



Alamosa

A Master Plan
2008



Table of Contents

Chapter 1	Guiding Principles - A Vision Statement	
Chapter 2	Introduction 1.0 -	
	Purpose & Use of Plan	2.2
	Government Statutes	2.3
	Amendment Process	2.6
	Public Process	2.7
Chapter 3	Existing Conditions	
	Demographic indicators	3.2
	Population projections	3.4
	Housing indicators	3.5
	Population trends	3.6
	County data	3.7
Chapter 4	Public Facilities, Services & Fiscal Considerations	
	Solid waste	4.1
	Water & wastewater	4.2
	Public schools	4.4
	Fire protection & EMS	4.5
	Fiscal trends	4.6
	Revenue mechanisms	4.8
Chapter 5	Community Economics	
	Basic economic indicators	5.2
	Size of firms	5.4
	Households & non-labor income	5.6
	Agriculture	5.6
	Available land for residential & commercial	5.9
	Commercial build-out potential	5.11
	Economic Development	5.15
	Overview of existing efforts	
	Alternative energy	
	Hooper & Mosca	5.16
	Goals & Policies	5.16
Chapter 6	Future Land Use	
	Land use element	6.1
	Public involvement	6.2
	Community-developed land use alternatives	6.3
	Goals & Policies	
	Rural transition areas	6.5
	Sand dunes corridor	6.6
	Wildland interface	6.7
	Working agriculture	6.8
	Communities	6.9

Recreation & Cultural Amenities		Chapter 7
Introduction	7.1	
Inventory of Facilities	7.1	
Opportunities & Challenges	7.3	
Goals & Policies		
Open Space	7.4	
Recreational Opportunities	7.5	
Park Facilities	7.6	
Agriculture & Natural Resources		Chapter 8
Agricultural Resources	8.1	
Scenic Resources	8.2	
Natural Hazards	8.3	
Mining & Energy Development	8.4	
Wildlife Habitat	8.6	
Water Quality	8.8	
Air Quality	8.9	
Transportation		Chapter 9
Unincorporated Alamosa Transportation Plan		
Existing Conditions	9.1	
Policies For Existing Road System	9.3	
Intergovernmental Transportation Planning	9.4	
County Roads & Future Land Use	9.7	
Implementation		Chapter 10
Introduction	10.1	
Goals & Policies		
Stakeholders & Priorities	10.1	
Funding, Regulatory, Monitoring	10.2	
Master Plan Updates	10.3	

Acknowledgements

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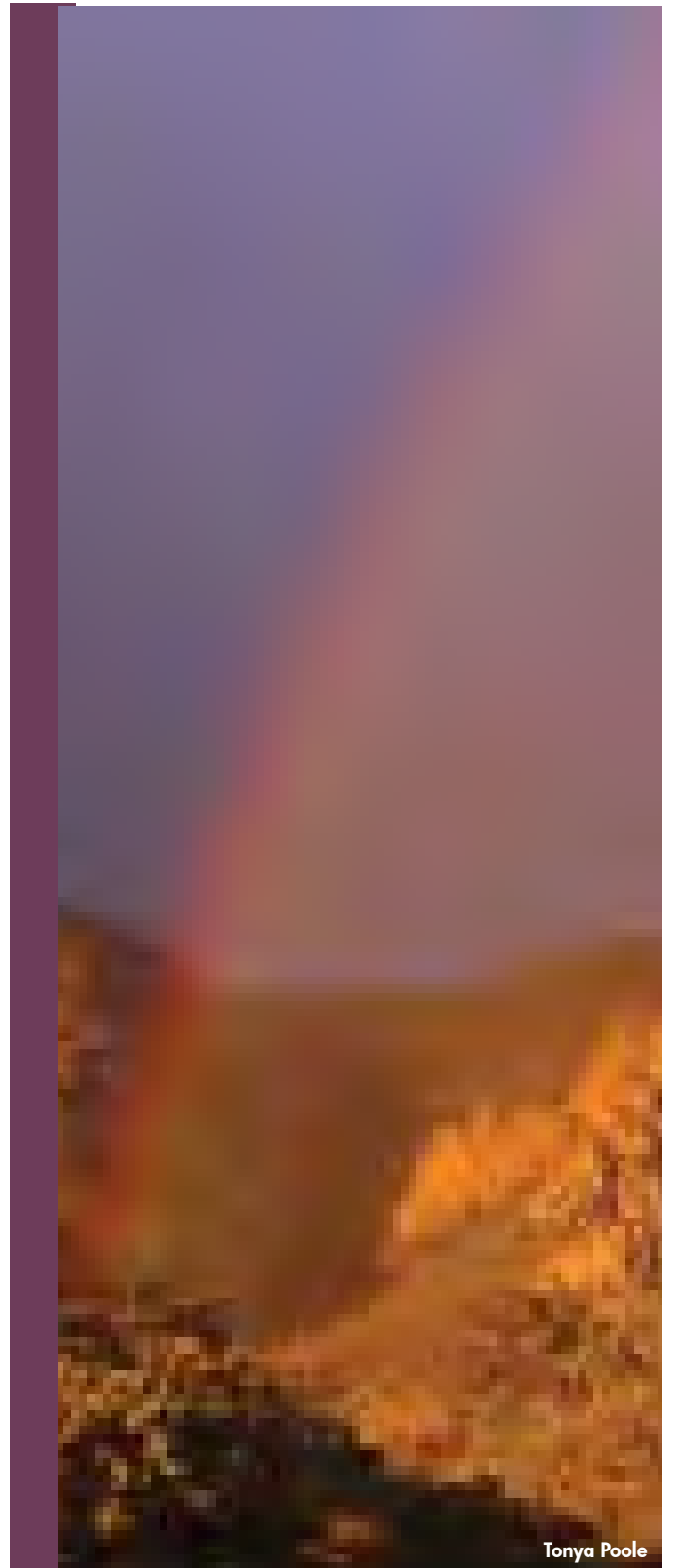
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Alamosa Area Vision for Success

Several common themes emerged from the master planning process. These themes are necessarily general but reflect Alamosa-area citizen desire for the future condition of the County and community. Alamosa citizen visions primarily focus on the area's heritage, natural resources and economy.

- Quality of life will be preserved by maintaining key area resources and is further enhanced through easily accessible recreational opportunities and high quality public assets and services.
- By thoughtfully realizing more value from resources already contained in Alamosa County, the community can increase prosperity, further innovation, maintain and expand its unique economy, enjoy world class landscapes and foster a vibrant, cohesive community.
- Agriculture is, has been, and continues to be an important economic driver. Agricultural activities exert powerful and important positive influences on the economy and culture of Alamosa County.
- Agriculture benefits local farmers and business owners rather than national-scale businesses while value added agricultural products broaden the spectrum of opportunities in the agricultural market.
- Water rights currently used on land in Alamosa County remain in the County; exporting water resources should be minimized.
- The community will preserve and promote its heritage and historic downtowns.
- The Rio Grande River is embraced as the centerpiece of Alamosa utilized for a variety of recreational activities and will remain accessible to all, while users are sensitive to habitat values along the river.
- Alamosa County is interested in becoming a state and national center of alternative energy innovations and development.
- Alamosa will ensure that all new development enhances, rather than degrades, the existing service levels and expects that all new residents and businesses will contribute their fair share towards this objective.
- Downtown Alamosa is a vibrant and prosperous commercial area, providing goods and services for locals and visitors in a welcoming, historic setting easily accessed on foot. All future planning efforts will maintain and expand on this existing asset.
- Hooper and Mosca are important components of the area's appeal and would benefit from additional development and improvement as commercial and residential areas.
- Alamosa recognizes and enjoys the value of its world-class views. All future actions and policies will work towards the maintenance of these



Guiding Principles A Vision for the Future

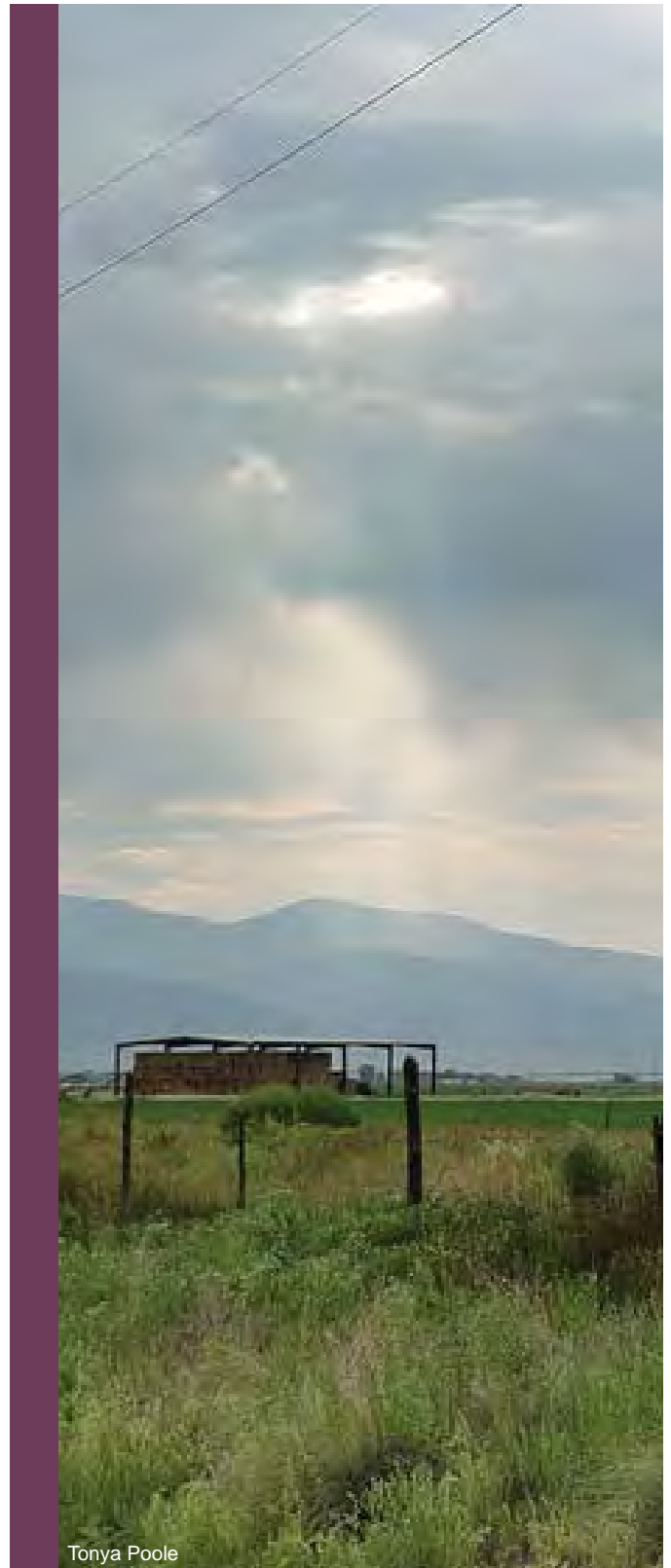


view corridors.

- Alamosa is a place where individual liberties are respected under the constitution of the United States of America and people are allowed the fullest balance of liberties with regard to use of private property and the needs of area residents as a whole.



History of Alamosa
Purpose of the Plan
Local Government Statutes
Amendment Policy



Tonya Poole

Introduction & Brief History of Alamosa County

Alamosa means “cottonwood grove” and was originally given to a creek within the County by Spanish pioneers. The name was next given to the City and finally to the County itself. Alamosa County was formally carved from the northern portions of Conejos and Costilla counties in 1913. The County has a total area of 724 square miles with only about one square mile of this land area as water. Alamosa County is located in south central Colorado at an average elevation of 7,544 feet. The San Luis Valley holds the distinction of being the largest alpine valley in the world.

County development was originally influenced by mining in the late 19th century as well as agricultural interests and timber harvesting. Alamosa became a major commerce hub of the San Luis Valley as it received products from external markets and exported significant quantities of agricultural products.

The Rio Grande National Forest, and ample recreation opportunities associated with the San Luis Valley, have been attracting new residents and visitors for nearly a century. Not only a provider of recreation, the forests are also a key economic resource. The Rio Grande National Forest first came under government control in 1891 with the authorization of the Timber Reserves Act in 1891. The Great Sand Dunes National Monument was originally established by Herbert Hoover in 1932. On November 22, 2000, Congress passed the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve Act of 2000, which authorized the expansion of the national monument into a national park almost four times its original size. As part of the Act of 2000, roughly 42,000 acres of national forest wilderness area were immediately transferred to National Park Service (NPS) management, and were renamed the Great Sand Dunes National Preserve. The San Luis Lakes State Park also offers outstanding outdoor recreation on the valley floor.

The County possesses many natural, cultural and civic assets. Foremost of which is perhaps Adams State College founded in 1921 and now a bachelor and master degree-granting college.

Number of Sunshine Days: 350
Average Summer Temperature: 65 degrees F
Average Winter Temperature: 14 degrees F
Average Annual Precipitation: 7.6 inches
Average Annual Snowfall: 41.7 inches

The climate of the San Luis Valley is marked by moderate summers and cold winters, light precipitation and much sunshine. In Alamosa, 80 percent of the annual precipitation occurs from April to October, most of it as scattered,



Introduction

Purpose of the Plan

light showers from thunderstorms that develop over the mountains and move into the valley during the afternoon. More than half of these thunderstorms occur during July and August.

Winter snow, which occurs mainly in frequent light falls, average less than 40 inches per year, with occasional falls as early as September or as late as May. A good snow cover will remain on the ground for several weeks during the coldest months. The growing season averages about 90 days in Alamosa, increasing to over 100 days in the areas north and west of the City. July and August are usually the only frost-free months.

In 2006 Alamosa undertook the generation of the County's first formal comprehensive planning document in 2006. The process and purpose of this document is outlined below.



Purpose and Use of the Plan

A master plan is an advisory document that outlines a community's goals for the future and provides direction for elected and appointed officials in making choices regarding the long-range planning needs of the County and its municipalities. Specifically, the Master Plan, along with the future Land Use map, provide guidance for decisions affecting growth and annexation, the use and development of land, preservation of open space, transportation systems and the expansion of public facilities and services. The policy recommendations and maps contained in the Master Plan are interrelated and, in most cases, should not be used independently from one another or from other adopted elements of the plan. Master plans, as important guiding documents, are sometimes formally adopted by a county although this is not always advisable.

Master plans will always walk a fine line between specificity and ambiguity. Treading this line is necessary because although the plan will not likely be updated for five or even 10 years, the County, City and Town elected officials and staff may undergo many changes in personalities and priorities during that time. Consequently, an overly-specific plan runs the risk of becoming an unused document when officials or staff take charge who were not involved with the plan and its process or possess priorities and opinions that differ from that document.

This Plan should also serve as a framework for other plans and regulations such as sub-area plans and the Alamosa County Code that govern the location and density of land uses. It provides guidance to County officials for decisions on proposals such as zoning changes and developments. It also gives the public direction on the County's position on proposed changes in land use or zoning, environmental regulations or broader policy issues. The Plan also provides a basis for decisions about public spending on facilities and services. The Plan presents other agencies, such as cities,

special districts and state government, with Alamosa County and municipal positions on large-scale matters including annexation, preferred uses of state and federal land, transportation issues and environmental protection.

Local Government Statutes

Counties (30-28-103) and municipalities (31-23-202) are authorized to appoint a planning commission except where a county's population is less than 15,000, in which case the Board of County Commissioners may constitute the Planning Commission or appoint a separate body.

County (30-28-106) and municipal planning commissions (31-23-206) are required to prepare and adopt a master plan for the physical development of their jurisdictions.

Planning Tools

Land use regulation through zoning is available for counties (30-28-111) and municipalities (31-23-301). The adoption of subdivision regulations has also been required of counties since 1972 (30-28-133), while optional for municipalities (31-23-214). "Subdivisions" or "subdivided land" is defined (30-28-101 (10) for counties, 31-23-201 (2) for municipalities as; any parcel of land which is to be used for condominiums, apartments or any other multiple dwelling units, or which is divided into two or more parcels unless specifically excluded in this same section. Specifically excluded from the definition of subdivision within counties is any division of land resulting in parcels of 35 acres or more. Counties and municipalities are authorized to use planned unit developments (PUDs) (24-67-101).

In 1999, the General Assembly updated the vested property rights statutes (24-68-101) to allow municipalities and counties to establish a vesting process and determine when vesting occurs in the development review process within a jurisdiction. Development proposals must go through the review process under the same regulations that were in effect when the completed application was submitted, except in emergency or safety situations.

Counties (30-28-201) and municipalities (31-15-601) may adopt building codes for consideration of, and in accordance with, the public health, safety, morals and general welfare and the safety, protection and sanitation of such dwellings, buildings and structures.

In 2001, broad impact fee authority was granted to counties and statutory municipalities, enabling them to better plan for growth and permitting that, to the extent practicable, certain costs of growth will be paid for by new development (29-20-104.5). Home rule municipalities have always had the authority to collect impact fees by virtue of their constitutional home rule powers.

The Local Government Land Use Control Enabling Act 29-20-101, from HB 74-1034, grants counties and municipalities broad authority to plan for and regulate the use of land, with no restrictions, conditions, or procedures prescribed for local governments. According to this statute, each local government within its respective jurisdiction has the authority to plan for and regulate the use of land.

The House Bill 1041 "Powers," is derived from HB 74-1041 and found in 24-65.1-101 allowing local governments to identify, designate and regulate through a permitting process 21 statutorily defined "areas and activities of state interest." There are 21 areas and activities listed.

Extraterritorial and Cooperative Powers

In addition to the foregoing statutes regarding the use of land within respective jurisdictions, there exist other statutes that give one jurisdiction certain powers over land use activities in a separate, different, jurisdiction.

- 31-23-212 and 213 enable a municipality to enforce its major street plan on all land within three miles of its boundaries.
- 31-15-401 through 601 allows a municipality to prohibit or regulate nuisances such as bawdy, obscene or disorderly houses within three miles of City limits and storage of explosives within one mile.
- 25- 7-138(4) allows municipalities to consent to the location of a new land waste application site or new waste impoundment within one mile of their boundaries.
- 31-15-707 (IV) (b) allows a municipality to construct waterworks outside its boundaries and to protect the waterworks and water supply from pollution up to five miles above the point from which the water is taken).
- 31-25-216, 217, 301, and 302 allow a municipality to establish, manage and protect its park lands, recreation facilities and conservation easements, including the water in those parks, located beyond City limits.
- 31-23-225 requires a municipality to notify County government, as well as the Land Use Commission and State Geologist, of a proposed major activity, covering five or more acres of land, prior to approving any zoning change, subdivision or building permit application associated with that activity.
- 30-28-136 requires counties to submit a copy of any preliminary plan for a subdivision to affected governments, including: school districts, special and other districts, counties and municipalities located within two miles of the proposal, and other agencies. The statute also requires County government to allow a 21 day review period before taking action.

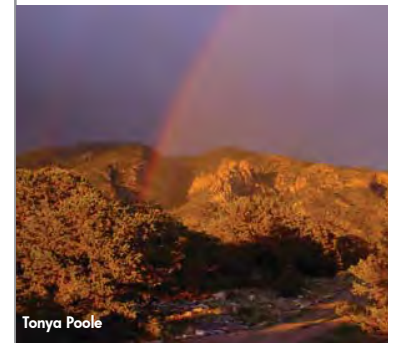
- In 2001, legislation was enacted requiring jurisdictions intending to adopt or amend a master plan to give notice of the proposed plan or amendments to all neighboring jurisdictions for review. The neighboring jurisdictions may file objections to the proposed plan or amendments and may compel the planning jurisdiction to participate in mediation prior to litigation in order to settle the dispute over the master plan or amendments (24-32-3209).

Some statutes specifically address the power of local governments to cooperate with each other:

- 29-20-105 through 107 authorizes and encourages local governments to cooperate or contract with other units of government for purposes of planning or regulating the development of land. Local governments may provide through intergovernmental agreements (IGA) for the joint adoption by the governing bodies, after notice and hearing, of mutually binding and enforceable comprehensive development plans for areas within their jurisdictions. Each governing body has standing in district court to enforce the terms of the agreement and the plan. Local governments may, pursuant to an IGA, provide for revenue sharing.
- 29-1-203 allows local governments to cooperate or contract with one another to provide any function, service, or facility lawfully authorized to each of the cooperating or contracting units. The contract may establish a separate legal entity to do so.
- 30-28-105 enables municipalities and counties to form multi-county and joint city/county planning commissions, known as regional planning commissions, to conduct studies and make and adopt a regional plan for the physical development of the region. 30-28-117(5) enables regional zoning boards of adjustment as well.
- 32-7-101 authorizes at least two counties (upon approval of the electors) to form a regional service authority to perform any of the nearly twenty service functions (e.g., urban drainage and flood control, land and soil preservation, public surface transportation, etc).
- Special districts and school districts may, upon a vote of their Boards, overrule development disapprovals by the Board of County Commissioners (30-28-110).

In order to clarify the intent of the plan document, the following specific statement is offered:

In Alamosa County, the Master Plan is advisory only. It is not mandatory that either the planning commissions or County Board of Commissioners follow any adopted plan. However, much time and effort from the Alamosa-area community contributed to the development of this plan including land use guidelines. To ignore the plan without legitimate reason should be



Introduction Amendment Process



unacceptable. Changes to the land use element of the plan should only be made if there is a change in the immediate area that would indicate such. While it is a property owner's right to make a request on land use designation, the planning commission and County Board of Commissioners should assign an appropriate land use that benefits the entire community, not just the property owner.

In summary this plan intends to:

- Focus on current trends and issues within Alamosa County and address them with appropriate solutions.
- Provide the best possible projection on future conditions based on current patterns and identify strategies to help create a more desirable and sustainable future.
- Direct future change through a vision of community potential.
- Establish the framework for consistency between future land use policies and land use regulatory measures.
- Assist County officials in their decision-making processes.

Policy

The Alamosa-area Master Plan will be open to minor amendments once per calendar year at a regularly-scheduled board meeting during the first quarter.

Amendments

It is possible to amend master plans. This plan suggests making an amendment process available on an annual basis. Fully updating a plan more than about every half decade is an expensive and exhausting process. This plan strives to make category-specific suggestions and action while stating policies in a general enough format to allow some margin of variance when interpreted and utilized for specific planning decisions.

Throughout this plan, policy recommendations are made to undertake additional research and development on specific projects while leaving the "how, when and why" open to whomever initiates those projects. Again, it is always possible, indeed advisable, to make amendments to the plan on an annual basis. There is a single period each year, typically during the first quarter, where the plan will be open to amendments. It is prudent that these amendments be approved by a super-majority of the jurisdiction's governing body.

The Alamosa-area Master Plan will be open to minor amendments once per calendar year at a regularly-scheduled board meeting during the first quarter. All proposed plan amendments must first be examined and recommended by the concerned jurisdictions planning commission prior to full hearing.

Finally, this document strives for brevity, conciseness and transparency so that any existing or prospective citizen, developer or business owner can clearly understand the implications of the entire document in a reasonably short period of time. To these ends the plan is tidily organized into the following 10 chapters to effectively and broadly address all, or nearly all, of the Alamosa Area's future planning needs.

1. Guiding Principles
2. Introduction
3. Existing Conditions
4. Public Facilities, Services & Fiscal Considerations
5. Community Economics
6. Future Land Use
7. Recreation & Cultural Amenities
8. Agriculture & Natural Resources
9. Transportation
10. Implementation

Public Involvement

Development of this Master Plan is the result of hundreds of hours of community participation and effort. The interest and involvement of the community in initiating and pursuing this Plan is its backbone. The key ideas and insights underlying the Plan have come from informal discussions and interviews, structured group discussions and exercises and the optimism and enthusiasm that makes Alamosa County a great place to live.

Phase 1 - Getting the lie of the land

Kickoff meetings

Two initial meetings were conducted in 2006 to gather ideas and insights, identify the planning-related issues and to find areas of interest for land use planning in Alamosa County. These meetings were informal, allowing people to speak their mind freely, but were also informative. Consultants provided participants with basic information such as describing what Master Plans are and how they are used in practice by planners and public officials.

Personal Interviews

There is no substitute for informal conversation in identifying planning issues, gathering ideas for successfully moving forward and gaining an understanding of the values and flavor of the community. Informed citizens and decision makers comprising a cross section of Alamosa-area citizens were interviewed to obtain their perspectives on issues to be addressed in the Master Plan update.



Phase 2 - Active Involvement in plan elements

This plan was developed by challenging community members to think carefully about the current situation and the future of Alamosa County. Three meetings provided a venue for expressing opinions, new ideas and desired future conditions in the County. These meetings were heavily advertised in the newspaper, flyers, public notice, mailed invitations and e-mail lists. Attendance was strong, typically filling the County Commissioners room where meetings occurred. Participants represented a broad mix of Alamosa residents, with representation from City residents, County residents, business owners, consistent representation from Hooper and the Mosca area and some participation from neighboring counties. Feedback from participants was positive and meetings received positive reports in both newspaper and television press coverage.

Meeting 1 - Bridging the gap between planning and community values

Resource and existing conditions study

In this first meeting participants were provided a multi-media presentation showing resource mapping of irrigated agricultural land, wetlands, wildlife habitat, floodplain and riparian habitat, transportation corridors and other important information such as current County zoning, transportation, public lands and protected lands.

Visualizing Land Use

To gather participants' views and preferences for future land uses as they relate to important resources and values, consultants provided a set of visualization tools to show what various land uses look like; for example: How does a 1-acre lot subdivision compare visually to a 5-acre lot subdivision? Once participants had a firm understanding of the types of land uses occurring in Alamosa County, as well as some alternatives to the current development patterns including rural cluster and open lands subdivisions, they were invited to share their opinions and preferences about these development patterns and the implication on important resources and values using key pad polling technology. Results from this meeting were distributed back to participants and integrated into the remaining steps of the planning process.

Meeting 2 - Locating future development

The Chip Game

Participants played the "chip game," during which they worked in groups placing future projected residential and non-residential growth through 2025 on gameboard maps. The gameboards and other maps displayed in the meeting room highlighted important resources, such as irrigated agricultural land, floodplain, wetlands, public lands, existing subdivisions, zoning, transportation infrastructure, fire hazard and other information

about resources for evaluating land use. The game pieces represented densities allowed under current zoning, as well as some optional densities not currently contained in the County Land Use Code. The chip game provided participants a direct avenue to express what type of land uses should go where; the fundamental question underlying a land use element.

Meeting 3 - Synthesis Plan and Vision for Success

Community review of synthesis plan

The geographic input from the “chip game” was synthesized into a conceptual land use plan and presented in detail back to the participants. Using key pad polling, participants were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the physical plan. Since the development of the plan was based on the community’s collective values and ideas, consultants found a great degree of support for the core elements of the plan and made adjustments where needed.

Vision for Success

As a final step, participants worked in groups to brainstorm about what Alamosa County would look like if this plan were successfully implemented.

- Introduction
- Demographic Analysis
- Economic Indicators - Table
- Population Projections - Table
- Housing Analysis
- Housing Indicators by Geographic Location - Table
- General Information Data - Table
- Crime Statistics



Tonya Poole

Existing Conditions

This chapter analyzes baseline existing conditions including demographic, population, housing and crime characteristics for Alamosa County, the City of Alamosa and the Town of Hooper using basic indicators from the 2000 U.S. Census and other data sources. A more detailed analysis of the City of Alamosa and east Alamosa was performed to quantify some of the differences between geographic sections of the urbanized area, particularly north and south of the railroad tracks. The 2000 U.S. Census does not conveniently present statistics specifically for north and south Alamosa, although east Alamosa is listed as a Census Designated Place (CDP).

Demographic Analysis

Table 1 presents several basic demographic and economic indicators from the 2000 U.S. Census as a means to compare the various geographic areas included in this Master Plan. The basic indicators are total population, race, Hispanic/Latino population, per capita income and individuals below poverty level.

Table 1 indicates that most of the 2000 population of Alamosa County is concentrated within the Alamosa urbanized area, which includes the City of Alamosa and the East Alamosa CDP. The 2000 population of the urbanized area was 9,488, about 63 percent of the total County population of 14,966.

Table 1

Indicator	Geographic Area					
	Alamosa County	City of Alamosa			East Alamosa CDP	Town of Hooper
		City Total	North of RR	South of RR		
Population	14,966	7,960	4,909	3,051	1,528	123
Race/Ethnicity						
White	10,654 (71.2%)	5,455 (68.5%)	3,706 (75.5%)	1,749 (57.3%)	916 (59.9%)	100 (81.3%)
Black	145 (1%)	112 (1.4%)	96 (2%)	16 (0.5%)	7 (0.5%)	0
Am. Indian	350 (2.3%)	175 (2.2%)	87 (1.8%)	88 (2.9%)	41 (2.7%)	4 (3.3%)
Asian	122 (.8%)	76 (1%)	64 (1.3%)	12 (1.4%)	14 (0.9%)	0
Hawaiian/P.I.	28 (0.2%)	21 (0.3%)	10 (0.2%)	11 (0.4%)	1 (0.1%)	0
Some other race	3,044 (20.3%)	1,780 (22.4%)	654 (13.3%)	1,126 (36.9%)	464 (30.4%)	14 (11.4%)
2 or more races	623 (4.2%)	341 (4.3%)	221 (4.5%)	120 (3.9%)	85 (5.6%)	5 (4.1%)
Hispanic/Latino	6,197 (41.4%)	3,725 (46.8%)	1,587 (32.3%)	2,138 (70.1%)	831 (54.4%)	23 (18.7%)
Per Capita Income	\$15,037	\$15,405	NA ¹	NA	\$10,948	\$13,897
Below poverty level	2,992 (21.3%)	1,742 (25.0%)	NA	NA	384 (24.8%)	25 (21.0%)

Existing Conditions Population Projections

The County's Hispanic/Latino heritage is reflected in the large number of individuals identifying themselves as members of this group in the 2000 U.S. Census: 41.4 percent of the County population; 46.8 percent of the City population; 54.4 percent of the population of east Alamosa; but only 18.7 percent of the population of the Town of Hooper. Within the City of Alamosa, most of the Hispanic/Latino population is concentrated south of

the railroad tracks (2,138 versus 1,587 north of the railroad tracks). This ethnic concentration is further reflected as 70.1 percent of the total population in south Alamosa with only 32.3 percent of the total population residing north of the railroad tracks.

It should be noted that the Hispanic/Latino population is not considered to be a distinct racial group by the U.S. Census. In terms of racial identification, some Hispanic/Latino individuals consider themselves to be white, others identify themselves as some other race or two or more races.

Table 2 shows the best estimates and forecasts for Alamosa County and municipal populations in 2005 and in annual increments to the year 2025. These population forecasts were developed by the Colorado Demography Department. Table 2 populations assume a fairly aggressive two percent annual growth rate for the County at large and historical growth rates of 1.1 percent for the City of Alamosa, and 0.5 percent for Hooper.

Housing Analysis

Table 3 presents several basic housing indicators from the 2000 U.S. Census as a means to compare the various geographic areas included in this Master Plan. The basic indicators are total housing units, occupancy status (owner versus renter), median value of single-family owner-occupied units, median value of mobile homes, median gross rent, median year built and number of units in a residential structure. Data from the Alamosa Multiple Listing Service (MLS) as of January 2007 is also presented as an indicator of current housing prices.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, most of the housing units within Alamosa County are concentrated in the urban area that consists of the City of Alamosa and the east Alamosa CDP: 3,827 (63 percent) of 6,088

Table 2

Year	Population		
	Alamosa County	City of Alamosa	Town of Hooper
2000	15,132	8,012	123
2001	15,280	8,128	123
2002	15,384	8,248	122
2003	15,550	8,370	122
2004	15,649	8,419	122
2005	15,763	8,488	122
2006	15,978	8,582	123
2007	16,217	8,677	123
2008	16,449	8,773	124
2009	16,700	8,870	125
2010	16,953	8,968	125
2011	17,212	9,068	126
2012	17,475	9,168	126
2013	17,746	9,270	127
2014	18,031	9,372	128
2015	18,312	9,476	128
2016	18,601	9,581	129
2017	18,909	9,687	130
2018	19,201	9,794	130
2019	19,499	9,903	131
2020	19,808	10,012	132
2021	20,093	10,123	132
2022	20,388	10,235	133
2023	20,688	10,348	134
2024	20,987	10,463	135
2025	21,275	10,579	135

Existing Conditions Population Projections

Table 3

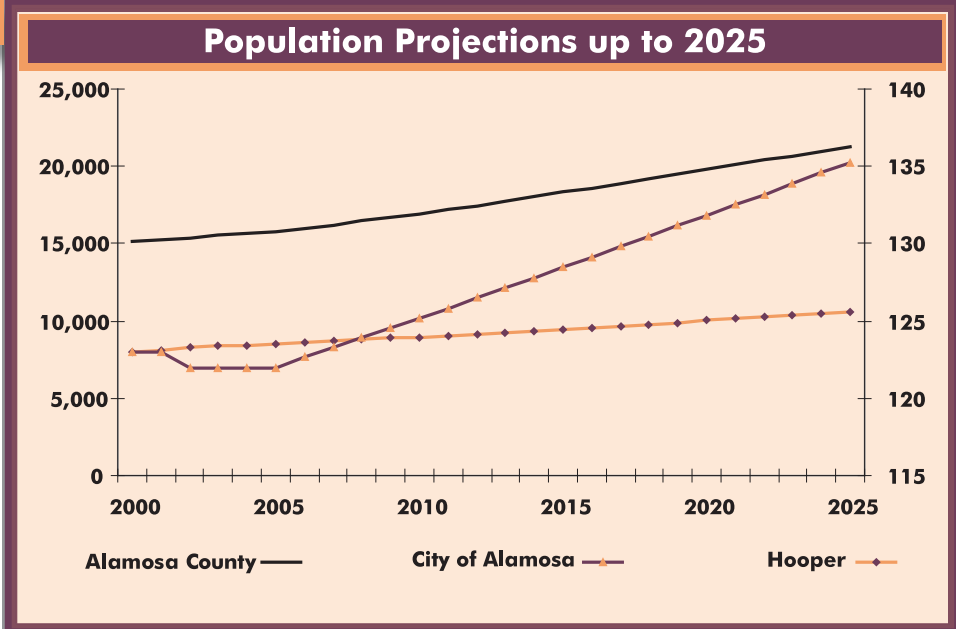
Indicator	Geographic Area					
	Alamosa County	City of Alamosa			East Alamosa CDP	Town of Hooper
		City Total	North of RR	South of RR		
Total housing units	6,088	3,215	1,982	1,233	612	57
Occupied units	5,467 (89.8%)	2,974(92.5%)	1,856 (93.6%)	1,118 (90.7%)	556 (90.8%)	48 (84.2%)
Owner occupied	3,498 (64%)	1,560(52.5%)	898 (48.4%)	660 (59.0%)	426 (76.8%)	41 (85.4%)
Renter occupied	1,969 (36.0%)	1,414(47.5%)	958 (51.6%)	458 (41.0%)	130 (23.4%)	7 (14.8%)
Vacant housing	621 (10.2%)	241(7.5%)	126 (6.4%)	115 (9.3%)	56 (9.2%)	9 (15.6%)
Median value sngl family	\$87,900	\$83,100	NA	NA	\$81,100	\$53,800
Median value mobile homes	\$28,300	\$12,900	NA	NA	\$18,800	\$31,300
Median gross monthly rent	\$408	\$395	NA	NA	\$560	\$433
Median year structure built	1969	1965	NA	NA	1972	1958
No. of units in structure ³						
Single Family	4,001	2,066	NA	NA	473	25
Duplex	221	192	NA	NA	9	0
3-4	309	291	NA	NA	0	0
5-9	156	130	NA	NA	11	2
10-19	177	162	NA	NA	12	0
20-49	76	76	NA	NA	0	0
50 or more	41	36	NA	NA	0	0
Mobile home	1,081	221	NA	NA	112	21

units. The housing vacancy rate is lower in the City (7.5 percent) compared to the County (10.2 percent), with a high rate of 15.6 percent for the Town of Hooper. Within the urban sub-areas, the East Alamosa CDP had a housing vacancy rate of 9.2 percent, the area south of the railroad tracks had a vacancy rate of 9.3 percent and the area north of the railroad tracks had a vacancy rate of only 6.4 percent.

Owner-occupied units are prevalent in the County (64 percent) and much higher in rural sections, as indicated in the Town of Hooper with 85.4 percent owner-occupied. The number county-wide is skewed by the relatively low percentage of owner-occupied units in the City of Alamosa (52.5 percent), particularly north of the railroad tracks, where only 48.4 percent of the units are owner-occupied. This may be due to rental units occupied by college students. By contrast, the percentage of owner-occupied units is much higher in east Alamosa (76.8 percent) and south of the railroad

Existing Conditions Housing Indicators

Figure 1



tracks (59.0 percent).

The 1999 median value of single-family occupied units is fairly consistent throughout the County, except for the Town of Hooper, with a median value of only \$53,800, compared to the County (\$87,900), the City (\$83,100) and east Alamosa (\$81,100). However, data for census block groups south of the railroad tracks compared to block groups north of the railroad tracks suggest a disparity between the two sections of the City. Median values of single-family occupied units for block groups 1 and 2 of census tract 9817 (south of the railroad tracks) are only \$72,000 and \$45,800, respectively, well below the city-wide median value of \$83,100. By contrast, median values for block groups 3, 4 and 5 of census tract 9816 (north of the railroad tracks) were \$89,800, \$131,300 and \$98,700, respectively.

MLS provides details about each property, including square footage of a house, the year a house was built, the address and the listed sale price. As of January 2007, 33 single-family homes were listed within the Alamosa City limits, ranging in price from \$49,500 to \$499,000. The six lowest-priced single-family homes, ranging from \$49,500 to \$85,500, are located in the southern portion of Alamosa. Nearly all of the homes listed above \$100,000 are located in the northern portion of Alamosa.

Median 1999 values for mobile homes are higher in rural parts of the County compared to urban sections. The median value county-wide is \$28,300 compared to only \$12,900 for the City and \$18,800 for east Alamosa. The median value for the Town of Hooper is \$31,300.

The age of the housing stock is generally older in the City compared to the County, with median year built of 1965 and 1969, respectively, although

Existing Conditions Population Trends

some rural parts of the County, as indicated by Hooper (1958), have older units. Within the urban area, there are parts of the City with older housing stock. The median year built for block groups 1 and 2 of census tract 9817 (south of the railroad tracks) is 1953 and 1949, respectively. For block groups 3, 4 and 5 of census tract 9816 (north of the railroad tracks), median year built is 1950, 1958 and 1976, respectively.

The rural areas of the County are dominated by single-family housing units, including mobile homes. Conversely, most multi-family structures are located in the urban areas of Alamosa and east Alamosa. Within the City, 28 percent of all housing units are located in multi-family structures, but only 5.2 percent of total units are located in such structures in east Alamosa. For the remainder of the County, only 1.5 percent of total units are located in multi-family structures.

Table 4

Variable	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Percentage of change 2000-2005
Average household size	3	3	3	3	3	0 %
Births	249	227	220	271	260	12.6 %
Deaths	171	177	131	101	115	8.5 %
Group quarters population	1,026	1,026	1,026	1,026	1,026	3.1 %
Housing vacancy rate	10	10	10	10	10	0 %
Natural population increase	78	50	89	170	145	16.0 %
Net building permits	95	49	36	54	No Data	
Net migration	65	45	79	-72	-23	-112.0%
Total Households	5,582	5,624	5,692	5,731	5,779	5.7%

Finally, **Table 4** provides additional demographic and population data from 2001 to 2005. There does seem to be some trend to decreasing net migration into the County although building permits are relatively stable.



Existing Conditions County Data

Crime Statistics

Alamosa area law enforcement agencies report offenses on an annual basis to the Colorado Bureau of Investigation (CBI). Total offense counts over the six-year period indicate that crime in the area has maintained relatively stable and low levels. Low crime rates in the Alamosa area undoubtedly contribute to the areas ongoing attractiveness. With a total of 51 officers in the County and a 2007 population slightly over 16,000, the number of officers per 1,000 in population is over three – the national average, or standard, of officers per 1,000 population is two – this higher existing service level in Alamosa likely contributes to relatively low number of offenses.

Table 5

Agency	Total Offenses							2006 Total Officers
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	
Alamosa County Sheriff	86	62	34	33	35	92	89	22
City of Alamosa Police Department	457	487	510	543	632	473	699	25
Adams State College Police	41	63	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	54	4

Endnote

¹ Data is available by block group but not by individual block. For the north side of the tracks, block groups 3, 4 and 5 of Census Tract 9816 are entirely within the City limits and portions of block groups 2 and 6 (disaggregated as numerous census blocks) are partially within the City. For the south side of the tracks, block groups 1 and 2 of Census Tract 9817 are entirely within the City limits and portions of block groups 3 and 4 are partially within the City.

Endnote

² See footnote¹ - from Table 1, page 3.2

Endnote

³ Based on 2000 U.S. Census sample data, which has different total than actual counts of total housing units.

Solid Waste Facilities & Policies
Water & Wastewater Facilities & Policies
Public Schools & Policies
Fire Protection & EMS
Fiscal Trends
Revenue Mechanisms & Policies



Tonya Poole

Public Facilities, Services, & Fiscal Considerations

Alamosa County is a statutory county and currently provides an extensive set of public facilities and services including general administration, airport, animal control, emergency response and preparedness, County detention/jail facilities, sheriff, nursing services, social services, veterans services, weed control, coroner and regional health care for children with special needs. Public facilities in Alamosa County are provided by a number of entities including special districts, private associations and the two incorporated municipalities.

4.2.1 GOAL: Alamosa-area jurisdictions will strive to provide excellent quality public services and facilities. New growth and development should enhance and not degrade existing service levels. Where and when appropriate new growth will be expected to contribute their fair share towards the maintenance of existing standards.

The following sections consider specific facilities and service provisions, future planning policies are included within each element and should serve to generally guide decision making.

Solid Waste

Solid waste in Alamosa County is primarily land-filled by the San Luis Valley Regional Solid Waste Authority. This landfill was started through a joint effort of Alamosa and Rio Grande counties in 1995. The landfill was designed for an initial life expectancy of 59 years, so, as of 2007, the facility should provide an additional 47 years of service to approximately the year 2047.

Solid waste collection in Alamosa County is primarily handled by Waste Management and other private sector providers. The City of Alamosa also provides collection services for residents living within City boundaries.

Although the solid waste facility is confident that future expansions will be relatively trouble-free it is likely that continuing and expanded recycling efforts in both the public and private sectors will decrease the total solid waste volumes entering the facility and thus extend its service life expectancy.

Policy 4.1: Where feasible and appropriate, Alamosa-area jurisdictions will promote and encourage the public and private sector in recycling and other bio-mass reduction efforts.



Policy

Where feasible and appropriate, Alamosa-area jurisdictions will promote and encourage the public and private sector in recycling efforts.

Public Facilities, Services & Fiscal Considerations

Water



Water & Wastewater Facilities

Water

The two primary water sheds in Alamosa County are the Alamosa-Trinchera and San Luis. Two non-governmental organizations operate and work on watershed projects - Citizens for San Luis Water operate out of Alamosa and are “dedicated to ensuring the prudent use of San Luis Valley water in conjunction with preservation of the agricultural, ecological and recreational environment.” The Alamosa River Watershed Project is based in La Jara and has drafted a watershed management plan and pursues public education and water quality oriented projects.

Alamosa County is also in the Rio Grande Water Conservation District. This district was statutorily created by the legislature in 1967 with the purpose to “enhance and protect the water rights of the citizens of the San Luis Valley.” The district has property taxing authority and works on water projects in a five-county area. Currently the district is working to establish the Rio Grande Outstanding Natural Area - a 33-mile stretch of the Rio Grande River between the Alamosa Wildlife Refuge and the Colorado and New Mexico state line to be administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) with the purposes of promoting the protection and restoration of the riparian zone of the Rio Grande.

In 2000 the United States Geological Survey (USGS) compiled estimated water usage in Alamosa County – 2005 data had not been released as of the writing of this document but should be available soon. The following chart documents total uses from public supplies, surface and ground water withdrawals and estimated total irrigation uses.

Table 1

Alamosa County Water Withdrawal Type	Gallons per day (average)
Total withdrawals from public supply	1,760,000
Irrigation, ground-water withdrawals	123,120,000
Irrigation, surface-water withdrawals	99,560,000
Irrigation, total withdrawals	222,680,000
Total ground-water withdrawals	125,270,000
Total surface-water withdrawals	99,560,000
Total withdrawals	224,830,000

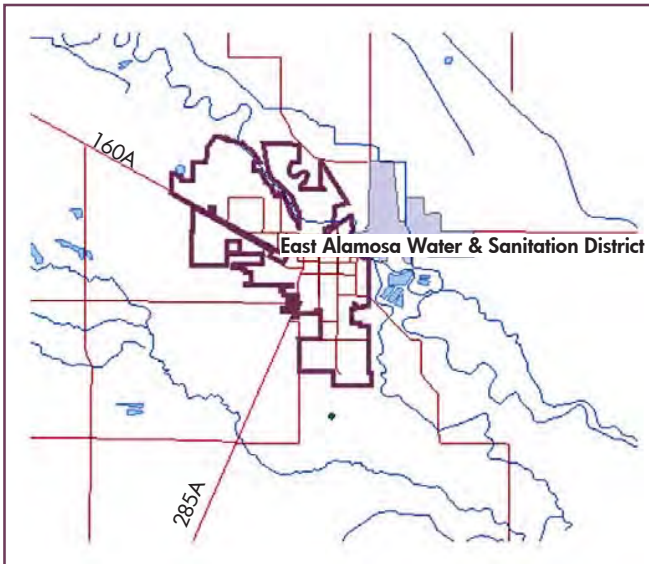
Source: <http://water.usgs.gov/watuse/data/2000/index.html>

Wastewater

Wastewater treatment in Alamosa County is provided by central sewer systems, sanitation districts, community/homeowner systems and individual septic systems.

The East Alamosa Water and Sanitation District provides services to customers outside of the City of Alamosa boundaries to the northeast of the municipality.

East Alamosa Water & Sanitation District



State statutes and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment’s water quality control division regulate the operation and treatment of waste water. State and departmental regulations apply to private and public discharge system with permits issued constraining volume, effluent qualities, and

construction parameters for all processing facilities.

Inevitably the wide array of treatment services lead to some instances of poor treatment levels and inefficiencies. The extension of public-provided lines, particularly from established sanitation districts or municipalities, generally offer the highest levels of service and these types of connections are favored where possible or appropriate.

Policy 4.2: All new development having the potential to impact water quality shall be designed to ensure that existing water-quality will not be degraded. Development design should further ensure that it does not adversely impact the recharge of groundwater resources.

Policy 4.3: On-site sewage disposal systems should take into account the spectrum of soil types and be located in such a manner to protect surface and groundwater resources.

Policy 4.4: When appropriate, water storage projects benefitting Alamosa County residents should be encouraged.

Policy 4.5: Encourage the design of water projects to permit multiple uses.

Policy 4.6: Review water projects to minimize negative impacts on the

Policy
All new development having the potential to impact water quality shall be designed to ensure that existing water quality will not be degraded. Development design should further ensure that it does not adversely impact the recharge of groundwater resources.

Policy
Ensure on-site sewage disposal systems shall be located on suitable soils to provide maximum protection to surface and groundwater resources.

Policy
Encourage the development of water storage projects that promote the most beneficial and efficient use of water in Alamosa County.

Policy
Encourage the design of water projects to permit multiple uses.

Public Facilities, Services & Fiscal Considerations

Public Schools, Fire Protection & EMS

Policy

Review water projects to minimize negative impacts on the riparian biology and designate riparian corridors free of encroachments.

riparian biology.

Policy 4.7: Trans or interbasin water transfers should be carefully considered.

Public Schools

Public schools in Alamosa County are primarily served by two districts, Alamosa RE-11J and Sangre De Cristo RE-22J school districts. As of 2006 enrollment in RE-11J was 2,148 students and 335 in the RE-22 district for a total of 2,483 pupils in the County. Total district enrollment has been dropping by approximately 1.7 percent per year since 2000, although the Sangre De Cristo district has increased slightly every year over the same time period.

Figure 1

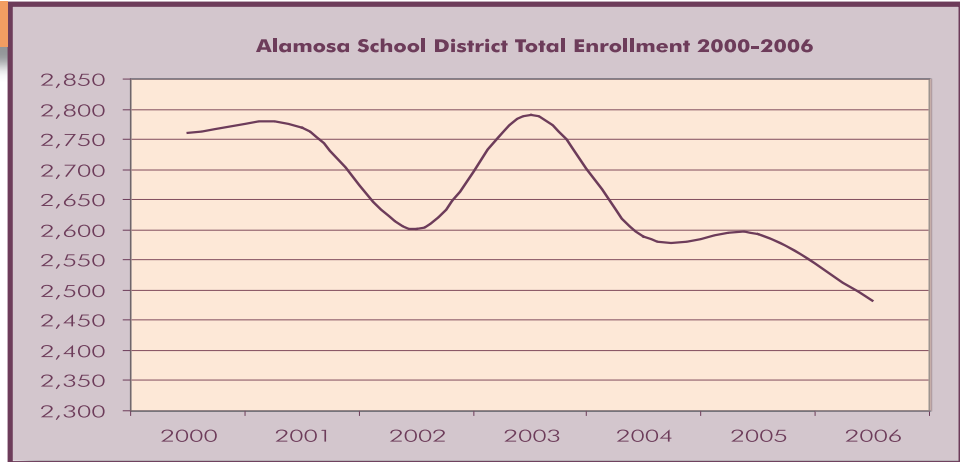


Figure 1 graphs total district enrollment over a six year period.

State law allows the collection of land dedication or fees-in-lieu for school lands each time a new subdivision is platted. The purpose of these dedications is to ensure that new growth, and thus demand for school services, contributes some share towards the provision of land for future school sites. Currently, Alamosa County does not collect any land or fees in lieu of land for school districts although the County is statutorily enabled to do so.

School districts are typically responsible for preparing school land dedication/fee-in-lieu schedules. Alamosa County and the municipalities will consider entertain these proposals.

Policy 4.8: If appropriate, Alamosa jurisdictions will consider adopting a school land dedication/fee in lieu prepared by the school district(s).

In addition to considering school land dedications all public jurisdictions in the County recognize that high quality school districts are important to existing and future residents. High quality schools promote better

Policy

Strongly discourage all trans-basin, out-of-county, water transfers.

Policy

The County and municipalities will consider adopting a school land dedication/fee in lieu prepared by the school district(s).

Public Facilities, Services & Fiscal Considerations Fire Protection & EMS

quality of life for residents as well as contributing positively to economic development.

Policy 4.9: When appropriate, Alamosa County will work with school districts to establish intergovernmental agreements to facilitate coordination of land use planning, development review and provision of new school facilities.

Fire Protection & Emergency Response

Fire protection and emergency response are provided by fire protection districts, volunteer fire departments and municipal fire departments. Additionally the U.S. Forest Service and the Colorado State Parks department are responsible for fire fighting on public lands.

The state of Colorado emergency resource inventory lists the following

Policy

The County will work with school districts to establish intergovernmental agreements to facilitate coordination of land use planning, development review and provision of new school facilities.

Table 2

Agency	Service
Adams state College DPS	Law Enforcement
Alamosa County Ambulance	EMS
Alamosa County Volunteer Fire Protection District	Fire Protection/EMS
Alamosa County Sherriff's Office	Law Enforcement
Alamosa Fire Department	Fire Protection/EMS
Alamosa Police Department	Law Enforcement
Colorado State Patrol Troop 5B	Law Enforcement
Colorado State Forest Service Alamosa District	Fire Fighting/Law Enforcement
Mosca-Hooper Volunteer Fire Department	Fire Protection/EMS
San Luis Valley Hazardous Materials Response Team	Hazardous Materials Response

fire, police, and emergency medical service (EMS) providers in Alamosa County.

Fire protection and EMS in unincorporated Alamosa County is primarily provided by the Alamosa County Fire Protection and Ambulance districts although some service is provided in the northwest corner of the County by the Center Fire Protection district.

Policy 4.10: Alamosa County will encourage local, state, and federal governments as well as landowners to develop cooperative strategies to minimize wildfire hazards.

Policy 4.11: The County, working with appropriate agencies, will identify critical areas of wildfire hazard and work toward the development of evacuation routes and other emergency operation procedures as

Policies

- Encourage the development of cooperative strategies to minimize wildfire.
- Identify and prioritize wildfire expenditures and critical areas.
- Encourage fire annex stations in rural areas.

Public Facilities, Services & Fiscal Considerations

Fiscal Trends

necessary.

Policy 4.12: Alamosa County will encourage the development of fire departments and/or fire annex stations in rural areas where adequate fire fighting and EMS are not currently available.

Fiscal Trends

Alamosa County understands that the provision of excellent public services is both an essential element of responsible governance as well as an essential economic development incentive; consequently the County does, and will continue, striving to provide the highest quality of services both to existing and new residents.

Table 3

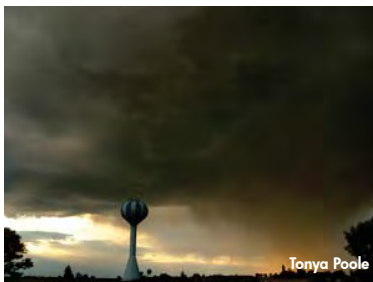
City of Alamosa	Total Revenues in dollars (\$)	Total Tax Revenues in dollars (\$)	Property Tax Revenue in dollars (\$)	Total Operating Expenditures in dollars (\$)	Total Expenditures in dollars (\$)
2000	7,705,323	5,776,374	358,782	4,770,127	6,995,038
2001	8,180,258	6,231,257	281,404	5,585,325	8,254,419
2002	8,346,758	6,425,862	293,369	5,194,364	10,599,883
2003	9,011,453	6,644,484	347,990	5,796,145	11,546,638
2004	8,438,261	6,704,974	340,477	6,252,695	8,699,117
2005	9,073,955	6,850,779	356,869	6,404,984	8,180,295
Total Percent (%) Change	18%	19%	-1%	34%	17%
Annual Rate of Change (%)	2%	2%	5%	3%	0%

Examining historical data from past years for the City of Alamosa, Town of Hooper and Alamosa County reveals interesting information regarding the County's basic financial operations and potential futures.

The City of Alamosa is showing fairly strong revenue trends with revenue growth outpacing expenditure growth by 1 percent.

Alamosa County is also experiencing strong revenue growth with aggressive annual revenue increases of approximately 4 percent total, however total expenditures have been outpacing revenues slightly.

The Town of Hooper has experienced very strong growth in property tax revenues and its expenditures have dramatically increased (more than doubling) between 2000 and 2005.



Public Facilities, Services & Fiscal Considerations Fiscal Trends

Table 4

Alamosa County	Total Revenues in dollars (\$)	Total Tax Revenues in dollars (\$)	Property Tax Revenue in dollars (\$)	Total Operating Expenditures in dollars (\$)	Total Expenditures in dollars (\$)
2000	10,819,041	4,023,952	2,204,879	9,146,585	10,625,634
2001	12,883,231	4,907,167	2,312,454	9,798,860	11,789,732
2002	12,816,608	4,842,459	2,442,942	10,529,113	12,731,954
2003	13,067,145	4,985,710	2,610,789	10,651,268	14,215,568
2004	13,128,806	4,803,575	2,617,070	11,289,784	13,963,043
2005	13,566,717	4,855,426	2,646,459	11,303,534	14,290,440
Total Percent (%) Change	25%	21%	20%	24%	34%
Annual Rate of Change (%)	5%	4%	4%	5%	7%

Table 5

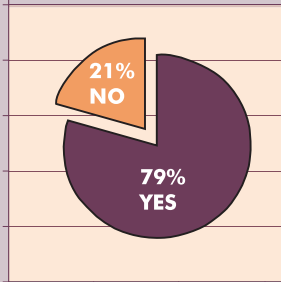
Town of Hooper	Total Revenues in dollars (\$)	Total Tax Revenues in dollars (\$)	Property Tax Revenue in dollars (\$)	Total Operating Expenditures in dollars (\$)	Total Expenditures in dollars (\$)
2000	28,623	17,225	3,706	14,829	14,829
2001	35,245	21,608	4,067	38,967	38,967
2002	30,085	17,310	4,314	23,544	23,544
2003	36,126	21,542	4,475	14,745	14,745
2004	32,561	21,888	4,406	19,414	33,697
2005	30,411	19,777	5,050	32,634	36,731
Total Percent (%) Change	6%	15%	36%	120%	148%
Annual Rate of Change (%)	1%	3%	7%	24%	30%

Public Facilities, Services & Fiscal Considerations

Revenue Mechanisms & Policies

Community Response

Community response to question:
Should the county and the city
implement revenue mechanisms
to make new growth pay its way?



Revenue Mechanisms

A number of revenue mechanisms are available to Colorado public entities. The purpose of applying these systems is to ensure that public facilities and services are maintained and operated at adequate levels. A brief review of common revenue sources follows.

- **Impact Fees** – Impact fees are a one-time charge assessed against new development. These fees recover the capital expansion costs incurred by a local government in providing the public facilities required to serve new development. These fees cannot be used to fix existing deficiencies, only to maintain existing service levels. A water tap fee is an example of an impact fee.
- **Excise Taxes** – Excise taxes are a specific type of tax imposed on the performance of an act, the engaging in a occupation or the enjoyment of a privilege. This tax can be imposed on the privilege of subdividing or developing property rather than on the property itself. Revenues from these taxes can be spent on maintenance and capital expenses. Only home rule municipalities have the authority to impose excise taxes and they require voter approval.
- **Special Assessment** – A special assessment is a charge imposed for the purpose of financing local improvements. The charge must be directed towards the users of an improvement and the revenue derived from the charge must be applied only to the maintenance, operation or development of the improvement. It is based on the premise that the property assessed is enhanced in value at least to the amount of the levy. A typical example of a special assessment is when the City places sidewalks in front a homeowner’s yard and requires the homeowner to pay a portion of the improvement.
- **Administrative fees** – These fees include building or plan review fees, park and recreation fees, user fees, inspection fees or fees for other special services. Administrative fees are charged to cover the cost of the specific service the municipality provides. Fees rarely cover the entire cost of the service. The fees cannot exceed the overall direct and indirect costs of the services provided.
- **School Land Dedication** – A school land dedication can be required of all new subdivisions. It requires that a portion of land or a fee-in-lieu of that land be dedicated to the school district to cover the new facilities and land that will be needed to service the children arising from that development.
- **Sales & Use Taxes** - In Colorado, the state sales and use taxes are imposed at the rate of 2.9 percent of the tax base. The total sales or use tax rate imposed by the state and all local governments may not exceed 6.9 percent. The retail sales tax applies to the gross receipts from all of

Public Facilities, Services & Fiscal Considerations

Revenue Mechanisms & Policies

the following activities: retail sales of tangible or exchanged property, telephone and telegraph service, gas and electric service, meals and cover charges where meals are regularly served, and charges for rooms and accommodations.

The Colorado use tax applies to the privilege of storing, using, or consuming tangible personal property in Colorado that has been purchased at retail and is supplementary to the sales tax. The sales tax and use tax are complementary taxes — the use tax is not imposed on sales that are subject to the sales tax. All sales and use tax increases are subject to approval in a public vote.

Other revenue mechanism abound including mill levy increases, which are subject to complex state laws involving the Tabor and Gallagher amendments, as well as a host of special districting options that require considerable work by the local government and some risk.

Maintaining the long-term integrity of the public administrative facilities and office space is imperative, as the investment in government buildings may last through several generations. As Alamosa’s population and commercial activity increases, the need to hire more and full-time staff will become necessary. Having the proper facility to house those staff and their equipment is an important long-term planning objective.

Similarly providing law enforcement with office space and holding facilities is another important component of future planning. As the area grows it is imperative that all new development, both commercial and residential, contribute to the expansion of facilities so that law enforcement service levels are maintained.

Alamosa-area jurisdictions may consider requiring dedication of park lands or a fee-in-lieu of land but it is also essential that those parks be developed with facilities that increase both the recreation opportunities and capacity of those park lands.

Finally, one of the most visible and costly impacts of new growth to services accrues on the roads system. Inevitably, more businesses and residences create more traffic. In order to maintain the currently good level of service for roads, which generally are not crowded and safe, area jurisdictions will need to address the increasing cost of the transportation system.

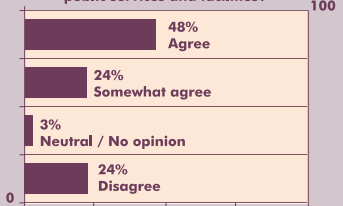
Many of the revenue mechanisms outlined above are geared toward one-time charges for the expansion of capital expansion facilities. But taxes are among the top means for funding the ongoing maintenance of facilities and services as well as a source of funding for their expansion.

Alamosa County and other jurisdictions would like to ensure:

Policy 4.13: Alamosa area jurisdictions should encourage development projects that do not reduce existing service levels.

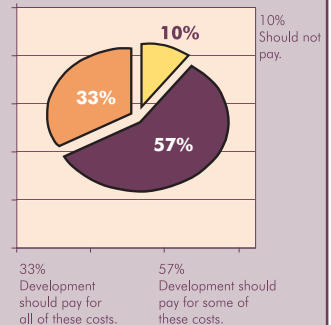
Community Response

Community response to question: Do you feel that growth in unincorporated Alamosa County will strain public services and facilities?



Community Response

Community response to question: To what degree should new development pay the cost of expanding the capacity of the infrastructure?



Policy
Encourage development project that do not reduce existing service levels.

Public Facilities, Services & Fiscal Considerations Revenue Mechanisms & Policies

Policy

Consider the development of impact and other revenue mechanisms to maintain service levels as the community grows.

Policy

The County will examine the feasibility of impact fees for the transportation system.

Policy

All impact fees and other charges will contain language that will allow the jurisdiction to waive charges for certain preferred projects.

Policy

Administrative fee schedules should be examined and updated periodically to reflect cost changes over time.

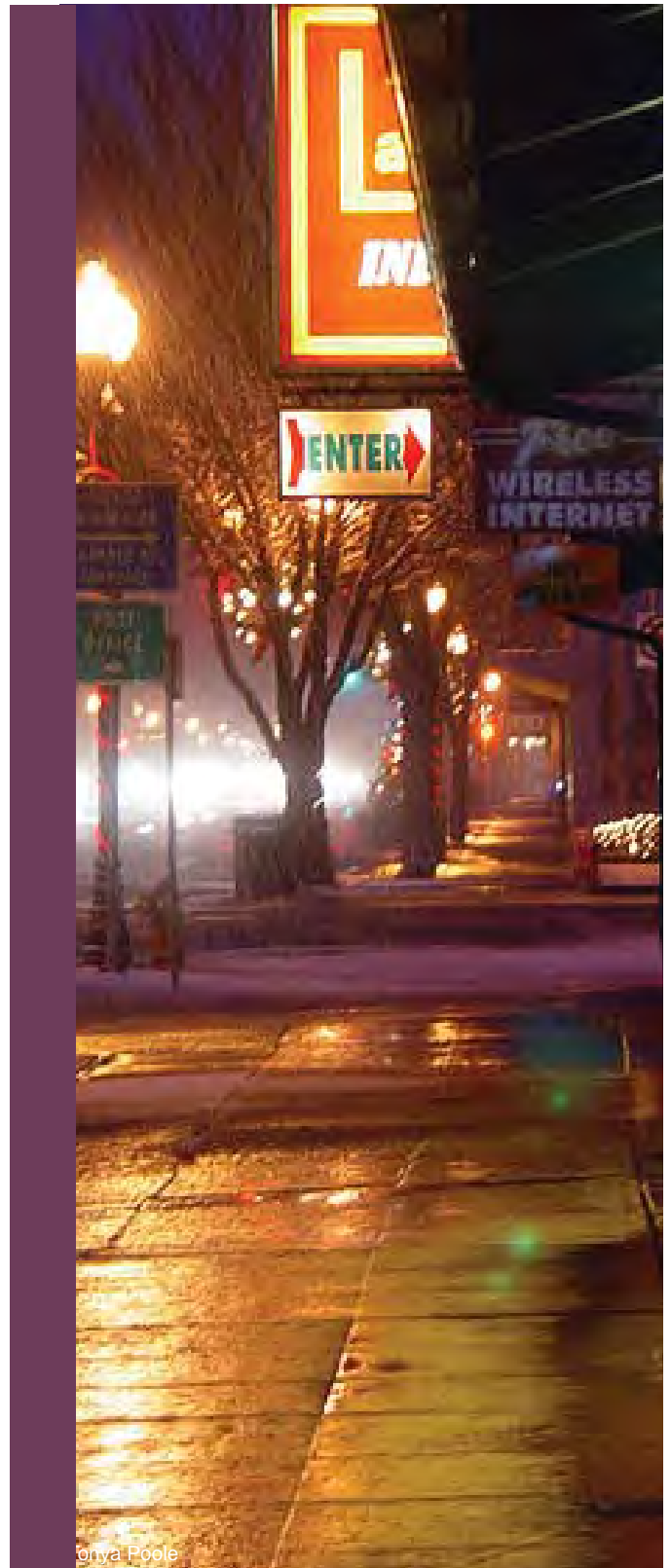
Policy 4.14: Alamosa area jurisdictions will consider the development of impact fees and/or other revenue mechanisms so that the cost of providing services to new residents and development may be captured and existing service levels maintained.

Policy 4.15: Alamosa County will consider examining the feasibility of impact fees for the transportation system.

Policy 4.16: All impact fees and other charges should possess language that allows the administering jurisdiction to waive the charges for certain preferred projects.

Policy 4.17: Administrative fee schedules should be examined and updated periodically to reflect cost changes over time.

Basic Economic Indicators
Households & Non-Labor Income
Agriculture
Available Land
Build-out Potential
Economic Development
Alternative Energy
Goals & Policies



Onya Foole

Community Economics

Alamosa area residents are challenged by the need to preserve and enhance the area's unique local identity while also remaining connected to the regional and national economy thus creating jobs and supporting local business.

The Alamosa area supports a strong agricultural and regional services sector, is an attractive place for retirees and possesses a tourist base resulting from the Great Sand Dunes, two scenic railroad lines, San Luis State Park and Wildlife Area, Medano-Zapata Ranch, the Rio Grande National Forest, the Colorado Gator Farm and various other festivals, events and attractions.

All communities require locally-functioning and prosperous economies both for the livelihood of existing, and attraction of new, residents. Additionally, a thriving local business economy is the number one source of new revenues to public sector entities which are ultimately used to implement other elements of the Master Plan. Over time, Alamosa will pursue policies to both facilitate the market and work to achieve a resident/business/jobs equilibrium that enhances both the area's local and regional identity.

This chapter of the Master Plan first considers some underlying factors and trends in the Alamosa-area economy, second, it examines - in specific detail - many of the elements and assets of that economy, and finally it utilizes the suggestions and preferences of the master planning process to present long-term planning goals and policies for the area.

Basic Economic Indicators

Perhaps the best technique to use when first examining a local or regional economy is the model of economic base analysis. This simple theory explains a host of trends and creates a framework through which to consider local and regional economies.

Economic-base theory operates on two assumptions. First, that there is outside demand for a region's products, in this case the region is Alamosa County. When that outside demand grows, money flows into the County as products are exported (sold) and the local economy swells. When demand declines the local economy follows suit.

Second, it is not only the export of a region's goods to an outside economy that creates base industry. Money may also flow into the County by other means such as retirees or others residing in the County who have made their incomes elsewhere.

Tourist spending also qualifies as a base industry bringing money from outside of the County and spending it within.

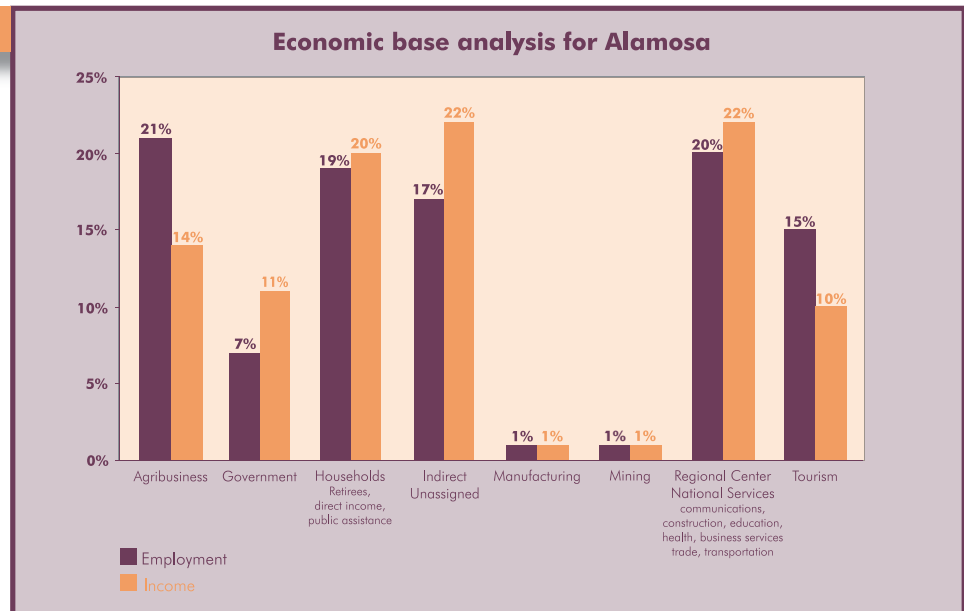
Industries fulfilling the demands outlined above are typically referred to as "base industry" or "base drivers." In Alamosa the primary base drivers are a

Community Economics Basic Economic Indicators

demand for agricultural products, regional services and tourist amenities. Economic base analysis works by categorizing all industry into three classes known as direct basic, indirect basic and resident services. Indirect basic industries are those that supply the base industries. An agricultural implement dealer or dealership would be an example of an indirect basic industry. Resident service industries are those that meet the day-to-day needs of existing residents such as grocery stores, barbershops and the like. There are many variations on this theme, but this overview will focus primarily basic industries as these are the fundamental drivers of the local economy.

Figure 1 clearly shows that agriculture is an important force in Alamosa as 21 percent of the employment and 14 percent of the income comes from this sector. The other primary inputs into the economy are from the previously described householders, those residents who receive checks from money made elsewhere. Typically these are retirement or investment accounts but also include public assistance checks.

Figure 1



The Alamosa area is a regional service hub and provides a variety of shopping and other professional services to many residents in surrounding towns and counties and this is reflected in the regional and national services categories providing 20 percent of the employment and 22 percent of the income. Finally, tourism and government make up reasonably sizeable components of the economy with 15 percent of County employment and 10 percent of basic revenues derived from tourist-related activities and slightly smaller amounts attributed to government jobs and services.

Alamosa County likely has four excellent opportunities to increase basic industries. First the County can continue to promote and facilitate agriculture and agricultural operations and services. Second, it can position itself to provide an even broader array of services and goods to surrounding area residents. Third, the County can continue and enhance its tourism promotion as these revenues typically demand the least in terms of publicly-provided services and leave the most in terms of revenues. Fourth, and finally, the area can facilitate the development of the alternative energy and other industries which have the multiple benefits of potentially increasing the number of jobs and employment while also developing new base drivers capable of generating commodities for sale both within the County and for export.

Size of Firms

Another important element of any economy is an understanding of the typical size of firms. In Alamosa, firms with less than 49 employees dominate with the largest shares of employment occurring in firms with nine or fewer employees. This is surprising to many people but it should also be encouraging. The fact is that the large majority of people are employed in relatively small businesses. Small businesses and small business startups are a promising sign that the economy is dynamic and has a good entrepreneurial base. Moreover, it indicates that many existing businesses are poised for growth and expansion – this is considered a significant positive because economic development efforts can first concentrate on growing businesses already in operation and secondly consider recruiting business from outside the County.

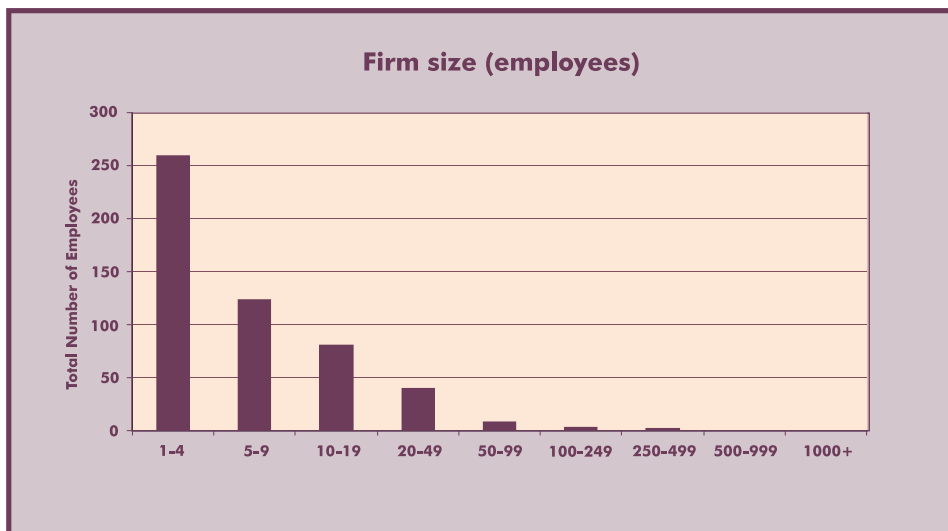


Figure 2

Historical data reveal that Alamosa County has benefited from reasonably strong job growth. From 1970 to 2004 (the most recent data available) 6,143 new jobs were created in the County. Of those jobs, 83 percent

Community Economics

Basic Economic Indicators

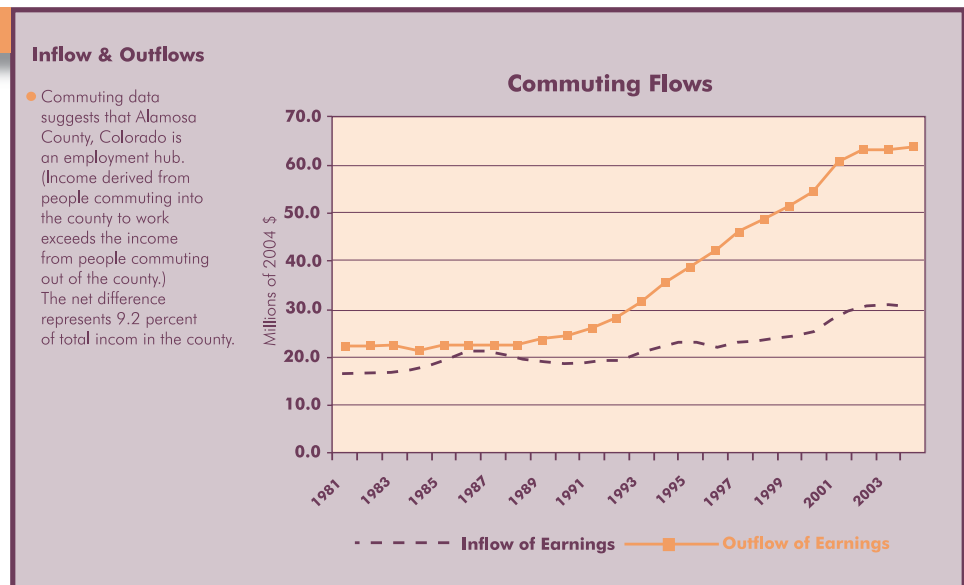
were wage and salary jobs. Proprietors contributed 17 percent of new employment, but in the 10-year period from 1994-2004 proprietors claimed 20 percent of new employment.

Figure 3



Figure 3 demonstrates quantitatively that Alamosa is a regional employment center. The outflow of earnings, that is, money earned within the County but reported outside of the County, greatly outpaces the inflow of earnings, Alamosa County residents earning money from jobs outside of the County. Or stated another way, commuters coming into the County for work outnumber those commuters leaving the County for work. This also is a good sign that Alamosa is maintaining and enhancing local jobs and industries.

Figure 4



Households and Non-Labor Income

As previously discussed, household and non-labor incomes are extremely important elements of the Alamosa-area economy. Again, these are incomes that essentially come into Alamosa County through the mailbox. They represent money originally paid to individuals in some other locale but those residents now fund their lifestyles in Alamosa County either partially or completely off of that revenue. The most common forms of this income are from retirement or investment accounts. Non-labor income in Alamosa County has grown by an average of 3.7 percent per year, outpacing all other income-source growth. Furthermore, 35 percent of total personal income in the County was from non-labor sources and it represented almost 43 percent of total new income between 1970 and 2004.

The reason that non-labor and household income numbers are critical is because these are consumers who act as a base driver for the County; these people are bringing money from outside and spending the majority of it locally. This local spending is year-round and reliable as they purchase day-to-day goods and services.

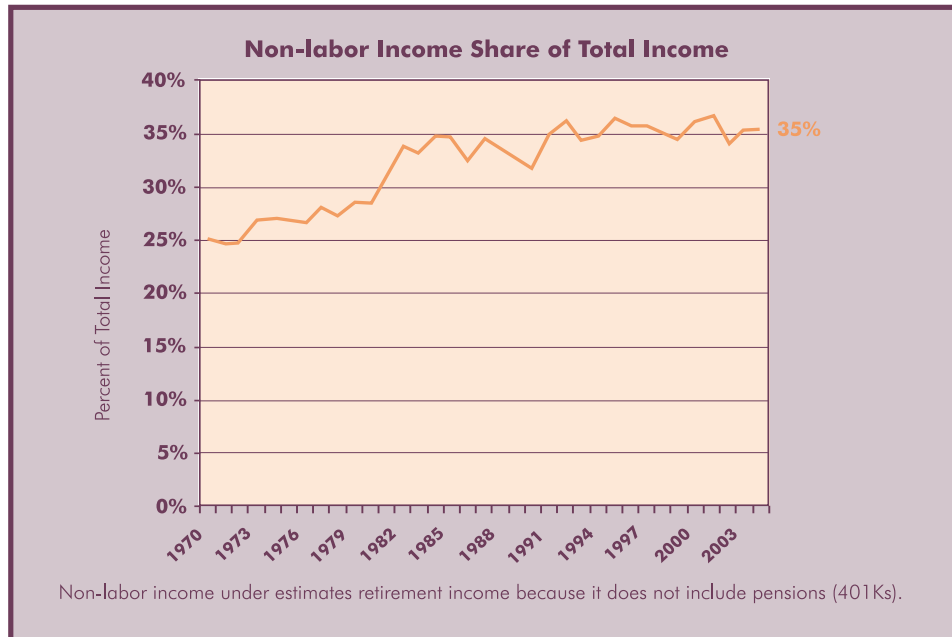


Figure 5

Agriculture

Also previously mentioned, agriculture is a vital element of the Alamosa-area economy. But, due to macroeconomic, political and weather events, agricultural income and earnings are a somewhat volatile driver.

Figure 6

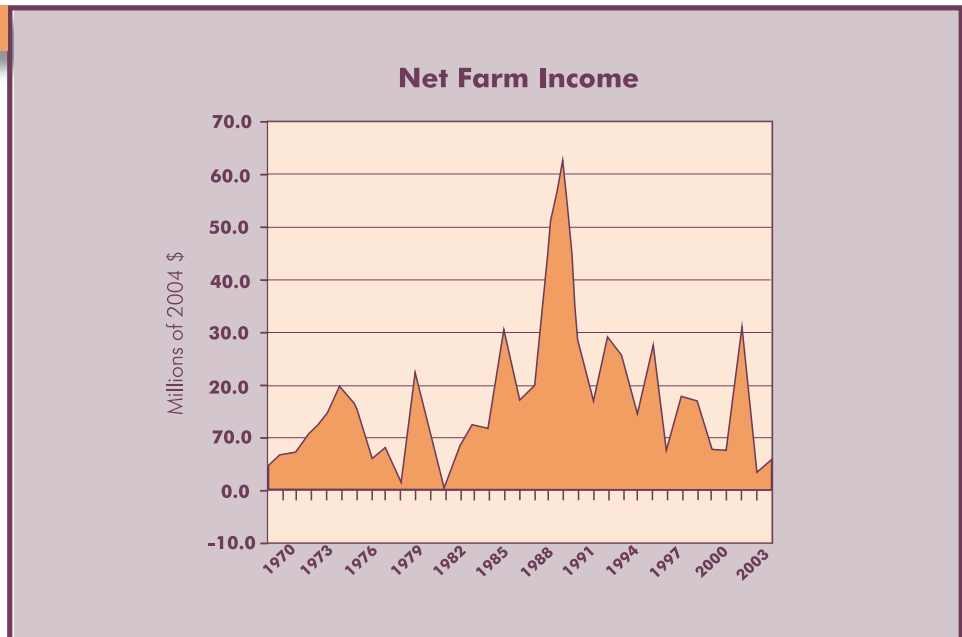


Figure 6 shows the farm income over a 30-year period (1970-2004) with its attendant dramatic spikes and declines.

Table 1

Farm Earnings							
All figures in thousands of 2004 \$	1970	% of Gross Income	1994	% of Gross Income	2004	% of Gross Income	1970-2004 Change in Share
Gross Income (Cash + Other)	25,292		84,799		70,903		
Cash Receipts from Marketing	23,632	93%	82,123	97%	66,925	94.4%	1%
Livestock & Products	13,510	53%	6,907	8%	7,680	10.8%	-43%
Crops	10,122	40%	75,216	89%	59,245	83.6%	44%
Other Income	1,660	7%	2,675	3%	3,978	5.6%	-1%
Government Payments	682	3%	904	1%	914	1.3%	-1%
Imputed Rent & Rent Received	979	4%	1,772	2%	3,064	4.3%	0%

The simplified **Table 1** represents a comparison of income from agriculture – it seems that the most dramatic increases have occurred in the decrease of livestock income and a concurrent significant increase in crop revenue.

In 2004 agriculture brought in over \$70 million of gross income into the County. In addition to the many positive cultural, social and scenic benefits of agriculture the revenue generated by this industry is substantial.

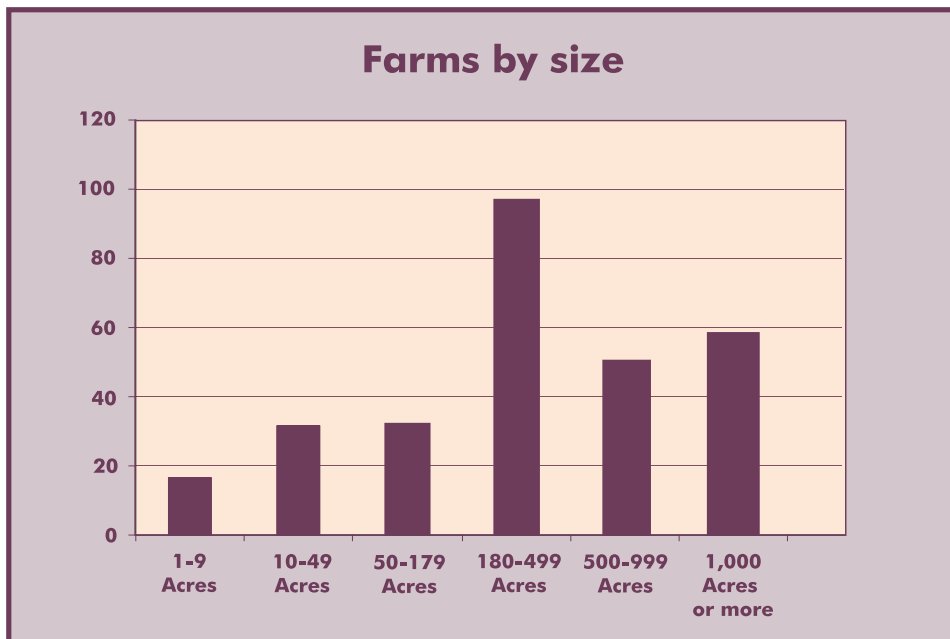


Figure 7

Figure 7 indicates the number of farms by size. Farms from 50 to 1000 acres dominate in the County with the most in the 50 to 179-acre category. Interestingly, Alamosa has few farms in the “hobby” category of one to approximately 49 acres – yet another indicator Alamosa remains a genuine agricultural community and economy.

Table 2

Irrigated land (farms)	201
Irrigated land (acres)	93,968
Livestock and poultry - Cattle and calves inventory (number)	10,983
Livestock and poultry - Hogs and pigs inventory (number)	173
Selected crops harvested - Wheat for grain, All (farms)	9
Selected crops harvested - Wheat for grain, all (acres)	2,057
Selected crops harvested - Oats for grain (farms)	4
Selected crops harvested - Oats for grain (acres)	380
Selected crops harvested - Potatoes (farms)	53
Selected crops harvested - Potatoes (acres)	24,941
Selected crops harvested -Forage -land used for all hay & all haylage, grass silage & greenchop (farms)	163
Selected crops harvested -Forage -land used for all hay & all haylage, grass silage & greenchop (acres)	35,239
Selected crops harvested - Barley for grain (farms)	51
Selected crops harvested - Barley for grain (acres)	16,538

Finally, data from the most recent agricultural census (2002) gives a sampling of the most active elements of the County’s agriculture.

Available Land for Residential & Commercial Expansion

Although population projections have been considered in a previous chapter this analysis focuses on the buildout of actual residential structures as well as commercial build-out potential of vacant land based on densities allowed by the City and County of Alamosa’s current land use codes. A build-out analysis estimates the dwelling units or commercial square footage of an area based on assumptions about allowable density. Residential build-out analysis, for example, identifies the supply of developable land, identifies development densities by location or zone, calculates the number of new housing units and then multiplies housing units by estimated number of people per unit. The build-out population of an area is the hypothetical capacity based on assumptions about allowable densities, which might or might not occur in the future. By contrast, a projection combines this supply of land and associated population with the anticipated regional demand for population for a particular time frame.

Residential Build-out Potential

Vacant parcels and vacant lots in existing subdivisions within the City of Alamosa were identified based on field observations and the Alamosa County Assessor database. The acreage of each vacant parcel was obtained from the database and aggregated by residential zoning districts.

Table 3 summarizes build-out potential for residential zoning districts, expressed as new housing units and additional population. Approximately 2,370 new housing units could be built on vacant subdivision lots and on unsubdivided parcels within the City’s residential zoning districts, resulting in an additional population of about 5,600.

Table 3

Residential build-out potential by residential zoning district						
Zone	No. of vacant lots in existing subdivisions	Vacant parcels			Total no. new units	Additional population
		No. of vacant acres	Allowable density	No. of units		
Residential Estate	10	9.85	3	29	39	92
Residential Low Density	280	73.65	5	368	648	1,529
Residential Medium Density	0	128.19	12	1,538	1,538	3,630
Residential High Density	0	5.85	25	146	146	345
Totals	290	217.54			2,371	5,596

Assumes average household size of 2.36 people, according to 2000 U.S. Census.

Figure 8 shows a graphic comparison of the build-out potential based on the existing City residential zones and the three alternative population projections for 2025: low growth (0.5% annual average), moderate growth (1.5% annual average) and high growth (2.5% annual average). Figure 8 shows that residential build-out potential under current zoning densities would accommodate a high growth rate. Current (2005) population of 8,488 plus additional population of 5,596 at build-out under existing zoning densities results in a build-out population of 14,084, which exceeds the 2025 high growth projection of 13,597. Note that this additional population increase could be entirely accommodated under existing zoning within the Alamosa City limits without additional annexations

Comparison of current population, build-out population and alternative population

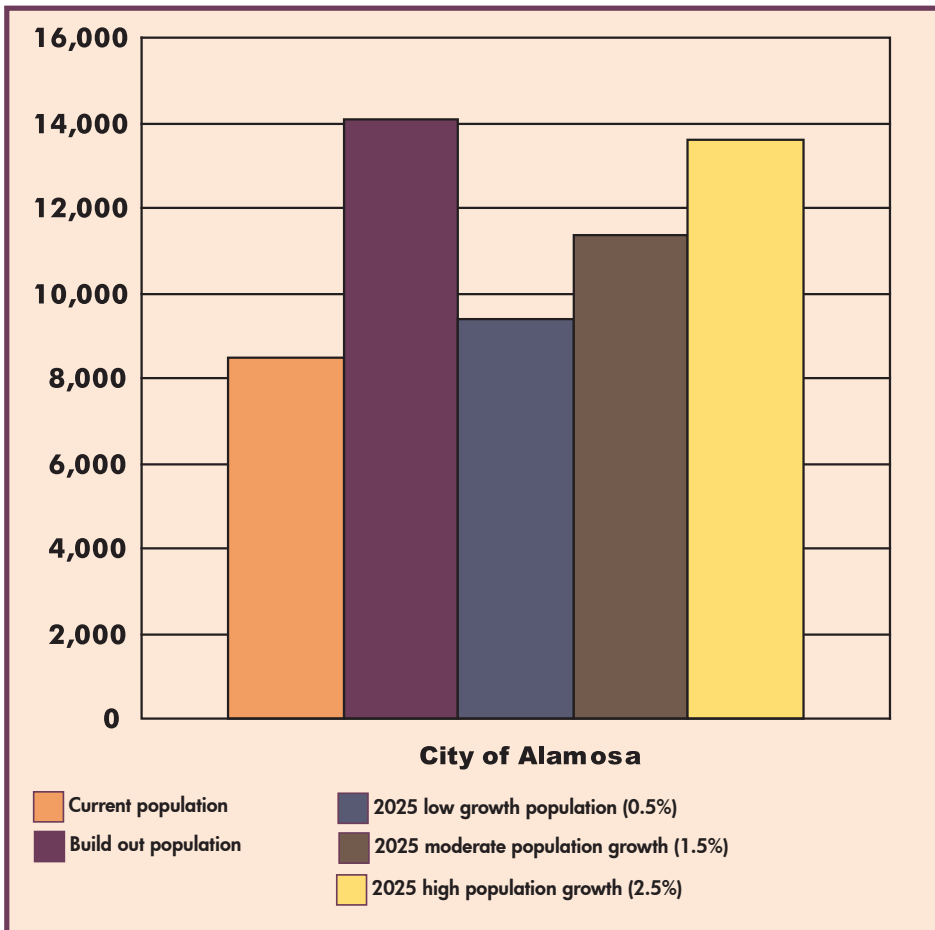


Figure 8

Community Economics Commercial Build-out Potential

Commercial and Industrial Build-out Potential

This section analyzes current and future demand for commercial/industrial space and the supply of land available to accommodate future demand.

Demand for Commercial/Industrial Space - Square footage of commercial and industrial uses per person is an indicator of demand for commercial/industrial space in a community as well as an indicator of the relative economic independence of an area. During the past decade, the Master Plan consultant analyzed commercial/industrial space in other communities. Fruita, which is in the economic shadow of Grand Junction, had 90 square feet of commercial/industrial uses per person within its three mile plan area and 71 square feet per person within the City limits. By comparison, communities that serve as the central market area for a larger region have more commercial/industrial square footage per person: 170 for Pagosa Springs and 215 for Gunnison, for example.

Table 4

Commercial and industrial parcels		
Type of use	Number of parcels	Aggregate building size (square feet)
Commercial	265	1,189,223
Intensive commercial ¹	76	272,624
Multiple commercial ²	35	241,482
Sub-total commercial	376	1,703,324
Industrial	189	393,990
TOTALS	565	2,097,314

As seen in **Table 4** and the narrative below, Alamosa, like Gunnison and Pagosa Springs, functions as a regional center of economic activity and therefore has a relatively large amount of commercial/industrial square footage per person. Based on the land use inventory and Alamosa County Assessor data, square footage for various categories of commercial and industrial uses within the three mile plan area was aggregated. Table 4 indicates the aggregated square footage for various types of commercial and industrial buildings.

With an estimated 2005 population of 15,765 in Alamosa County, the amount of commercial/ industrial space is approximately 133 square feet per person (2,097,314 square feet divided by 15,765 people). The County total population rather than the City of Alamosa population is used in the calculation because the commercial/industrial land uses serve the entire County population and much of the San Luis Valley. The number of commercial/industrial parcels and the number of aggregate square footage reflect totals for the entire County. However, it should be noted that most commercial/industrial uses are located within the City of Alamosa and within the three mile plan area surrounding the City. Using only the population of the City of Alamosa, where most commercial/industrial land uses are located yields approximately 247 square feet per person (2,097,314 square feet divided by the 2005 population of 8,488).

Assuming for planning purposes that the demand for future commercial/ industrial square footage within Alamosa County can be estimated based on 133 square feet per person, the amount of commercial/industrial space needed by 2025 in the County for each alternative growth scenario is as follows:

- Low growth (0.5% annual average) – 17,392 people x 133 sq. ft./person = 2,313,136 sq. ft.
- Moderate growth (1.5% annual average) – 21,042 people x 133 sq. ft./person = 2,798,586 sq. ft.
- High growth (2.5% annual average) – 25,239 people x 133 sq. ft./person = 3,356,787 sq. ft.

Supply of Commercial/Industrial Land - Based on existing land use patterns, it cannot be assumed that all vacant commercial land will be fully occupied by buildings. Except for some downtown parcels, most commercial and industrial lots allocate space for parking, landscaping or outdoor storage.

The portion of a lot occupied by buildings relative to total lot size is typically expressed as a floor area to lot size ratio, commonly referred to as a floor area ratio (FAR). This ratio is an indicator of the relative efficiency of use of the land. For example, a FAR of 0.1 indicates that only one-tenth of a parcel is occupied by a building. A FAR of 0.5 indicates much higher land use efficiency – half of a parcel occupied by a building. In urban areas, including downtown Alamosa, some parcels have a FAR of more than 1.0, usually indicating buildings with two or more floors.

The FARs for the various categories of commercial/industrial land uses in Alamosa are presented in **Table 5**, which indicates the ratio of aggregate building square footage to aggregate parcel area per category.

Community Economics Commercial / Industrial Build-out Analysis

The aggregate FAR for all commercial/industrial uses within the County is 0.070, which means that average lot coverage by buildings is only seven percent of lot size. The low FAR is caused by several very large parcels comprising the railroad yards and associated industrial land uses. The FAR for industrial uses only is 0.026, meaning that an average of only about 2.5 percent of industrial parcels is covered by structures. For more conventional commercial uses, by contrast, the FAR for these parcels is 0.141, meaning that about 14 percent of the area of these parcels is occupied by structures.

Table 5

Commercial / industrial floor area ratios by category			
Type of use	Aggregate building (square feet)	Aggregate parcel area (square feet)	Floor area ratio
Commercial	1,189,223	8,443,104	0.141
Intensive commercial	272,624	4,439,243	0.061
Multiple commercial	241,482	1,749,58	0.138
Sub-total commercial	1,703.324	14,631,934	0.116
Industrial	393,990	15,235,240	0.026
TOTALS	2,097,314	29,867,175	0.07

While **Table 5** displays data for various categories of commercial and industrial land uses, as indicated by the land use survey, **Table 6** (next page) displays data by zoning district. It should be noted that there is a large agricultural zone near the airport. Some of the land functions as a structure-free buffer around the runway. However, much of the land may be suitable for eventual industrial use. Thus, it is assumed that the vacant acres within this agricultural zone will eventually be zoned industrial and are categorized as such in Table 6. According to the City of Alamosa Land Use Code, the Industrial Transition Zone consists of industrial uses with the intent to eventually redevelop such parcels as commercial uses. Thus, the assumed FAR within the Industrial Transition Zone is 0.14, the same FAR as for the Commercial Business Zone.

Community Economics Commercial / Industrial Build-out Analysis

Table 6

Supply of commercial and industrial land by zone			
Zone	Number of Vacant Acres	Floor area ratio	Aggregate additional building (square feet)
Commercial Light	5.48	0.14	33,419
Commercial Business	66.29	0.14	404,263
Industrial	16.09	0.026	18,223
Industrial Transition	33.61	0.14	204,967
Agriculture*	151.13	0.026	171,164
TOTALS	272.60		832,036

*Includes parcels near airport that appear to be suitable for industrial uses.

Table 7

Comparison of commercial and industrial land supply and demand					
Supply (square feet)			Demand (square feet)		
Existing	Additional Supply	Total at build-out	Low growth	Medium growth	High growth
2,097,314	832,036	2,929,350	2,313,136	2,798,586	3,356,787

Table 7 compares existing commercial/industrial square footage, additional supply of such land, as shown in Table 4, and the demand for commercial industrial land for the three alternative growth projections. Based on the above assumptions and calculations, it appears that there is a sufficient supply of land now zoned commercial/industrial plus eventual conversion of agriculturally-zoned land near the airport to industrial within the City of Alamosa to accommodate 2025 demand for commercial/industrial square footage for low growth and moderate growth scenarios. However, the potential supply falls short of the demand for commercial/industrial square feet for the high growth scenario. It is likely that the shortfall could be accommodated within the three mile plan area outside the present City limits.

Community Economics Economic Development

Economic Development

Overview & Existing Efforts

The Alamosa area has a number of organized and effective economic development efforts in action. Perhaps the Alamosa County Chamber of Commerce that “is organized to advance the general welfare and prosperity of the San Luis Valley so that its citizens and all area of its business community will prosper. Promotion and education will be provided with particular attention given to the economic, civic, cultural and educational interests of the area and to opportunities for involvement.” The chamber acts as a gateway to the community promoting tourism, business, local events and attractions, facilitating new residents and coordinating projects among the various other organizations.

The San Luis Valley Development Resources Group (DRG), is based in Alamosa and administers the Colorado state enterprise zone program and revolving loan fund. DRG is also involved with state grants and transportation planning EDA grants, as well as other economic development activities.

The San Luis Valley Small Business Development Center, also based in Alamosa, provides personal financial and business startup counseling among other services.

The Upper Rio Grande Economic Development Council (URGED) acts to also promote economic development in the Rio Grande drainage, but is specifically interested in enhancing agribusiness and responding to industry and company location and re-location interests. URGED was involved in the generation of a regional marketing profile in 2006.

The number of existing elements in the County promoting or contributing to economic development and activity include Adams State College, Trinidad State Junior College, The San Luis Valley Regional Airport, San Luis Valley Regional Medical Center, Rio Grande National Forest, Colorado Gator Farm, the two scenic railroads, Great Sand Dunes National Monument, San Luis State Park and many others. All of these assets have proven themselves to be excellent. New prospects are discussed in the following sections.

Alternative energy

Alamosa County is already pursuing and would very much like to augment its focus as a national center for the exploration and production of alternative energies like geothermal, solar, wind, biodiesel and other renewable and alternative energy industries.

Existing noteworthy companies pursuing alternative energies exist in Alamosa County. Alta fuels are a historic petroleum marketer in the area and





has several programs and is pursuing biodiesel and other environmentally-friendly fuel mixtures. Blue Sun Biodiesel directly addresses energy security and environmental benefits by providing biodiesel fuels to the automotive fuel market. Sunedison & Xcel energy are in the process of installing the largest dual technology (concentrating photovoltaic and flat panel) solar plant in the nation. At 8.22 megawatts the solar array will produce enough power for more than 2,000 homes.

In addition to solar and biofuel industries Alamosa County is interested in considering and pursuing other alternative energies including but not limited to biomass, wind, and, geothermal.

Biomass energy is widely used for power generation; biomass can be collected from landfills and agriculture. It has been estimated that 30-40 percent of crop residues can be collected for biomass energy. Methane from landfills and animal wastes can also be burned in micro-turbines and other engines.

Contingent on geothermal temperatures in the area, geothermal applications may be used directly for energy production but most geothermal temperatures are considered “low temperature” (between 86 and 212 degrees Fahrenheit) and are more appropriate for direct use to provide home heating, aquaculture and or other industrial applications.

Because many alternative energy strategies are in the incipient stages of research, development and deployment, they often require coordinated and, sometimes, initially subsidized approaches to get them started. Alamosa County would like to be on the forefront of these developments as a state, as well as, national leader in this emerging industry.

Hooper & Mosca

Goals & Policies - Community Economics

The following goals and policies are intended to guide and stimulate ongoing or future projects with regard to economic development in the Alamosa area.

Goal

Explore opportunities associated with alternative energy industries.

GOAL 5.1: Alamosa public and private jurisdictions and organizations are interested in exploring the opportunities associated with alternative energy industries to make the region a leader in alternative energy development and use.

Policy 5.1.1: Alamosa County, in coordination with other jurisdictions, will generally support grant programs for alternative energy projects.

Policy 5.1.2: Alamosa County and other public jurisdictions will consider offering incentives for alternative energy development projects.

Policy 5.1.3: Explore the possibility of a formal system/process to generate

Community Economics Goals & Policies

project initiatives and also track outcomes of those initiatives as they relate to alternative energy.

GOAL 5.2: Promote development projects in or near Hooper and Mosca.

Policy 5.2.1: Alamosa-area economic development organizations are encouraged to collaborate with the citizens and governing bodies of those entities to develop a sub area-specific plan for Hooper and Mosca economic development priorities.

Policy 5.2.2: Hooper and Mosca should explore design and development elements to enhance their positions as a “gateway” into the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve.

GOAL 5.3: Alamosa, while continuing to promote its core economic assets (including agriculture and tourism), will pursue the development of a balanced and diverse economy that is more durable and less susceptible to the cyclic swings of any single industry.

Policy 5.3.1: Encourage high quality telecommunications infrastructure in the high density areas of Alamosa County.

Policy 5.3.2: Encourage commercial and/or industrial uses to locate within or near municipal boundaries.

Policy 5.3.3: Define acceptable commercial and/or industrial uses in the unincorporated areas and develop standards that allow the specific uses to be approved through the special use permit process

Policy 5.3.4: Develop clear cell tower ordinances to ensure that better and more diversified wireless opportunities occur in the County, with the intent of providing more comprehensive coverage.

GOAL 5.4: Alamosa will support, expand and diversify the role of tourism and tourist-attracting businesses in the local economy.

Policy 5.4.1: Alamosa will continue support for tourism related land uses, businesses, marketing and City of Alamosa downtown improvements leading to increased drive-through and destination tourist traffic.

Policy 5.4.2: Develop and implement special use permit regulations that allow tourist-based businesses that are appropriately located within the unincorporated areas of the County with the goal of minimizing any potential negative impacts.

Policy 5.4.3: Encourage the location of commercial, lodging, restaurant and other tourism-based activities in the municipalities and those planned unit developments that allow for commercial uses.

Policy 5.4.4: Allow special events within the County in a manner that

Goal

Promote development projects in Hooper and Mosca

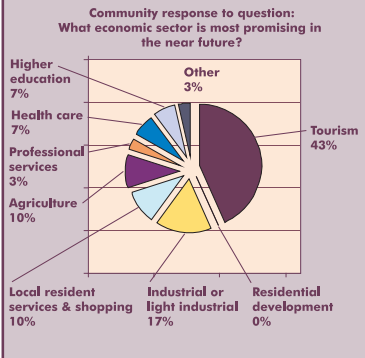
Goal

Pursue a balanced and diverse economy.

Goal

Support, expand and diversify tourism in the local economy.

Community Response



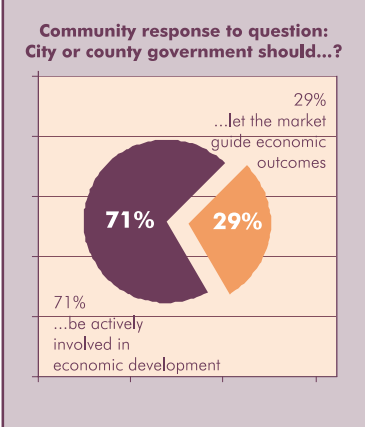
Goal

Maintain, support, expand and promote local businesses and entrepreneurs.

Goal

Continue to provide community assets and an environment attractive to families and long-term residents.

Community Response



minimizes impacts on the environment, infrastructure and County residents' lifestyles.

Policy 5.4.5: Support generation of a coordinated long-range and comprehensive strategic planning document focused on increasing year-round tourism.

Policy 5.4.6: Alamosa will promote and preserve existing and improved air access to the community.

Policy 5.4.7: Alamosa will support studies that explore the positive and negative impacts of recreational vehicle parks and consider facilitating the development of such parks at appropriate locations within the County or City.

Alamosa desires to maintain, expand and promote local businesses and entrepreneurs.

Policy 5.5.1: The County, City of Alamosa, and Town of Hooper will ensure that an adequate spectrum of commercially-zoned land exists to accommodate new businesses.

Policy 5.5.2: The City of Alamosa will partner with local business development groups and planning efforts to actively recruit new business.

Policy 5.5.3: Where appropriate, Alamosa will support home occupations, pending necessary permits, for the purposes of promoting entrepreneurship, growth and employment in local cottage industries.

Policy 5.5.4: Alamosa will establish a clear and marketable definition of the City's assets, identity and core appeal to prospective businesses and potential residents.

Alamosa will continue to provide community assets and community environment conducive to the attraction of families and other long-term residents.

Alamosa recognizes that a diverse community is an important contributor to the area and its prosperity, but wants to emphasize the special role of families and their sustaining influence on long-term growth and economic stability.

Policy 5.6.1: Alamosa recognizes that high-quality school facilities and services are an important draw for families and the County and Towns will encourage the continuation and further improvement of school facilities through the adoption of a land dedication/fee-in-lieu schedule if the School District makes such a request. Collection of these fees is subject to review and legal limitations.

Policy 5.6.2: Alamosa jurisdictions will generally support child care operations.

Community Economics Goals & Policies

Policy 5.6.3: Alamosa will continue its support of and, where appropriate, will facilitate the expansion of health care facilities.

Policy 5.6.4: Where possible and appropriate Alamosa County and City will facilitate development of the Regional Airport, perhaps working with local business to increase the number of commercial service carriers and departures.

Public opinion polling and historic economic data suggest that the majority of day-to-day shopping by Alamosa residents occurs inside the County. This is recognized as a significant positive and maintaining this situation is a priority.

GOAL 5.7: Alamosa will pay particular attention to the continuing development of businesses that provide products and services for locals' day-to-day shopping needs.

Policy 5.7.1: The City of Alamosa will continue to monitor the planning review process for commercial and industrial developments with special emphasis on promoting those activities that return significant out-of-area income and provide products and services to local residents.

Policy 5.7.2: Tax increment financing, bonding, waiving of impact fees and special districts may be acceptable and possible mechanisms to utilize when local resident serving businesses are considered.

GOAL 5.8: Alamosa will continue to promote the downtown area of Alamosa and the commercial core as an important community asset.

Policy 5.8.1: When appropriate and feasible, Alamosa will make necessary infrastructure improvements such as sidewalks, parking and other information transfer infrastructure to the Commercial Center to make conducting profitable business easier for existing and prospective business owners.

Goal

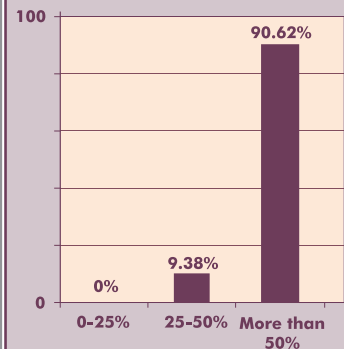
Recognizes the importance of businesses providing products and services for local residents' day-to-day shopping needs.

Goal

Continue support of the commercial core as an important community asset.

Community Response

Community response to question:
What percentage of your day-to-day shopping do you do in Alamosa County?



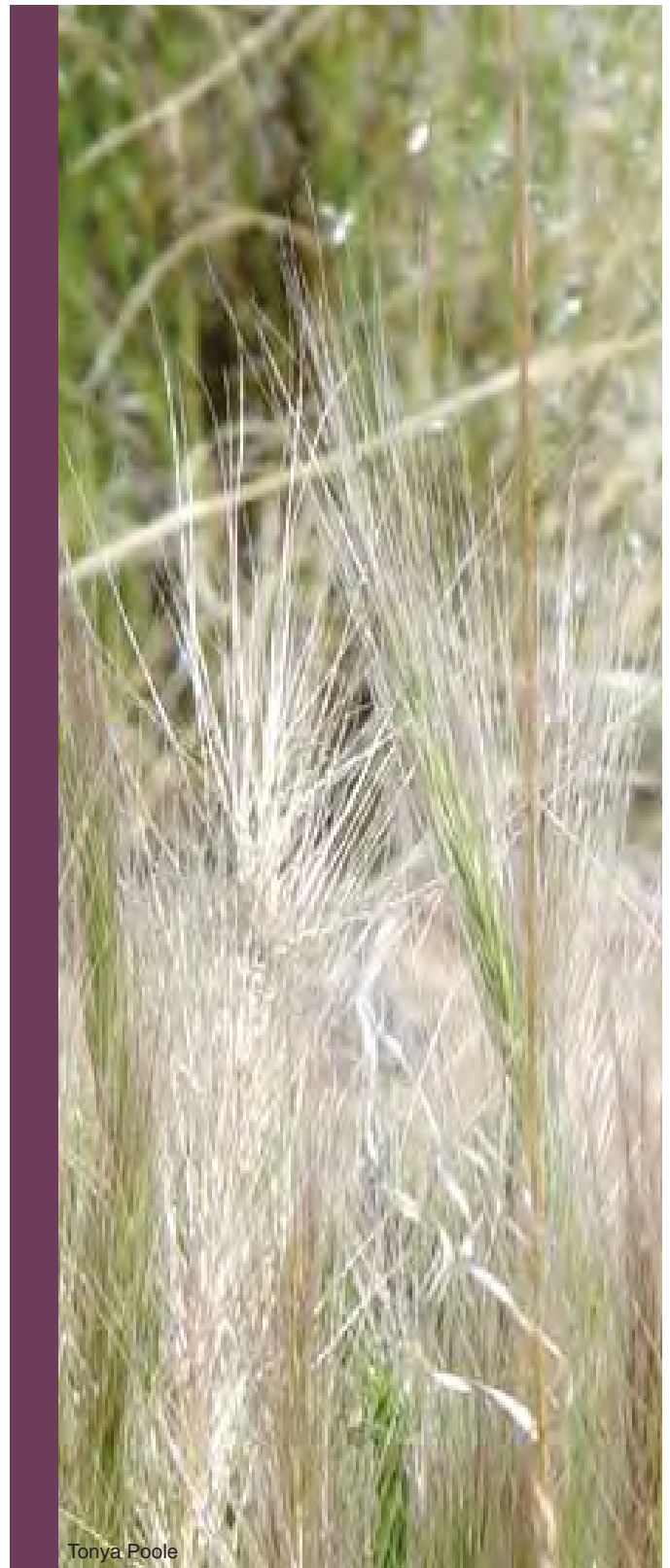
Endnote

¹ Commercial uses that are typically dependent on a high volume of traffic, such as fast food establishments, service stations and supermarkets.

Endnote

² More than one commercial establishment on a parcel, often two or more uses in one building.

Developing the Land Use Element
Land Use Alternatives
Sand Dunes Corridor
Wildlife Interface
Working Agriculture
Communities
Goals & Policies



Tonya Poole

Future Land Use Developing the Land Use Element

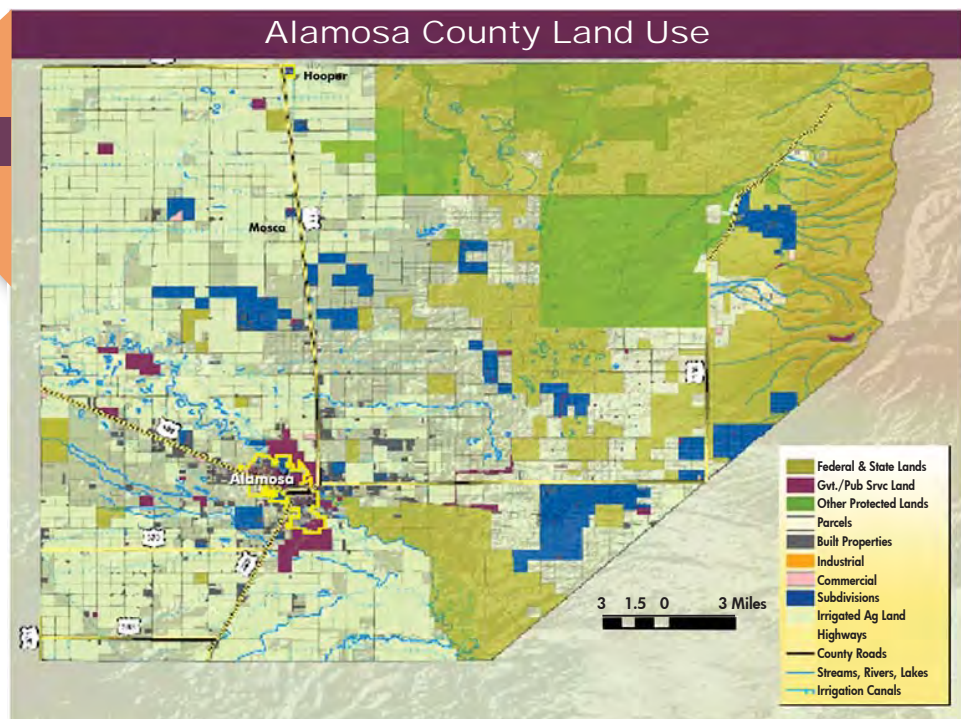
Unincorporated Alamosa Conceptual Land Use Element Developing the Land Use Element

The land use element of the Alamosa Master Plan provides guidance for future land uses in the unincorporated County according to the unique geographies contained within the County.

The approach to developing the land use element incorporates two main principles:

1. Successful physical land use planning requires keen attention to the physical features of the landscape - both natural and manmade.
2. In order to reflect community members' preferences for future land uses and the deep attachments to the land, public involvement in developing the plan requires media and approaches that encourage geographically specific public input about specific types of land use.

Map 1



Presenting Existing Conditions Intuitively

Building a thorough base of existing physical conditions on the landscape was of key importance in initiating the land use element of the plan. Analysis of existing conditions and the presentation of these conditions to participants in the public involvement forums required a dual perspective:

Bird's eye view: Using GIS technology, base maps were developed that represent the location of important resources and physical characteristics

(wetlands, floodplain, irrigated agriculture, wildlife habitat, roads, towns, subdivision boundaries, developed properties, public lands, protected lands, etc.).

Windshield view: Photography and visualization tools were used to represent the way various development patterns look for example one house per 5 acres versus one house per 35 acres. This includes development patterns currently underway in Alamosa County, and possibilities for the future.

Public Involvement

The public involvement foundation for the land use element included forums for fundamentally different types of community input:

Qualitative: To get community members' views on various issues and to gather qualitative preferences and values about physical land use, forums included a combination of visualization aids including photos, maps, digital terrain models and opinion polling. Using key pad polling technology, opinions were tracked carefully, thoroughly and anonymously and presented back to the group instantly. This approach provided planners and participants an instantaneous 'group photo' of public opinion regarding important values, issues and planning topics. Other forums included facilitated study-group discussions.

Geographic: Participants played a chip game, during which they worked in groups placing future projected residential and non-residential growth through 2025 on gameboard maps. The gameboards and other maps displayed in the meeting room highlighted important resources, such as irrigated agricultural land, floodplain, wetlands, public lands, existing subdivisions, zoning, transportation infrastructure, fire hazard and other information about resources for evaluating land use. The game pieces represented densities allowed under current zoning, as well as some optional densities not currently contained in the County Land Use Code. The chip game provided participants a direct venue to express what type of land uses should go where; the fundamental question underlying a land use element.

Land Use Alternatives

The chip game was the basis for establishing three alternatives for residential growth in the County. These alternatives were compared to existing and proposed land uses, such as the City of Alamosa Three Mile Plan, and were then synthesized into a final land use map. The alternatives are presented here to demonstrate the evolution of the public process. Briefly, the alternatives could be characterized as follows:

Alternative 1 - Development is close to Alamosa (mostly north and south of the City), with more dense development closest to the City. Future development

5-Acre Lots



1-Acre lot



Rural Landscape Retention
Subdivision



Future Land Use Community-developed Land Use Alternatives

close to the City is broken up by tracts of open space (represented by green outline) contained in cluster, or open space subdivisions.

Alternative 2 - Like Alternative 1, this alternative concentrates most development near Alamosa (mostly north and south of the City), but allocates significant quantities of future projected growth in the Hooper and Mosca areas. In this sense, Alternative 2 represents an economic development strategy to spur activity in those Towns. This alternative calls for nearly all future subdivisions to include areas of dedicated open space.

Alternative 3 - This alternative calls for the most dense development patterns, with a mix of open space, clustered subdivisions and traditional subdivisions. The fundamental differences include the placement of future subdivisions in the Sand Dunes National Park area and the concentration of development to the north and east of the City, with none to the south of Alamosa.

Commonalities Among All Alternatives

The geographic input from the chip game summarized in the alternatives is congruent with the qualitative input gathered during the opinion polling sessions. Most people feel that residential development should be close to, or in, cities and towns with the caveat that open space is preserved as part of each development. Additionally, during the chip game, participants were given optional game pieces to place future subdivisions at 35 acres per house density and none of the participants selected this option. Tracts of 35 acres are not the preferred development pattern in any of the three alternatives. This is reflected in the opinion polling results as well. Only 10 percent of participants cited no concerns with 35-acre tract developments.

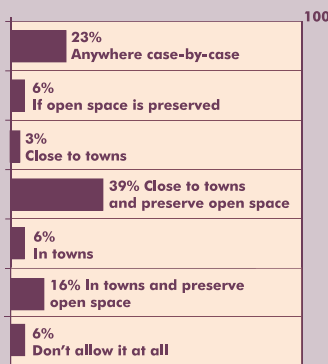
Note: Group polling was taken through anonymous electronic voting devices during the public process. These results reflect the preferences of those members of the community present at the meetings but are not intended to represent statistically-accurate results of a random sample of the entire community. However, every effort was made to garner a wide cross section of community interest and personalities at the public meetings.

Polling results revealed community rationale for locating future development near the City. The community wants to protect its special natural features such as habitat and tourist attractions. Some residents are also concerned about strain on public infrastructure associated with a scattered rural development patterns.

The chip game planning exercise also demonstrated that core agricultural values are alive and well in Alamosa County. Irrigated agriculture and irrigation canals were depicted on the chip game board maps so participants could easily identify it. While participants were willing to consume some irrigated agriculture right near the City of Alamosa, and some areas near Mosca and Hooper, participants avoided identifying irrigated agricultural

Community Response

Community response to question:
Under what conditions is 1 acre per
residence density appropriate?



lands as future growth areas entirely.

Land Use Element

The land use alternatives have many common threads which were then synthesized into a single land use plan. While the plan can be represented on a single map, it is best understood in terms of the unique geographic areas comprising the County.

Distinct Geographies

Alamosa County has many distinct geographic areas, all of which have different characteristics both in terms of the natural and the built environment. This plan considers The unincorporated County at-large, a rural transition area, a City of Alamosa area of influence, and at a finer level of detail the preferred growth area - a level of detail within the Alamosa area of influence. Each area is identified, described and accompanied by a set of policies or guiding principles that reflect the values and preferences of the community and the geographic characteristics.

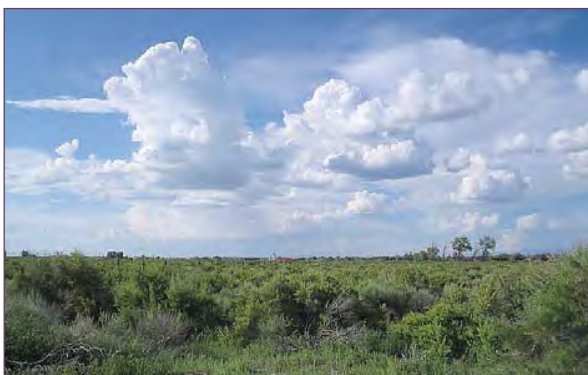
Rural Transition Area

Rural transition areas extend to the edge of a rural landscape retention area area.

GOAL 6.1: Alamosa County recognizes the need to accommodate future and existing platted subdivisions within the unincorporated County; however there is an interest in maintaining these urban-level developments in close proximity to the City and Towns. Furthermore, both the County and communities have a keen interest protecting County resources, including habitat and irrigated agricultural land, as well as providing a clear boundary between urban areas such as cities and towns and the more rural unincorporated County.

Policy 6.1.1: Open lands belt marks geographic identity of the City and breaks up continuous development patterns entering and exiting the City along major travel routes.

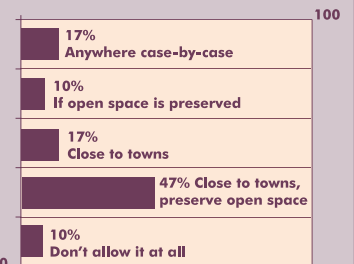
Policy 6.1.2: Whenever possible conserve riparian habitat and maintain



Undeveloped area south of Alamosa contained in the City of Alamosa area of interest

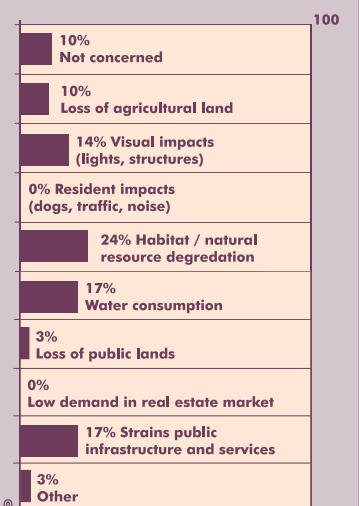
Community Response

Community response to question:
Under what conditions is 5 acre per residence density appropriate?



Community Response

What concerns you most about
35-acre tract subdivisions?



Goal

Alamosa recognizes the need to accommodate future and existing subdivisions with a keen interest in protecting County resources, habitat and agricultural land.

Future and se and se oals & Policies Rural ansition reas

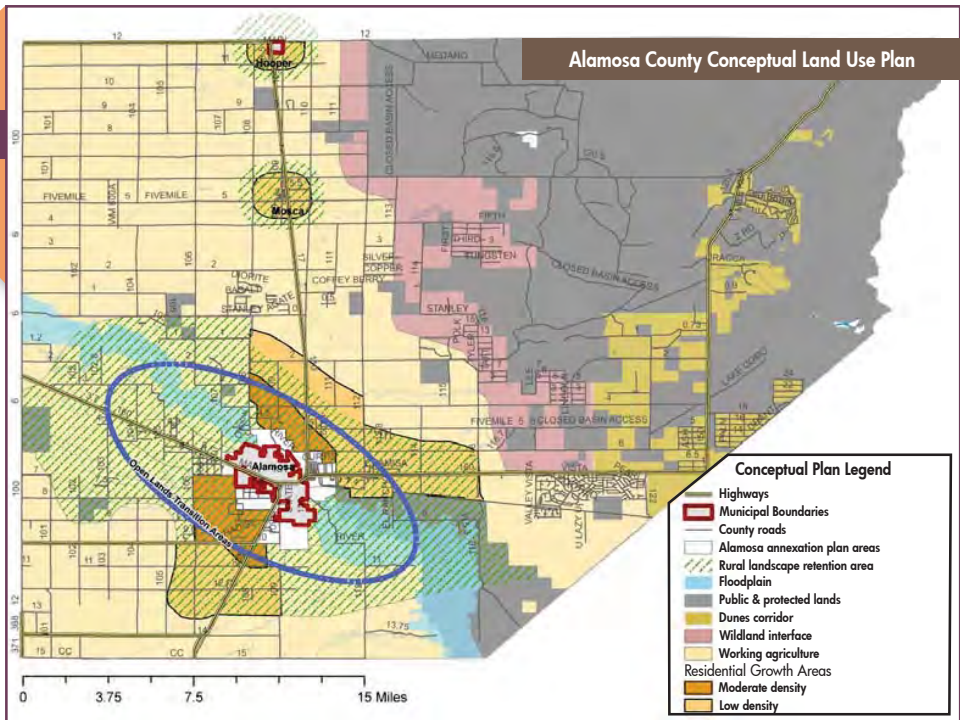
habitat connectivity.

Policy 6.1.3: Transition from moderate density near the City to low density rural development farther from Alamosa.

The City of Alamosa area of interest includes areas around Alamosa’s municipal boundary and reaches along major highway corridors. This area includes future growth areas for the City and areas where future development could have direct implications on City infrastructure and quality of life in Alamosa.

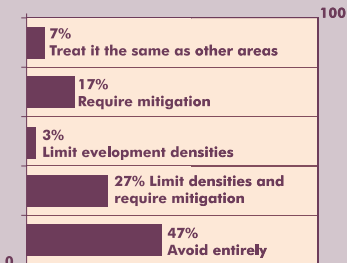
Policy 6.1.4: Most future commercial development would occur within the

Map



Community Response

Community response to question:
How should development in, or on,
special natural features be handled?



Alamosa periphery conceptual land use plan



Rattlesnake in the Sand Dunes corridor

City limits or in the Alamosa area of interest.

Sand Dunes Corridor

Alamosa County residents recognize the importance of the Great Sand Dunes National Park & Preserve as an economic and aesthetic asset to the County and to ensure that land uses around

Goal

Alamosa County residents recognize the importance of the Great Sand Dunes National Park & Preserve.

Future Land Use Land Use Goals & Policies - Sand Dunes Corridor

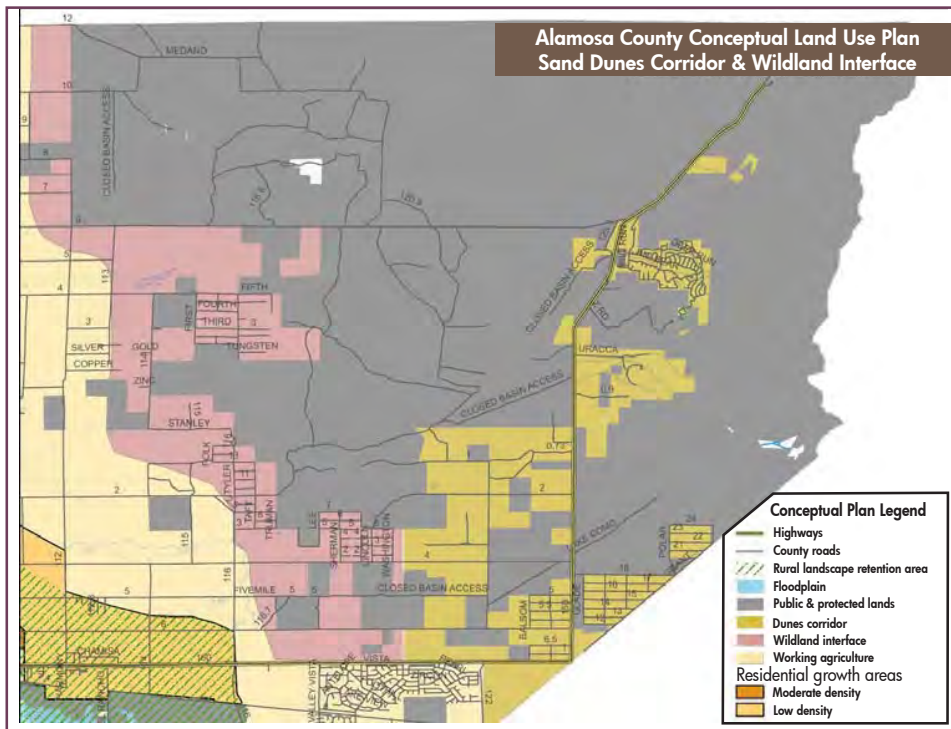
those objectives.

The Sand Dunes corridor consists of the areas of private property along Highway 150 leading to Sand Dunes National Park.

Policy 6.2.1: Because the Sand Dunes is an important asset for the County’s tourism and recreation market, scenic resources and important habitat along travel corridor leading to the dunes should be preserved.

There are an estimated 1,900 vacant lots in the dunes corridor. Most of these properties were platted or established decades ago and have not yet been built upon.

Development on currently-platted lots or legal parcels constitutes the primary development activity in the dunes corridor.



Sand Dunes corridor and wildland interface conceptual land use plan

Some subdivisions with design problems, such as poor access, or with infrastructure limitations, such as a lack of domestic water, might need to be re-planned and re-platted to be attractive to buyers and acceptable in terms of basic health and safety concerns.

Policy 6.2.2: To best capture economic activity associated with Sand Dunes visitation, some commercial development is acceptable along the corridor, ideally located at the intersection of highways U.S. 160 and S.H. 150 and near existing commercial establishments.

Community Response

Community response to question:
In regards to rural clustering, does open lands belt make good sense around Alamosa?



Community Response

Community response to question:
Should the river corridor be managed to balance habitat protection and recreation opportunities?



Future Land Use

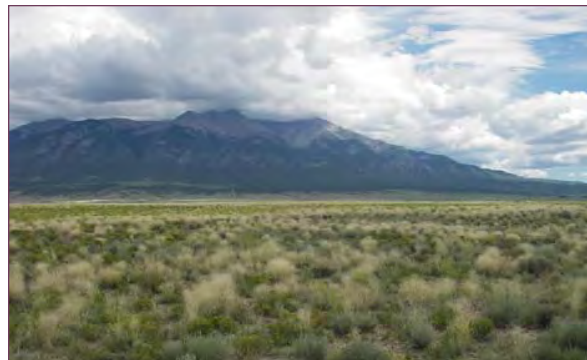
Land Use Goals & Policies - Wildland Interface

Goal

The patchwork of public and private lands needs to be carefully managed with regard to infrastructure provision and wild fire issues.

Wildland Interface

GOAL 6.3: The complex patchwork of public and private lands needs to be carefully managed with attention to all of the interests involved and in such a way that fiscal efficiencies are achieved with regard to infrastructure provision and wild fire issues.



Sangre de Cristo Mountains thunderstorm seen from the dunes corridor.

The wildland interface consists of the band of private properties along the edge of federal or state public lands and lands protected from development by other entities such as the Nature Conservancy.

There are an estimated 700 or more vacant lots in the wildland interface. Most of these properties were platted or established decades ago and have not yet been built upon.

Development on currently-platted lots or legal parcels constitutes the primary development activity in the wildland interface.

Policy 6.3.1: Because public lands are a key asset for the County, attracting visitors and providing high quality recreational opportunities for residents, maintaining access to publicly-owned land is a top priority for the County.

Policy 6.3.2: In the wildland interface, access along existing public routes is maintained and new routes are created as appropriate and where needed.

Policy 6.3.3: Fire and fuels management in the wildland interface is of key importance in order to protect wildlands from human-caused fires and to protect private property from fires occurring on wildlands.



Alamosa County wildland interface



Working Agriculture

.4 On working agricultural lands the primary land use is agriculture with all other uses secondary.

Policy 6.4.1: Working agriculture covers the majority of Alamosa County. Agriculture is based around a series of irrigation canals running through the northern two-thirds of the County and sprinkler-based irrigation systems, many of which rely on groundwater.

Currently, 2,700 vacant lots exist in working agriculture areas, some of which are 35 acre tracts, some of which are vacant subdivision lots. Future development is related to the viability of agricultural operations and compatible with working agriculture.

Policy 6.4.2: Prioritize build-out of existing subdivisions and parcels before platting new ones.

Policy 6.4.3: Develop incentives to maintain water rights for use in Alamosa County to avoid water exportation.

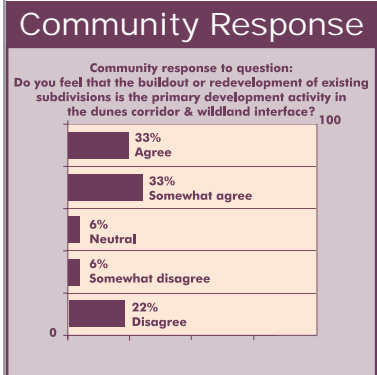
Policy 6.4.4: One of the factors that will be utilized in the evaluation of future development will be the development’s effect on the viability of agricultural operations and its compatibility with working agriculture.

Goal

On working agricultural lands the primary land use is agriculture with all other uses secondary.



Irrigation canal in western Alamosa County.

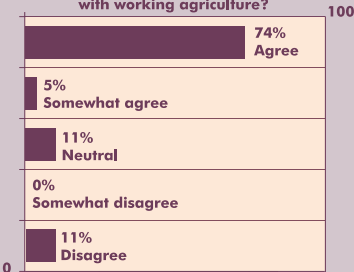


Future Land Use

Land Use Goals & Policies - Communities

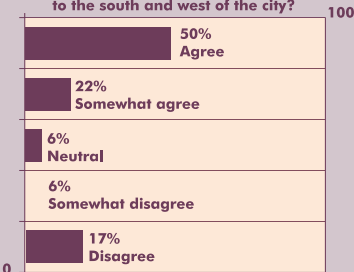
Community Response

Community response to question:
Do you feel future development in working agricultural is related to the viability of agricultural operations and is compatible with working agriculture?



Community Response

Community response to question:
Do you feel that, with the exception of some infill areas, that the most suitable areas to expand the city lie to the south and west of the city?



Goal

Ensure lands immediately adjacent to the City of Alamosa receive appropriate densities and incorporate mixed use elements.

Communities

City of Alamosa Preferred Growth Scenario within the Three Mile Area

The chip game described above also included a City of Alamosa area game board and game pieces that reflect urban development possibilities. Participants played two city chip games to identify a future preferred growth scenario along the periphery of the current City limits. The results of the two games included a high degree of agreement about future expansion areas for the City, resulting in a single synthesis plan for the preferred growth scenario. The City of Alamosa refers to this area as the Three Mile Area Plan.

In addition to identifying future development scenarios, participants were encouraged to identify future land use projects, parks, trails and open space.

The City of Alamosa has prepared and updates a Three-Mile Area Map on an annual basis. The chip game results were integrated with this map. This map contains eight areas designated by the City. The County input is generally congruent with these areas and this Plan makes recommendations for future land use outside of the perimeters of the Three-Mile Area. In brief, the City areas contain the following proposed land use elements, although they are contingent on annual updates and approval by the City:

Area 1: This area is currently used for public utilities and generally agricultural uses.

Area 2: This area generally consists of commercial and industrial uses.

Area 3: This area includes two subareas generally with commercial and light industrial uses near the highway and low and medium residential densities.

Area 4: This area contains a variety of uses and should continue to do so pending permits and conditions.

Area 5: This area is residential in and adjacent to the McClain-Fink Subdivision and industrial or commercial for the rest of the area.

Area 6: This area will continue to contain agricultural uses but other uses are pending further study.

Area 7: The preferred uses for this area is industrial and service commercial.

Area 8: Agricultural uses are designated for this area.

GOAL 6.5: To ensure that lands immediately adjacent to City of Alamosa boundaries most suitable for future expansion are generally designated and to suggest appropriate densities while incorporating mixed use and recreation elements.

Policy 6.5.1: A combination of infill and expansion areas will be used to

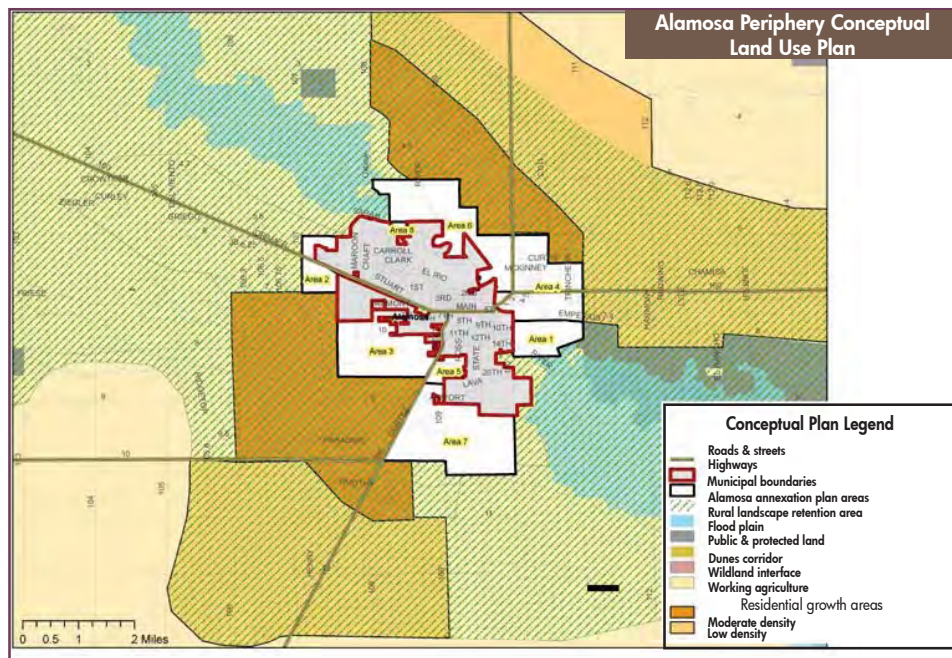
accommodate future demand for residential and commercial development in the time horizon of this document (year 2025).

Policy 6.5.2: Existing physical features, such as the river, Alamosa Ranch and the protected land south of Alamosa are all natural boundaries for the City and should be recognized as potential boundaries in future planning.

Policy 6.5.3: Because many small lots already exist in Alamosa, moderate density single-family, 12,000 square feet to one-acre lots, is the preferred density for residential development.



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Map 4

City of Alamosa preferred growth scenario

Policy 6.5.4: When appropriate new neighborhoods should be evaluated for parks and other such amenities.

Policy 6.5.5: Future development patterns and projects will continue to respectfully embrace the river and enhance it as a community asset.

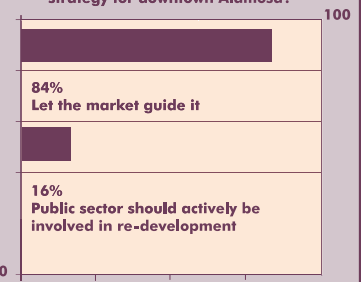
Policy 6.5.6: While infrastructure and market realities make highway-based commercial an acceptable development pattern, special consideration will be put upon maintaining the viability of the market for downtown business.

GOAL 6.6: Ensure that land use policies and development occurring in the County within the City's area of interest are compatible with the existing zoning and future land use objectives of the City.

Policy 6.6.1: The development of an intergovernmental agreement between the County and the municipalities will be considered if appropriate.

Community Response

Community response to question:
What do you think is the best strategy for downtown Alamosa?



Goal

Ensure land use policies and development in the city's area of interest are compatible with existing zoning and future land use objectives.

Future Land Use

Land Use Goals & Policies - Communities



Policy 6.6.2: County land use policies will be consistent with local land use policies and objectives in the Three-Mile Area.

Policy 6.6.3: Development densities in the Three-Mile Area that require municipal water and wastewater will be encouraged to locate in areas where these services are available and annex into the municipality.

Policy 6.6.4: Development in the Three-Mile Area will have street patterns and right-of-way widths that are compatible with the City.

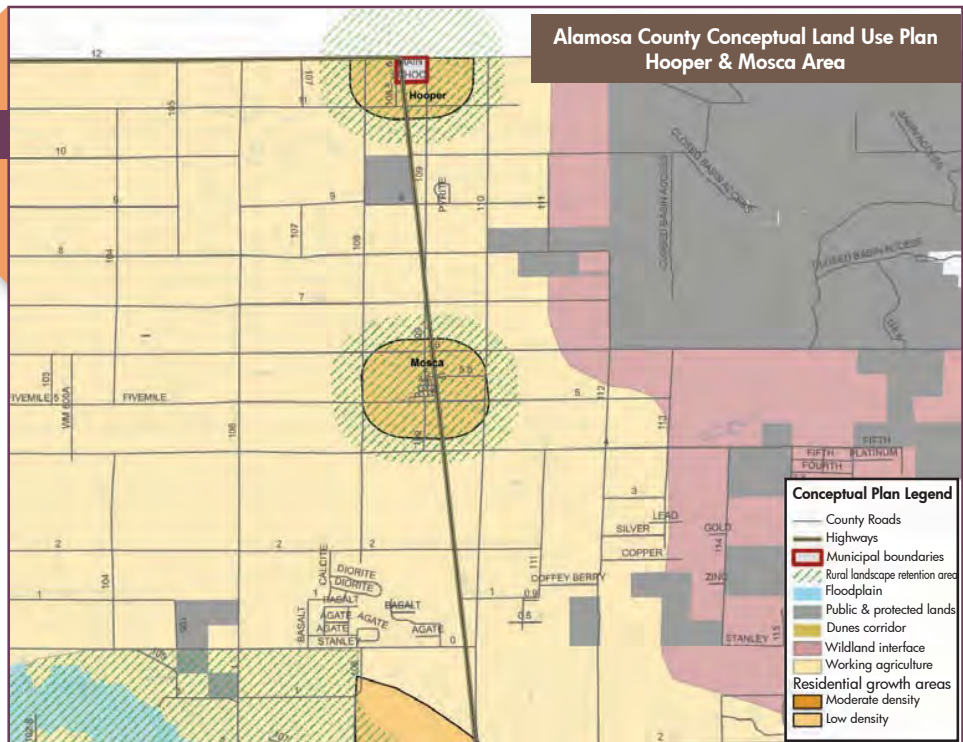
Town of Hooper and Community of Mosca

The incorporated Town of Hooper and the community of Mosca are both well situated to provide neighborhood commercial and services to the rural residents in the San Luis Valley and to visitors as well. As the City of Alamosa grows, Hooper and Mosca are likely to be favored locations for future residents who seek a smaller community, less traffic and good real estate values. The drives into Alamosa, or north to Salida, or west to Monte Vista or Del Norte, are not prohibitively long, meaning that commuters will likely continue to filter into these attractive small Towns. With proximity to the solar energy center and easy access to the Sand Dunes National Park, Mosca has an interesting geography for future non-residential development. Meanwhile Hooper already has some momentum built in its commercial markets.

Goal

To retain the small-town agricultural character that makes Hooper and Mosca great places to live while also mapping out a viable economic future.

Map 5



Alamosa County small communities: Hooper and Mosca

GOAL 6.7: To retain the small-town agricultural character that makes Hooper and Mosca great places to live while also mapping out a viable economic future for these areas.

Policy 6.7.1: Developments and projects that retain the small-town agricultural character of Hooper and Mosca will be supported.

Policy 6.7.2: Recognizing that both Hooper and Mosca provide small-town lifestyles in a working agricultural setting. The areas immediately surrounding the Towns are appropriate for low-intensity residential development.

Policy 6.7.3: Open land belts should be generally followed in order that the geographic identity of the towns can be maintained. This is particularly important with regard to development along the highways.

Policy 6.7.4: In order to continue to move towards economic and fiscal self-sufficiency, Hooper and Mosca wish to develop strategies to attract commercial development aimed at serving residents, visitors, agricultural operators and build off of the alternative energy industry already underway in the San Luis Valley.

Project Ideas

During the planning process, participants shared many ideas for future projects in Alamosa County that will make it a better place to live and do business.

River Recreation

Many residents feel that the river has tremendous potential as an amenity. River access for float trips, a fish hatchery, a foot bridge from Alamosa into the Alamosa Ranch, a river trail, and a river park in Alamosa were just a few of the ideas resulting from brainstorming sessions during public involvement forums.

Alternative Energy Development

Recognizing that the San Luis Valley is an ideal place for developing wind, solar, and other alternative energy sources in a time when much work needs to be done to diversify energy sources, many residents suggested that this plan include specific support for such development. One idea was to build off of the existing solar energy facility near Mosca, but other locations could be appropriate as well.

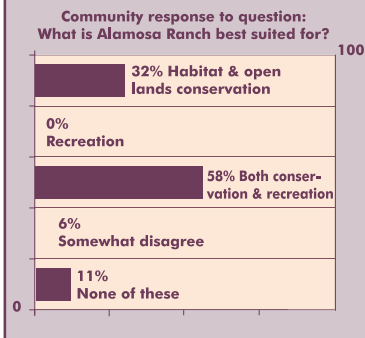
Downtown Alamosa

While the initiation of commercial development is largely a function of market forces, people value the unique downtown core in Alamosa and want to preserve it and enhance it. As in many towns in the U.S., it often becomes necessary to provide public sector support to keep downtown



Future Land Use Land Use Goals & Policies - Communities

Community Response

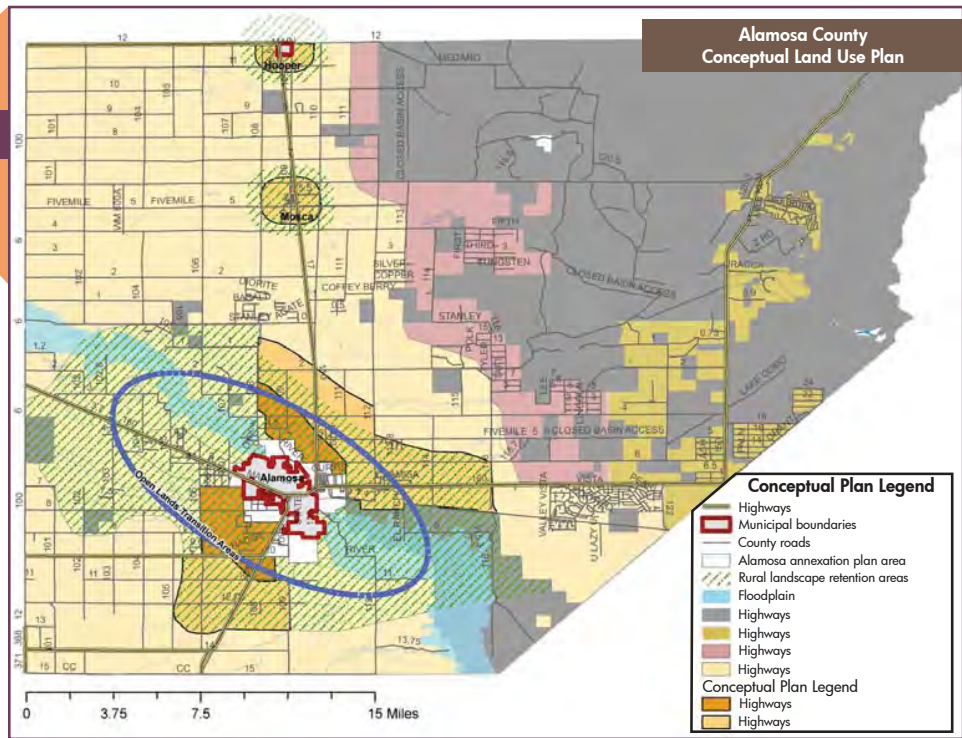


markets healthy and competitive. Nearly all participants suggested that some public sector effort will be necessary to keep Alamosa's downtown vibrant.

Rural Schools

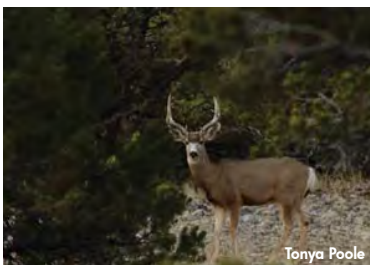
If rural developments generate the number of students needed to justify an elementary school out in the rural areas of the County, residents would be well served by a rural elementary school. Such a school would intercept traffic that would otherwise continue into the City, and would provide an important gathering place for parents and students who otherwise would not interact.

Map 6

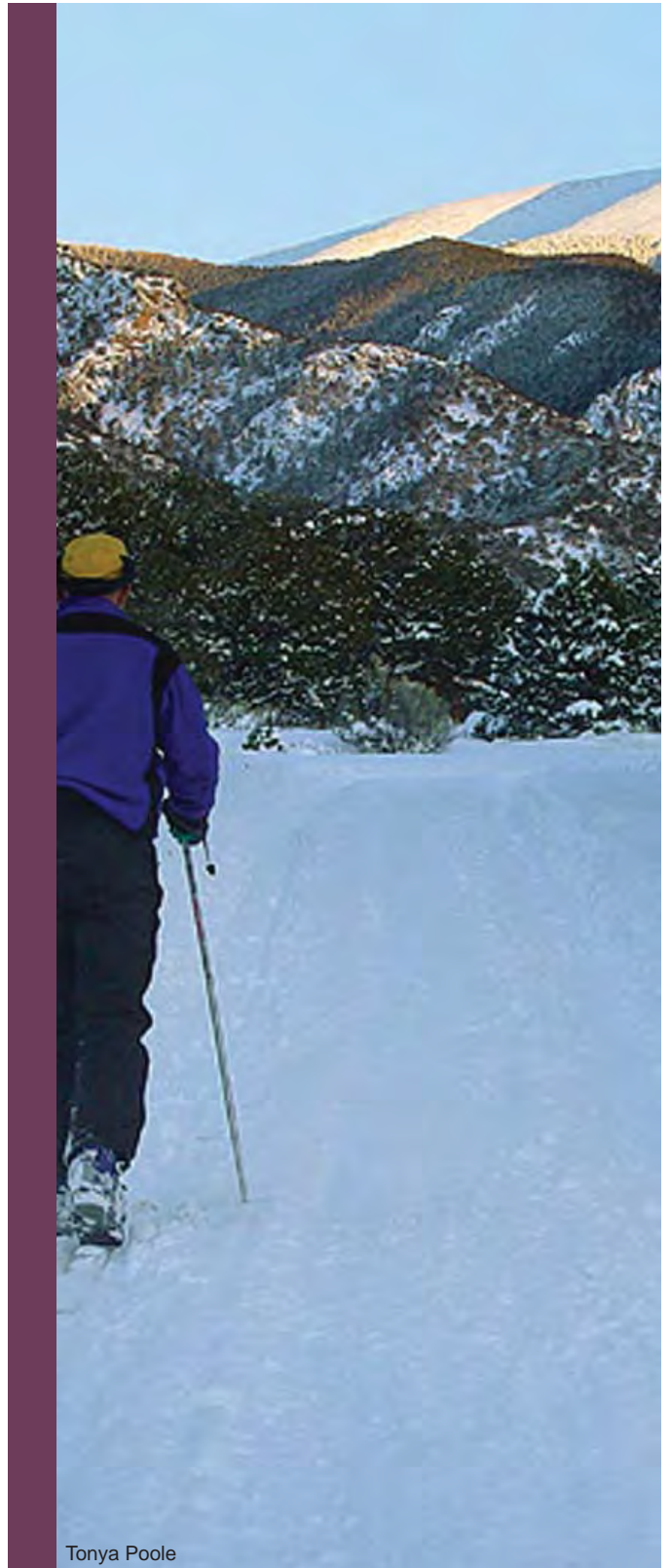


Alamosa Ranch

The City owns Alamosa Ranch and currently manages it as open space. Most residents support the open space management of Alamosa Ranch, but many would like to see more low-impact recreational opportunities such as trails, river access, and foot bridges. Development of these recreational opportunities would need to be sensitive to the habitat values on the ranch.



Inventory of Facilities
Opportunities & Challenges
Public Response
Goals & Policies



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Recreation & Cultural Resources

Introduction



Recreation & Cultural Resources

Introduction

This chapter considers recreation and cultural facilities, including parks and trails, within the City of Alamosa, Town of Hooper and Alamosa County. These facilities, both publicly and privately owned, contribute to the area's quality of life and are important both to existing residents' lifestyles and as elements in further developing tourism as a vital component of the economy.

Inventory of Facilities

The following list highlights cultural and recreation facilities that enhance the quality of life for both residents and visitors. They also make a significant contribution to the tourism sector of the local economy.



Parks and Recreation Facilities – The City of Alamosa maintains nearly 170 acres of parks, pathways and trails, including Cole Park along the Rio Grande (which includes a skateboard park) and Cattails Golf Course. Other outdoor facilities not maintained by the City but generally available for public use include school playgrounds and ball fields, including some located on the campus of Adams State College. The City also owns and operates the Alamosa Family Recreation Center. The City provides a wide range of recreation programs for people of all ages, ranging from toddlers to seniors.

The Alamosa Senior Center, which receives funds from the City and County, provides many services and activities for seniors. The City maintains a network of trails, most of which are on the levees connecting Cole Park with neighborhoods to the northwest and to Cattails Golf Course and the Alamosa Ranch area. Most of the trails are composed of grave and cinder. In addition, the City has designated bike lanes along some of the major streets.

Tourist/Cultural Facilities – A variety of facilities attract tourists to the Alamosa area, including the following:



■ **Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve:** Located about 35 miles northeast of Alamosa, straddling the counties of Alamosa and Saguache, the park attracts thousands of visitors each year. A major challenge for Alamosa is to encourage some of those visitors to spend more time in the County taking advantage of other attractions.

■ **San Luis State Park and Wildlife Area:** Located about 10 miles west of the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve, this park supports a wide range of ecosystems and is home to numerous bird species. The park also attracts hikers, boaters and campers.

■ **San Luis Valley Wildlife Refuge:** 11,169 acre refuge located

several miles east of Alamosa, this facility, managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is home to thousands of birds, many of which seek refuge during migration journeys. The refuge also features several hiking trails through the wetland habitat.

■ **Monte Vista Wildlife Refuge:** is a United States National Wildlife Refuge located approximately 10 miles west of the City of Alamosa. It is administered jointly with the nearby Baca and Alamosa refuges by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. It was established in 1953 by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission to provide a habitat for wildlife, particularly waterfowl, in the San Luis Valley.

■ **Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic and Historic Byway:** “The Ancient Road” is a 129-mile, officially-designated State Byway, that crosses through Alamosa County

■ **Old Spanish National Historic Trail:** The National Scenic Trail begins in Sante Fe and runs to Los Angeles, a portion of the trail runs through Alamosa County. The trail was originally utilized to transport Native American goods and products to the West Coast. Designated in 2002 the trail does not currently possess any visitor facilities but in the future the trail system should be further developed as a national attraction.

■ **Rio Grande Scenic Railroad:** The railroad provides two routes. The southern route goes from Alamosa to Antonito and connects with the Cumbres & Toltec Railroad, which travels on narrow gauge tracks to Chama, New Mexico. The recently-opened eastern route connects Alamosa to La Veta via La Veta pass and travels below several 14,000 foot peaks.

■ **Hunting and Fishing:** The Alamosa area offers plentiful hunting and fishing opportunities, including on public land. The City’s website lists many of these opportunities.

■ **Colorado Alligator Farm and Reptile Park:** This facility, located 17 miles north of Alamosa on S.R. 17 between Mosca and Hooper, features alligators, crocodiles, birds and reptiles.

■ **Splashland:** This privately-owned outdoor swimming pool is located several miles north of Alamosa on S.R. 17, just northeast of the city-owned Alamosa Ranch.

■ **Alamosa Museum:** Housed in the old depot building adjacent to Cole Park, the museum features aspects of early pioneer life through more modern times. A locomotive, prominently placed near the levee and easily visible from U.S. Highway 160, is located nearby.

■ **Adams State College:** Part of the state college system, Adams State College, in addition to fulfilling its education mandate, hosts sporting,



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Recreation & Cultural Resources Opportunities & Challenges



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arts and music events.

■ **Special Events:** Summerfest on the Rio takes place during early June and features arts and crafts booths and music. A Fourth of July parade takes place on Main Street and fireworks are featured at the fairgrounds.

Opportunities and Challenges

There are many opportunities and challenges related to cultural and recreation facilities and their relationship to economic development that could be explored. These opportunities and challenges include:

■ **Rio Grande Scenic Railroad** – The operations of the railroad hold promise for a resurgence of downtown, especially when viewed in conjunction with the connections to the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad. Some individuals, including the owner of the Rio Grande Scenic Railroad, would like to build a spur line to the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve.

■ **Historic Downtown** – The many historic structures create a critical mass that can be augmented by thoughtful renovations and new development.

■ **Railroad Property** – This large acreage downtown presents a unique opportunity for revitalizing downtown. This underdeveloped property could be redeveloped as a mix of commercial, cultural and park facilities, and it may hold the key to a successful downtown revival.

■ **The Old Power Plant** – With its location, large size and historic nature, the old power plant presents an opportunity for adaptive re-use as a cultural and recreation facility, commercial space or a mixture of uses. Renovation and re-use of this facility also provides an opportunity to strengthen the ties between the southside community and the rest of the City north of the railroad tracks.

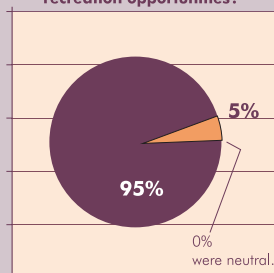
■ **The Rio Grande** – The river itself is quite a treasure as it skirts the east side of the downtown area. The current City policy of prohibiting boat access from City property should be re-examined in order to attract the boating and rafting community. Trails, both existing and potential, add to the diversity of experiences for residents and increase the attractiveness of living and visiting downtown. There is an opportunity to develop trails connecting the railroad property with the river and the levee trails along and north of Cole Park. More benches could be installed on the levee trails. Cole Park could be extended to the east side of the river. Also, a trail could cross the Rio Grande and connect to the San Luis Wildlife Refuge. This trail could be extended to Ft. Garland with a spur that follows Highway 15 to the sand dunes.



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Community Response

Community response to question:
Should the river corridor be managed
to balance habitat protection and
recreation opportunities?



95% Disagree or somewhat disagree.

5% Agree or somewhat agree

Recreation & Cultural Resources Goals & Policies - Open Space

- It has been suggested that the City needs trails that go south and east, not just north. There is a need for better pedestrian connections between the southside and downtown crossing the railroad tracks.
- It has been suggested that the City should buy Splashland.
- The City and County could build a hot springs pool with an amusement park for small children using geothermal resources west of Alamosa.
- Trails on levees could be paved for in-line skating, biking and running or walking.
- There appears to be a disagreement within the community as to the proper role of Alamosa Ranch. On one hand, some individuals favor preserving the most of the land in its natural state without further development. Others argue that we don't need all of the 1,300 acre city-owned Alamosa Ranch for open space. It is agreed that a hands off attitude about the Ranch is not good. It is possible that small, compatible development, such as a compact RV park near the golf course may be appropriate. The golf course club house could be improved, such as the construction of a small adobe structure.
- There is a need for safe bike paths to and from schools.
- The decision to convert the historic railroad depot, which was built in 1905, from use for County social services offices to offices for the chamber of commerce, visitor center and museum. This would be an opportunity to revitalize the railroad area.

The following goals and policies should serve to guide the maintenance and development of future recreation and cultural amenities.

Goal 7.1: Alamosa County and municipalities will evaluate open space needs or options as needed.

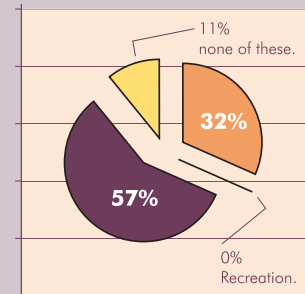
Policy 7.1.1: Alamosa area jurisdictions will consider jointly developing an open space master plan that clearly designates priority open space lands and provides funding strategies for acquiring those lands.

Policy 7.1.2: Alamosa Jurisdictions will consider requiring open space land dedications or a fee in lieu for all new subdivisions and/or annexations prior to final approval so that existing levels of open space service are not decreased with new development.

Open space can be defined in two ways, passive and active. Passive open spaces may be defined as: riparian corridors, wetlands, steep slopes, water shed or drainage areas, wildlife habitat, wildlife travel corridors, scenic views or important archeological or historic resources. Generally land left in its natural state with limited human recreational uses is considered to be passive open space.

Community Response

Community response to question:
What is Alamosa Ranch
best suited for?



32%
Alamosa Ranch
should be for
habitat and open
lands conservation.

57%
Alamosa Ranch
should be for
recreation and
lands conservation.

Goal

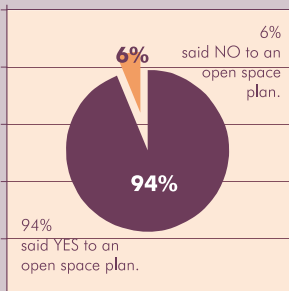
Evaluate open space lands
in the unincorporated
areas and within City
& Town boundaries as
needed.

Recreation & Cultural Resources

Goals & Policies - Recreational Opportunities

Community Response

Community response to question:
Should the Alamosa area have
an open space plan?



Active open spaces will generally be defined as any space developed with the intent of active recreation including developed parkland, trails, golf courses and/or other uses that leave the land largely undeveloped but encourage recreational uses.

Policy 7.1.3: Development projects containing open space will generally be preferred over those that do not.

Policy 7.1.4: Alamosa jurisdictions requiring or receiving land dedications generally prefer parcels that have some recreational, wildlife or scenic values.

Policy 7.1.5: When feasible, all jurisdictions will explore revenue mechanisms and leverage options for increasing open space acquisitions.

Goal

Strive to provide adequate recreation opportunities to residents. Continue and sustain access to public lands and preserve all existing recreational opportunities.

GOAL 7.2: All jurisdictions will strive to provide adequate recreation opportunities to residents including continued and sustained access to public lands and the preservation of all existing recreational opportunities.

Policy 7.2.1: Encourage the expansion of existing additional festivals and events such as the Quilt Adventure, Early Iron and the like, and special events surrounding existing assets such as the trains and the sand dunes.

Policy 7.2.2: River and stream access, particularly for boating, fishing and hunting will be encouraged during development review.

Policy 7.2.3: County policy regarding recreation amenities and systems should reflect regional goals and be consistent and complementary with other jurisdictional efforts.

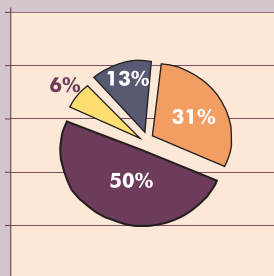
Policy 7.2.4: All new development bordering or adjacent to public lands will be encouraged to provide or maintain public access.

Policy 7.2.5: Where possible and appropriate land use approval process will incentivize projects that maintain or improve access to public lands and/or waterways.

Policy: Developers will be generally encouraged to provide recreational amenities as a component of their project(s). Jurisdictions will consider adding the dedication of some facility types to development proposals.

Community Response

Community response to question:
What is open space?



50% defined open space as undeveloped ag or public land with trails.
6% defined open space as developed recreation land such as ballfields and courts.
13% Other
31% defined open space as undeveloped or ag private land.

GOAL 7.3: Alamosa County and other jurisdictions will proceed with the development of new and the expansion of existing trail systems

Trails provide a form of alternative transportation and offer linkages between residences, public lands, developed parkland, businesses, neighborhoods and open space. Trails also promote physical fitness, and leisure opportunities.

Policy 7.3.1: Alamosa jurisdictions will promote and support future and existing plans for a trail system that interconnects with regional and public

land system trails.

Policy 7.3.2: New trails should generally include all-weather paved trails as well as natural, unpaved hiking/biking/running trails. Generally, trail easements should be approximately three or more times the width of the trail itself.

Policy 7.3.3: Trail system development will generally prioritize linkages between existing and planned trails with special emphasis on spanning existing gaps within the system.

Policy 7.3.4: Public jurisdictions may require trail easements meeting the criteria established or congruent with a trail master plan in all new subdivisions and/or annexation developments prior to approval.

Policy 7.3.5: Alamosa jurisdictions will explore a variety of means and mechanisms for securing rights-of-ways and addressing private land issues for trail systems without using condemnation.

Policy 7.3.6: Alamosa County, along with other jurisdictions/agencies, will collaborate to facilitate the development of trail systems to access municipal and public lands.

Policy 7.3.7: Where possible and appropriate trail systems should be extended along river and major stream corridors.

GOAL 7.4: Alamosa jurisdictions will strive to develop and maintain a broad spectrum of developed park facilities.

Developed parks, that is, those infused with trails, playground equipment, ballfields and other surface infrastructure supporting both personal and organized recreation are an important element of the total recreation package in the area.

Policy 7.4.1: Alamosa County and its municipalities propose a comprehensive developed parks system.

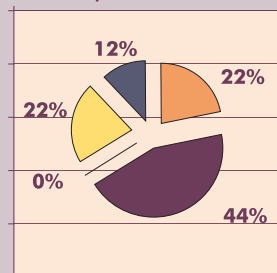
Community parks are large parks meant to serve the entire region. These parks will not be less than 10 acres and have the full compliment of utilities available on site such as water and electricity. They will contain major, permanent, recreation facilities such as ball fields, skate parks, public events venues and other land-intensive usages as well as park benches, picnic pavilions and play sets. These parks will have automatic irrigation on-site, adequate parking and full connectivity to the trail system. Due to likely intensive use of these facilities; location, access and buffering from surrounding neighborhood uses will be required. A portion of the Alamosa Ranch may be appropriate for designation of a regional park.

Goal

Develop new and expand existing trail systems to promote an alternative form of transportation and promote physical fitness and leisure opportunities.

Community Response

Community response to question:
What is the best way to fund new parks and trails?



22% said a combination of existing revenue streams, new taxes and dedications.
12% said through fees and new taxes only.

22% said through existing revenue streams.
44% said through dedications or fees on development.
0% said through new taxes.

Goal

Strive to develop and maintain a broad spectrum of developed park facilities.

Recreation & Cultural Resources Goals & Policies



Goal

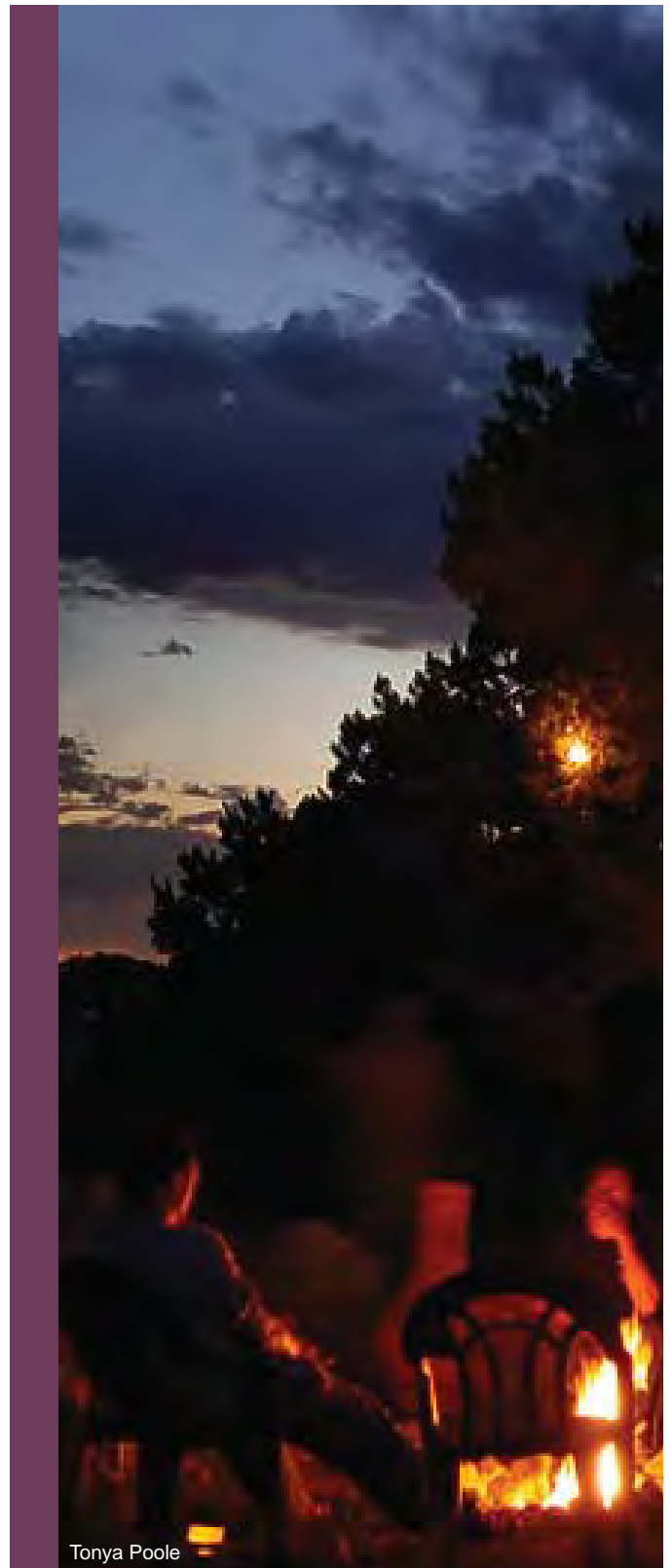
Make every effort to develop recreational and cultural facilities in a manner consistent with community needs, costs and other prudent considerations.

Neighborhood parks are much smaller than community parks being between $\frac{1}{4}$ and 3 acres and are meant to serve those residents who live with walking distance, approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ mile. These parks will not typically be served by any utilities other than electricity for limited night lighting. Neighborhood parks will be fully landscaped, provide some seating and picnic benches as well as a small playground. The biggest neighborhood parks may contain court facilities such as tennis and basketball. Neighborhood parks are appropriate both in Alamosa municipal and County subdivisions.

Policy 7.4.2: Parks should only be built on suitable lands that are accessible and usable by the general public and generally bordered by at least two publicly-owned streets or roads.

GOAL 7.5: Alamosa jurisdictions will make every effort to develop recreational and cultural facilities in a manner consistent with community needs, costs and other prudent considerations.

Introduction
Agricultural Resources
Scenic Resources
Natural Hazards
Mining & Energy Development
Wildlife Habitat
Water Quality
Air Quality



Tonya Poole

Agriculture & Natural Resources

Agricultural & Natural Resources



Agriculture & Natural Resources

Although technical economic details regarding agriculture and other natural resources are presented in other segments of this plan, this chapter endeavors to highlight these assets and their importance to the Alamosa area. A number of goals and policies to guide the future use and development of these resources are also included.

Agricultural Resources

Agriculture is an important component of the Alamosa area because it directly contributes to the area's unique character, preserves wildlife habitat, provides important open spaces and scenic vistas and is a base economic driver and important component of a diverse economy. Preservation of these lands in large tracts is necessary to maintain the agricultural economy. Development of agricultural properties is a concern in both the agricultural and residential communities.

GOAL 8.1: Alamosa desires to retain agricultural lands for agricultural productivity and to facilitate the expansion of agricultural activity wherever and whenever possible and appropriate.

Policy 8.1.1: Develop or maintain right to farm and ranch regulations protecting the agricultural community by ensuring the right to continue agricultural activities as surrounding land uses evolve.

Policy 8.1.2: Alamosa jurisdictions will be generally supportive of conservation easements to maintain the viability of agricultural lands but will not be directly involved with its initiation or implementation.

Policy 8.1.3: Support commercial activities that are compatible with and that augment the viability of the productive agricultural uses.

Policy 8.1.4: Allow commercial activities on agricultural parcels as a means to supplement agricultural operations.

Policy 8.1.5: Continue to include efforts to augment and find new markets for value-added agricultural commodity production and commercial activities to supplement revenues for agricultural operations in local and regional economic development planning.

GOAL 8.2: Align land use policy and water conservation strategies to maintain a local water supply for agricultural operations.

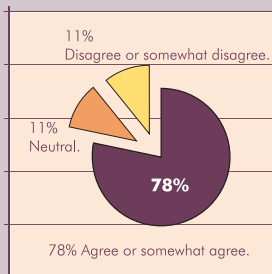
Policy 8.2.1: Future land use decisions concerning increasing residential density will consider the effect of base density on water resource consumption and evaluate whether this water consumption would jeopardize the viability of water supply in the County for agriculture currently and in the future.

Goal

Alamosa desires to retain agricultural lands for agricultural productivity and to facilitate the expansion of agricultural activity wherever and whenever possible and appropriate.

Community Response

Community response to question: Do you feel that future development in working agriculture is related to the viability of agricultural operations and is compatible with working agriculture?



Goal

Align land use policy and water conservation strategies to maintain local water supply for agricultural operations.

Policy 8.2.2: Alamosa County will consider adopting 1041 regulations for the purpose of reviewing major water development projects.

GOAL 8.3: Whenever possible, Alamosa County will responsibly protect and buffer agricultural uses from other incompatible uses.

Policy 8.3.1: Alamosa County will consider developing actual buffer zone guidelines between agricultural uses and other development projects.

Policy 8.3.2: Require that all new development maintain existing legal access to irrigation ditches.

Policy 8.3.3: Consider requiring all new subdivision development to submit a mitigation plan for noxious weeds.

Policy 8.3.4: Do not approve residential development in locations that could be affected by ditch seepage or blowouts.

Scenic Resources

Scenic resources in Alamosa County are defined as the most important elements of the vista as seen from scenic travel corridors running through the City, Towns and the County. Because regulating land use to mitigate impacts on scenery is a labor-intensive process for both developers and County and City staffs, carefully prioritizing protection of the most important views is paramount.

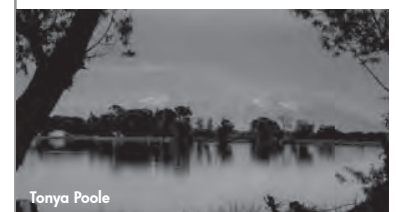
The most critical landscape element as viewed from scenic travel corridors are the ridgelines, those upland areas behind which only sky is visible. Structures that extend above the ridgeline interrupt the natural contours of these highly visible ridgelines. Accumulation of structures on these visible ridgelines can degrade the scenic integrity of the travel corridor.

Although less influential on the overall scenic integrity, impacts of structure development in the foreground can also degrade scenic resources. In Alamosa County, due to the predominance of level terrain, it would be unreasonable to require that all development not be visible from travel corridors. However, where particularly important foreground landscapes are identified and are as viewed from scenic travel corridors, scenic impacts of future development can be mitigated through the use of less visible exterior materials such as non-metallic products, earthtones and natural or landscaped vegetation screening.

During the public involvement, many participants suggested that S.H. 150 leading up to the sand dunes is an important scenic travel corridor because the trip up to the sand dunes and back is an important part of that experience. The land use element of this plan expresses this sentiment in the dunes corridor policies. In this sense, scenery along this corridor is a County resource worthy of protection during land use review.

Goal

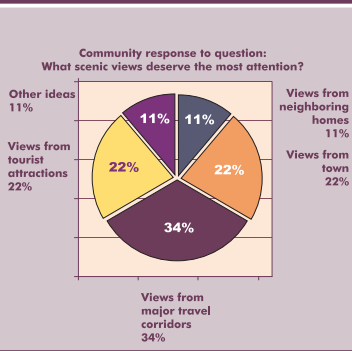
The County will responsibly protect and buffer agricultural uses from other incompatible uses whenever possible.



Agriculture & Natural Resources

Natural Hazards

Community Response



Goal
Alamosa-area jurisdictions will maintain the scenic integrity of views along priority scenic travel corridors.

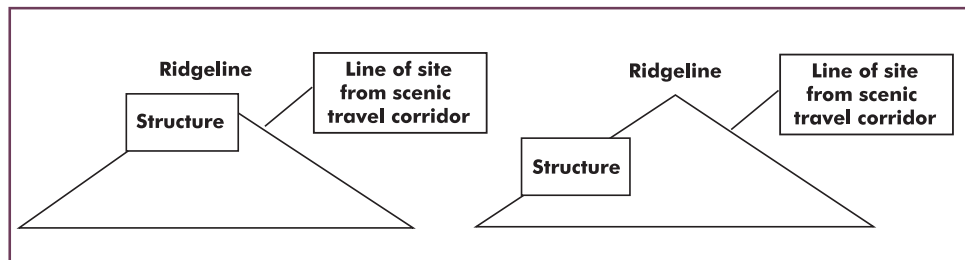
GOAL 8.4: Alamosa-area jurisdictions will maintain the scenic integrity of views along priority scenic travel corridors.

Policy 8.4.1: Scenic travel corridors, which must be identified and mapped, are routes along which scenic resources are protected. Scenic integrity from locations other than along scenic travel corridors may not be maintained.

Policy 8.4.2: S.H. 150 from Jct. U.S. Highway 160 to the sand dunes is identified as scenic corridor and will be mapped accordingly.

Policy 8.4.3: Ridgelines as seen from scenic travel corridors, behind which only sky is visible will be identified and new structures in these ridgeline areas would be sited so that any negative impacts are mitigated. In this case "structures" include signs, radio or cell towers, etc..

Policy 8.4.4: If the County identifies specifically important scenic foreground features, possible mitigation of any negative impacts may be required.



Natural Hazards

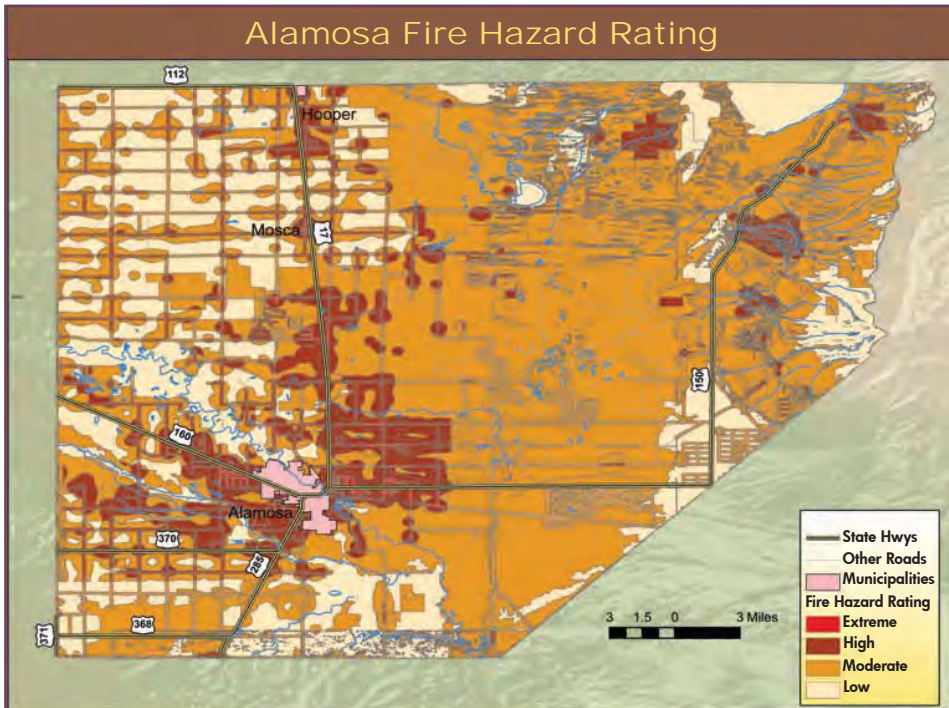
Natural hazard areas are typically only problematic if development occurs on or near them. Development in natural hazard areas is to be generally discouraged. An effective method to achieve this objective is to maintain natural-hazards mapping that highlights potential natural hazard areas. Site design requires additional analysis such as evaluating for potentially instable slopes, looking at micro-terrain features, guiding rockfall and debris flow and identifying severe wildfire hazard. Expert opinions are essential for evaluating natural hazards during development review. For example, Colorado State Forest Service can provide wildfire hazard assessments, and local fire districts can also be a resource.

Natural hazards may be defined as landslide areas, unstable slopes, rock fall areas, debris flows, mining tailings, areas within the 100-year floodplain and high and extreme wildfire hazard areas.

GOAL 8.5: Alamosa jurisdiction will pursue land use policies that minimize issues and consequences associated with natural hazards.



Alamosa Fire Hazard Rating



Map 1

Policy 8.5.1: Generally, development will be discouraged in known natural hazard areas and encouraged in areas with the fewest natural hazards.

Policy 8.5.2: Conservation of natural hazard areas as open space in future subdivisions will generally be supported.

Policy 8.5.3: Proposed development in any area that is a known and mapped a natural hazard area, may be required to engage additional analysis prior to approval.

Policy 8.5.4: Projects will be encouraged to utilize the natural features of the land and not engage in undue vegetation removal or earth moving that would cause slope instability, excessive scarring or contribute flood danger.

Policy 8.5.5: In high or extreme wildfire hazard areas in the wildland interface, the County will work to suggest and integrate fuels reduction projects into federal land management planning and operations.

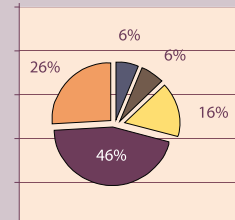
Mining and Energy Development

Currently mining and other natural resource extraction operations are very minimal in Alamosa County, comprising only one percent of total area income and employment. Nonetheless there is some possibility that these operation will accelerate in the future. In addition, alternative energy enterprises, including biodiesel, wind and solar energies may



Community Response

Community response to question: How should development in or on natural hazards be handled?



46% limit densities and require mitigation
26% avoid natural hazards entirely.
6% treat it the same as other areas
6% require mitigation.
16% limit development densities

Agriculture & Natural Resources

Wildlife Habitat

Goal

Natural resource industries will be encouraged, as long as these industries are in accordance with appropriate codes and regulations.

also be considered natural resource extractive industries. Although these alternative resource industries are very much to be encouraged it is important that all industries respect and maintain the integrity of the natural environment.

GOAL 8.6: Natural resource industries will be encouraged, as long as they are in accordance with appropriate codes and regulations.

Policy 8.6.1: Where possible and appropriate, all natural resource projects plans will be reviewed and monitored for their effects on existing air quality, water quality, wildlife habitat and visual resources.

Policy 8.6.2: When possible and appropriate, impacts listed in the previous policy will be mitigated; the mitigation may include visual screening, phasing of the project, drainage improvements, noise buffering and the like.

Policy 8.6.3: When indicated, consider the possible impacts of natural resource extraction activities on adjacent properties and their values.

Policy 8.6.4: When feasible, it is recommended that all new residential and commercial property developers obtain the mineral rights as well as the surface rights prior to developing residential or commercial properties.

Policy 8.6.5: Mining operations in aquatic, riparian or wetland ecosystems must not measurably degrade habitat.

Wildlife Habitat

There is a long history of commitment to protecting wildlife habitat in the San Luis Valley. While the high country and foothills are the primary habitat for big game, the most critical wildlife habitat on the private lands portion of Alamosa County are the riparian and wetland ecosystems along rivers and irrigation ditches and canals. The value of this habitat is evidenced by the numerous riparian conservation efforts in the San Luis Valley:

- Water management efforts - Groundwater management sub districts and other efforts to preserve the hydrological systems that are so crucial for riparian and wetland ecosystems.
- Conservation easements - Existing conservation easements on private land have protected 43,000 acres in the San Luis Valley, 589 acres of which contain riparian habitat.
- Rio Grande Natural Area - This federal designation would, if enacted, provide a management and planning framework that would benefit riparian and wetland ecosystems.
- Alamosa River Restoration Project - Stream bank stabilization, re-



vegetation and fencing off of riparian areas are all measures being taken to restore habitat along the Alamosa river.

- Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration - This plan addresses a variety of measures to improve and sustain habitat while providing flood control functions.
- Colorado Wetlands Initiative - Forming partnerships between federal and state agencies with landowners is the key to several successes already in the San Luis Valley and now efforts are directed towards achieving voluntary conservation along the Rio Grande between Alamosa and Monte Vista.
- Saguache Creek Corridor Project - Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) recently contributed \$3.7 million for acquiring conservation easements along Saguache creek.

Source: *San Luis Valley Regional Habitat Conservation Plan*

From a federal perspective, the most important conservation issue is preserving the thick willow riparian habitat in Alamosa County occupied by the endangered species, the southwestern willow flycatcher and the candidate yellow-billed cuckoo. Current efforts by the Rio Grande Water Conservation District are underway to develop a habitat conservation plan to avoid federal citations and create more flexibility for managing habitat as people continue to use private property in the San Luis Valley. To the extent that this plan increases flexibility under the endangered species act, it is generally supported by the County and its municipalities.

GOAL 8.7: The County and its municipalities will support and promote voluntary conservation efforts by disseminating information to help those considering the placement of conservation easement on their properties investigate the feasibility.

Policy 8.7.1: Applicants for development of large intact parcels or particularly important riverside properties are offered contact information for the land conservation entities that are active in Alamosa County and the San Luis Valley.

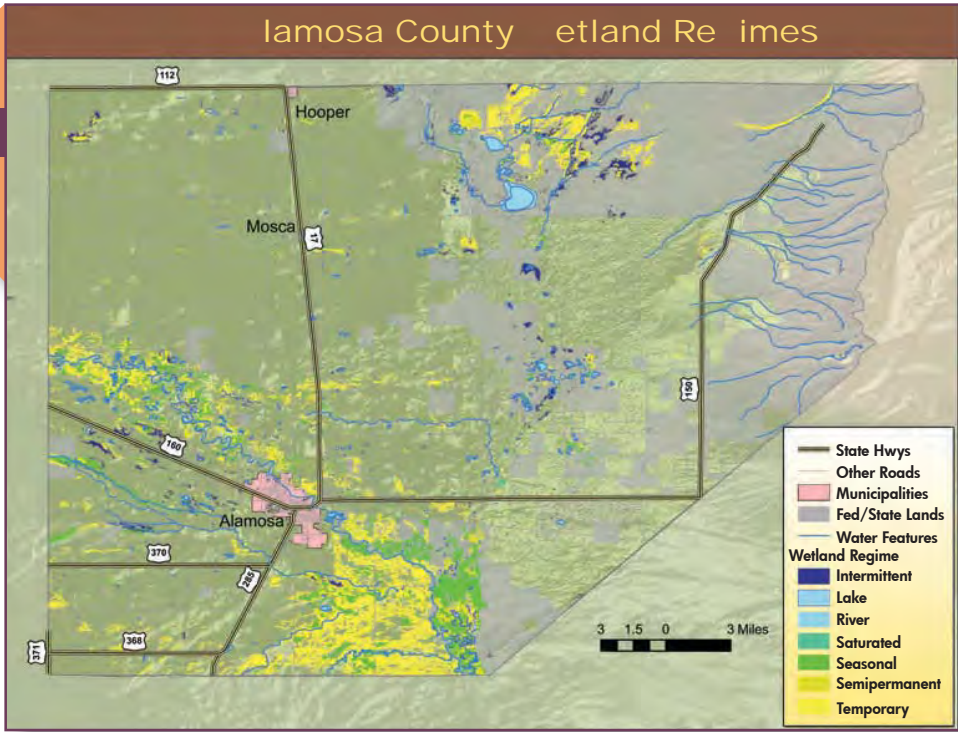
Entity	Phone Number
Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust	719.852.4015
CO Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust	303.225.8677
Colorado Open Lands	303.988.2383
The Nature Conservancy	303.444.2950
Ducks Unlimited	719.378.2356
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation	406.523.4500



Goal

The County and its municipalities will support and promote voluntary conservation efforts by disseminating information to help those considering the placement of conservation easements investigate the feasibility.

Map



Goal
The County and its municipalities will avoid impacts on specified endangered species.

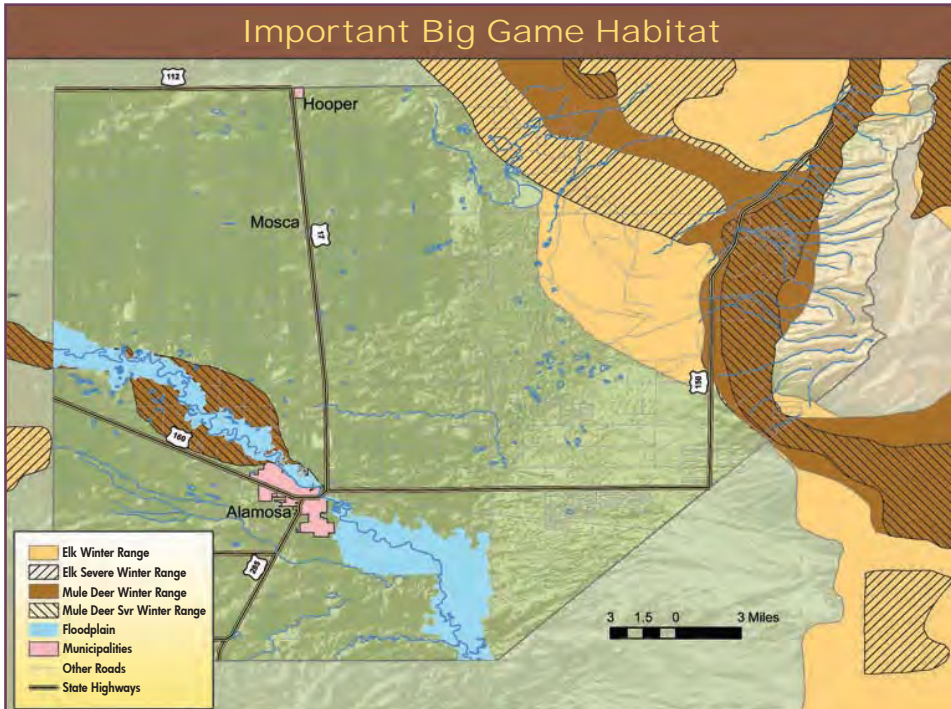
Goal
Preserve wildlife habitat through open space subdivisions that maximize protection of key wildlife habitat areas.

To avoid federal penalties that could result from a “take”¹ of the southwestern willow flycatcher (endangered) or the yellow-billed cuckoo, County and municipalities will carefully avoid impacts or entirely mitigate impacts on these species in future projects conducted by the County or its municipalities.

Preserve wildlife habitat through open space subdivisions that maximize protection of key wildlife habitat areas including:

- Riparian and wetland ecosystems,
- Big game severe winter range
- Aquatic ecosystems

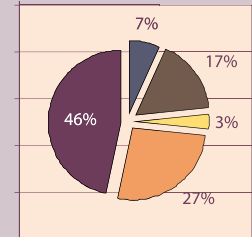
Important Big Game Habitat



Map 3

Community Response

Community response to question:
How should development in or on natural
features be handled?



46% avoid entirely
27% limit densities and require mitigation.
7% limit development densities
3% require mitigation.
7% treat it the same as other areas
17% require mitigation.

Water Quality

Water quality concerns encompass both surface and groundwater. Groundwater is best protected simply by not permitting pollutants onto groundwater recharge areas. Surface water is protected by eliminating or filtering pollutants before they enter the water system.

GOAL 8.10: Alamosa jurisdictions will strive to protect water sheds and maintain high water quality.

Policy 8.10.1: Natural drainage patterns will be preserved. Development and industry should respect the natural contours and drainage patterns.

GOAL 8.11: Alamosa will promote sound water and wastewater systems.

Policy 8.11.1: Development located adjacent to municipalities or sanitation districts with available capacity in its central water/sewer systems will be required to annex and tie into these systems.

Policy 8.11.2: High density development should generally be located near and attached to existing central sewage treatment systems.

Policy 8.11.3: The County will generally discourage the proliferation of private water and sewer systems.

Goal

Jurisdictions will strive to protect water sheds and maintain high water quality.

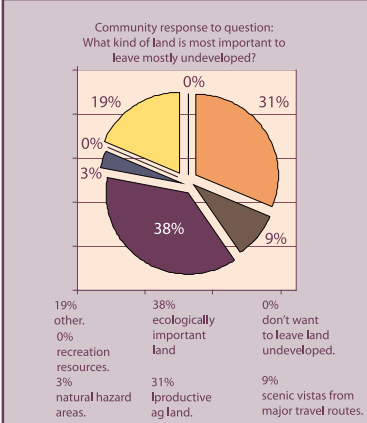
Goal

Alamosa will promote sound water and wastewater systems.

Agriculture & Natural Resources

Air Quality

Community Response



Goal

Air quality in the San Luis Valley is protected, maintained and improved from its current pristine condition with respect to the integrity of associated aquatic, soil and terrestrial ecosystem components.

Goal

Visibility along scenic travel corridors is maintained or improved.

Endnote

¹ The term “take” under the Endangered Species Act means to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap or to collect or attempt to engage in such conduct.

Air Quality

Air quality in the San Luis Valley has long been recognized as among the most pristine in the country. People living in the valley full time and those coming to the valley as visitors generally expect clear, clean air. Air quality is an integral part of the natural environment and affects water quality, soil chemistry, aquatic ecosystems and vegetation.

Over the last five years, air-quality issues have emerged as a major resource concern in relation to prescribed burns and human developments. Coal-fired power plants are large sources of atmospheric mercury that can pollute water. Atmospheric nitrogen deposition from anthropogenic sources of air pollution is increasing and has the potential to affect water quality and high-elevation aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems.

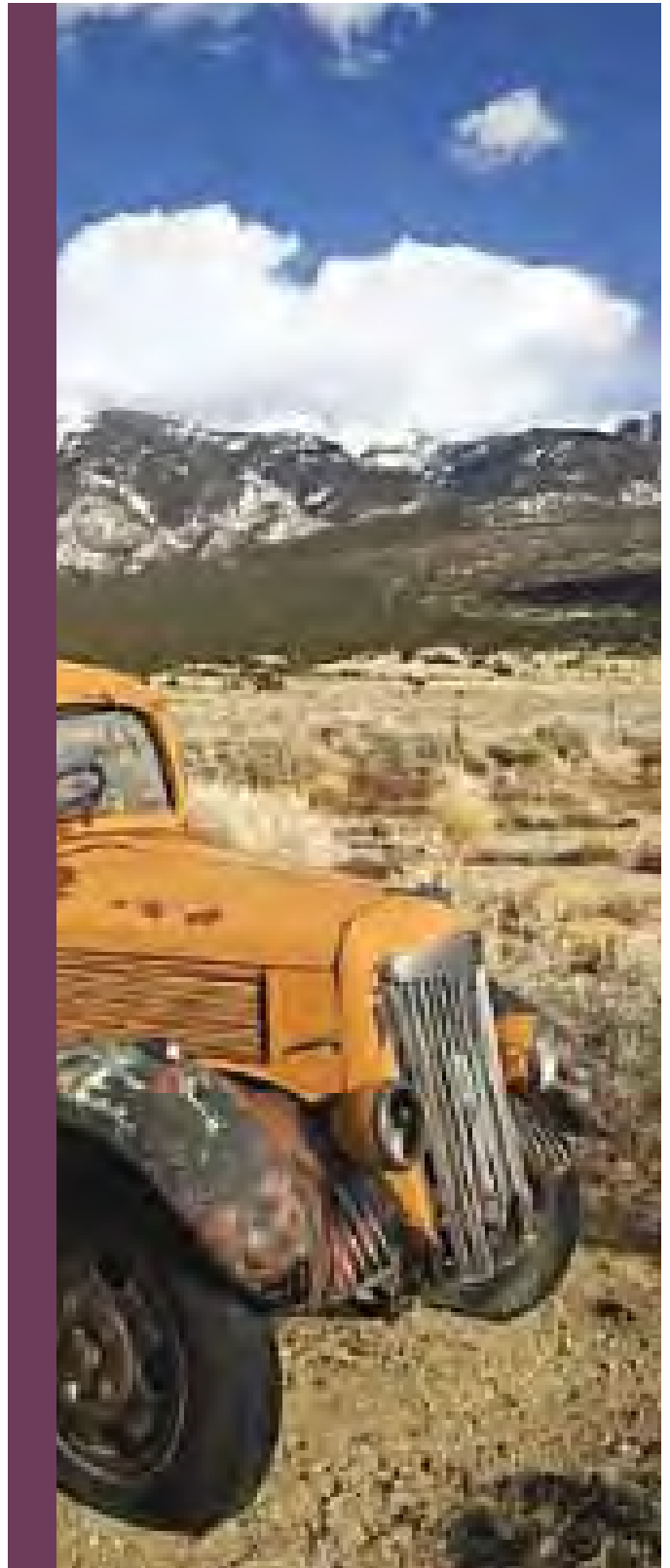
GOAL 8.12: Air quality in the San Luis Valley is in pristine condition. Air quality in the San Luis Valley is maintained or improved with respect to pollutant concentrations so that the integrity of associated aquatic/soils/terrestrial ecosystem components is protected. Visibility along designated scenic travel corridors is maintained or improved.

Policy 8.12.1: When possible, implementing compact development patterns and focusing future subdivisions near the City of Alamosa will result in fewer vehicle miles traveled and less air pollution than more dispersed development patterns with longer commutes.

Policy 8.12.2: Review of future commercial, industrial or energy development land uses in the County will consider impacts on air quality.

Policy 8.12.3: Support regional efforts to reduce or curtail the growth of air pollution.

Unincorporated Alamosa
Transportation Plan
Existing Conditions & Trends
Policies for Existing Road System
Road Functions & Definitions
Intergovernmental Transportation
Planning
County Roads & Future Land Use



Unincorporated Alamosa Transportation Plan

Existing Conditions and Trends

Integrating land use planning and transportation planning is of key importance for strategically planning for the future. This portion of the plan begins by describing the existing conditions of the transportation system and relevant trends. From this baseline the plan draws on principles of rural transportation planning, County staff expertise and ideas gathered during public involvement to establish integrated transportation policies.

Road Functions

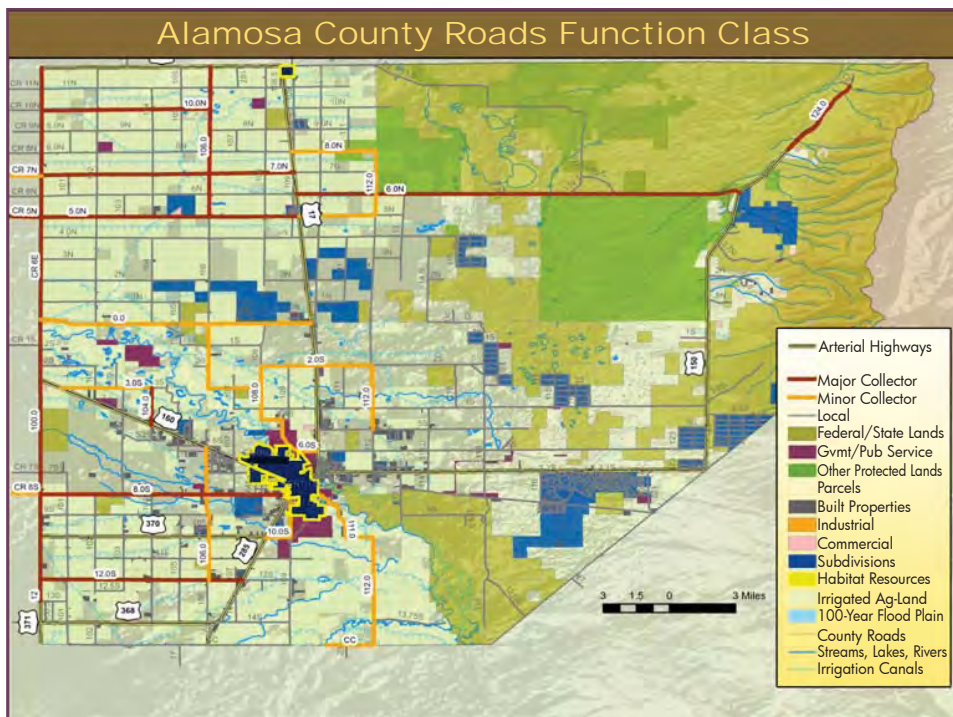
Evaluating the place each road carries in the hierarchy of road functions provides a framework for considering the relationship between the condition of a road such as if it is paved or not and the quality of the surface and the purpose it serves. Identification of high-order roads versus local roads can also be important during land development review when evaluating impacts of proposed development on County roads. The classifications are identified below and geographically illustrated in **Map 1- Alamosa Roads Function Classification**. *Source: Colorado Department of Transportation.*

Arterial Highways - These state-owned and maintained highways, including State Highways 285, 370, 17, 371, 368 and 150 and U.S. Highway 160 are classified as arterials because they connect Alamosa County to the regional transportation network in the San Luis Valley and south to New Mexico. Arterials contain traffic produced by land uses in Alamosa County as well as pass-through traffic.

Major Collectors - The major collectors funnel traffic from minor collectors and local access roads and provide efficient access to the arterial highway system. Some regional traffic occurs on major collectors, particularly because the City of Alamosa is the major economic hub in the San Luis Valley region. Often, the most sensible travel route for Rio Grande, Saguache or Conejos county residents commuting to work or going shopping in Alamosa is along County roads. This regional traffic poses a serious challenge for road maintenance and traffic patrol.

Minor Collectors - Minor collectors are second order roads that collect the traffic from several local access roads. These roads often funnel traffic onto the major collectors, but can also provide direct access to arterial highways. Minor collectors generally do not contain pass-through regional traffic.

Local Roads - These roads function as direct access to local land uses, and usually do not act as funnels for traffic coming from other roads.



Map 1

Road Surface

A paved surface can handle much more traffic loading than a gravel surface road. Gravel roads possess a tangible threshold of traffic, above which maintaining the road at a reasonable level of safety and comfortable driving becomes infeasible. If thresholds are exceeded, the road needs to be upgraded to a paved surface.

Load equivalency metrics, such as equivalent single axle loads (ESAL) establish a relative measure of the effects of different loadings on road surface, making it especially suited for measuring the impact of mixed commercial truck and passenger vehicle traffic equivalently. By convention, a single pass by one 18,000-pound axle equals 1 ESAL. This means that a vehicle with an ESAL of three has three times the impact on the road surface than a vehicle with an ESAL of one.

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials' (AASHTO) *Guide for Design of Pavement Structures* Ch. 4 - low volume road design catalogue - recommends pavement surface for roads accommodating 100,000 ESAL during the design period. County road improvements should last 15-20 years with adequate maintenance.

According to the aggregate surface road design catalogue in the *Guide for Design of Pavement Structures*, 30,000 to 60,000 ESAL is a medium traffic level and requires an aggregated road base of at least 12 inches for "fair" soils. An ESAL of 30,000 represents the threshold from a low

Transportation Policies For Existing Road System

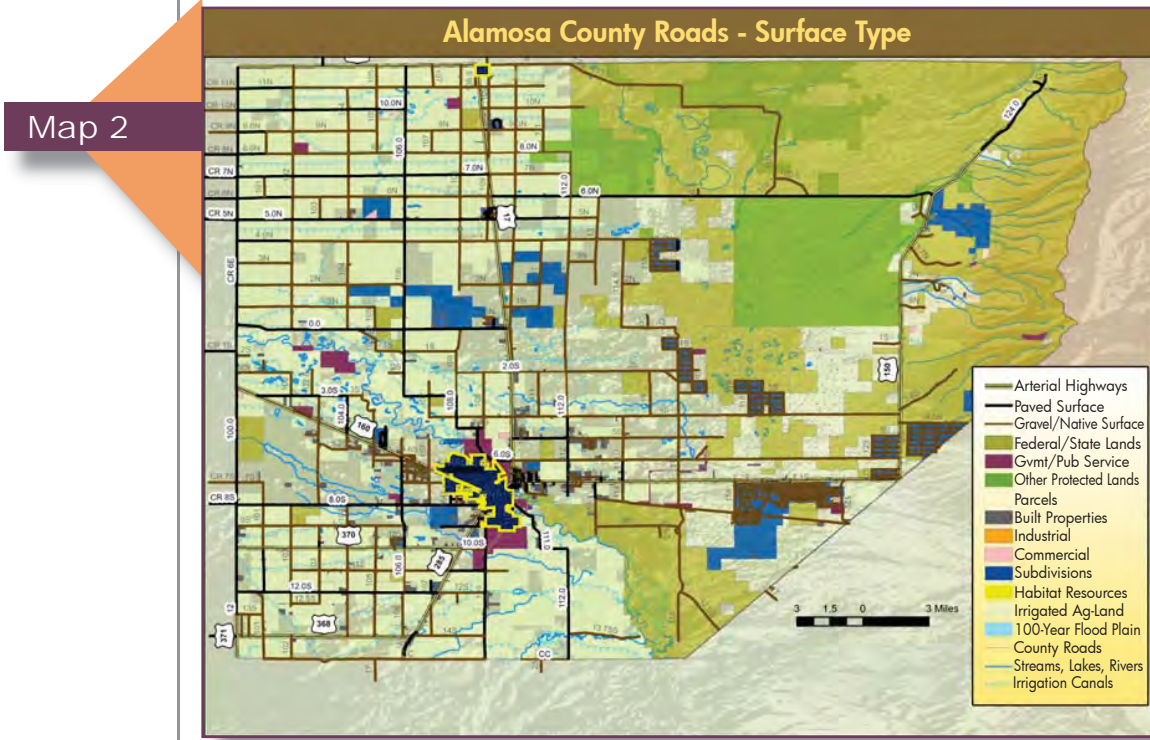
Table 1

ESAL Road Improvement Thresholds from AASTO	
ESAL Threshold	Improvement Needed
>100k 18 kip ESAL	Upgrade dirt or aggregate surface to asphalt surface
>30k 18 kip ESAL	Upgrade dirt road to an aggregate surface road

Source: American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials Chapter Four

volume to a medium volume road with a 12-inch minimum aggregate base triggering the need to rebuild and improve a primitive dirt surface road to a gravel surface.

To meet increased traffic loads, Alamosa County has steadily improved and paved gravel roads throughout the County (see **Map 2 - Alamosa County Roads Surface Type**). The roads that are currently paved are mostly grouped near the City of Alamosa, and in the most active agricultural areas in the County near Hooper and Mosca. Agricultural traffic loads are generated mostly by the hauling of harvested commodities, while traffic near the City of Alamosa is largely related to residential uses, commuting and shopping.



Policies for the Existing County Road System

This Master Plan provides direction for prioritizing County road maintenance and improvement planning of the existing roads system.

GOAL 9.1: Alamosa County will attempt to maintain existing service levels on County roads.

Policy 9.1.1: Currently paved roads are maintained by providing periodic chip-seal and resurfacing with asphalt.

Policy 9.1.2: If currently paved roads are maintained and resources are available, future paving of gravel roads would be considered.

Policy 9.1.3: Gravel surface roads projected to experience 100k 18,000 lb equivalent single axle loads (ESAL) or more in a 15-year period should be considered a priority for upgrading to an asphalt surface.

Policy 9.1.4: Intersection improvement resources are best directed to the intersection of major collectors with arterial highways in coordination with CDOT.

Policy 9.1.5: Future development must pay for the cost of the impacts of the traffic it causes on the County roads system.



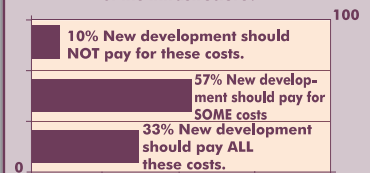
Gravel road in eastern Alamosa County serving residential uses.

Goal

To maintain existing service levels on County roads.

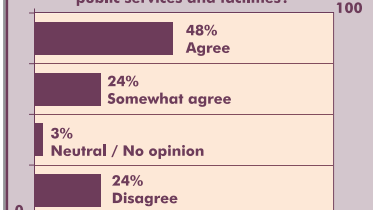
Community Response

Community response to question:
To what degree should new development pay the cost of expanding the capacity of the infrastructure?



Community Response

Community response to question:
Do you feel that growth in unincorporated Alamosa County will strain public services and facilities?



Transportation Inter-Governmental Transportation Planning

Intergovernmental Transportation Planning

Participation in State Highway Transportation Planning

Alamosa County contains almost 100 miles of state or federal highways. This highway system provides the arterial roads allowing movement across the County and also connecting Alamosa County to the regional transportation network in Colorado and New Mexico. During 2006, the transportation planning commission and **STAC** reviewed and updated the 2035 planning policies. The plan is in final stages of adoption, and one conclusion is abundantly clear: if current revenue sources are not augmented, the highway system in Alamosa County, and elsewhere in the state, will experience a decline in maintenance levels. This reality makes it even more critical that the County, City of Alamosa, and Town of Hooper participate actively in regional transportation planning and in prioritizing the limited resources.

Part of the 2006 update to the San Luis Valley region includes a vision and priorities for highways including listing and estimating the cost of improvements needed by 2035. **Table 2** below summarizes the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) project for the San Luis Valley region and the visions and priorities located in Alamosa County. A draft document is currently available at www.dot.state.co.us/StateWidePlanning/.

Table 2

Alamosa County Highway Project Priorities from Vision Plan Priorities			
Description	Project Type	Priority	Estimated Cost
Jct. US 160 & SH 150 A to Sand Dunes	Safety	High	\$39 Million
2 mi. south of US 160 to Jct. 160 in Alamosa	System Quality	High	\$233 Million
US 160 west of Monte Vista to east Alamosa	Mobility	High	\$48 Million
US 160 Jct. SH 150 to east of Alamosa	Mobility	Medium	\$374 Million
SH 17 B Alamosa to Jct. SH 285	System Quality	Medium	\$143 Million
SH 112 US 285 to Jct. SH 17	Safety	Medium	\$26 Million

Table 2 Source: draft document until final adoption: <http://www.dot.state.co.us/StateWidePlanning/PlansStudies/Docs/Techreports/>

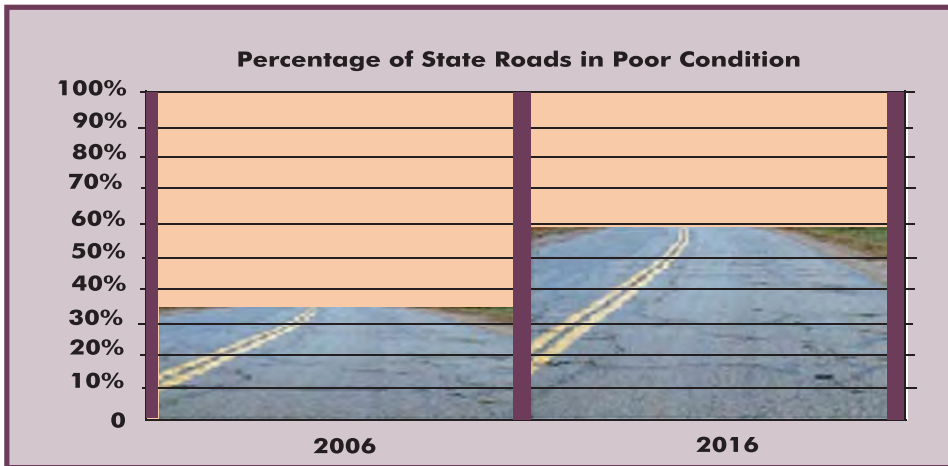


Figure 1

Figure 1: Percentage of State Roads in Poor Condition, 2006 and 2016 given current CDOT funding and infrastructure conditions.

Source: http://www.dot.state.co.us/StateWidePlanning/PlansStudies/Docs/Techreports/SLV_Tech_2_REVISSED_040207.pdf

Nearly every highway in the County calls for some level of improvement costing nearly \$900 million. The entire San Luis Valley region is slated to receive \$1.9 billion worth of funding for highway projects through 2035 for the region as a whole, significantly short of the \$2.6 billion dollar price tag for improvements included in the 2035 vision and priorities for the entire San Luis Valley region.

GOAL 9.2: Given the high demand for highway projects, increasing construction costs, and limited revenues, the County and its municipalities will strive to help allocate resources to the most important projects.

Policy 9.2.1: The County, the City of Alamosa, and Town of Hooper will participate in regional planning and help allocate available resources by:

- Identifying regional issues (example - trucking of harvested commodities).
- Identifying priority corridor needs (example - Dunes corridor intersection, SH 150 & US 160 is a key intersection from an economic development perspective).
- Develop criteria for evaluating projects (example - safety, economic development, congestion relief).

Policy 9.2.2: During development review, the County and its municipalities will continue to help identify impacts from development on the highway system so that these impacts can ultimately be mitigated.

Policy 9.2.3: The County and its municipalities will encourage opportunities for local and regional transit and foster private sector investment in passenger transportation.

Goal

To help allocate resources to the most important projects.

Coordinating Transportation Planning with Municipalities

The transportation network extends seamlessly across jurisdictional boundaries. Most of the traffic on County roads is headed in to or out of the City of Alamosa. Coordinating planning to keep this traffic flowing safely and efficiently will require careful effort for the City and the County as well as CDOT.

One of the most serious concerns is that traffic congestion in the City of Alamosa may result in de-facto bypassing on County roads. To some degree this is already happening as truck traffic heading south on S.H. 17 seeks to avoid the City of Alamosa by bypassing using C.R. 6 north to S.H. 150 or 7 north to C.R. 6E. To a large degree, this is due to the difficult intersection movement at Jct. S.H. 17 and U.S. Hwy. 160. This intersection is on the list of priority projects on the 2006 CDOT *Intersection Prioritization Study*, but is listed as 26th out of 42 priorities.

Another major concern is traffic bottle-necking at the only two bridges leading into Alamosa from the north and east of the City at the bridge on U.S. Hwy. 160 and State Street. As traffic loads increase, the capacity of these bridges could be a major concern. Difficult access into Alamosa could result in additional bypassing on County roads for those trying to get through the City and congestion and safety concerns could adversely affect quality of life for residents and visitors trying to get in and out of the City.

GOAL 9.3: Recognizing that some County, City and State transportation improvement decisions affect all three jurisdictions, each will continue to cooperate and participate in inter-jurisdictional transportation planning to improve highway circulation through Alamosa.

Policy 9.3.1: Efforts will be made to prioritize highway improvements that will prevent bypassing of traffic along County roads caused by avoidance of bad intersections and other capacity constraints on the state highway system.

County Roads and Future Land Use

Future Major Roads

Successful implementation of this plan could have tangible implications on the County road system. Specifically, because the plan calls for the prioritization of future subdivisions near the City of Alamosa, some roads that are currently local roads (see **Figure 3-** County Road Function Classification) could become major roads [collectors]. The Alamosa Three-Mile Area, also included in the land use element section of the Master Plan and included here for quick reference, identifies roads that could become major roads if this plan is successfully implemented.

Goal

Recognize transportation improvement decisions affect all three jurisdictions and continue to cooperate in inter-jurisdictional transportation planning to improve highway circulation.

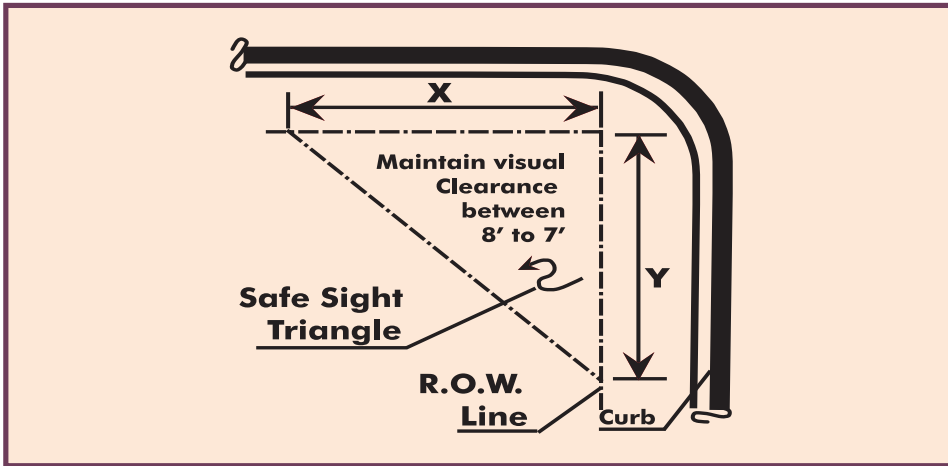


Figure 2

Sight distance illustration

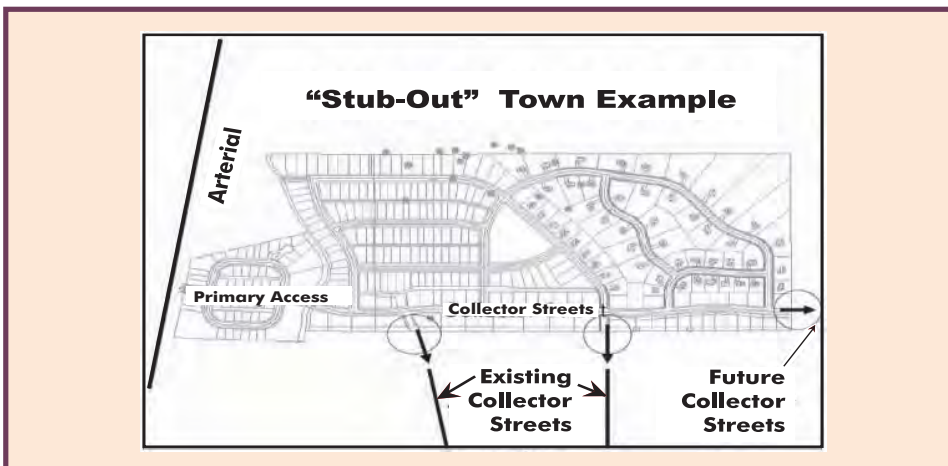


Figure 3

“Stub-out” illustration on a development plat to enhance road system connectivity

Developing this system of major County roads in the residential growth areas identified in the conceptual plan will require both private and public sector investment.

County Roads and Development Review

The County has authority to permit land uses and construction, opening an opportunity to mitigate impacts on the road system and possibly improving the condition of the infrastructure. Several policies offer broad guidance for mitigating impacts and/or improving conditions during development review.

GOAL 9.4: Alamosa County and the municipalities, especially the City of Alamosa, will work together to establish standardized road requirements for all development occurring within the Alamosa Three-Mile Area.

Policy 9.4.1: Site distance - (See Figure 2) Establish requirements for

Goal

County and municipalities will work together to establish standardized roads for all development occurring within the Alamosa Three-Mile Area.

Transportation County Roads & Future Land Use

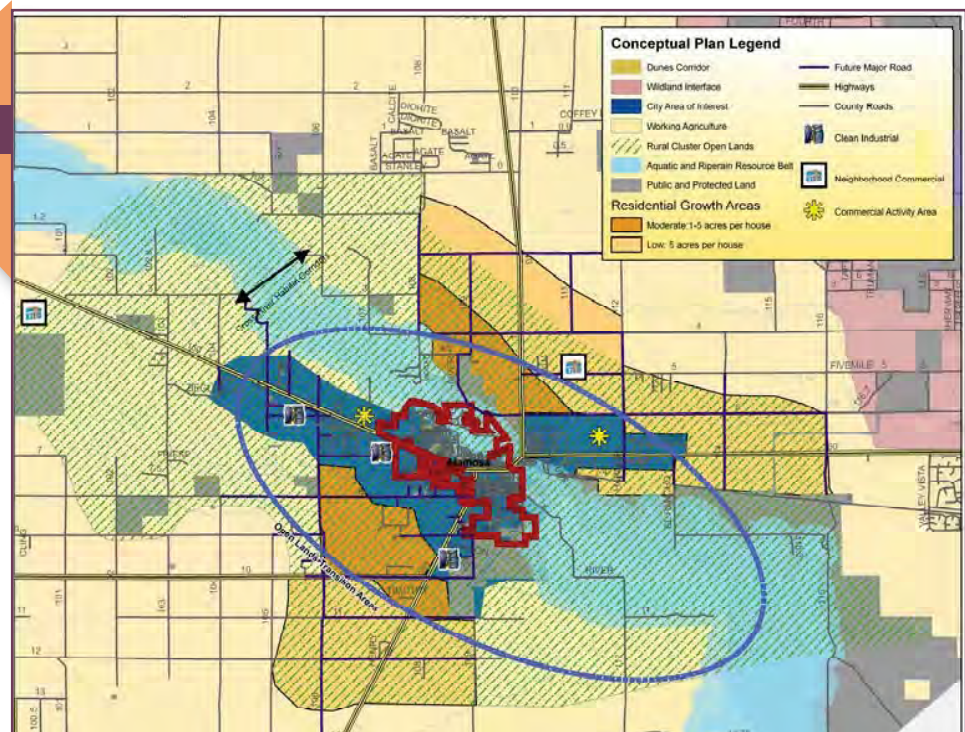
corner clearances and sight obstructions at intersections.

Policy 9.4.2: Connectivity - A network of roads is capable of carrying substantially larger volumes of traffic than a system with only one access point to the road network. More than one access or entrance to a given subdivision, joint driveways and cross-access easements such as drive spaces between parking lots should be encouraged, if not required, in an effort to maintain existing roadway capacity. This will likely require establishment of 'stub-out' requirements that explicitly require connection of subdivisions to each other and to existing roadways (see **Figure 3** Illustration "Stub-outs," example below).

Policy 9.4.3: Access Management - Unlimited access to commercial and non-residential uses along highways and busy County roads is most detrimental to the safety and function of the roadway. Roadway access should be consolidated to ensure sufficient distance between driveways and roads that intersect arterial highways and streets.

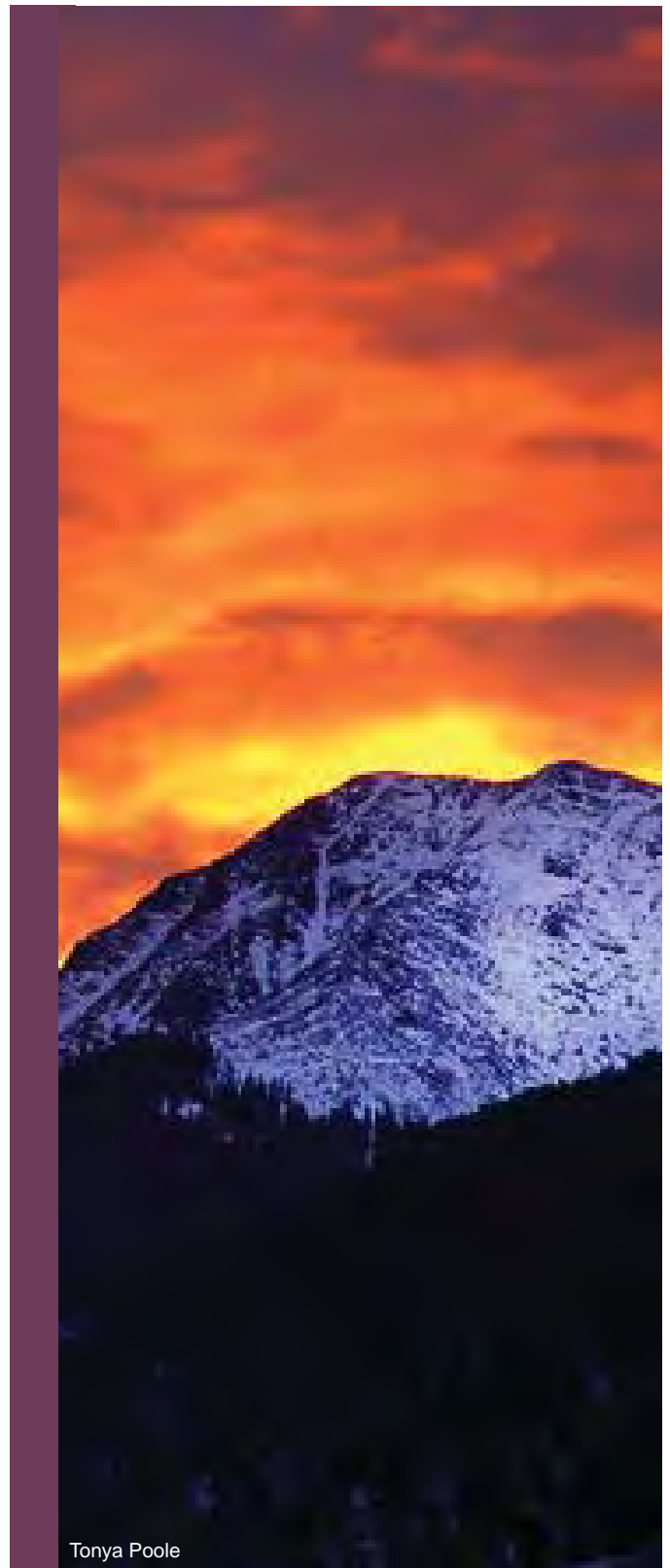
Policy 9.4.4: Logical Extension of City Streets - Where unincorporated County development is contiguous, or near a municipal streets network, the streets within such development must connect with the City streets network in a manner that logically extends the streets network into the unincorporated development.

Map 3



Alamosa Periphery Conceptual Land Use Plan

Introduction
Goals & Policies



Tonya Poole

Implementation

Alamosa County and other participating jurisdictions will implement the master plan in an active, yet responsive manner. Many of the policies outlined in this master plan are intended to represent general public sentiment and preferences at the time of its writing. These policies are primarily intended to guide decision making by elected officials and serve as criteria from which projects and actions, both within the government and and proposed by the private sector, may be evaluated.

However, some of the policies within this document suggest or outline specific action on explicit projects (e.g. the development of a multi-jurisdictional open space plan). The implementation section makes broad recommendations of how to approach, prioritize, and fund policies and projects.

Goal
Involve a wide variety
of stakeholders in
plan goal and policy
implementation.

GOAL 10.1: Involve a wide variety of stakeholders in plan goal and policy implementation.

Similar to the development of this plan, the public should be involved in implementation; public feedback should be sought when prioritizing project specific implementation strategies and priorities.

Policy 10.1.1: When possible develop a continuing role for interested citizens and other governmental and non-governmental entities that have a stake in policy implementation and outcomes.

Policy 10.1.2: Interpretation and action on plan goals and policies should be flexible and adaptable to the needs of public and private sector concerns.

Goal
Identify and pursue high
priority projects in an
order that is prudent and
financially responsible.

GOAL 10.2: Alamosa will identify and pursue high priority projects in an order that is prudent and financially responsible.

Policy 10.2.1: In general, Alamosa should set a high priority on projects that support existing private development projects that are congruent with and working towards the visions of the master plan. When evaluating projects, jurisdictions may utilize the following criteria:

- Is the project specifically mentioned in the master plan or is it working towards the realization of the community's vision?
- Is the project capable of leveraging or attracting private funding such as alternative energy development?
- Is the project time sensitive?
- What is the general public benefit? Does the project have general public support?
- Can the project be combined with another project? Does this

project need to be completed before other projects can be engaged?

- Is there multi-jurisdictional support or funding available for the project?

Funding capital projects may be made from a number of sources, but generally Alamosa jurisdictions prefer to fund projects from current revenue sources. Nonetheless, other funding options do include, general tax or fee increases, and/or bonds and grants. However, these measures are not generally preferred.

Projects that result in a general benefit to the entire community are to be preferred over those that result in specific benefits for specific geographic areas or residents.

Policy 10.2.2: Prior to initiating a specific project or goal Alamosa will determine definite costs and the potential funding sources necessary for implementation.

Policy 10.2.3: Alamosa jurisdictions will develop capital improvement plans for all needed capital infrastructure projects.

Policy 10.2.4: Project-specific initiatives from the master plan will be prioritized on an annual basis.

Policy 10.2.5: Jurisdictions initiating projects will monitor and ensure performance and financial accountability on projects.

10. Develop a regulatory foundation for development, revision and implementation.

Policy 10.3.1: Accompanying the drafting of this master plan, extensive recommendations were made to update and change the land use codes of the participating jurisdictions. When feasible code changes should be made in the light and guidance of the Master Plan.

Policy 10.3.2: As regulations are adopted and implemented, clear provisions for correcting or adapting those regulations should be in place.

Policy 10.3.3: Concurrent with code and other regulatory changes, public hearings and/or other opportunities for public feedback and information should be conducted.

10.4 Following project initiation, a results and outcome monitoring mechanism should be in place to evaluate progress.

Policy 10.4.1: Annually prepare and if possible, appropriate or necessary, progress reports will be issued on the state of projects throughout initiation.

Goal
Definite costs and potential funding sources necessary for implementation will be determined prior to initiating a specific project or goal.

Goal
A regulatory foundation shall be developed for implementation.

Goal
Establish a systematic monitoring mechanism following project initiation to evaluate progress of the project.

Implementation Goals & Policies

Goal
Development projects
under review should
agree with the master
plan.

Goal
Update the master plan at
10 year intervals.

GOAL 10.5: New development proposals should be generally congruent with the vision of the Master Plan.

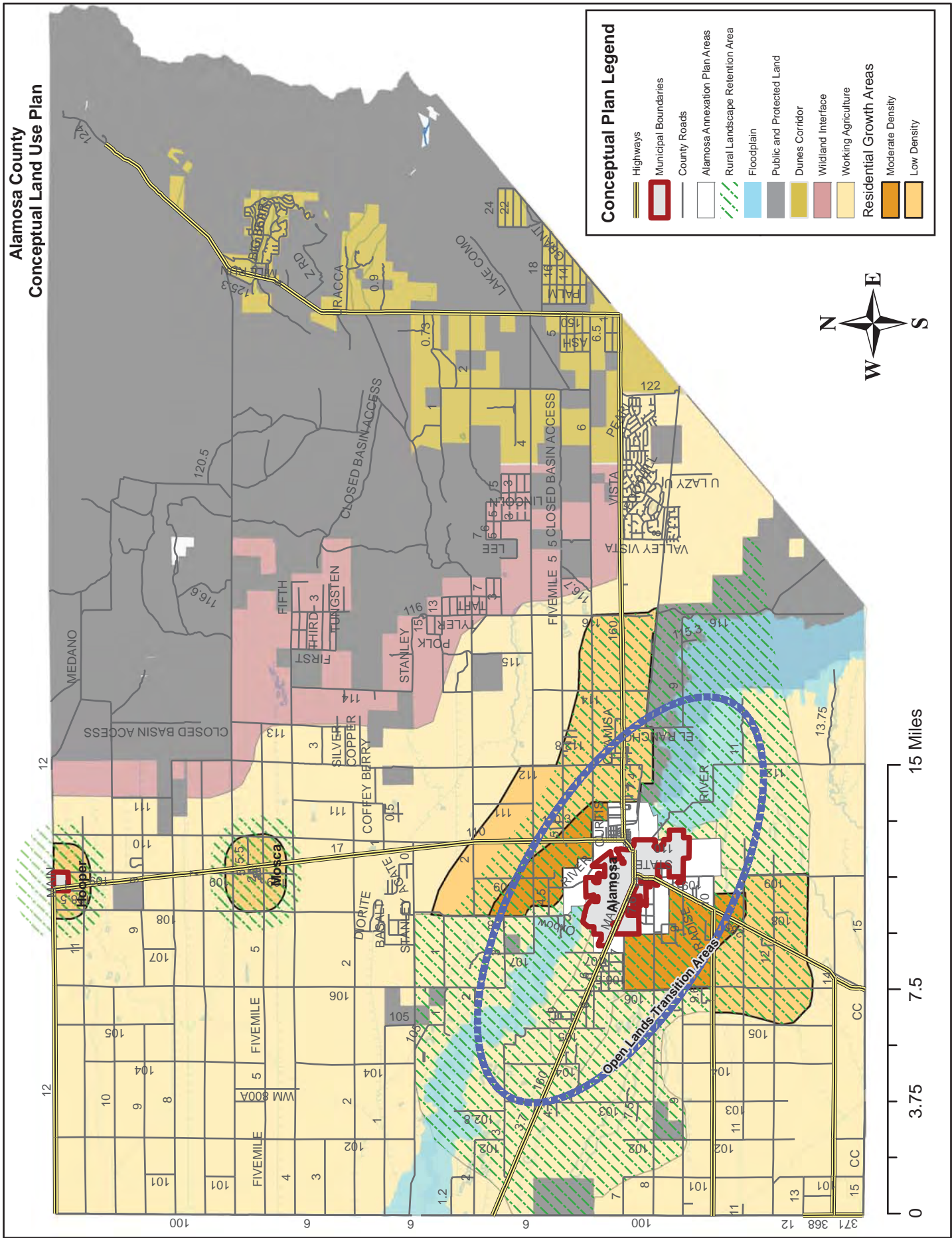
Policy 10.5.1: Require staff reports to reference master plan goals and policies.

Policy 10.5.2: Require amendment to the master plan if a development project is favored for approval but is not congruent with master plan.

GOAL 10.6: Update Master Plan at five-year intervals.

Policy 10.6.1: At minimum **5** year intervals the master plan update will be designed completed and delivered.

Alamosa County Conceptual Land Use Plan

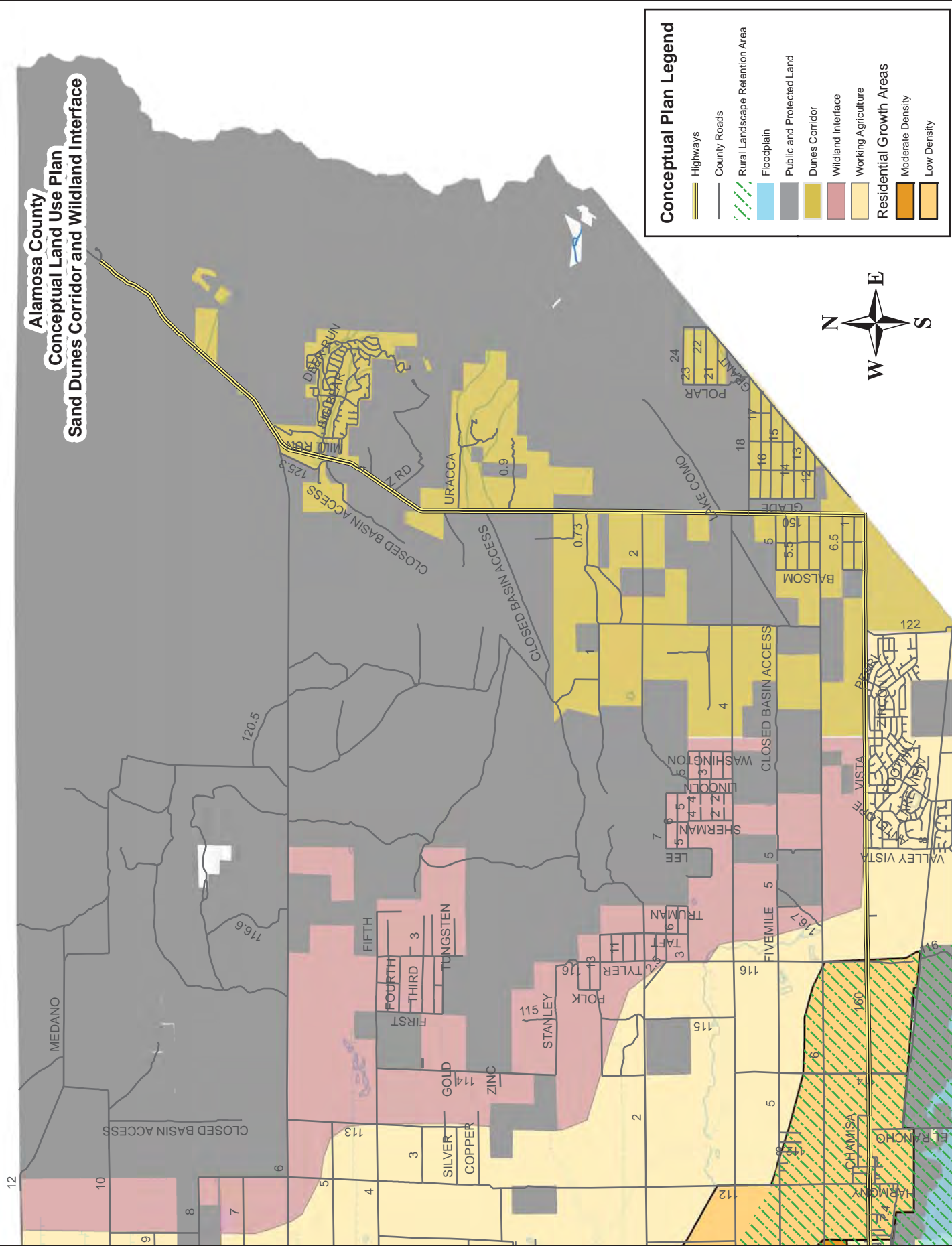


Conceptual Plan Legend

- Highways
- Municipal Boundaries
- County Roads
- Alamosa Annexation Plan Areas
- Rural Landscape Retention Area
- Floodplain
- Public and Protected Land
- Dunes Corridor
- Wildland Interface
- Working Agriculture
- Residential Growth Areas**
 - Moderate Density
 - Low Density



**Alamosa County
Conceptual Land Use Plan
Sand Dunes Corridor and Wildland Interface**



Conceptual Plan Legend

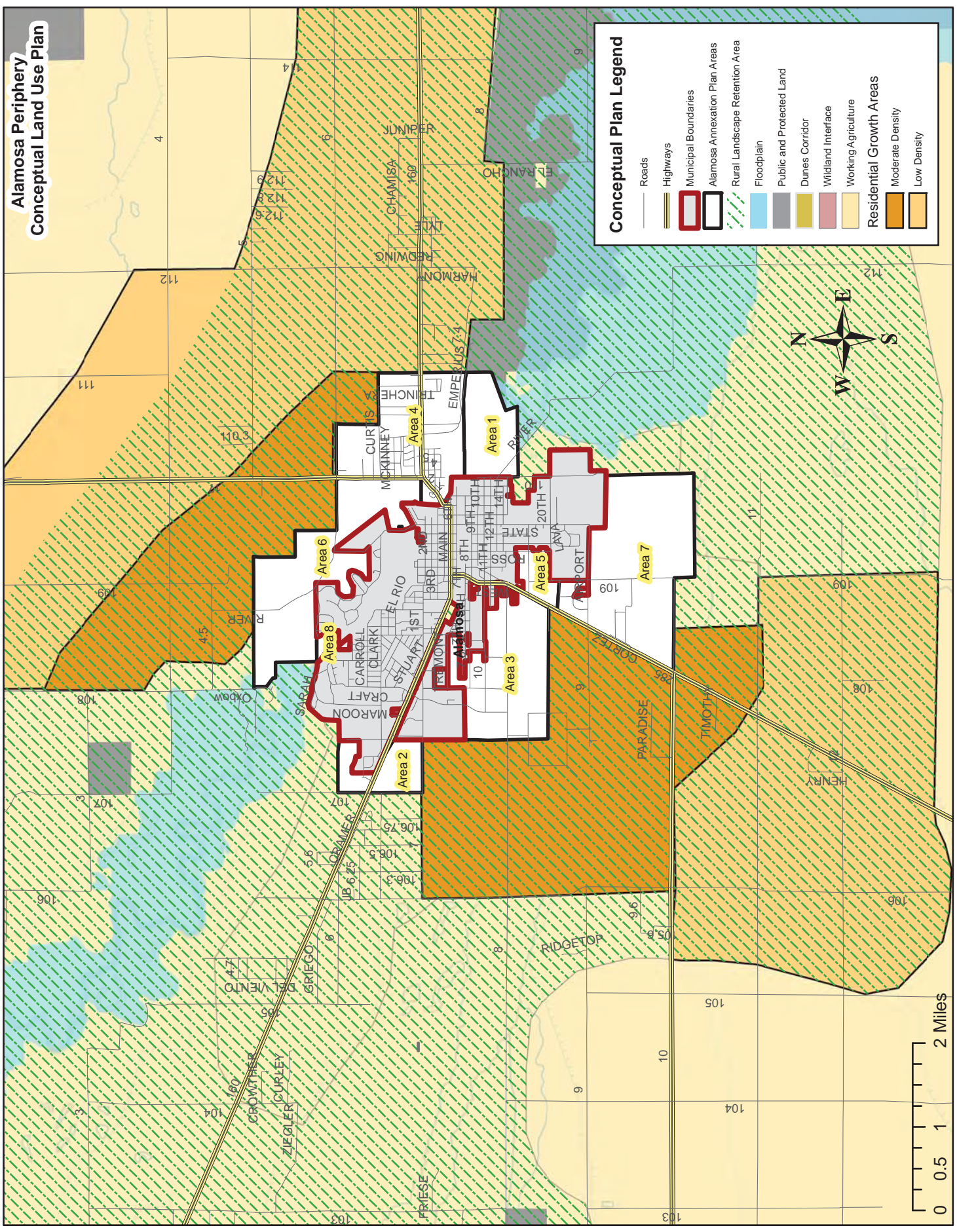
- Highways
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 - Low Density

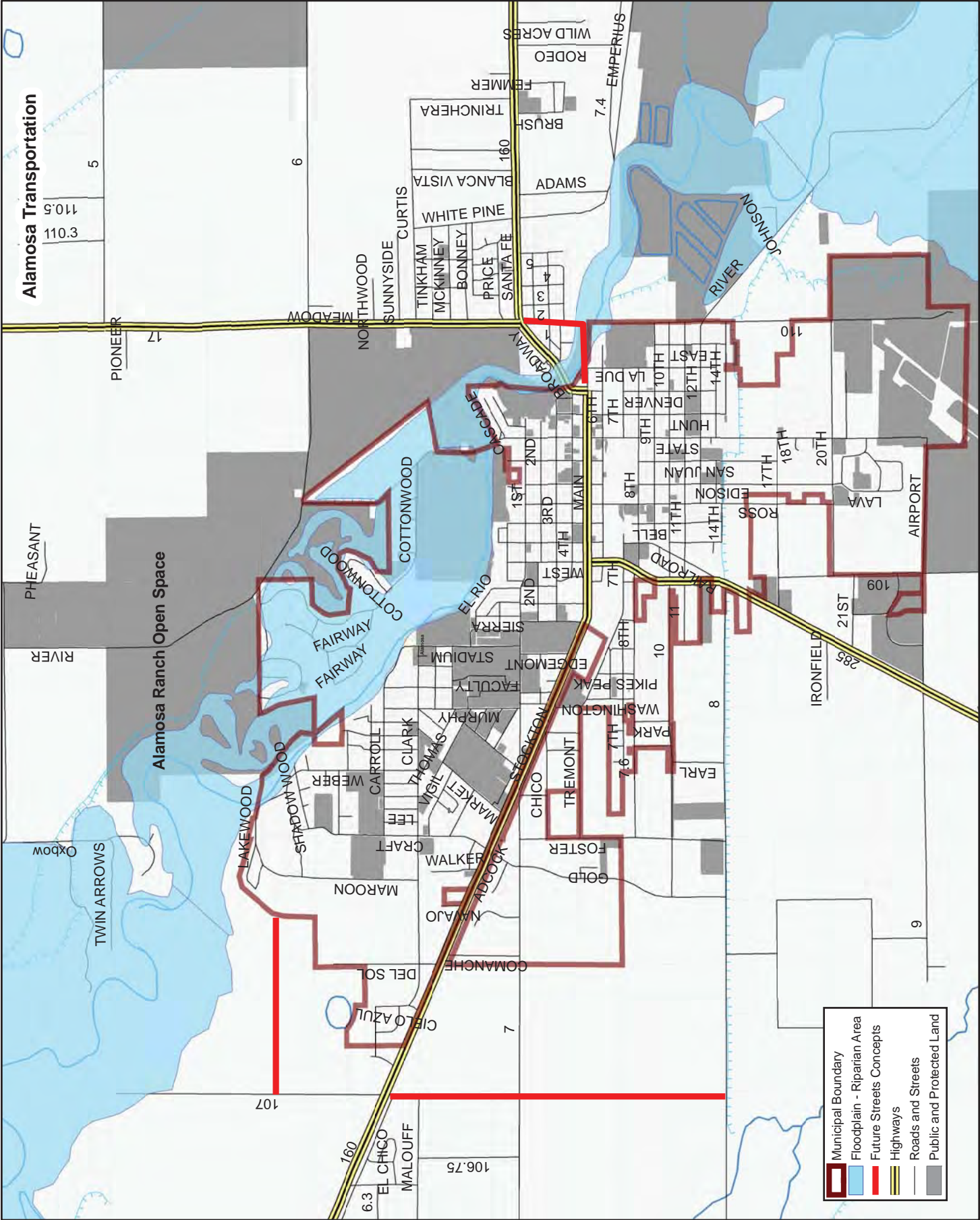


Alamosa Periphery Conceptual Land Use Plan

Conceptual Plan Legend

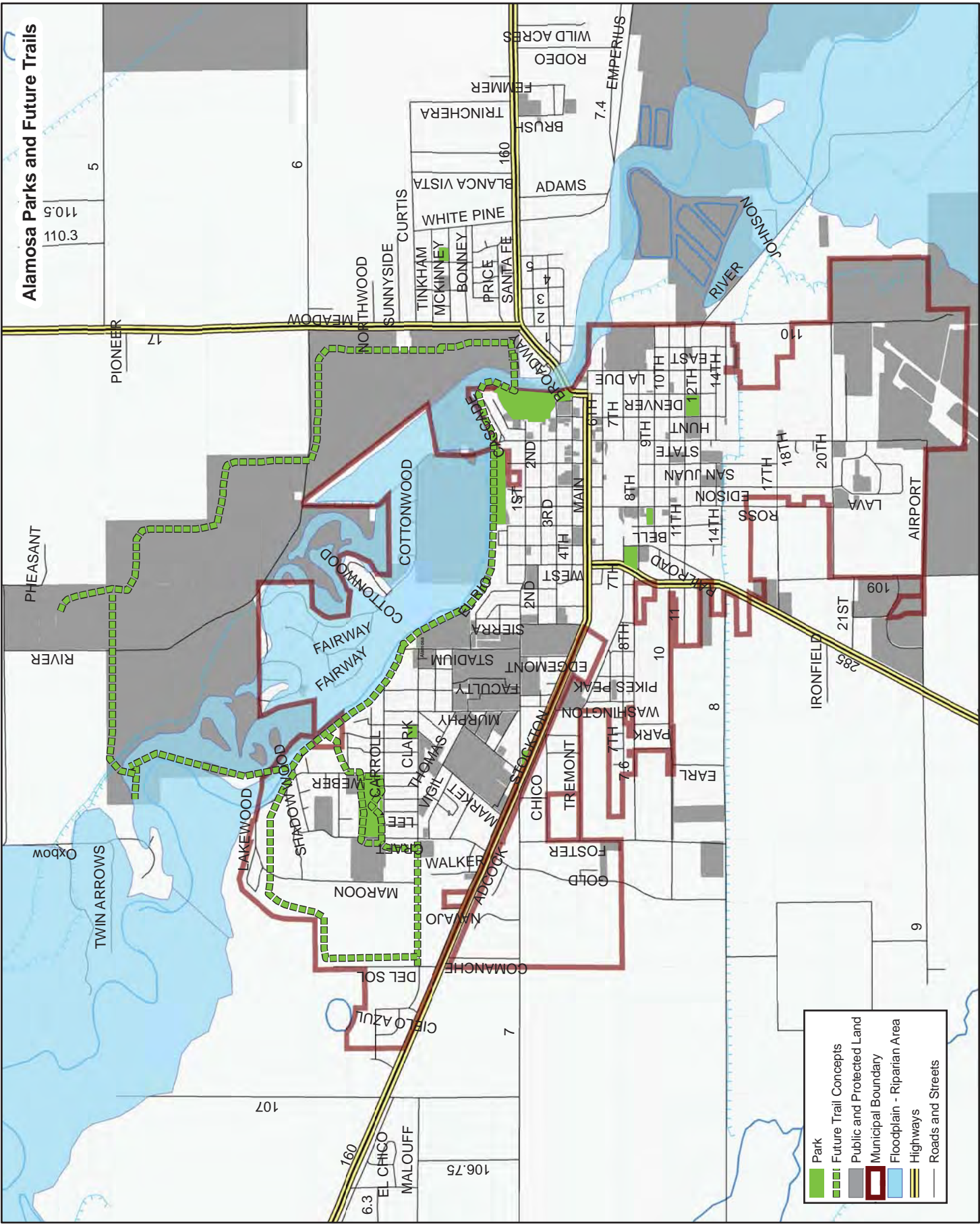
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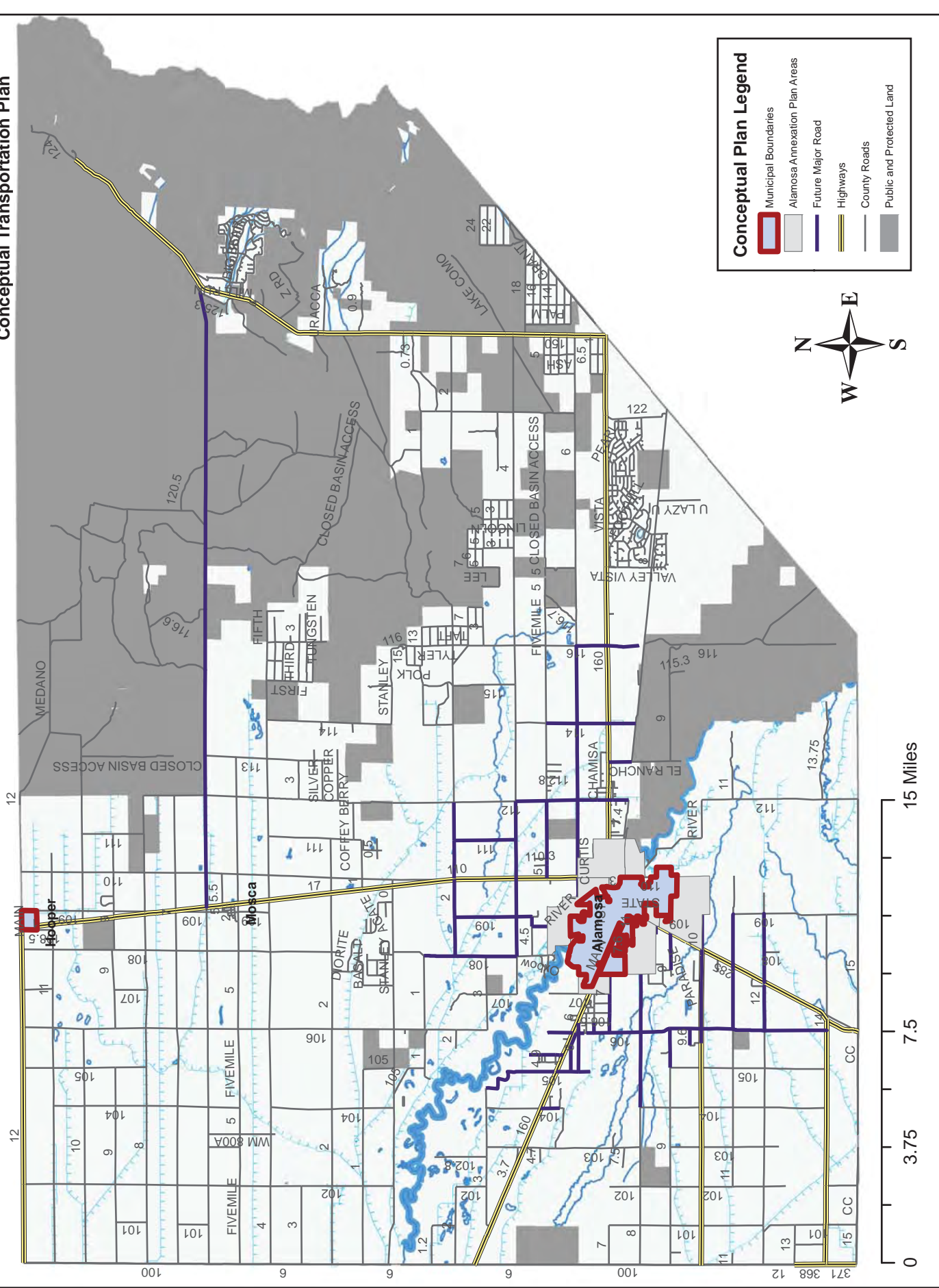
- Municipal Boundary
- Floodplain - Riparian Area
- Future Streets Concepts
- Highways
- Roads and Streets
- Public and Protected Land

Alamosa Parks and Future Trails



	Park
	Future Trail Concepts
	Public and Protected Land
	Municipal Boundary
	Floodplain - Riparian Area
	Highways
	Roads and Streets

Alamosa County Conceptual Transportation Plan



Conceptual Plan Legend

- Municipal Boundaries
- Alamosa Annexation Plan Areas
- Future Major Road
- Highways
- County Roads
- Public and Protected Land

