

2010-2015

**COMPREHENSIVE**

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**STRATEGY**

Prepared by

**SOUTHWEST NEW MEXICO  
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS**

Cathy and Emily Gojkovich, Editors

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
<b>Introduction</b>	4
Board of Directors	4
Members	5
Contributors	5
<b>Chapter I: Overview: Vision and Goals</b>	7
Goals	8
Overview and Vision Statement	13
<b>Chapter 2: Thematic Discussion of Economic and Community</b>	
<b>Development Problems and Opportunities</b>	16
Regional Natural Resources	17
Geography	17
Climate	17
Hydrology	18
Water Planning	19
Water Quality Issues	20
Soil and Vegetation	21
People	22
Demographics	22
Labor Force Development	23
Racial Characteristics	25
Senior Citizens	25
Youth	25
Health	25
Colonias	25
Housing	26
Services and Industry	28
Agriculture and Ranching	28
Arts, Recreation, and Tourism	29
Downtown Revitalization and Improvements	30
Business Development and Retention	32
Fort Bayard National Historic Landmark	32
International Borders	33
Education	34
Pre-School and Child Care	34
Elementary, Middle and High Schools	34
Western New Mexico University	37
Environmental Issues and Renewable Energy	39
Solid Waste	39
Renewable Energy	39
Planning	40
Transportation	43
Highways	44

## Introduction

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is a regional planning document representing the four southwest New Mexico counties of Catron, Grant, Hidalgo, and Luna from 2010 to 2015.

Economic development is a broad concept, encompassing improvements in infrastructure, education, housing, water supply, which also includes improvements to and expansion of services and industry. Business retention, expansion, and job creation is the goal that relies on healthy infrastructure and set of services.

There was wide participation in the writing of this document from county and local governments, nonprofits, and leaders in the region. The vision and goals reflect various sectors and entities as to their ongoing work and visions for a better New Mexico.

Any questions or comments regarding this report may be directed to Emily Gojkovich at [emily@swnmcog.org](mailto:emily@swnmcog.org) or (575) 388-1509.

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# **CHAPTER I**

## **OVERVIEW: GOALS AND VISION**

# Southwest New Mexico Regional Goals

## Water

- Participate in regional groups in each community to plan for the use of the redirected waters that are anticipated from the Arizona Water Settlement Act.
- Support counties, municipalities, and water districts for planning and maintaining their water systems
- Encourage updating, as needed, and/or creation of 40 year water plans
- Create and develop water conservation programs, drought contingency plans, drought mitigation plans, and asset management plans

## Health

- Develop outreach programs to provide services to isolated and remote areas
- Obtain support for health and wellness priorities of each of the county-wide health councils
- Respond to the needs of residents for family services such as youth activities, youth centers, and children's activities
- Provide needed services to disadvantaged populations, including the elderly
- Promote walking, biking, and use of sidewalks and trails towards alleviating obesity
- Promote Safe Routes to Schools programs
- Promote improved health services through the county health centers
- Promote the development and use of school health and wellness plans

## Colonias

- Improve infrastructure and services to Colonias
- Obtain planning assistance and funding for road improvements, water, utility lines, housing, and other needed services
- Establish zoning and enforcement for economic development of these areas to prevent the development of new Colonias
- Develop additional landfills through the counties, where needed, for example in Catron County

## Housing

- Refurbish or replace old or sub-standard housing stock
- Establish plans for new developments to provide affordable housing, including multi-unit buildings and single family houses, and to provide housing for people with special needs, emergency shelters for the homeless, seniors, and other needy populations

- Develop housing plans which detail specific locations that are generally agreed upon for development ideally which are adjacent to utility access and other services
- Institute green components in buildings and developments to provide cost savings and reduce any environmental impacts

### **Agriculture and Ranching**

- Promote the creation of “backyard” and community gardens to increase food sources for communities
- Develop local food sources so that the region is not entirely dependent on obtaining food from outside
- Promote the establishment of berry (black and raspberries) farming, as this food grows well in the region, and there is a prospective buyer of the product
- Make plans for use of unused grazing lands
- Support ranchers and their ranching activities
- Support larger-scale farmers and their crops by ensuring adequate water supplies

### **Arts, Recreation, and Tourism**

- Achieve long-term financial sustainability for Fort Bayard National Historic Landmark through public/private partnerships and to preserve, enhance, and promote the natural, historical, cultural, scenic, and recreational resources of Fort Bayard
- Identify funding for museums and heritage sites, memorials and monuments that feature and tell the history of the area and that draw in tourists, including new Elfego Baca Memorial & Old West Museum in Reserve
- Promote Silver City’s Cultural Arts District and develop arts centers in other municipalities
- Assure that outdoor recreation areas are well maintained and new ones identified and mapped
- Create plans for more motel/hotel rooms for tourists, especially for large fairs and special events
- Develop more cultural events to draw tourists to cities and communities in the region
- Promote tourism to southwestern New Mexico

### **Creating Vital Community Centers**

- Establish public/private partnerships to plan, design, and implement downtown master plans
- Secure planning grants to assist in the creation of plans
- Provide resources to communities wishing to improve their downtown areas using examples from other successful projects, funding sources, and model plans
- Position downtown areas as attractive to both residents and visitors

- Encourage the development of a broad business mix in downtown areas, including coffee shops and other gathering places because a vibrant downtown provides many opportunities for informal connections among its people

### **Business Recruitment and Retention**

- Develop industrial parks in order to attract larger scale employers to the southwest region
- Identify businesses in the field of renewable and alternative energy to make use of the excellent solar, biomass, and geothermal capacities in the region
- Create a climate that is favorable to businesses of all sizes
- Work through established economic development entities to market the region and respond to PRO's
- Showcase the resources of the region through websites and publications

### **Economic Development "Engines"**

- Create, strengthen, or expand economic development organizations or programs where there is a need in the region
- Coordinate planning by and between economic development organizations, departments, and programs in order to present a united front about area needs and plans to funders and prospective funders
- Develop and maintain databases to inform local and regional planning
- Publish relevant information for use by grant writers and planners
- Create regional partnerships for large grant applications and programs that will increase jobs in the region
- Maintain and develop strong leadership from elected officials for economic development initiatives
- Support elected officials by keeping them informed of needs, ideas, and goals from the communities
- Create and publicize tax incentives for businesses to relocate to the region
- Create informational pieces designed to promote the region to prospective businesses
- Develop plans for placement of such pieces on the internet, in print, on billboards, and other appropriate forums
- Provide resources such as business plan assistance

### **Creation, Expansion, and Retention of Employment Opportunities**

- Attract small businesses and "lone eagles"
- Improve broadband access in the region
- Cooperate with mines and other major employers to assure an available workforce
- Create and expand targeted and affordable vocational training opportunities related to workforce needs and projections
- Provide vocational training for high school and college students to help them match their interests and skills with workforce projections

- Support and increase concurrent or “dual” enrollment for high school students who want to obtain college credits
- Provide and implement tax incentives for new businesses
- Identify and provide loans and grants for small businesses
- Assist small businesses in the development of business plans

### **Education**

- Expand, and in some communities, create vocational/career technical training and on-the-job training opportunities for youth
- Double the amount of funding available for computer-related technology in the classrooms and the necessary ancillary staffing support for that technology to bring New Mexico schools up to the level of other, better funded school districts
- Support facility development that will benefit students, their families, and the community, such as sports and health venues, and better, more up-to-date schools
- Secure increased funding for pre-schools, elementary, middle and high schools
- Coordinate vocational training with college credit courses to allow students to transition into career preparation

### **Solid Waste and Brownfields**

- Ensure adequate disposal of solid waste and encourage recycling programs
- Obtain funding to clean up brownfields and put abandoned lands to use
- Use green technology in upgrading or building public water systems

### **Renewable Energy**

- Establish offices of sustainability within local governments
- Develop an energy efficiency and conservation strategy for each community
- Use all available opportunities to retrofit buildings and facilities with energy efficient lighting, heating, and cooling mechanisms
- Provide education to promote water and energy conservation by individuals and families
- Develop home energy use audit guidelines and provide support in their use
- Use energy efficient motors when updating water systems
- Consider use of energy alternatives to “fuel” water systems
- Enforce land-use policies that conform to city and county regulations
- Promote friendly walking communities
- Provide financial/tax incentives to companies that will use geothermal, biomass, wind, and solar energy sources to replace or supplement traditional energy sources such as electricity and natural gas
- Establish a lighting plan that ensures street lights are adequate but not excessive for local needs for those communities that have street light
- Replace incandescent traffic signals with LED signals which utilize about 10% of the energy used by existing incandescent lights and result in an 84% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions

## **Planning**

- Provide coordination and support, as needed, to county and local governments, and water districts in the development of five-year comprehensive plans, infrastructure capital improvement plans, economic development plans, and 40-year water plans
- Provide technical assistance and support to members with preliminary engineering plans, water source protection plans, drought mitigation, emergency planning, etc

## **Transportation**

- Make road improvements:
  1. Paving of roads in cities, towns, and unincorporated areas where deemed necessary and beneficial
  2. Assurance of Americans with Disabilities Act compliance where possible
  3. Provide adequate drainage of roads
  4. Provide curb and gutters for drainage, again, where deemed necessary and beneficial
- Encourage installation and use of sidewalks where appropriate and beneficial to permit other, multi-modal transportation and to alleviate obesity problems
- Expand and maintain air transportation options in the region
- Continue to improve and maintain major arteries, including interstate and state highways
- Develop local transit systems to assist seniors, youth, and disabled individuals
- Develop plans for rapid transit to improve inter-city transportation/access for all
- Encourage and support programs for school bus routes
- Ensure development and funding for multi-modal, non-motorized transportation, including walking, bicycling, and walking and equestrian trails

## Vision Statement and Overview

The Southwestern New Mexico Council of Governments serves the four rural counties of Catron, Grant, Hidalgo, and Luna, which includes nine municipalities and a number of small unincorporated communities, dotting the landscape throughout the counties. The sixth largest national forest, the Gila, has a major presence in this region. The region is mountainous, isolated, and semi-arid sits at a high altitude above sea level. The region borders Mexico and eastern Arizona.

Water is a prominent concern in the southwest with no exception to this region. County, municipal governments, and 45 volunteer-run water districts in the region, have an important responsibility to properly maintain their systems, plan for the future, and plan for upgrades/improvements to maintain an adequate and potable water supply. Water utility lines are the most important consideration in planning new housing or commercial developments. Since the risk of wildfires is an ongoing threat to this region, water, sizing of lines, updating, or placement of new hydrants, are necessary to providing adequate fire protection. The Arizona Water Settlements Act (AWSA) has an important milestone coming up in 2012 which will affect the water supply to this region. It is incumbent on the counties and municipalities in the region to participate in regional planning around the AWSA to address their own needs.

The combined population of the four counties is approximately 63,300<sup>i</sup> with one in five people of the population living below the poverty line. Poverty is an abiding issue in this region. Most of the communities in the region are designated as “colonias” by the state of New Mexico, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Colonias are characterized by sub-standard housing, inadequate water and wastewater.

Housing is in short supply, with much of the current housing stock throughout the region being sub-standard. Since, there is affordable housing shortage throughout the region, it is critical that this problem gets resolved in order to attract more businesses and labor force to this area. As part of this problem, it is imperative that local leaders create a “sense of place” for people to be drawn to the region.

Opportunities for economic development in the fields of tourism and recreation abound in the region; however, the groundwork for substantially increasing the amount of cultural heritage and outdoor recreation must be laid by ensuring adequate short-term housing, food supply, promotional activities, and development of new events and opportunities.

The town of Silver City leads the way in downtown revitalization with their partnership with New Mexico Economic Development Department-MainStreet and Arts and Cultural District. Other communities throughout the region are also involved with MainStreet projects, including the city of Deming and the village of Reserve. The city of Deming is

also involved with the Arts and Cultural District program. Quemado is involved in the MainStreet satellite program. Many other communities in the region are beginning to see the benefits of revitalizing their downtowns.

Due to the unreliability of the mining industry and the uncertainty of the government's environmental views that skew the timber and biomass industries, the region is well aware of the need to diversify its economic base. The region has established several economic development organizations to help organize those efforts. In addition to the existing local partnerships and strong leadership, the area requires infusions of outside funding and continual efforts to buoy the economy by making the area inviting to operations of small businesses. To achieve this goal, the infrastructure for serving new and existing businesses and their employees must be strong.

Small businesses are the lifeblood of communities; therefore, business retention and recruitment is needed to strengthen the economic base of the region. Tax incentives for small businesses, training, assistance in development of business plans, and small business loans/grants are tools used to support and increase small businesses in the region.

Economic development in southwestern New Mexico must include strategies for attracting businesses and industry with the potential to employ large groups of people. As part of that strategy is developing industrial parks throughout the region to be able to offer sites to new and emerging industries or the relocation of existing businesses.

Technology and broadband are essential tools for all walks of life and will connect the people of southwestern New Mexico with each other and the rest of the world, with goods and/or information. Since the region is rural with isolated areas, the internet provides a link to friends, relatives, other professionals, education, information, and shopping. The number of publicly available computers is limited to a handful at libraries in the region. Wider availability of broadband and computers will help employers, job seekers, and residents in a multitude of ways. Good internet service will enable people to work from their homes and enhance small or large businesses.

Western New Mexico University (WNMU), the only higher education facility in the region, is working to fulfill the region's training needs, in addition to having partnerships with economic development organizations, local governments, and other agencies. WNMU, in partnership with the local school districts and governments, is formally in the process of creating vocational/ career training facilities in Grant County. All parties involved believe that this is the dominant educational need in this region to equip the existing and growing labor force with job skills that are needed in the job market.

Solid waste is a growing concern in the region. The town of Silver City's landfill serving two counties in the region with the possibility of gaining another, struggles to keep up

with increasing demand. In addition to new cell development, more transfer stations are needed. As with other infrastructure needs in this region, partnerships with state funding agencies are critically important to maintaining adequate systems for waste disposal.

Brownfields are abandoned or underused industrial and commercial facilities available for re-use after the assessment and remediation of the site is finished. There are many brownfields due to previous mining in the area and from underground storage tanks. The southwest region wishes to clean up contaminated areas, revitalize abandoned areas and put them to use. However, expansion or redevelopment of such a facility may be complicated by real or perceived environmental contaminations.



NM Cabinet Secretary Rick Homans discusses the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act  
Photo by Maureen Craig  
May 2009

Renewable energy has been a prominent theme of the Obama Administration. Some positive signs of creating better solutions to energy creation and management are already seen in the area. Changes will come about through consumer education, incorporating green technology in building and refurbishment of buildings, planning for energy efficient systems by counties and municipalities in the various facets of transportation, construction, and street and traffic lighting.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **THEMATIC DISCUSSION OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

# Regional Natural Resources

## Geography

Southwest New Mexico Council of Governments serves the extreme southwestern corner of New Mexico. This region is comprised of Catron, Grant, Hidalgo, and Luna counties. It is bordered on the south by Mexico and on the west by the state of Arizona. The largest municipality in the region is the city of Deming in Luna County followed by the town of Silver City in Grant County.

The region is a large rural area. Embedded in the region is the Gila National Forest which is a protected national forest in New Mexico. It covers approximately 3.3 million acres (5,150 sq. miles) of public land, making it the sixth largest national forest in the continental United States. The forest lies in southern Catron, northern Grant, western Sierra, and extreme northeastern Hidalgo counties in southwestern New Mexico. The forest headquarters is located in Silver City. The Gila Wilderness lies within the Gila National Forest and was established in 1924 as the first designated wilderness by the U.S. federal government. Aldo Leopold Wilderness and Blue Range Wilderness are also found within the Gila Wilderness' border.

Terrain ranges from rugged mountains and deep canyons to semi-desert. Due to the extremely rugged terrain, the area is largely unspoiled. There are several hot springs in the Gila National Forest. Several large metropolitan centers Tucson and Phoenix, Arizona; El Paso, Texas, Albuquerque, New Mexico, are located from 150 to 350 miles away from most areas in the district.



View of the Mogollon Mountains from Hwy 180-Photo by Ira N. Craig

This region covers an area of 11,074,823 acres; much of the region is made up of state, federal, and public land with wide expanses that include undeveloped valleys, desert, and mountains.

Elevations range from 4,900 feet near the Mexican border to about 9,000 feet on the mountain peaks in the northern part of the province.

## Climate

Catron, Grant, Hidalgo, and Luna counties are typical of the arid southwestern United States with large diurnal temperature fluctuations, low annual precipitation, minor snowfall amounts, and very intensive summer thunderstorms. The annual precipitation for the four counties ranges from 8.59 inches in the lower elevations in Deming to 15.43 inches at higher elevations at Gila Hot Springs and 20 to 30 inches in the mountainous areas. Elevation is a greater factor in determining the temperature of any specific community rather than its latitude. Warmest days often occur in June before the

monsoon season sets in during July and August. Afternoon storms tend to decrease solar insolation, lowering temperatures before they reach their potential daily high.

Within an area of this size, climate is nearly as varied as the terrain. The only unifying climatic variable is aridity; throughout the region evaporation potentials exceed the amount of precipitation typically received.

The mean annual precipitation in the lower elevations is generally between 8 and 13 inches. The mean annual precipitation in the mid range elevations between the flat lands and upper mountain areas, ranges from 12 to 16 inches, while the mountain areas range from 16 to 30 inches.

Snow falls from October to May in the mountain areas with most snowfall occurring between December and February, although March also has considerable snowfall. The mean annual snowfall ranges from 0.3 inches in the lower elevations to 36.4 inches at higher elevations.

Climate models project substantial changes in New Mexico's climate over the next 50 to 100 years if no measures are taken to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>ii</sup> Recurrence of a severe multi-year drought like that of the 1950's is expected sometime during this century. With projected increases in air temperatures by 6-12 degrees on average, warmer temperatures will offset the effect of any increase in precipitation that might occur due to climate change. Climate changes that are projected will impact water resources, infrastructure, agriculture, tourism, outdoor recreation, ecosystems in New Mexico's forests, grasslands, lakes and streams, and environmental health and quality.

## **Hydrology**

The principal water basins in the region are the Lower Colorado River Basin and the Southwestern Closed Basins. These basins cover more than 80% of the four counties. Additionally, portions of the Western Closed Basins and the Rio Grande Basin lie within the eastern part of Catron County.

Sub-basins within the Lower Colorado River Basin include the Little Colorado River, San Francisco River, Gila River, and San Simon Creek watersheds. In this region, streams in the Little Colorado sub-basin are generally ephemeral. The San Francisco and Gila Rivers are normally perennial, although diversions for irrigation sometimes result in short dry stretches, especially in areas of thick gravel fill. San Simon Creek, which joins the Gila after it crosses the Arizona border, is an ephemeral stream with no tributaries.



Elk  
Photo by Bob Pelham

The Southwestern Closed Basins lie mostly

within the Mexican Highland section of the Basin and Range Province. They include six sub-basins in New Mexico, covering about 8,420 square miles: Animas, Hachita, Mimbres, Playas, San Luis, and Wamel.

Drainage within the closed basins generally does not follow distinct channels, rather, runoff tends to spread across lowlands as sheet flow, terminating in shallow playa lakes. The major exception to this phenomenon is the Mimbres River and to a lesser degree, the Animas Creek which along with some of its tributaries is perennial in its upper reaches. The Mimbres follows a distinct channel across much of its basin, but disappears in its lower reaches. Flood flow in the river generally terminates as sheet flow in the area east of Deming that is known as Lewis Flats.

With the exception of the San Francisco River, Gila River, and the Mimbres River watersheds, most of the region has ephemeral waterways that are affected by short and sometimes intense thunderstorms. All incorporated communities have some local flooding from these intense storms. In most cases, damages have been minimal, and the communities have controlled public and private building in these areas.

Access to the headwater areas of stream systems such as the Gila has always been difficult. Some of these areas remain primitive and undeveloped, unique traits that have been officially acknowledged through the creation in the Gila National Forest and the Gila Wilderness designation, and later, the Aldo Leopold Wilderness area and the Blue Range Wilderness area. Today, these wilderness areas protect 789,385 acres. The entire national forest remains a popular destination for hunting and other outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, and timber harvesting.



Gila Cliff Dwellings  
Photo by Bob Pelham

Historically, irrigated agriculture has been the largest source of surface and groundwater depletion. Farm development in New Mexico picked up substantially in the 1950s, with the realization that soils and climate conditions enabled successful cash crop production, once groundwater became more available. This resulted in the creation of many farming enterprises where previously only livestock grazing had been feasible. Mining is the second largest cause of groundwater depletion followed by public and domestic water use.

### **Water Planning**

In order to plan for future water needs, regional water planners must estimate future population growth. Accordingly, population projections for each county in the southwest New Mexico planning region are annually forecast. Additionally, water demand by sector for each county is analyzed as a means of understanding water use in each county.

The Arizona Water Rights Settlements Act (AWSA) of 1982 is an important piece of legislation for the region. The AWSA is offering an additional 14,000 acre-feet of surface water to the region annually through one or more diversions. Funding of \$66 million dollars may be used for any water projects and related activities in the four county southwest region beginning in 2012 without requiring repayment. This funding will come to New Mexico in increments of \$6.6 million over a ten year period. Extra funding up to \$62 million will be provided to New Mexico, if a New Mexico unit develops diversions that capture the 14,000 acre-feet of water.

The Act requires the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission, in consultation with the Southwest New Mexico Water Planning Group or its successors, to make a decision on a New Mexico unit and notify the U.S. Secretary of the Interior by 2014.

In 2007, Governor Bill Richardson requested that a parallel planning process be set up to be inclusive of environmental groups. Therefore, the stakeholders group, which meets quarterly, and its implementation and technical committees, which meet monthly, are addressing issues pertaining to the planning process to use or not use the water and funding.

Water is the key to life. Counties, municipalities, and water districts not only need to properly maintain and manage their water systems, but they must also plan for future water use and storage systems. Proper stewardship of the infrastructure systems for water is the highest priority, especially given the problems and possible droughts expected, due to climate change in the future, the potential for wildfires, and the need for water sources for housing and other community developments.



Gila River  
Photo by Mary Alice Murphy

Government entities and state agencies must partner with mutual domestic water associations to assist in obtaining funding and training on how to manage the water systems because they are managed by volunteers.

Counties and municipalities in the region are in the process of creating 40 year water plans to assure that the people in their areas will have sufficient water for their future needs.

### **Water Quality Issues**

Both surface and groundwater quality is generally very good throughout the region. It is well suited for agricultural use, for private domestic well, and is easily treated for public water supply systems; however, there are a number of existing water quality concerns in the region.

Surface water resources in the region include 67.3 river miles that have been identified by the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) in 2002 as being impacted. The water quality in most lakes and reservoirs in the region is good.

Groundwater quality in the region is impacted in localized areas by leaking gasoline storage tanks, elevated sulfates and contaminants from mining operations, nitrates from septic tanks, and chlorinated solvents from industrial operations in Deming.

Although the vast majority of surface and groundwater resources are not impacted, watershed protection planning helps ensure that these resources remain healthy and should be a priority in developing a regional water plan.

Groundwater is relied on heavily throughout the region; nearly three times as much groundwater is withdrawn as surface water. In particular, the region is dependent on groundwater for mining, public, and domestic water supply purposes. As pumping from these groundwater sources increases, outpacing natural recharge, water tables throughout the region are dropping.

### **Soil and Vegetation**

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)-Soil Conservation Service has published soil surveys for each of the four counties in the region. Soils within a given category are subject to significant variations in depth and texture. These variations are due to differences in underlying geologic materials from which the soils are formed, as well as localized weathering, and biological factors.

Soils in the broader reaches of the Gila and San Francisco River Valleys are mostly sandy to silty, well drained, and suited to agriculture. Soils in the drainages farther north tend to have higher clay content, derived from shale parent material. They are usually much heavier than the soils of surrounding hills and mountains. The closed basins to the south are covered mostly by light-to-medium textured soil derived from sedimentary and igneous rocks of varied mineral content. Alkaline minerals have accumulated in the playas, and areas of caliche are present locally, as are wind-blown sand deposits.



Gila River  
Photo by Mary Alice Murphy

Soil cover on mountain slopes is generally not more than a few inches deep where woodland cover is absent, while in forested areas, it is usually thick with a much higher humus content. Soils in the closed drainage basins, where run-off from higher elevations collects, tend to be low in humus, high in soluble minerals, and are often alkaline.

Within the Lower Colorado River Basin, the valley floor and adjacent slopes are mainly grassland and low brush, commonly dotted with piñon and oak on the intermediate slopes. Oak generally gives way to a greater prevalence of juniper in the more northerly latitudes. Ponderosa pine is common between 6,000 and 8,000 feet with spruce, fir, and aspen found at altitudes above 8,000 feet.

Lower elevations in the Western Closed Basin are also dominated by grass and brush lands with the exception of the relatively barren playas and salt flats. Vertical progressions in these basins are similar to those of the Lower Colorado Basin.

The lowland areas of the Southwestern Closed Basins consist of semi-desert grassland and brush lands. Representative plants include creosote bush, mesquite, and yucca, giving way to woodland vegetation such as piñon, juniper, oak, and eventually ponderosa pine in the higher elevations.

## People

### Demographics

According to the 2010 Census, Catron, Grant, Hidalgo, and Luna counties have a combined population of approximately 63,300 people. The population of the region is equal to about 3.0% of the population of the entire state. The four largest population centers in the region are: Deming, Silver City, Lordsburg, and Bayard.

Grant County is the most densely populated county in the region with a population of 29,514 while Catron County is the least sparsely populated county with a population of 3,725. In Hidalgo County, the majority of the population, 4,894, resides in Lordsburg while Luna County's population, 25,095, stayed almost constant from the 2000 to 2010 Census with only a 0.3% increase.

Population estimates for the incorporated communities in the region are as follows:

<u>Incorporated Places</u>	<u>2010 Census</u>
Bayard	2,328
Columbus	1,664
Deming	14,855
Hurley	1,297
Lordsburg	2,797
Reserve	289
Santa Clara	1,686
Silver City	10,315
Virden	153

## Labor Force Development

The region has a civilian labor force of approximately 29,000 people. Although the unemployment rates have not dropped significantly in Catron, Grant, Hidalgo, or Luna counties, the region has seen an increase in hiring within the mining, retail, and government industries.

<u>County</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Ranked in NM</u>	<u>Ranked in US</u>
Catron	8.3%	10	1,568
Grant	7.9%	14	1,775
Hidalgo	6.5%	20	2,347
Luna	20.4%	1	23

### ***Catron County***

The 2010 population of Catron County is 3,733, a 5.1% increase from 2000, according to the 2010 U.S. Census. The total civilian labor force in 2011 was 1,510 of which 1,384 were employed, leaving 126 unemployed, giving Catron County an unemployment rate of 8.3%. The average weekly wage for Catron County in 4th Quarter 2011 was \$546. The total number of employees located in Catron County in 4th Quarter 2011 was 602.

The largest industry sectors for employment are:

<u>Sector</u>	<u>Percentage of Employment</u>
Public Administration	19%
Health Care and Assistance	19%
Retail Trade	10%
Construction	9%
Accommodations and Food Services	5%
Manufacturing	4%
Other Service (except Public Administration)	2%
Wholesale Trade	2%
Utilities	2%

### ***Grant County***

The 2010 population of Grant County is 29,514, a -4.8% decrease from 2000, according to the 2010 U.S. Census. The total civilian labor force in 2011 was 11,567 of which 10,652 were employed, leaving 716 unemployed, giving Grant County an unemployment rate of 7.9%. The average weekly wage for Grant County in 4th Quarter 2011 was \$679. The total number of employees located in Grant County in 4th Quarter 2011 was 9,664.

The largest industry sectors for employment are:

<u>Sector</u>	<u>Percentage of Employment</u>
Health Care and Social Assistance	21%
Education Services	21%
Retail Trade	12%
Accommodations and Food	9%

Public Administration	6%
Construction	5%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	2%
Finance and Insurance	2%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	2%

### ***Hidalgo County***

The 2010 population of Hidalgo County is 4,898, a -17.5% decrease from 2000, according to the 2010 U.S. Census. The total civilian labor force in 2011 was 2,636 of which 2,465 were employed, leaving 171 unemployed, giving Hidalgo County an unemployment rate of 6.5%. The average weekly wage for Hidalgo County in 4th Quarter 2011 was \$719. The total number of employees located in Hidalgo County in 4th Quarter 2011 was 1,679.

The largest industry sectors for employment are:

<u>Sector</u>	<u>Percentage of Employment</u>
Public Administration	25%
Retail Trade	12%
Accommodation and Food Services	11%
Health Care	10%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	5%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	5%
Transportation and Warehousing	3%
Construction	3%
Information	1%

### ***Luna County***

The 2011 population of Luna County is 27,227, a 0.3% increase from 2000, according to the 2010 U.S. Census. The total civilian labor force in 2011 was 12,611 of which 10,385 were employed, leaving 2,226 unemployed, giving Luna County an unemployment rate of 17.7%. The average weekly wage for Luna County in 4th Quarter 2011 was \$636. The total number of employees located in Luna County in 4th Quarter 2011 was 7,476.

The largest industry sectors for employment are:

<u>Sector</u>	<u>Percentage of Employment</u>
Retail Trade	16%
Public Administration	13%
Manufacturing	12%
Health Care and Social Assistance	11%
Accommodations and Food Services	10%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	9%
Construction	5%
Transportation and Warehousing	2%
Profession, Scientific, and Technical Services	2%

## **Racial Characteristics**

Since, the region borders the Mexico border, there is a significant amount of Hispanic descent. Catron County has the lowest population percentage of Hispanic descent, 19%; however, the Hispanic population increased significantly in the three other counties in the region. Grant County has the next highest with 48% Hispanic population followed by Hidalgo County at 57%. Luna County has the highest population of Hispanics in the region with 62%.

## **Senior Citizens**

A number of community leaders have expressed the need for more senior housing and more services in the region. The regions' leaders are aware and support the need of senior housing and services as the 2010 Census confirms that the senior population is growing throughout the region. The percentage of senior citizens in Catron County is 28%, 21% in Grant County, 17% in Hidalgo County, and 20% in Luna County.

## **Youth**

Leaders in the field of education have stated that youth without aspirations for higher education are leaving school without the necessary vocational skills to find meaningful and lasting employment. Serving the youth is also justified by the 2010 Census as Catron County 4%, Grant County 8%, Hidalgo County 8%, and Luna County 9% of the population that is 18-24 years of age.

## **Health**

In New Mexico, county health councils are an important source of information about issues affecting the well-being of the population. Some of the more harmful issues affecting people's health include heart disease and cancer (one of the top causes of death); low birth weight infants, making them vulnerable to other health problems; rising obesity rates in youth; and the delivery of health care services to a geographically disbursed population.<sup>iii</sup> Poor housing conditions affect the health of the poorest in this region because of mold, asbestos, lead paint, and other issues.

## **Colonias: Designation and Needs**

The Cranston-Gonzales National Affordable Housing Act of 1990 is the catalyst for the establishment of partnerships between federal, state, local governments, and the private sector, including local non-profit community-based organizations.

The state of New Mexico partners with the federal government, local subdivisions, and the private sector in meeting the infrastructure needs of its citizens. Colonias are located 150 miles along the border of the United States and



Annette Morales at Colonias Training  
Photo by Priscilla C. Lucero

Mexico. Colonias lack vital infrastructure components such as adequate water, wastewater, and housing. Under provisions of the Cranston-Gonzales Act, the Colonias are entitled to funding for infrastructure development of primary needs such as water, wastewater, housing, utilities, and roads.

### **Housing**

The comprehensive plan addresses each of the communities need to create new housing and to improve or to rehabilitate sub-standard housing. Regional housing authorities and the state of New Mexico are encouraging the use of green technologies in order to reduce family and individual energy costs and the overall “carbon footprint” in the region.

According to the New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority<sup>iv</sup> (MFA), the priority needs in the southwest region are single family rehabilitation and new construction, public infrastructure, and economic development. This region also needs emergency and transitional housing for the homeless, elderly, and emergency repairs for existing homeowners.

MFA reports that housing discrimination occurs in New Mexico, albeit at a somewhat lower degree than the percentage reported by HUD nationwide. MFA recommends that the state invest in credit and homebuyer counseling programs to improve citizens’ understanding of how to manage personal debt. The state should also work to ensure that minority populations are aware of government-guaranteed loan programs, which appear to better serve these populations than conventional loan programs. These programs should be targeted in communities where denial disparities are the greatest and denial rates are high overall, especially to Native Americans and Hispanics/Latinos. As the Hispanic presence in Grant, Hidalgo, and Luna Counties hovers around 50%, it is incumbent on the region to improve its services in this regard and for the state to help fund such expanded services.

Example of a rebuild project on a house in Silver City

*Before:*



*During and after:*



The priority housing needs are for single family rehabilitation or reconstruction, including self-help solutions and hook-ups.

MFA reports that counties are considered high-need if they satisfy at least three of the following criteria:

- More than 6% of housing units are overcrowded;
- More than 20% of housing units are mobile/manufactured homes;
- More than 20% of its population living in poverty; or
- More than 50% of the county's population earning less than \$20,000 is cost burdened.

Luna and Hidalgo counties satisfy at least three of the four criteria.

“The Southwest Regional Housing and Community Development Corporation provides safe affordable housing and housing resources for low to moderate income residents throughout the region,” according to the past interim director Richard Hayes, at least 50% of the housing in Deming is in very poor condition, and 30% of those homes are in “great need” of repair. In Columbus, 90% of the housing is in need of rehabilitation or replacement. He said that all of Hidalgo County is a high priority need according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development standards. Mr. Hayes also stated, “That the increase in retirees moving to the area has resulted in inflating the cost of housing, making it difficult for local families to buy or rent homes.”

The town of Silver City has created an Affordable Housing Plan, one of the first in this region.<sup>v</sup> The report states there are four identifiable groups of residents who will need special attention for affordable housing in Silver: single mothers, disabled individuals, the elderly, and the impoverished. These people need additional affordable housing alternatives. The plan describes strategies and locations for developing these alternatives and should be considered an important resource for the town and a model for development of such plans for other communities in the region.

Hidalgo County and the city of Lordsburg recognize the critical need for new and renovated housing throughout the county to meet the needs of a wide variety of household types and levels of income. Housing stock in Hidalgo County is both relatively old and poor in quality, and a disproportionate number of households live in poor or sub-standard housing. Furthermore, the county finds it difficult to attract and retain professionals because these individuals and their households are often forced to live outside the county to find housing that will meet their needs.

Along with the Housing Plan, stating the community's housing needs, local governments will have to pass the Local Economic Development Act (LEDA) to override the Anti-Donation Clause in order to donate property for affordable housing. Since many of the communities in the region do not have a Housing Plan, one should be considered to help alleviate the housing crisis in the region.

## Services and Industry

### Agriculture and Ranching

Gross receipts income from ranching and farming provide income in southwestern New Mexico. Approximately 80% of the land in New Mexico is rangeland, consisting primarily of native shrubs, grasses, forbs, and open stands of trees.<sup>vi</sup> Almost all ranching operations in the state are family business. The drought of the past several years is affecting the beef industry, due to the cost of supplemental feeding. USDA is evaluating the situation and trying to help with the feed for the cattle, but there is a need for a wider response through legislative action.

According to the New Mexico Taxation and Revenue Department, the combined income for Catron, Grant, and Luna Counties in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting for the third quarter 2011 totaled \$531,360, while Hidalgo County had a non-disclosure report.



Moon Ranch Cattle  
Photo by Ira N. Craig

Pete Walden of Grant County Extension reported that the return on investment from 51 ranches in the county equaled 1.4% in 2008. The Endangered Species Act has affected the number of jobs in this industry and severely reduced county income because of reduction in use of grazing land. However, the reduction has had other implications for the region, including increased fire hazards from grasslands. The reduction in cattle went from 59,000 in 1979 to 28,000 in 2009. The 6,400+ irrigated acres in Grant County are mostly used for grass production for livestock; crops and fruits in the county include apples, grapes, and some hay. A

food council has been formed in Grant County to encourage food production and community gardens to protect the residents from potential food shortages. Food security is seen as increasingly important because of the region's isolation.

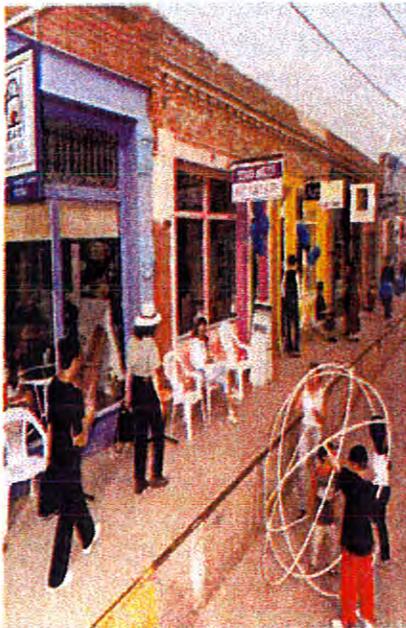
Livestock production is still an important income producer in Catron County with 170 beef cattle ranches. Beef cattle and timber are the primary agriculture commodities produced in the county. Tracy Drummon of Catron County Extension affirmed Peter Walden's report on reduction of livestock, influenced by the Endangered Species Act and the release and protection of wolves. Ranchers are doing more with fewer employees. Drummon also reported that the largest agriculture-related employer in the county is in timber. A sawmill was the biggest employer in the county but was gutted in the 1990's. Only in the past few years has the industry begun a comeback, and now, there are three or

four smaller timber-related businesses in the county. There is a need for efficient equipment or retrofitting old equipment. This would allow producers to use different kinds of wood and to efficiently produce wood products and increase job opportunities. A related problem for the timber industry is the prevention of use of certain woods due to opinions of environmentalists.

Luna County has the largest amount of irrigated cropland in the region with an estimated 35,000 to 40,000 acres. Onions and chile are among the major crops in Luna County. Labor laws affecting farms, including a proposed workman's compensation requirement, will detrimentally affect farms and cause loss of labor, in turn reducing production and food availability. Jack Blandford of Luna County Extension Service said that an important goal in Luna County is to install drip irrigation to use water more efficiently. USDA has announced \$2.4 million to install drip irrigation on 24 small farms, with the assistance of the Black Range Resource & Conservation Development, Inc. The cost of installing this kind of irrigation is from \$2,000 to \$2,500 per acre.

### **Arts, Recreation and Tourism**

The importance of arts-related activities in economic development has been proven through studies of employment, delivery of nonprofit services, and productivity of the artists in many disciplines. Dance, animation, film, theater, music, puppetry, and the visual arts are among the arts celebrated in southwestern New Mexico communities. Engagement in the schools with art educational programs and participation in community are necessary for art projects to be continued and expanded. The Youth Mural Program



Yankee Street in Silver City  
Photo courtesy of WNMU

and National Dance Institute are two good examples of engaging youth and their families in the artistic life of the community.

Grants are needed to provide artist-in-residence programs and art education programs because the schools do not have funding for arts across the disciplines for their students. Cobre Consolidated School District has a strong music program and facilities for various cultural offerings. There is also a need for proper cultural facilities in the schools.

The Department of Tourism says that the top seven items that draws tourists to New Mexico are:

1. Scenic beauty
2. Native American culture
3. Historic sites
4. Outdoor recreation
5. Arts
6. Hispanic culture
7. Special events

Developing cultural heritage tourism is a goal of the Village of Reserve. Reserve and Catron County have all of the above.<sup>vii</sup> Reserve is uniquely qualified to build a tourism strategy based on its distinctive western heritage. Its goals include the promotion of Reserve as an authentic Western town, promoting the new Elfege Baca Memorial, enhancing recreational tourism as an anchor for economic development in the area, and promoting a business cluster oriented to outdoor sports and recreation.

A discussion of tourism would not be complete without recognizing the attraction of the national parks, the Gila National Forest and Wilderness area, and the scenic beauty of southwestern New Mexico have been bringing tourists to the region. Annual events such as the Tour of the Gila bicycle race, the Silver City Blues Festival, and other such events are also drawing tourists to the region. Strategies for increasing tourism include properly showcasing the tourism attractions and ensuring adequate accommodations for visitors.



Elfege Baca Memorial Plaque in Reserve  
Photo by Ira N. Craig

Other recreation destinations include the region's three state parks: City of Rocks in Grant County; Rock Hound State Park and Pancho Villa Park in Luna County; the Gila Cliff Dwellings and the Catwalk in Catron County. In Hidalgo County, Janaloo and Manny Hough, the owners and managers of Shakespeare Ghost Town have been making headway getting Shakespeare made into a New Mexico State Park.

### **Downtown Revitalization and Improvements**

Silver City MainStreet Project offers lessons for the other communities in the region that are working to improve their downtown areas. Frank Milan, former executive director of the project, says, "An important goal of a renewed downtown is to provide informal gathering places for people. Also, the revitalized downtown need not be one central location or crossroads, but can encompass a wider area as the Silver City downtown does." Existing historical buildings add depth and character to downtowns and should be considered for restoration. It is important to have a broad business mix so that residents can walk, meet with friends or acquaintances, and accomplish their shopping needs. The downtown provides a "sense of place" and history that connects residents with the past. Silver City has received a national award for its MainStreet project. Silver City's MainStreet project has been in existence for over 25 years, which accounts for Deming, Bayard, Santa Clara, and other communities have contacting Silver City to discuss their MainStreet project to gain ideas and strategies for their communities.

Deming MainStreet is committed to guiding Deming's commercial district to reaching its full potential in every way possible through organizing the community and its businesses; developing and growing its economic positioning in the region and state; promoting the downtown's unique identity to the community and nation and restoring its historical significance with both aesthetics and design.



Mural project in Silver City  
Photo by Ira N. Craig

Other communities working to improve and strengthen their downtown areas in this region are Bayard, Lordsburg, Quemado, Reserve, and Santa Clara. The needs of these communities vary but all will need various amounts of funding in the areas of infrastructure, historical restoration, business recruitment and retention, promotion/marketing, and streetscape planning and design to enhance their downtowns.

The Silver City Arts and Cultural District (ACD) recently became one of six state-designated arts and culture districts across the state. The ACD is to serve as a catalyst for enlisting the range of community arts and culture resources in enhancing downtown revitalization and encouraging economic development. The ACD, while having distinct boundaries, is also a clearinghouse and resource for artists and organizations across Grant County.<sup>viii</sup> Communities qualifying for designation as a New Mexico Arts and Cultural District gain significant benefits such as a Local Option Gross Receipts Tax to support the district's development; a doubling of the state tax credit for rehabilitation of historic structures; and a Quality of Life Tax to fund the district's ongoing operations.

As one of the requirements of ACD's designation, efforts to develop a Cultural Plan were initiated in March 2008 with the technical assistance and resources of the Mimbres Region Arts Council and Western New Mexico University. The University of New Mexico Institute for Applied Research, Bureau of Business & Economic Research (BBER), conducted research on behalf of this effort to inform planning. One of BBER's findings was the under-representation of Hispanics in arts and cultural events. The project in August 2008 won the first-ever national award for "Historic Preservation-led Strategies for Economic Development" from the US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration.

The main findings of the Cultural Plan are:

- Planning to include professional development of the arts community
- Need for a community cultural center
- Centralizing a calendar of community arts and cultural events
- Marketing and promotion including upgrading billboard signage to guide travelers into downtown
- Improving websites aimed at tourism
- Developing vehicles to celebrate the region's diverse ethnic cultures
- Planning and design, which includes the adoption of an Artist Live/Work ordinance to legalize the practice of some local artists seeking to use downtown studio spaces as living quarters

- Building and financing capacity including the identification and procurement of public and private funding sources and studying the impact of tourism on the county's economy
- Planning for a mid-sized venue that can serve the interests of performing arts organizations

All these needs arose through a careful and well-designed planning process that provided many opportunities for community involvement.

As stated in the Cultural Plan, there is a need for cultural facilities for arts and cultural events across the region. Historic buildings, stages, and movie theaters should be restored to offer venues for community events and gatherings. Such facilities as Silco Theater, El Sol, and the Gila in Silver City, Fort Bayard Little Theater, and the old Bayard Theater are examples of buildings can be considered when choosing a place for renovations. They reflect the heritage of the region and will build pride of place if properly restored.

### **Business Development and Retention**

Southwestern New Mexico is working on diversifying its economic base to reduce reliance on employment from mining companies. There are a number of economic development organizations and programs in the region that are working to increase employment options and business growth and retention, including Western New Mexico University's Small Business Development Center, Deming/Luna County Chamber of Commerce, Lordsburg/Hidalgo County Chamber of Commerce, Old West Country, Silver City/Grant County Chamber of Commerce, the Grant County Economic Development Coalition for Progress, Southwest New Mexico Council of Governments, Gila Economic Development Alliance, and Silver City and Deming MainStreet Project.

Goals of these organizations include attracting large employers to the region as well as creating an environment with the right incentives to support and retain small businesses. These efforts depend upon development of adequate facilities for businesses to use cost effective transportation since the region is geographically isolated, a trained workforce, strong schools, vibrant arts, culture, and recreation opportunities.

### **Fort Bayard National Historic Landmark**

Fort Bayard was established in 1866 by troops of Company B, 125<sup>th</sup> U.S. Colored Infantry and was designated as a National Historic Landmark in March 2004. Fort Bayard Medical Center became a medical center in the 1900s after the army troops left. The site consists of 468 acres with its own water system fed by 19 natural springs and is surrounded by a National Forest Game Preserve. One of only two national cemeteries in New Mexico is located at Fort Bayard.

A unique aspect of Fort Bayard's history that sets it apart from other Forts of its kind is that it has been continuously occupied for more than 140 years.



Tour guide, dressed in period costume at Fort Bayard  
Photo by Ira N. Craig

Fort Bayard is considered a vital and vibrant cornerstone of the economic foundation of southwest New Mexico. A new medical facility has been constructed just outside the grounds of Fort Bayard property. When the facility was completed, the Department of Health moved out of Fort Bayard and for the first time in its history, the grounds may be unoccupied. With concern about its future, a steering committee has been working under the coordination of the Southwest New Mexico Council of Governments to seek alternative uses for Fort Bayard and to improve its vibrancy.

In 2006, the Grant County Economic Development Coalition for Progress and the Southwest New Mexico Council of Governments supported a study and the writing of a plan with options for the future of Fort Bayard.

In 2009, a summit meeting about the future of Fort Bayard was held. One of the ideas emerging from the summit was a plan to create vocational training programs in deconstruction trades such as asbestos abatement, lead paint removal, residential construction technology, and renewable energy technology. Western New Mexico University is spearheading an effort to seek funding support for training that would culminate in on-the-job training that could result in restoration of a number of historic buildings on the grounds of Fort Bayard.

Community interest in the preservation and development of Fort Bayard is strong, but the region lacks the resources to restore the many historical buildings on the grounds. Community and regional leaders are seeking long-term financial sustainability for Fort Bayard through public and private partnerships. An important goal into the future is to achieve this mission.

### **International Borders**

The southwest region borders Arizona and Mexico. Although there are efforts being made to tighten the borders against illegal entry into the United States, there are also efforts to expanding the ports of entries in New Mexico for economic development purposes. In spite of the ten-year old NAFTA agreement New Mexico Ports of Entry are underutilized or not utilized at all. The Santa Teresa expansion has put forth assets that the port of entry communities can utilize such as a six mile heavy load radius, discussion between New Mexico and Mexico about trade agreements, and collaboration of expanding transportation avenues.

Hidalgo County has seen a sizeable increase in the number of border patrol officers. The City of Lordsburg has collaborated with the U.S. Border Patrol to construct a \$45 million building for administration and services. The State Land Office sold 25 acres of state trust land near Interstate 10 in Hidalgo County to federal officials for the building of the Border Patrol station. The facility will accommodate up to 650 agents and employees. It

will have an administration building, vehicle maintenance shop and fueling station, equestrian center, dog kennels, firing range, and a heliport pad.

Funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 has provided \$15.16 million to Antelope Wells, a port of entry in Hidalgo County, for improvement of border security. Antelope Wells is a small port and will be the last to be developed fully for economic development purposes.

The border community of Columbus in Luna County is the only 24-hour port of entry in the state. Columbus was awarded \$2.4 million to improve its border with Mexico. The investments in border security are expected to bring additional revenues from gross receipts taxes to border communities from new border patrol agents and their families and through construction trades. Although the port of entry expansion has begun in Santa Teresa, Columbus will be the next port of entry that is utilized for economic development purposes.

## **Education**

### ***Pre-School and Child Care***

Childcare is an important need of families with working parents. In Grant County, a recent study found that almost two-thirds of the families with children need childcare. More than half of families needing care for their children are unable to find said care.

According to the Community Partnership for Children survey, the greatest need in southwest New Mexico is for after-school programs and care for three to five year olds. The survey also verified the need for infant care as reported by approximately 25% of the respondents, greatly exceeds available slots in the community. More than one-half of the children covered in the survey are being cared for at home by relatives or friends. Only about one-third of the children are in childcare centers. More than half of the responding parents said they would be willing to drive six miles or more for a quality program.

Grant County has built a child-care facility that serves at least 40 children. The facility is located behind the Grant County Business Conference Center. The facility provides care during non-traditional hours.

### ***Elementary, Middle, and High Schools***

There are seven school districts in the region: Animas Public Schools, Cobre Consolidated Schools, Deming Public Schools, Lordsburg Municipal Schools, Quemado Independent Schools, Reserve Independent Schools, and Silver Consolidated School District.

Independent schools include the charter Aldo Leopold High School and Guadalupe Montessori School in Silver City and the Chavez Charter School in Deming. The largest school district is



Fitting Helmets in Bayard  
Photo by Cynthia Stoechner

Deming Public Schools with a reported enrollment in the 2009-2010 school year of 5,321; second is Silver Consolidated Schools with 3,123, followed by Cobre with 1,377 students. Enrollment of students in other school districts in the region for 2009-2010 was: Lordsburg 601, Animas 243, Quemado 165, and Reserve 169.

Schools educate and prepare the future workforce for the region. The Council of Governments asked several educational leaders about their priorities and needs related to their students' preparation to join the workforce.

*Need- Increase in or Creation of Career/Vocational Training for High School Students:*

First and foremost is the need to provide hands-on training with a career/vocational training for students. Mr. Dick Pool, superintendent of Silver Consolidated Schools, stated unequivocally that those youth who do not aspire to higher education and who lack career training opportunities are lost to a cycle of poverty that will envelop their families and children and continue to be repeated in their children. The need is for students to participate in on-the-job training and job coaching while enrolled in classes that help them to obtain the necessary certifications for work in their selected fields. Because the Silver School District does not meet the low income standards required for extra federal or state funding, the district is not funded sufficiently to support those marginal students who fall between the cracks. Those students who do not wish to attend college, are not sufficiently trained to be able to compete for jobs upon graduation. Ms. Harvielee Moore, superintendant from Deming echoed this sentiment since several of the schools in Deming have over 90% poverty with one school having 98%.

Superintendent Harvielee Moore of Deming Public Schools outlined the parameters of her district's Career Technology Program which offers training in welding, building trades, carpentry, and A+ technology certification. There is a need for an infusion of funding to build vocational training courses in nursing, electrical work, plumbing, and automobile mechanics. The cost to jumpstart programs in any of these areas ranges from \$75,000 to \$150,000, depending on the equipment and laboratory needs.

In Lordsburg, with declining school enrollments, the challenges are different. The Lordsburg Schools, because of their small size, are unable to qualify for vocational program monies through the state. They are partnering with Western New Mexico University (WNMU) to develop courses to be held at the Learning Center in Lordsburg.

The courses include dual high school/university credit courses, and as a start in the vocational/career training arena, industrial maintenance training.



Tree Day at Lordsburg Municipal Schools  
Photos contributed by Don C. Smith

Western New Mexico University offers dual enrollment classes which enables high school students to obtain college credits. Dr. Joseph Shepard, president of WNMU, is proud of the outreach that the university provides across the region, from Lordsburg to Deming and as far north as Gallup. WNMU is a precious resource, as the sole institution of higher learning in the region and is actively working with the various counties to offer education and training to students who cannot make the drive to Silver City for regular classes. An increase in education and training opportunities requires facilities, equipment, and staffing.

*Need-Distance Learning Opportunities:*

Mr. Jim Barentine, former superintendent of Lordsburg Municipal Schools, emphasized the need for the proper technology to be able to offer more distance learning opportunities to students. He said, "That as the amount of information doubles every five to ten years, students need to be taught the skills to find knowledge and information; students have to be constant researchers." When corners are cut by providing outmoded or inadequate computer equipment, the students suffer and society pays the cost in other ways.

*Need-Computers and state of the art technology:*

Ms. Harvielee Moore was asked how much it costs the Deming schools to maintain, operate, and constantly update the technology needs of computer and related technology systems. She estimated that the current line item for these costs is \$2.8 million, but that at least \$5 million per year is actually needed.

*Need-Changing the funding paradigm for school districts:*

The City of Lordsburg faces a unique problem: its school enrollments are shrinking, which means that there should be more campus consolidation. But when a school building is shut down, the operational budget of the district is hit with a decrease that it cannot afford. The district cannot feasibly close a school, so the funding infrastructure is driving operational priorities, rather than the other way around. The newest school building is close to 40 years old. The tax base in Lordsburg is so low that the district cannot afford to put up new buildings – this will lead to serious problems in the future.

Along this line, Mr. Pool also mentioned that the current funding paradigm negatively impacts Silver Consolidated Schools with regard to poverty levels. It will be useful for the reader to understand this region is seeing an influx of retirees with more disposable income which shifts the median income upward. At the same time, children are having children, moderate- and lower-income families are struggling to survive, and the economic recession is affecting everyone.

*Need- Retain a highly qualified staff:*

This point came from Ms. Harvielee Moore of Deming Schools. She briefly noted that once a district begins to invest in training and retaining its highly qualified staff, the district suffers when teachers move elsewhere. The need is for salaries to be competitive,

for districts to receive funding for district-wide training days, and for the class sizes to be manageable.

The needs expressed by educational leaders for the purposes of this report are echoed in the Education Commission of the States report entitled, "Future Trends Affecting Education," published in 1999<sup>ix</sup>. That report notes the increasing dominance of technology in the economy and society creates a widening gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots", the rise of knowledge industries and a knowledge-dependent society, and more single-parent families. The report also notes that investments in technology infrastructure and equipment for schools are expanding – but not so much in southwestern New Mexico, where the needs are still significant and that the unemployment rate does not reveal the extent of employment problems – certainly a truism for this region as well.

### ***Western New Mexico University***

Western New Mexico University (WNMU), located in Silver City, has served the people of the state and its surrounding areas as a comprehensive, regional, rural, public coeducational university since 1893 and caters to a student body diverse in age, culture, language, and ethnic background.

From humble beginnings as a Normal School and then a State Teacher's College, Western New Mexico University has become a five-city campus (Silver City, Deming, Gallup, Lordsburg, and Truth or Consequences) with award winning programs and faculty. Approximately 3,000 students benefit from diverse degree offerings and programs with over 70 fields of study.

A Hispanic-serving institution, WNMU serves as a community college as well as a four-year institution. Nationally certified programs in Early Childhood, Nursing, Education, and Economic Development are emblematic of the unique programs available at this state university. The small-town campus environment equals personalized attention for students, while also providing distinctive educational opportunities.



Besse-Forward Global Resource Center  
Photo courtesy of WNMU

WNMU, with its unique access and resources, helps various community entities with economic development assistance. Education continues on the home front with the new Southwest New Mexico Leadership Program. A four-month course, the program is dedicated to providing participants with skills and tools to be effective community leaders.

WNMU's Office of Institutional Advancement, Economic Development and Community Affairs serves the region through its Small Business Development Center (SBDC), International Business Accelerator (IBA), and Southwest Office of Research Development.

WNMU offers annual week long Basic Economic Development Course at the Silver City campus; the course meets prerequisites for participants' certification as economic developers. It is one of 19 such certified courses in the United States. Expanding its education efforts in economic development, WNMU recently began presenting its annual Basic Economic Development Course in Mexico. A first for Mexico, the new course is the only accredited offering available in that country. The International Economic Development Council (IEDC) is the accrediting organization of the actual course.

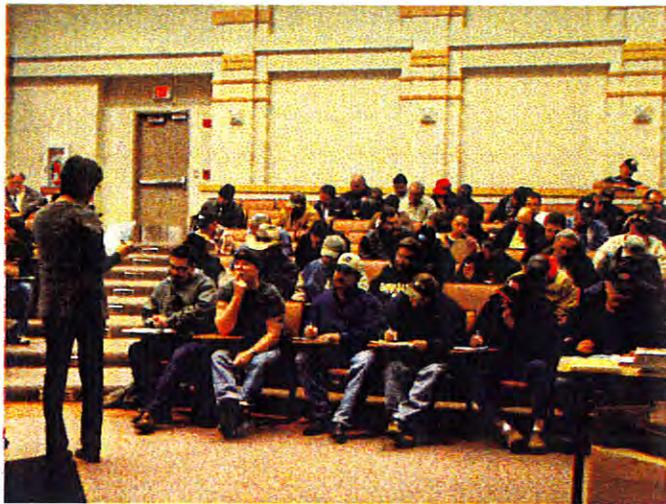
One of 20 centers throughout the state, the SBDC offers training, one-on-one counseling, and information to prospective small business entrepreneurs. The Procurement Technical Assistance Program, a New Mexico SBDC initiative, teaches business owners how to conduct business with the government. On average, more than 100 clients visit the SBDC at WNMU yearly.

WNMU's International Business Accelerator, in Santa Teresa, assists companies and organizations that do business with other countries. The IBA assists with paperwork processing at no charge to customers and helps New Mexican businesses to develop contacts for business expansion, particularly in Mexico but also in other countries. The IBA is the only program of its kind in New Mexico, so its services are available statewide. WNMU's IBA hosts the annual NAFTA Institute, the largest international trade conference in the state for business-to-business matchmaking.

The Southwest Office of Regional Data (SWORD) is a new initiative of WNMU, with partial funding from the New Mexico Economic Development Department, designed to help inform and drive economic development in the region. WNMU recently produced a high quality CD-ROM for prospective businesses, realtors, and others who are considering relocating to southwest New Mexico. This service offers a comprehensive center of information that greatly strengthens the region's grant writing, economic development, and other efforts.

Throughout the community, WNMU is executing economic development opportunities. The university has taken a lead role in developing the first of two Arts and Cultural Districts in the state. Service learning has also been moved to the forefront with WNMU's new *Food Security Initiative* which focuses on creating greater community partnerships with volunteer, food, and service organizations in the county.

Future projects include education and training opportunities with Spaceport America and "green" technology. Western's Department of Community Education and Technology Programs is developing plans and curriculum for the Spaceport in



WNMU offers training for displaced workers  
Photo courtesy of WNMU

New Mexico. WNMU now has a Comprehensive Space Course Accreditation package, which is a two-year curriculum in space aeronautics. The courses can be transmitted to and televised at the WNMU campus in Truth or Consequences as well as the main campus, once funding is obtained for the necessary equipment. This year, one course has been submitted to the Curriculum and Instruction Committee for approval for credit. This is the first step and Tony Macias, Dean of Community Education and Technology Programs, states that the other courses will soon be subject to the committee's approval. The university is looking towards further development of the curriculum and seeking funding for that effort.

The new curriculum is an exciting step towards preparing interested students for careers in a number of fields, including operations supervisors, pilots, emergency responders, weather forecasters, and customer relations specialists. WNMU's industrial maintenance program students receive national certification from the National Center for Construction and Research (NCCER) upon completion of each course. WNMU is planning curricula in green technology, including certification programs in lead paint removal, asbestos abatement, and green construction.

## **Environmental Issues and Renewable Energy**

### ***Solid Waste***

Due to new solid waste regulations, which are mandated by the New Mexico Environment Department, the disposal of solid waste has been a continual problem in the district. Illegal dumping has been a perpetual issue in this region, since most of the district has a very sparse population that is geographically separated. This also makes recycling difficult and hauling expensive.



Cell development at Grant County  
Landfill  
Photo by Cynthia Stoechner

In Grant County, two of its public landfills have closed. A new landfill was opened in 1996 and is operational with transfer stations, both in Grant County and in Hidalgo County. The landfill is receiving over 100 tons of solid waste per day; it takes in only about 6,000 tons per year of recyclable material. The current life of a cell for disposal of solid waste is less than three years and Southwest Solid Waste Authority is seeking funding for creation of new cells to stay ahead of demand.

Catron County does not have a landfill. They have transfer stations but are currently hauling their solid waste to Apache County in Arizona. Luna County has one landfill in operation and a transfer station in Columbus. Deming also has a landfill; unfortunately, Luna County and Deming's landfills are filling up quickly and like other landfills in the state have overextended some of their permits.

### ***Renewable Energy***

Renewable energy has been a prominent theme of the Obama Administration. Some positive signs of creating better solutions to energy creation and management are already seen throughout the region. The Gila Resources Information Project has established a

Viva Verde Guide 2009 and a website about energy conservation and renewable energy. The Viva Verde Guide benefits not only the region but the entire state.

The Town of Silver City published a Climate Action Plan in January 2009. Acting on the initiatives put forth by local citizens and Mayor James Marshall, the Town Council of Silver City passed Resolution 2007-31 to create the Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement Citizen's Advisory Committee. This is part of a global strategy to address climate change and was developed out of the protocol targets in the Kyoto Accords.

Hidalgo County is also one of the best areas for solar and wind energy. In Hidalgo County, businesses are exploring the capturing and use of renewable energy sources because of the reputation of the county's renewable assets. Hidalgo County is a great area for geothermal energy there are currently two companies taking advantage of this energy.

Luna County has definitely been the leader in renewable energy. There is wind energy at Macho Springs, biofuels made by Sapphire Energy, and PNM solar panels all located in Luna County.

Changes will come about through consumer education, incorporating green technology in building and refurbishment of buildings, and planning for energy efficient systems by counties and municipalities in the various facets of transportation, construction, street and traffic lighting.



## **Planning**

Planning is an important activity in the region since various plans are required in order to be eligible for some federal and state grants. Comprehensive plans are five-year plans that address current needs of the community, how those needs can be met, and how the community can work to address the vision and goals of its people for quality of life and services. Required elements to the plan include the following:

- I. Land Use
  - Analysis and mapping of existing land patterns and an inventory of the amount, type, and intensity of uses by land category, as well as an analysis of effects of various land use patterns on greenhouse gas emissions
  - Analysis of trends in the supply and demand of land by land use category, including a projection of the distribution, location, and extent of future land uses by land use category over a twenty-year period
  - Goals, objectives, and policies that address maintaining a broad variety of land uses, including the range of uses existing when the plan is adopted or amended
  - Specific actions and incentives that the contracting agency may use to promote planned development, reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, or otherwise encourage certain identified development patterns and the locations where such development patterns should be encouraged

- II. Housing

- Analysis of existing housing supply and demand, analysis of greenhouse gas emissions from the housing sector, and forecasted housing needs
  - Goals, objectives, and policies for the improvement of housing quality, variety and affordability, for reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and for provision of adequate sites for housing and housing opportunities for all segments of the community
  - Description of the actions that will be taken to implement housing goals, objectives, and policies
  - Must comply with the affordable housing act
- III. Transportation
- Description and assessment of the location, type, capacity, and condition of existing transportation facilities, such as freeways, arterial and collector streets, mass transit or other modes of transportation as may be appropriate, and analysis of greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector
  - Goals, objectives, and policies for encouraging safe, convenient, efficient and economical transportation, including mass transit and facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians, for reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and a description of proposed levels of service and funding mechanisms
  - Description and assessment of proposed location, type, and capacity of proposed transportation facilities designed to implement transportation goals, objectives, and policies and a description of funding mechanisms that will be used to fund proposed transportation improvements
- IV. Infrastructure
- Description and assessment of the location, type, capacity, and condition of existing infrastructure, including emergency services, sewage, drainage, local utilities, and other types of facilities
  - Goals, objectives, and policies for promoting the efficient provision of infrastructure, including a description of proposed levels of service
  - Description and assessment of proposed facility expansion and improvements designed to support planned uses and implement infrastructure goals, objectives, and policies
- V. Economic development
- Description of existing job composition and trends by industry and location characteristics, such as access to transportation or proximity to natural or human resources that influence the economic development potential of the contracting agency, and analysis of greenhouse gas emissions from the commercial and industrial sectors
  - Goals, objectives, and policies for promoting economic development, and for reduction of greenhouse gas emissions
  - Description of the actions that the contracting agency will take to implement economic development goals, objectives, and policies
- VI. Water
- Description and assessment of the sources of water supply
  - Demand for water by residential, commercial, institutional, industrial, and recreational sectors
  - Assessment of the water unaccounted for water losses due to leaks, theft, or other reasons
  - Goals, objectives, and policies for promoting the efficient use of water and for managing periods of drought

- Analysis of the demand for water that will result from future growth projected in the plan when added to existing uses, and how the demand for water that will result from future projected growth will be served by current water supplies, water conservation, water reuse, or a plan to obtain additional water supplies or increase water use efficiencies
- VII. Hazards
- Analysis of the risks of hazards such as wildfire, floods, extreme weather conditions, accidents, and terrorism
  - Goals, objectives, and policies for hazard mitigation
  - Description of the actions that will be taken to mitigate hazards
- A. Development of additional elements of a comprehensive plan may include, but are not limited to:
- \* Drainage
  - \* Parks, recreation, and open space
  - \* Tourism
  - \* Growth management
  - \* Fiscal impact analysis
  - \* Intergovernmental cooperation
  - \* Social services
  - \* Historic preservation
  - \* Asset management plan
- B. If the entity has a current comprehensive plan (not older than five years from the date of application), it may apply for funding assistance for any of the following:
- \* Data gathering analysis and special studies
  - \* Base mapping, aerial photography, geographic information systems, or global positioning satellite studies
  - \* Improvement of infrastructure, capital improvement plans, and individual project plans
  - \* Development of codes and ordinances that further refine the implementation of the comprehensive plan
  - \* Climate change mitigation and adaptation plan
  - \* Preliminary engineering report (according to USDA/RUS guidelines)
  - \* Related citizen participation or strategic planning process
  - \* Other functional or comprehensive planning activities
  - \* Asset management plan
  - \* Regionalization of infrastructure and service delivery

Implementation a compilation of the plan's goals, objectives, policies, standards or guidelines, along with specific actions to be completed in a stated sequence, which start with adoption of the comprehensive plan by ordinance. Each local government in the region aims to have an up-to-date comprehensive plan.

Annually, each local government within the region also develops an Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan (ICIP). The ICIP is a five-year plan as well, but lists specific unfunded projects in detail, resulting from a comprehensive process of reviewing plans,

gathering public and stakeholder input, as well as adopting the plan through the governing body by resolution, and submitting it to the state's Department of Finance and Administration for funding consideration.

Strategizing to better capitalize on opportunities within the region, many local governments have created economic development plans. The Southwest New Mexico Council of Governments has encouraged these plans as well as facilitated economic development collaboration on a regional level through a United States Department of Agriculture Grant.

To better manage hydrologic resources, water districts and governments are being urged to create 40-year water plans to assure proper planning and a sufficient reserve to meet the needs of the population. As a regional planning commission, the Southwest New Mexico Council of Governments works with each of its members on its planning and evaluation activities. The goal for the region is for each entity to have up-to-date comprehensive plans, ICIPs, economic development plans, and long-term water plans.



Mercy Roybal, Debbie Hudson, and Joseph De La Rosa from NMDOT  
Photo by Maureen Craig

## Transportation

The New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) is committed to the principle of partnership with local governments. It recognizes the vital role of local governments in decision-making and in the delivery of transportation services throughout the state. Working together, additional funds and development projects improve mobility and connectivity while respecting local cultures, preserving existing environments and working with local priorities. To meet this goal and to fulfill the state's responsibility under the federal transportation act to develop projects in cooperation with local governments, the NMDOT contracted with each of the seven planning districts in the state to act as regional transportation planning organizations.



Southwest Regional Planning  
Organization Meeting  
Photo by Cynthia Stoechner

The Southwest Regional Planning Organization (SWRPO) members are one appointed individual for each of the thirteen local governments within the geographic area of Catron, Grant, Hidalgo, and Luna counties. The SWRPO serves as a technical advisory committee and policy board that work in conjunction with New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) to develop and prioritize transportation projects for funding recommendation in the four-county area. The FY2012-2015 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program lists all federally funded projects in our NMDOT districts one and six.

The transportation planner of the Council of Governments administers the committee and board by serving as a liaison between each entity and NMDOT for various needs such as transportation project development, changes in federal requirements, and training in the field or office through the NMDOT Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP).

The Southwest Regional Planning Organization meets every two months on the third Tuesday of the month. The RPO Technical Advisory Committee discusses any transportation-related projects within the four county areas as well as new funding, grants, or transportation issues.

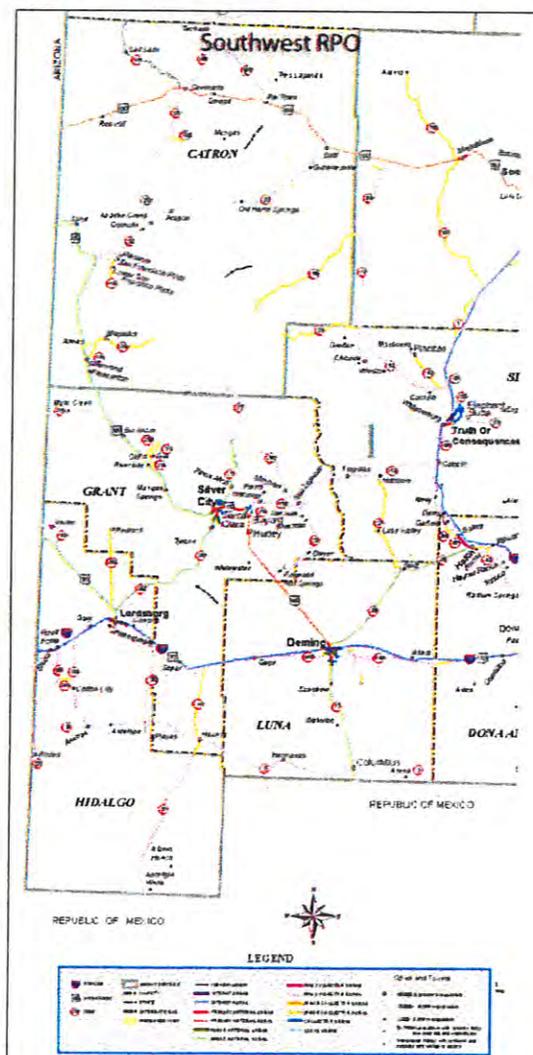
The New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) is committed to the principle of transportation supporting the economic vitality of New Mexico. Investments in transportation are essential for the economic growth of the state, maintaining and improving movement of goods and services within and across the state, and attracting visitors and major investment. Expanded usage of analytical tools, cooperation with governmental entities and private sector partners, and long range planning will ensure the New Mexico's transportation resources fully support the state's economy.

### Highways

The Southwest Regional Planning Organization contains one hundred ten miles of interstate highways and two hundred-seventy eight miles of US Highways. Interstate 10 is an east/west route that traverses Grant, Luna, and Hidalgo Counties. Although Interstate 10 crosses Grant County, it does not serve any municipality in the county. It does serve Lordsburg and Deming in Hidalgo and Luna Counties. US Highway 180 is a north/south route serving the communities of Luna, Alma, Glenwood, Cliff/Gila area, Silver City, Santa Clara, Bayard, and Hurley and eventually connects to Interstate 10 at Deming.

U.S. Highway 80 leaves I-10 at Road Forks, five miles east of the New Mexico/Arizona border. It carries traffic south toward Douglas, Arizona and the Mine-Mill Smelter Complex. The New Mexico portion of US Highway 80 ends in Rodeo.

New Mexico Highway 338 leaves Interstate 10, about five miles east of Road Forks, proceeding south through the communities of Cotton City and Animas. Traveling south from Animas, State Road 338 terminates



near the Mexican Border, joining State Road 79 that goes east to State Road 81 and Antelope Wells, New Mexico. The lower portion of NM 79 is not paved.

State Road 9 begins four miles north of Rodeo, New Mexico, off US Highway 80, proceeding east through the village of Animas and on through the village of Hachita in Grant County. At a point between Hachita and Animas, NM 9 connects with a private road leading to the Playas Valley Town site and the Phelps Dodge copper smelter. The smelter closed in the year 2000, and most of the residents living at the Playas Town site have left.

New Mexico State Highway 81 is a north/south route, and together with NM Highway 146, it connects Interstate 10 with Antelope Wells. Antelope Wells is a major gateway into Mexico from New Mexico for passenger vehicles. Mexico has almost completed paving from the port-of-entry south from Berrendo to Mexico Highway 2. Mexico Highway 2 is a major east/west route connecting many Mexican border cities like Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, and Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico. There is also a large population center in Casas Grandes, Chihuahua, and surrounding towns, directly south of Berrendo/Antelope Wells border crossing.

US Highway 70 leaves Lordsburg heading northwest connecting Interstate 10 with the copper mining industry in the Clifton/Morenci, Arizona area. US 70 continuing west connects cities like Safford, and Globe eventually ending up in Phoenix, Arizona.

New Mexico State Highway 90 leaves US 70 two miles north of Lordsburg, proceeding northeast ending up in Silver City. Besides being a commuter route, it is a major thoroughfare for residents of Grant County traveling to Interstate 10 West and into Arizona. NM 90 is a four-lane highway from Silver City to south of the Tyrone Copper Mine.

New Mexico State Highway 15 begins in Silver City and passes through the small village of Pinos Altos, a community of about four hundred people. NM 15 continues north to the Gila Cliff Dwellings, a popular tourist attraction that draws over fifty thousand persons per year.

New Mexico Highway 152 begins in Santa Clara and proceeds east through the communities of Hanover and the Mimbres area. NM 15 continues heading east over the Black Range Mountains, connecting with Interstate 25, about 10 miles south of Truth or Consequences.

Deming's transportation system is highly influenced by Interstate 10, US 70/80, US 180, and by the railroads (Union Pacific and Burlington Northern). The major highways listed and the New Mexico State Roads (418, 11, 26, and 549) provide access from/to Deming from the north, south, east and west.

New Mexico State Road 418 enters Deming from the southwest and terminates near the northwestern corner city limits. NM 549 enters Deming from the east and terminates at its junction with US 70/80. Florida Street is maintained by the New Mexico Department of Transportation from Country Club Road west beyond the city limits to 418. Country Club Road is maintained by the NMDOT from Florida Street to Pine Street. Eighth Street

enters on the southwest side, as a county road and changes to state maintained from Florida Street north to Interstate 10. Luna County has four other roads that are county maintained within the city of Deming. Dona Ana Road that traverses the city limits near the south edge is county maintained, as well as Country Club Road from Florida Street south to the southern limits. Also, a portion of J Street near the southeastern corner is county maintained.

There are two United States primary highways that traverse the city limits. US 70/80 enters Deming from I-10 and proceeds along Pine Street and back onto the Interstate system on the east side. US 180 also leaves I-10 near the east side, but proceeds out of Deming on the north side continuing on to Silver City.

A 2002 City of Deming street inventory has 166 streets with a total mileage maintained by the city at 86.4 miles. Most of this mileage is two lane miles, but Gold, Cody, and Pine Street have some four-lane areas.

### ***Airports***

Grant County has three airports. They are Grant County, Whiskey Creek, and Turner Airports. Grant County Airport is the largest and most widely used of the three airports and is located 20 miles southeast of Silver City. Great Lakes Airlines provides commercial air service between Silver City and Albuquerque.

Whiskey Creek Airport is located in Arenas Valley, four miles west of Silver City. It is a private airport facility, as is Turner Airport, leaving plane storage facilities and providing charter air service.

Luna County has three airports within its boundaries. Deming has the largest airport in the county. Their airport is used for helicopters of the Department of Homeland Security, as well as for private and commercial use. The runway was expanded in 2008. There is a privately owned airport in Columbus and another facility in the Columbus International Industrial Park.

The Lordsburg Municipal Airport offers Hidalgo County the most attractive location for a business park. The City of Lordsburg owns the airport and up to 150 acres of additional land. At this point in time, the Lordsburg Municipal Airport does not offer commercial flights.

The Reserve Airport is leased by Catron County from the U.S. Forest Service and is located 5 miles west of the Village of Reserve. It has a 4,800 foot paved runway and area to tie down airplanes. It does not have hanger storage facilities.

### ***Rail Services***

Rail service is available in Luna and Hidalgo Counties for both freight and passenger transportation. Currently the Union-Pacific railroad runs through Luna and Hidalgo



Catron County Road  
Photo by Lif Strand

Counties. A large volume of freight is carried on this line.

Deming and Lordsburg are serviced by the Amtrak system, with transportation to the west coast and service to El Paso and the east coast.

***Bus Service***



The Southwest Regional Transit District (SWRTD) serves Grant, Hidalgo, and Luna counties. Catron County is not at this time associated with the SWRTD. The SWRTD administers Corre Caminos and provides public transportation services throughout the three counties. The service is also available for hire under contract for events and other occasions.

Greyhound Bus and Turismos Rápidos service Deming and Lordsburg. They provide transportation to Tucson and Phoenix, Arizona, Los Angeles, California, Las Cruces, New Mexico, El Paso and San Antonio, Texas.

## **CHAPTER III**

# **COUNTIES, CITIES, TOWNS AND VILLAGES IN SOUTHWESTERN NEW MEXICO**

## CATRON COUNTY

Catron County is the largest county in New Mexico, consisting of 6,898 square miles, equivalent to a total area of 4,395,500 acres. Not only is Catron County the largest county in New Mexico, it is also the most sparsely populated. The small population in turn has a small tax base which puts a strain on the county government's ability to provide services. Land use planning and services are complicated by the fact that much of the county is comprised of federal and state owned land. Local ranchers and their supporters argue that the federal government should relax its controls on use of public lands. While many others argue that public lands should be converted to private ownership in order to assure the success of ranching and other forms of economic development.



Allegres Mountain in Catron County  
Photo by Lif Strand

The county is surrounded by the Gila National Forest and is home to a Gila National Forest Ranger Station. The Gila Wilderness is the oldest wilderness area in the United States, with over a half million acres of wild rugged mountains. The Continental Divide also winds through the county and includes several peaks over 10,000 feet in elevation. The terrain varies throughout the county, but primarily consists of mountain ranges and high plateaus. Most of the streams in the county are ephemeral, except the Gila and San Francisco Rivers. The vegetation in the county also varies greatly from open

grasslands to densely wooded conifer forests offering a wide range of wildlife habitat, as well as recreational and commercial opportunities.

Along U.S. 60 in the northern part of Catron County, three towns interrupt the remote mountain landscape, Datil, Pie Town, and Quemado. There are also four settlements in the area south of Datil: Cruzville, Apache Creek, Aragon, and Old Horse Springs. Reserve is the only incorporated community in the county and serves as the county seat.

The nearest communities that provide higher level services to county residents are Socorro to the east, Gallup and Grants to the north, Silver City to the south, and Springerville, Arizona to the west. The county is approximately the same distance to these major cities of Albuquerque and Las Cruces, New Mexico and Tucson, Arizona.

As in other areas of the region, housing is inadequate. In Reserve and some of other populous areas, much effort has been made to upgrade the housing by remodeling some of the existing housing and by the construction of new housing in new sub-divisions. Mobile homes are becoming increasingly popular, particularly in the rural areas of the county.



Mogollon in Catron County  
Photo by Gale Moore

The main economic activities in the county are farming, ranching, forestry, tourism, and retail. With the closure of the local sawmill in the 1990's, many jobs in the logging industry were lost. The sawmill has been reopened but has been surmounting many obstacles while trying to stimulate the county's economy. The owners of the sawmill have been paying their employees even though they are having a hard time obtaining the timber to fulfill their contracts. They have been able to utilize Apache County's Steward Award by gaining timber from the thinning of the Apache National Forest; however, they have endured high transportation costs due to the distance to markets.



Photo by Lif Strand

Catron County's economic development strategy begins with recognition of important partners such as the Catron County Citizens Group, Catron County Chamber of Commerce, Glenwood Chamber of Commerce, and the Southwest New Mexico Council of Governments, who are needed to help represent the county's interests. The Catron County Citizens Group has taken the lead in coordination with the county to develop an economic vision to keep its efforts appropriately focused.

The county's economic development strategy includes but is not limited to:

1. Maintaining economic development leadership and vision through successful partnerships, establishing a clear vision, pursuing economic growth by identifying the types of businesses appropriate to the county, and determining where growth should take place.
2. Retaining existing businesses and growing new small businesses. Such efforts should be in partnership with organizations that assist in small business development such as the State of New Mexico Economic Development Department, New Mexico Department of Labor, and the Southwestern Small Business Development Center at Western New Mexico University.
3. Workforce Development Training, seen as essential for the county's future economic growth, is to include partnerships with the county's school districts to initiate vocational training programs and classes.
4. Catron County wishes to utilize New Mexico State Incentive Programs by partnering with the State of New Mexico Economic Development Department to steer potential businesses towards incentive packages such as compensating tax abatement, New Mexico investment credit, New Mexico In-Plant Training Program, and with the Department of Labor utilizing the Workforce Investment Act. These state and federal incentive programs are described in the county's comprehensive plan, adopted in 2007.
5. The county has realized that the targeted industries for Catron County should include: tourism, specialty retail, bio-fuels, and traveler convenience retail as industries that are reasonable targets for locating to the county.
6. The county's goal is to support efforts to revitalize the commercial areas of the county including, but not limited to, the Reserve and Quemado main streets and other modes of commercial development.

### *Village of Reserve*

The Village of Reserve is the county seat and regional center of Catron County; Reserve becomes the hub and destination for tourists and residents with the main trading and shopping community residing here. However, residents from the village and other areas of the county travel regularly either to Socorro, Springerville, or Silver City for their shopping needs. In order for Reserve and the outlying communities to become more sustainable, capturing the market leakage from outside communities is an important part of Catron County's economic development strategy.

The economic prosperity of Reserve and Catron County has historically relied upon government employment and private businesses associated with timber, ranching, and tourism. The area has experienced a continuing decline in the fortunes of businesses and employment in the timber and ranching industries. Government employment remains strong and is an important source of income for residents.<sup>x</sup>



Village of Reserve New Multipurpose Facility

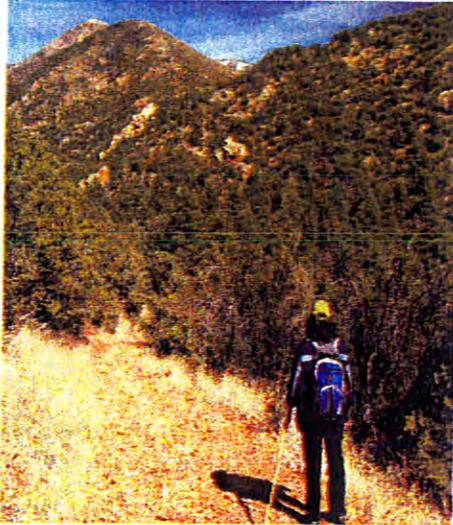
The most significant effort in the Reserve area to create a value-added wood products industry has been through the efforts of The Forestry Association (TFA), a local organization that has constructed a new lumber mill on county-acquired property with the goal of creating high dollar jobs. While initially only five people were employed in 2004, TFA hopes for many new jobs primarily from creation of specialized wood product firms.

Tourism's possibilities for Reserve and Catron County include traveler services, downtown revitalization, promotion of Reserve as an authentic western town, special events such as rodeos and festivals, and other opportunities under the rubric of "recreational tourism." Reserve has started its tourism efforts by:

1. Creating the Elfego Baca Memorial and Museum to celebrate the life and times of the legendary hero and anti-hero of Reserve, Catron County, Socorro, and central New Mexico. It is hoped that the memorial and museum will become the anchor for a revitalization of downtown Reserve.
2. By planning for large numbers of visitors for rodeos, horse shows, and related events, the fairgrounds might be improved; and adjacent to the Fairgrounds and in other locations, existing RV campgrounds might have more stalls and better services for visitors. Local stables would also benefit. Reserve's planners also discussed establishment of a horse motel for those visiting Reserve. This could provide an incentive for families with horses to travel to Reserve.
3. A marketing plan to promote "Back Roads through Reserve" has been proposed to focus on current attractions and new attractions in the community. The goal of this plan is to promote the scenic beauty of the area and attract more tourists.

Recreational tourism incorporates hunting and fishing, wilderness and mountain experiences in backpacking and hiking, and the general attraction of the scenery, climate, and unique historic qualities of the area. Surrounded by national forest, Reserve is a natural gateway by Forest Service roads or hiking trails into wild and wonderful

country.<sup>xi</sup> The village's comprehensive plan recommends that a joint Village-Forest Service committee be formed to identify outlooks, parking areas, trailheads, and short day hikes within a short distance of Reserve. The sites could be developed and promoted as part of the village's tourism plan.



Mogollon Mountains in Catron County  
Photo by Ira N. Craig

The village recognizes the need to develop an integrated and comprehensive approach to developing a hunting industry cluster. Businesses in the village and region that belong to such a "hunting cluster" could collaboratively advertise and market services, and possibly help spawn other businesses such as transport services from regional airports. A number of strategies for promoting Reserve as "THE" center for hunting in the area are discussed in the village's comprehensive plan. Among those ideas are promotion by use of the internet and on-going job training and entrepreneurship education in collaboration with the local school system.

The historic buildings of Reserve reflect a distinctive character that makes it a unique place, reflecting both the rural heritage of New Mexico small towns in general and Reserve's frontier and western character in particular. However, many of these buildings are in disrepair, and facades have not preserved original features or been improved in ways that would help preserve the unique small town character of Reserve.

Future growth is focused on two possibilities: new subdivisions and continuing growth in the number of new homes in the county with the hope that newcomers will bring changes of their own. Establishment of new subdivisions would have to occur outside the village; however, the village would need to extend water and wastewater infrastructure and services to those subdivisions.



Windmills and Weather  
Photo by Lif Strand

## **GRANT COUNTY**

Grant County is located in southwest New Mexico, adjacent to the New Mexico/Arizona border. Grant County lies immediately north of Hidalgo County, south of Catron County, and west of Sierra and Luna Counties.

Grant County is home to mining, ranching, and agriculture and is known for the surrounding mountains, forests, and wilderness areas, vast open spaces, wonderful river valleys, historic towns and settlements, as well as its rich mix of ethnic and cultural heritages. It is approximately 3,968 square miles in size. Land within the boundaries is owned by federal, state, and local governments, as well as private land owners. Fire

prevention and suppression in Grant County is the responsibility of rural volunteer fire departments that operate in nine fire districts in rural communities across the county.

Family households make up the majority of household types in Grant County. There is a concern among citizens that the cost of living is high and that there is little affordable housing available to middle and lower income families. Mobile homes have become abundant in the county as they help lower the cost of living.

The largest employers in Grant County are Freeport McMoran, Gila Regional Medical Center, and Western New Mexico University. Fort Bayard Medical Center, local governments, the Gila National Forest Service, Cobre Consolidated Schools, and Silver Consolidated Schools are also significant economic drivers in the county.

People have always been attracted to Grant County for the health benefits of the climate and geothermal springs. Grant County has a state-of-the-art health care facility, Gila Regional Medical Center, which serves all of southwest New Mexico. Their staff comprises more than 40 physicians and dentists, and provides a 24-hour physician staffed emergency room, intensive care unit, mental health unit, and medical, labor, delivery, and newborn nursery care.



Hummingbird Frenzy  
Photo by Bob Pelham

The Grant County Economic Development Coalition for Progress, which includes mayors of four municipalities, Bayard, Hurley, Silver City, and Santa Clara, and one elected commissioner of Grant County, was formed in 2003. The goal of the Coalition is to build cooperation with a wide variety of business and government leaders for economic development. The Coalition aims to provide a single, informed point of contact for economic development activity in the county and to assure that municipalities share a single vision for the county's economic development.

The economic goals of the County and the surrounding entities are:

1. Encourage the diversification of economic sectors and the expansion of the local economic base to meet existing and future economic needs of the community

2. Promote intergovernmental and private/public partnerships to enhance economic development and to increase job opportunities and job training programs for the community
3. Maintains and enhances its unique cultural history, traditions and features, and promotes these attributes locally, regionally, nationally, and even internationally, to encourage tourism and support economic development
4. Support youth development as a vital part of economic development and the community's future



Sam Spearman, Economic Development Administration, Senator Jeff Bingaman, and NM Cabinet Secretary Fred Mondragon, New Mexico Economic Development Division, at Grant County Business/Conference Center  
Photo by Maureen Craig

The Gila Economic Development Alliance (EDA) takes direction from the Grant County Coalition for Economic Progress in order to provide a single voice. Gila EDA's main role is to respond to businesses that are interested in relocating to Grant County and to provide them with information about the communities such as utilities, labor force, education, etc., in order for them to make a decision. The Gila EDA is also authorized, by the Coalition, to respond to opportunities from the New Mexico Economic Development Department (NMEDD). The Gila EDA will be the core organization for collaboration among entities such as: the local municipalities, more targeted economic development groups, educational agencies, businesses, and other parties that wish to be a part of economic development.

### ***City of Bayard***

The City of Bayard is a small town that is reaching its goal of being the economic hub of the mining district; recently Bayard has been the home to a 100 licensed businesses. Bayard is located several miles east of Silver City and is between Hurley and Santa Clara. Bayard originally served as a supply terminal for Fort Bayard.

The city wishes to develop and diversify its local economic base through business recruitment. Strategies include creating a Business Incentives Committee to help develop incentives for businesses to establish operations there; creating a list of target businesses and initiating contact and negotiations with them; identifying likely locations for business development including potential reuse of brownfield sites; and developing a marketing package to recruit businesses. The city's strategy includes cooperation and collaboration among area economic development organizations.

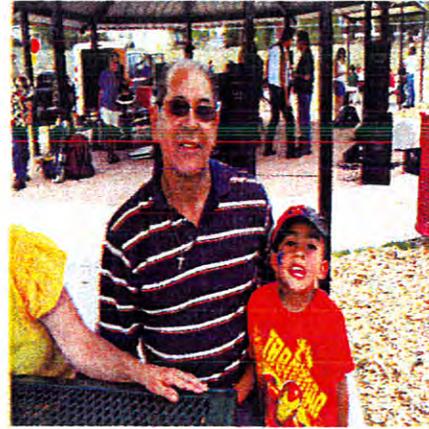
The city would also like to provide incentives for the adaptive reuse and rehabilitation of existing buildings. Strategies for this include utilizing the Cultural Property Preservation tax credit through the New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office to encourage historical building rehabilitation. Bayard plans to work with the New Mexico Economic Development Department (NMEDD) to identify tax incentives for commercial building rehabilitation and to develop enabling legislation for Non-Enterprise Communities that

would allow a rural commercial building rehabilitation tax credit up to \$50,000 based on a model by the State of Vermont which would encourage reuse and rehabilitation.

Downtown revitalization is another theme for economic development in the City of Bayard. The city intends to submit an application to the MainStreet program as a start-up community to revitalize its historic downtown.



*Left:* Councilor A.C Rodriguez, Councilor Jovita Gonzales, Mayor Rodolpho Martinez, and Councilor Armando Arzola, at the Grand Opening of Bayard's New Community Park.



*Right:* Participants in the day's festivities.

Bayard is committed to improving its quality of life by diversifying the local economy and promoting economic development opportunities such as ranching, farming, tourism, recreation, retail, and small business.

Strategies include:

1. Developing and promoting the County Sports Complex and an Interpretive Museum on Open Pit Mining
2. Assisting Fort Bayard National Cemetery with celebration of Memorial Day and Veterans Day
3. Developing of seasonal Recreation Vehicle parks for winter travelers
4. Developing a Depot District revitalization, retention, and expansion of existing businesses
5. Developing a marketing package to attract small franchise retail and service businesses while promoting such businesses throughout the Mimbres Valley as a closer alternative to Silver City

### ***Town of Hurley***

The Town of Hurley was originally established in 1910 as a "company town" by Chino Copper Company when it took over the Santa Rita Mines to develop one of the world's largest open-pit mining operations. In 1955, Chino Copper Company sold the town to a third party, businesses to individuals, and the homes to the employees who occupied them; in 1956 the Town of Hurley incorporated. Freeport



Hurley stacks were a well-known landmark in Grant County  
Photo by Bob Pelham

McMoRan now operates the Chino Mines Division in Hurley and has reduced its work force substantially, which has caused a severe economic impact in Hurley. The smelter was shut down in 2002 and the concentrator and crusher buildings were demolished. In 2007, the town's once most recognizable landmark, the stacks, were taken down.

Hurley is a part of the tri-city mining district which includes Bayard and Santa Clara. Low housing costs, mild climate, and friendly residents have attracted both new families and retirees to the area. Visitors are intrigued by the views of "The Kneeling Nun" above the Santa Rita open pit and "Geronimo Mountain" between Hurley and Bayard. History laced with folktales of unrequited love and Indian strongholds draws vacationers to take a second look and then venture out to the State Park of City of Rocks and the National Monument Gila Cliff Dwellings.

The Hurley Pride Committee, a non-profit volunteer organization, has worked diligently to promote civic pride and public participation. They host festivals, parades, and a Christmas bazaar to entertain residents and attract visitors. The Hurley Pride obtained a grant to upgrade Hurley Park and their 'flag project' which provides and places 50 American flags throughout Hurley during the proper holidays. They have improved the Christmas lighting throughout the town and pay for the electricity used. Most recently they were awarded money from the Freeport McMoran Community Enhancement Fund to build a gazebo at the Hurley Park and resurface the tennis court.



Mayor Baca, Trustees Richard R. Maynes, Jr. and Fernando Martinez, J. Jackson, retiring fire chief, and Hurley volunteer firefighters

Photo by Maureen Craig

The Hurley swimming pool is only open during the summer, provides swimming classes, scuba lessons, lifeguard and CPR training, and night-time pool parties. Adjacent to the Hurley Park, the area provides a safe, comfortable environment for children and families to gather. The Hurley Community Center, in cooperation with Grant County Senior Services, hosts meals for senior citizens during the week. The center is also available as a rental for parties and get-togethers. Once renovations were completed, the Town Hall building could be listed on the National Historic Register.

Hurley has endured economic fluctuations of the mining industry through the years, but the mining company was available to provide water and wastewater services and to subsidize smaller projects. Freeport is no longer able to assist in this matter and has notified Hurley they must find other resources to provide these basic need services. The immediate goals are to identify sustainable revenue sources and to preserve the infrastructure of the community.

The town's serious challenges:

1. Fund and construct a pipeline connection and pumping station to Bayard's new wastewater treatment system
2. Locate and purchase water rights to enable Hurley to be self-sufficient in providing water to the town's residents

3. Upgrade streets, by adding street lights, a walking path, and a bus stop, and to continue the curbs, gutters, and sidewalks to all Hurley streets as funding permits
4. Maintain existing buildings and renovate a building donated by Freeport to be used as a Town Hall for the Town Offices, Police Department, and Municipal Court.

### *Village of Santa Clara*

Santa Clara first began as Central City that served as the gateway into the New Mexico territory from Arizona and Mexico and as an outpost where four different cultures were represented. Santa Clara incorporated in 1947 and is the municipality that is recognized as the heart of the mining district. The vast majority of residents are employed outside the village limits with the primary work destination being Silver City.

Fort Bayard National Historic Monument a state administered facility, adjacent to Santa Clara, the first served as a U.S. Army hospital. Now, it specializes in care for the elderly and disabled while offering all levels of medical care such as: an adult day care, a chemical dependency unit, an outpatient/inpatient physical therapy facility, and a specialized veterans' unit. A new medical center has been constructed outside Fort Bayard property. The Village of Santa Clara has annexed the land on which the new medical center is located; therefore, gaining the gross receipts from the construction of the medical center.



Scrub Jay – Birding brings tourists to the region  
Photo by Bob Pelham

The Village of Santa Clara is primarily concentrating on working on its appearance and marketing the community to reestablish its economic vitality. The untapped Industrial Park has great potential for economic development. The village would like companies that specialize in light assembly, high tech, or bio-technology to locate there. Currently, Santa Clara is working on finishing the Industrial Park to attract businesses by developing a marketing package for business recruitment and identifying land and building sites. The village's strategies are to work with the New Mexico Economic Development Department (NMEDD) to identify grant opportunities for development of the industrial park and to create a Business Incentives Committee to help market the community properly. Santa Clara also wishes to promote the establishment of new businesses that can serve the community, improve the quality of life, and to keep the revenues from gross receipts within the village.

Downtown revitalization is overdue for the Village of Santa Clara. The village is addressing street, bridge, road, and drainage improvements as its first order of business. The village has been encouraged by State Senator Howie C. Morales to seek funding for a downtown revitalization plan and design. Santa Clara's historic downtown area has at least 75 structures that may be eligible for historic designation. A goal of the village is to obtain this designation as part of its downtown revitalization effort.



Javelina  
Photo by Bob Pelham

#### Economic development strategies:

1. Working with the New Mexico MainStreet partners program to obtain technical assistance for downtown revitalization
2. Utilizing the Cultural Property Preservation tax credit to encourage historical building rehabilitation
3. Working with NMEDD on a variety of other economic development strategies
4. Identifying the types of businesses such as restaurants/motels, retail, and/or manufacturing
5. Working collaboratively with Gila EDA on recruitment and retention strategies
6. Working with the Department of Labor on workforce development and training opportunities
7. Creating a computer technology training center at the community center that can be used for on-site, video, or web-based training.

Like the other communities in the region, tourism is an important part of the Santa Clara's economic development plan. The village proposed to develop an annual community festival that celebrates its spirit and culture. Its primary strategy is to work with area organizations on regional tourism strategies. The Fort Bayard Game Refuge and the county sports complex hold potential for attracting tourists.

#### *Town of Silver City*

Silver City is the county seat and regional center for retail, commercial, institutional, and government activity for Grant County. Its economic health is a fundamental indicator of the state of the county's economy as a whole. Furthermore, while the workforce for the region is located across the county, the great majority of county workers live in the Silver City area, which includes the Mining District.

Downtown Silver City is increasingly becoming a center for arts, restaurants, entertainment, and related venues. Highway 180 east is becoming the main corridor for businesses to locate. Silver City is the service and economic center for a large rural area and serves as a base for visitors to the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument, the Gila National Forest, and is home to Western New Mexico University.

In spite of severe job losses due to the fluctuations with the commodity markets, the economies of Silver City and Grant County have been resilient, primarily because of trends indicating diversification of the area's economy. The most important of these trends that support a strong local economy and provide the basis for confidence in the future are:

1. Influx of retirees

2. Lone Eagles-independent business operators who are able to locate anywhere in the country because of the availability of broadband and good transportation systems that enjoy the quality of life in Silver City
3. A strong real estate market
4. Tourism



View from Bullard up Broadway  
Photo by Ira N. Craig

Encouraging a diverse mix of economic development and new employment opportunities that balance the values and goals of the community is the primary goal of the town. As Silver City and Grant County experience a decline in a traditional economic base founded on resource extraction, related industries, and businesses, “sense of place” will increasingly become the most important driver of economic development for the region. Silver City’s strategies include: business recruitment and retention, supporting and participating in the development of industrial parks, encouraging energy conservation and recycling, maximizing tourism opportunities, supporting the development of its arts community, maximizing public involvement, creating loans, and venture capital funds to support the formation and growth of innovative business and educational activities.

The current strategic plan for regional economic development for Silver City and Grant County include:

1. Initiatives such as the Department of Labor funded community survey
  2. A marketing plan to be funded from the state legislature
  3. Enhance public relations through trade shows or other economic development drivers
  4. Creation of an economic development plan with funding from the NMEDD
  5. Development and expansion of import/export businesses
- The Town seeks to position itself to receive benefits associated with NMEDD’s statewide incubator program and initiatives in media and film

## **HIDALGO COUNTY**

Hidalgo County is a rural area located in the most southwestern part of New Mexico, contiguous to Arizona on the west and Mexico on the south. Total land area is 3,446 acres with several hundred farms and ranches scattered throughout the county.

Beginning in the region of present Animas and continuing southward to the boundary of Mexico, a series of raised bench systems extend into the Animas Valley from the Peloncillos on the west and from the Animas Mountain escarpment on the east. The Gila River emerges from Grant County in the north and continues across the northern section of Hidalgo County, providing a rich riparian ecosystem that supports wildlife and plant systems as well as agriculture. Major tributaries of the Gila River within the area are the San Francisco River, Eagle Creek, Bonita Creek, San Simon Creek, and the San Carlos River. All of the water supply in this area is linked to a distinct and separate aquifer that

is not related to other communities. The water table ranges from 100 feet in the lower areas to 1000 feet in the mountainous and hill areas of the county.

In addition to Lordsburg, being the market center, county seat, and the center of population in the county, Hidalgo County includes several traditional farming and ranching communities: Virden, Animas, Playas, Cotton City, and Rodeo. Interstate 10 (I-10) is the major east-west highway in the county and the east-west railroad line for Union Pacific and Amtrak. Major economic activities in the area have over time included: ranching, copper mining, and tourism. The largest individual employers are the City of Lordsburg, Hidalgo County, and the U.S. Border Patrol. Other key employers outside Lordsburg include: the Animas School District, Americulture Tilapia Facilities, and the Santa Fe Ingredients chili processing operation. Successful truck stops, motels, and restaurants provide an increasingly important base to the economy and revenues for local government.



Dust storm in Hidalgo County  
Photo by Cynthia Stoehner

The principal source of medical services for the general population in Hidalgo County is the Hidalgo Medical Services (HMS) located in Lordsburg, where primary health care, eye, and dental services are provided. Hidalgo County residents find that specialized medical care often requires traveling great distances.

Due to the lack of housing and the inferior quality of housing, half of the school teachers and more than half of the border patrol officers live in other municipalities in the region. The lack of quality housing is one of the principal reasons to adequately recruit new residents who can contribute to the

county's economic development. Housing developers become frustrated when looking for new subdivision development projects because of inadequate infrastructure.

To help find more permanent solutions to its economic difficulties, Hidalgo County with aid from the US Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant of approximately \$70,000 created an Economic Development Adjustment report that identified opportunities and strategies for diversification of the local and regional economy. The following have been prioritized:

1. Developing initiatives between Hidalgo County and Mexico with Antelope Wells Port of Entry being the focus
2. Housing initiatives both HUD housing projects and support for market-rate housing development
3. Building a new County Detention Center
4. Revitalizing of Downtown Lordsburg and Motel Drive
5. Expanding the role of the Lordsburg Housing Authority
6. Encouraging relocation of light industry
7. Enhancing tourism opportunities
8. Developing a more diversified agricultural and ranching economy
9. Developing an industrial and business park in Lordsburg
10. Building Phase 2 of the Vocational Learning Center

In 2003, New Mexico Tech agreed to purchase the Playas townsite and the surrounding 1200 acres with funding from the Department of Homeland Security. The town is now a training and research facility for the University's first responders and counter-terrorism programs supported by federal funds.

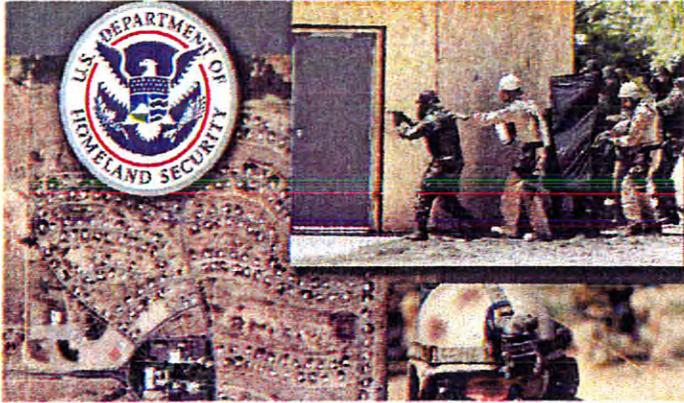


Photo courtesy of NM Tech

Hidalgo County's plans include construction of a new detention center which is desperately needed. The current detention center is inadequate, lacks proper separation of facilities for male and female inmates, and is poorly located in the center of Lordsburg.

The City of Lordsburg and Hidalgo County are seeing a dramatic increase in the number

of Border Patrol agents to protect the U.S./Mexico border. The number of agents continues to grow which means more income in gross receipts, and an economic development multiplier for the region is anticipated.

The Lordsburg/Hidalgo County Chamber of Commerce and the local governments are working collaboratively to develop a gateway for global trade. By facilitating, promoting, and supporting multi-modal transportation and trade opportunities to enhance economic development in the region, the increased cross-border economic activity will benefit both residents and governments on both sides of the border.

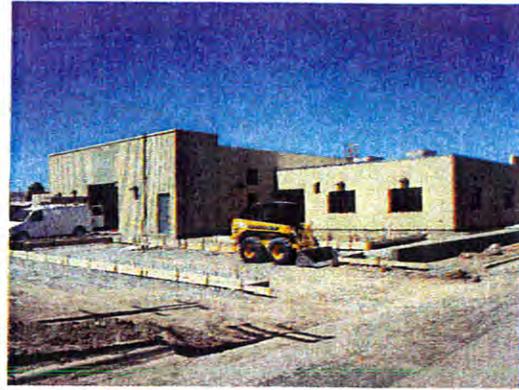
Antelope Wells is a small U.S. Port of Entry on NM 81, just north of the Mexican border. The county views Antelope Wells as a huge asset and would like to develop more commercial and business opportunities in this area. Hidalgo County is considering the purchase of land and infrastructure development for potential economic development along the border.

For many years, the City of Lordsburg and Hidalgo County have been aware of the need to focus on economic development. The city and county needs to develop an unprecedented common search for solutions to their economic woes and have an engaged a collaborative planning effort. The city and county are working cooperatively with the Chamber of Commerce and business and civic groups, to conduct important research, secure funding through private and public grants, and help forge a common economic development program. The major initiatives for economic development are as follows:

1. Playas Townsite: Homeland Security Training Center
2. Lordsburg Industrial Park
3. Antelope Wells Port of Entry Feasibility Study
4. Hidalgo County Detention Center
5. Tourism – Hidalgo County's Heritage and Natural Features
6. Farming and Agriculture
7. Real Estate Development

### *City of Lordsburg*

The City of Lordsburg is the largest incorporated municipality in Hidalgo County. It is located along a major east-west rail line and Interstate in between Las Cruces, New Mexico and Tucson, Arizona, situated 44 miles southwest of Silver City, near the Arizona state line. The city sits in the Chiricahua Grassland at an elevation of 4,250 feet. The topography is considered to be high desert, characterized by a sparsely vegetated valley. Lordsburg's climate and close proximity to the Gila and Coronado Wilderness are conducive to year round outdoor activities including camping, fishing, and hiking. Travelers make up a strong market for lodging, restaurant, and convenience/gasoline retailers. Transportation helps shape the character of Lordsburg.



Phase I of the Hidalgo County Vocational Learning Center in Lordsburg  
Photo by Maureen Craig

According to the Lordsburg Chamber of Commerce, the major employers in the city are the Lordsburg Municipal School District and the State of New Mexico Transportation yard, each of which employ more than 100 people.

Lordsburg is a trade center for an area whose economy has historically included cattle, vegetables, cotton, chilies, wheat, oats, barley, alfalfa, Christmas trees, and minerals with copper, silver, gold, and lead mines in the vicinity. Lordsburg is the start point for nearby historic mining towns, primarily Shakespeare Ghost Town and Steins Ghost Town.

The city's leaders' economic development strategy includes efforts to target the motoring public. Since the adoption of an economic development plan, the city has recruited two new truck stops, a new motel, and new restaurants. Lordsburg seeks ways to diversify its economy by expanding and retaining existing businesses and recruiting a variety of business types. The city's location makes it a candidate for a distribution center for a large retail or wholesale company. The city wishes to recruit new businesses, particularly those related to the hospitality industry to service the motoring public. The city is prepared to seek funding to provide technical and educational assistance for its existing businesses and other services such as advertising and expansion/retention incentives. The city will identify the types of businesses that should be recruited to Lordsburg and in compliance with the Local Economic Development Act (LEDA).

Tourism, transportation-related industries, and recruitment of Call Centers form the crux of Lordsburg's economic development strategy. The city plans to promote agriculture and ranching activities, particularly the growing and processing of chile and the raising of livestock.

The city plans to review its zoning code to promote agricultural produce stands and related businesses in the city.

The City has identified a site for an industrial park, adjacent to the Interstate. The city plans to initiate a business survey to learn from residents the kind of goods and services

they need and to pinpoint where spending occurs outside the city. Their intent is to implement a “Buy Lordsburg” plan to mitigate economic leakage to other cities.



City of Lordsburg- Arthur Clark Smith  
City Hall  
Photo by Maureen Craig

Promotion of land use policies that enhance economic development is another goal of the City of Lordsburg. The city needs to ensure that it has an adequate amount of commercial and industrial zoned land. Builders and developers will be surveyed to determine the complexity of the development approval process for possible streamlining. In addition, the city will identify vacant buildings and land within the city limits to evaluate their redevelopment potential and evaluate

the capacity and/or expansion needs of all utilities to ensure the ability to service new businesses.

Lordsburg also needs to increase its revenues in other ways. Strategies include:

1. Increasing spending from non-residents including the motoring passers-by
2. Aggressively pursuing grant opportunities that enhance its economic development
3. Annexing land that will be capable of increasing gross receipts and property taxes
4. Increasing the city’s tourism potential.

### *Virden*

Virden was incorporated as a village in 1930, and is located in the northwestern corner of Hidalgo County, on the Gila River about 45 miles northwest of Lordsburg and seven miles west of the Arizona border. The rural community has its modern roots in the Mormon Church. Following the Mexican Revolutionary War, the Mormon settlers in Chihuahua were commanded to leave immediately. Ernest W. Virden, president of the Gila Ranching Company, sold the Virden Valley to the settlers for \$50,000 in 1916. The settlers changed the name of the village from Richmond to Virden in his honor.



Village of Virden Council Meeting  
Photo by Cynthia Stoenner

Many of Virden’s residents work in Lordsburg or Duncan, Arizona. There is little commercial activity, except for a quilting store. Most convenience goods and services are purchased across the Arizona state line in Duncan. The economy of Virden has been primarily driven by agriculture and the mining industry. Few families now own most of the land and make their living exclusively or primarily from farming or ranching.

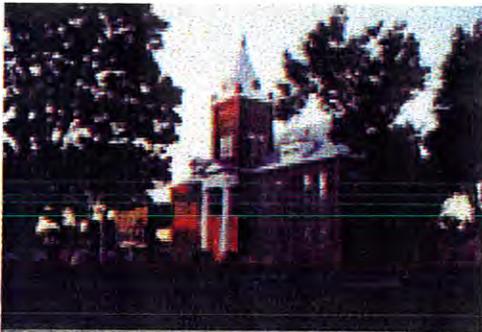
According to their comprehensive plan, economic development goals for Virden include:

1. Encouraging tourism that focuses on the village’s natural and historical resources, including creation of an historical settlers’ museum in the old school building,

- opening a visitor information center, creating a website, and brochure to promote bird watching, geo-tourism, and the history of Virden
2. Promoting arts and cultural enterprises and events such as expanding the July 4<sup>th</sup> celebration; establish a venue for the sale of local arts and crafts, and promoting Virden to quilters for event, retreats, and shopping
  3. Facilitating opportunities for entrepreneurship and home-based businesses, such as a commercial kitchen for the production and sale of agricultural products, distance learning opportunities for youth and adults, and creation of a business incubator for start-up entrepreneurs<sup>xii</sup>

## LUNA COUNTY

Luna County lies at the northern end of the vast Chihuahua Desert that stretches deep into Mexico. The border location and settlement history give the area a colorful, multi-cultural flavor fused from a blend of Mexican, Native American, and Anglo people. Luna County was created in 1901, from Grant and Doña Ana Counties and named after Solomon Luna, a politician and cattle rancher. The county covers a total of 2,695 square miles, mostly being flat lowland of desert scrub, and grassland; however, the county does contain three mountain ranges: Cooke's Range in the north, Florida Mountains to the southeastern area, and Tres Hermanas Mountains to the south. Akela, Arena, Chambray, Carne, Columbus, Deming, Eller Place, Florida, Gage, Hermanas, Mirage Mimbres, Myndus, Nutt, Old Town, Peruhill, Spalding, Tunis, and Waterloo are the cities and towns that compose the county.



Luna County Courthouse

The major industries in Luna County are the retail trade, manufacturing, health care and social assistance, agriculture, and construction.<sup>xiii</sup> Major crops in Luna County include chile, onions, cotton, and corn. Cattle have been an essential element of Luna County since the late 1860s. New Mexico produces 70% of the chile in the United States and Luna County produces 60% of New Mexico's chile.

Luna County has many strengths for promoting economic development activities including: a favorable market, proximity to the border, lower costs for land and buildings, excellent transportation routes and facilities, and available labor pool. High rates of poverty and unemployment have plagued New Mexico for decades; unfortunately, Luna County has consistently experienced the highest rates in the state. Deming and Luna County were designated as an Enterprise Community in 1999 by USDA Rural Development. The Enterprise Communities Initiative allows communities to implement their own economic development plan and charter their own economic future.

Luna County has traditionally encouraged the development of light industry. Business operations such as wholesaling, shipping, manufacturing, testing, fabricating, packaging, and other types of industrial uses are encouraged to call Luna County home as long as they do not adversely affect the environment or neighboring property owners.

Luna County is fortunate to have three industrial parks. The Deming Industrial Park has over 680 acres of land for lease or sale. The rail was removed from this park in 1999; however, rail is available at the Peru Mill Industrial Park. The Columbus International Industrial Park which has 288 acres county-owned industrial park that accommodates businesses involved in border trade.

Alternative energy has found its home in Luna County. The forms of alternative energy include: solar, wind, and biomass. The creation of the Peru Mill Industrial Park will be a prime area for the growth of alternative energy.



Rio Mimbres Golf Course

Luna County continues to actively promote tourism as an important component of economic development. The Great American Duck Race in Deming is well known to Luna County's residents and also a great tourist attraction. The county seeks to create new events and community functions to promote tourism.

Regional partnerships are recognized as a key economic development strategy by Deming and Luna County. The Deming/Luna County Economic Development Corporation seeks funding for the sufficient number of staff and internal infrastructure to develop strategic partnerships. Deming/Luna County Economic Development Corporation also provides the promotion of the county and city to prospective businesses.

### ***City of Deming***

The City of Deming is located in southwestern New Mexico, along Interstate 10. The city is approximately 90 miles east of the Arizona state line, 30 miles north of the Port of Entry in Columbus, and 100 miles west of El Paso, Texas. Deming is the county seat of Luna County and one of two incorporated municipalities located within the county. Deming was founded in 1881, named after Mary Ann Deming Crocker. Deming served as the port of entry on the U.S./Mexican border until 1853 when the Gadsden Purchase occurred.<sup>xiv</sup>

The favorable climate contributes to Deming's potential tourist magnet. The history of the area, the desert landscape, and the outdoor recreation opportunities all contribute to Deming's marketability as a tourist destination. Deming has developed an entertainment district for residents with an amphitheatre, bowling alley, and theater. A historic train depot was relocated to Deming and has been restored; it is within walking distance of the Mimbres Valley Special Events Center. The Deming/Luna County Economic Development Corporation strategic plan includes a goal of promoting tourism by expanding events in the community to utilize these various facilities. Also, the city wishes to obtain support for an off-ramp for easy access to this area by tourists and residents.

Deming's economy is driven by a myriad of physical, political, and socioeconomic factors that will continue to influence the form and direction of economic development in

the city for the next twenty years. For years, the primary industry has been farming and ranching; however, a new trend of employment has shifted to individuals who work out of their homes, including “lone eagles,” but also includes individuals who work for larger companies. The need for expansion of broadband or fast internet service will enable more people to work from home.

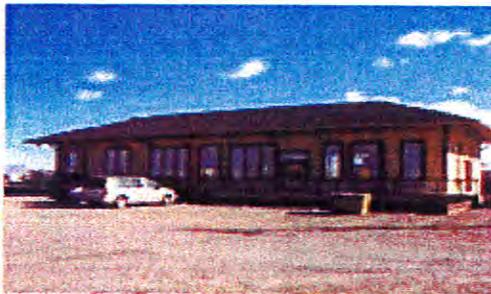
Businesses look to relocate in Deming because of abundant land, cheaper utilities, available water, and a trainable workforce, they should not be alarmed about the uncertainty that is occurring across the U.S./Mexico border. Although the national media reports and gives attention to the drug cartel wars in Mexico, Deming is a safe and beautiful city. Deming has the Local Economic Development Act (LEDA) in place, so the city has more flexibility in negotiating with businesses wishing to start, expand, or relocate. Deming has made important economic gains that have helped to diversify the local economy. Solitaire Mobile Homes opened a manufacturing plant in the Deming Industrial Park. Border Foods, which is based in the city, has expanded operations and is now the largest chile processor in New Mexico.

The City of Deming was awarded a grant from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) to help the city cultivate heavy industry, especially, alternative energy at Peru Mill Industrial Park, a former brownfield, located just north of Deming. This 1,564 acre park is located close to Luna Energy, a 570-watt energy substation owned by PNM, Tucson Electric, and Freeport McMoran.

Even with the Southwest Regional Housing and Community Development Corporation and Region V Housing Authority working on Luna County’s housing needs, affordable housing is still a huge obstacle. Affordable housing and rentals for teachers, nurses, Homeland Security agents, and local law enforcement is not available. There is also a need for housing for retirees, border patrol agents, and others relocating to Deming.

The City of Deming was the lead entity for all of Luna County in achieving designation as an Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community in 1999. The Mimbres Valley Authority (MVA) was later established that year, their role being to oversee implementation of the Enterprise Community initiatives. The Mimbres Valley Authority mini-grant program helps leverage funds and provides technical assistance for smaller nonprofits throughout the county such as Deming MainStreet, Keep Luna County Beautiful, Graffiti Eradication Program, Flores Youth Development Wrestling Group, Saint Ann’s Foundation, and Deming Helping Hand. The MVA received an extension on its designation from USDA and continues to focus on education and training, economic

development and opportunity, community development, health and recreation, and housing.



Luna County moved and renovated the old Depot.

In addition to providing additional employment in the city, the Mimbres Valley Learning Center, a WNMU campus, is a vocational education center and a community college for Deming and Luna County residents as well as a special events center available for rent.

### *Village of Columbus*

The only invasion of American territory until World War II occurred when Pancho Villa led rebel soldiers across the Mexican border into the Village of Columbus on March 16, 1916. Several hundred rebel soldiers raided and burned much of the town, causing many residents to flee in the desert. U.S. Army soldiers defended the town with two machine guns. The fighting continued until dawn, when Villa fled back across the Mexican border. Villa was never caught and died seven years later at the hands of an assassin. Today, Pancho Villa State Park in Columbus is known for its beautiful cacti.

The Village of Columbus is located in Luna County just three miles north of the U.S./Mexico border and is approximately 30 miles south of Deming and 65 miles west of the Santa Teresa Port of Entry. Columbus Port of Entry is a full service port of entry and is the only open port in New Mexico for 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The port of entry houses Immigration and U. S. Customs.

Columbus is a small community that is economically distressed; however, it is one of the fastest growing communities in New Mexico. Historically, agriculture and livestock activity have been the most important economic activity. The village's economic development strategic plan expressed the areas of interest being: increased services, renewable energy, light industry, and educational facilities.

With Palomas, Mexico being only three miles south, many residents from Columbus rely on medical and dental services from across the border due to financial reasons and proximity; although Columbus has a health clinic, Ben Archer Health Clinic, which serves the community. In turn, Palomas relies on Columbus for fire, emergency services, and educational facilities.

The overall growth in population over the next 10 years will be important to increase current revenues. The addition of a Reverse Osmosis Water facility in 2008 and the expansion of the village's wastewater facilities will allow for significant growth in both housing and business. Business promotion and attraction include: retention and expansion of existing businesses, finding new businesses and attracting compatible businesses from other locations. An assessment of the economic connections between Columbus and Palomas will bring new opportunities such as industrial, agribusiness, and renewable energy to this part of the county. The scheduled expansion of the Columbus Port of Entry as well as the Mexican side expansion and finance and the new six mile radius overweight truck zone, will affect the patterns of growth in Columbus and Palomas.

## **CHAPTER IV**

# **COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION**

## Southwest New Mexico Council of Governments

The New Mexico's Planning District V, Southwest NM Council of Governments, is comprised of Catron, Grant, Hidalgo, and Luna Counties. The district was created by Governor's Executive Order in 1966. The SWNMCOG was organized under the Regional Planning Act and the Planning District Act. The SWNMCOG is not considered a state agency, but is viewed as an extension of local governments, a recognized District of the State of New Mexico. The Southwest New Mexico Council of Governments (SWNMCOG) assists in planning for common needs and for coordinating sound regional transportation.

Within the district, there are nine municipalities, seven school districts, four soil and water conservation districts, and several other units of local governments, such as water associations. Of these, all four counties, nine municipalities, two school districts and a Head Start program, three soil and water conservation districts, and a resource conservation and development agency form the Council of Governments' membership. Information is also furnished to all other units of government regardless of their membership. All members of the Board are elected or appointed officials with appointments to the COG Board occurring at public meetings.

The Southwest NM Council of Governments Board meets on the fourth Thursday of every other month. They also meet under special conditions as called upon under the by-laws of the Council.

During months when the entire Council does not meet, the activities of the organization are coordinated by the Executive Committee. All activities of the Executive Committee are reviewed for approval, or further action, at the next meeting of the full council. The five member Council of Governments staff is centrally located within District V in Silver City, New Mexico. Priscilla C. Lucero, an employee of the Council of Governments since 1987, is the current executive director. Pam Eley is the office manager and housing planner. Traci Burnsed is the transportation planner. Emily Gojkovich is the economic/community development planner.



Priscilla C. Lucero and State Senator  
Howie C. Morales  
Photo by Cynthia Stoehner

### Process for Development of the CEDS

The CEDS is coordinated by the Council of Governments with input from its Board of Directors, members, timely and significant research and analysis reports as noted in the appendices, and information from the counties, municipalities, and special districts' comprehensive plans and infrastructure capital improvement plans. All Council of Government members were invited to read and comment on the CEDS which was posted on the COG website at [www.swnmcog.org](http://www.swnmcog.org). The Council of Governments also contacted area specialists in the fields of agriculture and ranching, downtown revitalization,

education, water and workforce development. Through this process it was determined that the retail industry needs to be a focus of every community in the region to improve the quality of life and become a sustainable communities.

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<sup>i</sup> Source: 2010 U.S. Census (combined the four counties total population).

<sup>ii</sup> New Mexico Environment Department report, "Potential Effects of Climate Change on New Mexico", Agency Technical Work Group, December 30, 2005.

<sup>iii</sup> Grant County Community Health Council, "Community Health Improvement Profile 2007."

<sup>iv</sup> NM Mortgage Finance Authority Consolidated Plan, 2006-20120. Can be found at [housingnewmexico.org](http://housingnewmexico.org).

<sup>v</sup> Affordable Housing Plan, prepared by Medius, Inc., for the Town of Silver City Community Development Department, 2009.

<sup>vi</sup> Economic Impact of Ranching in Grant County and New Mexico, Pete Walden, New Mexico State University, 2009.

<sup>vii</sup> Village of Reserve New Mexico 2005 Comprehensive Plan

<sup>viii</sup> Silver City Arts and Cultural District Cultural Plan, June 2009

<sup>ix</sup> "Future Trends Affecting Education", Education Commission of the States, 1999, Denver, Colorado.

<sup>x</sup> Village of Reserve Comprehensive Plan 2005

<sup>xi</sup> Village of Reserve Comprehensive Plan 2005

<sup>xii</sup> Village of Virden Comprehensive Plan, draft, June 4, 2009.

<sup>xiii</sup> Luna County, Grand Total Employment and Wages by Industry—Fourth Quarter 2007,

<sup>xiv</sup> [www.lunacountynm.us](http://www.lunacountynm.us)