



PEOPLE



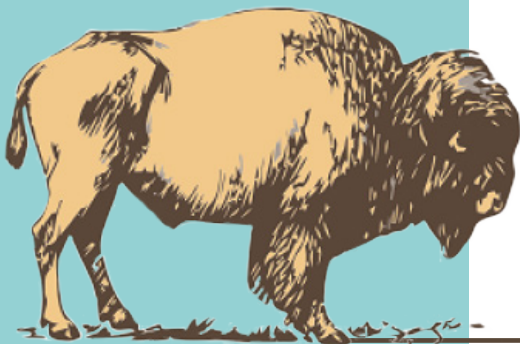
PLACE



QUALITY OF LIFE

# CIBOLA COUNTY

## *Comprehensive Plan*



*Update 2022*

## Acknowledgements

The Cibola County Comprehensive Plan authors would like to thank the members of the Steering Committee, County staff, subject matter experts, stakeholders, and the public for their commitment to advancing quality of life in Cibola County. Each participant brought a unique perspective to the planning process that helped to shape this Comprehensive Plan.

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Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments

A very special thanks to all the respective departments — Cibola County and to all our partners for participating and supporting the development of the Cibola County 2022 Comprehensive Plan. Crucial information was gathered during these special meetings and workshops that were assessed and integrated into this updated and revised Comprehensive Plan.

### Cibola County County

Clerks Office  
Treasury Office  
Voting Office  
Office of Emergency Management  
Sherriff's Department  
Planning Department  
GIS & Rural Addressing  
Finance Department  
Human Resources  
DWI Coordinator  
Road Department  
Facility Maintenance



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Cibola County Vision Statement

**Cibola County strives to become a vibrant and safe county that embraces cultural diversity and fosters sustainable efforts to ensure economic prosperity.**

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# INTRODUCTION

## Background

Since the adoption of the current comprehensive plan in 2015, significant change has occurred in Cibola County. Demographic, economic, environmental and many other facets of Cibola County have seen drastic change in recent years, which has resulted in the need for reexamining of the direction of the county. To redirect Cibola County's path for growth and positive quality of life, a new comprehensive plan needed to be developed to replace the plan that no longer reflects the current state of the community and no longer provides effective guidance for growth.

This comprehensive plan serves as the guiding policy document and will serve as an efficient living document and to replace the previous plan which was adopted in 2015. The intent of this plan is to unify the County's vision for future growth by establishing comprehensive goals and objectives through integration and collaboration.

## What is a Comprehensive Plan?

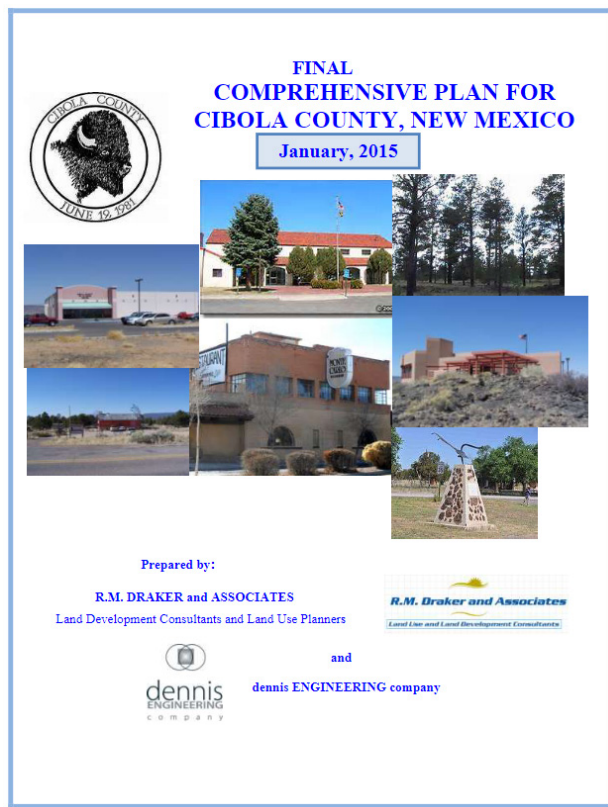
Community planning, according to the American Planning Association, is "a process that seeks to engage all members of the community to create a more prosperous, convenient, equitable, healthy, and attractive place for present and future generations." One of the fundamental responsibilities of local government is to plan for future growth and development of the community. The guidance document that results from this planning process is the comprehensive plan. The development of a Comprehensive Plan provides an opportunity for elected officials, organizations, and individual citizens to determine how the future of the County should be shaped across

**A comprehensive plan is an official public document adopted by a local government as a policy guide to decision-making about the physical development of the community. It depicts the grand vision of what the community would be in 20 years and provides a path to achieve the desired goal.**

the spectrum of elements that influence health, welfare, safety, and prosperity of its residents. This comprehensive plan helps create a vision that reflects a prosperous Cibola County and identifies goals and strategies that guide policy, program, projects, and resource decisions to ensure that prosperity is reached. This Comprehensive Plan provides a framework for thinking about the future of the community over a 20-year period.

## Purpose of a Comprehensive Plan

A well-developed comprehensive plan accomplishes numerous objectives such as serving as the guidance document for all future growth and development decisions; it provides up-to-date and relevant information about the character of the community, socio-economic trends, and insight from local champions and experts; it fulfills a legal requirement required for numerous regulations; and lastly it serves as the foundational reference point for other long-range land use plans within the county. This guidance document examines and plans for Cibola County across a 20-year horizon and identifies goals, objectives, and actions across an interdisciplinary framework reflective of the community.



To guide development activities, it is imperative that this plan takes close examination of existing conditions and recommends actions to reach the desired level of prosperity. Through this examination, the plan is able to present anticipated trends and areas of change to assist the county with maximizing its strengths and minimizing its weaknesses. This plan will set policies that help guide how the county and other governing bodies address critical issues and capitalize on opportunities facing the community.

The Cibola County Comprehensive Plan is structured to highlight functional elements that play critical roles on the physical development and growth of the community including land use, housing, transportation, water, infrastructure, hazard mitigation and economic development. The data, goals, objectives and actions work together to develop a framework for achieving the vision of the community. The plan also highlights the need for continued and improved collaboration across multiple jurisdictions and outlines avenues for close coordination and partnership.

As a general rule, a comprehensive plan should be updated every 5-years but is recommended to be revisited annually to ensure the accuracy of information and effectiveness of guidance. Continual review of this plan is critical to ensure implementation of the objectives and actions outlined within.

## Planning Process

The Cibola County Comprehensive Plan was developed utilizing shortened traditional long-range planning methodologies. The consultant team began with internal review of existing plans such as the current Cibola County Comprehensive plan, the City of Grants and Village of Milan Comprehensive plans, statewide and regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy plans, regional Transportation and Water plans, local master plans and various other plans.

Next, the team developed a list of data needs and began to collect significant amounts of data including socio-economic data such as population characteristics, housing and economic data, transportation and water data and numerous others. Data gathered was both quantitative and qualitative with the quantitative data gathered through traditional methods such as use of U.S. Census Bureau data tools, while qualitative data was gathered through interviews and workshops as part of strategic planning activities. Quantitative data included the most recent American Community Survey data from 2019, along with decennial census data from the recent 2020 census.

After plan review and data collection efforts concluded, the consultant team began to analyze the information to obtain understanding of the existing conditions of Cibola County. Obtaining this understanding helps depict current trends and helps to develop goals and strategies.

As part of the planning process, a steering committee was developed comprised of county commissioners, the county manager, and select county staff. This steering



Figure 1.1.1: Context Map. Source: NWNMCOG 2021

committee was responsible for providing local information, data, and direction to help the process progress. Additionally, the steering committee provided internal review of draft sections of the plan and provided comments, corrections, and suggestions to improve the plan prior to final approval.

Lastly, the consultant team provided a presentation to the County Commission on May 26, 2022 where the plan was approved and adopted.

## Legal Framework

The authority of a county to prepare a comprehensive plan is established in New Mexico state laws. The following is an overview of the legal framework for “comprehensive” or “master” planning (terms used synonymously in the statutes). Selected relevant statutory provisions and state regulations are quoted and discussed. The full statutes and state regulations should be consulted when researching specific questions.

### Statutes Overview

**General Powers of Counties and Municipalities** - Local governments (i.e. municipalities, counties) are required to develop comprehensive plans, as specifically stipulated in New Mexico state law. The following statute grants counties the same authority that municipalities have in many areas, including planning. Section 4-37-1 NMSA 1978 states:

“All counties are granted the same powers that are granted municipalities except for those powers that are inconsistent with statutory or constitutional limitations placed on counties. Included in this grant of powers to the counties are those powers necessary and proper to provide for the safety, preserve the health, promote the prosperity and improve the morals, order, comfort and convenience of any county or its inhabitants. The board of county commissioners may make and publish any ordinance to discharge these powers not inconsistent with statutory or constitutional limitations placed on counties”.

**County Planning Commission formation** - Section 4-57-2 NMSA 1978 enables the creation of county planning commissions and describes the power and duties of the commission. The statute does not specify what the recommendations must address; consequently, recommendations may address the subjects of a comprehensive plan. Subsection 4-57-2(B) allows that a county planning commission may:

- a. make reports and recommendations for the planning and development of the county to any other individual, partnership, firm, public or private corporation, trust estate, political subdivision or agency of the state or another legal entity of their legal representatives, agents or assigns;



- b. recommend to the administrative and governing officials of the county, programs for public improvements and their financing.

**Approval of changes to public property and rights-of-way** – Section 3-19-11 NMSA 1978 addresses the legal status of a municipality's master plan:

- a. After a master plan has been approved and within the area of the master plan, the approval of the planning commission is necessary to construct, widen, narrow, remove, extend, relocate, vacate, abandon, acquire or change the use of any.
  - park, street or their public way, ground, place, or space
  - public building or structure; or
  - utility, whether publicly or privately owned.
- b. The failure of the planning commission to act within sixty-five days after submission of a proposal to it constitutes approval of the proposal unless the proponent agrees to an extension of time. If the planning commission disapproves a proposal, it must state its reasons to the governing body. The governing body may overrule the planning commission and approve the proposal by a two-thirds vote of all its members.

**Purpose of a plan** – Section 3-19-9 NMSA 1978, Subsection (A) — general purpose of a master plan:

“...a municipal planning commission shall prepare and adopt a master plan for the physical development of the municipality and the area within the planning and platting jurisdiction of the municipality which in the planning commission's judgment bears a relationship to the planning of the municipality”.

**Subjects the plan may recommend on** – The statutory provision relating to counties is Section 3-21-5 NMSA 1978, entitled “Zoning Conformance to Comprehensive Plan.” Subsection (A) states:

“The regulations and restrictions of the county or municipal zoning authority are to be in accordance with a comprehensive plan....”

**Zoning conformance to plan** – The statutory provision relating to counties is Section 3-21-5 NMSA 1978, entitled “Zoning Conformance to Comprehensive Plan.” Subsection (A) states:

“The regulations and restrictions of the county or municipal zoning authority are to be in accordance with a comprehensive plan....”

**Subdivision regulations conformance with the plan** – The New Mexico Subdivision Act, Section 47-6 NMSA, adopted in 1996, requires counties to regulate subdivisions according to requirements and procedures in the act. An amendment was approved in 2003 requiring counties with subdivision regulations that are stricter than the act to have a comprehensive plan that supports the more stringent requirements. Section 47-6.9 (C) states:

“Nothing in the New Mexico Subdivision Act shall be construed to limit the authority of counties to adopt subdivision regulations with requirements that

are more stringent than the requirements set forth in the New Mexico Vision 2020 102 Subdivision Act, provided that:

- a. the county has adopted a comprehensive plan in accordance with Section 3-21-5 NMSA 1978;
- b. the comprehensive plan contains goals, objectives and policies that identify and explain the need for requirements that are more stringent; and the more stringent regulations are specifically identified in the comprehensive plan”.

**Extraterritorial zoning, planning and subdivision regulations** – The statutes allow for a one-mile extraterritorial area for zoning and a three-mile extraterritorial area for planning and platting (subdivision). Section 3-21-2(B) (NMSA 1978) states:

“A municipal zoning authority may adopt a zoning ordinance applicable to the territory within the municipal boundaries and, if not within a class A county with a population of more than three-hundred thousand persons according to the last federal decennial census, shall have concurrent authority with the county to zone all or any portion of the territory within its extraterritorial zoning jurisdiction that is within...

- a. one mile of the boundary of any municipality having a population of one thousand five hundred or more but less than twenty thousand persons, provided such territory is not within the boundaries of another municipality...”

Section 3-19-5(A) states:

“Each municipality shall have planning and platting jurisdiction within its municipal boundary. Except as provided in Subsection B of this section [for cities with over 200,000 persons], the planning and platting jurisdiction of a municipality:

- a. having a population of twenty-five thousand or more persons includes all territory within five miles of its boundary and not within the boundary of another municipality; or
- b. having a population of less than twenty-five thousand persons includes all territory within three miles of its boundary and not within the boundary of another municipality”.



# CIBOLA COUNTY PROFILE

## Regional Setting

The State of New Mexico consists of four major land regions: the Great Plains (northeast to east), the Colorado Plateau (northwest), the Rocky Mountains (north central), and the Basin and Range region (southwest to south). Cibola County is situated within the Colorado Plateau region, which is rugged and full of wide valleys, deep canyons, sharp cliffs, flat-topped mesas, and the Continental Divide.

Cibola County is located in west central New Mexico. It is bordered by Arizona to the west; McKinley to the north; Sandoval and Bernalillo to the northeast; Valencia and Socorro to the southeast; and Catron to the south.

Cibola County consists of an area of approximately 4,539 square miles (or 2,904,960 acres) and it is the state's youngest county, established in 1981, having been apportioned from what was once Valencia County that stretched to the Arizona border. The City of Grants is the county seat.

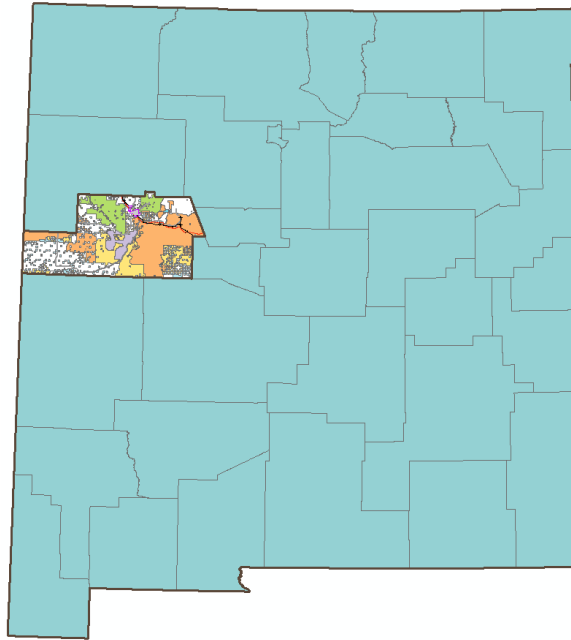


Figure 2.1.1: Context Map. Source: NWNMCOG 2021

Cibola county is mostly rural and has two incorporated municipalities (City of Grants and Village of Milan), and numerous unincorporated communities or subdivisions. The county is home to four Native American tribes – the Pueblo of Acoma, the Pueblo of Laguna, the Pueblo of Zuni, and multiple chapters of the Navajo Nation.

## Governmental Structure

The governmental structure of Cibola County is much like other county structures found across the state in which the county is governed by a Board of Commissioners (5 Commissioners).

Table 1.1.1 to the right showcases the the number of and types of positions funded by Cibola County:

In addition to its own responsibilities, the county has at one point in time, had a seat on several committees including the Juvenile Justice Continuum Board, Chamber of Commerce, Cibola Communities Economic Development Foundation, Hospital Board, and Grants MainStreet. Presence and participation on these standing committees is often dependent on staff or elected official availability and organization existence and activity. Boards such as the Grants MainStreet have been periodic due to limited resources and constant leadership vacancies. Cibola County has been less active with these types of committees and has focused its attention on those with longer standing presence within the community and those that are actively trying to improve the quality of life for residents.

Cibola County Funded Positions		
Position	FY21 Budget	FY22Budget
Elected Officials	10	10
Appointees	5	5
County Manager	1	1
Clerk	7	7
Sheriff	18	19
Treasurer	3	2
Assessor	8	8
Booking/Releasing	2	2
Information Technology	2	2
LDWI	4	4
Manager's Office	5	5
E-911	16	16
Planning & Development	2	4
Fire Marshall	1	2
Road & Public Works	13	14
Building & Grounds	4	4
<b>Total Positions =</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>105</b>

Table 2.1.1: County Funded Positions. Source: FY22 Final Budget Program, Cibola County

## History

Ancient settlements of the Anasazi people, including the prehistoric ruins of Chaco Canyon (more commonly known as the Chaco Culture National Historic Park), are the predecessors of today's Puebloan tribes that mostly inhabit the middle Rio Grande River valley and other geographic regions, including the Acoma, Laguna, Zuni and Hopi tribes (Arizona).

## Eras

**The Spanish Frontier** - In 1527, one of the first documented Spanish explorations to the American southwest was by Panfilo de Narváez and Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, during the Narváez Expedition (1527-1536) that tracked from the Caribbean islands, along the Gulf of Mexico coastline, landing in Galveston (Texas) and continuing along the Rio Grande River to Baja California and south to Compostela (the capital of Nueva Galicia, Mexico) and Mexico-Stadt (Mexico City).



Missionary Fray Marcos de Niza arrived in Central America in 1531, working as a Franciscan Friar in Peru and Guatemala, who began hearing about a place of multiple riches. Perhaps a mistranslation led him to believe of the existence of a storied treasure city, the fictional Seven Cities of Gold, that started the earliest “gold rush” amongst Mexican Spanish explorers.

In February 1540, Niza joined the Francisco Vázquez de Coronado Expedition (1540–1542) that began from Compostela, traveling north through the traditional settlements of the Navajo, Apaches, Pueblos and Comanches, eventually ending in present-day Kansas. This was also one of the first introductions of domestic livestock (horses, sheep, pigs and cattle). No treasure city was ever found, and the failed expedition resulted in Coronado and his entourage being charged for war crimes.

By the late 1500s, the “New” Mexico region was settled by the Spanish with Santa Fe de Nuevo Mexico being established as the province capital of the territory. En route to the upper Rio Grande River valley, Oñate found the watering hole at El Morro where rock inscriptions were found made by Don Juan de Oñate around 1605. In tandem, Oñate was named the first Spanish colonial governor (1598 to 1610). Oñate’s group was met with strong resistance from Indigenous settlements that often resulted in enslavement, death and massacre. In 1606, Oñate resigned his post, returned to Mexico City to be found guilty of cruelty and was expelled back to Spain.

The Indigenous settlements were given sheep and horses as gifts that enable inhabitants to become excellent horsemen and weavers. Sheep ranching also provided an economic industry for wool, rugs, blankets, and nourishment, while other goods were developed through the art of silversmithing and jewelry-making.

**The Spanish Colonial Era** - The New Mexican Spanish colonies were administered by the Spanish-Mexican authority that gave allegiance to Old Spain and the Spanish Crown. Spanish pioneers were encouraged to settle the Territorio de Nuevo Mexico by establishing land grants as homesteads and ranchos, to raise cattle and sheep, that was modeled after the landed gentry in Spain.

The San Clemente Land Grant is one of the oldest lower Rio Grande Valley land grants. In 1650, Mateo de Sandoval y Manzanares was granted the tract that was later jettisoned by the 1680 Pueblo Revolt. It was regranted to daughter Ana de Sandoval y Manzanares, by Governor Felix Martinez in 1716. The grant was conformed in 1909 with support from the U.S. Congress.

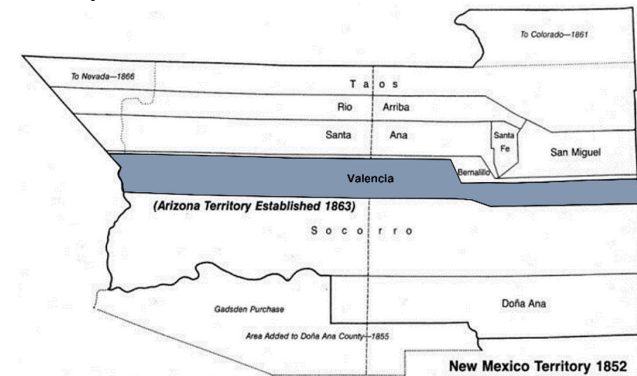
Spanish Captains Don Diego Torres and Antonio Salazar, founded Belen in 1740, originally named Nuestra Senora de Belen, Spanish for “Our Lady of Bethlehem,” in honor of the biblical Virgin Mary. Years later, the name was shortened to simply Belen.

Subsequent to the southwestern regions being settled by Spanish colonizers during the 17th century, the establishment of statehood of the New Mexico territory and its respective counties officially started after the American victory of the Mexican-

American War (1846–1848) with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo on February 2, 1848, in present-day Texas, that started with American invasion and expansionism of the Frontier West. By its terms, Mexico ceded 55% of its territory, which are the present-day states of Arizona, California, New Mexico, Texas, Colorado, Nevada, and Utah.

**The American Territorial Era** - By 1852, the U.S. Congress created the Territory of New Mexico which also included the land base of Arizona and parts of Nevada and Colorado .

The historic boundary of Cibola County, then Valencia County, has changed since the New Mexico Territory was created in 1852.



**Table 2.1.2:** New Mexico Territory Map 1852. Source: <https://mycounties.com/newmexico/>

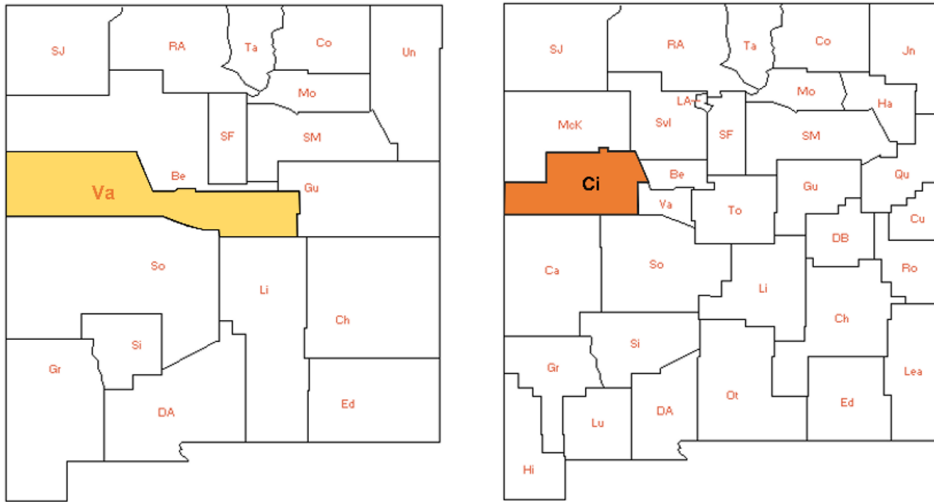
From 1852 to 1981, Valencia County stretched from the Rio Grande valley to the Arizona state border, as indicated in Figures 2 and Figure 3. Prior to 1981, Cibola County did not exist, until it was created from the western portion of Valencia County that was passed through state legislation on June 19, 1981. Cibola County became the 33rd county, and newest, in the state 1981.

Today, Cibola County is bordered by the state of Arizona (west), McKinley County (north), Catron County (south), Valencia and Socorro Counties (southeast), and Bernalillo and Sandoval Counties (northeast). Cibola County sits entirely within the Colorado Plateau physiographic region with elevations from 5,460 feet to 11,300 feet (Mount Taylor).

**Uranium Mining Era** - New Mexico’s energy and mineral wealth is one of the richest endowments of any state in the United States. New Mexico has the second largest identified uranium ore reserves of any state after Wyoming, but no uranium ore has been mined in New Mexico since 1998. Cibola County was a significant player to the uranium boom (1950s – 1990s) that was stirred after Navajo sheepherder, Patricio “Paddy” Martinez, stumbled across some peculiar yellowish substance in 1950 that turned out to be uranium deposit.







**Figure 2.1.3:** New Mexico Counties Map 1897 (left), 1981 (right): <https://mycounties.com/newmexico/>

The uranium belt extended along the southern margin of the San Juan Basin of Cibola, McKinley, Sandoval, and Bernalillo Counties, including tribal lands. The Grants Mining District was primary to uranium extraction and production activities. The Navajo, Acoma, and Laguna tribes negotiated royalty agreements that required the use of local workers in mining operations, providing an economic boon after the devastating stock reductions during the 1930s.

Mining and extraction methods included manual labor (pickaxes, sorting by hand) and conveyance by burros from the mines to the mills, but the development of modern heavy equipment transportation dramatically increased the impact of mining on the area's resources. Mining operations expanded throughout the Colorado Plateau, including Churchrock-Crownpoint, the Ambrosia Lake and Jackpile districts on Mount Taylor, to Arizona (Carrizo Mountains, the Lukachukai Mountains, Tuba City-Cameron area), to Colorado (Naturita, Slick Rock, Durango, Grand Junction area), and to Utah (Monument Valley, Moab, and Monticello).

Several area abandoned mines are under the jurisdiction of New Mexico Environment Department, New Mexico Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department, and the United State Environmental Protection Agency. US-EPA is working with state, local, and federal partners to assess and address health risks and environmental effects of the mines.

- The famous musician, Bo Diddley (1928-2008), lived in Los Lunas from 1971 to 1978, serving over two years as Deputy Sheriff on the Valencia County Citizen's Patrol, where he also personally purchased three patrol cars for the sheriff's department.
- Before apportionment, Valencia County had a total 710,967 acres of federal entitlement lands, with Cibola County acquiring 671,046 acres, or 94.38% later.

In September 1981, BLM distributed entitlement payments to Valencia County and none to Cibola, and Valencia refused to apportion any amount. Cibola County sued Valencia County due to a disagreement regarding revenues for "entitlement lands," managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), due to flawed computation of entitlement and local population formulas. Cibola County was ultimately awarded 28.22% of the (1981) 94.38% PILT payment, or \$133,373, plus ten-percent interest.

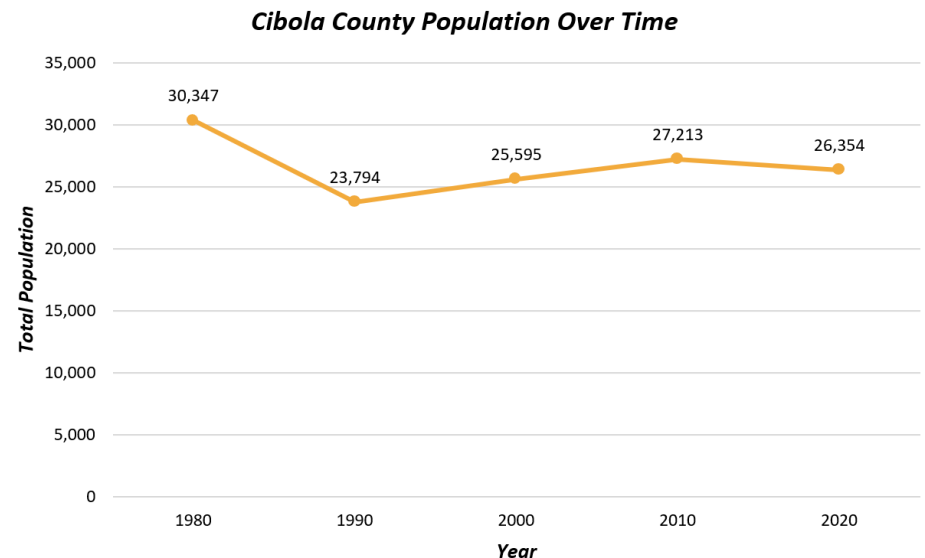
**Present Day** -Present day Cibola County resembles that of a rural county that strives to replace its identity which was solely situated on Uranium and other Extractive Industries. Recent closures of regional economic base employers have also added to the desire to reestablish an identity.

Fortunately for Cibola County, it has more to offer and has other characteristics that could help shape its new identity. People, culture, outdoor recreation, climate, and geography are all significant characteristics that separate Cibola County from neighboring counties.

## Population Characteristics

### Total Population

**Cibola County** - According to the U.S. Census data figure below, Cibola County had a total population of 23,721 in 1990, or 1.6% of the State's total population, ranking 16th in the state. In 2000, the County had a total population of 25,675, or 1.4% of the State's total population, ranking 17th in the state, as well as for 2010 and 2020. In 2010, the County had a total population of 27,213, or 1.3% of the State's total population. And in 2020, the County had a total population of 26,354, or 1.3% of the State of New Mexico's



**Figure 2.1.4:** Cibola County, Population 1980 - 2020. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, NWNMCOG, 2021





total population of 2,106,319. Additionally, the state's population increased by 2.29% from 2010 to 2020.

The trend in total population for the county indicates that the transition away from uranium mining in the 1980's resulted in significant population decline, approximately 22% from 1980 to 1990. Cibola County experiences slight resurgence in total population from 1990 to 2000. Approximately 8% of the population was regained over the decade and this trend continued from 2000 to 2010 with an additional 6% increase. Some of this can be attributed to the resurgence of other extractive industries and power generation facilities in nearby counties and increases in tribal populations. Unfortunately, Cibola County has once again seen a decrease in population from 2010 to 2020 with an approximately 3% decrease in total population. With regional closures of economic base employers and a stagnant economy, residents have moved away from Cibola County.

**Populated Places** - Population trends within the municipal core of Grants and Milan have seen similar trends. The City of Grants seen a gradual climb in total population from 1990 to 2010, but has since seen a slight decrease. The Village of Milan experienced a much more significant decline in population from 2010 to 2020 with an approximate 24% decrease in total population. Much of this decline could be attributed to migration patterns as a result of economic trends within the local and regional economy.

Since 1990, tribal communities such as the Pueblo of Acoma and the Pueblo of Laguna have gradually increased in total population. The Pueblo of Acoma has experienced a 21% increase in total population from 1990 to 2020, while the Pueblo of Laguna experienced a 9% increase.

#### Census Designated Places (CDP)

- A census-designated place is a concentration of population defined by the U.S. Census Bureau that is generally for statistical purposes only. Table 2.1.3 lists a total of 24 different Census Designated Places,

Total Population Over Time				
Populated Places	1990	2000	2010	2020
City of Grants	8,669	8,806	9,182	9,163
Village of Milan	1,967	1,891	3,245	2,456
Pueblo of Acoma	3,634	3,815	4,043	3,985
Pueblo of Laguna	2,551	2,802	3,011	3,230

**Table 2.1.2:** Populated Places Total Population over Time. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, NWNMCOG, 2021

Total Population Over Time				
CDPs	1990	2000	2010	2020
Acomita Lake		331	416	339
Anzac Village			54	67
Bibo			140	121
Bluewater Village			628	464
Broadview				339
Cubero			289	281
El Morro Valley				30
Encinal		252	210	207
Fence Lake			42	17
Golden Acres				144
Las Tusas				253
Lobo Canyon				146
McCartys Village			48	360
Moquino			37	31
Mount Taylor				56
Mountain View			122	436
Pinehill		116	88	586
San Fidel			138	124
San Mateo			161	139
San Rafael			933	1,164
Seboyeta			179	164
Skyline-Ganipa		1,033	1,224	1,614
Stoneridge				21
Timberlake				121

**Table 2.1.3:** CDPs Total Population over Time. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, NWNMCOG, 2021

or CDPs, located within the boundaries of Cibola County. Of the overall total, there are 17 rural county communities that are classified as CDPs. There are 5 CDP community located within the boundaries of the Pueblo of Acoma. The Pueblo of Laguna has 1 official tribal community, Encinal, designated as a CDP, but there are 3 outlier communities that are connected to the Pueblo through access. Ramah Navajo has one CDP community, Pinehill.

**Migration Trends** - Population migration is broadly defined as the movement of people (permanently or temporary) from one location to another, whether the motive being employment, education, healthcare, political or other. In-migration is the movement of people within a specific area or location, for example, within Cibola County or within the State of New Mexico. Out-migration is the movement of people outside a specific area or location, such as county residents moving to other parts of the county or internationally.

For Cibola County, residents have transitioned to areas with available jobs and housing. The uranium boom of the 1970s and 1980s help put Grants and Milan on the map with increases in job growth in the mining and power generating industries. Once these industries collapsed, population migrated to the nearest availability of jobs, housing and education. Overall, migrations are relative to local and regional economic, political and socio-cultural activities.

Cibola county has seen significant out-migration in 2020 likely due to regional closures of based industries in the county and region, resulting in one of the highest rates of population decrease. In contrast, natural increases indicate that the county's population (not factoring in migration) would remain the same but would eventually see more births than deaths as the senior population would decrease.

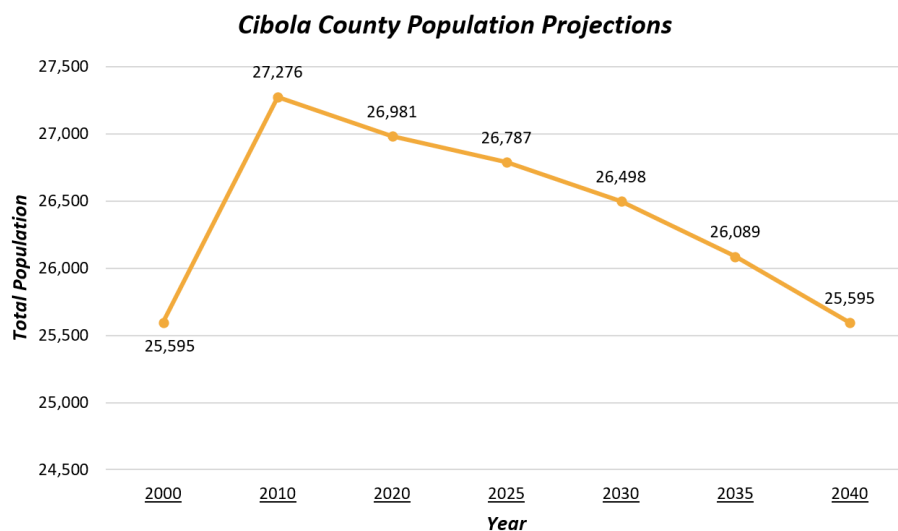
#### Population Projections

Under the University of New Mexico's Geospatial and Population Department, the Bureau of Business and Economic Research (BBER) conducts research and data analysis on the state's top economic industries that socially impact communities, including population projections. These projections are used by several state agencies and private entities for research and planning purposes. Table 2.1.5 shows what Cibola County's population projections may look like after 2020, compared to neighboring McKinley and San Juan Counties, that is further supported graphically. These projections were also included in the New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee's State Population Trend Report (April 2021). What is not shown in the table and graph below is how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the county's overall population trends and data.

#### Age & Sex

Cibola County's median age for males in 2010 was 34.9 years, 35.2 in 2015, and 36.1 in 2019. Within a decade, the male median age increased by 1.03%, signifying aging male population.





**Figure 2.1.5:** Cibola County Population Projections. Source: UNM BBER, 2022

The median age for females in 2010 was 37.7 years, 37.8 in 2015, and 38.6 in 2019. Within a decade, the female median aged also increased by 1.02%, also signifying aging female population.

Cibola County Median Age		
Year	Male	Female
2010	34.9	37.7
2015	35.2	37.8
2019	36.1	38.6

**Table 2.1.4:** Cibola County Median Age: U.S. Census Bureau

According to this chart, the median age for females has been higher than that of males for 2010, 2015 and 2019, ranging from 1.08% to 1.06%. Overall, the average median age for males is 35.4, and the average median age for females is 38.6%.

Population pyramids are visual graph used to show how population models are composed when looking a groups divided by age and sex, that can be further analyzed by youth, adolescent, working adults and elderly groups. There are three trends in population pyramids: expansive, constrictive, and stationary.

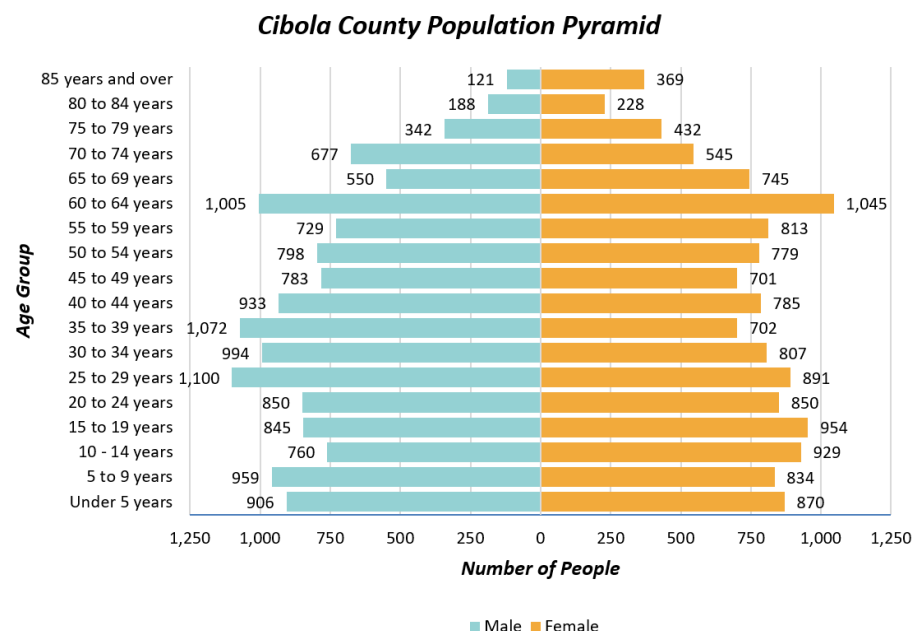
- Expansive populations have very high fertility (large base) and mortality rates (apex or tip) that is indicated by a 'sharp triangle-shaped' graph. Expansive populations generally have a large population percentage for adolescents.
- Constrictive populations have constant fertility rates and lower mortality rates, causing a higher total numbers in middle-age and elderly population.
- Stationary populations have low fertility and mortality rates that are indicated by square, pillar-shaped graph, compared to an actual pyramid-shaped graph.

Analysis of age and sex data for Cibola County is representative of distributions throughout the country and is representative of small rural counties. Aggregation of data to form the below population pyramid helps showcase the age and sex distribution in the county. Typical or healthy population distributions have larger bases indicating more births and children, and gradually shrink the higher the age

group. Cibola County's rural nature and recent economic trends have resulted in an abnormal population pyramid with a smaller base, larger middle and elder age populations.

According to 2019 data from the U.S. Census Bureau, there was approximately 7,057 residents below the age of 19 and considered to be within the youth age groups. This population group represents approximately 26% of the total population. This smaller base can be attributed to reductions in births and childbearing age groups deciding to wait to start families or families leaving the community for other socio-economic reasons.

The age groups between 20 and 64 years is considered the middle-aged group and is also the primary working population for any community. Data indicates that this age group represents approximately 58% of the total population. The largest segments of this age group are the groups between 25 to 39 years and 60 to 64 years. The 25 to 39 years old population is the primary workforce for entry level and service sector jobs within the county.



**Figure 2.1.6:** Cibola County 2019 Population Pyramid. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, NWNMCOG, 2021

The 60 to 64 years old population is likely a product of mining and other extractive industries present during the formation of the county in the 1980s. This population is slated to enter retirement and will exit the labor force. Lastly, the population 65 years and older accounts for approximately 16% of the total population. This population is no longer a part of the labor force and is considered dependent.

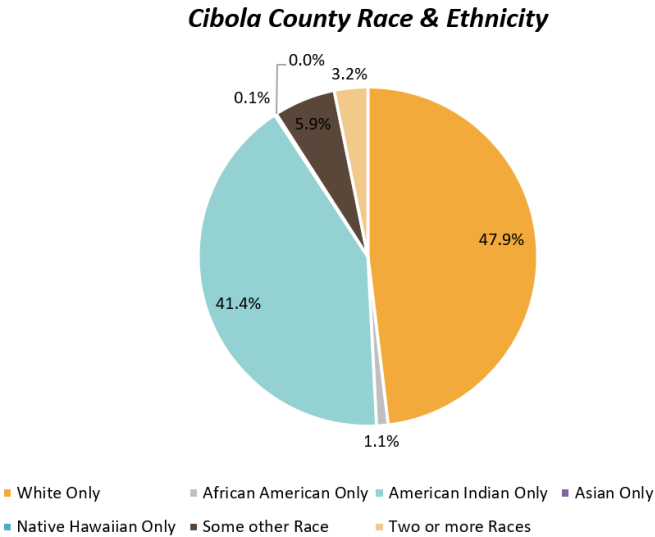
Overall, the 2019 population data showcases a rural county that has an aging population and is seeing declines in total population due to out-migration, deaths,



and less births. There are numerous factors that contribute to distributions seen in Cibola County such as economic trends (loss of industry and jobs), housing market changes (increases in rates), few quality-of-life amenities (needed to retain and attract families), and cultural shifts (younger populations migrate to larger cities). As population of the county continues to age, it will be necessary to improve characteristics of the county that will help retain and attract families. Population growth is unlikely but large-scale decreases can be avoided. It will be imperative that the county identify the needs and wants of all population groups to develop strategies to retain then attract residents.

**Race & Ethnicity**

A majority of the county's population are 'White/Caucasian' at 47.9%, followed by the 'American Indian' population at 41.4%. 'Some Other Race' category ranks 3rd at 5.9%. 'Two or More Races' totals at 3.2%. 'African American' totals at 1.1%. 'Asian Americans' and 'Native Hawaiians' total at 0.15% and 0.03%, respectively.



**Figure 2.1.7:** Cibola County 2019 Race & Ethnicity. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, NWNMCOG, 2021



# PLANNING ELEMENTS

## Land Use

The analysis of land use is critical as it guides future decisions within the unincorporated portions of the County in the coming years. Decisions such as the location and intensity of development are directly impacted by the guidance within this section of the plan. The analysis of land use will assist the county to best utilize public and private holdings, accurately time development, and ensure integration with associated uses surrounding each development. Whether residential, commercial, industrial, open space or other land uses, it is important understand current development patterns as all land uses must work together to ensure the success and implementation of this comprehensive plan. Other planning elements such as transportation, economic development, and infrastructure are directly impacted by the guidance set forth in this section of the comprehensive plan.

The cultural and geopolitical makeup of the county is diverse and form a unique mix of differing communities. These factors play a part in understanding and planning future growth within the county. These factors also highlight the need for close collaboration between agencies, organizations and individuals as numerous land use issues have been voiced through numerous public and private forums.

The land use section provides a snapshot of the current distribution of land and analyzes the impacts of future land use decisions for the residents of the community. Additionally, this section provides a vision for future distribution of land within the county and describes how these decisions align with the goals of the community.

### Land Use Overview

Like the majority of counties in the State of New Mexico, Cibola County is largely a rural community comprised of a diverse geographic landscape including rangeland, forests, escarpments, and mountains. Much like its geographical makeup, the county is divided into numerous forms of land ownership including public lands (BIA, BLM, USFS, NPS, state, and local government), tribal land (Navajo Nation, Pueblo of Acoma, Pueblo of Laguna, and Pueblo of Zuni), and private land. In addition to incorporated urban and semi-urban centers, the county is home to numerous designated places and subdivisions within the mostly rural portions of the county.

Understanding land use and how it impacts the quality of life for residents of the county is critical. Often communities that are prosperous are well-planned and take careful consideration of land uses both within and outside populated centers. Land use activities can be initiated both organically, or by way of targeted growth through planning at the local level. Whether residential, commercial, institutional,

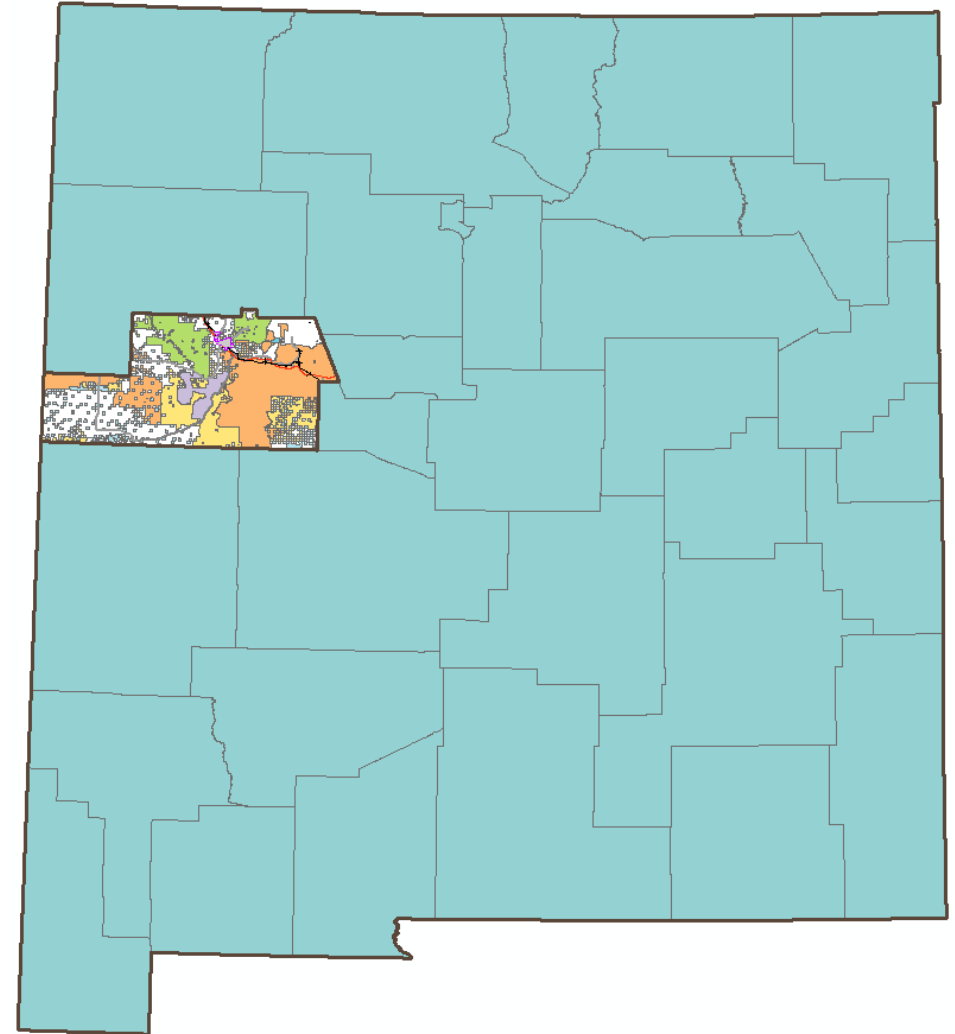


Figure 3.1.1: Context Map. NWNMCOG 2021

or public, these types of land uses should seamlessly flow together creating an integrated community. Guidance and foresight over land use decisions improve overall development and reduce land use conflicts between uses, users, and the environment, which lead to inefficiencies in service and reduced quality of life.



Unlike their counterparts' municipalities, counties are usually less involved in the act of determining or guiding land use activities. This is primarily due to the rural nature of counties and the limited amounts of owned property that it can self-prescribe a preferred type of land use. Although not as involved as municipalities, counties are still encouraged to think about long-term land use decisions to ensure compatibility and reduce conflict among land uses. Counties are also encouraged to coordinate with municipal districts to ensure compatible uses on the fringes of prescribed development districts, otherwise known as extraterritorial zoning. For these reasons, it is important to examine the existing land use characteristics of the county to identify where and how land can be developed and how best to utilize this finite asset.

## Existing Conditions

### Land Area

Cibola County is the 10th largest county within the State of New Mexico at approximately 4,542 square miles of land. It is bordered by McKinley County to the North, Catron County to the South, the Arizona border to the West and both Bernalillo and Valencia to the East. (Source: NWNMCOG, 2021)

Table 3.1.1 lists the area of land in acres defined by land ownership category.

Land Ownership Group	Acreage	% of Total
<b>Federal Land</b>	<b>852,242.44</b>	<b>29.32%</b>
<b>State Land</b>	<b>161,476.74</b>	<b>5.56%</b>
<b>Tribal Land</b>	<b>977,635.93</b>	<b>33.63%</b>
<b>Other (mostly private)</b>	<b>913,096.59</b>	<b>31.40%</b>
<i>Total Acreage within Subdivisions</i>	<i>64,164.64</i>	<i>-</i>
<i>Total Acreage within Land Grants</i>	<i>41,798.50</i>	<i>-</i>
<b>City of Grants Land</b>	<b>1,162.15</b>	<b>0.04%</b>
<i>Total Acreage within Jurisdiction</i>	<i>9,577.21</i>	<i>-</i>
<b>Village of Milan Land</b>	<b>634.62</b>	<b>0.02%</b>
<i>Total Acreage within Jurisdiction</i>	<i>2,481.41</i>	<i>-</i>
<b>Cibola County Land</b>	<b>631.54</b>	<b>0.02%</b>
<b>Total Acreage within Cibola County</b>	<b>2,906,880</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 3.1.1: Cibola County Acreage by Jurisdiction. NWNMCOG 2021

### Land Status

The land within Cibola County is owned by a diverse array of stakeholders from public agencies, tribal entities, and private constituents. The agencies that make up the public sector land ownership group include the United States Forest Service (USFS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), National Parks Service (NPS), State of New Mexico, Cibola County, City of Grants, and the Village of Milan. Both the USFS and BLM make up the largest portions of the holdings within this ownership group. Much of these holdings are comprised of parcels that are uninterrupted and create large allotments of public land accessible to all. The remaining local government and state-owned land do not follow the pattern of composition of the federal holdings and are scattered throughout the county and local jurisdictions. The entities that

make up the tribal sector land ownership group include the Pueblo of Acoma, Pueblo of Laguna, Pueblo of Zuni, and the Navajo Nation. Much of the tribal holdings are held in large allotments however, on the fringes of these holdings, land ownership is intermingled between two or more owners resulting in a checkerboard pattern. Lastly, the remaining land not owned by public agencies or tribal entities is private. Private holdings vary in size from quarter-acre holdings within the incorporated communities to thousand-acre holdings in the rural portions of the county.

### Notable Holdings within the County

- United States Forest Service (USFS)

The USFS operates and maintains the Cibola National Forests and National Grasslands. Within this division of the USFS is the Mt. Taylor Ranger District which oversees two mountain ranges: the Zuni Mountains and Mt. Taylor (totaling over 520,000 acres of land between Cibola and McKinley Counties). Both mountain ranges are maintained to provide natural ecosystems for fish and wildlife but are also maintained to provide access to public activities including hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, off-highway vehicle use, hunting, fishing, and other activities. (Source: [www.fs.usda.gov](http://www.fs.usda.gov))

- Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

Like the USFS, BLM operates and maintains large holdings within Cibola County. Most notably are the El Malpais National Conservation areas (approximately 249,200 acres) which includes Cabolla and El Malpais Wilderness areas, and the Canyons, Chain of Craters, El Malpais, Petaca Pinta Wilderness Study Areas (WSA). These areas are managed to protect nationally significant geological, archeological, ecological, cultural, scenic, scientific, and wilderness resources. (Source: [www.blm.gov](http://www.blm.gov))

- National Parks Service

The National Parks Service operates and maintains two monuments within Cibola County, the El Malpais and El Morro National Monuments. Both monuments cover thousands of acres in central Cibola County and are known for the richly diverse volcanic landscapes with geologic features such as lava flows, cinder cones, lava tube caves, sandstone bluffs and of course the El Morro National monument itself. Both monuments provide residents and visitors opportunities for recreation, exploration, and historical visitation. (Source: [www.nps.gov/state/nm](http://www.nps.gov/state/nm))

- New Mexico Land Office

The State of New Mexico Land Office operates and maintains numerous parcels of land within Cibola County. Most of the land owned by the state is scattered within the rural portions of the county and contribute to the checkerboard pattern seen throughout the west. There are no large holdings comparable to federally owned land. A portion of the state-owned land within the county are leased for purposes such as agricultural production and livestock grazing, energy production or corridors, oil and gas production, commercial sites, and mineral extraction. The revenue generated through the lease of state-owned



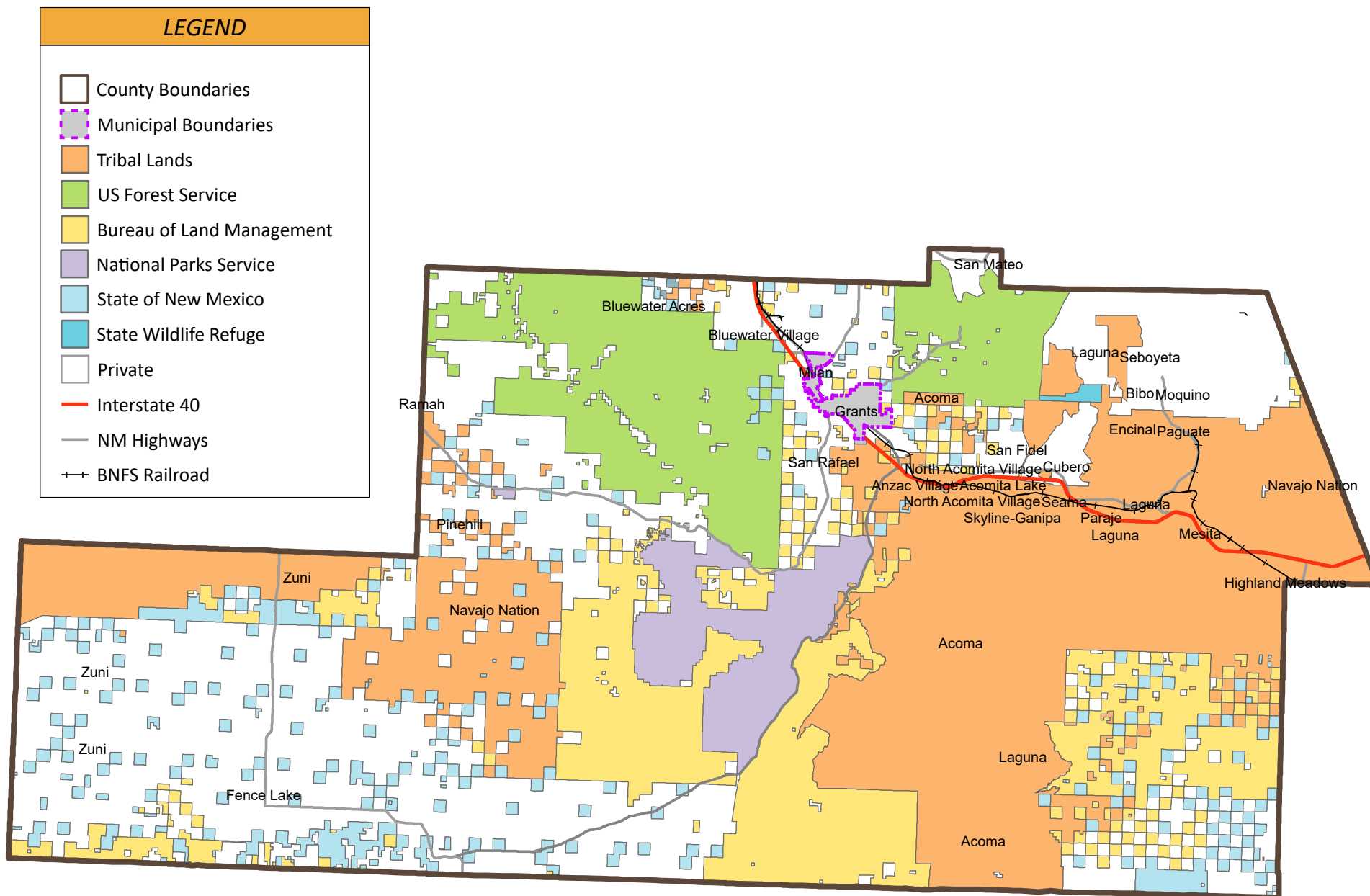
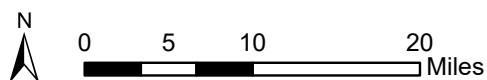


Figure 3.1.2: Cibola County Land Ownership Map, 2022. Source: NWNMCOG





land are used to support New Mexico public schools, hospitals, colleges, and other public institutions.

- **Local Government**

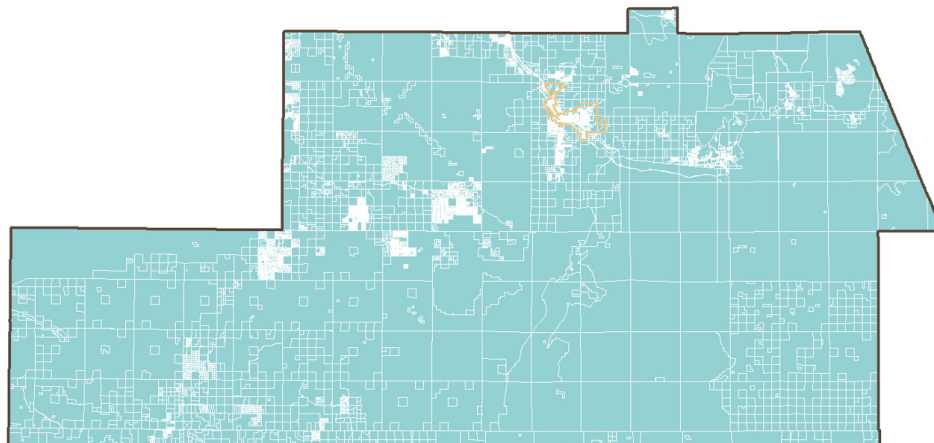
There are three local governments within the county, the City of Grants, Village of Milan and of course Cibola County. These three entities hold land within the county with both the City and Village holding within their jurisdictional boundaries. Cibola County has holdings within City limits and within the rural portions of the county. Much of the publicly owned land are used to house public facilities and institutions such as administrative offices, fire departments, community centers, parks, roadway corridors, utility corridors, etc.

- **Tribal**

The three sovereign Native American Tribes within Cibola County own a significantly large portion of the available land within the county. The Pueblo of Acoma and the Pueblo of Laguna consume much of the land to the east while the Pueblo of Zuni owns land to the west. The majority Navajo Nation land is in the west central portion of the county. The Navajo Nation does have a satellite community in Tohajiilee/Canoncito that is located along the east central boarder of the county.

- **Private**

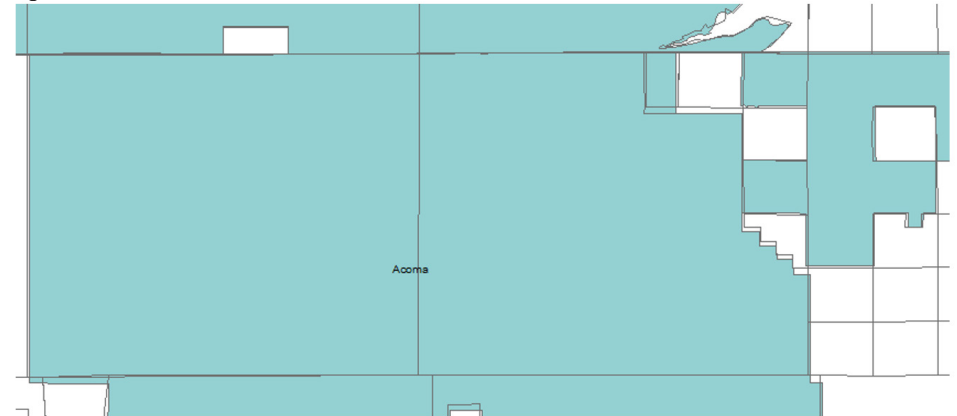
The remaining land is privately held and includes both small quarter-acre parcels within the municipal districts to large thousand-acre parcels out in the county. Private land is utilized for various activities including residential, commercial, agricultural, ranching, oil & gas production, energy production or corridors, etc.



**Figure 3.1.3:** Cibola County Parcel Map. NWNMCOG 2021

## Parcels

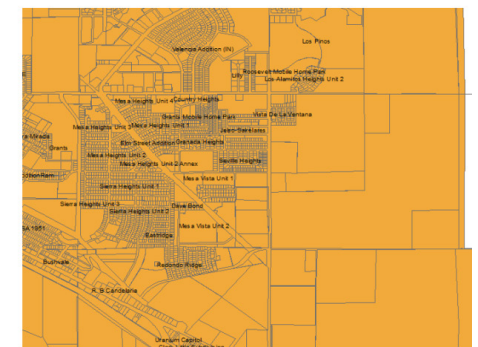
Figure 3.1.3 showcases the relative parcel and lot sizes throughout the county. As expected, lots vary considerably in size based on location within the county and the land use associated with the parcel or lot. This is representative of most rural counties within the State of the New Mexico. With large federal and tribal holdings, most of the land held within the county have little to no subdivision resulting in numerous parcels of the section (640 acre) and/or township (23,040 acre) size (see figure 3.1.4).



**Figure 3.1.4:** Rural Parcel Size Differentiation. NWNMCOG 2021

Parcels and lots within the urban/semi-urban core and within subdivisions throughout the county are considerably smaller in size but still showcases considerable variation in size. For example, within the City of Grants the variation in lot sizes is more pronounced as there are small private 0.160-acre residential lots adjacent to medium size 5 to 15-acre or 100+ acre commercial, institutional, open space, or industrial lots.

For example, lots within the Zuni Canyon Vistas Subdivision range between 5 to 20 acres. See Figure 3.1.5 below



**Figure 3.1.5:** Subdivision and Municipal Parcel Size Differentiation. NWNMCOG 2021



## Zoning and Subdivision Regulation

### • Zoning

Cibola County has not adopted a zoning ordinance to guide the development of land. The lack of zoning is typical of a rural western county with vast undevelopable land and existing minimal development patterns consolidated within the urban and semi-urban core. The only adopted and enforced zoning regulations within the county are present within the municipal jurisdictions of the Village of Milan and the City of Grants.

### • Subdivision Ordinance

Cibola County has adopted a subdivision ordinance to control the subdivision of land within the county. The subdivision ordinance establishes the basis for subdivisions, which is the creation of new property lines and land development which is the construction of public or private improvements. The ordinance mandates a review of a proposed division of land into separate lots for resale and ensures that land development is orderly and provides necessary improvements to achieve the goals of the county. The Cibola County Subdivision Ordinance was adopted for the following purposes:

1. To provide for and protect the public health, safety and general welfare of the County;
2. To guide the future growth and development of the County in accordance with any plans adopted by the County;
3. To ensure orderly and integrated development in compliance with County policies and regulations.
4. To provide for adequate light, air, and privacy; to secure from fire, flood, and other danger; and to prevent overcrowding of the land and undue congestion of population.
5. To ensure the design and provision of an adequate supply of water for domestic and firefighting purposes.
6. To ensure the design and provision of adequate sanitary sewage facilities and adequate solid waste disposal.
7. To protect and conserve the value of land throughout the County and the value of buildings and improvements upon the land, and to minimize the conflicts among the uses of land and buildings, and to protect private property rights;
8. To provide the most beneficial relationship between the uses of land and buildings and the circulation of traffic throughout the County, having particular regard to the avoidance of congestion in the streets and highways and pedestrian traffic movement appropriate to the various uses of land and buildings; and to provide for the proper location and width of streets;
9. To establish reasonable standards of design and procedure for subdivisions and re-subdivision of land in order to further the orderly layout and use of land, and to ensure proper legal description and documentation of subdivided land; and
10. To prevent the pollution of air, streams, and ponds; to assure the adequacy of drainage facilities to safeguard the water table, and to encourage the

wise use and management of natural resources throughout the County in order to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the community and the value of the land; and

11. To encourage adequate housing opportunities for all citizens of the County and future generations, in balance with the County's natural resource base. (Source: Cibola County Subdivision Ordinance, 2015)

**Section 3-21-18 of New Mexico Statutes enables counties to create one or more special zoning districts without the need to develop zoning for the entire County. This allows for the flexibility to enact zoning for only one or more portions of the County. Following is the language of this act:**

A special zoning district is created in an area consisting of no more than twenty thousand contiguous acres that is outside the boundary limits of an incorporated municipality when:

- A. There are at least 150 single-family dwellings within the area;
- B. At least 51 percent of the registered electors residing in the area sign a petition requesting a special zoning district;
- C. The signed petition, along with a plat of the area included within the district, is filed in the office of the County clerk of the County or counties in which the area is situate; and
- D. No general zoning ordinance applying to all areas in the County outside of incorporated municipalities has been adopted by the County or counties in which the area is situate; provided that any special zoning district in existence upon the effective date of this 1979 act may continue to exist without cost to any County, and any special zoning district created pursuant to this section may continue to exist after adoption of a general zoning ordinance applying to all areas in the County outside of incorporated municipalities by the County or counties in which the district is situate without cost to any County, but no new special zoning districts shall be created in any County after the adoption of such general zoning ordinance by such County.

Land Use Plans in Cibola County		
Entity	Government Type	Plan & Year Produced
Cibola County	County	Comprehensive Plan (2015)
City of Grants	Municipality	Comprehensive Plan (2017)
Village of Milan	Municipality	Comprehensive Plan (2017)
Pueblo of Laguna	Pueblo	Village Comprehensive Plans (2012 - 2015)
Ramah Navajo	Navajo Nation Chapter	Land Use Plan (2003)
Cebolleta Land Grant	Land Grant	Comprehensive Plan (2008)
Cubero Land Grant	Land Grant	Comprehensive Plan (2008)
Grants Mainstreet	Downtown Organization	MRA Plan (2018)
Zuni Mainstreet	Frontier Community Organization	Zuni Community Plan (2014)

**Table 3.1.2:** Current Land Use Plans within Cibola County. NWNMCOG 2021



## Key Take-Aways

### Small Communities and Exurban Development

- Take-Away: Cibola County has numerous small rural communities that require county facilitated services, which cost more than tax revenues or fees generated within those communities. The ability to continue service to these areas have proven to be difficult considering recent economic decline and continued out-migration.
- » Translation into Strategy: Educate rural constituents and potential residents of limitation of service due to proximity and costs, while working to increase tax revenue through rural economic development strategies such as meat processing facilities, value added agriculture and agribusiness ventures to name a few options.
- » Translation into Strategy: Encourage development within subdivisions to increase the population base to reach economies of scale for public services required for everyday living in rural Cibola County.

### Extraterritorial Development

- Take-Away: Migration and development patterns point to continued increases in development within and surrounding urban and semi-urban centers. These patterns have been seen within Cibola County in recent years as migration to the Village of Milan and the City of Grants continues. These population centers also experience the largest share of development activities within the county. Fortunately, state law allows for municipal and county planning, subdivision regulations and zoning for areas around municipalities to ensure compatible uses.
- » Translation into Strategy: Cibola County should partner with the Village of Milan and the City of Grants to establish an extraterritorial planning and platting authority to ensure compatible and synchronized land use development along the borders of the municipal jurisdictions.

### Conservation and Preservation of Natural and Environmental Resources

- Take-Away: Cibola County has a long history of natural and environmental resource exploitation and in recent years has adopted a sustainability perspective to development and growth. Knowing that past development and land use activities have left scars that still impact many residents of the community today, Cibola County wants to ensure that future growth does not continue this harming and unsustainable trend. Cibola County leadership, staff and constituents have all agreed that conservation and preservation of natural and environmental resources should be a top consideration when developing and growing the county.
- » Translation into Strategy: Cibola County has made tremendous strides to distance itself from traditional development activities that require the exploitation of natural and environmental resources. The County should continue to emphasize

natural and environmental conservation and preservation during development activities and coordinate with other self-governing jurisdictions to incorporate conservation and preservation into local development review processes.

### Zoning and Subdivision Regulations

- Take-Away: The Cibola County Subdivision Ordinance, which was adopted in 2015, appears to follow the “template” set in the New Mexico Subdivision Act but has been modified slightly to accommodate the needs of the county and its constituents. This ordinance allows the county to establish one or more special zoning districts without the need to develop zoning for the entire county.
- » Translation into Strategy: Conduct annual or bi-annual review of the subdivision ordinance with subdivision communities to ensure the provisions within accommodate the needs and goals of rural communities in Cibola County.

**Section 3-21-18 of New Mexico Statutes enables counties to create one or more special zoning districts without the need to develop zoning for the entire County. This allows for the flexibility to enact zoning for only one or more portions of the County. Following is the language of this act:**

A special zoning district is created in an area consisting of no more than twenty thousand contiguous acres that is outside the boundary limits of an incorporated municipality when:


- A. There are at least 150 single-family dwellings within the area;
- B. At least 51 percent of the registered electors residing in the area sign a petition requesting a special zoning district;
- C. The signed petition, along with a plat of the area included within the district, is filed in the office of the County clerk of the County or counties in which the area is situate; and
- D. No general zoning ordinance applying to all areas in the County outside of incorporated municipalities has been adopted by the County or counties in which the area is situate; provided that any special zoning district in existence upon the effective date of this 1979 act may continue to exist without cost to any County, and any special zoning district created pursuant to this section may continue to exist after adoption of a general zoning ordinance applying to all areas in the County outside of incorporated municipalities by the County or counties in which the district is situate without cost to any County; but no new special zoning districts shall be created in any County after the adoption of such general zoning ordinance by such County.

### Intergovernmental Collaboration

- Take-Away: There are numerous self-governing jurisdictions within Cibola County, and each has its own land use goals and priorities to meet the needs of their constituents. In recent years, collaboration between local governments to develop strategic plans has occurred but there remains a need for improved collaboration with other jurisdictions such as tribal governments, federal and state agencies, and community organizations.
- » Translation into Strategy: Engage and lead multi-jurisdictional planning efforts that involve numerous land management agencies and governments to ensure coordinated efforts and strategic outcomes.







Land Use Goal

**Cibola County strives to promote orderly and efficient use of land within Cibola County to ensure the health, safety and welfare while balancing preservation and growth.**

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## L-1: PRESERVATION OF COUNTY LAND

**Cibola County is home to some of the most pristine and beautiful natural and scenic landscapes in all of New Mexico, and it is important to preserve these sensitive lands for all the qualities they provide.**

- **L-1a:** Develop and engage in cooperative initiatives with federal, state, regional, tribal, and local entities to protect the scenic landscapes, cultural places, watersheds, ecological corridors, and other sensitive lands of Cibola County.
- **L-1b:** Encourage development within the urban core of Grants and Milan to be compact to discourage sprawling development patterns that infiltrate the extraterritorial boundaries.
- **L-1c:** Encourage rural subdivisions and unincorporated communities to adopt compact development activities to mimic small town development patterns to reach economies of scale related to critical infrastructure required for rural living.
- **L-1d:** Consider cross-jurisdictional training with other local and tribal entities to ensure development is consistent throughout the county or to fully understand other development strategies that could be employed within Cibola County.
- **L-1e:** Collaborate with the USFS to promote sound forest and grassland management practices, to minimize disturbance and degradation.
- **L-1f:** Collaborate with the Bureau of Land Management and County Extension agents to promote sound rangeland management practices, to minimize disturbance and degradation.
- **L-1g:** Collaborate with the USFS to promote sound forest and grassland management practices, to minimize disturbance and degradation.
- **L-1h:** Consider regulatory measures to protect sensitive lands through subdivision regulations with terrain management requirements.
- **L-1i:** Promote and support illegal dumping mitigation and educate residents on the importance of proper disposal and consequences of offense. This could result in the development of a multi-jurisdiction task force aimed at tackling the illegal dumping issue that plagues the County.
- **L-1j:** Discuss with the Northwest Regional Solid Waste Authority on increasing services throughout the county and engage in cost sharing responsibilities to provide solid waste service for all county residents.
- **L-1k:** Encourage recycling programs that are feasible and economically sound.

Engage and promote the reuse of waste to reduce consumption, and limit illegal disposal.

## L-2: URBAN and SEMI-URBAN DEVELOPMENT

**The City of Grants and the Village of Milan account for a large portion of the population and provide a majority of the services within Cibola County. These areas should be encouraged to engage in density and mixed-use development to increase efficiencies through economies of scale.**

- **L-2a:** Encourage and support urban development to be located within the boundaries of the City of Grants and the Village of Milan. These jurisdictions have the capacity and existing infrastructure to support mixed-use development such (i.e., living, working, shopping, recreation and entertainment) which can be more easily achieved.
- **L-2b:** Support the establishment of incentives within the urban core to encourage development such as mixed-use that includes housing or that reinvigorates commercial corridors.
  - » Target incentives based on land use type and location such as the mixed-use retail with housing on Santa Fe Avenue.
- **L-2c:** Utilize existing transportation infrastructure to prioritize location of development. NM122 or Route 66 and Interstate 40 are prime areas to encourage development as these corridors provide easy access and could reduce commute times and decrease traffic congestion. Other land use activities such as employment centers, business parks, industrial parks should consider the transportation network within these two jurisdictions.
- **L-2d:** Coordinate with municipal planning commissions to consider the establishment of a growth boundary around the City of Grants and the Village of Milan.
  - » It would also be important to consider establishment or review and updates of extraterritorial zoning.
- **L-2e:** While it is encouraged that Cibola County promote compact development within subdivisions where existing infrastructure is present, it is still optimal for Cibola County to promote urban development prior to promoting rural and subdivision development.
- **L-2f:** Develop mechanism to ensure that new subdivisions are pre-planned and incorporate mixed-used development activities to reach economies of scale.

## L-3: FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT

**Cibola County and its partners need to engage in focused development practices to achieve the desired goal of improving quality of life for all residents of the county.**





**Whether singular or mixed-use development, it is important to ensure elements of economic development, housing, transportation, critical infrastructure and agriculture and rangeland are incorporated into planning processes.**

- **LU-3a: Economic Development** – Incorporate appropriate economic development perspectives when conducting master planning or development activities.
  - » Consider the need for diversification and increase in base jobs that supply the county with increased GRT, higher salaries and the means to support other industries such as retail, entertainment, etc. Manufacturing within the county can achieve the goal of increased based jobs.
  - » Encourage the revitalization of downtowns and critical commercial corridors through mixed-used development and increases in density.
  - » Support the balance between traditional and non-traditional economic development activities and the establishment of a transition strategy.
- **L-3b: Housing** – Increase collaborative efforts with the City of Grants and the Village of Milan to develop housing within the urban core close to good, services and employment centers.
  - » Encourage the development of medium to high density housing options within or adjacent to critical commercial corridors such as downtown Grants and when appropriate, stress the importance of mixed-use development to create efficient and effective neighborhoods.
  - » Support the development of single-family homes and varying price levels.
  - » Educate prospecting rural residents of the challenges, limitations to set realistic expectations of county services.
- **L-3c: Critical Infrastructure** – Locate and/or plan for critical infrastructure during planning and development activities. Critical Infrastructure includes transportation corridors, utility lines, subsurface water and wastewater lines, facilities, etc.
  - » Consult with all governmental entities to identify critical infrastructure to support development activities or to avoid during development.
  - » Locate master plan developments adjacent to existing infrastructure to reduce costs and tap into existing assets.
  - » Encourage developers to build out necessary infrastructure that can be utilized for other adjacent activities.
- **L-3d: Agriculture and Rangeland** – Mostly seen in rural Cibola County, agriculture and rangeland are critical components to the preservation of land and limited intense development or unwanted land uses.
  - » Encourage and support the continuation of the agriculture and farming culture and the use of land for this purpose.
  - » Collaborate with County Extension agents to educate farmers and livestock owners on best practices to ensure that the land is properly utilized and maintained.

- **L-3e: Open Space** – Open space not related to agricultural or farming, is critical to the quality of life for residents of the county. It is important to ensure that open space is maintained to the quality necessary for human and wildlife use.
  - » Develop a county-wide open space master plan to identify uses, management activities and preservation actions to keep these lands as close to natural as possible.

## L-4: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

**The disturbance of land has ancillary consequences that are often not seen until it is too late. Much of the negative impacts of development are often on the shoulders of the environment. It is imperative that sustainable development practices are incorporated into planning and development activities as the county continues to grow.**

- **L-4a:** Water is an invaluable and finite resource that is often not considered during development activities. The County should implement review mechanisms that consider environmental impacts of development and incorporate that into decision processes.
- **L-4b:** Consider development activities that include compact development and small footprints to reduce the disturbance to the environment.
- **L-4c:** When feasible, encourage new development to incorporate energy efficiency and small-scale renewable energy production to assist with the transition away from traditional energy production which has significant impacts to the environment.

## L-5: INTERGOVERNMENTAL COLLABORATION

**Promote intergovernmental collaboration during land use planning activities.**

- **L-5a:** Developing joint planning agreements with federal/state agencies for development on lands near their assets.
- **L-5b:** Collaborate or reestablish the local housing authority or other quasi-public and non-profit housing entities to engage in housing development within the core urban areas of Grants and Milan. Tribal housing organizations should also be encouraged to develop within the county both on tribal and public lands.
- **L-5c:** Consult with Tribal entities regarding master planning efforts along Interstate 40 and how the county can support development.
  - » Consult with Tribal entities on intergovernmental collaboration to prioritize road, utilities, transit, and other infrastructure or services.
- **L-5d:** Work with the City of Grants and the Village of Milan to cooperatively develop a plan for annexation and extraterritorial planning and zoning.





# Housing

The housing element is presented to identify existing and future housing needs within Cibola County. The identification of current needs is based on data collection and analysis, field research and insight from community experts. Housing needs are identified through the utilization of data to understand demographic trends, development patterns, and economic forecasts within the incorporated and unincorporated portions of the county. This section of the plan is intended to guide the County in endeavors that aim to reach the short and long-term housing goals presented within this section of the plan.

## Housing Overview

Besides the people within, housing is often considered the foundational element of any community. It is regarded as one, if not the most integral infrastructure element within inhabited spaces. The importance of housing is best represented through Ray Oldenburg's Space Theory. According to Oldenburg's space theory, a person has three "spaces," the first of which is home, with the second being the place of employment and the third are communal or social environments. (Oldenburg, The Great Good Place, 1989).

The importance of housing in the development of community and the creation of a sense of place results in the need for improved access and options for residents of the county. Well developed communities ensure that housing is tightly integrated into the grand scheme of development. This close integration results in communities that seamlessly integrate residential, commercial, institutional, and public amenities in a connected and synchronized development pattern. With housing tightly integrated into development, communities can ensure available stock within various housing types and at all levels of affordability.

## Existing Conditions

### Housing Stock

Within the past two decades, Cibola County has seen continuous increases in housing units. In 2000, the county reported 10,328 housing units compared to 11,101 housing units in 2010 and 11,397 housing units in 2019. This represents an increase of 1,069 total units or 0.94% within the past two decades. During this time, household size has fluctuated minimally ranging from 2.95 persons per household in 2000, 2.98 persons per household in 2010 and 2.92 persons per household in 2019.

Year	Total	Occupied	Vacant	Household Size
2019	11,397	8,708	2,689	2.92
2015	11,088	8,533	2,555	2.98
2010	11,101	8,860	2,241	3.11
2000	10,328	8,327	2,001	2.95

**Table 3.2.1:** Cibola County Housing Characteristics. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, NWNMCOG 2022

The City of Grants seen a slight decrease in the total number of housing units during this same period. In 2000, the city reported 3,626 housing units compared to 3,804 housing units in 2010 and 3,598 housing units in 2019. This represents a slight decrease of 28 housing units or approximately 0.07% within the past two decades.

Year	Total	Occupied	Vacant	Household Size
2019	3,598	3,149	449	2.52
2015	3,479	3,091	388	2.74
2010	3,804	3,327	477	2.80
2000	3,626	3,202	673	2.61

**Table 3.2.2:** City of Grants Housing Characteristics. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, NWNMCOG 2022

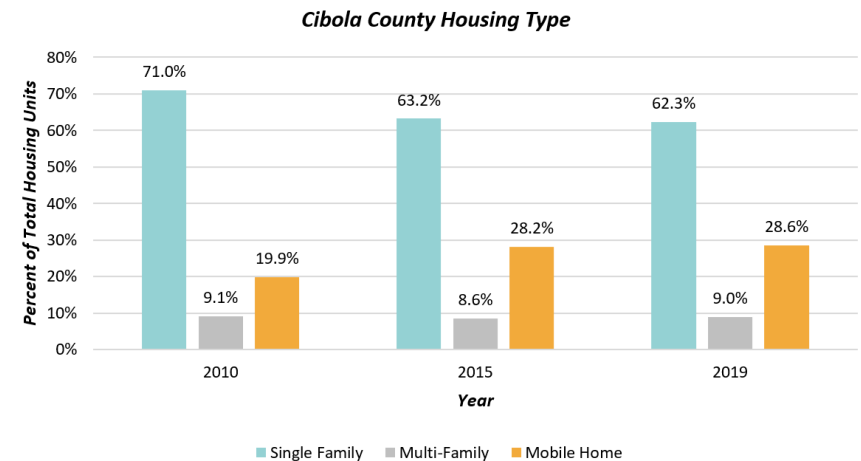
The Village of Milan has seen significant increases in total housing units between the years 2000 and 2019. The Village reported 806 housing units in 2000 compared to 837 housing units in 2010 and 1,402 housing units in 2019. This represents an increase of 596 housing units or 42.51%.

Year	Total	Occupied	Vacant	Household Size
2019	1,402	1,233	169	2.85
2015	1,068	870	198	2.98
2010	837	837	111	2.67
2000	806	806	133	2.81

**Table 3.2.3:** Village of Milan Housing Characteristics. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, NWNMCOG 2022

### Housing Stock By Age

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey data, a majority (58.3%) of the housing units within Cibola County were built before 1979. Additionally, approximately 28.2% of housing units were built between 1989 - 1999. Over the past decade (2010 - 2019) only 13.5% of the of the total housing units were constructed with only 2.5% being constructed within the last ten years. This information suggests that residential structures are continuously inhabited and little to no housing



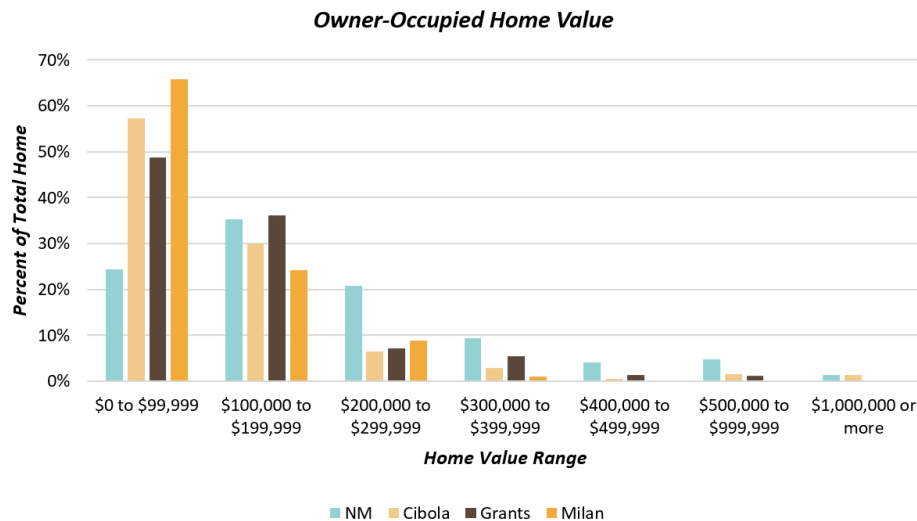
**Figure 3.2.1:** Cibola County Housing Type. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, NWNMCOG 2022



development has occurred within the county in past 10 years outside of the significant increase in housing units within the Village of Milan between the years 2015 - 2019.

### Home Value

Cibola County is comprised of homes that are valued across a broad scale. However, a majority (57.33%) of owner-occupied homes are valued within the \$0 to \$99,999 range. This can be attributed to older homes that have not been renovated or rehabilitated and the influx of mobile homes within the county. The next largest percentage (30.06%) of homes are valued within the \$100,000 to \$199,999 range. These are typically single-family homes that have been maintained or renovated and remain inhabited. Much of these homes are located within and surrounding the municipal core of Grants and Milan. Additional homes within this value range are located within the tribal jurisdictions and communities in the rural portions of the county. Homes valued between \$200,000 to \$299,999 account for approximately 6.40% of the total owner-occupied homes in the county. Much like the previous group of homes, a majority of these reside within or immediately surrounding the municipal core. The remaining 6.2% of owner-occupied homes are valued between \$300,000 or more. These homes reside in both the municipal core and rural portions of the county.



**Figure 3.2.2:** Owner-Occupied Home Value. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, NWNMCOG 2022

### Vacancy

When conducting analysis of housing characteristics, it was noted that vacancy rates have increased by 4.22% since 2000. During this two-decade period, Cibola County has continuously had higher than average vacancy rates as shown in Table 3.2.1 (19.37% in 2000, 20.19% in 2010, and 23.59% in 2019). In comparison, the City of Grants currently has a vacancy rate of 12.48%, while the Village of Milan has a vacancy rate of 12.05%. The household vacancy rate within the state of New Mexico is approximately 16.53%, which is 7.24% less than Cibola County.

Additionally, when municipal data is subtracted from the total, the current vacancy rate increases to a whopping 32.37%, which is approximately 15.84% more than the state average. This indicates that much of the vacancy is occurs within the unincorporated and tribal portions of the county, which could be the result of migration to the municipal core (Grants and Milan) or to the metropolitan area of Albuquerque or housing is old and uninhabitable.

### Occupancy Characteristics

In 2019, of the 8,708 occupied housing units within Cibola County, approximately 68.68% or 5,981 housing units were owner occupied. Approximately 31.32% of the total occupied housing units were renter occupied. This represents a 7.57% increase in owner occupied housing units and a 6.09% increase in renter occupied housing units since 2010.

With multi-family housing units experiencing a slight decrease (-0.10%) since 2010, it is presumed that a majority of the rental units are single-family and mobile homes.

### Housing Costs

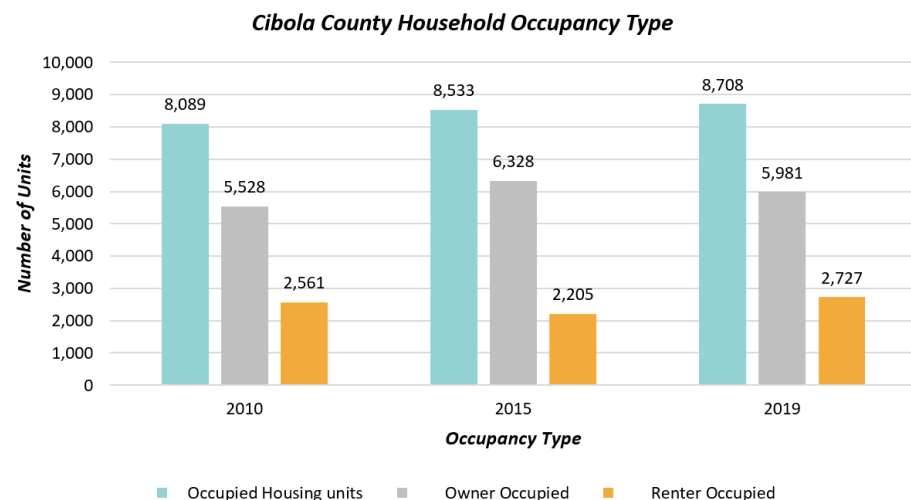
A snapshot of Cibola County housing costs reveals that since 2010, housing costs per month have remained steady with little variation between years and monthly cost range. A majority of households (33.6% in 2019, 34.0% in 2015 and 34.4% in 2010) spend less than \$300 per month on housing costs. 21.0% of total households spend between \$300 - \$499 a month for housing costs, while 17.8% of households spend between \$500 - \$799.

In many academic and professional circles, affordability in housing is defined as the spending of no more than 30% of total household income on housing costs, including rent, mortgage, and utilities. Vice versa, cost burden is defined as a household spending 30% or more on housing costs. According to the H+T index which is a widely used online data base that aggregates data to identify housing and transportation costs, the average household in Cibola County spends approximately 26% of total



**Figure 3.2.3:** Home for Sale in Cibola County. Source: www.zillow.com





**Figure 3.2.4:** Cibola County Household Occupancy. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, NWNMCOG 2022

household income on housing. This translates to an average of \$739 in monthly housing costs per household in Cibola County. According to the index, housing within Cibola County remains relatively affordable compared to national levels. Many factors could contribute to this trend such as lack of housing stock resulting in households living in less than suitable housing units, higher than normal levels of owner-occupied homes without a mortgage, an increase in mobile homes with lower levels of mortgage or rent payments, large number of self-funded or self-built homes within the rural portions of the county, to name a few.

### Rental Units

As noted, renter occupied units account for approximately 31.32% of the total occupied housing units within Cibola County in 2019. This is a 5.48% increase since 2015 and similar in percentage (31.66%) to 2010. Of the 2,727 occupied rental units, approximately 1,629 or 59.73% have rental rates at or below \$799 per month. The remaining 974 or 35.72% of rental units have rental rates of \$800 or more. Interestingly, approximately 521 or 19.11% households are classified as having “no cash rent” meaning that these households are living rent free. According to the H+T Index, the median Gross Monthly Rent is approximately \$460.

### Group Quarters

Cibola County is impacted by a large informal population which reside in both institutional and noninstitutional group quarters. Most predominately, correctional institutions accounted for the largest portion of population and housing units within Cibola County. The three correctional institutions located in the Village of Milan and the City of Grants accounted for approximately 822 persons in 2000, 2,306 persons in 2010 and 2,012 persons in 2020. Additional population and housing units are a result of nursing homes and other noninstitutional facilities located within the County.

## Key Take-Aways

### Housing Stock

- **Issue or Challenge:** Housing shortage has been an issue across the northwest region of New Mexico and is not solely a Cibola County issue. Lack of housing stock can be attributed to many factors such as lack of new development, inadequate and uninhabitable housing units, lack of affordability, and limited numbers of multi-family and other high density dwelling types. According to U.S. Census data, Cibola County has approximately 2,689 vacant dwelling units which indicates that either the vacant units are uninhabitable or do not fit the need of the demographics of the community. The reality of the local housing market is blurry and the need to fully understand the supply and demand within the county is imperative.

- » **Translation into Strategy:** Conduct a Housing Market Analysis that aims to identify the true need for housing within Cibola County and to further understand how to combat issues with housing.

### Affordable Housing

- **Issue or Challenge:** Affordable housing options within Cibola County are limited. With a declining local and regional economy, it is imperative that the County works toward developing accessible housing options for low-income populations.

- » **Translation into Strategy:** Develop a tri-entity Affordable Housing Plan and Adopt Ordinances to allow local government donation to encourage and support affordable housing projects within Cibola County.

### Outdated and dilapidated Housing Stock

- **Issue or Challenge:** According to local knowledge, many of the 2,689 vacant dwelling units within Cibola County need serious rehabilitation to remain habitable.

- » **Translation into Strategy:** Develop a mechanism to acquire and rehabilitate foreclosed structures and put them back into the market to increase housing stock and options for current and prospecting residents.

### No New Development

- **Issue or Challenge:** Rural counties like Cibola struggle to provide updated and desirable housing options. Many reasons contribute to the struggle to provide this much needed necessity such as lack of local/regional developers, limited incentives for housing development, water supply needed for development, financing, and others.

- » **Translation into Strategy:** Reach out to housing professionals to better understand how to effectively recruit and attract small-scale (4 – 12 homes) housing developers to slowly improve and increase housing stock.

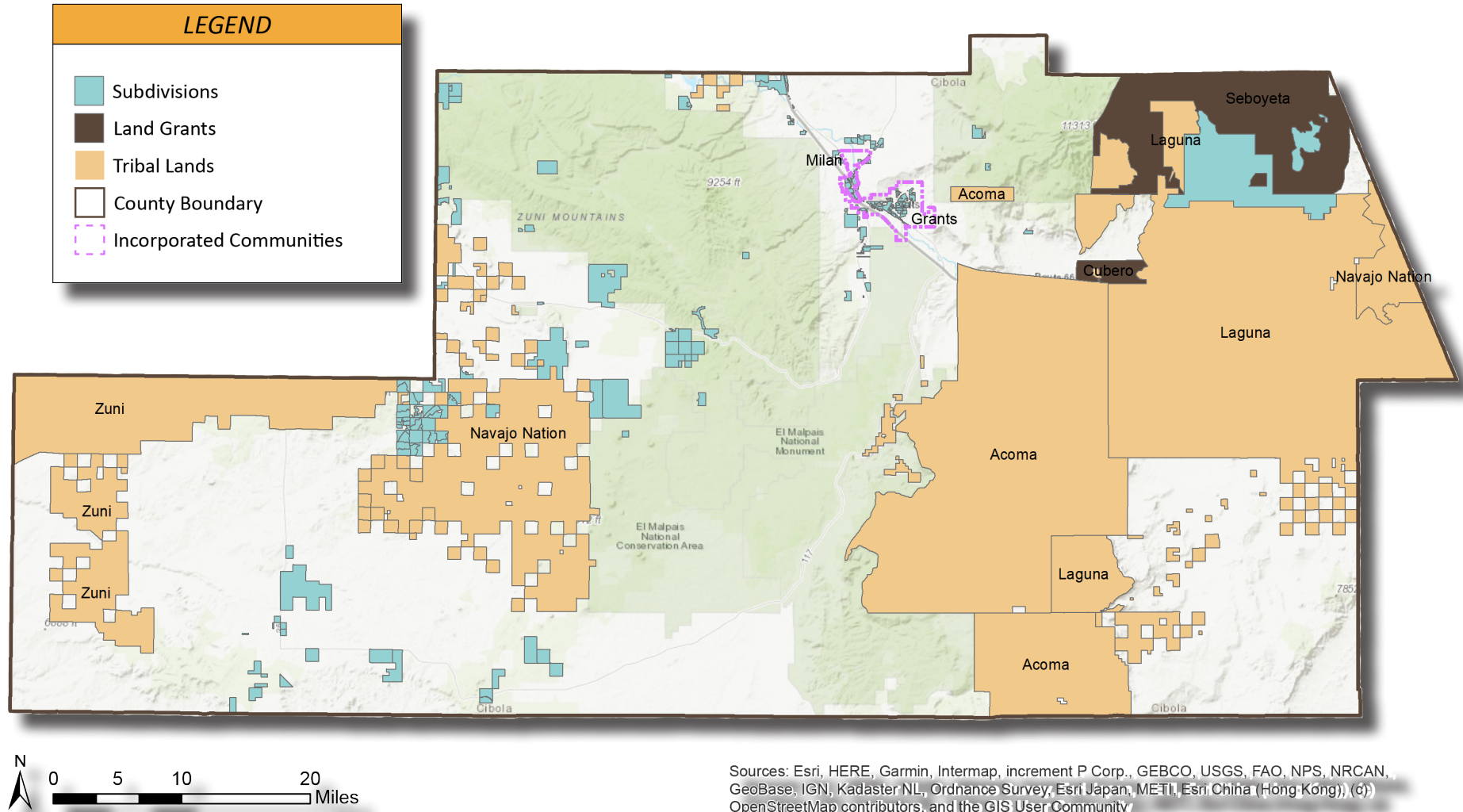


### Zoning and Building Code Limitations

- Issue or Challenge: Across many incorporated communities, zoning and building codes have hampered medium to high density housing development. This issue has been expressed locally within the City of Grants and Village of Milan.
- » Translation into Strategy: Encourage the City of Grants and the Village of Milan to review and update zoning and building codes to reduce hinderance of medium to high density housing development.

### Migration Patterns

- Issue or Challenge: Throughout the country, rural counties are seeing increases in out-migration to metropolitan areas. This is indeed the case in Cibola County as younger and working age populations are migrating to the metropolitan areas for education and employment opportunities.
- » Translation into Strategy: Support the collaboration between local educational institutions and regional employers to decrease out-migration by providing localized training tied to employment opportunities.



**Figure 3.2.5:** Cibola County Subdivision Map. Source: NWNMCOG 2021







Housing Goal

**Cibola County strives to engage and support sustainable housing development activities that ensure the adequate supply of quality housing options for current and future residents.**

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## H-1: Housing Market Analysis

**Conduct a Comprehensive Housing Market Analysis to accurately identify housing needs within the county. The plan is the first step to improving housing within the county and will serve as the springboard for future housing development activities.**

- **H-1a:** Research best practices to develop a comprehensive, effective, and accurate housing market analysis comprised of information that reflects the current market and need and future trends.
- **H-1b:** Assemble a housing steering committee to provide direction to consultant during the development of the housing market analysis. Representatives should include those with the knowledge and means to impact housing development such as developers, realtors, planners, engineers, finance managers, and housing experts.
- **H-1c:** Conduct a comprehensive housing survey of local home owners and renters to be included into the comprehensive housing market analysis.

## H-2: Affordable Housing

**Housing markets across the country have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic and the result of such impacts have been soaring market rates. This has been the case in Cibola County and with the lack of housing stock, current and prospecting residents have noted the lack of affordability.**

- **H-2a:** Partner with the City of Grants and the Village of Milan to develop a joint Affordable Housing Plan. The plan will build off the information provided within the Housing Market Analysis and should include affordability strategies, financial assistance program development, regulatory code updates and enforcement, sustainability practices, and reforms to the permitting process for housing development activities within the municipal jurisdictions.
- **H-2b:** Utilize the same steering committee assembled for the housing market analysis to serve the same role during the development of the affordable housing plan.

## H-3: Housing Stock & Quality

**During the comprehensive planning process, it was noted that there is limited available stock within the local housing market. This is true for housing types and levels of affordability. Residents have noted the need to increase stock and the quality of housing in Cibola County.**

- **H-3a:** Encourage rehabilitation of homes within Cibola County. Consider incentives, rehab programs, rebates, etc. to get homes back into the market.
- **H-3b:** Encourage medium to high density housing developments within the urban core to increase stock and provide affordable options.
- **H-3c:** Consider modular home developments (different from mobile homes) within the extraterritorial zones and within the urban core where permitted.

## H-4: Public – Private Partnership

**Forge Collaborative partnerships with public and private sector entities on planning, zoning, financing, and implementing new housing development.**

- **H-4a:** Consider the reestablishment of a housing authority to take the lead in implementing public-private partnership activities related to housing development.
- **H-4b:** Reach out to regional housing developers that focus on small-scale (10-30 home developments) to assist with development or to provide insight into small-scale housing development to slowly increase stock and improve quality. Consider issuing a "Request for Interest (RFI)".
- **H-4c:** Invite local contractors and housing experts to housing forums, discussions, and strategic planning sessions to garner input regarding the viability of housing development in Cibola County.

## H-5: Infrastructure

**Ensure that infrastructure is in place to support housing development such as water and wastewater systems, utilities, roads, etc. Infrastructure can be the public's contribution to housing development projects with private partnership.**

- **H-5a:** Work with local governments and realtors to identify available properties for potential housing development based on housing type, size, and on-site characteristics.
- **H-5b:** Conduct infrastructure assessments on identified sites to determine on-site infrastructure needs and to help prioritize development locations.
- **H-5c:** Incorporate infrastructure needs that support housing development into the County's Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan.
- **H-5d:** Where feasible, extend infrastructure to sites identified for housing development.

## H-6: Standards and Regulation

**Far too often, local regulation hinders the development of housing and deters developers from entering the community. Regulation should not be an impediment to new housing development especially during times of limited and low-quality housing stock.**

- **H-6a:** Conduct a thorough review of local regulatory frameworks to identify regulation that hinders housing development.
- **H-6b:** Work with the City of Grants and the Village of Milan to update zoning code regulations to incentivize and encourage housing development, rehabilitation of homes and to provide standards for upkeep.
- **H-6c:** Consider adopting tax incentive districts such as public improvement districts (PID) that promote housing development and revitalization of key corridors or neighborhoods.





# Transportation

## Transportation Overview

The resiliency of a rural county like Cibola is often dependent on the ability to connect residents to adjacent rural, semi-urban, and metropolitan centers. Connection to these population centers provides residents with employment and educational opportunities, medical, financial and community services, and retail and leisure activities. Additionally, the vitality of local economic development activities is dependent on the transportation networks that connect these regional employers to the local, national, and international markets. Without an effective and efficient transportation network, the ability to retain a sustainable level of quality of life would prove to be a challenge. In this section of the comprehensive plan, we examine the existing transportation network to identify how to best plan for transportation needs in the future.

Cibola County is well-positioned as a transportation hub in western New Mexico. Advantages include multiple interchange access points to Interstate 40, additional arterial highways to the north and south (NM37, NM53, NM547 & NM605), Burlington Northern Transcontinental Rail Line, aviation service and a vast local transportation network.

Interstate 40 is the primary transportation corridor, which sees an average daily use of ranging between 20,000 to 28,000 vehicles per day. This corridor is also one of the premier freight corridors in the country and is heavily trafficked by commercial vehicles. East bound traffic counts are considerably higher than west bound counts for Cibola County due to freight transport for west coast ports. The corridor serves as the connection to trade and retail hubs in McKinley (Gallup) and Bernalillo (Albuquerque & Rio Rancho) counties. Both locales offer a variety of options for retail and trade, employment, and entertainment. The Burlington Northern – Santa Fe Railroad also provides transcontinental linkage for both passenger (Amtrak but no longer stops in Cibola County) and freight services.

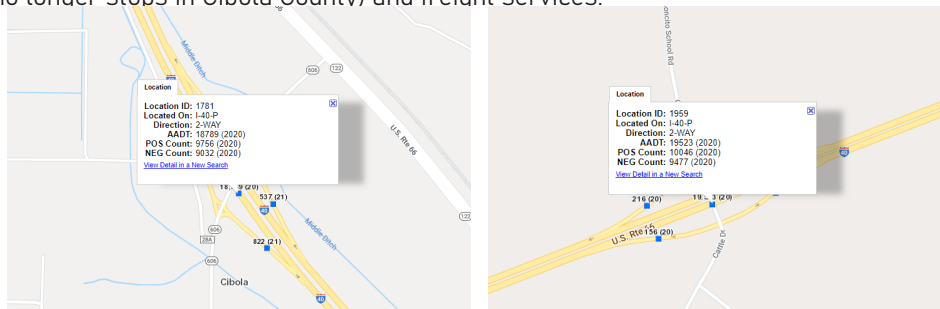


Figure 3.3.1: I-40 Traffic Counts in Cibola County. Source: www.dot.nm.gov

## Existing Conditions

### Regional Connectivity

Much like most of the counties in New Mexico, Cibola County has a large jurisdictional boundary with sparsely populated communities. This dynamic, which is not new to rural New Mexico, makes it difficult to provide for and maintain adequate transportation corridors for residents. With significant distances between rural communities and populated centers that house services and amenities, rural residents are required to travel great lengths to obtain everyday necessities.

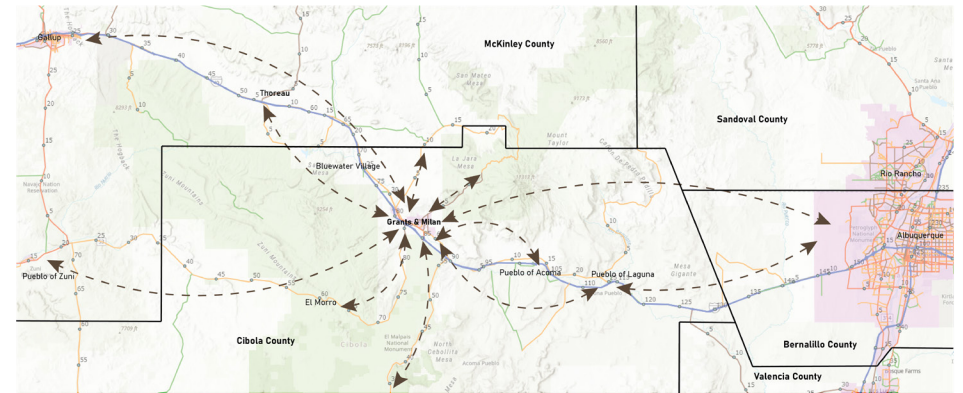


Figure 3.3.2: Cibola County Connectivity & Travel Patterns Map. Source: NWNMCOG 2022

The requirement for travel along one of the many federal, state, or local transportation corridors is just a part of everyday life for many rural residents in the county. At its most extreme, some rural residents within communities such as Fence Lake are traveling approximate 1.5 hours for employment or to obtain goods and services in the county's urbanized areas of Grants and Milan. According to U.S. Census Bureau data, approximately 44.1% of the County's 26,354 residents live within a municipal settlement and experience reduced travel requirements to obtain everyday necessities and reach places of employment. Some tribal communities within the county provide services and access to amenities but are generally still limited in offerings and many of their residents still require extensive travel to meet everyday needs. Excluding the municipal population, the remaining 55.9% of county residents spend the longest time traveling for goods, services, and employment.

Much of the remaining regional road network within Cibola County runs north to south to connect communities, villages, land grants, Tribes and Pueblos that were historically developed along old Route 66. Many of these regional travel corridors connect to Interstate 40, which serves as the backbone of the regional transportation network. Connection to these regional travel corridors however is much less due to varying jurisdictional regulations, lack of funding and limited population served. Many of the road that connect communities, villages, land grants, tribes and pueblos are not sufficiently connected to these corridors or are underdeveloped and require significant improvements to serve the population. Many of these roads are locally owned by the county, Pueblo of Zuni, Pueblo of Acoma, Pueblo of Laguna, Navajo



Nation, or Bureau of Indian Affairs. A coherent and multi-jurisdictional county-wide plan must be developed to support the Cibola County transportation network to serve all and ensure regional connectivity.

### Travel Patterns

Fortunately for Cibola County, the urbanized core of Grants and Milan have most if not all necessary goods and services that residents require for everyday life. The urbanized core provides key services such as access to hospitals, clinics & pharmacies, financial institutions, educational institutions including post-secondary, grocery stores & retail options.

Lastly, much of the urbanized core is also home to a majority of employment centers within the county including but not limited to local government, educational, and healthcare institutions, correctional facilities, large retail corporations, and numerous retail and service sector businesses. According to statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies, there were approximately 6,739 people employed within Cibola County in 2019. Of the 6,739 people, approximately 3,327 lived outside the county. This indicates that of the large employers such as the correctional facilities, educational institutions, local governments, and large corporate retailers, are attracting employees from outside the county, most likely from McKinley, Bernalillo and Sandoval Counties. 3,077 employed persons live in Cibola County but are employed outside the county. This is likely attributed to employment opportunities within the Albuquerque Metropolitan (Bernalillo and Sandoval Counties) area but also within the larger economic base industries in McKinley County. Lastly, 3,412 employed persons both live and work in Cibola County. It is assumed that a larger portion of this group, in relation to the two other sectors of employees, is employed within the retail and service sector industries.

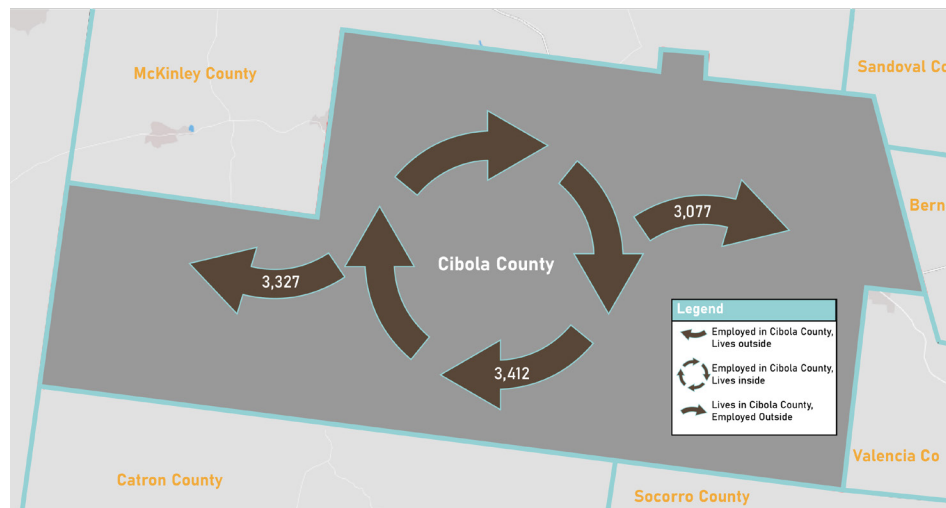


Figure 3.3.3: In-flow/Out-flow Cibola County. Source: <https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>



Travel patterns support three recognized trends: 1. higher wage and jobs that require more skill are often filled by employees from outside the county, 2. Cibola residents that are trained and skilled often find employment outside the county, and 3. the county lacks high wage and skilled jobs and has a larger retail and service sector industry composition than the average.

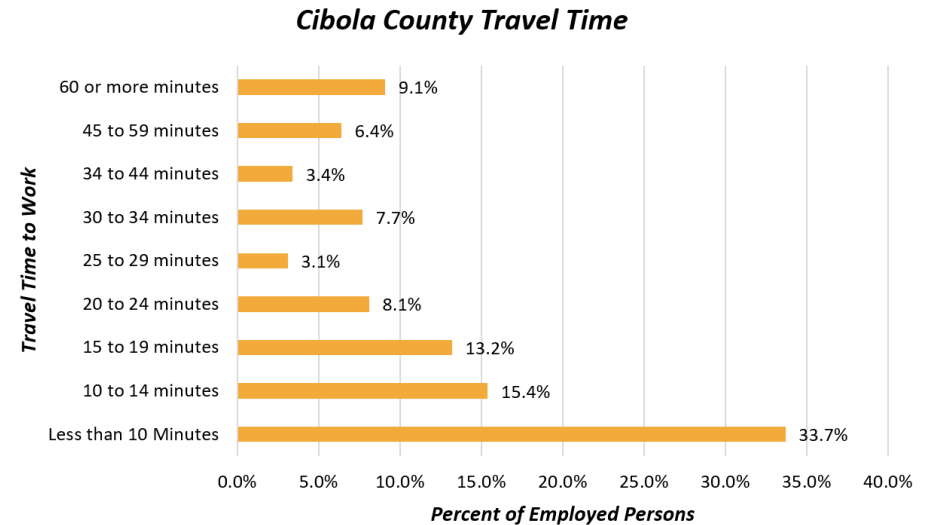


Figure 3.3.4: In-flow/Out-flow Cibola County. Source: <https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>

### Commute and Travel Times

According to the U.S Census Bureau, a majority of employed residents have a relatively short commute time to their place of employment. Approximately 33.7% of the total employed population have commutes less than 10 minutes. Much of this population resides within the municipal core and in communities that have employment opportunities such as the Pueblos of Acoma and Laguna. A combined total of approximately 62.3% of the total employed population commute less than 20 minutes to their places of employment. It is assumed that a majority of this population both lives and works within Cibola County. Lastly, approximately 37.8% of the employed population commutes over 20 minutes to places of employment. It is assumed that this population either resides within the rural portions of the county and commute to the urbanized core for employment or they are employed outside the county likely within the Albuquerque Metropolitan Area.

## Cibola County Functional Classification Map



Figure 3.3.5: Road Classification in Cibola County

### Interstates, U.S. and State Highways in Cibola County

- **I-40** - Wilmington, DC to Barstow, CA
- **NM 122** - McKinley County Boundary to Bernalillo County Boundary
- **NM 36** - Pueblo of Zuni south to Fence Lake
- **NM 53** - Grants south to Quemado (Catron County)
- **NM 547** - Grants north to Mt. Taylor
- **NM 605** - Milan north to San Mateo & NM 509





## Roads Types

**Federal and State Highways** – As noted, Interstate 40 is the primary travel corridor within Cibola County. The corridor traverses approximately 63 miles from the Bernalillo county-line from the east to the McKinley county-line to the northwest. A majority of developed communities are located adjacent to the Interstate. Similarly, NM122 and NM124 both formally known as Route 66, meander throughout Cibola County along most of the same alignment as Interstate 40. Cibola County has one the longest continuous stretches of Route 66 in New Mexico.

Other significant New Mexico Highways include (see map):

- **NM36** – Pueblo of Zuni south to Fence Lake
- **NM53** – Grants west to Pueblo of Zuni
- **NM117** – Grants south to Quemado (Catron County-Line)
- **NM547** – Grants north to Mt. Taylor
- **NM605** – Milan north to San Mateo & NM509 (McKinley County-Line)
- **NM6** – Interstate 40 southeast to Las Lunas (Valencia County-Line)

**Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Roads** – The United States Forest Service maintains a handful of roads within the Cibola National Forests and Grasslands. Most of the corridors they maintain are located within the Zuni Mountains and Mt. Taylor District and are primarily utilized to access public land, private ranches, and homesteads. Outdoor recreation including, hiking, mountain biking, hunting, fishing, cross-country skiing, etc. have led to higher-than-average use within recent years.

- **FR157** – Forest Road 50 south to Timberlake Subdivision
- **FR183** – On top of Horace Mesa .33 miles
- **FR400** – NM124 north towards Mt Taylor in between Grants and San Fidel
- **FR425** – Pole Canyon Road south to Ojo Redondo Road (FR480)
- **FR480** – Post Office Flats west to Forest Road 50
- **FR50** – Zuni Canyon Road to McKinley County-Line (McGaffey area)
- **FR501** – La Mosca Road southeast alongside Mt. Taylor
- **FR548** – Post Office Flats south to Forest Road 50

**County Road and Bridges** – County owned and maintained roads are scattered throughout the county. Most of these corridors provide connection to unincorporated communities, subdivisions, ranches, and homesteads. Additional county-owned roads also connect to USFS, tribal or BIA owned facilities increasing connectivity throughout the county. Unfortunately, many of these corridors are in poor shape and need significant repairs or reconstruct to remain usable and safe. However, limited county funds and ultra-competitive grants limit the county's ability to properly maintain, repair and reconstruct these corridors. The county has worked internally to prioritize county roads in need of repair and has worked with the Northwest Regional Transportation Planning Organization (NWRTPO), under the auspices of the Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments (NWNMCOG) to apply for and secure funding for repair and/or reconstruction of these critical corridors.

Fortunately for Cibola County, it does not own or maintain a substantial number of bridges like the neighboring counties of Bernalillo and McKinley. According to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), there are only 6 bridges within the inventory that are owned and maintained by Cibola County. It is important to note that there may be other bridges or crossing structures owned and maintained by the county but are not on the National Bridge Inventory list. It is imperative that the county develop and monitor a road and bridge inventory list to ensure proper maintenance and timely improvements.



**Figure 3.3.6:** County Road 1 Bridge in Cibola County. Source: NWNMCOG 2022

**Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Roads** – The Bureau of Indian Affairs has a large presence in Cibola County through the establishment and maintenance of transportation corridors within tribal land. All the BIA owned transportation facilities are located within the Ramah Navajo and Pinehill communities situated in east-central Cibola County. The challenges of a multi-jurisdictional collaborative between the Navajo Nation and BIA have resulted in a substandard local transportation network within the isolated Navajo community. Many of the BIA facilities are constructed of gravel or dirt and only a handful of corridors are paved but this small share of the network is rapidly deteriorating.

**Tribal Roads** – There are numerous tribally owned transportation corridors within Cibola County. The management of the transportation network is handled differently between each tribal entity and most of the roadways within the Pueblos of Acoma, Laguna and Zuni are operated and maintained by the local tribal road department. Much of the challenges that plague the County and other non-tribal jurisdictions are also present within the pueblos. Although actively utilizing the Federal Highway Administration's Tribal Transportation Improvement Program (TTIP) funding, the Pueblos are still in need of significant financial investment into the local transportation network to serve members of their communities. Many of the NMDOT funding programs offer tribal set-aside options for competitive funding, but these





are often limited in financial offerings and are still relatively difficult to obtain due to the number of sovereign nations within New Mexico.

### Public Transit

The rural nature of Cibola County limits the effectiveness of public transportation. However, there are two services in operation at the present time:

- **Rockin 66 Express** – Operating out of Milan, the Rockin 66 Express is both a fixed route and demand response public transit service that is accessible to all Cibola County residents. The Rockin 66 Express charges minimal fares such as \$0.75 per person per trip (one-way), \$0.30 per student per trip (one-way), and free fares for veterans. The service area includes all of Cibola County where accessible by van.
- **Laguna Shaa'srk'a Transit** – Operating out of the Pueblo of Laguna the Shaa'srk'a Transit service provides demand responsive, fixed route, and route deviation services through the public transportation services within the reservation and service area. Services are from 6:30am to 5:30pm, Monday thru Friday. Fees for services range from .50 to .75 for children, elders, adults, and persons with Disabilities. Free services are available for eligible Dialysis clients through Laguna Medical Transportation program (LMT).

### Air

There is only one in-service airport within Cibola County. The Grant-Milan Municipal Airport has been in operation for over 60 years and has provided air service within the county for decades. The airport is publically owned and operated by the City of Grants and accommodates approximately 14 aircrafts including 12 single engine aircrafts, 1 multi-engine aircraft and 1 helicopter. According to the City of Grants' website, in 2018 the airport had an average weekly usage rate of 91 trips, 44% transient general aviation, 44% local general aviation, \*5 air taxi service, and 4% military service trips. There are two in-service runways at the Grants-Milan Municipal Airport (Source: [www.cityofgrants.net](http://www.cityofgrants.net)).

The Grants-Milan Municipal Airport has at one point in time provided the following services:

- Self-Served Fuel (Currently Available)
- Parking with Tiedowns (Currently Available)
- Storage via Hangers (Currently Available)
- Airframe Service (Currently Unavailable)
- Powerplant Service (Currently Unavailable)
- Bottled Oxygen (Currently Unavailable)
- Bulk Oxygen (Currently Unavailable)

### Freight by Truck and Rail

Freight traffic in Cibola County is primarily limited to the Interstate 40 corridor. Much of the freight traffic along the corridor is a product of the transport of goods to and from commercial ports on the west coast (e.g., Port of Long Beach) and in-land ports and key distribution destinations to the east. According to the NMDOT freight network map, a portion of NM122 (Santa Fe Avenue) within the City of Grants is the only other

identified corridor that is critical to the larger freight network. This small (6.5 mile) portion of NM122 is identified by NMDOT as a "critical Urban Freight Corridor" and is often utilized as the bypass route during construction or crash related occurrences.

Freight by rail is transported on the Burlington Northern-Santa Fe Transcon Railway which dissects the northern portion of the county and mimics the Interstate 40 alignment with slight deviations. Identified as the southern transcon line, this rail corridor is one of the most heavily trafficked rail corridors in the western United States. According to statistics, as of 2006, an average of almost 90 trains daily passed over the section between Belen and Clovis, New Mexico. These numbers are likely to be similar for the Cibola County. Each train is typically 6,000 to 8,000 feet long. There are no destination stops along the transcon line within Cibola County.

### Key Take-Aways

#### Aging Infrastructure

- **Take-Away:** Numerous Cibola County roads were built years ago and are now seeing signs of rapid deterioration causing unsafe and unreliable conditions.
- » **Translation into Strategy:** A comprehensive analysis of all county roads to develop an asset management plan for maintenance and replacement of transportation infrastructure.

#### Expectations

- **Take-Away:** Cibola County is relatively small in terms of operation and services and expectations of from residents outweighs actual capacity to mitigate issues in a timely manner.
- » **Translation into Strategy:** Educate residents on the limitations of the county and fiscal capacity to implement transportation activities.

#### Prioritization

- **Take-Away:** Without asset management plans that include inventories of infrastructure and analysis of conditions, Cibola County has been reacting to infrastructure issues rather than being proactive.
- » **Translation into Strategy:** Develop asset management plans and translate information into the Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan (ICIP).

#### Maintenance

- **Take-Away:** Maintenance activities have increased as infrastructure has aged resulting in increased cost and complexity of maintenance activities.
- » **Translation into Strategy:** Promote organized and cost-effective maintenance programs on roadways within the Cibola County inventory.



Transportation Goal

**Cibola County strives to improve the local transportation network to increase accessibility, safety, reliability, and inter-connectivity to support the everyday lives of Cibola residents.**

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## T-1: Agreements & Policy

**Agreements, or the lack of, and local policy have been hindering effective regional transportation development in Cibola County for years.**

- **T-1a:** Engage neighboring transportation management agencies to conduct review of local policy to remove unnecessary hurdles and increase ease of collaboration.
- **T-1b:** Review and update or enter into Memorandum of Understandings between tribal entities to outline roles, responsibilities, and identify areas for collaboration.
  - » MOUs can be used to allow County to maintain tribal corridors where necessary and feasible.

## T-2: Prioritized Maintenance and Development

**With a long list of maintenance activities to conduct, a comprehensive list of needs prioritized based on level of service, condition, etc. would greatly improve efficiency and effectiveness of Road Department maintenance activities.**

- **T-2a:** Develop a comprehensive asset management plan for the transportation network within Cibola County.
  - » Utilize the asset management plan to prioritize maintenance activities and larger transportation improvements.
  - » Utilize the asset management plan to assist with the development of the Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan.
- **T-2b:** Establish internal procedures to prioritize maintenance and development activities recommended by the County Road Department Manager and Special Projects Coordinator and approved by the County Commission.
- **T-2c:** Utilize functional classification, existing data, average annual daily traffic (AADT) and other transportation data to determine roadway improvements.
  - » Consider other sources of information such as number of residents or households, school bus routes, connectivity, and regional significance.
  - » Consider cost estimates and funding sources to help determine implementation strategies.
- **T-2d:** Prioritize corridors and infrastructure that the County has secured Right of Way on.

## T-3: Regional Connectivity

**Develop an integrated regional transportation network to ensure connectivity between all communities.**

- **T-3a:** Consider the development of a more detailed transportation plan that examines regional connectivity within the county.
  - » Coordination and cost sharing with the City of Grants and the Village of Milan could lead to the development of a comprehensive transportation plan that outlines recommendation to improve the transportation network.
  - » The plan should highlight regional corridors that connect multiple communities and move those recommendations to the forefront of the

implementation schedule.

- **T-3b:** Develop and recommend appropriate improvements to regional corridors to ensure controlled costs and reduce unnecessary improvements and overspending.

## T-4: Intergovernmental Collaboration

**Promote intergovernmental collaboration among local governments, tribal entities, state, and federal agencies to plan and implement road and other transportation related improvements.**

- **T-4a:** Apply the 4C's (Collaborate, Community, Cooperate, and Coordinate) concept to effectively engage in collaborative transportation planning and development.
- **T-4b:** Encourage, support, and provide autonomy to the roads department manager and the special projects coordinator to engage regional entities to promote intergovernmental collaboration.
- **T-4c:** Provide training on cross jurisdictional partnerships
- **T-4d:** Understand the numerous processes and procedures implemented within other governmental agencies to effectively collaborate on road improvements.
- **T-4e:** Utilize the County's participation in the Northwest Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) as a means to engage other transportation planning organizations and identify common projects, goals, and outcomes.

## T-5: Transportation Alternatives

**As noted prior, rising transportation costs has resulted in an increase in the number of residents left without means of transport.**

- **T-5a:** Identify multi-modal connectivity networks for bicyclists, pedestrians, public transit, and recreational trails in support of regional economic development activities.
- **T-5b:** Research the possibility of the return of Amtrak services to Cibola County.
- **T-5c:** Collaborate with Rockin 66 Express and Shaa'srk'a Transit and other prospecting transit providers to enhance and extend transit service to other unincorporated communities within the county.
- **T-5d:** Collaborate with NMDOT planning division to identify missing connections within the state bicycle network.

## T-6: Environmental Protection

**Promote conservation initiatives and activities that help to reduce fossil fuel use and air pollution in the county.**

- **T-6a:** Consider developing a phased schedule for replacing county vehicle fleet with hybrid or ethanol-based vehicles.
- **T-6b:** Engage in the statewide electric vehicle charging station planning effort.



# Infrastructure & Service Facilities

## Infrastructure & Service Facilities Overview

The infrastructure of a community is the basic and physical organization of structures, installations and facilities needed to operate the county and provide services to its residents. Assets such as roads and bridges, railways and airports, water and wastewater systems, stormwater systems, utilities, broadband networks, telecommunication systems, and public service facilities are critical components of a community. The following section highlights some of the existing infrastructure within the county and proposes strategies to ensure longevity and efficiency of county-owned infrastructure.

## Existing Conditions

### Road & Bridges

Cibola County maintains approximately 100 roads spanning over 340 miles and numerous bridges throughout the county. A majority of the county owned corridors are key corridors that connect to the larger regional network. The county utilizes multiple forms of roadways to connect residents to the regional systems such as earthen roads, gravel roads, roads with basecourse, chip seal and full pavement. The conditions of the local road network vary, and the county has an internal prioritization system that helps target local, state, and federal funding into priority corridors. Additionally, the county owns and maintains a handful of bridges that are critical for access to communities for residents, school buses, and emergency services. The number of bridges owned and maintained by the county is significantly less than neighboring counties.

Other roads within the county are maintained by the State of New Mexico, local municipalities, tribal governments, and federal agencies such as the Bureau of Indian Affairs. For more information regarding the Cibola County transportation network, refer to the transportation section of this comprehensive plan.

### Railways & Airports

**Railways** – There is one main railway that dissects the northern portion of Cibola County, the Burlington Northern-Santa Fe Transcon railway. The rail is primarily used to transport goods from ports on the west coast to destinations in the Midwest such as Chicago but is also used for the domestic transport via Amtrak passenger service. Years ago, Amtrak discontinued its stop in Cibola County and has not reestablished passenger service to the Cibola Community. Cibola County does not have authority to alter, utilize, or maintain any portion of the Transcon line, therefore no real action can be taken to improve, modify or alter the railway.

**Airports** – There is only one airport in Cibola County which is owned and operated by the City of Grants. The County does not provide financial or administrative support for the Grants-Milan Municipal Airport but does support and advocate for increase services and capital improvements. The airport is a critical asset for the Cibola

community and has the potential to become a catalytic economic development and transportation hub project.

For more information regarding the BNSF Railway and the Grants-Milan Municipal Airport, refer to the transportation section of this comprehensive plan.



Figure 4.1.1: BNSF locomotive in Grants, NM. Source: [www.youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

### Water & Wastewater

The rural nature of Cibola County does not lend to the development of water and wastewater systems as the capacity to build, operate and maintain these facilities does not exist. With the majority of the population and water consumers located within the municipal core, the county does not have large enough communities to suffice starting water operations. Water operations within the municipal core are handled by the City of Grants and the Village of Milan.

Water systems within the rural portions of the county are handled directly by locally established water management districts such as water and sanitation districts, mutual domestic water users' associations, etc. Under state law, these entities have many of the same powers as incorporated municipalities including taxing. Many of these communities have self-maintained community water and wastewater systems in various forms, service levels and efficiencies. Although the County does not operate or maintain any water system, the county does provide support for infrastructure improvements by advocating for funding and when eligible, serves as fiscal agent for many state appropriations and grant funding.

Like many other rural counties in the state, the remaining unserviceable areas of the county rely on individual wells or manually transporting potable water for domestic use and are not a part of a community water or wastewater system. These areas either have internal or no wastewater septic systems.





Tribal communities within the county rely on internal water management entities such as the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority (NTUA) which provides water and wastewater service for Navajo Chapter communities. The Pueblos of Acoma, Laguna, and Zuni have internal utility authorities that own, operate, and maintain water and wastewater systems within the many villages in their communities.

### Stormwater Management

Cibola County does not own and maintain significant amounts of stormwater and drainage infrastructure. The only infrastructure owned by the county are the underground storm drainage systems in the communities of San Rafael and the Village of Milan. Additional Open drainage areas maintained by the county are in San Rafael and Cubero. With stormwater and drainage infrastructure within the municipal core owned by the local municipalities and infrastructure within unincorporated communities owned and maintained by special districts, Cibola County has limited infrastructure responsibility but is ready to support the needs of sister governments and special districts to ensure flooding does not occur.



**Figure 4.1.2:** San Rafael Open Drainage Ditch. Source: Cibola County

Cibola County partnered with the City of Grants and the Village of Milan to fund a regional drainage master plan that encompasses the urbanized core of the county and has resulted in the investment of millions of local, state, and federal dollars to improve drainage and stormwater management within the populated center.

### Utilities

**Electricity** – Electricity within Cibola County is generally provided by the Continental Divide Electric Cooperative, Inc. (CDEC). The electric company also provides service to McKinley, Sandoval, Bernalillo, and Valencia counties. Headquartered in the City of Grants, the non-profit electric CO-OP is member owned. The CO-OP was incorporated under existing state and federal law and issues a certificate of incorporation in 1945, when the county was still Valencia. Since its inception, the electric company has utilized many forms to acquire power to distribute to its members. Today, CEDC primarily purchases electricity from generating stations throughout the state and has also begun to purchase power from solar generating facilities such as those located within Cibola and McKinley counties.

**Natural Gas** – Natural Gas is utilized within much of the populated core of Cibola County. A main natural gas trunk line that distributes gas to multiple states dissects the northeast portion of the county and is aligned parallel to Interstate 40. The El Paso Natural Gas (formerly owned by El Paso Natural Gas Company and was later acquired by Kinder Morgan) line transports gas from the San Juan, Permian, and Anadarko basins to California, Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, and Northern Mexico.

Natural Gas from the El Paso line is purchased by the New Mexico Gas Company where it is then resold to the public. Headquartered in Albuquerque, the New Mexico Gas Company provides natural gas service to residents of Cibola County.

### Broadband

Broadband is a critical necessity for many reasons such as education, workforce training, financial services, telehealth, retail trade, and entertainment. Modern day society revolves around the ability to engage online networks as many critical institutions require some form of online presence or interaction. Improving broadband in Cibola County will continue to remain one of most important infrastructure actions to conduct.

Broadband in Cibola County has long been a topic of discussion and a dire need for the community. In the past, many service providers have provided broadband capabilities but reach and quality remained low due to limited fiber networks and other necessary infrastructure. Currently, providers such as Red Bolt (operated by CEDC), Sacred Wind Communications, and others have improved the quality of broadband service in the county through the expansion of fiber networks but unfortunately, much of this service is limited to the urbanized core. Service providers such as Red Bolt worked diligently to increase connectivity in rural communities such as Bluewater Village and have identified future expansion areas such as the Pueblo of Zuni and Bluewater Acres (both in McKinley County). While the level of broadband in Cibola County is not near the levels of other neighboring counties, progress is being made. The County is ready to support and advocate for expansion efforts of existing providers.

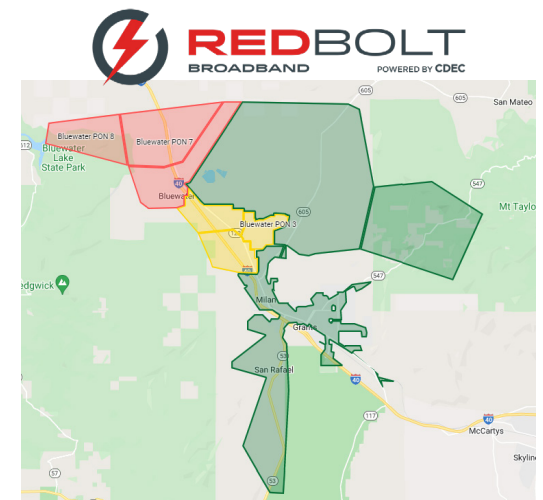
### Telecommunications

Telecommunication infrastructure is some of the most critical but forgotten infrastructure components within a community. Telecommunication infrastructure and equipment is utilized by numerous local and state agencies including those that provide critical services such as the sheriff's department, office of emergency management, fire departments, correctional facilities, and hospitals. Without this infrastructure

**Figure 4.1.4:** CDEC Red Bolt Broadband Logo and Map of Service Area. Source: <https://redboltbroadband.com/>



**Figure 4.1.3:** CDEC Grants Substation. Source: <https://www.cdec.coop/>



communication within and between emergency service providers would be non-existent. Cibola County maintains communication towers located at the various Fire Departments and other publicly owned facilities throughout the county.

Through the Cibola Regional Communication Center, the county continues to do its best to maintain said infrastructure to eliminate communication issues within these agencies.

### Alternative Energy

**Solar** – Solar energy production in Cibola County has taken off in the last decade. With demands from the State of New Mexico to increase renewable energy production, energy providers have turned to solar away from traditional energy production methods. Solar has proven to be a reliable and environmentally friendly form of energy production and has also proven to be much less expensive to construct, operate and maintain than traditional methods. Cibola County is in full support of solar energy production and will continue to support for and advocate for solar and/or renewable energy production to support the electricity needs of Cibola County residents. The following are established solar energy production centers that are currently in operation in Cibola County.

- **Grants & Bluewater, NM** – Continental Divide Electric Cooperative entered into a 20-year agreement with Lightsource BP to purchase clean, affordable, renewable electricity to power approximately 1,700 homes in New Mexico. Lightsource BP then invested millions of dollars to construct two separate solar farms in Cibola County that produce 9-megawatts.
- **Bibo, NM** – The 118-acre remote canyon and mesa ranching land in the northeast corner of the county is home to PNM's \$14 million dollar 8-megawatt solar energy center. The solar farm has approximately 96,000 solar panels that provide enough energy to power 3,050 residential customers. The solar energy center broke ground in 2015 and is now fully operational.

**Wind** – The Red Mesa Wind Energy Center located in Cubero is the County's only



Figure 4.1.5: Grants Solar Farm. <https://www.lightsourcecbp.com/us/projects/grants-and-bluewater/>

wind energy production facility. The energy center, which began operation in 2010, is operated by a subsidiary of NextEra Energy Resources and produces 102.4-megawatts through the use of 64 1.6-megawatt GE xle turbines that are capable of generating enough electricity to power more than 30,720 homes. Each turbine is approximately 262 feet tall and requires 6 full-time staff to operate and maintain the energy center.



Figure 4.1.6: Red Mesa Wind Farm. <http://www.blockenergygroup.com/pdf/RedMesaWindNexterafactsheet>

### Public Service Facilities

**Solid Waste** – Solid waste service in Cibola County is provided by the Northwest New Mexico Regional Solid Waste Authority (NWNMRSWA). The solid waste authority was established in 1995 and is owned by multiple local governments including Cibola County, City of Grants, Village of Milan, McKinley County, and the City of Gallup. The solid waste authority was established to assist residential communities in McKinley and Cibola Counties with the proper disposal of solid waste and has since expanded services to the Navajo Nation, Pueblo of Acoma, Pueblo, of Laguna and the Pueblo of Zuni. The solid waste authority provides roll off services, tire recycling, general household recycling and special waste disposal.

The Regional landfill is located in the community of Thoreau (McKinley County) approximately 36-miles west (40-minutes) from the urbanize core of Cibola County. In addition to the regional landfill, the solid waste authority has developed transfer stations across the region, including a few in Cibola County, the largest of which is in the Village of Milan along NM 568. This transfer station was established to service the residents of Cibola County and accepts solid waste for minimal fees. Fees and rate schedules are subject to change and do so according to regional economic activity, cost of operations, and various other factors. Rate and schedule changes are reviewed and approved the Board of the Solid Waste Authority, which is comprised of representatives from local governments in both counties.

The Cibola County Transfer Station provides the following recycling service to residents: aluminum & tin cans, cardboard, plastics, paper, scrap metal, appliances, electronics, motor oil, and tires. In recent years, the availability of recycling services has fluctuated due to numerous factors such as local buy-in, local capacity to gather recycled materials, cost vs. benefit of recycling and regional and national prices for recycled waste.

In addition to the Cibola County Transfer Station, the solid waste authority, in



partnership with local communities and the county, have established additional convenience centers in Cubero, Bluewater, Pinehill, San Mateo, and Seboyeta.

**Healthcare (Hospital)** – Cibola General Hospital was established in 1959 to provide residents of then Valencia County with healthcare services. Since then, the facility has expanded and now provides quality care through leading technology. The 50,000 square foot facility supports a 25-bed operation with the dedicated team that performs numerous medical procedures. The facility also offers general surgery, 24-hour emergency care, intensive care nursing, internal medicine, obstetrics, pathology, pediatric dentistry, podiatry, primary care, and radiology.

Cibola County owns a portion of the Cibola General Hospital and supports healthcare services provided within the facility by ensuring upkeep and infrastructure improvements when necessary. The County has partnered with the Quorum Health Resources, LLC. management agency to prioritize infrastructure improvements within the publicly owned portions of the facility. Cibola county will continue to provide support for and will implement infrastructure improvements to ensure continued operations for this regional healthcare provider.

**Fire** – With many rural communities and subdivisions scattered throughout the county, and recent climatic trends, fire protection has become an even more pressing public service for residents. Cibola County oversees 7 fire departments in Bluewater Village, Candy Kitchen, Cubero, El Morro Valley Fire, Fence Lake, Lobo Canyon, and San Rafael.

Additional fire stations are located within the City of Grants and the Village of Milan. These stations are owned and operated by their respective municipality. Tribal communities also own and operate their own fire departments including one in Seboyeta which is operated by the Pueblo of Laguna. These fire stations provide both fire protection and emergency medical services for residents of the county.

**Law Enforcement & Public Safety** – Cibola County owns and operates the Sheriff's Department which provides law enforcement services for residents outside the municipalities. The Sheriff's Department is located within the City of Grants and is scheduled for relocation to a much more accessible and convenient location along Interstate 40. Cibola County has taken action to house all public safety departments including E-911 into one centralized location to reach economies of scale and increase efficiency, and collaboration within and between departments.

Cibola County owned the facilities these departments will utilize along with the equipment needed to conduct daily service. Cibola County will continue to support all public safety departments and will work diligently to improve service to residents.

**Other Community Facilities** – Cibola County owns numerous facilities that are managed by outside entities such as community and senior centers. These facilities are co-maintained and provide much needed social services for residents in outlying areas. Cibola serves as the primary improvement agency and will continue to ensure

upkeep of these facilities.

## Key Take-Aways

### Aging Infrastructure

- **Take-Away:** Significant amounts of Cibola County infrastructure was built decades ago and are now seeing signs of rapid deterioration causing unsafe and unreliable conditions.
- » **Translation into Strategy:** A comprehensive analysis of all county infrastructure to develop an asset management plan for maintenance and replacement.

### Collaboration

- **Take-Away:** In the past, Cibola County and its local and tribal governments have engaged little with each other to implement critical infrastructure projects that support large portions or all county residents.
- » **Translation into Strategy:** Engage in collaborative conversations with other governmental entities that aim to improve local and regional infrastructure.

### Raising Construction Cost and Stagnant Funding Sources

- **Take-Away:** The costs to implement critical infrastructure projects has risen tremendously over the past decade and funding sources both locally, statewide, and federally have remained constant.
- » **Translation into Strategy:** Emphasize leveraging of local funding to secure larger resources and focus of priority projects.

### Prioritization

- **Take-Away:** Like many other local governments across the state, the county has not utilized the ICIP effectively as a mechanism to prioritize infrastructure projects.
- » **Translation into Strategy:** Develop internal mechanisms that give the ICIP more weight and that tie to existing processes such as annual budgeting.





Infrastructure & Facilities Goal

**Cibola County strives to actively cultivate partnerships that encourage, support, and implement essential community infrastructure to serve county residents and maximize county resources.**

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## Infrastructure & Facilities Strategies

### I-1: Collaborative Implementation

With limited local and outside resources available to achieve implementation of all infrastructure needs, the county has identified the need to closely examine and prioritize infrastructure projects that are regional in nature and support the needs of multiple jurisdictions.

- **I-1a:** Incorporate the 4C's model into county operations to meet local needs by promoting cost-sharing initiatives for planning, designing and construction of projects.
- **I-1b:** Utilize Intergovernmental Agreements (IGA) for shared investments, resources, support, and services.
- **I-1c:** Continue to participate in regional manager meetings with the City of Grants and the Village of Milan and consider expanding meetings to include other governmental agencies including tribal entities.

### I-2: Critical Projects

Cibola County has numerous infrastructure needs across an array of areas such as roads, bridges and facilities. Some small, some large and some more urgent than others. It is imperative that the County focus resources on critical projects that are catalytic in nature. Example projects include:

- **I-2a:** County Road and Bridge Improvements
  - » Prioritize planning, design, and construction of improvements to County Road 1, County Road 5, and Elkins Road over other transportation corridors.
- **I-2b:** Public Safety Building
  - » Complete the renovation of the Grants Armory building to serve as the public safety administration building which will house the Sheriff's, Emergency Management, E-911, and other public safety departments.
- **I-2c:** Regional Drainage Master Plan
  - » Coordinate with the City of Grants and Village of Milan to update the regional drainage master and implement identified projects.
- **I-2d:** Zuni Mountain Trails
  - » Design and construct the remainder of the Quartz Hill Trail.
  - » Design and construct the Bluewater Trail and Ojo Redondo Trails.
- **I-2e:** Milan Industrial Park
  - » Support the Village of Milan's effort to design and construction of the Milan Industrial Park.

### I-3: Asset Management

Ensure the cost-effective management and maintenance of County infrastructure assets to increase longevity and effectiveness.

- **I-3a:** Develop a comprehensive asset management plan to analyze existing assets and to help prioritize maintenance and replacement activities.
- **I-3b:** Develop preventative maintenance procedures for infrastructure related

departments.

- **I-3c:** Identify and cultivate dedicated sources of income for asset management.

### I-4: Staff Capacity

Implementation of complex infrastructure projects requires talent and focused attention. Cibola County needs a dedicated team to implement these capital improvements to ensure the needs of the community are met.

- **I-4a:** Support the professional development of planning and special projects staff.
- **I-4b:** Consider expansion of the planning and special projects office.

### I-5: Action Planning

Often local governments are overwhelmed by the sheer number of infrastructure improvements needed within the community. This results in unclear and inefficient implementation.

- **I-5a:** Consider developing 1-year action plans to target critical infrastructure improvements that are obtainable with the resources available locally, statewide, and federally.
  - » This action plan should be realistic and implementable.
  - » Projects should be vetted for readiness and phasing should be incorporated.
- **I-5b:** Ensure that actions plans are incorporated into yearly strategic planning sessions with commissioners and staff.
- **I-5c:** Develop a mechanism to monitor progress and record successes and failures.

### I-6: State and Federal Funding Programs

Rising costs of materials and labor has made outside funding necessary for the development of infrastructure. With minimal revenue generation and reductions in base industries, Cibola County cannot afford to internally fund infrastructure projects and needs to seek and obtain outside funding.

- **I-6a:** The County should continue to advocate through its State and National Associations for the continuation and increased funding for programs like the US Department of Housing & Urban Development's (HUD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, US Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration grant programs, and many others that provide critical funds for projects.
- **I-6b:** Align potential action plans, strategic plans, and the ICIP to available funding sources at the state and federal levels.
- **I-6c:** Advocate for increased funding for programs utilized within the Cibola such as CDBG, NMFA, Water Trust Board, Transportation Project Fund, LEDA, etc.



# Economic Development

The people of Cibola County and their leadership recognize the importance of economic development. Economic development increases the tax base allowing the County government to provide better services, and it also improves the lives of the residents who live here. Cibola County still experiences some of the lowest income levels and highest unemployment rates in the United States. Despite significant efforts and investments, Cibola County's tax base has eroded over the past several decades. Since 2015, the County's economic profile has stabilized and shows some positive upticks in personal income, per capita income, and wages and salaries. Cibola County continues to experience population losses and a jobs gap between available employment and working age residents. A major concern is the current downturn in the coal industry, and its associated impacts on regional power plants, associated mines, and support businesses. This downturn has already strained the tax base and forced Cibola County and its partners into real strategic planning, focusing on diversification the economy while preserving existing large base job employers.

Cibola County has major locational advantages, including Interstate Highway 40 and the Burlington Northern- Santa Fé transcontinental rail line. As a transportation nexus, Cibola County provides a uniquely powerful opportunity for commercial entities that need well-developed access to national transportation corridors. Cibola County also serves as a gateway portal to the wonders of the Four Corners region, including world heritage sites situated along the Trail of the Ancients Scenic Byway, diverse cultural communities and natural wonders such as the Ice Caves, Mt. Taylor, and the El Morro and El Malpais National Monuments. As a cultural crossroads, the County is a Historic Route 66 community with the longest stretch of continuous access of any County, boasting a robust regional retail economy lined with original signage and exciting attractions.

## Economic Development Overview

### Economic History of Cibola County

The City of Grants is the County seat and one of two incorporated municipalities in Cibola County, along with Village of Milan, which together serve as the County's main commercial center. Cibola County has pockets of development that serve it's many tribal communities, private subdivisions, land grant enclaves, and other semi-urbanized areas. The Grants/Milan Micropolitan Statistical Area (Grants MSA) has a strong presence of governmental institutions and program employers, as well as robust retail sales and services meeting the needs of over 50,000 people in northwestern New Mexico as well as Catron County.

Cibola County is one of the poorer counties in New Mexico. According to the US Census Bureau, the percentage of County residents below the poverty level continues to hover above 25%. A limited job gap exists between working age residents and available jobs with almost half employed. Major industries in the area include

government (including education), mining, refining/energy production, healthcare and Native American gaming and cultural tourism.

The area's once strong economic engines of mining and farming/ranching have been in decline overall since the 1970's. Mining employment has been on a steady decline since the closure of area uranium mines and milling operations and more recent with the bankruptcy of Peabody Energy and significant downsizing at Lee Ranch mine across the county line in rural McKinley County.

Cibola County benefits from a Native American casino and entertainment market, which wields significant economic influence and serves as a major attraction for visitors and tourists. Small manufacturing includes printing, sheet metal products, food products, piñon nut gathering, and cattle and sheep byproducts. Heavier manufacturing includes wood products and paper manufacturing.

In summary, the past thirty years has seen an overall decline in the economic health of Cibola County. Since 2015, population growth has dipped slightly due in some part to outmigration, which could be due to the jobs and skills gap. Several major employers report high-paying jobs go unfilled due to this skills gap. As indicated by its ongoing high rate of unemployment, Cibola County is struggling to create jobs for its residents and workforce pipelines to fill existing jobs.

### Economic Development Plans

#### Empower & Collaborate – New Mexico's Economic Path Forward

The Statewide Economic Development Plan (October 2021) developed by SRI International is an important document to align efforts with the State of New Mexico. This plan sees similar challenges that are found in Cibola County and identifies nine (9) key targets for the State. While Cibola County targets do not align perfectly with the State, it is important for Cibola County to understand them and how to fit niches and opportunities to build towards these targets as they are long-term industries with large growth potential.

#### The six challenges are:

1. Lack of collaboration between economic development stakeholders
2. Difficulty attracting and retaining talent in urban, rural, and tribal communities
3. Misalignment between higher education and industry
4. Disengagement of socioeconomically disadvantaged communities in planning processes
5. Public-sector dominance in New Mexico's innovation ecosystem
6. Concentration of economy in a few key industries

**Northwest New Mexico Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy** – The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), developed and managed by Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments, provides a plan for economic development for McKinley County as well as the other counties in the region.



The La Ristra Northwest strategy focus is around three main visions:




-  **Enterprise** – putting the region's workforce to work
-  **Community** – creating great places to live, work, play and stay
-  **People** – growing individual and household prosperity



Figure 3.5.1: NWNM CEDS Plan. Source: NWNMCOG 2022

**Stronger Economies Together (SET) Plan** – The Stronger Economies Together (SET) Initiative is a national Program Sponsored by USDA-Rural Development that was created to strengthen the capacity of rural communities in America to plan their future and to start bringing in resources to implement those plans. The initiative was introduced to the region as the “Trail of the Ancients Region” years ago and is now a key contributor to the development of the region’s larger Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. At the end of the 2-year SET study and planning process, the development of a “High Quality Plan” was generated for the Northwest region of New Mexico. The Trail of the Ancients

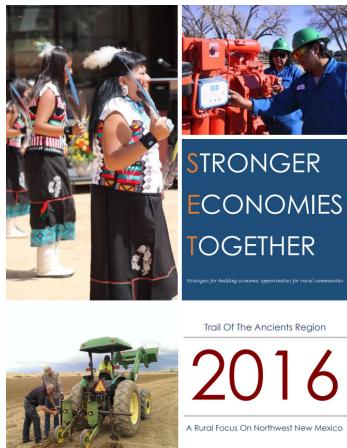


Figure 3.5.2: 2016 SET Plan. Source: NWNMCOG 2022

Region “High Quality Plan’s” rural focus and rural strategies have been incorporated into the CEDS overarching goals.

With rural perspectives in mind, the SET plan was developed to focus on four strategic goal areas: Agriculture & Food Systems, Tourism & Artisan Enterprises, Manufacturing and Workforce Development & Entrepreneurship. The strategic goal areas are viewed as avenues to improve the economic health of the rural communities in Northwest New Mexico including those in Cibola County.

### Local Plans and Initiatives

**Comprehensive Plans** – As noted in the introduction of this plan, comprehensive plans are official public documents adopted by a local government as a policy guide to decision-making about the physical development of the community. It depicts the grand vision of what the community would be like in 20-years and provides a path to achieve the desired goal. In Cibola County, there are numerous communities with comprehensive or strategic land use plan including the City of Grants, Village of Milan, Pueblo of Acoma, Pueblo of Laguna, Pueblo of Zuni, and satellite communities of the Navajo Nation. Additionally, state, and federal agencies also develop land use plans that in some cases include economic development goals and strategies. In most, if not of these plans, economic development goals and strategies are included to help guide local communities to improve economic vitality.

**Metropolitan Redevelopment Area Plans** – Within the City of Grants, a special plan has been developed specifically for a designated metropolitan redevelopment area (MRA). This special district is in the heart of downtown Grants and guides development within this critical commercial corridor. The plan not only suggests land use decisions, and programming activities, it also highlights local level economic development goals and strategies. The purpose of the MRA plan is to guide revitalization of downtown Grants over a planning horizon of ten years.

**Local Economic Development Act** – Cibola County as well as the City of Grants and the Village of Milan have updated their Local Economic Development Act ordinances. The enactment and utilization of LEDA allows public support for economic development to foster, promote, and enhance local economic development efforts while continuing to project against the unauthorized use of public money and other public resources. The purpose of the Act is to allow municipalities and counties to enter into Joint Powers Agreements to plan and support regional economic development projects.

**Milan Industrial Park** – Cibola County leadership recognizes external threats to several of its major taxpayers that could disrupt County revenues. These impending impacts coupled with State and Federal policies and unfunded mandates (e.g. jail detention costs), Cibola County faces two short-term options: support, expand, and diversify its tax base or cut essential services. Recently, Cibola County has been proactive to grow its economy by providing business incentives to a manufacturing firm and several renewable energy production facilities. The County has spearheaded





economic development planning to create commercial and industrial hubs in areas positioned for development. The County has also provided support for developing “shovel-ready” economic development sites with utilities and infrastructure needed to fast-track attraction and operation.

- The Village of Milan holds 800 acres for the Milan Industrial Park with significant water rights, interstate access, and a master plan in place for a vision of a future rail spur.
- Cibola Foundation, Inc. holds the Cibola Industrial Park with existing infrastructure and interstate access.
- The City of Grants has a master plan in place with Main Street for downtown revitalization and a master site plan for Grants Public Library and a Regional Arena facility.
- The City of Grants is in the early stages of a Grants Bio-Park project and Airport Commercial Development project.

## MILAN INDUSTRIAL PARK

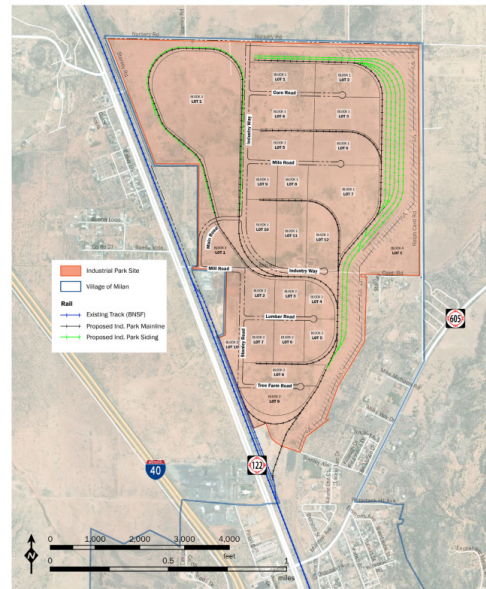


Figure 3.5.3: Milan Industrial Park Map. Source: NWNMCOG 2022

**Opportunity Zones** - Qualified Opportunity Zones were created by the federal 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act and designed to spur economic development by bringing private investment to areas that might otherwise have difficulty attracting it. These zones consist (8,764) consist of low-income census tracts nominated by each of the 50 states and U.S. territories and comprise economically distressed areas where new investments may be eligible for preferred tax treatment and the resulting

## Opportunity Zones in Cibola County, New Mexico



Figure 3.5.4: Cibola County Opportunity Zone Map. Source: NWNMCOG 2022

investments, according to the U.S. Treasury. The Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments developed Opportunity Zone brochures for each county, including highlighting the two (2) opportunity zones in Cibola County.

## Existing Conditions

**E < P – Economy growing faster than Population** - Economic Development is now a highly data-driven business. There are three critical dashboards that can be rolled up and evaluated to get a snapshot of economic health in a community and see trends that reveal, which direction a community is headed.

**Job & Wage Diversification**  
**Base vs Non-Base Jobs**  
**E > P | Economy > Population**  
**P > D | Producers > Dependents**

Job and Wage Diversification - Cibola County has about 7,407 jobs available to our 9,120 civilian workforce or about 8 jobs for every 10 workers. This ratio is actually very high compared to neighbors, which is positive from a taxpayer perspective but could make it difficult for businesses to fill jobs, especially skilled positions. The three industry clusters that provide the top wage producing jobs are Utilities (\$84,915 annual average wage), Construction (\$62,453 annual average wage) and Transportation & Warehousing (\$56,279 annual average wage). While only providing 9% of the total jobs, provide close to 14% of the purchasing power in the County as well as account for a high percentage of tax base and in region purchases and supply chain. Cibola County must focus on talent and worker attraction, which underscores the need for housing. Secondly, there needs to be a huge emphasis on getting better paying jobs as the median and per capita incomes are very low.

Government-based jobs are typically stable base jobs as they bring outside dollars into the economy and represent 34% of the County gross domestic product. A focus on growing private sector base jobs to diversify the portfolio of jobs is critical as drastic cuts to government spending will have disproportionate negative impact on the economy.

Base vs Non-Base Jobs - Base jobs very simply are jobs that bring outside dollars in to a community while non-base circulate dollars in a community. For every new base jobs there are several non-base jobs that are created and supported by those outside dollars. A healthy economy needs a strong number of base jobs that are stable and diverse. About 60% of the jobs in Cibola County are base and about 40% are non-base.

Cibola County Base vs Non-Base Jobs

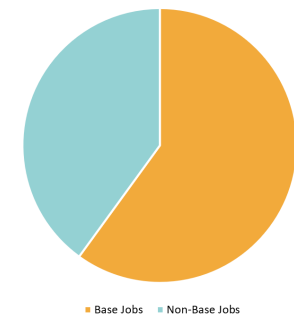


Figure 3.5.5: 2019 Base vs Non-Base Jobs Source: U.S. Census Bureau, NWNMCOG 2022

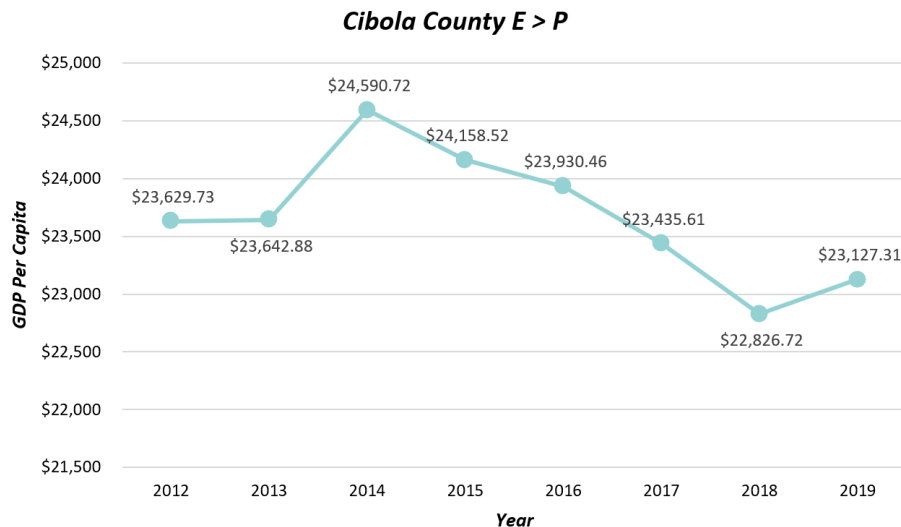




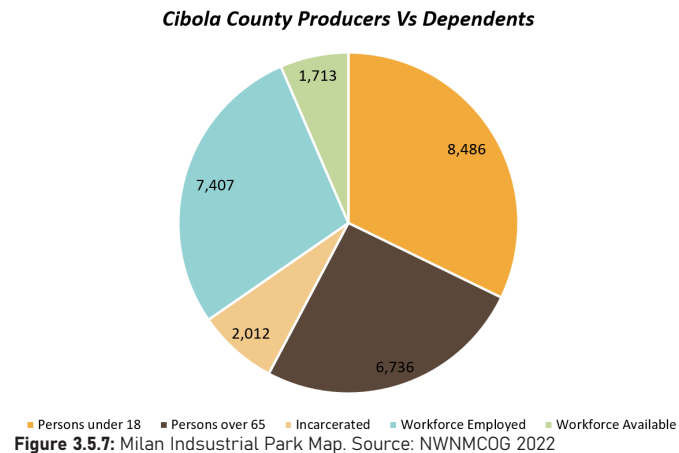
**Economy > Population** - The first indicator and question to measure is whether than economy is greater and growing faster than the population or is the Economy > People? (E > P)

This is the basic calculation for gross domestic product (GDP) per Capita, which indicates:

- GDP per capita is a County's economic output divided by its population.
- It's a good representation of the standard of living.
- It also describes how much citizens benefit from their County's economy



**Figure 3.5.6:** 2019 Economy > Population Chart. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, NWNMCOG 2022



**Figure 3.5.7:** Milan Industrial Park Map. Source: NWNMCOG 2022

**Producers > Dependents** - The second indicator and question is whether your economy has more producers versus dependents meaning those that produce the tax base versus those who depend on the tax base. Cibola County has about a split of about 30% producers to 70% dependents.

Based on these key dashboards and charts shown below, the economic development strategies that are needed should look to produce the following targets:

- Workforce Growth target should be set at getting from 9,000 to 15,000 by 2040, to increase workforce availability for key employment sectors;
- Housing is key to recruiting people, so for 15,000 new workers you would need about 5,000 more units, which is about 250 per year by 2040. This will take a very aggressive and an all housing approach (all levels and types), but market rate and worker housing should be prioritized.
- Target reaching 12,000 jobs by 2040, which is 250 net jobs a year for 18 years;
- Target creation of 100 private base jobs a year. This should be coupled with a 2:1 ratio for every government job added there should be at least two net private sector jobs gained.
- Develop targets and integrated workforce strategies for competitive clusters with growth and sustaining potential.
- Heightened Business Retention & Expansion (BRE) program on top 10 industry clusters in wages and tax base on top three industry clusters of Utilities, Construction, and Transportation & Warehousing.

### Economic Development Partners

Cibola County is working with local and tribal economic development organizations to advocate for additional economic development tools, such as expansion of the Local Economic Development Act (LEDA), a public-private partnership mechanism, and other innovative programs for speculative building development.

Cibola County and its partners are focused on repurposing the Escalante Generation Station in Prewitt, NM. Cibola County has joined the McKinley County Electric Generating Facility Economic District as an official member and will provide input and recommendations on opportunities for redevelopment or reuse. Cibola County is working with the District and the Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments to finalize the Prewitt-Milan Transportation Master Plan (PMTMP) master plan.

A joint Cibola County – City of Grants Drainage Master Plan and the significant and focused investment it has attracted has created new opportunities for business, as well as the Superfund and Brownfields investments that assist in moving useable properties back into productive use.

Large infrastructure improvements in Cibola County such as upgrading regional wastewater systems and upgrades to Interstate 40 and intra-City Road improvements like 1st/2nd/Roosevelt provide both short-term employment in construction jobs and long-term capacity for economic development and sustained population growth.



- Development
- Grants MainStreet
- Laguna Development Corporation

The following are existing and potential economic development partners:

#### Public Entities

- City of Grants
- Village of Milan
- Pueblo of Acoma
- Pueblo of Laguna
- Navajo Nation
- NM State University

#### Economic Development Organizations

- Cibola Communities Economic Development Foundation
- Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments
- Grants-Cibola Chamber of Commerce
- Albuquerque Economic

#### State Agencies

- NM Economic Development Department
- NM Department of Transportation
- NM Department of Workforce Solutions
- NM Tourism Department
- NM Outdoor Recreation Division
- NM MainStreet

#### Federal Agencies

- US Economic Development Administration
- US Department of Agriculture - Rural Development

<b>Cibola County Socio-Economic Characteristics</b>		
<b>People &amp; Income Overview (By Place of Residence)</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Rank in State</b>
Population (2020)	26,354	<a href="#">17</a>
Growth (%) since 2010 Census	-3.2%	<a href="#">16</a>
Households (2019)	8,708	<a href="#">18</a>
Labor Force (persons) (2020)	9,120	<a href="#">19</a>
Unemployment Rate (2020)	9.2	<a href="#">7</a>
Per Capita Personal Income (2020)	\$32,755	<a href="#">33</a>
Median Household Income (2019)	\$40,436	<a href="#">19</a>
Poverty Rate (2019)	25.5	<a href="#">4</a>
High School Diploma or More - % of adults 25+ (2019)	83.0%	<a href="#">21</a>
Bachelor's Degree or More - % of adults 25+ (2019)	14.2%	<a href="#">26</a>
<b>Industry Overview, 2020 (By Place of Work)</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Rank in State</b>
Covered Employment	7,409	<a href="#">18</a>
Avg. Wage per Job	\$41,459	<a href="#">13</a>

**Table 3.5.1:** Socio-Economic Characteristics. Source: NWNMCOG 2022

<b>Cibola County Top Employers</b>		
<b>Company Name</b>	<b>Industry Type</b>	<b>Employers (#)</b>
Laguna Development (Route 66 and Dancing Eagle)	Casinos, Management	1,075
Acoma (Sky City) Pueblo Casino	Gaming	687
Grants-Cibola Public School District	Education	667
Silver Lining Services	Health	400
Cibola county Correctional Center `	Corrections	230
NM Department of Transportation	Government	212
Wal-Mart	Retail	200
Western New Mexico Corrections Facility	Corrections	192
Cibola General Hospital	Health	175
Cibola County	Government	145
New Mexico Women's Correctional Facility	Corrections	145
City of Grants	Government	135
C & E Concrete	Construction	110
Continental Divide Electric Co-op	Utilities	67
New Mexico State University – Grants	Education	49
Stewart Brothers Drilling Company	Utilities	40

**Table 3.5.2:** Top Employers. Source: Cibola Communities EDF and NM Partnership

<b>Cibola County Labor Force Participation Rate</b>			
<b>Labor Force Annual Averages in 2020</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Rank in State</b>	<b>New Mexico</b>
Total Labor Force	9,120	<a href="#">19</a>	943,287
5-Year % Change	-2.30%	<a href="#">17</a>	0.00%
10-Year % Change	-1.40%	<a href="#">11</a>	1.60%
Employed	8,278	<a href="#">19</a>	863,874
5-Year % Change	-3.50%	<a href="#">19</a>	-1.40%
10-Year % Change	-1.40%	<a href="#">12</a>	0.80%

**Table 3.5.3:** Labor Force Participation Rate. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

<b>Cibola County Employment Vs. Unemployment</b>			
<b>Employment Averages in 2020</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Rank in State</b>	<b>New Mexico</b>
Unemployed	842	<a href="#">18</a>	79,413
5-Year % Change	11.40%	<a href="#">14</a>	27.90%
10-Year % Change	-0.90%	<a href="#">16</a>	9.90%
Unemployment Rate	9.2	<a href="#">7</a>	8.4
5-Year % Change	13.60%	<a href="#">14</a>	27.30%
10-Year % Change	0.00%	<a href="#">17</a>	7.70%

**Table 3.5.4:** Employment Vs. Unemployment. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics



<b>Cibola County Educational Attainment</b>				
<b>Educational Attainment in 2019</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent of Population 25+</b>	<b>Rank in State</b>	<b>U.S. % of Population 25+</b>
Total Population 25 and Older	18,134	100%	N/A	100%
Less than 9th Grade	901	5.00%	<a href="#">19</a>	5.10%
9th to 12th, No Diploma	2,177	12.00%	<a href="#">7</a>	6.90%
High School Graduate (includes equiv.)	5,839	32.20%	<a href="#">14</a>	27.00%
Some College, No Degree	4,773	26.30%	<a href="#">10</a>	20.40%
Associate Degree	1,870	10.30%	<a href="#">3</a>	8.50%
Bachelor's Degree	1,577	8.70%	<a href="#">25</a>	19.80%
Graduate, Professional or Doctorate Degree	997	5.50%	<a href="#">25</a>	12.40%

**Table 3.5.5:** Educational Attainment. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

<b>Cibola County Median Household Income</b>			
<b>Median Income</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Rank in State</b>	<b>Percent of U.S.</b>
Median Household Income in 2019	\$40,436	<a href="#">19</a>	61.50%
Median Household Income in 2000	\$27,396	<a href="#">19</a>	65.20%
Percent Change 2000 to 2019	47.60%	<a href="#">18</a>	-

**Table 3.5.6:** Median Household Income. Source: U.S. Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

<b>Cibola County Per Capita Income</b>			
<b>Per Capita Personal Income (PCPI)</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Rank in State</b>	<b>Percent of U.S.</b>
2020	\$32,755	<a href="#">33</a>	55.00%
2010	\$23,042	<a href="#">33</a>	56.60%
2000	\$15,276	<a href="#">32</a>	49.80%
1990	\$9,398	<a href="#">32</a>	47.90%
10-Year % Change	42.20%	<a href="#">1</a>	-
20-Year % Change	114.40%	<a href="#">1</a>	-
30-Year % Change	248.50%	<a href="#">5</a>	-

**Table 3.5.7:** Per Capita Income. Source: U.S. Bureau Economic Analysis

<b>Cibola County Poverty Rate</b>		
<b>Poverty Estimates</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Rank in State</b>
Poverty Rate in 2019	25.5	<a href="#">4</a>
In 2000	22.1	<a href="#">13</a>
Poverty Rate for Children under 18 in 2019	32.5	<a href="#">7</a>
In 2000	30.7	<a href="#">12</a>

**Table 3.5.8:** Poverty Rate. Source: U.S. Bureau Economic Analysis

<b>Cibola County Industry Sector Employment and Wage</b>					
<b>2020</b>	<b>Firms</b>	<b>Jobs</b>	<b>Pct. Dist.</b>	<b>Average Wage Per Job</b>	<b>Rank in State</b>
Total	468	7,409	100.00%	\$41,459	<a href="#">13</a>
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	4	0	0.00%	\$0	<a href="#">19</a>
Mining	3	0	0.00%	\$0	<a href="#">16</a>
Utilities	5	71	1.00%	\$84,915	<a href="#">6</a>
Construction	41	556	7.50%	\$62,453	<a href="#">3</a>
Manufacturing	9	70	0.90%	\$29,963	<a href="#">22</a>
Wholesale Trade	14	124	1.70%	\$49,221	<a href="#">12</a>
Retail Trade	56	752	10.10%	\$29,001	<a href="#">15</a>
Transportation & Warehousing	24	69	0.90%	\$56,279	<a href="#">8</a>
Information	5	10	0.10%	\$38,741	<a href="#">22</a>
Finance and Insurance	20	90	1.20%	\$31,832	<a href="#">26</a>
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	9	21	0.30%	\$34,903	<a href="#">14</a>
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	16	0	0.00%	\$0	<a href="#">24</a>
Management of Companies and Enterprises	2	0	0.00%	\$0	<a href="#">18</a>
Admin. & Support & Waste Mgt. & Rem. Services	17	434	5.90%	\$49,627	<a href="#">4</a>
Educational Services	16	128	1.70%	\$46,498	<a href="#">9</a>
Health Care and Social Services	96	1,621	21.90%	\$37,853	<a href="#">24</a>
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	11	67	0.90%	\$40,328	<a href="#">6</a>
Accommodation and Food Services	47	0	0.00%	N/A	<a href="#">1</a>
Other Services (Except Public Administration)	18	0	0.00%	N/A	<a href="#">1</a>
Public Administration	56	1,422	19.20%	\$44,158	<a href="#">25</a>

**Table 3.5.9:** Industry Sector Employment and Wage. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)



## Cibola County Target Industry Analysis

As part of the Comprehensive Plan and Strategic Planning work, the Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments provided an in-depth analysis of target industries that Cibola County could focus and align its efforts, including attraction efforts, lead generation firm (GSLI) targets, and incentives and infrastructure investments. The Targeted Industry Analysis has been submitted as a stand-alone document and here is a quick snapshot. Recommendations are market-based, so the County Commission will need to provide a public benefit and compatibility screen to them to include things like environmental impact, average wages, energy use, and water use.

The purpose of a Target Industry Analysis is to identify 'best-fit' industries to target to business recruitment and attraction. Best-fit industries align with existing community capacity as it relates to infrastructure, workforce, and existing industries. Targeting of best-fit industries is intended to lower upfront development costs thereby presenting the community with a higher probability of success.

A Target Industry Analysis is part of an overall economic development strategy, occurring early in the strategy development process providing critical input and data for stakeholders to make critical decisions.

Industry delineation based on location quotient analysis for current make up of Cibola County economy, based on 2020 data.

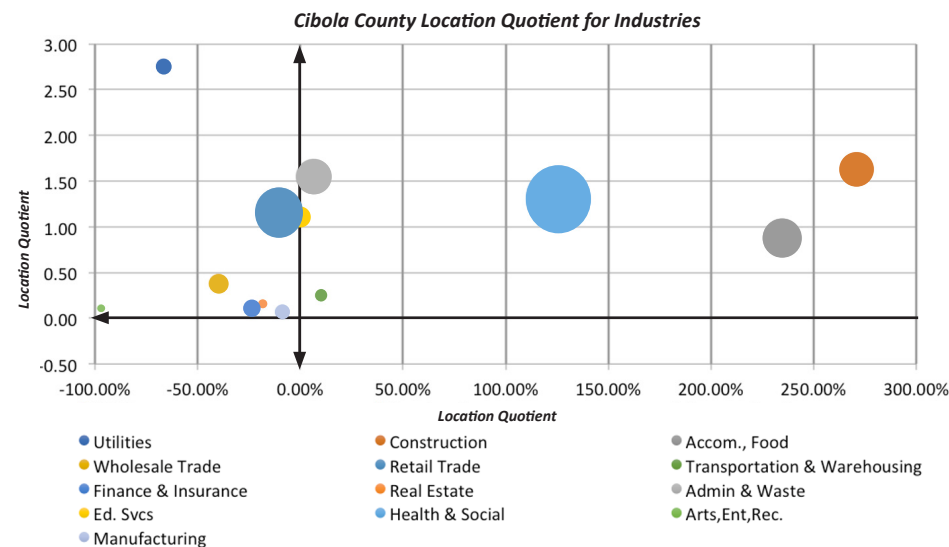


Figure 3.5.8: Location Quotient For Cibola County Industries. Source: NWNMCOG 2022

Cibola County Current Industry Strength and Maturity			
Strong and Declining		Strong and Growing	
NAICS Code	Industry Name	NAICS Code	Industry Name
22	Utilities	23	Construction
44 - 45	Retail Trade	56	Administrative & Waste Services
		61	Educational Services
		62	Health Care & Social Assistance
Weak and Declining		Weak and Growing	
NAICS Code	Industry Name	NAICS Code	Industry Name
31 - 33	Manufacturing	48 - 49	Transportation & Warehousing
42	Wholesale Trade	72	Accommodation & Food Service
52	Finance & Insurance		
52	Real Estate		
71	Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation		

Table 3.5.10: Current Industry Strength and Maturity. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, NWNMCOG 2022

Cibola County Targeted Industries	
NAICS Code	Targeted Industries:
31-33	Manufacturing
42	Wholesale Trade
48-49	Transportation & Warehousing
51	Information
54	Professional, Scientific and Technical Services
71	Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation
72	Accommodations & Food Service

Table 3.5.11: Targeted Industries. Source: NEEDS SOURCE NWNMCOG 2022

The way that this analysis is best used in concert with economic development partners is to align the following:

1. **Recruitment & Attraction:** This provides meaningful targets and screens to maximize efforts rather than just chasing everything that comes in, such as:
  - a. Align these targets with the efforts of GSLI for lead generation and specific target marketing,
  - b. Partner with NM Partnership on the attributes and needs of these industries to hone in on their specific needs, marketing approach, and actual business growth chatter.
  - c. Respond to NM Partnership Potential Recruitment Opportunities (PROs) that fit with these best-fit industries coupled with community presence.
  - d. Align trade show attendance and conferences as well as trade and professional associations to develop strategic networks and leads in these industries using the NMEDD LEADS grant with Cibola Communities Economic Development Foundation.
2. **Workforce:** Align education, workforce, and college career programs to these economic targets to create a competitive advantage and career pathways.
3. **Incentives & Infrastructure:** Align Local Economic Development Act (LEDA) and incentives as part of the intake application to have a clear toolbox available for these target industries based on what their industry's need. The County can make infrastructure investments that align with the infrastructure needs of these businesses, e.g. broadband.





## Key Take-Aways

Following are key economic development Take-Aways identified during Cibola County comprehensive planning process:

### Broadband

- Take-Away. One of the key obstacles that cut across all the elements in this Comprehensive Plan relates to accessibility, availability, affordability, and redundancy of quality broadband.
- » Translation into Strategy. Engage in activities that increase broadband availability in Cibola County including both the urban and rural communities.

### Inter-governmental Cooperation

- Take-Away. Development within Cibola County's multi-jurisdictional composition results in the inclusion of multiple partners.
- » Translation into Strategy. Utilize economic development activities as a vehicle for collaboration between multiple governments, agencies, and other land management groups.
- Take-Away. There has been minimal collaboration on economic development activities within the County.
- » Translation into Strategy. Cibola County can and should act to bring various economic development partners to a common table to plan and implement strategies, programs, and projects.
- Take-Away. Cibola County is on the western edge of the Albuquerque regional market and has not capitalized on this advantage and has not established regional partners.
- » Translation into Strategy. Create strategic partnerships especially with Albuquerque Metro Region as Cibola County is tied more directly to that economic market.

### Workforce

- Take-Away. The International Economic Development Council (IEDC) states that workforce development is quickly outpacing other factors in its importance to compete globally for jobs and businesses.
- » Translation into Strategy. Cibola County and its economic development partners need to develop programs to develop a skilled and qualified workforce to recruit industry.

- Take-Away. Communities that are growing in the Southwest are changing the paradigm, whereby talented workers are moving to places they want to live (e.g., Phoenix and Denver) and companies are moving operations to harness this talent.
- » Translation into Strategy. Cibola County other local governments should improve quality of life amenities and provide a comprehensive set of services (e.g., quality schools, hospitals, higher ed institutions, parks, retail options, dining options, entertainment options, and a clean community) to recruit talented workforce.
- Take-Away. There are many high-paying jobs within the county and region that remain unfilled due to the gap in acquired skills.
- » Translation into Strategy. Develop and implement an education and training career pathway system that produces trained workforce with life skills that results in a workforce ready and available to work.

### Limited Job Opportunities

- Take-Away. Job growth did not keep pace with population growth, wages are low and there is high unemployment.
- » Translation into Strategy. Cibola County and its economic development partners should focus on the recruitment of industry to provide jobs and reduce unemployment.
- Take-Away. Youths leave the community due to lack of job opportunities. Many high school graduates leave the area for the military, or to relocate to Albuquerque or Phoenix.
- » Translation into Strategy. Improve quality of life amenities and increase job opportunities pipelined through local higher education institutions.
- Take-Away. Rural areas in Cibola County outside Grants/Milan appear to be on the decline because employment opportunities are not increasing and may be decreasing.
- » Translation into Strategy. Recruit industry to increase employment opportunities for all Cibola residents.

### Housing Shortage

- Take-Away. Business development is stifled from the lack of available housing for new entrepreneurs and employees.
- » Translation into Strategy. Conduct a housing market analysis to determine the level of housing needs within Cibola County including the type and price level of housing needed.



- Take-Away: The current housing market in Cibola County is a relatively small sector of the economy, considering the high housing demand.
- » Translation into Strategy: Encourage the development of all types of housing to meet housing needs while generating more wealth in the community.
- Take-Away: Housing is reported to be expensive, the result of demand being greater than supply.
- » Translation into Strategy: Develop an affordable housing plan to encourage affordable housing development in Cibola County and especially the urban core.

### Business Climate

- Take-Away: Negative attitudes are prevalent in the business community and the public especially towards change and growth in the community.
- » Translation into Strategy: Educate residents on the changing economy and the need to adjust to ensure continued economic vitality.
- Take-Away: Local sales “leak” to Albuquerque and Gallup.
- » Translation into Strategy: Review Economic leakage and determine best course of action to reduce and promote buy local and/or develop businesses that fill the need.

### Land Requirements

- Take-Away: Some lands designated for industrial development have physical constraints, lack infrastructure, environmental concerns and have “structural” land issues as described above.
- » Translation into Strategy: Work to remedy industrial site challenges and improve on-site infrastructure to recruit economic base industry.
- Take-Away: There has been little focus on prioritizing and collaboratively promoting certain sites for development and industry recruitment.
- » Translation into Strategy: Collaborative prioritization of resources and focus to create assets on lands that are positioned for development and in demand by the private sector (e.g., Milan Industrial Park).

### Tax Base

- Take-Away: Cibola County lacks a diverse economy which has resulted in economic decline during closures.
- » Translation into Strategy: Cibola County needs to protect, sustain, and diversify its current tax base, including embracing business, retention, and expansion (BR&E)

strategies and building clusters like in Milan. More economic development in the off-reservation unincorporated County area is also desired.

### Microenterprise and Remote Work

- Take-Away: There are limited support services including access to capital for microenterprises which could help reinvigorate the local economy especially within downtowns or smaller commercial corridors.
- » Translation into Strategy: Develop and/or increase support services for microenterprises. Review best practices, partner with regional organizations such as the Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments Revolving Loan Fund, NMSU, Small Business Development Center, etc.

### Economic Development within Tribal communities

- Take-Away: Since Pueblo communities are a major part of Cibola County as well as Ramah Navajo, there is a desire to assist in their economic development when possible.
- » Translation into Strategy: Engage in cross-jurisdictional economic development activities such as Business Recruitment and Expansion, workforce development programs and regional infrastructure development such as broadband, transportation networks, airports, water system, etc.

### Conservation Economy

- Take-Away: Cibola County's past with environmental exploitation has resulted in significant environmental issues.
- » Translation into Strategy: Cibola County could be the center of creating a conservation and restoration workforce and business opportunities to deal with site clean-ups, land restoration, conservation, etc.





Economic Development Goal

**Cibola County strives to promote and support the expansion of economic opportunity; to stabilize, expand, and diversify in the County tax base; and to strengthen economic resiliency of County citizens and families.**

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## Economic Development Goals and Strategies

The goals, policies and strategies set forth in this section coincide closely with the desired goals of the residents of Cibola County who provided input into the Comprehensive Plan. The Economic Development Element includes a broad spectrum of methods for enhancing Cibola County's economy, including strategies for increasing economic growth and diversification through enhanced private investment, focused business retention, expanded workforce training, and improved local infrastructure and business climate.

Economic Development is tied closely to other Plan Elements including Tourism, Fiscal Impact, Infrastructure, Transportation, and Intergovernmental Relations. Constraints and impediments to economic development in Cibola County can be reduced significantly by cooperative efforts that overcome inter-jurisdictional and inter-agency fragmentation, including overcoming the County's "checkerboard" land ownership pattern.

### ED-1: Local Economic Development Plan

**Maintain, periodically update, and utilize a local Economic Development Plan in conformance with the provisions of the Local Economic Development Act (LEDA)**

- **ED-1a:** Include a menu of incentives and other benefits and investments that the County Commission may authorize on a case-by-case basis for economic development activities and projects.
- **ED-1b:** Link incentives to companies that provide quality jobs, hire local, and support the workforce training pipeline.

### ED-2: Economic Development Fund

**Establish a local Economic Development Fund, to which allocations may be made periodically at the discretion of the County Commission in accordance with available budget, for which a protocol shall be in place to guide utilization of the Fund, and which may be tapped for County contributions to and/or investments in specific economic activities and projects.**

- **ED-2a:** Utilize this fund to implement a speculative (spec) building program to better position the County for potential recruitment opportunities.
- **ED-2b:** Utilize this fund to build out shovel-ready sites and industrial parks.

### ED-3: Inter-Agency Cooperation

**Participate with other local public and private entities in economic development activities and projects as appropriate to the interests of the citizens of Cibola County and promote economic development in the County through various programs that are integrated and set in a regional, intergovernmental context.**

- **ED-3a:** Partnership with the Cibola Communities Economic Development Foundation (CCEDF), which offers a focus on economic-base business and

industrial attraction in the region, including management of a professional economic development website and an economic development professional that is certified by the International Economic Development Council (IEDC).

- **ED-3b:** Coordination with and participation in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) plans as managed respectively by Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments, the Pueblo of Acoma (in process), and the Navajo Nation.
- **ED-3c:** Working with Ramah Navajo, Land Grants, Pueblo of Acoma and the Laguna Pueblo to jointly promote economic development consistent with the goals and policies of this plan.
- **ED-3d:** Coordination with and participation in the Regional Authority (Electric Generating Facility Economic District) on developing and transitioning the Prewitt area for economic opportunities.
- **ED-3e:** Coordination with and participation in the Albuquerque Economic Development and other entities that focused on promoting and growing the Greater Albuquerque area, which might provide opportunities for Cibola County in economic opportunities.

### ED-4: Local Priorities

**Select economic development priorities that are most appropriate in Cibola County.**

- **ED-4a:** Selection, prioritization and promotion of projects and businesses in conformance with criteria in the regional CEDS and Target Industry Analysis, such as target industries appropriate to the County and potential for expansion, e.g.:
  - » I-40 Accommodation & Food Services
  - » Distributions / fulfillment centers
  - » Manufacturing using value-added agriculture

### ED-5: Workforce Development

**Stress the need for true workforce development in Cibola County to meet the economic development needs of industry both existing and prospecting.**

- **ED-5a:** Advocate for the expansion of the Industrial Workforce Program or other programs into Cibola County to train workers for high-demand and local jobs.
- **ED-5b:** Utilize State and Federal trends, including the Energy Transition Act and Assistance to Coal Communities to transition and re-train skilled but displaced workers.

### ED-6: Leadership

**Incorporate economic development focus into leadership activities and perspectives within Cibola County.**

- **ED-6a:** Re-engage quarterly Manager's meetings, facilitated by the NWNMCOG, and look to expand into a monthly session with all-area Executive Directors to





encourage members to improve the connection between education, workforce development, and economic targets.

- **ED-6b:** Partner to develop of Leadership Cibola program modeled after other successful programs.

## ED-7: Housing Development

**Encourage housing development as a means of both job creation and meeting critical local needs.**

- **ED-7a:** Participation in a public/private effort to promote an integrated, seamless housing industry serving Cibola County residents.
- **ED-7b:** Encouragement of high-quality, affordable and environmentally sensitive “green architecture”.
- **ED-7c:** Expansion of the modular home industry in Cibola County.
- **ED-7d:** Collaboration with the City of Grants and the Village of Milan to evaluate whether incentives are needed for developers to build housing in their communities.

## ED-8: Land For Development

**Promote land that is available, planned, and desired for new industrial development, especially focused and targeted in the IRS-designated opportunity zones.**

- **ED-8a:** In order to increase the County tax base, promote development on private fee land in the City of Grants and Village of Milan and on those lands in unincorporated Cibola County that are subject to County taxation.
- **ED-8b:** Prioritize economic development in metro areas, where full access to utilities and transportation facilities exist, before encouraging development on undisturbed lands in unincorporated rural areas of the County.
- **ED-8c:** Support development that is consistent with target industries with high returns of tax generation, job creation, high wages, limited environment impacts, and community context.
- **ED-8d:** Support economic development initiatives in tribal communities in Cibola County.

## ED-9: Energy Development

**Promote environmentally sound energy development, including leveraging new legislation to provide off-ramps for historic power generation, sustain current businesses, and gear-up for future opportunities.**

- **ED-9a:** Promotion of wind, solar, geothermal, and other renewable energy development.
- **ED-9b:** Support for resource development if mining, drilling operations and reclamation meet state and federal environmental standards.
- **ED-9c:** Advocacy for local employment and an employment and training pathway for large environmental cleanup projects, whether related to land mines and mills, Superfund and Brownfield sites.

## ED-10: Agricultural Preservation and Development

**Promote the restoration, continuation, and further development of local agricultural traditions.**

- **ED-10a:** Promotion of livestock ranching and grazing as a traditional economic activity in most areas of the County, recognizing the modern need for supplemental economic activities for families engaged in ranching.
- **ED-10b:** Support for forest management of national forest lands where tree harvesting is limited to minimize environmental damage, to adequately thin forest growth and to leave watersheds undamaged, including projects like Bluewater and Zuni Mountains Forest Landscape Restoration Projects and trail building.
- **ED-10c:** Support for and cooperation with agricultural extension activities that appropriate in Cibola County and that conserve the land.

## ED-11: Microenterprise Support

**Encourage small entrepreneurs to develop new economic activities.**

- **ED-11a:** Adoption and implementation of the Ernesto Sirolli model of Enterprise Facilitation and/or Wealthworks model of Building Value Chains to develop markets and to motivate and coordinate local producers and local sellers.
- **ED-11b:** Promotion of microlending programs, particularly targeting groups who have traditionally been discouraged from engaging in commercial ventures.
- **ED-11c:** Financial literacy training for County residents, including education on debt, credit and accounting to discourage reliance on payday loans and reduce the high rate of individual indebtedness and bad credit.

## ED-12: Family Economic Security and Asset Building

**Support programs managed locally by public and private entities that focus on economic well-being and asset development in County households, such as special-purpose savings accounts, financial literacy and asset protection from predatory lending practices.**

## ED-13: Leveraging

**Leverage regional, state, and federal resources that can benefit the County's economic development strategy.**

- **ED-13a:** a. Working with the State Legislature, the Governor and the Economic Development Department to increase economic development resources and support to communities in Cibola County.



# Water

Water is the most important and crucial resource essential for the health and wellbeing of Cibola County communities. Regardless of this fact, access to reliable, safe drinking water has been one of the biggest challenges, especially for the rural communities that may be living off-grid or away from the nearest water and wastewater infrastructure.

## Existing Conditions

### Accessibility

Accessibility is defined as the proportion of the population with reliable improved drinking water supply through piped waterlines for residential dwellings, agriculture, livestock, and landscaping, including public tap, standpipe, bore/spring/dug well, and rainwater collection. Access to water and sanitation is a basic human right but one of the very fundamental challenges of accessibility is funding resources to develop and/or improve local water and wastewater infrastructure.

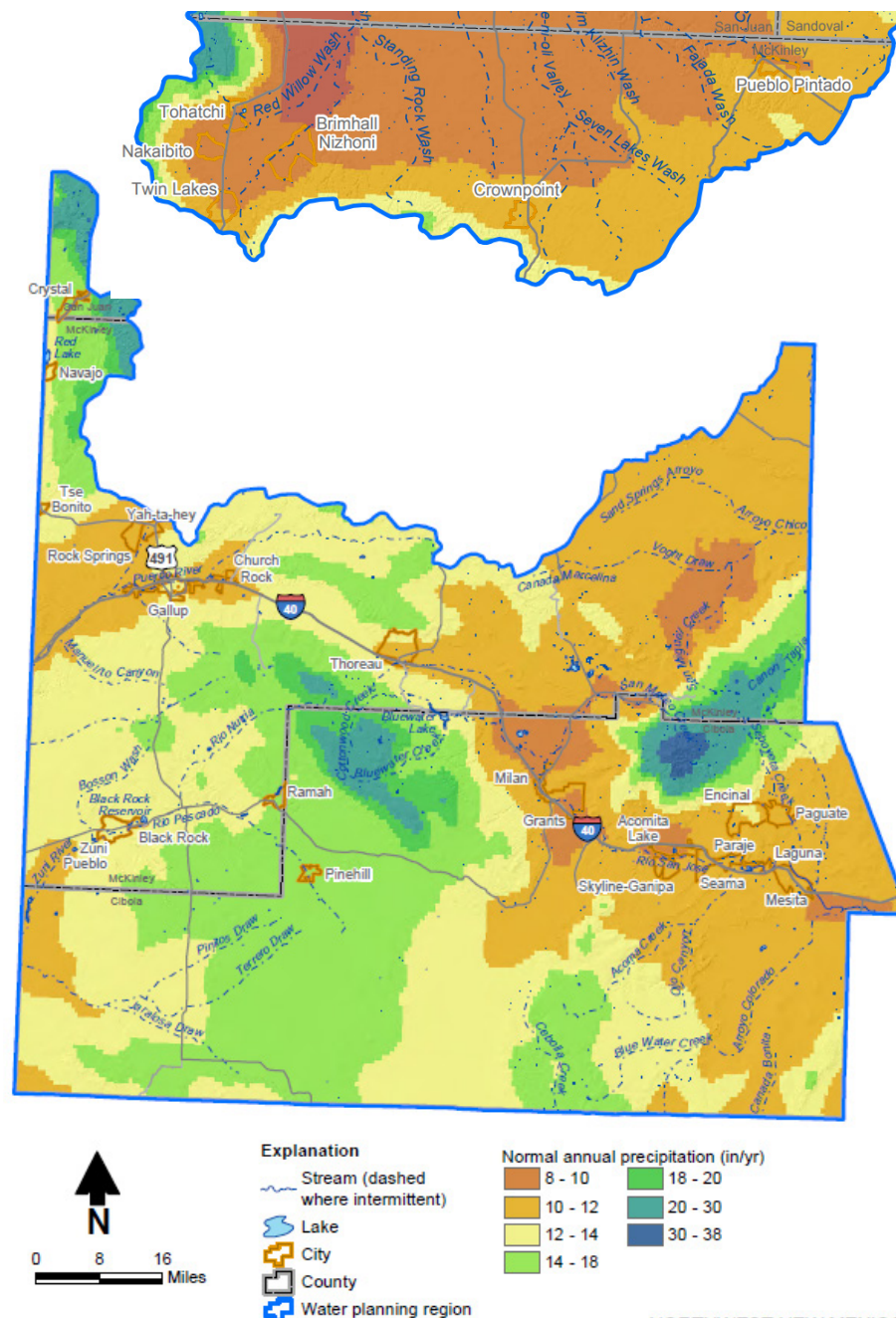
The SARS-COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 taught the world a very crucial lesson in hygiene and cleaning, which is not possible without access to safe drinking water. The rural communities have been the most impacted populations in this state. Another reason why water is important.

### Water Scarcity

Within the last decade, climatic conditions have dramatically changed causing a drop or decrease in local and regional water supply, including underground water reserves, within the county and area water basin regions and sub-regions.

Drought conditions are monitored on a weekly basis by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), through its National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) program. The NOAA is a regulatory agency within the U.S. Department of Commerce that forecasts weather, monitors oceanic and atmospheric conditions, charts the seas, conducts deep sea exploration, and manages fishing and protection of marine mammals and endangered species. This agency also collaborates with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's National Drought Mitigation Center (NDMC). This information and data are readily available online, for County administration and essential departments to be aware of. The website has recently been updated to include getting automated alerts when local drought conditions change.

The drought indicator blend is a virtual data analysis tool that is able to compute and assess short-term and long-term drought indicators, based on the methodology developed at the NOAA Climate Prediction Center (CPC) that incorporate standard indices as weighing metrics and percentiles, including the Palmer Drought Severity



**Figure 3.6.1:** Average Annual Precipitation (1980 to 2010). Source: Northwest New Mexico Regional Water Plan, 2017



Index (PDSI), Soil Moisture, and Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI).

The blends are created using the Climate Engine tool and apply the CPC weighting ratios to the high-resolution gridMET, gridded research dataset. The data is updated daily, with a delay of 2 to 3 days to allow for data collection and quality control. A blend of different drought indices for short- and long-term time scales can be useful to understand short- and long-term drought for a region.

### Source Water

Source water refers to sources of water found on the Earth's surface (surface water) or water found within the Earth's crust (groundwater) that provide water to public drinking water supplies and private wells. Protecting source water can reduce risks by preventing exposures to contaminated water. Source water protection includes a variety of actions and activities aimed at safeguarding, maintaining, or improving the quality and/or quantity of sources of drinking water and their contributing areas. Many communities have formed organizations or groups that plan and implement source water protection, including special districts like soil and water conservation districts and small water systems, as mentioned in the regional water planning section.

**Surface Water** - Surface water is any body of water above ground, including streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands, reservoirs, and creeks. The ocean, despite being saltwater, is also considered surface water. While surface water can seep underground to become groundwater, groundwater can resurface on land to replenish surface water. Surface water may also be referred to as blue water. In common usage, it is usually used specifically for terrestrial waterbodies, the vast majority of which is produced by precipitation and runoff from nearby higher areas.

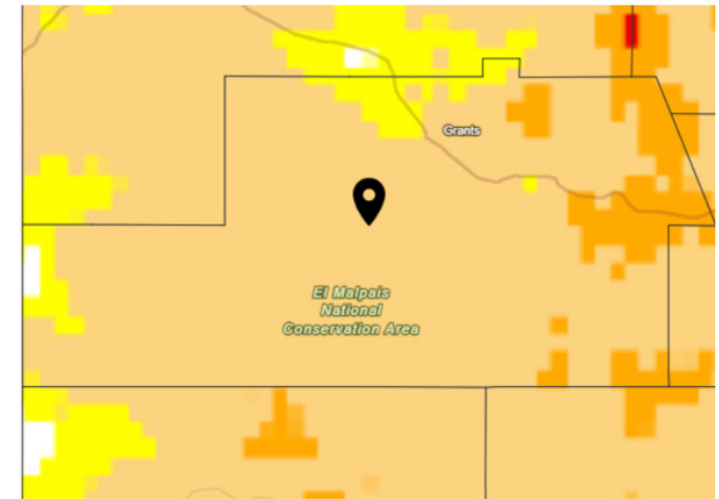
Cibola County is almost centered on the continental divide which divides the southwestern regional basin watersheds that ultimately flow to the Pacific Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean, as follows:

To the east flows the San Juan Chama Diversion that is fed by area watersheds, including the Azotea and Oso concrete tunnel systems that divert water from the Rio Blanco, Navajo and Little Navajo Rivers and back west across the divide towards the Colorado/New Mexico state line. This diversion also flows into area reservoirs to deliver water to Santa Fe and Albuquerque.

To the west flows the Colorado River that feeds into multiple manmade reservoirs that convey water to larger urban centers like Phoenix (Arizona) and Las Vegas (Nevada). These reservoirs have stored water during other drought years and most of the water supply have been discharged and are quite depleted.

Municipalities and rural communities of Cibola County are not favorably located to

### Short-Term Drought Indicator Blend: Short Term



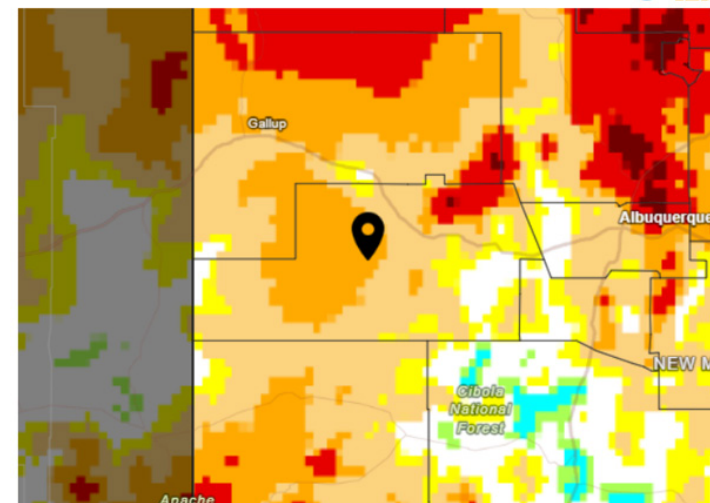
#### U.S. Drought Monitor



Source(s): UC Merced, Climate Engine  
Last Updated - 12/06/21

**Drought.gov**

### Long-Term Drought Indicator Blend: Long Term



#### U.S. Drought Monitor



Source(s): UC Merced, Climate Engine  
Last Updated - 12/06/21

**Drought.gov**

**Figure 3.6.2:** Long and Short-term Drought Indicator Map. Source: [www.drought.gov](http://www.drought.gov)





receive water allocations from any large reservoir storages thus must mostly rely on groundwater supplies.

**Water Bodies** - The largest water body in Cibola County is Bluewater Lake which resides near the Cibola/McKinley County line. The lake is created by Bluewater Dam which was built in 1925 by the Bluewater-Toltec Irrigation District. It is an 80-foot-high concrete arch dam that is capable of containing 38,500 acre-feet of water for storage at the spillway crest. The water is primarily used for irrigation and recreational purposes and is subject to the minimum pool agreement, where the State Game Commission owns the water below the 7,365-foot elevation for conservation, and the Bluewater-Toltec Irrigation District owns the water above this elevation. Bluewater Lake is not officially considered a source of water for Cibola County as it is unreliable due to insufficient supply and quality and its location is well outside any meaningful development of regional water distribution system or such.

During times of severe drought, it is possible to experience the less frequent 100-year rainstorm. Severe storms have been occurring more frequently since 2013 in which Bluewater Village has completely flooded, once breaching local levees to flood parts of Interstate-40 freeway.

**Groundwater** - Groundwater sources are beneath the Earth's surface, within the crust, including underground springs and wells, that can be better understood by examining the natural process involved with climatic activities such as wind, rain and snow.

For Cibola County, groundwater is the primary water source for local municipalities, entities and rural communities, that is drawn from different underground water basins, including the San Andreas-Glorieta Aquifer and the Ojo del Gallo spring flow. Water wells located within the City of Grants appear to have a steady supply, as theorized to the cessation of uranium mining operations in the region as well as the closures of area generating stations. Regardless of this, Cibola County residents continue to face an increasing demand for water and water availability for the future. There are several federal and state agencies that are involved in water and mineral resources:

The New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources (NMBGMR) is a non-regulatory agency that serves as the state geological survey. It was established by legislation in 1927 as a research and service division of the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology (NM Tech). An interactive map indicates some 22 water sources located within the county. NMBGMR compiles groundwater data, under the Collaborative Groundwater Monitoring Network and the Aquifer Mapping Program databases.

The Collaborative Groundwater Monitoring Network (CGMN) is a compilation of select groundwater monitoring networks, across the state and nation, that are

designed to provide access to groundwater data from multi-agency dispersed mapping applications and databases, including historical data.

The Aquifer Mapping Program (AMP) is actively expanding the Healy Collaborative Groundwater Monitoring Network for New Mexico. Our primary focus is rural and under-monitored regions throughout the state. Our public groundwater level data is meant to benefit all water users — especially mutual domestic water systems, private domestic well owners, and water management decision-makers. Groundwater data is essential for tracking changes and making informed decisions about water and management, and data can also be accessed.

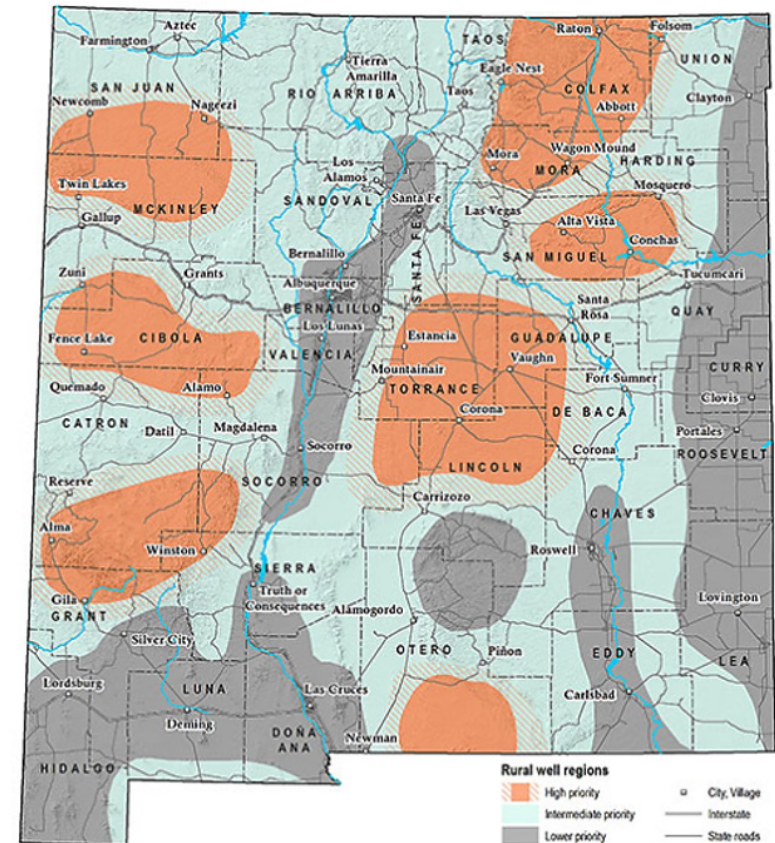


Figure 3.6.3: Rural Well Regions in New Mexico. Source: NWNM Regional Water Plan, 2017

**Water Quality** - With respect to its suitability, water quality describes the condition of the water, including chemical, physical, and biological characteristics, usually for a particular purpose such as drinking. Water quality is measured by several factors, including:

- concentrations of dissolved oxygen,
- levels of bacteria and other microorganisms,



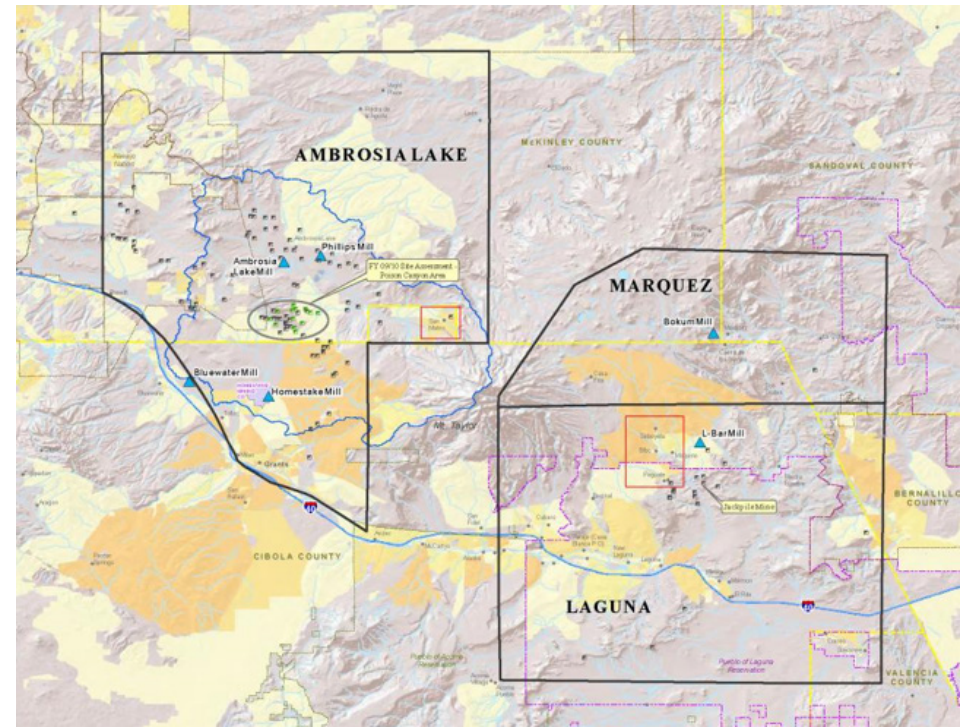


- amount of salt (or salinity),
- amount of other elements, such as arsenic or other contaminants, or
- amount of suspended material in the water (turbidity).

In some bodies of water, the concentration of microscopic algae and quantities of pesticides, herbicides, heavy metals, and other contaminants from manmade spills or leakages may also be measured to determine water quality. Groundwater contamination is critical to water source protection. When man-made products, such as gasoline, oil, road salts and other chemicals, seep into groundwater reserves can potentially cause unsafe and unfit conditions for human use. Contamination from mining and chemical spills have a high probability of polluting available water sources. For example, all the uranium mining activities of the past have had subsequent environmental impacts to local resources, including water sources and ecosystems. Additional research needs to be conducted to deter water quality levels at within the various communities of Cibola County.

As aforementioned, there are a number of abandoned mines located throughout the county, in which some have been categorized as superfund sites by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Superfund is the name given to the environmental program established to address abandoned hazardous waste sites. In this case, the abandoned hazardous waste is the mill tailings (uranium mill tailings are the byproduct of uranium ore milling). In recent years, there has been a call for cleanup initiatives for the abandoned uranium mines. A superfund operation involves capturing the alluvial groundwater that occupies sedimentary deposits (sand and silt) that flows beneath through a well system that is treated by a reverse osmosis (RO) process or evaporation ponds. Water from the RO unit is combined with fresh water from deep wells that is then injected back into the alluvial aquifer. This process has been ongoing and based on a restoration plan which began in 1977. Superfund is the federal government program that was established to help clean up uncontrolled hazardous waste sites in the country. The EPA is committed to ensuring that these hazardous waste sites are cleaned up to protect the environment and the health of all communities. Today, there are a total of 21 superfund sites in the State of New Mexico. In Cibola County, there is the:

- Grants Mining District that was the primary focus of uranium extraction and production activities in New Mexico (1950s to 1990s). Several area mines are under the authority of NMED, EPA, and the New Mexico Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department (NMEMNRD) in efforts to assess and address health risks and environmental effects. For more information, refer to The Legacy of Abandoned Uranium Mines in the Grants Mining District, New Mexico report.
- Grants Chlorinated Solvents site consists of a 20-acre, 100-foot-deep groundwater plume that extends about 1,000 feet from the source. A dry-cleaning facility was blamed as the primary source of contamination where chemicals contaminated the groundwater. Remedy construction, operation and maintenance activities and groundwater monitoring are ongoing.



**Figure 3.6.4:** Abandoned Mine Sites Map. Source: NWNM Regional Water Plan, 2017

- Two uranium tailings piles (Site ID# 007860935 and 0600816) are under voluntary groundwater restoration programs. One site is about 200-acres, and the other is about 40-acres. Entered an administrative agreement with EPA to conduct Removal Site Evaluations at eight abandoned uranium mines in the Ambrosia Lake region north of Grants, New Mexico, in McKinley County. Long-term goal is to restore groundwater quality within the zone, after which the site will be monitored by the US Department of Energy for long-term site care and maintenance.
- Jackpile-Paguate Uranium Mine (Laguna) site consists of three former tribal leases. Former leaseholder, Anaconda Minerals Company, mined and operated from 1952 to 1982. A total of 7,868-acres was leased, in which 2,656-acres was mined that included three open pits, 32 waste dumps and 23 protore (sub-grade ore) stockpiles, four topsoil stockpiles and 66 acres of buildings and roads.

**Water Conservation** - With drought conditions, water scarcity, and contamination issues, water conservation becomes more and more important. The City of Gallup may offer an effective model for water conservation to municipalities within Cibola County as Gallup has noticed and recognized an eminent shortage of water, prior to the turn of the century, and has recently updated its Drought Contingency Plan (September 2018). As a result, Gallup has aggressive water conservation policies which include water rate increases progressive with quantity of water used.



As of 2004, OSE has adopted rules and regulations to undertake the supervision of the physical distribution of water, to prevent waste, and to administer the available supply of water by priority date or by alternative administrations, as appropriate. The rules apply to all water rights within the state from all sources of water, surface water and hydrologically connected groundwater (NMAC 19-25-13). Agriculture water users or agriculture water rights owners are excluded from the provisions (NMAC 3-53-2.1).

In 2013, Section 74-1-13 of the NMSA 1978 was revised to stipulate a fee of \$0.03 cents per 1000 gallons of public water produced, to be utilized for the state's water conservation fund. This fund is used for costs and expenses associated with collecting and analyzing water samples, training programs for public water systems, and vulnerability assessments of water sources. All public water systems in New Mexico are subject to this fee except the Pueblos and other federal government entities which are exempt.

**Wastewater** - Cibola County does not directly manage wastewater service to customers but discharges wastewater from individual County facilities.

**Solid Waste** - Solid Waste service in Cibola County is provided by the Northwest New Mexico Regional Solid Waste Authority (NWNMRSWA, an entity owned by multiple government entities, including Cibola and McKinley Counties, Cities of Gallup and Grants, and the Village of Milan. There are transfer stations locations including those in the communities of Cubero, Bluewater, Pinehill, San Mateo and Seboyeta.

The Cibola County Transfer Station is located in Milan, off of State Road 568 and offers recycling service for surrounding communities, including appliances, electronics, motor oil, tires, etc.

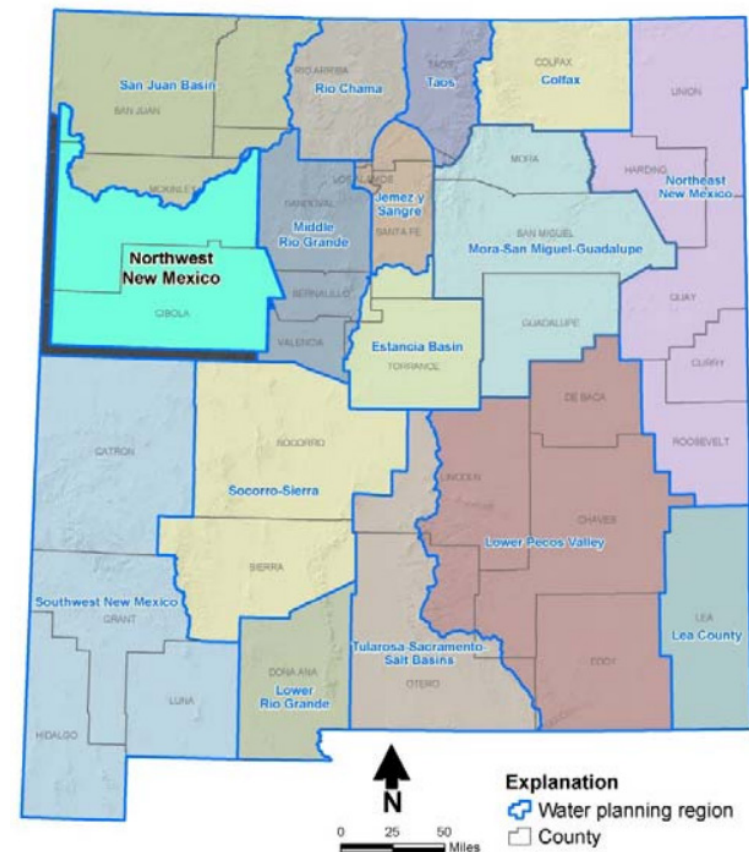
### Regional Water Planning

In 1987, the New Mexico Legislature recognized the state's need for water planning and created the regional water planning program. This legislation designated the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission (ISC) and the Office of the State Engineer to implement the state's regional water planning program. Since then, the Commission has officially accepted regional water plans from all sixteen water planning regions throughout the state, including the Northwest New Mexico - Region 6 that comprises of San Juan, McKinley and Cibola Counties. The latest draft of Region 6 Water Plan was approved in January 2004 that includes an executive summary, maps, and appendices. The ISC also approved the "Regional Water Planning Handbook" (2015).

The regional water planning districts are divided into 16 water planning regions. Administration for each region is tasked to identify water supply, project demand, and develop alternatives to meet water shortage challenges. Drinking water utilities that meet the definition of a public water system are responsible for meeting the requirements of EPA and state drinking water programs under the Safe Drinking

Water Act (SDWA). Protecting source water from contamination helps reduce treatment costs and may avoid or defer the need for complex treatment.

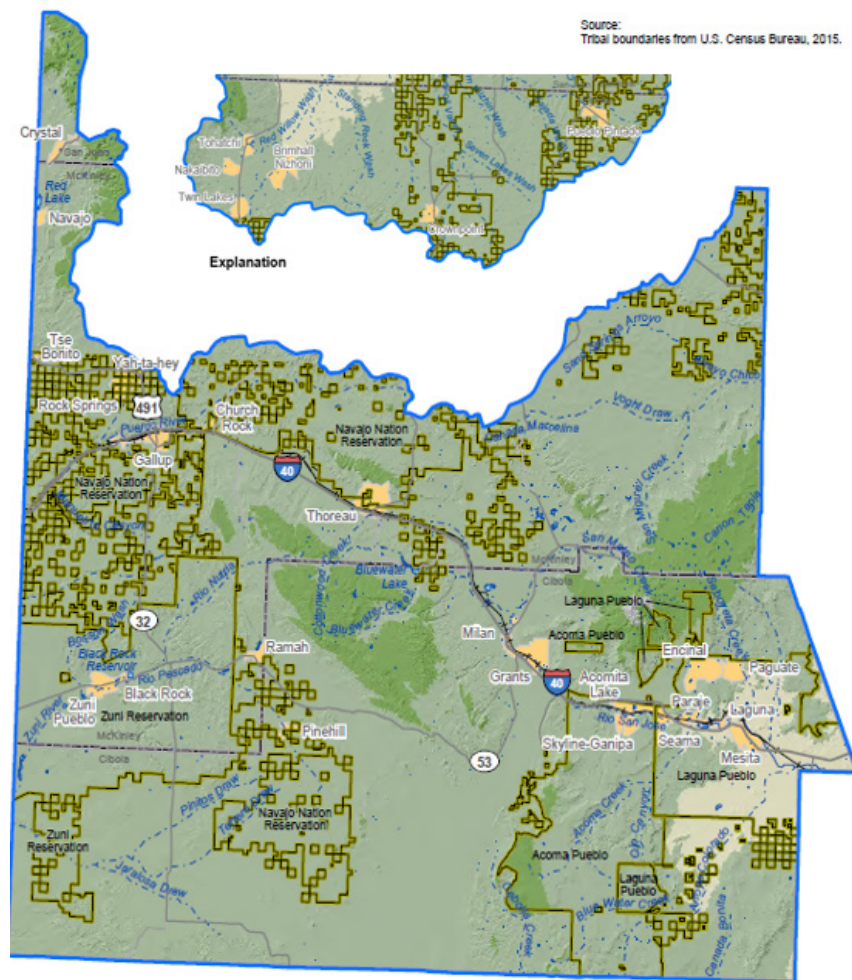
More recently, the ISC has launched the planning and development of the state's 50-Year Water Plan as a pillar for stewardship, equity and sustainability. It is critical that the state starts charting a course that will allow for more flexibility in managing water supplies and infrastructure in the face of weather extremes brought on by a changing climate. Water regions throughout the state are currently undergoing community and public outreach to help start compiling data and information to update the regional water plan for Region 6. All communities, residents, special districts and water systems are highly encouraged to contribute to the development of these regional plans through a consistent technical approach and better support.



**Figure 3.6.5:** Water Planning Regions in New Mexico. Source: NWNM Regional Water Plan, 2017

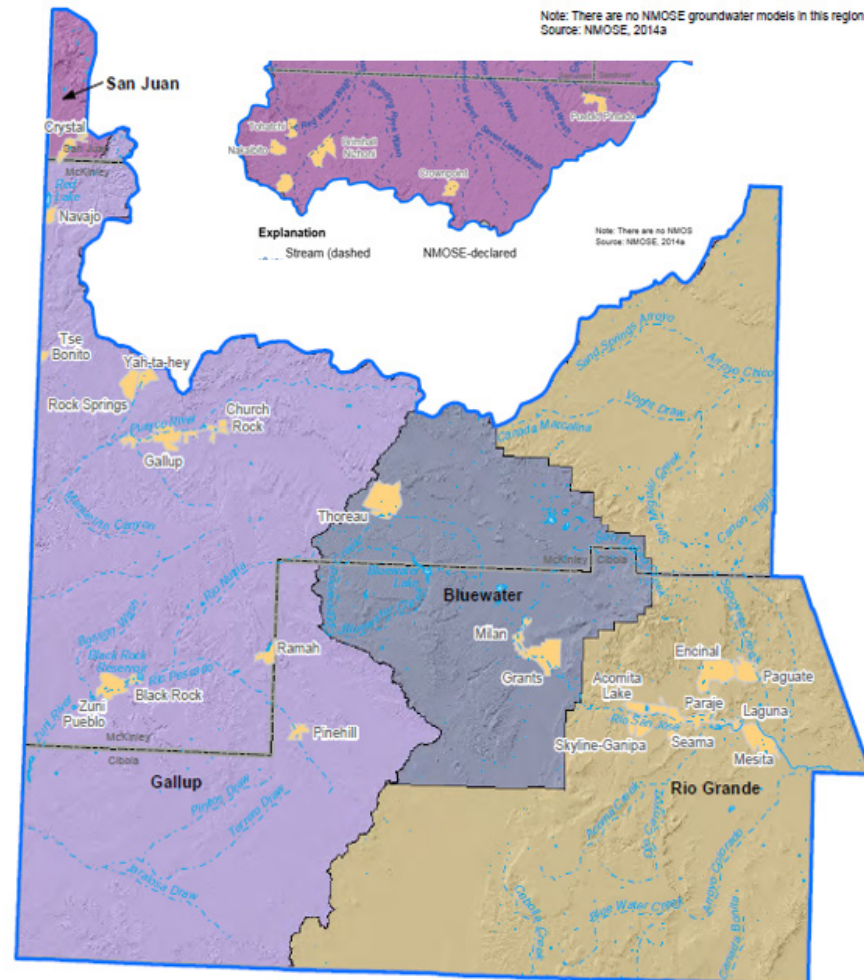






**NORTHWEST NEW MEXICO  
REGIONAL WATER PLAN 2017  
Regional Map**

**Figure 3.6.6:** Jurisdiction and Elevation Map. Source: Northwest New Mexico Regional Water Plan 2017



**NORTHWEST NEW MEXICO  
REGIONAL WATER PLAN 2017  
NMOSE-Declared Groundwater Basins and Groundwater Models**

**Figure 3.6.7:** Regional Declared Groundwater Basins Map. Source: Northwest New Mexico Regional Water Plan 2017



## Water Systems and Special Districts

Cibola County does not operate any public water systems but manages three wells, from the Rio Grande Groundwater and the Bluewater Groundwater basins, with a total of 9-acre-feet-per-year permitted water rights. There are a number of water systems and special districts within Cibola County that requires the most support in technical assistance and funding capacities. There are a total of 35 entities registered and listed with NMED's Drinking Water Bureau, of which, only 19 are currently active and in compliance with respective agencies, as indicated in the table below.

Water Systems in Cibola County		
Water System Name	Water ID#	Population
1. Acomita Rest Area	NM3595733	2501
2. Bibo Mutual Domestic Water Users Association	NM3526033	215
3. Bluewater Acres Water Users Association	NM3510333	302
4. Bluewater State Park Stone Ridge	NM3596833	178
5. Bluewater Water and Sanitation District	NM3525033	736
6. Bowlins Bluewater Dairy Queen Store	NM3594933	200
7. Cubero Elementary School	NM3595333	240
8. El Malpais National Monument	NM3580133	50
9. El Malpais Ranger Station (BLM)	NM3580033	150
10. El Morro National Monument	NM3596433	133
11. Grants Domestic Water System	NM3526133	8700
12. Grants KOA	NM3501033	180
13. Milan Community Water System	NM3525533	3669
14. Moquino Water System	NM3525633	49
15. Potco Water System	NM3500333	100
16. San Mateo Mutual Domestic Water Users Association	NM3525733	192
17. San Rafael Water and Sanitation District	NM3525833	963
18. Seboyeta Water System	NM3525933	209
19. St. Joseph's School	NM3596033	69

**Table 3.6.1:** Water Systems in Cibola County. Source: NWNMCOG, 2022

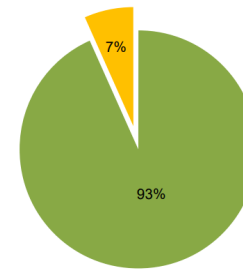
Grants and Milan is where most of the population of Cibola County resides, with two of the largest public water systems being the Grants Domestic Water System and the Milan Community Water System. The City of Grants has approximately 3304 service connections with two active wells and one inactive well. The Village of Milan has approximately 1150 service connections with three active wells and one inactive well.

Municipal water plans are specific to local usage and supply, legal rights and physical availability of water supply which are required components when it comes to applying for funding for improvements from various sources. To keep the municipal water systems operational within Cibola County, water sources must be sustained or acquired. Per the Region 6 water plan, the Rio San Jose surface water basin should have enough ground water resources to sustain the communities, however, it is noted that only a very small amount of this water can actually be produced otherwise subsidence may occur. Out of necessity, this may be an issue to examine in future water plans for the municipalities located to draw water supply from this

basin.

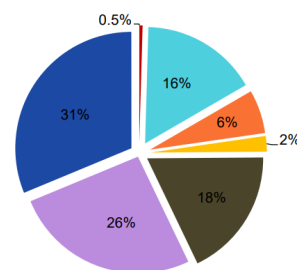
Both the City of Grants and the Village of Milan (2003) have completed a 40-year water plan that evaluates water demand, sufficiency, and water rights for different growth scenarios through year 2040. The plan addresses water conservation requirements stipulated by the OSE. Milan's 40YWP documents notable declines in the static water levels for Milan's 3 active wells, between 1989 to 2002. This data was of significant concern to Village officials, particularly as the data indicated an accelerated decline in the most recent 2-1/2 years (from 2002) and that the current yield of the wells is not sustainable for the long term.

**Surface Water**



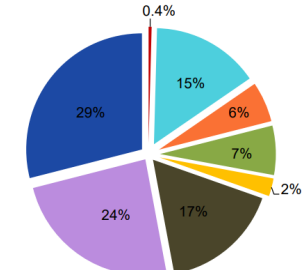
Total usage: 1,045 acre-feet

**Groundwater**



Total usage: 13,190 acre-feet

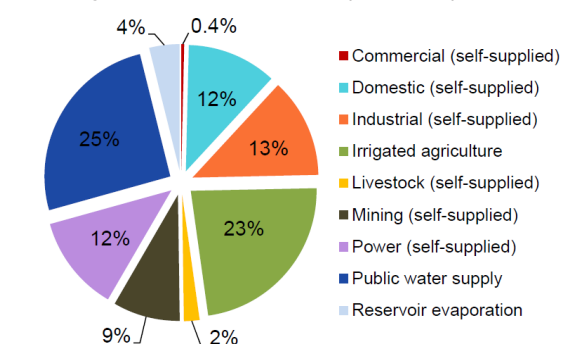
**Total**



Total usage: 14,235 acre-feet

**Figure 3.6.8:** Regional Water Demand Source: Longworth et al., 2013, Northwest New Mexico Regional Water Plan, 2017

In addition to these regional water plans, it is also crucial for local communities and municipalities to consider developing or updating their respective Grants-Milan Drainage Master Plan (last updated April 2011) and drought contingency plans. As

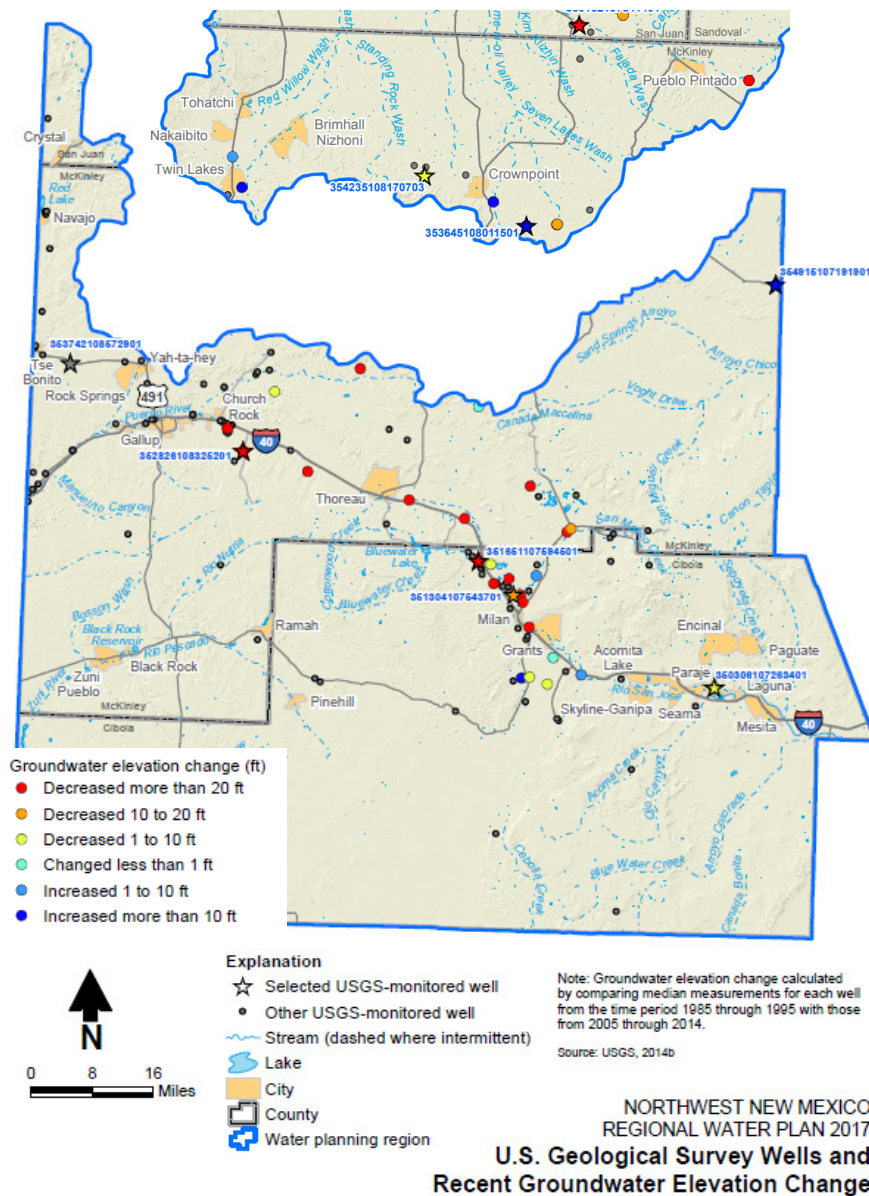


**Figure 3.6.9:** Total Regional Water Use, 2010 Source: Northwest New Mexico Regional Water Plan, 2017

mentioned, the City of Gallup recently completed and adopted their Gallup/NGWSP Water Commons Drought Contingency Plan (2018) that could be used as a model for Cibola County.







**Figure 3.6.10:** U.S. Geological Survey Wells and Recent Groundwater Elevation Change Map. Source: Northwest New Mexico Regional Water Plan 2017

## Key Take-Aways

### Continuity within Small Water Systems

- Take-Away:** Small water systems throughout Cibola County struggle to hire and recruit volunteers to formally assemble and manage water systems. For years, there has been significant turnover within these small systems which has resulted in failed operations and minimal improvements.
- » **Translation into Strategy:** Cibola County should consider regionalizing the small water systems to consolidate operation and maintenance responsibilities and to achieve economy of scales.

### Water Consumption

- Take-Away:** The scarcity of water in Cibola County has long been a topic of discussion and with continued and more severe drought, reductions in the aquifer, and evaporation of surface water, the demand for water is in jeopardy of exceeding supply.
- » **Translation into Strategy:** Educate residents of the importance of water conservation.
- » **Enforce water conservation strategies outlined within the County's Water Conservation Plan and Ordinance.**

### Drought

- Take-Away:** Persistent drought has severely impacted rural communities like Cibola County. A reduction in available water supply could hinder growth.
- » **Translation into Strategy:** Revisit and update the county drought contingency plan to ensure its effectiveness and relevance.

### Infrastructure


- Take-Away:** The infrastructure in many water systems have reach their useful life and are in dire need of replacement and upgrades. Large scale replacement of old infrastructure has proven to be difficult due to costs.
- » **Translation into Strategy:** Support and invest in priority infrastructure projects that serve the long-term interests of communities and systems.

### Long-Term Supply

- Take-Away:** Across the American southwest, the lingering effects of consumption and drought have caused concern for long-term water supply in many communities including Cibola County.
- » **Translation into Strategy:** Conduct and participate in long-term water supply planning to ensure availability and quality of water for future generations.
- » **Translation into Strategy:** Employ best practices to capture and reuse storm and gray water to preserve water.







Water Goal

**Cibola County strives to ensure long-term, sustainable, and quality water supply for the residents, households, economic activities, public services, and environmental sustainability.**

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## W-1: Long-Term Water Supply

**Collaboratively work with the City of Grants, Village of Milan, Pueblos of Acoma, Laguna and Zuni, small water systems, and other water management agencies to develop plans for ensuring long-term water supply for residents of Cibola County.**

- **W-1a:** Heavily engage in the Northwest New Mexico Regional Water Plan update process to ensure Cibola County is closely examined to help determine current and future water supply.
- **W-1b:** Collaborate with State and Federal Water Management agencies to implement long-term water supply strategies that encompass larger sub-regions within the county.
- **W-1c:** Examine rural water systems to identify sources for long-term water supply.

## W-2: Conservation & Maintenance

**Encourage communities and small systems to proactively undertake measures to conserve water through operations and maintenance activities.**

- **W-2a:** Encourage communities and small water systems to develop water conservation plans which include infrastructure improvement measures, resident education, and reuse strategies.
- **W-2b:** Encourage communities and small water systems to develop asset management plans specifically for or to include water system infrastructure to line-out maintenance and operation activities. The plan will also be critical to assist with the development of the ICIP.
- **W-2c:** Encourage communities to attend free and paid for trainings on operations and maintenance of water systems.

## W-3: Contamination

**Cibola County has a long history of environmental exploitation which has left a negative legacy of contamination of both the environment and the local water supply.**

- **W-3a:** Work closely with State and Federal agencies to identify contaminated aquifers and other water supply sources and work to mitigate contamination to improve water quality for beneficial use.
- **W-3b:** Partner with private industry to secure state and federal funding to mitigate contamination within local water supply sources.
- **W-3c:** Educate the community on the importance of water quality improvements, contamination, mitigation strategies, conservation, and protection of existing non-polluted sources.

## W-4: Infrastructure Improvements

**Necessary for continuous water supply, infrastructure plays a major role in sustainability, conservation, quality, redundancy, and the rate of consumption. Larger communities require more intricate water system infrastructure, while rural communities can rely on much more simplified systems.**

- **W-4a:** Consider hiring an on-call engineering firm to provide comprehensive services for water infrastructure. Having a singular entity or individual who works closely with public works and special projects departments has proven to be beneficial during the implementation of multi-year projects.
- **W-4b:** Host an annual open call for infrastructure projects during Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan (ICIP) development process. Communities can present local infrastructure needs including water systems, and the county can determine if assistance can be provided, and where to prioritize those infrastructure needs within the ICIP.
- **W-4c:** Partner with the Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments to host local ICIP trainings for small water systems and to provide one-on-one ICIP assistance for all small water systems and other special districts in Cibola County.
- **W-4d:** Consider establishing a Regional Water System Forum for small water systems to discuss water needs including infrastructure, operations, maintenance, billing, and funding for improvements. The County should lead this regional forum and could partner with the Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments to provide training and technical assistance.
- **W-4e:** Coordinate with NTUA, Indian Health Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and other purveyors of water on the Navajo Nation, and the Pueblos of Acoma, Laguna, and Zuni. These water management agencies can assist with planning for efficient and non-duplicative water system development and intersections where appropriate.
- **W-4f:** Consider developing a policy for the County Commission to set terms for investing local environmental gross receipts tax (ERGT) into water and wastewater system projects to encourage self-sufficiency, accountability, good planning, and maintenance and to leverage the local funds to secure other state and federal funding.





# Hazard Mitigation

**Understanding and preparing for hazards is a necessary responsibility for the county. In doing so, the county can ensure that residents remain free from the negative impacts of such events. The effort to ensure proper preparation and effective response, leads to recovery and a return to normality for county residents.**

## Hazard Mitigation Overview

### Purpose of Hazard Mitigation Planning

A Hazard Mitigation Plan identifies risks and vulnerabilities that are created by natural and man-made disasters. The plan identifies appropriate mitigation strategies that aim to help prevent loss from natural and man-made disasters. The planning process allows for communities or entities to become prepared for the event of a disaster. This preparation reduces the severity of events and the impacts induced on a community.

Natural disasters like severe drought, flooding, wildfires, landslides, high winds, thunderstorms, and other hazards have a substantial impact on homes, businesses, and infrastructure. Hazard Mitigation is defined as any sustained action taken to reduce or eliminate the impacts of long-term risk to life and property from natural hazard events that are caused by severe weather activities (i.e. wildfires, flooding), and man-made hazard events (i.e. chemical spills, combustion).

While weather and other climatic events cannot be controlled, human actions can be assessed, strategized, and implemented to mitigate any potential damage or destruction to public and private properties is called hazard mitigation planning. Minimizing the impact of disasters begins with local and tribal governments and state agencies working together to identify natural

disaster risks and vulnerabilities that are common to this region. Once risks are identified, long-term strategies are developed to safeguard people and property from disaster events.

Mitigation planning is key to reducing injury and/or loss of life, and the cycle of disaster damage and reconstruction. A plan provides the framework for hazard mitigation that includes identifying: (a) existing conditions, (b) potential threats and impacts, and (c) identifying local projects that will help mitigate any potential damage in the event of a disaster. Other examples of hazard mitigation indicators include local planning and policymaking, local project development, protection plan development for preparedness and response actions, and education programs. These indicators could potentially be incorporated into other regional plans as part of the County's implementation planning.

### Federal Requirements for Hazard Mitigation

Cibola County recognizes the importance of hazard mitigation and planning and has developed multiple Hazard Mitigation plans since the county's inception in 1981. Two of the most recent plans developed were done so in accordance with the state and federal rules and regulations governing local hazard mitigation plan. The following are regulations that provide local entities with the authority to complete and adopt such plans:

- Section 322, Mitigation Planning of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief Emergency Act and Section 104 of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000
- Local Mitigation Planning requirements outlined in Code of Federal Regulations – 44 CFR art 201.6.

### State Hazard Mitigation Planning

Hazard Mitigation planning is not just a local level responsibility but is also a statewide initiative. Understanding the importance of hazard mitigation planning and preparedness, the New Mexico Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (NMDHSEM) developed the statewide Hazard Mitigation Plan. The purpose of the plan is to provide a framework for hazard mitigation which includes two components: recovery and reconstruction after a given disaster, and longer-term strategy to identify current and proposed mitigation projects which will reduce the potential for future losses and decrease the costs to the taxpayers. Lastly, the plan "will be used to increase awareness and initiate development of long-range, interagency, multi-objective mitigation activities". (Page 1 – NMHMP, 2018).

The New Mexico Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management is a multi-jurisdictional coordinated program that works to mitigate hazards, preparing for emergencies, preventing attacks, and recovering from disasters regardless of cause, as well as preparing for emergencies, including wildfires, flooding, and health crises. NMDHSEM also serves as the conduit for federal assistance for emergency management.



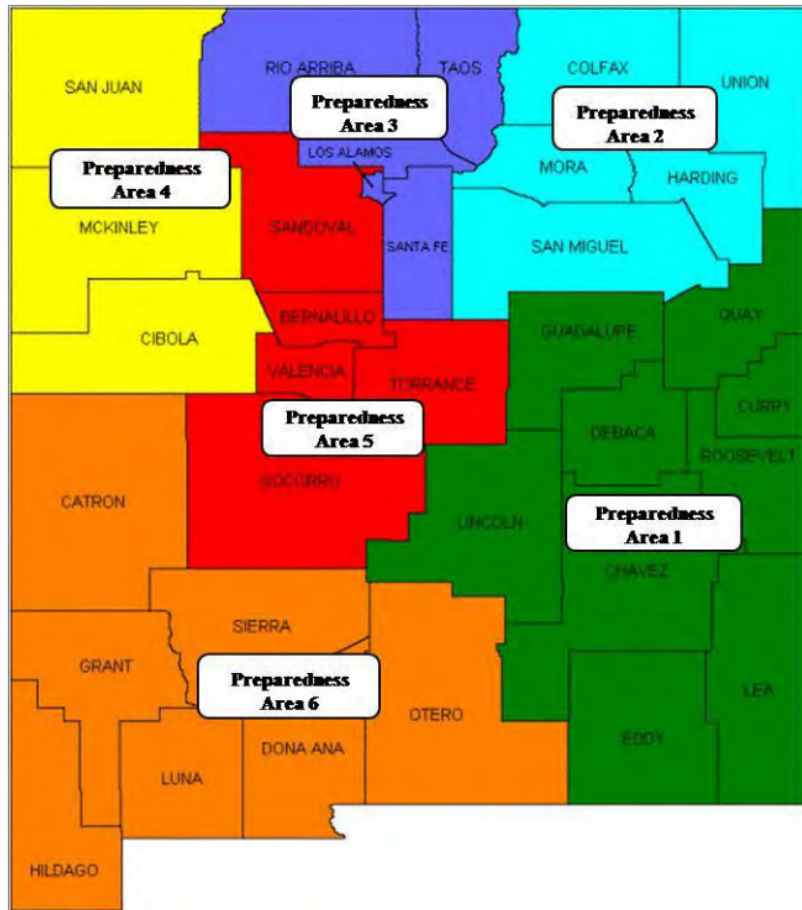
**Figure 3.7.1:** Resiliency Cycle





The Northwest Region of New Mexico, which includes Cibola County, is identified by NMDHSEM as Preparedness Area 4 and includes the following local governances:

- San Juan County
- McKinley County
- Cibola County
- Navajo Nation and its three satellite communities
- Ute Mountain Tribe
- Pueblo of Acoma
- Pueblo of Laguna
- Pueblo of Zuni



**Figure 3.7.2: State Preparedness Areas Map.** Source: 2018 State of New Mexico Hazard Mitigation Plan

## Local Hazard Mitigation Planning

As noted, Hazard Mitigation Planning and Preparedness has been an activity of the County for decades. Cibola County views Hazard Mitigation as collaborative process and has included the two local municipalities, the City of Grants and the Village of Milan into the framework of the 2015 Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan. The plan “identifies and profiles the existing hazards, identifies the County’s vulnerability to these hazards by jurisdiction and identifies alternative mitigation actions” (Page i – CCMHMP, 2015). The plan establishes three major visions that provide the framework for fulfilling the requirements outlines in the Disaster Mitigation Act of 200:

1. Reduce Hazard Risks and Impacts – This multi-hazard mitigation plan assessed vulnerability of life and property from potential natural hazards and prioritized corresponding mitigation strategies to reduce the risk and impact from the hazard
2. Build on Existing Efforts – the intent of this plan is to maximize these efforts by inventorying, coordinated, building on these efforts where possible, and developing new strategies to fill any gaps identified among existing efforts. The plan incorporates information and strategies from existing emergency response plans and other relevant efforts.
3. Share Information and Raise Awareness – Public engagement methods used in the preparation of this plan sought input from a diverse range of stakeholders including the public, Tribal Councils, and various public, private and non-profit sector representatives. Mitigation strategies identified in this plan address public information communication, and outreach in a universal manner regardless of hazard type, and within a hazard-specific context.

The Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan identified the following natural and human-caused hazards that occur within the boundaries of Cibola County:

- Floods
- Wildfires
- High Winds
- Severe Winter Storms
- Thunderstorms (including lightning and hailstorms)
- Drought

One hazard that is not accounted for in the plan is domestic terrorism (e.g., school and workplace shootings). This form of hazard is unfortunately trending upward throughout the country in mostly dense urban communities but is not dependent on population or geographic location. The increase of occurrences of this type of hazard has caused many communities to separate this hazard from mitigation plans and many have opted to create specific mitigation plans for domestic terrorism. While this is may pertain more to public safety, it is imperative that the hazard is acknowledge and strategies are identified to prepare for such occurrences.



## Existing Conditions

### Floods

Hazard Type	Probability Scale		
	Cibola County	City of Grants	Village of Milan
Floods	High	High	High

**Table 3.7.1:** Flood Probability Scale. Source: Cibola County Multi-Jurisdiction Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2015.

Flooding occurs when large amounts of water cover or submerge normally dry land, particularly after severe weather and climatic activity. Formally, the Southwest Training Institute & Consulting defines flood as “a body of water which rises to overflow land which is not normally submerged”.

According to the 2015 Multi-Jurisdiction Hazard Mitigation Plan, most of the flooding that occurs within Cibola County can be attributed to “intense storm events coupled with typically sparse vegetation cover”. These events typically occur during the monsoon season between the months of July through September. In addition to sparsely vegetated land, significant portions of the County including the City of Grants and the Village of Milan have soil that “consists of clays that have a high shrink-swell potential, soils that have a high water table, soils that have a clay pan or clay layers at or near the surface and soils that are shallow over nearly impervious material”. This type of surface results in a large area of land classified as having Group D soils which means “soils have very slow infiltration rate (high runoff potential) when thoroughly wet” (Page 39 – CCMHMP, 2015).

In Cibola County, there are multiple Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) designated floodplains including the Rio San Jose floodplain which is the largest in the county and runs through the City of Grants and Village of Milan. The Rio San Jose and other floodplains in the County are results of large watersheds that have numerous tributaries which feed into the Rio San Jose.

The Hazard Mitigation Plan indicates that “flooding has occurred in the past along the Rio San Jose and its tributaries, from the eastern Pueblo of Acoma reservation boundary to McCarty’s, and on the Rinconada and Largo Creeks”. It is also noted that future severe storms will



**Figure 3.7.3:** Roadway Damage in Bluewater Village, NM.

undoubtedly occur within the watershed and that areas along the Rio San Jose will be subject to flooding during a 1-percent or 100-year flood event. However, according to the plan, “none of the floods that occurred in the past 35 years since stream gages have existed on the Rio San Jose have approached the magnitude of a 100-year event” (Page 49 – CCHMP, 2015)

Within the municipalities of Grants and Milan, it is noted that shallow flooding and pooling of water is a common occurrence. This is a result of overwhelmed and inadequate drainage infrastructure in the relatively flat areas of the populated centers. Additionally, proximity to Black and Horace Mesas increase runoff during thunderstorms as these are steep sloped geographic features that are sparsely vegetated.

Overall, the 2018 Hazard Mitigation Plan indicates that there is a high probability of flood throughout the populated areas of the county especially along the Rio San Jose due to overall size of the watershed, soil type, lack of vegetation cover, and location of populated centers. It was also pointed out that “a structure located within a base or 1-percent flood zone has a 26 percent chance of suffering flood damage during a 30-year period” (Page 49 – CCHMP, 2015). In the past, floods within Cibola County have resulted in damage to public and private property in the communities of Anaconda, Bluewater, Seama, McCarty’s, Grants and Milan (see table 3.7.2). Flooding also causes extensive damage to existing infrastructure such as roads and bridges.

Reported Property Damage from Floods		
Location	Date	Property Damage
Bluewater	07/29/1999	\$0
Fence Lake	08/10/2005	\$0
Grants	08/11/2005	\$0
San Fidel	08/07/2006	\$0
Laguna (Pueblo of Laguna)	08/07/2006	\$0
Anaconda	07/19/2008	\$5,000
Bluewater	07/22/2008	\$10,000
Seama (Pueblo of Laguna)	08/05/2008	\$2,000
Bluewater	08/05/2008	\$40,000
Milan	06/28/2009	\$0
Seama (Pueblo of Laguna)	09/16/2009	\$5,000
Milan	07/25/2010	\$20,000
McCarty’s (Pueblo of Acoma)	08/05/2010	\$50,000
McCarty’s (Pueblo of Acoma)	08/24/2011	\$200,000
El Morro	07/24/2012	\$0

**Table 3.7.2:** Reported Property Damage from Floods in Cibola County. Source: Cibola County Multi-Jurisdiction Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2015.

Overall, flooding is a significant natural hazard that communities in Cibola County have to deal with. Flooding not only results in the damage of public and private property but it also hinders critical public services such as emergency response,



student transportation, and general access critical facilities (e.g., hospitals, places of employment, residences, etc.).

## Wildfire

	Probability Scale		
Hazard Type	Cibola County	City of Grants	Village of Milan
Wildfire	Medium	Low	Low

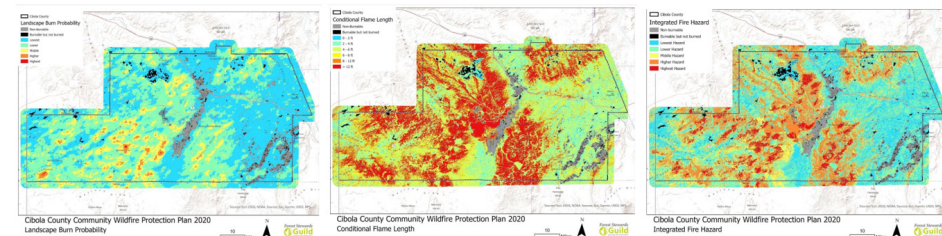
**Table 3.7.3:** Wildfire Probability Scale. Source: Cibola County Multi-Jurisdiction Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2015.

Wildfire is a type of fire that often occurs in areas of forestation and vegetation that are either naturally caused by lightening or man-made fires by accident or intention. An uncontrolled forest fire can cause great damage to life, property, and fragile ecosystems.

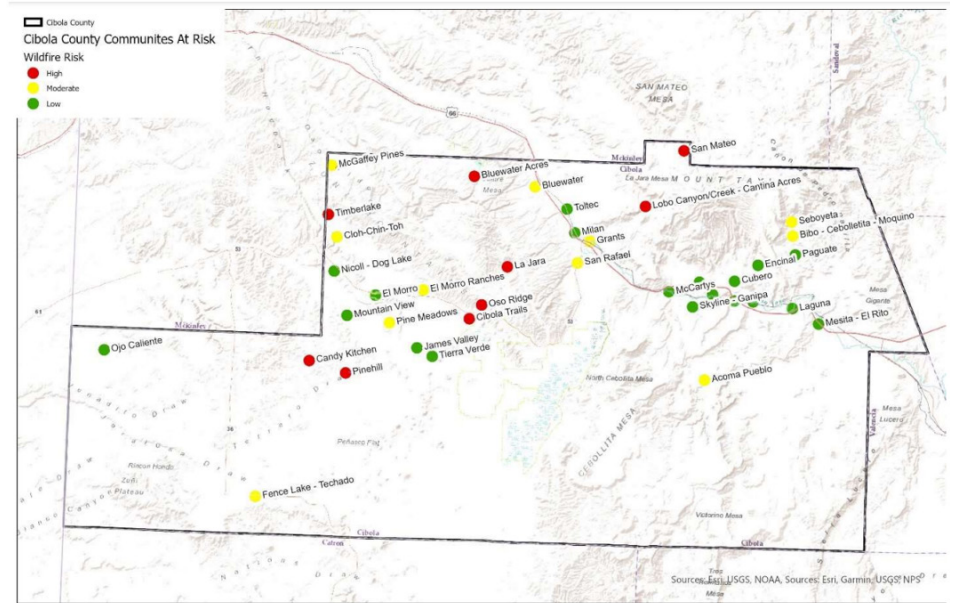
The Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA) (Public Law 108-148 2003) recognizes “that many communities in the United States are living in or near fire adapted ecosystems are often bringing with them inherent risks of wildfires”. Additionally, the HFRA recognizes that the Federal Government cannot provide funds to reduce hazardous wildland fuels for all communities at risk. The result is the establishment of the CWPP mechanism to prioritize funding to reduce hazardous fuels or other prioritized actions that have been incorporated into the local plan (Page 9 – CWPP, 2020).

Cibola County has large swaths of forested and wooded grasslands that are susceptible to wildfires. Coupled with recent climatic events such as drought, these areas are prime for long overdue wildfire mitigation activities. Within the CWPP, in order to identify mitigation activities, “it is crucial to identify areas of greatest wildfire hazard”. To conduct a risk assessment, the plan utilized spatial models using the Interagency Fuels Support Decision System (IFTDSS). Using the spatial models, the following analysis was used to determine risk rating:

- Landscape Burn Probability – is based on the likelihood of fires occurring on the landscape.
- Conditional Flame Length – is the average of flames lengths from every fire that was simulated during the modeling run.
- Integrated Hazard – combines landscape burn probability and conditional flame length into a single value that identifies the fire hazard.



The following are the results of the IFTDSS modeling that helps determine risk level for Cibola County and communities within:



**Cibola County Community Wildfire Protection Plan 2020**  
Communities at Risk

**Table 3.7.4:** Communities at Risk Map. Source: 2020 Cibola County Wildfire Protection Plan.

Communities at Risk Ratings		
Communities	2006 Risk Rating	2020 Risk Rating
Bluewater Acres	Moderate	High
Candy Kitchen	Moderate	High
Cibola Trails	N/A	High
La Jara	N/A	High
Lobo Canyon – Cantina Acres	Moderate	High
Oso Ridge	N/A	High
Pinehill	N/A	High
San Mateo	Low	High
Timberlake	N/A	High
Acoma Pueblo	N/A	Moderate
Bibo – Cebolletita – Moquino	N/A	Moderate
Bluewater	Moderate	Moderate
Cloh-Chin-Toh	N/A	Moderate
El Morro Ranches	N/A	Moderate
Fence Lake	N/A	Moderate
Grants	N/A	Moderate





McGaffey Pines	N/A	Moderate
Pine Meadows	N/A	Moderate
San Rafael	N/A	Moderate
Seboyeta	N/A	Moderate
Techado	N/A	Moderate
Acomita – North Acomita	N/A	Low
Cubero	N/A	Low
El Morro	Low	Low
Encinal	N/A	Low
James Valley – Tierra Verde	N/A	Low
Laguna	N/A	Low
McCartys	N/A	Low
Mesita - El Rito	N/A	Low
Milan	Low	Low
Mountain View	N/A	Low
Nicoll	N/A	Low
Ojo Caliente	N/A	Low
Paguete	N/A	Low
Paraje – Casa Blanca	N/A	Low
San Fidel	N/A	Low
Seama - Laguna	N/A	Low
Skyline – Ganipa	N/A	Low
Toltec	N/A	Low

**Table 3.7.3:** Communities at Risk Ratings. Source: Cibola County Multi-Jurisdiction Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2015.

Overall, wildfires pose significant threat to many communities in Cibola County. As wildland urban interface continues to increase during a time of extreme drought, the risk of associated wildfires follows suit. Other activities associated with wildfires are controlled burn activities that are intentional for purposes of forest management, farming, restoration, or greenhouse gas abatement. In recent years, these control burns have turned course and gotten out of hand due to increased winds and limited firefighting crews. Other human caused wildfires are results of improper campfire tending, arson, recreational activities such as lighting fireworks, and unintentionally sparking from vehicles and other machinery.

The County's preparation of the Community Wildfire Protection Plan is the initial step to becoming a well-prepared community ready to plan for, combat and recover from wildfires. Cibola County has also passed and adopted county ordinance 12-01 Limiting Open Burning and Fireworks in the Unincorporated Areas of Cibola County, in April 2012. This was a coordinated effort between local, state, tribal and federal partners to deter any threats that may arise from uncontrol burns and fireworks. Permits for such activities can be obtained through the Cibola County Fire Department, after consultation with the Cibola County Emergency Management Coordinator. Any complaints are taken with the Cibola County Sheriff's Office.

## High Winds

Hazard Type	Probability Scale		
	Cibola County	City of Grants	Village of Milan
High Winds	High	High	High

**Table 3.7.4:** High Winds Probability Scale. Source: Cibola County Multi-Jurisdiction Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2015.

High winds in Cibola County are a common occurrence. In general, wind speeds can reach up to 100mph and can produce significant damage along its path. These types of high wind events are classified as "straight-line" winds in order to differentiate from winds associated with tornados. The general rule of thumb is that "damaging winds are classified as those exceeding 50-60mph" (Page 66 – CCHMP, 2015).

Damaging winds are categorized based on associated attributes such as cause of wind, direction, and speed. The following are the types of damaging winds:

- Straight-Line Winds – a term used to define any thunderstorm wind that is not associated with rotation and is used mainly to differentiate from tornadic winds.
- Downbursts – A strong downdraft with horizontal dimensions larger than 4km (2.5mi) resulting in an outward burst or damaging winds on or near the ground. Downburst winds may begin as a microburst and spread out over a wider area, sometimes producing damage similar to a strong tornado. Although usually associated with thunderstorms, downbursts can occur with showers to weak to produce thunder.
  - Downdrafts – A small scale column of air that rapidly sinks toward the ground. A downburst is a result of a strong downdraft.
  - Microbursts – A small, concentrated downburst that produces an outward burst of damaging winds at the surface. Microbursts are generally small (less than 4km across) and short-lived, lasting only 5-10 minutes, with a maximum wind speed up to 168mph.
    - » A wet microburst is accompanied by heavy precipitation at the surface
    - » A dry microburst, common in places like the high plains and intermountain west, occur with little or no precipitation reaching the ground.
- Gust Front – A gust front is the leading edge of rain-cooled air that clashes with warmer thunderstorm inflow. Gust fronts are characterized by a wind shift, temperature drop, and gusty winds out ahead of a thunderstorm. Sometimes the winds push up air above them, forming a shelf cloud or detached roll cloud.
- Derecho – A derecho is a widespread thunderstorm wind event caused when new thunderstorms form along the leading edge of an outflow boundary (a surface boundary formed by the horizontal spreading of thunderstorm-cooled air).
- Bow Echo – A radar echo which is linear but bent outward in a bow shape. Damaging straight-line winds often occur near the "crest" or center of a bow echo. Bow echoes can be over 300km in length, last for several hours, and produce extensive swaths of wind damage at the ground" (Pages 66-67 – CCHMP, 2015).



According to the Hazard Mitigation Plan, Cibola County can expect high wind occurrences within the 0 to 8 range of the Beaufort Wind Scale. The Beaufort Wind Scale is one of the first wind speed scales and was created by Britain's Admiral Sir Francis Beaufort in 1805 and is still widely use to estimate wind strengths (weather.gov).

<b>Beaufort Wind Scale</b>			
Beaufort Number	Wind Speed (mph)	Description	Land Conditions
0	0	Calm	Calm. Smoke rises vertically
1	1-3	Light Air	Wind motion visible in smoke
2	4-7	Light Breeze	Wind felt on exposed skin. Leaves rustle
3	8-12	Gentle Breeze	Leaves and smaller twigs in constant motion
4	13-18	Moderate Breeze	Dust and loose paper rise. Small branches begin to move.
5	19-24	Fresh Breeze	Smaller trees sway
6	25-31	Strong Breeze	Large branches in motion. Whistling heard in overhead wires. Umbrella use becomes difficult
7	32-38	Near Gale	Whole trees in motion. Effort needed to walk against the wind
8	39-46	Gale	Twigs broken from trees. Cars veer on road
9	47-54	Strong Gale	Light structure damage
10	55-63	Storm	Trees uprooted. Considerable structural damage
11	64-73	Violent Storm	Widespread Structural Damage
12	73-95	Hurricane	Considerable and widespread damage to structures

**Table 3.7.5:** Beaufort Wind Scale. Source: Cibola County Multi-Jurisdiction Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2015.

The average normal wind speeds in Cibola County range approximately between 7.5 mph to 10.6 mph but the county remains vulnerable to high wind events up to 46 mph. Most of the larger high wind events occur during the spring and winter months and remain seasonal.

According to the Hazard Mitigation Plan, "most wind events are predictable, and the Cibola community is usually prepared for such events". Most of the vulnerability is centered around less formidable structures such as mobile or manufactured homes. Additional vulnerability comes by way of reduced visibility caused by high winds kicking up dust or snow. These types of events have occurred in Cibola County with the most recent being in "2003 in the Bluewater area where wind speeds reached 40 knots and visibility was severely limited that it created a chain reaction of automobile collisions along Interstate 40 west of Milan (Pages 68-69 – CCHMP, 2015).

## Severe Winter Storms

Hazard Type	Probability Scale		
	Cibola County	City of Grants	Village of Milan
Severe Winter Storm	Medium	Medium	Medium

**Table 3.7.6:** Severe Winter Storms Probability Scale. Source: Cibola County Multi-Jurisdiction Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2015.

A Severe Winter Storm is said to "have significant snowfall (4 inches or more in a 12-hour period, or 6 or more inches in a 24-hour period in non-mountainous areas; and 12 inches or more in a 12-hour period or 18 inches or more in a 24-hour period in mountainous areas), ice, and/or freezing rain, with the quantity of precipitation variable by elevation" according to the 2018 State Hazard Mitigation Plan. These storms vary in size and attributes but could include the following: heavy snowfall, blizzards, freezing rain, sleet, ice storms, blowing and drifting snow and extreme cold (Page 242 – NMHMP, 2018).

To fully gauge the severity and type of winter storm, the National Weather Service has approved the following definitions of winter storm elements:

- Heavy Snowfall – the accumulation of six or more inches of snow in a 12-hour period or eight or more inches in a 24-hour period.
- Blizzard – the occurrence of sustained wind speeds in excess of 35 mph accompanied by heavy snowfall or large amounts of blowing or drifting snow.
- Ice Storm – an occurrence where rain falls from warmer upper layers of the atmosphere to the colder ground, freezing upon contact with the ground and exposed objects near the ground.
- Freezing Drizzle/Freezing Rain – the effect of drizzle or rain freezing upon impact on objects that have a temperature of 32F or below.
- Sleet – solid grains or pellets of ice formed by the freezing of raindrops or the refreezing of largely melted snowflakes. This ice does not cling to surfaces.
- Wind Chill – an apparent temperature that describes the combined effect of wind and low air temperatures on exposed skin.

The National Weather Service have also defined severe winter storms for New Mexico which include:

- 4 to 5 inches of snowfall below 7,500 ft.
- 6 or more inches of snowfall above 7,500 ft. in a 12-hour period
- 6 or more inches of snowfall below 7,500 ft.
- 9 inches of snowfall above 7,500 ft. in a 24-hour period

Much of Cibola County is susceptible to sever winter storms with the higher elevations in the Mt. Taylor Ranger District seeing the most severe storms. Less populated rural communities in higher elevation areas also see more severe storms than centrally populated centers such as the City of Grants and the Village of Milan. According to the Cibola County Multi-Jurisdiction Hazard Mitigation Plan, there are an average of 5.5 snow days per year which results in a total snowfall average of 9.3



Unlike high wind events, the intensity of severe winter storm events is unpredictable. It is noted in the CCHMP that the “probability of 1 severe winter storm annually is high with local knowledge indicating that 2 inches of snow accumulation in the populations is likely during those events”. During these events, much is of the hazard is relegated to freezing temperatures and high wind cause extreme levels of wind chill, and the formation of black ice on roadways.

	Probability Scale		
Hazard Type	Cibola County	City of Grants	Village of Milan
Thunderstorm	High	High	High
Lightning	High	High	High
Hail	Medium	Medium	Medium

### Thunderstorms (with Lightning and Hail)

Cibola, NM

8.7 events/km<sup>2</sup>/year

Lightning Activity Level					
Cloud and Storm Development		Aerial Coverage	Counts cg / 5 min	Counts cg / 15 min	Average cg / min
1	No thunderstorms	None	-	-	-
2	Cumulus clouds are common but only a few reach the towering stage. A single thunderstorm must be confirmed in the rating area. Light rain will occasionally reach ground. Lightning is very infrequent.	<15%	1 - 5	1 - 8	<1
3	Cumulus clouds are common. Swelling and towering cumulus cover less than 2/10 of the sky. Thunderstorms are few, but 2 to 3 occur within the observation area. Light to moderate rain will reach ground, and lightning is infrequent.	15% to 24%	6 - 10	9 - 15	1 - 2
4	Swelling cumulus and towering cumulus cover 2-3/10 of the sky. Thunderstorms are scattered but more than three must occur within the observation area. Moderate rain is commonly produced, and lightning is frequent.	25% to 50%	11 - 15	16 - 25	2 - 3
5	Towering cumulus and thunderstorms are numerous. They cover more than 3/10 and occasionally obscure the sky. Rain is moderate to heavy, and lightning is frequent and intense.	>50%	>15	>25	>3
6	Dry lightning outbreak	>15%	-	-	-

Hailstorms are characterized by abnormal basket like clouds with “dark and portentous exterior, a ragged and ominous-looking opening at the bottom”. The result of such strange cloud formations is precipitation that forms into hailstones. According to the 2018 State Hazard Mitigation Plan, hail is defined as “frozen water droplets formed inside a thunderstorm cloud during strong updrafts of warm air and downdrafts of cold air. The movement of water droplets inside a thunderstorm cloud through warm then cold air causes the droplet to add layers of ice and can become



large before it finally falls to the ground as hail". The size of hail stones range in size from as small as a pea to as large as a softball. As expected, the larger the hail stone the more destructive they can be to humans, buildings, vehicles, crops, and livestock.

Hailstorms are common occurrences throughout the state including here in Cibola County. Most occurrences take place during the late afternoon and evenings of monsoon seasons and higher elevations see more storms than lower elevations. According to the CCHMP, "between 1969 to 2004, there were seven recorded hailstorm events in Cibola County and the current probability of future events is medium in a given year" (Page 72 – CCHMP, 2015).

Overall, thunderstorms bring with them potential for negative impacts including power outages and wildfires caused by lightning strikes, and property damage including structures, vehicles and crops caused by hailstorms.

## Drought

Hazard Type	Probability Scale		
	Cibola County	City of Grants	Village of Milan
Drought	High	High	High

**Table 3.7.9:** Drought Probability Scale. Source: Cibola County Multi-Jurisdiction Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2015.

Drought and New Mexico go hand in hand as it is a common occurrence and predictions are that "periodic drought conditions are likely to continue for the foreseeable future". Drought is a period of abnormally dry weather, sufficiently prolonged by the lack of water and causes serious hydrologic imbalance in the affected area. Lack of rainfall (or snowmelt) for an extended period can bring serious impacts. " Drought increases the probability of wildfires, flash flooding, and has tremendous impacts to wildlife and agricultural activities". Additional economic impacts are felt within the manufacturing, tourism, and outdoor recreation industries as these are reliant on the availability of water (Page 56 – SHMP, 2018).

Drought "magnifies the decades long challenge of balancing limited water supplies with growing demand". According to the 2018 State Hazard Mitigation Plan, drought is defined as "a condition of climatic dryness that reduces soil moisture, water or snow levels below the minimum necessary for sustaining plant, animal, and economic systems". Drought has numerous definitions that are based on meteorological, agricultural, hydrological, and socio-economic effects. Below are definitions associated with drought:

- Meteorological drought is defined by a period of substantially diminished precipitation duration and/or intensity. The commonly used definition of meteorological drought is an interval of time, generally on the order of months or years, during which the actual moisture supply at a given place consistently falls below the climatically appropriate moisture supply

- Agricultural drought occurs when there is inadequate soil moisture to meet the needs of a particular crop at a particular time. Agricultural drought usually occurs after or during meteorological drought, but before hydrological drought and can affect livestock and other dryland agricultural operations.
- Hydrological drought refers to deficiencies in surface and subsurface water supplies. It is measured as stream flow, snowpack, and as lake, reservoir, and groundwater levels. There is usually a delay between lack of rain or snow and less measurable water in streams, lakes, and reservoirs. Therefore, hydrological measurements tend to lag behind other drought indicators.
- Socio-Economic drought occurs when physical water shortages start to affect the health, wellbeing, and quality of life of the people, or when the drought starts to affect the supply and demand of an economic product.
- Ecological drought occurs when natural ecosystems begin to be affected by the lack of water or precipitation in a given area.

Palmer Drought Category Descriptions			
Drought Category	Drought Severity	Description of Possible Impacts	Palmer Drought Index
D0	Abnormally Dry	Going into drought; short-term dryness slowing growth of crops or pastures; fire risk above average. Coming out of drought; some lingering water deficits; pastures or crops not fully recovered	-1.0 to -1.9
D1	Moderate Drought	Some damage to crops or pastures; fire risk high; streams, reservoirs, or wells low, some water shortages developing, or imminent, voluntary water restrictions requested.	-2.0 to -2.9
D2	Severe Drought	Crop or pasture losses likely; fire risk very high; water shortages common; water restrictions imposed.	-3.0 to -3.9
D3	Extreme Drought	Major crop and pasture losses; extreme fire danger; widespread water shortages or restrictions.	-4.0 to -4.9
D4	Exceptional Drought	Exceptional and widespread crop and pasture losses; exceptional fire risk; shortages of water in reservoirs, streams, and wells creating water emergencies.	-5.0 or less

**Table 3.7.10:** Palmer Drought Index. Source: National Drought Mitigation Center, State of New Mexico Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2018

Much like numerous other hazard types reviewed prior, drought can occur anywhere within Cibola County. According to the CCHMP, "there is a high probability of drought in Cibola County in the coming years, even decades to follow". The Impacts of drought can be severe especially for communities that are represented in Cibola County. Numerous rural communities rely on water wells to supply potable water. Within more urbanized communities like Grants and Milan, the importance of water supply is prevalent and still rely on subsurface aquifers to provide a water source. Aquifers are reliant on the surface moisture to replenish and remain at sustainable levels for current and future populations. As drought persists in Cibola County, the sustainability of these water sources is at risk.

Overall, drought proves to be one of the most impactful hazards facing Cibola County. All forms of precipitation are necessary to ensure the sustainability of communities



within the county. Reductions in recent years will trigger and require alternative responses from the community such as improved efficiency, increased preservation, alternative habits, education of risks, and reuse of water. Drought impacts not only everyday life of Cibola residents but the economic vitality of the region through the agricultural, manufacturing, extractives, energy production, tourism, and outdoor recreation industries. With minimal mitigation strategies to eliminate drought, it is a responsibility of the community to ensure that water is treated with respect and is used wisely.

Other Hazards to Consider

Hazardous Materials can include explosives, flammable and combustible substances, poisons, and radioactive materials, including biological, chemical, and radiological substances that could adversely affect the safety of the public, handlers, or carriers during transportation. The manufacturing, transportation, and distribution of such substances (or goods) are classified by the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) as “dangerous goods”.

Hazardous materials spills pose a risk to health, safety, property, or the environment. It is the responsibility of authorized state and federal agencies to identify the spill and dispatch and deploy appropriate emergency response staff to contain and clean up the spill, in accordance to type of material. Such risks can be identified under emergency management preparedness and response plans as well as hazard mitigation plans. Clean-up response and operations are conducted by the emergency management agencies. Due to the nature of certain chemicals and substances, hazardous materials may chemically react (or combust) or explode, resulting in an extremely rapid release of gas and heat that is able to rapidly conflagrate or detonate. As a result, hazardous materials are often subject to chemical regulations.

The Cibola County Fire Department will provide first response to any situation involving hazardous spills or explosion. The State Police Emergency Response Office will assume responsibility for control and coordination of actions in the situation and call on their Hazardous Materials Team (HAZMAT team).

Uranium waste (or radioactive waste) is a type of hazardous waste that contains radioactive material, including uranium and plutonium. In the 1950s, Cibola County became the center and “boomtown” for uranium mining when a Navajo sheepherder, Patricio “Paddy” Martinez, discovered the yellowy substance in Haystack, located some 15 miles northwest of Grants.

The development of the Grants Mining District was critical to uranium extraction and production activities that began in the 1950s into the late 1990s. This uranium belt extends along the southern margin of the San Juan Basin in Cibola, McKinley, Sandoval, and Bernalillo Counties as well as on tribal lands. Today, mill tailings are still present in and around some of the more prominent mines and production sites and ponds. Several mines in this area are under the jurisdiction of NMEMNRD, the EPA and the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED). EPA is working with state, local, and federal partners to assess and address health risks and environmental effects of these mines. Currently, there are 40 Superfund sites, 2 active National Priorities List (NPL) sites, 16 active Non-National Priorities List (NNPL), and 22 archived sites.

A superfund site is any land that has been contaminated by hazardous waste and identified by the EPA as a candidate for cleanup as it poses risks to human health and/or the environment. An NPL is a list of the most hazardous waste sites,

Current U.S. Drought Monitor Conditions for New Mexico: Current

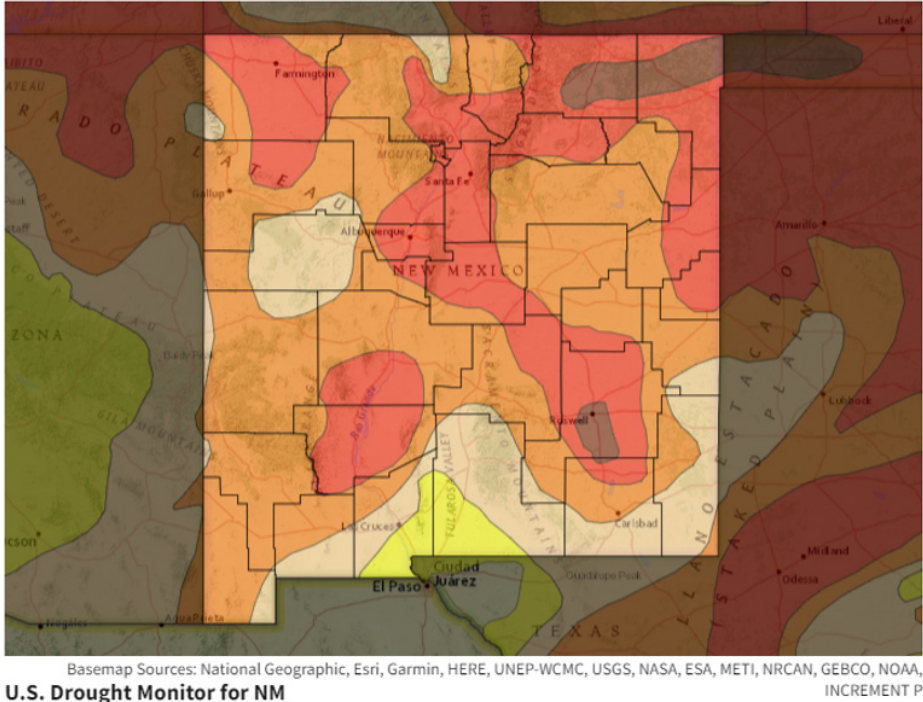


Figure 3.7.6: New Mexico Drought Map. Source: www.drought.gov



identified by the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Information System (CERCLIS), where long-term remedial response actions can only be conducted. An NNPL is a site where assessment, removal, remedial, or oversight activities are being planned or conducted. Archived sites have no further interest by the EPA or the CERCLIS inventory.

Acts of Terrorism should be of major concern in Cibola County and should be included in all local and regional plans, including the hazard mitigation plan and the emergency preparedness plans. All suspicious activities are to be reported to the proper authorities within Cibola County.



**Figure 3.7.7:** Fence Lake Emergency Service Vehicles. Source: [www.cibolacounty.com](http://www.cibolacounty.com)

## Key Take-Aways

### Periodic Updates of Hazard Mitigation Plans

- Take-Away: With ever changing environments, climatic trends, and human activity, the importance of accurate information is critical to preparing for and mitigating hazard events.
- » Translation into Strategy: Every 3-years, it is recommended that Cibola County undergo complete rewrites or updates of the Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan.

### Infrastructure Assessments & Improvements

- Take-Away: Some of the most vulnerable assets within Cibola County are structures, which house critical public services.
- » Translation into Strategy: As part of Hazard Mitigation review processes, Cibola County should consider incorporating structural assessments of public buildings to ensure long-term longevity and risk from hazards and strategically invest in critical infrastructure projects that alleviate hazard risk.

### Continuous support for Emergency Management Department

- Take-Away: Cibola County is vulnerable to numerous types of hazards and requires constant observation and preparedness to ensure hazards are mitigated in a timely manner.
- » Translation into Strategy: Continue and increase support for the Emergency Management Department including introduction of new methods, providing data, encouraging cross-training and collaboration, and increasing personnel.

### Continuous support for Flood Plain Management

- Take-Away: Flooding in Cibola County, especially within the populated centers of Grants and Milan is prevalent.
- » Translation into Strategy: Continue and increase support for the Flood Plain Manager Management Department including introduction of new methods, providing data, encouraging cross-training and collaboration and increasing personnel and update and develop drainage master plans accordingly.

### Information & Education

- Take-Away: In order to become a prepared community, ready to combat and mitigate hazards, it takes a community armed with knowledge.
- » Translation into Strategy: Implement a public education campaign, social media, presence, and provide trainings to educate County residents on hazard mitigation topics.





Hazard Mitigation & Public Safety Goal

**Cibola County strives to ensure community-wide preparedness to reduce the loss life, damage to existing community assets, and to effectively mitigate hazards present within the county.**

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## HM-1: Hazard Mitigation Plan

**Update and improve the County Multi-Jurisdiction Hazard Mitigation Plan every 3 to 5 years to ensure accuracy of data and relevance of preparedness and mitigation strategies.**

- **HM-1a:** Partner with the City of Grants and the Village of Milan to conduct periodic updates to the plan.
- **HM-1b:** Conduct spot hazard mitigation analysis for rural communities outside the urban core.
- **HM-1c:** Develop mechanisms for implementation of the preparedness strategies.

## HM-2: Active Shooter or Domestic Terrorist Strategies

**Within or separate from the Hazard Mitigation Plan, Cibola County should incorporate active shooter or domestic terrorist response strategies to ensure protocols are in place.**

- **HM-2a:** Conduct a review of best practices regarding these types of response plans to ensure effective planning.
- **HM-2b:** Conduct Active Shooter trainings for county staff.
- **HM-2c:** Educate the public on proper response in the event of terrorist acts.

## HM-3: Emphasis on Water and Wildfire Hazards

**Two of the most probable and impactful hazards facing the County are water supply and wildfire hazards. The county should emphasize these two hazards conducting land use decisions and other activities related to the impact of land.**

- **HM-3a:** Conduct a review of best practices on how to incorporate water conservation and wildfire prevention into daily county activities.
- **HM-3b:** Continue to implement and/or develop water conservation plans and strategies to increase the conservation of this finite resource.
- **HM-3c:** Continue to implement and/or update the County's Community Wildfire Protection Plan to reduce and prevent wildfires in the county.

## HM-4: Drainage & Stormwater Master Plans

**Plan and develop drainage master plans within the county including spot analysis of rural communities and problem areas to address flood issues and implement protection and erosion control.**

- **HM-4a:** Update the Regional Drainage Master Plan which includes the urban core of Grants and Milan.
- **HM-4b:** Incorporate spot drainage analysis for rural communities and problem areas within the county.
- **HM-4c:** Work collaboratively with other local governments, tribal entities, and

engineering firms to implement critical drainage infrastructure improvements throughout the county.

## HM-5: Capital Improvements

**Develop a mechanism to ensure the effective update of the Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan (ICIP) and properly include hazard mitigation infrastructure.**

- **HM-5a:** Partner with other local governments and tribal entities to cross-list critical projects to show support and regional significance.
- **HM-5b:** Prioritize multi-faceted projects that improve community amenities but also achieve mitigation strategies.

## HM-6: Public Information

**Implement a public education campaign, increase social media presence, and provide trainings to educate County residents on hazard mitigation topics.**

- **HM-6a:** Provide trainings on wildfire prevention through defensible space creation, vegetation management and fuel reduction.
- **HM-6b:** Provide trainings on flood protection through on-site retention and purchase of flood insurance.
- **HM-6c:** Provide trainings on water conservation techniques and retrofitting; and actions to take during an emergency situation.

## HM-7: Continuity of Operation

**Develop a Continuity of Operation Plan (COOP) to ensure that Cibola County is able to continue to perform essential functions under a broad range of circumstances.**



# Intergovernmental Cooperation

The Intergovernmental Cooperation Element is intended to act as guidance to engage other entities in strategic partnerships aimed at working together for the greater good and benefit of the whole County. The County recognizes that it can only do so much alone and that building alliances, coalitions, and partnerships are critical to organizing and deploying its resources effectively and leverage economies-of-scale and alignment of purpose. During the public involvement process and staff interviews, this topic arose almost every time as a force multiplier that is needed to be built, nurtured, maintained, and expanded because of the various jurisdictions, land statuses, and distribution of people.

It was emphasized that the only way to move the County forward was if everyone was included and involved. The County sees itself as a natural convener and bridge to bring diverse stakeholder groups together on common issues, needs, and opportunities. The County desires to be a leader and accountable for advancing intergovernmental cooperation.

## Intergovernmental Cooperation Overview

To counter local socioeconomic challenges, the County is concerned with (a) identifying assets and resources, and (b) understanding process and procedures that are aimed at completing much needed projects. The idea is to plan for economies of scale as a strategy that gears towards improving the overall quality of life for all citizens and local communities.

Initiatives like strategic infrastructure, economic development, housing, and conservation efforts cannot be led by the County alone and strategic partnerships are critical to advance these projects and their outcomes for the County.

The levels or examples of inter-governmental cooperation include:

- City-Village-County collaborations including continuing and expanding on monthly “Coffee with the Managers” events and quarterly Manager’s Meeting between the Village of Milan and City of Grants with COG facilitating. A good example was the Drainage Master Plan that was a common issue and brought everyone together to plan and development actions to prevent flooding including the San Jose Flood Control District.
- County and Pueblo collaborations to discuss issues, needs, and opportunities in common including fire protection, enforcement, road access, and other topics naturally agreed upon.
- County and Hispanic and Spanish Land Grants collaboration to discuss issues,



**Figure 3.8.1:** Zuni Mountain Trails Master Plan Meeting, NWNMCOG, 2022

needs, and opportunities in common including water, wastewater, and other topics naturally agreed upon.

- County and private sector including subdivision, housing, mixed-use, and economic developers to encourage desirable and planned growth and provide incentives through public-private partnerships.
- Resource-based collaborations including associations like Mt. Taylor/Zuni Mountains Collaborative that interacts with the US Forest Service on plans, projects, and programs. This could include Mount Taylor Traditional Cultural Properties designation and dialogues.
- Regionalization of Services including bringing together water associations to discuss issues and needs in common to facilitate solutions.
- Government and Non-profit Organizations including an annual summit to discuss programs, events, and trends including mutual support needed to continue services.
- Inter-County or County to County relationships including mutual aid agreements and road maintenance sharing agreements.





- Bi-county level including forming and serving on effective Joint Powers Act (JPA) boards like Northwest NM Solid Waste Authority and the Bi-County Electric Generating Facility Economic Development Authority to advance issues and opportunities in common like trash services, recycling, re-purposing the Prewitt Industrial Cluster and promoting the Prewitt Industrial Park.
- Regional level through associations like Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments and even across COG Districts including the broader Four Corners region for issues and opportunities like tourism and outdoor recreation.
- State level through the New Mexico Association of Counties and serving on committees improvement to interests of Cibola County, as well as advocating and educating Legislative Delegation Offices including policy changes in Santa Fe, NM.
  - » **Annual Legislative Forum** – expand into policy changes that are needed at the State level or have quarterly forums to discuss formally with our Legislators.
  - » **Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act** – continue dialogues and promote investments needed in Cibola County with Infrastructure Advisor, Executive, Legislative, and State agencies.
- National level through National Association of Counties and serving on committees and advocating and educating Congressional Offices including policy changes in Washington DC.

### Existing Conditions

As showcased above, Cibola County has been involved in inter-governmental cooperation in various forms. One critical piece is continuity of the process, which does take staffing, capacity, and resource, but accountability and success are key to collaboration. The four C's model could be employed to provide a framework for this approach of:

- Establishing regular and respectful communication
- Prioritizing items that encourage and activate cooperation
- Develop relationships into collaboration
- Coordinating action with evaluation, accountability, and transparency.

Policy officials are a good source of leadership that can be activated as agents of inter-governmental cooperation while staff provides the depth of services and programs. County staff can also provide the memory of these interactions to document and create action plans that can be marshalled with approval from the Manager's Office.

Citizens and community leaders have the energy and understanding to recommend implementation actions and practices that best serve their respective populations. Pueblos, land grants, rural communities and municipalities have created their own ideas and strategies for transportation, infrastructure and land use. To change this, attune the "not my problem" mindset with "how can we help" mindset. Input from public involvement sessions stressed the importance of anchoring and strengthening intergovernmental relations to oblige the 4C's philosophy. Through facilitated public workshops and listening sessions, suggestions and recommendations were stated by local experts, community members and some tribal leaders with regards to how this comprehensive plan should be developed and executed once adopted by the County Commission. Further discussions are still needed to identify in-depth opportunities and coordinating strategies for policies and local projects. Intergovernmental cooperation between all local and regional governances is crucial to addressing issues and stressing collaborative regional planning.



**Figure 3.8.2:** 4Cs model. Source: NWNMCOG, 2022



**Cibola County strives to develop an organizational culture that drives excellence, positive communication and cooperation both internally and externally, while strengthening the County's outreach and working relationships with municipal, tribal & other agencies & communities.**

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## Inter-Governmental Cooperation Policies & Strategies

Leadership in inter-governmental cooperation takes focus, consistency, respect, and constant maintenance of relationships, personalities, and motivations. Policies and strategies need to be clear in direction and consistent in delivery to show the County as a good and faithful actor in moving the common good.

The County has no jurisdiction over sovereign Indigenous lands, lands held in trust by the federal government, or tribal trust lands that are not part of an Indian reservation. In such cases, the County will seek consultation and cooperation from property owners and stakeholders regarding the advancement and development of these policies.

The County's establishment of a central and fully functioning Planning Office is a critical first step in providing the capacity and resources needed in a focused and strategic manner to advance inter-governmental cooperation.

### IG-1: Listening Sessions

**Facilitate annual listening sessions to create respectful dialogue and government-to-government relationships with rural, land grant, and tribal communities.**

- **IG-1a:** Hold annual listening sessions with the tribal entities including Pueblos of Acoma, Pueblos of Laguna, and Ramah Navajo to hear the issues, needs, projects, and opportunities.
- **IG-1b:** Hold annual listening sessions with the Hispanic and Spanish Land Grants to hear the issues, needs, projects, and opportunities.

### IG-2: Cibola Planning Office

**Continue to empower and provide resources for this office to help the County lead on planning and development issues as well as streamline government review and approval process.**

- **IG-2a:** Develop professional development plans for planning office positions based on peer reviews and best practices.
- **IG-2b:** Encourage planning office professional development including those provided by the American Planning Association (APA), International Economic Development Council (IEDC), National Association of Counties (NACo), National League of Cities (NLC), and their New Mexico Chapters.
- **IG-2c:** Collaborate with other government planning departments to synchronize services and support planning activities.

### IG-3: Mutual Support

With limited resources and capacity, the County should develop policies and agreements like Memorandums of Understanding that clearly define what the County can do to assist water associations and special districts, and what the County requires from them in terms of governance, accounting and management.

### IG-4: Joint Land Use Planning

**Work with the City of Grants and Village of Milan to cooperatively develop a plan for City annexation of current County areas and a cooperative extraterritorial planning and zoning plan.**

- **IG-4a:** Establish a review committee to examine potential extraterritorial boundaries based on adjacent land use activities and proposed activities within each municipality.

### IG-5: Strategic Network & Active Partnership

**Determine with staff, officials, governmental and non-governmental entities and resource agencies, which partnerships to seek out and how to manage such partnerships with the intent to support the county and reciprocate services.**

- **IG-5a:** Identify missing support services and target resources that provide services and establish partnerships to bolster effectiveness.
- **IG-5b:** Identify services that are not provided within other jurisdictions and organizations that the county can provide and establish partnerships to have those services incorporated into local frameworks.

### IG-6: Service Improvements

**Seeking collaborative efforts to improve services to unincorporated private communities. The County should encourage entities with authority to take initial steps towards community governance, including special assessment districts for specific purposes like affording a dedicated County Deputy appointed to their community.**

- **IG-6a:** Conduct listening sessions with rural subdivisions to determine the needs of each community and identify ways the county can assist.
- **IG-6b:** Clearly convey the county's role, limitations, and areas of potential assistance to lineout rural resident expectations.

### IG-7: Tribal PILT

**Work with tribal entities and Federal government to expand the payment in lieu of taxes (PILT) program to counties for lands that are held by the Federal government and designated as tribal lands. If approved, this would alleviate tension when tribal entities purchase large private tracts of land and moving them into tribal trust thus removing them from property tax roles.**





# Fiscal Impact

## Fiscal Impact Overview

First and foremost, Cibola County, its staff, and elected officials deserve a lot of credit over the last several years of transforming the fiscal house of the County to regain fiscal management abilities across the organization from financials to budgets, to cash flow, and beyond. From this new vantage point, the County has the ability and capacity to manage day-to-day deviations and make prudent financial decisions, direct allocations and investments aligned with strategic plan priorities, and reinvestment funding into its human and technologic capital.

Cibola County suffers the disadvantage of having a very small tax base; only about 31.4% of the total land base is taxable property, and nearly 68.6% is owned in trust by the Federal or State government. Household income levels are also quite low, thus limiting the generation of public revenues. A significant portion of Cibola County funding comes from outside assistance sources, but public financial needs remain inadequately met, especially in terms of infrastructure and innovative programs such as community development. To support the cost of developing and maintaining its very basic infrastructure, the County looks both to new funding sources – such as increased tax base – as well as strategies that encourage partnering with local jurisdictions and developers to share the financial burden.

The Fiscal Impact Element reviews some of the factors that limit the growth of local public revenues as well as look internal to growing capacities to be as efficient and effective as possible in delivering services and prioritization uses of public funds. Recommendations for solutions emphasize ways to raise capital for strategic investment in the infrastructure that will stimulate growth.

Lastly, the management team at the County has a short-term and very intentional plan to progress forward that should be supported by staff and elected officials to avoid backsliding and to be conservative as we monitor economic conditions.

## Existing Conditions

This section is a reiteration of many parts of the FY22 Final Budget Program and interviews with key staff. The graphic on the next page shows the general fund including a trend of stabilized revenues and operating costs. The County is in good financial position with a healthy reserve that allows them to make strategic investments into building and information technologies as well as strategic projects like the public safety building. The public expects the County not only to be steward of public resources but also make prudent choices to invest back into services, projects, and quality of life initiatives. Despite COVID-19 and lingering effects caused on the economy and the double-whammy of coal markets leading to dramatic closures in the region, the gross receipts tax (GRT) seem stable and increasing slightly. Mainly, this is due to:

- Stimulus packages from the federal government that propped up spending,
- Local distribution enacted by the Legislature, which supplemented the County,
- A new compensating tax for internet sales, and
- Construction projects including major projects on Interstate 40.

As you can see, these sources while stable are not guaranteed to last forever and closely linked to government actions and spending. So, as the State and Federal governments trend so should Cibola County. This reinforces the need for a strategic and aggressive economic development strategy that looks to build private sector industries and diversify the economy with industries that have longer term upsides that are a good fit for the community. Investments should be prioritized heavily with an eye on impact and return on investment, such as infrastructure that spurs private investment, economic activity and generation, and incentivizing the right growth. This needs to be balanced with quality-of-life investments to make Cibola County an attractive place to raise a family, grow a business, come visit, and retire.

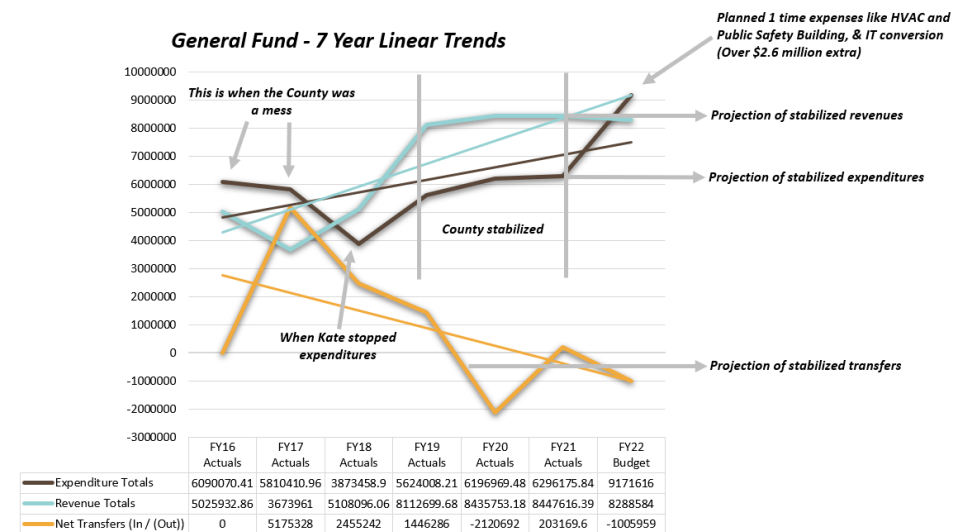


Figure 3.9.1: Cibola County General Fund - 7 Year Trends. Source: Cibola County FY22 Budget Summary

## Inter-Governmental Cooperation Policies & Strategies

### F-1: Fiscal Management

The procedures that Cibola County management team has enacted need to be cemented to financial policies and procedures and re-enforced with staff and elected officials so that they become habits that are constantly improved and baked into the culture.

- **IG-1a:** Hold annual listening sessions with the tribal entities including Pueblos of Acoma, Pueblos of Laguna, and Ramah Navajo to hear the issues, needs, projects, and opportunities.





Fiscal Impact Goal

**Cibola County strives to improve the budgeting and financial management system to ensure the County's financial stability, accountability, and transparency into the future.**

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## F-2: Investments

Strategic investments need to be aligned with the budget and financial plans for the County as well as prioritized with the County's Strategic Plan that is re-assessed annually through a capital improvement process and internal prioritization process that provides the Commission with knowledge to make informed decisions. These investments should look to follow three basic principles.

- **F-2a:** Invest in our People. The race for human talent is the number one issue facing business and government today. The County should complete and implement its County Employee Compensation Study and invest in the stayers that made sacrifices and stayed with the County during a tough period. The County can also develop new approaches to grow its own talent pool through mentorships and internships and have a succession plan that includes integrating retired professionals as volunteers, consultants, or coaches.
- **F-2b:** Invest in the Organization. Technology continues to change the world as we know it at an ever-growing pace. It can also be a great equalizer for smaller organization and rural communities to automate workflows and communicate over great distances. It can help with efficient delivery of services and save professional staff time for the routine and move it into the strategic. Workplace and customer satisfaction also need consideration in terms of County facilities, equipment, software integrations, and vehicles. These are the tools that improve the organization, so re-invest in them is critical to the success of the County.
- **F-2c:** Invest in the Community. Public resources are for a public purpose and a public good, so the County should prioritize investments back into the communities that improve quality-of-life, drive economic activity, and develop equitable and sustainable communities. Investments can take different shapes in the form of one-time projects whether traditional or transformative to recurring investments in service providers that tackle social issues or promote programs that align with the County's strategic goals. This can echo out a step further in terms of incentivizing housing development, conducting a retail leakage study and strategy, and supporting a robust business recruitment & expansion program where the County and its partners visit the top employers ever year.

There are coordinated investments that can help all three, for example, the County Commission's decision to create a new Planning Department to streamline and align planning and development services to work effectively with private developers. In this case, you are promoting and empowering people with the tools they need to succeed, and aligned this with community and economic goals.

## F-3: Buildings & Properties

One area that is important for governments to actively work is restoring, recycling, and returning properties and buildings back into productive use whether its housing, greenspace, business, and community purposes. The County has done a good job in moving properties back onto the tax roles or utilize these spaces for

public good. The flip side is reducing County liability. Many times, the County is approached to buy a property or building, or even someone wanting to donate. The County should implement a review policy that includes a phase I environmental assessment to alleviate risks or potential clean-up costs as well as understand what the re-use plan is going to be based on community input.

## F-4: Cost & Revenue Sharing

The County should explore cost and revenue sharing intergovernmental agreements for partnering on facilities construction, maintenance, and provision of services. Some examples that could be pursued are:

- **F-4a:** A tribal payments in-lieu of taxes could be explored as a means to enable County participation in extending services to tribal trust and allotment land.
- **F-4b:** Road construction and maintenance joint agreements, likewise, have promise for cooperative fiscal impact response.

In the past, opportunities for intergovernmental investments from tribal entities have been successful and could be expanded. The County partnership with Pueblo of Laguna to build a fire station and then turn operation over to the Pueblo.

## F-5: Federal, State, & Local Policy

Be alert and weigh-in on policy changes at the Federal and State levels that adversely affect the County ability to raise resources or add unfunded mandates.

- **F-5a:** Continue to actively work on Cooperative Leadership and Regional Collective actions that can better pool its resources and collaborate on projects both locally with City of Grants and Village of Milan but also with tribal entities such as Ramah Navajo and Pueblos. Implement regular meetings to discuss joint operating programs and performance.
- **F-5b:** Active engage the New Mexico Association of Counties and partner with other counties on strategies and policies to bring down costs for detention services and liability costs and continue to advocate together for increased funding support from the State of New Mexico.
- **F-5c:** Encourage engineering and design service firms to have an office in the County to be able to charge and collect GRT on projects be planned and designed in the County through public resources.
- **F-5d:** Review County Investment Policy and assess other Counties approaches to grant writing and attracted Federal, State, and foundational dollars to leverage local investments.
- **F-5e:** Review the County Employee Professional Development program and approach private sector about scholarships for attending leadership programs.
- **F-5f:** Continue County budget and audit management process as well as enact policies regarding the hospital as component unit like Las Vegas, NM.





# IMPLEMENTATION

## Implementation Overview

Implementation of a comprehensive plan is moving from vision to reality. Effective implementation is the difference between having a good plan on paper and having a great community on the ground. Unfortunately, far too often a comprehensive plan is viewed as having little weight, is merely a guiding document, and that if not developed to include implementable actions, is likely to find its way to the shelf.

Implementation of comprehensive plans typically fall into three main categories:

1. **Regulatory** – Regulation that dictates land use activities including location, form, and character;
2. **Capital** – Capital projects which are likely catalytic in nature and conducted by the local government; and
3. **Programming** – Programming which include initiatives that local governments participate in or support but are often led by outside organizations.

## Comprehensive Plan Implementation

The governing body and staff are slated to provide administration and oversight of the Cibola County Comprehensive Plan. Provision and oversight are intended to foster success and achievement of goals and the implementation of strategies and actions that move the county forward.

Cibola County has initiated a new process to help with the implementation of the comprehensive plan. During the development of the comprehensive plan, Cibola County led by the Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments, underwent strategic planning activities that not only assist with the implementation of the comprehensive plan but also provided key qualitative data to assist with the development of the overarching goals and strategies that will guide all future activities of the county.

The Cibola County Strategic Plan is slated to act as the immediate action plan for county administration. The plan will utilize the framework of the comprehensive plan and will incorporate vetted input from county staff. The plan is perceived to be developed and updated annually to include implementable projects that can be monitored and reported accurately while also providing much needed positive outcomes for the community and the internal operations of the county. Implementation of the strategic plan will be led by the Cibola County Manager and will integrate department work programs, goals, performance metrics and must tie to larger goals and strategies of the comprehensive plan. The immediate action plan should include administrative, operational, capital, and policy actions.

The County Commission will ultimately determine the framework of the strategic

plan, but to ensure seamless implementation of the comprehensive plan, the strategic action plan is recommended to follow the recently approved and adopted long-range community plan.

## Amendments and Revisions

It is widely recommended by numerous federal and state agencies and planning organizations that comprehensive plans be reviewed annually and updated every 5-years. Additionally, with the incorporation of strategic planning into county procedures, the Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments recommends that the County contract with consultants to update and develop annual strategic action plans that utilize the comprehensive plan as a guide to set short, mid, and long-term actions. The Council of Governments also recommends that the County, as part of the strategic planning process, incorporate performance measures and annual reports to monitor progress, review achievements and highlight shortfalls.

As time passes, the comprehensive plan will be faced with changes at ground level within all jurisdictions of the county. These changes will challenge the accuracy of the comprehensive plan and could lead to the need for amendments. When appropriate, the Cibola County Commission can ratify changes to the comprehensive plan. However, it is important to note that amendments to the comprehensive should be weighed against the need for complete update. Some changes require less time and effort while others require significant resources, staff time, and ability to modify the plan accordingly. Changes to the plan should not be made without careful consideration.

## Large Amendments

Larger and more complex amendments to the comprehensive plan would occur when proposed changes of conditions are seen or when new development is considered, both of which would have to significantly alter the trajectory of the grand vision. These types of amendments may be justified on a case-by-case level but likely include significant development activities that require significant resources. An example of larger amendments based on development activities include potential shifts in focus areas for master planning and development activities such as shifting from downtown redevelopment to industrial park development as a response to closures regional economic base industries.

## Minor Revisions

Minor revisions are likely to occur more frequently than large amendments and include miniscule changes such as text changes, updates to maps, data, and images.



These changes do not impact the grand vision of the plan and are merely revisions to improve the accuracy of the information provided to the public. Numerous minor revisions over a short period of time could potentially shift the balance of the plan. County staff must be aware of this trend and acknowledge that the plan could potentially no longer reflect community needs and desires of its residents.



**Figure 4.1.1:** Cibola County Commission Meeting. Source: <https://www.facebook.com/CibolaCountyCommission>

## Management

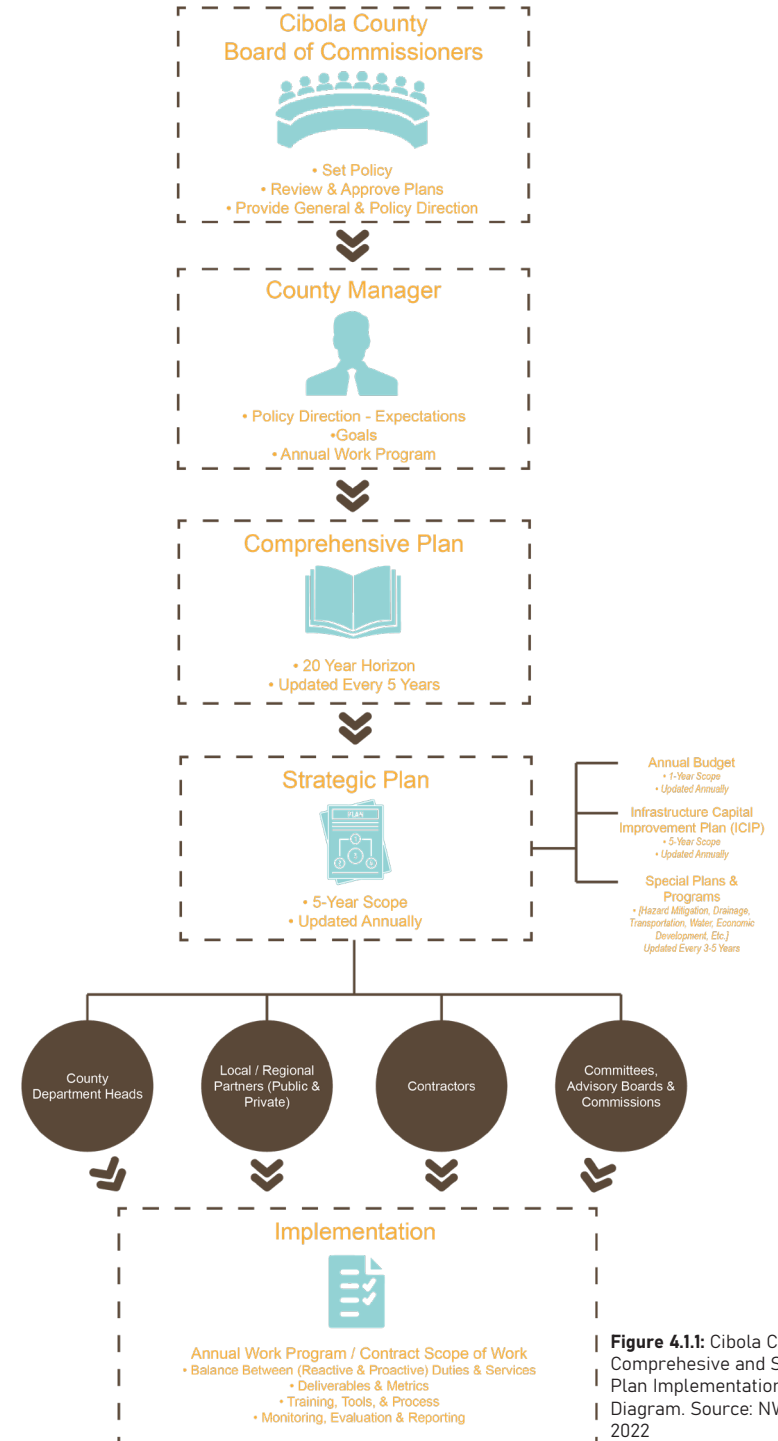
Implementation of the Cibola County Comprehensive Plan including the more detailed Strategic Action Plan hinders on the ability of county staff to manage the implementation tools.

First and foremost, the Cibola County Commission should buy-in into the strategic planning process and encourage the implement of the action plan. With buy-in from the County Commission, management staff can confidently work to implement the most immediate actions and feel supported throughout the process. Management staff should take direction from the commission, set expectations, and reiterate goals and actions on a regular basis.

## Performance Measures & Regular Monitoring

It is important that implementation of the comprehensive plan through the strategic action plan is monitored. The strategic action plan provides the opportunity for the county to develop mechanisms and methods that require the implementation of the comprehensive plan and allows for department specific responsibilities. The utilized mechanism and/or method to monitor progress ultimately can be used to depict the effectiveness and accuracy of the comprehensive plan.

Mechanisms and/or methods employed can also be used to evaluate staff based on the actions included into the plan. Management staff is responsible for regular check-ins with implementing staff and should monitor progress and report back to the commission. Ultimately, the implementation of the strategic action plan is a reflection of the effectiveness of management staff and can be used to evaluate this select group of county employees.



**Figure 4.1.1:** Cibola County Comprehensive and Strategic Plan Implementation Diagram. Source: NWNMCOG, 2022



# APPENDICES

