

**Vision 2040 Housing & Social Services Focus Group Meeting
March 3, 2008**

Participants:

Peggy Shinn
David Dollahon
Greg Sanchez
Karim Martinez
Theresa Garrett
Rose Garcia

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?

- A unique and favorable climate and the diversity and heritage of its people
- Marked with great people and an environment made up of locals and new residents that have experienced substantial growth
- A vibrant, growing community with great people that is at a crossroads in growth and development
- A multicultural community that includes many families with limited resources who face many challenges
- Large county filled with several small towns with completely different needs, cultures and populations – limited resources outside Las Cruces
- A dynamic growth area of proximity to the US and Mexico. Effective growth management offers much opportunities and challenges to the quality of life of residents

Question 2: What are the three most important opportunities and or potentials for the region? What are the three most important challenges the region faces?

Opportunities/Potential

- Weather (2X)
- border proximity (2X)
- Leverage experience of new residents and dollars (2X)
- Implement affordable housing policies
- Develop affordable housing (2X)
- Stabilize and train workforce that will attract jobs
- Huge area/space for growth
- Develop public transportation
- Develop infrastructure that encourages physical activity
- Develop better access to health care
- Nice environment
- Great people

- Great standards
- Implementation of the 2040 Plan – City and County acting as facilitators rather than just administrators

Challenges

- Water –sustainability (2X)
- Balanced development – affordability (2X)
- Health care for everyone
- The will of city and county to facilitate the implementation of affordable housing
- Developers to commit to providing affordable housing
- Addressing impediments to housing
- Different cultures within the County tend to clash (2X)
- Using historic preservation for housing, economic development and to preserve history
- Lack of resources and access to available resources
- Limited funding for social services due to perceived lack of need from lack of ability to access resources
- Income levels vs. housing costs
- Lack of support for transportation services
- Large indigent population, large number of families who need healthcare,
- Access to healthcare (2X)
- Educated/skilled workers
- Ambulance
- Land prices for affordable housing
- Limited or continuously reduced funding sources
- Income differences between locals and new residents
- Getting new residents to understanding that they are moving to an industrial zone not a bucolic area. Agriculture is an industrial use.
- Using preservation as an umbrella concept that includes wilderness and history

Question 3: How can the social services community become better equipped to handle significant future population growth?

- Resources and money coupled with strong public sentiment to support public official's support of the efforts
- Planned growth – connectivity, livability
- Focus growth towards East Mesa, not Valley or west
- Valley - development rights; keep it less dense; agriculture and new development are somewhat incompatible
- Better coordination between the different agencies
- Better advertising of fellow agency services
- Problem is not lack of availability of resources, it is poor allocation of resources and lack of political will

Question 4: How can the completed Vision 2040 Regional Planning Project best benefit the social services community?

- Address issues of education, health, housing affordability which result from underlying issue of poverty and poverty consciousness (3X)
- Economic solutions that raise wages and income – though not easy to build into a regional land plan
- Vacant homes – code enforcement in need of additional staff overall
- Health insurance
- Domestic violence – safe houses
- Living wages (2X)
- Transportation to access services (2X)
- Safety/security
- Housing rehabilitation for elderly and disabled
- In-home care to avoid nursing homes
- Daycare
- Sportsplexes
- Respect cultures (2X)
- Intergenerational services and housing
- Roundtable Strategic Plan input
- Plan needs to have teeth and not just sit on a shelf – language in recommendations is critical
- Include timeframe for Plan implementation
- Focus on actual services needed
- Include priorities for the housing and social services community (needs-gap analysis) with coordination for services between local governments and non-profits
- Don't overkill on safety and aesthetics-must be a compromise that is inexpensive to maintain and meets the needs of the society