

**Vision 2040 Citizen and Neighborhood Focus Group Meeting
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Participants:

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Question 1: In one sentence, describe the character of Las Cruces and Doña Ana County –e.g. “Our region is...” What makes this area unique?

- Diverse and growing population surrounded by desert, agriculture and low density residential. The City of Las Cruces has the oldest and the newest residences. The character is derived from the mountains, which are right in amongst us; the desert with its sparse vegetation, cactus, mesquite and arroyos over vast distances and the river with the farmland it makes possible. Within a relatively small region there is every challenge of growth – shortage of resources (especially water), need to infill older areas, need for modern urban growth and modernization of colonias
- Las Cruces is a City nestled in Mesilla Valley experiencing tremendous growth threatening quality of life; geographically located along I-25 and I-10, west of panoramic Organ Mountains. Doña Ana is a huge county with multiple representative land forms including mountains, Rio Grande, escarpment, farmland, arroyos and irrigation canals. It has abundant public and state lands - all in Chihuahua Desert
- Las Cruces is a small city-an agricultural city that has a small historical area. Factors that draw people to our area include: weather, beautiful mountains, closeness of residents, affordability of housing for retirees and the desert
- City of Las Cruces and Doña Ana County still have characteristics rising from historic land use and water rights – colonial and territorial. Radium Springs/Fort Selden (unincorporated area 15 miles north of the City of Las Cruces) – farms, ranches, recreation, history and geographical features give it a dynamic identity. Increasing residential clusters are prompting need to address regulation and service demands. Current population consists of families that have been there for three or four generations, retired people from all over the US and many seeking relief from growth in other places. Sixty percent of population is at or below poverty - mix of Hispanics and white. Vibrant and many talents in these neighbors who appreciate the rural/semi-rural beauty and peace.
- Neighborhoods are a mix of housing types; access to undeveloped desert; open space with some Jornada Mogollon sites; proposed development

- High range is bounded by the flood control dam on the west and the Sonoma Ranch Development on the East. Blend of Spanish colonial, Mexican Native American and White heritage (culture, architecture, traditions, and values). Weather is pleasant and encourages outdoor activity.
- A high desert river valley bordered by mesas and mountains that make it a unique mix of riparian, desert, open area with a mild climate. Attractions include agricultural, NMSU, semi-rural living opportunities with year round recreation and a lot of open space. It is fragile in terms of water, erosion, plant life and character if development continues at its present pace without area wide planning with teeth. Major public land owners (BLM and New Mexico) have a huge impact as they manage their lands

Question 2: How will significant future growth impact the region's neighborhoods?

Where growth should occur

- Developed should be infill of the city and ETZ where already zoned and where infrastructure is already planned and can be extended. Consider arroyos and historical sites as existing infrastructure and plans develop (2X)
- Growth will continue on East Mesa until saturated – should consider development on West Mesa where road network can be developed
- Growth to Las Cruces is best placed in downtown area – combine businesses with over store or cluster housing – retirees would be close to stores and medical services – growth would encourage revitalization of downtown
- Growth should be in carefully delineated regions of the County (whole county not just Las Cruces); preserve farmland, arroyos, natural open space; cluster growth/jobs; transportation tying all things together
- Establish where not to grow by establishing green infrastructure - mountains, escarpment and Rio Grande along with farmland and wetland buffers. Connectivity between these areas via arroyos and irrigation canals. All 100-year floodplains and buffers are not to be developed. Remaining areas can be thoughtfully planned or left open via Sector/Sub area planning process
- Not on farmland or arroyos; where it is not likely to harmonize with existing neighborhood

Positive growth

- Economic development that makes sense in terms of resources, climate and existing communities , coupled with county wide planning would be good
- Growth around existing villages and communities should meet a design that addresses total impact (water, school, traffic flow) and consistency features expressed by comprehensive plans reflecting village or community input
- Not a lot basically. I'm here - shut the door. Best is to meet the challenge and provide a great place for everyone to live. Figure our sustainability, good jobs and build a total system
- A better planning process with qualified people

- Better restaurants, educational and cultural events, museum; consistent with environmental pressure to support plan for water planning

Negative growth

- Growth that just puts lines on a paper without considering arroyos, farms, existing neighborhoods, recreation and conservation and economic maintenance will be costly. BLM and State Land Office and public input are very important up front
- East Mesa development will cause negative impacts on traffic, flood control and reduce scenic quality
- It will distract from the responsibility for the welfare and service of the whole county due to small tax base
- Resources sprawl - lack of control- degraded quality of life
- Lacking resources; visual blight; air pollution
- Water issues, diminishing open space and farmland, crowding, density , poorly planned

Growth in your neighborhood

- Our areas are mostly large lot subdivisions and will be impacted by whether positive or negative development occurs
- Our neighborhood is complete with the exception of two lots which are presently owned by the adjoining homeowners. Since we are a loop the only affects new development has on us is traffic as we try to leave our neighborhood
- Radium needs Historic Village designation to allow zoning and regulation to work for the design that preserves its historic and natural features
- Hold limit on development to the east – preserve Organs-Franklins
- My area will be developed to existing zoning with hopeful acquisition of flood prone lands and farmland preservation and arroyo preservation. We need to do sector planning to look at community as a whole
- Change of character - loss of open space

Question 3: How can the completed Vision 2040 Regional Planning Project best benefit the region's neighborhood?

- Respond to the community
- Use best practices in sustainable development (2X)
- Parks with walking trails
- Recreation centers for all citizens – nonexclusive
- Help design makers to integrate sound development practices for increasing population growth and existing infrastructure to meet public needs and goals
- Create a plan – stick with it

- Develop a plan for the entire county
- Have new ideas
- Make it practical, workable
- Educate people that it exists
- Implement with ordinances for cities, county and village
- Provide a real enforceable guide and control for development (2X)
- Be more than just a guideline – provide power to people to control
- Bring every citizen and stakeholder in to the process
- Have teeth to apply and look at the entire area
- Design standards that fit the area
- “Real” open space in developments
- Use arroyos as infrastructure to connect and recreate
- Actually have BLM and State Land Office be responsive to area residents and have residents involved up front
- Take what is good from Albuquerque Plans, Pima County Plans etc. and apply here
- Legislation and ordinances to back Vision 2040 Plan for sustainable future
- Vision 2040 should have a stipulation that any proposed development must have a viable plan for recovering as much water as the proposed development will draw
- Neighborhood First Ordinance (see El Paso and Albuquerque) with education including:
 - Neighborhood Liaisons (City and County)
 - Neighborhood Advisory Council to City and County
 - Early Neighborhood Notification Ordinance
 - Neighborhood Sector Planning / Neighborhood Overlay
 - Bill of Rights for Neighborhoods
- Land Trust to acquire land or development rights
- Local food source – reruralization