



ECONOMIC RECOVERY STRATEGIC PLAN



CITY OF SOCORRO, TEXAS

July 2024

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STRATEGIES

Acknowledgments

Ascendo Strategies would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their participation in this process:

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And every respondent to the business and community survey.

Images courtesy of the City of Socorro.

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Executive summary

Economic recovery outcomes

The vision for the City of Socorro is captured in creating a more equitable and prosperous community by building on its assets, including its cultural and heritage richness, young population, and positioning in a binational region. There are major economic outcomes, including a prosperous community for all its current and future residents, a thriving business community, and an established extraordinary destination based on its cultural and historical richness for all visitors. This plan is intended to be a five-year plan.

Guiding principles

- ▶ A vibrant community with a stronger and more resilient economy
- ▶ Heritage preservation
- ▶ Inclusive growth
- ▶ Asset-based economic opportunities
- ▶ An entrepreneurial spirit

Economic development goals

This plan is built upon three primary goals:

- ▶ Catalyze a stronger, more prosperous, and diversified economy.
- ▶ Foster inclusive economic opportunities.
- ▶ Capitalize on cultural and historical assets for sustainable growth.

Strategies at-a-glance

Short-term

- ▶ [Strategy 1](#). Expand the existing partnership with Project Vida for targeted business technical assistance and financial support by 2021 Business Incubator Feasibility Study (Study) recommendations.
- ▶ [Strategy 2](#). Expand the existing partnership with Workforce Borderplex Solutions (WBS) to provide more services for job seekers and businesses.
- ▶ [Strategy 3](#). Focus on promoting heritage and cultural tourism and retail along commercial corridors.
- ▶ [Strategy 4](#). Adopt a policy for all economic development programming to be available in Spanish and English.
- ▶ [Strategy 5](#). As a retail strategy, partner with existing retailers to expand their locations or their offerings to include fresh produce.
- ▶ [Strategy 6](#). Increase access to local and fresh foods through the enhancement of a local and fresh food ecosystem
- ▶ [Strategy 7](#). Increase internal capacity for economic development initiatives using technology.
- ▶ [Strategy 8](#). According to the Study, foster a vibrant business culture and entrepreneurial spirit by celebrating and recognizing Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprises (MWBEs), small and veteran-owned businesses, and businesses along the commercial corridors.
- ▶ [Strategy 9](#). Revitalize the manufacturing and construction industries in Socorro.
- ▶ [Strategy 10](#). Enhance collaboration and networking among local businesses.
- ▶ [Strategy 11](#). Enhance access to capital through microfinancing by recommendations from the Study.
- ▶ [Strategy 12](#). Establish bilingual financial literacy for aspiring and current business owners by recommendations from the Study.
- ▶ [Strategy 13](#). Position Socorro the "Heart of the Mission Trail" as place branding.
- ▶ [Strategy 14](#). Enhance the business culture through community leadership.
- ▶ [Strategy 15](#). As an attraction retail strategy, develop a partnership with Mexican food restaurants to create a "Passport Program," branded to leveraging the unique cultural background and culinary landscape.
- ▶ [Strategy 16](#). Enhance daycare services to reduce barriers to employment and support economic resilience for entrepreneurs through childcare.

Medium-term

- ▶ [Strategy 17](#). Launch the Rio Vista Business Incubator launch as a centralized business center, following the feasibility study completed in 2021 and in alignment with the Management and Operations Plan from 2023.
- ▶ [Strategy 18](#). Establish a Revolving Loan Fund for low-interest loans for Socorro's businesses and entrepreneurs by recommendations from the Study.

- ▶ [Strategy 19](#). Focus on revitalizing and establishing Socorro Corridor as the Main Street for attractions, retail, entertainment, and a leverage point for revitalization.
- ▶ [Strategy 20](#). Establish and maintain a strong working relationship with well-established non-profit organizations to jointly seek grants and funding opportunities that are only available for non-profit organizations and specific to the City's needs.
- ▶ [Strategy 21](#). Enhance eligible local business capacities for government contracting.
- ▶ [Strategy 22](#). Partner with MBDA, SBDC APEX, or similar partners to enhance local companies' access to government procurement opportunities.
- ▶ [Strategy 23](#). Widen government-related opportunities for local businesses through key strategic partnerships.
- ▶ [Strategy 24](#). Strengthen historical preservation and cultural programming.
- ▶ [Strategy 25](#). Promote local hospitality initiatives.

Long-term

- ▶ [Strategy 26](#). To support community-driven efforts, foster the development and enhancement of local non-profit organizations in the community to contribute to economic and community development.
- ▶ [Strategy 27](#). Foster industrial development by attracting and training high-wage industrial employers.
- ▶ [Strategy 28](#). Enhance historical preservation and tourism infrastructure.
- ▶ [Strategy 29](#). Leverage regional visitors by enhancing active transportation and recreational opportunities.
- ▶ [Strategy 30](#). Expand lodging options and improve accommodation infrastructure.
- ▶ [Strategy 31](#). Establish youth programming that will lead to a multigenerational impact.
- ▶ [Strategy 32](#). Develop a food truck park along the Socorro Corridor to enhance local dining, community engagement, and gathering spaces.

Target industries

Target industries reflect those industries that are important to a local or regional economy, now and in the future. Identifying target industries matters only to the extent that a community works to actually “target” efforts to support said industry. The strategies and action section details specific strategies to grow Socorro's economy through catalytic entrepreneurial support, business support to existing businesses, marketing, and policies to support growth and workforce initiatives. Nonetheless, a successful target industry initiative must begin with a solid framework that employs quantitative, qualitative, and strategic methods. After a comprehensive analysis of the opportunities, assets, and challenges gathered from public input completed during the community outreach and secondary data, and in the context of the five-year period for this strategic plan, the following six industries are the target sectors for the City of Socorro as priority areas.¹

- Tourism²
- Retail
- Transportation and warehousing
- Construction
- Manufacturing
- Accommodation and food services

Top three ARPA-funded recommendations for impact investments

- ▶ **Top 1 strategy.** Expand the existing partnership with Project Vida for targeted business technical assistance and financial support.
- ▶ **Top 2 strategy.** Expand the existing partnership with Workforce Borderplex Solutions (WBS) to increase services for both job seekers and businesses.
- ▶ **Top 3 strategy:** Focus on promoting heritage and cultural tourism and retail along the Mission Trail, which corresponds to the Socorro Corridor located along Socorro Road.

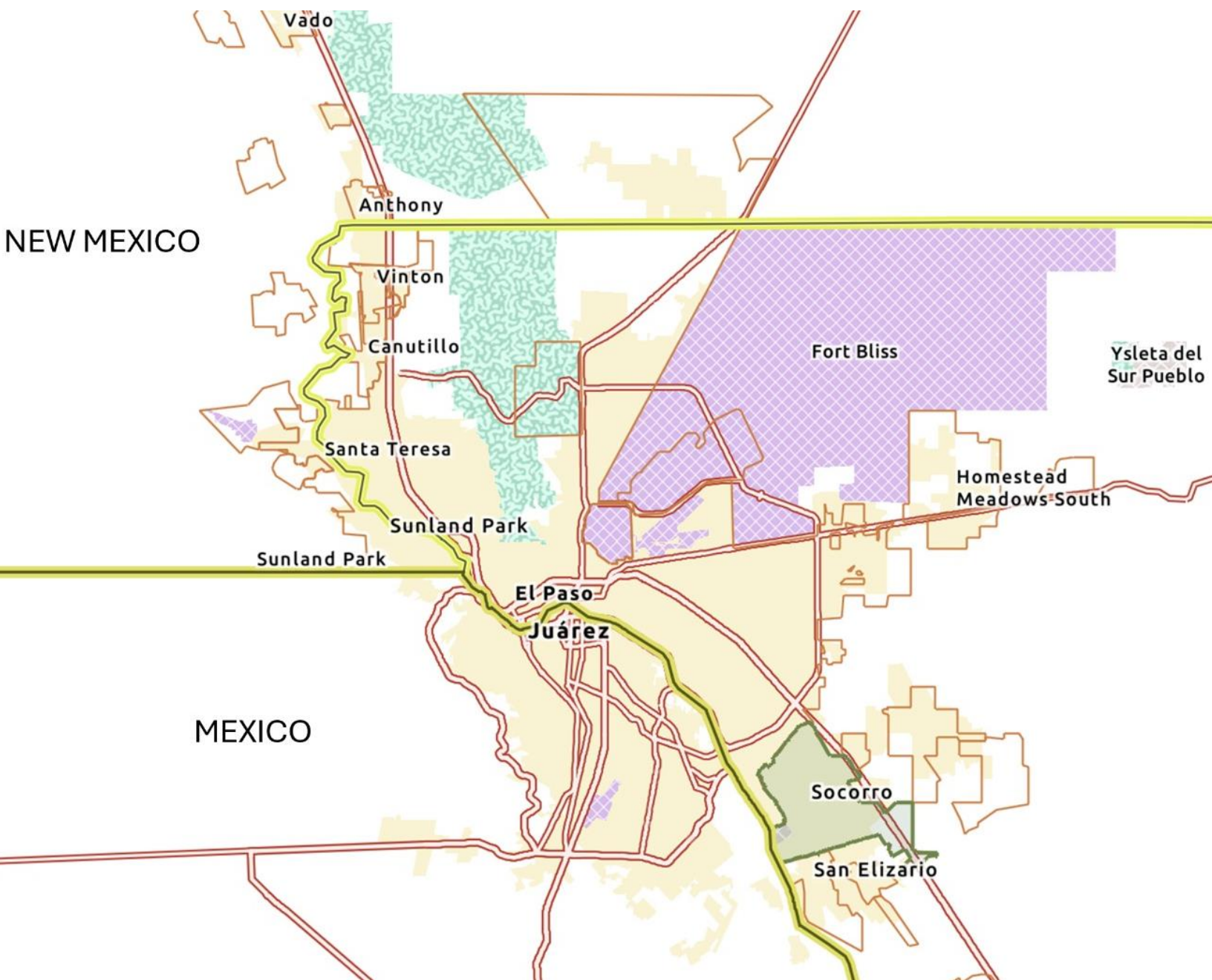
¹ ** Priority industry for WSB and part of "2024 Hot Jobs Borderplex"

² Tourism is not a NAICS code industry. Occupations presented are based on career pathways related to lodging, recreation, restaurants and food/beverage services, and travel and tourism.

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Socorro in a regional setting

The City of Socorro, Texas, is strategically situated in the vibrant El Paso Metropolitan Area within El Paso County, anchoring a region encompassing three states—Chihuahua, Texas, and New Mexico—and two nations, the United States and Mexico. This urban area, home to over 3 million people, benefits from its location along Interstate 10 and its proximity to international points of entry. Historically, Socorro is part of the southern segment of El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro, locally known as the Mission Trail, reflecting its rich cultural heritage and longstanding regional significance.



How to read this plan

This section provides context for navigating the document and key definitions of terms used to optimize understanding.

Plan framework

The plan has been developed in sections, including the project background and scope of work and the importance of this economic recovery strategic plan as a tool to recover from the lingering negative impacts of COVID-19. This is followed by the guiding principles distilled from the community outreach process and data analysis. Lastly, goals, strategies, an action plan, and strategic performance metrics are included. This plan is intended to be a five-year plan.

Definitions:

Guiding principles reflect a community's residents' values, allowing this plan to be framed based on the community's priorities.

The top three ARPA-funded strategies recommendations for impact investments are covered, given limited funding resources, including those available through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). These initiatives are detailed as part of short-term strategies and action steps and are intended to support the City of Socorro in its decision-making,

The goals serve as the foundation, providing a visionary and ambitious target that reflects the desired future state or outcome. They are broad, encompassing, and long-term, often addressing key areas such as economic growth, employment, and resilience. Each **goal** includes a series of corresponding strategies.

Strategies are the bridge between goals and actions, outlining the approach to achieving these goals with several interconnected actions. Strategies are more specific than goals but still somewhat broad, illustrating the method of change that will guide efforts. Strategies consider the resources, strengths, and challenges unique to the situation and frame a coherent plan of attack.

Strategies are listed in priority order for each timeframe given below. Each strategy includes a timeframe, either **short, medium, or long-term**.

 Short-term (Year 1)  Medium-term (Year 2-3)  Long-term (Year 4-5)

Actions are the plan's most concrete and specific elements. These are the individual steps that will be taken to execute the strategy. They include detailed tasks, projects, programs, and policies needed to achieve the goals and ensure measurable and impactful progress.

Key metrics measure the progress or outcomes of the plan and its parts, including those reflecting the achievement and completion of the actions. They also ensure efficiency and timeliness and serve as a feedback system. These metrics allow for celebrating success and adjusting when necessary.

Project background

In July 2023, the City of Socorro engaged Ascendo Strategies to develop an economic recovery strategic plan to help focus and optimize economic recovery efforts, especially after the devastating economic downturn caused by COVID-19. The economic recovery strategic plan has been developed in sections, including an evaluation of the negative impacts of COVID-19 on the community, followed by an assessment of the importance of this strategic economic recovery plan for a stronger recovery. Lastly, goals, strategies, action steps, implementation support recommendations, and strategic performance metrics are included.

Phase 1. Discovery

This plan was informed by a comprehensive evaluation of internal and external factors impacting Socorro's economic future. The process included three major areas of focus: a multifaceted entrepreneurial approach to continue to support new and existing business owners, including a business incubator management plan; a holistic evaluation of opportunities for Socorro specific to retail; and lastly, an overarching economic recovery strategic plan bringing the biggest opportunities for Socorro into actionable items for the short, medium, and long terms.

Community outreach was critical in informing a robust strategic plan for economic recovery. This process included the kick-off meeting with city staff to define priorities, followed by the City's staff review and approval of the public participation plan, and the presentation of community input before the City Council as an opportunity to bring awareness of the key findings during the community outreach process. Implementing the public participation plan as the community outreach effort allowed for collecting primary data, which was then summarized in the SWOT analysis and via the survey summary report. Important elements of the community outreach effort included connecting with local community members and regional stakeholders through one-on-one conversations, focus groups, a visioning exercise with the City's leadership, and surveys to the business owners and the community at large. Discussions with the City Council were also held.

In parallel to collecting primary data, a comprehensive analysis based on secondary data was completed, resulting in the community profile. The community profile includes a review of socioeconomic and demographic data, an understanding of the economic conditions of the City, a poverty profile, and target industries and occupations. Additionally, a holistic analysis of retail was completed, which included understanding the key business and consumer characteristics relevant to retail, a peer community comparing Socorro to similar communities to draw possible opportunities for the City, and a leakage evaluation and an analysis of the retail market potential. Specific to the commercial corridors within the City, an understanding of the trade areas nearby was completed, followed by a review of the composition of existing businesses along them. The discovery process also included evaluating the entrepreneurial ecosystem, with the vision to include support for new and existing businesses, including how to best support

Latino and Spanish-speaking communities. Lastly, the management and operations of a business incubator covered key aspects of the operation of a business incubator as a business center to build upon challenges and opportunities in the community.

Phase 2. Opportunities

Opportunities were evaluated based on the City's vision at each step in the discovery process. The goals and strategies were crafted using input from the City's leadership, community members, and regional stakeholders as a benchmark for the desired outcomes.

Each section of the overall work completed presents key findings from multiple data sources, including primary and secondary data. The overall analysis resulted in crafting strategies and action steps included in this strategic plan.

Below is a summary of each segment of the overall analysis, providing context to the strategies, action items, and key metrics in this document.

Community outreach

The data source was from community outreach surveys, one-on-one meetings, focus groups, and visioning exercises conducted in October and November 2023. These provided valuable insights into the economic perspectives of Socorro residents and business owners. Most respondents supported prioritizing Socorro's cultural and historical tourism to drive economic growth. Business owners highlighted gaps in support services, including financial and digital literacy knowledge and a lack of awareness. Community outreach participants needed amenities like high-speed internet and office spaces. Data collected through this outreach identified key industries as the largest contributors to jobs and businesses, including food, beverage, and retail. Findings from the surveys in the areas of challenges for businesses confirmed those gathered through community outreach as part of the Business Incubator Feasibility Study in 2021.

Community profile

From a comprehensive analysis, eight target industries for Socorro were chosen based on quantitative data and public input: transportation and warehousing, construction, manufacturing, retail, accommodations and food services, tourism, educational services, healthcare and social assistance. The analysis emphasized that while manufacturing and construction declined in the number of jobs within the analysis period, they remain significant job sources and tax revenue for the municipality, and therefore, their positive economic impact on the community. The profile also underscored the need to focus on retail and hospitality to support economic recovery as key areas of strength and specialization compared to the region and the state. Furthermore, in prioritizing feasible activities within the strategic plan, target industries were reduced to focus on transportation and warehousing, construction, manufacturing, retail trade, accommodations and food services, and tourism, given the current assets and the potential of catalytic opportunities.

Peer communities' comparison

Comparing Socorro with peer communities such as Weslaco, San Juan, and San Benito—the three communities of similar size, along the border, and of suburban nature—highlights Socorro's relative strengths and areas for improvement. Socorro shows lower educational attainment and household income levels than its peers, indicating the need for targeted economic development initiatives. However, Socorro's construction and transportation sectors are relatively strong, providing a solid foundation for future growth. The comparison suggests improving educational and economic opportunities to elevate the community's socioeconomic status.

Key business and consumer characteristics

The analysis of key business and consumer characteristics focused on the strategic retail, hospitality, and entertainment industries, which collectively employ 2,784 individuals and generate significant sales and tax revenue. The consumer profile shows a young, predominantly Hispanic population with increasing income levels and a growing number of households for the next five years with substantial economic potential, suggesting a robust market potential for retail and other services. The study also compared Socorro to synthetic areas within the El Paso region, providing benchmarks to understand local market dynamics better and guide targeted economic initiatives.

Leakage analysis and retail market potential

Socorro experienced significant retail leakage in key areas such as general merchandise stores, automobile dealers, and restaurants. The leakage is primarily due to the proximity to larger urban areas and limited local supply. Addressing these gaps by enhancing local offerings and diversifying retail options could recapture a significant portion of spending currently lost to neighboring communities, thus boosting local economic activity and supporting business growth.

The spending on convenience retailers is expected to increase by \$55.3 million annually from 2024 to 2028 in the City of Socorro; spending at attraction retailers is expected to grow by \$53.7 million annually for the same five years. This is a projected total annual spending of about \$109.1 million, primarily attributed to anticipated population growth and the rise in median income in Socorro. However, changes in the economic conditions would potentially alter these forecasts.

The study identifies significant opportunities in the restaurant, highlighting that the city could support up to 19 new restaurants, enhancing local dining options and reducing retail leakage. Strategic efforts to catalyze new retail businesses are recommended to capitalize on this potential and foster economic resilience.

Furthermore, based on key findings from the retail analysis—including the leakage analysis, retail market potential, corridor analysis, and comparisons with peer communities—and considering Socorro's priorities, an additional evaluation was conducted to identify specific retail priorities. The evaluation set criteria to assess current

and future opportunities for retail, focusing on current leakage, future leakage, and the potential for new businesses. The analysis identified grocery stores, with the highest current and future leakage and potential for four new businesses, as a top priority to alleviate food deserts. Restaurants also emerged as a key focus, with the potential to add 19 new establishments, enhancing culinary diversity and dining experiences. Additionally, clothing stores were identified as a niche market opportunity, with the potential for two new businesses to capture apparel retail demand and reduce spending leakage.

Retail corridor analysis

Finally, the retail corridor analysis identifies four key corridors in Socorro: Nuevo Hueco Tanks Road, Horizon Boulevard, Alameda Avenue, and Historical Mission Trail. Each corridor is assessed on its current business composition and the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of two trade areas within the five and ten-mile radius from the central point to each corridor. Each area offers unique opportunities for retail development. For example, the Historical Mission Trail Corridor has significant potential for heritage tourism, leveraging Socorro's cultural assets. Improving infrastructure, such as parking and pedestrian pathways, and enhancing the overall attractiveness of these corridors are crucial for fostering retail growth and economic vitality. Similarly, the Alameda Avenue Corridor, with a concentration of fast-food restaurants and personal care services, presents opportunities for diversification and improved commercial activity. Also, Alameda and Socorro Corridors have grocery stores: Walmart Neighborhood Market and Vista Quality Market Socorro along Alameda Road and Bodega Loya, along Socorro Road.

Phase 3. Implementation

Considering the opportunities and challenges gathered through the analysis, strategies, an action plan, and key performance metrics were defined. In addition to the analysis completed as part of this work, the implementation stage incorporates previous work from the Business Incubator Feasibility Study completed in 2021 and its complementary work through the Business Incubator Management and Operations report completed in 2023.

This strategic plan is a document that must be kept alive through regular revisions and amendments as conditions change. Given the fast-changing economic environment, it must remain flexible and dynamic in its implementation, including regularly revisiting the plan to measure progress and reprioritize strategies and actions as needed. In addition to the crafted short, medium, and long-term strategies, a

Economic recovery from COVID-19

Assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on the City of Socorro

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic caused a severe public health crisis and, eventually, an economic recession in the United States. The recession finished the largest business cycle expansion in the nation since it was recorded (128 consecutive months)³. The drastic decrease in business activity caused the loss of approximately 22 million jobs nationwide within two months, leading to a substantial increase in the unemployment rate to 14.7% by April 2020.

On March 27, 2020, a bill called the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) was signed to mitigate economic damage. The CARES Act was designed to facilitate recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic recession and included \$2.2 trillion in funds and resources. This stimulus was distributed nationwide to support unemployed individuals, small businesses, families, corporations, essential services such as healthcare providers, and state and local governments. On March 11, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) was passed as an additional rescue package to complement the CARES Act. ARPA, worth \$1.9 trillion, included extended unemployment compensation, higher child tax credits, and a continuation of eviction and foreclosure moratoriums. Funds were also allocated to the state and local governments, which helped them compensate for the lost tax revenues they incurred. To provide funds to state, local, and Tribal governments to provide resources to mitigate the continuous effects of the pandemic and its negative economic effects and to build a stronger, more equitable economy during the recovery, the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) were sectioned from the overall ARPA funds. Under the "Final Rule," funds were allocated under two categories: impacted and disproportionately impacted households.

- Impacted households. Low- or moderate-income households that show a negative economic impact attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic or households experiencing unemployment, increased food, or house insecurity associated with the pandemic.⁴ A household could also be classified as impacted if it was previously qualified for specific federal programs.
- Disproportionately Impacted households. Those households showed pre-existing health, economic, or social disparities before the pandemic, and their condition worsened.

Socorro, Texas: A vulnerable community impacted by COVID-19

As mentioned above, the COVID-19 pandemic caused a severe recession that affected every location, business, and person in the nation. However, negative economic impacts were not evenly distributed among individuals and businesses across different regions and locations in the country. One key factor that drove this impact variability was the

³ NBER's Business Cycle Dating Committee

⁴ Bureau of Economic Analysis; Regional Data: GDP and Personal Income

economic activity associated with those individuals and businesses. Existing precarious sociodemographic and economic conditions before the pandemic were exacerbated, resulting in greater negative impacts during this economic recession and the later recovery months. Vulnerable conditions included low income, high poverty, and/or high unemployment. Socorro's socio-demographic and economic conditions before the pandemic made these effects more severe and the economic recovery more prolonged.

Income levels

The median household income in Socorro, TX, was \$38,111 in 2019, the year before the pandemic. To put this number in perspective, the median household income in El Paso County was \$46,871 (23% higher), while Texas overall was \$61,874 (62% higher) during that same year. In conformity with the final rule, the City of Socorro had approximately 2,216 households classified as low income and 1,200 households classified as moderate income. By the ARPA definition, 3,416 households (low and moderate-income combined) would be considered impacted households.

Poverty levels

Nearly 24% of the population in Socorro was considered to live below the poverty level in 2019. As for income levels, this indicator for Socorro is also considerably higher than the corresponding numbers of El Paso County (20.2%) and the overall state of Texas (14.7%). The City of Socorro had proportionally more beneficiaries for governmental assistance programs than El Paso County and Texas. While 21.9% of the population in Socorro were affiliated with the Medicaid program, El Paso County and Texas had 17.4% and 16.8%, respectively. For 2019, nearly one-third of all households in Socorro (32%) were beneficiaries of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), another governmental program supporting impoverished populations. This number is significantly higher than the corresponding figure for El Paso County (20.9%) and the overall state (11.8%).

Employment levels

The City of Socorro, a sub-geography of El Paso County, lost approximately 2,200 jobs in March and April 2020 (see Figure 1), drastically increasing its unemployment rate from 4.3% to 14.2% (see Figure 2). El Paso County experienced a significant loss of over 53,000 jobs (17.5% of its total employment) in two months, resulting in a sudden increase from 3.7% to 13.9% during the same period⁵.

Establishments

During the second and third quarters of 2020, business activity declined in El Paso County, affecting local governments and business owners. The gross sales tax recorded a 7.7% decrease in Q2 and a 12.5% decrease in Q3 compared to 2019 (before the pandemic). These drops and additional expenses from increased government services during these months led to financial challenges for the region's local governments.

⁵ Bureau of Labor Statistics; Local Area Unemployment Statistics
City of Socorro
Economic Recovery Strategic Plan

For the City of Socorro, 457 establishments were reported operating in the second quarter of 2020. By the third quarter, this number decreased by 47% in 243 establishments in the third quarter. By the fourth quarter, the number of establishments had peaked at 656. Through the rest of 2021 and 2022, the number of establishments has fluctuated between the numbers of 500 and its peak of 676 in the fourth quarter of 2021⁶. See Table 2 for details. During the pandemic recovery period of 2020 and 2021, the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) granted 243 loans worth \$6.6 million to local establishments in Socorro⁷.

The importance of this economic recovery plan

An economic recovery plan for Socorro is pivotal for the City's economic resilience to better leverage on opportunities, withstand economic downturns, and proactively take action towards achieving the long-term vision and economic success that the City's leadership and community members have for this community. This plan is designed to inform and equip the City of Socorro's leadership with the tools and strategies to navigate the post-pandemic landscape effectively and lead to a strong recovery that will result in greater community vibrancy and well-being. By leveraging extensive data analysis, thorough stakeholder input, including surveys, interviews, and focus groups with city officials, community members, business leaders, and best practices, the plan ensures that the City's response is comprehensive and tailored to its residents and businesses' unique assets and needs.

At the heart of this recovery plan is the commitment to improve Socorro's economic health and resilience, fostering inclusive growth. These initiatives address the current economic challenges and position Socorro as a competitive and thriving city capable of increasing economic opportunities for all its current and future residents while nurturing a solid business culture that welcomes and supports current and future businesses and visitors.

Guiding principles

Guiding principles reflect a community's residents' values, beliefs, wants, and concerns about the future.

- ▶ A vibrant community with a healthy and resilient economy
 - An engaged and proud community actively involved in crafting a vibrant economic future.

⁶ Texas Comptroller's Office

⁷ U.S. Small Business Administration

- ▶ Inclusive growth
 - Creating economic opportunities that address the distinct needs of community members, particularly those related to language and skill barriers.
- ▶ Asset-based economic opportunities
 - Fully embracing the community's rich assets, including its location, young population, multiculturalism, and history.
- ▶ An entrepreneurial spirit
 - Elevating business ownership to create local opportunities for higher incomes for owners and their employees.
- ▶ Heritage preservation
 - A commitment to preserving and leveraging the city's heritage and sense of place.

Target industries

Target industries reflect those industries that are important to a local or regional economy, now and in the future. Identifying target industries matters only to the extent that a community works to actually “target” efforts to support said industry. The strategies and action section details specific strategies to grow Socorro's economy through catalytic entrepreneurial support, business support to existing businesses, marketing, and policies to support growth and workforce initiatives. Nonetheless, a successful target industry initiative must begin with a solid framework that employs quantitative, qualitative, and strategic methods. After a comprehensive analysis of the opportunities, assets, and challenges gathered from public input completed during the community outreach and secondary data and in the context of the five-year period for this strategic plan, the following six industries are the target sectors for the City of Socorro as priority areas.⁸



Retail



Tourism*



Transportation and warehousing**



Construction**



Manufacturing**



Accommodation and food services

For retail

Furthermore, considering specific key findings for retail analysis, including those from the leakage analysis, retail market potential, corridor analysis, and comparisons with peer

⁸ ** Priority industry for WSB and part of "2024 Hot jobs Borderplex"

*Tourism is not a NAICS code industry. Occupations presented are based on career pathways related to lodging, recreation, restaurants and food/beverage services, and travel and tourism.

communities, and in light of Socorro's priorities, additional evaluation was conducted to narrow down the specific type of retail as a priority. Three additional criteria were set to evaluate current and future opportunities for retail: current leakage, future leakage, and the potential for new businesses. The top three subindustries to target as market opportunities within this strategic plan are:

1. Grocery stores. The highest leakage currently and in the future, with the potential for four new businesses, averaging 13,553.25 sqft. each. Additionally to its market potential, this alleviates food deserts within the community.
2. Restaurants. The highest business creation potential, with the possibility of adding 19 new establishments averaging 1,584 sqft. each contributing to the city's culinary diversity and dining experience.
3. Clothing stores. Currently experiencing higher leakage than expected in the next five years, there is potential for two new businesses averaging 3,995 sqft. each, reflecting a niche market opportunity for apparel retail.

While educational services and healthcare rose to the top priorities from the community input, these are noted as long-term and emerging opportunities to consider in future plan updates.

Economic development goals

This plan is built upon three primary goals:



Catalyze a stronger, more prosperous, and diversified economy.



Foster inclusive economic opportunities.



Capitalize on cultural and historical assets for sustainable growth.

Timeframe

Strategies are presented for the short, medium, and long term. The short term is year one, the medium term is years two and three, and the long term is years four and five. Other considerations beyond the five years for this plan are included in the 5-years plus considerations for the future.

 Short-term (Year 1)  Medium-term (Year 2-3)  Long-term (Year 4-5)

Top three ARPA-funded recommendations for impact investments

This section prioritizes the recommended projects that would have the biggest short-term impact. Additionally, this summary is intended to support the City of Socorro in its decision-making, given limited funding resources, including those available through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). These strategies and listed action items are an extracted portion of short-term strategies and action steps.

- ▶ **Top 1 strategy and action items. Expand the existing partnership with Project Vida for targeted business technical assistance and financial support by 2021 Business Incubator Feasibility Study recommendations.**
 - Provide dedicated space for a full-time staff dedicated to Socorro.
 - Expand the current partnership by funding the hire of a full-time bilingual staff dedicated to Socorro exclusively.
 - Through this partnership, establish a cohort-based technical assistance accelerator program for businesses by industry, prioritizing business along commercial corridors under target industry categories.
 - For businesses completing this accelerator program, create a micro-grant program outlining allowable investments, including technology-based solutions.
- ▶ **Top 2 strategy and action items. Expand the existing partnership with Workforce Borderplex Solutions (WBS) to increase services for both job seekers and businesses.**
 - Fund a full-time staff member within WBS dedicated to Socorro, focusing on bringing opportunities to businesses and job seekers in the City.
 - Dedicated staff member to coordinate with local businesses, job seekers, and educational institutions to maximize program participation.
 - Allocate funding to expand WBS's Upskilling program to specifically serve Socorro. The program is currently funded by the City of El Paso.
 - Bring awareness to opportunities available through WBS through business visitations, career fairs, and hiring events,
 - For job seekers, position qualified candidates for job placement in high-demand jobs.

- For businesses, increase the utilization of services available through WBS, including talent recruitment and training opportunities.
- Highlight and promote WBS participants' success stories for businesses and job seekers.

► **Top 3 strategy and action items. Focus on promoting heritage and cultural tourism and retail along commercial corridors.**

- Establish a partnership with a public relations agency specializing in tourism for municipalities to promote the community's cultural heritage assets and uniqueness.
 - Earned media: Work with media outlets and travel journalists to secure coverage in travel magazines, newspapers, and online publications.
 - Influencer partnerships: Collaborate with influencers and travel bloggers with a significant following. Their recommendations can have a powerful impact on potential tourists.
 - Media coverage: Collaborate with regional media outlets to feature cultural events and festivals.
- Partner with local businesses to create packages and cross-promotional deals, encouraging tourists to explore various aspects of the destination, prioritizing restaurants, clothing stores, and other types of attraction retail.
- In partnership with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and their certified Texas Friendly program, establish and deploy customer service training for hospitality and tourism type of businesses and their employees⁹.
- Prioritize businesses along the commercial corridors:
 - Historical Mission Trail Corridor
 - Alameda Avenue Corridor
 - Nuevo Hueco Tanks Road (NHTR) Corridor
 - Horizon Boulevard Corridor

⁹ [Texas Friendly Hospitality Customer Service Workshop](#)

Strategies and action steps

The strategies and actions developed for each goal serve as a roadmap to organize and prioritize the steps toward a more robust economy.



Short-term strategies (Year 1)

Strategy 1. Expand the existing partnership with Project Vida for targeted business technical assistance and financial support by 2021 Business Incubator Feasibility Study (Study) recommendations.

- ▶ Action step. Have a full-time staff dedicated to Socorro.
 - Expand the current partnership by funding the hiring of a full-time bilingual staff dedicated exclusively to Socorro.
 - Provide dedicated space at the Chayo Apodaca Community Center.
- ▶ Action step. Through this partnership, provide targeted technical assistance to businesses in Socorro.
 - Establish a cohort-based technical assistance accelerator program for businesses by industry,
 - Prioritize business along commercial corridors under target industry categories.
- ▶ Action step. Support participating business growth through technology-based solutions
 - For businesses completing this accelerator program, create a micro-grant program to purchase technology-based solutions.
 - Examples: Bookkeeping software, inventory management, point of sales systems, demand forecasting software, and eCommerce sites.
 - Provide implementation and ongoing training for the optimized use of technology-based solutions.
- ▶ Action step. Prioritize business technical assistance in the areas the Study recommends, including those currently provided and those pending. See Appendix 2 for the implementation status of the comprehensive list of facilities, amenities, and services recommended in 2021 and updated in 2023.
 - Prioritize the serving of business in the target industries including retail (restaurants, grocery stores, and clothing stores), manufacturing and construction, accommodation and food services, transportation and warehousing, and tourism-related businesses.

Strategy 2. Expand the existing partnership with Workforce Borderplex Solutions (WBS) to provide more services for job seekers and businesses.

- ▶ Action step. Provide dedicated space for a full-time staff dedicated to Socorro, focusing on bringing opportunities to businesses and job seekers in the City.
 - Promote opportunities available through WBS for businesses
 - Enhance service delivery and outreach to Socorro members by coordinating with local businesses, job seekers, and educational institutions to maximize program participation.
- ▶ Action step: Allocate funding to expand WBS's Upskilling program to specifically serve Socorro. The program currently covers the City of El Paso.
 - Outreach to businesses citywide via business visitations.
 - Increase the utilization of services available through WBS, including talent recruitment and training opportunities.
- ▶ Action step. Promote available and high-demand jobs for job seekers
 - In collaboration with WBS, recruit qualified candidates to place residents of Socorro in high-demand jobs in El Paso County and rural counties nearby.
 - In collaboration, offer monthly job readiness in-person and virtual workshops.
 - Establish "Jobs of the Week" as public announcements during City Council meetings, where City or WBS staff highlight high-paying positions that are available.
 - Promote "Jobs of the Week" on City's social media channels
- ▶ Action step. Co-organize quarterly career fairs and hiring events with hiring regional businesses on-site and job seekers prepared for hiring.
 - Promote these events nontraditionally through community billboards, church public announcement sections, and mailing lists.
 - Host these events at centralized locations that are easy to access, such as schools, popular eateries, and shopping destinations.
 - Prioritize hosting events during after-hours or weekends.
 - Highlight and promote WBS participants' success stories for businesses and job seekers.
- ▶ Action step. Form a local coalition for business retention expansion and workforce
 - Identify and recruit committed local representatives from target industries, educational institutions, non-profits, and government agencies to join the coalition.
 - Collaborate with coalition members to identify key priorities, set goals, and outline specific actions as a joint action plan to address workforce needs.

- Establish stronger joint planning and programming with WBS, Center for Corporate and Workforce Training, UTEP's WIOA Career Assistance, Project Arriba, and Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso.
- Establish regular coalition meetings and communication channels.
- Document successes achieved through the action of the partners of this coalition.

Strategy 3. Focus on promoting heritage and cultural tourism and retail along commercial corridors.

- ▶ Action step. Establish a partnership with a public relations agency specializing in tourism for municipalities to promote the community's cultural heritage assets and uniqueness, including but not limited to:
 - Home of the only Pueblo in the state of Texas with Ysleta del Sur Pueblo
 - Socorro Mission established in 1680, which is the 2nd oldest mission in Texas
 - Rio Vista Bracero Processing Center, which has now been nominated to become a National Historic Landmark
 - Socorro is only a few miles away from the oldest mission in Texas, located in Ysleta, and from the oldest presidio in Texas, located in San Elizario
 - Hundreds of acres of farmland are still available in Socorro. The cultivation of cotton, alfalfa, and pecans is still active among other small crops.
 - Growing with Sara Farms is over 100 years old and is recognized by the Texas Department of Agriculture.
 - Interconnected system of canals and drains, recognized in the National Register of Historic Places.
- Earned media: Work with media outlets and travel journalists to secure coverage in travel magazines, newspapers, and online publications.
- Influencer partnerships: Collaborate with influencers and travel bloggers with a significant following. Their recommendations can have a powerful impact on potential tourists.
- Media coverage: Collaborate with regional media outlets to feature existing cultural events and festivals.
- ▶ Action step. Partner with local businesses to create experiences that will incite residents and tourists to explore various aspects of the destination.
 - Support local businesses to create packages and cross-promotional deals, prioritizing restaurants, clothing stores, and other types of attraction retail.
 - In partnership with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and their certified Texas Friendly program, establish and deploy customer service training for hospitality and tourism type of businesses and their employees¹⁰.
 - Prioritize businesses along the commercial corridors:

¹⁰ Texas Friendly Hospitality Customer Service Workshop

- Historical Mission Trail Corridor
- Alameda Avenue Corridor
- Nuevo Hueco Tanks Road (NHTR) Corridor
- Horizon Boulevard Corridor

Strategy 4. Adopt a policy for all economic development programming to be available in Spanish and English.

- ▶ Action step. Honor the community's fabric by establishing an institutional approach to offering in Spanish, reflecting the population's language preferences and multicultural community.
 - Assess the current programs and gaps in the availability of bilingual programs.
 - Use technology to support multiple languages, including using Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based software for subtitles and real-time AI translation.
 - Example: [Interprefy](#)

Best practices: [Tips to overcoming local language barriers in government.](#)

Strategy 5. As a retail strategy, partner with existing retailers to expand their locations or their offerings to include fresh produce.

- ▶ Action step. Identify and engage other local producers and retailers interested in expanding fresh food offerings.
 - Conduct outreach to local farmers, and regional co-ops and grocery stores to assess interest and capacity for expansion.
 - Demonstrate the business opportunity utilizing figures from the retail leakage analysis and retail potential.
 - Facilitate networking events and workshops to encourage collaboration and knowledge sharing among local food producers.
 - Create a support system, including marketing and logistical support, to help local producers establish new locations.
 - As part of the support system, retailers should be encouraged to participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). For more details, visit the [US Department of Agriculture \(USDA\) Food and Nutrition Services](#) website.
- ▶ Action step. Leverage upon the industry trends and Dollar General's aggressive growth plans to support the expansion to Dollar General Fresh.
 - Work with the existing Dollar General at 11401 Socorro Road to craft a plan for expanding into a Dollar General Fresh.

Example: [Dollar General Fresh](#)

- ▶ Action step. Retailer engagement to bring awareness of the business opportunity.

- Develop a comprehensive and tailored presentation for potential grocery stores expanding to new markets, highlighting the market analysis, financial incentives, and community support.
 - Narrow down potential sites to the selection of viable sites for this effort, ensuring they meet the square footage requirement and access to high traffic.
 - Arrange site visits and tours with interested parties to showcase the potential locations and community engagement.
 - Negotiate the agreement's terms, ensuring that the community's needs and the goals of the new grocery store business owners are met.
- ▶ Action step. Work with local grocery retailers, growers, and producers to expand access to fresh foods into new locations, prioritizing the city's south side and the four commercial corridors.
- Propose expansion of local growers and producers to understand their perspective on opportunities.
 - Expand partnerships with local growers and producers who are current SNAP participants to train other local grocery stores to participate in SNAP.
- ▶ Action step. Create an incentive package for retailers providing fresh goods to catalyze this strategy that will serve the City as an investment to mitigate food deserts, decrease retail leakages, and enhance the local retail scene.
- Evaluate the needs of the retailers to assess the level of investment in the way of incentives from the City's perspective
 - Consider tax breaks or grants as part of the support for their expansion efforts
 - Streamline any permitting process for these expansions.
- ▶ Action step: Partner with a regional non-profit organization such as PDN Foundation to support the implementation of an innovative model and incentivize the expansion of local retailers or producers through a mobile unit.
- Support establishing mobile fresh grocery services in a mobile unit to rotate scheduled routes throughout the city, prioritizing underserved parts of the community.
 - Elements of success include a consistent bus route and timetable and wide dissemination of this information through local media, community bulletin boards, and social media platforms.

Best practices: [Twin Cities Mobile Market](#)

Strategy 6. Increase access to local and fresh foods through the enhancement of a local and fresh food ecosystem

- ▶ Action step. Establish a network of community members as local growers and producers of fresh foods (vegetables, fruits, and others).
 - Recruit community members to participate in this initiative with a minimum of 25 participating households or individuals.
 - Utilize social media, local events, and community networks to spread awareness about this initiative and its benefits.
 - Provide small groups or one-on-one technical assistance and training to the participating twenty-five (25) targeted growers or producers to ensure their operation is successful.
 - Provide limited supplies and materials to the twenty-five (25) targeted growers or producers to ensure success, such as soil amendments, seed supplies, and other materials needed for locally grown food production.
 - Implement training events or workshops on financial resources available technical assistance, and other program resources available to local growers and producers. Trainings may include those available through the [Texas Department of State Health Services](#).
 - Implement training and workshops on local and state laws and regulations, and best practices for the production and handling of fresh foods.
 - Facilitate mentorship opportunities within the network for local growers and producers, facilitating regular (monthly or quarterly) meetings to share resources and knowledge.

- ▶ Action step. Establish access channels to the locally and regionally grown food
 - Make locally grown foods available at the Socorro Sundays farmer's market.
 - Create a system of collecting, processing, and market distribution of local foods through volunteers, co-ops, or other nascent mechanisms.
 - Partner with local and regional food producers to increase their presence in Socorro and increase the variety and availability of fresh foods.
 - Promote access to fresh local foods for low-income families and individuals in need through programs like the SNAP healthy incentives, WIC, and similar programs.
 - Collaborate with local food banks and other community organizations serving Socorro to distribute fresh foods to low-income households.
 - Explore partnerships with [La Semilla Food Center](#) as a local organization serving the El Paso region on access to local and fresh foods

- ▶ Action step. Incentivize the general public engagement and participation in the local and fresh food ecosystem.
 - Launch a multimedia campaign to highlight the benefits of local foods, featuring success stories and educational content.

- Distribute informational materials about the local and fresh goods in Socorro at community centers, schools, and public events.
 - Create a Socorro specific plant-based recipes ebook, mirroring existing models such as [Laredo's Veggie Fiesta eBook](#) and videos showcasing recipes.
 - Create monthly workshops on topics such as local food production, local food storage methods, healthy meal recipes, and nutritional and wellness education.
- Action step. Support local growers and producers of fresh foods for the creation of businesses and access to markets.
- Create systems to train and equip local growers and producers to participate in SNAP healthy incentives, WIC to expand their client reach.
 - Connect with restaurants, grocers, local school systems, or other produce outlets to support the diversification of revenue streams and markets.
 - Organize events where growers can network with potential buyers and distributors to diversify their revenue streams.
 - Create a directory of technical assistance programs and services available to support microbusinesses specific to local and fresh foods.
- Action step. Support the Farmer's Market to become a staple destination for the community
- Become a certified Farmer's Market as per the Texas Department of Agriculture
 - Leverage Texas A&M resources to support vendors at Texas Farmer's Market by accessing online courses and resources including ["Texas Farmer's Market: Becoming a Vendor" course](#).
 - Create a website or social media page to capture the story of this initiative, the participants, the success and all other resources related to it.

Examples of websites and social media pages:

- [Concho's Valley Farmer's Market](#)
- [Laredo's Main Street Farmer's Market](#)
- [McAllen Farmer's Market](#)
- [Frisco Fresh Market](#)

Strategy 7. Increase internal capacity for economic development initiatives using technology.

- ▶ Action step. Leverage technology to optimize staff time for the most value-added activities and targeted effort
 - Establish a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platform for tracking existing businesses and gathering business intelligence through visits, including needs and follow-ups.
 - Facilitate site selection for existing, new, or relocated businesses leveraging relevant site-selection data by licensing Zoom Prospector or similar software¹¹.
 - Provide market research and intelligence to local businesses for strategic decision-making, acquiring new customers, and retaining existing customers by licensing Size Up or similar¹².
- ▶ Action step. Maintain regular updates and data entry in the CRM through the City's staff and partners.
 - Select and customize a CRM platform tailored to the needs of local businesses.
 - Integrate CRM with existing business support systems and databases.
 - Ensure data security and privacy compliance for all CRM records.
 - Develop and deliver CRM training sessions for city staff and business support partners.
 - Establish a schedule for regular data entry and updates.
 - Assign specific roles and responsibilities for CRM data management.
 - Implement a quality assurance process to ensure data accuracy and completeness.
- ▶ Action step. Leverage regional higher educational institutions to expand capacities.
 - Recruit interns from the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) to support strategic plan implementation.

Strategy 8. According to the Study, foster a vibrant business culture and entrepreneurial spirit by celebrating and recognizing Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprises (MWBEs), small and veteran-owned businesses, and businesses along the commercial corridors.

- ▶ Action step. Calendarized each of the recognition dates.
 - Veteran's Day, celebrated annually on November 11.
 - Small Business Week by US SBA, dates vary by year.

¹¹ [Zoom Prospector](#)

¹² [Size Up](#)

- Hispanic Heritage Month, annually celebrated from September 15 to October 15.
 - Women's History Month, celebrated annually from March 1 to March 31.
- ▶ Action step. Create tailored events for each category.
 - In collaboration with business technical assistance partner(s), hosts workshops, conferences, seminars, and networking events tailored to the different population group's needs and interests.
 - Collaborate with local businesses under each category to offer promotions and discounts.
 - Example: [Downtown Canton's Facebook](#), as a subsection to their overall municipality, showcasing local businesses, their goods and services, and other details.
 - ▶ Action step. Establish a monthly award ceremony to recognize "Outstanding Small Business of the Month."
 - Collaborate with local businesses under each category to offer promotions and discounts.
 - ▶ Action step. Raise awareness of the celebration of each business category and those awarded "Business of the Month".
 - Partner with local publications to feature the "Business of the Month."
 - Share and promote through the City's social media channels.
 - ▶ Action step. Expand the current "Shop Local" program.
 - Market the "Shop Local" directory and its benefits during the calendarized recognition dates.
 - Partner with local business owners for implementation of a Loyalty Program
 - Establish a Shop Local loyalty program that rewards residents for frequenting local businesses, such as a points system or a mobile app with redeemable rewards.
 - Promote the designation of Better Business through the Better Business Bureau of El Paso.
 - Promote the loyalty program through various marketing channels and partner with local businesses to participate and offer exclusive deals.
 - ▶ Action step. Establish partnerships for women's leadership
 - [Crowning Point](#) is a non-profit organization in El Paso that aims to connect women with peers, mentors, coaches, and friends to empower and support each other in their professions and lives.
 - [Mija Yes You Can](#) is a non-profit organization in El Paso that aims to unite, encourage, and remind women and young girls that an equal world is possible.
 - [Mashup Lab](#) helps rural entrepreneurs start and grow their small businesses, which helps build rural communities' economies.

Strategy 9. Revitalize the manufacturing and construction industries in Socorro.

- ▶ Action step. Facilitate building capacities, customer access, and capital and resources for local businesses.
 - Establish a local work coalition of manufacturing and construction businesses to increase access to contract opportunities, capital, grants, and incentives.
 - Provide training, workshops, and seminars on business development, financial management, and marketing tailored to the manufacturing and construction sectors.
 - Create a fund for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to upgrade technology and equipment to enhance productivity and competitiveness.

- ▶ Action step: Establish an attraction program for manufacturing companies through partnerships with site selectors.
 - Promote foreign trade zones and its benefits.
 - Create an incentive package that includes all possible funding sources from federal, state, county, and local incentives to support.
 - Leveraging technology, such as [Zoom Prospector](#), to promote available strategic locations for prospectors.
 - Create a comprehensive marketing campaign to promote Socorro's advantages, including its location along the US-Mexico border, strategic position within the region, and foreign trade zone benefits.
 - Highlight success stories of existing manufacturing companies in Socorro to showcase the city's business-friendly environment and support systems.
 - Develop a package of incentives, such as tax breaks, grants, and low-interest loans, to attract manufacturing companies to Socorro.
 - Provide comprehensive support services, including site selection, permitting, and navigating regulatory requirements.

- ▶ Action step. Develop targeted programs to upskilling programs.
 - Partner with local community colleges, vocational schools, and Workforce Solutions Borderplex (WSB) to create specialized training programs in advanced manufacturing and construction skills.
 - Implement on-the-job training (OJT) and apprenticeship programs in collaboration with local manufacturers and construction firms.
 - Offer bridge programs for transitioning workers from low-wage industries into manufacturing and construction.

Strategy 10. Enhance collaboration and networking among local businesses.

- ▶ Action Step. Implementing One Million Cups¹³ (English) and Tazas (Spanish)¹⁴
 - Recruit local entrepreneurs and business owners to participate as presenters and attendees.
 - Create targeted marketing campaigns for both One Million Cups and Taza (bilingual networking event), utilizing social media, local newspapers, radio, and community newsletters.
 - [How to start one](#)
 - Design flyers and posters in English and Spanish to be distributed in high-traffic areas and community hubs.
 - Monitor and evaluate program impact by collecting feedback at every meeting, adjusting as needed based on it.

Best practices:

- ▶ [Taza](#), part of the South Valley Economic Development Corporation
- ▶ [One Million Cups Success stories](#)

Strategy 11. Enhance access to capital through microfinancing by recommendations from the Study.

- ▶ Action step. Establish a strategic partnership with Prestamos CDFI¹⁵, currently serving Houston, Texas, and exploring further expansions.
 - Explore the option with selected CDFI of funding a full-time staff member dedicated to Socorro to widen access to microfinancing offerings.
 - Partner with Prestamos CDFI to promote and deploy their free-of-cost bilingual (English and Spanish) virtual coaching to businesses in Socorro as part of their Texas territory.

Strategy 12. Establish bilingual financial literacy for aspiring and current business owners by recommendations from the Study.

- ▶ Action step. Collaborate with regional banks, Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs), Project Vida, Money Week, and other relevant organizations to deploy financial literacy programs.
 - Engage bilingual professionals from these institutions to ensure materials and instruction are available in both English and Spanish.

¹³ One Million Cups, <https://www.1millioncups.com/s/organize>

¹⁴ Tazas at the South Valley Economic Development Center, <https://www.svedc.org/small-business-support/taza/>

¹⁵ [Prestamos CDFI](#)

- Utilize existing bilingual financial literacy resources and programs offered by partners to avoid duplication of efforts and enhance program effectiveness.
- ▶ Action step. Conduct a needs assessment survey to identify the financial literacy gaps among aspiring and current business owners in Socorro.
 - Work with partners to customize and tailor these resources to the specific needs of aspiring and current business owners in Socorro based on survey results.
 - Ensure all materials are culturally sensitive and accessible to non-native English speakers.
- ▶ Action step. Utilize digital platforms for wider reach.
 - Develop an online portal where participants can access course materials, recorded sessions, and additional resources in both English and Spanish.
 - Promote the programs through social media, local media outlets, and community events to increase awareness and participation.

Strategy 13. Position Socorro the “Heart of the Mission Trail” as place branding.

- ▶ Action step. Establish a place brand for Socorro as a master brand that represents the place and its essence, energy, and uniqueness through municipal marketing strategies
 - For locals to embrace it and to attract more visitors, the brand must represent the locality, considering all community citizens, their essence, and the local landmarks.
 - Branding needs to represent the past and present of the community.
 - Create a stand-out website for your target audience, including considerations of search engine optimization and mobile responsiveness and representing civic pride.
 - Incorporate social media marketing, including options for “user-generated content” as images and videos from regular people to add authenticity and originality.
 - Provide branding tools and training for local businesses to utilize the local brand in their individual marketing efforts.
 - Incorporate influencer marketing, such as inviting a travel vlogger to visit the city to record a vlog.
- ▶ Action step. Establish and promote Socorro's brand identity specific to tourism for destination marketing as a subcomponent of the broader brand identification effort for the City of Socorro.
 - Consider branding as “Visit Socorro,” leveraging upon the current national tourism practice of “Visit-fill in the blank.”
 - Develop a comprehensive branding campaign highlighting Socorro as the heart of the Mission Trail with a unified brand message and visual identity.
 - Partner with international, national, and regional tourism-related organizations to include Socorro in broader marketing efforts.

- Utilize digital marketing, social media, and traditional advertising to promote this identity.
- Position ads in targeted publications and leverage earned media to reach wider audiences.

Best practice: [City of Clanton](#) place brand

Strategy 14. Enhance the business culture through community leadership.

- ▶ Action step. Establish a volunteer-based “Business Ambassador Program” to create a community among business owners and serve as a trusted bridge between business resources and businesses.
 - The ambassadors' main function is to help promote the community's business resources and create synergies between local businesses.
 - Identify and recruit local business leaders emphasizing non-traditional approaches, including the involvement of informal business owners.
 - Identify local business leaders who are already actively building capacity in the community to get their input in formalizing an ambassador's program for businesses.
 - Develop a clear description of the role and the criteria for selecting business ambassadors, focusing on leadership and character, community engagement, and business success.
 - Host informational sessions to explain the program and recruit interested leaders.
- ▶ Action step. Create a tool kit for Ambassadors to utilize and be successful in their work.
 - Empower ambassadors as brand advocates and networking ninjas.
 - Have clear guidelines about the program's goals and expected outcomes.
 - Provide rules and directions regarding expectations, an event calendar, a means to communicate with the City's staff and between ambassadors, talking points of frequently asked questions, and popular do's and don'ts.
 - Organize monthly or quarterly meetings for business ambassadors to share updates, challenges, and best practices.
 - Launch a marketing campaign to raise awareness about the program and its benefits to the community.
 - Similar to a Chamber of Commerce Ambassador, the “Business Ambassadors” would support new businesses, new locations, expansions, or unique achievements, including ribbon cuttings.
 - Highlight the success stories possible on local and social media platforms with the support of a Business Ambassador.
 - Recognize and reward excellence in the achievements and contributions of ambassadors.

Best practice: [How to jumpstart a Chamber Ambassadors Program](#)

Strategy 15. As an attraction retail strategy, develop a partnership with Mexican food restaurants to create a “Passport Program,” branded to leverage the unique cultural background and culinary landscape.

- ▶ Action step. Through community outreach, create an invitation for all Mexican restaurants interested in participation.
 - Issue an application to gather details from interested participants, highlighting the advantages of increased customer traffic and community recognition to encourage participation.
 - Convene working sessions to explain program details, roles, and commitments.
 - Develop a physical or digital passport booklet that lists all participating restaurants and provides space for stamps or signatures.
 - Encourage participating locations to offer exclusive discounts to passport holders in dishes outside of those participating in the passport.
 - The City to allocate funds to cover expenses for a physical passport.
- ▶ Action step. In partnership with participating businesses, develop a marketing campaign to publicize the “Passport Program.”
 - Utilizing local media outlets, social media platforms, and community bulletin boards and collaborating with local influencers to spread the word.
 - Organize a launch event to generate excitement and distribute the initial passport batch.
 - Encourage participating restaurants to promote initiatives within their establishments and through their marketing channels.
- ▶ Encourage participants to join this “Passport Program”.
 - Define a timeframe for participation to be eligible to participate in monthly drawings to win \$100 in Socorro's cash.
 - City to coordinate with participating restaurants to fund the Socorro cash awards

Best practices: [Kosciusko County Taco Trail Passport](#)

Strategy 16. Enhance daycare services to reduce barriers to employment and support economic resilience for entrepreneurs through childcare.

- ▶ Action step: Partner with United Way El Paso to implement the Caring Home Initiative and increase the capacity of childcare providers.

- Collaborate with United Way to provide training sessions on licensing requirements and compliance for minority home-based childcare businesses.
 - Coordinate with United Way to facilitate access to resources such as business planning, financial management, and marketing strategies tailored to the childcare industry.
 - Organize informational sessions to educate childcare providers on how to apply for grants and loans and assist them in preparing their Caring Home Initiative applications.
 - Establish a network of childcare providers to facilitate peer-to-peer support and sharing of best practices.
 - Host regular meetings where business owners, employees, and job seekers as potential users of childcare services can meet childcare providers participating in the Caring Home Initiative.
 - In collaboration with United Way, promote the Caring Home Initiative to potential childcare providers.
 - Use various communication channels such as social media, local media, and community events to increase awareness of the initiative and encourage participation.
- ▶ Action step. Increase access to childcare for business owners, employees, and job seekers.
- Partner with local childcare providers and non-profits to provide childcare subsidies or vouchers directly to workers.
 - Establish partnerships with local childcare centers to offer working parents affordable and reliable childcare options.
 - Partner with local organizations to provide childcare subsidies or vouchers for informal entrepreneurs.



Strategy 17. Launch the Rio Vista Business Incubator launch as a centralized business center, following the feasibility study completed in 2021 and in alignment with the Management and Operations Plan from 2023.

- ▶ Action step. Pursue funding opportunities from the US Economic Development Administration (US EDA) to fund the required remodeling efforts for the Rio Vista Complex as the designated location for the Rio Vista Incubator.
 - Incorporate the recommendation for site needs in the final plan for the use of the space according to the recommendations:
 - Space for business-related events.
 - Supporting services to the operations of tenants: conference room, video conferencing rooms, and in-person meeting space; access to internet, computers, copy center, printer, and similar; administrative support services such as receptionist.
 - Dedicated space for use of tenants, including point of sale, storefront, and retail for their products.
 - Classroom space for workforce development and training purposes.
- ▶ Action step. Utilize the Rio Vista Incubator as the central location for entrepreneurship and business support.
 - Incorporate all entrepreneurial and workforce-supporting activities for the community under the business incubator, transferring them from the business support and entrepreneurial activities at Chayo Apodaca Community Center.
 - In coordination with partners to support local businesses, incorporate programming under the umbrella of the Rio Vista Incubator
- ▶ Action step: Use the Rio Vista Incubator to enhance collaboration between new and existing retailers and expand offerings in the community.
 - Develop collaborative retail spaces where multiple boutique retailers can share a single storefront, reducing overhead costs and increasing customer foot traffic.

Strategy 18. Establish a Revolving Loan Fund for low-interest loans for Socorro's businesses and entrepreneurs based on recommendations from the Study.

- ▶ Action step. In partnership with trusted CDFIs, establish a citywide revolving loan fund to fill in the gaps in financing for small business expansion relocations underserved by traditional banking institutions.
 - To assist in capitalizing the fund, the City should pursue grants from the Economic Development Administration (EDA), the Department of Housing and

Urban Development (HUD), and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program funds.

- Potential partner CDFIs serving Texas and serving the region already:
 - LiftFund
 - El Paso Collaborative (affiliate to Project Vida)
 - Prestamos CDFI
 - Tigua Community Development
 - Raiz Credit Union
- As a potential partner, explore joint efforts through the regional credit union to pursue the Community Development Revolving Loan Fund (CDRLF) to make funds available for loans for the community. More information is available on the [National Credit Union Administration](#) website.
- Prioritize the targeted efforts for loans in the top three retail subsectors: grocery stores, clothing, and restaurants.

Strategy 19. Focus on revitalizing and establishing Socorro Corridor as the Main Street for attractions, retail, entertainment, and a leverage point for revitalization.

- ▶ Action step. Support the creation of new restaurants supporting the diversification of culinary experiences
 - In addition to general business technical assistance, provide technical assistance specific to restaurants and the type of restaurant being considered.
 - Incentivize the establishment of locally owned restaurants to support fast-casual concepts, particularly Asian, such as poke, sushi, ramen, and fusion, as well as barbecue, breakfast/brunch, and Italian and Latin flavors as one of the fastest-growing categories for retail space use.

Resource: Retail Strategies, [Retail Expansion Outlook 2024](#)

- ▶ Action step. Establish a new local tradition for “Pedestrian Sunday Socorro Market” along one of the main commercial corridors.
 - Establish a monthly Sunday (first or last Sunday of each month) to close the road for pedestrian use only in a designated schedule.
 - Create a website to serve as the hub of information for all aspects of this recurrent event, including:
 - Public meeting notices
 - Application for vendors
 - Application for food trucks
 - Application for artists and musicians
 - Street closure map
 - While keeping it affordable, set a fee schedule for vendors and food trucks for the events.

- Coordinate for the event to be family friends, including local vendors.
- For marketing purposes, target local residents and regional visitors.
- Gather local support from businesses along the corridor to cross-market the events.

Best practices: [2024 Pedestrian Sundays Kensington Market](#)

- ▶ Action step. Foster the creation of boutique-style clothing stores along Socorro Corridor that capture Socorro's uniqueness
 - Launch a targeted recruitment campaign to attract local designers, artisans, and fashion entrepreneurs who can offer unique, budget-friendly, and trendy apparel.
 - Use digital marketing and social media platforms to promote the opportunities and benefits of opening boutique stores in Socorro, utilizing data gathering through retail leakage and retail potential analysis.
 - Support local entrepreneurs in developing boutique stores that offer unique shopping experiences, such as personalized styling services, exclusive local designs, and custom-made apparel.
 - Promote stores incorporating local culture and heritage into branding and product offerings.
- ▶ Action step: Define the Socorro Corridor as the primary commercial corridor to apply for the "Main Street" program designation.
 - As per Corridor Analysis, Socorro Corridor is defined as Socorro Road, from Isaiah Drive to Holguin Road.
 - Join the "Texas Associate Network" (Network) as the initial step to be considered for this designation.
 - Associates (communities within the network) have access to educational material and training relevant to downtown commercial district challenges.
 - Work with the Network staff to further evaluate the commitments and process for a successful Main Street program designation.
 - More details can be found on the [Texas Historical Commission \(THC\) website](#).

Best practices: [Success stories from the Main Street America program](#).

- ▶ Action step. Partner with the Downtown TX, part of the Texas Historical Commission
 - Complete a list of vacant buildings along Socorro Corridor that may qualify for a historical designation.
 - If any is eligible, work in partnership with Downtown TX and ensure available real estate properties along Socorro Corridor are included in historic property listings for historic downtown Socorro.
 - More details can be found on the [DowntownTX website](#).

- ▶ Action step. Enhance the support system for downtown revitalization efforts
 - Become a Texas Downtown (TXD) member to access direct assistance and support for downtown projects and staff.
 - As a member of TXD, pursue funding from the Anice Read Fund for physical projects or professional or program development.
- ▶ Action step: Expand “tactical urbanism” methods to activate empty spaces and underutilized properties along the Socorro Corridor.
 - Host alley fairs, PARK(ing) Day events (temporarily turning an on-street parking spot into a public space), and other events to raise the corridor's profile as the city's primary center of gravity.
 - Focus on lesser-known or underutilized areas of the corridor to raise awareness of the possibilities for new development or business growth in distinct subdistricts downtown.
- ▶ Create and manage a storefront and façade improvements program for buildings along a commercial street.
 - Engage with building and business owners located along Socorro Corridor to gather their input, including challenges and opportunities for this program.
 - Prioritize retail, restaurants, and businesses along the commercial corridors.
 - Allocate funding to support the improvement of facades along Socorro Corridor to encourage walkable environments.
 - Prioritize improvement to businesses under the target industries.
 - Define guidelines for eligible types of projects.
 - Require a match from the private entity of at least the same amount as that granted by the City.
 - Example: [Renovate Las Cruces program](#)

Best practices: [Improving Storefronts, Guidance on developing a storefront improvement program for place-based economic development](#), published by LISC.

Strategy 20. Establish and maintain a strong working relationship with well-established non-profit organizations to jointly seek grants and funding opportunities that are only available for non-profit organizations and specific to the City's needs.

- ▶ Action step. Work with non-profit partners to identify grant opportunities from federal, state, and private sources.
 - Formalize partnerships through Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) or partnership agreements outlining each party's roles and responsibilities.
 - Establish regular communication channels and meetings to discuss funding opportunities and collaborative projects.
- ▶ Action step. Collaborative grant writing, fundraising, and successes

- Form joint grant-writing teams to develop compelling proposals that highlight the combined strengths and impact of the partnership.
 - Create a shared database of funding opportunities and deadlines to ensure timely applications.
 - Share local and regional success stories of new funding acquired through this partnership.
- ▶ Action step. Program development and implementation.
- Co-develop programs that address the specific needs of Socorro's residents, such as job training, small business support, and community services.
 - Leverage the expertise of non-profit partners in program design, management, and evaluation.
 - Ensure programs are inclusive, culturally relevant, and accessible to all community members, especially those facing language and skill barriers.

Strategy 21. Enhance eligible local business capacities for government contracting.

“Government procurement in the United States accounts for 10 percent of gross domestic product and is an important component of the entrepreneurial ecosystem and efforts to address gender-related barriers to business formation, growth, and entrepreneurship. The federal government is the largest purchaser of goods and services in the U.S., buying over \$550 billion worth of goods and services in FY 2019”, Office of Government Contracting report on “Women-owned Small Business NAICS Analysis.”¹⁶”

- ▶ Action step. Identify and assess companies ready to scale through government contracting.
- Conduct a comprehensive assessment to identify local companies ready to scale.
 - Develop criteria to evaluate businesses based on capacity, past performance, and readiness for government contracting.
 - Utilize surveys, interviews, and data analysis to develop a deep understanding of these types of companies' strengths and weaknesses.
- ▶ Action step. Provide customized business support and back-office services.
- Develop and deploy tailored business support programs that address identified weaknesses in partnership with MBDA, SBDC APEX, or similar partners.
 - Facilitate mentorship and coaching sessions with experienced business consultants.

¹⁶ Optimal Solutions Group, SBA's contractor for program evaluation
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Strategy 22. Partner with MBDA, SBDC APEX, or similar partners to enhance local companies' access to government procurement opportunities.

- ▶ Action step. Establish robust access to resources available through the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) business centers in the region (El Paso MBDA Business Center, New Mexico MBDA Business Center, and Phoenix MBDA Business Center), as assistance is not limited to the center's geographies
 - Establish a formal partnership with Business Centers
 - Promote available resources available to MBDA clients, including access to databases for procurement opportunities
 - Promote training and business support available to MBDA clients.
- ▶ Action step. Coordinate assistance and partnership resources.
 - Develop a directory of assistance programs, capital providers, and potential partners.
 - Facilitate matchmaking services to connect businesses with partners and resources that can strengthen their proposals.
 - Increase community outreach to bring awareness to government contracting opportunities.
 - Provide technical assistance programs specific to competitiveness for local procurement opportunities, including topics on bidding processes, proposal writing, and compliance.
 - Create gathering spaces for buyers and suppliers, including regular networking events and procurement fairs where buyers from various entities meet local suppliers.
 - Develop industry-specific roundtables to discuss procurement needs and supplier capabilities.
 - Use these events to promote alignment between the needs/demands of public agencies and the supplies offered by local businesses.
 - Targeted outreach to firms or business associations
 - Host prime and subcontractor matchmaking nights.
 - Host pre-bid informational sessions.
- ▶ Action step. Establish a procurement advisory board composed of representatives from public agencies, local suppliers, business support organizations, and financial institutions.
 - Hold quarterly meetings to discuss challenges, opportunities, and strategies for enhancing access to the government contracting and procurement ecosystem.
 - Use feedback from the advisory board to continuously improve the procurement support services.
- ▶ Action step. Establish a robust SBA Mentor-Protégé program and other similar programs.

- Partner with the SBA to identify and enroll eligible local businesses in the Mentor-Protégé program.
 - Establish partnerships with prime contractors and larger companies to create subcontracting opportunities for small local businesses.
 - Host networking events and match-making sessions to connect small businesses with prime contractors.
 - Develop a mentorship program in which prime contractors guide and support small businesses in pursuing, acquiring, and successfully completing government contracts.
- ▶ Action step. Increase capacities supported by SBDC APEX for local businesses.
- Partner with the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) APEX Accelerator to offer specialized training programs for local businesses on securing government contracts.
 - Facilitate access to resources and tools provided by SBDC APEX to enhance local business capabilities.
 - Facilitate one-on-one mentoring sessions with SBDC APEX advisors for personalized guidance and support.
- ▶ Action step. Leverage SBA certifications and designations.
- Promote and support the acquisition of US SBA certifications for local businesses, including disadvantaged, women-owned, veteran-owned, minority-owned, and disadvantaged business designations.
 - Conduct informational sessions on the various SBA certifications, their benefits, and application processes.
 - Provide application assistance through workshops and one-on-one consulting sessions to help businesses complete certification requirements.
 - Assist with the application process for SBA certifications to ensure more local businesses qualify for preferential contract allocations.

Strategy 23. Widen government-related opportunities for local businesses through key strategic partnerships.

- ▶ Action step. Establish initial contact and partnership agreements with defense-related regional institutions.
- Reach out to key procurement officers at Holloman Air Force Base, White Sands Missile Range, and Fort Bliss.
 - Evaluate opportunities for potential partnerships based on supply gaps from the military installations, local capacities, and shared benefits for both the military installations and the local economy.

- ▶ Action step. Conduct comprehensive needs assessment of defense-related regional institutions.
 - Collaborate with procurement officers at the different defense-related regional institutions to identify their needs and gaps in the supply chain, including historical procurement data to understand spending patterns and frequent supply needs.
 - Engage local businesses to determine their capacity and capability to meet the identified needs.

- ▶ Action step: Develop a localized supply chain plan in partnership with regional support entities, including SBDC APEX.
 - Create a detailed supply chain plan that outlines how local businesses can fulfill the procurement needs of Holloman, White Sands, and Fort Bliss.
 - Identify local suppliers that can meet the specific requirements and ensure they comply with government contracting standards.
 - Develop training programs for local suppliers to help them understand and meet military procurement standards and regulations.

- ▶ Action step. Implement and monitor the supply chain plan.
 - Launch the supply chain plan with a pilot program involving a select group of local suppliers and a subset of procurement needs.
 - Establish a monitoring and feedback system to track the performance of the local suppliers and address any issues that arise.
 - Regularly review and update the supply chain plan based on feedback and performance data to ensure continuous improvement and effectiveness.

Strategy 24. Strengthen historical preservation and cultural programming.

- ▶ Action step. Aggressively focus on fund acquisition for historical preservation.
 - Partner with El Paso County and other regional entities to secure match funding and bring awareness to proposed impact projects.
 - Submit grant applications to the U.S. EDA and other funding bodies for placemaking and infrastructure projects.

- ▶ Action step. Programming to position the Bracero Program and Rio Vista Farm.
 - Further expand partnerships for developing educational and interpretative programs focused on the Bracero Program.
 - Organize events and exhibitions to educate the public about this historical period.
 - Include these two as anchor landmarks to the place branding effort.

Strategy 25. Promote local hospitality initiatives.

- ▶ Action step. Enhance lodging options by developing and promoting a "stay with locals" program.
 - Encourage residents to offer lodging options through accommodation-sharing platforms like Airbnb and VRBO.
 - Provide incentives for residents to list their properties, including hosting community meetings to educate them about the program's benefits.
 - Offer comprehensive training and certification programs for local hosts.
 - Organize workshops and online courses on hospitality management and safety standards.
 - Partner with regional "super hosts" from platforms like Airbnb to provide best practices.

- ▶ Action step. Create marketing materials highlighting unique local stays.
 - Develop promotional content featuring local hosts and unique stays.
 - Create video profiles and testimonials of local hosts.
 - Highlight these stays on the city's website and social media channels.

- ▶ Action step. Build capacity and expand lodging inventory.
 - Partner with locals to expand the inventory of available lodging.
 - Establish an academy to train residents on converting spaces into rental accommodations.
 - Provide small grants and resources to help residents prepare their properties for guests.

Best practice: [Casa Piro](#)

Strategy 26. To support of community-driven efforts, foster the development and enhancement of local non-profit organizations in the community to contribute to economic and community development.

- ▶ Action step: Partner with the El Paso del Norte Foundation (PDN), United Way El Paso, and other large non-profit organizations to target the formation of new non-profit organizations locally.
 - With the support of regional non-profit organizations as partners, train community members interested in starting non-profits.
 - Enhance resource allocation and seed funding for non-profit organizations
 - Develop partnerships with larger regional non-profits to offer mentorship and share resources with smaller organizations.
 - Through regional partnerships, offer capacity-building grants and training programs to enhance the operational capacity of existing non-profits.
 - Facilitate access to necessary digital tools and platforms to enhance non-profit organizations' operations.
 - Launch public awareness campaigns to promote the role and impact of non-profits through public awareness campaigns.

Best practice: 80/20 Foundation

The 80 | 20 Foundation invests in San Antonio's future by issuing grants to public charities that Attract, Grow, and Retain San Antonio's future workforce and job-creating entrepreneurs. Since 2021, they have supported our microlending branch in San Antonio.

Strategy 27. Foster industrial development by attracting and training high-wage industrial employers.

- ▶ Action step. Create an incentive policy that determines the criteria to prioritize incentives based on the type of projects.
 - Define the municipality's values and priorities concerning industrial development.
 - Incorporating the target industries as a criteria for incentivizing selected companies.
 - Evaluate the return on investment of prospects whose decisions are based on local and state incentives aligned with the municipality's values and priorities and the community's expected fiscal and economic impact.
- ▶ Action step. Offer tax incentives, grants, and low-interest loans to high-wage companies.

- Develop a competitive incentive package for businesses paying above the living wage and investing in industrial zones
 - Include in incentive all possible funding sources from federal, state, county, and local incentives to support.
 - Regularly review and adjust the tax incentive package to ensure it remains competitive and attractive to high-wage employers.
 - Promote the incentive package at the local, regional, national, and international levels, emphasizing opportunities with potential Mexican investors.
- Action step. Create a streamlined permitting process for high-wage businesses.
- Develop a one-stop shop for permitting, with all permitting and regulatory requirements for industrial development, into a single office or platform.
 - Ensure the one-stop shop is staffed with knowledgeable personnel trained to assist high-wage businesses efficiently.
 - Create a feedback mechanism to continuously improve the permitting process based on business experiences.
 - Conduct regular training sessions for municipal staff on the specific needs of high-wage employers utilizing standard operating procedures to guide staff in providing consistent and efficient service.
 - Implement a customer service evaluation system to ensure high satisfaction levels among business clients.
- Action step. Offer tax incentives, grants, and low-interest loans to high-wage companies.
- Develop a competitive tax incentive package for businesses paying above the living wage and investing in industrial zones.
 - Regularly review and adjust the tax incentive package to ensure it remains competitive and attractive to high-wage employers.
 - Promote the tax incentive package at the local, regional, national, and international levels, emphasizing opportunities with potential Mexican investors.
- Action step. Develop a Sustainability Plan
- Draft a comprehensive sustainability plan, including input from industrial business stakeholders.
 - Focus on critical areas such as energy efficiency, water conservation, and waste reduction.
 - Include measurable goals and timelines to track progress and adjust strategies.
 - Incorporate green building practices in the plan.
 - Promote renewable energy use by providing rebates for solar panel installation and other green technologies.

- Promote the use of renewable energy sources.
 - Partner with energy providers to offer incentives for using renewable energy.
 - Create a recognition program for businesses that adopt renewable energy solutions.
- ▶ Action step. Implement pilot projects.
- Select a few industrial sites to pilot sustainability initiatives and showcase their benefits.
 - Monitor and document the outcomes of these pilot projects to provide case studies and data for broader implementation.
 - Use successful pilot projects as models to encourage wider adoption of sustainable practices.
 - Promote the benefits of sustainable practices.

Strategy 28. Enhance historical preservation and tourism infrastructure.

- ▶ Action step. Leverage partnerships for technical support and funding.
- Continue to build relationships with national, state, and regional agencies, including the National Trust of Historic Preservation, the National Park Service, and the Texas Historical Commission.
 - Develop a philanthropic investment plan to attract donations and sponsorships for heritage projects.
 - Leverage upon the resources available including the technical support and advocacy available through the Rio Grande Council of Governments (RGCOG).
- ▶ Action step. Implement a comprehensive tourism infrastructure development plan.
- Conduct a gap analysis and create a detailed plan for tourism infrastructure.
 - Include a comprehensive inventory of heritage and cultural resources.
 - Develop a visitor interpretative experience plan and design guidelines.
- ▶ Action step. Incentivize the restoration of historical buildings.
- Promote state historic preservation grants and tax incentives.
 - Provide information sessions for local stakeholders on available tax benefits.
 - Facilitate applications for preservation grants and tax credits.
- ▶ Action step. Enhance infrastructure and amenities.
- Improve signage and wayfinding along major routes to the Mission Trail and acequias.
 - Install clear, attractive signage on I-10 and major local roads promoting the City of Socorro and its tourist-related amenities.

- Develop digital maps and guides for tourists highlighting the acequias trail network, landmarks, local eateries, and local shops.
- Create a digital marketing plan for existing marketing materials, including the Rio Vista Farm Guidebook¹⁷
- Improve parking facilities, rest areas, and public restrooms.
- Ensure accessibility for all visitors, including those with disabilities.
- Establish tracking systems for tourism-related metrics to increase understanding and track success.

Strategy 29. Leverage regional visitors by enhancing active transportation and recreational opportunities.

- ▶ Action step. Develop an Acequia Trail Trailhead Plan for Hiking and Biking
 - Replicate best practices from the Mission San Juan under the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park.
 - Design and construct trailheads with amenities like parking, restrooms, and information kiosks.
 - Ensure the trails are well-marked and maintained to provide a high-quality experience for hikers and bikers.
- ▶ Action step. Continue to implement the active transportation plan for Socorro.
 - Continue to work with TXDOT and other funding options to implement the active transportation plan.
 - Secure funding through grants and partnerships to support the development of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.

Strategy 30. Expand lodging options and improve accommodation infrastructure.

- ▶ Action step. Attract investment for boutique hotel development.
 - Identify and market potential sites for boutique hotels, considering proximity to lodging demand generators, proximity to visitor amenities, access and visibility, and sites of suited size and configuration.
 - Conduct feasibility studies to determine the best possible locations.
 - Prepare a business plan and financial model to attract investors, highlighting the opportunities and the supply gap.
 - Cultivate relationships with minority-focused real estate developers and investors with a track record of creating projects that provide retail and services to underserved populations in suburban markets.

¹⁷ Rio Vista Farm Guidebook , https://costx.us/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/RioVista_Guidebook_DIGITAL.pdf
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Strategy 31. Establish youth programming that will lead to a multigenerational impact.

- ▶ Action step. Develop partnerships with educational institutions, fostering a supportive community around entrepreneurship.
 - As part of the business incubator, create a community space or co-working hub where young entrepreneurs can collaborate and share ideas.
 - Establish a youth entrepreneurial network to facilitate peer support and networking opportunities.
 - Collaborate with local schools K-12 to integrate entrepreneurship curricula into their programs.
 - Partner with educational institutions to offer workshops and seminars on entrepreneurship.
 - Resources for trainers: [National Consortium of Entrepreneurship Education](#)
 - Support the launch of entrepreneurial competitions and events, including hackathons, startup weekends, and pitch events to foster innovation and collaboration.

- ▶ Action step. Create mentorship programs to support youth entrepreneurship.
 - Establish a network of local business leaders and entrepreneurs to serve as mentors for youth participants.
 - Deploy a mentorship matching platform to connect students with experienced mentors.
 - Leverage upon military spouses as a potential pool of mentors¹⁸

- ▶ Action step. Collaborate with local educational institutions and financial experts to deploy a youth financial program for lifelong success including financial literacy, budgeting, saving, and investing curriculum .
 - Engage with community leaders and parents to gain support and encourage youth participation, acting as a liaison and advocate for the program.
 - Assist local experts in launching the program in schools.
 - Support the promotion of the program through social media, local media outlets, and community events to increase awareness and enrollment.

Best practices: [Youth Entrepreneurship: Preparing Teens to Go After their Ambitions, published by Boys & Girls of America](#)

¹⁸ Hiring our Heroes, U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation <https://www.hiringourheroes.org/career-services/education-networking/mspn/>

Strategy 32. Develop a food truck park along the Socorro Corridor to enhance local dining, community engagement, and gathering spaces.

- ▶ Action step. Select and prepare a strategic location site suitable for four to eight food trucks
 - Final selection to focus on accessibility, visibility, and proximity to high-traffic areas.
 - Engage with property owners to use suitable property.
 - Streamline the City's permitting process for food truck operators.
 - Require food truck operators to be self-sufficient in terms of electricity, water, water disposal, and seating areas for customers.

- ▶ Action step. Attract and support locally-owned food truck operators.
 - Launch a targeted recruitment campaign to attract diverse food truck operators, highlighting the benefits of participating in the food truck park.
 - Utilize social media, local advertising, and food industry networks to reach potential vendors.
 - Offer incentives such as reduced permit fees, grants, or marketing support to encourage food truck operators to join the park.

Best practices: [Grand Valley Food Truck Friday](#)

Key metrics

| Goals | | | | |
|-------|---|---|--|--|
| ■ | Catalyze a stronger, more prosperous, and diversified economy | | | |
| ▲ | Foster inclusive economic opportunities | | | |
| ● | Capitalize on cultural and historical assets for sustainable growth | | | |
| Goal | Metric | | | Data source |
| ■ | | | New business establishments overall | In-house data collection from business registrations |
| ■ | | | New businesses in the target industries | In-house data collection from business registrations |
| ■ | | ● | Net new businesses along commercial corridors | In-house data collection from business registrations |
| ■ | | ● | Gross sales taxes overall | Texas Comptroller |
| ■ | | ● | Gross sales taxes for target industries | Texas Comptroller |
| ■ | ▲ | | Number of residents with a job placement in a high-demand job | Provided by partner |
| ■ | ▲ | | Dollars in new government contracts acquired by locally-owned businesses | Provided by partner |
| ■ | ▲ | | Dollars in microfinancing loans | Provided by partner |
| ■ | ▲ | | Municipality dollars allocated to locally owned MWBEs | In-house data collection from business registrations |
| ■ | | ● | Awareness of Socorro's place brand | Interviews and surveys to residents and tourists. |

Considerations for the future 5+ years

In addition to the strategies and action steps captured in the short, medium, and long terms covering priorities for the next five years, this strategic planning process identified other opportunities. This section summarizes those opportunities as something to consider for the future.

Strategy. Establish and deploy an Equitable Procurement policy for the City of Socorro's procurements.

- ▶ Action step: Enhance the City's Procurement capacities to support the adoption and implementation of an Equitable Procurement policy for Socorro.
 - Hire a Purchasing Specialist who will enable the crafting and managing of the equitable procurement policy.
 - Designate a staff member to craft and develop the framework and guidelines for an equitable procurement policy.
 - Ensuring collaboration with each City's department and legal counsel to a policy applicable to all City's departments.
 - Engage with community stakeholders, including Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprises (MWBEs), to gather input and ensure the policy addresses their needs and challenges.
 - Incorporate into this policy the practice of unbundling large contracts to allow smaller companies to compete.
 - Streamline the contracting process, including removing unnecessary burdens to make them more accessible to smaller companies, especially for first-time bidders.
 - Adoption of Equitable Procurement policy by the City Council.
 - Implementation of this policy immediately after its adoption.
 - Provide training and resources to MWBEs on participating in procurement opportunities.

- ▶ Action step. Strategically conduct business outreach to MWBEs
 - Create a comprehensive database of local MWBEs as a subset of local business information to facilitate targeted outreach.
 - Develop and distribute informational materials detailing the benefits and opportunities of the equitable procurement policy.
 - Organize informational sessions and workshops to educate MWBEs about the new policy and how to participate.
 - Monitor and report on the participation of MWBEs in city contracts and procurement activities.

Best practices: ["Removing Barriers to Participation in local and state government procurement and contracting for entrepreneurs of color"](#), published by The Urban Institute in May 2024.

Strategy. Increase capacities through the creation of an Economic Development Department.

- ▶ Action step. Advocate for the creation of an Economic Development Department with additional staffing.
 - Staff department with at least two full-time members
 - Including a director/manager.
 - An economic development specialist
 - Prepare a detailed presentation for the City Council highlighting the critical role of the Economic Development Department in driving strategic initiatives and implementing this strategic plan.
 - For the long-term (Year 5+), increase staffing level to at least one additional full-time staff to handle tourism-based activities outlined in this plan.

Strategy. Attract foreign direct investment (FDI) in target industries in Socorro through a comprehensive soft-landing program.

- ▶ Action step. Develop a soft-landing framework.
 - Establish local expertise and support networks.
 - Identify and partner with local legal advisors, accountants, industry specialists, business consultants, and mentors.
 - Provide regulatory and compliance assistance.
 - Develop resources and training programs to help businesses understand and comply with local regulations, licensing requirements, tax laws, and other legal obligations.
- ▶ Action step. Facilitate networking and partnerships.
 - Organize networking events and industry-specific forums.
 - Host regular events to connect foreign businesses with local businesses, industry associations, and potential partners.
 - Leverage local business networks for introductions.
 - Create a database of local businesses and industry contacts willing to mentor and support foreign investors.
- ▶ Action step. Provide access to infrastructure and resources.
 - Develop a directory of available office spaces, shared workspaces, and virtual office solutions.
 - Develop an inventory of shovel-ready sites.

- Identify city-owned and commercial properties that are available for sale or lease. To provide business certainty, mitigate risks associated with long-term leases, such as escalating rates.
- ▶ Action step. Facilitate cultural adaptation.
 - Provide cultural training and language support.
 - Offer workshops and resources on local culture, customs, and business practices, including language support.
- ▶ Action step. Promote Socorro as an ideal FDI destination.
 - Create promotional materials highlighting Socorro's strategic location, foreign trade zones, and business-friendly environment. Utilize digital marketing, trade shows, and investment forums to showcase Socorro.
 - Establish relationships with international trade bodies, embassies, and investment agencies to promote Socorro. Participate in international trade shows and investment forums.
- ▶ Action step. Build a bridge with Mexican service providers.
 - Collaborate with Mexican trade organizations to identify reliable service providers.
 - Create a directory of vetted service providers.
 - Facilitate business connections through commercial missions and networking events.
 - Organize commercial missions to Mexico and host networking events to connect local businesses with Mexican service providers.
 - Promote the benefits of cross-border partnerships.
 - Develop marketing materials and case studies highlighting cost savings and efficiency gains. Host webinars and workshops on partnering with Mexican service providers.

Lastly, opportunities to leverage educational services, healthcare, and social assistance need to be considered as an expansion to the six primary industries selected for the five-plus year period and beyond the scope of this strategic plan.



APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Socorro, Texas: A vulnerable community impacted by COVID-19 in figures and tables



Figure 1 Employment levels

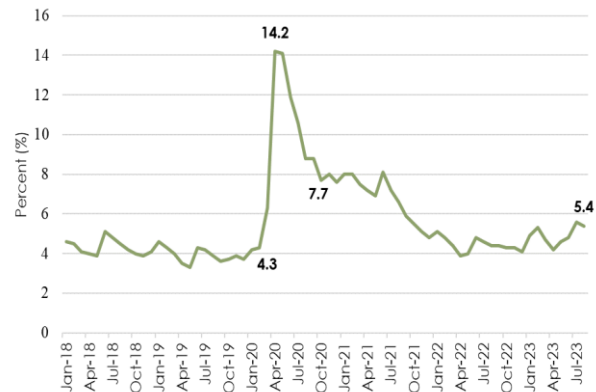


Figure 2 Unemployment rates

| | El Paso County | | | | | | |
|---------|----------------|--------|---------------------|----------------|-----------|--------|--------|
| | All Industries | Retail | Accom. & Food Serv. | Other Services | Wholesale | Const. | Manuf. |
| Q1-2019 | 16,097 | 5,377 | 2,730 | 1,237 | 1,393 | 1,345 | 938 |
| Q2-2019 | 16,348 | 5,429 | 2,802 | 1,260 | 1,383 | 1,384 | 930 |
| Q3-2019 | 16,645 | 5,533 | 2,854 | 1,251 | 1,411 | 1,417 | 971 |
| Q4-2019 | 22,297 | 8,172 | 3,094 | 1,785 | 2,241 | 1,662 | 1,325 |
| Q1-2020 | 16,859 | 5,609 | 2,913 | 1,307 | 1,389 | 1,421 | 990 |
| Q2-2020 | 17,331 | 5,738 | 2,991 | 1,336 | 1,423 | 1,436 | 1,014 |
| Q3-2020 | 9,953 | 3,410 | 1,494 | 739 | 878 | 815 | 579 |
| Q4-2020 | 22,558 | 8,166 | 3,169 | 1,848 | 2,211 | 1,656 | 1,361 |
| Q1-2021 | 17,860 | 6,048 | 2,986 | 1,367 | 1,472 | 1,505 | 1,071 |
| Q2-2021 | 18,156 | 6,179 | 3,068 | 1,370 | 1,498 | 1,534 | 1,093 |
| Q3-2021 | 18,314 | 6,190 | 3,116 | 1,385 | 1,521 | 1,555 | 1,109 |
| Q4-2021 | 23,331 | 8,495 | 3,385 | 1,875 | 2,242 | 1,758 | 1,440 |
| Q1-2022 | 18,801 | 6,344 | 3,277 | 1,436 | 1,553 | 1,616 | 1,127 |
| Q2-2022 | 19,064 | 6,494 | 3,317 | 1,442 | 1,570 | 1,649 | 1,137 |
| Q3-2022 | 19,162 | 6,441 | 3,355 | 1,454 | 1,561 | 1,681 | 1,166 |
| Q4-2022 | 23,190 | 8,280 | 3,557 | 1,815 | 2,169 | 1,851 | 1,421 |

Table 1 Number of establishments by selected industries for El Paso County

| | City of Socorro | | | | | | |
|----------------|-----------------|--------|---------------------|----------------|-----------|--------|--------|
| | All Industries | Retail | Accom. & Food Serv. | Other Services | Wholesale | Const. | Manuf. |
| Q1-2019 | 428 | 151 | 83 | 42 | 32 | 44 | 17 |
| Q2-2019 | 438 | 150 | 85 | 45 | 28 | 45 | 16 |
| Q3-2019 | 454 | 157 | 91 | 46 | 29 | 47 | 16 |
| Q4-2019 | 645 | 281 | 93 | 67 | 61 | 52 | 21 |
| Q1-2020 | 436 | 151 | 88 | 41 | 32 | 42 | 16 |
| Q2-2020 | 457 | 153 | 92 | 43 | 35 | 39 | 17 |
| Q3-2020 | 243 | 82 | 40 | 27 | 20 | 20 | 13 |
| Q4-2020 | 656 | 278 | 91 | 74 | 62 | 46 | 23 |
| Q1-2021 | 492 | 167 | 100 | 48 | 36 | 40 | 19 |
| Q2-2021 | 506 | 164 | 105 | 48 | 40 | 42 | 24 |
| Q3-2021 | 505 | 172 | 102 | 50 | 38 | 39 | 26 |
| Q4-2021 | 676 | 281 | 103 | 75 | 60 | 45 | 31 |
| Q1-2022 | 503 | 171 | 106 | 43 | 35 | 40 | 32 |
| Q2-2022 | 504 | 174 | 108 | 42 | 37 | 40 | 28 |
| Q3-2022 | 496 | 169 | 104 | 43 | 32 | 43 | 27 |
| Q4-2022 | 662 | 271 | 108 | 72 | 54 | 49 | 31 |

Table 2 Number of establishments by selected industries for Socorro, TX

Appendix 2 Rio Vista Business Incubator Feasibility Study

Recommended facilities, amenities, and services implementation status

| 2021 Recommended categories | 2023 Status implementation | |
|---|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Business incubator facilities | Current status | Provider |
| Internet access | Actively provided | Internal |
| Access to office equipment | Actively provided | Internal |
| Warehousing space | Pending | - |
| Assistance with manufacturing | Pending | - |
| Childcare/services | Pending | - |
| Specialized facilities (Office space, business location, and point of sale) | Pending | - |
| Business incubator services | Current status | Provider |
| Networking activities for regional business owners | Actively provided | Internal |
| Networking activities for incubation program clients | Actively provided | Internal |
| Regulatory compliance specific to taxes | Actively provided | Partners |
| Accounting / financial management | Actively provided | Partners |
| Marketing assistance | Actively provided | Internal & partners |
| Assistance with e-Commerce | Actively provided | Internal & partners |
| Assistance with social media | Actively provided | Partners |
| General legal services | Pending | - |
| Internet access | Actively provided | Internal |
| Access to office equipment | Actively provided | Internal |
| Warehousing space | Pending | - |
| Access to new regional, national, and international markets | Pending | - |
| Mentorship / peer-to-peer | Pending | Internal & volunteers |
| Human resources | Pending | - |
| Shared administrative and office services | Pending | - |
| Management team development | Pending | - |
| Assistance with manufacturing | Pending | - |
| Product design and development practices | Pending | - |
| Loaned executive to act in a management capacity | Pending | - |
| Linkages to angel or venture capital investors | Pending | - |
| Childcare/services | Pending | - |
| Transportation | Pending | - |
| Commercializing technology | Pending | - |
| Specialized equipment/facilities | Pending | - |

| Business support services | Current status | Provider |
|--|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Help with business basics | Actively provided | Internal & partners |
| Help access specialized noncommercial loan funds | Pending | - |
| Economic literacy training | Pending | Internal & partners |
| Help access commercial bank loans | Actively provided | Partners |
| Comprehensive business training programs | Actively provided | Partners |
| Linkages to higher education resources | Pending | |
| Linkages to strategic partners | Actively provided | Internal |
| Workforce training for employers and community members | Actively provided | Partners |
| Federal procurement assistance | Actively provided | Partners |
| International trade assistance | Actively provided | Partners |
| Business management process | Pending | - |

Appendix 3 SWOT Analysis

In addition to the key findings presented in this report, Ascendo Strategies completed an extensive analysis of the City of Socorro's economic strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This SWOT analysis is based on various quantitative and qualitative sources, including stakeholder input from focus groups, interviews, online surveys, social, demographic, and economic data analysis, and observations by the consulting team's economic development expertise.

The SWOT is described as follows¹⁹:

Strengths: The assets and resources currently available in the community that may be leveraged to grow and strengthen the local economy. Strengths are generally considered factors internal to the community.

Weaknesses: Current challenges and barriers that may limit the community's economic vitality and enhancement opportunities. Weaknesses are generally considered factors internal to the community.

Opportunities: Areas of competitive advantage that are not yet fully utilized to achieve the community's economic short—and long-term vision. Opportunities are generally considered factors external to the community.

Threats: Unfavorable external trends and factors that may result in a negative economic impact on the community and for which contingency considerations may help mitigate. Threats are generally considered factors external to the community.

¹⁹ International Economic Development Council, Economic Development Strategic Planning Manual
City of Socorro
Economic Recovery Strategic Plan

| | |
|-----------|---|
| Strengths | Location, along I-10 and other major highways passing through the region |
| | Located along the US-Mexico border, in a tristate (Texas, NM/ Chihuahua/binational region. |
| | Partnerships for business support, including local and non-profit organizations located within the region |
| | Existing local labor force |
| | Community members hold a deep pride in their community, people, and heritage |
| | Attractive rural and historical character |
| | A growing warehousing and logistics sector within Socorro and a larger region |
| | Supportive local government |
| | Bilingual population, staff, and resources |
| | Historical and cultural sites |
| | Engaged business community who want to promote local initiatives |
| | Available land for development |
| | Existing clusters of logistics businesses along I-10 |
| | Located within a rapidly growing El Paso region |
| | Established regional business support programs, including Borderplex Workforce Development, SBDC, APEX, SBA, and Chambers of Commerce |
| | Regional collaboration for the implementation of the Mission Trail Comprehensive Plan |
| | Visionary City Council and staff leading and trailblazing opportunities for the City |

| | |
|------------|---|
| Weaknesses | The absence of a clear identity and brand for Socorro |
| | Low economic resilience and high economic vulnerability |
| | Limited civic engagement resulting in weak grassroots and non-profit ecosystem |
| | Limited higher-paying jobs within the City |
| | Limited number of residents working and living within the community |
| | Vacant, underutilized, or deteriorating historical sites |
| | Lack of restoration programs and funding for historic buildings |
| | Shortage of skilled workforce |
| | Limited strategy to capture visitors and their spending |
| | Unplanned growth impacting the rural character |
| | Limited government resources for bold initiatives |
| | Limited sources of funding for community-based type of projects |
| | High reliance on grant funding, limiting the full potential of initiated programs and initiatives |
| | Limited regional collaborations |
| | Limited understanding of the special needs and opportunities of regional partners |

| | |
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| | Limited funding and sources of funding for community-based initiatives |
| | Large amounts of residents' disposable dollars spent outside the community |
| | Limited or absent trust and awareness of business support programs |
| | Lack of a sense of place, limited by a lack of a downtown location |
| | Traffic and infrastructure challenges |
| | Potential water/sewer capacity issues constraining growth |
| | Prevalent small "mom and pop" business with limited capacities and capital |
| | Small-town mindset reluctant to grow among some local businesses |
| | High poverty rates, especially among Spanish speaking population |
| | Bigger needs from business compared to resources available |
| | Language barriers for Spanish-speaking business owners |
| | Limited Spanish language offerings for business and workforce training |
| | Lack of technical skills and digital literacy among some entrepreneurs |
| | Limited access to capital for "mom & pop" businesses |
| | Limited lodging options leading to limited visitation periods |
| | Lack of awareness of business support programs |

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| Opportunities | Develop tourism-related businesses around historical & cultural assets |
| | Leverage on Mission Trail for the full implementation of the recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan for the Mission Trail |
| | Develop heritage tourism& hospitality-related initiatives |
| | Incentivize restoration of historic buildings for adaptive use |
| | Partner with UTEP/EPCC, & other local institutions for more educational offerings in Socorro |
| | Partner with elementary, middle and high schools to deploy entrepreneurial programs for youth, leveraging on the successful art program offering by the City |
| | Engage business owners to promote Socorro's unique identity |
| | Support the development of land as mixed-use |
| | Expand tax incentives to attract & support businesses |
| | Further awareness of current FREE OF COST support for small businesses |
| | Increase the bilingual (English & Spanish) technical assistance in the community with the support of Project Vida |
| | Increase capacities supported by SBDC APEX for local businesses to increase government contracts |
| | Partner with prime contractors & larger companies to create government contract opportunities for small companies |
| | Leverage all SBA certifications and denominations for preferential contract allocation, including but not limited to women, veterans, and minority-owned and disadvantaged business owners for government contracting |

| | |
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| | Increase SBDC presence locally to increase the reach of technical assistance |
| | Implement policies that will provide local businesses an advantage for the City of Socorro contracts for services and goods |
| | Enhance the partnership with Workforce Borderplex to expand local training for businesses & job seekers |
| | In partnership with El Paso County and other small municipalities, catalyze the creation of a local Community Development Financial Institution to serve the rural areas of El Paso County |
| | Develop a creative business community to include history, arts, and agricultural themes |
| | Support entrepreneurship & business creation for the general population and with specific programs for youth, women, trade-focus, and veterans. |
| | Expand regional agency- partnerships for more offerings, including supporting services such as childcare, youth programming, after-school and senior programs |
| | Implement robust financial literacy for small businesses in English and Spanish |
| | Implement robust digital literacy and e-commerce programs for existent formal and informal entrepreneurs and aspiring business owners |
| | Identify in detail capital & training needs for small businesses |
| | Define a business attraction strategy for the type of business that will offer jobs salaries above the living wage for Socorro |
| | Attract compatible logistics companies |
| | Attract new franchises & restaurants within the retail-specific areas of opportunity (see retail report) |
| | Increase the number and quality of local jobs employing residents |

| | |
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| Threats | Negative perception of the community within and outside the region |
| | Pressure for unplanned commercial and residential growth, given fast regional growth |
| | Loss of farmland and "green spaces" to development pressure |
| | Lack of access to water and workforce for local farmers |
| | Stalled development and redevelopment if risks remain high for property investments |
| | Competition from other cities within the region for business attraction, jobs, and investment |
| | Ongoing issues like irrigation canals increasing business costs |
| | Limited regional capacity and experience in state and federal contracts |
| | Traditional banks are less willing to support startups in areas outside of urban area |
| | Limited understanding of issues and challenges specific to Socorro due to lack of access and understanding of local-specific data |
| | |

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| | Lack of capacity and resources from support service providers to provide support services specific to the needs of Socorro and not the overall regional/urban needs |
|--|---|

Appendix 4 Community Outreach

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| | |
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Community outreach overview

The City of Socorro, valuing the pivotal role of its community in shaping its economic future, initiated an Economic Recovery Strategic Plan to outline its economic prospects for the next three to five years. To ensure a comprehensive approach, an inclusive community outreach effort was launched. A key instrument for this outreach was a survey meticulously crafted to gather insights from community members and business owners. This report documents all responses for both surveys, presented in two distinct sections of the report.

The survey was available in English and Spanish, reflecting our commitment to inclusivity. The collection period was October and November 2023, with the surveys distributed through various channels, including social media, the city's business registration email database, and physical copies at the Chayo Apodaca Community Center.

Encuesta de Estrategia Económica para Residentes de la Ciudad de Socorro

¡La Ciudad de Socorro necesita la ayuda de sus residentes! Invitamos a todos los residentes de Socorro a participar en una encuesta sobre las oportunidades económicas y de negocios en la Ciudad de Socorro, Texas. Si usted tiene al menos 18 años y vive en la Ciudad de Socorro, está invitado a participar en esta encuesta para compartir sus opiniones y perspectivas para ayudar a dar forma a nuestro futuro económico.

Ascendo Strategies, una firma local de desarrollo económico, ha sido contratada para realizar esta investigación. La encuesta no debería tomarle más de 10 minutos para completar. Usted tiene el derecho

¡Realice la encuesta en línea!
Escanea el código QR usando el
cámara en tu teléfono:



Economic Strategy Survey for City of Socorro Business Owners

To change the language (English to Spanish), please click on the globe (🌐) in the upper right corner.
Para cambiar de idioma (Inglés a Español), oprima el mundo (🌐) en la esquina superior derecha.

As we navigate the path toward economic recovery, the [City of Socorro](#) seeks insights from its business community. We invite you to participate in a survey about the opportunities and challenges among business owners in the City of Socorro, Texas.

If you are at least 18 years old and own a business in the City of Socorro, you are invited to participate in this survey.

Your insights will help the city as it thinks about shaping the future of economic opportunities. Please take this opportunity to help the City of Socorro to craft its future strategically.

[Ascendo Strategies](#), an economic development firm, has been contracted to conduct this research. The survey should not take longer than 10 minutes for you to complete.

You have the right to choose not to take part in this survey and can choose not to answer any of the questions. If you do not participate in the survey, there will be no penalty or change in your relationship with the City of Socorro. Data from all participants will be combined for the analysis; any identifying information will be removed before responses are summarized and shared.

We appreciate your participation and insights. As a thank you, we will randomly select four respondents who complete the survey to receive a \$50 pre-paid Amazon gift card.

If you have any questions about this initiative, please contact Alejandra Valdez, City of Socorro Director of Development, at grants@coso.tx.us. If you have any questions regarding this survey, please contact Dr. Griselda Martinez, Ascendo Strategies CEO & Founder, at griselda@ascendostrategies.com.

All answers to the survey were made optional to respect community members' ability and willingness to answer the specifics of the survey. Because of this, responses by question may vary from the total number of surveys collected. The responses

collected by question are indicated by question. The number of surveys collected for the community members survey was 83, and 34 for the business owners survey. When answers to specific questions were smaller than the total number of surveys, the number of responses for that specific question is listed.

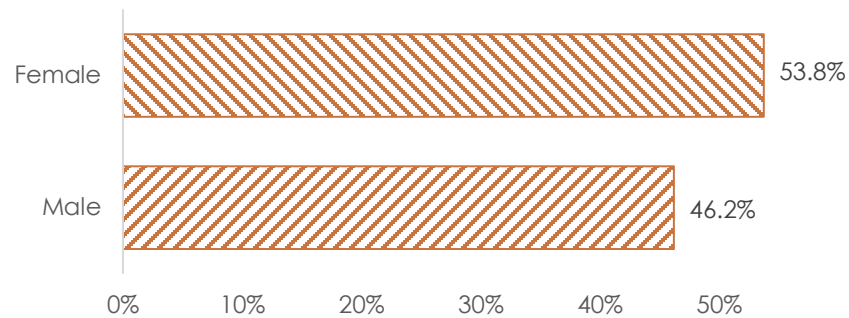
Community members survey

To guarantee that the answers accurately reflected the community, the received responses were weighted using the sample obtained from the 2021 ACS 5-year estimates of the U.S. Census against the population parameters. All responses are presented in percentages, providing a comprehensive view of the community's perspectives.

Community respondents' profile

a. Median age of respondents: 39.69 years of age.

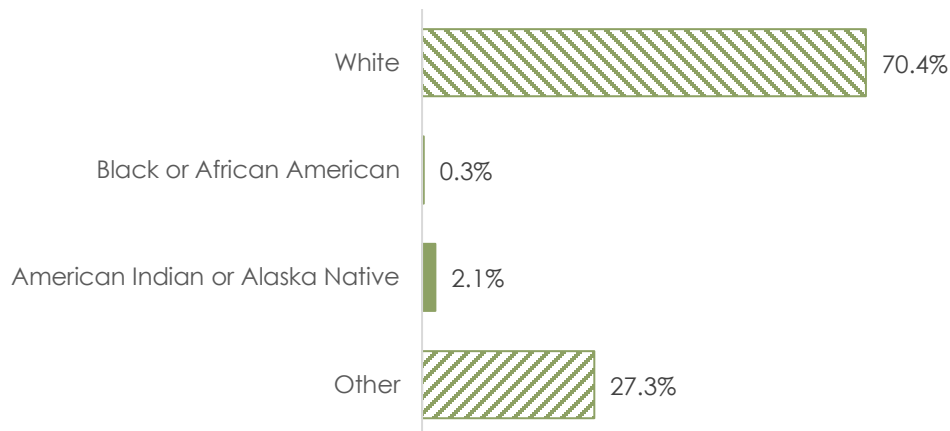
By gender



By ethnicity

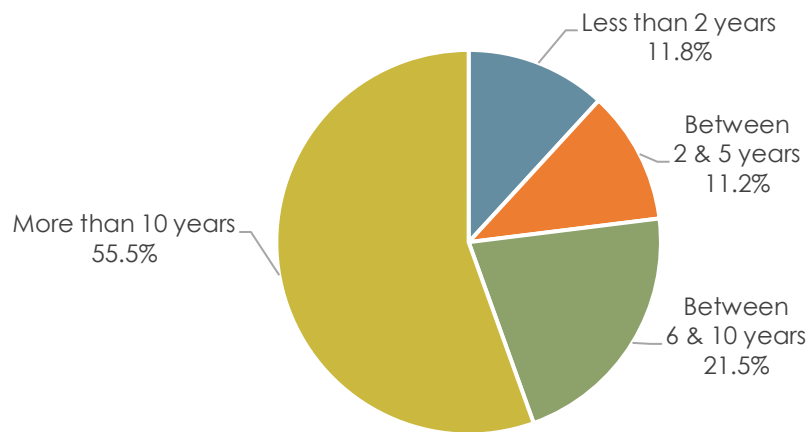


By race



How long have you lived in the City of Socorro, Texas?

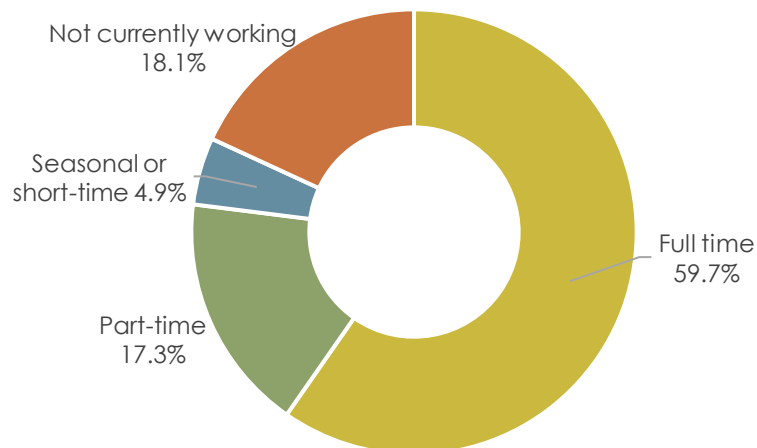
Most respondents have lived in Socorro for at least six years, with the vast majority over 10 years.



Years of residence in Socorro

Which of the following best describes your current employment status?

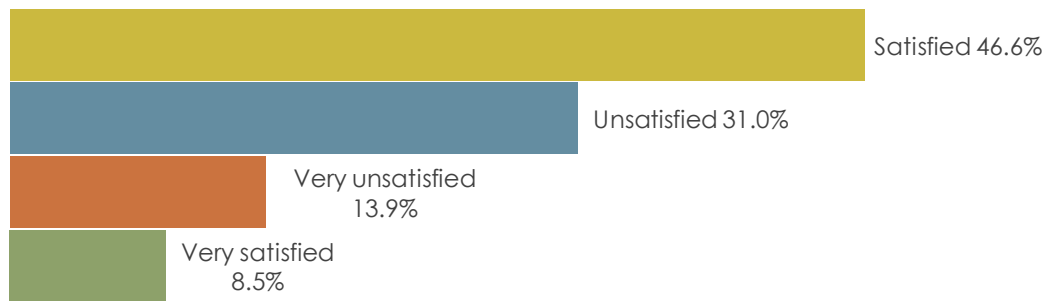
Full-time was defined as at least 35 hours of work per week; part-time, with less than 35 hours per week. Most respondents were employed full-time, followed by the “not currently working” category.



Employment status of respondents

Considering factors like business growth and salary, jobs available, security, and potential economic growth in the City of Socorro, how satisfied are you with the current opportunities available to Socorro residents?

With 82 responses, most respondents were satisfied with the current opportunities in Socorro. However, the following category was “unsatisfied.” This contrast may be due to the current opportunities each respondent is experiencing, including those who answered that they are not currently employed and have part-time and seasonal jobs.



Level of satisfaction with job opportunities

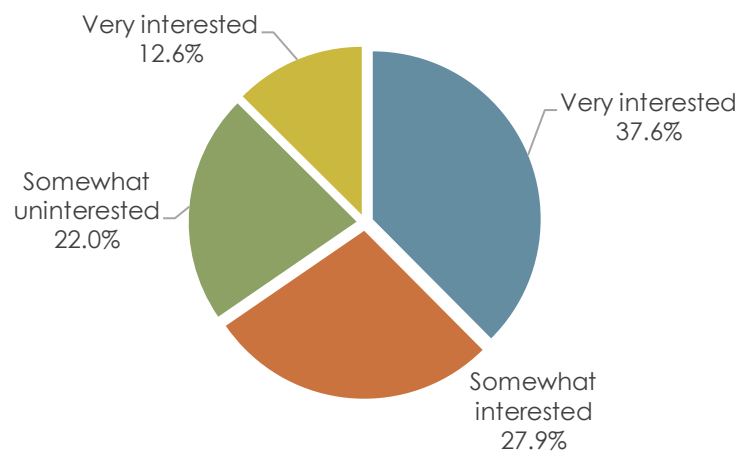
To all respondents, a question was asked whether the community members currently owned a business.

From the 83 responses, 85.2% responded no, while 14.8% responded yes.

For respondents who answered “no” to owning a business, a follow-up question assessed their interest in starting a business in the following 12 months.

Which of the following best represents your level of interest in starting a new business in the City of Socorro in the next 12 months?

From the 71 responses, at least half of the respondents were either very interested or interested in starting a business in the next 12 months.

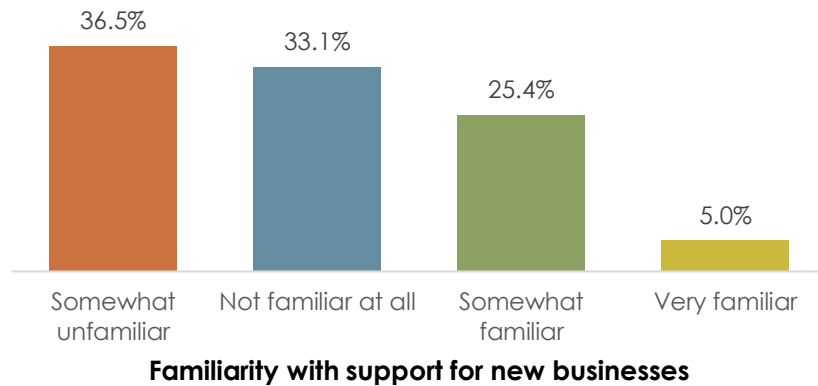


Interest in starting a business in the next 12 months

To the same respondents who answered that they did not own a business, the next follow-up question was about their familiarity with support for new businesses.

How familiar are you with the support available in Socorro for new businesses?

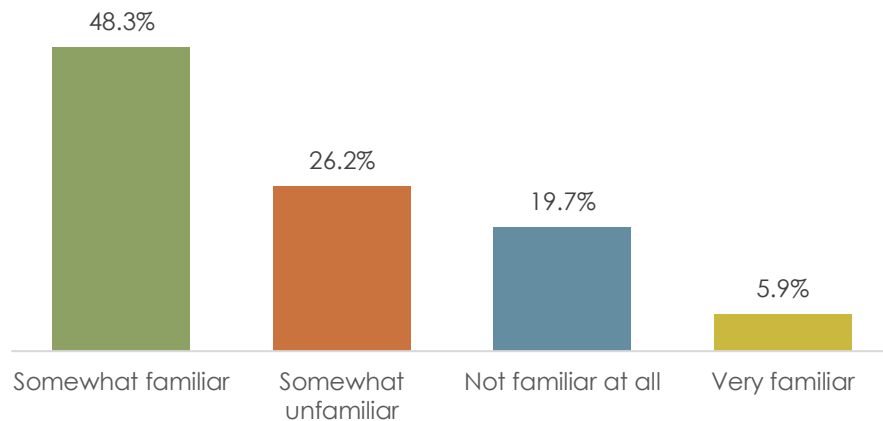
30 answers were received, with most of the responses needing to be more familiar and familiar. Only five percent were very familiar. This poses a huge opportunity to bring awareness to the current support available to aspiring entrepreneurs and support the idea of the need to expand services targeting specifically aspiring entrepreneurs in the community. In addition to the responses collected, the lack of response may indicate a lack of awareness, which may result in a lack of engagement in this question.



To those who indicated that they currently own a business, a follow-up question was asked to assess their familiarity with the support available to them as business owners.

How familiar are you with the support available in Socorro for existing businesses?

Only 12 answers were received to this question, of which almost 50 percent responded somewhat familiar, followed by almost 46 percent needing to be more familiar or somewhat unfamiliar. Only five percent were very familiar. In addition to the responses collected, the lack of response may indicate a lack of awareness, which may result in a lack of engagement in this question.

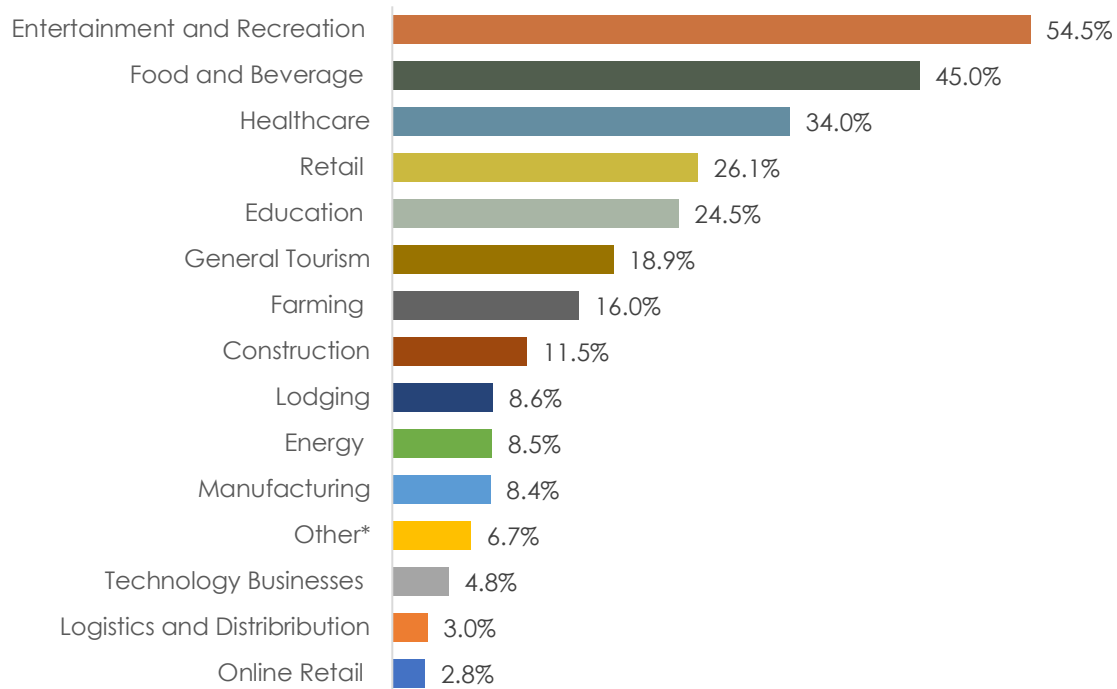


Familiarity with support for existing businesses

Then, the survey questions shifted to assessing the respondents' preferences for future economic opportunities. The following questions were asked.

Of the following types of business and jobs, which are the TOP THREE INDUSTRIES that the City of Socorro should focus on to promote economic growth in the next three (3) years?

Entertainment and recreation, food and beverage, and healthcare were the top three industries selected out of the 83 responses collected for this question. Retail, education, and tourism were the next tier of industries selected. Two interesting highlights, logistics and distribution, as one of the fastest growing industries in Socorro and neighboring communities, was second to last in preference. Another highlight of interest is the responses on farming, from which 16 percent were selected as the top three.

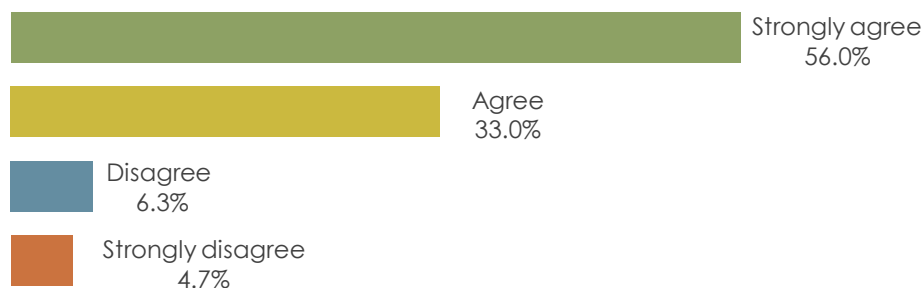


Industries to focus on to promote economic growth in next three years

Given the context of opportunities discussed among community members and, in particular, within the Mission Trail Comprehensive Plan, the next question was to evaluate the community's support for cultural and historical tourism.

Please provide your level of agreement with the following statement: "The City of Socorro should PRIORITIZE Socorro's cultural and historical tourism as a tool for economic growth for the creation of jobs and businesses."

From the 83 responses, almost 90 percent either agreed or strongly agreed to this statement.

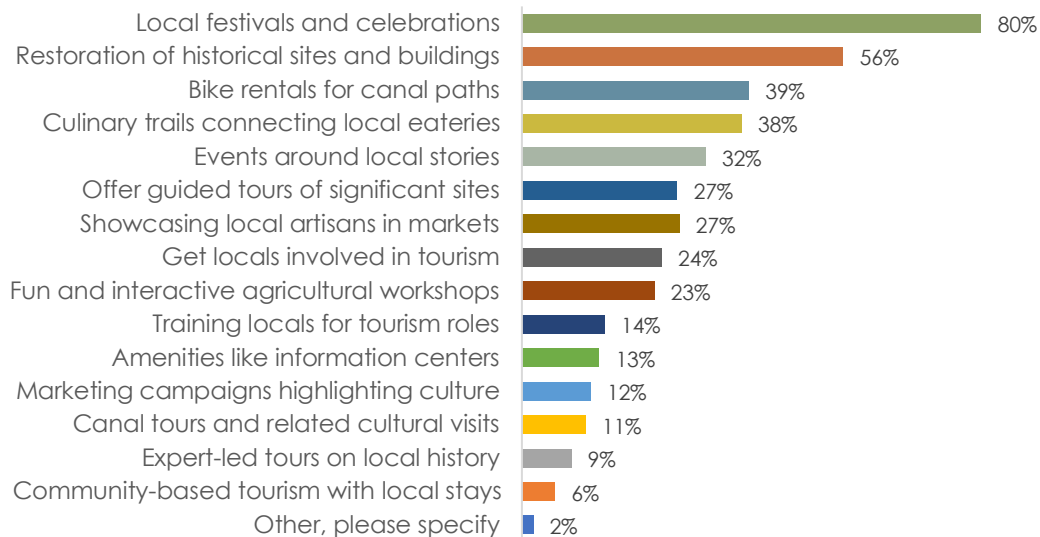


Should Socorro prioritize cultural and historical tourism as a tool for economic growth?

A follow-up question was asked for those who agreed or strongly agreed that cultural tourism should be prioritized to understand better what that represented for respondents.

Please select your top five ways to do so that would maximize economic benefit and job creation.

From the 74 responses, local festivals were the number one answer with 80% of responses, followed by restoration of historical sites and buildings, bike rental for canal paths, culinary trails connecting local eateries, and events around local stories. For the "Other" option, responses are listed below the graph.



Best ways to maximize on cultural and historical tourism

Responses under "Other":

- Clean up the historical trail, add safe sidewalks, and widen Socorro Road.
- Promote tourism: opening restaurants, steak houses, and family-oriented attractions.

The last question was open-ended, aiming at allowing community members to share their vision of economic vitality. The answers were classified into four categories: a) businesses and jobs; b) Retail, food, and entertainment; c) Quality of life/infrastructure; and d) Beautification.

From your experience, what is one major initiative or project that would boost Socorro's economic vitality and job market?

a) Businesses and jobs

- High pay increases jobs
- giving job opportunities to our high school kids.
- Just more businesses in the area.
- Ventas, clínicas
- For important companies to move to town. Incentives for expansions to microenterprises.
- I believe that the city should make Socorro Rd a two-lane road in both directions so that people have better access to the businesses in the Socorro area. My parents used to own a business on Socorro Rd, and it failed because many people never saw the store they owned. Potential customers told them they had never seen their store because they avoided traveling along Socorro Rd because

of how inconvenient it was for them. Most people commute using the Alameda or the Nort Loop streets. I believe that customers will choose to shop at businesses with easy access and low traffic.

- Host activities for businesses
- Generate manufacturing jobs
- Attract manufacturing companies
- Get a Bucky's Store to build Socorro.
- Generate more jobs, tourism, diversion, and education for Socorro and nearby cities.
- Tourism
- Local vending stores (markets)
- Open doors to the maquiladora industry with options for growth
- Supporting our local business and more community involvement. I could go on with much more, but our city is going places. I used to drive to New Mexico to enjoy certain activities and places, and a lot of it is becoming available in our humble town. Let's go, Soco Loco 🇲🇽! Born and raised here, I'm proud to say that!
- I noticed a logistics plant being built, which is a great start! Socorro is an awesome place to live in, with a small-town feel. However, the town should focus on a major attraction that would not only serve the citizens but create jobs. There is not one major attraction. There are no water parks, no event parks, etc. One major attraction can spin off Socorro's awesome history while also providing jobs and revenue for the residents of Socorro.
- Give credits, look for workers across the border (there are no local workers), reduce taxes as possible, reduce requirements as possible

b) Retail, food, and entertainment

- Retail, restaurants, gas stations. Unfortunately, we have to drive far to get to certain places. Our big Walmart is quite a drive away, and our gas stations are also far from each other. We have minimal close restaurants to choose from. Also
- Entertainment
- Restaurant
- Tourism, large retail stores, Targets, Kohl's, Lowes, Entertainment, sports events.
- A place that includes food and entertainment for families; everything is far from Socorro.
- Festivals
- Festivals to attract people for them to know the city.
- Need bigger box stores and shopping
- More stores or shopping centers
- Entertainment businesses as well as convenience stores that are located several miles from home
- Build retail stores, gyms and restaurants
- Various types of restaurants
- More attractions theaters, fitness activities, shooting fields.
- Movie theater, nice shopping center with big-name stores and a hotel
- Clothing stores
- Bars
- Open up big retail stores like Target or Albertsons
- Create a list or a map of historical places and restaurants to visit
- A big swap meet with sections to sell items and food BUT also service areas not only for adults but also dogs and kids. Have some sort of rodeo because El Paso doesn't have one. Have a race track where speed racers are allowed to speed out but increase the speeding fines!

- More family-friendly events where to find local craftsmen and foods
- Shopping Centers
- Mall
- Create an entertainment district by Socorro's mission.
- Sport Stadium
- Promote more local events through the different communication channels

c) Quality of life/ infrastructure

- I think having a library would help. As a parent with small children who like to read, I have to pay a fee at Clint or El Paso, while their residents don't. Many people use the library to either read or find resources and even have events. Another thing is having a sports recreation program for kids.
- Small community fairs
- More parks with bike trails, also where we can have basketball courts, tennis courts and so on.
- A community library.
- Our infrastructure is all around the City of Socorro. Fix and pave all our streets. Fix Socorro Rd and make it more attractive for tourists.
- Less construction
- Creating a downtown and a cultural plaza in and around Rio Vista
- Recreational Center with swimming pool, gym, indoor track, monkey bars, etc.
- Hospital
- Trail system
- To bring new residents to move into Socorro while building apartments and waterparks. No more car washes, no more warehouses.
- Preserve our historical sites and bring tourism.
- A Science Museum like the one downtown that was called "Insights Museum," or like the interactive museum in Ciudad Juarez called "La Rodadora."
- Closer access to 375 and I-10. More Lanes so traffic flows better.
- An excellent project would be to research what students are learning and why they're leaving to grow their future elsewhere. Find out how to build what they are learning to keep them in Socorro and help Socorro grow.
- A bus route. Preferably for students to go to college. Maybe even an express route to and from the Mission Del Paso Community College and UTEP. A bus route from Socorro High School to the Mission Del Paso Community College would be innovative.
- Parks are needed to attract more families to live here in Socorro in the new residential areas.. and keep them clean and green!
- Focus on improving the old neighborhoods
- Make walking/ bike trails along existing canals
- Save farmland

d) Beautification

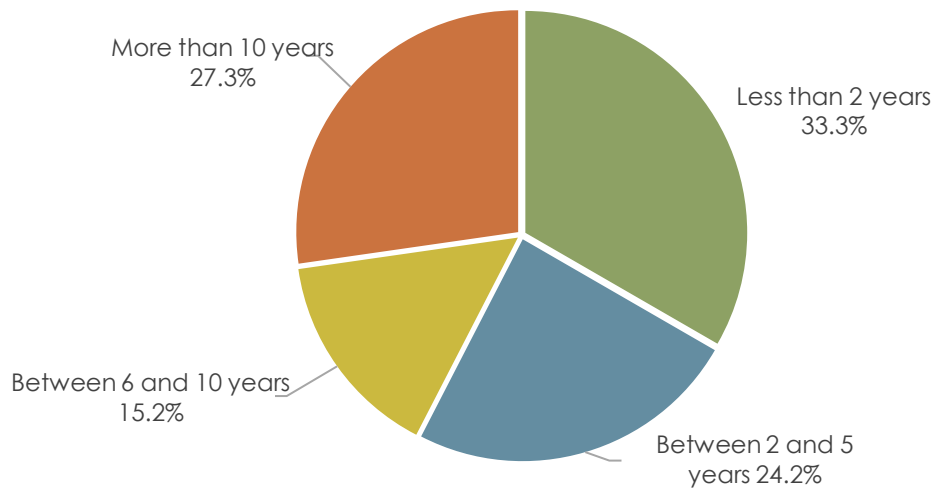
- Clean-up and code enforcement upgrades are needed.
- Sidewalks on Socorro Rd. Cleaning up the wetland terrain and adding more things to the wetland trail. Restoration of the historic trail.
- Clean up. Lots of properties with overgrown weeds. Empty lots that are not kept up. Streets with weeds all over. It's just dirty and old-looking.
- Make the City of Socorro more appealing by making it more friendly overall. Just driving to Socorro, there are no sidewalks, and it is really dark at night. Whatever 'parks' are dark and not kept up. Just having an overall more appealing Socorro will bring more people.

Survey for business owners

This survey was intended to gather information from current business owners. Therefore, the first question was whether the respondents owned a business in the City of Socorro. If they answered yes, they continued with the survey. If they answered “no,” they were disqualified, and the survey ended.

How many years have you owned your current business in Socorro?

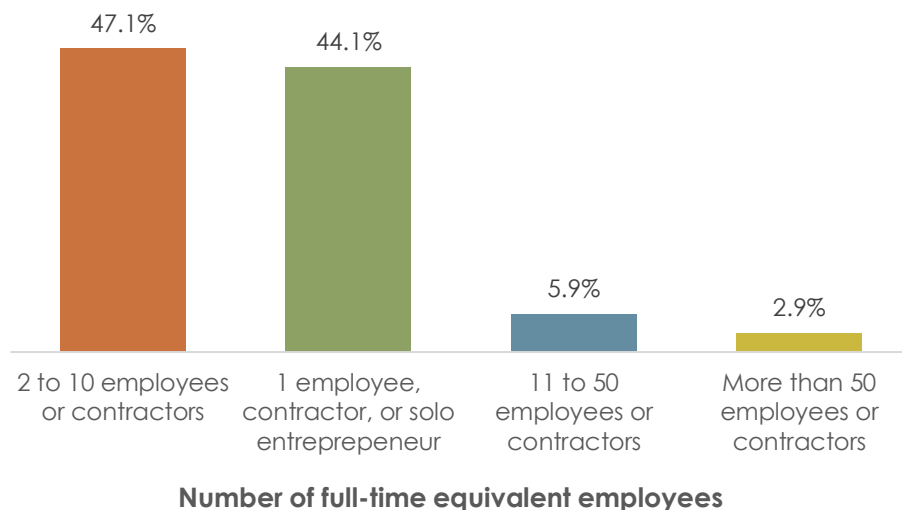
Over 50 percent of the respondents answered they have owned their businesses for five years or less. Given that the first five years of business ownership are critical to set the foundations to a solid and sustainable business long-term, this provides an opportunity to strengthen the early-stage entrepreneur ecosystem. A quarter of respondents had their businesses for 10 years or more, which represents an opportunity to establish partnerships for these business owners to share knowledge, support, and ideally, long-term mentorship for the early-stage entrepreneurs.



Years owning a business in Socorro

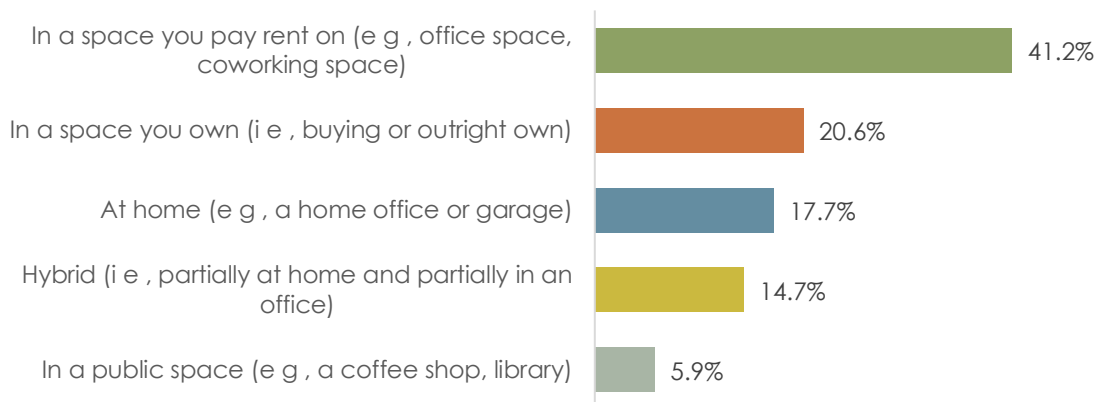
Including yourself, how many full-time equivalent (FTE) employees or contractors does your current business employ?

For this question, 91 percent of responses were of companies either having one employee, contractor, or solo entrepreneur or with less than 10 employees or contractors. This question was of particular interest to ensure capturing hires from the companies, other than full-time such as contractors. On the contrary, less than three percent had more than 50 employees or contractors. This poses a great opportunity for capacity building for existing businesses that would allow for expansions and an increase in the number of jobs, if that is the interest of the business owner.



To understand the types of demand for space, the next question asked the type of space for current operations.

Which of the following physical spaces do you currently conduct business operations in?

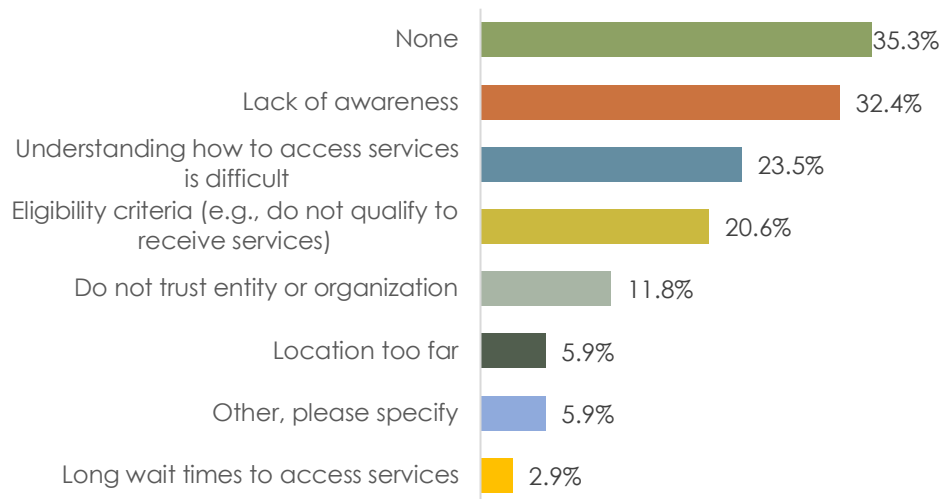


Space where business is conducted

Most respondents answered that renting space is followed by owning their business space for operations. Potential home-operated business types from the respondents include 17 percent operated from home and hybrid.

The survey then shifted to assessing the business support services, continuing a previous effort as part of the feasibility study of a business incubator. Collecting data further to understand areas of strength and opportunity was important.

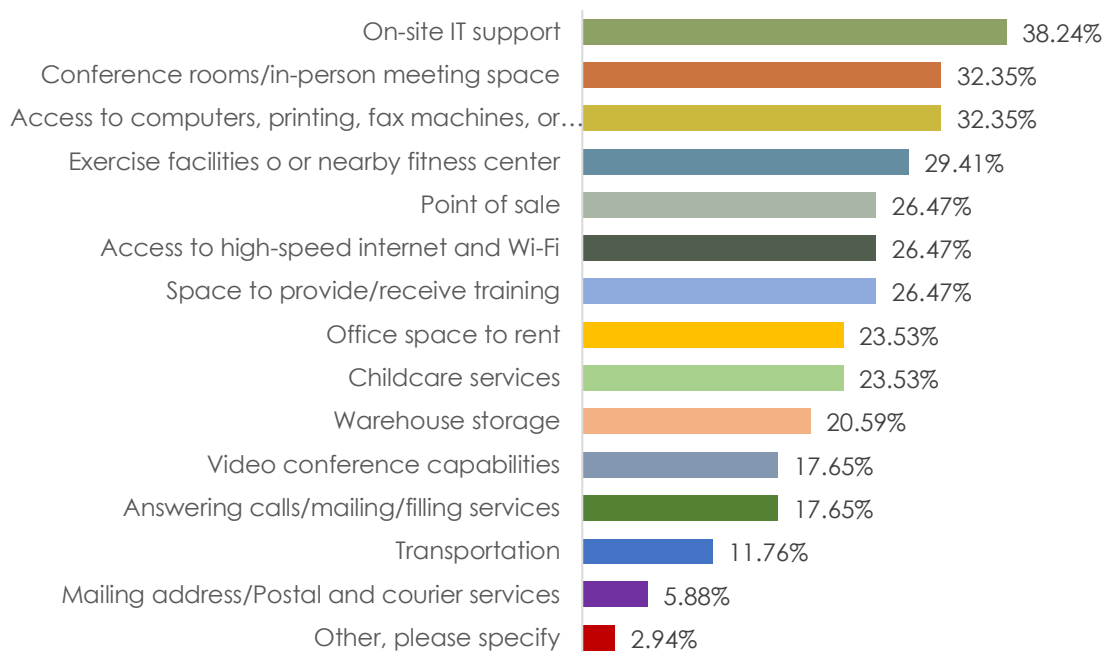
1. Based on your experience, what gaps or barriers, if any, exist in accessing business support services in the City of Socorro?



Gaps or barriers in business support services

Of the respondents, a third answered with no gaps or barriers, followed by a lack of awareness of services provided and difficulty in understanding how to access the services. In the latter two, this poses an opportunity to continue bringing awareness to the existing business support already offered and an easy access point to lower barriers to access. To further understand the potential gaps, the next question was specific to what amenities respondents would likely use.

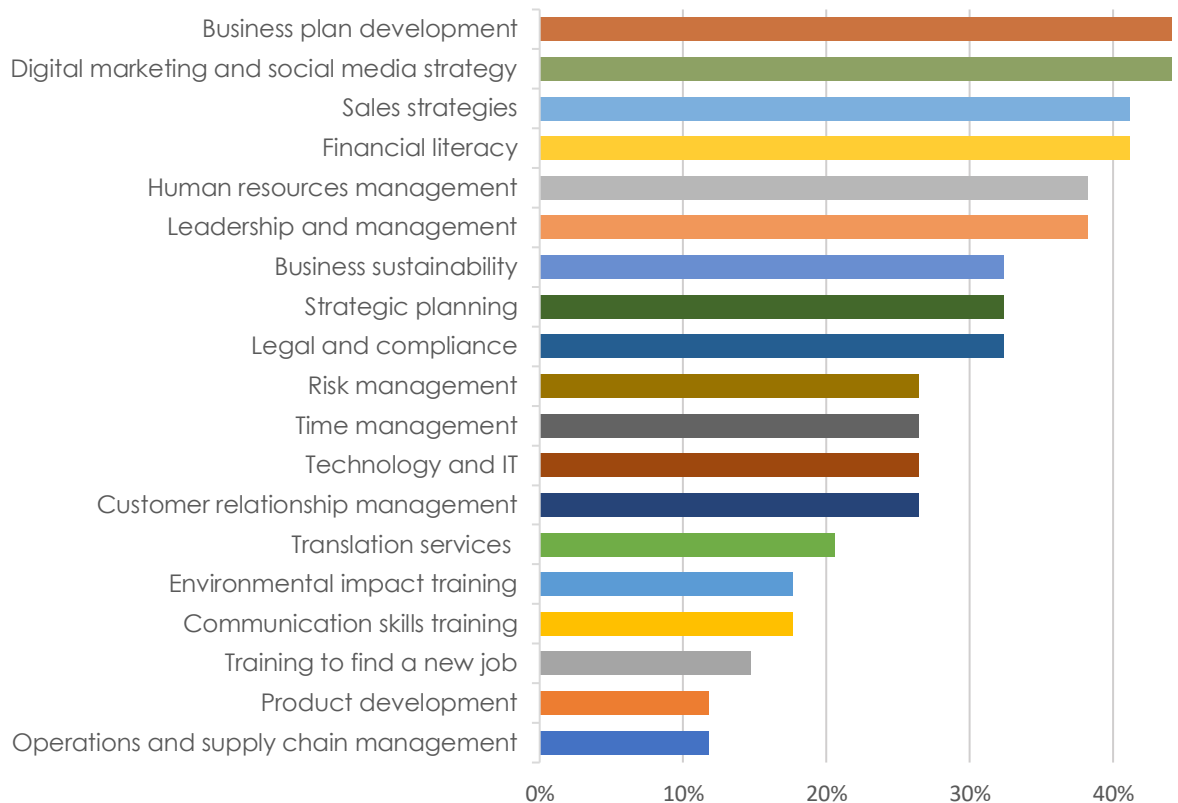
If a new business center were available in the City of Socorro, which of the following amenities would you most likely use?



Business support amenities most likely to be used

The top 10 on the list capture the need for spaces supporting business stability or expansions. The top three categories selected were onsite IT support, conference room or meeting space, and access to office equipment. Similarly, the categories include point of sale, access to high-speed internet, and space for training. Under the category “Other,” the response collected was “Help filling out new business documents.”

Assuming it was available in the City of Socorro, please select the training(s) you would most likely attend in the next 12 months:

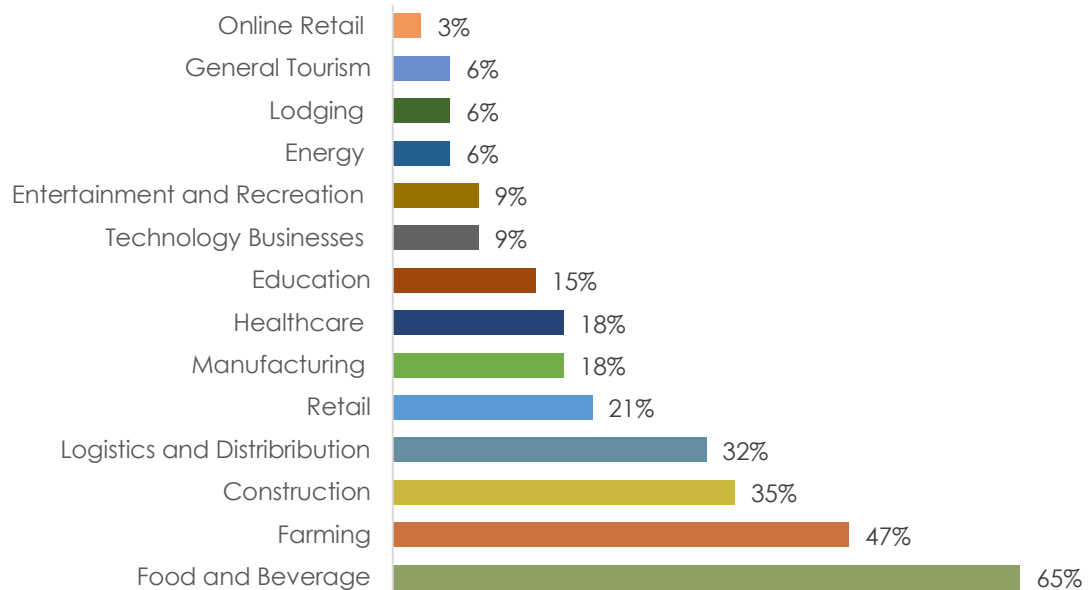


Trainings most likely to attend

This question allowed respondents to select all applicable answers. The top two were business plan development, digital marketing, and social media, followed by sales strategy and financial literacy.

Finally, the survey shifted to assessing the preferences for economic opportunities for the future in a broader approach.

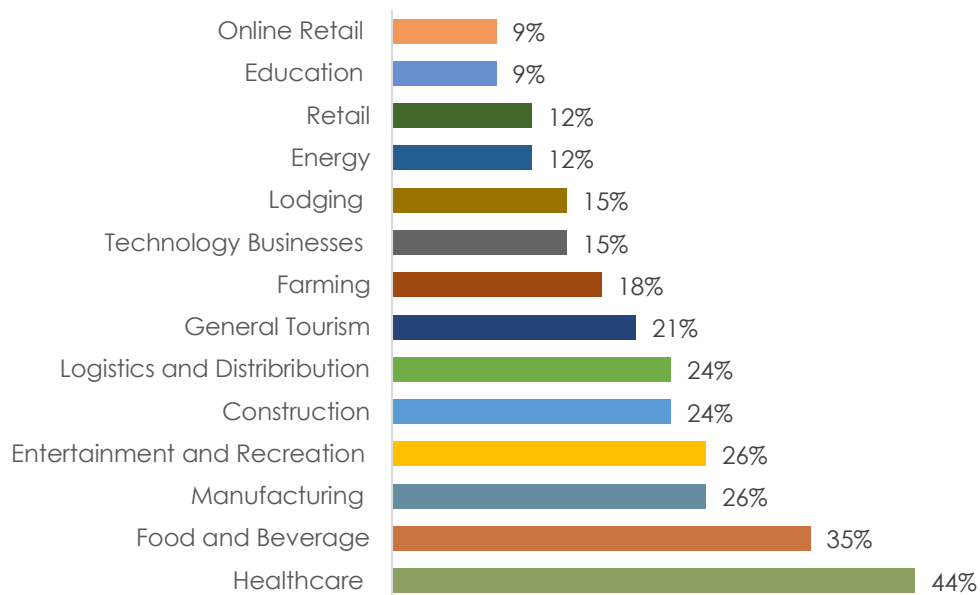
Which of the following industries do you believe are the top three current largest contributors to jobs and businesses in the City of Socorro?



Industries believed to be largest contributors to jobs and businesses

From the perspective of business owners, the food and beverage industry is the top contributor to jobs and businesses in Socorro. This was followed by farming, construction, and logistics and distribution.

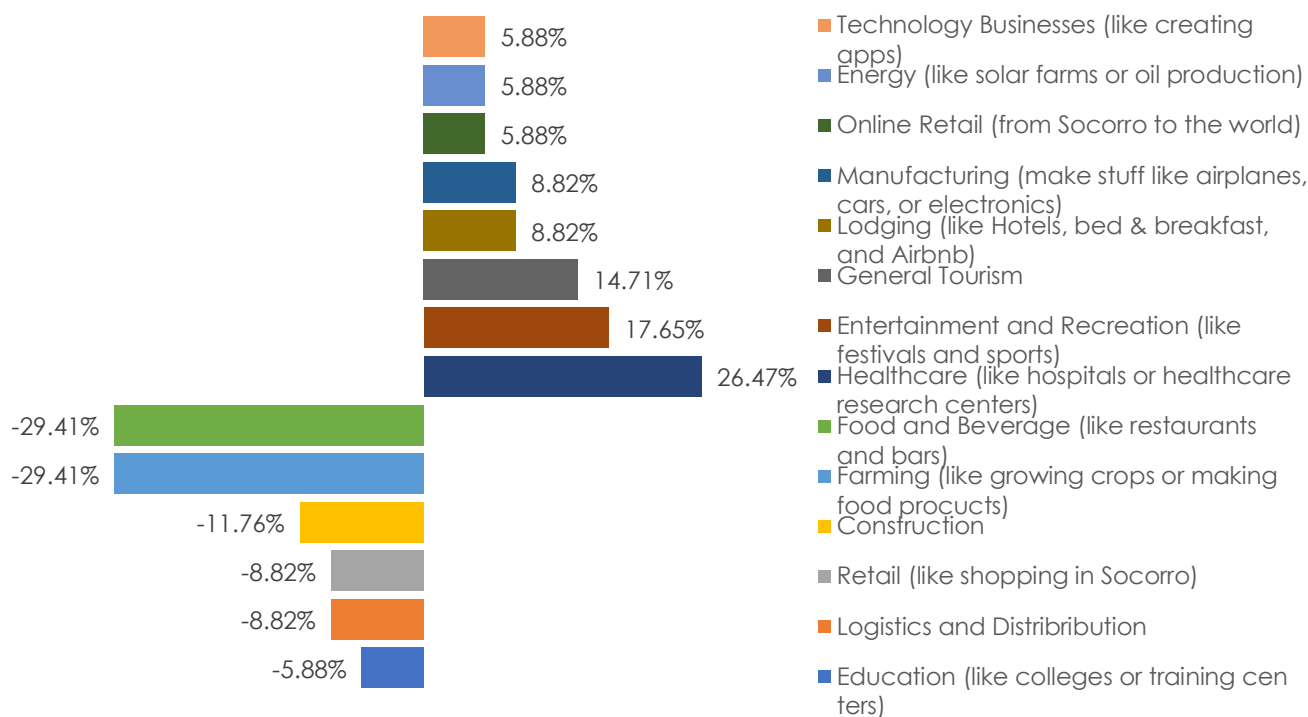
From your perspective, what three industries have the most potential for jobs and businesses in the City of Socorro in the future?



Industries believed to have largest potential in the future

When asked about the potential for the future, healthcare was perceived as the industry with the most potential, followed by food and beverage.

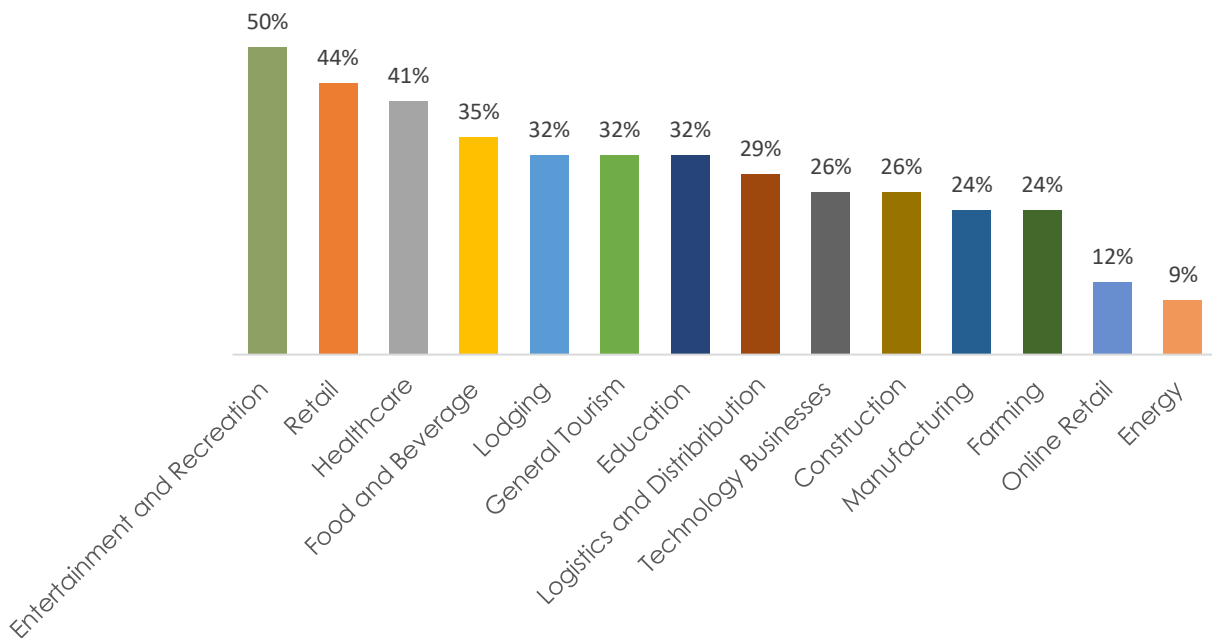
From the previous two questions, a comparison between the respondents' beliefs for current versus future impact was made. The graph below shows the difference in the frequency of responses by industry based on the beliefs of the top current and future industries contributing towards jobs and businesses in the City of Socorro. The bars to the right (positive) represent the belief that the specific industry will be of greater importance to their contribution to jobs and businesses than currently. The top three industries that respondents believed will be most important for the future are healthcare, entertainment and recreation, and general tourism. On the contrary, the bars on the left (negative) are for those industries respondents believed would decrease their impact on jobs and businesses in the City of Socorro. The industries with the largest change in the frequency of responses from current to future are food and beverages, farming, and construction.



Beliefs in future growth or declines in impact for jobs and businesses by industry

The following question inquired about the top three industries as the focus for future economic growth. Interestingly, two industries swapped places in the two questions between beliefs for potential and the preferred focus for the future. As the third top industry respondents believed had the largest opportunities for the future, manufacturing dropped to a much lower position when asked about the focus for the next three years. Similarly, retail was listed in the bottom three for the potential for the future while listed as number two as a focus for the future. The rest of the industries may have slightly different positions, with overall consistency.

Of the following types of businesses and jobs, which should be the top three industries that the City of Socorro should focus on to promote economic growth in the next three years?

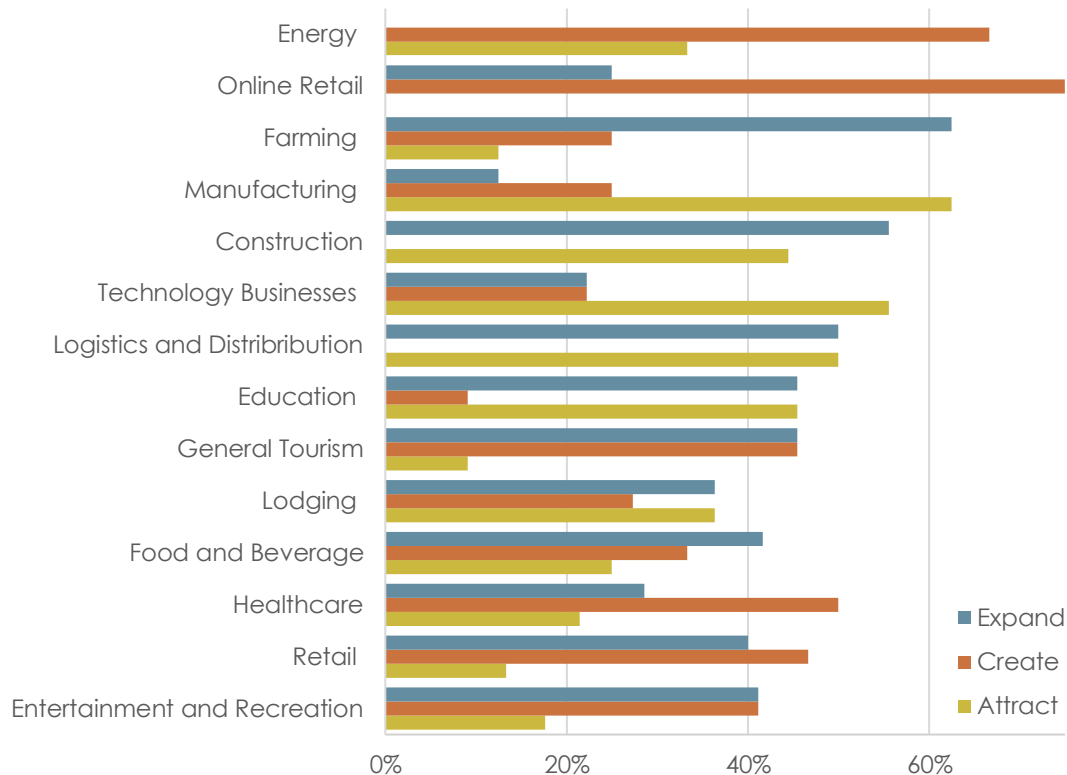


Industries to focus to promote economic growth in next 3 years

To further understand preferences with respect to strategies, the selected top three industries from each respondents appeared, inquiring now whether to target, create, or expand the specific type of businesses in that industry.

Of the options you selected, should the City of Socorro “Attract,” “Create,” or “Expand” businesses?

From the responses received, the answers were biased towards online retail as the top answer for business creation, followed by energy-related businesses. For business expansion, the top was farming, followed by construction. For business attraction, manufacturing was number one, followed by technology businesses. Categories that had no responses for business attraction were logistics and distribution and construction; no responses for business expansion were only energy; and no answers for business attraction were for online retail only.

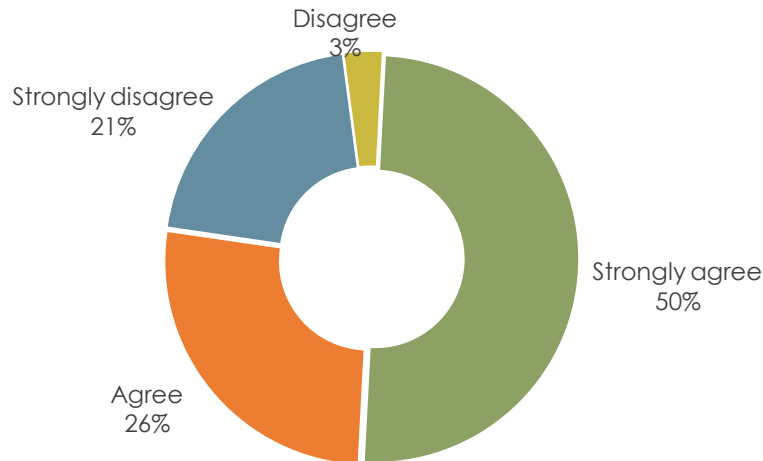


Business Attraction, Creation, or Expansion by industry

Similar to the survey for community members, the last section of the survey focused on historical and cultural tourism. The next question evaluated the community's support for this type of tourism.

Please provide your level of agreement with the following statement: The City of Socorro should PRIORITIZE Socorro's cultural and historical tourism as a tool for economic growth for the creation of jobs and businesses.

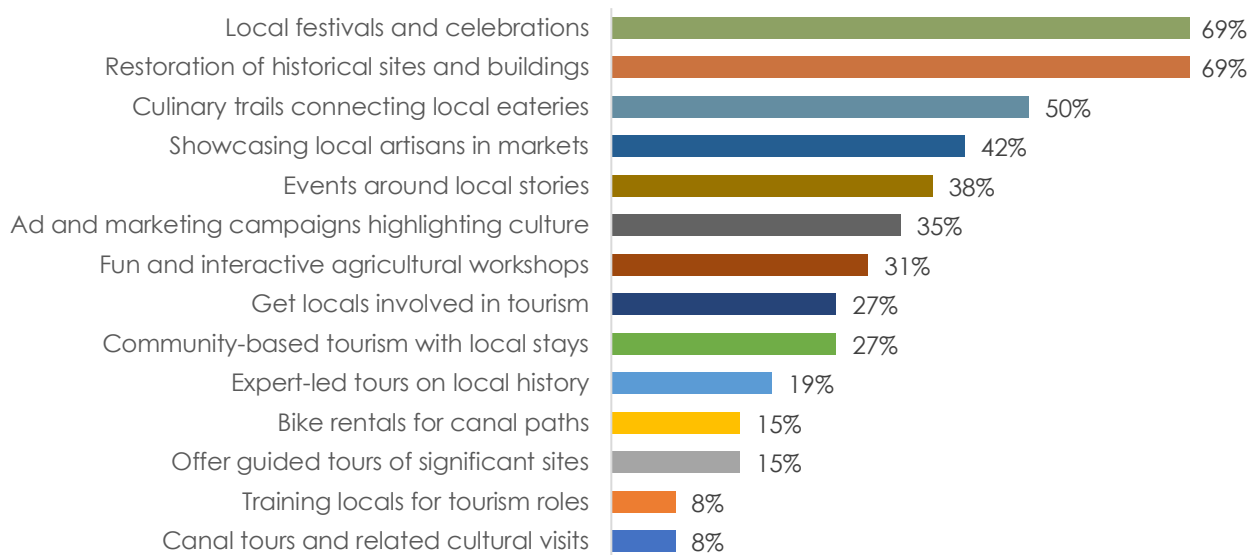
Similar to the answers in the community survey, business owners agree and strongly disagree with this as an area of focus. However, the strongly disagreed option represented a larger ratio than that of community members.



Should the City of Socorro prioritize cultural and historical tourism for economic growth?

Respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that the City of Socorro needs to prioritize cultural and historical tourism for economic growth were asked a follow-up question. Local festivals and celebrations, restoration of historical sites and buildings, culinary trails connecting local eateries, showcasing local artisans in markets, and events around local stories were the top five ways to maximize the economic benefits and job creation. Compared to the answers from community members, the only difference in the top five was with bike rentals and showcasing local artisans in markets that swapped places in terms of priorities.

You agreed that the City of Socorro should promote its culture and history to tourists. Select your top five ways to do so that would maximize economic benefit and job creation



Ways to maximize economic benefit through tourism

The last question to all respondents for the business survey was the following.

City of Socorro

Economic Recovery Strategic Plan

From your experience, what is one major initiative or project that would boost Socorro's economic vitality and job market?

The answers were classified into five categories: a) businesses and jobs; b) Retail, food, and entertainment; c) Quality of life/infrastructure; d) Beautification; e) Tourism. If the comments were received in Spanish, they have been translated; also, answers may have been edited for clarity and readability.

a) Businesses and jobs

- Good paying jobs
- Informing the region of our rich history and creating the image of Socorro as our county's spacious and quiet part.
- Rio Vista Bracero project.
- Have locals give tours. Capacity building for local people.
- Providing grants to new and existing businesses to open and grow.
- More big businesses and medical centers
- Health care facilities is of particular importance to support the development of future business expansion
- Continue to attract new warehouses and logistics firms. They will create construction and long-term jobs
- Restaurant, hotel, and big business
- Support established businesses for growth and promotion within the community.
- Ease the permits and requirements, making them more affordable and enabling the community to invest and diversify services
- Increase publicity and marketing to promote local businesses in the region to attract more customers. This would allow us to hire more people and maintain the quality of the services.

b) Retail, food, and entertainment

- Community events
- To have cultural and history-based events. The City of Socorro is very rich in history; a tour should exist to explain it.
- Having a small retail center with stores like Ross, craft, and clothing stores.

c) Quality of life/infrastructure

- The cost of living
- Construction
- Blend the historic and contemporary housing for young professionals.
- Housing affordable, streets, retail (shopping).
- Mission Trail/ Socorro Rd is a very busy road that needs more traffic control and expansion
- Infrastructure
- More funding

d) Beautification

- In my opinion, the streets should be clean and for businesses to have a better presentation; the city is very ugly
- Train local youth and citizens how to care for and maintain Adobe buildings.
- Develop vacant lots on the major streets.

e) Tourism

- Socorro's historical areas are attracting a lot of people, but it requires upkeep.
- Making Socorro Rd pedestrian-friendly and having a district where you can walk around, from restaurants to shops and other drinking establishments with open containers.
- Development, restoration, promotion, and funding for tourist-type businesses along the mission trail portion of Socorrofest
- Tourism
- Inviting our surrounding community to visit.
- I believe marketing Socorro as a place to live, and work would help to increase visibility

Appendix 5 Community profile

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Community Profile

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This community profile is one of the components informing the Economic Recovery Strategic Plan for the City of Socorro, Texas. Specifically, this section analyzes the demographic and socioeconomic profiles, followed by an evaluation of the labor market and economic conditions. Unless otherwise noted as footnotes, this section's data sources are the U.S. Census Bureau, 2017-2021 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates. Population data for 2023 is using ESRI Business Analyst Online. Population data for 2023 is using ESRI Business Analyst Online.

Demographic profile

Population

According to the recent American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates, Socorro, TX, was home to 35,429 residents by 2022. By 2023, the estimated population²⁰ reached 36,946, demonstrating a steady rise and consistent growth since 2010. Over the span from 2010 to 2021, Socorro experienced a notable 12% growth in population. This growth rate reflects the town's expanding community, surpassing the population increase in El Paso County by one percentage point during the same period. See Figure 3 for details.

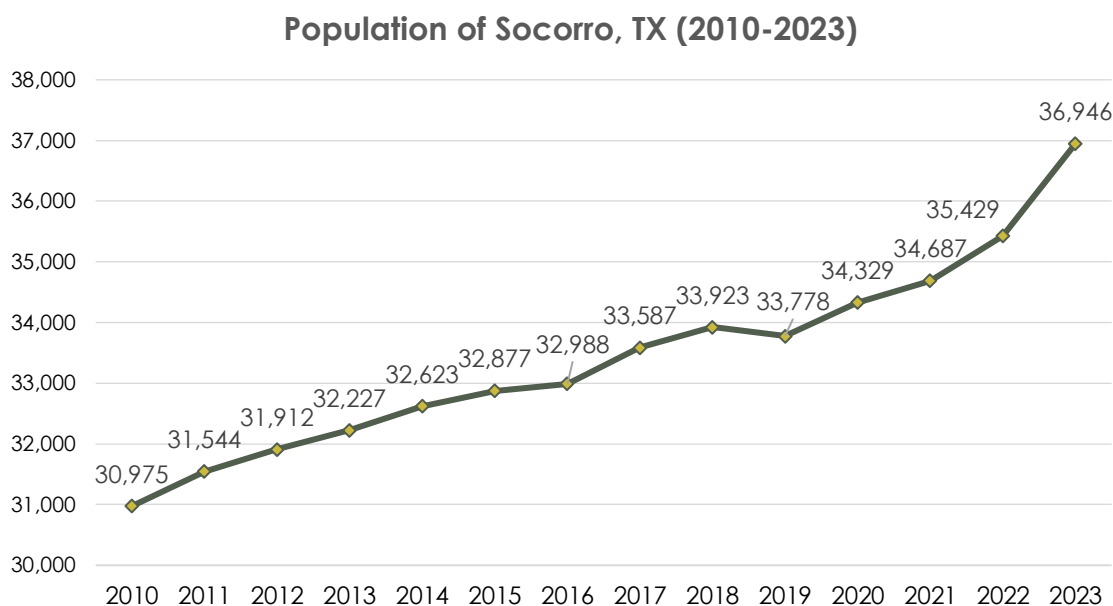


Figure 3 Population in Socorro, TX (2010-2021)

Population pyramid

Socorro's population distribution aligns closely with that of the larger county. 52% of the population falls between 20 and 59, comparable to El Paso for the same age brackets.

²⁰ For consistency in calculation methods, population data for 2023 are sourced through Business Analyst Online. ACS population figures for 2023 are unavailable, given that it was a Decennial Census year. Available estimates for 2023 are based on the Decennial Census figures and are calculated differently from ACS estimates, resulting in incomparable figures and significant differences between the estimated figures for 2022 and 2023.

Although the differences are slight, Socorro has a slightly lower percentage of younger populations (0-19 years) and a lower percentage in the older age groups (70+ years). It is particularly interesting to highlight that Socorro's population declines compared to El Paso in age groups 20 to 29, 30 to 39, and 40 to 49, representing three of the critical age brackets within working age. The percentages for the following two brackets, age groups 40 to 49 and 50 to 59, are larger for Socorro. For the age group 40 to 49, Socorro has 14% versus 12% for El Paso County. Similarly, for the age group ages 50 to 59, Socorro has a 13% versus 11 for El Paso County. It is worth highlighting that these two age groups tend to represent families with children, a category under which the largest differences exist when comparing Socorro to the county. Group ages 60+ are comparable between the two with 17% each. See **Error! Reference source not found.** for details.

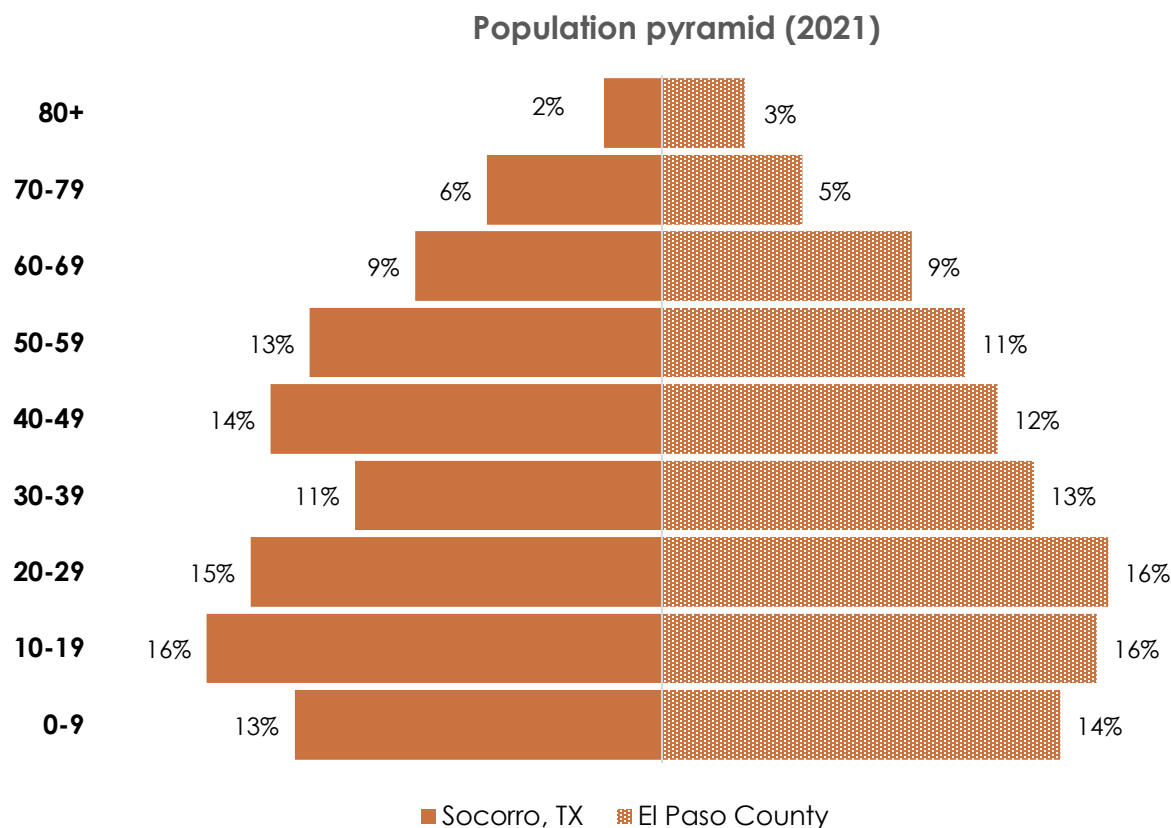


Figure 4 Population pyramid (2021)

Population pyramid for Socorro by gender

Within Socorro, the overall population is comprised of 53% females and 47% males. In the age groups considered to be working between 20 and 59, females make up 54% of the total versus 52% for males. On a closer look, for age groups 40 to 49 and 50 to 59, with

15% and 14%, respectively, versus males with 13% and 12% for the same age groups. While the percentage differences are slight, males have larger percentages compared to females in age groups 30 to 39, 60 to 69, and in ages under 19 years old. See

Figure 5 for details.

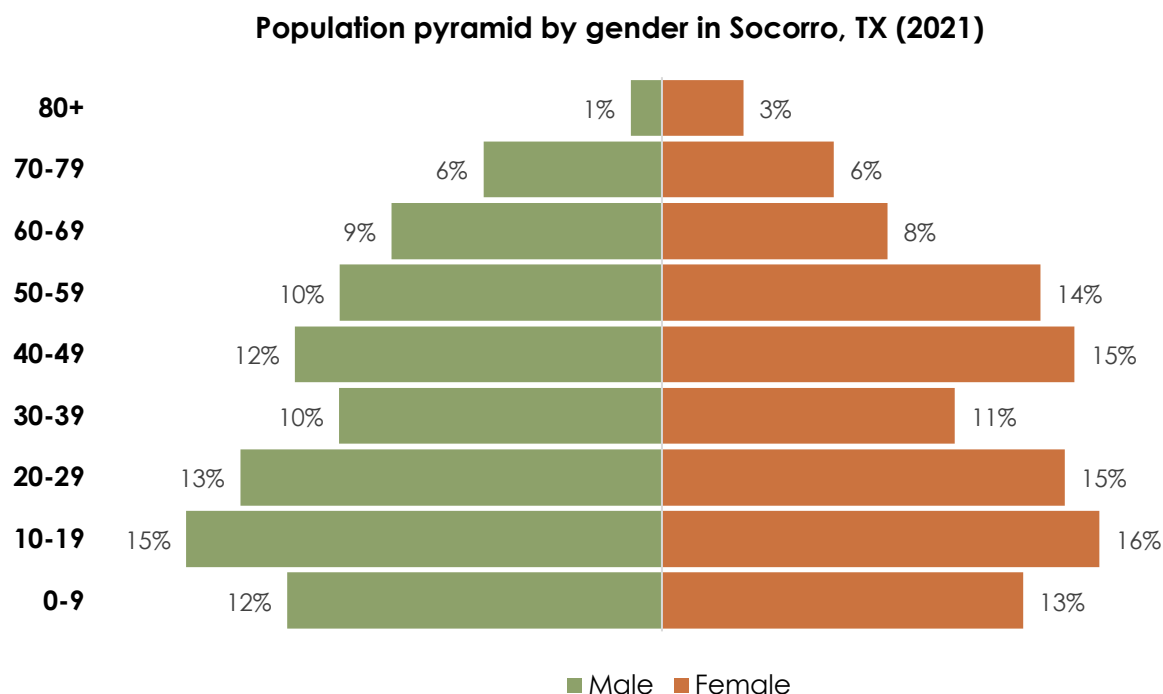


Figure 5 Population pyramid by gender in Socorro, TX (2021)

Population by race and ethnicity

Most of the population is Hispanic, making up 96.5% of the total, a significant demographic feature. The White population follows at 2.2%, with smaller percentages for other races: American Indian or Alaska Native at 0.6%, African American at 0.2%, and other races at 0.5%. This diverse yet predominantly Hispanic community shapes Socorro's cultural and social landscape. See Figure 6 for details.

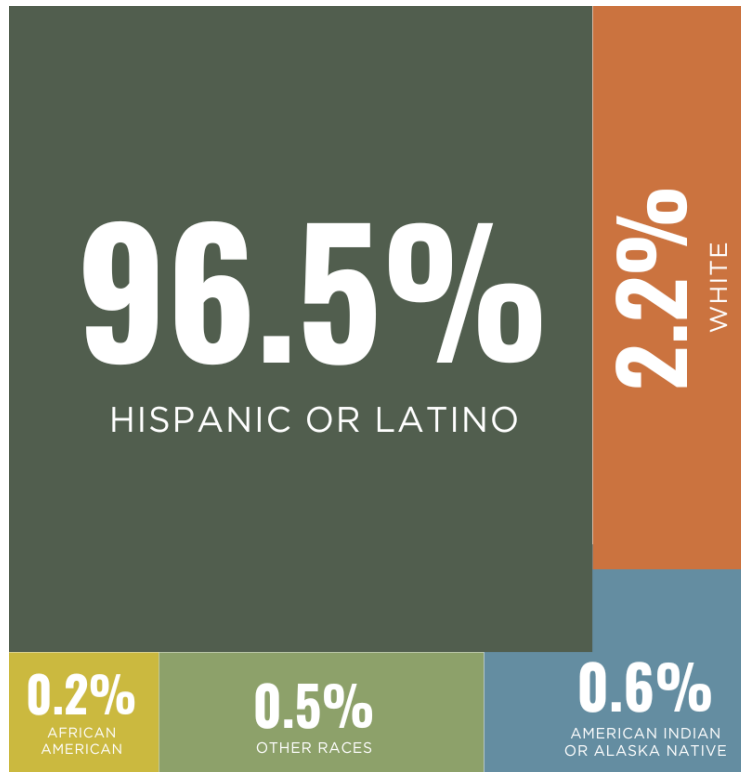


Figure 6 Population by race and ethnicity in Socorro, TX (2020)

Median age

The median age in Socorro, TX, saw a significant rise from 2010 to 2021, increasing by 5.8 years, a notable shift compared to smaller increases elsewhere. In contrast, during the same period, El Paso County and the broader Texas population aged only 1.4 and 1.6 years. Additionally, in Socorro, females are relatively older, with a median age of 36.3, compared to 33.7 for males, trend even larger for El Paso County with 3.2 years older females versus males. While the median age difference between females and males for Texas is also females older compared to males, the age difference statewide is only of 1.6 years. This information highlights the distinct aging pattern in Socorro. See Table 3 for details.

| | Socorro, TX | | El Paso County | | Texas | |
|-------------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | 2010 | 2021 | 2010 | 2021 | 2010 | 2021 |
| Total population | 30,975 | 34,687 | 772,280 | 860,485 | 24,311,891 | 28,862,581 |
| Median age | 29.2 | 35.0 | 31.2 | 32.6 | 33.4 | 35.0 |
| Male | 27.2 | 33.7 | 29.2 | 31.1 | 32.4 | 34.2 |
| Female | 30.7 | 36.3 | 33.0 | 34.3 | 34.5 | 35.8 |

Table 3 Median age by gender in Socorro, TX, El Paso County, and Texas (2010 & 2021)

Language

In Socorro, TX, 87.63% of residents speak Spanish at home, reflecting the high concentration of Hispanic individuals in the city, with 28,196 Spanish speakers. Conversely, only 12.37% of the population speaks only English. This linguistic profile underscores the cultural richness of Socorro and highlights the importance of bilingual communication for all aspects of life in the community. See Figure 7 for details.

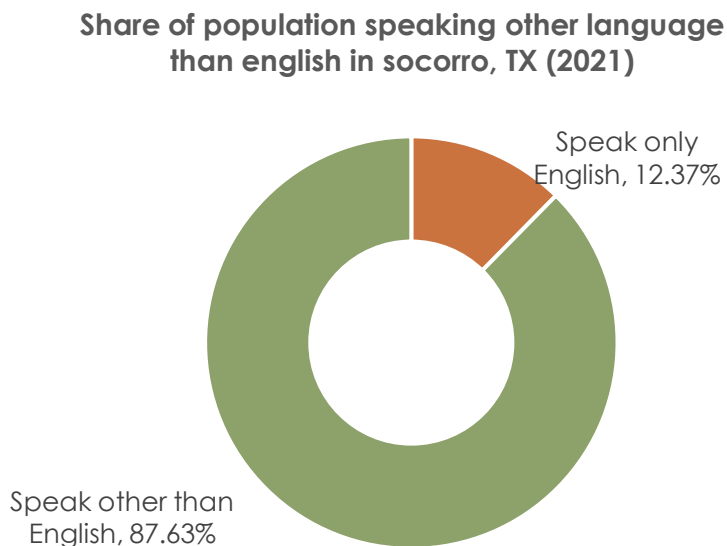


Figure 7 Share of the population speaking other language than English

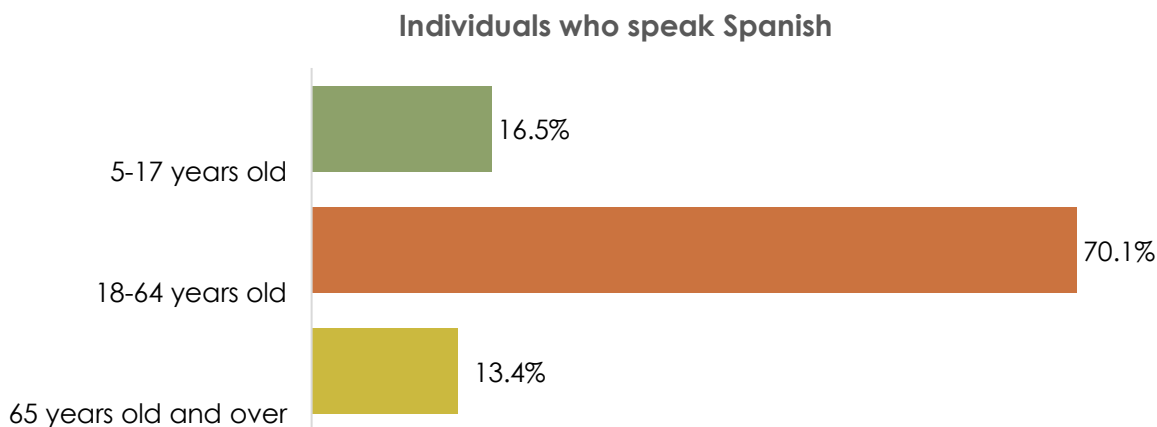


Figure 8 Individuals who speak Spanish

Educational attainment

The educational attainment in Socorro, TX, shows significant disparities compared to both El Paso County and the state of Texas. A notably higher percentage of Socorro's residents

still need to complete elementary (19.5%) or high school education (14.1%). While the high school graduation rate in Socorro is higher than state levels (30.4% versus 24.5%), the rates of higher education attainment—both bachelor's degrees at 7.0% and advanced degrees at 2.1%—are markedly lower. See Table 4 for details.

| | Socorro, TX | El Paso County | Texas |
|--|-------------|----------------|------------|
| Population 25 and over | 21,836 | 530,711 | 18,619,469 |
| Less than 9th grade | 19.5% | 11.9% | 7.6% |
| 9th to 12th grade, no diploma | 14.1% | 8.3% | 7.5% |
| High school graduate (including equivalency) | 30.4% | 23.8% | 24.5% |
| Some college, no degree | 17.1% | 22.3% | 21.2% |
| Associate's degree | 9.7% | 9.0% | 7.5% |
| Bachelor's degree | 7.0% | 16.6% | 20.4% |
| Graduate or professional degree | 2.1% | 8.1% | 11.2% |

Table 4 Educational attainment in Socorro, El Paso County and Texas (2021)

The educational disparities in Socorro are further compounded when considering the language spoken at home. Spanish speakers, who comprise close to 88% of the population (see Figure 7), show lower educational attainment, with 34.1% lacking a high school diploma. However, it's notable that 9.5% of Spanish speakers have obtained a bachelor's degree or higher, almost three times the proportion of English-only speakers at 3.2%. This detailed data breakdown highlights significant educational disparities in the community based on the language spoken at home. It suggests a complex interplay between language, culture, and educational achievement, underscoring the need for targeted educational support that addresses these linguistic nuances. See Figure 9 for details.

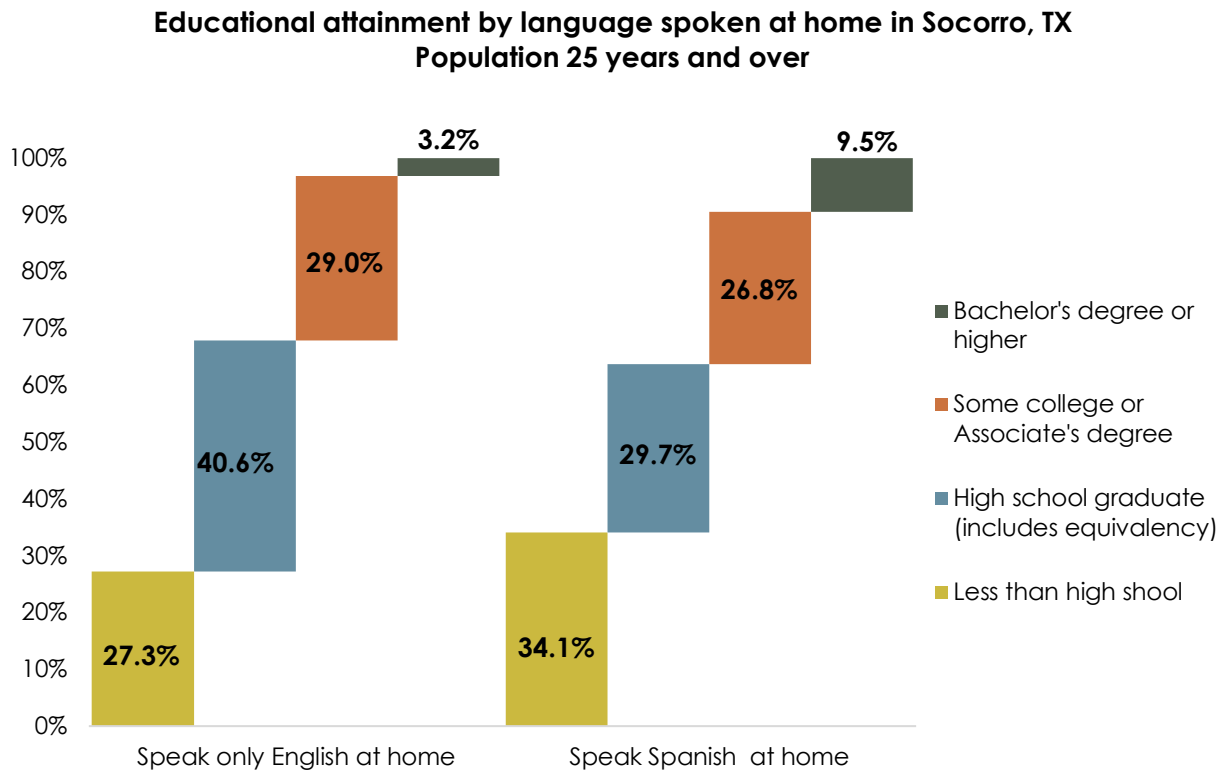


Figure 9 Educational attainment by language spoken at home

Furthermore, when analyzing by racial demographics, the White and American Indian communities in Socorro exhibit relatively higher levels of educational achievement, with over 93% having at least a high school diploma and more than 12% holding higher education degrees. However, these figures still fall short of county and state averages, emphasizing a community-wide educational shortfall across all demographics. This overview highlights the need for comprehensive educational improvement and outreach programs in Socorro that cater to the diverse needs of its Hispanic, White, and American Indian populations, aiming to bridge the significant educational gaps and enhance the community's developmental prospects. See Figure 10 for details.

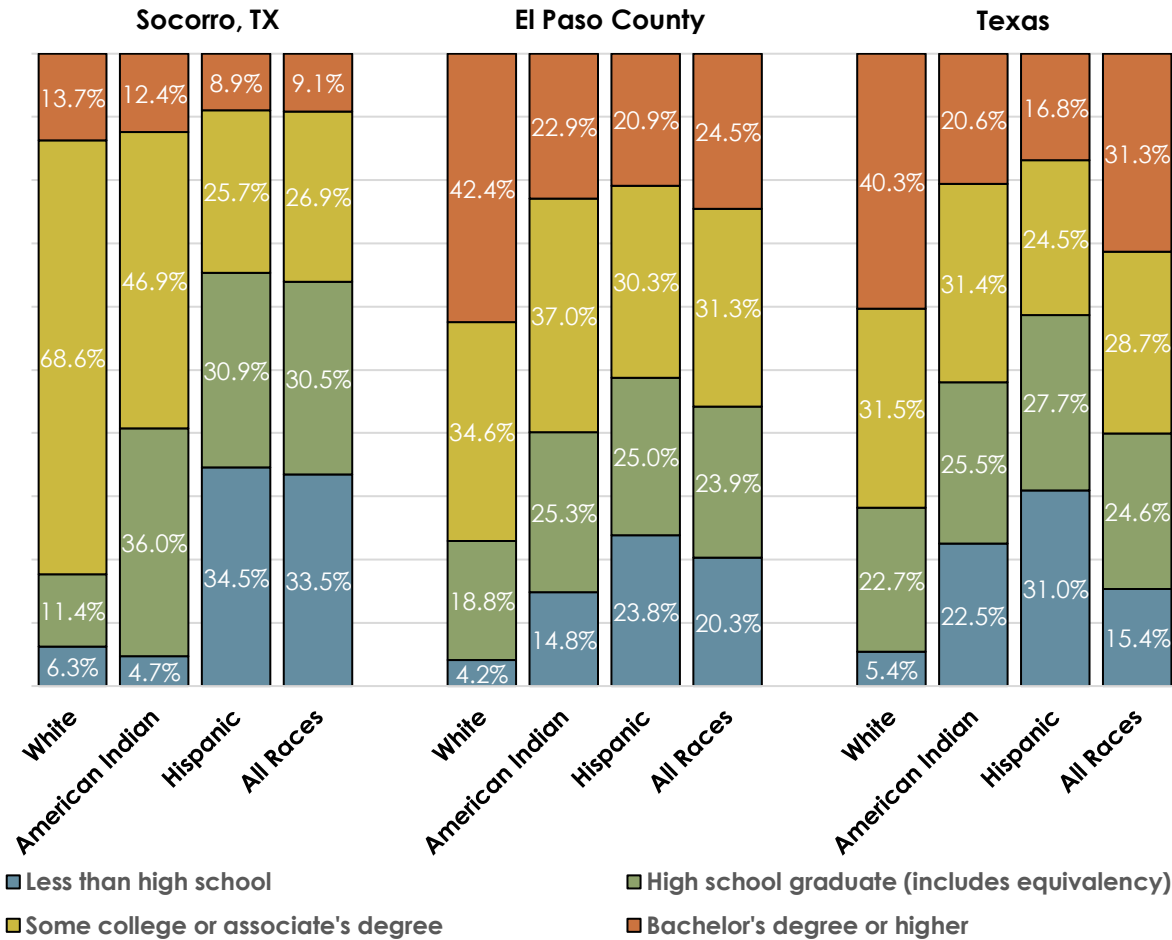


Figure 10 Educational attainment by major racial and ethical groups in Socorro, El Paso County and Texas (2021)

Socioeconomic profile

Median household income

In 2021, the median household income in Socorro was \$42,042, which is lower than El Paso County at close to \$50,919 and Texas at \$67,321. Being part of El Paso County, Socorro shows a notable income gap, particularly evident through the percentage of low-income households. Nearly 30% of households in Socorro earn \$25,000 or less, compared to 25% in El Paso County and 17.1% in Texas. Furthermore, about 13% of Socorro's households have a six-figure income, less than the 21% in El Paso County and 33% in Texas. These statistics highlight that even though Socorro is part of a more affluent county, the local challenges are persistent in terms of household income distribution. See Table 5 for details, where data is presented in 2021 inflation-adjusted dollars.

| | Socorro, TX | El Paso County | Texas |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Income bracket | | | |
| Less than \$10,000 | 10.0% | 8.1% | 5.7% |
| \$10,000 to \$14,999 | 7.4% | 5.7% | 3.7% |
| \$15,000 to \$24,999 | 12.2% | 11.2% | 7.7% |
| \$25,000 to \$34,999 | 11.8% | 10.7% | 8.5% |
| \$35,000 to \$49,999 | 16.0% | 13.5% | 11.7% |
| \$50,000 to \$74,999 | 16.7% | 19.0% | 17.3% |
| \$75,000 to \$99,999 | 13.2% | 11.0% | 12.7% |
| \$100,000 to \$149,999 | 8.9% | 12.5% | 16.2% |
| \$150,000 to \$199,999 | 2.8% | 4.6% | 7.7% |
| \$200,000 or more | 0.9% | 3.7% | 8.7% |
| Median income (dollars) | \$42,042 | \$50,919 | \$67,321 |

Table 5 Distribution of annualized household income in Socorro, El Paso County, and Texas (2021)

Median household income by race and ethnicity

Median household income in Socorro varies significantly among different racial and ethnic groups. The White community in Socorro has the highest income at approximately \$49,594, while Hispanics, who are close to the overall median, earn about \$41,708. The American Indian community has the lowest income at \$30,947. This contrasts sharply with figures from El Paso County, where the American Indian community reports the highest household income at \$59,534, surpassing both Whites at \$53,941 and Hispanics at \$42,024. At the state level, the income distribution shows Hispanic households with the lowest median income at \$54,786, whereas White households have the highest at \$72,829. These comparisons allow for an appreciation of the challenges and opportunities of Socorro in the regional and state contexts as opportunities for the future based on the disparities. See Figure 11 for details.

Median household income by major racial and ethnical groups in Socorro, El Paso County and Texas (2021)

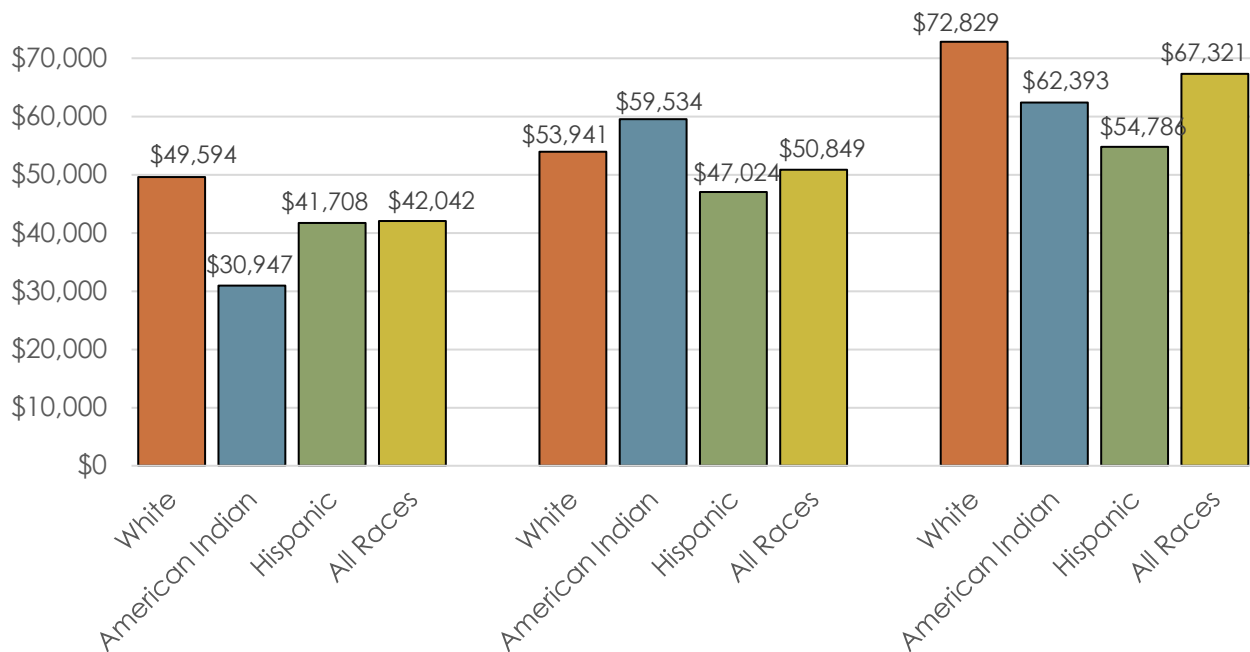


Figure 11 Median household income by major racial and ethnical groups in Socorro, El Paso County and Texas (2021)

Living wages

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Living Wage is a low-income indicator that calculates figures to determine the minimum wage a full-time worker needs to earn to support their family based on local living costs. This indicator is assessed for 12 family types across all U.S. counties (3,142 in all 50 states). In El Paso County, the Living Wage (LW) for a family with two parents and two children, with only one parent working, is estimated at \$21.44 per hour. For a single parent with one child, it rises to \$30.63 per hour. These two wages are visually represented in Figure 10, as horizontal lines across all occupations. A total of 21 occupations are captured with their hourly wages. The difference between the two LW's categories and the hourly wage per occupation represents where wages fall short of the living wage needed for family support.

Only two occupations in Socorro, TX, exceed the requirements for the Living Wage calculator considered for the County, as referenced previously. Health diagnosing and treating practitioners top the list with an average wage of \$40.89 per hour, and law enforcement workers, including supervisors, follow at \$37.45 per hour. This information is critical for understanding wage adequacy relative to the cost of living in specific family contexts. See Figure 12 for details.

Major occupations and living wage indicator in El Paso County (2021)

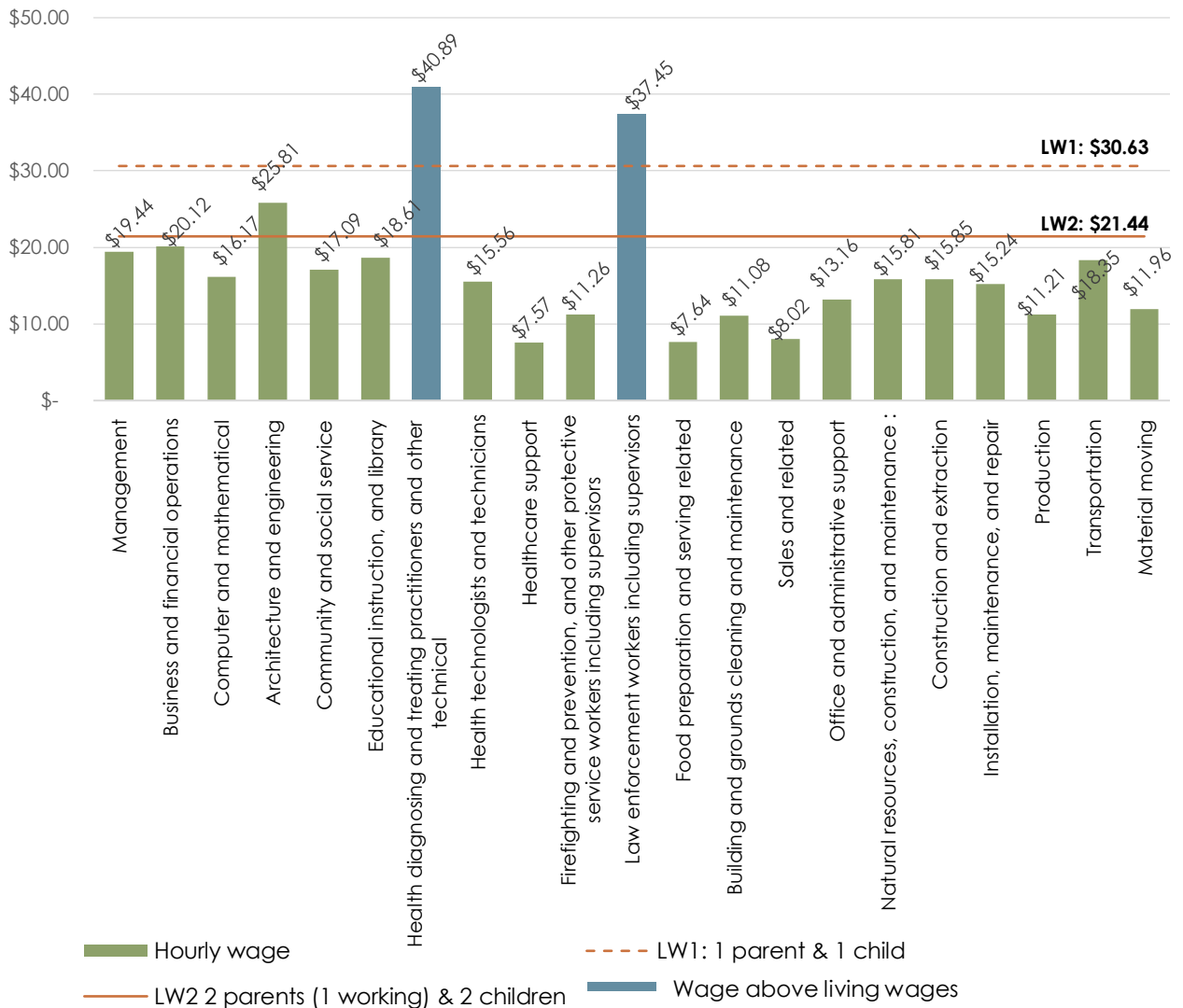


Figure 12 Major occupations and living wage indicator (2021)²¹

²¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; Living Wage Calculator, 2023, MIT.

Labor market

Labor force participation and unemployment rates

In 2021, Socorro's labor force participation rate (LFPR) stood at 61%, slightly lower than El Paso County's 63% and the Texas average of 65%. However, the age group of 25 to 54 years—considered the most productive years—is captured by the highest level of labor participation in Socorro, rising to around 80% per age cohort, which is roughly on par with the 79% to 82% range seen in El Paso County and across Texas. See Table 6 for details.

Socorro's unemployment rate (UR) was relatively low at 5.9%, which is favorable compared to the slightly higher 6.8% in El Paso County. However, it is marginally above the Texas rate of 5.4%. Notably, the age group of 30 to 44 years in Socorro shows an exceptionally low UR of 3.0%, representing a substantial portion (nearly one-quarter) of the local labor force. This rate contrasts with higher UR for the same age group in El Paso County, which ranges from 5.3% to 7.2%, and in Texas, which ranges from 4.2% to 4.8%.

| | Socorro, TX | | El Paso County | | Texas | |
|----------------------|-------------|-------|----------------|-------|-------|-------|
| | LFPR | UR | LFPR | UR | LFPR | UR |
| Population (16+) | 61% | 5.9% | 63% | 6.8% | 65% | 5.4% |
| By age cohort | | | | | | |
| 16 to 19 years | 31.2% | 12.7% | 31.0% | 19.9% | 34.5% | 15.9% |
| 20 to 24 years | 71.4% | 6.3% | 74.2% | 10.6% | 73.5% | 9.5% |
| 25 to 29 years | 78.5% | 9.0% | 78.8% | 8.8% | 81.5% | 6.0% |
| 30 to 34 years | 80.0% | 2.9% | 79.8% | 7.2% | 81.9% | 4.8% |
| 35 to 44 years | 80.7% | 3.1% | 82.2% | 5.3% | 81.7% | 4.2% |
| 45 to 54 years | 80.3% | 5.6% | 80.0% | 4.3% | 80.7% | 3.9% |
| 55 to 59 years | 72.6% | 9.7% | 69.4% | 4.3% | 72.9% | 4.0% |
| 60 to 64 years | 49.2% | 2.2% | 52.1% | 3.4% | 59.0% | 3.8% |
| 65 to 74 years | 11.0% | 11.6% | 23.8% | 5.7% | 28.5% | 4.2% |
| 75 years and over | 1.9% | 0.0% | 5.1% | 1.3% | 8.0% | 3.6% |

Table 6 Labor force participation and unemployment rate in Socorro, El Paso County, and Texas (2021)

Additionally, the UR for individuals aged 60 to 64 in Socorro is remarkably low at 2.2%. This suggests that older individuals, likely benefiting from extensive work experience, are more likely to secure employment if they remain in the workforce. These figures highlight the strength of Socorro's labor market, particularly for its most experienced workers, and

underscore the potential for targeted employment policies that capitalize on the productivity of its core working-age and senior populations.

Inflow and outflow of employees

Based on the 2021 U.S. Census Bureau estimates, the workforce dynamics within Socorro, TX, reveal a significant commuting pattern for employment. Only a small portion of the workforce, about 437 people, both live and work within Socorro. In contrast, a large number of workers commute to and from the city; 9,545 residents commute out of Socorro for work, while 3,499 workers travel from other areas into Socorro for employment. This indicates a substantial reliance on surrounding communities for labor exchange and underlines the importance of developing transportation and infrastructure solutions to support the extensive daily movement of workers. See Figure 13 for details.

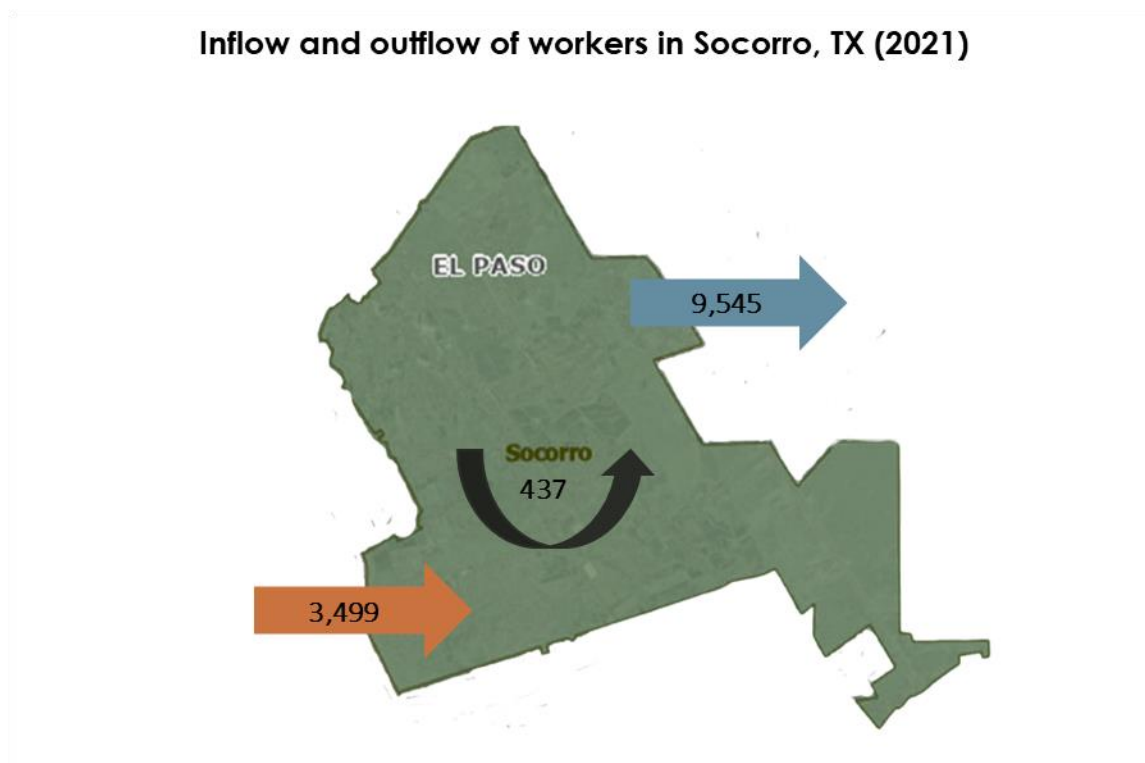


Figure 13 Inflow and outflow of employees in Socorro, TX (2021)²²

Industries by employment levels

In Socorro, TX, the dominant industries contributing to employment highlight a significant sectoral distribution. Educational Services and Retail Trade are the leading employers,

²² U.S. Census Bureau, On the Map 2021 (Inflow/Outflow Analysis).

each comprising 17.1% of the workforce with 933 and 929 employees, respectively. This indicates a strong presence of schools, universities, retail stores, and shopping centers, pivotal to the local economy. Transportation and warehousing, and construction are also significant contributors, employing 15.1% and 13.3% of the workforce, respectively. Accommodation and Food Services account for 10.2% of employment as part of the service industry, highlighting the importance of tourism and dining industries in the local job market.

The top five industries combined - educational services, retail trade, transportation and warehousing, construction, and accommodation and food services - employ nearly three-quarters of all workers in Socorro. Smaller sectors like Other Services, Health Care, and Social Assistance employ 5.4% and 4.9%, respectively. These sectors are essential for basic community needs and well-being despite being smaller. The category labeled "All other," comprising 16.8% of the workforce, suggests a diverse range of other industries contributing to the local economy. See Figure 14 for details.

**Industries with the highest employment levels in Socorro, TX
(Q3-2023)**

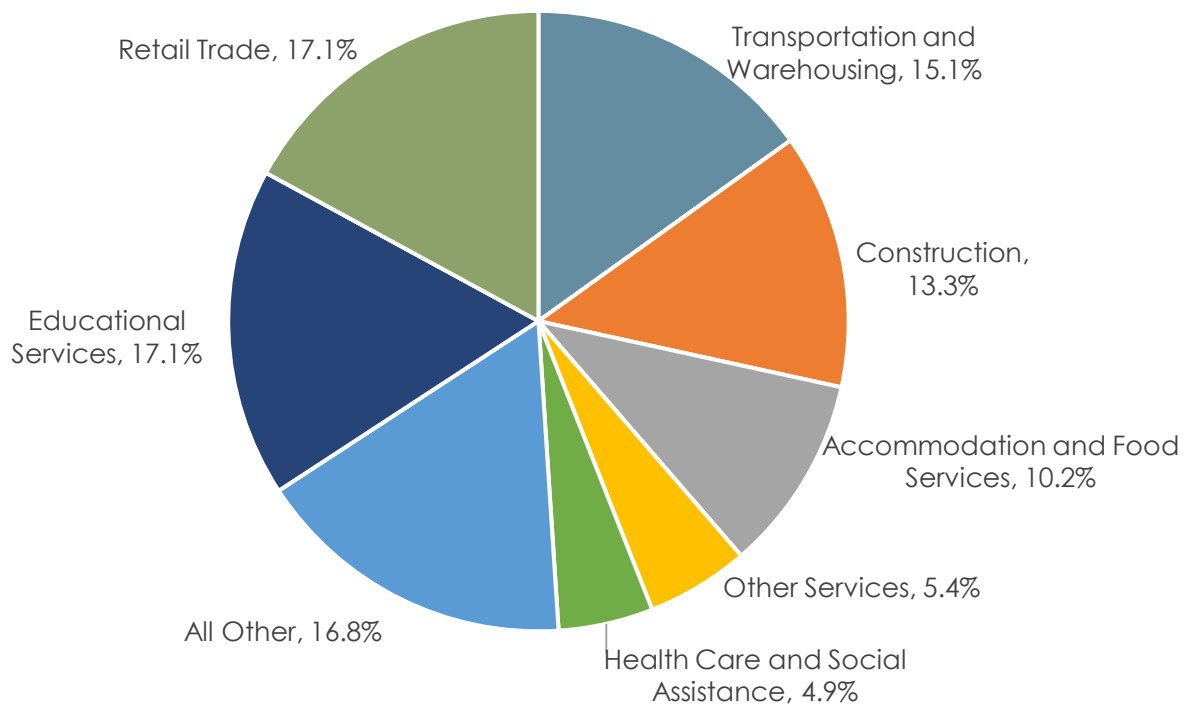


Figure 14 Industries with the highest employment level in Socorro, TX (Q3-2023)

Wages by industry

Socorro's average annual wage across all industries is approximately \$47,095. The overview of wages reveals significant variances that underscore the economic

stratification based on industry sectors. See Table 7 for details²³, highlighting the wages for highest employment industries from Figure 14.

| Industry | Average annual wages |
|--|----------------------|
| All Industries | \$47,095 |
| Professional, scientific, and technical services | \$68,252 |
| Finance and insurance | \$66,411 |
| Utilities | \$66,233 |
| Wholesale trade | \$63,838 |
| Public administration | \$62,676 |
| Public administration | \$62,676 |
| Manufacturing | \$55,533 |
| Real estate and rental and leasing | \$54,721 |
| Construction | \$54,132 |
| Transportation and warehousing | \$52,638 |
| Educational services | \$46,644 |
| Health care and social assistance | \$45,594 |
| Administrative and support and waste management and remediation services | \$38,944 |
| Retail trade | \$36,068 |
| Other Services (except public administration) | \$35,766 |
| Arts, entertainment, and recreation | \$25,169 |
| Accommodation and Food Services | \$20,746 |
| Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction | n/a |
| Information | n/a |
| Management of companies and enterprises | n/a |

Table 7 Average annual wages by industry in Socorro (2023)

High-wage sectors: The industries offering the highest wages in Socorro are the Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services, where the average annual wage is \$68,252. This is closely followed by Finance and Insurance at \$66,411 and Utilities at \$66,233. These sectors typically demand a high level of education and specialization. None of the industries with the highest employment for Socorro are in this category of high-wage sector.

Middle-wage sectors: Other significant economic contributors include Wholesale Trade and Public Administration, with average wages of \$63,838 and \$62,676.

²³ Bureau of Labor Statistics (2023).

Manufacturing, Real Estate, and Construction also provide robust wage offerings, ranging from approximately \$54,132 to \$55,533. Five out of the seven highest employment industries for Socorro are within this category.

Lower-wage sectors: At the lower end of the wage spectrum, Retail Trade and Other Services (except Public Administration) present more modest wages, between \$35,766 and \$36,068. Notably, the Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation sector, along with Accommodation and Food Services, are the least remunerated, with wages at \$25,169 and \$20,746, respectively. Two of the seven highest employment industries for Socorro are in this category of low-wage sectors.

Employment by occupations

In Socorro, the distribution of employment across various occupational groups provides significant insight into the dynamics and potential growth areas within the local labor market. Utilizing the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system, we can observe that the workforce is concentrated predominantly in a few key sectors. Socorro's top five occupational categories account for over half of all workers, totaling 50.2%. Leading the employment figures are Construction and extraction with 1,918 workers (12.5% of total employment), followed closely by Sales and related occupations with 1,869 workers (12.2%), Office and administrative support roles engaging 1,731 workers (11.3%), Transportation with 1,272 workers (8.3%), and Production roles which employ 934 workers (6.1%).

This concentration highlights Socorro's economic strengths, particularly in sectors like construction and sales, which drive the local economy and offer substantial employment opportunities to the community. However, while these sectors flourish, others show markedly less engagement. Specifically, occupational groups such as Farming, fishing, and forestry are barely represented, accounting for only 0.1% of the workforce. Architecture, engineering, and Life, physical, and social science have very minimal representation at 0.2% and 0.3%, respectively. This disparity in sectorial employment points to a limited diversification within the local economy. See Figure 15 for details.

Employment by occupations in Socorro, TX (2021)

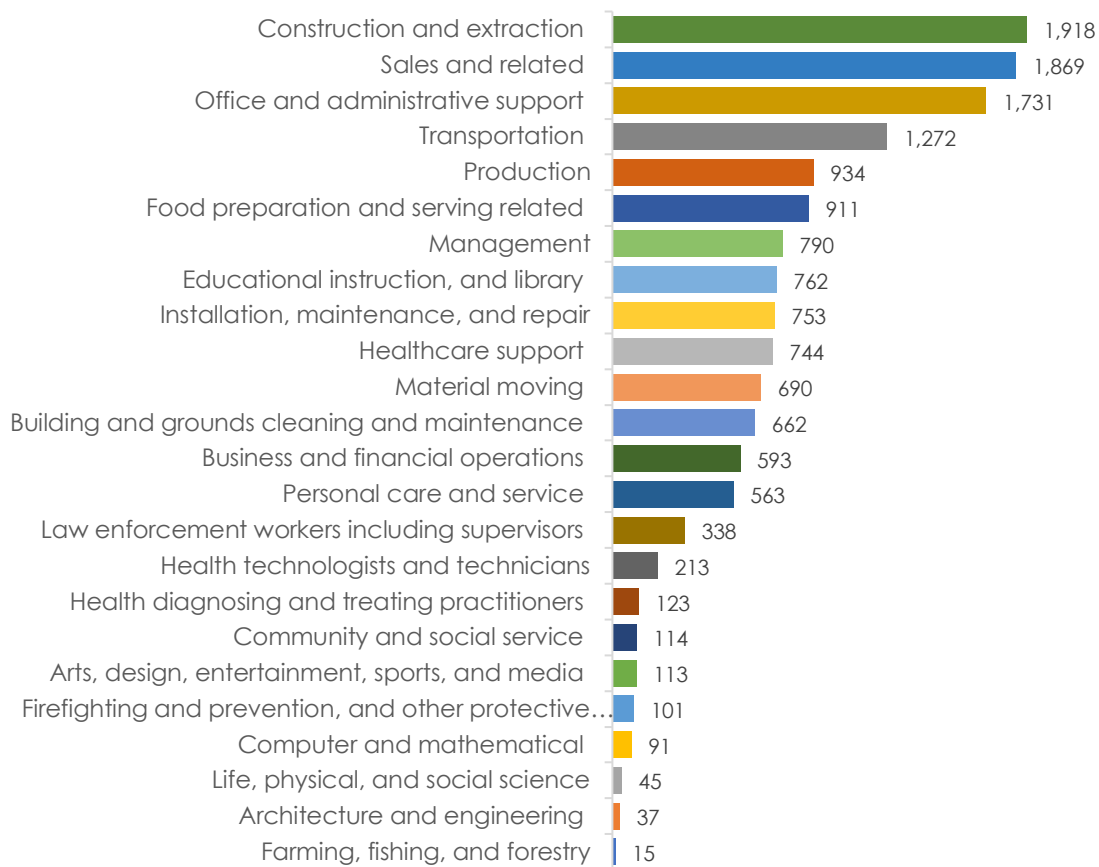


Figure 15 Employment by occupations in Socorro, TX (2021)

Employment by gender

When juxtaposed with gender distribution in the workforce, it reveals distinct patterns and disparities highlighting the roles men and women occupy in the local economy. Women are disproportionately represented in certain occupations despite making up about 47% of the workforce. For instance, there are notable gender disparities within sectors such as Construction and extraction, which employs no women, and Office and administrative support, where women significantly outnumber men with 1,224 female workers compared to 507 male workers.

Furthermore, occupations employing the majority (61%) of women in Socorro include Office and administrative support (16.9% of total employment), Sales-related (16.8%), Healthcare support (9.5%), Educational instruction and library (9.3%), and Food preparation and serving related (8.2%). These sectors alone comprise 59% of all job opportunities in the city, indicating a concentration of female employment in these areas. Meanwhile, high-paying sectors like Construction and extraction are

overwhelmingly male-dominated. See Figure 16 for details. Percentages in parenthesis for each occupation represent that occupation's total employment percentage.

Labor market by gender and occupations in Socorro, TX (2021)

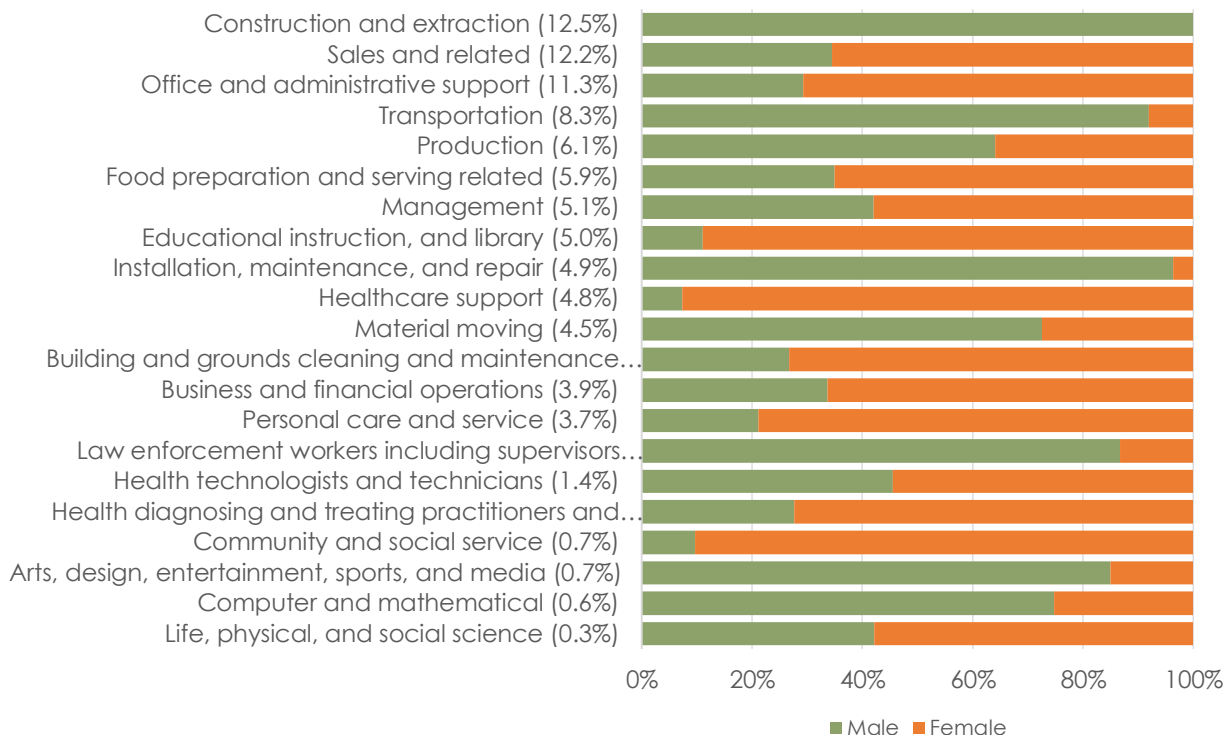


Figure 16 Labor market by gender and occupations in Socorro, TX (2021)

Economic conditions

Gross domestic product

Economic growth within regions is typically gauged using Gross Domestic Product (GDP), an essential economic indicator that reflects a geographical area's overall economic health and productivity. Specific GDP data is unavailable for smaller regions like Socorro, TX, compelling reliance on broader economic trends from nearby larger areas such as El Paso County to infer local economic conditions. Figures are presented in millions of chained 2012 dollars.

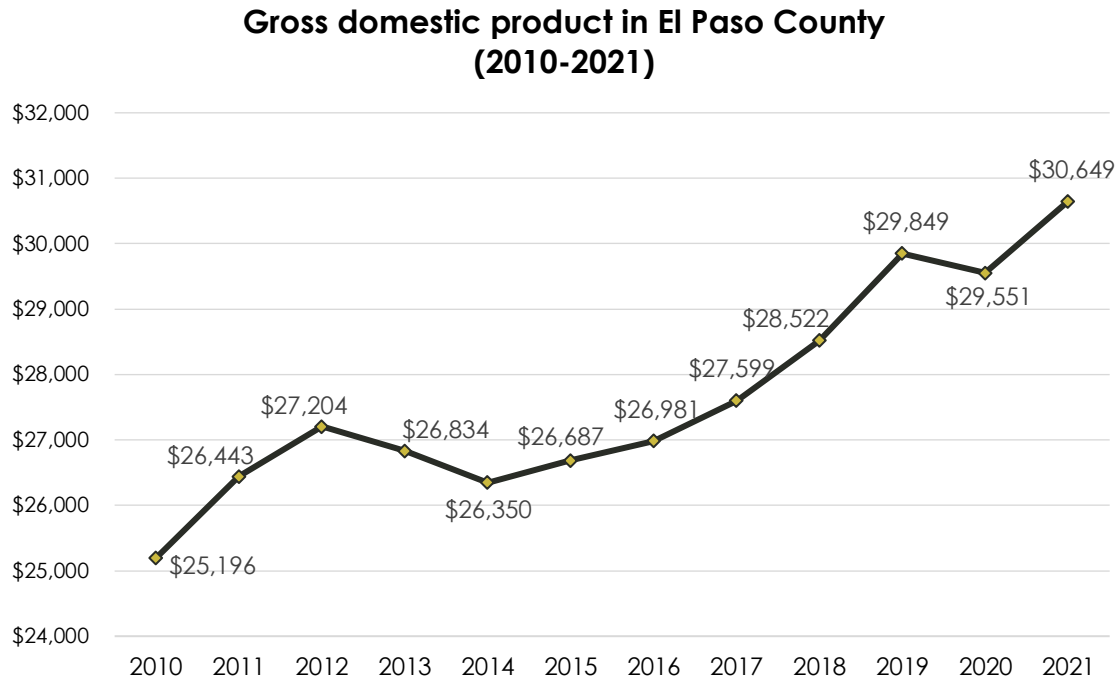


Figure 17 Gross domestic product in El Paso County (2010-2021)

El Paso County's GDP has consistently grown since 2010, with a few notable exceptions. There were declines around 2013 and 2014, during which the GDP saw a significant reduction of about 10% over two years. This downturn was followed by a gradual recovery over several subsequent years, illustrating the region's resilience and capacity to rebound from economic setbacks. A similar GDP decline occurred in 2020, attributed primarily to the global economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, mirroring the 10% drop seen in the earlier part of the decade. However, the recovery post-2020 was markedly faster than the recovery period in the 2010s. This figure assumes that Socorro's economic trends perform, if not perfectly, in close similarity to El Paso County's. See Figure 17 for details²⁴.

Gross sales tax

Gross Sales Tax revenue in Socorro provides an insightful perspective on the city's economic activity over several quarters. Throughout 2021 and into 2022, there is a clear trend of fluctuating yet generally increasing sales tax revenue. However, figures for 2023 by quarter show lower revenues for each quarter compared to 2022. Starting in the first quarters of 2021, 2022, and 2023, there was an increase in the first quarter of 2022 (\$257,030) compared to the first quarter of 2021 (\$208,234) and then a drop from the first quarter of 2022 to the first quarter of 2023 (\$228,559). For the second quarters, it was a similar pattern was captured by the data as in the first quarters, with an increase year to

²⁴ U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

year from the second quarter of 2021 (231,724) to the second quarter of 2022 (\$264,008) and a drop year to year from 2022 to 2023 (234,512). Year-to-year for the third quarter of 2021 was the highest of the three, with revenue of \$251,761 compared to \$250,085 for 2022 and \$243,085 for the third quarter of 2023. For the year-to-year fourth quarters, it is highlighted that the fourth quarter for 2022 was the highest record between the year-to-year compared to 2021 (\$274,746) and 2023 (257,550) and the highest revenue from any quarter between 2021 and 2023.

For yearly revenues, 2022 was the strongest in revenue with a total of \$1,094,313, followed by 2021 with a total of \$966,464, and lastly year 2023 with a total of \$963,706. See Figure 18 for details²⁵. This highlights the changes in consumer behavior and business performance.

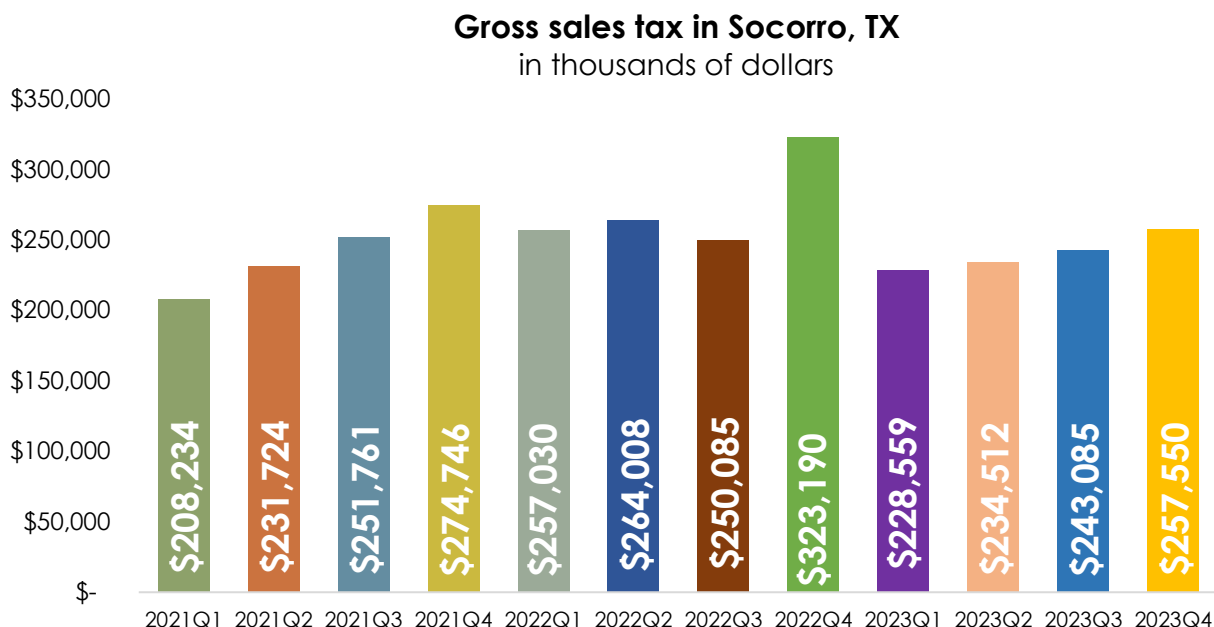


Figure 18 Gross sales tax in Socorro, TX, in thousands of dollars

A deeper dive into the composition of this revenue for the City of Socorro reveals that the retail trade and wholesale trade sectors are the primary drivers, contributing a combined majority of over 84% to the sales tax revenue. Retail Trade alone accounted for about 64.26% of the total sales tax, emphasizing its dominant role in the local economy. Wholesale Trade also significantly contributed, accounting for 20.29% of the sales tax revenue. See Figure 19 for details²⁶.

²⁵ Texas Comptroller (2021-2023), data retrieved January 25, 2024.

²⁶ Texas Comptroller (2022), data retrieved January 25, 2024.

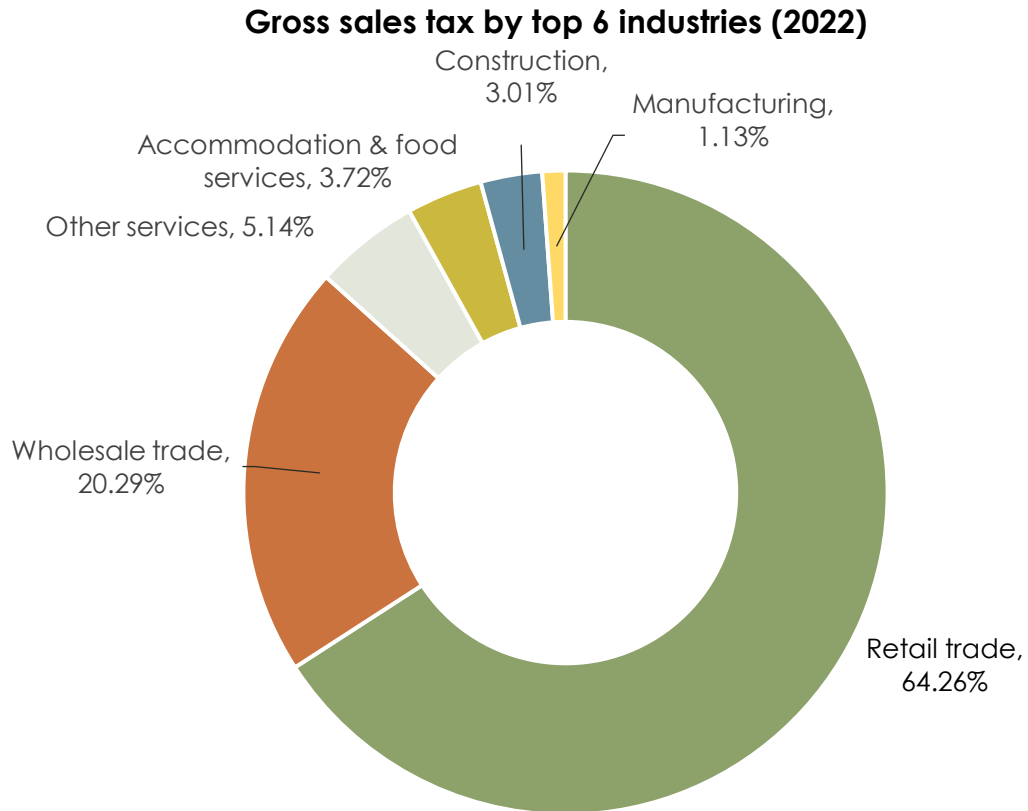


Figure 19 Gross sales tax by the top 6 industries for the four quarters of 2022

For the 2023, the retail sector increased compared to the yearly share of gross sales taxes from 2022 (from 64.26% to 68.77%), and slightly Accommodations and food services increased from 3.72 to 3.10. All other sectors experienced a decline in sales for this one quarter. Wholesale from 20.29% in 2022 to 14.64%, Other services from 5.14% to 4.90%, Construction from 3.01% to 1.01%, and manufacturing from 1.13% to 0.78%. See Figure 20 for details.

Gross sales tax by top 6 industries (2023)

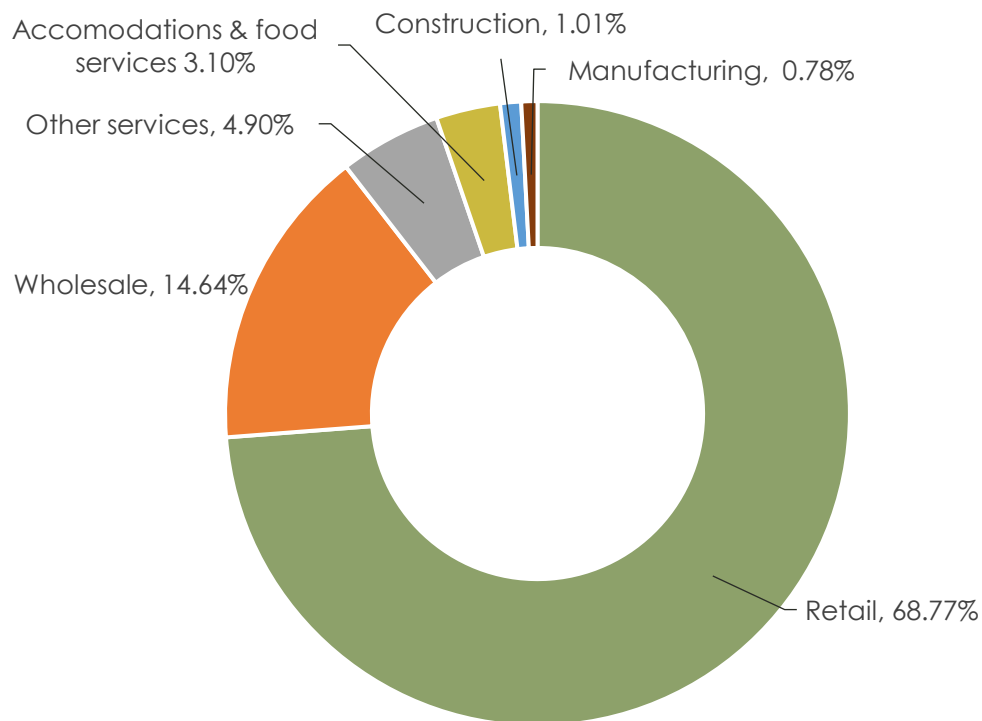


Figure 20 Gross sales tax by top 6 industries for the first quarter of 2023

Location quotient

Finally, a Location Quotient (LQ) analysis is used in parallel with evaluating the number of jobs per industry within Socorro. LQs are a crucial tool used for regional evaluation to assess the specialization of economic activities within a particular area regarding employment. By comparing local industry employment levels in Socorro to the state of Texas, LQs provide insight into the economic uniqueness of this region as it indicates that an area has proportionately more workers in a specific industry sector relative to the state. This implies that an area produces more of a product or service than area residents consume. The excess is available for export outside the area. An LQ greater than 1 may represent an industry as an exporter or excessive local demand. A high LQ in a specific industry may translate into a competitive advantage for the local economy; an LQ lower than 1 indicates a lower concentration of people employed in that industry compared to the state of Texas²⁷. The total number of jobs within Socorro per industry allows a further understanding of the size of employment in the community, regardless of the changes with respect to the state. For all details, see Table 8 and Table 9.

²⁷ Ascendo Strategies estimations with U.S. Census Bureau, 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

The strategic application of LQs in economic analysis helps to identify four categories of industry concentration and trends:

Industry clusters: Industries in this category are more concentrated than the average and are increasing in specialization. In Socorro, TX, Retail Trade is the only industry to emerge as a cluster with an LQ of 1.21. Over the past six years, employment in retail Trade has grown by 14.5%, going from an LQ of 1.06 to 1.21, indicating an increasing specialization that exceeds the state average. This growth designates Retail trade as a major player in the local economy and a potential area for further economic development and job creation. The total number of jobs in retail for 2021 was 2072.

High concentrations but declining industries: These industries include those with higher concentrations of employment compared to the state and, therefore, considered specialized but with a diminishing presence. For Socorro, these industries include utilities, transportation and warehousing construction, administrative support and waste management services, and other services. It is worth mentioning that these industries represented at least the same concentration level as retail trade in 2015, yet their decline has been significant over the last five years. Not replacing or reinforcing these industries may have a long-term negative economic effect on the local economy, especially if other industries do not increase their employment levels to have a net balance in employment.

When looking at these industries by number of jobs, construction is the largest, with 1,903 jobs for 2021, followed by 1,357 for transportation and warehousing. Even though utilities grew in LQ compared to the state, the number of jobs has remained constant within Socorro.

Pre-emergent industries: Industries here have a smaller employment level than the state level but are becoming more so over time. These industries are progressing to become more significant to the region's economic base, and they can potentially move into the "pre-emergent" sectors. Under this category, Socorro has Public Administration with a growth of 34.2% in the period considered, and its continued growth is dependent on public investment. As for accommodation and food services, the wholesale trade industry is slightly above the LQ of 1. However, their growth has been significant, especially for wholesale trade, with a 75.6% growth. These two industries represent promising industry clusters characterized by high concentration and expansion. Lastly, within the pre-emergent category, there are four additional industries as an opportunity for medium to long-term potential industry clusters: educational services; health care and social assistance; arts, entertainment, and recreation; and agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting.

In terms of jobs, the top largest industries within this category are healthcare and social assistance, with a total number of jobs of 1,810, followed by educational services, 1,460, and accommodation and food services, 1,199. While agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting have increased the number of jobs, the figure is small, accounting for 59 jobs in 2021.

Lower concentrations and declining industries: Industries in this category have a lower level of employment regionally and compared to the state while also experiencing a decline in employment. For Socorro, these include manufacturing, mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction; real estate and rental and leasing; information; finance and insurance; and professional, scientific, and technical services.

When assessing these industries by number of jobs, manufacturing is a major employer with 1,015, even with a decline from 1,096 employed in 2015. The rest of the industries are relatively smaller.

| Industries | 2015 LQ | 2021 LQ | Classification | Specific notes |
|--|---------|---------|---------------------------------|---|
| Retail trade | 1.06 | 1.21 | Industry cluster | Promising industry cluster consolidation |
| Utilities | 2.53 | 2.04 | High-concentrated but declining | - |
| Transportation and warehousing | 1.69 | 1.65 | | - |
| Construction | 1.44 | 1.42 | | - |
| Administrative and support and waste management services | 1.20 | 1.04 | | - |
| Other services | 1.20 | 1.10 | | - |
| Public administration | 0.96 | 1.29 | Pre-emergent industries | Growth is contingent on continued public investment |
| Accommodation and food services | 0.96 | 1.07 | | Promising industry cluster, characterized by high concentration and expansion |
| Wholesale trade | 0.59 | 1.04 | | Medium to long-term opportunities as industry clusters |
| Educational services | 0.95 | 0.99 | | |
| Health care and social assistance | 0.93 | 0.97 | | |
| Arts, entertainment, and recreation | 0.57 | 0.66 | | |
| Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting | 0.39 | 0.49 | | |
| Manufacturing | 0.98 | 0.77 | Declining | - |
| Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction | 0.85 | 0.74 | | - |
| Real estate and rental and leasing | 0.82 | 0.68 | | - |
| Information | 0.66 | 0.65 | | - |
| Finance and insurance | 0.57 | 0.33 | | - |
| Professional, scientific, and technical services | 0.56 | 0.37 | | - |

Table 8 Location quotients for Socorro, 2015 to 2021

| Industries | Number of jobs 2015 | Number of jobs 2021 | Employment growth (2015- 2021) |
|--|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Retail trade | 1501 | 2072 | 38% |
| Utilities | 288 | 287 | 0% |
| Transportation and warehousing | 933 | 1357 | 45% |
| Construction | 1377 | 1903 | 38% |
| Administrative and support and waste management services | 674 | 713 | 6% |
| Other services, except public administration | 782 | 846 | 8% |
| Public administration | 505 | 820 | 62% |
| Accommodation and food services | 869 | 1199 | 38% |
| Wholesale trade | 218 | 434 | 99% |
| Educational services | 1120 | 1460 | 30% |
| Health care and social assistance | 1353 | 1810 | 34% |
| Arts, entertainment, and recreation | 102 | 149 | 46% |
| Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting | 44 | 59 | 34% |
| Manufacturing | 1096 | 1015 | -7% |
| Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction | 252 | 225 | -11% |
| Real estate and rental and leasing | 194 | 213 | 10% |
| Information | 143 | 165 | 15% |
| Finance and insurance | 320 | 242 | -24% |
| Professional, scientific, and technical services | 436 | 413 | -5% |

Table 9 Number of jobs by industry for Socorro, 2015 to 2021

Poverty profile

The poverty profile analyzes the population that lives under the poverty line by specific characteristics, including gender, age, ethnicity, educational attainment, and employment. In 2021, 12% of the U.S. population lived in poverty, with Texas having a slightly higher rate at 14%. When evaluating this data point for El Paso County, it fared worse than Texas, with 19.3%. For Socorro, TX, it was even more critical, with 23.3% of its population living in poverty.

The share of the population living below the poverty line in Socorro varies considerably across different demographic profiles: age, gender, and ethnicity.

By age groups: The most affected demographic by poverty in Socorro are those under 18, with a poverty rate of 27.9%, signaling significant financial hardship among children and teenagers. Similarly, seniors 65 and older also face a high poverty rate of 26.7%, underscoring the need for robust support systems for both the youngest and oldest in the community. Young adults and working-age adults also grapple with poverty at rates of 22.9% and 19.5%, respectively.

By gender: Both males and females experience higher poverty rates than their counterparts in El Paso County, with males seeing a 3-percentage point difference and females having a 5-percentage point difference. Within Socorro itself, the differences between genders showed a disparity between males and females, with females experiencing a higher poverty rate of 26.1% compared to males at 20.1%. This gender gap points to deeper layers of vulnerability among women in Socorro.

Ethnic disparities: Racial and ethnic disparities also play a critical role, with Hispanics—who make up the majority of the population—experiencing a higher poverty rate of 23.6%, compared to 17.7% for Whites. This suggests persistent economic challenges within the predominant demographic group, emphasizing the need for culturally sensitive economic policies that address these inequalities. See Figure 21 for details.

Furthermore, the data suggests a clear connection between educational attainment and poverty rates, underscoring education as a pivotal factor in economic stability. Individuals with a bachelor's degree or higher experienced a significantly lower poverty rate of 6.8 percent, compared to a staggering 31.1% among those without a high school diploma. This trend highlights the critical role of education in reducing poverty and suggests a strategic focus on enhancing educational access and quality to lift individuals out of economic hardship.

Lastly, the type of employment and its link to poverty are evaluated, as employment typically reduces poverty levels within communities. Among the 922 unemployed individuals residing in the City of Socorro, 49.8% live in poverty. Among the 15,485 employed individuals, 15.5% are also grappling with poverty. Unfortunately, when breaking poverty figures for employment type, 8.1% of people with a full-time job live in poverty, while those working part-time are 32.9%. While the trends for all categories evaluated here are similar between Socorro and El Paso County, the poverty level for each of the three categories presented under educational attainment, employment status, and type of employment breakdown suffer higher poverty rates in Socorro than those in El Paso County. See Figure 22 for details.

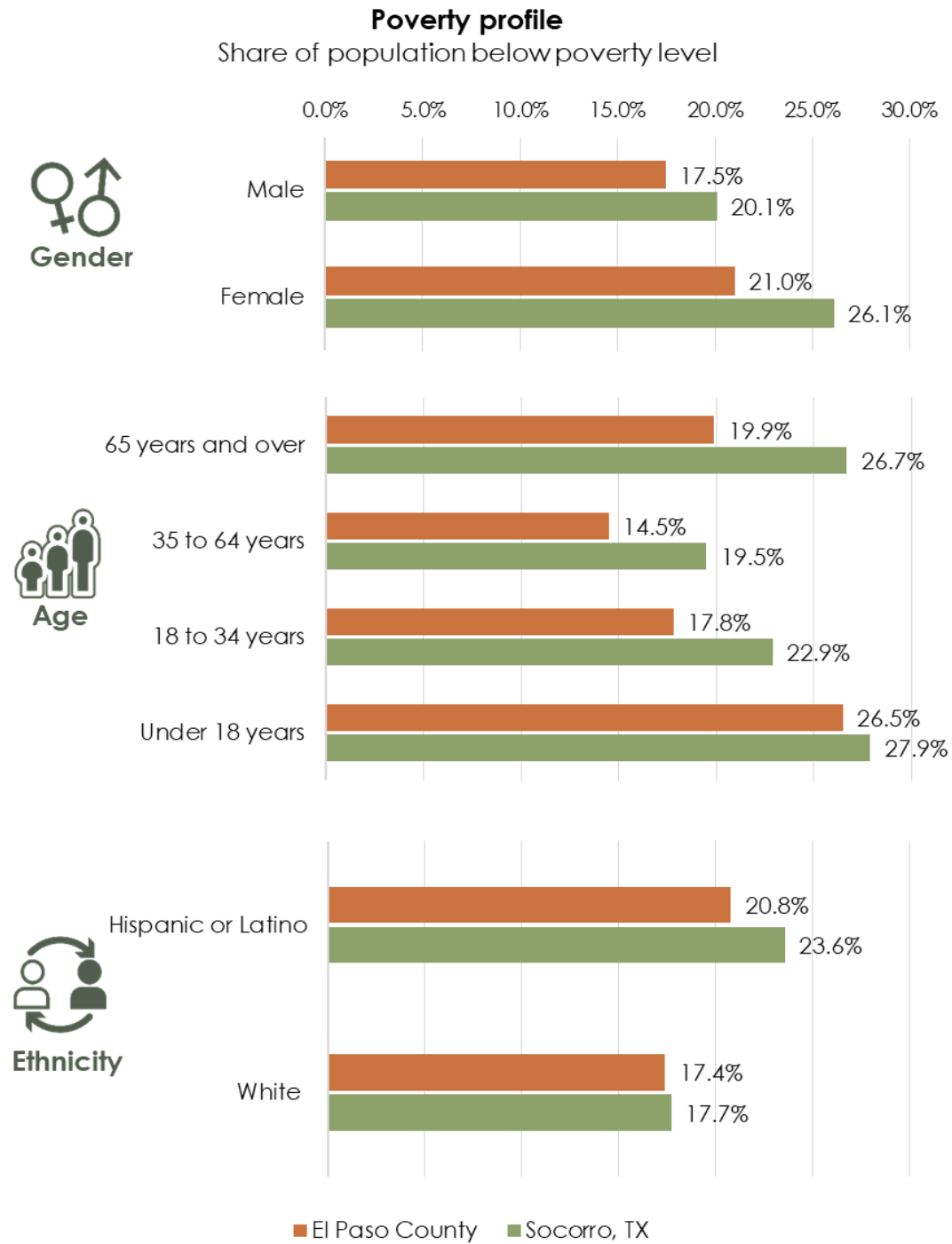


Figure 21 Poverty profile by gender, age, and ethnicity

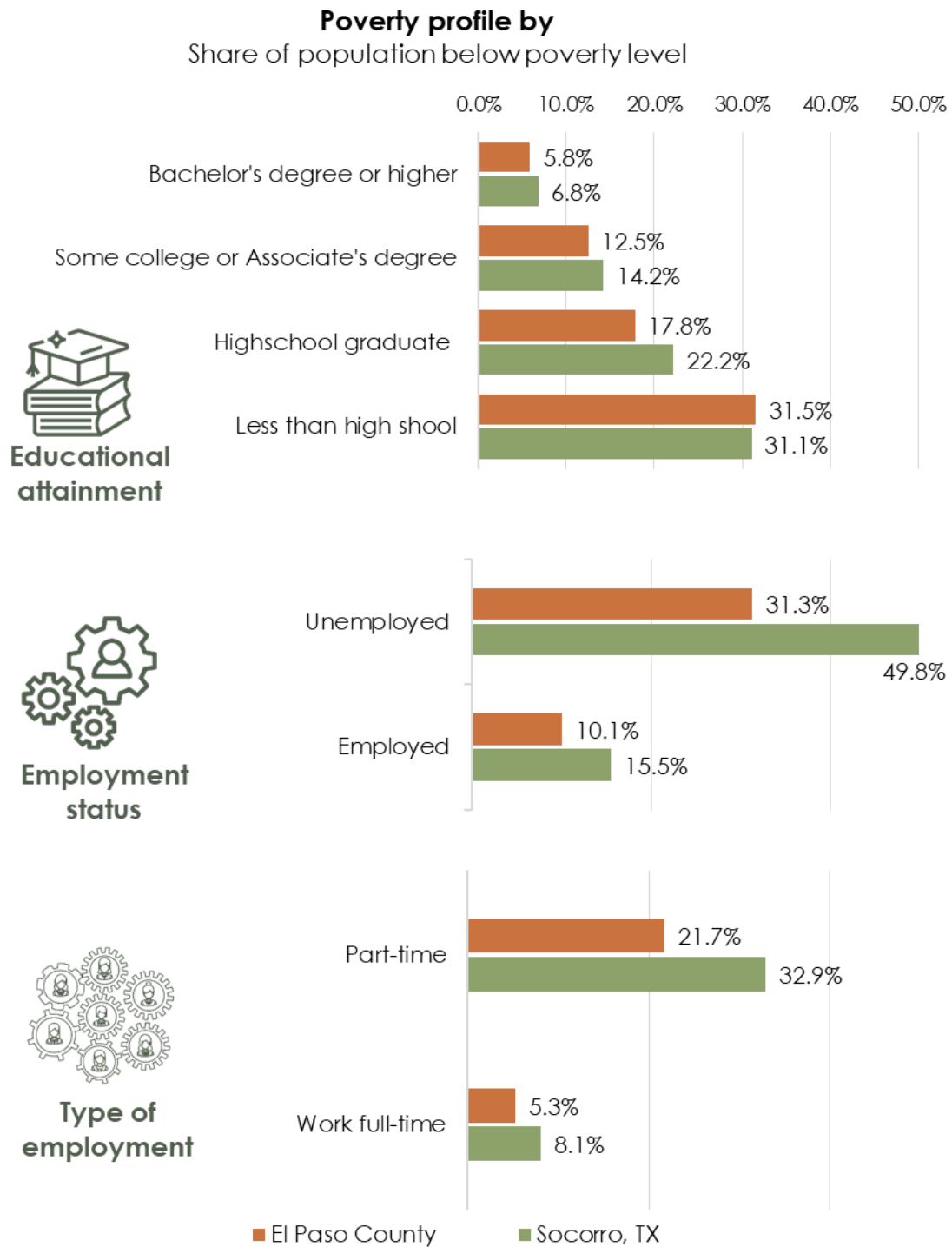


Figure 22 Poverty profile by educational attainment, employment status and type of employment



Target industries and their occupations

Target industries

Given the data presented in the community profile and in consideration of public input support, the recommended target industries are:

- ▶ Transportation and warehousing
- ▶ Construction
- ▶ Manufacturing
- ▶ Educational services
- ▶ Healthcare and social assistance
- ▶ Retail trade
- ▶ Accommodations and food services
- ▶ Tourism²⁸

These eight industries resulted from a comprehensive analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. Table 10 captures the quantitative data highlighting location quotients (LQ) to identify specialized areas, correlating with the number of jobs created by each industry and the average annual wage.

| Industries | 2015 | | 2021 | | Average annual wage |
|--|------|------|-----------|------|---------------------|
| | LQ | | # of jobs | | |
| Transportation and warehousing** | 1.69 | 1.65 | 933 | 1357 | \$ 52,638 |
| Construction** | 1.44 | 1.42 | 1377 | 1903 | \$ 54,132 |
| Educational services** | 0.95 | 0.99 | 1120 | 1460 | \$ 46,644 |
| Healthcare and social assistance** | 0.93 | 0.97 | 1353 | 1810 | \$ 45,594 |
| Manufacturing** | 0.98 | 0.77 | 1096 | 1015 | \$ 55,533 |
| Retail trade | 1.06 | 1.21 | 1501 | 2072 | \$ 36,068 |
| Accommodation and food services | 0.96 | 1.07 | 869 | 1199 | \$ 20,746 |
| Tourism | - | - | - | - | - |
| ** Priority for WSB and part of "2024 Hot jobs Borderplex" | | | | | |

Table 10 Target industries characteristics

While transportation and warehousing, and construction are noted as having high concentrations but declining, these two industries are a crucial source of jobs in the community.

Similarly, the number of jobs and its close concentration to an LQ of 1 in 2015 were the key factors in selecting manufacturing, even when it was noted as a declining industry. For construction and manufacturing, it is critical to highlight that outside retail and

²⁸ *Note: While tourism is not a NAICS industry, it will still be presented as a desired area of focus with potential.

wholesale (representing over 84% of total gross sales taxes for Socorro, these two industries are the largest contributors to gross sales taxes, with 3.01% and 1.13%, respectively. See Figure 19 for the total gross sales taxes for Socorro.

While utilities, administrative and support, and waste management services appeared to be high-concentration but declining industries, the number of jobs was limited. Lastly, public administration was not included in the list even as a pre-emergent industry, given that it depends on public investment. See Table 8 for details.

Also, as marked in asterisk (*) in Table 10, five of the eight industries meet the preferential criteria included in WSB 2024 Hot Jobs – Transportation and warehousing, construction, educational services, healthcare and social assistance, and manufacturing. Lower wages for retail, accommodation and food services, and tourism-related occupations are one of the primary reasons for these industries not to meet these criteria as presented in Table 7 capturing the average annual wages by industry in Socorro. The following section, “target occupation,” covers further detail on this.

Target occupations

With the target industries, the next step was to consider the occupations within these target industries.²⁹ Some examples captured in

| Industries | Including occupations such as: |
|--|--|
| Transportation and warehousing** | Shipping, receiving, and inventory clerks; stockers and order fillers, database architects; supply chain managers; transportation engineers and planners; light truck drivers, and transportation, storage, and distribution managers. |
| Construction** | Construction laborers and managers; helpers, construction trades; carpenters; surveyors; construction and related workers; electricians; electrical engineers; mobile heavy equipment mechanics, civil engineers*. |
| Educational services** | Educational, guidance, career counselors and advisors; education administrators; instructional coordinators; teaching assistants, Pre-K through secondary school; adult basic education; community health workers; chief executives. |
| Health care and social assistance** | Social and human service assistants, social workers, personal care aides, home health aides, middle school teachers, and health informatics specialists. |
| Manufacturing** | Supply chain managers; industrial engineers; sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing, and technical and scientific products; industrial engineering technologists and technicians. |

²⁹ Utilizing O*NET OnLine as a matching source, which is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor and Employment & Training Administration.

| | |
|--|---|
| Retail trade | Wholesale and retail buyers, retail sales workers, sales managers, online merchants, and purchasing agents. |
| Accommodation and food services | Food preparation workers; food scientists and technologists; cooks, fast food; business operations specialists; first-line supervisors of food preparation and serving workers; bartender helpers; waiter and waitresses. |
| Tourism* | Concierges, lodging managers, entertainment attendants, bakers, baristas, cooks, food worker preparations, travel agents and guides, tour guides and escorts |

Table 11, is exemplified by the wide variety of occupations within each industry.

| Industries | Including occupations such as: |
|--|--|
| Transportation and warehousing** | Shipping, receiving, and inventory clerks; stockers and order fillers, database architects; supply chain managers; transportation engineers and planners; light truck drivers, and transportation, storage, and distribution managers. |
| Construction** | Construction laborers and managers; helpers, construction trades; carpenters; surveyors; construction and related workers; electricians; electrical engineers; mobile heavy equipment mechanics, civil engineers*. |
| Educational services** | Educational, guidance, career counselors and advisors; education administrators; instructional coordinators; teaching assistants, Pre-K through secondary school; adult basic education; community health workers; chief executives. |
| Health care and social assistance** | Social and human service assistants, social workers, personal care aides, home health aides, middle school teachers, and health informatics specialists. |
| Manufacturing** | Supply chain managers; industrial engineers; sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing, and technical and scientific products; industrial engineering technologists and technicians. |
| Retail trade | Wholesale and retail buyers, retail sales workers, sales managers, online merchants, and purchasing agents. |
| Accommodation and food services | Food preparation workers; food scientists and technologists; cooks, fast food; business operations specialists; first-line supervisors of food preparation and serving workers; bartender helpers; waiter and waitresses. |
| Tourism* | Concierges, lodging managers, entertainment attendants, bakers, baristas, cooks, food worker preparations, travel agents and guides, tour guides and escorts |

Table 11 Target industries and examples of occupations by industry

*Tourism is not a NAICS code industry. Occupations under tourism are based on career pathways along lodging, recreation, restaurants and food/beverage services, and travel and tourism.

Acknowledging two factors -that even within higher average-paying industries, wages specific to occupation may vary broadly and that even when occupations are high paying, availability of jobs will determine the real opportunity- further evaluation to narrow down was done to highlight feasible opportunities for implementation. Utilizing the priority occupations for the Workforce Solutions Borderplex (WSB), the occupations highlighted in Table 12 are those that match target industries for Socorro and are included in “WSB 2024 Hot Jobs”³⁰. The occupations listed in the “WSB 2024 Hot Jobs” meet three crucial criteria to place job seekers for success:

- ▶ 10% or more growth over ten years
- ▶ \$17.24 or more per hour entry wage
- ▶ 20 or more annual job openings




WSB is one of Texas's 28 public workforce development boards, serving the six-county Borderplex region - El Paso, Hudspeth, Culberson, Jeff Davis, Presidio, and Brewster counties. “WSB functions as a nonprofit opportunity incubator, personalizing the career path and connecting the right people to the right positions”³¹.
















Table 12 also has a particular category titled the “hottest” jobs that represent jobs both - in top wage quartiles and entry wages at or above \$17.24. The “hottest” jobs are highlighted in yellow and marked with a “fire” icon - 🔥 - as part of their description.

In addition to the opportunities within El Paso County presented in the WSB and given the opportunities within the regional context for Socorro, occupations in the rural counties also served by WSB - Hudspeth, Culberson, Jeff Davis, Presidio, and Brewster – were also included. Only in some instances did the occupations coincide to be a “hot job” in both El Paso County and the rural counties. It is important to highlight that the same occupation may have different hourly entry and experience wages based on the location. See section “Rural neighboring counties” in Table 12 for details.

³⁰ WSB 2024 Hot Jobs, <https://borderplexjobs.com/jobseekers/hot-jobs>

³¹ Borderplex mission, vision, and values, <https://borderplexjobs.com/about-us/mission-vision-and-values>

| Workforce Solutions Borderplex 2024 Hot jobs | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|------------|--|--------------|----------------------------|---|------------|------------------|--------------|
| 10% or more growth over 10 years | | | \$17.24 or more per hour entry wage | | | | | | |
| 20 or more annual job openings | | |  Hottest jobs are in top wage quartiles and entry wages are at or above \$17.24 | | | | | | |
| El Paso County | | | | | Rural neighboring counties | | | | |
| Hot | Occupation | Entry wage | Experienced wage | Job openings | Hot | Occupation | Entry wage | Experienced wage | Job openings |
| Industry classification: Transportation and warehousing | | | | | | | | | |
|  | Logisticians | 19.93 | 38.76 | 66 | | | | | |
| | | | | | | Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers | 16.11 | 29.36 | 371 |
| | | | | | | Bus Truck Mechanis and Diesel Engine Specialist | 16.98 | 30.07 | 97 |
| Industry classification: Construction | | | | | | | | | |
|  | Civil engineers | 23.21 | 41.89 | 45 | | | | | |
| | Security and Fire Alarm Systems Installers | 16.41 | 33.04 | 33 | | | | | |
| | Operating and Other Construction Equipment Operators | 15.17 | 21.87 | 120 | | | | | |
| | Electricians | 15.42 | 25.23 | 232 | | Electricians | 18.04 | 31.35 | 53 |
| | Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters | 15.31 | 26.36 | 115 | | | | | |
| | Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers | 15.47 | 24.53 | 132 | | Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers | 15.96 | 28.75 | 29 |
| | | | | | | Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators | 18.03 | 25.89 | 53 |
| | | | | | | Control and Valve Installers and Repairers, Except Mechanical Door | 19.94 | 37.81 | 28 |
| | | | | | | Water and Wastewater Treatment Plant and System Operators | 16.22 | 22.98 | 28 |
| | | | | | | Wellhead Pumpers | 25.27 | 45.65 | 60 |

| El Paso County | | | | | Rural neighboring counties | | | | |
|---|---|------------|------------------|--------------|---|---|------------|------------------|--------------|
| Hot | Occupation | Entry wage | Experienced wage | Job openings | Hot | Occupation | Entry wage | Experienced wage | Job openings |
| Industry classification: Educational services | | | | | | | | | |
| | Career/Technical Education Teachers, Postsecondary | 15.91 | 40.19 | 30 |  | Career/Technical Education Teachers, Postsecondary | 23.59 | 45.33 | 142 |
|  | Preschool/Kindergarten Teachers, Except Special Education | 23.52 | 28.73 | 59 | | | | | |
|  | Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education | 23.46 | 28.57 | 314 |  | Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education | 24.05 | 31.49 | 23 |
|  | Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education | 23.5 | 28.84 | 178 | | | | | |
|  | Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education | 23.84 | 29.57 | 272 | | | | | |
|  | Special Education Teachers, Kindergarten and Elementary School | 24.37 | 28.87 | 30 | | | | | |
|  | Special Education Teachers, Secondary School | 23.8 | 28.4 | 28 | | | | | |
| | | | | |  | Psychologists | 29.92 | 37.37 | 41 |
| Industry classification: Manufacturing | | | | | | | | | |
|  | Electrical Engineers | 27.61 | 47.28 | 12 |  | Electrical Engineers | 31.42 | 59.62 | 44 |
|  | Industrial Engineers | 25.76 | 45.11 | 26 |  | Industrial Engineers | 34.52 | 58.2 | 35 |
| | Industrial Machinery Mechanics | 15.72 | 25.89 | 54 | | | | | |
| | Electrical and Electronics Repairers, Commercial and Industrial Equipment | 15.17 | 26.48 | 21 | | Electrical and Electronics Repairers, Commercial and Industrial Equipment | 19.21 | 36.91 | 33 |
| | | | | |  | Mechanical Engineers | 30.27 | 55.01 | 31 |
| | | | | |  | Electronics Engineers, Except Computer | 37.45 | 61.94 | 22 |




















| El Paso County | | | | | Rural neighboring counties | | | | |
|---|--|------------|------------------|--------------|---|---|------------|------------------|--------------|
| Hot | Occupation | Entry wage | Experienced wage | Job openings | Hot | Occupation | Entry wage | Experienced wage | Job openings |
| Industry classification: Health care and social assistance | | | | | | | | | |
|  | Occupational Health and Safety Specialists | 19.11 | 36.06 | 22 |  | Occupational Health and Safety Specialists | 21.09 | 42.02 | 55 |
|  | Respiratory Therapists | 25.27 | 33.81 | 35 |  | Respiratory Therapists | 28.99 | 37.3 | 60 |
|  | Registered Nurses | 27.95 | 40.57 | 469 |  | Registered Nurses | 32.27 | 44.55 | 828 |
|  | Dental Hygienists | 28.33 | 37.17 | 14 | | | | | |
|  | Radiologic Technologists and Technicians | 23.89 | 33.88 | 48 |  | Radiologic Technologists and Technicians | 26.79 | 37.85 | 176 |
|  | Surgical Technologists | 18.09 | 26.27 | 27 |  | Surgical Technologists | 16.46 | 26.63 | 169 |
|  | Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses | 19.27 | 24.81 | 196 |  | Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses | 21.73 | 28.04 | 71 |
|  | Medical Dosimetrists, Medical Records Specialists, and Health Technologists and Technicians, All Other | 45.53 | 61.2 | 112 | | | | | |
| | Child, Family, and School Social Workers | 16.15 | 25.71 | 41 | | | | | |
| | Healthcare Social Workers | 16.86 | 30.58 | 45 | | | | | |
| | Health Education Specialists | 15.96 | 28.65 | 26 | | | | | |
| | Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors | 15.11 | 26.27 | 51 | | | | | |
| | Physical Therapist Assistants | 20.98 | 36.2 | 38 | | Physical Therapist Assistants | | | |
| | Occupational Therapy Assistants | 18.35 | 34.81 | 21 |  | Occupational Therapy Assistants | 31.65 | 59.9 | 64 |
| | | | | |  | Physician assistants | 51.2 | 74.19 | 47 |
| | | | | |  | Diagnostic Medical Sonographers | 29.42 | 44.45 | 40 |
| | | | | |  | Medical and Clinical Laboratory Technologists | 17.76 | 33.17 | 72 |
| | | | | |  | Magnetic Resonance Imaging Technologists | 30.18 | 42.94 | 24 |
| | | | | | | Cardiovascular Technologists and Technicians | 16.46 | 29.71 | 199 |

Table 12 2024 WSB Hot jobs for selected industries for Socorro

Appendix 6 Highlights of the Mission Trail Comprehensive Plan for El Paso County

In 2019, a comprehensive plan (MTCP) was completed for the entire Mission Trail within the El Paso County, covering the three missions: Ysleta Mission, Socorro Mission, and Presidio Chapel of San Elizario. This section provides a summary specific to its content relevant to Socorro. The MTCP was utilized as an additional source of information to advise Socorro on the strategic plan for economic recovery in the areas of tourism and retail.

The 2019 comprehensive plan was created around five big ideas with more specific objectives each:

1. Create complete centers around each mission and chapel.
 - a. Live, work, and play in the Mission Valley.
 - b. Encourage each community's unique identity.
 - c. Support existing destinations.
2. Protect and enhance historic assets and agricultural landscapes.
 - a. Document historical assets, landscapes & artifacts.
 - b. Protect historical assets.
 - c. Preserve agricultural assets.
3. Add destinations and events.
 - a. Destinations and events in each community
 - b. Common links to destinations
4. Add trails and improve streets to connect the Mission Valley.
 - a. Add trails along the historic irrigation canals and Socorro Road.
 - b. Improve the mobility of the commuting network.
5. Expand the economic base and identify funding sources.
 - a. Create a Mission Valley alliance.
 - b. Coordinate existing funding sources.
 - c. Seek additional funding sources.
 - d. Establish public improvement districts.

Socorro, Texas, has embraced a unique rural character and rich agricultural heritage, highlighted by the Rio Vista Farm and the Bracero community. This identity was the basis for the recommendations provided for Socorro in the Plan, emphasizing the promotion of organic farming, local food shops, and agriculture-related tourism as key components of its economic development. Below is a summary of the areas recommended.

► Enhancing existing destinations

Improving public streets, encouraging private infill development, and incorporating public art can attract visitors and strengthen connections to existing destinations. A significant proposal involves developing a visitor-friendly placita near Apodaca and Socorro Roads. This new hub, surrounded by homes and businesses, aimed to create a walkable area that links the historic Socorro Mission with the town's commercial and residential zones.

► Adding new destinations and events

Creating new attractions such as farm stands, botanical gardens, local coffee shops, and restaurants to enhance Socorro's rural charm and provide new amenities for residents and visitors. Leveraging the large vacant area near Apodaca and Socorro Roads offers significant potential for infill developments.

► Enhancing Socorro Road

Public art installations, strategic signage, and themed plantings along Socorro Road are recommended to create a unified and attractive corridor that enhances the visitor experience. Given Socorro Road's role as the main access route between communities, enhancing it with markers, signage, and public art can unify Ysleta, Socorro, and San Elizario, providing visitors with a coherent and inviting experience. A trail network for hiking, biking, and horse riding, utilizing historic irrigation canals and ditch banks, is proposed to expand connections across the Valley, increase mobility options, and promote recreational activities.

► Improving access and visibility

Plans include installing billboards along I-10 to highlight the Mission Trail and adding prominent signage at the 375 off-ramps at Alameda and Carl Longuemare Roads to direct people to Socorro Road and the Mission Trail area. Enhanced corridor signage on Socorro Road, similar to those in Kern Place and Manhattan Heights, is also recommended to increase visibility and effectively guide visitors.

► Preserving agricultural assets

Efforts are being made to reestablish farms, orchards, and community gardens amidst commercial and residential developments. Promoting crop rotations and supporting smaller, productive farms that use natural resources wisely can help preserve farmland and grow the local economy. This approach sustains the area's agricultural heritage while encouraging the production of specialty crops that require less water and space, yielding high-value products.

► Supporting small organic farms and specialty crops

This specialized industry, including crops such as verdolagas, squash, quinoa, and various dye crops, aligns with the Mission Valley's historical agricultural practices. Financial assistance, tax incentives, and providing plant material and training can

incentivize the growth of specialty crops on small parcels. These initiatives can help feed the local population with healthy foods and create opportunities for exporting commodities to other markets.

- ▶ Promoting tourism and retail development

A single branded marketing vision for all entities along the Mission Trail can increase exposure to local visitors and tourists. This strategy should highlight the area's unique attractions and cultural heritage, encouraging more people to visit and explore the Mission Valley.

- ▶ Advocating for commercial and retail business development

Encouraging the establishment of businesses that complement the community's agricultural and cultural heritage to create a diverse and resilient economic base. Promoting local coffee shops, restaurants, bed and breakfasts, and retail shops to enhance the visitor experience and provide new opportunities for residents.

- ▶ Creating a Mission Valley Alliance

This proposed alliance would coordinate existing funding sources and seek additional funding for various projects. By bringing together property owners, business representatives, tenants, and community leaders, the alliance can manage a special assessment fund aimed at making improvements within the Mission Trail area.

- ▶ Expanding the trail network and improving pedestrian amenities

Periodically closing off sections of Socorro Road or other side streets to vehicular traffic to encourage walking, biking, and other non-motorized activities. Street trees, protected lanes, and even surfaces to create a more inviting environment for residents and visitors to explore the Mission Trail. Completing the Paso del Norte Trail system to enhance the regional connectivity further, allowing people to walk or bike along a designated pathway from San Elizario to downtown El Paso, UTEP, and the border with New Mexico.

- ▶ Promoting physical activity and community health

Increasing physical activity through regular events and races along Socorro Road to promote community health and provide economic opportunities. Supporting local vendors and small businesses in creating community gardens and farmers' markets can enhance local food production and economic activity.