

Socorro County

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This economic development plan is intended to be used by stakeholders in Socorro County. It is intended to build upon the strengths of the County and its communities while providing clear strategies that will help the County meet economic development challenges. In providing economic development strategies, this section analyzes current economic conditions, identifies strengths and challenges, and seeks out opportunities that economic development stakeholders in the County can capitalize upon to facilitate economic growth.



New Mexico Tech Mountain Outside Socorro

I. Key Issues Related to Economic Development in Socorro County

There are several key issues impacting Socorro County as they relate to economic development. These issues were identified at a public meeting held to discuss economic development and through interviews with key stakeholders within Socorro County.

- Socorro County suffers from “economic leakage” a condition in which people from the County leave to spend money in other communities, primarily Albuquerque, Los Lunas, and Belen;
- There will be a new Wal-Mart Supercenter opening in Socorro which will help stop economic leakage, however, this in turn has created some anxiety among small businesses over competition;
- There is a need to grow the County’s existing businesses, which includes creating awareness of the goods and services already present within the County;
- There is a strong desire to beautify the County, particularly zoning enforcement in the City of Socorro. This can make the community more attractive for people to move there;
- New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology plays a vital role in the County, however, there needs to be more coordination between programs at NM Tech and local economic development stakeholders, especially in attracting industry related to Tech activities;
- There is a shortage of housing in Socorro County that could potentially impact the County’s communities ability to grow;
- There is vacant land within Socorro and Magdalena, which could accommodate growth as long as infrastructure is provided;
- Socorro County sits in a strategic position along Interstate 25. In addition, there are several outdoor and tourist attractions in the County;
- Socorro has several small cottage industries that could lead to greater economic diversification such as a growing arts community and smaller high-tech manufacturers;

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- Water and the lingering drought will impact the State's ability to realize economic growth in some sectors;
- The State of New Mexico has committed to helping the rural areas of the State grow. To this end, the State has been proactive in establishing new programs and funding sources and increasing awareness of existing programs;
- The County has a low unemployment rate but would like to increase wages; and
- The Chamber of Commerce recently hired an Economic Development Coordinator and Tourism Director. The Village of Magdalena relies on their Clerk or Elected Officials for its economic representation. The Magdalena Area Development Corporation also works on economic development efforts in the Magdalena area of Socorro County.



New Mexico Tech Campus

2. Summary of Objectives and Strategies

The list above represents several economic issues facing Socorro County. All economic development strategies geared toward creating sustainable economic growth can be summarized into the following objectives, each containing a set of strategies designed to achieve the objectives (identified later in this document):

Objective 1: Seek pro-active diversification of Socorro County's economic base;

Objective 2: Initiate strategic partnerships with New Mexico Tech in order to capitalize on programs at the school that might generate economic development for the County;

Objective 3: Implement County-wide improvements in terms of infrastructure and community appearance;

Objective 4: Capitalize on Socorro County's strategic location along I-25, proximity to Albuquerque and El Paso, and the outdoor recreational amenities located throughout the County; and

Objective 5: Expand residential construction in Socorro County.

The summary of strategies are provided in the matrix below. Within the text of this document, each strategy corresponds to the objective listed above, however, for the sake of the matrix, they are listed together. Each strategy is organized according to when they should be initiated by economic development stakeholders and community leaders in Socorro County.

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	2005-2007	2008-2010	2011-2015	On Going
Economic Development Strategies				
1A. Pass the Local Economic Development Act (City of Socorro Village of Magdalena, Socorro County)	X			
1b. Identify Incentives Package	X			
1c. Establish Quick Response Committee	X			
1d. Develop A Small Business Incubator		X		
1e. Sirolli Institute Program	X			
1g. Certified Community Program	X			
1f. Growing The Arts Community				X
1g. Continual Workforce Development Training				X
2a. NM Tech Joint Committee	X			
2b. Maximize Research/development Potential				X
3a. Industrial Park Master Plan		X		
3b. County-wide Appearance Enhancements				X
3c. County-wide Infrastructure Improvements				X
4a. Economic Development Website	X			
4b. Targeted Marketing Plan And Strategy		X		
5a. Expand The Role Of Non-profits And Housing Services				X
5b. Annual Housing Fairs				X
5c. Revitalization Of Bia Property In Magdalena			X	
5d. Strategic Housing Study			X	

B. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Socorro County Strategic Economic Development Plan is to provide specific recommendations on how to best grow the overall economy of the County in order to benefit residents living in each of its communities. This document is essentially a plan for action on how best to utilize the County's strengths and overcoming challenges in growing its economy. The City of Socorro, the Village of Magdalena, and Socorro County in general are well positioned to take advantage of the growing prominence of the Central Rio Grande Valley. Recently, the City of Socorro has taken remarkable steps to ensure a vibrant economic future not only for the City itself but for all the County. It has hired a Tourism Director, and the Chamber of Commerce has hired an Economic Development Coordinator, both of whom work together to develop ideas and projects to implement for the economic good of each community. This Strategic Plan consists of recommendations for the County and its communities to implement and are comprised of both short-term and long-term actions.

Socorro County is second largest county in the State of New Mexico in terms of land area. The County seat is the City of Socorro, which is also the largest City and retail base for the County. The Village of Magdalena is the other incorporated community,

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located west of Socorro. The County also has a chapter of the Navajo Nation located within its boundaries. The Alamo Chapter of the Navajo Nation is located approximately 57 miles to the northwest of the City of Socorro.

C. SOCORRO COUNTY BUSINESS PLAN

The purpose of this business plan is to address community issues that will assist Socorro County in attracting capital investment, existing business retention/expansion, seeking business relocation to the County, while maintaining the attractive quality of life of Socorro County. Elements of this plan also form some of the strategies found under the Objectives and Strategy Section (Section D). This Plan is required in order for Socorro County to qualify for some of the programs established by the State of New Mexico such as the Certified Communities Initiative. Several elements comprise the business plan. These elements are listed in this section.

I. Utilization of the Local Economic Development Organizations

Within Socorro County, there are organizations that are devoted to overseeing the economic development interests of Socorro County, City of Socorro, and the Village of Magdalena. These organizations should work closely with representatives from local government, the Chamber of Commerce, local companies, New Mexico Tech, financial institutions, and other relevant civic organizations that play a role in economic development.

a. City of Socorro Tourism Director/Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Coordinator - Recently, the City of Socorro hired a Tourism Director, while the Chamber of Commerce hired an Economic Development Coordinator. These two positions will work together to assist in the diversification of the Area's economy. This involves looking beyond the City's boundaries to focusing on what all of Socorro County has to offer in terms of amenities and in addressing the quality of life for the community. Although both positions are new, the Economic Development Coordinator and Tourism Director have launched several initiatives to assist in economic development. These include:

- A Buy-Socorro campaign aimed at keeping shoppers from Socorro in Socorro;
- Assisting the growing arts community display their goods; and
- Working with smaller businesses on enhancing their competitiveness as the new Wal-Mart Super Center is opening in the community.

b. Magdalena Community Development Corporation - The MACDC's stated mission is to develop the community's employment, educational, cultural, and environmental resources with Magdalena in order to improve the quality of life for its residents. However, no official relationship exists between the Village and MACDC. Two areas where the MACDC is currently working include:

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- Magdalena Mountains ROPES Challenge Course, which is a partnership between the Magdalena Area Community Development Corporation, the Socorro County Boys and Girls Club, and the Magdalena Ranger District of the US Forest Service. Groups can take advantage of these self-esteem, trust, and communication building activities to build teamwork. The Course is an important economic development tool since it brings people to the area.
- Magdalena Regional Technology Park - The technology park seeks to attract technology-based companies to the area. A recent project that has been implemented by Western New Mexico Telephone in conjunction with the MACDC is the completion of high-speed internet. This type of infrastructure is necessary to attract companies to Socorro County and the Magdalena area.



Bosque del Apache

2. Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats, and Opportunities Analysis

A Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats (SWOT) Analysis organizes a community's assets, identifies challenges to be overcome, and determines which opportunities the community can take advantage of, and the threats that can impact economic development. In the Spring of 2004, the New Mexico Rural Development Response Council published a document called "Voices of Rural New Mexico", which contained SWOT analysis for rural communities in New Mexico, including Socorro. The SWOT analysis is based upon extensive discussion that Council representatives held with residents of each community. This SWOT analysis is summarized below and has been supplemented with additional information researched for this Economic Development Strategic Plan.

a. Strengths

- **Community Amenities** - Friendly community with rich history, events, good infrastructure, recreation, and family centers;
- **Education** - Good public school system; New Mexico Tech, National Radio Astronomy Observation, Radio Active Testing Center, and Earthquake Testing Center;
- **Business** - Agricultural owned products; variety of locally owned businesses;
- **Recreation** - Two nearby wildlife refuges, golf course, extensive youth activities, movie theater;

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- **Health Care** - Mental health center, Parent Child Health Center, Public Health Office;
- **Infrastructure** - Fire Academy, Safe Ride Government; and
- **Transportation** - Interstate Highway System

b. Weaknesses

- **Social Problems** - High teenage pregnancy rate, substance abuse, youths at risk;
- **Employment** - Need for more quality jobs within community;
- **Housing** - Lack of housing;
- **Appearance** - Community needs to become more attractive;
- **Economics** - Low per-capita income, low tax base;
- **Leadership** - Need for more leadership related to economic development; and
- **Technology** - Lack of technology means more traditional means of communication.

c. Opportunities

- **Tourism** - Take advantage of community events, amenities, NM Tech, and recreation;
- **Arts Community** - Grow the arts community, pursue gallery space, work with the Alamo Chapter of the Navajo Nation Arts Center;
- **Social Services** - Strengthening the Substance Abuse Task Force could reduce crime in the County;
- **Movie sites** - New Mexico has been successful in luring movie producers to the area. Socorro County has many areas where movies could be filmed.
- **Partnerships** - Create partnerships between City, County, Magdalena, Alamo Chapter, New Mexico Tech, and private enterprises;
- **X-Prize** - Southern New Mexico has been chosen as the site for the X-Prize competition, in which experts compete to build and fly a space craft capable of holding passengers. Although the X-Prize location is farther south from Socorro County, activities at New Mexico Tech can potentially provide a link between the competition and economic growth in the County.;
- **Retail** - Socorro will add new retail opportunities in 2005 but existing opportunities also need to be maintained; and
- **Potential Connection to I-40 from NM 169** - There has been momentum in the planning of a connection from Interstate 40 to NM 169, which will provide easier access to the interstate from the County. If this connection is made, traffic could cut across the County to link to Interstate 25 and Southern New Mexico. This could benefit the Alamo Chapter of the Navajo Nation and the Village of Magdalena.

d. Threats

- **Property values** could decrease unless development occurs;
- **Social problems** - drug traffic via Interstate could impact crime;

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- **Transportation** - Lack of available public transportation;
- **Employment** - Lack of job opportunities unless the County can diversify its economic base; and
- **Retail** - New large retailers may hurt smaller businesses.

The strategies found within this Economic Strategic Plan are meant to build upon the strengths and opportunities while minimizing the weaknesses and threats.

3. Economic Diversification Through Building Upon What Already Exists

Focusing on retention and growth of small business is the first step in economic diversification. Small businesses are vital to a strong, healthy, and stable economy, especially since small businesses collectively represent the largest single employer in the community. As part of its economic development strategy, economic development stakeholders within Socorro County should place an emphasis on businesses already operating in Socorro, Magdalena, the Alamo Chapter, and the other unincorporated areas of Socorro County (such as the travel centers that exist around Lemitar). Growing and improving the position of small businesses in the County is predicated on the following steps:

- Increasing awareness of and access to capital, grants, programs, low interest loans, technical support, and training programs available from the State of New Mexico and Federal Government as well as incentives from the private sector. A comprehensive list of programs and funding sources are included as Appendix A and B;
- Conduct seminars on how to establish and grow a small business and the type of programs and assistance that is available for growth and expansion;
- Identification of the gaps in services and goods in Socorro County and identify potential entrepreneurs who may be willing to provide these services. Goods and services gaps, as well as identification of entrepreneurs can be identified through community surveys. For example, a community survey can reveal which goods and services are in demand within Socorro County, but are not available. Likewise, such surveys can identify key entrepreneurial skills of community members that could be cultivated through network building and educational initiatives;
- Seek local business people who could serve as mentors to those wishing to open a small business in order to help identify steps needed and potential pitfalls to be avoided; and
- The Establishment of a small business incubator for those wishing to establish their own business. Study similar incubators in Taos, NM and other communities.

4. Economic Diversification Through Targeting Appropriate Industry

In addition to emphasizing the growth and retention of small businesses, economic development stakeholders in Socorro County can balance out their economic diversification strategy by attracting the appropriate target industries for location to the County. The following industries represent potential targets for economic development officials in Socorro County to consider in its economic development marketing. These industries have been chosen because they are appropriate for the community, there are similar businesses already operating in the area or that are associated with New Mexico Tech, they correspond to the County's strengths and weaknesses, and they require locational characteristics already in place in the County, Socorro, or Magdalena.

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Table 1: Target Industries for Socorro County

Industry	Reasons for Targeting to Socorro	Industry Requirements (Conditions present in the community to adequately support the industry)
Transportation Based Warehousing/Distribution Centers	Socorro County's location on the Interstate; Proximity to major markets (Albuquerque and El Paso); Available land to accommodate a center; and Provides higher wage jobs.	Ability to construct large buildings; Inexpensive land; Easy truck access to Interstate off-ramps; Utilities; and Truck service centers and truck stops; High speed telecommunications to process shipments and orders.
Food Processing or manufacturing	Presence of agriculture; Excellent highway and interstate access; Growing presence of dairies in southwestern New Mexico; Excellent incentives for employer based training; Within 4 hours of Mexican border; and Industrial park for location.	Inexpensive land and utilities; Access to agricultural products and food stuffs; Storage and distribution facilities nearby; High speed telecommunications due to automation increases in the industry; Water; and Agricultural Zoning
Tourism/convention destination	Historic Significance; Outdoor recreational amenities; Accessibility of Socorro and Magdalena; Favorable climate; Centralized location; Very Large Array; and Campground space.	Presence of tourist related facilities (lodging/restaurants/service stations); Convention space; Visitor center with friendly and knowledgeable staff; Strong retail component in the community; and Well maintained roads.
Technology based manufacturing and research/development	Presence of New Mexico Tech; Significant amount of scientific earth and planetary research occurring in Socorro County; Several smaller computer and technology firms present in the area, that can provide support services to new firms; and Clean industry that could preserve existing characteristics of Socorro.	Skilled workforce; Access to ongoing research and development; Homes to meet demand for people wishing to live in the community; High speed telecommunications such as internet, cable, cellular phone service; and Available land or office space.
Arts and Crafts Industry	Strong presence in New Mexico and along the I-25 "Arts Corridor"; Taos, Santa Fe, Albuquerque Old Town, Truth or Consequences, and Mesilla; Strong presence of local artisans; and Alamo Chapter of the Navajo Nation Arts Center located in Socorro.	Gallery and exhibition space; Marketing program; Identification of a specific brand; and High speed data communications to process internet orders.

Source: Consensus Planning Industry Analysis

The industries listed in the table are all viable for Socorro County to target for location to Socorro. For each industry, the table provides an overview of why these industries were chosen. The third column of the table provides an analysis of the characteristics that need to be present in the County to attract these

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industries. Socorro County is in good position to attract businesses within each target industry. The presence of New Mexico Tech for instance, provides an immediate magnet for technology based businesses such as computer manufacturers and research/development firms, particularly those businesses focused on the earth sciences.

There are some characteristics that need to be in place within Socorro County, however, to really make the area stronger as a draw for many of these industries. These characteristics include:

- Need for housing - The Socorro County area will need to demonstrate that there is sufficient housing in the community to accommodate new employees moving into the community. This has been an issue in Socorro since many people who currently work in the City of Socorro, Magdalena, or the unincorporated County live outside of the County for lack of housing.
- Need for expanded convention facilities and increase in the number of lodging rooms - This characteristic is especially important for cultivating the tourist/convention industry. As it stands now, the City of Socorro would be unable to accommodate a 400-person conference. Socorro is an ideal location for a convention/conference community, given its centralized location along Interstate 25 and US 380. Expanding convention facilities is a reasonable long-term goal for the County.
- Need for a skilled workforce - Socorro County and the communities need to demonstrate a skilled workforce to attract industry to the area (discussed in more detail below).

5. Land Inventory

There is a significant amount of vacant land located throughout Socorro County, however, not all would be readily available for economic development purposes. Land readily available for economic development purposes includes land that a business could potentially move into quickly and is generally served by road infrastructure, utilities, has appropriate zoning, and high speed communication infrastructure. Most of this type of land is concentrated in the incorporated communities like Magdalena and Socorro.

There are two industrial parks within the City of Socorro that could accommodate tenants almost immediately. These are the New Mexico Tech industrial park, which is part of the overall New Mexico Tech campus. The other industrial park is the City of Socorro Industrial Park, which is located off of US 60 on the road to Magdalena. The City's industrial park still has space available. Both parks are served by utilities, infrastructure, and high speed telecommunications. In addition to these parks, there are also vacant parcels and buildings that could be utilized for business location.

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Two areas suitable for industrial development exist within the County as well. One is north of the City of Socorro on the west side of the Interstate near an existing aluminum plant. The other is a 40,000 square foot building adjacent to New Mexico Tech's campus. This site is advantageous since trucks accessing the site can take the Escondida exit into the area and by-pass the City of Socorro all together. Given the space available in the industrial parks and vacant lots, there are areas where development could take place within Socorro County. The land and buildings that are available in Socorro County could be utilized for several different businesses and industries.

6. Continual Workforce Development

Workforce training is critical for the expansion and recruitment of business in Socorro County. There is a constant need for a workforce to adapt to changes in work environments and technology. Workforce training programs are available through the One-Stop Career Center located in the City of Socorro, which is a division of the New Mexico Department of Labor. All Socorro County residents need to be encouraged to take advantage of career counseling programs, workshops, training programs, and job search skills offered at the Center.

7. Meeting Labor Force Demand in Socorro County

According to the One-Stop Career Center, the following jobs and skill sets are in immediate demand in Socorro County;

- Educational Professionals;
- Engineers;
- Health Care Professionals;
- Specialty Mechanics;
- Management; and
- Office managers.

The One-Stop Center reports that there are immediate job openings for people who have these skills. Future job training programs and workshops should be focused on teaching these skills. In addition, employers in Socorro County and the communities should be encouraged to apply for the Federal Job Training Partnership program and New Mexico In-Plant training, which can provide a certain amount of funding for the training of employees.

D. OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

This section contains the objectives and accompanying strategies that economic development stakeholders in Socorro County should follow and undertake in order to achieve its economic development goals. The objectives listed below represent achievable actions that economic stakeholders in Socorro County can pursue while the strategies represent specific tasks required to successfully achieve the objective.

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Objective I: Pursue steps aimed at the diversification of Socorro County's economic base;

Strategy IA: Pass the Local Economic Development Ordinance

In 1993, the New Mexico State Legislature approved an amendment to the State Constitution to allow for public support of economic development opportunities when authorized by law. The amendment provides the means for a municipality or county to provide land, buildings, and infrastructure as a mechanism for small business growth, without violation of the Constitution anti-donation clause. Under the Act, the City of Socorro, Village of Magdalena, and/or Socorro County can expend up to 5% of its general fund on economic development projects and industries that pay wages that will raise the area's per capita income and diversify the local economy. Part of this act also allows a community to pass a local options gross receipts tax, which allows the community to dedicate one-fourth of one percent of the gross receipts tax to pay for economic development projects. Passage of this act would allow economic development stakeholders to play a greater role in economic diversification since it provides a tool that they can market to businesses and industries interested in locating to Socorro County.

After passing the ordinance, the City of Socorro, Village of Magdalena, and/or Socorro County will be able to provide financial assistance and/or land to qualified economic development projects. The criteria and other requirements for local economic development aid are included as Appendix C. When evaluating economic development projects, the local entities should consider the criteria.

Lead Parties: City of Socorro, Village of Magdalena, Socorro County

Strategy IB: Identify a package of incentives available for retaining and growing existing businesses and attracting new businesses to Socorro County

Economic development stakeholders in Socorro County need to evaluate the types and level of incentives package that the City, County, and Village of Magdalena could feasibly provide existing businesses and new businesses. There are several incentives that local and county government can provide to employers or can partner with the State to provide. Many of these incentives are located in Appendix A and B, which included contact information. Ultimately, economic development stakeholders in Socorro County need to work with County leadership on identifying the incentives package that is appropriate for county and local government to provide.

Lead Parties: City of Socorro, Village of Magdalena, Socorro County, in conjunction with Socorro County Chamber of Commerce, and local business leaders

Strategy IC: Establish a Quick Response Retention and Expansion Committee

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Economic development stakeholders in Socorro County need to work to establish a Quick Response and Expansion Committee. The Committee should be made up of 8-10 leaders from the community, including business leaders, the economic development coordinators for the City of Socorro and Magdalena Area Community Development Corporation, NM Tech, financial institutions, local utility representatives, real estate agents, and local leadership. The role of the committee will be to:

- Collect and provide information to local business on incentives for expansion of their businesses in the communities;
- Identification of new programs designed to assist in the expansion and retention activities;
- Contact local businesses regularly to discuss business expansion and retention opportunities;
- Provide information on vacant land and buildings to prospective new business owners; and
- Assist in distribution, collection, and analysis of questionnaires designed to gauge the business environment in Socorro County.

Lead Parties: Socorro County Chamber of Commerce in conjunction with New Mexico Tech, and local business leaders

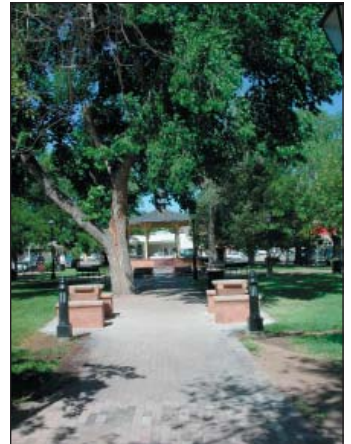
Strategy ID: Development of a small business incubator

A small business incubator could help lead to the development of new and expanded businesses and workforce development within Socorro County. An incubator is generally a building and/or space that is offered to new and small businesses at a nominal fee. In addition, certain technical assistance could be provided to the small businesses leasing space in the incubator. An incubator in Socorro County could benefit from the presence of New Mexico Tech and some of the other existing high tech firms already in Socorro County. Starting an incubator requires the following:

- Vacant land or building;
- The possibility of remodeling the building to create separate office or work space for several small businesses;
- A minimum of \$300,000 or more depending on the size, type, and equipment requirements of the small businesses (i.e. an incubator with a focus on high technology would require computers, software, and other specialized tools used in software manufacturing);
- Incubator management; and
- Equipment.

Lead Parties: City of Socorro in conjunction with New Mexico Tech, and community involvement

Strategy IE: Sirolli Institute Enterprise Facilitation Program for Community Economic Development



Socorro Plaza could be used to showcase local arts and crafts

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The State of New Mexico has recently partnered with the Sirolli Institute, an economic development program, aimed at fostering the existing entrepreneurship potential of a community. The premise of the program is to utilize existing ideas, passion, and talent in the community to grow and expand small businesses. At the 2004 Governor's Summit on Economic Development, the Governor said that the State intended to expand this program to other New Mexico communities wishing to participate by committing \$600,000 in funding for the program. The program helps the community establish a community-based organization with the intent of building the economy from within. When fully implemented, this program has led to the development of 20 to 30 new businesses/year. The project is underway in Luna, Grant, and Taos counties in New Mexico.

Lead Parties: Socorro County Chamber of Commerce, Socorro County, City of Socorro, Village of Magdalena, local business leaders.

Strategy IF: Certified Communities Program

Another program available to communities throughout the State is the Certified Communities program, developed by the New Mexico Economic Development Department. The program assists communities in the recruitment, retention, and creation of economic based jobs. In order to become part of the program a community submits an application process that demonstrates ways the community has met several requirements (many of which are included in this plan such as a SWOT analysis, business plan, and target industry analysis. Some of the benefits of the program include:

- \$5,000 per year for two years that can be applied to special projects such as a grant writer, aerial photographs, training, website, and other uses;
- Recognition as a Certified Community by the State of New Mexico;
- Trade show booth display highlighting the community; and
- Greater exposure through the New Mexico Economic Development Department.

Lead Parties: City of Socorro, Village of Magdalena, Socorro County in conjunction with Socorro County Chamber of Commerce

Strategy IG: Grow the Arts Community in Socorro County

Socorro County is located along what some call "The I-25 Arts Corridor", extending from Taos in the north to Mesilla in the South. Arts and crafts are already strong in the State of New Mexico and the growing arts community located in Socorro County can assist with economic diversification in a number of ways. First, it could bring more tourists into the area who want to visit the region. The City of Socorro already has historical significance, something that the arts community compliments nicely. Second, it brings in new money as the result of the increase in tourism. This money is spent on local arts and crafts and at area businesses, thereby increasing revenues to the communities in terms of gross

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receipts taxes and personal income. Third, it brings recognition to the area as an arts community. Fourth and finally, the presence of an arts community can give rise to other businesses such as arts supply stores, coffee shops, and galleries. Specific steps that need to be undertaken in order to cultivate the arts community include:

- **Increase the amount of gallery space in the County**- The City of Socorro has already donated gallery space and the City's economic development coordinator is also working on providing additional gallery space. Several areas of the City have potential for further development in the arts. These include the historic plaza district, as well as California Street. These areas are particularly well suited because of their ease of access and high visibility in the community.
- **Showcase local arts through shows and displays** - This is another activity that the City of Socorro is pursuing and could be accomplished in Magdalena as well. An example of showcasing arts is the Arts and Luminaria display on the Plaza, which occurred earlier in December of 2004. These shows could be expanded and increased to other times of year.
- **The City of Socorro should work with the Alamo Chapter of the Navajo Nation in the operation and maintenance of the Chapter Arts Center located in Socorro** - The City currently pays the utilities on the building. The Alamo Chapter would like to increase the utilization of the Center in order to allow its local artisans to display their arts and crafts. In addition, the Chapter would like to use the Center as an educational center and small business incubator as well, both of which could benefit the City of Socorro and the rest of the County. Improving the building façade fits in with goals found in the City of Socorro Comprehensive Plan that relate to creating an attractive atmosphere. This could mean that the City and Alamo Chapter could partner together to improve the building. In addition, the City and the Chamber of Commerce may work with the Chapter to use the facility as a marketing tool for the arts presence in Socorro.

Lead Parties: City Tourism Director in collaboration with local artisans, the City of Socorro, and the Chamber Economic Development Director

Strategy IH: Continual Workforce Development Training Initiative

Economic Development Stakeholders within Socorro County should work with the State of New Mexico Economic Development Department and local business owners to apply for tax credits for job training programs. These programs can help reimburse business owners for the cost of training. Part of this initiative involves public outreach so that business owners know that these programs exist within the State and are available for them to utilize.

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Lead Parties: City of Socorro, Socorro County, and Village of Magdalena in conjunction with the State of NM Economic Development Department

Objective 2: Initiate strategic partnerships with New Mexico Tech in order to capitalize on programs at the school that might generate economic development for the County;

Strategy 2A; New Mexico Tech/Socorro County Stakeholders Joint Committee

The relationship between New Mexico Tech and the Socorro County communities needs to be strengthened in order to maximize the mutually beneficial potential for increasing economic development. A committee comprised of representatives of New Mexico Tech and each community needs to be established. The role of the Committee would be to:

- Identify mutual goals that could be accomplished through greater collaboration;
- Establish an action agenda for the committee with specific projects to accomplish within a five-year time frame; and
- Leverage resources of both the Socorro County communities and New Mexico Tech in attracting business, students, and faculty members to the community.

Lead Parties: Socorro County, Chamber Economic Development Director

Strategy 2B: Work together to maximize the region's potential benefits from the X-Prize and research/development activities associated with New Mexico Tech.

Economic development stakeholders in Socorro County should work with the Committee mentioned above to outline a strategy designed to ensure that the County is able to compete for research/development firms and business associated with the X-Prize. Capitalizing on the X-Prize and associated activity that it generates includes; Identify the programs already located at New Mexico Tech that could be ancillary to the X-Prize and; Promote the programs and businesses already present in Socorro County which could provide support to X-Prize activities, such as the Very Large Array. In addition, New Mexico Tech is one of the leading geologic research institutions in the United States. Significant research programs are already in place that study the seismology and earth sciences. These programs can also be marketed to attract visiting scientists to the area.

Lead Parties: New Mexico Tech., Chamber Economic Development Director

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Objective 3: Implement County-wide improvements in terms of land use, infrastructure, and community appearance;

Strategy 3A: Industrial Park Master Plan

Master planning the City of Socorro Industrial Park would be beneficial to economic development efforts in a variety of ways. First of all, the master plan would show lot configuration, lot size, access points, and identify the locations and types of infrastructure that serve the park. This could allow prospective tenants to decide where in the park they want to locate and the potential lots that could be available to them. Second, a master plan graphic could be created to show the park layout, which then could be turned into a brochure that could be sent to interested businesses and placed on the Economic Development website. The industrial park should be planned with design guidelines in order to create a quality development.

Lead Parties: City of Socorro

Strategy 3B: Continue to Improve the Appearance of the Socorro County Communities

The appearance of each community is important in promoting the quality of life of the Socorro communities. Improving the community appearance attracts visitors and tourists to the area and attracts people who may want to relocate to the area. Improving the appearance of each community is a multi-pronged approach and includes:

- Develop a Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance for the County and increase the resources devoted to zoning enforcement within all areas as those resources are available;
- Continue to follow through with projects such as the City of Socorro Downtown to NM Tech corridor enhancement; seek similar projects on the south side of the City of Socorro;
- Improve the appearance of public parks as needed;
- Initiate the New Mexico Main Street program in Socorro and Magdalena in an effort to improve building facades in each community; and
- Initiate new streetscaping and enhancement projects in the Socorro County communities.

Lead Parties: Socorro County, City of Socorro, Village of Magdalena

Strategy 3C: Conduct County-Wide Infrastructure Improvements

Providing the adequate water and wastewater lines as well as improving roadways in commercial and industrial areas is critical for any community undertaking economic development. Socorro County, the City of Socorro, and Village of Magdalena need to continue their focus on improving its infrastructure im-

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provements on areas where economic development is likely to occur in order to promote business development in those areas. This includes:

- Water and wastewater expansion as necessary in industrial and commercial areas;
- Roadway improvement and expansion in industrial and commercial areas;
- Overall system maintenance and upgrade to pump stations, lift stations, wells, and the wastewater treatment plant; and
- Improvements to these systems will require that the communities program projects into their Infrastructure and Capital Improvements Plan and seek community development funding in order to complete these projects. In order to identify improvements relevant to economic development, the public works officials, economic development stakeholders, and leadership from each community should identify relevant projects that will enhance the economic development potential of the communities.

Lead Parties: Socorro County, Chamber Economic Development Director

Strategy 3D: Develop and Implement a Countywide Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance

A Countywide Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance can help improve efficient land development and enhance the community's appearance, while protecting the health, safety, and welfare of County residents. The County should investigate Zoning Alternatives that respect the rural character of certain areas of the County, while enhancing both rural and more developed areas alike. Comprehensive Zoning must be approached in a manner that protects existing developments from infringement, while providing assurance and security to new business and industry interested in locating in Socorro.

Objective 4: Capitalize on Socorro County's strategic location along I-25, proximity to Albuquerque and El Paso, and the outdoor recreational amenities located throughout the County.

Strategy 4A: Socorro County Economic Development and Industrial Profile Website

Development of a website specifically devoted to showcasing the County's economic development potential needs to be developed. A website would be a major marketing tool, giving the Socorro County communities more of an opportunity to market themselves to state and national interests. Thus far, the City of Socorro and Magdalena Area Community Development Corporation have websites, however, a website focused on economic development and containing data on area demographics, incentives, and amenities could help companies make locational decisions for Socorro County. At a minimum, the website should contain the following links:

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- a. **Community Profile:** The community profile link should contain information about education, workforce demographics, socioeconomics, housing, and charts/figures that provide a visual illustration of the data. In addition, information comparing Socorro County to other regional communities should be provided. The site should also list some of the County's strengths.
- b. **Industrial Profile:** This link should contain information on the business activities that are currently taking place in the County and its communities. This can include information on major employers, links to employers websites, the composition of the industrial base in the County.
- c. **Land and Infrastructure:** This link should provide information on the area's utilities, telecommunications, transportation, access, traffic counts, and vacant/available land and buildings. This link should also have a map that shows where available sites are located.
- d. **Quality of Life and Educational Attributes:** This link should contain information about Socorro County and its communities as a place to live, work, study, and play. It should contain information and photos about recreational facilities, golf, arts, entertainment/humanities, community events, and community facilities, as well as information on the Very Large Array and NM Tech.
- e. **News:** The latest news about the communities, County, and New Mexico should be contained in this link. Hot links to the El Defensor Chieftain newspaper, the Magdalena Area Community Development Corporation, City of Socorro, New Mexico Tech, The Chamber of Commerce, the NRAO, and the BLM, should also be included. In addition, these websites should have a link back to the Socorro Economic Development Website.

Lead Parties: Chamber Economic Development Director

Strategy 4B: Targeted Marketing Plan and Strategy

Economic Development stakeholders within Socorro County should initiate a targeted marketing strategy aimed at promoting the economic assets of Socorro County, its outdoor recreation potential, and its centralized location within the State of New Mexico. Initially, economic development stakeholders should study the marketing campaigns of that of Deming and Santa Rosa, two other NM communities that are successful at their own marketing efforts. The Plan and Strategy should consist of the following elements:

- a. **Outdoor Recreation:** Socorro County is already known for its outdoor amenities and recreational opportunities. There is already a triathlon that takes place in Socorro County so the precedence is already set for people coming to the area for this type of activity. Economic development stakeholders should continue to build upon this recognition and begin a targeted

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marketing campaign at outdoor recreation. This marketing approach should consist of the following:

- Camping in the Cibola National Forest;
- Sevieta National Wildlife Refuge;
- Bosque del Apache Wildlife Refuge;
- Mountain biking trails; and
- HH Ranch.

The package should be sent to outdoor magazines, websites, and outdoor clubs around the state and southwest. Economic Development stakeholders should work with local businesses and the tourism director in the County to develop an outdoor recreation package to provide an incentive to lure people to the area who wish to take advantage of the area's amenities.

b. Socorro's Location: Another target could be nationwide lodging establishments, movie studios, artisans, tourists, and large retailers for warehousing by developing a focused marketing package that highlights the following:

- Interstate and Centralized Location;
- Traffic counts along I-25, US 60, and US 380 through Socorro County;
- Demand for lodging and hospitality industry in Socorro;
- Proximity to an International Airport in Albuquerque;
- Growth of the artisan community;
- Very Large Array;
- Socorro County's historical significance; and
- Presence of New Mexico Tech;

Lead Parties: Chamber Economic Development Director

Objective 5: Implement ways to expand residential construction in Socorro County in order to retain people who work in Socorro County as full time residents.

Strategy 5A: Expand the role of non-profits and other housing services within Socorro County

It is important for economic stakeholders within Socorro County to work with and support the activities of non-profit and housing service providers operating within the County. These organizations provide loans and grants to low-income families for home ownership and housing rehabilitation. A relationship between economic development stakeholders should be developed in order to identify issues related to housing development in Socorro. Groups that the economic development stakeholders should reach out to include:

- USDA Rural Development - Socorro Office;
- Socorro County Housing Authority;
- Tierra del Sol Housing Services; and the
- Community Action Agency of Southern New Mexico.

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Housing summits or forums are useful tools in bringing all the major housing stakeholders to the table. These forums and summits have been used in several communities to identify barriers to housing development in a community

Lead Parties: Socorro County, City of Socorro

Strategy 5B: Annual Housing Fairs in Socorro County

Another way that the economic development coordinators can work with housing organizations is to put on an annual housing fair in which the public is invited to learn about available programs, loans, and the overall home ownership/rehabilitation. These fairs have proven successful in other communities throughout the State in disseminating information to people wishing to own their own homes. Many people are unaware of the process of home ownership and these fairs could expose them to the necessary steps required to purchase a home. Organizations that can be asked to take part include:

- USDA Rural Development;
- Socorro Housing Authority;
- Habitat for Humanity;
- New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority;
- South Central Council of Governments;
- Local banks;
- Home Improvement Stores/Hardware stores;
- Realty companies;
- City of Socorro;
- Homebuilders Association;
- Village of Magdalena;
- Socorro County;
- Local mortgage companies; and
- Fannie Mae New Mexico Partnership Office.

Lead Parties: Chamber Economic Development Director

Strategy 5C: Revitalization of BIA property in Magdalena for Housing Development

The BIA land located in Magdalena represents a good community asset. The BIA dorm buildings themselves are not in good condition and have asbestos issues. The Village of Magdalena has been working with the Federal Government and Congressman Pearce to have the old dorms removed. If the dorms could be removed, the land could be reclaimed and used for economic development purposes in the Village. One of those uses could be housing should the community determine this should be the proper use. Additionally, this land could be used for other purposes. Funding should be sought to remove the BIA dorms and for revitalization of the land.

Lead Parties: Village of Magdalena

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Strategy 5D: Strategic Housing Study

Economic development stakeholders in Socorro County should initiate a Housing Market Analysis that could be passed on to home builders in the region. With Socorro County being only an hour away from the Albuquerque Metropolitan area, it is logical to assume that the growth of the Metro area could eventually spill over to Socorro and the Socorro County communities. People already commute to Albuquerque from Socorro and Magdalena and vice versa. Part of the reason people commute to Socorro from Albuquerque is the result of the absence of high quality housing in the Socorro area. The study should include:

- Information of the Community's demographics;
- Analysis of housing need in Socorro County;
- Identification of vacant land within the County that is available for subdivision development; and
- Identification of housing profiles and trends within Socorro County.

In addition, economic development stakeholders should contact the Homebuilder Association of Central New Mexico to determine ways that Socorro County can appeal to national and local homebuilders already present in Los Lunas and Belen.

Lead Parties: Socorro County, City of Socorro

Strategy 5E: Vacant Land Availability Map

C. OVERVIEW OF SOCORRO COUNTY

I. Location

Socorro County is the second largest in the State of New Mexico's in terms of land mass. Located in the Central Rio Grande Valley, it is comprised of 6,648.71 square miles. The County Seat is the City of Socorro, which is located approximately 70 miles south of the Albuquerque Metropolitan Area, the State's largest metro area. Socorro is also located approximately two hours north of the second largest metropolitan area, the Las Cruces Metropolitan Area.

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2. Population

The Bureau of Business and Economic Research at the University of New Mexico estimates that the County's July 2003 population totaled 18,178 persons, which is an increase of 100 people from the 2000 Census. This population total ranks Socorro County as the 22nd most populous County in the State. It is reasonable to assume that this increase is the result of both live births and a small amount of in-migration (new people moving in to the County). Socorro County is comprised of two incorporated communities, a chapter of the Navajo Nation, and several smaller unincorporated communities.

Table 2 : Socorro County Population 1990 - 2000

Community	1990 Population	2000 Population	Percentage Change, 1990 - 2000
City of Socorro	8,207	8,877	8%
Village of Magdalena	844	913	8%
Alamo Chapter of the Navajo Nation	1,228	1,183	NA
Unincorporated County	4,885	7,192	40%
Total	14,476	18,165	22%

Source: US Census Bureau

The table indicates that Socorro County and its communities have seen a moderate rate of growth over the past ten years. The unincorporated part of the County has seen the most growth, with most of it taking place in the northern part of the County, around the Lemitar and Escondida area. Future predictions prepared by the Bureau of Business and Economic Research indicates that Socorro County can expect to see continued growth for the next 25 years. Table 2 shows population projected to the year 2030.

Table 3: Population Projections for Socorro County, 2000 - 2030

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Year	Population and Projected Growth	Growth Rate
2000	18,165	-
2005	19,802	9%
2010	21,421	8%
2015	23,000	7%
2020	24,493	6%
2025	25,864	5%
2030	27,137	4%

Source: BBER at UNM

The table shows growth continuing to occur at a moderate rate, although it is projected to slow as time goes on. Population growth, however, is highly dependent on a number of external and internal factors and can fluctuate significantly higher or lower, depending on how these factors play out over time. Some of the issues that could impact growth of Socorro County and its communities include:

- The County's and municipalities ability to diversify its economy;
- The number of homes available in the County for purchase or rent;
- The amount of water available for development;
- Socorro County's ability to take advantage of regional growth issues such as the X-Prize in Southern New Mexico and its ability to capture some of the growth of the Albuquerque Metropolitan Area;
- Socorro County's ability to retain New Mexico Tech students and faculty; and
- Ability to attract visiting scientist to the Very Large Array

3. Employment and Labor Force

According to the 2000 US Census, the County's labor force consists of approximately 7,845. The labor force is an important economic indicator since it shows the number of trained employees in an area. This in turn is important for business attraction. There are several industrial sector categories in which Socorro County residents are employed. Table 3 breaks down employment by industry and includes the total number of employees and percentage of labor force involved in each category.

Table 4: Employment by Industry in Socorro County

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Industry	Number of Employees	Percentage of Labor Force
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, mining	450	6.3
Construction	575	8.1
Manufacturing	392	5.5
Wholesale Trade	60	.8
Retail Trade	665	9.3
Transportation, warehousing, utilities	281	3.9
Information	101	1.4
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	192	2.7
Professional, Scientific, Management, Administrative	662	9.3
Educational, Health, Social Services	2,202	30.9
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodations (Hospitality)	635	8.9
Other Services (Except Public Administration)	298	4.2
Public Administration	614	8.6

Source: 2000 US Census

As Socorro is the largest community in the County, most of the total labor force is based in the County. The City of Socorro's labor force represents 54% of the total labor force in the County. Magdalena's share represents 5% of the total County labor force.

4. Major Employers in Socorro County

Employment in the dominant industries is reflected in the major employers in the County as defined by the New Mexico Department of Labor. These employers have more than 25 employees.

Table 4: Major Employers in Socorro County

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Employer	Type of Establishment
New Mexico Tech	Education
Socorro Consolidated Schools	Education
Magdalena Municipal Schools	Education
Socorro Medical Associates	Health Care
Socorro General Hospital	Health Care
Bhasker Medical Clinic	Health Care
City of Socorro	Public Administration
National Radio Astronomy Observatory	Other services
Dicaperl Minerals Corporation	Mining and excavating
Monette Ford	Car dealership
Holiday Inn Express	Accommodations
1st State Bank	Professional services

Source: New Mexico Department of Labor

5. Analysis of Industrial Base

Both tables 3 and 4 reveal that the economy in Socorro County is driven by a few dominant sectors, which include:

- a. **Educational/Health Care/Social Services:** The educational/health/social services sector accounts for 30.9% of the total labor force in Socorro County, with the majority of these people employed either at New Mexico Tech or one of the school districts. Jobs at both places account for some of the highest wages in the County.
- b. **Retail Trade/Professional Scientific Management Sectors:** The retail trade sector and the professional management sector are the next dominant industrial sectors. Most of these sectors are centered in the City of Socorro where many of the shops and offices are located. Magdalena and some of the unincorporated areas in the County have smaller businesses as well that contribute to a strong retail industry. One issue that economic development stakeholders in Socorro County would like to address is the stemming of economic leakage outside of the area. The issue of economic leakage should be helped in part to the opening of a Wal-Mart Super Store in Socorro, which should carry many of the goods that cause people to leave the area. However, the WalMart will also create new competition against the areas smaller retailers.

The breakdown of the industrial base is essentially the same for each of the County's incorporated communities and the Alamo Chapter of the Navajo Nation. The Alamo Chapter however has significant employment in the construction and transportation/warehousing/utilities sectors. Analysis on the industrial base reveals that Socorro County is highly dependant on these sectors for its economic development. Downturns in these sectors could significantly impact