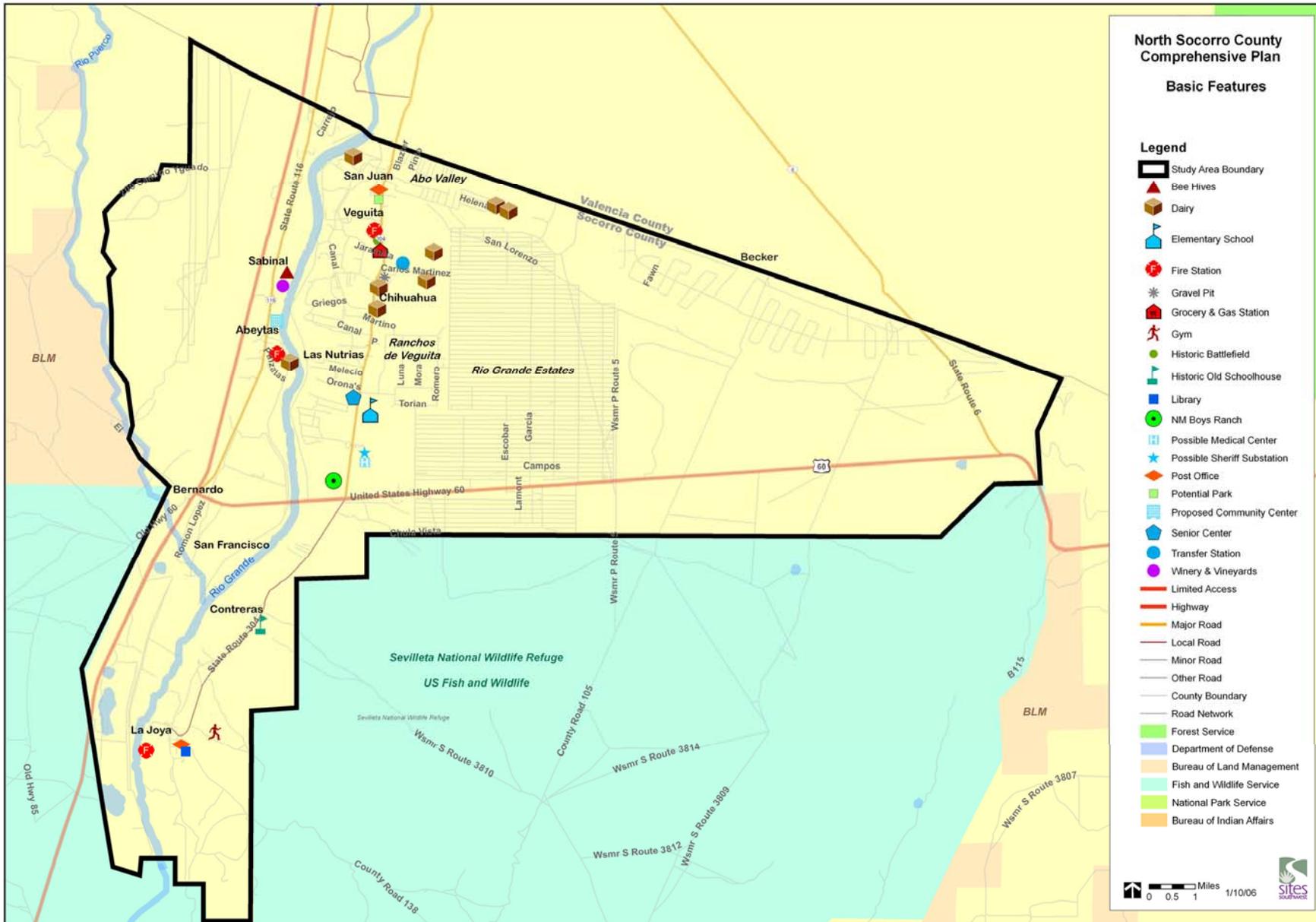
La Promesa Elementary School

#### **Education Issues, Opportunities and Desired Conditions**

The school faces several significant challenges that affect its ability to provide quality education to students:

- Some 90 percent of the students come from low-income families. Most participate in the universal feeding program which provides breakfast and lunch. Some students walk up to 1.5 miles a day to catch the school bus.
- Forty-seven percent of the students list Spanish as their first language at home.
- Currently, as the only medical practitioner in the area, the part-time school nurse provides the primary medical care for many of the school's students, as well as some community residents. Access to medical care is poor, since the community does not have a medical clinic. Families must travel north to Belen to visit urgent care at Presbyterian or south to Socorro to visit the hospital. Access to transportation and rising gas costs both pose significant barriers to health care for many families

Figure 7. Local Features



Source: Sites Southwest LLC, MRCOG and US Census



- The part-time school counselor has limited ability to provide needed services to students. A State agency – Children, Youth, and Families – does provide transportation to Socorro for counseling services for some students.

The combination of low-income families and poor medical care access results in many students missing multiple days of school if they get sick, because families cannot afford to take them to see a doctor. Occasionally, the school nurse has to care for a student that gets sick during the school day because parents either do not have telephones or cannot come to retrieve students. If a family can afford to take a sick child to Belen or Socorro to see a doctor, wait times at urgent care facilities can be up to four hours. Because it is an all-day affair, parents sometimes will take all the children in the family, so they all miss school for the day.

The lack of emergency care is also a significant safety issue. In one incident, a student fell off the playground swings and could not move his legs. It took 1.5 hours for an ambulance to arrive. Fortunately, the student was fine in this case. The school was originally designed with a heliopad for emergency helicopter lifts to the hospital, but it was not built due to lack of funds. In extreme cases, helicopters can land in the soccer field.

Because alcoholism and domestic violence rates are high in this area, students need counseling and behavioral assistance at school. A significant number of students have witnessed a murder, which dramatically affects their behavior in school and ability to concentrate and learn in class. The part-time counselor cannot provide assistance to all the students that need it. A social worker or counselor at a nearby medical clinic would help alleviate this shortcoming. The school is trying to raise funds to hire a full-time nurse and has plans to hire a full-time counselor for the 2004-05 school year.

La Promesa facilities were also designed to accommodate university extension classes, offering a future opportunity for college classes to be taught at the site.

## ***Medical Care and Social Services***

### **Existing Medical Care and Social Services**

Northern Socorro County lacks a medical or health care clinic. Currently, residents must travel to either Belen or Socorro to see a doctor or an emergency clinic, where waiting times can be up to four hours. The cost of transportation and access to private vehicles leaves this medical care out of reach for many area residents. As noted previously, a part-time school nurse and part-time counselor provide primary care and counseling services by default to students who lack other resources in the area. Their time is limited to the elementary school population and to school hours, however.

New Mexico Boys Ranch is located in the Las Nutrias area, near Route 60. This group-care ranch provides behavior modification through activities for up to 40 boys ranging in age from 9-17.



Boys are given goals based on the length of their stay and participate in athletics, horseback riding, camping, and hiking in order to raise self-esteem and provide a sense of accomplishment. Chores emphasize responsibility, teamwork, and respect for authority.

### **Medical Care and Social Services Issues, Opportunities and Desired Conditions**

One of the most pressing needs in Northern Socorro County is access to nearby medical care. The area would be well-served by a small primary health care clinic where cash payments would be accepted so that all residents could make use of the services. The clinic would need to build trust with area residents over time.

Northern Socorro County also faces challenges that accompany many low-income communities, such as domestic violence, alcoholism, and drug abuse. A counselor or social worker would be a beneficial addition to any community health care clinic.

The elementary school counselor currently is the only resource for these problems. She refers many residents to treatment for alcohol, drug abuse, and domestic violence. She also teaches conflict resolution to the elementary school students and the Boys and Girls Club.

Transportation to medical care continues to be a challenge for many area families because of the distance to medical care, the cost of transportation, long emergency response times, and non-direct transportation routes.

The nearest medical clinics are in Belen and Socorro, where emergency wait times can be up to four hours. Emergency response times for an ambulance or fire station can be 20 to 30 minutes. Most ambulances come from Bosque Farms and occasionally from Socorro. Many families only have access to a single car that is used by the main commuter. Family members left at home must ask for rides from neighbors in emergencies. Medicaid has a van service for scheduled doctor visits, but many families do not apply for it. One program, Safe Rides, provides home health care for some community members.

Transportation routes also pose a medical risk for some community areas. La Joya only has one road for access to and from its residences. Residents have to travel all the way to NM 60 and then back south to Socorro. In an emergency, this indirect route takes precious minutes away from medical care. When arroyos are flowing, there is no exit.

Active community members are attempting to find funds and resources to open a medical clinic in Northern Socorro County. A nearby clinic would alleviate some of the transportation issues that hinder medical care, and it would improve the availability of health care for many area residents, especially if the clinic can accept cash payments. Medical and behavioral health care should both be provided at the clinic. A national non-profit health care provider is exploring the possibility of locating a clinic in Northern Socorro. A first step is engaging residents in completing a health survey that will be used to assess community health care needs. The Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP) has offered to help administer the survey to local residents. More assistance would be helpful to complete the survey and move forward with plans to open a nearby clinic.

Another option would be to start with a small health office, perhaps through the Women, Infants and Children's program, where families could receive vaccinations in addition to other services.

### **Existing Senior Citizen Services**

The Northern Socorro County Senior Center in Las Nutrias is one of three senior community centers operated by the County in conjunction with the City of Socorro. The main office and largest center is located in Socorro, and the other two satellite centers operate in Magdalena and Las Nutrias. The centers provide group lunches and recreation activities at the centers and deliver both breakfast and lunch to seniors who are home-bound. Currently a total staff of 18 feeds approximately 120 seniors at the Socorro center, 45 in Magdalena, and 20 in Las Nutrias. They also provide transportation to medical appointments during normal operating hours. The centers receive the largest amount of their budgets from the state and the rest from the federal and local government. Budget requests are sent through the area Agency on Aging, which packages requests to the state legislature.

The Northern Socorro County Senior Center operates with a staff of three. They serve meals to approximately 20 seniors a day, although this number varies, and more are encouraged. The van service delivers meals to seven people. Van service to medical appointments can travel to Albuquerque, Belen, or Socorro.

## ***Senior Citizens***

### **Senior Citizen Issues, Opportunities and Desired Conditions**

The staff at the Northern Socorro County Senior Center has not received a wage increase in the past several years. In order to provide quality care for senior citizens, the Center is dependent on hard-working, dedicated staff, which is hard to retain without wage increases.

On-going training for staff is currently provided by the site manager once a year. Training should be provided more often, optimally every three months, with occasional visiting experts who can provide the most up-to-date information. The current site manager has been at the center for 14 years and handles every aspect of training, including measuring food ingredients, cooking for senior citizens, and driving the transportation van so as to not jar senior citizens. All staff must already have CPR certification before employment. Having trainings every three months would also provide the opportunity to address recent issues and events on a regular basis.



**Northern Socorro Senior Citizens Center**

The satellite centers need more frequent visits from the director at the Main Office in Socorro. Not only would this improve operations at the satellite centers, it would improve staff morale and provide much-desired visits for the senior citizens.

## **Community Centers**

### **Existing Community Center Services**

Northern Socorro County in general lacks community centers, although La Promesa Elementary School, east of the river, opens its doors for community meetings in the evenings and weekends. The parish center also is available for wedding receptions, classes and other events.

To the south, the La Joya Community Development organization has been appropriated \$50,000 from the State Legislature for improvements and remodeling of the building that now serves as the community center and library as well as improvements to the septic system. La Joya Community Development is also renovating a former gymnasium, first built as part of the La Joya School in 1949, to convert it to a Community Hall and commercial kitchen. To date, \$30,000 has been received from the State Legislature for to install a heating system, gas service and the commercial kitchen (completed except for walk-in freezers) as well as to remodel one of the rooms into a meeting space for 4-H Clubs and other organizations. Plans are to create a community park on the land surrounding the Community Hall.



**La Joya Abandoned Gym**

There is no dedicated place for community gatherings on the west side of the river. Residents in Abeytas sometimes use the fire station, at the discretion of the fire chief. This solution is less than ideal, as equipment must first be cleared out. Moreover, parking the fire truck outside the fire station in the winter causes wear on the trucks. This option must be used sparingly, since the primary purpose of the fire stations relates directly to public safety.

### **Community Center Issues, Opportunities and Desired Conditions**

The Abeytas/Sabinal community would like to construct a community center that would provide space for a visitor center; parish fiestas; a farmer's market; private receptions such as weddings, graduations, and funerals; neighborhood meetings, especially NSCHNA and SZD meetings; a multi-purpose room and gym; concerts/outdoor amphitheater; commercial kitchen; senior services; health services; and a youth center, especially for the Boys and Girls Club, which will start activities in this area in September 2005. Someone has donated land between Sabinal and Abeytas for this purpose, and the community has grant money for architectural services. A local architect, Bob Hall, presented designs for the community center at a May 1, 2005 meeting of the Northern Socorro County Historical Neighborhood Association.

Another option for the community center has been proposed by the County Fire Marshall. Since Abeytas has land near the highway to build another main fire station in the Abeyta/Sabinal area, the community center could be incorporated into this building in order to leverage resources and provide a central location for community services.

## ***Parks and Recreation***

### **Existing Parks and Recreation**

There are no County-designated parks in the Northern Socorro area, although private open space is abundant as much of the area is sparsely developed with housing. La Promesa features a playground for school children but this is closed to the general public due to liability issues.

### **Parks and Recreation Issues, Opportunities and Desired Conditions**

Residents would like safe playgrounds in each community, particularly in the Veguita and La Joya areas. While County funds may not be available, there are examples of other places where the community has organized to help design and build playgrounds and parks. A six-acre abandoned ball field in the Veguita area within walking distance of Abo Valley is an opportunity for a play area. The area might also be able to tie into a planned Bosque Trail along the river being sponsored by State Parks. The Sanchez Parish Center would like to purchase new playground equipment. And La Joya would like to create a community park on the land surrounding the renovated Community Hall.

## ***Library Services***

### **Existing Library Services**

The only library service in Northern Socorro County is in La Joya with approximately 2,000 books for circulation and an all-volunteer staff of one. Operating hours are coordinated with youth activities. Summer hours coincide with the summer lunch program, from 11 am - 2 pm Monday through Friday. School-year hours run Tuesday through Thursday from 12:30-5:30 pm. The library has one working computer, with two more that currently need servicing. One donated scanner is not hooked up, due to lack of demand.



**La Joya Library and Community Center**

While it is difficult for some residents to travel all the way to La Joya, many do, and the youth come frequently, especially in the summer when the library provides the nearest source of entertainment.

The State of New Mexico provides bookmobile services through its Los Lunas branch to Socorro County once a month in three locations: Veguita, Alamo, and Magdalena. The length of the stop depends on the local population and demand for library services. Stops are usually made at the post office or a convenience store.

### **Library Issues, Opportunities and Desired Conditions**

Because everything at the library exists as a result of donation, it is difficult to find funds to cover the telephone bill of \$50 a month in this small, low-income community. A recent request to have the County provide the \$600 a year for local phone service was denied. Residents would also like to move the La Joya Library north to a more centralized location.

## ***Community Facilities and Services Goals***

### **CFS Goal 4-1. Improve Northern Socorro County's ability to apply for and receive funding for community projects.**

- Objective 1. Coordinate priorities for funding among the area's organizations (Northern Socorro County Historical Neighborhood Association, Special Zoning Districts, etc.) and present a unified priority list to the County Commission, area legislators, and the South Central Council of Governments.
- Objective 2. Enlist the staff assistance of the South Central Council of Governments in applying for grants.

### **CFS Goal 4-2. Expand the availability of health care and social services in north central Socorro County.**

- Objective 1. Develop a master plan that would guide phased construction of a medical clinic that could be funded by the State Legislature and County.
- Strategy a. Seek funding from the State Legislature and Community Development Block Grant Program to develop a master plan.
- Strategy b. Work with the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program to establish an office in the Las Nutrias area where families could obtain supplemental food, nutrition education and vaccinations.
- Strategy c. Continue to work with nonprofit healthcare organizations such as Presbyterian Medical Services or Ben Archer to encourage them to locate to the north central Socorro County area.
- Strategy d. Seek help from the Southwest Organizing Project in surveying residents about their health care needs and other data required to apply for federal funding of community health care clinics.
- Objective 2. Seek funds to implement a drug and alcohol prevention education program for children attending school at La Promesa Elementary School that teaches conflict resolution and addresses domestic violence as a community issue. Make treatment referrals readily available for families.

### **CFS Goal 4-3. Locate community centers at locations that would equitably serve all villages.**

- Objective 1. Continue to seek funding to build a community center north of Abeytas

Objective 2. Continue to seek funds to relocate the library in La Joya to a more centralized location in Northern Socorro.

Objective 3. Seek funds to continue renovating the Community Hall (former gymnasium) in La Joya and to install a commercial kitchen.

Objective 4. Co-locate community facilities as much as feasible.

Strategy a. Consider combining sites/facilities for future community centers, libraries, parks, schools, and fire protection to leverage space and funding sources and operating money.

Strategy b. Develop a long-range plan for community facilities and parks in Northern Socorro County.

#### **CFS Goal 4-4. Establish parks in the Northern Socorro County area.**

Objective 1. Plan and develop a park on the six-acre abandoned ballfield in the Veguita area.

Objective 2. Create a park in La Joya adjacent to the Community Hall.

#### **CFS Goal 4-5. Improve library services in the area.**

Objective 1. Secure an ongoing source of funds to pay the La Joya library phone bill.

Objective 2. Create access to internet service at the La Joya library and community centers.

Strategy a. Secure used equipment donations from businesses in Socorro, Albuquerque, Belen and Los Lunas.

Strategy b. Secure an ongoing source of funds for an internet service provider.

#### **CFS Goal 4-6. Retain staff at the Northern Socorro Senior Center.**

Objective 1. Seek funds to increase staff compensation and provide a career path for senior center staff.

## 5.0 Public Safety Services

Public safety services are critical for responding quickly to the health, safety and welfare needs of a community and for maintaining order. This elements of the comprehensive plan addressed fire protection, emergency medical services, and law enforcement.

### ***Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Services***

#### **Existing Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Services**

Of the five County Fire Districts in Socorro County, three are within the Northern Socorro County planning boundary, including Abeytas, La Joya, and Veguita. All three fire stations have 3,500-gallon tankers to haul water for fires in outlying areas. These fire stations operate with all volunteers.

The Insurance Services Organization (ISO) fire ratings for these stations were as follows: Abeytas 9, La Joya 10, Veguita 9. ISO ratings are based on how much water each department can deliver and how well. A high ISO rating of 9 or 10 mean poor availability of water and/or poor means of delivery. Northern Socorro County does not have Emergency Medical Services (EMS). EMS responds from Ranchos Estates, Bosque Farms, and Rio Communities. Response times from these areas can range from 20-30 minutes.

#### **Fire Protection Issues and Opportunities**

The State uses ISO ratings to determine the distribution of fire funds, so fire districts with high ISO ratings are losing funds from the State.

Abeytas has a response time of approximately eight minutes. There are 16 active volunteers and approximately 20 on the volunteer roster. It has a 20,000-gallon water tank but is in desperate need of a new fire truck. Abeytas currently has one main fire station and one substation. While more equipment and upgraded equipment is always needed, it currently has enough equipment for its ISO rating.



**Abeytas Fire Station**

Recently, Abeytas bought some land near the main highway that runs north to Belen to build an additional main station in the northern part of its fire district, just one mile south of the County line. Once this station is constructed and operating, the response time in Abeytas will improve to the north. Residents indicated during the Comprehensive Planning process that they wanted a fire station on the west side of the river closer to Sabinal. This new station would satisfy this desire.

Residents from the area west of Bernardo are also seeking fire protection, better roads and better communications. They also requested a local pay phone in the area.

La Joya has one fire station with 22 volunteer fire fighters. While it currently has an ISO rating of 10, it is in the process of buying a new engine for its fire truck. Once the engine is purchased and operational, the fire station will request an ISO inspection and hopes to be upgraded to class 9 or better. It currently has a water tank with a 30,000-gallon capacity. There are fire hydrants in the immediate vicinity of the village, but these do not extend into the outskirts. For now, this is sufficient, since the 3,500-gallon tanker can haul water to outlying fires.

Veguita has a single fire station with 18 volunteer fire fighters. At the end of July, it installed two 21,000-gallon water tanks. The response time for Veguita ranges from five to eight minutes. Veguita needs to find funds to build a substation for the southern part of its district near Boys Ranch or La Promesa Elementary School. A substation would greatly shorten its response time in this area.

While Veguita bought a new fire truck in the past year, all stations need to upgrade to new fire trucks. Fire trucks should be replaced every ten years in order to keep the fleet in good repair and provide the best service.

The area west of Bernardo also lacks fire protection.

More volunteers are always needed. While some areas of the country have attracted more volunteers since 9-11, Socorro County has not. Training is a significant barrier to recruitment and retention. It takes 140 hours of training at the initial stage, and every year requires an additional 120 hours to maintain fire-fighting status properly for wildland fires, structural fires, and vehicle fires. The fire school in Socorro takes three to four weeks for training. Most volunteers cannot take time off work, so their training is done in-house by the chief or training officer. Usually held just on the weekends, this training process takes months to complete. Volunteers must be trained within a year, or they lose the training hours older than a year. Volunteers can work at the fire stations prior to completing the training, but they cannot perform work that they have not been trained to do.

The County has begun a county-wide master planning process for fire protection coverage. Eventually, the process will examine all the current fire stations and try to prioritize distribution of County funds according to need. Areas that do not have fire stations, however, will not be accounted for in this plan as currently envisioned. Another complicating factor is that fire departments operate somewhat autonomously and seek funding from various sources based on political connections, making it difficult to prioritize funding distribution.

### **Desired Future Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Services**

As noted above, fire protection is lacking in the area around Boys Ranch/La Promesa Elementary School, north of Sabinal, and Contreras. These areas need to find a way to be included in the master planning process. Abeytas is in need of a new fire truck, and all the stations need to upgrade their fire trucks every ten years.

Residents would also like to shorten the emergency medical response times in the area to less than the current 20 to 30 minutes it takes to respond from Bosque Farms.

## ***Law Enforcement***

### **Existing Law Enforcement**

Socorro County once operated a sheriff's substation in San Juan near Veguita, but it has since been abandoned. Socorro County is now fully staffed at 16 deputy officers plus the sheriff. Last year, they were down to seven officers due to a county-wide budget crisis. The sheriff's office operates two shifts, with two to three deputies patrolling county-wide on each shift.

### **Law Enforcement Issues and Opportunities**

Northern Socorro County has experienced a rash of thefts in the last year. One family lost farm equipment. Others had homes broken into during work day hours, when many homes are vacant. Due to the deputy staff increase, deputies were able to find the suspects. As they continue to patrol the area, the Sheriff's Department fully expects to alleviate the problem.

Drug activity, methamphetamine laboratories (meth labs) in particular, is a significant issue county-wide. More patrols would be helpful, but designated narcotics agents would also help the County to fight this particular battle. Fighting drug activity carries significant risk to officers, and they feel they should be paid for the extra risk they assume. Currently, the deputy officers are not compensated for the extra risk they take on during drug-related patrolling due to lack of funds in the County budget.

Currently, there are only enough deputy officers to patrol morning and evening shifts. There are no County officers patrolling between 2 am and 7 am. State Police are responsible for responding to any emergencies during those hours.

### **Desired Future Law Enforcement**

Hiring more patrol officers and assigning them specifically to critical areas in Northern Socorro County would help to combat thefts and drug activity in the area. A proposed sheriff's substation near the elementary school, behind the senior citizen's center, would provide a local base for deputies on patrol in Northern Socorro County. Residents and the sheriff's office both see the need for and benefit of a local substation. Special training and additional compensation for narcotics officers could also help the County better deal with illegal drug activity.

## ***Public Safety Goals***

### **PS Goal 5-1. Improve fire protection coverage in Northern Socorro County.**

- Objective 1. Construct a new fire station north of Sabinal.
- Objective 2. Build a new fire substation near La Promesa Elementary School and Boys' Ranch.
- Objective 3. Purchase a new fire engine for La Joya.

Objective 4. Seek to include Northern Socorro fire stations and proposed stations in the County fire protection master plan.

Objective 5. Reclaim burned Bosque areas and clean up dead and down wood.

**PS Goal 5-2. Provide better law enforcement coverage in Northern Socorro County.**

Objective 1. Establish a County sheriff substation near La Promesa Elementary School.

Objective 2. Provide additional compensation for officers investigating use and production of illegal drugs.

Objective 3. Provide more law enforcement over the late night (2 a.m. to 7 a.m.) shift.

Strategy a. Consider hiring more officers for this shift, mutual aid agreements with the State Police, or Northern Socorro residency requirements for deputies.

**PS Goal 5-3. Improve EMS services in Northern Socorro County.**

Objective 1. Reduce response time within the study area to less than 20 minutes.

## 6.0 Economic Development

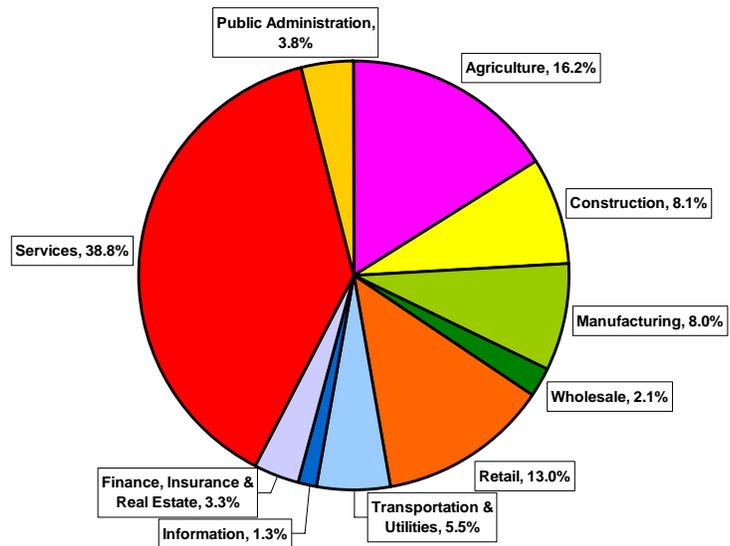
The local economy helps determine the rate of growth in a community, the prosperity of its residents, and the amount of resources available to the local government to carry out physical and other improvements. The economic development element of the Comprehensive Plan addresses several aspects of the County's economy: income levels, jobs and employment, existing businesses and tourism opportunities.

### ***Existing Economic Conditions***

#### **Income and Occupations**

The median household income reported by residents in the plan area in the 2000 Census was \$24,083, which was projected to reach \$29,083 by 2005. This figure includes income from wages and salaries, interest, dividends, net rents, pensions, SSI and welfare payments, child support and alimony. By contrast, the median income for the State of New Mexico was \$34,133 in 2000. Only seven percent of households in the plan area have incomes of \$75,000 per year or higher.

A little over half (56 percent) of the 1,995 population ages 16 and older in 2005 was in the labor force. The majority were employed in Services (38.8 percent), Agriculture or Mining (16.2 percent), or Retail Trade (13.0 percent). Some eight percent or less worked in Construction, Manufacturing, Transportation/Utilities, Fire/Insurance/Real Estate, Public Administration, Information or Wholesale Trade.



While some residents were employed locally at one of the dairies, four sand and gravel mines, the elementary school, the senior center, or other local businesses, others commuted to Socorro, Belen, Los Lunas or even farther for jobs. This is borne out by Census travel statistics which showed that 24.1 percent of workers drove at least 10 to 19 minutes to work and another 35.3 percent drove between 20 and 34 minutes to work.

Approximately 5.8 percent worked at home, operating such cottage industries as a local bee-keeping enterprise, arts and crafts works, farms, a winery, and an auto body shop.

Nearly 18 percent of employed persons in 2005 worked in service occupations, 16 percent worked in professional occupations, 12 percent in administrative support and in farming, forestry and fishing. Fewer than ten percent worked in each of the following occupations: management, business and financial; sales; construction and extraction; installation, maintenance and repair; production; or transportation and material moving.

### **Agriculture**

Agriculture is a crucial aspect of Northern Socorro County's identity, according to many participants in the public meetings.

The principal agricultural products in Socorro County are cattle, alfalfa, and hay, more recently including more lucrative, highly nutritious "designer hay" for racehorses.

A number of farmers grow vegetables that they market through vegetable stands, and several dairies have moved into the northern part of the County in recent years.

Milk cash receipts in all of Socorro County exceeded \$23 million in 2001, which compared favorably to the County's gross receipts of just over \$57 million for retail trade. Taking into account the multiplier effect, the annual economic impact of the dairy industry in Socorro County exceeded \$63 million in 2002, according to the New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension Service. Using a general rule of thumb that the groundwater diversion for dairy supply is twice the discharge volume, the economic benefit to Socorro County translates into \$618,000 for every acre-foot of dairy water use (NMSU, 2003).

Northern Socorro County farmers also raise bees for honey and pollination and grapes for wine. A local beekeeper places hives out five miles from his Sabinal house in all directions. His family sells honey from their home as well as at the Belen and Socorro grower's markets, Las Golondrinas, and through buyer's cooperatives. They raise a few cows to produce mozzarella cheese and cream.

Besides the subdivision of larger farmland parcels into smaller home sites, the main threat to agriculture in the County is the limited supply of and increasing demand for water, according to the County agricultural extension agent. Current drought conditions and recent court mandates to maintain sufficient stream flows in



Hay Barn



Dairy



Bee Farm

the Rio Grande to support the endangered silvery minnow could mean that water for irrigation will be shut off early. Farmers could lose as many as three cuttings of alfalfa.

Water shortages should have less of an immediate impact on ranchers; the forage base on rangeland is in the County is apparently in good condition. Nevertheless, reports suggest that some ranch land is being converted to large-lot residential developments as ranchers draw on the equity in their property to carry them through difficult times.

The County Agricultural Extension Service is encouraging farmers to plant more low-water-use crops, such as new varieties of cotton, chilies and vegetables that New Mexico State University has been developing. The County extension agent suggested that this would enable the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District to ration water over the whole growing season and apply it at the most opportune time for the maximum benefit.

### **Tourism, Recreation and Entertainment**

Socorro County offers a number of attractions for visitors and tourists; the following are located in the north central area.

**The Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge**, which forms the southern boundary of the plan area, was established in 1973, primarily as a research area. It is the only national wildlife refuge to host one of the 21 Long-Term Ecological Research Project (LTER) locations in the United States or internationally, and several universities have research projects underway on the refuge. It offers beautiful scenery but limited access to the public.

Sevilleta NWR has a wide range of ecosystem types: Chihuahuan Desert, Great Plains Grassland, Great Basin Shrub-Steppe, Piñon-Juniper Woodland, Bosque Riparian Forests, Wetlands and Montane Coniferous Forest. Resident wildlife at Sevilleta NWR includes desert bighorn sheep, pronghorn, mule deer, mountain lion, and bear. Bird species include bald eagle, peregrine falcon, northern shoveler, northern pintail, American coot, wood duck, canvasback, great blue heron, black-crowned night heron, sandhill crane, killdeer, long-billed dowitcher, red-tailed hawk, kestrel, and burrowing owl. There are also a variety of insects and reptiles, including the endangered horned lizard.

Sevilleta NWR is currently closed to most recreational uses. However, limited waterfowl and dove-hunting is permitted, and special tours may be arranged. Future plans call for a visitor center with computers detailing the projects and current happenings on the refuge. A hiking trail will be opened in San Lorenzo Canyon. Finally, an annual open house with field trips to research sites, bird and plant identification field trips is being held.

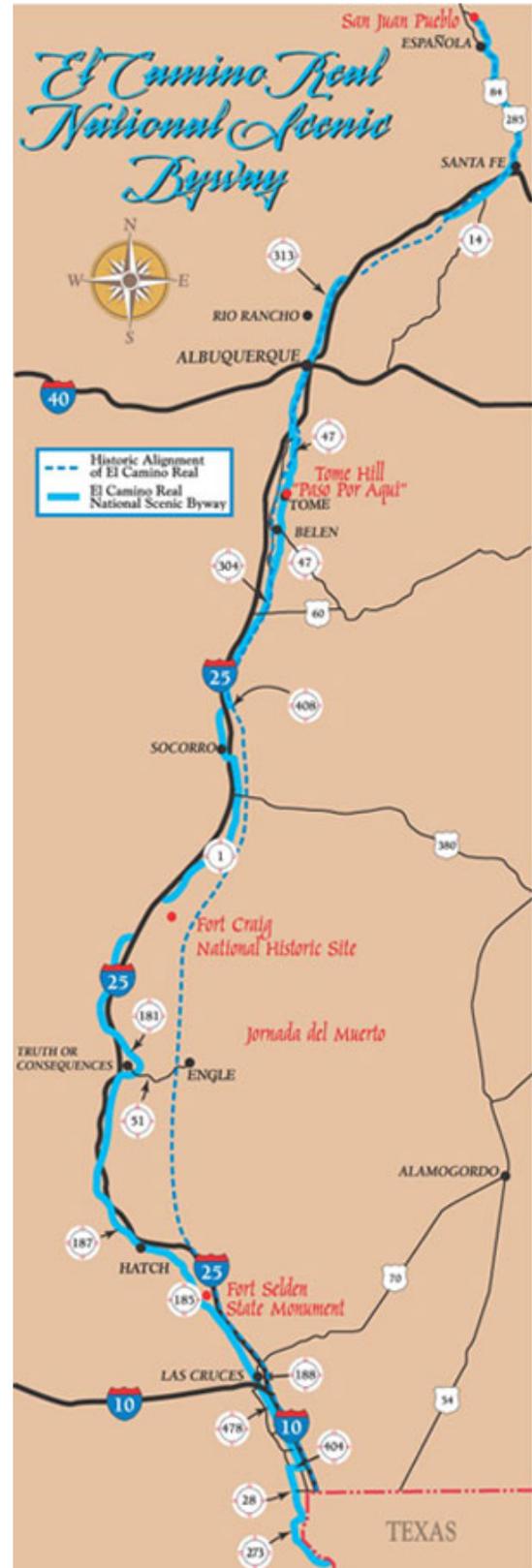
**La Joya Wildlife Refuge** encompasses six interconnected ponds, divided by levee access roads and fed by the dammed waters of Geronimo Springs and diverted waters from the nearby Rio Grande. Early area ranchers discovered a seepage at the base of Sand Dunes near the Rio Grande that resulted in the original 30-acre natural wetlands. They called it Geronimo Springs, and in 1948 the NM Department of Game and Fish began purchasing parcels of land in and around the springs to

create the 3,500-acre La Joya Wildlife Refuge. Although it is adjacent to I-25, it is located down a steep embankment that maintains its state of peaceful seclusion. It hosts a variety of ducks as well as migrating Canada geese. Shorebirds such as sandpipers, sora, green-backer herons, black-necked stilt, American avocet, killdeer, and other species such as pelicans are abundant in spring from late March through April 30. Chihuahuan desert bird species and typical marsh species such as pied-billed grebe and double crested cormorant also frequent this desert oasis. Wild turkeys are found on the refuge peripheries and Sandhill cranes near the river. It is accessible from Exit 169 off I-25. Visitors are discouraged from coming September through mid-January due to the waterfowl hunting season.

The **Kiva RV Park and Horse Motel** is located west of I-25 on Old Hwy. 60, near Bosque.

**Canoe launches** are feasible at the bridges. Canoeists could launch in Belen and paddle down to Hwy. 60, for example.

The communities along NM 304 are situated along **El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro**, an historic trail that was the only link between Santa Fe and Mexico City from the time of the conquistadors to the coming of the railroad. Historically, caravans came annually over this 1,500-mile trail carrying not only tools, seeds, and other worldly goods, but also news of the outside world. Archaeologists have retraced the original route of El Camino Real, or the Royal Road, and where contemporary roads such as NM 304 overlap, sections have recently been designated part of a National Scenic and Historic Byway. The national historic trail now extends 404 miles from El Paso, TX to San Juan Pueblo, NM. The U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the NM Department of Cultural Affairs are jointly moving ahead with plans to built and staff a major interpretive center dedicated to the history and contributions of the Camino Real. The El Camino Real International Heritage Center will be located high on a desert bluff just south of the Bosque del Apache and 35 miles south of Socorro. North of Belen, visitors travel to Tome, the site of Paso Por Aqui, a monumental sculpture depicting the historic procession of travelers on El Camino Real. Tome Hill has been a landmark for travelers since prehistoric times.



Out of the community involvement process for the historic trail's feasibility study came the notion of creating "Camino Real Satellite Attractions," the development of heritage tourism programs in each community related to different viewpoints of the Camino Real experience. The actual ideas and their implementation would come from each community and would intentionally be different and distinct, ranging from festivals celebrating the history of the Royal Road to establishing a visitor center that would develop curriculum for local schools. Belen has already established a small Camino Real Visitor Center, and Los Lunas recently received funding from the State Legislature to build a visitor and convention bureau that will emphasize the history of the Camino Real through literature and exhibits. Part of the staffing request for the heritage center will be an outreach/educator staff member who will work with local communities to develop educational programming and coordinate events.



Church in Las Nutrias

Las Nutrias ("meadow of the beavers"), along NM 304, featured an historic marker interpreting its former role as a stopping place along the Camino Real in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. It was recently demolished, however.

### **Tourism Promotion**

Some of the attractions discussed above as well as other tourist areas in the County such as the Bosque del Apache Wildlife Refuge are publicized through web sites, brochures, advertising, and free media coverage.

Both the Socorro County and Magdalena Chambers of Commerce maintain web sites that highlight area visitor attractions. They provide information about local businesses, lodging establishments, local artists and galleries, historic buildings, seasonal and occasional events, and nearby recreational opportunities.

However, there is currently no effort to promote all of Socorro County's attractions together, in order to raise the profile of the County as a visitor destination.

### ***Economic Development Issues and Opportunities***

Residents would like to have more jobs and economic opportunities available without compromising their quality of life or losing their agricultural base and landscape.

Few jobs exist other than for the dairies, the sand and gravel companies, and the few community facilities such as the school, Senior Citizens Center, Boys' Ranch, and the post offices. Most residents work in Belen, Los Lunas, Albuquerque or Socorro or engage in agriculture or arts and crafts sold from their homes.

## **Agricultural Products**

Local beekeeper Les Crowder sees opportunities for several different agricultural pursuits apart from the traditional alfalfa. Goats could be raised for milk, meat, or goat cheese. For example, an organic goat farm in Pietown has 60 goats and is doing well selling goat cheese. Goats could also be raised to clear salt cedar, an invasive tree that consumes vast quantities of water. Goats preferentially eat salt cedar shoots and can keep it at bay. He also sees opportunities for a manufacturer of gourmet cheese, such as Tillamook in Oregon. A local commercial kitchen or certified facility could enable processing of various crops.

Berries are another potential crop. Raspberries and some blackberries have grown well on his soils, and another local farmwoman does well selling wolfberry jam made from wild berries. Technical assistance in growing these types of crops and starting these types of businesses could be a boon to the area. He would even welcome another beekeeper, as his farm can't keep up with the demand.

The organic food industry in general has been growing at the rate of 20 percent a year for the past five years, according to a spokesperson for the Organic Valley Co-op, the largest organic farmer's co-op in the country (Redman 2005). Such value-added products can offer greater economic returns than traditional crops and can be grown on smaller parcels. For example, organic milk accounted for about \$834 million in sales last year in the \$10.2 billion overall milk market, where conventional milk sales have been flat or declined in recent years. There are no certified organic milk producers in New Mexico, however. A free-range chicken farmer, however, is doing well economically in Socorro.

Local farmers might pool their resources to offer products to buyer's cooperatives in the region.

## **Agri-tourism Opportunities**

With no restaurants or inns in the villages and only one small grocery store and gas station, attracting tourists would have to depend initially on drawing them off I-25. One possibility is to establish a combined farmer's market/visitor center at the intersection of I-25 and NM 60. Another is to attract tourists north from NM 60 onto NM 304 and 116 for a loop tour to visit local residences for products. Honey customers, for example, often stop by the bee farm for purchases or to tour the bee farm during a weekend in the fall.



**Veguita Trading Post**

A map with products or sights at specific houses printed in a color brochure or on a website might help draw visitors into a loop from I-25 and US 60 north on 304, over on Rt. 346, south on 116, then back onto I-25. Signage at the I-25 interchange could help publicize the tour. Marketing funds could be available from the NM Department of Economic Development through its Co-op Advertising Grants Program, which provides non-profit tourism-related organizations funding for 50 percent of

the costs for print, billboard, website and other advertising designed to promote New Mexico as a tourist destination. Socorro County, or even the non-profit Northern Socorro County Historical Neighborhood Association, could apply to become a “certified community,” which would open the doors to up to \$5,000 of contractual funding for special projects, extra support through the co-op marketing program, press releases and media exposure.

With no restaurant in town, a Bed-and-Breakfast establishment might have some success. A location for an artists/food seller’s cooperative might also draw customers while allowing artists or growers to rotate as salespeople.

Northern Socorro could also try to tie into Governor Richardson’s plans to create a connected bike/horse/pedestrian trail along the Rio Grande from Belen to the Town of Bernalillo. It will be implemented by the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District.

Another avenue of assistance is the Rural Economic Development Through Tourism (RETT) Project, funded through the US Department of Agriculture and based at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces. REDTT staff and volunteers work to educate, train, spread information, and assist in tourism development.

### **Telecommuting Opportunities**

Parts of Northern Socorro County could be ideal for telecommuting if faster internet service were available. Some options are connections through cable modems, digital subscriber lines (DSL), or wireless connections. Currently, internet connections are available over telephone lines at 56 K speed. While the community could try to raise funds for wireless infrastructure, DSL providers such as Quest and smaller companies are gradually nearing the area. The community might be able to accelerate this by determining the amount of customer demand for such service and where customers are located in the area.

### **Rail Commuting Opportunities**

Commuter rail service is slated to connect Belen, Los Lunas, Albuquerque, and the town of Bernalillo in the near future. The project has been fast-tracked by an initiative from Governor Richardson that has provided funds and secured agreements to use the BSNF Rail for commuter service.

Albuquerque will have three stations: one in the South Valley at the northeast corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and Rio Bravo, one downtown at the Alvarado Transportation Center, and one in the North Valley. The line is expected to eventually extend to Santa Fe. One resident suggested extending service to the City of Socorro.

### ***Future Desired Economic Development and Goals***

Residents favor limited economic development with clean industries such as a cheese plant, windmill farms, ice cream, and cottage arts and crafts while retaining their agricultural base. A DSL line was viewed as necessary, given their remote location. Any manufacturing should be placed farther to the east, beyond residential areas. Meeting participants also favored tourism, capitalizing



on their location along El Camino Real. A small local restaurant and a grower's market were also suggested.

**ED Goal 6-1. Establish Northern Socorro County as a visitor destination.**

**Objective 1. Establish a farmer's market/visitor center for Northern Socorro at I-25 and NM 60.**

**Objective 2. Create a marketing campaign for the Northern Socorro Tour Loop.**

Strategy a. Create a map/brochure depicting the NM 304/116 visitor tour loop and places to stop for various products, crafts, and historical sites.

Strategy b. Post signs at the I-25 interchange designed to encourage travelers to stop and visit the area.

Strategy c. Create gateway features at the intersection of NM 304 and US 60.

Strategy d. Tie into promotions for the El Camino Real Historic Trail and interpretive sites.

Strategy e. Ensure that Northern Socorro attractions and promotions are listed on tourism and county websites.

**Objective 3. Expand opportunities for "agri-tourism" in Socorro County.**

Strategy a. Participate in the Rural Economic Development Through Tourism (REDTT) Project at NMSU to gain training in and help implement county tourism initiatives.

Strategy b. Work with the Socorro County Agricultural Extension Service to educate County farmers and ranchers about agri-tourism efforts in other parts of the country.

Strategy c. Schedule Northern Socorro events such as a festival to coincide with such established events in the region as the Fat Tire Festival in Socorro and Festival of the Cranes at Bosque del Apache.

**ED Goal 6-2. Strengthen Socorro County's agricultural economy.**

**Objective 1. Increase the production of specialty crops and other agricultural products that can be marketed directly to retail outlets (especially in Albuquerque and Las Cruces) or out of the home directly to customers.**

Strategy a. Work with the Socorro County Agricultural Extension Service and area farmers to identify promising specialty crops and to tap into agricultural technical assistance and business expertise.

**Objective 2. Encourage value-added agricultural processing operations in Socorro County.**

Strategy a. Work with the Socorro County Agricultural Extension Service, the Socorro County Chamber of Commerce, and area dairies to explore the feasibility of attracting a cheese plant to Socorro County.

Strategy b. Explore the feasibility of developing a commercial kitchen in the area.

**ED Goal 6-3. Attract clean industry to Northern Socorro County.**

**Objective 1. Consider the benefits of Socorro County or the Northern Socorro Historical Neighborhood Assn. becoming certified under the State of New Mexico Certified Communities Initiative.**

Strategy a. Seek certification from the state, which can help the area position itself to attract new business to the area.

**ED Goal 6-4. Make available a high-speed internet connection to the Northern Socorro area to facilitate telecommuting.**

**Objective 1. Assess the number of customers interested in subscribing to high-speed internet services and where they are located.**

**Objective 2. Approach potential companies regarding the possibility of high-speed internet service.**

## 7.0 Infrastructure

A community's infrastructure refers to the various public utility systems, such as drinking water supply, wastewater treatment, storm drainage, and solid waste disposal, as well as private utilities such as gas, electric, telephone, and broadband services that serve different types of land uses. The location and capacity of these systems has a strong influence on the location and rate of growth of a community. The infrastructure element of the comprehensive plan summarizes these systems, assesses whether they are sufficient to meet the current and future needs of the area, and recommends improvements.

### ***Water Resources and Services***

#### **Existing Drinking and Agricultural Water Conditions**

Two municipal water systems, four mutual domestic water consumer associations (MDWCAs) and numerous private wells provide drinking water for Socorro County residents depending on where they reside. All these supplies come from groundwater resources. Only the La Joya MDWA is located within the planning area of the Northern Socorro Comprehensive Plan. It reported a total annual consumptive use of 10.7 acre-feet to serve a population of 132 in 2000 (Daniel B. Stephens and Associates December 2003). Private wells provide drinking water for the remainder of the population, and surface water is diverted from the Rio Grande for agricultural uses.

The largest amount of water used in the County is depleted through natural processes such as consumption by non-agricultural plants near surface water or within shallow water tables (60 percent), and evaporated from open water at La Joya and Bosque del Apache Wildlife Refuges (4.0 percent). Another 34 percent is diverted from the Rio Grande to irrigate farms, ranches and wildlife refuges as well as to fill livestock ponds (1.0 percent). Groundwater pumping also provides a small amount of water for businesses, manufacturing, and mining (0.41 percent).

Socorro and Sierra Counties completed a joint 40-year regional water plan in 2003 (Daniel B. Stephens and Assoc. 2003) with the active participation of citizens in the region and sponsored by the State Interstate Stream Commission through the Socorro and Sierra Soil and Water Conservation Districts. The plan assessed the available supply of surface water and ground water within the region and identified methods for meeting the projected future demand and protecting the water resources through conservation, water resources management, and protection of the quality and quantity of existing supplies for future use.

Surface waters of the Rio Grande are fully appropriated, with the majority of water rights owned and used by farmers in the two irrigation districts, the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District and the Elephant Butte Irrigation District. Use is also constrained by the Rio Grande Compact, which requires delivery of a certain amount of surface water each year to New Mexico, Texas, and Colorado. Moreover, prior rights of the pueblos upstream represent a significant unknown in determining future water supplies. A average annual water budget for the region found 245,000 acre-feet of water entered the region at the Valencia-Socorro County line and 224.4 remained by San Acacia, taking into account inflows from rain, the Rio Puerco and Rio Salada and ungaged tributaries, as well as

depletions of 44.8 acre-feet from riparian evapotranspiration, 16.9 acre-feet from irrigated agriculture, and 7.8 acre-feet through open water consumptive use at San Acacia.

The Northern Socorro County planning area lies within two declared groundwater basins, the Rio Grande basin along the river and the Jornada del Muerto Basin to the east. While significant water supplies lie within the Rio Grande Basin, the Office of the State Engineer (OSE) considers the effect of groundwater withdrawals on flows in the Rio Grande. Thus development of these supplies is limited by the availability of water rights and by the Rio Grande Compact.

The Jornada del Muerto Basin is a north-south trending basin lying east of and parallel to the Rio Grande Valley in the eastern portions of Socorro and Sierra Counties. It is more than 120 miles long and ranges in width from 12 to 30 miles. It contains significant quantities of groundwater (11.5 million to 87 million acre-feet), but much of it would require treatment to remove excess salts. Any withdrawals that would impact the Rio Grande would require a transfer of water rights.

Groundwater so far is still available for individual domestic wells. At a density of one dwelling unit per acre, however, individual septic systems could negatively impact the shallow water table near the river.

### **Water Issues and Opportunities**

Because the waters of the Rio Grande are fully appropriated, increased demand by growing communities north of the region (for example, Albuquerque, Belen, Rio Rancho, Santa Fe) creates a market for transfer of agricultural rights from the region. Such transfers to the highest bidder have already occurred and applications are pending, putting at risk the future of Socorro County as an agricultural area.

Another key issue is cleaning up existing supplies which are contaminated through nitrates from former agricultural enterprises and septic tanks. This is addressed further in the Wastewater Disposal section.

The Regional Water Plan identifies key alternatives for the region to increase water supplies and reduce demand. These include agricultural water conservation, removal of exotic vegetation (and evaluating the economic potential for non-native species removal), managing watersheds to increase yields, implementing water conservation and drought contingency plans, identifying and protecting areas vulnerable to contamination, and encouraging retention of water rights in the region.

### **Desired Future Water Supply Conditions**

Residents would like to ensure a safe source of clean drinking water for the population, sufficient water for agriculture, and to clean up the nitrate plume in the groundwater.

## ***Wastewater Disposal***

### **Existing Wastewater Disposal Conditions**

There is no sewage treatment plant in Northern Socorro County. Residents dispose of wastewater chiefly through septic systems, lagoons, and in some cases, illegal cesspools or dumping in arroyos. A constructed wetlands is a unique feature that disposes of wastewater for La Promesa Elementary School.

County subdivision regulations mandate that water be of an acceptable quality for human consumption and that specific measures to protect the water supply from contamination be taken. It requires subdividers to submit a Water Quality Plan with their preliminary plat that states how the water quality requirements will be met, sets forth a schedule of compliance, and presents results of specific water quality tests for various minerals, metals and contaminants.

The County subdivision law mandates a net lot size of one acre as well as setback requirements for an individual liquid waste or septic system to be approved. It makes an exception for housing in open space or cluster subdivisions where the housing is grouped closer together and at least ten percent of the land is set aside for open space. Community liquid waste systems are to comply with the New Mexico Ground and Surface Water Quality Protection Regulations (20 NMAC 6.2)

Individual liquid waste systems that are not part of a formal subdivision still must be located, installed, operated and maintained in compliance with the New Mexico Liquid Waste Disposal Regulations (20 NMAC 7.3). These require a minimum lot size of  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre for an on-site liquid waste system that generates 375 gallons per day or less, which is typical household usage. Lot size requirements increase gradually up to four acres as the gallons-per-day increase. Cesspools are prohibited and will be cited by the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED).

In June 2005, new, tighter regulations went into effect. Previously, if a lot was platted before February 1, 1990, the regulations allowed septic tank installation on lots smaller than  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre. The new regulations apply the  $\frac{3}{4}$  -acre minimum on undeveloped lots regardless of the plat date and bring all undeveloped lots to current standards. Now development on lots smaller than  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre will be required to install advanced treatment units that will filter wastewater before it is discharged into the ground via conventional septic systems. (New Mexico Environment Department 2005).

The regulations stipulate a schedule for compliance. All undeveloped lots must immediately comply with the new regulations if the lot is less than  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre and the depth to groundwater is less than 100 feet. A lot  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre in size where the depth to groundwater is more than 100 feet, with a private well, will have three years to comply. A lot  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre in size with a depth to ground water greater than 100 feet and on a public water system will have five years to be developed, using a conventional system.

The new regulations also implement a certification program for septic system installers. Beginning July 1, 2007, any person installing a septic system must be certified. There will also be a homeowner certification program for homeowners who wish to install their own systems.

The NMED Ground Water Bureau also regulates facilities with wastewater discharges that have a potential to impact groundwater quality. These facilities must comply with regulations and obtain approval of a discharge plan that provides for measures needed to prevent and detect groundwater contamination. Quarries for sand and gravel extraction are not generally considered potential contaminant sources. The various dairies in the area, however, have obtained discharge permits.

Leaking underground storage tanks (LUST's) are another potential source of groundwater pollution. NMED in 2003 was investigating only one LUST in the planning area along NM 304, but noted it was not impacting the water supply.

### **Wastewater Issues and Opportunities**

The County is experiencing severe nitrate contamination problems of groundwater in the northern Veguita area, particularly in Abo Valley near the Rio Grande and Valencia County line and in Rio Grande Estates subdivision. Elevated nitrate levels cause health problems in humans and are particularly severe in infants, where “blue baby” syndrome can cause suffocation.

Tests administered by NMED point to former use of fertilizers for a local onion farm as the most probable source of nitrate contamination in the wells. Contamination does not appear to be coming from the nearby dairies. Some may be the result of inadequate septic systems or cesspools in the area (per. comm. Dennis McQuillen NMED, 4-29-03).

Both NMED and the Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP) have been working with a committee of local residents to investigate and mitigate the contamination problem. Several options are being considered: a mutual domestic water association, digging wells deeper than 200 feet (most are between 50 and 80 feet), purchasing bottled water, using individual reverse osmosis water filtration systems, and trying to clean up the nitrates. Residents, who are mostly low income and work in the dairies or agriculture, currently are purchasing bottled water or hauling water from the local fire station which makes water available under certain restrictions.

All of the options are problematic. The mutual domestic system would require water rights as well as adequate water lines to each dwelling, which is typically a single-wide trailer with lines that could not accommodate the water pressure. A number of wells dug at 200 feet could draw the nitrate contamination into that level of the aquifer. Many residents cannot afford to purchase bottled water or reverse osmosis filtration systems. In addition, people continue to move into the area, unaware of the contamination problems.

A **denitrification demonstration project** has recently been funded through the Governor's Water Innovation Fund to test the feasibility of cleaning up groundwater nitrate contamination in the area. Kleinfelder Inc. contracted to drill and sample four new monitoring wells to confirm the locations of the high nitrate levels—hot spots—check water table levels and examine the aquifer. They will then design a system by which a food-grade carbon source is added to the groundwater. Microbes naturally occurring in the ground use the carbon as food, destroying the nitrate and producing harmless nitrogen gas (which makes up 79 percent of air we breathe). Termed Enhanced In-Situ Bioremediation or EISB, the technology was developed in New Mexico and is expected to be suitable

for use on small-community drinking water contamination problems. If successful, water in the demonstration area could be safe to drink in about nine months after the process begins.

### **Desired Future Wastewater Conditions**

Residents would like to have the nitrate contamination cleaned up and to ensure that the drinking water supply is not further contaminated.

## ***Solid Waste Disposal***

### **Existing Solid Waste Disposal Conditions**

The County operates transfer stations in Veguita and La Joya. In addition there are a number of dumpsters scattered around the County. Trash from these facilities is transferred to the joint City-County landfill located two miles south of the City of Socorro. A new landfill adjacent to the current one has been designed and approved by the State. In the meantime, use of the older landfill is allowed by the state. The County only recycles old appliances or “white goods,” as the market is too soft for other items except possibly cardboard.



Tires along NM 60



Trailer along NM 60

Property owners are billed once a year for a sticker allowing them to take refuse from a particular property to a transfer station or landfill. An ordinance that authorizes a lien to be placed on the property of persons who fail to pay is apparently rarely enforced. The County is being more vigilant in preventing people from dumping more solid waste than would reasonably be expected to be on their individual property. This prevents numerous property owners or renters from using the same sticker to gain access to the transfer stations. The ordinance is in the process of being revised to address complaints by farmers and ranchers that they don't use the landfill and shouldn't be charged, among other issues. (It should be noted that the sticker fee covers not only the cost of operating the landfill but also the cost of vector control, i.e., animal-borne disease control efforts, in the County.)

### **Solid Waste Disposal Issues and Opportunities**

The policies of refusing tires at the landfill and preventing people from cleaning other property owners' yards and dumping the trash on the same user fee saves space and funds at the landfill. The

same policies, however, work against solving the larger problem of encouraging residents to clean up trash and abandoned piles of tires located around the County. The dumping is particularly acute in the northern part of the County.

Other counties in New Mexico have instituted innovative programs to encourage responsible tire disposal. Otero County collects tires and transforms them into tire bales, a rammed-earth material suitable for building and/or erosion control projects. The County accepts donations of tires, trains and pays residents to ram them with earth, and then sells them to individuals and construction companies. Otero County acquired the machine to create tire bales from the New Mexico Environment Department as part of a grant program designed to clean up tire dumps and recycle tires.

The New Mexico Environmental Department (NMED) provides educational support for communities to establish and operate programs to prevent and clean up illegal dumping through a manual published in May 2004. The manual explains the political buy-in, planning, education, enforcement, cleanup, and administration necessary to create a successful program.

Financial support may be possible through a grant from the Keep New Mexico Beautiful organization, which funds educational and clean-up campaigns, among others. Funding for this organization is provided through private donators and a contract for services from New Mexico Clean and Beautiful, a division of the New Mexico Tourism Department.

New Mexico Clean and Beautiful also funds public awareness, cleanup efforts, and enforcement statewide through yearly grants to counties and municipalities. Originally created as part of the Litter Control and Beautification Act of 1985, the program is now run through the NM Transportation Department. Workshops throughout the year provide information on the projects and application tips. Full application assistance is also available.

The New Mexico Environment Department's Solid Waste Bureau publishes a directory of New Mexico Recycling resources through a partnership with the New Mexico Recycling Coalition. The New Mexico Recycling Directory can provide information about the resources available nearby that could be leveraged in Northern Socorro County to begin or maintain a recycling program.

Ideas for the potential re-use of recycled construction materials can also be found through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency website: <http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/osw/>

### **Desired Future Solid Waste Disposal Conditions**

Northern Socorro County residents would like to prevent illegal dumping of tires and clean up existing dump sites of tires, broken down trailers, and other refuse. Some residents feel the yearly fee is an obstacle to encouraging people to take their trash to the transfer station and that disposal service should be paid as part of property taxes.

## ***Stormwater Drainage***

### **Existing Stormwater Drainage Conditions**

In-depth studies of storm drainage in the County have not been undertaken, but County staff indicates that localized flooding of streets and adjacent properties after rain storms is increasingly a problem in various parts of the County. This is especially the case in the northern part of the County where relatively more development is occurring. The area west of the Los Penos Mountains is a flood plain. When it rains in or immediately west of the mountains, water flows into arroyos that criss-cross the communities in Northern Socorro County.

Drainage problems occur not only due to inadequate storm drainage facilities but also on occasion when people build homes in arroyos and other flood plains.

### **Stormwater Drainage Issues and Opportunities**

The State is responsible for rectifying state roads that are destroyed or impacted by flooding of arroyos. If the State declares a disaster event involving irrigation ditches, then Disaster Relief funds can be used to cover up to 95 percent of the recovery cost. In approving building plans, the Special Zoning Districts could prohibit building in a floodplain.

### **Desired Future Stormwater Drainage**

Residents would like to reduce flooding and flood damage from storm water runoff in Northern Socorro County.

## ***Infrastructure Goals***

### **Infrastructure Goal 7-1. Ensure that Northern Socorro County residents have a clean and safe source of drinking water.**

**Objective 1. Resolve the nitrate contamination in the Veguita area so that residents have a clean and safe source of drinking water.**

Strategy a. Continue to work with the New Mexico Environment Department, the Southwest Organizing Project and local residents to implement solutions to the nitrate contamination in groundwater.

--Continue to participate in the denitrification pilot project.

Strategy b. Locate a funding source for a revolving loan fund to allow Veguita residents to purchase point-of-use reverse-osmosis water filtration systems.

**Objective 2. Ensure that new or prospective residents in the contaminated area are informed about the water contamination problem.**

Strategy a. Develop an information sheet to hand out to residents who plan to build in the nitrate contaminated area.

Strategy b. Post signs in the area of the nitrate plume notifying residents and potential purchasers about the nitrate contamination and its health risks, urging them to test their well water, and giving them a hotline phone number to call for further information.

Strategy c. Consider the possibility of informing residents of the nitrate contamination, its health risks, well testing, and hotline numbers through their phone or electric bills.

Strategy d. Require real estate agents to disclose contamination information to prospective buyers in the area.

**Objective 3. Ensure that proposed subdivisions are not approved until they prove they can provide an adequate source of clean drinking water.**

Strategy a. Ensure that subdivisions proposing individual domestic wells perform sufficient well tests to determine whether water meets state and federal requirements for safe, clean drinking water.

Strategy b. Do not approve subdivisions that cannot provide an adequate source of clean, safe drinking water.

**Infrastructure Goal 7-2. Prevent new groundwater contamination in Northern Socorro County.**

**Objective 1. Promote the installation of community liquid waste systems in new subdivisions.**

Strategy a. Provide incentives or requirements for community liquid waste systems in the subdivision ordinance.

Strategy b. Base County standards for whether a subdivision must have a connection to a community liquid waste treatment system on the Soil Survey of Socorro County and other data to determine the overall potential for contamination of groundwater.

Strategy c. Promote the development of wellhead protection plans for public and semi-public wells.

**Objective 2. Ensure compliance with the NM Liquid Waste Disposal Regulations**

Strategy a. Require proof that homebuilders comply with the regulations before giving them a building permit.

Strategy b. Report noncompliance to NMED and or the State Construction Industries Division

**Infrastructure Goal 7-3. Ensure sufficient supplies of water for domestic and agricultural use in Northern Socorro County.**

**Objective 1. Encourage retention of water rights in the region.**

Strategy a. Work to develop strategies with communities and organizations in the County, such as the Socorro Soil and Water Conservation District, that have an active concern about retaining water rights in attachment with the land.

Strategy b. Establish connections with other agricultural communities in the state facing similar demands on their water supply to develop an understanding of what means are being used and considered in retaining water for agriculture.

**Objective 2. Develop water policies based on the goals, objectives and policies of the Socorro-Sierra Regional Water Plan.**

Strategy a. Review the final regional water plan and adopt as policy those specific recommendations that could be implemented by the County.

**Infrastructure Goal 7-4. Provide for adequate disposal of solid waste in Northern Socorro County.**

**Objective 1. Reduce the incidence of illegal dumping of tires and other waste.**

Strategy a. Work with the NM Environment Department to secure grants and educational assistance to develop a program to prevent illegal dumping and recycle used tires.

Strategy b. Consider funding waste disposal service through property taxes rather than by a flat annual fee.

**Objective 2. Clean up existing tire and trash dumps**

Strategy a. Find sponsors or volunteers to hold clean up days.

Strategy b. Investigate and fine persons who illegally dump.

**Infrastructure Goal 7-5. Reduce stormwater flooding and flood damage in Northern Socorro County.**

**Objective 1. Secure funding to study the drainage basins, patterns, and anticipated flows from storms events in the area.**

Strategy a. Seek grant funds from the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) to use their data to map 100-year flood zones in the County.

Strategy b. Survey residents and the Socorro Soil and Water Conservation District to determine the usual flood patterns and problems.

**Objective 2. Prevent development in the floodplain.**

Strategy a. Do not approve subdivisions or other homebuilding within the floodplain.

**Objective 3. Ensure drainage infrastructure is designed to carry flows under roadways and away from properties and roads.**

Strategy a. Resurface and pave roads to direct storm water runoff to property designed infrastructure.

**Infrastructure Goal 7-6. Improve heating and electrical service.**

**Objective 1. Work with the Rural Electric Co-op to secure a steady source of electricity.**

**Objective 2. Investigate potential sources of natural gas for heating.**

**Objective 3. Encourage the use of passive solar construction in new residences.**

## **8.0 Transportation**

A well-designed and balanced transportation system is crucial for the orderly functioning and development of a community. The Transportation element of the comprehensive plan addresses the city's roads, pathways, and other means for people to get around the community.

### ***Existing Transportation Conditions***

Northern Socorro County is served by two major four-lane highways, Interstate 25 which runs north-south along the west side of the Rio Grande, and US Highway 60, which is the main east-west route into and across the area. US 60 lies just north of the Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge, which marks the southern boundary of the planning area. I-25 and US 60 intersect at Bernardo, the only interchange in Northern Socorro County. Highway 60 offers a narrow shoulder for bicycle riders or pedestrians.

State roads 304 and 116 run parallel to the Rio Grande east of Interstate 25, connecting the small communities along the river. NM 304 links the villages on the east side of the river-- Veguita, Las Nutrias, Contreras, and La Joya. It is also designated the El Camino Real National Scenic Byway. NM 116 parallels the west side of the river, linking the communities of San Francisco, Abeytas, and Sabinal. South of US 60, NM 304 is a poorly paved road with narrow lanes, no berm, broken edges, and an arroyo crossing that terminates in La Joya.

Another road, NM 346, crosses the river under the interstate near the northern County line to connect routes 304 and 116. In addition, NM 47, extending from the northwest to the southeast, forms the eastern boundary of the planning area. These roads are for the most part two-lane paved highways.

Other dirt roads traverse the area, for example, tracing routes north-south along the power line in the Rio Grande Estates subdivision and east-west through the Ranchos de Veguita subdivision.

### ***Transportation Issues and Opportunities***

Residents have complained that vehicles travel too fast on both US 60 and NM 304. The beginning of NM 304, when entered from US 60, is posted at 45 mph, and increases to 55 mph near the Boys' Ranch and on to La Promesa Elementary School and the senior citizen's center. It drops back to 45 mph where homes begin to line the road. The density of residential and commercial development increases near Las Nutrias, where houses are placed close to the road, some with fences and others without. There are no sidewalks or other paths along the road, which offers a medium-width shoulder. One resident recently lost his dog, which had escaped the fence briefly and was struck by a vehicle.

Large tractor-trailer trucks also barrel through the villages on NM 304, presumably on their way from US 60 to the industrial park facilities in Belen, the gas station/grocery store in Veguita, or other businesses along NM 304, creating dangerous conditions through the villages. In addition, large pick-up trucks transport sand and gravel from the area.

There is only one road in and out of La Joya; residents have to travel north on NM 304 to US 60 and then out to I-25 (Interchange #175). NM 304 south of Route 60 is a school bus route, approximately 18 feet wide with lane widths of 8.5 feet, no shoulders, and inadequate drainage (SCC Res. 2005-61). US 60 is the main route into and out of the area. The closest other interchanges are at Belen, 14 miles to the north, and San Acacia, 12 miles to the south. Residents noted that drainage is inadequate on some paved roads.

It is somewhat unclear which district office of the NM Department of Transportation—District 1 or District 3— has responsibility for the study area. When contacted, transportation staff called it a “gray area,” making it more difficult to engage in the process of transportation planning.

There are no provisions for bike lanes or trails in the area. Both NM 60 and 304 offer shoulders too narrow for bicycling safety, given the speed of traffic. Similarly, there is no public transportation in the area, except for van service earmarked for senior citizens.

There are opportunities for improvements, however, through Governor Richardson’s Investment Partnership (GRIP) program, an approximately \$1.5 billion statewide transportation expansion and infrastructure improvement project. Socorro County originally proposed two projects in the study area for GRIP funding: Installation of a railroad crossing on NM 116 approximately 7.5 miles north of Bernardo, across from the San Antonia Church; and road widening and structure installation on NM 304 for the six miles from US 60 to La Joya. When funds were cut back, it submitted the railroad crossing as the priority project.

The County also applies for funds for road improvements from the State school bus route program and the State road co-op funds, both of which are programmed through the County Infrastructure Capital Improvements Program.

In addition, the Landscape Architecture Program at the UNM School of Architecture and Planning in Albuquerque is involved in a research project for the NM Department of Transportation on what is called “context-sensitive” highway design. They are working on an overall strategy for placing or reconstructing highways through towns. Northern Socorro County might be able to use their results in making improvements to NM 304 and 116, which abut the villages.

### ***Desired Future Transportation Conditions and Goals***

The community would like to reduce truck traffic and slow traffic in general on NM 304 north of US 60. Improvements were proposed for NM 304 south of US 60 to bring it up to standards. Van services for those with limited or no access to cars was also mentioned.

#### **Transportation Goal 8-1. Provide a safe, efficient integrated transportation system for Northern Socorro County.**

Objective 1. Grade roads in Northern Socorro County more frequently.

**Objective 2. Make improvements to NM 304 south of US 60 to bring up to adequate highway standards for a school bus route.**

Strategy a. Apply for GRIP or State school bus funds to widen, and improve drainage and safety.

**Objective 3. Apply for State school bus route to pave roads in Abo Valley.**

**Objective 4. Decrease truck traffic and slow traffic in general on NM 304 north of US 60.**

Strategy a. Contact the UNM School of Architecture and Planning regarding their “context sensitive” highway design.

Strategy b. Discuss strategies with the appropriate State District office of the NM Department of Transportation.

**Objective 5. Determine which district office of the NM Department of Transportation (NMDOT) has jurisdiction over the study area as well as their responsibilities and become involved in the regional transportation planning process.**

Strategy a. Request the South Central Council of Governments to obtain a letter from the NM DOT clarifying this jurisdiction.

Strategy b. Be involved with the South Central COG’s public process to include transportation improvements for Northern Socorro County in its regional transportation plans.

**Objective 6. Work to resolve conflicts between ATV and other off-road vehicle users and residents.**

Strategy a. Encourage Socorro County to prohibit use of off-highway vehicles within a certain distance from a residence.

Strategy b. Distribute information to ORV users regarding the 2005 revisions to the NM Off-Highway Vehicle Act.

**Transportation Goal 8-2. Provide transportation alternatives to the automobile.**

**Objective 1. Provide van service for people lacking private auto transportation.**

Strategy a. Seek grants for funding a van service.

**Objective 2. Develop bike lanes/routes/trails for commuting and recreation.**

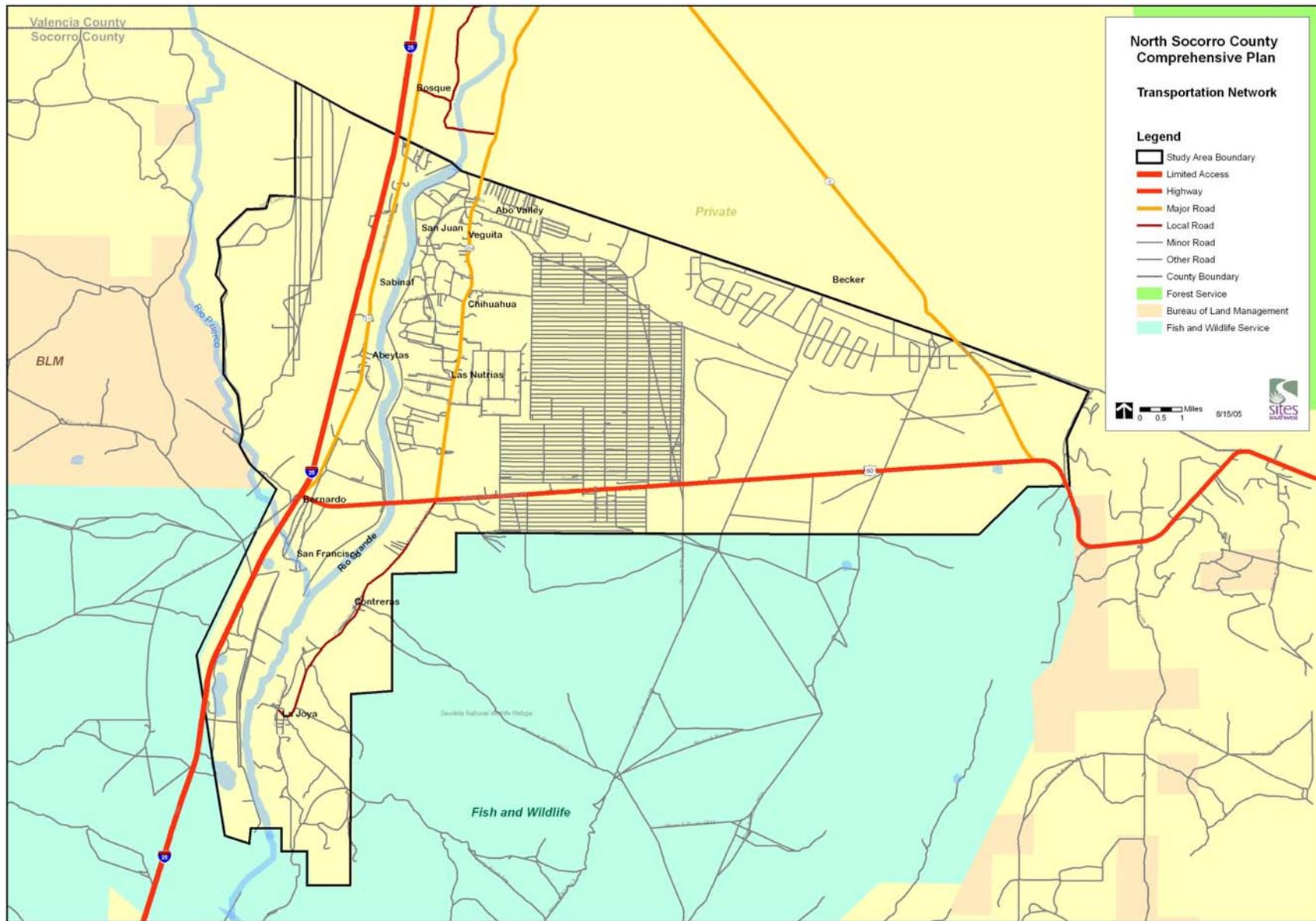
Strategy a. Incorporate bike lanes or wide ASHTO shoulders into road widening and repaving.

Strategy b. Consider restriping wide roads to allow for bike lanes.

Strategy c. Work with the Middle Grande Conservancy District to extend the proposed Belen-to-Bernalillo bicycle/pedestrian/equestrian trail along the Rio Grande into Northern Socorro County.

Strategy d. Determine which potential routes/trails are a priority for the various communities and work to include them in the area’s transportation plans.

Figure 8. Transportation



Source: US Census

## 9.0 Housing

Housing is perhaps the most fundamental land use of a community. It almost always encompasses the largest area and, therefore, has an important impact on the physical character of the community. Even more important, it has the most direct effect on the personal lives of residents, providing the place for family life and for socializing with friends.

The housing element of the Comprehensive Plan addresses several aspects of the County's housing supply: the number, type and age of existing housing units; the occupancy rate; and the percentage used seasonally or for recreation. It also identifies the number of new housing units that will be required in the future to meet the needs of population growth.

### ***Existing Housing Conditions***

Northern Socorro County had a total of 1,049 housing units as of the 2000 U.S. Census. The housing mix is primarily manufactured and mobile homes (56 percent) and single-family site-built housing (40 percent). By comparison, the State of New Mexico has a lower percentage of mobile homes (18.6 percent) and a higher percentage of multi-family housing (15.3 percent).

Some 87 percent of the housing was occupied in 2000, the same as the statewide rate. Housing used seasonally or for recreational purposes currently makes up a very small percentage of the total housing supply. Owner-occupied housing units comprised 74 percent of the total, higher than both the countywide rate of 71 percent and the statewide rate of 70 percent.



Housing along NM 60



La Joya Housing

### **Housing Programs**

The Socorro County Housing Authority is an independent governmental authority that administers several programs funded through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the New Mexico Mortgage Housing Authority (NMMFA) to provide affordable housing for low- and moderate-income people in the county. These programs are:

- Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program
- HOME Rehabilitation Program.
- HOME Ownership Program
- Homeless Prevention Program
- Tenant-Based Rental Assistance Program

The Housing Authority is currently assisting about 400 people with these programs. According to the director of the Housing Authority, the NMMFA does not classify Socorro County as an underserved county with respect to affordable housing services.

### ***Housing Issues and Opportunities***

Northern Socorro County is a growing part of the County. New housing will be needed to meet the needs of new residents. Although future growth is not anticipated to be quite as strong as the in the last decade, from 1990 to 2000 this area grew at an average annual rate of 8.43 percent – more than four times faster than the 2.05 percent for Socorro County as a whole. This strong growth is reflected in the study area’s population count, which more than doubled from 1,167 people in 1990 to 2,622 in 2000.

### ***Desired Future Housing Conditions and Goals***

With the 1.16 percent annual growth rate estimated for the study area between 2000 and 2005, an additional 162 housing units were needed to meet current demand. Growth from 2005 to 2010 is projected at 0.65 percent annually, translating to an additional 79 housing units by 2010. Housing development is typically the purview of the private sector or the County, State, and Federal governments.

Table 5. Housing Needs in Northern Socorro County, 2000, 2005 and 2010

	Current and Projected Housing Needs						Northern Socorro County	5 Year Increase in Housing Need
	Subarea 1	Subarea 2	Subarea 3	Subarea 4	Subarea 5	Subarea 6		
2000 Housing Units	21	361	168	193	544	123	1,049	--
2005 Housing Units	23	420	196	224	633	135	1,211	162
2010 Housing Units	24	449	210	239	676	141	1,290	79

Source: U.S. Census; UNM, BBER

### **Housing Goal 9-1. Improve the quality and availability of affordable housing in Socorro County.**

**Objective 1:** Encourage the County to improve the quality of substandard housing.

Strategy a. Establish standards for mobile homes located in the County based on age and condition of the mobile homes.

Strategy b. Bring existing substandard subdivisions into compliance with existing subdivision design standards.



## 10.0 Implementation

### Land Use

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/ Organization	Tasks	Potential Funding Sources
Mapping Critical Farmland	Socorro Soil and Water Conservation, National Resources Conservation Service (NCRS)	Determine critical mass of contiguous farmland and parcel sizes.  Map important agricultural land in northern part of County.	American Farmland Trust, NRCS
Agriculture/Open Space Preservation	Local farmers and ranchers, Rio Grande Agricultural Trust, Socorro Soil and Water Conservation District, Quivera Coalition	Donate conservation easements or sell development rights.  Promote State/County PDR program.  Form voluntary agricultural districts.  Work with other organizations that protect farm and ranch land.  Link existing farmers with prospective farmers.	USDA, State of NM, American Farmland Trust
Agriculture/Open Space Preservation	Socorro County Commission	Eliminate some exemptions for subdivisions in County ordinance.	County General Fund
Orderly Growth and Development	Special Zoning District Commissioners	Implement zoning code in SZDs Set application fees to cover costs	Application fees
Zoning Code Enforcement	Special Zoning District Commissioners, Rural Electric Cooperative	Prevent illegal development by coordinating requests for electric service with zoning/subdivision approvals.  Alert Socorro County officials about illegal subdivision activity.	General Fund
Dark Skies Preservation	Special Zoning District Commissioners, Northern Socorro County Historical Neighborhood Association	Educate residents and business owners about State Night Sky Protection Act and encourage compliance.	
Historical Preservation		Contact State historic preservation authorities for assistance.  Educate private owners about financial benefits of restoring historic buildings.	Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credits,
Historical Interpretation	Northern Socorro County Historical Neighborhood Association, community members, local students, university students	Translate and transcribe videotaped oral histories of villages and record for posterity.  Decide which historic events need interpretation through signs or other displays and seek funding to implement.	University of New Mexico graduate students, NM Dept. of Cultural Affairs
Sign Design	Local artists	Develop design guidelines for signs in villages.	

## Community Facilities And Services

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/ Organization	Tasks	Potential Funding Sources
Coordination of Funding Requests	Northern Socorro County Historical Neighborhood Association, SZD Commissioners	Coordinate priorities for funding among the area's organizations.	
Grant Applications	Northern Socorro County Historical Neighborhood Association, SZD Commissioners	Enlist assistance of South Central COG in applying for grants.	South Central Council of Governments
Health Care and Social Services Clinic	Community members, Southwest Organizing Project	Develop a master plan.  Seek to establish WIC office.  Survey residents about health care needs and other data required for federal funding of community health care clinics.	State Legislature; Community Development Block Grants; State Women, Infants and Children Program, Presbyterian Medical Services; Ben Archer, other non-profit healthcare provider; Federal Community Health Centers
Community Centers	Northern Socorro County Historical Neighborhood Assn., Socorro County, La Joya Community Development	Co-locate community facilities as much as feasible to leverage space, operating costs, and funding sources.  Seek funding to build center north of Abeytas.  Seek funds to continue renovating the Community Hall and commercial kitchen in La Joya.	Legislative appropriations, CDBG
Library Services	Northern Socorro County Historical Neighborhood Association	Seek funds to relocate La Joya library to a more central location.  Secure an ongoing source of funds to pay the La Joya library phone bill.	Legislative appropriations, CDBG
Parks	Northern Socorro County Historical Neighborhood Association, Socorro County	Plan and develop a park on six-acre abandoned Veguita ballfield.  Create a park in La Joya adjacent to the Community Hall.	Legislative appropriations, community fundraising
Public Internet Service	Northern Socorro County Historical Neighborhood Association, Socorro County	Provide access to internet service at the La Joya Library and Community Centers.  Secure used equipment donations from regional businesses and an ongoing source of funds for an ISP.	
Senior Center Staff Retention	Socorro County	Seek funds to increase staff compensation and provide a career path.  Encourage the program director to visit the Northern Socorro Senior Center more frequently.	County General Fund

## Public Safety

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/ Organization	Tasks	Potential Funding Sources
Fire Protection	County Fire Stations and Chiefs, Northern Socorro County Historical Neighborhood Assn.	Construct new fire station north of Sabinal.  Build new fire substation near elementary school and Boys' Ranch.  Purchase new fire engine for La Joya fire station.  Include area fire protection needs in County master plan.	County General Fund, State fire funds
Bosque Fire Prevention	Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, Socorro Soil and Water Conservation District	Clean up dead and down wood.  Reclaim burned Bosque areas.	Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, Socorro Soil and Water Conservation District
Law Enforcement	Socorro County Commission, State Police	Establish sheriff substation near elementary school.  Offer higher compensation for investigating illegal drug use and production.  Provide more law enforcement over the 2 am to 7 am shift: more officers, residency requirements, mutual aid agreements.	County General Fund
Emergency Medical Service	Socorro County	Reduce response time to less than 20-30 minutes.	County General Fund

## Economic Development

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/ Organization	Tasks	Potential Funding Sources
Tourism	NM Economic Development Dept.  Northern Socorro Historical Neighborhood Assn., Socorro County	Establish farmer's market/visitor center at I-25 and US 60.  Create map and brochure for NM 304/116 tourist loop.  Post tourism signs at I-25 interchange.  Create gateway features at intersection of US 60 and NM 304 and 116.  Link with promotions for the El Camino Real.  List area attractions and promotions on tourism websites.	NM Economic Development Dept. (Cooperative Advertising Grants and Certified Communities Initiative), Project for Public Spaces, Inc
Agri-tourism	Local farmers, crafts people, business people; Northern Socorro County Historical Neighborhood Assn., Socorro County	Join in Rural Economic Development Through Tourism (REDTT) Project at NMSU.  Work with Extension Service to learn of agri-tourism in other parts of the country.  Schedule Northern Socorro County events to coincide with established events in the region, eg. Festival of the Cranes.	USDA Cooperative Extension Service, REDTT Project, USDA Rural Business Enterprise Program
Agriculture Industry	Agricultural Extension Service, Northern Socorro County Historical Neighborhood Assn., Socorro County Chamber of Commerce, local farmers and ranchers, Soil and Water Conservation District	Identify specialty or value-added crops to market directly to retail outlets.  Explore the feasibility of attracting a cheese plant.  Develop a commercial kitchen in the area.	USDA Cooperative Extension Service, USDA Rural Business Enterprise Program,
Economic Development	Local residents, Northern Socorro County Historical Neighborhood Assn., Socorro County	Seek to become a certified community.	NM Economic Development Dept. (Cooperative Advertising Grants and Certified Communities Initiative)
High Speed Internet	Local residents, Northern Socorro County Historical Neighborhood Assn.	Assess the number of potential customers interested in high speed internet service and where they are located.  Approach potential companies to obtain DSL.	

## Infrastructure

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/ Organization	Tasks	Potential Funding Sources
Nitrate Contamination	Socorro County, NM Environment Dept.	Cooperate with NMED and consultants.  Secure funds for revolving loans for residents to purchase point-of-use osmosis water filtration systems.	NM Environment Dept., Governor's Special Projects
Nitrate Contamination Publicity	NMED, Special Zoning District Commissioners, Southwest Organizing Project	Inform new or prospective residents of nitrate contamination through signs, electric bill notices, real estate agents.	NM Environment Dept.
Subdivision Approvals	Socorro County Commission	Do not approve subdivisions unless well tests show they can provide an adequate source of clean, safe drinking water.	County General Fund
Prevention of Groundwater Contamination	Socorro County Commission, Socorro Soil and Water Conservation District	Provide incentives or requirements for community liquid waste systems in the subdivision ordinance.  Base County standards for requiring community liquid waste systems on Soil Survey.  Promote development of wellhead protection plans.	NM Environment Department, County General Fund
Liquid Waste Disposal Regulations	State Construction Industries Division, Special Zoning Districts	Require proof that homebuilders comply with regulations before granting them a building permit.  Report noncompliance to NMED or State Construction Industries Division.	State Construction Industries Division
Water Supply	Socorro Soil and Water Conservation District, Rio Grande Agricultural Trust, Socorro County, area farmers.	Work with communities and organizations to retain water rights in the region.  Survey other agricultural communities in the state to find out how they are retaining water rights.	
Water Policies	Socorro County Commission, Socorro Soil and Water Conservation District.	Develop County water policies based on the recommendations of the Socorro-Sierra Regional Water Plan.	County General Fund
Solid Waste	Socorro County, County Sheriff's Dept.	Secure grants to start programs to recycle tires and prevent illegal dumping.  Consider funding waste disposal services through property taxes.  Clean up existing tire and trash dumps through area Clean-Up Days.  Investigate and fine persons who illegally dump.	NM Dept. of Tourism (Keep NM Beautiful Program), NMED Solid Waste Bureau

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/ Organization	Tasks	Potential Funding Sources
Stormwater Flooding	Socorro County, Socorro Soil and Water Conservation District	<p>Secure funding to study drainage patterns, basins, and anticipated flows.</p> <p>Survey residents to determine and map usual flood patterns and problems.</p> <p>Do not approve subdivisions within the flood plain.</p> <p>Resurface and pave roads to direct storm water runoff to properly designed infrastructure.</p>	Federal Emergency Management Administration, Community Development Block Grants
Heat and Electric Service	Socorro County, the dairies, Northern Socorro County Historical Neighborhood Assn., Special Zoning Districts	<p>Work with the Rural Electric Co-op to secure a steady source of electricity.</p> <p>Investigate potential sources of natural gas for heating.</p> <p>Encourage the use of passive solar construction in new residences.</p>	



## Transportation

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/ Organization	Tasks	Potential Funding Sources
Road Improvements	Socorro County	Grade roads in Northern Socorro County more frequently.  Widen and improve drainage on NM 304 south of US 60.  Pave roads in Abo Valley along the school bus route.	GRIP Funds, State School Bus Route Funds, NM Department of Transportation
Traffic Issues	Local residents, Northern Socorro County Historical Neighborhood Assn.	Contact UNM School of Landscape Architecture and NM DOT district office to find out options for decreasing trucks and slowing traffic on NM 304 north of US 60.	NM Department of Transportation
Regional Transportation Planning Process	Local residents, Northern Socorro County Historical Neighborhood Assn.	Request the South Central COG to obtain a letter from the NM DOT determining which district office is responsible for Northern Socorro County.  Become involved in the South Central COG's regional transportation planning process.	N/A
All-Terrain Vehicles	Socorro County, Northern Socorro County Historical Neighborhood Assn.	Pass a County Ordinance prohibiting use of ATVs within a certain distance of a residence.  Distribute information to ATV users about the 2005 revisions to the NM Off-Highway Vehicle Act.	State Legislature
Van Service	Socorro County	Seek grants for a van service for people lacking private auto transportation.	Medicaid
Bike Lanes and Trails	South Central COG, Socorro County, Northern Socorro County Historical Neighborhood Assn.	Incorporate bike lanes or wide ASHTO shoulders into road widening and repaving.  Consider restriping wide roads to provide for bike lanes.  Extent the proposed Belen-to-Bernalillo bicycle/pedestrian/equestrian trail along the Rio Grande into Northern Socorro County.  Determine which potential lanes/trails are a priority for various communities and work to include them in the regional transportation plans.	NM Department of Transportation, South Central COG

## ***Housing***

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/ Organization	Tasks	Potential Funding Sources
Affordable Housing	Socorro County	<p>Establish standards for manufactured homes located in the County based on age and condition.</p> <p>Bring existing substandard subdivisions into compliance with existing subdivision design standards.</p>	CDBG and or General Fund, NM Construction Industries Division



# Appendices

## Appendix A. Bibliography

Daniel B. Stephens and Assoc. Socorro-Sierra Regional Water Plan, December 2003.

Hydrosphere Resource Consultants. Draft Demand Report, Socorro-Sierra Regional Water Plan, 2000.

Hydrosphere Resource Consultants. October 7, 2002. Personal Communication.

McQuillen, Dennis, New Mexico Environment Department, April 29, 2003. Telephone interview.

New Mexico Environment Department. Liquid Waste Disposal Regulations, *20 NMAC 7.3*. October 15, 1997.

New Mexico Environment Department. Liquid Waste Disposal Regulations, June 2005.

New Mexico Department of Finance and Administration. *Property Tax Rates by Location*, 2001.

New Mexico Department of Taxation and Revenue. *Analysis of Gross Receipts Tax by Standard Industrial Classification*, 2001.

Redman, Donna. "Dairy Disconnect," Alb. Journal Business Outlook, July 25, 2005.

Socorro County Commission. Establishing That the Right-to-Practice Agriculture is a Primary Right within Socorro County. *Ordinance No. 01-001*. 2001.

Socorro County Commission. Land Subdivision Regulations of Socorro County, *New Mexico. Ordinance No. 97-006*. 1997.

Socorro County Commission. Public Nuisance Ordinance of Socorro County. *Ordinance 01-002*. 2001.

Socorro County. *Socorro Comprehensive Plan*, 1998.

State of New Mexico. Special Zoning Districts, *NMSA 1978 3-21-18*.

State of New Mexico. Night Sky Protection Act, (*NMSA 1978 74-12-1*).

U.S. Census Bureau. 2000 Census of Population and Housing. Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agriculture Statistics Service. Census of Agriculture, 1997.

U.S. Census Bureau, 1997 Economic Census.

University of New Mexico, Bureau of Business and Economic Research. Population Projections for New Mexico and Counties, August 2002.



## ***Appendix B. Public Input 2005***

### **Meeting Notes Categorized By Topic**

#### ***What value***

- Open Space
- Fresh, clean air
- Rural area and community
  - Farmland – alfalfa, chile, 11 acres
- No traffic
- Wildlife, Sevilleta, flyway
- Cultural heritage
- Rural/undeveloped
- Beautiful countryside
- Friendly
- Quiet
- Feel ignored by County
- Look same as now on future

#### **Land Use**

- Hope develop orderly fashion
- Land for horses – 25 acre
- More managed growth
- Abatement of junk yards
- Lot of historic buildings
- Contreras School – Contreras S. 60 on 304 safe playgrounds in each community
- Picnic tables
- La Joya has one
- Clean up junk yards
- Tires still a problem
- Junk everywhere
- No historical interpretive signs
- Affordable land – Abo Valley

#### **Historic Buildings**

- La Joya – school, churches
- Old Sheriff's substation, was school – county owns it.
- Next to Veguita FD. Community could help fix it for meetings

#### **Transportation/Roads**

- Lack of transportation
- Need to improve roads
  - Between 304 & Hwy 47 Secondary roads

- Dead animals 304 due to speeding/ houses close to road here
  - State patrol should come down 304 in morning people don't stop (check flips)
  - Trooper lives in Veguita
  - Kids waiting for bus
  - Avoid accident
- Wheeler Road in Valencia County
  - Paving & weeds
  - Road safety Hwy 304
- Problems
  - Road maintenance
  - Signage – street signs
  - Speeding
  - Unpaved roads – only Wheeler & San Lorenzo are paved
  - Dust

### Community Services

- Little service from Socorro Co. Have to go to Belen – “step children”
- Boys & Girls Clubs of NM
- School & Weekend time programs
- Have parish – don't have a place for community gatherings on west side of river
- Got \$\$, grant for architectural services
- Community center needed on west & east side of river
  - For wedding receptions etc.
- Fire station in Abeytas is used
- School counselor –referrals
  - Alcohol & drug abuse (kids bring pot to school)
  - Domestic violence
  - Teach conflict resolution
  - Work with Boys & Girls Club
- Clean under bosque to prevent fires (What's going on with task force?)
- Accountable fire department la Joya
- Have fire station in Abeytas and Veguita
  - Far from Sabinal, however.
- La Promesa – drugs & alcohol, domestic violence, La Vida de Veguita
- Enforcement of existing ordinances
- Sheriff state, police respond from Los Lunas & Socorro
- School bus
- 30 minute response time
- Mobile home fires
  - Response time
  - Faulty heating
- Health Clinic needed – nurses & therapists come from Belen & Socorro \_\_\_\_\_
- Ambulance comes from Los Lunas

## Economic Development

- Commercial plants – gravel pits, dairies (30 years ago) – plop in middle of villages – outside Veguita
- Keep manufacturing outside area—to east
- Emphasize Camino Real tourism
  - Onate Campground (S. of La Joya)
- Windmill farm east mesa?
- La Joya far from 60
- Ok clean industry
- Don't want traffic
- No jobs here
  - Rancho de La Joya Country Club jobs
- Allot agriculture, Socorro, Belen, Conservancy, Hwy department
- No \$\$ for development
- Cheese plant? (lot of dairies in mesa)
- Ice Cream
- Want to preserve what we have
- Don't need big commercial or industry
- Shop Belen, Los Lunas, Abq.
- Small restaurant needed
- Growers market
- DSL needed – 20 people is enough for Qwest

## Contamination

- Abq. Valley – no septic tanks – State ED?
- Planting trees, lawns for dust control
- Substandard wells
- Who permits these?
- Punch through – not sealed off cause contamination
- Need inspections

***Appendix C. Techniques for Preserving Agriculture and Open Space***



Agricultural Land Preservation Technique	Description	When it works best	When it doesn't work	Other comments
<b>Sector Plan Options</b>				
<b>Exclusive Agricultural zoning</b>	Zones property specifically for agricultural use; zone typically allows farm-based businesses. Often sets a minimum lot size needed to sustain an individual farm.	When there are active farms that landowners want to retain, and where minimum lot size corresponds to the average farm size	When farmland owners are not farmers or are no longer interested in farming but desire the income from sale of their land.	Ordinances often include an anti-nuisance clause to protect farmers from complaints by residential neighbors about such practices as night plowing, spraying herbicides.
<b>Non-exclusive agricultural zoning</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum lot size or</li> <li>• Area-based allocation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>--Fixed area</li> <li>--Sliding scale</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Allows agricultural uses but also other uses such as residential. Creates a minimum lot size so that farms can't be broken into parcels less than a certain number of acres, or allows sale or development of small number of residential lots based on size of tract	Works best where farming is predominant and where the size of lot is related to the average size farm. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fixed eg. 1 home per 20 acres in Carroll Co. MD, 1 home per 60 acres in Marin Co. CA.</li> <li>• Sliding eg.: 1 lot/ first 7 acres; 2 lots/7-30 acres, 1 more lot for each additional 50 acres up to 19 in Peach Bottom, PA</li> </ul>	If there is demand for residential subdivisions as allowed by right, non-exclusive agricultural zoning does not protect agricultural use.	County A-1 zone allows residential development on lots as small as one acre. Under current zoning, agricultural land can be subdivided into parcels that are too small to farm.
<b>Cluster Development</b>	Developer of agricultural property is given a density bonus to cluster development on a portion of the property while preserving the remainder (typically 30-50%) in perpetuity as agricultural land or open space	Large parcel of land. When open space is secured through deed restriction or conservation easement and homes have water and wastewater treatment system rather than individual wells and septic.	When residents of the cluster homes don't want farming so close to their homes. When homes are on individual wells/septics.	County has authorized this approach in the SWAP. Can be accomplished under current zoning as a special use permit for a planned development area. Open areas tend to be private and reserved for homeowners.
<b>Conservation easement</b>	A voluntary, recorded legal agreement between a property owner and an easement holder (typically a land trust) that permanently donates or sells some land ownership rights	When landowner wants an economic return (income tax deduction or profit from sale) but is actively farming or seeking to preserve property as farmland or open space. It permanently limits	When there is no organization to hold and monitor easements.	Open areas or farmland tends to be reserved for homeowner unless expressly opened to the public by the easement language. The Rio Grande Agricultural Land Trust accepts easements. Sector



Agricultural Land Preservation Technique	Description	When it works best	When it doesn't work	Other comments
	(development or mineral rights).	uses of the land.		plan could encourage.
Limited Development	Selling a few select lots and restricting their location in order to protect the rest of the property from future development and avoid interference with farming and ranching operations. Conservation easements or covenants are placed over the remainder of the land.	When landowners wish to achieve an economic return on their property but still safeguard some of natural assets and value. Best when carves out large private home sites where buyers will pay a premium to live near preserved land with little, if any, public access.	Where clustering might better serve purposes.	In use in Colorado. Ranchers set aside a number of scenic building sites away from ranch operations and donated conservation easements to the American Farmland Trust. The Quivera Coalition is promoting similar development in New Mexico.
County options				
Right-to-farm ordinance	Ordinance that preserves the right to farm and protects farmers from nuisance suits	Typically put in place where farming activities may be threatened by encroaching subdivision development. Useful where there are active farms trying to stay in business.		State of New Mexico Right-to-Farm Act is in place. May be incorporated into agricultural zoning. County could adopt as ordinance.
Fee simple purchase	Outright land purchase	For parcels that are desirable for public use.	It works less well for parcels closed to public use	This approach is used by the County's open space acquisition program, funded by a property tax mil levy. It provides the most public access but is also the most costly to taxpayers.
Transfer of development rights	Voluntary sale of development rights in a "sending area", such as farmland to be preserved, to a "receiving area", where densities are allowed higher than the receiving area's base zoning. Compensates agricultural land owners for foregoing development rights.	When the receiving area base zoning density is lower than is economically and politically feasible and can accommodate more than a one-to-one transfer. This helps ensure the maximum value of the credits created in the sending zone.	When residents of the receiving area resist increasing densities, or market does not demand the increased densities allowed by TDR.	Questionable whether there are suitable receiving areas if zoning is already consistent with market demand and density constraints such as water and sewer availability and neighborhood acceptance. Social equity issues related to impact of density on receiving areas. TDRs don't offer long-term



Agricultural Land Preservation Technique	Description	When it works best	When it doesn't work	Other comments
				protection of ag land, as land can be developed at density allowed after transfer i.e. large lot homesteads. Used in Santa Fe.
<b>State Options</b>				
<b>Preferential taxation (Current Agricultural Use Value)</b>	Special property tax assessment whereby land is appraised at its current use (typically agriculture) and not according to actual market value (ie, development potential).	Where there are active farms	When there is no penalty or recovery of back taxes if land is sold for development. This encourages land speculation.	Removes some of the development pressure on the land by holding down the property tax burden. In NM, there is no penalty for conversion, so there is no deterrent to future development.
<b>Agricultural transfer tax</b>	Tax on land that has received benefit of special valuation or special tax rate at the time of sale when land is transferred to a non-agricultural use	When coupled with preferential tax assessment for agriculture and landowners want to retain land as farms.		Serves as a deterrent to the conversion of ag land and as a penalty when land is sold for development. In Maryland, tax proceeds fund purchase of development rights to preserve existing farms. Does not exist in NM.
<b>Purchase of Development Rights</b>	Farmers or other landowners voluntarily sell their property's development rights for compensation, typically from state or local government. Permanently preserves land from development.	Where there is a critical mass of active farms, and landowners want to continue farming or pass the farm to heirs while receiving income for retirement or farm capital investment. Needs county and preferably state support.	Where farmers would rather sell their land, where there is not a critical mass of active farms, where purchase prices exceed the value of the land for farming.	A PDR program is best organized with state level support and county implementation. A USDA program provides matching funds.
<b>Agricultural Districts</b>	Legally recognized geographic entities where agricultural activities and their land bases are encouraged and protected. First enacted in California in 1965.	Works best when combined with other techniques. Carroll Co., MD combines districts with agricultural zoning and a state program to purchase development rights.	Where there are only a few remaining farms.	



Agricultural Land Preservation Technique	Description	When it works best	When it doesn't work	Other comments
<b>Federal Programs</b>				
<b>USDA Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program</b>	Leverages federal funds with state and local funds to purchase conservation easements on prime and locally important or unique land by limiting conversion to non-agriculture.			
<b>Forest Legacy Program</b>	Federal funds and support for state efforts to protect environmentally sensitive forest lands, fee simple purchases and conservation easements.	Limited to private forest owners.		
<b>Land and Water Conservation Fund</b>	Federal fund used to support land acquisition by the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Forest Service, and Bureau of Land Management.	Where there is Congressional support.		

To choose a strategy or combination of strategies, need to consider:

- 1) The desired use of the land: open space, wildlife habitat, recreation, active farming. Will it be private or open to the public?
- 2) The landowner's needs, desires, goals: continuing to farm, tax break, retirement income, sells or retain the land?
- 3) Available or willing governmental support



## ***Appendix D. Resources***

### **Land Use, Zoning and Community Character**

#### **NM Construction Industries Division**

<http://www.rld.state.nm.us/cid/>

The New Mexico Construction Industries Division is a state program that provides for the protection of life and property by adopting and enforcing building codes and standards. The Division is responsible for issuing residential and commercial building permits. The Division conducts field inspections for general building, electrical, mechanical and LP Gas code compliance and safety standards. Cities and counties with local building inspection offices must adopt the building codes and standards of the Division as a minimum standard.

The Division is also responsible for:

- Examinations and the issuance of licenses for contractors, and certificates of competence for journeymen.
- Review and approval of residential and commercial building plans for building code and accessibility requirements.
- The conduct of unlicensed contractor investigations.
- Code compliance and other complaints related to violations of the Construction Industries Licensing Act.

**For more information**, please contact:

Construction Industries Division  
Regulation and Licensing Department  
2550 Cerrillos Road  
Santa Fe, NM 87505  
(505) 476-4700  
Email: [rldcid@state.nm.us](mailto:rldcid@state.nm.us)

#### **Web site for building codes**

New Mexico Administrative Code: [http://www.nmcpr.state.nm.us/nmac/\\_title14/T14C007.htm](http://www.nmcpr.state.nm.us/nmac/_title14/T14C007.htm)

#### **CDBG**

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD):

<http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/communitydevelopment/programs/index.cfm>

Begun in 1974, the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) is one of the oldest programs in HUD. The CDBG program provides annual grants on a formula basis to many different types of grantees through several programs:

- Entitlement Communities: The program provides annual grants on a formula basis to entitled cities and counties to develop viable urban communities by providing decent housing and a

suitable living environment, and by expanding economic opportunities, principally for low- and moderate-income persons.

- State Administered CDBG: States participating in the CDBG Program award grants only to units of general local government that carry out development activities. Annually each State develops funding priorities and criteria for selecting projects.
- Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program (Section 108 Program): Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) entitlement communities are eligible to apply for a guarantee from the Section 108 Loan Guarantee program. CDBG non-entitlement communities may also apply, provided that their State agrees to pledge the CDBG funds necessary to secure the loan. Non-entitlement applicants may receive their loan guarantee directly or designate another eligible public entity such as an industrial development authority, to receive it and carry out the Section 108 assisted project.
- Colonias: Texas, Arizona, California and New Mexico set aside up to 10 percent of their State CDBG funds for use in colonias.

### **Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credits**

National Park Service, Heritage Preservation Service

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/tax/>

The Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program provides successful and cost-effective community revitalization. The program fosters private sector rehabilitation of historic buildings and promotes economic revitalization. It also provides a strong alternative to government ownership and management of such historic properties. Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives are available for buildings that are National Historic Landmarks, listed in the National Register, and that contribute to National Register Historic Districts and certain local historic districts. Properties must be income-producing and must be rehabilitated according to standards set by the Secretary of the Interior.

### **PROGRAM PARTNERS**

Jointly managed by the National Park Service and the Internal Revenue Service in partnership with State Historic Preservation Offices, the Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program rewards private investment in rehabilitating historic buildings. Prior to the program, the U.S. tax code favored the demolition of older buildings over saving and using them. In 1976, the Federal tax code aligned with national historic preservation policy to encourage voluntary, private sector investment in preserving historic buildings.

The Historic Preservation Tax Incentives provide an invaluable tool to revitalize communities and preserve the historic places that give cities, towns, and rural areas their special character. The Historic Preservation Tax Incentives generate jobs, both during the construction phase and in the spin-off effects of increased earning and consumption. Rehabilitation of historic buildings attracts new private investment to the historic core of cities and towns and is crucial to the long-term economic health of many communities. Enhanced property values generated by the Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program result in augmented revenues for local and state government through increased property, business, and income taxes. Historic Preservation Tax Incentives also create moderate and low-income housing in historic buildings.

Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives, Heritage Preservation Services (2255), National Park Service, 1201 Eye St. NW, Washington, DC 20005

Phone: Michael Auer at (202) 354-2031  
FAX: (202) 371-1616  
E-Mail: [nps\\_hps-info@nps.gov](mailto:nps_hps-info@nps.gov)

### **State Historic Preservation Tax Credits**

[http://www.nmhistoricpreservation.org/PROGRAMS/creditsloans\\_taxcredits.html](http://www.nmhistoricpreservation.org/PROGRAMS/creditsloans_taxcredits.html)

The State of New Mexico Investment Tax Credit program was created on January 1, 1984. The state income tax credit is available to owners of historic structures who accomplish qualified rehabilitation on a structure or stabilization or protection of an archaeological site. It is a two-part process. State applications are available on-line in MS Word format or from the office.

- Property must be individually listed in, or contributing to a historic district listed in the State Register of Cultural Properties. The property may be a personal residence, income-producing property (such as an apartment building or office), or an archaeological site.
- The State Cultural Properties Review Committee (CPRC) must approve the proposed rehabilitation work prior to the beginning of the project.
- The project term expires 24 months from the date of the original approval.
- The completed project must be documented in Part 2 of the application and presented to the CPRC for certification. Project expenses must be fully documented and submitted.
- Each program project carries a maximum of \$50,000, although the project costs may exceed this amount.
- Maximum credit is 50% of eligible costs of the approved rehabilitation or \$25,000 (50% of project maximum) or 5 years of tax liability, whichever is least. The credit is applied against New Mexico income taxes owed in the year the project is completed and the balance may be carried forward for up to four additional years.

#### **HISTORIC PRESERVATION DIVISION**

Department of Cultural Affairs  
Villa Rivera Building, Room 320  
228 E. Palace Avenue  
Santa Fe, NM 87501  
(505) 827-6320

### **USDA Cooperative Extension Service, Technical Assistance**

<http://www.csrees.usda.gov>

The Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) has been an agency within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) since 1994.

CSREES advances knowledge for agriculture, the environment, human health and well-being, and communities by supporting research, education, and extension programs in the Land-Grant University System and other partner organizations. CSREES doesn't perform actual research, education, and extension but rather helps fund it at the state and local level and provides program leadership in these areas:

- **National program leadership** to help states identify and meet research, extension, and education priorities in areas of public concern that affect agricultural producers, small business owners, youth and families, and others.
- **Federal assistance** in the form of an annual formula funding to land-grant universities and competitively granted funds to researchers in land-grant and other universities.

CSREES and its partners support advanced research and educational technologies that empower people and communities to solve problems and improve their lives on the local level, responding to quality-of-life issues such as:

- Improving agricultural productivity
- Creating new products
- Protecting animal and plant health
- Promoting sound human nutrition and health
- Strengthening children, youth, and families
- Revitalizing rural American communities

CSREES operates through an extensive network of state, regional, and county extension offices in every U.S. state and territory. The New Mexico extension service is based at NMSU, with the local extension office located in Deming.

### **New Mexico State University**

<http://www.cahe.nmsu.edu/ces>

## **Transportation**

### **NMDOT Highway Improvements Funds**

<http://www.nmshtd.state.nm.us/main.asp?secid=11463>

The Highway Safety Improvement Program Section provides engineering services to:

- Develop, prioritize, and select roadway safety improvement projects on a statewide basis
- Coordinate with the Transportation Programs Division, Traffic Safety Bureau to administer a statewide transportation safety management system
- Assist other groups within NMDOT and other agencies in highway safety-related matters.

The NM Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) addresses the highway element and the engineering functional group as part of a more comprehensive traffic safety program operated by others both within and outside of the NMDOT. The HSIP is run from the NMDOT Transportation Planning Division, Project Planning Bureau. Other highway safety programs are run from other bureaus in various Divisions of NMDOT.

FHWA provides program oversight and federal aid for safety projects. The FHWA has also made city streets and county roads eligible for federal aid for safety projects, in addition state highways.

The HSIP Section has the responsibility to systematically analyze New Mexico's roadways, including available crash data, to identify roadway (state highway, county road, or city street) locations, sections, and elements in

New Mexico that are currently determined to be hazardous or are forecasted with the likelihood of being hazardous to vehicular or pedestrian travel. On the basis of such analysis the HSIP section can conduct more detailed engineering studies of hazardous or potentially hazardous locations, sections and elements.

From these more detailed analyses suggested countermeasures in the form of safety improvement projects can be recommended, and federal funding can be incorporated to implement them.

The NM HSIP has 3 basic procedural components: Planning, Implementation, and Safety Effectiveness Evaluation.

**Planning includes:**

- Reviewing Roadway System for actual or potential hazards;
- Conducting engineering safety studies;
- Seeking guidance from others concerning proposed safety projects;
- Using Benefit/ Cost ratio as guidance for project selection;
- Establishing top priority for high benefit/cost projects, such as rumble strips on rural highway shoulders;

**Implementation includes:**

- Coordinating the placement of appropriate safety projects in metro TIPS and the STIP;
- Oversight of project design, letting, and construction performed by others.

**Safety Effectiveness Evaluation includes:**

- Conducting before and after studies where safety projects were implemented, examining crash data for up to 3 years before and after project placement
- Findings reported in annual report to NMDOT and FHWA.

Paving: <http://www.nmshtd.state.nm.us/main.asp?secid=11462>

The Pavement Management Section located in the Project Planning Bureau supports the Department's efforts to provide New Mexico with quality highways at minimum cost by providing information necessary to develop cost-effective highway pavement management strategies and to make informed decisions between competing highway projects.

This section evaluates pavement conditions on a statewide basis and predicts expected pavement deterioration so that pavement preservation, rehabilitation and reconstruction projects can be optimally scheduled.

GRIP: <http://nmgrip.com/link.asp?id=14956>

GRIP is an economic benefit package that will:

- create thousands of new jobs each year for the next six to eight years
- employ hundreds of New Mexico businesses
- have an \$8.4 billion positive impact on New Mexico's economy
- have a \$10.9 billion direct savings impact on the citizens of New Mexico in terms of commuter cost, safety and vehicle operating costs
- increase state personal income, mostly wages and salaries by \$170 million a year
- generate nearly \$90 million in direct gross receipt taxes on construction and millions more in payroll taxes.
- break down individual projects so local contractors can competitively bid.

GRIP will also enhance safety on New Mexico highways and roads.

### **Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Non-urbanized Area Formula Grants**

[http://www.fta.dot.gov/legal/guidance/circulars/9000/433\\_1182\\_ENG\\_HTML.htm](http://www.fta.dot.gov/legal/guidance/circulars/9000/433_1182_ENG_HTML.htm)

Fact sheet: <http://www.fta.dot.gov/library/policy/prgms/nuafg.html>

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) carries out the Federal mandate to improve public mass transportation. As one of nine operating administrations or agencies within the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), FTA is the principal source of financial assistance to America's communities for the planning, development and improvement of public transportation systems. Through FTA, the federal government provides financial and technical assistance and training to local transit systems, states and planning organizations.

### **Resources Available For Community Redevelopment**

- **Formula Grant Programs** (matching ratio: 80% maximum federal share/minimum 20% local share) Urbanized Area Formula Grants for capital and operating assistance to transit agencies in urban (50,000 or more in population) areas.
  - - Non-urbanized Area Formula Grants for capital and operating assistance through the states to transit operators in non-urban (less than 50,000 in population) areas. A state must use a percentage (5-15%) of the funds it receives for inter-city bus service unless the state can certify that its inter-city bus needs have been met.

The goals of the nonurbanized formula program are: 1) to enhance the access of people in nonurbanized areas to health care, shopping, education, employment, public services, and recreation; 2) to assist in the maintenance, development, improvement, and use of public transportation systems in rural and small urban areas; 3) to encourage and facilitate the most efficient use of all Federal funds used to provide passenger transportation in nonurbanized areas through the coordination of programs and services; 4) to assist in the development and support of intercity bus transportation; and 5) to provide for the participation of private transportation providers in nonurbanized transportation to the maximum extent feasible.

**Eligible Recipients:** State and local governments, non-profit organizations (including Indian tribes and groups), and public transit operators.

**Eligible Purposes:** Funds may be used for capital, operating, and administrative purposes.

**Allocation of Funding:** Funding is apportioned by a statutory formula based on the latest U.S. Census figures of areas with a population less than 50,000. The amount that the state may use for state administration, planning, and technical assistance activities is limited to 15 percent of the annual apportionment. States must spend 15 percent of the apportionment to support rural intercity bus service unless the Governor certifies that the intercity bus needs of the state are adequately met.

**Match:** The maximum Federal share for capital and project administration is 80 percent (except for projects to meet the requirement of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Clean Air Act, or bicycle access projects, which may be funded at 90 percent.) The maximum Federal share for operating assistance is 50 percent of the net operating costs. The local share is 50 percent, which shall come from an undistributed cash surplus, a replacement or depreciation cash fund or reserve, or new capital.

**Funding Availability:** Year appropriated plus two years (total of three years)

**Contact:** The Office of Program Management, (202) 366-4020

#### **NMDOT Rural Transportation Assistance Program**

<http://www.nmshtd.state.nm.us/main.asp?secid=11225>

The State of New Mexico's Rural Transportation Assistance Program (RTAP) program offers training sessions, workshops, scholarships and other services to help improve transit systems. No local match is required. RTAP funding is available only to existing subrecipients, who must submit a written request for RTAP funds to the Transit & Rail Bureau Chief. Requests for RTAP funding are evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Under contract with the Transit & Rail Bureau, the Alliance for Transportation Research (ATR) Institute through the University of New Mexico (<http://www.unm.edu/~atr>) coordinates training and provides technical support for New Mexico's rural transit providers and sub-grantees. Training and support are directed primarily to transit programs funded through the Federal Transit Administration's 5310 program, which serves senior and disabled populations, and 5311 program, which provides transit for any rural area or small town. In addition, the ATR Institute staffs the New Mexico Passenger Transportation Association (NMPTA), a non-profit transit advisory organization.

604 W. San Mateo Plaza

Santa Fe, NM 87505 Voice: 505.827.0410 Fax: 505.827.0431

#### **US Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration**

The FHWA provided Federal funds for a variety of transportation projects, including roadways, trails, rail, and transit. These funds cover not only basic infrastructure but enhancements such as streetscapes as well.

**Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)**

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/safetealu/index.htm>

**SAFETEA-LU** was signed on August 10, 2005 by President George W. Bush and authorizes the Federal surface transportation programs for highways, highway safety, and transit for the 5-year period from 2005-2009.

SAFETEA-LU addresses safety, traffic congestion, efficiency in freight movement, intermodal connectivity, and the environment. SAFETEA-LU promotes more efficient and effective Federal surface transportation programs by focusing on transportation issues of national significance, while giving State and local transportation decision-makers flexibility to solve transportation problems in their communities.

SAFETEA-LU continues a strong fundamental core formula program emphasis coupled with targeted investment, featuring:

- *Safety* – A new core Highway Safety Improvement Program structured and funded to reduce highway fatalities almost doubles the funds for infrastructure safety and requires strategic highway safety planning, focusing on results. Other programs target specific areas of concern, such as work zones, older drivers, and pedestrians, including children walking to school.
- *Equity* – Building on TEA-21's Minimum Guarantee concept, the Equity Bonus program ensures that each state's return on its share of contributions to the Highway Trust Fund (in the form of gas and other highway taxes) is at least 90.5 percent in 2005, building toward a minimum 92 percent relative rate of return by 2008. Every state is guaranteed a specified rate of growth over its average annual TEA-21 funding level, regardless of its Trust Fund contributions. Selected states are guaranteed a share of apportionments and High Priority Projects not less than the state's average annual share under TEA-21.
- *Innovative finance* – Innovative changes, such as eligibility for private activity bonds, additional flexibility to use tolling to finance infrastructure improvements, and broader TIFIA and SIB loan policies, encourage the private sector to invest in highway infrastructure projects.
- *Congestion Relief* – States have more flexibility to manage congestion through road pricing. Real-time traffic management is promoted in all states to help improve transportation security and provide better information to travelers and emergency responders.
- *Mobility & Productivity* – SAFETEA-LU invests in core Federal-aid programs, as well as programs to improve interregional and international transportation, address regional needs, and fund critical high-cost transportation infrastructure projects of national and regional significance. Improved freight transportation is addressed in a number of planning, financing, and infrastructure improvement provisions throughout the Act.
- *Efficiency* – The Highways for LIFE pilot program will advance longer-lasting highways using innovative technologies and practices to speed up the construction of efficient and safe highways and bridges.
- *Environmental Stewardship* – SAFETEA-LU retains and increases funding for environmental programs of TEA-21 and adds new programs focused on the environment, including a pilot program for nonmotorized transportation and Safe Routes to School. SAFETEA-LU also includes significant new environmental requirements for the Statewide and Metropolitan Planning process.
- *Environmental Streamlining* – Changes aimed at improving and streamlining the environmental process for transportation projects includes provisions for a new environmental review process for highways, transit, and multimodal projects, with increased authority for transportation agencies, but

also increased responsibilities for participation (e.g., a new category of "participating agencies" and notice and comment related to defining project purpose and need and determining alternatives).

## **Infrastructure**

### **NMED Rural Infrastructure Programs**

<http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/cpb/rip.html>

The Rural Infrastructure Program (RIP) was created in 1988 as part of the Rural Infrastructure Act to provide financial assistance to local authorities for the construction or modification of water supply facilities. The Rural Infrastructure Act was amended in 2001 to include construction or modification of wastewater facilities.

Because the funds are state monies, the application and approval process is streamlined, allowing the funds to be available within four to six weeks. The maximum loan amount in any single year is \$500,000.

The base interest rate is 3%, with a repayment schedule of up to 20 years. No grants are currently available but may be in the future.

Any incorporated city, town, village, county, mutual domestic association, or water and sanitation district whose water supply facility serves a population of less than ten thousand persons.

The approximate amount of loan money available as of June 30, 2005 is \$12 million.

Applications for placement on the priority list are accepted throughout the year.

**Loan funds can be made available to projects within four to six weeks.**

### **NMFA Rural Infrastructure Programs**

<http://www.nmfa.org/>

The New Mexico Finance Authority (NMFA), created in 1992, provides local governments with low-cost funds and technical assistance for affordable financing of capital equipment and infrastructure projects at any stage of completion – from pre-planning through construction – through its five main financing sources:

- Drinking Water Revolving Loan Fund (DWRLF)
- Primary Care Capital Fund (PCCF)
- Public Project Revolving Fund (PPRF)
- State Buildings and Automation Project Financing
- Water and Wastewater Grant Fund (W/WWGF)

The Water Trust Fund (created in 2001) is also administered by the NMFA, and the NMFA provides staff support to the Water Trust Board that oversees this fund.

NMFA funds capital projects with a useful life of 3 years or longer, including:

- Equipment
- Buildings
- Hospitals

- Water Systems
- Sewer Systems
- Solid Waste Facilities
- Streets
- Airports
- Municipal Facilities
- Parking Facilities

**Contact Information:**

207 Shelby Street  
Santa Fe, NM 87501  
Phone: (505) 984-1454  
Toll Free: (877) ASK-NMFA  
Fax: (505) 984-0002  
[frontdesk@nmfa.net](mailto:frontdesk@nmfa.net)

**USDA RUS Loans and Grants**

<http://www.epa.gov/owm/mab/smcomm/factsheets/usda/>

The U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) administers financial and technical assistance programs through its Rural Development department to help rural communities develop safe and affordable sewage treatment and waste disposal systems. Programs that target wastewater treatment are run by the Water Programs Division of the Rural Utilities Service (RUS). The Water and Waste Disposal Loans and Grants Program provides loans, guaranteed loans, and grants for water, sewer, storm water, and solid waste disposal facilities.

Public bodies (e.g., municipalities, counties, Indian Tribes, nonprofit organizations) serving rural areas may be eligible for loans or grants from the water and waste disposal program. The program makes assistance available only to rural areas with 10,000 or fewer people.

**Water and Waste Disposal Loans and Grants**

Small communities with wastewater treatment or disposal needs can apply for loans and grants to construct, repair or modify waste collection and waste disposal facilities. To receive loans small communities must show that they (1) can't get funds at reasonable rates from commercial sources, (2) have the capacity to borrow and repay loans, and pledge security, and (3) can operate and maintain the affected facilities. Depending on the economic status of the service area, borrowers may receive one of three interest rates: the poverty rate (median household income is below poverty or below 80 percent of the statewide metropolitan median and the project is necessary to meet applicable health or sanitary standards), market rate (where median household income exceeds the statewide non-metropolitan household income), or the intermediate rate.



## **Housing**

### **New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority**

<http://www.nmmfa.org/>

The MFA, though it is not a state agency, was created by state law with a mandate to provide affordable housing in New Mexico. The MFA is given authority to issue tax-exempt mortgage revenue bonds. Proceeds from bond sales are used to fund below-market interest rate loan programs for single-family homebuyers and for developers of affordable multi-family dwellings. In this way MFA fulfilled its mission, using private dollars only (no state or federal funds), from its 1975 inception to the present.

The state made the MFA responsible for state and federally funded housing programs as well. Besides constituting recognition for a job well done by MFA with its revenue-bond programs, New Mexico made the MFA a "one-stop shop" for housing finance, a model already adopted by most states. The MFA purview now encompasses the tax credits program, emergency shelter grants, homeless initiatives, and Housing and Urban Development's HOME program.

By operating efficiently, the not-for-profit MFA generates surplus revenue, used to create even more programs to make affordable housing a reality in New Mexico. These include programs for down payment assistance and to support other (non-profit) providers of housing and related services.

### **The New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority**

344 4th Street SW

Albuquerque, NM 87102

(505) 843-6880

(800) 444-6880 (Toll free in New Mexico)

Fax: (505) 243-3289

TTY: (800) 659-8331

TTY/Voice: (800) 659-1779

***State Construction Industries Division*** – information on building codes, alternative materials and methods

<http://www.rld.state.nm.us/cid/>

The New Mexico Construction Industries Division provides for the protection of life and property by adopting and enforcing building codes and standards thereby promoting the general welfare of the people of New Mexico. The Division is responsible for issuing residential and commercial building permits. The Division conducts field inspections for general building, electrical, mechanical and LP Gas code compliance and safety standards. Cities and counties with local building inspection offices must adopt the building codes and standards of the Division as a minimum standard.

The Division is also responsible for:

- Examinations and the issuance of licenses for contractors, and certificates of competence for journeymen.

- Review and approval of residential and commercial building plans for building code and accessibility requirements.
- The conduct of unlicensed contractor investigations.
- Code compliance and other complaints related to violations of the Construction Industries Licensing Act.

Construction Industries Division  
 Regulation and Licensing Department  
 2550 Cerrillos Road  
 Santa Fe, NM 87505  
 (505) 476-4700  
 Email: [rldcid@state.nm.us](mailto:rldcid@state.nm.us)

## **Economic Development**

### **NM Economic Development Department**

<http://www.edd.state.nm.us/>

The New Mexico Economic Development Department raises the standard of living for today’s New Mexicans and future generations by fostering a sustained rise in the production of goods and services.

This agency has many diverse projects devoted to a single aim—**better jobs and better lives for New Mexicans**. The Economic Development Department promotes research and development, helps finance job training, revitalizes downtowns, recruits new businesses to our state, and assists our cities and towns to market themselves to attract new business.

Within the New Mexico Economic Development Department, the Community Development Team focuses on helping local communities reach their goals. Regional representatives who live in the region provide direct assistance to communities.

### **New Mexico Economic Development Department Certified Communities Initiative (CCI)**

<http://ww1.edd.state.nm.us/index.php?/community/category/Become%20a%20Certified%20Community/>

The New Mexico Economic Development Department recognizes that in a local community a little change can have a big impact. The intent of the Certified Communities Initiative (CCI) is to help communities make those changes.

Regional representatives work with local officials on the CCI application. Next, they provide the community with a grant and extra support through the co-op marketing program. The Economic Development Department provides publicity to make potential businesses aware of the community and its assets.

Certified Community status comes with up to \$5,000 of contractual funding for two years for special projects, ten bonus points in the coop marketing program, an awards ceremony for the community, press releases and media exposure about the community’s new status, and a Certified Community seal to be used in promotions.



Most important, being a Certified Community shows that the community is willing to invest in the infrastructure that successful, growing businesses need.

The Certified Communities brochure can be downloaded from the Economic Development Department web site.

**Contact:**

Kathy Keith, Community Development  
[Kathy.Keith@state.nm.us](mailto:Kathy.Keith@state.nm.us)  
(505) 827-0089.

**New Mexico Tourism Department Cooperative Advertising Grants**

<http://www.newmexico.org/go/loc/departement/page/dept-coop-advertising.html>

The Cooperative Advertising Grants Program provides matching funds to non-profit tourism related organizations, local and tribal governments in the state promoting New Mexico as a tourist destination. The program reimburses funding recipients 50 percent of the cost for direct advertising including print, broadcast, billboard and online advertising; printing and distribution of promotional brochures; website development; and trade show participation.

For more information contact:

**Mona Medina**

Director

Tel: 505-827-7605

Email: [mona.medina@state.nm.us](mailto:mona.medina@state.nm.us)

**Economic Development Administration** – funds for industrial park infrastructure

<http://www.eda.gov/AboutEDA/Programs.xml>

The Public Works Program empowers distressed communities to revitalize, expand, and upgrade their physical infrastructure to attract new industry, encourage business expansion, diversify local economies, and generate or retain long-term, private sector jobs and investment.

Austin Regional Office

327 Congress Avenue, Suite 200

Austin, Texas 78701-4037

Telephone: (512) 381-8144

**HUD Economic Development Initiative**

<http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/economicdevelopment/programs/edi/index.cfm>

The Economic Development Initiative consists of two components:

- **Special Purpose EDI** (below) - Congressionally earmarked  
*Contact:* Program Office (202) 708-3773
- **Competitive EDI** - No new grants are being awarded  
*Contact:* Bill Seedyke (202) 708-3484 extension 4445

WHO MAY APPLY (For Special Purpose EDIs only) :

The entity named by Congress in the FY 2004 Conference Report is the official recipient for the EDI-Special Project grant. This entity sends in the application, and HUD then awards the grant to them.

### **USDA Rural Business Enterprise Program**

<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/busp/rbeg.htm>

The Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBS) makes grants under the Rural Business Enterprise Grants (RBEG) Program to public bodies, private nonprofit corporations, and Federally-recognized Indian Tribal groups to finance and facilitate development of small and emerging private business enterprises located in any area other than a city or town that has a population of greater than 50,000 inhabitants and the urbanized area contiguous and adjacent to such a city or town. The public bodies, private nonprofit corporations and federally recognized Indian tribes receive the grant to assist a business. **GRANT FUNDS DO NOT GO DIRECTLY TO THE BUSINESS.**

#### ***Who is Eligible?***

Eligibility is limited to public bodies, private nonprofit corporations, and Federally-recognized Indian Tribal groups. Public bodies include incorporated towns and villages, boroughs, townships, counties, States, authorities, districts, Indian Tribes on Federal and State reservations, and other Federally-recognized Indian Tribal groups in rural areas. The small and emerging businesses to be assisted must have less than 50 new employees and less than \$1 million in gross annual revenues.

#### ***How May Funds be Used?***

Funds are used for the financing or development of a small and emerging business. Eligible uses are: Technical Assistance (providing assistance for marketing studies, feasibility studies, business plans, training etc.) to small and emerging businesses; purchasing machinery and equipment to lease to a small and emerging business; creating a revolving loan fund (providing partial funding as a loan to a small and emerging business for the purchase of equipment, working capital, or real estate); or construct a building for a business incubator for small and emerging businesses.

Grants cannot be used for:

1. Agricultural Production.
2. Comprehensive areawide planning.
3. Loans by grantees when the rates, terms, and charges for those loans are not reasonable or would be for purposes not eligible under RBEG regulations.
4. Development of a proposal that may result in the transfer of jobs or business activity from one area to another. This provision does not prohibit establishment of a new branch or subsidiary.
5. Development of a proposal which may result in an increase of goods, materials, commodities, services, or facilities in an area when there is not sufficient demand.
6. For programs operated by cable television systems.
7. To fund part of a project dependent on other funding, unless there is a firm commitment of the other funding to ensure completion of the project.

Forms are available from and may be filed in any USDA Rural Development State Office, check your telephone directory under "Federal Government" or call the RBS National Office Specialty Lenders Division, (202) 720-1400.

We recommend discussing the proposed project and process with your local State or area office before completing the application.

**Deming Contact:**

405 East Florida

Deming, NM 88030-5235

Telephone: (505) 546-9291 X4

TTY: (505) 761-4938

<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/nm/info.asp?id=rbs>

**New Mexico Cooperative Extension Service, NMSU, Rural Economic Development Through Tourism (REDTT) Project**

<http://www.redtt.org>

The Rural Economic Development Through Tourism (REDTT) Project began as a three year pilot project in the spring of 1992 to boost rural tourism development in five New Mexico counties as part of New Mexico's Cooperative Extension Service. Because of its success, REDTT has continued to be funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. REDTT now serves 17 counties, including Luna County.

The REDTT project and professional team members are housed in the College of Agriculture and Home Economics at NMSU. Funds have been secured for the project on a year-to-year basis. Members of New Mexico's congressional delegation, as well as the state of New Mexico and other tourism-related organizations, have continued to demonstrate their strong support for the project.

REDTT staff and volunteers work to educate, train, spread information and assist in tourism development. Rural tourism development continues to be a transitional process, moving from the organizational stage to planning and implementation.

The major component of REDTT's outreach efforts is the County Tourism Councils (CTC) in each REDTT county. The CTC for each county is made up of area volunteers, including local interested people, county Extension Service agents, tourism professionals, leaders in business, education, industry, government and the REDTT staff. CTCs assist with the development and implementation of local and regional tourism goals. Each CTC helps design and implement county tourism initiatives. Each council meets monthly.

**Contact:**

Rural Economic Development Through Tourism Project

Box 30003, MSC 3HRTM, Las Cruces, NM 88003

Phone: (505) 646-8006 or 646-5994

FAX: (505) 646-8100

## **Alternative Energy and Alternative On-Site Utility Systems**

Columbus Electric Cooperative  
900 North Gold  
Deming, New Mexico 88031  
505-546-8838

Email: [ColumbusElectric@col-coop.com](mailto:ColumbusElectric@col-coop.com)  
<http://www.columbusco-op.org>

Tristate Generation and Transmission Association, Inc. web site:  
<http://www.tristategt.org/>

**New Mexico Office of the State Engineer**  
<http://www.ose.state.nm.us//water-info/conservation/>

### **Information about Use of Gray Water**

With drought conditions and increasing concern about the availability of water in general, more homeowners and businesses are considering the use of gray water for landscape irrigation and other purposes. (Gray water includes wastewater from bathtubs, showers, washbasins, or clothes washing machines, but not from the kitchen or toilets.) Gray water reuse systems can be elaborate or simple. Some homeowners choose to water landscapes directly from the shower or clothes washer through a garden hose or by using buckets. Others prefer to install a dedicated plumbing system that performs subsurface irrigation.

Gray water does contain pathogens and, as such, the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) regulates all uses of gray water (and black water, which includes water from kitchen and toilets) to ensure protection of public health and water quality. Different regulations will apply depending on the volume, measured in gallons per day (gpd), discharged to a single lot:

- Less Than 250 gpd of Gray Water - A permit is not required to apply less than 250 gpd of private residential gray water for a resident's household gardening, composting or landscape irrigation, so long as the gray water is applied in accordance with certain requirements outlined in the *NMED Gray Water Irrigation Guide* which is posted on the NMED web page at [www.nmenv.state.nm.us](http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us).
- Greater Than 250 gpd of Gray Water, But Less Than 2,000 gpd of Total Combined Gray Water and Black Water - A Liquid Waste Permit issued by the NMED Field Operations Division is required if more than 250 gpd of gray water will be applied and the combined volume of gray water and black water discharged to a single lot is less than 2,000 gpd. Permits may be obtained from the nearest NMED field office.
- Greater Than 250 gpd of Gray Water, and More Than 2,000 gpd of Total Combined Gray Water and Black Water - A Discharge Permit issued by the NMED Ground Water Quality Bureau is required if more than 250 gpd of gray water will be applied and the combined volume of gray water and black water discharged is more than 2,000 gpd. Submit a *Notice of Intent to Discharge* to the NMED Ground Water Quality Bureau describing the proposed project. If NMED determines that a Discharge Permit is required, an *Application for Discharge Permit* must be completed and submitted.

The local city or county government may also have gray water requirements that must be followed. In addition, if a large-scale gray water project is being planned, communities should contact the local OSE Water Rights Division to make sure the project does not inappropriately affect the flow of wastewater for water supply recharge.



***Appendix E. Draft Maps of the Belen School Bus Routes into Socorro County***



