



A collage of four images related to urban planning and architecture. The top-left image shows an aerial view of an 'Existing Commercial Node' and a 'Proposed Town Node' with the text 'Long Range Planning Conceptual Design'. The top-right image is a 3D architectural rendering of a 'Transit Oriented Development' with a 'Pedestrian Program', showing a central plaza with trees and walkways. The bottom-left image is a topographic map with color-coded zones. The bottom-right image is an aerial photograph of a rugged, hilly landscape. The text 'Placitas Area Plan' is overlaid in large, bold, black letters across the bottom half of the collage.





RESOLUTION NO. 4-16-09.8C
Sandoval County, New Mexico

ADOPTING THE PLACITAS AREA PLAN

WHEREAS, the purpose of the Placitas Area Plan is to develop a long-range land use plan that reflects the unique characteristics, constraints, and growth pressures of the community; and

WHEREAS, the Sandoval County Comprehensive Plan encourages that the County take into consideration the diverse and distinctive qualities of communities within the various regions of the County such as the Placitas Area; and

WHEREAS, due to the unique scenic, cultural, landscape, and environmental characteristics of the Placitas community, the Board of County Commissioners has recommended the development of a community-based plan; and

WHEREAS, the Placitas Area planning process began in July of 2008 with many community meetings and public hearings; and

WHEREAS, the Placitas Area Plan was developed as a community-based plan with involvement and input from Placitas community members.

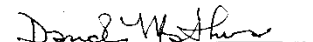
THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, BY THE SANDOVAL COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, that the Placitas Area Plan be adopted to guide Sandoval County policy as well as to develop land use regulations that protect the unique qualities of the Placitas Area.

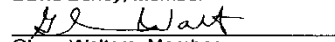
ADOPTED IN BERNALILLO, COUNTY OF SANDOVAL, NEW MEXICO, THIS 16th DAY of APRIL 2009.


Sally Padilla, County Clerk


Don E. Leonard, Chairman


Orta, Chairman
EXCUSED

Approved as to form:

David Mathews, County Attorney

David Bency, Member

Glenn Walters, Member

VOTED NO
Darryl Madalena, Member

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Placitas Area Plan

Board of County Commissioners

Orlando Lucero, County Commissioner,
District 1, Vice Chairman

Don Leonard, County Commissioner,
District 2, Chairman

David Bency, County Commissioner
District 3

Glenn Walters, County Commissioner
District 4

Darryl Madalena,
County Commissioner, District 5

Juan R. Vigil, County Manager

David Matthews, County Attorney

Planning and Zoning Commission

John Arango, Chairman

Todd Hathorne, Vice-Chair

Robert Cote, Member

Henry Street, Member

Pat Vester, Member

Ralph Martinez, Member

Mike Lucero, Member

County Development Staff

Michael Springfield, Development Director

Moises Gonzales, Long Range Planner and
Placitas Project Planner

Guy Bralley, Water Resource Administrator

Brad Stebleton, Planner III





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Introduction

The purpose of the Placitas Community Area Plan is to develop a long range land use plan that reflects the unique characteristics, constraints, and growth pressures in the community. Based on the Sandoval County Comprehensive Plan, the County must consider the diverse and distinctive qualities of communities within the County. This area plan includes the Placitas region as well as the western portion of the Diamond Tail Ranch (please see Placitas Area Plan Map). In May of 2008, the Board of County Commissioners authorized the development of a community based area plan for Placitas that provides a framework for developing localized land use criteria and regulations representing community values and goals. This document is that plan.

Jurisdiction:

The jurisdiction of the Placitas Area Plan is solely over the private land under the authority of Sandoval County and does not apply to any lands under the jurisdiction of a Federal Agency, State Agency, Indian Tribe or Nation, Community Land Grant, or Municipality. The Placitas Area Plan may only guide policy recommendations to entities outside of the Jurisdiction of Sandoval County.

Planning Process

The Plan was developed through a series of community meetings, and through this process future land use criteria and capital improvements recommendations were developed with and by members of the community.





The Placitas Area Plan Consists of Three Major Sections:

Existing Conditions:

- **Describes the current land use condition and development practice.**

Goals and Strategies:

- **Describes strategies for the future in areas of land use, zoning, and future subdivisions.**

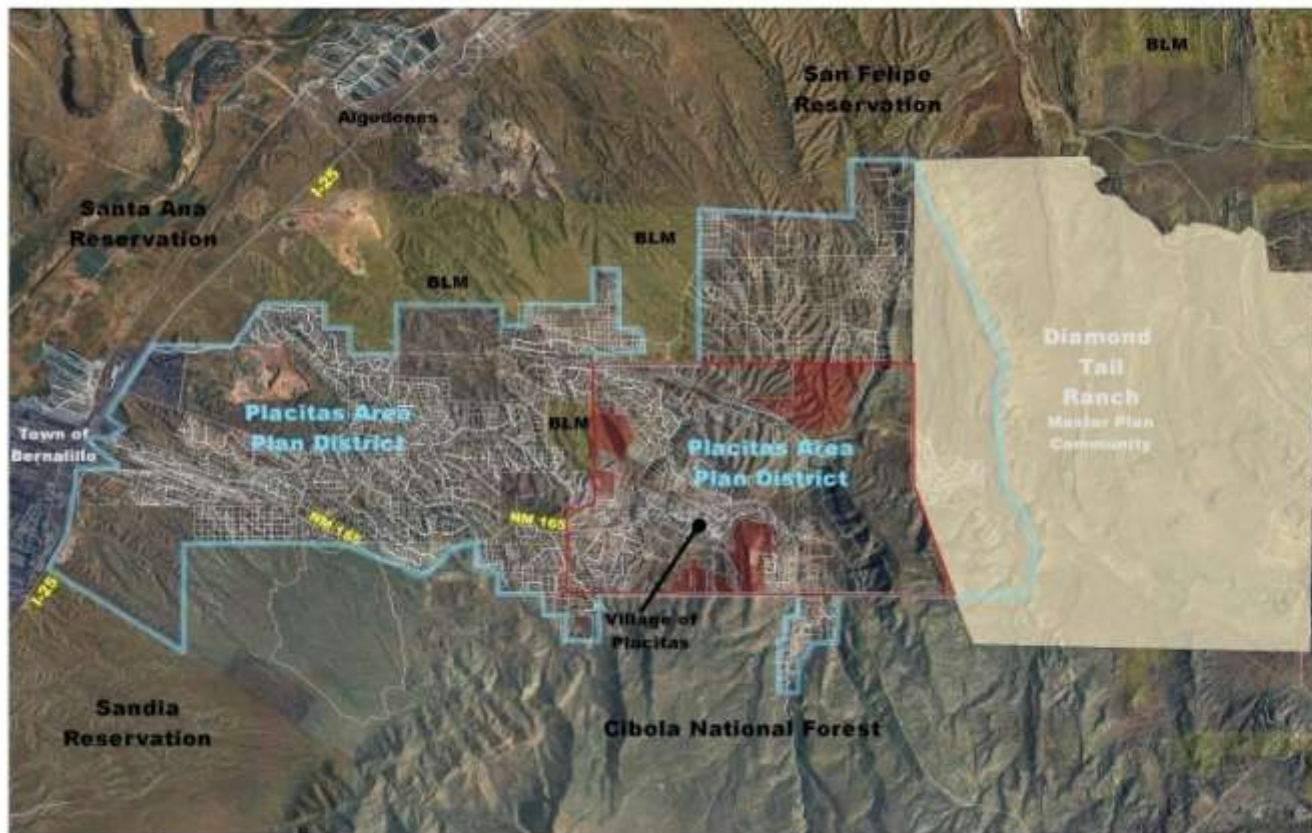
Plan Implementation:

- **Establishes recommendations for zoning regulations, future infrastructure, road improvements, as well as community facilities; may amend existing land use regulations affecting the plan area.**





Placitas Community Area Plan



Legend

- Plan Area Boundary
- Lex Haines Land Grant
- Town of Bernalillo
- Lex Haines Land Grant Parcel Tracts
- Bureau of Land Management
- Forest Service
- Reservations
- State
- Diamond Tail Ranch

Exhibit A





Section 1: Existing Conditions

Historical Background

Placitas is located in the unincorporated portion of Sandoval County known as the Placitas Region. The Plan area is bounded on the west by the Town of Bernalillo and on to the east by the Crest of Montezuma. It is bounded on the north by the San Felipe Pueblo and on the south by the Sandia Pueblo and Cibola National Forest (see plan area map).

In 1848, the territory of New Mexico was ceded by Mexico to the United States at the end of Mexican American war. Many communities began to have their land titles recognized by the United States Congress in the later part of the 19th century. By 1904, the Town of Bernalillo Land Grant was patented 3,404 acres of land which included the western part of the study area. The Las Huertas Land Grant also received its patent by the early 1900's and was patented approximately 4,763 acres.

In the early 1900's most of the plan area was used for grazing and wood-gathering. The Las Huertas Grant maintained the lands irrigated by the acequias near the village of Placitas; remaining lands were utilized to sustain livestock for community members. Residents of the Town of Bernalillo used much of these lands for traditional wood-gathering, hunting and grazing. The land located between Bernalillo Grant and the Western Boundary of the Las Huertas Grant became private land; this was patented as homesteads to private individuals and primarily used for grazing purposes. During the 1900's, some tracts in Las Huertas became





private lands owned by both land grant and non land grant members. By the late 1900's, some of these tracts exchanged hands several times; by the 1980's many of these privately claimed lands were developing into subdivisions. The resultant development in the Grant is characterized by a traditional village (of a plaza type) community located along an acequia in the center of the Las Huertas Area.

Much of the land in the planning area west of the San Antonio de las Huertas Grant has been developed; there remain several tracts of land directly northeast of the area known as the S-curve and several tracts adjacent to the Town of Bernalillo. Approximately 1800 acres remain undeveloped. Other land in this portion of planning area has been developed as residential subdivisions. The pattern is typical of "suburban development" with one dwelling unit on approximately 3/4 acre lots or larger. Also in this area are about a half dozen commercially zoned parcels.





**Placitas Area Plan
Population Conditions**

Year	Population	Housing Units	Family Size
1990	1,611	677	2.38
2000	3,452	1,606	2.14
2008 Estimate	5,523	2,569	2.15

Building Permits by Year Since 2002	
Year	Number of Permits
2000	87
2001	83
2002	109
2003	107
2004	173
2005	137
2006	134
2007	101
2008	32
Total	963





Placitas Build Out by Community Area

West Placitas Area

The western portion of the plan area has experienced the most development; this includes the Overlook, Indian Flats, Anazasi Trails, Homesteads, and Placitas West (see map below). The West Placitas area is approximately 70% developed; it is primarily large lot residential development. Undeveloped tracts are the Liberman Grevey Tract, Liberman-Grevey by The Overlook, and the Cashwell Tract. In addition, there is potential for future land division in the Indian Flats and, to a lesser degree, in the Placitas West areas. This area accounts for approximately 1,200 potential housing units. Mining activities at the Liberman-Grevey Gravel Pit will transition into residential development at a density of 1 dwelling unit per acre in approximately 10 years.

Undeveloped Tracts:

Liberman-Grevey (Gravel Pit): 833.33 acres

Cashwell Tract: 97 acres more or less

Liberman-Grevey near Overlook: 104 acres

Las Placitas Area

The Las Placitas area includes the Village of Placitas, Tecolote, Cañon de Las Huertas and Dome Valley. This area is made up of the older established communities in the Plan area. This portion of the Plan area is approximately 70% developed. However, there is still the potential for division of small tracts in this sub community area.





Undeveloped Tracts:

Apodaca Tract: Approximately 90 Acres

Neville Dawkins Tract: Approximately 120 Acres

Undeveloped Diamond Tract: Approximately 100 Acres

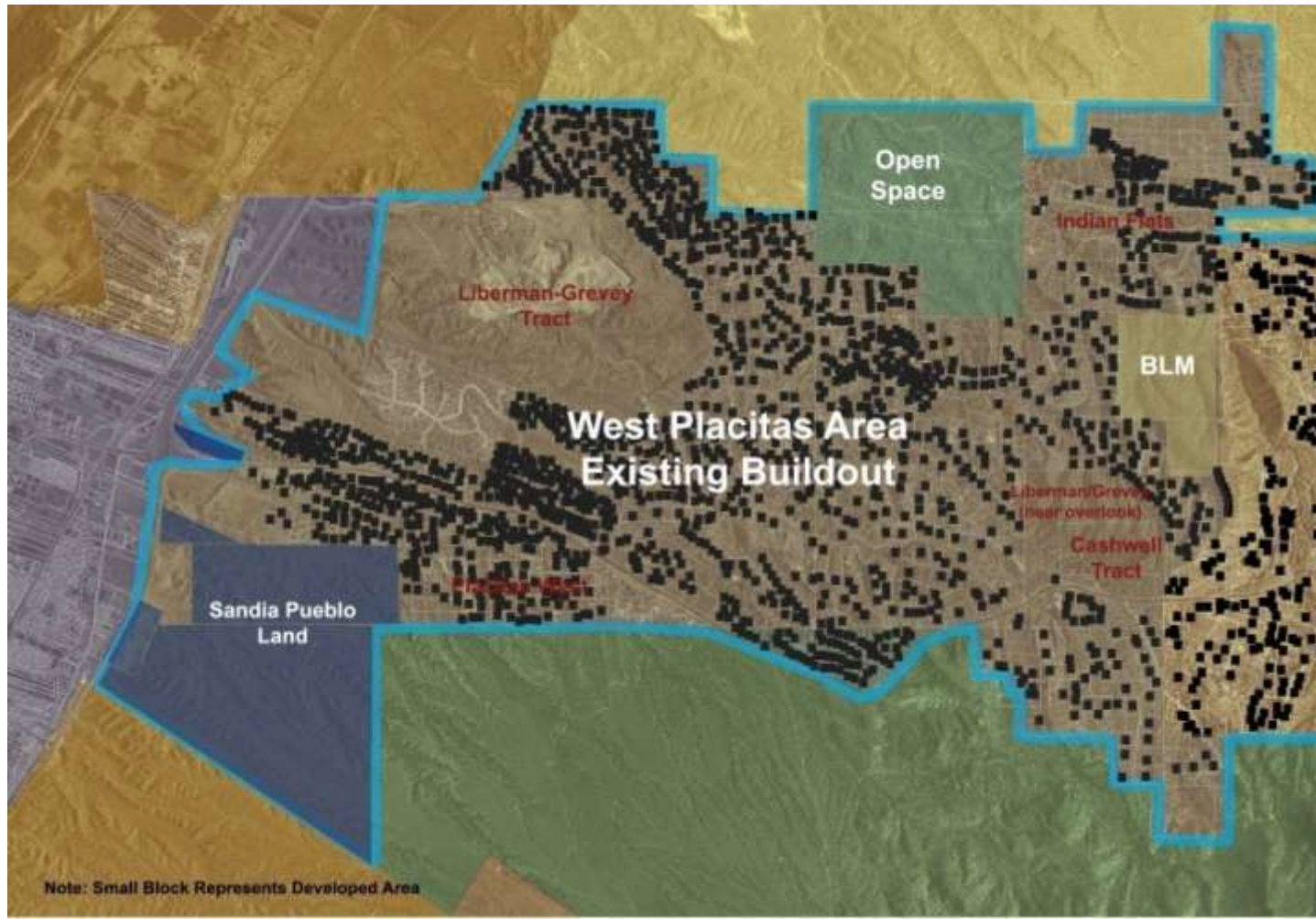
Ideal Acres/San Francisco Area

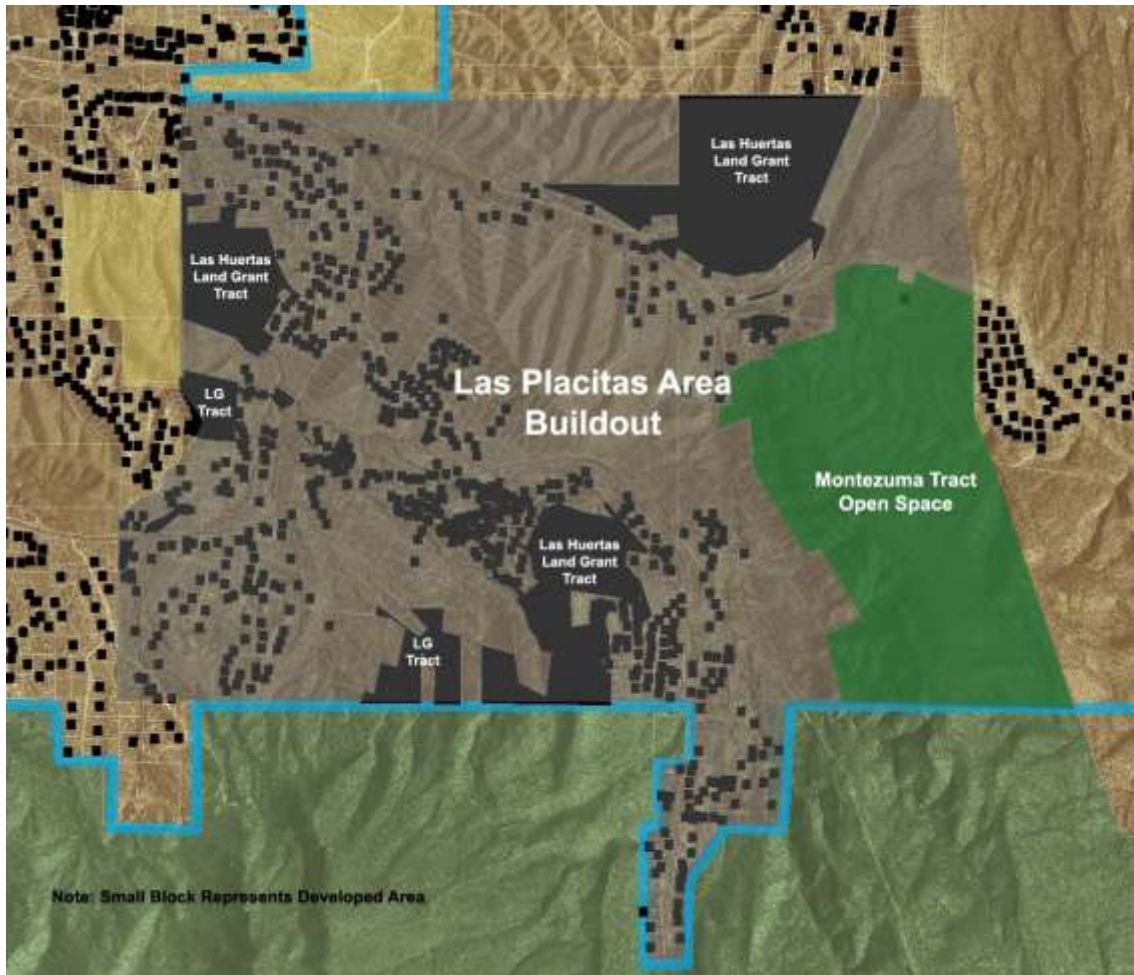
The Ideal Acres region of the Placitas area lies north of the San Antonio de Las Huertas Land Grant. This area consists of approximately 1,200 acres and it is approximately 25% developed. This undeveloped area has the most growth potential in the Placitas Area.

Diamond Tail Area

The 1st phase of the Diamond Tail Master Planned Community consists of approximately 60 lots. The total build out of the Diamond Tail area (in the master plan) is less than 300 units. The Diamond Tail community area is approximately 30% developed.

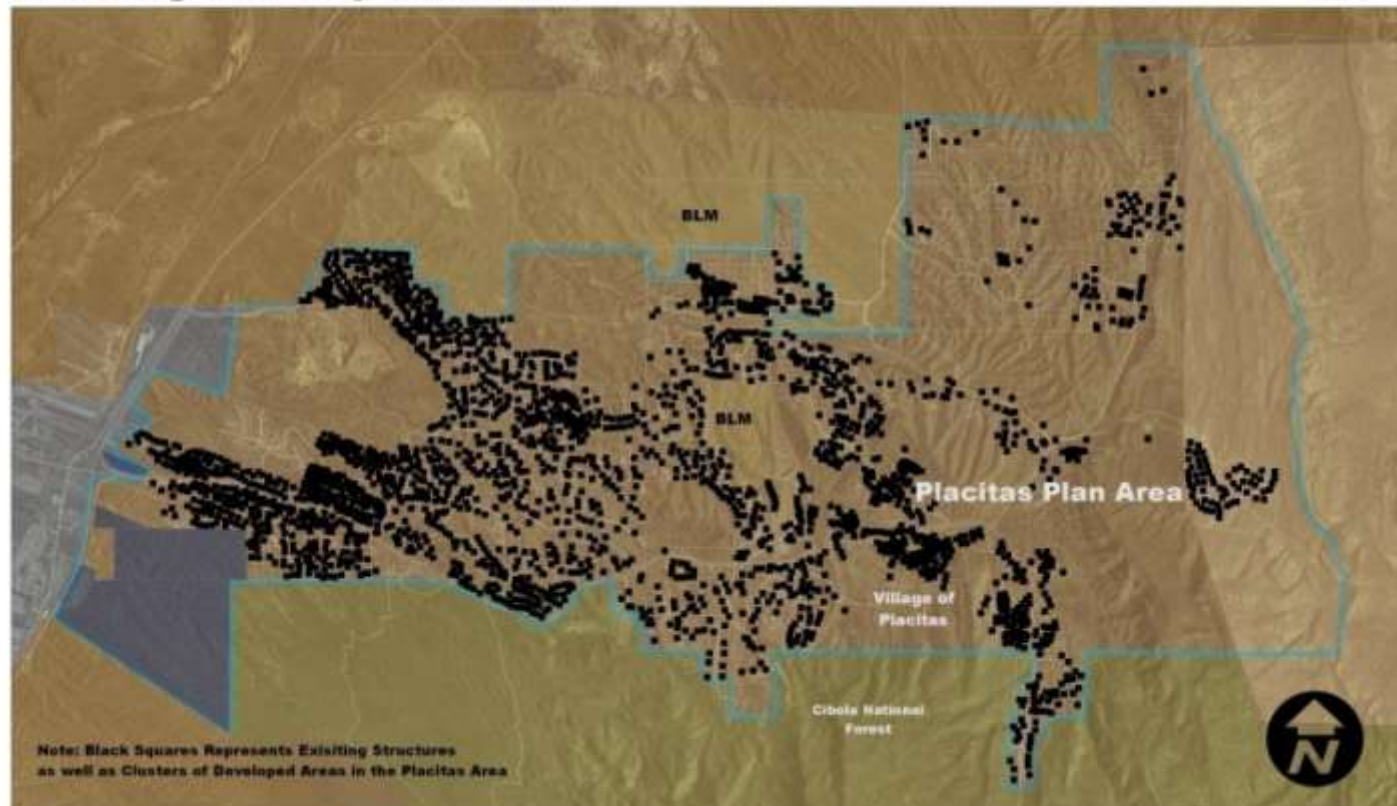








Placitas Area Plan Existing Developed Areas





Existing Transportation Conditions

The transportation backbone of the Placitas Planning Area is NM 165; it begins at Interstate 25 and ends 9 miles eastward where the roadway enters the Cibola National Forest. According to NMDOT traffic monitoring, average weekday traffic volumes along NM 165 are highest at the western portion of the plan area, accounting for a volume of 7,500 movements per day (see map). The overall volume east of the S-curve is approximately 3,100 with a localized volume of 3,900 at the Placitas Village center. Overall, the existing capacity of NM 165 meets the current and future build-out of the Placitas region. On a conservative estimate, the build out of the area would add an additional 1,200 homes; this is estimated by accounting for undeveloped tracts in the eastern portion of the area and two additional phases of Diamond Tail. Given future build out, the total traffic volume on NM 165 could be as high as 12,000. It is anticipated NM 165 will be adequate to accommodate build-out of the plan area without any major redesign. Additional modification of turning bays; acceleration and deceleration lanes may be needed based on specific future development scenarios.

The area's internal roadway system consists of un-improved and paved county roads, such as Camino de Las Huertas and Paseo De San Antonio in the Village, and paved subdivision roads, such as Homesteads Road, which serves as the collector road for the Homesteads Subdivision. Numerous unpaved private drives in the community are maintained by property owners. Some of these private roadways are located along steep slopes contributing to both drainage and soil erosion problems and can negatively impact air quality.



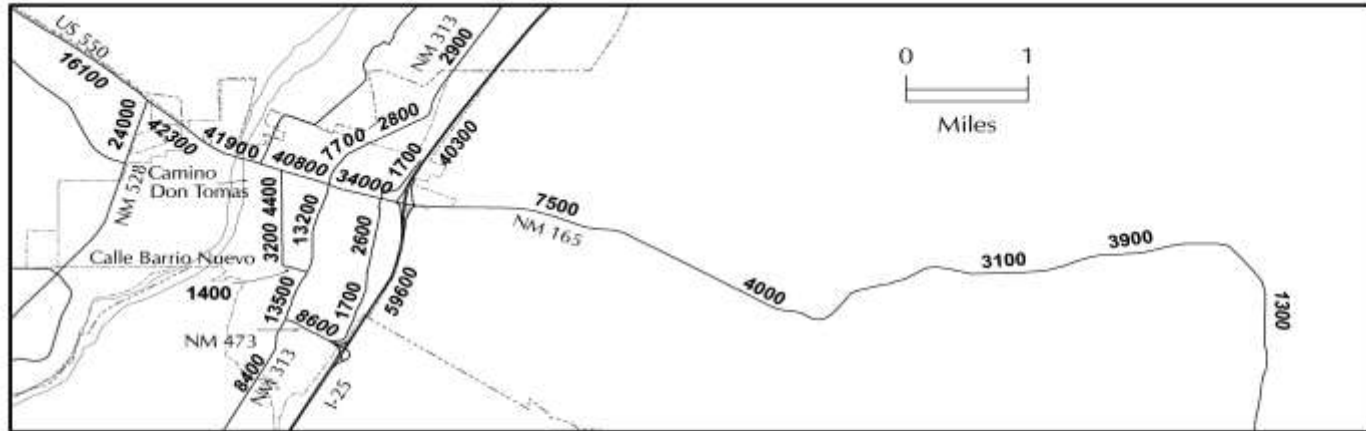


Overall, the biggest transportation issue in the plan area is the traffic congestion at I-25 and NM 165 and US 550. The existing interchange exceeds its traffic carrying capacity (see 2007 Traffic Flows, MRCOG) at that location and, as a result, the Placitas community is congested at NM 165 and US 550 during peak traffic periods. NM DOT has listed the redesign and construction of I-25/US 550 Interchange as a priority; it will go to bid in 2009 with construction following within approximately 2 years.



NM 165 Looking West Near the County Fire Station





Inset for Bernalillo Area

2007 TRAFFIC FLOWS for Sandoval Co., N.M.

Prepared by the Mid-Region Council of Governments in cooperation with the local governments in State Planning and Development District 3, and funded in part by the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration.





Existing Water Resources

Placitas Water Issues

Water in the Placitas Planning area presents a complex problem. Geology in the area, both surface and subsurface, aggravates the problems of sparse rainfall and the random nature of snowmelt as renewable / sustainable sources of water for the area.

Over recent decades, several studies have been completed for numerous reasons. Chief among them are studies by developers who are required to prove water supplies suitable for 100 years before sub-division permits are approved. This requirement is in accordance with Appendix A of the Sandoval County Subdivision Ordinance; areas of the County not under Appendix A are not required to show 100 year supplies and are only required to meet a lesser standard. In August 2002, (updated in January 2008) Peggy Johnson and Andrew Campbell co-authored “Hydrogeology and Water Resources of the Placitas Area, Sandoval County, New Mexico.” This study covered an extended area and was less constrained by individual development areas to which developers limit their studies. In addition, the fact that Johnson and Campbell are from New Mexico Tech, a State University, lends an element of disinterest and objectivity. This is not to cast aspersions or suggestions that other studies are not prepared with the highest ethical conduct or professionalism; they are just constrained to smaller areas of interest.

In view of the different areas covered by the various studies, and the fact that they were conducted for different reasons, the County contracted with Intera, Incorporated, to collect and evaluate these studies and deliver a report based on the collective findings of these efforts. This





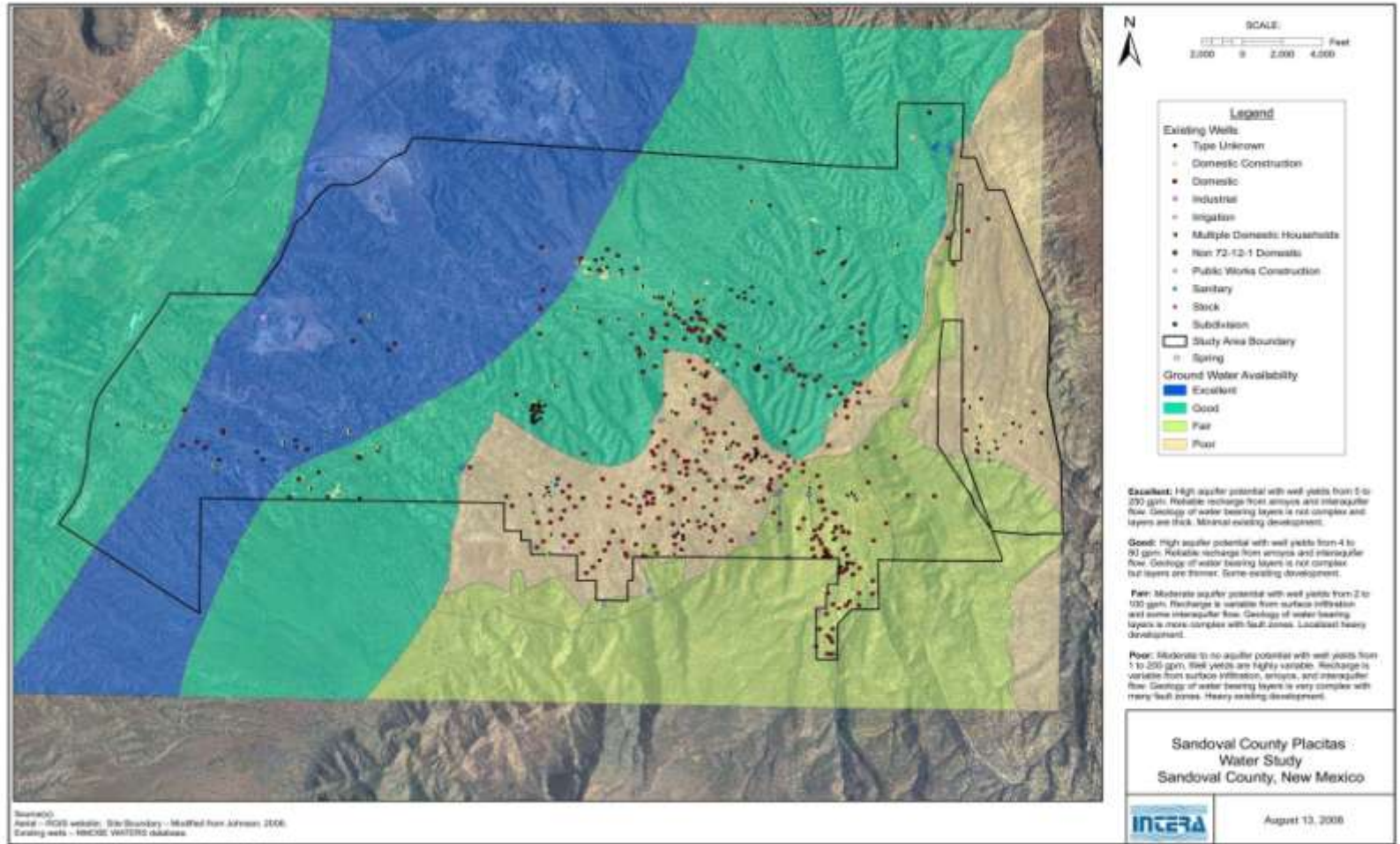
study was delivered in August 2008, and briefed at the Placitas community planning meeting held in September. (See map)

The conclusions of the study are that water availability in the Placitas area varies. There are sections where water is relatively abundant, areas where water availability is challenged, and areas between these extremes. In Placitas, like most areas, water is greatly influenced by geology. Local structure is complex; it is characterized by faulting associated with the Rio Grande Rift zone.

Over time, numerous solutions to the water issues in Placitas have been developed. In the territorial and colonial periods, surface water from springs and streams was largely the solution of choice. Over time, additional demands were met through the development of wells. Today, the increasing populations have caused a move toward systems using shared wells to meet the water needs of the area. While there are still individual domestic wells, the needs of water resource management are driving away from that option as the preferred method.

There are about 14 area water systems plus Las Acequias de Placitas. Further, there are numerous old, single lot domestic wells, shared wells, springs and streams in the area used as water sources in the community. As such, there is not a simple definition of the water situation from a demand point of view any more than there is an easy way to characterize the supply side of the equation. Given continuing growth of the area and a desire to maximize the utility of the available water and encourage conservation practices, the County will encourage shared wells and community water systems.





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Placitas Area Plan





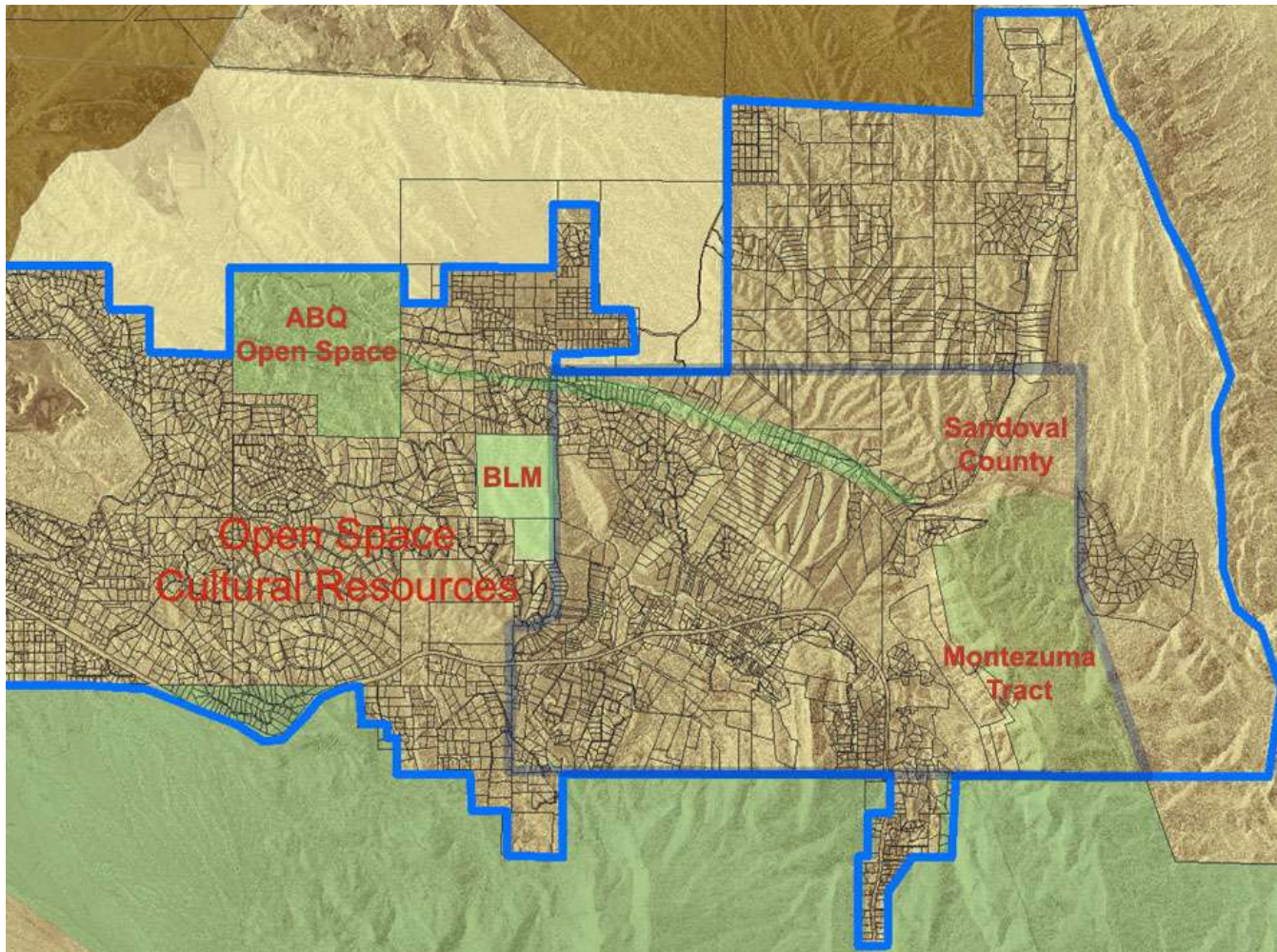
The Acequias of Placitas

The surface waters of the acequia systems are one of the most valued and passionately defended natural resources in Las Placitas Communities District. The residents of the three geographical areas whose irrigated lands are fed by the acequia systems have adamantly expressed their concerns in protecting the acequias, the water sheds that feed the acequias and the land. Acequia use is integrally tied to land use and residents are adamant that preservation of Las Acequias is key to preservation of the foundation of the culture and lifestyle in the district.

Existing Open Space Conditions

The Placitas Area is comprised of several major open spaces. The most significant of these is the Sandia Wilderness area which forms the south boundary of the planning area. Next is the Placitas Open Space Area which is managed by City of Albuquerque. While not designated as open space, the BLM controls two parcels of land within the planning area. One, approximately 200 acres in size, is located in the middle of the planning area and borders the Overlook Subdivision and the western boundary of the San Antonio de Las Huertas Land Grant. The other tract, which is known as the Crest of Montezuma tract, contains approximately 917 acres and has recently been acquired as part of a land trade between Diamond Tail, Santo Domingo Pueblo, and the BLM.







Placitas Open Space Area

The 560 acre property known as the Placitas Open Space was acquired by the City of Albuquerque in 1966 from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) with a patent issued under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act: it is “for reservation type park and recreation purposes only.” The property covers the S ½ of Section 24 and the N ½ of the NW ¼ and all of the NE ¼ of Section 25, Township 13 N, Range 4 E, NMPM and is bordered by several Placitas neighborhoods as well as BLM property. The Las Huertas Creek, a major hydrologic feature of the Placitas area, crosses the Open Space.

In the 1990’s a proposal was placed before the City of Albuquerque to use the property as a shooting range. This proposal, which was denied by the City, was vigorously opposed by Placitas residents and led to the beginnings of the Master Plan for the Open Space. This effort, begun in 1999, was completed in 2002 with the generous support and involvement from Placitas residents, in particular the Las Placitas Association.

In summary, the Master Plan, which was approved by the Albuquerque City Council and the Sandoval County Board of County Commissioners, calls for the property to be used for low impact recreation including hiking, horseback riding, and mountain biking; and for the restoration of the Las Huertas Creek. The Las Placitas Association sponsors a series of free hikes and activities on the Open Space each year that help to educate residents about the property.





In 1998, cultural resources inventories were conducted on the Open Space. A total of 72 archaeological sites were identified, 16 of which were recommended as eligible, and 5 as potentially eligible, for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. The property is now listed on the State's Register of Cultural Properties as a Cultural Landscape District of Historical Significance. Due to the significance of the archaeological sites, the Master Plan calls for their locations to not be made public in order to prevent damage.

In 2004, the Sandoval County Board of County Commissioners adopted a Management Ordinance, in cooperation with the City of Albuquerque, to address management, maintenance, and law enforcement for the Open Space.

Sandia Wilderness

In 1978, the United States Congress designated approximately 37,877 acres of the northern portion of the Sandia Mountains within the Cibola National Forest as a wilderness area. The vegetation is primarily juniper and piñon woodland vegetation at the lower elevations rising into spruce, fir, and mixed conifer forest stands at the higher elevations. A recreation destination for many residents of the Middle Rio Grande Valley population is the Las Huertas Picnic Area which is located at the northern boundary of the wilderness area in the Placitas community. A major concern for Placitas residents is the ability for wildlife to move through the Sandia Wilderness to other open space areas given the amount of development that has occurred in the area. During the preparation of this plan, many residents urged the County to further support studies and future possibilities to mitigate development and enhance natural movements of wildlife through the Placitas Area Planning area.





BLM Land Ownership

The BLM manages two tracts of land within the planning area. One tract consists of a parcel of land approximately 200 acres located within the center of the study area adjacent to the Overlook subdivision and the western boundary of the San Antonio de Las Huertas Land Grant. The BLM has one additional tract of land approximately 917 acres in size that was acquired in a land exchange; it is known as the Crest of Montezuma. The parcel is located at the far eastern boundary of the Las Huertas Land Grant. According to the BLM, the agency will need to conduct a resource inventory for the tract in order to plan any future use.

In the course of the planning process many residents expressed concerned about the Rio Puerco Resource Management Plan currently being developed by the BLM which will re-evaluate existing uses for BLM land and recommend what type of uses should be considered on BLM land in the future. In the course of public comment into the planning process, many residents felt that the BLM land should be maintained as open space and be considered as part of a proposed wildlife corridor for the area.

Sandoval County

Sandoval County owns approximately 8 acres of land which was also acquired by the County as part of the BLM/San Felipe land exchange. The tract is located on the north side of BLM's Crest of Montezuma tract on Diamond Trail Rd. and was purchased to serve as parking and a trail head facility into the BLM land.





Storm Drainage and Topography

The upper and lower Las Huertas watershed areas are the primary drainage basins within the Placitas Area Plan. The upper stretches of this Las Huertas watershed are on the north face of the Sandia mountains near Poniente de Capulin (choke cherry peak) at about 9000 feet in elevation; they stretch approximately 15 miles to the boundary of the study area. The entire Las Huertas basin encompasses nearly 30 square miles of land. Generally, the basin receives up to 20 inches of precipitation at the upper reaches of the basin to an average of 12 inches a year at the lower reaches near the Albuquerque Open Space tract. Much of the natural landscape and topography in the Placitas region can be described as rolling hills with cuts of drainage ways supporting woodland vegetation such as juniper, piñon, various chamizos, and buffalo grass. Along the Las Huertas creek/arroyo there are segments of riparian vegetation such as cottonwood trees, willows, and other plant type's characteristic of a riparian zone.

In recent years, drainage concerns have become an increasing issue for both Bernalillo and Placitas because of the rapid rate of development. Since 1980, much of the natural landscape has been impacted by the development of roads and homes. The Placitas plan area is already approximately 75% built out. In fact, a large segment of Placitas, especially subdivisions located in the western part, was developed before Sandoval County had formal zoning and subdivision regulations. The result is a large number of private drives and roadways that do not provide for adequate soil retention for dealing with heavy rain event as well as sufficient design to prevent soil erosion. After some intense flooding in 2006, the State Legislature passed a bill to begin the process of creating a flood control authority for the Bernalillo, Algodones, and Placitas Community.



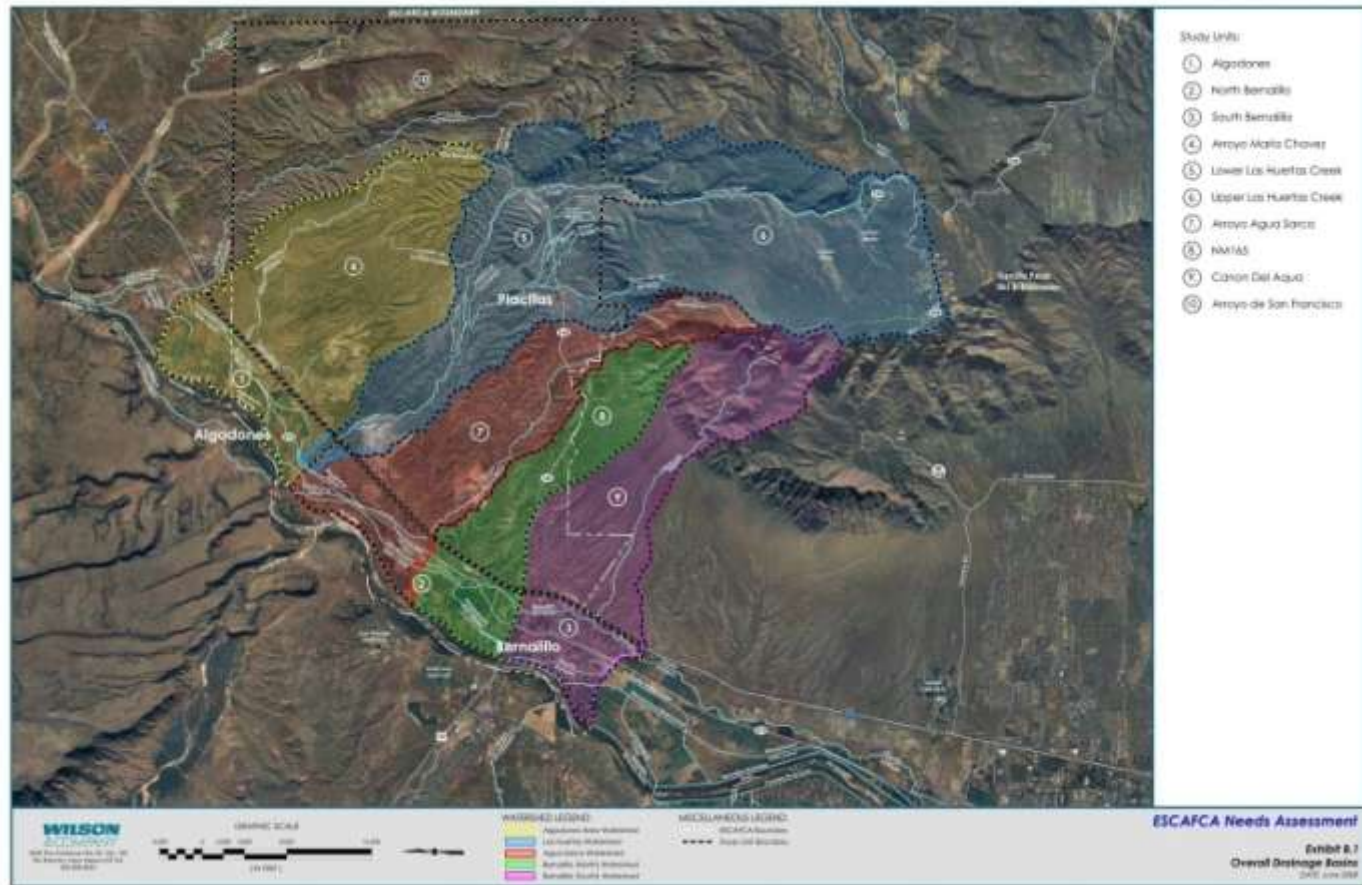


In November 2008, a local election formally created the East Sandoval County Flood Control Authority (ESCAFCA) responsible for improving flood control and mitigating these issues in the Placitas area (see map). The County and ESCAFCA will need to collaborate in development of processes to review future development proposals in the Placitas area.



Drainage Sub Basin of the Placitas Area







Waste Water Conditions

The overwhelming majority of homes utilize conventional septic systems to treat waste water. The Placitas area is relatively well suited for conventional septic systems because of larger lots, relatively good soils to support leach fields, and the ability to meet requirements for setback distances from domestic well heads and other nearby septic systems. There are, however, some areas that may be problematic for supporting traditional septic systems. For example, there are areas with smaller lots, lots located on steep slopes, and septic tanks located near a creek or in area with a high water table. Since the NMED has not found significant problems utilizing conventional systems on lots that are $\frac{3}{4}$ acre and larger, the State will continue to allow these systems for waste water treatment in the plan area.

New regulations for septic systems for lots smaller than $\frac{1}{2}$ acre will impact areas such as the Village of Placitas where the majority of lots are much smaller. The NMED is very likely to only to allow advanced treatment systems for new construction as well as replacements for older systems.

Overall, the usage of septic tanks and drain fields in Placitas Area Plan has not proven to be a significant environmental concern. Eventually, there will need to be a coordinated effort to deal with potential waste water issues; this might include the possibility of a central waste water system for the village.





Existing Land Use Conditions

Land use in the Placitas area is dominated by single family residential with scattered rural commercial and several public facilities areas. While the Village of Placitas and the Tecolote communities support gardens, livestock, and orchards; the plan area on the larger scale has a very little agricultural uses. In observing residential land use characteristics, one notes two distinct areas:

1. Within the historic “Las Placitas” portion of study area and the communities such as Ideal Acres and Dome Valley, there is a random and non-formal “development pattern” described by the residents as a “live and let live” pattern which is quite tolerant of non-conformity and celebrates individuality in lifestyles and architecturally diverse structures. Whereas,
2. in the more recently platted and formally planned developments, there is a practice of controlled architectural standards; these areas are largely in the western portions of Placitas. Commercial development pattern is similarly more formal in the western portion of the study area and more informal, characterized by small commercial development patterns near the Village of Placitas.





Note: The term “formal” development in this section refers to development in planned Type I, II, or III subdivision. “In-formal” development pattern refers to development typical of historic neighborhoods in the study area of antiquated platting or lot splits”

Non Residential Development Uses

Currently there are several small scale office and commercial locations in the Placitas plan area along NM 165. The following areas are among the non-residential locations in the plan area:

La Puerta Real Estate Area

The La Puerta Real Estate area, located in the western portion of the plan area on NM 165, consists of approximately 6 acres but is less than 30% built-out. Currently, there are two structures on this site. First is the La Puerta office building which is about 8,000 square feet; it is used as office space. Also nearby is the Comcast Cable office; this small structure is about 3,000 square feet. This location was approved under the Bernalillo (Town) Extra Territorial Zoning Authority in the late 1980s for use as a small scale commercial. Today, much of the commercially zoned land at this site remains vacant but has vested zoning rights for future commercial use. The building sites here are typical of a strip commercial layout with building structures reflective of a pueblo architectural motif.

The Placitas Homestead Retail Development

The Placitas Homestead Retail Development site consists of approximately 10 acres and is located in the center of the West Placitas area. This development was also approved by the





Bernalillo Extra-Territorial Zoning Authority and has vested development rights. The full build-out of the plan allows for approximately 14 building structures that range from approximately 4,000 to 12,000 square feet in size. The Placitas Homestead development is currently less than 20% built out; current occupants include the Homestead Mercantile (store), a bank, as well as Placitas Realty's office space consisting of two buildings less than 4,000 square feet in size. Overall, over 60,000 square feet of zoned office and retail space remains undeveloped at this location.

Village of Placitas

Along NM 165 through the "Village of Placitas" there are about a dozen parcels along a stretch of 1.5 miles that have vested zoning rights for non-residential uses. From the Old Windmill Mercantile/Drive-up coffee shop on the west side of the village along NM 165 up to the Clear Light Cedar Company located near the Camino de las Huertas junction are several non residential/small scale commercially zoned lots. These businesses include Rio Sierra Realty office, the Mini-Mart, and the Post Office; there exist several parcels of land zoned rural commercial that are currently vacant. These commercial structures range from less than 1,000 square feet in size, such as the drive-up coffee stand, to buildings with larger foot prints such as the post office which is about 10,000 square feet.

Unlike the La Puerta and Homestead commercial nodes with design guidelines which were formally planned as a unit of development, these commercial uses near the village do not have design guidelines. While almost all structures conform to a southwestern design vernacular, sites are spatially distributed in an informal pattern along NM 165.





Residential Land Uses:

Residential Uses in Formal Developments

The typical residential unit in the Plan area is single family home on a 1 acre lot guided by the current zoning regulations for residential development.

Most residential development after the 1980s has been in formally planned subdivisions with architectural standards. The typical development pattern in a formal subdivision is a 1 acre lot which allows residence, a guest home, and the ability to operate a home occupation. Also, homes in formal subdivisions are guided by design covenants that only allow construction that follows a southwestern or pueblo vernacular with an earth toned color pallet. This land use type is typical of Diamond Tail, Anasazi Trails, The Overlook, Tierra Madre and Placitas Trails.

Typical Development in Formal Subdivisions

- **1 acre lots size or larger**
- **Large Single Family Residential Homes**
- **Allows a Single Home, A Guest House, and a Home Occupation**
- **Architectural Design Controls on Structures**

Residential Development in Informal Developments





In the area generally referred to as “Las Placitas”, which includes the historic village, Tecolote, Cañon de las Huertas, and Dome Valley, development can typically be described as a traditional New Mexico pattern with clusters of housing, smaller lot sizes, and farm plots situated along an acequia system. The residential development pattern is often (and more typical in the village of Placitas) based on a smaller lot size, with variations in housing types including adobe, mobile homes, and dome structures; agricultural uses; and many accessory structures such as sheds, cellars, and barns. The style of home construction is so diverse in this area that no single architectural style can be identified as dominant. Many residents recognize a shared community attitude of “live and let live;” residents in this area express concern that further development of formal subdivisions (or regulations) would negatively impact their more established, “non-planned” communities. This type of development pattern is also shared in areas such as Indian Flats, Linda Placitas, San Francisco, and Ideal Acres.

Typical Development in Traditional Community Areas

- **Many lots less than $\frac{3}{4}$ acre in size in the village; larger lots in other areas such as San Francisco**
- **Diversity in housing types (adobe homes, mobile homes, dome structures, and yurts)**
- **Gardens and orchards are common (including accessory structures such as sheds and barns)**
- **A “live and let live” value system in regard to development patterns**
- **Informal layout of lots and roadways**





Placitas Area Plan Existing Conditions/West Placitas Area





Other:

Town of Bernalillo Land Use Interface

Along the east side of the I-25 corridor in the study area is not only the interchange between NM 550 and I-25, but also the intersection of several jurisdictions such as the Town of Bernalillo, Non-trust Sandia Pueblo Land and parcels of land that fall within the jurisdiction of Sandoval County. Approximately 50% of the land on the I-25 frontage road is already in the Town of Bernalillo's jurisdiction or owned by Sandia Pueblo. Due to the proximity of the Bernalillo/Placitas interface area to the frontage on I-25, as well as this area being located near the Rail Runner 550/Sandoval County Station, a rational alternative for future land use development in this area would be higher density housing/mixed use commercial.

This area also serves as a land use transitional zone from the Town of Bernalillo to the single family large lot zoning characteristic of the land use development pattern in the West Placitas Plan area.





Section 2: Plan Goals

Placitas Area Plan Goals

During the numerous public meetings and hearings conducted as this plan was developed, there was general support for preserving the values that have shaped this historic area, and for maintaining the semi-rural landscape and existing development patterns. For example, many residents did not support expanded commercial uses in the Plan area that were not consistent with a more rural community fabric. The following section captures the goals developed during the Placitas Area Plan Process. These goals were submitted by various community groups in the Plan Area through many community meetings from September through December of 2008.

Generalized Plan Goals

- **The Placitas Plan should protect the existing semi-rural character of the Placitas region and the character and the identity of specific neighborhoods**
- **The community supports limited commercial and non-residential amenities**
- **Large big-box retail and franchise businesses are not appropriate for the Plan area**
- **The Placitas plan should support the efforts to develop a wildlife corridor**
- **Placitas plan residents support the protection of “dark skies”**
- **Home Occupations should continue to be allowed in the Placitas Area**
- **Preserve the current lifestyle and historic nature and character of the Plan area**
- **Establish protection of ridge-top development for some areas in the Placitas plan**
- **The community does not support a “by-pass” road facility through the Placitas Plan area that connects I-25 to NM14.**





- **Respect the acequia culture of the Las Placitas Area and the agricultural lifestyle**
- **Preserve independence and property rights of Placitas property owners**
- **Support the “Live and Let Live” attitude of the Las Placitas community**
- **Discourage covenants and architectural control in the eastern planning Placitas Area**
- **Control development through architectural control in the western portion of Placitas**
- **Keep the existing overall development pattern in the Placitas area**
- **Improve the traffic conditions associated with the I-25/NM 55 Interchange**
- **Develop policy that ensures water sustainability in Placitas region**
- **Develop bike paths and pedestrian trails in the Placitas area**
- **Provide for public transportation in the Placitas area to connect with the Rail Runner Sandoval County/NM 550 station.**
- **Find ways to preserve and enhance open space areas in the Placitas Plan area**
- **Preserve and protect the cultural heritage and historic legacy of the historic village of Placitas.**
- **Support small scale agriculture.**
- **Develop land use definitions that promote varied building types and land uses that conform to the appropriate development pattern in the Placitas area.**
- **Preserve the right to family transfers in the Placitas Area**
- **Respect the diversity of the various communities in the Placitas area**





Section 3: Plan Implementation and Recommendations

The following section is the implementation and plan recommendation strategies developed for the purpose of guiding future development and growth in the Placitas planning area based on community input and evaluation of existing conditions. The purpose of the following recommendations is to establish land use policy and regulations that meet the plan goals set by community members in Placitas and extensive study by the County. After the plan is adopted, then appropriate zoning regulations will be developed to meet these recommendations:

The Placitas area plan should adopt the following policy changes in the following areas:

- **Amend the current zoning classification of RRA in the Placitas area and create several land use zoning districts to meet the needs of the diverse neighborhoods in the Placitas area plan.**
- **Develop general land use regulations across the Placitas Plan Area that mitigate potential negative development impacts in the plan area.**
- **Develop a transportation policy for the Placitas community that promotes transit alternatives, improves traffic issues along NM 165, and creates park and ride alternatives for the Placitas community.**
- **Develop an open space strategy to improve and provide connectivity between open space areas, protecting natural and cultural resources, and wildlife corridors.**
- **Maintain guidelines to ensure a sustainable water supply in the plan area for future generations.**
- **Develop a plan to improve storm drainage in the Placitas area.**





- **Develop recommendations for future public facilities needed to service the community planning area.**

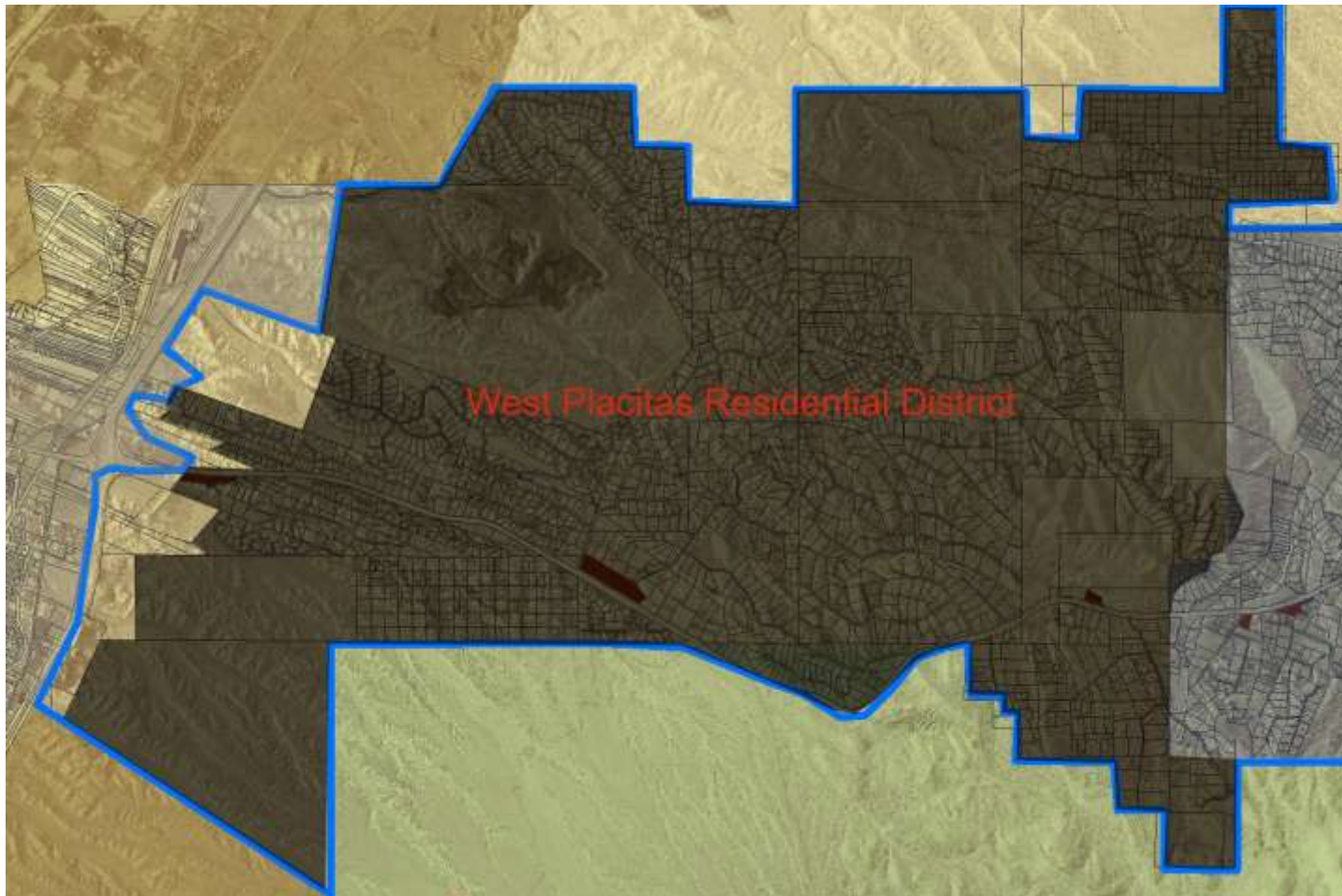
Proposed Land Use Policies for the Placitas Area Plan

Due to the uniqueness of the various neighborhoods within the Placitas plan area as well as environmental and cultural considerations, the County should develop several community zoning districts within the plan area. The purpose of these community districts is to facilitate harmonious development appropriate for each unique community in the plan district.

Proposed Community Districts

- **West Placitas Residential District**
- **Las Placitas Residential Community District**
- **Ideal Acres San Francisco Community District**
- **Non-Residential Districts**
- **Diamond Tail Community District**
- **I-25 Frontage/Bernalillo Interface District**







Purpose of West Placitas Residential District (sub-Area) Plan

Creation of the West Placitas Residential District (WPRD, See Map) will allow crafting land use regulations and policies to support the long term goals of the area residents. The following recommendations were based on evaluation of existing conditions of the area and public input from area residents. The desire of the district is to retain residential development typical of the formal development and subdivision style currently in place in the west Placitas area. As an example, development is currently characterized by uniformly residential, site-built homes representative of southwest architecture on lots of $\frac{3}{4}$ acre or larger. Many residents participating in the Placitas Area Plan expressed a desire to maintain consistency with the housing type and lot size typical in subdivisions such as The Overlook, Anasazi Trails, and Placitas Trails. Therefore, it is recommended that zoning criteria should be amended to reflect the following criteria in the WPRD:

WPRD Zoning Recommendations:

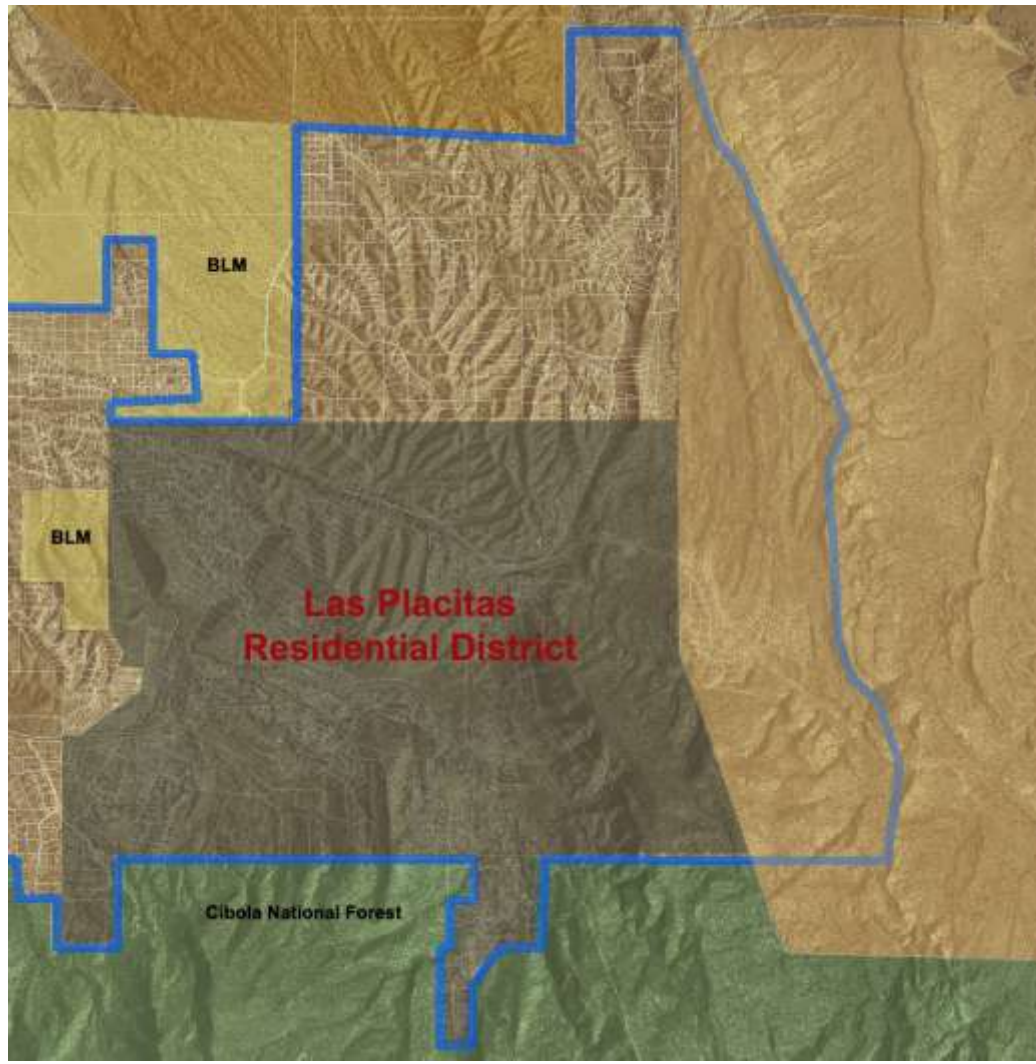
- A minimum lot size of 1 acre for any new platting in the WPRD
- Use the existing RRA Zoning District uses as a starting point for appropriate uses in this new district
- Continue home occupations as defined in the current Zoning District
- Develop guidelines in the area to encourage consistency of the existing architectural vernacular





- Develop design criteria requiring the placement of any manufactured housing to be compliant with established design standards (similar to design standards for the Rio Rancho Estates Community District)
- Develop zoning district standards that promote housing types consistent with existing development pattern and subdivisions in the western Placitas area.
- Slope and Ridge Top Development: A major area of concern to many Placitas residents was the protection and preservation of natural views and the cultural landscape qualities of the area. Zoning code should be amended to provide adequate setbacks and building height standards to preserve view-sheds when possible.





Placitas Area Plan





Las Placitas Residential District

The purpose of the Las Placitas Residential District (EPRD) sub-area is to recognize the informal development patterns of neighborhoods in the historic La Placitas area. The Las Placitas district includes the village of Placitas, Dome Valley, Cañon de las Huertas, Tecolote, the Rosa de Castilla spring area, La Otra Banda, Placitas Heights, La Buena Vista and Des Montes, and hereinafter referred to as the Las Placitas district. This unique community features small orchards and garden tracts connected to the multiple acequias ubiquitous to the traditional Placitas area. Further, it will recognize and continue the informal development patterns and the diversity of development and housing styles in the plan area. The following are recommended for the Las Placitas district:

EPRD Zoning Recommendation:

- Recognize the district as a “right to farm” community
- Allow flexibility in setback requirements of non-conforming lots (less than $\frac{3}{4}$ acres in size) to accommodate home remodels that might have difficulty meeting current set back requirement in traditional lots in the historic village.
- Use the existing RRA Zoning District uses as a starting point for appropriate uses in this new district
- Continue home occupations as defined in the current Zoning District
- Continue to respect and allow for family transfers of land because of its cultural significance in New Mexico.





Example of Right to Farm Language in State Statutes

47-9-3. Agricultural operations deemed not a nuisance.

A. Any agricultural operation or agricultural facility is not, nor shall it become, a private or public nuisance by any changed condition in or about the locality of the agricultural operation or agricultural facility if the operation was not a nuisance at the time the operation began and has been in existence for more than one year; except that the provisions of this section shall not apply whenever an agricultural operation or agricultural facility is operated negligently, improperly or illegally such that the operation or facility is a nuisance.

B. Any ordinance or resolution of any unit of local government that makes the operation of any agricultural operation or agricultural facility a nuisance or provides for abatement of it as a nuisance under the circumstances set forth in this section shall not apply when an agricultural operation is located within the corporate limits of any municipality as of the effective date of the Right to Farm Act [[47-9-1](#) to [47-9-7](#) NMSA 1978].

C. The established date of operation is the date on which an agricultural operation commenced or an agricultural facility was originally constructed. If an agricultural operation or agricultural facility is subsequently expanded or a new technology is adopted, the established date of operation does not change.





Ideal Acres/San Francisco Residential District

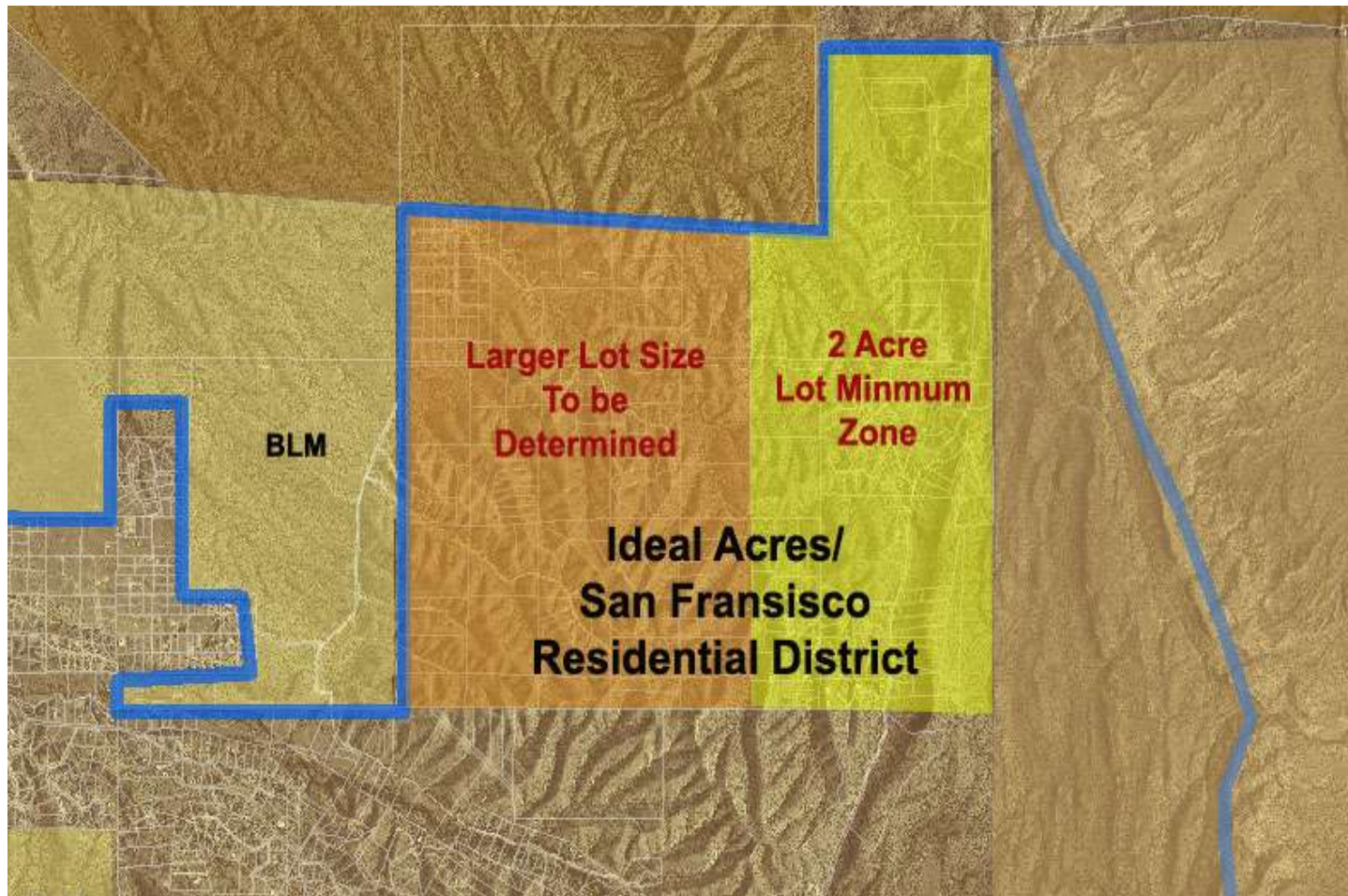
The purpose of the Ideal Acres/San Francisco Residential District (IASFRD, See Map) is to recognize the unique landscape qualities and development patterns of this community of the Placitas Plan area. The boundaries of the district, as depicted in the proposed district map, are north from the boundary of the Las Huertas Land Grant to land primarily under the ownership of San Felipe Pueblo. Due to the topography and terrain features in this area, which are characterized by rolling hills with steep slopes and arroyos, this area should be zoned as follows:

IA/SFRD Zoning Recommendation:

- In the Linda Placitas Mountain View Acres, and the San Francisco Road area, increase minimum lot size to two (2) acres.
- In the Ideal Acres and Vista Cabezon Subdivision, increase lot size, with minimum lot size to be determined during the writing of the amended Zoning Ordinance
- Use the existing RRA Zoning District uses as a starting point for appropriate uses in this new district
- Continue home occupations as defined in the current Zoning District











Non-Residential Districts

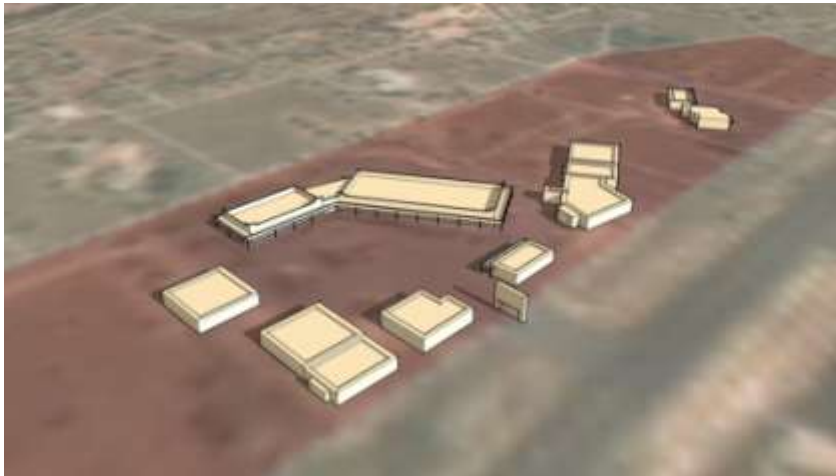
- **West Placitas Non Residential District**
- **Las Placitas Non Residential District**

West Placitas Non Residential District

The purpose of the West Placitas Non Residential District is to develop land use policy that ensures the appropriate type of commercial development in the West Placitas area. Based on the review of existing rural commercial development areas (during the existing conditions evaluation as well as public comment meetings), the area plan recommends the establishment of two commercial locations and development criteria for these nodes. The nodes recommended already exist in West Placitas. They are referred to here as the La Puerta Real Estate Node and the Homestead Mercantile Node. The major reason for recommending only existing areas is that the two nodes are less than 20 percent built out and, therefore, the need to further expand rural commercial zoning in the area is not driven by current or near-term future demand.

In this type of rural community, Sandoval County does not support extended linear commercial land uses because of the negative impact on rural community aesthetics as well the associated highway safety problems. Finally, rural community commercial nodes should be focal community locations, not just supporting retail services, but act as centers in the community.





Idealized Center at Homestead Mercantile

Village of Placitas Non Residential District

The purpose of the Village of Placitas Non Residential District is to formalize and recognize a commercial node within the Placitas Area Plan. The designation would establish a separate rural commercial district in the historic Village of Placitas. This district is proposed to be the properties accessing NM 165 beginning west of the Village at the Windmill Mercantile and extending to the Clear Light Cedar Company. Designation of this node will formalize the district and the town center of the Las Placitas plan area.

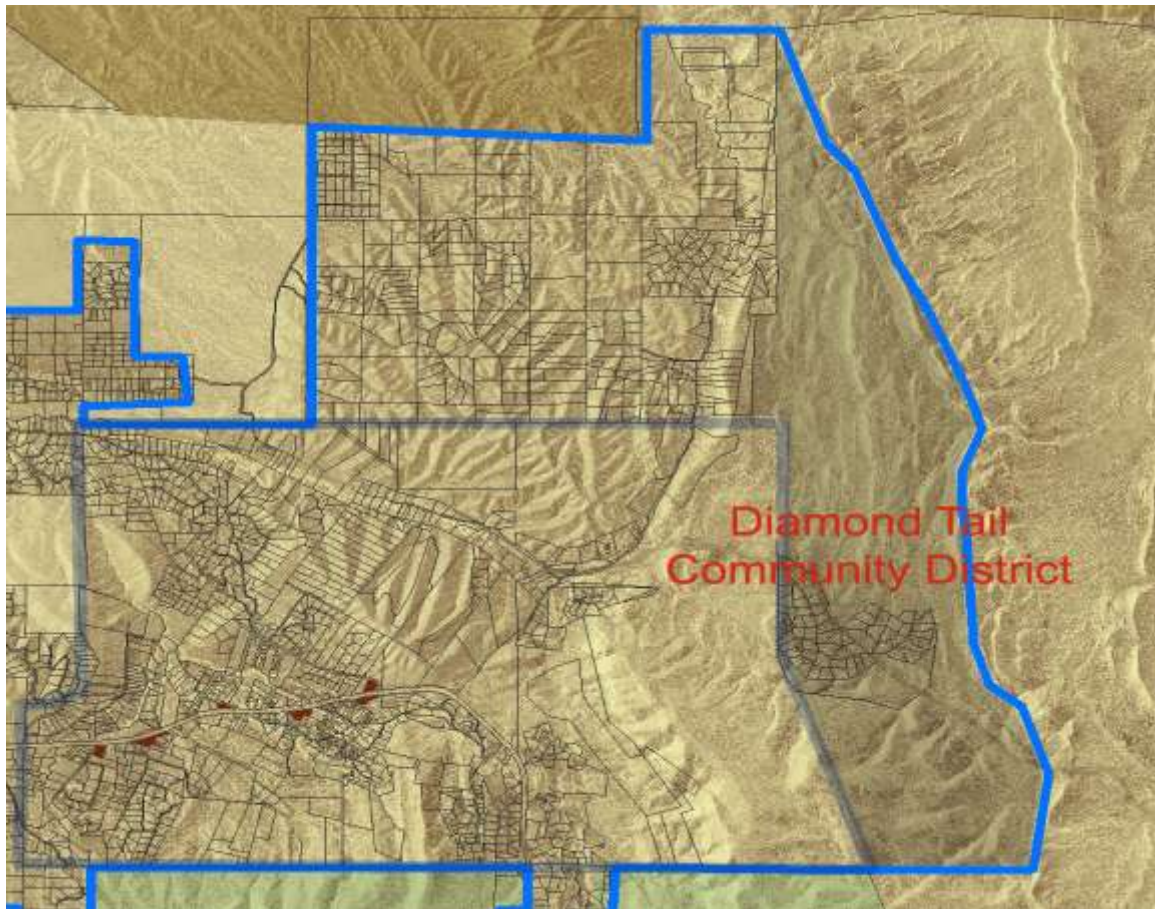




Non-Residential District Zoning Recommendations:

- To ensure compatibility with a rural community fabric, designate a maximum floor area for rural non-residential structures.
- A maximum lot build out of 50% of lot area.
- Adopt general design standards that promote consistency with existing architectural style as the existing development.
- Adopt requirements for the screening of mechanical equipment and waste collection facilities.
- Develop requirements for landscape buffering between rural commercial uses and residential uses which might incorporate such features as berms, walls, and landscaping.







Diamond Tail Residential District

The designation of the Diamond Tail Residential District (DTRD, See Map) is to recognize this single unit planned community neighborhood in the Placitas Area Plan. Diamond Tail is consistent with many of the formal architectural design controls commonly found in the West Placitas subdivisions. As the community has a master plan approved by Sandoval County, the criteria established by that master plan shall guide development of this area. Designation of Diamond Tail as a community is appropriate due to the unique development patterns making it distinct from less formally planned communities, such as Las Huertas and Tecolote. The following criteria are proposed to guide apply to the Diamond Tail Community District:

DTCRD Zoning Recommendation:

- Adopt standards for the district as established in the Diamond Tail Master Plan





Purpose of the I-25 Frontage/Bernalillo Interface District

The purpose of the I-25 Frontage/Bernalillo Interface district is to create land uses which transition commercial and retail development along the I-25 frontage road to low density housing characteristic of the West Placitas area. Assuming adequate infrastructure, the district should:

- a) In the narrow area adjacent to the I-25 Frontage Road, encourage mixed use commercial, retail, and high density residential uses that exploit opportunities created by the NM 550/ Rail Runner Station
- b) In the intermediate area between those described in a) and c), encourage less dense residential uses suitably protected by vegetation, berms, etc, from high density and commercial uses.
- c) In the area adjacent to the WPRD, encourage even less dense residential use consistent with WPRD standards.





Transit Oriented Development Goals should be:

- **Transition land uses from retail, higher density housing to single family housing**
- **Connect pedestrian facilities such as bike paths and trails to the Rail runner Station**
- **Provide for Park n Ride Opportunities at development along the I-25 frontage**
- **Construct appropriate pedestrian facilities across I-25**

Transitional Implementation Strategy

- **Commercial/Retail and Higher Density Housing Along the I-25 frontage**
- **Condominium/Town Home/Patio home Development Between Mixed use along the Frontage and Development Patterns of West Placitas**
- **Single Family Housing patterns should be developed adjacent to existing single family housing**













General Plan Recommendations

- **Night Sky Protection**

The area plan recommends that County establish an enforceable night sky protection policy for the Placitas area. The County recommends language addressing night sky protection for Placitas based on the text in the Jemez Valley Area Plan. The standard applied in the Jemez Valley area is more enforceable than the New Mexico Night Sky Protection Act.

The Jemez Night Protection Criteria:

Outdoor light fixtures shall comply with the following:

- **Fixtures shall be shielded such that light rays emitted by the fixture are projected at 45 degrees from a point on the fixture where light is emitted.**
- **Where used for security purposes, or to illuminate walkways, equipment yards and parking lots, only shielded outdoor light fixtures shall be utilized.**
- **Fixtures shall be required to have all light focused downward.**
- **Exterior lighting shall be shielded in such a manner as to confine emitted light within the boundary of the property from which it originated.**
- **Outdoor light fixtures shall be limited to sixteen (16) feet in height.**
- **Any illuminated on-premise advertising sign shall be turned off between 11:00 P.M. and sunrise except that on-premise signs may remain illuminated while a business is open to the public.**
- **All non-conforming lighting installed prior to the effective date of this Ordinance shall be altered or replaced in order to conform within two (2) years.**





- **Wildlife Corridor**

The residents of the Placitas area are interested in the County supporting, in its policies and operations, a wildlife corridor in the Placitas area. Therefore, Sandoval County should support the Placitas community in their request that New Mexico Game and Fish as well as the United States Fish and Wildlife conduct an official wildlife corridor study which can identify corridors, and make specific recommendations for protecting a designated corridor to ensure free passage of wildlife.

- **Incentive for Cluster Development to Improve Open Space**

Based on the concern for the protection of open space, view sheds, and wildlife corridors in the plan area, a cluster development incentive should be allowed to provide developers with an incentive to protect open space. Developers should be allowed to cluster housing units on a smaller single family lot size. A cluster development should be allowed to cluster on 50% of the total predevelopment parcel. However, undevelopable area such as slopes greater than 40% as well as arroyos should not be considered as part of the gross parcel.

- **Recommendations for Transportation Policy**

Roads and transportation were among elements considered in the Placitas plan study. Based on present conditions and the anticipated build out of the area, there is no compelling need to redesign or expand the current Placitas road system. There are, however, other issues affecting





transportation policy which were identified and developed during the public meeting process. The following transportation policy recommendations are set forth in the plan.

- Virtually all participants from the area were overwhelmingly in opposition to a loop road through Placitas. Although the County understands the concerns of area residents, Sandoval County cannot forever close the opportunity to study transportation issues based on future needs or growth driven conditions in other parts of the County.
- County should expand transit service into the Placitas with connectivity to the new Sandoval Transit Center and the 550/Sandoval County Rail Runner station.
- Sandoval County should support the development of future park and ride locations at the Village of Placitas and also at the Homestead Mercantile.
- The County should work with the NMDOT to develop a pedestrian/equestrian trail system along NM 165 to serve as the backbone trail of the Placitas Area

Open Space Recommendations

The Placitas area has many high value landscape features; many residents are passionate about the protection and conservation of open space. The following policy recommendations are related to the improvement of open spaces in the plan area:

- Work with the City of Albuquerque to ensure the permanent protection of the Placitas Open Space Tract. Also, support community residents' desire to ensure the proper use and appropriate functions of the tract in keeping with the interest of Sandoval County.





- Encourage the development of NM 165 as the back bone of a trail network system for the Placitas Plan Area that can enhance critical open space and provide connections within the community.
- Encourage the set aside of open space in future subdivisions to further protect the cultural landscape of the Placitas area.
- Support cluster development incentives to preserve view sheds and wildlife habitat.
- Implement future findings by the New Mexico Game and Fish regarding wildlife habitat improvement and wildlife corridors.
- Encourage the BLM to maximize open space opportunities on the roughly 3,500 acre tract to the north of the Plan Area as open space, and to set aside any part of this tract identified as a wildlife corridor for use by wildlife.

Waste Water Recommendations

Due to the prevailing soil types and large parcel sizes which are common to the study area (outside the historic Village area), the use of traditional septic systems is not presently providing undue negative impacts on water quality. However, replacement of systems in the Village of Placitas (with the associated small lot sizes and dense, traditional development patterns) will continue to challenge residents due to the high cost of secondary systems that may be required in the village. Therefore, in the future, Sandoval County may need to assist with the identification of appropriate community scale treatment system for the village area, since costs of compliant (advanced septic) systems in the traditional village will likely tax the ability of individual home owners pay for these improvements.





Water Recommendations

The County should encourage the connection of housing units in subdivisions to shared systems or community water systems using system wells for water supply. Where there are not options to connect to existing systems, the use of shared wells for clusters of houses is recommended. Any option which reduces the number of wells in the aquifer is preferable to the practice of individual domestic wells. An additional advantage of the community systems or the shared wells is the management of the water supply that is inherent in the metering of wells of this type, allowing system management and the user / customer to see their usage, be part of realistic conservation programs, and provide for identification of water losses.

Storm Water Recommendations

In November of 2008, the Eastern Sandoval County Arroyo Flood Control Authority was formalized by election to become a governing flood control authority. Flood control and storm water mitigation will come under the authority of this body. Therefore, any new regulation, as well as review of large subdivisions, will require ESCAFCA approval. Sandoval County Development Division will support and work with ESCAFCA to develop a comprehensive approach to dealing with drainage issues in the Placitas Plan Area.





Public Facilities Recommendations

Develop the Placitas Library and fire station as a governmental facilities node for the Placitas Plan Area. Currently, Sandoval County has services facilities located at the Placitas Community Center as well as the site on NM 165 where the Placitas Fire Department and Library are located. Therefore, the 6 acre site of the Placitas Library and Fire Station should be recognized as a Sandoval County public facility campus. The County should be encouraged to consolidate all appropriate public facilities at this location in the future.



Placitas Fire Station



