

Colonia and Community Planning Toolkit

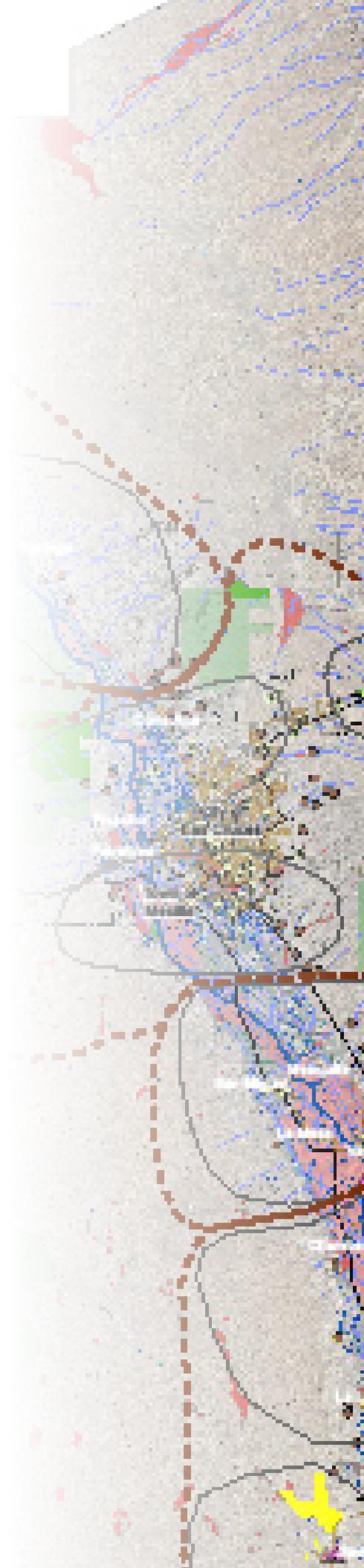
Doña Ana County

Approach & Opportunities



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A Roadmap to the Colonia Community Planning Toolkit

Improving the Quality of Life at the Community Level

This Colonia Community Planning Toolkit is designed to support the Livability Principles as defined by the numerous community members who contributed during the public participation process of the Viva Doña Ana Initiatives which produced the Comprehensive Plan-Plan 2040. Both the Comprehensive Plan and Community Toolkit support Doña Ana County communities as well as nearby or adjacent communities.

The Colonia and Community Planning Toolkit, a key Viva Doña Ana (VDA) initiative, represents a community-based planning approach which will serve as a road map to improve the quality of life of residents and communities in Doña Ana County. This planning toolkit focuses on showcasing various integrated approaches to strategic community planning at the community level. Given the social, geographical, and cultural diversity of Doña Ana County, a single county-wide community plan is an inappropriate and inefficient approach to address the unique challenges and opportunities of the thirty-seven (37) diverse and distinct communities and colonias in Doña Ana County.



Doña Ana County residents deserve a community plan that integrates a community-based vision with mix of new, creative and above all practical strategies to enhance the quality of life in local neighborhoods and communities.

For this reason, the Community Planning Toolkit will provide the framework for evaluating conditions, identifying funding opportunities, partners and agencies capable of completing key projects. Additionally the Toolkit will provide the tools and methods, and subsequently serve as a template for development of a series of Community Based Strategies for the county planning areas. The Community Based Strategies will also focus of capacity building opportunities which communities can utilize to strengthen existing communities. The Community Planning Toolkit framework strives to provide a balance between community needs, improving existing conditions and guiding future development.

Aligning with Livability Principles

Improving the Quality of Life at the Community Level

The Colonia Community Planning Toolkit aligns with the Plan 2040-Comprehensive Plan, specifically supporting the following Livability Principles:



- **Supports Our Existing Communities**

Prioritize safe, cost effective development to prioritize better development, expand existing utilities, focus on connectivity and promote infill.



- **Preserves Our Heritage**

Encourage respect and enhancement of existing networks, integrate local culture and value and protect natural resources and agriculture lands.



- **Provides More Transportation Choices**

Broaden the range of transportation options to include pedestrian, bicyclist and ride share options, and integrate transportation planning with other livability options.



- **Promotes Equitable, Affordable Communities**

Guide housing policy to support affordable choices, develop a range of tools to enhance affordability and improve other housing factors such as employment opportunities.



- **Enhances Economic Competitiveness**

Coordinate state and local economic development, attract likely employment markets, encourage workforce development, coordinate with prospective employers, promote tourism and agribusiness.



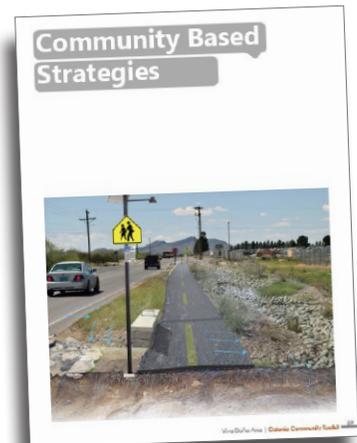
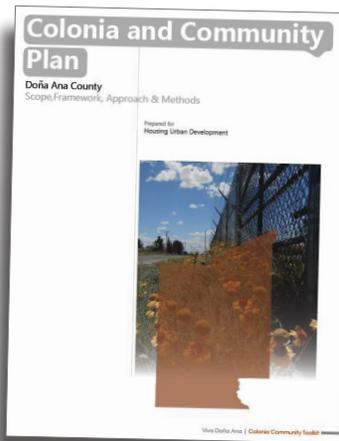
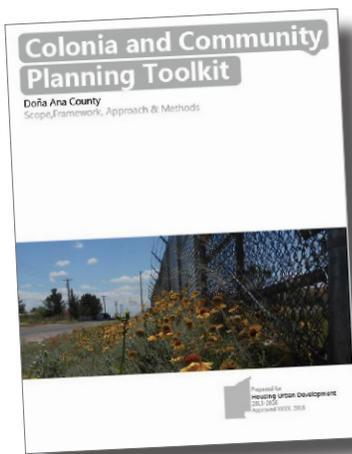
- **Coordinates Policies and Leverage Investment**

Involve and collaborative with agencies, departments and organizations to build accountability, streamline processes and rules, encourage ownerships of outcomes.

Scope of Work

Tools and Methods of the Colonia Community Planning Toolkit

The Colonia and Community Planning Toolkit includes numerous tools and methods applicable to various components of colonias and communities within Doña Ana County. Both tools and methods are compiled from current and emerging planning practices which can be applied in different scales, leverage different resources and applied in common contexts. Tools and methods offer a wide variety of community building, institutional, technical, and practical procedures useful to addressing community concerns. Initiatives include the following tools and methods:



What to Do!



Planning Initiatives

- Comprehensive Plan-Plan 2040
- Unified Development Code
- El Camino Real Corridor Plan
- Border Development Plan
- Colonia Plan



Community Assessment

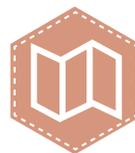
- Road Safety Audit
- Complete Streets
- Community Health Audit
- Health Impact Assessment
- Community Mapping

How to Do it!



Community Tools

- Green Infrastructure
- Low Impact Development
- Drainage Plans
- Fair and Affordable Housing
- Military Community Impacts



Community Methods

- Multi-Disciplinary Projects
- Active Landscapes
- Connectivity Projects
- Corridor Enhancements

How to Do it!



Build Capacity

- Best Methods/Practices
- Health in All Policies
- Safe Routes to School
- Complete Streets



Fund Projects

- Best Methods/Practices
- Health in All Policies
- Safe Routes to School
- Complete Streets

Community Action Plans

Developing Strategies for Community Driven Action and Strategies

Community Action Plan showcases the method of how planning efforts, capacity building and community methods can be developed by: identifying **issues**, deciding **priorities** and **opportunities** for **capacity building**, and identifying community **projects**.

Step One: Community Identifies Issues

Issues	Who (Responsibility)	Opportunities
1. Flooding	Counties Depts Neighborhood Groups MPOs Flood Commission	utilze Flood water to provide landscaping...
2. Crime at Parks	Parks/Codes/Schools	Provide programs!
3. Pedestrian Crossings	Engineering /NMDOT/ Transit District	More Connectivity at Intersections.

Step Two: Community Decides Priorities

Selected Priority	Possible Methods
1. Flooding/Landscaping	Low Impact Development Green Infrastructure

Step Three: Capacity Building Opportunity

Selected Opportunity	Capacity Building
Low Impact Development Green Infrastructure	Workshop

Step Four: Identify Projects and Funding

Selected Project	Funding Sources
Combined Trail and Storm System	EPA/NMDOT/Grants

Process For Action

Steps 1-4 of the community action plan template outline the process to turn community issues into action.

This process and template will be explored and evaluated later in this document and will showcase how Community Action Plans can inform both the community and prioritized projects.

Community Engagement

Improving the Quality of Life of Doña Ana County Communities

Community residents in Doña Ana County understand the importance of public engagement and consistently demonstrate a high level of interest and play an active role to improve their community. Community residents continually provide input and insight to better their communities and enthusiastically participated in Education and Engagement initiatives of Viva Doña Ana.



Community input and participation represent critical elements which lend credibility and validity to the process of developing a community vision and eventually a community plan. Doña Ana County residents care about their communities and take advantage of opportunities to engage in a wide range of community discussions, meetings, surveys, interactive sessions, and other community engagement opportunities designed to gather information related to community needs, wants and desires.

Improving Communities

The major goal of Viva Doña Ana initiatives is to focus on people, places and prosperity. The focus of the Colonia Community Planning Toolkit is to showcase community based strategies to improve the quality of life and bring prosperity to the people and places in Doña Ana County communities.

Community residents have voiced the need for a practical balance between meeting the critical needs of the present and planning for the future.

In order to bring change to Doña Ana County communities , there needs to be a different approach towards community planning, an approach based on engagement, capacity building and collaboration.

Creating County Partnerships

Doña Ana County Services

Doña Ana County has many departments which serves the various needs of county communities. Each department serves a specific function and regularly partners with both internal departments and external community agencies. Fostering partnerships with the following departments will continue to promote proactive communication and coordination in development of resolutions to resident concerns and issues that are institutional in nature and that could be addressed County and communities wide.

Community and Constituents Services

The County has recently created the Community and Constituents Services (CCS) Division as part of the Public Information Office. CCS provides assistance to residents with County government services and where applicable, provides referrals to state and other entities.

Community Development

Community Development provides direction to development, basic infrastructure, enforcement, maintenance and protection of the county's built and natural resources. Recent activities include the Viva Doña Ana Comprehensive Plan, Unified Development Code proposed land use and zoning code, Border Area Economic Plan, El Camino Real Corridor Plan and the Colonia Community Planning Toolkit.

Engineering Department Services

Engineering Department Services (EDS) provides in-house professional support for road construction, flood prevention and a variety of projects related to infrastructure development, connectivity and environmental systems. EDS provides key services to contractors, developers, homeowners and constituents.

Facilities and Parks

Facilities and Parks department provides maintainance to all county buildings, parks, ballfields and community centers throughout the county. The department oversees major and minor projects that range from facility maintenance, remodeling and construction management. Recent activity includes project management for the newly constructed Mesilla Valley Regional Dispatch Authority Center.

Flood Commission

The Flood Commission provides flood management in Doña Ana County. This includes overseeing both existing and proposed flood control systems. The Flood Commission provides maintenance, repair, and improvements to flood control structures as funding becomes available. Recent Flood

Community Engagement

Directing Community Concerns

The Viva Doña Ana initiatives provided numerous opportunities for the public to share comments and suggestions regarding how best to address short and long term needs with the aim of improving the quality of life in rural communities. While there were discussions on long term issues such as growth patterns and trends anticipated to take place over the next 20 years, there was a focus by residents to address current and short term issues which impact community life. There is need to improve the communication between County residents and public entities such as the County, MPOs, non-profits, community and health agencies. The County is intrical in gauging the community, and as a result can serve as a conduit of public information towards communities.

County residents are clear about what they would like to see in their community: improved basic services (wastewater, natural gas), enhancement of community facilities (community centers, parks, playgrounds) and code enforcement as it relates to health and public safety.

The County can serve as a conduit of public information towards communities by providing both proactive communication and coordination between community agencies and community leaders. The County can also develop and distribute a community status report to provide updates on past, current and future projects (capital, federal and local programs)

Proactive Communication

Proactive communication would expand traditional communication opportunities to inform the community about general progress on local projects / annual call for new projects, which typically include:

- **Infrastructure Capital Improvement Projects (ICIP)**
- **Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)**
- **Colonias Infrastructure Board Projects**

Proactive Coordination

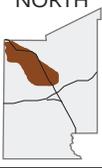
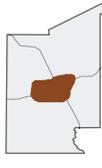
Proactive coordination includes convening County department representatives and other entities at community centers and other community meeting venues to answer questions and provide periodic updates on community projects. Proactive coordination also includes disseminating information in a variety of formats including maps, charts included in large graphic format (in English and Spanish) for display at the community centers for reference for community members as well as a tracking mechanism for project implementation.

County Communities-Planning Areas

Recognizing and Promoting the Community Identities of Doña Ana County

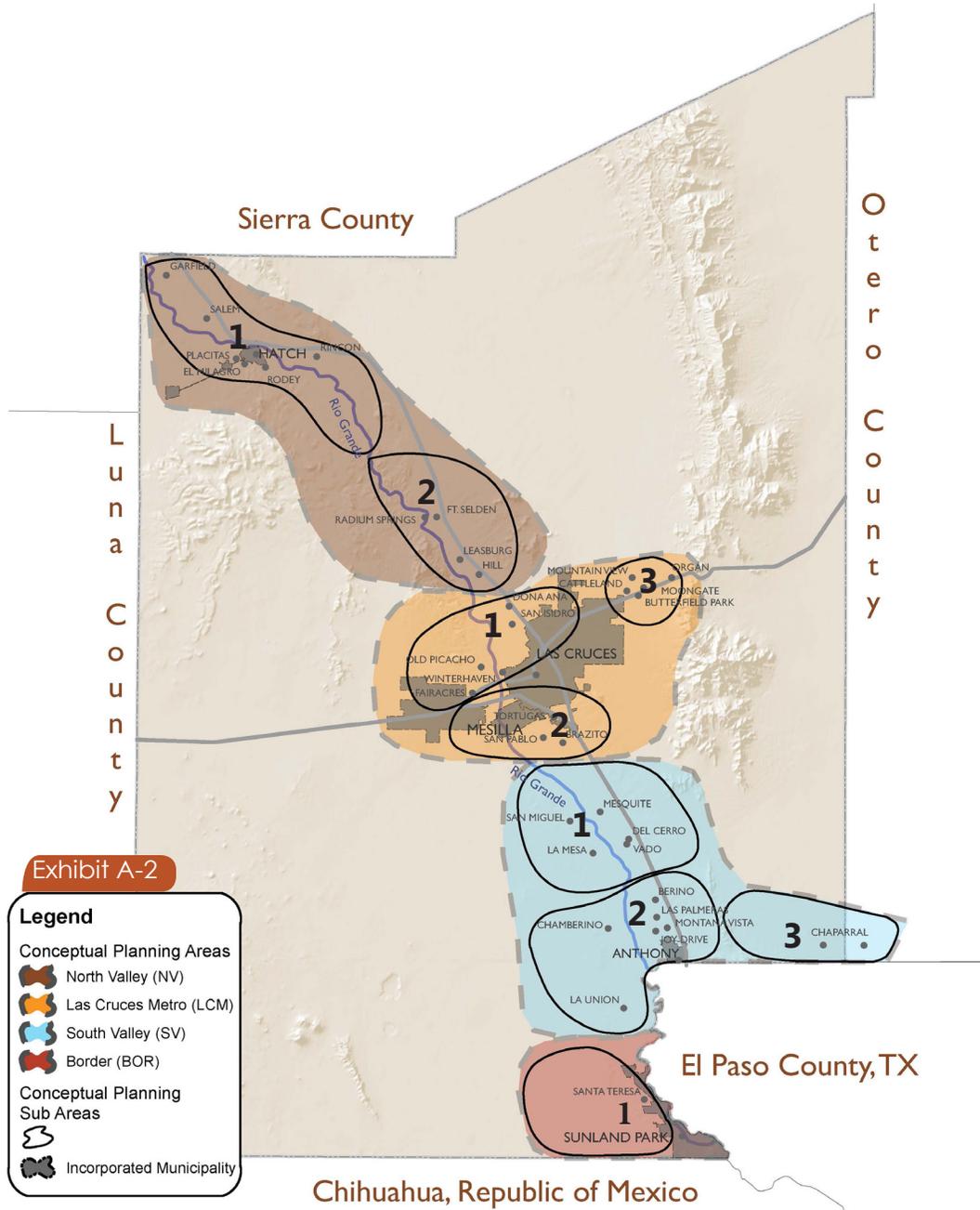
Doña Ana County is comprised of many distinct and culturally rich communities. Each community and colonia is proud of their community identity, history and values. For this reason, a more flexible planning approach is necessary to accommodate the various concerns, interest and priorities of each community, while aligning to possible funding strategies and as a result creating community partnerships.

For planning purposes, Doña Ana County has been grouped into four (4) major planning areas and nine (9) sub-planning areas. These planning areas will make the development of the plans more efficient by aligning communities with shared common challenges and opportunities. These planning areas will also allow regional planning to be more efficient by requiring nine (9) sub-area plans for the entire County rather than thirty-seven (37) separate plans.

Exhibit A-1 Doña Ana County Planning Areas			
Area	Sub-Areas / Communities	Communities/Colonias	Population
NORTH 	North 1 Garfield, Salem, Placitas, El Milagro, Hatch, Rincon, Rodey	Garfield, Salem, Placitas, El Milagro, Rincon, Rodey	5,425
	North 2 Radium Springs. Fort Selden, Leasburg, Hill	Radium Springs. Fort Selden, Leasburg, Hill	
CENTRAL 	Central 1 North of Las Cruces /Mesilla Doña Ana, San Isidro, Old Picacho, Winterhaven, Fairacres,	Doña Ana, San Isidro, Old Picacho, Winterhaven, Fairacres,	10,548
	Central 2 South of Las Cruces Tortugas, San Pablo, Brazito	Tortugas, San Pablo, Brazito	
	Central 3 East Mesa Area including Mountain View, Cattleland, Organ, Moongate, Butterfield Park	Mountain View, Cattleland, Organ, Moongate, Butterfield Park	
SOUTH 	South 1 San Miguel, Mesquite, La Mesa, Del Cerro, Vado	San Miguel, Mesquite, La Mesa, Del Cerro, Vado	30,228
	South 2 Chamberino, Berino, Las Palmeras, Montana Vista, Joy Drive, La Union, Anthony	Chamberino, Berino, Las Palmeras, Montana Vista, Joy Drive Subdivision, La Union, Anthony	
	South 3 Chaparral and vicinity	Chaparral (Otero 8,005)	
BORDER 	Border (1) Santa Teresa , Sunland Park	Sunland Park	14,155
		TOTAL	60,009

Planning Areas in Context

Planning Areas and Sub Planning Areas



Above: Map highlights the various communities in Doña Ana County. Many community residents work, shop, and visit nearby communities, towns, counties and states on a regular basis.

Community Issues

Identifying Challenges and Opportunities

Doña Ana County communities face a similar challenges which present common yet diverse opportunities. One of the overall challenges is for all sectors, particularly public entities, to develop new and creative solutions to address these challenges. Provided below is a summary of challenges common to local communities.

Health and Public Safety

The size (3,800 square miles) and population (200,000) of Doña Ana County present challenges for monitoring and providing adequate health, public safety and services².

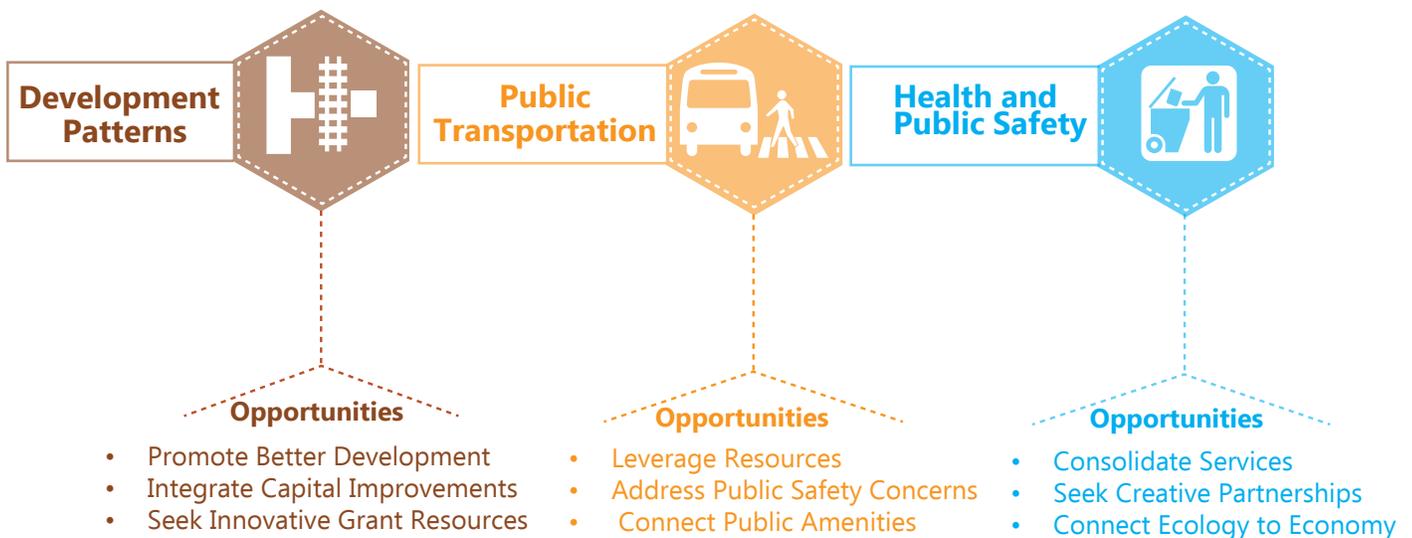
Public Transportation

The lack of a public transportation systems places an extra burden on Doña Ana County residents. Housing and transportation costs represent 65% (average) of expenses placed on a typical household².

Infrastructure and Development Patterns

The amount of aging infrastructure and development prior to subdivision rules continues to burden the resources, economies and services available to communities.

Provided below are possible opportunities to address each challenge



Community and Legacy Developments

Addressing Existing Conditions

Development patterns in colonia communities are both diverse and challenging. Some communities developed after local subdivision rules were established (1996), while others developed when few planning regulations and/or standards were in place. Integrated planning standards and procedures can assist communities to develop in a more structured, efficient and safe manner.

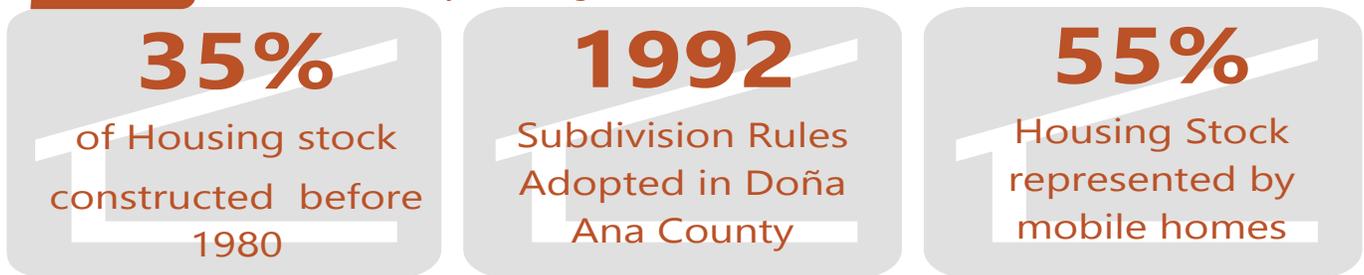
Legacy Communities

Doña Ana County did not have subdivisions rules fully in place until 1996 and thus certain communities were never properly subdivided or platted. Upon adoption of the subdivision rules, these communities and /or developments were “grandfathered” and thus classified as a legal non-conforming use. There is a need to better inform the common home owners to understand the implications of bringing a property into compliance. For historical town sites, original town sites should be reviewed and updated to meet current standards. In some instances a plat (survey) verification may be warranted.

Future Development

New residential development standards, which now include more comprehensive statutory regulations, require developments to provide paved streets, sidewalks and (in most cases) wastewater connections. Legacy communities are spread throughout Doña Ana County and it is important to recognize that not all legacy communities will experience new developments. Development strategies designed to improve the quality of life for legacy community residents, regardless of new residential growth, should consider innovative strategies for community redevelopment, even if at a micro-scale such as improved access (to local community centers/parks, schools, community clinics and retail establishments) as well as providing best management practices in storm water management.

Exhibit A-3 Dona Aña County Housing Facts



Encroachments

There is a number of inconsistencies with both roadway and utility easements in Doña Ana County. In certain instances, there are encroachments of structures such as fences, trees, brush and utility poles that are within the roadway easements. This negatively impacts roadway projects and adds an additional and costly step to roadway projects, such as roadway widening. There is a need to better document road easement issues per planning area and determine the impacts to general circulation and community access and develop solutions to address these challenges.



Community Master Planning

Improving Existing Communities

The Viva Doña Ana Comprehensive Plan-Plan 2040 presents numerous goals and actions related to the Livability Principles, as well as a providing a framework for future growth and development in Doña Ana County. Goals and actions of section 5.3 of Plan 2040, promote increasing services to colonias and other rural areas. This section also provides actions which aims to outline feasible strategies to improve and strenghten existing colonias and other rural areas. Plan 2040 also states "rural areas are too expensive to justify extending full municipal services and expensive streets to reach, they are potentially livable areas that can enjoy the dignity of appropriate infrastructure and services. As a result, the type of infrastructure investment should match the intensity at which its surroundings are developed".²

While the Comprehensive Plan is focused on future development, be it in forms of a new subdivision, infill projects, re-use of land or existing developed sites, it is important to keep in mind there are a range of initiatives and projects that could be considered as important steps to improving existing communities and ultimately the quality of life of colonia community residents.

While the needs of the existing colonia communities exceed available resources, not all opportunities to enhancing the quality of life in these communities require major capital investments. Targeted actions designed to improve existing communities should not be limited by typical project development, but should go above and beyond business as usual and focus on basic elements such as the following:

- **Efficient Use of Resources**
(funds, volunteers, community service participants)
- **Enforcement of Existing Laws and Regulations**
(Codes and Building Services)
- **Enforcement of Health and Safety Codes**
(local/state)
- **Proactive Coordination of Public Works projects**
(Engineering Services/ Community Development/Flood Commission)
- **Consolidation of County/City Services**
(where feasible)
- **Equity and Capacity**
(funds, education, outreach and community building)

Community Master Planning Tools

Advancing Communities through Planning

Viva Doña Ana Comprehensive Plan

This plan establishes a living framework for Doña Ana County's policies that will shape physical and economic development for the next generation. The plan provides for a context for decision-making as options for measuring future success and how County residents can monitor progress. The Plan establishes goals and actions under four strategic areas that will assist in implementing the vision of the plan. The strategies address:

- **Future Development and Growth Areas**
- **Economic Opportunity**
- **Infrastructure**
- **Public Services**

Unified Development Code

The Unified Development Code (UDC) is a proposed land use code that consolidates the County's land development rules in one streamlined document. It is a single document that includes all development-related regulations such as zoning, subdivision, and development standards.

El Camino Real Corridor Plan

The Corridor Enhancement Plan focuses on improvement concepts and future projects for the El Camino Real Corridor in Doña Ana County. This plan identifies projects that enhance and preserve the natural and visual qualities of the corridor while improving economic competitiveness along the Rio Grande River and portions of Historic Highway 28.

Border Economic Development Plan

The development of the area adjacent to the New Mexico /Mexico border will impact the entire Paso del Norte region. It is critical for the County to take advantage of the growth of this area for increased prosperity for all residents of Doña Ana County and its communities.

The Border Area Economic Development Strategy analyzes data, identifies strengths and weaknesses, outlines issues, and proposes actions to strengthen our economic border activities with a focus on the County's border region which encompasses the Santa Teresa industrial park area, the Doña Ana County Jet Port , Santa Teresa International Border Crossing, and the recent \$400 million Union Pacific Intermodal Transfer facility.

Community Master Planning Tools

Advancing Communities through Planning

Rail Industry in Dona Ana County

Experience suggests that an entirely railroad-funded solution is unlikely on the US side, as Class 1 railroads remain hesitant about mismatches between benefits and costs, and are concerned about the introduction of additional traffic on already congested mainlines. For this reason, the Border Authority and / or NMDOT will need to consider financial and operational roles in the project. Nationally, DOT's are partnering with railroads to enhance rail capacity.

There is growing interest in compressed or liquid natural gas (CNG/LNG) as a truck fuel, linked with lower fuel costs and reduced emissions. Although diesel fuel in Mexico is less expensive, consideration should be given to a regional natural gas fueling strategy for municipal fleets and trucking companies, as a response to air quality concerns.

With news reports indicating that BNSF will expand intermodal service between Mexico and Chicago, Officials from NMDOT, Doña Ana County and the City of Las Cruces should begin to plan for growth in traffic along the BNSF main line that runs parallel with NM 478 toward Las Cruces with eventual need for grade-separated routes.

Infrastructure funding remains a topic of national debate. While Public Private Partnerships (P3) are popular, these structures are ultimately tied to revenue streams that can support investor interest and rate-of-return thresholds. At minimum, the Region should consider enabling legislation for "impact fees" on trucks that cross the border; resulting revenues could be allocated for Border Area improvements. Projects such as the Sunland Park POE should be pursued, in part because POE projects are tied to crossing fees.



Community Master Planning Tools

Advancing Communities through Planning

Funding considerations include:

Public officials should evaluate the applicability and need for impact fees, assessments or special tax districts on all development and properties that utilize and benefit from the infrastructure, spreading the cost of infrastructure among more and higher value land uses, reducing the cost burden on industrial uses alone.

Tax Increment Financing can be used to fund infrastructure improvements, to the extent that specific projects do not otherwise benefit from property tax abatement. Experience in other border areas also suggests that industrial values alone may not be sufficient to drive sufficient tax increment to pay for necessary improvements.

Given the sustainability implications associated with rapid growth in freight volumes, El Paso and Doña Ana Counties would be an ideal candidate for future rounds of Tiger Grant funding.

Future rounds of HUD funding appear to be shifting toward investments that enhance regional resiliency; future announcements by HUD will confirm the amount of grant funding that will be available.

Experience in other bi-national border areas such as Detroit and Windsor, Ontario associated with the planned construction of the New International Trade Crossing provides a case study for the plausible role of the Mexican Government to fund improvements on the US side of the border that have obvious benefits to citizens in Juarez. The new bridge between Canada and the US is being funded largely by the Canadian government using a P3 structure, in response to traffic problems on the Canadian side of the border

*** TIGER GRANT: Doña Ana County coordinated with regional public transit providers in preparation of a Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery, or TIGER Discretionary Grant during the 2015 funding cycle. The proposed local TIGER grant proposal requested \$3.86 million dollars to enhance the startup County transit system. The grant requested land/structure, vehicles and vehicle equipment which focused on transit investments to expand transit service and transit amenities (transit shelters and micro-scaled transfer stations) in rural communities.**

Transportation Concerns

Identifying Traffic Safety Issues

Community concerns regarding local transportation issues are consistent among rural communities, and include a wide range of topics. Concerns of rural communities related to transportation include the following:

Easements

There are numerous easement issues in legacy communities that include a mix of dedicated roadway easements, private roads with access easements and pending roadway maintenance agreements. Identifying road easement issues per planning area would help to determine impacts to general circulation/community access and develop solutions to address these challenges.

Inconsistency

The incorporated communities are very diverse in terms of development, there are historic communities that have well defined town site developments, those along Highway 28 and others that were developed through the early subdivision rules. Desert Aire, Vado, portions of Berino among others, are a patchwork of informal developments which today are colonia communities.

Transportation Conflict

Auto and pedestrian conflicts exist in areas of Doña Ana County, specifically where major corridors meet rural yet populated areas. Conflicts include the separation of pedestrian and motorist, pavement and intersections conditions, utilities, site visibility and lighting, drainage and landscape features.

Safety and Classification

Roads in DoNa Ana County serves as both major and minor corridors for many communities. Rural roads may connect local communities and be used a shipping or freight route alternative. This has caused a number of safety concerns regarding intersection ,signalization and turn lane design, and the designation of freight routes.

How is this linked to Doña Ana County Communities?

All of these concerns are interlinked and impacted by each other. It is critical to consider these concerns in both future and current roadway projects, as well as methods to integrate pedestrian and motorist safety, and appropriate and active landscape buffers.



Tools for Local Communities

Transportation and Interconnectivity Tools

Communities can utilize different tools to promote public safety, pedestrian routes and access to transit such as:

Road Audit and Evaluation

A Road Safety Audit (RSA) is a formal safety performance examination of an existing, future road or intersection by a professional independent or multidisciplinary team. The RSA documents potential road safety issues and identifies opportunities for improvements in safety for all road users. Bicycle and pedestrian level of service (BLOS/PLOS) evaluation is another method to determine the bike and pedestrian character and performance of roadways and streets.

Safe Routes To School

Community leaders, parents and schools across the U.S. and around New Mexico are utilizing Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs to encourage and enable more children to safely walk and bike to school. SRTS programs support walking and bicycling as viable and healthy transportation options for children and families on their school journeys. SRTS is currently reviewing and updating their Action Plan to respond to local connectivity issues in and around school communities.

Complete Streets

Complete Streets are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities. Complete Streets make it easy to cross the street, walk to stores and businesses, and to bicycle to local destinations. Communities that have adopted a Complete Streets policy direct their transportation planners and engineers to routinely design and operate the entire right of way to enable safe access for all users, regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation. This means that every transportation project will make the street network better and safer for drivers, transit users, pedestrians, and bicyclists – making a community a better place to live.

Unified Development Code- Development and Zoning Standards

Recently ammendments to the proposed Unified Development Code now include requirements for improved street design, drainage, pedestrian and cyclist features as well as buffer and fencing types that consider visibilty, safety and landscape features.



Health and Safety Concerns

Identifying Obstacles to Active Communities

Community concerns regarding local parks and trails are consistent among rural communities, and include key issues such as distance, accessibility and safety. A recent Health Impact Assessment conducted by Doña Ana Communities United (Placematter) showcased how proximity, accessibility and safety are obstacles to county residences accessing parks and multi use trails.

(<http://www.nmhealthequitypartnership.org/file/hia/DACPM-Final-HIA.pdf>)

Community Mapping

Mapping existing County communities distance to parks indicates that approximately 49 percent of county residents live within walking distance (1/4 mile) of a park or trail. This however, does not mean a direct, safe or public routes exists from communities to park facilities. Community mapping may be utilized to determine obstacles and opportunities in various communities.

Accessibility

Communities may be in close proximity to existing parks, but are oftened faced with accessibility issues that may include lack of connectivity(i.e sidewalks, pedestrian routes) and development patterns that are inconsistent with connecting communities to public amenities (i.e. cul-de sac, dead end streets)

Safety

Many factors can influence the perception of safety at public parks. Perceptions of safety at parks can range from size of facility, park programs, location, environment concerns and pedestrian and automobile connectivity.

How is this linked to Doña Ana County Communities?

All of these conditions and perceptions are interlinked and influenced by each other. It is critical to consider these concerns in both future and infill development as well as methods to integrate stormwater management and infrastructure funding to support or provide public amenities such as parks and trails.



Tools for Local Communities

Health and Connectivity Tools

Communities can promote active and healthy neighborhoods by encouraging and leveraging the use of the following connectivity tools:

Community Health Quick Audit

The Community Health Quick Audit is an easy tool which provides communities the ability to assess their neighborhoods based on the ability to access physical activity, connectivity and availability to healthy foods. Each community has different assets and needs. This assessment is easily accessible and can provide initial community ratings and is most beneficial when utilized prior to the following health assessment and models. By completing this assessment, communities will better be able to utilize the communities toolkit to support their assets and address their needs. (Plan4Health)

Health Impact Assessment (HIA)

A HIA provides analysis of the associated impacts of a proposed plan or policy, specifically in the lens of public and community health. HIA may provide impact forecast and strategy or policy recommendations. It is critical for the development of a neighborhood, colonia or community to incorporate the health of a community as part of the planning process. A recent HIA completed by Doña Ana Communities United (formerly Doña Ana Placematters) identified parks, multi-use paths and trails as key elements to promote healthy active lifestyles in Doña Ana communities.

Health In All Policies (HiAP)

Health in All Policies is a collaborative approach to improving the health of all people by incorporating health considerations into decision-making across multiple sectors and policy areas. The goal of Health in All Policies is to ensure that all decision-makers are informed about the health consequences of various policy options during the policy development process. (Public Health Institute)

How is this linked to Doña Ana County Communities?

All of these conditions and perceptions are interlinked and influenced by each other. It is critical to consider these concerns in both future and infill development as well as methods to integrate stormwater management and infrastructure funding to support or provide public amenities such as parks and trails.

Infrastructure and Development Concerns

Identifying Obstacles to Active Communities

Development patterns in colonia communities are both diverse and challenging. Portions of development within the county occurred previous to subdivision rules, while other portions recently developed. As a result, communities have aligned and developed with various and opposing development standards. Current communities have concerns regarding the continuity and functionality of infrastructure and development. Common concerns exist throughout rural communities, and include key issues such as connectivity, public safety and infrastructure systems.

Active and Pedestrian Connectivity

Pedestrian connectivity was not fully considered in previous development patterns within the county. This is especially evident in rural but populated areas of the county. This has resulted in the disconnection of pedestrians and the built environment. Sidewalks and pedestrian may connect to portions of a neighborhood or community, but lack connectivity to public parks, school and other community amenities.

Storm Water Management

Storm water management was not fully considered in areas where small and minimal development has occurred. This has resulted in areas of development with no or minimal stormwater management and drainage systems. This lack of storm water management can potentially cause storm and water management issues downstream from development that may endanger populated areas, communities and properties.

Neighborhood Drainage

Typical subdivision and neighborhood development has included standardized engineering practices which capture, store or distribute water as needed, but as a result has led to practices in which large areas of land are solely utilized for stormwater control.

How is this important to Doña Ana County Communities?

Both infrastructure and development are interlinked and influenced by each other. It is critical to consider these concerns in both future and infill development, as well as methods to integrate stormwater management and infrastructure. Capital funding may be utilized to improve stormwater and infrastructure while providing support to public amenities such as neighborhood connectivity, open space, and natural drainage systems.

Tools for Local Communities

Consolidating Regional Efforts

Communities can utilize different methods to address and promote public safety, pedestrians and transit routes with the following departments, plans and organizations:

Consolidation of ACO/CODES and Community Development

In 2015, the supervision of the Doña Ana County Animal Control and Codes Enforcement operations and personnel was shifted from the Sheriff's Office to the office of Community Development. This transfer will allow Community Development to more closely monitor community-level issues related to code conformity and enforcement.

Storm Water Management Master Drainage Plan

Flood control is vital to protecting existing communities, residents and properties. Strategic flood control will ensure as communities grow, impacts from floods will be minimized. Master Drainage Plans provide for detailed capital projects designed to address community level flood control. Stormwater management best practices can assist with community design that converts stormwater and stormwater facilities into a community and natural resource.

Transit Service

In 2016, transit service arrived in Doña Ana County and is provided by the South Central Regional Transit District. Current services include limited routes to several areas in the county including: Alamogordo, Organ, Las Cruces, Anthony, Chaparral and Sunland Park. Coordination and evaluation of both regional and local transit systems is currently ongoing and strives to provide a seamless transit system to all communities of Dona Ana County.

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO)

Both Mesilla Valley and El Paso MPOs function within portions of Doña Ana County. Both agencies coordinate large scale and regional urbanized transportation projects within the region. MPOs can assist communities to access federal and state transportation funds for traditional (roadways) and non-traditional (bike routes and walking paths) and thereby leveraging additional resources to meet a range of community transportation needs.

Activating Community Capacity

Identifying Obstacles To Building Communities

Community Concerns

County communities present a diverse range of perspectives, values and concerns that stem from the vast area. The challenge in serving diverse communities is engaging, empowering, and overcoming equity issues.

Community Engagement

Participation and engagement is consistently a challenge in Doña Ana County due to a number of social and physical barriers. Rural residents can be challenged in attending community events due to difficulties with language, time constraints, accessing transportation and public information.

Community Involvement

Issues regarding community involvement are linked to the previously mentioned obstacles of community engagement. However some communities improve their conditions with by conducting and organizing informal and formal neighborhood groups.

Economic Challenges

County communities are also faced with economic challenges based on the increases of living and transportation cost. Some rural communities lack access to retail, entertainment or recreation which adds to transportation cost. Other economic challenges based on climate change may be increases the cost of living for rural communities.

How is this important to Doña Ana County Communities?

Both engagement and involvement are key to improving Doña Ana Communities. It is critical to consider these obstacles while organizing community building and outreach initiatives. A series of community building initiatives are available to assist communities in increasing their capacity to participate and improve their communities.

Tools for Local Communities

Capacity and Community Building

Communities can become more engaged and readily able to contribute to the improvement of their neighborhoods by participating in the following initiatives:

Advocacy Community Groups

Local groups have recently organized communities in order to identify and voice community concerns to policy makers. These groups are committed to advancing the quality in Doña Ana County through shared information, collaboration, capacity building and leadership. Key groups include the Empowerment Congress of Doña Ana County and Doña Ana Communities United.

Community Trainings-Improvement Projects

Communities may also benefit from trainings on emerging community building methods such as community gardens and rainwater harvesting. These methods of community building showcase different approaches to utilizing and embracing natural and shared resources. These methods conceptually overlap with tools that will be mentioned in later sections. La Semilla Agriculture Advocacy group has showcased rural and urban agriculture as a viable alternative food source. Another organization showcasing neighborhood improvement projects is Watershed Management Group which can teach, design and build neighborhood amenities that utilize stormwater runoff to provide community benefits.

Alternative Economic Models- Time Banking

Recently Doña Ana Communities United (formerly Doña Ana Placematters) initiated a community building initiative known as Community Time Banking. Time Banking offers a platform for alternative and place-based economies to develop and promotes community building. Time banking is a reciprocity-based work and trading system which utilizes different skills or services offered by other local community members. Service hours are typically tracked and monitored by a community representative and can be utilized by other residents participating in community time bank. Time Banks most importantly capitalize on the multitudes of strengths and capacities provided by rural communities.

Infrastructure : Green Infrastructure

Methods for Activating Natural Landscapes and Enhancing Communities

The use of green infrastructure is an important strategy for the Housing and Urban Developments (HUD) Office of Economic Resilience (OER) and its Sustainable Communities Initiative (SCI) grantees, especially for communities that plan for current and future impacts of climate change and natural disasters.

*** Green Infrastructure refers to constructed engineered and or landscape features that integrate living and natural systems to provide environmental functions, such as capturing, cleaning and infiltrating stormwater; creating wildlife habitat; shading/cooling streets and buildings; and calming traffic.**

According to the HUD report of Green Infrastructure and the Sustainable Communities Initiative, the incorporation of green infrastructure can be a cost-effective solution to help communities save taxpayer money on a number of public projects. Costs savings can be achieved by reducing the need for traditional “gray public infrastructure”, redirecting limited capital funding towards scalable green infrastructure projects, and by providing natural drainage systems which reduces maintenance. Cost savings can also be achieved by improving stormwater management and water quality, reducing combined sewer overflows (CSOs), and limiting the impacts of floods towards homes, businesses and communities. All of these efforts support communities to become more resilient to the effects of climate change and extreme weather events, while lowering future infrastructure costs and promoting community revitalization. In summary, the reports highlights green infrastructure investments are most effective and beneficial when coordinated at the regional scale.

According to the HUD report, green infrastructure investments are especially valuable because of the added community benefits they provide. Typical stormwater management known as “gray infrastructure” require major capital investments and are typically concealed underground and hidden from plain sight. Green infrastructure services, on the other hand, provide active and functional landscape systems which can provide natural water management. Green infrastructure can provide natural and landscape amenities which may increase property values and spur economic revitalization. Additionally, communities which utilize increased vegetation, landscape features and tree canopies are proven to increase both property values and the desirability of neighborhoods.

Several of the Sustainable Communities Initiative (SCI) grantees opted to pursue Green Infrastructure initiatives. HUD SCI grantees have planned for the use of green infrastructure as a feature within a larger place-making strategy to catalyze economic development with desirable community amenities and improved aesthetics. A brief summary of several green infrastructure projects includes the following.

Infrastructure : Green Infrastructure

Learning from Neighboring Communities

City of New Orleans, Louisiana

Livable Claiborne Communities

TIGER Funding \$1,072,000 | HUD Award: \$928,000

The City of New Orleans applied green infrastructure planning by including sustainable solutions in policy recommendation and actions for this flood-prone environment. This resulted in the translation of grey infrastructure projects into community benefitting green infrastructure projects. As a result this transformed neighborhood amenities by providing improvements to a local greenway plan with a system of rain gardens, retrofitted parks, landscape swales, and daylight canals as linear parks. Sustainable and policy recommendation promoted green infrastructure, integrated design, incorporation of high performance stormwater systems and green design as an essential component into all public and private development. The project was designed to accomplish the following:

- **Create sustainable solutions for the flood prone environment.**
- **Link green infrastructure networks.**
- **Support citywide and regional flood control and storm protection .**
- **Restore street trees canopies, landscape and pedestrian related features.**
- **Promote walkable and affordable communities.**

According to the report project summary, the project goals aimed to create “**sustainable solutions for a flood prone area, while offering equitable access to economic prosperity** where residents, visitors, and businesses are able to enjoy a safe, pedestrian-friendly environment that connects the agricultural tradition and authenticity of the area.”

Image Credit (<http://www.nola.gov/livable-claiborne-communities>)



Could this be your community?



Infrastructure : Green Infrastructure

Learning from Neighboring Communities

Bernalillo County, New Mexico:

Bridge Boulevard Corridor Redevelopment Plan

TIGER Funding \$262,500 | HUD Award: \$237,500

Bernalillo County developed green infrastructure methods by utilizing a project based approach to implement goals that align with the performative aspects of green infrastructure. This specific green infrastructure project identified key improvements to a high capacity thoroughfare which aimed at producing a mixed-use, pedestrian-and transit friendly corridor that maintains the unique history and character of the community. This corridor plan included zoning regulations, roadway concepts, transit strategies, and recommendations for pedestrian amenities. Throughout the plan, water conservation and harvesting remain central goals. Several design elements are incorporated in the plan to reduce water usage in landscaping and increase the capture of stormwater. The project was designed to accomplish the following:

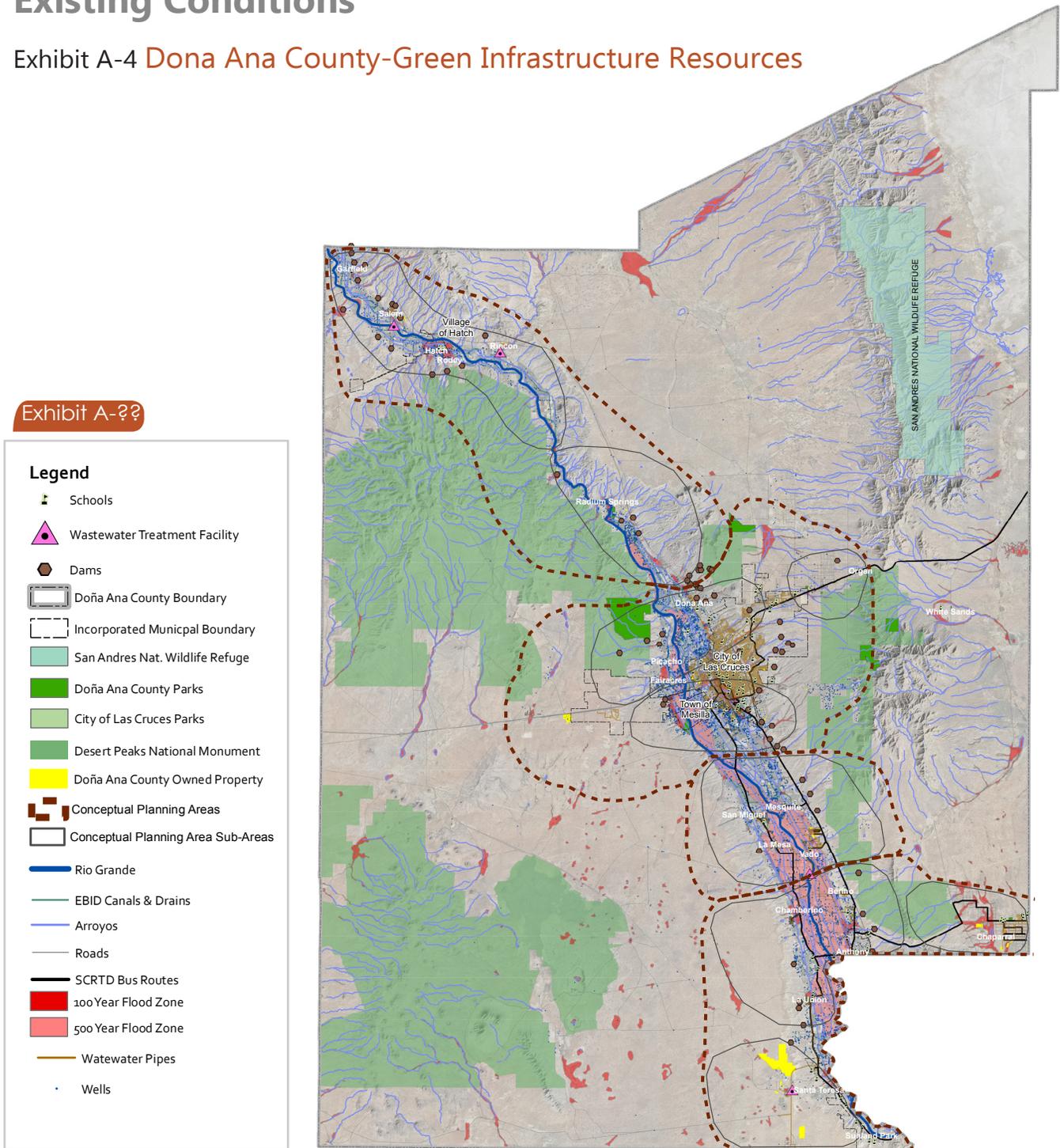
- **Encourage vegetated medians , traffic circles and other storm water capture systems.**
- **Manage traffic and increase safety for those walking and biking.**
- **Reduce water usage in landscaping and increase the capture of stormwater**
- **Incorporation of water efficiency, water efficient landscaping, native arid vegetation usage Stormwater management through pervious surface for parking lots, as well as through rain gardens and bioswales.**

According to the report project summary, the project aimed to create “**a sustainable main street where residents, visitors, and businesses are able to enjoy a safe, pedestrian-friendly environment** that celebrates the agricultural tradition and authenticity of the area.”

Image Credit (<http://www.bernco.gov/>)

Existing Conditions

Exhibit A-4 Dona Ana County-Green Infrastructure Resources



Above: Map indicates various natural and green infrastructure resources available throughout Doña Ana County including parks, river, arroyos, dams, flood systems and preserved natural space. Colonias can utilize various green infrastructure systems to improving flood and drainage performance while providing community benefits.

Low Impact Development

Promoting Development, Protecting Communities

Low Impact Development (LID) has emerged as a highly effective and beneficial approach to controlling stormwater and protecting both developing communities and watersheds and has many available application in the county. LID emphasizes both sustainable development techniques and lot specific strategies that reproduce or replicate pre-development hydrology patterns and can reduce the impacts of development.

*** Low Impact Development integrates active landscape features and infrastructure systems to fit within the natural features of landscape. LID preserves natural landscape functions, minimizes effective impervious surfaces to create functional drainage and drainage control strategies. LID manages stormwater as close to its source as possible and is most effective when combined with Green Infrastructure best management practices.**

According to the National Resource Defense Council (NRDC) report on stormwater strategies, the incorporation of LID can provide multiple benefits for the development community due to the emphasis on existing natural processes. LID methods cost less than conventional grey infrastructure and can be cost effective to construct, maintain and have a longer life cycle cost. LID also supports alternative stormwater management that may provide the best use of site features that may require less area than conventional stormwater techniques. In addition, the reports highlights LID techniques are most effective and beneficial when coordinated with regional and local green infrastructure systems.

There are a several rural and colonia communities in Doña Ana County adjacent to various forms of development. LID provides an alternative development method that can be beneficial to both existing and development communities. Some communities may develop at a greater rate than infrastructure services can be provided, and as a result developments can incorporate a level of community resiliency by employing LID methods. LID protects and connects communities, environmental systems and development.

The NRDC also report on the economic benefits of LID based stormwater strategies. LID methods add economic and aesthetic value to development projects. This is achieved by protecting natural landscapes and conserving natural features, thereby enhancing aesthetic value of a property. LID also simultaneously promotes community amenities such as parks and open space. Other LID benefits include habitat restoration, flood control and drought impact prevention.

Low Impact Development

Applying Best Methods and Practices

Exhibit A-??



Unified Development Code- Development and Zoning Standards

Proactive coordination between the Engineering Services Department and Community Development has recently resulted in a series of amendments to the proposed Unified Development Code. These additions include a series of Low Impact Development-Best Management Practices, which provide useful and flexible best management practices for integrating site design, grading, drainage and erosion control with the natural existing features at the initial stages of development.

Low Impact Development currently exists in Doña Ana County stormwater management program and has not been incorporated at the initial stages of development. Low Impact Development strengthens the existing EPA Municipal Separate Storm, Sewer System (MS4) requirements in terms of reducing erosion and providing tools for education and outreach. MS4 operators must satisfy the appropriate water quality requirements of the Clean Water Act. MS4s program elements include developing, implementing and enforcing sediment controls for construction and development activities. Development of the MS4 program also includes applying Best Management Practices.

EPA MANDATE requires MS4 permit operators to adhere to the following:

- **Reduce discharge**
- **Protect water quality**
- **Meet water quality requirements of the Clean Water Act**

Fair Housing

Housing: A Fundamental Element of Community Development

Housing plays an important role in the development of Doña Ana County communities. Housing may impact future growth, development patterns and the quality of life of Doña Ana County residents. Affordable housing can also be part of a larger strategy to promote infill development and mixed-use developments. Communities may also benefit from Affordable housing programs as they extend housing, retail and service opportunities to existing communities.

Housing Assessment and Studies

The Viva Doña Ana Comprehensive Plan- Plan 2040 included a Fair Housing Equity Assessment (FHEA) and Regional Analysis of Impediments (RAI) study. The study recommends more outreach and education to landlords, lenders, tenants and buyers. The study recommends more diverse housing types be allowed by zoning codes and transit service be expanded to improve access to public services.

The study analyzed areas with a high level of access to various opportunities, including education, jobs, transportation and a healthy environment. The study identifies areas with the highest level of connectivity to opportunity and recommends investments in affordable new housing and transit in these identified areas.

A Call for Public and Private Investment

The Fair Housing study emphasizes substantive investments in economic development, public infrastructure, and affordable housing will result in gains that will reduce disparities in burdens and benefits in the County. According to the study "Areas that have received private sector investment in the past have typically not been in areas of lower income residents", as demonstrated by the Community Reinvestment Act data evaluation. Such investment can be removal of "other vacant" dwellings not available to the marketplace, rehab of existing structures, redevelopment of existing vacant buildings, redevelopment of underutilized housing, or replacement of old and dilapidated infrastructure. Expansion of the public transportation system is a key objective. Engagement with Fair Housing advocates during the development of this study reiterated the need for a local Affordable Housing Plan for the Doña Ana County.



Affordable Housing

Increasing Affordable Housing and Housing Options

The Affordable Housing Plan (AHP), funded by the New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority (NMMFA) and the Colonias Infrastructure Board, was completed in 2015. The AHP included some of the following recommendations:

- **Adopt an affordable housing plan and ordinance in compliance with the Affordable Housing Act and MFA guidelines.**
- **Ensure County initiatives are consistent with the Affordable Housing Plan, ensuring affordable housing is recognized as a priority issue in other County efforts.**
- **Link affordable housing and economic development investments.**
- **Reduce or eliminate performance zoning in target areas.**
- **Standardize permitting for approved affordable housing projects, including infill development.**
- **Support infrastructure financing for large developments that include affordable housing.**
- **Encourage the regionalization of utilities and expedited development review in areas where water service providers have the capacity to accommodate growth.**
- **Partner and coordinate with a wide range of affordable housing advocates to conduct outreach to potential home buyers for credit counseling and to expand opportunities for home financing.**

Leveraging Affordable Housing Resources

The Affordable Housing Plan identifies potential sources of federal, state and local financing and subsidies to support affordable housing in New Mexico. Information includes most commonly used housing resources for non-profit and public agency housing providers, housing developers, individual homeowners and renters. The major funding sources include Housing and Urban Development (HUD), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority. The AHP emphasizes the importance of developing collaborative strategies with multiple entities to leverage a mix of resources, both public and private, to include affordable housing. Local advocates include developers as well as Tierra Del Sol Housing Corporation, Habitat for Humanity, Community of Hope, Southwestern Regional Housing and Community Development Corporation, Mesilla Valley Public Housing Authority, as well as private developers.

Military Use and Community Impacts

Joint Land Use Initiative

Doña Ana County recently secured funding and is at the initial stages of conducting a Southern New Mexico Joint Land Use Study (JLUS). The study area encompasses six counties, two states, and the three military installations of Fort Bliss, White Sands Missile Range (WSMR), and Holloman Air Force Base (HAFB) as well as Doña Ana, Sierra, Lincoln, Otero, and Socorro counties in New Mexico and El Paso County, Texas surround the installations.

The JLUS was designed to create dialog around complex issues such as land use, zoning, economic development, infrastructure, environmental sustainability. The JLUS focuses on the operational demands and mission impacts on both military and civilian entities. The study will highlight common interests, such as: stable economic growth, more efficient infrastructure, healthier environments, improved quality of life, the protection of Department of Defense (DoD) and civilian investments and missions. Highlights from the study include the following:

Community Connection

- **Recognition of the strong economic linkages between the military installations and the surrounding communities.**
- **Opportunities for increased coordination around specific facilities, particularly airports and roadways.**

Community Concerns

- **Protection of private property rights and local economic development opportunities.**
- **Dust pollutants and the related impacts caused by maneuvers on the Doña Ana Range training areas. This is of particular interest to communities in south Doña Ana County and areas adjacent to U.S. Highway 54 traffic.**
- **Military protocols establish restricted use easements for large parcels of land adjacent to various Doña Ana communities. An example of this would be evident in Chaparral, New Mexico. This community currently has restricted use of large adjacent parcels due to its proximity to a military installation. This condition also presents compatibility issues due to the military noise impacts placed on nearby communities. This condition highlights the incompatible issue faced by many designated and community uses.**

Conclusion

The Colonia Community Planning Toolkit

Colonia Community Toolkit For Future Planning

The Colonia Community Toolkit, represents a community-based planning effort to serve as a road map to improve the quality of life of residents and communities in Doña Ana County. This document presented integrated and flexible approaches to strategic community planning - a new way of planning for communities. A process that continues to focus on enhanced proactive communication, coordination, integration and public engagement.

Each colonia in Doña Ana County presents a wide array of opportunities, obstacles, natural and built environments, lifestyle and personal perspectives which define each colonia and community in the region. This creates the need for a flexible set of varying approaches and methods which can be utilized differently at each colonia. This toolbox approach allows for communities to select approaches and methods which best represent their concerns and values.

Each planning area in the County will have a community plan based upon the needs specified by the communities and will integrate the approaches and methods recommended in the toolkit. This "toolkit" serves as a model for development of a series of community plans for the distinct regions, or planning areas, in the county. The toolkit community plan framework strives to strike a balance between improving existing community conditions, showcasing integrated projects and guiding future development.

Development of an effective community plan requires clear strategies and an integrated approach that incorporates well-defined short and long implementation strategies critical to improve the quality of community life in Doña Ana County.

Doña Ana County's residents deserve community plans that integrate a community-based vision with a mix of new, creative and above all practical strategies to transform neighborhoods and communities.

