

**SECTION 1:      SUMMARY**

**1.1      ESTABLISHMENT OF THE EXTRATERRITORIAL ZONE (ETZ)**

The New Mexico State Legislature enacted a state statute that allows any municipal governing body or the board of county commissioners of any county to create Extraterritorial Zoning areas around cities. The state law allows for such joint planning in areas outside unincorporated cities. In 1989, the City of Las Cruces and Doña Ana County established an Extraterritorial Zone for joint city and county planning, zoning and subdivision approval. Joint planning is necessary due to the rapid suburban growth outside cities and the relative ease with which cities can annex land.

**1.2      ADMINISTRATION OF ETZ ZONING REGULATIONS**

The Doña Ana County Community Development Department administers the Las Cruces Extraterritorial Zoning Ordinance which regulates the size and type of land use permitted within a described zone. The current zoning ordinance was last revised in 1996. The Code was adopted pursuant to the authority set forth in the New Mexico State Statutes 1978, Section 3-21-3 and 3-21-4, as amended. The Extraterritorial Zoning Authority and the Extraterritorial Zoning Commission oversee the development of all private property located within the boundaries of ETZ.

The Extraterritorial Zone’s Development Standards are shown in Chart 1: Extraterritorial Development Standards (See Appendix D to view Map 14: Generalized ETZ Zoning Land Use Map). The zoning ordinance requires a “special use permit” in addition to zoning approval for many types of commercial and industrial uses, as well as for accessory dwellings (living quarters). The ordinance states that when land is transferred from federal or state ownership, it automatically receives a zoning designation of ECN-1 (Public Conservation). Only agriculture and site-built homes on a minimum lot size of five (5) acres are permitted. The property owner may request a zone change for other uses.

**1.3      ETZ BOUNDARIES**

Doña Ana County – City of Las Cruces Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) is located at the junction of Interstate 10 and Interstate 25. The City of Las Cruces serves as the regional center for Southern New Mexico. The Extraterritorial Zone (ETZ) extends five miles out, in all directions, from the corporate limits of the City of Las Cruces. The ETZ contains approximately 17,549 parcels, 219,445.3 acres or 342.88 square miles, with a mix of suburban and urban uses, industrial and agribusiness, rural uses and agriculture as well as undeveloped lands. In 1998, the ETZ’s population was estimated to be 57,000 persons.

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**1.4                      PROFILE OF THE ETZ COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

The ETZ Commission, the ETZ Authority, consultants from GeoStat, Inc., professional staff and residents who reside within the boundaries of the ETZ committed their time and effort to the process of developing the comprehensive plan. Public hearings and workshops were held, interviews were conducted, studies were undertaken and the preparation of numerous preliminary drafts of the plan contributed to the current version. The meetings and workshops that the ETZ Commission hosted (May through October of 1999) were held at five locations (O► ate High School, Picacho Elementary School, Do► a Ana Community Center, Clyde Tombaugh Elementary School and Fairacres Elementary School).

The comprehensive plan is intended to be used as a tool for identifying areas of concern and to express definite policies that would be designed to aid in future decision-making. Although the order of priority differed among the participants, the outcome of the meetings and workshops resulted in the creation of a list of concerns, which are addressed in Section 3 of the plan. The goals themselves provide a direction for the ETZ's actions, and the policies are statements of intent that, when implemented, accomplish the goals. Overall, the plan is intended to serve as a guideline for revising the ETZ's zoning ordinance and subdivision code.

The format of the Comprehensive Plan is comprised of three (3) sections: Section 1: Summary; Section 2: ETZ Characteristics; and, Section 3: Goals and Objectives. Each section of the ETZ Comprehensive Plan contains elements that provide supportive documentation in the form of text, tables and maps. Section 2 of the ETZ Comprehensive Plan provides demographic, economic, housing and household data, as well as physical and environmental data on hydrology, geology, soils, ground and surface water, zoning recommendations, and current and future land-use information. Section 3, or the Goals and Objectives section of the comprehensive plan, is the heart of the plan and is intended to reflect the public's concerns for the future of the Extraterritorial Zone (See Map 5: ETZ Sub-Areas in Section 2: ETZ Characteristics), with the intention of identifying the needs or problems that were significant to an area (East Mesa, Talvera/Las Alturas/Tortugas Areas, South Valley, North Valley and the West Mesa).

Twelve (12) goals were established for the ETZ:

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|---|---------------------------------------|
| * Comprehensive Plan & Conceptual Map         | * Urbanization                        |
| * Physical Structure/Overall Form             | * Economic and Industrial Development |
| * Open Space, Scenic and Historic Areas       | * Transportation                      |
| * Natural Resources and Environmental Quality | * Public Facilities and Services      |
| * Agricultural Lands                          | * Public Safety and Natural Hazards   |
| * Housing                                     | * Implementation                      |

The goals are designed to assist the Extraterritorial Zoning Authority and the Extraterritorial Zoning Commission in making decisions that will affect the future development of the Extraterritorial Zone.

The first three goals of this section are concerned with the compatibility of land use, the creation and updating of a Future Land-Use Concept Map for the ETZ, the protection of the ETZ's unique physical environment and the preservation of open space, scenic lands, historic areas and archeological sites. Although the county does not provide recreation facilities and services, federal and state governmental agencies have provided numerous large regional recreational and open space permanent-land allocations. Residents of the ETZ have identified the Village of Doña Ana, the Town of Mesilla, the Townsite of Organ, older sections of Las Cruces and the Mesilla Valley as needing clear and concise Historic Preservation ordinances and funding to encourage preservation.

The remaining nine goals (Goals 4 through 12) address issues that concern the preservation and wise use of the area's natural resources; urbanization; economic development; conservation of agricultural lands; housing needs; circulation and transportation networks; infrastructure; community facilities and the process of implementing the comprehensive plan. The fourth goal of the comprehensive plan, the Natural Resources and Environmental Quality goal, promotes a policy that will protect air and water quality, promote energy conservation and addresses light pollution. The fifth goal in the plan focuses on the need to balance the protection and preservation of farmland with the demand growth and development will place on the ETZ. Goal 6 establishes policies that attempt to address the area's housing needs, specifically in response to the issues of affordable housing, mobile homes, manufactured homes and higher residential density. The seventh goal or the urbanization element of the plan, provides recommendations pertinent to the transition of landuses (rural to an urban environment), projected transportation needs, the extension of public services, and annexation. The Economic and Industrial Development goal, or Goal 8, places an emphasis on where commercial and industrial development might be located in the ETZ, as well as on the importance of diversifying its economic base, and on the need for developing retention and expansion mechanisms for the ETZ's commercial activities. The focus of the ninth goal, the transportation element, is on the ETZ's present and future road networks, right-of-way acquisition issues and road conditions. Provisions for law enforcement, fire protection, floodplain management and hazardous materials are issues that are addressed in Goal 10 (Public Facilities and Services) and in Goal 11 (Public Safety and Natural Hazards). Implementation, the twelfth goal of the plan, provides measures that are intended to improve the ETZ planning process and the coordination between governmental entities (city, county, state, and federal).

The Commission and staff are taking innovative approaches to meeting challenges the ETZ will face over the coming years. The information collected for the ETZ's comprehensive plan is integrated with a Geographic Information System (GIS). In its entirety, the Comprehensive Plan provides an excellent environmental analysis through a

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merging of geology, hydrology, soil data and the natural environment, with the use of the County's or City's Geographic Information System to provide a complete inventory of the ETZ's physical attributes. The end product of this effort will be the availability of an automated mapping process that will provide the detailed mapping of the ETZ's natural environment and its known natural hazards. This was accomplished through the coordinated effort of local, state and federal agencies, New Mexico State University and our consultants. These data may be accessed along with essential zoning and land use information to enhance the ETZ's planning process.

An added component has been included in the ETZ Comprehensive Plan: The City of Las Cruces Planning Department has developed an urban growth boundary map with suggested guidelines that extend from the city limits to areas where existing services could be utilized. Monitoring development trends would identify areas of future urban development potential while discouraging leapfrog development. Urban growth corridors would provide for inevitable growth within the ETZ while providing relief to those areas identified as primarily rural or agricultural in character.

Cluster development of commercial and industrial uses within these corridors will accommodate the present need for such uses in the ETZ while retaining an "open look" and creating an aesthetically pleasing setting. Design and building construction standards shall closely mirror those of the City of Las Cruces, while allowing for varied setbacks to create open spaces between structures, in order to protect vistas and avoid strip development trends.