

Vision 2040 Utilities/Infrastructure Focus Group Meeting
March 3, 2008
Workbook Summaries

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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?

In general:

- Expansive areas of open spaces, which draw myriads of people to the area to retire and live
- Attractive desert landscape surrounded by mountains
- Mild climate
- Low traffic
- Proximity to the US-Mexico border, multi-cultural
- Strong agricultural economic base; unique because there is farming all along the Río Grande
- Availability of higher education, research and development of NMSU
- Diversity, cross cultural, multicultural
- Diversity of needs, goals and expectations from government, managers and officials
- Water use is costly and controlled by farming practices (50% + water used by farmers and ranchers)
- Many tourist attractions to see during one-day trips

City of Las Cruces:

- City is in a very diversified area (ethnicity, residential areas, opportunities, travel, growth)
- Las Cruces is one of the oldest settlements in New Mexico
- Las Cruces still has its own culture despite being threatened by growth
- City’s new transplants arrive with great service expectations; this contrasts with the expectations of residents who require basic services

Doña Ana County:

- County has lower economic status, despite the influx of new middle to upper class residents
- Region is beautiful and diverse, with few natural disasters
- A region that will experience tremendous growth in population as a direct result of national demographics (ie. aging, retiring baby boomers that want to relocate to warmer climates)
- Our region is unique because it is growing at rate faster than we can catch up with it
- Our area is unique because it is constantly growing as people want to be in a rural area setting away from high density with green space and access to recreational areas

Question 2: What are the three most challenging issues related to utility and infrastructure development?

In general:

- Density
- Educating communities in rural areas to be open to changes that are good for them
- Infrastructure is very hidden, blends in with the environment
- Infrastructure systems are aging and face greater demands due to growth
- Growth pressures on small water systems
- Growth pressure on City of Las Cruces to provide services outside of its boundaries
- Lack of sound county-wide development policies
- Rules and regulations and their effect on planning and development
- Location of facilities- industrial and subdivision
- Prioritizing needs and areas of needs is an overwhelming task
- Maintaining ability to grow
- Utilities try to be strict with developers but it is not politically acceptable
- Staying at the pace or ahead of development and maintaining our existing system
- Protecting our natural resources
- Lack of regionalized services
- Lack of knowledge about the effects of regionalization
- Lack of a Regional Storm Drainage Plan
- Protecting critical infrastructure
- Storm drainage and flash floods
- Water supply
- Fire flows and ability to sustain adequate service (3)
- Water conservation
- Water and wastewater treatment
- Water rights vs. community needs
- Cost vs. benefit of providing natural gas and propane systems; Natural gas not available for customers on the East Mesa and some areas in the West Mesa. Some customers interested in having access to natural gas rather than propane.
- Maintenance of natural gas and propane systems
- Solid waste management; difficulty in identifying where to put transfer stations; property costs, trying to create a service area, trying to increase commodity to increase revenue
- Public safety services need to meet the demand for public health and safety of residents and visitors

Expectations, demand, cost, funding, liability:

- Cost of providing infrastructure services is high (2) and difficult when you have low income areas mixed with wealthier retirees
- Cost of new wells/pumping
- Lower aquifer (cost of desalination)
- Cost of services is increasing (internet, recycling, alternative energy and adding bells and whistles)
- Demand for affordable renewable energy outpaces economic realities
- Providing cost-effective quality services to meet needs of customers (2) while compliance with new regulations keeps increasing infrastructure costs
- Cost of providing both water and wastewater services in rural areas is high, and most areas are already serviced mostly by private wells and septic systems
- Flood control infrastructure hugely expensive, but used rarely, and can't be built in increments. People don't want to pay for flood control infrastructure until a large flood happens. In old times, people didn't have to get sued if area got flooded. It was ok to build dams everywhere. Now, the liability of owning a dam is too great.
- Lack of funding for capital construction and system maintenance (2)
- Funding is not available for natural gas
- Crying poor will get us nowhere
- Retaining qualified personnel

Question 3: How can the region's utilities and infrastructure better prepare for growth?

- Coordinated infrastructure planning for utilities (water, sewer, roads, drainage) (3)
- Work with developers to provide infrastructure
- Coordinate public-private partnerships
- Long range planning and strategic plans to show public what funds will be spent on
- Recognize where growth is occurring
- Smart growth to consolidate planning areas for large development to keep infrastructure costs down
- Prioritize funding and projects
- Regionalized utilities with centralized management (3)
- Reach out to people to help them understand that better infrastructure costs more of their money (3)
- Become better at getting federal and state monies
- Innovate
- Purple pipe- reclamation
- Provide propane and natural gas

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

- Find an effective way to deal with the region's politics and create consensus on regional issues between all of the entities in our region (cities, towns, etc.) (2)
- Provide insight into the resolution of utility service area disputes (2). We are beginning to see overlapping facilities, but this equals wasted resources. This is complex issue in terms of differing utility standards, historic claims, etc.
- Provide a real regional framework, regional planning document (4)

- Integrate all infrastructure topics to the plan
- Plan should identify where infrastructure is needed (2)
- Develop list of infrastructure need for each utility including cost
- Address regional drainage issues
- Address needs of low-income areas
- International fire code- fire flows
- Determine a way to prioritize projects to dovetail together
- Don't fund based on population but on the regional Plan
- Coordination and respecting each other's right to co-exist
- Support small water system improvements
- Offer incentives for farmers and ranchers to improve nitrate management
- Help community feel safer and well informed
- Centralize the utility system (2)