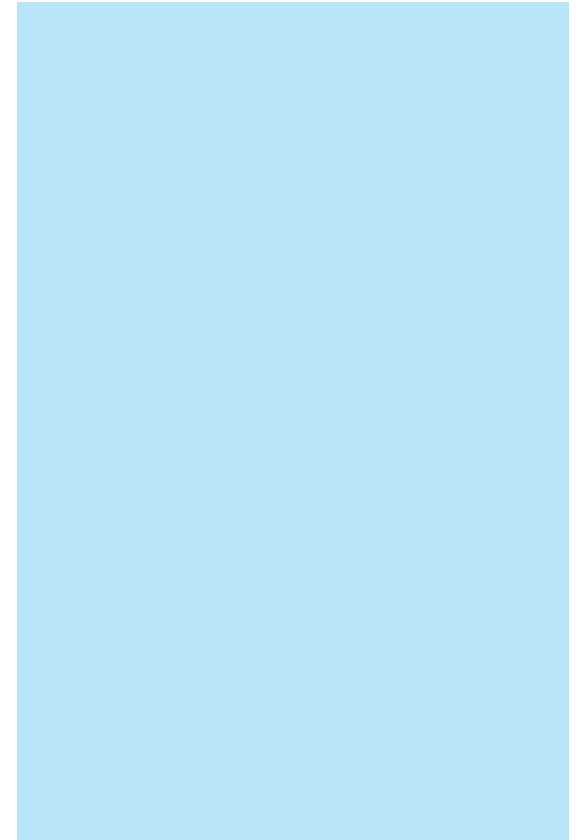




# 2026 La Cienega/La Cieneguilla Communities Plan

Adoption Draft



# Acknowledgements

The Planning Committee was open to the entire community and the following individuals participated in the planning process by attending at least one meeting:

## Planning Committee:

|                         |                      |              |
|-------------------------|----------------------|--------------|
| Adolfo Maes             | Jose Varela Lopez    | Susan Reid   |
| Alonzo Gallegos         | Jose L. Villegas Sr. | Toby Herrera |
| Andrea La Cruz-Crawford | Joseph Baros         | Tom Dixon    |
| Anna Brunson            | Julian Gonzales      |              |
| Anna Gurule             | Kathleen McCloud     |              |
| Bryce Gibson            | Keir Carreccio       |              |
| Bushrod Lake            | Kelley Rogers        |              |
| Carl Dickens            | Ken Baros            |              |
| Carol Cooper            | Kevin Taylor         |              |
| Daniel Goodman          | Luis Rodriguez       |              |
| David Craig             | Lyndsey Hacker McNew |              |
| David Funck Sr.         | Marc Mros            |              |
| David Tapia             | Michael Salimbene    |              |
| Diana Borin             | Meryl Lovecock       |              |
| Diana Boyd              | Nicole Cunico        |              |
| Diane Pinkey            | Osma Rojas           |              |
| Edna V. Sandnot         | Pamela Romero        |              |
| Elise Madison           | Phyllis LaBaca       |              |
| Gene Bostwick           | Rachel de la Torre   |              |
| Guillaimo Lozoyal       | Rick Lamie           |              |
| Isela Rodriguez         | Rosina Simoni Vargas |              |
| Ivonne Pona             | Rosis Herrera        |              |
| J.J. Gonzales           | Sean Paloheim        |              |
| Jamie Anaya             | Shayla Woodhouse     |              |
| Jennifer Salimbene      | Soma Franks          |              |
| John Heelund            | Starr Woods          |              |
| John Herbrand           | Stephen Schmidt      |              |
| Joni Clemens            | Susan Guevara        |              |

## La Cienega Valley Association (LCVA) Board of Directors:

Andrea La Cruz-Crawford, President  
Pamela Romero, Vice President  
Mary Dixon, Treasurer  
Robert Romero, Representative Acequia de la Cienega  
Jeff Montoya, Representative of Pueblo of Pojoaque  
J.J. Gonzales, Representative El Guicu Ditch  
Julian Gonzales  
Rachel de la Torre

## **Santa Fe County**

### **Elected Officials:**

Justin S. Greene, Commission District 1  
Lisa Carcari Stone, Commission District 2  
Camilla Bustamante, Commission District 3  
Adam F. Johnson, Commission District 4  
Hank Hughes, Commission District 5

### **County Manager's Office:**

Gregory S. Shaffer

### **Growth Management Department:**

Alexandra Ladd, Growth Management Director  
Brett Clavio, Planning Manager  
Nate Crail, Senior Community Planner  
Joseph Scala, Community Planner  
Marvelous Echeng, Community Planner  
Carrie Tremblatt, Senior Transportation Planner  
Andrew Harnden, Senior Water Planner  
Valerie Rangel, Senior GIS Planner  
Herbert Foster, Planning Team Leader, TDR Program  
Adeline Murthy, Planning Team Leader, Open Space & Trails  
Monica Harmon, Open Space Resource Mgt. Specialist  
Rose Masters, Open Space Interpretative Ranger

### **Economic Development Division:**

Juan Torres, Economic Development Manager  
Leila Shadabi, Economic Development Specialist

### **Front Cover Photos:**

Top: View overlooking Tres Rios Ranch, Photo by Carl Dickens

Middle: Rael Ranch house in El Cañon, Photo by Joseph Scala

Bottom: View overlooking La Cieneguilla, Photo by N. Crail

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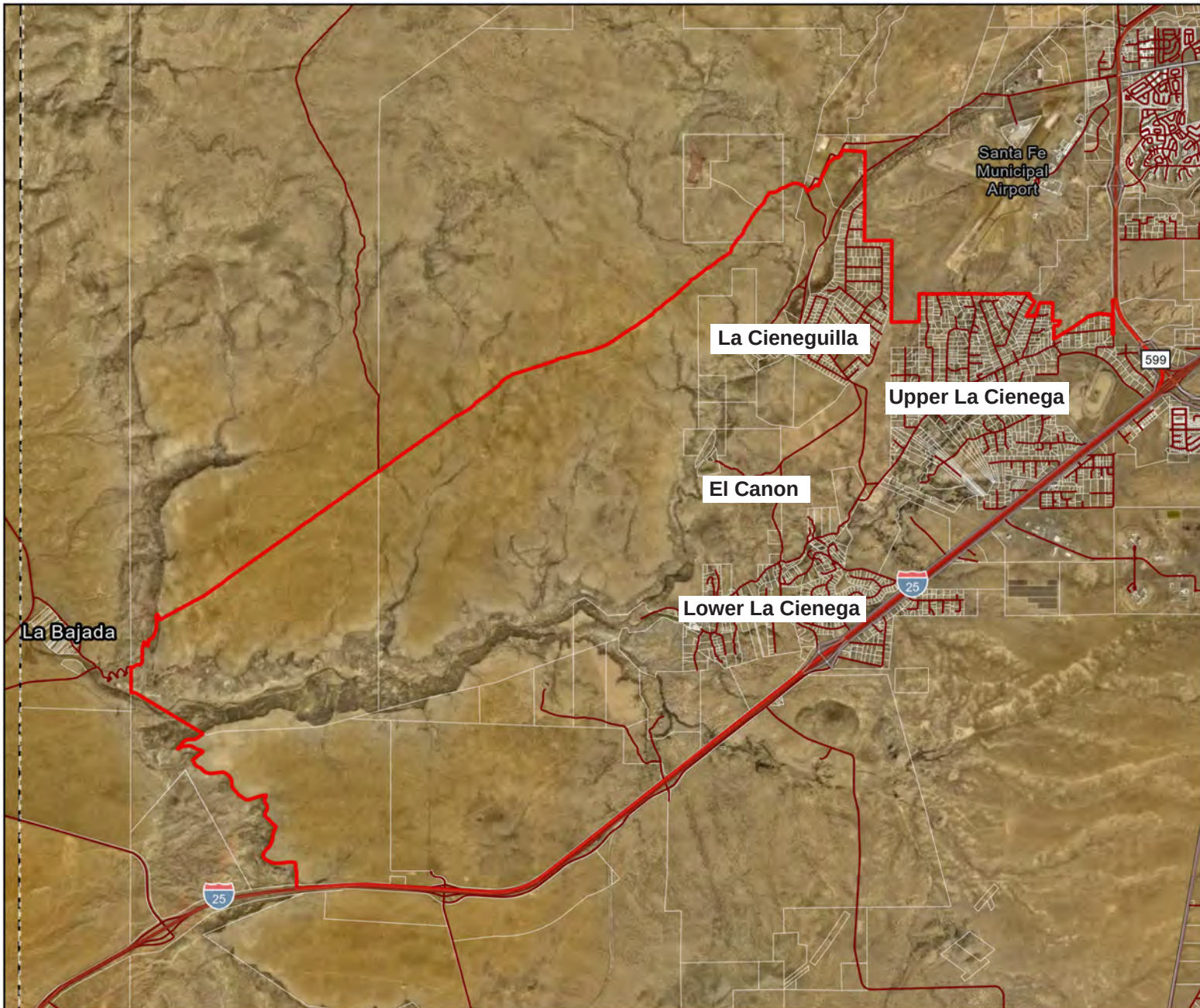
# Map 1

## La Cienega & La Cieneguilla

### Planning Area Map

#### Legend

-  Santa Fe County Boundary
-  Community Boundary
-  Roads
-  Parcel Boundary



Growth Management Department  
Planning Division

Prepared: April, 2025

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# Executive Summary

The plan is organized into three sections:

1) Context, 2) Elements, and 3) Implementation

## Section I: Context

The 2025 La Cienega/La Cieneguilla Communities Plan covers the traditional communities of La Cienega, La Cieneguilla, and El Canon. The plan provides a foundation for amendments to the La Cienega/La Cieneguilla Community District Overlay in the Sustainable Land Development Code. The purpose of the plan is to ensure the histories, context, vision, and goals of the communities are documented and supported by the County.

### Communities Vision Statement

The villages of La Cienega and La Cieneguilla have unique histories, but we share a vision of a peaceful and rural communities that respects diversity and are governed through unity.

We will protect our natural environment, air and water resources, and unique character by honoring and preserving our traditional culture and the area's historical, agricultural, livestock, and rural low-density residential development traditions.

We will maintain our self-sufficiency and protect our communities from impacts of urban developments.

We will live in a communities where people of all cultures and incomes share in decision making.

We will live in a communities where any changes, improvements, and decisions are informed by a realistic understanding of our available resources and our vision of a relaxed and open quality of life.

## Section II: Elements

The plan includes a comprehensive set of elements designed to guide the future development and preservation in the Planning Area. These elements address a wide range of critical areas, including land use, economic development, agriculture, resource conservation, open space, public safety, transportation, and water management. Each element is tailored to the unique needs and opportunities of the Planning Area, ensuring a balanced and sustainable approach to growth.

## Section III: Implementation

The implementation section prioritizes key projects, assigns them priority rankings, and identifies potential funding sources to ensure critical initiatives are addressed. It compiles goals, strategies, and actions from each plan element to provide a comprehensive overview of required initiatives, ensuring a coordinated approach to project execution. The plan includes a framework for monitoring and evaluating progress, emphasizing community engagement to foster collaboration and address the community's needs. By following this structured implementation roadmap, the village can ensure efficient and effective realization of the Plan, achieving its long-term vision and addressing immediate needs.



# SECTION I: CONTEXT





Northwest view over Tres Rios Ranch, Photo by Carl Dickens



## Plan Purpose

The intent of the La Cienega/La Cieneguilla Communities Plan is to reinforce the unique, historical, rural character of the Planning Area while serving evolving community needs through a mix of policies, projects, and programs. The Plan specifically:

- Documents and maps changes from 2015 through 2025 and analyze impacts.
- Revisits elements, strategies and recommendations identified in the 2015 La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Plan Update.
- Establishes a future land use map, categories and general provisions to guide future development, and land use policy.
- Identifies projects, programs and strategies that support the community's vision and goals.
- Provides recommendations to guide amendments to Sustainable Land Development Code (SLDC) Section 9.8, La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community District Overlay, which tailors zoning and development standards for the Planning Area.
- Provides a community action plan to further the Community vision and solve problems on an ongoing basis with an emphasis on developing collaborative relationships between residents, each level of government, public agencies, and community organizations.

## Community Planning Context

This document is the 2025 La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Communities Plan. When adopted it will amend the County's Sustainable Growth Management Plan (SGMP) and replace the 2015 La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community Plan Update. Furthermore, it is consistent with the SGMP, Sustainable Land Development Code (SLDC), and related County policies.

As an amendment to the SGMP, this plan guides land use policy for the Planning Area and provides the framework for future zoning and development regulations, capital projects, programs, and services.

## Key Issues

Many issues identified in the 2015 Plan are still relevant today and are brought forward in this update. Among these ongoing and primary concerns are the reduction of the Planning Area's surface and ground water resources and a continued desire to preserve and enhance the rural character related to residential development, roads, open space, agriculture and the acequia systems.

This plan update also identifies new issues pertaining to growth both within and adjacent to the Planning Area, particularly the need to coordinate and plan for increased commercial activities both within and adjacent to the Planning Area, including the areas associated with Eagle Ridge (formerly known as the Santa Fe Downs), Erica Road, the Airport, I-25/NM 599 interchange, and Ojo Santa Fe.

Additionally, this update addresses issues and opportunities associated with changes that have occurred over a decade in the County's land use and policy framework. Developed during a community mapping exercise, the "Community Issues of Concern" Map on page 13 highlights current issues such as car racing and high density development.

# Communities Vision Statement

Building upon the 2001 and 2015 Plan Vision Statement, members of the community developed a revised Vision Statement that recognizes the multiple communities in the Planning Area, makes minor clarifications, and reformats the statement:

The villages of La Cienega and La Cieneguilla have unique histories, but we share a vision of peaceful and rural communities that respect diversity and are governed through unity.

We will protect our natural environment, air and water resources, and unique character by honoring and preserving our traditional culture and the area's historical, agricultural, livestock, and rural low-density residential development traditions.

We will maintain our self-sufficiency and protect our communities from impacts of urban developments.

We will live in communities where people of all cultures and incomes share in decision making.

We will live in communities where any changes, improvements, and decisions are informed by a realistic understanding of our available resources and our vision of a relaxed and open quality of life.



## Major Recommendations

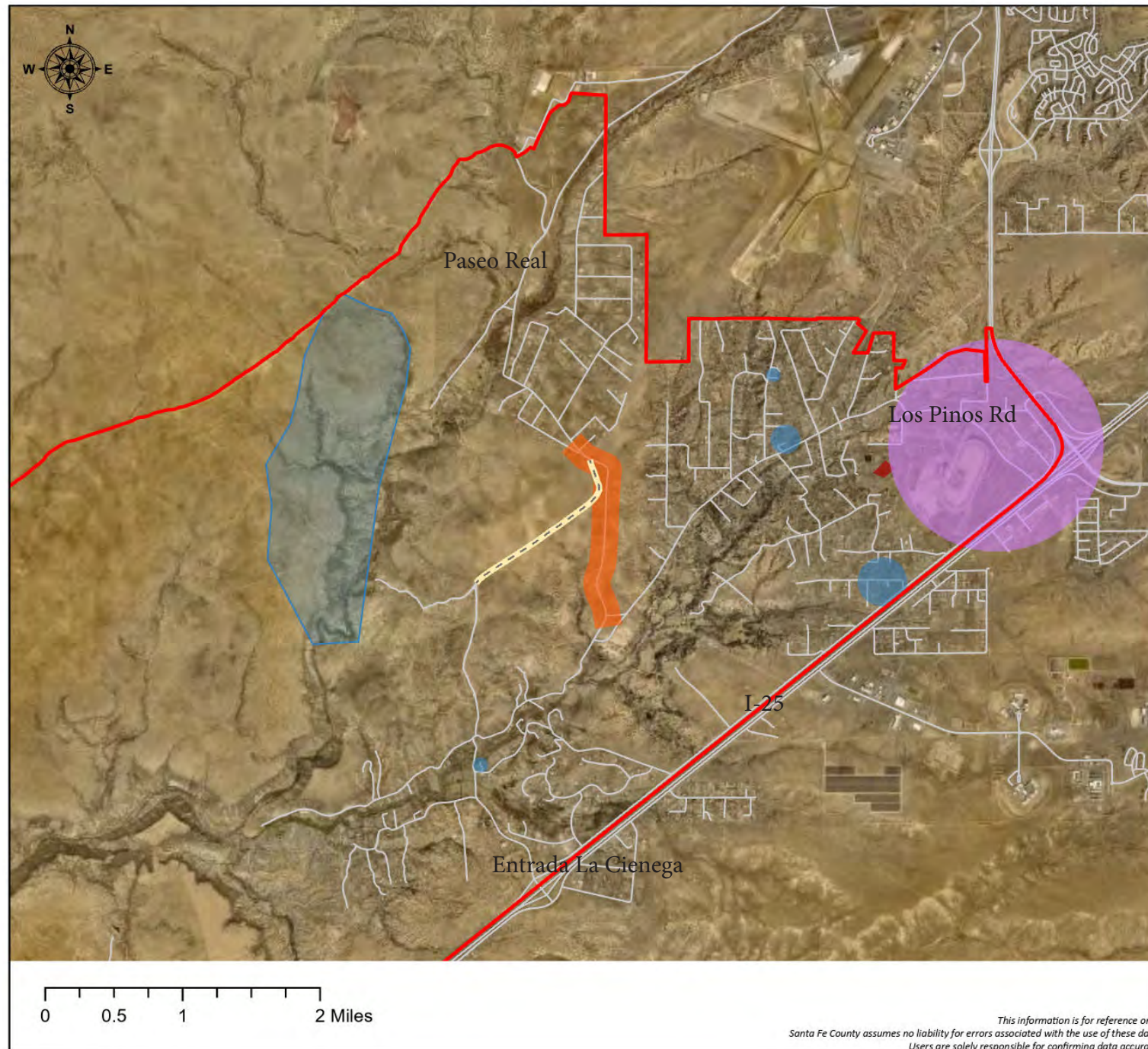
Many recommendations of the 2001 and 2015 Plans have been implemented through a variety of public and private actions, zoning regulations, capital improvement projects and programs. Recommendations that have not been fully implemented and are still relevant have been brought forward in this update, combined with new ones. Major recommendations include:

- Enhance the condition of the La Cienega Watershed by seeking the extension of Santa Fe County water lines to serve existing and future residential and commercial uses in Upper La Cienega.
- Maintain public transit throughout the community that provides connections to the Rail Runner Station and to City bus routes on Airport Road.
- Maintain the rural character of roads and increase pedestrian, vehicular and equestrian safety.
- Preserve and protect traditional agricultural and ranching activities through various means, including incentives such as site development standards, density bonuses, and transfers.
- Allow cluster development and density transfers in conjunction with agricultural, archaeological and open space conservation easements.
- Ensure that any density increases and/or bonuses take into account water, wastewater, neighborhood surroundings, access, traffic, utilities, history, etc.
- Establish community and equestrian trails along existing road network to connect with existing and planned regional trail systems, open space and community facilities.
- Conduct a water/sewer feasibility study for the Planning Area to analyze utility service options to consider all possible methods of serving the area over the long-term including on-site systems, (primarily well and septic), community systems and extensions of the Santa Fe County water and wastewater systems.
- Initiate a Public Improvement District (PID) or other funding mechanisms to finance infrastructure projects in existing areas with deficiencies.
- Plan and take measures to mitigate potential hazards posed by fire and flooding including participating in fire and fuel reduction programs and programs that clear dead and downed trees.
- Provide support for the expansion of county resources for emergency response in a manner that ensures that resources and personnel to address emergencies are expanded to meet the demands of expanding population in the service area; and look at access issues for emergency response and how those issues can be mitigated.
- Conduct a study on existing utilities available to county residents and existing limitations on access to certain services including landline and cell phone reception, internet access, and upgrades to allow for use of solar power within the communities.
- Collaborate with the City of Santa Fe and Santa Fe County to formalize interactions with residents of this community who are impacted by city infrastructure located adjacent to the Planning Area.
- Collaborate with the City of Santa Fe and Santa Fe County officials to address contamination of the lower Santa Fe River from the Paseo Real Wastewater Treatment Plant including replacing the existing waste water treatment plant with a jointly managed facility between the city and county.
- Develop stronger planning and communication between the Planning Area communities and the Santa Fe Regional Airport in order to minimize and/or eliminate the airport's impacts on these communities.

## Planning Area Boundary

The physical boundaries of the Planning Area are designed to recognize the traditional uses of the land and how development would impact the communities. Expansion of the City of Santa Fe and possible annexation of the Planning Area's communities threatened many of the grazing lands and open lands connecting the villages which are crucial to the fabric of the communities. Through discussion by the 2001 Planning Committee, historic and rural importance was assigned to these areas.

The boundary is coterminous with the La Cienega/La Cieneguilla Tradi-



La Cienega & La Cieneguilla

Community Issues  
of Concern

Legend

- LCLC Community Boundary
- Drug Trafficking
- Car Racing 1-3am
- Concern over water & high density development
- Illegal Business Activity
- Gun Shooting
- Landfill Site
- Roadways



Growth Management Department  
Planning Division

Prepared: September, 2024

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Planning Division Staff at Rael Ranch in El Canon. Photo by Joseph Scala.



tional Historic Communities boundary that was established by Santa Fe County Ordinance 2000-07 in accordance with State Law (NMSA 1978, Section 3-21-1) which recognizes the historic importance of the area and prevents annexation by the City of Santa Fe.

The Planning Area is the same as the area included in the 2001 and 2015 Community Plan boundary. The boundary follows the upper edge of the La Bajada escarpment on the south, follows topographic features and County Road 56 C to the west and north, the southern airport boundary and NM State Highway 599 to the north and east, and Interstate 25 to the east and south. (See Map 1: La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area). Within the core of the Planning Area the 1980 Santa Fe County General Plan delineated a Traditional Community Zoning District.

## Planning History & Process

The Planning Area is comprised of Lower La Cienega, Upper La Cienega, El Cañon and La Cieneguilla and surrounding areas. These rural communities in Santa Fe County share a long, enduring history, a scenic rural environment and a tradition of working together through discussion, education, listening and negotiation to solve problems and plan for the future by creating a community plan that encourages sensible and sustainable growth. In the late 1990's the communities began an in-depth community planning process that resulted in the adoption of the 2001 La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community Plan

(via Resolution 2001-117) and corresponding Ordinance 2002-009.

In late 2010, the Board of County Commissioners, (BCC), adopted the Sustainable Growth Management Plan (SGMP). In December 2013 the BCC adopted the corresponding Sustainable Land Development Code (SLDC) which replaced the 1996 Land Development Code and implement many of the policies from the SGMP. Most significantly, the new code presents a shift from the County's current hydrologic zoning, which regulates density based on water availability, to a fixed zoning scheme. To implement the new code and zoning scheme, the County will assign zoning districts and adopt a corresponding zoning map following criteria identified in the SGMP including water resources, proximity to public utilities, community character, existing and compatible land uses, densities and lot sizes. For areas such as La Cienega and La Cieneguilla covered by adopted plans and ordinances, the County worked with communities to assign base zoning districts and overlay zones as outlined in Chapter 9 of the SLDC.

In early 2011, in response to the adoption of the County's new General plan (the SGMP), Planning Area community members recognized the need to revisit the 2001 La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community Plan, and corresponding 2002-9 Santa Fe County La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community District Ordinance. Over the course of several years, members of the community and the County worked together to assess changes in the area, update

information, identify issues, and revise and develop strategies to manage growth and development in accordance with the SGMP and SLDC. This effort resulted in the 2015 La Cienega/La Cieneguilla Community Plan Update (via Resolution 2015-123).

Building upon the 2015 Plan, the 2024-25 La Cienega/La Cieneguilla community planning process was initiated by the La Cienega Valley Association (LCVA) and authorized by the Board of County Commissioners via Resolution 2024-013 in January 2024. The La Cienega/La Cieneguilla Planning Committee meetings were always open to any community member. The first meeting began in March 2024 where the Committee, led by Planning Division staff, held monthly meetings through July 2025. At each monthly meeting, the Committee focused on different topics (i.e., land use, transportation, or economic development) and then begin reviewing red line drafts throughout 2025. Implementation of the Plan will occur through amendments to the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community District Overlay (SLDC Section 9.8) and project implementation specified in Section 3 of this plan.

## Related Plans, Policies, and Programs

As a part of the La Cienega/La Cieneguilla Communities planning process, the following plans, policies, and programs were reviewed in order to understand the current policy and regulatory framework that guides development in the area and determine appropriate amendments to the framework:

The La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Traditional Historic Community: Santa Fe County Ordinance 2000-07 declared La Cienega and La Cieneguilla as a Traditional Historic Community (THC) in accordance with state law - New Mexico Statutes Section 3-7-1-1. To qualify as a traditional historic community, an area shall:

- be an unincorporated area of a county;
- be an identifiable village, community, neighborhood or district that can be documented as having existed for more than one hundred years;
- include structures or landmarks that are associated with the identity of the specific village, community, neighborhood or district seeking designation as a traditional historic community;
- have a distinctive character or traditional quality that can be distinguished from surrounding areas or new developments in the vicinity; and
- be declared a traditional historic community by an ordinance by the BCC.

2015 Santa Fe County Sustainable Growth Management Plan (SGMP)

- The Santa Fe County Sustainable Growth Management Plan provides policy direction for managing future growth across the County, including direction on creating, adopting, and implementing community plans. The multi-year process to update the SGMP began in summer 2025

Sustainable Land Development Code (SLDC)

- 2016 Santa Fe County SLDC provides zoning regulations and standards for new development. The SLDC implements the County's SGMP and includes the La Cienega/La Cieneguilla Community District Overlay.

Santa Fe County Open Space

- The Santa Fe County Open Space Program currently manages the El Peñasco Blanco Open Space and La Cieneguilla Open Space.

Capital Planning

- Santa Fe County Capital Improvement Plan (CIP): Guides public investment in projects to serve existing and future development.
- Santa Fe County Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan (ICIP): Comprised of projects generated by the County and project requests from the community that are submitted to the state legislature for capital outlay funding.

Wildfire Planning

- Santa Fe County Community Wildfire Protection Plan: Identifies areas at high-risk of wildfire and fire mitigation programs and policies.

Regional Authorities

- Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)- A federally funded transportation policy-making organization responsible for programming federal transportation dollars and for transportation planning. The MPO Planning Area includes the La Cienega/La Cieneguilla Planning Area.

State and Federal Agencies:

- Office of the State Engineer (OSE) and Interstate Stream Commission (ISC): Responsible for administering the state's water resources and handles applications for replacement well permits.
- NM Environment Department (NMED): Administers programs and regulations to promote a healthy, high functioning environment. The agency's responsibilities include the administration of the Liquid Waste Program and Drinking Water Program.



- NM Department of Transportation (NMDOT): Responsible for planning a safe, integrated, and multi-modal transportation system. The agency's responsibilities include managing construction activities on state roads and highways including Interstate 25 on the southern border of the Planning area.
- US Army Corps of Engineers: A formation of the US Army that assists in planning, design, building and operating civil engineering projects, particularly flooding protection systems, across the United States.
- US Forest Service (USFS): Manages the Santa Fe National Forest.
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM): manages some federal land in the Planning Area.

### Santa Fe County Zoning Context

The SLDC is the regulatory document which the County uses for building and development permit review. Applications to the County are reviewed according to “uses” in the SLDC Use Matrix, which are classified as Permitted (P), Conditional (C), Prohibited (X), or Accessory (A).

When developing their land, residents and business-owners in the Planning Area must comply with the SLDC’s La Cienega/La Cieneguilla Community District Overlay, which has slightly different standards than the general code.



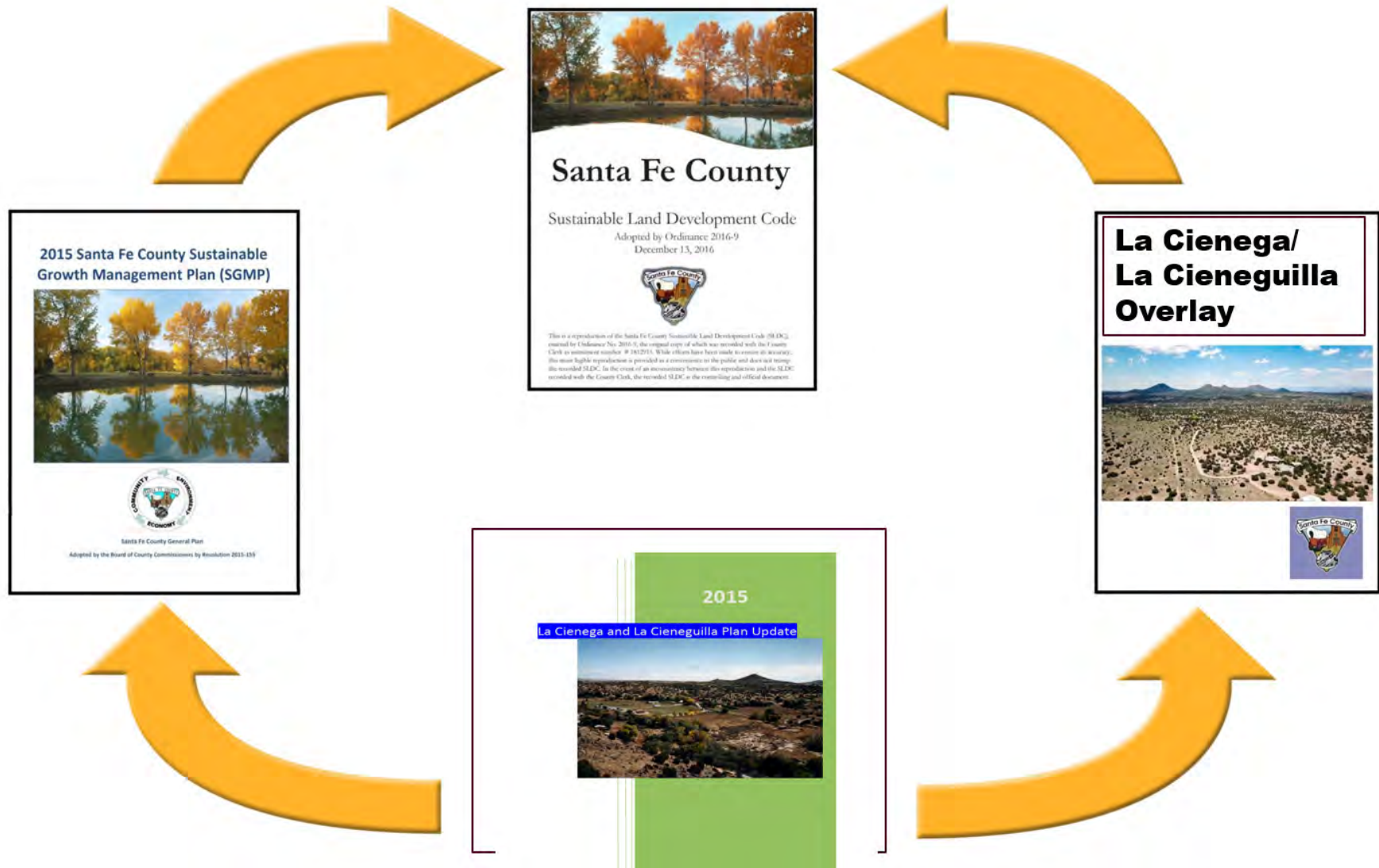
### Santa Fe County Policy Framework

The La Cienega/La Cieneguilla Communities Plan ultimately has a direct influence on two important policy documents that govern growth and development in Santa Fe County.

The first, the Sustainable Growth Management Plan (SGMP), outlines the goals, policies, and strategies behind County-wide rules and regulations. The second, the Sustainable Land Development Code (SLDC), outlines the rules and regulations for all development and land use in Santa Fe County. The SGMP-SLDC relationship is summarized visually with the graphic on this page.

The La Cienega/La Cieneguilla Communities Plan outlines the vision, goals, and actions that are important to the communities. This document will amend the SGMP and creates the basis for amendments to SLDC Section 9.8. La Cienega/La Cieneguilla Community District Overlay (land use regulations). SLDC Section 9.8 is sub-section in the SLDC. The graphic on page 19 depicts this policy framework.





### Brief History and Description

The history of the Planning Area and its traditional historic communities of La Cienega and La Cieneguilla date back thousands of years. As the name Cienega and Cieneguilla (Spanish for "marsh" and "little marsh") implies, the area contains marshlands formed by natural springs that have attracted passersby and settlers. Archaeological surveys conducted over the years yielded archaeological sites ranging from camp sites of the Archaic Period five thousand years ago to ruins of an early 20th century schoolhouse. This high level of archaeological site density is indicative of numerous ancient settlements throughout the valley. Overall, the Planning Area has one of the highest concentrations of historic occupations in the Santa Fe vicinity.

The oldest traces of human use can be found on the slopes overlooking the numerous springs in the area. The mesa escarpments are dotted with petroglyphs and rock etchings that date as far back as three thousand years, when indigenous peoples utilized the water resources so vital to us even today. Around 0 AD, people began living in pit houses presumably on a year-round basis. Over the centuries, people began the transition of living in surface structures made of puddled adobe or stone, or a combination.

At the time of Spanish contact in the late 16th century, there was mention of at least two considerably large Indian Pueblos in the Planning Area referred to as "La Cienega" and "La Cieneguilla". La Cienega continued to be inhabited through the 17th century by Tano Indians. La Cieneguilla was abandoned by the Keres Indians in the early 1600's but subsequently reoccupied by the Spanish in the 1630's. The location of the Cieneguilla Pueblo is in the present village of La Cieneguilla whose mesas are adorned "with petroglyphs inscribed over thousands of years." La Cienega is located on the mesa adjacent to the confluence of the Santa Fe River and La Cienega Creek.

The earliest known Spanish settlement in the valley is the "Sanchez Site" otherwise known as LA, 20,000 dating from 1630 to the time of the Pueblo Revolt in 1680. It is a very important site located in the southern part of the valley that was partially excavated in the 1980's and is now owned and protected by El Rancho de Las Golondrinas. Other pre-revolt estancias are known to have existed at that time, although none have been located. Collectively the numerous archaeological sites constitute a concentration of historic resources that need to be protected and preserved. The Galisteo Basin Archaeological Sites Protection Act passed by Congress and signed into law on March 19, 2004 includes La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Pueblos. Other significant sites within the boundaries of the Planning Area may be worthy of inclusion in the Act. It is important to note that this protection is only on publically-owned lands.

While the communities of La Cienega and La Cieneguilla are both located within the Planning Area, the Spanish settlement of each village was very different. La Cienega rapidly increased in population due to the fact that common lands were easily settled and the availability of water. The village of La Cieneguilla, along the Camino Real, was initially settled by Spanish colonists to the west of the Santa Fe River shortly after the arrival of Don Juan de Oñate to the area late in the 16th century. The east side of the river was the site of both historic and prehistoric Keresan pueblos.

The original grantee, Francisco Anaya De Almazan, was conferred title to over three thousand acres by Don Diego De Vargas in 1693. The property was sold in June of 1716 to the extended Montoya family. Increased population during the 19th century prompted the settlement of families to the east side of the Santa Fe River, in the vicinity of the then abandoned pueblo, as seen on the U.S. surveyor general's map from the late 1800's (below). Farming and ranching on the La Cieneguilla Land Grant was a major area of food production for the population in the Villa de Santa Fe.

Extensive settlement of La Cieneguilla did not occur until some 50 years after the Anaya De Almazan family sold the grant. Currently, the remaining traditional land of the grant is located near the mouth of the Santa Fe River.



After the Spanish reconquest in 1692 and throughout the Spanish Colonial period, various place names are recorded for a number of ranchos in the Planning Area including “Guicú,” “Los Tanques,” “Las Golondrinas,” “El Alamo,” “La Capilla Vieja” and “El Cañon.” “El Alamo” notably hosted Zebulon Pike for a period of time. The springs that seep throughout the valley made these areas very desirable for ranching and grazing. In addition, El Rancho de Las Golondrinas was a major paraje (stopping place) on the Camino Real de Tierra Adentro that traversed along the Santa Fe River serving as the first stop leaving Santa Fe when traveling south and the last stop for travelers before entering Santa Fe coming north. Even today, remains of the trail ruts can still be seen in the La Cienega Valley. The names of the early Spanish settlers are ones that are prevalent today in the valley: Baca, Bustamante, C’ de Baca, Delgado, Gonzales, Montoya, Ortiz, Perea, Pino, Rael, Romero, and Sanchez to name a few.

The Planning Area continued to be used for farming and ranching in the 19th century and up to the present. The valley was a busy place in the 19th century as reflected in the census of the time. By World War II, with the development of better roads, motor vehicle travel enabled the economy of the Planning Area to change. More and more people found work in Santa Fe and families sent their children there for schooling. By the early 1980’s, the settlement patterns of La Cienega and La Cieneguilla were changing dramatically; more affordable land was located in this part of the Santa Fe area where families could live. The area was caught in an incredible surge of residential development that included residential population growth and in-migration, Table 1 displays this growth. Although the rate of growth has slowed in the past decade, the repercussions to the cultural landscape of the valley are ongoing.

What does this all mean? It means that the Planning Area has always been a desirable place for people to live, raise their families, grow their crops, graze their livestock and welcome strangers. It means that we in the valley have become stewards of a cultural landscape that has nurtured our forebears and welcomed recién emigrados (recent immigrants) to the valley for centuries. It means we have a responsibility to preserve as best we can the lay of the land, the water and its traditions, while at the same

time allowing controlled growth to take place that respects one’s neighbors.



La Cieneguilla Land Grant, Map circa 1898



## Community Demographics

### Population Growth

Total Population Growth in population for the Planning Area from 2010 to 2020 has been relatively low for the County. As Table 1 describes, the La Cienega CDP (census dedicated place), which includes most of the populated portions of the Planning Area, grew substantially between 2000 and 2010 (27%) however from 2010 to 2020 the population only grew 1.69%. The 27% population increase observed between 2000 and 2010, while substantial is actually a less dramatic increase than occurred in the 1990's, though significantly greater than the population growth experienced in 2010-2020. Between 1990 and 2000 the population increased from 1,775 to 3,007 representing a 69% increase. In general, Planning Area has a growing population as result of both residential population growth and in-migration, but the rate is slowing. As Table 2 describes, two decades of growth in the community has resulted in a population size equal or greater than many incorporated New Mexico communities and towns.

### Housing Characteristics

Growth in housing units also is also relatively high for the County, as seen in Table 3. According to both the census and County data on residential structures, the number of units has increased 17% from 2010 to 2020. The percent of owner occupied units and rental units has remained the same while number units that are vacant has remained at 6% but is low compared to the County vacancy rate of 10%.

Table 1: La Cienega CDP Population Changes

| 1990 | 2000 | 2010 | 2020 | Change 2000-2010 | Change 2010-2020 |
|------|------|------|------|------------------|------------------|
| #    | #    | #    | #    | % change         | % change         |
| 1775 | 3007 | 3819 | 3885 | +27%             | +1.73%           |

Source: 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2020 Census

Table 2: Population of other small New Mexico towns and communities

| <i>Community/Town</i>                                 | <i>Population</i> |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Chama Village, Rio Arriba County                      | 917               |
| Agua Fria, Santa Fe County*                           | 2,913             |
| City of Santa Rosa, Guadalupe County                  | 2,850             |
| Town of Clayton, Union County                         | 2,645             |
| Village of Chimayo, Santa Fe and Rio Arriba County*   | 3,077             |
| Town of Edgewood, Santa Fe County                     | 6,174             |
| La Cienega and La Cieneguilla, Santa Fe County*       | 3,885             |
| Village of Bosque Farms, Valencia County              | 4,020             |
| Town of Taos, Taos County                             | 6,474             |
| Los Ranchos de Albuquerque Village, Bernalillo County | 5,874             |

Source: 2020 Census

\*Unincorporated communities within Santa Fe County

Table 3: Change in La Cienega Housing Characteristics – 2000 to 2010

|                        | 2000       |            | 2010       |            | 2020       |            | Change 2010-2020 |          |
|------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------------|----------|
|                        | # of units | % of total | # of units | % of total | # of units | % of total | # of units       | % change |
| Occupied Housing       | 1033       | 96%        | 1259       | 94%        | 1483       | 93%        | 224              | +18%     |
| Vacant Housing         | 46         | 4%         | 81         | 6%         | 100        | 6%         | 19               | +23%     |
| Owner Occupied         | 800        | 77%        | 966        | 77%        | 1102       | 74%        | 136              | +14%     |
| Renter Occupied        | 233        | 23%        | 293        | 23%        | 281        | 19%        | -60              | -4%      |
| Occasional Use Housing | 9          | 1%         | 12         | 1%         | 15         | 1%         | 3                | +25%     |

Source: 2020 Census



## Age Structure and Ethnicity

Compared with the community's population and housing growth figures, other population characteristics, such as age structure and ethnicity have been more stable (see Table 4). The percent of the population that identifies as Hispanic or Latino has decreased by 4.7% from 2010-2020 while the percent of the population that identifies as not-Hispanic or Latino has increased by 28.4%. The percent of individuals under the age 18 has decreased by 27.2% while the percent of population ages 55-64 has increased 25% and the percent over 65 has increased 131%. Continued increases the elderly population may increase the need for community services in the area.

## Employment

The limited amount of commercial development and community services in the Planning Area may limit employment opportunities available within the community. Most working residents travel outside the community for work. Average commute times are about 4 minutes higher in the Planning Area than in Santa Fe County as a whole and most residents work in industries that are unevenly represented in the community. However, the significant number of residents who work from home in the community (about 5.2%) may mean that opportunities for home based businesses may ameliorate the spatial mismatch between jobs and housing in the community. Key employment characteristics are described in Table 5.

Table 4: Change in Ethnicity and Age distribution between 2000 and 2010

| Ethnicity              |               |                 |               |                 |                  |          |
|------------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|------------------|----------|
|                        | 2010          |                 | 2020          |                 | change 2010-2020 |          |
|                        | No. of people | % of total pop. | No. of people | % of total pop. | Change in pop.   | % change |
| Hispanic or Latino     | 3069          | 80%             | 2922          | 75%             | -147             | 4.7%     |
| Non-Hispanic or Latino | 750           | 20%             | 963           | 25%             | 213              | 28.4%    |
| Age                    |               |                 |               |                 |                  |          |
| under 19               | 1292          | 34%             | 940           | 24%             | -352             | 27.2%    |
| 20-24                  | 205           | 5%              | 262           | 6.7%            | 57               | 27.8%    |
| 25-34                  | 440           | 15%             | 435           | 11.2%           | -5               | -1%      |
| 35-54                  | 1132          | 30%             | 1019          | 26.3%           | -113             | 9.9%     |
| 55-64                  | 477           | 12.5%           | 598           | 15.4%           | 121              | 25.3%    |
| 65 & over              | 273           | 7%              | 631           | 16.3%           | 358              | 131%     |

Source: 2010 and 2020 Census

Table 5: 2020 Estimates of La Cienega CDP Community Employment Characteristics

|                                                                                                            |              |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Percentage unemployed                                                                                      | 6.1%         |
| Percentage who work from home                                                                              | 5.2%         |
| Mean travel time to work                                                                                   | 26.4 minutes |
| Median income                                                                                              | \$65,549     |
| Percentage employed in construction                                                                        | 15.2%        |
| Percentage employed in public administration                                                               | 7.0%         |
| Percentage employed in educational services, healthcare and social assistance                              | 13.9%        |
| Percentage employed in professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services | 12.5%        |
| Percentage employed in arts, entertainment, and recreation, accommodation, and food services               | 14.8%        |
| Percentage employed in retail trade                                                                        | 11.1%        |
| Percentage employed in transportation and warehousing, and utilities                                       | 4.3%         |
| Percentage employed in other services (except public administration)                                       | 9.4%         |
| Percentage employed in finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing                             | 10.3%        |
| Percentage employed in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining                              | 0.5%         |
| Percentage employed in wholesale trade                                                                     | 0.0%         |
| Percentage employed in information                                                                         | 0.0%         |
| Percentage employed in manufacturing                                                                       | 1.1%         |

Source: 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

### Historic and Cultural Resources

The Planning Area's rich cultural heritage is evident in the continuation of agriculture production in the community, the continued use of the historic acequia systems, local building form and patterns, community traditions, and the many families with histories going back for generations. Historic structures including churches, cemeteries, capillas, homes, barns, corrals, and cisterns, dot the landscape and many are still in use and highly valued by community members. The community values historic resources and actively protects and maintains historic structures and by collaborating in the acquisition and management of historic sites and public lands.

Collectively the numerous archaeological sites constitute a concentration of historic resources that need to be protected and preserved.

Significant sites within the Planning Area include:

- La Cienega Pueblo and Petroglyphs - The La Cienega Pueblo dates to A.D. 1100-1300. It contains over 140 rooms and over 1,000 petroglyphs. The site is not accessible to the public.
- La Cienega Pithouse Village - The La Cienega Pithouse dates to A.D. 700-900. It is not accessible to the public.
- La Cieneguilla Petroglyphs and Petrographs & Camino Real de Tierra Adentro - The Camino Real de Tierra Adentro provided connections among native peoples prior to European contact, and later between colonial Mexico City and Santa Fe. Extensive petroglyphs are associated with the trail.
- La Cieneguilla Pueblo - The La Cieneguilla Pueblo dates to 1325-1600. The Pueblo was abandoned and resettled and eventually had a Spanish and Mexican village built on it. It is not open to the public.

Since the 2001 plan was adopted, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has made significant land purchases to expand their holdings in the Planning Area and further protect the community's historical as well as natural resources. The agency, in cooperation with community members and other governmental bodies, has also developed a plan to manage the

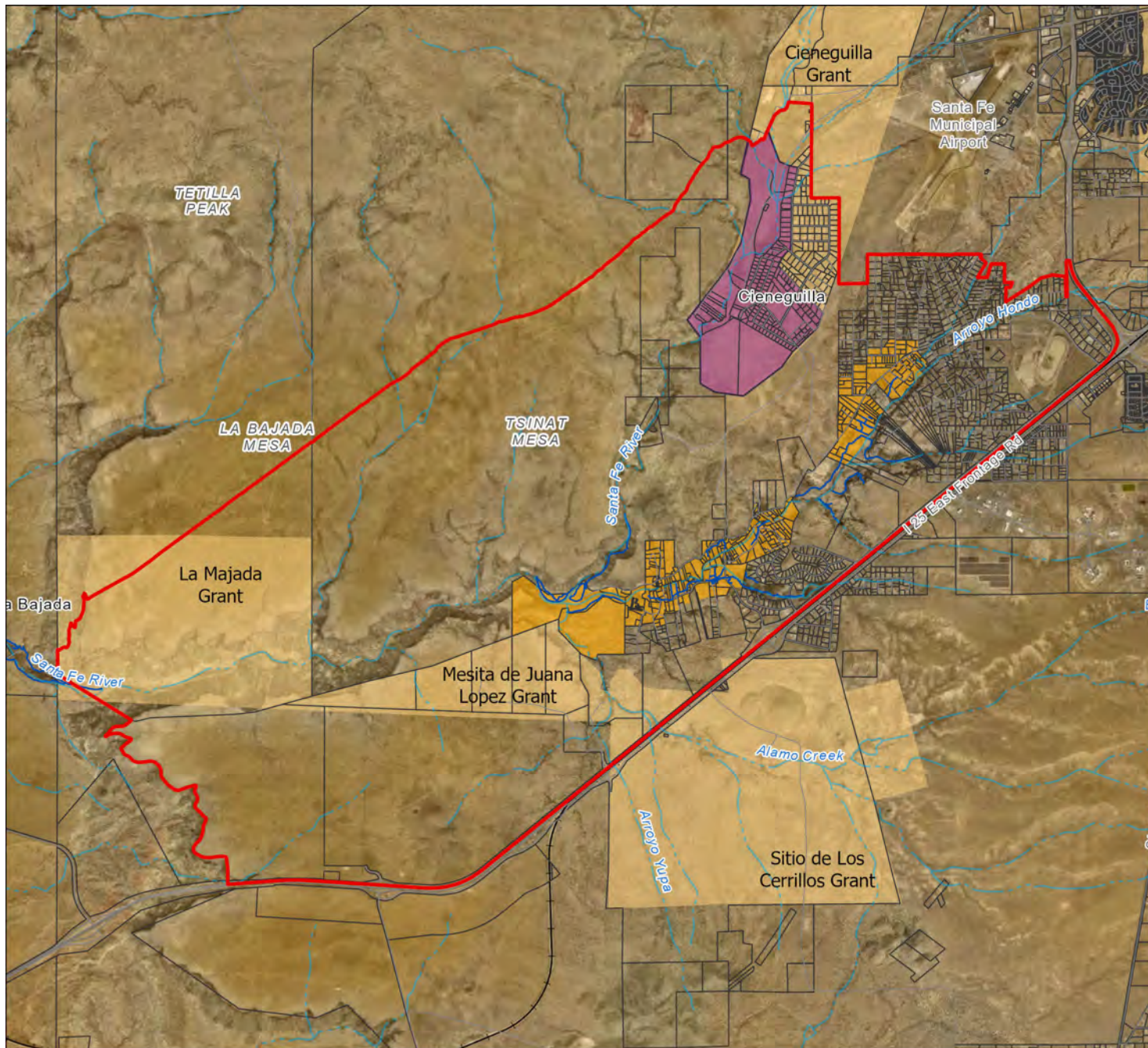
community's land resources. Portions of La Cienega and La Cieneguilla also are covered by the "La Cienega Area of Critical Environment Concern," a BLM designation that formally signifies a need for land management to protect "national significant cultural resources as well as riparian, wildlife and scenic values."

Other public lands significantly contribute toward preserving the community's historical resources. Santa Fe National Forest land, BLM land, and Santa Fe County Open Space land all contain portions of the Camino Real. Although only the BLM petroglyph site has interpretative resources to facilitate public visitation of historical resources, all public lands in the area are managed with an objective to protect the community's uniquely valuable cultural resources.

In addition, El Rancho de Las Golondrinas Living Museum, located on a historic local hacienda, has been operated by a local nonprofit organization for over fifty years. This historic rancho, now a living history museum, dates from the early 1700s and was an important paraje or stopping place along the famous Paseo Real, the Royal Road from Mexico City to Santa Fe. The museum also includes and protects the "Sanchez Site" dating from 1630 to the time of the Pueblo Revolt in 1680. Partially excavated in the 1980's, it is the earliest known Spanish settlement in the valley. Other pre-revolt estancias are believed to have existed in the area at that time, although none have been officially identified.

Finally, as depicted on the page 25 map, several historic land grants are partly within the Planning Area including the La Cieneguilla Land Grant, La Majada Land Grant, Sitio de Los Cerrillos Land Grant, and Sitio de Juana Lopez Land Grant.

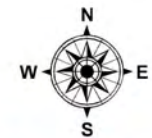




# La Cienega & La Cieneguilla

## Land Grants Map

- Legend**
- LCLC Traditional Historic Community Boundary
  - Parcel Boundary
  - +— Railroad
  - Streams and Arroyos
- Acequias**
- Type
- Irrigation Ditch
  - Land Grant Boundaries
  - Traditional Community
  - La Cieneguilla Historic Area
  - Roads



**SANTA FE COUNTY**

Growth Management Department  
Planning Division

December 2025

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

*This information is for reference only.  
Santa Fe County assumes no liability for errors associated with the use of these data.  
Users are solely responsible for confirming data accuracy.*



# SECTION II: ELEMENTS

- 2.1 Land Use**
- 2.2 Economic Development**
- 2.3 Agriculture & Ranching**
- 2.4 Open Space & Resource Conservation**
- 2.5 Public Safety**
- 2.6 Transportation**
- 2.7 Water**
- 2.8 Community Services**
- 2.9 Governance**





View of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, Photo by Diana Boyd





## SECTION 2.1 LAND USE



La Cienega Sunset, Photo by Carl Dickens





# Land Use and Development Trends

## Historic Development Trends

Traditionally, the rural and agricultural character of the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area has shaped local settlement and land use patterns. Communities were formed along waterways to ensure irrigation for crops while upland areas were used commonly for grazing, wood collection and other household purposes. Early settlement by pre-pueblo and pueblo communities was characterized by compact housing areas near water sources. Beginning in the 1600's, Spanish, Mexican and United States immigrants expanded development along the waterways and acequia systems as the population grew. Housing units were typically clustered in familial and community compounds. The primary land uses were for housing, irrigated agriculture and grazing. This type of land use required coordinated management and stewardship practices to maintain shared water resources and common lands or ejidos for livestock, timber and other uses. These agricultural and community traditions have defined where people built homes and how the community grew well into the 1900's.

## Recent Development Trends

In the 1970's through 1990's urban pressures from the City of Santa Fe's growing population as well as internal growth from settled families spurred rapid residential growth in the Planning

Area. New development intensified in upland areas near the intersection of NM State Highway 599 and Interstate 25 as well as in La Cieneguilla. Growth has also occurred in Upper and Lower La Cienega where traditionally irrigated lands have been converted to housing sites. The Planning Area became an attractive community for Santa Feans looking for the rural amenities of quiet living, low traffic, and open spaces.

From 2000 to present, growth is still influenced by close proximity to the City of Santa Fe, its desirable rural and historic character, a market preference for low-density single family housing, and low initial development costs relative to many other areas proximate to the City of Santa Fe. Increase in employment associated with the Community College District, the Airport, the National Guard and new commercial growth in Southwestern Sector of the City of Santa Fe may also be a contributing factor. Other factors may include proximity to transportation facilities including easy access to I-25, NM 599, NM Route 14 and the opening of the New Mexico Rail Runner Express station in 2010.

New development trends continue to pressure the Planning Area's traditional rural character, farm fields, running acequias, and open spaces. The demand for new housing drives up real estate prices as well as property taxes on undeveloped and agricultural property, thereby making agricultural uses less viable. Community members have expressed that they feel overpowered by development and a lack of local control over land use decisions. One of the primary intents of the Plan is to protect and maintain the rural

character and non-urban style development that makes the area special to residents while providing for community input in future land use decisions.

## Residential Land Use

With the exception of the public lands, a few private ranches, Las Golondrinas Living History Museum and Eagle Ridge formerly known as the Santa Fe Downs Property, land uses in the Planning Area continue to be predominantly low-density, single family residential with a few large and medium sized parcels remaining in agricultural use. From 1990 to 2010, an estimated 404 new housing units were developed in the Planning Area, representing annual growth rate of 6%. With the exception of the Las Lagunitas subdivision in Lower La Cienega, most of the development occurred on existing lots, small subdivisions of fewer than 5 lots, lots created by family transfers, and infill of a large pre-1980 subdivision in La Cieneguilla, (see page 41, Existing Land Use Map).

Several factors will likely influence the rate of residential development in the Planning Area:

- **Available Land**, especially the transfer of private lands to public conservation lands. The transfer from private to public lands has significantly reduced the amount of land in the Planning Area available for single residential development.
- **Limited Water Resources**: In recent decades, several factors in the larger watershed and water supply of the region have come into play that are having and will continue to

have impact on the Planning Area water supply. Decreases in rain and snowfall and increased temperatures have contributed to longer-term drought conditions. Several new studies and reports have confirmed continued drawdown of the aquifer generally, with increases in some isolated areas. Availability of regional water supplies through County and/or community systems may also be limited. Water quality concerns from various types of contamination also raises issues about the future water supply for these communities.

- **Market Conditions:** Between 2010 and 2020, the number of housing in the Planning Area increased 17%, down from a 24% increase between 2000 and 2010. The slower pace of new development in recent years partly reflects the impact of the 2008-09 recession and general slowdown of house construction throughout the Santa Fe region. The number of occupied housing increased by 224 units from 2010 to 2020 with approximately 74% of the housing units being owner-occupied. According to data from the 2023 Santa Fe County Affordable Housing Plan (Resolution 2023-083), the median County single-family house sale price increased significantly from \$428,875 in 2016 to \$789,395 in Q2 of 2022. This is an increase of 61% for home prices, while incomes have only risen by 16% from 2016-2021. While the Planning Area's housing is cheaper than more expensive areas of the County, this significant increase in prices relative to income is a challenge for community members, particularly younger residents who are starting new households.
- **Zoning and Legal Regulations:** Santa Fe County's adoption of the Sustainable Growth Management Plan and Sustainable Land Development Code represents a significant change in how development occurs. Establishment of zoning districts determines maximum densities, and water use for new residential development is restricted to 0.25 acre feet per household, which in most cases will be more restrictive than the water allocations permitted by the Office of the State Engineer (OSE).
- **County Purchase of La Bajada Ranch:** In 2009, Santa Fe County acquired 470-acres of the La Bajada Ranch property (also known as Santa Fe Canyon Ranch) composed of several additional large parcels which comprise a total of approximately 1300 acres. The County established a steering committee to review development options and

potential uses in the early 2010s. A 2010 survey of residents conducted by the County revealed a community preference for the property to be preserved as open space. Given the amount of time that has passed since the last survey was conducted a new survey should be conducted to reflect the current community preferences prior to any development. The Master Plan was revised in 2014 to remove the large parcels and the remaining County land consists of 470 acres.

- **Home Occupation Businesses:** Home occupation businesses continue to play an important economic role in the community. About 8.1% of residents work from home according to American Community Survey 5-year estimates. Small home-business scaled business operations include agriculture, a lodging facility, a furniture maker, and an upholstery shop among others. While home businesses have the potential to increase opportunities for commercial and employment services, concerns remain about traffic, industrial uses of land and their neighborhood impacts.



**Agricultural Land Use**

The rich legacy of agricultural production in the Planning Area includes grazing in dry upland areas as well as harvesting food, herbs, and tree crops along the waterways and acequias. Today, agricultural traditions are highly valued by community members and continue to reinforce the Planning Area’s rural heritage and historic character. Many residents tend gardens, livestock and fruit trees which yield substantial harvest for their household consumption. Even so, conversion of irrigable agricultural land to residential uses and home sites combined with declines in water flows in the acequia systems and groundwater contamination have led to a decrease in agricultural production.

**Commercial Land Use**

Commercial services and employment opportunities in the community are limited. Other than RV and mobile home parks, open-yard commercial operations, a small number of home-based craft studios and shops, there are no grocery stores, gas stations, or retail services in the Planning Area. As Table 6 makes clear, the number of commercial establishments is low relative to the number of commercial establishments in other small communities in the County. Furthermore, in the 2010 Census, the Planning Area had 1.3% of parcels in commercial use meaning that there has been a 44% drop to 0.72% of parcels.

| Table 6: Commercial Land Use |                                |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Community                    | % of parcels in commercial use |
| Pojoaque                     | 1.7%                           |
| Arroyo Seco                  | 6.2%                           |
| Agua Fria                    | 2.27%                          |
| La Cienega                   | 0.72%                          |
| Source: Santa Fe County      |                                |

The amount of commercial services in the Planning Area will be heavily influenced by utility extensions, water resources, transportation improvements, land use, and zoning regulations. Factors including changes in ownership or land use could have significant impact on the surrounding community and future development proposals. Major factors influencing commercial development include:

1. Medium to Large-Scale Commercial or Quasi-Commercial Properties: A small number of medium-to-large scale business currently operate within the Planning Area. In the Planning Area there are three properties that have current Master Plans with zoning approved from the Board of County Commissioners. These properties include:
  - Eagle Ridge (formerly known as the Santa Fe Downs): The Eagle Ridge property has a Master Plan in development and has traditionally hosted recreational or semi-commercial land uses. Since 2015, the property has hosted concerts allowed organized league play on the irrigated, grassy infield. In 2025, the old Downs grandstand structure was torn down. The property is adjacent to most of the other commercial establishments in the community which is mostly located in Upper La Cienega and Eagle Ridge is expected to produce a master plan in the near-term that proposes more intensive development on the property.
  - Several properties between the Eagle Ridge formerly known as the Santa Fe Downs and the NM 599 / I-25 Interchange are used for open yard commercial and RV or mobile home parks.
  - Ojo Santa Fe: Ojo Santa Fe has a Master Plan and has lodging, restaurant, and retreat facility. The property has extensive gardens and water features and in the past has provided gallery space.
  - MCT: MCT has a Master Plan and is a commercial waste management facility that sorts and temporarily stores construction site waste and maintains a fleet of trucks and storage/collection containers on site.
  - Las Golondrinas: Las Golondrinas is the only living history museum in New Mexico and is located within the Planning Area. Las Golondrinas hosts a number of community events including Renaissance

Fair, Harvest Fest, Spring Festival, Fiesta de los Ninos, the Wine Festival, the Beer & Wine Festival and Spirits of New Mexico among others.

- Green Tractor Farms, La Capilla Hops Farm, and Rey Romero Farms sell their produce commercially.
2. Adjacent Commercial Development and other Uses Adjacent to the La Cienega Planning Area: Several properties adjacent to the Planning Area have been developed or are slated for intensive development. These include:
- Santa Fe Regional Airport.
  - The Pavilion business park, 371 acres located along N.M. 599 near the airport. This property is directly adjacent to the boundary of the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area.
  - 23 acre Komis property at northeast intersection of I-25 and N.M. 599.
  - Las Soleras, mixed use commercial and residential development, 550 acres located northeast of the outlet mall development.
  - National Guard complex on approx. 1,000 acres located across I-25 from the Las Estrellas/racetrack area.

### Community Facilities

For the size of the population of the Planning Area there are also relatively few community facilities. There are no medical clinics, public schools or limited developed parks in the community. However, the community does host County facilities including the La Cienega Community Center, Fire Station and the Transfer Station; and there are a couple of churches and cemeteries that provide a variety of services to the community.

In general public funding at both the state and County level have increased recently, however, appropriate levels of funding for community facilities will continue to influence the ability for the community and the County to adequately meet the needs of this growing community. The community has been very active in identifying needs and seeking funding. Eagle Ridge will be planning acreage for the community to create a community center and/or park as part of their master plan. The commu-

nity should work with the Board of County Commissioners to seek Capital Outlay to obtain funding for a new Community Center with associated outdoor recreation facilities.



## **Conservation, Community Stewardship, and Open Space Use**

Settlement in the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area has traditionally been focused on rural, agricultural economies and land use practices. Communities formed along waterways to ensure irrigation for crops while upland areas were shared in common by the community for grazing, wood collection and other purposes. This system required coordinated management and stewardship practices to maintain the common areas. The system also allowed for common lands between communities and spacing of development to allow for enough resources to support each community. Areas traditionally used as common lands continue to be lost to new development. While these common lands were often privately held, development effectively removes them from the undeveloped landscape and reduces areas for grazing and hiking. The common undeveloped lands also helped define individual villages by forming buffer areas between communities and signified rural, agricultural and historical characteristics of the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area. Residents of La Cienega and La Cieneguilla have always considered these lands to be integral and essential parts of the community and continue to collaborate with private landowners, the BLM, the County and the State Land Office in the management and stewardship of these cherished areas.

Major conservation land uses include federal, state, and County holdings as well as properties that function to conserve historic and natural resources such as the El Rancho de Las Golondrinas Living Historic Museum and the Leonora Curtin Wetland Preserve, managed by El Rancho de las Golondrinas. Since 2001 over 1000 acres has been transferred from private property to public property and is now under the control of the Bureau of Land Management and Santa Fe County Open Space. This transfer from private to public lands has significantly reduced the amount of land in the Planning Area available for residential development. The public lands contribute greatly to protecting the community's natural setting, resources, cultural heritage, scenic amenities and recreation value.

Public lands in La Cienega and La Cieneguilla encompass approximate-

ly 46% of the Planning Area. They include Santa Fe County Open Space property, Bureau of Land Management properties, US Forest Service land and lands managed by the New Mexico State Land Office. Each agency operates under various management objectives and not all lands have been completely inventoried or have had management plans developed to date. An inventory of public lands within the Planning Area includes:

### **Bureau of Land Management**

In 2004, the United States Congress passed the "Galisteo Basin Archaeological Sites Protection Act" in recognition of the unique historical value of the basin's archeological resources. The Act designates four sites in La Cienega and La Cieneguilla as "Galisteo Basin Archeological Protection Sites" and directs that sites should be protected and preserved: La Cienega Pueblo and Petroglyphs; La Cienega Pithouse Village; La Cieneguilla Petroglyphs/Camino Real de Tierra Adentro; and La Cieneguilla Pueblo. The BLM is the lead agency in managing La Cienega and La Cieneguilla's archeological resources and most of the community's archeological resources recognized in the Galisteo Basin Archeological Sites Protection Act are located on agency land. The agency has increased their land holdings in La Cienega substantially since the adoption of the 2001 community plan and has developed a management plan for its La Cienega and other northern New Mexico land holdings. While much of the agency's management focuses on historical resources preservation, BLM lands are also managed for habitat values and support community uses such as grazing. The BLM Petroglyphs/Camino Real de Tierra Adentro is one of the few developed interpretive sites on public lands in La Cieneguilla.

### **US Forest Service Lands**

Forest Service lands in the Planning Area provide grazing opportunities under the Caja del Rio grazing allotment (the allotment extends beyond the community Planning Area and supports in excess of 500 head of cattle). The portions of the Santa Fe National Forest in the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla community planning boundary do not have any developed recreational sites..

## State Lands

State Trust lands encompass nearly 750 acres of the Planning Area. They border public lands managed by the Federal Bureau of Land Management and County Open Space as well as developed and undeveloped private lands. Although State Trust Lands are owned by the State of New Mexico, they are frequently leased for private uses. Unless a parcel is specifically designated for public access, these lands are not open to the public and require a permit for entry. In many cases, permission from the leaseholder is also necessary to prevent trespass and to respect any private facilities located on the leased land. State Trust lands currently host several agriculture leases (supporting traditional grazing practices) and commercial leases as follows (according to the New Mexico State Land Office's Land Status map in late-2025):

- Agricultural Lease 386.63 acres GM28280000 Reynaldo Romero
- Agricultural Lease 254.77 acres Robert Romero G024230000
- Agricultural Lease 45.88 acres Reynaldo Romero G023350001
- Commercial Lease .09 acres BL 27970101 Gravity Pad Partners II LLC
- Commercial Lease .09 acres BL27970000 Gravity Pad Partners II LLC
- Commercial Lease .57 acres BL14830000 Verizon Wireless
- Minerals Lease (Water) W000400000 La Cienega MDWCA (accommodating its wells, waterlines, and community water tank)

## County Lands

County open space properties include holdings in the Planning Area:  
In La Cieneguilla:

- A part of the property at La Cieneguilla is included in a site boundary for the Galisteo Archaeological Sites Protection Act, under the designation for the La Cieneguilla Petroglyphs and management of the property for historic preservation is provided for by a Memorandum of Agreement between the County and BLM.
- The County owns and manages approximately 100 acres of the riparian corridor along the Santa Fe River and regularly removes non-native trees and plants native trees. The County also has an agreement with the Santa Fe Girl's School to use the part of the property along the river for outdoor education and limited water quality monitoring.

In La Cienega:

- El Peñasco Blanco in La Cienega includes the Springs and restoration work at Los Carrizales. This property is open to public (access is only possible via horseback or foot), but at the wishes of the La Cienega community, the property lacks any signage.
- La Bajada Ranch: Santa Fe County acquired the 470-acre ranch property and facilities in 2009. It is also known as the Santa Fe Canyon Ranch. This property is not currently open to the public.

## Pueblo Lands

Santo Domingo Pueblo owns approximately 3500 acres located at the southwest corner of the Planning Area.

## El Rancho de Las Golondrinas Living History Museum

El Rancho de Las Golondrinas is a living museum of Spanish Colonial life in the 17th century in New Mexico. The museum encompasses 193-acres of a former encampment on the Camino Rael and former ranch dating to 1710. The ranch includes a vast number of historic structures restored and added to the site in the 1930s including at least three acequias, an 18th century placita house complete with defensive tower, a 19th century home and all of its outbuildings, a molasses mill, a threshing ground, several primitive water mills, a blacksmith shop, a wheelwright shop, a winery and vineyard, a morada, descansos, a Campo Santo and an Oratorio. The museum is open to visits from the public and is regularly rented for large events and for filmmaking. The museum and its land are owned and managed by the El Rancho de Las Golondrinas, Inc. a non-profit organization.

## The Leonora Curtin Wetland Preserve

The preserve is a 35-acre habitat preserve with picnic areas, trails, and interpretive guides. The area includes a spring-fed pond and significant species diversity. It is managed by El Rancho de Las Golondrinas and is open to the public.



# Land Use Plan

## Introduction

The Community Land Use Plan is made up of several components that are interrelated and when viewed as a whole provide a framework to guide development decisions, zoning and regulations, utility extensions and capital improvement projects. The components include:

- Traditional Agricultural Lands Preservation and Protection Map and recommendations which will be used to guide the establishment of an Agricultural Overlay Zone to incentivize and promote the conservation and use of irrigated agricultural land and open space.
- Priority County Water Hook-Up Area Map and recommendations based on existing regulations pertaining to the La Cienega watershed conditions, County water extension policies and current and planned alignment of County water lines.
- Roads and Transportation Plan that includes a map, text and graphics illustrating a proposed route for a commuter shuttle and recommended rural road profiles and improvement guidelines as well as emergency evacuation routes.
- Corresponding Community Facilities, Open Space and Trails Map and recommendations.

Guidelines for growth and development based on the principle of sustainability reflect a number of changes in the ways that zoning densities are determined. Many of the original components of the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community Plan incorporate sustainability. Preservation and stewardship of the traditional uses of the land are important aspects of sustainability and watershed restoration, as are principles of protecting water resources (in both quantity and quality), and supporting the viability of traditional occupations including agriculture and grazing. In addition to these existing components, sustainability and watershed restoration address the broader use of all resources, including energy consumption, recycling, and the economic stability of the community.

The County's Sustainable Growth Management Plan (SGMP) outlines principles based on long-term sustainability that will guide land use, and provides a framework for zoning for the County's Sustainable Land Development Code (SLDC). These principles include consideration of water availability and use, terrain, proximity to existing development, energy consumption, and economic viability. Many of the original components of the 2001 La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community Plan incorporate these principles. This plan update reinforces those principles and supports the goals and policies of the SGMP and in fact implements many of the strategies identified in the SGMP.

In conjunction with the SGMP policies and the SLDC, the following future land use map and

provisions are intended to ensure compatibility among various land uses, to protect existing property rights pertaining to lot size and density, provide flexibility and certainty, conserve local water resources, protect scenic features and environmentally sensitive areas, enhance rural development patterns, delineate areas to incentivize agricultural preservation while accommodating the anticipated natural growth of the community and the potential for appropriate commercial development.

The land use categories are consistent with the Existing Land Use Categories in the SGMP and SLDC but are described in greater detail here to capture the community's goals for the Planning Area and the area's unique character.

Development types, such as clustered developments and accessory dwelling units are identified as a means to encourage compact development, encourage historic development patterns and accommodate a variety of lifestyles including multi-generational families living together. Many provisions and recommended standards identified in this plan are accommodated in appropriate sections of the SLDC.

## Land Use Plan Key Issues

- Community residents have identified that family transfers and variances are sometimes used to divide properties below the minimum lot sizes to avoid subdivision regulations and procedures, contrary to the intent of the variance. This allows for increased density on small lots and places higher demands on local water resources to accommodate the new development. More careful examination of the potential impacts of increased densities on local water resources as well as on infrastructure and the area's rural character is necessary before exemptions and variances are granted.
- The rapid development and subsequent changes in land uses, primarily from agricultural to housing, impacts property values and increases tax burdens. This development has benefited some property owners, particularly in the case of large-scale developments. However, the development has also increased economic pressure on families and small-scale landowners to follow the same pattern which has led to piecemeal subdivision of the Planning Area at the expense of the community character. Community residents have identified that continued and uncontrolled development, especially on the south side of Santa Fe, threatens to destroy the rural nature of the community. Additionally, rapid development places strains on limited local natural resources, including water.
- The Planning Area includes various zoning districts including the Traditional Community Zoning District. The maps which depict these different zones, particularly the Traditional Community Zoning District, are interpreted on a case-by-case basis which has led to confusion on individual zoning decisions. Thus, enforcement is complicated because of unclear boundaries between the various zoning areas.
- Due to increased growth and concerns regarding water quality in the Planning Area, some community members have called for extension of County water and/or wastewater systems into the Planning Area. However, if these systems were expanded in the Planning Area it might be possible to increase housing densities to areas served by both sewer and water. The increased housing densities would lead to urban style intensive development which would further threaten the rural character of the communities in the Planning Area. It would be advisable to extend water and sewer to mobile home parks and other more densely developed areas in phases and residents impacted by water quality issues and to prioritize serving existing residents. Further the community supports the adoption of resolutions by the county for the Planning Area that would prevent the ability of developers to tie into county water for dense or large-scale development.
- Zoning and density decisions are largely influenced by water quality and availability, and the adequacy of septic systems. This is an appropriate approach in the Planning Area due to the need to balance water resources with development. However, the rural character of the communities in the Planning Area is intrinsically linked to development patterns and zoning decisions. Community members in the Planning Area have expressed the importance of including specific consideration of important elements such as local infrastructure, traffic and other impacts of development on the rural communities along with the critically important water resources.
- In the past two decades, zoning changes and land use policies designed for the entire County have helped to direct new growth in the Planning Area. While growth and change are recognized as inevitable and often positive, the rapid development in the Planning Area has also negatively impacted the quiet, rural character of the community. Community members have expressed frustration and exasperation at decisions and policies impacting the community in which they feel community concerns were not addressed or considered. This has led some members of the community to feel a sense of disenfranchisement at the community level and served to discourage their participation in community and County level decision-making.



- The current regulations for setbacks (the distance between structures and the property line) in most Zoning Districts are considerably stricter than the County standard. This has led to many variance requests for both new and existing structures.
- The Board of County Commissioners adopted commercial cannabis regulations in 2021. There are mixed opinions in the community concerning commercial cannabis.

## Community District Overlay

### General Provisions & Framework

The following general provisions and framework have been implemented into SLDC Section 9.8 (La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community District Overlay) and the Official Zoning Map.

#### Restricted Land Uses based on Water Quality Protection

New development that poses a risk of spills and potential to contaminate surface and ground water systems shall not be permitted within the Planning Area. Non-permitted uses include gas stations, asphalt batch plants and asphalt production plants, large-scale mining, any warehouse which stores or transfers chemicals, large-scale agricultural operations which stockpile manure or have manure lagoons (e.g.: dairies, horse parks or stables, chicken farms), waste oil recycling, septic tank pumping waste disposal, grease trap waste disposal, large-scale chili processing plants, cheese processing plants, gasoline storage facilities or transfer stations, auto repair facilities, car washes, sludge disposal fields, mortuaries, and slaughter houses.

#### Steep Slope Areas

These are areas with greater than 30% slope.

#### Restricted Development Areas

Restricted Development Areas simply delineate all of the areas where development are severely restricted. This can be based on the FEMA maps, the SGMP official maps and the community identified scenic features and environmentally sensitive areas. For example, La Cienega Creek, Arroyo Hondo and Alamo Creek, and lower Santa Fe River and associated bosques could be delineated on a map using FEMA flood plains.

#### Floodplain Areas

These are the 100-year floodplains that have been mapped by FEMA. Santa Fe County also generally prohibits development within a 75-foot buffer adjacent to the mapped FEMA floodplain boundary, which will also be included.

#### Wetland Areas And Riparian Habitat

The National Wetlands Inventory will be used for wetland areas and the New Mexico ReGAP Vegetative Land Cover data will be used for riparian areas. “Riparian areas” are the willows, cottonwoods, etc. that are typically found near streams, but do not occur in the water-saturated soils that characterize wetlands.

#### Archaeological Sites

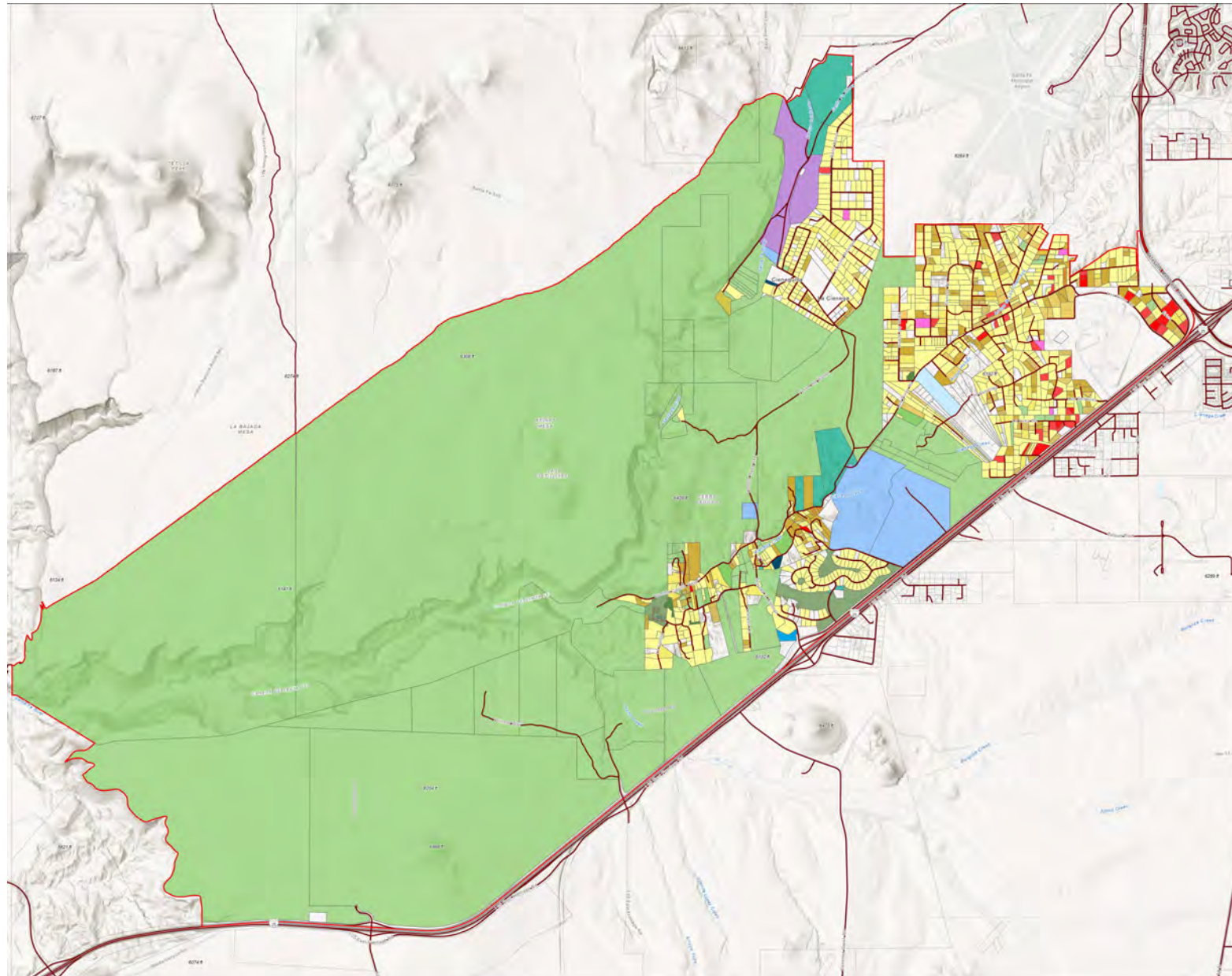
Archaeological sites identified under the Galisteo Basin Sites Protection Initiative are protected.

#### Stream And Arroyo Buffers

Streams have at least a 25-foot buffer based on the current County Land Development Code requirements.

#### Critical Habitat Areas

These are typically defined as areas that are essential to the maintenance of viable populations of endangered or threatened animal species. Likely areas that may be included as Critical Habitat Areas are usually within the wetland, riparian, and floodplain zones.



## La Cieneguilla/ La Cienega

### Existing Land Use Map

#### Legend

— LCLC Community Boundary

— Roads

— Parcel Boundary

#### LCLC Existing Land Use

##### Property Classification

— Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting

— Arts, entertainment, and recreation

— Church

— Commercial

— Cemetery/Church

— County Open Space

— Lot with horses, chickens

— Mobile Home

— Mobile Home Park

— Multi-residential

— National Monument

— Passive open space

— Private Conservation

— Public/Institutional

— Short Term Rental

— Single Residential

— Vacant



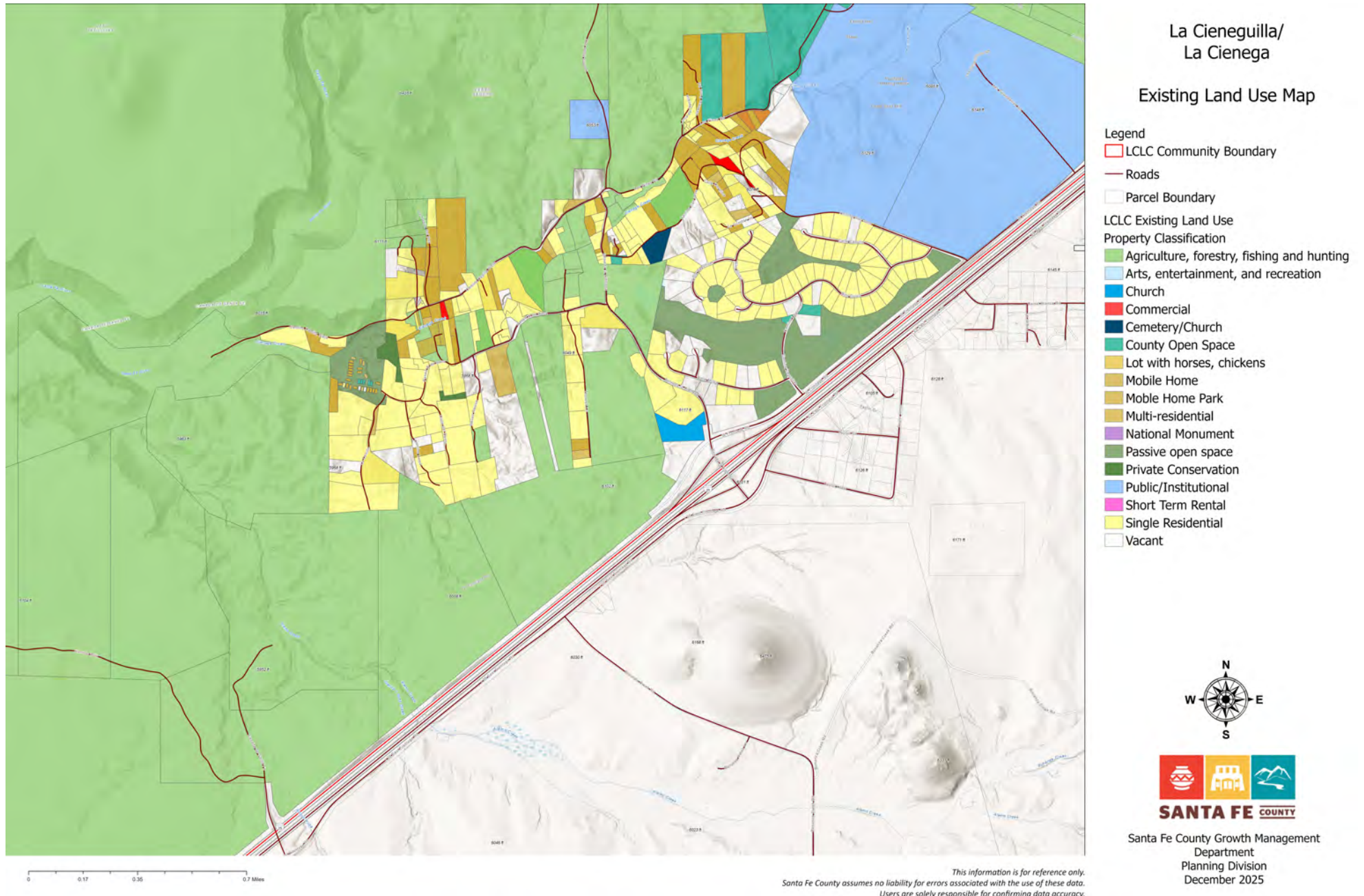
**SANTA FE COUNTY**

Santa Fe County Growth Management  
Department  
Planning Division  
December 2025

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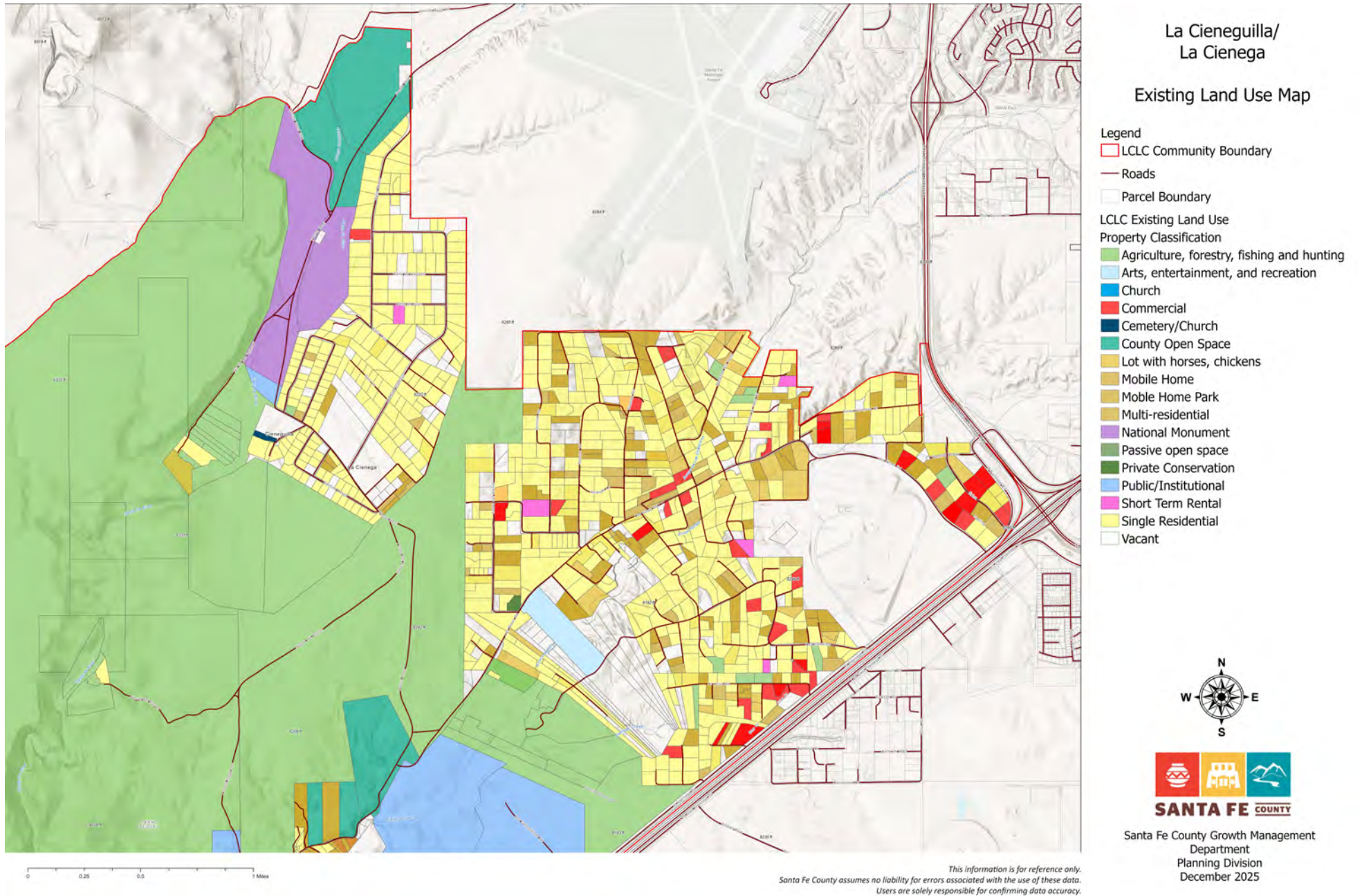


## Map 4.1. Lower La Cienega





## Upper La Cienega & La Cieneguilla. Map 4.2



## Current Land Use & Zoning Categories

In conjunction with the SGMP policies and the SLDC the following land use and zoning categories have been established for the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area via SLDC Section 9.8. The current zoning map is illustrated on page 43.

The current zoning of the Planning Area aims to protect the natural and historical resources and rural character of the communities in the La Cienega Valley while at the same time position the community to leverage its location adjacent to increase opportunities for employment and access to resources within the Planning Area. The Current Zoning Map (p. 43) depicts the current zoning classifications in the Planning area (9/2025).

### Federal and State Public Lands

Federal and State Lands land use category applies to the western half of the Planning Area, which is primarily under the management of the BLM with a smaller portion under the control of the Forest Service. The area should continue to provide opportunities for hiking, grazing, hunting, mining limited to existing operations and a natural setting for wildlife and flora. State Land is a large undeveloped property owned and managed by the State Land Office. It should continue to provide opportunities for grazing and hiking. Due to its central location and easy access off Paseo Real, a portion of the area should be considered as a possible site for active outdoor recreation facilities including playing fields.

### Public /Institutional

The Public/Institutional Zoning District pertains to the area associated with the El Rancho de Las Golondrinas Museum and the Leonora Curtin Wetland Preserve. This area should continue to conserve the natural and historic resources and manage visitor impacts with designated operating hours and coordinated traffic management on days with special events

### Agricultural/Ranch

The Agricultural and Ranch Zoning District applies to portions of the Planning Area that are associated with the historic ranch operations. The area includes approximately 3,500 acres adjacent to Santo Domingo Pueblo, the adjacent six tracts averaging 140 acres in size for a total of approximately 900 acres. The large tracts should continue to support ranching and associated activities.

### Rural Fringe

The Rural Fringe Zoning District applies to portions of the Planning Area associated with ranch operations. These areas are largely undeveloped.

### Rural Residential

The Rural Residential Zoning District covers several largely undeveloped agricultural tracts in the Planning Area, including large grazing properties west of La Cieneguilla. These areas should continue with primarily agricultural uses.

### Residential Fringe

The Residential Fringe Zoning District covers sections of the Planning Area south of the Traditional community.

### Residential Estate

The Residential Estate Zoning District is designated for areas associated with contemporary residential subdivisions in both La Cienega and La Cieneguilla. This plan anticipates continued infill on the remaining



La Cienega &  
La Cieneguilla

Current Zoning Map

**Legend**

-  LCLC Community Boundary
-  Parcel Boundary
-  Tribal Lands

**Santa Fe County  
Land Use Zoning**

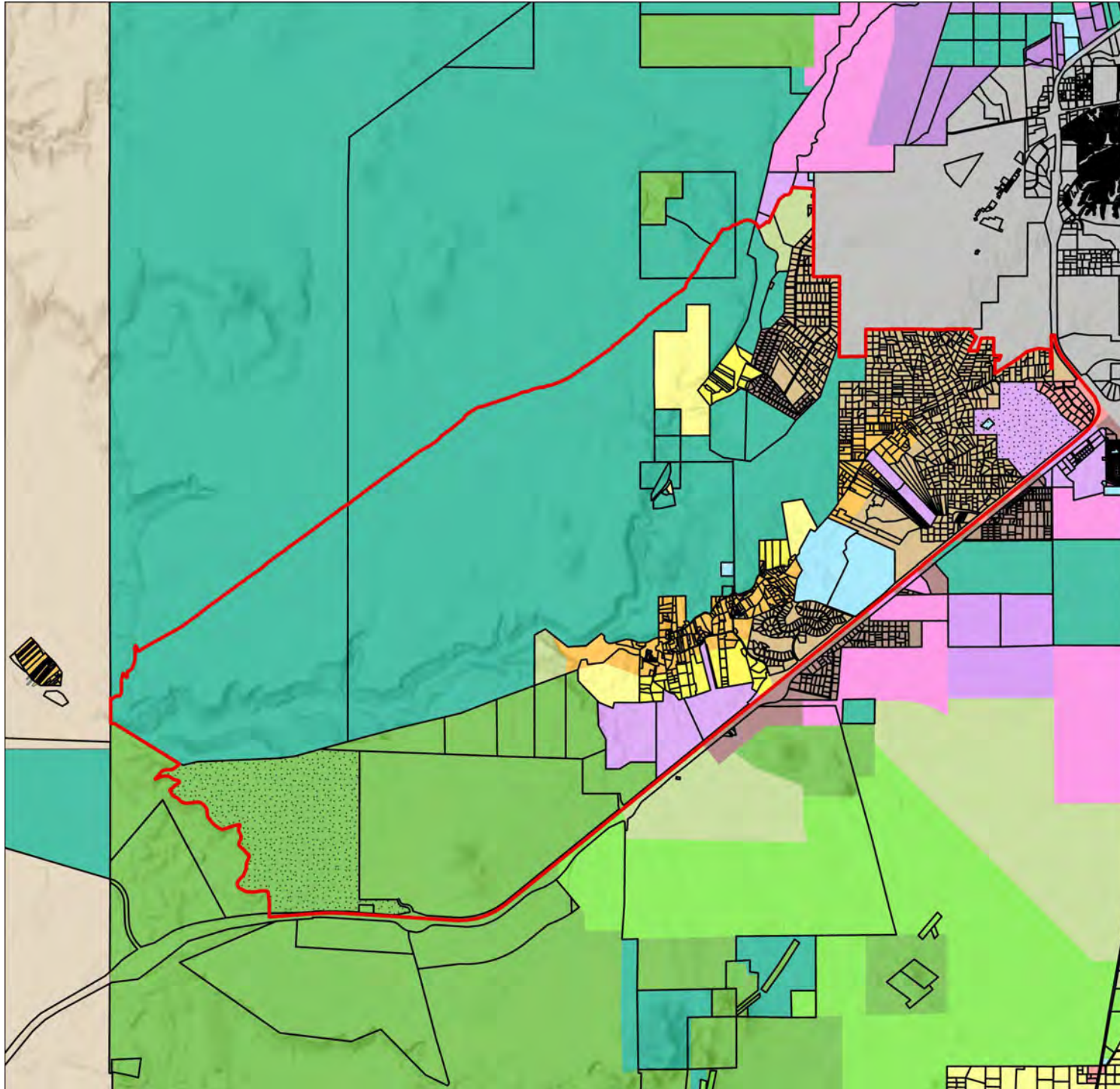
**Zone District**

-  Ag / Ranch
-  Commercial General
-  Commercial Neighborhood
-  Federal and State Lands (not under County zoning jurisdiction)
-  Industrial General
-  Industrial Light
-  Mixed Use
-  Municipal Annexation Area (not under County zoning jurisdiction)
-  Municipality (not under County zoning jurisdiction)
-  Planned Development District (PDD)
-  Public / Institutional
-  Residential Community
-  Residential Estate
-  Residential Fringe
-  Rural
-  Rural Fringe
-  Rural Residential
-  Traditional Community
-  Tribal Lands (not under County zoning jurisdiction)



Growth Management Department  
Planning Division

Prepared: November, 2025



scattered vacant lots; and supports primarily single-family residential development with options for agricultural related uses, home occupations and businesses.

### Residential Community

The Residential Community Zoning District applies to only a contiguous residential area in La Cieneguilla that is almost completely built out on existing one acre lots created in the late 1970's.

### Traditional Community

The Traditional Community Zoning District is designated for the historic village areas of La Cienega. It is characterized by the historic acequia irrigated farmlands and a concentration of historic homes and traditional development patterns. Agricultural lands and acequias are the defining cultural features of the area and should be preserved and expanded through incentives zoning techniques.

The area consists of primarily single-family residential and small-scale agricultural development, consistent with historic development patterns and uses. Community facilities, institutional uses, agricultural uses, home businesses and occupations should be allowed anywhere in the area.

### Planned Development (PDD).

Planned Development Districts are included as a land use category in order to recognize existing Master Plan approvals for properties that do not fit a single land use category. Properties in a PDD may be built out in accordance with their approved master plans.

### Commercial Neighborhood

The purpose of the Commercial Neighborhood Zoning District is to allow for low-intensity convenience retail and personal services, as well as office uses, which are intended to serve and are in close proximity to individual residential neighborhoods.

## Other Provisions & Guidelines

### Density Transfers

Density transfer(s) generally are used to protect community assets including but not limited to wetlands, open spaces, springs, watercourses, riparian areas, agricultural lands, acequias, traditional community centers, archeological sites, historical and cultural sites and multigenerational family housing compounds. This could allow developments to transfer minimum lot size densities from an entire piece of property to a specific area of the property in order to protect important community resources such as those listed above. For example, if a developer chooses to develop a 10 acre tract in the Traditional Community Zoning District under permitted .75 acre lot size zoning, the county code would allow the developer to divide the land into 13 individual parcels with one dwelling unit per .75 acre parcel. Under density transfers, the developer would be able to cluster the gross density of 13 units on a portion of the property, leaving the rest of the property open and undeveloped.

### Home Occupations & Businesses

The Community Plan recognizes the importance of individuals and families to operate small businesses from their homes. Mixed use development consisting of development that house both residential and non-residential uses on the same property and or in the same structures should be permitted as part of a home occupation. Small-scale arts & crafts and galleries already exist in the community as was previously demonstrated through gallery tours. The Plan determines that home occupations are appropriate throughout the Planning Area and supports the continuation of existing home businesses and small commercial operations in the Planning Area.

### Cell Towers and Antennas

Standards and regulations for cell towers provided in the SLDC should be reviewed for appropriateness. It should be noted that unique standards and regulations for the Planning Area may be preempted by federal law which limits permitting authority for cell towers. Cell towers should be placed away from migratory paths of birds and in areas that



do not negatively impact the viewshed and should be kept to the minimum height required to operate to the extent possible.

### Family Transfers

Because local families are one of the great community resources of the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community Planning Area, lots created by inheritance or family transfer should continued to be supported as provided by the SLDC.

### Land Protection

Open spaces set aside for density transfer or other easements for the protection of community assets, as described above, should interconnect to similar sites or potential sites on adjacent properties whenever possible.

Narrow roads and driveways should follow the natural terrain without creating large cut and fill areas and should be designed with more natural edges, using shoulders, ditches and grassy swales rather than curb and gutter.

Native vegetation should be preserved, when possible, on development sites and local native plants used for landscape buffers and screening.

### Acequia Protection

Development should be set back at least 15 feet from the maintenance right of way of the traditional acequias to maintain the integrity. Applications for development within twenty-five feet (25') of an acequia should be reviewed by the affected Acequia Association prior to the issuance of permits. The County should work with the Acequia Associations to develop a contact list for review of proposals. The Overlay amendment should add language referring to the relevant State statutes that create acequia protections.

### Ridgetop Protection

In order to more effectively protect the horizons surrounding La Cienega and La Cieneguilla, ridgetops in the Planning Area are not permitted to

have unnecessary development.

### Tres Rios Ranch Rezoning

Based on community feedback in 2024-25, the Planning Committee requests to rezone portions of the property known as Tres Rios Ranch so that both of its parcels are fully classified as the Traditional Community Zoning District. This new zoning map amendment better matches the property's status as a historic ranch with traditionally irrigated agricultural lands. This proposed rezone is depicted in the Future Land Use Map on page 47.

### 25 Entrada La Cienega Rezoning

Based on community feedback in 2024-25 and to be consistent with its legal property description in the Las Lagunitas subdivision plat, the Planning Committee requests to rezone 25 Entrada La Cienega to the Commercial Neighborhood Zoning District. This proposed rezone is depicted in the Future Land Use Map on page 47.

### Noise and Lighting

Noise and lighting standards should be strictly enforced to protect the quiet nature and dark skies of the community.

### Water Impacts

All new development is required by the SLDC to prove adequate water resources.

### Land Use Goal:

Goal 1: Protect the Planning Area's rural character and natural and historic resources, while ensuring land use regulations are not burdensome for residents.

*See the strategies and actions on page 136.*





Winter View of the La Cienega Creek, Photo by Carl Dickens

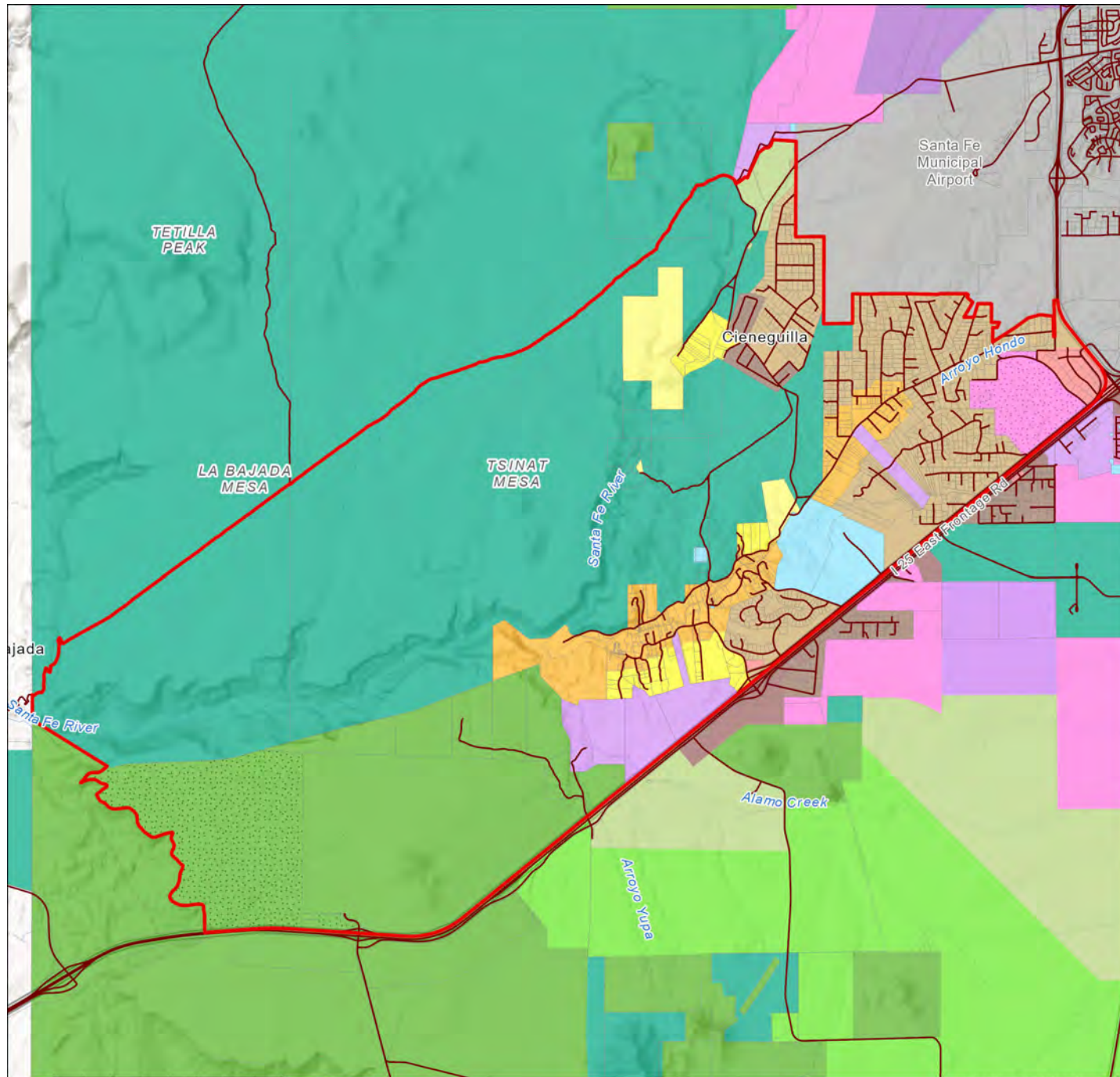


# La Cienega & La Cieneguilla

## Future Land Use & Zoning Map

### Legend

- Santa Fe County Boundary
- LCLC Community Boundary
- Roads
- Parcel Boundary
- Proposed Zoning Districts**
  - Ag / Ranch
  - Commercial General
  - Commercial Neighborhood
  - Federal and State Lands
  - Industrial General
  - Industrial Light
  - Mixed Use
  - Municipal Annexation Area
  - Municipality
  - Planned Development District (PDD)
  - Public / Institutional
  - Residential Community
  - Residential Estate
  - Residential Fringe
  - Rural
  - Rural Fringe
  - Rural Residential
  - Traditional Community
  - Tribal Lands (not under County zoning jurisdiction)



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Growth Management Department  
Planning Division

December 2025



## SECTION 2.2. Economic Development





Garden and Grape Vines on Acequia de la Capilla. Photo by Andrea La Cruz-Crawford





This chapter was written in collaboration with the County's Economic Development Division.

## Introduction & Demographic Analysis

The La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area is composed of several unincorporated communities located just southwest of the City of Santa Fe. With a population of 3,970, the Planning Area ranks as the fifth largest community area in Santa Fe County, following the City of Santa Fe, Española, Edgewood, and Eldorado. Despite its rural nature, the Planning Area plays a crucial role in the demographic and economic makeup of the county. The community's population trends offer important insights into its socio-economic structure and potential future challenges, particularly regarding workforce demographics, educational needs, and healthcare services.

The largest population group in the Planning Area is those aged 35-54, followed closely by individuals under 19 years old. These figures suggest that the Planning Area is a family-oriented community with many households raising children of school age. The dominance of the 35-54 age group indicates that families are the core demographic in the area, with this group typically representing the primary workforce of the community. These adults are generally at the peak of their careers, and their economic contributions are vital to the local economy, especially in sectors like agriculture, services, and construction.

However, the community is seeing a demographic shift that could impact its future. The population in the 35-54 age group has decreased by 9.9% compared to 2010, a trend that signals potential challenges in maintaining a strong, active workforce. This decrease may be due to several factors, including outmigration, fewer opportunities for employment within the community, or a preference for relocation to nearby cities like Santa Fe, which offer more employment opportunities, amenities, and cultural attractions. The reduced workforce in this age range may lead to an increased reliance on older populations or necessitate

new policies to retain or attract workers.

Another significant demographic trend is the 27% decline in the under-19 age group from 2010. This drop reflects the outmigration of young people who either leave the community for educational opportunities or are part of families that have relocated elsewhere. The decline in youth population may also point to the community's limited capacity to provide educational and extracurricular opportunities that could encourage young families to stay. Importantly, the number of births in the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area has not been sufficient to replace the population loss in the youngest group. This demographic shift could have long-term implications for local schools and community services, as a smaller youth population may result in reduced enrollment in local schools, further straining public resources.

At the same time, the Planning Area is seeing a growth in its older population, specifically in the 55-64 and 65 and over age groups. This reflects the broader trend of an aging population in many rural communities across the United States, with more individuals reaching retirement age and fewer younger people entering the workforce. This increase in the elderly population can place pressure on healthcare services, social support systems, and housing infrastructure. The growing number of retirees in the Planning Area may also shift community priorities, necessitating greater attention to senior services, healthcare facilities, and retirement-related amenities. The increasing aging population may also affect local businesses, as they may need to adjust to meet the demands of an older demographic, such as offering more age-appropriate goods and services.

The migration patterns of the Planning Area's workforce are closely tied to these demographic changes. As younger working-age individuals and families leave for educational and employment opportunities in larger urban centers, the community's labor force shrinks, which could limit the availability of skilled workers. This, in turn, might affect the economic viability of local businesses and increase the difficulty of attracting new investment. Conversely, the older population may bring a different



set of skills and resources, such as retirees with professional backgrounds or disposable income, which could help stimulate the local economy through new ventures or social initiatives.

These population shifts suggest a need for proactive planning. For instance, efforts to attract young families to the Planning Area could focus on improving local amenities, such as schools, childcare services, and recreational opportunities, as well as increasing job opportunities in the area. Providing incentives for businesses to set up in the Planning Area could help reverse the workforce decline in the 25-54 age group, thereby strengthening the local economy.

Additionally, addressing the needs of the growing elderly population could involve creating more age-friendly infrastructure, such as health-care services, senior housing, and transportation options, which are critical to ensuring that older residents can remain in the community as they age.

## Economic Base

The La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area is a small community with a diverse but modest economic base, characterized by a limited number of businesses spread across several industries. The community is home to 13 companies operating in seven distinct industries, providing a snapshot of the local economy's structure. Despite its relatively small size, the Planning Area's economy is anchored by several key sectors, with construction being the largest industry in the area. Understanding the economic base of the Planning Area offers insight into its economic strengths, challenges, and opportunities for growth.

## Overview of Industries

The Planning Area's 13 businesses span a range of industries, reflecting the diverse needs of the local population and regional economy. These industries include construction, retail, services, agriculture, manufacturing, real estate, and professional services. The presence of businesses in a variety of sectors is indicative of the area's balanced economic profile,

though some sectors are more dominant than others.

## Construction Industry (NAICS 2-Digit Code 23)

The construction industry (NAICS code 23) is the largest sector in the Planning Area, comprising five of the 13 businesses. This industry is integral to the community, given the area's demand for residential development, infrastructure improvement, and ongoing property maintenance. Construction-related businesses range in size and scope, providing both local employment and services to surrounding areas, including Santa Fe.

Among the five construction companies, one stands out as the largest, employing between 10 and 19 workers. This company has annual sales ranging from \$500,000 to \$1 million, indicating a stable and relatively substantial presence in the local economy. The larger company likely handles a significant portion of larger projects, such as residential or commercial construction, and may be involved in both new construction and renovation projects. These types of businesses are essential not only for the physical development of the Planning Area but also for generating jobs and local economic activity.

The remaining four construction businesses are smaller, with an average of 1 to 4 employees and annual sales under \$500,000. These smaller companies often focus on specialized services, such as landscaping, repair, home remodeling, or other niche construction services. While these businesses are smaller in scale, they still contribute to the local economy by providing essential services to homeowners, small businesses, and regional clients.

The construction industry is particularly significant in the Planning Area because of the increasing demand for housing and infrastructure improvements in nearby Santa Fe. As urban sprawl continues to move outward from Santa Fe, the Planning Area benefits from its proximity to this metropolitan area, attracting contractors and construction-related businesses that support new developments. However, the industry also faces challenges, such as fluctuations in the real estate market, which can

affect construction activity and the demand for new housing and commercial spaces.

### **Other Key Industries**

Aside from construction, the Planning Area hosts a diverse array of smaller businesses in several other industries. These industries support the community's overall economic structure, providing goods and services to both residents and visitors.

**Retail:** Retail businesses adjacent to the Planning Area cater to the local population, offering a range of goods from groceries to specialty items. Small local retail businesses, often family-owned, play a key role in providing goods that are not readily available in larger nearby towns.

**Services:** Service-oriented businesses include personal services, such as hair salons, auto repair shops, and other maintenance services. These companies meet the daily needs of local residents and contribute to the overall functionality of the community.

**Agriculture:** the Planning Area is part of a broader agricultural region, with some businesses engaged in farming and ranching activities. The agricultural sector contributes to the local economy through both the production of crops and livestock, and the provision of products like fresh produce and dairy to local markets. The area's natural capital, including its water resources and fertile soils, plays a role in sustaining these industries.

**Real Estate:** With its proximity to Santa Fe and the increasing demand for housing in the region, real estate businesses in the Planning Area play a crucial role. These companies assist in the buying, selling, and renting of properties, serving both residents and individuals seeking properties in the nearby Santa Fe area.

**Professional Services:** The Planning Area's economy also includes businesses in professional services, such as legal, accounting, and con-

sulting firms. While these businesses are fewer in number, they contribute to the local economy by offering specialized services to individuals and businesses in the area.

## **Community Resources and Assets**

Accurate information about the community's capital and resources leads to better economic development planning. In this section we will focus on providing information about different types of available capital and resources in the Planning Area. This section will discuss natural capital, human capital, cultural capital, infrastructure (in economic terms it is called the built capital), and financial capital. Some other types of capitals including social capital, political capital, and intellectual capital are not available for such a small community. So, we can't discuss them in this section.

### **Natural Capital**

The Planning Area is composed of small, rural communities located approximately 10 miles south of Santa Fe, nestled at the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. This area is rich in natural capital, which refers to the stock of natural assets such as geology, soil, air, water, and living organisms. The natural resources in the Planning Area are not only ecologically significant but also offer economic benefits to local residents and the broader region. The region's semi-arid climate, with seasonal variations and limited water resources, is an important characteristic of its natural environment. However, the Planning Area enjoys abundant sunshine, making it an ideal location for renewable energy projects, particularly solar power, which is not currently available in the area due to an apparent lack of grid capacity. Grid capacity should be increased to allow for use of solar power in the Planning Areas.

### **Water Resources and Watersheds**

One of the most important elements of the Planning Area's natural capital is its water resources. Its surface water is lower reach of Santa



Fe River and several tributaries including Arroyo Calabasas, Arroyo de los Chamisos, Arroyo Hondo, Cienega Creek, Guicu Creek, and Alamo Creek. These water sources are vital for maintaining biodiversity, supporting agriculture, and providing drinking water. The wetlands and riparian zones surrounding these water bodies serve as habitats for a variety of plant and animal species, including migratory birds and other wildlife. The preservation and sustainable management of water resources in the Planning Area is critical, as water scarcity is an ongoing concern in the arid southwestern United States.

The groundwater level in this area was investigated for 50 years in some of its wells. Compiling water level data shows the level of aquifer consistently dropped from 1970 to 2012. A comparison between water levels showed 8.9 feet decline; however, later studies show stabilizing in water level after 2013 which could be the result of conservation policies in the City of Santa Fe. However, this information does not account for the recent drought of 2017-2019 and growth of population. So, the water levels for the more recent years should be reviewed with some degree of skepticism.

## Soils

The fertile soils of the Planning Area are another vital component of its natural capital. The region's soils support a variety of agricultural activities, ranging from traditional farming to more modern practices like organic farming and sustainable ranching. Historically, the area has been used for growing crops such as corn, alfalfa, and chile, which are staples of New Mexican agriculture. The local landscape, with its mix of open plains and irrigated land, also supports livestock grazing and other forms of agricultural production. Proper land management practices, such as soil conservation, are essential to ensure the continued productivity of the Planning Area's agricultural lands, which rely heavily on the health of the soil, and availability of surface water.

## Biodiversity and Ecosystems

The Planning Area's proximity to the Sangre de Cristo Mountains gives

it a diverse range of ecosystems, from grasslands to conifer forests. These ecosystems are home to a variety of plant and animal species, many of which are adapted to the unique high-desert environment. The area's rich biodiversity includes species of flora like piñon pine, juniper, and various shrubs, as well as fauna such as coyotes, mountain lions, bobcats, mule deer, black bears, wild turkeys, and smaller mammals like rabbits and migratory birds. The protection of these habitats is essential for maintaining the region's ecological health and supporting tourism and outdoor recreational activities, such as hiking, birdwatching, and hunting, which contribute to the local economy.

Forty-three percent of the Planning Area land is managed by the Forest Service or the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The BLM oversees public land for a variety of uses, including energy production, grazing, recreation, and conservation. Additionally, county open spaces make up 3.7% of the Planning Area's land.

## Recreational and Cultural Value

Beyond its direct ecological and economic value, the Planning Area's natural resources also provide significant recreational and cultural value such as El Rancho de las Golondrinas and the Leonora Curtain Wetland Preserve. The area's scenic beauty and outdoor opportunities attract visitors, which helps drive local tourism. The Planning Area is an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). Furthermore, the natural landscape plays a role in the cultural identity of the region. Indigenous peoples and settlers alike have deep historical and spiritual connections to the land, and these connections are reflected in local traditions, folklore, and the ongoing stewardship of natural resources.

## Human Capital

The Planning Area are composed of small, tight-knit communities located just south of Santa Fe, known for its rich history, rural charm, and close connection to the land. The people of the Planning Area represent the core of its human capital, which encompasses the skills, knowledge, experiences, and social networks that contribute to the area's social, cultural, and economic vitality. Human capital is essential for fostering local development, maintaining traditions, and adapting to new opportunities. In the Planning Area, the strengths of its residents provide the foundation for a resilient community, and their connection to the land and each other plays a pivotal role in the community's growth and sustainability.

## Historical and Cultural Knowledge

One of the most significant aspects of the Planning Area's human capital is its rich historical and cultural heritage. The community has a long history, dating back to its settlement in the early Spanish colonial period, and it is deeply tied to Native American, Spanish, and later Anglo-American traditions. The knowledge passed down through generations, including agricultural techniques, traditional crafts, and customs, forms a cultural foundation that continues to influence the community today. Many residents have a deep understanding of local history, folklore, and cultural practices, which contributes to a unique sense of identity and pride within the community. This cultural knowledge also attracts visitors interested in experiencing the area's authentic heritage.

## Skilled Workforce

In the Planning Area, the workforce is composed of individuals with diverse skill sets, including agriculture, construction, and arts and crafts. While many residents have historically worked in agriculture, particularly farming and livestock ranching, the area has seen a shift toward more diversified occupations, with people engaging in a range of trades and professions. Skilled artisans, carpenters, mechanics, and other

tradespeople contribute to the community's self-sufficiency and resilience, as well as the local economy.



El Rancho de las Golodrinas. Photo by Andrea La Cruz-Crawford



## Education and Learning Opportunities

Education is another key aspect of the Planning Area's human capital. While the community itself is small, its proximity to Santa Fe provides access to a wide range of educational opportunities. Local schools, such as those within the Santa Fe Public Schools district, play an essential role in fostering the development of children and young adults. These schools offer basic education as well as programs in the arts, science, and environmental studies, helping students acquire skills that are valuable to both local and regional economies.

Santa Fe is home to excellent colleges, such as Santa Fe Community College, which focuses on specialized programs like Emergency Medical Technology/Technician (EMT Paramedic), Automotive Mechanics Technology, and Community Health Services/Liaison/Counseling. The Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) offers diverse programs in Fine Arts, Cinematography, Creative Writing, American Indian/Native American Studies, Museology, and Drama. Thanks to its proximity to Santa Fe, the Planning Area's younger generation has easy access to these institutions enriching the community with new ideas and expertise.

## Social Capital

Social networks and community involvement are key components of the Planning Area's social capital. The community is marked by strong, close-knit bonds where neighbors support each other, and local events play a vital role in bringing residents together. Gatherings such as festivals, farmers' markets, and religious ceremonies help create a sense of belonging and shared purpose. These social connections offer emotional and practical support, enabling residents to collaborate on initiatives, tackle local challenges, and strengthen their collective spirit.

The Planning Area is home to two churches and a community center, and there is interest in establishing another community space. The area also benefits from high levels of civic engagement, with residents actively participating in local decision-making, volunteering, and supporting

community initiatives. This level of involvement helps ensure that the Planning Area remains a thriving, resilient community, despite its small size and rural setting. Overall, these factors suggest that the Planning Area enjoys a higher-than-average level of social capital.

## Political Capital

Political capital refers to the resources and influence that individuals or groups in a community can leverage to shape decisions, policies, and actions that affect their well-being. In communities like the Planning Area, political capital serves as a valuable asset that can be used to advocate for the needs and interests of its residents. Political capital in the Planning Area can help unite community members, build relationships with local officials, and ensure that the community's voice is heard in regional or state-level decision-making, ultimately contributing to the long-term prosperity and growth of the area.

The La Cienega Valley Association plays a key role in facilitating the relationship between the community, state and the county government. This group is integral in connecting residents with the resources and support they need, ensuring that the community's concerns are addressed.

In addition, there are at least four political subdivisions located in the Planning Area – the Acequia de La Cienega, El Guicu Ditch, Acequia de la Capilla and the La Cienega Mutual Domestic Water Association. Each of these separate entities can apply for ICIP funding for infrastructure projects within the Planning Area.

Additionally, there is a County-operated solid waste transfer station, which adds another important infrastructure asset to the area.

## Built Capital

Built capital refers to the physical infrastructure and man-made structures that contribute to the community's overall development and quality of life. This includes essential facilities like roads, utilities, and public buildings, as well as community spaces such as parks and the local community center. Built capital also encompasses the residential and commercial properties in the area, which provide housing and spaces for economic activity. These structures not only meet the immediate needs of the community but also have long-term potential to support economic growth, attract investment, and enhance the livability of the community.

The Planning Area, like many small rural communities, has a limited but essential building capital that plays a key role in its economic and social structure. By investing in and maintaining its built capital, the Planning Area can foster a stronger, more resilient community, providing a foundation for sustainable development in the future.

In the Planning Area, the built capital reflects its historic development, rural landscape, and proximity to Santa Fe, which impacts its growth and infrastructure needs. This includes residential homes, commercial buildings, roads, utilities, and public structures.

### Residential Buildings

The housing in the Planning Area varies, ranging from traditional adobe homes to more contemporary suburban residences. Many of the area's homes reflect their historical roots, with some structures dating back to the 19th century, when the settlement first began. These buildings are typically made from adobe, a material well-suited to the Southwestern climate, providing natural insulation against both heat and cold. However, the condition of older homes may necessitate renovations or upgrades, presenting a challenge in maintaining the community's architectural heritage.

Being part of the greater Santa Fe metropolitan area, the Planning Area's

residential development has been influenced by the growing demand for housing in Santa Fe. Recently, an influx of individuals looking for more affordable housing outside the city has spurred the development of new homes in the area. These newer properties often incorporate modern features and materials, such as stucco and wood, in contrast to the traditional adobe structures.

Nonetheless, the expansion of new housing should be balanced with the preservation of the community's historical charm and environmental sustainability. Efforts to maintain the Planning Area's distinct aesthetic, as well as promote sustainable building practices like using local materials and energy-efficient designs, could help preserve the area's identity while enhancing its architectural capital.

### Commercial and Public Buildings

The commercial building stock in the Planning Area is limited due to its rural character. However, there are small businesses and commercial properties that cater to local needs, including service-oriented businesses, construction companies, and a few retail establishments. Given the Planning Area's proximity to Santa Fe, it holds potential for future growth, which could lead to an increased demand for commercial spaces and more development in the area. Public buildings, such as schools, community centers, and places of worship, play a vital role in the area's built infrastructure, providing essential services to residents. Additionally, some vacant properties are zoned for commercial use, presenting an opportunity to address the limitations in commercial development within the Planning Area.

### Transportation and Infrastructure

The communities of the Planning Area are connected to the larger Santa Fe County infrastructure by a network of rural roads. While these roads are the main transportation routes, their condition can vary, with some requiring repairs or upgrades. Public transportation options are limited, which can pose challenges for residents without access to private vehicles.



The Planning Area's location along NM 599 and its proximity to Interstate 25 offer convenient access to Santa Fe and other regional markets. This connectivity is a key component of the community's infrastructure, enabling residents to commute to work and access larger markets for goods and services. However, enhancing public transportation and improving road conditions could further improve accessibility, particularly for those who do not own private vehicles.

### **Broadband and access to the Internet:**

The Planning Area faces significant challenges due to its limited access to reliable internet, which is a critical barrier to education, business, and community development. The lack of robust infrastructure, particularly high-speed internet, has left the region underserved. Notably, the Planning Area is close to the fiber-optic project on Highway 14. This project could aim to expand fiber-optic internet access to other areas, further exacerbating the digital divide. The community center, which belongs to the county and serves as an election center, is a key example of how this issue affects the area. If this center were to gain access to reliable internet, the lack of connectivity could be addressed more easily, enabling residents to engage in remote work, online education, and access essential services. This underscores the need for increased attention and investment in internet infrastructure for the community.

### **Utilities and Water Resources**

One of the most crucial aspects of the Planning Area's built capital is its water resources. Access to clean and reliable water is vital for residential living, agriculture, and any future development. The Planning Area relies on both groundwater and surface water to meet its needs, as outlined in the Natural Resources Asset section. Ensuring the long-term sustainability of these water sources is essential for the community's future, particularly as the population grows and water demand increases.

While the community has access to gas, water services are only available through the La Cienega Mutual Domestic Association and residents of

Las Lagunitas subdivision from the County lines, and wastewater services are not available. Due to the Planning Area's rural nature, many homes rely on private septic systems. Maintaining and expanding these utility systems will be crucial in supporting future growth and ensuring a high quality of life for residents.

## **Financial Capital**

Financial capital refers to the monetary resources within a community that support economic activity, investment, business growth, and public services. The financial capital of a community is typically derived from various sources, including local businesses, household income, investments, government funding, and external sources such as grants and loans.

Although the Planning Area is a small, rural community with a modest population, several factors contribute to its financial capital. These include local business activity, the wealth of its residents, and the capacity of local and regional governments to fund infrastructure and services.

### **Local Business Contributions**

The Planning Area's business base is small but varied, with companies operating across industries like construction, retail, and services. There are 13 businesses in total, the majority of which generate less than \$500,000 in annual sales. However, four of them fall into the \$500K to \$1M sales range. These businesses contribute to the local economy by generating financial capital through both sales and employment, providing jobs, goods, and services to the community. The construction sector, being the largest industry in the area, plays a key role in driving economic activity. As businesses in this sector grow, they provide income to local workers, contractors, and suppliers, which helps circulate financial resources within the community.

That said, the financial capital generated by these small businesses in the Planning Area is relatively limited when compared to larger cities. As the

sales data indicates, many of these businesses are modest in size, with small revenues and few employees. This limits their ability to reinvest in the local economy or expand. Moreover, the financial capacity of these businesses to support long-term development projects may be restricted due to the size of their market and limited access to funding.

### **Household Income and Wealth**

The financial capital in the Planning Area also stems from the household income of its residents. Census data shows that the median household income in the Planning Area is lower than in nearby urban areas like Santa Fe, reflecting the community's rural characteristics and lower cost of living. While many households depend on local employment or small businesses, some residents commute to Santa Fe or neighboring cities for higher-paying jobs in sectors such as government, healthcare, and education.

This relatively lower household income reduces the amount of disposable income available for local spending and investment, which affects the overall financial capital in the community. However, the community's proximity to Santa Fe—where wages are generally higher—provides residents with opportunities to supplement their income, which could increase the circulation of financial capital back into the local economy.

Additionally, wealth in the form of property ownership contributes to the Planning Area's financial capital. Many residents own their homes, which offers both stability and the potential for financial capital through home equity. However, there may be inequalities in wealth distribution, with some families possessing more assets and financial resources than others. The distribution of wealth and income levels can influence the community's financial resilience and its ability to support large-scale development projects or sustain local businesses.

### **Government Funding and Grants**

A significant portion of the Planning Area's financial capital is derived from external sources, such as government funding and grants. These re-

sources are vital for maintaining and enhancing the community's infrastructure, including roads, utilities, and public buildings. Government funds also play a key role in supporting essential services like education and healthcare for the Planning Area's residents.

As a small, rural area, the Planning Area has limited capacity to generate significant tax revenue, which can constrain its ability to invest in large-scale projects without external assistance. Therefore, the ability to secure grants for specific initiatives is a critical factor in the community's financial sustainability.

For instance, the Planning Area may benefit from federal and state programs aimed at improving rural communities, such as grants for rural housing or renewable energy projects. Such funding helps bolster the Planning Area's financial capital by providing the necessary resources to support local projects and drive further economic development. Additionally, government programs like LEDA and JTIP can assist local businesses in growing, especially those connected to manufacturing. Furthermore, local government revenues, primarily from property taxes and other fees, contribute to the community's financial capital. These funds are essential for maintaining public services, infrastructure, and supporting economic development efforts.

### **External Investments and Development**

Although the Planning Area is composed of several rural communities, its close proximity to Santa Fe offers potential opportunities for external investment. The area's picturesque location and potential for residential or commercial development could attract investors and developers. Such investments could greatly enhance the community's financial capital by creating jobs, boosting property values, and generating tax revenue.

However, attracting external investment presents challenges, as the Planning Area's rural nature and small market size might be viewed as limitations for large-scale development. The community's financial capital could be strengthened by focusing on strategic investments in



sectors like tourism, renewable energy, or technology—industries that are becoming key growth areas for rural communities. Collaborations with regional development organizations, along with offering incentives for businesses and entrepreneurs to set up in the Planning Area, could help expand the community's financial base.

## Role in the County

The location of La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area offers unique opportunities due to its proximity to Santa Fe, the New Mexico state capital. The Planning Area benefits from its closeness to a major urban center, positioning it as a prime location for growth and development. The area's rural charm, combined with its accessibility, makes it an ideal destination for Santa Fe residents seeking weekend amenities and recreational activities. Additionally, the growing housing constraints in Santa Fe further highlight La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area's potential as a suburban alternative. With perfect access to I-25, the Planning Area is well-connected to both Santa Fe, just 10 miles away, and Albuquerque, the largest city in New Mexico, located 40 miles to the south.

This strategic location makes the Planning Area a different role for future development, offering a blend of rural tranquility and convenient access to the state's two major cities. However, the proximity to a large urban center does come with some challenges. One notable issue is the potential loss of the area's unique character and natural resources, with water and soil contamination in the Planning Area serving as a concerning example. As the area grows and becomes more integrated with nearby urban developments, it will be crucial to balance growth with environmental stewardship to preserve its natural beauty and resources.

## Advantages & Constraints

The La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area has several competitive advantages, including its strategic location and recreational resources. However, the main constraints facing the Planning Area include various types of pollution, such as water and soil contamination, challenges related to sewage management, and limited internet access and cell phone connectivity. These issues primarily fall under the category of built capital. Therefore, the community must invest in long-term solutions to address these challenges and align with the goals of sustainable development.

Table 7 summarizes the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the Planning Area on page 60.

**Table 7: SWOT Analysis of the Planning Area.**

| <b><u>Factor</u></b>                     | <b><u>Asset</u></b>                                              | <b><u>Strength</u></b> | <b><u>Weakness</u></b>                                                                               | <b><u>Opportunity</u></b>                                       | <b><u>Threat</u></b>                                                                                                                                                       |
|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Demography                               | Human Capital:<br>Aging population                               | Yes                    | Yes                                                                                                  | Abundance of experience; strong mentoring potential             | Declining workforce due to aging population & outmigration of working-age residents                                                                                        |
| Industry- Small construction Businesses  | Built Capital & Financial Capital                                | Yes                    | Yes                                                                                                  | Potential to diversify & expand                                 | Vulnerable to economic downturns                                                                                                                                           |
| Location                                 | Proximity to major cities (Albuquerque and Santa Fe) and airport | Yes                    | Yes                                                                                                  | Eco- and agri-tourism potential; convenient access              | Noise & pollution (Airport)                                                                                                                                                |
| Geography                                | Natural Resources                                                | Yes                    | Yes                                                                                                  | Sustainable energy development; tourism based on natural beauty | Wildfire & drought risks                                                                                                                                                   |
| Business Climate                         | Financial Capital                                                |                        | Yes:<br>Heavy reliance on government funding                                                         |                                                                 | Continued uncertainty due to unstable government support                                                                                                                   |
| Internet, Commercial & Industrial Zoning | Built Capital                                                    |                        | Yes:<br>Lack of infrastructure including reliable internet, safe roads, & adequate commercial zoning |                                                                 | Aging housing stock; narrow, curvy frontage road with speeding issues; poor internet quality limiting business growth; insufficient commercial & industrial building stock |



## Economic Implications and Opportunities

While construction remains the dominant industry in La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area, the community's heavy reliance on small businesses across various sectors presents both challenges and opportunities. The concentration of small businesses makes the local economy vulnerable to fluctuations in market demand and broader economic conditions. For instance, when the Planning Area's economy was heavily focused on construction, any downturn in the housing market or cuts to infrastructure funding had a direct impact on local businesses.

At the same time, this reliance on smaller businesses presents an opportunity for the Planning Area to diversify and strengthen its economic base. By fostering growth in sectors like tourism, renewable energy, and technology, the community can create new job opportunities and reduce its dependency on the construction industry. The area's natural beauty and proximity to Santa Fe make it an ideal location for tourism-related ventures, such as arts and crafts shops and outdoor recreational services. Additionally, the rising demand for sustainable energy solutions, especially solar power, presents new avenues for economic growth and job creation.

Encouraging entrepreneurship and supporting local business development can further bolster La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area's economic resilience. Programs that provide financial assistance, training, and networking opportunities for small business owners can foster innovation and contribute to the community's long-term growth.

Alongside diversifying its economic base, the Planning Area has significant potential to enhance its natural capital. Increased tourism could drive demand for eco-friendly and sustainable construction projects, including lodges and other accommodations that complement the area's natural charm. Investing in renewable energy infrastructure, such as solar panels, would also contribute to the community's sustainability

and reduce its reliance on external energy sources. Moreover, integrating smart growth principles into future residential and commercial developments will allow the Planning Area to expand while preserving its rural character.

Like many rural areas, the Planning Area faces challenges in maintaining and expanding its built capital. The community's infrastructure, particularly its older homes and public buildings, may need updates or repairs to meet modern standards. The limited availability of commercial properties restricts economic growth, as there are fewer spaces available for new businesses. Another challenge is the lack of reliable internet, which hinders access to essential services and opportunities for residents and businesses alike. Additionally, improving transportation infrastructure could enhance connectivity to Santa Fe and surrounding areas, making the Planning Area more attractive to potential new residents and businesses.

In conclusion, the Planning Area's built capital is a blend of its rural heritage and the foundation for its future development. While the community has a solid base of residential, commercial, and public buildings, there are clear opportunities to improve infrastructure, utilities, and modern construction techniques. Balancing growth with sustainability and preserving the area's cultural and environmental identity will be critical as the Planning Area evolves. By addressing these needs strategically, the community can strengthen its built capital and ensure a high quality of life for generations to come.

Despite its financial challenges, the Planning Area has several opportunities to build and sustain its financial capital. The community's small population and limited business base make it difficult to generate significant local wealth. Furthermore, its reliance on government funding and external grants creates instability, as these resources can fluctuate with changes in political and economic conditions.

## Economic Development Framework

In addition to the goals, strategies and actions for economic development in the Implementation Element, this section outlines a broader framework. The Planning Area has the potential to build a more resilient and prosperous future through strategic investment in sustainable energy, economic diversification, infrastructure improvements, and community development. By capitalizing on its unique assets, such as abundant natural resources and proximity to Santa Fe, the community can position itself for long-term growth while addressing its current challenges.

### 1. Building Stronger Community and Economic Resilience

The La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area's natural resources, including its beautiful landscapes and potential for outdoor recreation, can drive tourism-related businesses. As interest in eco-tourism grows, the community can leverage its natural beauty to attract visitors seeking outdoor experiences such as hiking, birdwatching, and environmental education. This would provide an additional revenue stream and further diversify the economy. El Rancho de Las Golondrinas is an existing non-profit on a historic local hacienda hosting many events and tours. This organization and other similar programs and farming initiatives could be expanded to help foster a greater understanding and appreciation of the area's history and culture. Measures intended to encourage greater employment of local residents from the Planning Area at El Rancho de Las Golondrinas, Ojo Santa Fe, La Bajada Ranch, and other local organizations could also help to improve the economic resilience of the Planning Area.

Furthermore, the Plan Area's landscapes and historic ranches are an ideal setting for film industry shooting locations. With the Santa Fe region as a hub for film, the Plan Area can work with the Santa Fe Film Office to bring shoots into the communities. Through a commitment to leaving no trace and minimizing traffic impacts, occasional film shoots in the Plan Area can contribute to economic resilience.

### 2. Economic Diversification and Business Development

La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area's reliance on a limited number of industries, particularly construction, has made the local economy vulnerable to economic fluctuations. By diversifying its economic base, the community can reduce its dependency on any one sector and build a more resilient financial foundation. Key sectors to focus on include sustainable agriculture, value-added agriculture, film, renewable energy, and eco-tourism. To attract businesses and foster entrepreneurship, the Planning Area should create a business-friendly environment by offering incentives for local startups, improving road and utility infrastructure, and providing access to training programs including but not limited to youth education and rural farming initiatives, historical knowledge-based programs and education. Further development of value-added agriculture, such as viticulture, can be beneficial for economically sustainable agriculture while be consistent with the Planning Area's past. Additionally, attracting tourism-related businesses that capitalize on the area's natural beauty and historic agriculture, such as eco-friendly accommodation, outdoor recreational services, and agri-tourism, can provide a significant boost to the local economy.

### 3. Addressing Demographic Shifts

The aging population in the Planning Area presents both challenges and opportunities. As the number of older residents increases, the community can take proactive steps to address the needs of this demographic. Establishing a senior center, health centers, senior housing options, and other facilities tailored to older residents will improve the quality of life for this population while providing employment opportunities. Simultaneously, the Planning Area must create an environment that supports younger families and professionals. This can be achieved through investments in education, healthcare, and infrastructure. Encouraging remote work through improved internet connectivity is essential, as the current lack of reliable internet limits business expansion and access to remote job opportunities.



## 4. Improving Infrastructure and Accessibility

The Planning Area's accessibility to Santa Fe and the regional airport provides an opportunity to attract new residents and businesses. Improved transportation infrastructure, such as roads that connect the community more efficiently to Santa Fe and neighboring regions, would facilitate growth and enhance the area's attractiveness to potential investors.

However, the community also faces challenges related to noise pollution and the limited availability of commercial and industrial buildings. Addressing this issue through maintaining existing commercial nodes, particularly around the intersection of Highway 599 and Interstate 25 in the existing Commercial Neighborhood Zoning District and the Pojoaque Pueblo-owned Eagle Ridge development, encouraging low-impact home occupations, and expanding value-added agricultural businesses on existing farms will open more opportunities.

## 5. Building a Resilient Financial Foundation

Despite challenges such as an aging population and a limited business base, the Planning Area can strengthen its financial capital through targeted investments and strategic partnerships. The community should seek out external funding and grants, particularly in the areas of renewable energy and infrastructure development. Government support, combined with private sector investment, can generate substantial local wealth and create a more stable financial future. Moreover, while reliance on government funding provides essential support, it also brings uncertainty due to fluctuating political and economic conditions. To counteract this, the Planning Area should work toward developing a more diversified economy that is less reliant on external funding.

## 6. Harnessing Renewable Energy for Economic Growth

As global attention increasingly shifts toward sustainable energy solutions, the Planning Area's sunny climate presents a significant opportunity to develop residential solar power projects. Additionally,

the area's potential for small-scale wind energy complements these efforts. By attracting clean energy businesses and investing in solar and wind energy infrastructure, the Planning Area can reduce reliance on fossil fuels, promote sustainability, and create new economic opportunities. The development of renewable energy can also generate local jobs and encourage investment from energy companies, enhancing the region's financial capital. In the long run, the revenue generated from renewable energy projects can be reinvested into the community to fund additional infrastructure projects and support economic development. Nonetheless, the current grid capacity, particularly in lower La Cienega, is limited. Any projects must address grid capacity and take into account community concerns about impact on viewsheds and the environment.

## Conclusion

By fostering a culture of entrepreneurship, supporting local businesses, and addressing infrastructure needs, the Planning Area can create a more resilient and thriving community. Implementing strategic policies focused on sustainability, accessibility, and economic diversification will set the stage for long-term growth, reduce vulnerability to economic downturns, and improve the overall quality of life for all residents. In conclusion, the Planning Area has numerous opportunities to capitalize on its unique assets and strategic location. By investing in renewable energy, expanding business opportunities, addressing demographic trends, and improving infrastructure, the community can foster sustainable economic growth while preserving its rural charm and natural beauty.

## Economic Development Goal:

**Goal 2:** Enhance economic development that is respectful of historic traditions and natural resources

*See the strategies and actions on page 137.*

## SECTION 2.3. Agriculture & Ranching





Irrigating fields on Acequia de la Capilla. Photo by Andrea La Cruz-Crawford



## Introduction

Farming, ranching, and the acequia irrigation systems have been the defining characteristics of land use and settlement of communities in the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area for hundreds of years. The presence of ojos or springs that formed the area's cienegas or marshes have been tapped by settlers to irrigate crops, water livestock, and sustain households. The agricultural and community traditions formed around acequias have defined where people built homes and how the community grew since at least the early 1600s. Collective maintenance and management of acequias was a primary basis of community governance along with stewardship of both land and water resources needed to sustain the communities. The waterways and irrigation of fields has also led to the development of unique and vibrant riparian ecosystems. The rich legacy of agricultural production in the Planning Area includes grazing in dry upland areas as well as harvesting food, herbs and tree crops along the waterways and acequias.

Agriculture and associated farm activities are part of the history, culture, economic base and tradition of the area. Additionally, the agricultural economy is still an important component of the Planning Area and the County as a whole. Many residents have both full-time employment outside the agricultural sector and engage part time in tending to the orchards, vegetable farms and pastures of the Planning Area which contributes to the household food budgets and a diverse economy. A number of residents still earn their living entirely from farming. Without taking steps to revitalize local agriculture, residents fear that continued development will eliminate the option of farming in the valley and the communities will permanently lose agriculture along with the rural character of the Planning Area. Maintenance of agricultural production and protection of agricultural land are primary goals of this Plan. (See the Map of Agriculture on page 68)

According to a hydrographic survey of the area completed by the State Engineer's Office in 1976, approximately 150 acres of land were potentially irrigable by community acequias, surface water sources such as springs, streams and rivers. Out of that 150 acres of acequia irrigated farmland, an estimated 80 acres are actively under cultivation. There are lands used for grazing located primarily on the large ranch holdings and public lands in the Planning Area.

Several factors will continue to positively and negatively influence agricultural production in the Planning Area:

- The growing demand for organic locally grown food by Santa Fe County residents and visitors has steadily grown. The Santa Fe Farmers Market provides a local venue for selling produce.
- New technologies applied to weed control and water conservation.
- Continued conversion of agricultural lands into home sites.
- Continued drought conditions and the drawdown of water supplies.
- A labor force that is aging.
- The selling off of water rights associated with the acequia systems.

The demand created for new housing drives real estate prices up as well as property taxes on undeveloped property. Higher property taxes and low returns from agriculture create economic pressure on Planning Area residents. The pressure encourages the sale and development of land traditionally used for agricultural purposes. Once land is converted to housing, it is virtually eliminated from future use in agriculture.

Local residents continue to look for viable means to preserve agricultural lands and protect them from development. Potential avenues include:

- Transfer of Development Rights Programs
- Conservation Programs
- Land Trusts
- Institutional Ownership
- Traditional Community Preservation Programs
- Bylaw provisions for acequias that require approval of the acequia prior to any transfer of water rights off the acequia as permitted by NMSA Section 73-2-21(E).



- Water banking provisions
- Restrictive covenants that prevent transfer of water rights from land.
- Establishment of recorded documents memorializing the acequia infrastructure and historic easement as established by statute to help protect and provide notice of the location of existing acequia works.

### Agriculture Key Issues

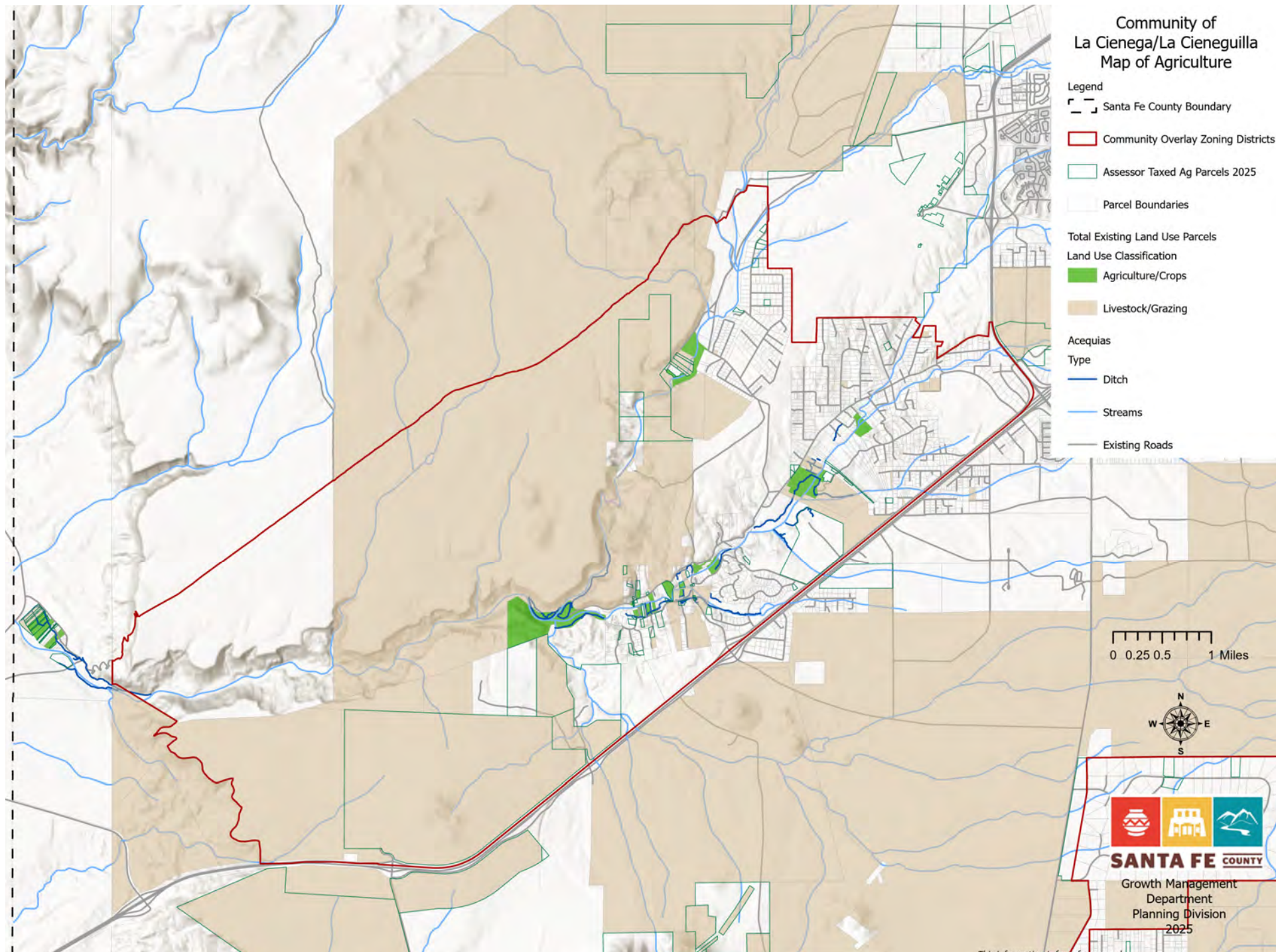
- Agricultural land, including irrigated fields, orchards, and grazing areas, are being lost to new development. This significantly alters the local communities, as agricultural activities are integral parts of the rural character and historical heritage of the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area.
- The changing agricultural economy and decreased use of agricultural lands helps encourage the conversion of farmlands to other development. A lack of education and promotion of economically viable agricultural practices exacerbates this problem for the typical small-scale farmer in the Planning Area.
- Lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management and the New Mexico State Land Office (NMSLO) currently provide opportunities for agricultural uses, such as grazing, within the Planning Area. However, if these lands should change to private ownership through land swaps or state development, they could be removed from use in the communities' traditional grazing practices.
- The drop in spring flows in and near the Planning Area has dramatically impacted local acequias and has made the practice of irrigation difficult because there is less water available for irrigating than the total number of irrigable acres. Residents and longtime irrigators have identified the drop in available water for irrigation as one of the biggest obstacles to maintaining agriculture in the area.



Photo of the Rael Ditch in the Autumn, Photo by Joseph Scala



# Map 7







Jacon, Spanish Mustang Stallion, at Blue Horse Ranch, Photo by Ellie Dickens



## **Traditional Irrigated Agricultural Land Preservation**

Maintenance of agricultural production and protection of agricultural land are primary goals of the community. Conversion of irrigated land into home sites often results in land that is no longer irrigated and left fallow shrinking the overall health of the agricultural lands. As an important connection to the history and an important aspect of the community's rural character, the irrigated agricultural lands of the valley deserve special design guidance and incentives to individual property owners who continue to keep and/or assemble land for agricultural uses.

There is a need to promote the integrity of historic agricultural lands in the valley by incenting individual property owners to assemble and set-aside consolidated tracts of irrigated agricultural land. The strategy is to increase the value of irrigated agricultural lands by establishing zoning incentives, density bonuses, and transfers in conjunction with agricultural conservation.

Buildable areas that employ density bonus's should be encouraged to locate outside of the Traditional Irrigated Agricultural Lands; this reflects traditional patterns in the acequia landscape where prime farmland was preserved for farming. Development, including residential development, was relegated to the drier areas, the ejidos & altitos, above the acequia systems.

### **Residential Density Bonuses and Transfers**

- Preserved agricultural lands should be registered as conservation easements or no build-areas recorded on the plat.
- Residential density bonuses and transfers will allow for increases to base zoning densities for residential development and in many cases decreases in minimum lots sizes.
- In order to accommodate density bonuses, the County should first revise minimum regulations for the divisions of land as well as site

development standards and regulations.

- Regulations and standards for land division and site development should include provisions for the following:
  - Development in the set-aside of Qualifying Traditional Irrigated Agricultural Land, ("no build area" and/or agricultural conservation easement).
  - Land used for roads, parking and private yards should not be counted as part of the set aside. No buildings or structures should be permitted in the set aside except as incidental to agricultural uses such as green houses, sheds or corrals. Underground and above ground utility easements and land accommodating septic systems, acequias, drains or laterals can be counted as part of the set-aside.

## **Development in Buildable Areas**

Procedures, regulations and standards based on the intent and purpose of the underlying land use designation or base zoning districts should be established to regulate and guide development with increased density due to the use of density bonuses. Particular attention must be paid to water supply and wastewater treatment in conjunction with density and soils suitability. It is anticipated that high performing septic systems and shared wells or hook up to County or community water and waste water systems will be necessary for increased density on most sites.

Incentives should be increased for density bonuses that are transferred to qualified developments outside of parcels associated with the Traditional Irrigated Agricultural Lands.

Density bonuses in the form of residential units should be established if development right is transferred to a qualifying development outside of a parcel associated with Traditional Irrigated Agricultural Land. Transfer of the development right should be submitted as part of the development application for the qualifying development and include the set-aside of qualifying Traditional Irrigated Agricultural Land in the form of



an agricultural conservation easement and/or no-build area depicted on an approved site plan or subdivision plat.

### Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program

The purpose of the TDR Program is for the conservation of natural, scenic, and/or agricultural qualities of open land, areas of special character or specific historic, cultural or aesthetic value, or environmental protection such as watershed, steep slopes, or floodplains. Participation in the TDR Program is voluntary, but it is a key zoning tool to permanently preserve traditional irrigated agricultural land. SLDC Section 12.14 outlines the specific requirements and regulations for TDRs.



Horses grazing at Blue Horse Ranch, Photo by Ellie Dickens



Cattle herding in the La Cieneguilla area.  
Photo by Robert Romero.



## Agriculture & Ranching Goal:

**Goal 3:** Support, maintain, and expand agriculture in the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area.

*See the strategies and actions on page 137.*



Above: Fields in  
La Cieneguilla, 1955

Bottom: Chile Growers  
Antonio and Diego Romero  
Photo by Robert Romero.

Photo on page 73: Field at  
the Rael Ranch in El Canon,  
Photo by Joseph Scala.









## SECTION 2.4. Open Space & Resource Conservation





Southeast View of Tres Rios Ranch and Lower La Cienega. Photo by Joseph Scala



## Community Open Spaces, Trails & Parks

Areas traditionally used as community open spaces are being lost to new development. While these common land areas are often privately held, development effectively removes them from the undeveloped landscape which has traditionally been used for grazing, riding and walking and has helped define individual villages by forming buffer areas between communities. The development pressures threaten the traditional rural character of the Planning Area characterized by farm fields, acequias, and open lands. The open lands and buffers between development are significant characteristics of the rural, agricultural and historical identity of communities in the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area.

Open spaces and undeveloped areas in the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community Planning Area include County open space property, Bureau of Land Management properties and lands managed by the New Mexico State Land Office. Open space areas throughout the Planning Area contain significant ecological and cultural resources that have not been completely inventoried, and some areas have not had management plans developed to date. It should also be noted that extensive study has been conducted on the adjoining BLM designated Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and that the BLM has cooperated with community members in developing management strategies. Residents of La Cienega and La Cieneguilla have always considered these lands to be integral and essential parts of the communities. The Plan supports continued and enhanced joint management between community members, private landowners, the BLM, the County, and the State Land Office.

### La Cieneguilla Open Space

La Cieneguilla Open Space comprises two parcels equaling 150 acres that extend from the east riparian zone of the Santa Fe River northwest to the HIPICO equestrian event center and bounded on the west by County Road 36C. In the late 1990s, these parcels – along with adjacent

parcels now owned by the Bureau of Land Management – were slated for subdivision development by a private landholder, Santa Fe Land Partners L. P. As a result of extensive efforts by local citizens, who were alarmed at the potential loss of valuable open space that significantly contributes to the traditional character of the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla communities, Santa Fe County purchased what is now La Cieneguilla Open Space in late 1999, making this the first open space acquired for the county's Open Space, Trails, and Parks program.

La Cieneguilla Open Space preserves the region's scenic beauty, rural landscape, diverse natural resources, connection to public land, and potential for interpretation, education, and outdoor recreation. The open space includes important wildlife habitat, especially in the riparian zone along the Santa Fe River. Notable species include Narrowleaf Milkweed (*Asclepias fascicularis*), upon which the Monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) is reliant for reproduction. To guide management of these resources, Santa Fe County, in cooperation with Ecotone Landscape Planning, LLC, developed the La Cieneguilla Open Space Management Plan in 2016.



La Cieneguilla Open Space riparian zone along the Santa Fe River.  
Photo by County Open Space



## El Peñasco Blanco Open Space

This open space within the traditional community of La Cienega is comprised of three parcels totaling 93.4 acres along the north side of Los Pinos Road: Las Golondrinas parcel (also known as the “Las Carazzales” parcel), El Peñasco Blanco parcel, and El Tanque parcel, which is separated by a private lot to the west and includes a large irrigation pond that supplies water to the Acequia de La Cienega.

The El Tanque and El Peñasco Blanco parcels were identified by LCVA as potential county open space when put up for sale by the landowners’ heirs. As a represented entity within the LCVA, the Acequia de La Cienega initiated a community petition requesting that Santa Fe County acquire the properties for open space purposes, with the primary objective of protecting the reservoir and maintaining water quality.

Las Golondrinas parcel had been under ownership of El Rancho de Las Golondrinas living history museum. As it directly borders the El Peñasco Blanco parcel, the county identified preservation of this portion of the museum’s property – either through a conservation easement or acquisition as county open space – as a prerequisite for simultaneous protection of El Peñasco Blanco. Santa Fe County purchased El Tanque Parcel in 2002 and due to liability issues associated with the reservoir is not open to the public. Following three years of negotiations, the county completed the purchase of the remaining two parcels in 2005.

Local community members including the heirs to El Tanque and El Peñasco Blanco parcels, along with county staff and resource professionals, identified numerous objectives and values for supporting the preservation and protection of El Peñasco Blanco Open Space. The property connects the community of La Cienega to other public lands (Bureau of Land Management and New Mexico State Lands), opening opportunities for future trail networks. The property’s unique natural beauty includes the white and gray rock formations from which the open space gets its name, which served as an important landmark for those traveling along El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro. The “Las Golondrinas” parcel in-

cludes a perennial spring and riparian corridor, sustaining plants and wildlife. Lastly, the protection of these parcels preserves the historic viewshed from El Rancho de Las Golondrinas living history museum, which helps the traditional community retain its historic landscape, and makes it possible for museum visitors to feel immersed within earlier eras of this region’s human occupation.



El Penasco Blanco Open Space protects La Cienega’s traditional landscape and offers view of the Cerrillos Hills and Ortiz Mountains. Photo by County Open Space





La Cieneguilla/  
La Cienega

Map of La Cieneguilla  
County Open Space

Legend

- LCLC Community Boundary
- Parcel Boundary
- Roads
- County Open Space parcels
- Streams and Arroyos



**SANTA FE COUNTY**

Santa Fe County Growth  
Management Department  
Planning Division  
April , 2025

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La Cieneguilla/  
La Cienega

Map of El Penasco Blanco  
County Open Space

Legend

-  LCLC Community Boundary
-  Parcel Boundary
-  Roads
-  County Open Space parcels
-  Streams and Arroyos



0 0.07 0.15 0.3 Miles

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**SANTA FE COUNTY**

Santa Fe County Growth  
Management Department  
Planning Division  
April , 2025



## Community Open Space Key Issues

- Lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the New Mexico State Land Office (NMSLO) currently provide open space opportunities within the Planning Area. However, if these lands should change to private ownership or control through land swaps or state leases, they might be removed from the communities' traditional open space and buffer areas.
- Open space areas throughout the Planning Area including the County open spaces, BLM lands and NMSLO lands require a coordinated, community-based management plan to maintain and protect these resources while allowing for community uses.
- New development on private lands threatens to build over many of the buffer areas and traditional open spaces which help define the rural character of the community.
- Use of off-road vehicles and firearm discharge/target shooting in unauthorized areas as well as garbage dumping on open lands in the Planning Area have also been identified as problems. BLM is currently planning to relocate the target shooting area near the Planning Area to a more suitable and safe location.

## Parks, Trails & Open Space Framework

The following locations and functions are identified to assist in planning for future parks, trails and open space in the Planning Area.

### Central Planning Area (between Upper/Lower La Cienega)

A developed community park should be designed and established as part of the proposed community center on State Land Office land in the central Planning Area. Additionally, a pedestrian and biking trail with some educational signage should be developed to connect the community center to adjacent County Open Space land. The community park and trail should be scaled and programmed to serve Planning Area residents. This trail may be connected to the City of

Santa Fe's Santa Fe River Trail system and throughout the Planning Area.

### La Cieneguilla

A neighborhood scale semi-developed park should be developed in conjunction with any new subdivision on the large undeveloped 40-acre tract located off of Paseo Real. The park should be scaled and programmed to serve residents of La Cieneguilla. Additionally, there is general community support for a park in the upland portion of the La Cieneguilla Open Space adjacent to HIPICO. This park should include an equestrian and pedestrian park as well as traditional park amenities.

### Upper La Cienega

A neighborhood park should be developed in conjunction with expected new development in the commercial district associated with Eagle Ridge. It should be located in the transition area from higher density/commercial land use and adjacent existing residential areas south and west of the commercial district. It should be scaled and programmed to serve the existing residents of upper La Cienega and the future residents of the commercial district. Additionally, a multi-use trail along Los Pinos Rd. should be developed in conjunction with Eagle Ridge and the Pueblo of Pojoaque.

### Lower La Cienega

Dedicated community open space with trails should be developed in conjunction with expected new development associated with La Bajada Ranch. There is a potential to provide trail linkages for pedestrians and equestrians to regional trails associated with Arroyo Hondo and Alamo Creek as well as links through Tres Rios Ranch to BLM land in the western portion of the Planning Area. Open space and trails in this area should be scaled and programmed for the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla communities as well as any future residents.

### Southeastern Planning Area (along Interstate 25)

A pedestrian, biking and equestrian trail parallel to but offset from the I-25 West Frontage Road should be developed from Entrada La Cienega to Eagle Ridge.



## Open Space & Resource Conservation Goal:

**Goal 4:** Ensure that parks, open spaces and trails in the community reflect and support community values.

*See the strategies and actions on page 139.*

### **La Bajada Ranch** (previously known as Santa Fe Canyon Ranch)

Santa Fe County acquired the 470-acre ranch property and facilities in 2009. It was not purchased to be added to the County open space program. In 2016, the Board of County Commissioners adopted Resolution 2016-118, which approved the development of a conceptual plan that shifted the vision for the ranch away from residential use and instead envisioned it as an agricultural and recreational hub, directly responding to a key priority outlined in the 2015 La Cienega/La Cieneguilla Community Plan. The proposed features, which included local food production, a winery incubator, a regional food distribution center, and an agricultural lease, were designed to fulfill this community-driven goal. Despite this high-level direction and alignment with other county plans supporting agriculture and food security, this ambitious plan was never implemented, and the property has remained vacant.

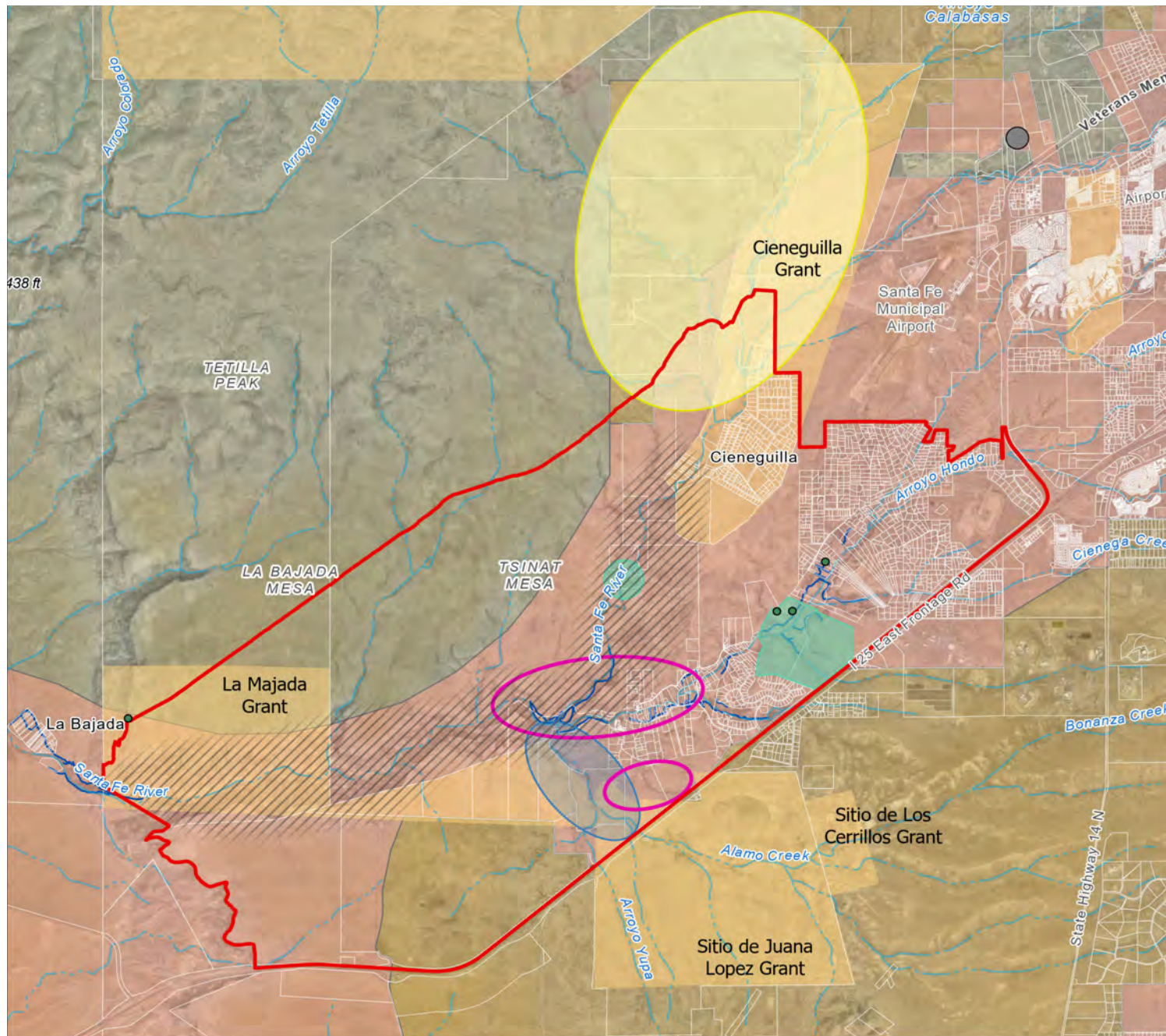
With on-going community support for the County to develop the property into a community asset, County planning staff are now recommending the establishment of a dedicated La Bajada Ranch Working Group, composed of county staff, community members, agricultural experts, tribal representatives, and economic development professionals. The working group's key tasks would be to evaluate past failed plans and identify the specific barriers to implementation, assess current opportunities for sustainable agricultural, educational, recreational, or economic uses, engage broadly with the community and regional partners, and develop a new, feasible, and phased strategy to finally realize the property's potential in line with the environmental and community priorities established in this community plan.

### **Tres Rios Ranch**

A small group of residents are working to protect and preserve Tres Rios Ranch, a 298-acre ranch at the southern end of the La Cienega Valley. The property is where three water courses: Alamo Creek, La Cienega Creek (Arroyo Hondo), and the Santa Fe River come together. It is a property of great history with both Pueblo and Spanish archaeological sites; the farmhouse was damaged during the Pueblo Revolt and La Cienega Creek provides a habitat for the endangered leopard frog. The river route of the El Camino Real runs through the ranch and was the approach Juan de Onate used to enter the area in 1598. It is also an established wildlife corridor. The community group working to preserve the property envision the ranch having uses such as a demonstration farm, communal kitchen, and algae farm. In the coming years, this group will publicize their detailed vision to the broader community.

The Planning Division and community members have identified potential trail and road connections between La Bajada Ranch and Tres Rios Ranch. Furthermore, trails advocate, Deirdre Monroe, led the development of the “Caja del Rio Plateau: A 2020 Vision for the Future of Santa Fe, New Mexico Trails” plan. This plan not only identified potential trail connections between La Bajada Ranch and Tres Rios Ranch (such as a trailhead at La Bajada Ranch), but also additional connections to the El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro and comprehensive resource management improvements such as improving access, safety, and grazing.

# Map 10



## La Cienega & La Cieneguilla

### Community Map of Historic Preservation Concerns

#### Legend

- National Register of Historic Places
- ▬ LCLC Community Boundary
- Old Water Treatment Plant
- ▬ National Monument (Will Limit Use/Not Wanted)
- ▬ Protection of Petroglyphs
- ▬ Historic Preservation Needed
- ▬ Protection of Private Acequia/Traditional Ag
- ▬ Wetlands (endangered species)
- ▬ Las Golondrinas
- ▬ Parcel Boundary
- ▬ Streams and Arroyos

#### Acequias

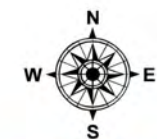
##### Type

- ▬ Ditch

- ▬ Land Grant Boundaries

#### Archaeological Districts

- ▬ High Potential
- ▬ Medium Potential
- ▬ Low Potential



Growth Management Department  
Planning Division

Prepared: March, 2025

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## Rael Ranch

The 462-acre Rael Ranch, a protected Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), sits in El Canon and within a larger expanse of BLM public land. In 2007, the BLM acquired the 178-acre Alonzo Rael Farm, a property that had been farmed for over two centuries by descendants of the Rael family, one of the first Spanish families to settle in northern New Mexico some 400 years ago.

At the heart of this historic farmstead is a remarkable 1.25-mile-long acequia, dating back to 1718. For generations, this acequia has been the lifeblood of the property, and today, its preservation continues through organizations like Cornerstones and specialists like arborist Gordon Tool-ey.

The acequia supplies water to a collection of heritage fruit trees at their roots, including a number of mulberry, apricot, and plum trees, as well as ten apple trees, a quince, and several pears. This century-old orchard surrounds a field that once provided subsistence crops, representing the self-sufficient way of life where the Rael family lived off the land, drinking wine from their own upstream vineyard, which has since flooded. The farmstead is a significant cultural site beyond the acequia and orchards, also featuring an adobe farmhouse where the Rael family lived for generations.

Ecologically, the ranch provides critical habitat for a wide array of wildlife, including black bears, mule deer, northern leopard frogs, and Southwestern willow flycatchers. The Santa Fe River, which flows through the property, is a major migratory corridor. The health of this land is critical to the wider ecosystem, preserving the region's rich ecological and cultural character.



House on the Rael Ranch. Photo by Joseph Scala.



## SECTION 2.5. Public Safety





Sunset in La Cienega. Photo by Andrea La Cruz-Crawford



## Fire Protection

The La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area is served by the La Cienega Fire District of Santa Fe County Fire Department, responsible for providing fire and emergency medical services to the communities of La Cienega, Rancho Viejo north and south, Valle Vista, and the Santa Fe Community College area. See the map on page 85 depicting the Fire District and its stations. The District's two stations are located at 37 Rancho Viejo Boulevard and at #18 Camino San Jose. The district responds to approximately 1150 fire and EMS calls each year with 25 certified volunteer Firefighter/EMTs aiding 18 full-time career personnel. The rapidly growing district includes approximately 40 square miles of space, Interstate 25, several large residential developments, and an ever-increasing commercial sector along State Highway 14. The district assists and receives aid from other agencies including NM State Forestry, US Forest Service, the City of Santa Fe, Sandoval County Fire Department, and other Santa Fe County Fire Districts.

The La Cienega Volunteer Fire Department was originally started approximately forty-eight years ago because several of the residents, who were also farmers at the time, would burn off / clear fields in preparation for yearly planting. These fires would sometimes get out of control in the La Cienega Valley, bringing the residents together to fight the field fires with whatever resources and personnel they had available. The department started with a garage donated by a resident and member for housing of a 4x4 brush truck on loan from the forest service. Years later, on land donated next to the community center, the members and residents of the Valley built the current substation (then main station) with donated building materials and labor. Members were trained to basic firefighter levels though no certifications were standardized at the time. Additionally, no medical first response programs were available at the time. In the early days, the organized volunteers serve their community at approximately 10 calls a year with a used fire engine and borrowed firefighting equipment.

## Public Safety Key Issues

- The communities of the Planning Area have seen a dramatic increase in population over the past two decades. The increase in residents and home sites has outstripped fire protection infrastructure development. This has led to a lack of accessible and adequately functioning fire hydrants throughout the Planning Area.
- Five of the eight working fire hydrants in the planning boundary do not have adequate water pressure to meet fire suppression needs.
- The working fire hydrants are not positioned to provide timely service to all parts of the Planning Area.
- The La Cienega Fire District does not have enough volunteer members from the Planning Area. More local volunteer firefighters would improve its ability to provide timely responses to emergencies.
- Developments and subdivisions in the Planning Area have been created with commitments to develop adequate fire protection services to new residences and subdivisions. The actual installation of such facilities was not often observed at the community level in the past and residents have expressed concern that facilities may not be fully developed or may not be in proper working order.
- Permits for burning agricultural fields are necessary for local farmers yet are difficult to plan due to potential conflicts.
- Riparian areas throughout the Planning Area have a build up of growth and need clean up to mitigate fire risk.

### Public Safety Goal:

**Goal 5:** Create a fire protection network for the entire community.

*See the strategies and actions on page 142.*



# Map 11

La Cienega &  
La Cieneguilla

Planning Area Map

## Legend

 LCLC Community Boundary

 County Fire Stations

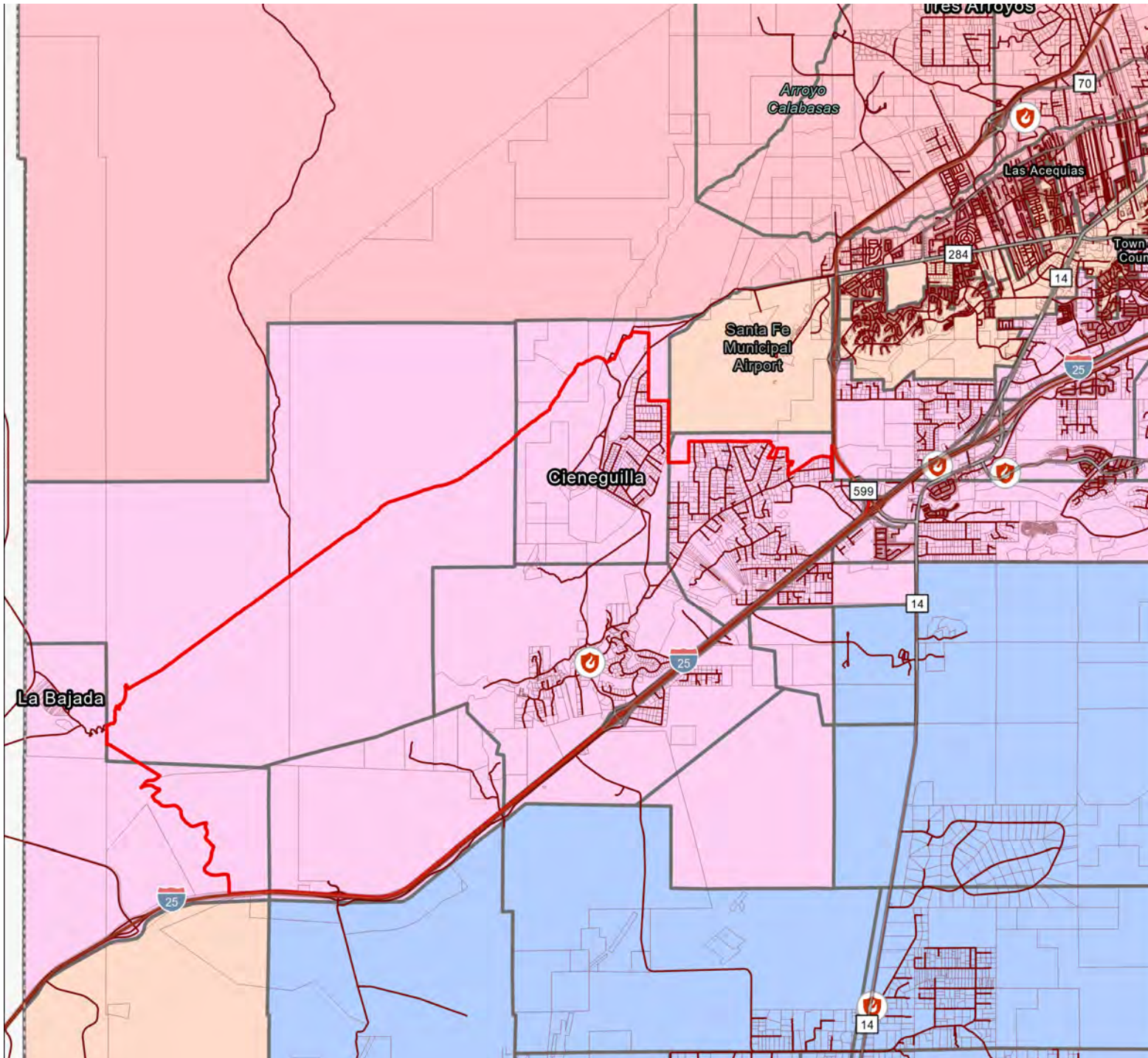
 Roads

 Parcel Boundary

## SFCo\_Fire Districts

### NAME

-  Agua Fria Fire District
-  Edgewood Fire District
-  La Cienega Fire District
-  Madrid Fire District
-  Santa Fe City
-  Turquoise Trail Fire District



Growth Management Department  
Planning Division

Prepared: April, 2025



## SECTION 2.6. Transportation





Paseo Real, La Cieneguilla. Photo by Google.



### Introduction

Significant changes have occurred since the adoption of 2001 and 2015 Plans that influence traffic conditions and transportation options for the community. New public transit services available just north of the Planning Area have increased connectivity to the wider region and enhanced the mobility of mobility-restricted residents. Continued residential growth in the Planning Area has led to increased daily traffic volumes on many roads and the community continues to be concerned about road safety and traffic violations. Residents in some neighborhoods of the Planning Area have petitioned the County to consider traffic calming measures to increase safety for all users including seniors and children. Similarly, communities across the state are examining their road networks for ways to strengthen overall health of the residents by preventing crashes and increasing opportunities for exercise in the form of walking, horse-back riding or bicycling.

### Roads

The Planning Area's roads are often narrow and winding. They were created over several centuries, beginning with the Camino Real de Tierra Adentro from Mexico City to Santa Fe and have been continually developing to serve increasing populations while also following natural contours of the landscape.

The majority of roads in the Planning Area are County owned and maintained. The Planning Area is accessed from the northeast by the I-25 Frontage Road and Los Pinos Road (CR 5), from the northwest by Paseo Rael, (CR 56) and from the southeast on Entrada La Cienega. Access from Interstate Highway 25 is provided at three intersections: at NM 599, at Exit 271 and at the Waldo exit to the south, near the La Bajada precipice.

The County conducts minor repairs of its roads on a regular basis. Overlays and repaving occur less frequently. In the 2000s, the Board of County Commissioners established the Road Advisory Committee. The Board re-established a Transportation Advisory Committee via Resolution 2013-13 which consists of 13 community volunteers, appointed by the Commission, who represent areas throughout the County. The Committee meets monthly and advises staff on road conditions or problems in their respective areas. Additionally, the Committee prepares an annual Road Improvement Priority Program which lists the County's priority projects. The program is provided to the legislative delegation and becomes the basis for most of the projects funded by the legislature.

Future and on-going transportation studies, plans and projects adjacent to the Planning Area present potential impacts and/or opportunities for the Planning Area. These include:

- The extension of Jaguar to NM 599 (Veterans Memorial Highway) which will provide a major connection to I-25 and the relief route to new and growing developments associated with Tierra Contenta. A major interchange at the intersection of Jaguar and NM 599 just south of the airport which will serve the planned Pavilions Development and possibly access to the Airport.
- A study conducted by NMDOT and completed in 2009 proposed new interchange at the signaled intersection of NM 599 and I-25 West Frontage RD as well as the extension of the frontage road in the right-of way paralleling the south side of NM 599, the realignment of the I-25 West Frontage Rd and a new local access road providing access to properties associated with Erica Road and Santa Fe Downs. This project is on the NMDOT and Santa Fe MPO list and will be started when funding becomes available.
- The SGMP Future Road Network Map shows a proposed study of a future road extension between State Highway 14 approximately 1 mile south of the Penitentiary to the interchange at I-25 and Entrada La Cienega.



- The City of Santa Fe is in the process of creating a new exit off of 599 directly to the Santa Fe Regional Airport.

## Traffic

The main source of traffic is from local residents with additional traffic generated by several tourist sites located in the Planning Area. Numerous large and small businesses and home occupation businesses located throughout the Planning Area generate additional traffic. Due to its proximity to Santa Fe, the area also receives some tourist traffic from “scenic drives” to enjoy the rural character and setting. Presently there are two relatively major generators of traffic in the Planning Area during specific events: Ojo Santa Fe and Las Golondrinas. Additionally, Eagle Ridge (previously known as the Santa Fe Downs) will likely generate traffic in the coming years as the Pueblo of Pojoaque develops the property. All three places are accessed via the I-25 frontage road. With the exception of the Transfer Station accessed off of Camino Capilla Vieja, major generators of traffic are not anticipated nor zoned for the interior of the Planning Area.

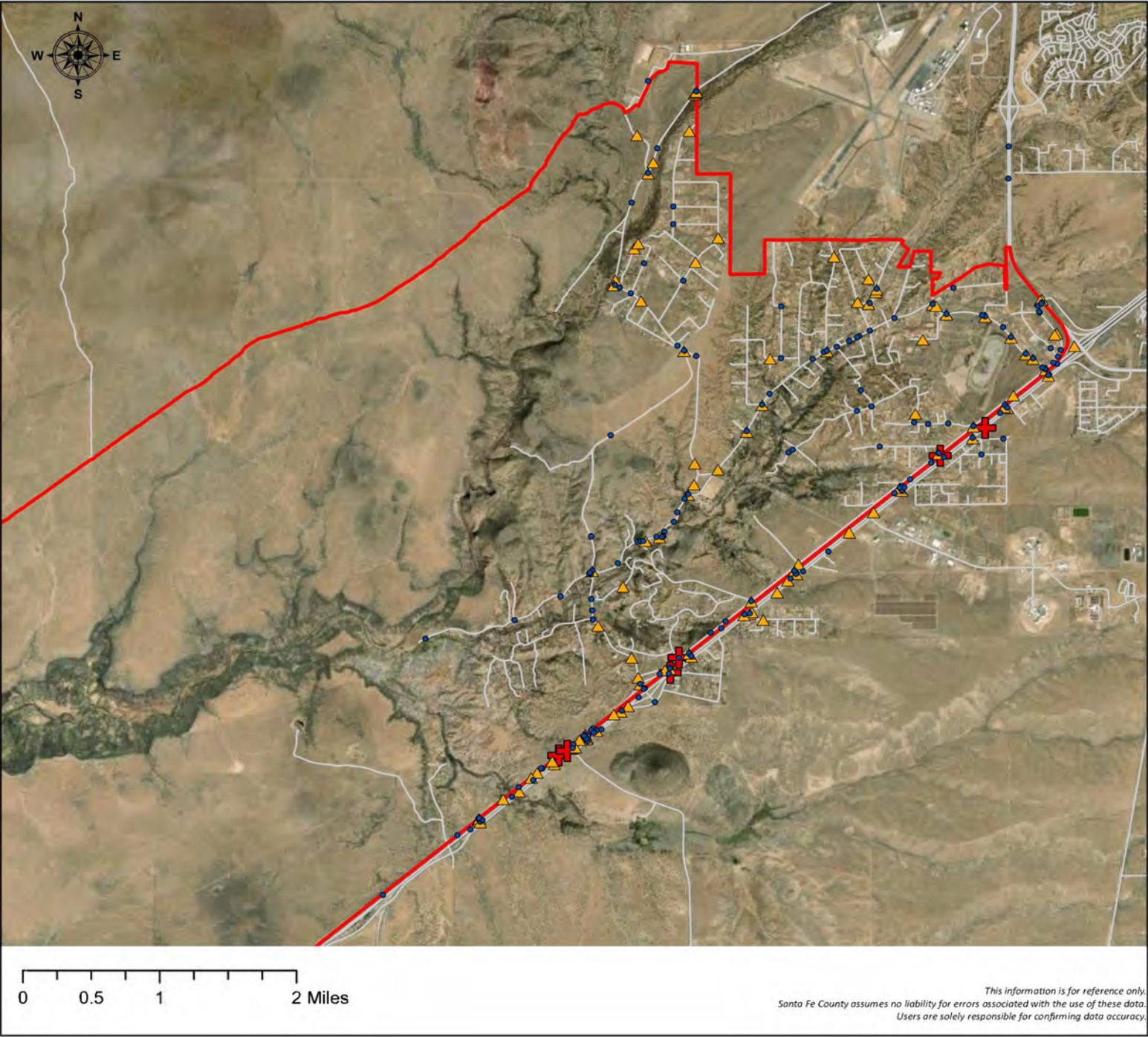
## Traffic Safety

As illustrated in the NMDOT Traffic Safety Data Crash Severity Map (p. 92) and Traffic Safety Crash Data Points map (p. 96), the traffic crash hotspots within the Planning Area include Los Pinos Rd, the W Frontage Rd (especially at intersections with Los Pinos and NM-599), Paseo Real, and Entrada La Cienega. Steps should be taken to alleviate serious traffic accidents at these intersections and corridors. Other options such as stop lights or roundabouts should be researched to make these areas safer. The upcoming La Cienega Road Safety Study will investigate these issues thoroughly and recommend specific steps to address these issues. Community-identified traffic and safety concerns are illustrated on Map 12 (p. 93).



Paseo El Canon. Photo by Google.

Map 12



La Cienega & La Cieneguilla

2014-2023  
NMDOT Traffic Safety  
Crash Data

**Legend**

**LCLCCrashPoints**

**CRASH SEVERITY**

- Fatal Crash
- Injury Crash
- Property Damage Only Crash

**LCLC Community Boundary**

**Roads**



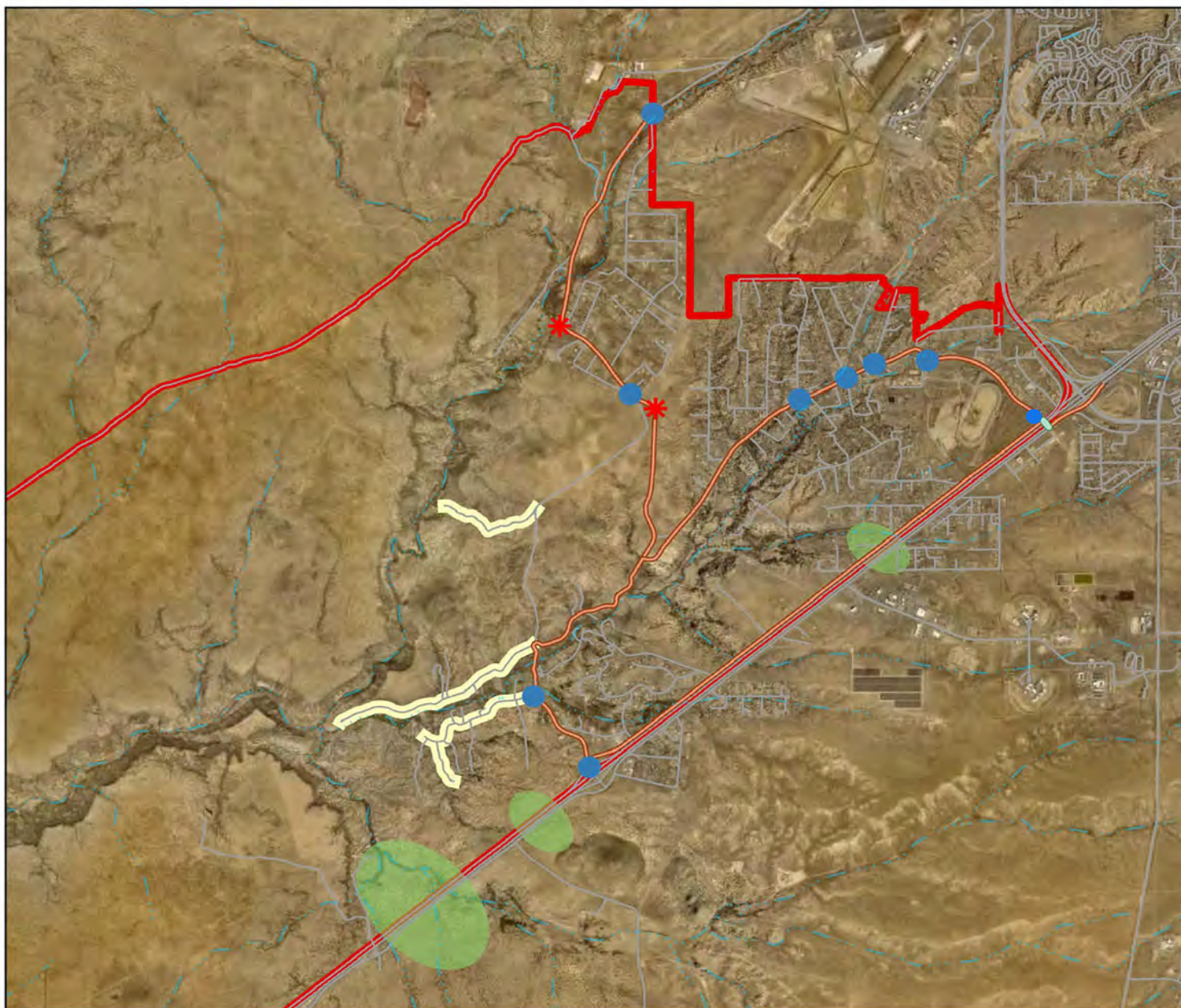
# Map 13

La Cienega & La Cieneguilla

Community Identified  
Traffic and Safety Concerns

## Legend

-  Santa Fe County Boundary
-  Community Boundary
-  Streams and Arroyos
-  Flashing Lights Needed
-  Round-About Needed
-  Potential Ped/Bike Path
-  Roads
-  Wider Road needed for ER services
-  Wildlife corridors
-  Bridge Needed



Growth Management Department  
Planning Division

Prepared: September, 2025

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## Public Transit

The NM Rail Runner Express commuter train station is located near the intersection of NM 599 and I-25, with current rail access to the City of Santa Fe, and south to Bernalillo, Albuquerque, Belen, and stops in between.

The station is within 1 mile of 3% of the Planning Area (43 parcels including Eagle Ridge) but there is not an easy pedestrian trail or bicycle route connecting the area with the station.

Santa Fe County submitted its annual Transit Plan to NCRTD in July 2025. The plan included a new Service Request for La Cienega and La Cieneguilla, as Route 260-La Cienega remained out of service. The request was for the new 'MyBlue' Micro transit service in the La Cienega/La Cieneguilla area and to include the Santa Fe Adult Detention Facility.

The MyBlue micro-transit service is an on-demand transit service, in which riders can call to be picked up and are then taken to their destination within an established zone. In August 2025, the NCRTD Board passed the amendment of the La Cienega MyBlue micro-transit service to cover the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla areas. Following the amendment, the service was commissioned in October 2025.

NCRTD combined Route 260-La Cienega and Route 270- NM-599 Station to create the La Cienega My Blue micro-transit zone. The service area covers the La Cienega/ La Cieneguilla, including La Cienega Community Center, El Rancho de las Golondrinas, Ojo Santa Fe resort, Santa Fe Outlet Mall, The Presbyterian Hospital, Super Walmart, Santa Fe Place mall and will include the stops of the previous route 270. This includes the Military Complex, State Corrections Department, State Penitentiary Corrections, Santa Fe Adult Detention Center and the State Penitentiary Administration Office. The service runs Monday to Friday from 6am to noon and 3:30pm to 7:30pm. The zone map is shown below. MyBlue fares are \$1.00 per trip except for veterans and active-duty military members who ride free. Check the NCRTD website for the latest information.

Photos of the MyBlue Van (below) and MyBlue Zone in the Planning Area (right) - Photos from the NCRTD.

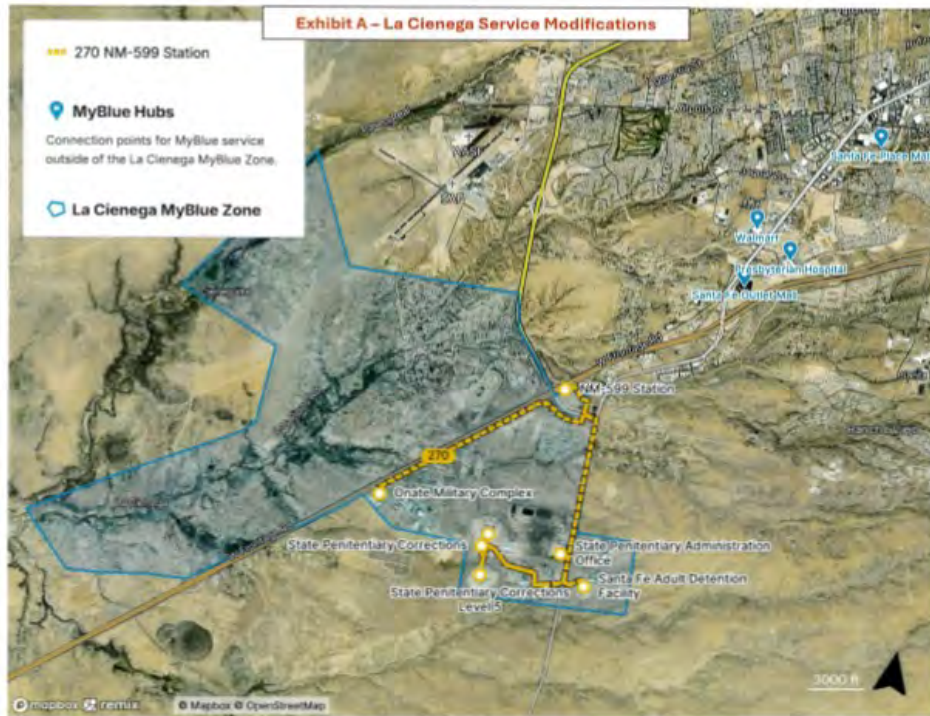


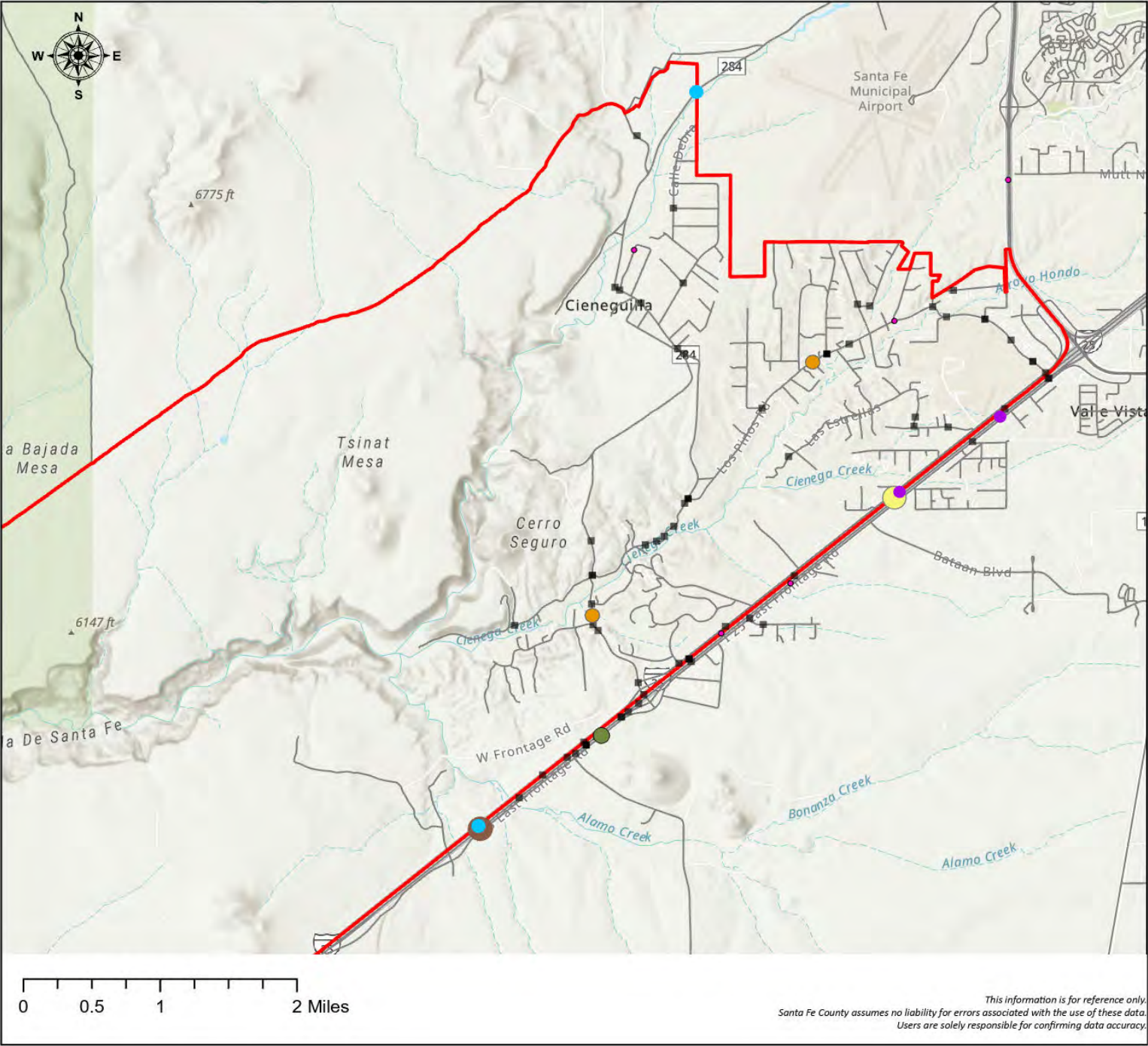


## Transportation Key Issues

Key issues from the 2015 plan are still relevant today:

- Vehicles often travel at high speeds along the roads in the Planning Area. The majority of roads are quite narrow with sharp turns. The high vehicle speeds create hazardous conditions for other vehicles, pedestrians, and others sharing the roadways.
- Potholes and poor road conditions exist on many roads throughout the Planning Area due to a lack of maintenance.
- Roads in the Planning Area are subjected to frequent washouts and erosion damage due to runoff from the arroyos, poor drainage and a lack of engineered drainage planning, the Santa Fe River, and other drainage problems.
- As the area has grown and tourist destinations have developed, increased traffic including large trucks and buses have created new safety hazards for residents, pedestrians, and livestock on the narrow roads and lanes within the Planning Area.
- Senior citizens, the disabled, and others who do not drive or have access to transportation lack mobility both within the valley and for trips to Santa Fe.
- Blind and sharp curves often do not have guard rails or other protections.
- Many roads leading to area homes have insufficient access for fire safety and emergency vehicles.





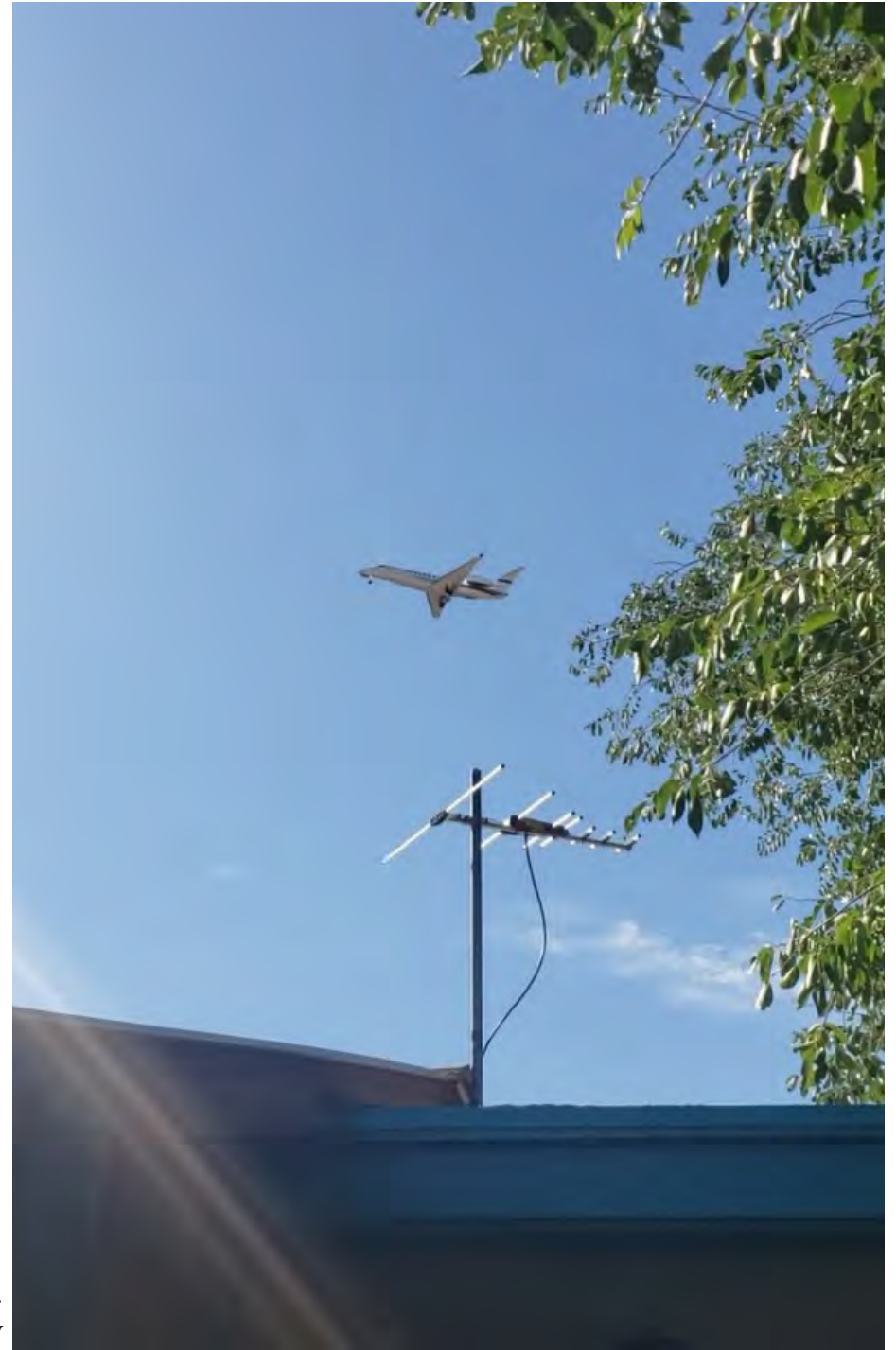
La Cienega & La Cieneguilla

2014-2023  
NMDOT Traffic Safety  
Crash Data

- Legend
- Crash Points - Animal Caused  
CRASH ANALYSIS
- Animal - Bear
  - Animal - Cougar
  - Animal - Cow/Cattle
  - Animal - Coyote
  - Animal - Deer
  - Animal - Dog
  - Animal - Horse
  - Crash Points - Fixed Object
  - LCLC Community Boundary
  - Roads

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Private jet landing at the Santa Fe Regional Airport.  
Still from video by Diane Pinkey

## Transportation Framework

In addition to the goals, strategies and objectives for roads and transportation in the Implementation Element, the following framework should be considered in all future road projects and maintenance routines for the Planning Area. SLDC design standards for roads should be reviewed as part of the drafting and adoption of the Community District Overlay. Road design standards should be communicated in a clear graphic representation of desired road profiles for each area type (traditional community, rural developed, and rural open lands). Implementation of design standards for roads should be accomplished through amendments to the SLDC Section 9.8 La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community District Overlay.

The County Roads and Planning Divisions should work with the community to determine and refine area type and identify unique contextual elements that will influence the design beyond those generalized below. Unique contextual elements includes the church, community center, natural features such as large “heritage” trees, creeks, springs & arroyos, historic features such as archeological sites, acequias, bridges, and miscellaneous structures. Furthermore, all roads planning should account for drainage from the roadways onto adjacent properties and take steps control drainage from roadways where needed.

### Users

Roadways in the Planning Area serve a variety of users including pedestrians, bicyclists, horse back riding, motor vehicle drivers and passengers. Selecting the appropriate treatment of the roadway to accommodate all users, (including children and the elderly) can influence the overall health of the community by preventing crashes while increasing opportunities for exercise in the form of walking or bicycling.

There may be a latent demand above observed pedestrian and bicycle volumes in the Planning Area because pedestrian and bicycle facilities

do not yet exist or are substandard, or do not provide complete connectivity to key community locations such as the community center or church. Future pedestrian and bicycle facilities including paths, crosswalks, and transit stops should be considered in evaluating new or changes in land development, including any potential attractors such as schools, parks and retail uses.

### Area Types

Roadways in the Planning Area traverse three distinct environments; rural open lands, traditional community areas, and rural developed areas, and are characterized by differing land uses, densities and topography with changes in the amount of pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle use. Land use dictates the function of a road; as land use changes along a road the roads functions also change. Roadways should be designed in a manner that serves the existing land use while supporting future land use goals. Traditionally, roadways have been classified either as “rural” or “urban.” It is important to recognize that a roadway’s formal classification as urban or rural (which is determined from census data using periodicaly-adjusted criteria adopted by the United States Office of Management and Budget) may differ from actual site circumstances or prevailing conditions.

### Rural Open Lands

This area type is associated with public conservation or open space shown on the future land use map, where the roadway travels through range land or other open space. There are few access points along the roadway and little or no development. Design constraints tend to involve topographic, environmental, scenic or historic resources. Pedestrian, bicycle and transit activity is usually infrequent and of low volume. However, there may be potential latent demand for bicycle accommodation on low-volume roadways traversing scenic rural areas.

Most of Paseo Real from the intersection with NM 599 to the intersec-



tion with Los Pinos Road passes through rural open lands. It is currently a 2 lane paved road maintained by the County with a 35 mph speed limit through the Planning Area. A portion of Paseo Real goes through La Cieneguilla in an area with single family homes, however very few of the properties front or have access directly onto Paseo Real.

The SLDC Official Map Functional Classification for Paseo Real is Collector Urban. SLDC Design Standards applied to collector urban classification requires 11' lane width, two 5' sidewalks, two 5ft on-road bike lanes and a Right of Way (ROW) of 45-72 feet.

### Traditional Community

This area type is associated with the more compact built-up areas based on traditional acequia settlement patterns. Varied building setbacks, and frequent driveways and intersections are common. Individual property frontage is generally less than 200 feet. Right-of-way is usually constrained by the built environment. Pedestrian activity is generally moderate. At this time bicycle activity is low but often generated to, from, and within the traditional community. An important safety consideration for design is the often rapid transition between rural open lands or rural developed areas to a traditional community area.

Major roads in this area include portions of Los Pinos and Entrada La Cienega. SLDC Official Map Functional Classification for the two major roads is "Minor Arterial Urban". SLDC Design Standards applied to Minor Arterial (SDA-2) classification requires 12' lane width, two 5' sidewalks, two 5ft on-road bike lanes and a ROW of 60-100 feet.

Minor roads include Camino C de Baca, Camino San Jose and Camino Capilla La Vieja. SLDC Official Map Functional Classification for these roads is "Local." SLDC Design Standards applied to Local (Urban SDA-2) classification requires 10' lane width, one 5' sidewalk, and a minimum ROW of 34-48 feet.

### Rural Developed

This area type is associated with the low-density residential development based on contemporary subdivisions and occasional commercial uses. Buildings generally have large setbacks from the roadway. Occasional driveways require a driver to be more alert for entering and exiting vehicles than in rural open land areas. Pedestrian and bicycle activity are more frequent than in rural open lands area, but generally of modest scale.

Major Roads in this area type include, Calle Debra, Camino Montoya in La Cieneguilla, Cerro Del Alamo, Sunset Road, Nancys Trail, Paseo De Angel, and Las Estrellas in upper La Cienega. The SLDC Official Map Functional Classification for these roads is "Other Major Local or Collector Road Not Officially Classified". Although there are no SLDC Design Standards for this classification, standards that apply to Local (Urban SDA-2) classification requires 10' lane width, one 5' sidewalk, and a minimum ROW of 34-48 feet.

### Potential Regional Commercial Node

Presently there are three relatively major generators of traffic in the Planning Area: Las Golondrinas Historic Museum during events primarily on weekends, Ojo Santa Fe property during regular business hours, and Eagle Ridge when it is hosting events. Traffic for these generators is adequately accommodated via access from the I-25 Frontage Road, but additional access may be needed as Eagle Ridge is further developed.

Additional major generators of traffic are not anticipated nor zoned for the interior of the Planning Area. However, major traffic generators are expected if the area designated as commercial mixed-use is fully developed with urban densities and infrastructure. This area has large tracts of land, high visibility, close proximity and easy access to regional (NM 599) and interstate highway systems (I-25), the airport and regional transit systems including the Express Rail Runner Commuter Train and North Central Regional Transit Authority buses. Roads and circulation in this

area should evolve as part of larger efficient, safe, multi-jurisdictional, multi-purpose circulation plan that encompasses land and facilities associated with the I-25/NM 599 interchange, the Airport and the Rail Runner Station.

### Traffic Calming Measures

Several areas in La Cienega have expressed an interest in traffic calming measures including the residents along Camino Capilla Vieja. Once traffic calming has been implemented, monitoring of the performance of the project should be undertaken to assure that speeds have indeed been reduced, and to provide valuable lessons for future traffic-calming projects.

### Transit Options

Currently, NCRTD's Route 260 is temporarily suspended. There are no other transit options within the Planning Area.

### Transportation Goals:

**Goal 6:** Develop a transportation system that provides for community mobility and safety

**Goal 7:** Minimize the Santa Fe Regional Airport's external impacts on the Planning Area

*See the strategies and actions on pages 144 and 146.*

## Airport

The La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area is located directly south and southwest of the Santa Fe Regional Airport. The airport was established in the 1950's and has expanded over the years as the region has grown. The airport currently serves as the main air traffic facility serving commercial, private and military aircraft in north-central New Mexico. Current flight patterns for landing and departing from the facility regularly direct aircraft over the Planning Area.

All of the populated areas in the Planning Area are within a 5-mile radius of the airport with the adjacent communities of La Cieneguilla and Upper La Cienega most impacted. These residents and communities have received rapid growth over the past two decades. Simultaneously, as demand for air service from the Santa Fe region has grown, airport operations have intensified. The proximity of these communities to the airport has led to increasing impacts from airport operations. Residents in the Planning Area have strong concerns that possible airport expansion will exacerbate the existing noise and disturbance problems. The Airport Area Map depicts the Airport Noise Overlay Zone and noise setbacks along I-25 and Highway 599.

### Airport Key Issues

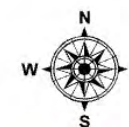
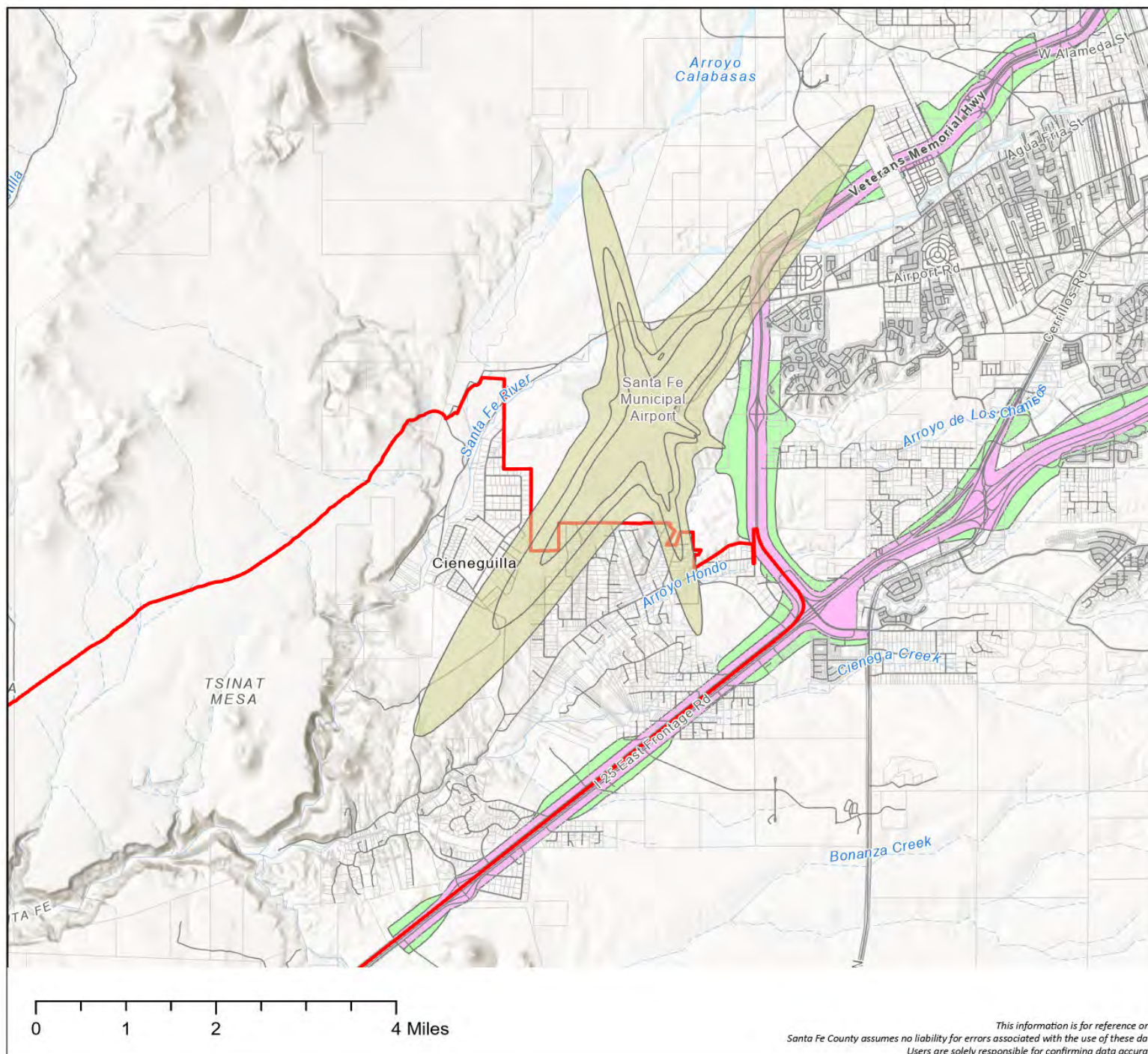
- The current Santa Fe Municipal Airport flight patterns and flight schedules create nuisances from noise as well as safety concerns for Planning Area residents such as aircraft crashes into homes.
- Training exercises conducted by the Air National Guard at and near the airport facility generate noise and vibrations due to low flying helicopters and jets.
- Expansion of airport facilities including increased or intensified use by commercial, residential and military aircraft will likely exacerbate existing noise and safety problems.



## La Cienega & La Cieneguilla

### Airport Area Map & Noise Nuisances

- Legend**
-  Airport Noise Overlay Zone  
55 / 60 m/ 65+ DNL
  -  LCLC Community Boundary
  -  Roadways
  -  Parcel Boundary
- Critical & Desired Noise Setbacks**
- SETBACK**
-  CRITICAL
  -  DESIRED



Growth Management Department  
Planning Division

Prepared: April, 2025

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## SECTION 2.7. Water





Acequia de La Cienega, Commissioner Robert Romero, meeting with Acequia de la Capilla Commissioners, Nick Jones and Kevin Barrows, at the Acequia's point of diversion.  
Photo by Andrea La Cruz-Crawford



## Water Resources

For centuries, the availability of water in the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla valleys has been a primary factor for area settlement by Native American, Spanish, Mexican, Territorial and United States settlers. Surface water is found in springs, streams, and river that the area is named after. Surface water has traditionally been used for domestic purposes, to water livestock, power mills and irrigate crops. By the mid-20th century, domestic use of the streams, rivers and acequias, or ditches, was minimized due to recognition of bacteriological cotangents, contamination and depletion of the aquifer. Household consumption from naturally-filtering springs continued, but there are now few if any remaining springs with sufficient quantity of flow to support a home. Following World War II, most valley households began replacing spring boxes with conventional wells, electric pumps and pressure tanks. The proliferation of water wells has been a major factor in altering the character of the valley communities. Traditional land and water use for agricultural purposes have been rapidly converted to serve residential development.

Due to residential and commercial growth in the basin including up-stream communities in the greater Santa Fe area, substantial drawdown of the aquifer is occurring. The combined effect of aquifer mining throughout the basin as well as increased local demand for water has created a serious threat to ground and surface water resources in the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area. While this Plan is applicable to the established Planning Area, it must be recognized that the water resources in the Planning Area are intrinsically tied to the entire basin. This includes large developed areas of the City of Santa Fe and Santa Fe County including the Community College District, areas east of I-25 associated with the Penitentiary, National Guard, Valle Vista neighborhood, and other developments in the Turquoise Trail area.

Since the 2001 and 2015 Plans were adopted several factors in the larger watershed and water supply of the region have come into play that are

having and will continue to have impact on the Planning Area water supply:

- Decreases in rain and snowfall and temperature increases have contributed to short and medium-term drought conditions.
- Several new studies and reports have confirmed continued draw-down of the aquifer with increases in isolated areas.
- The Buckman Direct Diversion project (BDD) has come on-line bringing a source of imported surface water from the Rio Grande to both the City and County water utilities. This has the potential to decrease the rate of ground water depletion by replacing service areas currently dependent on wells with the imported water supply.
- Dramatic increases in beaver populations along the Santa Fe River have impounded water, reducing surface water available to downstream irrigators, and likely increasing ground water infiltration



La Cienega &  
La Cieneguilla

Topographic and  
Hydrologic Map

Legend

— Santa Fe County Boundary

Community Boundary

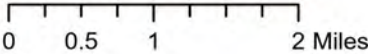
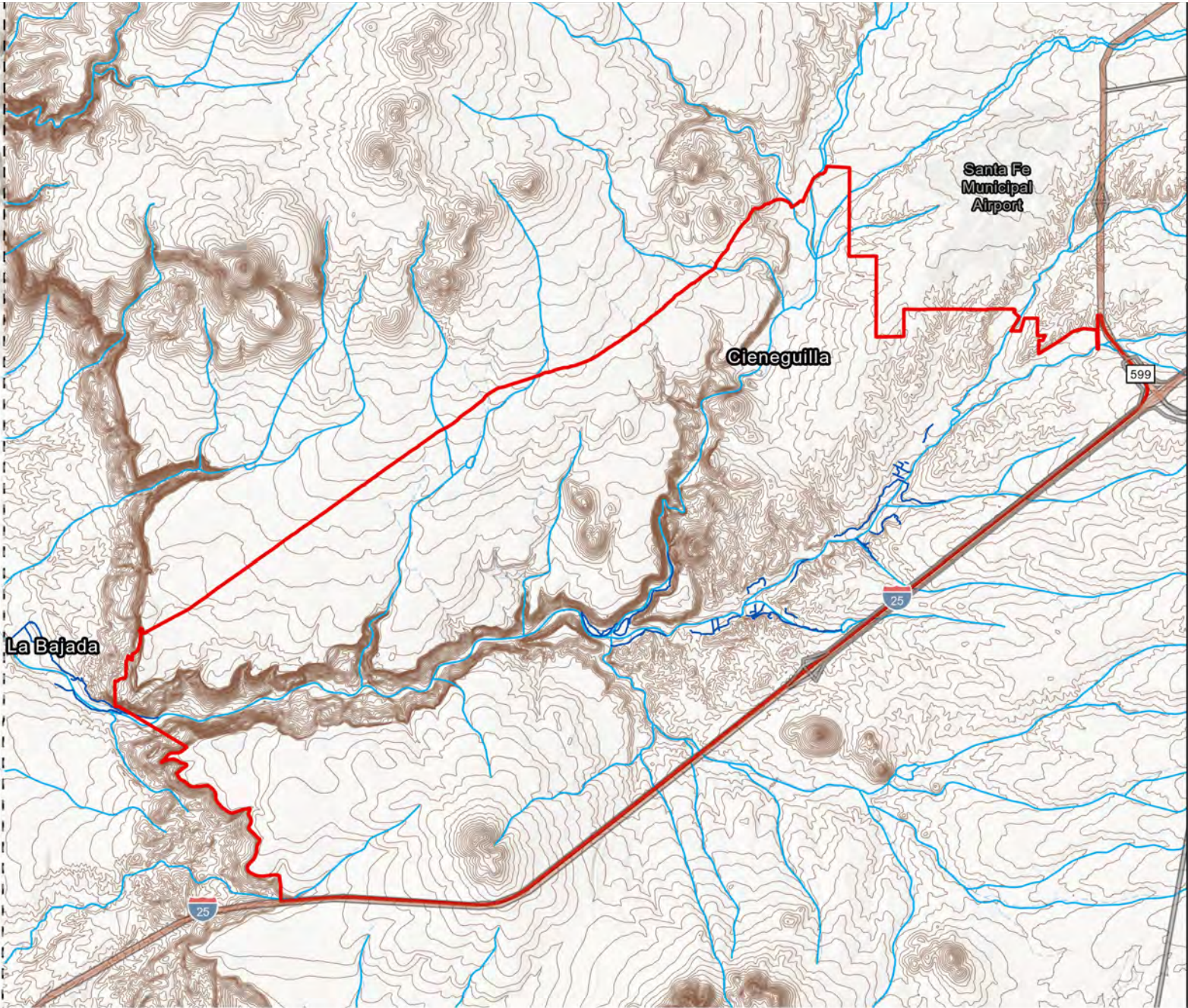
Acequias

Type

Ditch

Streams and Arroyos

Elevation Contours - 20 FT



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Growth Management Department  
Planning Division

Prepared: April, 2025



## **Area Hydrology: Rivers, Creeks, Springs, Arroyos, Flood Plains, and Wetlands**

The river, creeks, springs, major arroyos and their tributaries provide a surface water drainage system which forms regional and local hubs of riparian zones, springs, and wetlands. The creeks and their tributaries are mostly intermittent streams due to the complex interaction of geology, ground water and climate of the area.

### **Santa Fe River, La Cienega Creek, Arroyo Hondo, and Arroyo Chamiso**

The Santa Fe River runs diagonally through the Planning Area from the northwestern boundary to the southern boundary. It enters the Planning Area south of City of Santa Fe Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) through a shallow meandering river channel traversing County Open Space crossing Paseo Rael (sometimes under the road, sometimes over the road) flowing through the agricultural lands of La Cieneguilla and into a narrow canyon of basalt eventually joining the Cienega and Alamo creeks in the southern portion of the Planning Area.

The Santa Fe River below the WWTP is a perennial stream, primarily due to effluent release from the plant. In 1996 the 12.7 mile stretch of the Santa Fe River between the WWTP and Cochiti Pueblo, including the portions running through Planning Area, was classified as impaired due to low dissolved oxygen levels, high pH, high chlorine levels, high ammonia levels, and high sedimentation. Water quality in the reach below the WWTP has improved since the revegetation.

Effluent released from the WWTP benefits downstream irrigators, including the community of La Bajada, and provides semi-consistent flows in the river to replace the flow from area springs which are now virtually depleted. Due to the current release point, this benefit to irrigators does not extend to the Upper and Lower La Cienega area acequias or springs

and does not appear to provide wide-spread recharge. During the summers of 2011 and 2012, the effluent flow was retained by beaver dams created at the wetland area near the City of Santa Fe Municipal Airport which resulted in reduced flow and less water for irrigators (see Trends below).

Management of effluent from the City's WWTP and beaver activity on City and County property associated with the effluent will continue to impact flow in the Santa Fe River and irrigators that divert off the river. In addition, the City of Santa Fe is proposing to install a pipeline connecting the WWTP to the Buckman Direct Diversion (BDD) in order to obtain return flow credits, which in turn will allow the City of Santa Fe to pump more water from the BDD. This however, has the potential to reduce flows in the lower Santa Fe River by around 50% of their existing flows. An alternative that should be explored is to see whether the lower Santa Fe River can remain intact and return flow credits can be applied for using the natural drainage back to the Rio Grande that already exists through the lower Santa Fe River. This would save millions of dollars and eliminate the need to build a pipeline between the WWTP and the BDD and would eliminate the detrimental impacts to irrigators off of the lower Santa Fe River from a reduction in stream flow.

The communities of La Cienega and La Bajada have been diligent in advocating that the City of Santa Fe adjust their water release schedule and volume to accommodate the needs of downstream irrigators and will continue to do so in cooperation with other partners.

Arroyo Hondo enters the Planning Area at its junction with NM 599. Arroyo Chamiso enters the Planning Area near the eastern boundary of the Airport. Both traverse in a southwestern direction, joining each other in Upper La Cienega. Cienega Creek enters the Planning Area under Interstate I-25 in Upper La Cienega where it runs west joining Arroyo Hondo just above the north boundary of El Rancho de Las Golondrinas. The intermittent Alamo Creek enters the Planning Area under Interstate-25 along the southern boundary of Santa Fe Canyon Ranch where it runs west to join the Santa Fe River and Cienega Creek near the



western portion of the aptly named Tres Rios Ranch.

## Trends in the Area Hydrology

Since the adoption of the 2001 and 2015 plans, a number of trends and events have either affected or are likely to affect the community's water resources:

- Based on the increase in households, the number of ground water wells has increased, which has an impact of withdrawing more acre-feet of water per year.
- Work in the late 1990's and 2000's to restore the stretches of the Santa Fe River on City of Santa Fe and County-owned land, while increasing water quality, has led to dramatic increases in the beaver population. Beaver activity has impounded enough water to impact downstream irrigators. Beaver populations need to be monitored and managed and impoundments need to be controlled.
- The Santa Fe-Pojoaque Soil and Water Conservation District grant provided for the removal of nonnative vegetation on Santa Fe County Open Space property along the Santa Fe River in La Cieneguilla and at Los Carrizales in La Cienega.
- The New Mexico House of Representatives passed House Memorial 74 requesting that the City of Santa Fe and Santa Fe County work together to ensure sufficient river flows to La Bajada and La Cienega.
- Santa Fe County passed Resolution 2011-191 requesting that the City of Santa Fe release additional effluent to the Santa Fe River to support agricultural production in La Cieneguilla and La Bajada.
- Santa Fe River Traditional Communities Collaborative formed with the goal of promoting the health of the Santa Fe River and the traditional communities that depend on the river. The initiative is the result of partnership among La Cienega community members, La Cieneguilla landowners, the community of La Bajada, the Santa Fe Watershed Association, Forest Guardians, the City of Santa Fe, County of Santa Fe, Santa Fe-Pojoaque Soil and Water Conservation District and federal agencies with land holdings in the community. The broad mission of the group is to promote the health of the Santa

Fe River as well as the communities. In the near-term, the group will be working toward developing a plan for mitigating the impoundment of water associated with beaver activity on public lands.



Acequia La Cienega Diversion Headgate

## Acequias

Traditional agriculture in the Planning Area has historically been sustained by spring-fed acequias and, to a lesser extent, diversions of the Santa Fe River. The ojos y ojitos or natural springs filled ponds formed by construction of earthen dams which store water to be directed into an acequia. By the 1990's greatly diminished flows of area springs necessitated the addition of supplemental ground water irrigation wells to maintain flows and acequia system integrity. Additionally, reduced flows in effluent in the Santa Fe River due to the beaver dams (see above) are a major concern to effected acequia associations and communities. The communities of La Cienega, La Cieneguilla and La Bajada have been diligent in ensuring that the City of Santa Fe adjust their water release schedule and volume to accommodate the needs of downstream irrigators and will continue to do so in cooperation with other partners.

There are three acequia associations and four private acequias in the valley that provide water for irrigation. According to a hydrological survey of the area completed by the State Engineer's Office in 1976, approximately 150 acres of land are potentially irrigable by community acequias. Conversion of irrigable agricultural land to use residential in conjunction with declines in water flows in the acequia systems have led to a decrease in acreage under agricultural production.

**La Acequia de La Cienega** delivers water to 98.6 acres of irrigated land of which approximately 40 acres are currently being farmed. Some of the acreage traditionally used for irrigation has been developed for other purposes; some of it lies fallow. The acequia is entitled to use approximately 294 acre-feet of water per year (one acre-foot equals approximately 325,850 gallons of water). However, due to dramatic declines in water flow from the springs that feed the acequia, an irrigation well has been employed since 1998 to provide a supplemental water source to maintain the ditch integrity.

**La Acequia de El Guicu** traditionally serves approximately 41 acres of irrigated land. The acequia currently irrigates approximately 25 acres. The El Guicu is entitled to approximately 123 ac-ft of water per year. The ditch has an irrigation well to supplement spring or surface flows.

**La Acequia de La Capilla** (formerly known as the La Acequia de El Molino ) has approximately 7 users and is currently irrigating approximately 16 acres.

The valley also supports four private acequias: the El Canon, La Capilla Vieja, Los Pinos, and Romero ditches.

The mayordomos of the two largest acequias, La Cienega and El Guicu, report that it is currently not possible to supply water to all of the potentially irrigable acres along their acequias due to low flows from springs. Residents report that one of the reasons for a decline in local agricultural production is the lack of adequate and reliable water flows in the acequias. Residents believe that a primary reason for low flows is the depletion of ground water supplies throughout the Santa Fe watershed. No studies to date adequately illustrate aquifer depletion and resulting potential impairments, however, the County in coordination with LCVA and community stakeholders are currently implementing a water planning and springs restoration project. Additionally, a reduction in treated effluent releases to the Santa Fe River from the WWTP during the peak summer months and reduced flows from beaver activity are a major concern to the private acequias, which irrigate directly from the Santa Fe River.



## Private Water Wells

Throughout the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community Planning Area, most homes and businesses receive water from private domestic wells. In the Upper La Cienega area and parts of La Cieneguilla, many lots share a well with 1-4 other homes. Several homes still use springs for drinking water. According to OSE data, as of July 2011, the Planning Area included approximately 146 one-household domestic wells, 28 multi-household wells and 30 irrigation/stock/sanitary wells. All property owners with wells, who have requested a building or development permit with Santa Fe County since 1996 are required to install water meters on their new wells (or in the case of shared wells, meters on each dwelling unit or primary structure), record monthly meter readings, and provide an annual report of monthly readings to the County Hydrologist.

## Lots Subject to the La Cienega Watershed Conditions

The La Cienega and La Cienega Planning District Ordinance implemented many of the strategies identified in the 2001 Community Plan pertaining to water resources including reaffirming and refining the “La Cienega Watershed Conditions.” County parcel data shows that out of approximately 1,645 private parcels in the Planning Area, approximately one quarter (385 parcels) are subject to watershed conditions with the majority concentrated in Upper La Cienega. The watershed conditions require residential property owners to hook up to County water services, when service is available within 200 feet of the property line of land being divided and all commercial development applications to hook up regardless of distance. Additionally, owners have waived their right to protest the implementation of an improvement or assessment district. An estimated 709 parcels are not subject to the watershed conditions. For 509 parcels it is unclear whether they are subject to the watershed conditions due to missing information on the plats. The County has not extended water lines to serve the majority of those properties. As a result, the use and number of private domestic wells using ground water has increased to accommodate the increased number of households.



Acequia La Cienega Diversion Headgate,  
Photo circa 2015.

## County Water System

In 1998, Santa Fe County water service was extended at the cost of the developer to serve the Las Lagunitas subdivision to prevent this proposed development from using wells, which would have affected the groundwater supply and the springs of the La Cienega community.

Several years later at the request of community members in along Paseo C de Baca the County Water System was extended down Entrada La Cienega to end of Paseo C de Baca. When this extension was completed, there was Grant funding remaining from the project which allowed the County to extend its water system from Paseo C de Baca along Entrada la Cienega to Camino San Jose. The initial intent of this extension was to provide service to the County Fire Department and Community Center but as a result of objections of encroachment into its water service area by the LCMDWA, this water line currently serves only one fire hydrant near the community center. The LCMDWA viewed this water line extension as an encroachment into the LCMDWA water service area and initially objected to this waterline extension that was made without notice to the LCMDWA. As a result of negotiation, Santa Fe County and the LCMDWA formed a Joint Powers Agreement where they could mutually benefit from this waterline extension to better serve fire protection, and domestic water to the community.

The LCMDWA has currently asked Santa Fe County to dedicate this waterline on Entrada La Cienega to the LCMDWA to better serve its customers and provide a river Crossing and looped system along with improved fire protection for the community through this Joint Powers Agreement it has formed with the County. This agreement also provided for an interconnection between the county and the LCMDWA systems, which allows both entities to provide back up water to each other in case of an emergency as well as enhancing fire protection.

The LCMDWA serves water to the Santa Fe County Fire Department,

Community Center and County solid waste transfer station, making Santa Fe County a customer of the LCMDWA water system. The LCMDWA system also provides for about 20 fire hydrants throughout the entire LCMDWA system which are utilized by Santa Fe County Fire department.

In 2004, the water line was extended further to include a proposed loop system at La Lomita (road). At the direction of the BCC (SF County Resolutions Nos. 2006-93 & 2011-162) and with 2013 Water Trust Board funding support, the Utility has nearly completed the design of a looped water service line for the Camino Loma, La Lomita, and Cielo Del Oeste (Lower La Cienega) area. The County system is piped to provide water supply to the LCMDWA system, under an agreement with the County.

Wherever County water lines are extended within the Planning Area, properties with the watershed conditions are required to hook up. Other residents may hook up to the County water utility according to costs and conditions set forth in the then current line extension and customer service policies and ordinances.

Other notes on the County Water System and County water management with respect to the Planning Area:

- The County provides approximately 275 acre-feet/year of water to the State Penitentiary, thus reducing the depletions to the shallow Ancha/Tesuque Formation aquifer in the area.
- The County owns surface water rights associated with the Guicu acequia, which should be transferred to the LCMDWA to offset the County's use of the LCMDWA water to serve the Community Center and the La Cienega Fire Department or otherwise retired from use.
- The County adopted via Resolution No. 2012-58, a policy that allows small, public or private water systems to seek water-related technical assistance or water supply service from the County Utilities. The community water systems within the Planning Area may avail themselves of the services. Qualified systems may or may not be connected to the BDD Rio Grande surface water supply; if not connected to



the BDD water supply, water systems run by the County may continue to be supplied using local ground water sources.

- County water systems that rely on ground water include the County Public Works Complex, the Romero Park, and the Caja del Oro system, which serves La Familia Medical Center, the Nancy Rodriguez Community Center, and the Agua Fria fire station. The County has not been pumping its water rights from the Hagerman well since approximately 2011.
- County Water Service Areas established as part of the SGMP (2010) include portions of Upper and lower La Cienega.
- The County continues to analyze the amount of uncommitted water supply available for providing service outside of the SDA-1 area.

## Water-related Policies, Programs, Resolutions, Ordinances, and Activities

The list below identifies the various actions that, community members, local governments, and other stakeholders have taken in order to support sound water resource management in the Planning Area.

### Maintaining and Enhancing Santa Fe River Flows

- Santa Fe County passed Resolution No. 2011-191, requesting that the City of Santa Fe release additional effluent to the Santa Fe River to support agricultural production in La Cieneguilla and La Bajada.
- In 2012, the New Mexico House of Representatives pass House Memorial 74 requesting that the City of Santa Fe and Santa Fe County work together to ensure sufficient river flows to La Bajada and La Cienega.
- The City of Santa Fe, Santa Fe County, NM Game and Fish Department, and Bureau of Land Management analyzed the following alternatives for delivering water from the Santa Fe River to La Bajada:
  - trucking potable water from La Cienega to La Bajada reservoir;
  - pipe potable water from La Cienega distribution line to La Bajada;

- control beavers with birth control;
- control beavers with beaver deceivers;
- buy out farmers' crops;
- drill a supplemental well in La Bajada;
- sharing of shortage priority of diversion among and within acequias based on crop type;
- coordinating irrigation diversions.

The city's reports of the alternatives analysis describes that none of the alternatives appear to have high feasibility.

- Local residents and other stakeholders formed the Santa Fe River Traditional Communities Collaborative, with the goal of promoting the health of the Santa Fe River and the traditional communities that depend on the river. The group is developing a plan for mitigating the impoundment of water associated with beaver activity on public lands. The initiative is a partnership among La Cienega community members, the community of La Bajada, the Santa Fe Watershed Association, Forest Guardians, the City of Santa Fe, County of Santa Fe, and federal agencies with land holdings in the community (Bureau of Land Management and US Forest Service).
- The County 2002-09 Ordinance includes a provision that all projects plans that propose restoration, enhancement or creation of new riparian areas shall:
  1. be legally noticed;
  2. submit a hydrologic report to the County hydrologist describing proposed projects' likely effects on evapo-transpiration, infiltration, and recharge;
  3. show compliance with existing terrain management and floodway regulations; and
  4. demonstrate no net impact on traditional water uses.

Projects on ephemeral streams shall demonstrate how occasional flows will be managed to support wetlands.

The communities of La Cienega and La Bajada, in cooperation with other partners, continue to advocate that the City of Santa Fe adjust their water release schedule and volume to accommodate the needs of downstream irrigators.

## Conjunctive Use, Sustainability, & Back-Up Supplies

- The County's Conjunctive Use Management Plan identifies the County's commitment to importing water to the basin to alleviate the use of domestic wells.
- The County continues to participate in a public process to work with the communities of La Cienega and La Cieneguilla to develop plans to minimize water used from the Planning Area and in watersheds that impact area acequias.
- In 2014 the County's Water Policy Advisory Committee, considered the high cost and onerous permitting requirements of aquifer-storage and recovery (ASR). Upon the WPAC's recommendation, the BCC approved Resolution No. 2015-14, which recommends that the County Utility pursue back-up supply to the BDD water supply via in-basin ground water wells, since the BDD has been off-line an average of 17 percent each of the last four years.

## Water Right Acquisition

- Per Resolution No. 2006-57, the County acquires or requires developments to acquire water rights necessary to serve future water utility customers.

The Community would like to continue to work in developing a water plan for the County water utility that addresses:

- Recharge of the area aquifer and springs;
- Reduced pumping of County held wells in or near the Planning Area;
- Planning future expansion of the county water system to manage withdrawals from wells near the Planning Area to achieve a sustainable ground water supply and recharge of the area aquifer to prevent or mitigate depletion of the aquifer;

- Investigating and actively pursuing other points of diversion that would reduce impact on the Planning Area;
- Investigating and pursuing the possibility of using effluent to supplement acequia flows and;
- Coordinating a cooperative process with the community and all water interests to minimize impacts of future water use on the Planning Area; and
- Incorporate County "growth area" zones to further define areas that may have future access to County water systems.

## Water Resources Key Issues

- Limited water is available to meet both domestic and agricultural needs in the Planning Area. Continued approval of development applications in the Planning Area creates an atmosphere where many local residents feel as if they are forced to compete with new developments for limited water resources. As a result, many residents oppose new development. This serves to hinder all potential development, regardless of scale and leads to community division rather than coordinated planning for development that is determined to be appropriate by local residents.
- The Community Planning Committee has identified issues regarding enforcement of density requirements based on water availability within the Planning Area. Dwellings have been permitted in the Community Planning Area without regard to approved water resource estimates.
- Area residents have identified that property division through family transfer splits and variances are being used to divide properties below the minimum lots sizes. These newly subdivided lots are often developed for rental or sale. This allows for increased density on small lots which places new demands on local water resources to accommodate the new development. While the community supports the family transfer process, it is felt that more careful examination of



the potential impacts of increased densities on local water resources is necessary before variances are granted.

- Large commercial and institutional entities and the proliferation of apartment complexes on the south side of Santa Fe, or in or near the Community Planning Area, are high volume water users (Map1: La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community Planning Area for more information). The high volume use threatens the limited water resources in the Planning Area as well as the La Cienega and Santa Fe River watersheds. Public records at the Office of the State Engineer (OSE) have documented instances of water use exceeding permitted rights for both institutional and commercial entities in or near the Planning Area.
- Both wells and water rights that affect water resources in the Planning Area and the La Cienega and Santa Fe River watersheds have been actively sought by the City of Santa Fe, the County and private entities. Use of these water resources would further draw down local water supplies. Without adequate protections for local water resources, continued draw down and aquifer mining in the La Cienega and Santa Fe River watersheds threatens to deplete or impair existing water resources for Planning Area residents. All new development in the county should be subject to increased water restrictions including rainwater harvesting for all exterior landscaping excluding lands containing acequia water rights for surface irrigation.
- The Traditional Community District of La Cienega currently has more users drawing water through private wells than the recommended density based on the critical population estimates outlined in the 1980 County General Plan. The critical population estimates were established to define a maximum population carrying capacity for local water resources but were removed from the County's 1999 Growth Management Plan. The Sustainable Growth Management Plan and complimentary code both support planning for centralized sewer and water systems in the Traditional Community in order to accommodate the increased population. Continued development in

the area without regard to the limited water supplies threatens the Planning Area and watershed surface and ground water resources of all communities in the Planning Area.

- Documentation of aquifer drawdown as demonstrated by decreased stream flows of La Acequia de La Cienega are presented in a 1994 report by W. Fleming that was commissioned by the County. The Fleming report clearly states that the aquifer is being depleted as evidenced by the dropping water flow from springs between 1966 and 1994. Residents confirm these dramatic decreases in spring flows over the past three decades. Aside from USGS monitoring of La Acequia de La Cienega, no data collection systems are in place to measure and document actual impacts to La Cienega and La Cieneguilla area water supplies.



Photos Clockwise:

1. Beaver dam along the Santa Fe River in La Cieneguilla (circa 2015)
2. Empty Acequia de La Cienega Reservoir. Photo by Robert Romero.
3. Full Acequia de La Cienega Reservoir. Photo by Robert Romero.



# Map 17

## La Cienega & La Cieneguilla

### Community Water Supplies Map

#### Legend

- ▬ Community Boundary
- OSE Points of Diversion
- ▬ Parcel Boundary
- UTILITIES Lift Stations
- ▬ UTILITIES SFCU Collection Lines
- Valves Through 9-8
- Master Meter
- ▬ Waste Water Facility
- ▬ County Utilities Contracts

#### NM Public Water Systems

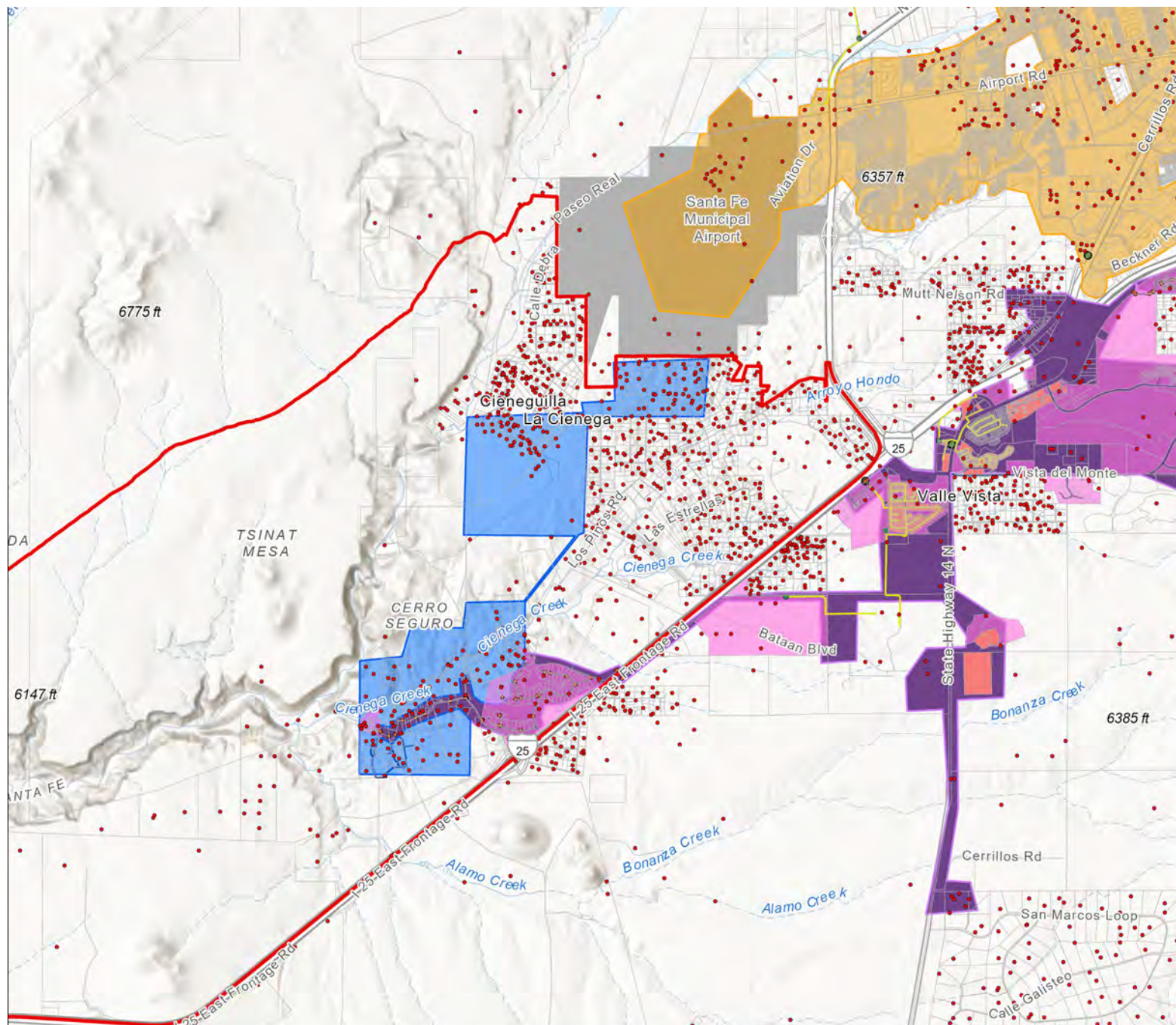
##### System Type

- ▬ Municipal Water System
- ▬ County Water Utility
- ▬ Mutual Domestic Water Association
- ▬ UTILITIES Sewer Treatment Plant
- ▬ SFCU Water Lines 4-11-17



Growth Management Department  
Planning Division

Prepared: April, 2025



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## Water Quality & Wastewater

Latrines and cesspools were the traditional wastewater systems in the area. Septic tanks and leach fields to treat increasingly higher volumes of wastewater in the valleys have gradually replaced these systems. Currently, almost all development in the Planning Area uses septic systems to dispose of wastewater. The modernization of wastewater treatment systems has provided limited improvements to wastewater treatment in the Planning Area. Increased commercial and residential development continue to pose a risk of ground water contamination due to the large number of septic systems, areas with high concentrations of active and aging septic tanks, improperly functioning septic systems and pollution from increased runoff. Existing systems leach to the surface, especially during dry weather, and leak into waterways.

Additionally, as discussed in the water resources section, effluent from the City of Santa Fe's wastewater treatment plant is released into the Santa Fe River near La Cieneguilla. While the effluent benefits downstream irrigators and provides semiconsistent flows in the river, community members have expressed serious reservations as to the consistency of facility operations as well as the potential for effluent to contaminate local water resources in the Planning Area. Thus, the potential benefits for effluent to recharge Planning Area aquifers should be explored and must be balanced with clean and safe procedures to protect area water resources.

Protection of the Planning Area's water resources from further contamination and maintenance of historic stream flows in the La Cienega Creek and Santa Fe River are critical goals of this Plan.

### Community and County Sewer Systems

In 2014, The Wild and Wooley Mobile Home Park constructed a wastewater forcemain (pipeline) and a lift (pumping) station. The pipeline

was deeded to the County as public infrastructure, while the pumping station remains private. The project was funded privately and there is a pro-rated repayment provision to the owner of the Wild and Wooley for anyone seeking to connect to the pipeline within the next 10 years.

### Water Quality and Wastewater Key Issues

- Increased commercial and residential development pose a risk of ground water contamination due to the large number of septic systems, improperly functioning septic systems and pollution from increased runoff. Existing systems leach to the surface, especially during dry weather, and leak into waterways.
- Commercial and residential development create a risk of surface contamination through increased runoff from impervious surfaces due to the potential for pollution from roadways and parking lots. This results in increased turbidity in surface water from increased flow.
- In 2023 wells in the Planning Area, particularly in La Cieneguilla, were discovered to contain levels of Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) above permissible drinking water standards. PFAS are a group of chemicals known to cause certain adverse health impacts. LCVA worked with the County to provide educational materials to residents in the Planning Area and held monthly meetings to address various PFAS related topics. The County is currently in the process of conducting a study to identify the sources and spread of PFAS, which is set to be completed in fall 2025. Once that study is complete the County and Community will need to consider the recommendations provided by that study, which are likely to include PFAS mitigation and continued monitoring of the water table to track to spread of PFAS. Currently it is recommended that all residents in the Planning Area test their wells for PFAS and/or obtain filtration systems that will remove PFAS from any water that is used for human consumption. The latest information about PFAS and the County's study can be found on the County website.



- Ordinance 2002-09 restricts certain land uses based on water quality protection; primarily those that pose a risk of spills and potential to contaminate surface and ground water systems such as gas stations, asphalt batch plants and asphalt production plants, large-scale mining, any warehouse which stores or transfers chemicals, large-scale agricultural operations which stockpile manure or have manure lagoons (e.g.: dairies, horse parks or stables, chicken farms), waste oil recycling, septic tank pumping waste disposal, grease trap waste disposal, large-scale chili processing plants, cheese processing plants, gasoline storage facilities or transfer stations, auto repair facilities, car washes, sludge disposal fields, mortuaries, and slaughter houses.
- Treated Effluent Management Plan: In 1998, the City of Santa Fe adopted the Treated Effluent Management Plan which provided an allocation formula for the 11,000 acre-feet of water that the city projected the WWTP to produce annually. Actual annual effluent production has fallen far below initial projection and the allocation formula has required adjustment. The average volume of effluent discharge from the Santa Fe City waste treatment plant was 3.64 million gallons per day for 2009 and 2010. Volumes were higher from November through March, averaging 4.59 million gallons per day. Volumes were lower from April through October, averaging 2.96 million gallons per day. June volumes were lowest overall, averaging 2.52 million gallons. Records for effluent discharge are kept at the City's waste treatment facility headquarters, currently at 73 Paseo Rael, Santa Fe, NM 87507. In 2013 the City of Santa Fe created the Reclaimed Wastewater Resource Plan (RWRP), which replaces the 1998 Treated Effluent Management Plan (TEMP).
- The Planning Area is located at the downstream end of the Santa Fe watershed. The area's natural springs and ground water supplies are hydrologically connected to both underground and surface water flows. This interconnectedness of water systems leads the area's environment to be sensitive to alterations in natural water flows, water withdrawals and septic or other water introductions.
- The Environment Department enforces wastewater disposal and septic systems standards but does not always have the resources to monitor or enforce violations if they occur. The County does not have the authority to consistently enforce wastewater discharge requirements following granting of development permits. This allows for the potential of septic systems being installed in the Planning Area on small lots so that the intent of protecting ground water through existing regulations may not always be met.
- The increasing population is served mainly by septic systems. This increases the probability of future ground water contamination through overcrowding of lots and increasing density levels that pose a risk of contamination by placing septic tanks too close to existing water resources.
- State regulation 20.7.3.902 NMAC, Operation and Maintenance Requirements and Inspection Requirements at Time of Transfer, requires inspection of residential treatment systems at the time of sale of the property. This regulation is largely ignored and rarely enforced.
- Permits for new construction do not require mapping of adjacent properties for septic and waste treatment systems or wells, springs, water courses, etc.
- Beaver dams below the City of Santa Fe Wastewater Treatment facility are obstructing the flow of effluent to downstream users in lower Cienega, La Cieneguilla and La Bajada.



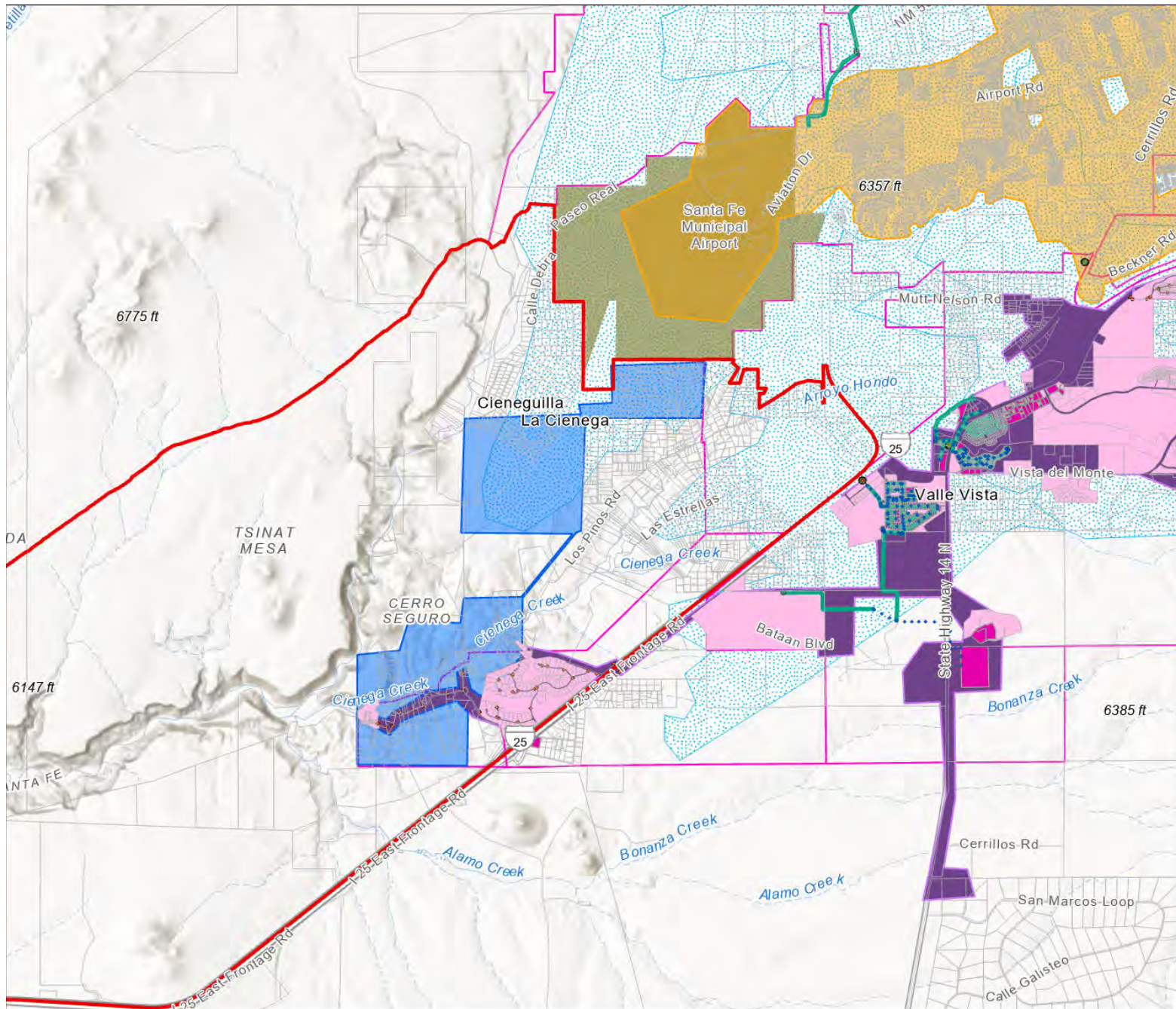
Compuerta of Acequia de la Capilla.  
Photo by Andrea La Cruz-Crawford



# Map 18

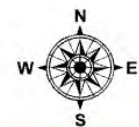
## La Cienega & La Cieneguilla

### Water Connections Map



#### Legend

- ▬ Community Boundary
- Man Holes
- ▬ Parcel Boundary
- UTILITIES Lift Stations
- ▬ UTILITIES SFCU Collection Lines
- Valves Through 9-8
- Master Meter
- ▬ Canoncito Planned Water Lines
- ▬ UTILITIES Waste Water
- ▬ County Utilities Contracts
- NM Public Water Systems**
- System Type**
- ▬ Municipal Water System
- ▬ County Water Utility
- ▬ Mutual Domestic Water Association
- ▬ UTILITIES Waste Water Facility
- ▬ UTILITIES Sewer Treatment Plant
- ▬ COUNTY WATER SERVICE AREAS
- ▬ UTILITIES Water Pressure Zone



Growth Management Department  
Planning Division

Prepared: April, 2025

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## **Water Service Priority Area & La Cienega Watershed Conditions**

This Plan establishes a priority area for implementing the La Cienega Watershed Conditions as outlined in Santa Fe County Ordinance 2002-09 and the potential extension of Santa Fe County Water Utilities which is identified on the Water Connections Map (page 119). The priority area is in close proximity to existing County water pipes and development, both residential and commercial, is expected to be fully built-out in the next ten years. The intent is to serve Upper La Cienega and La Cieneguilla in order to reduce ground water depletion, negative effects on downstream users and to fully implement the La Cienega Watershed Conditions.

Utility service to the Planning Area should provide an appropriate level of service and maintain rural density that is important to the area residents. On-site systems (primarily well and septic), community systems and extensions of the Santa Fe County water and wastewater system are all possible methods of serving the area over the long term. Utility extensions will be necessary to support higher density and non-residential uses proposed in the areas designated as commercial mixed-use.

A water/sewer feasibility study to analyze utility service extension and options for the area is necessary to begin implementation. Possible funding mechanisms for the project include Public Improvement Districts, County Improvement Districts or Special Assessment Districts. All lots subject to the La Cienega Watershed Conditions have waived the right to protest the implementation of an improvement or assessment district.

## **Water Goals:**

**Goal 8:** Ensure a sustainable, fresh water supply for the community.

**Goal 9:** Protect the quality of surface and ground water.

*See the strategies and actions on pages 148 and 151.*



# Map 19

## La Cienega & La Cieneguilla

### Watershed Map

#### Legend

-  Santa Fe County Boundary
-  Community Boundary
-  OSE Points of Diversion

#### Acequias

##### Type

-  Ditch
-  Streams and Arroyos

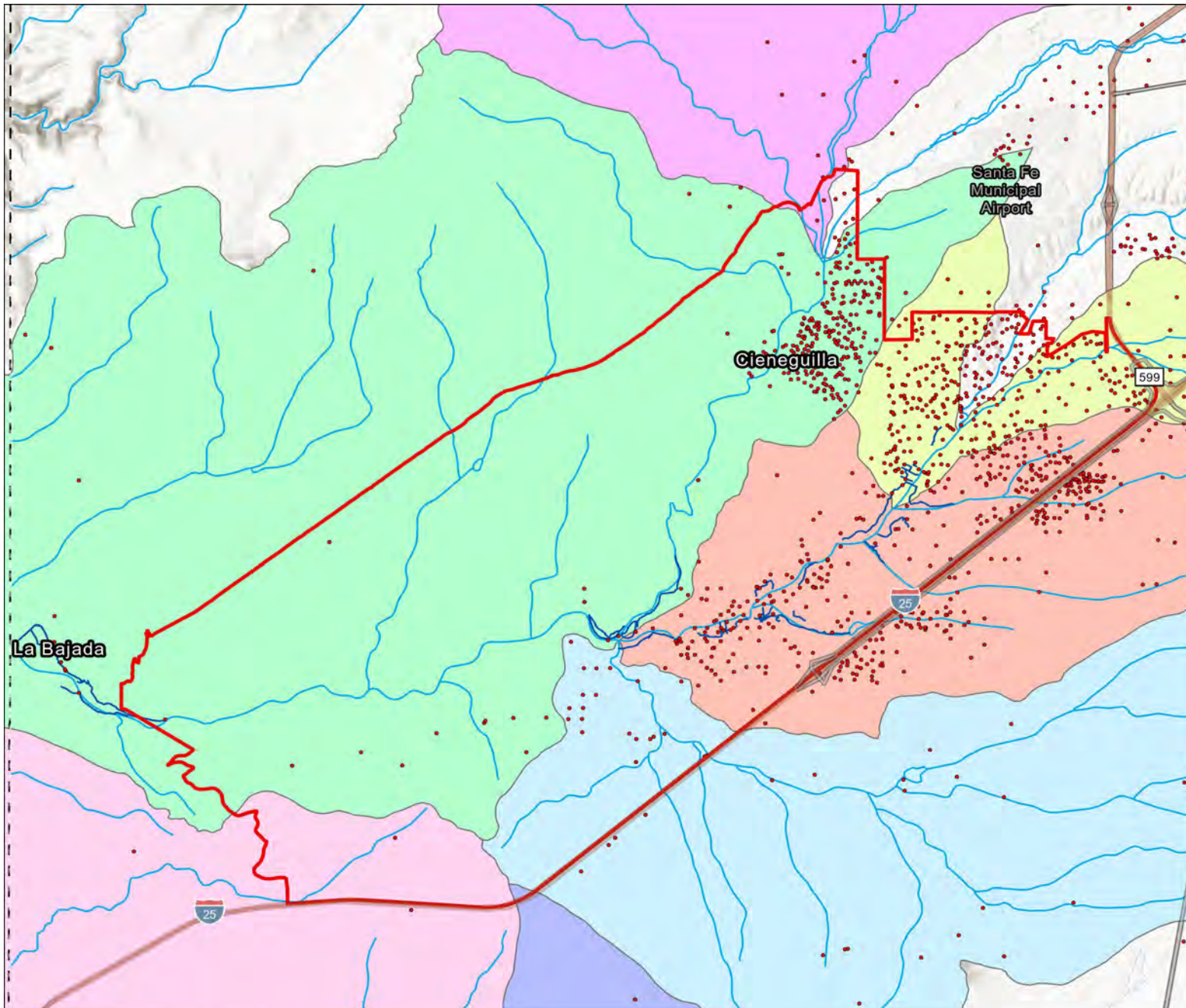
#### Watersheds (HUC 12)

-  Alamo Creek
-  Arroyo Calabasas
-  Arroyo Hondo
-  Cienega River
-  Galisteo Reservoir-Galisteo Creek
-  Outlet Santa Fe River
-  Tom Payne Gulch-Galisteo Creek



Growth Management Department  
Planning Division

Prepared: April, 2025



0 0.5 1 2 Miles

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## SECTION 2.8. Community Services





Rainbow over the San Jose Church Parish La Capilla in Lower La Cienega. Photo by Andrea La Cruz-Crawford



## Electric & Gas Utilities

As the communities of La Cienega and La Cieneguilla have grown in the past few decades, the number of overhead utility cables has dramatically increased. The lines provide power and communications to Planning Area residents. However, the proliferation of overhead lines also creates aesthetically unappealing alterations to the rural landscape and scenic vistas in the area. Overhead lines are also at high risk of being damaged and overhead power lines can fall during storms which can result in fires in the Planning Area.

## Solid Waste

Traditionally, residents disposed of household waste by burning it at home. Since the 1980s, the County has managed garbage removal. Solid waste is collected at a County operated transfer station, also known as the La Cienega Convenience Center located on County Road 54 B. The transfer station is open five days per week and residents purchase “unit” permits that allow a specified number of visits. Commercial businesses generating less than 850 pounds of refuse per month may also use the transfer station. Use of the facility’s recycling bins is free of charge. The County’s Solid Waste Ordinance No. 2014-10 outlines maximum size and weight of loads, requirements for bagging and covering loads, prohibited materials, fines for disposal of waste after hours, permit abuses, and requires recycling of pulp based materials such as paper and cardboard.

The existing facility is perceived to lack the necessary capacity for the area it serves and the location is considered inconvenient for many. The large service area, including communities outside of the Planning Area, brings additional traffic to the area and litter throughout the traditional Planning Area as dump loads are often not properly covered.

Illegally dumping garbage along roadways and in arroyos is still an issue. Many residents are unaware of the procedures for disposing of waste or the community impacts of illegal dumping. Many people from outside the community also dump their waste in the local arroyos and along roadways to avoid dump fees.

## Community Services Key Issues

- Overhead cables alter the rural aesthetics of the roads and vistas of the Planning Area.
- Utility easement access is often missing for existing homes, and no reasonable method exists to obtain easements over private property.
- The location of the solid waste transfer station on County Road 54 B generates additional traffic on narrow roads in the Planning Area. This creates safety and traffic problems. It would be beneficial to move this facility outside the Planning Area to a location more central to I-25 and the frontage road.
- The transfer station serves too broad of an area and results in a large amount of solid waste from outside of the Planning Area’s communities being brought into the community.
- There is illegal trash dumping on public and private property.
- The impacts of illegal dumping create problems such as public health, water contamination and aesthetic detriment to the rural community character.

## Community Services Goals:

**Goal 10:** Ensure adequate utility services that do not undermine the Planning Area’s rural character.

**Goal 11:** Ensure solid waste is appropriately disposed.

**Goal 12:** Ensure the availability of community facilities to serve the Planning Area’s diverse and growing population.

*See the strategies and actions on page 154.*





La Cienega Convenience Center. Photo by Joseph Scala.

## SECTION 2.9. Governance





Spring Fruit Tree Blossoms. Photo by Andrea La Cruz-Crawford



## State & Federal Representation

At the Federal-level, the Planning Area is represented by US Senator Martin Heinrich, US Senator Ben Ray Luján, and Representative Teresa Leger Fernández (Congressional District 3). At the State-level, the Planning Area is represented by Representative Christine Chandler (State House District 43) and Senator Liz Stefanics (State Senate District 39).

## County Commission

The Planning Area is represented by Commissioner Camilla Bustamante (County Commission District 3).

## Community Notification

As the recognized Community Organization (CO) for the La Cienega/La Cieneguilla Planning Area, the La Cienega Valley Association (LCVA) notifies the community of development proposals and advocates for capital projects in the Planning Area. Additionally, the following organizations are Registered Organizations (RO) with Areas of Interest covering all or parts of the Planning Area include:

- La Cieneguilla Land Grant
- Caja del Rio Majada Cooperative
- Hispano American Communities Heritage Alliance (HACHA)

## Amendments to the Plan

Any amendments to the Plan will be made in accordance with the SGMP and SLDC Section 2.1.

## Governance Goal:

**Goal 13:** Ensure implementation of the plan by Planning Area residents and other relevant stakeholders.

*See the strategies and actions on page 156.*





La Cienega Community Center. Photo by Google.

## SECTION III. IMPLEMENTATION





Sunset over Lower La Cienega. Photo by Carl Dickens



# Implementation

The Implementation Element is designed to provide a structured approach to executing the goals, strategies, and actions outlined in the plan. Implementation of these projects, programs, strategies, and actions will depend on future funding, feasibility, capacity, and priorities of Santa Fe County, LCVA, and other stakeholders.

First, the Long-Range Implementation Matrix, lists 15 community-identified programs and projects in order by priority, which goal they relate to, potential partners, an estimated time frame to complete the project/program, and the status at time of writing. While the programs and projects are listed by priority, the community and County are (and will be) working on multiple projects and programs simultaneously. At several Planning Committee meetings in spring 2025, community members agreed upon a general prioritization of projects and programs based on factors such as addressing key issues, needs of the Planning Area, and timing. The purpose of the Matrix is to guide the community and relevant stakeholders in prioritizing projects, securing funding, and ensuring the implementation of the communities' vision and goals over the next decade.

After the Matrix, the Goals, Strategies, & Actions sub-section (beginning on page 136) describes the goals, strategies, and actions for each plan element to ensure a cohesive and actionable implementation plan. The “goals” are the community visions for each topic-specific element. The “strategies” are the statements of intent, general direction, and broad policies to meet a specific goal. The “actions” are tangible steps, techniques, and programs taken by identified stakeholders to implement a specific goal. It is important to note that the programs and projects outlined in the Long-Range Implementation Matrix generally correspond to one or more actions in the Goals, Strategies, & Actions sub-section, but not every action is represented in the Matrix.

Finally, the Five-Year Priority Projects sub-section (beginning on page 157) lists La Cienega’s and La Cieneguilla’s short-term priority projects in Tables 9 and 10 respectively. These projects are based on the Long-Range Implementation Matrix and conversations in January 2026 with the La Cienega Valley Association, La Cieneguilla Land Grant, and subject matter experts. By prioritizing five specific projects for each community, this approach ensures that limited public funds are invested strategically and transparently. These projects are the communities' highest priorities and are ready for inclusion in various County and State funding sources such as the ICIP or capital outlay.



# Long-Range Implementation Matrix

| <b>Priority</b> | <b>Program/Project</b>                                                                                                                                     | <b>Related Element + Goal</b>  | <b>Potential Partners</b>                                                                                              | <b>Time Frame</b> | <b>2025 Status</b>                                                                        |
|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.              | Extension of Santa Fe County Water Lines in Upper La Cienega and La Cieneguilla                                                                            | Water, Goal 8 (p. 148)         | LCVA, County, NMED, Federal Government                                                                                 | 10+ years         | Long-term vision.                                                                         |
| 2               | Remediation planning and engineering for PFAS and other emerging contaminants                                                                              | Water, Goal 9 (p. 151)         | LCVA, County, City, NMED, Federal Government                                                                           | 2-10 years        | In-progress study, but monitoring will be needed going into the future.                   |
| 3               | Fuel Mitigation & Fire/Flood Response Program                                                                                                              | Public Safety, Goal 5 (p. 142) | County Fire, LCVA, Acequia Associations, BLM, USFS                                                                     | 2-5 years         | New                                                                                       |
| 4               | New Joint City/County Wastewater Treatment Plant                                                                                                           | Water, Goal 9 (p. 151)         | LCVA, County, City, NMED, Federal Government                                                                           | 10+ years         | Long-term vision of the community.                                                        |
| 5               | Emphasize the TDR Program and consider developing, SLDC standards in the Overlay to preserve and expand contiguous agricultural lands and acequia systems. | Ag & Ranching, Goal 3 (p. 137) | Acequia Associations, Property Owners, LCVA, County                                                                    | 1-3 years         | While the TDR program is active, more support for preservation and expansion can be done. |
| 6               | Analyze supplemental water to use for irrigation                                                                                                           | Ag & Ranching, Goal 3 (p. 137) | Acequia Associations, State Penitentiary, National Guard, SF Wastewater, Treatment Plan, Property Owners, LCVA, County | 1-2 years         | New                                                                                       |

| <b><u>Priority</u></b> | <b><u>Program/Project</u></b>                                                                        | <b><u>Related Goal</u></b>           | <b><u>Potential Partners</u></b>                                                      | <b><u>Time Frame</u></b> | <b><u>2025 Status</u></b>                                                                                                                                      |
|------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 7                      | Drainage Master Planning and Engineering including Wastewater Feasibility Study and Engineering Plan | Water, Goal 9 (p. 151)               | County Public Works, NMED, EPA, USDA                                                  | 1-2 years                | This should be considered in conjunction with the Springs restoration planning that is currently in progress but may require additional study and engineering. |
| 8                      | Implement the Transportation Safety Study                                                            | Transportation, Goal 6 (p. 144)      | LCVA, County Public Works                                                             | 2-5 years                | The Study is expected to start in late 2025.                                                                                                                   |
| 9                      | La Bajada Ranch Conceptual Plan and Outreach                                                         | Open Space, Goal 4 (p. 139)          | County, LCVA                                                                          | 1-2 years                | Planning Staff are recommending                                                                                                                                |
| 10                     | Agricultural Lands Directory                                                                         | Ag & Ranching, Goal 3 (p. 137)       | Acequia Associations, LCVA, County, USDA Farm & Ranch                                 | 2-5 years                | Staff are actively working on this as a part of the 2025-26 SGMP Update.                                                                                       |
| 11                     | Conduct a needs assessment for a Multipurpose, Multigenerational Community Center                    | Community Services, Goal 12 (p. 155) | LCVA, County, State Land Office                                                       | 2-5 years                | New                                                                                                                                                            |
| 12                     | La Cienega Community Library Expansion                                                               | Community Services, Goal 12 (p. 155) | LCVA, Santa Fe County Public Works, Santa Fe Public Library, Las Golondrinas, and UNM | 5-7 years                | Reopening of the Community Library is happening fall 2025.                                                                                                     |



| <b>Priority</b> | <b>Program/Project</b>                                                           | <b>Related Goal</b>         | <b>Potential Partners</b>                                                                                                                                                          | <b>Time Frame</b> | <b>2025 Status</b>                                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 13              | Develop accurate population estimates for the Planning Area                      | Land Use, Goal 1 (p. 136)   | Acequia Associations, LCVA, County Planning, NM OSE                                                                                                                                | 1 year            | As a key aspect of our upcoming SGMP update, Planning staff will develop these estimates for the entire County.                                                          |
| 14              | Creation of Public Park and multi-use trail system throughout the Planning Area. | Open Space, Goal 4 (p. 139) | LCVA, Santa Fe County Open Space, HIPICO                                                                                                                                           | 5 years           | Will require community partnerships to create a full-scale trail system. Could tie in with the Santa Fe River trail system and lower Santa Fe River management planning. |
| 15              | Springs Restoration Study and Engineering Plan                                   | Water, Goal 8 (p. 148)      | Acequia Associations, Mutual Domestic Association, Santa Fe County Planning, Santa Fe County Public Utilities, Owners of Private Irrigation Ditches, Las Golondrinas, Ojo Santa Fe | 1-2 years         | In progress featuring monthly stakeholder meetings.                                                                                                                      |

# Goals, Strategies, & Actions

This section is organized by Element in order that each Element is in this plan. It is important to note that 13 Goals are ordered by element - not priority.

Elements by Order:

1. Land Use (p. 136)
2. Economic Development (p. 137)
3. Agriculture & Ranching (p. 137)
4. Open Space & Resource Conservation (p. 139)
5. Public Safety (p. 142)
6. Transportation (p. 144)
7. Water (p. 148)
8. Community Services (p. 154)
9. Governance (p. 156)

## Land Use

**Goal 1: Protect the Planning Area's rural character and natural and historic resources, while ensuring land use regulations are not burdensome for residents.**

Strategy 1.1: Modify the existing zoning and land use regulations as needed for the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla planning area based on the communities' needs, culture, and resources by amending the Community District Overlay.

Action 1.1.1: The La Cienega/La Cieneguilla Planning Committee will work with County Planning staff to develop appropriate amendments for SLDC Section 9.8: La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community District Overlay, including: amending the height standards; amending the dwelling density to place limitations on the number of units; amending the setback standards to reduce the number of variance requests; creating appropriate regulations for commercial cannabis uses; removal of the TDR Overlay District (SLDC 9.8.5); and developing appropriate road design standards.



# Economic Development

**Goal 2: Enhance economic development that is respectful of historic traditions and natural resources.**

Strategy 2.1: The County should collaborate with local, state, and federal government agencies to improve internet access for local residents and to promote the use and installation of underground fiberoptic throughout the Planning Area.

Action 2.1.1: LCVA and community members should work with County Planning to coordinate internet expansion through County Economic Development and the New Mexico Office of Broadband Access and Expansion.

Strategy 2.2: The Planning Area's landscapes and historic ranches are an ideal setting for film shooting locations.

Action 2.2.1: Community members should work with the Santa Fe Film Office to bring shoots into the community while ensuring that the occasional shoot commits to leave no trace principles and minimize traffic impacts.

# Agriculture & Ranching

**Goal 3: Support, maintain, and expand agriculture in the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area.**

Strategy 3.1: Maintain existing agricultural uses of land and protect agricultural water rights by minimizing conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses.

Action 3.1.1: County Planning staff will work with farmers and the Office of the State Engineer to create an inventory of agricultural lands in the Planning Area.

Action 3.1.2: The County will work with LCVA to adopt an ordinance limiting the ability of individual property owners to separate land from agricultural water rights in areas that serve historic agriculture through use of acequias and private ditches. In New Mexico, if an acequia (or community ditch) has adopted a bylaw giving itself authority over water transfers, any proposed transfer into or out of the acequia must first go through the acequia commission for approval or denial, as required by state law. There are three community ditches or acequias – Acequia de la Cienega, El Guicu Ditch and Acequia de la Capilla. The Acequias bylaws give their commissions the right to refuse the request to transfer water rights off of the acequia where such a transfer will be detrimental to the members of the acequia.

Action 3.1.3: The LCVA and the County will work together to form a representative committee of stakeholders to develop a community managed agricultural land protection program using methods such as, but not limited to, land trusts, conservation easements, and transfer of development rights.

Action 3.1.4: The County will assist residents through investigating various funding mechanisms to support agricultural land protection and management programs through mechanisms including, but not limited to, improvement districts, development impact fees, grants, and legislative appropriations.

Action 3.1.5: The County will support the use of federally managed and state managed land, for grazing, as it is a community tradition and directly tied to sustaining economically viable agricultural enterprises in the Planning Area.

Action 3.1.6: County Planning staff and LCVA will encourage property owners to create permanent agricultural conservation easements and support the preservation of agricultural lands in the Planning Areas via the County's Transfer of Development Rights program and/or land trusts.

### Strategy 3.2: Support farmers and ranchers.

Action 3.2.1: The County with assistance from LCVA will help to educate residents in the Planning Areas about County Assessor programs which alleviate property tax burdens for small-scale ranching and farming operations.

Action 3.2.2: LCVA, with assistance of the County and relevant State agencies or non-profits, and in coordination with the three acequias, should investigate the feasibility of recharging area springs in order to support traditional agricultural uses of water resources in the Planning Area.

Action 3.2.3: LCVA, with assistance of the County and relevant State agencies or non-profits, should develop an agricultural support program to help revitalize traditionally irrigated lands and agricultural activities such as small-scale farming and ranching in the Planning Area. This may include educational outreach, skills training, and marketing assistance to support economically and environmentally viable farming practices for community members in the Planning Area. The program may also include educational outreach for appropriate scale gardening and landscaping in newer subdivision areas.



# Open Space & Resource Conservation

## **Goal 4: Ensure that parks, open spaces and trails in the community reflect and support community values.**

### Strategy 4.1: Ensure that planned uses on public lands do not inappropriately impact the Planning Area.

Action 4.1.1: The County Planning Division, working in coordination with the LCVA and relevant public agencies, will maintain an accurate inventory of all public land uses and leases in and surrounding the Planning Area. This will include development of a reporting procedure whereby all parties can be informed as to current and planned uses of these public lands.

Action 4.1.2: The County Open Space, Trail and Parks program and the Planning Division will work with local residents to develop a public education program to help clearly identify boundaries between public and private properties in order to respect and protect private property from non-permitted public use.

Action 4.1.3: The County working in coordination with LCVA will form a representative committee of stakeholders to develop a community open space protection program.

### Strategy 4.2: Maintain open space and limit new growth to development that is cognizant of existing land use and preserves historic viewsheds and community traditions.

Action 4.2.1: The County Planning Division will coordinate with local residents and non-profits to develop voluntary open space protection programs including but not limited to: land conservation programs, Transfer of Development Rights, conservation easements, creating purchase of development rights programs to send development rights to other areas and community-based land trusts.

### Strategy 4.3: Plan for appropriate pedestrian and equestrian access aligned with exiting road networks that provide connections to community facilities and regional trails.

Action 4.3.1: LCVA and the Planning Division will work together to identify pedestrian connections in conjunction with planning and creation of new community facilities.

Action 4.3.2: LCVA and the Planning Division will identify roads in the Planning Area with appropriate right-of-way that can accommodate a future trail network to avoid trail linkages across private property or in arroyos.

Action 4.3.3: The Planning Division will work with private land owners, the BLM and the State Land Office to develop voluntary use agreements, easements, or other arrangements for public use of trails. This will include working with all parties to help identify trailhead locations for existing trails.

Action 4.3.4: Prior to sale or transfer of County open space the County will first approach the community and inform LCVA of any intent to sell or transfer. The County recognizes that the sale or transfer of lands in the Planning Areas designated as open space is inherently bad for the well-being of the community. The County shall not sell or transfer open spaces without providing public notice through publication in a newspaper of general circulation for three weeks prior to holding a public hearing, which shall include an opportunity for public comment before the County Commission. When possible, the community will negotiate a voluntary first right of refusal on sales or transfers in order that the lands may be purchased for protection and inclusion in community open spaces. The community may also create programs or entities to pursue funding to purchase the lands and maintain the lands, for common community use.

Action 4.3.5: The Planning Division will develop an accurate inventory of wildlife habitat areas in the Planning Area and in coordination with LCVA, will develop a management and protection program with direct participation from local residents, property owners and business owners.

Action 4.3.6: The Planning Division in coordination with residents, LCVA, Las Golondrinas and other entities in the Planning Area will identify and create a management program consistent with existing county and state regulations to preserve historical and archaeological areas within the Planning Area including but not limited to petroglyphs, Pueblo ruins, and other cultural sites.

Action 4.3.7: The Planning Division will develop a community-based stewardship and management program for public lands in and adjacent to the Planning Area, which should include local residents. The management program will create environmentally and culturally sensitive programs to maintain traditional activities such as common open space areas, horseback trails, agriculture, and grazing. Examples of public properties in the Planning Area include the Rael Ranch (owned by BLM) and the La Bajada Ranch (owned by the County).

#### Strategy 4.4: Plan for small parks to serve the communities of La Cienega and La Cieneguilla.

Action 4.4.1: Work with local non-profits, residents, developers, and businesses to create management programs to support the creation of parks through out the communities.





Alonzo Gallegos overlooking Tres Rios Ranch, Photo by Joseph Scala



# Public Safety

## **Goal 5: Create a fire protection network for the entire community.**

### Strategy 5.1. Increase capacity to respond to fire events.

Action 5.1.1: The community will coordinate with County Utilities, County Fire, and the mutual domestic water association to investigate means to increase water pressure in existing fire hydrants. This may include but is not limited to connecting existing hydrants to the County water system and/or other available water systems at the earliest possible date.

Action 5.1.2: County Utilities and County Fire in coordination with LCVA and LCMDWA will identify additional public and/or private water sources and to develop use agreements in order to meet emergency service needs in the Planning Area.

Action 5.1.3: County Fire, and County Utilities in coordination with LCVA and LCMDWA will develop an implementation and funding plan in order to expand the number and location of accessible fire hydrants throughout the Planning Area. This may include, but is not limited to, construction of water storage facilities for emergency use in the Planning Area. Improvements must be designed to maintain the rural character of the community.

Action 5.1.4: County Fire, and County Utilities in coordination with LCVA and LCMDWA will assess the capacity and working order of existing fire hydrants and develop a repair and or replacement program for hydrants which are not in proper working order.

Action 5.1.5: County Fire, and County Utilities in coordination with LCVA and LCMDWA will assess fire access conditions in the planning area and develop a community education program to ensure proper access conditions on roads, driveways and gated drives and roads within the Planning Area.

Action 5.1.6: County Fire in coordination with Acequia de la Cienega, El Guicu Ditch and Acequia de la Capilla and LCVA will plan for coordinated permitting and burning of agricultural fields, including working with the local Acequia Associations to coordinate burns and provide support to fire personnel.

Action 5.1.7: County Fire in coordination with the Pueblo of Pojoaque and LCVA will assist to help ensure that fire protection is available for addressing the spontaneous burning of manure piles and ensure that similar stockpiling of manure does not occur in the future.



### Strategy 5.2. Require an access management plan for all new roadways in the Planning Area.

Action 5.2.1: Santa Fe County Land Use and County Fire will ensure that developments and subdivisions in the Planning Area meet all commitments to create adequate fire protection services by coordinating fire protection efforts and planning with LCVA. These commitments should be fully developed and in proper working order to service new residences and subdivisions.

### Strategy 5.3. Increase volunteer fire fighter recruitment from within the Planning Area.

Action 5.3.1: County Fire will develop an educational campaign to increase awareness in the Planning Area of the need for volunteers and options for volunteering. (Coordinate with County efforts per SGMP Policy 29.3 and Strategy 29.3.1). LCVA will assist with providing information about these programs to residents.

Action 5.3.2: County Fire will work with LCVA and other community groups and non-profits to increase fire protection awareness in the Planning Area. This will include an educational campaign to inform residents of current County Code requirements as well as practical measures that residents can implement to improve fire protection. LCVA will assist with providing information about these programs to residents.



County Fire Department La Cienega Station 2, Photo by Google

# Transportation

## **Goal 6: Develop a transportation system that provides for community mobility and safety.**

### Strategy 6.1: Ensure existing transportation infrastructure is properly maintained.

Action 6.1.1: County Planning, in coordination with the community, will develop educational materials to inform Planning Area residents of the County's notification procedures for road maintenance needs and requests.

Action 6.1.2: The County's Transportation Advisory Committee and the County Planning Division will coordinate with community representatives including the LCVA to develop a community priority list of road improvements and funding priorities.

### Strategy 6.2: Ensure that future transportation improvements maintain and preserve the Planning Area's rural character.

Action 6.2.1: County Planning, in coordination with the community and County Public Works, will design road safety features, in consultation with the community and LCVA, including but not limited to, lighting and signage that are designed to maintain the rural character of the community.

Action 6.2.2: County Planning, in coordination with the community and County Public Works, will work to ensure that all construction, widening and/or upgrading of public roads into the Planning Area shall be planned and designed through consultation with a representative community body including the LCVA. Design standards shall meet all legal requirements while also maintaining the rural character of the Planning Area.

### Strategy 6.3: Enhance the transportation network's safety.

Action 6.3.1: The County Planning, in consultation with the community and LCVA will identify areas with speeding problems and develop a periodic monitoring schedule with the County Sheriff's Department to enforce speed limits within the Planning Area.

Action 6.3.2: County Planning, in coordination with the community, will study the feasibility of implementing traffic calming measures, such as speed bumps and median and road-edge rumble strips, on roads with consistent speeding problems and develop strategies to reduce speeding and other unsafe road conditions



Action 6.3.3: The County's Road Safety Study will inform County Planning of high traffic areas in the Planning Area. The County may ask LCVA to assist in coordinating with establishments in the Planning Area that generate high traffic volumes in order to develop either alternative traffic routes and/or event planning to minimize impacts from high traffic.

Action 6.3.4: County Planning, in coordination with the community, will study the feasibility of implementing guardrails on dangerous and sharp curves in the Planning Area and install roadway improvements that will minimize hazards.

Action 6.3.5: County Planning, in coordination with County Public Works, and the community, will work with the NMDOT to create screening which will clearly separate headlights on the interstate from headlights on the Frontage Road. This will specifically address the intersection of Las Estrellas Road and the Interstate 25 Frontage Road; the intersection of Los Pinos Road and Interstate 25 Frontage Road; and other intersections on along west Frontage Road.

Action 6.3.6: The Planning Division will work with County Public Works to install signage in designated areas to alert drivers about cattle, equestrian use, wildlife crossings, pedestrians, and cyclists.

Action 6.3.7: The Planning Division will coordinate with County Public Works and NMDOT to study the feasibility of wildlife crossings under or over Interstate 25.

#### Strategy 6.4: Support the use of alternative transportation modes.

Action 6.4.1: County Planning, in coordination with the community, will study the feasibility of providing transportation services to low mobility residents through existing public, non-profit and private transportation services and educate the community about services that are available.

Action 6.4.2: County Planning, in coordination with the community, will study the feasibility of developing alternative transportation services including options such as ride-sharing and park and ride.

Action 6.4.3: County Planning and County Open Space, in coordination with LCVA, will identify grants and other funding sources to develop better walking trails and pedestrian access along roadways.

Action 6.4.4: County Planning and County Open Space, in coordination with LCVA and the Pueblo of Pojoaque, will study the feasibility of developing a multi-use trail along Los Pinos Rd.

## **Goal 7: Minimize the Santa Fe Regional Airport's external impacts on the Planning Area.**

Strategy 7.1: Encourage the Santa Fe Regional Airport and National Guard to create policies to reduce community impacts by working to create a community engagement plan and regular community input process.

Action 7.1.1: Take steps to minimize the impacts of airport operations on surrounding communities where possible by working with the City of Santa Fe, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and any other relevant agency or group on issues including but are not limited to development of flight patterns that minimize the need to cross populated areas, timing of flights, placement of navigational beacons and noise abatement.

Action 7.1.2: LCVA, in collaboration with the County, will advocate for a permanent seat on the City of Santa Fe's Airport Advisory Board in order to communicate the goals and aspirations of the community which are:

- Noise Mitigation and Abatement Program at the airport.
- Limit expansion of new carriers, daily flights by commercial aircraft and nonemergency operations.
- Explore options and constraints of locating an airport facility away from heavily populated areas in the County. This program action is intended as an investigative measure and does not imply any type of commitments by any party for siting of future facilities.
- Investigate options and means for developing a scheduling process to limit regular flights to daytime hours and decrease or eliminate regularly scheduled flights after 8:00 p.m.
- Work with the National Guard to reduce the impact of flights over populated areas, riparian areas and undeveloped private property in the Planning Area through higher flight patterns, noise abatement efforts, and other means.
- Encourage the airport management to educate pilots and other airport personnel about the importance of noise abatement procedures, respect for wildlife, common courtesy toward local residents, and the locations of private property in the airport vicinity.





Red Wing Blackbird at La Cienega Marsh, Photo by Carl Dickens

# Water

## **Goal 8: Ensure a sustainable, fresh water supply for the community.**

Strategy 8.1: La Cienega and La Cienguilla should develop alternative water sources to serve portions of the Planning Area, should work to preserve existing water supplies through conservation efforts and engage in strategic negotiation of methods to mitigate the impacts to area springs and aquifers from water users outside the Planning Area.

Action 8.1.1: County Public Utilities should work with LCVA to ensure that commercial and institutional entities with on-site wells in or adjacent to the Planning Area connect to the County water system at the earliest possible date. When possible, existing on-site wells should be retired or dedicated for emergency uses only, such as fire protection or in the event that the County water system should fail.

Action 8.1.2: County Growth Management, in coordination with County Utilities, will ensure that all new residential development shall limit water consumption to 0.25 acre feet or less of water per year for domestic consumption per household for all indoor and outdoor water use.

Action 8.1.3: The County will create a staffed department of water conservation to investigate and educate county residents of alternative sources of water to use for outdoor irrigation of non-agricultural lands without pre-1907 water rights. Sources might include water harvesting and/or other reuse initiatives such as treated effluent from the City of Santa Fe's wastewater treatment plant, the State penitentiary and/or National Guard facility to serve commercial, institutional and residential developments in or near the Community Planning Area.

Action 8.1.4: County Planning should work with local residents and LCVA to develop water conservation and protection initiatives at all commercial facilities within and adjacent to the Community Planning Area.

Action 8.1.5: County Planning should work with LCVA to adopt an ordinance to ensure that water users and all new utility, institutional, residential, and commercial developments in the La Cienega and Santa Fe River watersheds will incorporate a reasoned approach in the development of water sources. These policies will be based upon the best available data and should be considered as necessary aspects of all development approvals in the Planning Area and in the La Cienega and Santa Fe River watersheds.

Strategy 8.2: The La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area shall retain water rights which currently exist in the community within the community.

Action 8.2.1: County Planning and County Utilities, will inventory water rights in the Planning Area, and if possible, develop a voluntary notification process for water right transfers in the Planning Area and create a program to provide a preferential right of purchase for these water rights to members of the communities in order that they may continue to serve as a community resource.



Action 8.2.2: The County will develop materials and LCVA will coordinate with the acequia associations, the La Cienega Mutual Domestic Water Association, residents, business owners and property owners to distribute such materials which promote the expansion of water conservation initiatives within the community by providing educational materials and practical examples of water conservation techniques that can be employed in the Planning Area.

Action 8.2.3: The County, in consultation with the New Mexico Acequia Association, will coordinate with the Planning Area's acequia associations to ensure they apply for acequia-specific state funding.

### Strategy 8.3: Expedite the implementation of the La Cienega watershed conditions.

Action 8.3.1: The County Utility Department will implement watershed conditions fully by seeking the prioritization of the extension of Santa Fe County water lines to serve existing and future residential and commercial uses in La Cieneguilla and portions of Upper La Cienega. The County will prioritize existing water users over new development depending on capacity and funding.

### Strategy 8.4 Require documentation of conservation measures.

Action 8.4.1: Limit the maximum possible existing residential water use to 0.25 acre feet of water per dwelling unit per year. Any use above 0.25 acre feet per year must be applied for with a water budget and proof of 100 year water supply as per the existing County Sustainable Land Development Code. The application must also demonstrate conservation of water through recycling, reduced use, rainwater (and other) collection and other means equal to stringent sustainable land use principles. This water consumption requirement applies only to use of water for domestic purposes from domestic wells as defined by the state and does not apply to any other water rights (irrigation or private.)

Action 8.4.2: Verify that all new wells and buildings using ground water drawn from wells located within the Planning Area as a partial or total water supply have installed a water meter on their wells. All new development using shared wells or community water systems shall install a water meter on every dwelling unit or primary structure/intake that uses the well water.

Action 8.4.3: Enforce current regulations requiring the monitoring and reporting of water usage. All users shall record water meter readings on a monthly basis and submit an annual report of monthly readings to the County Hydrologist and, if established, to the community's water management authority. The community will coordinate with the County Hydrologist to develop a water meter auditing program to ensure compliance with water restriction covenants. If a user is over consuming, the County will work with the individual to

- 1) develop a water budget and conservation plan including efforts to replace any amount over consumed and,
- 2) develop a fine for repeated instances of over consumption.

## Strategy 8.5: Promote and enforce water conservation and best management practices.

Action 8.5.1: The LCLCPC and County Planning will develop Overlay amendments so that all new development shall incorporate water conservation and best management practices which are compliant with state and county regulations as well as current sustainability practices. This may include reuse of gray water, storm water recharge and rainwater collection systems such as, cisterns, gravel beds or other storage systems for which regulations have been enacted. These practices may include:

- Water collection to the extent practical and affordable (and not required to exceed 1% of total construction costs) shall be used for landscape irrigation and/or other domestic uses in order to replace use of potable water supplies.
- Xeriscaping and/or native plants will be encouraged for landscaping on all new landscaping. The area of landscaping to be irrigated will be based on County Hydrologist approved water budget estimates of rainwater collection and storage capacity per the individual development. This will not apply to agricultural uses of water.
- The building of swimming pools is discouraged in the Community Planning Area. Any new pool must meet County SLDC, County water conservation guidelines, satisfy water availability requirements, and include a covering when not in use to minimize evaporation.

## Strategy 8.6: Regulate all new development of riparian areas and/or wetlands

Action 8.6.1: Prior to development of new riparian areas and wetlands in the Planning Area, applicants shall demonstrate adequate water rights and/or source(s) of water to meet consumptive needs of the riparian area or wetlands, and demonstrate that the project will not negatively impact prior beneficial uses or traditional uses of water resources, in accordance with State Engineer's Office regulations.

Action 8.6.2: LCVA will advocate for policies including OSE guidelines for determining the consumptive needs of the riparian area or wetlands, which shall use the U.S. Soil Conservation Service Modified Blaney-Criddle Method, long-term weather data for the period from 1867 onward and consumptive-use coefficients developed by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation for riparian vegetation in the Middle Rio Grande Valley. The Consumptive Irrigation Requirement (CIR), an annual measure of water uptake by vegetation, exclusive of precipitation, shall be calculated for all proposed types of vegetation to be incorporated into the riparian area or wetlands.

Action 8.6.3: County Growth Management will ensure that all development of new projects in riparian areas and wetlands shall also comply with all County Code requirements including, without limitation, terrain management. Projects may also be subject to monitoring, which will be designed on a case-by-case basis, to ensure that the water rights associated with the project are not exceeded. The County shall inform LCVA of all riparian development projects in the Planning Area and such projects shall also be brought to the attention of the community by holding regular public meetings (at least four meetings) within the community to obtain feedback on the project and address any possible negative impacts associated with the project.



**Goal 9: Protect the quality of surface and ground water.****Strategy 9.1: Monitor existing on-site treatment wastewater systems to prevent contamination.**

Action 9.1.1: County Utilities will undertake and fund a feasibility study for different scales and approaches to wastewater management in the Planning Area including sanitation districts, satellite systems and regional wastewater treatment facilities. County utilities shall explore the possibility of establishing local financing mechanisms, such as an assessment district, to create a water and/or sanitation district or multiple different systems to serve the Planning Area. Any county managed wastewater treatment system created in the Planning Area shall be required to reuse effluent to serve the needs of the residents in the Planning Area and to supplement the Planning Areas water supply and shall not be exported outside of the Planning Area.

Action 9.1.2: County Utilities will develop a program that will assist homeowners with septic system compliance. Such a program should include education, outreach and funding mechanisms to help homeowners ensure existing and new septic systems meet applicable standards. Non-conforming septic systems are required to conform to existing requirements for septic systems if any component of the septic system is replaced according to the New Mexico Environmental Department (NMED) regulations.

Action 9.1.3: The LCLCPC and County Planning will develop Overlay amendment guidelines to assist in ensuring all new developments install wastewater treatments systems which are designed to treat effluent or wastewater to EPA and NMED standards. (The state requires systems to meet EPA and NMED standards and in order to get a County development permit an applicant must have a state approved permit). This will include working with the Drinking Water Bureau of the Environment Department to disseminate information regarding how individuals can test their own water, all relevant County and State regulations regarding well drilling and maintenance, as well as scheduling periodic water fairs in the Planning Area.

Action 9.1.4: County Land Use will work with the NMED to develop voluntary noticing procedures whereby when new wells or septic systems are installed within the Planning Area, the land owner will provide a map of all wells, septic systems, open water courses, springs, arroyos and acequias on or adjacent to the property. New septic systems shall not be permitted within or directly adjacent to water courses, springs, arroyos or acequias. The intent of this is to prevent accidental placement of wells or septic systems which might have potential impacts to water resources and drainage on adjoining properties.

Action 9.1.5: LCVA will advocate that the County develop a septic tank monitoring program. Such a program will require that individual septic tank sludge levels be measured every 2 years and pumped if called for by NMED standards. A biennial report examining septic tank conditions and problems in the Planning Area will be compiled and distributed to interested community organizations. This policy is intended to help homeowners ensure that septic systems will not fail, to avoid large costs of repairing failed systems, and protect surrounding water resources from potential contamination.

## Strategy 9.2: Minimize ground water impacts associated with polluting land uses.

Action 9.2.1: The LCLCPC and County Land Use will develop Overlay amendments to require existing commercial and institutional entities which produce animal or chemical wastes that have the potential to contaminate ground water which are located adjacent to or in the Planning Area to properly contain and dispose of all wastes either brought onto the property or generated through the entity's operations.

## Strategy 9.3: Reduce erosion and pollution from storm water runoff.

Action 9.3.1: County Land Use will coordinate with LCVA to control runoff through use of retention ponds, water harvesting, and/or other techniques while also allowing for aquifer recharge.

Action 9.3.2: County Sustainability and County Planning will coordinate with LCVA to review all roadways and future roadway projects that affect run-off in the La Cienega and Santa Fe River watersheds and Planning Area such as the Arroyo de Los Chamisos, Arroyo Calabasas, Arroyo Hondo and the Santa Fe River to minimize instances of flooding in the Planning Area and reduce the instances and hazards associated with flash flooding.

Action 9.3.3: LCVA will work with the County to apply for funds to conduct a drainage study in the Planning Area to develop engineered solutions and recommendations on ways to address flooding off of roadways and during storms.

## Strategy 9.4: Enhance water quality and quantity in the Santa Fe River.

Action 9.4.1: LCVA will seek to develop cooperative agreements to allow for joint information sharing and dissemination program that allows for periodic review of the City's Wastewater treatment facility operations and reports. This will be designed to allow for greater communication and cooperation between the City, the County, NMED and County residents regarding facility operations' impacts on the community at large and the communities of the Planning Area. Issues of concern to the community include but are not limited to facility design and potential for spills, reliable supplies for power generation and emergency back-ups, sludge treatment and storage capacity, and sludge field injection practices and potentials for water contamination. The goal of this action is to get the above parties to investigate means to formalize such a cooperative program through development of cooperative agreements between the various parties and agencies.

Action 9.4.2: County Planning, in collaboration with County Utilities, will encourage the City of Santa Fe to monitor that quantity and quality of effluent flows from the City's wastewater treatment plant are sufficient, based on the best available data, to meet the needs of downstream water users and in recognizing priority water rights of downstream users, once established.



Action 9.4.3: LCVA will coordinate with entities such as the Santa Fe Watershed Association to develop a study of best management practices to ensure quality of water, wildlife habitat and beneficial use of water resources along the Santa Fe River in the Planning Area.



Grapes growing from irrigated water from Acequia de la Capilla and Eggs from home chickens. Photos by Andrea La Cruz-Crawford

# Community Services

## **Goal 10: Ensure adequate utility services that do not undermine the Planning Area's rural character.**

Strategy 10.1: Ensure that the planning and installation of future utility services reflect community preferences.

Action 10.1.1: County Planning, in coordination with the community, will develop design and installation standards for all new or replacement utility services in the Planning Area. All improvements must be designed to maintain the rural character of the community. This will include a public process for input from residents, business owners and property owners.

Action 10.1.2: The County should require all new and replacement utility services within the Planning Area to be installed underground or, if this is not possible, installed in such a manner so as to mitigate the aesthetic impact on the rural character of the community and surrounding natural environment.

Action 10.1.3: The County will coordinate with PNM and the PRC to develop solutions to address the frequent electricity outages in Lower La Cienega, including residents ability to add residential solar to their property.

## **Goal 11: Ensure solid waste is appropriately disposed.**

Strategy 11.1: Prevent illegal dumping.

Action 11.1.1: County Public Works, in coordination with LCVA, will study how well existing solid waste management practices are serving the Planning Area. This may include investigating the possibilities for additional sites for solid waste transfer, particularly for areas on the eastern side of I-25 and communities north of the Planning Area, as well as means to finance a new station.

Action 11.1.2: County Public Works, in coordination with LCVA, will study the possibility of opening the solid waste facility seven days per week in order to better meet the demand for waste disposal from the entire area served by the transfer station and to eliminate illegal dumping at times when the facility is not open.

Action 11.1.3: County Code Enforcement, in coordination with LCVA, will develop more effective enforcement of illegal dumping fines and develop regular community wide sweeps to discourage illegal dumping.



Action 11.1.4: County Code Enforcement, County Public Works, and County Planning in coordination with LCVA, will develop new signage to educate people regarding illegal dumping and to deter the practice in the Planning Area. Signage should also educate people about disposal of hazardous household items that can enter water resources.

### Strategy 11.2: Reduce trash in the Planning Area.

Action 11.2.1: LCVA will initiate an annual community program “Clean-up.” This will include developing a representative community committee to coordinate local waste management activities and projects. This may also include working with the County to expand an Adopt a Road program and to create affordable incentives for community participation in annual clean-ups.

## **Goal 12: Ensure the availability of community facilities to serve the Planning Area’s diverse and growing population.**

### Strategy 12.1: Establish new community facilities in appropriate locations in the Planning Area.

Action 12.1.1: LCVA and the County will continue to investigate means, including funding for development, operations and maintenance costs, to establish community facilities in the Planning Area and to improve upon existing facilities. For example, the La Cienega Community Center needs updates to its electrical systems to make the space more useful. Other facilities may include but are not limited to a park, development of trails for walking and biking, a local history center, recreational facilities for sports, expansion for the community library, a senior center, youth center, a cooperative grocery, a historic entry feature at each of the four entrances to the community and a multipurpose community meeting center. LCVA and the County will coordinate efforts to apply County resources to local facilities as described in SGMP Chapter 12.

Action 12.1.2: The County and LCVA will investigate options including but not limited to linking public facilities with acquisition and management of County Open Space properties and /or other lands held by public agencies within the Planning Area. Coordinate efforts to apply County resources to local facilities as described in SGMP Chapter 6.

Action 12.1.3: The County and LCVA will investigate mechanisms available to include public recreational facilities in new development and or local funding mechanisms to support maintenance of community facilities and to coordinate efforts to apply County resources to local facilities as described in SGMP Chapters 6 and 12.

Action 12.1.4: County Planning Staff and the LCVA will ensure that all proposed community facilities shall be designed through consulting with a representative community body and shall include low water use design, energy efficient construction, passive solar features, and low-maintenance design.

## Strategy 12.2: Expand the scope of community services available in the Planning Area.

Action 12.2.1: LCVA with the assistance of County Planning and through application for funding from the county will develop one or more message boards, including digital marquees at each of the four entrances to the Planning Area and at the community center, for the Community Organization to use for announcements of development projects to facilitate greater public notification and review of proposed development in the Planning Area. Such board(s) should be placed in centrally located spot(s) within the Planning Area and be used by the Community Organization for public notification procedures as outlined in this Plan. A separate public message board or kiosk shall be included at the community center. LCVA shall coordinate efforts to apply County resources as described in SGMP Chapter 14.

Action 12.2.2: LCVA and the County have developed a commercial kitchen for community use at the La Cienega Community Center. If a new community center is created in the future the commercial kitchen should be moved to the new facility and the existing community center may be used for an expansion of the La Cienega Library.

Action 12.2.3: LCVA will seek additional resources from the County to develop a permanent funding source for community outreach, including announcement board signs, community website expansion and maintenance, community newsletters, and other informational programs.

# Governance

## Goal 13: Ensure implementation of the plan by Planning Area residents and other relevant stakeholders.

Strategy 13.1: The La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Committee (LCLCPC) should establish regular meetings to monitor and implement the plan.

Action 13.1.1: The LCLCPC should hold meetings at least once a year and meet as needed with County staff and other stakeholders to implement the plan.

Action 13.1.2: The LCLCPC and County Planning staff should consider minor updates to the plan every five years.



# Five-Year Priority Projects

This sub-section lists the five priority projects for La Cienega (Table 9) and the five priority projects for La Cieneguilla (Table 10). Similar to the Long-Range Implementation Matrix, these two tables' projects are ordered by priority and include information about project detail and background, the related goal, potential partners, and estimated cost. As stated in the introduction of the Implementation Element, the Five-Year Priority Projects are the highest priority projects for each community and are ready for inclusion in various County and State funding sources such as ICIP or capital outlay.

In addition to the projects prioritized below, other programs and projects identified in the Long-Range Implementation Matrix (Table 8) of the plan may be advanced for future consideration and funding as conditions, data, and community priorities evolve. These initiatives may be refined, phased, or implemented as opportunities arise and as funding, partnerships, and regulatory approvals become available. The Planning Committee will convene every 1-2 years to amend these lists as necessary.

**Table 9a. La Cienega's Five-Year Priority Projects**

| <b>Priority</b> | <b>Project</b>                                                                                                                                          | <b>Project<br/>Details &amp; Background</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <b>Related<br/>Goal</b>           | <b>Potential<br/>Partners</b>                                                                    | <b>Cost<br/>(estimated)</b> |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1               | Phase I. Conduct a PER for extending water and wastewater systems in the Planning Area.                                                                 | Upper La Cienega, Lower La Cienega, and La Cieneguilla need a <b>dependable, safe, code-compliant drinking water and wastewater system</b> that protects public health, improves fire protection, and withstands drought and emergencies. We are requesting funding to complete a full <b>design and engineering</b> —including system assessment, water quality and compliance evaluation, a Preliminary Engineering Report, and final construction-ready plan/specifications/cost estimates—so the community has a <b>shovel-ready, permit-ready</b> project package and can secure construction funding immediately. This effort will reduce contamination risk, outage and strengthen resilience, plus provide a sustainable foundation for long-term water service. | Water,<br>Goal 8 (p. 148)         | County Public Works, County Planning, NMED, LCVA, LCMDWA, La Cieneguilla Land Grant              | \$250,000                   |
| 2               | Phase I. Conduct a PER for flood and fire hazard mitigation and resilience projects with attention to emergency ingress and egress in Lower La Cienega. | We are requesting funding for <b>planning and engineering for both fire and flood mitigation</b> . This project will <b>plan and design a coordinated, science-based fire and flood mitigation response</b> for the planning area identified in the Santa Fe County La Cienega Plan. The goal is to deliver <b>construction-ready, fundable mitigation projects</b> that reduce litigation, risk, protect residents, and lowers long-term public costs. Areas of immediate concern (where there is only one route of ingress/egress) in Lower La Cienega include Camino Capilla Vieja and Paseo C de Baca.                                                                                                                                                               | Public Safety,<br>Goal 5 (p. 142) | County Fire, County Emergency Management, County Planning, LCVA, Acequia Associations, BLM, USFS | \$250,000                   |

**Table 9b. La Cienega's Five-Year Priority Projects**

| <b>Priority</b> | <b>Project</b>                                                                                                                     | <b>Project<br/>Details &amp; Background</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>Related<br/>Goal</b>           | <b>Potential<br/>Partners</b>                                                                     | <b>Cost<br/>(estimated)</b> |
|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 3               | Funding to purchase TDRs (Transfer of Development Rights) of an environmentally, culturally, and agriculturally significant ranch. | We are requesting funding that <b>purchases Transferable Development Rights</b> listed in the Santa Fe County La Cienega/La Cieneguilla Communities Plan for the <b>Tres Rios Ranch</b> (298 acres) that permanently and legally protects <b>acequia systems, irrigated agricultural land, and cultural and traditional significant areas</b> including adjacent County-owned land (i.e. La Bajada Ranch) and Federal lands (i.e. Caja del Rio). This investment represents a <b>fiscally responsible, culturally informed, and locally driven strategy</b> to manage and or stop growth while honoring the land and water systems that sustain our villages, communities and city. | Ag & Ranching,<br>Goal 3 (p. 137) | County, LCVA,<br>Property Owners,<br>Acequia<br>Associations                                      | \$6,000,000                 |
| 4               | Phase I. Conduct a conceptual plan for a park and multi-use trail system in the Planning Area.                                     | We are requesting funding to <b>plan, design, and construct a public park and integrated multi-use trail system</b> in the Planning Area that uses existing open space, public rights-of-way and trailheads, and public lands including Federal, State, and County lands (i.e. La Bajada Ranch). Based on <b>stakeholder input and public meetings</b> , this system will protect identified areas cultural, traditional and agricultural resources, and deliver meaningful public benefits to La Cienega and La Cieneguilla in a fiscally responsible manner.                                                                                                                      | Open Space,<br>Goal 4 (p. 139)    | County Open<br>Space, County<br>Public Works,<br>State Land Office,<br>BLM, USFS, LCVA,<br>HIPICO | \$200,000                   |
| 5               | Phase I. Conduct a PER to determine the scope and cost of recommended and prioritized transportation capital improvement projects. | Upon completion of the road safety study, Santa Fe County will have a <b>prioritized list of road improvement projects</b> in the Planning Area <b>based on documented public safety needs, emergency access, and vulnerability to flood and wildfire impacts</b> . The study will be used as a decision-making tool to identify the road segments <b>most in need of immediate funding and implementation</b> .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Transportation<br>Goal 6 (p. 144) | County Planning,<br>County Public<br>Works, LCVA,<br>NMDOT                                        | \$250,000                   |



Table 10. La Cieneguilla's Five-Year Priority Projects

| <u>Priority</u> | <u>Project</u>                                                                                                   | <u>Project<br/>Details &amp; Background</u>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <u>Related<br/>Goal</u>   | <u>Potential<br/>Partners</u>                                                       | <u>Cost<br/>(estimated)</u> |
|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1               | Phase I. A preliminary study to identify precise and strategic locations for monitoring wells.                   | Drill and install four monitoring wells with dual-screens to <b>address existing gaps</b> within La Cieneguilla Land Grant boundaries. In addition, resources need to be provided to <b>conduct appropriate and sustainable monitoring</b> of these wells to track the contamination, an effort that could continue for many years. The preliminary study will determine factors like <b>depth</b> which will impact the cost of the wells. | Water,<br>Goal 8 (p. 148) | County Public Works, County Planning, NMED, La Cieneguilla Land Grant               | \$250,000                   |
| 2               | Additional funding for public education about the ongoing contamination assessment investigation and mitigation. | Provide the public with a <b>current list of PFAS filters that are ANSI/NSF certified</b> and have been shown to be effective in <b>blocking PFAS</b> . A related <b>public education</b> component is an ongoing water quality (WQ) testing program, especially for those people living on top of the PFAS contamination.                                                                                                                  | Water,<br>Goal 8 (p. 148) | County Public Works, County Planning, NMED, LCVA, LCMDWA, La Cieneguilla Land Grant | \$100,000                   |
| 3               | A hydrogeochemical investigative study to determine the PFAS plume characterization.                             | The study should determine the location, depth, size, length, width, the migration of the plume, and its chemical <b>characterization of the PFAS plume</b> . The study should also be agreed upon <b>between governmental entities</b> and then communicated to community members through <b>public meetings</b> .                                                                                                                         | Water,<br>Goal 8 (p. 148) | County Public Works, County Planning, NMED, LCVA, LCMDWA, La Cieneguilla Land Grant | \$250,000                   |
| 4               | Funding to implement a community-wide "Emergent Contaminant Awareness Initiative Program"                        | The program should <b>increase educational awareness</b> about emergent containments in water that is culturally competent and culturally sensitive within the boundaries of the La Cieneguilla Land Grant. As a part of the program, <b>public meetings</b> should be held in the La Cieneguilla community.                                                                                                                                | Water,<br>Goal 8 (p. 148) | County Public Works, County Planning, NMED, LCVA, LCMDWA, La Cieneguilla Land Grant | \$200,000                   |
| 5               | A study to assess the impact on resale home values from observed drinking water contamination.                   | This assessment study should look at the County's tax records to chart the <b>anticipated devaluation</b> of property values due to properties' drinking water source being <b>contaminated by PFAS</b> and other contaminants.                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Water,<br>Goal 8 (p. 148) | County Public Works, County Planning, NMED, LCVA, LCMDWA, La Cieneguilla Land Grant | \$100,000                   |

# References

The purpose of this section is to list relevant plans, documents, and additional resources.

1. 2015 La Cienega & La Cieneguilla Plan Update (Resolution 2015-123)
2. 2001 La Cienega & La Cieneguilla Community Plan (Resolution 2001-117)
3. Caja del Rio: A 2020 Vision for the Future of Santa Fe, New Mexico Trails (Deirdre Monroe, 2020)
4. NM OSE Santa Fe River Hydrographic Survey maps ([https://www.ose.nm.gov/HydroSurvey/legal\\_ose\\_hydro\\_SantaFe\\_menu.php](https://www.ose.nm.gov/HydroSurvey/legal_ose_hydro_SantaFe_menu.php))

