

iii. CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

Planning for the future is nothing less than an attempt to anticipate the demands that growth and development will place on an area's limited resources (e.g., funding for public services, public facilities and new streets). The Extraterritorial Zone (ETZ) is growing and requires attention now and for the long term. The major challenge Doña Ana County and the City of Las Cruces is facing today is the impact their ever increasing populations are having on the area's finite resources. As population increases in the area, so does the need for infrastructure.

The citizens of Doña Ana County and the Las Cruces Extraterritorial Zone have played an active and important role in the development of the first Extraterritorial Zone Comprehensive Plan. Citizen participation in the Comprehensive Plan was accomplished through a series of community meetings. These included six public meetings, two meetings at the outset of the process and four sub-area meetings which resulted in the contribution of public comments from over 200 citizens.

In addition to the community meetings, there were seven days of Stakeholders meetings with more than 70 stakeholders interviewed, a resident survey, a business survey, participation at numerous Extraterritorial Zoning Commission work sessions, the Commission's Task Force workshop sessions, two final ETZ Commission public hearings and a final ETZ Authority public hearing to adopt the comprehensive plan.

The Task Force worked closely with the County and City ETZ staff and consultant team during the development of the Comprehensive Plan. The proactive involvement of citizens and stakeholders in each element of the Comprehensive Planning process went far beyond the usual planning scope. Every step to ensure the incorporation of all possible public input into the plan was taken. The majority of elected officials provided excellent input to the plan, with exceptional insight for future direction. In addition to the involvement of the elected officials, citizens and stakeholders, the consultants from GeoStat Inc., the City Planning Department, and the Doña Ana Planning Director and staff spent countless hours providing invaluable input and direction without which the plan could not have been completed.

Prior to final approval, the Comprehensive Plan received additional public reviews and comment through public involvement meetings and hearings before the ETZ Commission, ETZ Authority, Board of County Commissioners and City Council.

The ETZ Comprehensive Plan process also included the preparation of an extensive human and natural environmental database of information for capital improvement programs, climate, demographics, economics, the environment, geology, housing, soils, planning, quality of life, transportation and many other characteristics. This database

includes summaries of the natural resources and environmental characteristics, existing land use and zoning, a complete property ownership pattern, existing circulation system characteristics, existing public services and facilities, capital improvement plans, demographics, housing, economic and social indicators, an extensive summary of community issues, community survey results, business survey results.

All supporting data have been included in an extensive GIS Virtual Atlas with a statistical abstract, based demographic projections, economics, climate and quality of life indices, with a Virtual Comprehensive Plan including Land Use, Housing, Population and Zoning. The population and housing were adjusted with future land use changes to place demographic changes in the planned land uses. The ETZ Comprehensive Plan databases with GIS attribution and application mapping were prepared under separate cover, and are available for review or electronic transfer at the Doña Ana County Planning Department.