

ELEVATE LAS CRUCES

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Volume II: Community Profile

ADOPTED FEBRUARY 18, 2020

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VOLUME II: COMMUNITY PROFILE

ELEVATE LAS CRUCES IS A FOUR-VOLUME DOCUMENT.

VOLUME II IS A DATA DOCUMENT. IT SUMMARIZES LAS CRUCES' GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS, RESOURCES, AND RELEVANT PLANNING INITIATIVES, AND SERVES AS A COMPILATION OF BASELINE INFORMATION THAT WAS INCORPORATED INTO THE ELEVATE LAS CRUCES PLANNING PROCESS.

ELEVATE LAS CRUCES COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
ADOPTED FEBRUARY 18, 2020



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GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

AARP - American Association of Retired Persons

ACS - American Community Survey

Adm - Avenida de Mesilla Gateway Overlay

ALTS&D - Aging and Long-Term Services Department

APA - American Planning Association

BLM - Bureau of Land Management

BNSF - Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad

CBD - Central Business District

CE - Community Environment

CIP - Capital Improvement Program

CL - Community Livability

CNG - Compressed Natural Gas

CP - Community Prosperity

CPAC - Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee

CPTED - Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

DAC - Doña Ana County

DACC - Doña Ana County Community College

DAMD&WCA - Doña Ana Mutual Domestic Water Consumer Association

DU - Dwelling Units

EBID - Elephant Butte Irrigation District

EPA - Environmental Protection Agency

ESRI - Environmental Systems Research Institute

ETZ - Extraterritorial Zone

FAR - Floor Area Ratio

FEMA - Federal Emergency Management Association

FHWA - Federal Highway Administration

GIS - Geographical Information Systems

GRT - Gross Receipt Tax

HOA - Homeowners Association

HUD - Department of Housing and Urban Development

ITE - Institute Transportation Engineers

JH&WTF - Jacob Hands Water Treatment Facility

LCAR - Las Cruces Association of Realtors

LCMC - Las Cruces Municipal Codes

LCPS - Las Cruces Public Schools

LCPCS - Las Cruces Partnership for Community Schools

LEED - Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design

LEP - Limited English Proficient

LRGRWP - Lower Rio Grande Regional Water Plan

MF - Multi-Family

MPO - Metropolitan Planning Organization

MVEDA - Mesilla Valley Economic Development Alliance

MVMP&O - Mesilla Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization

MVPHA - Mesilla Valley Public Housing Authority

MWC - Moongate Water Company

NACTO - National Association of City Transportation Officials

This glossary is a composite list of acronyms found in Volumes 1 through 4 of Elevate Las Cruces. This Volume may not contain all acronyms listed.



GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

- NAICS** - North American Industrial Classification System
- NAMI** - National Alliance on Mental Illness
- NRHP** - National Register of Historic Places
- NMCYFD** - New Mexico Children, Youth & Families Department
- NMDFA** - New Mexico Department of Finance & Administration
- NMDOH** - New Mexico Department of Health
- NMDOT** - New Mexico Department of Transportation
- NMHSD** - New Mexico Human Services Department
- NMPED** - New Mexico Public Education Department
- NMSU** - New Mexico State University
- NWIC** - National Wraparound Implementation Center
- OS-NC** - Open Space -Natural/Conservation District
- OS-R** - Open Space-Recreation
- PRC** - Policy Review Committee
- PUD** - Planned Unit Development
- QOZ** - Qualified Opportunity Zones
- SCRTD** - South Central Regional Transit District
- SCSWA** - South Central Solid Waste Authority
- SF** - Single-Family
- SLO** - State Land Office
- TBL** - Triple Bottom Line
- TDR** - Transfer of Development Rights
- TIDD** - Tax Increment Development District
- UD** - University District
- USDOT** - U.S. Department of Transportation
- USGBC** - U.S. Green Building Council
- USGS** - United States Geological Survey
- UTEP** - University of Texas El Paso
- WIC** - Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and children
- WMIP** - West Mesa Industrial Park

This glossary is a composite list of acronyms found in Volumes 1 through 4 of Elevate Las Cruces. This Volume may not contain all acronyms listed.



ELEVATE
LAS CRUCES

COMMUNITY PROFILE

An integral part of any planning process is the assessment of existing conditions in the community. A clear understanding of where Las Cruces has been and where the community is today is needed to establish a vision for the future discussed in other volumes. This volume represents a comprehensive community profile covering a broad range of planning topics including:

- Community History
- Past Planning Efforts
- Population Profile
- Land Use & Development
- Mobility
- Public Services
- Natural Resources
- Economic Development
- Infrastructure & Utilities
- Housing & Neighborhoods
- Cultural Resources

The information compiled in this volume is an abbreviated summary of features that define Las Cruces' general characteristics, resources, and relevant planning initiatives that have recently been undertaken by the community. This information is not an exhaustive inventory of all data and reference material that has been collected to assist in the Elevate Las Cruces planning process, but represents important baseline information that is incorporated into the analysis and vision in **Volume I: Elevate Las Cruces**, and **Volume III: Scenario Planning Initiative**.

COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

Las Cruces, situated in southern New Mexico in the Mesilla Valley, is the second most populous city in the state. The community is located about 45 miles north of El Paso, Texas and Ciudad Juárez, Mexico and 225 miles south of Albuquerque. Approximately 102,000 residents call Las Cruces home today - a growth rate of roughly 37 percent since the year 2000. Las Cruces is the county seat of Doña Ana County, and serves as the center of commerce and culture for the southern New Mexico region.

Today, Las Cruces is intrinsically linked to both El Paso and Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. **Figure 2.1, Regional Context Map**, (page 3), on the following page shows the location of Las Cruces in the greater bi-national region. The City is traversed by two interstates - Interstate 10 leads to El Paso to the south and to Deming in the west and Interstate 25 originates in Las Cruces and travels north to Wyoming. US 70 leads northeast to the Organ Mountains Desert Peaks National Monument and White Sands Missile Range. The City is flanked by two defining natural landscapes - the Organ Mountains in the east and the Rio Grande to the west.

Las Cruces is known for the expansive natural beauty of the surrounding mountain ranges, strong neighborhoods, and a rich cultural history.

COMMUNITY HISTORY

Prior to the community’s founding in 1849, several Native American groups lived in the area, including the Manso People, Guadalupe People, and Mescalero Apaches. The proximity to the Rio Grande made the area an attractive location to settle. The Camino Real (Royal Road) served as a major trade route linking Mexico City to Santa Fe and crossed through present-day Las Cruces.

Present-day southern New Mexico was home to several conflicts between Native Americans and Spanish conquistadors in the 1500s to 1800s. In 1848, the U.S.-Mexican War ended and Americans flocked westward from Texas to California and in 1849, Las Cruces was established. The name may originate from a landmark of crosses marking graves. On May 21, 1598, Pedro Robledo, a member of the Oñate Entrada whose mission was to colonize New Mexico, became the journey’s first casualty and was buried where he died. Robledo’s grave, located somewhere between Doña Ana and Radium Springs, was marked with a cross. In 1854, the Gadsden Purchase between the U.S. and Mexico secured the southern portions of present-day New Mexico and Arizona, making Las Cruces within U.S. territory.

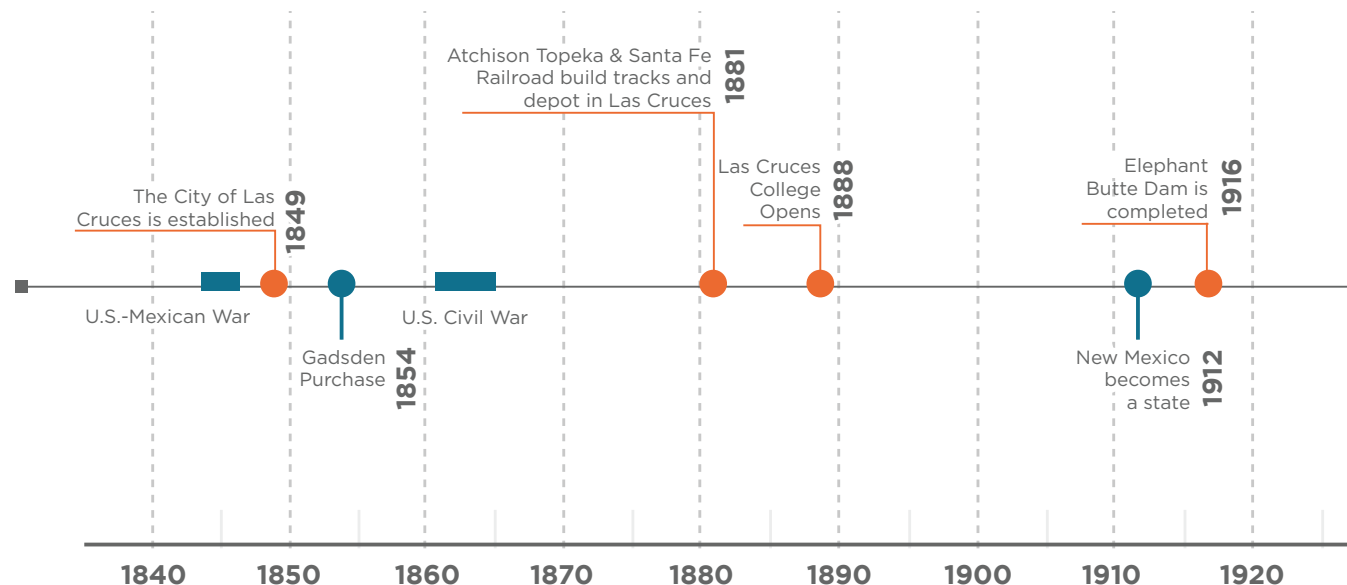
In the 1880s, the railroad came to southern New Mexico. The Atchison Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad built tracks and a depot in Las Cruces in 1881. The community grew rapidly after the introduction of the railroad; new homes, churches, and schools were built at the end of the 19th century. In 1888, Las Cruces College opened, which is now New Mexico State University.

Given the proximity to the Rio Grande, agriculture is an important feature of Las Cruces history. The construction of the Elephant Butte Dam allowed for more farmers to be more productive in the Mesilla Valley region. The Great Depression caused crop prices to fall dramatically and many did not recover until New Deal programs were put into place by President Roosevelt. White Sands Missile Range was established in the 1940s after WWII, which is still a major employer for the region today.

Similar to the rest of the country, Las Cruces experienced a population boom from 1950 to 1960. During this time an urban renewal program was established for downtown, and many historic structures were torn down.

Figure 2.2, Historic Timeline presents an abbreviated timeline of major events in Las Cruces.

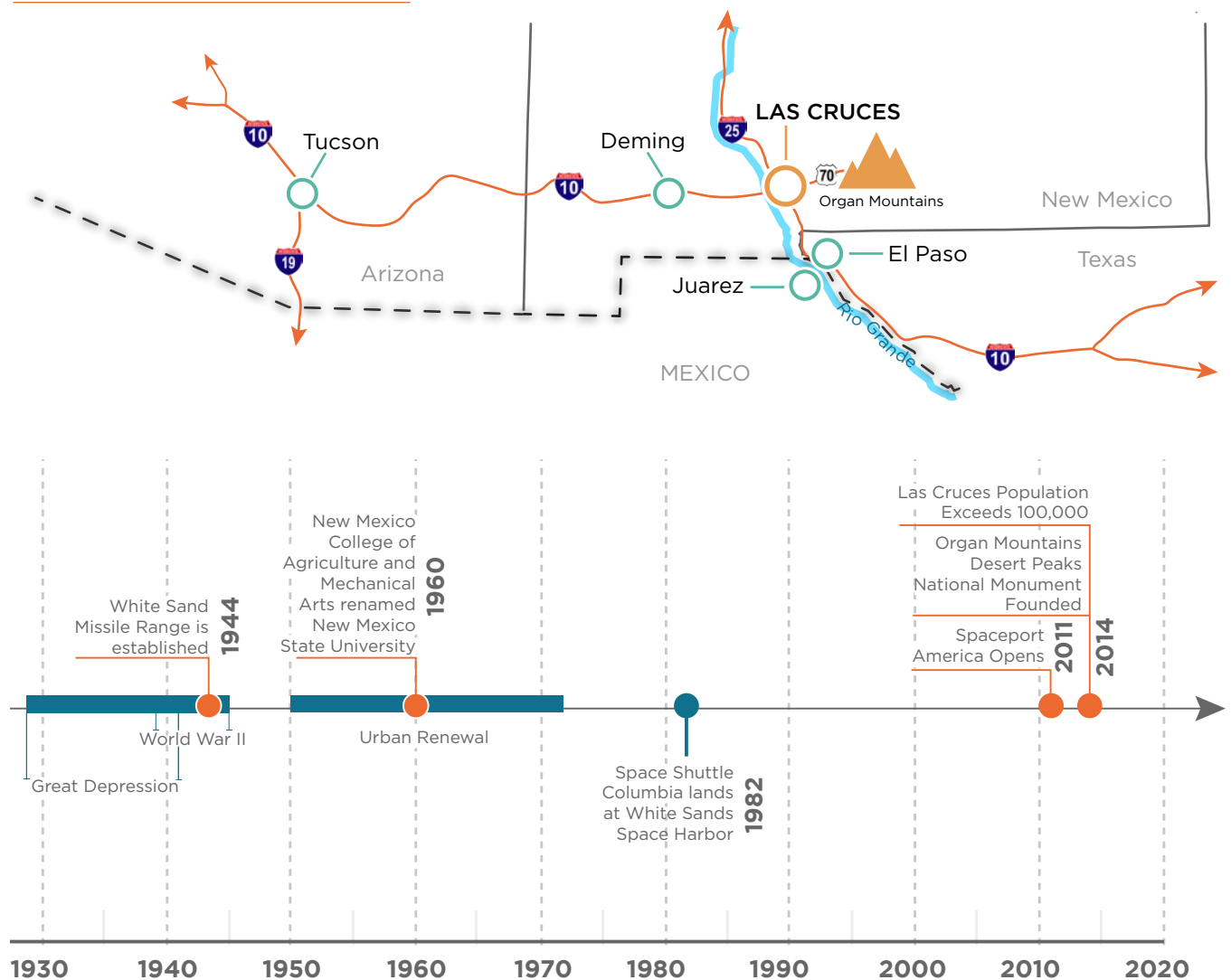
FIGURE 2.2, HISTORIC TIMELINE





Both historically and naturally relevant, the Rio Grande River (above) is one of the most significant defining features in the Mesilla Valley.

FIGURE 2.1, REGIONAL CONTEXT MAP



LAS CRUCES TODAY

Las Cruces has continued to grow and is now the second largest city in the state. The City limits now encompass approximately 68 square miles. Major highways include Interstate 10 traveling east/west, Interstate 25 traveling north/south, and US Highway 70 heading northeast to the White Sands Missile Range. Today the community has a dual identity as both a college town and hot spot for retirees.

Part of what makes Las Cruces attractive is the climate and surrounding natural landscape. The City is located within the Chihuahuan Desert; scenic features nearby include the Rio Grande River and several mountain ranges. In 2014, the Organ Mountains Peak National Monument was established, preserving opportunities for hiking right outside Las Cruces.

Major industries in Las Cruces include government jobs and aerospace-related fields given the proximity to White Sands and Fort Bliss. New Mexico State University has grown to a student population of approximately 14,400. Other higher-education options in Las Cruces include Doña Ana Community College campuses.

Since the urban renewal occurred in downtown about 50 years ago, significant public investment has created a thriving downtown with public plaza space, restaurants, and retail. Signature buildings in downtown include the Las Cruces City Hall and Doña Ana County Courthouse. The arts and cultural scene in Las Cruces is also vibrant; several arts and cultural groups call Las Cruces home.

Downtown Las Cruces (below) has experienced recent reinvestment and renewal and is a central part of the community today.



COMMUNITY PLANNING EFFORTS

COMPREHENSIVE PLANS

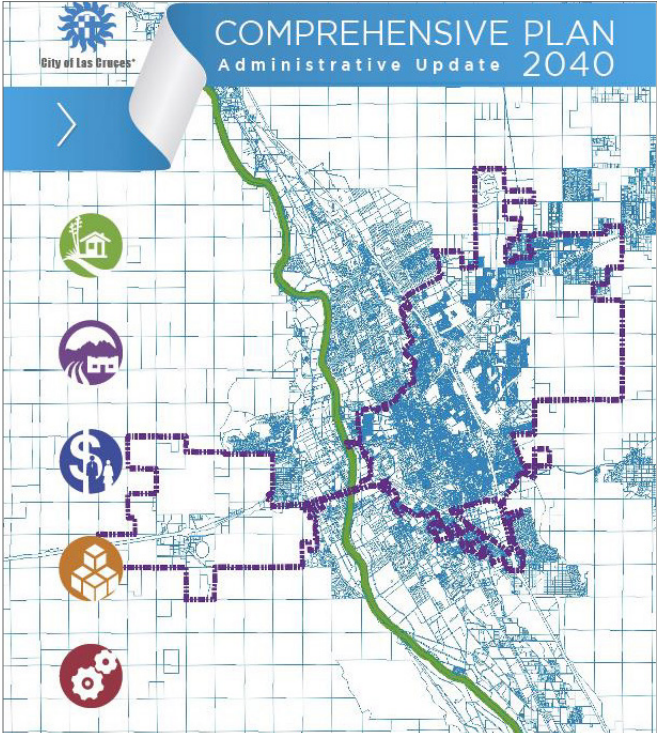
The City of Las Cruces has a long history of comprehensive planning to guide growth and development. Prior to the first comprehensive plan, the City developed a sign code in 1906 and the first full zoning ordinance in 1930. Tremendous growth from 1930-1955 was the impetus for development of the first comprehensive plan.

- **1955 Plan.** The 1955 plan addressed population growth, housing needs, transportation needs, flood protection, and industry.
- **1968 Plan.** In the 1960s, Las Cruces experienced about 300% growth in population, primarily due to the establishment of the White Sands Missile Range and the NASA Research Facility. This growth led to a new comprehensive plan which was adopted in 1968. This plan included the first recorded future land use map for the city and identified general location of future residential, commercial, and industrial land uses.
- **1985 Plan.** The third comprehensive plan was adopted in 1985 as a result of continued growth. This plan focused on eight main elements: land use, community facilities, urban design, utilities, economic development, housing, transportation, and environment. The primary emphasis of the plan was to create a multi-modal transportation system and improve urban form but lacked straightforward guidance.

- **1999 Plan.** The next comprehensive plan was adopted in 1999 and focused more on goals, objectives, and policies to guide key decisions related to community growth over the next forty years. In 2013, the City approved an administrative update to the 1999 plan that refined the goals, objectives, and policies based on the current environment and emerging trends. The administrative update also introduced overarching plan themes to group the policies and recommendations:

Additionally, in 2017 the Community Development department drafted an update to the Comprehensive Plan 2040 document that focused on the Healthy Community theme topic. This draft was entitled Plan4LasCruces to represent the four major themes (operational support was deleted since the 2013 administrative update). This draft was not adopted by the Planning & Zoning Commission.

Elevate Las Cruces is Las Cruces’ fifth comprehensive plan and has a planning horizon year of 2045.



Comprehensive Plan 2040 (right) was originally prepared in 1999 and underwent an administrative update in 2013.

ASSOCIATED PLANNING EFFORTS

In addition to the City’s previous comprehensive planning efforts, Las Cruces regularly conducts or participates in other planning initiatives at the regional, city-wide, and sub-area level. **Figure 2.3, Community Plan Types**, represents the hierarchy of community plans in Las Cruces.

- Regional Plans.** At a regional scale, Las Cruces works with Doña Ana County, the Mesilla Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), surrounding municipalities, and other public and private partners to develop overarching regional plans to address shared interests such as development, sustainability, and transportation. The recommendations of Elevate Las Cruces have been prepared to be consistent with the overarching visions of these regional planning documents.
- Elevate Las Cruces.** As the City of Las Cruces’ comprehensive plan, Elevate Las Cruces represents the guiding document for future growth and redevelopment in Las Cruces. The Plan articulates the community’s collective vision for how Las Cruces will grow and change, and identifies policies that should be referenced as the City conducts other community development and redevelopment initiatives.
- Policy Plans.** Typically, after a comprehensive plan is completed, several policy plans will be conducted to address specific topics or geographic areas of the city in more detail. In Las Cruces, these include technical plans, corridor plans, area plans, and community blueprints.

- Implementation Tools.** Finally, budgets, municipal codes, strategic plans, and capital improvement projects are tools used to implement the recommendations outlined in the City’s adopted planning documents. Elevate Las Cruces identifies implementation tools according to the following categories: financial investment, operational change, policy, regulation, and study.

Table 2.1, Inventory of Relevant Plans and Studies, on the following page lists relevant plans and studies that have been reviewed for the development of Elevate Las Cruces. The table indicates the related planning topic and where the plan is discussed in this volume.

FIGURE 2.3, COMMUNITY PLAN TYPES



TABLE 2.1, INVENTORY OF RELEVANT PLANS AND STUDIES

PLANNING DOCUMENT	YEAR ADOPTED	SECTION(S) DOCUMENT IS REFERENCED	PAGE NUMBER*
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2040	2013	COMMUNITY PLANNING EFFORTS	5
PLAN4LASCUCES	N/A (DRAFT)	COMMUNITY PLANNING EFFORTS	5
DOÑA ANA COUNTY REGIONAL PLAN: ONE VALLEY, ONE VISION 2040	2012	LAND USE	21
DOÑA ANA COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: PLAN 2040	2015	LAND USE	21
ALAMEDA DEPOT NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN	2009	LAND USE	22
AVENIDA DE MESILLA GATEWAY PLAN	1996	LAND USE	22
LOHMAN AVENUE AREA PLAN	2000	LAND USE	22
MESQUITE HISTORIC DISTRICT AREA PLAN	2005	LAND USE, CULTURAL RESOURCES	22
UNIVERSITY DISTRICT PLAN	2010	LAND USE	24
WEST MESA INDUSTRIAL PARK MASTER PLAN	1995	LAND USE	24
AMADOR PROXIMO COMMUNITY BLUEPRINT	2015	LAND USE	24
EL PASEO CORRIDOR COMMUNITY BLUEPRINT	2012	LAND USE	24
APODACA COMMUNITY BLUEPRINT	2018	LAND USE	24
SOUTH JORNADA COMMUNITY BLUEPRINT	2014	LAND USE	25
EAST MESA COMMUNITY BLUEPRINT	2013	LAND USE	25
SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN	2017	NATURAL RESOURCES	32
ARROYO MANAGEMENT PLAN	2015	NATURAL RESOURCES	32
LAS CRUCES UTILITIES WATER CONSERVATION PLAN	2012	NATURAL RESOURCES	32
COMMUNITY FOREST ASSESSMENT	2014	NATURAL RESOURCES	33
WATER AND WASTEWATER MASTER PLAN UPDATE	2008	INFRASTRUCTURE	40
40-YEAR WATER DEVELOPMENT PLAN	2017	INFRASTRUCTURE	40
STORMWATER MANAGEMENT PLAN	2009	INFRASTRUCTURE	40
AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLAN	2016	HOUSING	57
FIVE YEAR CONSOLIDATED PLAN	2016	HOUSING	57
INFILL POLICY PLAN	1998	HOUSING	57
NMSU CAMPUS MASTER PLAN	2017	COMMUNITY RESOURCES	61
HEALTHY CITY DESIGN: HEALTHY PEOPLE, HEALTHY COMMUNITY	2015	COMMUNITY RESOURCES	61
TRANSPORT 2040 PLAN	2015	MOBILITY	75
LONG-RANGE TRANSIT PLAN	2011	MOBILITY	75
ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN	2018	MOBILITY	75
PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN	2019	PUBLIC SERVICES	80
DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN	2016	CULTURAL RESOURCES	85
LAS CRUCES ARTS & CULTURAL DISTRICT PLAN	2018	CULTURAL RESOURCES	85

*The page numbers refer to where the plans are referenced in this Community Profile Volume.

REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Consistent with the polices of Comprehensive Plan 2040, Las Cruces has increased its promotion and support of cultural events and activities that are unique to the area.

Since the 2040 comprehensive plan administrative Update (Comprehensive Plan 2040) was adopted in 2013, the City has made progress implementing several identified policies and actions. In total, the city has completed 57 actions and 459 are currently in progress. Additionally, 32 actions are no longer a priority and 107 actions have not yet been started. Some of the accomplishments related to specific planning topics are discussed in the remaining sections in this volume. A “report of accomplishment” compiled and referenced as part of the Elevate Las Cruces planning process is located in **Appendix II-A**.



HEALTHY COMMUNITY THEME*

- 10 policies/actions completed
- 134 policies/actions in progress
- 16 policies/actions no longer a priority



COMMUNITY CHARACTER THEME*

- 12 policies/actions completed
- 102 policies/actions in progress
- 1 policy/action no longer a priority



ECONOMIC PROSPERITY THEME*

- 49 policies/actions in progress
- 2 policies/actions no longer a priority



SUSTAINABLE GROWTH THEME*

- 35 policies/actions completed
- 72 policies/actions in progress
- 11 policies/actions no longer a priority



OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY THEME*

- 102 policies/actions in progress
- 2 policies/actions no longer a priority

*Represents themes from Comprehensive Plan 2040.



Las Cruces is a diverse community with a population that has grown roughly 37 percent since the year 2000.

POPULATION PROFILE

Past, current, and projected population data was used to develop a comprehensive profile of the demographics of Las Cruces. Understanding the demographic composition of the community is a vital step in the comprehensive plan process.

HISTORIC POPULATION

Las Cruces' population has grown significantly over the past century. As of 2017, the population has increased by nearly 100,000 people since 1910. The largest increase in population occurred between 1950 and 1960, during which the growth rate was 138.4 percent, as shown in **Table 2.2, Historic & Current Population**. This immense growth in population is attributed to the establishment of the White Sands Missile Range and the NASA Research Facility. Since this population boom Las Cruces has experienced steady growth, with a current population estimate of 101,014 (2017 ACS).

TABLE 2.2, HISTORIC & CURRENT POPULATION

YEAR	POPULATION	GROWTH RATE
1910	3,836	--
1920	3,989	4.0%
1930	5,811	45.7%
1940	8,385	44.3%
1950	12,325	47.0%
1960	29,387	138.4%
1970	37,857	28.8%
1980	43,377	14.6%
1990	57,866	33.4%
2000	74,267	28.3%
2010	97,618	31.4%
EST. 2017	101,014	3.5%

Source: U.S. Decennial Census, 2013-2017 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates Table S0101.

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

The population of Las Cruces is predicted to grow over the next 25 years at a rate of about 1.2% per year. **Figure 2.4, Population Projections**, depicts the steady but minimal growth anticipated in the future. The forecasted population for the year 2045 is 141,565, which is roughly 37 percent increase from 2018. Looking forward, the projected growth rate is less than 20 percent each decade from 2010 onward. This is a slower rate than what Las Cruces experienced in the second half of the 1900s and from 2000-2010, but is more consistent with local and nationwide trends since 2010.

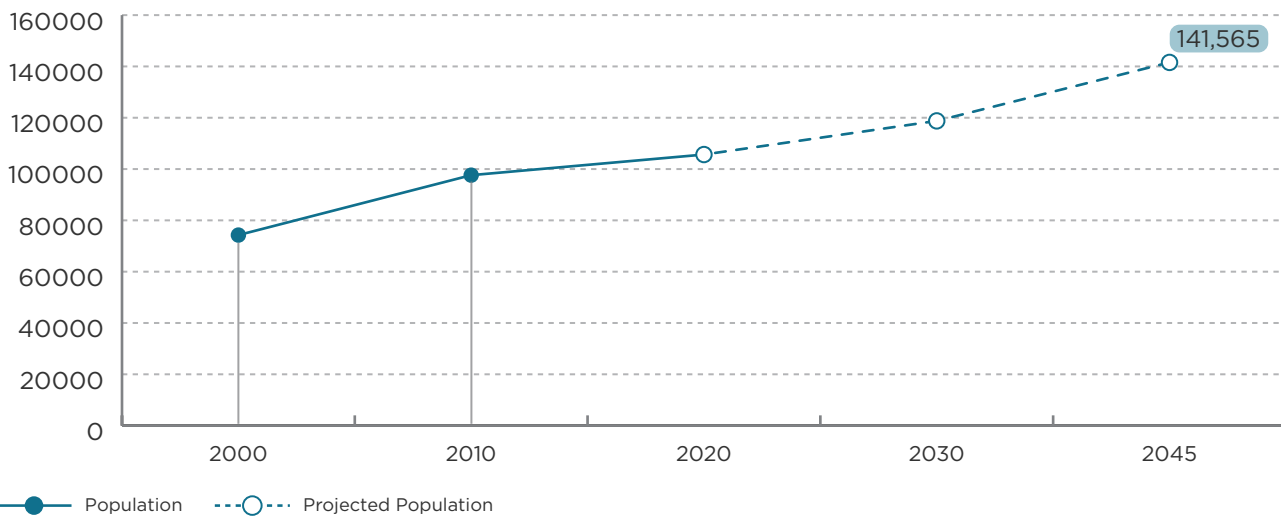
POPULATION DENSITY

Population density (people per square mile) is a helpful measure to determine dense and sparsely populated areas. **Map 2.1, Population Density** (facing page), depicts the population density by Census block groups using 2016 ACS population estimates. Darker colors represent areas with higher population densities. Dense areas in Las Cruces today include the area near NMSU and areas near the city center.



New retail and restaurants in downtown Las Cruces (above) attracts younger generations from across the City.

FIGURE 2.4, POPULATION PROJECTIONS



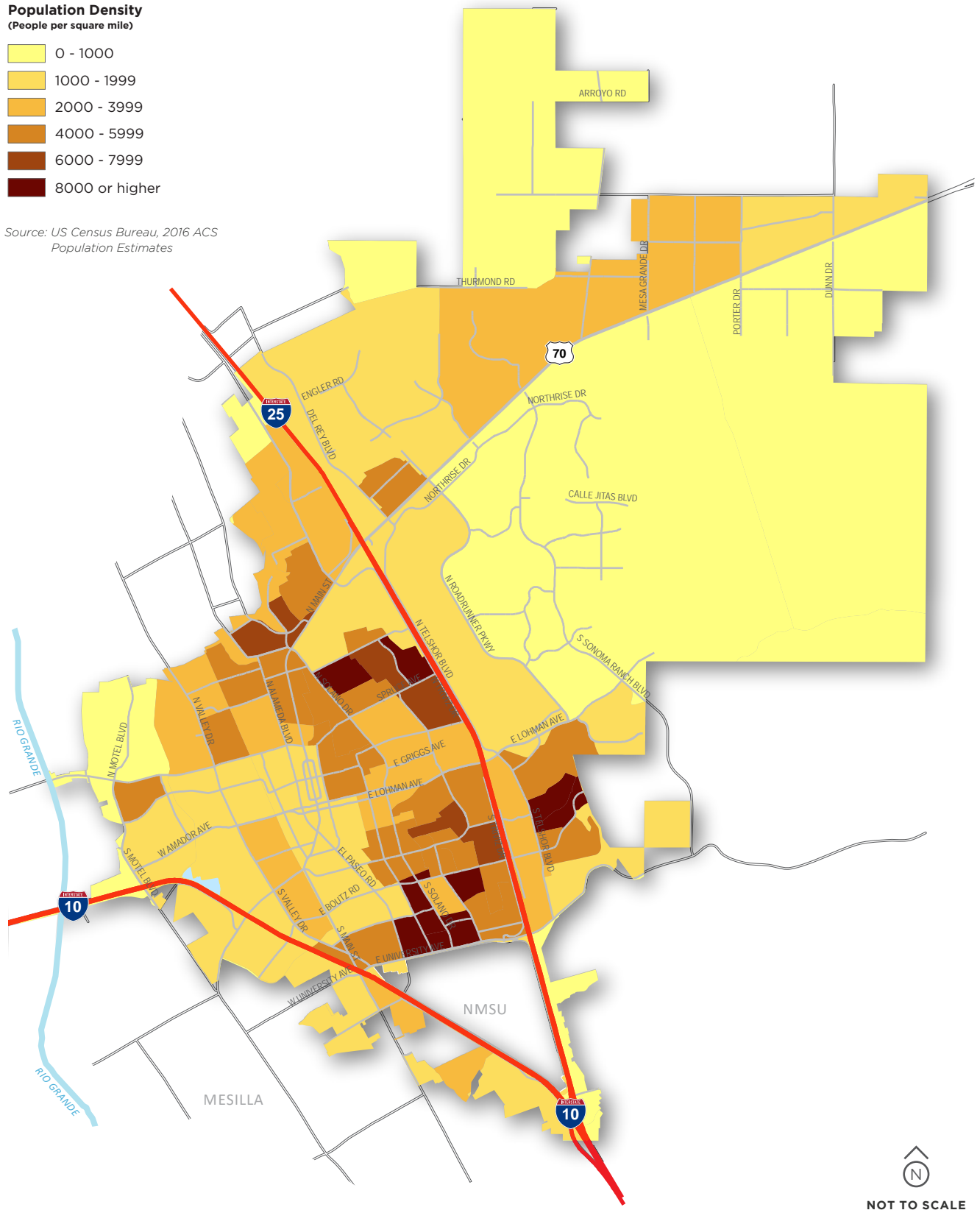
Source: U.S. Census, Mesilla Valley MPO, Economics and Planning Systems.

MAP 2.1, POPULATION DENSITY (2016)

Population Density
(People per square mile)

- 0 - 1000
- 1000 - 1999
- 2000 - 3999
- 4000 - 5999
- 6000 - 7999
- 8000 or higher

Source: US Census Bureau, 2016 ACS
Population Estimates



AGE CHARACTERISTICS

Overall, the Las Cruces population is relatively young, with a median age of 32.6 in 2017. Comparatively, the median age for New Mexico is 37.3 and 37.7 in the United States. Nearly 65 percent of the current population is younger than 44, representing children and individuals in the labor force. The single age cohort with the largest percentage of the total population are ages 20 to 24 years old (12%), however there may be fluctuations in this cohort due to college students leaving during the summer. Only 25.3 percent of the population is made up of individuals 55 and older. **Figure 2.5, Population by Age**, depicts the breakdown of age cohorts in Las Cruces.

RACE AND ETHNICITY

The racial and ethnic composition of a community is important to consider when establishing a community profile. According to the 2017 ACS, 71.5% of Las Cruces are a minority; this includes all races other than white alone and individuals that are of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity. **Table 2.3, Race** and **Table 2.4, Ethnicity**, depict the racial and ethnic composition of Las Cruces, Doña Ana County, and New Mexico in 2017. The percentage of Hispanics in Las Cruces is higher than the percentage statewide, but lower than the percentage in Doña Ana County.

TABLE 2.3, RACE (2017)

RACE	LAS CRUCES	DOÑA ANA COUNTY	NEW MEXICO
WHITE	87.1%	88.3%	74.2%
BLACK	2.6%	1.8%	2.0%
AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKAN NATIVE	1.5%	1.1%	9.5%
ASIAN	1.7%	1.0%	1.4%
NATIVE HAWAIIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
SOME OTHER RACE	4.2%	5.9%	9.5%
TWO OR MORE RACES	2.9%	1.9%	3.3%

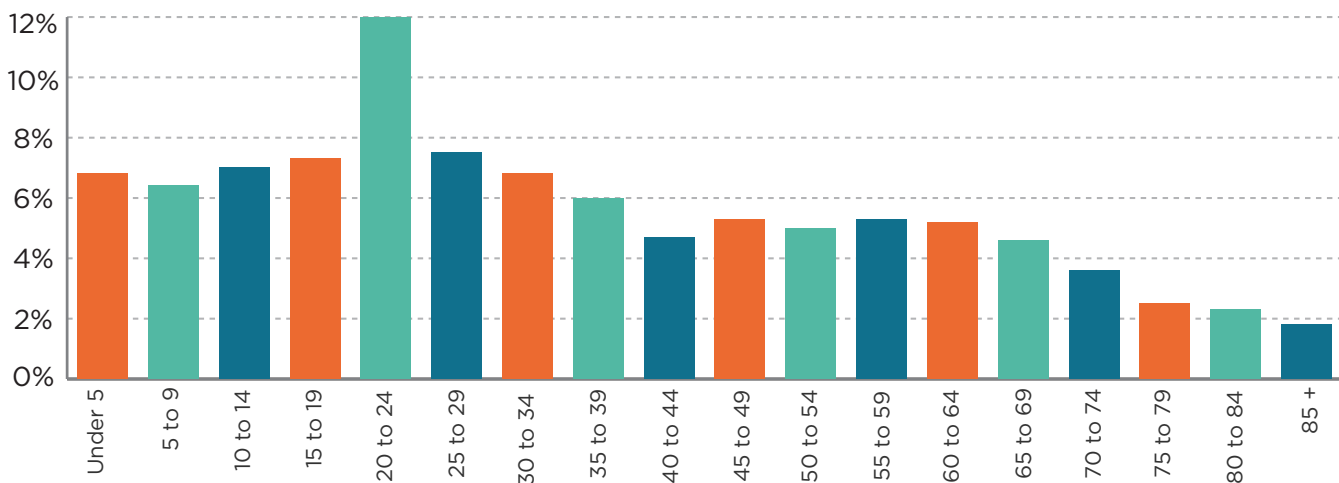
Source: 2013-2017 American Community Five-Year Estimates Table B02001.

TABLE 2.4, ETHNICITY (2017)

ETHNICITY	LAS CRUCES	DOÑA ANA COUNTY	NEW MEXICO
HISPANIC OR LATINO	58.6%	67.7%	48.2%
NOT HISPANIC OR LATINO	41.4%	32.3%	51.8%

Source: 2013-2017 American Community Five-Year Estimates Table DP05.

FIGURE 2.5, POPULATION BY AGE (2017)

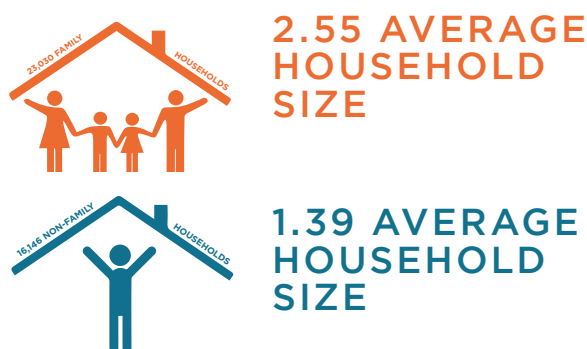


Source: 2013-2017 American Community Five-Year Estimates Table S0101.

HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

Of the nearly 40,000 households in Las Cruces today, the majority are made up of family households (58.8%) and the remaining 42.2 percent are non-family households. **Table 2.5, Household by Type**, and **Figure 2.6, Family & Non-Family Households**, depict the make-up of family and non-family households in Las Cruces. Additionally, the average household size for family households is 2.55 and 1.39 for non-family households.

FIGURE 2.6, FAMILY & NON-FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS (2017)



Source: 2013-2017 American Community Five-Year Estimates Table B11001.

In 2017, the median household income in Las Cruces was \$40,924 dollars; this figure is slightly more than Doña Ana County (\$39,114), but less than New Mexico (\$46,718). **Table 2.6, Median Household Income Over Time**, shows how the median household income has changed over time for Las Cruces, Doña Ana County, and New Mexico. The median household income in Las Cruces has increased at a faster rate than in the County or the state.

TABLE 2.6, MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME OVER TIME (2010-2017)

	LAS CRUCES	DOÑA ANA COUNTY	NEW MEXICO
2010	\$38,391	\$36,657	\$43,820
2017	\$40,924	\$39,114	\$46,718
2010-2017 % CHANGE	7.4%	5.4%	6.6%

Source: 2013-2017 American Community Five-Year Estimates Table S1903.

TABLE 2.5, HOUSEHOLDS BY TYPE (2017)

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	NUMBER
TOTAL	39,176
FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS	23,030
MARRIED-COUPLE FAMILY	14,698
OTHER FAMILY	8,332
MALE HOUSEHOLDER	2,282
FEMALE HOUSEHOLDER	6,050
NON-FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS	16,146
HOUSEHOLDER LIVING ALONE	12,610
HOUSEHOLDER NOT LIVING ALONE	3,536

Source: 2017 American Community One-Year Estimate Table B11001.

POPULATION PROFILE KEY FINDINGS

Las Cruces is a racially and ethnically diverse community that is projected to grow at a rate of roughly 1.2 percent per year. While there are many wealthy and financially-stable residents in Las Cruces, nearly a quarter of residents live beneath the poverty line and the overall median household income is lower than the state. Additional key findings include:

- The largest historic increase in population was from 1950 to 1960.
- Las Cruces is projected to grow 37 percent from 2018 to 2045.
- The median age is about five years younger than in New Mexico and the United States.
- Roughly 23.5 percent of the population is made up of residents ages 55 or older.
- About 71.5 percent of Las Cruces identify as a racial or ethnic minority.
- Nearly 60 percent of households are made up of some type of family unit.
- The median income in Las Cruces is \$40,924 dollars, which is higher than the county but lower than the state.
- Twenty four (24) percent of Las Cruces live beneath the federally-established poverty level.



II. COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

The character of Las Cruces' community environment, and the conditions under which the City's residents currently live, is reflective of how efficiently and harmoniously the human realm interfaces with the region's pre-existing natural conditions and features. The desert environment can place greater constraints on human habitation than many other types of ecosystems, particularly through increased energy demands due to extreme heat and constant exposure to the sun. These resource constraints - and their impact on the scale, form, and growth potential of Las Cruces' built environment - have been acknowledged by comprehensive planning participants alternatively as:

- A challenge that must be mitigated to promote future growth; and,
- An opportunity that necessitates the embrace of Smart Growth principles that balance growth with resource conservation.

The Community Environment section of this report presents current information on the following topics (listed in random order): land use and development; infrastructure, utilities, and energy; and natural resources. These topics represent core physical and resource-based elements that must be assessed during the comprehensive planning process before considering how a jurisdiction's economic and social characteristics can be leveraged to affect a more prosperous and livable community in the long-term.

Information in this section of the report informs many of the goals, policies, and actions contained in **Volume I (Elevate Las Cruces)**, relating to future land use patterns and the methods by which roads, water, and other infrastructure and public services will be provided to new or existing development. Likewise, the information in this section informs Plan recommendations on how to incorporate resource conservation into the City's vision of growth and development.

“en•vi•ron•ment (*en vi'rən mənt*) *n.* **1.** the aggregate of surrounding things, conditions, or influences; surroundings; milieu. **2.** Ecol. the air, water, minerals, organisms and all other external factors affecting a given organism at any time. **3.** the social and cultural forces that shape the life of a person or a population.”

LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT

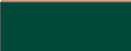








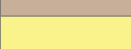
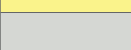

The spatial relationship between different land uses within a community greatly influences resident quality of life and generates environmental conditions that affect our daily personal habits. Proximity and accessibility between residential areas, employment centers, community facilities, recreation and entertainment facilities, and shopping centers will directly affect market values, neighborhood choice, commuting patterns, consumer spending, and the consumption of open space. Balancing these spatial relationships among land uses in a way that is fiscally, environmentally, and socially sustainable is a core component of any comprehensive planning effort - being manifested in future development maps, and subsequently influencing all other policy recommendations. This section of the Community Profile identifies existing land uses and corresponding regulatory considerations within the plan area.

EXISTING LAND USE

As an established community, the built environment in Las Cruces is varied. **Table 2.7, Existing Land Use, City of Las Cruces and ETZ**, illustrates that the category of “undeveloped, open space, or detention” accounts for 42.3 percent of the city’s total land area. Other significant land uses within the municipal limits include detached single-family residential (18.4%) and vacant areas (16.2%). All other land use categories individually comprise less than 10 percent of the total city land area. The current distribution of land uses within and around the city is depicted on **Map 2.2, Existing Land Use** (facing page).

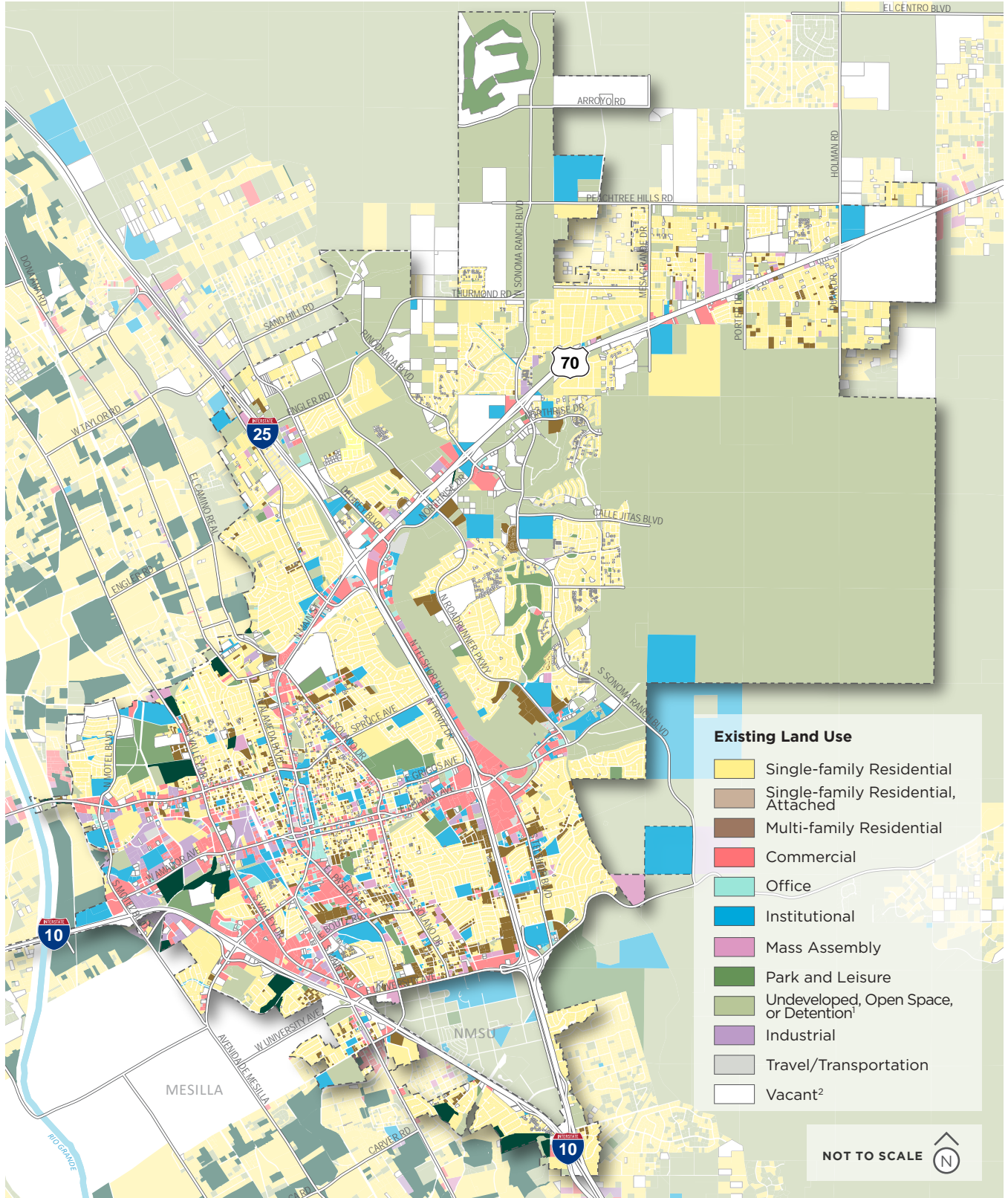
Since Comprehensive Plan 2040 was developed in 1999, the majority of new growth (and corresponding change in land use) has occurred in the eastern and northern parts of Las Cruces, east of I-25 and north of US 70.

TABLE 2.7, EXISTING LAND USE, CITY OF LAS CRUCES & ETZ (2018)

LAND USE CATEGORY	LEGEND COLOR ¹	CITY LIMITS		ETZ	
		SQUARE MILES	PERCENT (%) ²	SQUARE MILES	PERCENT (%) ²
AGRICULTURE		0.38	0.6%	17.12	4.7%
COMMERCIAL		2.37	3.5%	2.23	0.6%
INDUSTRIAL		1.20	1.8%	0.66	0.2%
INSTITUTIONAL		3.80	5.6%	5.35	1.5%
MASS ASSEMBLY		0.58	0.9%	0.11	0.03%
MULTI-FAMILY		1.39	2.0%	0	0.0%
OFFICE		0.27	0.4%	0	0.0%
UNDEVELOPED, OPEN SPACE, OR DETENTION ³		28.90	42.3%	280.28	77.6%
PARK AND LEISURE		1.37	2.0%	4.35	1.5%
SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL, ATTACHED		0.11	0.2%	0	0.0%
SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL, DETACHED		12.56	18.4%	42.53	11.8%
TRAVEL/TRANSPORTATION		4.41	6.5%	0	0.0%
VACANT ⁴		11.06	16.2%	8.02	2.2%
TOTAL		68.4	100%	361.1	100%

1. Legend corresponds to Map 2.2, Existing Land Use; 2. Total may not equate to 100 percent due to rounding; 3. Refers to undeveloped lands that are currently a) in an agricultural or ranching state, b) in a holding state pending development, or c) permanently preserved for open space or detention purposes; 4. Refers to lands that have previously been developed but that are currently available for development. Source: City of Las Cruces, Doña Ana County Appraisal District.

MAP 2.2, EXISTING LAND USE



1. Refers to undeveloped lands that are currently a) in an agricultural or ranching state, b) in a holding state pending development, or c) permanently preserved for open space or detention purposes; 2. Refers to lands that have previously been developed but that are currently available for development.
 Note: See Appendix II-B for existing land use in the West Mesa.

EXISTING ZONING

Zoning is the principal tool used by local governments to regulate land uses and development character within a community. Sections 3-19, 3-20, and 3-21 of the New Mexico State Statutes authorize cities to adopt zoning regulations. In Las Cruces, there are 20 primary zoning districts split into six (6) main categories as shown in **Table 2.8, Existing Zoning Categories**. Chapter 38 (Zoning) of the Las Cruces Development Code presents specific provisions regarding allowable land uses, development density, and development size for each zoning district. **Map 2.3, Existing Zoning, City of Las Cruces** (facing page), represents a simplified version of the zoning map as of early 2019.¹

SPECIAL ZONING DISTRICTS

The City of Las Cruces utilizes several special zoning districts and overlay zones. These 15 districts have specific provisions to deal with unique characteristics and circumstances.

Eight (8) of the City’s special zoning districts are overlay zones - prepared largely to address building and site character within particular areas of the city. Current overlay zones include the following:

- Central Business District & Main Street Plaza Overlay (CBD)
- University District Overlay (UD)
- Avenida de Mesilla Gateway Overlay (Adm)
- West Mesa Industrial Park Overlay (WMIP)
- Lohman Avenue Overlay
- Infill Development Overlay
- North Mesquite Neighborhood Overlay
- South Mesquite Neighborhood Overlay

The City’s overlay zoning districts are not included on **Map 2.3**, but are depicted on **Map 2.4, Special Planning Areas** (page 23). Special zoning districts (including overlay districts) cover roughly 52.1 percent of the City’s land area.

TABLE 2.8, EXISTING ZONING CATEGORIES (2019)

ZONING DISTRICTS	ABBREV.
<i>SINGLE-FAMILY RURAL RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS¹ (1.2%)</i>	
SINGLE-FAMILY EQUESTRIAN ESTATE & AGRICULTURE	EE
SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL ESTATE	RE
SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL ESTATE MOBILE	REM
<i>SINGLE-FAMILY URBAN RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS¹ (20.4%)</i>	
SINGLE-FAMILY LOW DENSITY	R-1C
SINGLE-FAMILY MEDIUM DENSITY	R-1A
SINGLE-FAMILY HIGH DENSITY	R-1B
SINGLE-FAMILY LOW DENSITY MOBILE	R-1CM
SINGLE-FAMILY MEDIUM DENSITY MOBILE	R-1AM
SINGLE-FAMILY HIGH DENSITY MOBILE	R-1BM
<i>MULTI-DWELLING RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS¹ (6.6%)</i>	
MULTI-DWELLING LOW DENSITY	R-2
MULTI-DWELLING MEDIUM DENSITY	R-3
MULTI-DWELLING HIGH DENSITY	R-4
<i>OFFICE DISTRICTS¹ (0.3%)</i>	
OFFICE, NEIGHBORHOOD - LIMITED RETAIL SERVICE	O-1
OFFICE, PROFESSIONAL - LIMITED RETAIL SERVICE	O-2
<i>COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS¹ (19.4%)</i>	
COMMERCIAL LOW INTENSITY	C-1
COMMERCIAL MEDIUM DENSITY	C-2
COMMERCIAL HIGH DENSITY	C-3
INDUSTRIAL LIGHT	M-T
INDUSTRIAL STANDARD	M-1/M-2
INDUSTRIAL HEAVY	M-3
<i>SPECIAL DISTRICTS¹ (52.1%)</i>	
FLOOD CONTROL	FC
HOLDINGS	H
PUDS AND OVERLAY DISTRICTS	VARIES

¹. Percent of total City land area
Source: City of Las Cruces

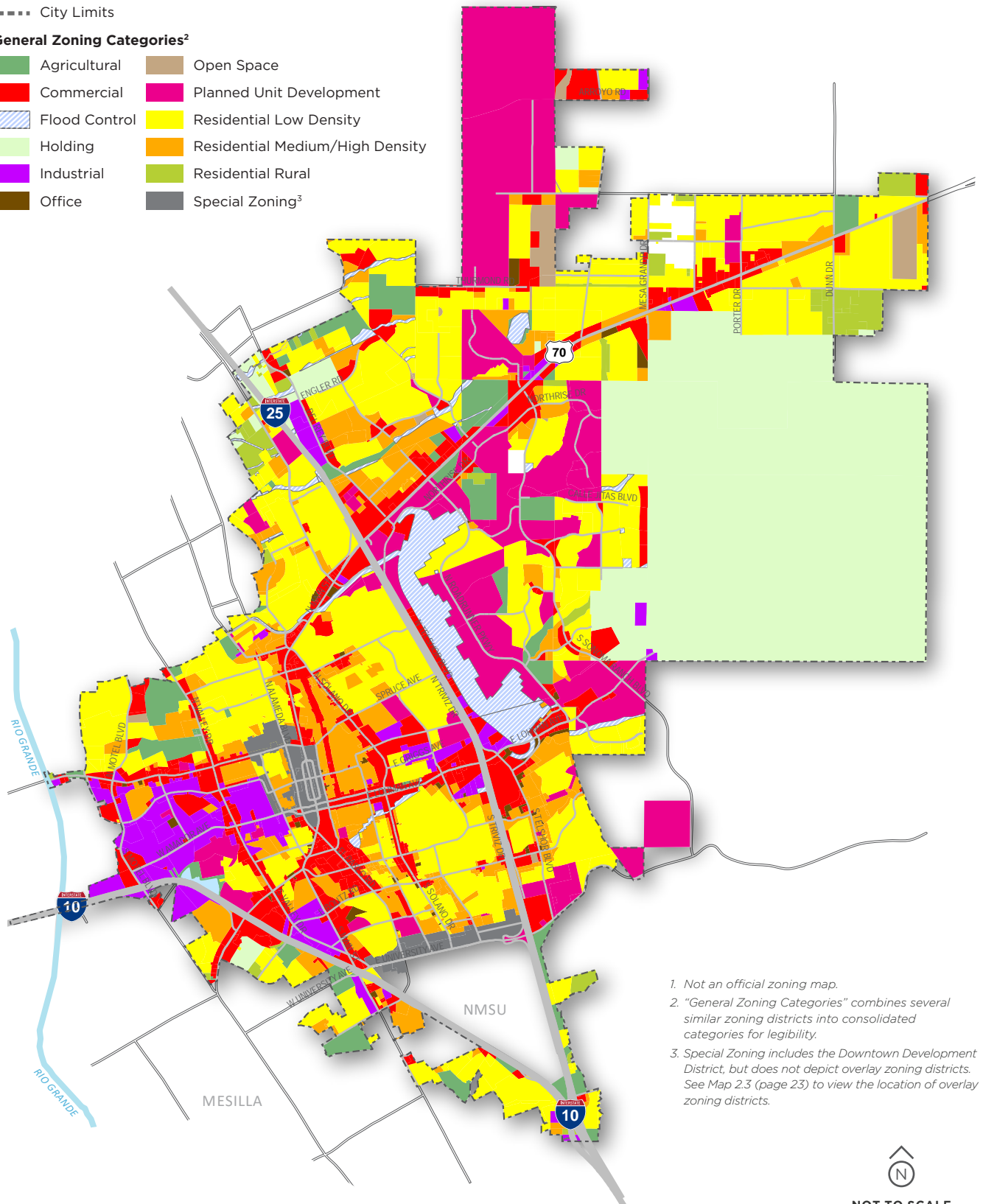
¹. Map 2.3, Existing Zoning, City of Las Cruces, combines several similar zoning districts into consolidated categories for legibility.

MAP 2.3, EXISTING ZONING, CITY OF LAS CRUCES (2019)¹

..... City Limits

General Zoning Categories²

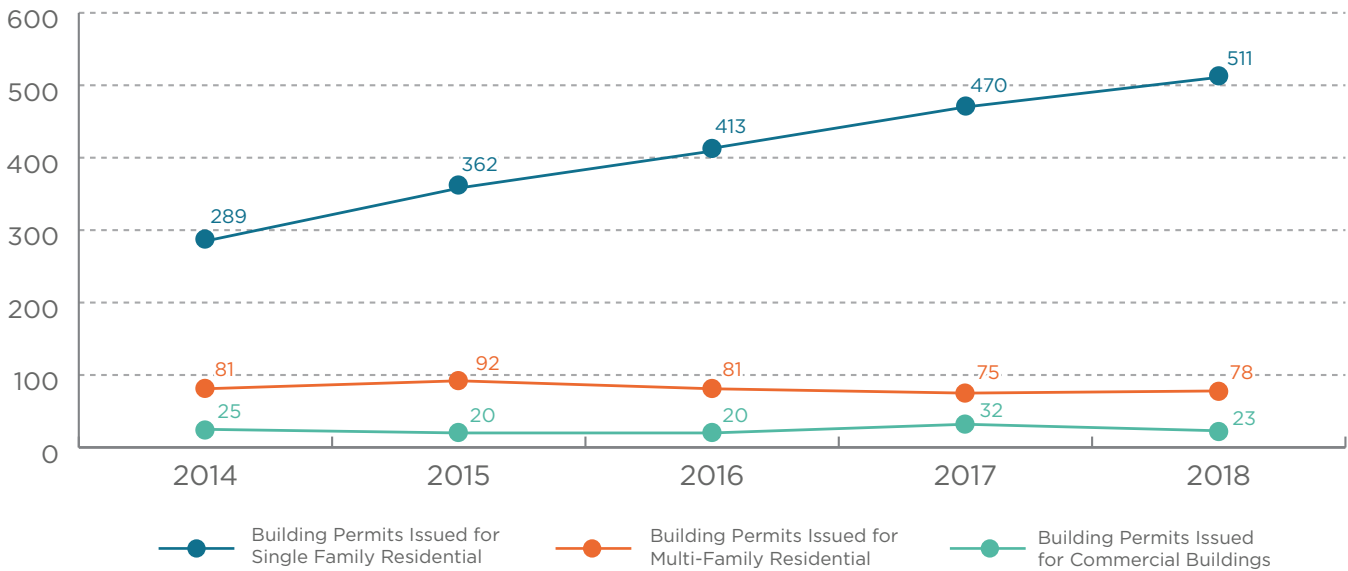
 Agricultural	 Open Space
 Commercial	 Planned Unit Development
 Flood Control	 Residential Low Density
 Holding	 Residential Medium/High Density
 Industrial	 Residential Rural
 Office	 Special Zoning ³



1. Not an official zoning map.
2. "General Zoning Categories" combines several similar zoning districts into consolidated categories for legibility.
3. Special Zoning includes the Downtown Development District, but does not depict overlay zoning districts. See Map 2.3 (page 23) to view the location of overlay zoning districts.


 NOT TO SCALE

FIGURE 2.7, BUILDING PERMIT TRENDS¹



1. New construction only. Excludes additions and alterations.
Source: City of Las Cruces

DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

As the eastern and northern expansion of residential land uses continues in Las Cruces, the number of annual residential building permits being issued for new construction has gradually increased - slowly rebounding from the nationwide housing crisis of 2007-08. Although multi-family building permits declined slightly between 2014 and 2018, **Figure 2.7, Building Permit Trends**, indicates that the number of single-family building permits issued by the City increased 77 percent in the same time period. The number of building permits for new commercial uses remained relatively unchanged during the time frame assessed in **Figure 2.7**.

This permit data generally follows the steady growth rate Las Cruces has experienced over the past five years.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT

While Las Cruces does not employ a formal growth management program or policy beyond that contained within its comprehensive plan, there are natural features surrounding the City that can pose an informal barrier to growth including: floodplains, arroyos, steep slopes, and federal land holdings.

Local organizations such as the Southwest Environmental Center and Friends of the Organ Mountains are focused on land conservation in close proximity to Las Cruces. Government organizations related to land conservation or resource management within Las Cruces and Doña Ana County include the following:

- **Doña Ana Soil and Water Conservation District.** Mission is to conserve and develop the natural resources in New Mexico.
- **Bureau of Land Management (BLM).** The Las Cruces District Office of the BLM manages 5.4 million acres of public land in the diverse region of Southern New Mexico.



Topography and public lands can impede new development on portions of the East Mesa - even absent municipal policies geared to manage development patterns.

PAST PLANNING EFFORTS - REGIONAL COORDINATION

Las Cruces continually participates in regional planning initiatives with Doña Ana County and other partners. Recent regional planning initiatives are described below.

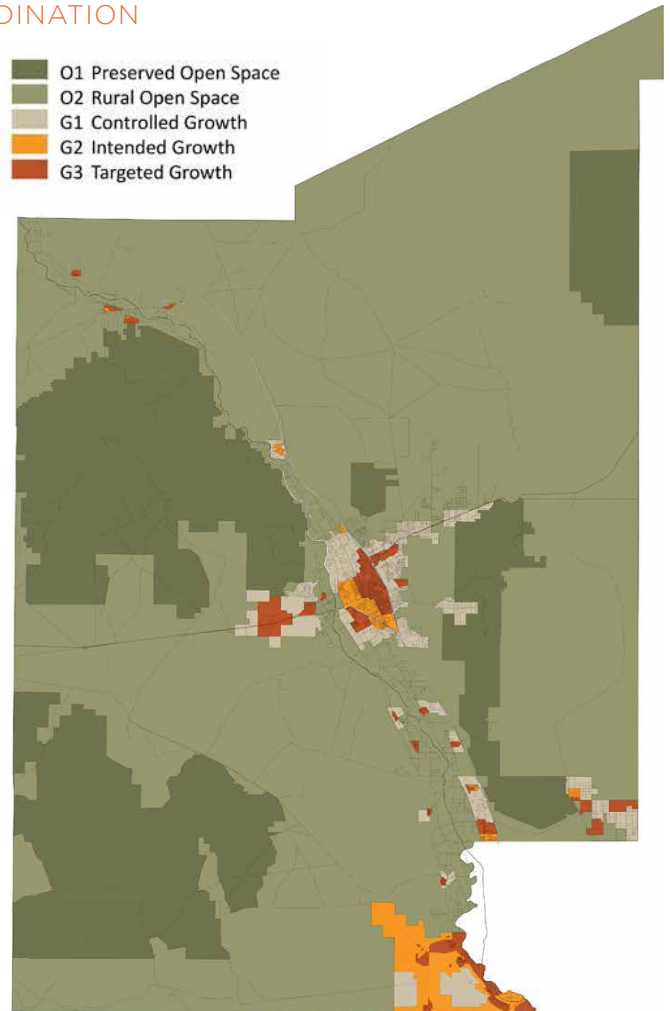
ONE VALLEY, ONE VISION 2040: DOÑA ANA COUNTY REGIONAL PLAN

Doña Ana County developed a regional plan in 2012 in coordination with five (5) municipalities to address regional issues such as: impacts of growth on public services, infrastructure capacity, and environmental resources. The plan presents a series of growth strategies and related implementation items to create a unified county-wide vision for balancing development with resource conservation.

PLAN2040

The Doña Ana County comprehensive plan (Plan2040), adopted in 2015, establishes a County growth and development vision and identifies implementation strategies for future development. The plan is organized into: **A)** Values (what motivates planning activity in the County); **B)** Decisions (the process to develop strategies); and, **C)** Strategies (specific goals and actions to achieve the overall vision). The primary strategies identified in the plan were to guide future development patterns, broaden economic opportunity, prioritize infrastructure, and enhance public services.

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



Plan2040, the comprehensive Plan for Doña Ana County, identifies areas of intended growth and preservation (above).

ASSOCIATED PLANNING EFFORTS

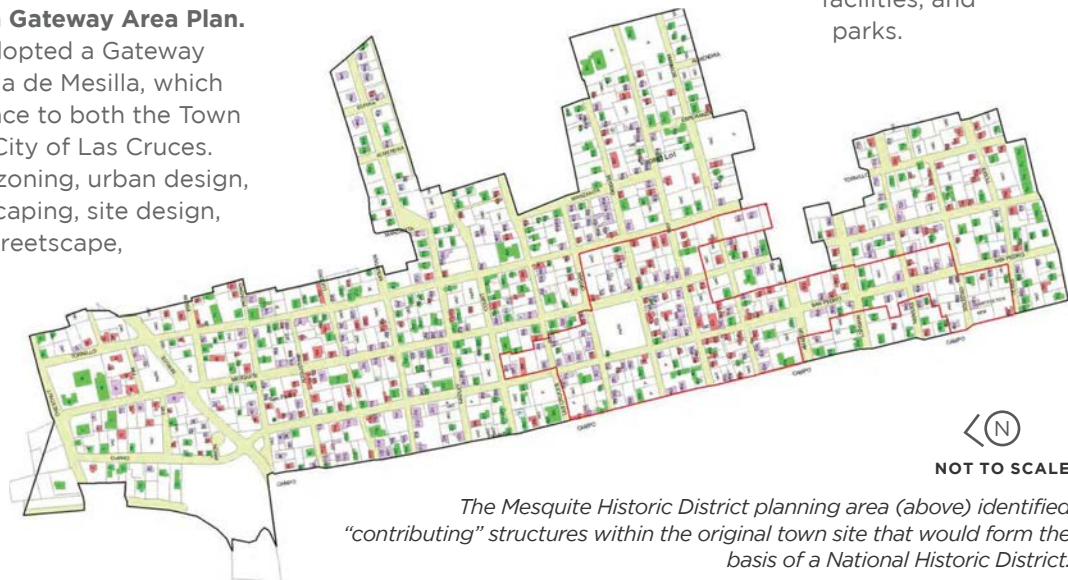
In addition to participation in regional planning efforts and commissioning city-wide plans, the City of Las Cruces regularly develops “special area” plans for neighborhoods, corridors, or districts to provide detailed guidance on area-specific development or redevelopment. **Map 2.4, Special Planning Areas** (facing page), illustrates areas that have been subject to a neighborhood plan or community blueprint initiative - and areas that are currently located within the boundaries of an overlay zoning district.

This section briefly describes the area planning and community blueprint initiatives conducted by the city over the past 20 or so years.

SPECIAL AREA PLANS

- Alameda Depot Area Plan.** In 2009, Las Cruces created a neighborhood plan for the Alameda Depot area, which is one of the city’s oldest neighborhoods. In response to renewed interest in historic properties and commercial property growth, the City created the neighborhood plan which serves as the policy basis for creating a Special Zoning District. Major components of the plan were to preserve and enhance neighborhood character, develop standards to accommodate non-conforming uses, and maintain a reasonable balance between residential and non-residential uses.
- Avenida de Mesilla Gateway Area Plan.** In 1996, the City adopted a Gateway Plan for the Avenida de Mesilla, which serves as an entrance to both the Town of Mesilla and the City of Las Cruces. Policies related to zoning, urban design, architecture, landscaping, site design, signage, utilities, streetscape, and transportation were developed which form the foundation of an overlay district to implement gateways into both communities.

- Downtown Master Plan.** Adopted in 2016, the updated downtown master plan assesses development potential and defines implementation strategies for the downtown area. The plan is focused on three (3) main priorities: eliminate barriers between downtown and other neighborhoods, support the Plaza area with new development and redevelopment, and create a sense of arrival in downtown.
- Lohman Avenue Area Plan.** Adopted in 2000, the Lohman Avenue Plan provided a vision for a major east-west corridor as it was being extended further to the east. In preparation of future development, this plan outlines guiding design and land use policies to create a consistent character along Lohman Avenue. Goals and objectives were related to creating gateways and improving aesthetics through streetscape and urban design.
- Mesquite Historic District Area Plan.** The Mesquite Street Neighborhood is one of the oldest areas in Las Cruces. In 2005, the City adopted a neighborhood design plan to create a guiding vision that will inform future improvements that are consistent with the area’s historic character. The resulting design plan assessed and prioritized infill opportunities, rehabilitation sites, façade enhancements, streetscape improvements, lighting, pedestrian facilities, and parks.



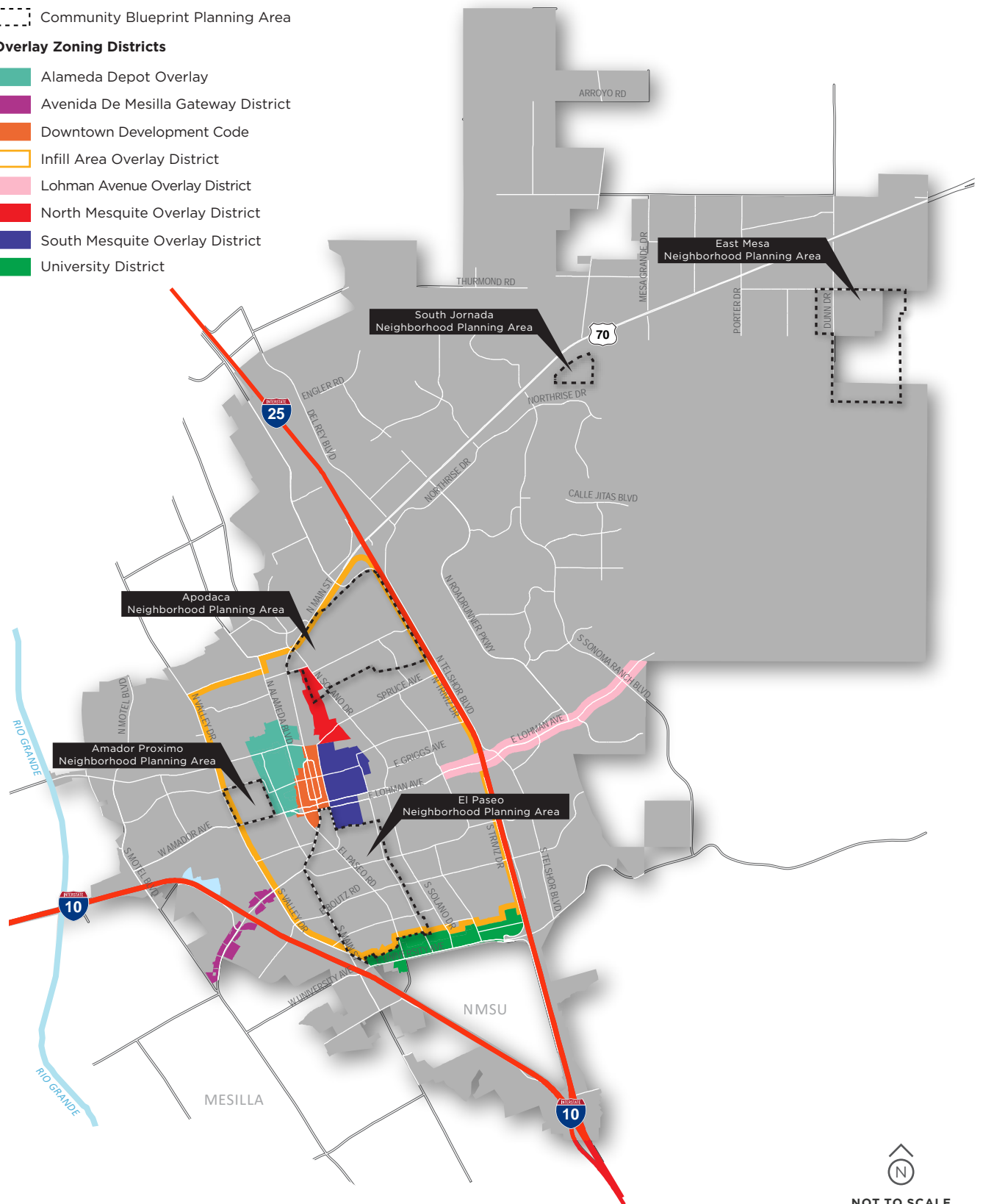
The Mesquite Historic District planning area (above) identified “contributing” structures within the original town site that would form the basis of a National Historic District.

MAP 2.4, SPECIAL PLANNING AREAS

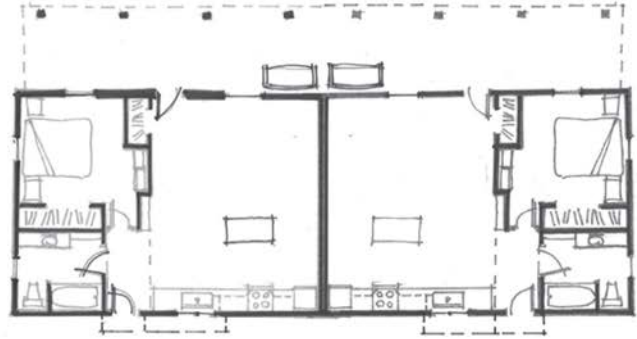
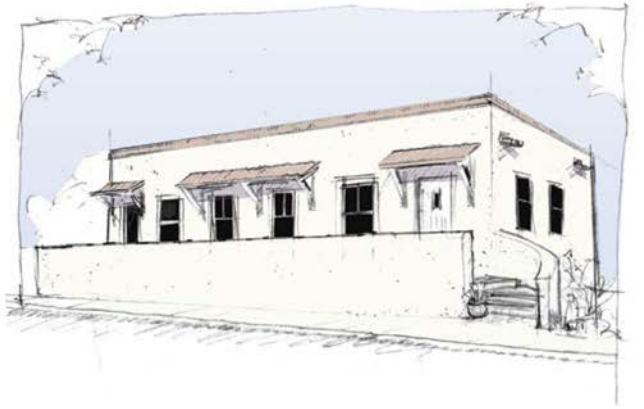
Community Blueprint Planning Area

Overlay Zoning Districts

- Alameda Depot Overlay
- Avenida De Mesilla Gateway District
- Downtown Development Code
- Infill Area Overlay District
- Lohman Avenue Overlay District
- North Mesquite Overlay District
- South Mesquite Overlay District
- University District



↑
N
NOT TO SCALE



The Amador Proximo Community Blueprint proposes architectural design guidelines for an expanded mixed-use neighborhood in a key redevelopment area west of downtown (above).

- **University District Area Plan.** Adopted in 2010, the University District Plan addresses development considerations and defines a vision for the University District to be compact, walkable, and a safe destination. Resulting plan actions included recommended changes to zoning and building regulations.
- **West Mesa Industrial Park Area Plan.** Developed in 1995 as part of a U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration award, this report presents strategies to develop an industrial park and attract businesses in the city’s West Mesa area south of the airport. The plan assessed current site conditions, identified target industries, developed marketing strategies, and presented implementation actions.

COMMUNITY BLUEPRINTS

- **Amador Proximo Community Blueprint.** The 2015 Community Blueprint for the Amador Proximo neighborhood was conducted to build on existing assets and to create strategies for infill and redevelopment. Strategies included complete streets, infill housing, gateways, maker-spaces, and public space. Concepts for potential development were also incorporated into the blueprint.

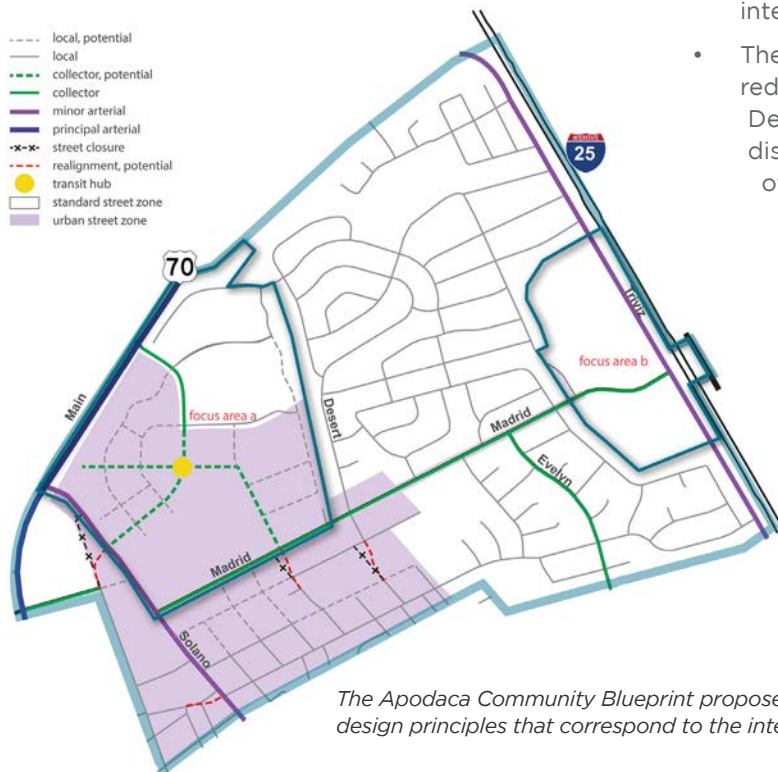
- **El Paseo Corridor Community Blueprint.** The City developed a community blueprint for the area surrounding El Paseo Road, which serves as a connection between downtown and New Mexico State University. The blueprint vision for the corridor included concepts such as transit-oriented development, multi-modal options, and economic growth. Six (6) primary goals and related actions outline next steps for the City and development community.
- **Apodaca Community Blueprint.** This neighborhood planning effort focused on promoting vitality and investment in neighborhoods near Apodaca Park. The overall vision includes elements such as promoting health, balancing residential character and investment, diversifying housing choice, and increasing access to amenities. The resulting future development map identifies opportunity areas for neighborhood mixed-use, residential revitalization, and gateways; the associated text recommends development patterns for each of the area typologies. Two (2) focus areas, the former Las Cruces Country Club and the Villa Mora property, were subject to the development of conceptual site plans which identified preferred future land use and development patterns on the sites.

- **South Jornada Community Blueprint.** This neighborhood is located near the Organ Mountains and is characterized by large residential lots and a rural character. The need for a community blueprint arose as urban-style development began to encroach upon the South Jornada neighborhood. The resulting vision statement, land use policies, and implementation strategies aim to preserve the natural and rural character of the neighborhood amongst overall city growth.
- **East Mesa Community Blueprint.** Developed in 2014, this neighborhood plan for the East Mesa community focuses on the preservation of the rural atmosphere, rezoning issues, roadway improvements, and light pollution. The overall vision for the East Mesa neighborhood is that it is a 'unique community that embraces the rural lifestyle within the city.' Primary actions include zoning updates, new roadway standards, trail design, and introduction of a conservation easement.

LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT KEY FINDINGS

This section reviewed key considerations related to the built environment in Las Cruces today. New residential and commercial growth has occurred east of I-25 and around US 70 since the previous comprehensive plan was completed. The City has established several overlay areas in their zoning code that cover areas previously studied through community blueprints. Additional key findings include:

- Over 40 percent of land in Las Cruces is categorized as agriculture, open space, or detention uses.
- Roughly 16 percent of land in Las Cruces is vacant.
- Residential development patterns are extending into the East Mesa and north of US 70.
- Redevelopment activity is limited - with most building permits being dedicated to new construction outside of the City's infill overlay area.
- The City has a robust inventory of area plans and community blueprints that identify intended growth and character.
- The regulatory approach promoting redevelopment is inconsistent. The Las Cruces Development Code features eight overlay districts in the zoning regulations as well as other special zoning districts - including the Downtown Development Code. Many special districts apply widely varying design and procedural standards. The City has had to rely on the Planned Unit Development (PUD) to incorporate preferred design features that are not addressed by standard requirements.



The Apodaca Community Blueprint proposes street character zones (above) that promote roadway design principles that correspond to the intended style of surrounding development.

NATURAL RESOURCES



Las Cruces' setting within the Mesilla Valley and the broader expanse of the surrounding Chihuahuan Desert places it within a region with an extremely arid climate with limitations on water resources. Enjoyment of the region's climate and ecology must be balanced with a concerted effort to conserve natural resources. This section provides a brief overview of the area's natural environment and municipal efforts to promote sustainable growth and development practices, and lists key findings for further consideration in the Comprehensive Plan.

SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

Map 2.5, Natural Features in Las Cruces (facing page), depicts many of the relevant natural features found in Las Cruces that will affect - or be affected by - future patterns of growth and development.

TOPOGRAPHY

Las Cruces is located within the Chihuahuan Desert, which is categorized as a "high-elevation desert" - with a large area of the region being above 4,000 feet. The Organ Mountains frame the eastern edge of the Mesilla Valley and adjacent mesa, while the Organ Needle - at 8,990 feet - is the highest point in Doña Ana County. The East Mesa area is defined by gradually sloping hills leading to the base of the Organ Mountains and has experienced residential growth in the last few decades. In contrast, the West Mesa area is flatter yet includes steep escarpments, or drop offs, down to the Rio Grande. The Rio Grande River floodplain which flows through Las Cruces provides a narrow band of fertile soil that supports concentrations of native vegetation (that is largely absent from the surrounding arid mesas), as well as significant agricultural activities.

The area around the Rio Grande River (above) supports a narrow band of agriculture including crops and orchards.

EXPANSIVE SOILS

Doña Ana County is characterized by approximately 70 different soil types, all of which are considered "highly erodible." These expansive soils can expand or contract depending on how much moisture they capture. Rising and shrinking soils can be hazardous to properties and can cause foundation problems.

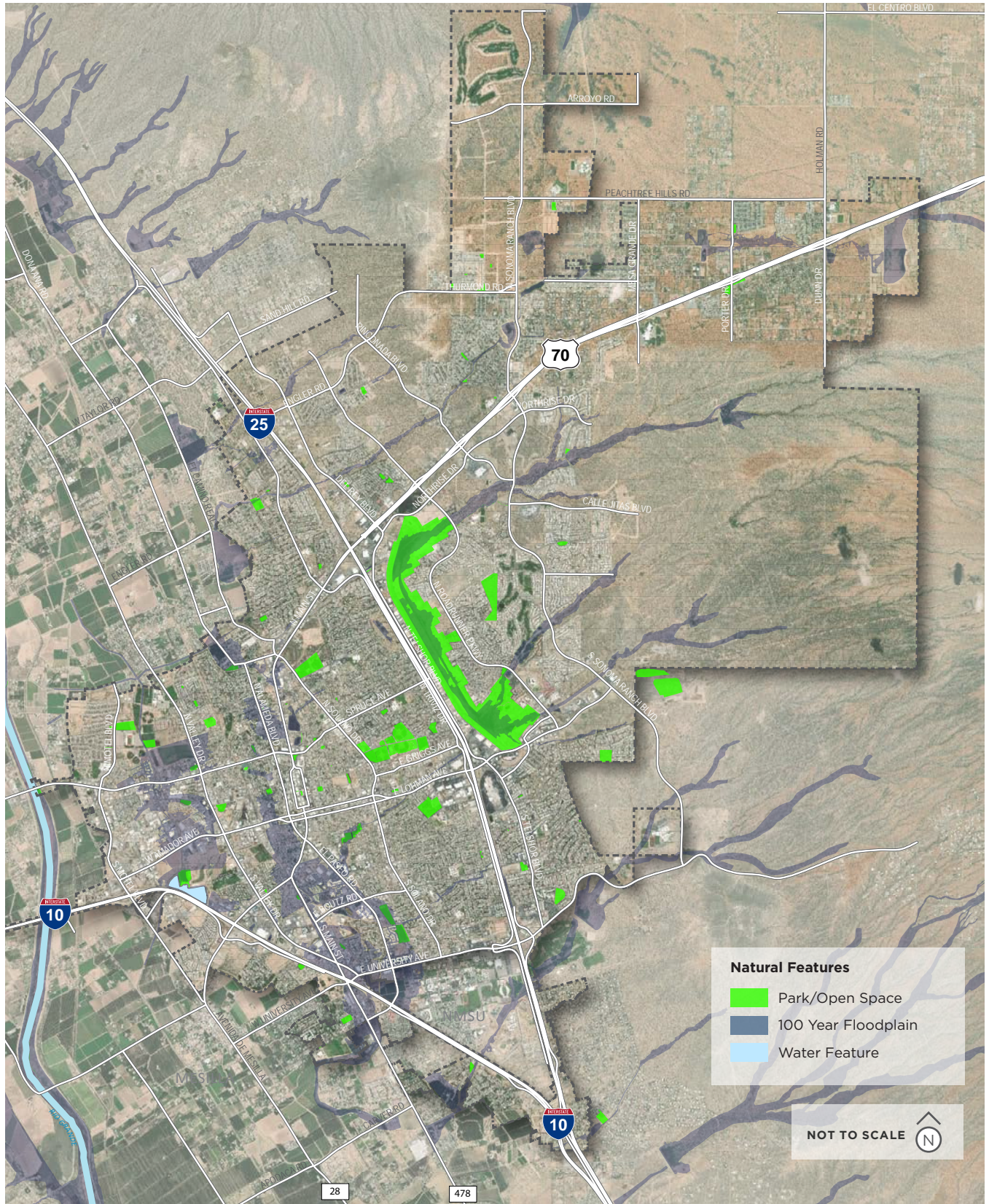
VEGETATION

Except for land within and in close proximity to the Rio Grande River floodplain, vegetation in Las Cruces is sparsely distributed. Typical vegetation includes: shrubs, stem succulents, cacti, and grasses. Land managed for agricultural purpose supports field crops like chiles and groves of Pecan trees. Additionally, according to the City's 2014 Community Forest Assessment, roughly 3.7 percent of the city's land area is covered by 10 native species of trees. The most common tree species are Desert Willow, Italian Cypress, and Afghan Pine.

FLOOD ZONES

The Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA) delineates areas of potential flooding throughout the United States. In Las Cruces, areas immediately flanking the Rio Grande River are within the 500-year flood zone, meaning that there is a 0.2 percent chance of having a historic flood each year. Additionally, 100-year flood zone depicted on **Map 2.5** generally follows arroyos. While older parts of the city may already be developed in a flood zone, City ordinance now discourages development in flood-prone areas.

MAP 2.5, NATURAL FEATURES IN LAS CRUCES





Arroyos (above) are natural pathways that provide an important drainage function in Las Cruces and communities throughout the Chihuahuan Desert.

SUPERFUND SITES

The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Superfund program identifies contaminated sites and works with local agencies toward remediation. Within Las Cruces, there is only one (1) site designated as a Superfund site: the Griggs & Walnut Ground Water Plume located at the intersection of Griggs Avenue and Walnut Street. Contaminants discovered at this location have affected four (4) municipal water supply wells. The Superfund designation was initiated to remediate PCE in ground water supplies. The City, County, and EPA are continuing remedial actions which were initiated in 2007 to improve municipal water quality.

BROWNFIELDS

Brownfields are sites that are difficult to redevelop due to previous contamination; a common example of a brownfield site is a former gas station. According to the New Mexico Environment Department, all brownfields sites in Las Cruces have been remediated through the State Clean Up Program. No active brownfield sites were documented in Las Cruces as of 2018. However, buildings constructed before 1970 often contain asbestos. There are 10,246 residential homes and 1,802 commercial buildings that were constructed before 1970.

WATER RESOURCES

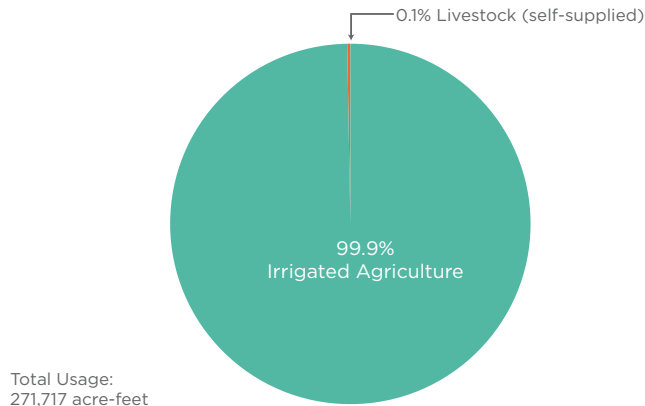
The City of Las Cruces draws water supply from over 70 wells spread out across the water service area. These wells are filled by two aquifers located underneath Las Cruces and the West Mesa. Other water supply comes from deep wells on the East Mesa. In total, Las Cruces has the rights and permits to pump 51,179 acre-feet per year of groundwater according to the 2018 Groundwater Supply Fact Sheet. Within the larger Rio Grande Basin, groundwater pumping by Las Cruces accounts for less than 11 percent of total groundwater diversions. The majority (77 percent) is used for irrigated agriculture.

The Las Cruces Utilities Department prepared a 40-Year Water Development Plan in 2017 to forecast future water supply needs. This plan calculated that the demand for water in 2015 was 22,133 acre-feet per year and that in 2055, with medium growth the projected demand is 36,437 acre-feet per year and with high growth the projected demand is 44,207 acre-feet per year. (Both projections exceed more recent growth projections prepared for Elevate Las Cruces.) In both the medium and high growth scenarios, the water demand is still less than the amount represented by the City's current water rights and permits. However, current litigation with Texas may impact water rights in the future (see page 38).

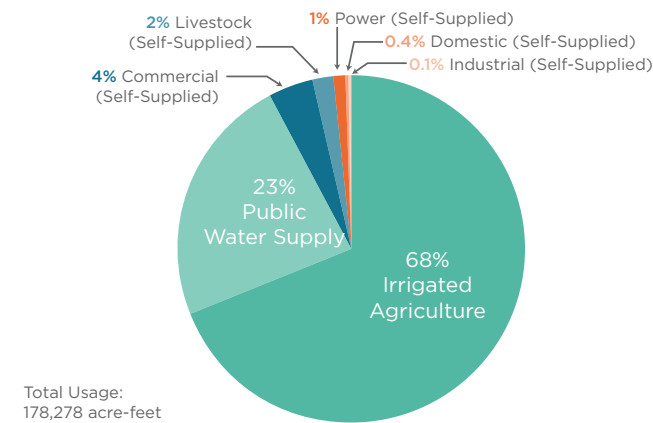
Being in possession of sufficient water "rights and permits" to meet projected demand does not guarantee the actual long-term availability of water. The Lower Rio Grande Regional Water Plan suggests that the region is experiencing a gradual depletion of groundwater and surface water resources. Given this consideration, the City's 40-Year Plan recognizes that in order to sustain a reliable water supply, proactive conservation and careful monitoring of sources are critical. The City's Water Conservation Program (page 30) has set a goal to reduce water use from 168 gallons per capita per day to 140 gallons per capita per day by 2055.

FIGURE 2.8, REGIONAL WATER DEMAND BY SECTOR (2017)

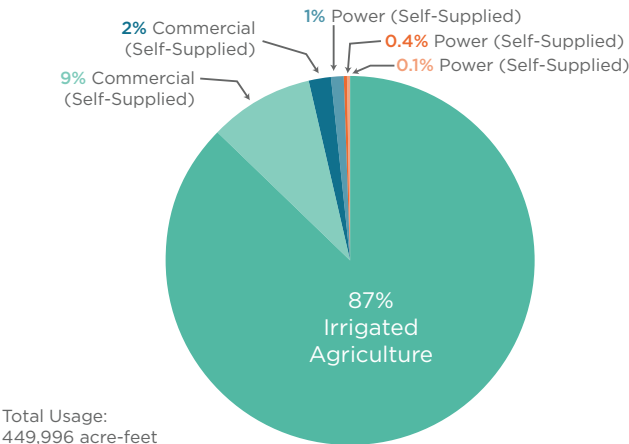
SURFACE WATER



GROUNDWATER



TOTAL



Source: Lower Rio Grande Regional Water Plan (2017)

The City is also proactive regarding monitoring the health of aquifers; the water-level monitoring program tracks trends in well water levels over time. The data can help diagnose problems that may arise with a specific well.

From a regional standpoint, the Lower Rio Grande Regional Water Plan (LRGRWP, 2017) recommends the use of green infrastructure strategies using stormwater for beneficial purposes to clean pollutants, water landscape, and stabilize soils before recharging the aquifer. **Figure 2.8, Regional Water Demand by Sector**, illustrates that from a regional standpoint irrigated agriculture makes up the majority of both surface water and groundwater use. In total, agriculture accounts for 87 percent of combined water demand in the Lower Rio Grande Water Planning Region.

Given the desert climate, conserving water resources is of critical importance in Las Cruces and the greater region to ensure long-term access to sufficient supplies of freshwater for human consumption and other purposes.

STORM WATER

An important component of water drainage in Las Cruces are arroyos. Common in the Chihuahuan Desert, arroyos are natural pathways for surface water runoff to flow from higher to lower elevations. Due to the volatility in storm events, the shapes and sizes of arroyos often change. As development has occurred in the past in Las Cruces, arroyos have sometimes been rerouted or channelized, which ultimately impacts drainage function, wildlife connectivity, and the presence of vegetation around arroyos. In 2015, Las Cruces adopted an Arroyo Management Plan to guide changes to development standards in order to better protect the arroyos in their natural state. There are over 10 named arroyos within Las Cruces. The arroyos offer many ecosystem services that could be enhanced if stormwater management practices encouraged upstream waters to be slowed in small bioswales and allowed to infiltrate the ground.

RESOURCE CONSERVATION INITIATIVES

The City of Las Cruces has taken an active role in developing and promoting resource conservation initiatives aimed at reducing the impacts of growth on the region's natural resources, and at balancing long-term economic and social prosperity with environmental stewardship. This commitment to resource conservation is embodied by the City's Sustainability Program and represents a "Triple Bottom Line" (TBL) approach to sustainability – where organizations balance economic vitality, environmental health, and social responsibility to make decisions about growth, development, and public investments. The City's resource conservation and sustainability initiatives are administered by a sustainability officer employed within the Economic Development Department.

PROGRAMS AND CERTIFICATIONS

- **Green Building Design.** The City of Las Cruces is certified through the U.S. Green Building Council's (USGBC) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Cities Program. This program recognizes communities that have adopted and implemented a series of core programs and policies related to sustainability. Las Cruces is one of just 75 cities throughout the country that have LEED certification, attaining a 3-STAR Certified Community rating in 2015.

The LEED Program also certifies individual buildings that meet certain energy-efficient and green building standards. There are currently seven (7) city facilities that are either LEED certified or waiting final approval from USGBC.

- Convention Center
- City Hall
- Museum of Nature and Science
- Regional Aquatic Center
- Mesilla Valley Intermodal Transit Terminal
- Fire Station 7
- East Mesa Public Safety Complex

- **Water Conservation Program.** The City of Las Cruces administers a Water Conservation Program that works to encourage the reduction of water use and waste through an even-odd address watering schedule that is implemented throughout the year and restrictions on watering during the heat of the day in summer months. The program incorporates educational content, informal water audits, and the evaluation of water usage at city facilities to identify ways to reduce use.

The City's water conservation ordinance establishes standards for outdoor watering including restrictions and penalties. Associated Water Conservation Program events include: **A)** Lush and Lean Workshops: Which teach wise water usage in home gardens and landscapes; and, **B)** Water Festival: An annual event offering area 3rd and 4th graders informative exhibits and hands-on activities about hydrology, cultural uses of water, local geography, and environmental impacts. The City website also includes links to various online resources related to water conservation, rainwater harvesting, and indoor/outdoor water use.

- **Landscaping Resources.** To encourage residents to use native and drought-tolerant plants and automatic irrigation as part of their home landscaping plans, the City has produced a Demonstration Garden Guide. The City has also created a demonstration

garden at the Las Cruces Utilities building (and offers Lush and Lean workshops as described in the preceding section).



SUSTAINABILITY
Nature based decisions that
inspire a vibrant economy
and community
program
City of Las Cruces

The City's Sustainability Program provides resources to organizations to better balance economic vitality, environmental health, and social responsibility.



The City of Las Cruces has invested in solar panels at many municipal facilities to generate energy (below).

- Solar Initiatives.** Photo-voltaic solar panels have been installed on many City buildings and facilities to be more energy-efficient and ultimately save money on energy costs. Significant City facilities that have or will soon have solar panels installed include the City Hall Parking Structure, East Mesa Water Reclamation Facility, Regional Aquatic Center, East Mesa Public Safety Complex, Robert Munson Senior Center, Convention Center, and Sage Cafe. Las Cruces' list of facilities incorporating solar installations includes many of the previously sited buildings that are either LEED certified or are waiting final approval from USGBC, and other non-LEED certified properties. In total, the City has 1.1 megawatts (MW) of solar energy, with another 3 MW planned through a Power Purchase Agreement. The City passed a resolution to utilize 25% of its energy from renewable sources by 2022; 50% by 2030 and 100% by 2050.

The City promotes the installation of solar on new and existing buildings through an expedited solar permitting process and online resources that assist residents, property owners, and business owners in understanding the steps of solar installation including: sizing and cost; selecting a contractor; financing; and available tax credits, incentives, and rebates. The City is currently in the process of applying for a SolSmart designation with the US Department of Energy for recognition in Las Cruces' ongoing efforts to promote the use of solar power.
- Nevada Avenue Cool Corridor.** The City is implementing a “cool corridor” pilot project on Nevada Avenue which will result in a redesigned roadway that is more walkable and reduces the impacts of the “heat island” effect to surrounding residents. The design concept is an outcome of the City’s recent collaboration with the University of Arizona’s Sustainable Built Environments program utilizing temperature data to inform planning and policy decisions about wise building, site, and street design in hot desert climates. The cool corridor concept is one design approach aimed at creating comfortable micro climates around areas where people live, work, and play. The City is using the Envision criteria from the Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure as a design framework for this project.
- Additional Conservation Resources.** In addition to other programs, the City of Las Cruces has also adopted ordinances related to storm water pollution prevention and dust control. Other online resources offered by the City link residents to information or classes about smart landscaping, efficient irrigation, indoor water conservation, storm water, dust control, and neighborhood clean-up activities (through Keep Las Cruces Beautiful).

ASSOCIATED PLANNING EFFORTS

The City of Las Cruces continues to lead or participate in planning initiatives that promote sustainable growth and development practices. Resource conservation and sustainability policies and actions are incorporated into multiple city-wide and regional planning documents. Some key plans and studies that are focused on sustainable growth and development practices include:

SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN

The City adopted a Sustainability Action Plan in 2017 as an element of its STAR Certified Community rating. The action plan identifies 30 targeted objectives related to climate and energy, natural systems, built environment, economy and jobs, and equity, empowerment, and community. This plan serves as the City's 5-year framework for the development or refinement of educational and incentive programs and policies geared toward enhancing economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

ARROYO MANAGEMENT PLAN

Arroyos are natural pathways that allow surface water runoff to flow to the Rio Grande River. The City of Las Cruces recognizes the importance of these natural features, especially as new development occurs, and created an Arroyo Management Plan in 2015. This plan outlines strategies and policies to protect major arroyos in the community when designing new developments or subdivisions.

COMMUNITY FOREST ASSESSMENT

In conjunction with the regional urban and community forest assessment project, the City of Las Cruces commissioned the Community Forest Assessment in 2014. The assessment relies on a combination of field research and a digital model to assess the quantity and health of the City's tree canopy. This data is used to better understand the composition, species, and age distribution; benefits and values; and, possible risks to Las Cruces' urban forest. The assessment found that in order to reach a citywide tree canopy coverage of 10%, the City will need to plant approximately 72,000 trees.

LAS CRUCES UTILITIES WATER CONSERVATION PLAN

The City's 2012 water conservation plan was prepared as a condition of its groundwater withdrawal permit. Although a regulatory necessity, Las Cruces Utilities has been implementing water conservation activities for almost 20 years to help ensure that future water demands, quality of life, and economic development can be supported. The plan promotes water conservation through education, and assistance to reduce water over time. As such, the plan is intended to serve as a broad guidance document that will inform development of action plans and establish frameworks for improved water conservation measures.

LOWER RIO GRANDE REGIONAL WATER PLAN

The Lower Rio Grande Regional Water Plan (LRGRWP) was developed by the Interstate Stream Commission in 2017 to address topics of water availability at a regional level. The plan discussed that recent drought conditions – combined with high evaporation rates and population growth in the region – is leading to the gradual depletion of groundwater and surface water sources. To help combat the effects of drought, the LRGRWP recommends use of green infrastructure strategies using stormwater for beneficial purposes to clean pollutants, water landscape, and stabilize soils before recharging the aquifer.



The Community Forest Assessment assesses the quantity and health of the City's tree canopy. Many of the City's most substantial stands of trees are located in City-owned parks and other public grounds.

NATURAL RESOURCES KEY FINDINGS

This section served as a review of key natural resources in Las Cruces. Resource conservation is a primary concern in Las Cruces, with the Organ Mountains, arroyos, and Rio Grande as key resources to be protected. Recent planning efforts considered strategies to protect arroyos and more effectively manage stormwater. Additional key findings include:

- Resource conservation is an agreed upon need in the community requiring City of Las Cruces, other local government jurisdictions, and agricultural interests to be stewards of natural resources.
- Arroyos serve a dual purpose of natural drainage and opportunities for increasing open space through the use of green infrastructure.
- There is a significant amount of state, BLM, and National Monument land immediately surrounding the City that may never be developed.
- The City must determine the degree to which future open space should be preserved and woven into areas of new development.
- There is only one Superfund site within Las Cruces and all brownfield sites have been remediated.
- Continued coordination with the Bureau of Land Management and the New Mexico State Land Office is crucial to preserve environmentally sensitive areas, which may include arroyos, floodplains, groundwater recharge areas, steep slopes, river corridors, wetlands, and habitats with threatened or endangered species.
- Green building and solar initiatives must extend beyond municipal properties to generate a cumulative and noticeable benefit to the community.
- Efforts to support a more extensive urban tree canopy - particularly in public spaces - should be extended to diminish the city's urban heat.

INFRASTRUCTURE & UTILITIES

Infrastructure and utilities such as the municipal water and wastewater systems are critical to consider in a comprehensive plan process when forecasting future growth. This section assesses existing issues and future opportunities for infrastructure systems in Las Cruces.

WATER SYSTEM

The City of Las Cruces water system produces over 6 billion gallons of clean, safe drinking water annually which serves the needs of approximately 100,000 residents and businesses within the City limits. The City’s water system pumps from two (2) deep aquifers, the Mesilla Basin and the Jornada Basin. Other water utilities that provide water service to areas within or adjacent to the city limits include, but are not limited to, Doña Ana Mutual Domestic Water Consumers Association, Moongate Water Company, Town of Mesilla, and New Mexico State University.

The City’s existing water system includes the following components:

- Pressure Zones.** A water system typically covers a large area encompassing different topographical features with high and low elevations. This variation in topographical features produces different zones of elevation, or pressure, within a system called pressure zones. The City’s service area contains 24 existing pressure zones.
- Regulating Valves.** The 63 pressure control valves are used to maintain the zone pressures by controlling flow into and out of the zones based on each zone’s requirement.
- Supply Wells.** Groundwater from two (2) aquifers currently supplies the system from 40 supply wells. These wells are scattered throughout the system and provide sufficient water to meet existing and future demands. The current combined capacity of these wells is approximately 38,200 gallons per minute (26.5 mgd, 29,710 ac ft/yr).
- Storage Tanks.** The combined storage capacity of all tanks is approximately 29.4 million gallons.
- Underground Water Lines.** The water transmission and distribution system contains approximately 700 miles of pipe ranging in size from 6 to 36 inches in diameter. Pipe materials include concrete cylinder, asbestos cement, ductile iron and PVC.
- Booster Pump Stations.** The system currently contains 17 booster pump stations which are used to boost and sustain pressure and to move water around within the system.

The City of Las Cruces is the primary water supplier within the city limits. Doña Ana Mutual Domestic Water Consumers Association (DAMDWCA) and Moongate Water Company (MWC) provide water service to limited areas in the northern and eastern areas within the City. Developers of new subdivisions in areas where provider service areas overlap can select the provider of their choice. Private water providers with lines located within City of Las Cruces right-of-way must enter into a Franchise Agreement to operate within Las Cruces. The City of Las Cruces has also recently purchased two (2) private water companies to provide improved reliability to customers.

Table 2.9, Las Cruces Water Consumption Rates, shows historical trends of water consumption in Las Cruces. Single-family residential water consumption has decreased from 123 gallons per capita each day in 2013 to 114 gallons per capita in 2017. Water consumption per capita for multi-family residential and industrial/commercial/institutional has also decreased since 2013.

TABLE 2.9, LAS CRUCES WATER CONSUMPTION RATES

	GALLONS PER CAPITA PER DAY				
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL	123.11	111.96	107.62	111.41	114.43
MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL	56.50	51.05	56.10	51.71	48.99
INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL & INSTITUTIONAL	40.84	35.48	36.18	32.38	31.52

Source: Las Cruces Utilities

WASTEWATER SYSTEM

The City of Las Cruces presently provides wastewater collection and treatment services to most areas within the city limits. Those not served by the City’s wastewater system rely on individual and group septic tanks. The City also treats wastewater from areas receiving water service from Doña Ana Mutual Domestic Water Consumers Association, Moongate Water Company, Town of Mesilla, San Pablo, and New Mexico State University.

The City currently operates two (2) separate sewer collection systems within the city limits. The main system collects wastewater flow from the east side of the Rio Grande to the furthest eastern edge of the northern and southern city boundaries. A smaller system located within the West Mesa Industrial Park collects wastewater from the Industrial Park tenants on the south side of I-10.

There are three (3) treatment facilities located within the city limits:

- The Jacob Hands Wastewater Treatment Facility has a capacity of 13.5 million gallons of sewage per day. This facility collects most of the wastewater flow in the City of Las Cruces.
- The West Mesa Wastewater Treatment Facility has a capacity of 400,000 gallons of sewage per day.
- The East Mesa Water Reclamation Facility treats wastewater to produce high quality irrigation water for use on golf courses, parks and other landscaped areas.

In total, there are 550 miles of sewer lines and 17 lift stations within the City of Las Cruces. **Table 2.10, Capacity at Wastewater Collection and Treatment Facilities**, depicts the capacity of each of the wastewater collection and treatment facilities. The City does charge wastewater fees categorized by residential users, large multi-unit residential, small commercial, and large commercial uses.

The Jacob Hands Wastewater Treatment Facility (JHWWTF) is receiving 9 mgd of wastewater and has a treatment capacity of 13.5 mgd. This means there is approximately 33% additional available capacity which roughly equates to an additional 10,000 - 12,000 households. The City will need to investigate possible future expansion of the JHWWTF with eastward growth; possible diversion of additional wastewater to the East Mesa Water Reclamation Facility; or the possible construction of a new wastewater treatment facility in the event the amount of wastewater being treated at the JHWWTF continues to increase. Some equipment in the JHWWTF facility is over 30 years old and in need of upgrades or replacement. Once plans have been completed the City will identify potential sources of funding to address the most pressing needs.

There are approximately 1,600 properties still on individual septic systems. The City is actively extending wastewater infrastructure in these areas to provide access to as many of the properties as feasible. Currently the City does not require residents to connect to the system, most will connect to the City’s wastewater system when their individual septic system is failing. Reduction in the number of septic systems is beneficial to the City as it eliminates a potential source of contamination and ensures viability of groundwater.

TABLE 2.10, CAPACITY AT WASTEWATER COLLECTION AND TREATMENT FACILITIES

FACILITY	CAPACITY (GALLONS)	CURRENT AVERAGE DAILY USE (GALLONS)
JACOB HANDS WASTEWATER TREATMENT FACILITY	13,500,000	9,000,000
WEST MESA WASTEWATER TREATMENT FACILITY	400,000	150,000
EAST MESA WATER RECLAMATION FACILITY	1,000,000	700,000

Source: Las Cruces Utilities



Reducing the amount of impervious surface in new developments (above) has helped reduce and manage stormwater run-off.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

Stormwater management in Las Cruces is accomplished through a storm drain network consisting of storm drain pipes, inlets/outlets, detention ponds as well as roadways and natural arroyos. There are 17 major detention ponds within the city limits. The stormwater collected through the natural arroyos and in the detention ponds is transported and discharged to the Rio Grande at several locations. In addition to the larger scale detention ponds, most properties are required to mitigate increases in stormwater runoff within project boundaries. The runoff collected in these stormwater collection systems either evaporates, percolates down into the groundwater, or adds to the controlled downstream runoff of the area.

The City prepared a Stormwater Management Plan in April 2009 that serves to develop, implement, and enforce its stormwater management program. In addition, the City has a Stormwater Management Ordinance in effect (Chapter 34 of the LCMC), which defines means of reducing pollutants from entering the City's municipal storm sewer system. Current trends, both nationally and statewide, indicate that cities will be strongly encouraged to adopt green infrastructure as it is a preferred best management practice.

Overall, stormwater management in Las Cruces has functioned well through traditional practices, but will need to establish new best management practices to help the City become more resilient to extreme heat and drought. The City continues to require new development to provide on-lot ponding to account for all impervious surface areas created. Thus, stormwater flow increases are kept to a minimum. The City landscaping ordinance also requires new development to meet specific "green" requirements to help minimize impervious surface areas.

FLOOD CONTROL

The City of Las Cruces is surrounded by several major drainage features of which the most prominent is the Rio Grande River. The drainage features that aid in the City's flood control procedures include arroyos as well as dams, levees and channels. There are numerous arroyos that originate from the main arroyos in Las Cruces: the Alameda Arroyo, Las Cruces Arroyo, and Tortugas Arroyo. Also within the City is an approximately three-mile-long dam located just east of Interstate 25 between Lohman Avenue and North Main Street. The Las Cruces Dam was constructed in the early 1970's in order to protect a large portion of Las Cruces from flooding.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation releases water from the Caballo Reservoir which aids in the replenishing of the Rio Grande River. The River and the Elephant Butte Reservoir are the main water sources for local farmers as well as the Elephant Butte Irrigation District's numerous channels throughout the City.

The City of Las Cruces currently has a 2-mill property tax in place that offers approximately \$5 million annually to fund flood control projects. The City Flood Control fund has been in place since the early 1970's and has been historically helpful in creating the flood control system throughout the City. This funding has allowed the City to keep pace with development that has occurred in different areas, construct needed ponding facilities, as well as other flood control improvements. As development continues to take place in the City, the funds should be used to transition to green infrastructure practices to fully address the many needs of the City.

SOLID WASTE

In Las Cruces and Doña Ana County, two separate entities are involved in the handling and disposal of Solid Waste. The Las Cruces Utilities Solid Waste Section is responsible for providing solid waste containers and collecting solid waste within the city limits. Within the Las Cruces Utilities system, there are 32,651 residential customers and more than 2,700 commercial customers. Las Cruces Utilities disposes of almost 6,000 tons of trash every month. The South-Central Solid Waste Authority, a joint City/County organization, is responsible for operating the Solid Waste Transfer Station located on West Amador, and the Corralitos Landfill located west of Las Cruces. Additionally, the South-Central Solid Waste Authority is responsible for collecting and processing recyclables.

Three solid waste disposal facilities are currently in use – the Foothills Landfill for clean fill material operated by the Las Cruces Utilities Solid Waste Section, the Solid Waste Transfer Station located on West Amador and the Corralitos Landfill located west of Las Cruces. The Corralitos Landfill handled 14,200 tons of residential and commercial waste in March 2019.

Like water and wastewater, the City of Las Cruces Solid Waste Section currently operates under a cost of service financial structure. As a result, capital equipment, vehicles and other equipment is replaced on a scheduled basis and is in good operating condition.

Students learn about solid waste disposal in Las Cruces (below).

Las Cruces Utilities delivers most of the solid waste generated within the City Limits to the Amador Transfer Station; the solid waste is then transported by the South-Central Solid Waste Authority to the Corralitos Landfill located west of Las Cruces. As of recent years, the Corralitos Landfill has utilized 30% of its capacity and is accepting approximately 19,000 tons of solid waste per month. With an expected life span of 90 years and incorporating the rate of disposal per month, the landfill is anticipated to continue accepting waste for the next 20 years with minimal to no concerns of exceeding the design capacity.

One of the major challenges that has been affecting the City of Las Cruces, the South-Central Solid Waste Authority, as well as additional areas of the southwest is the availability of services for processing recyclable materials. In March of 2018 China banned 28 categories of solid waste recyclables including all plastic and implemented a 0.05 contamination rate for all other types of recyclables. This move effectively closed China off from the global recycling market causing a glut of materials to hit the United States and foreign markets. Prior to this stoppage, China was responsible for accepting approximately half of the worlds recycled material. This means that municipalities such as Las Cruces are left to find innovative ways to find new markets or foster a circular economy to repurpose recycled materials. The City of Las Cruces and the South-Central Solid Waste Authority will increasingly be faced with how to meet the expectations of customers, how to continue offering services to which the community has grown accustomed, and the fleeting reality of the recyclable marketplace.





Water storage tanks (above) serve a necessary, utilitarian purpose, and in Las Cruces serve as an opportunity to showcase artistic abilities as well.

LOWER RIO GRANDE WATER RIGHTS

Recent disputes over water rights have caused uncertainty over the future of water in New Mexico.

The 1939 Rio Grande Compact signed by New Mexico, Texas, and Colorado stipulated how each of the three states were to share water rights from the Rio Grande.

In 2013, the State of Texas filed a complaint against New Mexico and alleges that the state allowed farmers to pump groundwater that was intended for Texas under the 1939 compact. New Mexico disputed the claim, but the issue was not resolved outside of court.

The case made it's way to the Supreme Court, called *Texas v. New Mexico & Colorado*. As of 2019, the case is still ongoing and current discussions are related to whether the federal government should participate in the ongoing case.

ASSOCIATED PLANNING EFFORTS

WATER AND WASTEWATER MASTER PLAN UPDATE

Last updated in 2008, the purpose of this plan is to identify best practices for managing the municipal water and wastewater systems to accommodate future population growth. The plan assesses the existing water and wastewater system, models current and future demand and capacity for these services, and identifies projects for the Water and Wastewater System Capital Improvement Programs.

40-YEAR WATER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

This plan, adopted in 2017, assesses current and projected water supply needs for Las Cruces. Strategies incorporated in the plan include limiting water waste, preventing pollution, and optimizing efficiency. According to the water demand projections in this plan, the population forecast for 2040 ranges from approximately 153,500 to 197,400 people.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT PLAN

Last updated in 2009, the Stormwater Management Plan for City Departments was created to comply with federal regulatory requirements. The plan assesses strategies to detect and eliminate illicit discharge, control construction site runoff, manage stormwater after construction, and prevent pollution.

INFRASTRUCTURE & UTILITIES KEY FINDINGS

This section reviewed existing conditions for major utilities in Las Cruces. While the City projects that they will have enough water supply to meet future demands, water conservation programs and initiatives should be continued to conserve natural resources. In regards to wastewater, the City may need to expand the current treatment facility if the population grows at a faster than expected rate. Additional key findings include:

- The City has ample groundwater *rights* to supply water to residents in the immediate and near future. Groundwater *availability* should be continued to be monitored as more growth occurs.
- The primary issue regarding water is the ongoing Supreme Court case between Texas, New Mexico, and the U.S. Government over the Rio Grande.
- The City's water conservation program has helped reduce average water use from 200 gallons per day to 170 in 2017.
- The City is identifying remaining transite water lines to replace them with PVC pipe material that is more durable.
- The primary wastewater treatment facility has approximately 33 percent additional capacity available, which equates to approximately 100,000 additional residents.
- Need to investigate possible expansion of JHWWTF if amount of wastewater continues to increase from the current 9 mgd toward the capacity of 13.5 mgd.
- Some residences remain on septic systems.
- Requirements such as on-lot ponding, minimizing impervious surface areas, and installing curb and gutter have helped reduce and manage stormwater run-off.
- The City has made a concerted effort to become more energy-efficient and resource-conscious by installing solar panels on many municipal buildings and constructing LEED-certified buildings.
- The Corralitos Landfill, which has a life expectancy of over 100 years, will handle anticipated growth over the next 20 years.



III. COMMUNITY PROSPERITY

The Elevate Las Cruces vision includes purpose statements that relate both to economic development and to human services. In this way, Elevate Las Cruces establishes that Las Cruces will be a city of public and private partnerships where business investment will be leveraged with social initiatives to ensure that all residents share in the fortune of a positive economic climate. There has been sustained consensus throughout the comprehensive planning process that Las Cruces must not only ensure that the programs and policies are in place to attract and retain private capital in the community, but that the local educational system and network of human service organizations are funded and mobilized to provide for the daily well-being and long-term personal and professional growth of Las Cruces.

The Community Prosperity section of this report presents current information on the following topics: economic development, education, housing, and human services. All four (4) topics are inherently related and must be assessed in equal measure to better understand where competing interests can be aligned, overlapping initiatives can be streamlined, and gaps in services can be filled so that near-term economic investments generate long-term social benefits.

Information presented in this section of the report informs many of the goals, policies, and actions contained in **Volume I (Elevate Las Cruces)** relating to economic development and human services. Resulting Plan recommendations promote a strengthened economy not only through business recruitment, but by also focusing on the local institutions that promote entrepreneurship and the development of an educated workforce, and provide for the needs of disadvantaged residents.

*“**pros·per·i·ty** (pro sper'i tē) n. **1.** a successful, flourishing, or thriving condition, esp. in financial respects; good fortune.”*

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

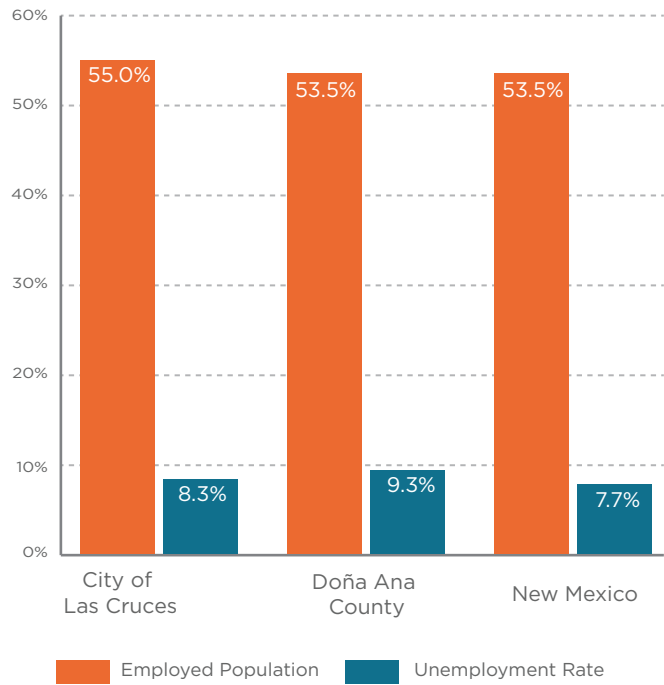
Economic development is an ongoing and sustaining process - essential to planning for the future. A local economy that can rely on multiple industry sectors for employment will be better equipped to keep pace with current municipal service demands, and also meet long-term maintenance responsibilities.

This section presents a broad view of Las Cruces' current economic statistics using information related to labor force, industry segments, and past planning efforts related to economic development.

LABOR FORCE




Figure 2.9, Employment Status, shows the rates of employment and unemployment in Las Cruces, Doña Ana County, and New Mexico. In 2017, 55 percent of Las Cruces who are of working age were employed and the overall unemployment rate was 8.3 percent. Compared to Doña Ana County and New Mexico, Las Cruces has a slightly higher percentage of employed residents. The unemployment rate in Las Cruces is lower than the county but higher than the state average. Furthermore, **Figure 2.10, Job Locations**, shows that there are approximately 25,000 people that both live and work in Las Cruces, 14,000 people leave Las Cruces for work, and 21,000 live outside Las Cruces but work within the city.

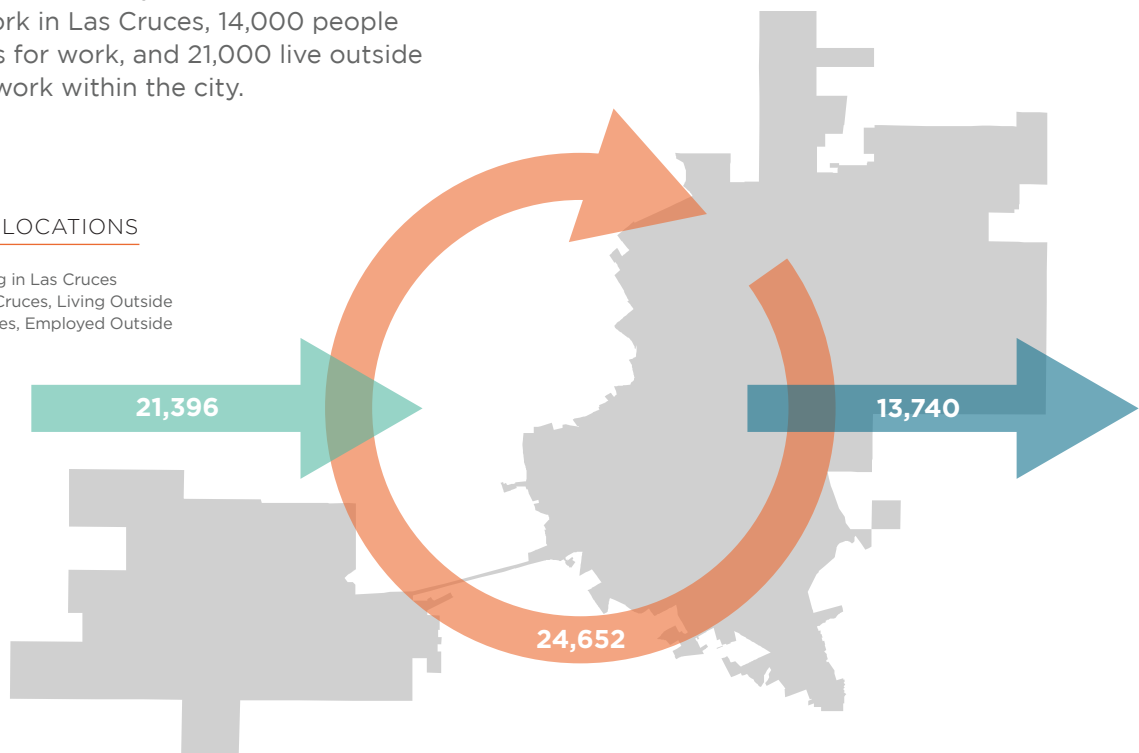
FIGURE 2.9, EMPLOYMENT STATUS



Source: US Census (2017)

FIGURE 2.10, JOB LOCATIONS

-  Employed & Living in Las Cruces
-  Employed in Las Cruces, Living Outside
-  Living in Las Cruces, Employed Outside

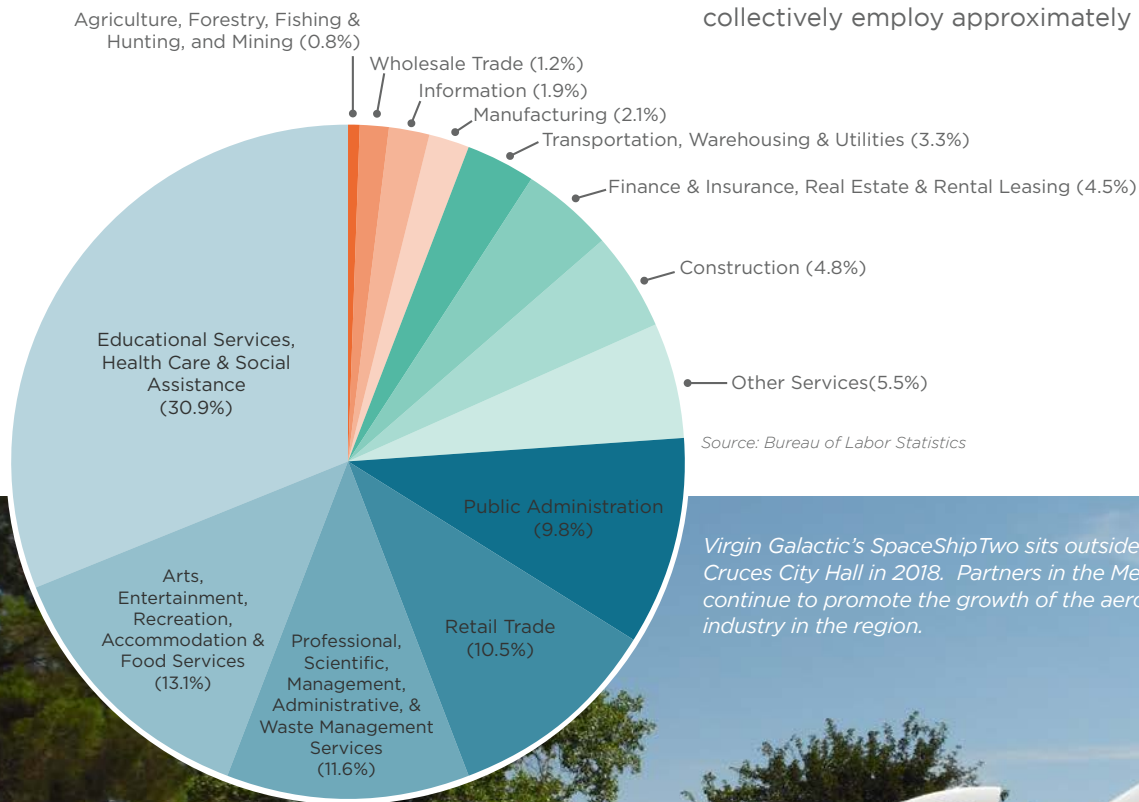


Source: US Census

INDUSTRY SEGMENT

Figure 2.11, Industry Segments, depicts the distribution of employment by industry types in Las Cruces. The largest percentage of employed workers in 2017 worked in the educational services, healthcare, and social assistance sector (30.9%). Other significant industries sectors include: arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodations & food services (13.1%); professional, scientific, management, administrative & waste management services (11.6%); retail (10.5%); and public administration (9.8%).

FIGURE 2.11, INDUSTRY SEGMENTS



MAJOR EMPLOYERS

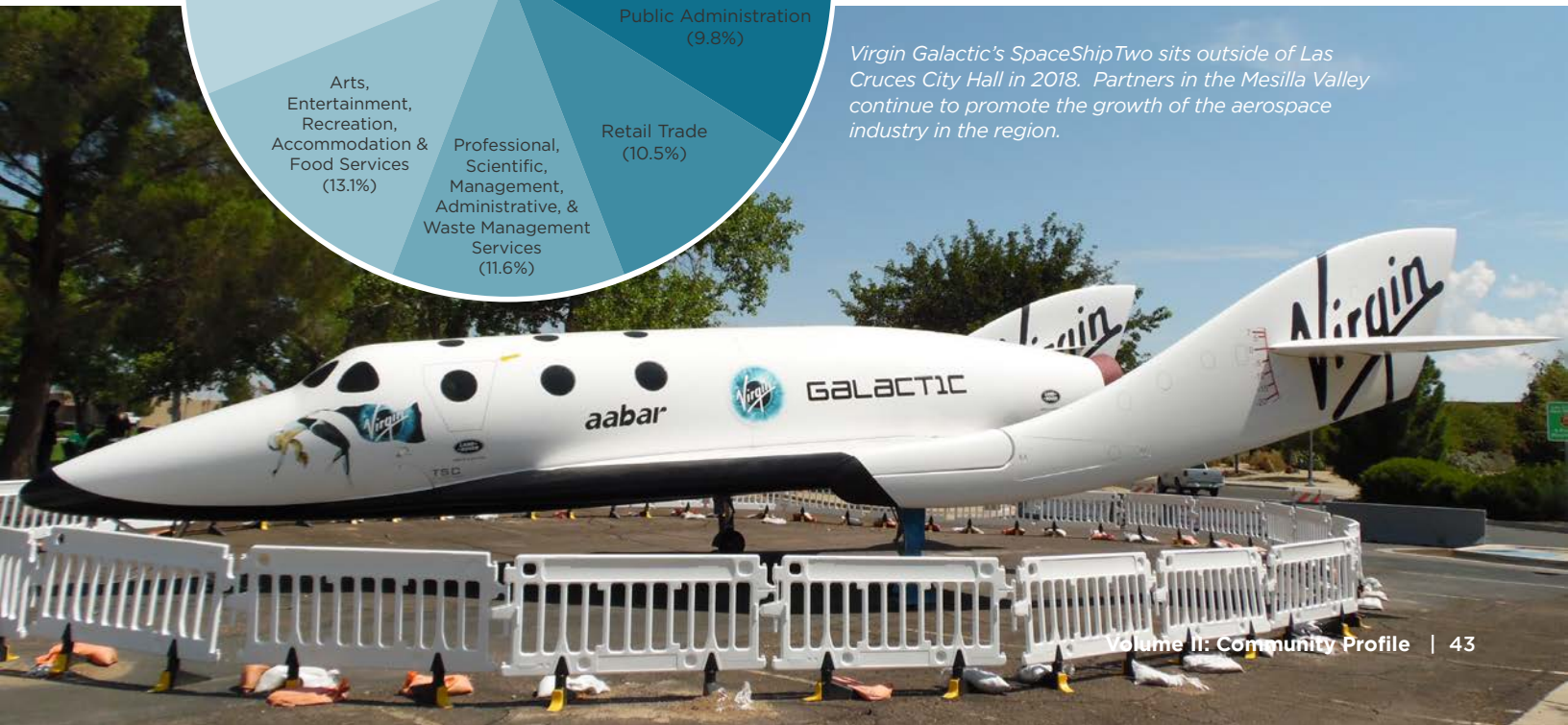
Map 2.6 Major Employers (page 44), depicts the location of major employers in Las Cruces according to the Mesilla Valley Economic Development Alliance (MVEDA). Entities with at least 500 employees include the following:

- New Mexico State University
- Las Cruces Public Schools
- City of Las Cruces
- Memorial Medical Center
- Walmart

Located just outside of Las Cruces within Doña Ana County, White Sands Missile Range and NASA collectively employ approximately 5,800 workers.

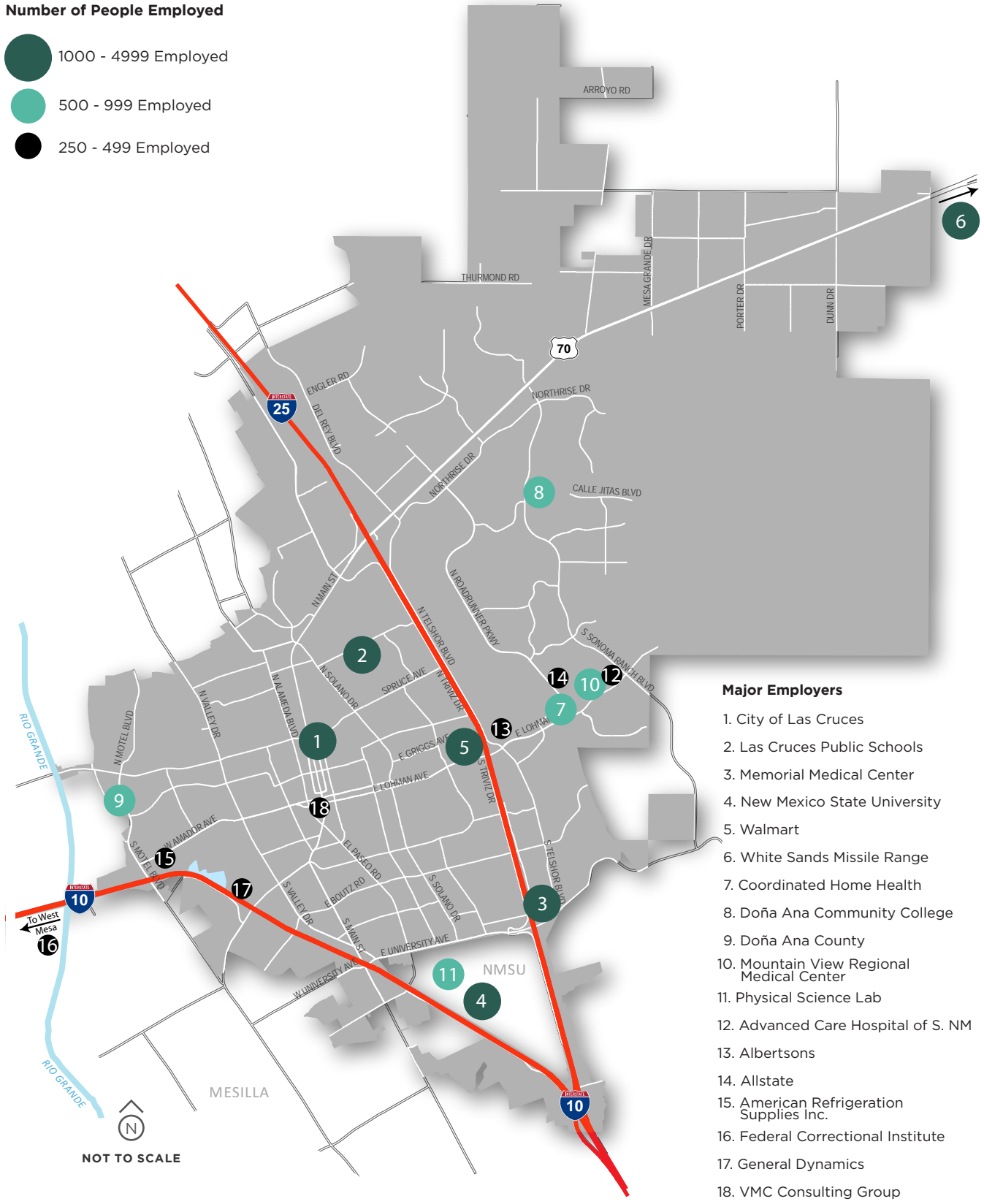
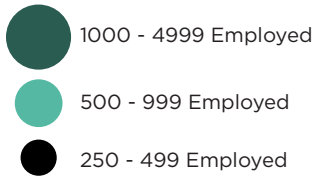
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Virgin Galactic's SpaceShipTwo sits outside of Las Cruces City Hall in 2018. Partners in the Mesilla Valley continue to promote the growth of the aerospace industry in the region.



MAP 2.6, MAJOR EMPLOYERS

Number of People Employed



- Major Employers**
1. City of Las Cruces
 2. Las Cruces Public Schools
 3. Memorial Medical Center
 4. New Mexico State University
 5. Walmart
 6. White Sands Missile Range
 7. Coordinated Home Health
 8. Doña Ana Community College
 9. Doña Ana County
 10. Mountain View Regional Medical Center
 11. Physical Science Lab
 12. Advanced Care Hospital of S. NM
 13. Albertsons
 14. Allstate
 15. American Refrigeration Supplies Inc.
 16. Federal Correctional Institute
 17. General Dynamics
 18. VMC Consulting Group

NOT TO SCALE

JOBS-HOUSING BALANCE

Communities that have a good balance of total jobs to housing units typically correlate to a local government jurisdiction that is capturing and retaining a greater proportion of its local workforce within its jurisdictional boundaries. In simple terms: people who are commuting less between work and home - preferably within the same governmental jurisdiction - are more apt to spend their household income within the local economy.

One of the original reports on the jobs-housing balance was published by the American Planning Association in 2003¹, and suggested that an appropriate jobs to housing units ratio ranged between 1.3:1 and 1.7:1. **Figure 2.12, Job-Housing Balance**, calculates the jobs-housing balance for Las Cruces by combining job counts from the Census Bureau's On The Map Area Profile Analysis for 2015 and total housing units from the Selected Housing Characteristics from the 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

FIGURE 2.12, JOB-HOUSING BALANCE

$$\frac{46,048 \text{ Jobs in Las Cruces (2015)}}{43,424 \text{ Housing Units in Las Cruces (2015)}} = 1.06:1$$

The jobs to housing units ratio as shown in **Figure 2.12** is 1.06:1, falling outside of the recommended target range of 1.3:1 to 1.7:1 stated in the American Planning Association's 2003 report. This indicates that there are only slightly more jobs available than housing units in Las Cruces. Interestingly however, **Figure 2.10** (page 44) suggests that Las Cruces continues to experience a substantially higher influx of workers living outside of the community. This net influx of labor may be explained by a mis-match between the types of jobs that may be found in Las Cruces and availability of diverse housing options to attract workers into residing within the city.

1. Jerry Wietz, *Jobs-Housing Balance*, PAS 516 (Chicago: American Planning Association, 2003)

CREATIVE INVESTMENT TOOLS

The City of Las Cruces has used various investment tools to encourage redevelopment.

In downtown Las Cruces, a Tax Increment Development District (TIDD) was created to dedicate a portion of gross receipts tax and property tax to public improvements. A public-private sector partnership was also created to incentivize development in the downtown area.

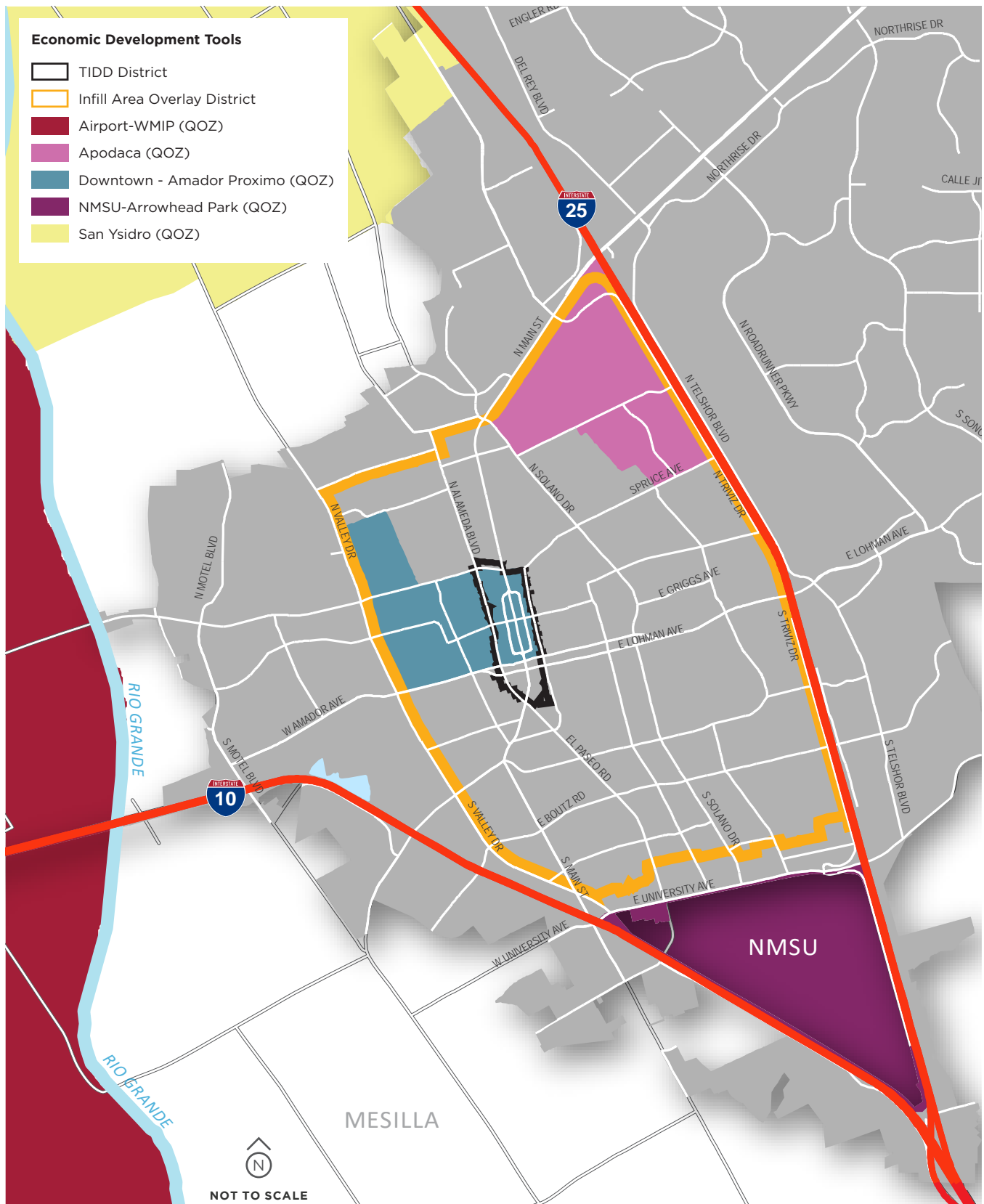
Additionally, there are five (5) Qualified Opportunity Zones (QOZ) within Las Cruces. QOZs are low-income census tracts where investors can finance new projects via a Qualified Opportunity Fund in exchange for tax advantages. If a private developer invests in an area designated as a QOZ, a tax incentive is offered to invest their unrealized capital gains into Opportunity Funds that are in turn used for investments in the area. The City's five (5) QOZs are Downtown/Amador Proximo, Airport/West Mesa Industrial Park, Apodaca, NMSU & Arrowhead Center, and San Ysidro (located in the ETZ). Detailed information about population and expenditures for each of these zones can be viewed on the city's website.

Map 2.7, Economic Development Tools (page 46), on the following page depicts the location of the TIDD and the QOZs in Las Cruces.

NMSU (below) is located within a Qualified Opportunity Zone, in which developers can qualify for tax advantages.



MAP 2.7, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TOOLS





The Las Cruces Convention Center (above), located on the NMSU campus, provides quality meeting space for conferences and events.

ASSOCIATED PLANNING EFFORTS

Economic development is a crucial part of many planning efforts and is integrated into several of the other planning documents referenced in this report.

Recent studies initiated by the City of Las Cruces Economic Development Department include:

- Minimum Wage Study
- Cost Benefit Analysis on the Construction of a 50-Meter Community Pool
- Economic Impact of the Organ Mountain Desert Peak National Monument Proclamation

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT KEY FINDINGS

This section reviewed key economic data to present an economic profile of Las Cruces. There are almost as many workers in Las Cruces that live outside of the City and come to work than those that both live and work in the City. The greatest number of workers are employed in the educational services, healthcare, social assistance, and professional and scientific services industries. Additional key findings include:

- The jobs-housing balance in Las Cruces is below the recommended target range, although a high percent of the City's labor force commutes from other jurisdictions.
- High percentage of imported labor may reflect limitations in housing choice.
- Las Cruces has used creative investment tools such as Tax Increment Development Districts and Qualified Opportunity Zones to encourage redevelopment and reinvestment in certain areas of the City.
- The City's Infill Area Overlay District has not generated a substantial increase in commercial development activity in center city as opposed to other areas.
- Most major employment is within public sector agencies and organizations.
- Business recruitment by the City and other local and regional agencies (e.g. NMSU, MVEDA, DAC, BRIDGE, LCPS) is not clearly focused on targeted industry sectors.

HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS

Individual housing quality, condition, and availability influences (and is influenced by) the condition and character of surrounding property. For Las Cruces to meet the housing goals and objectives that it has established in this Plan, it must also define the preferred attributes of surrounding neighborhoods that are essential to create or maintain quality residential areas.

This section therefore not only reviews the type, mix, and condition of existing housing stock; household characteristics; affordability factors; and anticipated future housing demand; but it also considers neighborhood interconnectivity, and nuisance and property maintenance codes.

While the construction of new housing in Las Cruces is largely dependent on population shifts that influence market demand, the City plays a role in directing where growth occurs, in ensuring the fiscal sustainability of public infrastructure and services that support residential development, and in encouraging activities that stabilize or enhance existing neighborhoods.

HOUSING TYPE AND MIX

Las Cruces' housing mix includes most contemporary categories of dwelling types, including: single family attached and detached homes, duplexes, multi-family, and a substantial percentage of mobile homes. **Table 2.11, Housing Type and Unit Breakdown** (facing page), illustrates the City's distribution of dwelling unit by type, which has remained relatively consistent since 2000. The lone exception is a marked increase in the percentage of single-family detached dwelling units, and corresponding decrease in mobile homes. Although there has been significant growth in the total number of duplex and multi-family dwelling units between 2000 and 2017, there has been more significant growth in the percentage of single-family detached dwelling units during the same time frame. Single-family detached dwelling units now account for 58.6 percent of the city's overall housing stock while duplex and multi-family dwelling units collectively account for 27.3 percent of the city's housing units - down from 27.9 percent in 2000.

Single-family detached homes (below) are the most common housing type in Las Cruces today.





Much of the Las Cruces' residential growth continues in the East Mesa and other areas flanking U.S. Highway 70 east.

TABLE 2.11, HOUSING TYPE AND UNIT BREAKDOWN

HOUSING TYPE	2000		2010		PERCENT CHANGE 2000-2010	2017		PERCENT CHANGE 2010-2017	PERCENT CHANGE 2000-2017
	TOTAL	%	TOTAL	%		TOTAL	%		
SINGLE-FAMILY, DETACHED	16,874	53.3%	22,340	56.0%	32.4%	26,133	58.6%	16.9%	54.9%
SINGLE-FAMILY, ATTACHED	1,896	6.0%	2,028	5.1%	7.0%	2,055	4.6%	1.3%	8.4%
DUPLEX	1,480	4.7%	1,570	3.9%	6.1%	2,059	4.6%	31.2%	39.1%
MULTIFAMILY (3+ UNITS) ¹	7,354	23.2%	9,558	24.0%	30.0%	10,123	22.7%	5.9%	37.6%
MOBILE HOME	3,930	12.5%	4,350	10.9%	10.7%	4,226	9.5%	-2.8%	7.5%
TOTAL:	31,534		39,846		26.4%	44,604		11.9%	41.4%

1. Multifamily = triplex, quadplex, and larger multifamily units.

Source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Table DP04, 2010 Census, 2000 Census.

TABLE 2.12, HOUSEHOLD ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

	2000	2010	PERCENT CHANGE 2000-2010	2017	PERCENT CHANGE 2010-2017
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME	\$30,375	\$38,391	26.4%	\$40,924	7.4%
MONTHLY INCOME	\$2,531	\$3,199	N/A	\$3,410	N/A
MEDIAN HOME VALUE	\$91,200	\$152,400	67.1%	\$150,000	-1.5%
MEDIAN GROSS RENT	\$470	\$674	43.4%	\$770	14.2%
HOME VALUE TO INCOME RATIO	3.0	4.0	N/A	3.6	N/A
MONTHLY RENT TO INCOME RATIO	0.19	0.21	N/A	0.22	N/A

Source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Table DP04, 2010 Census, 2000 Census.

COST OF HOUSING

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) established a threshold that housing costs should not exceed 30 percent of owner’s income (or 25 percent for renters). One way to evaluate affordability in Las Cruces is to compare how incomes, home prices, and rents are changing.

Between 2000 and 2010, rents and home values grew at faster rates than median household income, and between 2000 and 2017, home value increased overall but saw a decrease in the years 2010 to 2017 (see **Table 2.12, Household Economic Characteristics**). The main observation made through this data can be seen by looking at the increase of home value to income ratio since 2000 as well as the increase in the monthly rent to income ratio since 2000, both indicating a decline in affordability in Las Cruces.

Map 2.8, Household Characteristics (facing page), on the facing page depicts different housing cost characteristics. The shaded colors represent median household income by Census tract and the house icons represent the location of affordable housing units. Higher median incomes tend to be east of I-25 and affordable housing units tend to be closer to the core of the city.

Additionally, the Center for Neighborhood Technology has developed a method to assess housing affordability more comprehensively. The housing and transportation affordability index (the “H+T Index”) measures housing affordability in a way that considers the corresponding cost of daily transportation. This accounts for the situation in many parts of the country where homes are less expensive the further way they are from center of town or other job centers, but transportation costs increase, therefore reducing the actual affordability of the home.

The H+T Index calculates that in 2017, the typical Las Crucean spent 60 percent of their income on combined housing and transportation costs. This means that the average resident in Las Cruces is left with just 40 percent of their monthly income after paying housing and transportation costs. Comparatively, the index for El Paso, TX is 58 percent and Albuquerque is 51 percent.

The H+T Index also assesses affordability by Census block group, which allows for a more granular look at affordability. There are areas within center city where combined housing and transportation costs range between 24 - 45 percent of monthly household income. In contrast, there are neighborhoods in the East Mesa where residents spend greater than 60 percent of their household income on combined housing and transportation costs.

TABLE 2.13, AGE OF HOUSING STOCK

HOUSING TYPE	PERIOD OF CONSTRUCTION					
	OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (TOTAL)	1939 OR EARLIER	1940 - 1959	1960 - 1979	1980 - 1999	SINCE 2000
SINGLE-FAMILY	25,649	3.2%	15.2%	19.9%	27.1%	34.7%
DUPLEX/TRIPLEX/ FOUR-PLEX	4,298	7.1%	7.3%	30.2%	32.0%	23.4%
MULTIFAMILY	6,242	0.4%	1.8%	33.8%	41.2%	22.9%
OTHER ¹	3,620	0.0%	2.8%	20.1%	46.2%	30.9%
TOTAL:	39,809	1,161 (2.9%)	4,423 (11.1%)	9,226 (23.2%)	12,556 (31.5%)	12,443 (31.3%)

1. Other = Mobile home, boat, RV, van.

Source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates DP04, 2010 Census, 2000 Census.

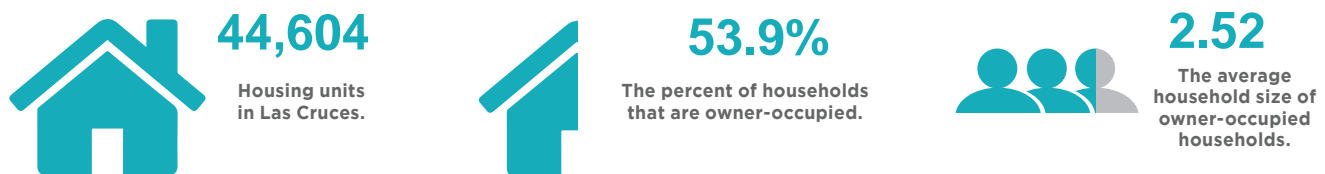
AGE OF HOUSING

Table 2.13, Age of Housing Stock, illustrates construction trends for various housing types over incremental periods of time. Thirty-one (31) percent of all housing units in Las Cruces have been constructed since 2000 and over 62 percent are less than 35 years old. Over one third of all single-family dwellings in Las Cruces have been constructed since 2000. The period between 1980 and 1999 suggests a period of significant investment in multi-family and “other” housing units. The total number of housing units represented in **Table 2.13** is for occupied housing units only. Older housing stock may have minimal insulation and outdated heating and cooling systems, putting lower-income residents that cannot afford improvements at risk during extreme temperature events.

HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

According to the 2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, there are 44,604 housing units in Las Cruces - an increase of 4,758 units, or 12 percent since 2010 (see **Table 2.14, Household Characteristics**, facing page). Las Cruces’ homeowner vacancy rate has nearly doubled since 2010, and rental vacancy rate also increased. Median household income increased by 7 percent. Between the years 2010 and 2017 average household size for renters has surpassed average household size for home owners. The percentage of households that are owner occupied in 2017 is 53.9 percent, up from 52.8 percent in 2010.

FIGURE 2.13, GENERAL HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS





Townhomes (above) and other multi-family units in Las Cruces often serve as a transition between single-family neighborhoods and other uses.

TABLE 2.14, HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

	2000	2017
TOTAL HOUSING UNITS	39,861	44,604
OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS	36,477	39,809
VACANT HOUSING UNITS	3,384	4,795
PERCENT OWNER OCCUPIED	52.8%	53.9%
PERCENT RENTER OCCUPIED	47.2%	46.1%
HOMEOWNER VACANCY RATE	2.4	4.5
RENTAL VACANCY RATE	7.2	8.3
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME	\$38,391	\$40,924
AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE (OWNER OCCUPIED)	2.60	2.52
AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE (RENTER OCCUPIED)	2.28	2.46
FAMILY HOUSEHOLD SIZE	3.05	2.55
NON-FAMILY HOUSEHOLD SIZE	N/A	1.39

Source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Table B11001 & DP04, 2010 Census.

HOUSING PROGRAMS

Las Cruces is an entitlement community, meaning that the City receives funding from HUD to be spent primarily on housing for low and moderate income residents. In Las Cruces, HUD funding is subsequently awarded annually to local housing agencies to provide affordable housing and housing services.

The City of Las Cruces also administers an Affordable Housing Land Bank and Trust Fund to create housing that is affordable to residents that make less than 80 percent of area median income. In 2018, the median family income was \$44,700 dollars; this means that a single-person household would be eligible for HUD assistance if they made less than \$30,100 dollars and a family of four would be eligible if they made less than \$42,950 dollars.

The City's Health and Human Services Advisory Committee helps to coordinate and prioritize annual requests for funding to provide social services. Additionally, the Mesilla Valley Public Housing Authority serves Las Cruces and Doña Ana County and provides public housing, development, and Section 8 Housing Choice vouchers.

A general inventory of price restricted housing units provided by public and private entities is provided in **Table 2.15, Price Restricted Units in Las Cruces** (page 56). **Map 2.10, Household Characteristics** (page 53) depicts the location of many of the City's affordable housing units.

TABLE 2.15, PRICE RESTRICTED UNITS IN LAS CRUCES

OWNERSHIP ENTITY	NUMBER OF UNITS
MVPHA*	628
TIERRA DEL SOL	177
OTHER NON-PROFIT OR PRIVATE OWNERSHIP	621
TOTAL	1,426

Source: City of Las Cruces 2016-2020 Five-Year Consolidated Plan.
 *MVPHA = Mesilla Valley Public Housing Authority.

Las Cruces’ statewide partners in providing affordable housing services include:

- New Mexico Coalition to End Homelessness
- New Mexico Balance of State Continuum of Care

Non-profit organizations in Las Cruces also play a critical role in providing housing options and other services for special needs populations including: victims of abuse, disabled persons, persons suffering from addiction, and more. These groups include:

- Mesilla Valley Community of Hope
- La Casa, Inc.
- Casa de Peregrinos
- Families and Youth, Inc.
- Tresco, Inc.
- El Caldito Soup Kitchen
- Tierra del Sol Housing Corp.

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS

As a large city with several distinct neighborhoods, there are many homeowner’s associations and neighborhood associations in Las Cruces. A homeowner’s association (HOA) is typically formed by a developer and is specific to a subdivision. Membership is required and dues pay for maintenance of common grounds or amenities. Alternatively, a neighborhood association is voluntarily formed and represents a section of a city with a common identity to give citizens a voice. Neighborhood associations were able to register with the City of Las Cruces as part of the Neighborhood Association Program however the neighborhood program has been suspended for several years.

As of 2017, there were 46 registered HOAs in Las Cruces - primarily located in the East Mesa area. Examples of neighborhoods with HOAs include Sonoma Ranch Estate, Pueblo Gardens, and Coronado Ridge. Additionally, there are 24 neighborhood associations previously registered with the City of Las Cruces. Examples include the Alameda Depot, Country Club, and Northpointe neighborhood associations.

Las Cruces also has a Neighborhood Action Team comprised of staff members from across City Hall to serve as an interdepartmental task force to address neighborhood nuisance issues and improve communication.

RESIDENTIAL CODE ENFORCEMENT

In Las Cruces, code enforcement is housed within the Police Department. Code enforcement officers respond to and review residential code issues related to the environment (weeds, trash, etc.), parking, and zoning. Code enforcement officers also provide outreach programs to educate citizens about bicycle safety, property maintenance, and city code education and outreach.

According to the Police Department, the majority of code violations they receive relate to residential properties. In a typical month, the department receives upwards of 1,000 calls related to residential code violations.



Apartments on W. Court Avenue (above) represent one of the few examples of residential infill in downtown Las Cruces.

ASSOCIATED PLANNING EFFORTS

AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLAN

The Affordable Housing Plan, adopted in 2016, was developed to address a need for expanded affordable housing options in Las Cruces. The plan is built upon five (5) key objectives: preserve existing housing stock, expand affordable rental housing for low-income and special needs populations, expand and preserve homeownership, create innovative partnerships, and reduce homelessness.

FIVE YEAR CONSOLIDATED PLAN

As a HUD Entitlement Community, Las Cruces is required to submit a consolidated plan every five (5) years to guide the expenditures of federal funds for housing. The City is currently operating under a plan for years 2016-2020. The current plan identifies high-priority needs, including housing for persons experiencing homelessness and special needs.

INFILL POLICY PLAN

In 1998, the City adopted an Infill Policy Plan that set the boundaries of an Infill Development Overlay District and established policies for development in that area. Located in the central core of the City, the impetus for this plan was to encourage infill development on vacant parcels to revitalize the area. The Infill Development Overlay District remains in effect.

HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS KEY FINDINGS

Single-family homes continue to comprise the majority of the housing stock in Las Cruces, and have accounted for a steadily rising percentage of all housing units in the city since 2000. Additional key findings include:

- Single-family detached dwellings account for nearly 60 percent of existing housing stock in Las Cruces.
- The total number of housing units has increased at a faster rate than population (nearly 40%) since 2000.
- The average household size for owner-occupied units has decreased since 2000 but the figure has increased for renter-occupied units.
- Increases in median home value and median gross rent in Las Cruces has outpaced the increase in median household income.
- Median household income grew just over 7 percent from 2010 to 2017.
- Public and subsidized housing units are concentrated in Census blocks with low median household income.
- Prior institutional efforts to create and empower neighborhood associations have diminished in the last several years.
- Most residential growth has occurred outside of the boundaries of the Infill Development Overlay District.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Quality education options and access to health and human services are vital to building long-term community prosperity. This section provides a snapshot of a few of Las Cruces’ essential community resources.

EDUCATION

The City of Las Cruces, Town of Mesilla, Village of Doña Ana, White Sands Missile Range, and parts of Doña Ana County are served by Las Cruces Public Schools (LCPS). LCPS is the second largest school district in New Mexico with just under 25,000 students and over 3,000 employees. **Table 2.16, Las Cruces Public Schools Enrollment**, shows that student enrollment in LCPS has remained steady over the past 10 years.

There are 40 total schools in the district, with the majority located within the municipal limits. Schools are depicted in **Map 2.9, Educational Facilities**. According to LCPS statistics, approximately 72 percent of students receive free or reduced-price meals and 85.5 percent of seniors graduated in 2017.

There are also post secondary education opportunities in Las Cruces:

- **New Mexico State University (NMSU).** Offers undergraduate and graduate programs and currently has more than 15,000 students enrolled. The campus, located just outside of the city limits, is 900 acres.

TABLE 2.16, LAS CRUCES PUBLIC SCHOOLS ENROLLMENT

SCHOOL YEAR	ENROLLMENT
2018-2019	24,814
2017-2018	25,006
2016-2017	24,900
2015-2016	24,989
2014-2015	25,183
2013-2014	25,073
2012-2013	25,228
2011-2012	25,244
2010-2011	25,475
2009-2010	24,814

Source: Las Cruces Public Schools.

- **Doña Ana Community College.** Offers associate degrees and certification programs. There are two campuses in Las Cruces - East Mesa and Espina. In 2017, there were about 10,600 credit seeking students and 3,500 non-credit seeking students.

Additionally, the Thomas Branigan Memorial Library adjacent to City Hall is the main library in Las Cruces which originally opened in 1935. There are also two branch libraries - Munson Center Library and Sage Cafe Library. Library services include library cards, books by mail, meeting rooms, study rooms, notary services, and copying services.

New Mexico State University (below) provides a quality secondary education option and is located outside of the Las Cruces city limits but is surrounded on all sides by the community.



MAP 2.9, EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

Facilities by Parcel (Public Schools)

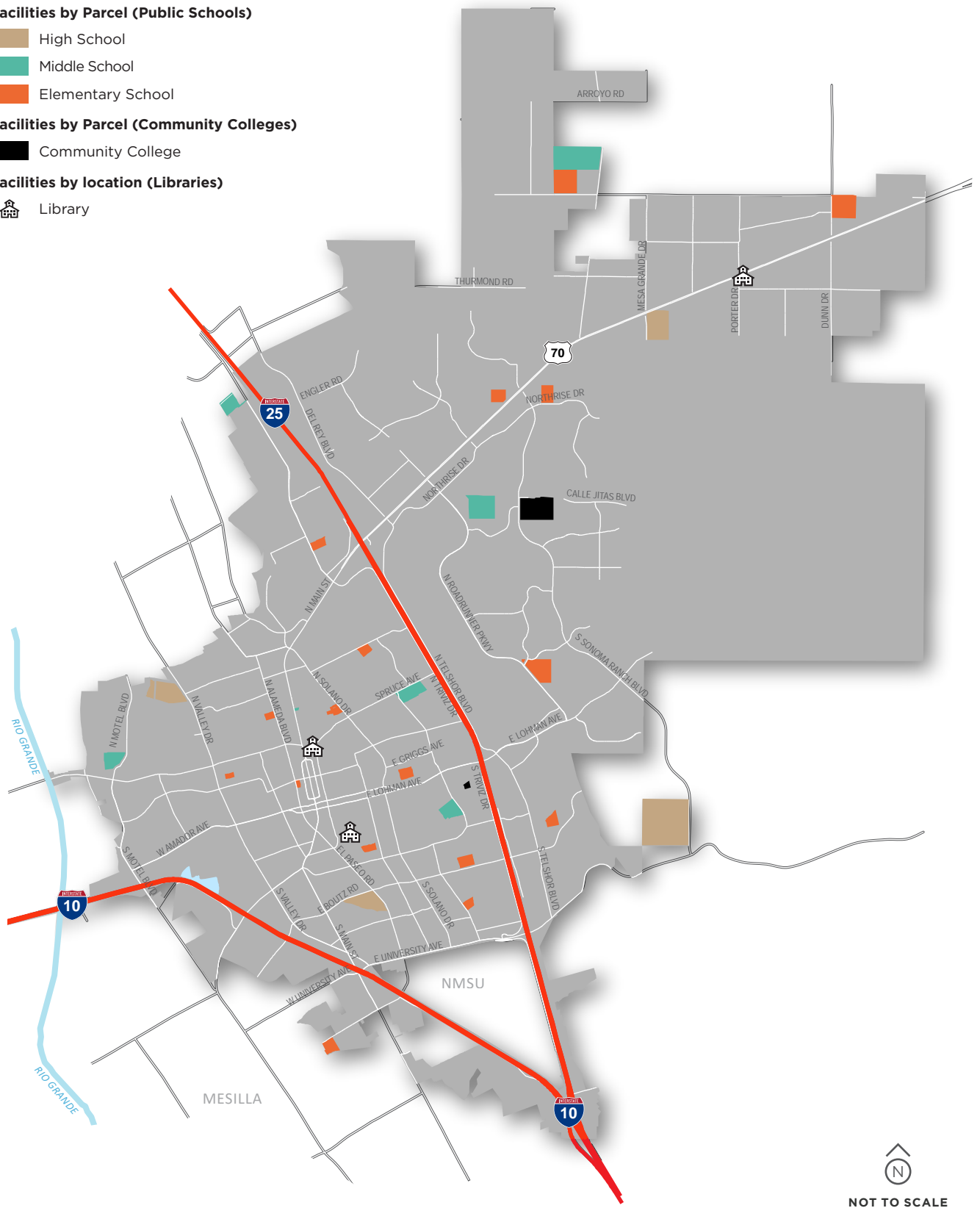
- High School
- Middle School
- Elementary School

Facilities by Parcel (Community Colleges)

- Community College

Facilities by location (Libraries)

- Library



NOT TO SCALE

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

The City of Las Cruces works with partnering agencies including the County and State to help ensure capacity for various health and human services exist for area residents. The Quality of Life Department provides services and support to residents, which promote their well-being through transportation, art, culture, literacy, senior activities, and social enrichment. Programs include meals, homecare, caregiver support, and nutrition services. A Senior Programs Advisory Board regularly meets with staff to advocate on behalf of senior center participants. Senior programming is available at the Munson Center, Eastside Center, Benavidez Center, Papen Center, and Sage Cafe.

Other non-city led social organizations include the following:

- **Mesilla Valley Community of Hope** is a single campus of agencies who serve the homeless population of Las Cruces by providing shelter services, case management, income support, and permanent housing programs.
 - **AARP** is a national nonprofit organization focused on providing services to the over 50 population. The Las Cruces Chapter of AARP provides a variety of resources, hosts events, and creates opportunities for community connections to grow.
 - **Ngage NM** is a nonprofit organization advocating for changes in education. This organization partners with other community groups and residents to generate change in access to and quality of education in Las Cruces.
 - **Doña Ana County Overdose Prevention** is a program committed to reducing the number of deaths due to prescription drug-related overdoses. Their prevention efforts include first responder training, distribution of Narcan kits throughout the community, and disposal of unused medication at home.
 - **Doña Ana County Mental Health** is a health service of the County, provided through medical professionals, primarily counselors, who offer treatment and guidance to those seeking treatment for mental health issues.
- **Veterans Advisory Board** is composed of veterans living in Las Cruces, who advise on matters concerning veterans as well as recommend solutions for the needs of local veterans.
 - **ADA Advisory Board** is a committee advocating for planning efforts focused on establishing programs, activities, and services that comply with and prioritize ADA requirements.
 - **The Bridge of Southern NM** is a program for the enhancement of career readiness and workforce development to boost the regions future economic prosperity. Their goals are achieved primarily through bridging the gap between skills and knowledge within New Mexico's Education System.



The City of Las Cruces offers programming for seniors at the Munson Center (above), Eastside Center, Benavidez Center, Papen Center, and Sage Cafe.



When preparing the Healthy City Design report, city employees and stakeholders toured sidewalk and bicycle accommodations in Las Cruces (above).

ASSOCIATED PLANNING EFFORTS

The City of Las Cruces has undertaken or participated in several recent planning efforts related to community resources such as education, health, and human services. Recent initiatives of note include:

NMSU CAMPUS MASTER PLAN

Intended to serve as a ten-year master plan, the New Mexico State University Campus Master Plan assesses maintenance, utilities, student living and dining, and transportation. A district framework was used to promote different development types in distinct areas of the campus. Other elements discussed include multi-modal transportation connections, parking improvements, and a demolition plan.

HEALTHY CITY DESIGN: HEALTHY PEOPLE, HEALTHY COMMUNITY

In 2015, the City of Las Cruces hosted a walking audit and visioning forums to promote health in community design. The resulting Healthy City Design report recommends policies and best practices to transform Las Cruces into a healthy community. The report also outlined strategies to transform roadways to encourage more healthy and active lifestyles.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES KEY FINDINGS

This section reviewed community resources that the City offers. Las Cruces is community-focused, as evidenced by the large number of organizations that provide health and human services. Additional key findings include:

- Nearly three-quarters of students in Las Cruces Public Schools receive free or reduced-price meals.
- Student enrollment in Las Cruces Public Schools has remained stationary over the past 10 years with no significant increases or decreases.
- Although there is a common public perception that a “brain drain” exists in Las Cruces when NMSU students leave after graduation, there is no available data to substantiate or refute that perception.
- There are several non-city led health and human services organizations in Las Cruces that serve a critical need for vulnerable populations.



IV. COMMUNITY LIVABILITY

Beyond individual access to the basic necessities for day-to-day living, a community's prosperity is also greatly dependent on access to services and amenities that enhance resident comfort and enjoyment. Although the City of Las Cruces and other public entities assume important roles in providing services that make a community "livable" (i.e. public safety, parks and recreation, public transportation), residents, property owners, and business owners also play vital grass-roots roles in building the dynamic type of community within which they wish to live. Thriving communities that have built the institutions to celebrate history, culture, nature, the arts, and healthy living are the ones which ultimately attract new investment. Indeed, Las Cruces is in a (friendly) competition with its peer cities to develop the amenities that make it stand out and be recognized as one of the country's next great destinations.

The Community Livability section of this report presents current information on the following topics (listed in random order): parks and recreation, mobility, public safety, arts and culture, historic preservation, and public health. Although some of these topics – such as mobility and public safety – may rightfully be viewed as essential community services, the diverse and creative manner by which Las Cruces provides these services and addresses the other topics assessed in this section will influence the city's attractiveness to potential businesses and residents.

Information presented in this section of the report informs many of the goals, policies, and actions contained in **Volume I, Elevate Las Cruces**, relating to community vitality. Topics such as mobility and parks and recreation have a more apparent and direct connection to land use and development patterns, and are therefore linked to recommendations contained with the Future Development Plan.

“liv·a·ble (*liv'ə bəl*) *adj.* **1.** *suitable for living in; habitable; comfortable.* **2.** *worth living; enduring.* **Syn.** *enjoyable; bearable; worthwhile.”*

MOBILITY

A community's transportation network serves as the structural spine that links people, places, and opportunities. Transportation issues such as congestion, accessibility, and affordability can affect quality of life, economic prosperity, and ultimately the overall health of individuals. This section assesses the existing conditions of the multi-modal transportation system in Las Cruces and identifies key issues to address moving forward.

THOROUGHFARE NETWORK

Roads in Las Cruces are classified according to functional use in accordance with guidelines developed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The City of Las Cruces operates 861 roadway miles and the New Mexico Department of Transportation operates 35 miles in Las Cruces. According to the Mesilla Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), Las Cruces' thoroughfare network is organized according to the following roadway classifications:

- **Principal Arterials.** Includes interstates, freeways and principal arterials with limited or no access control. Serves the major centers of activity of an urban area with the highest traffic volumes, the longest trips, and the highest proportion of total urban area travel. *Note: In the Las Cruces Roadway Design Standards these roadways are called "major arterials."*
- **Minor Arterials.** Includes all arterials not classified as "principal" and contains facilities that place more emphasis on land access and offer a lower level of traffic mobility. May carry local bus routes and provide intra-community continuity – but does not penetrate identifiable neighborhoods.
- **Collectors.** Provides land access service and traffic circulation within residential neighborhoods, commercial and industrial areas. May penetrate residential neighborhoods to collect and distribute local traffic to and from the arterial system. In central business (and similar) districts, the collector system may comprise a majority of the street grid.

- **Local Streets.** Provide direct access to abutting land and access to higher order systems. Offers low-level mobility - "through-traffic" movement is usually discouraged.
- **Rural Minor Arterials.** Provide links between cities and larger towns; and, should provide for relatively high overall travel speeds with minimum interference to through movement.
- **Rural Major Collectors.** Provide links to traffic generators not served by the arterial system including small towns, consolidated schools, shipping points, county parks, mining and agriculture.

Map 2.10, Existing Thoroughfare Network, on the facing page depicts Las Cruces' current thoroughfare network. This includes limited access highways, principal arterials, minor arterials, and collectors, as classified by the Mesilla Valley MPO. As part of the Elevate Las Cruces process, recommended changes to proposed thoroughfares are made in the future thoroughfare plan presented in **Volume I, Elevate Las Cruces**. The future thoroughfare map coordinates with the future development map.

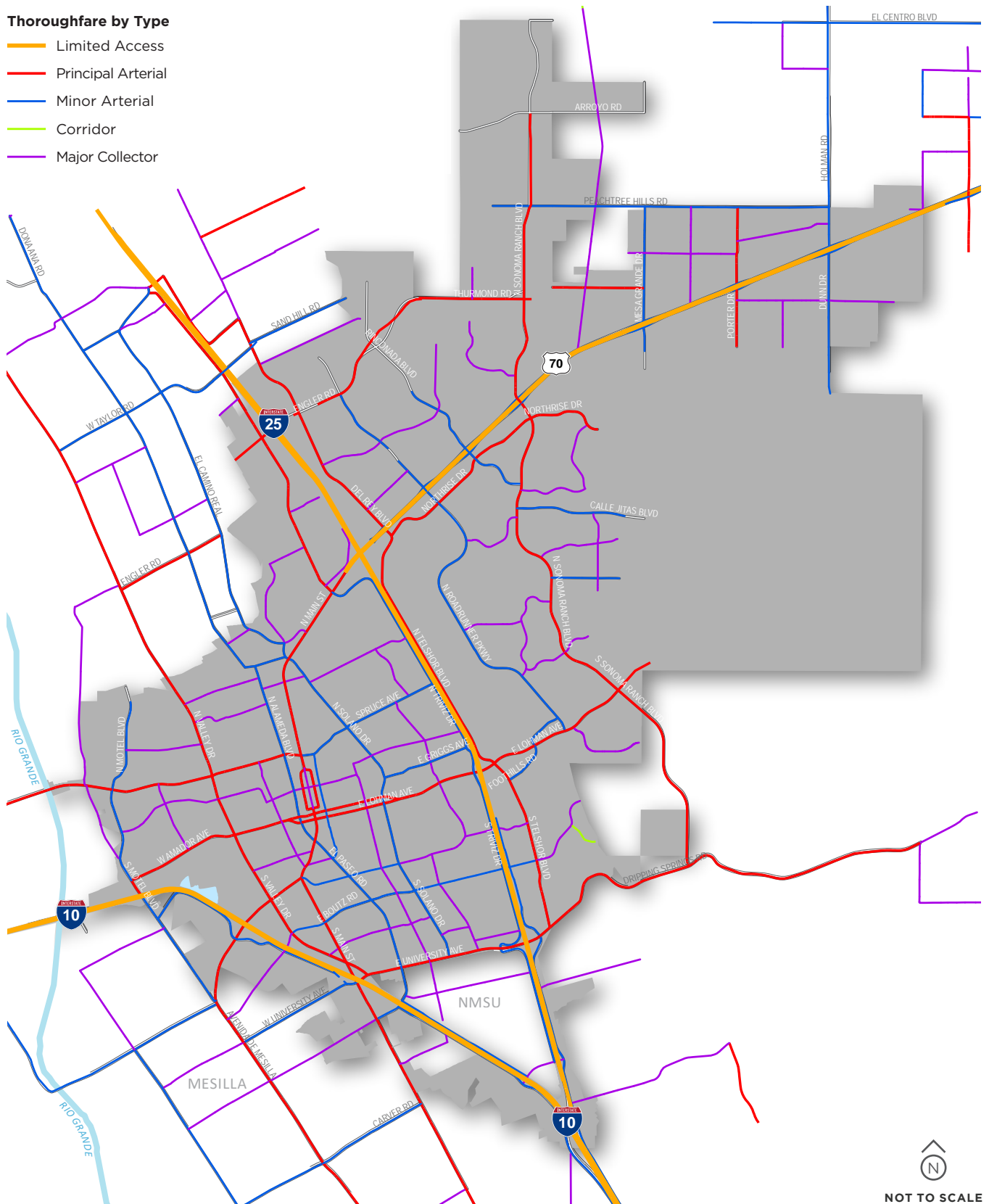


Lohman Avenue (above) is a major arterial roadway with right-of-way characteristics that can accommodate the addition of future travel lanes in anticipation of higher traffic volumes.

MAP 2.10, EXISTING THOROUGHFARE NETWORK

Thoroughfare by Type

- Limited Access
- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Corridor
- Major Collector




 NOT TO SCALE

Source: Mesilla Valley MPO
 Note: See Appendix II-B for future thoroughfares in the West Mesa.

TRAFFIC COUNTS

The New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) Traffic Monitoring System produces average annual weekday traffic volumes. Traffic counts are taken every three (3) years on each roadway segment in the City of Las Cruces. As shown in **Table 2.17, Traffic Counts for Major Arterials**, for the period of 2013-2017 there has been little cumulative growth in traffic counts on most of the city’s arterial roads.

Roads in the East Mesa and Valley Drive on the west side of the City have experienced the greatest percentages of growth in traffic for the period observed. In terms of absolute traffic volumes, Main Street/US 70 at I-25 has the highest traffic counts consistently from 2013 to 2017.



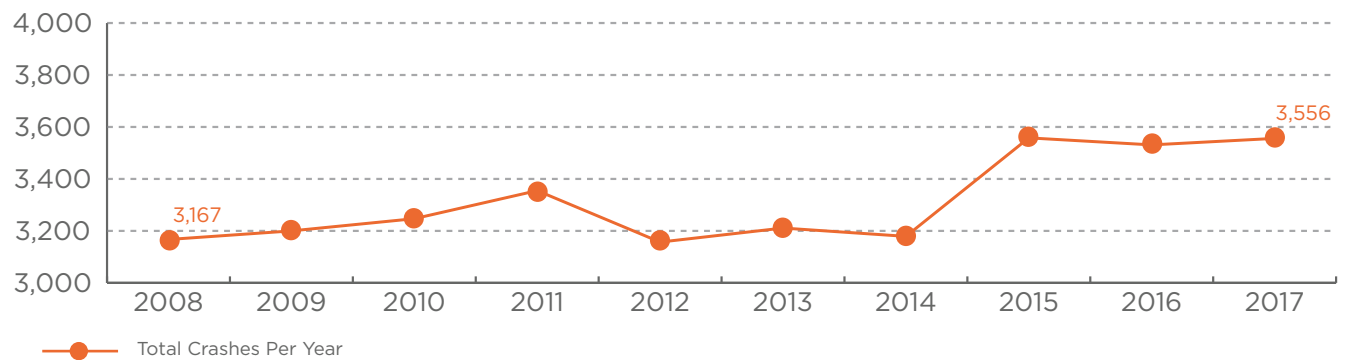
Unlike many thoroughfares in Las Cruces, Sonoma Ranch Boulevard (above) has experienced a significant increase in traffic volumes from 2013 to 2017.

TABLE 2.17, TRAFFIC COUNTS FOR MAJOR ARTERIALS

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	PERCENT CHANGE (2013 TO 2017)
EAST/WEST ARTERIALS						
UNIVERSITY AVE (AT TRIVIZ)	15,542	20,292	20,292	25,643	25,643	65.0%
MISSOURI AVE (AT TRIVIZ)	14,872	16,080	16,080	16,080	14,980	0.7%
LOHMAN AVENUE (AT FOOTHILLS)	25,287	27,175	27,715	27,175	26,428	4.5%
AMADOR AVENUE (AT MELENDRES)	14,760	14,760	13,179	13,179	15,687	6.3%
PICACHO AVENUE/U.S. 70 (AT VALLEY)	16,792	16,792	16,792	20,475	20,475	21.9%
N. MAIN STREET/U.S. 70 (AT I-25)	32,695	32,695	32,695	39,022	39,022	19.4%
NORTH/SOUTH ARTERIALS						
SONOMA RANCH (AT LOHMAN)	7,352	9,796	9,796	9,796	12,217	66.2%
ROADRUNNER PARKWAY (AT LOHMAN)	16,225	16,255	16,225	16,582	16,582	2.2%
TELSHOR BOULEVARD (AT LOHMAN)	20,320	20,320	20,320	20,320	20,459	0.7%
SOLANO DRIVE (AT LOHMAN)	16,899	16,899	16,012	14,517	14,517	-14.1%
EL PASEO ROAD (AT IDAHO)	13,275	14,205	14,205	14,205	15,139	14.0%
S. MAIN STREET (AT UNION)	13,745	13,745	13,099	13,099	13,099	-4.7%
VALLEY DR. (AT AVENIDA DE MESILLA)	16,241	16,300	16,300	16,300	21,172	30.4%

Source: New Mexico DOT Traffic Monitoring System

FIGURE 2.14, MOTOR VEHICLE CRASHES (2008 - 2017)

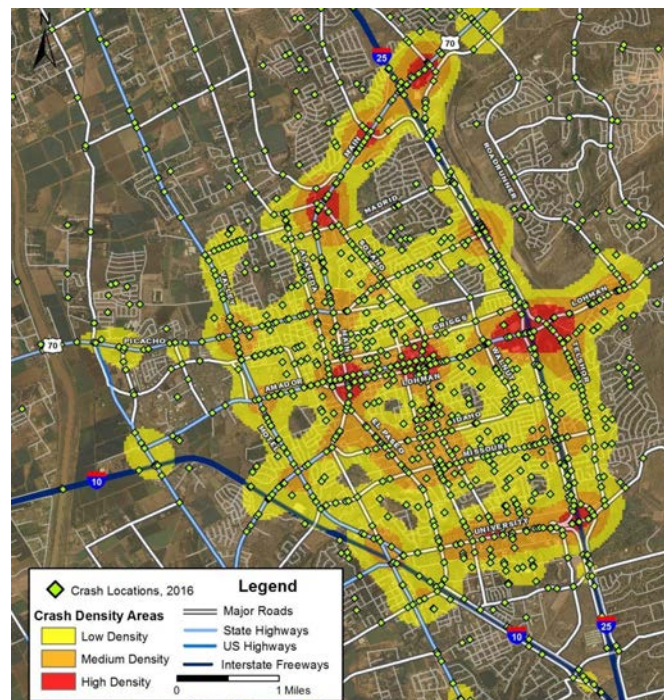


Source: New Mexico DOT Traffic Monitoring System

MOTOR VEHICLE CRASH DATA

Las Cruces ranked second in New Mexico for total number of motor vehicle crashes recorded during the period of 2012-2016. In that time period, an average of 3,327 crashes occurred annually. This is not unexpected as Las Cruces is the second most populous city in the state and crash instances typically correlates with population. When comparing the number of crashes per capita however, Las Cruces ranks fourth in New Mexico. In 2016, the community had 34.7 crashes per 1,000 residents. This ranks only behind Taos, Espanola, and Gallup. **Figure 2.13, Motor Vehicle Crashes (2008 - 2017)**, shows the total number of crashes in Las Cruces from 2008 to 2017. During that time period, there were 69 fatalities from auto accidents.

As with most communities, the majority of crashes in Las Cruces are located on roadways or at intersections of roadways with the largest traffic volumes. The intersection of Telshor Boulevard and Lohman Avenue had the highest number of crashes in 2016 (52). This intersection is considered the current hub of commercial activity in Las Cruces with the Mesilla Valley Mall located just south of this intersection. Several large commercial retailers and other commercial businesses are also located nearby. The intersections of Bataan Memorial West and Del Rey; and Triviz and North Main Street rank second with 42 crashes each.



The image above shows the density of crash locations in 2016. Areas in red represent the highest number of crashes and are primarily located along Lohman Avenue and Main Street.

SIGNALIZATION & SIGNAGE

There are presently 128 traffic signals in the City of Las Cruces. The Public Works Department's Traffic Management Section maintains all traffic signals and oversees the installation and maintenance of traffic control signs. There are several signalized intersections on NMDOT roadways in the City. These signalized intersections are maintained by the City under an agreement with the NMDOT. Traffic signs on state routes inside the city limits are maintained by the NMDOT.

ROADWAY MAINTENANCE

Pavement management is the process of planning budgeting, funding, designing, constructing, monitoring, evaluating, maintaining, and rehabilitating the pavement network to provide maximum benefits with available funds. The City of Las Cruces has identified an excess of 468.8 miles of major roadways encompassing over 9.7 million square yards of asphalt and concrete surfacing that will require preventative maintenance¹.

The City of Las Cruces presently utilizes a Pavement Management System to perform a pavement condition analysis on all city streets. This system was implemented in 2011. All roadways in the City are assessed every five (5) years. The last full analysis was completed in 2016. The pavement management system allows the City to develop a rehabilitation program that will fit into the established budget. This in turn allows the City to extend the life of existing streets and utilize available funding to its fullest potential.

The City of Las Cruces Street Management Section presently utilizes six (6) sweepers to clean streets. The goal is to sweep arterial roadways a minimum of once per month and each residential street a minimum of once every six (6) weeks. To accomplish this, the City has identified six (6) zones within the City limits and deploys all sweepers to a single zone for a period of one (1) week. This allows the City to sweep each street in a zone once every six (6) weeks.

BRIDGES

NMDOT oversees the bi-annual inspection of all bridges located on federal, state, county and city roads. The NMDOT contracts with New Mexico State University for all bridge inspections in the state and subsequently in Las Cruces. For purposes of inspection, a "bridge" generally includes bridge structures and culverts that are longer than 20 feet in length. "Drainage structures" typically include remaining structures that may allow for drainage under the roadway but are less than 20 feet in length.

The NMDOT has identified 25 bridges inside the Las Cruces City Limits. These bridges primarily accommodate storm water drainage under the roadway. The bi-annual inspections of all bridges in New Mexico is required by the FHWA.



The condition of City streets was among the highest concerns cited by participants of the Apodaca Blueprint community planning process.

¹ City of Las Cruces, Pavement Management Analysis Report



Interstates 10 and 25 (above) and Highway 70 are the primary highways within Las Cruces.

THOROUGHFARE ASSESSMENT

Las Cruces continues to experience residential and commercial growth in the area north and east of I-25. This places a demand on the City to ensure that the necessary roadway network is in place to accommodate the growth. The City's Major Thoroughfare Plan¹ identifies arterial and collector streets that need to be constructed in undeveloped areas of the City. The City design standards also identify required right-of-way widths for arterial, collector and local roadways.

The Las Cruces Land Development Code requires developers to fund 100 percent of the cost to construct local residential and collector streets within a new development. The code also requires new development to pay the cost to construct one half of arterial roadways that are directly adjacent to any property being developed. Although the Land Development Code ensures that low-volume streets are constructed and funded by private development, in instances of significant growth - such as during the mid to late 2000's - it has been difficult for the City to ensure that major arterial thoroughfares are constructed in their entirety and in a timely manner.

A constraint to constructing new arterial roadways are arroyos flowing from the Organ Mountains. The City of Las Cruces must continually consider the cost of funding arroyo crossings under new arterial roads. Past funding mechanisms have included a cost share between private developers and the City's Flood Control Fund. However, this has involved voluntary participation by private developers. This mechanism worked well to fund the arroyo crossings along Sonoma Ranch Boulevard but was not as successful for the expedient construction of crossings on Del Rey Boulevard and Roadrunner Parkway.

Overall, traffic volumes in most areas of the City of Las Cruces have shown little or no growth from 2013 to 2017. The two primary areas of congestion are North Main Street (U.S. 70) from Solano Drive to Del Rey Boulevard; and on Lohman Avenue from Solano Drive to Roadrunner Parkway. Both areas are east/west corridors through the City. The widening of North Main Street between Solano Drive and Elks Road has been identified by NMDOT in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan. This would replace the bridge over the outfall channel and add additional capacity to North Main Street (U.S. Highway 70). Additional improvements to add roadway capacity along Lohman Avenue between Solano Avenue and Telshor Boulevard may be difficult due to right-of-way constraints as this area is fully developed. Funding sources with the NMDOT or other sources will have to be identified by the City of Las Cruces to address any potential improvements along this corridor.

¹. See Volume I, *Elevate Las Cruces*.

TRANSIT NETWORK

As a community of over 100,000 persons, the provision of transportation options in Las Cruces is critical to ensure that traffic congestion does not significantly affect quality of life or hamper future growth. Las Cruces has invested in building a solid, albeit basic, transit system to connect major employers and other key destinations. However, as of 2017, less than 1 percent of commuters in Las Cruces used public transportation to travel to work.

Existing transit service in Las Cruces is primarily operated by RoadRUNNER Transit, which also serves the Town of Mesilla and the NMSU Campus. NMDOT and Doña Ana County also provide certain transit services within Las Cruces, which are described in this section.

ROADRUNNER TRANSIT

RoadRUNNER Transit offers two (2) distinct transit services:

- **Bus Service.** Currently in Las Cruces there are nine fixed-route bus routes, all but two of which are bi-directional. Buses run from 6:30 AM to 10:30 PM Monday through Friday and from 9:30 AM to 6:00 PM on Saturday. **Map 2.11, Existing Transit Service,** depicts the location of current fixed-route bus service and two (2) transfer points, from which several routes begin every hour or half hour. As indicated by **Table 2.18, Annual Roadrunner Transit System Ridership,** ridership has remained steady over time.
- **Demand Response Service.** RoadRUNNER also offers Dial-a-Ride, which is an on-demand type of service for senior citizens and individuals with disabilities. Qualified individuals can schedule an appointment ahead of time for door-to-door service. The available hours are the same as the fixed-route service and the fare is \$1.00 per one-way trip.

DOÑA ANA COUNTY

Doña Ana County Community College (DACC) operates a free shuttle service between the Mesilla Valley Mall and the DACC East Mesa Campus only while the semester is in session.

TABLE 2.18, ANNUAL ROADRUNNER TRANSIT SYSTEM RIDERSHIP (2003-2010)

FISCAL YEAR	ANNUAL RIDERSHIP
2010	601,782
2009	656,590
2008	671,727
2007	733,128
2006	691,649
2005	622,560
2004	602,573
2003	624,166

Source: RoadRUNNER Annual Ridership Summaries

AGGIE TRANSIT

RoadRUNNER Transit contracts with Aggie Transit to provide a free shuttle service in and around the NMSU campus. There are four (4) routes that operate every 20 minutes from 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM on Monday through Friday.

NEW MEXICO DOT PARK & RIDE

NMDOT operates a state-wide express bus service to key destinations within metropolitan areas; two (2) of these express routes serve Las Cruces Monday through Friday during the morning and afternoon peak times. The Silver Route provides express service from two (2) points in Las Cruces (US 70/I-25 interchange and NMSU campus) to the White Sands Missile Range. The Gold Route provides express service between downtown Las Cruces, NMSU, and the cities of Anthony and El Paso, Texas.

OTHER TRANSIT OPTIONS

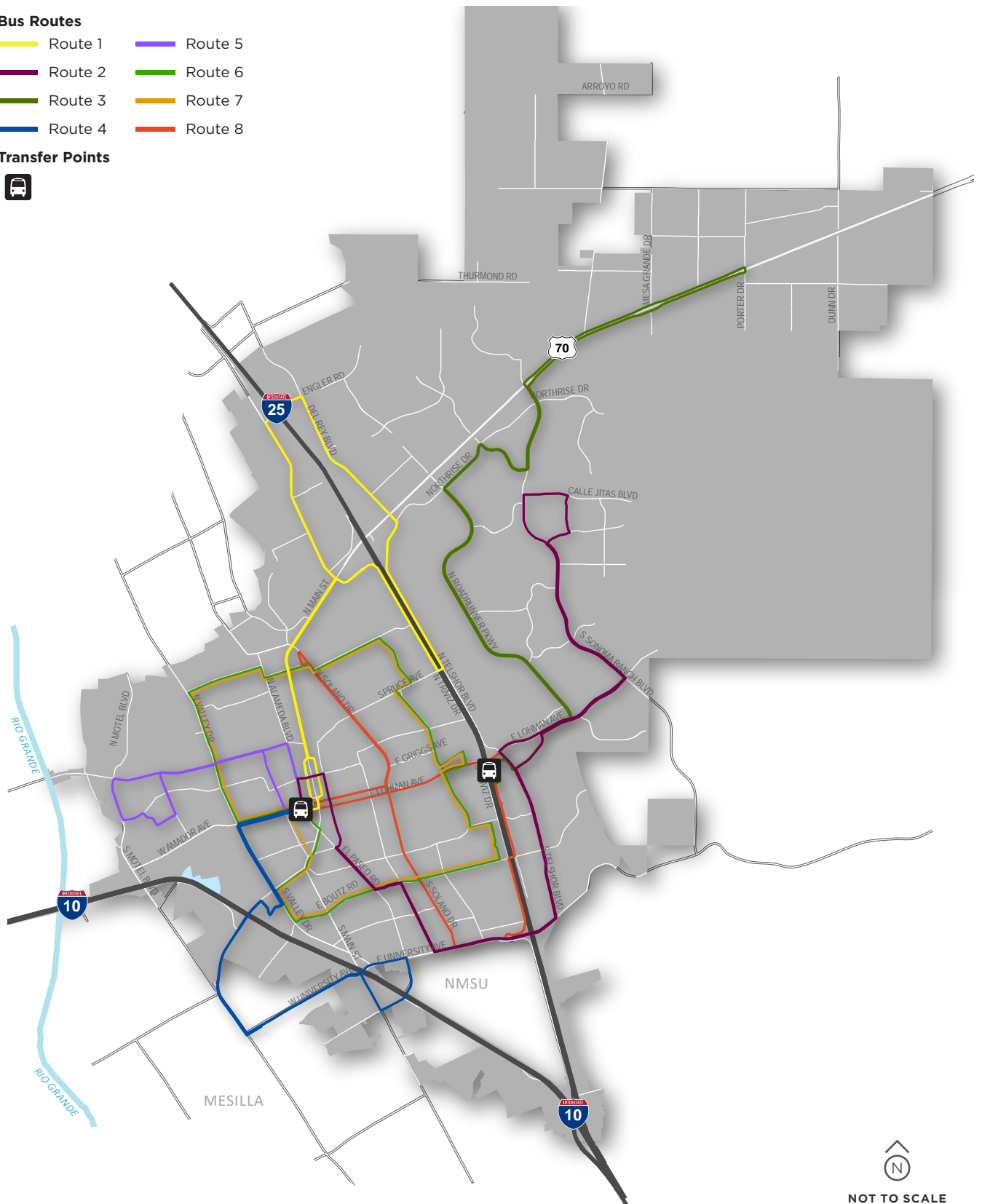
There are other private operators that provide services to seniors and disabled populations in Las Cruces such as Tresco, Inc. and Ben Archer Health Services. Las Cruces is also located along a Greyhound route from Los Angeles to Mexico. Additionally, there are private airport shuttles providing a connection from El Paso International Airport to Las Cruces. Private ride-sharing options such as Uber and Lyft are also available.

MAP 2.11, EXISTING TRANSIT SERVICE

Bus Routes

- Route 1
- Route 5
- Route 2
- Route 6
- Route 3
- Route 7
- Route 4
- Route 8

Transfer Points



NOT TO SCALE



The city's extensive sidewalk network can be enhanced by filling gaps and incorporating design features that increase user comfort.

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

Non-motorized options, such as sidewalks, bike lanes, and multi-use trails, are another critical component of the transportation system in Las Cruces. Safe, accessible active transportation options can lessen congestion and lead to a healthier community. In 2017, approximately 4.2 percent of Las Cruces commuters either walked or cycled to work, which is much higher than the percentage of commuters who took transit.

According to the recently completed Active Transportation Plan, today in Las Cruces, there are:

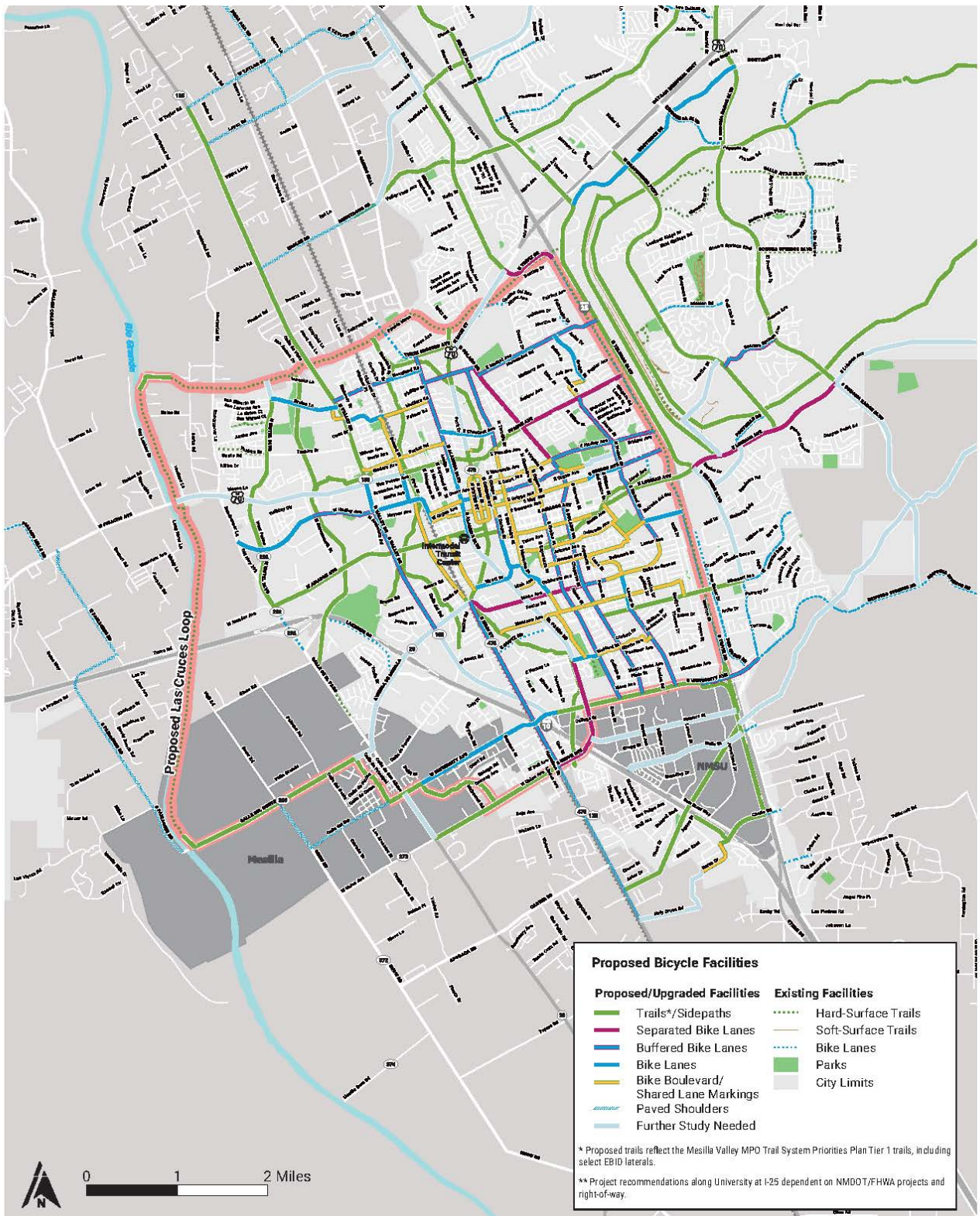
- 667 linear miles of sidewalk
- 35 miles of multi-use trails
- 73 miles of on-street bike lanes and paved shoulders
- 27 miles of shared streets

The longest multi-use trails in Las Cruces today are the Triviz Trail (4.5 miles), the Outfall Channel Main Trail (4.3 miles), Sonoma Ranch Trail (3.6 miles), and the La Llorona Trail (3.4 miles). According to user counts in the Transport 2040 Plan Update, the trails with the highest average daily usage are University Trail, followed by the Sonoma Ranch and Triviz trails.

The Active Transportation Plan also identifies corridors that have the highest instances of both pedestrian and bicycle crashes, the majority of which are concentrated in the central part of the city and near NMSU.

The Active Transportation Plan identifies “pedestrian focus areas” within which pedestrian enhancements should be prioritized. Typical investments may include: sidewalks, crosswalks, trails, and street trees. The Plan also proposes a 212 mile on-street and off-street network of bikeways that incorporates bicycle-only and shared use facilities. Approximately 113 miles of the proposed bikeway network is already constructed. Existing and proposed bikeway facilities are identified in **Figure 2.15, Proposed Bikeway Network** (facing page).

FIGURE 2.15, PROPOSED BIKEWAY NETWORK



Source: City of Las Cruces, Active Transportation Plan

RAILROAD NETWORK

Another component of the overall transportation system is railroad infrastructure. In Las Cruces, a Class 1 Railroad operated by Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) runs north/south through the city and serves as a freight corridor. The line starts in El Paso and travels north to Albuquerque. According to the New Mexico Rail Plan adopted in 2014, the line experiences an average of 15-25 trains per day. A rail depot is located just north of Lohman Avenue at Mesilla Street, which is also where the Las Cruces Railroad Museum is located.

Additionally, preliminary planning occurred roughly a decade ago to assess the feasibility of passenger rail service along the BNSF railway line between Las Cruces and El Paso; the Rail Plan cites the cost to be approximately \$900 million and no further study has been done to date. Furthermore, the State Rail Plan proposed developing a high-speed rail corridor between El Paso, Las Cruces, Albuquerque, and Denver. However, an initial planning study has not yet been conducted.

AVIATION NETWORK

The Las Cruces International Airport, located off I-10 west of downtown, is owned and operated by the City of Las Cruces. Since 2005 the airport has been used for general aviation by the U.S. government, NMSU, and private charters. National Guard helicopters are also housed at the airport. There are a total of three (3) runways and the airport is marketed as an ideal location for unmanned aerial activity and aviation testing. Commercial aviation for Las Cruces is served by El Paso International Airport, which is approximately 50 miles away from Las Cruces.

Moreover, Las Cruces' close proximity to the White Sands Missile Range and the Spaceport America site has attracted aviation-related companies to locate in and around Las Cruces. Virgin Galactic, a private spaceship building company that is a tenant of the Spaceport America, has recently built a professional office in Las Cruces.



Currently there is no passenger rail service in Las Cruces, just freight service along the BNSF Santa Fe line (above). The Las Cruces International Airport (below) is marketed as an ideal location for unmanned aerial activity and aviation testing.



ASSOCIATED PLANNING EFFORTS

The City of Las Cruces and Mesilla Valley MPO have both undergone several planning efforts related to improving mobility in Las Cruces. This section summarizes each of the recent major transportation planning initiatives.

LONG-RANGE TRANSIT PLAN

In 2011, the City adopted an update to the Long-Range Transit Plan, which sets a long-term vision for transit improvements and recommends both short and long-term investments in the transit system. From 2012 to 2040, the plan recommends a total of \$455 million dollars in investments for planning, marketing, service enhancement, infrastructure enhancements, and passenger information improvements.

TRANSPORT 2040

The Mesilla Valley MPO adopted an update to the region's long-range transportation plan in 2015, called Transport 2040. This document identifies multi-modal transportation needs for the MPO region for the next 20-25 years. In regards to transit, the plan identified adding high frequency local bus, commuter express bus, and bus rapid transit. From 2016 to 2040, the plan identified \$72.9 million dollars in transportation improvements.

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Adopted in 2018, the City of Las Cruces Active Transportation Plan provides a vision and framework for increasing opportunities to safely walk and cycle within the community. The primary recommendations included a 19 percent increase in bicycle facilities; 25 percent increase in on-street bike lanes and paved shoulders; 9 percent increase in shared streets; and, 47 percent increase in multi-use trails. The plan also prioritized projects over a 20+ year time frame.

MOBILITY KEY FINDINGS

Available data suggests that in most instances Las Cruces' current thoroughfare network efficiently accommodates existing traffic - with the exception of some key intersections - but there are gaps in roadway level of service data. There remain significant gaps in service and facilities related to bicycling, walking, and transit. The recently adopted Active Transportation Plan identified recommendations to improve options for cyclists and pedestrians. Additional key findings include:

- Las Cruces ranks second in the state for the most vehicle crashes.
- Traffic counts have not increased significantly over the past five (5) years, but the two (2) areas of congestion are US 70 from Solano Drive to Del Rey Boulevard and Lohman Avenue from Solano Drive to Roadrunner Parkway.
- The City has limited data on roadway level of service which inhibits the ability to accurately predict future areas of thoroughfare congestion.
- The municipal thoroughfare network is based on traffic function but does not consider roadway context based on the existing or desired built environment.
- A funding source specifically for traffic signal construction is needed.
- A need exists for more direct routes and frequent transit service to increase ridership, however land use densities in most areas do not appear to support high volumes in transit ridership.
- There is a need for first and last-mile connections to connect to existing fixed-route transit infrastructure.
- There are a lack of multi-use trails north of US 70 and within city core, but upcoming bond projects will start to alleviate this issue.
- An emphasis on healthy communities has led to an increased interest in improving bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

PUBLIC SERVICES

As presented in this Plan, “public services” refers to many of the remaining city services - including parks and recreation and public safety (fire and police) which have not otherwise discussed in other sections.

PARKS AND RECREATION

The City of Las Cruces’ municipal parks and recreation system is comprised of over 94 parks, open spaces, and facilities of varying scale that serve the residents of Las Cruces and the greater Mesilla Valley region. As with most communities, Las Cruces’ varying park types are principally classified according to their size and geographic service area. **Map 2.12, Las Cruces Municipal Parkland**, depicts the location of municipal parkland in Las Cruces.

In 2019, the City of Las Cruces updated the Parks and Recreation Master Plan that guides future investments in parks and recreation facilities. Building from standard industry practices, the Parks Master Plan classifies parkland in Las Cruces into a series of categories based on scale and/or function:

- Regional Parks
- Community Parks
- Neighborhood Parks
- Pocket Parks
- Linear Parks
- Special Use Parks
- Civic Parks
- Natural Area/Open Space



The spaces that comprise the Hadley Avenue Recreation Complex have been jointly reclassified as the City's first regional park.

LEVEL OF SERVICE

The 2012 Parks and Recreation Master Plan established acreage targets for three park classifications: community parks, neighborhood parks, and pocket parks. As of 2019, the City had met 86 percent of its acreage goal for these three (3) combined classifications.

The 2019 Plan has established new target levels of service for many of the City’s park classifications based on acreage and proximity to residential areas. For the first time, the City has established target levels of service for a series of common recreational facilities - many of which serve as “core” components of most municipal parks systems.

FUTURE SYSTEM NEEDS

The 2019 Parks and Recreation Master Plan includes 97 recommended actions to enhance the delivery of accessible parkland, recreational facilities, and recreational programming to the public. These recommendations were formulated through a four (4) tiered assessment of existing service including demand-based, resource-based, standards-based, and conditions-based assessment of the Las Cruces parks and recreation system.

While many of the Plan’s recommendations suggest ways to improve the efficiency of system administration, operations, and maintenance to meet daily public needs, some recommendations could result in more “apparent” changes to parks and recreation service delivery. A few highlights include:

- Establishment of an open space lands program;
- Adoption of a parkland dedication ordinance;
- Multi-use trail corridor easement reservation;
- Increases in indoor recreation space;
- Greater distribution of aquatics facilities;
- Additional community-scale parkland;
- Targeted investments in shade structures, lighting, and way-finding features; and,
- Emphasis on low-impact development and green building design practices.

TABLE 2.19, PUBLIC SAFETY EXISTING AND PROJECTED NEEDS

	2014-2018 AVERAGE CALL VOLUME	2045 PROJECTED CALL VOLUME ¹	2019 STAFFING	2045 PROJECTED STAFFING ¹
POLICE	143,013	198,620	181	273
FIRE	208	289	13 CREWS	18 CREWS
EMS	10,981	15,244		
ALARMS/PUBLIC ASSISTANCE	5,565	7,723		

¹ Based on estimated 2045 population of 141,565

Source: City of Las Cruces, Economics and Planning Systems.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Municipal public safety services are provided in the form of police, fire, and emergency medical services (EMS). A summary table of the existing and projected public safety needs is shown as **Table 2.19, Public Safety Existing and Projected Needs**.

The Las Cruces Police Department provides patrol, criminal investigation, special services, traffic services, and code and animal enforcement services. As of 2018, the Department included 181 sworn patrol officers, detectives, and general support staff. From 2014 to 2018, the average number of annual calls for service per officer was 1,403. In order to maintain current levels of police service, it is anticipated that an additional 62 patrol officers, 17 detectives, and 13 general support staff will be needed to serve the projected 2045 population.

The Las Cruces Fire Department responds to fire incidents aircraft emergencies, hazardous material releases, rescue situations, and public assistance calls. There are currently eight (8) engine companies, two (2) truck companies, three (3) squad units and two (2) Battalion Chiefs that respond to emergency calls from eight (8) stations. Engine and truck companies are staffed with three (3) to four (4) people, squad units are staffed with two (2) personnel and Battalion Chiefs are a single person unit that manages staffing and incident response daily. All response resources provide emergency medical care and the two squad units are capable of providing ambulance transport to local hospitals. The Department will acquire additional ambulances to be distributed among City Fire Stations, as funding allows. It is anticipated that an additional five (5) crews will be needed to serve the City’s 2045 population. The type of crew needed will depend on the location of new development.



The Las Cruces Police Department regularly engages with citizens during events (above left). Population growth may require additional crews to staff the City’s eight fire stations (above right).



A recurring public priority expressed during the comprehensive plan and parks & recreation master plan update process was for greater trail connectivity throughout the city.

ASSOCIATED PLANNING EFFORTS

PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN & PARK IMPACT FEE UPDATES

Adopted in 2020, the most recent Parks and Recreation Master Plan for Las Cruces serves as a strategic road map for future parks and recreation facilities and programming. The plan considered changing demographics, coordination with community partners, funding issues, and park system identity. Major recommendations included growing the City's athletic program, reinvestment in existing parks, pool expansion, partnership opportunities, and updated park impact fee rates.

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan was updated in 2019, establishing new targets for parkland, recreational facility, and recreational programming levels of service.

PUBLIC SAFETY DEVELOPMENT FEE UPDATE

The 2016 public safety development impact fee update established the level of development impact fees necessary to maintain fire, police, and EMS services for a growing population. The fiscal impact analysis conducted as part of this Plan - including updated land use assumptions - may require further public safety impact fee adjustments in the near future.

PUBLIC SERVICES KEY FINDINGS

Las Cruces maintains a quality parks and recreation system and has made great strides in implementing recommendations from the 2012 master plan. As Las Cruces continues to grow, the City will be challenged to maintain current levels of service for parks and recreation. Likewise, anticipated population growth will place demand on police and fire stations and crews and require more staff resources. Additional key findings include:

- Since the 2012 Parks and Recreation Master Plan, Las Cruces has met 86 percent of the parkland acreage goal set in that plan.
- Trails, shade, adult sports, and increased maintenance are the most commonly heard needs for parks and recreation in Las Cruces.
- Parkland and recreational facility additions have not resulted in improved accessibility to many of Las Cruces' residents.
- Additional indoor recreation space is needed to serve the current and projected population.
- Projected population growth by 2045 will necessitate an additional 62 patrol officers for the police department and 7 additional crews for the fire department.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Las Cruces is a culturally diverse community with a rich history. There is a highly active arts and cultural community and an emphasis on historic preservation in the city. This final section of the Community Profile highlights areas of historic and cultural significance in Las Cruces.

HISTORIC DISTRICTS & PROPERTIES

Within Las Cruces there are three (3) areas designated as National Historic Districts, as shown in **Map 2.14, Historic Properties in Las Cruces** (page 80). These districts include the Mesquite Historic District, the Alameda Depot Historic District, and the Mesilla Park Historic District.

The Mesquite Historic District represents the original town site for the City of Las Cruces and is along the southern portion of the El Camino Real. Today, the Mesquite neighborhood is an eclectic mix of homes and businesses with popular parks and plazas.

The Alameda Depot Historic District includes properties near Pioneer Park and along Alameda Boulevard. The district is also on the National Register of Historic Places due to the original railroad depot site. The district underwent a neighborhood plan in 2009 which outlined policies to maintain the character of the neighborhood even as new growth occurs.

The Mesilla Park Historic District is a neighborhood located west of New Mexico State University that contains a commercial strip, an industrial district, and a variety of residences. Landmarks include the W. E. Garrison Home, St. James Episcopal Church, and the Spanish-Pueblo Revival-style depot.

In addition to historic districts, there are also several individual properties that are considered historically significant and listed on the New Mexico Register of Historic Places. These sites are also shown on **Map 2.14**.

- YMCA Building (Air Science Building, NMSU)
- Nestor Armijo House
- Thomas Branigan Memorial Library
- Doña Ana County Courthouses
- Elephant Butte Irrigation District
- Fort Fillmore
- Fort Selden
- Foster Hall
- Goddard Hall
- Green Bridge
- Hadley-Ludwick House
- Mesilla Plaza
- Phillips Chapel CME Church
- Rio Grande Theatre
- University President's House (NMSU)



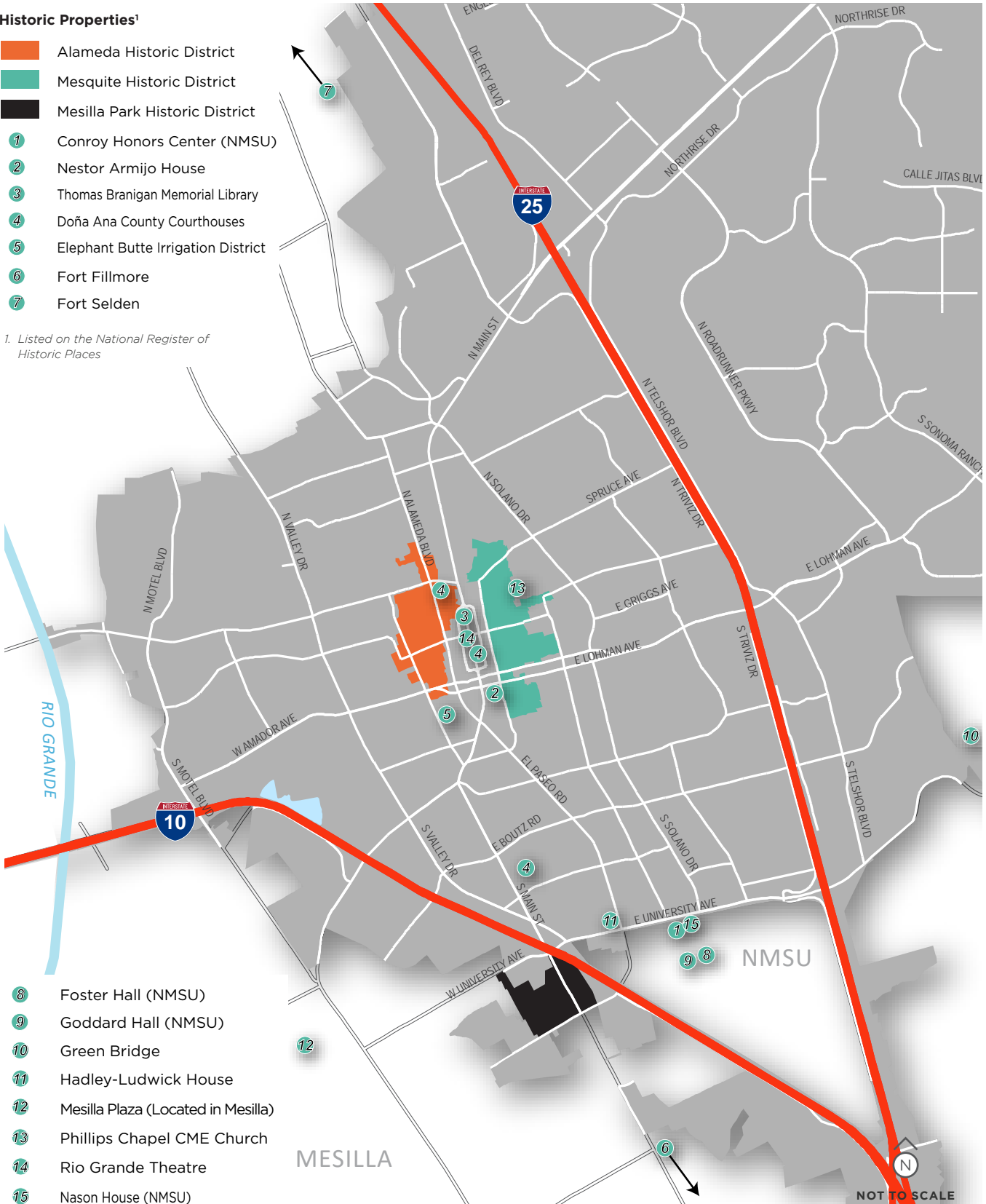
The Rio Grande Theatre (right) is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

MAP 2.14, HISTORIC PROPERTIES IN LAS CRUCES

Historic Properties¹

- Alameda Historic District
- Mesquite Historic District
- Mesilla Park Historic District
- 1 Conroy Honors Center (NMSU)
- 2 Nestor Armijo House
- 3 Thomas Branigan Memorial Library
- 4 Doña Ana County Courthouses
- 5 Elephant Butte Irrigation District
- 6 Fort Fillmore
- 7 Fort Selden

¹ Listed on the National Register of Historic Places



- 8 Foster Hall (NMSU)
- 9 Goddard Hall (NMSU)
- 10 Green Bridge
- 11 Hadley-Ludwick House
- 12 Mesilla Plaza (Located in Mesilla)
- 13 Phillips Chapel CME Church
- 14 Rio Grande Theatre
- 15 Nason House (NMSU)

SIGNIFICANT CULTURAL PLACES

In addition to Las Cruces' historic districts and properties, there are also several significant cultural places in the city. The community features multiple museums, theaters, galleries, and music venues.

Significant museums in Las Cruces include:

- Branigan Cultural Center
- Museum of Art
- Museum of Nature and Science
- New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum
- Zuhl Museum

Significant theaters in Las Cruces include:

- Black Box and No Strings Theatre Company
- Las Cruces Community Theatre
- Rio Grande Theatre

ARTS & CULTURAL GROUPS

Finally, there are many groups in Las Cruces dedicated to promoting and cultivating arts and culture. The City Art Board serves in an advisory capacity to the City Council in matters related to public art. Other groups in the City include the Artists Guild of Southern New Mexico, Foundation for Las Cruces Museums, Doña Ana Arts Council, Keep Las Cruces Beautiful, Las Esperanzas, Art Obscura, Historic Preservation Ad Hoc Committee, NMSU Art Gallery, Doña Ana County Historical Society, and Arts and Cultural District Coordinating Council.

As of 2019, the City is also preparing an Arts in Public Places Plan, which will identify strategies and policies related to promoting public art.



There are several theaters located in Las Cruces, including the Community Theatre (above). The City has invested in public art in places like the Municipal Complex (above).



ASSOCIATED PLANNING EFFORTS

LAS CRUCES DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

Adopted in 2016, the updated downtown master plan assesses development potential and defines implementation strategies for the downtown area. The plan is focused on three (3) main priorities: eliminate barriers between downtown and other neighborhoods, support the Plaza area with new development and redevelopment, and create a sense of arrival in downtown. The actions are organized according to the overarching themes of Comprehensive Plan 2040.

LAS CRUCES ARTS & CULTURAL DISTRICT PLAN

Developed in 2018, this plan proposes establishing an Arts and Cultural District in the downtown area. Spearheaded by the Downtown Las Cruces Partnership's, Arts and Cultural District Coordinating Council, the plan includes an overarching vision and goals for the district, identifies partners and resources, and prioritizes implementation strategies. The four (4) overarching goals on which the document is centered are 'Foster Economic Growth,' 'Improve the Community's Quality of Life,' 'Honor and Promote Las Cruces History and Culture,' and 'Community Engagement and Implementation.'

CULTURAL RESOURCES KEY FINDINGS

Historic preservation efforts are very important to many Las Cruces, especially in the older historic neighborhoods. The community's arts and culture scene is bolstered by the presence of NMSU and has coalesced around continuing initiatives to create a critical mass of cultural destinations in downtown. Additional key findings include:

- There are a significant number of historic and cultural districts, facilities, and features within the City, as well as organizations actively promoting historic preservation and visual and performing arts.

- Downtown Las Cruces is currently not designated as a national historic district, but there have been efforts to create an arts and cultural district. The Arts and Cultural District is officially recognized by the New Mexico Main Street Program and the State of New Mexico.
- The use of public grounds has become a way to showcase visual art installations in locations throughout the city.
- The City's National Historic Districts and Landmarks lack the protections against incompatible renovation or infill, or demolition by neglect, that are typically incorporated into local historic districts.



The Arts and Cultural District Plan proposed establishing a district with the above boundaries.

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ELEVATE
LAS CRUCES
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

 **City of Las Cruces**
MOUNTAINS OF OPPORTUNITY



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