2010-2015

COMPREHENSIVE

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGY

Prepared by

SOUTHWEST NEW MEXICO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Maureen Craig, Editor

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THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

AND

GRANT- IN-AID PLANNING DISTRICT STATE APPROPRIATION
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>chapter</th>
<th>page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board of Directors</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributors</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter I: Overview: Vision and Goals</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview and Vision Statement</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 2: Thematic Discussion of Economic and Community Development</strong></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems and Opportunities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Resources</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hydrology</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Planning</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soil and Vegetation</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographics</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services and Industry</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture and Ranching</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts, Recreation and Tourism</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Bayard National Historic Landmark</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Development and Retention</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonias: Designation and Needs</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downtown Revitalization and Improvements</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-School and Child Care</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary, Middle and High Schools</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western New Mexico University</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Issues and Renewable Energy</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solid Waste</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Quality Issues</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renewable Energy</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Borders</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor/Workforce Development</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 3: Counties, Cities, Towns and Villages in the Region</strong></td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catron County</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village of Reserve</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Grant County
  City of Bayard 52
  Town of Hurley 57
  Village of Santa Clara 58
  Town of Silver City 60
Hidalgo County 61
  City of Lordsburg 64
  Rodeo, Animas, Cotton City, Playas 66
  Village of Virden 68
  Antelope Wells 68
Luna County 69
  City of Deming 71
  Village of Columbus 74

Chapter 4: Community Participation 76
  Southwest New Mexico Council of Governments 77
  Process for Development of the CEDS 78
  Resources and Planning Documents 78

APPENDICES

A. SWNMCOG Board of Directors
B. Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan Summaries 2009-2014
C. Fort Bayard Preservation & Development Plan
D. Western New Mexico University – Spaceport Needs Assessment
E. Western New Mexico University Strategic Plan
F. FY2008-2011 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program
G. Letters of Endorsement

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Introduction

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for 2009-2014 (“CEDS”) is a regional planning document representing the four southwest New Mexico counties of Catron, Grant, Hidalgo and Luna.

Economic development is a broad concept, encompassing improvements in infrastructure, education, housing, water supply—to name but a few—as well as improvements to and expansion of services and industry. Business retention and expansion and job creation is the goal upon which a healthy infrastructure and set of services relies.

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 the goals of various sectors and entities as to their ongoing work and visions for a better New Mexico.

Comprehensive plans of counties and local governments are reflected in the descriptions. Infrastructure needs are addressed in the Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plans, the summaries of which are included in the appendices to this document.

Any questions or comments regarding this report may be directed to Maureen Craig, editor, at mcraig@swnmcoh.org or (575) 388-1509.

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The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2010-2015 was approved by the Southwest New Mexico Council of Governments Board of Directors on February 18, 2010.

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CHAPTER I

OVERVIEW: VISION AND GOALS
Southwestern New Mexico

Vision Statement and Overview

The Southwestern New Mexico Council of Governments serves the four counties of Catron, Grant, Hidalgo and Luna. The region is largely rural with nine municipalities and a number of small unincorporated communities dotting the landscape. A major presence in this region is the Gila National Forest, the sixth largest forest in the United States. Mountainous, isolated¹, and semi-arid, the region is generally set at a high altitude above sea level. The region borders Mexico and eastern Arizona. The combined population of the four counties is 65,000 to 70,000² and approximately one in five of this number lives below the poverty line.

The region was hard hit by the financial recession of 2007-2008 and the unemployment rates rose quickly, especially in the first half of 2009. Freeport McMorRan, an international mining company, laid off hundreds of its workers in early 2009. These layoffs had a ripple effect, reducing income from gross receipts taxes and further crippling the economy. The region is well aware of the need to diversify its economic base and has established several economic development organizations to help organize those efforts. Still, this awareness of the problem does not solve it. 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 for small businesses to situate their operations here. To achieve this goal, the infrastructure for serving new businesses and their employees must be strong: more housing is critically needed; and services to new developments must be in place such as utilities, schools, health care, roads and the people to maintain them.

In 2009, the Obama Administration and the U.S. Congress enacted the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to stimulate job growth. At the time of writing this report, over $40 million has been allocated to various institutions, governmental entities in southwestern New Mexico. The funding is for transportation, border security, education, health, infrastructure,

¹ Large cities such as El Paso, Tucson, and Albuquerque are located outside the region and may be as distant as a three to five hour drive from various points in the district.
² U.S. Census and Bureau of Business Research, University of New Mexico have different counts for population in the State of New Mexico.
labor and training programs. The results of this major investment are yet to be seen, but a significant portion is allocated to infrastructure development.

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 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Under the Cranston-Gonzales Act, “Colonia” is the Spanish term for neighborhoods. Colonias are characterized by substandard housing, inadequate water and drainage; and lack of proper plumbing, sewage or other basic utilities. In New Mexico, about half of the approximately 140 Colonia settlements lack proper wastewater treatment systems.³ Meeting and improving infrastructure needs in the Colonias will improve quality of life for their residents.

Business retention and recruitment of new businesses are needed to strengthen the economic base of the region.

Small businesses are the lifeblood of communities. 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 larger groups of people. Industrial parks need to be developed to be able to offer sites to new and emerging industries, and to assist in the relocation of other businesses that are seeking an improved quality of life such as that offered in southwestern New Mexico.

Targeted and varied vocational education programs will help displaced workers from the mines and others to acquire specialized skills to serve the region. A critically important resource here is Western New Mexico University, the only higher education entity in the region, which is

³ Source: New Mexico Environment Department
working to fill area training needs, and works in partnership with economic development organizations, local governments and other agencies to meet the needs of the region.

Vocational or career training is the dominant educational need in this region to equip the rising generation with job skills and job opportunities. Those students without the academic drive to attend college are left without options when they do not have the necessary skills to enter the job market. A wide variety of opportunities are needed with job coaching, on-the-job training and related classroom/educational experience. For those students with the drive and ambition to attend college, many in this region need financial support for their education.

Housing is in short supply and much of the current housing stock throughout the region is in need of refurbishment or replacement; there is also a need to create new and affordable housing throughout the region in order to attract more businesses and employers to this area. People in this region wish to preserve the unique identity or, as frequently referred to in their comprehensive plans, the “sense of place” that characterizes the region as well as drawing others to this area. People here understand the need for growth and development, but they want to be involved in thoughtful planning about how that growth occurs.

Renewable energy has been a prominent theme of the new Administration. With the ARRA funding available, New Mexico officials and leaders believe that the State should actively compete for ARRA funds and lead the way in modeling and instituting uses of natural energy resources in the area. 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, street and traffic lighting, and more.

Water is a prominent concern, need and focus of attention in the southwest and this region is no exception. County and local governments and the volunteer-run special water districts in this region, of which there are forty-five, have an important responsibility to properly maintain their systems, plan for the future, and plan for upgrades and improvements where needed to maintain an adequate and potable water supply. Because the risk of wildfires is an ongoing threat in this region, water and adequate sizing of lines, as well as updating or placement of new hydrants, are
necessary to providing adequate fire protection. Water utility lines are the most important consideration in planning new housing or commercial developments, as well.

The Arizona Water Settlements Act 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 adequately address their own needs.

Brownfields are abandoned or underused industrial and commercial facilities available for re-use. Expansion or redevelopment of such a facility may be complicated by real or perceived environmental contaminations. 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 those abandoned areas and put them to use.

Solid Waste is a growing concern as the only landfill that serves at least three of the counties 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.

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 recreational tourism must be laid by ensuring adequate short-term housing, food supply, promotional activities, and development of new and fun opportunities.

Silver City leads the way in downtown revitalization, in partnership with New Mexico MainStreet. 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 City of Deming’s start-up MainStreet Project is underway. Also, the City of Lordsburg and the Village of Reserve are working to revive or improve their downtown areas to attract tourists and showcase their history, people and the arts. Quemado has worked on a MainStreet Satellite Project and is seeking funding to continue their work, as well.
Technology and broadband are now essential tools in all walks of life and will connect the people of southwestern New Mexico with each other, with goods, and with information. No office is without a computer; most people—especially retirees, students, and young professionals who want to make a home for themselves in this beautiful area—rely on the internet to keep them connected to the world. Because we are rural and somewhat isolated, the internet provides a link to friends, relatives, other professionals, education, information, shopping, and more. The number of publicly available computers is limited to a handful at libraries in the region. Broader availability of broadband and computers will help job seekers and others in a multitude of ways. Good internet service will enable people to work from their homes as small businesses and as well for large companies. It is a necessary tool for the region.
Southwest New Mexico Regional Goals

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 isn’t 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.

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.

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.
• Development of additional landfills through the counties, where needed, for example in Catron County.

Creating vital town/city 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.

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.

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.

4 “Lone eagle” is an expression for those individuals who can operate their businesses from any area of the country that provides adequate broadband access and inter-city transportation.
• 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.

**Education**
• Expand and in some localities 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.
• Western New Mexico University Strategic Plan is provided in the appendices.
• Coordinate vocational training with college credit courses to allow students to more readily transition into career preparation in their chosen fields.

**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.

**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 that are adjacent to utility access and other services.
• Institute green components in buildings and developments to provide cost savings and reduce any environmental impacts.

**Planning**
• Provide coordination and support, as needed, to county and local governments, and to special 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.
Renewable energy

- Establish offices of sustainability within local governments.
- Municipalities will develop an energy efficiency and conservation strategy.
- Use all available opportunities to retrofit buildings and facilities with energy efficient lighting, heating and cooling mechanisms.
- Provide education and promote water and energy conservation by individuals and families.
- Develop home energy use audit guidelines and provide support in their use.
- When updating water systems, use energy efficient motors. Consider use of energy alternatives to “fuel” water systems.
- Enforce land-use policies that conform to city and county regulations.
- Promote walkable 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.
- For those communities that have street lights, establish a lighting plan that ensures street lights are adequate but not excessive for local needs.
- 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.

Transportation

- Make road improvements, including 1) the paving of roads in cities, towns and unincorporated areas where deemed necessary and beneficial; 2) assure 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-model transportation and 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 transit systems to assist seniors, youth and disabled individuals locally.
- 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-model, non-motorized transportation, including walking, bicycling, and walking and equestrian trails.

Water and Wastewater, Brownfields, Solid Waste

- Each county and municipality will have a vested interest in the Arizona Water Settlements Act with a plan for uses of redirected water and participation in regional planning groups.
- Public water systems run by counties, municipalities, and special water districts will receive the support they need to plan for and maintain their water systems.
- Encourage updating, where needed, and/or creation of 40 year water plans.
- Ensure adequate disposal of solid waste and encourage recycling programs.
- Obtain funding to clean up brownfields and put abandoned lands to use.
- Create and develop water conservation programs, drought contingency plans, drought mitigation plans, and asset management plans.
• Use green technology in upgrading or building public water systems.
CHAPTER II

THEMATIC DISCUSSION OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES
THEMATICAL DISCUSSION OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Natural Features

Geography

District V is located in the extreme southwestern corner of the State of New Mexico. The district 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 district is the City of Deming in Luna County followed in population size by the Town of Silver City in Grant County.

The region is primarily rural. The Gila National Forest is a protected national forest in New Mexico in the southwestern United States established in 1905. It covers approximately 3.3 million acres (5150 sq. mi., 13,000 km²) of public land, making it the sixth largest National Forest in the continental United States. Part of the area, the Gila Wilderness, 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 its borders. The forest lies in southern Catron, northern Grant, western Sierra, and extreme northeastern Hidalgo counties in southwestern New Mexico. Forest headquarters are located in Silver City, New Mexico.

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. There are several large metropolitan centers located from 150 to 350 miles away from most areas in the district. These would include Tucson and Phoenix, Arizona; El Paso, Texas, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

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

Elevations range from about 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 at Deming (Luna County) 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 locality than its latitude. Warmest days often occur in June before the monsoon season sets in; during July and August, afternoon
convective storms tend to decrease solar insulation, lowering temperatures before they reach their potential daily high.

Within an area of this size, as might be expected, climate is nearly as varied as the terrain. The only unifying climatic variable is aridity; throughout the district 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 range from about 12 to 16 inches and the mountain areas range from about 16 to 30 inches with the average between 16 and 20 inches.

Snow falls between October and into 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 about 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 fifty to one hundred years, if no measures are taken to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions. Recurrence of a severe multiyear drought like that of the 1950s is expected at some time 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 and 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 percent 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 of consequence in the region.

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, run-off tends to spread across lowlands as sheet flow, terminating in shallow playa lakes. The major

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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 District has ephemeral arroyos of washes 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 of the Gila Wilderness area in 1924, 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 is still a common use, and a small amount of timber is harvested.

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 only livestock grazing had been feasible previously. Mining is the second largest cause of groundwater depletion, and public and domestic water usage a distant third.

**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 of 1982 is an important piece of legislation for the region. The history and full dimensions of the Act will not be addressed in this report. It was amended in 2004 as the Arizona Water Settlements Act. Suffice it to say that the AWSA may afford 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. Those counties or communities not engaged in planning for projected use of that funding and the allocated 14,000 annual acre-feet of water are well advised to do so.

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.
Governor Bill Richardson in 2007 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 special 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 of 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 developments.

Also, because the mutual domestic water associations are managed by volunteers, government entities and state agencies must partner with them to assist with obtaining funding and training the volunteers on how to manage their water systems.

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 needs into the future.

Soil and Vegetation

The USDA Soil Conservation Service has published soil surveys for each of the four counties in the district. 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.

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 bolsons, 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 give 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.

Plant communities play an important role in any soil discussion, being both dependent upon and, to a somewhat lesser degree, responsible for soil types in a given area. Vegetation is also very dependent upon geographic location. The district is influenced by two of the major biogeographic provinces of the Southwest (Brown, 1982) the Great Basin from the north and Chihuahuan Desert in the south.

People

Demographics

The Southwestern New Mexico survey area (Grant County, Catron County, Hidalgo County and Luna County) has an estimated population of between 65,000 and 70,000. The 2000 Census reported that 65,493 live in the survey area; the estimated population of the region on July 1, 2008 was 65,385. University of New Mexico’s Bureau of Business and Economic Research or “BBER” reports a total population of 70,349 for the four-county area in 2008, using other economic and demographic indicators for the state. The population of the region is equal to about 3.3% of the population of the entire state.

The region has an estimated total civilian labor force of approximately 29,218 people. In late 2008 and early 2009, a series of events affecting the banking and housing industries in the United States resulted in an economic recession and resulted in significant layoffs at the mines in the region. The unemployment rates for the four counties are now among the highest in the State of New Mexico, with Luna County at the number one spot with 17.7% unemployment; Grant County (ranked second) at 11.4%; Hidalgo County (ranked fifth) at 8.4%; and Catron (ranked sixth) at 7%.

The three largest population centers in the region are Deming, population 15,277; Silver City, population 9,977; and Lordsburg, population 2,665.

Grant County is the most densely populated county in the region with an estimated population of 31,512. Catron County is the least sparsely populated county in the State of New Mexico with an estimated population of 3,707. In Hidalgo County, the majority of the 4,910 population

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6 Source: NM Department of Workforce Solutions, Unemployment Rates in New Mexico, Preliminary May 2009 data
resides in Lordsburg. Luna County’s population is 27,227; Luna County is the only county in the region that is showing an increase in estimated population from the time of the 2000 U.S. Census.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bayard</td>
<td>2,399</td>
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<tr>
<td>Columbus</td>
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<td>1,765</td>
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<td>Deming</td>
<td>15,480</td>
<td>14,116</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hurley</td>
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<td>1,464</td>
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<td>387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Clara</td>
<td>1,856</td>
<td>1,944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver City</td>
<td>10,329</td>
<td>10,545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virden</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Racial Characteristics

Catron County’s population is 19% Hispanic. The other counties in the region have larger Hispanic/Latino populations. Grant County’s population is 48% Hispanic. Hidalgo County’s population is 58% Hispanic. Luna County’s population is 60% Hispanic.

Senior Citizens

A number of community leaders have expressed the need for more senior housing and more services in the region. Using estimated population figures from the U.S. Census for 2008, we find that 34% of Catron County’s population is over 60 years of age; 26% of both Grant and Luna Counties’ population are over 60 years of age; and 22% of Hidalgo County’s population is over 60 years of age.

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. This younger generation is greatly underserved and in need of diverse job training opportunities. Youth ages 15 to 24 years of age in Catron County equal 10 percent of the population. In Grant County, youth ages 15 to 24 equal 13.7% of the population. Hidalgo County’s youth ages 15 to 24 equal 14.4% of the population. And Luna County’s youth ages 15 to 24 equal 13.5% of the population.

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 birthweight 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. Poor housing conditions affect the health of the poorest in this region because of mold, asbestos, lead paint and other issues.

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. Almost all ranching operations in the state are family business.

While Catron and Hidalgo Counties did not report on agricultural income in 2008, the combined income for Grant and Luna Counties in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting for the first quarter of 2008 totaled $2.82 million.

Pete Walden of Grant County Extension told us that the return on investment from 51 ranches in the county equaled 1.4%. The Endangered Species Act has halved the number of jobs and severely reduced county income. Whereas in 1979 there were 59,000 head of cattle, that number was reduced to 28,000 in 2009. The reduction in use of grazing land has had other implications for the region, including increased fire hazards from grassland. The 6,400 or so 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 is being 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 as well as expected climate shifts.

Catron County is the largest county in the state consisting of 6,798 square miles, 75% of which is public land. It is also the least densely populated county in New Mexico with a population of 3,543. Beef cattle are the primary agriculture commodity produced in the county, as there are currently 170 beef cattle ranches. Most agricultural programs focus primarily on beef cattle profitability. Tracy Drummon of Catron County Extension reports that the largest agriculture-related employer in that county is in timber. He affirmed 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. 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 Catron. There is a need for efficient equipment or retrofitting of old equipment to use different kinds of wood and to allow producers to more efficiently produce wood products and increase job opportunities. A related problem for the timber industry prevention of uses of certain woods due to environmentalists, so the effort is being made to develop new markets with the wood that is available for use. Livestock production is still an important income producer in Catron County.

8 Grant County Community Health Council, “Community Health Improvement Profile 2007.”

9 Economic Impact of Ranching in Grant County and New Mexico, Pete Walden, New Mexico State University, 2009.
Luna County has the largest amount of irrigated cropland in the region with an estimated 35,000 to 40,000 acres. 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. This is an important start, but much more work will be needed. The cost of installing this kind of irrigation is from $2,000 to $2,500 per acre.

Onions and chile are among the major crops in Luna County. Labor laws affecting farms, including a proposed workman’s compensation requirement, will deleteriously affect farms and cause loss of labor, in turn reducing production and food availability.

The drought of the past several years is affecting the beef industry. Ranchers cannot continue to get rid of herds of cattle when the rainfall is low and the cost of supplemental feeding takes its toll on ranchers. USDA is evaluating and trying to help with the feeding of cattle, but there is a need for a wider response through legislative action.

The availability of water is a critical need to agriculture. Mr. Blandford affirmed that the aquifer in Luna County has gone down in past years. He attributes this to the influx of retirees and new subdivisions which are drilling their own wells.

**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 themselves 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 arts education and participation in community arts projects need to be continued and expanded. The Youth Mural Program and National Dance Institute are two good examples of engaging youth and their families in the artistic life of the community.

The Silver City Arts and Cultural District (“ACD”) recently became a state-designated arts and culture district of which there are now six 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. Communities qualifying for designation of 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 its 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

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10 Silver City Arts and Cultural District Cultural Plan, June 2009
Western New Mexico University. The University of New Mexico Institute for Applied Research, Bureau of Business & Economic Research, 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 main findings of the Cultural Plan are 1) cultural planning to include professional development of the arts community, need for a community cultural center, and a centralized calendar of community arts and cultural events; 2) marketing and promotion including upgrading billboard signage to guide travelers into downtown, improving websites aimed at tourism, and developing vehicles to celebrate the region’s diverse ethnic cultures; 3) physical planning and design, which has including 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; and 4) capacity building and finance including the identification and procurement of public and private funding sources and studying the impact of tourism on the county’s economy. The report also expresses the need 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.

Deming, Bayard, Santa Clara, and other communities have contacted Silver City MainStreet to gain ideas and strategies for their localities.

Grants are needed to provide artist-in-residence programs and arts education 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 to offer various cultural offerings. This offers a model to other school districts. There is a need for cultural facilities as locations for arts and cultural events across the region. There is a need for proper cultural facilities in the schools, as well.

Historic buildings, stage and movie theaters can and should be restored to offer venues for community arts 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 that need serious work. They reflect the heritage of the region and will build pride of place if properly restored.

Developing cultural heritage tourism is a goal of the Village of Reserve in Catron County. The Department of Tourism says that the top 7 tourist draws in New Mexico are (in descending order): scenic beauty, Native American culture, historic sites, outdoor recreation, arts, Hispanic
culture, and special events. Reserve and Catron County has all of the above. 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 Elfego Baca Memorial and Museum, 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 that national parks, the Gila National Forest and Wilderness area, and the scenic beauty of southwestern New Mexico have for 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.

Other recreation destinations include the district'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.

Strategies for increasing tourism include properly showcasing the tourism attractions and ensuring adequate accommodations for visitors. A number of these strategies are further discussed in the entity descriptions, further on in this report.

**Fort Bayard National Historic Landmark**

Fort Bayard was established in 1866 by troops of Company B, 125th 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 surrounded by a National Forest Game Preserve. One of only two national cemeteries in New Mexico is located at Fort Bayard. The existing Medical Center includes a variety of licensed and certified 250-bed long/intermediate-term and skilled-care facility that provides various geriatric and orthopedic services. It also offers home care case management and chemical dependency treatment at Yucca Lodge. Fort Bayard currently employs 368 individuals and is considered one of the major employers in Grant County.

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.

Fort Bayard is considered a vital and vibrant cornerstone of the economic foundation of southwest New Mexico. At this time, a new medical facility is being constructed just outside the grounds of Fort Bayard proper. When the facility is completed,
the Department of Health will move 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. The Fort Bayard Preservation & Development Plan is included in the appendices.

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 renewable energy/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. The Gila Economic Development Alliance will apply for a Department of Labor grant in fall, 2009 to implement the project, for which Western New Mexico University will provide the educational component and serve as the fiscal agent.

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 beautiful 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.

**Business Development and Retention**

Southwestern New Mexico is in the business of diversifying its economic base to reduce reliance on employment from mining companies because such employment can be unreliable for mining employees and their families over the long-term.

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 Office, Deming/Luna County Chamber of Commerce, Mimbres Valley Authority Enterprise Community, Hidalgo Area Development Corporation, 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 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 somewhat geographically isolated, a trained workforce, strong schools, and vibrant arts, culture and recreation opportunities.

**Colonias: Designation and Needs**

The Cranston-Gonzales National Affordable Housing Act of 1990 is the catalyst for the establishment of partnerships between federal, state and 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 (colonies) are located along the border of the United States and Mexico. Colonias lack vital infrastructure components such as adequate potable water, sewage and housing. Under provisions of the Cranston-Gonzales Act, the Colonias are entitled to funding for infrastructure development of primary needs such as potable water and sewage facilities: decent, safe, sanitary and energy efficient housing; utilities and roads, and secondary necessities as health, education, and human service support facilities.

**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, executive director of the project, says that 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 up with friends and acquaintances, and accomplish their shopping needs. The downtown provides a sense of place and history that connects residents with the past. The downtown is where people celebrate their locality with events such as parades.

Other communities working to improve and strengthen their downtown areas in this region are Bayard, Deming, Lordsburg, Quemado, Reserve and Santa Clara.

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.

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.

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 all the care they need.

The inability to afford childcare, finding care that matched their work schedule, and the poor quality of available care were the top three reasons parents gave for not getting all the care they need. As a percentage of family income, the poorest families pay twice as much as moderate and high income families for their childcare.

The greatest need in southwest New Mexico is for after-school programs and care for three to five year olds. Also, the need for infant care, reported by approximately 25% of survey 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 is building a child-care facility that will serve at least 40 children. The facility is to be located behind the Grant County Business/Conference Center. The facility will additionally provide care during non-traditional hours.

Elementary, Middle and High Schools

Need: Increase in or Creation of Career/Vocational Training for High School Students
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. Three of the superintendents provided input for this economic development strategy. The largest school district is Deming Public Schools with a reported enrollment in the 2007-2008 school year of 5,380; second in place is Silver Consolidated Schools whose enrollment was 3,205 for the 2007-2008 school year. Enrollment of students in other school districts in the region for 2007-2008 was: Cobre 1,410, Lordsburg 696, Animas 263, Quemado 188, and Reserve 186.

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.

First and foremost is the need to provide hands-on training and career/vocational training and preparation for students. Mr. Dick Poole, 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 envelope their families and children and continued to be repeated in their children. Ms. Harvielee Moore in Deming echoed this sentiment since several of the schools in Deming have over 90% poverty, and one school is at 98% poverty level.

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, but are not sufficiently trained to be able to compete for jobs upon graduation.

Superintendent Harvielee Moore of Deming Public Schools outlined the parameters of her district’s Career Technology Program which offers training in welding, the building trades, carpentry, and A+ technology certification. There is a need for an infusion of funding to build up 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. The need is for a variety of vocational training options that will position students for jobs in the diversified marketplace.

In Lordsburg, with declining school enrollments, the challenges are a little 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 to develop courses to be held at the new Vocational Training Center in Lordsburg. At this time, Phase I of the Vocational Training Center is complete. Hidalgo County is seeking funding for Phase II in order to build more
classrooms. The courses would include dual high school/university credit courses and, as a start in the vocational/career training arena, industrial maintenance training.

Obviously the need is huge to begin offering training that will offer different career options to students, and those particularly that will make them employable close to home.

Western New Mexico University offers dual enrollment classes which enables high school students to obtain college credits. Dr. John Counts, president of Western, is rightfully 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. There is the need for more. An increase in educational and training opportunities requires facilities, equipment and staffing.

**Need: Distance Learning Opportunities**

Mr. Jim Barentine, superintendent of Lordsburg Municipal Schools, emphasized the need for the proper equipment 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**

We asked Ms. Moore how much it costs the Deming schools to maintain and operate the technology needs of her system and how much is really needed to properly maintain an up-to-date system of computers and related technology. 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. Mr. Barentine said that his newest school building is close to forty years old. A school in his district was built in the 1920s. 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. Poole 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 in the face of layoffs from the mines and the economic recession is affecting everyone.

**Need: Retain a highly qualified staff**

This point came from Ms. 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. That report notes the increasing dominance of technology in the economy and society, a widening gap between the “haves” and the “have-nots”, 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**

Located in Silver City, Western New Mexico University 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 State Teacher’s College, Western New Mexico University has become a five-city campus (Silver City, Deming, Gallup, Lordsburg, Truth or Consequences) with award winning programs and faculty. More than 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.

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WNMU, with its unique access and resources, helps various community entities with economic development assistance.

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

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 to 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. The SWORD website can be viewed at [www.swordnm.info](http://www.swordnm.info).

Taking a lead role in maintaining a skilled workforce in Grant County, WNMU developed courses for displaced workers, mostly miners, in the community. The University’s quick response to economical conditions has meant that many laid-off employees have remained in the community to further their educational opportunities as the economy turns around.

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. Offered annually at WNMU, the weeklong course meets prerequisites for participants’ certification as economic developers. It is one of 19 such certified courses in the United States. The International Economic Development Council (IEDC) is the accrediting organization.

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.

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 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, customer relations specialists, etc. A full list of the careers for which students can be trained may be found in the appendices.

WNMU’s industrial maintenance program fits into the Spaceport’s needs, also. WNMU students with training in hydraulics, pneumatics, and other areas 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.

See the appendices for Western New Mexico University’s Strategic Plan.

**Environmental Issues and Renewable Energy**

**Solid Waste**

Due to new solid waste regulations, which are mandated by the NMED, the disposal of solid waste has been a continual problem in the district. Illegal dumping has been a perpetual issue in
this region. Most of the district has a very sparse population that is geographically separated. This has made recycling difficult and hauling expensive.

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.

In Catron County, there are three active landfills. Two of these are located on federal land and are slated to be closed in the near future. The rest are collection centers, with most of the yard waste being burned. Once the collection centers are closed, Catron County will be required to transport solid waste out of the county at great expense to its residents. Luna County has one landfill in operation and a transfer station in Columbus.

**Water Quality Issues**

Identifying and understanding the available water supply is essential to water planning. For the Southwest New Mexico water planning region (Catron, Grant, Hidalgo, and Luna Counties), existing sources of information about surface water and groundwater supplies were used to characterize the regional water supply.

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

Surface water resources in the planning region include 67.3 river miles that have been identified by the New Mexico Environment Department as being impacted (NMWQCC, 2002). The water quality in most lakes and reservoirs in the planning region is good, but Bear Canyon Reservoir in Grant County has been impacted by excessive nutrients derived from agricultural lands.

Groundwater quality in the planning region is impacted in localized areas by leaking gasoline storage tanks, elevated sulfates and total dissolved solids 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 would help ensure that these resources remain healthy and should be a priority in developing a regional water plan.
Groundwater is relied on heavily throughout the water planning area; nearly three times as much groundwater is withdrawn as surface water. In particular, the region is dependent on groundwater for mining and public (and domestic) water supply purposes.

As pumping from these groundwater sources increases, outpacing natural recharge, water tables throughout the planning region are dropping. Areas within the region where groundwater infrastructure is unlikely to meet future demand include the municipal well fields of Santa Clara, Bayard, Silver City, and Columbus-Deming, and agricultural wells in Animas, Playas Valley, and Lordsburg Basin.

**Renewable Energy**

Renewable energy has been a prominent theme of the new Administration. With the ARRA funding available, New Mexico officials and leaders believe that the State should actively compete for ARRA funds and lead the way in modeling and instituting uses of natural energy resources in the area. Some positive signs of creating better solutions to energy creation and management are already seen in the area.

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. The Climate Action Plan can be found in the appendices.

The Gila Resources Information Project has established a Viva Verde Guide 2009 and a website about energy conservation and renewable energy. The first conference about renewable energy was held in Silver City in 2009. See [www.vivaverdenm.com](http://www.vivaverdenm.com).
In Hidalgo County, businesses are exploring the capturing and use of renewable energy sources.

A series of facilities aimed at creating “green” self-sustaining communities across the globe are coming to Luna County. The Viable International Technology Associates Corporate Cooperative Network bringing four high-end, high-tech manufacturing facilities and a research institute. According to the company, 100 jobs are expected to be created in the first year and after full expansion, a total of 300 jobs are expected to be created in Luna County.

Copernicus Energy is designing the development of a solar tower power plant that will generate approximately 20 megawatts of electricity. They intend to produce clean renewable energy using a solar thermal conversion process. An integral part of this type of renewable energy technology is a very large greenhouse structure that surrounds a tall central tower. This effort will generate many new jobs in the Deming area also through agricultural products grown inside the greenhouse structures.

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, and more.

**Housing**

In their Comprehensive Plans, each of the Counties reports on the need to create new housing and to improve or rehabilitate sub-standard housing. Regional housing authorities and the State of New Mexico are encouraging the use of green technologies in so doing 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 (“MFA”), the priority needs in the Southwest region are single family rehabilitation, single family new construction, public infrastructure and economic development. This region also needs emergency and transitional housing for the homeless, housing for the elderly and emergency repairs for existing homeowners.

MFA reports that housing discrimination occurs in the State of 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 counties where denial disparities are the greatest and denial rates are high overall, especially to American Indians and Hispanics/Latinos. As the Hispanic presence in Grant, Hidalgo and Luna

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14 NM Mortgage Finance Authority Consolidated Plan, 2006-20120. Can be found at housingnewmexico.org.
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:*
The Colonias in Luna County in particular lack adequate infrastructure, are overcrowded, and substandard. The priority housing needs are for single family rehabilitation or reconstruction, including self-help solutions and hook-ups.

The 2000 Census reported that 2 percent of all occupied housing units lacked complete plumbing facilities: in Catron County, the rate is 10.8 percent.

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

More than 6 percent of housing units are overcrowded;
More than 20 percent of housing units are mobile/manufactured homes;
More than 20 percent of its population living in poverty; or
More than 50 percent 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 Luna County Housing Corporation provides sage affordable housing and housing resources for low to moderate income residents in Luna and Hidalgo counties. According to 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, NM, 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 said 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 homes. Fifty percent of the population is below the median income. Also, there is a lack of rental housing available.

Many building contractors have quit or moved, leaving very few in Deming. There were perhaps 50 contractors at one time and now there are far fewer because of the lack of work due to foreclosures and the depressed economy.

The Town of Silver City, in Grant County, has created an Affordable Housing Plan, one of the first (if not the first) in this region. The report states there are four identifiable groups of

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15 Affordable Housing Plan, prepared by Medius, Inc., for the Town of Silver City Community Development Department, 2009.
residents who will need special attention for affordable housing in Silver: single mothers, disabled individuals, elderly, and the impoverished. Of all the special needs populations, single mothers are most likely to subsist below the poverty line. There are 2,237 individuals below the poverty line in Silver City. 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 localities in the region.

Hidalgo County and the City of Lordsburg recognize the critical need for new and renovated housing in the community to meet the needs of a wide variety of household types and levels of income. The 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 community to find housing that will meet their needs. Quality housing in Lordsburg and the core downtown area is also critical to support a downtown revitalization strategy for the city.\textsuperscript{16}

Because of the Anti-Donation Act, any local government that is going to donate property for affordable housing must have an ordinance to approve the donation of the land. In addition, that entity must develop a housing plan stating the needs of the community for housing. At this time, a number of the communities in the region have yet to develop housing plans to accompany the aforementioned ordinance. An important goal for the future would be the creation and approval of such plans by the MFA to provide for future needs.

**International Borders**

The southwest region borders Arizona and Mexico. Efforts are being made to tighten the borders against illegal entry into the United States.

Hidalgo County has seen a sizeable increase in the number of border patrol officers. The City of Lordsburg is collaborating 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 350 agents and employees. It will have an administration building, vehicle maintenance shop and fueling station, equestrian center, dog kennels and a firing range. State Land Commissioner Patrick Lyons says there is a possibility that the station would also include a heliport pad.

\textsuperscript{16} Hidalgo County Comprehensive Plan 2004
Funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 has been provided in the amount of $15.16 million to Antelope Wells in Hidalgo County for improvement of border security.

The border community of Columbus, NM 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.

**Labor/Workforce Development**

**Catron County**
The 2008 population of Catron County was estimated at 3,405. This represents a 4.0 percent increase from 1998. The total civilian labor force in Catron County for July 2009 was 1,783, of which 1,647 were employed and 136 were unemployed. The unemployment rate was 7.6 percent.

The average weekly wage for Catron County in 4th Quarter 2008 was $523. This would be equivalent to $13.08 per hour or $27,196 per year, assuming a 40-hour week worked the year around.

The total number of employees located in Catron County in 4th Quarter 2008 was 646. The largest major industry sector was Public Administration (with 20 percent of the employment), followed by Health Care and Social Assistance (with 14 percent), and Construction (with 9 percent).

The largest major occupational group was Office and Administrative Support Occupations (with 15 percent of the estimated employment), followed by Sales and Related Occupations (with 10 percent), and Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations (with 9 percent).

**Grant County**
The 2008 population of Grant County was estimated at 29,844. This represents a -5.5 percent decrease from 1998. The total civilian labor force in Grant County for July 2009 was 12,634, of which 11,020 were employed and 1,614 were unemployed. The unemployment rate was 12.8 percent.

The average weekly wage for Grant County in 4th Quarter 2008 was $650. This would be equivalent to $16.25 per hour or $33,800 per year, assuming a 40-hour week worked the year around.

The total number of employees located in Grant County in 4th Quarter 2008 was 10,057. The largest major industry sector was Health Care and Social Assistance (with 20 percent of the employment), followed by Education Services (with 16 percent), and Mining (with 13 percent).
The largest major occupational group was Office and Administrative Support Occupations (with 15 percent of the estimated employment), followed by Sales and Related Occupations (with 10 percent), and Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations (with 9 percent).

**Hidalgo County**
The 2008 population of Hidalgo County was estimated at 4,910. This represents a -21.2 percent decrease from 1998.
The total civilian labor force in Hidalgo County for July 2009 was 2,947, of which 2,722 were employed and 225 were unemployed. The unemployment rate was 7.6 percent.
The average weekly wage for Hidalgo County in 4th Quarter 2008 was $703. This would be equivalent to $17.58 per hour or $36,556 per year, assuming a 40-hour week worked the year around.
The total number of employees located in Hidalgo County in 4th Quarter 2008 was 1,803. The largest major industry sector was Public Administration (with 19 percent of the employment), followed by Retail Trade (44 & 45) (with 13 percent), and Accommodation and Food Services (with 10 percent).
The largest major occupational group was Office and Administrative Support Occupations (with 15 percent of the estimated employment), followed by Sales and Related Occupations (with 10 percent), and Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations (with 9 percent).

**Luna County**
The 2008 population of Luna County was estimated at 27,227. This represents a 10.7 percent increase from 1998. The total civilian labor force in Luna County for July 2009 was 13,770, of which 11,763 were employed and 2,007 were unemployed. The unemployment rate was 14.6 percent.
The average weekly wage for Luna County in 4th Quarter 2008 was $576. This would be equivalent to $14.40 per hour or $29,952 per year, assuming a 40-hour week worked the year around.
The total number of employees located in Luna County in 4th Quarter 2008 was 7,808. The largest major industry sector was Retail Trade (44 & 45) (with 15 percent of the employment), followed by Manufacturing (31-33) (with 13 percent), and Public Administration (with 12 percent).
The largest major occupational group was Office and Administrative Support Occupations (with 15 percent of the estimated employment), followed by Sales and Related Occupations (with 10 percent), and Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations (with 9 percent).

**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. Each entity aims to have an up-to-date comprehensive plan; 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. Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plans are also five – year plans which name the priority funding needs of the community and how they will be met. A number of entities have created economic development plans to specifically address job growth and needs related to workforce development. Finally, 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.

### Transportation

The Southwest Regional Planning Organization (RPO) is made up of one appointed individual per entity in Catron, Grant, Hidalgo and Luna counties. The RPO serves as a board that works in conjunction with New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT.) The transportation planner of the Council of Governments helps this board by serving as a liaison between each entity and NMDOT for any needs they may have including training in the field or even in the 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 projects coming down from the State to the local level.

The major cities within this corridor are Silver City, Deming, Lordsburg, Bayard, Santa Clara, Hurley and Reserve. Deming and Lordsburg are bridged by Interstate 10 while Deming, Silver City, Santa Clara, Bayard, Hurley and Reserve are connected by US Highway 180. New Mexico State Highway 90 connects Silver City and Lordsburg.

US Highway 180 is a Federal Aid Highway but it does not meet American Association of Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Standards. What this means is that the road does not have a shoulder in some areas and needs vertical and horizontal realignments. There are two projects in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) to upgrade US Highway 180 in Catron County, where the road is most dangerous. The highway from Silver City to Bayard is a four lane divided highway. US Highway 180 from Bayard to Deming is straight and has 12 foot lanes and a four foot shoulder, which will comfortably accommodate eighteen
wheelers. US Highway 180 connects the above mentioned cities to Interstate 10.

NM Highway 90 meets AASHTO standards for about half of its entire segment. It has four lanes from Silver City to South of the Tyrone Mine. The other half of this road would accommodate most eighteen wheelers but it lacks a shoulder. At the present time, there are three projects on the State Transportation Improvement Plant (STIP) to bring this road up to National Standards. This road links Silver City from the north to US Highway 90 to 70 (Virden) in the South at Lordsburg.

US Highway 60 is an East-West route and runs across the Northern part of Catron County and connects Springerville, Arizona to Quemado, Datil and Magdalena. US Highway 60 is also linked to Interstate 25.

Governor Richardson’s Investment Partnership (GRIP I and II) is the most significant transportation initiative in the New Mexico’s history. It addresses serious needs in many of the state’s highway corridors and the transit and passenger rail components of GRIP are unprecedented in the delivery of alternative transportation infrastructure and opportunities.

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.

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.

The Department of Transportation, with public and local government involvement has prioritized transportation projects for the four county area. The FY2008-2011 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program lists all projects in our District, see the appendices.

**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 it is located 20
miles southeast of Silver City. Great Lakes Airlines provides commercial air service between Silver City and Albuquerque.

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

Luna County has three airports within its boundaries. The City of 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 Facilities**

Rail service is available in Luna and Hidalgo Counties for both freight and passenger transportation. Currently both the Union-Pacific and Atchison-Topeka, and Santa Fe-Burlington Northern run through Luna and Hidalgo Counties. A large volume of freight is carried on these two lines.

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 serves Grant, Hidalgo and Luna counties. Catron County is not at this time associated with the SWRTD. Corre Caminos under contract with the SWRTD provides public transportation services throughout the three counties.

Greyhound Bus and Turismos Rapidos service Deming and Lordsburg. They provide transportation to Tucson, Phoenix, Los Angeles, Las Cruces, El Paso and San Antonio.
CHAPTER III

COUNTIES, CITIES, TOWNS AND VILLAGES IN SOUTHWESTERN NEW MEXICO
CATRON COUNTY

Catron County is the most sparsely populated county in New Mexico and at the same time is a very large County consisting of 6,898 square miles, equivalent to a total area of 4,395,500 acres. The County has a very small tax base. The County’s large size puts a strain on the County government’s ability to provide services.

The County is surrounded by the Gila National Forest and is home to the Gila National Forest Ranger Station. The Gila Wilderness is the oldest wilderness area in the U.S., with over a half million acres of wild rugged mountains which was established in 1924. Land use planning and services are complicated by the fact that much of the County is comprised of Federal and state owned land.

The Continental Divide 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 grass lands to densely wooded conifer forests offering a wide range of wildlife habitat, and 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. They are 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 the major cities of Albuquerque, Las Cruces, and Tucson, Arizona.

Catron County is considered entirely rural with an estimated population in 2008 of 3,405 residents according to the U. S. Census. The Labor Market Report of July, 2009 shows Catron’s unemployment rate at 7%. The per capita income is $13,951 and as of 2007, the poverty status, according to the U.S. Census, was 20.8%.

As in other areas, housing is inadequate. Mobile homes are increasing, particularly in the rural areas. In Reserve and some of the more 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.

The main economic activities in the County are farming, ranching, forestry and retail. With the closure of the local sawmill, in the 90’s, many jobs in the logging industry were lost. The County purchased the sawmill and has coordinated with Catron County Citizens Group to implement forest restoration and health initiatives to improve the economy of Catron County. Catron County has leased the sawmill to an entity that is presently upgrading the site with new sawmill equipment in an effort to stimulate the economics of the County. Upgrades are being made through grants from the New Mexico Economic Development Department and federal and state awards.

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, and 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. New Mexico State Incentive Programs: Catron County wishes to partner 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 Workforce Investment Act. These State and Federal incentive programs are described in the County’s comprehensive plan, adopted in 2007.
5. Targeted Industries: The County has targeted tourism, specialty retail, bio-fuels, and traveler convenience retail as industries that are reasonable for targeting for locating to the County.
6. Downtown Revitalization: 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 nodes of commercial development.

Catron County’s goals, objectives and implementation actions related to economic development may be found in the appendix with the County’s and the Village of Reserve’s infrastructure capital improvement plans.

**Village of Reserve**

The Village of Reserve is the county seat and regional center for Catron County. The estimated population in 2008 was 392.¹⁷

Reserve is a hub and destination for tourists and the main trading and shopping community in Catron County. However, residents of the Village and the county travel regularly either to Socorro or to Silver City for shopping needs. Capturing more of that spending within Reserve and the County is an important part of their 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 industry and in ranching. Government employment remains strong and is an important source of income for residents.¹⁸

Local ranchers and their supporters argue that the Federal Government should relax its controls on use of public lands, and many argue that public lands should be converted to private ownership in order to assure the success of ranching and other forms of economic development.

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 or TFA Inc., 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 5 persons were employed in 2004, TFA hopes for many new jobs primarily from creation of specialized wood product firms. A more detailed discussion of this effort can be found in the Village of Reserve Comprehensive Plan 2005.

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.”

The Elfego Baca Memorial and Museum will 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. In

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¹⁷ U.S. Census Fact Finder
¹⁸ Village of Reserve Comprehensive Plan 2005
promoting Reserve as an authentic Western town, strategies include expanding the number of special events like rodeos, horse races, and other distinctively Western events.

To accommodate larger 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 and for passers-through. This could provide an incentive for families with horses to travel through Reserve.

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. With the National Forest on all sides, Reserve is a natural gateway by Forest Service roads or hiking trails into wild and wonderful country. The Village’s comprehensive plan recommends that a joint Village-Forest Service committee be formed to identify overlooks, 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.

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. Again, the theme of and need for better vocational training in the region comes to the fore.

The historic buildings of the Village reflect a distinctive character that makes the Village 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. Residents have noted the need to make repairs and improve the appearance of the Village as a whole.

19 Village of Reserve Comprehensive Plan 2005
The Village plan includes a discussion of the local retail economy and strategies or needs related to keying spending to local businesses. This complex topic may be referenced in the comprehensive plan.

The revitalization of the downtown area is a central feature of the economic development strategy for the Village of Reserve. The strategy includes a number of special features including re-design of the two state highways within the Village; design and landscaping of mini-parks; creation of a downtown park and plaza area; development and construction of the Elfego Baca Museum; design and construction of parking and pedestrian pathways, and finally financing of façade improvements and other building and property improvements, including residential buildings, to enhance the look of downtown properties along main street.

The residents of Reserve are wary of change, underscoring the value that residents place on their rural and small town way of life. Future growth is focused on two possibilities: new subdivisions and continuing growth in the number of new homes in the County; and newcomers to the area will bring changes of their own. Establishment of new subdivisions would have to occur outside the Village, but at the same time the Village would need to extend water and sewer infrastructure and services to those sub-divisions.

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. Two major highways – US 90 and US 180 – travel through Grant County.

Grant County is home to mining, ranching and agriculture and is known for its 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 a number of entities including federal, state and local governments, as well as private land owners.

In 2008, Grant County had a population estimate of 28,844 based on the US Census Data. This includes estimates for the county’s incorporated areas, including the Town of Silver City, Bayard, Hurley and Santa Clara. The most recent New Mexico Department of Labor Report (March, 2009) indicates unemployment at 11.2%. The per capita income for Grant County (2000 Census) is $14,597 and poverty status in 2007 at 17.7%.
Grant County has a total of 14,577 housing units, with an average household size of 2.5 persons per unit. 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, including the ETZ (Extraterritorial Zone) and other areas close to Silver City.

The Grant County Airport is the largest airport facility in Grant, Luna and Hidalgo Counties. Because of its remote location and with little development in and around the area, the airport poses minimal conflict with local residents.

Corre Caminos Transit, working under contract with the Southwest Regional Transit District, is a rural public transportation service that serves Grant, Luna and Hidalgo County residents with modified fixed routes and demand service in the region.

Western New Mexico University, the only institution of higher learning in the four county region, is located in Silver City, New Mexico. See the “Education” section for more information about Western.

Today, there are two public school districts in Grant County. The Silver Consolidated School District and the Cobre Consolidated School District which is in the mining district.

People have always been attracted to Grant County for the healthful 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, an intensive care unit, a mental health unit, and medical, labor, delivery and newborn nursery care.

Fire prevention in Grant County is the responsibility of rural volunteer fire departments that operate in nine fire districts across the County. These Rural Fire Departments are responsible for fire prevention and suppression in the rural communities.

Gila Regional Medical Center is the leading provider of jobs in the area. Western New Mexico University is a significant economic driver in the Silver City area. Other major employers
include Ft. Bayard Medical Center, local governments, the Gila National Forest Service and the two school districts.

The mining sector has been historically a key employment sector for the county. As of early 2009, it is no longer the largest employer in the County due to layoffs caused by the economic recession in 2007 and 2008. Referenced in the vision statement above, these layoffs have had a devastating effect on the economic health of the County.

The Grant County Economic Development Coalition for Progress, which includes mayors of four municipalities and one elected commissioner of Grant County, was formed in 2003. The goal of the coalition is to build the widest possible base among business and government leaders for cooperation on 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 as follows:

1. To 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. To promote intergovernmental and private/public partnerships to enhance economic development and to increase job opportunities and job training programs for the community.
3. To be a community that 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. To support youth development as a vital part of economic development and the community’s future.

The Silver City-Grant County Economic Development Corporation, dormant for the past two years, was recently revitalized, its goals and activities reviewed, and the organization has been renamed the Gila Economic Development Alliance (“Gila EDA”). The Gila EDA will take direction from the Grant County Coalition for Economic Progress in order to provide this single voice. Gila EDA’s main role is to respond to businesses that may want to relocate to Grant County and to provide them with information about the communities here, the availability of utilities to possible sites, and whatever other information is necessary for their decision-making process. Also, the Gila EDA is the authorized entity by the Coalition to respond to opportunities from the New Mexico Economic Development Department. The Gila EDA will be the core organization for collaboration among such entities as the local municipalities, more targeted economic development groups, educational agencies, businesses and other parties.
City of Bayard

Bayard is a small town that serves as the business hub of the Mining District. Located between Hurley and Santa Clara, and several miles east of Silver City, Bayard was originally a supply terminal for nearby Fort Bayard. Bayard’s estimated population in 2008 was 2,399, a slight decline from 2000. The estimated median household income in 2007 was reported at $25,935. The 2000 US Census showed a population of 2,534, 84.3% being Hispanic or Latino. The per capita income in 2007 was $13,562, well below New Mexico’s average per capita income of $21,822. The number of individuals below the poverty line in Bayard is 24.1%.

Bayard is emerging as the Mining District’s retail and service hub with over 100 licensed businesses. The City’s goal is to enhance and maintain Bayard as the Economic Hub of the Grant County Mining District.

Problems noted in the City of Bayard’s 2005 Comprehensive Plan include a low number of businesses on its main street, lack of a skilled labor pool, low diversity of jobs and businesses, lack of job training opportunities, little support for entrepreneurs, and youth leaving the area for other places where jobs and educational opportunities exist.

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

20 Source: City-Data.com
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 with and among area economic development organizations.

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.

Another important goal is to promote partnerships for vocational and job training opportunities. This need is discussed in detail elsewhere in this report.

The City also wishes 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 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.

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 and small business. Additional strategies include developing a tourism element by promoting the County Sports Complex, an Interpretive Museum on Open Pit Mining, assisting Fort Bayard National Cemetery with celebration of Memorial Day and Veterans Day, development of seasonal Recreation Vehicle parks for winter travelers and Snowbirds, a Depot District revitalization, retention and expansion of existing businesses and putting together a marketing package to attract small franchise retail and service businesses and promoting Bayard as a retail and service center throughout the Mimbres Valley as a closer alternative to Silver City.

It is worth noting that Bayard’s leaders are actively engaged in county and regional planning organizations and thus working to help improve the quality of life for all in Grant County. Jovita
Gonzales, Bayard Trustee, is the chair of the Southwest New Mexico Council of Governments and she chairs the Grant County Commission. Bayard’s Mayor Rodolfo “Rudy” Martinez serves as representative to the state legislature.

**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 old Santa Rita Mines and developed one of the world’s largest open-pit mining operations. In 1955, Chino Copper Company sold the town to a third party, selling the businesses to individuals and the homes to the employees who occupied the homes. The Town of Hurley incorporated in 1956 and, as of the 2000 Census, had a population of 1,464. The per capita income was $11,999 in 2000 and the number of individuals below poverty level in 2007 was 23.9%. Freeport 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 as well as the county as a whole. The smelter was shut down in 2002 and concentrator and crusher buildings were demolished. The stacks, once the area’s most recognizable landmarks, were taken down in 2007.

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 City of Rocks and the Gila Cliff Dwellings.

The Hurley Pride Committee, a 501c3 volunteer organization, has worked diligently to promote civic pride and public participation. They have improved the Christmas lighting throughout the town and pay for the electricity used. The Hurley Pride obtained a grant to upgrade Hurley Park, and their ‘flag project’ provides and places 50 American flags throughout Hurley during proper holidays. They host festivals, parades, and Christmas bazaars to entertain residents and attract visitors.

The Hurley Swimming Pool, open during the summer, provides swimming classes, scuba lessons, lifeguard and CPR training, and night-time pool parties. A swim team called the “Sea Lions” offers team-building skills and competitions. Adjacent to the Hurley Park, the area

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The Hurley stacks were a well-known landmark in Grant County. They were taken down for safety reasons two years ago.

Photo by Bob Pelham

**Hurley Mayor Ray Baca with Priscilla Lucero, SWNMCOG executive director, and Jovita G. Gonzales, Chair of the Grant County Commission**

**In October 2008, Ms. Lucero was awarded the Joe Guillen Award for Outstanding Service to New Mexico Communities.**

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58
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 for rental for parties and get-togethers. Hurley Elementary School is currently undergoing a much needed renovation to the main school building and gymnasium.

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. Now, Freeport is no longer able to assist and has notified Hurley they must find other resources. The immediate goals are to identify sustainable revenue sources and to preserve the infrastructure of the community.

The Town has serious challenges to 1) fund and construct a pipeline connection and pumping station to Bayard’s new wastewater treatment system, 2) to locate and purchase water rights to enable Hurley to be self-sufficient in providing water to the Town’s residents, 3) to upgrade streets, particularly Diaz Ave – the entryway into the Town - by adding street lights, a walking path, and a bus stop, and to continue the addition of curbs, gutters, and sidewalks to all Hurley streets as funding permits, and 4) to maintain existing buildings and to renovate a building donated by Freeport to be used as a Town Hall for the Town Offices, Police Department, and Municipal Court. Once renovations are complete, the new Town Hall building can then be listed on the National Historic Register.

**Village of Santa Clara**

Santa Clara first began as Central City and it served as the gateway into the New Mexico territory from Arizona and Mexico and served as an outpost where four different cultures were represented.

The Village is a relatively new municipality, having incorporated in 1947. Together with Hurley and Bayard, the Village of Santa Clara serves as the heart of the mining district. The 2000 US Census lists the total number of persons in Santa Clara as 1,944, with 83.5% Hispanic or Latino. The per capita income is $9,484 and the number of individuals below poverty level is 28.8%. The vast majority of residents are employed outside the village limits, with the primary work destination being Silver City. This indicates that the Village is currently a bedroom community for the Town of Silver City.
Ft. Bayard, a state administered facility adjacent door to Santa Clara, first served as a US Army hospital and now specializes in care for the elderly and disabled and offers all levels of medical care. An adult day care, chemical dependency unit, outpatient/inpatient physical therapy and specialized 47 bed veterans’ unit. At this time, a new medical center is being constructed outside Fort Bayard proper. The Village of Santa Clara has annexed the land on which the new medical center is located. This will mean additional revenues for the Village from gross receipts when the new medical center is operational.

Like the other communities in Grant County, the layoffs at Freeport McMoRan have caused great economic hardship for Santa Clara. The Village of Santa Clara is primarily concentrating on working on its appearance and marketing the community to reestablish its economic vitality.

The Village feels that its Industrial Park has great untapped potential for light assembly, high tech or bio-technology concerns. Santa Clara is working on finishing the Industrial Park to attract more businesses to complement the existing economic and employment generators. Santa Clara intends to develop a marketing package for business recruitment to its Industrial Park, and to identify land and building sites for business development. Its strategies are to work with the New Mexico Economic Development Department to identify grant opportunities for development of the industrial park. As in Bayard, Santa Clara wishes to create a Business Incentives Committee to help market the community properly.

Santa Clara’s ties with Ft. Bayard Medical Center, copper mining, and the Gila National Forest are being utilized to determine what by-products are generated and if there are markets for secondary applications which could be targeted.

Downtown revitalization is a now overdue and much needed idea for the Village of Santa Clara. The Village is addressing necessary street, bridge, road and drainage improvements as its first order of business, and has been encouraged by State Senator Howie C. Morales to seek funding for a downtown revitalization plan and design in the near future. The Village’s economic development plan includes such strategies as working through the New Mexico MainStreet partners program to obtain technical assistance; utilization of the Cultural Property Preservation tax credit to encourage historical building rehabilitation; and working with NMEDD on a variety of other strategies. 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.

Santa Clara wishes to promote the establishment of new businesses that can serve the community in order to improve the quality of life of its residents and to keep the revenues from gross receipts in the Village. Strategies are to identify the types of businesses that will most help residents (such as a motel, pharmacy, and restaurant) and to work collaboratively with Gila EDA (see Grant County description) on recruitment and retention strategies. There are more than a
dozen strategies for business recruitment outlined in the Santa Clara economic development plan.

The theme of vocational training for youth and overall workforce development is a part of Santa Clara’s vision for the future (see “Education” earlier in this report.) Strategies proposed include working with the Department of Labor on workforce development and training opportunities and creating a computer technology training center at the high school or a community center (another future goal) that can be used for on-site, video or web-based training.

The Village has been advised to begin is looking into developing a strategy to create a water conservation industry in order to improve the economic base of the Village and utilize its water resources.

Like the other communities in the region, tourism is an important part of the Village’s economic development plan. The Fort Bayard Game Refuge and the County sports complex hold potential for attracting tourists. 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.

**Town of Silver City**

Silver City is the county seat and regional center for retail, commercial, institutional and government activity for Grant County, and 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 greater Silver City area, which includes the Mining District.

Downtown Silver City is increasingly becoming a center for arts, restaurants, entertainment and related venues. Hwy 180 East is now becoming the main corridor for businesses to locate. The New Mexico Economic Development Department has designated Silver City as a Certified Community under the Certified Communities Initiatives. Silver City, population 10,545, is the service and economic center for a large urban hinter-land, and serves as a base for visitors to the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument and the Gila National Forest. It is also home of Western New Mexico University.

In spite of severe job losses, 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—an expression for independent business operators who are able to locate anywhere in the country, with the availability of broadband and good transportation systems
3. A strong real estate market
4. Tourism
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 and related industries and businesses, quality of place will increasingly become the most important driver of economic development for the region. Towards this end, 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, and 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 includes such initiatives as a Department of Labor-funded community survey, a marketing plan to be funded from the state legislature, enhanced public relations through trade shows and other strategies, creation of an economic development plan with funding from the NMEDD, and development and expansion of import/export businesses. A full discussion of these initiatives can be found in the Silver City Comprehensive Plan. The Town seeks to position itself to receive benefits associated with NMEDD’s statewide incubator program and initiatives in media and film.

The Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plans for Grant County, Silver City, Hurley, Bayard and Santa Clara can be located in the appendices.

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.

In addition to Lordsburg, 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. Major economic activities in the area have over time included ranching, copper mining, and tourism. The largest individual employers are the City of Lordsburg, the County of Hidalgo and the US Border Patrol. Other key employers outside Lordsburg include the Animas School District, Americulture tilapia facilities, and the Santa Fe Ingredients chili processing operation, all in Cotton City.

Hidalgo County is an economically distressed rural area in one of America’s poorest states. The county seat of Lordsburg is one hour from the nearest hospital and other amenities such as a movie theater. A USDA-designated Champion Community, this extremely rural and sparsely populated county has chronic high unemployment and pervasive poverty. The unemployment rate for Hidalgo County fluctuated slightly between a low of 4.5% and a high of 12.4% between 1986-2000. It is currently, according to the Labor Market Report, July 2009 at 7.6%, down from a level of 8.2% in May. As per the U.S. Census Bureau, Hidalgo County has an estimated per capita personal income (PCPI) in 2007 of $23,967. Fifty-six percent of the total population is Hispanic or Latino. The poverty rate in New Mexico based on most current figures is 18.4%.
and Hidalgo County’s is 27.3%, which is significantly higher than the rate for the United States at 12.4%.²¹

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. The water table in the county is better than average for the southwestern part of the United States. 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.

The plant life of the southern Animas Valley and the surrounding area is properly considered under two zones: (1) the Upper Sonoran (2) the Transition. The following plants were observed in the valley: yucca, ocotillo, salt grass, creosote, prickly pear, sacaton, chamisa, sotol, sage, and buffalo grass. The trees include juniper, salt cedar, cottonwood, walnut and pines. Of the animals seen they are deer, antelope, bobcat, badger, skunk, coyote, squirrel, cottontail rabbit and jackrabbit. There were also owls, quails, doves, eagles, hawks and various field birds.

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

Not only is there a lack of housing but the housing is also of inferior quality predating to 1955. Half of the school teachers and more than half of the border patrol officers live in other cities and towns in the region. The lack of quality housing is one of the principal reasons cited by members of the community for Hidalgo County’s inability to adequately recruit new residents who can contribute to the area’s economic development. Due to inadequate infrastructure, housing developers become frustrated when looking for new subdivision development projects. They not only need quality for-sale housing, but the community also needs quality rental housing. Hidalgo County and the City of Lordsburg are a leadership role in creating new housing opportunities for Hidalgo County and for the region.

The transportation goals for the area are to create a comprehensive road inventory, classification system and mapping system for Hidalgo County, to develop more public transit options to serve the residents, to develop a transportation system that provides better roads and connectivity to

²¹ Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Fact Finder
support economic development, and to provide a safe roadway system for county residents and visitors.

Hidalgo County has two school districts: Lordsburg and Animas. During the 2008 school year, Lordsburg Municipal Schools had an enrollment of 696 students. Animas School District serves the residents of the Animas and Playas areas south of Interstate 10, with elementary, middle and high schools and had an enrollment in 2008 of 263.

Hidalgo County has made progress in providing medical health services to residents, primarily as a result of the efforts of Hidalgo Medical Services. Successful truck stops, motels and restaurants provide an increasingly important base to the economy and revenues for local government.

Declining copper prices led to the closing of the Playas smelter and the loss of some 500 jobs in 1999. This had a dramatic impact on the tax base of the county. In 2003, New Mexico Tech agreed to purchase the town 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.

As referenced above under ‘International Borders”, 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 City is actively cooperating with the U.S. Border Patrol on construction of a $45 million facility to house border agent training and administration. The number of agents is doubling and will eventually more than triple, which means more income in gross receipts for the region and a multiplier economic benefit for the region is anticipated.

The County has completed Phase I of a Vocational Center which will offer a variety of courses, including university credit courses for high school students to be offered through a partnership between WNMU and Lordsburg Municipal Schools. The County is seeking funding for Phase II in order to increase the number of classrooms.

Hidalgo County and the City of Lordsburg have combined efforts to hire an economic development staff person to establish a common economic development program. In addition, the County recently hired a grant administrator, to help provide coordination for the various federal and state grants issued to the County.

Hidalgo County’s plans include construction of a new Detention Center which is sorely needed. The current Detention Center is inadequate, lacks proper separation of facilities for male and female inmates, and poorly located in the center of Lordsburg behind the County building.
To help find more permanent solutions to its economic difficulties, Hidalgo County (with an US Economic Development Administration or EDA grant of approximately $70,000) identified opportunities and strategies for diversification of the local and regional economy. The following have been prioritized as follows:

1. Development initiatives between Hidalgo County and Mexico, focusing on the Antelope Wells Port of Entry.
2. Housing initiatives, both HUD housing projects and support for market-rate housing development.
3. Building a new County Detention Center.
4. Revitalization of Downtown Lordsburg and Motel Drive.
5. Expand the role of the Lordsburg Housing Authority.
6. Encourage relocation of light industry.
7. Enhance tourism opportunities.
8. Develop a more diversified agricultural and ranching economy.
10. Build Phase 2 of the Vocational Learning Center.

City of Lordsburg

The City of Lordsburg is the largest incorporated municipality, the market center and county seat for Hidalgo County. It is located along a major east-west rail line and is situated 44 miles southwest of Silver City, near the Arizona state line. Its population of approximately 3,000 people represents about half the people in Hidalgo County. The percentage of individuals below the poverty threshold is 32.7%. 

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 averages 358 days of sunshine per year. Its close proximity to the Gila and Coronado Wilderness and climate are conducive to year round outdoor activities including camping, fishing and hiking. It is situated on Interstate 10, midway between Las Cruces and Tucson. Travelers make up a strong market for the City’s lodging, restaurant, and convenience/gasoline retailers. In this way, transportation helps shape the character of Lordsburg. Lordsburg retains its small town atmosphere.

According to the Lordsburg Chamber of Commerce the major employers in the area are the Lordsburg Municipal School System and the State of New Mexico Transportation yard, each of
which employ more than 100 people. Another large employer in Lordsburg includes the hospitality industry.

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 taking-off 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 and since the adoption of an economic development plan about five years ago have recruited two new truck stops, a new motel and new restaurants. At this time, a large hotel is close to completion of construction off the interstate in the city.

Lordsburg seeks ways to diversify its economy by expanding and retaining existing businesses and recruiting a variety of business types. The City’s location on the Interstate make 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 such services 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 Economic Development Act.

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 has identified a site for an industrial park, adjacent to the Interstate. The City plans to initiate a business survey to find out from residents the kinds 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. Also, the City plans to review its Zoning Code to promote agricultural produce stands and related businesses in the City.

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 surveys to determine the complexity of the development approval process for possible streamlining.

Lordsburg also needs to increase its revenues in other ways. Strategies include increasing spending from non-residents including the motoring passers-by, aggressively pursuing grant opportunities that enhance its economic development potential, annexing land that will be capable of increasing gross receipts and property taxes, and increasing the City’s tourism.
potential. In addition, the City will identify vacant buildings and land within the municipal 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 as needed.

**Rodeo**

Rodeo is a small unincorporated town located along US 80 approximately 34 miles south of Interstate 10 and more than 50 miles from Lordsburg. Located at the eastern edge of the county, Arizona is only a few miles from Rodeo to the west.

Rodeo began as a railroad town serving as a shipping point for livestock in the area. The town today depends in large part on local ranchers and travelers in need of food or gas as they drive along U.S. Highway 80 between Douglas, Arizona and Road Forks, New Mexico. The area is known for its scenic beauty and is increasingly populated with writers, artists and scientific professionals.

![Rodeo as seen from Hwy 80](image)

Rodeo has problems with water quality and sewage treatment that in the future may become a greater problem. A new water system was designed to reduce water contamination caused by septic systems and cesspools with a grant from the USDA Rural Development.
Animas

Animas is a rural farming community in the Animas Valley in the southern part of the county, an unincorporated village of about 300 persons. It consists primarily of the school district, a church, a post office, a telephone office, a mercantile, an auto service and one café.

Ranches continue south from Animas to the border. On the Playas side, there is little farming and mostly ranching operations. Water issues include concerns about the depletion of the aquifer that supplies the wells that irrigate crops and support the primary economic activity of the area. Without adequate replenishing of the aquifer and conservation measures, the long-term sustainable water supply is threatened. Residents recognize that in the more populated areas around Animas, there will be a need for community-wide treatment of liquid waste in the future.

Border Patrol officers in the area have been important to the local economy of the Animas and Playas Valleys. They buy gasoline and they eat at restaurants and purchase other goods and services in the area.

Cotton City

Cotton City is located 16 miles south of I-10 along NM 338, a few miles north of Animas. It is a small unincorporated town with two or three churches and a grocery store with a café. Cotton City is a rural farming community with households located along a 5-6 mile stretch of the main roadway.

The Cotton City area is mostly a farming area, but there are also a few ranches. The most successful business at Cotton City is a large geothermal greenhouse where roses are grown on a 32-acre operation and distributed regionally and nationally. Also, the AmeriCulture Fish Farm in Cotton City raises tilapia from eggs produced on site.

Playas and Playas Townsite

Playas lakes exist on the plains of Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Kansas and Colorado. Playas offer wetland habitats for migrating and wintering birds. Up to two million ducks and hundreds of thousands of geese take winter refuge in playas of the southwestern United States.

The current Playas Townsite, located approximately 12 miles east of Animas, was established approximately 30 years ago by Phelps Dodge Corporation as a company town to house its workers and facilities for the Playas smelter. The Playas Townsite is located in an isolated part of Hidalgo County and southwest New Mexico, and is quite a distance from any other communities in the area.

Phelps Dodge Corporation built the copper smelter in 1961 and operated it until it closed in 2000, due to decline in copper prices. With the closing of the Playas smelting operation, the townsite was offered for sale. New Mexico Socorro Tech has purchased the Playas Townsite for an anti-terrorism training center to complement the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Artesia.

Virden
Virden, which was incorporated as a village in 1930, is in the northwestern corner of Hidalgo County, on the Gila River about 30 miles northwest of Lordsburg and close to the Arizona border. The rural community of Virden has its modern roots in the Mormon Church, when 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 and in 1916, the settlers changed the name of the village from Richmond to Virden in his honor.

The 2000 census reports there were 143 people, 48 households and 38 families residing in the village, an increase of 13.2% from the 1990 Census. One-third of the residents were under age 18, and one-seventh were over 65. Almost all were white, and 13% were Hispanic.

Many of Virden’s residents work in Lordsburg or Duncan, Arizona. There is little commercial activity, except for a quilting store, with most convenience goods and services being purchased across the Arizona state line in Duncan.

The economy of Virden has been primarily driven by agriculture and by the mining industry, which fluctuates greatly in employment. Few families now own most of the land and make their living exclusively or primarily from farming or ranching.

Economic Development goals for Virden, according to the recently written comprehensive plan, include:

1. Encourage 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, and creating a website and brochure to promote bird watching, geo-tourism, and the history of Virden.
2. Promote arts and cultural enterprises and events such as expanding the July 4th celebration, establish a venue for the sale of local arts and crafts, and promoting Virden to quilters for events, retreats and shopping.
3. Facilitate 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. 

Antelope Wells

Antelope Wells is on NM 81, just north of the Mexican border. It was settled in 1847 and named for the many antelope that roamed the area. It had a natural water hole where much wildlife gathered to drink. It is now a small US Port of Entry. The county would like to develop more

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commercial and business opportunities, primarily related to tourism, and purchase of land and development by the county is being considered for this purpose.

The Lordsburg/Hidalgo County Chamber of Commerce, municipal and county governments are working collaboratively to develop a gateway for global trade and facilitate, promote, and support multi-modal transportation and trade opportunities to enhance economic development in the region. The increased cross-border economic activity will benefit residents and government on both sides of the border. In spite of the ten-year old NAFTA agreement New Mexico Ports of Entry are under utilized or not utilized at all. A comprehensive strategy to improve all border crossings would benefit everyone along the border.

Other Hidalgo County communities and historic towns include, Hachita, Cloverdale, Valedon, Richmond, Walnut Wells, Pratt and Road Forks. Most of these communities began primarily as ranching communities or railroad towns. Some of these towns still remain primarily as ranching communities, private property or are ghost towns.

For many years, the City of Lordsburg and Hidalgo County have been aware of the need to focus on economic development. With the crisis of closures in the mining industry, the city and county developed an unprecedented common search for solutions to their economic woes, and have engaged in a collaborative planning effort. They are working cooperatively with the Chamber of Commerce, the city, the county, and with business and civic groups to conduct important research, to secure funding by applying for private and public grants, and to help forge a common economic development program for the community. 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

Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plans for Hidalgo County, Lordsburg and Virden are shown in appendix.

**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 peoples. High rates of poverty and unemployment have plagued New Mexico for decades and Luna County has consistently experienced some of the highest rates in the state. Luna County’s current poverty rate is more than twice the national average. The current unemployment rate is nearly five times the national average.

Luna County was created in 1901, from Grant and Doña Ana Counties, and named after Solomon Luna, who was...
a politician and cattle rancher. The county covers a total of 2,695 square miles, mostly being flat lowland of desert scrub and grassland, but 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.

The county seat is in Deming. Deming is approximately 100 miles northwest of El Paso, Texas, and 80 miles east of the Arizona state line. Columbus, the only other incorporated municipality in the county, lies just three miles north of Palomas, Mexico and about thirty miles south of Deming. Deming was founded in 1881, named after Mary Ann Deming Crocker (the wife of The Big Four railroad industry). It served as the port of entry on the US-Mexican border until 1853 when the Gadsen Purchase occurred. 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 to 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 major industries in Luna County in order of total covered wages are the retail trade, manufacturing, health care and social assistance, agriculture, and construction. 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 percent of all the chile in the United States; and Luna County produces 60% of all of New Mexico’s chile.

Luna County has many strengths in promoting economic development activities. These include a favorable market, proximity to the border, lower costs for land and buildings, excellent transportation routes and facilities, and available labor pool. 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 thus chart 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, excluding those classified as “heavy industry,” are encouraged as long as they do not adversely affect the environment or neighboring property owners.

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24 www.lunacountynm.us
25 Wikipedia
26 Luna County, Grand Total Employment and Wages by Industry—Fourth Quarter 2007,
A grant from the Economic Development Administration is helping the City and County to cultivate heavy industry and, especially, alternative energy at Peru Mill Industrial Park, a former brownfield, located 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.

Luna County is fortunate to have 3 industrial parks within its boundaries. The Deming Industrial Park has over 680 acres of land for lease or sale. Rail was removed from this park in 1999, but rail is available at the Peru Mill Industrial Park. The other is the Columbus International Industrial Park which is a 288 acre county-owned industrial park that accommodates businesses involved in border trade.

Alternative energy is seen as a growth area for the County. The area is being approached by the State and by private companies because of the potential for solar and wind projects.

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 and varied events and community functions to promote tourism. Deming and Luna County are supporting the start-up MainStreet program in Deming.

Regional partnerships are recognized as a key economic development strategy by Deming and Luna County. The Deming/Luna County Economic Development Corporation seeks funding to have the sufficient staff and internal infrastructure to develop strategic partnerships and to provide more systematic promotion of the County and the City to prospective businesses.

The City of Deming has received a CDBG grant to develop its next comprehensive plan which will be ready in 2010. The County is applying for funding for its comprehensive plan which should be published in 2011. The City’s 40 year water plan was approved this past year.

**City of Deming**

The City of Deming is located in Southwestern New Mexico, along Interstate 10, which connects this part of the State to Las Cruces and El Paso, Texas on the East and Tucson, Arizona on the West. The City is approximately 90 miles from the Arizona state line, 30 miles from the International Port of Entry at Columbus, NM, and approximately 100 miles from El Paso, Texas. Deming is the County Seat of Luna County and one of two incorporated municipalities located within the County, the other being Columbus, NM.

According to the 2000 U. S. Census, approximately 30% of the population are 19 and under, thus having an impact on how the Deming Public Schools plan for future facilities. Also, 19% of the population of persons aged 65 years and over, ranking 3rd highest among New Mexico’s largest communities, will have an impact on the amount of services needed for senior citizens in the future.

Over the past 90 years, the City of Deming has experienced a consistent growth rate of approximately 20 percent or more during this time period. The 2000 US Census showed that Deming experienced a growth rate of 21% between the years of 1990 to 2000. The University of New Mexico Bureau of Business and Economic Research completed a Community Economic Assessment for Deming Main Street in March 2008. The population projections for the years
2005 to 2030 show a growth rate of between 10 to 20 percent for each five-year interval from 2005 to 2020, based on historical growth trends for Luna County. 27

The Deming Public School System, the largest school district in the region, serves the City, the unincorporated areas of the County, and Columbus and students from Mexico. There are nine elementary schools, two middle schools, one mid-high school, and one high school in the District. A new elementary school in Columbus opened last summer. The old Columbus Elementary School has been donated to the Village of Columbus to house agencies providing communities services.

According to the US Census, the total number of housing units existing in Deming is 6,192. There is a need for low income affordable housing, multi-family and entry level housing, higher-end housing, senior housing and seasonal housing. Luna County Housing Corporation, which is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, is focused on all aspects of housing; its staff has increased from 1.5 to 4 this year. LCHC is the general partner in a 60-unit senior apartment complex which always has a waiting list.

Even with the Luna County Housing Corporation and Region V Housing Authority working to handle Luna County’s housing needs, affordable housing is still an obstacle in Luna County. Affordable housing and rentals for teachers, nurses, Homeland Security agents and our local police and sheriff departments is not available. It has improved since 2008 as the National Guard troops stationed in this border area left in August. When housing does become available, buyers deal with credit issues and/or job losses. The impact of the mine layoffs on Luna County is yet to be felt, but over 300 people who live in Luna County lost their jobs in the recent downsizing by the mines in Grant County. There is a need for housing also for retirees, border patrol agents and others relocating to Deming. There are now 398 border patrol agents in Luna County.

As businesses look to relocate to areas such as Deming with abundant land, cheaper utilities, available water, and a trainable workforce, uncertainty arises because of the City’s proximity to the Mexico border and the national media reporting and attention given to the drug cartel wars occurring in Mexico. 28

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. A new trend in employment is for individuals who work out of their homes, including “lone eagles” (see the Grant County section), but also including individuals who work for larger companies. Following a regional job fair recently, 40 Deming residents obtained such employment. The need for expansion of broadband or fast internet service will enable more people to work from home.

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 was later established that year, their role being to oversee implementation of the Enterprise Community initiatives.

27 Deming/Luna County Regional Transportation Comprehensive Plan, 2008
28 Mimbres Valley Authority 2008 Annual Report
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.

The NM Economic Development Department re-certified Deming as a Certified Economic Development Community in the past year, providing annual grants for economic development projects for the County. Deming also has the Local Economic Development Act in place through the State of New Mexico so that the City has more flexibility in negotiating with businesses wishing to start, expand, or relocate to Luna County.

Unemployment, underemployment, and seasonal employment are issues that have historically plagued the city and county. As per the Labor Market Report of July, 2009 the unemployment rate for Luna County is currently at 19%, the highest in the state. Approximately 28.5% of Deming’s families are living below the poverty line. Luna County has fluctuated between having the first and second highest poverty rate in the State of New Mexico.

Childcare services have always been an issue in Luna County. Construction of a much needed evening childcare facility was completed and the facility opened in January 2009. The facility was built adjacent to the learning center/community college in order to provide services for students attending evening classes.

Deming and Luna County have 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 Mimbres Valley Learning Center has, in addition to providing additional employment in the area, become a vocational education center and a community college for Deming and Luna County residents as well as a special event center available for rent and usage by businesses and nonprofits. This year’s graduating class through Western New Mexico University had 66 graduates up 19 from the previous year. The County and City are now looking into expanding the existing facility.

With increased traffic from the Columbus/Palomas Port of Entry, opportunities for increased gross receipts exist for Deming.

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 Depot was relocated to this area and restored; it is in 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 area wishes to obtain support for an off-ramp for easy access to this area by tourists and residents.

One key component of the City’s pursuit of economic development is economic diversification. Currently, the City has been dependent on a few industries, which employ a significant portion of the workforce.

The transportation access, proximity to the border of Mexico, the climate, a choice place for retirement, its industrial park and tourism potential are economic strengths for Deming and Luna County to capitalize upon.

Village of Columbus

The Village of Columbus is located in Luna County in the southwestern part of the State of New Mexico, just 3 miles north of the U.S./Mexico border. It is a small community in an economically depressed area. It is one of the fastest growing communities in the State. The 2000 census indicated a population level of 1,765. The Village has a per capita income of $6,721 and a poverty status of 56.7%. We would expect the new census to confirm our present population at close to 2,100 with a modest improvement in per capita income.

Historically, agriculture and livestock activity have been the most important economic activity, and several factors influence its organization in this area. To be economically feasible, a farm holding must be at least 300 acres. The Village has begun an economic development strategic plan. Areas of interest are increased services, renewable energy, light industry and educational facilities. Generally speaking, housing is insufficient in this area. A recent housing survey shows a total number of dwelling units is 600.

With Palomas, Mexico being only three miles south of Columbus, many residents from Columbus rely on medical and dental services from across the border due to financial reasons and the cost differences. Columbus now has a health clinic, Ben Archer Health Clinic, which services 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 as a means of support by increasing current revenues. The addition of an RO Water facility in 2008 and the expansion of the Village waste water facilities will allow for significant growth in both housing and business. Business promotion and attraction of capital would include retention and expansion of existing businesses, finding new businesses and attracting compatible businesses from other locations. Also, assessment of what opportunities arise from the economic connections between Columbus and Palomas, Chihuahua, Mexico will bring new opportunities for additional businesses in the area. As industrial, agribusiness and renewable energy interests grow on the U.S. and the scheduled expansion of the Columbus Port of Entry as well as opportunities on the Mexican side continue to expand and finance much of their own activity, this expansion well affect the patterns of growth in Columbus and Palomas.

Bordering Puerto Palomas, Chihuahua and located within the historic Village of Columbus the Columbus Port of Entry is approximately 30 miles south of Deming and 65 miles west of the
Santa Teresa Port of Entry, near El Paso, Texas. It is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and is a full service port of entry. It houses Immigration and U. S. Customs.

The Village will focus on Village roads and housing improvements over the next five years with a major effort to control the drainage to mitigate the problems of excess water and flooding in and around Columbus and the Port of Entry.

With the addition of a new Elementary School and the addition of Pershing Heights II to the Village boundary, the Village of Columbus is poised for growth.
CHAPTER IV

Community Participation
Community Participation

Southwest New Mexico Council of Governments

The New Mexico Area 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 Southwest NM Council of Governments assists in planning for common needs and for coordinating sound regional transportation. The SWNM Council of Governments was organized under the Regional Planning Act and the Planning District Act. The SWNM Council of Governments is not considered a state agency, but is viewed as an extension of local governments, a recognized District of the State of New Mexico.

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, etc.

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 from time to time 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. Cynthia Stoehner is the transportation planner. Gloria Terrazas–Barnes is the economic/community development planner. Maureen Craig is the community development planner.

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. The Council of Governments also contacted area specialists in the fields of agriculture and ranching, downtown revitalization, education, water and workforce development.

**Other Resources and Planning Documents**

**Infrastructure Capital Improvements Plans**

A local infrastructure capital improvement plan is a plan that establishes planning priorities for all anticipated capital projects. The plan considers both repair and replacement of existing infrastructure and development of new infrastructure. The plan includes community policy direction, funding time frames, estimated costs, justifications, and the detail of each specific infrastructure capital improvement projects proposed, by year, over a five year period. The purpose of the ICIP process (and the ICIP publication) is to encourage local governments to plan for the development of capital improvements at a pace that sustains their activities. It is important for local government entities because it focuses on short and long term planning for infrastructure improvements projects and helps establish priorities. Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plans 2009-2014 are included in this plan for each county and municipality.

**Comprehensive Plans**

Each county and municipal government in the region has a five year comprehensive plan which addresses goals and objectives in a broad range of areas including, but not limited to, land use, recreation, housing, economic development, transportation, and infrastructure. These reports helped to inform this Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. The Southwest New Mexico Council of Governments keeps a copy of each comprehensive plan at its offices and soon the comprehensive plans will be available for viewing on www.swnmcog.org. In addition, the governmental entities have a copy of their comprehensive plans available at city and county offices.
APPENDICES

TO THIS REPORT INCLUDE:

• Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plans 2010-2014 for All Governmental Entities included in this report

• Fort Bayard Preservation and Development Plan

• Western New Mexico University Spaceport Needs Assessment

• Western New Mexico University Strategic Plan

• Statewide Transportation Improvement Program, FY 2006-2011, Southwest Regional Planning Organization sections

• Letters of Endorsement

Appendices may be viewed at the offices of the Southwest New Mexico Council of Governments, 1203 N. Hudson Street, Second Floor, Silver City, New Mexico.