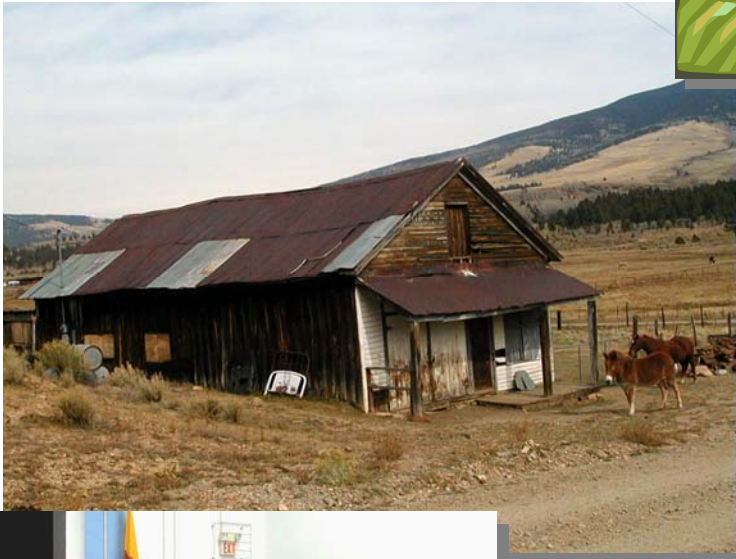


# A Comprehensive Plan for Colfax County



Colfax County  
Board of  
Commissioners  
Colfax County, NM

Prepared by:  
CommunityByDesign/  
Planners Ink

In association with:  
Southwest Planning and Marketing  
Western Environmental Law Center

Adopted June 22, 2004

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## A Comprehensive Plan for Colfax County

Colfax County, New Mexico

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# Table of Contents

<b>I.</b>	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>II.</b>	<b>County Profile.....</b>	<b>5</b>
	A. Regional setting	
	B. History and Culture	
	C. Demographics	
<b>III.</b>	<b>Community Participation.....</b>	<b>14</b>
	A. Steering Committee	
	B. Interviews	
	C. Community Workshops	
	D. Community Vision	
<b>IV.</b>	<b>Land Use/Community Character.....</b>	<b>16</b>
	A. Existing Conditions/Issues	
	B. Goals, Objectives and Implementation Strategies	
<b>V.</b>	<b>Water/Natural Resources.....</b>	<b>22</b>
	A. Existing Conditions/Issues	
	B. Goals, Objectives and Implementation Strategies	
<b>VI.</b>	<b>Economic Development.....</b>	<b>27</b>
	A. Existing Conditions/Issues	
	B. Goals, Objectives and Implementation Strategies	
<b>VII.</b>	<b>Civic/Public Services.....</b>	<b>35</b>
	A. Existing Conditions/Issues	
	B. Goals, Objectives and Implementation Strategies	
<b>VIII.</b>	<b>Housing.....</b>	<b>37</b>
	A. Existing Conditions/Issues	
	B. Goals, Objectives and Implementation Strategies	
<b>IX.</b>	<b>Transportation.....</b>	<b>41</b>
	A. Existing Conditions/Issues	
	B. Goals, Objectives and Implementation Strategies	
<b>X.</b>	<b>Implementation.....</b>	<b>44</b>
	A. Implementation Priorities	
	B. Plan Administration/Amendment	
<b>XI.</b>	<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>51</b>
	Community Workshop Comments	

# I. Introduction

Planning is a process that bridges the gap between where we are today and where we would like to be in the future. A Comprehensive Plan is a plan that establishes what the residents, business owners, property owners and other stakeholders would like to see in the future of the County. The Comprehensive Plan establishes a framework through the community's values, goals and objectives, defining the direction in which the County Board of Commissioners, as the community's leadership, should steer the County.

The Comprehensive Plan does not change any existing, or create any new, laws, regulations or requirements, but it does recommend policies that suggest changes to these implementation tools. An approved Comprehensive Plan is a legally binding document of the County that establishes a basis for regulations and programs necessary to manage current and future development within the County. The Plan identifies and analyses growth and development issues and indicates how the local residents and their elected officials want the regional community to develop in the next 20 years. Of importance is the state law requirement that land use regulations, if eventually formulated and adopted in Colfax County, must be in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan. New Subdivision regulations, if more stringent than those in the NM Subdivision statute, must also be identified on their need and clearly specified in the Comprehensive Plan, as per Senate Bill 410 passed in the 2003 Legislative session,

The Plan contains a Community Vision and describes six Elements to the Colfax County Comprehensive Plan. The Elements of the plan include Land Use/Community Character, Water/Natural Resources, Economic Development, Civic/Public Services, Housing, and Transportation. For each Element, there are a set of Values, Goals, Objectives and Implementation Strategies.

This is the first Comprehensive Plan prepared for and adopted by Colfax County. In 2002, the County Board of Commissioners identified the need for a Comprehensive Plan as their first priority in the County's Infrastructure Capital Improvement Program (ICIP). A planning grant to hire a consultant to prepare the Plan was submitted and approved by the Local Government Division of the NM Department of Finance and Administration.

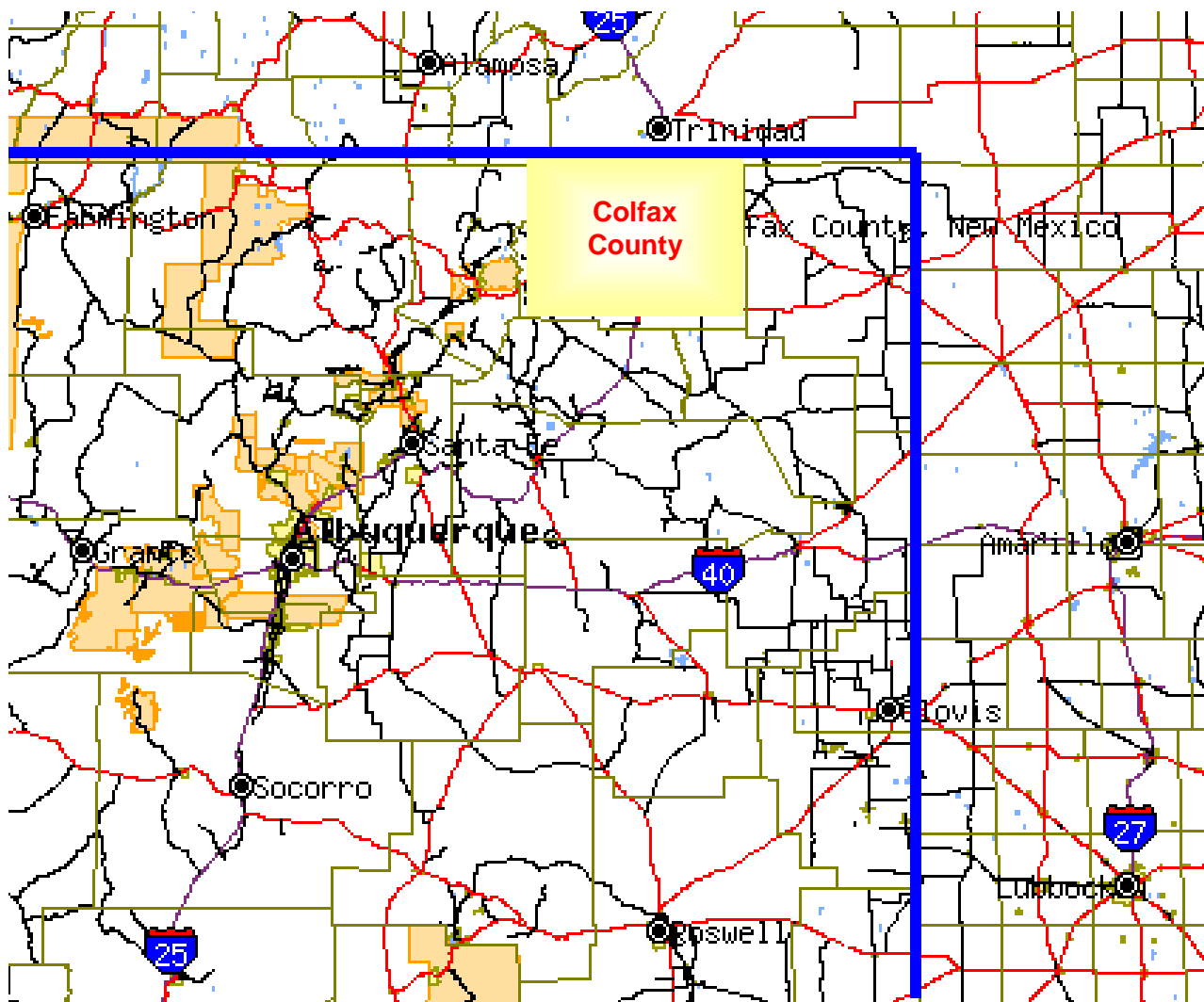
This Plan is a "living" document that is intended to be updated and amended as programs are implemented and conditions within the County change and evolve.

## II. County Profile

### A. Regional setting

Colfax County is located in northern New Mexico just south of the Colorado border. The County lies east of Taos County, north of Mora and Harding counties, and west of Union County. The total area of Colfax County is 3,800 square miles. Elevations range from over 12,000 feet above sea level in the mountainous western part of the County to about 5,000 feet in elevation in the eastern plains. Piedmont plains, high plateaus, and mesas are common geologic features in areas of the County.

Vegetation in the County is influenced by the elevation differences and ranges from spruce, fir, pine and aspen forests of the mountains through a transition of open juniper-pinion to the grasslands of the plains. Mountain grasslands exist in the Moreno Valley surrounding Eagle Nest Lake. Natural resources in the area include timber, water, wildlife, coal and methane gas.



The varied terrain of Colfax County, ranging from the Rocky Mountains to the High Plains, results in significant climate variations. For example, temperatures range from the winter lows

## II. County Profile

that are well below 0 degrees F in the mountains to summer highs above 100 degrees F in the plains. The average temperature in Colfax County for 1950 through 1999 was fairly consistent, ranging between 40 degrees and 50 degrees F. Average temperatures increased slightly over the period, mostly due to rising minimum temperatures. Precipitation also varies across the county, influenced by location and elevation. Weather systems may enter the county from the west, northeast and southwest, and systems from each point of origin bring unique sets of temperatures and moisture to the county. Average precipitation, including both snowmelt and rainfall, ranges from 14 to 21 inches annually. (Colfax Regional Water Plan, 2003).

Colfax County includes six incorporated municipalities of Raton, Springer, Cimarron, Maxwell, Eagle Nest and Angel Fire. Raton is the largest municipality, with a population of approximately 7,282 persons and is the county seat. Springer and Angel Fire, the second and third largest towns, have populations of 1,300 and 1,048, respectively, with Cimarron at 917 persons and Eagle Nest with 306. The total population of Colfax County has fluctuated between 12,000 and 14,000 over the last 40 years and is currently about 14,000. However, sizable seasonal population fluctuations occur throughout the year due to tourism in the Angel Fire/Eagle Nest area as well as at the Philmont Boy Scout Ranch, NRA Whittington Center and three state parks, Sugarite Canyon, Cimarron Canyon and Eagle Nest Lake.

Most of the land in the county is privately owned. Tourism and coal mining have been the primary industries; however, the coalmines in the county are in the process of closing. Significant livestock grazing and agriculture takes place in the eastern part of the county. More than 2 million acres of land is held by 208 farms, most of which produce cattle as their major commodity (NM EDD, 2002).

Nationally-recognized regional attractions within or near the county include:

- Maxwell National Wildlife Refuge

Maxwell NWR is located south of Raton off I-25 and west of Maxwell. The Refuge is comprised of 3,000 acres of prairie, playa lakes and reclaimed farmland at an elevation of 6,050 feet. It provides a winter haven for migrating waterfowl, which can reach a population of 90,000 during the fall, and refuge for other bird species such as the willow flycatcher, bald eagle, peregrine falcon, burrowing owl and prairie falcon.

- Capulin Volcano National Monument

Located 33 miles east of Raton on Highway 64/87, Capulin Volcano National Monument is 793 acres that ranges from 7,000 feet to 8,182 feet on the crater rim. On a clear day, five states can be viewed from the rim, including New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas and Colorado. Access to the rim is via Volcano Road, a two-mile long and narrow roadway. The visitor center includes exhibits and video on geology, natural history and human history of the Capulin Volcano.

- Sugarite Canyon State Park

Sugarite Canyon State Park is located east of Raton off Highway 72. The Park consists of 3,600 acres adjacent to the NM/Colorado border. Another 17,000 acres lie across the border in Colorado in the Dorothea Lake Wildlife Management Area. Sugarite Canyon Park features heavily wooded mountains, meadows and lakes. The dominant geologic feature at the park is

## II. County Profile

caprock, and extended cliff of basaltic rock columns formed 12 million years ago out of basaltic rock 10 to 100 feet thick.

- Santa Fe Trail Interpretive Center and Museum

The Santa Fe Trail Interpretive Center and Museum is a National Scenic By-ways project that is located in Springer in the 120 year old Colfax County Courthouse. The museum exhibits the development of the cultural landscape of the area traversed by the Santa Fe Trail in Northeast New Mexico.

- NRA Whittington Center

The Whittington Center is a world-class shooting facility operated by the National Rifle Association. Located south of Raton on Highway 64, the Center is the most comprehensive recreational, educational and competitive shooting facility in the world and one of the areas most significant tourist attractions. Open to the public, the Center attracts 150,000 visitors and contributes \$3.5 million a year to the economy. (Pers comm. M. Ballew, 2003)

- Philmont Scout Ranch

Philmont Scout Ranch, located along Highway 64, is the world's largest camping facility at 137,493 acres. Owned and operated by the Boy Scouts of America, more than 18,000 scouts from all over the country arrive at Philmont each year. The BNSF Railroad provides access to the Ranch through Raton, and has a tremendous impact on the area's economy.

- Santa Fe National Historic Trail

Segments of both the Cimarron and Mountain Routes cross through Colfax County. Private individuals and organizations own much of the Santa Fe Trail and not all sites are open for public use. The National Park Service and Santa Fe Trail Association coordinate efforts to preserve, develop, and enjoy the Trail; as well as provide technical and financial assistance for Trail projects.

- Santa Fe Trail National Scenic Byway

Several modern day roads and the Raton Pass National Historic Landmark bring motorists close to the original historic trail. The Santa Fe Trail Scenic Byway complements the preservation, recreation and education efforts of the Santa Fe National Historic Trail. The Federal Highway Administration and New Mexico Department of Transportation support scenic byway projects with technical and financial assistance.

- National Register Historic Districts

Cimarron, Point of Rocks, Raton Downtown, and Villa Philmonte are designated historic districts on the National Register of Historic Places. Numerous other cultural properties throughout Colfax County are also on the National Register.

- Folsom Man National Historic Landmark

Archeological discoveries on this section of State Trust Land pushed human occupation of North America back 10,000 years. The National Historic Landmark is also designated a New Mexico State Monument, but there is no public access to the site.

## II. County Profile

### B. Historical and Cultural Overview

To envision the future of a place, one must have an understanding of its history. Colfax County has a diverse and multi-cultural history that reaches back at least 10,000 years with evidence of prehistoric settlement sites, through the Spanish conquest and later included the first incorporated town in New Mexico.

The first pioneer to visit Colfax County was “Folsom Man”. This discovery opened a unique view of North America’s past, confirming that Colfax’s first residents were among the first in the New World, occupying this area at least 10,000 years ago. Located in eastern Colfax County, the Folsom Man Archeological Site is eight miles west of Folsom, off Hwy 72 across Johnson Mesa at Dead Horse Gulch. Anthropologists claim “Folsom Man” traveled from Asia to Alaska to America during the last Ice Age. Following the era of “Folsom Man” a prolonged drought made occupation in those areas impossible for several thousand years.

One of the earliest native groups to cross the Sangre de Cristos Mountains were the “Anazasi,” or Ancient Ones. These ancestors of today’s Pueblo Indians first lived in primitive caves and slowly began to erect larger adobe and stone structures. Hunting and gathering was gradually replaced with irrigated fields that produced corn, beans, and squash. They produced well-crafted pottery, woven cloth material and created elaborate ceremonial rituals held in underground Kivas. Archaeological evidence marks the probable arrival as early as 1000 AD.

At the time the Anazasi were moving southward along the Rio Grande and east across the Sangre de Cristos, the Early Plains Indians were coming into Colfax County from the Great Plains. The Early Plains Indians were hunters and lacking horses had a more primitive culture than later Plains Indians.

Between 1100 and 1400 AD there lived groups of Pueblo-Plains Indians that occupied Colfax County along valleys going into the Park Plateau. Many studies have been conducted in the Ponil Creek watershed of Chase and Philmont ranches giving rise to the name of the “Ponil People”. Their origins are unknown as is the reason for their disappearance. The Ponil People made their living from farming as well as hunting.

In 1540 Francisco Vasquez de Coronado led an expedition into New Mexico marking the starting point of its written history. Conquistadors visited the Cimarron area in search of the lost “City of Gold” but instead found Jicarilla Apaches and Moache Utes roaming the surrounding hills. Spanish civilization began to spread slowly along the Rio Grande. By 1598 Juan de Onate secured the submission of all the pueblo communities. By the 18<sup>th</sup> century settlements were constantly besieged by Native American elements making immigration into the Colfax area dangerous. There were no garrisons north of Santa Fe.

The Jicarilla Apaches arrived in the Colfax area around the early 1700’s. They were part of the Athapascans, who came from central Canada. Their culture combined aspects of hunting and agriculture.

Upon the arrival of the Spaniards, the Moache Utes were already settled in Colfax County. Unlike the Jicarillas, the Utes preferred mountain living. Eventually both groups intermarried

## II. County Profile

and conducted cultural exchanges. Evidence of Ute presence can be found at Ute Park at the entrance of Cimarron Canyon.

Far different than the Apaches and Utes who resided in the western part of the County were the Plains Indians, which included the Comanches and Kiowas. They were far less peaceful than the Apaches and Utes. By the 1600's the Plains Indians obtained horses from the Spanish and developed their hunting prowess. Warfare and raiding parties became central features within their societies. The Plains Indians made frequent raids on the Apaches and Utes, driving them high into the Sangre de Cristos. From the 1700's until the 1870's European attempts to expel them from the area were extremely unsuccessful.

By the early 1700's the first Europeans entered Colfax County. The Spanish made concerted efforts to settle the area fearing French encroachment. The Spanish, reaching Rayado, first encountered the Jicarillas at their settlement called La Jicarilla. Few non-Mexicans ventured into the area except a handful of French trappers.

Iturbide declared Mexican Independence on February 24, 1821, ending the Spanish commercial monopoly. William Becknell, the "father of the Santa Fe trail and founder of Santa Fe trade", became aware of the Mexicans desire for trade in 1821. He advertised in Missouri papers for men to travel west for the purpose of trading horses and hunting wild animals. Many responded to these advertisements and came west for handsome profits and soon a blossoming trade between the U.S. and Mexico developed. Paralleling the onslaught of Missouri merchants moving westward along the Santa Fe Trail was an even greater movement of easterners exploring the southern Rockies and Sangre de Cristos in search of beaver pelts. The opening of the southwest can be attributed to these early mountain men. Many of their trails later became roads. Mountain men led many of the early expeditions into the southwest. Fur trapping was typically an individual pursuit rendering the founding of settlements unlikely. Colfax County was one of the sites for trapping beaver. Early trappers playing a significant role in the development of the area.

Charles Beaubien was a prosperous storekeeper actively engaged in the fur trade with a need to increase his commercial activities. He decided to buy property on the eastern slope of the Sangre de Cristos near the Santa Fe Trail and entered into a partnership with Don Guadalupe Miranda. Together they petitioned Governor Manuel Armijo on January 8, 1841 for a tract of land nearly two million acres in size. On January 11<sup>th</sup>, 1841 the grant was approved. Lucien Bonaparte Maxwell ultimately attained ownership of the land grant, having married Charles Beaubien's daughter, Luz. In 1858, he felt secure enough to move his family to Cimarron, where he built a large ranch and was appointed Postmaster. More of the Land Grant went to Maxwell when Charles Beaubien died in 1864. In 20 years, he had gone from being a frontier hunter to being the largest individual landowner in the history of the United States — owning 1,714,765 acres. In 1870, Maxwell sold almost all of his land for \$1,350,000 to a British company, soon to become bankrupt, which sold in 1880 to the Dutch Maxwell Land Grant Company still in operation that bought the property through a group of prominent New Mexicans. They incorporated the holdings as the Maxwell Land Grant and Railway Company, so the Maxwell name remained connected to the land even after it left Maxwell's hands.

## II. County Profile

In June 1861 government officials decided to move 1500 Indians away from Taos to the more remote area near Cimarron. The establishment of the U.S. Indian Agency at Cimarron in 1861 was significant in the long-range development of Colfax County. In 1862, Maxwell leased 1,280 acres on the Ponil to the new Apache and Ute Cimarron Indian Agency, to be administered by Indian Agents including Amy, Keithly, Dennison, Keyes and Carson. This Agency allowed the local Indians to be fed by the government, lessening the threat of raiding the nearby ranches. In addition, providing food for the Indians generated large Federal revenues. This was the first time settlers had a financial incentive to grow beef, sheep, corn and wheat.

The growth of the gold district was evidenced by the increasing demands for the creation of a separate governmental district. After two years of debating, the New Mexico territorial legislature gave in to the demands of gold camp's leading figures by establishing a new county on January 25, 1869, naming it after Republican Vice President elect Schuyler Colfax, who was traveling the west at the time. Elizabethtown was designated by legislation to be the first incorporated town in New Mexico and the Colfax County seat.

By 1868, named after Elizabeth Catherine Moore, but nicknamed E-Town by most of the locals., there were about 400 people living in Elizabethtown. By 1870, E-town had about 100 buildings and boasted 7,000 residents. Herman Mutz, a rancher and cattleman of the area, built one of several hotels, the Mutz Hotel in 1905. However, by 1917, E-town's lifblood was nearly drained. The mines no longer produced profits and the town folk had moved away, abandoning their



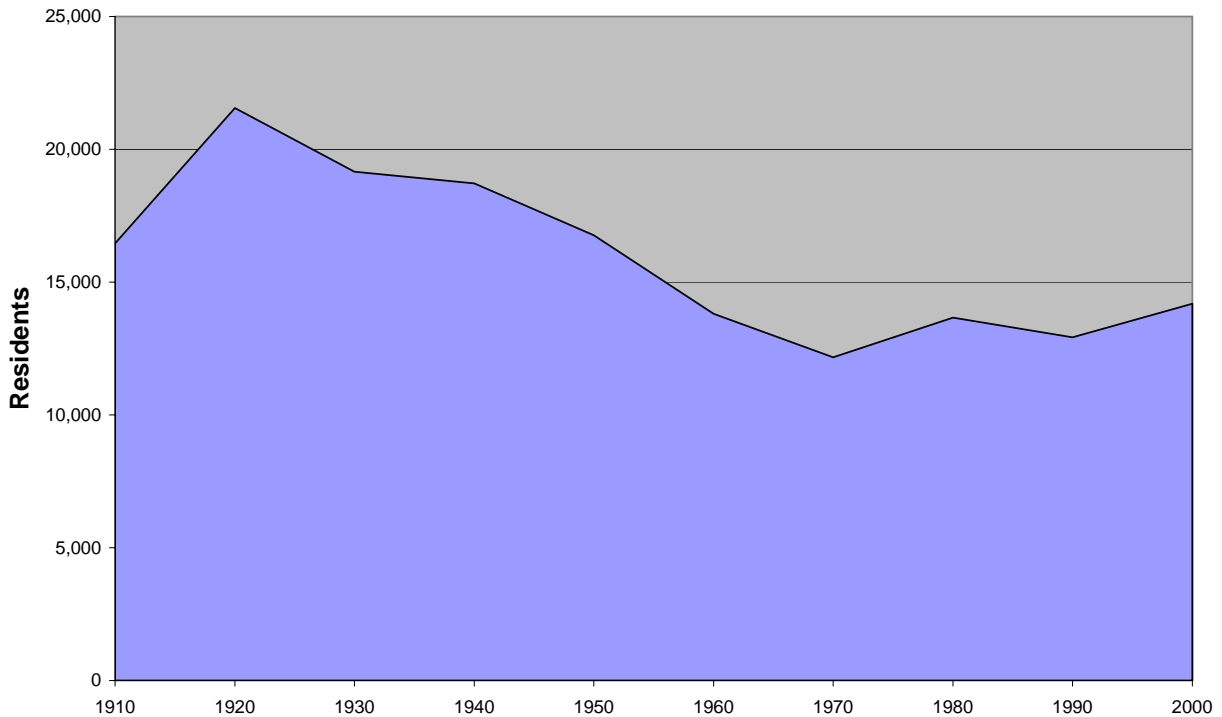
homes, as no one wanted to buy them. Investors fell into bankruptcy and even the staunchest old timers left. Curious people continued to frequent the site and unfortunately, a camper set a fire in the old Mutz Hotel, which further destroyed its remains, though its stone walls still stand.

### C. Demographic Information

Figure 1 shows historic population for Colfax County. The graph shows that the population of Colfax County steadily declined from its peak of over 21,500 residents in 1920 to a population of just over 12,000 in 1970. After a slight increase in the population, the County again experienced a net out-migration in the years 1984 to 1991. In fact, from the 1980's on, the County has gone from net in-migration to net out-migration in cycles up to the present. The fluctuation can be attributed, in part, to the cyclical opening and closing of the York Canyon coal mine. Despite these fluctuations, the overall population trend has been a slow increase since 1970. The 2000 Census population figure for the County was almost 14,200 residents.

## II. County Profile

**Fig. 1 -- Colfax County Population from 1910 - 2000**



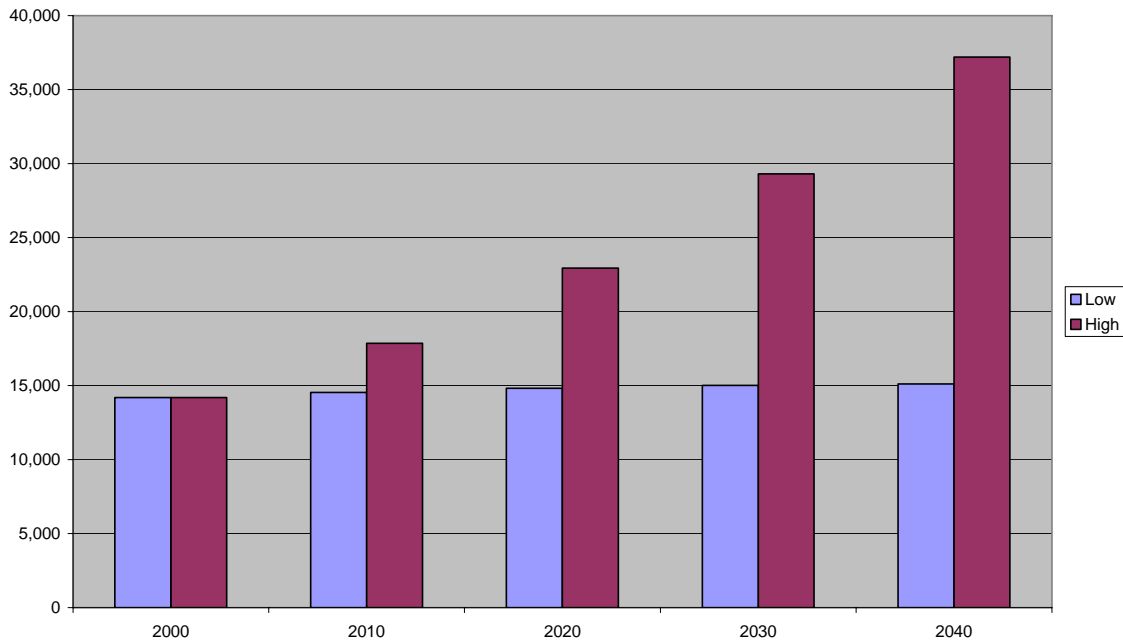
### **Population Projections**

The Colfax Regional Water Plan in 2002 developed the two growth scenarios, referred to as Low and High, respectively. The Low Scenario is very similar to the University of New Mexico Bureau of Business & Economic Research (BBER) forecast for the County. The Low scenario represents a surprise-free future with little new economic activity within the County. Rural areas would experience a decline in population, while there would be no change in Raton and Cimarron and slow growth in the Moreno Valley. The population in the Low scenario would only grow from the 2000 Census population of 14,189 to a projected population of 15,112 people in 2040.

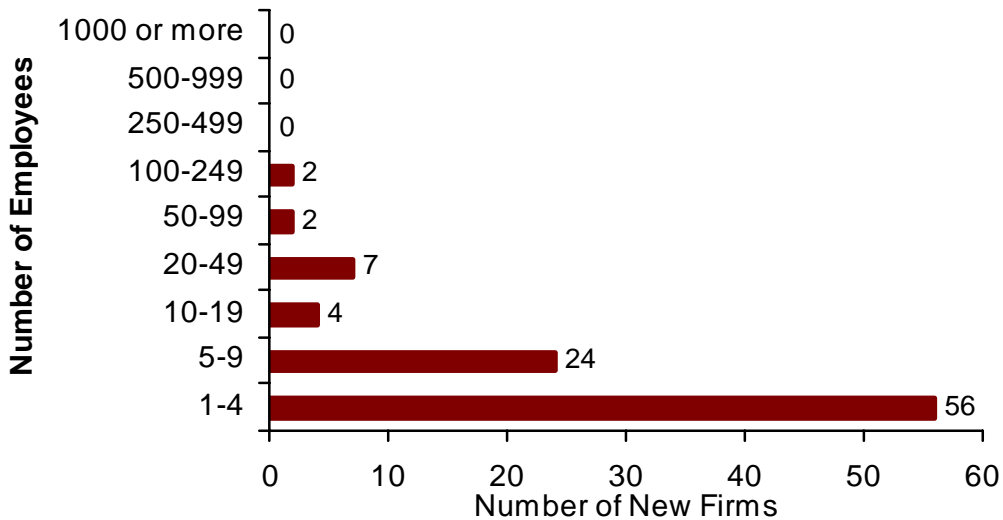
The High Scenario represents a more optimistic future in which new economic activity would lead to considerable net in-migration into the County. Raton and rural areas would stabilize or experience slight population growth, while the Moreno Valley would expand at a healthy rate of growth. The population in the high scenario would grow from the 2000 Census population to a projected population of 37,204 people in 2040.

## II. County Profile

### Colfax County Population Projections

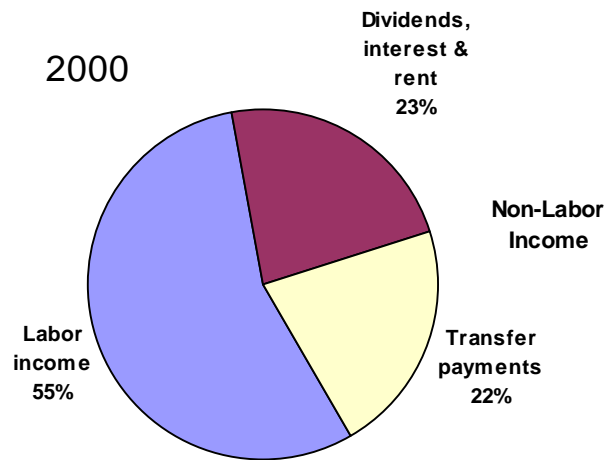


Because each of these scenarios is plausible, consideration should be given to each being realized. Development of the scenarios is based on data on the historic growth of the County and its communities, taking into account population, registered voters, water meters, and other factors.

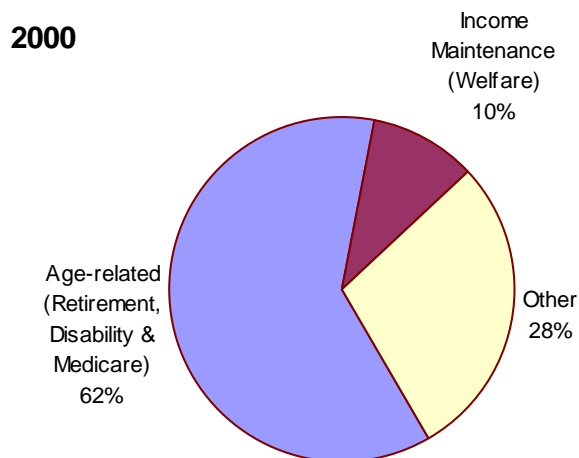


New Firms by Employment Size. From 1990 to 2000 the majority of new businesses established in Colfax County were small, with fewer than 20 employees.

## II. County Profile



In 1970 Non-Labor Income sources represented 28 percent of total personal income in Colfax County. By 2000 they comprised 44 percent. In 2000, Dividends, Interest and Rent represented 23 percent of total personal income. Transfer payments comprised 22 percent.



Components of Transfer Payments. – In 2000, 61 percent of transfer payments in Colfax County were from age-related sources (retirement, disability, insurance payments, and Medicare). 10 percent was from welfare.

### III. Community Participation

From the outset, a comprehensive and community-based planning process was determined to be important in developing the first Comprehensive Plan for Colfax County. This approach resulted in a grassroots “bottom-up” citizen driven process that is illustrated on the following diagram. This process had three major components: a Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee; several interviews with community leadership and stakeholders; and two rounds of community workshops at several locations within the county.

#### A. The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

A 20 member Steering Committee was created at the outset of the planning process. The Committee was comprised of residents, ranchers, developers and County and State agency representatives. The Committee met five times during the planning process, providing direction and establishing values, goals and priorities to the Plan outcomes.



#### B. Interviews

Interviews were conducted with community leaders in the county who were suggested by the Steering Committee. The interviews were conducted during the month of November, 2003 and included:

- Paul Kastler, Raton Development Corporation
- Kandi Barks, Raton Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development
- Leslee Valdez, Raton Zoning Enforcement Officer
- Ernie Lopez, NM State Forestry
- Viola Jeffers, Ag and Farm Bureau
- Mike Ballew, NRA Whittington Center
- Joe Garcia, NM Transportation Department
- Sandra Barrazo, County Agriculture Extension Office
- Adeline Shell, County Assessor

The interview participants identified issues and offered opportunities that the county could pursue in developing strategies. These opportunities included collaborative partnerships, funding sources and assistance programs.

#### C. Community Workshops

There were two rounds of community workshops conducted during the planning process. The first round was facilitated by the Western Environmental Law Center as a set of pre-planning meetings to identify issues and solicit interest for participants to be on the Steering Committee. These five meetings were held June 11, 2001 in Raton, September, 2002 in Cimarron, November 12, 2002 in Maxwell, December 12, 2002 in Eagle Nest, and December 13, 2002 in Raton. A total of approximately 52 interested citizens and community leaders attended these meetings

### III. Community Participation

A second set of community workshops were held in November 4, 5, and 6, 2003 at Angel Fire, Springer and Raton locations, respectively. These workshops were open house formats that presented the draft vision statement, values and goals for each of the Plan Elements that had been developed by the Steering Committee. There were seven stations at each workshop, corresponding to the Vision statement and the six Plan Elements. Each station was staffed by a Steering Committee member and/or a consultant member. The attendees were encouraged to revise or add their comments to the draft materials presented on large format sheets. The comments received at the three workshops are included in the appendix and are arranged by workshop location. There is also a copy of the display ad that was published in three local newspapers, displayed in several public locations and used in public service announcements to advertise the workshops. Approximately 65 participants attended the three workshops.



#### D. Community Vision

The Vision statement for the Comprehensive Plan was developed by the Steering Committee and then re-affirmed by the citizens in the community workshops. The Vision statement serves as the foundation for the goals and objectives in each Plan Element and as a point to return to when there are conflicts within the community's interpretation or implementation of the Plan. The vision statement was initially prepared by the Steering Committee in response to the consultant team asking them to list the three most important values to them about Colfax County. From these responses, the common values shared by this diverse group were integrated into the following statement:

***“Colfax County has grand vistas of natural landscapes of mountains, mesas, open spaces and valleys. We seek to sustain our natural resources of land, water, air and wildlife to keep a unique sense of place, while balancing the diversity of the community needs for social, economic and physical well-being. We treasure our rural and ranching lifestyles rich with diverse and multi-cultural heritages. We will preserve these cultures and traditions as we improve our quality of life in the future.”***

## IV. Land Use/Community Character

### A. Existing Conditions/Issues

Colfax County has a land area of 3,757 square miles or 2.4 million acres. The majority of the County is under private ownership, a pattern that is unusual in the West, but is largely due to the Maxwell Land Grant of 1.7 million acres in 1841. The second largest landowner in the County is the State Land Office, with a checkerboard ownership pattern in the eastern third of the County. The Carson National Forest manages approximately 64,000 acres in the Valle Vidal area of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains on the County's western boundary.

With a total population of 14,140 persons, the County is a very low density of 3.8 persons per square mile, particularly when compared to the State of New Mexico at 15 persons per sq. mile. The County grew about 10% in population from 1990 to 2000, or about 1% per year. This is about half of the State's overall growth rate of 2% per year for the same time period.

The principal land use in the County is ranching/agriculture. Residential development in the County is most active near Raton and Angel Fire, with some development also occurring near Eagle Nest and Cimarron. Building permits are issued by State Construction Industries Department (CID) under an agreement with the County.

An overview of current and historical land uses include:

#### **Ranching**

Many new residents included settlers from Texas who brought herds of cattle and made livestock raising another principal industry in the County. Sheep and cattle raising occupied many early Colfax County residents eventually making it a principal industry in the County. By the 1870s cattle ranching had developed into a hard but profitable business in Colfax County despite the continuous friction between settlers and grant owners. The cattle business began to flourish in eastern Colfax County once the Indians were removed. With huge areas providing good pastures, a permanent population soon began to inhabit the open plains.

#### **Mining**

##### **Gold Mining 1866 – 1959**

Colfax County had been an important source of lode and placer gold. Small quantities of silver, copper, and lead have also been mined. The metal mining districts in Colfax County are centered in the Cimarron Range, which is along the western edge of the county. Martin (1953) reported a total gold production for Colfax County through 1959 at about 358,000 ounces. The most productive placer deposits are in the Moreno Creek valley near Elizabethtown on the west side of the Cimarron Range, and the most productive lode deposits are in the Baldy (Ute Creek) area on the east side of the range, east of the Elizabethtown district.

##### **Coal Mining 1890 – 2002**

From 1899 – 1950 Dawson produced over 33 million tons of coal. A company town owned by Phelps Dodge, Dawson reached a population of 6,000 and contained over 500 buildings. By 1950 Phelps Dodge closed the coal mining operation. Virtually all the

## IV. Land Use/Community Character

buildings and railroad were dismantled and moved out of the area. Dawson now stands as a ghost town.

In 1966 Kaiser Steel opened the York Canyon Mine, which sat on the same vein of coal as Dawson. In 1989 Pittsburgh & Midway Coal Mining Company purchased the York Canyon, which obtained a one billion dollar, fifteen-year contract to supply a Milwaukee, Wisconsin power plant. By 2002 mining operations were closed. While Dawson was the largest and most active coal mine in Colfax County, there were several other mines located in the county, including Koehler, Gardiner, Sugarite, Blossburg, Van Houten. There are no active coalmines in Colfax County today.

### **Lumber**

The railroad's entrance into Colfax County in 1906 allowed logging to become another profitable industry in the area. The St. Louis, Rocky Mountain & Pacific Swastika route to Ute Park, and the Cimarron and Northwestern route on the Ponil, carried coal and wood products to Raton. Along with logging came the development of lumber mills in the area to process the wood; most of which was made into railroad ties. Most of the logging has diminished due to endangered species habitat protection and closure of the lumber mills. Today, there is renewed interest in small diameter harvesting as a result of the healthy forests and fire-wise initiatives. There is not yet a small diameter mill in the County to process these wood products commercially.

### **Oil and Gas Development**

This may become the fastest growing industry in the County, particularly under the present US administration's policy emphasizing domestic oil and gas production. New Mexico has among the highest oil and gas reserves in the US (4<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> respectively) and ranks 6<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> in total US production. The Vermejo Park Ranch in 1997 had 12 coal-bed methane (CBM) rigs in place and by 2003, there were approximately 350 CBM wells on the Ranch (NMWA, 2003). While the CBM rig alone can be relatively small in size, their spacing and density, along with their associated access roads, powerlines, compressors and "produced" water ponds, can have significant influences on the land and its uses.

Colfax County supports the responsible development of oil and gas resources within the County and recognizes that oil and gas development may provide a means of increasing County revenue as well as the revenue of private individual landowners. Oil and gas development, when done responsibly, may provide such revenue with minimal adverse impacts. In order to protect the surface land and natural resources, including the surface and groundwater of Colfax County, from undue and unnecessary degradation, oil and gas development should occur only where that development happens in accordance with the welfare of surface landowners and the County, and in accordance with all applicable local, state, and federal laws.

### **Land Use Development Regulations**

The County presently has no zoning designation or land use regulations on the unincorporated lands. The Colfax County Subdivision regulations were adopted by ordinance in 1997 and amended in 1999. The Subdivision Regulations meet the minimum standards as per the NM Subdivision statute. In 1999, the County also adopted a resolution establishing further

## IV. Land Use/Community Character

requirements on terrain management, liquid waste, solid waste, water availability and water quality, based on the model subdivision regulations developed by the Association of Counties. While these guidelines increase the level of protection on health, safety and welfare considerations, as a resolution, they are only advisory and not regulatory.

The County and City of Raton have established a three mile Extra-Territorial Zone (ETZ) around the city limits. This zone is governed by the Extraterritorial Zoning Authority comprised of two County Commissioners and one Raton City Commissioner. Land use and zoning regulations fall under the Raton-Colfax Extraterritorial Zoning Ordinance, adopted in 1981. The ETZ zoning ordinance is not the same as the City's zoning ordinance and has created issues of legal non-conforming uses upon annexation of these areas. The City also has a policy that it will only extend waterlines to parcels within the ETZ area that are 2.5 acres or greater. This policy may act as a disincentive to promoting compact development near existing infrastructure and cause increased sprawl by committing property near an urban area to low density uses.

### Land Use/Community Character Issues

Several issues were identified during the community pre-planning meetings and with the Steering Committee:

- Revisit subdivision regulations
- Residential subdivisions outside municipality
- Cultural/ Historical preservation - maybe county can adopt ordinance that gives tax breaks/somehow encourages restoration or preservation of historic structures
- Protect county's natural beauty
- Enforce subdivision regulations
- Protecting rural character of county
- Fire safety codes
- Private roads not wide enough for fire trucks
- County-wide subdivision standards
- Maintain low light pollution
- Respect rights of private property owners
- Alignment between Raton and Colfax plan/objectives: County should mitigate the effects of conflicts between municipal and county plans
- Regulate business/ industrial pollution - pollution control
- Consider county resources when deciding on new subdivisions
- Need subdivision regs that require open space
- Animal units per acre too high for land resources within the ETZ
- Subdivision regulations are adequate, but illegal subdividing is occurring
- Addressing access/egress problems in existing subdivisions (e.g., Ute Park) for safety and welfare of landowners
- Cellular phone tower siting guidelines
- Impacts of oil and gas development on ranches and environment

Following the issue identification process, the Steering Committee developed, based on their values and important community attributes, the following goals and objectives for land use and community character.

## IV. Land Use/Community Character

### B. Goals, Objectives and Implementation Strategies

Colfax County citizens value our:

- rural character and lifestyle- small communities and ranching heritage
- close, thriving communities
- night sky
- open space – open land, limited sprawl, development clustered in existing communities
- recreational opportunities (ski/golf/hiking/hunting/fishing/photography, horseback riding, trail running, shooting sports, bike paths)
- quality of life: cool evenings, ease of driving, for shopping, arts and humanities, independent living facility public transportation
- lifestyle (family – slower paced)
- peaceful, quiet community, safe environment
- scenic views – out to horizon; undeveloped mesa tops; plains and grassland
- sense of history, Santa Fe Trail, Indians, Spaniards, Maxwell land grant, coal mining, cowboys, mountain men, railroad
- preservation of county heritage and social/cultural roots

#### **Goal 1: Promote clustered development that maintains its surroundings as open space.**

*Objective 1.a. In all new developments, the County will encourage the set-aside of 30% of the developed area as open space.*

- Strategy 1. Revise the County’s subdivision ordinance to include a Conservation Subdivision option that provides a developer a 10% density in bonus in residences for providing a minimum of 30% of the plat area as protected open space.
- Strategy 2. Prepare and adopt Land Use Regulations that provide incentives, such as density bonuses or fee waivers, for new developments that provide 30% of their area as protected open space.

*Objective 1.b. New development will be encouraged to locate near existing towns or villages and utilize existing infrastructure.*

- Strategy 3. Create a Land Use District Map as part of the proposed Land Use Regulations that identifies areas appropriate for higher intensity development and establish benefit areas where the County can offer credits on development fees, maintenance costs or property taxes.
- Strategy 4. Coordinate with the City of Raton to review their current ETZ policy on water service and minimum lot sizes that still protect the groundwater and but allow higher density development through infrastructure service agreements.

#### **Goal 2: New development will respect and be compatible with the character of the existing adjacent neighborhoods.**

*Objective 2. New developments near existing neighborhoods will incorporate elements in their design that reflect the character of the existing neighborhood.*

## IV. Land Use/Community Character

- Strategy 5. Establish a set of design compatibility guidelines that offer ways to increase compatibility through setbacks, building heights, landscaping, roof styles, color and materials, etc., and the NFPA-1 (National Fire Protection Assoc.) requirements.
- Strategy 6. Establish design guidelines for manufactured homes parks and subdivisions to ensure that they meet minimum appearance standards. Such measures will help maintain the viability of manufactured homes as low cost housing options, while protecting property values and helping maintain the important aesthetic qualities of the county that are the basis of economic development efforts, such as the promotion of tourism.
- Strategy 7. Develop Historic District designations on neighborhoods or buildings which have historically contributing qualities as defined by the NM State Historic Preservation Division.
- Strategy 8. Adopt guidelines for utility or industrial uses to be compatible to rural or neighborhood characteristics, such as cellular towers and oil and gas production sites.

### **Goal 3: Increase the level of cooperation in planning land uses adjacent to existing municipalities, state parks, public forests lands and wildlife refuges.**

*Objective 3. Proposed developments or improvements within one mile of incorporated town limits, or park/forest boundary, will be coordinated with the appropriate municipality or management agency.*

- Strategy 9. Form an inter-jurisdictional/agency management network that serves to inform the participating towns and agencies of proposed developments and improvements.

### **Goal 4: Support ranching and agricultural land uses that enhance the open lands and rural lifestyle.**

*Objective 4. Prime ranching and agricultural lands will be identified and sustained as an integral part of the County economy and the county will strive to minimize any conversion of these lands to non-agriculturally-based uses.*

- Strategy 10. The County, in partnership with the USDA and Cooperative Extension Service, will inform and encourage ranchers and farmers to place conservation easements on their property and take advantage of the tax benefits offered by NM legislation.
- Strategy 11. Adopt an Agricultural Land Use designation that provides possible mechanisms for Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs), Purchase of Development Rights (PDRs) and investigates establishing a local non-profit land bank/land trust organization.
- Strategy 12. Encourage the charitable donation of land by landowners for historic, cultural, and scenic easements to non-profit land banks/land trust organizations to reduce state and federal income and inheritance taxes under NM Laws 1995, Chapter 137.

### **Goal 5: Encourage new developments to protect the views and preserve the night sky.**

*Objective 5. Viewsheds along designated scenic routes will not be impacted by new development and no ambient light from new developments will diminish the night sky.*

- Strategy 13. Scenic corridors may be designated and include development guidelines.

## IV. Land Use/Community Character

- Strategy 14. Enforce the NM Night Sky Protection Act and adopt specific lighting guidelines or regulations to include requirements on lighting standards such as shielding, pole heights, lighting types and hours of operation.

### **Goal 6. New developments will respect the topography and be in scale with the mesas and mountains.**

*Objective 6. Areas of high slopes or prominent peaks and ridges will be protected from development.*

- Strategy 15. Define grading guidelines on slopes above 15% within the Terrain Management section of the Subdivision Regulations.
- Strategy 16. Develop a Protected Peaks and Ridges overlay zone based on topographical and aerial mapping of prominent peaks and ridges.

## V. Water/Natural Resources

### A. Existing Conditions/Issues

Colfax County lies almost entirely within the Canadian River Basin, which is part of the larger Arkansas-White-Red River Basin. Surface water, which supplies more than 95 % of the water currently used in Colfax County, originates primarily in the mountains in the western and northern parts of the County and flows generally east and south to the Canadian River, through which it flows into Mora County. East of the Canadian River, slopes are relatively gentle, as altitudes in the eastern plains are less than 7,000 feet. West of the river lie the southern Rocky Mountains, and slopes in this area are very steep. Surface water availability varies greatly from year to year, depending on the amount of precipitation in the region.

The occurrence of groundwater in Colfax County is controlled by the varying hydrogeologic conditions of the two physiographic provinces: the Southern Rocky Mountains Province and the Raton Section of the Great Plains Province. Hydrologic conditions are also dependent upon localized geologic structures, stratigraphy, and geologic formation lithologies. Development of groundwater resources has been minimal to date and has focused primarily in the Moreno Valley area around Angel Fire.

Based on OSE water use categories, irrigated agriculture has historically been and continues to be by far the largest water use in Colfax County, accounting for around 80 percent of total withdrawals in 1995 and 2000. The second largest water use is reservoir evaporation, which was 12% of total withdrawals in 1995 and 2000. The remaining uses of water in the county are public and domestic water supply (around 3% of total withdrawals) and livestock, mining and commercial applications (1 to 2% of withdrawals). The overall amount of water withdrawn in the County decreased by approximately 10,000 acre feet, from around 70,000 acre-feet in 1975 to approximately 60,000 acre-feet in 2000 (Colfax Regional Water Plan, 2003).

The natural resources of the County include some of the highest wildlife populations in the State, including elk, deer and black bear. There are large areas of riparian habitat that occupy portions of the Cimarron, Canadian, Ponil and Rayado watersheds.

Land use decisions can significantly impact both the quantity and quality of local water supplies. In addition local water availability affects land-use decisions by a number of direct and indirect means. The integration of water resource considerations in the land use approval process includes a number of entities:

- The State Engineer is charged with the administration of the waters of the State. The State Engineer must approve or deny any appropriation of water.
- The New Mexico Environment Department is charged with regulating quality of water and wastewater and other discharges and this also influences land-use decisions.
- Local governments (Tribal, municipal and county) are charged with land-use and development regulation. Those same local governments have varying levels of responsibility to integrate water availability into the land-use decision-making process.

Most development, whether residential, commercial or industrial, will require a long-term water supply. The local governments charged with approving such development must take into account a development's anticipated water needs and balance that with the available supply. The duration of water availability is also an important consideration in land-use decisions, particularly if

## V. Water/Natural Resources

ground water is the source of supply, as these resources are finite and are not replenished quickly. High-water-use developments may be inappropriate in water-scarce areas.

Proper stewardship also mandates that the quality of water supply sources be protected. Land uses that produce contaminants must include provisions for containing, treating, and/or disposing of contaminants in a manner that will prevent contamination of the water supply, in accordance with State laws and regulations. Once contaminated, water supply sources may not be usable for certain uses without expensive treatment.

Local governments use zoning and land-use regulations and design criteria to effectively mitigate many undesirable aspects of development. Land use regulations can assure that development will be restricted to appropriate areas, and design criteria can be used to promote water use efficiency, moderate water use and protect water quality.

Land subdivisions present a number of significant issues with respect to water supply. When a new subdivision is proposed, the OSE assists the local government in its evaluation of the proposal by analyzing physical availability of a water supply for the proposed development. The OSE subdivision review determines whether water supply is sufficient to sustain the proposed development for 40 years. A 40-year planning horizon may be inadequate for many uses. Some local governments require that water be sufficient for periods of up to 100 years. In these instances, the OSE will assess water availability to the longer period. The OSE opinion regarding the availability of water is not binding, however, and the local government may choose to ignore a finding that the water supply for the development is insufficient.

Another significant subdivision problem is the development of large subdivisions using domestic wells and septic tanks. Community water and wastewater treatment systems have a number of advantages over the use of domestic wells and septic tanks and are typically the best method to provide a safe and secure water supply.

If a community water system is used, adequate water rights and permits must be obtained. The permitting process requires a rigorous determination of water availability, assessment of off-site effects, possible impairment of existing water rights, and the opportunity for notice and protest. Domestic wells, on the other hand, are automatically issued and not subject to a thorough review. As a consequence, domestic wells can adversely impact senior water rights and the ability to meet interstate stream compact obligations, and can reduce the availability of limited water supplies.

Local government land-use decisions should recognize that contamination of water supply sources is more likely when there are numerous domestic wells since every domestic well is a potential avenue along which contaminants may migrate. Community water systems, on the other hand, utilize few wells and are more likely to be properly constructed.

The use of septic tanks, particularly in areas where the water table is shallow, may contaminate water supplies. The County should consider the advantages offered by community wastewater treatment systems, including the potential to use treated effluent to augment stream flows or to provide water for non-potable community reuses such as landscaping. In comparison, the water

## V. Water/Natural Resources

discharged to septic tanks is often lost to evaporation and transpiration or moves as contamination to underlying aquifers. (ISC State Water Plan, 2003)

Several issues were identified during the community pre-planning meetings and with the Steering Committee:

- Not all groundwater in the County is adjudicated, and landowners don't always know if they need a state permit for a well
- Water quality and impact of development on watershed
- Assuring that water remains in the County
- Enforcement of septic regulations and other regulations
- Threat of unregulated subdivisions and septic tanks, inadequate septic systems, and over-concentration of septic tanks in some areas of the county
- Cities/urban areas usurping water resources from rural areas
- Address sewage contamination especially near Eagle Nest Lake
- SE Colfax County's special water concerns with the Ogallala Aquifer
- Maintain open space, wilderness, wildlife habitat- preserve natural character of County
- Look at alternatives that protect habitat/forests and also reduces fire risk through thinning-maintain balance and maintain healthy forests

Following the issue identification process, the Steering Committee developed, based on their values and important community attributes, the following goals and objectives for water and natural resources

### B. Goals, Objectives and Implementation Strategies

Colfax County citizens value our:

- surface and ground waters
- clean air and water, healthy ecosystems/watersheds
- natural resources
- wildlife, forests, wildlife, deer, red fox, black bear, antelopes, birds, reptiles
- natural setting, night sky, hills and mesas

#### **Goal 1. Maintain high water quality standards through protecting surface and groundwater supplies.**

*Objective 1. Surface water and groundwater will be improved in their quality and quantity.*

- Strategy 17. Participate in the cost-share programs with the NM State Forestry and private landowners to improve watershed conditions.
- Strategy 18. Support the Watershed Groups in developing a Watershed Restoration Action Strategy (WRAS) for funding for watershed improvement activities.
- Strategy 19. New development in hydrologically-sensitive areas such as Critical Management Areas (CMAs), flood plains and recharge areas will be done to prevent degradation to these areas.

#### **Goal 2. Encourage responsible ownership and monitoring of septic systems to protect the water quality.**

## V. Water/Natural Resources

*Objective 2. Reduce the number of inadequate or marginal septic tanks through improved information to property owners and more stringent inspections.*

- Strategy 20. Require new developments to include centralized wastewater treatment and disposal, or centralized management of de-centralized wastewater systems when appropriate. Encourage the use of constructed wetland systems when appropriate.

### **Goal 3. Recognize and protect existing water rights as new water demands occur.**

*Objective 3. New water demands will be balanced against senior water rights, while water conservation measures and sustainable new water sources will be pursued to minimize conflicts between different water uses and avoid overburdening any water resource.*

- Strategy 21. Develop guidelines on new domestic well use as a condition of approving development and encourage the use of Mutual Domestic Well systems.
- Strategy 22. Declare the Capulin Basin under the County's management.
- Strategy 23. Support and encourage the OSE to establish a Canadian River Water Master.

### **Goal 4. Implement water conservation practices to preserve the rural/ranching customs and cultures.**

*Objective 4. Per capita water consumption for indoor and outdoor uses should be reduced by 25% by the year 2010.*

- Strategy 24. Develop a Water Conservation Plan by 2005, as per NMSA Chapter 72, Article 14, to qualify for water infrastructure financing.
- Strategy 25. Develop a multi-staged Drought Plan with restrictions that correspond to the severity.
- Strategy 26. Encourage ranchers and farmers to use best management practices in water conservation measures such as laser leveling, drip irrigation, lining ditches and encasing delivery systems.
- Strategy 27. Adopt Landscape guidelines that limit landscaping areas, requiring native or drought-tolerant vegetation, and low-flow water fixtures.

### **Goal 5. Require new developments to have adequate water available to meet their water demands.**

*Objective 5. Water adequacy studies will be required of all developments that propose more than five lots or a community water system.*

- Strategy 28. New developments will demonstrate 40 to 100 year water adequacy plans and acquire water when necessary to meet full demand at build-out.
- Strategy 29. Pursue water rights transfers or leases that could supply projected demand.

### **Goal 6. Protect and enhance areas with high natural resource values such as riparian and wildlife habitats.**

## V. Water/Natural Resources

*Objective 6. Riparian and critical wildlife habitat areas should be protected or mitigation measures be provided to replace disturbed areas.*

- Strategy 30. Identify and map riparian and critical habitat areas and define appropriate levels of mitigation for disturbance in these areas.

### **Goal 7. Develop water use restrictions on oil and gas development and pumping.**

- Strategy 31. Develop land use regulations for that will protect water quality, wildlife habitat and agricultural lands related to oil and gas development. .

### **Goal 8. Strengthen the County's role in state and federal decisions that affect natural resources, endangered species and water.**

*Objective 8. The County will have a higher presence with state and federal officials and participate on committees and legislative lobbying as necessary.*

- Strategy 32. Create a recognized County Water Board.
- Strategy 33. Create a County Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Board.
- Strategy 34. Participate in the Coalition of Counties and work with Federal agencies in having them respect local cultures and values.

## VI. Economic Development

### A. Existing Conditions/Issues

The economy of Colfax County is quite diverse, reflecting the variations in the landscape and natural resources. The overall economy historically has been dominated by livestock ranching, especially in the eastern part of the county. The community of Raton is the commercial center of the county, where much of the retail and service businesses are located, primarily due to access to major transportation routes in the form of rail and later the Interstate highway. The economies of the communities in the Moreno Valley in the western part of the county have traditionally been tied to logging and other natural resource extraction. Moreno Valley communities such as Angel Fire and Eagle Nest are now, however, dependent primarily on tourism, recreation, and retirees.

### Unemployment

In 1996 the unemployment rate in Colfax County peaked at nearly 15 percent. According to the New Mexico Department of Labor, the County's average unemployment rate in 2002 was 5.0 percent. As of September, 2003 the unemployment rate was 7.3 percent, due, in part, to the loss of jobs at the York Canyon mine.

### Employment & Workforce

According to the New Mexico Department of Labor, the total civilian labor force in Colfax County in 2002 was 6,764 people. The three biggest employment sectors are Public Administration, employing an annual average of 1,558 persons; Accommodation & Food Service businesses, employing an annual average of 1,000 persons; and Retail Trade businesses, employing an annual average of 806 persons. Significant job losses occurred with the closure of the York Canyon Mine near Raton in 2003. About 160 miners lost their jobs due to the closure. A minimal skeleton crew continues on at the mine. The Colfax County economy has been dominated by employment in government (approximately 26% of the County's workforce), the Accommodation and Food Services industry (nearly 17% of the County's workforce), and retail businesses (accounting for over 13% of the workforce).

The following table lists the number of people employed in each sector of the Colfax economy as of the end of 2002 according to New Mexico Department of Labor statistics. The table also indicates what percentage of the total workforce is employed in each of the sectors.

## VI. Economic Development

### Colfax County Employment

Sector	Employed	Percent
Agriculture	495	8.25%
Mining	197	3.28%
Utilities	37	0.62%
Construction	275	4.58%
Manufacturing	247	4.12%
Wholesale Trade	38	0.63%
Retail Trade	806	13.43%
Transportation & Warehousing	60	1.00%
Information	60	1.00%
Finance & Insurance	117	1.95%
Real Estate	49	0.82%
Professional & Technical Services	113	1.88%
Management	45	0.75%
Administrative	73	1.22%
Educational Services	**	
Health Care & Social Assistance	327	5.45%
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	43	0.72%
Accommodation & Food Services	1,000	16.66%
Miscellaneous	461	7.68%
Public Administration	1,558	25.96%
Federal	60	1.00%
State	742	12.36%
Local	756	12.60%

### Income & Poverty

In real terms, the average earnings per job have fallen from \$25, 448 in 1970 to \$20,267 in 1999 in Colfax County. The average earnings per job in Colfax County are less than the \$28,283 average earnings in New Mexico in 1999, and less than the \$36,316 average earnings in the United States in 1999.

### Net Residential Adjustment

The Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) tracks information about personal income for Counties by the location of residence and uses that information to calculate the Total Gross Earnings Outflow. Total Gross Earnings Outflow is a measure of how much money is earned in a county by people living outside the county. Conversely, the Total Gross Earnings Inflow is a measure of how much money is earned outside a county by residents who live in the county. Inflow and outflow trends are a strong determination of commuting patterns. When one figure is subtracted from the other, it results in a figure called the Net Residential Adjustment. The trend in Net Residential Adjustment for Colfax County has been negative since 1983 and bottomed out at nearly \$8 million dollars in 1994. This indicates that a large number of jobs in Colfax County were held by residents who lived outside the County and commuted in to work. The most recent

## VI. Economic Development

figures (2000) show that outflow diminished to just 4.1 percent above inflow as a percentage of the total personal income in Colfax County.

### Factors That Could Affect Economic Development

Southwest Planning & Marketing (SPM) conducted extensive interviews within Colfax County in conjunction with the development of the Colfax County Water Plan in 2002. SPM also received assistance from the Colfax Regional Water Planning Steering Committee in identifying the factors that could influence the county's economy and growth. The following is a list of factors that could impact growth in the short or long run.

#### Short Term:

- **Coal bed methane gas production.** Coal bed methane gas production is generating new jobs and some in-migration to Colfax County, although many of the new residents are living across the state line in Colorado.
- **Reopening of the Raton Race Track.** The new owner of the Raton Race Track will reopen the track and estimates employing about 140 people year-round and an additional 80 people on a part-time seasonal basis. The track will have an estimated payroll of \$80 million. Development plans for the facility include a hotel, convention center, RV park, bowling alley, and swimming pool.
- **Growth of Angel Fire Resort.** Substantial investments have been made in the Angel Fire Resort since the new owner took possession of the property. This has created a healthy new business climate in Angel Fire that has reenergized the community and bodes well for future growth.
- **New subdivisions.** There is the potential for a number of new subdivisions to be constructed within the Moreno Valley.
- **Large lot subdivisions.** There have been several subdivisions, Meadowlark Ridge, Cherokee Hills, Bartlett, Bella Vista, Caribrook, Caviness 1 & 2, Linwood and Oxbow Draw, developed on the east side of Raton in the ETZ.
- **Medical Center Expansion.** There are plans to do a \$12 million expansion and modernization of the Miners Colfax Medical Center in Raton.
- **Logging and biomass power plant.** There is the potential for job creation through logging small diameter timber and using part of the timber and scraps in a 13 megawatt biomass power plant. This project could lead to the creation of approximately 50 new permanent jobs.

#### Long Term

- **Water availability and community capacity.** The long-term growth and economic health of the county are dependent upon the continuing availability of water and the ability of community water systems to deliver that water. The lack of capacity currently affects proposed new hookups in Springer and Maxwell. The lack of sewage capacity

## VI. Economic Development

was previously a deterrent to growth in Angel Fire. The current drought could adversely affect development if it continues for an extended period of time.

- **Rural migration.** There has been a national trend for businesses and self-employed individuals to relocate to rural communities with a high quality of life. This trend has spurred in-migration into the Rocky Mountain States to communities such as Santa Fe, Flagstaff, and Durango. This trend is partly a result of the Information Revolution and attendant telecommuting and partly a result of new wealth allowing the purchase of second homes. Rural migration is also bolstered by retirement to the Sunbelt. To the degree that this trend continues and Colfax County positions itself to take advantage of it, there will be additional growth in population and potential new web-based businesses.
- **Constructing a coal bed methane power plant.** There has been a proposal to construct a power plant that utilizes coal bed methane gas. This would create a number of construction jobs, as well as permanent operation jobs.
- **Closing the coal mine.** The York Canyon coal mine closed, eliminating 120 jobs from the Colfax County economy. It is possible that the mine could reopen at some future date.
- **Selling off ranch land for subdivisions.** One of the current factors limiting growth is the lack of developable land around Cimarron and Raton. However, in the long run, it is likely that some of the ranches will sell off land for subdivisions.
- **Expansion or closing of Boys School.** The Springer economy is highly dependent upon the New Mexico Boys School. It is possible that the school will one day be expanded or, in the alternative, closed.
- **Routing of U.S. Highway 87 Corridor.** The federal government plans to build a four-lane “Ports to Plains” U.S. Highway 87, connecting Laredo, Texas and Denver. The primary route will bypass northeast New Mexico; however, there will now be a spur to the route that will include U.S. Highway 87 from Clayton to Raton, where it will connect with I-25. This spur is important to the New Mexico economy and should help accelerate travel-related growth in Colfax County.
- **Tourism growth.** Colfax County has a number of tourist attractions, such as the Philmont Scout Ranch, Vermejo Park, Eagle Nest Lake, Angel Fire ski area, Vietnam Veterans Memorial, NRA Whittington Center, several state parks, and the Capulin Volcano National Monument (just east of Colfax County, but serviced by Raton). In 2003, there were 65,000 visitors to the Raton Visitors Center, 150,000 visitors to the Whittington Center, and 30,000 scouts visiting Philmont.

A unifying theme that emerged in community discussion regarding economic development in Colfax County is the desire to have development that is sensitive to the natural beauty of the region and the County’s traditional ways of life. Tourism if properly funded, planned, and executed can be a viable economic development tool.

## VI. Economic Development

Eagle Nest Lake State Park is a haven for fishing and boating enthusiasts. The Cimarron Canyon featuring the Palisades has developed campsites providing added fishing experiences. The Valle Vidal portion of the Carson National Forest and the Maxwell National Wildlife Area provide wildlife study. Skiing at Angel Fire provides thousands with winter sports. Raton and Springer feature museums for those interested in Colfax's historic past. Colfax County has developed an experienced tourism infrastructure.

Raton, Springer and Cimarron can be cultural centers and heritage destinations, each showcasing different aspects of Colfax County's evolution stretching back over 10,000 years from the Folsom Man, to Native American, Spanish, and Anglo influences. Heritage tourism can be defined as being based upon social and physical structures of the past and present. Heritage tourism, also called cultural or historical tourism, focuses on the cultural landscapes of the past and present that were shaped by human actions. The specific attraction may be a historical battleground, an archeological display, a reconstructed territorial town, or any other type of activity that defines our culture and heritage. Abandoned gold/coal mines, old cattle-driving trails, old forts are all aspects of cultural and heritage tourism. In Colfax County the Folsom Man Site and reconstruction of Dawson City are two potential sites that could be developed into revenue sources for the area. These potential sites have the potential for the U.N.'s World Heritage Site designation. Folsom Man Site can be developed to fully explore our human past. Dawson City could be reconstructed back to its early civic and commercial splendor. It can become a living monument that contributed to our nation's economic growth. It can instruct us how changing technologies and energy sources impacts a particular location, region, state, nation and world.

The learning component of cultural and heritage tourism necessitates interpretation of cultural events and heritage sites. Interpretation can result in a better-managed experience for both the visitor and the resource. Interpretative materials do more than explain the historical or cultural landscapes to the visitor. They can be a powerful story-telling tool that tells the visitor why the resource is important to the community. When integrated with a community awareness program, interpretation can strengthen a sense of community pride in area residents.

The growing need for sustainable tourism is fueled by the demand for destination resources. The entire community must support the development. The community and resources must come first, and the benefits must be seen as more than just economic. There must be a critical mass of attractions and services such as restaurants, motels and shops in the area. The area need not be just the local community, but other communities within the region as well. Raton, Springer, Cimarron and Angel Fire can organize their respective attractions and create tour packages that highlight one another. Other considerations are: maintaining quality in the tourism experience, creating effective interpretative and tourist facilities, directing tourism traffic flow, dedicating appropriate tourism-based revenue to improve or renovate resources, and planning and maintaining an attractive overall environment in the community.

# VI. Economic Development

## B. Goals, Objectives and Implementation Strategies

In terms of economic development in Colfax County, the citizens value:

- local customs and culture of the county.
- respect for private property rights.
- economic development in a controlled and clean means.
- clean industry to employ the young
- strong zoning and subdivisions enforcement
- economic stability
- a reasonable standard of living
- a viable sustainable agriculture industry
- Colfax County as a tourist destination

### **Goal 1. Encourage economic development that does not adversely affect the natural beauty of the County.**

*Objective 1. Adopt guidelines that address the size, appearance, and placement of new commercial development and the manner in which certain land uses are practiced to protect watersheds, viewsheds and air quality.*

- Same as Strategy 5. Establish a set of design compatibility guidelines that offer ways to increase compatibility through setbacks, building heights, landscaping, roof styles, color and materials, etc., and the NFPA-1 (National Fire Protection Assoc.) requirements.

### **Goal 2. Create and provide a stable wage base.**

*Objective 2. The County will seek to increase the creation and recruitment of diverse jobs by 5% each year.*

- Strategy 35. Adopt a Local Economic Development Ordinance per State law that will allow the County to offer business development incentives such as land, infrastructure development, and tax incentives.
- Strategy 36. Submit an application to the NM Economic Development Department to become certified under the Certified Communities Initiative.
- Strategy 37. Prepare a Colfax County Economic Development Plan in partnership with the region's Chambers and Economic development organizations.

### **Goal 3. Sustain existing agriculture and other economic opportunities.**

*Objective 3. Existing prime agricultural land acreage will remain at its present level.*

- Strategy 38. Develop legislation for tax incentives for existing prime agricultural land to help sustain its economic viability.
- Same as Strategy 11. Adopt an Agricultural Land Use designation that provides possible mechanisms for Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs), Purchase of Development Rights (PDRs) and investigates establishing a local non-profit land bank/land trust organization.

## VI. Economic Development

### **Goal 4. Provide economic development programs to assist existing businesses.**

- Strategy 39. Work with the local Chambers of Commerce and businesses on promoting a “Colfax First” program to stem business leakage to Trinidad and other Colorado towns.
- Strategy 40. Convene an annual County-wide Economic Development Summit to bring together business owners with county officials, economic development assistance providers, chambers of commerce, local educational institutions, and representatives of lending institutions to determine the needs of businesses and ways the County can help.
- Strategy 41. Coordinate with assistance providers such as the New Mexico Small Business Development Centers in Las Vegas and Taos to address specific needs identified in the business summit.

### **Goal 5. Enhance and grow existing businesses.**

*Objective 5. Create a job-training program to assist existing businesses with employee development and retention.*

- Strategy 42. Develop a countywide program that brings together administrators, faculty, and students from Luna Community College, the Northwestern New Mexico Educational Foundation and public schools with business owners to explore vocational training needs.
- Strategy 43. Create a higher education institution centrally located in Colfax County.

### **Goal 6. Foster economic development that promotes sustainable and environmentally-friendly forest and land health.**

*Objective 6. At least one out of every ten new jobs created in Colfax County will be in new or existing businesses that are environmentally-friendly and sustainable.*

- Strategy 44. Promote opportunities to develop renewable energy resources, including wind generation and biomass generation.
- Strategy 45. Promote opportunities to develop new businesses associated with the sustainable use of forest products such as small diameter trees and pursue federal funds available for these programs.

### **Goal 7. Establish Colfax County as a tourist destination.**

*Objective 7. Increase tourist visitation to Colfax County by 20 percent over the next ten years by promoting the County’s ranching heritage and lifestyle, and its unique historical, environmental, and recreational opportunities.*

- Same as Strategy 40. Convene an annual County-wide Economic Development Summit to bring together business owners with county officials, economic development assistance providers, chambers of commerce, local educational institutions, and representatives of lending institutions to determine the needs of businesses and ways the County can help.
- Strategy 46. Create a management plan that draws upon traditional and new funding sources such as Small Business Investment Companies, New Markets Venture Capital Companies, New Markets Tax Credits, and Business Investment Companies.

## VI. Economic Development

- Strategy 47. Initiate a campaign in conjunction with the county chambers of commerce to create and promote a “Colfax County Scenic Roadways” system that includes significant cultural, historical, environmental, and recreational assets of the county and associated visitor information.
- Strategy 48. Work with chambers of commerce to update the existing web-based promotional sites and develop links that have visitation information and identifies cultural, historical, environmental, and recreational tourism opportunities.
- Strategy 49. Develop a fresh and aggressive marketing campaign that would distinguish itself both in terms of using technological innovations in e-commerce and partnering with global travel distribution channels. Currently, there are no travel destination portals combining these features.
- Strategy 50. Work with the New Mexico Tourism Department’s Northeast Regional Marketing Group to develop a regional marketing plan.
- Strategy 51. Base tourism development efforts on existing plans, including community comprehensive plans and the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).
- Strategy 52. Put county promotional brochures in chambers of commerce, visitors’ centers, and businesses.

## VII. Civic/Public Services

### A. Existing Conditions/Issues

The Colfax County administration is comprised of eight elected officials: three County Board of Commissioners; County Clerk; County Treasurer; County Assessor; County Sheriff and the Probate Judge. There is an appointed County Manager position that serves in the day to day implementation of the Board of Commissioners policies, and as well as several Department Directors who are responsible for the operations and maintenance of daily County services and functions. The County presently has no Planning or Subdivision enforcement personnel.

The County's major source of revenue is through the property tax and Gross Receipts Tax. The largest County expenditure is on roads and fire protection. The County contracts its solid waste services with Tri-State Management. The only authorized landfill in the County is under ownership of the City of Raton, so all County refuse is transported to the regional landfill in Wagon Mound. There is no County-wide recycling program but Angel Fire and Eagle Nest have a recycling program for cardboard and aluminum.

The County presently provides no services related to parks and recreation, animal control or domestic violence. Among the issues raised by the County citizens on the present services and programs were concerns regarding animal control, solid waste, roads maintenance and fire protection. The County recently established a Fire Marshall position, which will improve the coordination and enforcement of this program in the future.

### B. Goals, Objectives and Implementation Strategies

The community values reflect:

- a common person can still be heard by our county government if the effort is made by that person
- one is able to participate or be involved in variety of activities from music to outdoors to committees working for good change
- low crime and neighborly environment
- if someone needs it – its there
- strong educational system – both primary and secondary
- welcoming communities: friendly, supportive, diversity, helpful civic involvement

#### **Goal 1. Develop standardized fire safety guidelines and infrastructure for municipal and non-municipal areas in the county.**

*Objective 1. Develop an intergovernmental County-wide Fire Safety and Guidelines manual.*

- Strategy 53. The County Fire Marshall will coordinate with the local municipalities, and State Forester in developing an inter-governmental agreement related to Fire Safety Standards and adopt the NFPA-1 (National Fire Protection Assoc) Standard.

#### **Goal 2. Improve County services such as roads, solid waste, fire protection, and county subdivision standards.**

*Objective 2: Complete an overall County Services Efficiency and Fiscal Impact analysis that reviews the current level of services and recommends financing strategies.*

## VII. Civic/Public Services

- Strategy 54. Establish a Planner/Subdivision Reviewer position that can manage the planning/subdivision process and also provide assistance to economic development and historic preservation functions.
- Strategy 55. Initiate a pilot recycling program, involving the other municipalities that will reduce transportation costs, reduce tonnage to the regional landfill, and be subsidized from recycled material revenue.
- Strategy 56. Prepare a Road Management and Maintenance Program that evaluates the overall roadway system and develops level of service standards and a maintenance program that reflects traffic volumes and safety issues.

### **Goal 3. Provide increased services through new programs, or in partnership with other local governments, that reflect the needs of the citizens.**

*Objective 3. The County will initiate a cooperative inter-governmental services summit with the local municipalities that will establish respective roles and responsibilities for public services.*

- Strategy 57. Review the County's Animal Control ordinance and establish a partnership with the municipalities that provides equitable assistance to them in localizing these services and facilities under their control.
- Strategy 58. The County should establish a Domestic Violence coordinator position and develop a shelter for citizens in need of this service.

### **Goal 4. Strengthen the local decision-making with the County Board of Commissioners in a leadership role.**

*Objective 4. The County Commissioners will attend an annual leadership conference on local governance or fiscal management.*

- Strategy 59. The Commissioners will adopt a policy on a performance-based management system that establishes the functions and expectations for County governance and places them in the position of setting the model for leadership.

### **Goal 5. Promote the Arts and Humanities including music, art, and the theater.**

*Objective 5. Provide promotion and support at least four arts and humanities events per year with other local governments and organizations.*

- Strategy 60. Work with local chambers of commerce to create a web-based calendar of events that promotes artistic and cultural events in all communities throughout the county.
- Strategy 61. Offer assistance through the Local Economic Development Ordinance to provide land, surplus office space, and other resources as a way of promoting the development of the arts and the humanities in Colfax County.

## VIII. Housing

### A. Existing Conditions/Issues

Housing in Colfax County has a variety of forms from high-end homes to mobile homes and from suburban houses with paved streets and municipal water systems to isolated cabins on remote dirt roads with independent wells. Despite these differences, there are certain core values that are consistent throughout the county regarding housing needs.

### Housing Occupancy

According to the 2000 Census, of the 8,959 housing units in Colfax County, there were 5,821 occupied housing units. 3,977 of the occupied housing units were occupied by families. Of the total occupied units, 4,233 were owner-occupied and the remaining 1,588 were renter-occupied.

**Housing Occupancy Characteristics**

Subject	Number	Percent
<b>TENURE BY ROOMS</b>		
<b>Owner-occupied housing units</b>	<b>4,233</b>	<b>100</b>
1 room	11	0.3
2 rooms	83	2
3 rooms	164	3.9
4 rooms	616	14.6
5 rooms	1,270	30
6 rooms	926	21.9
7 or more rooms	1,163	27.5
Median	5.5	(X)
<b>Renter-occupied housing units</b>		
<b>Renter-occupied housing units</b>	<b>1,588</b>	<b>100</b>
1 room	19	1.2
2 rooms	85	5.4
3 rooms	291	18.3
4 rooms	442	27.8
5 rooms	422	26.6
6 rooms	172	10.8
7 or more rooms	157	9.9
Median	4.4	(X)
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>TENURE BY BEDROOMS</b>		
<b>Owner-occupied housing units</b>	<b>4,233</b>	<b>100</b>
No bedroom	13	0.3
1 bedroom	231	5.5
2 bedrooms	1,204	28.4
3 bedrooms	2,126	50.2
4 bedrooms	514	12.1
5 or more bedrooms	145	3.4

## VIII. Housing

Renter-occupied housing units	1,588	100
No bedroom	41	2.6
1 bedroom	369	23.2
2 bedrooms	642	40.4
3 bedrooms	428	27
4 bedrooms	83	5.2
5 or more bedrooms	25	1.6

County-wide, 2,264 housing units were listed as used for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. Nearly half of this figure, 1,217 housing units, can be attributed to the community of Angel Fire, due to its unique status as a tourist resort. The percentage of occupied housing for most Colfax County communities, such as Raton, Maxwell, and Springer, is in the range of 75 to 80 percent. The percentage of occupied housing in Angel Fire, however, is much lower, at approximately 26 percent, reflecting the high number of seasonal and rental homes in the community.

### Housing Market

A large amount of the housing market activity in terms of sales of existing houses takes place in and around the City of Raton and in Angel Fire. Within the Raton housing market, defined as an area within a 30 mile radius of the city center, the average home value is \$65,556. The median home value, the value that divides the distribution of home values in two equal parts, one-half above and one-half below, was \$59,260 in September 2003 in the Raton market (September 2003 MLS market data). By comparison the median value of a home in Angel Fire was \$206,800 (2000 Census figure).

### Age of Housing

Nearly half of the homes in the Raton area were built in 1949 or before. Only 4 percent of the housing units in the Raton area were built after 1985. This is typical of the county, with the exception of Angel Fire, where the age of the housing stock is substantially less, due to the fact that the community was largely built after 1980.

### Affordable Housing

Each community in Colfax County has unique and diverse housing issues, and many of these issues are addressed by the market or by municipalities. However, a County-wide problem is the availability of affordable housing. This problem might best be addressed by a County-coordinated effort. Typically, affordable housing is defined as housing which costs a resident no more than 30 percent of their monthly income to purchase or 25 percent of their monthly income to rent. Affordable housing is generally perceived to be lacking within Colfax County for large families living on fixed incomes, for seniors, and for residents who hold low wage jobs, particularly for those residents who live in communities that have high housing costs, such as Angel Fire. Angel Fire offers few low cost housing opportunities, often forcing seasonal and low wage earners who work in the community to commute from other areas of the county or even from outside of the county. Mobile homes have been and will continue to be a viable affordable housing option for many county residents. In fact, mobile homes account for nearly 22 percent of the occupied housing units in the county.

## VIII. Housing

### Low Income & Elderly Housing Statistics

SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH HOUSEHOLDER 65 YEARS AND OVER	Number	Percent
<b>Occupied housing units</b>	<b>1,668</b>	<b>100</b>
Owner occupied	1,418	85
Less than 1.01 occupants per room	1,666	99.9
No telephone service	7	0.4
No vehicle available	196	11.8
Below poverty level	175	10.5
With meals included in rent	0	0
<b>SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF HOUSEHOLDS BELOW POVERTY LEVEL</b>		
<b>Owner-occupied housing units</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>100</b>
Lacking complete plumbing facilities	0	0
1.01 or more occupants per room	28	7.1
Built 1939 or earlier	92	23.2
Householder 65 years and over	126	31.7
With public assistance income	32	8.1
With Social Security income	171	43.1
No telephone service	15	3.8
<b>Renter-occupied housing units</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>100</b>
Lacking complete plumbing facilities	6	1.4
1.01 or more occupants per room	28	6.3
Built 1939 or earlier	99	22.3
Householder 65 years and over	49	11.1
With public assistance income	114	25.7
With Social Security income	72	16.3
No telephone service	52	11.7

## VIII. Housing

### B. Goals, Objectives and Implementation Strategies

The community values:

- housing and services for the elderly.
- affordability and availability for all residents.
- homeownership.
- support for existing housing authorities.
- diverse and mixed income neighborhoods and communities.

#### **Goal 1 – Increase the availability of affordable housing.**

*Objective 1. Make affordable housing available for 10% of those who are in the 80% median income range in every community in Colfax County that has a population greater than 500 residents.*

- Strategy 62. Establish incentives in future county land use regulations to promote the construction of affordable housing.
- Strategy 63. Work with US Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) and existing local housing authorities to establish a HUD Difficult Development Area designation in County.
- Strategy 64. Identify tracts of land within or adjacent to communities that could be utilized for affordable housing, including senior housing.
- Strategy 65. Bring in off-site infrastructure to sites to be utilized for affordable housing.
- Strategy 66. Coordinate County activity with Housing Summit Meeting proposed in the 2003 Raton Comprehensive Plan.\*\*
- Strategy 67. Establish a Colfax County Housing coalition with existing housing authorities and providers and meet quarterly.
- Strategy 68. Work with major employers, such as Angel Fire Resort, to provide housing for workers.
- Strategy 69. Contact organizations that provide senior housing, such as Jubilee Housing and Encino in Albuquerque, to explore the development of senior housing and independent and assisted-living projects.

#### **Goal 2 – Create a countywide housing acquisition and rehabilitation program.**

*Objective 2. Establish a County-sponsored Section 8 housing voucher program.*

- Strategy 70. Collaborate with HUD in applying for Section 8 housing vouchers and coordinate with the region's community-housing authorities to provide them affordable housing assistance.

\*\* "Housing Summit Meeting: On a yearly basis, the City of Raton in conjunction with the Raton Housing Authority will hold a housing summit with different housing organizations, lenders, realtors, seniors, and contractors in the City and Colfax County. The purpose of the summit is to identify housing issues, share information, and identify potential housing funding sources and programs to facilitate the development of housing in Raton." (City of Raton Comprehensive Plan, 2003, p. 60)

# IX. Transportation

## A. Existing Conditions/Issues

The County is well positioned with respect to transportation systems and has several regionally and nationally-recognized scenic corridors.

Interstate 25, running north and south through the County, serves as the backbone of the transportation system, connecting the County with Colorado and destinations north such as Denver, and to the southern portions of the State through to El Paso, Texas. US 64/87 is also a principal roadway that carries traffic east – west through the County to Oklahoma, Texas and Kansas. Other significant roadways include US 56 from Springer to the east, State Route 38 from Eagle Nest to Taos County and Highway 434 from Angel Fire to Las Vegas via Mora.

Among the assets of the transportation system, the County has a National Scenic By-way designation along I-25 and US 56. There is also the historically-designated Santa Fe Trail, which has three segments traversing the County. On a regional level, the Enchanted Circle loops through the western part of the County along Highways 38 and 64, connecting Eagle Nest and Angel Fire to the communities of Taos, Questa and Red River.

Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad serves the County and runs parallel to I-25 through the County. There is also AMTRAK service available, with a passenger depot located in Raton.

There are three public airports within Colfax County, located near Raton, Angel Fire and Springer. The County owns and manages the Angel Fire Airport, located one mile northwest of the town of Angel Fire. The airport has one runway, 17-35, and is 8900 feet long at an elevation of 9400' msl. There is a Fixed Base Operator (FBO) on-site with full services available. There presently is not commercial air service available but several charters frequent the airport. The City of Raton owns and manages the Raton/Crews Field Airport, which is located 10 miles southwest of the city. This airport has two runways, with the longest being 6300'. There is an on-site FBO who provides services, but there is no commercial air service operating at the airport. Springer Airport, with a 5000' paved runway, is an unmanned airstrip with no services available.

### US 64/87 Ports to Plains Feasibility Study

TEA-21 (Transportation Enhancement Act for 21<sup>st</sup> Century) designated the Ports to Plains corridor as one of the 43 “High Priority Corridors” on the National Highway System (NHS). The Ports to Plains corridor is designated as Corridor 38 in TEA-21, which is described as the Ports to Plains Corridor from the Mexican border via I-25 to Denver, Colorado. As with other High Priority Corridors, the importance of the Ports to Plains corridor is related to its direct connection with the US/Mexico border and potential to serve international trade and promote economic development. The portion of the study area which impacts New Mexico is referred to in the Ports to Plains Feasibility Study as the North Study Area and represents the portion of the route along US 87 between Amarillo, TX and Raton, NM and I-25 between Raton, NM and Denver, CO. Pedestrian facilities and curb and gutter sections vary from town to town. The existing alignment, which passes through the towns of Raton, Capulin, Des Moines, Grenville, Mt. Dora and Clayton, have a variety of existing roadway sections. Modifications of existing alignments through these towns will be evaluated for need during the study phase of the proposed project

## IX. Transportation

corridor. Opportunities to improve the vertical and horizontal geometry on this portion of the facility and addition of lanes to provide increased capacity would greatly enhance this facilities ability to carry heavy truck traffic. Recreational, general public and heavy commercial, appear to be the primary users of this roadway. The Department has performed a corridor study for US 64/87. Alignment alternatives and associated costs have been developed and the intent is to reconstruct the existing facility into a divided four-lane alignment. Funding for detailed or final design activities for this proposed corridor improvement is through the GRIP (Governor Richardson's Investment Partnership).

The issues related to transportation expressed by the citizens were predominately related to safety on several highways, both for vehicles and bicyclists, including US 64/87 east of Raotn, and US 64 between Cimarron and Eagle Nest. Another significant issue was concerns with visual blight and clutter along the scenic corridors from billboards, towers and salvage yards.

### **B. Goals, Objectives and Implementation Strategies**

The citizens of Colfax County value:

- our lack of congestion as compared to other areas of the mountain west
- our scenic roadways and byways

#### **Goal 1. Improve the safety and maintenance of the highway system.**

*Objective 1. Highway accidents will be reduced by 5% per year as a result of safety improvements instituted in cooperation with the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration.*

- Strategy 71. Review the highway accident statistics and prioritize the five highest-risk roadways and their causes, and working with the NMDOT, program these safety improvements in the STIP (State Transportation Improvements Program).
- Same as Strategy 56. Prepare a Road Management and Maintenance Program that evaluates the overall roadway system and develops level of service standards and a maintenance program that reflects traffic volumes and safety issues.

#### **Goal 2. Strengthen the intermodal transportation connections between rail, airports, highways and communities.**

*Objective 2. The County will collaborate with the City of Raton in developing an Intermodal Transportation Center (ITC) in the vicinity of the Raton/Crews Field Airport.*

- Strategy 72. Provide assistance and support to the City of Raton in preparing an Intermodal Transportation System study that examines the feasibility of developing an ITC near the Raton/Crew Fields Airport.
- Strategy 73. In collaboration with local chambers of commerce, pursue incentives for attracting commercial air service into the Angel Fire and Raton/Crews Field airports.
- Strategy 74. Negotiate the transfer of the Angel Fire Airport from the County to the Village of Angel Fire.

## IX. Transportation

### **Goal 3. Promote opportunities for alternative modes of transportation such as biking, pedestrian and public transportation between destinations.**

*Objective 3. Increase the number and lengths of bikeways/multi-use pathways in the County by an additional 5 miles per year.*

- Strategy 75. Develop a Bikeways/Trails Master Plan, in conjunction with local municipalities and the NMDOT that prioritizes primary connections, e.g., such as Raton Pass, Cimarron Canyon and Angel Fire, and pursue funding through TEA-21 Enhancement sources.

### **Goal 4. Enhance and expand the Scenic Roadways system in the County, including the Enchanted Circle and Santa Fe Trail and other tourist-related scenic drives in the County.**

*Objective 4. The County will facilitate the increase in distance of new roadways, or enhancement improvements to existing roadways, with a scenic roadway designation.*

- Strategy 76. In partnership with the local municipalities and the NMDOT, prepare an assessment of County and State routes that could qualify as part of a Colfax County Scenic Roadways system designation.
- Strategy 77. Assess feasibility of extending SR 555 through Vermejo Park to the Costilla Creek/Amalia area.
- Same as Strategy 13. Scenic corridors may be designated and include development guidelines.
- Same as Strategy 47. Initiate a campaign in conjunction with the county chambers of commerce to create and promote a “Colfax County Scenic Roadways” system that includes significant cultural, historical, environmental, and recreational assets of the county and associated visitor information

## X. Implementation

### A. Implementation Priorities

The Implementation Strategies identified under each of the Plan Elements were prioritized by the Steering Committee into three phases, Critical Needs (2004-2006), Phase I (2007-2012) and Phase II (2013-2018). The results of the Steering Committee's rankings were weighted and the following overall prioritization was established based on the relative rankings within each Element.

#### CRITICAL NEED STRATEGIES: 2004-2006

##### Land Use/Community Character

- Strategy 3. Create a Land Use District Map as part of the proposed Land Use Regulations that identifies areas appropriate for higher intensity development and establish benefit areas where the County can offer credits on development fees, maintenance costs or property taxes.
- Strategy 8. Develop guidelines for uses to be compatible to rural or neighborhood characteristics such as cellular towers, oil and gas production, or other utility and industrial uses
- Strategy 14. Enforce the NM Night Sky Protection Act and adopt specific lighting guidelines or regulations to include requirements on lighting standards such as shielding, pole heights, lighting types and hours of operation.

##### Water/Natural Resources

- Strategy 18. Support the Watershed Groups in developing a Watershed Restoration Action Strategy (WRAS) for funding for watershed improvement activities.
- Strategy 20. Require new developments to include centralized wastewater treatment and disposal, or centralized management of de-centralized wastewater systems when appropriate.
- Strategy 21. Develop guidelines on new domestic well use as a condition of approving development and encourage the use of Mutual Domestic Well systems.
- Strategy 22. Declare the Capulin Basin under County's management
- Strategy 31. Develop land use regulations that will protect water quality, wildlife habitat and agricultural lands related to oil and gas development.

##### Economic Development

- Strategy 35. Adopt a Local Economic Development Ordinance per State law that will allow the County to offer business development incentives such as land, infrastructure development, and tax incentives.
- Strategy 37. Prepare a Colfax County Economic Development Plan in partnership with the region's Chambers and Economic development organizations.
- Strategy 40. Convene an annual County-wide Economic Development Summit to bring together business owners with county officials, economic development assistance providers, chambers of commerce, local educational institutions, and representatives of lending institutions to determine the needs of businesses and ways the County can help.

## X. Implementation

- Strategy 45. Promote opportunities to develop new businesses associated with the sustainable use of forest products such as small diameter trees and pursue federal funds available for these programs.
- Strategy 50. Work with the New Mexico Tourism Department's Northeast Regional Marketing Group to develop a regional marketing plan.

### **Civic/Public Services**

- Strategy 53. The County Fire Marshall will coordinate with the local municipalities, and State Forester in developing an inter-governmental agreement related to Fire Safety Standards and adopt NFPA-1 (National Fire Protection Assoc) Standard.
- Strategy 54. Establish a Planner/Subdivision Reviewer position that can manage the planning/subdivision process and also provide assistance to economic development and historic preservation functions.
- Strategy 58. The County should establish a Domestic Violence coordinator position and develop a shelter for citizens in need of this service.

### **Housing**

- Strategy 63. Work with US Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) and existing local housing authorities to establish a HUD Difficult Development Area designation for Colfax County.
- Strategy 64. Identify tracts of land within or adjacent to communities that could be utilized for affordable housing, including senior housing.
- Strategy 67. Establish a Colfax County Housing coalition with existing housing authorities and providers and meet quarterly.

### **Transportation**

- Strategy 71. Review the highway accident statistics and prioritize the five highest-risk roadways and their causes, and working with the NMDOT, program these safety improvements in the STIP (State Transportation Improvements Program).
- Same as Strategy 56. Prepare a Road Management and Maintenance Program that evaluates the overall roadway system and develops level of service standards and a maintenance program that reflects traffic volumes and safety issues.
- Strategy 75. Develop a Bikeways/Trails Master Plan, in conjunction with local municipalities and the NMDOT that prioritizes primary connections, e.g., such as Raton Pass, Cimarron Canyon and Angel Fire, and pursue funding through TEA-21 Enhancement sources.

# X. Implementation

## PHASE II STRATEGIES: 2007-2012

### Land Use/Community Character

- Strategy 1. Revise the County's subdivision ordinance to include a Conservation Subdivision option that provides a developer a 10% density in bonus in residences for providing a minimum of 30% of the plat area as protected open space.
- Strategy 2. Prepare and adopt Land Use Regulations that provide incentives, such as density bonuses or fee waivers, for new developments, that provide 30% of their area as protected open space.
- Strategy 4. Coordinate with the City of Raton to review their current ETZ policy on water service and minimum lot sizes to establish a mutually beneficial service agreement.
- Strategy 5. Establish a set of design compatibility guidelines that offer ways to increase compatibility through setbacks, building heights, landscaping, roof styles, color and materials, etc., and the NFPA-1 (National Fire Protection Assoc) requirements.
- Strategy 6. Establish design guidelines for manufactured homes parks and subdivisions to ensure that they meet minimum appearance standards. Such measures will help maintain the viability of manufactured homes as low cost housing options, while protecting property values and helping maintain the important aesthetic qualities of the county that are the basis of economic development efforts, such as the promotion of tourism.
- Strategy 12. Encourage the charitable donation of land by landowners for Historic, Cultural, and Scenic Easements to non-profit land bank/land trust organizations that can reduce their state and federal income and inheritance taxes under NMSA 1995, Chapter 137.

### Water/Natural Resources

- Strategy 19. New development in hydrologically-sensitive areas such as Critical Management Areas, (CMAs), flood plains and recharge areas will prevent degradation to these areas.
- Strategy 24. Develop a Water Conservation Plan as per NMSA Chapter 72, Article 14, to qualify for water infrastructure financing.
- Strategy 25. Develop a multi-staged Drought Plan with restrictions that correspond to the severity.
- Strategy 30. Identify and map riparian and critical habitat areas and define appropriate levels of mitigation for disturbance in these areas.
- Strategy 32. Create a recognized County Water Board.
- Strategy 34. Participate in the Coalition of Counties and work with Federal agencies in having them respect local cultures and values.

### Economic Development

- Strategy 36. Submit an application to the NM Economic Development Department to become certified under the Certified Communities Initiative.

## X. Implementation

- Strategy 38. Develop legislation for tax incentives for existing agricultural land to help sustain its economic viability.
- Strategy 39. Work with the local Chambers of Commerce and businesses on promoting a “Colfax First” program to stem business leakage to Trinidad and other Colorado towns.
- Strategy 41. Coordinate with assistance providers such as the New Mexico Small Business Development Centers in Las Vegas and Taos to address specific needs identified in the business summit.
- Strategy 42. Develop a countywide program that brings together administrators, faculty, and students from Luna Community College, the Northeastern New Mexico Educational Foundation and public schools with business owners to explore vocational training needs.
- Strategy 44. Promote opportunities to develop renewable energy resources, including wind generation and biomass generation.
- Strategy 48. Work with chambers of commerce to update the existing web-based promotional sites and develop links that have visitation information and identifies cultural, historical, environmental, and recreational tourism opportunities.
- Strategy 51. Base tourism development efforts on existing plans, including community comprehensive plans and the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).

### **Civic/Public Services**

- Strategy 55. Initiate a pilot recycling program, involving the other municipalities that will reduce transportation costs, reduce tonnage to the regional landfill, and be subsidized from recycled material revenue.
- Strategy 57. Review the County’s Animal Control ordinance and establish a partnership with the municipalities that provides equitable assistance to them in localizing these services and facilities under their control.
- Strategy 59. The Commissioners will adopt a policy on a performance-based management system that establishes the functions and expectations for County governance and places them in the position of setting the model for leadership.

### **Housing**

- Strategy 62. Establish incentives in future county land use regulations to promote the construction of affordable housing.
- Strategy 66. Coordinate County activity with Housing Summit Meeting proposed in the 2003 Raton Comprehensive Plan.\*\*
- Strategy 70. Collaborate with HUD in applying for Section 8 housing vouchers and coordinate with the region’s community-housing authorities to provide them affordable housing assistance.

### **Transportation**

## X. Implementation

- Strategy 73. In collaboration with local chambers of commerce, pursue incentives for attracting commercial air service into the Angel Fire and Raton/Crews Field airports.
- Strategy 74. Negotiate the transfer of the Angel Fire Airport from the County to the Village of Angel Fire.
- Strategy 76. In partnership with the local municipalities and the NMDOT, prepare an assessment of County and State routes that could qualify as part of a Colfax County Scenic Roadways system designation.
- Strategy 47. Initiate a campaign in conjunction with the County Chambers of Commerce to create and promote a “Colfax County Scenic Roadways” system that includes significant cultural, historical, environmental, and recreational assets of the county and associated visitor information.

# X. Implementation

## PHASE III STRATEGIES: 2013- 2018

### Land Use/Community Character

- Strategy 7. Develop Historic District designations on neighborhoods or buildings which have historically contributing qualities as defined by the NM State Historic Preservation Division.
- Strategy 9. Form an inter-jurisdictional/agency management network that serves to inform the participating towns and agencies of proposed developments and improvements.
- Strategy 10. The County, in partnership with the USDA and Cooperative Extension Service, will inform ranchers and farmers to place conservation easements on their property and take advantage of the tax benefits offered by NM legislation.
- Strategy 11. Adopt an Agricultural Land Use designation that provides possible mechanisms for Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs), Purchase of Development Rights (PDRs) and investigates establishing a local non-profit land bank/land trust organization.
- Strategy 13. Scenic corridors may be designated and include development guidelines.
- Strategy 15. Define grading guidelines on slopes above 15% within the Terrain Management section of the Subdivision Regulations.
- Strategy 16. Develop a Protected Peaks and Ridges overlay zone based on topographical and aerial mapping of prominent peaks and ridges.

### Water/Natural Resources

- Strategy 17. Participate in the cost-share programs with the NM State Forestry and private landowners to improve watershed conditions.
- Strategy 23. Support and encourage the OSE to establish a Canadian River Water Master.
- Strategy 26. Encourage ranchers and farmers to use best management practices for water conservation measures such as laser leveling, drip irrigation, lining ditches and encasing delivery systems.
- Strategy 27. Adopt Landscape guidelines limiting landscaping areas, requiring native or drought-tolerant vegetation, and low-flow water fixtures
- Strategy 28. New developments will demonstrate 40 to 100 year water adequacy plans and acquire water when necessary to meet full demand at build-out.
- Strategy 29. Pursue water rights transfers or leases that could supply projected demand.
- Strategy 33. Create a County Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Board

### Economic Development

- Strategy 43. Create a higher education institution centrally located in Colfax County.

## X. Implementation

- Strategy 46. Create a management plan that draws upon traditional and new funding sources such as Small Business Investment Companies, New Markets Venture Capital Companies, New Markets Tax Credits, and Business Investment Companies.
- Strategy 47. Initiate a campaign in conjunction with the County Chambers of Commerce to create and promote a “Colfax County Scenic Roadways” system that includes significant cultural, historical, environmental, and recreational assets of the county and associated visitor information.
- Strategy 49. Develop a fresh and aggressive marketing campaign that would distinguish itself both in terms of using technological innovations in e-commerce and partnering with global travel distribution channels. Currently, there are no travel destination portals combining these features.
- Strategy 52. Put county promotional brochures in chambers of commerce, visitors’ centers, and businesses.

### Civic/Public Services

- Strategy 60. Work with local chambers of commerce to create a web-based calendar of events that promotes artistic and cultural events in all communities throughout the county.
- Strategy 61. Offer assistance through the Local Economic Development Ordinance to provide land, surplus office space, and other resources as a way of promoting the development of the arts and the humanities in Colfax County.

### Housing

- Strategy 65. Bring in off-site infrastructure to sites to be utilized for affordable housing.
- Strategy 68. Work with major employers, such as Angel Fire Resort, to provide housing for workers.
- Strategy 69. Contact organizations that provide senior housing, such as Jubilee Housing and Encino in Albuquerque, to explore the development of senior housing and independent and assisted-living projects.

### Transportation

- Strategy 72. Provide assistance and support to the City of Raton in preparing an Intermodal Transportation System study that examines the feasibility of developing an ITC near the Raton/Crew Fields Airport.
- Strategy 77. Assess feasibility of extending SR 555 through Vermejo Park to the Costilla Creek/Amalia area.

## B. Plan Administration/Amendment

The Comprehensive Plan for Colfax County is intended to be a dynamic document that should be implemented and reviewed on a continuous basis. As priorities and conditions change, so should these changes be reflected in the Plan. There should be a formal update of the Plan every five years, using updated information from the Census and other sources on socio-economic data.

# XI. Appendices

## Appendix A Community Meetings Comments November 4, 5, and 6, 2003

Community comments listed at the end of each Element in response to the after the Values and Goals that were presented at the meetings. Comments are organized by the three meeting locations with Angel Fire indicated in Arial font, *Springer in Script font* and *Raton in Times Roman Italics*. A copy of the display ad published in the three local papers and posted at several public locations is also included.

### I. Land Use/Community Character Element

Community Comments:

- Communication- especially between CID and county assessor and all gov't entities.
- Recreational opportunities- baseball fields, softball, soccer fields, youth and adult. I agree- we need facilities!
- Biodiversity preservation
- Some kind of rezoning county wide to eliminate unsightly areas.
- We need good facilities for all sports- bringing in athletes to exercise at our altitude could be a major income.
- Encourage biodiversity protection in making land use planning decisions. Planning requirements for natural resources, open space, wildlife habitat and critical and sensitive areas.
- Encourage existing land owners to remove dead fall and thin those lots to prevent fires or slow the pace of the fire.
- Access/availability to federal land (Carson Nat. Forest), State trust land, State parks/recreation areas for horseback riding and other activities (bikes, hikes, runs, explore)
- Viewsheds can only be protected with design guidelines/ regulations.
- Support the Enchanted Circle Scenic Byway effort.
- Keep as much land as possible open, multi use
- Better sports facilities- indoor soccer rink, ice hockey rink, bowling, dirt bike tracks.
- Pave main dirt roads
- *Noise and loud music restrictions for enjoyment of nature.*
- *Restrict areas especially for ATVs*
- *Every community should expand but not at the expense of the people- habitat and nature.*
- *Land access is an issue.*
- *Respect community "personalities", but provide overall direction for land use for whole county.*
- *New development needs to reflect Firewise Concepts in its planning to prevent California problems here.*
- *Respect private property rights.*
- *Slow down development in Angel Fire*

### II. Water/Natural Resources Element

- Goal#3: objection by municipalities because goes against NM Constitution; problem is existing water right protection does not address the problem.

## XI. Appendices

- Healthy forests
- Resource recovery using forest downfall to make electricity.
- County needs political will to regulate development in growth area and where scenic beauty/ tourism meet.
- Establish night sky lighting requirements.
- Encourage use of effluent for municipal parks. New residential septic systems be designed to have the ability to use effluent.
- *Environmental impact of all water courses and ditches to bring water to Springer.*
- *Pipe or live ditches*
- *Ogallala aquifer*
- *Enhance water distribution infrastructure to promote conservation of water*
- *A lot of water resources leaves County*
- *Whittington Center/Conference center*
  - *Water resources*
  - *Adventure Camp*
  - *Nature study*
  - *Outdoor education*
  - *Conservation, soil and wildlife*
  - *Grasses*
  - *Buffalo*
- *Do not protect wildlife if it means jobs are lost*
- *Protect 1<sup>st</sup> tier and 2<sup>nd</sup> tier water rights from our government taking them to over-populated metros, ie, golf courses.*

### III. Economic Development Element

- Issue: best use of water regarding economic development: in terms of generating \$ (i.e., ED) and how best can the county use water.  
Example: Angel Fire snow-making operation can potentially generate more \$/ac ft of water than an agriculture operation using same amount of water (tourism vs ag).
- Need to start discussion of how to make the greatest economic contribution using a finite water supply.
- Item #3 of goals statement list is questionable in terms of using water in existing agric. businesses instead of using it for new or different types of businesses.
- Sustainability
- Air travel
- Moreno Valley highway access via Mora/Ocate
- Promote natural resources- birding , trails, mtn biking, etc., “peace and quiet”
- Affordable housing.
- Without developments standards, there are no guarantees that economic development will not effect the natural beauty of the county.
- Need county backbone.
- Historic Preservation as an econ dev strategy
- Hire a County Planner
- Goal 1- yes! Growth is not necessarily better- we do not want to give up “quiet-peace” for \$.
- *Create centers for teens to be able to be teens*
- *Create area parks for young children to play safely*

## XI. Appendices

- *County needs to oversee (manage) econ dev that goes beyond local community interest - cooperate.*
- *Work force training for good quality jobs.*
- *Favor local contractors in govt. contracts.*
- *Zoning in county*
- *Clean up junk and broken vehicles and equipment*
- *Civic pride*
- *Heavy industrial zoning (outside Raton) Airport*
- *Vocational training*
- *Need an entity for assuring incoming industry is appropriate for our area, i.e., "Fits"- "does not suck up all the oxygen"! E.g., maybe: Biomass: air quality? Enough fuel for long term? Water quality?*
- *Animal units per acre 40 acres/u AU/acre (overgrazing)*
- *Work ethic*
- *Bring together all elements of the community to develop a plan.*
- *Find a way to share the land and its lessons with others - city kids.*
- *Where is the revenue for our county from the \$135 million a year from (extraction/gas wells) - we are getting \$300,000 per day.*

### IV. Civic/Public Services Element

- *Animal humane issues*
- *Computer access to public records - satellite offices*
- *Health care -most important*
- *Tech school- Junior College*
- *Improve garbage to reduce dumping by contractor's etc that they don't pay for ie remove dumpsters*
- *expand recycling efforts*
- *Moreno Valley representation*
- *Stray dogs*
- *Promote Fire-wise Community concepts in mountain areas.*
- *Expand dumpsters for contractors.*
- *Please do not remove dumpsters - move or empty more often. If dumpsters are removed we'll have more trash across the county.*
- *Goal 3 is super!*
- *College level courses- all areas- nursing, administration/business, teachers, truck driving, trades, car repair, plumbers, cattle auction/sales*
- *Goal #4 is good...it needs to be stressed and structure needs to be put in place to enhance role of Commissioners and their involvement at the community level.*
- *Commissioners need to be more involved @ the local levels, i.e., spend time in county offices and state-granted county programs.*
- *Encourage development of alterative energy sources that can be localized.*
- *Extra-territorial zone: "They ruled by city but they don't vote for city elections" (taxation without representation)*
- *Who will pay enforcement? Fire, sheriff, roads, chip-seal.*
- *Review plan every 5 years and update*

# XI. Appendices

## V. Housing Element

- Affordable housing is the critical key to getting businesses in the valley. Ditto. Yes! Ditto!
- Need affordable housing developments in the valley.
- Colfax County needs HUD's
- DDA designation (Difficult Development Area) so that housing corps can pursue Fed housing credits for affordable housing
- *Section 8 allocations*
- *Housing coalition*
- *Zone new mobile house subdivisions/mobile home parks*
- *Independent and assisted living! (this is a must)*
- *Basic home repair for seniors*
- *Emergency shelter- transits*
- *Multi-family homes*
- *Battered women shelter*
- *Single person apts- not elderly person*
- *Middle income rental*
- *No plumbers/ builders*
- *Rehabilitation of old houses*
- *Adaptive reuse*
- *Habitat for humanity*
- *Encourage use of housing/home in town as opposed to new subdivisions. In fill or tax vacant lots.*
- *Planned community. 10% parks or open land. Scenic or conservation easements*

## VI. Transportation Element

- Uniform speed limit on main roads
- Bike lanes on scenic routes through county – not like Taos Canyon from 3' to 0' wide
- Pave State Road 120
- Improve airports (How many would this serve? Money spent better elsewhere)
- Save the roads like Highway 21 and 39. Don't them away. Don't allow development and reversion to private land and gates.
- Develop air service.
- Gravel roads – B-7, B-8, B-10
- *Continue paving of road to Springer Lake, making it more accessible to motorists and tourists who do not have 4 wheel drive vehicles.*
- *Promote/expand Scenic By-ways system in County*
- *Rails with trails*
- *Bicycle paths over Raton pass.*
- *Taxi service*

# XI. Appendices

## Community Meeting Notice