



HIDALGO COUNTY 2011 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE



12/2011

Hidalgo County, New Mexico

Prepared by:



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Hidalgo County Comprehensive Plan Update

Hidalgo County, New Mexico

Board of County Commissioners

Richard Chaires, Commission Chair

Ed Kerr, Commissioner

Darr Shannon, Commissioner

County Management

John Salazar, County Manager

Carmen Acosta, County Clerk

Tisha Green, Asst. to County Manager

Southwest New Mexico Council of Governments

Priscilla Lucero, Executive Director

Comprehensive Plan Task Force

Belinda Chavez Brenda Hood

Dick Davis Ed Kerr

Edmund Saucedo Harriet Shultis

Roger Ellis Priscilla Lucero

Mary Ann Burton Traci Burnsed

Trini Kellogg Kim Kvamme

John Salazar

Consultant Team

CommunityByDesign

621 Vassar Drive NE

Albuquerque, NM 87106

505-508-3361

and

Southwest Planning and Marketing

Wilson and Company

Adopted December, 2011

The Hidalgo County Comprehensive Plan Update was made possible by a CDBG planning grant from the Local Government Division of the NM Department of Finance and Administration administered by the Southwest New Mexico Council of Governments.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

HIDALGO COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. VISION STATEMENT	2
3. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION	3
4. COMMUNITY PROFILE.....	5
REGIONAL SETTING.....	5
HISTORY AND CULTURE.....	5
COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS.....	15
5. LAND AND WATER ELEMENT	21
A. LAND AND WATER EXISTING CONDITIONS	21
B. LAND AND WATER GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:.....	29
6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT	32
A. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EXISTING CONDITIONS.....	32
B. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:	39
7. HOUSING ELEMENT.....	42
A. HOUSING EXISTING CONDITIONS	42
B. HOUSING GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:.....	51
8. INFRASTRUCTURE/COMMUNITY FACILITIES ELEMENT	53
A. INFRASTRUCTURE/COMMUNITY FACILITIES EXISTING CONDITIONS.....	53
B. INFRASTRUCTURE/COMMUNITY FACILITIES GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:	67
9. TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT	69
A. TRANSPORTATION EXISTING CONDITIONS.....	69
B. TRANSPORTATION GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:	71
10. HAZARDS MITIGATION ELEMENT	73
A. HAZARDS MITIGATION EXISTING CONDITIONS	73
B. HAZARD MITIGATION GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:	75
11. IMPLEMENTATION ELEMENT.....	76
APPENDICES.....	78

1. INTRODUCTION

This document updates the 2004 Hidalgo County Comprehensive Plan to describe and respond to conditions in 2011. The changing needs and conditions in the County have been studied and this update to the Hidalgo County Comprehensive Plan reflects the current needs and vision of the community residents. The Hidalgo County Comprehensive Plan is a policy document that establishes what the residents, property owners and other stakeholders would like to see in the future for the County. Through a framework of community values, goals and strategies, the Comprehensive Plan defines the direction in which the County Commissioners should guide the County.

The Comprehensive Plan does not change any existing, nor create any new, laws, regulations or requirements, but it does recommend policies that suggest changes to these implementation tools. An approved Comprehensive Plan is an advisory document of the County that establishes a basis for the regulations and programs necessary to manage current and future development within the County. The Plan identifies and analyses growth and development issues and indicates how the local residents and their elected officials envision the community developing in the next 20 years.

The Comprehensive Plan defines a Community Vision and describes the seven Elements of:

- Land and Water
- Economic Development
- Housing
- Transportation
- Infrastructure/Community Facilities'
- Hazards Mitigation
- Implementation

For each Element, there is an overview of the existing conditions/issues, followed by a set of Values, Goals, and Implementation Strategies established for each Element.

- Goals are statements of a desirable state or condition to be achieved in the future;
- Implementation strategies are action tasks such as policy statements, new regulations, or "next steps" needed to achieve the desired goal. The Implementation Strategies for all the Elements are listed and prioritized in the Implementation Element.

It should be noted that the implementation of some of these strategies, such as for grants, may require a match of monies or in-kind services from the County, or require an increase in County expenditures for maintenance or capital improvements.

The implementation of the Comprehensive Plan will be overseen by an Implementation Committee that will be appointed by the County Manager and Commissioners and be representative of the diverse community interests. The role of the Implementation Committee will be to coordinate, facilitate and direct the implementation of the strategies identified for each of the Elements of the Plan. The Committee will report directly to the County Manager and Commissioners on their activities and provide recommendations on the capital improvement plan, and legislative budget requests and initiatives. The Hidalgo County Comprehensive Plan Update is a living document that is intended to be updated and amended as programs and regulations are implemented and conditions within the County change and evolve.

2. VISION STATEMENT

HIDALGO COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

Hidalgo County is where our families lead healthy productive lives, raise children and have opportunities that keep generations here. The County is economically sustainable with housing, jobs, entertainment, medical services and shopping. Our rural agricultural lifestyle is a viable and locally-based production that meets our needs. Our high quality of life provides for clean and healthy water, air, and land. Our natural resources are pristine and provide opportunities for ecotourism and renewable management. The communities within the county are instilled with a deep community pride and collaborate to reach common goals throughout all aspects of the community socially, culturally, and between private and public organizations.

3. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

A comprehensive and community-based planning process was used in developing the Comprehensive Plan for Hidalgo County. This approach involved citizen driven process which had three major components: a Comprehensive Plan Task Force; several interviews with community leaders and stakeholders; community input through a community planning workshop and a community open house/workshop held on the draft plan.

The 12-person Comprehensive Plan Task Force included community leaders and residents of Hidalgo County representing diverse interests and geographical locations. Their input was integral in the development of this plan, providing insights on community values, process and issues to be addressed during the plan completion. The Task Force met monthly from Fall 2010 through Fall 2011. They were central in the drafting a long term vision statement for the County and Goals for the six plan elements: Land and Water, Economic Development, Housing, Infrastructure/Community Facilities, Transportation and Hazard Mitigation. This hard-working group of community members also reviewed implementation strategies for each of the goals.

Public workshops were conducted in the County during the planning process. A series of workshops were held in Lordsburg, Rodeo, Animas/Cotton City and Virden in October, 2011. In these workshops the participants developed and prioritized the Implementation Strategies to achieve the goals for each of the Elements. The results of this prioritization are in Chapter 11: Implementation. The final workshop was held in December, 2011 with the County Commissioners for the adoption of the plan. All of the workshops were highly interactive, structured to engage resident participation in the process.

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Based on discussions with the Task Force and the community, the following issues and opportunities were identified. The intent of the Comprehensive Plan will be to minimize or eliminate the issues and weaknesses, and build on and strengthen the opportunities and assets.

KEY ISSUES (listed in order of highest agreement)

- Affordable Housing: lacking and substandard (housing in general)
- Economic Development: lack of office/retail
 lack of promoting assets
 need of employment opportunities (livable wage)
- Workforce: training and development inadequate
 need career opportunities
- Border and Safety
- Community Pride: lacking (clean and enforcement)

3. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

- Services: social services lacking
programs on housing & food lacking
- Infrastructure: inadequate
roads are inadequate
- Rural/remoteness
- Education/Cultural: opportunities lacking
- Health & Emergency Services inadequate
- Agricultural viability

KEY ASSETS/OPPORTUNITIES (listed in order by highest agreement)

- Proximity to I-10 and markets
- Open space/natural beauty/ecotourism
- Renewable energy ventures
- Year-round mild climate
- Low cost of living
- Land available and inexpensive
- Quality of life/rural lifestyle
- Rail access
- Agricultural productivity
- Port of Entry/Border Patrol Stations with Silver LEED certifications
- Playas Training & Research Center (PTRC)
- HC Learning Center – WNMU
- Strong Housing Market
- Minerals and Mining

4. COMMUNITY PROFILE

REGIONAL SETTING

Hidalgo County is a rural area located in the most southwestern part of New Mexico, contiguous to Arizona on the west and Mexico on the south. The land area is 3,446 square miles. The population density per square mile of land area is 1.4. The major communities in the county are Lordsburg, Virden, Animas, Rodeo, Playas and Cotton City. Lordsburg is the largest town, the county seat and the "market center" for Hidalgo County. Several hundred farms and ranches are scattered throughout the county. Interstate 10 (I-10) is the major east-west highway in the county and the east-west railroad line for Amtrak and freight runs through Lordsburg.

Hidalgo County's remote location from metropolitan centers has significant impacts on the economy of the area and on the ability of social service providers to meet the needs of the population. This rural area is designated as "frontier", and distances and travel time are great to retail and commercial centers, and to other important services - health services in particular. Remoteness also means that Hidalgo County residents - few in numbers and far way from Albuquerque and the capital in Santa Fe - are often invisible and relatively without influence to secure the public services and other benefits of government that are needed, and that other counties often disproportionately enjoy.

HISTORY AND CULTURE

Hidalgo County was formed from Grant County in 1919. The new county is said to have been named for the patriot priest, Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla who in 1810 led the revolt that resulted in Mexico's independence. When the county was created, some local citizens proposed that it be called Pyramid, for the Pyramid Mountains, but the name Hidalgo was chosen instead.

This small panhandle of southwestern New Mexico that is now Hidalgo County was essentially a frontier area in prehistoric times, principally occupied by small groups from the Mimbres area to the north and Casas Grandes area to the south, but receiving some influences, and possibly people, from the east and west. In terms of the aboriginal populations, the Animas Valley appears to have been more important than the Hachita Valley. Beginning in the region of present Animas, and continuing southward to the boundary of Mexico, a series of raised bench systems extend into the Animas Valley from the Peloncillos on the west and from the Animas Mountain escarpment on the east. The entire arrangement of the benches, with their wide, flat, well-drained surfaces, furnished aboriginal populations with ideal spots for camping, village construction and good defensive positions. Many of the most important archaeological sites in the area date from the fifteenth century.

In modern times, the Hidalgo County was important in settlement of the west, with a rich history related to mining and the movement of people and commerce along the southern border of the emerging United States, including railroad lines and the important overland stage routes. The Civil War was also fought on Hidalgo County soil, in large part in the struggle to claim the mineral wealth of the area; and the confederates from Texas hoped to open up a clear path to the riches of California. The Apaches also played an important role in the history of the area at the turn of the century, as part of the last resistance to the military prowess of the United States.

4. COMMUNITY PROFILE

Lordsburg has been the perfect stop along the route from east to west throughout the days of the Old West. It continues to play an important role along the same transportation routes that first pulled settlers and travelers to the area. Lordsburg was part of the famous Butterfield Stage route and the Southern Pacific Railroad (SP) connecting Tucson with El Paso, Texas. The El Paso and Southwestern Railroad (EP&SW), built and originally owned by Phelps Dodge, ran through the southern part of Hidalgo County from Bisbee, Arizona, passing through Rodeo, Animas, Playas Junction and Hachita on its way to El Paso. Phelps Dodge also built a connector line from Lordsburg to Hachita, the Lordsburg and Hachita Railway, and a branch line from Lordsburg to Clifton, Arizona, the Arizona and New Mexico. When the SP acquired the EP&SW in 1924, it pulled up the tracks between Lordsburg and Hachita, but remnants of the roadbed still are visible in several locations, as are remnants of the former EP&SW.

In 1927, the city was one of the stops on Charles Lindbergh's famous transcontinental flight. The authentic ghost towns of Shakespeare and Steins are nearby attractions. Lordsburg also holds the honor of being the birthplace of the New Mexico State song. Lordsburg and the surrounding area of Hidalgo County enjoy 360 days of sunshine each year.

Hidalgo County: A County of Communities

Hidalgo County is a county of widespread and diverse rural communities. In addition to Lordsburg, the market center and county seat and the center of population in the county, Hidalgo County includes several traditional farming and ranching communities: Virden, Animas, Playas, Cotton City, and Rodeo. Virden and Animas still maintain distinctive identities as farming and ranching centers. Rodeo still maintains its ranching tradition, but it is becoming known more for tourism and as a home for retirees. The Playas area includes the Playas Townsite, a collection of homes and facilities physically organized like a small town, built by Phelps Dodge and simply named "Playas." Playas is now owned by NM Tech and is operated as a national training center for security personnel in conjunction with the United States Department of Homeland Security.

Colonias. Hidalgo County is a county of colonias, a Spanish term for neighborhood. According to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), a colonia, is a community within 150 miles of the U.S.-Mexico border which lacks potable water supplies, adequate sewage systems and safe and sanitary housing. These are generally rural, unincorporated settlements characterized by poverty, substandard housing, inadequate roads, poor drainage, and substandard or no water and sewer facilities. Although several communities meet the legal definition of colonia, they have not all been officially designated as colonias by the County. Several Hidalgo County colonias offer electricity and piped-in water, and many have wastewater systems. While these amenities are improvements for colonia residents, frequently the conditions would not be acceptable in more affluent areas of the state. Hidalgo County has seven designated colonias according to HUD. These include two incorporated communities, Lordsburg and Virden, and five unincorporated colonias; Cotton City, Rodeo, Del Sol, Windmill and Glen Acres.

Lordsburg. The City of Lordsburg is the largest incorporated municipality, the market center and county seat for Hidalgo County. (The Village of Virden is the only other incorporated municipality in the county.) Lordsburg is located along a major east-west rail line and is situated 44 miles (71 km) southwest of Silver City. Lordsburg is a trade center for an area whose economy has historically included cattle, vegetables, cotton, chilies, jalapenos, wheat, oats, barley, alfalfa and minerals - with

4. COMMUNITY PROFILE

copper, silver, gold, and lead mines in the vicinity. Lordsburg is the taking-off point for nearby historic mining towns, primarily Shakespeare Ghost Town and Stein's Ghost Town.

Lordsburg has had a post office since 1881. It was created on October 18, 1880 when the Southern Pacific Railroad (SPRR) reached the city from the west, and the fledging camp soon had a population of railroad workers, freighters, cowboys, gamblers, and merchants. One version is that the town took the surname of a man who had a chain of eating establishments along the railroad line. Another version is that it was the name of the engineer in charge of the construction crew.

The version most widely accepted for the city's name is that it recalls Dr. Charles H. Lord, a New York native who came west during the Civil War and stayed to become one of Tucson's leading citizens. He and a partner started a banking and wholesale distributing business, Lord and Williams. When the railroad freight handlers at the new southern NM Camp, still unnamed, came to a piece of the company's merchandise, they simply called out "Lords", a code name everyone knew, and in time the camp took the name of Lordsburg. Lordsburg Mesa is located outside of Lordsburg.

Viriden is in the northwestern corner of Hidalgo County, on the Gila River about 30 miles northwest of Lordsburg. The rural incorporated Village of Viriden is a stone's throw from Arizona. Most residents find their daily lives connected more with the larger community of Duncan Arizona just across the state line. Viriden is connected to Lordsburg (and to Duncan) by a principal east-west highway (US 70), and many residents commute daily to Lordsburg to places of employment. The town was founded as Richmond, but changed its name when Mormon Settlers in 1912 purchased the valley from Earnest W. Viriden, president of the Gila Ranch Company that owned most of the land in the valley.

Viriden has a rich and varied history. In the 1870's and 1880's, the area was promoted for silver mining. Within a few years the ore played out and the rugged land proved unprofitable to farm. From 1912 to 1916, Mormons immigrated to the area. A large contingent arrived to join friends already living in the area after having been forced from their homes in Mexico. These Mormon colonists had been living in Chihuahua, Mexico, and were forced to leave by the revolutionists. Seeking new land on which to establish farms and homes, they negotiated with the Gila Ranch Company for local land. Today many of the community of about 140 persons are descendants of these Mormon settlers from Mexico.

Many of the residents of Viriden now make their living in whole or in part by commuting to work primarily in Lordsburg. While scores of families once made their living almost exclusively from the land, in recent years land ownership patterns have changed and now only a few families own most of the land and make their living exclusively or primarily from farming and ranching. Households still maintain smaller farms (100-200 acres or smaller), but viable agricultural enterprises now require thousands of acres of land.

Glen Acres is north of and adjacent to the City of Lordsburg. There are approximately 237 people live in the colonia, which is entirely residential.

Rodeo. The small unincorporated town of Rodeo is located at an elevation of 4,128 ft in the San Simon Valley, a wide desert valley with the Chiricahua Mountains to the west. Rodeo lies on the

4. COMMUNITY PROFILE

western slopes of the Peloncillo Mountains along a former rail line. It is situated today along US 80 approximately 34 miles south of Interstate 10 and more than 50 miles from Lordsburg. Located at the eastern edge of the county, Arizona is less than a mile from Rodeo to the west and southwest. The town of Rodeo is unincorporated.

A post office was established in Rodeo 1903, just after the El Paso and Southwestern Railroad (EP&SW RR) extended its line in 1902 from Douglas, Arizona to Antelope Pass in the Peloncillo Mountains. {For more on the EP&SW RR, see section below on Playas.) Rodeo served as a siding, water stop and station. The town's survival depended on the railroad's operation, bringing travelers on passenger trains and local ranchers bringing cattle for shipment. Rodeo soon became the most important shipping point for livestock in the area. The town's Spanish name Rodeo is appropriate for a town that was the roundup area for cattle shipped to market from the surrounding area.

The Southern Pacific's "Golden State Limited" and "Californian" passenger trains passed through Rodeo until 1952. The station closed in 1962, and most of the buildings and other structures used by the railroad are now gone or just the foundations remain. Rodeo is one of the few towns located along the El Paso and Southwestern Railroad route that is still populated. The town today depends in large part on local ranchers and travelers in need of food or gas as they drive along US Highway 80 between Douglas, Arizona and Road Forks, New Mexico. Rodeo is just across the border from Portal in Arizona and there is a strong connection between the two communities.

Animas is a rural farming community in the Animas Valley in the southern part of the county, an unincorporated village of about 300 persons. There is no "town" in the traditional sense; Animas consists primarily of the school district (with some of the longest bus rides in the state), a church, a post office, a telephone office, a mercantile, an auto service, and one café. Nearby is a convenience store with a bar, gas, and sundries. The center of the Animas community is at the junction of NM 9 and NM 338, 11 miles south of Cotton City.

Animas was on the Phelps Dodge railroad line through southwestern New Mexico that began in 1901 and closed in 1962. Animas has had a post office since 1909. No one knows for sure where Animas got its name, but there are many landmarks in the area that carry the name. Local lore has it that Animas may be built upon an ancient Indian village. At least one source indicates that in 1753 the Spanish, in their quest for copper, gold, and silver, settled the site of present-day Animas. In Spanish, Animas translates to souls of the dead, lost souls or spirit.

Cotton City is located 16 miles south of 1-10 along NM 338, a few miles north of Animas. Originally called Valley View at the time of its founding just after the turn of the century, the name was changed in 1949 to Cotton City, though certain portions of it are still known as Valley View. Cotton City is a rural farming community with three churches. The area households are located along a 5-6 mile stretch of the main roadway. In the past, large crops of beans were grown in the areas, and cotton was once the primary crop, but chilies are now a favored crop.

The Cotton City area is mostly a farming area, but there are also a few ranches. The largest influx of settlers occurred between 1925-1930, when Mormon farmers arrived from the Virden Valley. They found land and water, but unlike their neighbors in Virden, they had to drill wells to sustain agricultural production. Water was found at reasonable depths and in sufficient quantities to

4. COMMUNITY PROFILE

maintain agriculture in the region - now for three quarters of a century. Recently, however, there is evidence that the entire Animas Valley is threatened with declining water tables that could eventually jeopardize agricultural production in the area.

Playas and Playas Townsite. The current Playas Townsite, located roughly 12 miles east of Animas, was established approximately 40 years ago by Phelps Dodge Corporation as a company town to house its workers and facilities for the Playas smelter. New Mexico Tech purchased the abandoned townsite in 2004 to operate as the Playas Training and Research Center (PTRC), complete with more than 250 homes and 1200 acres of surrounding land. PTRC operates as a training facility for border protection exercises, anti-terrorism and first responders training, hostage negotiations instruction and emergency preparedness, among others. While most of the town's original structures are utilized for training exercises, a small staff lives at the townsite and temporary housing is available for groups during training. Certain town amenities, such as a bank and day care center, are available for use by those associated with PTRC and by neighboring residents.

Located at an elevation of 4,311 feet, the Townsite of Playas is located in the Playas Valley, bordered on the west by the Animas Mountains and on the east by the Little Hatchet Mountains. The modern history of the area goes back much further than the 1970's. Several mining operations existed in the Little Hachet Mountains, and the area is dotted by abandoned mine sites that in the late 1880's produced turquoise, silver, and other valuable ores.

The site for the original town of Playas was selected in 1902 because of the valley's ample water supply that was needed for a railroads operation. The El Paso and Southwestern Railroad Company of Texas operated a railroad between the Arizona/New Mexico border and El Paso. Communities grew up along the tracks — adding schools, churches, businesses, and sidings if not depots. A relatively small community developed around Playas populated by railroad employees who serviced trains on the siding.

The railroad was largely an enterprise of the Phelps Dodge Corporation. The El Paso and Southwestern Railroad linked El Paso with the copper mines of Bisbee, Arizona, and eventually with several other mining towns throughout the region. In 1924, the Southern Pacific Company took control of the El Paso and Southwestern system. The EP&SW railroad ceased operation on December 20, 1961. Rails and ties were torn up and railroad properties sold to salvage companies. Now not much remains of Playas Siding except some cattle pens and stockyards. Highway 9, New Mexico's "Border Route" between Columbus and Rodeo, follows the old rail line and actually utilizes a portion of the abandoned EP&SW railroad bed between Columbus and Anapra.

Playas Smelter. Years after operation of the railroad ceased (1961), Phelps Dodge Corporation built a copper smelter about 10 miles south of "Playas Siding" on the Playas Lake. Playas Township was built as a company town to provide employees of the smelter a place to live in this remote desert area. The smelter was closed in 1999, and employees were ordered to move out of Playas Townsite by June 1, 2000.

Antelope Wells is on NM 81, just north of the Mexican border. First settled in 1847, it is known as the southernmost settlement in New Mexico. The name comes from an old ranch, located 2.5 miles (4.0 km) north of the current community. The village currently has no inhabitants. The United States

4. COMMUNITY PROFILE

operates a small Land Port of Entry solely for non-commercial traffic. The U.S. government is currently modernizing the Port of Entry and creating facilities for a Forward Operating Base for the Border Protection Services.

Hachita is actually in Grant County but is so close to Hidalgo County and so far away from any settlement in Grant County that it seems more connected to Hidalgo County. It is located on NM 9 and NM 8 (NM 146), and is a hub for traffic that out of Hachita in all directions. In 1875, a mining camp developed in the Hachita Mountains. It produced lead, cooper, turquoise, and silver. By 1884, the settlement had over 300 citizens. In 1900, the EP&SW RR laid tracks 9 miles east of Hachita and the community drifted between two settlements until there were two places named Hachita, Old Hachita and New Hachita. The Railroad pulled up its tracks and the old Hachita disappeared, but the new Hachita remains. Residents of the area today are primarily ranchers, and most of them have a stronger connection to Lordsburg and to Hidalgo County than to Grant County.

Historic Towns of Hidalgo County. Many historic towns and townsites exist in Hidalgo County, mostly mining towns, railroad towns or way stations along the route of the Butterfield Stage. Some are in good shape and restoration efforts are underway, while others are truly ghost towns with no residents and in some cases only foundations of buildings that once housed ever-hopeful miners looking for their fortunes.

Cloverdale in the most southwestern part of Hidalgo County was founded as farming and ranching community. In the 1880's the Cloverdale Ranch was established about one mile from the present site of the town. In 1889 the Victor Land and Cattle Company acquired the land, other ranches were established and the number of residents in the general area grew. The town of Cloverdale was established in the second decade of the twentieth century. However, there is little reliable information about its beginning. The remains of the old town are in decline. There is an old deserted store built in 1918, an abandoned flagstone house and an old wooden dance pavilion, once a lively spot on Saturday nights. The community was rather widespread and never had a population of more than two hundred persons. It had a post office from 1912 to 1943, and when the post office closed, the community has been served by the post office in Animas. In the early 1900's Cloverdale was the site of a popular annual picnic to which cattlemen and their families traveled from many parts of the country. The land south of Animas, including Cloverdale, is today primarily used for ranching, and a few ranching families live in the area. The Gray Ranch is the largest ranch remaining in the southern part of the county. It has become a laboratory for studying old and new ways of sustainable ranching; a unique partnership between traditional cowboys and rangeland ecologists.

Shakespeare. Shakespeare Ghost Town is a privately owned historic mining town in Hidalgo County just a few miles from Lordsburg. It has been selected to the New Mexico Heritage Preservation Alliance's list of Most Endangered Places. It is one of eleven significant historic resources in New Mexico, and has been a National Historic site since 1970. Shakespeare has had several names through the years and only acquired its present one in 1879 at the beginning of its second mining boom. The site for the town was chosen because there was a small but reliable spring located in the arroyo west of the town - hence its early name, Mexican Spring. This reliable water source attracted many people. Indians who ground mesquite beans left their metates scattered about, probably a few Spaniards stopped by, and then some of the forty-niners who were taking the southern route to the gold fields of California watered their stock at this little spring.

4. COMMUNITY PROFILE



About 1856 the Army built a building at the site, evidently to serve as a relay station on the Army Mail line between Fort Thorn on the Rio Grande and Fort Buchanan, south of Tucson. The spring served as an alternate stopping place for the San Antonio and San Diego mail line and later by the first Butterfield coaches. The Civil war brought soldiers from both sides, with the Texas Confederates seeking a route to California's gold fields. During this time one or two more buildings were built at Mexican Spring by the soldiers, the largest one was later referred to as the "old stone fort."

With the close of the Civil War, a new stage line was started and for a while during this period, the little settlement was called Grant. In 1870, local prospectors discovered samples of very rich silver ore in the surrounding hills, and mining operations were financed by William Ralston, President of the Bank of California. The town experienced a boom period with more than 3000 residents, but soon the rich silver mined out and a great diamond hoax in 1872 caused the town to empty of people. In 1879, the town was renamed and with new financing the Shakespeare Gold and Silver Mining and Milling Company, the town enjoyed a second boom. However, when the new railroad bypassed Shakespeare, the new railroad town of Lordsburg was the death knell for the town. In 1907 a new copper mine helped the town to recover somewhat, but never to its earlier heights. In 1935, the town and buildings were purchased by Frank and Rita Hill for a ranch. They maintained the buildings as well as they could with limited resources. The Hill's daughter continues to work toward preserving the town as a monument to the Real Old West, in spite of a devastating fire in 1997 and other obstacles to their work. Hidalgo County and Lordsburg officials and citizen groups are working with the Hill family to establish Shakespeare as the kind of tourist attraction that can truly benefit the economy of Hidalgo County.

Steins (pronounced "Steens") is a second Ghost Town near Lordsburg that has many preserved buildings and is a tourist attraction. The mining town began in the late 1800's and following some successes suffered the fate of other historic towns in the area. Steins Post Office was established in 1888 and discontinued in 1944. Steins was first named Doubtful Canyon due to the constant threat of Indians. Captain Stein, for whom the town was named, was killed at the site resulting in the naming of Steins Pass. A few years later, gold and other minerals were discovered here and the town was born as Doubtful Canyon. In 1902, there were 35 registered voters, but many more residents.

4. COMMUNITY PROFILE

The current site of Steins is actually a few miles east of the original Doubtful Canyon. Steins survival through the 1940's is due to the fact that Steins was also a rail station on the Southern Pacific. Today, Steins can be seen just off Interstate 10 west of Lordsburg.

Valedon is a small historic mining town near Lordsburg that had its beginning in 1885 with the discovery of gold, silver and copper ores located by three prospectors. The property in time passed through the hands of several owners and in 1913 the Eighty-Five Mining Company acquired the property, sank a shaft and the town began to grow. By 1926, the town had a population of two thousand residents, a theater, several boardinghouses, various stores and a two-room school. Phelps Dodge Company bought the property in 1931 and a year later discontinued operations. The Banner Mining Company now has operations in the area including the Valedon mines that are occasionally worked. The Townsite is private property and consists of an extensive assortment of building foundations and partially collapsed walls



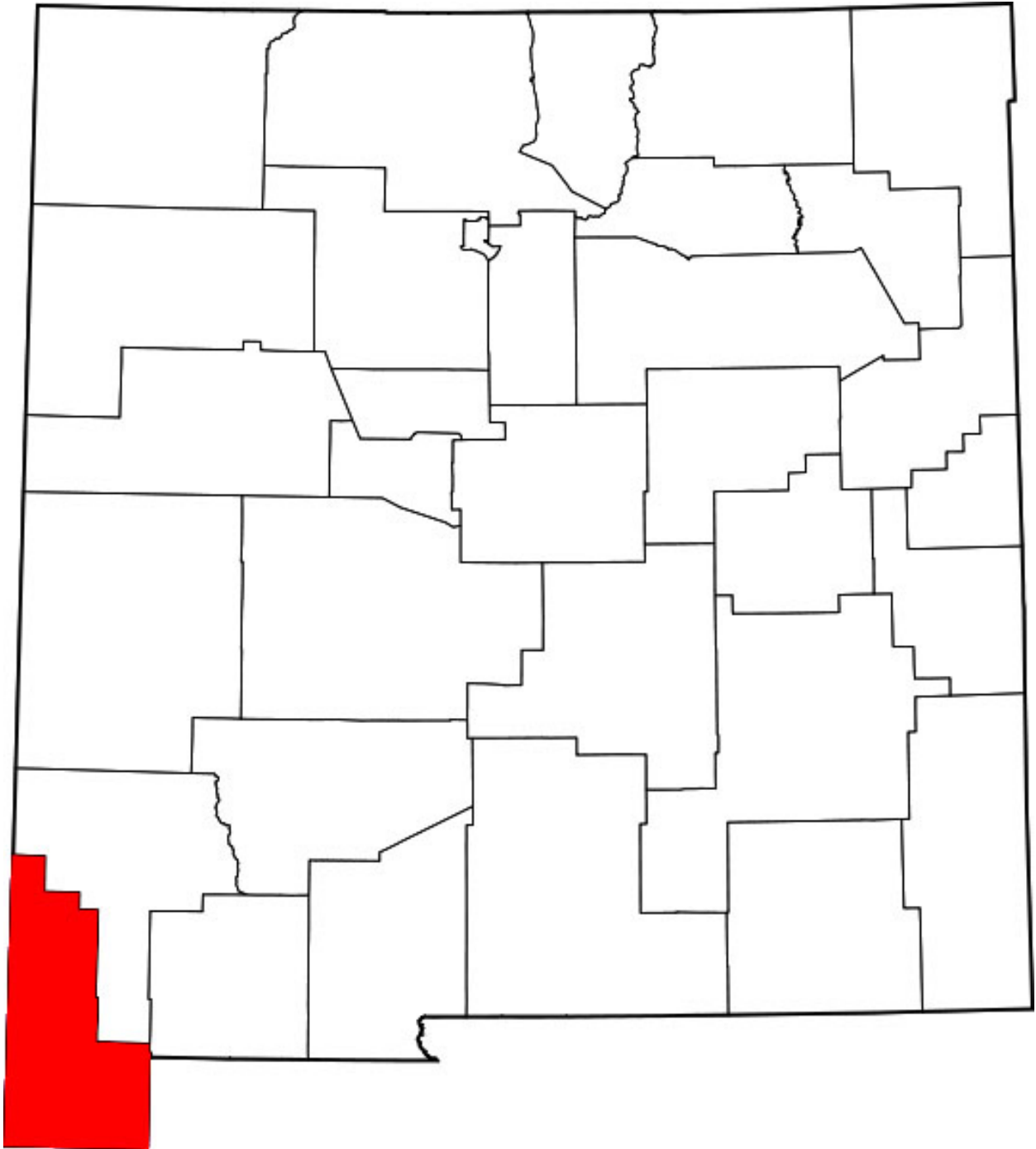
Richmond is another of Hidalgo County's historic mining towns, located near the town of Virden (See section on Virden above). A post office existed at the site from beginning in 1875 and ending in 1884. There are no remaining buildings today.

Walnut Wells was a way station on the Butterfield Overland Mail route in 1858. The Diamond A Cattle co owned the water well at the site. A placer gold discovery in February of 1908 triggered a boom that started Sylvanite. In a few months, there was a tent camp of five hundred people searching for the lode that supplied the placers. The population rose to nearly a thousand before the tent camp folded and the population moved on without finding the lode, if there ever was one. By June of 1909, only about seventy of the hardiest remained. Today, there is nothing but a few rock foundations to mark the site.

Pratt was a siding of the SP&RR, located 28 miles Southwest of Lordsburg. Today Pratt can be reached off NM 9. A post office existed at the site from 1905-1913.

Road Forks is 17 miles southwest of Lordsburg, at the junction of NM 80 and Interstate 10. It can be accessed from the 1-10 exit that also serves Rodeo to the south. Road Forks was settled about 1925 and boasted a post office from its founding until 1955. Today one can find many of the original buildings.

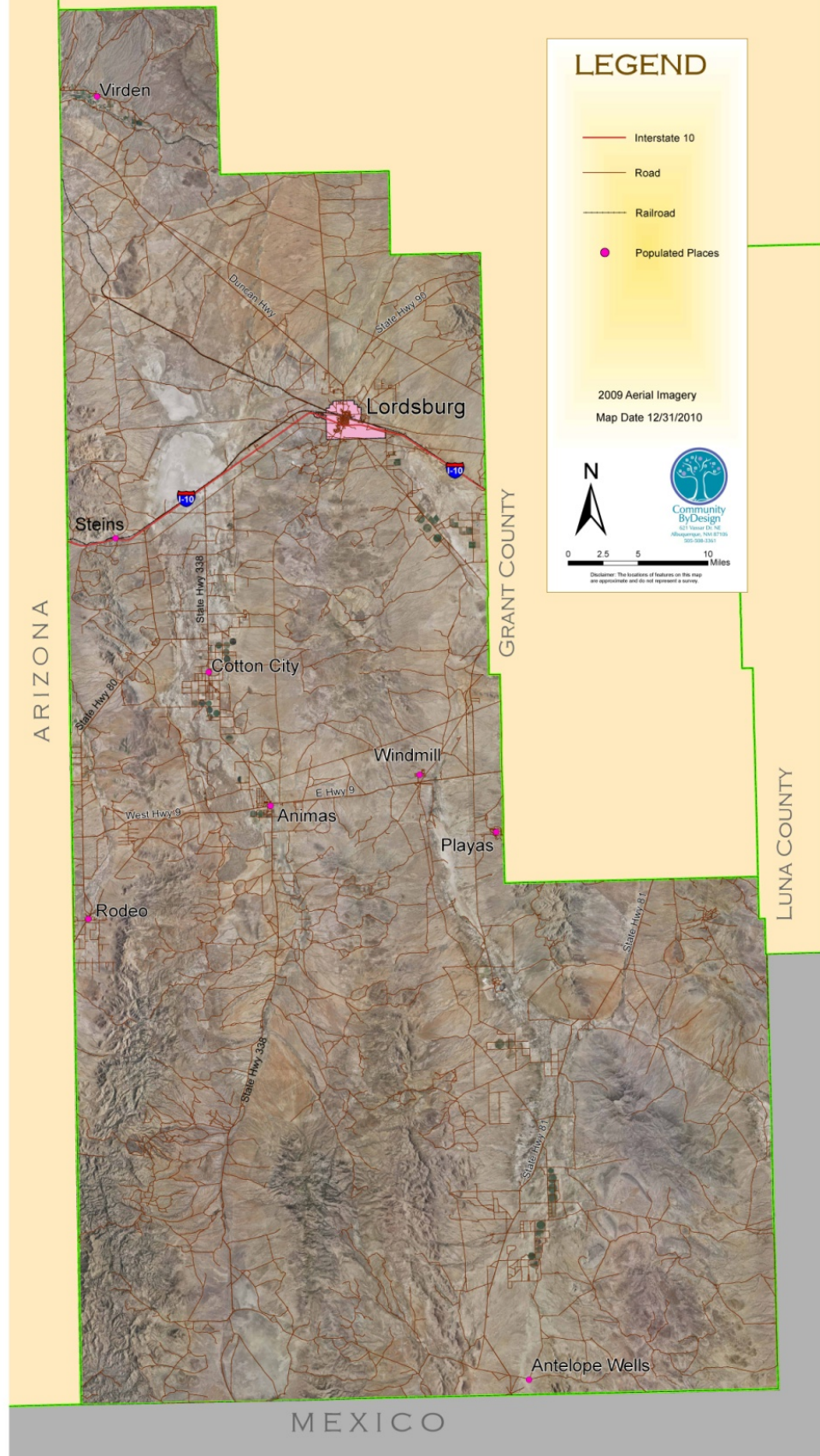
4. COMMUNITY PROFILE



HIDALGO COUNTY

Located in the southwest corner of New Mexico.

AERIAL IMAGERY



4. COMMUNITY PROFILE

COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS

Population

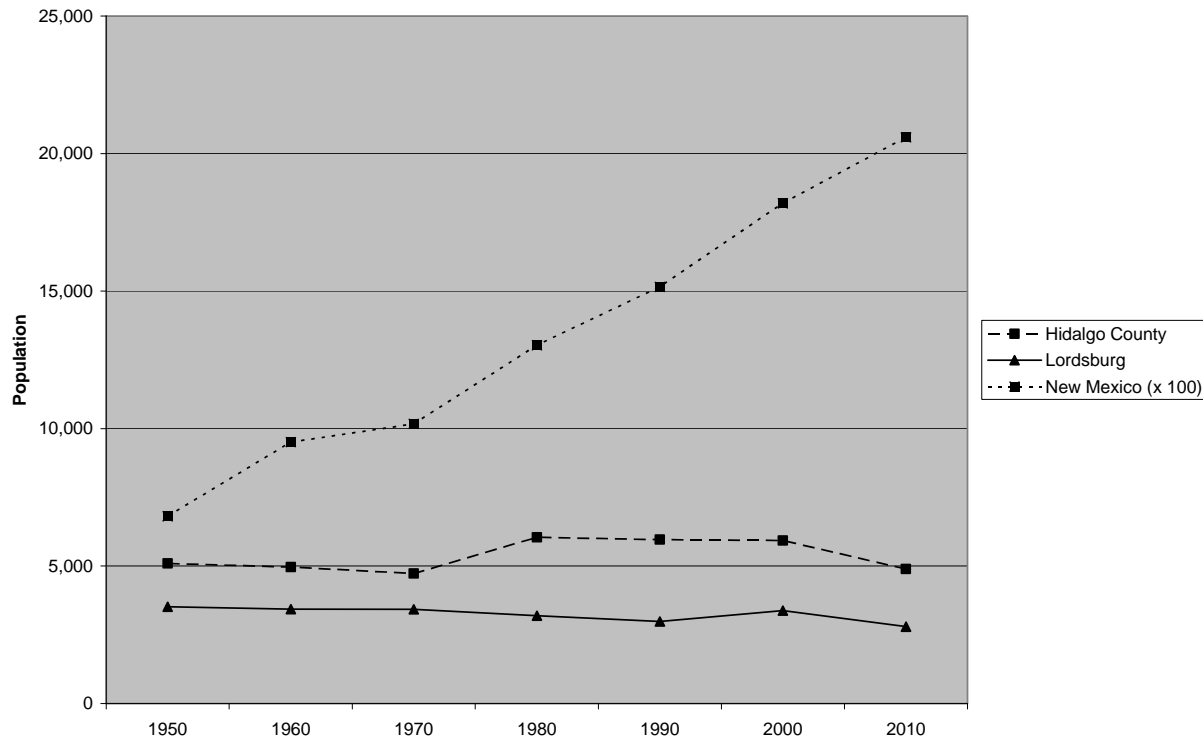
The population trend in Hidalgo County has been influenced by the closure of the Phelps Dodge smelters in the late 90's. From growth in population in the seventies and eighties, a reverse trend has been observed more recently. However, it is expected that the increase in border patrol officers operating in the area and the counter terrorism program at the former company town of Playas (Playas Research and Training Center) will bring new opportunities in terms of inward migration and economic growth. The following table shows the county population trends since 1950:

POPULATION TRENDS								
	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	Pop. % Change 2000- 2010
Hidalgo County	5,095	4,961	4,734	6,049	5,958	5,932	4,894	-17.5%
Lordsburg	3,525	3,436	3,429	3,195	2,981	3,379	2,797	-17.2%
Virden	146	135	151	246	108	143	152	6.2%
New Mexico	681,187	951,023	1,017,055	1,303,303	1,515,069	1,819,046	2,059,179	13.2%
Source: US Census								

According to NM County Profiles, prepared for the New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority (MFA), Hidalgo ranked 31st out of 33 counties in term of population percentage change between 2000 and 2010. The 2010 U.S. Census found the total population of Hidalgo County to be 4,894 inhabitants, a 17.5% decrease compared to the 2000 Census population of 5,932.

4. COMMUNITY PROFILE

Hidalgo County Population Trends



Source: US Census

Population Forecast: Southwest Planning and Marketing provided population estimates to 2035 based on two different Bureau of Business and Economic Research (BBER) growth rates, as shown in the table below.

Hidalgo County Population Forecast							
	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035
BBER 2008 Estimate	5,966	6,300	6,667	7,061	7,420	7,739	8,051
SWPM January 2011 based on BBER growth rate	5,966	4,894	5,179	5,485	5,764	6,012	6,254
SWPM based on two-thirds BBER growth rate	5,966	4,894	5,084	5,284	5,463	5,620	5,771
Source: Bureau of Business and Economic Research (BBER) and Southwest Planning & Marketing							

The January 2011 estimate uses the BBER 2008 growth rates for each five-year increment and applies it to the 2010 Census population data. The second estimate uses two-thirds of the BBER growth rates applied to the 2010 Census data.

Population by Age: At the time this report was written, Census 2010 data showing population by age cohorts and sex was not available. The Claritas 2010 population estimates show that a quarter of the total population (25.4%) is less than 18 years of age. This estimate is a decline compared to the 2000 Census, when close to one third of the population (31.8%) was under the age of 18. According to

4. COMMUNITY PROFILE

the New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority (MFA) 2010 New Mexico County profiles, the last decade saw a constant decrease in the youth population (those under 14 years of age) and the working age population (25 to 44 years of age) groups, with respective percentage decreases of 34.7% and 26.3% from 2000 to 2009. The age groups of 55 to 64 years and 65 and over saw respective percentage changes of 7.8% and 8.9% during the same period.

POPULATION BY AGE 2010		
Age	Number	Percent of County Population
0-4 years	315	6.5%
5-17 years	922	18.9%
18-64 years	2821	57.9%
65 and over	811	16.7%
Source: Claritas		

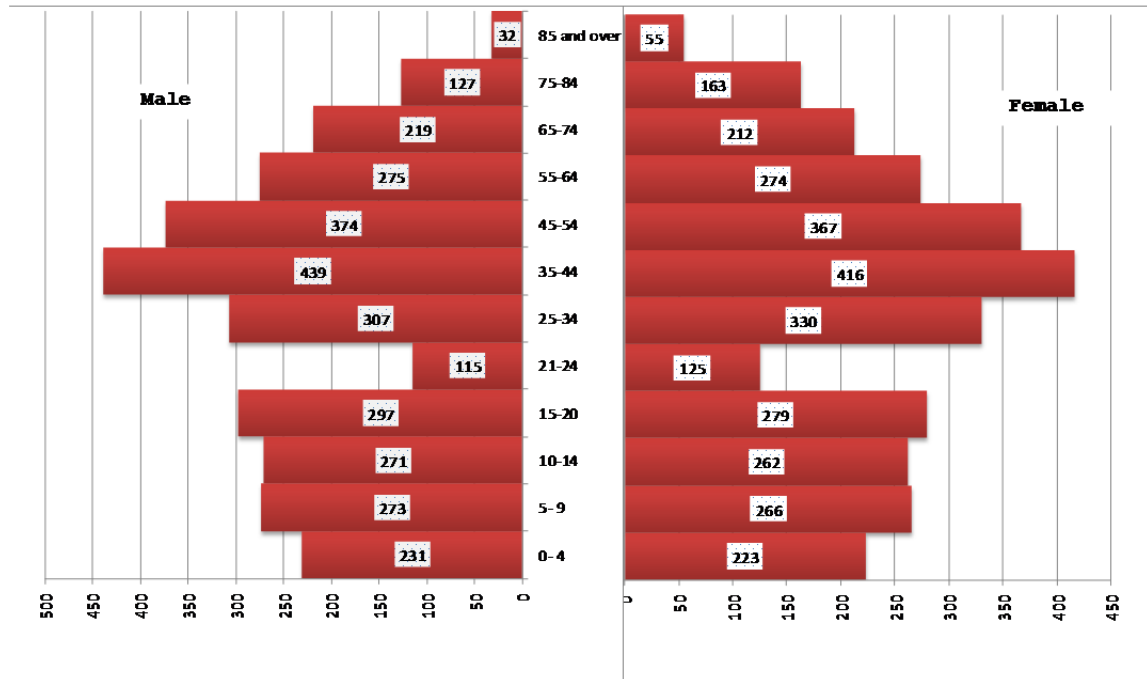
The median age for Hidalgo County is 38.7, while the average age is 39.9. The largest age group of Hidalgo County residents is between the ages of 35 and 54 years (25%). The next largest groups are young adults 21 to 34 years, seniors age 65 and over, and children 5-14 years of age.

INTERCENSAL POPULATION ESTIMATES BY AGE 2000-2009							
	Under 14 years	15 - 24 years	25 - 44 years	45 - 54 years	55 - 64 years	65 & over	Total
2000	1,526	816	1,492	741	549	808	5,932
2001	1,373	698	1,376	686	510	805	5,448
2002	1,280	687	1,289	689	526	810	5,281
2003	1,188	689	1,208	677	553	822	5,137
2004	1,145	673	1,161	686	553	817	5,035
2005	1,106	697	1,124	672	555	807	4,961
2006	1,031	698	1,083	691	580	844	4,927
2007	1,034	734	1,114	692	585	856	5,015
2008	1,023	731	1,102	720	597	870	5,043
2009	997	767	1,099	722	592	880	5,057
% Change 00-09	-34.7	-6.0	-26	-3	7.8	8.9	-14.8
Source: US Census							

4. COMMUNITY PROFILE

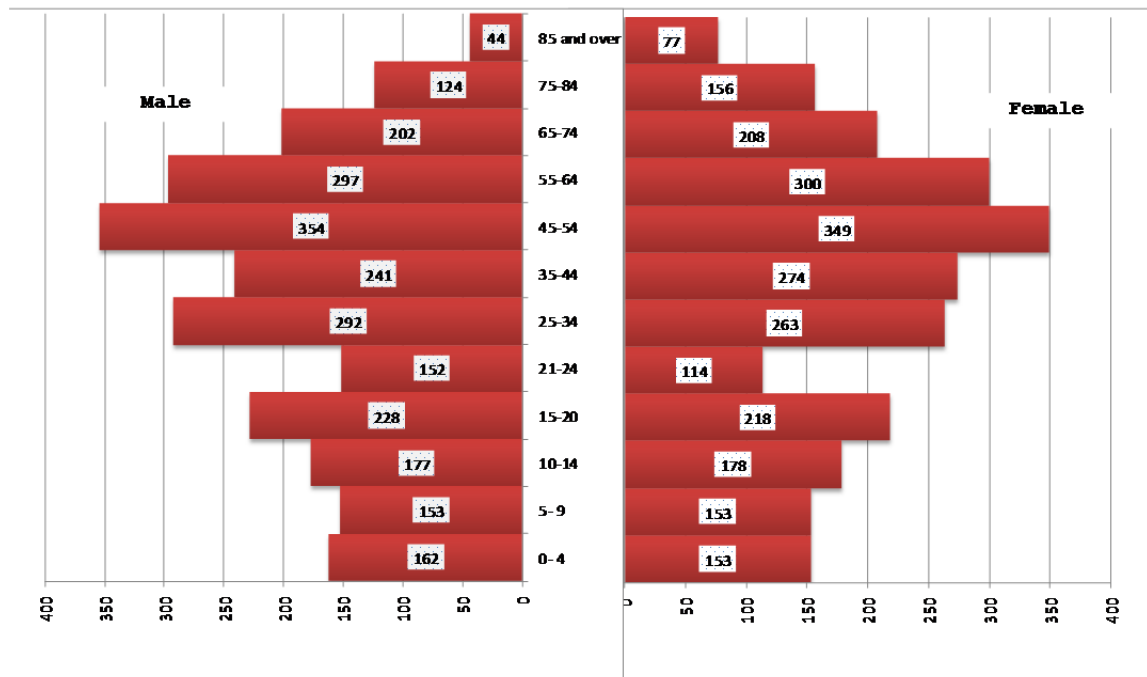
The following graphs show the 2000 and 2010 estimated population by age and sex:

Hidalgo County 2000 Population by Age and Sex



Source: US Census

Hidalgo County Estimated 2010 Population by Age and Sex



Source: Claritas

4. COMMUNITY PROFILE

Race and Ethnicity

According to the MFA study, the 2000 to 2009 period saw a 15.6% decrease in white population; the Hispanic population decreased by 11.3%. American Indian and black population experienced increases. According to the 2010 Census, there are 2,769 Hispanics, comprising 56.5% of the county's total population. In the 2000 Census there were 2,853 Hispanics, comprising 58.6% of the county's total population.

Place of Origin

According to the MFA study, migration patterns from 2000 to 2009 show an out-migration of 1,198 persons and a net change of population of -875. Migration patterns in Hidalgo County have been influenced by the lack of economic activity within the county amplified by the Phelps Dodge mine closings.

According to the 2008 American Community Survey, approximately 90.3% of Hidalgo County residents are native born, with just over 56.8% born in New Mexico, just over 31.5% born in other states, and 0.1% born as U.S. citizens outside the country. Foreign-born residents make up 9.7% of the population, with 89.7% entering the United States before the year 2000. Of the 9.7% foreign-born residents, 4.5% are not citizens and 5.0% are naturalized citizens.

Most foreign-born citizens (91.0%) were from Latin America, while 6.6% came from Europe and 1.4% from Asia. More than one half of households (57.4%) speak only English at home, while 42.4% of the population speaks some Spanish at home. A very small percentage (0.3%) speaks languages other than Spanish or English at home.

Other Demographic Indicators

Approximately 73% of Hidalgo County residents 25 years and older are high school graduates, with 10.3% completing some portion of grades 9-12 (with no diploma), and 16.4% not reaching ninth grade. Approximately 19.9% have completed some college level courses (with no degree), and 11.0% have college or graduate degrees. Associate degrees are held by 3.7 of the population, 7.0% have bachelor's degrees, and 4.1% have graduate or professional degrees.

Close to one-half of Hidalgo County residents are married, 48.9%, and 30.8% have never married. Almost 14% are divorced and 7.5% are widowed. An average of 2.6 people live in each household, and 71.6% are family households. The comparative demographics table below is based on Claritas estimates of 2010 data.

4. COMMUNITY PROFILE

Comparative Demographics - 2010		
	Hidalgo County	New Mexico
2010 Population	4,894	2,016,306
% Hispanic or Latino	59%	45%
Average Age	39.3	37.3
% under 18	25%	26%
% 65 and over	17%	12%
% HS Grads or better	73%	82%
% College Grads	11%	25%
Families Below Poverty Level	21%	13%
Households with Children Below Poverty Level	16%	10%
Average Household Income	\$43,244	\$58,684
Median Household Income	\$30,889	\$43,932
Per Capita Income	\$16,163	\$22,546
Source: Claritas and US Census		

Income

The average household income was estimated to be \$43,244 in 2010, compared to \$71,071 for the United States. The average household income is expected to increase to \$45,588 in the next five years, compared to \$77,465 for the U.S. As per the 2010 Claritas estimates, Hidalgo had a per capita personal income of \$16,163 in 2010 compared to \$27,034 for the United States. In 2000, per capita personal income was \$16,307.

The estimated median household income in 2010 was \$30,889 with an estimated average household income of \$42,244. Around 16.9% of families with children live below the poverty level.

Hidalgo County traditionally has had a high level of poverty. As per the Claritas 2010 estimates, 21.0% of Hidalgo population lives below the poverty level, as do 16.2% of families with children. According to the New Mexico Department of Health, 16.7% of children under the age of 21 are enrolled in Medicaid.

POVERTY RATE		
	2009	2010
U.S.	9.2%	9.7%
New Mexico	14.4%	13.0%
Hidalgo County	24.1%	21.0%
Source: Claritas		

5. LAND AND WATER ELEMENT

A. LAND AND WATER EXISTING CONDITIONS

Hidalgo County embraces an area about 100 miles long from north to south and 50 miles wide at the maximum, which is in the southern portion. Hidalgo County's total area in square miles is 3,445.91 or 2,195,080 acres. The population density is 1.4 persons per square mile of land area.

WATER RESOURCES AND USES

WATERSHED SUB-BASINS/HYDROLOGY

Beginning in the region of present Animas, and continuing southward to the boundary of Mexico, a series of raised bench systems extend into the Animas Valley from the Peloncillos on the west and from the Animas Mountain escarpment on the east. These benches were formed by the alluvial deposition from the heights of the two ranges and show a massive build-up from a very early time. Through these "flats" pass many runoffs and arroyos, which flow into Animas Creek. Behind these arroyos and situated in the pediment complexes are seasonal freshwater springs and extensive areas of isolated catch basins in the intermediate granite slopes. From Clanton Draw southward to the Cloverdale region, the Animas Creek drainage follows a southerly direction. The bottomland is about four miles wide here. To the north of Clanton Draw, however, owing to the abrupt change in watershed activity and tilting toward the creek, the direction of creek flow changes to the north. (*Specific to Animas Valley—from Structural Geology of North Part of Animas*).

Upper Gila River Watershed. The Gila River emerges from Grant County in the north and continues across the northern section of Hidalgo County, providing a rich riparian ecosystem that supports wildlife and plant systems as well as agriculture. The upper Gila River watershed is located in southwestern New Mexico and in southeastern Arizona above Coolidge Dam at San Carlos Reservoir. The watershed drains a total of 12,890 square miles that represents only one-fifth of the entire Gila watershed. The river originates in the Mogollon Mountains in western New Mexico and flows easterly through Arizona before flowing into the San Carlos Reservoir. The Gila River is the last free-flowing river in New Mexico and maintaining its relatively natural flow regime is critical to its ecological value.

In Arizona, the upper watershed drains 7,430 square miles and is within the Morenci, Duncan Valley, Bonita Creek, and Safford groundwater basin boundaries. Major tributaries of the Gila River within the area are the San Francisco River, Eagle Creek, Bonita Creek, San Simon Creek, and the San Carlos River. The Gila River is intermittent as it enters Arizona from New Mexico through the Duncan-Virden Valley. The river does maintain a 35-mile perennial stretch beginning approximately 20 miles downstream from where it enters Arizona.

Agriculture is the major use of surface water in the watershed. Irrigation water is obtained from the Gila River at several diversion points and from wells pumping groundwater. Diversions from the river above Coolidge Dam have been regulated by the Gila Decree since 1936.

5. LAND AND WATER ELEMENT

Generally, the water in the Gila River at low stages is highly mineralized, at times greater than 4,000 mg/1. The predominate constituents are sodium and chloride with high concentrations of fluoride and borate. During high stages, the water only contains small to moderate amounts of dissolved mineral matter, generally less than 500 mg/1 of the sodium bicarbonate type.

STATE OF NEW MEXICO WATER PLAN

The State of New Mexico developed a State Water Plan in 2003. The State Water Plan includes an inventory of area water supplies, a projection of future water needs and a water budget. The New Mexico Office of the State Engineer and Interstate Stream Commission are required to undertake a review of the New Mexico State Water Plan (SWP) every five years. An update of the SWP was issued in 2008 and presents a proposed work program. Several years ago, the state also provided funding to the state's 16 regions for the development of regional water plans. These regional water plans will establish the basis for county water plans and for the State Water Plan. Regional Water plans were completed and accepted by the Interstate Stream Commission and several of the regions have begun updating their plans to address changed conditions. The Southwest New Mexico Regional Water Plan was accepted by the Interstate Stream Commission in 2005. One of the reasons for writing a State Water Plan is to show that local jurisdictions have a need for scarce water resources, and thereby to avoid exporting water to neighboring regions. The State also realizes the need for comprehensive plans to deal with drought, to provide information on water conservation and to secure additional water for future needs. The regional plan will encourage conservation and allow for "water banking". Conservation is necessary if the region is to reduce significantly the rate at which aquifers are mined. New Mexicans depend upon surface water for about 50 percent of our needs and ground water for the other 50 percent. In the Southwest Region, municipalities and individual users rely almost exclusively on ground water. Many if not most wells in Hidalgo County show measurable losses in water levels each year. Because aquifers recover from over-mining only over hundreds if not thousands of years, they are essentially non-renewable resources. Therefore, conservation and other measures to reduce consumption can extend the life of the aquifers upon which this region depends.

Continuing efforts at conservation are critical—it can save millions of gallons of precious water in Hidalgo County. Conserving water increases available water supply and extends the life of aquifers that the county relies upon for long-term supplies; but for conservation to work, the conservation measures must be fair and equitable among all users.

WATER, FARMING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

The water table in the county is better than average for the southwestern part of the United States. The area's water supply comes from an aquifer that is relatively independent of other communities. The water table ranges from 100 feet in the lower areas to 1000 feet in the mountainous and hill areas of the county. Most of the farmers are middle to low -middle class and do not have the funds to secure more sophisticated watering methods to handle their crops. Therefore, most of the crop watering is the flood irrigation system.

The United States Bureau of Land Management in the Department of the Interior (BLM) and the State of New Mexico (New Mexico State Land Office) own a great deal of the land in Hidalgo

5. LAND AND WATER ELEMENT

County. Phelps Dodge Corporation also owns a large portion of land in southeastern New Mexico and Hidalgo County. There are about 45,000 acres in the central/southern areas of the county that are farmland. In the northern part of the county, there are about 2,500 acres of farmable land. Most of the crops are chilies, pumpkins, and onions. Ranching is also a major industry in this area and the farming and ranching industries make up the major portion of the economy.

The comprehensive plan task force urges Hidalgo County officials to coordinate with local farmers to apply for government grants to improve watering systems for more crop productivity. Better management of water distribution helps in the conservation of water, and more effective methods of water distribution help in production, which will in turn improve the livelihood of participating farmers and that, will improve the economic base. With these improved conditions, farmers could also grow crops that would support the cattle industry.

Ground Water. The water table in the county is better than average for the southwestern part of the United States. All of the water supply in this area is linked to a distinct and separate aquifer that is not related to other communities. The water table ranges from 100 feet in the lower areas to 1000 feet in the mountainous and hill areas of the county. Most of the farmers do not have the funds to secure more sophisticated watering methods such as drip to handle their crops. Therefore, most of the crop watering is the flood irrigation system.

Geothermal Waters. Hot wells (70-115.5°C) or geothermal waters were found in the Animas Valley beginning in 1948, where several successful wells have since been drilled. The Animas Valley is typical of the Basin and Range province. Its interior drainage leads to two playa lakes, remnants of Pleistocene Lake Animas, which once was up to 20 m deep. The valley is approximately 18 km wide; the hot wells are 5 km from its eastern edge. One of the most active geothermal wells is about five miles from Cotton City, which is southwest of the site. The well site is directly behind the house of the present owner. It can be reached by a graded road from NM-338, 4.5 km to the west.

Other geothermal waters (113 degrees Fahrenheit) have been found on the opposite side of the Pyramid Mountains. While an area off I-10 approximately 10 miles west of Lordsburg shows the greatest amount of hot wells, geothermal waters exist under a dry lake that extends almost to the city limits of Lordsburg.

Geothermal waters have been used in the past for greenhouse and fish farming. New plans to use the geothermal waters for energy production have been approved by the state.

LAND AND LAND USE PATTERNS

The land form is basin and range with as varied landscape consisting primarily of semi-arid Chihuahuan Desert. The US Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the State of New Mexico (particularly the New Mexico State Land Office) own a large percentage of the land within the boundaries of Hidalgo County. The Gila National Forest in the Burro Mountains, although primarily within Grant County, is partially in Hidalgo County above Lordsburg; and the Coronado National Forest in the southwestern corner of the county and state is primarily in Hidalgo County, but a portion of the forest is on the Arizona side of the border. The Continental Divide passes through the Animas Mountains and part of the Pyramid Mountains.

5. LAND AND WATER ELEMENT

There are about 45,000 acres in the central/southern areas of the county that is farmland. New Mexico Tech owns a large portion of land in the southeastern part of the county. The non-profit Gray Ranch covers an area of 502 square miles in the southern part of the state.

Topography, Ecology and Natural Resources

Hidalgo County has been settled, and has grown and developed, in response to the land and natural resources of the area. For this reason, it is important to have a picture of the topography, natural features, geology, geohydrology, ecology and natural resources of the semi-desert land of Hidalgo County.

Elevation ranges from 8,531 ft atop Animas Peak to approximately 3,700 ft, where the Gila River crosses the state line into Arizona. The maximum relief in the county is 4,831 ft. Valley floors slope, but generally lie below 4,200-4,500 ft. Most mountains rise above 5,000 ft.

An important feature of the area is rainfall: annual precipitation at Lordsburg is about 9.9 inches (240 mm) and natural vegetation is sparse. Recent drought conditions have reduced the average rainfall, stressing vegetation and wildlife and reducing surface flow and recharge of groundwater.

Hidalgo County is characterized by typical and-semiarid, basin-and-range terrain. The continental divide bisects area. Ground water is recharged mainly in the mountain ranges. From there flow is toward the adjacent basins and then along their axes to discharge points, often outside the county boundaries.

Mountain Ranges. Hidalgo County is traversed by three systems of mountain ranges and medium altitude hills that run along an irregular north-south axis. Beginning in the west, and forming the present southern New Mexico-Arizona boundary, is a long, almost continuous mountain mass called the Peloncillos Mountains. These mountains run due south along the western boundary of New Mexico and swing to the southeast, into the Animas Valley, some forty miles south of Animas. The Peloncillo Range is traversed at this point by a small group of mountains known as the Guadalupe Range. This latter range continues southward to the border of Mexico and supports the Coronado National Forest. As one moves across the northern part of the county, a second north-south range is encountered. Geologists refer to, and recognize its origin with the Pyramid Mountains located south of Lordsburg. The central chain runs south for a distance of about twenty-five miles and terminates in



5. LAND AND WATER ELEMENT

the valley floor. Some four miles farther south, the northern foothills of the Animas Range rise again from the valley. This wide group of mountains occupies the central portion of the Animas Valley, and, like the Guadalupe Range, continues toward Mexico with only a brief interruption. Occurring just at the border and crosscutting the southern Animas foothills are a small series of low-lying mesas known as the San Luis Range. San Luis Pass in this range provides one of the few east-west avenues in the southern part of Hidalgo County connecting the Animas Valley and Hachita Valley. The third system of mountains lies east of the other two ranges and is a rather complicated system of mesas, hills, and mountain chains located in both the eastern part of the county and the extreme western edge of Grant County. These begin approximately fifteen miles east of the slopes of the Animas Mountains and run obliquely as independent landmasses to the border of Mexico. The northernmost of these features are the Little Hatchet (Hachita) Mountains. When seen from a distance, this isolated series looks more like a single mountain peak than a chain, and it seems to lose its southern escarpment in the Hachita Valley.

Lying slightly southeast of the former chain are the Hatchet Mountains, sometimes called the Big Hatchets. These rise swiftly from the valley floor and, like all the other ranges on this eastern side, they appear rugged and impassable, owing to the extreme weathering of their crystalline structures. Again, the Hatchets drop into the valley floor and reappear farther to the southeast as the Alamo Hueco Mountains. The entire system then follows a southward direction into northern Mexico, diminishing into foothills. Lying between the three mountain chains just discussed are two impressive systems of wide plains and valleys, running north and south through the county. These two valleys are the Animas (between the Peloncillo-Guadalupe and the Animas Ranges) and the Hachita (between the animas and the Hachita, Hatchet, and Alamo Hueco Ranges). (*A Structural Geology of N. Part of Animas*).

Soils & Geology. The Animas Mountains are a north-south-trending range in south-central Hidalgo County. Precambrian basement rock is granite dated at 1,200 (plus or minus) 40 million years. Approximately 3,500 ft. (1,000 m) of Paleozoic marine and 10,000 to 15,000 ft. (3,000 to 4,500 m) of Cretaceous clastic sedimentary rocks are exposed in the area. Cretaceous rocks are dominantly synorogenic with respect to latest Cretaceous-earliest Tertiary Laramide orogeny. Tertiary rocks are chiefly post-orogenic intrusives and volcanics. An upfaulted block of basement and lower Paleozoic rocks at the north end of the area has resulted in local detachment and fragmentation of the lowest thrust plate. Post-Laramide structure involves normal faults and acidic intrusives injected along fractures, accompanied by volcanism. Normal faulting has continued to the present, (from Structural Geology of Northern Part of Animas).

Oil and gas deposits are found primarily on State Trust land north and east of Antelope Wells, at the lower end of an over thrust belt that extends from Wyoming through the Rockies and into Mexico. While the resource is not abundant in Hidalgo County, it is large enough to attract new lessees on state land in the southern part of the county.

Habitat. At the northern reaches of the Chihuahuan Desert, Hidalgo County ecology is defined by the basin and range geography of the area. Semidesert grassland and Chihuahuan desertscrub are dominant for the majority of the County basin areas. The southernmost reaches of the Animas Valley has characteristics of Great Plains vegetation. The isolated mountain ranges in the southwestern

5. LAND AND WATER ELEMENT

corner of the County support a variety of plants in their upper, cooler and moister elevations which are not found in the lower elevations. Within a very short vertical distance plantlife changes from desert-adapted species such as cacti, mesquite trees, and creosote bushes to montane species such as oaks, junipers, and pines. The Pelencillo Mountain region has been identified as the rich and diverse home to much of the plant and wildlife diversity in the County.

Within each life zone—Chihuahuan desertscrub, desert grassland, oak woodland, pine/oak forest, and riparian corridor—many species of invertebrates, reptiles, birds, and mammals flourish, including a large percentage of native species. Hidalgo County has 91 recorded mammal species. The Gila River, the only undammed river in New Mexico, flows through the northern reaches of the county supporting plants and wildlife not found in the adjoining semidesert grassland.

LAND USE ANALYSIS:

Within the county, there are a number of land use categories that can be identified, including agricultural, ranching, residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, and, parks and recreation. Hidalgo County's land use patterns can be defined as

- Agricultural land use along primarily in the Gila River Valley and in the Animas Valley; Ranching primarily in the southern part of the county, but occurring also throughout the county;
- Mining;
- Security and training and research at the 1200 acre Playas Training and Research Center, and
- The major urban center of Lordsburg, with its mix of uses.

In public meetings and in interviews, residents emphasized how much they valued the landscape of Hidalgo County - the several mountains ranges, the Gila River Valley and the Animas Valley, the historic towns and settlements, and the wide-open landscapes of the vast ranchlands. No matter where they lived, residents referred to the dramatic sunrises and sunsets, unique because they are filtered through the frequent sandstorms

These qualities that local residents love are also the qualities that draw tourists and retirees and others to settle in the county. Everyone wants to make certain that future development does not threaten the quality of these highly valued rich and varied landscapes. Landowners can develop their land, even extensively, and still protect these landscapes. The question is how the residents, through government regulation and their own actions and decisions as responsible stewards of the land, can preserve what is clearly loved by everyone.

Hidalgo County has a tradition of ranching, farming and mining. While agriculture once was the primary livelihood for residents, in recent years land ownership has changed and only a few of the larger landholders earn income from ranching and farming. Viable agricultural enterprises generally require thousands of acres now.

Farming: Farming has been the way of life in the upper part of the Virden Valley and in the Animas Valley for generations. Alfalfa, cotton, chilies, and melons are the principal crops farmed. This activity

5. LAND AND WATER ELEMENT

is primarily by a few larger-scale growers. In 2007 there were 162 farms in the county totaling 1,028,547 acres. There are limited jobs in farming available in the area.

Ranching: Open range cattle ranching in the county dates back to the post civil war era. Cattle continue to play an important role in the area, both in cattle ranching and in dairy production. Limited jobs in ranching are available in the area.

Mining: Mining has been a major industry in the County since the discovery of copper in the early 1800's. The closure of the Phelps-Dodge mine in 1999 dramatically reduced the mining. Many residents today commute to mining industry jobs in Grant County or near Safford, Arizona, 75 miles to the west of Lordsburg or Morenci, Arizona, 70 miles to the northwest of Lordsburg.

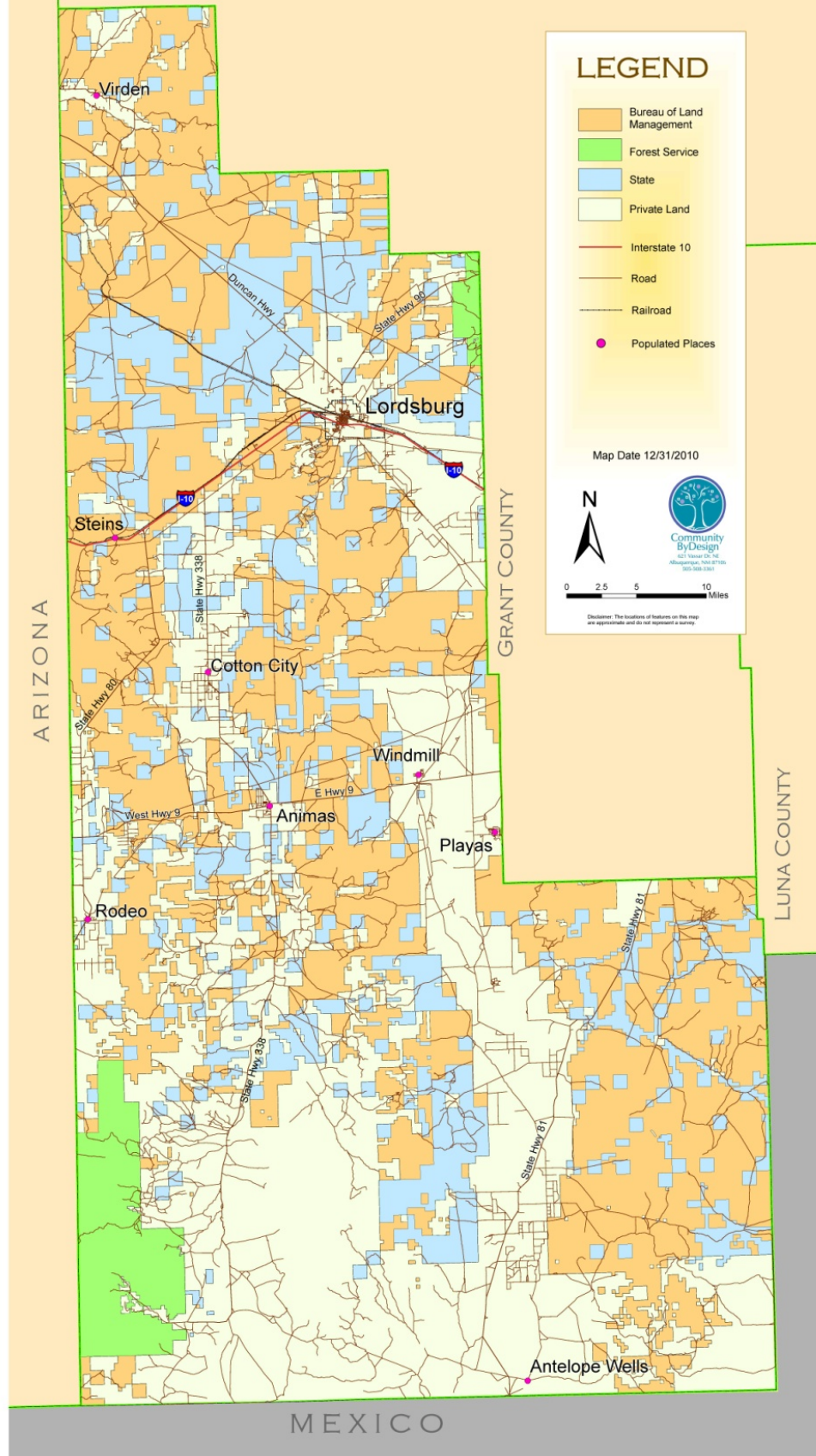
Development: Low-density single-family housing and agricultural land uses dominate land use throughout Hidalgo County. The communities of Lordsburg, Virden, Playas, Animas and Rodeo all have some manner of traditional town development, with streets laid out in a grid pattern and low to medium density single family housing. There is no centralized plan for residential development.

Lordsburg is the major commercial center in the County. Animas offers limited services, including a restaurant and gas station. Rodeo provides basic services along with tourist attractions such as art galleries and a nature museum.

Zoning and Land Use Regulations: Hidalgo County does not have a comprehensive set of land use regulations, and there are no existing countywide zoning regulations. The county land use regulations includes its subdivision ordinance, landfill ordinance and flood plain ordinance.

The county also has no growth management strategy or plan that would direct the different kinds of growth and intensity of growth within the county, and thus far growth and development has occurred directly and solely in response to private sector initiatives.

LAND OWNERSHIP



5. LAND AND WATER ELEMENT

B. LAND AND WATER GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:

GOAL 1: SECURE, PROTECT AND MAINTAIN SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY THROUGH EFFECTIVE AND COORDINATED WATERSHED AND AQUIFER MANAGEMENT.

Strategy 1. Pursue funding at New Mexico State water funding institutions such as the Water Trust Board, the NM Legislature and the New Mexico Finance Authority for groundwater studies, watershed protection and restoration treatments and the establishment and maintenance of a Hidalgo County Aquifer Monitoring Program as a decision making tool with local, state and federal partnerships.

Strategy 2. Promote and coordinate the active management of County ground water supplies according to New Mexico Water Quality Control Standards and the EPA Clean Water Standards.

Strategy 3. Coordinate and integrate water supply and watershed planning with the Southwest New Mexico Regional Water Plan, the New Mexico State Water Plan and the New Mexico State Forestry Watershed Plan.

Strategy 4: Promote and demonstrate domestic water conservation efforts, such as the use of drip irrigation, gray-water, water harvesting, low-flow fixtures, xeriscape landscaping through education programs and in the subdivision regulations.

GOAL 2: PROMOTE, PROTECT AND RESTORE THE OPEN SPACES AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUCH AS RIVERS, RIPARIAN AREAS, FLOODPLAINS, WILDLIFE HABITATS, FORESTS AND GRASSLANDS AND MIGRATION CORRIDORS.

Strategy 5. Promote land conservation easements and land trusts that protect unique wildlife habitats such as riparian areas and critical wetlands and springs.

Strategy 6. Coordinate public and private organizations to maintain natural, contiguous open space areas in and adjacent to wildlife migration corridors.

Strategy 7. Consider wildlife connectivity in design and development of roadways and in designing retrofits to existing roadway and work with NM DOT to encourage ecologically sensitive road design.

Strategy 8. Coordinate the Sykes Act wildlife habitat funds with BLM, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish and US Fish and Wildlife Service to protect wildlife and maintain fishing and hunting habitats.

5. LAND AND WATER ELEMENT

GOAL 3: RECOGNIZE, HONOR AND PROTECT HISTORICAL GRAZING AND WATER RIGHTS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.

Strategy 9: The County, in partnership with the USDA and Cooperative Extension Service, will inform and encourage interested ranchers and farmers to place conservation easements on their property and take advantage of tax benefits offered by State and Federal legislation.

Strategy 10: Promote incentives and funding for agricultural measures such as drip irrigation and laser leveling, in partnership with the County Soil and Water Conservation District.

Strategy 10A. Advocate changes in State water law to allow land owner full control of water rights for their land.

GOAL 4: SUPPORT, MAINTAIN AND PRESERVE THE COUNTY'S RURAL, CULTURAL AND AGRICULTURAL LAND USES.

Strategy 11. Protect agricultural operators from nuisance complaints concerning agricultural activities that are legal and responsible, and educate the public and non-agricultural residents about the existence, validity, and importance of the County's agricultural operations and activities.

Strategy 12. Adopt an Irrigated Agricultural Land Protection Ordinance to provide incentives in conserving agricultural lands.

Strategy 13. Support and encourage programs for Organic certification in partnership with the County Extension Office.

Strategy 14. Provide an education and information program to farmers and agriculture producers through the Hidalgo County Extension Office and Hidalgo County Economic Development office on producing sustainable crops and livestock that have a higher yield, higher market value and high demand.

GOAL 5: PROTECT DARK SKIES OVER THE COUNTY.

Strategy 15. Consider adopting a Night Sky ordinance with specific lighting guidelines and regulations to include requirements on lighting standards such as shielding, pole heights, lighting types and hours of operation pursuant to the NM Night Sky Protection Act.

Strategy 16. Encourage property owners and utilities to install only the level of outdoor lighting necessary for safety, security, and utility purposes while limiting light trespass onto neighboring properties through shielding of all outdoor lighting and the use of other best available lighting technologies.

5. LAND AND WATER ELEMENT

GOAL 6: ENCOURAGE PLANNED GROWTH THAT PROVIDES ADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE AND ROADS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY.

Strategy 17. Regulate land and water development according to New Mexico Subdivision statutes and consider adopting the NM Association of Counties model subdivision regulations.

Strategy 18. All new subdivisions should have community/shared wells and treated liquid waste systems that assure water rights will meet build-out demand, including water for storage and delivery for fire flows.

Strategy 19: Establish development impact fees on new developments to finance roads, infrastructure and public safety that are needed as a result of the new development.

Strategy 20. Consider adopting a planning and land use ordinance that protects property values and promotes health, safety and welfare, and educate property owners and residents on the benefits of the ordinance.

Strategy 21. Consider adopting a nuisance regulation for inoperable vehicles and abandoned mobile homes.

GOAL 7: ENCOURAGE PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION OF HISTORICAL AND TRADITIONAL BUILDINGS.

Strategy 22: Inventory/survey historic and traditional buildings and features for NM Cultural properties designation.

Strategy 23: Apply for preservation/restoration tax credits and resources available from state and federal agencies.

Strategy 24: Encourage the charitable donation of land by landowners for historic, cultural, and scenic easements to non-profit land banks/land trust organizations to reduce state and federal income and inheritance taxes under NM Laws 1995, Chapter 137.

GOAL 8: ENCOURAGE COLLABORATION/COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIPS WITH ALL LOCAL MUTUAL DOMESTICS, COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, MUNICIPALITIES, COLONIAS, STATE, FEDERAL, AND JURISDICTIONS IN DETERMINING FUTURE LAND AND WATER USES.

Strategy 25: Host a forum that meets on an annual basis to increase and encourage networking, participation, and communication with local stakeholders, including private and non-profit organizations, to better inform the participating towns, agencies and organizations of proposed programs, developments and improvements for advancing the management and development of the region's land and water resources.

6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

A. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EXISTING CONDITIONS

Hidalgo County has been, by tradition, a farming, mining and ranching area. The history of the local economy has been a series of ups and down, reflecting the health of the mining industry such as the copper mining industry. In 1983, Hidalgo County was designated as a site for emergency job creation under the Reagan Administration's Emergency Jobs Act. In 1994, Lordsburg was designated a "Champion Community", which provided ten years of access to preferential federal grants and assistance to develop a long-term strategic comprehensive plan. With the closure of the Phelps Dodge copper mines and the Playas smelter in the late nineties, the local economy suffered during the year 2000. Through the inspiration of community leaders, Hidalgo Area Development Corporation (HADECO), New Mexico Tech, and the local Chamber of Commerce, the County has embarked on a new path for growth and projects.

Per the 2010 Claritas estimates of Census data, the population of residents 16 years and older is estimated at 3,807. About half of the population aged 16 and older is employed in the civilian labor force while the rest of the population is either in the Armed Forces, unemployed or not in the labor force. Local, state and federal government jobs represent 20.3% of total jobs, while for-profit employment represents 68.6%. About seven percent of those 16 years and older are self-employed.

Today the largest sector of employment (461 people) is service occupations. The next largest employment sectors are construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations (426), sales and office occupations (420), production, transportation, and material moving occupations (254), followed by management, professionals and related occupations (242). The 2010 Census indicated that approximately 84 people in the labor force in Hidalgo County are employed in farming, fishing, and forestry occupations.

Blue Collar classified employees represent 29.4% of those having a job, while 41.9% are classified as white collar and 28.7% of the working population is service and farm workers. Most of the workers drive less than 15 minutes to work and commute alone. In 2008, 60.2% of total establishments had between one and four employees compared to 53.3% in year 2000. In 2007, there were 162 farms in Hidalgo County, with 82.7% of them having sales under \$100,000.

According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), farm employment decreased by 28.1% between 2001 and 2008, while the same period saw an increase of 25.6% increase in government jobs, most of them in local government. Education, government and services are sectors that will see increases in the coming years.



6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

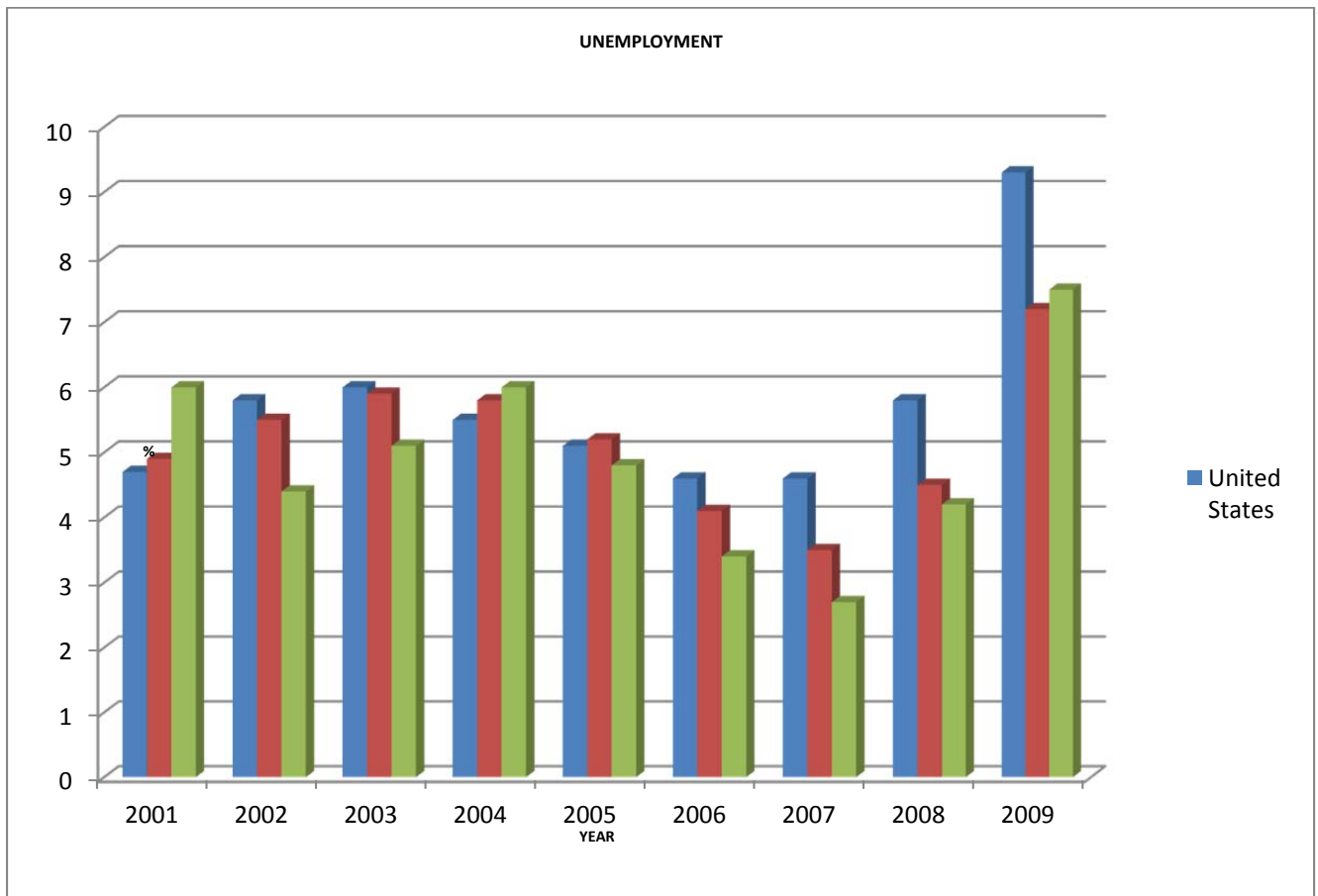
EMPLOYMENT BY MAJOR INDUSTRIAL SECTOR				
Sector	2001	2006	2008	2009
PRIVATE SECTOR				
Retail trade	257	181	244	250
Transportation and warehousing	ND*	17	29	22
Information	13	17	15	14
Professional and technical services	20	ND*	ND*	ND*
Health care & social assistance	115	ND*	ND*	ND*
Other services, except public administration	ND*	16	ND*	ND*
TOTAL PRIVATE SECTOR **	1,196	1,038	1,048	957
GOVERNMENT				
Federal	69	144	229	273
State	77	82	81	79
Local	374	343	343	348
TOTAL GOVERNMENT	520	569	653	700
GRAND TOTAL **	1,715	1,606	1,700	1,656
<i>Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis</i>				
*ND = not disclosed				
**Total reflects all industries, including those not disclosed				

Hidalgo's economy today is strongly influenced by existing assets, including the I-10 corridor, the east-west rail link, the new Playas Training and Research Center, government-related jobs such as the Border Patrol, and local entrepreneurship. The local economy has been plagued by a lack of good quality housing, distance from major economic centers, lack of highly educated workforce, and unrealistic goals when it came to past comprehensive plans. However, there is a new dynamism that has been created from recent in-migration of wealthy families who have retired in the County and are ready to help and invest in the local economy.

Although the region often had lower unemployment rates than the rest of the state of New Mexico, poverty rates among residents have been traditionally higher than in the rest of the state. In order to fight poverty levels, the County was successful in opening the Hidalgo Vocational Center in 2009 to provide training and career counseling to the local population. The table below shows unemployment rates between 2001 and 2010.

6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

PERCENTAGE OF UNEMPLOYMENT										
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
United States	4.7	5.8	6	5.5	5.1	4.6	4.6	5.8	9.3	9.4
New Mexico	4.9	5.5	5.9	5.8	5.2	4.1	3.5	4.5	7.2	8.4
Hidalgo County	6	4.4	5.1	6	4.8	3.4	2.7	4.2	7.5	7.5
<i>Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics and Business and Economic Research, University of New Mexico</i>										



Looking at twenty years of data, the unemployment rate was higher in Hidalgo than in New Mexico three years in a row, from 1999 to 2001 and also in 2004 and 2009. Other than these years, Hidalgo County always experienced a healthier unemployment rate than the rest of New Mexico. As the economy turns around, the unemployment rate is expected to decrease slowly in the coming years in the United States and New Mexico. The unemployment rate in Hidalgo County should also follow the same pattern and continue to perform better in the coming years.

According to the MFA 2000 New Mexico County Profiles and sources from the Bureau of Economic Analysis, there were 2,293 jobs in 2008, the latest year for which these data were available. There has been a constant, but limited, increase in job creation since 2004, which was a reversal from the sharp decrease in the number of jobs experienced by the County between 1998 and 2003.

6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

When it comes to industry earning, government saw a steady rise in revenue in the County, compared to other sectors. While the percent of increase in earning between 2001 and 2008 was 76.7% for government organizations and enterprises, there was a decrease of 20.6% in farm earnings and respective decreases of -5.6% and -3.8% for retail and information. The following table shows that overall earnings increased in the County by 29.7% during the 2001-2008 period.

EARNINGS BY INDUSTRY IN THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS				
NAICS Categories	2001	2006	2008	% Change 2001-08
Farm earnings	9,931	10,665	7,882	-20.6
Mining	86	225	ND*	
Retail trade	6,646	6,984	6,274	-5.6
Transportation and warehousing	ND*	2,686	4,124	
Information	643	ND*	618	-3.8
Professional and technical services	946	710	ND*	
Administration and waste services	ND*	ND*	85	
Other services, except public administration	ND*	2,733	ND*	
Government and government enterprises	24,930	27,887	44,039	76.7
TOTAL **	66,222	70,710	85,903	29.7
*ND = not disclosed				
**Total reflects all industries, including those not disclosed				
Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis				

The average earning per job in Hidalgo County is still below that of New Mexico. In 2008, the average earnings in the County were \$37,463 compared to average earnings of \$43,020 in the State. As per BEA data, the same period saw a 10.3% increase in farm earnings per job (+10.3%) and a sharp increase in Government per job earnings (+42.2%), while retail trade, transportation and warehousing, and information saw a decrease in earnings per job of respectively 3.8%, 3.8% and 15.4%. The total number of business establishments in 2007 was 112. The number of business establishments in Hidalgo County was fairly stable between 1998 and 2007.

The Southwest New Mexico Energy and Green Jobs Task Force has been meeting since April, 2010 to address policies, plans and job creation in the renewable energy field. The immediate priorities of the Task Force are to build capacity in the region through information sharing; develop a regional vision and plan; and to develop the market for renewable energy technologies through education and outreach. As the Task Force select it's top three to four prospects, The Hidalgo Learning Center positions the County to prepare its work force for new green jobs.

According to various interviews conducted with officials and members of the Hidalgo County Task Force, the following assessment and comments represent the past and current economic situation. This assessment will be important in making recommendations for strategic goals. When specific questions regarding past plans were asked, some respondents mentioned that if goals were not

6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

achieved in past years, it was often due to unrealistic objectives. One example mentioned was the R&D Industrial Park that was supposed to be created soon after the creation of the Playas Training and Research Center and bring hundreds of new jobs to the area. Community leaders expected that this would be similar to the experience at Virginia Tech, where an industrial park in Virginia was created after developing Virginia Tech Research Park. The recent downturn in the economy has delayed expected investments. In addition, the Playas Training and Research Center took longer than anticipated to create the expected number of jobs.

According to interviews, past analyses and reports, inadequate housing and lack of highly educated workforce have hampered the County's economic growth. Housing has been a major issue in the County as underlined in the 2004 Comprehensive Plan and as mentioned by community leaders in the recent task force meetings. Although some developers have expressed interest in looking at potential housing developments, the County needs to take a more active role to ensure that lack of quality housing can be remediated. Plans for increasing housing capacity will also help reverse the current trend of declining population. Furthermore, a development plan for housing could also bring direct investments for more retail and services.

The federal government has increased the number of Border Patrol agents in the region, but many new patrolmen, because of the lack of housing, need to reside outside the County boundaries, and therefore do not bring benefits to the local economy. The local economy has also suffered from the lack of a highly educated workforce. Over half of the County's population lives in the city of Lordsburg, among them a high level of poorly educated families, with a high level of teen pregnancy. The remainder of the people are scattered in the County, often living in ranches or small communities, and children often leave the County when they reach college age. The lack of a stable quality workforce is also perceived as a factor contributing to slow economic growth.

Today, there is a renewed dynamism coming from many of the local residents and decision leaders. The strong willingness for collaboration between the Playas Training and Research Center and the County government should be an engine for growth in the coming years. The Playas Training and Research Center has also provided new amenities to County residents such as a bowling alley, store and gas station. At the present time, part of the Research Center's 1,200 acres has been developed as a training ground for soldiers to prepare for active deployment overseas.

On March 15, 2011, the Albuquerque Journal reported that New Mexico Tech landed a \$27.5 million deal with Aegis Defense Services LLC, a privately-owned British company that will expand the scope of the Playas Training and Research Center. The Playas facility is a division of New Mexico Tech's Energetic Materials Research and Testing Center (EMRTC). According to John Meason, director of EMRTC, the net revenue from this deal over the next five years could be as much as \$10.8 million for the Playas center. Meason said additional facilities and capabilities needed for this contract would require a \$1.8 million capital investment over a six to nine-month period. When Tech gets the task order, they will have 22 days to conduct the first class.

I-10, a major east-west link between Texas and Arizona, can represent a major engine for economic growth for the County. There are some travel-related services at the three exits within the city of Lordsburg, with some truck stops, motels and chain restaurants. However, the benefits to the County and the city of Lordsburg are mainly coming from low-paying jobs and tax receipts.

6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

Many community leaders believe that I-10 should become an engine of growth by providing access to major markets in Texas and Arizona. To help in the matter, the City of Lordsburg has been active in identifying a site to develop an industrial park. Along the I-10 corridor, agriculture or other raw material processing industries could be developed, especially as the existing rail link could be further used. Shopping and distribution services can also be encouraged as many County residents, such as in Virden, shop and work in Arizona. First and foremost, the Playas Training and Research Center has contributed to job creation. Since creating a strategic plan in 2006, the Playas Training and Research Center has exceeded its goals in term of job creation and revenue. Over one hundred new jobs were created during the past few years, and the workforce will increase by another twenty five percent in the coming months.

Antelope Wells was for a long time mentioned as a potential location to bring economic opportunities to the County. However, development of any meaningful project was always hampered by the lack of adequate infrastructure on both sides of the border, especially on the Mexican side with its unpaved road. Recent stimulus money to upgrade the U.S. Port of Entry will help in revitalizing an area that may offer future potential. In addition, plans to develop motels, gas stations, and other commerce such as a pharmacy in conjunction with stakeholders from the Mexican side of the border are being discussed. Progress has been made on both sides of the border to launch meaningful developments.

In the near future, the County's labor force will benefit from the upcoming opening of the new County detention center that will provide 12 to 15 new jobs in May, and the reopening of the Hurley Chino Mine in neighboring Grant County. In addition to local, state and federal jobs, Hidalgo County is rich in small enterprises allowing a wide diversification of jobs in different sectors. From traditional oil and gas exploration in the south of the County to the services industry, there is a strong dynamism of local entrepreneurship.

However, as mentioned by many local economic actors, the traditional economy is not sufficient to bring future growth to the County and ensure development of housing and infrastructure. It is widely believed that the County can do more to take advantage of existing assets to bring prosperity. Existing assets with potential for development are listed as follows:

- Land: Vast areas of undeveloped land around local communities can be developed as retirement communities that would bring needed economic activity and tax revenues to the County
- Scenic Beauty: With a combination of mountains, farmland, ghost towns and historic mine sites, tourism can be developed County to observe the beauty of nature. There are opportunities to develop and invest more in RV parks and motels geared to this client base.
- Sun: With more than three hundred days of sun a year, there is an untapped source of energy that can bring dynamism to the County.
- Wind: Because of its topography, with mountains and flat areas, wind is a resource that can be captured to bring economic benefits to the County.

6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

Other potential opportunities that could be identified include:

- Retail Trade: Opportunity gap tables for retail trade give some useful information to assess lost revenues for retail activity in the County. When comparing consumer expenditures with retail sales in the County, we can observe a disparity in many product groups. As an example, County residents are estimated to have spent more than \$8.7 million for food and beverage, while retail sales in the County was just under \$2.5 million. There are several categories of goods for which it is known that County resident spend at least \$1 million a year, and have to go outside the County boundaries to make these purchase. Therefore County government could explore ways to incentivize local residents or out-of-County entrepreneurs to invest and create local retail outlets.
- Research: Using the campus managed by New Mexico Tech at the Playas Training and Research Center, County government should try working with federal agencies and the University to explore opportunities to bring R&D companies to develop research activities on the campus. The County is also a destination for bird watchers and astronomers. Due to the vast open land area, many people come to Hidalgo County.

Southwest New Mexico Economic Development Partnership

The Southwest New Mexico Economic Development Partnership (Partnership) was formed in the fall of 2010 as a resource group committed to regional economic development in the four counties served by the SWNCOG: Catron, Grant, Hidalgo, and Luna. The Partnership is part of the SWNMCOG and coordinates both the “Stronger Economies Together” (SET) program and the Southwest New Mexico Energy and Green Jobs Taskforce (Taskforce). The Partnership has developed a vision, mission statement, and goals for the SET program. The Partnership began the SET training in November 2010 and has completed all of the SET training modules which are part of USDA Rural Development. They are currently in the process of developing implementation strategies for the goals and a regional economic development plan. The Task force is working on a marketing plan to educate consumers and local governments about alternative energy, energy efficiency and green jobs. In the fall of 2011 a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by SWNMCOG and the counties, cities, towns and villages they serve, including Hidalgo County, agreeing to work together on regional strategies for economic development. The MOU is intended to support new economic opportunities, support the creation of jobs and enhance the quality of life in the region. The stated purpose of the MOU is “to provide for the establishment of an orderly economic development process to facilitate economic, educational and general community development” in the region.

6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

B. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:

GOAL 1: DEVELOP A REGIONAL FRAMEWORK TO COOPERATE EFFICIENTLY WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS, SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, AND PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERS TO CREATE LONG-TERM QUALITY JOBS AND A SKILLED WORKFORCE TO ASSURE ECONOMIC PROSPERITY.

Strategy 1: Identify all the local and regional organizations (governmental, private, non-profit) that can be instrumental in developing a strategic plan to ensure long term growth for the county and its residents.

Strategy 2: Fund and hire an Economic Development coordinator/manager that is responsible for responding to recruiting opportunities (PRO)s and implementing the strategies that have been developed in economic development plans.

Strategy 3: Work with the New Mexico Economic Development Department and the New Mexico Partnership to market and promote Hidalgo County to potential investors (business and developers).

Strategy 4: Prepare an update to the Hidalgo County Economic Development Plan pursuant to Local Economic Development Act (LEDA), including input from various agencies.

Strategy 5: Propose/assign an oversight task force composed of county, city and COG officials as well as local stakeholders to create and implement a marketing and promotional plan for the county.

GOAL 2: IDENTIFY AND MARKET LAND SUITABLE FOR BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTY.

Strategy 6: Create an inventory database of land suitable for business and economic development.

Strategy 7: Work cooperatively with NM Tech on developing parts of the campus and surrounding available land to attract business and economic opportunities associated with the Playas Training Center.

Strategy 8: Work with landowners on identifying assets and resources that could be used to further the county's economic development strategies.

GOAL 3: STRENGTHEN AND SUPPORT OPPORTUNITIES FOR ECO-TOURISM AND OTHER TOURISM RELATED ACTIVITIES.

Strategy 9: Create an inventory of all tourism related activities and assets in order to develop a strategic framework to encourage and promote local ecotourism.

6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

Strategy 10: Coordinate on-going cooperative meetings of local farmers, ranchers, artists and recreational businesses to strategize ways to promote ecotourism activities, such as wayfinding signage.

Strategy 11: Create a branding initiative and map of tourism attractions.

Strategy 12: Work closely with the City of Lordsburg and New Mexico Tourism Department to create specific tourism promotions.

GOAL 4: PROMOTE AND SUPPORT THE EXPANSION OF AGRICULTURAL-BASED BUSINESSES.

Strategy 13: Review the successes and shortcomings of all agricultural based businesses, from production to processing, to develop full understanding of local agricultural potential.

Strategy 14: With the help of Agricultural assistance agencies, attract outside investment for the development of the relative lower cost of agricultural land compared to neighboring counties in Arizona and New Mexico.

Strategy 15: Encourage local farmers and ranchers to work with the Agricultural assistance agencies to encourage the creation and investment of agricultural-related businesses.

Strategy 16: Support the establishment of a Farmers Market and other local value-added agricultural enterprises.

GOAL 5: EXPAND THE COUNTY-WIDE WORKFORCE TRAINING/EDUCATION PROGRAM, ESPECIALLY TO KEEP OUR YOUTH IN THE AREA.

Strategy 17: Work closely with WNMU and NM Tech to assess future skills needed in the county and surrounding counties and collaborate with WNMU to create specific education fields of study and programs in all cities served by the University (Silver City, Deming, and Lordsburg).

Strategy 18: Work with schools and universities on defining and communicating occupational opportunities for workers entering the job market

GOAL 6: PROMOTE THE USE AND PURCHASE OF LOCAL GOODS AND SERVICES THAT SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESSES.

Strategy 19: Work with the Chamber of Commerce to create a directory of goods and services offered within the County.

Strategy 20: Expand buy-local programs in partnership with state and federal agencies and increase the local preference percentage in county and city procurement policies.

6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

GOAL 7: ENCOURAGE THE CREATION AND RETENTION OF HOME-BASED BUSINESSES.

Strategy 21: Provide incentives, and reduce obstacles, in the permitting of home-based businesses that meet guidelines related to scale and intensity of the business.

Strategy 22: Encourage and promote the creation of home-based businesses and education (accounting, computer technology, workforce training, ethics, finance, tax laws) and support programs specifically geared to help home-based businesses.

GOAL 8: SUPPORT THE ENHANCEMENT AND EXPANSION OF COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS TO PROVIDE OUTSTANDING COVERAGE THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY TO SUPPORT BUSINESS GROWTH.

Strategy 23: Map and identify sites both lacking and with capacity in phone and communication coverage.

Strategy 24: Work with communication providers to ensure that proper service is delivered to residents and local businesses and investigate with the Southwest New Mexico Council of Governments and the State of New Mexico ways to improve telecommunication delivery, in order to support local initiatives in the areas of economic and education growth.

Strategy 25: Investigate any potential Federal and State grants and investments that could be used to enhance existing communication.

GOAL 9: ATTRACT INDUSTRY AND MANUFACTURING USES SUCH AS RENEWABLE ENERGY PRODUCTION IN WIND, SOLAR, GEOTHERMAL, AND BIOFUELS PRODUCTION/GENERATION.

Strategy 26: Develop a benefit cost study to enable the County to acquire existing land and vacant buildings and secure access to transmission facilities in order to develop long term leases with potential investors.

Strategy 27: Identify sites with the highest potential for commercial-scale renewable energy production and create an incentive and promotional package to market the county for renewable energy development.

Strategy 28: Work with the New Mexico Economic Development Department to find potential investors in renewable energy.

Strategy 29: Develop relations with Congressional Delegation to initiate projects through NM Tech, LANL and Sandia in order to encourage research in the renewable energy in Hidalgo County and work with NM Tech to expand research on campus

7. HOUSING ELEMENT

A. HOUSING EXISTING CONDITIONS

In 2009, Medius, Inc. conducted an inventory of Hidalgo County communities that was included in the Hidalgo County Roadmap 2010. The inventory revealed that all county communities need to focus on housing rehabilitation and new construction efforts because much of the housing stock is in need of repair. The following table shows the results of this physical inventory of housing:

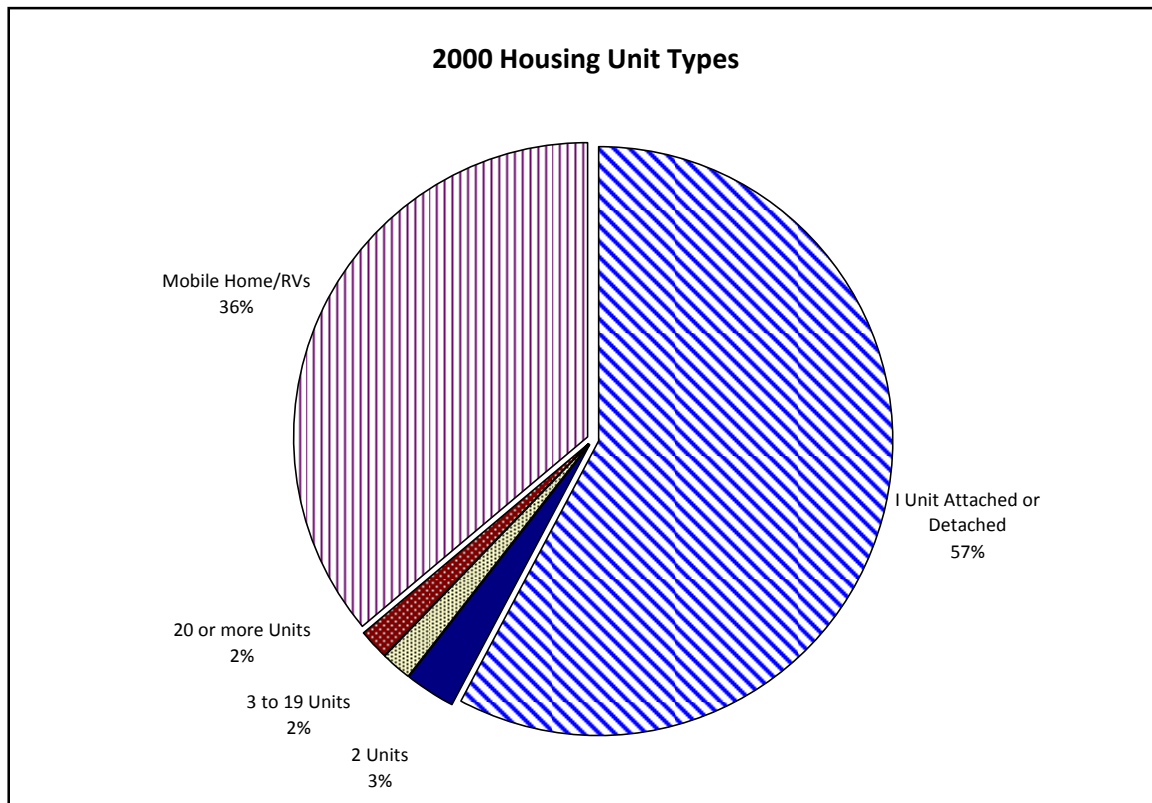
HOUSING INVENTORY								
	Total Units	Site Built	Manufactured	Trailer/RV/ Modified MH	Other	Vacant Structures		Empty Lots
Lordsburg *	1,658	1,063	73	309	151	62		207
Rodeo	97	54	8	11	12	12		29
Animas	127	42	17	45	23	0		41
Cotton City	175	53	36	52	15	19		29
Virden	82	43	5	21	9	4		7
Source: Hidalgo County Roadmap 2010, Medius, Inc., December, 2010								
* Lordsburg data include the El Sol housing development, which is entirely within the Lordsburg city boundaries. Total units are total lots with housing units; empty lots contain no structures.								

According to the 2000 Census, there were 2,848 housing units in Hidalgo County, 1,876 (70%) of which were occupied. Two-thirds of the occupied units (1,255) were owner-occupied, with the remaining third (621) renter-occupied. Vacant housing units totaled 804, or 30%. The 2000 vacancy rate for New Mexico was approximately 13%. Although the vacancy rates in the county were higher than the rest of the state, these rates do not reflect a surplus of available housing.

The 2010 Census shows that there are 2,393 units, 457 (19%) of which are vacant, a significant decline compared to the 2000 county vacancy rate. The 2010 vacancy rate for New Mexico was approximately 12%. At the time this document was written, 2010 Census data for owner-occupancy and renter-occupancy proportions and housing units per structure were not available. The table and graphs below show overall 2000 Census and 2010 Claritas estimates of housing data:

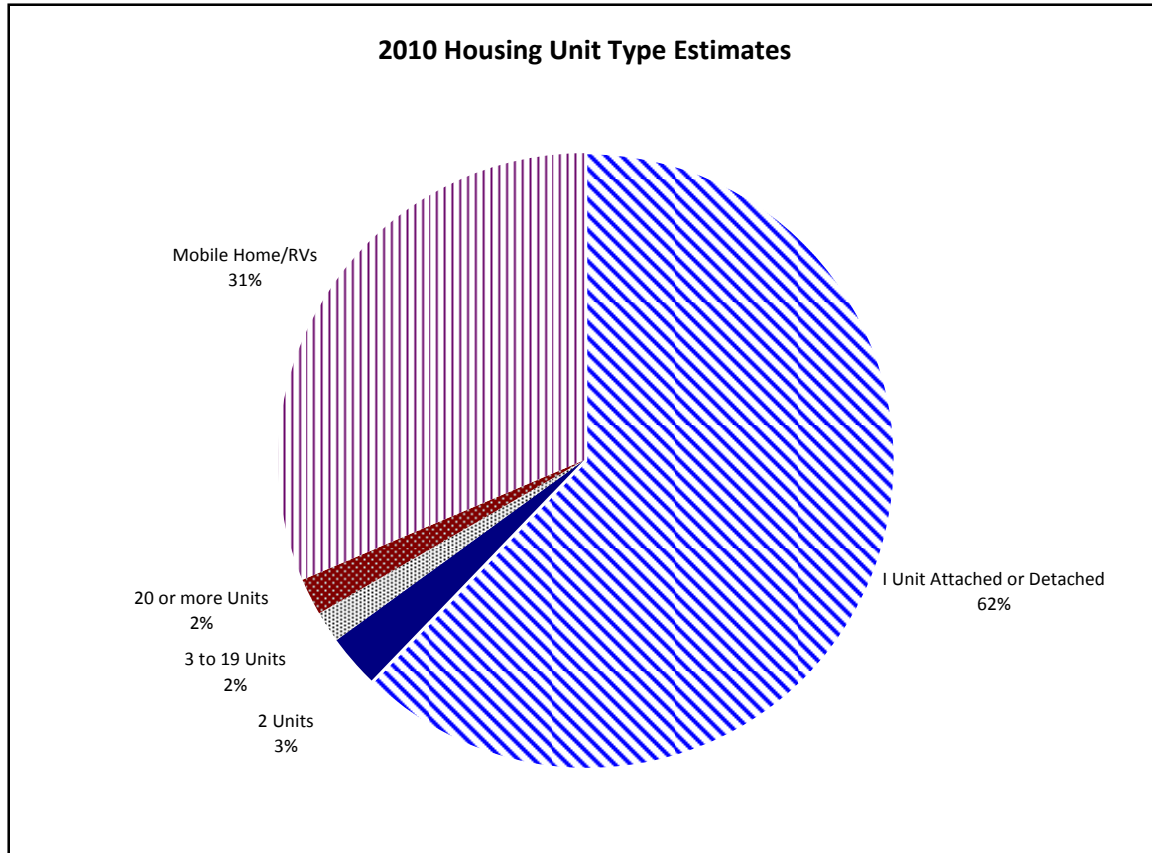
7. HOUSING ELEMENT

HOUSING OCCUPANCY FOR 2000 AND 2010				
	Total Housing Units		Change	% Change
	2000	2010	2000-2010	2000-2010
1 Unit Attached or Detached	1643	1786	143 est.	8.7% est.
2 Units	83	82	-1 est.	-1.2% est.
3 to 19 Units	49	49	0 est.	0.0% est.
20 or more Units	42	58	16 est.	38.1% est.
Mobile Home/RVs	1,031	901	-130 est.	-12.6% est.
Total (1); 2010 values are estimates	2848	2876	28 est.	1.0% est.
Total (2); 2000 and 2010 Census	2848	2393	-455	-16.0%
Sources: Claritas and US Census				



Source: US Census

7. HOUSING ELEMENT



Source: Claritas

There is one important difference between the Claritas 2010 estimates of population and total housing units and their 2010 Census equivalents. Claritas estimates of population are much closer to the Census data (4,869 vs. 4,894, respectively) than they are to the housing unit estimates (2,876 vs. 2,393, respectively). This difference in estimates suggests that housing units have been demolished at a faster rate than new housing units have been added, and that the Census vacancy rates do not reflect the vacancy rates of desirable, decent quality housing.

Because the 2000 Census data for Hidalgo County only provided specific information about the cities of Lordsburg and Virden, there was a lack of data about the locations and quality of housing units in the colonias. The Medius, Inc. survey team conducted a windshield survey of housing units that evaluated the quality of their roofs, doors, windows, and walls. They assigned letter grades A – F (A = excellent; F = failing) to each of these four categories as well as the overall quality of the housing per community.

The Medius, Inc. survey for the Roadmap did not include a physical inventory and housing quality analysis for Playas. This is because Playas is now owned by New Mexico Tech and is used for the Playas Research and Training Center. Antelope Wells was not surveyed either, but the community could provide housing for future border-related economic development.

7. HOUSING ELEMENT

Lordsburg: Lordsburg has the largest stock of rental and for sale housing in Hidalgo County. A large portion of the structures with 2 to 4 housing units and all structures with 5 or more housing units are located in Lordsburg. Most homes in Lordsburg are functional and modest in appearance, receiving an overall letter grade of C-.

Rodeo: Rodeo is in the southwestern portion of Hidalgo County near the Arizona border. About half of the homes are site-built. Housing is in decent condition, receiving an overall grade of B.

Animas: Located in the center of Hidalgo County, Animas is a farming community with large lots. Animas and Cotton City tend to have large lots, many of which are dedicated to farming uses. Major structural damage was uncommon. The overall housing quality grade of C reflects the routine and minor damage to paint and aesthetics.

Cotton City: Of the significant colonias in Hidalgo County, Cotton City is the most sparsely developed. It is a traditional farming community north of Animas. Routine and minor damage to paint and aesthetics was more common than structural damage, and the colonia received an overall letter grade of D.

Playas: When Playas was developed by the Phelps Dodge Corporation in the 1970s to house workers at its copper smelter, it had over 250 rental homes and six apartment buildings. New Mexico Tech used Department of Homeland Security Funds to purchase the site, which is now being used as a training and research center to provide housing for the Playas Training and Research Center.

Most of the original company housing units are now being used to simulate a suburban environment for security training. Currently, housing in Playas is entirely dedicated to staff and temporary personnel: there are 18 residential units for permanent staff and 20 temporary housing units. Although Playas does not provide housing for existing residents and newcomers unaffiliated with the Center, it does provide housing for those that are. These employees would otherwise live outside the county.

Virden: In addition to Lordsburg, Virden is the only other incorporated city in Hidalgo County. In 2000, there were no vacant units for rent. Renters in Virden paid between \$463 and \$488 a month, which is higher than any other community in Hidalgo County. Although the overall housing grade was C, this mostly reflected the large portion of homes with major renovation work rather than poor quality housing.

Colonias: Colonias are unincorporated and unplanned residential communities that tend to lack basic infrastructure (e.g. utilities and paved roads). In addition to the colonias listed above - Rodeo, Animas and Cotton City - the Hidalgo County Roadmap identified these additional colonias: El Sol, Glen Acres, McCants, Road Forks, and Windmill.

El Sol is wholly enclosed within Lordsburg and was designated a colonia according to the local ordinances but should not continue to receive this designation. Per page 38 of the Roadmap: "Both

7. HOUSING ELEMENT

from an infrastructure and housing perspective, there is no reason El Sol should be continued to be classified as a colonia.”

Both Glen Acres and McCants are proximate to Lordsburg and could easily be annexed by Lordsburg. Several vacant lots in McCants are within the Lordsburg city boundaries. Road Forks is an isolated settlement on the far western edge of Hidalgo County and contains mostly commercial properties. Windmill is centrally located and 40 percent of the houses were either mobile or manufactured homes. The following table lists the physical inventory of housing units in Glen Acres, McCants, Road Forks, and Windmill:

HOUSING IN COLONIAS								
	Total Units	Site Built	Manufactured	Trailer/RV/Modified Mobile Home	Other	Vacant Structure	Empty Lots	Overall Housing Grade
Glen Acres	79	33	11	34	1	0	24	C
McCants	19	8	0	9	2	0	5	D
Road Forks	17	4	1	2	7	3	1	F
Windmill	42	7	3	25	4	3	27	D
Source: Hidalgo County Roadmap 2010, Medius Inc., December, 2010								

Data provided by the Census and the New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority provide evidence that suggest three reasons for the lack of housing in Hidalgo County:

- Lack of new housing
- Vacancies that are not for rent or sale
- Lack of affordability

Lack of New Housing

First, there has been a lack of new housing construction, especially in the decades since the 1970s, when housing construction was at its peak. The Census Bureau estimates that total housing units increased by 1.02 percent in the county between 2000 and 2009, compared to a 12.2 percent estimated increase statewide. The table below shows the growth in housing for Hidalgo County compared to the rest of the state.

7. HOUSING ELEMENT

HOUSING UNIT ESTIMATES HIDALGO COUNTY vs. NEW MEXICO 2000-2009				
	Hidalgo County	% Growth since 2000	New Mexico	% Growth since 2000
2000	2,848		780,597	
2004	2,871		824,040	
2008	2,863		871,703	
2009	2,877	1.02	875,778	12.20
Source: US Census Bureau; 2000, 2004, 2008, and 2009				

Because of the lack of new housing construction, the existing stock of housing is old compared to the New Mexico average. Most housing units were built at least forty years ago, and consequently their appearance and functionality decrease the potential for rent and sales. The table below shows the percentages of housing units constructed during the last century, and the median age of the housing stock.

YEAR STRUCTURE BUILT				
Built Between	Hidalgo County	Lordsburg	Virden	New Mexico
1999 to March 2000	1.8%	0.2%	2.6%	0.3%
1995 to 1998	9.7%	10.3%	13.0%	11.0%
1990 to 1994	6.8%	4.7%	9.1%	8.9%
1980 to 1989	12.3%	6.8%	11.7%	20.0%
1970 to 1979	27.2%	26.3%	3.9%	21.2%
1960 to 1969	10.6%	12.2%	3.9%	12.7%
1950 to 1959	7.9%	12.6%	5.2%	11.6%
1940 to 1949	13.1%	10.7%	16.9%	5.7%
1939 or earlier	13.1%	14.4%	33.8%	5.9%
Median year structure built	1973	1970	1950	1977
Source: US Census				

7. HOUSING ELEMENT

Vacancies That Are Not for Rent or Sale

A second reason for the lack of available housing is the percentage of vacant housing units that are not available for rent or sale. Of the vacant units, one third are listed as “other vacant”, which means that the units are either unoccupied, not vacation units, and not for sale or rent. This category covers uninhabitable units or guest houses. The table below shows 2000 Census data for vacancy rates by type of housing unit.

VACANCY RATES IN HIDALGO COUNTY VS. NEW MEXICO 2000				
	Hidalgo County	Lordsburg	Virden	New Mexico
% of Housing Stock	24.4%	14.7%	41.6%	13.1%
Distribution of Vacant Units				
For rent	19.8%	7.6%	0.0%	26.1%
For sale only	11.4%	20.0%	12.5%	11.9%
Rented or sold, unoccupied	5.5%	8.1%	0.0%	5.9%
Seasonal/recreational use	26.3%	34.3%	43.8%	34.4%
For migrant workers	3.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%
Other vacant	33.3%	30.0%	43.8%	21.4%
<i>Source: US Census</i>				

The two most populous communities in Hidalgo, Lordsburg and Virden, have low percentages of housing units for rent compared to the New Mexico average.

7. HOUSING ELEMENT

Affordability

The third reason for the lack of housing in Hidalgo County is the affordability of various housing unit configurations. Although the 2000 median rental rate of \$267 a month is modest in comparison to the New Mexico median rental rate of \$406, the median incomes in Hidalgo County are also much lower than the median New Mexican incomes. The 2000 Census shows that almost half of the county residents spend more than 30% of their income on rent, which exceeds recommended living expenses.

Fair market rents (FMRs) indicate the rental affordability of housing units for a given area based on the availability of housing, prevailing rents, and family incomes. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development uses FMRs to determine rates and amounts for Section 8 vouchers, housing rehabilitation, and other housing programs. The table below shows the Hidalgo County fair market rents:

FAIR MARKET RENTS					
Year	No Bedrooms	One Bedroom	Two Bedrooms	Three Bedrooms	Four Bedrooms
2001	273	309	396	532	601
2002	285	322	413	555	627
2003	292	330	422	568	641
2004	292	330	422	568	641
2005	320	360	427	621	640
2006	338	381	456	664	684
2007	350	394	472	688	708
2008	355	400	479	698	719
2009	372	419	502	731	754
2010	388	437	523	762	785
%Change 2001-2010	42.1%	41.4%	32.1%	43.2%	30.6%
Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2010					

Fair market rents for one bedroom units increased 42.1% between 2001 and 2010, and that fair market rents for four bedroom units increased 30.6% between 2001 and 2010. However, during the same period the median household income only grew by 24.4%, from \$24,831 in 2001 to an estimate of \$30,889 in 2010.

7. HOUSING ELEMENT

The table below shows the proportion of income spent on rent for various housing unit configurations:

UNITS IN STRUCTURE BY GROSS RENT AS A PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME				
Units in Structure	1, attached or detached	2 to 4 units	5 or more units	Mobile Homes/RVs
Total Units	326	89	54	190
Less than 20 percent	145	51	11	43
20 to 24 percent	6	0	18	10
25 to 29 percent	38	20	6	12
30 to 34 percent	19	0	0	9
35 percent or more	68	14	13	50
Not computed	50	4	6	66
Portion > 30% *	31.5%	16.5%	27.1%	47.6%
Source: Hidalgo County Roadmap 2010, Medius, Inc., December 2010				
* Portion of renters paying 30% or more of income on rent				

In Lordsburg, almost four in ten residents spend more than 30% of their income on rent. Virden has the most expensive rents in the county, and no housing units available for rent. In general, the greater the number of housing units in a structure (i.e., multi-family housing) the more affordable the units are to the residents of Hidalgo County.

7. HOUSING ELEMENT

B. HOUSING GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:

GOAL 1: WORK COOPERATIVELY WITH THE MUNICIPALITIES, RURAL COMMUNITIES, NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS AND PRIVATE SECTOR WITHIN THE COUNTY TO CREATE AFFORDABLE HOUSING.

Strategy 1: Prepare an Affordable Housing Plan and create partnerships between public and non-profit agencies such as Hidalgo County, City of Lordsburg, and private developers to provide incentives to build affordable housing¹.

Strategy 2: Provide incentives for developers to create market rate housing; incentives could include expedited review process or extending utilities and infrastructure.

Strategy 3: Apply for Community Development Block Grants, rural economic development assistance via the United States Department of Agriculture, and other grantors to create a CIP “development pool” that would fund the extension of utilities and infrastructure to incentivize housing development.

Strategy 4: Work with major employers to assess work force housing needs and to identify potential sites for residential purposes.

GOAL 2: SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE REHABILITATION AND REPLACEMENT OF SUB-STANDARD HOUSING WITHIN THE COUNTY.

Strategy 5: Apply for HOME Investment Partnership Program Funds to rehabilitate sub-standard housing.

Strategy 6: Create partnerships among high schools and the dual enrollment program (administered by Western New Mexico University) to assist contractors in housing rehabilitation. Student volunteers could learn construction trade skills by apprenticing to skilled tradespeople and perform community service while doing so. Partnerships could involve non-profit groups such as Habitat for Humanity and government programs such as AmeriCorps.

GOAL 3: PROMOTE SITE-BUILT HOUSING WHERE ADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE EXISTS OR WILL BE PROVIDED.

Strategy 7: Maintain an inventory and map showing communities and locations with adequate infrastructure as well as those that will have adequate infrastructure in the near-term and identify developable parcels (5 acres minimum) suitable for single-family and rental housing.

¹ Affordable housing is generally defined as a housing payment that does not exceed 30 percent of gross monthly income and a home that is of a sufficient size to meet the needs of the household.

7. HOUSING ELEMENT

GOAL 4: PROVIDE EDUCATION IN PROGRAMS AND ASSISTANCE FOR HOME OWNERSHIP.

Strategy 8: Work with designated small business development centers, Western New Mexico University Besse-Forward Global Resource Center in Silver City and Mimbres Learning Center in Deming, and non-profit lenders to provide financial literacy and home ownership training and materials.

Strategy 9: Identify and refer eligible applicants to the SWNMCOG and other agencies that are applicable to their needs, such as Emergency Home Loan Program² (EHL) through Southwestern Regional Housing and Community Development Corporation (SRHCDC).

GOAL 5: ENCOURAGE INNOVATIVE AND EFFICIENT BUILDING MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES IN ALL RESIDENTIAL STRUCTURES THROUGH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES.

Strategy 10: Apply for funding for a Community Energy Outreach Project through Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants from the U.S. Department of Energy; meet with Deming City officials on lessons learned and work with the SRHCDC to explore a similar project for Hidalgo County residents.

Strategy 11: Sponsor training for area builders in the use of innovative and efficient building materials and practices. Provide actual case studies and lessons learned from New Mexico builders who construct sustainable low-cost housing.

Strategy 12: Encourage instruction of innovative and efficient building materials and techniques at either the high schools (via the dual enrollment program at Western New Mexico University) or the Hidalgo Learning Center.

² EHL was created to help homeowners who are temporarily and involuntarily unemployed or underemployed due to economic conditions or a medical condition, and are at risk of foreclosure. It pays a portion of mortgage payments up to 24 consecutive months or \$50,000, whichever occurs first.

8. INFRASTRUCTURE/COMMUNITY FACILITIES ELEMENT

A. INFRASTRUCTURE/COMMUNITY FACILITIES EXISTING CONDITIONS

Public facilities and services—which includes water and wastewater services, police and fire services, health services, the public library, and parks, recreation and community facilities—pose important questions for the county's future growth and development. The comprehensive plan task force explored these issues to identify opportunities and constraints for both existing and new development in the county. The growth and development of rural communities within the county is dependent upon the county's ability to create infrastructure and to provide adequate public services. For this reason, public service goals and policies are critical components.

The principal facilities and services of the county are located in Lordsburg. The Hidalgo County Comprehensive Plan identifies some public facilities and services that are shared with the City of Lordsburg. However, even when the facility or service identified in the comprehensive Plan is clearly a county operation (and vice versa), the intertwined fate of city and county is understood by all. This is particularly true in the discussion of proposed community facilities such as the Enrichment Center - a resource managed by the Lordsburg School System - that will be a source of pride for the entire community.

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

In 2009, Medius, Inc began an inventory of the physical, economic and social environment of colonias within Hidalgo County. The resultant document, *Hidalgo County Regional Roadmap 2010*, provides a detailed inventory of many subjects, including Public Infrastructure and Community Amenities, Facilities and Services. This inventory proved a valuable reference in research for this chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. The original document offers detailed inventories of infrastructure by community. The Roadmap study focused on nine communities: Lordsburg (El Sol, McCants), Glen Acres, Virden, Road Forks, Cotton City, Animas, Rodeo, Playas and Windmill.

COMMUNITY WATER AND SEWER SYSTEMS

Hidalgo County recognizes that the general welfare of people in the county is dependent upon maintenance of adequate supplies of good quality water. The county has an interest in assuring water for current and future residential use, commercial use, industrial use, and local government use.

Due to the rural nature and low population density of the County, Hidalgo does not have a water or wastewater system. Most county residents rely on private wells and septic systems; however, these individual systems are problematic. Wells may go dry and septic systems pollute both ground and drinking water. While this Comprehensive Plan favors limits on the proliferation of private wells and septic systems, state subdivision and water law do not currently discourage the use of these systems. Furthermore, community systems are often cost-prohibitive. There are four community water systems in Hidalgo County, but only two community wastewater systems, located in Lordsburg and Playas.

The City of Lordsburg operates the only municipal water and wastewater system in the County. Virden, Rodeo and Playas have community water systems. Playas Townsite has a community sewer

8. INFRASTRUCTURE/COMMUNITY FACILITIES ELEMENT

system. The water systems in Virden and Rodeo serve only those homes and businesses within the town or village and the immediate vicinity. In the case of Virden, this means the incorporated limits; and in Rodeo, the area served is more or less the limits of the traditional town.

Hidalgo County, with help from the Southwestern New Mexico Council of Governments, has assisted Rodeo and Virden in securing new water systems. The water and sewer systems in Playas serve the entire community. There are several wells at depths of 100' - 200' and a wastewater treatment facility serving the Townsite. The boundaries of these communities are well defined, and there are no other homes within several miles.

Subdivisions with lot sizes of 10 acres or more are not required to provide water and sewer infrastructure. All of the new subdivisions have required purchasers of individual lots to arrange for their own wells and septic systems.

WASTEWATER TREATMENT: INDIVIDUAL SEPTIC TANKS

Individual wastewater disposal systems are a major source of groundwater contamination in Hidalgo County, including the contamination of individual wells. New or improved wastewater treatment facilities are seen as needs in Rodeo, Virden and Animas. The county recognizes that certain areas are experiencing degraded groundwater quality due to a high density of individual wastewater disposal systems.

ENERGY

According to the *Hidalgo County Regional Roadmap 2010*, the vast majority of Hidalgo County residents heat their homes with gas provided by NM Gas Company. Rodeo and Playas Townsite receive gas service from El Paso Natural Gas. The communities that lack public gas systems and are dependent on propane service are Virden, Windmill, and Road Forks. Bottled, tank, or liquid propane gas is the next most popular way to heat a home.

Electric service south of Interstate 10 is provided by Columbus Electric Cooperative. PNM provides service for the greater Lordsburg area. Electricity in Virden is provided by The Duncan Valley Electric Cooperative located in neighboring Greenlee County, Arizona. Although electricity is available County-wide, residents in more remote locations sometimes pay tens of thousands of dollars to have electricity extended from a main line to their home. In addition, three-phase power required for commercial development is only available in certain areas. Thus, limited availability of gas and electricity preclude economic development in many parts of the County.

As new or improved electrical services are being added, the county and power company should take into consideration any future business that might be considered in certain areas of the county, and make provisions for future improvements. The county should encourage and support planning for and extension of services to outlying areas.

Hidalgo County is home to PNM's 80-megawatt natural gas-fired Lordsburg Generating Station. It provides power during peak-usage times and enhances power reliability in the region.

8. INFRASTRUCTURE/COMMUNITY FACILITIES ELEMENT

RENEWABLE ENERGY

The County has renewable energy options which could be researched further- geothermal power and both large scale and small scale solar. Large scale solar, however, is a much more viable possibility. The BLM has recently begun the process of solar leases and areas of Hidalgo County might be an ideal location for large scale solar. The County needs to develop regulations for large scale solar projects with the intent that those regulations will ensure expedited approval of projects that demonstrate compatibility with and minimal impact on the surrounding environment. Although small scale wind and solar production can save money over time, the initial installation cost is prohibitive, which has deterred widespread small scale energy production. State approval for geothermal power production in the Animas Valley is in place. The company plans to transfer this energy out of state.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Hidalgo County is served by two telephone cooperatives: Valley Telecom Group and New Mexico Telephone Cooperative. AZNEX provides high speed internet service for much of the county. Cell phone service is unreliable in much of the county, although Lordsburg and the Interstate 10 corridor have good service. Unreliable cell service is problematic for users in need of emergency assistance.

SOLID WASTE

Hidalgo and Grant counties share solid waste disposal facilities operated by Southwest Solid Waste Authority which opened in 1996 were recently upgraded. Landfills for both have an estimated life of twenty years. Transfer stations around the county offer residents locations to take their waste, but illegal dumping is a perpetual issue. Recently, Hidalgo County began to work with NM Tech to improve the solid waste facility at the Playas Townsite to serve the County needs in that region.

Southwest Solid Waste also accepts hazardous waste and recycling at their Silver City facility. While select recyclables are accepted at the Lordsburg transfer station, overall recycling figures for Southwest Solid Waste Authority are very low. This may be related to the cost and inconvenience of residents needing to transport most recyclables directly to facility in Grant County.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES

Hidalgo County owns and operates the Hidalgo County Courthouse and the Hidalgo-Lordsburg Library in Lordsburg. Both the Courthouse and the Library structures are listed on the National Registry of Historic Places and are recognized by the State of New Mexico as significant historic treasures.

Fairgrounds. The Hidalgo County Fairgrounds is home to the annual County Fair as well as hosting other events, including agricultural programs run by the local extension office of New Mexico State University. Leaders in the community have expressed interest in improving the fairgrounds by adding an indoor roping arena and/or creating a racino, a combined race track and casino, to improve economic activity.

8. INFRASTRUCTURE/COMMUNITY FACILITIES ELEMENT

Senior Center. The Ena Mitchell Senior Center, operated by Hidalgo Medical Services and located in Lordsburg, is run for the benefit of seniors in the Lordsburg area and throughout the county. Hot breakfast and lunch are offered at the center on weekdays, with frozen take-home meals available on weekends. Frozen meals are delivered to seniors in Lordsburg and Animas who cannot attend the center. The senior center offers in-town transportation in the Lordsburg area for errands and medical appointments. Elderly Hidalgo residents outside of the Lordsburg area must rely entirely on relatives and neighbors for assistance with food, care and transportation. Ground has broken for a new 6,200 square foot Senior Center building next to the current Hidalgo Medical Services building. It is scheduled to open in 2012.

Recreational Facilities. Limited recreational facilities are available in the county. Short Park, with playground and ball field, is found in Lordsburg. Animas and Rodeo developed and maintain parks through community support. The Virden playground suffers from vandalism and aging equipment. These resources suffer from worn and out-dated equipment and lack of maintenance funding. There is a need for improved parks and recreational facilities.

Formal trails and paths for exercise and recreation are not available in the county. There are hiking and camping opportunities in the Coronado National Forest. More outdoor recreational opportunities such as exercise paths are recommended to encourage activity and help improve the health of the county residents.

Community Centers. The communities of Rodeo, Animas and Virden have created community centers with the grant assistance from Hidalgo County. Leadership for the creation and maintenance of these facilities comes from within the communities. The centers are important gathering places for community events, classes and celebrations. The Playas Training and Research Facility has a community center, park, tennis courts, ballfields and a recreational facility with bowling alley that were originally constructed for the Phelps Dodge smelter workers. These facilities now provide an important resource for the Playas Facility. Access to some of these private facilities is available to county residents.

ENRICHMENT CENTER

The Enrichment Center is the oldest, largest and most significant historical building in the Lordsburg area. The original school building was completed in 1914, and later remodeled to its present size in 1928. The building then served as the high school until 1951 when the current high school was completed. It was subsequently the community's junior high/middle school for two decades until the new Middle School was completed in 1971. The building was used for special education classes, administrative offices, and miscellaneous storage until its abandonment sometime around 1976. The facility is full of rich memories for generations of students, many of whom remain residents of Lordsburg and Hidalgo County

Discussions on what to do with the shuttered building have been ongoing since its closure in the mid-1970's. Currently owned by the Lordsburg Municipal Schools, it has suffered from decades of neglect and has major roof and interior damage. In 2010, a preliminary structural assessment was conducted by Dr Sonya Cooper and her New Mexico State Department of Engineering Technology and Surveying Technology class. The survey determined that the building is structurally sound, but

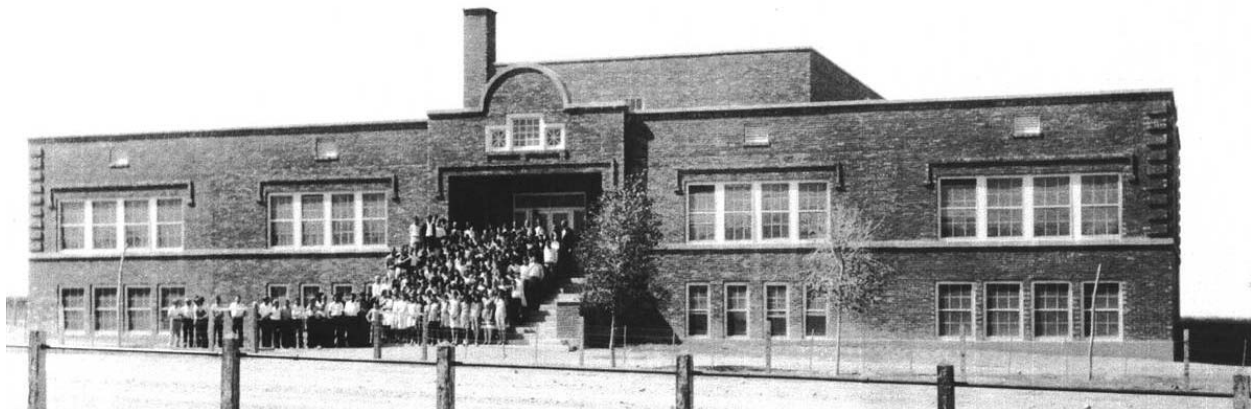
8. INFRASTRUCTURE/COMMUNITY FACILITIES ELEMENT

requires immediate intervention to stabilize it and protect the building from further deterioration. Basic repairs to the roof to prevent further water damage are the top priority identified by the assessment. Asbestos remediation is the second priority. The report estimated that \$3,000,000 would be required to rehab the building. \$850,000 (in 2011) dollars is estimated to be needed to “mothball” the structure until a full renovation is feasible. According the school district, this is less than estimates to demolish and dispose of the structure.

Following the release of the assessment, an open meeting of the Hidalgo County Commission, the Lordsburg City Council and the Lordsburg Board of Education was conducted in the March of 2011 to discuss opportunities and issues concerning the Enrichment Center. The engineering assessment finding were presented, followed by examples of other community’s experiences with preserving/reusing old school structures and a presentation of options for the building and how private sector could be involved in the restoration and adaptive reuse of the building.

Discussion by the stakeholders led to general agreement between County, City and Board of Education that the structure should be saved and not destroyed. The structure needs to be transferred to an entity other than school district to allow for reuse. The City of Lordsburg has the most funding resources available for rehabilitating the structure. By law, the school district cannot contribute funds for the building once the structure is transferred to another entity.

The School Board is moving forward with discussion of transferring the Enrichment Center property to either the City or County for furtherance of restoration efforts, with an indication that the property ownership will revert to LMS after ten years if restoration has not occurred, and that the LMS Board should be represented on the planning committee for the restoration. A May, 2011 meeting kicked off a community effort to move forward with planning and fundraising to stabilize the structure in the short term and ultimately make the structure the heart of the community once again. Potential uses discussed have included a judicial center, offices, public meeting space or housing. A vision of final use will facilitate the search for funding.



8. INFRASTRUCTURE/COMMUNITY FACILITIES ELEMENT

EDUCATION

K-12. Hidalgo County has two school districts: Lordsburg and Animas. The Lordsburg School District is very large, comprising 3557 square miles. Due to the long distance from Lordsburg schools, students living in Virden attend schools in Duncan, Arizona through an arrangement with the Lordsburg Municipal Schools. Area student enrollment numbers have been on the decline, creating problems for the school systems. During the 2000-2001 school year, the District served 839 students, in the 2009-2010 school year enrollment had dropped to 600. Full reports on the school districts are available from the Public Education Department.

The county's second school district (Animas School District) serves the residents of the Animas and Playas area south of Interstate 10, with elementary, middle and high schools. The school system is a source of great pride, and it serves as the most unifying social institution within the larger community. The school system has suffered dramatic cutbacks with the closing of the Playas Smelter in 1999. Enrollment has continued to decline gradually since then. In 2009-2010 enrollment was at 232, down from 325 in 2004, and cutbacks in student enrollment, staffing and funding continue.

Shrinking school enrollment is creating other difficulties for the Lordsburg Municipal Schools. Lower student numbers would normally mean more campus consolidation. Because a building closure would reduce district funding, the funding infrastructure is driving operational priorities and the facilities remain open. The low tax base and aging schools structures, the newest is over 40 years old, will generate more difficulties in the future, with the district unable to afford building maintenance or replacement.

A need identified by educators for Hidalgo students is proper technical equipment to facilitate distance learning. Students need to be taught the skills to succeed in the 21st century and out-moded, inadequate computer equipment puts them and society at a loss. To secure, maintain and replace equipment is beyond the budget of the local schools.

Recruiting and retaining quality school staff is another obstacle in southwest New Mexico. Lower than average salaries, lack of equipment and technology and aging infrastructure contribute to the problem. Districts suffer when teachers move on to other jobs following investment in staff training and retention.

The Hidalgo Learning Center & WNMU. The Hidalgo Learning Center, a vocational training center which opened in Lordsburg in 2010, partners Western New Mexico State University (WNMU) with local schools to offer dual enrollment high school/university credit courses and basic vocational/career training for student not planning to attend college. The new center also houses instructional television (ITV) and face-to-face classes to the residents of Hidalgo County. A computer lab is available to students who are enrolled in online courses through WNMU.

In addition to courses such as in public speaking and computer literacy, they currently offer an Industrial Maintenance degree with courses in electrical technology such as solar hydronics and plan to expand the degree program in the future. GED instruction and testing is also offered through the Learning Center.

8. INFRASTRUCTURE/COMMUNITY FACILITIES ELEMENT

Child Care and Pre-School. Child care and pre-school are important needs for working families. Local, affordable, quality childcare available to match parents work schedules are identified needs in the County. The greatest need is for after-school programs and care for three to five year olds. Childcare which is available to the community at the Playas Training Center has not been utilized much by neighboring families.

PUBLIC SAFETY

The Hidalgo County Sheriff Department serves the unincorporated areas of Hidalgo County and operates out of the County's offices in Lordsburg. Hidalgo has county-wide 911 emergency service. The United States Border Patrol also has a strong presence in the County.

Hidalgo County Sheriff's Department. The Hidalgo County Sheriffs Department has responsibility for approximately 3400 square miles of territory, an 80-mile border with Mexico, and a 100-mile border with the neighboring state of Arizona. The Department experiences the same difficulties in providing adequate law enforcement as many other large rural counties with a population spread out across many miles and in all directions. Furthermore, the 80-mile border with Mexico - almost all of New Mexico's border with Mexico — adds an additional burden that few other rural counties face; and the 100-mile border with Arizona adds other problems related also to alcohol and drugs, and DUI related speeding and reckless driving.

Law enforcement personnel include the Sheriff and Undersheriff and six deputies, the same staff levels as ten years ago. The salary levels for officers working in Hidalgo County is lower than for surrounding counties, which presents a difficulty in hiring and retaining officers, and the Sheriff is always looking for resources that make possible raises for the Department. The reduced budget for the Department also means that funds for overtime or raises are not available. Currently two of the deputy positions are being funded by "Safe Border" federal grants. The tenuous nature of reliance on these annual federal grants for two of the six deputies is stressful for all.

Increased manpower is needed to provide basic services for the county and to address border smuggling. The small staff may mean less than 24-hour service; case backlogs and inability to follow-up on some cases; and one officer per shift, which makes law enforcement difficult and presents risks to officers on duty.

The Sheriff continues to petition the County Commission for additional funds to hire additional officers, to meet the needs identified above. Recently the Sheriff's department has moved into newly remodeled station in the old National Guard building. The new facility meets all of the department's current needs.

The Sheriff's Department has good working relationships with other law enforcement personnel in the area, including city of Lordsburg Police Department, the Border Patrol, the Motor Transportation Division (MTD) of the Department of Public Safety, and State Police Department.

To facilitate maximum possible cooperation, federal, state and local law enforcement personnel meet on a regular basis every month to coordinate efforts and share information.

8. INFRASTRUCTURE/COMMUNITY FACILITIES ELEMENT

Hidalgo County Detention Center. The Hidalgo County Detention Facility, which has met the needs of the county since the mid-1970's, is in the process of being replaced by a new state of the art facility currently under construction. The detention center, a County facility distinct from the Sheriff's office, will replace the current 34 bed detention center with a \$5.6 million, 140 bed facility.

The current jail, which also houses the County Dispatch Office, has adequate space to meet current housing demand, but it is in desperate need of extensive repairs and upgrades. With the broad expansion of capacity, the new facility incorporates economic development opportunities to house federal prisoners and detainees. The new jail should create 15 new jobs, but funding to staff the expanded detention center is not available.

Hidalgo County Dispatch Center. The dispatch center, housed in the old jail facility, will not be moving to the new Detention Center when it opens. They will continue to cope with the old jail building badly in need of upgrades and they will continue to deal with broken and outdated equipment.

Additionally, they are on deadline to upgrade their radio communications equipment. On January 1, 2013, the FCC requires that all public safety and business industrial land mobile radio systems operating in the 150-512 MHz radio bands must cease operating using 25 kHz efficiency technology, and begin operating using at least 12.5 kHz efficiency technology. This deadline is the result of an FCC effort that began almost two decades ago to allow public safety agencies to be able to communicate with each other. After January 1, 2013, licensees not operating at 12.5 KHz efficiency will be in violation of the Commission's rules and could be subject to FCC enforcement action, which may include admonishment, monetary fines, or loss of license.

Communications equipment for multiple agencies will need upgrading to meet this mandate. Funding for upgrades to the Dispatch's dilapidated offices and for their equipment is desperately needed.

Lordsburg Hidalgo County Emergency Medical Services (EMS). Lordsburg Hidalgo County Emergency Medical Service (EMS) Department provides emergency response and patient care & transportation. CDBG funds were used to build the Department's office nine years ago. The Department needs to update equipment on a routine basis. Unfortunately, budget constraints make this impossible. The full-time staff is supplemented with volunteers and part-time personnel. In addition to the main office in Lordsburg, there are three outlying stations. Budget for the Department is lean and committed staff members are known to have second and even third jobs to support themselves and their families.

The outlying communities (Cotton City, Animas, and Virden) frequently have a shortage of Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs). There is constantly a need for many more training courses in the rural locations to increase capabilities. As with many rural communities, the issues are a lack of personnel and the vast distances covered.

The Department has a good working relationship with the Sheriff's Office, the County Volunteer Fire Departments and City of Lordsburg Fire Department, and the City of Lordsburg Police Department. The Department also works closely with neighboring counties in order to make certain that patients

8. INFRASTRUCTURE/COMMUNITY FACILITIES ELEMENT

will get care. The department enjoys close cooperation with and receives great assistance from the US Border Patrol on ambulance calls and responses.

Hidalgo County Volunteer Fire Departments. Hidalgo County has a number of volunteer fire departments that serve the towns and villages and outlying communities. The county itself does not maintain a fire department but supports the local communities, including Virden, Rodeo, Animas, Cotton City and Playas. Local departments also coordinate with the ambulance and emergency services described below.

Volunteer fire departments have evolved from community need and their facilities and equipment is in perpetual need of maintenance and upgrading. In addition to local fund-raising activities, the county continues to support the volunteer Fire Districts by securing grants from the legislature and from other available funds.

Most of the fires that the volunteers respond to are structural fires, but firefighters also respond (with neighboring volunteer departments) to fires in the forest. The Rodeo Volunteer Fire Department enjoys close cooperation with other districts, including Playas, Animas, Cotton City, as far away as Hachita, and its closest neighbor department in Portal Arizona. The Portal Fire Department plays another important role as "first responder" with its ambulance in response to medical emergency calls. Ambulances in Animas and Cotton City also respond to calls in the Rodeo area. Helicopter service is also called when necessary.

Emergency services and volunteer organizations are also an important hazard mitigation aspect. Virden's fire department provides service both local and regionally. Due to the volunteer nature of these Hidalgo services, the availability of responders is sometimes inadequate during working hours, increasing the risk to the residents with medical or fire emergencies.

The local fire departments do an excellent job with limited resources, and the crews that fight local fires and forest fires exemplify the kind of community spirit that makes Hidalgo County's rural towns resourceful and communities strong.

Border Security. Hidalgo County shares an 80 mile border with Mexico. This border has been a focus for human and drug smuggling activity in recent years since federal policies have moved activity away from population centers with increased manpower and fencing.

In 2010, KRQE television reported that state agricultural inspectors are now accompanied by armed sheriff's deputies while inspecting scales in far southern New Mexico because of escalating violence along the U.S. border with Mexico. Scale inspectors have been escorted by deputies from the Luna and Hidalgo county sheriff's departments in a program funded by the Homeland Security Department's "Operation Stone Garden".

Drug trafficking-related seizures by the sheriff's department have declined as they have border-wide in the past few years, but numbers are still high. A Border Patrol forward-operating base at the Antelope Wells border crossing has recently been completed and is used for agents patrolling remote areas of the county.

8. INFRASTRUCTURE/COMMUNITY FACILITIES ELEMENT

The Border Patrol has a strong presence in the county, with increasing staffing and construction of a new station in Lordsburg. This new facility will be able to accommodate up to 350 agents. The Lordsburg Station's area of responsibility consists of 80 miles of international border and 4,256 square miles in the southwestern part of the State of New Mexico.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Hidalgo County does not have an extensive system of community services, and the private and non-profit sectors, along with community volunteers, help to extend limited resources and services, especially to the neediest members of the population. Hidalgo Medical Services (HMS), the only medical services provider in the county, has taken a lead role in caring for the community's health and welfare.

Hidalgo County residents find that medical care, especially for special illnesses and conditions, often requires traveling great distances. From the farthest reaches of Hidalgo County, medical care in Silver City means a round trip of 300 miles, and when health specialists in Las Cruces and Tucson are required, residents can travel 450 to 500 miles. Residents of the area often say they like their remoteness and distance from the problems of metropolitan areas, but the remoteness of the area also means difficulties in accessing benefits of modern health care and other services.

Hidalgo Medical Services (HMS)

Hidalgo Medical Services (HMS) is the sole healthcare provider in the county. HMS provides a broad range of comprehensive community preventive, medical, dental primary care services, as well as inpatient services including deliveries. Behavioral health assessments and counseling are offered by HMS at three County locations (Lordsburg main clinic, Lordsburg High School and Animas schools). Psychiatric services are also offered via telehealth.

Integrated into medical services is the HMS Family Support Services program. Family support is a critical part HMS overall effort to serve the community with comprehensive assistance. HMS offers services in Lordsburg and Animas, plus services in adjoining Grant County and assists people with low income, many who are un- or underinsured. They are striving to be a national model for sustainable frontier health services and community development. In 2003, HMS open a 22,000 sq. ft. facility in Lordsburg that houses 6 dental exam rooms, 9 medical exams, mental health service space, public health office space, and a expanded Family Support program. HMS services are also provided through the Lordsburg School Health Center and through the Senior Citizen Center.

THRIVE Community Assessment

Hidalgo Medical Services, in partnership with the Hidalgo County Health Consortium, the University of New Mexico Center for Health Policy and the Prevention Institute, undertook a community participatory needs assessment between May and August of 2011 using the THRIVE survey. THRIVE (Tool for Health and Resilience in Vulnerable Environments) is a framework and tool designed to engage community members in thinking about what is shaping the health and safety of their community and to identify potential solutions. THRIVE was developed as a systematic way to move from focusing on the problem to focusing on the factors that have created the problem. The tool has been used in community-driven processes across the country aimed at improving health and safety.

8. INFRASTRUCTURE/COMMUNITY FACILITIES ELEMENT

The THRIVE framework and survey was presented community leaders who work and/or live in Hidalgo County at a meeting in May 2011. The THRIVE survey was subsequently distributed throughout the county with the help of community leaders and the Hidalgo County Health Consortium and completed by local residents. Completed surveys were returned them to Hidalgo Medical Services and then forwarded to the Prevention Institute and the University of New Mexico Center for Health Policy for analysis.

THRIVE Survey Results

Survey Completion:

- There were a total of 357 surveys collected and analyzed.
- Of the 357 surveys collected, 197 were from Lordsburg, 16 from Virden, 49 from Animas, 38 from Cotton City, 31 from Rodeo, and 4 from Playas. In addition, 9 surveys indicated that they lived in community other than those listed above and 13 surveys did not indicate a community.
- Over 70% of the surveys were completed by people between the ages of 19 and 65. Less than 10% were completed by youth 18 or younger.
- Ten surveys were completed in Spanish. [Note: Individuals who distributed the surveys reported a high number of Hispanic residents also completed the survey in English].

Ranking THRIVE factors

- When asked to choose, the top 3 factors most often picked by residents in all Hidalgo County locations were: 1) Look, Feel, & Safety, 2) Housing, and 3) Jobs & Local Ownership.
- There was a slight difference in terms of top threes between the community of Lordsburg and the communities of Virden, Animas, and Cotton City. Lordsburg's top 3 were the same as the overall county results while Virden, Animas, and Cotton City identified Education in place of Housing. Rodeo had significant differences in terms of top threes. Rodeo's top 3 were Look, Feel, & Safety, Parks & Open Space, and Arts, Culture, & Entertainment. Playas did not have a top 3 due to its small sample size of 4.
- Look, Feel, & Safety and Jobs & Local Ownership were consistently ranked high and picked as one of the top 4 in almost all the communities. Housing and Education ratings would often flip flop in frequency depending on the community and whether you look at top 3 most often picked vs. most often rated highest priority.
- Looking at the qualitative data across all factors a few specific issues that aren't reflected in the "top 3" which come up consistently:
 - Water quality
 - Need for recreational and entertainment opportunities, specifically a movie theater and park facilities
 - Educational opportunities outside of schools (for adults and youth)
 - Need for volunteers, collective action

The THRIVE survey results were presented to community members during two separate meetings held August 15 and 16, 2011. The results of the THRIVE survey reinforce many of the findings, goals

8. INFRASTRUCTURE/COMMUNITY FACILITIES ELEMENT

and strategies established by this Comprehensive Plan update. Based on the survey results the meeting participants identified the following short and long term strategies:

Look, Feel & Safety

- Neighborhood Watch programs
- BYA block parties/neighborhood clean up
- Improve High School track and field access (lights, consistent times to enter, etc.)

Jobs

- “Shop Local” campaign
- Assess business gaps and recruit needed businesses
- Incentives for new businesses
- Promote local businesses

Housing

- Incentives for housing contractors, including access to state code enforcers
- Ensure infrastructure (water, electric, sewer, etc.) to encourage contractors
- Join Southwest Housing Corporation
- Recruit developers to the county

Education

- Improve communication flow between school board, administration and parents in Lordsburg school district. (e.g. coordination of homework assignments)
- Improve career development opportunities
 - Find employment and career opportunity placements (paid or volunteer).
 - Future careers exposure for middle school students
 - Job shadowing opportunities
 - Find out what current employers are looking for in employees (skills, experience, work ethic, eligibility criteria, etc.)
 - Partner with universities and tech schools

Next Steps

It is recognized that the THRIVE survey is just one of several needs assessments and planning efforts being conducted throughout the county. Finding commonality among the various surveys and planning efforts will help to mobilize community members to collectively understand and address shared issues. Structural capacity must be in place to identify and prioritize common concerns and to identify limitations in resources, political issues, or other factors that may restrain advancement in addressing issues, including how to manage ongoing planning efforts and the implementation of strategies. To significantly impact community issues a network of collaborators will be required. HMS and it's partners in the THRIVE assessment will work to build formal relationships to promote linkages, alliances, and opportunities to leverage resources among the various groups throughout the county in order to impact the issues identified as most important by the community.

8. INFRASTRUCTURE/COMMUNITY FACILITIES ELEMENT

Hidalgo County Health Consortium

The Hidalgo County Health Consortium is a community-based organization officially recognized and charged by the Hidalgo County Commission to coordinate the assessment, planning and evaluation of Hidalgo County's health concerns. The Hidalgo County Health Consortium is dedicated to assessment, planning and coordination around prioritized health concerns, and is recognized as the leading advocate for health and well being for Hidalgo families. The Consortium is comprised of representatives of over 35 providers, services agencies, law enforcement, schools, and government, as well as consumers at large.

The Consortium's *Community Health Improvement Plan*, completed in fiscal year 2009, lists these issues as top health priorities: 1) family resiliency, including substance abuse and teen pregnancy; 2) suicide prevention; and 3) emergency preparedness.

1. *Family Resiliency:* Hidalgo County's sparse population makes family an important source of entertainment and also encompasses/plays a major role in how Hidalgo County's residents spend the majority of their time. Hidalgo County's teen and single mother birth rates have risen in the past years, and are currently higher than the average New Mexico rate for birth. Low birth weight is also a problem, given the two previous listings and the fact that drugs, alcohol and low prenatal care play a large part. Teen alcohol consumption in Hidalgo County is thus a problem, with our numbers consistently higher than New Mexico on average. Heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes are all causes of high mortality rates in Hidalgo County, each of them being related in large part to fitness and diet, or the lack thereof. Hidalgo County has a higher average of 'at-risk for overweight' and 'overweight' teens as compared to the New Mexico average. According to the National Health Rankings Report, New Mexico's obesity rate has grown from 9.8% in 1990 to 25.1 in 2008. Obesity being a large factor in many health problems, and in many cases, death, the Health Council feels it is a very important subject to tackle.

2. *Suicide:* Though in recent years, suicide deaths in Hidalgo County have been about average with the state of New Mexico, the New Mexico Epidemiological Profile reports that New Mexico's suicide rate is 1.5 to 2 times the national rate, and has been consistently one of the highest in the U.S.

3. *Emergency Preparedness:* Considering that many residents in Hidalgo County reside outside the city limits with few, if any neighbors, being prepared and informed in an emergency is crucial.

Healthy Communities

Multiple factors contribute to creation of healthy communities. A few of the main areas of concern for Hidalgo County are listed in this section.

Activity: The New Mexico Indicator-Based Information System (NM IBIS) reports that Hidalgo teens are moderately active. Physical activity is crucial to maintaining physical health. Among adolescents, regular physical activity helps improve bone health, body weight and composition, physical fitness and mental health. NM Healthier Weight Council's Community and Regional Planning Advisory

8. INFRASTRUCTURE/COMMUNITY FACILITIES ELEMENT

Group is working to increase awareness on the impact of the built environment on physical activity. Amenities such as exercise trails, play equipment and ball courts and fields combined with reinforcement can add to the community activity level which translates into a healthier population.

Food: Nutritional data for adults in the county is too small to analyze statistically but youth fruit and vegetable consumption is average for New Mexico. For persons to make healthy food choices, healthy food options must be available and accessible. Families living in low-income neighborhoods and rural areas of the state often have less access to healthier food and beverage choices than those in more urban, higher-income areas. Improvements to food systems and creation of community gardens can lead to healthier communities. Lordsburg schools provide free or reduced lunches to more than three quarters of their students and Animas schools offer more than 60% of their students subsidized meals. Food security for these children outside of school is uncertain.

Alcohol: Alcohol related deaths in the county exceed the state average. Excessive alcohol consumption contributes to many different poor health outcomes. Chronic heavy drinking (defined as drinking more than two drinks a day for men and more than one drink a day for women) contributes to a variety of alcohol-related chronic diseases, including liver cirrhosis and alcohol dependence. Episodic heavy (or binge) drinking (defined as drinking five or more drinks on a single occasion for men and four or more drinks on a single occasion for women) contributes to a variety of alcohol-related injuries, including motor vehicle crashes, poisonings, falls, homicides, and suicides.

Prenatal Care: Hidalgo County ranks lowest in the state for prenatal care in the first trimester. Women who receive early and consistent prenatal care enhance their likelihood of giving birth to a healthy child.

Depression: The percentage of students who felt sad or hopeless almost every day was very high. Persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness are a risk factor for depression. Students who reported these feelings of sadness or hopelessness were more likely than other students to report suicide attempts, cigarette smoking, binge drinking and illicit drug use.

Poverty: Poverty in the early years of a child's life, more than at any other time, has especially harmful effects on continuing healthy development and well-being, including developmental delays and infant mortality. Well-being in later childhood, such as teen pregnancy, substance abuse, and educational attainment, are also influenced by early childhood poverty. Children born into poverty are less likely to have regular health care, proper nutrition, and opportunities for mental stimulation and enrichment.

Environmental Health: According to the *New Mexico County Health Report Cards 2010*, Hidalgo County Community Environmental Health Concerns in 2010 include

- Trains: Air pollution, Noise, Safety
- Ground Water Quality; History of hazardous waste, nitrate, fluoride
- Waste Disposal; Illegal dumping
- Hazardous Material Disposal: Concerns about increase cancer
- Border Concerns: Drugs, alien traffic

8. INFRASTRUCTURE/COMMUNITY FACILITIES ELEMENT

B. INFRASTRUCTURE/COMMUNITY FACILITIES GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:

GOAL 1: IMPROVE EFFICIENCY IN THE USE, CONSERVATION, AND RE-USE OF WATER RESOURCES.

Strategy 1: Participate in the regional water resource plan to assure efficient use of the AZ Water Settlement Act funds.

Strategy 2: Educate water users about water resources and conservation, and offer water conservation education programs about techniques such as rainwater harvesting, wastewater reclamation, and groundwater recharge.

GOAL 2: EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES AND SUPPORT THE ECONOMIC USE OF GEOTHERMAL RESOURCES THAT PROTECTS THE GROUNDWATER AQUIFERS.

Strategy 3: Support the administration and protection of water rights in the County.

Strategy 4: Support a Basin-wide program of comprehensive monitoring, metering, and ongoing investigation of water resources in the aquifer areas.

GOAL 3: MAINTAIN A HIGH LEVEL OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND EMERGENCY SERVICES FOR COUNTY RESIDENTS.

Strategy 5: Increase the telecommunications system through partnerships with the private providers, state and federal agencies.

Strategy 6: Expand the County's 911 dispatch system and encourage joint or multiple use facilities for law enforcement, fire fighters, and rescue services.

Strategy 7: Promote "Neighborhood Watch" programs throughout the County.

GOAL 4: PROMOTE JOINT USES OF EXISTING COMMUNITY FACILITIES, AND DEVELOP PARKS AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES TO MEET COMMUNITY NEEDS.

Strategy 8: Establish partnerships and joint use agreements with school districts, Western New Mexico University and local municipalities, for the use of facilities and construction of new facilities to ensure public access and availability.

Strategy 9: Encourage subdivisions and planned developments to provide recreational facilities, such as community centers, parks, and trails to ensure adequate recreational amenities for residents.

Strategy 10: Provide assistance in the planning, development and funding of new community facilities and assist existing community facilities with rehabilitating and/or expanding their centers, such as completing acoustic treatment in Animas Community Center.

8. INFRASTRUCTURE/COMMUNITY FACILITIES ELEMENT

Strategy 11: Acquire access easements across private lands to public recreational areas such as Skeleton Canyon.

GOAL 5: ENSURE PROPER DISPOSAL OF SOLID WASTE, INCLUDING HAZARDOUS MATERIALS, AND PROMOTE RECYCLING.

Strategy 12: Support large-item pick up and hazardous waste disposal services.

Strategy 13: Implement the collection of solid waste transfer fees as the county costs increase for waste disposal.

GOAL 6: IMPROVE THE PROVISION AND ACCESSIBILITY OF THE HEALTH CARE FACILITIES AND SERVICES, AND PROMOTE THE COUNTY'S HEALTH AND PRIMARY CARE FACILITIES.

Strategy 14: Through capital improvements plans and grant writing, seek state and federal funding for the Hidalgo County Health facilities to provide extended hour pharmacy and urgent care facilities, and develop a facility for the training and housing of the Animas Emergency Medical Services (EMS).

Strategy 15: Play a leadership role by communicating needs to providers to increase services, develop new services, and meet gaps in the service array. Negotiate with the state and its designated agencies to insure that service coordination remains local.

9. TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

A. TRANSPORTATION EXISTING CONDITIONS

HIDALGO COUNTY: ROADS, HIGHWAYS AND RAILROAD SYSTEM

Hidalgo County's road network includes Interstate 10 (I-10) which passes through the county seat of Lordsburg. I-10 is a major route for interstate commerce as well as automobile traffic. I-10 east of Lordsburg is parallel to US 80, which was once the principal commercial district and "main street" of the city.

The principal roads in the County are from Lordsburg to Deming east (US 70/US 80), Virden to the north and west (US 70), and Silver City to the north and east (NM 90). US 80 and US 70 join in Lordsburg from the west end of the city and then continue eastward as the same roadway.

Highway 338 south begins at the I-10 exit located about 10 miles west of Lordsburg, continues south to Cotton City and Animas, and then to Cloverdale. An unimproved road off Highway 338 at the south end of the county provides access across the Coronado National Forest into Arizona. The main road continues to Cloverdale. Another 5 miles further west along I-10, at the Road Forks exit, US 80 breaks off from I-10 and begins its route southward to Rodeo before turning west into Arizona.

NM 81 begins in Grant County at the I-10 exit just east of Separ, about 20 miles east of Lordsburg, and continues from that point south to Hachita (Grant County) then to Antelope Wells. The principal road through Hachita (NM 9) leads west to Animas and continues from there to make a connection with US 80 south.

The county maintains approximately 500 miles of road today, with 45-55 miles paved (chip seal). The county's budget for paving and for maintenance of roadways is always tight, with just enough grant money annually to repair the current inventory of roads. The county recognizes that many residents want more east-west connections south of I-10, providing short cuts from Road 338 to US 80 South, and connections between Roads 81 and 338 in the southern part of the county. Some county residents also mentioned the need for a shorter alternate route between Animas and Lordsburg.

These connections would not only benefit local residents, some of whom farm and ranch on both sides of the ranges, but it would also be a benefit in promoting tourism and other kinds of economic development. A better-interconnected system of roads would also make it easier for cross-border travelers from Hidalgo County to Mexico, helping to promote economic development by increasing commerce across the borders. A new Port of Entry is located at Antelope Wells. More than 1000 Mexican residents immediately on the other side of the Hidalgo County border shop in the USA, and Hidalgo County wants these households to shop and bring their commerce to Hidalgo County.

The County also has Amtrak and Union Pacific railways passing through, connecting to the east and west coasts. Freight trains are frequent, but as they pass through Lordsburg they are not currently contributing to the local economy. The Amtrak passenger train runs through Hidalgo County three times per week both east and west, stopping in Lordsburg as requested. Opportunities exist to

9. TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

capitalize on the existing freight/rail service. Extending service to the south to expand freight lines into Mexico is another opportunity.

The New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) is developing a State Rail Plan in 2011 to describe the current status of the New Mexico rail system, demonstrate the demand for and the benefits of the rail system, and identify capital infrastructure and operating needs. The Plan will also provide a strategic vision and implementation steps to help guide decisions and investments affecting New Mexico's rail system. Ultimately, developing a State Rail Plan that complies with Federal requirements will help position NMDOT to take advantage of emerging Federal planning and funding programs that can facilitate implementation of statewide rail improvements.

Hidalgo County should consider the opportunities not only for better connectivity but also for recreational tourism such as working with the Coronado National Forest to get roads improved through the forest areas; an interconnected system of roadways would serve the needs of residents, tourists, including hunters and sports men and women, bicyclists, horseback riders and drivers of off-road motorized vehicles.

As areas of the county are developed more intensively, the county may want to consider the option of establishing road assessment districts where appropriate, to secure adequate funds for the needed upgrading and even maintenance of specific roads. Another option — privatizing some county road maintenance where economically justified — has been used in some counties, and may be an alternative for Hidalgo County in the future.

Corre Caminos Transit is a rural public transportation service that serves Grant County residents with modified fixed routes and demand service in Lordsburg, Bayard, Hurley, Santa Clara, Arenas Valley and Tyrone. ADA vans are available for riders with disabilities and/or limited mobility. There are nominal charges, and the cost of operations is subsidized by federal and state grants.

Hidalgo County Transportation Plan (2007) includes three transportation goals for the county:

1. Create a comprehensive road inventory, classification system and mapping system for Hidalgo County
2. Develop more public transit options and implement and expand Regional Transit District to serve Hidalgo County residents
3. Hidalgo County should create a road and transportation system that provides better roads and connectivity to support economic development, and provides a safe roadway system for the county residents and visitors.

Airports

No commercial air service is offered in Hidalgo County. The oldest airport in the State of New Mexico, the Lordsburg Municipal Airport, was dedicated by Charles Lindbergh in 1927. This City operated facility is available for public use. The need for an improved airport in Lordsburg to support more traffic is a goal of the county, and is linked directly to economic development initiatives. It is important also to assure that both the Lordsburg and Animas airports can handle larger planes, including charter flights to accommodate the needs for the training center at the Playas Townsite. The airport roads for both Playas and Lordsburg also need improving.

9. TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

B. TRANSPORTATION GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:

GOAL 1: DEVELOP MORE PUBLIC TRANSIT OPTIONS AND EXPAND THE REGIONAL TRANSIT DISTRICT TO SERVE THE COUNTY RESIDENTS.

Strategy 1: Encourage the RTD to survey local residents to assess actual and potential needs for public transportation.

Strategy 2: Pursue funding sources and partner with the other jurisdictions in the County in establishing a shuttle system with an expanded daily scheduled round trip(s) between Lordsburg and other outlying communities.

GOAL 2: ENHANCE THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM TO PROVIDE BETTER ROADS AND MULTI-MODAL CONNECTIVITY TO SUPPORT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Strategy 3: Partner with the Southwest Regional Planning Organization to update the Long Range Transportation Plan.

Strategy 4: Participate in the SET initiative to promote regional economic development.

GOAL 3: COLLABORATE WITH LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS TO COMMUNICATE TRANSPORTATION NEEDS FOR POTENTIAL FUNDING.

Strategy 5: Meet regularly with the Southwest Regional Planning Organization and New Mexico Department of Transportation to maintain a prioritized list of roadways in need of improvements that are eligible for potential funding.

GOAL 4: IMPROVE AND MAINTAIN THE LEVEL OF SERVICE AND CONDITION OF COUNTY ROADS.

Strategy 6: Create a Street and Drainage master plan that includes a comprehensive road inventory, classification system, mapping system and a maintenance program.

Strategy 7: Review and update subdivision standards, especially rural road standards.

GOAL 5: ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF SAFE, CLEAN ROADS, ESPECIALLY RELATED TO EMERGENCY AND SCHOOL VEHICLES.

Strategy 8: Review highway statistics and prioritize the five highest-risk roadways and their causes, and working with NMDOT, program these safety improvements into the STIP (State Transportation Improvements Program).

9. TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

GOAL 6: ENCOURAGE THE USE OF FUEL-EFFICIENT, LOW EMISSION VEHICLES AND REDUCE VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED.

Strategy 9: Place a high ranking on fuel efficiency in the criteria for purchasing new vehicles.

Strategy 10: Provide incentives for county employee car-pooling and institute programs for flexible work hours and home-telecommuting.

Strategy 11: Develop Park and Ride programs and locations through-out the County.

10. HAZARDS MITIGATION ELEMENT

A. HAZARDS MITIGATION EXISTING CONDITIONS

Hazards Mitigation addresses multiple natural and human-caused emergencies and hazards which may endanger the health, safety, and welfare of the residents of Hidalgo County. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the subsequent creation of the US Department of Homeland Security focused attention on these threats, resulting in funding for communities to plan for and implement actions for hazard mitigation.

Severe weather, flooding, drought, wildfires, dust storms, earthquakes, and human-caused hazards, such as hazardous materials releases, are potential risks. Of these, the County is most susceptible to fire, flooding, and drought, according to *Draft Hazard Mitigation Plan for Hidalgo County* dated September 3, 2003.

The Plan assesses and proposes mitigation actions for wildfire; drought; flooding; human-caused hazards, including terrorism and radiological hazardous materials transportation; and other hazards including severe weather and earthquakes. A priority mitigation action in the Plan is establishing a comprehensive communication network which would reduce potential loss of life and damage to community assets from all hazards. The Hazard Mitigation Plan also recommends several mitigation actions aimed at prevention of all hazards, including public education and intra-governmental partnerships.

2010 New Mexico Hazard Mitigation Plan by the New Mexico Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management lists floods, storms, wind or heat as the highest ranking natural hazard risks for Hidalgo County, with drought and wildfire considered medium risks. Social, economic and physical vulnerabilities are also considered in this plan. The “non-hazard” vulnerabilities ranked highest include social vulnerability and structural type vulnerability. The social vulnerability rating took into account the county’s high poverty rate and the high percentage of the population under 18 or over 65; those considered as the most vulnerable populations expected to require greater resources in the event of an emergency. Structure type vulnerability considers that the large number of older structures in the county may be in poor condition, therefore more prone to damage by wind and storms.

The 2009 *Hidalgo County All-Hazards Emergency Operations Plan* (EOP) is in place to “assemble, mobilize, and coordinate a team of responders and coordinators to deal with any emergency situation. The plan identifies the three major categories of hazard; weather related events; Haz-Mat accidents; and wildfire. Hazard mitigation, disaster planning, preparation, response, and recovery are addressed by the EOP. The plan includes “maximizing all resources of the county and municipal governments as well as resources of various private companies and organizations.” It provides for an overall, coordinated, integrated countywide disaster management organization with each municipality providing disaster management within its own jurisdiction.

DROUGHT

New Mexico typically experiences drought about every ten (10) years. The decade preceding this plan update has been unusually dry and climate models suggest the trend may continue. Droughts in Hidalgo County reduce water supplies used for human consumption, livestock, agriculture, forests,

10. HAZARDS MITIGATION ELEMENT

firefighting, recreation and wildlife, and also affect water quality. Water conservation is a primary tool to protect the County from the impacts of drought.

WILDFIRE

Wildfire is an uncontrolled fire fueled by vegetation, possibly threatening community assets. Although wildfires may occur anytime, they occur most frequently during extended periods of dry weather, a condition common in Hidalgo County. Wildfires in range and cropland, which constitutes much of the county, tend to not be as large as fires in steep, densely-forested lands such as that found in the southernmost portions of the county. In 2011, forest fires in New Mexico and Arizona burned uncontrolled for weeks, costing millions of dollars to fight and destroying property and habitat. Wildfire poses less of a threat to much of the county than structure fires. Volunteer fire departments provide protection for almost the entire county. Although many of these fire departments are well equipped to fight fires, the limited availability of volunteers during working hours and the remoteness of much of the county poses a risk to residents.

FLASH FLOODS

Flooding impacted areas along the Gila River in Hidalgo County in 1984, 1987, and 1993. Fires in the Gila National Forest could have a large impact on flooding in the Virden Valley, the low point of the Gila River in New Mexico. Loss of vegetation as the result of wildfires in the past ten years has exposed the soil, allowing high run-off and increased risk of flooding. This problem will persist until vegetation is re-established.

Flood vulnerability assessments are typically described in terms of community assets that lie in the path of floods. The impacts of flash flooding are exacerbated by wildfire, drought and development (roads etc.), which reduce vegetative cover and expose the soil further. Severe flash flooding is most likely to occur in drainages that receive runoff from watersheds with steep slopes and narrow stream valleys. Flash flooding effects are aggravated by steep slopes, obstructions trapping flow, and soils with low infiltration rates. Flooding of the drainages coming out of the hills behind the Village of Virden may cause local flooding issues during periods of intense precipitation.

HUMAN-CAUSED HAZARDS

Terrorism and hazards created by human error are difficult to predict or prevent because they can occur anywhere. In the case of Hidalgo County, potential hazards relate to hazardous materials transportation through the county on Interstate 10 and the rail line. Human-caused hazards are best mitigated by focusing on key facilities and emergency service providers.

OTHER HAZARDS

Unlike wildfires and floods, which are typically concentrated in one area, severe wind and weather hazards would likely affect the entire County or region. Dust storms are a frequently recurring hazard, creating exceptional safety concerns along Interstate 10. The risk of tornado and earthquake is considered low in Hidalgo County. Efforts to protect against severe weather may focus on identifying individual structures and critical facilities that are vulnerable to severe weather, on public education, and on improvements to building regulations. Hidalgo County has arrangements with the rural community centers to utilize their facilities in case of emergency.

10. HAZARDS MITIGATION ELEMENT

B. HAZARD MITIGATION GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:

GOAL 1: REDUCE POTENTIAL LOSS OF LIFE AND DAMAGE TO EXISTING COMMUNITY ASSETS, INCLUDING STRUCTURES, CRITICAL FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE FROM ALL EMERGENCIES, INCLUDING NATURAL AND HUMAN-CAUSED HAZARDS SUCH AS WILDFIRES, FLOODING, DROUGHT, SEVERE WEATHER, EARTHQUAKES AND CONTAMINANTS.

Strategy 1: Update and improve the County All-Hazard Emergency Operations Plan, including development of an all-hazard emergency notification system.

Strategy 2: Promote and coordinate the Best Management Practices (BMP) to protect and sustain safe and defensible fire safety buffer zones around communities that border the public lands.

Strategy 3: Assess the vulnerability of critical infrastructure facilities and structures in hazard-prone areas.

Strategy 4: Develop a county-wide storm water management plan that addresses flood protection and erosion control and leads to implementation of soil stabilization and flood control projects such as dikes and culverts.

Strategy 5: Develop capital improvement plans to identify and seek local, state and federal funding for priority emergency management and hazard mitigation projects.

Strategy 6: Implement a public education campaign to educate County residents on hazard mitigation topics such as wildfire prevention through defensible space creation, vegetation management and fuel reduction; flood protection through on-site retention and purchase of flood insurance; water conservation techniques and retrofitting; and actions to take during an emergency situation.

Strategy 7: Regularly review and update as appropriate the Hidalgo County Hazard Mitigation Plan.

11. IMPLEMENTATION ELEMENT

IMPLEMENTATION

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ADMINISTRATION, AMENDMENT AND UPDATE

The Hidalgo County Comprehensive Plan is intended to be a dynamic document that should be implemented and reviewed on a continuous basis. As priorities and conditions change, so should these changes be reflected in the Plan. There should be a formal update of the Hidalgo County Plan every five years, using updated information from the Census and other sources of socio-economic and geographic data. The Hidalgo County Commissioners will appoint a Comprehensive Plan Task Force for the formal Plan Update process that will include, but is not limited to, representatives from business and real estate interests, ranching/agriculture, water interests and neighborhood residents.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY PRIORITIES

The Hidalgo County Commissioners should appoint an Implementation Committee that will be represented by stakeholders in the community. The role of the Implementation Committee will be to coordinate, facilitate and direct the implementation of the strategies prioritized by the County Commissioners and community. The Committee will report directly to the County Commissioners on their activities and provide recommendations on the capital improvement plan, and legislative budget requests and initiatives.

The Implementation strategies for each Element were prioritized by the County residents at the community meetings in October, 2011. Following a review and revision of all the strategies within an Element, the residents placed dots (limited to ten dots for the 99 total strategies recommended in the plan) on those strategies most important to them. By having to make a choice in selecting a limited number of strategies, those strategies with the highest number of dots were determined to be of higher priority. Issues of sequencing, funding availability and a coordination of activities were also considered in establishing priorities. The following are the Community's Priority Strategies, listed in order of priority, which received at least six votes from the county residents:

Priority Strategy 1:

Increase the telecommunications system through partnerships with the private providers, state and federal agencies.

Priority Strategy 2:

Map and identify sites lacking in phone and communication coverage.

Priority Strategy 3:

Create partnerships among high schools and the dual enrollment program (administered by Western New Mexico University) to assist contractors in housing rehabilitation. Student volunteers could learn construction trade skills by apprenticing to skilled tradespeople and perform community service while doing so. Partnerships could involve non-profit groups such as Habitat for Humanity and government programs such as AmeriCorps.

11. IMPLEMENTATION ELEMENT

Priority Strategy 4:

Consider adopting a nuisance regulation for inoperable vehicles, and abandoned mobile homes.

Priority Strategy 5:

Work closely with WNMU and NM Tech to assess future skills needed in the county and surrounding counties and collaborate with WNMU to create specific education fields of study and programs in all cities served by the University (Silver City, Deming, and Lordsburg).

Priority Strategy 6:

Work with communication providers to ensure that proper service is delivered to residents and local businesses and investigate with the Southwest New Mexico Council of Governments and the State of New Mexico ways to improve telecommunication delivery, in order to support local initiatives in the areas of economic and education growth.

Priority Strategy 7:

Expand the County's 911 dispatch system and encourage joint or multiple use facilities for law enforcement, fire fighters, and rescue services.

Priority Strategy 8:

Through capital improvements plans and grant writing, seek state and federal funding for the Hidalgo County Health facilities to provide extended hour pharmacy and urgent care facilities, and develop a facility for the training and housing of the Animas Emergency Medical Services (EMS).

Priority Strategy 9:

Acquire access easements across private lands to public recreational areas such as Skeleton Canyon.

Priority Strategy 10:

Consider adopting a Night Sky ordinance with specific lighting guidelines and regulations to include requirements on lighting standards such as shielding, pole heights, lighting types and hours of operation pursuant to the NM Night Sky Protection Act.

Priority Strategy 11:

Inventory/survey historic and traditional buildings and features for NM Cultural properties designation.

Priority Strategy 12:

Review and update subdivision standards, especially rural road standards.

Priority Strategy 13:

Provide incentives, and reduce obstacles, in the permitting of home-based businesses that meet guidelines related to scale and intensity of the business.

APPENDICES

APPENDICES

ADVERTISEMENT FOR THE COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS, OCTOBER 25 & 26, 2011



What's your vision of Hidalgo County's future?

Come and provide **your** direction and priorities to the County Commissioners on:

- **Land and Water**
- **Housing**
- **Economic Development**
- **Community Facilities**

Copies of the Hidalgo County Comprehensive Plan Update are available for review at the Hidalgo County Manager's Office and on the www.communitybydesign.biz website.

Attend any **one** of these **Community Open House Workshops** from **5:30-7:30:**

Tuesday, Oct. 25

- Lordsburg City Hall *or*
- Rodeo Community Center

Wednesday, Oct 26

- Virden Old Church Building *or*
- Animas Community Center

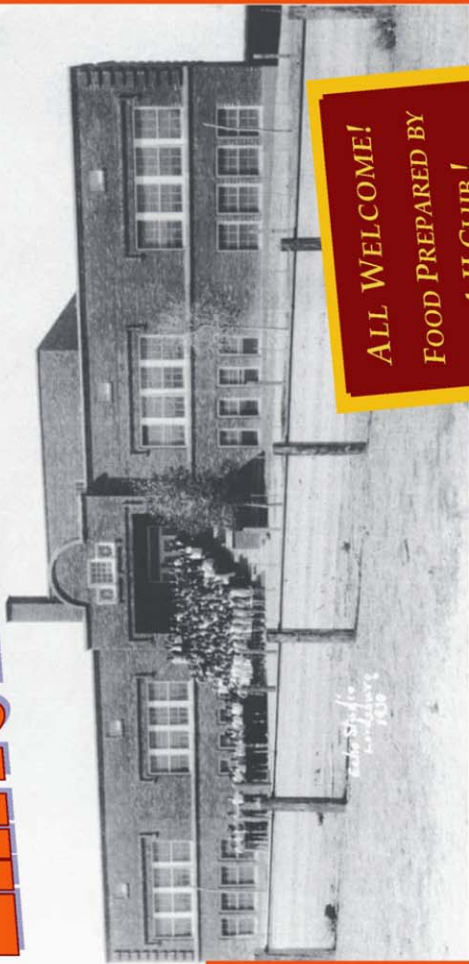
☛ *Refreshments!* ☛

For additional information or special needs, contact Charlie Deans at 505-508-3361, charlie@communitybydesign.biz or John Salazar, Hidalgo County Manager at 575-542-9428

Funding for the Hidalgo County Comprehensive Plan Update is made possible by a CDBG planning grant through the Southwest New Mexico Council of Governments from the NM Department of Finance and Administration.

*Hidalgo County, the City of Lordsburg, and the Lordsburg
Municipal School District invite you to create a new beginning*

for the Historic Enrichment Center



**ALL WELCOME!
FOOD PREPARED BY
4-H CLUB !**

**A Community Workshop to explore
the future of *OUR* historic treasure!**

**Tuesday, May 10 5-7 p.m.
Lordsburg Cafetorium, 4th Street**

- ❖ How do we save the building?
- ❖ What are your ideas for its future?
- ❖ Volunteer your skills and enthusiasm!
- ❖ Help save our historic school building!
- ❖ Would you like to be part of the planning committee?
- ❖ Help research grants and other funding sources!

For additional information or special needs contact Edmund Saucedo at 575-542-9716 or Charlie Deans, charlie@communitybydesign.biz
Funding for Enrichment Center planning provided by Hidalgo County.

APPENDICES

RESULTS OF COMMUNITY PRIORITIZATION OF ALL STRATEGIES OCTOBER, 2011 WORKSHOPS

Number in parentheses represents the total number of votes for that strategy

LAND AND WATER GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:

GOAL 1: SECURE, PROTECT AND MAINTAIN SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY THROUGH EFFECTIVE AND COORDINATED WATERSHED AND AQUIFER MANAGEMENT.

(4) *Strategy 1. Pursue funding at New Mexico State water funding institutions such as the Water Trust Board, the NM Legislature and the New Mexico Finance Authority for groundwater studies, watershed protection and restoration treatments and the establishment and maintenance of a Hidalgo County Aquifer Monitoring Program as a decision making tool with local, state and federal partnerships.*

Strategy 2. Promote and coordinate the active management of County ground water supplies according to New Mexico Water Quality Control Standards and the EPA Clean Water Standards.

Strategy 3. Coordinate and integrate water supply and watershed planning with the Southwest New Mexico Regional Water Plan, the New Mexico State Water Plan and the New Mexico State Forestry Watershed Plan.

(4) *Strategy 4: Promote and demonstrate domestic water conservation efforts, such as the use of drip irrigation, gray-water, water harvesting, low-flow fixtures, xeriscape landscaping through education programs and in the subdivision regulations.*

GOAL 2: PROMOTE, PROTECT AND RESTORE THE OPEN SPACES AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUCH AS RIVERS, RIPARIAN AREAS, FLOODPLAINS, WILDLIFE HABITATS, FORESTS AND GRASSLANDS AND MIGRATION CORRIDORS.

(2) *Strategy 5. Promote land conservation easements and land trusts that protect unique wildlife habitats such as riparian areas and critical wetlands and springs.*

(1) *Strategy 6. Coordinate public and private organizations to maintain natural, contiguous open space areas in and adjacent to wildlife migration corridors.*

(1) *Strategy 7. Consider wildlife connectivity in design and development of roadways and in designing retrofits to existing roadway and work with NM DOT to encourage ecologically sensitive road design.*

(1) *Strategy 8. Coordinate the Sykes Act wildlife habitat funds with BLM, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish and US Fish and Wildlife Service to protect wildlife and maintain fishing and hunting habitats.*

APPENDICES

GOAL 3: RECOGNIZE, HONOR AND PROTECT HISTORICAL GRAZING AND WATER RIGHTS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.

Strategy 9: The County, in partnership with the USDA and Cooperative Extension Service, will inform and encourage interested ranchers and farmers to place conservation easements on their property and take advantage of tax benefits offered by State and Federal legislation.

(3) Strategy 10: Promote incentives and funding for agricultural measures such as drip irrigation and laser leveling, in partnership with the County Soil and Water Conservation District.

(4) Strategy 10A. Advocate changes in State water law to allow land owner full control of water rights for their land.

GOAL 4: SUPPORT, MAINTAIN AND PRESERVE THE COUNTY'S RURAL, CULTURAL AND AGRICULTURAL LAND USES.

(3) Strategy 11. Protect agricultural operators from nuisance complaints concerning agricultural activities that are legal and responsible, and educate the public and non-agricultural residents about the existence, validity, and importance of the County's agricultural operations and activities.

(1) Strategy 12. Adopt an Irrigated Agricultural Land Protection Ordinance to provide incentives in conserving agricultural lands.

Strategy 13. Support and encourage programs for Organic certification in partnership with the County Extension Office.

(4) Strategy 14. Provide an education and information program to farmers and agriculture producers through the Hidalgo County Extension Office and Hidalgo County Economic Development office on producing sustainable crops and livestock that have a higher yield, higher market value and high demand.

GOAL 5: PROTECT DARK SKIES OVER THE COUNTY.

(6) Strategy 15. Consider adopting a Night Sky ordinance with specific lighting guidelines and regulations to include requirements on lighting standards such as shielding, pole heights, lighting types and hours of operation pursuant to the NM Night Sky Protection Act.

Strategy 16. Encourage property owners and utilities to install only the level of outdoor lighting necessary for safety, security, and utility purposes while limiting light trespass onto neighboring properties through shielding of all outdoor lighting and the use of other best available lighting technologies.

GOAL 6: ENCOURAGE PLANNED GROWTH THAT PROVIDES ADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE AND ROADS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY.

APPENDICES

(1) *Strategy 17. Regulate land and water development according to New Mexico Subdivision statutes and consider adopting the NM Association of Counties model subdivision regulations.*

(1) *Strategy 18. All new subdivisions should have community/shared wells and treated liquid waste systems that assure water rights will meet build-out demand, including water for storage and delivery for fire flows.*

(2) *Strategy 19: Establish development impact fees on new developments to finance roads, infrastructure and public safety that are needed as a result of the new development.*

(4) *Strategy 20. Consider adopting a planning and land use ordinance that protects property values and promotes health, safety and welfare, and educate property owners and residents on the benefits of the ordinance.*

(11) *Strategy 21. Consider adopting a nuisance regulation for inoperable vehicles, and abandoned mobile homes.*

GOAL 7: ENCOURAGE PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION OF HISTORICAL AND TRADITIONAL BUILDINGS.

(6) *Strategy 22: Inventory/survey historic and traditional buildings and features for NM Cultural properties designation.*

(2) *Strategy 23: Apply for preservation/restoration tax credits and resources available from state and federal agencies.*

Strategy 24: Encourage the charitable donation of land by landowners for historic, cultural, and scenic easements to non-profit land banks/land trust organizations to reduce state and federal income and inheritance taxes under NM Laws 1995, Chapter 137.

GOAL 8: ENCOURAGE COLLABORATION/COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIPS WITH ALL LOCAL MUTUAL DOMESTICS, COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, MUNICIPALITIES, COLONIAS, STATE, FEDERAL, AND JURISDICTIONS IN DETERMINING FUTURE LAND AND WATER USES.

(3) *Strategy 25: Host a forum that meets on an annual basis to increase and encourage networking, participation, and communication with local stakeholders, including private and non-profit organizations, to better inform the participating towns, agencies and organizations of proposed programs, developments and improvements for advancing the management and development of the region's land and water resources.*

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:

GOAL 1: DEVELOP A REGIONAL FRAMEWORK TO COOPERATE EFFICIENTLY WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS, SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL

APPENDICES

INSTITUTIONS, AND PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERS TO CREATE LONG-TERM QUALITY JOBS AND A SKILLED WORKFORCE TO ASSURE ECONOMIC PROSPERITY.

(1) *Strategy 1: Identify all the local and regional organizations (governmental, private, non-profit) that can be instrumental in developing a strategic plan to ensure long term growth for the county and its residents.*

(1) *Strategy 2: Fund and hire an Economic Development coordinator/manager that is responsible for responding to recruiting opportunities (PRO)s and implementing the strategies that have been developed in economic development plans.*

(3) *Strategy 3: Work with the New Mexico Economic Development Department and the New Mexico Partnership to market and promote Hidalgo County to potential investors (business and developers).*

Strategy 4: Prepare an update to the Hidalgo County Economic Development Plan pursuant to Local Economic Development Act (LEDA), including input from various agencies.

Strategy 5: Propose/assign an oversight task force composed of county, city and Council of Government officials as well as local stakeholders to create and implement a marketing and promotional plan for the county.

GOAL 2: IDENTIFY AND MARKET LAND SUITABLE FOR BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTY.

(1) *Strategy 6: Create an inventory database of land suitable for business and economic development.*

(2) *Strategy 7: Work cooperatively with NM Tech on developing parts of the campus and surrounding available land to attract business and economic opportunities associated with the Playas Training Center.*

(2) *Strategy 8: Work with landowners on identifying assets and resources that could be used to further the county's economic development strategies.*

GOAL 3: STRENGTHEN AND SUPPORT OPPORTUNITIES FOR ECO-TOURISM AND OTHER TOURISM RELATED ACTIVITIES.

(3) *Strategy 9: Create an inventory of all tourism related activities and assets in order to develop a strategic framework to encourage and promote local ecotourism.*

(5) *Strategy 10: Coordinate on-going cooperative meetings of local farmers, ranchers, artists and recreational businesses to strategize ways to promote ecotourism activities, such as wayfinding signage.*

(1) *Strategy 11: Create a branding initiative and map of tourism attractions.*

Strategy 12: Work closely with the City of Lordsburg and New Mexico Tourism Department to create specific tourism promotions.

APPENDICES

GOAL 4: PROMOTE AND SUPPORT THE EXPANSION OF AGRICULTURAL-BASED BUSINESSES.

(1) *Strategy 13: Review the successes and shortcomings of all agricultural based businesses, from production to processing, to develop full understanding of local agricultural potential.*

Strategy 14: With the help of Agricultural assistance agencies, attract outside investment for the development of the relative lower cost of agricultural land compared to neighboring counties in Arizona and New Mexico.

(1) *Strategy 15: Encourage local farmers and ranchers to work with the Agricultural assistance agencies to encourage the creation and investment of agricultural-related businesses.*

(2) *Strategy 16: Support the establishment of a Farmers Market and other local value-added agricultural enterprises.*

GOAL 5: EXPAND THE COUNTY-WIDE WORKFORCE TRAINING/EDUCATION PROGRAM, ESPECIALLY TO KEEP OUR YOUTH IN THE AREA.

(10) *Strategy 17: Work closely with WNMU and NM Tech to assess future skills needed in the county and surrounding counties and collaborate with WNMU to create specific education fields of study and programs in all cities served by the University (Silver City, Deming, and Lordsburg).*

(4) *Strategy 18: Work with schools and universities on defining and communicating occupational opportunities for workers entering the job market*

GOAL 6: PROMOTE THE USE AND PURCHASE OF LOCAL GOODS AND SERVICES THAT SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESSES.

(2) *Strategy 19: Work with the Chamber of Commerce to create a directory of goods and services offered within the County.*

(1) *Strategy 20: Expand buy-local programs in partnership with state and federal agencies and increase the local preference percentage in county and city procurement policies.*

GOAL 7: ENCOURAGE THE CREATION AND RETENTION OF HOME-BASED BUSINESSES.

(6) *Strategy 21: Provide incentives, and reduce obstacles, in the permitting of home-based businesses that meet guidelines related to scale and intensity of the business.*

(1) *Strategy 22: Encourage and promote the creation of home-based businesses and education (accounting, computer technology, workforce training, ethics, finance, tax laws) and support programs specifically geared to help home-based businesses.*

APPENDICES

GOAL 8: SUPPORT THE ENHANCEMENT AND EXPANSION OF COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS TO PROVIDE OUTSTANDING COVERAGE THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY TO SUPPORT BUSINESS GROWTH.

(14) *Strategy 23: Map and identify sites lacking in phone and communication coverage.*

(9) *Strategy 24: Work with communication providers to ensure that proper service is delivered to residents and local businesses and investigate with the Southwest New Mexico Council of Governments and the State of New Mexico ways to improve telecommunication delivery, in order to support local initiatives in the areas of economic and education growth.*

(4) *Strategy 25: Investigate any potential Federal and State grants and investments that could be used to enhance existing communication.*

GOAL 9: ATTRACT INDUSTRY AND MANUFACTURING USES SUCH AS RENEWABLE ENERGY PRODUCTION IN WIND, SOLAR, GEOTHERMAL, AND BIOFUELS PRODUCTION/GENERATION.

Strategy 26: Develop a benefit cost study to enable the County to acquire existing land and vacant buildings and secure access to transmission facilities in order to develop long term leases with potential investors.

(4) *Strategy 27: Identify sites with the highest potential for commercial-scale renewable energy production and create an incentive and promotional package to market the county for renewable energy development.*

Strategy 28: Work with the New Mexico Economic Development Department to find potential investors in renewable energy.

(1) *Strategy 29: Develop relations with Congressional Delegation to initiate projects through NM Tech, LANL and Sandia in order to encourage research in the renewable energy in Hidalgo County and work with NM Tech to expand research on campus*

HOUSING GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:

GOAL 1: WORK COOPERATIVELY WITH THE MUNICIPALITIES, RURAL COMMUNITIES, NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS AND PRIVATE SECTOR WITHIN THE COUNTY TO CREATE AFFORDABLE HOUSING.

(2) *Strategy 1: Prepare an Affordable Housing Plan and create partnerships between public and non-profit agencies such as Hidalgo County, City of Lordsburg, and private developers to provide incentives to build affordable housing.*

(1) *Strategy 2: Provide incentives for developers to create market rate housing; incentives could include expedited review process or extending utilities and infrastructure.*

APPENDICES

(3) *Strategy 3: Apply for Community Development Block Grants, rural economic development assistance via the United States Department of Agriculture, and other grantors to create a CIP “development pool” that would fund the extension of utilities and infrastructure to incentivize housing development..*

Strategy 4: Work with major employers to assess work force housing needs and to identify potential sites for residential purposes.

GOAL 2: SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE REHABILITATION AND REPLACEMENT OF SUB-STANDARD HOUSING WITHIN THE COUNTY.

(1) *Strategy 5: Apply for HOME Investment Partnership Program Funds to rehabilitate sub-standard housing.*

(11) *Strategy 6: Create partnerships among high schools and the dual enrollment program (administered by Western New Mexico University) to assist contractors in housing rehabilitation. Student volunteers could learn construction trade skills by apprenticing to skilled tradespeople and perform community service while doing so. Partnerships could involve non-profit groups such as Habitat for Humanity and government programs such as AmeriCorps.*

GOAL 3: PROMOTE SITE-BUILT HOUSING WHERE ADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE EXISTS OR WILL BE PROVIDED.

Strategy 7: Maintain an inventory and map showing communities and locations with adequate infrastructure as well as those that will have adequate infrastructure in the near-term and identify developable parcels (5 acres minimum) suitable for single-family and rental housing.

GOAL 4: PROVIDE EDUCATION IN PROGRAMS AND ASSISTANCE FOR HOME OWNERSHIP.

Strategy 8: Work with designated small business development centers, Western New Mexico University Besse-Forward Global Resource Center in Silver City and Mimbres Learning Center in Deming, and non-profit lenders to provide financial literacy and home ownership training and materials.

Strategy 9: Identify and refer eligible applicants to the SWNMCOG and other agencies that are applicable to their needs, such as Emergency Home Loan Program (EHLPP) through Southwestern Regional Housing and Community Development Corporation (SRHCDC).

GOAL 5: ENCOURAGE INNOVATIVE AND EFFICIENT BUILDING MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES IN ALL RESIDENTIAL STRUCTURES THROUGH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES.

Strategy 10: Apply for funding for a Community Energy Outreach Project through Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants from the U.S. Department of Energy; meet with Deming City officials on lessons learned and work with the SRHCDC to explore a similar project for Hidalgo County residents.

APPENDICES

(2) *Strategy 11: Sponsor training for area builders in the use of innovative and efficient building materials and practices. Provide actual case studies and lessons learned from New Mexico builders who construct sustainable low-cost housing.*

(2) *Strategy 12: Encourage instruction of innovative and efficient building materials and techniques at either the high schools (via the dual enrollment program at Western New Mexico University) or the Hidalgo Learning Center.*

INFRASTRUCTURE/COMMUNITY FACILITIES GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:

GOAL 1: IMPROVE EFFICIENCY IN THE USE, CONSERVATION, AND RE-USE OF WATER RESOURCES.

(2) *Strategy 1: Participate in the regional water resource plan to assure efficient use of the AZ Water Settlement Act funds.*

(1) *Strategy 2: Educate water users about water resources and conservation, and offer water conservation education programs about techniques such as rainwater harvesting, wastewater reclamation, and groundwater recharge.*

GOAL 2: EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES AND SUPPORT THE ECONOMIC USE OF GEOTHERMAL RESOURCES THAT PROTECTS THE GROUNDWATER AQUIFERS.

(2) *Strategy 3: Support the administration and protection of water rights in the County.*

Strategy 4: Support a Basin-wide program of comprehensive monitoring, metering, and ongoing investigation of water resources in the aquifer areas.

GOAL 3: MAINTAIN A HIGH LEVEL OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND EMERGENCY SERVICES FOR COUNTY RESIDENTS.

(16) *Strategy 5: Increase the telecommunications system through partnerships with the private providers, state and federal agencies.*

(8) *Strategy 6: Expand the County's 911 dispatch system and encourage joint or multiple use facilities for law enforcement, fire fighters, and rescue services.*

(1) *Strategy 7: Promote "Neighborhood Watch" programs throughout the County.*

GOAL 4: PROMOTE JOINT USES OF EXISTING COMMUNITY FACILITIES, AND DEVELOP PARKS AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES TO MEET COMMUNITY NEEDS.

APPENDICES

Strategy 8: Establish partnerships and joint use agreements with school districts, Western New Mexico University and local municipalities, for the use of facilities and construction of new facilities to ensure public access and availability.

(4) Strategy 9: Encourage subdivisions and planned developments to provide recreational facilities, such as community centers, parks, and trails to ensure adequate recreational amenities for residents.

(5) Strategy 10: Provide assistance in the planning, development and funding of new community facilities and assist existing community facilities with rehabilitating and/or expanding their centers, such as completing acoustic treatment in Animas Community Center.

(6) Strategy 11: Acquire access easements across private lands to public recreational areas such as Skeleton Canyon.

GOAL 5: ENSURE PROPER DISPOSAL OF SOLID WASTE, INCLUDING HAZARDOUS MATERIALS, AND PROMOTE RECYCLING.

(1) Strategy 12: Support large-item pick up and hazardous waste disposal services.

(2) Strategy 13: Implement the collection of solid waste transfer fees as the county costs increase for waste disposal.

GOAL 6: IMPROVE THE PROVISION AND ACCESSIBILITY OF THE HEALTH CARE FACILITIES AND SERVICES, AND PROMOTE THE COUNTY'S HEALTH AND PRIMARY CARE FACILITIES.

(7) Strategy 14: Through capital improvements plans and grant writing, seek state and federal funding for the Hidalgo County Health facilities to provide extended hour pharmacy and urgent care facilities, and develop a facility for the training and housing of the Animas Emergency Medical Services (EMS).

Strategy 15: Play a leadership role by communicating needs to providers to increase services, develop new services, and meet gaps in the service array. Negotiate with the state and its designated agencies to insure that service coordination remains local.

TRANSPORTATION GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:

GOAL 1: DEVELOP MORE PUBLIC TRANSIT OPTIONS AND EXPAND THE REGIONAL TRANSIT DISTRICT TO SERVE THE COUNTY RESIDENTS.

(1) Strategy 1: Encourage the RTD to survey local residents to assess actual and potential needs for public transportation.

APPENDICES

(2) *Strategy 2: Pursue funding sources and partner with the other jurisdictions in the County in establishing a shuttle system with an expanded daily scheduled round trip(s) between Lordsburg and other outlying communities.*

GOAL 2: ENHANCE THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM TO PROVIDE BETTER ROADS AND MULTI-MODAL CONNECTIVITY TO SUPPORT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Strategy 3: Partner with the Southwest Regional Planning Organization to update the Long Range Transportation Plan.

(3) *Strategy 4: Participate in the Stronger Economies Together (SET) initiative to promote regional economic development.*

GOAL 3: COLLABORATE WITH LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS TO COMMUNICATE TRANSPORTATION NEEDS FOR POTENTIAL FUNDING.

Strategy 5: Meet regularly with the Southwest Regional Planning Organization and New Mexico Department of Transportation to maintain a prioritized list of roadways in need of improvements that are eligible for potential funding.

GOAL 4: IMPROVE AND MAINTAIN THE LEVEL OF SERVICE AND CONDITION OF COUNTY ROADS.

(4) *Strategy 6: Create a Street and Drainage master plan that includes a comprehensive road inventory, classification system, mapping system and a maintenance program.*

(6) *Strategy 7: Review and update subdivision standards, especially rural road standards.*

GOAL 5: ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF SAFE, CLEAN ROADS, ESPECIALLY RELATED TO EMERGENCY AND SCHOOL VEHICLES.

(2) *Strategy 8: Review highway statistics and prioritize the five highest-risk roadways and their causes, and working with NMDOT, program these safety improvements into the STIP (State Transportation Improvements Program).*

GOAL 6: ENCOURAGE THE USE OF FUEL-EFFICIENT, LOW EMISSION VEHICLES AND REDUCE VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED.

(1) *Strategy 9: Place a high ranking on fuel efficiency in the criteria for purchasing new vehicles.*

Strategy 10: Provide incentives for county employee car-pooling and institute programs for flexible work hours and home-telecommuting.

(2) *Strategy 11: Develop Park and Ride programs and locations through-out the County.*

HAZARD MITIGATION GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:

APPENDICES

GOAL 1: REDUCE POTENTIAL LOSS OF LIFE AND DAMAGE TO EXISTING COMMUNITY ASSETS, INCLUDING STRUCTURES, CRITICAL FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE FROM ALL EMERGENCIES, INCLUDING NATURAL AND HUMAN-CAUSED HAZARDS SUCH AS WILDFIRES, FLOODING, DROUGHT, SEVERE WEATHER, EARTHQUAKES AND CONTAMINANTS.

(1) *Strategy 1: Update and improve the County All-Hazard Emergency Operations Plan, including development of an all-hazard emergency notification system.*

(2) *Strategy 2: Promote and coordinate the Best Management Practices (BMP) to protect and sustain safe and defensible fire safety buffer zones around communities that border the public lands.*

Strategy 3: Assess the vulnerability of critical infrastructure facilities and structures in hazard-prone areas.

(2) *Strategy 4: Develop a county-wide storm water management plan that addresses flood protection and erosion control and leads to implementation of soil stabilization and flood control projects such as dikes and culverts.*

Strategy 5: Develop capital improvement plans to identify and seek local, state and federal funding for priority emergency management and hazard mitigation projects.

(3) *Strategy 6: Implement a public education campaign to educate County residents on hazard mitigation topics such as wildfire prevention through defensible space creation, vegetation management and fuel reduction; flood protection through on-site retention and purchase of flood insurance; water conservation techniques and retrofitting; and actions to take during an emergency situation.*

Strategy 7: Regularly review and update as appropriate the Hidalgo County Hazard Mitigation Plan.

APPENDICES

List of Sources:

Bureau of Business and Economic Research, University of New Mexico

Bureau of Economic Analysis

Southwest New Mexico Council of Governments CEDS

2004 Hidalgo Comprehensive Plan

2010 New Mexico County Profiles, Western Economic Services

U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development Office of Policy Development & Research July 2007 (rev.)

Hidalgo County Roadmap 2010