

# OTERO COUNTY

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE 2020



COUNTY OF  
**OTERO**  
NEW MEXICO

ADOPTED NOVEMBER 12, 2020

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*The Comprehensive Planning update process began in December 2019 and was adopted on November 12, 2020.*

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*Thank you to all the community members and stakeholders who provided ideas and input!*

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# Introduction

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Otero County's population and economy is growing. Home to the country's newest National Park—White Sands, the expanding Holloman Air Force Base, the majestic Sacramento Mountains and Lincoln National Forest, and the unique fauna and flora found within, Otero County has ample attractions that are drawing new residents, companies, and jobs that are providing its younger generations opportunities to stay and raise their children. It is an opportune time to develop the Comprehensive Plan that captures Otero County residents' and leaders' vision for the next 20 years in order to ensure development is supported by the area's resources and the quality of life that residents seek is maintained.

Not only does the county have more ecological diversity and natural resources—the mountains, Tularosa Basin, White Sands, and Otero Mesa—than anywhere else in the state, but the timing of this update is particularly important because the county has the right mix of people from the municipalities and the County government wanting to work together and business owners interested in educating and training young people.

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PURPOSE

A comprehensive plan is designed to draw on a community's values and opinions as well as data about existing and future population and economic growth to help shape how a county or municipality will look and develop over the next 20 to 30 years. It is adopted by a local government to guide decisions primarily about the physical development of a community. It analyzes current conditions and sets future goals and policies in such areas as land use, housing, roads, water supply and use, natural resources, and economic development.

The Comprehensive Plan will be reviewed periodically to monitor progress on implementation. In addition, the Plan will be revised in response to changing conditions. The Plan will be reviewed every five years.

# WHY UPDATE THE PLAN?

## 2005 UPDATE

Otero County last undertook a comprehensive planning process in 2004 through 2005 to update the previous Comprehensive Plan, which had been in use since 1973. The resulting 2005 Comprehensive Plan integrated ideas and recommendations from the previous drafts and supplemented them with quantitative and qualitative research and additional recommendations to create a document endorsed by the communities within Otero County, as well as the State of New Mexico. It included the draft Interim Land Use Policy Plan developed by the County Public Land Use Advisory Council (PLUAC), which addresses public land, private property rights, and Otero County's customs and culture; and draft 1998 Otero County Comprehensive Plan goals and related material developed in conjunction with New Mexico State University. The 2005 Plan used goals and objectives from those plans as a starting point from which to make revisions. It also incorporated relevant information from the Alamogordo Comprehensive Plan (2000), the Tularosa Comprehensive Plan (2001), and the Air Installation Compatible Use Zone (2004), which analyzed the effects of noise and aircraft accident potential on existing and proposed development around Holloman Air Force Base (Holloman AFB) and made land use compatibility recommendations.

## 2020 UPDATE

Since the 2005 Plan was adopted, the PLUAC started to update the Plan in 2016. The work done in 2016 was never finalized or adopted, but it has been integrated into this 2020 update. This Update also takes recent planning efforts into account, including Alamogordo Comprehensive Plan (2018), preliminary draft of the Lincoln National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (2019), White Sands Missile Range Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan (2001), and the 40-year Water Plans for Alamogordo, White Sands Missile Range, and Tularosa-Sacramento-Salt Basins Region.

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The 2019-2020 planning process has been guided by Otero County residents and the Comprehensive Plan's Advisory Committee composed of representatives from Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), PLUAC, Alamogordo's Chamber of Commerce, Otero County Economic Development Council (OCEDC), County Assessor's Office, Otero County's New Mexico State University's Extension Office (NMSU Extension), Holloman AFB, US Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USFS), and the mayor of Alamogordo. Other community leaders in the county were invited to participate on the Advisory Committee. The process is comprised of three phases described as follows.

## PHASE ONE

### ADVISORY COMMITTEE

To initiate the planning process, the planning team met with the Advisory Committee. The purpose of the first meeting was to explore the major issues in the county and develop initial goals.

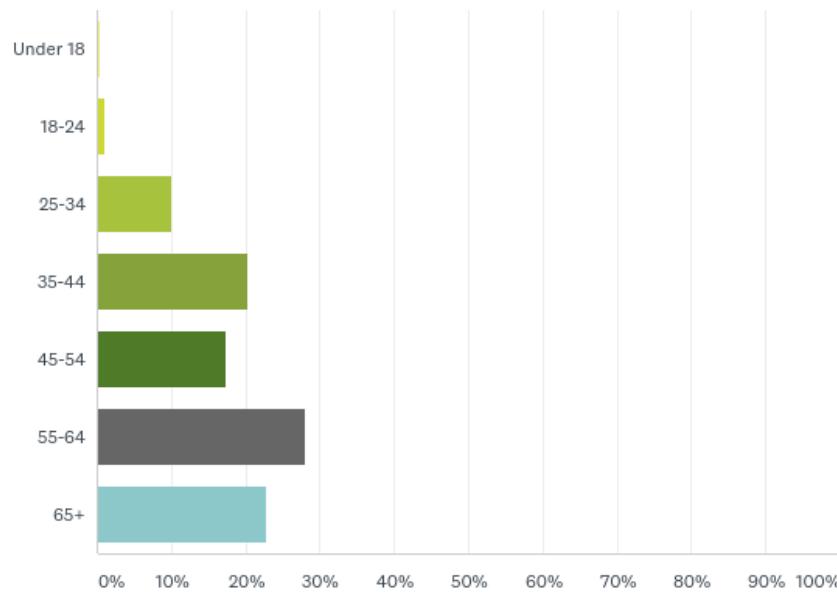
### COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

The team held three community and stakeholder meetings around the county to elicit input from residents, representatives, and employers from various parts of the county and find out what they valued and felt were the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in Otero County. The team also spoke with agency representatives and County staff to obtain detailed information on specific topics.

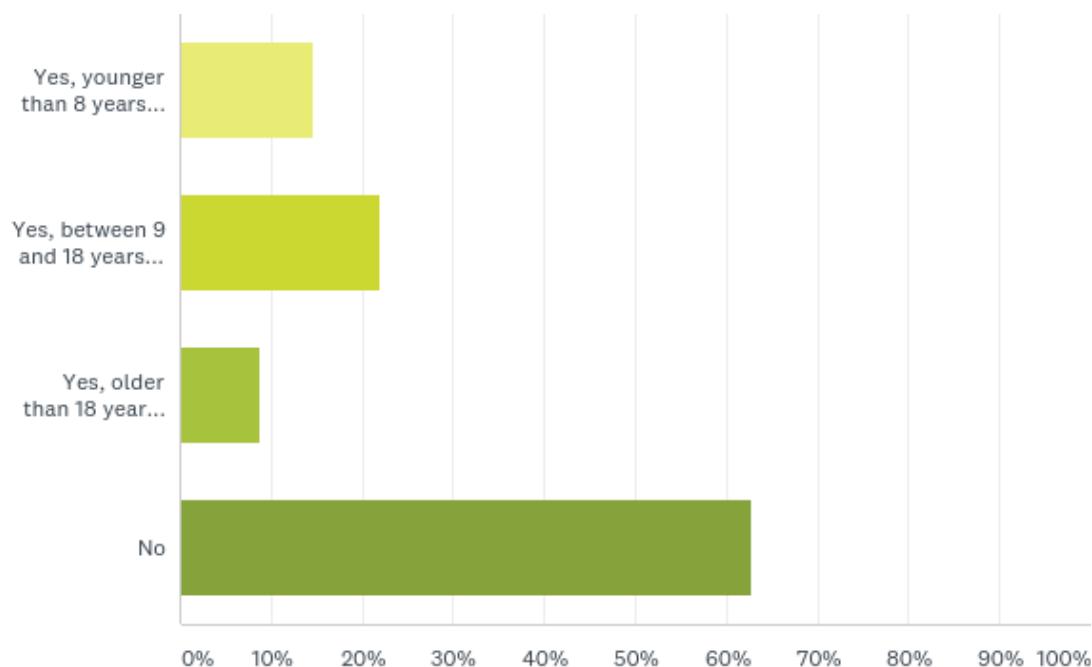
### COMMUNITY SURVEY

Following the initial meetings, a community survey was distributed online to reach more community members and hear their priorities for Otero County's future. The survey included questions about all the topics covered in this Comprehensive Plan. Copies of this survey were also available at the County Offices in Alamogordo. There were 207 surveys submitted; 70 percent of responses were from Alamogordo residents and 75 percent were from residents who have lived in Otero County for more than 10 years. The age of respondents was split; people 55-64 years old were the largest group to respond as shown in Figure 1-1. Most respondents did not have children living with them (see Figure 1-2). The answers to these two questions provide a frame of reference for the responses. For example, people without children living at home are less likely to be concerned about improvements to education, parks, and other family services. However, it is notable that despite this, many of the respondents did prioritize these types of improvements.

**FIGURE 1-1. WHAT AGE ARE YOU?**



Source: Otero County Comprehensive Plan Community Survey

**FIGURE 1-2. DO YOU HAVE CHILDREN LIVING WITH YOU AND IF SO, WHAT AGE?**

Source: Otero County Comprehensive Plan Community Survey

The survey responses were incorporated into the plan and influenced the goals, policies, and actions in each of the chapters. The full summary of the survey is in Appendix A. The survey asked three overarching questions to get a sense of what Otero County residents love the most about living in the county, what they most want to see preserved for future generations, and what they most want to see improved. The following three figures show the responses to each question. The most common responses are shown in the largest, boldest text.

**FIGURE 1-3. WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT LIVING IN OTERO COUNTY?**

Low cost living      home friendly people      Low rate      ability Small town atmosphere friendly county      Outdoor activities city Weather scenery

**cost living** **big** **beautiful** **growing** **small town** **terrain** **love**

Otero County **community** **great** **weather** **peaceful**

**mountains** **nice** **people** **live** **desert** **close** **large**

**small town**

**area** **Alamogordo**      **feel**      **land** **climate** **everything** **Quiet**

Holloman AFB **diversity** **peace** **quiet** **Small** **community** **growth** **traffic** **New Mexico**

**landscape** **Safe** **beauty**

**FIGURE 1-4. WHAT THINGS IN THE COUNTY DO YOU WANT TO SEE PRESERVED FOR THE FUTURE?**

Water Natural public lands nature City district open unsure rights going see  
 Otero County ZOO businesses county government **preserved**  
 Open Space **historic buildings** Otero history desert  
**parks** land area New York forest downtown town ranching  
 White  
 Sands freedoms community Mountains white sands buildings  
 Keep Downtown area Public access mountains road old Holloman AFB  
 Historical historic

**FIGURE 1-5. WHAT NEEDS TO BE IMPROVED OVER THE NEXT 20 YEARS?**

things repair bring Expand quality run kids technology activities young people Improve walk  
 much drive parks drainage town improvements Education properties see create city  
 hospital buildings family schools want **community** new streets  
 commission **business** older **county** eating need Otero  
**roads** better willing area provide restaurants  
 services people economic jobs Also place one keep forest clean city county  
 infrastructure make homes think look children shopping jobs opportunities  
 Alamogordo nice options highways opportunities Fix come county commission growth trash  
 wages trailers work

## PHASE TWO

The purpose of the second phase is to receive feedback on the draft plan. The draft plan and appendix were posted on the County's website for community, stakeholders, and the Advisory Committee's review to give all an opportunity to provide their input on the draft plan. These comments were documented for the County Commission, reviewed, and incorporated into a final draft of the Comprehensive Plan.

## PHASE THREE

The third phase involved presenting the final draft Comprehensive Plan to the Otero County Commission for final approval. This meeting was open to the public so the Commission could hear the community's comments on the final draft. The Commission discussed requested changes and adopted the Comprehensive Plan Update 2020 with additional changes included in this document on November 12, 2020.

## PLAN OVERVIEW

The Otero County Comprehensive Plan is organized into 13 chapters or "elements" that encompass the broad range of County functions:

1. **Introduction.** This chapter provides an overview of the purpose of the Comprehensive Plan and the process.
2. **Otero County Profile.** The profile describes the County's location, history, demographics, and government structure and capacity.
3. **Historical and Cultural Resources.** This element identifies the many cultural and historical sites in the county and the goals, policies, and actions to preserve them.
4. **Natural Resources.** This chapter provides an overview of the vast diversity of natural resources in the county and the goals, policies, and actions needed to maintain them.
5. **Public Land and Resource Management.** This element addresses the numerous public entities that manage land in Otero County, the laws that dictate these uses, the customs and culture that have shaped land use and management in the county for centuries, and the goals, policies, and actions to uphold these customs.
6. **Private Land Use.** This chapter provides a review of private land uses, including agricultural uses and municipal land uses abutting county land. The chapter lists the goals, policies, and actions to address private land use regulations.
7. **Housing.** The county's housing data, existing housing types and conditions, and issues are described in this chapter as well as the goals, policies, and actions needed to meet the county's housing demand.
8. **Economic Development.** This element provides an overview of the county's economy, the types of jobs offered, and the education and workforce training available. It also describes the opportunities for supporting new industries and the goals, policies, and actions to strengthen and diversify the economy.
9. **Community Facilities and Services.** The numerous community facilities and services provided by Otero County and offered throughout the county are described and the need for additional facilities and services are addressed, including law enforcement. The chapter's goals, policies, and actions support the continuation and improvement of services.
10. **Infrastructure.** This element addresses the existing conditions and needed improvements of the county's water supply, storm water drainage, wastewater, solid waste management, and other utilities infrastructure. Its goals, policies, and actions support sustainable long-term infrastructure systems.

11. **Transportation.** The conditions and needed improvements of US, State and County roads, airports, railroad, and trails are described in this chapter. The goals, policies, and actions identify the steps to sustain the transportation network in the long-term.
12. **Hazard Mitigation.** This chapter addresses fire protection, emergency services, and flood control and lists the goals, policies, and actions to mitigate hazards in the county.
13. **Implementation.** This final chapter provides an understanding of the authority of the Comprehensive Plan and details on how to implement it, including funding sources that can be used to support the actions of each of the previous chapters. It includes a matrix that combines the implementation tables from each chapter showing funding source, responsibility agency, and expected time frame for completion of each action.



# Otero County Profile

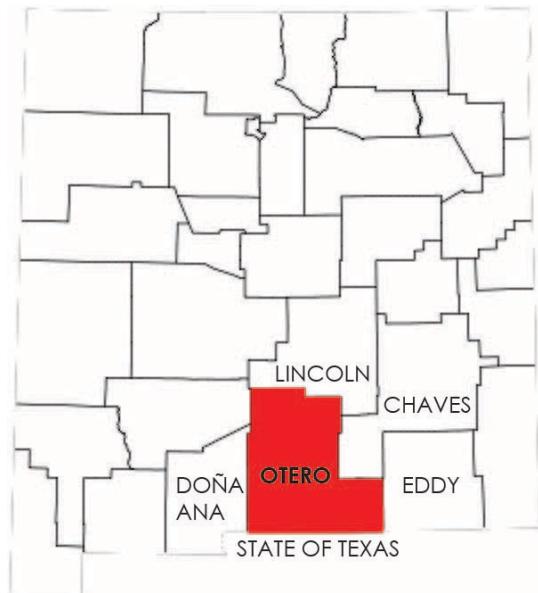
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Established in 1899 from land that had been within the adjacent Lincoln and Doña Ana counties, the county was named after Miguel A. Otero, who was appointed by President McKinley in 1897 and was the first Hispanic to serve as governor. The county encompasses nearly 4.3 million acres, of which 11 percent are privately owned. Because most of the land is owned by the US government (68 percent) and State government (10 percent), the county's economy is dependent on business activities on those lands.

## CONTEXT

Otero County is in southern New Mexico along the Texas border and is flanked by Doña Ana County to the west and Chaves and Eddy counties to the east. Its northern boundary is Lincoln County as shown in Figure 2-1.

**FIGURE 2-1. LOCATION MAP**



US Routes 54, 70, 82 and NM 24 are the principal roadways that serve the county. The main public airport is in Alamogordo, although Timberon also has a small airstrip owned by the County. From Alamogordo, the nearest metropolitan centers are Las Cruces, 68 miles to the southwest, and El Paso, Texas, 85 miles to the south and adjacent to the Mexican border. Albuquerque, the largest city in New Mexico, is 208 miles to the northwest, while Santa Fe, the State capital, is 221 miles to the north.

# HISTORY

It is important to understand the past as well as the present in developing goals for the future. The following history of Otero County was derived from information in the 1973 Otero County Comprehensive Plan supplemented by updated material in the White Sands Missile Range Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan.

The general sequence in the history of Otero County started with pre-Columbian settlement by Native Americans, exploration and settlement by the Spaniards and westward expansion by the pioneers. It was followed by the development of the railroad and railroad-oriented industries, including tourism. Next came the US Military establishment during and following World War II, and finally the modern development of the county as a good place to live and work.

## NATIVE SETTLEMENT

The earliest record of human occupation in Otero County dates from about 1000 B.C. These earliest formative populations lived in pit house villages (known as pueblos) and used a wide range of natural resources and farmed the land. By the end of the first millennium, stone and adobe pueblos replaced the pit house, and agriculture had made widespread gathering of wild plants less critical to survival. During the late 1300s, improved seed and an unprecedented period of rainfall led to more successful crops. The pueblo communities were held together by widespread trade and, more than likely, a common religion. Sites related to these settlements are on the State Register of Cultural Properties and contain the best examples of perishable material found within the state including rugs, mats, baskets, and food items.

The Jornado Branch of the Mogollon Culture lived in northern Otero County at the Three Rivers Petroglyph and Pueblo Site from 1050 to 1200 A.D. This site, also on the State Register, consists of prehistoric dwelling ruins, a pit house, and petroglyphs. The site has been improved with pathways and picnic shelters and is administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Mogollons also lived at the Escondido Ruin where architectural remains include three parallel discontinuous alignments of pueblo rooms constructed of coursed adobe. This latter site also is on the State Register of Cultural Properties.

Around 1400 A.D., for reasons not completely understood, the large agricultural settlements in the southern and eastern areas on what is now the White Sands Missile Range were abandoned. Archaeologists speculate that the Jornado Mogollon in the south and east may have remained in the area but altered their economy to that of former times—hunting and gathering wild native animals and plants. By 1450 A.D., the Apache from the north moved into the region. By the time of the Spanish Entrada in 1540 A.D., the ancestors of the Mescalero Apache occupied the Pecos River drainage area and the Sacramento Mountains while using the Tularosa Basin and the San Andres, Organ and Oscura Mountains.

## ARRIVAL OF THE SPANISH

The first Europeans to see south-central New Mexico were the Spanish explorers Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca (1535), Francisco Sanchez Chamuscado (1581-82), Antonia de Espejo (1582-83), and Francisco Leyva de Bonilla (1593), who all helped to explore the route from Chihuahua to the Santa Fe area. In 1598, Juan de Oñate led an expedition through the region to establish a permanent colony and territorial capital in the northern part of the state. The period of Spanish conquest and settlement in New Mexico took place until 1822 when the Treaty of Cordova, when Mexico gained independence from Spain, was signed.

New Mexico was under Mexican national sovereignty until August 18, 1846. On that date, Brigadier General Stephen Watts Kearney led the Army of the West into Santa Fe and took over this land from Mexican Governor Manuel Armijo as part of the US quest to acquire Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California from Mexico. Thereafter, the military commander of New Mexico exercised executive control until 1851 when the Territory of New Mexico was established by congressional action. Governors were appointed by the President of the United States until New Mexico achieved statehood in 1912.

## NON-NATIVE SETTLEMENT

Among the earliest settlements in the New Mexico Territory were those at Tularosa and La Luz. Anglo settlement in the more remote regions of modern-day Otero County was very dangerous as the region was the homeland for the Mescalero and Chiricahua Apache. Native Americans became residents of New Mexico territory when the Treaty of Cordova was signed in 1821. In 1858, Mexicans came up the Rio Grande to the district, but were driven back by Native Americans. They returned in 1860 and settled on the south side of Tularosa. The town was platted by US government surveyors in 1862. Colonists then began to appropriate waters of the Tularosa River, building canals and ditches from the foothills, erecting dams at proper places and distributing the water. In 1905, the people of Tularosa instituted legal proceedings against the federal government to restrain the use of water by Native Americans. This established the use of water on the Tularosa Basin for irrigated agriculture.

## SETTLER RELATIONS

Relations between Native Americans and non-Native settlers continued to be contentious with Native American land facing continued intrusion; in retaliation they raided livestock herds and settlements. Colonel Kit Carson was placed in charge of the military forces of New Mexico and concentrated his action against the Mescalero Apaches, which resulted in them being forced on to the Bosque Redondo Reservation near Fort Sumner by 1863. In November 1865, the Mescalero Apaches deserted the reservation and scattered in small bands, gradually returning to the Fort Stanton area in Lincoln County. The Mescalero Apache Reservation was established by executive order on May 29, 1873; local governments do not have any jurisdiction or control over the Reservation held in trust by the US Government. When Native Americans were removed from their land, European American and Hispanic settlement increased, especially with the Desert Land Act of 1877, which promoted non-native settlement in arid areas. By the mid-1880s, after the battle at Hembrillo Basin in 1880, non-native settlement increased in the more remote areas of south-central New Mexico.

## RANCHING

In the early 1880s, non-native ranchers began establishing ranches on the floor of the Tularosa Basin. Herds of cattle, goats, sheep, and horses grazed on unfenced, open land. These ranchers applied for homestead patents around springs and grazing patents for prime pasturelands, but often they were not successfully completed. By the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and into the early 1900s, ranches were scattered throughout the area. Water was usually the determining factor for the success or failure of a ranch. Early ranches had hand-dug wells where the water table was shallow while the later ranches relied on drilling for deep wells. Windmills brought the water to the surface. Dirt tanks were also developed by constructing an earthen dam across intermittent drainages to capture and hold runoff water from winter and summer storms.

## MINING

Otero County has a history of mining primarily for iron, copper, lead, silver, and gold. More than 100 mines have been recorded, and 81 of them have produced commodities and resulted in mining districts in the Cornudas Mountains, Orogrande, Tularosa, Sacramento (High Rolls), Nogal, and Parajito Mountains.

The most prolific of the mining districts is the Orogrande Mining District with 77 mines recorded. Mining in the Jarilla Mountains resulted in the discovery of gold in 1904 and led to the development of the Orogrande Mining District and the town of Orogrande. The Southwestern Smelting and Refining Company set up an office in Orogrande and built a 50-mile pipeline to the Sacramento River in the Sacramento Mountains in 1907 to bring water to the area. The mine did not produce enough ore to keep the company in operation past 1910, although mining in the district continued until 1918 and was resumed in the mid-1950s, late 1960s and late 1970s.

## THE BIRTH OF OTERO COUNTY

Otero County was created by the Territorial Legislature in 1899 and in its present form contains portions of former counties including Doña Ana, Socorro, and Lincoln. The County was named for Miguel A. Otero, a territorial governor who served from 1897 until 1906. During the westward expansion, the Butterfield Overland Mail Route was one of the few major stage lines operating through the territory between 1855 and 1861. The route started in St. Louis and Memphis, entered New Mexico from the south of the Ojos de Los Alamos Station, then swung southwest back into Texas to Hueco Station. The route and the Alamo Springs Station are on the State Register and its approximate route passed through Otero County.

Alamogordo was selected the County seat in 1899 when the County was created. Schools were built in Alamogordo shortly after its founding in 1898. Alamogordo was well known as a health resort at one time due to the presence of the Fraternal City Sanitarium located at the base of the Sacramento Mountains southeast of Alamogordo. Alamogordo remains the major population center of the county, followed by Tularosa and Cloudcroft, the other two incorporated municipalities.

## THE RAILROAD

The railroad played an important part in the early development of Otero County when Charles B. Eddy, owner of the El Paso and Northern Railway, purchased a portion of the Oliver Lee Ranch and subdivided a portion of it. Lots were first sold in June 1898 at the same time the first train arrived from El Paso. The Oliver Lee Ranch House near Dog Canyon is now on the New Mexico State Register of Historical Sites. Alamogordo was the headquarters of the railroad company, which at that time was known as the El Paso Northeastern Railway. Then in 1898 the railroad was extended from Alamogordo into Toboggan Canyon in the Sacramento Mountains; by 1900 it was extended Cloudcroft and by 1903, it was extended to a small community Russia.

The rail gave access to land rich in timber and resulted in the Alamogordo Lumber Company, which began by cutting railroad ties and bridge timbers for the growing railroad system. The railroad between Alamogordo and Capitan, which passed through Tularosa and Carrizozo, was opened in 1899 to serve the shippers of coal and gold ore from the mines in Lincoln County. This railroad later became part of the Southern Pacific System. It still operates for freight purposes, except the line into the mountains from Alamogordo to Russia through Cloudcroft, which was abandoned in 1947. The passenger train ceased operation in 1938.

## TOURISM

With the railroad line into Toboggan Canyon, visitors were able to see the mountain scenery and stay at the historic Pavilion resort in Cloudcroft. A scenic trestle on this abandoned line lies just west of Cloudcroft and it now on the State Register of Cultural Properties. Following the establishment of national monuments under the Act of Preservation of American Antiquities on June 8, 1906, White Sands National Monument was created in 1933 under the National Parks Program of Stabilization and Preservation. On December 20, 2019, the FY2020 National Defense Authorization Act authorized the re-designation of White Sands National Monument as White Sands National Park, making it the 62<sup>nd</sup> designated National Park. White Sands National Monument was extinguished on December 20, 2019.

## MILITARY

This remote region was one of the last frontiers in the United States even in the early 1900s. Ranch families had close bonds, often tied together by the marriage of children. They helped each other out with ranch work and educated their children in home schools and one-room schoolhouses. The remoteness of the region, however, and demands of World War II and the subsequent Cold War, inspired the US Government to select the region for two wartime projects: White Sands Proving Ground (originally established in 1945 and became known as White Sands Missile Range in 1958) and the Trinity Site (1945) where the first atomic bomb was detonated in a test in Socorro County.

In 1942 the Alamogordo Army Airfield was established 6 miles west of Alamogordo. Military presence increased when troops were trained there in 1944. The field was renamed Holloman Air Force Base in 1948. It became the center of activity for the White Sands Missile Range (WSMR) and the Sacramento Peak solar observatory at Sunspot, which started in 1949, grew substantially until 1953. South of WSMR is McGregor Range jointly managed by BLM and the US Army.

The military population has fluctuated in Otero County. In the early 1970s, approximately 11,000 people lived in Holloman. Today the Air Force Base supports 21,000 residents including active duty, guard, reserve, retirees, Department of Defense civilians and families.

The growth of the base spurred the development of a large local service industry in the form of motels, retail and service establishments, wholesale distributors and several small industrial firms, most of which are in or around Alamogordo.

## OTERO COUNTY TODAY

### MUNICIPALITIES, COMMUNITIES, AND PLACES

Lincoln National Forest borders Alamogordo to the east and is home to many small communities, including Cloudcroft, High Rolls, Hortonville, Mayhill, Weed, Sacramento, Sunspot, Piñon, and Timberon. Three Rivers and Tularosa, the second largest community in the county, are located along US Route 54 on the northern border of the county. Mescalero and Mescalero Apache Indian Reservation are also located along the northern border of the county with US Route 70 and State Route 244 connecting them to the community of Bent and northeast to Lincoln County. Holloman Air Force Base has the third largest population of the populated areas of Otero County and is located west of Alamogordo along US Route 70, adjacent to White Sands National Park on 59,639 acres of land dedicated to the Department of Defense. South of Lincoln National Forest, the county is sparsely populated with exception of the community of Orogrande along US Route 54 and Chaparral at the Texas and Doña Ana County borders.

#### MUNICIPALITIES

Today, Otero County is home to three incorporated municipalities—the City of Alamogordo, the Village of Tularosa,\* and the Village of Cloudcroft.\* Alamogordo, the largest community in Otero County and the County seat, was founded in 1898 as a terminal for the railroad and had its highest population of more than 35,852 in the 2000 Census, which was more than half of Otero County's total population at the time. Tularosa is a small village 13 miles north of Alamogordo with an estimated population of approximately 3,000 in 2018. The Demographics section later in this chapter shares more about the population of each municipality.

#### UNINCORPORATED COMMUNITIES

Small unincorporated communities are spread out around the county and more concentrated in the Sacramento Mountains as shown in Figure 2-2.

The communities include:

- Bent\*
- Boles Acres\*

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\* These communities are identified as colonias by UNM BBER (<https://bber.unm.edu/nm-colonia-maps>) and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

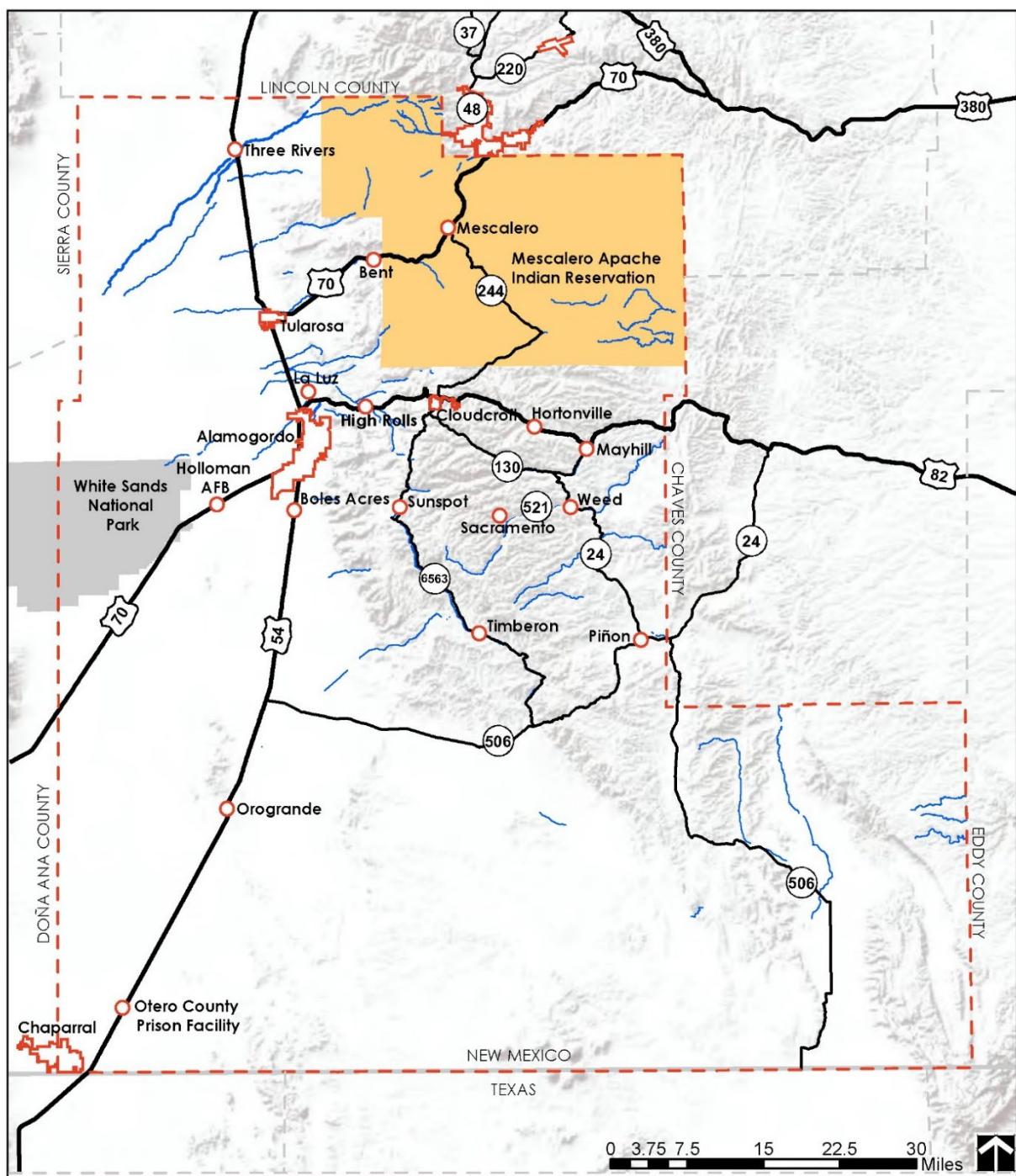
- Chaparral\*
- Dog Canyon\*
- Dungan\*
- High Rolls\*/Mountain Park
- Hortonville
- La Luz\*
- Mayhill\*
- Mescalero\*
- Newman\*
- Orogrande\*
- Piñon\*
- Sacramento\*
- Sunspot
- Three Rivers
- Timberon\*
- Twin Forks\*
- Weed\*

## PLACES

In addition to the municipalities and unincorporated communities, there are many notable places throughout the county as shown in Figure 2-2, including:

- Holloman Air Force Base
- Lincoln National Forest
- Mescalero Apache Indian Reservation
- National Solar Observatory
- Otero County Prison Facility
- White Sands National Park
- White Sands Missile Range

FIGURE 2-2. OTERO COUNTY TODAY



Source: Resource Geographic Information System, University of New Mexico, December 2, 2019

- Otero County Boundary
- County Boundaries
- State Boundary
- Rivers/Creeks
- US Routes
- New Mexico State Roads



## RECENT NEWS

### WHITE SANDS

During the comprehensive planning process, White Sands was designated the country's 62<sup>nd</sup> National Park. On December 20, 2019, the president signed into law the FY2020 National Defense Authorization Act which re-designated White Sands National Monument as White Sands National Park, making it the 62nd designated National Park. White Sands National Monument was extinguished on December 20, 2019. White Sands National Park as established "to protect, preserve, and restore its scenic, scientific, educational, natural, geological, historical, cultural, archaeological, paleontological, hydrological, fish, wildlife, and recreational values and to enhance visitor experiences..." It had been designated a National Monument since 1933. This new designation brings several changes: 1) the boundaries have expanded by 2,030 acres (land which was previously part of the Missile Range's site is now within the park in exchange for land that was adjacent to the testing area. This results in less closures of the park due to testing; 2) the economic impact of becoming a park has been studied and is estimated to increase tourism by 100,000 visitors.<sup>3</sup> The monument had already been the most visited National Park Service site in New Mexico.<sup>4</sup> In 2019, 609,000 park visitors spent an estimated \$32.7 million in local gateway regions while visiting White Sands National Park. These expenditures supported a total of 449 jobs, \$11.9 million in labor income, \$20.4 million in value-added, and \$37.8 million in economic output in local gateway economies surrounding White Sands National Park.

### ENDANGERED SPECIES

In the fall of 2019, the US District Court required that all three of New Mexico's National Forests cease timber management activities to protect the Mexican Spotted Owl's critical habitat and enable further study of the owl to continue. Although, the court amended its requirements to allow some timber management activities, it remains a hardship on Otero County. In December 2019, Otero County Commission requested an investigation by the US Forest Service and Fish and Wildlife Service citing mismanagement of public lands.

### SOLAR ENERGY

Since 2013, when PNM constructed a solar energy center near Tularosa along US Highway 70 and County Road 545 that generates the energy equivalent needed by 2,250 typical homes and reduces carbon emissions by 7,200 tons annually, the County has begun to benefit from renewable energy.<sup>5</sup> Solar and wind energy industries are addressed in the Economic Development and Utilities chapters.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.outsideonline.com/2407211/white-sands-new-mexico-national-park>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nps.gov/whsa/learn/news/monumentstatistics.htm>

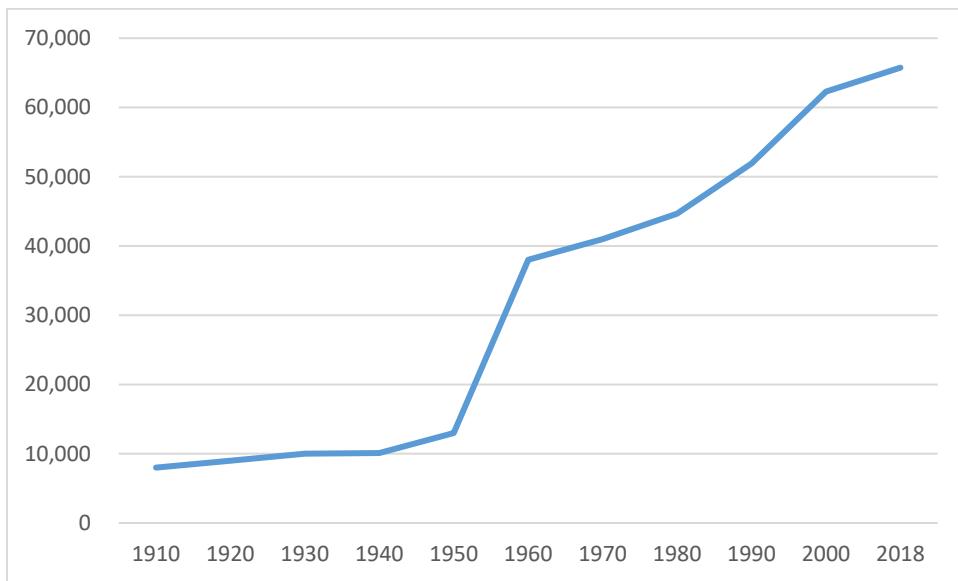
<sup>5</sup> <https://www.pnm.com/0307-solar>

## DEMOGRAPHICS

### HISTORICAL POPULATION TREND

Otero County had a population of just over 7,000 in 1910. As shown in Figure 2-3, the county grew on average between 8 and 24 percent each decade after that with two exceptions: between 1940 and 1950 when the population expanded by 42 percent, and between 1950 and 1960 when it more than doubled in size (148 percent). It was during these decades that US military operations in the area were expanding and bringing many more residents to the county.

**FIGURE 2-3. OTERO COUNTY HISTORIC POPULATION GROWTH**



Source: US Census, UNM Bureau of Business and Economic Research

### POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

Table 2-1 shows population in 1980, 1990 and 2000 for the county and its incorporated municipalities as well as for the state. Looking at US Census data from the past four decades, there has been a steady increase in population countywide with a 43 percent change from 1980 to 2010. The population of Otero County grew from 44,665 in 1980 to 51,928 in 1990, to 62,298 in 2000, and further increased to 63,797 in 2010. The percent change from 1980 to 2010 for the state was higher than that of the county at 58 percent.

The unincorporated areas of the county have experienced the greatest percent change at 117 percent, whereas Holloman AFB has seen a decrease of 58 percent over the decades. Alamogordo, Tularosa, and Cloudcroft have seen increases over the decades, although they have not experienced as much change as the county. Between 2000 and 2010, Alamogordo's population decreased by approximately 5,000 to 30,403 and Tularosa's and Cloudcroft's populations also decreased slightly. During that same period, the county's and Holloman AFB's population increased by approximately 1,000 and Unincorporated County areas increased by almost 6,000.

**TABLE 2-1. POPULATION CHANGE BETWEEN 1980 – 2010**

Location	1980	1990	2000	2010	Percent Change from 1980 - 2010	Percent Change from 2000 - 2010
Otero County	44,665	51,928	62,298	63,797	42.83%	2.41%
Alamogordo	24,024	27,986	35,582	30,403	26.55%	-14.56%
Tularosa	2,536	2,753	2,864	2,842	12.07%	-0.77%
Cloudcroft	521	612	749	674	29.37%	-10.01%
Holloman Air Force Base	7,245	5,891	2,076	3,054	-57.85%	47.11%
Unincorporated County	12,339	14,686	21,027	26,824	117.39%	27.57%
New Mexico	1,303,303	1,515,069	1,819,046	2,059,179	58.00%	13.20%

Source: US Census, 2010

In between the Census years, American Community Survey (ACS) estimates the population each year since the 2010 Census as shown in Table 2-2. ACS estimates Otero County's population to be roughly 65,800 in 2018 with a slight increase in population in Alamogordo, Tularosa, Holloman Air Force Base, and other areas of Unincorporated Otero County; Cloudcroft is estimated to lose population.

**TABLE 2-2. POPULATION ESTIMATES, 2011-2018**

Location	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Otero County	63,494	64,176	64,767	65,415	65,318	65,333	65,130	65,745
Alamogordo	30,165	30,544	30,903	31,224	31,198	31,201	30,963	31,230
Tularosa	2,854	2,865	2,884	2,916	2,914	2,907	2,902	2,931
Holloman Air Force Base	3,553	3,585	3,599	3,813	4,112	4,070	3,996	3,955
Cloudcroft	663	669	630	577	530	667	613	606
Unincorporated County	26,259	26,513	26,751	26,885	26,564	26,488	26,656	27,023
New Mexico	2,037,136	2,055,287	2,069,706	2,080,085	2,084,117	2,082,669	2,084,828	2,092,434

Source: ACS, 5-year Estimate

### **Median Age**

The median age of people in Otero County in 2000 was 33.8 years, slightly lower than the statewide figure of 34.6 years. By 2010 the median age had risen to 36.5 years and is estimated to have gone down to 35.6 in 2018 as shown in Table 2-3. This is about two years younger than the state's median age. In Alamogordo, the median age was 33.5 years in 2000, slightly younger than the countywide figure. By 2010 it rose to 37.4 years and is estimated to go down to 36.3 (still higher than the countywide figure, but a year younger than the state's). Comparatively, the villages of Tularosa and Cloudcroft's median age is much higher than that of the county and Alamogordo, estimated to be 55.3 and 57.9 in 2018, respectively. Holloman AFB's median age is significantly lower at 22.1 years in 2018, which is typical for a military base.

### **Age**

In addition to median age, it is important to understand which age groups the most population are within. In 2018, the highest percentage of residents in Otero County, Alamogordo, Holloman Air Force

Base, Chaparral, and New Mexico are between 25 and 34 years of age. The highest percentage of residents in Tularosa and Cloudcroft are 65 to 74 years old. Otero County's percentage of population over 65 years of age is roughly the same as the state's (16.7 percent and 16.3 percent, respectively).

**TABLE 2-3. MEDIAN AGE**

Location	2010	2018
Otero County	36.5	35.6
Alamogordo	37.4	36.3
Tularosa	42.8	55.3
Cloudcroft	48.9	57.9
Holloman Air Force Base	21.8	22.1
New Mexico	36.7	37.5

*Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates 2014-2018*

### **Race and Ethnicity**

In 2000, Otero County's population was 41.5 percent White, 32.2 percent was Hispanic, 3.9 percent was Black or African American, 5.8 percent was American Indian or Alaskan Native, 1.2 percent was Asian, 0.1 percent was Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 11.7 percent was described within the Census categories as "some other race", and 3.6 percent was two or more ethnicities. The characteristics of Alamogordo were similar -- 43.4 percent of the population was White, and 32.0 percent was Hispanic, while the remaining 26.4 percent was either non-White, non-Hispanic, or multiple ethnicities. Both Otero County and Alamogordo had lower rates of Hispanic ethnicity than New Mexico overall, which had 42.1 percent.

In 2018, the race and ethnicity has changed with a higher percentage of White in the county (now 49.3 percent) and Alamogordo (now 54.8 percent) as shown in Table 2-4. This is still notably higher than the rest of the state. The Hispanic population has decreased in the county (now 38 percent) but has increased in Alamogordo from 32 percent to 34.8 percent. Tularosa has a higher percentage of Hispanic population and Chaparral has a significantly higher Hispanic population at 91.4 percent.

The percent of Black or African Americans has decreased slightly countywide at 3.3 percent; Alamogordo's African American population is slightly higher than the county and notably higher than the state. Holloman AFB's African American population is 11.2 percent, the highest in the county.

The American Indian population in the county is 6.1 percent, which is higher than the municipalities, but lower than the state's 8.8 percent. Unincorporated County has a notably higher percent of Native Americans (18.4 percent) which is understandable because it includes the Mescalero Apache Reservation and Mescalero unincorporated community. The Asian population in the county is on par with that of the state. Tularosa has the highest percentage of Asian population of the county. In all, Chaparral has the least diversity among ethnicities and Holloman AFB and Unincorporated County could be considered the most diverse.

**TABLE 2-4. RACE AND ETHNICITY, 2018**

Location	HISPANIC	NOT HISPANIC White	NOT HISPANIC Black or African American alone	NOT HISPANIC American Indian & Alaska Native alone	NOT HISPANIC Asian alone	NOT HISPANIC Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander alone	NOT HISPANIC Some Other Race alone	NOT HISPANIC Two or More Races
Otero County	38.0%	49.3%	3.3%	6.1%	1.3%	0.1%	0.0%	2.0%
Alamogordo	34.8%	54.8%	4.8%	1.3%	1.6%	0.0%	0.1%	2.7%
Tularosa	40.4%	52.5%	1.4%	1.4%	4.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Cloudcroft	17.3%	77.4%	0.0%	3.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%
Holloman AFB	14.4%	65.0%	11.2%	0.1%	1.8%	1.4%	0.0%	6.2%
Chaparral	91.4%	8.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Unincorporated County	26.5%	52.3%	0.9%	18.4%	0.7%	0.0%	0.1%	1.1%
New Mexico	48.5%	37.7%	1.8%	8.8%	1.4%	0.0%	0.2%	1.5%

Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates 2014-2018

### ***Household Size***

The 2000 average household size in Otero County was 2.66 persons, which was slightly higher than the Alamogordo average of 2.57 persons. Statewide, the figure was similar with an average 2.63 people per household. By 2010, the county's average household size decreased to 2.41 and Alamogordo's decreased to 2.28 as shown in Table 2-5. In 2018, the average household size of the county is estimated to have gone back up to what it was in 2000 (2.66) and Alamogordo's is estimated to have decreased to 2.40. The highest average household size in the county is at Holloman AFB where it is estimated to be 3.33.

**TABLE 2-5. AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE**

Location	2010	2018
Otero County	2.41	2.66
Alamogordo	2.28	2.40
Tularosa	2.37	2.56
Cloudcroft	2.15	2.34
Holloman Air Force Base	2.37	3.33
New Mexico	2.49	2.64

Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates 2014-2018

### ***Income***

The median household income in Otero County has increased from \$30,861 in 2000 to \$39,615 in 2010 and in 2018 it was estimated to be \$42,752. Alamogordo's median income has been slightly higher over the decades: \$30,928 in 2000; \$41,640 in 2010; and \$44,133 in 2018. Tularosa's income is the lowest of the municipalities and county, as shown in Table 2-6; Holloman Air Force Base has the highest median income in 2018. All these figures are lower than the statewide median of \$48,059.

**TABLE 2-6. MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME**

Location	2010	2018
Otero County	\$39,615	\$42,752
Alamogordo	\$41,640	\$44,133
Tularosa	\$30,192	\$41,086
Cloudcroft	\$49,583	\$47,917
Holloman Air Force Base	\$39,384	\$46,517
New Mexico	\$43,820	\$48,059

Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates 2014-2018, DP-3

### **Public Assistance**

In 2000, households receiving public assistance comprised just 4.4 percent of all households in the county, slightly lower than the statewide rate of 4.7 percent. The rates for Alamogordo were even lower at 4.1 percent. The poverty rate for families in 1999 was 15.6 percent in Otero County and 13.2 percent in Alamogordo. The statewide poverty rate was between these two rates at 14.5 percent.

Now 18 years later, ACS estimates that poverty rates have increased in all areas and the percentage of people receiving public assistance has increased the most noticeably. One-quarter of Otero County residents are receiving public assistance in the form of supplemental security income, cash public assistance income, or food stamps/SNAP benefits as shown in Table 2-7. That percentage is slightly higher in Alamogordo and the state; it is noticeably lower in Cloudcroft and noticeably higher in Chaparral. The poverty rate in Otero County is just a percentage point higher than that of state.

**TABLE 2-7. PUBLIC ASSISTANCE, 2018**

Location	Supplemental Security Income	Cash Public Assistance Income	Food Stamp/SNAP Benefits	Total Public Assistance Rate	Total Households	Poverty Rate (All People)
Otero County	1,376	756	3,845	25.6%	23,391	21.2%
Alamogordo	816	457	2,067	26.2%	12,768	17.2%
Tularosa	99	24	127	21.8%	1,146	15.4%
Cloudcroft	5	0	5	3.9%	259	15.7%
Holloman AFB	6	0	13	1.9%	992	10.9%
Chaparral	128	196	871	64.1%	1,865	n/a
Unincorporated County	322	79	762	18.3%	6,361	n/a
New Mexico	49,233	22,362	130,965	26.1%	775,651	20.0%

Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates 2014-2018, DP-3

### **Education**

Among county residents 25 years old or older in 2000, 29.2 percent were high school graduates and 15.4 percent had a bachelor's degree or higher. Statewide the high school graduate figure was slightly lower at 26.6 percent, but the bachelor's degree or higher figure was significantly higher at 23.5 percent. People with some college education made up 51.8 percent of the Otero County population, slightly lower than the 52.3 percent for the State as a whole. In 2018, those number have changed. Slightly fewer Otero County residents are high school graduates (27.2 percent) as shown in Table 2-8.

**TABLE 2-8. EDUCATION, 2018**

Location	Less than 9th grade	9th to 12th grade, no diploma	High school graduate *	Some college no degree	Associate degree	Bachelor's degree	Graduate or professional degree	Total Population Over 25
Otero County	6.9%	9.5%	27.2%	26.7%	10.6%	11.2%	7.8%	43,102
Alamogordo	4.1%	7.4%	28.0%	26.9%	12.4%	12.7%	8.5%	21,064
Tularosa	7.3%	7.4%	32.1%	29.2%	2.6%	10.7%	10.7%	2,328
Cloudcroft	0.8%	2.4%	18.6%	40.3%	3.0%	18.4%	16.4%	499
Holloman Air Force Base	0.4%	0.8%	17.3%	30.7%	20.9%	21.6%	8.3%	1,521
Chaparral	30.5%	19.7%	22.1%	15.9%	6.4%	4.5%	0.8%	3,975
Unincorporated County	5.4%	11.5%	28.1%	28.2%	9.6%	9.4%	7.9%	13,715
New Mexico	6.2%	8.5%	26.4%	23.5%	8.2%	15.3%	11.8%	1,394,280

\* Includes equivalency

Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates 2014-2018, DP-2

The statewide number of high school graduates has essentially stayed the same at 26.4 percent. The percentage of people in the county with a bachelor's degree or higher has increased to 19 percent compared to the state's at 27.1 percent.

### **Summary**

In summary, the population of Otero County grew at the same average annual rate as the state population between 1990 and 2000, yet between 2000 and 2010 Otero County's growth slowed, Alamogordo's population decreased, and Unincorporated County's growth doubled that of the state's to almost 28 percent. Since the 2010 US Census, the population in all areas has increased slightly and at a greater rate than the state, except for Cloudcroft which decreased by 10 percent and Unincorporated County which increased less than a percent. Most notably, Holloman AFB increased by 30 percent between 2000 and 2018. The 2000 county population was slightly younger, with a lower median age. The county has 10 percent fewer residents with Hispanic background than the state. While a slightly higher percentage of county residents had high school diplomas, 8 percent fewer earned bachelor's degrees or higher. While the state and county had a comparable average household size and rates of poverty and public assistance, the annual median household income in the county was \$5,000 lower.

### **FUTURE POPULATION**

The Bureau of Business and Economic Research (BBER) at the University of New Mexico prepares population projections for counties in New Mexico. Table 2-9 shows BBER population projections for Otero County and the State of New Mexico in 10-year intervals from 2000 to 2040. The BBER projects that the county's population increases from 2010 to 2020 and then decreases from 2020 to 2040. According to these projections, Otero County can expect almost 2,000 fewer residents between 2020 and 2040.

**TABLE 2-9. OTERO COUNTY AND THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO POPULATION PROJECTIONS**

Location	2000	2010 Population	2020 Population	2030 Population	2040 Population
	Population		Percent Change 2000 - 2010	Percent Change 2010 - 2020	Percent Change 2020 - 2030
Otero County	62,298	63,797	2.41%	65,884	3.27%
New Mexico	1,819,046	2,059,179	13.20%	2,187,183	6.22%
				65,304	-0.88%
				2,308,475	5.55%
				2,401,480	4.03%
				64,402	-1.38%

Source: Bureau of Business and Economic Research, University of New Mexico

## EXISTING GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE AND CAPACITY

Review of the County governance structure and budget information helps determine its capacity to carry out recommendations of the plan. This section reviews the County administration, municipal revenue sources, and tax structure to evaluate whether the County can staff and fund projects on its own.

Otero County is governed by a three-member, elected County Commission. The County's Fiscal Year 2019 – 2020 budget reports the County employs 238 persons, 59 of whom worked in the Sheriff's Office, 48 in Corrections, 28 in the Road Department, and 18 in Solid Waste Transfer Station and Assessor's Office. The number of employees in each of the other departments ranged from 1 to 11.

The County provides the following services as authorized by public law: public safety (police and fire), roads, health and social services, farm and range, recreation, tourist promotion, and general administrative services. Revenues and expenses for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2019, are shown in Figure 2-4 and Figure 2-5.

### COUNTY BUDGET

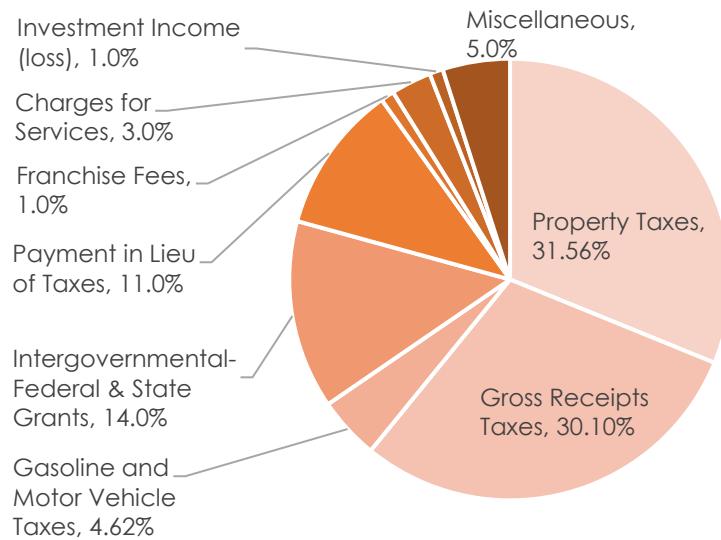
The County's Fiscal Year 2019 – 2020 budget includes \$130,151,879 million in revenues with a total of 149,565,280 in expenditures. Cash and investments balance the budget. Jail/Detention Facility Enterprise accounted for the largest expenditures in Fiscal Year 2019 – 2020 (52 percent), which was more than expenditures in Other Trust & Agency (15 percent), General Operating Fund (9 percent) and the GRT Revenue Bond Debt Service (8 percent). Jail – Detention (separate from the facility enterprise noted above) accounted for the next highest expenditure at 4 percent and County Roads followed with 3 percent. The remaining County-operated departments and services each accounted for 1 percent or less, including Fire Protection.

#### **Revenue**

According to the State of New Mexico's latest Audited Financial Statements for Otero County in 2018, nearly two-thirds of the County's total revenues (66 percent) came from taxes. Property taxes on the 11 percent of land that is privately owned generated nearly \$10,422,860 million in revenues or 32 percent of total revenues as shown in Figure 2-4. By contrast, payments-in-lieu of taxes from federal and state governments allotments amounted to another 11 percent of the County's revenue. The second highest revenue source was gross receipts taxes (30 percent) followed by federal and state

grants (14 percent). Charges for services made up 3 percent of revenue in 2018, whereas in 2003, it made up 17 percent.

**FIGURE 2-4. OTERO COUNTY REVENUE, 2018**

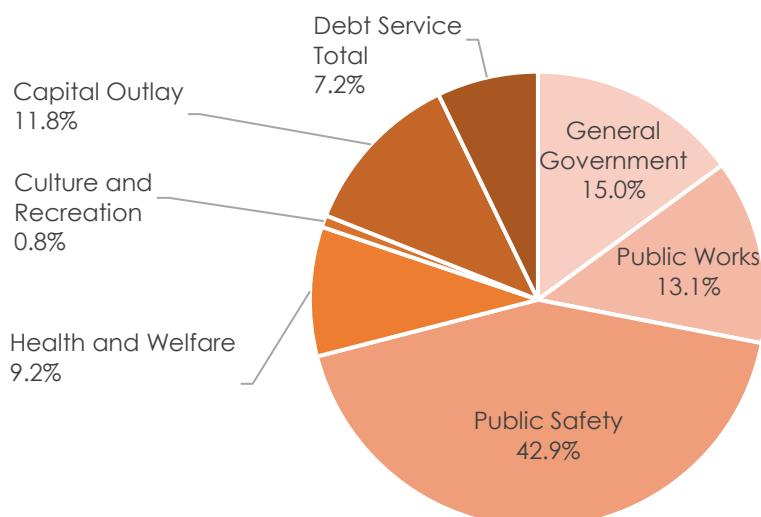


Source: State of New Mexico's Audited Financial Statements for Otero County, 2018

#### **Expenditures**

The State of New Mexico's Financial Statements breaks down the expenditures by Otero County in 2018 into more general categories than the fiscal year budget. Public safety was the largest expenditure, making up 43 percent as shown in Figure 2-5.

**FIGURE 2-5. OTERO COUNTY EXPENDITURES, 2018**



Source: State of New Mexico's Audited Financial Statements for Otero County, 2018

## COUNTY GROSS RECEIPTS TAX REVENUES

Otero County's gross receipts tax is 6.3125 percent. The three incorporated cities imposed additional taxes that generated a higher tax rate — Alamogordo at 8 percent, and both Cloudcroft and Tularosa at 7.75 percent. The gross receipts tax revenues fund the State debt service, the County's operational costs and debt service, the school district operating costs, debt service, capital improvements, and the Alamogordo branch of NM State University (NMSU-Alamogordo). In the incorporated cities, the gross receipts taxes also fund their respective municipal operating costs and debt service.

In 2019, the retail sector in Otero County reported \$970,220,938 in taxable gross receipts. The retail sector brings in the highest percent of gross receipts at 29 percent; the construction sector brings in the second highest at 14 percent.

**TABLE 2-10. OTERO COUNTY GROSS RECEIPTS BY SECTOR OF THE ECONOMY, 2019**

Sector of the Economy	County Total Reported Taxable Gross Receipts	Percent of Total
Retail Trade	\$281,148,555	29.0%
Construction	\$132,476,805	13.7%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	\$103,098,003	10.6%
Accommodation and Food Services	\$78,425,511	8.1%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	\$73,273,329	7.6%
Information	\$66,523,884	6.9%
Health Care and Social Assistance	\$58,225,556	6.0%
Utilities	\$54,111,963	5.6%
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	\$27,984,226	2.9%
Real Estate Rental and Leasing	\$22,771,841	2.3%
Wholesale Trade	\$21,695,745	2.2%
Manufacturing	\$13,959,603	1.4%
Unclassified	\$12,204,720	1.3%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	\$6,059,584	0.6%
Educational Services	\$6,092,346	0.6%
Transportation and Warehousing	\$4,168,329	0.4%
Finance and Insurance	\$4,144,135	0.4%
Public Administration	\$2,144,558	0.2%
Mining	\$600,362	0.1%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	\$734,362	0.1%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	\$377,523	0.0%
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$970,220,938</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: New Mexico Tax and Revenue Department 2019

## TAX ALLOCATION

Most of the County's residential taxes are currently allocated between two major categories: County School Capital and Debt Service (41 percent) and County Operations (34 percent), as shown in the Tax Allocation table below. City Operations receives the third highest percent at just under 12 percent. The State of New Mexico, City Debt, County School Operations, and other entities, (e.g., Doña Ana County and Timberon, etc.) receive 5 percent or less of the total taxes.

**TABLE 2-11. OTERO COUNTY TAX ALLOCATION**

Otero County Tax Warrants 2019	Property Tax Amount	% of Total	2018	% Change
County School Operations	\$1,026,487	3.3%	\$982,018	4.5%
County School Capital & Debt Service	\$12,651,038	41.2%	\$12,123,735	4.3%
County Operations	\$10,472,612	34.1%	\$10,040,392	4.3%
City Operations	\$3,625,321	11.8%	\$3,467,433	4.6%
City Debt	\$1,091,059	3.6%	\$1,062,843	2.7%
Other (Doña Ana, Timberon, etc.)	\$191,322	0.6%	\$192,125	-0.4%
State of New Mexico	\$1,673,762	5.4%	\$1,624,141	3.1%
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>\$30,731,601</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>\$29,492,685</b>	<b>4.2%</b>

Source: County Assessor, 2020



# Historical and Cultural Resources

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Otero County has a rich history made up of many cultures that have shaped it over the past hundred years and long before it was established as a County.

The county is home to 31 properties and districts on the National Register of Historic Places and the State Register of Cultural Properties that showcase the important history and cultures of the area and attract residents and visitors.

## COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

- Protect the historic buildings in the County.
- Preserve the diverse cultures and heritage of Otero County.
- Encourage new businesses to locate in historic buildings to help their long-term maintenance and integrity.
- Support historic downtowns and help expand them.

## HISTORICAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES

Cultural practices and sites are important in determining land use policy. Recognition of these properties is important to the documentation and preservation of sites and facilities and honors the cultures that have shaped this part of New Mexico. Protecting these resources also attracts tourism, which has a very important role in the County's economy.

## NATIONAL AND STATE REGISTERS

Some sites and landmarks in Otero County have been recognized and placed on the National Register of Historic Places and the State Register of Cultural Properties. Nineteen of these properties are in Alamogordo, many of which are on the New Mexico School of the Blind and Visually Impaired (NMSBVI) campus. Eight are in Cloudcroft or its vicinity, six are in La Luz, and two or fewer are throughout the rest of the County as shown in Table 3-1.

**TABLE 3-1. NATIONAL AND STATE REGISTERS**

Property Name and Location	National Register	State Register
<b>Alamo Mountain</b>		
Alamo Springs Stage Station		X
<b>Alamogordo</b>		
Ackley, Harry Francis, House		X
NMSBVI Administration Building	X	X
Alamogordo Site		X
Alamogordo U.S. Post Office	X	X
Alamogordo Woman's Club	X	X
NMSBVI Auditorium and Recreation Building	X	X
Aztec Imports & Connecting Buildings		X
NMSBVI Central Receiving Building		X
NMSBVI Infirmary Building	X	X
Jackson House	X	X
Parabolic Dune Hearth Mounds		X
Plaza Building		X
Railroad Logging Sites of the Sacramento Mountains		X
Rees, E. P., House		X
Ring Midden Sites of the Guadalupe Mountains		X
Six Jornada Mogollon Villages		X
Thomas, Charlie, House		X
White Sands National Park Historic District	X	X
Oliver Lee Dog Canyon Ranch	X	
<b>Cloudcroft</b>		
Cloudcroft Lodge		X
Cloudcroft Municipal School		X
Hubbell Canyon Log Chute	X	X
Mexican Canyon Railroad Trestle	X	X
Springville (Kent Acton Cabin)		X
Wills Canyon Spur Trestle	X	X
Wofford Lookout Complex	X	X
Bridge A 249-Cloudcroft	X	
<b>High Rolls- Mountain Park</b>		
High Rolls-Mountain Park Methodist Church		X
Fresnal Shelter	X	
<b>La Luz</b>		
Garcia, Juan, House	X	X
Gutierrez, Juan Jose, House		X
La Luz Pottery Factory	X	X
La Luz Townsite Historic District	X	X
Queen Ann House	X	X
Sutherland, D.H., House (Ramirez House)	X	X
<b>Mayhill</b>		
Hay Canyon Logging Camp	X	X
Mayhill Administrative Site	X	X
<b>Mescalero</b>		
St. Joseph Apache Mission Church	X	X

Property Name and Location	National Register	State Register
Wally's Dome		X
<b>Orogrande</b>		
Escondido Ruin		X
Grapevine Canyon Archeological District		X
<b>Queen</b>		
AR-03-08-03-128*	X	X
<b>Sacramento</b>		
Circle Cross Ranch, Main House	X	X
Weed Lookout Tower	X	X
<b>Shasta</b>		
Fall, A.B., Dam and Aqueduct		X
<b>Three Rivers</b>		
Three Rivers Petroglyph and Pueblo Site		X
<b>Timberon</b>		
AR-03-08-02-409*	X	X
AR-03-08-02-415*	X	X
<b>Tularosa</b>		
Tularosa Original Townsite Historic District	X	X
<b>Weed</b>		
Bluewater Lookout Complex	X	X
Carrisa Lookout Complex	X	X

\*Archaeological site

In addition to these protected sites, Otero County residents want to protect the Red Brick School House in Tularosa and the historic downtowns in Cloudcroft and Alamogordo.

The Mexican Canyon Trestle is listed on both registers and is the most noteworthy remainder of the Alamogordo and Sacramento Mountain Railway, which connected Alamogordo to Cloudcroft. It is visible from Highway 82 west of Cloudcroft.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexican\\_Canyon\\_Trestle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexican_Canyon_Trestle)

# HISTORICAL & CULTURAL RESOURCE ISSUES

Preservation of historic buildings and cultural heritage are priorities to Otero County residents.

Since 1969 archeologists have been working on a limited archeological survey of the Tularosa Basin. Efforts have been mainly directed towards chronology and ecology of human occupation in the Tularosa Basin during the past 10,000 years. This research may reveal many new sites which should be recommended for addition to the State Register of Cultural Properties according to New Mexico Cultural Properties Act, NMSA 18-6.

Over a long period of time, nonprofessional excavation of historic sites has resulted in much valuable historic material falling into private hands or in museums of the excavating schools. As much as possible of this material should be returned to Otero County and or the State of New Mexico. In the future no natural artifacts should be permitted to leave the County without the consent of the local governing bodies, the Board of County Commissioners, and the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs.

*"Over the years we have lost icons like the rail depot in Alamogordo and numerous other buildings. We lose your link to history, your culture and your identity when we tear down the historic elements of community and replace them with new construction with no design elements from the past."*

Community Survey Response

## DESIRED HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES IMPROVEMENTS

Many historical societies around the state have assessed the historical sites in their respective areas. As a part of good land use policy, it is recommended that the County follow the New Mexico Cultural Properties Act and work with the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) regarding the nomination of various sites to the State Historical Preservation Officer (SHPO) for consideration by the Cultural Properties Review Committee (CPRC). The Tularosa Basin Historical Society can assist with cultural resource issues at the request of the County.

Buildings, ruins, artifacts, and other features recommended for preservation should have enough original quality to be of interest. One such site is the Oliver Lee Memorial State Park at the base of Dog Canyon, which has camping, hiking trails, picnicking, and guided tours of Oliver Lee's historic ranch house. It was once used by the Apache as a defense post. Later in 1893, the ranch home was built.

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*"It's important to maintain the uniqueness of our Otero County area and its cultures. We are rich in history and it should be preserved."*

Community Survey Response

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Sites where buildings once existed, but where nothing stands at present deserve a marker-type classification as there is no longer physical evidence. Such sites include Blazer's Mill, the Otic Grist Mill at Fresnal Canyon, and mining towns near Orogrande.

To encourage restoration and preservation of cultural properties that are under private ownership, all historical and cultural properties listed on the official State Register

with the written consent of the owner and which are available for educational purposes under conditions approved by the CPRC should be exempt from that portion of local, city, county and school property taxes that is offset by a properly documented showing of Committee-approved restoration, preservation, and maintenance expenses. Declared historic sites in Otero County should already be receiving these tax benefits, while those that are yet to be nominated will be entitled to them once approved.

## GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

### **GOAL 1. Otero County honors and promotes its historical and cultural sites and artifacts.**

#### **POLICY 1. Prioritize the conservation of cultural sites and artifacts.**

- Action 1. Continue to encourage private owners of cultural properties to take advantage of NM tax credits that are listed on the State Register and are available for educational purposes.
- Action 2. Encourage the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs to return valuable and historic material to Otero County to be placed in the Tularosa Basin Historical Museum.
- Action 3. Prohibit natural artifacts from Otero County from leaving the County without the consent of the Otero Board of Commissioners and the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs.

**POLICY 2. Encourage the preservation of historic buildings and districts.**

- Action 1. Incentivize property owners to maintain and preserve their historic buildings.
- Action 2. Work with the State Historic Preservation Office and property owners to make historic buildings attractive for new businesses.
- Action 3. Promote the historic districts and sites in the county in coordination with the State's Tourism Department and New Mexico True marketing.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

Table 2-1 shows the steps required to implement the historical and cultural goals, policies, and actions. The Implementation Chapter of this plan provides more details on funding sources, resources, and the implementation process.

**TABLE 3-2. IMPLEMENTATION OF HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES GOALS**

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
<b>Goal 1. Otero County honors and promotes its historical and cultural sites and artifacts.</b>		
<i>Policy 1. Prioritize the conservation of cultural sites and artifacts.</i>		
Continue to encourage private owners of cultural properties to take advantage of NM tax credits that are listed on the State Register and are available for educational purposes.	Otero County; DCA; SHPO; CPRC	NM Income Tax Credit for Preservation of Cultural Properties
Encourage the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs to return valuable and historic material to Otero County to be placed in the Tularosa Basin Historical Museum.	Otero County; DCA; SHPO; Tularosa Basin Historical Society	N/A
Prohibit natural artifacts from Otero County from leaving the County without the consent of the Otero Board of Commissioners and the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs.	Otero County; DCA; Federal and State Land Management Agencies	N/A
<i>Policy 2. Encourage the preservation of historic buildings and districts.</i>		
Incentivize property owners to maintain and preserve their historic buildings.	Otero County; DCA; SHPO; Tularosa Basin Historical Society	Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program; NM Rehabilitation Tax Credit
Work with the State Historic Preservation Office and property owners to make historic buildings attractive for new businesses.	Otero County; DCA; SHPO; Tularosa Basin Historical Society	Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program; NM Rehabilitation Tax Credit
Promote the historic districts and sites in the county in coordination with the New Mexico Tourism Department and New Mexico True marketing.	Otero County; Tularosa Basin Historical Society;	NM Tourism Department Grants and promotion support

# Natural Resources

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Encompassing 4,248,320 acres in southeastern New Mexico, Otero County's natural environment ranges from hot, arid plains with sweeping vistas and cooler mountainous areas with regular annual snowfall. Other principal features are the Chihuahuan Desert and the Tularosa Basin, which comprises most of western Otero County. The White Sands National Park is a famous landmark in the basin, known for its bright, white gypsum sands.

The Sacramento Mountains form the eastern boundary of the largest city in Otero County—Alamogordo. These mountains are part of the Lincoln National Forest, a popular recreation destination in southeastern New Mexico. The Sierra Blanca mountains tower above the county at its northern border with Lincoln County, the Guadalupe Mountains wrap around the county's southeastern edge, and numerous other ranges delineate the landscape. Local economies of rural areas depend upon the health of the region's natural resources—protecting these resources is a vital part of maintaining overall community health.

## COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

When asked about priorities, community members who participated in the Comprehensive Planning process identified these priorities relating to natural resources:

- Survey respondents listed mountains and weather as two of the top aspects they love most about living in Otero County. Otero's climate, landscape, desert, and terrain were also listed (see Figure 1-3 in Chapter 1).
- It is important to preserve the natural resources within Otero County, including the forests, mountains, White Sands, and public land open space (see Figure 1-4 in Chapter 1).
- When asked about the concerns regarding water resources, community members support water conservation efforts and think water rights should be upheld and transparent.
- Prioritize forest health.

# EXISTING CONDITIONS

## GEOGRAPHY

Otero County elevation ranges from 3,700 feet in the southeast part of the County 12,000 feet on Sierra Blanca Peak in the north. The County's landscape is defined by the Chihuahuan Desert, Tularosa Basin, Otero Mesa, and numerous mountain ranges. These natural features draw people from all over the state and beyond. Their recreation and tourism features are described in the Economic Development chapter. Their management is described in the Public Land and Resource Management chapter.

### CHIHUAHUA DESERT

Much of Otero County is in the northern Chihuahuan Desert, North America's largest desert, which stretches from Alamogordo 1,200 miles into Mexico. Unlike other deserts, the Chihuahuan has more summer rains and colder winters and on average has freezing temperatures 100 nights per year. World Wildlife Fund considers the Chihuahuan Desert the most biologically diverse deserts, yet badly degraded due to agricultural activities. Heavily grazed areas have more creosote bush, tarbush, acacia, rather than the more desirable native plants that help the soil retain water, such as *Yucca filifera* and mesquite (*Prosopis juliflora*). NMSU's Department of Animal and Range Sciences includes the Chihuahuan Desert Rangeland Research Center (CDRRC) to inventory plants, implement brush control, and reseed the desert to improve herd management and forage conditions for livestock. CDRRC has conducted four vegetational surveys between 1858 and 1998 that show the changes in vegetation over that 140-year period. The first survey of 1858 noted a predominance of grasslands with shrubs closer to arroyos and rivers. Later researchers began a brush control program to preserve the desert grassland. The Center has also studied the suitability of seasonal grazing in three areas of the desert.

### TULAROSA BASIN

Tularosa Basin is a north-south sloping graben basin, which is part of the Sacramento section and the Rio Grande Rift zone of the Basin and Range Province overlying the Permian Basin. Tularosa Basin is partially filled with bolson deposits and gypsum sand dunes and covers 6,500 square miles—most of which is within Otero County.

The basin extends west from the Sacramento Mountains to the San Andres Mountains of Sierra County and the Organ Mountains of Doña Ana County. Within the basin are White Sands National Park, White Sands Missile Range, and historic Trinity nuclear test site, Holloman Air Force Base, Oliver Lee Memorial State Park, and Carrizozo Malpais lava flow. Notably, the basin has no water flowing out of it. Rainwater evaporates, soaks into the ground, or accumulates in the dry lake beds (playas) to form intermittent lakes. Lake Lucero is the largest of such playa. However, 12,000 years ago, the basin was full of large lakes and streams and attracted many ancient mammals and paleolithic humans, whose remains have been found surrounding Lake Lucero.

## WHITE SANDS NATIONAL PARK

The dune fields that make White Sands National Park special are made of gypsum sand and are the largest of their kind (275 square miles). They were formed 7,000-10,000 years ago from exposed selenite crystals that eroded into gypsum grains. White Sands is an important destination in the County for many reasons and is addressed in many chapters of this plan depending on the topic.

## OTERO MESA

The two million-acre Otero Mesa is east of US 54 and the Jarillas Mountains. It is the largest remaining region of Chihuahuan Desert grassland. The mesa is above the Salt Basin aquifer, which is the largest freshwater aquifer in New Mexico and feeds freshwater springs. McGregor Range is located on the west side of Otero Mesa and attracts hunters, hikers, and recreationists who can apply for use permits.

## MOUNTAIN RANGES

There are as many as 58 mountains in Otero County. The highest and most well-known is Sierra Blanca.

### ***Sierra Blanca Mountains***

This volcanic range straddles Lincoln and Otero Counties, running 40 miles from north to south. Its peak has the highest elevation of the southern New Mexico and Otero County at just under 12,000 feet. These mountains are part of the White Mountain Wilderness Area.

### ***Sacramento Mountains***

The Sacramento Mountains are primarily within the Lincoln National Forest and home to many of the communities within Otero County, including High Rolls, Cloudcroft, Hortonville, Mayhill, Weed, Sunspot, Sacramento, and Timberon. The northernmost part of the mountains is in Mescalero Apache Indian Reservation. The southernmost part of the Sacramento are contiguous with the Guadalupe Mountains to the southeast. At the foot of the Sacramento, is Dog Canyon National Recreation Trail, which has cultural significance as a Native American route. The trail connects Oliver Lee Memorial State Park to Joplin Ridge.

### ***Guadalupe Mountains***

Although Guadalupe Peak and Guadalupe Mountains National Park are in Texas, the Guadalupe Mountains wrap along the southeast edge of Otero County, southeast of the Sacramento Mountains and the Brokeoff Mountains. The range is contiguous with the Sacramento Mountains with varied terrain with deep canyons and sheer cliffs. The Guadalupe Mountains range in elevations from 3,500 to 7,500 feet and was once the Capitan barrier reef comprised of sedimentary limestone. The mountains are part of Lincoln National Forest and Guadalupe Mountains National Park.

### ***Brokeoff Mountains***

The Brokeoff Mountains are a north-south mountain range in southern Otero County, just west of the southern tail of the Guadalupe Mountains and 30 miles west of Carlsbad Caverns. The mountains are 80,000 acres; the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) operates 31,600 acres as the Brokeoff Mountains Wilderness Study Area, which includes Chihuahuan Desert, wildlife including elk and birds of prey.

### ***Hueco Mountains***

The Hueco Mountain range is in southern Otero County and Texas (east of El Paso). The mountains occupy 2,500 square miles, have a peak elevation of 6,700 feet (in Texas) and are home to juniper, oak, and mesquite trees.

### ***Jarilla Mountains***

The Jarilla Mountains are home to the Orogrande mining district and were mined for gold, silver, copper, lead, iron, and turquoise. The mountains reach a peak of 5,295 feet above the Tularosa Basin.

### ***Cornudas Mountains***

The Cornudas Mountains lie along the south-central border of Otero County and Texas; Wind Mountain is their dominant formation.

## **CLIMATE**

Average annual precipitation ranges from 10 inches in the low-lying White Sands National Park to 30 inches in Cloudcroft in the Sacramento mountains. The greatest annual rainfall on record for the County (and the state) was 62 inches at White Tail in 1941, and the least annual rainfall was 3 inches at White Sands National Park in 1956. Precipitation consists of both rain and snow. The greatest amount of precipitation occurs during the warm months from June through October. Most of this precipitation occurs in the form of short, local, high-intensity summer thunderstorms frequently originating from the Gulf of Mexico. Mid-winter snows and rain form an additional high precipitation period. Late winter through early spring is typically the driest period of the year in Otero County.

The prevailing winds are westerly most of the year but are interrupted during the rainy season. During this time, the winds are primarily from the south and east. However, the wind direction varies widely due to the great temperature fluctuations between the valley heat and the cool mountains. The average wind speed is nine miles per hour during the windiest months of March, April, and May. During the windy season there are frequent dust storms occurring over the Tularosa Basin and White Sands National Park with winds averaging 25 to 45 miles per hour and occasionally gusting to 60 and 70 miles per hour. Sometimes brief dust storms accompany thundershowers. Approximately three weeks a year the visibility is greatly reduced, often to six miles or less, due to blowing dust.

The Basin is cooled each evening as a 5-mile-per-hour downdraft carries the cooler mountain air to the desert below. During the windy season there are dust storms throughout the county. The Tularosa Basin is much less windy than most other areas of the state, but has very fine, silty soils. When disturbed or bare these soils are easily carried away by almost any wind. Severe dust storms occur near populated areas and construction sites when wind speeds of 25 to 45 miles per hour occur, typically in the spring.

## **VEGETATION**

Otero County has the most vegetation diversity of any county in New Mexico. Several inter-mountain valleys are farmed using surface water from area streams. Sacramento Mountain forests provide timber for area sawmills as well as grazing for livestock. Thriving populations of wildlife make their

home in the mountains. Six of the seven life zones are found in Otero County, ranging from the Chihuahuan Desert to the edge of the alpine tundra zone, which supports only low-growing grasses, lichens, and mosses above the timberline. The basin areas feature sparse grasses, shrubs, and low trees as shown in Figure 4-1.

## AGRICULTURE

Most agricultural activity in the County is ranching and timber production. Although there is irrigated agriculture near Tularosa and in the southeast near the Texas border, farming is hampered by the salinity of both the water and soils.

## DESERT HABITAT

The Chihuahuan Desert provides grazing land for many desert ranches in the Otero Mesa area and the Tularosa Basin. Otero Mesa is the largest Chihuahuan Desert grassland in North America and the largest habitat in the hemisphere for pronghorn antelope. It is also home to mountain lion, prairie dogs, and golden and bald eagles. The shallow bedrock on the Mesa prevents mesquite from gaining a toehold and allows black gramma and other native plants to dominate the landscape punctuated with clumps of althorn, tobosa grass, and yucca.

## FOREST HABITAT

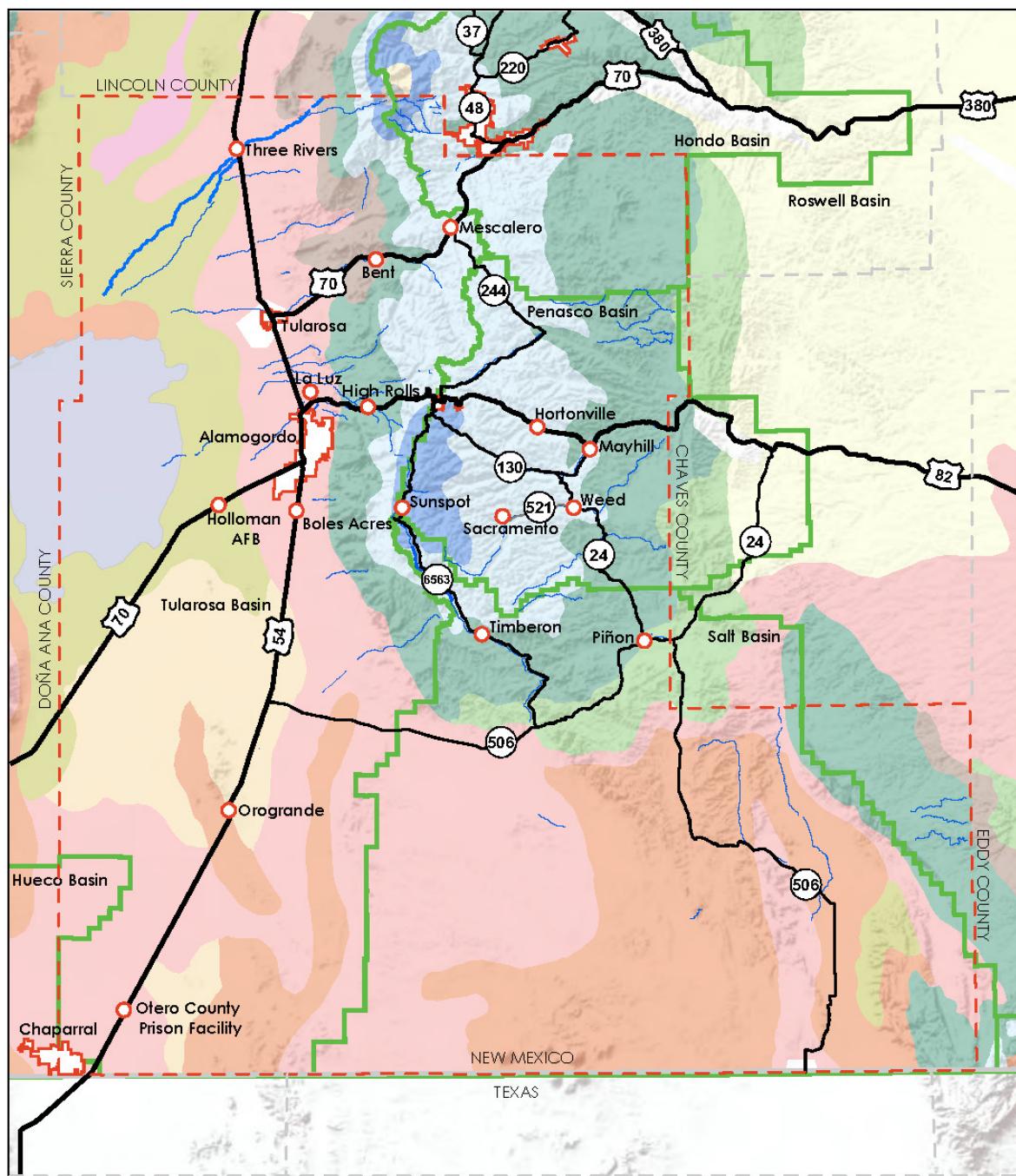
The Lincoln National Forest contains Intermediate and Woodland forestry zones in two management units: the Sacramento Mountains and Guadalupe Mountains. Trees located in the Sacramento Mountains are Douglas fir, ponderosa pine, white fir, spruce, gambel oak, and aspen. The Guadalupe Mountains contain uncommon species such as mescal bean, Texas madrone, chinquapin oak, Knolton hophornbean, Texas mulberry and Mexican buckeye.

Otero Soil and Water Conservation District (Otero SWCD) partners with the State's Energy, Minerals and Natural Resource Department and South Central Mountain Resource Conservation and Development Council (South Central Mountain RC&D) under a Joint Powers Agreement to work on forest restoration. In 2019, they completed ten work plans to mitigate the spread of wildfire. South Central Mountain RC&D's Community Forester does the field work and Otero SWCD is the fiscal agent. These projects treated 1,160 acres in Coleman Ranch (two phases), four Otero County Wildland Urban Interface Projects, Pine Springs Non-Federal Lands, Timberon Block 2, High Rolls, and Karr Canyon Non-Federal Lands. The US District Court injunction required two of their projects to stop until after the Mexican Spotted Owl breeding season ends in September (see Chapter 5, Public Land and Resource Management for more description of forest on public land).

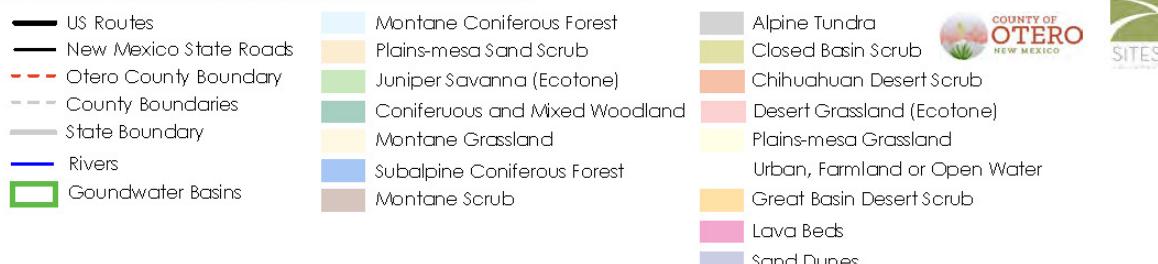
## NOXIOUS WEEDS

Noxious weeds are invasive, nonnative plants that take over native habitat and cropland with their seeds and extensive root systems. Many of these are toxic to animals and native plant species and since the native habitat is not adapted to control them from spreading, they tend to take over water sources and nutrients from native plants. The Otero SWCD manages a program that surveys, maps, and treats noxious plants and helps the county's residents control these noxious weeds on private property. More than 100 private landowners participate in the program. In 2019, the Otero County

FIGURE 4-1. NATURAL RESOURCE MAP



Source: Resource Geographic Information System, University of New Mexico, December 2, 2019



Commission declared a state of emergency due to the imminent spread of African rue, a perennial succulent that is toxic to cattle, sheep, and horses. BLM, Otero County, and the State's Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD) contracts Otero SWCD to treat African rue, Musk thistle, and other noxious weeds on BLM and State-managed land and County rights of way. NM State University Cooperative Extension Service (NMSU Extension) also works with EcoServants, a non-profit educational service organization, to teach youth how to recognize and treat these noxious plants as part of the Westside Sacramento Collaborative Forest Restoration Program.

## WATER

The Otero SWCD acknowledges the Sacramento Mountains as the principal source of the water which sustains communities, agriculture, and industry in the County, the Lower Pecos River, and the Tularosa and Salt Basin. And that the Sacramento Mountain Watersheds are in poor health from soil erosion. Alamogordo and the valley communities are in the Sacramento Mountains Watersheds and depend on water which originates as rain and snowfall in the mountains. The District recognizes that "understanding how the Sacramento Mountains function as a hydro-geologic unit is critical to make informed judgments concerning how the functioning of these watersheds can be optimized." It completed two projects in the Sacramento Mountains to address soil instability and erosion. This work is described more in Chapter 10, Infrastructure.

Salt Basin, Tularosa Creek, Sacramento River, and Tularosa Basin aquifers are underground layer of water-bearing permeable rock that feed freshwater springs in the county. Perennial streams include Three Rivers, La Luz Creek, Tularosa Creek, and the Peñasco River. The Sacramento River and Agua Chiquita Creek alternate between non-perennial and perennial streams depending on precipitation. There are 23 acequias or community ditches in Otero County. Tularosa Community Ditch is the largest and located in the desert at the mouth of the Tularosa Creek. Approximately 1,200 acres are irrigated from the Tularosa Creek.

Otero County has very little potable surface water. The Tularosa Basin contains one of the largest areas of brackish water in the United States. Potable water in Otero County is available in limited quantities in the areas where demand is greatest. Notably, the Little Bear Fire in 2012 affected Alamogordo's primary water source when Bonito Lake was filled with silt. This resulted in a water conservation ordinance for the City and ground water pumping.

There is a desalination plant in Alamogordo and ongoing research into desalinating the brackish water to make it potable, however there are concerns about what effect that would have on the ground water and ecosystem of the basin, especially on White Sands. See Chapter 10, Infrastructure for more discussion of water supply and desalination.

## PLANS AND PROGRAMS

### TULAROSA–SACRAMENTO–SALT BASINS REGIONAL WATER PLAN, 2016

Most of Otero County is within the State's Region 5: Tularosa – Sacramento – Salt Basins. A regional water plan was adopted in 2016 to address water sources, including Tularosa Creek, Sacramento River,

and Tularosa Basin aquifers; project water demand with a high- and low-growth scenario; and make recommendations following the State's Water Conservation Planning Guide for Public Water Suppliers.

## WATER PROGRAMS

### ***New Mexico Water Conservation Planning Guide for Public Water Suppliers, 2013***

The Office of the State Engineer provides water use and conservation guidance to all users, including homeowners; educators; industrial, commercial, and institutional users; landscaping industry; and public water suppliers. The guide for public water suppliers provides step-by-step instructions and templates for developing measurable water conservation plans. The City of Alamogordo last updated its 40-year Water Development Plan in 2014.

### ***Take it Outside, NM!***

Otero SWCD partners with the US Forest Service on a program that connects Otero County school children to the natural environment, including White Sands National Park, local water festivals, and Lincoln National Forest called "Take It Outside, NM!" The program is supported by grants from the US Forest Service, National Park Foundation, and the National Environmental Education Foundation.

### ***Summer Youth Academy***

Otero SWCD also partners with US Forest Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Eastern NM University–Ruidoso, and the Mescalero Apache Tribe to run the Summer Youth Academy, in which natural resource professionals teach Tribal high school juniors and seniors hands-on watershed restoration techniques. Students receive credits and summer employment.

## US FARM BILL

The US Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service in Alamogordo (NRCS–Alamogordo) is responsible for implementing the US Farm Bill. NRCS–Alamogordo's field office oversees the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and the Conservation Stewardship Payments, which totaled \$2.8 million and resulted in 67 completed conservation practices in 2019, including brush management, new fencing, irrigation systems, pipelines for livestock, and water storage tanks, troughs, and solar pumping plants.

## RESOURCE PRODUCTION AND ACTIVITIES

There is a long tradition of people in Otero County making their livelihood through productive use of the area's natural resources in the form of timber production, farming, grazing, and recreation.

### TIMBER

The County has an abundance of timber in the forested areas. The mountain regions are primarily forested areas under the jurisdiction of the Lincoln National Forest (US Forest Service) and the Mescalero Apache Indian Reservation.

*"Our most abundant natural resources are native grass and timber."*

*Advisory Committee Member*

The Lincoln National Forest contains Intermediate and Woodland forestry zones in the Sacramento Mountains and the Guadalupe Mountains. Commonly harvested trees in the Sacramento Mountains are Douglas fir, ponderosa pine, white fir, spruce, and aspen. The Guadalupe Mountains contains uncommon species such as mescal bean, Texas madrone, chinquapin oak, Knolton hophornbeam, Texas mulberry and Mexican buckeye.

## FARMING

Irrigated crops grown include hay, chile, pasture, and several orchards including pecans and pistachios. The dry desert climate makes this a highly preferred source of horse hay, grapes, and pistachios. Farmers in southeast Otero County grow mostly alfalfa hay and chile using center pivot sprinklers. According to the US Census Bureau, fruits, tree nuts, berries is the most valuable commodity category in the County.

### ***Natural Resource Conservation Service***

The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) is a program agency of USDA to help private landowners and lessees of federal and state lands improve the health of their operations while protecting natural resources. NRCS's mission is to ensure the long-term sustainability of American agriculture by building partnerships with farmers and ranchers, local and state governments, and other federal agencies to maintain healthy and productive working landscapes.

## GRAZING

Grazing on native grasses is an historical and current use throughout the county. Many of the allotments on public land are grazing allotments where private ranchers keep their livestock. Several horse trainers are also in the Tularosa area.

## RECREATION

Otero also offers a wealth of opportunities for recreationists who enjoy hiking, camping, birding, hunting, rock climbing, photography, and horseback riding activities.

# NATURAL RESOURCE ISSUES

## WATER

The availability of water supplies is commonly accepted as the limiting factor for many activities and is a concern in this frequently arid region. The Tularosa Basin feeds Alamogordo and allows it to grow, but the water has lots of saline and is finite. The County has supported desalination pilot projects. There are also numerous community water systems serving local areas within the County. The State has embarked on carrying out a policy to consolidate smaller systems into regional systems. Water supply and desalination are further addressed in Chapter 10, Infrastructure.

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*"The lifeblood of the region is its watersheds."*

*Community Survey Response*

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## EXTRACTION

Otero Mesa, under BLM jurisdiction, has been the focus of controversy for oil and gas drilling. Environmentalists, hunters, and some ranchers have opposed drilling.

## NATURAL RESOURCE ACCESS

Some residents would like to ease restrictions on using other resources on federal lands, such as timber that is dead, diseased, or otherwise scarified. Some ranchers would like to see less restrictions put on their grazing allotments, primarily regarding the access limitations to water sources, defending livestock from wolves, and forest use due to real or perceived endangered species habitat. This is addressed further in Chapter 5, Public Land and Resource Management.

*"Log it, graze it or watch it burn."*

*Community Survey Response*

## GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

Otero County seeks to balance the sustainable use of its natural resources, both for products and recreation, while also conserving them for future generations. To that end, the County establishes the following goals:

**GOAL 1. Otero County's natural resources are conserved and utilized in a manner that will sustain ecosystem health and community safety for future generations.**

**POLICY 1. Protect the quality of the environment through a balanced management approach to using natural resources.**

- Action 1. Review current practices and performance of managing agencies for sustainability.
- Action 2. Coordinate federal/state agency management to consider entire watershed/ecosystems in relation to landscapes (grazing, soil conservation, preservation of agricultural land etc.)
- Action 3. Ensure County involvement in federal/state agency decisions about the use and management of public land.
- Action 4. Involve the Public Land Use Advisory Council in land management decisions.
- Action 5. Advocate managing the Public Lands for multiple use.
- Action 6. Advocate grazing management to include elk and other wild game animals as well as domestic livestock according to available resources so the environment is not degraded.

**POLICY 2. Protect the quality of the environment through good stewardship practices.**

- Action 1. Compile environmental documents in a locally accessible Countywide archive.
- Action 2. Develop a list of sources such as experts qualified in subject matter to assist in decision-making/review of resource proposals.
- Action 3. Use internal budget and available grant programs to help finance the above strategies.

Other goals, policies, and actions that address the County's natural resources are included in the Public Land and Resource Management Chapter and the Utilities Chapter.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

Table 4-1 identifies the necessary steps needed to implement the natural resource goals, policies, and actions. The Implementation Chapter of this plan provides more details on funding sources, resources, and the implementation process.

**TABLE 4-1. IMPLEMENTATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES GOALS**

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
<b>Goal 1. Otero County's natural resources are conserved and utilized in a manner that will sustain ecosystem health and community safety for future generations.</b>		
Policy 1. Protect the quality of the environment through a balanced management approach to using natural resources.		
Review current practices and performance of managing agencies for sustainability.	Otero County	N/A
Coordinate federal/state agency management to consider entire watershed/ecosystems in relation to landscapes (grazing, soil conservation, preservation of agricultural land)	Otero County; EMNRD; NRCS; USFS; BLM; DOD; HAFB; WSMR; NPS; South Central Mountain RC&D; OSWCD; Range Improvement Task Force	N/A
Ensure County involvement in federal/state agency decisions about the use and management of public land.	Otero County; EMNRD; NRCS; USFS; BLM; DOD; HAFB; WSMR; NPS	N/A
Involve the Public Land Use Advisory Council in land management decisions.	Otero County; PLUAC	N/A
Advocate managing the Public Lands for multiple use.	Otero County; USFS; BLM; DOD; HAFB; WSMR; Range Improvement Task Force	N/A

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
Advocate grazing management to include elk and other wild game animals as well as domestic livestock according to available resources so the environment is not degraded.	Otero County; USFS; BLM; DOD; HAFB; WSMR; Range Improvement Task Force	N/A
<i>Policy 2. Protect the quality of the environment through good stewardship practices.</i>		
Compile environmental documents in a locally accessible Countywide archive.	Otero County	N/A
Develop a list of sources such as experts qualified in subject matter to assist in decision-making/review of resource proposals.	Otero County; South Central Mountain RC&D; OSWCD; NMSU-Extension; NRCS	N/A
Use internal budget and available grant programs to help finance the above strategies.	Otero County	USDA Grants

# Public Land and Resource Management

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The purpose of this element is to highlight public land and its management in Otero County as well as the customs and culture that have sustained the county's economy. Most of the land in Otero County is owned or managed by the US and state governments. Because of the proportion of public lands in Otero County and specific concerns regarding the impacts of federal requirements on property owners and businesses, this plan dedicates a chapter on public land management. It includes a review of public landowners, federal and state laws, and addresses concerns regarding resources and land uses that could be impacted by governmental regulation.

The interface between the County and federal and state land managers is so important that the County appointed a committee to deal with these issues, called the Public Land Use Advisory Council (PLUAC). The nature and intent of Otero County's land use planning is to protect the custom and culture of county residents and private property rights, including the facilitation of a free market economy and to establish a process to ensure self-determination at the County level by local communities and individuals as required by law.

## COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

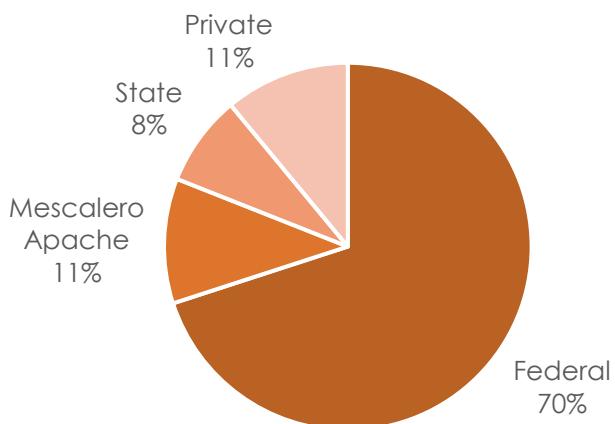
- Property owners value private land rights.
- Ranchers and rural landowners are concerned about federal mandates that could affect their ability to operate their businesses and manage their land allotments. Conversely, some community members are concerned that too much of public land is being used for private purposes, such as grazing.
- There is concern about regulations related to the Endangered Species Act, which are affecting the management and use of forestland and timber.
- Some consider the current lack of forest thinning in Lincoln National Forest detrimental to the health of the forest and watershed, creating a risk of wildfire and water quality and availability.

# EXISTING CONDITIONS

## LAND OWNERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Otero County has a total land area of 4,248,320 gross acres. Of that acreage, only 11 percent of the land area in the county is privately owned. The remaining 89 percent is under federal, state, and tribal management, as shown in Table 5-1 and Figure 5-1.

**FIGURE 5-1. LAND MANAGEMENT**



*"It is amazing how much access we have to public land around here. This is one of the greatest things about our county."*

*Community Survey Response*

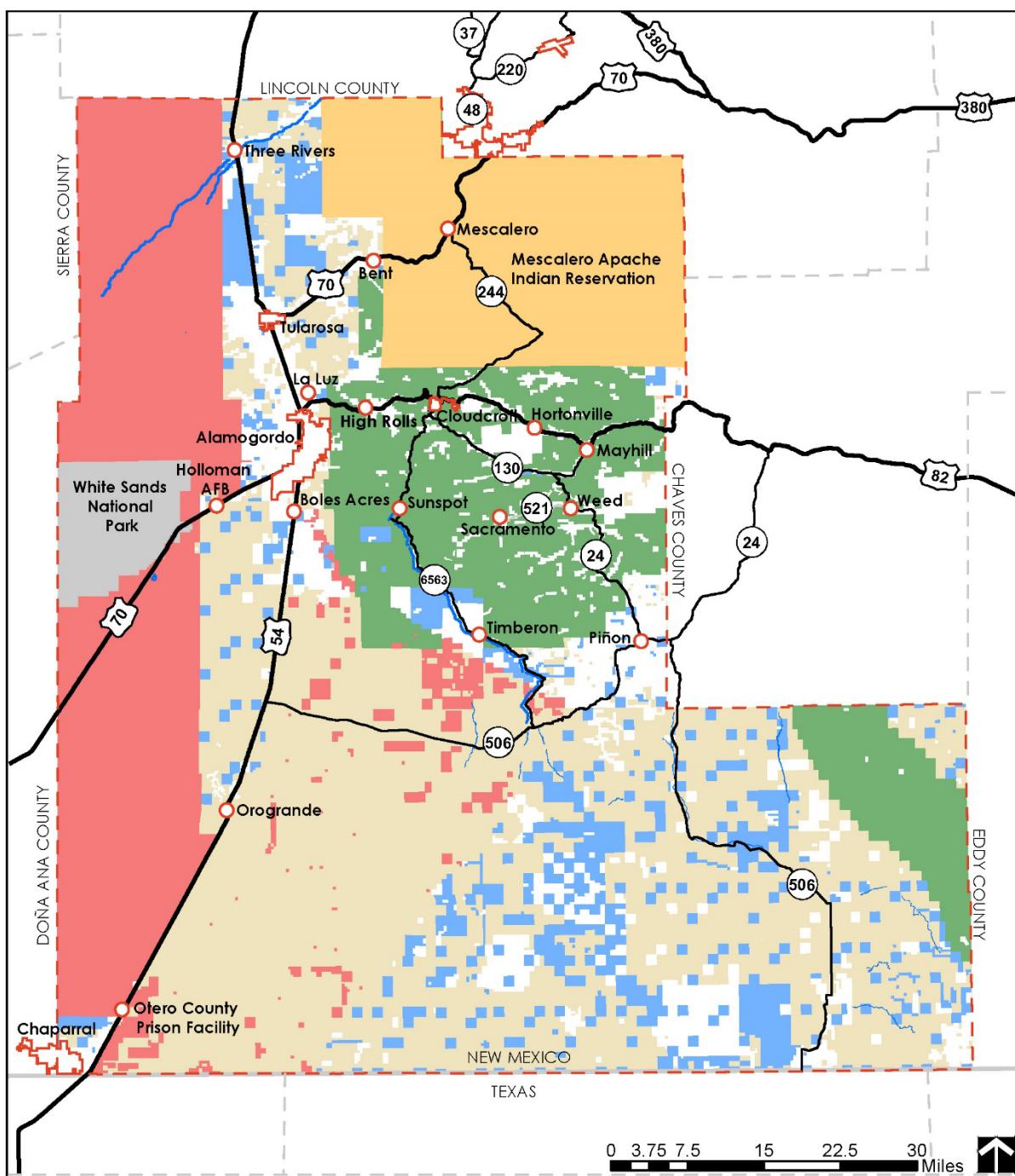
*Source: UNM RGIS, BLM New Mexico Surface Ownership, 2019*

The federal government manages 67 percent of the land area in Otero County. The federal land management agencies responsible for the largest land areas are the US Department of Defense (Holloman Air Force Base, Fort Bliss, McGregor Range, and White Sands Missile Range), the US Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USDA) including the US Forest Service, (Lincoln National Forest), and the US Department of the Interior, including both National Park Service (NPS—White Sands National Park) and the US Bureau of Land Management (BLM). In 2017, BLM and the State of New Mexico swapped 43,000 acres of New Mexico State Trust Land with 70,500 acres of BLM land across many counties, including Otero. County Commissioners were not in favor of the land swap given the decrease in Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) to the County.

The County desires to guide decisions regarding the use of public lands and public resources in Otero County and to protect the rights of private landowners and the rights of all citizens with respect to the multiple uses of public lands.

### PUBLIC LANDOWNERS

The term public land refers to all the lands owned or managed by the federal government or State of New Mexico, or their agencies. Each entity that manages significant land acreage in Otero County is described as follows and shown in Figure 5-2, Land Status Map.

**FIGURE 5-2. LAND STATUS MAP**

Source: Resource Geographic Information System, University of New Mexico, December 2, 2019

— Otero County Boundary	National Park Service	Bureau of Land Management
- - - County Boundaries		
- - - State Boundary		
— Rivers/Creeks	Mescalero Apache Reservation	Department of Defense
— US Routes	United States Forest Service	State
— New Mexico State Roads	Private	



**United States Department of Defense and Army**

The US Department of Defense (DOD) and its departments oversee 3.3 million acres in three separate, yet contiguous areas, which overlap Otero County, and 8.8 million acres of restricted airspace over these lands and non-military land.

**White Sands Missile Range**

Located west of White Sands National Park and 15 miles from Alamogordo, White Sands Missile Range (WSMR) is operated by the US Army as the premier test range in the world. Covering more than two million acres (3,200 square miles of land in Tularosa Basin) that crosses five counties, including Otero with a restricted airspace covering 5 million acres, this Army installation range performs tests for government agencies, the Department of Defense, private entities, and foreign countries. White Sands is home to the Trinity Site, a national historic landmark where the world's first atomic bomb was detonated on July 16, 1945. The Trinity Site is open for public viewing on the first Saturday in April and the first Saturday in October and receives approximately 5,000 visitors per visit. The site is celebrating its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2020 and is even more popular to visitors. Launch Complex 33 is also a national historic landmark due to its role in space travel. The primary compatibility issues with WSMR are radio frequency and spectrum impacts on wildlife and land use changes in areas near the range.

**Naval Air Warfare Center**

Naval activity at White Sands Missile Range began in June 1946 when the Navy participated in the research and testing of captured German V-2 rockets. The mission of the Naval Air Warfare Center is land-based testing of naval weapon system missiles and gun munitions, as well as launch operations for sub-orbital space systems and research rockets. Naval facilities include the LLS (Land-locked ship) Desert Ship which serves as the primary live fire test bed for today's surface-to-air weapons including Standard Missile and Evolved Seaspark Missiles (ESSM).

**Holloman Air Force Base**

East of WSMR and 6 miles west of Alamogordo is Holloman Air Force Base (Holloman AFB), which is 60,000 acres and is home to the 96<sup>th</sup> Test Group, 49<sup>th</sup> Wing. Holloman AFB has also hosted the F-4, F-15, T-38, F-117, and F-22 with the 46th Test Group. In 2008 the F-117 were retired and in 2009, MQ-1 and MQ-9 aircraft began to be used in training. The F-22 were phased out in 2014, which reduces the frequency of sonic booms. The base's three-runway airfield is on the south portion of the base and the northern part of the base is primarily undeveloped for use on special functions. Holloman AFB has an agreement to use WSMR's facilities for testing; both areas have restricted airspace, which is the responsibility of Holloman AFB to control. As of the 2015, the base expected to increase F-16 low-altitude flying to 60 operations per day, which can have a noise impact given their speed and altitude, and expand the Unmanned Air Vehicle mission using the MQ-1 and MQ-9 aircraft. The noise associated with Holloman AFB's operations is noted as the primary compatibility issue.

**German Air Force**

The German Air Force maintained a flight training center at Holloman Air Force Base from 1992 to 2019 that trained German Air Force pilots to fly Tornado aircraft. The program had 600 military

personnel plus their families. The program had an associated German school and grocery store in Alamogordo before training center closed.

### **Fort Bliss**

Fort Bliss is 1,700 square miles (more than 1.1 million acres of land and restricted airspace) operated by the US Army in New Mexico (in Doña Ana and Otero Counties) and Texas on both sides of US 54. In Otero County, Fort Bliss jurisdiction extends from the Texas border to Lincoln National Forest (stopping just south of Timberon) east of US 54 and north of Chaparral to Orogrande west of US 54, which is known as the Doña Ana Training Areas. It serves as a training, mobilization, and deployment site for combat teams. The primary compatibility issue in Otero County is noise from firing weapons particularly near Chaparral and Orogrande. McGregor Range is part of Fort Bliss to the east of US 54 and is operated jointly by the US Army and BLM (see section below).

### ***United States Department of Agriculture and Forest Service***

#### **Lincoln National Forest**

Located in south central New Mexico and covering over 1,103,441 acres, Lincoln National Forest is operated by the US Department of Agriculture Forest Service. In Otero County, the forest is comprised of two non-contiguous areas: Sacramento Ranger District in the center of the county and Guadalupe Ranger District in the southeast. Both districts have private inholdings. Like BLM, USFS issues grazing permits; these allotments are also shown in Figure 5-3. Outside Otero County, a third district of the Lincoln National Forest—the Smokey Bear Ranger District—is headquartered in Ruidoso and manages over 375,000 acres.

The US Forest Service is currently updating the Lincoln National Forest Plan and released a draft for comments in May 2019. The draft acknowledges the importance of using the forest's resources for firewood, Christmas trees, nuts, plant materials, and transplants: "Wood-product harvesting for ecological restoration purposes from fire mitigation to carbon sequestration can also have measurable economic value."<sup>1</sup> The draft also addresses rangelands and acknowledges them as a significant economic driver for localities historically and today. US Forest Service considers 65 percent of the forest suitable for livestock grazing. Guidelines for forest products, grazing, recreation, roads, mineral extraction are included.

#### **Grazing Permits**

The grazing permits issued by Lincoln National Forest require permittees to own private "base property" of at least 80 acres of fenced land with water and livestock facilities. The permittee owns the grazing rights, water rights, and rights-of-way as part of their property rights. The permit regulates the grazing usage, which is determined by the US Forest Service.

#### **Sacramento Ranger District**

The Sacramento Ranger District is the largest of the forest districts and is in the center of Otero County, bound by Mescalero Apache Indian Reservation to the north and Fort Bliss to the south. The

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/fseprd637975.pdf](https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd637975.pdf), p 77 - 82.

district offers permits for hunting and has the most campgrounds in the forest. The historic railway has been converted to trails.

#### [Guadalupe Ranger District](#)

The Guadalupe Ranger District is on the southeastern edge of Otero County and bound by BLM land. Considered sacred and an integral to Apache people, the Guadalupe Mountains are full of limestone caves, are considered to have a high potential for wind energy and have no known oil and gas potential.

#### ***United States Department of the Interior***

#### **Bureau of Land Management McGregor Range Complex**

Contiguous with WSMR to the south is McGregor Range Complex on Otero Mesa. McGregor Range is 606,000 acres on the west side of Otero Mesa jointly managed by the BLM and US Army. It is not open to the public during training exercises; members of the public must obtain a recreational access permit to enter the range for purposes other than passing through on NM 506 or County roads.

The US Army began purchasing private land near McGregor Range in 1950. In 1957, the land was withdrawn for public use to serve the Army as a missile testing range. This use was extended for another 20 years with the Military Withdrawal Act (PL 106-65) in 1999. Livestock grazing is allowed if consistent with training priorities.

#### [McGregor Range Grazing Contracts](#)

Every year BLM issues grazing unit contracts on McGregor Range under the Federal Material Disposal Act of 1947. These grazing contracts range from 9 to 36 months and are for 14 grazing units comprised of 271,000 acres east of US 54 grouped into three districts—the Tularosa Basin, Otero Mesa, and Sacramento Foothills. Figure 5-3: Public Land Allotments shows these allotments, as well as other government agency allotments.

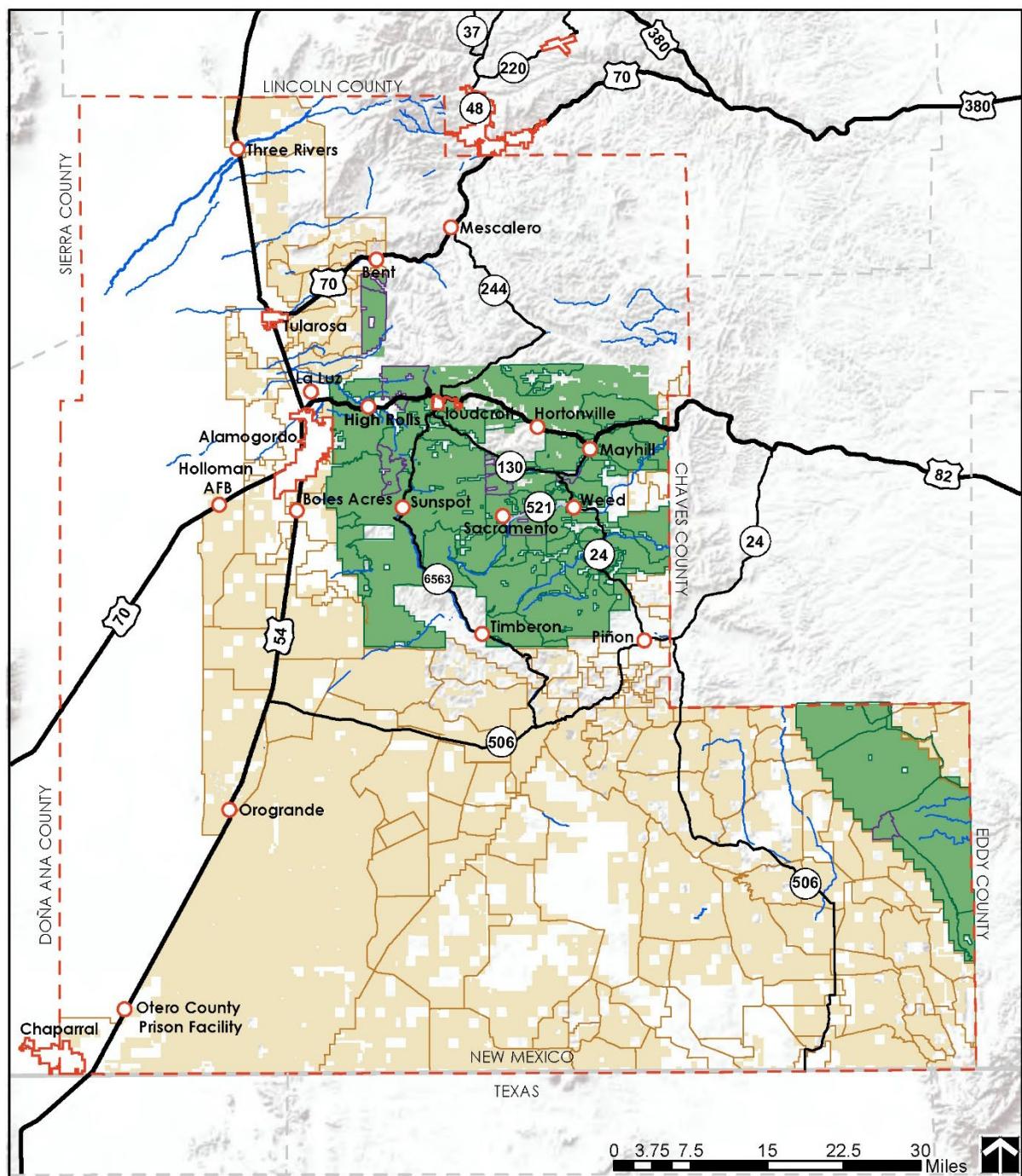
#### [Grazing Rights](#)

Outside of McGregor Range, BLM's allotments are owned grazing rights; BLM issues a grazing permit for ten years that regulates the usage in cooperation with the permit holder.

#### **National Park Service White Sands National Park**

Managed by the National Park Service (NPS), White Sands National Park protects portions of the largest gypsum ecosystem in the world, including the world's largest gypsum dunefield. White Sands hosts more than 600,000 visitors annually and provides a world class experience. The most visited NPS site in the state, White Sands was designated a National Monument in 1933 and redesignated as a National Park at the end of 2019. The Park is about 150,000 acres, which protects about 40 percent of the dunes. The remaining 60 percent are part of White Sands Missile Range. Aside from closures resulting from military testing at White Sands Missile Range and Christmas Day, the park is open to the public.

### FIGURE 5-3. PUBLIC LAND ALLOTMENTS MAP



Source: Resource Geographic Information System, University of New Mexico, December 2, 2019

This map illustrates the land ownership and management entities in New Mexico. The legend on the left identifies the following features:

- Otero County Boundary (dashed red line)
- New Mexico & Texas Counties (dashed grey line)
- State Boundary (solid grey line)
- Rivers/Creeks (blue line)
- US Routes (black line)
- New Mexico State Roads (black line)

The legend on the right identifies the land management entities:

- US Forest Service (green box)
- US Forest Service Allotment, Active (light green box)
- US Forest Service Allotment, Closed (purple box)
- Bureau of Land Management (tan box)
- BLM Grazing Allotment (orange box)



### ***State of New Mexico***

The property owned by the State of New Mexico is scattered throughout the county as shown in Figure 5-2. The State leases subsurface and surface property for agricultural, commercial, mineral and oil and gas extraction purposes throughout Otero County. In 2018, the State of New Mexico entered into an agreement with BLM to exchange 16,869 acres of state lands in Otero County in two Areas of Interest (AOIs) in order to consolidate ownership and make management more efficient.<sup>2</sup> The land in AOI AA is along the southern boundary of Otero County; it is remote desert scrubland which overlaps three grazing allotments and also supports dispersed recreation and hunting activities. The land in AOI U is much larger area stretching from the center of the county into Lincoln County overlapping Mescalero Apache Reservation; it is primarily grassland and forest and has been used for grazing. The State recently decided to suspend this exchange, so the transfer has not been finalized.<sup>3</sup>

## **FEDERAL LAWS**

In addition to public land, there are Federal laws that have an impact on private land use as well as public land management.

### **CLEAN WATER ACT AND SAFE DRINKING WATER ACT**

The Clean Water Act (CWA), administered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) establishes the basic structure for regulating discharges of pollutants into the waters of the United States and regulating quality standards for surface waters. The Clean Water Act was enacted in 1948 as the Federal Water Pollution Control Act and reorganized and expanded in 1972. Under the CWA, EPA has implemented pollution control programs such as setting wastewater standards for industry. EPA has also developed national water quality criteria recommendations for pollutants in surface waters.

The CWA made it unlawful to discharge any pollutant from a point source into navigable waters unless a permit was obtained. EPA's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit program controls discharges. Point sources are discrete conveyances such as pipes or man-made ditches. Individual homes that are connected to a municipal system, use a septic system, or do not have a surface discharge do not need an NPDES permit; however, industrial, municipal, and other facilities must obtain permits if their discharges go directly to surface waters.

EPA safeguards human health by enforcing the requirements of the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) to ensure that the nation's public drinking water supply and its sources (rivers, lakes, reservoirs, springs, and ground water wells) are protected.

EPA works with its federal, state and tribal regulatory partners through a comprehensive Clean Water Act compliance monitoring program and a Safe Drinking Water Act compliance monitoring program to protect human health and the environment by ensuring that the regulated community obeys environmental laws/regulations through on-site visits by qualified inspectors, and a review of the information EPA or a state/tribe requires to be submitted. The CWA and SDWA compliance assistance

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<sup>2</sup> New Mexico Land Exchange Socioeconomic Report, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.blm.gov/programs/lands-and-realty/new-mexico/rio-grande-del-norte-sabinoso-wilderness-state-land-exchange>

programs provide businesses, federal facilities, local governments, and tribes with tools to help meet environmental regulatory requirements.

The 2015 rule will not go into effect until 2020 to give the agencies time to reconsider the definition and implement a public notice and comment process.

## THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT (ESA)

ESA was originally passed in 1973 and has been updated and amended since then. The purpose of the ESA is to protect and recover imperiled species and the ecosystems upon which they depend. This authorized the determination and listing of species as endangered and threatened, prohibited their unauthorized taking, and allowed land acquisition for conservation of listed species by specific federal funds.

The ESA is administered by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service. The FWS has primary responsibility for terrestrial and freshwater organisms. Amendments to the law in 1988 required the FWS to notify state and county governments regarding all proposed listings, all proposed additions or changes in critical habitat designations, and all property protective regulations. The amendments also allow state and county governments the opportunity to participate in and influence all proposed species listing, proposed designation of critical habitat, and any other proposed regulation.

The FWS collaborates with states, tribes, private landowners, non-governmental organizations, and federal partners to achieve conservation for species and habitats. Conservation goals focus on the following principles:

- Focus on recovery
- Provide conservation incentives
- Increase public participation through grants and partnerships
- Ensure clear and consistent policies and implementation
- Base decisions on sound science
- Provide private landowners and industry with tools to implement projects

The FWS has developed many tools and incentives to protect the interests of private landowners while encouraging management activities that benefit listed and other at-risk species. These include Habitat Conservation Plans, Safe Harbor Agreements, Candidate Conservation Agreements, and Conservation Banks.

### ***Federal or State Threatened/Endangered Species***

According to NM Department of Game and Fish's current list of Federal or State Threatened/Endangered Species, there are 25 species in Otero County. Of those, nine are listed as endangered: New Mexico Meadow Jumping Mouse, Penasco Least Chipmunk, Common Ground-dove, Least Tern, Brown Pelican, Elegant Trogan, Aplomado Falcon, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, and Gray-banded Kingsnake. The FWS identifies eight non-plant threatened/endangered species in Otero County and of them the Least Tern, Rio Grande Silvery Minnow and the New Mexico Meadow Jumping Mouse have

the endangered status. Those that are threatened are the Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Mexican Spotted Owl.

### **New Mexico Meadow Jumping Mouse**

Contention has resulted from FWS's decision to protect the critical habitat of the Meadow Jumping Mouse in Lincoln National Forest because it puts restrictions on property and water rights and the riparian, grassy habitat is also prime for grazing. Since 2014, FWS has worked with grazing permittee who have allotments in the three forests with critical habitats and representative groups "to ensure public-land cattle grazing can continue in close proximity to the projected habitat."<sup>4</sup> Together the FWS and 13 of the 14 allotment permittees have found solutions that accommodate the habitat without compromising grazing and ranching operations.

### **Mexican Spotted Owl**

In the fall of 2019, US District Court ceased timber management activities in Region 3's national forests, which includes Lincoln National Forest to protect the Mexican Spotted Owl's critical habitat. The Owl has been listed as threatened since 1993. The activities that were prohibited included forest thinning operations, hazardous fuels reduction projects, firewood and Christmas tree permits and cutting, and other commercial and personal-use forest product permits. The suspension was amended to allow personal and some commercial cutting of firewood and forest management activities outside the owl habitat. The suspension of timber management has been a hardship on Otero County and has made some Otero County residents and groups concerned for the health and safety of the forests, watershed, and surrounding communities and see the protection of habitat being upheld to the detriment of necessary wildfire management and hazard mitigation. At the end of 2019, Otero County Commission and the PLUAC requested an investigation by FWS and USFS citing mismanagement of public lands resulting from the Mexican Spotted Owl tracking.

### **PUBLIC RANGELANDS IMPROVEMENT ACT (PRIA)**

The PRIA was enacted in 1978 to improve the conditions of public rangelands so they become as productive as feasible in accordance with the FLPMA, which was also amended under the Act. It requires the US Secretaries of both the Interior and Agriculture to develop, update and maintain an inventory of range conditions and to track trends in the condition of public rangelands. It requires the Secretaries to manage the public rangelands in accordance with the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934, the FLPMA, and other laws consistent with the Act's improvement program. No less than 80 percent of appropriated funds must be used for on-ground range rehabilitation, construction, maintenance, and training of personnel. It also established a formula for setting fees for domestic livestock grazing on public rangelands.

Pursuant to this Act, the State of New Mexico entered a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the BLM and US Department of the Interior in 1980. The intent is to provide for consultation, cooperation, and coordination between parties in matters relating to rangeland management on US public lands located in the state. The MOU states: *"It is the policy of the State Director, Bureau of Land Management, New Mexico and the Governor of New Mexico to further expand the concept of*

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.fs.usda.gov> NM Meadow Jumping Mouse Home Page

*consultation, cooperation, and coordination expressed in Section 8 of the Public Rangelands Improvement Act into additional phases of the Rangeland Management Program and thus complement the Congressional Intent of the Act."*

Section 8 of the PRIA requires the BLM and the USFS to engage in careful and considered consultation, cooperation and coordination with grazing permittees (owners of priority grazing rights on public land), lessees, and landowners involved and any state or states having lands within the area to be covered by such Allotment Management Plans (AMPs) or in revisions of AMPs.

Also pursuant to PRIA, the Director of the NM Department of Agriculture entered an MOU with the USDA's Southwestern Region, to promote the multiple use of range resources in the Southwestern Region of the US Forest Service. The MOU promotes management that is responsive to the overall public interest; promotes healthy, useful forests and grasslands; reflects a strong land ethic; and applies current scientific forest and rangeland principles. It states, *"When a single allotment is involved, such cooperation (as authorized by the Public Rangelands Improvement Act of October 25, 1978) ensures full participation of the permittees and NMDA in the planning process if requested and agreed to by the permittee."*

## CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL ACTS

All federal agencies are required to follow the following cultural and historic preservation laws:

- National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), as amended (54 USC 300101 et seq.: Historic Preservation)
- Archeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA), as amended (16 USC 470aa-mm)
- National Historic Landmarks Program (54 USC 302102-302108)
- NRHP National Register of Historic Places (54 USC 302101-302108)

## FEDERAL AGENCY REQUIREMENTS

### FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS TO WORK WITH LOCALITIES

Federal law requires federal agencies to consider the impacts of actions authorized by these agencies on the natural environment, social structure, and economy of counties. Federal agencies have an affirmative obligation to consult, cooperate, and coordinate with local government entities and to further ensure that the management of public lands is consistent with local land use plans to the maximum extent possible.

The US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, for example, are required to consider the effect of their actions on communities adjacent to or near federal lands and on employment in the affected areas. The Federal Land Policy and Management Act ("FLPMA"), which applies to public lands managed by the BLM, requires BLM to consult and coordinate with local governments in land use decisions and policies and to reduce contradictions and conflicts between local government land use

plans and those of the BLM.<sup>5</sup> BLM must also coordinate and consult on issues of rangeland management and livestock grazing with landowners, including the state with respect to state lands.

The Forest Service must also involve the public in land use planning and management decisions. [16 US C. §§1604(d),612].

County policy requires that state and federal agencies consult with the county before making decisions or taking actions that have an impact on the functioning of the county government or on the ability of private landowners to maintain the customary use of their properties.

Four major federal statutes dictate the federal government's policy when dealing with land use issues in counties:

- National Environmental Policy Act
- Intergovernmental Cooperation Act
- National Forest Management Act
- Federal Land Policy and Management Act

These mandate that decisions regarding allocation of natural resources and land uses on public lands be made through a comprehensive public planning process. They also mandate that the federal government and appropriate agencies coordinate closely with state and local government on land use issues. These laws are summarized below.

### ***National Environmental Policy Act of 1970 (NEPA)***

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to consider the environmental impacts of their proposed actions and reasonable alternatives to those actions. To meet this requirement, federal agencies must conduct an environmental analysis that is documented in an Environmental Assessment (EA). If the EA shows that the project may have a significant effect on the human environment a more detailed analysis – an Environmental Impact Statement or EIS – is required. This examines the environmental impact of the proposed action, adverse environmental effects that cannot be avoided should the proposal be implemented, alternatives to the proposed action, the relationship between the local short-term uses of the land/environment and the maintenance and enhancement of long-term productivity, and any irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resource that would be involved in the proposed action's implementation.

NEPA states that it is the policy of the federal government to "use all practicable means, consistent with other essential considerations of national policy, to improve and coordinate federal plans, functions, programs, and resources" so that the federal government may:

- Fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations,
- Assure for all Americans' safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings,

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<sup>5</sup> 43 US C. §1712(c)(9)

- Attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences,
- Preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage, and maintain, whenever possible, an environment which supports diversity and variety of individual choice,
- Achieve a balance between population and resource use which will permit high standards of living and wide sharing of life's amenities, and
- Enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resource.

NEPA allows state and local governments to develop their own environmental plans. It also requires that federal agencies consult, coordinate, and jointly conduct environmental studies, plans, review, and hearings with local county government. The Act requires federal agencies to inform the public of proposed or ongoing actions and requires public involvement, consultation with state and local governments, and consideration of conflicts between a proposed action and local plans.

The Council of Environmental Quality ("CEQ") is instrumental in the development of environmental policies and initiatives and issues guidance and interpretation of regulations that implement NEPA processes.

Federal agencies that are responsible for a proposed action have agency specific rules regarding NEPA implementation. These agencies can designate other agencies that are cooperators in the NEPA process. For all federal actions involving an Environmental Impact Statement, the County desires to be a cooperating agency, and will request that status from the lead agency. The County Commission's role is to represent local interests by providing expertise in issues related to a proposed action.

#### ***Intergovernmental Cooperation Act of 1968 (ICA)***

This Act requires federal agencies to coordinate with local governments to review federal programs and project plans. Specifically, ICA "provides opportunities for strengthening the consultation and coordination between federal, local and state governments through coordination and review of proposed federal assistance and direct development programs."

The ICA contains Executive Order 12732, which further requires federal agencies to coordinate with state and local governments, stating that "federal agencies shall provide opportunities for consultation by elected officials of those state and local governments that would provide the non-federal funds for or what would be directly affected by proposed federal financial assistance or direct development."

#### ***US Forest Management Act of 1976***

This Act puts in place a system for forest management based on the principles of multiple use and sustained yield. It requires the US Forest Service (USFS) to coordinate land use planning efforts with those of county governments by using the NEPA process. Resource management plans are to consider both economic and environmental factors. In addition, the Act mandates that regional and forest planning be based on the following principles:

- Preservation of important historic, cultural, and natural aspects to the national heritage.
- Coordination with the land and resource planning efforts of other federal agencies, state, and local governments and Indian tribes.
- Management of National Forest System lands in a manner that is sensitive to economic efficiency.
- Responsiveness to changing conditions of land and other resources and to changing social and economic demands of the American people.

In May 2005, the US Forest Service published a new rule to allow roadbuilding in the last 58.5 million acres of untouched national forests, opening them to possible logging, mining, and other commercial uses. No new roads are being built in Lincoln National Forest at the time of the plan's writing; existing roads are being maintained or improved.

#### ***Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA)***

Known as FLPMA, this Act created a single, unified statutory scheme to guide operations of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Because of FLPMA, federal government is required to consult with local government prior to creating or enforcing land use decisions and policies.

It established a policy that most remaining public lands would be retained in federal ownership, while allowing for some land exchanges and sale of discrete tracts. FLPMA directed the BLM to establish a planning process that resembles that used by other federal agencies, inventorying public lands and their resources, and developing management plans. Management principles are to follow multiple use (typically grazing, energy and mineral extraction, recreation and conservation uses) and sustained yield. The BLM is empowered to take actions necessary to prevent "unnecessary or undue degradation" of public lands.

FLPMA requires the Department of the Interior to coordinate its land use planning and management activities with the land use planning and management programs of state and local governments within which the lands are located. Federal land managers must give consideration to local plans in the development of land use plans for public lands and provide meaningful public involvement of state and local government officials, both elected and appointed, in the development of land use programs, land use regulations, and land use decisions for public lands. Land use plans of the Secretary of the Interior must be consistent with state and local plans to the maximum extent consistent with federal law and the purposes of FLPMA.

#### ***Presidential Executive Order 12630***

President Reagan signed an order regarding Government Actions and Interference with Civil Constitutionally Protected Property Rights on March 15, 1988 that requires federal government decision-makers to carefully evaluate the effects of their administrative, regulatory and legislative actions on property rights and avoid those that could result in a taking for which just compensation is required by the US Constitution. It notes that "undue delays in the decision-making process that interfere with private property carry a risk of takings. Following the directives in this order, the US Attorney General established guidelines for federal departments and agencies to use in evaluating the risk and avoidance of unanticipated takings.

### ***The Sikes Act***

The Sikes Act, as amended in 1989, authorizes the Secretary of Defense to develop cooperative plans for conservation and rehabilitation programs on military reservations and to establish outdoor recreation facilities. It also authorizes the US Department of Agriculture and the Interior to develop such cooperative plans for public lands under their jurisdiction. The Department of Defense is directed to manage the natural resource of each military reservation under its jurisdiction for the sustained multipurpose uses of those resources and to provide necessary or appropriate public access to the extent not inconsistent with the military mission of the reservation.

### ***Defense Authorization Bill***

In 1999, President Clinton signed the Defense Authorization Bill which included the renewal of the McGregor Range Withdrawal from public use. The Army uses the approximately 678,103-acre McGregor Range, an integral part of the Fort Bliss Range Complex, to train the nation's military forces, develop and test future concepts for fighting wars, and support the sister services and allied military education and training programs. This includes closures of portions of NM 506 and US 54 during military activities such as missile firings. The US Army administers all activities and access on McGregor Range, while the Bureau of Land Management co-manages the nonmilitary uses, subject to Army approval. The renew of the withdrawal for 50 more years specified the continuance of grazing, protection of wildlife and their habitats, control of predatory animals, recreation, and prevention and suppression of nonmilitary-caused fires, to the extent they do not conflict with the military missions. There are 14 grazing units totaling 271,000 acres permitted in areas that have a relatively low safety risk. The range is closed to mineral extraction. Cooperative agreements operate to manage the McGregor Black Grama Grassland Area of Critical Environmental Concern to protect valuable biological resources and study the ecology of undisturbed grassland.

## **STATE LAWS**

### **GROUND WATER PROTECTION**

New Mexico Environment Department's (NMED) Ground Water Quality Bureau protects the environmental quality of New Mexico's ground water resources as mandated by the Water Quality Act and the Water Quality Control Commission (WQCC) regulations (20.6 NMAC). Under these regulations, NMED is required to identify, investigate, and clean up contaminated sites which pose significant risks to human health and the environment.

### **WATERSHED PROTECTION**

Surface waters in New Mexico are managed by the Surface Water Quality Bureau Watershed Protection Section (WPS). WPS is responsible for organizing all CWA §319(h) related activities in watersheds with Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) or with assessed data. They also coordinate the state's CWA §401 certification and §404 dredge and fill permits with the US Army Corps of Engineers.

## OTERO COUNTY CUSTOM AND CULTURE

It is the County's position that all decisions affecting natural resource management and land use planning will be guided by the following principles:

- Protect property rights
- Protect and sustain valuable natural resources
- Protect local custom and culture
- Maintain traditional economic structures through self-determination
- Open new economic opportunities through reliance on free markets

The term "custom and culture" is an integral part of this chapter of the Comprehensive Plan because it helps to define and enhance the County's position concerning public land within the county. Federal land use planning laws and regulations require all federal agencies to consider the impacts of proposed actions on the social structure and economy of an affected area. Federal agencies have accepted the term "custom and culture" in the context of land use planning as synonymous with social structure and economy.

The custom and culture of Otero County is defined by the activities and values brought by residents of the past, present, and future who derive their well-being and subsistence from the land and natural resources. These values and activities are what make Otero County unique. The County recognizes its custom and culture is based on traditional values and activities subject to gradual, continuous change by various influences incurred by succeeding generations. The Comprehensive Plan, therefore, must continue to be a work in progress, reflecting changes as they occur.

Certain land uses have historically helped shape the values, attitudes, and traditions of county residents by providing them ways to earn a living, offering recreation, or by providing them places to live. Traditional land uses, which help define the "custom and culture" of Otero County are still active today, including:

- Agriculture
- Grazing and Ranching
- Timber and Wood Products
- Mineral Resources
- Recreation
- Cultural Resources
- Wildlife
- Tourism

# PUBLIC LAND & MANAGEMENT ISSUES

## WATERSHED AND FOREST HEALTH

The County is concerned about brush management, watershed health, and erosion control. The process of forest thinning needs improvement; the County should be involved in the public land management. Stakeholders believe the forest is not safe with the amount of brush, which is fuel load for fire; the forest's health affects the city and impacts the health of the entire watershed; addressing weed and brush control from non-native species all over the forest is considered necessary, however the bureaucracies that exist within the US Forest Service, BLM, and NEPA plus the Endangered Species Act requirements are not allowing appropriate management. For example, the Southern

Sacramento Restoration Project was put on hold due to the Spotted Owl lawsuit. Restoration has not been able to occur, which leads to poor forest health and wildfire safety. Many believe the process to address forest health needs to be simplified. NRCS' projects cross the jurisdictional boundaries and need a liaison to work it out. Congress mandated the US Forest Service to work with local government, provide timber, and protect the watershed in the US Forest Management Act and others. The County and stakeholders feel these mandates are not being upheld.

*"Working with the Forest Service to improve forest thinning will help prevent wildfires."*

*Community Survey Response*

## WATER AND LAND DEVELOPMENT

How the County can work most effectively with the municipal governments regarding water supply, water rights, and land development and with federal and state land managers regarding US Government-owned and controlled land in the county continues to be an issue needing attention.

*"We need to monitor and maintain a healthy water supply for the entire county."*

*Community Survey Response*

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Otero County citizens have direct control over only the small portion of private land within its borders, yet the county's economy is dependent on business activities on federal and state lands. These activities are inseparably tied to the private, patented lands in the county. Certain federal government regulations can have an impact on the use of privately owned lands. This situation creates conflict when residents perceive that federal and state land managers are making land use decisions within the county without enough notice, guidance, and consultation. Federal and state agencies must give timely notice of pending actions affecting local governments, communities, and residents and coordinate with them in the planning and implementation of those actions. Consultation and

collaboration with private interests as well as local government on proposed actions that impact the county is required by federal law. Otero County's role is to ensure coordination and collaboration, and the County's Public Lands Council can represent these interests.

## PUBLIC LAND ACCESS

It should be noted that several survey respondents stressed the need for public lands to remain public without privatization and restricted access. Concern about the impact on and restricted access to these public lands due to grazing, endangered species, or other federal or private uses was a common theme among responses.

*"Public lands should stay public and open to the public."*

*Community Survey Response*

## MULTIPLE USES ON PUBLIC LAND RIGHTS

The nature and intent of Otero County government land use planning is to protect the customs, culture, economy, and welfare of the county and continue to encourage appropriate multiple uses on public land so that local communities and individuals may continue their livelihood and recreate. Therefore, the County has and will continue to develop and implement land use mechanisms that work with federal and state agencies to ensure that public land and resources be available for multiple uses as required by management plans.

## DESIRED IMPROVEMENTS

Based on its custom and culture, Otero County and its citizens support the continuous, multiple use of federal lands and resources in Otero County. The County defines multiple use of public land as using such land and its intrinsic resources in a combination of ways to best meet present and future public needs based on ever-changing needs, conditions, and desires of county residents. Allowing multiple, compatible uses is the most practical use of public land.

The County expects that based on federal laws cited previously, federal and any state agencies subject to NEPA will inform the Otero County manager of any pending actions affecting local communities and residents' health and welfare, and coordinate and consult with the manager in the planning and implementation of these actions. The County also expects that all federal and state agencies subject to NEPA and other federal laws will use the Otero County Comprehensive Plan as a guide and coordinate with the County Commission in planning and managing federal lands within the geographic boundaries of Otero County in accordance with the following requirements.

### ***Land Disposition***

Otero County recognizes that land is essential to local industries and residents.

- The design and development of all federal land transactions, including land adjustment, purchase, disposals, and exchanges, should be carried out to the benefit of Otero County citizens.

- Increase opportunities for local economic developments by increasing the amount of private property within the county.
- Federal land agencies shall not acquire any private land or rights in private lands within Otero County without first ensuring that private property interests are protected and enhanced.
- Federally managed lands that are extremely difficult to manage, particularly those which lie in isolated tracts, will be targeted for disposal.
- The Otero County Manager will be notified of and consulted about all federal land adjustments in Otero County.
- Before federal land agencies can change local, historic, or cultural customs or land use, the Otero County Commission may require adverse impact studies as outlined in Presidential Executive Order 12630 which requires that all federal agencies complete a takings implication assessment (TIA) to evaluate the effect of their rules, regulations and decision on: 1) private property; 2) private property rights; and 3) the investment-backed expectations of private citizens. These requirements shall be conducted, and mitigation measures adopted with concurrence from Otero County. Adverse impact studies shall also address all classes of grazing rights, flood plain areas' public access, and the health and welfare of Otero County residents.

### **Water Resources**

Otero County recognizes that the protection and development of its water resources are essential to its short- and long-term economic, recreational, and cultural viability. The protection of existing water rights, including the head waters of our rivers and water users within the county, is of primary importance to the county's economic and cultural well-being.

- Transfers in water use should be carefully considered in relationship to the history, traditions, and culture of Otero County.
- Any federally proposed designation of Wild and Scenic Rivers and all federal policies regarding riparian management in Otero County shall be coordinated with the County and Water Users Groups in the County and will be jointly planned with all plans addressing County water use.
- Otero County may prepare plans for the protection of all threatened and endangered species within its boundaries. Federal agencies managing waterways and wetlands containing such species will coordinate their management activities and plans with the County Commission.
- Otero County may promote or pursue development of water markets for existing as well as future water rights for agricultural, municipal, industrial, and domestic purposes. In addition, Otero County may explore and promote alternative uses of water.
- Otero County may promote water-based recreation within the county.
- Otero County, if deemed necessary, may initiate a process for establishing geologic, hydrologic, and biologic data bases within the county. The County may acquire, develop, and synthesize, alone or in coordination with other government agencies, drilling information, water well testing information, riparian vegetation information and all other information necessary for the County. The County may also develop a definition of "natural" hydrologic environment to assess the use of water in the county by man, vegetation, livestock, and

wildlife with the context of current and historical use. The County shall base its water use relationship between precipitation, surface water, ground water, saline water, evapo-transpiration, and water use within the county.

- The Otero County government will be notified of all state, interstate and federal actions that have any impact on the water in the county prior to such actions being initiated. In addition, such proposed actions, including federally proposed Wild and Scenic River designations, will be coordinated with Otero County Commission, and appropriate water use groups, and the water and land use plans affecting the county's resources prior to adoption and implementation. It is the intent of the County to guide federal and state agencies in the planning and management of the county's natural, cultural, and economic resources.
- Otero County recognizes the principles contained in the State Water Law as they exist at this time.
- Otero County will develop its water use policy to ensure both water quality and quantity to ensure that such policy does not adversely impact water users within the county.
- Otero County may develop Wild and Scenic River Designations. Federal agencies will consult and coordinate all actions with respect to the intent of local government efforts in the acceptance and enforcement of such designations. In addition, the County may develop riparian management planning in concert with and coordinated with landowners, ranchers, the appropriate state and federal agencies, and other interested parties if those specific riparian issues meet National Riparian definitions.
- The New Mexico Office of the State Engineer updated the Alamogordo-Tularosa Administrative Area Guidelines in 2014 that documents Critical Management Area with a diminishing water supply along US 54 north of Tularosa to south of Alamogordo; irrigation wells in this area will be denied. The Office must demonstrate a diminishing water supply in specific areas before it can deny drilling of irrigation wells.
- The County Commissioners need to participate and have representation in the 40-Year Regional Water Plan.

### ***Agriculture***

The custom and culture associated with agricultural production in Otero County is necessary to the livelihood and well-being of its citizens. It endorses the following policies:

- Protect agricultural land and promote the continuation of agricultural pursuits by protecting private property rights, relying on self-determination, and ensuring open-market conditions.
- Disallow unsound agricultural practices that cause watershed damage, soil erosion and reductions in water quality.
- Opportunities for grazing livestock on federal land shall be continued at sustainable levels consistent with proper range management custom, culture, and the protection of equitable property rights.
- Federal land managing agencies shall coordinate with the County Commission on any matter affecting livestock grazing on public lands.
- Federal and state governments will not obstruct agricultural opportunities, along with other appropriate multiple uses.

- Otero County will continue its established Grazing Advisory Board, which meets quarterly, to help advise the Otero County Commission of equitable and feasible grazing fees based on New Mexico State University and other economic data; the fees are paid to federal agencies. These fees are to be reviewed for formula fluctuation based on cattle prices and Executive Order #12548. Federal Regulation #5985 requires under Public Rangeland Improvement Act, Section 1, the protection of personal property grazing rights and civil rights of local citizens against any adverse economic impact. Livestock grazing on federal lands shall continue at present levels and where conditions justify, Animal Unit Months will be increased.
- Otero County may develop, in coordination with federal and state agencies, an effective Section 8 process pursuant to the Public Rangeland Improvement Act of 1978 and will implement procedures and guidelines to account for the allocation of expenditures of range improvement funds and funds collected through the Sikes Act.
- Otero County will support any agency's continued desire to explore market and incentive systems to reduce administrative and grazing cost on federal lands.
- Otero County may request the responsible agency to remove from the County, or transfer within the County, excessive numbers of all wild animals that damage private or public property within the confines of the law, that have an adverse economic impact on the County or its citizens.
- Otero County at its option will coordinate with the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish on the maximum and minimum hunting days for big game.
- Otero County will encourage Congress to promote a wetlands policy to include only those areas that function as wetlands. This would allow for development of wetland areas when overriding public need requires such development and it is offset by suitable mitigation action, and does not require land designated as agricultural land by the USDA prior to 1985 to be restored to conditions that existed prior to agricultural use. Otero County will be the lead agency in designating wetlands. All actions concerning wetlands will be reviewed by the County Commission prior to initiating action.
- Otero County will support the Public Rangelands Improvement Act (PRIA) with a memorandum of understanding between the State of New Mexico, Bureau of Land Management, US Department of Agriculture and US Forest Service, to promote efficient multiple use management of the range resources in Otero County.

### ***Timber and Wood Products***

The custom and culture associated with timber and wood products production in Otero County is necessary to the livelihood and well-being of its citizens. The following policies are promoted:

- Protect timber resources and promote the continuation of a sustainable wood products industry by providing economic opportunity, relying on self-determination, and ensuring open market conditions.
- Otero County will promote sale sizes that provide opportunities for a wide spectrum of producers and that allow for local entrepreneurship, and which will provide for optimum utilization of the resource.

- Opportunities for a sustainable wood products industry will be continued at levels consistent with custom and culture as affected by prevailing market conditions.
- Otero County will encourage continued private use of timber products for its residents in terms of wood fuel, Christmas trees, etc.

### ***Cultural Resources, Recreation, Wildlife, Wilderness, and Threatened and Endangered Species***

Otero County will promote and facilitate public and private recreational, cultural, wilderness, and wildlife opportunities compatible with local custom and culture and within the constraints of private property rights and local self-determination through the following policies:

- Otero County shall be consulted with and may oversee the formulation of plans for the recovery of all federal and state-listed threatened or endangered species. Otero County requires notification from agencies on recovery plans. State and federal agencies must prove a species is endangered or threatened with full counts and historical data in Otero County.
- Federal and state wildlife management and enforcement agencies will coordinate and consult with the County Commission relative to controversial matters regarding wildlife and resources. All wildlife management plans will be reviewed by County Commission prior to finalization or initiation of actions.
- There shall be no additional Federal Wilderness or park areas, or special designated areas, in Otero County without the consideration of and coordination with the County Commission. Public lands will be managed under multiple use to provide opportunities for all users of public lands.
- Cultural resources will be reviewed by the County Commission or the designee to determine their value as a resource in the customs and cultures of people of Otero County.
- All proposed Sikes Act projects will be reviewed by the County Commission or their designee.
- Sikes Act Funds collected in Otero County will be spent in Otero County.

### ***Mineral Resources***

Otero County recognizes that the development of its hydrocarbon and mineral resources is desirable and necessary to the state and nation. Therefore, Otero County may develop procedures on site-specific plans that provide for the long-term availability and responsible development of its hydrocarbon and mineral resources. Further, it is the policy of Otero County to promote the exploration and enhance the development of its hydrocarbon and mineral resources. It endorses the following policies:

- Support retention of and compliance with the 1872 Mining Law.
- All decisions made by state, federal, and local agencies concerning the extractive industries that have an economic impact on the citizens of Otero County must be reviewed by, and coordinated with, the County Commission or their designee prior to implementation.

### ***Access and Transportation***

Otero County recognizes the need for an adequate transportation system within the county and intends to maintain and improve its valid existing rights-of-way across public and private lands accepted pursuant to the grant under Federal Revised Statute 2477, in accordance with appropriate

safety standards. The County has developed and will maintain a transportation network that optimizes accessibility within the county. Costs and environmental degradation from movement between communities and across public lands will be minimized. Otero County recognizes a need for adequate routes to transport the natural resources produced within the county as well as a need for tourism enhancement.

#### ***Monitoring and Compliance***

Otero County may develop monitoring and compliance standards to evaluate its Comprehensive Plan to ensure coordination and concurrence among city, county, state, and federal agencies. It endorses the following policies:

- Otero County may monitor, as needed, through the appropriate land user or agency, the condition of grazing lands, woodlands, wildlife, and wetlands. Federal and state agencies subject to NEPA shall provide to the County upon request any resource data in the subsequent analysis of all resource conditions.
- Otero County shall enforce compliance with this public land use plan and shall monitor consistency between federal and state actions and activities and the land use requirements enumerated herein.
- The Otero County Commission, through the County Sheriff, has control of all law enforcement within Otero County, recognizing that the sheriff is the highest-ranking law officer in the county.

## **GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS**

### **GOAL 1. Public land uses are sustainable and maintain and protect the vested rights and the custom and culture of Otero County.**

#### **POLICY 1. Protect the custom and culture of Otero County in all decisions regarding the use of publicly managed lands and resources.**

- Action 1. Promote forest and watershed restoration.
- Action 2. Support sustainable livestock grazing practices.
- Action 3. Support timber production and manufacturing of timber.
- Action 4. Facilitate easing restrictions on using resources on federal lands.
- Action 5. Support the beneficial use of timber that is bug-killed, diseased, dead/dying, or scarified.
- Action 6. Support removal of trees as necessary for the safety and welfare of forest health, watershed health, and residents of Otero County.
- Action 7. Reduce depletion rates of groundwater to sustain the custom and culture of the county.
- Action 8. Create a regional action plan to develop both extractable and renewable minerals, as needed.

- Action 9. Designate and map established agriculture or grazing lands, based on soil type and availability to aid their preservation.
- Action 10. Promote recreational opportunities that benefit county residents, as well as tourism.
- Action 11. Conserve sites of cultural and historical importance.

**GOAL 2. The county's historical, agricultural, and forestry land uses and practices are protected.**

**POLICY 1.** *Preserve agricultural uses and grazing lands based on soil type and water availability to aid in their preservation for future generations.*

- Action 1. Designate established grazing land to preserve agricultural use.
- Action 2. Continue to collaborate with federal and state agencies on the management of resources. This collaboration should include the County Manager's Office, landowners, federal and state agencies, and County Commission.

**GOAL 3. Local interests are represented in the decisions and planning of state and federal agencies within and adjacent to the county's boundaries.**

**POLICY 1.** *Protect and enhance private property rights when federal or state land agencies acquire private land rights or private lands within the county, while protecting the public health, safety, and welfare of county residents.*

- Action 1. Involve local individuals and groups, including the County Public Land Use Council and others who have expertise, experience, or interest in resource and land use issues to assist the County's participation in state and federal agency decision making processes.
- Action 2. Support cooperators and government agencies in making sound natural resource and land use decisions that are scientifically based, legally defensible, sensitive to resource health, and responsive to multiple use interests while maintaining custom and culture practices of the county and protecting private vested rights.
- Action 3. Work to ensure local input on state and federal resource and land use policy issues to protect private property rights, review of endangered species, and review of Water Quality Control Commission regulations.
- Action 4. Maintain partnerships with local, state, and federal agencies to provide technical assistance on resource and land use issues.

- Action 5. Work closely with and enter into coordination and joint planning efforts with local, state, and federal agencies to ensure that the natural resource and private property right goals of the Comprehensive Plan are included in these agencies' planning and management actions, regulations, and policies with regard to private, local government, state, and federal lands.
- Action 6. Request cooperating agency status from the lead agency on all federal actions involving an Environmental Impact Statement.
- Action 7. Encourage local, state, and federal agencies to share information that they routinely collect (i.e., geographic information system mapping and the assessment of new management practices and techniques) with the County, which will also share its data and information.

**POLICY 2. Increase *intergovernmental cooperation* between Otero County, municipalities, state, and federal agencies.**

- Action 1. Continue to coordinate firefighting with the US Forest Service so County volunteer fire departments are the first responders to communities located in Lincoln National Forest.
- Action 2. Pursue multi-county and agency agreements regarding water rights and management.
  - Develop taskforce with representatives from the ranching community, farming community, US Forest Service, BLM, Holloman AFB, the County, and municipalities to come to agreement on water management.
  - If appropriate, use a professional facilitator for conflict resolution.
- Action 3. Pursue multi-county and agency agreements regarding land management.
  - Develop taskforce with representatives from the ranching community, farming community, US Forest Service, BLM, Holloman AFB, the County, and municipalities to come to agreement on land management.
  - If appropriate, use a professional facilitator for conflict resolution.
- Action 4. Designate staff and funding to support cooperative efforts, as necessary.
- Action 5. Develop partnerships with other governmental bodies.
  - Hold quarterly meetings in community centers to address community concerns.
  - Hold special meetings between the County and municipal governments, BLM, US Forest Service, and other agencies to address these concerns.
  - Share funding of programs with other governments.
- Action 6. Improve communications with other government agencies by using available technology.

**POLICY 3. Protect and sustain Otero County's water resources.**

- Action 1. Continue to support protection of ground water, aquifers, and Lake Lucero, Tularosa Creek and Sacramento River.
- Action 2. Continue to follow Water Rights, Appropriation of Ground and Surface Water; Canadian River Compact; Conservancy and Irrigation Districts; and Endangered Species Act.
- Action 3. Continue to explore water supply alternatives.
- Action 4. Participate in the preparation of the regional 40-Year Water Plan and ensure its adoption.
- Action 5. Support region-wide water collaboratives, plans, and initiatives for water efficiency and conservation.
- Action 6. Continue to follow water quality standards – Surface Water: Federal Clean Water Act; Groundwater: New Mexico Water Quality Act; Drinking Water: Safe Drinking Water Act.
- Action 7. Plan and work with local entities to protect and wisely utilize available water resources for the long-term interest of the area.
- Action 8. Support communities in providing the necessary infrastructure needed to preserve and protect the ground water in this area.
- Action 9. Protect and preserve well water resources throughout the County.

*This policy and actions are also supportive of Utilities and Economic Development goals.*

**POLICY 4. Promote the use and transmission of renewable energy.**

- Action 1. Promote and encourage renewable energy businesses and solar water heating.
- Action 2. Support smart growth-oriented land use planning to coincide with the common goal of reducing greenhouse gases.
- Action 3. Continue to support increasing transmission lines so the county can increase distribution of renewable resources.

*This policy and actions are also supportive of Utilities and Economic Development goals.*

**GOAL 4. Land uses that are compatible with Holloman Air Force Base Operations are supported and encouraged.**

- Action 1. Support private property rights while working with Holloman Air Force Base.
- Action 2. Continue to collaborate with Holloman Air Force Base and the County Commission.

## IMPLEMENTATION GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

Table 5-1 identifies the necessary steps needed to implement the public land and resource management goals, policies, and actions. The Implementation Chapter of this plan provides more details on funding sources, resources, and the implementation process.

**TABLE 5-1. IMPLEMENTATION OF PUBLIC LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT GOALS**

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
<b>Goal 1. Public land uses are sustainable and maintain the custom and culture of Otero County.</b>		
<i>Policy 1. Protect the custom and culture of Otero County in all decisions regarding the use of publicly managed lands and resources.</i>		
Promote forest and watershed restoration.	Otero County; USFS; BLM; NRCS; OSWCD; NPS (WHSAs)	USDA grants
Support sustainable livestock grazing practices.	Otero County; USFS; BLM; NRCS; South Central Mountain RC&D; OSWCD; Range Improvement Task Force (RITF)	N/A
Support timber production and manufacturing of timber.	Otero County; USFS; BLM; NRCS; South Central Mountain RC&D	N/A
Facilitate easing restrictions on using resources on federal lands.	Otero County; USFS; BLM; DOD; HAFB; WSMR	N/A
Support the beneficial use of timber that is bug-killed, diseased, dead/dying, or scarified.	Otero County; USFS; BLM; NRCS; South Central Mountain RC&D	N/A
Support removal of trees as necessary for the safety and welfare of forest health, watershed health, and residents of Otero County.	Otero County; USFS; BLM; NRCS; South Central Mountain RC&D	USDA grants
Reduce depletion rates of groundwater to sustain the custom and culture of the county.	Otero County; USFS; BLM; NRCS; South Central Mountain RC&D	N/A
Designate and map established agriculture or grazing lands, based on soil type and availability to aid their preservation.	Otero County; NRCS; South Central Mountain RC&D; OSWCD; RITF	USDA grants
Promote recreational opportunities that benefit county residents, as well as tourism.	Otero County; State Tourism Department; State Outdoor Recreation Division	Tourism Department Cooperative Marketing Grants; Outdoor Equity Fund; Outdoor Rec Incubator grant; Special Projects and Infrastructure Fund

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
Conserve sites of cultural and historical importance.	Otero County; DCA; SHPO; Tularosa Basin Historical Society	NM Income Tax Credit for Preservation of Cultural Properties
<b>Goal 2. The county's historical, agricultural, and forestry land uses and practices are protected.</b>		
<i>Policy 1. Preserve agricultural uses and grazing lands based on soil type and water availability to aid in their preservation for future generations.</i>		
Designate established grazing land to preserve agricultural use.	Otero County	N/A
Continue to collaborate with federal and state agencies on the management of resources. This collaboration should include the County Manager's Office, landowners, federal and state agencies, and County Commission.	Otero County (County Commission, County Manager); private property owners; State Land Office; USFS; BLM; NPS (WHSA); DOD	N/A
<b>Goal 3 Local interests are represented in the decisions and planning of state and federal agencies within and adjacent to the county's boundaries.</b>		
<i>Policy 1. Protect and enhance private property rights when federal or state land agencies acquire private land rights or private lands within the county, while protecting the public health, safety, and welfare of county residents.</i>		
Involve local individuals and groups, including the County Public Land Use Council and others who have expertise, experience, or interest in resource and land use issues to assist the County's participation in state and federal agency decision making processes.	Otero County; PLUAC; RITF; property owners; USFS; BLM; NPS (WHSA); NRCS; DOD	N/A
Support cooperators and government agencies in making sound natural resource and land use decisions that are scientifically based, legally defensible, sensitive to resource health, and responsive to multiple use interests while maintaining custom and culture practices of the county and protecting private vested rights.	Otero County; PLUAC; RITF	N/A
Work to ensure local input on state and federal resource and land use policy issues to protect private property rights, review of endangered species, and review of Water Quality Control Commission regulations.	Otero County; State Land Office; USFWS; USFS; BLM; NPS (WHSA); Water Quality Control Commission	N/A

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
Maintain partnerships with local, state, and federal agencies to provide technical assistance on resource and land use issues.	Otero County; PLUAC; State Land Office; USFS; BLM; NPS (WHSA); NRCS	N/A
Work closely with and enter into coordination and joint planning efforts with local, state, and federal agencies to ensure that the natural resource and private property right goals of the Comprehensive Plan are included in these agencies' planning and management actions, regulations, and policies with regard to private, local government, state, and federal lands.	Otero County; State Land Office; USFS; BLM; NPS (WHSA); DOD; HAFB; WSMR	N/A
Request cooperating agency status from the lead agency on all federal actions involving an Environmental Impact Statement.	Otero County; State Land Office; USFS; BLM; NPS (WHSA); DOD; HAFB; WSMR	N/A
Encourage local, state, and federal agencies to share information that they routinely collect (i.e., geographic information system mapping and the assessment of new management practices and techniques) with the County, which will also share its data and information.	Otero County; State Land Office; USFS; BLM; NPS (WHSA); DOD; HAFB; WSMR	N/A
<i>Policy 2. Increase intergovernmental cooperation between Otero County, municipalities, state, and federal agencies.</i>		
Continue to coordinate firefighting with the US Forest Service so County volunteer fire departments are the first responders to communities located in Lincoln National Forest.	Otero County; USFS	N/A
<p>Pursue multi-county and agency agreements regarding water rights and management.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Develop taskforce with representatives from the ranching community, farming community, US Forest Service, BLM, Holloman AFB, the County, and municipalities to come to agreement on water management.</li> <li>– If appropriate, use a professional facilitator for conflict resolution.</li> </ul>	Otero County; USFS; BLM; NPS (WHSA); HAFB; City of Alamogordo; Village of Tularosa; other municipalities/colonias	USDA programs

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
<p>Pursue multi-county and agency agreements regarding land management.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Develop taskforce with representatives from the ranching community, farming community, US Forest Service, BLM, Holloman AFB, the County, and municipalities to come to agreement on land management.</li> <li>– If appropriate, use a professional facilitator for conflict resolution.</li> </ul>	Otero County; Doña Ana County; Lincoln County; PLUAC; USFS; BLM; HAFB; ranchers; farmers; municipalities/colonias	N/A
Reconsider expanding the Otero County Commission from three to five members.	Otero County	N/A
Designate staff and funding to support cooperative efforts, as necessary.	Otero County	General Fund
<p>Develop partnerships with other governmental bodies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Hold quarterly meetings in community centers to address community concerns.</li> <li>– Hold special meetings between the County and municipal governments, BLM, US Forest Service, and other agencies to address these concerns.</li> <li>– Share funding of programs with other governments.</li> </ul>	Otero County; Doña Ana County; Lincoln County; PLUAC; USFS; BLM; NPS (WHSA); HAFB; municipalities/colonias	USDA programs
Improve communications with other government agencies by using available technology.	Otero County; Doña Ana County; Lincoln County; PLUAC; USFS; BLM; NPS (WHSA); HAFB; municipalities	USDA programs
<i>Policy 3. Protect and sustain Otero County's water resources.</i>		
Continue to support protection of ground water, aquifers, and Lake Lucero, Tularosa Creek and Sacramento River.	Otero County; OSWCD; NPS (WHSA)	NMED programs
Continue to follow Water Rights, Appropriation of Ground and Surface Water; Canadian River Compact; Conservancy and Irrigation Districts; and Endangered Species Act.	Otero County	WEP
Continue to explore water supply alternatives.	Otero County	EPA grants; NMED; CWSRF

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
Participate in the preparation of the regional 40-Year Water Plan and ensure its adoption.	Otero County	New Mexico Finance Authority
Support region-wide water collaboratives, plans, and initiatives for water efficiency and conservation.	Otero County; Office of State Engineer; Region 5: Tularosa–Sacramento–Salt Basins	NM Interstate Stream Commission
Continue to follow water quality standards – Surface Water: Federal Clean Water Act; Groundwater: New Mexico Water Quality Act; Drinking Water: Safe Drinking Water Act.	Otero County	N/A
Plan and work with local entities to protect and wisely utilize available water resources for the long-term interest of the area.	Otero County; municipalities/colonias	N/A
Support communities in providing the necessary infrastructure needed to preserve and protect the groundwater in this area.	Otero County; municipalities/colonias	NMED
Protect and preserve well water resources throughout the county.	Otero County; municipalities/colonias	CWSRF
<i>Policy 4. Promote the use and transmission of renewable energy.</i>		
Promote and encourage renewable energy businesses and solar water heating.	Otero County; OCEDC; municipalities/colonias	USDA Electric Program
Support smart growth-oriented land use planning to coincide with the common goal of reducing greenhouse gases.	Otero County	CDBG
Continue to support increasing transmission lines so the County can increase distribution of renewable resources.	Otero County	USDA Electric Program



# Private Land Use

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Land use is a fundamental component of comprehensive planning and provides an underlying framework for the entire document. Land use patterns influence such things as a community's economic base, the cost of providing public services and the location of future development. Analyzing existing patterns helps to determine how and in what direction a community is growing and whether the pattern should be continued or changed.

This chapter addresses land uses on privately owned land in the county.

## COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

- The community is not in agreement on what types of uses should be allowed and encouraged. Many think the county should regulate land uses depending on their water usage and limit more development unless water demand can be met. Some think agriculture and new development should be encouraged. Others think uses that require so much water should not be allowed given the county's limited water.
- The community is not in agreement on whether countywide zoning should be enacted to prevent incompatible uses and to enforce property maintenance. Many think areas in the county needs to be cleaned up, especially the abandoned and vacant property seen from the thoroughfares. Community members want to protect property rights, yet do not agree on how that should be done. Some think zoning will help hold property owners accountable for property maintenance and prevent bad maintenance or incompatible land uses from bringing down others' property values. Others think zoning is an infringement on property rights and should not be used as a mechanism to control development and maintenance.
- Incentivize businesses to locate in existing structures and infill lots with infrastructure and utilities rather than continuing to sprawl into undeveloped areas.

# EXISTING CONDITIONS

Approximately 11 percent, or 467,315 acres, of Otero County is privately owned. The remainder is managed by federal agencies, state agencies, and Indian tribes. Three incorporated municipalities—Alamogordo, Tularosa, and Cloudcroft—as well as the communities of Bent, High Rolls/Mountain Park, Holloman Air Force Base, La Luz, Mayhill, Mescalero, Orogrande, Pinon, Sacramento, Sunspot, Timberon and Weed have private land. The five-mile area surrounding the Alamogordo city limits is within the city's planning and platting jurisdiction.

## COUNTYWIDE LAND USE

### AGRICULTURAL USES

Historically, Otero County residents used the land for agriculture, ranching, forestry, recreation, hunting and mining of gold and coal. In fact, some of the oldest evidence of agriculture in the United States is in Otero County. These traditional uses have diminished somewhat over the years and have been partially supplanted by the military missions at Holloman Air Force Base and White Sands Missile Range, tourism of the county's scenic and scientific attractions, and retirement pursuits. Despite this, agriculture and ranching remain a way of life important to the economy, customs, and culture of the county. Otero County has pecan, pistachio, apple, and cherry orchards and several ranches and wineries. Farmers grow alfalfa and, pumpkins.

**TABLE 6-1. OTERO COUNTY AGRICULTURAL USES**

	2002	2017	% change
Total Farms	622	473	-23.95%
Farm Operations - (1 TO 49.9 ACRES)	376	256	-31.91%
Farm Operations - (500 TO 999 ACRES)	32	22	-31.25%
Farm Operations- (1,000 OR MORE ACRES)	64	73	14.06%
Farm Operations - Acres operated	1,207,598	1,019,246	-15.60%
<b>Livestock</b>			
Cattle, including Calves	16,833	16,279	-3.29%
Cattle, Cows, Beef	11,198	11,320	1.09%
Cattle, Cows, Milk	15	15	0.00%
Hogs	142	31	-78.17%
Sheep, including Lambs	9,168	305	-96.67%
Chickens, Layers	2,698	1,327	-50.82%
<b>Major Crop Acreage</b>			
Hay & Haylage - Acres Harvested	2,000	2,031	1.55%
Vegetable Totals, Acres Harvested	21	19	-9.52%
Orchards - Acres Bearing & Non-Bearing	3,850	2,178	-43.43%

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*Source: 2017 Census of Agriculture and 2002 Otero County Comprehensive Plan*

In 2002, for example, there were 1,207,598 acres of farmland spread among 622 farms in the county according to the US Census of Agriculture (USDA 2002). Most farms, 376, were between 1 and 49 acres, with the median size being 45 acres. Some 64 farms, however, were at least 1,000 acres or more and another 32 ranged from 500 to 999 acres. Between 2002 and 1973, Cattle ranching dropped to about half what it was, yet orchards (primarily pistachios and pecans) increased.

In the 15 years between 2002 and 2017, cattle and calves ranching continued to decrease by 3 percent (although beef cows increased by 1 percent) and hog, sheep and chicken livestock decreased more drastically by 78 percent, 97 percent, and 51 percent, respectively; farming decreased by 24 percent (although the number of large farms of 1,000 acres or more increased by 14 percent); acres of hay production increased by 2 percent and orchards decreased by 43 percent.

Given the continued declining trends in most agricultural production, the County should continue designating or mapping prime agricultural or grazing lands, based on soil type and water availability, to aid in their preservation for future generations.

## POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

When thinking about land use and Otero County's future development, it is important to understand the trends in population growth. According to the US Census, the total population of Otero County in 2000 was 62,298, with more than half—35,582—living within the City limits of Alamogordo (see Table 6-2). Countywide the population increased in the decades between 1908 and 2010, but not nearly as much as the state grew.

**TABLE 6-2. POPULATION IN 1980, 1990, 2000, AND 2010**

Location	1980	1990	2000	2010	% Change from 2000 - 2010
Otero County	44,665	51,928	62,298	63,797	2.41%
Alamogordo	24,024	27,986	35,582	30,403	-14.56%
Tularosa	2,536	2,753	2,864	2,842	-0.77%
Cloudcroft	521	612	749	674	-10.01%
Holloman Air Force Base	7,245	5,891	2,076	3,054	47.11%
Unincorporated County	12,339	14,686	21,027	26,824	27.57%
New Mexico	1,303,303	1,515,069	1,819,046	2,059,179	13.20%

*Source: US Census, 2010*

Since the 2020 Census is being conducted during the writing of this plan, we cannot state the current population as fact and must rely on the estimates by the American Community Survey (ACS). Between 2010 and 2018, the county's population was estimated to increase by 1,950 people according to (see Table 6-3).

**TABLE 6-3. POPULATION ESTIMATES**

Location	2010	2018	% Change
Otero County	63,797	65,745	3.05%
Alamogordo	30,403	31,230	2.72%
Tularosa	2,842	2,931	3.13%
Cloudcroft	674	606	-10.09%
Holloman Air Force Base	3,054	3,955	29.50%
Unincorporated County	26,824	27,023	0.74%
New Mexico	2,059,179	2,092,434	1.61%

Source: US Census, 2010; ACS, 5-year Estimate, 2019

## ALAMOGORDO LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

By 2010, the population of the county grew by 2.41 percent, but Alamogordo's population decreased by 14.56 percent. Between 2010 and 2018, Alamogordo's population was estimated to have increased by 827 people. Alamogordo's Comprehensive Plan 2000 projected the proportion of county residents living in Alamogordo and its immediate surroundings to increase to 72 percent of the county population by 2020, which is likely far too generous; in 2018 less than half the county's population was living in Alamogordo.

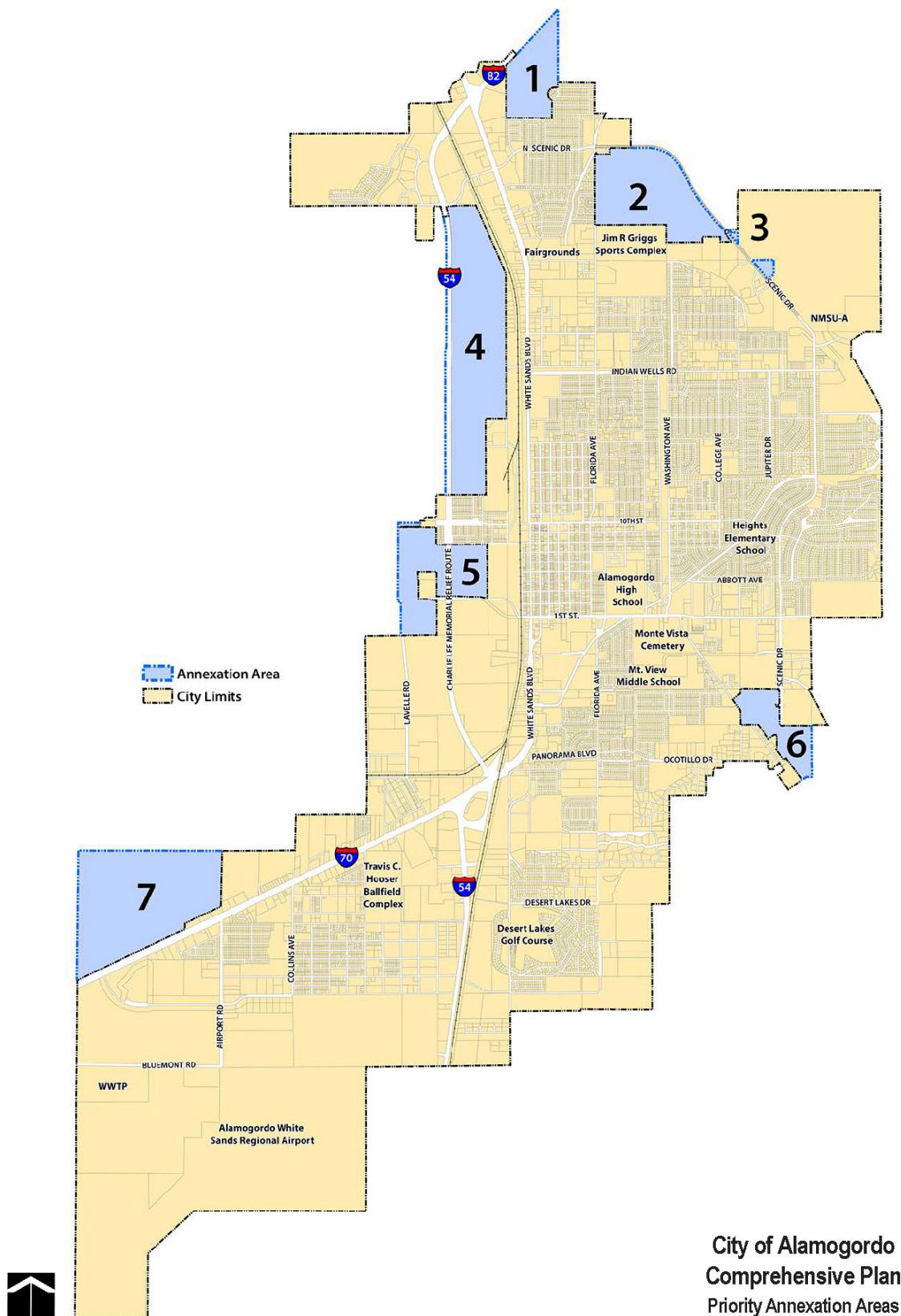
### DRAFT ALAMOGORDO COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2018

The draft Alamogordo's Comprehensive Plan 2018 notes the county's population projections show a slow decrease between 2020 and 3035. The City is heavily invested in the Brackish Groundwater National Desalination Research Facility so it can support existing and future land uses. The City's preferred land use plan for the next 20 years includes:

- Annexation of County land to create a more continuous boundary as shown in Figure 6-1.
- Infill development in Downtown (south of Tenth Street), on Indian Wells Road, on First Street, N. Florida Avenue, in the Science, Technology, and Education area, in the Railroad Industrial area, and in the Desert Lakes Golf Course, Panorama, and Florida areas.
- Redevelopment of vacant parcels in and around the Metropolitan Redevelopment Area in Downtown.
- A "planned community" with a range of residential densities and commercial uses on the south edge of the city on County land north of US 70.
- New mixed-use around White Sands Boulevard to complement the White Sands Beautification District.
- A business park near the Alamogordo-White Sands Regional Airport.

The Plan surmises there is adequate capacity to expand the water distribution and sewer collection systems to serve the annexation areas and that new lift stations and pumps may be required.

FIGURE 6-1. ANNEXATION MAP FROM THE CITY OF ALAMOGORDO'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Development at the edge of the existing urbanized areas require cooperation and joint planning between the City and the County. Joint management of growth of unincorporated areas adjacent to Alamogordo can be accomplished through joint planning and platting review and extraterritorial zoning. A cooperative arrangement to manage development in identified growth areas could benefit both the City and County in the future.

### ***What Has Changed***

The City's 2000 Comprehensive Plan predicted the area with the greatest potential for multi-family growth, including mobile homes is in the southern area of the City, bordered by US 70/82 on the north, Airport Road on the west, US 54 on the east and the Alamogordo airport on the south. Zoned for manufactured housing units, it was expected to develop significantly by the year 2020 due to its proximity to Holloman Air Force Base. However, in 2020, a large amount of this area remains undeveloped; the area that is developed is primarily mobile home parks.

The 2000 Plan also predicted retail growth would be concentrated in the southwest area of the city along the US 70/82 and US 54 interchange, where there already had been commercial growth. Most growth took place north of the interchange along White Sands Boulevard. The Plan also predicted industrial growth to take place west of White Sands Boulevard and around the Alamogordo-White Sands Regional Airport. Neither of these areas were developed with industrial uses; White Sands Boulevard is flanked by commercial and open space.

### **ALAMOGORDO'S 40-YEAR WATER PLAN**

The City's 40-Year Water Plan focuses on the Alamogordo Regional Water Supply Project's (ARWSP) desalination of brackish water to meet water demands over the next 40 years and recommends replacing wells, adopting aggressive water conservation measures, and reusing water for irrigation.

### **ALAMOGORDO'S GROWTH CONSTRAINTS**

The City sits at the base of the Sacramento Mountains, development is limited by the area's susceptibility to flooding from the canyons and arroyos that flow through the City. Accessibility is a limiting factor for growth in newly developing areas that do not have adequate connections to the region's transportation system.

## **TULAROSA LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT**

The Village of Tularosa's population was 2,864 in 2000, down from a peak of 3,200 persons in 1970. Although, the Village's population decreased by less than 1 percent between 2000 and 2010, it is estimated to have increased 3 percent between 2010 and 2018 with an additional 90 people as shown in Table 6-3. By 2030, Tularosa is projected to grow steadily to exceed its 1970's peak population to 3,760 persons. The Tularosa Metropolitan Redevelopment Area Plan notes the Village's two focus areas for commercial development are along US 54 and on East Granado Street downtown on vacant or underutilized parcels. The Village is prioritizing economic development to retain and attract new

business, infill housing development and redevelopment of underutilized properties for a mix of commercial and residential (especially multi-family) uses. Revitalizing its historic areas and structures and renovating or redeveloping vacant and dilapidated structures, particularly along US 54 south of Fresno was identified as a goal in the Village's 2001 Comprehensive Plan. It also seeks to preserve agriculture as an option, without infringing on landowner's property rights. Potential areas for commercial development identified in the plan were along US 54 south of Fresno Street and along East Granado Street. The Village's Metropolitan Redevelopment Area Plan from 2017 notes redevelopment infill sites along Higuera Avenue, 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Gallegos Lane, and St. Francis Drive in downtown Tularosa.

As with other municipalities, cooperation between the Village and the County on future land use decision can benefit both jurisdictions. The Village has a history of working with the County: its Red Brick Building Restoration Foundation has worked with the County to restore the historic resource; it works with Otero County Economic Development Council to support and attract businesses; and the Tulie Trails working group includes Otero County representation.

## LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE UNINCORPORATED AREAS OF THE COUNTY

Residential densities of new urban area development range from about three to four families per acre to one to three families per acre in Tularosa, La Luz, Boles Acres, Dog Canyon Estates, and mountain resort areas in the Sacramento Mountains. In Alamogordo or Tularosa development is on relatively flat land, with slopes a maximum of five or six percent. In Cloudcroft and on private lands throughout the Sacramento Mountains, new homes often sit on steep hillsides, some of which may reach 25 percent grade (25 feet vertical per 100 feet of horizontal distance).

The most privately-owned areas likely to experience growth in the unincorporated areas are around Alamogordo, La Luz, and Tularosa. The second most likely area for residential development will be the mountain area, while the third will be the very southwest corner of the county, in Chaparral, and other isolated private ownerships. The southeasterly portion of the county has been developing into agriculture uses.

# PRIVATE LAND USE ISSUES

## LAND USE CONTROLS

Potential implementation of County land use controls has long been a controversial issue in Otero County. Both Alamogordo and Tularosa enforce zoning ordinances. The County has a subdivision ordinance but does not impose zoning controls. The lack of zoning provides no regulatory control of desirable or undesirable development. The County must use other means to protect agricultural land

and preserve current land uses. The enactment of land use controls in unincorporated portions of the county should be presented to county residents for a vote.

If the County prefers to accomplish its goals without countywide zoning, it could consider creating Special Zoning Districts areas, as some Socorro County areas have done. The state municipal code (NMSA 1978 3-21-18) allows special zoning districts of no more than 20,000 acres each to be created by most landowners in areas of a county that has no general zoning ordinance and are outside of incorporated municipalities. Special zoning districts may be an appropriate solution for areas in need of special protection, such as Holloman's AICUZ impact area, prime agricultural lands, scenic areas, or the areas surrounding Alamogordo that are facing growth pressure.

## PROPERTY MAINTENANCE

Unkept, vacant, or abandoned properties are prevalent throughout Otero County. Some community members wish to rehabilitate these properties to provide residents with more housing options, offer prospective businesses with more building options, and improve the overall health and look of the community. This rehabilitation can take different approaches and the efforts must be in sync with each community's goals and priorities. The County can take the lead on a countywide property rehabilitation initiative.

Many community members think the County needs to regulate the poorly maintained or abandoned properties that are taking over the landscape and competing with the county's beautiful vistas. To address this, there are numerous approaches the County should consider:

- Enact a Clean and Lien Ordinance that requires property owners to maintain their properties and prevent them from becoming hazardous and diminishing the value of adjacent properties.
- Develop a multi-pronged approach to address abandoned properties that provides incentives for redevelopment and rehabilitation, as well as consequences for delinquent properties such as:
  - Holding property owners accountable. For example, give 30 days to clean up their abandoned/unmaintained properties and register vacant property. If they do not, impose fines.
  - Make process clear and understandable to public through campaign and website that provides property owners with assistance to maintain, sell, or buy properties.
  - Aid property owners struggling to pay taxes through installment payment plan.
  - Begin foreclosure on properties that have not had property taxes paid for 3 years.
  - Market and sell buildings once they have been foreclosed; work with community stakeholders to identify priority sites.

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*"Tighten up the county ordinances with regard to mobile homes and abandoned homes."*

*Community Survey Response*

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- Leverage private and public funding for properties beyond repair to assist with demolition or deconstruction costs. Deconstruction is a more sustainable form of demolition that allows materials to be recycled and sold, which provides income to owners and jobs for locals.

## CITY AND COUNTY INTERFACE

State law provides for overlapping City and County planning and platting jurisdiction within an area five miles outside the City of Alamogordo's limits. This helps the City and County coordinate planning issues within the extraterritorial area where development is occurring. As the City grows and meets County infrastructure, incompatibilities can occur between infrastructure systems, streets, and other features. There is a need to coordinate City and County development standards to enhance land use and infrastructure compatibility in the long term.

## DEVELOPMENT CAPS

Given the scarcity of water in Otero County, many think the County should regulate development based on water use to maintain water for future generations.

*"Make developers more accountable for ground water sustainability."*

*Community Survey Response*

## COMPATIBILITY WITH MILITARY INSTALLATIONS

There are concerns about the interface between federal and private land and their compatibility. Holloman AFB sought assurance that the land surrounding their operations will continue to be compatible with neighboring land use so their flying mission can continue without adversely impacting the community's safety or noise tolerance. It proposed an Air Installation Compatible Use Zone (AICUZ) surrounding the base operations. A primary objective is to share information with neighboring communities so that they can make educated decisions on land use planning and zoning actions that may affect the Air Force flying mission. Other land use compatibility issues with the Air Force fall within the category of real estate actions such as restrictive easements and fee simple acquisition; these actions are implemented only when the associated safety risks are unacceptable to the installation commander or the mission is threatened.

Holloman AFB established a Clear Zone and Accident Potential Zones (APZ) that abut the runway and base's boundaries, which are the most hazardous zones. APZ I is an area beyond the Clear Zone where approximately 10 percent of all aircraft accidents are likely to occur. APZ II is an area beyond APZ I with a 6 percent potential for aircraft accidents. Proper land use planning and controls are strongly encouraged in the APZs to protect the public safety and welfare.

# DESIRED LAND USE

The County may establish land use controls enough to regulate undesirable or unsafe development, foster desirable development, and promote residential and commercial development compatible with Holloman Air Force Base's flying mission. Joint management of growth in unincorporated areas adjacent to municipalities can be accomplished through joint planning and platting review and extraterritorial zoning. A cooperative arrangement to manage development in identified growth areas could benefit both the City and County in the future. It would also be beneficial to coordinate City and County development standards to enhance infrastructure compatibility in the long term.

# GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

The County Commission recognizes and protects all private property rights as guaranteed by the US Constitution and defined by federal and state law while protecting the public health, safety, and welfare of county residents.

**GOAL 1. Otero County allows orderly and appropriate growth in the county while protecting individual property rights and upholding County policy.**

**POLICY 1. Consider the interests and rights of Otero County residents in all decisions regarding the use of federal- and state-owned lands.**

- Action 1. Enforce laws within jurisdiction of the County Commission.
- Action 2. Assure the right to cultivate land and maintain livestock in accordance with the Right to Farm Act as provided in NMSA 1978, Chapter 47, Article 9.
- Action 3. Solicit property owners' opinions of proposed action.
- Action 4. Negotiate to reach settlement of differences.
- Action 5. Use due process in courts to settle differences.

**POLICY 2. Develop an educated, informed, and involved citizenry in community planning and decision-making.**

- Action 1. Use all means to communicate to residents and inform them of local, state, and federal actions and planning processes, including newspapers, radio and television programs, and internet.
- Action 2. Motivate citizens to get involved in planning.
- Action 3. Use a Comprehensive Plan committee and a professional if needed to review and update the County's Comprehensive Plan every five years.

**POLICY 3. Ensure Holloman Air Force Base Mission is not jeopardized by incompatible growth.**

- Action 1. Work with Holloman AFB to promote further consideration of the Air Force Air Installation Compatible Use Zone (AICUZ) land use recommendations.
- Action 2. Adopt the Holloman Air Installation Compatible Use Zone as County policy and attach the report as a technical appendix to the Otero County Comprehensive Plan.
- Action 3. Implement the Holloman Air Installation Compatible Use Zone through cooperation between adjacent landowners and the base.

**POLICY 4. The County Commission reviews, updates, and enforces County regulations, ordinances, codes, databases, and plans.**

- Action 1. Designate an enforcement officer responsible to the Sheriff's Office as the person responsible for enforcement of County ordinances.
- Action 2. Use the County assessor records and County mapping resources to identify subdivision violations.
- Action 3. Hire a County code enforcement officer to monitor activity and enforce adopted ordinances.
- Action 4. Review and update ordinances and codes every three years.
- Action 5. The County Commission may consider methods to regulate the use, density, and massing of development.
- Action 6. Recognize current and historical land uses through mapping. Traditional zoning typically establishes zones that regulate use, setbacks, and height and other physical parameters.
- Action 7. Adopt regulations that codify current and historical land uses based on existing assessor classifications and require a special use permit or other process to build a certain number of units or change the use.
- Action 8. Investigate the feasibility of adopting performance zoning or growth guidance systems that would evaluate prospective developments based on their project impact on the local area.
- Action 9. Enact joint powers agreement to establish joint zoning ordinance, joint planning and zoning authority in extraterritorial areas surrounding municipalities.
- Action 10. Update the County's subdivision ordinance.
- Action 11. Limit the use of Eminent Domain by government entities to the unincorporated parts of the county when a government agency has exhausted every other alternative to overcome a critical obstacle to an important project.

Action 12. Before using Eminent Domain, government agencies will conduct open, public discussions with residents, property owners, and the County Commission.

**GOAL 2. The county's built environment is well-cared for and complements the natural beauty.**

**POLICY 1.** Encourage rehabilitation or redevelopment of vacant and abandoned property to provide residents with more housing options, businesses with more building options, and improve the overall health and look of the community.

Action 1. Convene a taskforce with government entities and legal/title professionals to:

- Assess the local and state laws regarding abandoned property, tax foreclosure statutes, and the feasibility of developing a land bank for abandoned property so it can be returned to productive use.
- Enact an Abandoned Building Ordinance that specifies the process for fee collection and lien before sale of property.
- Develop an abandoned property list and register all buildings in unincorporated areas.
- Establish fees/fines until properties are in compliance.

Action 2. Initiate a countywide cleanup. Consider hiring residents to clean up blight along public rights-of-way.

Action 3. Put the enactment of land use controls in unincorporated portions of the county on the ballot so county residents can vote for or against.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

Many of the private land use goals and strategies are within the authority of the Otero County Commission to accomplish. Others require negotiation with federal and state agencies. Table 6- identifies the necessary steps needed to implement the private land use goals, policies, and actions. The Implementation Chapter of this plan provides more details on funding sources, resources, and the implementation process.

**TABLE 6-4. IMPLEMENTATION OF PRIVATE LAND USE GOALS**

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
<b>Goal 1. Otero County allows orderly and appropriate growth in the county while protecting individual property rights and upholding County policy.</b>		
Policy 1. Consider the interests and rights of Otero County residents in all decisions regarding the use of federal- and state-owned lands.		
Enforce laws within jurisdiction of the County Commission.	Otero County	N/A
Assure the right to cultivate land and maintain livestock in accordance with	Otero County; USFS; BLM; NRCS; South	N/A

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
the Right to Farm Act as provided in NMSA 1978, Chapter 47, Article 9.	Central Mountain RC&D; OSWCD; Range Improvement Task Force (RITF)	
Solicit property owners' opinions of proposed action.	Otero County; property owners	N/A
Negotiate to reach settlement of differences.	Otero County; RITF; property owners	N/A
Use due process in courts to settle differences.	Otero County	N/A
<i>Policy 2. Develop an educated, informed, and involved citizenry in community planning and decision-making.</i>		
Use all means to communicate to residents and inform them of local, state, and federal actions and planning processes, including newspapers, radio and television programs, and internet.	Otero County; community organizations; municipalities/colonias	N/A
Motivate citizens to get involved in planning.	Otero County; community organizations; municipalities/colonias	N/A
Use a Comprehensive Plan committee and a professional if needed to review and update the County's Comprehensive Plan every five years.	Otero County	CDBG
<i>Policy 3. Ensure Holloman Air Force Base Mission is not jeopardized by incompatible growth.</i>		
Work with Holloman AFB to promote further consideration of the Air Force Air Installation Compatible Use Zone (AICUZ) land use recommendations.	Otero County; HAFB	N/A
Adopt the Holloman Air Installation Compatible Use Zone as County policy and attach the report as a technical appendix to the Otero County Comprehensive Plan.	Otero County	N/A
Implement the Holloman Air Installation Compatible Use Zone through cooperation between adjacent landowners and the base.	Otero County	N/A
<i>Policy 4. The County Commission reviews, updates, and enforces County regulations, ordinances, codes, databases, and plans.</i>		
Designate an enforcement officer responsible to the Sheriff's Office as the person responsible for enforcement of County ordinances.	Otero County	N/A

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
Use the County assessor records and County mapping resources to identify subdivision violations.	Otero County	General Fund
Hire a County code enforcement officer to monitor activity and enforce adopted ordinances.	Otero County	General Fund
Review and update ordinances and codes every three years.	Otero County	N/A
The County Commission may consider methods to regulate the use, density, and massing of development.	Otero County	N/A
Recognize current and historical land uses through mapping. Traditional zoning typically establishes zones that regulate use, setbacks, and height and other physical parameters.	Otero County	CDBG
Adopt regulations that codify current and historical land uses based on existing assessor classifications and require a special use permit or other process to build a certain number of units or change the use.	Otero County	CDBG
Investigate the feasibility of adopting performance zoning or growth guidance systems that would evaluate prospective developments based on their project impact on the local area.	Otero County	N/A
Enact joint powers agreement to establish joint zoning ordinance, joint planning and zoning authority in extraterritorial areas surrounding municipalities.	Otero County; municipalities/colonias	N/A
Update the County's subdivision ordinance.	Otero County	CDBG
Limit the use of Eminent Domain by government entities to the unincorporated parts of the county when a government agency has exhausted every other alternative to overcome a critical obstacle to an important project.	Otero County	N/A
Before using Eminent Domain, government agencies will conduct open, public discussions with residents, property owners, and the County Commission.	Otero County; residents	N/A

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
<b>Goal 2. The county's built environment is well-cared for and complements the natural beauty.</b>		
Policy 1. Encourage rehabilitation or redevelopment of vacant and abandoned property to provide residents with more housing options, businesses with more building options, and improve the overall health and look of the community.		
<p>Convene a taskforce with government entities and legal/title professionals to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Assess the local and state laws regarding abandoned property, tax foreclosure statutes, and the feasibility of developing a land bank for abandoned property so it can be returned to productive use.</li> <li>– Enact an Abandoned Building Ordinance that specifies that specifies process for fee collection and lien before sale of property.</li> <li>– Develop an abandoned property list and register all buildings in unincorporated areas.</li> <li>– Establish fees/fines until properties are in compliance.</li> </ul>	Otero County, municipalities/colonias; lawyers; State	N/A
Initiate a countywide cleanup. Consider hiring residents to clean up blight along public rights-of-way.	Otero County; municipalities/colonias; lawyers; NMDOT	Clean and Beautiful Grant
Put the enactment of land use controls in unincorporated portions of the county on the ballot so county residents can vote for or against.	Otero County	N/A



# Housing

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Housing is perhaps the most fundamental land use of a community and has an important impact on the physical character of the community. Even more importantly, it has the most direct effect on the personal lives of residents, providing the place for family life and for socializing with friends.

The Housing Element of the Comprehensive Plan addresses several aspects of the County's housing supply: the number, type, and age of existing housing units; the occupancy rate; and the cost of housing for both owners and renters. It also identifies the number of new housing units that will be required in the future to meet the needs of population growth.

## COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

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- Provide more affordable housing.
- Increase housing options for young families, seniors, and single adults, including apartments, townhomes, and condos.
- Rehabilitate existing housing stock.

*"Housing prices are very disproportionate to wages."*

*Community Survey Response*

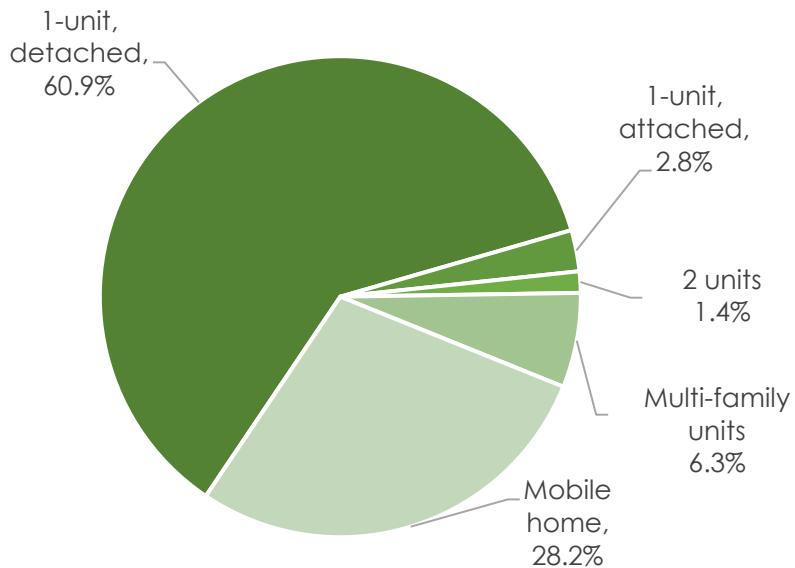
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## EXISTING CONDITIONS

The 2010 US Census indicates that Otero County has a total housing inventory of 30,967 housing units. ACS estimates that Otero County has 31,673 total housing units in 2018.

### HOUSING TYPES

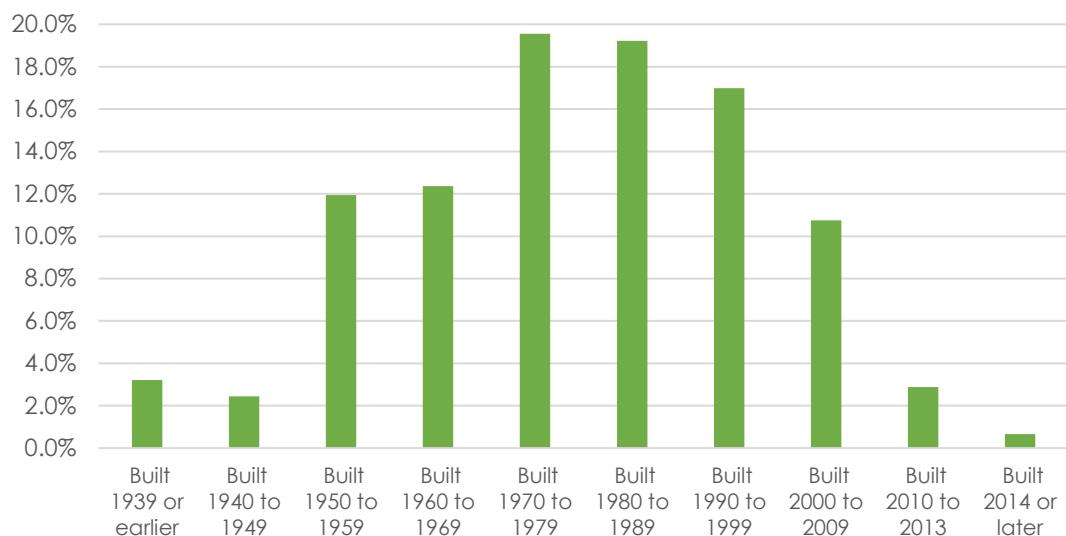
In 2000, nearly 62 percent of 19,093 units of the total housing in the county were single-family detached dwellings. Mobile homes accounted for 27.6 percent and multi-family units for 6.7 percent of the housing stock. In 2018, 61 percent of the county's housing units are single-family detached homes as shown in Figure 7-1. Compared to the state, Otero County has notably more mobile homes (17 percent compared to 28 percent, respectively) and fewer multi-family units.

**FIGURE 7-1. HOUSING BY TYPE, 2018**

Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, 2014-2018

## AGE OF HOUSING STOCK

The housing stock in Otero County is a mix of ages, however the vast majority was constructed between 1950 and 2009, with just under 40 percent constructed between 1970 and 1989 as shown in Figure 7-2. About 17 percent was constructed between 1990 and 1999. Less than 5 percent of new housing construction has occurred since 2010.

**FIGURE 7-2. AGE OF HOUSING STOCK**

## OCCUPANCY AND VACANCY RATES

Occupied housing units in Otero County accounted for 74 percent or 23,391 of the total housing units in 2018 with vacant housing units making up the remaining 26 percent or 8,282 units as shown in Table 7-1. Otero County's overall vacancy rate is 9 percent higher than that of the state. Homeowner and rental vacancy rates for year-round housing are higher in Otero County than in the state. Rental vacancy rates are more than double the homeowner vacancy rates.

**TABLE 7-1. VACANCY AND OCCUPANCY RATES, 2018**

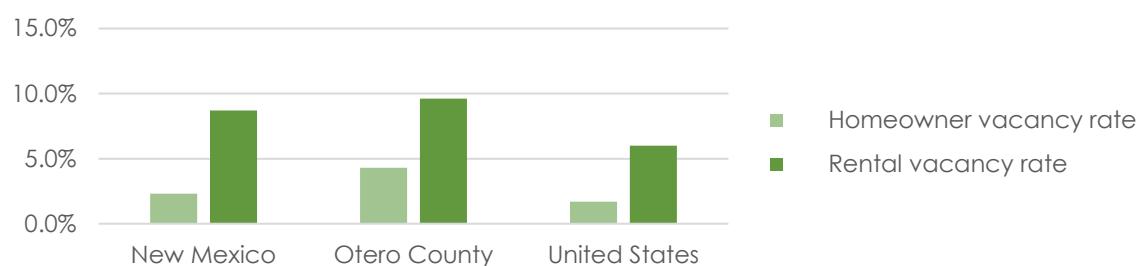
	New Mexico		Otero County	
	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent
<b>Total housing units</b>	932,818		31,673	
Occupied housing units	775,651	83.15%	23,391	73.85%
Vacant housing units	157,167	16.85%	8,282	26.15%
Homeowner vacancy rate		2.3%		4.3%
Rental vacancy rate		8.7%		9.6%

*Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, 2014-2018*

In 2000, Otero County had a homeowner vacancy rate of 3.5 percent. Now 18 years later, it is 4.3 percent. This compares to rate of 2.3 percent for the state, which has essentially stayed the same since 2000. Rental vacancy rates have decreased since 2000. Otero County's rental vacancy was 16.4 percent 18 years ago and it is now 9.6 percent. The state's rental vacancy rate has also decreased since 2000, when it was 11.6 percent and it now is 8.7 percent.

Vacancy rates in New Mexico and Otero County have and continue to be higher than the national averages as shown in Figure 7-3. Typically, enough housing should be vacant so that families moving into the market have adequate housing choice at a reasonable price. Community members have shared that too many homes are vacant or rundown so while having slightly higher than average vacancy rates may be desirable to accommodate the fluctuating housing needs of Holloman Air Force Base, it is not seen as desirable by neither the community nor the Base. Excessive vacancies can be detrimental to a community's well-being, particularly if vacancies contribute to housing deterioration and decreased property value.

**FIGURE 7-3. VACANCY RATES BY TENURE, 2018**



*Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, 2014-2018*

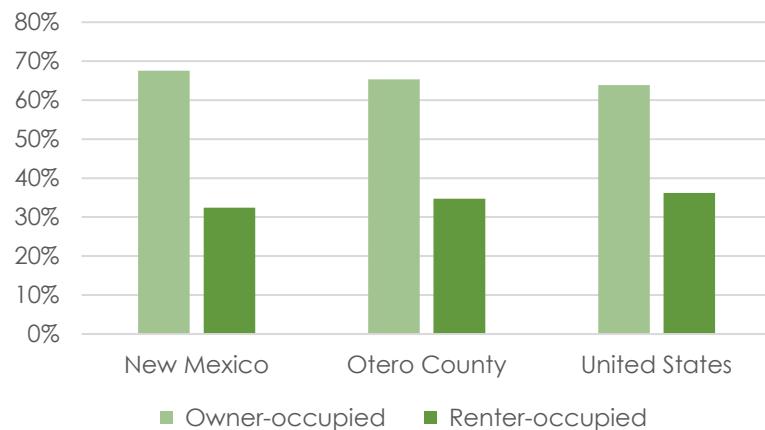
Looking more closely at the vacancies in the communities within Otero County, Table 7-2 shows which are vacant for what purposes. Of the county's 8,382 vacancies 2,349 of them are in Alamogordo and 4,408 are in unincorporated county areas. Cloudcroft has 805 vacancies, but the vast majority are for seasonal use.

**TABLE 7-2. VACANCIES BY TYPE**

Location	Total	For Rent	Rented, not occupied	For sale	Sold, not occupied	For Seasonal, Occasional Use	For Migrant workers	Other
Otero County	8,282	885	207	690	215	3,698	4	2,583
Alamogordo	2,349	686	91	302	73	320	0	877
Tularosa	318	0	46	40	40	20	0	172
Cloudcroft	805	6	0	67	9	668	0	55
Holloman Air Force Base	85	37	32	0	0	0	0	16
Chaparral	317	0	0	0	0	144	0	173
Unincorporated County	4,408	156	38	281	93	2,546	4	1,290
New Mexico	157,167	24,306	4,727	12,441	4,090	52,714	673	58,216

Of the 23,391 units of occupied housing in the county, 65.3 percent are owner-occupied, and the remaining 34.7 percent are renter-occupied. The statewide rate of owner-occupation is somewhat higher, with 67.6 percent of housing owner-occupied and 32.4 percent renter-occupied.

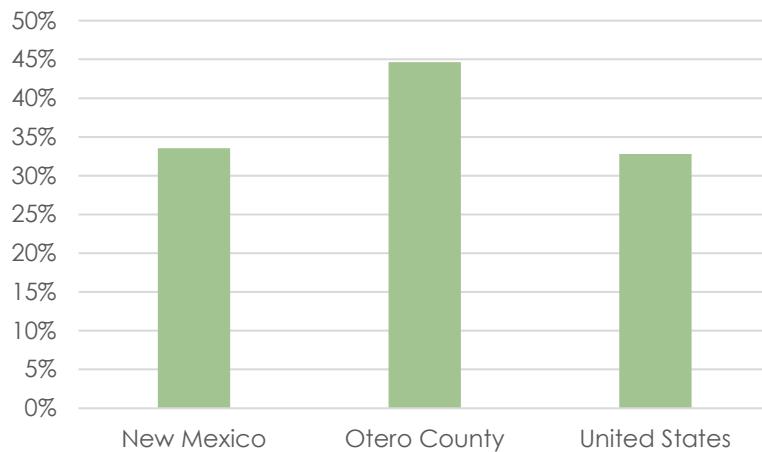
**FIGURE 7-4. OCCUPANCY RATES BY TENURE, 2018**



Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, 2014-2018

The percentage of housing that is for seasonal use in Otero County is notably higher than the state and nation, due to seasonal homes in the Cloudcroft area.

**FIGURE 7-5. HOUSING FOR SEASONAL, RECREATIONAL, OR OCCASIONAL USE**



Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, 2014-2018

## HOUSEHOLD SIZE

Looking more closely at Otero County's average household size for owners compared to renters, we see that the county is estimated to have an average household size of 2.7 persons in owner-occupied units in 2018 and 2.59 persons in renter-occupied units. These households' averages are larger than the averages in 2010, but almost the same as the statewide estimates in 2018. In 2010, the average household size statewide was slightly lower at 2.67 persons in owner-occupied and renter-occupied units at 2.46 persons.

**TABLE 7-3. AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE BY TENURE**

Location	2010		2018	
	Owner-occupied Unit	Renter-occupied Unit	Owner-occupied Unit	Renter-occupied Unit
Otero County	2.58	2.51	2.7	2.59
Alamogordo	2.5	2.17	2.51	2.24
Tularosa	2.22	2.16	2.67	2.06
Cloudcroft	2.1	2.66	2.4	2.03
Holloman Air Force Base	n/a	3.05	1.89	3.34
New Mexico	2.67	2.46	2.69	2.54

Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates 2014-2018

## MORTAGE

Based on the 2010 US Census, the median monthly mortgage payment in Otero County was \$913, up from \$758 in 2000. The state's median monthly mortgage payment was considerably higher at \$1,194, up from \$929 in 2000. In 2018, median monthly payments in the county were \$955 compared to \$1,263 for the state.

**TABLE 7-4. MEDIAN MONTHLY MORTGAGE PAYMENTS**

Location	2010	2018
Otero County	\$913	\$955
Alamogordo	\$898	\$961
Tularosa	\$763	\$822
Cloudcroft	\$1,089	\$975
New Mexico	\$1,194	\$1,263

*Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates 2014-2018*

## HOUSING COSTS

Housing in general increased in price between 1990 and 2000, but housing costs in Otero County did not increase as fast as the state's. According to the 1990 Census, the median value of an owner-occupied house in Otero County was \$58,000. In 2000, the median value of an owner-occupied house was \$78,800, which is an increase of 35.9 percent. By 2018, the median value of owner-occupied house was 108,300, an increase of 37 percent. The 2000 median value of a house in Otero County was \$29,300 less than the state and in 2018 it was \$58,500.

The median value of homes in Otero County was \$108,300 in 2018. The median rent for a home was \$814 per month. Compared to the state, Otero County's median value of homes is notably lower, yet the median rent is roughly the same. The low cost of manufactured homes compared to conventional construction makes this housing type an attractive option for families that cannot afford homes priced at \$100,000 or more.

**TABLE 7-5. HOUSING COSTS, 2018**

Location	Owner-Occupied House (Median Value of Home)	Renter-Occupied House (Median Rent)
Otero	\$108,300	\$814
New Mexico	\$166,800	\$828

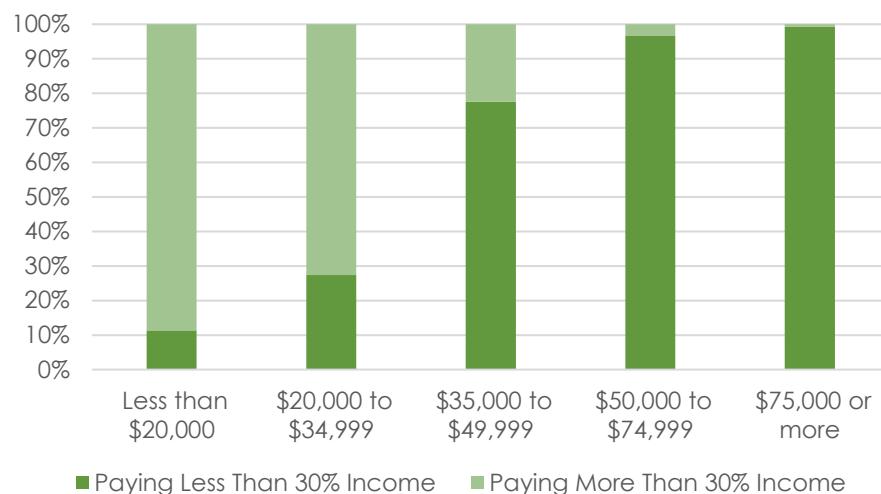
*Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates 2014-2018, DP-3*

## BURDENED HOUSEHOLDS

Households paying more than 30 percent of their income for gross rent are generally considered to have excessive housing costs. By this measure, 37.5 percent of renters in Otero County were incurring excessive housing costs in 2018 which is higher than 1990 when the figure was 27.2 percent. The

percentage of renters earning \$20,000 or less annually who are cost-burdened is much higher than the average at 90 percent (see Figure 7-6). More than 70 percent of renters earning \$20,000 to \$34,999 annually are paying more than 30 percent of their income on housing. Higher income earners are less burdened by their housing costs.

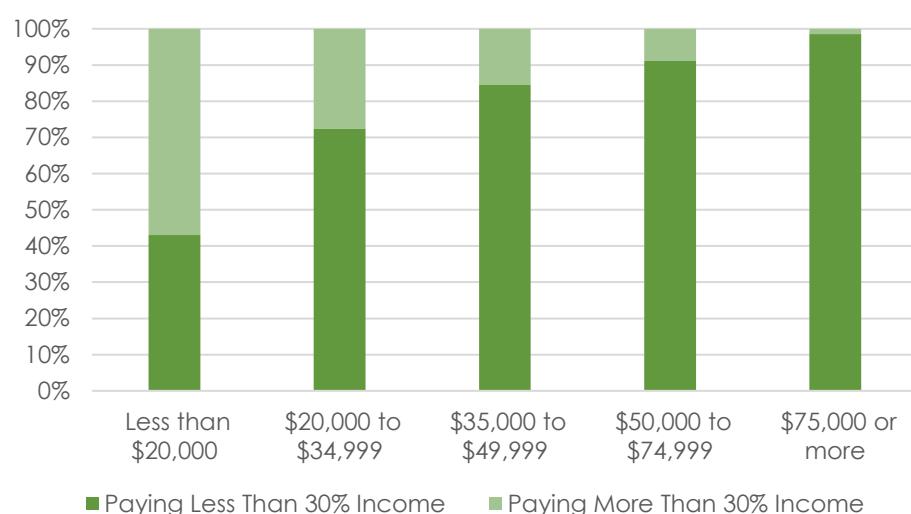
**FIGURE 7-6. COST-BURDENED RENTERS**



Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates 2014-2018

Among homeowners, the percentage with excessive housing costs has increased less than renters since 1990 from 18.2 percent to 22.1 percent. However, more than 55 percent of homeowners earning \$20,000 or less annually are paying more than 30 percent of their income on housing. Almost 30 percent of homeowners earning \$20,000 to \$34,999 annually are cost burdened.

**FIGURE 7-7. COST-BURDENED HOMEOWNERS**



Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates 2014-2018

## HOUSING ASSISTANCE

### NEW MEXICO MORTGAGE FINANCE AUTHORITY

The NM Mortgage Finance Authority (MFA) offers home ownership programs, provides grants and or loans to families for purchasing a home. These programs have established income limits to ensure eligibility.

#### ***Eastern Regional Housing Authority***

The MFA has three regional housing authorities mandated to provide affordable housing to rural parts of New Mexico. The Eastern Regional Housing Authority (EHRA) serves Otero County long with 11 other counties. It is the role of the authority to coordinate affordable housing financing and development by partnering with local and state entities, nonprofits, and private sector investors and developers. EHRA operates the Section 8, Housing Choice, and Low Rent programs, which provide rental assistance and subsidized rental housing for households that earn 80 percent or less of the area median income (AMI).

#### ***HOME Rehabilitation Program***

The MFA's HOME Rehabilitation Program offers financial assistance to low-income homeowners who cannot afford to repair their homes. Eligible applicants can use the funding on improvements that make the property code compliant, ADA accessible, more energy efficient, and safe from lead paint. Repair or replacement of "non-luxury" housing systems, site improvements and utility connections are also funded. MFA administers the program through local partners (local government or tribal entities or nonprofits). It is the partners' responsibility to market the program locally and secure the loans for eligible residents. White Sands Habitat for Humanity, described in the following pages, administers the program in Otero County.

#### ***NM Energy \$mart Program***

Homeowners and renters can receive funding from the Energy \$mart Program to make up to \$6000 of upgrades to their homes' insulation, windows, and heating systems. These funds are administered by local government entities or nonprofits.

#### ***Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation and Accessibility Improvements Program***

The Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation and Accessibility Improvements Program is a program of the Community Block Development Grant (CBDG) to provide "safe, decent, and sanitary housing for low income individuals and families." Eligible homeowners can receive up to \$65,000 to repair their homes. The requirements of this program are:

- Homeowners' annual household income cannot exceed sixty percent of the area median income.
- Home repairs must be code compliant.

Eighty percent of this program's funding is dedicated for homeowners living in Colonias. According to MFA, 17 of the 118 Colonias statewide are in Otero County, including Bent, Boles Acres, Chaparral,

Cloudcroft, Dog Canyon, Dungan, High Rolls, La Luz, Mayhill, Mescalero, Orogrande, Piñon, Sacramento, Timberon, Tularosa, Twin Forks, and Weed.

## USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Rural Development is a division of US Department of Agriculture that focusing on improving the quality of life and economy in rural areas. It offers loans and grants as part of the Section 504 Home Repair program and Section 502 Direct Loan program for repair of owner-occupied single-family residences. Homeowners can apply for loans for up to \$20,000 if they have a household income of 50 percent AMI or less (very low-income) and cannot obtain financing through other means through Section 504. Homeowners of at least 62 years of age can apply for a grant for up to \$7,500, in addition to the loan. Section 502 is also available to low-income homeowners. Low income is between 50 and 80 percent of AMI. This funding can be used to repair, improve, modernize, and remove health and safety hazards from homes. Homeowners apply directly to the Rural Development State Director in Albuquerque. Table 7-7 identifies the eligibility for each program offered in Otero County.

**TABLE 7-6. USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM INCOME LIMITS**

Program	1 Person	2 Person	3 Person	4 Person	5 Person	6 Person	7 Person	8 Person
Grant Income	\$12,150	\$13,900	\$15,650	\$17,350	\$18,750	\$20,150	\$21,500	\$22,900
Very Low-Income	\$28,900	\$28,900	\$28,900	\$28,900	\$38,150	\$38,150	\$38,150	\$38,150
Low-Income	\$46,250	\$46,250	\$46,250	\$46,250	\$61,050	\$61,050	\$61,050	\$61,050
Moderate Income	\$86,850	\$86,850	\$86,850	\$86,850	\$114,650	\$114,650	\$114,650	\$114,650
38 Year Term	\$34,700	\$34,700	\$34,700	\$34,700	\$45,800	\$45,800	\$45,800	\$45,800

Source: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/single-family-housing-repair-loans-grants/nm>

## HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

White Sands Habitat for Humanity (HFH) works in partnership with people in need to build and renovate decent, affordable housing. HFH has built 45 homes since 2000 and makes improvements to existing homes, such as installing ramps for seniors and disabled residents, using HOME Rehabilitation funding.

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING

### PUBLIC HOUSING

The Public Housing Authority of the City of Alamogordo offers low-income rental housing and public housing management in two locations:

- Alta Vista, which has 70 homes and a learning center for community programs.
- Plaza Hacienda, which has 150 homes ranging from studios to 4 bedrooms that also house seniors and disabled population.

The Housing Authority no longer offers Section 8 rental assistance and abides by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) income qualifications. In Alamogordo, HUD's rental assistance qualifications range from \$12,490 to \$61,050 of up to eight person households to be considered affordable to households earning less than 30 percent, 50 percent, or 80 percent of the area median income (AMI) as shown in Table 7-7.

**TABLE 7-7. ALAMOGORDO HUD RENTAL ASSISTANCE INCOME QUALIFICATIONS**

AMI Band	1 Person	2 Person	3 Person	4 Person	5 Person	6 Person	7 Person	8 Person
30%	\$12,490	\$16,910	\$21,330	\$25,750	\$30,170	\$33,550	\$35,850	\$38,150
50%	\$20,250	\$23,150	\$26,050	\$28,900	\$31,250	\$33,550	\$35,850	\$38,150
80%	\$32,400	\$37,000	\$41,650	\$46,250	\$49,950	\$53,650	\$57,350	\$61,050

Source: <https://affordablehousingonline.com>

In addition to the Housing Authority's homes, there are 40 other affordable units that use HUD's HOME Investments Partnerships Program at First Street and Scenic Boulevard in Alamogordo. These units accept Section 8 vouchers. HUD's mortgage finance program also helps finance replacement manufactured homes.

## LOW-INCOME HOUSING

Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) are tax credits developers receive in exchange for building affordable housing. LIHTC requires some of the units to be affordable to households earning less than 50 percent or 60 percent of the area median income (AMI). In Alamogordo, the income limits that qualify for units built with LIHTCs for up to eight person households range from \$20,250 to \$45,780, as shown in Table 7-8.

**TABLE 7-8. LOW- AND VERY-LOW INCOME LIMITS**

AMI Band	1 Person	2 Person	3 Person	4 Person	5 Person	6 Person	7 Person	8 Person
Very Low-Income (50%)	\$20,250	\$23,150	\$26,050	\$28,900	\$31,250	\$33,550	\$35,850	\$38,150
Low-Income (60%)	\$24,300	\$27,780	\$31,260	\$34,680	\$37,500	\$40,260	\$43,020	\$45,780

Source: <https://affordablehousingonline.com>

There are three LIHTC housing complexes in Alamogordo that serve very low-income residents and offer Section 8 vouchers:

- Azotea Senior Apartments has 60 1- and 2-bedroom units specifically for seniors.
- Cottonwood Commons has 60 "green" apartments built with recycled materials and rain gardens in 2005.
- Otero Village has 40 1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom apartments.

## TULAROSA HOUSING

The Village of Tularosa has a 22-unit senior housing complex for households earning 50 percent of the AMI, which in Tularosa amounts to \$20,250 to \$23,250 for a 1-person or 2-person household, respectively. The Villa de Tularosa Senior Housing complex was funded by HUD's Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly and requires at least one member to be 62 years or older.

## CHAPARRAL HOUSING

Tierra del Sol Housing Corporation has a self-help program that builds homes for low-income people in Chaparral. The corporation has a grant to build 40 homes over 2 years in Otero County and Chaparral. So far, homes have been built on Hermosa Street in Chaparral. They usually build a block of 6 homes at a time since it is more difficult and costly to build on scattered lots. The 1-acre lots in Chaparral are attractive for their housing development. They work with the water company to get the utilities set up.

Homeowners pay \$580 for the home and land. Most homes loans are for \$90K, but homes are appraised at \$105 - \$140K so if homeowners decide to sell, they can make \$40K on their sweat equity. Homeowners sign an agreement with Tierra del Sol with a covenant that requires properties to be kept up and trash free, and the covenant passes to the next homeowners. USDA also regulates since the mortgage is through them. The hardest part is credit qualification since the credit screening is very strict.

# HOUSING ISSUES

## REHABILITATION OF EXISTING HOUSING

There is a need to renovate and rehabilitate the existing housing stock to provide more places to live while conserving open land and landfill space and create jobs. Of 8,282 vacant houses in the County that are not being used seasonally, recreationally or occasionally in 2018, approximately 2,349 were located in Alamogordo, 318 were in Tularosa, 805 were in Cloudcroft, and 4,408 were found in the unincorporated part of the County.

There are specific tax advantages for private rehabilitation of historic properties. These tax incentives could be publicized to encourage the rehabilitation and occupancy of historic structures.

*"[There are] far too many condemned houses and buildings that are an eye sore, dangerous, and need removed."*

*Community Survey Response*

## MOBILE HOMES AND MANUFACTURED HOMES

The high percentage of mobile homes in the County is of concern, particularly since many mobile homes do not meet current building codes and many are not kept up or are abandoned. The

preference is to house families in high quality housing that would include conventional construction or manufactured housing that meets current HUD's building standards. Mobile homes provide an affordable alternative to conventional construction, and the need for affordable housing that is of acceptable quality is an issue.

## NEW CONSTRUCTION

Holloman AFB is growing, and its training students have filled the dorms, so it needs more housing. In addition, the base has aging homes. Approximately 135 homes need to be bulldozed and approximately 700-800 units of multi-unit housing to serve Sergeants and Senior Airman (in E4, E5, and E6 classes). The base wants Alamogordo to build it, but investors need commitment of long-term tenure, which the military cannot offer.

County and state could provide economic incentives to private home builders who construct homes within the reach of current infrastructure.

*"There's no middle of the market for housing."*

*Community Survey Response*

## DESIRED HOUSING IMPROVEMENTS

There is a concern that because Chaparral is close to El Paso, the USDA may determine Chaparral is no longer eligible for rural designation funding. Otero County could help and approach USDA to keep the rural designation. This approach helped in Anthony. There is a need to get the word out more to get families aware of the low-income home program.

The following housing objectives are desired:

- The vacancy rate for year-round housing in the county will drop to a level approaching the national average.
- Adequate vacant housing will be available for new families moving into the county.
- Housing in the county will be maintained in good condition. Over time, deteriorated or inadequate housing will be renovated or replaced.
- Affordable homes will be available to moderate-, low-, and very-low income families in the county, and local agencies and organizations will make homeownership assistance available to all eligible families within these categories.
- New housing will be located to take advantage of existing infrastructure.

*"There is plenty of housing. However, so much housing is not affordable. And what is affordable may not be quality."*

*Community Survey Response*

# GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

## **GOAL 1. The county's existing housing stock is utilized through rehabilitation.**

POLICY 1. *Enact a housing rehabilitation as a priority countywide.*

- Action 1. Create a housing rehabilitation task force to development program, assistance, and outreach efforts.
- Action 2. Publicize tax advantages available for rehabilitating historic homes.
- Action 3. Educate residents on home maintenance and training on minor repairs and encourage residents to maintain homes to building code standards.
- Action 4. Inventory the condition of vacant housing in the unincorporated part of the county to assess for historical value and code violations.
- Action 5. Match property owners with available grants and financing options to rehabilitate properties and put them back into productive use.

## **GOAL 2. Affordable housing is available to residents of Otero County.**

POLICY 1. *Promote the development of new housing that is affordable to low-, very low-, and moderate-income households in Otero County.*

- Action 1. Work with Habitat for Humanity, Tierra del Sol, and other housing developers to provide affordable homes to qualified families in Otero County.
- Action 2. Work with USDA to maintain eligibility for USDA Rural Development programs in Otero County's rural communities near El Paso and Alamogordo.

## **GOAL 3. New housing is sited and constructed in areas already served by adequate infrastructure.**

POLICY 1. *Promote infill housing development to maximize use of existing infrastructure before constructing new infrastructure or new subdivisions outside service areas.*

- Action 1. Incentivize residential subdivision and multi-family development in infill areas most suitable for housing, such as providing expedited permitting processes or reduced fees.

Action 2. Support efforts to develop higher residential densities in Chaparral where served by adequate infrastructure.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

A variety of resources are available in Otero County for meeting the housing needs of very low-, low-, and moderate-income families. The City of Alamogordo Housing Authority and White Sands HFH are two agencies that provide housing and housing-related services in the county, in addition to other state and federal agencies that offer programs and financing for quality, affordable housing.

Table 7-9 lists ongoing implementation actions, responsibilities, and potential funding sources to meet the County's housing goals, policies, and actions. The Implementation Chapter of this plan provides more details on funding sources, resources, and the implementation process.

**TABLE 7-9. IMPLEMENTATION OF HOUSING GOALS**

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
<b>Goal 1. The county's existing housing stock is utilized through rehabilitation.</b>		
<i>Policy 1. Enact a housing rehabilitation as a priority countywide.</i>		
Create a housing rehabilitation task force to development program, assistance, and outreach efforts.	Otero County	MFA
Publicize tax advantages available for rehabilitating historic homes.	Otero County	SHPO
Educate residents on home maintenance and training on minor repairs and encourage residents to maintain homes to building code standards.	Otero County; Tierra del Sol; Habitat for Humanity and other non-profits	MFA
Inventory the condition of vacant housing in the unincorporated part of the county to assess for historical value and code violations.	Otero County	MFA
Match property owners with available grants and financing options to rehabilitate properties and put them back into productive use.	Otero County; MFA	HOME; USDA; Energy Smart Program; Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation and Accessibility Improvements Program
<b>Goal 2. Affordable housing is available to residents of Otero County.</b>		
<i>Policy 1. Promote the development of new housing that is affordable to low-, very low-, and moderate-income households in Otero County.</i>		
Work with Habitat for Humanity, Tierra del Sol, and other housing developers to provide affordable homes to qualified families in Otero County.	Otero County; HFH; Tierra del Sol; housing developers	Low-Income Housing Tax Credits
Work with USDA to maintain eligibility for USDA Rural Development programs in Otero County's rural communities near El Paso and Alamogordo.	Otero County; USDA; Chaparral; other designated colonias	N/A

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
<b>Goal 3. New housing is sited and constructed in areas already served by adequate infrastructure.</b>		
Policy 1. Promote infill housing development to maximize use of existing infrastructure before constructing new infrastructure or new subdivisions outside service areas.		
Incentivize residential subdivision and multi-family development in infill areas most suitable for housing, such as providing expedited permitting processes or reduced fees.	Otero County	General Fund
Support efforts to develop higher residential densities in Chaparral where served by adequate infrastructure.	Otero County; Chaparral	N/A



# Economic Development

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The local economy helps determine the rate of growth in a community, the prosperity of its residents, and the amount of resources available to the County government to carry out physical and other improvements.

The Economic Development Element of the Comprehensive Plan addresses several aspects of the county's economy: income levels of residents, jobs and employment, the inventory of existing businesses, and recreation and tourism opportunities. This analysis helps identify obstacles hindering business activity in the community. This Element also recommends workforce and business initiatives to meet the everyday needs of residents and to create a more attractive destination for visitors.

## COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

- Provide workforce development and training in new industries, trades, health care, and work ethic as early as middle school and high school so kids are aware of career opportunities and the county has enough qualified, skilled, and reliable employees.
- Be business friendly especially to small businesses, companies that are not service-, military-, or government-related, or dependent on water, and companies that expand the diversity of the jobs available in the county.
- Attract businesses with higher, living wage jobs, instead of minimum wage jobs that need skilled and unskilled labor.
- Improve retail, restaurant, and entertainment choices to attract and keep residents. Diversity and upkeep are lacking.
- Attract and support businesses to community centers. For example, Cloudcroft's Burro Street and Alamogordo's White Sands Boulevard have many vacancies to be filled.
- Focus on building the rural economy and needed infrastructure improvements.
- Pursue clean industry opportunities that make use of the county's transportation hub and access to three highways.

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*"The challenge seems to be investing in the locals rather than focusing on the visitors. Both are important."*

*Community Survey Response*

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# EXISTING CONDITIONS

To understand the big picture of Otero County's economy, we look at personal income, labor force, occupations, industries, employers, and tourism.

## PERSONAL INCOME

In 2000, the median household income in Otero County was \$30,861, which was 90.4 percent of the statewide median household income of \$34,133. In 2018, the county's median household income increased to \$42,752, which is 89 percent the state's median household income of \$48,059.

In 2018, 6,670 households or 29 percent of the total population of Otero County earned less than \$24,999 annually, 6,741 households or 29 percent earned \$25,000 to \$49,999, 6,910 households or 30 percent earning \$50,000 to \$99,999, and 3,070 or 13 percent earning \$100,000 or more as shown in Table 8-1.

**TABLE 8-1. INCOME, 2018**

Location	\$24,999 or less	\$25,000 to \$49,999	\$50,000 to \$99,999	\$100,000 or more	Total Households
Otero County	6,670	6,741	6,910	3,070	23,391
Alamogordo	3,274	3,872	3,894	1,728	12,768
Tularosa	246	497	187	206	1,146
Cloudcroft	66	71	71	51	259
Holloman Air Force Base	155	389	350	98	992
Chaparral	1,157	304	322	82	1,865
Unincorporated County	2,669	2,213	3,484	1,742	6,361
New Mexico	210,786	189,804	221,925	153,136	775,651

*Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates 2014-2018*

Otero County had a slightly higher percentage of people living in poverty than the state as shown in Table 8-2. Each of the municipalities within Otero County had lower poverty rates than the county and state.

In 2016, Otero County had a total person income (TPI) of \$2,268,842 as shown in Table 8-3. This includes net earnings by place of residence; dividends, interest and rent; and age-related transfer payments (payments from government such as retirement, Medicare and Medicaid, hardship-related payments (unemployment benefits, veterans' benefits, etc.), and other transfer payments from business, such as liability payments and corporate gifts to nonprofits. Compared with the state, Otero County received 3 percent less earnings from personal income, 2 percent more personal income from dividends, interest and rent and age-related transfer payments, and 1.5 percent less from hardship-related payments than the state as shown in Figure 8-1.

**TABLE 8-2. PEOPLE LIVING IN POVERTY, 2018**

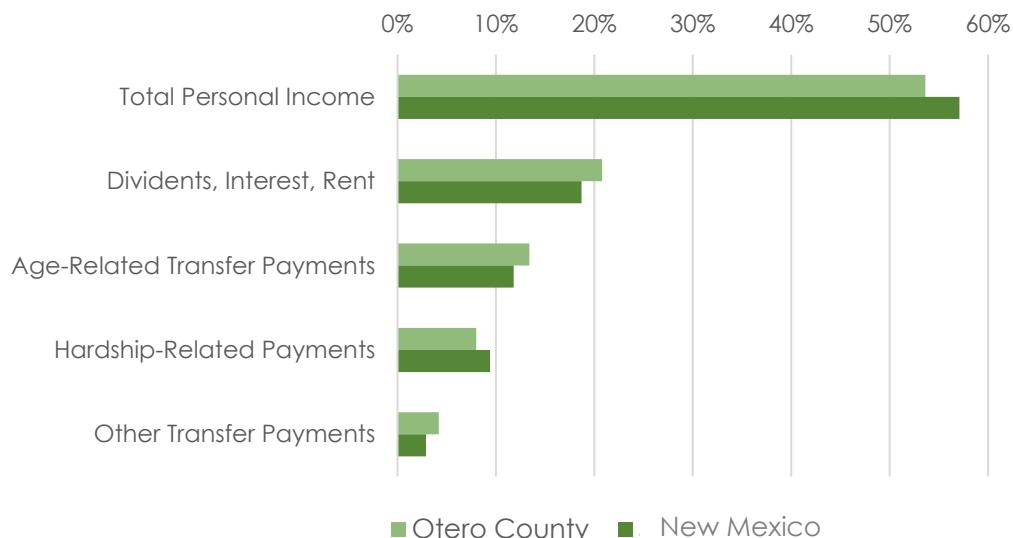
Location	Poverty Rate (All People)
Otero County	21.2%
Alamogordo	17.2%
Tularosa	15.4%
Cloudcroft	15.7%
Holloman Air Force Base	10.9%
New Mexico	20.0%

Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates 2014-2018, DP-3

**TABLE 8-3. SOURCES OF PERSONAL INCOME, 2016**

Types of Income	Otero County	New Mexico
Total Personal Income	\$2,268,842	54%
Total Non-Labor Income	\$1,052,119	46.37%
Dividends, Interest, Rent	\$471,369	20.80%
Age-Related Transfer Payments	\$304,273	13.40%
Hardship-Related Payments	\$181,093	8.00%
Other Transfer Payments	\$95,384	4.20%

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) 2016

**FIGURE 8-1. PERCENTAGE OF PERSONAL INCOME, 2016**

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) 2016

## COUNTY LABOR FORCE AND EMPLOYMENT

It is helpful to assess Otero County's labor force and employment figures to see how they have changed over the last 20 years.

### LABOR FORCE TRENDS

In 2000, 59.8 percent or 27,478 persons of the Otero County population 16 years old and over were in the labor force. Approximately 47.8 percent of the workforce (21,934 persons) was employed in the civilian labor force, 7.8 percent (3,599 persons) were in the Armed Forces, and 4.2 percent (1,945 persons) were unemployed.

In 2018, Otero County's population of people 16 years and older in the labor force was 28,379 as shown in Table 8-4. This was an increase of 901 people since 2000. Of this population, 23,596 were not in the labor force, which could be explained by the number of retirees in the county. The unemployment rate remained the same at 4.2 percent. Half the labor force (25,921) was employed in the civilian labor force, which was an increase of approximately 4,000 people. The percent of people employed in the Armed Forces decreased to 4.7 percent (2,458) and amounted to 1,141 fewer residents employed in the Armed Forces compared to 2000.

### OCCUPATIONAL TRENDS

In 2000, more than 28 percent of employed county residents worked in management, professional, or related occupations; in 2018 this figure stayed the same at 28 percent. County residents working in service occupations rose from 18.8 percent in 2000 to 25 percent in 2018. The percentage of residents that worked in sales and office occupations rose one percent between 2018 (23 percent) and 2000 (22 percent). These three occupational categories had lower percentages compared to the state in 2018. By contrast, a higher percentage of residents in the county than the state worked in natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations in 2000 (16.3 percent) and 2018 (15 percent) compared to the state's 11 percent in 2018. People working in production, transportation, and material moving occupations in the county decreased from 13 percent in 2000 to 9.1 percent in 2018.

### INDUSTRY TRENDS

In 2000 of the employed civilian population in the county, 20.1 percent were employed in educational, health or social services, slightly less than in the state. This percentage has increased to 23.8 percent in 2018 (the highest of all industries) and remains slightly less than the state's 25.3 percent. The next most common industries for Otero's residents are retail and public administration. In 2000, 12.7 percent were employed in retail trade; this increased to 13.5 percent in 2018. The percent working in public administration increased from 12.3 in 2000 to 13.4 in 2018. Residents also held jobs in arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services (10 percent in 2000 and 12 percent in 2018), construction (9 percent in 2000 and 8.2 percent in 2018), and professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services (6.5 percent in 2000 and up to 9.3 percent in 2018). The percentage working in manufacturing has decreased from 7.4 percent in 2000 to just 2 percent in 2018. Compared with the state in 2018, Otero County residents had a higher percentage of jobs in public administration, construction, and retail.

**TABLE 8-4. LABOR FORCE CHARACTERISTICS, 2018**

<b>Labor Force Characteristics</b>	<b>Otero County</b>		<b>New Mexico</b>	
	<b>Number</b>	<b>% Total</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% Total</b>
TOTAL POPULATION	65,745	100.0%	2,092,434	100.0%
EMPLOYMENT STATUS (Population 16 years old and over)	51,975	100.0%	1,655,769	100.0%
In labor force	28,379	54.6%	960,566	58.0%
Civilian labor force	25,921	49.9%	951,105	57.4%
Armed forces	2,458	4.7%	9,461	0.6%
Employed	23,841	45.9%	882,735	53.3%
Unemployed	2,080	4.0%	68,370	4.1%
Not in labor force	23,596	45.4%	695,203	42.0%
OCCUPATION				
Management, professional and related occupations	6,548	27.5%	317,113	35.9%
Service occupations	5,938	24.9%	182,977	20.7%
Sales and office occupations	5,479	23.0%	198,087	22.4%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	3,709	15.6%	96,941	11.0%
Production, transportation, & material moving occupations	2,167	9.1%	87,617	9.9%
INDUSTRY				
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	597	2.5%	36,314	4.1%
Construction	1,947	8.2%	61,448	7.0%
Manufacturing	466	2.0%	35,542	4.0%
Wholesale trade	266	1.1%	17,098	1.9%
Retail trade	3,219	13.5%	101,845	11.5%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	886	3.7%	37,313	4.2%
Information	314	1.3%	13,466	1.5%
Finance, insurance, real estate, & rental and leasing	1,148	4.8%	42,234	4.8%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, & waste management services	2,206	9.3%	102,517	11.6%
Educational, health, and social services	5,684	23.8%	222,973	25.3%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services	2,860	12.0%	101,380	11.5%
Other services (except public administration)	1,053	4.4%	45,051	5.1%
Public administration	3,195	13.4%	65,554	7.4%
CLASS OF WORKER				
Private wage and salary workers	15,335	64.3%	629,833	71.4%
Government workers	6,838	28.7%	193,594	21.9%
Self-employed workers in un-incorporated businesses	1,514	6.4%	57,689	6.5%
Unpaid family workers	154	0.6%	1,619	0.2%

Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates 2014-2018, DP-3

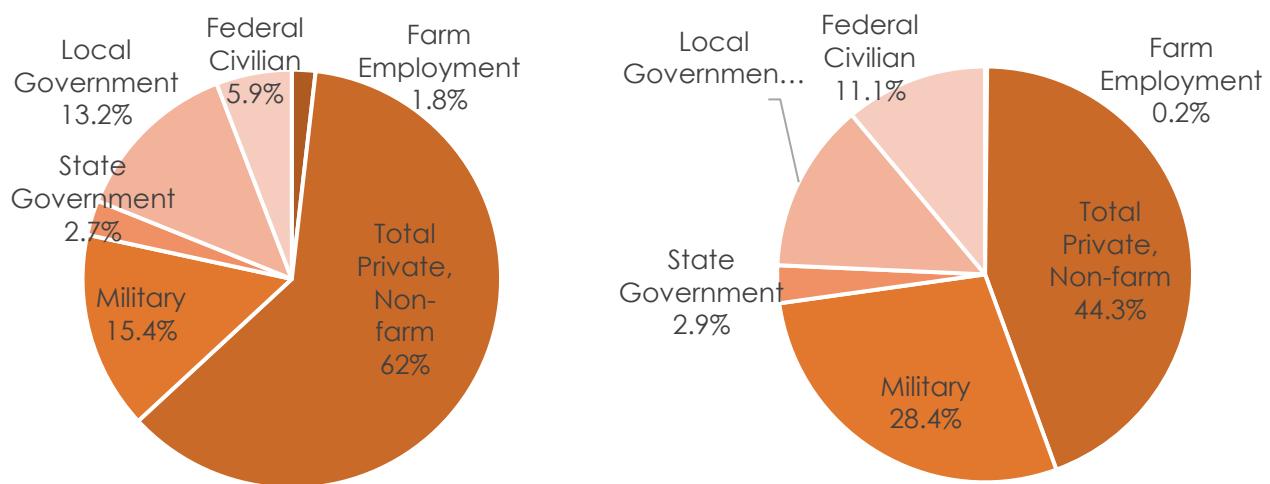
## LABOR CLASS TRENDS

In 2000, private businesses accounted for the largest proportion (60.8 percent) of wages and salaries for Otero County residents; this increased to 64.3 percent in 2018 but remained lower than the state's 71.4 percent. The percentage working in government went down slightly from 29.3 percent in 2000 to 28.7 in 2018, but it is still slightly higher than the state's 21.9 percent. Fewer were self-employed in 2018 (6.4 percent) than in 2000 (9.4 percent). This is comparable to the state's rate of self-employed residents.

## COUNTY INDUSTRIES, JOBS, AND EARNINGS

In 2002, the government sector provided nearly 40 percent of jobs in the county with the military accounting for nearly 16 percent, and state and local government, 17 percent. Federal civilian jobs account for seven percent. In 2018, government jobs made up 37.3 percent of jobs within the county, down by 3 percent from 2000 (see Table 8-5). Of those jobs, military jobs went down slightly to 15.4 percent, local and state government jobs reduced by a percent, as did federal civilian jobs, as shown in Figure 8-2.

**FIGURE 8-2. OTERO COUNTY JOBS BY INDUSTRY (LEFT) AND EARNINGS (RIGHT), 2018**



Source: US Bureau of Economic Analysis, CAEMP25N Total Full-Time and Part-Time Employment

The percentages of earnings of government industries in the county were higher than the number of jobs they provide. In 2000, government jobs accounted for 60 percent of earnings; in 2018 that figure went down to 55.6 percent as shown in Figure 8-2. In 2000, nearly 30 percent of earnings were from the military jobs; in 2018, it was slightly less at 28.4 percent. In 2000, 16.8 percent of earnings were from state and local government jobs combined; in 2018, they made up roughly the same at 16.1 percent of earnings. Private sector, non-farm jobs made up 44.3 percent of earnings in 2018. Of the private sector jobs, those in healthcare and social assistance were responsible for the highest earnings at 12 percent in 2018, which was up from 9 percent in 2000. Earnings from retail jobs decreased from 11 percent in 2000 to 5.1 percent. Earnings from construction jobs increased to 5.2 percent in 2018.

Jobs in administrative and waste services earned 4.6 percent in 2018, whereas jobs in the rest of the private industries earned less than 3.5 percent each. Most notable were earnings from farming, forestry, fishing and hunting, manufacturing, and arts and entertainment, which each had 0.2 percent of the total earnings in 2018. This indicates that despite some diversification, the county was still very dependent on the military, particularly Holloman Air Force Base for its economy.

**TABLE 8-5. OTERO COUNTY JOBS AND EARNINGS BY INDUSTRY, 2018**

2018 Otero County Jobs	Number of Jobs	Percent of Total	Income	Percent of Total
Industry				
Farm Employment	528	1.8%	\$2,212	0.2%
Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	215	0.8%	\$2,098	0.2%
Mining	204	0.7%	\$6,314	0.5%
Utilities	124	0.4%	\$10,132	0.7%
Construction	1,622	5.7%	\$72,447	5.2%
Manufacturing	214	0.7%	\$3,367	0.2%
Wholesale Trade	192	0.7%	\$8,323	0.6%
Retail Trade	2,904	10.2%	\$70,968	5.1%
Transportation and Warehousing	641	2.2%	\$25,471	1.8%
Information	287	1.0%	\$14,040	1.0%
Finance and Insurance	632	2.2%	\$22,287	1.6%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	758	2.7%	\$9,365	0.7%
Professional and Technical Services	957	3.3%	\$48,518	3.5%
Management of Companies/Enterprises	50	0.2%	\$1,541	0.1%
Administrative and Waste Services	1,620	5.7%	\$63,822	4.6%
Educational Services	306	1.1%	\$14,261	1.0%
Health Care and Social Assistance	3,152	11.0%	\$167,342	12.0%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	355	1.2%	\$2,330	0.2%
Accommodation and Food Service	1,786	6.2%	\$33,617	2.4%
Other Services, Ex. Public Admin	1,387	4.9%	\$39,140	2.8%
Total Private, Non-farm	17,719	62.0%	\$615,383	44.3%
Total Government	10,661	37.3%	\$772,558	55.6%
Military	4,415	15.4%	\$394,113	28.4%
State government	780	2.7%	\$40,724	2.9%
Local government	3,776	13.2%	\$183,709	13.2%
Federal, civilian	1,690	5.9%	\$154,012	11.1%
Total, Industries	28,595		\$1,390,153	

Source: US Bureau of Economic Analysis, CAEMP25N Total Full-Time and Part-Time Employment

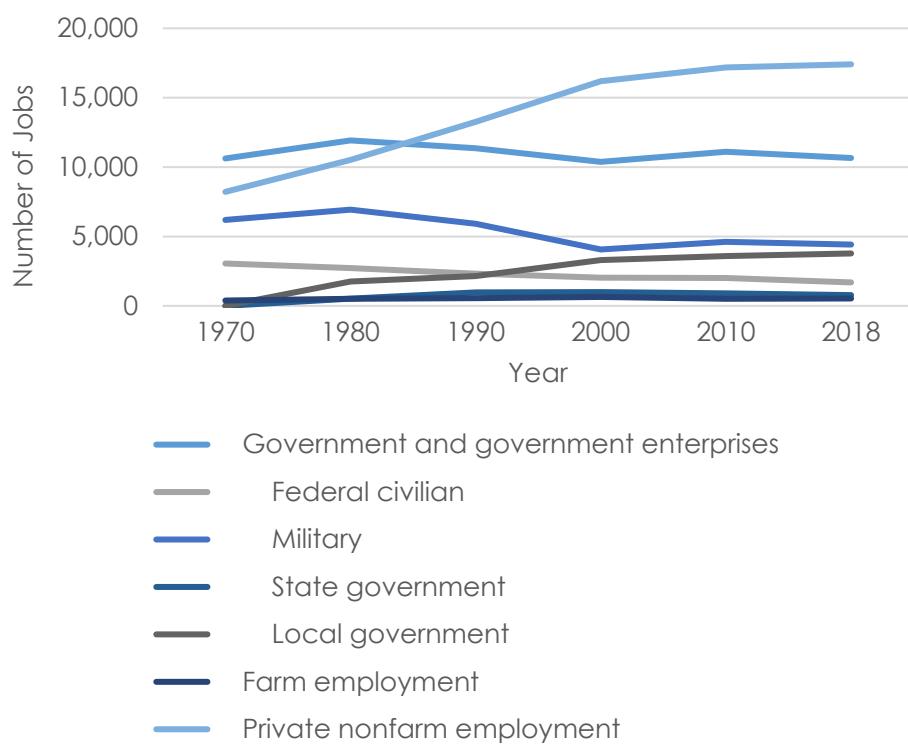
## COUNTY JOB TRENDS

Looking at job trends over the decades since 1970, the most notable increase has been in private sector jobs as shown in Figure 8-3. In 2000, there were a total of 27,207 jobs in Otero County; in 2010, the number of jobs increased to 28,787. By 2018, the county was estimated to have lost close to 2000 jobs and had 28,595.

The number of jobs in the county increased by 375 jobs a year between 1970 and 1980, for a growth rate of 19 percent over the decade. The rate slowed to 10 percent between 1980 and 1990, 8 percent between 1990 and 2000, and 6 percent between 2000 and 2010. Between 2000 and 2018, the rate is estimated to have declined to negative 1 percent. This estimate can be reevaluated when US Census 2020 data collection is complete.

Employment in all government enterprises accounted for half the total jobs at least through 1980, with two percent in farm employment and the rest in the private sector. That reversed by 1990, when the percentage of jobs in the private sector outstripped the government by eight percent. The gulf widened further by 2000, with private employment accounting for nearly 60 percent of jobs and continued to see a minimal increase in 2010 and 2018. In the government sector, the military accounted for 32 percent of the jobs in 1970, shrinking to 15 percent by 2000; it rose slightly in 2010 to 16 percent and reduced to 15.4 percent in 2018. The number of federal civilian jobs also fell over the almost 50-year period, while jobs in local government made up an increasing share.

**FIGURE 8-3. OTERO COUNTY JOBS 1970 - 2018**



Source: US Bureau of Economic Analysis, 1970-2018

Of the basic industries that drive the economy, military employment, federal civilian employment, and most notably manufacturing jobs have decreased over time, while state and local government, farm employment, mining have increased somewhat; construction has increased the most. Retail and transportation have increased since 1970 but have decreased notably since 2000. This indicates some diversification is needed to resume economic growth.

## MAJOR EMPLOYERS IN OTERO COUNTY

The Otero County Economic Development Council (OCEDC) has identified a list of major employers in Otero County (see Table 8-6).

**TABLE 8-6. MAJOR EMPLOYERS IN OTERO COUNTY, 2020**

Employer	Category
Holloman Air Force Base	Defense
White Sands Missile Range	Defense
Alamogordo Public Schools	Education
Inn of the Mountain Gods	Mescalero Resort
Wal-Mart Super Center	Retail
Gerald Champion Regional Medical Center	Medical
City of Alamogordo	City Government
NMSU-Alamogordo	Education
Otero County	County Government
New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired	Education
Casa Arena Blanca	Nursing Home
Zia Therapy Center, Inc.	Community Services
Lowe's Grocery	Grocery Chain
Lowe's Home Improvement Warehouse	Retail
Home Depot	Retail
The Lodge at Cloudcroft	Cloudcroft Resort
First National Bank	Financial
PreCheck	Business Assistance

Source: Otero County Economic Development Council, 2020.

## MAJOR ATTRACTIONS IN OTERO COUNTY

### MILITARY

The US military is a major economic engine for Otero County. As of 2016, Holloman Air Force Base's military/civilian annual payroll was more than \$213 million and had an economic impact of just under \$412 million to the local economy. As of 2014, White Sands Missile Range's military/civilian annual payroll was just under \$782 million and had an economic impact of \$834 million.

## SHOPPING, DINING, AND LODGING

Otero County has many restaurants, which are located mainly within the cities and towns. As the largest municipality, Alamogordo offers the most variety. Alamogordo also receives the most guests visiting White Sands National Park and has the most lodging.

A variety of shopping opportunities and experiences exist throughout Otero County. White Sands Mall, the major shopping center in Otero County, is over 250,000 square feet of enclosed shopping and contains more than 20 stores, several medical offices, and service providers. The mall is located at the north end of Alamogordo on White Sands Boulevard. Major national retailers are found in Alamogordo, primarily along White Sands Boulevard. In addition, a variety of local shops and restaurants are in Downtown Alamogordo near 10th Street and New York Avenue. The community's financial and business district, as well as the local government offices, are also located Downtown.

## TOURISM AND RECREATION

Tourism is one of Otero County's biggest industries. The county is home to so many spectacular natural and cultural environments from White Sands to Otero Mesa. There are cultural and recreational opportunities for tourists and residents to visit, explore, and enjoy that are attractive to outdoor enthusiasts, historians, foodies, retirees, and families.

Some of the major tourist and recreation attractions are listed below. Other destinations are described in the Community Facilities and Services chapter.

### ***La Luz***

Located four miles north of Alamogordo, La Luz, meaning "the light," is the oldest settlement in the Tularosa Basin. Its name probably dates from 1719 with Franciscan missionaries built a chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Light" (Nuestra Senora de la Luz). In 1863 settlers from areas on the Rio Grande settled here. La Luz is now a quiet plaza surrounded by a few old adobe buildings, homes, and artist studios.

### ***Tularosa***

A small village 13 miles north of Alamogordo, Tularosa, known as the City of Roses, has been successful in blending the new with the old. Its main street—Granado Street—has an assortment of shops housed in original buildings. The Catholic Church, St. Francis de Paula, was built as a fulfillment to promises made by Tularosa citizens when they defeated the Apaches at the "Battle of Round Mountain."

### ***Cloudcroft***

Surrounded by Lincoln National Forest, Cloudcroft has an elevation of 9,000 feet, a temperate climate, and great natural beauty. The Village was established in 1898, and the downtown business district offers a unique western motif boardwalk with a variety of retail shops, art studios, and cafés. Visitors have been attracted to the village's historic Lodge Hotel since it was constructed in 1899, which is still in use today. It is a destination for golfers due to its cooler summers and skiing in the winter at Ski Cloudcroft, a small ski resort that offers downhill skiing, snowboarding, tubing, and night skiing.

### ***Mescalero Apache Reservation***

The Mescalero Apache Reservation is more than 460,000 acres of pine forests and mountains that spans Otero County south of Ruidoso and Lincoln County. The Mescalero Apache Reservation offers the following services and amenities.

#### ***Ski Apache***

Ski Apache offers skiing and snowboarding opportunities on over 750 acres. Ski Apache is the second largest ski resort in New Mexico and has 11 ski lifts – 1 gondola, 2 quads, 5 triples, 1 double, and 2 surface lifts with a lift capacity of 16,500 skiers per hour. Other amenities include two cafeterias, three snack bars, two burger stands, ski and snowboard lessons, and various ski shops.

#### ***Mescalero Apache Cultural Center***

The Mescalero Apache Cultural Center features photo exhibits, basketry, and clothing of the three Apache tribes indigenous to the area.

#### ***Inn of the Mountain Gods Resort and Casino***

The Mescalero tribe opened a resort in 2005 that includes a 50,000-square-foot casino and an 18-hole championship golf course built around a man-made lake and open to the public.

#### ***Outdoor Recreation***

Outdoor activities available at the Mescalero Reservation include big game hunting, seasonal hunts, hunting packages for elk, bear, turkey, sporting clays, fishing, horseback riding, hiking, and other activities.

#### ***White Sands National Park***

As introduced in the Natural Resources chapter, one of the world's greatest natural wonders, White Sands National Park rises from the heart of the Tularosa Basin. The large wave-like dunes of gypsum sand and the surrounding plant and animal community have been preserved forever for visitors to explore and discover. Some of the recreational opportunities at White Sands include sightseeing along Dunes Drive, hiking, backcountry camping, and picnicking in the Heart of the Dunes area. In addition to the natural wonders of the area, the National Park includes a visitor center that houses a museum, information desk, bookstore, gift shop, and restrooms.

#### ***Lincoln National Forest***

Lincoln National Forest is the birthplace of the original Smokey Bear, the living symbol of the campaign to prevent forest fires. In Lincoln County to the north, Lincoln National Forest has two wilderness areas with over 86,000 acres as well as the Ski Apache Resort. Outdoor activities include camping, fishing, hiking, backpacking, scenic views, wilderness, and skiing. The Sacramento Ranger District in Cloudcroft manages over 450,419 acres and includes opportunities for camping, picnicking, fishing, hunting, hiking, and skiing as well as self-guided tours at the Sacramento Peak Observatory. Containing many limestone caves and deep rough canyons, the Guadalupe Ranger District in Carlsbad, is the perfect place for visitors to "get away from it all."

During the writing of this Comprehensive Plan, the US Forest Service was reviewing the recreation fees and access to campgrounds and day-use sites in Lincoln National Forest (along with others

throughout the state) in order to help improve and maintain recreation facilities. The agency is proposing changes including new, increased, and decreased fees at recreation sites as well as the adoption of the Enchantment Pass. Comments on the proposed changes to the management of the developed recreation program are accepted until December 31, 2020.

### ***McGregor Range***

More than 600,000 acres of rangeland managed by BLM and the US Army on the west side of Otero Mesa is available to hikers, backpackers, campers, horseback rider, and hunters with permits. The Range is one of the few county destinations currently advertised on the New Mexico True website.

### ***Valley of Fires Recreation Area***

Managed by BLM, the Valley of Fires Recreation Area in nearby Lincoln County offers visitors a chance to explore the most recent lava flow in the Continental US. The lava flow is over 44 miles long and is estimated to be 1,500 to 2,000 years old. The recreation area is located four miles northwest of Carrizozo and allows camping and day use. The three-quarter-mile long Malpais Nature Trail is a popular hike that provides a close-up of the lava formations.

### ***Oliver Lee Memorial State Park***

Named after one of New Mexico's most colorful characters, the 640-acre Oliver Lee Memorial State Park is nestled at the mouth of Dog Canyon 12 miles south of Alamogordo. Set in a quiet, green oasis, Dog Canyon is a deep ravine where water flows year-around and ferns cling to the rocky cliffs. Guided tours of the restored Lee Ranch are a major attraction of the park as well as the hiking trails, visitor center, picnic areas, and 44 developed campsites.

### ***Bonito Lake***

Owned by the City of Alamogordo and ten miles north of the Village of Ruidoso in nearby Lincoln County, Bonito Lake serves as a potable water supply and recreational area. The Bonito Lake and area was badly damaged during the Little Bear fire in 2012 and is currently being restored. Though swimming and boating are not permitted at the lake, activities like fishing, camping, and hiking will be allowed when it is restored.

### ***New Mexico Museum of Space History***

The New Mexico Museum of Space History is home to the space museum, the Tombaugh Planetarium/IMAX Theater, Hubbard Space Science Education Facility, and the International Space Hall of Fame. Located in Alamogordo since 1976, the museum celebrates man's exploration of space and its mission is to preserve and interpret the history, technology, and science of the "space age." The space museum's five-story golden building features exhibits ranging from Robert Goddard's early rocket experiments near Roswell to mock-ups of future space stations. Also, on display is the rocket sled that made John P. Stapp the "Fastest Man Alive" when he rode it to 632 miles per hour in 1954. Built in 1980, the Tombaugh Planetarium/IMAX Theater houses a 40-foot diameter tilted dome theater and is named after the man who discovered Pluto. The Hubbard Space Science Educational Facility is home to the museum's educational programs and educates kids each summer in the week-long Space Camp.

**Alameda Park and Zoo**

Established in 1898, Alameda Park and Zoo is the oldest zoo in the Southwest. The zoo is home to more than 300 animals of 90 different species. Included at the zoo is a playground and picnic area.

**Founders Park**

Created in 1998 to celebrate Alamogordo's centennial, Founders Park aims to honor the three cultures—Native American, Spanish Conquistador, and American Cowboy—most responsible for the establishment of the City. The park is located at the corner of White Sands Boulevard and 10th Street and is open to the public to view several bronze sculptures created by local artists.

**Alamogordo Airborne Park**

This monument is dedicated to a small area of Alamogordo called "Chihuahita," which is approximately one-quarter square mile in size. It produced 56 airborne paratroopers in World War II, the largest concentration of its kind in the US.

**Kids Kingdom**

A children's playground in Alamogordo offering a challenging and imaginative playscape. Picnic facilities are also available. The playground is located off Indian Well Road between Oregon and Washington Avenues.

**Tularosa Basin Historical Museum**

The mission of the Tularosa Basin Historical Museum is to preserve and promote local, regional, and occasionally national history through exhibits, projects, presentations, and other methods. The museum is in Alamogordo adjacent to the Alameda Park and Zoo. The museum maintains a large display of articles and photos on the early history of the area as well as one of only two 47-Star US flags.

**Sacramento Mountains Museum**

Located in Cloudcroft, the Sacramento Mountains Museum is a collection of historic buildings constructed in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Displays include old-time farming and ranching tools and equipment, a display of the Cloud-Climbing Railroad which helped make Cloudcroft a reality and a wide array of artifacts and memorabilia from Cloudcroft and surrounding communities. Collections and displays are accompanied by audio tapes and written histories, microfilmed newspapers, maps, books, and photographs.

**Tularosa Vineyards and Winery**

This small family-owned vineyard and winery is located two miles north of the Village of Tularosa on Highway 54. The winery, operated by the Wickham Family, produces primarily varietals wines from vinifera grapes. The winery has opportunities for tours, wine tasting, and relaxing at the picnic tables under the shade of pecan trees.

**The Toy Train Depot**

A 100-year old train depot, the Toy Train Depot in Alamogordo is home to hundreds of model and toy trains as well as a 1,000-square-foot model depicting Alamogordo in the 1940s. The Depot houses

the smallest scaled working train in the world and provides small-scale train rides circling Alameda Park and Zoo.

#### ***Apache Point Observatory and National Solar Observatory***

The Apache Point Observatory and National Solar Observatory are located 18 miles south of Cloudcroft in Sunspot. The National Solar Observatory is managed by the National Science Foundation and used for solar research during the day. New Mexico State University administers the Apache Point Observatory to explore the skies by night. At 9,200 feet, Apache Point provides an excellent location due to its clear weather, little water vapor, and dark night skies. Together, both facilities provide over 70 jobs. The facilities are open to visitors during daylight hours.

#### ***Eagle Ranch Pistachio Groves***

Home to over 12,000 pistachio trees, Eagle Ranch contains the first pistachio trees planted in New Mexico in 1972. Various varieties of flavored pistachios as well of line of pistachio candies, cookies, and ice cream are available at the retail store on the farm and through mail order.

#### ***McGinn's Pistachio Tree Ranch and Area Blanca Winery***

Located six miles north of Alamogordo, McGinn's Pistachio Tree Ranch is home to more than 12,500 pistachio trees on 94 acres, New Mexico's largest contiguous planting of pistachio groves, and 14 acres of wine grapes. The ranch is open for tours and operates two retail stores offering pistachios, pistachio-related products, and an assortment of wine.

#### ***Sertoma Speedway***

The Sertoma Motorplex sits on approximately 640 acres about four miles north of Tularosa on US 54. The track is a three-eighth mile semi-banked dirt oval.

#### ***Golf Courses***

- **Desert Lakes Municipal Golf Course.** An 18-hole, championship golf course in Alamogordo, this course is quickly becoming one of southern New Mexico's finest. This course, recently renovated, is open year-round seven days a week and features a lighted driving range, pro-shop, golf lessons, and restaurant and bar.
- **The Lodge Golf Course.** This 9-hole golf course in Cloudcroft is one of the highest in the world at 9,000 feet and a premier attraction in the Southwest. The course is based on old Scottish traditions of playing different tees and separate flags on each hole, thus the layout can accommodate a challenging 18-hole round.
- **Inn of the Mountain Gods Golf Course.** (See description in the previous Mescalero Apache Reservation section).
- **Ponderosa Pines Golf Course.** Located in the middle of Lincoln National Forest approximately nine miles south of Cloudcroft at 8,000 feet, this 9-hole course is very narrow and challenging.
- **Timberon Golf Course.** This 9-hole course in Timberon offers golfers a challenging round of golf in a beautiful setting.

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

## JOB DIVERSIFICATION

Close to one-third of the earnings in Otero County are from military occupations, particularly Holloman Air Force Base, which in 2016 had more than 10,000 military and civilian personnel (including dependents) and a gross payroll of more than \$23,442,337.

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*"Before [Otero County] will see a significant improvement in economic development [we] must address the root problems: healthcare, education, qualified [work] force and a state that is safe for children."*

*Community Survey Response*

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Dependence on the military leaves the county's economy subject to the federal government's plans. The periodic base realignment and closure process cannot be predicted. For example, in 2016, the German Air Force announced their departure was imminent in 2019.

Thus, leaders in the county and Alamogordo have been trying to diversify the economic base and offer good jobs with attractive salaries for all in the labor force, as well as for the younger generation, so they are not forced to move out of the area for better economic prospects. OCEDC is a major driver of these activities.

## WATER AND LAND AVAILABILITY

The County is constrained somewhat by the small amount of private land available—about 11 percent of the area—as well as the lack of readily available potable water. Efforts to desalinate the water, if successful, could position the County as a leader in the area and potentially be turned to economic benefit. The Brackish Groundwater National Desalination Research Facility opened in Alamogordo in 2007. While many people think it has the potential to provide a new source of water, others think the potential unknown and unintended consequences of stripping the basin of groundwater could be devastating to White Sands and the entire region.

## MILITARY OPERATIONS

Military operations also serve to constrain commercial growth by seeking to limit development around bases due to potential encroachment as well as road closures during missile launches. Yet, the recent reclassification of White Sands National Park was combined with a land swap that will result in fewer closures of the roadway. On the other hand, aviation expertise at Holloman AFB, WSMR, the 46th Test Group and the coming X Prize Cup event offers the potential to grow an aerospace industry cluster. White Sands Missile Range will be National Space Center in next 10 years and soon to have regional jet service with two flights per day. The new mission will attract even more economic development. These are huge opportunities but require appropriate infrastructure to support them.

One of the defense companies on Holloman AFB wants to hire 200 people, but they need the workforce; at the end of 2019, there were 260 unfilled positions.

## FOREST RESTRICTIONS

The use of forest resources has been constrained by the USFS' restrictions on logging in the Lincoln National Forest. Many think this is to the detriment of the forest and watershed health, in addition to the health of the economy. If more thinning and clearing of underbrush and fallen timber was allowed, it could benefit the overall health of the county.

## SUSTAINABILITY OF EXTRACTION

Oil and natural gas were discovered in southern Otero County. The Bureau of Land Management has considered future oil and natural gas extraction from Otero Mesa. Extraction could provide economic development, but many feel their benefits would be short-lived and not worth potential long-term environmental impacts.

## FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

The primary obstacle to the recruitment of new jobs to Otero County is the lack of financial incentives. The competition from inside and outside the state is intense. Numerous municipalities in New Mexico have passed the Local Option Gross Receipts Tax (LOGRT) for economic development which has given them the ability to offer cash incentives to companies to offset their startup costs in a new location. Alamogordo and Clovis are two communities in New Mexico that have been very successful in using the LOGRT to create jobs. Despite the many advantages of moving to Otero County, the move of a company to a new location represents a significant risk which should be mitigated by incentives. OCEDC has spent \$5M through LEDA to attract new business and offers a comprehensive list of all the incentives available to businesses on their website.

## DESIRED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Otero County also is well positioned to capture businesses as they leave the more expensive areas on the West Coast, the Midwest, and the East Coast. The adverse business climate and decreasing quality of life in these areas are making New Mexico and Otero County an increasingly viable option.

There is support from county leaders and communities to attract new industries to Otero County and to support existing industries and businesses with business-friendly strategies and policy.

## FILM

Otero County has one of the state's five accredited and registered Association of Film Commissioners International film offices, which opened in 2003 and an established film industry. With the mission of attracting and serving all forms of film and media production and promoting and serving Otero County's residents, locations, products, services, and businesses, the Otero County Film Office (OCFO) has put the film industry at the forefront of the county's economic development and tourism

economy. Each year, OCFO puts on the Desert Lights Film Festival to train and inspire middle and high school students interested in the industry; students also enter their films in the festival.

Along with filming, comes film-related tourism attracting visitors to film locations. Communities can benefit from connecting the State Tourism Department and promoting themselves as destinations with walking or diving tours, promotional materials, and even film-themed restaurants or retail establishments. The industry can support the place-based cultural and recreational tourism industry—not only will film professionals be interested in tourism attractions in the area to explore during their down time, so will fans of television and film productions who come to see the sites showcased in their favorite productions filmed in the area.

## RENEWABLE ENERGY

New Mexico's natural resources are abundant and have the potential to generate sustainable jobs statewide. Sun and wind are two forms of renewable energy that are being utilized in wind and solar farms. These industries can offer Otero County jobs and reduce its reliance on non-renewable energy sources. PNM has constructed two solar farms in Otero County (Alamogordo and Tularosa) in the last ten years. Although construction jobs to build such infrastructure are temporary, there are long-term opportunities in other associated technology and maintenance jobs, including energy storage and transmission.

## MANUFACTURING

Alamogordo has attracted retail and low-water using, welding-related, and agriculture-related manufacturers and a call center. The old Walmart is now manufacturing business.

## TOURISM

Tourism is also an important source of income. Tourists are drawn to the beauty of Lincoln National Forest and White Sands National Park as well as the historic downtowns and character throughout the county. The New Mexico Department of Tourism has made great strides in marketing the vast attractions of the state and making them known to locals and tourists. It offers technical assistance to communities seeking to boost local tourism. Currently, just a handful of cultural, historic, and natural resources in Otero County are promoted on the State's New Mexico True website, which helps travelers plan a complete trip from national parks to great restaurants that provide authentic New Mexican experiences. For example, it features White Sands National Park as a popular destination and lists some of the great wineries and McGinn Pistachio Tree Ranch in nearby Tularosa that visitors can enjoy. By working with the State, the County and local entrepreneurs can benefit from the State's many tourism resources.

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*"We need more investment  
in the county's natural  
resources for tourism."*

*Community Survey Response*

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## AGRI-TOURISM AND ADDED-VALUE AGRICULTURE

New Mexico branding services are available to local farmers and producers that make their products known locally and to tourists. Local farmers and the County can use these state resources to promote local goods. New Mexico True promotes products ranging from beer and wine, salsa, and chocolate to jewelry, artisanal crafts, and musical instruments. New Mexico Taste the Tradition® and New Mexico Grown with Tradition® are programs available through the New Mexico Department of Agriculture that promote agritourism and New Mexico grown products and offer funding assistance and grants.<sup>1</sup> USDA Agricultural Marketing Resource Center (AgMRC) is a national resource that supports value-added producers with grants.<sup>2</sup>

Agri-tourism could be more fully developed to supplement farm and ranching income. This goes together with value-added agriculture businesses such as beef-processing, nut processing and wine-making that produce locally made products.

Across the border in Chavez County, for example, one of the working ranches is developing a small conference center and air strip so people can fly in for brief conferences. Pumpkin farms in Santa Fe and Torrance Counties host annual events that draw families from multiple counties.

The New Mexico Department of Agriculture Marketing and Development Division supports agribusiness through several marketing and economic development efforts, including the Grown with Tradition® program.<sup>3</sup> Several independent resources are available for New Mexican ranchers:

- New Mexico Beef Council is an industry-led group of cattle ranchers that helps promote local ranches and link ranchers with resources to support their businesses.<sup>4</sup>
- Eatwild helps New Mexico's ranchers promote their grass-fed animals and lists all the stores, restaurants, farmers markets, and buying clubs selling grass-fed animals in New Mexico.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nmda.nmsu.edu/nmda-homepage/divisions/marketing/new-mexico-taste-the-tradition-and-new-mexico-grown-with-tradition/> and <http://tradition.nmda.nmsu.edu/>

<sup>2</sup> [agmrc.org](http://agmrc.org)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.nmda.nmsu.edu/nmda-homepage/divisions/marketing/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nmbeef.com/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.eatwild.com/products/newmexico.html>

## OUTDOOR RECREATION

Outdoor recreation is a national trend as people travel to seek out unique outdoor experiences. Outdoor recreation has huge potential in Otero County's numerous mountain rangers and Otero Mesa. The fine weather during Fall and Spring school breaks lends itself to family tourist packages. There have been suggestions to rebuild the Cloud-Climbing railway as a tourist attraction. The planned 68-mile Enchanted Trail loop could also bring in hikers and other tourists to the Sacramento Mountains.

The New Mexico Economic Development Department has a variety of resources for businesses located in New Mexico. The new Outdoor Recreation Division is committed to supporting a thriving outdoor recreation economy and is developing several resources to support outdoor related business development, assistance to business incubators that assist new outdoor businesses and youth employment through the Youth Conservation Corps. Otero County has an opportunity to become part of this statewide effort from its beginning.

Currently, USFS limits many activities and continues to be increasingly restrictive. Otero County can work with the Outdoor Recreation Division, USFS, and BLM to identify and promote sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities.

## RETIREE ATTRACTIONS

The County formerly participated in a State-funded Sunbird package to attract retirees to the area until funding ran out; this could be revived.

## WORKFORCE TRAINING

All these industries could be improved and supported by countywide training programs that train young adults for a range of jobs in desirable new industries and traditional trades. New Mexico State University-Alamogordo (NMSU-Alamogordo) has a workforce apprenticeship pilot program. It also offers several programs in cinema and film production and renewable energy, including an Associate of Applied Science degree in Renewable Energy Systems Technology.

*"This is vital for our area; it is one of the greatest tourism opportunities that we have to offer. From the Ski and tubing area in Cloudcroft, national and international hunting appeal, backpacking, fly fishing in Rio Peñasco, rock climbing near Tunnel Vista and Marble canyon, numerous trails and camping sites, and White Sands National Park."*

*Community Survey Response*

*"Start educating students at a young age about the diverse opportunities for education/training and viable career choices."*

*Community Survey Response*

Community and Advisory Committee members voiced the need for trades programs in the high schools, including traditional trades like welding, electrical, plumbing, and marketing, finance, hospitality, and management. Alamogordo adopted the State's Gross Receipt Investment Program Initiative and utilizes State Local Economic Development Act (LEDA), and various workforce training credits.

In summary, Otero County would like to achieve steady growth that makes full use of the government entities but continues to diversify with nongovernmental businesses and industries. It would continue a high level of education for its workforce, attract living wage jobs and offer diverse employment opportunities to county residents of all ages and circumstances. Tourism would continue to play a major role in the economy, and filmmaking would become an established sector. Renewable energy production, sustainable oil and gas extraction, and sustainable timber logging and production would be reestablished as profitable industries.

## GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

### **GOAL 1. Otero County's economy is strong and diverse.**

#### **POLICY 1. Support existing businesses and encourage their expansion.**

- Action 1. Identify common needs and obstacles to business expansion.
- Action 2. Actively participate in Alamogordo and Cloudcroft Chamber of Commerce "shop local" programs and marketing activities to include radio spots and print media advertising.
- Action 3. Work with the Eastern Area Workforce Development Board to:
  - Determine best practices and encourage their implementation in Otero County.
  - Identify workforce training deficiencies that prevent companies from expanding.
  - Implement workforce training that will help existing businesses.
  - Provide outreach services to educate employers on the resources available for workforce development.
- Action 4. Work with local Chambers of Commerce to identify state and federal issues that hamper local business.
  - Participate in chamber committees that work with state and federal legislative and funding issues.
  - Participate in chamber-led legislative forums, roundtables, and town halls.

**POLICY 2.** *Continue to diversify the economy by attracting or growing new sustainable industries that offer quality employment and living wages.*

- Action 1. Support the Otero County Economic Development Council's recruitment and retention efforts.
  - Participate in local site visits of companies looking to relocate in Otero County.
  - Provide input to OCEDC on the types of industries to attract.
  - Be proactive about marketing.
  - Develop incentives such as a revolving loan fund.
- Action 2. Use public funds to assist in the development of new jobs when feasible and within the provisions of the New Mexico Local Economic Act.
- Action 3. Identify County land that could be used as an incentive in attracting industry.
- Action 4. Facilitate development of beef processing, nut processing, wine-making and other value-added enterprises.
- Action 5. Promote industrial growth around the airport.

**POLICY 3.** *Provide workforce training and prepare county for workforce readiness.*

- Action 1. Partner higher education and NMSU-Alamogordo with businesses to coordinate and align programs so students will have the right skills when entering college and the workforce.
- Action 2. Coordinate educational programs with the Career Technical Leadership Project (CTLP), which manages four Career Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs) statewide: Business Professionals of America (BPA), DECA, Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA), and HOSA—Future Health Professionals.

**POLICY 4.** *Promote tourism in the county.*

- Action 1. Promote White Sands National Park, Lincoln National Forest, and the New Mexico Museum of Space History as destinations for holidays and special events.
- Action 2. Work with New Mexico Department of Tourism to strategize cohesive countywide tourism approach and leverage resources.
- Action 3. Develop community resources to support incentives for tourism.
- Action 4. Develop plans to attract tourism and trade from the air travel industry.
- Action 5. Promote commercial growth in community centers for dining, lodging, and travel centers.

Action 6. Promote agri-tourism.

- Encourage farmers and ranchers to share the history of their farms and ranches by participating in agri-tourism events and promotional material.
- Actively advertise nut and wine producers' efforts as well as other agricultural products as part of a program to promote Otero County as a tourism destination
- Promote events such as the cherry festival in High Rolls.
- Support the efforts of agricultural producers to diversify and develop value-added products that attract visitors to the county.
- Actively participate in local and state initiatives to promote agri-tourism with OCEDC, and Southeastern NM Economic Development District.

**GOAL 2. Otero County's federal government-run facilities are maintained sustainably for the long-term.**

POLICY 1. *Recognize Holloman Air Force Base, White Sands Missile Range, Lincoln National Forest, White Sands National Park, Fort Bliss, and Sunspot and Apache Point Observatories for their economic significance to the community and take action to facilitate their retention and expansion.*

- Action 1. Educate citizens to understand the benefits of these facilities and their role in the county.
- Action 2. Encourage appropriate development surrounding military bases as described in Holloman AFB's AICUZ study through cooperation between agencies and private landowners.
- Action 3. Support and actively encourage efforts of our congressional delegation and local community-based organizations to expand the missions and economic impact of these entities.
- Action 4. Cooperate with El Paso and Las Cruces in the promotion of the region as a location capable of handling new military and homeland defense missions.
- Action 5. Encourage training and use of available local workforce and local business products and services at these facilities.
- Action 6. Re-use former government facilities.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

There are many resources available for economic development, most of which are well known to the OCEDC and the local chambers of commerce. The County is a certified community, which would give it access to marketing and advertising funds from the State of New Mexico. Implementation actions, responsibilities, and potential funding sources to meet the County's economic development goals are listed in Table 8-7. The Implementation Chapter of this plan provides more details on funding sources, resources, and the implementation process.

**TABLE 8-7. IMPLEMENTATION OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
<b>Goal 1. Otero County's economy is strong and diverse.</b>		
<i>Policy 1. Support existing businesses and encourage their expansion.</i>		
Identify common needs and obstacles to business expansion.	Otero County; OCEDC	N/A
Actively participate in Alamogordo and Cloudcroft Chamber of Commerce "shop local" programs and marketing activities to include radio spots and print media advertising.	Otero County; OCEDC; Chambers of Commerce; NM Tourism Department	NM True Certification and Cooperative Marketing Grants
Work with the Eastern Area Workforce Development Board to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Determine best practices and encourage their implementation in Otero County.</li> <li>– Identify workforce training needs that prevent companies from expanding.</li> <li>– Implement workforce training that will help existing businesses.</li> <li>– Provide outreach services to educate employers on the resources available for workforce development.</li> </ul>	Otero County; EAWDB; OCEDC; SNMEDD	WIOA Funds; Job Training Incentive Program (JTIP) Funds
Work with local Chambers of Commerce to identify state and federal issues that hamper local business. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Participate in chamber committees that work with state and federal legislative and funding issues.</li> <li>– Participate in chamber-led legislative forums, roundtables, and town halls.</li> </ul>	Otero County; Chambers of Commerce; OCEDC	N/A
<i>Policy 2. Continue to diversify the economy by attracting or growing new sustainable industries that offer quality employment and living wages.</i>		
Support the Otero County Economic Development Council's recruitment and retention efforts. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Participate in local site visits of companies looking to relocate in Otero County.</li> <li>– Provide input to OCEDC on the types of industries to attract.</li> <li>– Be proactive about marketing.</li> <li>– Develop incentives such as a revolving loan fund.</li> </ul>	Otero County; OCEDC	Revolving loan fund

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
Use public funds to assist in the development of new jobs when feasible and within the provisions of the New Mexico Local Economic Act.	Otero County; OCEDC	LEDA Job Creation Fund
Identify County land that could be used as an incentive in attracting industry.	Otero County; OCEDC	N/A
Facilitate development of beef-processing, nut processing, wine-making and other value-added enterprises.	Otero County; NM Department of Agriculture; NM Beef Council; SNMEDD	NIFA Grants; Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP)
Promote industrial growth around the airport.	Otero County; OCEDC; SNMEDD	N/A
<i>Policy 3. Provide workforce training and prepare county for workforce readiness.</i>		
Partner higher education and NMSU-Alamogordo with businesses to coordinate and align programs so students will have the right skills when entering college and the workforce.	Otero County; NMSU-Alamogordo; OCEDC; SNMEDD; School Districts serving Otero County	LEDA Funds; WIOA Funds; Job Training Incentive Program (JTIP) Funds
Coordinate educational programs with the Career Technical Leadership Project (CTLP), which manages four Career Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs) statewide: Business Professionals of America (BPA), DECA, Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA), and HOSA—Future Health Professionals.	Otero County; NMSU-Alamogordo; SNMEDD; School Districts serving Otero County; CTLP; CTSOs; BPA; DECA; FCCLA; HOSA	LEDA Funds; WIOA Funds; Job Training Incentive Program (JTIP) Funds
<i>Policy 4. Promote tourism in the county.</i>		
Promote White Sands National Park, Lincoln National Forest, and the NM Museum of Space History as destinations for holidays and special events.	Otero County; White Sands National Park; USFS; NM Museum of Space History; NM Tourism Department	NM True Cooperative Marketing Grants
Work with NM Tourism Department to strategize cohesive countywide tourism approach and leverage resources.	Otero County; NM Tourism Department	NM True Cooperative Marketing Grants
Develop community resources to support incentives for tourism.	Otero County; OCEDC; SNMEDD; Chambers of Commerce	NM True Cooperative Marketing Grants
Develop plans to attract tourism and trade from the air travel industry.	Otero County; OCEDC; SNMEDD; Alamogordo White Sands Regional Airport; Spaceport America	N/A
Promote commercial growth in community centers for dining, lodging, and travel centers.	Otero County; OCEDC; SNMEDD; Chambers of Commerce	N/A

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
<p>Promote agri-tourism.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Encourage farmers and ranchers to share the history of their farms and ranches by participating in agri-tourism events and promotional material.</li> <li>– Actively advertise nut and wine producers' efforts as well as other agricultural products as part of a program to promote Otero County as a tourism destination</li> <li>– Promote events such as the cherry festival in High Rolls.</li> <li>– Support the efforts of agricultural producers to diversify and develop value-added products that attract visitors to the county.</li> <li>– Actively participate in local and state initiatives to promote agri-tourism with OCEDC, and Southeastern NM Economic Development District.</li> </ul>	Otero County; OCEDC; SNMEDD; NM Department of Agriculture; NM Beef Council	USDA Grants; NM True Certification and Cooperative Marketing
<b>Goal 2. Otero County's federal government-run facilities are maintained sustainably for the long-term.</b>		
Policy 1. Recognize Holloman Air Force Base, White Sands Missile Range, Lincoln National Forest, White Sands National Park, Fort Bliss, and Sunspot and Apache Point Observatories for their economic significance to the community and take action to facilitate their retention and expansion.		
Educate citizens to understand the benefits of these facilities and their role in the county.	Otero County;	N/A
Encourage appropriate development surrounding military bases as described in Holloman AFB's AICUZ study through cooperation between agencies and private landowners.	Otero County; HAFB	N/A
Support and actively encourage efforts of our congressional delegation and local community-based organizations to expand the missions and economic impact of these entities.	Otero County; local community-based organizations	CDBG Funds
Cooperate with El Paso and Las Cruces in the promotion of the region as a location capable of handling new military and homeland defense missions.	Otero County; City of El Paso; City of Las Cruces	N/A

<b>Implementation Action</b>	<b>Responsible Agency/Organization</b>	<b>Potential Funding Sources</b>
Encourage training and use of available local workforce and local business products and services at these facilities.	Otero County; OCEDC; HAFB; WSMR; WSNP; LNF/USFS	LEDA Funds; WIOA Funds; Job Training Incentive Program (JTIP) Funds
Re-use former government facilities.	Otero County; OCEDC; HAFB; WSMR; DOD; LNF/USFS	Varies

# Community Facilities and Services

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Otero County's community facilities and services make an important contribution to the overall quality of life. County services range from policing and protection to outdoor recreation programs. County facilities provide places for recreation and relaxation, learning, cultural activities, and gathering with family and friends. The Community Facilities and Services Element of the Comprehensive Plan examines the existing inventory of community facilities and services in Otero County, identifies gaps, and recommends additional facilities and programs.

While most of the facilities and services are not owned, managed, or under Otero County's control, providing increased collaboration and cooperation with municipalities regarding community services is an important step in maintaining positive relationships and partnerships for shared community services and ultimately, a better quality of life for Otero County residents.

## COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

- Provide senior services.
- Provide a central location to find out about all the services and facilities available to Otero County residents.
- Continue to provide parks, recreation, and walking paths and prioritize their expansion and improvements.
- Prioritize affordable family-friendly facilities that have shade and water play, such as a splash pad.
- Consider an indoor pool for year-round use.
- Provide services outside Alamogordo in the smaller communities.
- Provide more reputable and reliable childcare facilities.
- Support the library with additional funding for services.
- Support the Sheriff's Office in training, recruitment, and retention of quality enforcement and systems.

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*"[We need] more police, bigger library, more parks."*

*Community Survey Response*

# EXISTING CONDITIONS

This section includes descriptions of the various facilities and services that in Otero County. Most of them are not County-run or owned, unless specified, but they serve Otero County residents.

## COMMUNITY CENTERS

In addition to community centers in La Luz, Mayhill, Weed, and Chaparral, the following facilities offer services for Otero County residents.

### SERGEANT WILLIE ESTRADA MEMORIAL CIVIC CENTER

The mission of the Sergeant Willie Estrada Memorial Civic Center in Alamogordo is to provide facilities for meetings, seminars, conventions, trade expositions, concerts, and social, educational, or entertainment events at reasonable rate for public and private events. The Civic Center contains a 6,084-square foot auditorium, four conference rooms varying in size from 450 to 828 square feet, a 345-square-foot kitchen, and restrooms. The center is rented for wedding receptions, reunions, family events, fundraisers, antique and fashion shows, and banquets.

### OTERO COUNTY BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB

The Boys and Girls Club is in Alamogordo and provides meals, a center for teens, and a military youth club. It has extended hours on the weekends and in the summers.

### ALAMOGORDO SENIOR CENTER

The Alamogordo Senior Center provides a variety of services for persons of ages 60 and over. The center's mission is to create a social environment that provides support, education, recreation, nutrition, and entertainment for seniors in Alamogordo and the surrounding area. The center offers a variety of programs for seniors including lunch, Meals on Wheels and homemaker services for homebound seniors, health screening, fitness equipment and exercise classes, billpaying assistance, and transportation services to and from the senior center, retail destinations, doctor appointments, and other errands. NM Aging and Long-Term Services Department administers the center and programs to meet federal guidelines and the City of Alamogordo sponsors it.

### TULAROSA SENIOR CENTER

The Tularosa Senior Center offers home-delivered meals and transportation services to seniors, in addition to recreational activities, a thrift store, and meals at the center.

### SACRAMENTO MOUNTAINS SENIOR SERVICES, INC.

The Sacramento Mountains Senior Services operates and maintains three senior centers in Cloudcroft, Mayhill, and High Rolls to serve seniors throughout the Sacramento Mountains and in the communities of Mayhill, Cloudcroft, High Rolls, Timberon, Sacramento, Piñon, Sunspot, and Weed. They provide a variety of services to provide seniors nutrition, social activities, and emotional support including meals, respite care, transportation, housekeeping services, and a lending library.

## CHAPARRAL SENIOR CENTER

Chaparral's Senior Center serves lunch and offers transportation for various errands and shopping needs to seniors over 60 years of age. The Center is located on the County Line of Otero and Lincoln counties.

## FLICKINGER CENTER OF THE PERFORMING ARTS

In 1988, Margaret Flickinger purchased the 675-seat Sierra movie theater in Alamogordo. After the subsequent purchase, she donated the theater to the non-profit Alamogordo Civic Auditorium, Inc. and thus became the Flickinger Center for Performing Arts. Since that time, the theater has been renovated to include a 40-foot by 32-foot performing arts stage, orchestra pit, dressing rooms, wardrobe room-orchestra room, and various lighting elements. The Flickinger Center is home to the Community Concert Series, the Alamogordo Music Theatre, the Cloudcroft Dance Theatre, the Magic of Dance and Twirl, New Voice Theatre, the Academy of Ballet, and the Miss New Mexico Scholarship Pageant. Additionally, local schools can use the theater free of charge. It is available for rent for private and business events, and community functions.

# HEALTH CARE AND MEDICAL FACILITIES

## HEALTHCARE SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Otero County Healthcare Services Department in Alamogordo coordinates and distributes health care resources available to Otero County residents. During the writing of this Comprehensive plan, the Department was preparing a Community Health Assessment in partnership with The Counseling Center and the Otero County Community Health Council. The Community Health Assessment works with community members, groups, organizations, and local governments to collaboratively improve community health, make healthier choices easier, and improve access to care.

## GERALD CHAMPION REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

Located in Alamogordo, the Gerald Champion Regional Medical Center (GCRMC) is a state-of-the-art 95-bed medical center built in 1999. GCRMC is the first medical center in the country that is a shared civilian/military facility. The \$35 million facility treats patients in need of cardiac rehab, behavioral medicine, cancer treatment, orthopedic care, pain management, weight management, endocrinology, fracture repair, gastroenterology, internal medicine, neurology, nephrology, pediatrics, pulmonary, women's and family health services. Facilities available at the hospital include emergency room, urgent care, intensive care, general surgery, labor/delivery, nursery, pharmacy, and a helicopter pad. There are 86 physicians and nurse practitioners at GCRMC.

## ALAMOGORDO FAMILY HEALTH CENTER

The Family Health Center in Alamogordo is operated by Presbyterian Medical Services and offers primary care services, which includes chronic illness treatment, preventative medicine, women's healthcare, physicals, and wellness screenings.

## **ALAMOGORDO FAMILY HEALTH CENTER – BEHAVIORAL HEALTH**

The behavioral Health Center in Alamogordo is also operated by Presbyterian Medical Services and offers individual and group therapy for mental health and substance use disorders, psychiatric medication management, comprehensive community support services and crisis intervention.

## **ZIA THERAPY CENTER**

Zia Therapy Center in Alamogordo provides a wide range of services to children and adults with developmental disabilities, mental health concerns, and other special needs as well as services to their families. The Center offers transportation, early intervention services including physical and speech therapy for children from birth to 3 years of age, and childcare services.

## **MOUNTAIN SHADOWS HOME CARE**

Mountain Shadows provides home-based care and pediatric care in Alamogordo. The offer families with special needs kids early periodic screening diagnostic treatment and assistance in applying for pediatric medically Fragile waiver programs.

## **CHAPARRAL FAMILY HEALTH CENTER**

Presbyterian Medical Services operates a primary care facility in Chaparral, which offers preventative medicine, physicals and wellness screenings, and treatment for chronic illnesses. The clinic also offers dental and behavioral healthcare, and childhood education and senior programs.

## **LA CLINICA DE FAMILIA – CHAPARRAL MEDICAL**

This health clinic in Chaparral offers medical, dental, and behavioral health services for the community, and head start and child development services for families with children 3 years and under.

## **TULAROSA HEALTH CENTER**

Operated by Presbyterian Medical Services, the Tularosa Health Center offers the following services and programs: Medical Care, Pharmacy, Dental Care, Laboratory and Radiology, Patient Education, Women, Infants and Children (WIC), Public Health Nursing, Optometry, and Coordination of Community Services.

## **SACRAMENTO MOUNTAINS MEDICAL CENTER**

Located in Cloudcroft, the Sacramento Mountain Medical Center is operated by Presbyterian Medical Services and offers the following services and programs: Medical Care, Pharmacy, Dental Care, Laboratory and Radiology, Patient Education, Women, Infants and Children (WIC), Public Health Nursing, Optometry, and Coordination of Community Services.

## **NURSING HOME AND ASSISTED LIVING FACILITIES**

There are six nursing and assisted living care facilities in the county.

- Betty Dare Good Samaritan Center in Alamogordo
- Casa Arena Blanca Nursing Center in Alamogordo
- Alamogordo Home Healthcare Care and Hospice

- Mescalero Family Center in Mescalero
- Beehive Homes of Alamogordo
- The Aristocrat Assisted Living Community in Alamogordo

## EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

Otero County is served primarily by three different school districts: Alamogordo Municipal School District, Cloudcroft Municipal School District, and Tularosa Municipal School District. County taxes help support these districts as well as the Gadsden School District, which covers a small portion of the southwest part of the county, and the Alamogordo branch of New Mexico State University.

The County's Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan (ICIP) 2021-2025 has allocated funding for Aces School Building for administrative functions.

### ALAMOGORDO MUNICIPAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Alamogordo Municipal School District encompasses over 3,772 square miles and consists of two high schools, three middle schools, nine elementary schools, one intermediate school, and one primary school. For the 2003-2004 school year, the Alamogordo District school enrollment totaled 6,933 students. There were 122 students in pre-kindergarten, 517 students in kindergarten, 2,544 in elementary school (grades 1-5), 1,651 in middle school (grades 6-8), and 2,099 in high school (grades 9-12).

### CLOUDCROFT MUNICIPAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Cloudcroft Municipal School District comprises one elementary school, one middle school, and one high school with a 2003-2004 school enrollment of 436 students. The district included 115 elementary students, 120 middle school students and 180 high school students. The Cloudcroft School District covers more than 1,456 square miles.

### TULAROSA MUNICIPAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Tularosa Municipal School District has approximately 1,019 students based on 2003-2004 school year enrollments counts and covers over 1,395 square miles. The district consists of three schools including one high school, one middle school, and one elementary school. Of the 1,019 students, 367 were elementary students, 262 were middle school students, and 310 were high school students.

### GADSDEN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Gadsden Independent school District serves the Chaparral community with Chaparral High school, Chaparral Middle School, and Yucca Heights, Sunrise, and Chaparral Elementary Schools. The school district primarily serves the communities of Anthony and Sunland Park in Doña Ana County, New Mexico.

### NEW MEXICO SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

The New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired opened its doors in 1903 to provide the training, support, and resources necessary to prepare blind, visually impaired, and multiple impaired children in New Mexico to fully participate in work, families, and life. Their goals are to provide

academic and compensatory skills training, support and ancillary services and resources to each student, promote advocacy and outreach, and to provide a safe, productive, and nurturing environment for students. It is owned and operated by the State of New Mexico.

## **HIGHER EDUCATION**

Opportunities for higher education can be found locally at the Alamogordo Campus of New Mexico State University (NMSU–Alamogordo). NMSU–Alamogordo offers students bachelor's degrees as well as associate degrees in a variety of programs. It also offers distance education, community education classes, and sponsors a small business development center in Alamogordo that organizes small business workshops. The spring 2002 enrollment at NMSU–Alamogordo was 1,751 students. Additionally, the main New Mexico State University campus in Las Cruces is only 68 miles from Alamogordo. Educational opportunities are also available at Holloman Air Force Base.

There is also an extension of Doña Ana Community College in Chaparral called the Chaparral Center. It is adjacent to the High School and students can take dual-credit courses and can receive their Associate Degree.

## **LIBRARY FACILITIES**

In addition to the libraries serving students in the K-12 schools the following libraries are in Otero County.

### **ALAMOGORDO PUBLIC LIBRARY**

The Alamogordo Public Library had a total budget of \$920,144 for fiscal year 2020 with a staff of 14. The library is partially funded by Otero County for joint use, has contains 102,486 volumes, circulates 197,612 items per year (as of 2017), and serves a population of 30,403 residents. The library offers preschool, tween, and teen programs, internet access, computer and job application assistance, public meeting rooms, and computer workstations available to the public.

### **CLOUDCROFT PUBLIC LIBRARY**

Known as the Michael Nivision Library, this library consists of one librarian and two library aides. The 2017 budget was \$57,108. The library contains 12,587 volumes, circulates 8,012 items per year and serves a population of 674 residents. There are four computer workstations with internet access.

### **TULAROSA PUBLIC LIBRARY**

The Tularosa Public Library offers story time, book talks, and computer classes in addition to after school programs and a summer reading program. As of 2017, the library contains 22,300 volumes, circulates 21,223 items per year, and serves a population of 2,842 residents with a budget of \$49,961.

### **NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY – ALAMOGORDO CAMPUS**

The NMSU–Alamogordo campus library, officially named the David H. Townsend Library, is an academic library open to the public and supported by the library director and two assistants. The library has 49,008 volumes, circulates 5,592 items per year, serves a student population of 1,799.

## **HOLLOWAN AIR FORCE BASE LIBRARY**

The Holloman AFB Library is available to military personnel and their families. In addition to its collection for adults and children, it offers access to a national network of libraries and their collections, workstations with internet access, a 3D printer, and numerous other programs.

## **MESCALERO COMMUNITY LIBRARY**

The Mescalero Community Library has a collection of 11,650 volumes, circulates 6,000 items per year, and serves a population of 3,613. The library has 12 computers with internet access and a staff of two.

## **CHAPARRAL LIBRARY**

There is an effort underway to open a library in Chaparral since the community is without one aside from the school libraries.

## **BOOKMOBILE**

The New Mexico State Library operates three bookmobiles in the state to provide books and information to rural residents who have no local library service. Each bookmobile carries up to 4,000 volumes and makes a monthly route of regularly scheduled stops in the rural communities within its region. The Bookmobile East region stops at the Piñon Store, Sacramento Post Office, Mayhill Post Office, High Rolls - Tunnel, and La Luz Senior Citizens Center.

## **PARKS AND RECREATION**

Parks and recreation facilities in the area are primarily owned and operated by the City of Alamogordo or private organizations, such as the golf courses listed in the tourism section of the Economic Development Element. The County is responsible for the County Fairgrounds and public rifle range.

## **OTERO COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS**

The 37-acre County Fairgrounds is used for events throughout the year, including the County Fair, horse shows, dance, animal clinics, and a Rattlesnake Round-up. It is also home to the Otero County/New Mexico State University Extension Service and master gardener association. It is owned primarily by the County, except for a City-owned portion of the parking lot.

## **SIDNEY PAUL GORDON SHOOTING RANGE**

The Otero County Rifle Range (also known as the Sidney Paul Gordon Shooting Range) is owned by the County. It is a supervised shooting range for rifles, pistols, shotguns, and archery. Ranges available include 360-yard and 200-yard rifle ranges, a 60-yard archery range, a 50-yard pistol range, and four 45-yard general purpose ranges. The range is home to the Otero Practical Shooting Association which stages weekend competitions. The range offers basic education classes in handling these weapons as well as in home protection and hunter education. Qualifying classes are also held for the state, county, and local departments of public safety and for the US Border Control.

## CITY OF ALAMOGORDO PARKS

The City of Alamogordo Parks Division maintains 300 acres of parks and sports-related areas to provide an improved quality of life to the residents of Alamogordo. In addition to the Parks Department, the Alamogordo Recreation Department offers a wide range of fitness, sports activities, programs, and special events which augment a schedule of year-round leisure services and recreation for the community. The department operates and maintains 34 parks, courts, golf courses, medians, and fields.

## FAMILY RECREATION CENTER

Located in Alamogordo, the Family Recreation Center provides residents and visitors of all ages a variety of activities, services, and programs for fitness and fun. The facility contains a pool that is open year-round, a basketball and volleyball gym, a multi-purpose room designed for yoga, dance, and fitness classes as well as for meetings or parties; a youth activities area with big screen TV, pool table, air hockey table, and ping pong table, a weight room with free weights, fitness machines, and heavy bags, and a childcare facility free to members. The Family Recreation Center can be rented for private events and hosts an "After School Frenzy" program, day camp programs, youth leagues, and special events such as craft shows and holiday festivals.

## LAW ENFORCEMENT

### OTERO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

The Sheriff's Office coordinates law enforcement and public safety for Otero County. The Sheriff's Office operates out of a main office in Alamogordo and two sub-stations in: 1) Chaparral and 2) the Sacramento Mountains. The Sheriff's Office has an arrangement to form a major crime team that coordinates efforts among officers from Alamogordo Public Safety, New Mexico State patrollers, and Otero County officers to address the crime across jurisdictions. The County Sheriff's Office operates on a budget funded out of the Otero County General Fund. The Sheriff's Office also receives some funds from the federal government for federal property within the county in lieu of taxes. The County's ICIP allocated funding for a new fleet of vehicles for the Sheriff's Office in fiscal year 2021-2025.

Otero County Sheriff's Office is in Alamogordo and includes a Dispatch Center and reverse 911 that keeps registered residents informed of emergencies. All 911 emergency calls from cell phones are routed through the Sheriff's Office. All 911 emergency calls from cell phones and land lines located outside Alamogordo's city limits are routed through the Sheriff's Office. Calls made from land lines within Alamogordo connect to the County Department of Public Safety in Alamogordo. The operator at the Sheriff's Office dispatches information to the closest responders and send the appropriate response team from local police or fire departments and the County Sheriff's Office based on the location and type of incident.

The Sheriff's Office experienced its first raise since 2015 in July 2019. As of September 2019, the Sheriff's Office was authorized to have 44 certified officers with a starting hourly wage is \$18.51; at the time the office had 40 officers and 10 openings for deputies, court security, transport, animal control

officers, and dispatchers. Otero County's wages are lower than adjacent Lincoln County where certified deputies start at \$23.68 per hour. The Sheriff's Office also employs Reserve Deputies, trained community volunteers who undergo background checks. Reserve Deputies provide security at County events, including the County Fair and are on call to assist the department during emergencies or when needed. The Sheriff's Office includes several programs to ensure safety in the county.

#### ***Child and Senior Identification Program***

This is a proactive program run by the Sheriff's Office in partnership with law enforcement agencies throughout the state and community organizations in the area to help identify children and seniors should they go missing. Parents and guardians of children and seniors can get their fingerprints, photos, and descriptions so in case of an emergency they are equipped with this valuable information.

#### ***Crime Stoppers***

This is community policing program that enables members of the community to anonymously report information about a crime. Eyewitnesses are encouraged to provide helpful information that can lead to the arrest of the criminal and are rewarded.

#### ***Neighborhood Watch Program***

This is another proactive community policy program run by the Sheriff's Office that encourages residents to keep their properties visible and safe through property landscaping, security systems, window treatment, lighting, and reporting suspicious behavior.

#### ***OffenderWatch***

OffenderWatch® is a community notification tool that keeps communities informed of registered sex offenders in real-time through an email alert system.

### **OTERO COUNTY PRISON FACILITY**

The Otero County Prison Facility is in the southern part of the county on US 54 and is operated by the private company Management and Training Corporation. It is a maximum-security facility that can hold up to 1,421 inmates. The facility prepares inmates for re-entry into society by providing educational, vocational, substance abuse, cognitive behavioral, and life skills programs. It employs more than 300 staff with starting hourly wages of \$18.66. It generates \$681,802 of County revenue and estimates its local spending to be more than \$4.5 million. The facility has been nationally recognized for its educational and reform programs and has a Community Relations Board that includes representation from the County and area leaders.

### **OTERO COUNTY DETENTION CENTER**

The County runs a detention center located near Holloman Air Force Base on Highway 70. Inmates are provided with medical, religious, and social services as well as access to GED classes and Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous. The detention center operates two programs that assist with re-entry:

#### ***Community Custody Program***

Inmates with Court approval can be reintegrated into the community while they are electronically monitored and receive community-based supervision and treatment. The program is meant to help

with re-entry into the community and workforce while reducing overcrowding and the strain on tax dollars.

### ***Work Release Program***

Like the Community Custody Program, the Work Release Program allows Court-approved inmates to seek employment while incarcerated. The inmate is subject to random drug testing and visits at their place of employment.

## **OTERO COUNTY PROCESSING CENTER**

The US Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement division (ICE) operates an immigrant processing center near the Otero County Prison Facility off US 54 just north of Chaparral.

## **UNITED STATES BORDER PATROL**

The US Border Patrol opened its station in Alamogordo has 10 Patrol Inspectors. The station area is 16,285 square miles and has two Border Patrol checkpoints along US 70 and 54. Otero County is near the US-Mexican border and has been impacted by the border relations and federal decisions. From April to August of 2019, staff at six federal inspection checkpoints were relocated to the border to process asylum seekers, leaving the two checkpoints in Otero County unstaffed. The County declared a state of emergency due to the possibility of illegal narcotics coming in from Mexico and increasing crime in the county.

## **NEW MEXICO STATE POLICE**

The New Mexico State Police's District 8 is headquartered in Alamogordo and serves both Otero and Lincoln counties. According to the State Police's latest Annual Report, District 8 has 14 officers who responded to approximately 3,000 calls for service and made 645 arrests in 2015.

## **ALAMOGORDO POLICE DEPARTMENT**

Fully staffed, the Alamogordo Police Department should have 77 officers according to the FBI recommended ratio of 2.4 officers per 1,000 residents, but as of September 2019 the Department had 45 officers. In addition to two lieutenants, four sergeants in the patrol division, the Police Department has one community relations sergeant and runs Alamogordo Animal Control and Animal Shelter.

## **ALAMOGORDO ANIMAL CONTROL**

The Animal Control in Alamogordo's mission is to educate the public in its awareness of ordinances and laws concerning animals and to control the animal population.

## **TULAROSA POLICE DEPARTMENT**

The Tularosa Police Department has the goal of having a staff of seven officers in addition to its police chief, but as of September 2019, it was short 3 officers.

## **CLOUDCROFT POLICE DEPARTMENT**

The Village of Cloudcroft is operated by its police chief and two police officers.

# COMMUNITY FACILITY/SERVICE ISSUES

## COMMUNITY FACILITIES

There is an interest in long-term improvements to the County Fairgrounds, library services (including digital materials), and more recreation facilities, especially for younger people.

*"There needs to be a study group to look at long term improvements to the Fairgrounds."*

*Community Survey Response*

## COUNTY GOVERNANCE

*"Expand the County Commission to 5 or 7 people. With only 3 people on the Commission, it's too easy to 'stack the deck'."*

*Community Survey Response*

Some residents believe County administration and leadership needs improvements and better checks and balances. Some think the County Commission should be expanded to include 5 or 7 people for a more inclusive representation of residents and better checks and balances. Some think there needs to be better review of public sector dollars including review of effectiveness of staff.

## SERVICES

### EDUCATION

Some residents believe the schools in Otero County are not providing students quality education and should be preparing students for living wage jobs either in trades, renewable energy, or medical services. Workforce training and education is discussed in more detail in the Economic Development chapter.

### MEDICAL SERVICES

Another issue is that more retirees from the military are staying in Otero County, generating a need for more medical services for this population, which typically is covered by the US Government. County residents rely primarily on services in the municipalities—mainly Alamogordo—but some community members thought the County should provide health services to residents in rural areas.

### LAW ENFORCEMENT

Law enforcement in Otero County is controlled by the County Sheriff, who is an elected official. The physical geography of the county presents response time, coverage, and funding challenges. Because the size of the county, County manpower limitations and

*"More police and sheriff deputies are needed, but the pay is far too low to get them."*

*Community Survey Response*

land management responsibilities, there are several cooperating agreements with agencies. Law enforcement is provided through the cooperative efforts of multiple agencies. The Sheriff is the highest-ranking law enforcement official in the county.

## DESIRED SERVICES

### COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Participants in the 2020 comprehensive planning process would like more recreational opportunities for its residents, such as new or improved trails, parks with water features and shade, and an indoor swimming pool. There is interest in continuing to modernize and improve the library facilities (offering more digital services) and parks so they can continue to serve families.

### MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES

Community members expressed the need for more health care providers at clinics dispersed throughout the county. The lack of doctors, mental health professionals was discussed as an issue. Providing medical training in Alamogordo would help improve job prospects for locals and provide residents with needed services. There is also the need to share information about the health services, so people know what is available.

### LAW ENFORCEMENT

In the future, the Sheriff's Office, in cooperation with other agencies, would provide 24-hour coverage throughout Otero County with an enhanced response time. The County will promote community education and involvement towards prevention and will aim to boost volunteerism and participation of reserve deputies.

## GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

**GOAL 1. Residents of Otero County have access to quality health care, community services, and recreational opportunities.**

**POLICY 1. Work toward making health care services more available to residents in rural areas of the county.**

Action 1. Meet with local and regional healthcare providers to discuss options for providing more medical services in rural areas, such as a traveling nurse practitioner and internet satellite links to larger medical facilities, and better transportation to and broadband infrastructure in existing facilities.

Action 2. Work with NMSU to expand nursing, mental health, and medical professional programs available in Alamogordo.

**POLICY 2. Prioritize recreation opportunities and improvements.**

Action 3. Inventory opportunities for the following recreational facilities (indoor and outdoor) throughout the county, including joint use with municipalities or with private entities (motels, golf courses) and evaluate the need and priority for the following:

- Recreation and hiking trails
- Indoor swimming pools
- Parks with water features

Action 4. Develop a County Recreation Master Plan, with community input, to coordinate joint use of existing facilities, locate and plan new facilities, and develop access to public land for recreation.

Action 5. Hire a recreation planner.

**GOAL 2. Otero residents receive quality education that prepares them for living wage jobs.**

**POLICY 1. Partner with school districts and NMSU-Alamogordo to provide workforce readiness and career opportunities for students.**

Action 1. Use County resources to enhance education.

- Provide on-job training.
- Work with fire departments and local government, film, medical, and legal professionals to develop mentorship and internship programs for students.

Action 2. Implement a successful visual and performing arts program throughout the county.

Action 3. Encourage early involvement of art in new construction and renovation processes

- Devote a small percentage of county construction funds derived from general obligation bonds or certain revenue bonds to purchase or commission public works of art.

**POLICY 2. Support the County's Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan.**

Action 1. Follow through on the ICIP 2021-2025's allocated funding for Aces School Building for administrative functions with legislative funding requests and other funding applications or requests as opportunities become available.

**POLICY 3. Establish a countywide library system.**

- Action 1. Evaluate ways to expand library services throughout the county.
- Action 2. Explore expanding State's Bookmobile services.
- Action 3. Consider establishing branch libraries in existing facilities connected with the main library through the Internet and inventory potential sites.
- Action 4. Utilize State library funding and apply for grants.

**GOAL 3. Otero County Sheriff's Office has the resources to provide quality protection.**

POLICY 1. *Provide 24-hour law enforcement coverage by the Sheriff's Office throughout Otero County.*

- Action 1. Secure an annual budget sufficient to hire enough officers with competitive salaries to patrol on a 24-hour basis.
- Action 2. Support the ICIP's allocation for the new fleet of vehicles for the Sheriff's Office with legislative funding requests and other funding applications as opportunities become available.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

The implementation strategy for community facilities and services goals takes advantage of existing facilities and joint use opportunities, while directing County resources toward filling in the gaps in an economical way. The implementation action, responsible party, and potential funding sources are listed in Table 9-1. The Implementation Chapter of this plan provides more details on funding sources, resources, and the implementation process.

**TABLE 9-1. IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMUNITY FACILITY AND SERVICE GOALS**

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
<b>Goal 1. Residents of Otero County have access to quality health care, community services, and recreational opportunities.</b>		
<i>Policy 1. Work toward making health care services more available to residents in rural areas of the county.</i>		
Meet with local and regional healthcare providers to discuss options for providing more medical services in rural areas, such as a traveling nurse practitioner and internet satellite links to larger medical facilities, and better transportation to and broadband infrastructure in existing facilities.	Otero County Health-care Services Dept; private medical service providers	N/A
Work with NMSU to expand nursing, mental health, and medical professional programs available in	Otero County; NMSU; EAWDB; OCEDC; SNMEDD	State Funds

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
Alamogordo.		
<i>Policy 2. Prioritize recreation opportunities and improvements.</i>		
Inventory opportunities for the following recreational facilities (indoor and outdoor) throughout the county, including joint use with municipalities or with private entities (motels, golf courses) and evaluate the need and priority for the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Recreation and hiking trails</li> <li>– Indoor swimming pools</li> <li>– Parks with water features</li> </ul>	Otero County; municipalities/colonias; private businesses; NM Outdoor Recreation Division	NM Outdoor Equity Fund; NM Special Projects and Infrastructure Fund; NPS; LWCF; EDD
Develop a County Recreation Master Plan, with community input, to coordinate joint use of existing facilities, locate and plan new facilities, and develop access to public land for recreation.	Otero County; NM Outdoor Recreation Division; municipalities/colonias; federal and state land management agencies	CDBG
Hire a recreation planner.	Otero County	General Fund
<b>Goal 2. Otero residents receive quality education that prepares them for living wage jobs.</b>		
<i>Policy 1. Partner with school districts and NMSU-Alamogordo to provide workforce readiness and career opportunities for students.</i>		
Use County resources to enhance education. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Provide on-job training and trades apprenticeships.</li> <li>– Work with fire departments and local government, film, medical, and legal professionals to develop mentorship and internship programs for students.</li> </ul>	Otero County; municipalities/colonias; NMSU-Alamogordo; school districts serving Otero County; Otero County Film Office	LEDA Funds; WIOA Funds; Job Training Incentive Program (JTIP) Funds
Implement a successful visual and performing arts program throughout the county.	Otero County; Flickinger Center; OCEDC; DCA; NM Arts	NMArts.org Grants
Encourage early involvement of art in new construction and renovation processes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Devote a small percentage of county construction funds derived from general obligation bonds or certain revenue bonds to purchase or commission public works of art.</li> </ul>	Otero County; OCEDC; DCA; NM Arts	NMArts.org Grants; DCA Arts Grants
<i>Policy 2. Support the County's Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan.</i>		
Follow through on the ICIP 2021-2025's allocated funding for Aces School Building for administrative functions with legislative funding requests and other funding	Otero County	Capital Outlay

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
applications or requests as opportunities become available.		
<b>Policy 3. Establish a countywide library system.</b>		
Evaluate ways to expand library services throughout the county.	Otero County; municipalities/colonias	State Grants to Libraries
Explore expanding State's Bookmobile services.	Otero County; NM State Library; Bookmobile	State Grants to Libraries
Consider establishing branch libraries in existing facilities connected with the main library through the internet and inventory potential sites.	Otero County; municipalities/colonias; NM State Library	State Grants to Libraries
Utilize State library funding and apply for grants.	Otero County; NM State Library	State Grants to Libraries
<b>Goal 3. Otero County Sheriff's Office has the resources to provide quality protection.</b>		
<i>Policy 1. Provide 24-hour law enforcement coverage by the Sheriff's Office throughout Otero County.</i>		
Secure an annual budget sufficient to hire enough officers with competitive salaries to patrol on a 24-hour basis.	Otero County	General Fund
Support the ICIP's allocation for the new fleet of vehicles for the Sheriff's Office with legislative funding requests and other funding applications as opportunities become available.	Otero County	Capital Outlay

# Infrastructure

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This Chapter addresses Otero County's infrastructure conditions and necessary improvements. Infrastructure is grouped into two categories: 1) wet utilities, which includes water distribution, stormwater, wastewater, and solid waste; and 2) dry utilities, which includes electricity, gas, and communications.

Maintaining quality and reliable infrastructure is essential to a community's quality of life and well-being.

## COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

- Work with the State to provide broadband to the communities in Otero County. Reliable broadband can attract small-footprint, low-water use businesses.
- Continue to strive towards water conservation and innovation to sustain the county's water supply.
- Continue to work on watershed management, including management of stormwater runoff to improve and maintain the health of Otero County's watersheds and reduce flooding in our communities.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

### WET UTILITIES

Although Otero County is not directly responsible for domestic water transmission or distribution, County leadership and residents are concerned with future sustainability of water and access in the next 20 years.

#### WATER SUPPLY

Water supply for the residents of Otero County comes from various sources and is not directly part of the County's services. In general, water infrastructure throughout the state is aging. Domestic water is provided by each individual municipality or community within the county, including private water companies and Mutual Domestic Water Consumer Associations (MDWCAs). The County follows the Office of the State Engineer (OSE) guidelines in making decisions on water use within the county. The County is concerned the depletion rate per year will deplete much of the water supply in the current generation. The County continues to work with state authorities to better understand the aquifer and

to manage it for sustainability. Chapter 4, Natural Resources describes the county's natural water sources.

### ***Tularosa–Sacramento–Salt Basins Regional Water Plan, 2016***

The OSE requires a 40-year water management plan from municipal water utilities and enforces water conservation measures. Water issues and recommendations for Otero County are addressed in the Tularosa–Sacramento–Salt Basins Regional Water Plan, 2016 (an update of the Regional Water Plan 2000 – 2040). The County is also continually seeking new technologies in water conservation and will amend future conservation plans and specific plans according to technological advances.

### ***Brackish Groundwater National Desalination Research Facility***

The Bureau of Reclamation opened a desalination research facility in Alamogordo in 2007 to develop technologies to desalinate groundwater. The facility has water storage and distribution lines for desalinated water. The Bureau is working to integrate renewable energy in the desalination process, creating off-grid desalination units that can work remotely, as well as developing desalination technology to treat water affected by oil and gas production. The facility's equipment and technology are available to government agencies, businesses, and universities through Facility Use Agreements.

### ***Brackish Water Treatment Facility***

In 2017, the City of Alamogordo approved a \$9.5 million contract to build the Brackish Water Treatment Facility, which will treat groundwater and make it usable for consumption. This desalination plant is part of the Alamogordo Regional Water Supply Project and will work in conjunction with the City's Snake Tank Well Field north of Alamogordo to provide Alamogordo with another source of water. The City's main source of water was Bonito Lake, which has been contaminated since the Little Bear Fire in 2012. The 1.0 MGD facility was expected to be complete in 2019 with the potential for expansion to 4.0 MGD in future phases.

### ***Alamogordo-Tularosa Administrative Area Guidelines for Review of Water Rights Applications***

The OSE issued an update the Area Guidelines in 2014, which "promote the orderly development of water resources" in the Alamogordo-Tularosa Administrative Area (ATAA). The guidelines meet statutory obligations regarding "non-impairment to existing water rights, availability of unappropriated water, conservation of water within the state, and public welfare of the state." Drawdowns with relatively small impact will be allowed until 2050; because fresh water sources are limited, allowances will be more stringent.

## **STORM WATER DRAINAGE**

Otero County utilizes historic arroyos for storm drainage. Otero County maintains drainage on County roads and ditches. The County also works with federal agencies after fire disasters to address the enhanced flooding potential created by fire damage. As introduced in Chapter 4, Natural Resources, the Otero SWCD manages a watershed restoration and runoff program that addresses stormwater drainage and overall watershed health. The program maintains watershed health by constructing dams and diversions in arroyos, drainage ditches, swales, or channels that help control stormwater runoff. The District shows property owners how to build net wire diversions or dams built from wood logs, stone, pea gravel-filled sandbags, bricks, or cement to control and reduce arroyo/channel

erosion, slow runoff speeds, and allow the sediment to establish. See Chapter 12, Hazard Mitigation for discussion on flood control.

## **WASTEWATER**

Otero County does not provide wastewater collection or treatment for county residents. The local incorporated communities are responsible for wastewater collection and treatment facilities. The rural areas outside municipal entities typically utilize septic systems for wastewater disposal. The community of Chaparral in the southern region of the county is served by Doña Ana County wastewater treatment plant.

## **SOLID WASTE**

Otero County's Solid Waste Department is sustainably minded and seeks ways to manage the county's waste and create an earth friendly environment by addressing solid waste reduction and recycling. The Department provides solid waste disposal for residents at four manned sites and several other unmanned sites dispersed throughout the county, including Alamogordo, Tularosa, Bent, Weed, Piñon, and Chaparral. The department offers recycling services at the local convenience centers for standard materials items and encourages recycling of multiple materials so they may be repurposed for other uses. It also offers educational information to residents about the benefits of recycling and reducing waste.

## **DRY UTILITIES**

### **ELECTRICITY**

The Public Service Company of New Mexico (PNM) is the largest electricity provider in New Mexico and has an office in Alamogordo. PNM's service area in Otero County only includes Tularosa and Alamogordo. Otero County Electric Cooperative provides electricity to 14,000 consumers across 2,793 miles of distribution line in Otero, Lincoln, Chaves, and Socorro counties. The cooperative offers an energy efficiency program to its customers that allows them to get rebates for taking steps to reduce their energy consumption. Rio Grande Electric serves 13,421 consumers living in Eddy and Otero counties on 9,900 miles of distribution line.

### **SOLAR**

In the last ten years, PNM has built two solar farms in Otero County. First, the company built a 5-megawatt solar center in Alamogordo in 2011. Then two years later in 2013 it built a 7.5-megawatt farm on 70 acres southeast of Tularosa on US 70 and County Road 545. These facilities generate enough electricity for close to 4,000 homes per year. In 2014, the Otero County Electric Cooperative built a solar garden that generates energy to serve 23 homes and is planning an expansion to double its output.

### **GAS**

New Mexico Gas Company provides natural gas transmission and distribution to a large portion of Otero County and has an office in Alamogordo. New Mexico Gas Company's South-Central distribution system serves communities in and around Alamogordo, Tularosa, La Luz, Boles Acres,

Chaparral, Holloman Air Force Base, and White Sands Missile Range. The Mountain communities rely on liquid propane gas for their energy needs, which is available by private suppliers.

## COMMUNICATIONS

Telephone service providers include Tularosa Basin Telephone Company, Inc. and Tularosa Communications, Inc. (TBTC & TCI), a local phone and internet provider based in Tularosa; Peñasco Valley Telephone Cooperative (PVT), a local phone, tv, and internet company with 100 employees in Southeast New Mexico; and TDS, a national phone, internet, and tv provider.

Cellular phone services are also available throughout the region provided by national carriers, including AT&T, Sprint, Verizon, and Metro T-Mobile.

Fiber optic mainline cables run from Alamogordo to Albuquerque and El Paso and highspeed internet service is available in those areas. Internet service is offered by the following local and nationwide providers:

- TBTC & TCI provides broadband internet service to Alamogordo, Cloudcroft, and Tularosa. The company is aiming to provide Gigabit Fiber Internet Service in Alamogordo and is encouraging residents who live within select neighborhoods to sign up and put down a deposit of \$10. When 25 percent of select neighborhood signs up, TCI will construct the fiber to reach those neighborhoods.
- TDS offers highspeed (up to 600 Mbps) internet in Alamogordo.
- ZiaNet Inc. is a locally owned and operated Internet Service Provider in New Mexico.
- Windstream provides residential internet in the northernmost part of Otero County.
- Southwestern Wireless provides 5 Mbps internet speeds in most of Otero except for the Sacramento Mountains.
- Hughesnet is a national company that provides 25 Mbps internet speeds.

# INFRASTRUCTURE ISSUES

## WATER SUPPLY

The reality of the Tularosa Basin requires long-term planning to maintain a sustainable water supply for Otero County. The Regional Water Plan addresses population growth over the next 40 years with long-term conversation and actions. The County should continue to take a proactive role in the many water issues facing the area to ensure a sustainable water supply for the future. There are only 25 private water companies in the state because of the amount of regulation and expense. There are 154 MDWCAs statewide and some think they are given an advantage and more favorable state policies.

Other water issues facing the County are the location of abundant and quality water. Much of the potable water within the County is in the southern region where it is less populated. In the densely populated northern areas, potable water supply is significantly less. The focus on desalination plants will help in attaining a new consumable water supply and will offset the loss of the Bonito Lake water

supply until it has been fully restored. The long-term sustainability of pumping groundwater for desalination purposes will need to be studied to ensure unintended side effects do not impact the ecosystem.

The City of El Paso owns farms and water rights in New Mexico and is drilling wells that removes water from New Mexico and pumps it into Texas. This trend is continuing as more land is being bought. Addressing the amount of water leaving the state and the county is necessary.

## STORM WATER DRAINAGE

Stormwater drainage projects should be prioritized to reduce erosion and improve the watershed health in the Sacramento Mountains and its canyons and foothills. Ongoing flooding from stormwater is addressed in Chapter 12, Hazard Mitigation. Given the water supply issues, the County and its partners should investigate localized largescale stormwater and wastewater management and filtration that can be used to for agricultural purposes.

The County's Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan (ICIP) 2021-2025 allocated funding for three water crossings at Riata Road and Pecos, Appler Road, and Suzy Anne Street.

## WASTEWATER

Otero County recognizes septic systems are a potential source of groundwater pollution. The County will work with New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) to mitigate any existing problems and embrace new technology as it is developed and available.

## COMMUNICATIONS

While some Otero County residents and stakeholders expressed internet coverage was adequate, many think it needs improvement, especially in the areas outside Alamogordo and Tularosa. In most parts of the county, cell phone coverage is considered unreliable. Mountainous and rural eastern Otero County is not serviced. Providers say they offer certain speeds, but they are not actually available. Poor and unreliable internet and cell phone coverage limits business and economic development.

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*"Internet access is fine in urban areas but for the other 50-80% of the county it is non-existent, slow and very expensive."*

Community Survey Response

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# DESIRED FUTURE INFRASTRUCTURE CONDITIONS

## WATER SUPPLY

Otero County ensures water supply to meet the future water needs of its residents. To accomplish this, local municipalities, outlying communities, and the County should work together to plan a potable water system for the region. The County should participate in regional water systems' task forces, mediate water disputes, and support private water companies and MDWCAs in their missions to provide water to Otero County residents. The County will secure a sustainable potable water supply for its residents by 1) reducing the depletion rate per year; developing a watershed management plan; 2) desalinating groundwater and researching its impacts on the ecosystem, 3) monitoring leak-proof and long-term storage catchments at the base of canyons with perennial streams and flood flows, and 4) initiating water reclamation programs countywide.

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*"The County and City [of Alamogordo] need to work together to ensure that both of their infrastructure growth plans are compatible. New developments and businesses need to be focused on the areas where there will be planned infrastructure improvements."*

Community Survey Response

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## STORMWATER DRAINAGE

The County will continue to strive to provide a safe and high quality of life for county residents through well-maintained and adequate stormwater drainage structures and control methods in partnership with municipalities. Methods to prevent flooding could serve a dual purpose of recharging the aquifer and supplementing the water supply.

## WASTEWATER

Due to environmental concerns, health issues, and continued growth, wastewater treatment and collection improvements may be needed in the future. Inadequate wastewater systems are a major contributor to shallow groundwater aquifer pollution. New technology exists to mitigate this circumstance. The County should prioritize wastewater treatment that explores water reclamation and reuse. Some residents would like to see a more innovative approach to gray water and rainwater so it can be used efficiently for landscaping.

A sewer system is needed along Hwy 54 in Chaparral in place of septic systems. Businesses will not locate in Chaparral if they must rely on a septic system. The community would like the County's support in extending Chaparral's sewer lines.

## SOLID WASTE

The County expanded its solid waste infrastructure and recycling capacity and will continue to strive to educate community members to reduce their waste by repurposing and recycling materials and will expand as needed to serve residents.

## GAS AND ELECTRICITY

The Chaparral community is interested in having more gas lines available. There has been some expansion of gas lines recently. Residents must pool their money to pay for the street line and then pay for individual line. It would be more streamlined if the main line was paid for through public/private investment, which has proven successful in Chaparral's new health center. All the new subdivisions have gas, but the older parts of town do not. Tierra has given loans to help people afford the gas line and individual connection. Chaparral is particularly interested in utilizing renewable energy; one of the largest solar energy projects in southern New Mexico is in Chaparral.

The County will continue to encourage development of renewable energy facilities to serve its residents. Private gas suppliers will continue to provide a reliable source of gas energy for Otero County. Public, private, and local electric cooperatives will continue to provide reliable power for Otero County.

## COMMUNICATIONS

Broadband should be expanded so municipalities and rural Otero County have reliable cell phone and internet service. Better, more reliable service will serve existing businesses, including medical facilities, and can attract more businesses, especially those operate virtually and require little water use. These types of digitally based businesses offer living wage jobs and can operate anywhere with reliable internet, even out of home offices. Improved broadband will also increase the opportunity for telemedicine so residents can access health care without travel, which will be especially helpful to those in remote areas. Attracting businesses that are willing to relocate to Otero County would make the County less dependent on the Department of Defense for jobs.

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*"Broadband development for rural areas is a must."*

*Community Survey Response*

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# GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

**GOAL 1. Otero County's watersheds and water sources are healthy, protected, and optimized for long-term sustainability.**

**POLICY 1. Promote watershed health and water conservation.**

Action 1. Work with the US Forest Service and other federal land managers in a collaborative effort to restore surface water

flow and groundwater recharge in watersheds to historical conditions and to make historic water yield a consideration in US Forest Service planning documents.

Action 2. Initiate and develop a County Watershed Management Plan that addresses watershed health, water supply, distribution, aquifer pumping, storage, and recovery.

Action 3. Work with other state, locals, and federal agencies to balance withdrawals from the aquifer with the recharge in that respective watershed or area.

Action 4. Work with the Mescalero Apache Tribe, sawmills, and the US Forest Service to restore healthy forest conditions in the Sacramento Mountains.

Action 5. Initiate programs to recharge freshwater aquifer at higher elevations.

Action 6. Improve agricultural irrigation water efficiency.

Action 7. Utilize flood prevention methods to serve a dual purpose of recharging the aquifer and supplementing the water supply.

**POLICY 2. Develop new sustainable sources of water.**

Action 1. Continue to support and collaborate with the desalination projects.

Action 2. Identify desalination's potential long-term effects on ecosystem and water supply and adjust desalination efforts to maintain long-term aquifer health.

Action 3. Explore the feasibility of distributing water from aquifers in the south to the populated areas in the north.

Action 4. Support development of new water well fields in the alluvial fans.

Action 5. Construct long-term storage cabinets at the bases of canyons and streams.

Action 6. Study and support efforts to reclaim gray and wastewater for irrigation purposes.

**POLICY 3. Proactively address water issues to ensure long-term sustainability for future generations.**

Action 1. Create a basis of cooperation and communication with other counties that share water sources with Otero County.

Action 2. Continue to update the regional water plan that plans for Otero County's water usage with 60-year planning horizon.

Action 3. Initiate and develop the County's 40-Year Water Plan.

**POLICY 4. Promote water conservation at all levels of the region.**

Action 1. Work with local citizen groups to promote awareness and use of water conservation techniques in the community.

- Action 2. Require new construction to include appropriate water-conserving measures including low-flow fixtures, water-conserving appliances, and low-volume irrigation systems and to provide water conservation incentives.
- Action 3. Explore aquifer management to ensure sustainable water without depleting the aquifer more than one acre-foot per year.
- Action 4. Develop a program to encourage existing consumers to retrofit with appropriate water-conserving appliances and low-volume irrigation systems.
- Action 5. Enforce County regulations including the subdivision ordinance and water conservation ordinance.
- Action 6. Follow the Public Land Use Advisory Council (PLUAC) recommendations to control current water use and supplies.

**POLICY 5. Study the hydrogeology of Otero County.**

- Action 1. Work with federal agencies to collect any existing water-related data, especially regarding recharge, desalination, and aquifer recovery.
- Action 2. Supplement existing data with new hydrological studies in the county.
- Action 3. Integrate findings into the Regional Watershed Plan to ensure long-term sustainability.

**GOAL 2. Otero County's well-maintained stormwater drainage infrastructure provides residents a safe and high quality of life.**

**POLICY 1. Prioritize stormwater drainage improvements that protect watershed health, residents, and property.**

- Action 1. Secure funding to study the drainage basins, patterns, and anticipated flows of the area using existing studies as a starting point.
- Action 2. Design and construct drainage infrastructure that serves a dual purpose of utilizing the water and keeping it from flooding properties and roads.
- Action 3. Work with municipalities and property owners to incorporate dual-purpose systems into their future flood control projects.
- Action 4. Follow through on the ICIP's funding allocation for three water crossings at Riata Road and Pecos, Appler Road, and Suzy Anne Street with legislative funding requests and other available funding opportunities.
- Action 5. Review and revise the Otero County's subdivision ordinance to ensure drainage upholds the Comprehensive Plan's stormwater drainage goals.

**GOAL 3. Otero County uses wastewater systems that protect the environment, reuses water, and protects groundwater quality.**

POLICY 1. *The County encourages wastewater management systems that mitigate potential pollution.*

- Action 1. Encourage reclamation and reuse of graywater.
- Action 2. Promote the development or extension of centralized wastewater service where population density is high.
- Action 3. Promote and regulate environmentally friendly wastewater systems and increase public awareness.
- Action 4. Support the continued used of permitted septic tank/leach field systems where appropriate.

**GOAL 4. Otero County is a leader in waste reduction, reuse, and recycling.**

POLICY 1. *Provide innovative solid waste collection for Otero County residents and businesses.*

- Action 1. Continue to initiate solid waste reduction, reuse, and recycling innovation at Otero County disposal facilities.
- Action 2. Prepare public awareness campaign to encourage residents and businesses to reduce solid waste.

**GOAL 5. Otero County has ample energy sources and communication technology to support a sustainable, high quality of life.**

POLICY 1. *Utilize renewable energy sources to supplement gas and electrical energy needs.*

- Action 1. Incentivize development of more solar farms to increase the county's reliance on renewable energy and decrease reliance on oil and gas.
- Action 2. Work with the State's Office of Renewable Energy to determine feasibility of wind farms in Otero County and attract more renewable energy facilities.

POLICY 2. *Ensure Otero County residents and businesses' energy needs are met.*

- Action 1. Continue to support private, public, and cooperative electric and gas companies in serving countywide.
- Action 2. Encourage energy efficiency and conservation programs with incentives, rebates, and public awareness campaigns.

POLICY 3. *Prioritize reliable broadband throughout the county.*

Action 1. Work with the State and service providers to establish a plan to construct fiber lines for broadband so municipalities and rural Otero County have reliable cell phone and internet service.

Action 2. Promote better, more reliable service as an economic development tool that will allow the county to grow sustainably and diversify its economy without impacts on natural resources, especially water.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

Table 10-1 lists implementation actions, responsibilities, and potential funding sources to meet the County's water supply, stormwater drainage, wastewater, solid waste, electricity, gas, and communication goals. The Implementation Chapter of this plan provides more details on funding sources, resources, and the implementation process.

**TABLE 10-1. IMPLEMENTATION OF INFRASTRUCTURE GOALS**

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
<b>Goal 1. Otero County's watersheds and water sources are healthy, protected, and optimized for long-term sustainability.</b>		
<i>Policy 1. Promote watershed health and water conservation.</i>		
Work with the US Forest Service and other federal land managers in a collaborative effort to restore surface water flow and groundwater recharge in watersheds to historical conditions and to make historic water yield a consideration in US Forest Service planning documents.	Otero County; USFS; BLM; DOD; NPS (WHSAs)	CWSRF; Clean Water Act funding; NM Environment Dept Nonpoint Source Control and Surface and Ground Water Pollution Control; EPA Water Quality Management
Initiate and develop a County Watershed Management Plan that addresses watershed health, water supply, distribution, aquifer pumping, storage, and recovery.	Otero County	Planning; EPA Wetlands Protection Program; EPA Assessment and Watershed Protection Support
Work with other state, locals, and federal agencies to balance withdrawals from the aquifer with the recharge in that respective watershed or area.	Otero County; NM Department of Agriculture; NPS (WHSAs)	N/A
Work with the Mescalero Apache Tribe, sawmills, and the US Forest Service to restore healthy forest conditions in the Sacramento Mountains.	Otero County; Mescalero Apache Tribe; USFS; private sawmills	USDA Forest Service Forestry Incentives Program
Initiate programs to recharge freshwater aquifer at higher elevations.	Otero County; USFS	See action 1 (above)

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
Improve agricultural irrigation water efficiency.	Otero County; farmers	USDA Rural Development Service Administration
Utilize flood prevention methods to serve a dual purpose of recharging the aquifer and supplementing the water supply.	Otero County; OSWCD	CWSRF
<i>Policy 2. Develop new sustainable sources of water.</i>		
Continue to support and collaborate with the desalination projects in Otero County.	Otero County; Brackish Groundwater National Desalination Research Facility	Desalination and Water Purification Research Program Funds
Identify desalination's potential long-term effects on ecosystem and water supply and adjust desalination efforts to maintain long-term aquifer health.	Otero County; Brackish Groundwater National Desalination Research Facility	Desalination and Water Purification Research Program Funds
Explore the feasibility of distributing water from aquifers in the south to the populated areas in the north.	Otero County; OSWCD; NM Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resource	CWSRF; Clean Water Act funding; EPA Water Quality Management
Support development of new water well fields in the alluvial fans.	Otero County; OSWCD; NM Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resource	Planning; EPA Assessment and Watershed Protection Support
Construct long-term storage cabinets at the bases of canyons and streams.	Otero County; OSWCD; NM Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources; NMOSE	
Study and support efforts to reclaim gray and wastewater for irrigation purposes.	Otero County; OSWCD	CWSRF
<i>Policy 3. Proactively address water issues to ensure long-term sustainability for future generations.</i>		
Create a basis of cooperation and communication with other counties that share water sources with Otero County.	Otero County; OSWCD; Lincoln County; Doña Ana County	CWSRF
Continue to update the regional water plan that plans for Otero County's water usage with 60-year planning horizon.	Otero County; OSWCD; NMOSE	CWSRF
Initiate and develop the County's 40-Year Water Plan.	Otero County; OSWCD; NMOSE	CWSRF
<i>Policy 4. Promote water conservation at all levels of the region.</i>		
Work with local citizen groups to promote awareness and use of water conservation techniques in the community.	Otero County; non-profits	CWSRF
Require new construction to include appropriate water-conserving measures including low-flow fixtures, water-conserving appliances, and	Otero County; OSWCD; NMOSE	NMOSE

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
low-volume irrigation systems and to provide water conservation incentives.		
Explore aquifer management to ensure sustainable water without depleting the aquifer more than one acre-foot per year.	Otero County; OSWCD; NM Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources; NMOSE	CWSRF
Develop a program to encourage existing consumers to retrofit with appropriate water-conserving appliances and low-volume irrigation systems.	Otero County; OSWCD; NMOSE	NMOSE
Enforce County regulations including the subdivision ordinance and water conservation ordinance.	Otero County	N/A
Follow the Public Land Use Advisory Council (PLUAC) recommendations to control current water use and supplies.	Otero County	N/A
<b>Policy 5. Study the hydrogeology of Otero County.</b>		
Work with federal agencies to collect any existing water-related data, especially regarding recharge, desalination, and aquifer recovery.	Otero County; OSWCD; NM Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources; NMOSE; USFS; DOD; BLM; NPS (WHSAs)	N/A
Supplement existing data with new hydrological studies in the county.	Otero County; OSWCD; NM Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources; NMOSE; NPS (WHSAs)	CWSRF; NM Water Resources Research Institute Funds
Integrate findings into the Regional Watershed Plan to ensure long-term sustainability.	Otero County	N/A
<b>Goal 2. Otero County's well-maintained stormwater drainage infrastructure provides residents a safe and high quality of life.</b>		
<b>Policy 1. Prioritize stormwater drainage improvements that protect watershed health, residents, and property.</b>		
Secure funding to study the drainage basins, patterns, and anticipated flows of the area using existing studies as a starting point.	Otero County; OSWCD; NM Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources; NMOSE	CWSRF; NM Water Resources Research Institute Funds
Design and construct drainage infrastructure that serves a dual purpose of utilizing the water and keeping it from flooding properties and roads.	Otero County; OSWCD; NM Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources; NMOSE	CWSRF; NM Water Resources Research Institute Funds
Follow through on the ICIP's funding allocation for three water crossings at Riata Road and Pecos, Appler Road, and Suzy Anne Street with legislative funding requests and other available funding opportunities.	Otero County	Capital Outlay

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
Work with municipalities and property owners to incorporate dual-purpose systems into their future flood control projects.	Otero County; OSWCD; municipalities/colonias; NMOSE	CWSRF; NM Water Resources Research Institute Funds
Review and revise the Otero County's subdivision ordinance to ensure it upholds Comprehensive Plan's stormwater drainage goals.	Otero County	N/A
<b>Goal 3. Otero County uses wastewater systems that protect the environment, reuses water, and protects groundwater quality.</b>		
Policy 1. The County encourages wastewater management systems that mitigate potential pollution.		
Encourage reclamation and reuse of graywater including residential systems and reuse of municipal wastewater for irrigation.	Otero County; OSWCD; NMOSE	CWSRF
Promote the development or extension of centralized wastewater service in municipalities and colonias.	Otero County; OSWCD; NMOSE	CWSRF
Promote and regulate environmentally friendly wastewater systems and increase public awareness.	Otero County; OSWCD; NMOSE	CWSRF
Support the continued used of permitted septic tank/leach field systems where appropriate.	Otero County; OSWCD; NMOSE	CWSRF; NM Water Resources Research Institute Funds
<b>Goal 4. Otero County is a leader in waste reduction, reuse, and recycling.</b>		
Policy 1. Provide innovative solid waste collection for Otero County residents and businesses.		
Continue to initiate solid waste reduction, reuse, and recycling innovation at Otero County disposal facilities.	Otero County; NM Environment Department Solid Waste Bureau	Solid Waste Facility Grant Fund
Prepare public awareness campaign to encourage residents and businesses to reduce solid waste.	Otero County	Keep America Beautiful Think Green Grant
<b>Goal 5. Otero County has ample energy sources and communication technology to support a sustainable, high quality of life.</b>		
Policy 1. Utilize renewable energy sources to supplement gas and electrical energy needs.		
Incentivize development of more solar farms to increase the county's reliance on renewable energy and decrease reliance on oil and gas.	Otero County; NM Office of Renewable Energy; ENMRD Energy Conservation and Management Division	New Solar Market Development Tax Credit; Renewable Energy Production Tax Credit
Work with the State's Office of Renewable Energy to determine feasibility of wind farms in Otero County and attract more renewable energy facilities.	Otero County; NM Office of Renewable Energy; ENMRD Energy Conservation and Management Division	NM Grid Modernization Grant Fund; DOE Wind Energy Technologies Funds
Policy 2. Ensure Otero County residents and businesses' energy needs are met.		

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
Continue to support private, public, and cooperative electric and gas companies in serving countywide.	Otero County; electric and gas cooperatives serving Otero County	N/A
Encourage energy efficiency and conservation programs with incentives, rebates, and public awareness campaigns.	Otero County; NM Office of Renewable Energy; ENMRD Energy Conservation and Management Division	PACE Programs; ECMD Programs
<i>Policy 3. Prioritize reliable broadband throughout the county.</i>		
Work with the State and service providers to establish a plan to construct fiber lines for broadband so municipalities and rural Otero County have reliable cell phone and internet service.	Otero County; NM Department of Information Technology Broadband Program	DOIT Broadband Grants; private service providers; USDA ReConnect Program
Promote better, more reliable service as an economic development tool that will allow the county to grow sustainably and diversify its economy without impacts on natural resources, especially water.	Otero County; OCEDC	General Fund



# Transportation

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A well-designed and balanced transportation system is crucial for Otero County to function. The Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan describes the County's roads, pathways, and other means for people to get from place to place.

The purpose of this Transportation Element is to assess how the transportation network is functioning, address where development might occur that impact the transportation system, and determine the improvements are needed. This system included thoroughfares for motorized vehicles and air, bicycle, and pedestrian systems allowing commercial, public, and personal travel within and through the County of Otero.

## COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

- Roadway maintenance and upkeep is concern voiced by many community members.
- Building new trails or maintaining existing trails are priorities for many community members. Some think new trails with amenities are needed; others think the County should prioritize improving existing trails with better marked and maintained. However, some community members are more concerned with road maintenance than trails, and do not want road maintenance to suffer at the expense of trails.
- Some stakeholders want to reopen the railroad for freight service to increase the county's transportation options.
- Regional jet service is an interest by some, especially in the next 10 years as White Sands' Space Center develops. Air travel and related infrastructure is needed to support this.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

The transportation system within Otero County's jurisdiction consists of 1,600 miles of roads, including state highways, local residential streets, and platted roadways. Otero County currently has six maintenance districts to provide maintenance and repair to roadways in the county. There are several major US highways throughout its region.

## ROAD CLASSIFICATIONS

Roads are classified according to their function and use. The road system of Otero County consists of three classifications: arterials, collectors, and local streets. Below are the definitions of each classification type (Highway Functional Classification Concepts, Criteria, and Procedures, FHWA):

- **Arterials:** These roads serve communities that do not have a principal arterial system such as an interstate or expressway. They provide inter-city and inter-county service. The trip length and travel density are larger than on the collector systems. Travel is at relatively high speed with minimal interference to through movement. US and state highways fall under this classification.
- **Collectors:** These roads typically collect traffic from local roads and feed it onto arterials. County maintained roads typically fall under this classification.
- **Local:** Local roads provide access from local (primarily residential) areas to collectors.

## US HIGHWAYS

Three US Highways, classified as arterials, provide access to Otero County's communities as shown in the transportation map (Figure 11-1).

### ***US Highway 54***

US Highway 54 provides two-lane travel from Albuquerque (north) and accesses Otero County through Lincoln County, connecting Tularosa, Alamogordo, Orogrande and Chaparral before continuing south. It becomes four lanes souths of Alamogordo.

### ***US Highway 70***

US Highway 70 is a four-lane highway connecting Otero County to Lincoln County and the Village of Ruidoso in the north, Las Cruces in the west, and Roswell in the east. Within Otero County, US 70 passes through Mescalero Apache Indian Reservation and the Town of Mescalero, Tularosa (where it tees into and merges with US 54), south to Alamogordo, and west to Whites Sands National Park.

### ***US Highway 82***

US Highway 82 runs east-west in the Sacramento Mountains connecting the mountain communities of La Luz, Cloudcroft, Mayhill, and then east of Otero County to Chaves County and Artesia.

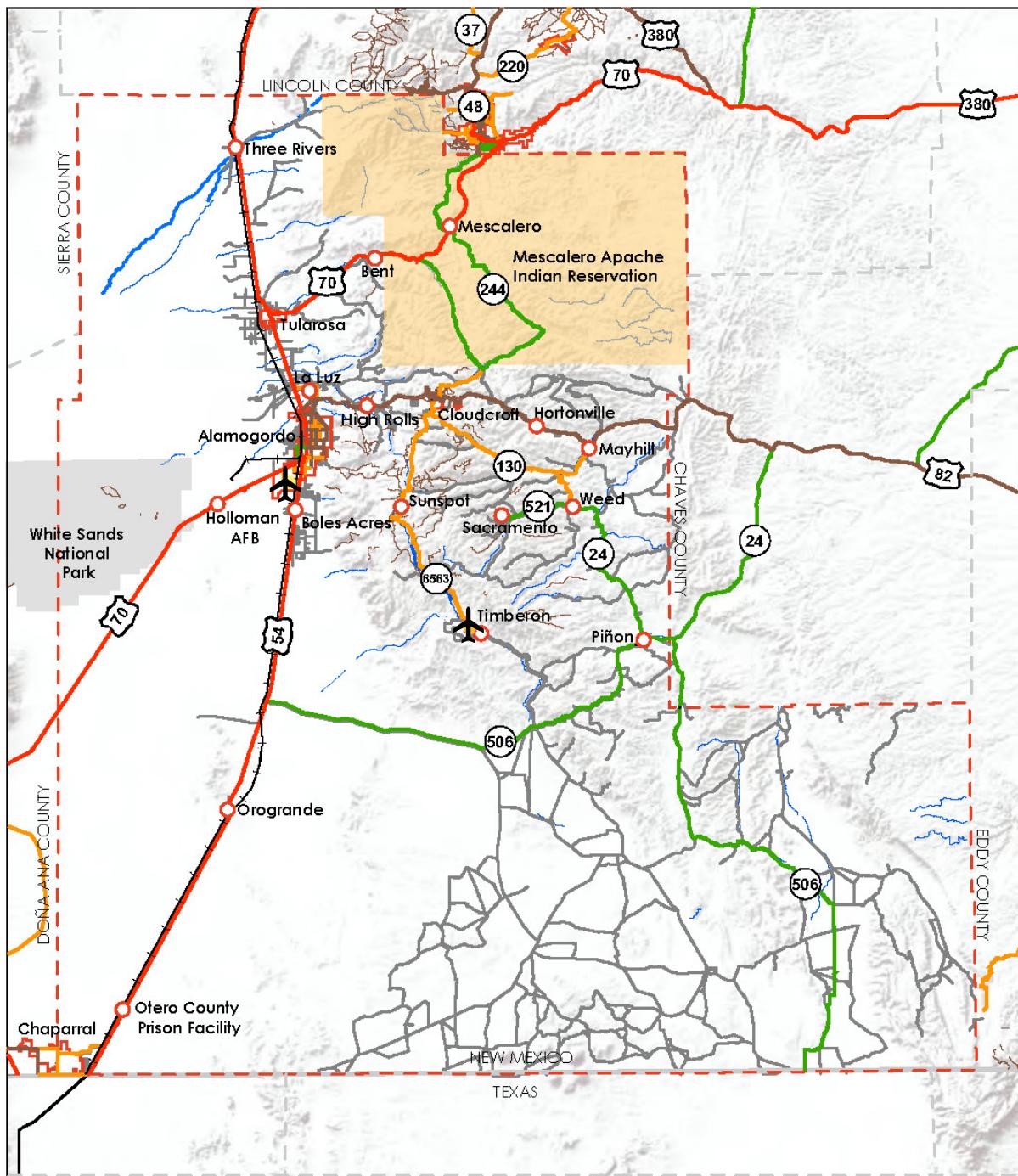
## STATE HIGHWAYS

Five New Mexico state highways—6563, 130, 521, 244, and 24—connect the mountain communities of High Rolls, Mayhill, Week, Piñon, Sacramento, and Timberon. Other state roads include NM State 506 across the McGregor Range and NM 213 to Chaparral.

## COUNTY MAINTAINED ROADS

Otero County is responsible for the maintenance of more than 1,635 miles of county roads, as well as the construction of new roads within the county borders. As seen in Figure 11-1, County maintained roads make up most of the roads in Otero County; they connect the small communities to each other and provide links to the larger highways.

FIGURE 11-1. OTERO COUNTY TRANSPORTATION MAP



Source: Resource Geographic Information System, University of New Mexico, December 2, 2019

- US Routes
- New Mexico State Roads
- County Roads
- NMDOT Road Classifications
  - Principal Arterial - Other
  - Minor Arterial
  - Major Collector
  - Minor Collector
- Otero County Boundary
- County Boundaries
- State Boundary
- Rivers/Creeks
- Trails
- Railroad
- Timberon Airport
- White Sands Regional Airport



## ROAD CONDITIONS

The county road system comprises some arterial roadways of either standard hot-mixed paving or double-seal penetration surfaces (approximately 13 percent of county roadways), while most rural roadways are bladed and unsurfaced. Most collector and local roadways within the county are dedicated to Otero County, except the state roads.

Typical county roadways do not incorporate standard curb and gutter or sidewalks in their design due to the rural nature of the roadway. In addition, arterial roadways do not require these elements. The incorporated municipal entities within the county are responsible for each residential road section within each community.

The local New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) maintenance patrols conduct routine maintenance of the state roads within the county limits. The County Road Department has a staff of 28 to maintain and patrol the county roads daily.

## PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Ztrans has been providing public transportation to residents in the Tularosa Basin, Alamogordo, and surrounding areas since 2001. Ztrans stops in Alamogordo, Holloman AFB, La Luz, Tularosa, Mescalero Apache Reservation, and Las Cruces on the following routes:

- Purple Route – Fixed Route Service from Holloman AFB to Alamogordo
- Green and Yellow Routes – Fixed Route Service in Alamogordo
- Demand Response (Paratransit) Service that covers the same area as the routes above
- Red and Blue Routes – Intercity Service from Alamogordo to Mescalero Apache Reservation
- Orange Route – Intercity Service from Alamogordo to Las Cruces

Ztrans is a division of Zia Therapy Center in Alamogordo. Ztrans provides service to the public in Alamogordo, Holloman AFB, La Luz, Tularosa, Mescalero Indian Reservation, and intercity commuter service to the City of Las Cruces. It is the goal of Ztrans to provide safe, dependable, and comfortable service to all riders.

The South Central Regional Transit District serves Chaparral in southwestern Otero County and contracts with Ztrans to provide the Orange Route service between Las Cruces and Alamogordo.

## RAIL

The Union Pacific Railroad's Tucumcari Line passes through Otero County carrying cargo but does not stop in Alamogordo or offer passenger service. Remnants of the tracks of the historic Alamogordo-Sacramento Mountain Railway, a subsidiary of El Paso and Northeastern Railway (EP&NR), still exist in the Sacramento Mountains where they have been partially converted to trails. Otero County Economic Development Council is working with the Mescalero Apache Tribe to re-open the rail and collaborate on expanding freight service in the region.

## TRAILS

Lincoln Nation Forest has an extensive trail network with close to 100 trails in Sacramento Ranger District alone. Within Lincoln National Forest there are 16 Rail Trails on what was once the Alamogordo-Sacramento Mountain Railway route, most notably the Cloud Climbing Trestle Trail and Bridal Veil Falls. The US Forest Service classifies their trail as easy, moderate, or difficult and specifies which trails allow what types of uses including, hiking/backpacking, pack and saddle animals, mountain biking, and motorized uses, including motor bikes and Off-Highway Vehicles (OHVs), which are allowed on 56 trails in the Sacramento Ranger District.

White Sands National Park also offers extensive hiking and backpacking opportunities. Otero Mesa attracts backpackers for off-trail hiking. McGregor Range is open for backpacking and horseback riding with permit on a case by case basis. Historically, trails crossed the Tularosa Basin connecting old settlement sites to Lake Lucero.

## AIRPORTS

### ALAMOGORDO–WHITE SANDS REGIONAL AIRPORT

The Alamogordo–White Sands Regional Airport is a general aviation airport owned and operated by the City of Alamogordo. It is located four miles west of Alamogordo on Airport Road and provides commuter travel as well as delivery service. The airport is a US Forest Service Fire Tanker Base, which operates between April and June to provide air resources to assist firefighting efforts. The airport has one paved runway and one dirt runway, terminal building, maintenance shop, fire station on 1,500 acres of fenced property. The facility is operated by two employees and a 5-member Airport Advisory Board that meets quarterly.

As of 2017, the airport housed aircraft 72 aircraft, 57 single engine airplanes, 8 multi engine airplanes, 5 gliders, and 2 ultralights. It had an average of 91 operations per day, 60 percent of which were local general aviation. Only 3 percent of operations were military related and fewer than 1 percent were air taxi, although the airport does have air taxi service.

### TIMBERON AIRPORT

Timberon Airport, which has a gravel runway suitable for small aircraft, is owned by Otero County and managed by Timberon Development Council and Timberon Airfield Coop. It was rehabilitated in 2013 and is recognized by Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

### EL PASO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

The nearest International Airport in the vicinity is El Paso International Airport, in El Paso, Texas, which hosts most all major carriers. It is located less than 25 miles to the south of Chaparral and 100 miles to the south of Alamogordo. Las Cruces Regional Airport is approximately 80 miles to the west of county seat, Alamogordo.

## SPACE TRAVEL

White Sands Missile Range (WSMR) is home to the historic White Sands Space Harbor a space shuttle runway and test landing site. It is said that WSMR will become a National Space Center in next 10 years and even sooner is expected to have regional jet service with two flights per day.

Spaceport America, the first commercial spaceport for commercial space travel is just west of WSMR and a two-hour drive from Alamogordo. Space travel is on the horizon, which will bring associated economic development opportunities; appropriate infrastructure will be needed to support them.

# TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

## ROADWAYS

We need a thorough review of county records that designate official county roads and public right of way and update maps to document them.

### COUNTY ROADS

While some believe most county roads are well maintained, many community members list road improvements as their top concern. Continue to use the more cost-effective chip sealing opposed to the traditional asphalt application. Many of the rural communities still have dirt surfacing for local roadways. This results in airborne dust during the dry months, and flooding and washouts during rainstorms. Unsurfaced roadways diminish the quality of life for many rural residents of Otero County. The County's Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan (ICIP) 2021-2025 allocated funding for three water crossings at Riata Road and Pecos, Appler Road, and Suzy Anne Street.

There is interest in re-opening the county road between Tularosa and Elephant Butte to allow for a more direct route between Otero County and the central part of the state.

### STATE HIGHWAYS

Route 506 should be paved to provide reliable connections from Otero Mesa, Piñon, and Timberon.

NMDOT typically provides grants to the County through the New Mexico State Road Fund Cooperative and provides monthly financial support for operations. Due to the constraints of the State Road Fund agreements, these funds are required to be expended each year. This allows the County to remove and replace or repair only small portions of roadways annually. Other funding comes from the state school bus route appropriations and state capital improvements appropriation programs. The County should apply for the State's GRIP funding to help with road maintenance.

### US HIGHWAYS

There is interest in expanding the right of way of US 54 through Lincoln and Torrance Counties to match the standard of US 54 from Alamogordo to El Paso, which is a four-lane divided highway with 75 mph speeds. There is also interest in improving US 82 from eastern Otero County into Eddy County

to provide better access to Artesia, which would allow Otero County residents to commute more easily to work in Artesia's oil and gas industry. The issues with US 82 include damaged guard rails that are not repaired or replaced, fallen rocks that are not removed and cleared from the roadway and shoulder, and erosion prevention in areas prone to rockslides.

## RAIL

There is interest in building Union Pacific spurs to provide Otero County with freight service, giving local manufacturing and businesses more transportation options.

## TRAILS

The community is not in agreement about the trail network and improvements. Many residents think the trail network needs to be expanded and existing trails need better markings and maintenance. Some residents think road maintenance and environmental protection are more important than building new trails. There is some interest in expanding the trail network to connect the Tularosa Basin to mountain trails and continued support of the Rails to Trails program. Community members suggested partnering with the Boy Scouts to work on trail improvements or EcoServants and AmeriCorps youth (as they do in the Smokey Bear Ranger District in Ruidoso). The National Park Service's Rivers and Trails Program offers free assistance in planning a trails system and building volunteer capacity to serve as stewards.

# DESIRED IMPROVEMENTS

An inventory of roads and rights of way should be established to provide a clear and accurate ownership record and guide for maintenance and prioritizing paving and improvement projects. Improvements to make travel and recreation throughout Otero County easier and safer as identified in the issues section should be prioritized, whether by rail, air, trail, or roadway.

The local scenic by-ways attract recreational vehicles and tourism traffic to the area. Recreational vehicle scenic routes and retreats, easy access to hiking and biking trails and other commercial services related to transportation should be a priority for continued growth and economic development.

# GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

**GOAL 1. Residents of Otero County rely on a safe, equitable, efficient, and integrated transportation system.**

**POLICY 1. Provide an efficient network of streets and roadways that meets the needs of residents and allows for a smooth flow of vehicular traffic (NMDOT designation Level of Service C).**

- Action 1. Participate in the Southeastern Regional Transportation Planning Organization's regional planning efforts and request projects through the SERTPO process to create a well-defined street hierarchy of local, collector and arterial roads.
- Action 2. Update the GIS data and map of county roads' rights of way and easements.
- Action 3. Develop road grid and drainage plans that are followed for the dedication of easements that do not detract from the rural character of the county.
- Action 4. Work with NMDOT to identify areas where there are safety concerns so they can address in road improvement plans.
- Action 5. Prepare engineering studies for proposed county road improvements.
- Action 6. Develop a safe, all-weather alternate route to be used in the event of closure of US Highway 82.

**POLICY 2.** *Provide standards for local roads in residential areas that promote traffic safety and meet residential transportation needs.*

- Action 1. Update the subdivision ordinance to:
  - Ensure design standards for local residential roads discourage non-local traffic and minimize disruption of the terrain.
  - Require a traffic impact analysis where new development is projected to cause a significant increase in traffic volume on nearby county roads.
- Action 2. Bring all county roads to standards adequate to be accepted for maintenance by the County Road Maintenance Department.
- Action 3. Ensure that every at-grade railroad crossing has proper signals and closures.

**POLICY 3.** *Provide adequate levels of maintenance of all components of the county transportation system, including roadways, shoulders, sidewalks, bicycle facilities, and roadway drainage systems.*

- Action 1. Prepare a repaving plan that includes estimated costs, a funding strategy, and proposed project phasing for resurfacing and new road construction, as well as bicycle and sidewalk amenities.
- Action 2. Follow through on the ICIP's funding allocation for three water crossings at Riata Road and Pecos, Appler Road, and Suzy Anne Street with legislative funding requests and other available funding opportunities.
- Action 3. Develop an asset management plan for roads, which addresses all road maintenance scheduling and equipment replacement needs.

- Action 4. Construct a new Road Department facility to provide adequate workspace, storage, and offices to proficiently provide a high level of service to county residents.
- Action 5. Consider expanding the duties of the Road Department Maintenance personnel to include maintenance and repair of all vehicles in their fleet. Additional auto mechanics could provide this service, without having to contract services to outside source.

**POLICY 4. *Encourage safe air travel and associated infrastructure.***

- Action 1. Promote improving and expanding the regional airport to accommodate anticipated increased air travel to the area.
- Action 2. Recognize advances in air travel and anticipate that additional air travel and associated tourism and economic development may require additional county infrastructure in future.

**POLICY 5. *Promote transportation alternatives to the automobile.***

- Action 1. Promote public transportation between communities within the county.
- Action 2. Incorporate bike lanes or ASHTO shoulders into road repaving to accommodate bicycle use on roads as alternative transportation.
- Action 3. Re-stripe roads with adequate widths to accommodate bike lanes.
- Action 4. Work with NMDOT and Holloman AFB to establish a bike route between Alamogordo and Holloman AFB.
- Action 5. Prepare an Active Transportation Plan to identify countywide priorities for pedestrian and bicycle connections, including trails.
- Action 6. Work with Union Pacific to conduct a feasibility study to assess the possibility of railway spurs into Otero County.

**POLICY 6. *Coordinate with responsible entities and generate resources to enable the building and maintenance of transportation infrastructure.***

- Action 1. Partner and coordinate with NMDOT, Union Pacific, federal government, local organizations, and residents on improvements to state and US Highways, railroad crossings, trails on public land, and connections to county roads.
- Action 2. Ensure that citizens appointed to County boards and commissions are educated about the Comprehensive Plan and the goals, policies and actions related to their responsibilities.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

The New Mexico Department of Transportation is the chief source of information and funding for road improvements. Other sources for transportation improvements include funds from the Community Development Block Grant program, the State Legislature, and the Federal Aviation Administration. Table 11-1 lists actions, responsibilities, and potential funding sources to implement the County's transportation goals. The Implementation Chapter of this plan provides more details on funding sources, resources, and the implementation process.

**TABLE 11-1. IMPLEMENTATION OF TRANSPORTATION GOALS**

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
<b>Goal 1. Residents of Otero County rely on a safe, equitable, efficient, and integrated transportation system.</b>		
Policy 1. Provide an efficient network of streets and roadways that meets the needs of residents and allows for a smooth flow of vehicular traffic (NMDOT designation Level of Service C).		
Participate in the Southeastern Regional Transportation Planning Organization's regional planning efforts and request projects through the SERTPO process to create a well-defined street hierarchy of local, collector and arterial roads.	Otero County; SERTPO; NMDOT	N/A
Update the GIS data and map of county roads' rights of way and easements.	Otero County	CDBG Planning Grant
Develop road grid and drainage plans that are followed for the dedication of easements that do not detract from the rural character of the county.	Otero County	CDBG Planning and Infrastructure Grants
Work with NMDOT to identify areas where there are safety concerns so they can address in road improvement plans.	Otero County; SERTPO; NMDOT	N/A
Prepare engineering studies for proposed county road improvements.	Otero County; SERTPO; NMDOT	CDBG Planning Grant
Develop a safe, all-weather alternate route to be used in the event of closure of US Highway 82.	Otero County; SERTPO; NMDOT; FHWA	Federal Highway Funding
Policy 2. Provide standards for local roads in residential areas that promote traffic safety and meet residential transportation needs.		
Update the subdivision ordinance to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Ensure design standards for local residential roads discourage non-local traffic and minimize disruption of the terrain.</li> <li>– Require a traffic impact analysis where new development is</li> </ul>	Otero County; SERTPO; NMDOT	CDBG Planning and Infrastructure Grants

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
projected to cause a significant increase in traffic volume on nearby county roads.		
Bring county roads up to standards adequate to be accepted for maintenance by the County Road Maintenance Department.	Otero County; SERTPO; NMDOT	NMDOT; Local Government Road Fund; Local Government
Ensure that every at-grade railroad crossing has proper signals and closures.	Otero County; SERTPO; NMDOT Transit and Rail Division; FHWA; Union Pacific	Transportation Fund; State Road Fund; Highway Infrastructure Fund; Federal Highway Funding; CDBG Planning and Infrastructure Grants
<i>Policy 3. Provide adequate levels of maintenance of all components of the county transportation system, including roadways, shoulders, sidewalks, bicycle facilities, and roadway drainage systems.</i>		
Prepare a repaving plan that includes estimated costs, a funding strategy, and proposed project phasing for resurfacing and new road construction, as well as bicycle and sidewalk amenities.	Otero County; SERTPO; NMDOT	NMDOT; Local Government Road Fund; Local Government Transportation Fund; State Road Fund;
Follow through on the ICIP's funding allocation for three water crossings at Riata Road and Pecos, Appler Road, and Suzy Anne Street with legislative funding requests and other available funding opportunities.	Otero County	Highway Infrastructure Fund; Federal Highway Funding; CDBG Planning and Infrastructure Grants
Develop an asset management plan for roads, which addresses all road maintenance scheduling and equipment replacement needs.	Otero County	
Construct a new Road Department facility to provide adequate workspace, storage, and offices to proficiently provide a high level of service to county residents.	Otero County	
Consider expanding the duties of the Road Department Maintenance personnel to include maintenance and repair of all vehicles in their fleet. Additional auto mechanics could provide this service, without having to contract services to outside source.	Otero County	General Fund
<i>Policy 4. Encourage safe air travel and associated infrastructure.</i>		
Promote improving and expanding the regional airport to accommodate anticipated increased air travel to the area.	Otero County; Otero County Alamogordo-White Sands Regional Airport	FAA Grants

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
Recognize advances in air travel and anticipate that additional air travel and associated tourism and economic development may require additional county infrastructure in future.	Otero County; Otero County Alamogordo–White Sands Regional Airport; Timberon Airport; private airports in Otero County	FAA Grants
<i>Policy 5. Promote transportation alternatives to the automobile.</i>		
Promote public transportation between communities within the county.	Otero County; Ztrans; SCRTD; SERTPO; NMDOT Transit and Rail Division; municipalities/colonias	FTA Formula Grants for Rural Areas Program; Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP)
Incorporate bike lanes or ASHTO shoulders into road repaving to accommodate bicycle use on roads as alternative transportation.	Otero County; SERTPO; NMDOT	NMDOT Transportation Alternatives Program
Re-stripe roads with adequate widths to accommodate bike lanes.	Otero County; SERTPO; NMDOT	
Work with NMDOT and Holloman AFB to establish a bike route between Alamogordo and Holloman AFB.	Otero County; SERTPO; NMDOT; HAFB	
Prepare an Active Transportation Plan to identify countywide priorities for pedestrian and bicycle connections, including trails.	Otero County; SERTPO; NMDOT	
Work with Union Pacific to conduct a feasibility study to assess the possibility of railway spurs into Otero County.	Otero County; SERTPO; NMDOT; Union Pacific	
<i>Policy 6. Coordinate with responsible entities and generate resources to enable the building and maintenance of transportation infrastructure.</i>		
Partner and coordinate with NMDOT, Union Pacific, federal government, local organizations, and residents on improvements to state and US Highways, railroad crossings, trails on public land, and connections to county roads.	Otero County; SERTPO; NMDOT; Union Pacific	NMDOT; Local Government Road Fund; Local Government Transportation Fund; State Road Fund; Highway Infrastructure Fund; Federal Highway Funding; CDBG Planning and Infrastructure Grants; NMDOT Transportation Alternatives Program
Ensure that citizens appointed to County boards and commissions are educated about the Comprehensive Plan and the goals, policies and actions related to their responsibilities.	Otero County	N/A

# Hazard Mitigation

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This Chapter addresses Otero County's wildfire protection, flood control, emergency services, drought, and other possible hazards in the county that are natural and human-created including soil instability and hazardous materials. Comprehensive Plans are required to include a section documenting hazard mitigation that is coordinated with local emergency management and wildfire protection plans to minimize the damage to property and prevent loss of life resulting from such hazards.

This chapter summarizes information regarding existing hazards and mitigation efforts and includes recommendations to consider that will improve mitigation success and emergency response.

## COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

- Provide Volunteer Fire and EMS Departments with continued and improved support and incentives to keep and attract qualified volunteers.
- Prioritize forest thinning and fire protection as a top priority to keep forests, watershed, and our communities healthy and safe.
- Prioritize flood control and mitigation efforts to reduce flooding, keep arroyos free of debris, and improve roadway access and quality of life.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

### HAZARD MITIGATION PLANS AND PROGRAMS

#### NATIONAL PLAN

##### ***The 2010 Wildland-Urban Interface of the Conterminous United States***

This report details the conditions and risks of the wildland-urban interface (WUI) areas; it defines WUI as "the area where structures and other human development meet or intermingle with undeveloped wildland."<sup>1</sup> It stresses that the WUI is where wildfires have the greatest impact on people because fire

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nrs.fs.fed.us/pubs/48642>

can spread quickly from wildlands' forest and grasslands into neighborhoods and homes. Unlike the Profile of Development and WUI report, it focuses on the environmental impacts that building next to wildlands has on wildlife and their habitat, in addition to the economic impacts. The trend to develop next to wildlands is leading to forest fragmentation and loss of habitat and an increase in domestic animals—both of which are interfering with native species and ecosystems, in addition to increasing the risks of wildfire threatening homes and people. When compared to the rest of the country, New Mexico has one of the highest percentages of homes in the WUI relative to the total homes in the state. The report identifies New Mexico as one of a handful of states that has greater than 80 percent of its seasonal homes located in the WUI. It acknowledges that such homes can be a good draw for tourism and related economies, but it also recognizes that seasonal homeowners can be harder to coordinate when it comes to maintaining their properties to reduce fire risk. Most notable is 70 percent of New Mexico's population lives in the WUI. The report's WUI map of New Mexico shows all the communities in the Sacramento Mountains as well as communities along US 54 near Tularosa, Alamogordo, and Chaparral as WUI area (as noted in orange and yellow in Figure 12-1).

## STATE PLANS

### ***State of New Mexico Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2018***

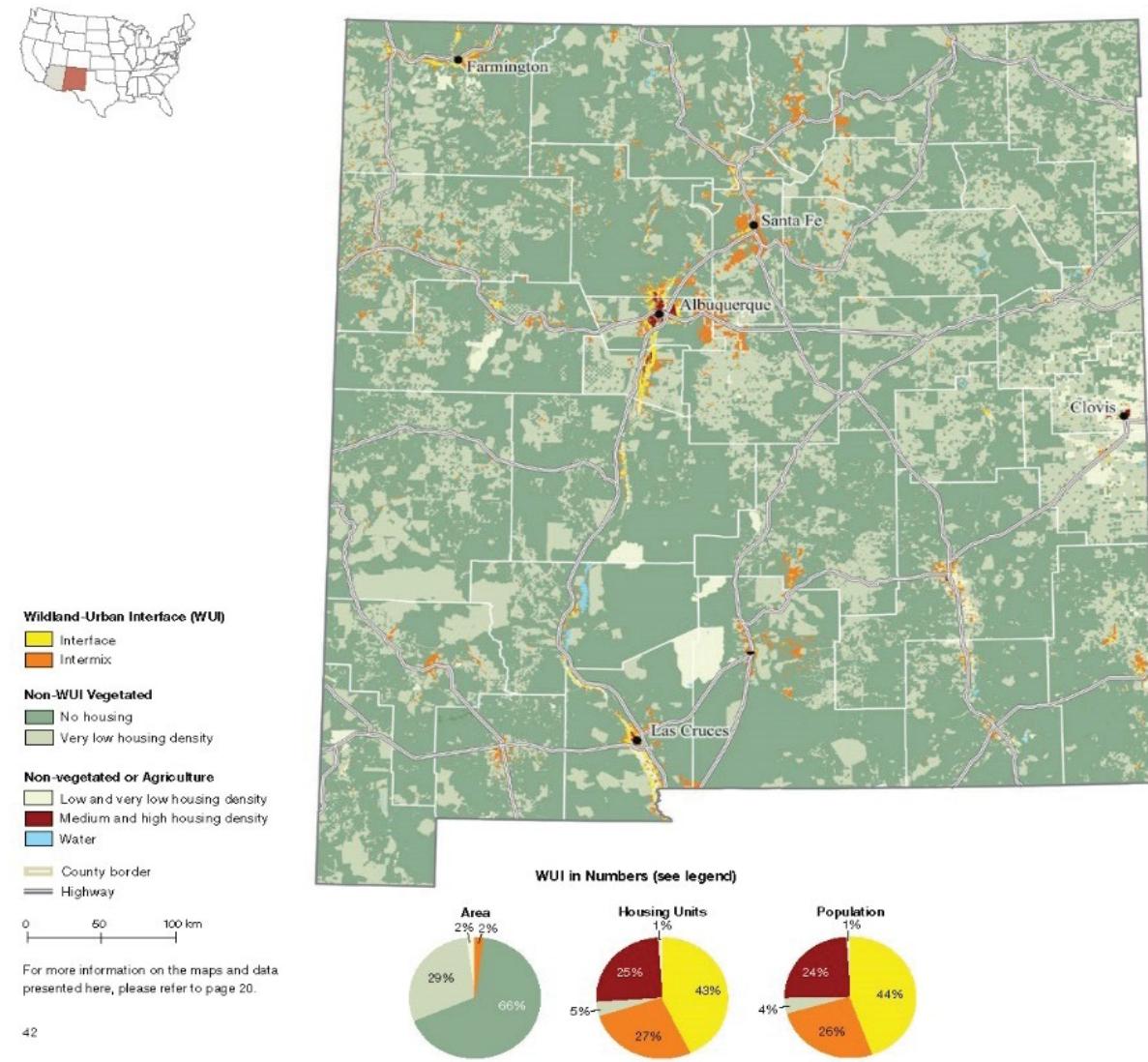
The State of New Mexico Hazard Mitigation Plan addresses hazard mitigation statewide and groups the state into 6 preparedness areas. Otero County falls within Preparedness Area 6, which is subject to the following hazards in order of priority:

1. **Floods/flash floods.** While each of New Mexico's preparedness areas are considered at risk of flooding during the months of June through September, it is the number one hazard priority in Preparedness Area 6 given the acequias and prone to flash floods. The only area in Otero County to receive public assistance to support disaster recovery flash flooding is Bent.
2. **Extreme drought.** Given the area's extended extreme drought conditions and extreme heat, it is considered especially vulnerable to wildfire disasters and flash floods.
3. **High winds.** Otero County is vulnerable to high winds, particularly in the area near White Sands. High winds can limit visibility, lead to accidents, result in property damage from downed power lines, and increase fire risk.
4. **Landslide and rockfall.** Otero County's steep mountainous area have relatively high potential for deep-seated landslides or rockfall, particularly in the Sacramento Mountains.
5. **Land subsidence.** Otero County's arid areas with alluvial fan deposits on the alluvial fan margins of the mountains are extremely susceptible to collapsible soils.
6. **Wildfire.** Preparedness Area 6 does not rank wildfire protection as one of its top priority hazards. The plan reports approximately 16 percent of the area has been treated or is planned to be treated with prescribed burns or thinning to decrease the fuel loads and mimic frequent, low intensity burns that are natural to the ecosystem.

**FIGURE 12-1. WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE MAP**

## New Mexico

Southwestern Region



Source: *The 2010 Wildland-Urban Interface of the Conterminous United States*

### New Mexico Communities at Risk Assessment Plan, 2019

The Communities at Risk Assessment Plan guides the state's coordinated effort against wildfires. In 2003, the State Legislature created the New Mexico Fire Planning Task Force (NMFPTF) to identify the state's Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas most vulnerable to wildland fires, develop standards for building codes and ordinances to reduce the threat of wildland fires to those communities, and review Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) each year and approve those that meet all criteria set forth by the Healthy Forest Restoration Act. The CWPPs has identified 814 areas at risk of wildfire across the state, which are compiled to create the New Mexico Communities at Risk list and are addressed in the Assessment Plan.

The State's Energy, Minerals & Natural Resources Department, Forestry Division conducted this assessment plan of communities at risk around the state. In Otero County, 16 communities are considered High Risk, including Bent, Burro Flats, Cloudcroft, Cox Canyon, Dry Canyon, Dungan, High Rolls, James Canyon, La Luz, Mayhill, Mescalero, Sacramento, Sixteen Springs, Sunspot Observatory, Timberon, and Weed. Two communities were identified as Moderate Risk: Alamogordo and Tularosa.

The Assessment Plan in 2019 makes two important observations that affect Otero County's wildfire protection efforts: 1) it describes the purpose of the CWPP to give communities the opportunity to "influence where and how federal agencies implement fuel reduction projects on federal lands," and how to distribute federal funds for projects on non-federal lands; and 2) the demand for fuel reduction projects exceed the available funding for such projects. Federal funding for wildfire protection and public outreach comes from the US Forest Service's National Fire Plan and BLM.

#### ***Living with Fire: A Guide for the Homeowner, New Mexico, 2018***

To help New Mexican property owners "live more safely with the threat of wildfire," the New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (New Mexico State Forestry Division and New Mexico Energy Conservation and Management Division), New Mexico Office of Emergency Management, BLM, and US Forest Service sponsored a descriptive guide illustrating how to better prepare and safeguard property from fire risks. The manual outlines the steps property owners should take to reduce the wildfire threat in four zones in and around the property: the access zone that allows emergency vehicles to locate the property, defensible space zone surrounding the structure, the built zone, and the interior zone.

#### ***Firewise Plant Materials***

New Mexico State University in conjunction with the US Department of Agriculture, and the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department prepared a guide for homeowners to protect their home from wildfire risks by creating defensible space by planting and maintaining specific fire-resistant plants and trees.<sup>2</sup> The manual includes a detailed list of appropriate species, guidance for spacing between plants, and maintenance instructions. These recommendations are shared with all property owners.

### **COUNTY PLANS**

#### ***Otero County All Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2012***

The Otero County All Hazard Mitigation Plan was prepared for the Otero County Mitigation Planning Group and Office of Emergency Services and adopted in October 2012. The Plan involved the participation of multiple agencies and identified hazards and mitigation strategies to reduce or eliminate the effects of those hazards, including increasing public awareness; improving floodplain management; and improving early warning systems and response processes to decrease the impacts of floods, wild fires, household fires, ambulance runs, and potential accidents involving hazardous materials. Like the State's plan, it provides guidance to local jurisdictions within the county.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us/SFD/FireMgt/documents/FireWisePlantMaterial- sNMSU.pdf>

**Otero County Community Wildfire Protection Plan, 2014**

Otero County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (OCCWP) was updated in 2014 and meets the requirements of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (2003). The plan was prepared by a team of representatives of local government, local fire authorities, the State, US Forest Service, and BLM, along with stakeholders and organizations interested in fire management that formed the Otero Working Group. The planning process recognized the county's risk of wildfire seeing that 1000 fires occurred between 1987 and 2012. As of 2014, 11 percent of the county had undergone fuel treatment. The plan should be updated every two years. The OCCWP was in the process of being updated by the South Central Mountain Resource Conservation and Development Council (South Central Mountain RC&D) during the writing of this Comprehensive Plan.

The plan created a community base map that defines Otero County's Wildland-Urban Interface where development and inhabited settlements are particularly at risk given their proximity to forest areas (see Figure 12-2). The plan also conducted a community risk assessment and established community priorities and recommendations with assigned actions and long-term monitoring. The risk assessment used fire behavior modeling to assess each area's fire risk based on fuel, topography, and weather data. It identified the highest risk areas to be in the higher elevation, forested northeast quadrant of the county. Cloudcroft was determined to have extreme risk. Mescalero and Timberon fell in the range of high to extreme risk.

The recommendations for these high to extreme risk communities include:

1. Increase defensible space with a strong educational component. Encourage communitywide defensible space projects. In areas with vacation homes, educate the part-time residents and guests about the reasons for making homes and property fire wise.
2. Arrange an organized slash disposal day with cooperation from local, county, and/or state authorities.
3. Complete nearby fuels treatment projects and assess need for further work in coordination with state and federal agencies.
4. Seek funding for home hazard assessments to inform homeowners about actions to reduce structural ignitability and defensible space.
5. Pursue Firewise Communities and similar grant funding opportunities to assist residents with cost of treatments on private lands.
6. Install a communication repeater for better communication.
7. Improve water infrastructure to limit water loss and increase water pressure. More 6-inch pipes are needed throughout the community.
8. Increase water storage capacity through the addition of storage tanks.
9. Improve visibility of street signs and house numbers.
10. Increase capacity within the fire station to increase the ISO rating.
11. Pursue pre-fire planning efforts particularly relating to citizen evacuation and safety zones.

## FIRE PROTECTION AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Fire protection in Otero County is provided by 24 County Volunteer Fire Departments (VFDs) and Mescalero Apache Tribe Fire and Rescue Department.

### FIRE DEPARTMENTS

The County's fire protection is primarily managed by VFDs. These departments are responsible for their own district for adequate fire coverage. Each district is supervised by a fire chief and has the responsibility of providing adequate fire flows for its residents. Otero County administers and distributes funds from the quarter-cent County excise tax and the State of New Mexico's fire funds to all 20 County VFDs. The volunteer departments are comprised of residents who volunteer their time to time to serve their communities in fighting fires and addressing other hazards should they arise. The County Ordinance 16-03 (Chapter 69 of the Administration Legislation) outlines the standards by which volunteer departments and their volunteers operate. The County's Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan (ICIP) 2021-2025 includes funding for the Timberon Fire Station.

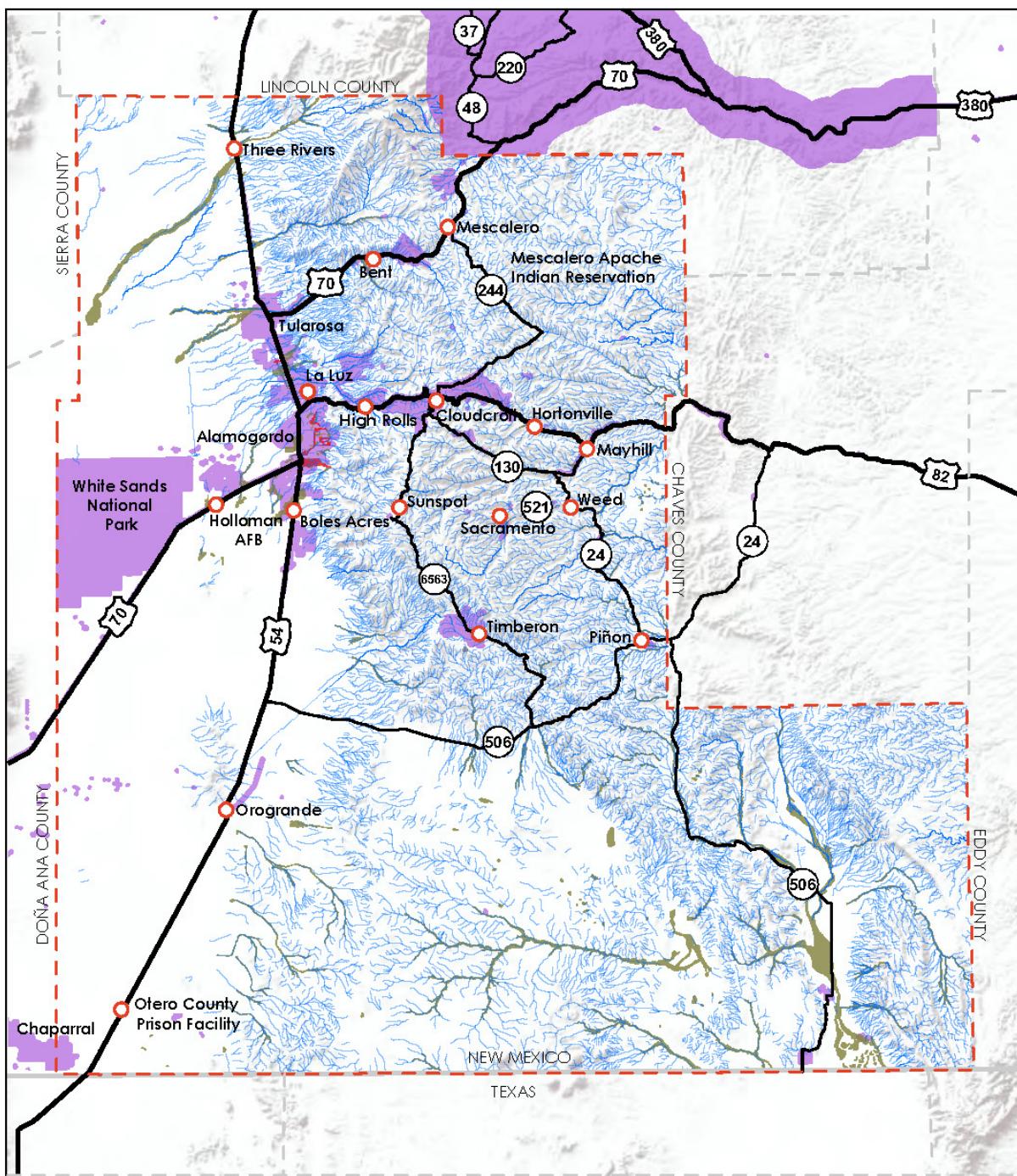
### SHERIFF'S OFFICE COORDINATION

All 911 calls made from cell phones and land lines outside municipal boundaries are routed through the Sheriff's Office. Calls made from land lines within Alamogordo connect to the Alamogordo Department of Public Safety. The Sheriff's Office dispatches appropriate resources from each fire district based on the location and type of incident.

### EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

All Emergency Medical Services (EMS) are provided through the fire departments and funded through the State "Fund Act" that distributes money to the fire departments (administered by the County). In most departments with EMS personnel, the Emergency Medical Technicians are also firefighters. In each of these fire departments there is an EMS captain who oversees crews and equipment. All EMS personnel are volunteers.

FIGURE 12-2. HAZARD MITIGATION MAP



Source: Resource Geographic Information System, University of New Mexico, December 2, 2019

- US Routes
- New Mexico State Roads
- - - Otero County Boundary
- - - County Boundaries
- - - State Boundary
- Waterways
- Creeks
- Rivers
- 100 - YEAR FLOOD PLAIN W/O BASE ELEVATION (A)
- 100 - YEAR FLOOD PLAIN (AE)
- Wildland Urban Interface



## HAZARDOUS MATERIALS RESPONSE

Hazardous Materials Response Team members are included in the fire department personnel numbers.

The following 24 departments serve Otero County residents:

1. Alamo West Volunteer Fire Department and EMS
2. Alamogordo Volunteer Fire Department
3. Bent Volunteer Fire Department
4. Boles Acres Fire and Rescue and EMS
5. Boles Acres Volunteer Fire Department and EMS
6. Burro Flats Volunteer Fire Department and EMS
7. Cloudcroft Volunteer Fire Department and EMS
8. Dog Canyon Volunteer Fire Department
9. Dungan Volunteer Fire Department and EMS
10. Far South Volunteer Fire Department and EMS
11. High Rolls Volunteer Fire Department and EMS
12. Jack Rabbit Flats Volunteer Fire Department
13. James Canyon Volunteer Fire Department and EMS
14. La Luz Volunteer Fire Department
15. Mayhill Volunteer Fire Department
16. Oro Grande Volunteer Fire Department
17. Oro Vista Volunteer Fire Department and EMS
18. Pinon Volunteer Fire Department
19. Rio Felix Volunteer Fire Department
20. Sacramento/Weed Volunteer Fire Department and EMS
21. Sixteen Springs Volunteer Fire Department
22. Sunspot Volunteer Fire Department and EMS
23. Timberon Volunteer Fire Department and EMS
24. Upper Cox Canyon Volunteer Fire Department and EMS

## COORDINATION OUTSIDE THE COUNTY

### OTHER COUNTIES

All the fire districts have mutual aid agreement that enables the districts to work together to best meet the needs of every emergency incident. Some departments have automatic mutual aid. When one district is called for a structural fire, as many two to three other districts might be called out at the same time. In addition, the County has mutual aid agreements with other counties in the region, including Chavez, Eddy, and Lincoln.

### NEW MEXICO STATE FORESTRY

Otero County also has a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) with New Mexico State Forestry Division of the Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department to coordinate resources to fight forest fires. The procedures and agreements are laid out in a Resource Mobilization Plan. The five County fire departments that have chosen to participate have agreed to provide fully trained and certified personnel available for deployment anywhere in the state, plus equipment needed to fight wildland

fires. During the initial response to any wildland fire, the local fire district oversees firefighting and resource coordination. If the property falls under the jurisdiction of a federal agency (for example, the US Forest Service, NM State Forestry, or BLM), the agency's Incident Commander will ensure district firefighters on duty have the required physical fitness certification (Red Cards). The Incident Commander can also remove any district equipment that is not certified to meet certain standards.

# HAZARD MITIGATION ISSUES

## WILDFIRE

### FUELS MANAGEMENT

The threat of wildfires is a big concern to many Otero County residents. There is a widespread belief that the forests have not been properly maintained and as a result invasive and low-lying brush has taken over the forest creating ideal forest fire conditions. Residents are concerned that wildfire will affect their property, as well as affect nearby towns and cities, and the entire watershed citing Little Bear Fire as an example. Although the majority of forestland is managed by BLM and US Forest Service, forest and fuels mismanagement are threatening to burn both government and private property.

Some point to national forest tree thinning programs that have been successful in reducing fuels and forest fires. Most residents believe healthy forest management must involve tree-thinning and the removal of fallen trees, invasive weeds, and plants.

### INSURANCE RATINGS

Mountain districts have poor access to water for firefighting. These districts need more storage capacity and tankers that can deliver water. The lack of water in mountain districts for firefighting has contributed to poor Insurance Services Organization (ISO) ratings, which are based on how much water each department can deliver and how well (Poor ISO ratings of 9 or 10 caused by poor availability and means for delivery). Homeowner's insurance rates are affected by ISO ratings; poor ratings mean higher insurance rates. The State looks at ISO ratings to determine the distribution of fire funds. The amount of funds each department receives is determined by its ISO rating—the better its rating, the more funds it gets. The State sets aside fire funds to be distributed

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*"Fuels mismanagement is a real problem. It affects everyone, and it drives away business both because of risk and because of insurance costs."*

*Community Member*

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among the fire districts, but due to ISO ratings, not all the fire departments can get full funding. Areas with poor ratings are not prioritized, thus the mountain fire districts with poor ISO ratings are losing funds from the State. Improving an ISO rating requires purchasing equipment or obtaining resources

that improve the ability to deliver enough quantities of water for firefighting. Approximately half of the fire funds each year revert to the State General Fund. The State Finance Authority provides loans for purchasing needed equipment.

However, the Cloudcroft VFD and EMS reduced its ISO ratings to 4 due to the fire management steps taken. As of 2014, Cloudcroft was in the top 4 percent of all 369 ISO rated fire departments in New Mexico.

## STAFFING BY VOLUNTEERS

Staffing is an ongoing problem for all the fire departments. One reason recruitment of volunteers is down is because volunteer firefighters are required to maintain the same certifications and training levels as paid professional firefighters. These requirements are difficult for volunteers to meet. The volunteers who are already part of the County fire departments are enthusiastic and dedicated yet were not in favor of the changes to the County's ordinance regarding volunteer fire fighters and emergency service providers. There is also concern about turnover and loss of qualified volunteers in the fire departments due to internal politics. In the mountains, there is a pool of retirees who volunteer. In the basin, the departments are staffed by younger volunteers, many from Holloman Air Force Base where they are stationed. There is a lack of incentives to attract volunteers and in turn, departments are short staffed putting people and property at risk. If funds could be found to pay firefighters for the time they are on-call or tax breaks were offered, recruitment would likely increase.

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*"The volunteers save the County tens of millions yet receive very limited support."*

Community Member

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## TRAINING

Training is a perpetual issue, especially for departments in remote locations. Training is often not available in the communities, so volunteers are required to travel to the training sessions. Occasionally, trainers travel to the mountain fire stations, but several stations are so remote that trainers and inspectors do not visit them often enough. In the mountain districts, the average age of volunteer firefighters is 65. Requiring these volunteers to travel long distances for training is problematic. In the basin, volunteers are younger working people, and it is hard for them to take time from their jobs for training.

## EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

Otero County needs more emergency medical services. Funding for Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) is a problem. State fire funds help pay for training for firefighters but not for EMTs. Some funds for EMT training come from the quarter-cent County excise tax, but these funds are not enough to cover the considerable expense of maintaining an EMT license. There are training conferences available throughout New Mexico and nearby at New Mexico State University. American Medical Response (AMR) offers continuing education courses on a regular basis.

## FLOOD CONTROL

Many areas in Otero County experience flooding during the monsoon season and remains a top concern to many community members. Some believe that the federal entities (US Forest Service and BLM) are not doing enough to mitigate flooding and are responsible for flood damage that has impacted private properties, in addition to publicly managed lands. The County has been working to address flooding by teaming with the Otero Working Group, City of Alamogordo, US Army Corp of Engineers, and state agencies on a flood insurance awareness program, water diversion projects, an early warning system (Reverse 911) that can alert all residents of hazards, and compliance with the National Flood Insurance Program. Despite these efforts, flooding continues to impact daily functions and reduces the quality of life for many Otero County residents. In general, the floodwaters coming down the Sacramento Mountains continue to impact the foothill communities and infrastructure.

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*"Flood protection should be addressed in conjunction with exploration of more efficient water collection and use."*

Community Member

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In particular, residents in Alamogordo noted the need for flood control measures and better water management; their streets flood during the monsoon season and heavy rains, including White Sands Boulevard and Tenth Street, North Florida Avenue and Scenic Drive, Dale Scott Avenue and East First Street, Washington Avenue, and Texas Street. In addition, improved water crossings in highly traversed areas and better drainage in case of flash flooding was identified as a need along US 54 and US 70, especially south of Tularosa where currently arroyos and run off is routed into adjacent residential areas. The City of Alamogordo has been working on an extensive flood control project to increase the volume of stormwater the city's infrastructure can handle. The project is estimated to be complete in 2022. Finishing the flood control projects and keeping the existing arroyos free of debris would be of great benefit for the neighborhoods who get flooded every year due to clogged waterways.

Outside of Alamogordo, there is concern that dams in Mayhill need to be addressed and flood control education is needed for all residents living in flood prone areas.

## DESIRED FUTURE HAZARD MITIGATION

To improve recruitment and retention, all firefighters and EMTs should be paid for the time spent on-call, State Fire Academy instructors should travel to the County fire stations to conduct a minimum of 24 hours of training per year per firefighter training sessions required by the ISO for structural firefighting, and AMR pays a portion of the training costs for EMTs who also work part time for AMR's ambulance service.

The County's desire is for all its fire departments to have low ISO ratings and the appropriate equipment for effective firefighting, including fire trucks and tankers. Fire districts with high ISO ratings should receive enough funds to improve their ratings. The funding should be distributed to fire departments to improve their ISO ratings or assist in needs assessments. Each department should receive a needs assessment, performed by the State Fire Marshal's Office, at least once every five years to ensure that each department has the appropriate resources, up-to-date equipment for firefighting, and the maximum amount of State fire funds. Currently, the State Fire Marshal's office sends inspectors to Otero County to perform needs assessments to inspect and audit all departments with ISO ratings of 9 or 10 and make recommendations to improve their ratings. Most departments with high ratings are already working on improvements and simply need to request an ISO inspection.

Resume the Otero Working Group to ensure fire protection and flood control measures are being taken throughout the county that all stakeholders support.

Another goal is to continue to coordinate the County's radio communication system and coordinate with the Sheriff's Office communication system.

## GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

### **GOAL 1. Otero County has coordinated, proactive, and effective protection from wildfire and flooding hazards.**

**POLICY 1.** *Resume the Otero Working Group that prepared the Otero County Community Wildfire Protection Plan to continue fire protection and flood control measures that all stakeholders support.*

- Action 1. Ensure that the Otero Working Group includes representation from all stakeholders, including federal, state, local governments, residents and property owners, and local non-profit organizations.
- Action 2. Update the OCCWP as necessary to show what has been accomplished and to reflect the current priorities of the Working Group.
- Action 3. Identify an implementation plan that identifies the time frame, responsible entity, and funding source for each necessary control.

**POLICY 2.** *Upgrade the entire County's radio communication system.*

- Action 1. Continue grant applications to fund the upgrade.
- Action 2. Execute a lease or purchase agreement to pay for needed equipment.

Action 3. Coordinate the fire and EMS radio communication systems with that of the County Sheriff's Office.

**POLICY 3. *Increase the number of available trained firefighters in the county.***

Action 1. Provide stipends paid to volunteer firefighters for each shift or call they make.

Action 2. Increase local opportunities for training, particularly for those in remote mountain areas.

**POLICY 4. *Improve Insurance (ISO) ratings in County fire departments.***

Action 1. Schedule needs assessments at each fire station every five years to encourage continuing improvement.

Action 2. Seek funds to purchase necessary firefighting equipment and resources.

Action 3. Utilize State fire funds in each fire station and encourage surpluses to be distributed to the County fire department to improve ISO ratings countywide.

**GOAL 2. *Otero County has quality and reliable emergency service responders.***

**POLICY 1. *Increase the number of qualified emergency medical technicians and service providers.***

Action 1. Provide stipends to pay emergency medical technicians.

Action 2. Designate funds to defray County EMT volunteers' costs for required emergency medical services training and licensing.

Action 3. Support the ICIP allocation for Timberon Fire Station with legislative funding requests and other funding applications as opportunities become available.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

Table 12-1 lists the implementation actions, timing, responsibilities, and potential funding sources to meet the County's hazard mitigation goals. The Implementation Chapter of this plan provides more details on funding sources, resources, and the implementation process.

**TABLE 12-1. IMPLEMENTATION OF HAZARD MITIGATION GOALS**

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
<b>Goal 1. Otero County has coordinated, proactive, and effective protection from wildfire and flooding hazards.</b>		
<i>Policy 1. Resume the Otero Working Group that prepared the Otero County Community Wildfire Protection Plan to continue fire protection and flood control measures that all stakeholders support.</i>		
Ensure that the Otero Working Group includes representation from all stakeholders, including federal, state, local governments, residents and property owners, and local non-profit organizations.	Otero County; OCCWP Working Group; NM State Forestry Division; NM Energy Conservation and Management Division; NM Office of Emergency Management; BLM; USFS	NM Counties Wildfire Risk Reduction Program
Update the OCCWP as necessary to show what has been accomplished and to reflect the current priorities of the Working Group. Identify an implementation plan that identifies the time frame, responsible entity, and funding source for each necessary control.	Otero County; OCCWP Working Group; NM State Forestry Division	NM Counties Wildfire Risk Reduction Program
<i>Policy 2. Upgrade the entire County's radio communication system.</i>		
Continue grant applications to fund the upgrade.	Otero County	State and Local Implementation Grant Program
Execute a lease or purchase agreement to pay for needed equipment.	Otero County	State and Local Implementation Grant Program
Coordinate the fire and EMS radio communication systems with that of the County Sheriff's Office.	Otero County	
<i>Policy 3. Increase the number of available trained firefighters in the county.</i>		
Provide stipends paid to volunteer firefighters for each shift or call they make.	Otero County; VFDs	General Fund
Increase local opportunities for training, particularly for those in remote mountain areas.	Otero County; VFDs	NMVFA Fund
<i>Policy 4. Improve Insurance (ISO) ratings in County fire departments.</i>		
Schedule needs assessments at each fire department every five years to encourage continuing improvement.	Otero County; VFDs	New Mexico Fire Protection Grant
Seek funds to purchase necessary firefighting equipment and resources.	Otero County; VFDs	NMVFA Fund; New Mexico Fire Protection Grant

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
Utilize State fire funds in each fire station and encourage surpluses to be distributed to the County fire department to improve ISO ratings countywide.	Otero County; VFDs	NMVFA Fund; New Mexico Fire Protection Grant
<b>Goal 2. Otero County has quality and reliable emergency service responders.</b>		
Policy 1. Increase the number of qualified emergency medical technicians and service provider		
Provide stipends to pay emergency medical technicians.	Otero County	General Fund
Designate funds to defray County EMT volunteers' costs for required emergency medical services training and licensing.	Otero County	Emergency Medical Services Fund Act
Support the ICIP allocation for Timberon Fire Station with legislative funding requests and other funding applications as opportunities become available.	Otero County	N/A



# Implementation

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The purpose of the Implementation Chapter is to explain how the Comprehensive Plan will be adopted, amended, and implemented. It describes the authority that the Comprehensive Plan has at the County and State levels and it lists the potential funding sources that can be used to implement all the actions identified in the previous chapters. It contains one master table of all the policies and actions of the Plan.

## AUTHORITY

New Mexico statutes enable county planning commissions to carry out and promote county planning. This includes making reports and recommendations for the planning and development of the county as well as recommendations for public improvements to county officials. Comprehensive plans serve these purposes. While there are no statutory requirements of what elements should be in a comprehensive plan, there are state administrative rules in place related to project funding listed in NMAC 2.110.2.11. It should address streets and other infrastructure, parks and playgrounds, floodways, airports, public schools and other buildings, public utilities, community centers and planning of blighted districts. To be in effect, it must be adopted by resolution by the governing authority after at least one public hearing.

## PLAN ADOPTION

The Comprehensive Plan is adopted by resolution as a statement of policy by the County. The ability of a county to prepare a comprehensive plan is established in New Mexico statutes. New Mexico statutes grant the same powers to counties that are granted to municipalities except for those powers that are inconsistent with statutory or constitutional limitations placed on counties.<sup>1</sup> Among these powers are the ability to establish a planning commission that shall "prepare and adopt a master plan for the physical development of the [county]. The plan shall be made with the general purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the [county] which will, in accordance with existing and future needs, best promote health, safety, morals, order,

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<sup>1</sup> 4-37-1 NMSA 1978

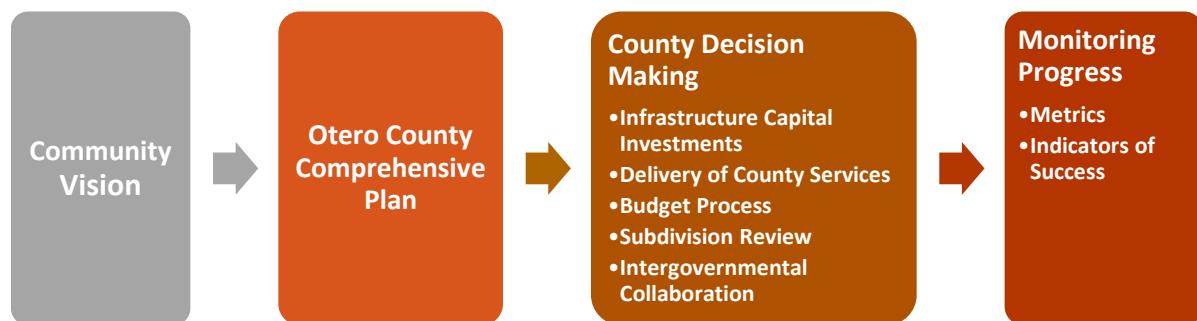
convenience, prosperity or the general welfare as well as efficiency and economy in the process of development.”<sup>2</sup>

## PLAN AMENDMENTS

The plan should be reviewed annually to monitor progress and ensure that the analysis and recommendations of the plan are still valid, with more comprehensive updates every five years. The plan can be amended by resolution for interim changes, if needed.

## HOW THE PLAN IS IMPLEMENTED

The Otero County Comprehensive Plan provides policy and direction for the County Commission and County administration related primarily to the physical development of the County over a long-term time horizon. The goals, policies, and actions outlined in the Comprehensive Plan elements create a framework and priorities so that County leaders can make decisions that are consistent with the community vision expressed in the plan.



The objectives of the Comprehensive Plan are achieved with the following structure:

- Goals. A goal expresses a desired outcome.
- Policies. A policy sets the direction to meet a goal. Statements of policy describe how the County intends to conduct business but do not have specific projects or timelines associated with them.
- Actions. An action is carried out pursuant to a policy to achieve a specific goal. Actions identify a priority, responsible agency or agencies, and funding sources.

## THE ROLE OF COUNTY DEPARTMENTS

A coordinated effort across all County departments is needed to prioritize the actions, determine what is needed to be done to complete each action, identify the party and supporting parties that are

<sup>2</sup> 3-19-9 NMSA 1978

responsible for implementing the action, confirm funding sources that can support it, and specify the time frame in which it should be accomplished.

The implementation matrix (Table 13-1) consolidates all the goals, policies, and actions from each of the Plan's chapters or elements to guide the County in achieving their objectives.

# FUNDING SOURCES

## GENERAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

### NEW MEXICO CAPITAL OUTLAY

The New Mexico Capital Outlay is authorized by the Legislature and can only be used for government-owned facilities because of provisions in the New Mexico Constitution. Capital outlay funds New Mexico's public, local government, and state infrastructure projects. The State Legislature identifies the priority projects to be included in the state's Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan (ICIP). Much of the state's capital outlay is funded through three sources: general obligation bonds, severance tax bonds, and nonrecurring general fund revenue. Funds are administered by the Department of Finance and Administration's Capital Outlay Bureau and is responsible for capital appropriations, tracking project expenditures and issuing grant agreements. The Local Government Division (LGD) assists local government entities, local representatives, and citizens with the appropriate use of public funds and provides administrative and technical support to New Mexico's local jurisdictions. The projects identified in Otero County's ICIP are reviewed among all other local jurisdiction ICIPs and the State Legislature determines which priorities should receive capital outlay funding.

### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANTS

Begun in 1974, the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) is one of the oldest programs administered by US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The CDBG program provides annual grants on a formula basis to many different types of grantees through several programs:

- *State Administered CDBG*: States participating in the CDBG Program award grants only to units of general local government that carry out development activities. In New Mexico, the annual ICIP is the means used to set priorities locally. This is used when evaluating multiple funding sources including CDBG and state capital outlay.
- *Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program (Section 108 Program)*: Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) entitlement communities are eligible to apply for a guarantee from the Section 108 Loan Guarantee program. CDBG non-entitlement applicants may receive their loan guarantee directly or designate another eligible public entity such as an industrial development authority, to receive it and carry out the Section 108 assisted project.

- *Colonias:* Texas, Arizona, California, and New Mexico set aside up to 10 percent of their State CDBG funds for use in colonias.

## FEDERAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION TAX CREDITS

The Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program provides successful and cost-effective community revitalization. The program fosters private sector rehabilitation of historic buildings and promotes economic revitalization. It also provides a strong alternative to government ownership and management of such historic properties. Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives are available for buildings that are National Historic Landmarks, listed in the National Register, and that contribute to National Register Historic Districts and certain local historic districts. Properties must be income-producing and must be rehabilitated according to standard set by the Secretary of the Interior.

Jointly managed by the National Park Service and the Internal Revenue Service in partnership with State Historic Preservation Offices, the Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program rewards private investment in rehabilitating historic buildings. Prior to the program, the US tax code favored the demolition of older buildings over saving and using them. In 1976, the Federal tax code aligned with national historic preservation policy to encourage voluntary, private sector investment in preserving historic buildings.

The Historic Preservation Tax Incentives provide an invaluable tool to revitalize communities and preserve the historic places that give cities, towns, and rural areas their special character. The Historic Preservation Tax Incentives generate jobs, both during the construction phase and in the spin-off effects of increased earning and consumption. Rehabilitation of historic buildings attracts new private investment to the historic core of cities and towns and is crucial to the long-term economic health of many communities. Enhanced property values generated by the Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program result in augmented revenues for local and state governments through increased property, business, and income taxes. Historic Preservation Tax Incentives also create moderate and low-income housing in historic buildings.

## STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION TAX CREDITS

The State of New Mexico Investment Tax Credit program was created on January 1, 1984. The state income tax credit is available to owners of historic structures who accomplish qualified rehabilitation on a structure or stabilization or protection of an archaeological site. It is a two-part process. State applications are available on-line in MS Word format or from the office.

- Property must be individually listed in or contributing to a historic district listed in the State Register of Cultural Properties. The property may be a personal residence, income-producing property (such as an apartment building or office), or an archaeological site.
- The State Cultural Properties Review Committee (CPRC) must approve the proposed rehabilitation work prior to the beginning of the project.
- The project term expires 24 months from the date of the original approval.
- The complete project must be documented in Part 2 of the application and presented to the CPRC for certification. Project expenses must be fully documented and submitted.

- Each program project carries a maximum of \$50,000, although the project costs may exceed this amount.
- Maximum credit is 50 percent of eligible costs of the approved rehabilitation or \$25,000 (50 percent of project maximum) or 5 years of tax liability, whichever is least. The credit is applied against New Mexico income taxes owed in the year the project is complete and the balance may be carried forward for up to four additional years.

## COMMUNITY CHALLENGE PLANNING GRANTS

These grants foster reform and reduce barriers to achieving affordable, economically vital, and sustainable communities. Such efforts may include amending or replacing local master plans, zoning codes, and building codes, either on a jurisdiction-wide basis or in a specific neighborhood to promote mixed-use development, affordable housing, the reuse of older buildings for new purposes, and similar activities with the goal of promoting sustainability at the local or neighborhood level.

## AGRICULTURE

### US DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) offers many resources related to farming and ranching, land management and conservation, and resource protection. The following divisions or related services promote USDA's programs.

#### ***Natural Resources Conservation Service***

This division of USDA offers financial and technical assistance and easement programs to manage land sustainability. The NRCS' local branch office in Alamogordo. Its Financial Assistance Programs include:

The **Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)** helps agricultural producers use conservation to manage risk and solve natural resource issues through natural resources conservation. NRCS administers the AMA conservation provisions while the Agricultural Marketing Service and the Risk Management Agency implement other provisions under AMA.

The **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)** helps agricultural producers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems and adopt additional conservation activities to address priority resources concerns. Participants earn CSP payments for conservation performance—the higher the performance, the higher the payment.

The **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)** provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits such as improved water and air quality, conserved ground and surface water, increased soil health and reduced soil erosion and sedimentation, improved or created wildlife habitat, and mitigation against increasing weather volatility.

The NRCS' **Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)** provides land users assistance with identifying and assessing resources and practices related to the use of natural resources. CTA helps land users make sound natural resource management decisions on private, tribal, and other non-federal lands to:

- Maintain and improve private lands and their management
- Implement better land management technologies
- Protect and improve water quality and quantity
- Maintain and improve wildlife and fish habitat
- Enhance recreational opportunities on their land
- Maintain and improve the aesthetic character of private land
- Explore opportunities to diversify agricultural operations
- Develop and apply sustainable agricultural systems

The NRCS' **Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)** provides financial and technical assistance to help conserve agricultural lands and wetlands and their related benefits to Indian tribes, state and local governments and non-governmental organizations protect working agricultural lands and limit non-agricultural uses of the land. Under the Wetlands Reserve Easements component, NRCS helps to restore, protect, and enhance enrolled wetlands.

The **Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)** helps landowners restore, enhance, and protect forestland resources on private lands through easements and financial assistance. Through HFRP, landowners promote the recovery of endangered or threatened species, improve plant and animal biodiversity, and enhance carbon sequestration.

Through the 2018 Farm Bill NRCS has a new program, **Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)**, which promotes coordination of NRCS conservation activities with partners that offer value-added contributions to expand our collective ability to address on-farm, watershed, and regional natural resource concerns.

#### ***Farm Service Agency***

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) is an USDA agency that upholds the Farm Bill and offers services and programs to help agriculture producers with drought and natural resource conservation assistance, as well as farm loans, energy programs, and disaster aid.

#### ***National Institute of Food and Agriculture***

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) replaced the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service branch of the USDA in 2009. Its purpose is to consolidate all federally funded agricultural research. The following is a list of comprehensive grants that are provided by NIFA:

- 1890 Facilities Grants Program
- 1890 Institution Teaching, Research and Extension Capacity Building Grants (CBG) Program
- AgrAbility - Assistive Technology Program for Farmers with Disabilities
- Agriculture and Food Research Initiative - Education and Workforce Development

- Agriculture and Food Research Initiative - Foundational and Applied Science Program
- Agriculture and Food Research Initiative - Sustainable Agricultural Systems
- Agriculture and Food Research Initiative - Water for Agriculture Challenge Area
- Agriculture and Food Research Initiative - Water for Food Production Systems Challenge Area
- Alaska Native-Serving and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions Education Competitive Grants Program (ANNH)
- Alfalfa Seed and Alfalfa Forage System Program
- Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP)
- Biotechnology Risk Assessment Research Grants Program (BRAG)
- Capacity Building Grants for Non-Land-Grant Colleges of Agriculture Program (NLGCA)
- Centers of Excellence at 1890 Institutions (1890 COEs)
- Children, Youth and Families at Risk Professional Development and Technical Assistance Program
- Children, Youth, and Families at Risk (CYFAR) Sustainable Community Projects
- Clearinghouse for Military Families Readiness
- Community Food Projects (CFP) Competitive Grants Program
- Comparative Genomics Research Program
- Crop Protection and Pest Management
- CYFAR 4-H Military Partnership Professional Development and Technical Assistance (CMPC-PDTA)
- Distance Education Grants for Institutions of Higher Education in Insular Areas (DEG)
- Emergency Citrus Disease Research and Extension Program (ECDRE) Pre-Application
- Enhancing Agricultural Opportunities for Military Veterans Competitive Grants Program
- Equipment Grant Program (EGP)
- Evaluation Plan for Army Community Service - Mobilization, Deployment and Stability Support Operations
- Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program WebNEERS
- Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN)
- Farm Business Management and Benchmarking (FBMB) Competitive Grants Program
- Federally Recognized Tribes Extension Program (FRTEP) (formerly Extension Indian Reservation Program)
- Food and Agriculture Service Learning Program
- Food Safety Outreach Program
- Global Change, Ultraviolet Radiation Monitoring and Research Program
- Higher Education Challenge (HEC) Grants Program
- Higher Education Multicultural Scholars Program (MSP)
- Hispanic-Serving Institutions Education Grants Program (HSI)
- Methyl Bromide Transition Program
- Military Families Learning Network
- Minor Crop Pest Management Program Interregional Research Project #4 (IR-4)
- National Food and Agricultural Sciences Teaching Extension and Research Awards (TERA)
- New Beginning for Tribal Students Programs (NBTS)

- New Technologies for Ag Extension (NTAE)
- Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative
- Organic Transitions (ORG)
- Potato Breeding Research
- Renewable Resources Extension Act-National Focus Fund Projects (RREA-NFF)
- Resident Instruction Grants Program for Institutions of Higher Education in Insular Areas (RIIA) & Agriculture and Food Sciences Facilities and Equipment (AGFEI)
- Rural Health and Safety Education Competitive Grants Program (RHSE)
- Scholarships for Students at 1890 Institutions (1890 Scholarships)
- Secondary Education, Two-Year Postsecondary Education, and Agriculture in the K-12 Classroom Challenge Grants Program (SPECA)
- Small Business Innovation Research Program - Phase I
- Small Business Innovation Research Program - Phase II
- Smith-Lever Special Needs Competitive Grants Program
- Special Research Grants Program Aquaculture Research
- Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI)
- Sun Grant Program
- Supplemental and Alternative Crops (SAC)
- Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Regional Host Institution
- The Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program Formerly known as the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Program (FINI)
- Tribal Colleges Extension Program - Special Emphasis (TCEP-SE)
- Tribal Colleges Extension Services Program - Capacity (TCEP)
- Tribal Colleges Research Grants Program (TCRGP)
- Veterinary Services Grant Program (VSGP)
- Women and Minorities in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Fields Program (WAMS)
- Youth Farm Safety Education and Certification Program
- Youth Support and Internship Program (YSIP)

## NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### ***Marketing and Development***

The Department of Agriculture's Marketing and Development Division helps New Mexican businesses with research and development and offers the following resources:

- Enhancing product awareness and loyalty through the New Mexico—Taste the Tradition®/Grown with Tradition® Logo Program
- Facilitating federal and state grant funds to support industry-driven marketing projects, scientific research, and industry or consumer education projects
- Providing quality inspections for produce and nuts
- Licensing produce brokers and packers

- Conducting organic inspections and certifications according to USDA's National Organic Program Standards
- Providing timely livestock and grain market news data
- Publishing the annual NM Agriculture Statistics Bulletin
- Providing oversight and support to industry-led groups such as the New Mexico Dry Onion Commission, New Mexico Chile Commission, New Mexico Sheep & Goat Council, and the New Mexico Beef Council
- Serving as the fiscal agent for several state-funded initiatives supporting farmers' markets, farm to school, and on-farm education efforts

## NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

NMSU Extension offers a resource center for New Mexico's farmers and ranchers, which includes information on loans, marketing, best practices, and risk management. NMSU Extension connects New Mexicans to relevant online resources about natural resources, addressing drought and pests, and links to USDA's programs.

The NMSU Extension includes the Range Improvement Task Force (RITF), which is dedicated to resolving resource management conflicts. The Task Force is comprised of range scientists, ecologists, wildlife experts, agricultural economists and livestock specialists who use scientific information to help ranchers, land managers and policy makers make decisions about natural resource management and public land use.

The NMSU College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences provides research, academic programs, and the Cooperative Extension Service to make a positive impact on the economy and community development in New Mexico. The Small Farm and Ranch Task Force maximizes the use of NMSU and other resources to address issues relevant to small scale farmers and ranchers in New Mexico. These include specialized educational programs held throughout the state on various topics of interest to small farmers and ranchers. In collaboration with the Cattlegrowers' Foundation, the Raising Ranchers program is intended to help ranchers expand, manage, and keep records for agricultural enterprises during their first 10 years in business.

## NEW MEXICO BEEF COUNCIL

The New Mexico Beef Council is a non-profit with the mission of protecting and increasing the demand for beef and beef products in New Mexico through national and state developed marketing programs. The intent is to enhance profit opportunities for New Mexico's beef producers. Activities include legislative advocacy, continuing education, and professional development, and helping to promote ranching related resources such as NMSU's New Mexico Youth Ranch Management Camp.

## VALUE-ADDED AGRICULTURE

- Producer Grants for farmers, ranchers, and cooperatives for the purpose of processing, marketing, on-site renewable energy production, and local food through USDA
- Beer and Wine Producers' Preferential Tax Rate
- Consumables Gross Receipts Tax Deduction for Manufacturers

## FARMERS.GOV

Farmers.gov is a resource provided by USDA to assist farmers with funding, management, conservation, and other programs. There is one service center in Otero County in Alamogordo.

Farmers.gov offers loans and funding in the following categories:

- Farm Loans for land purchase, construction, equipment, seed, livestock
- Youth loans for aspiring farmers
- Funding for conservation efforts
- Funding for homeownership
- Crop insurance for organic crops, pasture rangeland forage, and hemp and whole farm protection

## AGRICULTURAL MARKETING RESOURCE CENTER (AGMRC)

The AgMRC is an online resource center funded by USDA and promoted by universities across the country. Some economic and marketing resources it offers include:

- Planning grants for feasibility studies, business plans, marketing plans, and legal review
- Working capital grants to purchase inventory, equipment
- Market Maker: a national network that connects farmers to retailers and restaurants.

## TRANSPORTATION

New Mexico Department of Transportation is the chief source of information and funding for road improvements. Other sources for transportation improvements include funds from the Community Development Block Grant program, the State Legislature, and the Federal Aviation Administration.

### NMDOT HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS FUNDS

The State's Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) section provides engineering services to:

- Develop, prioritize, and select roadway safety improvement projects on a statewide basis
- Coordinate with the Transportation Programs Division, Traffic Safety Bureau to administer a statewide transportation safety management system
- Assist other groups within NMDOT and other agencies in highway safety-related matters.

The HSIP addresses the highway element and the engineering functional group as part of a more comprehensive traffic safety program operated by other both within and outside of the NMDOT. The HSIP is run from the NMDOT Transportation Planning Division, Project Planning Bureau. Other highway safety programs are run from other bureaus in various Divisions of NMDOT

FHWA provides program oversight and federal aid for safety projects. The FHWA has also made city streets and county roads eligible for federal aid for safety projects, in addition state highways.

The HSIP section has the responsibility to systematically analyze New Mexico's roadways, including available crash data, to identify roadway (state highway, county road, or city street) locations, sections,

and elements in New Mexico that are currently determined to be hazardous or are forecasted with the likelihood of being hazardous to vehicular or pedestrian travel. Based on such analysis the HSIP section can conduct more detailed engineering studies of hazardous or potentially hazardous location, sections, and elements.

From these more detailed analyses suggested countermeasures in the form of safety improvement projects can be recommended, and federal funding can be incorporated to implement them.

The HSIP has 3 basic procedural components: Planning, Implementation, and Safety Effectiveness Evaluation

***Planning includes:***

- Reviewing Roadway System for actual or potential hazards.
- Conducting engineering safety studies.
- Seeking guidance from others concerning proposed safety projects.
- Using Benefit/Cost ratio as guidance for project selection.
- Establishing top priority for high benefit/cost projects, such as rumble strips on rural highway shoulders.

***Implementation includes:***

- Coordinating the placement of appropriate safety projects in metro TIPS and the STIP.
- Oversight of project design, letting, and construction performed by others.

***Safety Effectiveness Evaluation includes:***

- Conducting before and after studies where safety projects were implemented, examining crash data for up to 3 years before and after project placement
- Findings reported in annual report to NMDOT and FHWA.

***Paving***

The Pavement Management section located in the Project Planning Bureau supports NMDOT's efforts to provide New Mexico with quality highways at minimum cost by providing information necessary to develop cost-effective highway pavement management strategies and to make informed decisions between competing highway projects.

This section evaluates pavement conditions on a statewide basis and predicts expected pavement deterioration so that payment preservation, rehabilitation and reconstruction projects can be optimally scheduled. The NM State Road Fund is generally used for highway maintenance while federal funds are used mostly for construction. However, growth in the state road fund has been slow and NMDOT has struggled to keep up with road maintenance. The department estimates the road fund would have to grow by 80 percent more a year to meet the demand for scheduled road maintenance, including road and bridge resurfacing, repair, and preventive maintenance.

## TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION (FTA) NON-URBANIZED AREA FORMULA GRANTS

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) carries out the Federal mandate to improve public mass transportation. As one of nine operating administrations or agencies within the US Department of Transportation (DOT), FTA is the principal source of financial assistance to America's communities for the planning, development, and improvement of public transportation systems. Through FTA, the federal government provides financial and technical assistance and training to local transit systems, states, and planning organizations.

### FORMULA GRANT PROGRAMS

These grant programs require matching ratio of 80 percent maximum federal share/minimum 20 percent local share.

- Urbanized Area Formula Grants for capital and operating assistance to transit agencies in urban (50,000 or more in population) areas.
- Non-urbanized Area Formula Grants for capital and operating assistance through the states to transit operators in non-urban (less than 50,000 in population) areas. A state must use a percentage (5-15 percent) of the funds it receives for inter-city bus service unless the state can certify that its inter-city bus needs have been met.

The goals of the non-urbanized formula program are: 1) to enhance the access of people in non-urbanized areas to health care, shopping, education, employment, public services, and recreation; 2) to assist in the maintenance, development, improvement, and use of public transportation systems in rural and small urban areas; 3) to encourage and facilitate the most efficient use of all Federal funds used to provide passenger transportation in non-urbanized areas through the coordination of programs and services; 4) to assist in the development and support of intercity bus transportation; and 5) to provide for the participation of private transportation providers in non-urbanized transportation to the maximum extent feasible.

**Eligible Recipients:** State and local governments, non-profit organizations (including Indian tribes and groups), and public transit operators.

**Eligible Purposes:** Funds may be used for capital, operating, and administrative purposes.

**Allocation of Funding:** Funding is apportioned by a statutory formula based on the latest U.S Census figures of areas with a population less than 50,000. The amount that the state may use for state administration, planning, and technical assistance activities is limited to 15 percent of the annual apportionment. States must spend 15 percent of the apportionment to support rural intercity bus service unless the Governor certifies that the intercity bus needs of the state are adequately met.

**Match:** The maximum Federal share for capital and project administration is 80 percent (except for projects to meet the requirement of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Clean Air Act, or bicycle access projects, which may be funded at 90 percent). The maximum Federal share for operating assistance is 50 percent of the net operating costs. The local share is 50 percent, which shall

come from an undistributed cash surplus, a replacement or depreciation cash fund or reserve, or new capital.

**Funding Availability:** Year appropriated plus two years (total of three years)

### US DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

The FHWA provided Federal funds for a variety of transportation projects, including roadways, trails, rail, and transit. These funds cover not only basic infrastructure but enhancements such as streetscapes as well.

### SAFE, ACCOUNTABLE, FLEXIBLE, TRANSPORTATION EQUITY ACT

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) was signed on August 10, 2005 by President George W. Bush and authorizes the Federal surface transportation programs for highways, highway safety, and transit for the 5-year period from 2005-2009.

SAFETEA-LU addresses safety, traffic congestion, efficiency in freight movement, intermodal connectivity, and the environment. SAFETEA-LU promotes more efficient and effective Federal surface transportation programs by focusing on transportation issues of national significance, while giving State and Local transportation decision-makers flexibility to solve transportation problems in their communities.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

### NM RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAMS

The NM Rural Infrastructure Program (RIP) was created in 1988 as part of the Rural Infrastructure Act to provide financial assistance to local authorities for the construction or modification of water supply facilities. The Rural Infrastructure Act was amended in 2001 to include construction or modification of wastewater facilities.

Because the funds are state monies, the application and approval process are streamlined, allowing the funds to be available within four to six weeks. The maximum loan per entity is \$2,000,000 per year.

The base interest rate is 2.375 percent, with a repayment schedule of up to 20 years. No grants are currently available but may be in the future.

Any incorporated city, town, village, county, mutual domestic association, or water and sanitation district whose water supply facility serves a population of less than ten thousand persons.

Applications for placement on the priority list are accepted throughout the year. Loan funds can be made available to projects within six to eight weeks.

## NMFA RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAMS

The New Mexico Finance Authority (NMFA) provides local governments with low-cost funds and technical assistance for affordable financing of capital equipment and infrastructure projects at any stage of completion—from pre-planning through construction—through its six main financing sources:

- Public Project Revolving Fund (NMFA's flagship program)
- Water Programs
- Local Government Planning Fund
- Colonias Loans and Grants
- NMFA Conduit Bonds
- NMDOT Bonds

NMFA funds capital projects with a useful life of 3 years or longer, including:

- Equipment
- Buildings
- Hospitals
- Water Systems
- Sewer Systems
- Solid Waste Facilities
- Streets
- Airports
- Municipal Facilities
- Parking Facilities

## USDA RURAL UTILITIES SERVICE LOANS AND GRANTS

USDA's Rural Utilities Service (RUS) provides much-needed infrastructure or infrastructure improvements to rural communities. These include water and waste treatment, electric power, and telecommunications services. All these services help to expand economic opportunities and improve the quality of life for rural residents.

### ***Rural Development Broadband ReConnect Program***

The Broadband ReConnect Program furnishes loans and grants to provide funds for the costs of construction, improvement, or acquisition of facilities and equipment needed to provide broadband service in eligible rural areas. The application window for the second round of funding closed on April 15, 2020, and applications are currently under review. The entities considered eligible to apply for assistance under the ReConnect Program included:

- Cooperatives, non-profits, or mutual associations
- For-profit corporations or limited liability companies
- States, local governments, or any agency, subdivision, instrumentality, or political subdivision thereof

- A territory or possession of the United States
- An Indian tribe (as defined in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. § 450b)).

**Eligible Funding Purposes:** Award Funds may be used to pay for the following costs:

- To fund the construction or improvement of buildings, land, and other facilities that are required to provide broadband service.
- To fund reasonable pre-application expenses.
- To fund the acquisition and improvement of an existing system that is currently providing insufficient broadband service (eligible for 100 percent loan requests only).
- To fund terrestrial-based facilities that support the provision of satellite broadband service.

**Funding Limits:**

- 100 Percent Grant: Up to \$200,000,000 is available for grants. The maximum amount that can be requested in an application is \$25,000,000.
- 50 Percent Loan / 50 Percent Grant: Up to \$200,000,000 is available for loan/grant combinations. The maximum amount that can be requested in an application is \$25,000,000 for the loan and \$25,000,000 for the grant. Loan and grant amounts will always be equal.
- 100 Percent Loan: Up to \$200,000,000 is available for loans. The maximum amount that can be requested in an application is \$50,000,000.

**Water and Environmental Programs (WEP)**

WEP provides loans, grants and loan guarantees for drinking water, sanitary sewer, solid waste and storm drainage facilities in rural areas and cities and towns of 10,000 or less. Public bodies, non-profit organizations and recognized Indian tribes may qualify for assistance.

WEP also makes grants to non-profit organizations to provide technical assistance and training to help rural communities with their water, wastewater, and solid waste problems.

**Electric Programs**

The Electric Program provides capital and leadership to maintain, expand, upgrade, and modernize America's vast rural electric infrastructure. The loans and loan guarantees finance the construction or improvement of electric distribution, transmission, and generation facilities in rural areas. The Electric Program also provides funding to support demand-side management, energy efficiency and conservation programs, and on-and off-grid renewable energy systems.

Loans are made to cooperatives, corporations, states, territories, subdivisions, municipalities, utility districts and non-profit organizations.

**Telecommunications Programs**

The Telecommunications Program improves the quality of life in rural America by providing capital for the deployment of rural telecommunications infrastructure. USDA Rural Development is committed to ensuring that rural areas have access to affordable, reliable, advanced telecommunications services

comparable to those available throughout the rest of the United States. With this access, rural America will see improved educational opportunities, health care, safety, and security and ultimately, higher employment.

## **WATER SUPPLY**

A variety of federal and state agencies and non-profits have resources available for addressing water supply needs of the County. On the Federal level, the Army Corps of Engineers is a potential funding source for maximizing the beneficial use of storm water and recharging the freshwater aquifer. The US Department of Agriculture is a resource for improving the efficiency of irrigated agriculture and exploring aquifer storage and recovery. Watershed and water source protection, transporting water from aquifers, and reuse of graywater fall under the purview of the New Mexico Environment Department. Regional water plans are funded through the NM Interstate Stream Commission. County water plans are funded by New Mexico Finance Authority with oversight by the New Mexico Environment Department.

See USDA Rural Development's Rural Utility Service description above for details about water supply programs.

### ***319 Grant Program for States and Territories***

The 1987 amendments to the Clean Water Act (CWA) established the Section 319 Nonpoint Source Management Program. Section 319 addresses the need for greater federal leadership to help focus state and local nonpoint source efforts. Under Section 319, states, territories and tribes receive grant money that supports a wide variety of activities including technical assistance, financial assistance, education, training, technology transfer, demonstration projects and monitoring to assess the success of specific nonpoint source implementation projects. In 2019, there was \$165.4 million in total for the grants.

### ***Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grants***

These grants support metropolitan and multijurisdictional planning efforts to integrate housing, land use, economic and workforce development, transportation, and infrastructure investments in a manner that empowers jurisdictions to consider the interdependent challenges of economic competitiveness and revitalization, social equity, inclusion, and access to opportunity, energy use and climate change, and public health and environmental impact.

### ***EPA Urban Waters Small Grants***

Since the inception of the Urban Waters Small Grants Program in 2012, the program has awarded approximately \$6.6 million in grants to 114 organizations across the country and Puerto Rico. The grants are competed and awarded every two years, with individual award amounts of up to \$60,000.

## **WASTEWATER**

The NM Environment Department (NMED) is the main resource for information about and prevention of groundwater contamination. The USDA Rural Development's Rural Utility Service (described earlier) has some programs that address wastewater.

With drought conditions and increasing concern about the availability of water in general, more homeowners and businesses are considering the use of gray water for landscape irrigation and other purposes (Gray water includes wastewater from bathtubs, showers, washbasins, or clothes washing machines, but not from the kitchen or toilets). Gray water reuse systems can be elaborate or simple. Some homeowners choose to water landscapes directly from the shower or clothes washer through a garden hose or by using buckets. Others prefer to install a dedicated plumbing system that performs subsurface irrigation.

Gray water does contain pathogens and, as such, the NMED regulates all uses of gray water (and black water, which includes water from kitchen and toilets) to ensure protection of public health and water quality. Different regulations will apply depending on the volume, measured in gallon per day (gpf), and discharged to a single lot:

- **Less than 250 gpd of Gray Water** – A permit is not required to apply less than 250 gpd of private residential gray water for a residents' household gardening, composting or landscape irrigation, so long as the gray water is applied in accordance with certain requirements outlined in the *NMED Gray Water Irrigation Guide* which is posted on the NMED web page at [www.nmenv.state.nm.us](http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us).
- **Greater than 250 gpd of Gray Water, But Less than 2,000 gpd of Total Combined Gray and Black Water** – A Liquid Waste Permit issued by the NMED Field Operations Division is required if more than 250 gpd of gray water will be applied and the combined volume of gray water and black water discharged to a single lot is less than 2,000 gpd. Permits may be obtained from the nearest NMED field office.
- **Greater than 250 gpd of Gray Water, and More than 2,000 gpd of Total Combined Gray and Black Water** – A Discharge Permit issued by the NMED Ground Water Quality Bureau is required if more than 250 gpd of gray water will be applied and the combined volume of gray water and black water discharged is more than 2,000 gpd. Submit a *Notice of Intent to Discharge* to the NMED Ground Water Quality Bureau describing the proposed project. If NMED determines that a Discharge Permit is required, an *Application for Discharge Permit* must be completed and submitted.

The local city or county government may also have gray water requirements that must be followed. In addition, if a large-scale gray water project is being planned, communities should contact the local OSE Water Right Division to make sure the project does not inappropriately affect the flow of wastewater for water supply recharge.

#### **Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF)**

The Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) program is a federal-state partnership that provides communities low-cost financing for a wide range of water quality infrastructure projects.

The CWSRF was created by the 1987 amendments to the Clean Water Act (CWA) as a financial assistance program for a wide range of water infrastructure projects, under 33 U.S. Code §1383. The program is a powerful partnership between EPA and the states that replaced EPA's Construction

Grants program. States have the flexibility to fund a range of projects that address their highest priority water quality needs. The program was amended in 2014 by the Water Resources Reform and Development Act.

Using a combination of federal and state funds, state CWSRF programs provide loans to eligible recipients to:

- Construct municipal wastewater facilities,
- Control nonpoint sources of pollution,
- Build decentralized wastewater treatment systems,
- Create green infrastructure projects,
- Protect estuaries, and
- Fund other water quality projects.

Building on a federal investment of \$45.2 billion, the state CWSRFs have provided \$138 billion to communities through 2019. States have provided 41,234 low-interest loans to protect public health, protect valuable aquatic resources, and meet environmental standards benefiting hundreds of millions of people.

## STORMWATER DRAINAGE & GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

The County will continue to work with FEMA guidelines as applicable and continually update mapping through the County GIS department to reflect and provide true and realistic flood and watershed information. There are several grants available for green infrastructure projects.

### ***Community Development Block Grants***

These grants are eligible to fund stormwater and green infrastructure because these projects can create jobs, increase economic activity, and increase property values. Urban tree planting can increase economic activity in a commercial district. Additionally, green infrastructure can increase property values by mitigating flooding, improving neighborhood aesthetics, and providing other benefits.

### ***Community Development Block Grant- Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR)***

This program provides federal aid to states post-disaster, and funds can be used for a variety of community development activities that benefit low and moderate-income individuals, reduce blight, or address an urgent community need. In rehabilitating housing and constructing public amenities, cities may be able to incorporate green infrastructure techniques (like street trees and permeable pavements) in street design.

### ***Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program***

This program allows future CDBG allocations to be used to guarantee loans for neighborhood revitalization projects, including construction and installation of public facilities and infrastructure. Section 108- guaranteed projects can incorporate green infrastructure into their design and construction.

## SOLID WASTE

There are multiple loans and grants available from the North American Development Bank and the USDA Solid Waste Management Department.

### ***North American Development Bank: Infrastructure Financing***

#### **Loans**

The North American Development Bank (NADB) works closely with project sponsors to structure appropriate and affordable financing packages to meet the specific needs of each community or project.

Financing may be provided in several ways, including:

- Direct loans: Term, bridge, A/B, etc.
- Revolving lines of credit
- Participation in municipal bond issues

Additionally, NADB may act as the sole lender or co-finance projects with other public or private financiers, depending upon the characteristics and financing needs of the project.

#### **Grants**

##### [Border Environment Infrastructure Fund \(BEIF\)](#)

Through this program, the Bank administers grant funds provided by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), for the implementation of high-priority municipal water and wastewater infrastructure projects located within 100 kilometers of either side of the US–Mexico border.

##### [Community Assistance Program \(CAP\)](#)

Through this program, NADB provides grant financing for critical environmental infrastructure projects in low income-communities for public sponsors with limited capacity to incur debt. Grants are available for projects in all sectors eligible for NADB financing, with priority given to drinking water, wastewater, water conservation and solid waste infrastructure.

##### ***USDA Solid Waste Management Grants***

This program reduces or eliminates pollution of water resources by providing funding for organizations that provide technical assistance or training to improve the planning and management of solid waste sites.

#### **Eligible applicants:**

- Most state and local governmental entities
- Nonprofits
- Federally recognized tribes
- Academic institutions
- All applicants must have:
- Proven ability, background, or experience to successfully complete a project like the one proposed

- Legal authority and capacity to provide technical assistance or training

The program applies to rural areas and towns with a population of 10,000 or less. Special consideration may be given for projects serving an area with fewer than 5,500 or fewer than 2,500 people, regional, multi-state or national areas, or lower-income populations.

The funds may be used for the following purposes:

- Evaluate current landfill conditions to identify threats to water resources.
- Provide technical assistance or training to enhance the operation and maintenance of active landfills.
- Provide technical assistance or training to help communities reduce the amount of solid waste coming into a landfill.
- Provide technical assistance or training to prepare for closure and future use of a landfill site.

## HAZARD MITIGATION

### ***Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)***

This program provides post-disaster federal aid to states to mitigate the risks of future disasters and can fund flood mitigation projects, including acquisition and relocation of flood-prone properties and soil stabilization projects like the installation of vegetative buffer strips.

### ***Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program***

This program provides funds to implement a sustained pre-disaster natural hazard mitigation program. The goal is to reduce overall risk to the population and structures from future hazard events, while also reducing reliance on Federal funding in future disasters. This program awards planning and project grants and provides opportunities for raising public awareness about reducing future losses before disaster strikes. Mitigation planning is a key process used to break the cycle of disaster damage, reconstruction, and repeated damage. PDM grants are funded annually by Congressional appropriations and are awarded on a nationally competitive basis.

## HOUSING

The Housing Chapter of this plan addresses the local housing resources in Otero County. Please refer to that chapter for more details.

## NEW MEXICO MORTGAGE FINANCE AUTHORITY

Though not a state agency, the New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority (MFA) was created by state law with a mandate to provide affordable housing in New Mexico. The MFA is given authority to issue tax-exempt mortgage revenue bonds. Proceeds from bond sales are used to fund below-market interest rate loan programs for single-family homebuyers and for developers of affordable multi-family dwelling. In this way MFA fulfilled its mission, using private dollars only (no state or federal funds), for its 1975 inception to the present.

The state made the MFA responsible for state and federally funded housing programs as well. Besides constituting recognition for a job well done by MFA with its revenue-bond programs, New Mexico made the MFA a “one-stop shop” for housing finance, a model already adopted by most states. The MFA purview now encompasses the tax credits program, emergency shelter grants, homeless initiatives, and Housing and Urban Development’s HOME program.

By operating efficiently, the not-for-profit MFA generates surplus revenue, used to create even more programs to make affordable housing a reality in New Mexico. These include programs for down payment assistance and to support other (non-profit) providers of housing and related services (described in more detail in Chapter 7, Housing).

## STATE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRIES DIVISION

The New Mexico Construction Industries Division is a state program provides for the protection of life and property by adopting and enforcing building codes and standards thereby promoting the general welfare of the people of New Mexico. The Division is responsible for issuing residential and commercial building permits. The Division conducts field inspections for general building, electrical, mechanical and LP Gas code compliance and safety standards. Cities and counties with local building inspection offices must adopt the building codes and standards of the Division as a minimum standard.

The Division is also responsible for:

- Examinations and the issuance of licenses for contractors, and certificates of competence for journeymen.
- Review and approval of residential and commercial building plans for building code and accessibility requirements.
- The conduct of unlicensed contractor investigations.
- Code compliance and other complaints related to violations of the Construction Industries Licensing Act.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### NM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

The New Mexico Economic Development Department raises the standard of living for today’s New Mexicans and future generations by fostering a sustained rise in the production of goods and services.

This agency has many diverse projects devoted to a single aim – better jobs and better lives for New Mexicans. The Economic Development Department promotes research and development, helps finance job training, revitalizes downtowns, recruits new businesses to our state, and assists our cities and towns to market themselves to attract new business.

Within the New Mexico Economic Development Department, the Community Development Team focuses on helping local communities reach their goals. Regional representatives who live in the region provide direct assistance to communities.

### ***Local Economic Assistance & Development Support Program (LEADS)***

In fiscal year 2016 the Certified Communities Initiative (CCI) evolved into the LEADS Program. LEADS is a funding program for economic development projects that produce sustainable outcomes. The funding provided through LEADS is intended to create jobs through recruitment, retention/expansion, and startup activities; develop the tax base; and provide incentives for business development. LEADS applications will be evaluated based on these objectives.

Projects may be awarded \$5,000 to \$15,000 per year and funding is awarded through a cost reimbursement contract. EDD will reimburse the project applicant for work performed and/or costs incurred by the applicant up to the total amount specified in the grant. Reimbursement will be made only upon completion of the project and submittal of a project report.

#### **Eligible applicants:**

- Are part of an economic development effort that includes both public and private participation and can demonstrate their capacity to facilitate economic growth
- Have an up-to-date community economic development plan and a marketing plan that supports business development and job growth
- Have passed the [Local Economic Development Act](#), and, ideally, a Local Option Gross Receipts Tax for economic development; or have enacted other economic development financing tools in your service area

#### **Eligible projects:**

- Achieve specific economic development objectives of job creation, expansion of tax base, and/or business development through measurable outcomes
- Are consistent with the community's adopted economic development plan
- Have a clear beginning and end
- Have an appropriate budget and timeline

### **OTERO COUNTY LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACT (LEDA) ORDINANCE**

The purpose of the County's Local Economic Development Act (LEDA) Ordinance is to allow public support of qualified economic development projects. The ordinance sets criteria for the types of projects that the County is willing to provide donations to accomplish and describes the types of donations it can contribute. The County Commission is responsible for reviewing and accepting eligible projects.

#### ***Assistance that the County Can Provide***

Through the powers granted by the New Mexico Local Economic Development Act and subject to the requirements of the County LEDA Ordinance, the County can provide direct or indirect donations of land, buildings or other infrastructure; public works improvements that are essential to recruiting a

qualifying business. Assistance can include the purchase, lease, grant, or construction, reconstruction, improvement or other acquisition or conveyance for the expansion of a qualifying business; and payments for professional services contracts necessary for local or regional governments to implement a plan or project.

### ***Types of Projects That Are Eligible***

An existing or proposed corporation, limited liability company, partnership, joint venture, syndicate, association, or other person that is one or combination of two or more of the following can qualify for assistance through the LEDA Ordinance:

- An industry for manufacturing, processing, or assembling of any agricultural or manufactured products.
- A commercial enterprise for storing, warehousing, distributing, or selling products of agriculture, mining, or industry, not including a retail business or public utility.
- A business in which all or part of the activities of the business involves the supplying of services to the public or to government agencies or to a specific industry or customer, not including a retail business.
- A telecommunications sales enterprise that makes most of its sales to persons outside of New Mexico.

### ***County Priority Projects and Applicants***

Applications for economic development projects requesting economic assistance from the County, which meet the policies and objectives of the County's economic development plan, receive priority. Examples listed in the ordinance include, but are not limited to:

- Manufacturing firms (including intellectual property such as computer software).
- Projects that enhance the exporting capacity of companies and or provide goods: and services, which currently must be imported into Otero.
- Private companies seeking to build, expand or relocate facilities.
- Private companies which provide facilities or services which enhance the ability of Otero businesses to operate.
- Organizations, which assist business start-ups or bring small companies together to increase their competitive abilities. This must involve a tangible project, which will create jobs and promote an industry. Examples include, but are not limited to:
  - Business incubator
  - Art incubator or coalition (e.g. a performing arts coalition seeking construction rehearsal or performance facilities)
  - Public market for farmers, gardeners, crafts, etc.
  - Organizations which foster economic development by promoting work force development efforts such as apprenticeships or other job training programs
- Projects in industry clusters listed above are particularly encouraged, but others are eligible to apply as well. The intention is to retain flexibility in the use of incentives.

- Qualifying entities with existing contracts or projects with the County LEDA Ordinance was adopted can propose a restructuring of their projects as an economic development project.

### ***Project Selection***

The LEDA Ordinance describes the application process and information required of entities that apply for assistance from the County. Applicants for assistance must meet criteria that demonstrate the financial viability of the proposing organization and the benefit of the project to the County relative to cost. The project must allow the County to recoup its costs within ten years. A project must provide career opportunities for Otero County residents, including career development and training opportunities, and must consider cultural impacts of the project.

## **TOURISM**

### **NEW MEXICO TOURISM DEPARTMENT**

The New Mexico Tourism Department offers many ways for small businesses, historic and cultural destinations, and natural resources to be promoted and funded. A full list of resources is found on their website [newmexico.org](http://newmexico.org). The following grant programs are available.

#### ***New Mexico True***

The New Mexico True program promotes the special places and products in New Mexico. The program has the resources to promote the attractions throughout Otero County and help municipalities market their attractions and resources with:

- New Mexico True advertising and branding campaign
- New Mexico True certification for locally produce products
- Destination marketing through the New Mexico True website and social media

#### ***Cooperative Marketing Grants***

The "Co-Op" program supports our shared vision to grow the tourism economy in New Mexico. Tourism-related, nonprofit organizations and local and tribal governments can:

- Double their tourism marketing impact with dollar-for-dollar matching funds
- Collaborate with for-profit entities to contribute up to half of applicant's investment
- Harness the power of millions of New Mexico True brand impressions with proven creative and media tools
- Build marketing capability through media consultations and technical assistance
- Share measurable results and performance reporting to demonstrate the impact to your destination, attraction, or event!

#### ***Clean and Beautiful Grant Program***

The New Mexico "Litter Control and Beautification Act," NMSA 1978, § 67-16-1 et seq., addresses litter control and is fostered the Tourism Department's Clean and Beautiful Grant Program. The Clean and

Beautiful grant program funds projects and initiatives that contribute to the following established goals, as identified through Keep America Beautiful and the Litter Control and Beautification Act:

- End Littering
- Improve Recycling
- Beautify Communities
- Empower Youth
- Improve Program Capacity

## OUTDOOR RECREATION AND PUBLIC RESOURCES

### NEW MEXICO OUTDOOR RECREATION DIVISION

The State's new Outdoor Recreation Division offers two programs to assist New Mexico communities with their outdoor recreation and related economic development efforts:

The **Outdoor Equity Fund** is accepting grant applications for the first time starting in 2020. The grant will support transformative outdoor experiences that foster stewardship and respect for our lands, waters, and cultural heritage.

The **Outdoor Rec Incubator** grants are provided to business incubators that propose the best programs to assist early stage outdoor companies that have a regional focus in service, retail, or manufacturing.

The **Special Projects and Infrastructure Fund** is a grant program to support projects that enhance communities' outdoor recreation opportunities. Trails, river parks, wildlife viewing areas contribute to economic development, prosperity, and general wellness, and this grant will fund shovel-ready projects that directly add to that access.

### NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

#### ***Community Assistance Programs***

The National Park Service provides grants for preservation and outdoor recreation and offers assistance registering historic places and national trails. Their Community Assistance Programs can help conserve natural assets, improve outdoor recreation, document historic structures, and help communities share their local culture and history.

#### ***Land and Water Conservation Fund***

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) provides local and state governments matching grants to acquire and develop and improve public outdoor recreation areas and facilities.

## US ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

### ***Public Works Program***

The Public Works Program empowers distressed communities to revitalize, expand, and upgrade their physical infrastructure to attract new industry, encourage business expansion, diversify local economies, and generate or retain long-term, private sector jobs and investment.

### ***USDA Rural Business Development Grants***

The Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG) is a competitive grant designed to support targeted technical assistance, training, and other activities leading to the development or expansion of small and emerging private businesses in rural areas that have fewer than 50 employees and less than \$1 million in gross revenues. Programmatic activities are separated into enterprise or opportunity type grant activities. There is no maximum grant amount for enterprise or opportunity type grants; however, smaller requests are given higher priority. Generally, grants range from \$10,000 up to \$500,000. There is no cost sharing requirement. Total opportunity type grant funding is limited statutorily to up to 10 percent of the total RBDG annual funding.

The following entities may apply:

- Towns
- Communities
- State agencies
- Authorities
- Nonprofit Corporations
- Institutions of Higher Education
- Federally recognized Tribes
- Rural Cooperatives

## NM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT - OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY RESOURCES

- **Business Resource Center (BRC):** EDD is willing to partner with certified business incubators and other service providers to create a web portal to direct businesses to the services they need across the State.
- **Marketing:** The Office of the Secretary has undertaken small marketing efforts to better inform New Mexico businesses of EDD programs and services. Efforts include distributing flyers, placing ads in the New Mexico Small Business Association (SBA) magazine, developing brochures on programs and assets, and providing online marketing through an enhanced website.
- **New Mexico Business Incubator Program:** The program includes workshops on business incubation and to mentor five rural communities in starting entrepreneurship programs customized to community needs.

### ***Economic Development Division Resources***

- **New Mexico MainStreet Program Arts & Cultural District:** this program is focused on sustaining and growing the cultural economy in New Mexico by developing creative

industries and supporting cultural entrepreneurs with opportunities for business development.

- **Community, Business and Rural Development Team (CBRDT):** the mission of the CBRDT is to assist communities in building capacity for development by training local leadership, engaging diverse community stakeholders in planning processes, and helping communities identify strategic opportunities to advance the region's goals for economic growth. The team aids through facilitation and establishment of Economic Development Organizations, providing technical assistance on economic revitalization and community development, and aiding in identifying funding programs. The team also assists with the passage of Local Economic Development Acts (LEDAs) and relation Local Option Gross Receipts Tax.
- **Rural Economic Development Council (REDC):** the mission of the REDC is to, "establish a formal platform to identify issues and challenges affecting rural New Mexico, advocate for sustainable growth in rural communities, support programs, and collaborate on policies which positively impact rural areas."
- **Finance Development Team (FDT):** the FDT assists new and existing business by providing detailed information on tax incentives and financial assistance programs. The council also helps provide training for rural community leaders.
- **Job Training Incentive Program:** this program offers wage reimbursements of 50 to 75 percent to businesses that train new employees for newly created jobs within their company. This helps offset training and education costs and may help offset skill upgrades for existing jobs. It is geared toward manufacturers and other large companies.
- **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Services:** Under This Act New Mexico set up four regional offices to help match employers with the skilled workers they need, The Central Area Workforce Development Board comprises both the Mid-Regional Council of Governments, which provides planning services for economic growth and workforce development, and the Workforce Connection of Central New Mexico Business and Career Centers, which helps employers and job seekers in Sandoval, Bernalillo, Valencia and Torrance counties. One component is a job training incentive program for small and medium-size businesses that will reimburse employers for up to 75% of wages (up to \$32 an hour)
- **Office of Science and Technology:** The goal of this office is to, "enhance the business climate to encourage the start-up, relocation, development, and growth of technology-based industry in New Mexico." Currently, the EDD is developing a work plan for the office to grow in the future.

## NEW MEXICO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (NMEDC)

The NMEDC is a public-private partnership intended to provide marketing and contract services for businesses development to attract and expand economic base employers in New Mexico. The EDC helps to create economic employment opportunities by business communication and assistance in site selection, leveraging market resources, communicating business success stories, and supporting funding for competitive project closings.

# IMPLEMENTATION

The Comprehensive Plan provides policy and direction for Otero County over the next 20 years. The actions outlined in the Comprehensive Plan create a framework and priorities so that the County departments and leadership can make decisions that are consistent with the community vision expressed in this Plan. This section includes a detailed matrix of all the actions needed to implement the Plan, along with responsibilities and time frame.

**FIGURE 13-1. IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX**

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
<b>HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES</b>		
<b>Goal 1. Otero County honors and promotes its historical and cultural sites and artifacts.</b>		
<i>Policy 1. Prioritize the conservation of cultural sites and artifacts.</i>		
Continue to encourage private owners of cultural properties to take advantage of NM tax credits that are listed on the State Register and are available for educational purposes.	Otero County; DCA; SHPO; CPRC	NM Income Tax Credit for Preservation of Cultural Properties
Encourage the NM Department of Cultural Affairs to return valuable and historic material to Otero County to be placed in the Tularosa Basin Historical Museum.	Otero County; DCA; SHPO; Tularosa Basin Historical Society	N/A
Prohibit natural artifacts from Otero County from leaving the County without the consent of the Otero Board of Commissioners and the NM Department of Cultural Affairs.	Otero County; DCA; Federal and State Land Management Agencies	N/A
<i>Policy 2. Encourage the preservation of historic buildings and districts.</i>		
Incentivize property owners to maintain and preserve their historic buildings.	Otero County; DCA; SHPO; Tularosa Basin Historical Society	Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program; NM Rehabilitation Tax Credit
Work with the State Historic Preservation Office and property owners to make historic buildings attractive for new businesses.	Otero County; DCA; SHPO; Tularosa Basin Historical Society	Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program; NM Rehabilitation Tax Credit
Promote the historic districts and sites in the county in coordination with the NM Tourism Department and NM True marketing.	Otero County; Tularosa Basin Historical Society;	NM Tourism Department Grants and promotion support
<b>NATURAL RESOURCES</b>		
<b>Goal 1. Otero County's natural resources are conserved and utilized in a manner that will sustain ecosystem health and community safety for future generations.</b>		
<i>Policy 1. Protect the quality of the environment through a balanced management approach to using natural resources.</i>		
Review current practices and performance of managing agencies for sustainability.	Otero County	N/A

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
Coordinate federal/state agency management to consider entire watershed/ecosystems in relation to landscapes (grazing, soil conservation, preservation of agricultural land).	Otero County; EMNRD; NRCS; USFS; BLM; NPS (WHSAs); DOD; HAFB; WSMR; South Central Mountain RC&D; OSWCD; Range Improvement Task Force	N/A
Ensure County involvement in federal/state agency decisions about the use and management of public land.	Otero County; EMNRD; NRCS; USFS; BLM; NPS (WHSAs); DOD; HAFB; WSMR	N/A
Involve the Public Land Use Advisory Council in land management decisions.	Otero County; PLUAC	N/A
Advocate managing the Public Lands for multiple use.	Otero County; USFS; BLM; NPS (WHSAs); DOD; HAFB; WSMR; Range Improvement Task Force	N/A
Advocate grazing management to include elk and other wild game animals as well as domestic livestock according to available resources so the environment is not degraded.	Otero County; USFS; BLM; DOD; HAFB; WSMR; Range Improvement Task Force	N/A
<i>Policy 2. Protect the quality of the environment through good stewardship practices.</i>		
Compile environmental documents in a locally accessible Countywide archive.	Otero County	N/A
Develop a list of sources such as experts qualified in subject matter to assist in decision-making/review of resource proposals.	Otero County; South Central Mountain RC&D; OSWCD; NMSU-Extension; NRCS	N/A
Use internal budget and available grant programs to help finance the above strategies.	Otero County	USDA grants

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
<b>PUBLIC LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</b>		
<b>Goal 1. Public land uses are sustainable and maintain the custom and culture of Otero County.</b>		
<i>Policy 1. Protect the custom and culture of Otero County in all decisions regarding the use of publicly managed lands and resources.</i>		
Promote forest and watershed restoration.	Otero County; USFS; BLM; NPS (WHSAs); NRCS; OSWCD	USDA grants
Support sustainable livestock grazing practices.	Otero County; USFS; BLM; NRCS; South Central Mountain RC&D; OSWCD; Range Improvement Task Force (RITF)	N/A
Support timber production and manufacturing of timber.	Otero County; USFS; BLM; NRCS; South Central Mountain RC&D	N/A
Facilitate easing restrictions on using resources on federal lands.	Otero County; USFS; BLM; DOD; HAFB; WSMR	N/A
Support the beneficial use of timber that is bug-killed, diseased, dead/dying, or scarified.	Otero County; USFS; BLM; NRCS; South Central Mountain RC&D	N/A
Support removal of trees as necessary for the safety and welfare of forest health, watershed health, and residents of Otero County.	Otero County; USFS; BLM; NRCS; South Central Mountain RC&D	USDA grants
Reduce depletion rates of groundwater to sustain the custom and culture of the county.	Otero County; USFS; BLM; NRCS; South Central Mountain RC&D	N/A
Create a regional action plan to develop both extractable and renewable minerals, as needed.	Otero County	N/A
Designate and map established agriculture or grazing lands, based on soil type and availability to aid their preservation.	Otero County; NRCS; South Central Mountain RC&D; OSWCD; RITF	USDA grants
Promote recreational opportunities that benefit county residents, as well as tourism.	Otero County; State Tourism Department; State Outdoor Recreation Division	Tourism Department Cooperative Marketing Grants; Outdoor Equity Fund; Outdoor Rec Incubator grant; Special Projects and Infrastructure Fund
Conserve sites of cultural and historical importance.	Otero County; DCA; SHPO; Tularosa Basin Historical Society	NM Income Tax Credit for Preservation of Cultural Properties
<b>Goal 2. The county's historical, agricultural, and forestry land uses and practices are protected.</b>		

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
<i>Policy 1. Preserve agricultural uses and grazing lands based on soil type and water availability to aid in their preservation for future generations.</i>		
Designate established grazing land to preserve agricultural use.	Otero County	N/A
Continue to collaborate with federal and state agencies on the management of resources. This collaboration should include the County Manager's Office, landowners, federal and state agencies, and County Commission.	Otero County (County Commission, County Manager); private property owners; State Land Office; USFS; BLM; NPS (WHSA); DOD	N/A
<b>Goal. 3 Local interests are represented in the decisions and planning of state and federal agencies within and adjacent to the county's boundaries.</b>		
<i>Policy 1. Protect and enhance private property rights when federal or state land agencies acquire private land rights or private lands within the county, while protecting the public health, safety, and welfare of county residents.</i>		
Involve local individuals and groups, including the County Public Land Use Council and others who have expertise, experience, or interest in resource and land use issues to assist the County's participation in state and federal agency decision making processes.	Otero County; PLUAC; RITF; property owners; USFS; BLM; NPS (WHSA); NRCS; DOD	N/A
Support cooperators and government agencies in making sound natural resource and land use decisions that are scientifically based, legally defensible, sensitive to resource health, and responsive to multiple use interests while maintaining custom and culture practices of the county and protecting private vested rights.	Otero County; PLUAC; RITF	N/A
Work to ensure local input on state and federal resource and land use policy issues to protect private property rights, review of endangered species, and review of Water Quality Control Commission regulations.	Otero County; State Land Office; USFWS; USFS; BLM; NPS (WHSA); Water Quality Control Commission	N/A
Maintain partnerships with local, state, and federal agencies to provide technical assistance on resource and land use issues.	Otero County; PLUAC; State Land Office; USFS; BLM; NPS (WHSA); NRCS	N/A
Work closely with and enter into coordination and joint planning efforts with local, state, and federal agencies to ensure that the natural resource and private property right goals of the Comprehensive Plan are included in these agencies' planning and management actions,	Otero County; State Land Office; USFS; BLM; NPS (WHSA); DOD; HAFB; WSMR	N/A

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
regulations, and policies with regard to private, local government, state, and federal lands.		
Request cooperating agency status from the lead agency on all federal actions involving an Environmental Impact Statement.	Otero County; State Land Office; USFS; BLM; NPS (WHSA); DOD; HAFB; WSMR	N/A
Encourage local, state, and federal agencies to share information that they routinely collect ( <i>i.e.</i> , geographic information system mapping and the assessment of new management practices and techniques) with the County, which will also share its data and information.	Otero County; State Land Office; USFS; BLM; NPS (WHSA); DOD; HAFB; WSMR	N/A
<i>Policy 2. Increase intergovernmental cooperation between Otero County, municipalities, state, and federal agencies.</i>		
Continue to coordinate firefighting with the US Forest Service so County volunteer fire departments are the first responders to communities located in Lincoln National Forest.	Otero County; USFS	N/A
<p>Pursue multi-county and agency agreements regarding water rights and management.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Develop taskforce with representatives from the ranching community, farming community, US Forest Service, BLM, Holloman AFB, the County, and municipalities to come to agreement on water management.</li> <li>– If appropriate, use a professional facilitator for conflict resolution.</li> </ul>	Otero County; USFS; BLM; NPS (WHSA); HAFB; City of Alamogordo; Village of Tularosa; other municipalities/colonias	USDA programs
<p>Pursue multi-county and agency agreements regarding land management.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Develop taskforce with representatives from the ranching community, farming community, US Forest Service, BLM, Holloman AFB, the County, and municipalities to come to agreement on land management.</li> <li>– If appropriate, use a professional facilitator for conflict resolution.</li> </ul>	Otero County; Doña Ana County; Lincoln County; PLUAC; USFS; BLM; HAFB; ranchers; farmers; municipalities/colonias	N/A
Designate staff and funding to support cooperative efforts, as necessary.	Otero County	General Fund
<p>Develop partnerships with other governmental bodies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Hold quarterly meetings in community centers to address community concerns.</li> <li>– Hold special meetings between the County and municipal governments, BLM, US Forest</li> </ul>	Otero County; Doña Ana County; Lincoln County; PLUAC; USFS; BLM; NPS (WHSA); HAFB; municipalities/colonias	USDA programs

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
<p>Service, and other agencies to address these concerns.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Share funding of programs with other governments.</li> </ul>		
<p>Improve communications with other government agencies by using available technology.</p>	<p>Otero County; Doña Ana County; Lincoln County; PLUAC; USFS; BLM; NPS (WHSA); HAFB</p>	<p>USDA programs</p>
<p><i>Policy 3. Protect and sustain Otero County's water resources.</i></p>		
<p>Continue to support protection of ground water, aquifers, and Lucero Lake, Tularosa Creek and Sacramento River.</p>	<p>Otero County; OSWCD; NPS (WHSA);</p>	<p>NMED programs</p>
<p>Continue to follow Water Rights, Appropriation of Ground and Surface Water; Canadian River Compact; Conservancy and Irrigation Districts; and Endangered Species Act.</p>	<p>Otero County</p>	<p>WEP</p>
<p>Continue to explore water supply alternatives.</p>	<p>Otero County</p>	<p>EPA grants; NMED; CWSRF</p>
<p>Participate in the preparation of the regional 40-Year Water Plan and ensure its adoption.</p>	<p>Otero County</p>	<p>NM Finance Authority</p>
<p>Support region-wide water collaboratives, plans, and initiatives for water efficiency, and conservation.</p>	<p>Otero County; Office of State Engineer; Region 5: Tularosa–Sacramento–Salt Basins</p>	<p>NM Interstate Stream Commission</p>
<p>Continue to follow water quality standards – Surface Water: Federal Clean Water Act; Groundwater: NM Water Quality Act; Drinking Water: Safe Drinking Water Act.</p>	<p>Otero County</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Plan and work with local entities to protect and wisely utilize available water resources for the long-term interest of the area.</p>	<p>Otero County; municipalities/colonias</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Support communities in providing the necessary infrastructure needed to preserve and protect the groundwater in this area.</p>	<p>Otero County; municipalities/colonias</p>	<p>NMED</p>
<p>Protect and preserve well water resources throughout the county.</p>	<p>Otero County; municipalities/colonias</p>	<p>CWSRF</p>
<p><i>Policy 4. Promote the use and transmission of renewable energy.</i></p>		
<p>Promote and encourage renewable energy businesses and solar water heating.</p>	<p>Otero County; OCEDC; municipalities/colonias</p>	<p>USDA Electric Program</p>
<p>Support smart growth-oriented land use planning to coincide with the common goal of reducing greenhouse gases.</p>	<p>Otero County</p>	<p>CDBG</p>
<p>Continue to support increasing transmission lines so the County can increase distribution of renewable resources.</p>	<p>Otero County</p>	<p>USDA Electric Program</p>

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
<b>PRIVATE LAND USE</b>		
<b>Goal 1. Otero County allows orderly and appropriate growth in the county while protecting individual property rights and upholding County policy.</b>		
<i>Policy 1. Consider the interests and rights of Otero County residents in all decisions regarding the use of federal- and state-owned lands.</i>		
Enforce laws within jurisdiction of the County Commission.	Otero County	N/A
Assure the right to cultivate land and maintain livestock in accordance with the Right to Farm Act as provided in NMSA 1978, Chapter 47, Article 9.	Otero County; USFS; BLM; NRCS; South Central Mountain RC&D; OSWCD; Range Improvement Task Force (RITF)	N/A
Solicit property owners' opinions of proposed action.	Otero County; property owners	N/A
Negotiate to reach settlement of differences.	Otero County; RITF; property owners	N/A
Use due process in courts to settle differences.	Otero County	N/A
<i>Policy 2. Develop an educated, informed, and involved citizenry in community planning and decision-making.</i>		
Use all means to communicate to residents and inform them of local, state, and federal actions and planning processes, including newspapers, radio and television programs, and internet.	Otero County; community organizations; municipalities/colonias	N/A
Motivate citizens to get involved in planning.	Otero County; community organizations; municipalities/colonias	N/A
Use a Comprehensive Plan committee and a professional if needed to review and update the County's Comprehensive Plan every five years.	Otero County	CDBG
<i>Policy 3. Ensure Holloman Air Force Base Mission is not jeopardized by incompatible growth.</i>		
Work with Holloman AFB to promote further consideration of the Air Force Air Installation Compatible Use Zone (AICUZ) land use recommendations.	Otero County; HAFB	N/A
Adopt the Holloman Air Installation Compatible Use Zone as County policy and attach the report as a technical appendix to the Otero County Comprehensive Plan.	Otero County	N/A
Implement the Holloman Air Installation Compatible Use Zone through cooperation between adjacent landowners and the base.	Otero County	N/A
<i>Policy 4. The County Commission reviews, updates, and enforces County regulations, ordinances, codes, databases, and plans.</i>		

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
Designate an enforcement officer responsible to the Sheriff's Office as the person responsible for enforcement of County ordinances.	Otero County	N/A
Use the County assessor records and County mapping resources to identify subdivision violations.	Otero County	General Fund
Hire a County code enforcement officer to monitor activity and enforce adopted ordinances.	Otero County	General Fund
Review and update ordinances and codes every three years.	Otero County	N/A
The County Commission may consider methods to regulate the use, density, and massing of development.	Otero County	N/A
Recognize current and historical land uses through mapping. Traditional zoning typically establishes zones that regulate use, setbacks, and height and other physical parameters.	Otero County	CDBG
Adopt regulations that codify current and historical land uses based on existing assessor classifications and require a special use permit or other process to build a certain number of units or change the use.	Otero County	CDBG
Investigate the feasibility of adopting performance zoning or growth guidance systems that would evaluate prospective developments based on their project impact on the local area.	Otero County	N/A
Enact joint powers agreement to establish joint zoning ordinance, joint planning and zoning authority in extraterritorial areas surrounding municipalities.	Otero County; municipalities/colonias	N/A
Update the County's subdivision ordinance.	Otero County	CDBG
Limit the use of Eminent Domain by government entities to the unincorporated parts of the county when a government agency has exhausted every other alternative to overcome a critical obstacle to an important project.	Otero County	N/A
Before using Eminent Domain, government agencies will conduct open, public discussions with residents, property owners, and the County Commission.	Otero County; residents	N/A

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
<b>Goal 2. The county's built environment is well-cared for and complements the natural beauty.</b>		
<i>Policy 1. Encourage rehabilitation or redevelopment of vacant and abandoned property to provide residents with more housing options, businesses with more building options, and improve the overall health and look of the community.</i>		
Convene a taskforce with government entities and legal/title professionals to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Assess the local and state laws regarding abandoned property, tax foreclosure statutes, and the feasibility of developing a land bank for abandoned property so it can be returned to productive use.</li> <li>– Enact an Abandoned Building Ordinance that specifies that specifies process for fee collection and lien before sale of property.</li> <li>– Develop an abandoned property list and register all buildings in unincorporated areas.</li> <li>– Establish fees/fines until properties are in compliance.</li> </ul>	Otero County, municipalities/colonias; lawyers; State	N/A
Initiate a countywide cleanup. Consider hiring residents to clean up blight along public rights-of-way.	Otero County; municipalities/ colonias; lawyers; NMDOT	Clean and Beautiful Grant
Put the enactment of land use controls in unincorporated portions of the county on the ballot so county residents can vote for or against.	Otero County	N/A
Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
<b>HOUSING</b>		
<b>Goal 1. The county's existing housing stock is utilized through rehabilitation.</b>		
<i>Policy 1. Enact housing rehabilitation as a priority countywide.</i>		
Create a housing rehabilitation task force to development program, assistance, and outreach efforts.	Otero County	MFA
Publicize tax advantages available for rehabilitating historic homes.	Otero County	SHPO
Educate residents on home maintenance and training on minor repairs and encourage residents to maintain homes to building code standards.	Otero County; Tierra del Sol; Habitat for Humanity and other non-profits	MFA
Inventory the condition of vacant housing in the unincorporated part of the county to assess for historical value and code violations.	Otero County	MFA

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
Match property owners with available grants and financing options to rehabilitate properties and put them back into productive use.	Otero County; MFA	HOME; USDA; Energy \$mart Program; Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation and Accessibility Improvements Program
<b>Goal 2. Affordable housing is available to residents of Otero County.</b>		
<i>Policy 1. Promote the development of new housing that is affordable to low-, very low-, and moderate-income households in Otero County.</i>		
Work with Habitat for Humanity, Tierra del Sol, and other housing developers to provide affordable homes to qualified families in Otero County.	Otero County; HFH; Tierra del Sol; housing developers	Low-Income Housing Tax Credits
Work with USDA to maintain eligibility for USDA Rural Development programs in Otero County's rural communities near El Paso and Alamogordo.	Otero County; USDA; Chaparral; other designated colonias	N/A
<b>Goal 3. New housing is sited and constructed in areas already served by adequate infrastructure.</b>		
<i>Policy 1. Promote infill housing development to maximize use of existing infrastructure before constructing new infrastructure or new subdivisions outside service areas.</i>		
Incentivize residential subdivision and multi-family development in infill areas most suitable for housing, such as providing expedited permitting processes or reduced fees.	Otero County	General Fund
Support efforts to develop higher residential densities in Chaparral where served by adequate infrastructure.	Otero County; Chaparral	N/A
Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>		
<b>Goal 1. Otero County's economy is strong and diverse.</b>		
<i>Policy 1. Support existing businesses and encourage their expansion.</i>		
Identify common needs and obstacles to business expansion.	Otero County; OCEDC	N/A
Actively participate in Alamogordo and Cloudcroft Chamber of Commerce "shop local" programs and marketing activities to include radio spots and print media advertising.	Otero County; OCEDC; Chambers of Commerce; NM Tourism Department	NM True Certification and Cooperative Marketing Grants
Work with the Eastern Area Workforce Development Board to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Determine best practices and encourage their implementation in Otero County.</li> <li>– Identify workforce training needs that prevent companies from expanding.</li> </ul>	Otero County; EAWDB; OCEDC; SNMEDD	WIOA Funds; Job Training Incentive Program (JTIP) Funds

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Implement workforce training that will help existing businesses.</li> <li>– Provide outreach services to educate employers on the resources available for workforce development.</li> </ul>		
<p>Work with local Chambers of Commerce to identify state and federal issues that hamper local business.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Participate in chamber committees that work with state and federal legislative and funding issues.</li> <li>– Participate in chamber-led legislative forums, roundtables, and town halls.</li> </ul>	Otero County; Chambers of Commerce; OCEDC	N/A
<p><i>Policy 2. Continue to diversify the economy by attracting or growing new sustainable industries that offer quality employment and living wages.</i></p>		
<p>Support the Otero County Economic Development Council's recruitment and retention efforts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Participate in local site visits of companies looking to relocate in Otero County.</li> <li>– Provide input to OCEDC on the types of industries to attract.</li> <li>– Be proactive about marketing.</li> <li>– Develop incentives such as a revolving loan fund.</li> </ul>	Otero County; OCEDC	Revolving loan fund
<p>Use public funds to assist in the development of new jobs when feasible and within the provisions of the NM Local Economic Act.</p>	Otero County; OCEDC	LEDA Job Creation Fund
<p>Identify County land that could be used as an incentive in attracting industry.</p>	Otero County; OCEDC	N/A
<p>Facilitate development of beef-processing, nut processing, wine-making and other value-added enterprises.</p>	Otero County; NM Department of Agriculture; NM Beef Council; SNMEDD	NIFA Grants; Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP)
<p>Promote industrial growth around the airport.</p>	Otero County; OCEDC; SNMEDD	N/A
<p><i>Policy 3. Provide workforce training and prepare county for workforce readiness.</i></p>		
<p>Partner higher education and NMSU-Alamogordo with businesses to coordinate and align programs so students will have the right skills when entering college and the workforce.</p>	Otero County; NMSU-Alamogordo; OCEDC; SNMEDD; School Districts serving Otero County	LEDA Funds; WIOA Funds; Job Training Incentive Program (JTIP) Funds
<p>Coordinate educational programs with the Career Technical Leadership Project (CTLP), which manages four Career Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs) statewide: Business Professionals of America (BPA), DECA, Family,</p>	Otero County; NMSU-Alamogordo; SNMEDD; School Districts serving Otero County;	LEDA Funds; WIOA Funds; Job Training Incentive Program (JTIP) Funds

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA), and HOSA—Future Health Professionals.	CTLP; CTSOs; BPA; DECA; FCCLA; HOSA	
<i>Policy 4. Promote tourism in the county.</i>		
Promote White Sands National Park, Lincoln National Forest, and the NM Museum of Space History as destinations for holidays and special events.	Otero County; White Sands National Park; USFS; NM Museum of Space History; NM Tourism Department	NM True Cooperative Marketing Grants
Work with NM Tourism Department to strategize cohesive countywide tourism approach and leverage resources.	Otero County; NM Tourism Department	NM True Cooperative Marketing Grants
Develop community resources to support incentives for tourism.	Otero County; OCEDC; SNMEDD; Chambers of Commerce	NM True Cooperative Marketing Grants
Develop plans to attract tourism and trade from the air travel industry.	Otero County; OCEDC; SNMEDD; Alamogordo White Sands Regional Airport; Spaceport America	N/A
Promote commercial growth in community centers for dining, lodging, and travel centers.	Otero County; OCEDC; SNMEDD; Chambers of Commerce	N/A
Promote agri-tourism. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Encourage farmers and ranchers to share the history of their farms and ranches by participating in agri-tourism events and promotional material.</li> <li>– Actively advertise nut and wine producers' efforts as well as other agricultural products as part of a program to promote Otero County as a tourism destination</li> <li>– Promote events such as the cherry festival in High Rolls.</li> <li>– Support the efforts of agricultural producers to diversify and develop value-added products that attract visitors to the county.</li> <li>– Actively participate in local and state initiatives to promote agri-tourism with OCEDC, and Southeastern NM Economic Development District.</li> </ul>	Otero County; OCEDC; SNMEDD; NM Department of Agriculture; NM Beef Council	USDA Grants; NM True Certification and Cooperative Marketing
<b>Goal 2. Otero County's federal government-run facilities are maintained sustainably for the long-term.</b>		
<i>Policy 1. Recognize Holloman Air Force Base, White Sands Missile Range, Lincoln National Forest, White Sands National Park, Fort Bliss, and Sunspot and Apache Point Observatories for their economic significance to the community and take action to facilitate their retention and expansion.</i>		

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
Educate citizens to understand the benefits of these facilities and their role in the county.	Otero County	N/A
Encourage appropriate development surrounding military bases as described in Holloman AFB's AICUZ study through cooperation between agencies and private landowners.	Otero County; HAFB	N/A
Support and actively encourage efforts of our congressional delegation and local community-based organizations to expand the missions and economic impact of these entities.	Otero County; local community-based organizations	CDBG Funds
Cooperate with El Paso and Las Cruces in the promotion of the region as a location capable of handling new military and homeland defense missions.	Otero County; City of El Paso; City of Las Cruces	N/A
Encourage training and use of available local workforce and local business products and services at these facilities.	Otero County; OCEDC; HAFB; WSMR; WSNP; LNF/USFS	LEDA Funds; WIOA Funds; Job Training Incentive Program (JTIP) Funds
Re-use former government facilities.	Otero County; OCEDC; HAFB; WSMR; DOD; LNF/USFS	Varies
<b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES</b>		
Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
<b>Goal 1. Residents of Otero County have access to quality health care, community services, and recreational opportunities.</b>		
<i>Policy 1. Work toward making health care services more available to residents in rural areas of the county.</i>		
Meet with local and regional healthcare providers to discuss options for providing more medical services in rural areas, such as a traveling nurse practitioner and internet satellite links to larger medical facilities, and better transportation to and broadband infrastructure in existing facilities.	Otero County Healthcare Services Dept; private medical service providers	N/A
Work with NMSU to expand nursing, mental health, and medical professional programs available in Alamogordo.	Otero County; NMSU; EAWDB; OCEDC; SNMEDD	State Funds
<i>Policy 2. Prioritize recreation opportunities and improvements.</i>		
Inventory opportunities for the following recreational facilities (indoor and outdoor) throughout the county, including joint use with municipalities or with private entities (motels, golf courses) and evaluate the need and priority for the following:	Otero County; municipalities/colonias; private businesses; NM Outdoor Recreation Division	NM Outdoor Equity Fund; NM Special Projects and Infrastructure Fund; NPS; LWCF; EDD

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Recreation and hiking trails</li> <li>– Indoor swimming pools</li> <li>– Parks with water features</li> </ul>		
Develop a County Recreation Master Plan, with community input, to coordinate joint use of existing facilities, locate and plan new facilities, and develop access to public land for recreation.	Otero County; NM Outdoor Recreation Division; municipalities/colonias; federal and state land management agencies	CDBG
Hire a recreation planner.	Otero County	General Fund
<b>Goal 2. Otero residents receive quality education that prepares them for living wage jobs.</b>		
<i>Policy 1. Partner with school districts and NMSU-Alamogordo to provide workforce readiness and career opportunities for students.</i>		
Use County resources to enhance education. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Provide on-job training and trades apprenticeships.</li> <li>– Work with fire departments and local government, film, medical, and legal professionals to develop mentorship and internship programs for students.</li> </ul>	Otero County; municipalities/colonias; NMSU-Alamogordo; school districts serving Otero County; Otero County Film Office	LEDA Funds; WIOA Funds; Job Training Incentive Program (JTIP) Funds
Implement a successful visual and performing arts program throughout the county.	Otero County; Flickinger Center; OCEDC; DCA; NM Arts	NMArts.org Grants
Encourage early involvement of art in new construction and renovation processes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Devote a small percentage of county construction funds derived from general obligation bonds or certain revenue bonds to purchase or commission public works of art.</li> </ul>	Otero County; OCEDC; DCA; NM Arts	NMArts.org Grants; DCA Arts Grants
<i>Policy 2. Support the County's Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan.</i>		
Follow through on the ICIP 2021-2025's allocated funding for Aces School Building for administrative functions with legislative funding requests and other funding applications or requests as opportunities become available.	Otero County	Capital Outlay
<i>Policy 3. Establish a countywide library system.</i>		
Evaluate ways to expand library services throughout the county.	Otero County; municipalities/colonias	State Grants to Libraries
Explore expanding State's Bookmobile services.	Otero County; NM State Library; Bookmobile	State Grants to Libraries
Consider establishing branch libraries in existing facilities connected with the main library through the internet and inventory potential sites.	Otero County; municipalities/colonias; NM State Library	State Grants to Libraries
Utilize State library funding and apply for grants.	Otero County; NM State Library	State Grants to Libraries

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
<b>Goal 3. Otero County Sheriff's Office has the resources to provide quality protection.</b>		
<i>Policy 1. Provide 24-hour law enforcement coverage by the Sheriff's Office throughout Otero County.</i>		
Secure an annual budget sufficient to hire enough officers with competitive salaries to patrol on a 24-hour basis.	Otero County	General Fund
Support the ICIP's allocation for the new fleet of vehicles for the Sheriff's Office with legislative funding requests and other funding applications as opportunities become available.	Otero County	Capital Outlay
<b>INFRASTRUCTURE</b>		
Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
<b>Goal 1. Otero County's watersheds and water sources are healthy, protected, and optimized for long-term sustainability.</b>		
<i>Policy 1. Promote watershed health and water conservation.</i>		
Work with the US Forest Service and other federal land managers in a collaborative effort to restore surface water flow and groundwater recharge in watersheds to historical conditions and to make historic water yield a consideration in US Forest Service planning documents.	Otero County; USFS; BLM; DOD; NPS (WHSA)	CWSRF; Clean Water Act funding; NM Environment Dept Nonpoint Source Control and Surface and Ground Water Pollution Control; EPA Water Quality Management Planning; EPA Wetlands Protection Program; EPA Assessment and Watershed Protection Support
Initiate and develop a County Watershed Management Plan that addresses watershed health, water supply, distribution, aquifer pumping, storage, and recovery.	Otero County	
Work with other state, locals, and federal agencies to balance withdrawals from the aquifer with the recharge in that respective watershed or area.	Otero County; NM Department of Agriculture; NPS (WHSA)	N/A
Work with the Mescalero Apache Tribe, sawmills, and the US Forest Service to restore healthy forest conditions in the Sacramento Mountains.	Otero County; Mescalero Apache Tribe; USFS; private sawmills	USFS Forestry Incentives Program
Initiate programs to recharge freshwater aquifer at higher elevations.	Otero County; USFS	See action 1 (above)
Improve agricultural irrigation water efficiency.	Otero County; farmers	USDA Rural Development Service Administration
Utilize flood prevention methods to serve a dual purpose of recharging the aquifer and supplementing the water supply.	Otero County; OSWCD	CWSRF
<i>Policy 2. Develop new sustainable sources of water.</i>		

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
Continue to support and collaborate with the desalination projects in Otero County.	Otero County; Brackish Groundwater National Desalination Research Facility	Desalination and Water Purification Research Program Funds
Identify desalination's potential long-term effects on ecosystem and water supply and adjust desalination efforts to maintain long-term aquifer health.	Otero County; Brackish Groundwater National Desalination Research Facility	Desalination and Water Purification Research Program Funds
Explore the feasibility of distributing water from aquifers in the south to the populated areas in the north.	Otero County; OSWCD; NM Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resource	NM Water Resources Research Institute Funds
Support development of new water well fields in the alluvial fans.	Otero County; OSWCD; NM Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resource	NM Water Resources Research Institute Funds
Construct long-term storage cabinets at the bases of canyons and streams.	Otero County; OSWCD; NM Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources; NMOSE	NM Water Resources Research Institute Funds
Study and support efforts to reclaim gray and wastewater for irrigation purposes.	Otero County; OSWCD	CWSRF
<i>Policy 3. Proactively address water issues to ensure long-term sustainability for future generations.</i>		
Create a basis of cooperation and communication with other counties that share water sources with Otero County.	Otero County; OSWCD; Lincoln County; Doña Ana County	CWSRF
Continue to update the regional water plan that plans for Otero County's water usage with 60-year planning horizon.	Otero County; OSWCD; NMOSE	CWSRF
Initiate and develop the County's 40-Year Water Plan.	Otero County; OSWCD; NMOSE	CWSRF
<i>Policy 4. Promote water conservation at all levels of the region.</i>		
Work with local citizen groups to promote awareness and use of water conservation techniques in the community.	Otero County; non-profits	CWSRF
Require new construction to include appropriate water- conserving measures including low-flow fixtures, water-conserving appliances, and low-volume irrigation systems and to provide water conservation incentives.	Otero County; OSWCD; NMOSE	NMOSE
Explore aquifer management to ensure sustainable water without depleting the aquifer more than one acre-foot per year.	Otero County; OSWCD; NM Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources; NMOSE	CWSRF
Develop a program to encourage existing consumers to retrofit with appropriate water-conserving appliances and low-volume irrigation systems.	Otero County; OSWCD; NMOSE	NMOSE

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
Enforce County regulations including the subdivision ordinance and water conservation ordinance.	Otero County	N/A
Follow the Public Land Use Advisory Council (PLUAC) recommendations to control current water use and supplies.	Otero County	N/A
<b>Policy 5. Study the hydrogeology of Otero County.</b>		
Work with federal agencies to collect any existing water-related data, especially regarding recharge, desalination, and aquifer recovery.	Otero County; OSWCD; NM Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources; NMOSE; USFS; DOD; BLM; NPS (WHSAs)	N/A
Supplement existing data with new hydrological studies in the county.	Otero County; OSWCD; NM Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources; NMOSE; NPS (WHSAs);	CWSRF; NM Water Resources Research Institute Funds
Integrate findings into the Regional Watershed Plan to ensure long-term sustainability.	Otero County	N/A
<b>Goal 2. Otero County's well-maintained stormwater drainage infrastructure provides residents a safe and high quality of life.</b>		
<b>Policy 1. Prioritize stormwater drainage improvements that protect watershed health, residents, and property.</b>		
Secure funding to study the drainage basins, patterns, and anticipated flows of the area using existing studies as a starting point.	Otero County; OSWCD; NM Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources; NMOSE	CWSRF; NM Water Resources Research Institute Funds
Design and construct drainage infrastructure that serves a dual purpose of utilizing the water and keeping it from flooding properties and roads.	Otero County; OSWCD; NM Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources; NMOSE	CWSRF; NM Water Resources Research Institute Funds
Work with municipalities and property owners to incorporate dual-purpose systems into their future flood control projects.	Otero County; OSWCD; municipalities/colonias; NMOSE	CWSRF; NM Water Resources Research Institute Funds
Follow through on the ICIP's funding allocation for three water crossings at Riata Road and Pecos, Appler Road, and Suzy Anne Street with legislative funding requests and other available funding opportunities.	Otero County	Capital Outlay
Review and revise the Otero County's subdivision ordinance to ensure it upholds Comprehensive Plan's stormwater drainage goals.	Otero County	N/A
<b>Goal 3. Otero County uses wastewater systems that protect the environment, reuses water, and protects groundwater quality.</b>		
<b>Policy 1. The County encourages wastewater management systems that mitigate potential pollution.</b>		

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
Encourage reclamation and reuse of graywater, including residential systems and reuse of municipal wastewater for irrigation.	Otero County; OSWCD; NMOSE	CWSRF; NM Water Resources Research Institute Funds
Promote the development or extension of centralized wastewater service in municipalities and colonias.	Otero County; OSWCD; NMOSE	CWSRF; NM Water Resources Research Institute Funds
Promote and regulate environmentally friendly wastewater systems and increase public awareness.	Otero County; OSWCD; NMOSE	CWSRF; NM Water Resources Research Institute Funds
Support the continued used of permitted septic tank/leach field systems where appropriate.	Otero County; OSWCD; NMOSE	CWSRF; NM Water Resources Research Institute Funds
<b>Goal 4. Otero County is a leader in waste reduction, reuse, and recycling.</b>		
<i>Policy 1. Provide innovative solid waste collection for Otero County residents and businesses.</i>		
Continue to initiate solid waste reduction, reuse, and recycling innovation at Otero County disposal facilities.	Otero County; NM Environment Department Solid Waste Bureau	Solid Waste Facility Grant Fund
Prepare public awareness campaign to encourage residents and businesses to reduce solid waste.	Otero County	Keep America Beautiful Think Green Grant
<b>Goal 5. Otero County has ample energy sources and communication technology to support a sustainable, high quality of life.</b>		
<i>Policy 1. Utilize renewable energy sources to supplement gas and electrical energy needs.</i>		
Incentivize development of more solar farms to increase the county's reliance on renewable energy and decrease reliance on oil and gas.	Otero County; NM Office of Renewable Energy; ENMRD Energy Conservation and Management Division	New Solar Market Development Tax Credit; Renewable Energy Production Tax Credit
Work with the State's Office of Renewable Energy to determine feasibility of wind farms in Otero County and attract more renewable energy facilities.	Otero County; NM Office of Renewable Energy; ENMRD Energy Conservation and Management Division	NM Grid Modernization Grant Fund; DOE Wind Energy Technologies Funds
<i>Policy 2. Ensure Otero County residents and businesses' energy needs are met.</i>		
Continue to support private, public, and cooperative electric and gas companies in serving countywide.	Otero County; electric and gas cooperatives serving Otero County	N/A
Encourage energy efficiency and conservation programs with incentives, rebates, and public awareness campaigns.	Otero County; NM Office of Renewable Energy; ENMRD Energy Conservation and Management Division	PACE Programs; ECMD Programs
<i>Policy 3. Prioritize reliable broadband throughout the county.</i>		
Work with the State and service providers to establish a plan to construct fiber lines for broadband so municipalities and rural Otero	Otero County; NM Department of Information Technology Broadband Program	DOIT Broadband Grants, private service providers, USDA ReConnect Program

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
County have reliable cell phone and internet service.		
Promote better, more reliable service as an economic development tool that will allow the county to grow sustainably and diversify its economy without impacts on natural resources, especially water.	Otero County; OCEDC	General Fund
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>		
Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
<b>Goal 1. Residents of Otero County rely on a safe, equitable, efficient, and integrated transportation system.</b>		
<i>Policy 1. Provide an efficient network of streets and roadways that meets the needs of residents and allows for a smooth flow of vehicular traffic (NMDOT designation Level of Service C).</i>		
Participate in the Southeastern Regional Transportation Planning Organization's regional planning efforts and request projects through the SERTPO process to create a well-defined street hierarchy of local, collector and arterial roads.	Otero County; SERTPO; NMDOT	N/A
Update the GIS data and map of county roads' rights of way and easements.	Otero County	CDBG Planning Grant
Develop road grid and drainage plans that are followed for the dedication of easements that do not detract from the rural character of the county.	Otero County	CDBG Planning and Infrastructure Grants
Work with NMDOT to identify areas where there are safety concerns so they can address in road improvement plans.	Otero County; SERTPO; NMDOT	N/A
Prepare traffic engineering studies for proposed county road improvements.	Otero County; SERTPO; NMDOT	CDBG Planning Grant
Develop a safe, all-weather alternate route to be used in the event of closure of US Highway 82.	Otero County; SERTPO; NMDOT; FHWA	Federal Highway Funding
<i>Policy 2. Provide standards for local roads in residential areas that promote traffic safety and meet residential transportation needs.</i>		
Update the subdivision ordinance to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Ensure design standards for local residential roads discourage non-local traffic and minimize disruption of the terrain.</li> <li>– Require a traffic impact analysis where new development is projected to cause a significant in traffic volume on nearby county roads.</li> </ul>	Otero County; SERTPO; NMDOT	CDBG Planning and Infrastructure Grants

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
Bring all county roads up to standards adequate to be accepted for maintenance by the County Road Maintenance Department.	Otero County; SERTPO; NMDOT	NMDOT; Local Government Road Fund; Local Government Transportation Fund; State Road Fund; Highway Infrastructure Fund; Federal Highway Funding; CDBG Planning and Infrastructure Grants
Ensure that every at-grade railroad crossing has proper signals and closures.	Otero County; SERTPO; NMDOT Transit and Rail Division; FHWA; Union Pacific	
<p><i>Policy 3. Provide adequate levels of maintenance of all components of the county transportation system, including roadways, shoulders, sidewalks, bicycle facilities, and roadway drainage systems.</i></p>		
Prepare a repaving plan that includes estimated costs, a funding strategy, and proposed project phasing for resurfacing and new road construction, as well as bicycle and sidewalk amenities.	Otero County; SERTPO; NMDOT	NMDOT; Local Government Road Fund; Local Government Transportation Fund; State Road Fund; Highway Infrastructure Fund; Federal Highway Funding; CDBG Planning and Infrastructure Grants
Follow through on the ICIP's funding allocation for three water crossings at Riata Road and Pecos, Appler Road, and Suzy Anne Street with legislative funding requests and other available funding opportunities.	Otero County	NMDOT; Local Government Road Fund; Local Government Transportation Fund; State Road Fund; Highway Infrastructure Fund; Federal Highway Funding; CDBG Planning and Infrastructure Grants
Develop an asset management plan for roads, which addresses all road maintenance scheduling and equipment replacement needs.	Otero County	
Construct a new Road Department facility to provide adequate workspace, storage, and offices to proficiently provide a high level of service to county residents.	Otero County	General Fund
Consider expanding the duties of the Road Department Maintenance personnel to include maintenance and repair of all vehicles in their fleet. Additional auto mechanics could provide this service, without having to contract services to outside source.	Otero County	
<p><i>Policy 4. Encourage safe air travel and associated infrastructure.</i></p>		
Promote improving and expanding the regional airport to accommodate anticipated increased air travel to the area.	Otero County; Otero County Alamogordo- White Sands Regional Airport	FAA Grants
Recognize advances in air travel and anticipate that additional air travel and associated tourism and economic development may	Otero County; Otero County Alamogordo- White Sands Regional Airport; Timberon	FAA Grants

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
require additional county infrastructure in future.	Airport; private airports in Otero County	
<i>Policy 5. Promote transportation alternatives to the automobile.</i>		
Promote public transportation between communities within the county.	Otero County; Ztrans; SCRTD; SERTPO; NMDOT Transit and Rail Division; municipalities/colonias	FTA Formula Grants for Rural Areas Program; Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP)
Incorporate bike lanes or ASHTO shoulders into road repaving to accommodate bicycle use on roads as alternative transportation.	Otero County; SERTPO; NMDOT	NMDOT Transportation Alternatives Program
Re-stripe roads with adequate widths to accommodate bike lanes.	Otero County; SERTPO; NMDOT	
Work with NMDOT and Holloman AFB to establish a bike route between Alamogordo and Holloman AFB.	Otero County; SERTPO; NMDOT; HAFB	
Prepare an Active Transportation Plan to identify countywide priorities for pedestrian and bicycle connections, including trails.	Otero County; SERTPO; NMDOT	
Work with Union Pacific to conduct a feasibility study to assess the possibility of railway spurs into Otero County.	Otero County; SERTPO; NMDOT; Union Pacific	
<i>Policy 6. Coordinate with responsible entities and generate resources to enable the building and maintenance of transportation infrastructure.</i>		
Partner and coordinate with NMDOT, Union Pacific, federal government, local organizations, and residents on improvements to state and US Highways, railroad crossings, trails on public land, and connections to county roads.	Otero County; SERTPO; NMDOT; Union Pacific	NMDOT; Local Government Road Fund; Local Government Transportation Fund; State Road Fund; Highway Infrastructure Fund; Federal Highway Funding; CDBG Planning and Infrastructure Grants; NMDOT Transportation Alternatives Program
Ensure that citizens appointed to County boards and commissions are educated about the Comprehensive Plan and the goals, policies and actions related to their responsibilities.	Otero County	N/A
<b>HAZARD MITIGATION</b>		
Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
<b>Goal 1. Otero County has coordinated, proactive, and effective protection from wildfire and flooding hazards.</b>		
<i>Policy 1. Resume the Otero Working Group that prepared the Otero County Community Wildfire Protection Plan to continue fire protection and flood control measures that all stakeholders support.</i>		

Implementation Action	Responsible Agency/Organization	Potential Funding Sources
Ensure that the Otero Working Group includes representation from all stakeholders, including federal, state, local governments, residents and property owners, and local non-profit organizations.	Otero County; OCCWP Working Group; NM State Forestry Division; NM Energy Conservation and Management Division; NM Office of Emergency Management; BLM; USFS	NM Counties Wildfire Risk Reduction Program
Update the OCCWP as necessary to show what has been accomplished and to reflect the current priorities of the Working Group. Identify an implementation plan that identifies the time frame, responsible entity, and funding source for each necessary control.	Otero County; OCCWP Working Group; NM State Forestry Division	NM Counties Wildfire Risk Reduction Program
<i>Policy 2. Upgrade the entire County's radio communication system.</i>		
Continue grant applications to fund the upgrade.	Otero County	State/Local Implementation Grant Program
Execute a lease or purchase agreement to pay for needed equipment.	Otero County	State/ Local Implementation Grant Program
Coordinate the fire and EMS radio communication systems with that of the County Sheriff's Office.	Otero County	
<i>Policy 3. Increase the number of available trained firefighters in the county.</i>		
Provide stipends paid to volunteer firefighters for each shift or call they make.	Otero County; VFDs	General Fund
Increase local opportunities for training, particularly for those in remote mountain areas.	Otero County; VFDs	NMVFA Fund
<i>Policy 4. Improve Insurance (ISO) ratings in County fire departments.</i>		
Schedule needs assessments at each fire station every five years to encourage continuing improvement.	Otero County; VFDs	New Mexico Fire Protection Grant
Seek funds to purchase necessary firefighting equipment and resources.	Otero County; VFDs	NMVFA Fund; New Mexico Fire Protection Grant
Utilize State fire funds in each fire station and encourage surpluses to be distributed to the County fire department to improve ISO ratings countywide.	Otero County; VFDs	NMVFA Fund; New Mexico Fire Protection Grant
<b>Goal 2. Otero County has quality and reliable emergency service responders.</b>		
<i>Policy 1. Increase the number of qualified emergency medical technicians and service provider</i>		
Designate funds to pay emergency medical technicians.	Otero County	General Fund
Designate funds to defray County EMT volunteers' costs for required emergency medical services training and licensing.	Otero County	Emergency Medical Services Fund Act

<b>Implementation Action</b>	<b>Responsible Agency/Organization</b>	<b>Potential Funding Sources</b>
Support the ICIP allocation for Timberon Fire Station with legislative funding requests and other funding applications as opportunities become available.	Otero County	N/A



COUNTY OF  
**OTERO**  
NEW MEXICO