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CHAPTER

PURPOSE & PLANNING CONTEXT

LAS CRUCES PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN



R.L. Young Park is a cherished public gathering space in the heart of Las Cruces.

SECTION 1:

RELEVANCE OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Access to parks, open spaces, and recreational activities available within a community greatly influence resident quality of life. The Las Cruces Parks and Recreation Department oversees a multitude of public spaces for meeting and socialization, and appreciating the city's natural beauty and cultural heritage; as well as facilities and programs for exercise and active recreation which promote a shared community identity and pride.

The population of the city of Las Cruces continues to grow at a steady rate. The city's population increased by 31 percent between 2000 and 2010 - substantially exceeding the growth rates of Doña Ana County (20%) and the State of New Mexico (13%) during the same time frame. More recent estimates suggest that the city's growth rate over the last decade has remained consistent.

Las Cruces' growth is projected to continue over the course of the next several decades. The Geospatial and Population Studies Department at the University of New Mexico estimates the population of Las Cruces will add approximately 27,000 residents by 2040, increasing 26 percent. Recently adopted local plans and studies suggest similar city-wide growth.

Current and new residents have an expectation of services offered by the City. Rapid population growth in a limited time can strain city services and infrastructure. Services and infrastructure impacted include, parks, recreational programs, park facilities, roadways, water, wastewater, public safety, and more.

The 2012 *Las Cruces Parks and Recreation Department Parks and Recreation Master Plan & Park Impact Fee Update* presented multiple essential public benefits in having access to public parks which include the following:

- Physical activity makes people healthier.
- Physical activity increases with park access.
- Contact with the natural world improves physical and psychological health.
- Residential and commercial property values increase.
- Value is added to community and economic development sustainability.
- Benefits of tourism are enhanced.
- Trees are effective in improving air quality.
- Trees control storm water and reduce erosion.
- Crime and juvenile delinquency are reduced.
- Recreational opportunities for all ages are provided.
- Stable neighborhoods and strong neighborhoods are created.
- Children are happier, healthier, with access to frequent and varied outdoor play.

These acknowledged benefits are summarized in **Figure 1.1, Essential Benefits of Parks** (page 5).

SECTION 2:

MASTER PLAN PARAMETERS AND VISION

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The 2019 Las Cruces Parks and Recreation Master Plan provides updated and timely guidance on the provision of public park spaces and recreational opportunities to the residents of Las Cruces and visitors to the city. The Plan evaluates community preferences, parkland and facility distribution, community programs and events, system-wide conditions and maintenance, and municipal service delivery to ensure current and future residents of Las Cruces have the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of a diverse parks and recreation system.

Key plan components include:

- Evaluation of regional and national trends in the delivery of parks and recreation services;
- Determination of the future level of service for park space by area and accessibility;
- Assessment of park condition to prioritize maintenance activities;
- Evaluation of the condition and availability of facilities and need for new facility development;
- Review of recreation programming and events, and recommend adjustments to meet public preferences;
- Evaluation of recreational partnerships; and
- Review of funding opportunities.

The findings related to the key plan components listed above are used to generate a system-level action plan for the future delivery of park space and recreation opportunities that maximize the benefits that parks can provide Las Cruces as identified in

Figure 1.1, Essential Benefits of Parks.

CAPITAL PROGRAMMING

This Plan includes recommendations on short-term and long-range capital investments and departmental budgeting. The Plan's recommended implementation program (**Chapter 5**) is structured to balance public needs and desires with the finite resources that can be applied toward the delivery of park and recreation services. Recommended investments within the Plan have been organized to correspond with projects identified in the City's capital improvements plan (CIP) and recently approved general obligation (GO) bond for park system service expansion. The Plan's implementation program *informs* the City of possible future adjustments to existing capital project lists but does not replace them. Amendment of park system capital project lists will require additional action independent of this planning process.

IMPACT FEE STUDY

The timing of this Master Plan update reflects the City's need to remain in compliance with the statutory requirements of the State of New Mexico regarding cyclical review and evaluation of the City's formula for assessing impact fees for parks and recreation, and related to growth caused by the new development. (More information on impact fees is located on page 144.) A separate impact fee study has been prepared in conjunction with and concurrent to this Plan. The 2019 Las Cruces Parks and Recreation Impact Fee Study is located in **Appendix A**.

FIGURE 1.1, ESSENTIAL BENEFITS OF PARKS



PARKS IMPROVE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Parks provide opportunities for both active and passive recreation. Active recreation includes organized sports and physical activities and passive recreation activities includes hiking, wildlife viewing, etc.



PARKS PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES TO BE INVOLVED

Parks are places to socialize, engage members of the community, and meet new people. Social interactions help build safe, connected, and friendly communities.



PARKS PROVIDE A SAFE HAVEN FOR YOUTH

Parks and recreation programs can have a positive social impact as young people have the opportunity to socialize through organized or unstructured activities which assist in developing life skills.



PARKS INCREASE TOURISM

People will visit a community because of local attractions which may include park lands, open spaces, or event venues. Attracting visitors to Las Cruces via concerts, festivals, tournaments, etc. is a way to increase local revenue.



PARKS CONTRIBUTE TO THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Parks improve local economies by increasing residential property values through the Proximate Principle which states “people will pay more for a home when it is next to a park or green space.”



PARKS PROMOTE CONSERVATION

Parks and open spaces provide areas for native plantings and reclamation projects which can address issues with storm water runoff, retaining wildlife corridors, and linking built areas of the community to natural spaces.

VISION STATEMENT

The City of Las Cruces park system will be a defining community asset that fosters city-wide prosperity and increases personal happiness through the provision of park lands and facilities that are accessible and interwoven throughout our city, links us to our natural setting and environmental assets, and offers customized recreational offerings to meet the diverse needs of our residents and visitors.

The City of Las Cruces' vision statement regarding parks and recreation services (above) re-affirms the City's commitment to investing in parks and recreation to serve as a cornerstone of elevating community-wide prosperity, and the health and welfare of residents.

The vision statement was prepared in consideration of the following: **A)** A review of on-line and person-to-person feedback received during the preliminary stages of the master planning process; and, **B)** A review of pre-existing mission and vision statements contained in other planning documents adopted by the City. These same considerations influenced the development of the supporting plan goals introduced on page 7.

The 2019 Las Cruces Parks and Recreation Master Plan vision statement is structured to align with the Parks and Recreation Department's current mission statement, and the vision and principles of the City's current and pending comprehensive plan documents. The following value statements are among those that influenced the new 2019 Las Cruces Parks and Recreation Master Plan vision statement and supporting goals:

CONTRIBUTING VALUE STATEMENTS:

"Las Cruces is a Livable Community. We invest in the services and amenities that provide our residents with feasible options to live, work, and play in Las Cruces regardless of personal means or stage in life. We will improve our residents' daily quality of life by increasing access to multiple transportation options, recreational and cultural amenities, and diverse housing types."

Elevate Las Cruces (Pending)

"The City of Las Cruces' vision is to establish a community which is supportive and pursues the furtherance of the quality of life residents and visitors envision and desire. In support of this, the City should endeavor to create a built environment which is compatible with and communicates sensitivity to the natural environment."

Las Cruces Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2012)

"The goal of the Parks and Recreation Department is to expand park and recreation opportunities throughout the City and to provide competent, responsive and efficient maintenance services to enhance the appearance and functionality of City parks and recreation fields."

Las Cruces Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2012)

"Within the Recreation Division, the Department aims to enhance the quality of life through the provision of leisure programming, services, and facilities to ensure customer satisfaction by meeting social, emotional and physical wellness of citizens."

Las Cruces Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2012)

"The mission of the Las Cruces Parks and Recreation Department, "The Fun Experts," is to provide dynamic customer-focused services to residents and visitors so they can experience a diverse, vibrant, prosperous, active, engaged, connected, happy, and inclusive community."

Parks and Recreation Department, Strategic Business Plan (2017)

MASTER PLAN GOALS

The sentiments contained in the 2019 Las Cruces Parks and Recreation Master Plan vision statement are common among many American communities – regardless of size, demographics, or region. We all desire quality public spaces that can alternatively serve as places for active engagement with our neighbors or personal contemplation.

The method by which each community will meet these desires may differ greatly however based on local values and means. The City of Las Cruces will implement its vision for parks and recreational services by implementing an action plan built around the eight (8) goals listed below.

PARKLAND ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT. Provide an increased parkland level of service by adding new park space that is widely distributed throughout the city and by ensuring that the provision and development of new parkland occurs concurrent with new development.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY. Provide a community-wide system of multi-use trails that support residents' and visitors' fitness, recreation, and transportation needs, while linking community destinations such as parks, open space, schools, and other community activity centers.

PARK AMENITIES. Increase community-wide recreational choice by incorporating new indoor and outdoor facilities into the municipal park system portfolio.

PARKLAND AND FACILITY MAINTENANCE. Provide a high level of park land and facility maintenance that places equal emphasis on landscapes, hard-scapes, and structures.

PARK DESIGN AND PROGRAMMING. Increase residents' and visitors' enjoyment of existing and new park spaces through the application of standard park design and programming practices.

RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS. Increase public accessibility to recreational opportunities by offering a diverse suite of programs that cater to varying community interests, ages, and abilities.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND PARTNERSHIPS. Connect residents and visitors to recreational space and programs through a robust and sustained public outreach effort, and by leveraging partnerships with other recreational, educational, and human service providers.

ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT. Improve the efficiency of park and recreation service delivery by aligning administrative and operational practices with Master Plan goals.

REGIONAL CONTEXT

Las Cruces is located in south central New Mexico approximately 47 miles from El Paso, Texas and 23 miles north of the Texas state line. The City is positioned at the crossroads of Interstate 25 and Interstate 10 and is the county seat for Doña Ana County. For statistical purposes, Las Cruces is part of the El Paso / Las Cruces combined statistical area, and is also a part of the Mesilla Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization. See **Map 1.1, Regional Map.**

Las Cruces is surrounded by stunning natural features. The Rio Grande River bisects the city while multiple mountain ranges frame its edges - including the prominent Organ Mountains to the east of the City, the Picacho Mountains located to northwest of the City and the Robledo Mountains which provide residents with majestic views and recreational opportunities. Many of these dramatic natural elements are now incorporated into the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument significantly increasing the area's potential as an outdoor recreation destination.

The Organ Mountains lie largely within land administered by the United States Bureau of Land Management. These iconic community features are outside of the geographic and administrative scope of this Plan, but their impact on the local outdoor recreation economy has been considered.

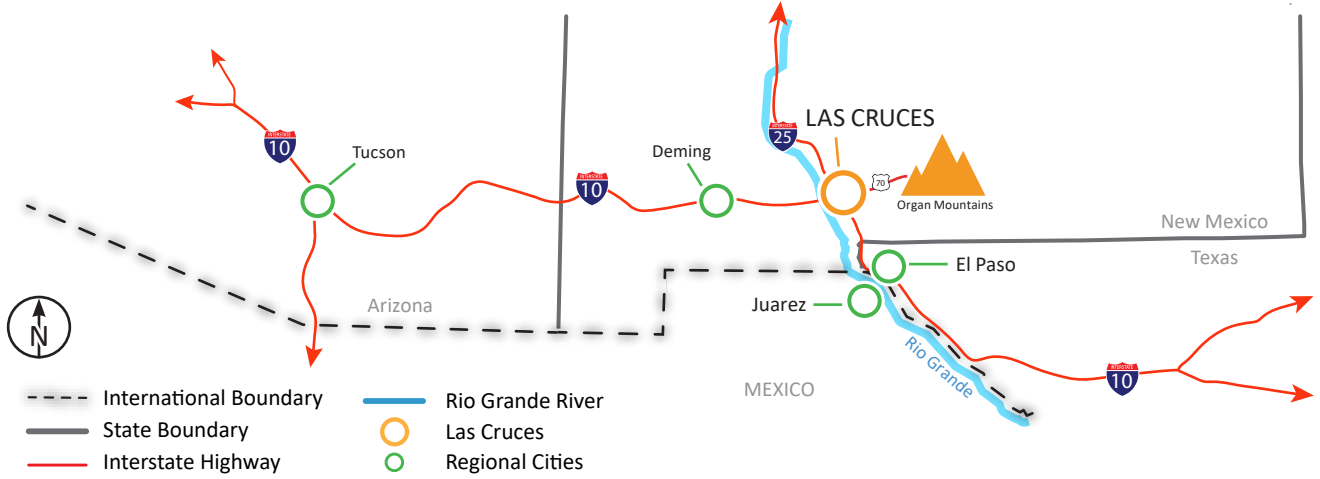
JURISDICTION & SCOPE

The City of Las Cruces provides the majority of recreational facilities for the residents of the City and adjacent unincorporated areas. Doña Ana County provides an additional 16 parks and recreational facilities near the City limits. There are additional recreational facilities operated by multiple entities within 15 miles of the City. These include facilities operated by New Mexico State University (NMSU), and property managed by the Bureau of Land Management - including the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument.

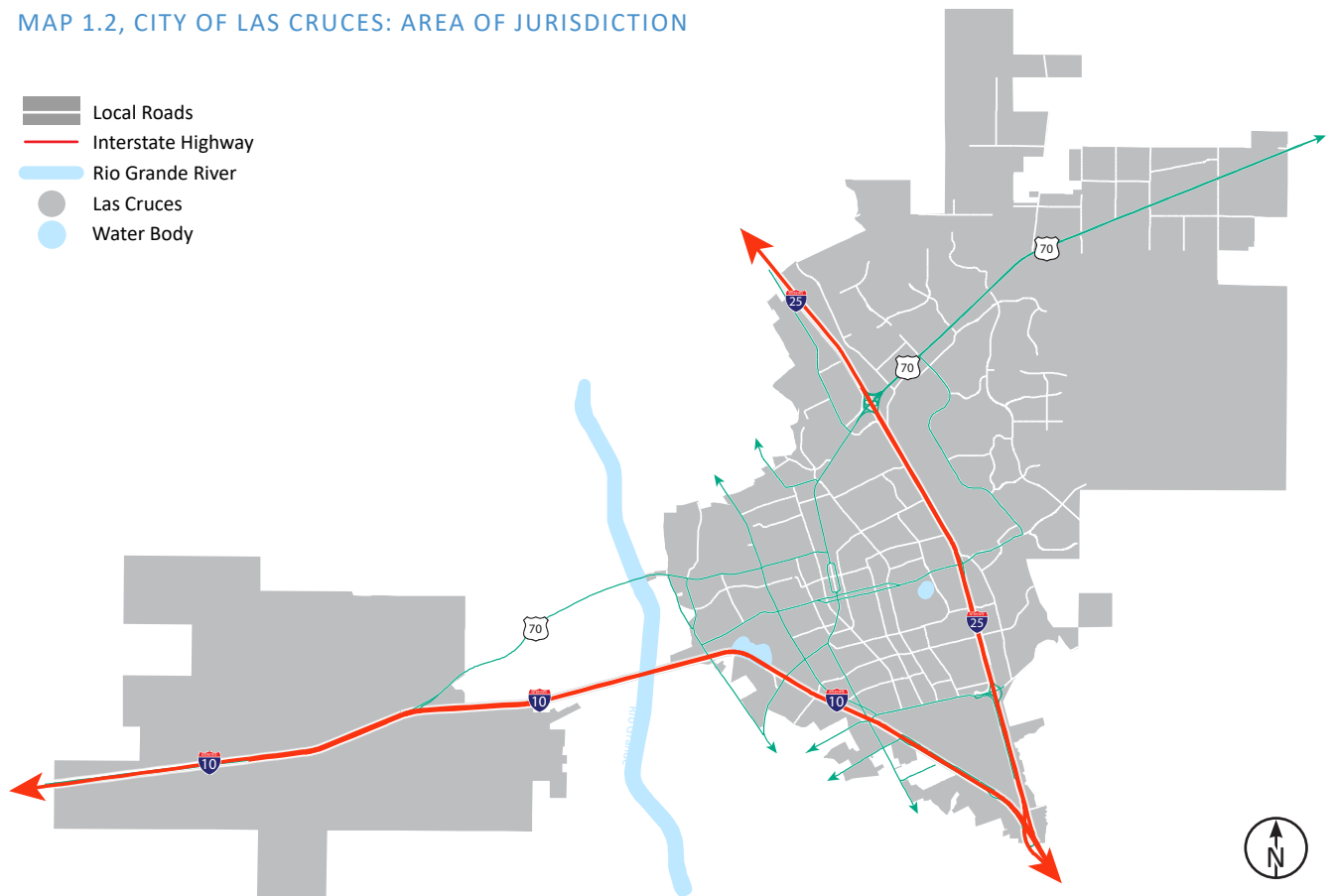
The City of Las Cruces is the principal organization responsible for the implementation of this report as this Plan focuses on the parks and recreation facilities operated by the City. As depicted by **Map 1.2, City of Las Cruces: Area of Jurisdiction** park land and facility evaluation has been contained almost entirely within the municipal limits except for two facilities operated by the City Parks and Recreation Department that are located outside of municipal limits.



MAP 1.1, REGIONAL MAP



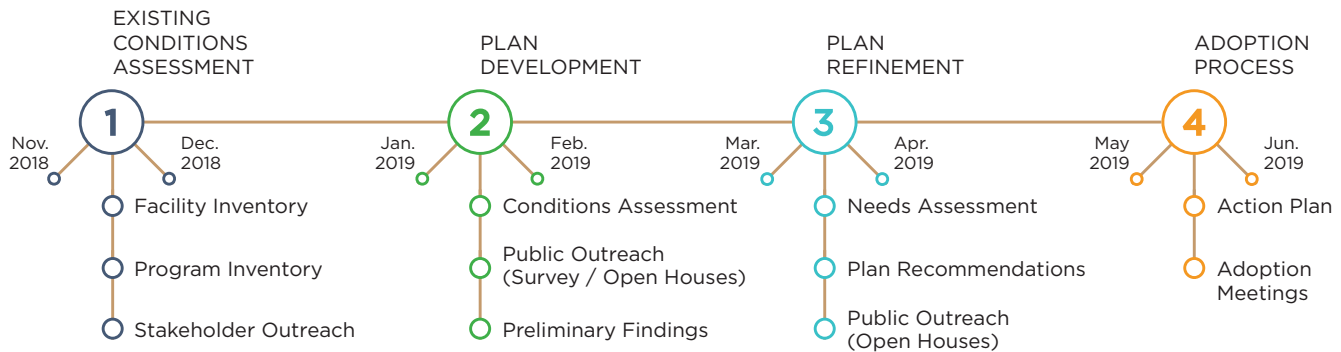
MAP 1.2, CITY OF LAS CRUCES: AREA OF JURISDICTION



SECTION 3:

PLANNING PROCESS AND TIMELINE

FIGURE 1.2, TIMELINE FOR THE LAS CRUCES PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN



TIMELINE SUMMARY

The update of the 2019 Parks and Recreation Master Plan was initiated in November 2018 and completed in June 2019. An update to the 2012 impact fee study was prepared separately and completed within a similar time frame (see **Appendix A**). A summary of master planning process and time frame is depicted by **Figure 1.2, Timeline for the Las Cruces Parks and Recreation Master Plan**.

The Plan was prepared by a consultant team selected by the City of Las Cruces with support from the Parks and Recreation Department. Parks and Recreation Department staff provided data and document review assistance, and assistance with public engagement. Additional project support was provided by staff from the City Manager's Office and Community Development.

As depicted in **Figure 1.2** (above), this Plan has been prepared in four (4) phases:

- **Phase 1, Existing Conditions Assessment.** Includes an inventory of park lands, facilities, and programs. Stakeholder meetings were conducted to obtain important insight about the community.
- **Phase 2, Plan Development.** Includes a conditions assessment, document review, additional public outreach, and preliminary findings.
- **Phase 3, Plan Refinement.** Preliminary assumptions are refined, detailed plan recommendations prepared, and additional public feedback is solicited on system-wide recommendations.
- **Phase 4, Adoption Process.** Final action plan development and meetings of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and City Council.

The time line presented in **Figure 1.2** represents a general chronology - with many of the steps in the planning process occurring concurrently.



PUBLIC SURVEY OPEN

The Las Cruces Parks and Recreation Master Plan Survey (in English and Español) will remain open until the end of February. Please take the survey and add your voice to the future of Parks and Recreation in Las Cruces

Go to the “ONLINE INPUT” Page to Participate

Advertising materials for public outreach activities included on-line announcements (above), event fliers (below), and other creative measures such as bus wraps and a promotional video.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

The 2019 Parks and Recreation Master Plan process included a series of opportunities for the public to give their input, ideas, and concerns about parks and recreational facilities within the City. The following are the means by which residents could obtain information about the Plan and provide their feedback.

- **Project Website.** An on-line website presence for the 2019 Parks and Recreation Master Plan was created. The website provided interested parties with news and information about plan progress and access to associated documents.
- **On-line Community Survey.** An on-line community survey was advertised on the project website, postcards, movie theater advertisement, bus wrap, newspapers, fliers, social media, City events, and emails. The survey was open from November 2018 to February 2019.
- **Stakeholder Meetings.** At the start of the project, stakeholder meetings were conducted for three days. Attendees included key City staff; City Council members; Parks Youth Board; indoor and outdoor sports users; Cultural Historic Neighborhood members; passive park users; Senior Program members; and City Art Board members.

HOW CAN OUR PARKS RISE TO OUR EXPECTATIONS?
PARTICIPATE IN THE LAS CRUCES PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN.

**LAS CRUCES
PARKS AND
RECREATION
MASTER
PLAN**

**PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES
JANUARY 22,23,24**

No formal presentation. Drop-in anytime during advertised hours.
Spanish speaking staff will be on hand to answer questions.

TUESDAY 01.22
6PM - 8PM
Dona Ana Community College
Student Resources,
2800 Sonoma Ranch Blvd

WEDNESDAY 01.23
8AM - 1PM
Las Cruces Farmers Market,
Downtown Main Street
6PM - 8PM
Benavidez Community Center,
1045 McClure Road

THURSDAY 01.24
6PM - 8PM
Frank O'Brien Papen Community Center
Auditorium,
2304 West Bell Avenue

**LAS CRUCES
PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN**

CAN'T MAKE IT TO THE OPEN HOUSES?
Please take the survey at the Las Cruces Master Plan Website

Las Cruces Parks and Recreation Master Plan Website
lascrucesparksplan.half.com

For more information, contact the
City of Las Cruces Parks & Recreation Department (575) 541-2550.

- **Public Open Houses.** Four open houses were held at the beginning of the project. Three additional open houses were held in April 2019 to allow residents to evaluate preliminary plan recommendations and prioritize plan actions.

PUBLIC OUTREACH THEMES

PUBLIC PREFERENCES (NOVEMBER 2018 - FEBRUARY 2019)

During initial public outreach activities, several themes were identified via the on-line and in-person outreach activities identified on page 11. A few prominent themes included:

- More lighting is needed in key locations;
- Additional security is needed in some parks;
- Signage needs to be added for identification;
- Facility conditions must be improved;
- There is a lack of indoor facilities;
- Restrooms need to be added to some parks;
- There must be more shade in our parks; and,
- Running, walking, and biking trails need to be added to the existing trails system.

Many of the results compiled from the on-line public survey conducted between November 2018 and February 2019 can be found in **Chapter 3, Needs Assessment**. A full summary of the survey and other initial public outreach activities (stakeholder meetings, open houses) is located in **Appendix B**.

PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS (APRIL 2019)

In April 2019, three additional open houses took place to allow participants the opportunity to view and evaluate preliminary plan recommendations and prioritize plan actions. A summary of public outreach activities relating to plan recommendations is located in **Appendix B**.



An initial public open house was held at the Benavidez Community Center where citizens were provided an opportunity to give their input about the Park Master Plan.

What do you like most about your park system?

There is a diversity of what we have available, and it (the park system) is programmed to serve a diverse number of people.

Stakeholder Meeting Participant (January 22, 2019)

SECTION 4:

CHARACTERISTICS OF LAS CRUCES

CHANGING ROLE OF PARKS

The history of a city or town can provide community members with a distinct sense of identity and can create important local traditions that are passed down from each generation. Reverence for one's local heritage is often retained in historic structures, relevant landscapes or geographic features, and memorials for past events or influential individuals. As is the case in Las Cruces, these tangible features are often embedded within a community's park system and other public spaces.

Las Cruces was founded in 1849, with initial development occurring around today's Mesquite Historic District. Today's Klein Park and its companion Pioneer Womens' Park are vestiges to the growing city's first public squares at a time when public park space was dedicated not just to provide active recreation, but also to host significant public events and other 'utilitarian' public functions.

As the Mesilla Valley's agricultural economy has grown through the decades and diversified with the development of New Mexico State University, and the nearby White Sands Proving Ground and NASA Research Facility, so too has community wealth and the desire for larger spaces for active recreation and structured play. To meet these needs, the Las Cruces Park system has gradually grown to over 93 parks containing a wide range of facilities to meet diverse recreational needs.

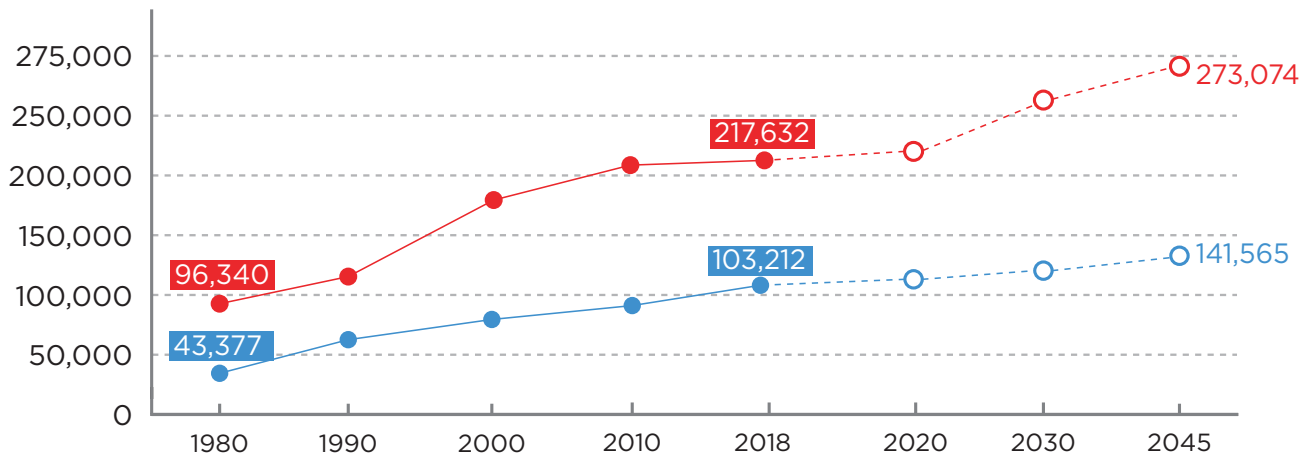


Klein Park (top) is Las Cruces' original public square. Today's programming within the park reflects evolving community needs. The trail at La Llorona Park serves to meet Las Cruces' increasing desire to connect to the outdoors.

Today, Las Cruces is a community that prides itself on its location among the Organ Mountains and other surrounding peaks – and while this interest in the area's open space and natural settings has increased, so too have changes in park preferences. In addition to the formal gathering spaces of the past (and present, in the form of Plaza de Las Cruces), and the active recreation spaces of today, attention is now turning to how Las Cruces' parks can provide access for its residents to the iconic natural features that make the city unique.

DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT

FIGURE 1.3, POPULATION PROJECTION FOR LAS CRUCES & DOÑA ANA COUNTY



Source: ESRI; Mesilla Valley MPO; Economic & Planning Systems

Understanding a population's changing demographics is an essential step in evaluating the basic needs of residents and property owners in any community. As part of this Plan, an initial review of Las Cruces' core demographic indicators including: population characteristics, household wealth, education, employment, and public health provided initial clues in how subsequent participants in the master planning process may view the City's roles and performance in providing parks and recreational services to Las Cruces.

POPULATION

Figure 1.3, Population Projection for Las Cruces and Doña Ana County, illustrates both the historic population growth and projected population growth for the Las Cruces and Doña County between 1980 and the year 2045. Between 1980 and 1990, the City of Las Cruces experienced a growth rate of 33.4 percent which was 7.3 percent less than Doña Ana County, but 17.2 percent greater than the State of New Mexico.

The City of Las Cruces had its highest rate of growth between the year 2000 and 2010 as its residential population grew by 31.4 percent in comparison to 19.8 percent for Doña Ana County and 13.2 percent for the State of New Mexico.

Growth continues for Las Cruces as the population reached 103,212 in 2018 and is projected to continue to grow. Based on estimates prepared in Winter 2018 as part of the Elevate Las Cruces comprehensive planning process, Las Cruces is projected to gain an additional 38,353 new residents by 2045. This growth rate will surpass both Doña Ana County and the State of New Mexico.

POPULATION BY AGE

Figure 1.4, Las Cruces Population by Age, illustrates Las Cruces' population by age group in 2017. The group comprising the largest percentage of the city's population are residents aged 65 years old and above - roughly 14.3 percent of the total population. The city's second largest age group is residents aged 25-34.

These figures do not provide verification of a common perception articulated in Las Cruces - that the City is unable to retain young adults who have completed their high school or college educations. The division of municipal population by age group does however, loosely conform with on-line participation rates in the master planning process.

HOUSEHOLD INCOME

The median household incomes of the residents of Las Cruces, Doña Ana County, and the State of New Mexico are illustrated in **Figure 1.5, 2017 Median Household Income**. An analysis of household income indicated that 17.8 percent of residential households have a median income between \$50,000 and \$74,999 while those with a median household income of less than \$25,000 represent 32.7 percent of the population.

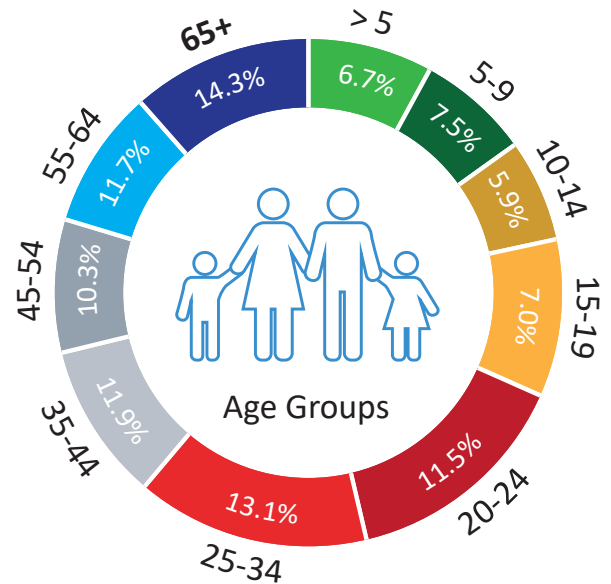
Consistent with household income figures, **Figure 1.6, 2017 Poverty Rates**, illustrates the poverty rate for Las Cruces, Doña Ana County, and New Mexico is significantly higher than national averages.

FIGURE 1.6, 2017 POVERTY RATES

2017 POVERTY RATES	
LAS CRUCES	21.3
DOÑA ANA COUNTY	26.3
NEW MEXICO	20.4

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimate, Table S1701

FIGURE 1.4, LAS CRUCES POPULATION BY AGE



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimate, Table S0101

FIGURE 1.5, 2017 MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

LAS CRUCES	
2010	\$38,391
2017	\$40,924
DOÑA ANA COUNTY	
2010	\$36,657
2017	\$39,114
NEW MEXICO	
2010	\$43,820
2017	\$46,718

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimate, Table S1901

MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION TO WORK

In 2017, approximately 80 percent of Las Cruces used a car, truck, or van to drive alone to work. Approximately 12 percent of surveyed residents use the same means, however, they carpool to their place of employment. These rates are nearly identical to 2010 rates in the City. In 2017, approximately 3 percent of individuals walked to destinations and 2.5 percent used other means to travel to work (see **Figure 1.7, 2017 Means of Travel to Work**) - not an insignificant figure when compared to nationwide statistics on bicycling and walking.

RACE AND ETHNICITY

Figure 1.8, Race and Ethnicity, illustrates the racial and ethnic composition of Las Cruces in 2017. Approximately 83 percent of residents identify themselves as white, while 59 percent of residents identified themselves as ethnically Hispanic.

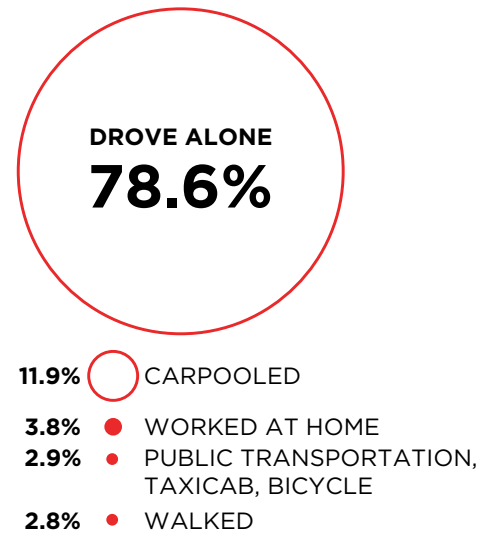
The second largest racial group - at 7.3 percent, are identified as "some other race" which is not uncommon when residents confuse the category of race versus ethnicity.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Residents in Las Cruces with a disability represent approximately 13.6 percent of the population. A total of 5.93 percent of residents over the age of 65 have some form of disability.

The number of individuals with disabilities are similar to levels in both Doña Ana County and New Mexico. However, the population of Las Cruces 65 and older with disabilities is higher than the United States as a whole, perhaps reflecting a slow trend in the growth of older age groups in the city.

FIGURE 1.7, 2017 MEANS OF TRAVEL TO WORK



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimate, Table B08101

FIGURE 1.8, RACE AND ETHNICITY

RACE	LAS CRUCES	DOÑA ANA COUNTY	NEW MEXICO
WHITE	83.4%	81.0%	75.8%
BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN	3.3%	4.6%	2.1%
AMERICAN INDIAN & ALASKA NATIVE	1.2%	1.9%	9.6%
ASIAN	1.4%	2.0%	1.4%
NATIVE HAWAIIAN & OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER	7.3%	17.6%	7.7%
OTHER	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
TWO OR MORE RACES	3.3%	4.7%	3.3%
ETHNICITY			
HISPANIC OR LATINO DESCENT	58.6 %	67.7%	48.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimate, Table QP-P3

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Figure 1.9, 2017 Educational Attainment, illustrates the educational levels of Las Cruces residents who are 25 years old and older. Around 87 percent of all residents have a high school diploma or its equivalent.

Nearly 30 percent of Las Cruces residents in 2017 have a bachelor's or graduate degree. This level of post-secondary education exceeds that of Doña Ana County and New Mexico as a whole.

EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

Figure 1.10, 2017 Employment by Industry, identifies the employment sectors of residents over the age of 16 that are employed within industries located in the City. Employment by industry sector in Las Cruces is similar to both Doña Ana County and New Mexico.

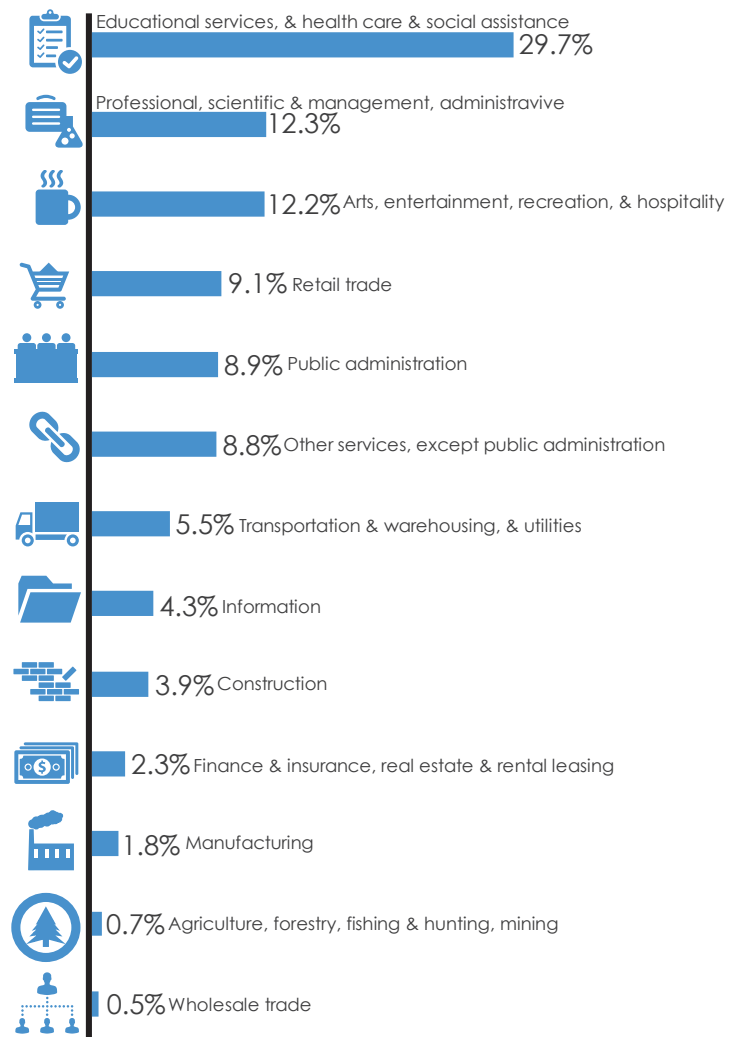
The field of "educational services, healthcare, and social assistance" is the largest employment sector within Las Cruces - amounting to nearly 30 percent of the workforce. Employment in the field of "professional, scientific, management; administrative and waste management services" and "arts, entertainment, and recreation; accommodation and food services" represents 24.5 percent of the workforce.

FIGURE 1.9, 2017 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	LAS CRUCES	DOÑA ANA COUNTY	NEW MEXICO
HIGH SCHOOL OR HIGHER	87.5%	78.9%	86.0%
BACHELORS DEGREE OR HIGHER	28.6%	24.9%	27.0%

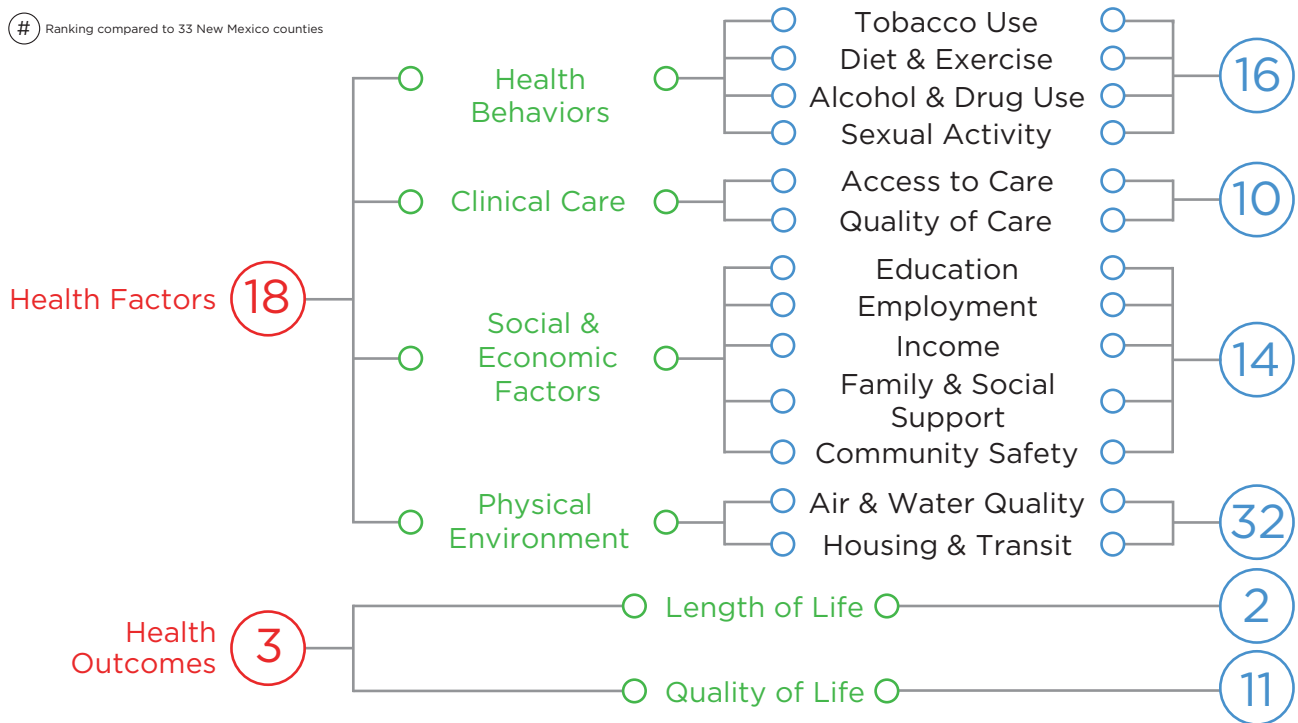
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimate, Table S1501

FIGURE 1.10, 2017 EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimate, Table DP03

FIGURE 1.11, 2017 HEALTH MEASURES



Source: County Health Rankings & Roadmaps for Webb County, TX, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, Accessed 6 February 2019

HEALTH MEASURES

The Community Health Rankings issued by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation are a tool used to understand the levels of overall health of a community. These annual rankings are an examination of community-wide health care outcomes which include length and quality of life and health factors which include; health behaviors, clinical care, social and economic factors, and physical environment.

The overall health rankings for Doña Ana County - in comparison to the state's 33 counties - are found in **Figure 1.11, 2017 Health Measures**. In comparison to New Mexico's 33 counties, Doña Ana County ranks very well in the length of life measurement and in all measures with the exception of physical environment where it ranks second to last. Physical environment features may be collectively addressed through open space recommendations contained in this Plan and land use and transportation policies contained in the City's comprehensive plan and the MPO's metropolitan transportation plan.



Many Las Crucesans rely on public transportation to get around the City. The above photo shows an example of a bus stop near R.L. Young Park.

SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS

The figures presented between pages 14 and 18 were initially compiled prior to this planning effort's public outreach activities. Absent the context provided by subsequent public feedback, few of the Plan's demographic measures provide surprising information by which conclusive assumptions can be made of public parks and recreation preferences. Given the benefit of hindsight however, some information in this section offers clues about probable community expectations regarding public parks and recreation services:

- Lower household incomes and higher poverty rates in Las Cruces and surrounding Doña Ana County allow less disposable income for recreation.

- Populations living in areas with less community-wide wealth tend to expect a greater amount of recreational space and programming to be offered by local government.
- The combined rate of Las Crucesans that rely on car-pooling, public transportation, bicycling, and walking as their means of travel to work suggests the need to place greater emphasis on accessibility (or 'proximity') to parkland and recreational facilities.

These initial demographic observations are expanded upon as part of the parkland, recreational facility, and recreational programming evaluation presented in **Chapter 3, Needs Assessment**.

SECTION 5:

PARK PLANNING IN LAS CRUCES

Multiple statewide, regional, and local planning initiatives have been conducted which have impacted how Las Cruces provides parks and recreational services to its residents, or how the City has otherwise prioritized and invested in parkland and facilities. Many of the documents produced by these initiatives still influence park and recreation planning in Las Cruces today.

PARK PLANNING IN NEW MEXICO

VIVA NEW MEXICO: A STATEWIDE PLAN FOR OUTDOOR ADVENTURE 2016-2020 (2016)

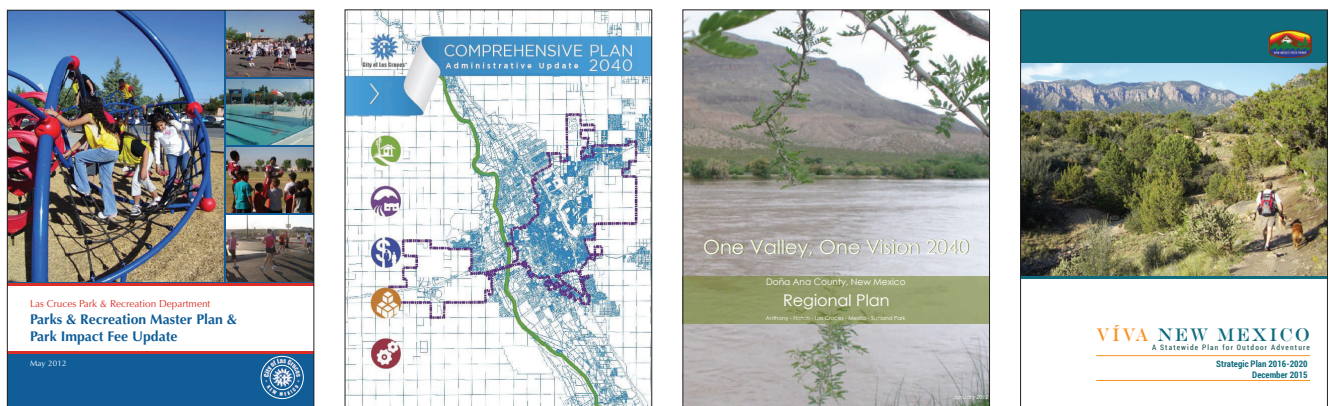
The State of New Mexico's State Parks Division recently completed a five-year update of Viva New Mexico: A Statewide Plan for Outdoor Adventure 2016-2020. This strategic plan includes outdoor recreation data, analysis, and conclusions to assist federal, state, and local organizations in the development of jurisdictional park plans that address statewide recreation needs. The Viva New Mexico Strategic Plan is not policy document, but rather a guide to identify New Mexico's most pressing outdoor recreation trends and to encourage public and private recreation providers to position themselves for funding of park and recreation amenities by emphasizing investments that can support broad statewide goals.



The Rio Grande River at La Llorona Park. State plans identify opportunities for local investments to serve broader statewide outdoor recreation needs and goals.

RIO GRANDE TRAIL MASTER PLAN

The Rio Grande Trail Master Plan establishes the framework to develop a 500-mile cross-state recreational trail for hiking, biking, and horseback riding along the Rio Grande River. Administered by the State of New Mexico's Rio Grande Trail Commission, the Rio Grande Trail route would bisect Las Cruces utilizing existing multi-use trail segments along the Rio Grande River which currently connect the Outfall Channel Trail with La Llorona Park.



State, regional, and local plans were reviewed as part of the master planning process (above). The Las Cruces Parks and Recreation Master Plan and Park Impact Fee Update, the Comprehensive Plan Administrative Update 2040, the One Valley, One Vision 2040 Regional Plan, and the Viva New Mexico: A Statewide Plan for Outdoor Adventure 2016-2020, are a few of the documents within which parks and recreation are discussed to varying degrees.

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LOCAL PLANS

Many current regional and municipal plans were reviewed to understand how the policies, goals, and actions within each might influence the Plan recommendations herein. Relevant regional and municipal plans are listed in accordance with the City's 'planning framework' identified in Comprehensive Plan 2040 (Administrative Update): Regional Plans; Level 1: Comprehensive Plan; Level 2: Policy Plans; and, Level 3: Implementation Tools.

REGIONAL PLANS

ONE VALLEY, ONE VISION 2040 REGIONAL PLAN (2010)

The One Valley, One Vision 2040 (Regional) Plan presents a region-wide perspective on challenges and opportunities posed by changing economic, environmental, and social conditions in the Mesilla Valley. This regional planning document was prepared through the collaboration of private interests and public entities throughout Doña Ana County including the communities of Anthony, Hatch, Las Cruces, Mesilla, and Sunland Park. One Valley, One Vision was endorsed by the Las Cruces City Council as the City's official regional comprehensive plan. It includes goals that address the provision of outdoor recreation and community facilities.

TRANSPORT 2040, METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN UPDATE (2015)

Transport 2040 is the Mesilla Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) long-range transportation plan guiding the planning, construction, operation and maintenance of the metropolitan area's integrated, multi-modal transportation network. The plan establishes the regional transportation vision for Las Cruces and adjacent urbanized areas and identifies and prioritizes actions and projects to improve region-wide mobility.

Transport 2040's Trail System Priorities Plan identifies the future trail segments that – once constructed – will provide over 100 miles of interconnected multi-use trail to serve the community's recreational and active transportation needs. Complimentary bicycle and pedestrian system priorities plans identify additional active transportation routes that will provide improved access to the City's growing multi-use trail system.

CITY OF LAS CRUCES ARROYO MANAGEMENT PLAN (2015)

The Las Cruces Arroyo Management Plan includes a series of recommendations regarding the conservation of arroyo corridors as new development encroaches further into the City's surrounding natural areas and desert habitat. In addition to multiple recommendations regarding ecological preservation and storm water management, the Management Plan promotes the benefits of utilizing arroyo corridors as linear parks and multi-use trail corridors. The possibility of developing these recreational assets is acknowledged in the Mesilla Valley MPO's Trail System Priorities Plan (a component of Transport 2040, Metropolitan Transportation Plan Update).



Transport 2040, Metropolitan Transportation Plan Update (2015)



Arroyos represent natural pathways for storm water drainage, but may also be improved to accommodate increased runoff and seasonal recreational activities.

LEVEL 1: COMPREHENSIVE PLANS

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2040, ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATE (2013)

Comprehensive Plan 2040, Administrative Update is the City's primary policy document which provides City elected and appointed officials and staff a collective vision for how Las Cruces should grow and develop. This policy tool provides guidance for the management of capital improvement projects, community changes, and land use and includes a corresponding action plan to implement the community's growth and development vision and goals.

Comprehensive Plan 2040 includes no fewer than 71 actions that directly or indirectly relate to the provision of parkland, recreational facilities, and recreational programming. The status of all 71 actions was provided by the City of Las Cruces as part of this planning initiative.

The City initiated an update of Comprehensive Plan 2040 in 2016. Called Plan 4 Las Cruces, this initiative focused on updating the 'Healthy Community' theme of the existing plan. Plan4LasCruces was not adopted, but has been reviewed as part of this planning effort because it provides a more recent assessment of public opinions regarding healthy community lifestyles – an essential benefit of well-maintained and managed municipal park system (see **Figure 1.1**, page 5).



The Las Cruces PRMP was prepared concurrent with the City's most recent comprehensive plan update efforts (Elevate Las Cruces). Issues related to parks and recreation are largely addressed in the 'Community Livability' section of the plan. Elevate Las Cruces will include goals, policies, and recommended actions for city parks and recreation that correspond with the recommendations of this Plan.

LEVEL 2: POLICY PLANS

LAS CRUCES PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN AND PARK IMPACT FEE UPDATE (2012)

The current Las Cruces Parks and Recreation Master Plan and Park Impact Fee Update has guided how Las Cruces provides public parks and recreational services to its residents since May 2012. The Master Plan includes level of service assessments for parkland, park facilities, and recreational programs, and compares these assessments to stated public preferences and needs. The 2012 Master Plan includes 10 goals and 90 recommended actions to improve the delivery of parks and recreation services to the community. Many of the 2012 Master Plan goals have been re-affirmed by participants in this planning process and incorporated into this report.

LAS CRUCES ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (2018)

The Las Cruces Active Transportation Plan (ATP) proposes a prioritized list of on-street and off-street bicycle and pedestrian improvements to provide access to community-wide destinations through bicycling and walking. The multi-use trail network proposed in the ATP aligns with the recommendations of the Mesilla Valley MPO's Trails Priorities Plan. Although serving a dual recreation-transportation role, it is assumed that new multi-use trail mileage will be added to the current inventory of trail facilities maintained by the Parks and Recreation Department.

APODACA BLUEPRINT (2018)

The City of Las Cruces' Community Blueprint Planning Initiative was initiated by action of City Council in 2011 to address unique land use, economic development, aesthetic, urban design, resource protection, transportation, and neighborhood conservation issues related to specific districts, corridors, or neighborhoods in Las Cruces. Six (6) Community Blueprints have been completed in Las Cruces to date.

The Apodaca Blueprint proposes a conceptual redevelopment plan for the former Las Cruces Country Club property and Apodaca Park. The plan includes proposed parkland additions that would link Apodaca Park to the Outfall Channel Trail corridor to the north. The conceptual site plan also proposes a multi-use trail that forms a loop on the outer boundary of the property and suggests the addition of a series of additional civic spaces. Programming of additional parkland is proposed on a separate parcel (the Villa Mora property) at the intersection of E. Madrid Avenue and Triviz Avenue.



LEVEL 3: IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

LAS CRUCES PARKS AND RECREATION STRATEGIC BUSINESS PLAN (2018)

Part of the City's PEAK Performance strategic planning initiative, the City of Las Cruces Park and Recreation Strategic Plan establishes the Park and Recreation Department's mission statement:

"The mission of the Las Cruces Parks and Recreation Department, "The Fun Experts," is to provide dynamic customer-focused services to residents and visitors so they can experience a diverse, vibrant, prosperous, active, engaged, connected, happy, and inclusive community."

The Plan provides a series of five (5) department-wide issue statements and identifies measurable strategic outcomes ('results'). Additional service-based objectives are established throughout the strategic business plan. The implementation program contained within this Plan has been calibrated to ensure consistency between the demand and service-based recommendations contained herein and the Park and Recreation Department's Strategic Business Plan.

RECORD OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

As part of the master planning process, the Las Cruces Parks and Recreation Department completed an inventory of accomplishments based on actions, initiatives, and projects referenced in prior planning documents. A summary of significant actions includes many parks and recreation-related activities that were recommended in the 2012 Parks Master Plan, Comprehensive Plan 2040 and the 2018 Capital Improvement Plan.

2012 PARKS MASTER PLAN

- Identified and developed an area for archery, remote control cars/ trucks, remote control airplanes and rocketeering at the City Complex;
- Standardized park furniture to reduce inventory cost and improve the appearance of, and maintenance consistency within parks;
- Increased resident awareness of Park and Recreation activities as Facebook followers have increased to over 3,000 individuals;
- Expanded youth and senior leagues, expanded open pickleball sessions;
- Established a system-wide identification system named Etrak; and
- Solar panels placed in the parking lot of the aquatics center.

2040 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

- Increased facilities in existing parks including way-finding signs for trails, Woman's Veterans Monument, Provencio-Van Dame Soccer Field Lighting, etc.;
- Encouraged parks and multi-use activity/ recreational fields in conveniently located areas including Highland Park - East Mesa;
- Solicited public input regarding facility, program and activity requests so that the City may meet the needs and desires of the community. Meeting were held at seven different community centers;
- Applied water conservation measures in Metro Verde Desert Park, Paseo de Oñate Neighborhood Park, etc.;
- Included amenities for companion animals such as watering stations, waste stations, and watering bowls for dogs in new fountains; and,
- Constructed NM 292 Trail in the Elephant Butte Irrigation Right of Way.

2018 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROJECTS

- Apodaca Park was granted \$275,000 for a new shade canopy; grandstands were repaired; and, a new sound system conduit was provided;
- Harty Field was provided \$175,000 for parking;
- North Las Cruces Park was provided \$75,000 for a drinking fountains, picnic shelter, lighting, a security camera, and a future basketball court;
- Young Park was provided \$325,000 for the installation of new bathrooms;
- Desert Trails received \$630,000 for parking and trail renovations; and
- Paseo de Oñate Park was constructed with funds totaling \$238,000.

SECTION 6:

ASSESSMENT COMMUNITIES

The abbreviated ‘record of accomplishments’ presented on page 25, illustrates that substantial new investment in the municipal parks system has resulted from Las Cruces’ past and ongoing long-range planning initiatives. To assist in measuring ongoing success however, the City has determined to compare its park system and administration to a series of similar communities across the region.

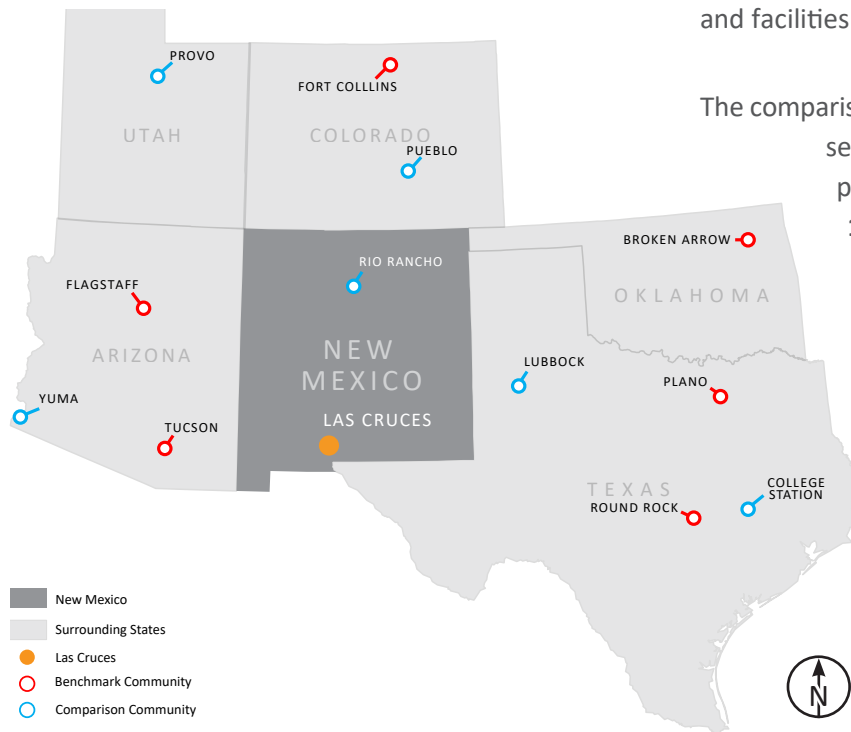
Two groups of ‘assessment communities’ have been selected by the City of Las Cruces to compare the level of service at which each provide parks and recreation services to its residents.

Assessment communities include the following:

- **Comparison Communities.** Six (6) cities that exhibit characteristics similar with Las Cruces including: population, education, and/or income. These peer communities assist in determining whether current parkland and facility standards in Las Cruces represent a competitive quality of life measures.
- **Benchmark Communities.** Six (6) cities with population, education, and income demographics that exceed those in Las Cruces. These communities may exhibit exemplary parkland and facility standards that offer aspirational targets for Las Cruces.

All assessment communities assist in establishing this Plan’s targeted service standards for parkland and facilities to Las Cruces’ growing population.

FIGURE 1.12, ASSESSMENT COMMUNITIES



The comparison and benchmark communities selected by the City for assessment as part of this Plan are depicted on **Figure 1.12, Assessment Communities**. **Figure 1.13, Comparison Communities, Characteristics**, and **Figure 1.14, Benchmark Communities, Characteristics** (page 27) provide an overview of each assessment communities’ basic demographics in comparison with Las Cruces. Further comparison of each community’s parks and recreation system, and operational structures, is provided in **Chapter 3, Needs Assessment**.

FIGURE 1.13, COMPARISON COMMUNITIES, CHARACTERISTICS

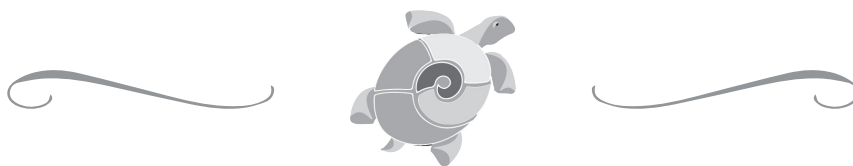
MEASURE	COMMUNITY						
	COLLEGE STATION, TX	LUBBOCK, TX	PROVO, UT	PUEBLO, CO	RIO RANCHO, NM	YUMA, AZ	LAS CRUCES, NM
POPULATION	107,445	247,323	116,199	109,122	93,317	93,851	101,014
HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION	94%	86%	92%	86%	93%	78%	87%
BACHELOR'S DEGREE	56%	30%	43%	19%	30%	18%	33%
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME	\$39,430	\$47,326	\$44,312	\$36,280	\$63,180	\$46,151	\$40,924
POVERTY RATE	31.8%	19.8%	25.4%	24.4%	12.3%	16.9%	24.4%
POPULATION PER SQUARE MILE	2,268	2,063	2,631	2,056	929	789	1,330

Source: American Community Survey, US Census Bureau (2017): DP05, S1501, S1701, S1901

FIGURE 1.14, BENCHMARK COMMUNITIES, CHARACTERISTICS

MEASURE	COMMUNITY						
	BROKEN ARROW, OK	FLAGSTAFF, AZ	FORT COLLINS, CO	PLANO, TX	ROUND ROCK, TX	TUCSON, AZ	LAS CRUCES, NM
POPULATION	106,264	69,903	167,500	281,390	116,369	530,905	101,014
HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION	94%	93%	96%	94%	92%	85%	87%
BACHELOR'S DEGREE	34%	45%	54%	55%	40%	27%	33%
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME	\$70,788	\$51,758	\$60,110	\$83,793	\$76,295	\$39,617	\$40,924
POVERTY RATE	7.6%	21.7%	17.0%	7.0%	8.2%	24.1%	24.4%
POPULATION PER SQUARE MILE	2,328	1,119	2,888	3,908	3,330	2,341	1,330

Source: American Community Survey, US Census Bureau (2017): DP05, S1501, S1701, S1901



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