



CITY OF SOCORRO TEXAS

COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN June 2014



Prepared by Sites Southwest, LLC

The City of Socorro, Texas
Comprehensive Master Plan

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

City of Socorro Administration

Jesus Ruiz, Mayor
Willie Norfleet Jr., City Manager
Samuel A. Leony, Planning Director
Sandra Hernandez, City Clerk

Socorro City Council

Sergio Cox, District 1
Gloria Macias Rodriguez, District 2
Victor Perez, District 3
J.E. "Chito" Bowling, District 4
Rene Rodriguez, At-Large

Socorro Planning and Zoning Commission

Joe De Turo
Jorge Perez
Richard Lara
Arnulfo Salazar
Tommy Faulkner

Consultants

Sites Southwest

Albuquerque, NM and El Paso, TX

Phyllis Taylor, AICP, Principal-in-Charge
Barbara S. Herrington, AICP, Project Manager
Debra Hradek, ASLA, El Paso Office Director
James Aranda, Community Planner
Sara Bautista, Community Planner
Shelly Homer, Graphics and Production
Susan Bucklin, Geographic Information Systems

Moreno Cardenas, Inc.

El Paso, TX

Jose F. Cardenas, PE, President
Marvin H. Gomez, PE, CFM, Project Manager

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Executive summary v**
 - A. Land Use and Housing Trends v
 - B. Economic Development and Historic Preservation vi
 - C. Public Facilities and Services viii
 - D. Parks and Recreation ix
 - E. Green Infrastructure x
 - F. Infrastructure x
- I. Introduction 1**
 - A. Purpose of the Plan 1
 - B. Legal Basis for Planning 2
 - C. Planning Process 2
- II. Community Profile: Past, Present and Future 5**
 - A. History and Historic Resources 5
 - B. Natural Physical Factors Influencing Development 6
 - C. Demographics 6
 - D. Population Characteristics 11
 - E. Summary and Implications 13
- III. Existing Land Use and Zoning Characteristics 15**
 - A. Previous Planning Efforts 15
 - B. Relationship to the Comprehensive Plan and Applicable Ordinances 15
 - C. Settlement Patterns 15
 - D. Existing Land Use 17
 - E. Government and Commercial Centers 20
 - F. Annexations 20
 - G. Rate of Construction 23
 - H. Existing Zoning 23
 - I. Extraterritorial Jurisdiction 31
 - J. Existing Development Ordinances 33
 - K. Land Use Issues 34
 - L. Future Land Use Plan 35
 - M. Land Use Goals and Strategies 41
- IV. Economic Development 47**
 - A. Economic Beginnings 47
 - B. The Economy Today 47
 - C. Economic Strengths, Challenges, and Opportunities 53
 - D. Public Concerns 54
 - E. Historic Preservation and Tourism 55
 - F. Future Economic Development Plan 58
 - G. Economic Development Goals and Strategies 61
 - H. Tourism and Historic Preservation Goals and Strategies 62

V. Housing	65
A. Housing Characteristics and Neighborhoods	65
B. Housing Characteristics	65
C. Housing Goals and Strategies.....	77
VI. Public Facilities	81
A. Introduction.....	81
B. Government Offices	81
C. Community Facilities and Services	84
D. Schools	85
E. Public Health Clinics	87
F. Public Facilities and Services.....	88
Public Facilities and Services Goals and Strategies.....	89
VII. Parks and Recreation	91
A. Introduction.....	91
B. Existing Park Conditions	91
C. Park Classifications	93
D. NRPA General Park Standards	95
E. Park Assessment.....	97
F. Parks Assessment Summary.....	103
G. Regulations Regarding Parks	103
H. Parks and Recreation Goals and Strategies.....	104
VIII. Green Infrastructure and Rural Character	107
A. Green Infrastructure in Socorro	107
B. Preserving and Enhancing Green Infrastructure	108
C. Landscaping in the Public Right-of-Way.....	109
D. Green Infrastructure Goals.....	111
IX. Transportation and Planned Improvements	113
A. Transit.....	113
B. Rail.....	115
C. PEDESTRIAN PATHS AND BIKE LANES.....	115
D. Roadways	115
E. City of Socorro Proposed Thoroughfare Plan.....	121
F. Transportation Infrastructure Goals and Strategies.....	125
G. Transit Goals and Strategies.....	126
H. Pedestrian and Bicycle Goals and Strategies.....	126
X. Utility Infrastructure	129
A. Water and Wastewater	129
B. Electric.....	130
C. Natural Gas.....	130
D. Communications	136
E. Irrigation.....	136
F. Existing Storm Drainage	136

G. Estimated Costs of Prioritized Drainage Improvements	139
H. Utilities Goals and Strategies.....	141
I. Storm Drainage Infrastructure Goals and Strategies	141
XI. Implementation	143
A. Capital Improvement Resources	143
B. State Programs and Funding Mechanisms	144
C. County Programs and Funds	145
D. Federal Programs and Funding Mechanisms	146
XII. Appendices	149
A. Bibliography	149
B. Vacant Land Map.....	151
C. Transportation Addenda	152

Tables

Table 1. Town of Socorro Population Growth, 1960—1980.....	8
Table 2. Population Growth, 1990—2010	8
Table 3. Population Projections, 2010—2060	10
Table 4. Age, Race and Ethnicity Population Characteristics.....	11
Table 5. Educational Attainment for Population Age 25 and over	12
Table 6. Household Type	12
Table 7. Socorro, Texas Existing Land Use Map.....	17
Table 8. Socorro Zoning.....	25
Table 9. ETJ Distances by Population.....	31
Table 10. Socorro Commuters	48
Table 11. Employment Status of Socorro Residents.....	48
Table 12. Type of Work of Socorro Residents.....	49
Table 13. Socorro, Texas, Employed Population by Industry Sector	49
Table 14. Socorro Housing Units by Type	65
Table 15. Tenure of Occupied Units	66
Table 16. Housing Units by Year Built.....	66
Table 17. Housing Units with Select Characteristics.....	66
Table 18. Housing Units with Overcrowded Conditions.....	67
Table 19. Median Value of Owner-Occupied Units	67
Table 20. Households with a Cost Burden	68
Table 21 Physical Disability by Sex by Age by Employment Status for the Civilian Non- institutionalized Population 16 to 64 years	73
Table 22. Income Characteristics of Residents with Disabilities.....	73
Table 23. The Fair Housing Laws and Executive Orders	74
Table 24. Schools in the City of Socorro	85
Table 25. Existing Socorro Parks	91
Table 26: Socorro Park Acreage in Relation to NRPA Park Standards	96
Table 27. Park Assessment	97
Table 28. 2035 Traffic Data (Fully Developed).....	123
Table 29. Transportation Improvements Budgetary Costs.....	124
Table 30. Funded Transportation Projects by Other Entities (i.e. TxDOT and MPO).....	124
Table 31. El Paso County SMP Priority Projects Impacting the City of Socorro	139

Figures

Figure 1. Socorro, TX Location Map.....	1
Figure 2. Socorro, Texas Natural Features.....	7
Figure 3. Town of Socorro boundaries	9
Figure 4. Projected Population, 2010-2060.....	10
Figure 5: Example of organic settlement pattern in Socorro	16
Figure 6: Example of conventional settlement pattern in Socorro	16
Figure 7. Existing Land Use Map.....	21
Figure 8. New Development: Building Permits June 2008 – November 2010... 24	
Figure 9. Existing Zoning.....	29
Figure 10. ETJ Boundaries.....	32
Figure 11. Future Land Use Map.....	39
Figure 12. Establishments by Type (515)].....	51
Figure 13. Socorro Employment 1997	52
Figure 14. Economic Development Plan.....	60
Figure 15. Socorro Neighborhoods.....	71
Figure 16. Example of Conventional Subdivision Design versus Conservation Subdivision Design.....	76
Figure 17. Socorro Public Facilities	83
Figure 18. Socorro Parks.....	92
Figure 19. Water Harvesting.....	109
Figure 20. Green Infrastructure Plan	112
Figure 21. Existing Transit.....	114
Figure 22. Existing Transportation Network.....	118
Figure 23. Major Thoroughfare Plan.....	120
Figure 24. Proposed Thoroughfares Plan	122
Figure 25. Existing LVWD Water Lines.....	131
Figure 26. Existing LVWD Sewer Lines.....	132
Figure 27. Future LVWD Water Improvements	133
Figure 28. Future LVWD Sewer Improvements	134
Figure 29. Existing Electric and Gas Facilities	135
Figure 30. Existing Drainage Infrastructure	137
Figure 31. EPC-SMP Recommendations	140
Figure 32. Arterial Street Sections.....	152
Figure 33. 2010 Traffic Data	153
Figure 34. 2020 Traffic Data	154
Figure 35. 2025 Traffic Data	155
Figure 36. 2035 Traffic Data	156

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Some 32,000 people live in the City of Socorro, Texas, according to the 2010 Census count. Since 1990, the city has been adding between 400 and 500 new residents every year. The future population is expected to grow to 45,500 by 2030 and to 60,000 by 2060, nearly double the existing population. Where will all these new residents live, shop, work, and find entertainment? How will this growth affect transportation in the city, water resources, housing, and agricultural land?

The 2030 Socorro Comprehensive Master Plan provides direction for how the City can manage the expected influx of new residents while improving the overall quality of life for all of its residents. Developed by a joint planning effort of city officials, residents and the consulting firms of Sites Southwest and MCI Engineering, the plan provides a blueprint for the future physical development of the city. It reflects the issues and concerns identified by residents, and presents goals and actions tailored to help address and solve those concerns, moving Socorro forward into a promising future.

A. LAND USE AND HOUSING TRENDS

Despite the growing population, agricultural uses—primarily cotton and pecan farms—continue to dominate nearly one third of the City’s 13,260 acres. Single family and rural housing are spread over another fifth of the land in large rural lots and suburban subdivisions, while another fifth is vacant land. Between 1988 and 2011 agriculture and rural residential uses decreased by 60 percent, indicating conversions to other uses, primarily residential and commercial.

In part because of its relatively recent suburban growth, Socorro did not develop a town center, defined as an area of mixed commercial, civic, and residential uses that provides a social and economic focus for the town. While a few community centers and schools provide places for residents to gather, government/administrative offices are dispersed, requiring car trips back and forth. Commercial and retail goods and services sporadically line major road corridors, but there is no central shopping district. Combined with warehouse truck traffic, the existing land use pattern results in traffic congestion at major intersections.

With the expected influx of new residents, Socorro can anticipate needing an additional 7,500 to 8,000 dwellings by 2060. At the existing average size of 0.31 acres per home, continued low-density residential development will consume 2,500 acres of land that are now vacant or being used for agriculture— or more than one third of Socorro’s existing open space. Continued low density development will add even more traffic to the roadways as residents are forced to drive everywhere for needed goods and services.

An alternative development scenario that may work better for Socorro is being proposed in this plan. The scenario, shown in the Future Land Use Map, would create slightly more compact development, offering a range of housing choices that include apartments and townhomes as well as single-family residences. It designates potential places for neighborhood retail and office centers that are within walking or biking distance for residents. The future scenario would establish a commercial Town Center in Socorro as a focal point for the city and location for retail and office space as well as higher density housing. This location would be accessible by bus, helping to cut down on traffic congestion. Irrigation ditches through the area provides opportunities for future trails or greenways.

Higher density housing could also be accommodated on vacant land near a new light industrial center proposed for land recently annexed along I-10 in the southeast part of Socorro as well as along Old Hueco Tanks Road.

To accomplish this, the plan recommends a number of actions, detailed further in the plan.

- Encourage a variety of residential units and dwellings to be built that offer residents greater choices and increase the average residential density to approximately 4.1 units per acre. Zoning select areas for higher density townhomes and apartments or mixed uses would help implement this goal.
- Designate areas for mixed-use neighborhood centers that include a grocery or convenience store, shops, offices and residences that are within walking distance (a quarter to a half-mile) from neighborhoods.
- Focus development efforts on creating a commercial Town Center in a central location with good vehicle and bus access. Rezone the land to allow a mix of office and retail uses as well as higher density residential.
- Consolidate government offices in an Administrative Complex and provide public space to anchor and catalyze future commercial development.
- Allow and encourage cluster or conservation housing developments in which housing is concentrated on a portion of the land (to provide utilities and roadways more efficiently) and preserve the remainder of the land for agriculture or open space or parks.
- Develop programs to assist residents in maintaining and rehabilitating the existing housing stock.

B. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Originally established as a farming community that developed around a Spanish mission after the 1680 Pueblo Revolt, Socorro now is primarily a bedroom community for El Paso. More than 90 percent of the workforce commutes to work, and at least half of those commutes for longer than 25 minutes per trip. During 2008-2010, the median household income was \$32,778, with half of

households receiving more and half receiving less. The overwhelming majority (80%) earned income from employment and 28 percent receive Social Security payments.

The educational services, health care and social assistance sector employs the highest percentage of the Socorro workforce (22%) with construction, manufacturing, retail trade and transportation, warehousing and utilities each employing about half that. Of more than 500 private businesses located in Socorro, more than half are retail and service establishments.

Some of Socorro's economic strengths are a number of large undeveloped sites that have industrial/commercial potential, its proximity to the existing ports-of-entry, and direct access to Interstate 10 and the rail line. It also has excellent electrical infrastructure, a foreign trade zone, and is part of the historic Mission Trail, which invites tourism. Some challenges are that only a little over half of the population ages 25 and older has a high school diploma or higher, the southeastern part of the city lacks access to I-10, and there is no town center or downtown.

To take advantage of its strengths, the plan recommends that Socorro

- Create an industrial park near I-10 with amenities to attract businesses and industries that pay higher wages.
- Promote development of a regional retail and entertainment center on vacant land along I-10.
- Support creation of a self-sustaining Chamber of Commerce, specific to Socorro.
- Create a commercial Town Center in a central location with good vehicle and bus access. Rezone the land to allow a mix of office and retail uses as well as higher density residential.
- Consolidate government offices in an Administrative Complex, providing public space to anchor and catalyze future commercial development.
- Establish gateways into Socorro from I-10 and a way-finding program for tourists and other travelers to be drawn to Socorro's historic sites.
- Encourage bed-and-breakfast establishments and other tourist amenities to be developed along Socorro Road. Develop design guidelines to retain the historic aesthetic of the area. Divert truck traffic to other more appropriate arterials.
- Renovate the area around the Socorro Mission with a plaza, landscaping and other amenities.
- Renovate and reuse the existing buildings at the Rio Vista Historic District as a heritage tourist attraction and community center.
- Ensure that the transportation network and other city infrastructure support these new developments.
- Take advantage of opportunities conferred to the city under Section 380 of the Texas Municipal Code and its status as a HUB zone.

- Establish a business incubator and or commercial kitchen to enable residents to develop their individual skills into business enterprises.
- Work with the school district to improve high school graduation rates.

C. PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

At this writing, the City of Socorro employs 84 persons, with more than 80 percent working for either the police department or public works. The Administration Building on Horizon Boulevard houses offices of the Mayor, City Council, City Manager, City Clerk, and Human Resources, while the City Administrative Complex on Rio Vista contains the Municipal Courtroom, City Council chambers, and Planning and Zoning Department. The Public Works Department is located on Old Hueco Tanks Road. Fire department personnel have been volunteers but are transitioning to paid employees. The city has three community centers in the northeast area that host a number of activities and programs, as well as a privately-owned ballroom available for rent. The Socorro Independent School District is one of the fastest growing school districts in the State of Texas. Nine of the schools are located within the City of Socorro, serving pre-kindergarten to 12th grade. Straddling the city’s municipal limits to the northeast is El Paso Community College’s Mission del Paso campus which offers a full range of classes and degree programs. The Socorro Family Health Clinic—a partnership between Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center and Kellogg—provides primary care and family medicine for Socorro residents.

Many of Socorro’s public facilities are old and need significant improvements. Residents commented that Socorro needs more police and a larger holding facility; a substation on the southwest side of the railroad tracks would avoid the delays in emergency services caused by trains. The City has contracted El Paso County to perform Animal Control services. Residents see a need for more public health care facilities and services as well as technical/vocational/continuing education classes and training. Plan recommendations include:

- Develop a level-of-service policy for public facilities and services (the number of residents within a specific radius that should be served by a community center, police station or fire house). Give special consideration to providing emergency and police services on the southwest side of the railroad tracks and identify potential locations for additional community centers where none exist.
- Create a public facilities and services plan that identifies public facilities and service needs, creates a timeline for expansion, and seeks funding.
- Consolidate municipal offices as much as feasible in a central location.
- Identify locations and secure land for an additional community center, as well as police and fire substations, in underserved areas of the city.

D. PARKS AND RECREATION

The City of Socorro is served by 11 parks that range in size from less than an acre to more than 11 acres. Bulldog Championship Park, a community park, is the newest to be developed. With a total of 46 acres of existing parks, the level of service provides about 1.4 acres of park land for every 1,000 residents. This amount is low compared with the standard offered by the National Recreation and Park Association, which is about 16 acres per 1,000 persons. This national standard may be unrealistic or undesirable for Socorro, however, given that much of the city is fairly rural with a lot of open space in the form of agricultural land. An analysis of each park's service area (ranging from a quarter-mile radius to a one-and-a-half mile radius, depending on the park's size) indicates that the northern and northeastern portions of the city have good access to parks while this is lacking in the southern and southeastern portions.

A parks survey conducted for the Comprehensive Master Plan indicated that Socorro's existing parks are in poor overall condition due to inadequate planning and design, old equipment, a lack of facilities and poor landscape conditions. Many parks lack such basic amenities as signage, ADA-required access, parking areas and bathroom facilities. During public meetings, city residents called for more parks and recreation fields, more walking trails, and better maintenance and upkeep. They also requested more shade and sitting areas within the parks.

Based on these evaluations, the plan recommends that the City:

- Engage residents in planning amenities and improvements at each park and develop a list of priorities for installation, replacement and maintenance to be carried out as funding allows. All parks must be ADA-accessible.
- Adopt city-wide park standards for appropriate and sustainable park construction and maintenance, including irrigation requirements.
- Adopt a level-of-service policy (a target number of park acres per 1,000 population) as well as a target service area coverage policy (for example, every resident should be within a 10-minute walking distance from a park) for the city.
- Develop new parks in areas in need of park services as funding allows.
- Develop parks that can be jointly used as drainage facilities.

E. GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

More and more communities are planning to retain and enhance their green infrastructure as they become aware of its benefits. Green infrastructure can be defined as an interconnected network of protected land and water that supports native species, maintains natural and ecological processes, sustains air and water resources and contributes to the health and quality of life for communities and people. It includes trails, wildlife corridors, parks, drainage ponds, wetland, forests and other natural areas. These areas help manage storm water, reduce the risk of flooding, recharge the aquifer, filter pollution, absorb noise and heat and take up carbon as well as providing recreation and solace for people. The plan recommends that Socorro

- Strive to conserve, protect and enhance the city's green infrastructure while respecting private property rights through such strategies as conserving forested areas and agricultural lands, emphasizing compact development over sprawl, look for joint use opportunities (for example, drainage ponds that are also parks, tree farms or soccer fields), and harvesting storm water in green areas.

F. INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure is the foundation on which the city is developed and is designed to support and help implement the City's development priorities. It includes water and wastewater systems, drainage, transportation (roadways, bus routes, bicycle lanes, trails and walkways), as well as gas, electric and communication utilities. Socorro's **water and wastewater facilities**, provided by the Lower Valley Water District, have largely been sized and constructed to serve build-out conditions within the city. A mile-long extension of a water line along North Loop Drive is planned and a lift station, which moves wastewater from a lower to a higher elevation, is under construction. Additional improvements will extend water and wastewater service to new developments and un-served existing developments.

Storm water drainage is a key issue in Socorro, with parts of the city, especially near the interstate, experiencing periodic flooding. Measures to address this are presented in the 2010 El Paso County Storm Water Master Plan and include detention and retention basins, outlet structures, and concrete-lined channels. These are multi-million dollar projects, however, and will depend on federal and state funding for engineering and construction.

The highest priority project is the Sparks Arroyos, whose flows deposit sediment to the northern part of the City of Socorro. Partnering with other government entities to secure federal funding for these projects will be key.

The **Transportation** chapter proposes a **Future Thoroughfare Plan** to support the anticipated land uses in the Comprehensive Master Plan. Socorro's major roadways are state highways and farm-to-market roads under the jurisdiction of the Texas Department of Transportation. The major northwest-southeast roadways are North Loop Drive (FM76) and Alameda Avenue (State highway 20). Horizon Boulevard (FM 1281) is the only major arterial that runs perpendicular to these roadways, providing access to Interstate 10. Since a cluster of commercial businesses and government offices are located near the intersection of North Loop and Horizon, this area is plagued by traffic congestion. Socorro Road (FM 258) is a minor northeast-southwest state arterial located along a designated historic corridor that experiences heavy truck traffic speeds higher than desirable for a historic district. In addition, several local roads function as minor arterials. An often-raised concern among city residents was the repair and paving of local roads. Another issue was the lack of access to I-10, which residents believe plays a large part in the car and truck congestion on North Loop Drive.

Projects already proposed and funded by TXDOT over the next five years are:

- Widening North Loop Drive from two to four lanes between Horizon Boulevard and the El Paso City limits.
- Extending Old Hueco Tanks Road from North Loop Drive to I-10 (Eastlake Boulevard Interchange).
- Widening Horizon Boulevard/Buford Road to four lanes between North Loop Drive and Alameda.

The following additional roadways are proposed in the **Future Thoroughfare Plan** (shown in Chapter IX) to support the Future Land Use Plan. These include:

- The southeastern extension of Eastlake Boulevard/Old Hueco Tanks Road to Alameda and Socorro Road.
- Two additional major arterial roads to provide access from the City of Socorro to I-10 southeast of Horizon Boulevard. The arterial farthest south could collect vehicles from a potential port-of-entry in the southwest corner of Socorro.
- Seven proposed minor arterials (detailed in the Transportation chapter).
- Intersection improvements at Old Hueco Tanks Road/Moon Road, Rio Vista Road/Alameda Avenue, Rio Vista Road/Horizon Boulevard, and Buford Road/Socorro Road.
- Roundabouts should be considered before installing any traffic signals, or should be installed in lieu of traffic signals where they already exist and improvements are planned.

The plan also recommends developing a traffic study for the city to recommend improvements to the existing intersections, developing a regularly scheduled

maintenance and paving schedule, and considering imposing impact fees on new development to help defray the cost of constructing new roads.

For **transportation alternatives** to the car, three bus routes funded by El Paso County provide rural transit services to the City of Socorro, averaging a monthly ridership of 3,000 to 4,000. A key future transit mode for Socorro could be Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), which the City of El Paso is developing along the Alameda Avenue corridor. It is slated to run from downtown El Paso to the Mission Valley Transit Terminal at Zaragoza Road and Alameda Avenue, approximately 2.5 miles from the Socorro city limits. To take advantage of this, the plan recommends

- The City of Socorro should consider a partnership with the City of El Paso for extending BRT to Socorro. A Park-and-Ride facility near the Mission Valley Terminal would provide parking for residents wishing to drive to the terminal and ride the BRT to El Paso.

Bicycle routes identified by El Paso County include one existing bicycle lane along North Loop Road from Loop 375 to Horizon Boulevard in Socorro, a proposed bike route along Alameda Avenue from Loop 375 to Moon Road and along a portion of Moon Road, Old Hueco Tanks Road and Eastlake Boulevard from Alameda Avenue to I-10.

- The City should improve pedestrian, bicycle, and equestrian pathways by providing adequately wide sidewalks along major streets, designating additional bike lanes and routes, and creating an interconnected network of trails.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

Socorro, Texas, is a city of more than 32,000 people that borders Mexico on the east and is located about ten miles southeast of downtown El Paso. Its rapidly increasing population has prompted City leaders to undertake an organized effort to plan for its future development by contracting for an update of its 1988 Comprehensive Master plan.

The purpose of the comprehensive plan is to create a guide for the physical development of the community for the next 20 years. It describes the community as it is today and creates a vision of what it can become in the future. It takes into account the desires of citizens, elected leaders and City staff in formulating the goals and objectives as well as strategies for how to reach them. The comprehensive planning process is a way to “base individual project decisions on well-researched and well-conceived criteria, rather than on piecemeal and fragmented information generated by day-to-day crises,” (ORCA 2002).



Figure 1. Socorro, TX Location Map

The Socorro, Texas Comprehensive Master Plan documents the physical and socioeconomic characteristics of the city, establishing a baseline reference in a number of elements: land use, housing, economic development, historic preservation, parks and recreation, public facilities and services, transportation and utilities. Its analysis of issues facing the community is firmly rooted in input from the public and elected officials. Each of the elements was viewed holistically to determine their interrelationships and lead to one unified plan.

B. LEGAL BASIS FOR PLANNING

Texas law authorizes cities to spend money for planning purposes, although it does not require it. (Texas Local Government Code “LGC,” Chapter 371). Further, the statutes give cities authority to adopt a comprehensive plan and to define its content and design (Chapter 219, LGC). Any map of a comprehensive plan, however, must contain a clearly visible statement that “a comprehensive plan shall not constitute zoning regulations or establish zoning district boundaries.”

C. PLANNING PROCESS

Gathering public input and developing community support for the plan was a key part of the planning process. This was done primarily through a series of public meetings held in different parts of the city to make them more accessible to residents. Relevant plan information was also displayed at public locations in Socorro, such as the City Administrative buildings, police station, planning department and Rio Vista Community Center. Meeting notices were promoted through flyers at prominent locations, mailings, and through press releases and articles in local newspapers. Altogether nearly 100 persons participated in at least one public meeting regarding the plan.

The consultant team also met individually with elected officials and city staff and worked closely with the El Paso Regional Economic Development Corporation and the Rio Grande Council of Governments. They also toured the community numerous times, taking photographs and documenting land use to complete an existing land use map of the city.

Approximately 52 community members attended the first Comprehensive Plan Update Meeting, held on October 5, 2010, at the Rio Vista Community Center in Socorro from 6 to 8 PM. Meeting materials were available in both English and Spanish; the presentation and all public comments were delivered in both languages. Phyllis Taylor from Sites Southwest, introduced the consulting team. Sara Bautista of Sites Southwest opened the meeting by giving an overview of the night’s agenda. She then explained the public input process during the Plan update and described the purpose and content of a comprehensive plan. After a question and answer session, Ms. Bautista reviewed the city’s demographic statistics and explained the instructions for the small group activity.



Public Meetings for the Comprehensive Master Plan

Participants then broke into small groups for approximately 45 minutes to discuss and map what they liked and disliked about Socorro as well as their vision for its future. Attendees later reconvened to report on their results. The meeting adjourned promptly after the group presentations.

The second public meeting was held Tuesday, February 22, 2011, at the Socorro Police Association building. Approximately 39 people attended this meeting, which was organized in an Open House format to allow participants to drop in between the hours of 6 PM and 8 PM to look at maps, check and add to the list of issues under each topic, ask questions and offer their opinions about future development. Participants also received a survey (English and Spanish) to fill out inquiring about the conditions and importance of various types of infrastructure—sidewalks, lighting, roads, etc.—in their neighborhoods. The same survey was distributed to the rest of the residents via placement in public buildings. A brief question and answer session was held to address concerns voiced by some of the meeting attendees. The open house continued after this, and the meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Approximately 15 community members attended the third public meeting, which was held Wednesday, April 20, 2011, at the Rojas Elementary School cafeteria. The purpose of this meeting was to present the public with an initial set of goals and strategies, and to give them the opportunity to comment on the recommended future land uses for Socorro. Barbara Herrington and David Parra of Sites Southwest opened the meeting by giving an overview of the night's agenda. Like all prior public meetings, all materials and the presentation were bilingual. Ms. Herrington then gave an overview of the various elements of the Comprehensive Plan and presented the draft plan's goals and recommendations to the meeting participants. In addition to presenting the public with an initial set of goals and recommendations, Ms. Herrington also gave a PowerPoint presentation that detailed the elements of the future land use plan for Socorro. Before adjourning the meeting, the consultants briefly outlined the next steps in the planning process.

Consultants delivered the first full draft of the comprehensive master plan at the end of December 2011. It was reviewed by City staff and councilors, boards and committees. In early May 2012, consultants met one-on-one with City Councilors and the new City manager to obtain their comments on the draft. The document was revised accordingly and resubmitted to the City in early August 2012. After that submittal, several changes were made to the future land use map and report to accommodate new information. A second revised document was submitted in January 2013.

Page intentionally left blank

II. COMMUNITY PROFILE: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

A. HISTORY AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

Socorro was settled in the aftermath of the 1680 Pueblo Revolt, which resulted in the expulsion of all Spanish settlers from New Mexico. In 1682, the Spanish established a mission in Socorro, formally known as *Nuestra Señora de la Limpia Concepción de los Piroso de Socorro del Sur*. The first permanent structure was built in 1691 but was swept away by floodwaters of the Rio Grande in 1744. Shortly afterward a second church was built and subsequently washed away in 1829 when the Rio Grande cut a new channel south of the old one. The main structure of the present Socorro mission was completed in 1843. By that time the town of Socorro had developed around the mission and had a population of 1,100. The town was a part of Mexico from 1821 to 1848, when it became a part of the State of Texas as a result of the US-Mexican War. For the rest of the 19th century Socorro remained a small farming community. Locally constructed acequias supplied water for agricultural crops, which included vineyards, fruit trees, and grains. The town, together with other Rio Grande communities, played an active role in county politics until 1881 when the railroads arrived and shifted the political power structure to the City of El Paso.



In 1916, the construction of Elephant Butte Dam along the Rio Grande resulted in an agricultural revolution that transformed the family-based system into large-scale agricultural production on plantation-sized estates. Small farms, manual labor, and vineyard culture gave way to large landholdings where machinery was used in the cultivation of cotton and alfalfa. By 1920, cotton was beginning to rival copper as the area's principal industry. Socorro's population was 2,123 in the mid-1930s, but fell to 350 by 1941 and remained static for several decades thereafter. During the 1960s and 1970s the number of residents increased at a rapid rate. Developers built residential subdivisions that lacked paved streets, water, and sewer lines. Residents of these antiquated neighborhoods—also known as *colonias*—put great pressure on existing wells throughout Socorro as the town's population grew from 10,000 in the middle 1970s to 18,000 in the late 1980s and 22,995 in 1990.

By 2000, Socorro's population was 27,152. In recent years the Lower Valley Water District Authority received the necessary assistance to begin construction of new water and sewage systems for the area. Throughout its long history, the Town of Socorro has unincorporated and reincorporated several times. In 1985 the threat of annexation of the entire town by El Paso sparked the most recent effort to reincorporate Socorro. The result ended with Socorro residents blocking El Paso's plan to annex the town by a margin of 263 votes to remain a separate corporation. Since then, Socorro has continued to grow. The City adopted a Comprehensive Master Plan (1988), as well as ordinances and codes to regulate land use and halt uncontrolled growth. It also created a Historic Landmark Commission to encourage historic preservation.

B. NATURAL PHYSICAL FACTORS INFLUENCING DEVELOPMENT

Socorro sits at an elevation approximately 3,661 feet above sea level. Average temperatures typically range from 29 to 61 degrees Fahrenheit during January, the coldest month, and from 69 to 99 degrees Fahrenheit in July, making it slightly warmer than El Paso, Texas, to the northwest. It is 22.05 square miles in size.

Its topography is relatively flat and its soil suitable for agriculture, which has been the dominant land use for much of its history and still exists to a large degree. Average precipitation is between 9 and 10 inches per year. This contrasts with land to the northeast and west of its boundaries which has a much more varied topography and elevations ranging from 3,689 to more than 4,000 feet above sea level. This disparity in elevation accounts for the 100-year flood zones close to the city's borders on the northeast and west (Figure 2).

C. DEMOGRAPHICS

Socorro was first incorporated in 1921. The town limits were those of the original Socorro Land Grant, as given to early Spanish settlers by the King of Spain in 1692. Since the town's incorporation in 1921, its boundaries have changed several times. In 1933, the international border between Mexico and the United States was realigned, which caused nearly 327 acres of land in the Socorro Grant to be dedicated to Mexico. Later, in 1965 and 1973, the City of El Paso annexed portions of the Socorro Grant, totaling 712 acres. Throughout this time, the local government was "dormant,"¹ and the town had voted to unincorporate and reincorporate several times². After attempts by El Paso to annex the entire town, Socorro residents voted to reaffirm their incorporation in 1986³. Since then, the local government has taken a more active role in the management and development of the town. Nevertheless, due to its changing boundaries and incorporation status, Census counts for the area within the municipal boundaries are not available until 1990.

The first comprehensive plan for Socorro, written in 1988, used population data from Census Tract 104 to approximate the town's population growth from 1960 to 1980. As shown, the population in the Census Tract doubled from 1960 to 1980.

¹ "Comprehensive Planning Study, Town of Socorro, Texas," December 1988

² "Socorro, TX," *Handbook of Texas On-line*, no date

³ "Comprehensive Planning Study, Town of Socorro, Texas," December 1988

Figure 2. Socorro, Texas Natural Features

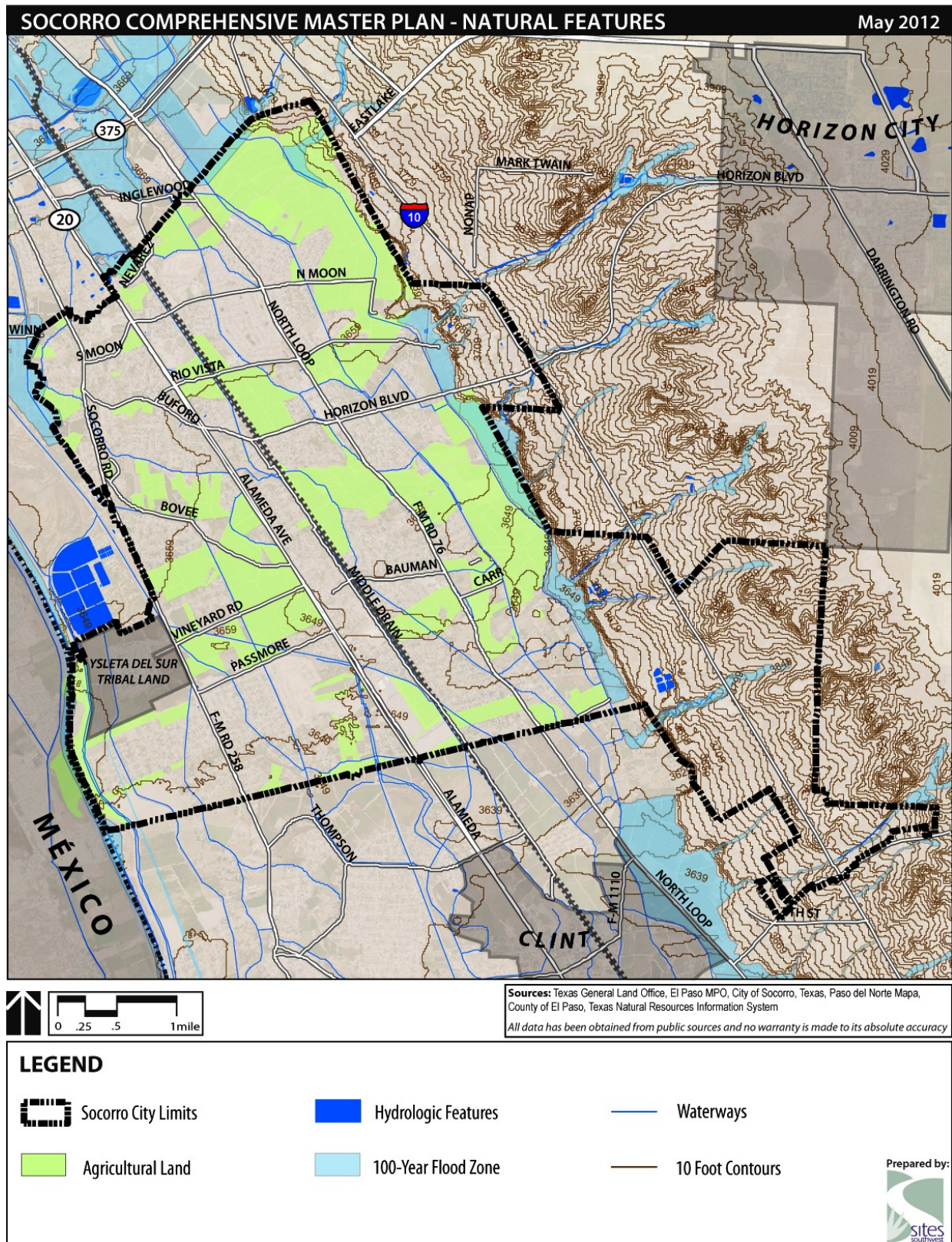


Table 1. Town of Socorro Population Growth, 1960—1980

Total Population: Census Tract 104			Total Population: Town of Socorro Estimate
1960	1970	1980	1980
5,286	n/a	10,848	11,936

Source: US Census Bureau; Comprehensive Planning Study, Town of Socorro, Texas, 1988.

In 1985, when the City of El Paso considered annexing a significant portion of Socorro, it conducted a demographic study of the area in question. At that time, the population of the Socorro Land Grant was estimated to be 18,290 people. It should be noted that the area considered for annexation at that time was larger than the current town boundaries, which are shown in Figure 3. Rapid growth during this time was attributed to the proximity to El Paso and its employment centers and access to I-104.

1. CURRENT POPULATION

According to the US Census Bureau, Socorro’s 2010 population was 32,013. This figure was in the first batch of 2010 Census data released in September 2011. Data regarding socioeconomic characteristics and population projections were obtained from the American Community Survey and from the Texas Water Development Board.

Growth over the last two decades is shown below. According to the US Census Bureau, Socorro’s population in 2000 was 27,152, an 18.1 percent increase over the 1990 population of 22,995. The rate of growth from 2000 to 2010 decreased slightly to 17.9 percent for the decade. In other words, Socorro has grown by some 400-500 residents annually since 1990. At the same time, the City of El Paso and El Paso County have grown at average annual rate of 1.5 percent and 1.8 percent, respectively, over the last decade.

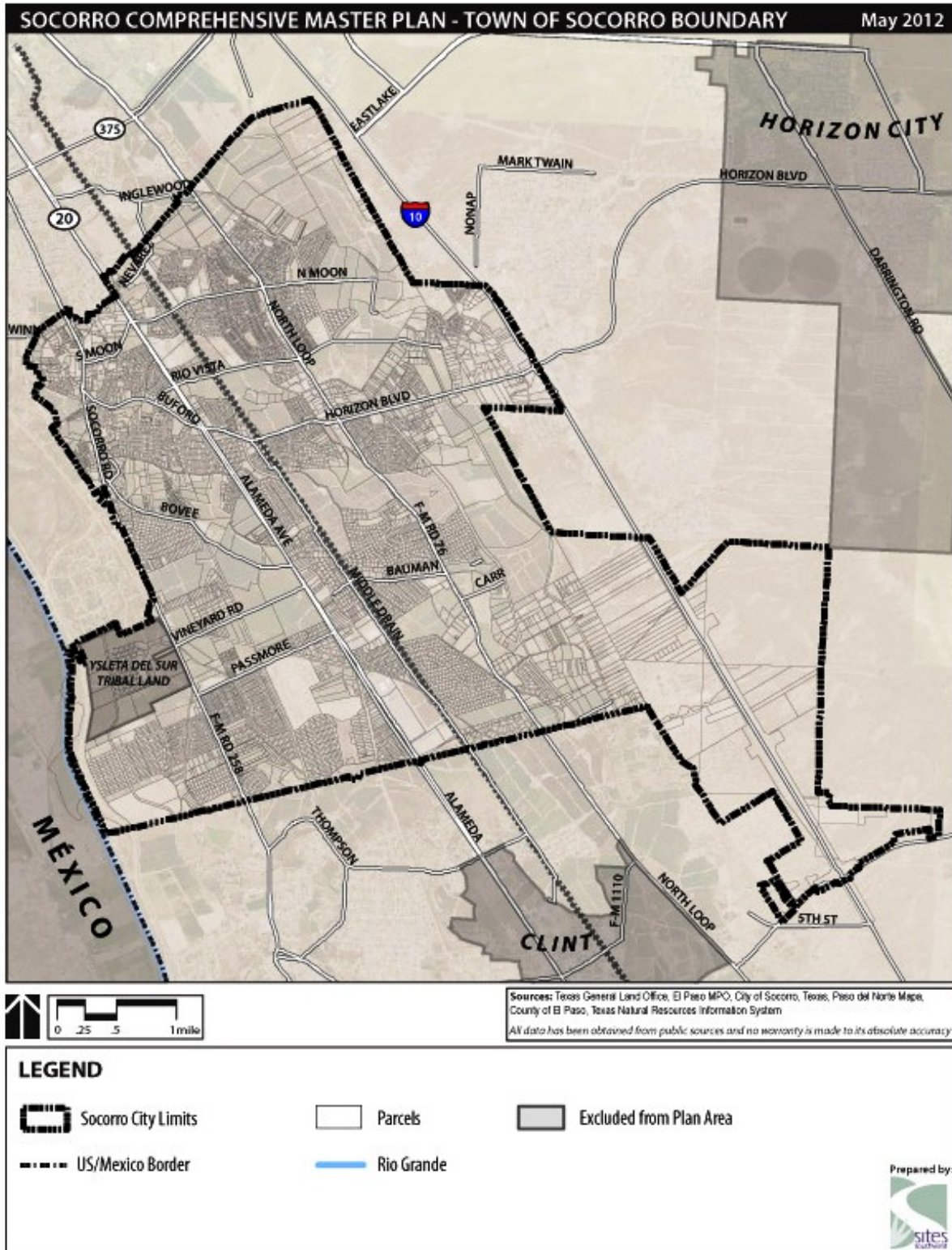
Table 2. Population Growth, 1990—2010

	1990	2000	2010	Total % increase 1990-2000	Total % increase 2000-2010	Average annual % increase 2000-2010
Town of Socorro	22,995	27,152	32,013	18.1%	17.9%	1.8%
City of El Paso	515,342	563,662	649,085	9.4%	15.2%	1.5%
El Paso County	591,610	679,622	800,647	14.9%	17.8%	1.8%

Source: US Census

⁴ Ibid.

Figure 3. Town of Socorro Boundaries



2. FUTURE GROWTH

Population projections for Socorro, El Paso, and El Paso County come from the Texas Water Development Board. These were revised in 2010. Projections for Socorro, El Paso and El Paso County are shown below. By 2060, Socorro’s population is estimated to be about 60,000 people.

Table 3. Population Projections, 2010—2060

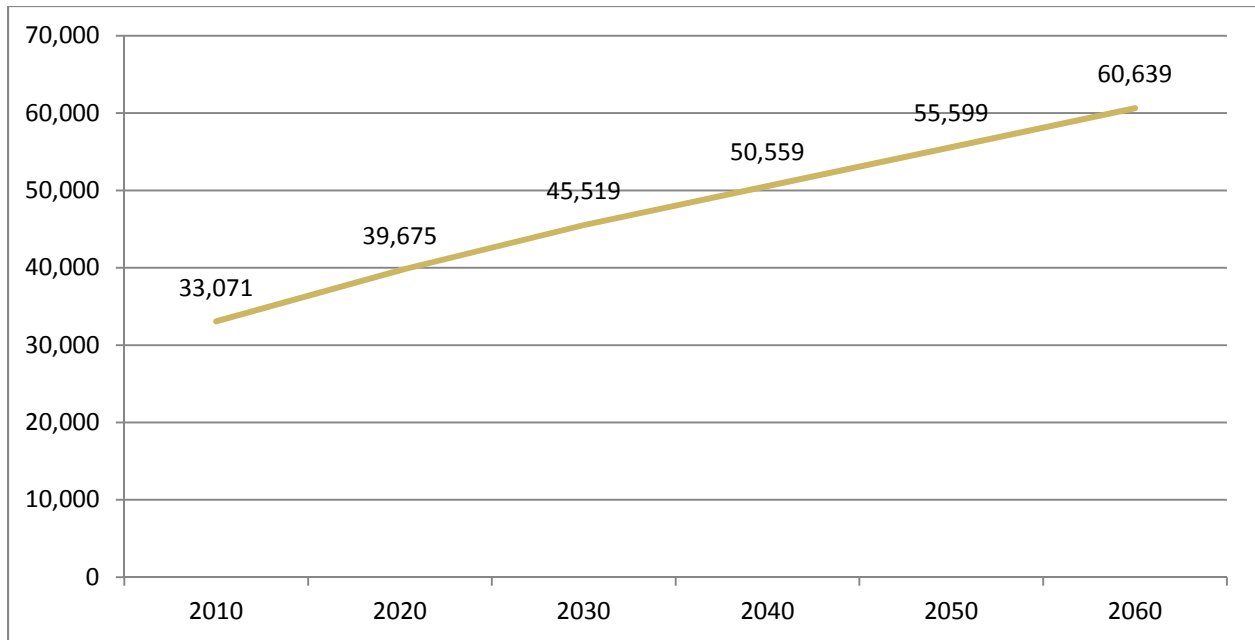
	2010*	2020	2030	2040	2050	2060
Socorro	33,071	39,675	45,519	50,559	55,599	60,639
City of El Paso	637,481	717,651	788,014	848,699	909,384	970,069
El Paso County	833,640	1,000,651	1,141,414	1,262,817	1,384,220	1,505,623

Source: Texas Water Development Board projections, 2010

*Note: 2010 population estimate is higher than that reported by the US Census 2010.

Socorro’s projected growth is shown in Figure 4. As in the last decade, Socorro is expected to grow at about the same rate as El Paso County but faster than the City of El Paso. Socorro is projected to capture just over four percent of the County’s growth, adding 500 to 600 residents per year.

Figure 4. Projected Population, 2010-2060



Source: Texas Water Development Board projections, 2010

D. POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

1. AGE AND SEX

The median age of Socorro residents is 29.5, lower than the El Paso County median age of 31.3. Socorro has a slightly higher youth population compared to the county. The female population is somewhat larger than the male population (51.8% compared with 48.2%).

2. RACE AND ETHNICITY

Socorro has a predominantly White, Hispanic population, with a higher proportion of residents who identify as Hispanic or Latino compared to the county. It also has a lower population of seniors than the county.

Table 4. Age, Race and Ethnicity Population Characteristics

% Population by Age Group	Socorro	El Paso County
Under 19	36.2%	33.6%
20 - 64	54.9%	56.4%
65 and older	8.7%	10.2%
Race		
White	94.3%	82.1%
Black or African American	0.2%	3.1%
American Indian and Alaska Native	1.6%	0.8%
Asian	0.1%	1.0%
Some Other Race	2.9%	10.5%
Two or More Races	0.8%	2.5%
Ethnicity		
Hispanic or Latino	96.7%	82.2%
Not Hispanic or Latino	3.3%	17.8%

Source: 2010 Census, US Census Bureau

3. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Socorro residents (ages 25 and over) have a lower level of education than do residents of the county as a whole. Nearly 30 percent of the adult population has less than a high school education. Furthermore, only 30 percent have some college education or a higher degree, compared to more than 48 percent for the county.

Table 5. Educational Attainment for Population Age 25 and over

% Population by Highest Level of Education Obtained	Socorro	El Paso County
Less than 9th grade	29.3%	16.6%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	15.1%	10.7%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	24.9%	24.1%
Some college, no degree	18.4%	23.0%
Associate's degree	3.8%	6.0%
Bachelor's degree	6.8%	13.0%
Graduate or professional degree	1.6%	6.6%

Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2008-2010, US Census Bureau

4. HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

According to the 2008-2010 American Community Survey, there are 8,621 households in Socorro. The average household size is 3.65, larger than that of El Paso County, which has an average household size of 3.19. The majority of households are families (90.1%), while 8.4% percent of households are made up of people living alone.

Table 6. Household Type

% Households by Household Type	Socorro	El Paso County
Family households (families)	90.1%	75.9%
With own children under 18 years	47.9%	39.7%
Married-couple family	58.1%	50.1%
With own children under 18 years	27.0%	25.9%
Male householder, no wife present, family	10.4%	5.2%
With own children under 18 years	6.3%	2.4%
Female householder, no husband present, family	21.7%	20.7%
With own children under 18 years	14.6%	11.4%
Nonfamily households	9.9%	24.1%
Householder living alone	8.4%	21.2%
65 years and over	3.6%	7.9%

Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2008-2010, US Census Bureau

E. SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Socorro is growing at a faster rate than El Paso County overall and is expected to continue growing over the coming decades. It has a younger population than El Paso County, with more families and larger household sizes. At the same time, Socorro residents have a lower educational attainment.

Based on these demographics, planning efforts for Socorro must center on how to accommodate a young, growing population. This means ensuring that transportation, housing, water and wastewater infrastructure facilities are adequate for the existing population and the anticipated future growth. Furthermore, there must be adequate land zoned for economic development to support a young workforce, and supporting services and training, to enable local job growth. Finally, there should be enough outdoor recreation opportunities for families such as parks, as well as safe, walkable trails and sidewalks, especially near schools and other neighborhood amenities.

Page intentionally left blank

III. EXISTING LAND USE AND ZONING CHARACTERISTICS

The patterns of land use that exist today in Socorro have evolved over time to meet the requirements of the community as it has grown geographically and in population. Analyzing these patterns is very important to accurately evaluate the city's future land use needs. Residents of a city need a variety of land uses to carry out their daily activities: residential, retail, commercial, recreational, office and industrial, among others. Future growth in Socorro will mostly likely require the conversion of vacant and agricultural land to more intense urban uses. How this happens will be important to the city as it will help determine the community's future urban form as well as its attractiveness and desirability. The relationships between existing and future land uses will not only have an impact on Socorro's economic development, but will also shape the character and livability of the community in the years to come.

A. PREVIOUS PLANNING EFFORTS

Socorro has a tradition of planning. In December of 1988 the City completed a Comprehensive Plan that had, among other elements, a land use component. Similar to the current effort, the previous Land Use Plan reviewed the area within the city limits at the time and made recommendations regarding the types of land uses that should develop in the future.

B. RELATIONSHIP TO THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND APPLICABLE ORDINANCES

This Comprehensive Plan should be viewed as a continuation of the City's previous land use planning efforts. Socorro's 1988 Comprehensive Plan and Ordinance 76, which pertains to Zoning, have been reviewed and referenced where appropriate. The land use recommendations listed in this element are intended to support these goals.

C. SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

While the City of Socorro has been officially incorporated and disincorporated as a municipality over time, small portions of Socorro's settlement patterns predate the imposition of American land use law and practices. Today very little is known about the layout of the original historic Socorro settlement. It is probably safe to assume that those patterns were very similar to other historic Spanish colonial settlements located throughout much of the southwestern United States, and thus also similar to existing patterns seen within older parts of the city today. Many of these settlements have similar characteristics, most notably the ubiquitous town center or plaza, which is generally bordered by community structures and core housing units that composed the settlement. Also present in most surviving Spanish Colonial settlements are acequias

(community ditches) which historically provided domestic drinking water and irrigation water for gardens and crops. Another shared characteristic of historic settlements is the overall lack of uniformity in parcel and road configuration. This pattern of land use is known in the planning and urban design disciplines as an “organic” settlement pattern and reflects the utilitarian and tenure-based nature of many historic settlements.

Prior to the adoption of the City’s Zoning Ordinance in 2002, land within the city limits was generally developed under unregulated conditions. The lack of land use controls such as zoning, subdivision and construction regulations resulted in an organic settlement pattern characterized by variable parcel configurations and diverse building shapes, forms, placement and footprints. While the implementation of land use controls has created a more uniform development standard throughout much of the city, the organic settlement pattern present in the historic core has helped maintain the city’s cultural landscape and rural fabric. Due to the availability of ample vacant land and the presence of many large, undeveloped tracts of agricultural land within and around the city limits, the City of Socorro has ample opportunity for future development.

Figure 5: Example of organic settlement pattern in Socorro



Figure 6: Example of conventional settlement pattern in Socorro



D. EXISTING LAND USE

In order to classify Socorro’s existing land use patterns, a land use survey was conducted by the consultants using the geographic information service (GIS) data, aerial photo analysis, available building permit data, and site visits. The survey grouped all existing land uses within Socorro into one of the following categories: Agricultural, Rural Residential, Commercial, Single Family Residential, Multi-Family Residential, Industrial/Manufacturing/Warehousing, Public/Institutional, Drainage/Flood Control, Parks/Recreation/Open Space, Transportation/Utilities/Easements, Vacant, and Unknown (Unclassified).

The results of the land use survey are seen in Table 7 and Figure 7. When compared to the results of the land use survey conducted in 1988, a number of changes in Socorro’s land use percentages emerge. These changes are detailed in Table 7 below. The existing land use map (Figure 7) will establish the basis for future land use and development in the City of Socorro.

Table 7. Socorro, Texas Existing Land Use Map

2011 Land Use Classification	# of Parcels	Acres	% of Total Acreage (2011)	% of Total Acreage (1988)	% Change
Agricultural	333	4,389.8	33.1%	59.8%	-26.7%
Rural Residential	854	1,285.5	9.6%	**	--
Commercial	468	913.9	6.8%	.40%	+6.4%
Single Family Residential	7,882	2,405.1	18.1%	15.7%	+2.4%
Multi-Family Residential	26	54.6	.4%	.39%	+0.01%
Industrial/Manufacturing/Warehouse	75	231.8	1.7%	1.42%	+0.28%
Public/Institutional	124	325.4	2.4%	4.16%	-1.76%
Parks/Recreation/Open Space	8*	66.89	.5%	***	***
Drainage/Flood Control	136	475.5	3.5%	--	--
Transportation/Utilities/Easements	106	397	2.9%	8.44%****	-5.54%****
Vacant	1,154	2,632.7	19.8%	9.62%	+10.18%
Unknown (Unclassified)	279	82.1	.6%	--	--
Total:	11,445	13,260.2	--	--	--

Sources: GIS Data for Socorro, Texas; City of Socorro building permits from 2005-2010; 1988 Socorro Comprehensive Master Plan

NOTES:

**Rural Residential is included with Agricultural Land Use category in 1988 Plan.

*According to existing GIS Data, Paradise Park, Rio Vista Park, and Belen Park have no parcels (legal lots of record) associated with them.

***Parks are combined with the Schools Land Use category in the 1988 Land Use Survey.

****Transportation is combined with the Riverine Land Use category in the 1988 Land Use Survey.

According to GIS data provided by the City of Socorro, the city boundaries encompass a total area of 13,260 acres and comprise approximately 11,445 total parcels. Socorro’s overall land use pattern is characterized by single family residential interspersed with large tracts of agricultural land. Various commercial and industrial uses are also interspersed throughout the community. The most prevalent land use in Socorro is agriculture, which accounts for over 33 percent of the total acreage within the city. Table 7 also shows that Socorro has a significant amount of vacant land—19.8 percent of all land within the city limits. The third largest land use in Socorro is single-family residential, accounting for 18.1 percent of land within the city.

Comparing the 2011 with the 1988 percentages of land use within Socorro shows that the percentage of land classified as Agricultural/Rural Residential decreased from nearly 60 percent in 1988 to 33 percent in 2011. This indicates that agricultural land is being converted to other uses, primarily residential and commercial.

1. AGRICULTURAL/RURAL RESIDENTIAL USES

Despite these conversions, agriculture remains Socorro’s most predominant land use and is characterized by large and small parcels on which agricultural activities such as farming and livestock grazing take place. Much of the agriculture in Socorro consists of cotton farming and pecan orchards. The 333 parcels of irrigated and non-irrigated parcels of undeveloped land range in size from less than one acre to 177 acres. Ownership is spread over more than 140 people. More than 40 owners own two or more parcels and eight own from six to 19 parcels. The federal government owns several large parcels ranging in size from 6.4 to 75 acres each, and the City of Socorro owns two parcels totaling just over seven acres. Also associated with Socorro’s agricultural parcels are Rural Residential lots characterized by single family dwellings on small lots adjacent to larger agricultural parcels.

2. RESIDENTIAL USES

Single family residential is another of Socorro’s most predominant land uses, comprising over 18 percent of the total acreage in the city. Because of the city’s rural/suburban nature, residential lot sizes are relatively diverse in size, ranging from 5,000 square feet to one acre and larger. A vast majority of Socorro’s residential areas resemble what is considered the prototypical subdivision form seen throughout much of the southwestern United States: uniform parcel sizes and configurations and standardized road widths, some of which end in cul-de-sacs. Nevertheless, like most longstanding settlements, there are areas such as the city’s historic districts, where a more organic settlement pattern predominates.



Agricultural Land Uses in Socorro

According to building permit and GIS data, multi-family residential land use is the smallest land use category in Socorro. Multi-family land uses consist of apartments and duplex homes. The overall residential density in Socorro, including rural residential, single family and multi-family, is 2.3 dwelling units per acre. This rises to 3.3 units per acre for single family residences—the majority of residential land use.

3. COMMERCIAL USES

Socorro’s commercial land uses are characterized by a variety of personal and business services and general retail businesses. Examples include auto parts retailers, furniture stores, restaurants, mechanic/auto repair garages, and convenience stores. Most of Socorro’s commercial land uses are located along major roads, including Alameda Avenue, Horizon Boulevard, and North Loop Drive.

4. INDUSTRIAL/MANUFACTURING/WAREHOUSING USES

The industrial land use category includes a number of warehousing facilities located along southern Alameda Avenue. A number of small manufacturing operations are also included in this category. A large number of Socorro’s industrial land uses are located south of Bovee Road, along the east side of Alameda. These large warehouse facilities are served by a railroad spur.

5. OTHER LAND USES

Public and institutional land uses include public facilities such as municipal buildings, schools, public libraries, and other public services. Parks, recreation and open space are also public uses. Drainage and flood control uses are areas characterized by occasional flooding. Development in these areas is generally restricted to limit damage to personal property. The transportation, utilities, and easement uses category comprises public infrastructure such as roads, alleyways and public utility facilities. The largest parcels are part of the I-10 right-of-way. All land in Socorro that has been identified as undeveloped or not currently used has been classified as vacant. As seen in Table 7, Socorro has a significant amount of vacant land, totaling approximately 19 percent of the city’s total acreage. Lands in which a discernable land use has not been identified are categorized as unknown or unclassified. Some of these lands have junkyards on them or abandoned uses.



Commercial and Industrial Land Uses in Socorro

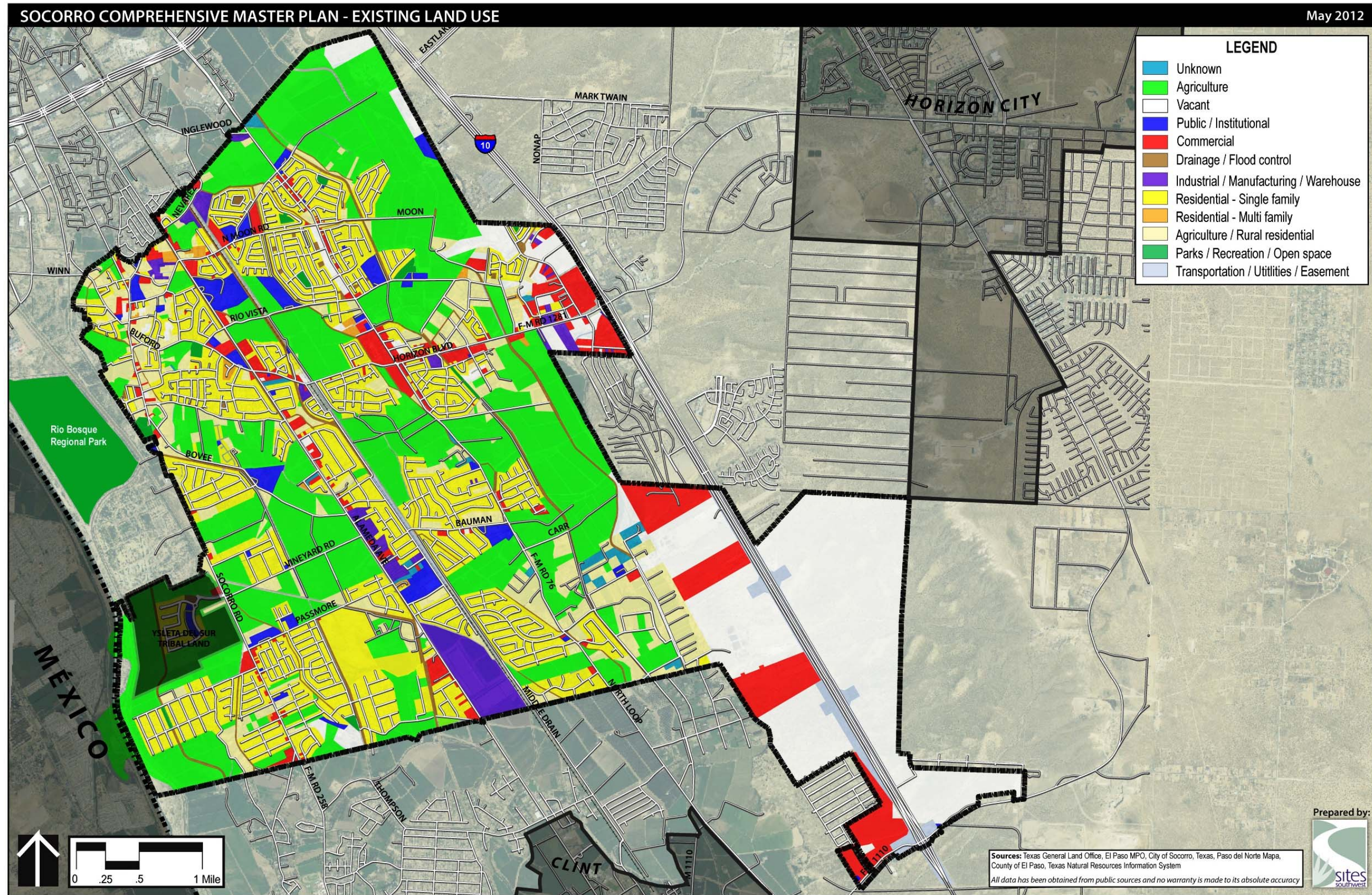
E. GOVERNMENT AND COMMERCIAL CENTERS

Socorro's historic Mission Trail (Socorro Road) is characterized by a mix of single family residential, agricultural uses, and commercial uses such as mechanic's shops, apparel stores and restaurants. The city's primary retail commercial area is located at the intersection of Horizon Boulevard and North Loop Drive. This area's development pattern is characterized by strip malls with predominantly retail and general commercial service uses. While this particular area serves as the city's main commercial center, what is notably lacking in Socorro is the presence of a town center. According to the American Planning Association, a town center can be defined as an area of mixed uses that provides for the local availability of goods and services needed on a daily basis by area residents. Town centers also provide the social and operational focus of the town. Many town centers also include the community's government and administrative offices. Socorro, on the other hand, houses these functions in two separate areas, in a shopping center along Horizon Boulevard and in historic buildings along Rio Vista Road.

F. ANNEXATIONS

In 2005, the City of Socorro adopted Resolution 323. Pursuant to the Texas Local Government Code, the Resolution establishes a plan for annexing territory adjacent to the city.

Figure 7. Existing Land Use Map



Page intentionally left blank

G. RATE OF CONSTRUCTION

From 2004 to November 2010, the City of Socorro issued a total of 1,286 building permits for single family residential buildings and 136 for mobile home placements. This count appears low because building permit data for parts of 2005 and 2006 are not available. Furthermore, the City of Socorro also imposed a moratorium on all residential building permits in 2009 so the City could evaluate the implementation of impact fees. According to analysis, the average number of new residential permits (including mobile homes) has been 233 per year. Figure 8 details the locations of issued building permits, differentiating between residential and commercial. The map indicates that residential growth is well distributed throughout Socorro, while commercial building is more sporadic.

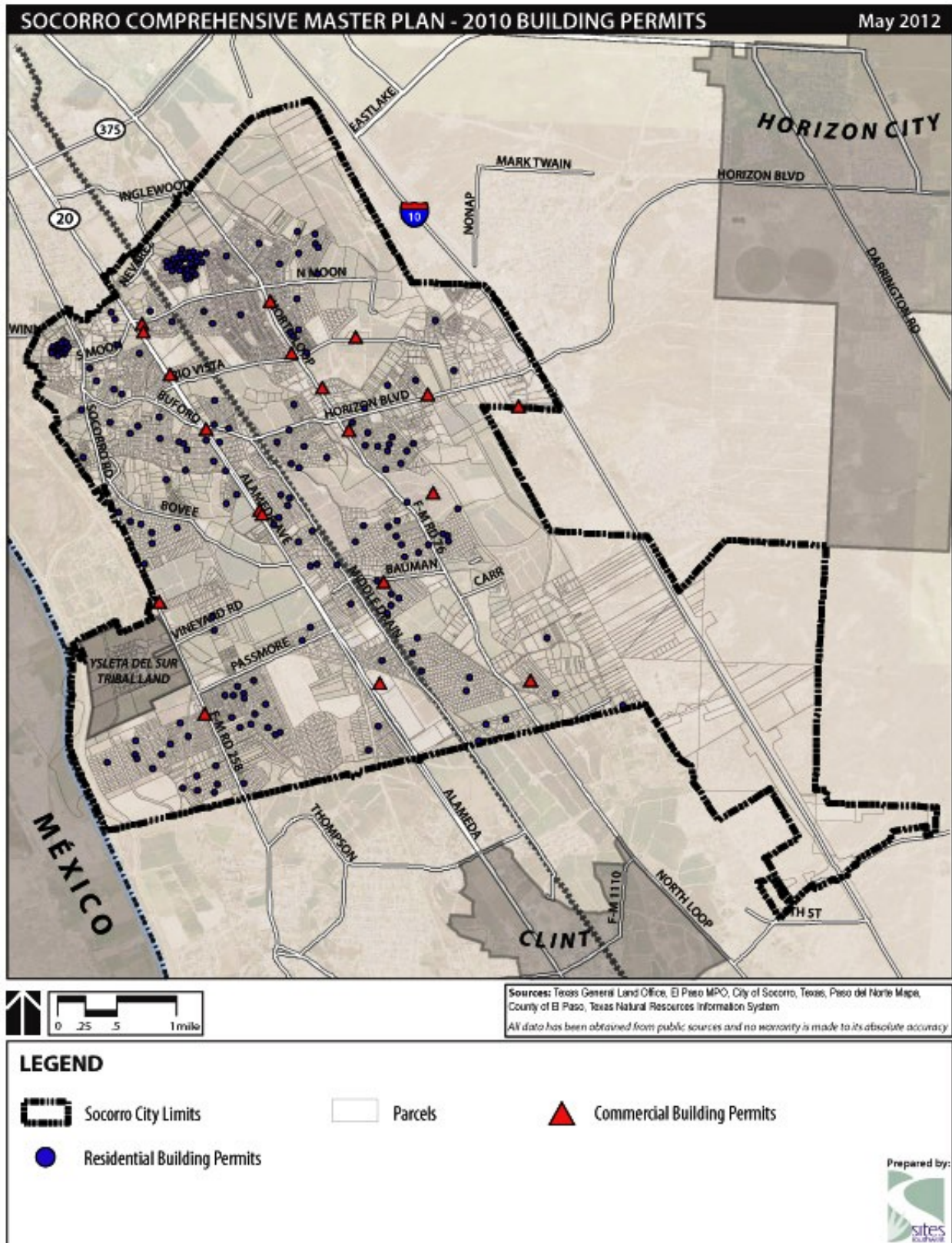
H. EXISTING ZONING

The State of Texas has established laws with regard to the way in which cities can ensure the health, safety and welfare of their citizens. State law gives municipalities the power to regulate the use of land, but only if such regulations are based on a plan. The law states as follows:

*The governing body of a municipality may adopt a comprehensive plan for the long-range development of the municipality...A municipality may define the relationship between a comprehensive plan and development regulations and may provide standards for determining the consistency required between a plan and development regulations.
(Chapter 219.002 of the Texas Local Government Code)*

The ability to zone property for specific uses is one of the most significant land use controls that a city has. It is through the establishment of zoning districts that the City can not only regulate land uses, but also the density, mass and bulk of development.

Figure 8. New Development: Building Permits June 2008 – November 2010



Ordinance 76 addresses zoning in the City of Socorro. Within the Zoning Ordinance are chapters that explain definitions, zoning districts, non-conforming uses, development standards, manufactured homes and special uses. The Zoning Ordinance also establishes fees for building permits. There are 14 different zoning districts established by the Socorro Zoning Ordinance. The districts and their characteristics are listed in Table 8. The existing zoning map is shown in Figure 9.

Table 8. Socorro Zoning

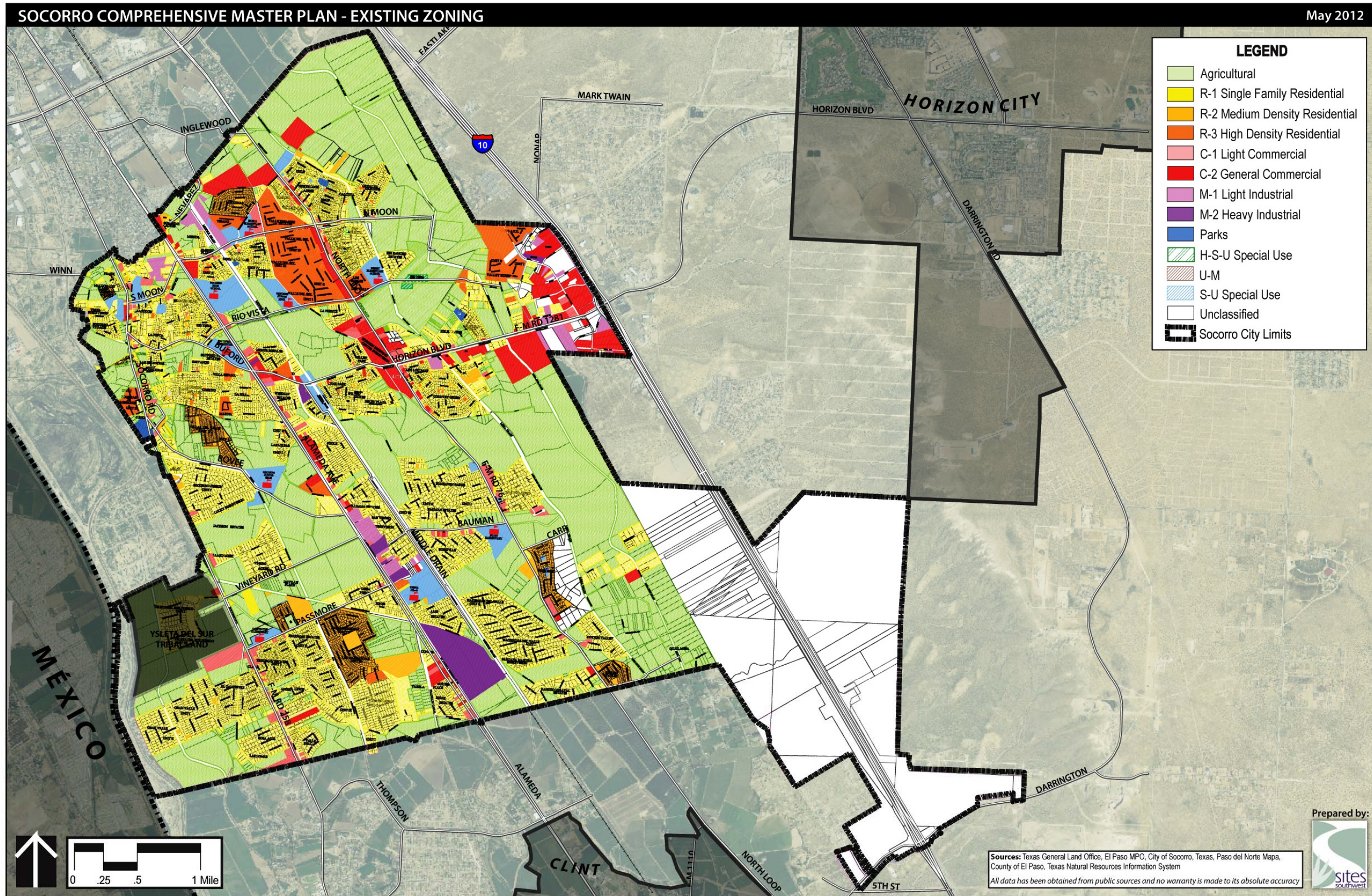
Zone	Intent	Minimum Lot Size	Setbacks			
			Front	Side	Rear	Side Street
Rural Estate (RE)	Agricultural activities and single family residential units	1 acre	35 ft	15 ft	25 ft	Collector: 35 ft Minor Arterial: 55 ft Major Arterial: 60 ft
Single Family Residential (R-1)	Low-density single family residential units	8,500 sq ft with ponding	25 ft	Interior: 7 ft Street: 10 ft	25 ft	Collector: 35 ft Minor Arterial: 55 ft Major Arterial: 60 ft
		10,000 sq ft without ponding				
Medium Density Residential (R-2)	Single family and multi-family units	6,000 sq ft with ponding	25 ft	Interior: 7 ft Street: 10 ft	25 ft	Collector: 35 ft Minor Arterial: 55 ft Major Arterial: 60 ft
		10,000 sq ft without ponding				
High Density Residential (R-3)	Single family and multi-family units	5,000 sq ft with ponding	10 ft	Interior: 7 ft Street: 10 ft	15 ft	Collector: 35 ft Minor Arterial: 55 ft Major Arterial: 60 ft
		10,000 sq ft without ponding				
Mobile Home Subdivision (RM-1)	Detached single family manufactured and mobile home units	5,000 sq ft with ponding	15 ft	5 ft	20 ft	Collector: 35 ft Minor Arterial: 55 ft Major Arterial: 60 ft
		10,000 sq ft without ponding				
Residential Mobile Home Park (RM-2)	Manufactured and mobile home units	10 acres (with ponding)	Minimum distance between mobile homes: Side to Side 20 ft End to End 20 ft End to Side 20 ft			Collector: 35 ft Minor Arterial: 55 ft Major Arterial: 60 ft
Neighborhood Commercial District (C-1)	Limited mixture of residential and retail commercial activities	5,000 sq ft with ponding	Where the site faces or abuts a residential zone, the setback requirements of the residential zone apply			Collector: 35 ft Minor Arterial: 55 ft Major Arterial: 60 ft
		10,000 sq ft				

Zone	Intent	Minimum Lot Size	Setbacks			
			Front	Side	Rear	Side Street
General Commercial (C-2)	Commercial activities that serve the general community	without ponding N/A *Buffer zones may be required by the Planning and Zoning Commission	Front: 15 ft Shall meet the Minimum setbacks of the adjacent zones	N/A	Rear: 15 ft	Collector: 35 ft Minor Arterial: 55 ft Major Arterial: 60 ft
Light Industrial (M-1)	Light manufacturing, processing, storage, packaging, compounding, wholesaling, and distribution operations	N/A *Buffer zones may be required by the Planning and Zoning Commission	Shall meet the Minimum setbacks of the adjacent zones			Collector: 35 ft Minor Arterial: 55 ft Major Arterial: 60 ft
Heavy Industrial (M-2)	All types of manufacturing, processing, storage, packaging, compounding, wholesaling, and distribution operations	N/A *Buffer zones may be required by the Planning and Zoning Commission	Shall meet the Minimum setbacks of the adjacent zones			Collector: 35 ft Minor Arterial: 55 ft Major Arterial: 60 ft
Special Use Zone (SU-1)	Uses that require special consideration because of their unusual nature, dimensions, effect on surrounding property, or other similar reasons	The boundaries of this zone shall be determined on a case-by-case basis Supplementary regulations and special conditions may be imposed by the City Council upon recommendations by the Planning and Zoning Commission				
Floodplain and Floodway Overlay Zone (FP)	Protect persons and property from periodic flooding and enable the City to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program	The district is overlaid upon the other districts and the land encumbered so it may be used in a manner permitted in the underlying district only if such use is also permitted in the applicable overlay district. For any property in an overlay district, the regulation of both the overlay district and the underlying zoning district apply. In the case of conflict between the regulation of the underlying and overlay district, the most restrictive regulation takes precedence.				

Zone	Intent	Minimum Lot Size	Setbacks			
			Front	Side	Rear	Side Street
Planned Unit Development (PUD)	To provide for greater flexibility and discretion in the more integrated development of residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional uses, and combinations of such uses	Each PUD district shall be at least 5 acres in size	<p>Maximum coverage: No more than fifty (50) percent of the site shall be covered by primary or accessory buildings. Of the fifty percent, no more than forty (40) percent shall be for residential, no more than twenty (20) percent for commercial and no more than ten (10) percent for industrial uses</p> <p>Compatibility: No PUD shall be approved by the City Council until it has been determined that the planned use is compatible with the area that it will affect.</p>			
Historic Preservation District (HP)	<p>Protect, enhance and perpetuate places and areas which represent distinctive and</p> <p>important elements of the city's historical, cultural, archeological, political and architectural history;</p> <p>To promote tourism and strengthen the economy of the city;</p> <p>To foster civic pride and promote the enjoyment and use of historic resources by the city's residents;</p> <p>To preserve and enhance the beauty of historic areas;</p> <p>and to provide for new development in historic districts that is consistent with the existing historic structures.</p>	<p>The district is overlaid upon the other districts and the land encumbered so it may be used in a manner permitted in the underlying district only if such use is also permitted in the applicable overlay district.</p> <p>For any property in an overlay district, the regulation of both the overlay district and the underlying zoning district apply.</p> <p>In the case of conflict between the regulation of the underlying and overlay district, the most restrictive regulation take precedence.</p>				

Page intentionally left blank

Figure 9. Existing Zoning



Page intentionally left blank

I. EXTRATERRITORIAL JURISDICTION

The purpose of extraterritorial jurisdictions is to allow for cities and counties to decide who will regulate subdivision platting and permitting in lands outside the city's boundary that could be annexed in the future.

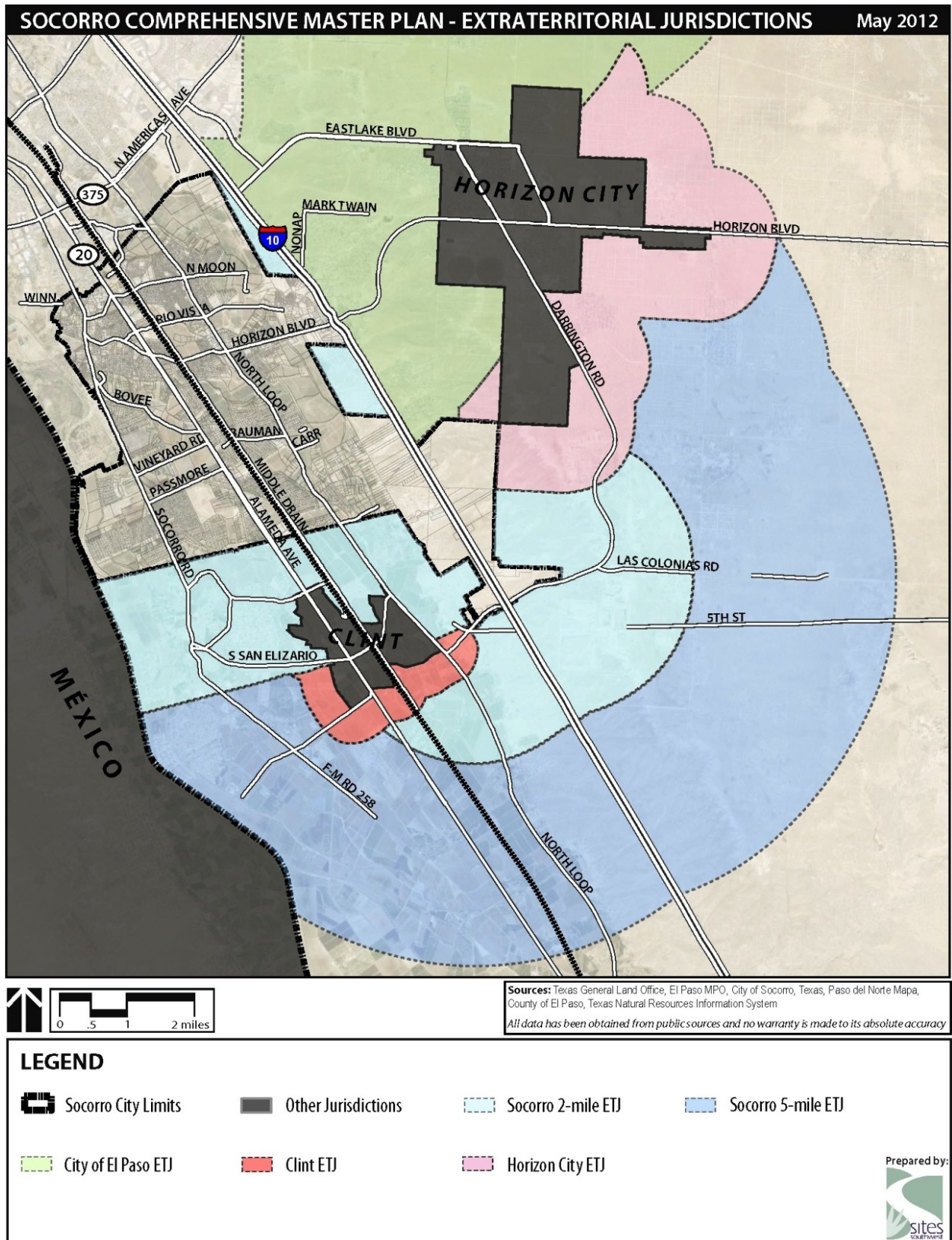
A municipality's extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) is defined by § 42.021 of the Texas Local Government Code to extend for different distances (½ mile, 1 mile, 2 miles, 3½ miles, or 5 miles) depending upon the number of inhabitants in the city. Nearby cities can apportion their ETJs, and other areas can be added to an ETJ with the consent of the landowners. In addition, under a special state law (LGC § 212.001) that applies in counties bordering the Rio Grande, the ETJ of a city with a federal decennial census population of 5,000 or more is expanded to five miles for purposes of subdivision and development regulation under Subchapter A of Chapter 212. Cities are required by law (LGC § 41.001) to keep up-to-date maps of their city limits and ETJs. Table 9 lists the applicable ETJ distances based on population.

Table 9. ETJ Distances by Population

ETJ Radius from City Limits	City Population
0.5 miles	< 5,000
1 mile	5,000—24,999
2 miles	25,000—49,999
3.5 miles	50,000—99,999
5 miles	> 100,000

Figure 10 illustrates the various extraterritorial jurisdictions in the Socorro area. As detailed in the map, there are two ETJ boundaries associated with Socorro. The first one is the two-mile annexation ETJ, the radius of which is based on Socorro's population. Socorro is authorized to annex more property within this boundary, which is located immediately south and east of its border. Also shown is the five-mile subdivision ETJ, which encompasses and extends beyond the two-mile ETJ to the south and east of the city. The City may exercise control over subdivisions within this boundary.

Figure 10. ETJ Boundaries



J. EXISTING DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCES

Ordinance 77 regulates the subdivision of land in the City of Socorro. Adopted in 1989, the subdivision regulations prescribe the standards, regulations, and procedures for all lands within the City and its Extraterritorial Planning and Platting jurisdiction. The regulations also establish fines and punitive measures for non-compliance.

Pursuant to Ordinance 77, a subdivision is defined as *the division of any lot or tract of land into two or more parts for the purpose whether immediate or in the future, to sale, lease, or develop*. Pursuant to the regulations, the following exceptions do not constitute a subdivision:

1. Any residual land retained by the subdivider after subdividing but which has not been divided for subdivision purposes.
2. The sale or lease of apartments, offices, stores or similar space within a building.
3. Any subdivision of land in which only gas, oil, mineral or water rights are severed from the surface ownership of the land.

Socorro's subdivision regulations also prescribed different procedures for the subdivision of lands within and outside of the City's incorporated limits. Pursuant to Section 8B, lands within the corporate limits shall be submitted for review and approval by the Socorro Planning Commission and City Council prior to filing with the El Paso County Courthouse and before beginning improvement activities or negotiating sale or lease of any lot within the proposed subdivision.

Section 8C establishes the procedure for the subdivision of lands within the City's Extraterritorial Jurisdiction. This section states that any proposed subdivision, replat, or vacation of plat occurring outside the corporate limits of the City (but within the extraterritorial planning and platting jurisdiction of the City of Socorro) shall conform to the requirements of the subdivisions regulations as well as the provisions of the El Paso County Subdivision Regulations, and shall be submitted for concurrent review and approval by the Socorro City Council and the El Paso County Planning Commission prior to filing with the El Paso County Courthouse and before beginning improvement activities or negotiating sale or lease of any lot within the proposed subdivision.

In addition to detailing the administrative procedure for the subdivision of lands, Ordinance 77 also establishes subdivision design standards. The purpose of the design standards is to promote consistent and sound design of improvements and facilities, create acceptable performance characteristics, and to encourage innovative design. Included in this chapter are standards for streets, sidewalks, sewer and domestic water systems, grading and drainage, dry utilities such as electricity and natural gas, street lighting, signage, and easements.

K. LAND USE ISSUES

A key land use issue, analyzed in more depth in the Housing Chapter, indicates that at the projected rate of growth and current development pattern, Socorro will need to accommodate another 7,500 to 8,000 more households by 2060. This is based on the current population of 32,000 doubling to more than 60,000 over the next 50 years. At the existing average density of about 3 dwelling units per acre (or one-third acre per dwelling) this will consume approximately 2,500 additional acres that are now vacant or being used for agriculture—more than one third of Socorro’s remaining open space. Continued low density development will add even more traffic to the roadways as residents are forced to drive for needed goods and services. By adopting a more compact future land use pattern, however, Socorro could lessen the amount of raw land consumed by dwellings.

Due to its relatively recent suburban growth, Socorro did not develop a town center, defined as an area of mixed commercial, civic, and residential uses that provides a social and economic focus for the town and helps establish a sense of place. While a few community centers and schools provide places for residents to gather, government/administrative offices are dispersed, requiring numerous car trips back and forth.

Stakeholders have expressed concern about multiple dwellings located on single parcels. Multiple dwellings per parcel are a problem not only from an aesthetic standpoint, but from an environmental standpoint as well. Some areas of the city still utilize septic tanks, which require approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ an acre for conventional septic tanks to function properly without negatively impacting groundwater supplies. Once septic tank density begins to be greater than the $\frac{3}{4}$ acre threshold, groundwater supplies become threatened due to nitrate contamination. Although the City’s zoning ordinance explicitly allows for only one dwelling per lot, the issue of multiple housing units per parcel is significant. Increasing code enforcement efforts is one strategy for addressing this particular issue.

Another important land use issue is the need for stronger design standards in the Subdivision Regulations as well as consistent enforcement. Requirements for street lighting and multiple access points to existing roads for large developments have also been discussed as potential strategies to address this issue. Also needed is better review of covenants at the time of preliminary plat submission as well as a requirement for improvements such as utilities and roads to be constructed prior to lots being subdivided and sold to individuals. Requiring improvements to be constructed or for the developer to post a bond or enter into a development agreement with the city for public improvements prior to final plat approval are all similar strategies that can address this particular issue and reduce the number of antiquated developments which are lacking basic infrastructure such as roads, sidewalks and lighting.

In addition, Socorro residents brought up the following issues during public meetings:

- Industrial land uses abut residential areas in some parts of the city.
- Mobile homes are mixed with site-built homes throughout the city (instead of being directed to designated areas).
- Growth in some portions of Socorro has occurred in an uncontrolled manner, some without necessary improvements such as streetlights and paved roads.
- The segregated patterns of land uses by zone categories means most residential areas are driving distance away from retail, commercial and other daily services. This contributes to traffic congestion.
- Large development areas should include recreational areas.
- Current planning and zoning regulations may be too strict for some developers.
- Preserving some agricultural land and open space is important to some residents.
- Socorro needs more attractive native landscaping, especially on commercial and multi-family properties.
- Apartments in Socorro need to be of higher construction quality.

L. FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

According to the Texas Water Development Board, Socorro will be home to 60,639 people by 2060. Based on the current household size of 3.65, there will be a need for an additional 7,365 housing units to accommodate the projected population. To ensure that the City of Socorro can adequately sustain continued population growth, this Comprehensive Plan proposes an alternative development scenario. The future land use plan would create more compact development, offering a range of housing choices that includes apartments and townhomes as well as single family residences.

By increase the average residential density from approximately 3 units per acre up to 5 and, where appropriate, 9 units per acre, the future growth areas and downtown core illustrated on the future land use map would be able to accommodate approximately 7,700 housing units. The growth areas would also accommodate a number of uses, including, but not limited to a new City administrative center, schools, parks, commercial and light industrial uses, a regional attraction such as an amusement park, a healthcare district as well as approximately 120 acres of open space reserved for future downtown development.

1. TOWN CENTER

The future scenario would create a commercial Town Center. Commercial establishments such as the new Walmart Neighborhood Market would be located there along with public spaces such as a park/plaza and library. It would be a center for retail and office space as well as higher density housing and live-work units. The location would be accessible by bus, helping to cut down on traffic congestion. (See Figure 11) Developing a Town Center would establish a sense of place and community in Socorro as well as create density more adequate for a transit station.



Town Square Examples



Live Work Example



Townhome Development

The City recently purchased approximately 10 acres for a future Administrative Complex near the intersection of Horizon Boulevard and North Loop Drive. A future master plan is also being developed for the Rio Vista Complex/Courthouse incorporating a River Walk as the main feature.

2. MIXED-USE NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS

The concept also designates potential locations for other mixed-use neighborhood centers including a grocery or convenience store, shops, offices and residences that are within walking distances (a quarter to a half mile) of neighborhoods. Encouraging the establishment of smaller neighborhood mixed-use nodes where residents can purchase daily necessities, enjoy dining, or even work at a job could help lessen the traffic on the roadways.

3. MORE COMPACT DEVELOPMENT

While there may be negative perceptions of higher density, and many feel that there is no place for it in a rural setting, it is critical to embrace higher housing density as a strategy for maintaining Socorro's rural fabric. If housing density is to remain at three dwelling units per acre, not only will the city be unable to adequately accommodate the population projected for 2060, it will also sacrifice much of the existing agricultural land and open spaces that make up Socorro's rural atmosphere. Thus it is crucial for the city to incorporate a mix of housing types and higher densities where appropriate.

While larger suburban-style lots will still be allowed in the valley, the future land use plan encourages new single family homes to be sited on a quarter acre or less in the proposed growth areas. New residential development would also include townhomes, apartments and other multi-family residential development. The City could also allow and encourage the development of conservation or cluster housing developments detailed in the Housing chapter. This type of development clusters homes along an internal road on a portion of the land parcel, preserving the remainder as open space, agricultural or park land.

4. BOUNDARY EXPANSION

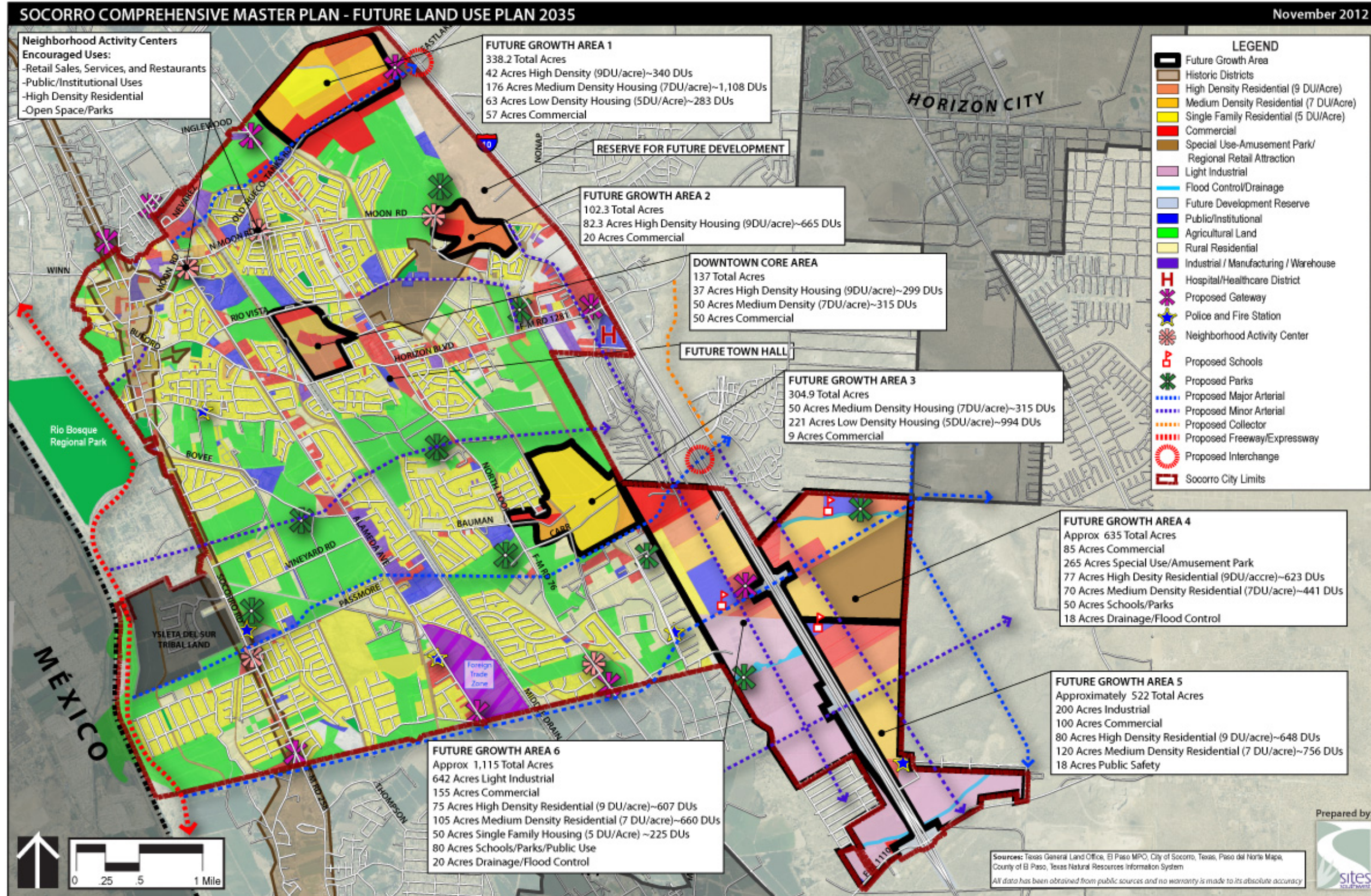
The City would annex land near the I-10 freeway to the northeast and the southeast of the City's existing boundaries to secure future space for warehouse activities and for other light industrial and mixed use development, including a potential regional entertainment and shopping center.

5. CITY GATEWAYS

Socorro should announce its presence to travelers on I-10 by installing monument signs along the freeway at both ends of its boundaries. Such signage will alert visitors to look for exit ramps into town. A gateway installed at the entrance to Horizon Boulevard and the Clint cutoff from I-10 and Loop 375 at both Socorro Rd., Alameda Ave. and N. Loop Drive could also give visitors a sense of arrival into Socorro and help direct them into town and to the historic districts.



Figure 11. Future Land Use Map



Page intentionally left blank

M. LAND USE GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The following Land Use Goals and Strategies are designed to guide Socorro's future land use planning and related policies and address the issues previously discussed. It is important to note that the Future Land Use Plan is not the community's official zoning map. Rather, it is a guide to decision-making in the context of the City's future land use patterns. The Future Land Use Plan should be used consistently and updated as development continues in Socorro over time.

Land Use Goal 1

Socorro will strive to implement the future land use plan, including a mixed-use Town Center, a more compact development pattern, and mixed-use neighborhood centers in appropriate places.

Strategy a *Modify the Zoning Ordinance and Map to support the future land use plan. The new zoning should ensure there is sufficient land in appropriate locations to accommodate and promote:*

- Residential uses at a variety of densities and types.
- Mixed-use areas that allow a combination of residential and commercial and office development both in nodes and along major thoroughfares.
- A Town Center located within easy access of arterial roads, transit, and pedestrian pathways.
- Appropriate locations for light industrial activities.

Strategy b *Through zoning and site plan review, encourage development of neighborhood retail nodes at key intersections to serve the needs of adjacent neighborhood areas.*

- *Ensure sufficient land is zoned for this purpose at key intersections.*

Strategy c *Modify the Subdivision Ordinance to include the following:*

- Requirements for public improvements such as sidewalks and street lighting.
- Standards for roads based on road classification.

- A requirement that large developments have multiple access points to existing roads.
- A requirement for either construction of or contractual assurance and bonding that all public improvements will be constructed prior to lots being subdivided and sold.

Strategy d *Ensure consistent enforcement of all development regulations by adequately staffing the City's Code Enforcement department.*

Strategy e *Adopt zoning regulations and development standards to allow and encourage conservation/cluster housing developments.*

Strategy f *Adopt standards for multi-family housing to ensure good quality design and construction of new and redeveloped buildings. Include landscape and open space requirements.*

Land Use Goal 2

Socorro will expand its boundaries to allow room for additional growth of light industrial and warehousing activities, entertainment centers, and higher density residential.

Strategy a. *Prioritize additional areas for annexation.*

Strategy b. *Adopt an annexation policy that explicitly establishes the criteria it uses for annexation, including, but not limited to the following:*

- The City should consider the costs and benefits of annexation to both the property owner and the City of Socorro.
- The City should be able to provide road, water, wastewater, and emergency services to annexed property within a reasonable amount of time.
- The City should ensure an adequate and comprehensive public process for residents and properties affected by annexation.

Strategy c. *Develop zoning and design standards for the large annexation along I-10 to ensure future growth there establishes an attractive and inviting presence along the freeway.*

Land Use Goal 3

Socorro’s future land use pattern shall be consistent with the City’s ability to provide services to existing and new development.

Strategy a *Direct high-density/high-impact development to areas where adequate services and infrastructure exist or can be served within a reasonable time and cost.*

Land Use Goal 4

Growth and land use in Socorro will occur in a well-planned and organized fashion, ensuring that adjacent land uses are compatible and protecting and enhancing property values within existing neighborhoods and commercial areas.

- Strategy a.* *Revise the Zoning Ordinance and Map to provide*
- Mandatory buffering and screening standards for nonresidential uses that abut residential uses and that are along major arterials.
 - Required buffers to protect low-density residential land uses (single-family homes) from non-residential uses by medium and high density residential land uses whenever possible.
- Strategy b.* *Ensure that the Planning and Zoning Department has adequate staff to enforce the zoning code effectively.*
- Strategy c.* *Continue to coordinate all land use planning activities with the Socorro Independent School District to ensure sufficient space for new school facilities and recreational opportunities.*

Land Use Goal 5

Socorro shall revise its subdivision and zoning ordinance as necessary to protect the public health, safety and welfare.

Strategy a. New subdivisions over a certain size should provide at least two vehicular entrances/exits.

Strategy b. Require new subdivisions as much as feasible to connect to other subdivisions via internal streets and paths.

Land Use Goal 6

Land Use in Socorro shall be attractive and reflect the City's unique history and small town atmosphere, displaying a recognizable image and sense of place to residents and visitors.

Strategy a. Establish design guidelines within the Zoning Ordinance to ensure that development located along major thoroughfares is aesthetically pleasing.

Strategy b. Develop and adopt design guidelines for the Historic Overlay Zone.

Strategy c. Establish a façade improvement program to supply grants or low-interest loans to business owners who want to revitalize their building facades, especially in historic districts.

Strategy d. Make enforcement of the zoning and building codes a high priority in the Historic Mission and Rio Vista Districts.

Land Use Goal 7

Socorro will promote the general beautification of Socorro’s public and private areas

- Strategy a* Create and enforce a property maintenance code that would enforce a minimum level of property maintenance to protect the value of surrounding properties and improve the town’s appearance.
- Develop town clean-up programs to address property maintenance, junk and trash, and graffiti. An example would be
 - A youth corps that provides yard maintenance, landscaping and simple facade improvements (like painting) to elderly or otherwise incapacitated neighbors’ properties.
 - Develop incentives for community members to report graffiti offenders.
- Strategy b* Regular neighborhood clean-up days (whether quarterly, biennially, annually, etc.) possibly focusing on a different area each time (an arroyo, alley, park, vacant lot, street, or part of town), during which the City would provide trash pick-up services.
- Strategy c* Install gateways to the city and public artwork at key locations.

Page intentionally left blank

IV. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The economic development profile presents a community's economic status in relation to its past and its current place in the region. This includes data on household income, jobs, the working age population and unemployment, basic industry in the community, major employers and taxes. Basic data is gathered and analyzed to understand how a community is doing economically and what are its main sources of income and employment. The community's assets and challenges are also examined in order to gauge its potential for future economic growth and development.

A. ECONOMIC BEGINNINGS

As detailed further in the History section, Socorro began as a farming community that developed around a Spanish mission in the aftermath of the 1680 Pueblo Revolt. Originally a Spanish land grant, it was part of Mexico until 1848 after the US-Mexican War when it became a part of Texas. In 1881 the railroad arrived, opening the area to copper mining. The construction of Elephant Butte Dam along the Rio Grande in 1916 transformed the family-based system that farmed vineyards, fruit trees, and cereal grains into large-scale agricultural production that cultivated cotton and alfalfa. Cotton began to rival copper as the area's principal industry by 1920. Residents flocked to the area in the 1960s and 70s as developers built residential subdivisions that lacked paved streets, water and sewer lines. The lack of services has gradually been corrected by the Lower Valley Water District Authority, which has constructed new water and sewage systems for the town.

B. THE ECONOMY TODAY

Socorro today is largely a bedroom community for other employment centers, particularly El Paso. Data collected by the 2008-2010 American Community Survey revealed that over 90 percent of the Socorro workforce commuted to work, at least half of them for longer than 25 minutes per trip. This indicates that many are traveling outside Socorro to work.

Table 10. Socorro Commuters

COMMUTING TO WORK	ESTIMATE	PERCENTAGE
Workers 16 years and over (in sample)	12,519	100.0%
Car, truck, or van -- drove alone	9,540	76.2%
Car, truck, or van -- carpooled	1,620	12.9%
Public transportation (excluding taxicab)	147	1.2%
Walked	112	0.9%
Other means	781	6.2%
Worked at home	319	2.5%
Mean travel time to work (minutes)	26.6	

Source: American Community Survey 2008-2010, US Census Bureau

Later data from the 2010 Census shows that nearly 96 percent of the approximately 12,500 employed Socorro residents worked outside the City of Socorro—75 percent of them in El Paso. The reverse was also true. Nearly 86 percent of the 3,000 jobs located in Socorro were held by non-residents. Only four percent of employed Socorro residents (about 432 persons) actually held jobs located within Socorro.

1. WORKFORCE

Socorro’s workforce comprises an estimated 14,366 persons ages 16 and older. Data collected from 2008 to 2010 suggested that 6.7 percent were unemployed during that time. By comparison, the Texas Workforce Commission reported unemployment rates in the El Paso Metropolitan Statistical Area of 9.2 percent in December 2009 and 10 percent in December 2010.

Table 11. Employment Status of Socorro Residents

EMPLOYMENT STATUS	ESTIMATE	PERCENTAGE
Population 16 years and over	23,161	100.0%
In labor force	14,442	62.4%
Civilian labor force	14,366	62.0%
Employed	12,817	55.3%
Unemployed	1,549	6.7%
Armed Forces	76	0.3%
Not in labor force	8,719	37.6%
Percent Unemployed	10.8%	

Source: American Community Survey 2008-2010, US Census Bureau

Nearly three quarters of Socorro residents draw wages or salaries from private sector employment. Close to a fifth work for the local, state, or federal government while only 8.3 percent are self-employed in small businesses.

Table 12. Type of Work of Socorro Residents

CLASS OF WORKER	ESTIMATE	PERCENTAGE
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	12,817	100.0%
Private wage and salary workers	9,260	72.2%
Government workers	2,464	19.2%
Self-employed workers in own not incorporated business	1,069	8.3%
Unpaid family workers	24	0.2%

Source: American Community Survey 2008-2010, US Census Bureau

As demonstrated in Table 13, the Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing/Hunting, and Mining sector accounts for just over one percent of the jobs held by Socorro residents. The Educational Services, Health Care and Social Assistance sector employs the highest percentage of the Socorro workforce (21%) of any industry sector. Following that is the Construction Industry (16%), Retail Trade (12%), and Manufacturing (9%).

Table 13. Socorro, Texas, Employed Population by Industry Sector

Industry	Estimate	Percentage
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	12,817	100.0%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	163	1.3%
Construction	2,048	16.0%
Manufacturing	1,240	9.7%
Wholesale trade	348	2.7%
Retail trade	1,583	12.4%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	972	7.6%
Information	443	3.5%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	289	2.3%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	946	7.4%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	2,712	21.2%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation, and food services	495	3.9%
Other services, except public administration	961	7.5%
Public administration	617	4.8%

Source: American Community Survey 2008-2010, US Census Bureau

2. HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Over 2008-2010 approximately 72 percent of Socorro households had incomes below \$50,000 a year; 23 percent had incomes between \$50,000 and \$99,000; and only 5.4 percent had incomes of \$100,000 or higher. The median household income was \$32,778, , meaning that half the households made more than that and half made less.

INCOME AND BENEFITS (IN 2008 INFLATION-ADJUSTED DOLLARS)	ESTIMATE	PERCENTAGE
Total households	8,621	100.0%
Less than \$10,000	1,016	11.8%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	662	7.7%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	1,684	19.5%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	1,320	15.3%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	1,513	17.6%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	1,309	15.2%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	655	7.6%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	369	4.3%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	43	0.5%
\$200,000 or more	50	0.6%
Median household income (dollars)	\$32,778	
Mean household income (dollars)	\$41,172	

Source: American Community Survey 2008-2010, US Census Bureau

The overwhelming majority of households in Socorro (85%) derive income from earnings (ACS 2008-2010). Some 22 percent receive Social Security retirement benefits, 9.5 percent other retirement income, and 10.4 percent Supplemental Security Income.

Total households	8,621	100.0%
With earnings	7,327	85.0%
Mean earnings (dollars)	\$40,203	
With Social Security	1,975	22.9%
Mean Social Security income (dollars)	\$10,098	
With retirement income	823	9.5%
Mean retirement income (dollars)	\$25,008	
With Supplemental Security Income	895	10.4%
Mean Supplemental Security Income (dollars)	\$7,649	
With cash public assistance income	116	1.3%
Mean cash public assistance income (dollars)	\$2,928	
With Food Stamp benefits in the past 12 months	2,527	29.3%

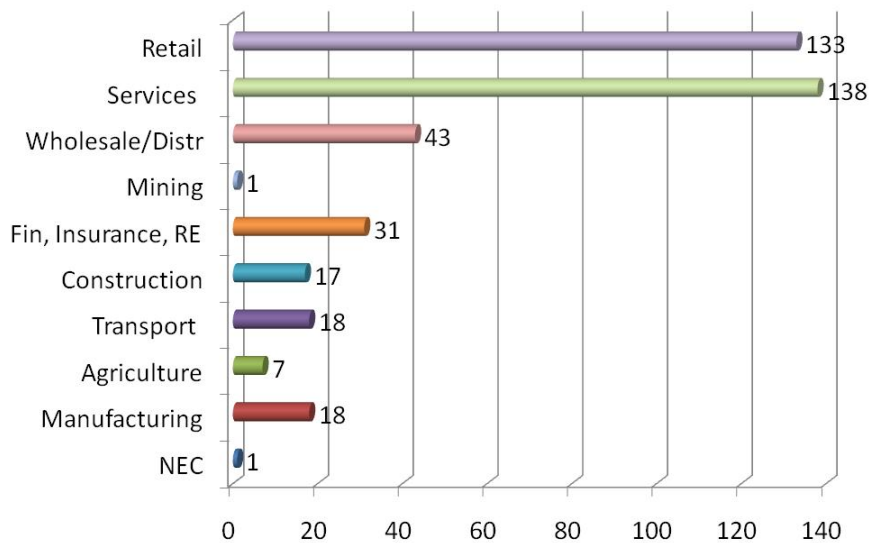
Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2008-2010, US Census Bureau

3. MAJOR EMPLOYERS AND BUSINESSES IN SOCORRO

There are employment opportunities in the City of Socorro. The top three employers in terms of number of employees are Socorro High School (325 employees), Sun Apparel Polo Jeans, (252 employees, \$196.8 million in annual sales), and Horizon Big 8, a branch supermarket (126 employees, \$31.1 million in annual sales).

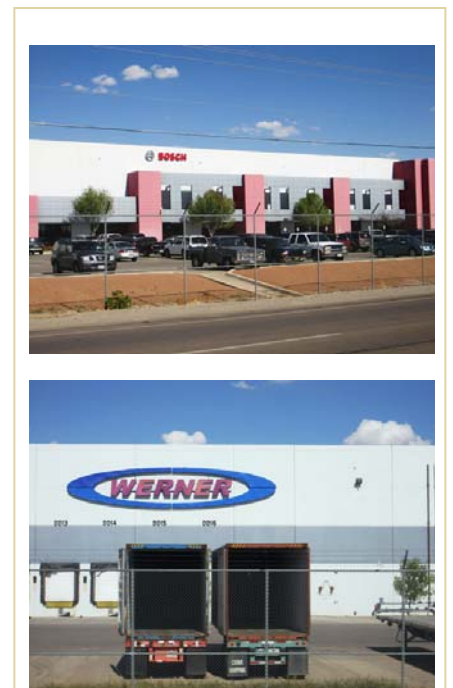
Of a total of 515 private businesses located in Socorro in 2009 there were 138 service establishments and 133 retail businesses. No malls or major department stores are included in this number. The nearest big box retail center is located approximately five miles to the northwest of the city. There were also other types of businesses: wholesale/distribution establishments (43); fire, insurance and real estate businesses (31); manufacturing (18); transportation (18) and construction businesses (17) (Reference USA, data retrieved July 2010).

Figure 12. Establishments by Type (515)]



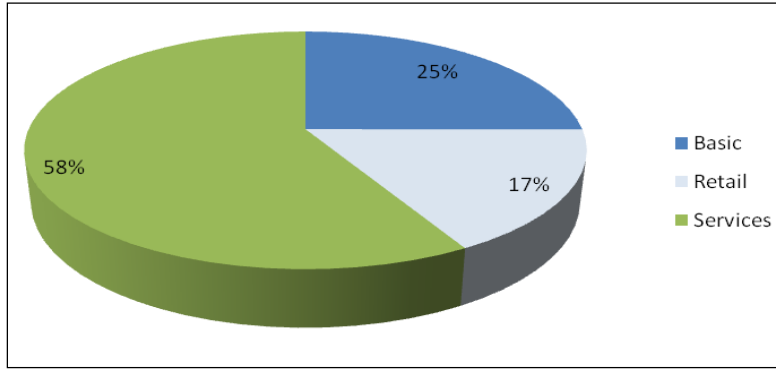
An estimated 18 distribution/logistics operations are based in Socorro with such notable players as Henry Trujillo Company, Cisneros Trucking and Access Transport. Five Star Development has more than one million square feet under roof at Alameda Ave. and Skov Rd. with at least three major logistics operations that sub-lease space: Werner Ladder, Bosch Brake Components, LLC, and Ryder Logistics. The first two have a major manufacturing presence in Ciudad Juarez (REDCO 2010).

The latest data available for types of employment within the Socorro area is from 1997 (El Paso MPO 2010). It shows that service jobs predominated with 2,749 jobs, followed by basic employment with 1,184 jobs (typically agriculture,



finance /insurance/ real estate, construction, manufacturing and transportation) and then retail with 799 jobs.

Figure 13. Socorro Employment 1997



4. FORT BLISS EXPANSION

Fort Bliss, the nearby regional military complex located on over 1.1 million acres, is expected to expand by approximately 20,000 active-duty personnel and 29,323 family members between 2005 and 2013. Some 11,800 family members are expected to be working and 60 percent of the families are expected to live off-post. The annual economic impact of Fort Bliss on the regional economy is projected to increase to \$4.7 billion by 2013 (www.elpasoredco.org accessed 7/31/2012).

5. TAXES

Socorro's property taxes are mid-range compared to other municipalities within the county. Rates range from \$2.64 per \$100 valuation for sites within Socorro Independent School District and up to \$2.79 per \$100 for sites within Clint Independent School District (REDCO 2010).

Similar to other municipalities in the county, Socorro assesses the maximum sales/use tax rate allowable under the Texas constitution at 1.5 per cent. Over the past five years, sales tax collections for the City have increased an average of 17 percent per year, the second fastest annual growth rate of any taxing jurisdiction in the county. Socorro collected more than \$1.2 million in sales/use taxes in 2009, and collections through November 2010 were 5.6 percent more than last year's level (REDCO 2010).

C. ECONOMIC STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

Much of the information for this section comes from the Regional Economic Development Corporation and the Rio Grande Council of Governments.

1. STRENGTHS

- Socorro has at least 30 undeveloped sites of 50 acres or more which may have industrial/commercial potential. At least two appear to have strong potential for rail users (see Appendix for map of vacant parcels).
- Socorro is strategically located in proximity to the Ysleta/Zaragoza port of entry and the future Fabens/Tornillo port of entry.
- Electric infrastructure for industrial loads in Socorro is some of the best in El Paso Electric's (EPE) service territory. It is served by three 69K transmission lines that traverse the community. An industrial site on Alameda Avenue near Skov Road has solid infrastructure and is one of the top five locations within EPE's service territory for the ability to accommodate new industrial loads.
- Direct interchange access to I-10 is provided by two roadways: Horizon Boulevard, the principal connection for the northern portions of the city, and FM1110 at the extreme southern end of the city.
- Socorro offers two potentially viable industrial sites served by rail: the 40-acre site to the south at Alameda Avenue and Skov Road and, to the north, approximately 162 acres of undeveloped property at the intersection of the Union Pacific mainline and N. Rio Vista Road.
- Eight of ten public school campuses in the city have been rated "recognized" or "exemplary" by the Texas Academic Excellence Indicator System.
- Socorro Road is part of the historic Mission Trail, a tourist attraction.
- There is a foreign trade zone (FTZ) within Socorro. This accords special customs procedures to US plants engaged in international trade-related activities, allowing duty-free treatment to items processed in FTZs and then re-exported. It helps to offset customs advantages available to overseas producers who compete with domestic industries.

2. CHALLENGES

- Lack of high quality locations for higher value-added, higher technology business and industry.
- Only 54 percent of the population ages 25 and older has a high school diploma or higher educational degree.

- Lack of access to I-10 in the southeastern part of the city.
- Lack of a town center or downtown.

3. OPPORTUNITIES

- Transportation/logistics operations similar to those already established by Werner and Bosch.
- Manufacturing operations for companies connected to the Juarez maquila industry. Socorro is one of the few places in the county that can accommodate industrial loads up to 3 to 5 megawatts at a single location.
- Attract a retail lifestyle center similar to “Plaza Mexico” south of Los Angeles, CA (an indoor/outdoor shopping, dining and entertainment venue boasting 650,000 square feet of retail, restaurant and office space blended into a Mexican cultural and entertainment space.) This could draw tourist dollars as well as provide entertainment for local residents.
- Take advantage of talents and skills of local residents to help them develop small businesses.
- Better promotion of Socorro as a HUB Zone. The Historically Underutilized Business Zone Program stimulates economic development and creates jobs in urban and rural communities by providing Federal contracting preferences to small businesses (see appendix for locations).
- Take advantage of federal assistance offered to address the impact of the Fort Bliss base expansion on local communities.

D. PUBLIC CONCERNS

In addition, the following needs and preferences were voiced by the general public:

- Better paying jobs, more businesses and job opportunities
- More job training, adult education opportunities, and youth job training
- Entertainment venues such as cinemas, as well as other retail uses and services such as medical clinics, restaurants, and commercial retail
- Tourist-oriented retail and services
- Trails with guided tours along the historic Mission Trail
- A more diverse industrial base that includes uses such as call centers and manufacturing

Residents generally expressed the desire to preserve and strengthen the Mission Historic District, both as a cultural treasure and a potential tool for economic development. This includes improvements to historic sites. They also said there was a lack of visibility and public education regarding Socorro’s historic sites. They view the Socorro Mission as the “heart” of the community and would like to see redevelopment in the area, following the lead of San Elizario.



Socorro Mission (top)
San Elizario Mission (below)

Additional development that would be welcomed includes small hotels and/or bed and breakfast facilities along the Mission Trail. Truck traffic on Socorro Road, however, impedes tourism.

E. HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND TOURISM

Historic preservation and restoration of buildings and places in historic districts can also be economic development strategies. Socorro is fortunate to possess two major historic areas that could become even greater tourist attractions, helping to boost the town's revenues.

1. SITES ALONG THE HISTORIC MISSION TRAIL/SOCORRO ROAD

The first is the part of the historic Mission Trail runs along its northwestern border (Socorro Road). The Mission Trail is part of the Camino Real de Tierra Adentro, which came into being as Don Juan de Onate forged through the Chihuahuan desert and into Santa Fe, New Mexico in 1598 to establish the lands north of "New" Spain (Mexico). Following ancient Native American trails, his 500 colonists established El Paso del Norte (The Pass of the North). The close knit valley of four major missions has endured the test of time and offers an eclectic and unique culture (EPMTA 2011).

Traveling Socorro Road currently offers views of several historic attractions along the trail, including the Socorro Mission, the Tigua Cultural Center, which houses a small museum of Tigua artifacts, and several other historic buildings. Restoration of the area that would provide places to stay overnight, such as bed-and-breakfast establishments, a landscaped plaza area at the Mission, retail shops and a walking tour could promote more tourism while preserving the important historic character.

2. HISTORIC SITES

SOCORRO MISSION

The Socorro Mission is located southeast of a traditional ford on the Río Grande, on the branch of El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro (Royal Road to the Interior) that runs through westernmost Texas from San Elizario to downtown El Paso. The mission arose in the aftermath of the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, when the Puebloans drove the Spanish from the settlements, haciendas and missions in New Mexico. Built at the community founded by Spanish and Tigua refugees, the first permanent Socorro Mission church, also known as *Nuestra Señora de la Limpia Concepción de los Piroso de Socorro del Sur*, was founded in 1682 by



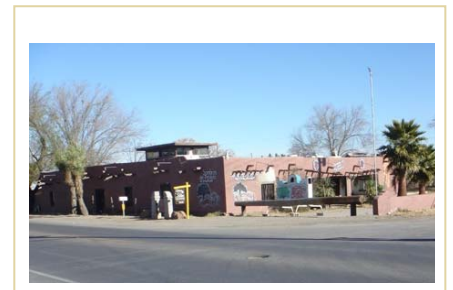
the Franciscan order. Completed in 1692, the church was destroyed by raging floodwaters of the Rio Grande in 1740. It was replaced in 1744, and destroyed again in 1828. The present building, the mission's third permanent structure, was formally dedicated in 1843. The walls, constructed of adobe block surfaced with plaster, are more than five feet thick at the base. The mission is also particularly notable for its interior. The finely painted beams, or *vigas*, are from the 18th-century mission and were reused when the present church was constructed. The massing, details and use of decorative elements of the Socorro Mission show strong relationships to the building traditions of 17th-century Spanish New Mexico.

The Socorro Mission is currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1972). It was recorded as a Texas Historic Landmark in 1963 and is commemorated by a Centennial Marker and two Texas Historical Commission Markers.

Residents in Socorro consider the Mission to be the "jewel" of the community. In 1998, La Purisima Restoration Committee asked Cornerstones Community Partnerships to assess the conditions of the Socorro Mission. The results were used to estimate the cost of preserving the structure at just over \$2 million. Two years of fundraising ensued, followed by three years of preservation work. Funding is now being sought to complete the building and initiate an extensive landscaping plan. A 1992 preliminary design sponsored by the El Paso Mission Trail Association was prepared by the Texas Tech Architecture Department. The plans envision the preservation of the 1843 rectory, construction of a new Visitor's Center and interpretive displays, enhanced lighting and parking facilities, and additional features such as seating, walkways, walls, improvements to the historic cemetery, and extensive shrub and tree plantings.

CASA ORTIZ

Casa Ortiz is just under a third of a mile south of the Socorro Mission along Socorro Road. A great example of New Spain's frontier architecture, this building was constructed in the late 1700s by Father Ramón Ortiz. The building is characterized by thick adobe walls, cottonwood and willow *vigas* and *latillas* with a dirt roof. In 1840s, its owner was Jose Ortiz, a "Comanchero, Salinero, Cibolero" who traded knives, sarapes, salt from the Guadalupe Mountains, and clothing with Comanches and other Native Americans from Durango, Mexico to Santa Fe, New Mexico. In the 1940s, Francisca Lujan, the widow of Epifanio Ortiz, was last of the Ortiz family to live there. Presently owned by Margaret Brer, the building currently houses an independent bookstore called The Bookery.



CASA APODACA

Casa Apodaca is located along Socorro Road and across the street from another Socorro landmark, Casa Ortiz. This structure is believed to have been

constructed in 1900. Built as unique period adobe, the building was home to the area's first silent movie theater, which was developed in 1902.

SOMBRAS DEL PASADO RESTAURANT

Also known as the *Tienda Carbajal*, this building, now a restaurant, was built in 1852. It is an official Texas State Historic Site and features heavy, adobe-plastered walls.

3. SOCORRO ROAD IMPROVEMENTS

To complement this development, improvements should be made to Socorro Road to divert truck traffic to more appropriate roadways. Other improvements to be considered would include improving drainage and providing pathways for pedestrians and bicyclists. These would have to be carefully designed to fit the context of the narrow right-of-way and historic character. Socorro Road (FM 258) currently is classified as a north-south minor arterial located within a designated historic corridor. It is under the jurisdiction of TxDOT. Traffic counts show that the two-lane road accommodates some 10,000 vehicles per day.

All road projects in the US that use federal transportation funds, which most do, must comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act or Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966. Under Section 106, if the proposed action will have an "effect" on impact on a historic property, the owner or managing agency (local, state, or federal) is required to undertake a review of the proposed action and consult with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to determine its effect on the integrity of the historic property prior to approving and funding the project. The purpose of this requirement is not to prevent any change to the road, but rather to ensure that whatever action is finally determined will have recognized any historic resources and "taken into account" the full range of options to preserve those historic resources (Marriott 2010).

Zoning along the roadway buildings could be revised to permit some mixed uses such as residential and neighborhood-scale commercial uses to allow owners to live in the same building as their businesses. A Design Overlay Zone covering the area would encourage landowners to preserve and protect the most important architectural characteristics of the Mission District.

4. RIO VISTA FARM HISTORIC DISTRICT

The second major historic area is the Rio Vista Farm Historic District.

RIO VISTA HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Rio Vista Farm Historic District is a 14-acre tract of land located adjacent to the Municipal Courthouse in the City's northeastern portion. Built in 1915, Rio Vista was at one time a farm used to house the poor. The farm was scheduled to be closed in 1929, but its population grew during the Depression era. The farm hosted a variety of public welfare programs beginning in the 1930s, operating under the Texas Transient Bureau and later the Federal Works Progress Administration. The farm became a temporary base for a Civilian Conservation Corps unit in 1936, while also continuing to shelter hundreds of homeless and destitute adults and children.

From 1951 to 1964 the farm was used as a reception and processing center for the Bracero Program, which brought Mexican laborers to work in the lower valley of El Paso and other agricultural areas in the US. New federal welfare programs and state law reduced the population at the farm to four people and it was closed in 1964.

The farm's housing units were built in the early 1900s and are still standing in their original place. Currently the Rio Vista Complex is being restored. The larger area of the Rio Vista Farm Historic District is registered in the National Register of Historic Places.

Currently, the main building has been restored and is being used as the Rio Vista Community Center. The complex also has served as a location for film shoots, such as the movie "Traffic." There is a park adjacent to the community center. Another historic building across the street houses the City's Municipal Offices.

This area has the potential to become an important tourist and recreation site. If City offices were consolidated into a town center, it would leave the Municipal building available to house a museum as well as meeting or classrooms. The Braceros area could be renovated and the park enhanced. A bike trail loop could link both the Socorro Mission Historic District and the Rio Vista Farm Historic District.

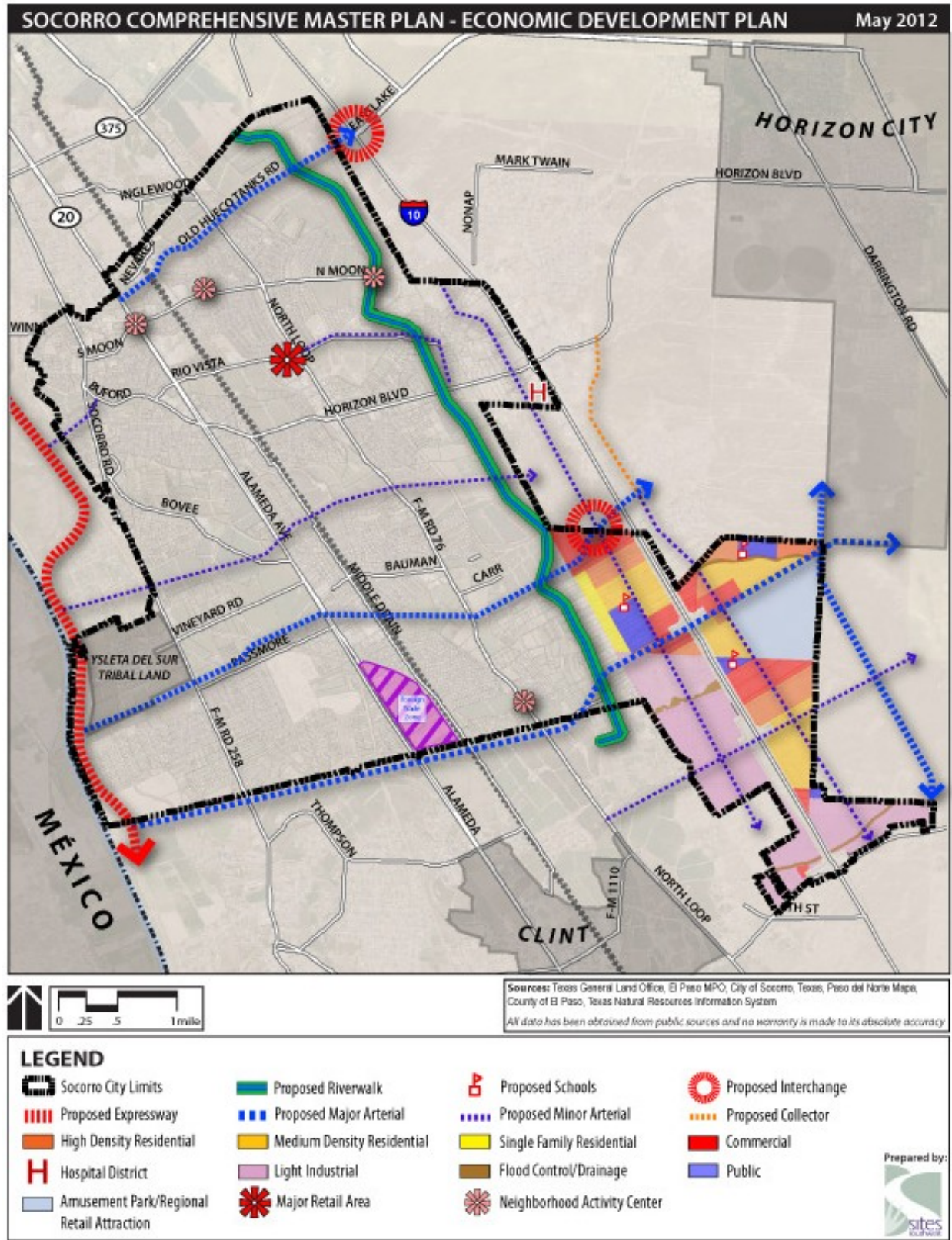
F. FUTURE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The economic development plan proposes several key projects to improve the prospects for jobs and economic activity in Socorro.



- **Existing Foreign Trade Subzone:** Expand existing warehousing/transportation area near the railroad and recruit more businesses.
- **New Industrial Park:** Annex additional land and establish a location for light industrial businesses along the freeway (a business and technology park).
- **Regional Entertainment Center:** Locate in an area along the freeway to attract regional visitors as well as locals. Higher density housing could also be located nearby.
- **Town Center:** Establish a location for a mix of commercial, civic, and residential uses near transit and arterial roadways. Consolidate government offices here and allow offices, retail and higher density housing (apartments, townhomes, and live-work). This would provide a social and economic center and establish a sense of place.
- **Historic Mission Area/Socorro Road Renovation and Promotion:** Establish Socorro's historic and cultural center along Socorro Road. Redevelopment could include shops, bed-and-breakfast establishments, cafes, outdoor seating, parks, a museum and visitor center and a landscaped mission area.
- **Rio Vista Farms Historic Area:** Renovate and reuse existing historical buildings as a heritage tourist attraction and community center.
- **Transportation support:** Construct new roadways and I-10 interchanges, particularly in southeastern part of the city. Divert trucks from Socorro Road onto arterials such as Alameda Avenue.
- **New port-of-entry:** Assess the feasibility of a new port-of-entry at the southwestern end of Socorro coupled with a regional medical center.
- **Local Small Business Development:** Consider providing technical assistance, a business incubator, and a small commercial kitchen for residents who wish to start or expand their own businesses. Support establishment of a Socorro Chamber of Commerce.
- **Education and Training:** Support the school district's efforts to ensure Socorro students graduate from high school and continue on to college or technical training for future jobs.
- **Gateway, Directional and Interpretative Signage:** Install signs to coax drivers off the freeway to visit Socorro, advertise Socorro's historic amenities, and provide historic information.
- **Property Owner Assistance:** Provide property owners in historic districts assistance with application materials required for renovation of historic buildings in historic districts.

Figure 14. Economic Development Plan



G. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Economic Development Goal 1

Diversify the economy by attracting and growing sustainable industries with living wage jobs in Socorro.

- Strategy a. Create a light industrial park with amenities to attract higher value-added business and industry that pay higher wages. If land is owned by City of Socorro, it can be used as an inducement for economic development.*
- Strategy b. Attract a regional entertainment and amusement center in vacant land along I-10.*
- Strategy c. Expand the Foreign Trade Zone near the railroad and attract additional businesses, with a focus on those using rail.*
-

Economic Development Goal 2

Take advantage of federal, state and local economic laws and programs.

- Strategy a. Take maximum advantage of opportunities conferred to the municipality under Section 380 of the Texas Municipal Code, which authorizes Texas municipalities to provide assistance in the form of monies, loans, city personnel and city services to promote and encourage economic development.*
- Strategy b. Better promote the HUB Zone in Socorro, which provides Federal contracting preferences to small businesses. (See appendix for geographic location.)*
- Strategy c. Collaborate with EPCC & SBDC to provide administrative assistance and training to small business owners in Socorro.*
- Strategy d. Continue to work with El Paso Regional Economic Development Corporation and the Rio Grande Council of Governments on economic development.*

Economic Development Goal 3

Draw on strengths and assets of community residents to develop new business enterprises in Socorro.

- Strategy a. Encourage formation of a Socorro Chamber of Commerce.*
- Strategy b. Consider establishing a business incubator and commercial kitchen to assist residents in starting their own businesses.*

Economic Development Goal 4

Ensure the Socorro workforce is well educated.

- Strategy a. Work with the Socorro Independent School District to increase the number of high school graduates.*
- Strategy b. Partner with El Paso Community College to encourage more Socorro residents to seek higher education.*

H. TOURISM AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Historic Preservation Goal 1

Draw on the Mission Trail, Socorro Mission, Rio Vista Farm and other historic resources to increase the City’s visibility and stimulate the local economy through heritage tourism.

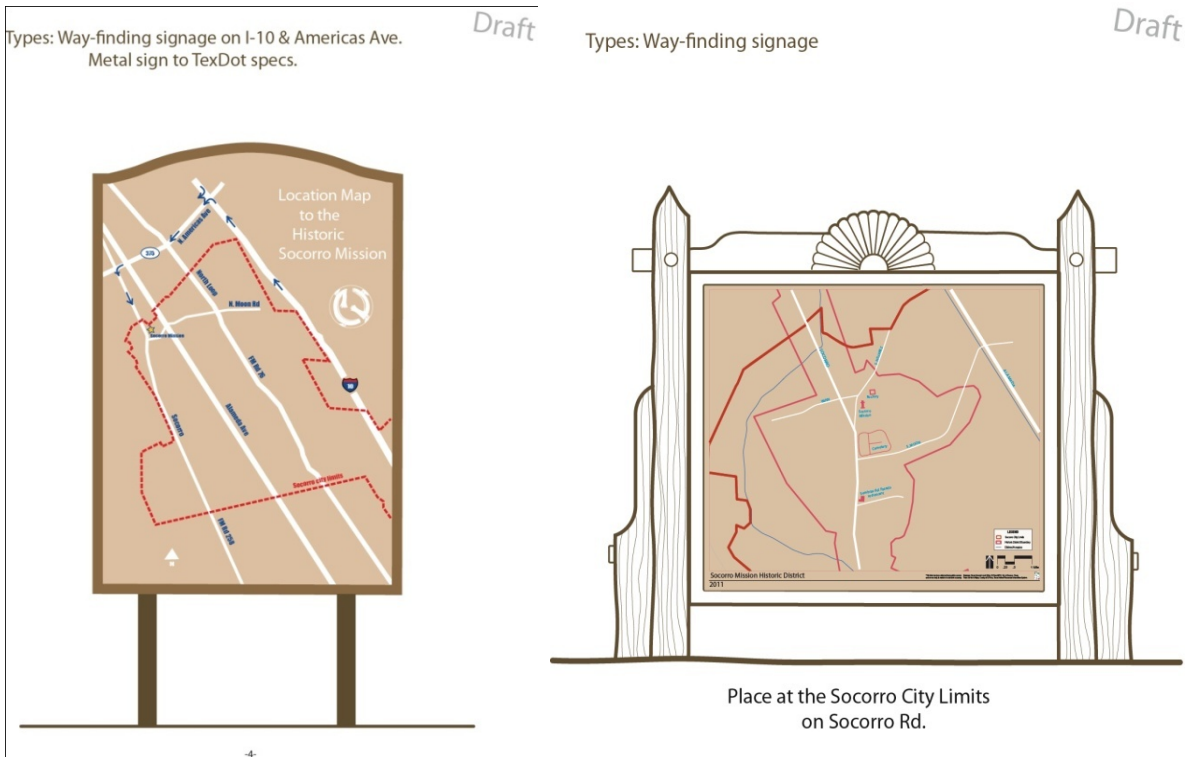
- Strategy a. Develop design guidelines for redevelopment and new development along the Mission District corridor to protect its character into the future. These can be based on the historic elements noted in the historic district nomination forms.*
- Strategy b. Amend the *Historic Overlay District Ordinance* to allow for mixed uses such as residential and neighborhood-scale commercial in the Mission Historic District.*

- Strategy c. *Improve the area around the Socorro Mission with landscaping, a plaza and park, and other amenities.*
- Strategy d. *Divert truck traffic from Socorro Road to existing or new arterials. Develop pedestrian and bicycle paths that can be accommodated in the narrow right-of-way.*
- Strategy e. *Rehabilitate the Braceros area into a tourist destination or other adaptive reuse.*

Historic Preservation Goal 2.

Increase visibility and public awareness regarding the Mission Historic District and other historic sites.

- Strategy a. *Install gateways that draw people to the Historic District area from the interstates and access arterials.*
- Strategy b. *Install way-finding signage in key locations throughout the city to attract residents and tourists to the Historic Mission District.*
- Strategy c. *Design and install interpretive signs near historic places.*



Page intentionally left blank

V. HOUSING

A. HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS AND NEIGHBORHOODS

Housing is one of the most fundamental land uses in a community. It almost always covers the most extensive developed area and so has an important impact on the physical character of the community. The Housing element of the comprehensive plan addresses several aspects of the city’s housing supply: the number, type, and age of existing housing units and the occupancy rate. It identifies future housing needs and issues of affordable housing and quality and recommends goals and strategies to address these.

B. HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

1. CURRENT HOUSING UNITS AND TYPE

According to the 2010 Census, there are 9,248 housing units in Socorro. This represents a 26.7 percent increase over 2000 (when there were 7,140 total housing units). Housing units in El Paso County as a whole increased by 20.4 percent during this same time period.

There are no data for housing types in the 2008-2010 ACS, so for the purposes of this study, data from the 2005-2009 American Community Survey will be used. Most housing in Socorro is single-family detached units (70.4%). Mobile homes are the second most prevalent housing type, constituting nearly a quarter of all housing. Multi-family units make up less than three percent of housing options.

Approximately 91 percent of all Socorro housing units are occupied. Owner-occupied housing is far more prevalent in Socorro than renter-occupied housing (84% compared with 16%, respectively). The homeowner vacancy rate is low at 1.1 percent and the rental vacancy rate is 5.3 percent. In El Paso County as a whole, renter-occupied units comprise over a third of housing.

Table 14. Socorro Housing Units by Type

Type of Unit	Total Units	Percent Total
1 Unit, Detached	6,509	70.4%
1 Unit, Attached	115	1.2%
Duplex	124	1.3%
Multifamily Unit	253	2.7%
Mobile Home	2,247	24.3%
Boat, RV, van, etc.	0	0.0%
Total Units	9,248	100.0%

Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey



Table 15. Tenure of Occupied Units

	Socorro	El Paso County
Owner-occupied	84.0%	63.0%
Renter-occupied	16.0%	37.0%

Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2008-2010, US Census Bureau

2. HOUSING CONDITION AND QUALITY

As shown in Table 16, the majority of dwelling units—nearly 70 percent—was built within the past 30 years. Over one fifth of housing was built in the last decade, while another fifth was built since 1990. Only about a third of all housing was built before 1980. This suggests that most of the housing stock is in good or fair quality. At the same time, mobile homes make up a significant portion of housing units; these tend to deteriorate over time and lose value compared with site-built single family homes. With the large number of mobile homes and the over 12 percent of homes that are over 50 years old, there is a need for low and moderate-income households, especially seniors and people with disabilities, to have assistance with home repairs.

Table 16. Housing Units by Year Built

Year Built	Percent Total Housing Units
2000 or later	27.0%
1990 to 1999	19.3%
1980 to 1989	21.0%
1970 to 1979	19.9%
1960 to 1969	7.7%
1950 to 1959	2.0%
1949 or earlier	3.1%

Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2008-2010, US Census Bureau

Nearly two percent of occupied Socorro housing units lack complete plumbing or kitchen facilities. More than four percent, however, do not have telephone service available.

Table 17. Housing Units with Select Characteristics

	Socorro	El Paso County
Lacking complete plumbing facilities	0.9%	1.3%
Lacking complete kitchen facilities	1.0%	1.2%
No telephone service available	4.2%	3.8%

Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2008-2010, US Census Bureau



The Census Bureau defines overcrowding as a housing unit that has more than one occupant per room; a unit with more than 1.5 occupants per room is considered severely overcrowded. (“Rooms” include bedrooms, kitchens, living rooms, etc. but exclude bathrooms, porches, hallways, and unfinished basements.) Seven percent of Socorro housing units are deemed overcrowded, while 1.8 percent is severely overcrowded. This is on a par with conditions in El Paso County as a whole.

Table 18. Housing Units with Overcrowded Conditions

Number of Occupants per Room	Socorro	El Paso County
1.00 or less	91.2%	93.1%
1.01 to 1.50	7.0%	5.2%
1.51 or more	1.8%	1.7%

Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2008-2010, US Census Bureau

3. HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Housing affordability is an important factor in the quality of life in a given community. It impacts whether young families and seniors can remain in their communities or not. Community input has suggested that affordable housing is an issue in Socorro, both for renters, homeowners and those with disabilities.

The median value of owner-occupied homes in Socorro was \$79,900, according to the 2008-2010 ACS. This is much lower than the median value of homes in the City of El Paso (\$103,700) and El Paso County as a whole (\$97,800).

Although the median value of homes in Socorro is low relative to the larger city and county, it still has risen over 61 percent since 2000.

Table 19. Median Value of Owner-Occupied Units

	2000	2008-2010 Average	Percent change
Socorro	\$49,577	\$79,900	61.1%
City of El Paso	\$71,300	\$114,800	61.0%
El Paso County	\$69,600	\$108,200	55.4%

Source: 2000 US Census Bureau and American Community Survey (ACS) 2008-2010, US Census Bureau

A review of homes for sale in Socorro in January 2011 indicated an asking price range from \$67,163 to \$180,000, with a median of \$108,000. The lowest priced homes were in foreclosure and owned by the bank.

December 2011 found at least 68 homes for sale in Socorro, ranging from \$74,900 to \$445,000, with a median price of \$118,450. Six were foreclosures.

There were also at least five houses for rent with monthly rent payments ranging from \$875 to \$1,150.

One measure of evaluating whether or not housing is affordable is by determining if there is a housing cost burden. Households that spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing and related costs are considered to have a cost burden, rendering their housing unaffordable.

As shown in Table 20, housing affordability is clearly an issue in Socorro. Nearly half of all owner households have a cost burden, with the majority paying more than 35 percent of their income for housing costs. Renter households are even more likely to have a housing burden; nearly 60 percent of all renter households spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing, while over 40 percent pay more than 35 percent.

Table 20. Households with a Cost Burden

	Percentage with a Cost Burden of 30% to 34.9 %	Percentage with a Cost Burden of 35% or More
Owner Households	9.1%	37.6%
Renter Households	19.4%	40.5%

Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2008-2010, US Census

4. HOUSING SERVICES AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECTS

The El Paso County Housing Authority located in Fabens, Texas, is an organization that provides public housing services to Socorro residents. It has public housing in Fabens and administers HUD Section 8 housing choice vouchers to county residents. Under Section 8, qualified income-eligible households are able to receive a voucher which they then apply to the rental unit of their choice, provided that it meets quality standards. The Housing Authority administers approximately 125 housing choice vouchers. Of those, five went to Socorro households in FY 2011. With the cutbacks in federal programs, additional vouchers are unlikely to be forthcoming.

There are approximately 200 units of affordable multifamily housing in the City. Table 8 below lists all identified affordable housing in Socorro. Most were developed by Tierra del Sol Housing Corporation, a nonprofit organization chartered to conduct businesses in New Mexico, Arizona and Texas. Active since 1973, Tierra del Sol works in rural communities to develop affordable multi-family housing, help families of low and moderate income to build single family homes, offer a housing rehabilitation and repair program to those most in need, and promote economic and community development.

Table 8. Affordable Housing Developments

Name	Address	Developer/Manager	# Units	Subsidy
Socorro Village	148 Buford Rd.	Capstone RE Services	50	Section 8, LIHTC
Mission Senior Housing	561 Three Missions Dr.	JL Gray/Tierra del Sol/MAC Management	42	Section 8
Tierra Socorro Apartments	560 Three Missions Dr.	Tierra del Sol	64	LIHTC
Mission del Valle TH	621 Dindinger Rd.	Tierra del Sol	16	LIHTC
Mission Pass	633 Dindinger Rd.	Tierra del Sol	36	LIHTC

Source: Socorro GIS Data 2010

In 2009, the City of Socorro received a \$385,000 grant from the federal HOME Program to assist a minimum of six low income families to repair or reconstruct their homes. The program was expected to be completed in September 2011.

Section 8 rental assistance is provided to Socorro residents through the Fabens Housing Authority. Rental assistance is limited. The City needs to develop its own resources, perhaps forming a local public housing authority or a City housing department to administer HUD and other housing programs. The City will need to work with funding agencies to develop the capacity to administer these programs.

Project Bravo, an El Paso based Community Action Agency, provides housing advocacy, housing counseling, and weatherization services in El Paso County through six service centers. The closest center to Socorro is the Ysleta Center on Zaragoza.

Weatherization program services are provided for low-income families, handicapped, and senior citizens. Applications for the weatherization program are taken at all the six Project Bravo centers. Clients who meet the qualifications for the program are put on a list. Priority is given to elderly and handicapped individuals, and then others that meet the requirements will follow. Selections for weatherizing a home are done by sections of El Paso County from Anthony to Tornillo. Weatherization and energy efficiency improvements resources are limited. In March 2012 the weatherization assistance program had reached capacity, and new applicants were being placed on a waiting list.

A number of homeowners who are seniors or have disabilities need minor repairs on their homes. When these are older homes, the cost of bringing the

entire unit up to code, which is required by most federal programs, is prohibitive. A program is needed to allow the City to help these households with minor repairs without the requirement to bring the entire unit up to code.

The City of Socorro has partnered with the Texas department of housing and community affairs (TDHCA) to provide services locally. The City can administer the following programs in partnership with TDHCA:

- TDHCA's HOME Homebuyer Assistance Program to provide individuals with funds for down payment, closing costs, gap financing, and rehabilitation for accessibility modifications with acquisition costs.
- TDHCA's HOME Homeowner Rehabilitation Assistance Program to provide funding for housing rehabilitation, including roof repair/replacement, electrical repairs, and plumbing repairs.
- TDHCA's HOME Tenant-Based Rental Assistance Program, which provide rental assistance for a maximum of two years and requires that individuals participate in a self-sufficiency program.

Homebuyer education providers can help repair credit problems, develop a budget and educate about the home purchase process.

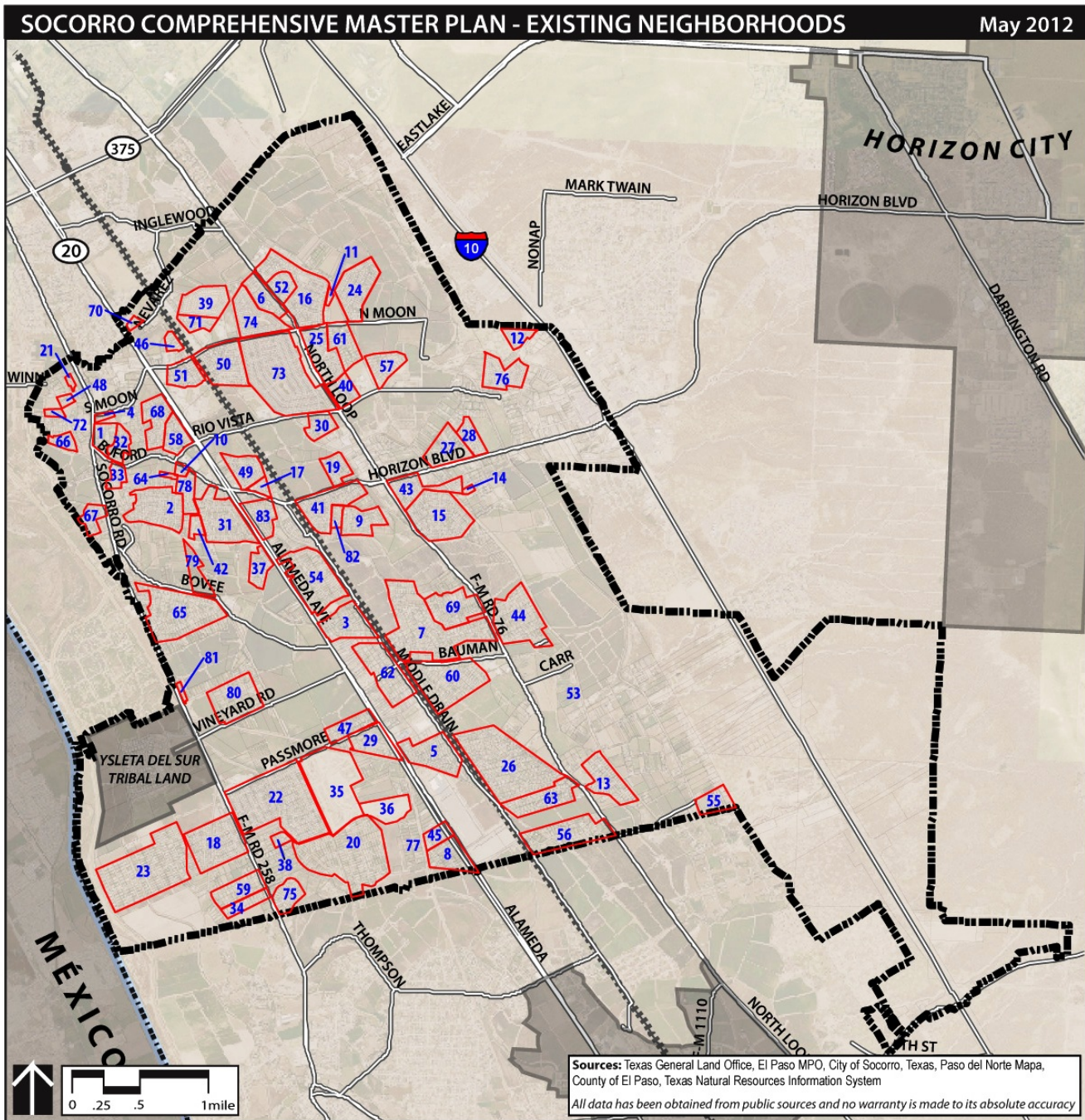
5. FUTURE HOUSING NEEDS AND ISSUES

PROJECTED HOUSING NEEDS

As stated in the Land Use chapter, the Texas Water Development Board estimates that Socorro will be home to 60,639 people by 2060. Using the current household size of 3.65, there will be a need for a total of 16,613 housing units, or 7,365 additional units by 2060. Currently, single family home lots in Socorro are an average size of 0.33 acres (about 14,520 SF), indicating that about 2,500 additional acres of land will be needed for housing development. (This includes 10% additional acreage for roads and other infrastructure.) Depending on the number of multi-family units, which consume less space per dwelling unit, total acreage needed may be even less.

As shown in the land use chapter, housing currently makes up about 18 percent of total land use in Socorro (2,570 total acres). There are 3,493 acres of vacant land as well as 4,344 acres of agricultural land that could eventually be converted to other uses if desired. This is more than sufficient to meet the future housing needs, given the existing population estimates. At an average of three dwelling units per acre, however, this density of development would consume about a third of Socorro's remaining agricultural and vacant land.

Figure 15. Socorro Neighborhoods



LEGEND

- | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Adobe | 13. Cotton Valley Estates | 25. Gurdev | 37. Las Milpas | 49. Monte Rosales | 61. San Agustin | 73. Valle del Sol |
| 2. Alameda Estates | 14. Cottonwood Cove | 26. Haciendas del Valle | 38. Lewis | 50. Moon Addition East | 62. San Ysidro | 74. Valle Hermoso Estates |
| 3. Aldama Estates | 15. Country Green | 27. Helen Acres | 39. Los Lunas | 51. Moon Addition West | 63. Santa Martina | 75. Valle Real |
| 4. Algodon | 16. Delip | 28. Hillcrest Manor | 40. Los Robles del Valle | 52. North Loop Acres | 64. Servando | 76. Valley Ridge |
| 5. Aljo Estates | 17. El Campanario | 29. Jones | 41. Lynn Park | 53. Pinecrest | 65. Socorro Mission | 77. Varela |
| 6. Bagge Estates | 18. El Campestre | 30. La Fuente | 42. Marina | 54. Poole | 66. Socorro Village | 78. Villa Espana |
| 7. Bauman Estates | 19. Ellen Park | 31. La Jolla | 43. Mary Lou Park | 55. Quail Mesa | 67. Sombras de Misiones | 79. Villas del Valle |
| 8. Bejar Estates | 20. Flor del Rio | 32. La Junta Addition | 44. McAdoo Acres | 56. Rancho Miraval Estates | 68. Spanish Trail | 80. Vinedo Acres |
| 9. Belen Plaza | 21. Frank | 33. Las Estancias Escondidas | 45. Melton Place | 57. Rio Rancho Estates | 69. Sunhaven Farms | 81. Willard Meek |
| 10. Buford View Estates | 22. Friedman Estates | 34. Las Lomas | 46. Merida | 58. Rio Vista Addition | 70. Sunshine | 82. Wilton Acres |
| 11. Calcutta | 23. Gran Valle | 35. Las Margaritas I | 47. Mesa Verde | 59. Rosa Azul | 71. The Tejano Subdivision | 83. Wiseman Estates |
| 12. Cielo Azul | 24. Grijalva Gardens | 36. Las Margaritas II | 48. Mission Valley | 60. Roseville | 72. Trejo | |

PRESERVING RURAL COMMUNITY CHARACTER

The large amounts of land used for agriculture and as open space appear to be important in Socorro's history and in maintaining its present sense of place and character. If residents are interested in conserving agricultural and open space land, the City could encourage slightly more compact residential developments. If future single-family homes are sited on a fourth of an acre or less (10,890 SF), for example, new residential development would consume less than a quarter of the city's remaining agricultural and vacant land. Adding multi-family apartments and townhouses to the mix to meet future housing needs would conserve even more land. Locating higher density housing near commercial and public uses within a Planned Unit Development (PUD) could help alleviate the resulting traffic, enabling residents to walk to these destinations rather than drive.

For more permanent preservation of agriculture and open space land, the City could consider allowing and promoting conservation or cluster subdivisions. These developments site their residential units on smaller lots along an internal roadway while setting aside other portions of the land (from perhaps a fourth to half the total subdivision area) as undivided permanent open space or agricultural land (see Figure 16). Such developments can lower the cost of infrastructure, lower site preparation costs, and increase design flexibility. They also provide residents with visual relief, cooling effects, places for recreation, and reduction of flood risks.

AFFORDABILITY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Housing and services for people with disabilities are also needed. According to the American Community Survey, more than 2,000 working age residents of Socorro are estimated to have a physical disability. These people are less likely to be employed, and as a result, have lower incomes than the general population. Affordable housing and services are needed for these residents.

Table 21 Physical Disability by Sex by Age by Employment Status for the Civilian Non- institutionalized Population 16 to 64 years

Total civilian non-institutionalized population:	18,659
With a physical disability:	2,198
Male:	1,050
16 to 34 years:	195
Employed	104
Not employed	91
35 to 64 years:	855
Employed	287
Not employed	568
Female:	1,148
16 to 34 years:	189
Employed	18
Not employed	171
35 to 64 years:	959
Employed	184
Not employed	775

Source: American Community Survey 3-year Estimates, 2005 – 2007

Table 22. Income Characteristics of Residents with Disabilities

Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months (In 2007 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) by Physical Disability by Sex for the Civilian Non-institutionalized Population 16 Years and Over with Earnings

	Estimate
Total:	\$16,910
With a physical disability:	\$13,945
Male	\$14,101
Female	\$13,729
No physical disability	\$17,106
Male	\$21,068
Female	\$13,060

Source: American Community Survey 3-year Estimates, 2005-2007

Housing programs, including homebuyer education, down payment assistance, rental assistance, and repair and rehabilitation could be administered locally by a designated non-profit or city department with the capacity to carry out the programs, either alone or in partnership with state and local agencies and organizations. The City could also work with affordable housing developers to provide new affordable housing for sale and for rent.

Federal law and Federal policies prohibit housing discrimination in the sale, rental and financing of homes. A summary of Fair Housing laws and executive orders is shown in Table 23. The City should take positive steps to further fair housing in Socorro, including public education and outreach to landlords, tenants, lenders and potential homeowners about fair housing issues and individual rights. The City can also help residents file complaints with HUD related to fair housing. A local agency would be able to accept housing discrimination complaints and work with the parties to resolve them.

Table 23. The Fair Housing Laws and Executive Orders

Fair Housing Laws:
<p>Fair Housing Act Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (Fair Housing Act), as amended, prohibits discrimination in the sale, rental, and financing of dwellings, and in other housing-related transactions, based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status (including children under the age of 18 living with parents or legal custodians, pregnant women, and people securing custody of children under the age of 18), and handicap (disability).</p>
<p>Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 Title VI prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance.</p>
<p>Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 Section 504 prohibits discrimination based on disability in any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.</p>
<p>Section 109 of Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 Section 109 prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex or religion in programs and activities receiving financial assistance from HUD's Community Development and Block Grant Program.</p>
<p>Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 Title II prohibits discrimination based on disability in programs, services, and activities provided or made available by public entities. HUD enforces Title II when it relates to state and local public housing, housing assistance and housing referrals.</p>
<p>Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 The Architectural Barriers Act requires that buildings and facilities designed, constructed, altered, or leased with certain federal funds after September 1969 must be accessible to and useable by handicapped persons.</p>
<p>Age Discrimination Act of 1975 The Age Discrimination Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of age in programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance.</p>
<p>Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 Title IX prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in education programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance.</p>

Fair Housing-Related Presidential Executive Orders:
Executive Order 11063 prohibits discrimination in the sale, leasing, rental, or other disposition of properties and facilities owned or operated by the federal government or provided with federal funds.
Executive Order 11246 , as amended, bars discrimination in federal employment because of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.
Executive Order 12892 , as amended, requires federal agencies to affirmatively further fair housing in their programs and activities, and provides that the Secretary of HUD will be responsible for coordinating the effort. The Order also establishes the President's Fair Housing Council, which will be chaired by the Secretary of HUD.
Executive Order 12898 requires that each federal agency conduct its program, policies, and activities that substantially affect human health or the environment in a manner that does not exclude persons based on race, color, or national origin.
Executive Order 13166 eliminates, to the extent possible, limited English proficiency as a barrier to full and meaningful participation by beneficiaries in all federally-assisted and federally conducted programs and activities.
Executive Order 13217 requires federal agencies to evaluate their policies and programs to determine if any can be revised or modified to improve the availability of community-based living arrangements for persons with disabilities.

The City could also work with non-profit affordable housing developers such as Tierra del Sol to build more lower cost multi-family housing in Socorro. It could also encourage Socorro residents to make use of the home-buyer technical assistance services

A second approach would be to promote rehabilitation of existing housing. The City could seek additional grants from the federal HOME program to develop a grant or loan program or work with a non-profit housing agency to help fund repair and maintenance of existing homes. Classes could also be offered to teach these skills to residents.

Allowing smaller lot sizes for future homes could help keep costs lower. Also, the City could ensure there is sufficient land in the right places zoned for higher density housing, such as townhouses and apartments. These strategies, however, should be balanced against the increased traffic they will create. Additional roadways and access to transit should be planned. Subdivisions should be required to have at least two accesses and encouraged to link to other subdivisions to provide alternative travel lanes. The City could also consider promoting use of its Planned Unit Development (PUD) zoning category, which would permit development of a large tract of land as a complete neighborhood unit with a range of dwelling types, necessary local shopping facilities and off-street parking areas, parks, playgrounds, and potentially school sites or other community facilities.

Figure 16. Example of Conventional Subdivision Design versus Conservation Subdivision Design

CONVENTIONAL SUBDIVISION DESIGN



CONSERVATION SUBDIVISION DESIGN



C. HOUSING GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Housing Goal 1

The City of Socorro will accommodate projected growth by means that protect the community’s historical and agricultural character.

- Strategy a. Encourage smaller lot sizes for single family dwellings by ensuring sufficient land is zoned for these uses and providing financial incentives or density bonuses.*
 - Strategy b. Encourage development of higher density housing such as multi-family apartments and townhouses in areas close to retail, employment, and transit.*
 - Strategy c. Encourage use of the Planned Unit Development zoning category to allow a mix of residential and commercial/office uses where appropriate.*
 - Strategy d. Permit and encourage cluster/conservation subdivision development.*
-

Housing Goal 2

New housing developments in Socorro will be of good quality with sufficient amenities and accesses to arterial roadways.

- Strategy a. Ensure there are at least two access points provided for each development*
- Strategy b. Ensure new subdivisions provide sufficient parks and open space.*
- Strategy c. Require new residential subdivisions to provide pedestrian and vehicular connections to other subdivisions via internal streets and pathways.*
- Strategy d. Require a traffic impact analysis of a proposed development and require mitigation as part of approval.*

Housing Goal 3

The City of Socorro will ensure that sufficient infrastructure is provided to support the anticipated housing growth.

- Strategy a. Give priority to application for subdivisions that are near or can easily be served by existing infrastructure.*
- Strategy b. Consider the use of impact fees to help pay for infrastructure attributable to growth.*
- Strategy c. Work closely with the MPO to make sure road improvement projects to support growth are included in the regional long-range plans.*
- Strategy d. Establish a systematic method to assess the infrastructure needs of existing residential subdivisions (sidewalks, paths, streetlights) and prioritize their improvements for funding when available.*

Housing Goal 4

Provide housing that meets the affordability needs of Socorro's residents.

- Strategy a. Strengthen relationships with non-profit housing organizations to encourage them to provide additional quality affordable housing and related services in Socorro.*
- Strategy b. Strengthen the relationship with the El Paso County Housing Authority to increase access to Section 8 housing assistance vouchers for eligible Socorro residents.*
- Strategy c. Develop local capacity within the City of Socorro administration and in local non-profits to administer the full range of affordable housing programs.*
- Strategy d. Serve as a resource to Socorro residents for fair housing education and assistance. Provide a fair housing complaint system that enables residents to file a complaint locally. Assist residents who have been the subject of discrimination with complaints to HUD and the Texas Workforce Commission.*
- Strategy e. Develop the capacity for grant management, including grant writing and administration.*

Strategy f. Work with local investors who are interested in developing affordable rental projects to ensure that infrastructure is adequate at suitable sites for multifamily housing.

Housing Goal 5

Maintain the existing housing stock

Strategy a. Work with the nonprofit housing organizations and the federal HOME program to develop a housing rehabilitation program to provide qualifying residents with loans or grants to repair and maintain their homes.

Strategy b. Work with the County, nonprofit housing organizations and El Paso Community College to develop instruction in home maintenance and repair for interested residents.

Strategy c. Work with local non-profits to refer residents who need assistance with disabilities to the right resources.

Strategy d. Develop a program to provide seniors and people with disabilities with minor home repairs that make the house livable but do not require bringing the entire structure up to current codes.

Page intentionally left blank

VI. PUBLIC FACILITIES

A. INTRODUCTION

Public facilities encompass a broad range of areas, including recreation, education, and public health and safety. They include both publicly-provided services as well as private and non-profit services. This chapter addresses the community's expectations regarding public services and the facilities needed to provide these services. The public facilities plan for Socorro focuses on both the building space and personnel needed to provide services such as police, fire, library, administration, and infrastructure for the city's residents. Public buildings that house the various governmental and service functions of a municipality are generally of two types: 1) those requiring a nearly central or a common location and that serve the entire municipal area and 2) those serving segments of the community on a service-area basis. Socorro's Municipal Building is an example of a governmental building that serves the entire community, while local schools represent public buildings that typically serve a portion of the community's geographic area. Figure 17 shows the location of community facilities in Socorro.

B. GOVERNMENT OFFICES

The Socorro government offices are split between two locations. The Socorro Municipal Building at 124 S. Horizon Boulevard houses offices of the Mayor, City Council, City Manager, City Clerk, and Human Resources. The City Administrative Complex on Rio Vista Road, part of the historic district in that area, contains the Municipal Courtroom, City Council chambers, the Planning and Zoning Department, and a police substation.

In Fall 2011 the City of Socorro employed 84 persons, more than 80 percent of whom worked for either the police department or public works. The total personnel for each City department are as follows:

- Administration (includes City Manager and City Clerk)—10 employees
- Municipal Court—6 employees
- Planning and Zoning—7 employees
- Police Department—32 employees
- Public Works—26 employees
- Recreational Services—3 employees

1. PUBLIC WORKS

Socorro's Public Works Department is located across from the Hueco Elementary School at 241 Old Hueco Tanks Road in the northern portion of the City. The department employs a total of 26 staff members. The facility also serves as a storage yard for the Road Department's heavy equipment.



(From top) Socorro Administrative Complex, Socorro Municipal Building, Socorro Public Works Building

2. RECYCLING CENTER AND TRASH SERVICE

Socorro's Recycling Center at 241 Old Hueco Tanks Road is open from 8 am to 5 pm Tuesday through Saturday for residents to recycle cardboard and plastics. It does not accept glass or tires. Trash pick-up service in the city is provided by the Lower Valley Water District for a fee.

3. POLICE SERVICE

Socorro is served by two police stations and had a total of 32 employees in Fall of 2011. The main headquarters is located at the City's Courthouse and Administrative complex in the Rio Vista Historic District at 800 N Rio Vista Road, while the second station is located at 670 Poona Road in the northeastern portion of the city. There is also another City building on Vineyard, formerly called the Sports Complex and now called the Police Association Building. Designed as a fire station to accommodate two fire trucks, it was abandoned when the Fire Department moved to a larger County facility at North Loop Drive and Bauman Road. It is used for meetings and to store sports equipment.

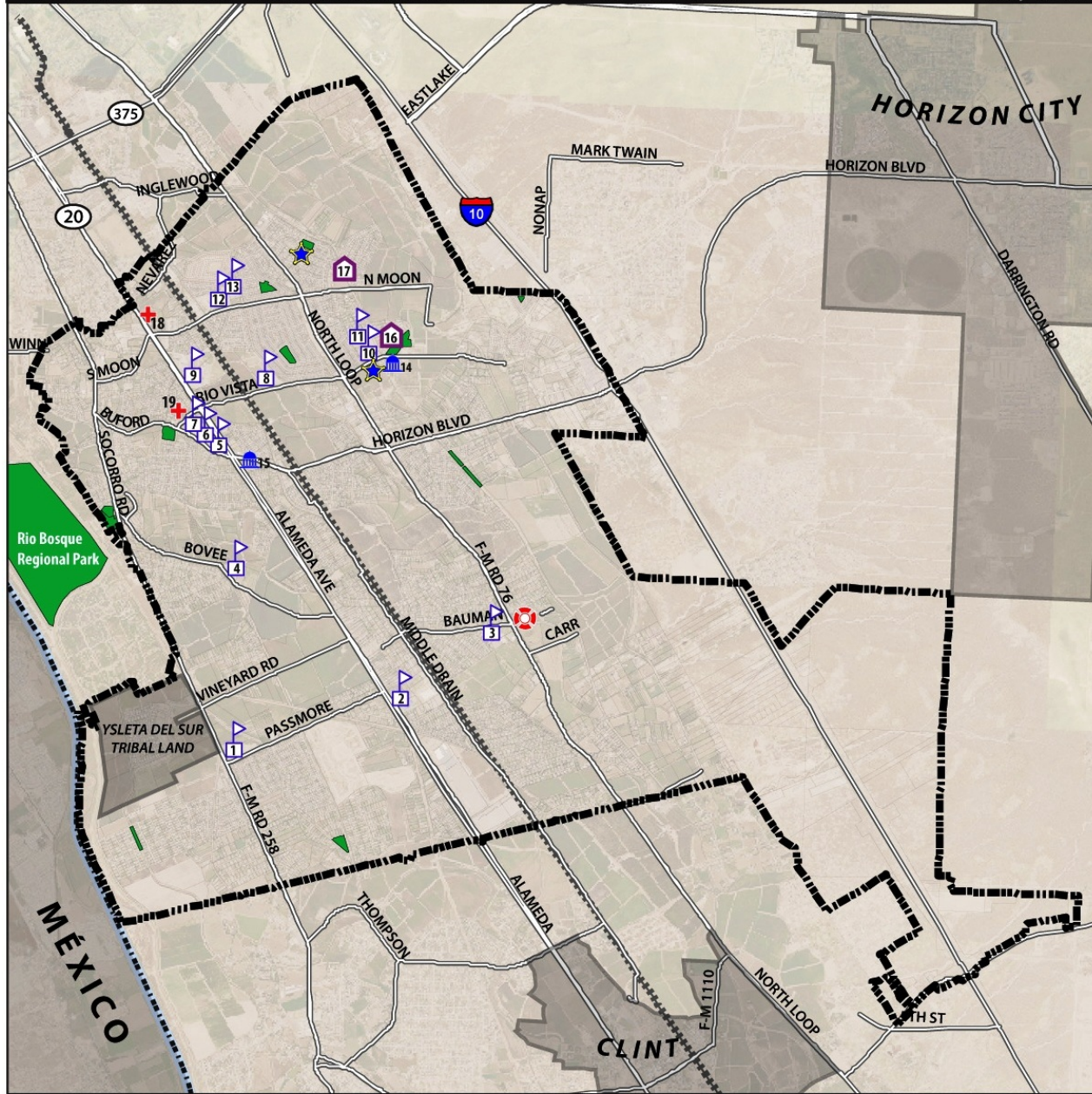
4. FIRE DEPARTMENT

Socorro is served by the District 2 County Fire department, which provides firefighting and other emergency services throughout El Paso County. Firefighters are volunteers whose operations are funded through a district-wide portion of property and sales taxes. Their location in a large firehouse at North Loop Drive and Bauman Road provides six bays, each of which can hold three fire trucks or other vehicles and equipment. From 30 to 35 personnel volunteer at the Socorro station, which has mutual aid agreements with the other five county fire departments. It is transitioning to paid service. The Socorro fire station is staffed around the clock, typically by 6 to 12 people. It can summon 30 to 40 trucks and 270 personnel within 15 to 20 minutes, according to the assistant fire chief.

A new Fire District 2 headquarters is in the works which would provide administrative offices for all the fire chiefs, the County inspector, meeting rooms and possibly an adjacent fire station. It would be located in Socorro to provide a central location for the monthly district meetings. Planners are considering the corner of Bovee Road and Alameda Avenue as a possible site.

Figure 17. Socorro Public Facilities

SOCORRO COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN - PUBLIC FACILITIES May 2012



Sources: Texas General Land Office, El Paso MPO, City of Socorro, Texas, Paso del Norte Mapa, County of El Paso, Texas Natural Resources Information System
 All data has been obtained from public sources and no warranty is made to its absolute accuracy

LEGEND

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Schools | Government | Public Safety | City Parks |
| 1. Campestre Elementary School | 14. Rio Vista Courthouse & Administrative Complex | Fire Station | Socorro City Limits |
| 2. Ernesto Serna Elementary School | 15. Socorro City Hall | Health Clinics | |
| 3. Roberto R. Rojas Elementary School | Community Centers | 18. Medicine Clinic | |
| 4. Socorro Middle School | 16. Rio Vista Community Center | 19. Texas Tech Socorro Clinic | |
| 5. Escontrias Early Childhood Center | 17. E.G. "Chayo" Apodaca Community Center | | |
| 6. Escontrias Elementary School | | | |
| 7. KEYS Academy High School | | | |
| 8. Salvador H. Sanchez Middle School | | | |
| 9. Socorro High School | | | |
| 10. Socorro Head Start | | | |
| 11. H.D. Hilley Elementary School | | | |
| 12. Hueco Head Start | | | |
| 13. Hueco Elementary School | | | |

Prepared by:

C. COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

1. RIO VISTA COMMUNITY CENTER

The Rio Vista Community Center is a 600-square-foot facility located in the Rio Vista Historic District. The center is operated by a total of three staff members and is open to the public Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm. The Community Center hosts a number of activities and programs, including aerobics, GED classes and activities for seniors.

2. NEW COMMUNITY CENTER

A new community center opened in Socorro Council District 2 in September 2011. The City renovated a former city fire station at 341 S. Moon Road to house the center. It features a daycare center, computers, a high tech game room, a library, and a children’s recreation and study area. The City is purchasing nine adjacent acres for a multi-purpose room that will offer a basketball court, a stage, meeting rooms and possibly a skate park. The community center is to be named after E.S. (Chayo) Apodaca, a well-known Socorro citizen who brought the first fire engine to the city and served on one of the first City Councils.

3. TIGUA RECREATION & WELLNESS CENTER

The Ysleta del Sur Pueblo (YDSP), a federally-recognized Indian tribe, established the YDSP Recreation and Wellness Center in 2001. The center is a 100,516-square-foot facility a fully equipped gym, indoor basketball and racket ball courts, outdoor patio and picnic areas and a banquet facility with the capacity to serve 234 individuals. The facility also offers catering. The center is open to Socorro residents for a small fee.

The Pueblo also collaborates with the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, El Paso County and City of Socorro in an effort respond to surrounding community emergency needs. Therefore, the center has been designated as a Red Cross Emergency shelter.

4. EL CAMPANARIO BALLROOM

Located approximately two miles east of Loop 375 off Socorro Road, the El Campanario Ballroom serves El Paso, Socorro, San Elizario, Clint, Tornillo, Fabens and the surrounding communities. Though not a public facility, El Campanario is considered a quality-of-life site that is available to rent for events such as weddings, anniversaries, quinceañeras, birthdays, conferences and organization meetings. The facility offers a package that includes space rental, catering, and security. The hall is also available at discounted rates



Rio Vista Community Center



El Campanario Ballroom



Latest Community Center

during weekdays and throughout the daytime hours for business conferences and organization meetings.

D. SCHOOLS

The Socorro Independent School District (SISD) is located in the southeastern portion of El Paso County, Texas, covering 136 square miles. It serves the City of Socorro, Horizon City, and the eastern portion of the City of El Paso.

SISD is one of the fastest growing school districts in the state of Texas. The District has 19 elementary schools, six pre-kindergarten through 8th grade schools, eight middle schools, seven high schools, one alternative school and a community education program.

There are a total of nine SISD schools in the City of Socorro, serving pre-kindergarten to 12th grade. Table 24 below includes information on each of the schools' locations and grades served. Also included in this section are brief descriptions of each of the schools.

Table 24. Schools in the City of Socorro

School	Address	Grades
Campestre Elementary School	11399 Socorro Rd	Pre-Kindergarten—5 th Grade
Ernesto Serna School	11471 Alameda Ave	Pre-Kindergarten—8 th Grade
Roberto R. Rojas Elementary School	500 Bauman Rd	Kindergarten—5 th Grade
H.D. Hilley Elementary School	693 N. Rio Vista Rd	Kindergarten—5 th Grade
Escontrias Elementary School	205 Buford Rd	Pre-Kindergarten—5 th Grade
Hueco Elementary School	300 Old Hueco Tanks Rd	Kindergarten—5 th Grade
Salvador H. Sanchez Middle School	321 N. Rio Vista Rd	6 th Grade—8 th Grade
Socorro Middle School	321 Bovee Rd	6 th Grade—8 th Grade
Socorro High School	10150 Alameda Rd	9 th Grade—12 th Grade
K.E.Y.S. Academy High School	12380 Pine Springs Rd	6 th Grade—12 th Grade

1. CAMPESTRE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Located along Socorro's Historic Mission Trail, Campestre Elementary School was opened in 1982. The school currently serves pre-kindergarten to fifth grade students and houses an Even Start Family Literacy Program.

2. ERNESTO SERNA SCHOOL

Ernesto Serna School opened in 2000 and is an open-enrollment campus that serves students from pre-kindergarten to 8th grade. The school offers a two-way dual language curriculum.

3. ROBERTO R. ROJAS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Located in southeast Socorro, Robert R. Rojas Elementary School opened in 1987. The school serves kindergarten through 5th grade students.

4. H.D. HILLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Opened in 1980, H.D. Hilley Elementary School serves 818 students, grades K-5. The school also houses a Head Start program, which serves children ages one through five.

5. ESCONTRIAS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Escontrias Elementary School is the SISD's oldest facility, opening its doors in 1924. Today the school serves pre-kindergarten to 5th grade students.

6. HUECO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Opened in 1983, Hueco Elementary School currently serves approximately 650 students grades K-5. The school's population is 99 percent Hispanic.

7. SALVADOR H. SANCHEZ MIDDLE SCHOOL

Opened in 1990, Salvador H. Sanchez Middle School currently serves approximately 780 students, grades 6-8. Feeder schools for Salvador Sanchez Mid School are H.D. Hilley, Escontrias, Roberto R. Rojas, and Hueco Elementary School.

8. SOCORRO MIDDLE SCHOOL

Socorro Middle School opened in 1990. The middle school serves students in grades 6 to 8.

9. SOCORRO HIGH SCHOOL

Socorro High School, the city's first high school, opened in 1965. Socorro HS currently serves approximately 2,800 students, grades 9-12.

10. KEYS ACADEMY HIGH SCHOOL

Established in 1995, the KEYS Academy is the SISD’s Discipline Education Alternative Program (DAEP). KEYS Academy currently serves students in 6th – 12th grades.

11. HEAD START PROGRAM

Head Start is a federally funded early childhood education and development program for low-income families that partners with school districts, local agencies, social services, and healthcare providers. The program offers a high-quality, comprehensive early childhood development and education program including pre-kindergarten. The program’s services are designed to increase the school readiness of children as well as their preparedness for the future.

The program also offers a range of free services designed to foster healthy development of young children from birth until age five. Services extended to Head Start children and families include health, education, nutrition, disabilities, mental health and family services.

Head Start partners with school districts, local agencies, social services and healthcare providers throughout our community serve to enrich family living and assist with individual needs. There are a total of four Head Start programs in Socorro, including Escontrias Early Childhood Center, Hueco Head Start Program, the Socorro Head Start Program and H.D. Hilley Elementary School, which has a Head Start program located on its campus.

E. PUBLIC HEALTH CLINICS

1. TEXAS TECH FAMILY HEALTH CLINIC

Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center School of Medicine provides health care for more than 200,000 patients across the Texas South Plains and Eastern New Mexico. Care is centered in four main cities—Amarillo, El Paso, Lubbock and Odessa—with a service area encompassing more than 108 counties. The four campuses operate more than 30 patient clinics, from family medicine and pediatrics to surgical oncology and pediatric orthopedics. Primary care clinics include family and community medicine, internal medicine, obstetrics and gynecology and pediatrics. Specialty clinics cover orthopedics, surgery, oncology, ophthalmology, dermatology, neuropsychiatry, and pain clinic management. Additionally, clinical services are available for Alzheimer’s disease, nutritional medicine, diabetes education and addictive diseases.

Located at the intersection of N. Rio Vista Road and Buford Road in central Socorro, the Socorro Family Health Clinic is a partnership between Kellogg and Texas Tech. The facility provides primary care and family medicine for Socorro’s residents. The facility is open from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday.

2. EL PASO COMMUNITY COLLEGE MISSION DEL PASO CAMPUS

Straddling the City's municipal limits to the northeast is El Paso Community College's Mission del Paso campus. Located at 10700 Gateway East between Americas Avenue and Horizon Boulevard, the new facility offers a full range of classes and degree programs. Available are technical and vocational programs such as accounting, industrial manufacturing advanced technology, court reporting, dental assisting and hygiene, digital video production and nursing, among many others. It also offers programs in the traditional academic disciplines such as art, biology and geology and mathematics. All student services are also available including admission, registration, financial aid, and counseling.

In the spring of 2000, the college opened a state-of-the-art Law Enforcement Training Academy which meets the training needs of area law enforcement agencies and provides a full spectrum of training programs for security guards and peace officers.

In order to accommodate the campus' growth, a new building opened in the Spring of 2004 that provided much needed space to house instructional labs for English as a Second Language (ESL), reading, and general tutoring services, along with faculty offices and two multi-purpose classrooms.

F. PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES ISSUES

1. PUBLIC FACILITIES

Similar to the City's public parks, many of Socorro's public facilities are old and in need of significant improvements. For example, both the Municipal Building on Horizon and the Administrative Complex on Rio Vista are too small to house all of the City's departments. Consolidating all the government offices in one central location would provide a more efficient government operation and reduce traffic traveling back and forth. A new, consolidated Municipal Building could also potentially serve as an anchor for a town center in Socorro.

Socorro's historic Rio Vista Community Center is also in need of maintenance such as repainting the walls, cleaning floors and replacing windows. As discussed in the Economic Development Chapter, the historic Rio Vista Farm with its former Bracero Center in combination with the existing Administrative Building, could be redeveloped into a tourist destination and museum.



Socorro Administrative Complex



Rio Vista Community Center

2. PUBLIC SAFETY

Participants during the public input process commented that Socorro needs more police and a larger holding facility. A police substation and fire station is needed on the southwestern side of the railroad tracks to prevent trains from delaying delivery of emergency services. Residents also called for improvements in the volunteer fire department to make it a paid force that is more available and prepared for emergencies. This is also an issue in other small towns in El Paso County. While Socorro representatives have suggested paying the salaries of a few full-time firefighters, the issue is complicated by the division between City and County finances and because firefighters are deployed all over the County. Hiring a few full-time firefighters might be feasible if all the municipalities contributed some funds for this purpose.

Both meeting participants and stakeholders also pointed to the City's lack of animal control services as an issue to be addressed. In Fall 2012, the City was working on an animal control ordinance.

3. PUBLIC SERVICES

Socorro residents also feel that there is a need for more public health facilities, clinics, and services. Also mentioned during the public input process was a desire for technical/vocational/continuing education college for adults within the city.

4. TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Socorro recently received a grant for a 19-passenger bus that could be used to transport seniors to such destinations as shopping and medical appointments. The City should explore funding resources for this purpose.

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Public Facilities Goal 1.

The City of Socorro will develop adequate Public Facilities and Services to meet the needs of its residents.

Strategy a. Adopt a target level-of-service policy regarding public facilities and services for the City (for example, the maximum number of residents to be served by each community center and or the maximum time for emergency response). Special

consideration should be paid to locating police and emergency services on the southwestern side of the railroad tracks to avoid delays due to trains.

- Strategy b. Develop and implement a public facilities and services plan that creates a timeline for the maintenance, rehabilitation, and expansion of public facilities and services, and seeks funding for implementation.*
- Strategy c. Identify locations and secure land for additional community centers, police and fire substations in underserved areas of the city.*
- Strategy d. Work with the County of El Paso to fund salaries for a few full-time, paid firefighters in Fire District 2.*
- Strategy e. Consolidate all of Socorro’s municipal offices within a new city hall in a central location with good arterial and transit access.*
- Strategy f. Renovate the Rio Vista Farms area and the existing Administrative Complex into a tourist destination and museum.*
- Strategy g. Analyze the feasibility of providing Animal Control Services for the City. The analysis can look at the financial feasibility of either establishing a City-operated Animal Control facility or entering into a Memorandum of Understanding with another existing Animal Control Service provider.*

VII. PARKS AND RECREATION

A. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to examine and analyze the City of Socorro’s existing park and recreation spaces and facilities, identify issues related to present and future community needs, and to make recommendations for how the City’s park and recreation facilities can be integrated into a cohesive system. This chapter also evaluates existing facilities, compares Socorro’s park system with national park standards, and identifies park-related issues that the City of Socorro will need to address in the short and long term.

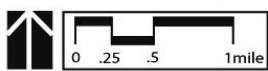
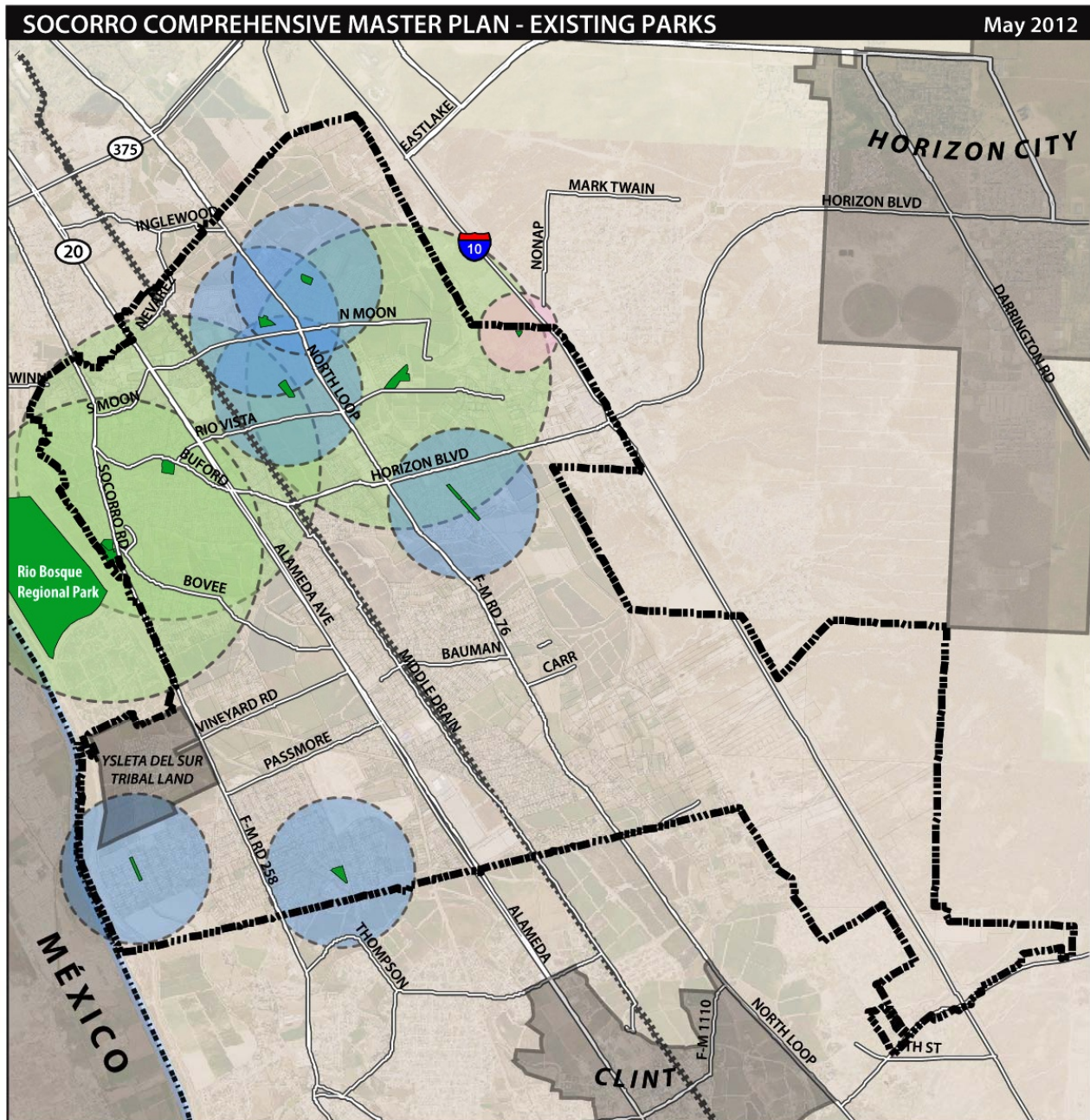
B. EXISTING PARK CONDITIONS

Detailed in Table 25 below, the City of Socorro is currently served by 11 parks, which in total encompass 46.4 acres. An additional park, named Bulldog Championship Park, was recently constructed. Figure 18 shows the locations of all of Socorro’s parks and their respective service areas. The area served by a park depends on the park’s size and proximity. Socorro’s parks range in size from less than one acre to more than 11 acres. Their service areas, shown on the map by overlapping circles, range from a quarter-mile to a one-and-a half-mile radius. While the northern portion of Socorro has a number of parks, the southern portion, particularly the southeast, has far fewer park options.

Table 25. Existing Socorro Parks

Park Name	Owner/Manager	Park Type	Acres	Service Area
Amistad Park	City of Socorro	Neighborhood	2.06	Gran Valle
Bulldog Championship Park	City of Socorro	Community	6.22	Socorro Mission Area, Spanish Trail, Villa España, Rio Vista, Alameda Estates, La Junta
Bonita Park	City of Socorro	Neighborhood	3.08	Flor del Rio
Cielo Azul Park	City of Socorro	Mini-Park	.77	Cielo Azul
Cougar Park	El Paso County/ City of Socorro	Community	10.43	Socorro Mission Area
Moon Park	City of El Paso/ City of Socorro	Neighborhood	2.56	North Loop Acres/Delip
Paradise Park	City of Socorro	Neighborhood	1.49	Country Green, Mary Lou Park, Cottonwood Cove
Rio Vista Park	City of Socorro	Community	11.42	Rio Rancho Estates
Valle de Sol Park		Neighborhood	4.41	Valle del Sol
Valle Hermoso Park	City of El Paso/ City of Socorro	Neighborhood	3.64	Valle Hermoso Estates
Total Park Acreage			46.08	

Figure 18. Socorro Parks



Sources: Texas General Land Office, El Paso MPO, City of Socorro, Texas, Paso del Norte Mapa, County of El Paso, Texas Natural Resources Information System
 All data has been obtained from public sources and no warranty is made to its absolute accuracy

LEGEND

Socorro City Limits	Parcels	Existing Park
Quarter-Mile Service Area	Half-Mile Service Area	One Mile Service Area

Prepared by:

C. PARK CLASSIFICATIONS

The following section describes common park classifications, amenities typically found, and Socorro parks that fall into those categories. The information comes from a variety of sources, primarily the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and the Parks Master Plan for Greenville, Texas, a small city with a population comparable to Socorro's.

1. MINI-PARK

A mini-park or “pocket” park is a small area generally designed to serve a very small population area. These parks normally serve a population of 500 to 1,000 persons. Although they range in size, they are typically one acre or smaller and have a service area of one-quarter mile. The primary function and use of this type of park is to provide recreational space for school-age children within walking distance of their residences.

Although most parks are owned and maintained by public entities such as local governments, it is common for mini-parks to be owned or maintained by private entities such as property owners associations or neighborhood associations. This is partly because the small scale of mini-parks makes it more conducive for private owners such as a neighborhood association to maintain them. Thus, if maintenance costs associated with mini-parks is a concern, the City of Socorro could require that any future development, ownership, and maintenance responsibilities be private in nature. Because of its small size, Cielo Azul Park is considered a mini-park.

2. NEIGHBORHOOD PARK

The neighborhood park is one of the most important elements of the park system and is considered to be one of the major cohesive elements in neighborhood design. The primary function of the neighborhood park is to provide recreational space for the neighborhood that surrounds it. When combined with an elementary school, the two facilities further enhance the fabric and identity of the neighborhood by providing a central location for recreation and education and by providing significant open space within the neighborhood.

A neighborhood park should be located near the center of a neighborhood and should have a service area of approximately one-half mile. Safe and convenient pedestrian access via sidewalks or trails is important to a neighborhood park location. To ensure pedestrian safety, the park's location should not be adjacent to major thoroughfares with high amounts of traffic. Amenities normally provided at a neighborhood park consist of the following:

- Playground equipment for small children
- A multiple-purpose, surfaced play area
- An athletic area for games such as baseball, football and soccer, and a surfaced area for such sports as volleyball, basketball and similar activities

Other desirable elements for neighborhood parks include:

- Pavilions with tables and grills for picnics
- Restrooms
- Water fountains
- Tennis courts
- Areas with landscaping, trees and natural elements

Neighborhood parks are designed to serve a relatively small population area. An appropriate standard in relation to size and population for this type of park is 2.5 acres per 1,000 persons. These parks normally serve a population of 1,000 to 2,500 persons, and they generally range in size from one acre to 15 acres. In Socorro, Bonita Park and Moon Park are considered neighborhood parks.

3. COMMUNITY PARKS

A community park is larger than a neighborhood park, is oriented toward providing active recreational facilities for all ages, and should have a service area of approximately 1 mile. As community parks serve several neighborhood areas, they should be easily accessible by automobile and should include off-street parking. Activities provided in these parks generally include:

- Game and practice fields for baseball, football, soccer and softball
- A community building/recreation center
- Tennis courts
- A surfaced, multiple-purpose play area
- Playground structures
- Areas for picnicking
- Other special facilities, such as frisbee golf, if space is available

It is desirable for community parks to be constructed adjacent to, or as a part of, a middle school or high school to allow for joint use. An appropriate size for a community park in relation to population is three acres per 1,000 persons; they generally range in size from 15 acres to 25 acres. Although smaller than the NRPA-recommended acreage, Belen Park and Cougar Park are considered community parks.

4. REGIONAL PARKS

Regional parks are 25 or more acres in size and provide both passive and active recreational facilities. The NRPA- recommended service area for a regional park is two or more miles. Passive recreational activities are activities that don't require playing fields such as mountain biking, walking, wildlife viewing, and picnicking. Active recreational activities, on the other hand, involve playing fields and team participation such as football, baseball, and soccer. These parks can serve all age groups and draw from the larger community. They often offer unique amenities such as fishing, boating, hiking and natural areas. There are no regional parks within Socorro at present; however, the adjacent Rio Bosque Wetlands Park is a 372-acre City of El Paso park, managed by the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) through its Center for Environmental Resource Management (CERM), is considered a regional park.

5. SPECIAL PARKS

Golf courses, linear parks/greenbelts, trails, country clubs, school parks, botanical gardens and special athletic and community centers are considered to be special types of recreational facilities. Standards for this type of facility vary and depend upon the extent of services provided.

6. TRAILS, OPEN SPACE, PRESERVES AND GREENBELTS

These areas are natural, generally left undisturbed, and can be referred to as preserves. Although active recreation can be accommodated within these areas, they are primarily intended for passive recreational use. Although their primary role is to serve as maintenance roads, the trails along the canal/acequia network that winds throughout the City of Socorro could be considered informal trails.

D. NRPA GENERAL PARK STANDARDS

For Socorro to provide the most efficient and adequate parks, recreation, and open space facilities for its residents, a set of standards and design criteria should be followed. Although there is no national standard of "x" number of acres of parkland per person, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) has developed a set of guidelines for parks, recreation and open space development that are intended to help guide local governments. Furthermore, the NRPA recommends that each community determine its own appropriate standard, tailored to an appropriate range, quantity and quality of recreational facilities.

Table 26 details the NRPA’s recommended standards for various park types. These standards include minimum park size, recommended acreage per 1000 people (by park type) and service area radius.

Table 26: Socorro Park Acreage in Relation to NRPA Park Standards

Park Type	Service Area	Park Size (acres)	Recommended Acres per 1000 People	Current Acres	Needed Acres (est. 2010 population)	Needed Acres (est. 2030 population)
Mini-Park	¼ mile	≤1	.25—.50	.77	7.5	10.6
Neighborhood	½ mile	1-15	1—2	17.24	14.77	28.2
Community	1+ mile	15-25	5—8	28.07	131.9	199.5
Regional	2+ mile	25+	10+	0	320	455
TOTAL			16.25—20.5	46.08	474.1	693.6

Source: Socorro, Texas GIS Data, 2010

Prior to calculating the ratio of parkland for Socorro, it is important to note that the estimated 2010 population of Socorro is 32,013 persons (US Census Bureau). Based on this population, the following equation was used to calculate the City’s ratio of parkland:

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Acres per 1000 people} &= \text{Total Park Acreage} \div (\text{Population} \div 1,000) \\
 &= 46.39 \text{ acres} \div (32,013 \div 1,000) \\
 &= 1.43 \text{ acres per 1,000 people}
 \end{aligned}$$

As seen in the result of the equation above, Socorro’s total existing park acreage equals approximately 1.4 acres of parkland for every 1,000 persons in the city. Based on the NRPA standards included in Table 26 above, the recommended minimum acres of parkland per 1000 persons for the city’s current population is 16.25; thus Socorro is well below the NRPA-recommended standard for overall park acreage.

According to the NRPA standards, the city should currently have a minimum of approximately 521 acres of parkland—474 more acres than the existing parks provide. Socorro’s projected population in 2030 will be 45,519 (Texas Water Development Board, 2010). To meet the recommended NRPA standard by that date, the City would have to acquire and develop an additional 693 acres of parkland by then.

Considering that Socorro is a fairly rural community with a significant amount of open space in the form of agricultural land, the recommended NRPA standard for the total amount of park acreage may be unrealistic and even undesirable. Thus, another way to approach determining the appropriate park balance is by looking at the existing parks’ service areas. In addition to showing the location of Socorro’s parks, Figure 18 illustrates each park’s service area, defined as a radial distance of a quarter mile to 1 ½ miles surrounding each park, depending on its size and function. Further analysis using this approach shows that Socorro’s existing park network serves much of the city; however, the map also indicates that the southern and southeastern portions of the city are not currently served by any of the City’s existing parks. Thus, it is recommended that any future acquisitions and/or development of parkland should occur in that area.

E. PARK ASSESSMENT

Table 27 is an assessment of Socorro’s parks. The table identifies all of Socorro’s existing park facilities and lists the number of amenities at each, such as landscape features, facilities, benches, playground equipment and amenities. The table also ranks the conditions of each park on a scale of 1 to 3. Rankings are based on the following criteria:

- 1 = Poor (Poor landscape conditions— dead grass, no shrubs or plants; no amenities, facilities, or equipment; existing amenities, facilities and equipment in serious need of improvements, repair, and/or replacement)
- 2 = Adequate (Landscape—grass, trees—in adequate or fair condition; existing amenities, facilities and equipment in need of minor improvement)
- 3 = Good (Landscape in good condition with ample trees and grass; existing amenities, facilities and equipment in good condition with little or no need for improvement)

Table 27. Park Assessment

		Park Sign	Soccer Fields	Baseball Fields	Open Play Areas	Basketball Courts	Handball Courts	Football Field	Trail	Exercise Stations	Bathroom Facilities	Trash Receptacles	Mitt-Mutt	Picnic Tables	Benches	Landscape Conditions	Trees	Grass	Shrubs	Native Landscaping	Shade Canopies	Playground Equipment	Grill	Gazebo	Parking	ADA Facilities	Chain Link Fence	Overall Conditions Good=3 Needs improvement=2 Poor=1	Approx. Area	
1	Amistad Park	No	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	Poor	12	yes	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	yes	1	2.06 Acre
2	Bonita Park	0	1	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	Poor	12	yes	0	0	1	1-swings	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3.08 Acre
3	Cielo Azul Park	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	6	deep	20	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1-no ramp	0	1	.77 acre	
4	Cougar Park	1	1	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	6	0	10	8	Poor	20+	yes	0	0	8	3	3	0	yes	0	yes	1	10.43 Acre	
5	Moon Park	1	1	0	1	2	1	0	1	0	portables	5	0	5	8	Poor	20+	yes	0	0	3	1	4	1	0	0	yes	1	2.56 Acre	
6	Paradise Park	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	3	0	3	0	Poor	35+	yes	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1.49 Acre	
7	Rio Vista Park	2	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	7	0	8	4	Poor	80+	yes	0	0	0	1	0	0	yes	0	0	1	11.42 Acre	
8	Valle del Sol Park	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	3	0	Poor	15+	yes	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	4.41 Acre	
9	Valle Hermoso Park	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Poor	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1-no ramp	0	1	3.73 Acre

Source: Sites Southwest Park Condition Survey, 2011

The following section is a brief description of park conditions for each of Socorro’s parks.

1. AMISTAD PARK

Amistad Park is 2.06 acres in size and is located in the Gran Valle Subdivision in the southwestern portion of Socorro. Amistad Park contains a soccer field, an open play area with playground equipment, a basketball court, a walking trail and 12 trees. The park also contains one trash receptacle. Amistad Park does not have bathroom facilities or any shade structures. In addition, the park's grass and overall landscape are in poor condition and there is no signage identifying the property as a public park.



Amistad Park



Amistad Park

2. BONITA PARK

Bonita Park is 3.08 acres in size and is located in the Flor del Rio Subdivision in southern Socorro. Bonita Park contains a soccer field and a football field, two basketball courts, an open play area with a swing set, and 12 trees. The park also contains two trash receptacles. Bonita Park also has a shade canopy; however, the park has no bathroom facilities. The park's landscape is in poor condition, and there is no signage identifying the property as a public park. In April 2012 the Socorro City Council dedicated one acre of the park in honor of former City Mayor Joe S. Carrasco.



Bonita Park

3. CIELO AZUL PARK

Cielo Azul Park is Socorro’s smallest park at 0.77 acre in size. It is located in the Cielo Azul Subdivision in the eastern-most portion of Socorro, adjacent to I-10. The park contains a picnic table and shade structure, one trash receptacle, six benches, and a total of 20 trees. There are no bathroom facilities, playing fields, or playground equipment. Cielo Azul Park does have an ADA-accessible access ramp and ample street-side parking. The park’s overall landscape is in poor condition, however, and there is no signage identifying the property as a public park.



Ceilo Azul Park

4. COUGAR PARK

Located off of Socorro Road in the city’s Historic Mission District, Cougar Park is Socorro’s largest park at 10.43 acres in size. Cougar Park contains a soccer field, three baseball fields with bleachers, a basketball court, 10 picnic tables, bathroom facilities, six trash receptacles, three grills, and eight benches with shade canopies. While the park also has grass and more than 20 trees, the landscape is in relatively poor condition. The park has an open play area with three sets of playground equipment, as well as parking and signage identifying it as a public park.



Cougar Park



Cougar Park

5. MOON PARK

Moon Park is a 2.56 acre neighborhood park located in the Delip Subdivision, found in the northeastern portion of Socorro. Moon Park has a soccer field, an open play area with playground equipment, two basketball courts, a handball court, and walking trail. The park also has a gazebo, portable bathroom facilities, five picnic tables, three shade canopies, four grills, eight benches, and five trash receptacles. Moon Park has signage identifying it as a public park, grass and more than 20 trees; however, the park's landscape is in poor condition.



Moon Park



Moon Park

6. PARADISE PARK

Paradise Park is 1.49 acres in size and located between the Country Green and Cottonwood Cove Subdivisions in east-central Socorro. The park's amenities include a handball court, a baseball field, and an open play area with playground equipment. Paradise Park also contains three picnic tables with trash receptacles. While the park has grass and more than 35 trees, the landscape is in relatively poor condition. In addition, Paradise Park lacks bathroom facilities, a designated parking area, and signage identifying it as a public park.



Paradise Park



Paradise Park

7. RIO VISTA PARK

Rio Vista Park is 11.42 acres in size and is located adjacent to the County Courthouse in the City's northeastern portion. The park has three baseball fields and an open play area with playground equipment, eight picnic tables, seven trash receptacles, four benches and a bathroom facility. Rio Vista Park also has grass, more than 80 trees, a parking area, and two signs identifying it as a public park; however, the park's landscape is in poor condition.



Rio Vista Park



Rio Vista Park

8. VALLE DEL SOL PARK

Valle del Sol Park is 4.41 acres in size. The park, which also serves as a drainage facility, is located in the Valle del Sol Subdivision in north central Socorro. It includes an open play area with playground equipment, three picnic tables and four trash receptacles. Rio Vista Park also has grass, more than 15 trees, and a sign identifying it as a public park; however, the park's landscape is in poor condition. In addition, there are no parking areas or bathroom facilities.



Valle del Sol Park



Valle del Sol Park

9. VALLE HERMOSO PARK

Valle Hermoso Park is a 3.64 acre park located in the Valle Hermoso Estates subdivision in northern Socorro. The park, which also serves as drainage facility for the subdivision, includes a soccer field and an open play area, but has no other amenities. The park has no trees or grass, and its landscape is in poor condition. While there is a parking area for Valle Hermoso Park, there are no signs identifying it as a public park.



Valle Hermosa Park



Valle Hermosa Park

10. BULLDOG CHAMPIONSHIP PARK

The Bulldog Championship Park along Buford Road opened in August 2012. It features an entry sculpture, a splash pad, plaza, playgrounds, open space and amphitheatre with open space for public seating. It also incorporates parking and an outer loop trail that connects to all the amenities. The park's detention pond and bridge acts as a focal point and allows the park to reuse recycled graywater for irrigation purposes.



F. PARKS ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

As seen in Table 27 and the individual park descriptions, all of Socorro’s parks were ranked as being in poor overall condition. This ranking is due to a number of factors, including inadequate planning and design, old equipment, Lack of maintenance and upkeep, and a lack of facilities. Residents said there was little shade or seating areas in the parks, and they requested walking trails within the parks. Perhaps the most prevalent factor determining the poor ranking, however, is the poor landscape conditions in all of the City’s parks. Such poor conditions may be due the lack of any discernable irrigation system. Furthermore, many parks lack basic amenities such as signage, ADA-required access, parking areas, and bathroom facilities (only three parks have bathroom facilities).

The implementation of improvements such as the provision of signage and parking areas, playground equipment repairs and replacement, and the addition of bathroom facilities and irrigation would go a long way toward improving the conditions of Socorro’s parks. This situation signifies that there is a need for the City to adopt park standards that include requirements for irrigation systems and the required amount of park acreage per dwellings for all future development.

1. OTHER RECREATIONAL NEEDS

Socorro residents commented that the City needs youth programs similar to the Boys and Girls Club. To keep costs down, attendees suggested that the City could house new recreational programs in existing buildings. Participants also commented that Socorro needs multi-generational centers with good outreach systems that offer programs/services to both youth and seniors. A gymnasium is also high on residents’ list of priorities.

G. REGULATIONS REGARDING PARKS

Section 24 of the City’s subdivision regulations requires that all subdividers transfer 2.5 percent of the total subdivided land (or equivalent dollar value) to the City of Socorro for the purpose of use as a park or other recreational use. This Section also states that the dedicated land does not need to be within the proposed subdivided lands.

H. PARKS AND RECREATION GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Parks Goal 1.

Existing City parks and recreational facilities will be well-equipped and well-maintained.

- Strategy a. Engage residents in planning which amenities and improvements to install at each park and develop a list of priorities for installation, replacement and maintenance to be carried out as funding allows.*
- Strategy b. Ensure that all parks are ADA-accessible and make improvements where needed.*
- Strategy c. Adopt City-wide park standards that outline appropriate and sustainable park construction and maintenance practices, including irrigation system requirements.*
-

Parks Goal 2.

Socorro will meet level-of-service needs throughout the entire city.

- Strategy a. Adopt a desired level-of-service-policy for Socorro parks.*
- Strategy b. Identify areas in need of park service, and develop new parks in those areas as funding allows.*
-

Parks Goal 4.

Future parks and upgrades of existing parks will employ techniques promoting water conservation and sustainability.

- Strategy a. Specify appropriate and sustainable park construction and maintenance techniques, particularly those that use water resources efficiently.*
- Strategy b. Where appropriate to the park purpose, limit the use of turf grass and incorporate native plant species and xeriscaping into park design.*

Strategy c. Explore the feasibility of using gray water for irrigation of existing and future parks. Incorporate water harvesting programs for gray water and runoff as part of park design and maintenance.

Parks Goal 5.

Work with the Socorro Independent School District to develop agreements on the joint use of recreational facilities.

Page intentionally left blank

VIII. GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AND RURAL CHARACTER

More and more communities are planning to retain and enhance their green infrastructure as they become aware of its benefits. Green infrastructure can be defined as “an interconnected network of protected land and water that supports native species, maintains natural and ecological processes, sustains air and water resources and contributes to the health and quality of life for America’s communities and people” (President’s Council, May 1999). It can include greenways (trails and other connections), parks, drainage ponds, wetlands, forests and other natural areas that help manage stormwater, reduce the risk of flooding, improve water quality, and provide other ecological and recreational services (1000 Friends of Florida, 2011).

Green infrastructure protects areas from the impacts of flooding, storm damage and drought by helping slow runoff and allowing it to percolate into the soil and recharge the groundwater. Plants and trees also have significant capacity to absorb noise, filter air pollution from motor vehicles, and take up carbon (a prominent greenhouse gas). For example, 100 acres of woodland can absorb emissions equivalent to 100 family cars (1000 Friends Florida, 2011).

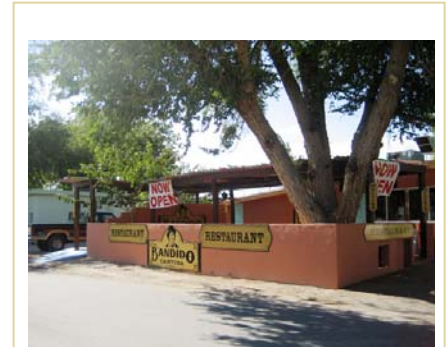
Green infrastructure contributes much to the health and well-being of a community’s citizens. Accessible green space and natural habitats create opportunities for recreation and exercise which promotes creative play, social skills, concentration span and mental health. The active use of green spaces also can encourage greater social interaction and contribute to a lively public realm. Trees shade people from the sun’s harmful ultraviolet rays and provide natural “air conditioning.” A single large tree, for example, can be equivalent to five room air conditioners and will supply enough oxygen for 10 people (ESA 2000 and Biodiversity by Design, 2004).

Green infrastructure also cycles and moves nutrients, decomposes and detoxifies wastes, controls agricultural pests and pollinates crops and natural vegetation.

A. GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE IN SOCORRO

Socorro already has a natural network of green infrastructure. The historic and current nature of the existing landscape and green infrastructure in Socorro is that of a rural character with scattered subdivisions among agricultural fields. A number of pecan orchards and cotton farms keep the rural nature of this community alive. Existing parks are located in the older areas and newer subdivisions in the western (true north) part of the city.

Since Socorro lies in the valley bed of the Rio Grande, a number of large trees such as valley cottonwoods formerly lined the streets and the river’s edge. Many trees in these areas have been removed but not replaced as commercial



development and subdivisions have been developed. In contrast, the city's edge along Interstate 10 contains a high desert scrub of native honey mesquite and three-wing salt bush due to the sand hills that dominate the area.

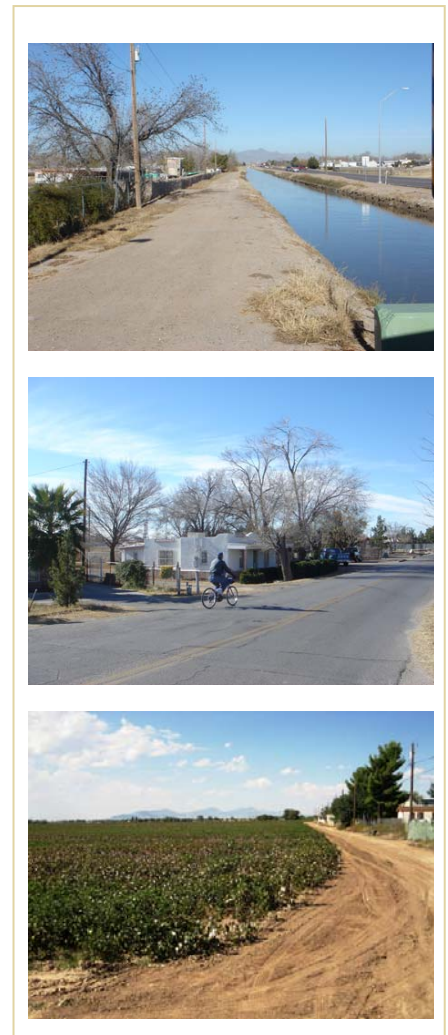
B. PRESERVING AND ENHANCING GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

The challenge facing Socorro is how to preserve and enhance its green infrastructure in the face of continued and even increasing development pressure. This comprehensive master plan already identifies locations for future new parks both small and large that could be created in the eastern (true south) part of the city, which is underserved. These locations were selected based on vacant parcels that the City owns or, where no City-owned land is available, general areas where vacant land is plentiful and could be acquired by the city for parkland. The Housing chapter also includes suggestions for planning and approving conservation subdivisions that cluster housing closer together in order to preserve surrounding open space and minimize the cost of infrastructure such as roads, and water and sewer lines. There are other steps the City could take, however, to protect and conserve its natural green heritage.

1. MULTI-USE TRAILS NETWORK

An interconnected network of trails would be a great amenity for the city in places where large numbers of citizens walk, ride bicycles or ride horses. While an informal network of dirt roadways along irrigation ditches now exists, the legality of their formal use by the general public remains unclear. The large rural population and the many horse owners, currently restricted to asphalt streets and irrigation ditch roads, would benefit from multi-use trails. There are also many students who walk to and from school and activities and would appreciate a connection to the city's amenities. Connections could be made to public use spaces such as parks in other areas, green spaces in the City of El Paso and to other nearby municipalities such as Clint, San Elizario, and Horizon City, as well as county and state facilities. Providing connections to urban and rural green spaces maintains a balance between the built and natural environment.

Multi-use trails should include pedestrian, bicycle, and equestrian (horse) trails. A system of formal and informal trails could be planned and upgraded for all of the identified users. This might also provide an additional source of economic development for businesses engaged in horse-related commerce such as horse riding lessons, open horse riding on trails, or housing developments that allow for horse riding as a special amenity.



C. LANDSCAPING IN THE PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAY

Providing green cover such as tree-lined streets and trails would be a great asset to the community. Street trees, which provide needed shade for pedestrians, planted parkways and vegetative swales can all provide a buffer between pedestrians and busy streets.

The landscape ordinance, which applies to commercial properties, and the subdivision ordinance, which addresses landscape and drainage in subdivisions, could be revised to include: permeable pavement, vegetative swales, bio-infiltration landscape areas, and rain gardens. In addition, preservation of existing trees, reuse of gray water, and installation of green roofs and small community gardens should be encouraged, perhaps through incentives, rebates or discounts.

More stringent requirements for commercial properties to introduce trees and landscaping along the streets in conjunction with the landscape ordinance will greatly aid in the creation of Green Streets. Trees in and around pavement such as parking lots reduce air temperature and reduce heat island effect and can begin to reinstate the original tree cover that was indigenous to the area. Trees also reduce energy usage costs and create clean air if installed with forethought to sun angles – one tree planted in the correct place can provide a greater benefit than 10 trees in the wrong place even on a very small lot.

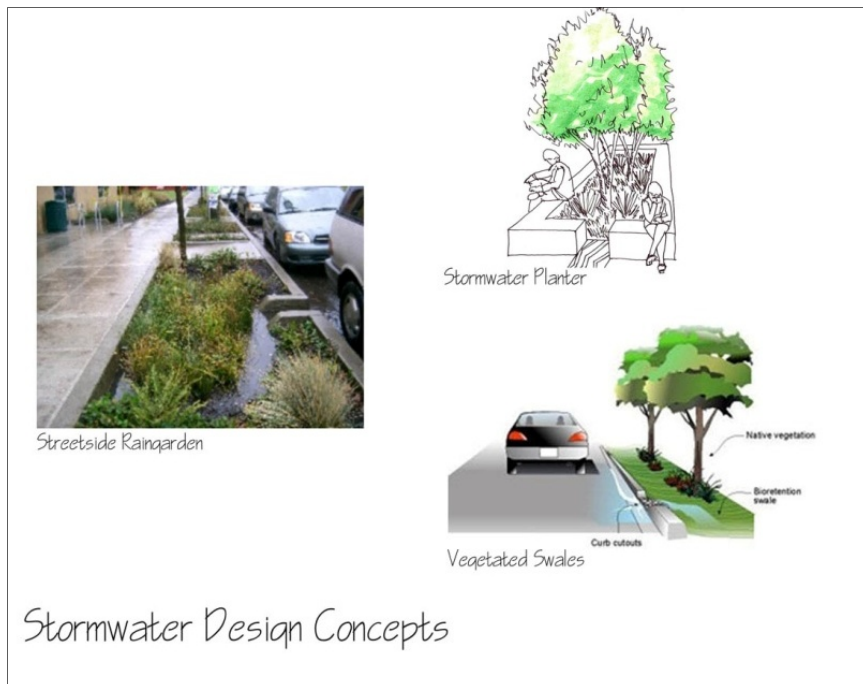


Figure 19. Water Harvesting

Landscaped medians and roundabouts would provide more attractive streets and help calm traffic. Landscaped parkways provided by commercial developers or the City, in cases where properties are not yet purchased, would buffer pedestrians from traffic. Pedestrians now are restricted to Socorro's very narrow sidewalks and often must walk on the street single file very close to traffic.

1. WILDLIFE CORRIDORS

The introduction of wildlife corridors and the preservation of existing wetlands and wildlife corridors such as Feather Lake and Rio Bosque provide increased natural habitat and natural open space. These help reduce air temperatures and cleanse the air through natural means. As development swallows more of the existing rural landscape, fewer and fewer natural landscapes will be available for the wildlife that use corridors for migration. These should be mapped and protected.

2. STORMWATER MANAGEMENT/IRRIGATION

With its heavy clay soils that retain water and its relatively flat existing land form, Socorro must address its storm water management at various levels. On-site ponding and storm water mitigation can aid in flood control if all properties replicate a site's predevelopment hydrologic function. This can be done with vegetative swales and other low impact development tactics to slow storm water runoff and use it to irrigate new landscape areas.

There are a few properties that are watered by flood irrigation. The City could begin a tree farm on one of its properties, starting with very small inexpensive trees and growing them until they are mature enough to be installed on public lands. Grants might be available for this type of activity.



D. GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE GOALS

Green Infrastructure Goal 1.

Conserve, protect and enhance the City of Socorro’s green infrastructure while respecting private property rights.

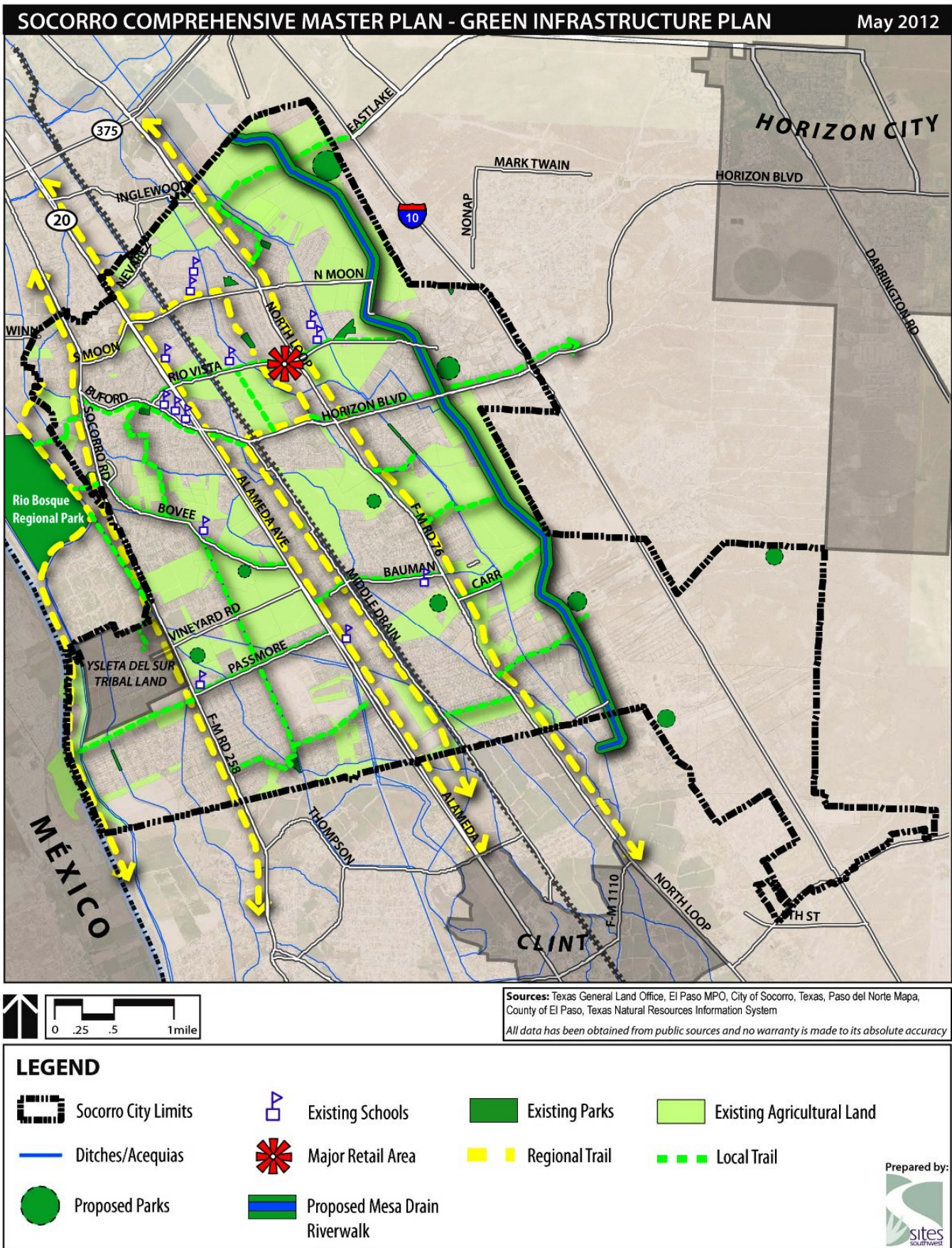
- Strategy a. Preserve forested areas by publicizing and taking advantage of federal and state programs that offer incentives for keeping private land forested or in agriculture.*
- Strategy b. Emphasize compact development over sprawling development. Allow and encourage conservation/cluster residential subdivision design that conserves remaining land permanently in conservation easements.*
- Strategy c. Look for joint use opportunities between green infrastructure and recreation, for example, drainage pond areas that can be used as recreation areas such as soccer fields or establishing a City tree farm irrigated by storm water, and maintaining the acequia ditch roads as public trail corridors.*
- Strategy d. Look for opportunities to harvest storm water in street-side rain gardens, storm water planters, vegetated swales and other features.*
-

Green Infrastructure Goal 2.

Encourage development and management of land in a manner that sustains local wildlife, their habitat and the ecological services of the land through an integrated system of green infrastructure.

- Strategy a. Plan development and conservation together to allow for the provision of wildlife corridors and decreased fragmentation of habitat. Maintain large patches of natural vegetation and wide vegetation corridors along major water courses.*
- Strategy b. Strive to incorporate existing or restored natural habitats and green linkage opportunities into storm water management planning, design and maintenance functions.*
- Strategy c. Preserve a background vegetation of predominately native plants and habitat types.*
- Strategy d. Strive to link community open spaces, storm water facilities and buffers to create planned separation of human and wildlife communities.*

Figure 20. Green Infrastructure Plan



IX. TRANSPORTATION AND PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS

The assessment of the existing transportation network, review of proposed transportation improvements, and development of a proposed Thoroughfare Plan are necessary components of the City of Socorro Comprehensive Master Plan. The transportation infrastructure both within the City of Socorro and the regional network must be balanced to support the land uses in the Master Plan. Because development of any transportation project requires substantial amounts of time and money, the Master Plan can be used to facilitate the planning and programming of the improvements required to operate both the City's and regional transportation system at an acceptable level of service by governing bodies such as the City of Socorro, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), and the Transportation Policy Board Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The Master Plan can also aid in coordinating its implementation with the public and stakeholders.

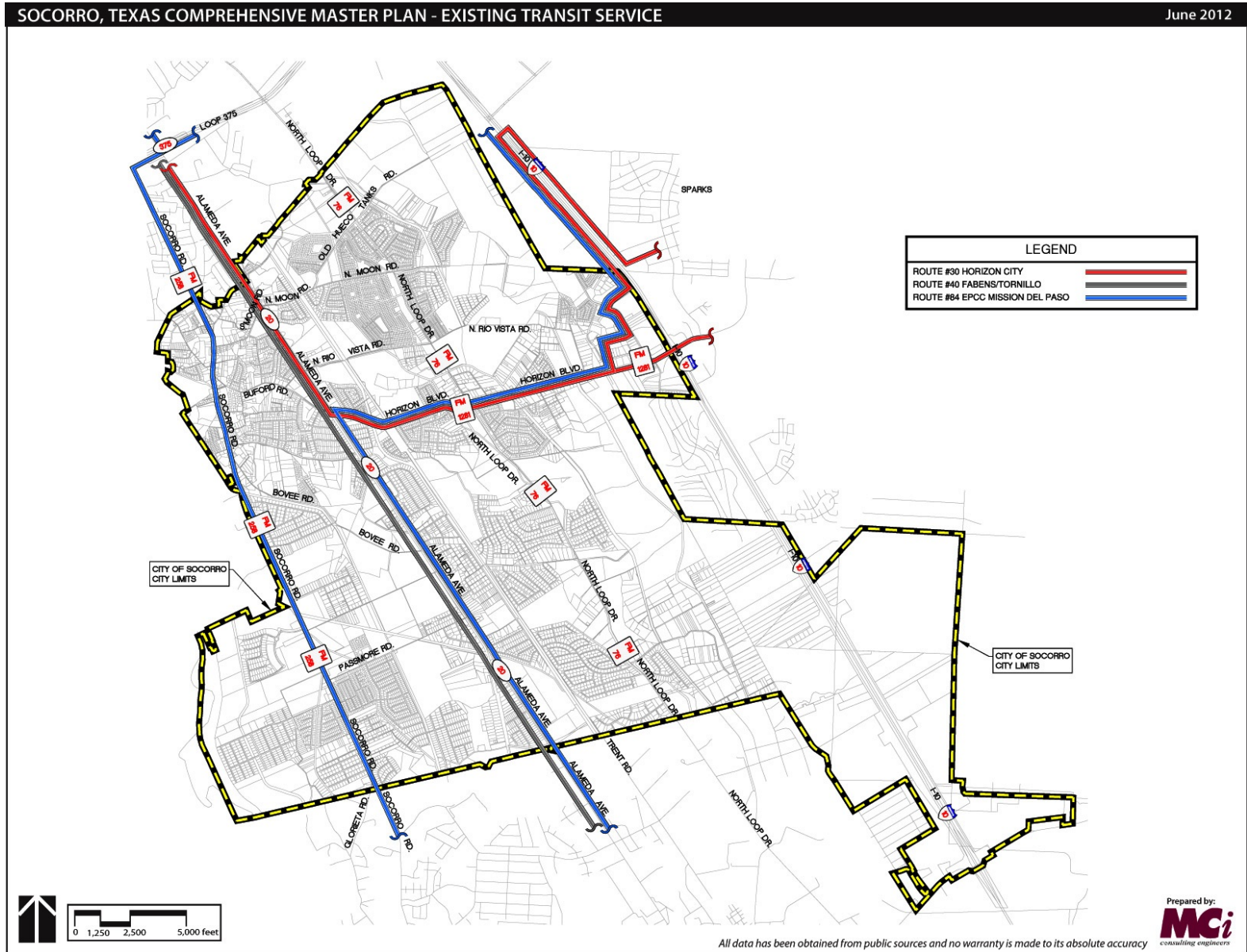
The following sections describe the existing transportation network, the planned improvements by TxDOT and El Paso MPO and the proposed Future Thoroughfare Plan for the City of Socorro. The existing transportation system in the City of Socorro consists of transit, railroad lines, pedestrian and bicycle routes and pathways, and roadways.

A. TRANSIT

El Paso County provides rural transit service to the City of Socorro. Routes 30, 40, 84 offer transit service to the City of Socorro. Route 30 runs along Alameda Avenue and Horizon Boulevard with major stops at the City of El Paso Mission Valley Transfer Center, the intersection of Alameda Avenue with Horizon Boulevard and El Paso Community College (EPCC) Mission Valley Campus. Route 40 runs along Alameda Avenue from the Mission Valley Transfer Center to the Town of Tornillo. Route 84 runs along the eastbound frontage road from Loop 375 (Americas Avenue) to the EPCC Mission Valley Campus, goes south along Horizon Boulevard, runs east along Alameda Avenue to the Town of Clint and returns along Socorro Road back to the Mission Valley Transfer Center. The average monthly ridership for Routes 30, 40 and 84 combined ranges from 3,000 to 4,000. (See Figure 21 for route locations.)

A potentially key future transit element for the City of Socorro could be bus rapid transit (BRT). The City of El Paso is in the process of developing the BRT along the Alameda Avenue corridor from downtown El Paso to the Mission Valley Transit Terminal located at Zaragoza Road and Alameda Avenue. The Mission Valley Terminal is approximately 2.5 miles away from the City of Socorro limits. The City of Socorro should consider a partnership with the City of El Paso for extending the BRT to the city. A Park-and-Ride facility near the Mission Valley Terminal would provide for parking for those City of Socorro residents wishing to drive to the terminal, park and hop on the BRT en route to the City of El Paso. This would be a useful option for the portion of the Socorro workforce that is employed in El Paso.

Figure 21. Existing Transit



B. RAIL

The Union Pacific Railroad Line runs across the entire stretch of the City of Socorro, paralleling Alameda Avenue. At times, Union Pacific operates trains stretching up to a mile long, splitting the City of Socorro. There are six at-grade crossings in the city. (See Figure 22 for the rail line location.)

C. PEDESTRIAN PATHS AND BIKE LANES

The El Paso MPO has planned the bicycle infrastructure for El Paso County, which includes the City of Socorro. The MPO has planned one existing bike lane along North Loop Drive, which has a design speed of 40 mph and a posted speed of 45 mph, from Loop 375 to Horizon Boulevard. The project is funded and construction began in August 2012. The bike lane will consist of a ten-foot lane for parking and bicycles. Also, the MPO has identified a proposed bike route along a portion of Alameda Avenue (from Loop 375 to Moon Road) and along a portion of Moon Road/Old Hueco Tanks Road/Eastlake Boulevard from Alameda Avenue to I-10.

In 2011, the City of Socorro received a grant in the amount of \$4,000,000 from the Texas Department of Transportation's Safe Routes to Schools Program (SRTS). The SRTS Program makes funding available for a wide variety of programs and projects, from building safer street crossings to establishing programs that encourage children and their parents to walk and bicycle safely to school.

The grant will enable the City to improve safety and encourage more children to safely walk and bicycle to eight schools in the area including Campestre Elementary, Escontrias Elementary, Hilley Elementary, Hueco Elementary, Rojas Elementary, Salvador Sanchez H. Middle School, Socorro Middle, and Ernest Serna Elementary. The project is expected to be completed in 2013.

D. ROADWAYS

The existing roadway transportation network for the City of Socorro consists of federal, state, and municipal roadways. Interstate Highway 10 (I-10) is under the jurisdiction of TxDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). While I-10 generally runs west-east across the country from Santa Monica, CA, to Jacksonville, Fla., it shifts to north-south in El Paso County to form the northeast border of the City of Socorro. Local residents, however, think of locations as being north or south of the freeway. The nearest major freeway corridor that runs perpendicular to I-10 is a state road known as Loop 375, located one mile northwest from the City of Socorro boundary. Three major roadways parallel I-10 in Socorro: North Loop Drive (FM 76) and Alameda Avenue (SH 20), classified as major arterials, and Socorro Road, which is a minor arterial located within a designated historic district. Horizon Boulevard (FM 1281) is the only major arterial within the city that runs

perpendicular to I-10 and provides access to the interstate. Any new interchanges (access points) proposed by the City of Socorro along I-10 would have to be negotiated with FHWA. These state roads are all under the jurisdiction of TxDOT. There also are several local roads that function as minor arterials in the City of Socorro such as Old Hueco Tanks Road, Moon Road, Rio Vista Road, Passmore Road, and Bovee Road (See Figure 22).

1. TxDOT PROPOSED IMPROVEMENT PLANS

This section describes the proposed improvements to the state-owned roadways in the immediate future (next five years) by TxDOT. Some the projects listed here are also discussed as part of the El Paso MPO Improvement Plans because the El Paso MPO serves as the approval authority for federally funded projects such as FM 76, FM 1281 and SH 20.

FM 76 (North Loop Drive) – Construction to widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes from the City of El Paso limits to FM 1281 (Horizon Boulevard) (Phase VII) began in August 2012. The environmental assessment for the project has been approved. At this point, there are no TxDOT plans to widen FM 76 beyond Horizon Boulevard.

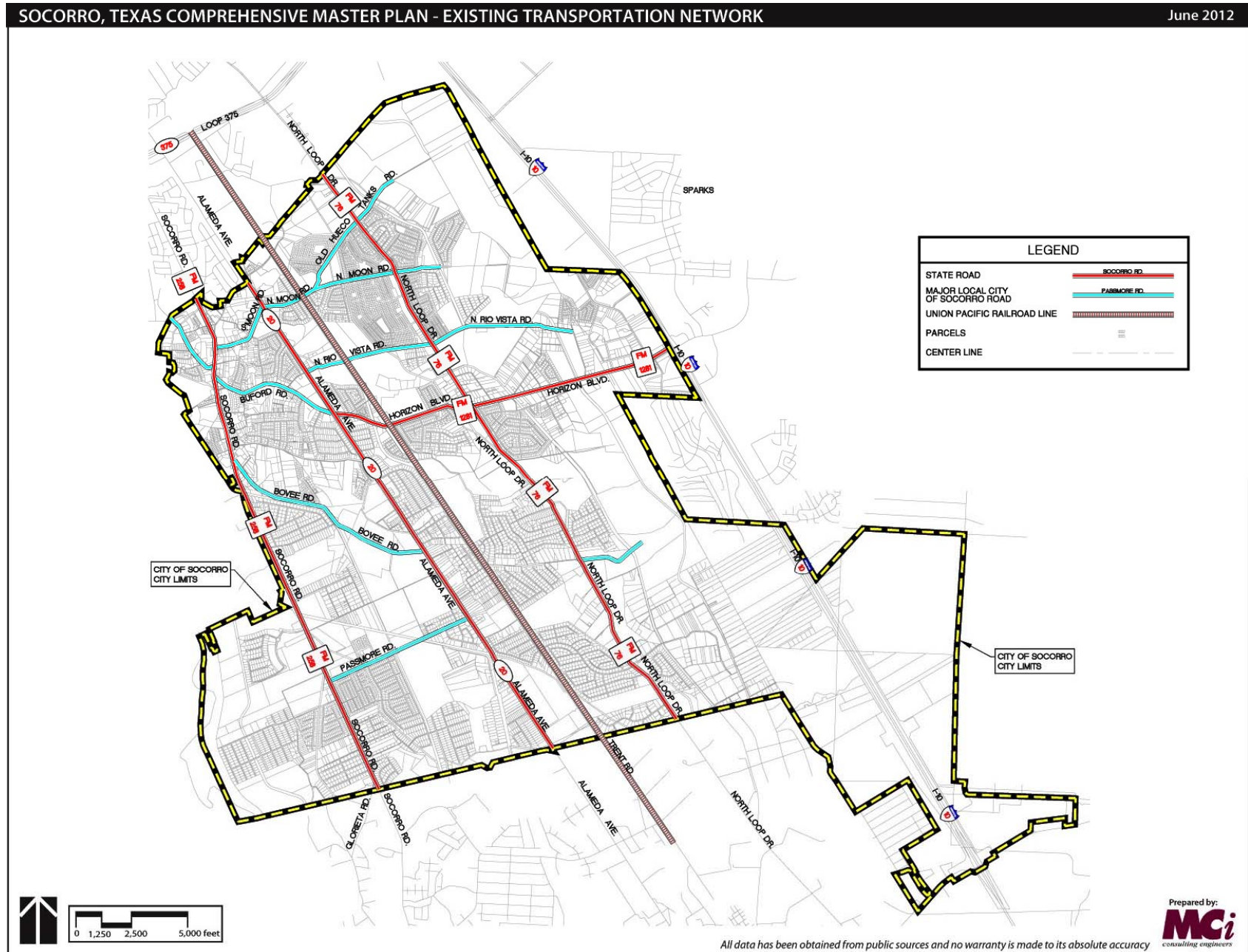
Eastlake Boulevard/Old Hueco Tanks Road Extension - The environmental document and schematic layout for the extension of Old Hueco Tanks (Eastlake Boulevard Interchange) from I-10 to FM 76 (North Loop Drive) was cleared by the FHWA by the end of 2010. Federal funding for this project has been identified for fiscal year 2016. The next step in the development of the project would be right-of-way acquisition. Socorro is also working with the El Paso MPO to extend this project from North Loop Drive to Alameda Avenue and generate funding for it by creating a Transportation Reinvestment Zone (TRZ) along the corridor.

Border Highway Extension East - TxDOT is in the process of preparing the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Border Highway Extension East (BHE). BHE limits are from Loop 375 to the Fabens Port-of-Entry with an approximately total length of 20.3 miles. The first public scoping meeting was expected during Summer 2011, but as of December 2012 the project was put on hold by TxDOT. The project schematic layout is five to six years away. The alignment has not yet been selected and is pending the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) process, which could take up to five years. Also, the short- to medium-term solution for BHE is constructing approximately eight miles of County Road from Loop 375 to Harring Road with a possible connection to I-10. The ultimate roadway section for BHE is a freeway facility stretching from Loop 375 to the Fabens Port-of-Entry.

FM 1281 (Horizon Boulevard/Buford Road) - TxDOT is in the process of completing improvement plans for FM 1281 (Horizon Boulevard/Buford Road) from North Loop Drive to Alameda Avenue with a construction cost of \$9 million. The project will widen the road from 2 lanes to 4 lanes. This project is part of the 2008 Comprehensive Mobility Plan (CMP). It was funded, awarded for construction in September 2012 and scheduled for construction in February 2012. The project includes an at-grade intersection at the Union Pacific railroad tracks.

International Ports-of-Entry - The Port-of-Entry Operations Plan for the region managed by TxDOT was completed in July 2011. The objectives of the plan were to review existing ports-of-entry (POE) within the El Paso region from Santa Teresa, NM, to the Tornillo/Guadalupe POE (six crossings), analyze how these POEs function individually and as a system, assess the POE's ability to handle future demand under a number of different operational scenarios, and to develop immediate, short-term, mid-term and long-term recommendations to improve cross-border mobility in the region consistent with local needs and issues. The plan included extensive outreach activities such as public meetings, public opinion surveys, meetings with focus groups and stakeholder meetings.

Figure 22. Existing Transportation Network



State Highway 20 - TxDOT has no improvement plans for State Highway 20 (Alameda Avenue) at this time.

FM 258 (Socorro Road) - TxDOT has no improvement plans for FM 258 (Socorro Road) at this time due to the restrictive rights-of-way and location within an historic district. The roadway carries an average of 10,000 vehicles per day on its two lanes. There are no roadway drainage structures, bicycle lanes, or sidewalks. It also sees a lot of heavy truck traffic, which is not conducive to tourism along the Mission Trail (of which Socorro Road is a part).

Interstate Highway 10 - TxDOT improvement plans for I-10 include only the direct connectors at Loop 375. No new interchanges are planned within the vicinity of City of Socorro boundaries at this time.

2. EL PASO MPO IMPROVEMENT PLANS (TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM 2011-2014)

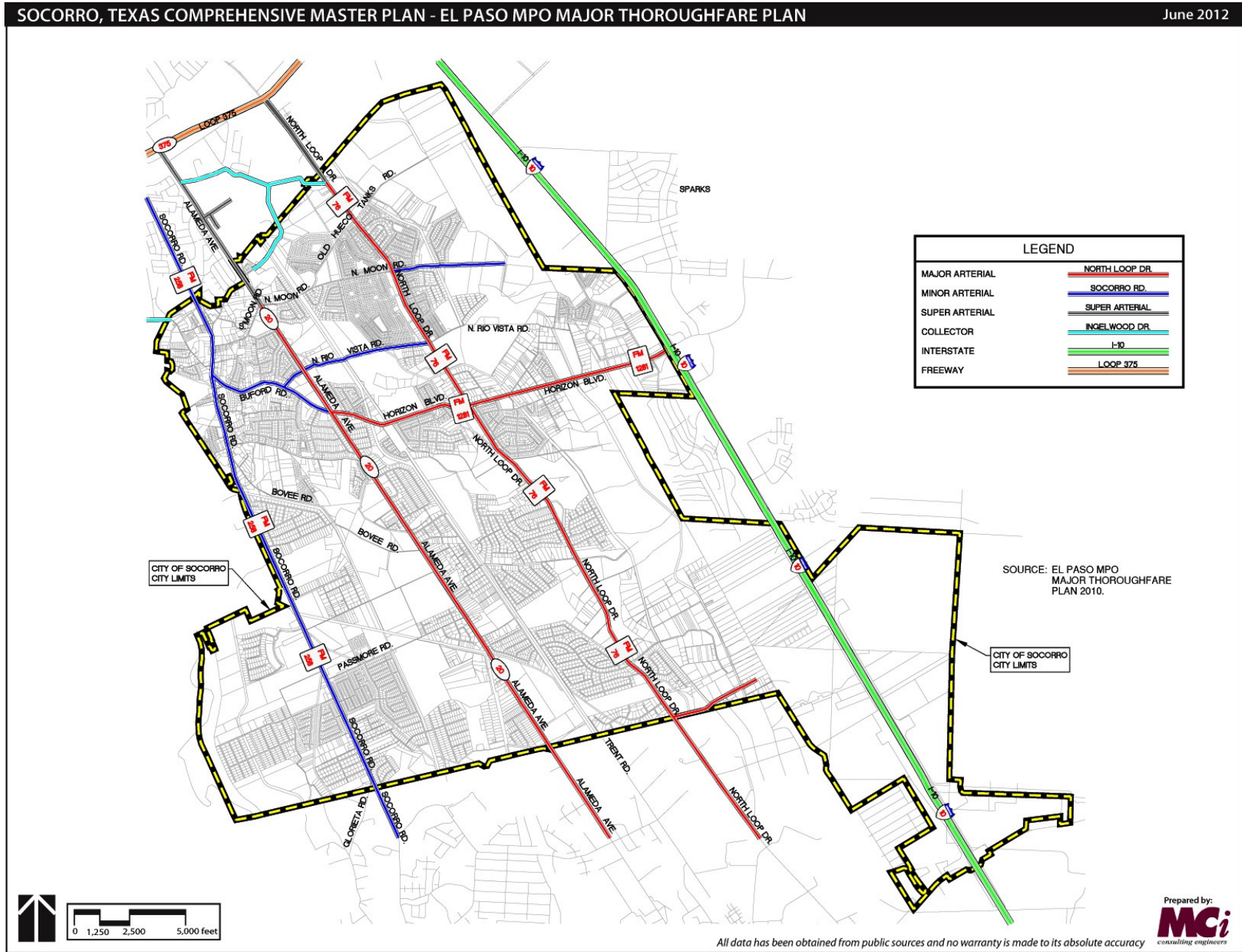
The El Paso MPO prepares and updates the short-term (Mission 2011-2014 Transportation Improvement Plan-TIP) and long-term (Mission 2035 Metropolitan Transportation Plan-MTP) regional transportation plans. The MTP sets forth long-range transportation improvements while the TIP establishes and prioritizes short-term improvement projects.

The following projects in the City of Socorro have been funded for construction under the Mission 2011-2014 TIP:

- North Loop Drive Phase VII (FM 76) - \$17 million for construction
- Horizon Boulevard/Buford Road (FM 1281) - \$7 million for construction
- Alameda Avenue/Horizon Boulevard Intersection (SH 20) - \$2 million for construction

Neither the Mission 2035 MTP nor the El Paso MPO Major Thoroughfare Plan planned for any future roads in the City of Socorro. See Figure 23 for the El Paso MPO Major Thoroughfare Plan for the roadway designations and proposed improvements of the major roads in the City of Socorro.

Figure 23. Major Thoroughfare Plan



E. CITY OF SOCORRO PROPOSED THOROUGHFARE PLAN

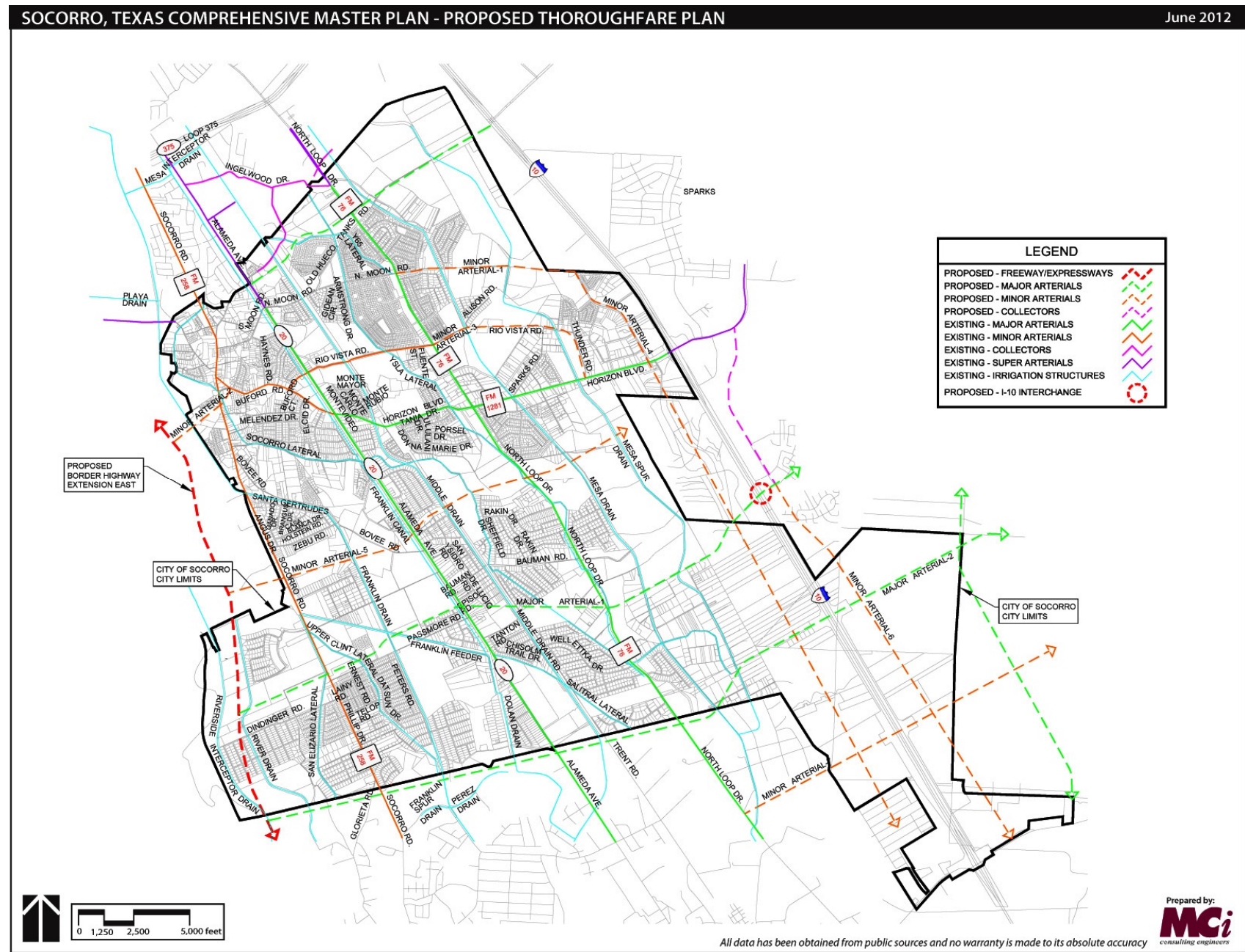
The improvement recommendations for the Thoroughfare Plan proposed for the City of Socorro were developed based on the future land use projected in the Comprehensive Master Plan and a future international port-of-entry planned within the city limits. The required transportation infrastructure to meet the future travel demand generated from the future land use plan is not addressed in the El Paso MPO transportation plans; thus the future transportation network will require changes to the El Paso MPO's MTP.

The proposed Future Thoroughfare Plan recommendations consist of:

- The proposed southeastern extension of Eastlake Boulevard/Old Hueco Tanks Road
- Two proposed major arterials and seven proposed minor arterials:
 - The two major arterials (Major Arterial-1 and Major Arterial-2) would provide access from the City of Socorro to I-10. These two major arterials would be located approximately 2,000 feet apart and located in the southeastern part of the city.
 - Three minor arterials (Minor Arterials 1, 2 and 3) would consist of the northeast extension of Moon Road from its current terminus, the southwest extension of Buford Road to the future Border Highway Extension East, and the re-classification of Rio Vista and Thunder roads as minor arterials from FM 76 to FM 1281.
 - Two other minor arterials (Minor Arterials 5 and 7) would follow a southeast alignment toward I-10.
 - Two minor arterials (Minor Arterials 4 and 6) would run parallel and along either side of I-10. They would provide circulation to the future industrial and mixed use land uses as identified in the future land use plan for the City of Socorro.
- In addition to the proposed arterials, consideration should be given to intersection improvements at the following intersections: Old Hueco Tanks Road/Moon Road; Rio Vista Road/Alameda Avenue; Rio Vista Road/Horizon Boulevard; and Buford Road/Socorro Road.
- Roundabouts should be considered before the installation of any traffic signal. Consider a roundabout at the intersection of Old Hueco Tanks Road and Moon Road.

The recommended transportation infrastructure elements would provide access to the future international port-of-entry and the proposed Border Highway Extension East. (See Figure 24 for the proposed City of Socorro Thoroughfare Plan and for the roadway designations.) Refer to the Appendix for recommended section design of major and minor arterials.

Figure 24. Proposed Thoroughfares Plan



Other than recommending that truck traffic on Socorro Road be diverted to Alameda Boulevard or another arterial, the plan does not make any specific recommendations for improvements to Socorro Road at this time. Some Socorro residents and elected officials have expressed a desire for improvements such as sidewalks, drainage, streetlights and landscaping. As Socorro Road is part of the historic El Camino Real (Royal Road) that originally connected Ciudad Juarez to Santa Fe, the plan recommends that any decisions regarding improvements follow the process and guidelines set forth in “The Preservation Guide to Historic Roads” (Marriott 2010.) as well as any requirements by the Texas DOT and City of Socorro Historic Landmarks Commission.

1. TRAFFIC PROJECTIONS METHODOLOGY

The amount of projected traffic from the future land use plan was estimated to determine the level of impact to the existing and proposed transportation system. The projected traffic was derived using the traffic equations from the Institute of Transportation Engineers Trip Generation Manual, Seventh Edition, 2003. The equations selected are those for corresponding land uses i.e., single family detached housing, commercial and industrial park. The proposed land uses were assumed to be fully developed for the 2035 analysis year. The amount of acres for each land use was used in the computation of the traffic information. The peak hour and peak hour of adjacent street traffic were computed for each proposed land use.

2. PROJECTED TRAFFIC INFORMATION

Table 28 summarizes the computed peak hour and daily volumes expressed as number of vehicles for each land use (i.e., residential, commercial and industrial).The volumes are based on the assumption that the designated land use is fully developed by the Year 2035.

Table 28. 2035 Traffic Data (Fully Developed)

Land Use ID	Land Use	Area (Acres)	Peak Hour	Daily Volume
FD-1	Residential	345	425	4,250
FD-2	Mixed Use	498	1,000	10,000
FD-3	Residential	101	167	1,670
FD-4	Residential	211	293	2,930
FD-5	Residential	305	387	3,870
FD-6	Residential	50	98	980
FD-7	Industrial	964	2,786	27,680
FD-8	Commercial	637	1,200	12,000
FD-9	Industrial	534	2,102	21,020

The traffic data provided by the El Paso MPO Mission 2035 TransCAD Model for the City of Socorro transportation network is summarized in Figure 33, Figure 34, Figure 35, Figure 36 in the Appendices for the years 2010 (base year), 2020, 2025 and 2035 respectively. The exhibits provide the total capacity and volume to capacity (V/C) ratio for North Loop Drive, Alameda Avenue, Socorro Road, Buford Road, Horizon Boulevard and Rio Vista Road.

3. BUDGETARY COSTS

Budgetary costs for the proposed roadways identified in the Future Thoroughfare Plan are summarized in Table 29. These costs were prepared using standard cost and/or estimating practices. These opinions of probable construction costs do not include right-of-way acquisition, environmental clearance, engineering, or testing costs.

Table 29. Transportation Improvements Budgetary Costs

Roadway ID	Budgetary Cost
Old Hueco Tanks Extension	\$ 8,700,000
Major Arterial-1	\$19,900,000
Major Arterial-2	\$24,700,000
Minor Arterial-1 (Moon Road Extension)	\$ 5,300,000
Minor Arterial-2	\$ 2,800,000
Minor Arterial-3 (Rio Vista & Thunder)	\$10,200,000
Minor Arterial-4	\$13,200,000
Minor Arterial-5	\$12,900,000
Minor Arterial-6	\$ 9,400,000
Minor Arterial-7	\$ 4,500,000
Total	\$111,600,000

The following table summarizes the projects that have approved funding from other government entities such as the El Paso MPO and TxDOT. The funding amounts shown on Table 30 are for construction only.

Table 30. Funded Transportation Projects by Other Entities (i.e. TxDOT and MPO)

Project Name	Funded Amount
North Loop Drive Phase VII	\$17,000,000
Horizon Boulevard/Buford	\$ 7,000,000
Alameda Avenue/Horizon Boulevard Intersection	\$ 2,000,000
Total	\$ 26,000,000

F. TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Transportation Goal 1:

Provide a safe and reliable street system that is efficient, context-sensitive, and offers alternate routes to Interstate Highway 10 as shown on the Proposed Thoroughfare Plan.

- Strategy a. Ensure the Proposed Thoroughfare Plan, or a modified version endorsed by the City of Socorro, is adopted by the El Paso MPO.*
- Strategy b. Develop and set aside funds for an improvement and maintenance program for City-maintained roadways that provides reliable drainage, paving and maintenance on a regular schedule according to established priorities.*
- Strategy c. Consider imposing impact fees to help defray the cost of constructing new roads.*
-

Transportation Goal 2:

Develop a traffic study for the city that provides transportation infrastructure level of service, system recommendations/improvements, and costs. (See model street sections for major and minor arterials in the Appendices.)

Transportation Goal 3:

Provide pathways for and links between different modes of travel, including bicycle and pedestrian traffic, while minimizing conflicts between them.

Transportation Goal 4:

Protect and promote Socorro Road’s function as an historic, tourist and pedestrian-oriented roadway through the Historic Mission District.

Strategy a. Divert northwest-bound and southeast-bound throughway truck traffic onto other major arterials such as Alameda Boulevard and the Border Highway Extension.

Strategy b. Consider and research the historic nature and features of Socorro Road and its historic structures before proposing and undertaking specific improvements such as sidewalks, streetlights, drainage improvements, and landscaping.

G. TRANSIT GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Transit Goal 1:

Conduct a needs analysis and determine the feasibility of providing some kind of transit service in the city to serve those without cars and those who do not drive.

Transit Goal 2:

Investigate the need for a commuter shuttle between Socorro and the City of El Paso’s Mission Valley Transfer Center.

H. PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Pedestrian and Bicycle Goal 1:

Work with the Socorro Independent School District and TxDOT to make walking and bicycling a safer travel option for those using these modes.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Goal 2:

Designate bicycle routes and trails throughout Socorro and construct improvements in a prioritized and sequential way.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Goal 3:

Improve the quality of walking in Socorro by providing adequately wide sidewalks along major streets and by creating an off-road multi-use trail system. (See model street sections in Appendix.)

Strategy a. Coordinate with EPCWID#1 to use existing irrigation rights-of-way for creating the off-road multi-use trail system.

Page intentionally left blank

X. UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

A critical component of any comprehensive master plan is completing an assessment of existing and future utility infrastructure to identify required financial and operational impacts along with associated timelines for completion of system modifications. Upgrades or adjustments to existing infrastructure to accommodate future infrastructure needs (drainage, roadway, etc.) or as required for system operational efficiencies, require concerted, well-coordinated efforts with all project stakeholders. Identification of necessary system improvements required to maintain adequate utility service to customers is an ongoing effort undertaken by all of the utility companies serving the City of Socorro residents and businesses. The following utilities were contacted for evaluation and coordination as part of this plan: Lower Valley Water District (water & wastewater), El Paso Electric (electrical), Texas Gas Service (natural gas), AT&T (communications), Time Warner (communications), El Paso County Water Improvement District No. 1 (irrigation), El Paso Water Utilities (storm drainage) and El Paso County (storm drainage). Service lines, from mains to dwellings, were not evaluated as part of this project.

A. WATER AND WASTEWATER

Utility infrastructure in Socorro has come a long way since the time of the 1988 Comprehensive Plan when two-thirds of the city's approximately 25,000 residents did not have household plumbing and none was connected to a central wastewater treatment facility (Molzin-Corbin, 1988). Most subdivisions now are connected to water service and many are now served by sewer lines.

Water and wastewater service within the City of Socorro boundary is operated and maintained by the Lower Valley Water District (LVWD). LVWD obtains its water supply from El Paso Water Utility (EPWU) using master meters; however, it operates, maintains and bills for the distribution network within the City of Socorro limits. All wastewater is conveyed through multiple series of LVWD-maintained gravity and force main networks which are ultimately connected to EPWU's system for treatment at its Roberto Bustamante Wastewater Treatment Plant. EPWU water and wastewater treatment plants are located outside City of Socorro limits.

1. SYSTEM MAPS – EXISTING & FUTURE

LVWD water and wastewater system mapping was researched to identify existing infrastructure located within City of Socorro limits. Figure 25 and Figure 26 depict existing water and wastewater facilities within the study area. The prepared exhibits were provided and reviewed by LVWD staff for accuracy.

LVWD was then contacted to review any planned system upgrades or adjustments for the purpose of identifying future system components. Figure 27 and Figure 28 highlight currently planned water and wastewater improvements for the area. Future water infrastructure improvements consist of an approximately one-mile extension of a 16-inch water transmission line routed along North Loop Drive between Bauman Road and Worsham Road and any new commercial or subdivision developments requiring extension of water service. LVWD was not aware of any developments being planned at the time of this coordination effort. Major wastewater collection facilities (interceptor lines greater than 18 inches) have already been constructed for build-out conditions with planned area upgrades consisting predominantly of small diameter gravity pipeline improvements necessary for extending service to unserved areas and new subdivision sites. A lift station—a facility designed to move wastewater from a lower to a higher elevation through pipes— is currently being constructed to further augment the collection system to accommodate new subdivision developments as shown on the map. In summary, LVWD’s water and wastewater infrastructure has the capacity to meet the needs of future development demands for water and sewer service.

B. ELECTRIC

Electric service within the City of Socorro limits is provided and maintained by El Paso Electric (EPE). Overhead distribution lines exist throughout the city as a means of extending service to residents and businesses. For the sake of this master plan study, only EPE transmission facilities were assessed, since adjustments to these facilities typically require substantial costs and extended lead time for planning, engineering and construction. Figure 29 depicts existing EPE transmission facilities. The prepared map was provided and reviewed by EPE staff for accuracy. EPE was then contacted to review any planned system upgrades or adjustments for the purpose of identifying future system components. Based on coordination efforts with EPE completed at this time, no major transmission facility upgrades are planned within the project limits.

C. NATURAL GAS

Gas service within the Socorro city limits is provided and maintained by Texas Gas Service (TGS). Subsurface gas lines (predominantly less than 6 inches in diameter) exist throughout the city for extension of service to residents and businesses. For the sake of this master plan study, only TGS pipelines greater than 8 inches in diameter were assessed, since adjustments to these facilities typically require substantial costs and extended lead time for planning, engineering and construction.

Figure 25. Existing LVWD Water Lines

SOCORRO, TEXAS COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN - EXISTING WATER LINES

June 2012

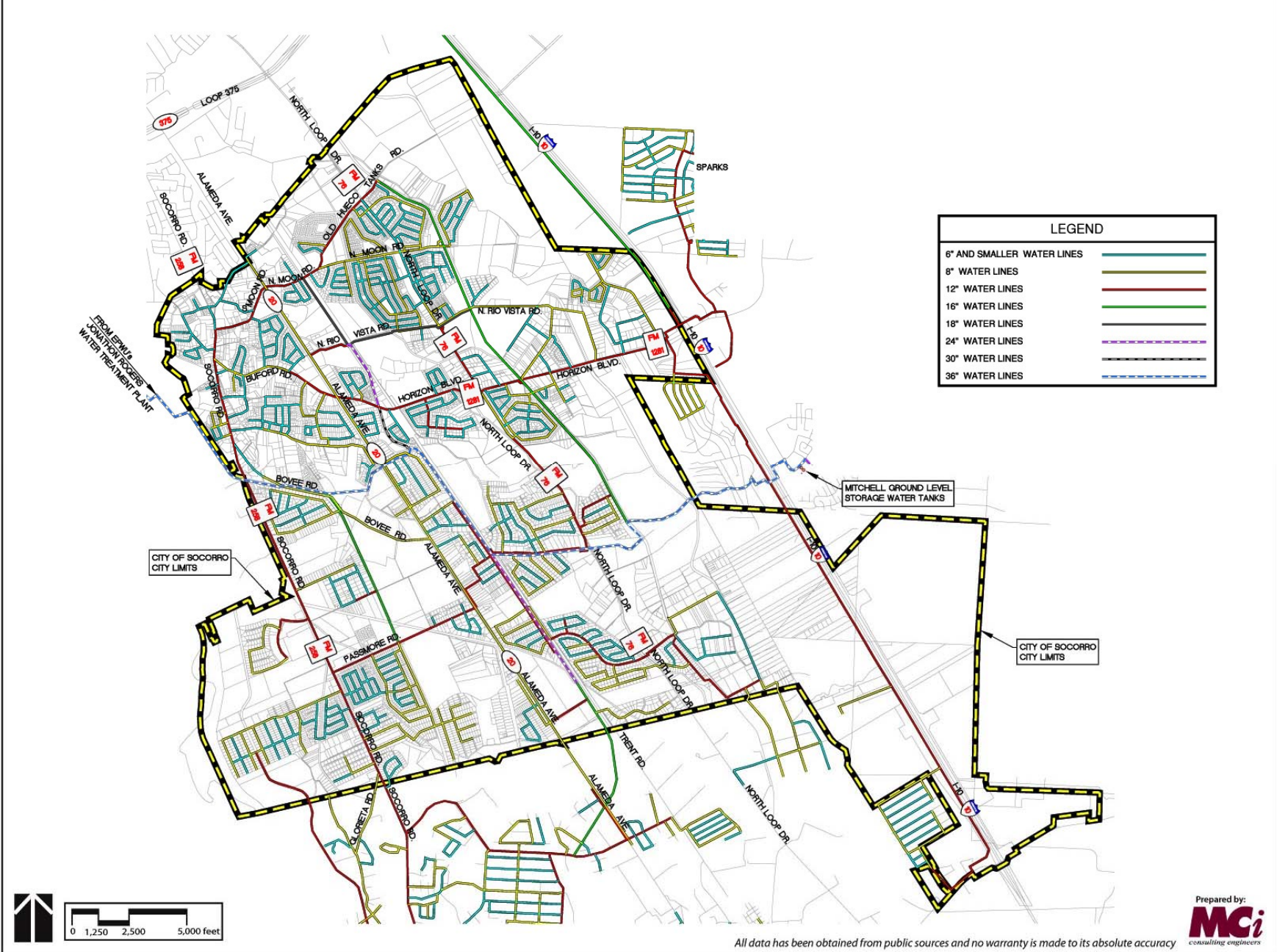


Figure 26. Existing LVWD Sewer Lines

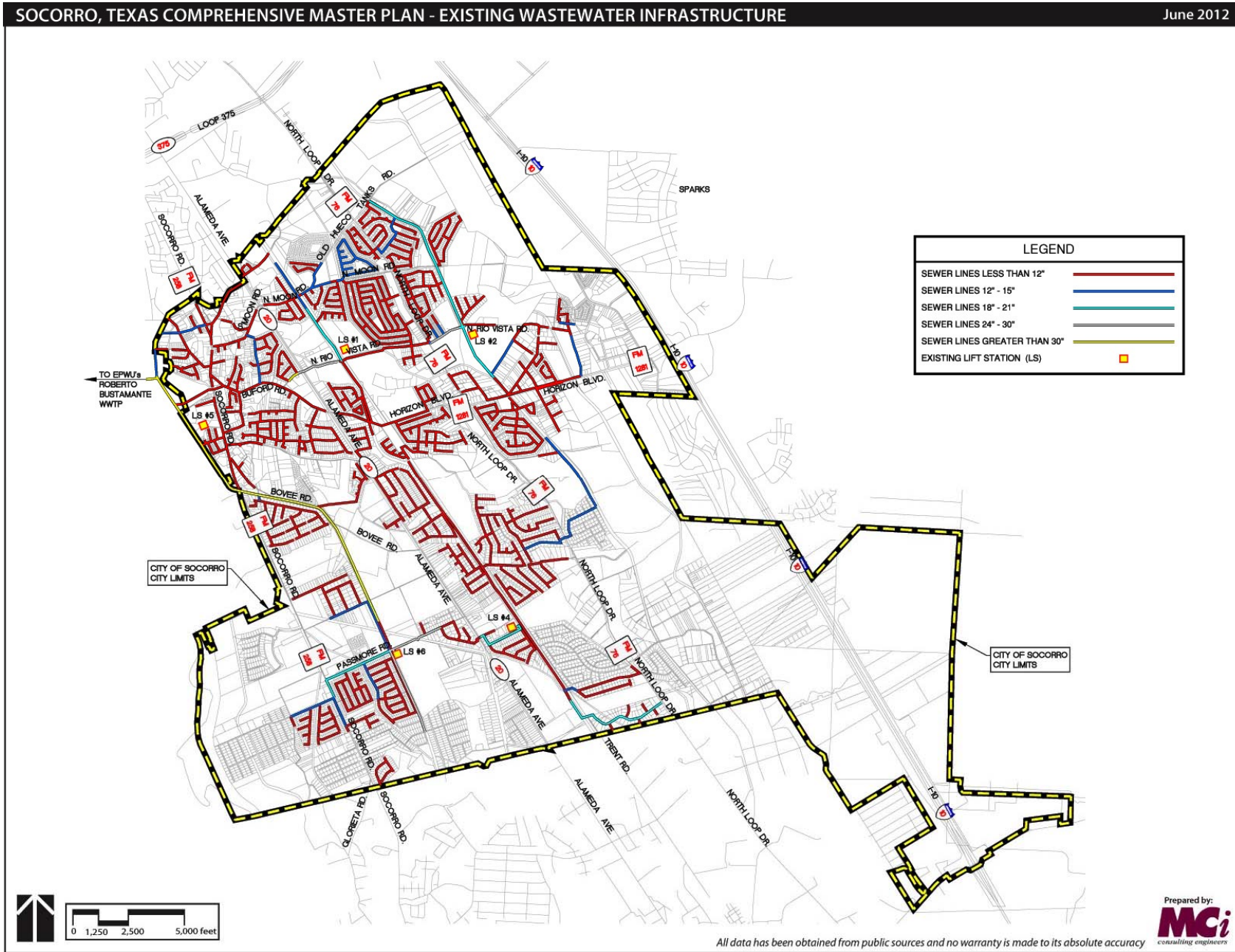


Figure 27. Future LVWD Water Improvements

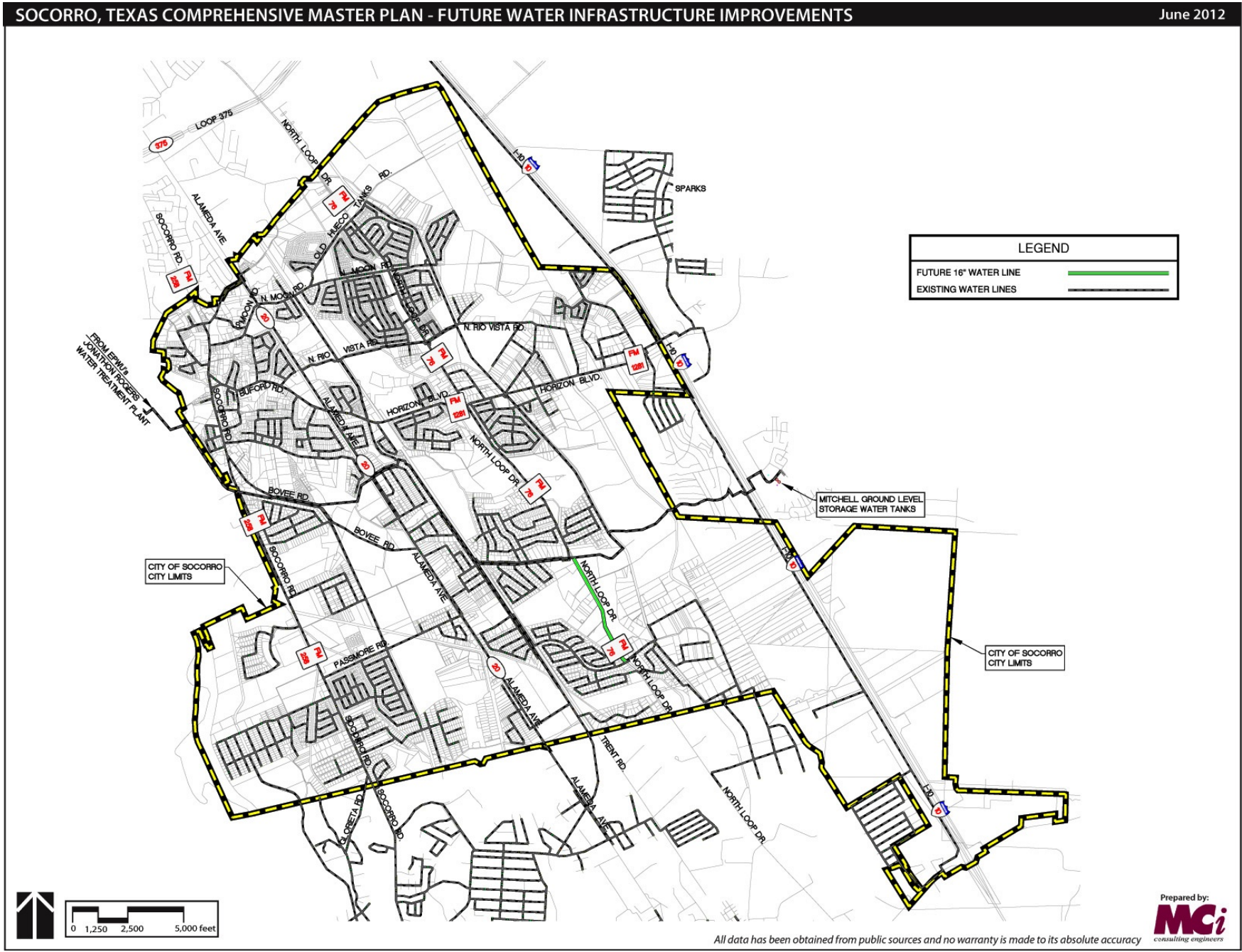


Figure 28. Future LVWD Sewer Improvements

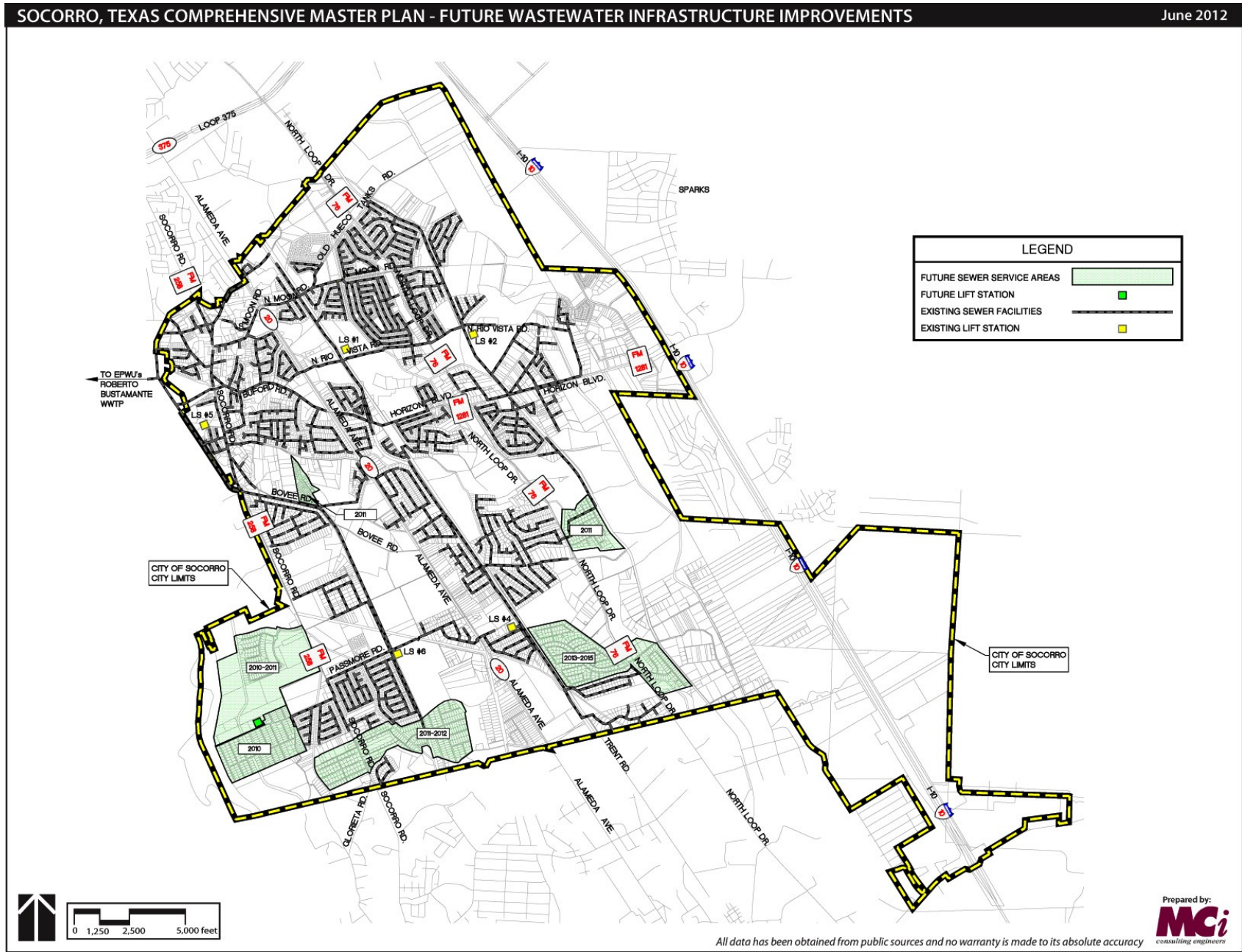
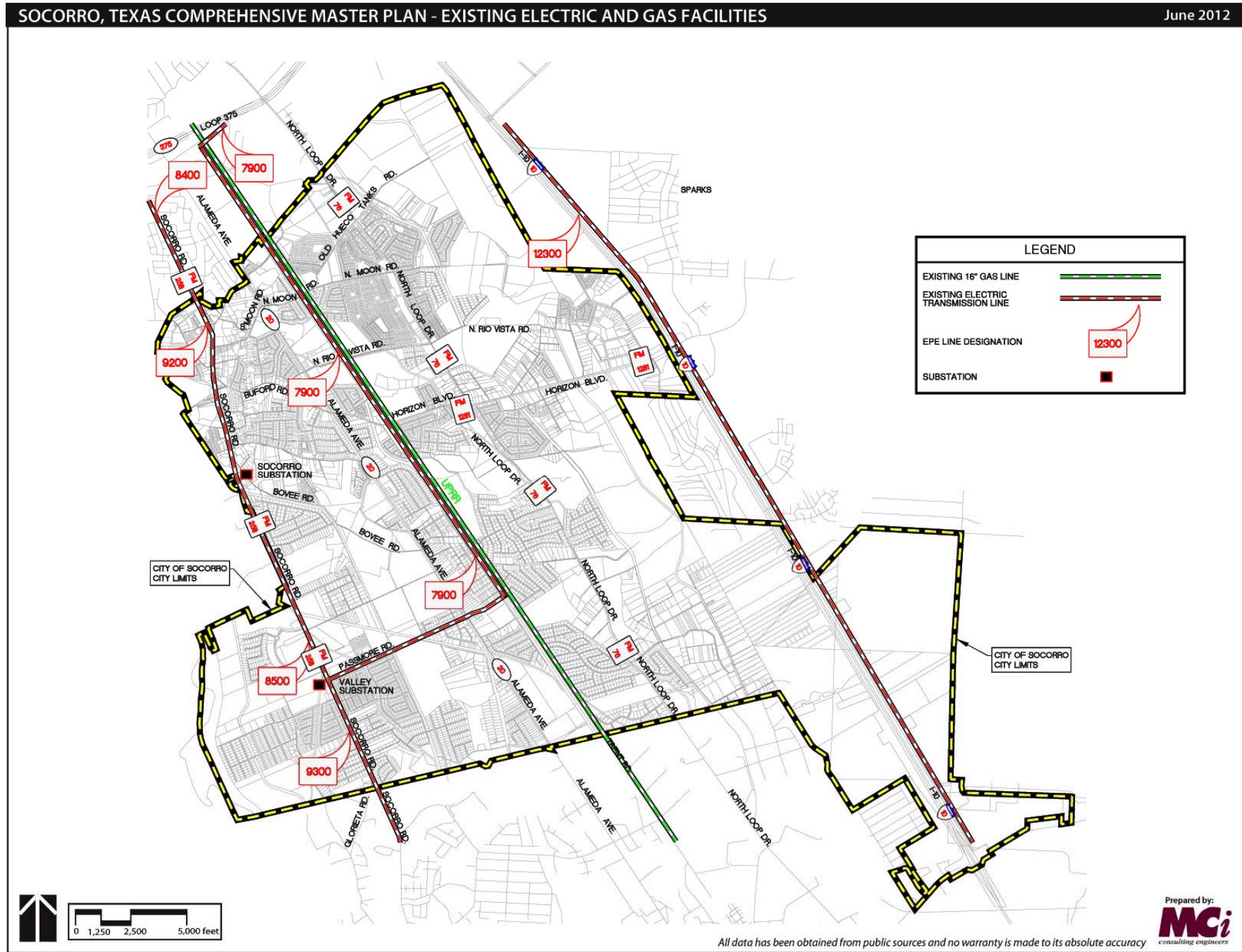


Figure 29. Existing Electric and Gas Facilities



1. SYSTEM GAS MAPS – EXISTING & FUTURE

Figure 29 depicts existing major (greater than 8 inches in diameter) natural gas infrastructure. The prepared exhibit was provided and reviewed by Texas Gas Service staff for accuracy. TGS was then contacted to review any planned system upgrades or adjustments for the purpose of identifying future system components. Currently, TGS does not have plans for facility upgrades within the City of Socorro.

D. COMMUNICATIONS

AT&T, Sprint Nextel and Time Warner provide and maintain communication facilities within the City of Socorro. Communication facilities consist of both overhead cable mounted on existing EPE distribution poles and underground fiber optics (AT&T). It was noted that AT&T has a “high profile” fiber optic line located along Horizon Boulevard. Coordination efforts are being completed with these utilities to obtain additional details about their existing and planned infrastructure details.

E. IRRIGATION

El Paso County Water Improvement District No. 1 (EPCWID#1) operates and maintains canals, laterals, drains, and other waterways that deliver surface water for irrigation. Figure 30, as described in the storm water section, highlights EPCWID #1 irrigation infrastructure. EPCWID#1 was contacted to review any planned system upgrades or adjustments for the purpose of identifying future system components. Based on coordination efforts with EPCWID#1, no major irrigation facility upgrades are planned within the project study limits.

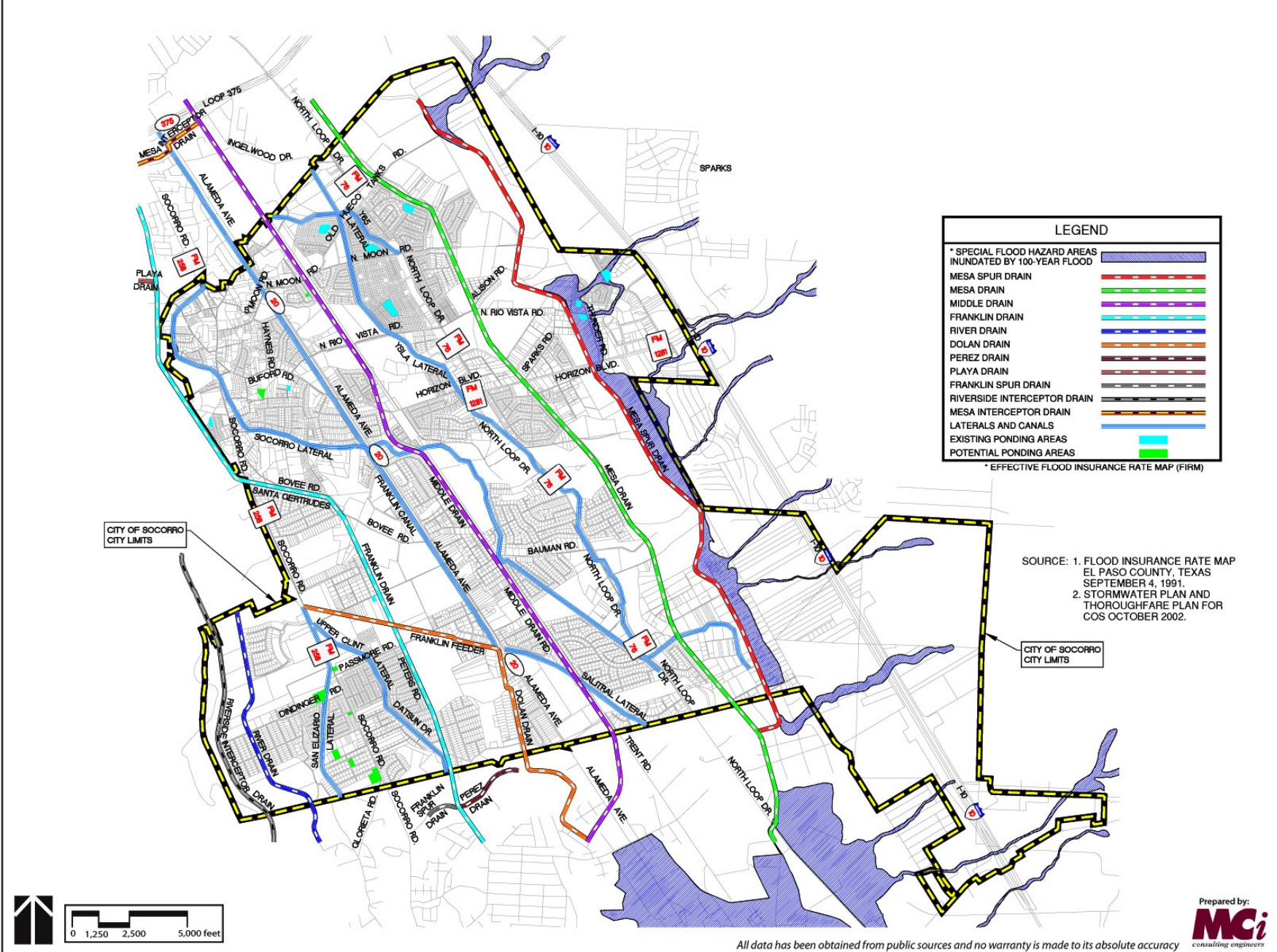
F. EXISTING STORM DRAINAGE

The City of Socorro storm drainage system mainly consists of natural arroyos, the Mesa Spur Drain and several other drains. The contributing drainage areas and peak flows that impact the City of Socorro originate northeast of I-10. These peak flows are conveyed under I-10 through a series of culvert structures. Once the peak flows cross under I-10, the flows become less defined and spread out to form alluvial fans in the City of Socorro. Downstream of I-10 is the Mesa Spur Drain which is the boundary of the flood zone for the arroyos. (See Figure 30 for the Existing Drainage Infrastructure.)

Figure 30. Existing Drainage Infrastructure

SOCORRO, TEXAS COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN - EXISTING DRAINAGE AND IRRIGATION INFRASTRUCTURE

June 2012



All data has been obtained from public sources and no warranty is made to its absolute accuracy

1. EL PASO COUNTY STORM WATER MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS

The El Paso County Commissioners Court, in partnership with the El Paso Water Utilities and the Texas Water Development Board, prepared a county-wide Storm Water Master Plan (SMP) identifying deficiencies and making recommendations to the storm water infrastructure, excluding the City of El Paso but including the City of Socorro boundary. The county study was partially funded by the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB). The completed SMP was adopted by the US Army Corps of Engineers and local governments. Recommendations are listed below and shown in Figure 31.

SPARKS ARROYOS

By far the highest priority project in the County Storm Water Master Plan is the Sparks Arroyos. They originate north of I-10 and stretch from Eastlake Boulevard/Old Hueco Tanks Road to half a mile west of Horizon Boulevard. The flow from the arroyos is conveyed under I-10 by several large culvert structures as large as two 10-foot by 6-foot concrete boxes. The flows from the arroyos transport large amounts of sediment deposits to the northern portion of the City of Socorro boundary. As discussed in the SMP, the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is conducting an ongoing feasibility study for these arroyos. The SMP made seven recommendations to address the drainage issues along the Sparks Arroyo identified as SSA1 through SSA7 in the plan. (See Table 28 for the costs.) The recommendations call for detention and retention basins, outlet structures, and concrete-lined channels. The Valley Ridge Subdivision retention basin downstream of Stockyard Drive (project SSA7) is identified as a high priority project in the SMP, with an estimated cost of \$20.3 million.

SOCORRO STUDY AREA

The City of Socorro boundary was identified in the SMP as a study area. According to the SMP, flooding in the Socorro Study Area is due to the lack of sediment and flood control drainage structures for the various natural arroyos that form alluvial fans. These arroyos spread out and flow in a sheet of water. To address the drainage deficiencies in the City of Socorro, the following eight recommendations (SOC1-SOC8) were made by the SMP.

El Paso Hills Basin Repair (SOC1) – repair the existing basin (embankment failed) at the El Paso Hills Detention Basin.

Stream 4 Basin (SOC2) – build new detention basin with 51 acre-foot capacity downstream of El Paso Hills Basin and construct 2-foot by 2-foot concrete box outlet structure.



Stream 5 Basin (SCO3) – build new detention basin with 8 acre-foot capacity downstream of Stream 5 and construct 2-foot by 2-foot concrete box outlet structure.

Stream 5.5 Basin (SOC4) – build new detention basin with 10 acre-foot capacity downstream of Stream 5.5 and construct 2-foot by 2-foot concrete box outlet structure.

Carr Road Crossing (SOC5) – replace existing 48-inch corrugated metal pipe with two 7-foot by 7-foot concrete box culverts at the intersection of the Mesa Spur Drain and Carr Road.

Coker Road Crossing (SOC6) - replace existing 48-inch corrugated metal pipe with two 7-foot by 7-foot concrete box culverts at the intersection of the Mesa Spur Drain and Coker Road.

Anderson Road Crossing (SOC7) - replace existing 48-inch corrugated metal pipe with two 7-foot by 7-foot concrete box culverts at the intersection of the Mesa Spur Drain and Anderson Road.

Mesa Drain Crossing (SOC8) - replace existing 60-inch corrugated metal pipe with two 7-foot by 7-foot concrete box culverts at the confluence of the Mesa Spur Drain and Mesa Drive.

G. ESTIMATED COSTS OF PRIORITIZED DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENTS

The El Paso County SMP included the following cost estimates shown in Table 31 for the required drainage improvements in order of priority for the Sparks Arroyo and the City of Socorro Study Area.

Table 31. El Paso County SMP Priority Projects Impacting the City of Socorro

Project No.	Estimate Cost	Prioritization
SSA7	\$20,300,000	Category I – High
SSA4	\$11,600,000	Category I - Medium
SSA2	\$4,360,000	Category I – Low
SSA5	\$8,690,000	Category I – Low
SSA1	\$22,630,000	Category I – Low
SOC6	\$140,000	Category II
SOC7	\$160,000	Category II
SOC5	\$170,000	Category II
SOC8	\$220,000	Category II
SOC3	\$870,000	Category II
SOC4	\$1,180,000	Category II
SOC1 & SOC2	\$3,650,000	Category II
SSA3	\$6,170,000	Category II
SSA6	\$1,910,000	Category III

H. UTILITIES GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Utilities Goal 1:

Minimize utility adjustment impacts and costs.

- Strategy a. Actively consider and coordinate proposed infrastructure upgrades associated with street and drainage improvements and future utility expansion/maintenance requirements in efforts to jointly coordinate, design and construct the work.*
- Strategy b. Adopt a City of Socorro and utility company coordination protocol for establishing coordination procedures and review of planned projects among the various entities.*

I. STORM DRAINAGE INFRASTRUCTURE GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Storm Drainage Goal 1:

Update the Storm Water Master Plan for Socorro.

- Strategy a. Identify system maintenance requirements.*
- Strategy b. Identify system deficiencies and make recommendations for improvements.*
- Strategy c. Develop a list of priority stormwater projects with costs.*

Storm Drainage Goal 2:

Coordinate with other agencies to fund priority projects.

- Strategy a. Partner with other agencies such as the County of El Paso, US Army Corps of Engineers, and/or TxDOT to prioritize, design and fund storm water drainage projects.*
- Strategy b. Identify and pursue funding for priority projects.*

Page intentionally left blank

XI. IMPLEMENTATION

A. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT RESOURCES

Capital improvements include projects that are difficult to fund in one year without securing debt financing that can be paid off over time. It is in the City of Socorro’s long-term financial interest to invest regularly in the physical maintenance and enhancement of the city rather than to undertake large improvement programs at longer time intervals. A modest amount of money expended annually on prioritized items consistent with the Plan recommendations will produce a greater return to the City than will large expenditures at long intervals. The following items summarize a variety of potential funding mechanisms.

1. AD VALOREM TAXES

An ad valorem tax is levied on property according to its value. Under an ad valorem tax, people who own certain types of property are required to pay periodic taxes which represent a percentage of the assessed value of the property. One of the most widespread forms of this tax is the property tax which people are required to pay on real estate. An ad valorem tax can also be assessed when property is purchased, in the form of a sales tax or value-added tax (VAT).

2. ROADWAY FUNDS

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) receives funds from the federal government and from the state budget that it distributes for roadway construction and maintenance across Texas.

3. BOND FINANCING

The three most widely used types of bonds are General Obligation Bonds, Revenue Bonds, and Certificates of Obligation. General Obligation Bonds, or G.O. bonds, are bonds secured by a county’s or municipality’s ad valorem taxing power. They are issued after approval at a bond election, typically for from 15 to 40 years, to pay for a specific purpose. Revenue bonds, by contrast, are secured by the pledge of revenues of a project of the issuer and not subject to a demand for payment from taxes. If a sufficient revenue stream exists, revenue bonds could be secured by water systems, toll roads or parks. Certificates of Obligation, on the other hand, are a streamlined method of financing that does not require voter approval unless a petition is presented for one. A CO may be backed solely by ad valorem taxes, revenues, or a

combination. They also may be amortized for up to 40 years, but a shorter time frame is usually involved (Pollan, 2008).

B. STATE PROGRAMS AND FUNDING MECHANISMS

1. SECTION 380, TEXAS LOCAL GOVERNMENT CODE

This section of the law authorizes Texas municipalities to provide assistance in the form of monies, loans, city personnel and city services to promote and encourage economic development. Cities are authorized to “provide for the administration of one or more programs, including programs for making loans and grants of public money and providing personnel and services of the municipality.” These programs must promote state or local economic development by stimulating business and commercial activity within the city, the extraterritorial jurisdiction of the city, or an area annexed by the city for limited purposes.” Unlike tax abatements, Chapter 380 agreements may extend beyond ten years. While municipalities are to refund or rebate municipal sales taxes or otherwise expend public funds for certain economic development purposes, they may not agree to abate a taxpayer’s delinquent taxes (Moore 2006).

2. IMPACT FEES

Chapter 395 of the Texas Local Government Code allows cities in Texas to charge fees to developers for off-site facilities based on their development’s impact on the infrastructure system. The state law allows cities to assess fees for 1) roadway and drainage construction, 2) water service expansion, and 3) wastewater service expansion to new residential and nonresidential development. This provides cities with an increased ability to plan and construct capital facilities so that the necessary infrastructure capacity is available when needed. If not implemented through impact fees, new capital facilities will likely be financed through taxes paid by existing as well as future residents. Impact fees ensure that the development community pays its related share of the cost of growth and the impact of that growth on local infrastructure systems.

3. TEXAS ENTERPRISE ZONE PROGRAM

Chapter 2303 of the Government Code allows local communities to partner with the State of Texas to promote job creation and capital investment in economically distressed areas of the state. Local communities must nominate a company as an Enterprise Project to be eligible to participate in the program. The state limits allocations biennially and accepts applications on a quarterly

basis. Designated projects are eligible to apply for state sales and use tax refunds on qualified expenditures. The level and amount of the refund is related to the capital investment and jobs created at the qualified business site. For example, a level of capital investment by a business of \$40,000 to \$399,999 that creates a maximum of ten jobs would entitle it to a \$2,500 maximum refund per job created. In addition, local communities must offer incentives to participants under the Enterprise Zone Program such as tax abatement, tax increment financing and one-stop permitting.

4. TEXAS MAINSTREET PROGRAM

This program helps Texas cities revitalize their historic downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts by providing ongoing training for MainStreet managers and board members, training in successful economic development approaches, design assistance, consultation with downtown merchants about visual merchandising, and advice on heritage tourism programs and marketing. In addition, it provides a three-day on-site evaluation accompanied by a full report with recommendations. To be eligible, cities with populations under 50,000 must agree to hire a full-time Main Street manager for three years and providing funding for the local program.

5. TRANSPORTATION REINVESTMENT ZONES

Transportation Reinvestment Zones (TRZs) are a relatively new method of financing transportation projects that is similar to tax-increment financing zones. Approved by the 2007 Texas Legislature, TRZs collect a portion of ad valorem taxes (property taxes) in the zone to finance transportation projects. For example, the City of El Paso, in concert with the Camino Real Regional Mobility Authority, is planning a bus route along with tolls on new roadways. City taxes on residential and commercial development bordering I-10 and Loop 375 are remaining at the 2008 level, while the additional tax revenue based on increased property values will go toward the new roads. While the TRZ does not increase taxes, it does increase the commercial viability of vacant and occupied properties. Locals funds raised through tolls and tax diversion that began in 2010 are expected to raise about \$70 million, which would qualify the zone for \$1 billion of state road construction funding (Williamson 2008).

C. COUNTY PROGRAMS AND FUNDS

1. EL PASO COUNTY REVOLVING LOAN FUND

The El Paso Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) is a public sector financing tool designed to stimulate economic growth in rural areas of El Paso County. The program complements efforts of private financial lenders by providing gap financing that

would not otherwise be available for private projects. Its goal is to create jobs and support capital formation in the private sector. Loans range from \$10,000 to \$50,000 and must be paid back within ten years. To receive consideration, the applicant must create at least one full-time equivalent job (37.5 hours per week) for each \$35,000 borrowed from the RLF. The business must be located in El Paso County but outside the El Paso City limits. Businesses relocating from one area of Texas to El Paso County cannot qualify unless they provide documentation that their only other alternative is to leave the State of Texas. Funds for the loan fund come from grants originating in the US Department of Housing and Urban Development.

D. FEDERAL PROGRAMS AND FUNDING MECHANISMS

1. HUBZONE (HISTORICALLY UNDERUTILIZED BUSINESS ZONE) PROGRAM

This program stimulates economic development and creates jobs in urban and rural communities by providing Federal contracting preferences to small businesses. The preferences can go to small businesses that obtain HUBZone certification primarily by meeting these requirements: 1) the principal office is located within a HUBZone, including “Indian Country” and military facilities closed by the Base Realignment and Closure Act, and 2) 35 percent of its employees live in a HUBZone. Parts of Socorro are included in a HUBZone—Census tracts 104.01, 104.02, and 103.10—as well as Ysleta Del Sur Pueblo. These Census tracts were considered qualified as HUB Zones up until June 2011. This may change depending on new income and employment data collected by the 2010 Census Count .

2. FOREIGN TRADE ZONES.

Foreign Trade Zones (FTZs) were created in the United States to provide special customs procedures to US plants engaged in international trade-related activities. Duty-free treatment is accorded items that are processed in FTZs and then re-exported; duty payment is deferred on items until they are brought out of the FTZ for sale in the US market. This helps to offset customs advantages available to overseas producers who compete with domestic industry. Thus goods entering FTZs are not subject to customs tariffs until the goods leave the zone and are formally entered into US Customs Territory. Merchandise shipped to foreign countries from FTZs is exempt from duty payments. This provision is especially useful to firms that import components in order to manufacture finishes products for export. There is no time limit on goods stored inside an FTZ and certain foreign and domestic merchandise held there may be exempted from state and local inventory taxes. A variety of activities can be conducted in a zone, including assembling, packaging, destroying, storing, cleaning, exhibiting, re-packing, distributing, sorting, grading, testing, labeling,

repairing, combining with foreign or domestic content, or processing.
Manufacturing and processing require specific FTZ Board approval, however.

FTZs are divided into general-purpose zones and subzones. General-purpose zones involve public facilities that can be used by more than one firm and most commonly are ports or industrial parks used by small to medium-sized businesses for warehousing/distribution and some processing/assembly. Subzones, however, are sponsored by general-purpose zones, but typically involve a single firm's site that is used for most extensive manufacturing/processing or warehousing/distribution that cannot easily be accomplished in a general-purpose zone (Trade Information Center, 20011).

Page intentionally left blank

XII. APPENDICES

A. BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. SOURCES:

Biodiversity by Design: A Guide for Sustainable Communities. Town and Country Planning Association. England. 2004.

City of Socorro Master Plan, City of Socorro, 2004.

Demographics Now website <http://library.demographicsnow.com>

Ecosystem Services. Ecological Society of America. 2000. www.esa.org.

El Campanario Ballroom website, <http://www.elcampanarioballroom.com/>

El Paso Community College Website, <http://www.epcc.edu>

El Paso County Historical Society Website,
<http://www.elpasohistory.com/show.html>, accessed 1/28/11.

El Paso MPO, Mission 2035 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP),
<http://www.elpasompo.org/publications.html>

El Paso MPO, Mission 2011-2014 Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)
<http://www.elpasompo.org/publications.html>

El Paso MPO, 2008 Comprehensive Mobility Plan,
<http://www.elpasompo.org/publications.html>

ESC—Region 19 Head Start Program website,
<http://www.esc19hs.net/index.htm>; accessed 1/7/2011

“Foreign Trade Zones.” Foreign-Trade Zone Resource Center.
<http://www.foreign-trade-zone.com/history.htm>. Data retrieved February 10, 2011.

Greenville, Texas Comprehensive Plan 2025, March 2004 Draft.

Historical Marker Database Website,
<http://www.hmdb.org/marker.asp?marker=37987> Accessed 1/27/11

MacLeod, Ian. “Foreign Trade Zones.” Trade Information Center.
<http://ia.ita.doc.gov/ftzpage/tic.html> June 2000.

Marriott, Paul Daniel. “The Preservation Office Guide to Historic Roads.” June 2010.

Moore, Jeff; Brown & Hofmeister, LLP. "Chapter 380 of the Texas Local Government Code." Presented at the Riley Fletcher Basic Municipal Law Seminar, Texas Attorneys Association. February 24, 2006.

National Park Service Website,
<http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/tx/tx1.htm>, Accessed 1/28/11-1/31/11.

National Recreation and Park Association website, <http://www.nrpa.org/>

Wildlife Habitat Planning Strategies, Design Features and Best Management Practices for Florida Communities and Landowners. One Thousand Friends of Florida. 2011.

Pollan, Thomas M. *Public Finance Handbook for Texas Counties*. Texas Association of Counties. 2008.

Reference USA website. Data retrieved July 2010.

Texas Socorro Mission Preservation Project, Jean Fulton, Cornerstones Community Partnerships (Santa Fe, NM), 2008.

Sites on Texas website, Data Retrieved Sept. 2010

Socorro Almanac. <http://www.citytowninfo.com/places/texas/socorro>, accessed 1/22/11

Socorro Independent School District website,
<http://www.sisd.net/socorroisd/site/default.asp>; accessed 1/6/2011

Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center website: <http://www.ttuhs.edu/>; accessed 1/10/11

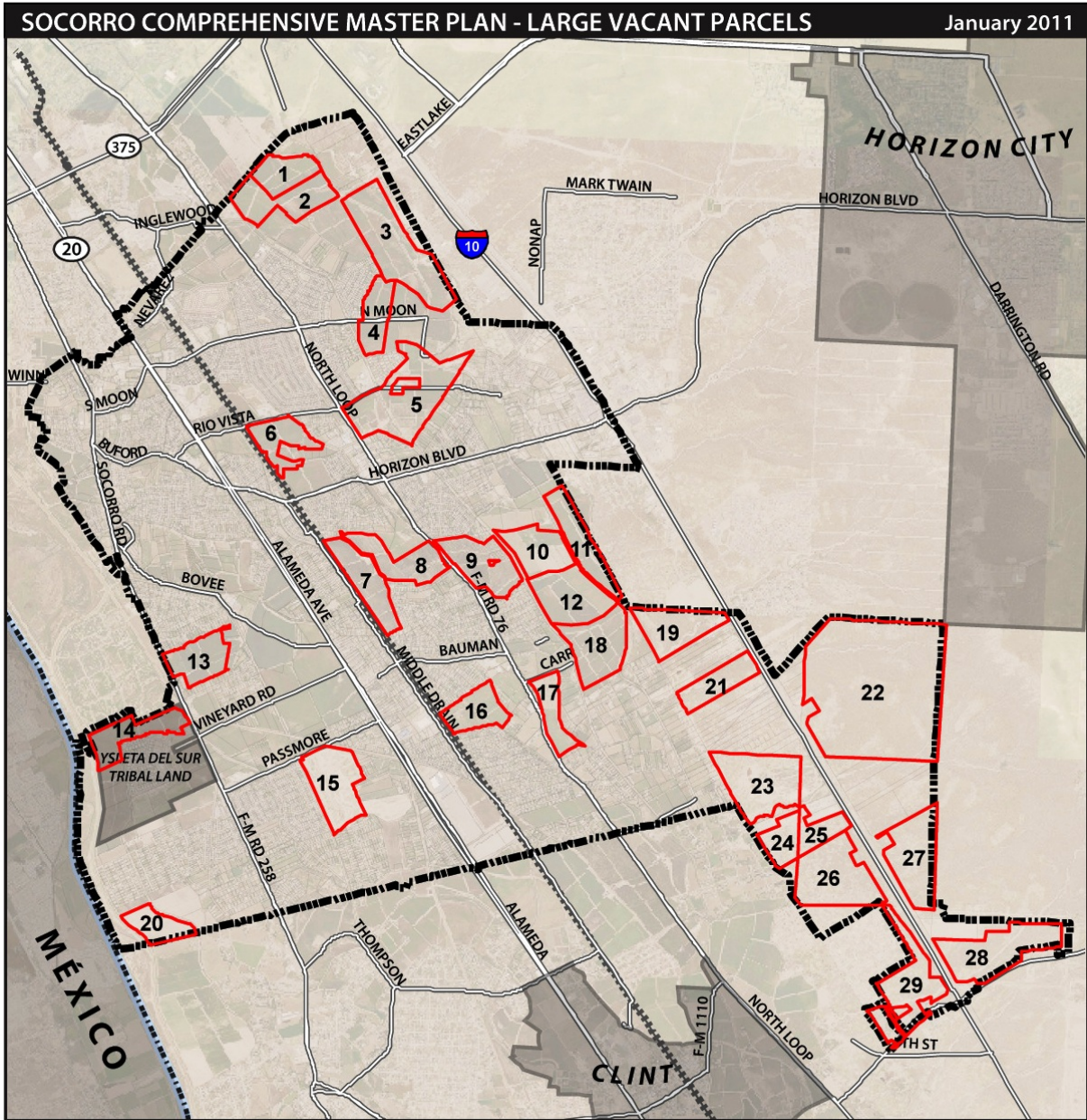
US Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2006-2008

UTEP, Institute for Policy and Economic Development, Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the West Texas Economic Development District (WTEDD). May 2006.

Williamson, Richard. "El Paso Council Creates Texas' First Transportation Reinvestment Zone," *all Business*, 2008, 20011.

Ysleta del Sur Pueblo website,
http://www.ysletadelsurpueblo.org/html_pages.sstg?id=120&sub1=121

B. VACANT LAND MAP



Sources: Texas General Land Office, El Paso MPO, City of Socorro, Texas, Paso del Norte Mapa, County of El Paso, Texas Natural Resources Information System
 All data has been obtained from public sources and no warranty is made to its absolute accuracy

LEGEND									
Parcel	Acreage	Parcel	Acreage	Parcel	Acreage	Parcel	Acreage	Parcel	Acreage
1	62.73	7	89.69	13	75.71	19	94.28	25	48.96
2	95.32	8	84.28	14	73.57	20	51.40	26	134.88
3	176.65	9	98.40	15	112.92	21	67.92	27	127.35
4	64.43	10	83.78	16	66.18	22	610.01	28	143.83
5	177.57	11	80.73	17	52.78	23	120.84	29	125.06
6	70.74	12	113.47	18	107.76	24	49.15		

Prepared by:
 sites
 southwest

C. TRANSPORTATION ADDENDA

Figure 32. Arterial Street Sections

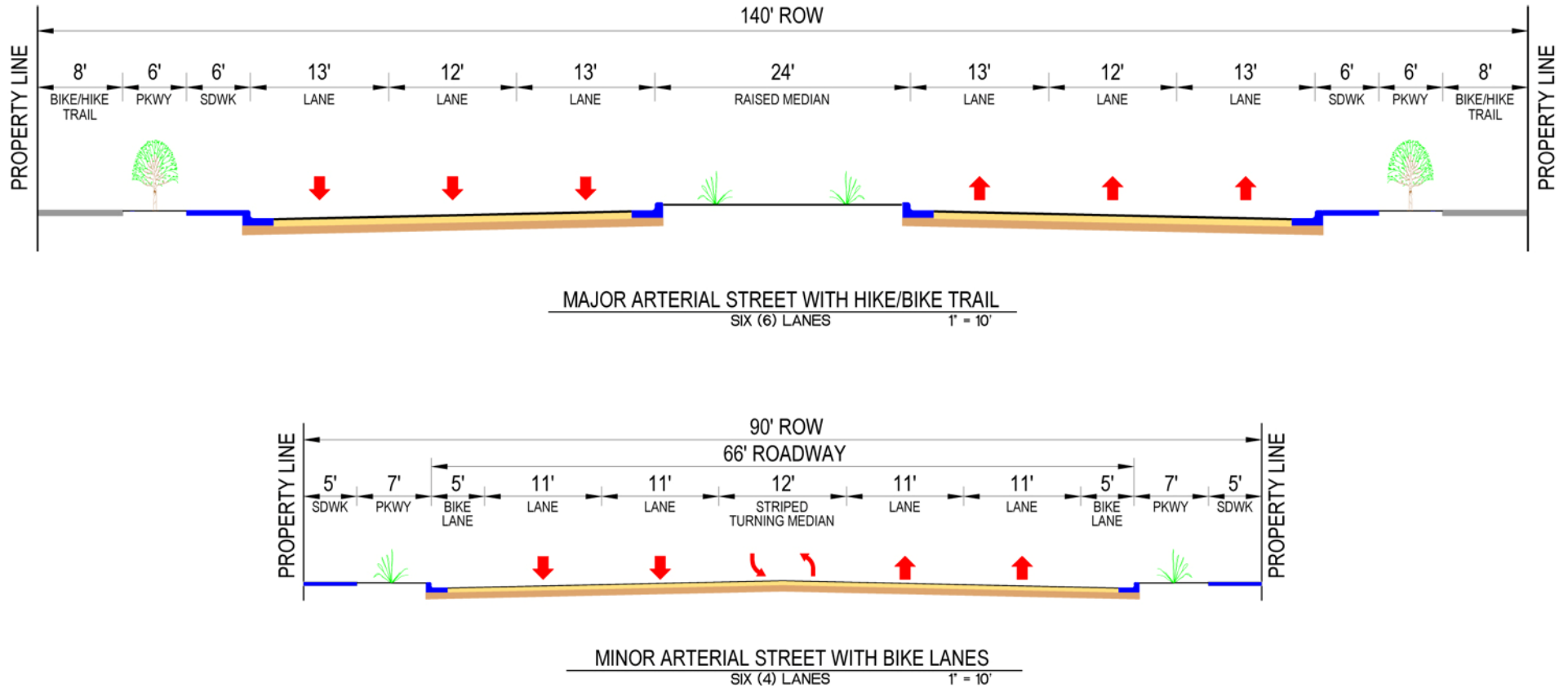


Figure 33. 2010 Traffic Data

SOCORRO, TEXAS COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN - EL PASO MPO 2010 TRAFFIC DATA

June 2012

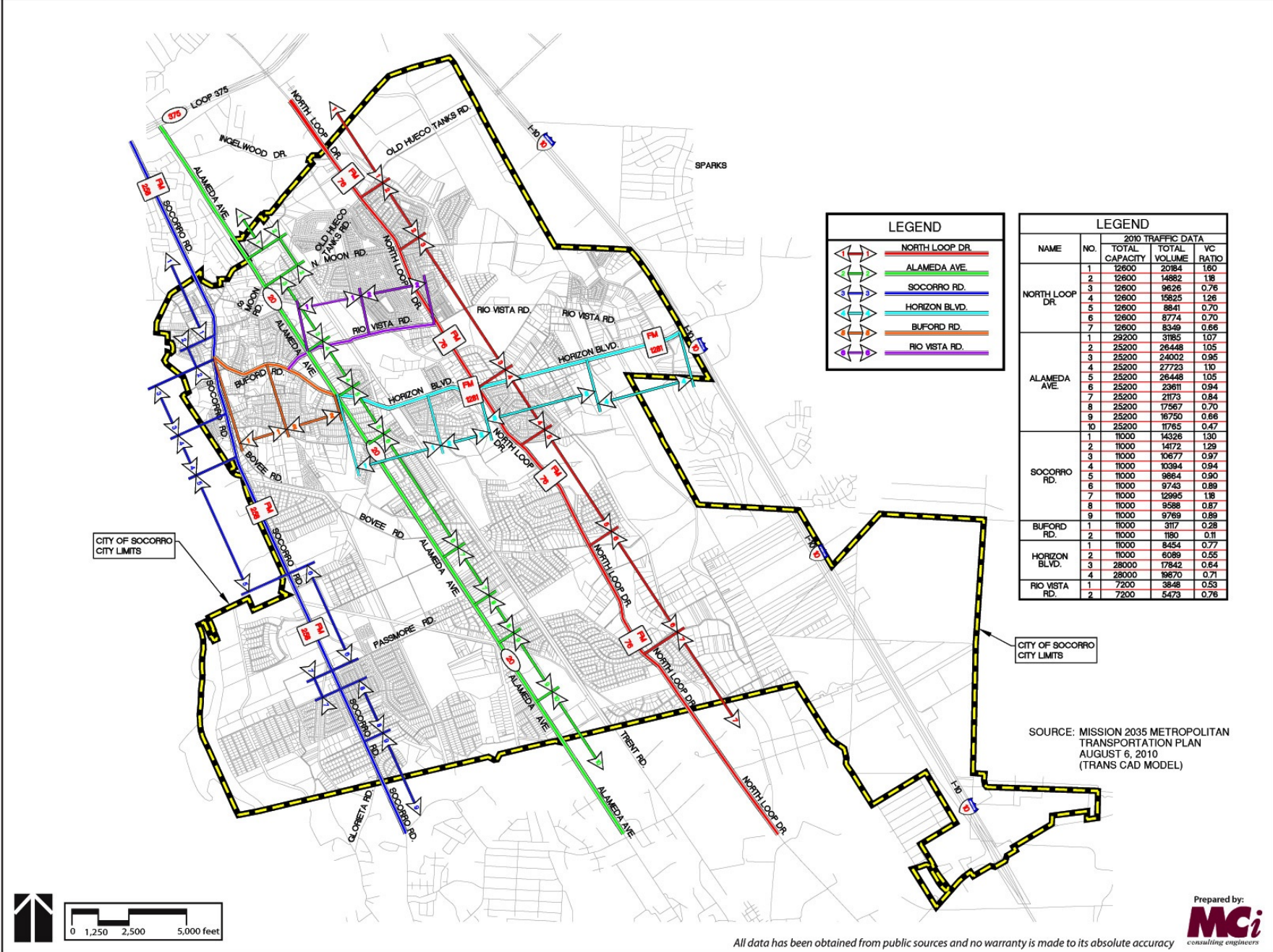


Figure 34. 2020 Traffic Data

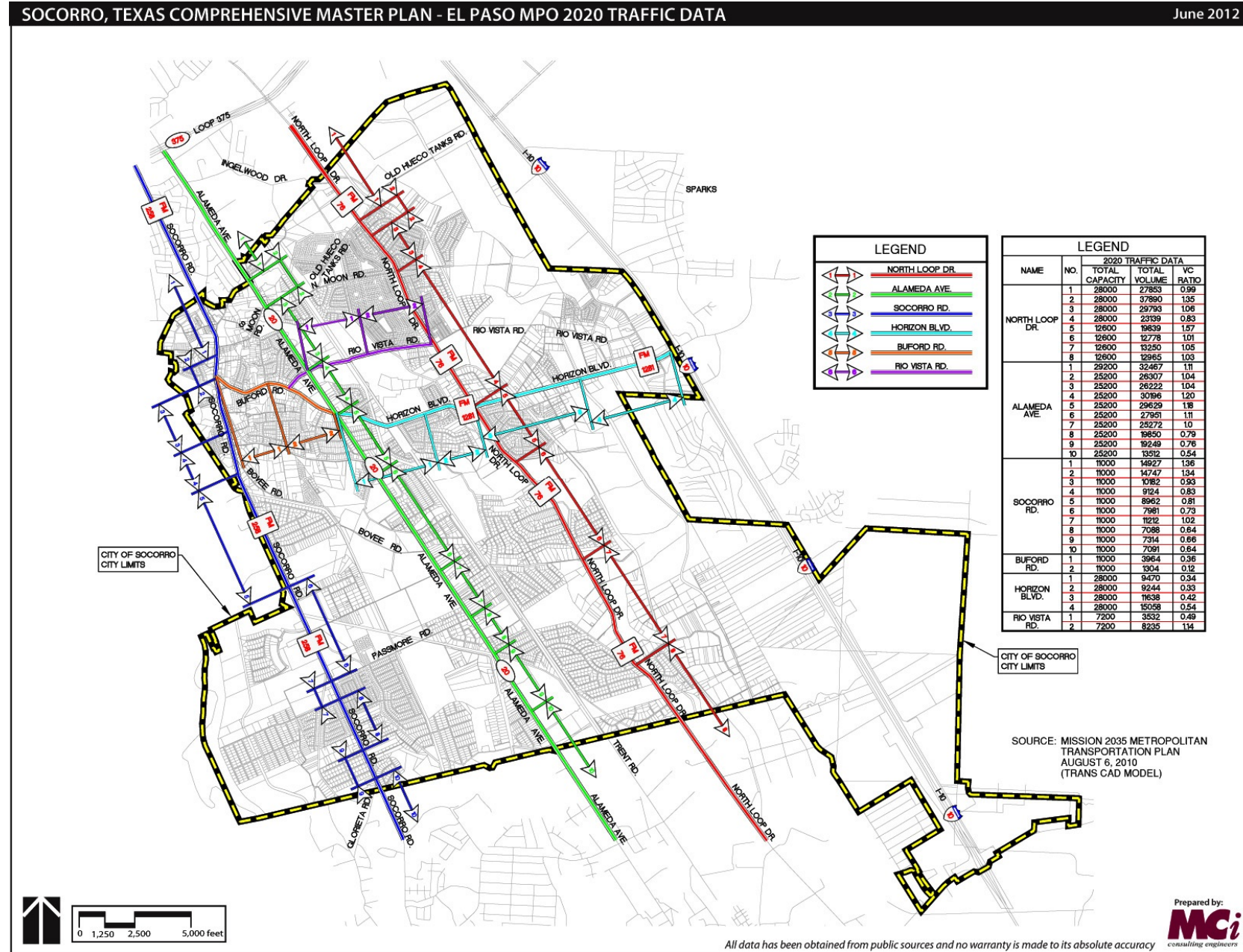
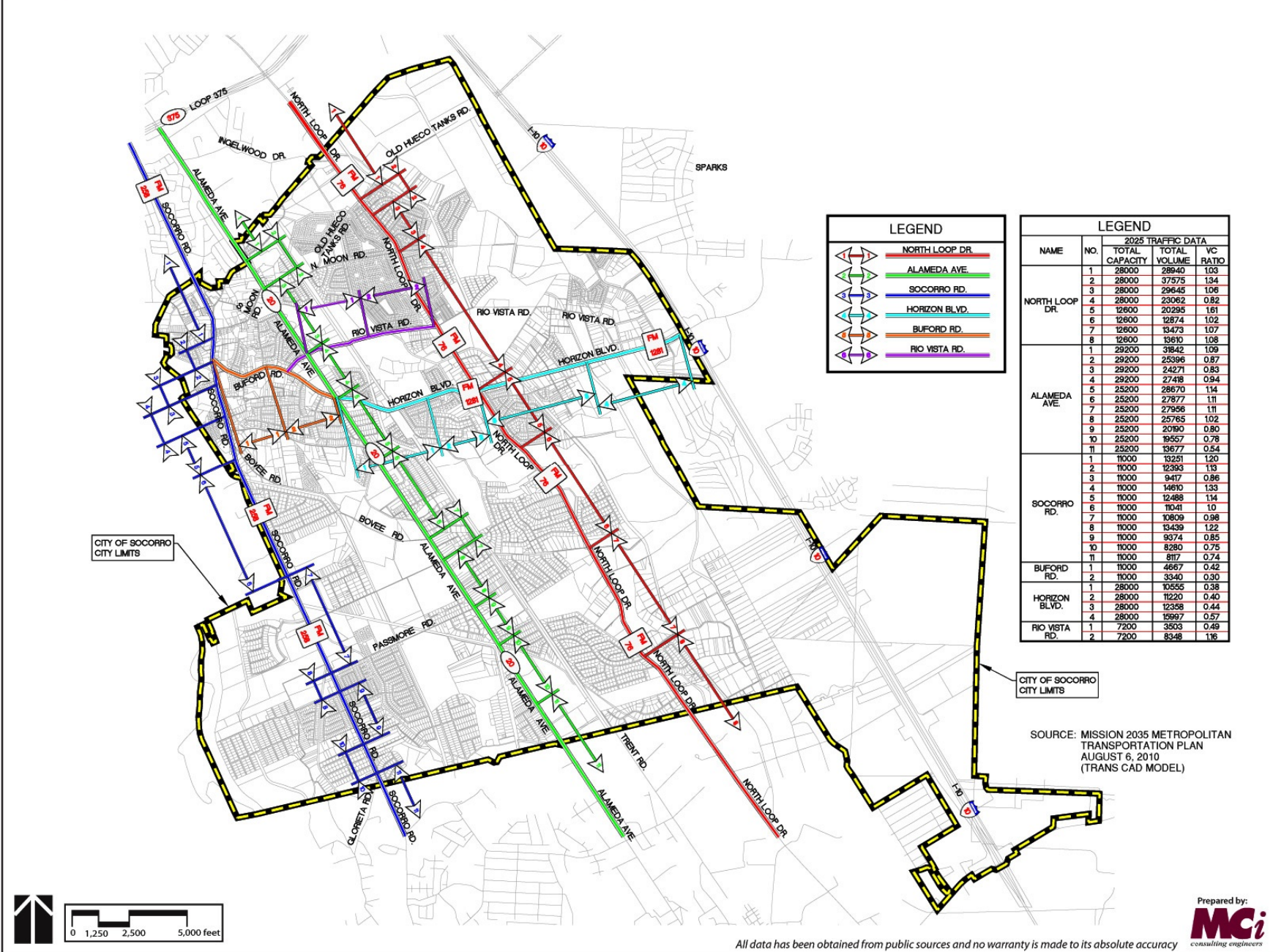


Figure 35. 2025 Traffic Data

SOCORRO, TEXAS COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN - EL PASO MPO 2025 TRAFFIC DATA

June 2012



All data has been obtained from public sources and no warranty is made to its absolute accuracy

Figure 36. 2035 Traffic Data

SOCORRO, TEXAS COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN - EL PASO MPO 2035 TRAFFIC DATA

June 2012

