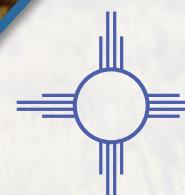


North Central New Mexico  
Economic Development District

# **2026-2030 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy**



**North Central**  
NEW MEXICO  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

# Acknowledgements

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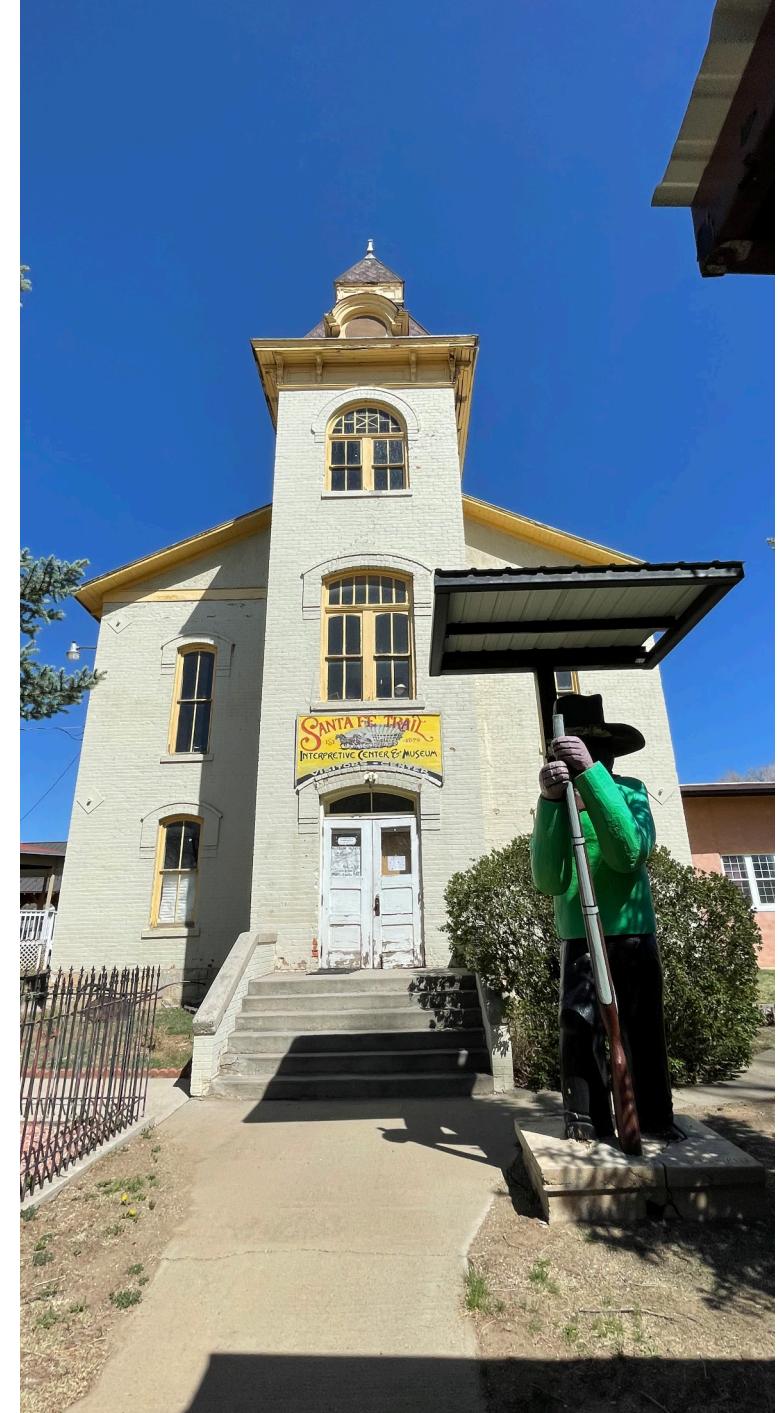
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## Stakeholder Participants

More than 150 people participated in our CEDS public engagement, from every county in the region, as well as from the Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs). We appreciate the valuable input from everyone who joined us and contributed.

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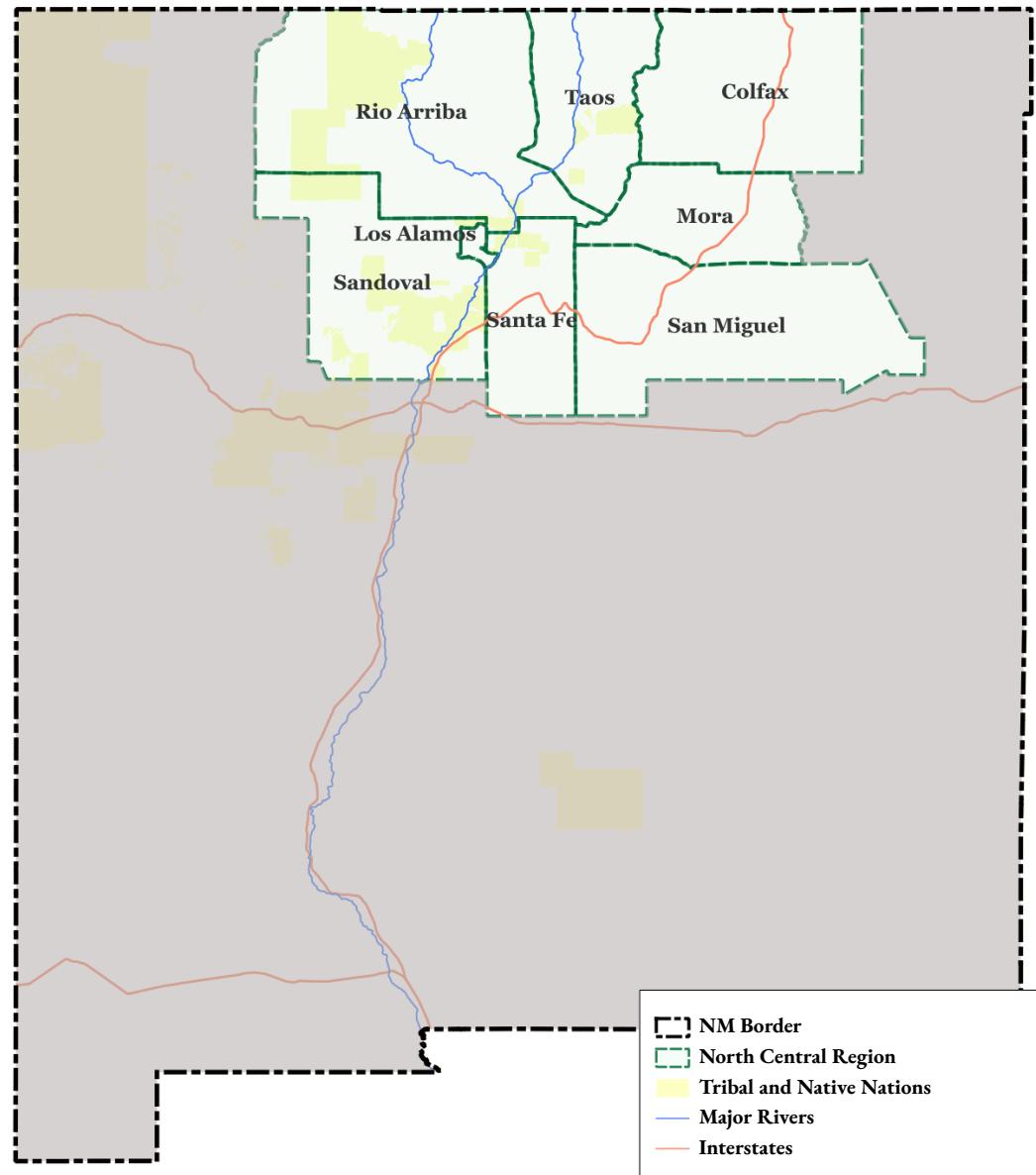


# Executive Summary

A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy is a strategic planning document that guides regional economic development efforts. It is used by regional planning organizations, local governments, businesses, and supporting nonprofit organizations. It is useful for identifying and supporting regional projects and to apply for federal and state funding.

The North Central New Mexico Economic Development District (herein referred to as “the region” when referring to the communities and people living within the 8-county area or “North Central” when referring to the organization itself) encompasses 8 counties (Colfax, Los Alamos, Mora, Rio Arriba, rural and tribal Sandoval, San Miguel, Santa Fe, and Taos), 14 tribal sovereign nations, and numerous special district governments including land grants, acequias, and mutual domestic water consumer and wastewater associations. (Throughout this document, the phrase “local government” refers to and includes municipal, county, tribal, and special district governments.)

North Central covers 24,200 square miles of land area, or approximately the size of West Virginia (see map). The region has a



population of more than 300,000 people, which represents 1/5<sup>th</sup> of the state's population.

NCNMEDD's eight-county region is geographically vast and economically and culturally diverse. To ensure a representative county and regional perspective, Community Development staff conducted a robust CEDS public engagement process, actively involving stakeholders from across the region.

A CEDS Steering Committee representing all eight counties worked closely with the CEDS team to organize county-level stakeholder meetings, a tribal and Pueblo round table, and two RTPO CEDS sessions. More than 99 past plans were reviewed, including economic development plans, comprehensive plans, hazard mitigation plans, metropolitan redevelopment plans, and more.

A SWOT analysis was created to understand the region's assets and challenges and a socioeconomic data review was conducted to understand the demographic, business, and other trends that are impacting the region's economic outcomes (these data are available via the [Data Dashboard](#)).

All of these inputs combined created the 2026-2030 CEDS, with defined strategies that will bring the region toward the vision articulated in the box on the right.

The 2026-2030 CEDS addresses the region's economic realities with a Five-Pillar Strategy designed to strengthen economic resilience, improve quality of life, and support small and new businesses to diversify the industry mix and improve the region's resilience. Each pillar contains targeted and collaborative objectives, strategies, and measures to help guide the region over the next five years.

# Regional Vision:

***Quality housing, strong infrastructure, thriving businesses, and opportunity for every resident—the future of North Central New Mexico***

North Central New Mexico is a region of vibrant, culturally grounded communities that are strengthened by resilient infrastructure, collaborative governance, and economic innovation—where high-quality housing, diverse economies, shared prosperity, and public infrastructure investment creates opportunity for all residents.

# NCNMEDD's Five-Pillar Strategy

## Pillar #1 - Housing

Objective: The region has a good supply of quality, affordable homes

## Pillar #2 - Foundational Infrastructure

Objective #1: The region has sufficient planning, funding and capacity to meet infrastructure needs.

Objective #2: The region has a resilient infrastructure that can withstand stressors and invests in quality of life and multi-modal transit options.

## Pillar #3 - Economic Mobility, Workforce Development, and Quality of Life

Objective #1: The region's child, youth, and workforce development programs provide a quality and relevant workforce pipeline.

Objective #2: The region's natural and cultural assets balance economic development and quality of life.

## Pillar #4 - Diversification and Business Success

Objective #1: The region has a strong and diversified business mix.

Objective #2: The region has a quality business infrastructure that is creating and supporting small businesses in multiple sectors.

## Pillar #5 - Government Efficiency, Capacity, and Collaboration

Objective #1: Local governments have skilled, knowledgeable, and effective staff or access to technical assistance organizations.

Objective #2: Local governments effectively collaborate to improve revenue utilization, services, and emergency response.

# Summary Background

## Demographics

The region's population grew 115% between 1960 and 2020. The population growth has followed an s-curve shape, with a slower recent decennial growth rate of 3% in the 2010s compared to a high 24% growth rate in the 1990s.

Growth is not consistent across the counties. Santa Fe County grew 7% in the 2020's while Colfax, Mora, and San Miguel (representing 12.5% of the population) have experienced population loss since 1960. Los Alamos and Rio Arriba each lost population between 2010 and 2020. Population growth is positively correlated with economic outcomes<sup>1</sup>, including higher income and employment levels. Counties with declining populations often face economic challenges such as slower income growth and an aging demographic.

<sup>1</sup>For more information, see [this article](#) from Buresch et al.

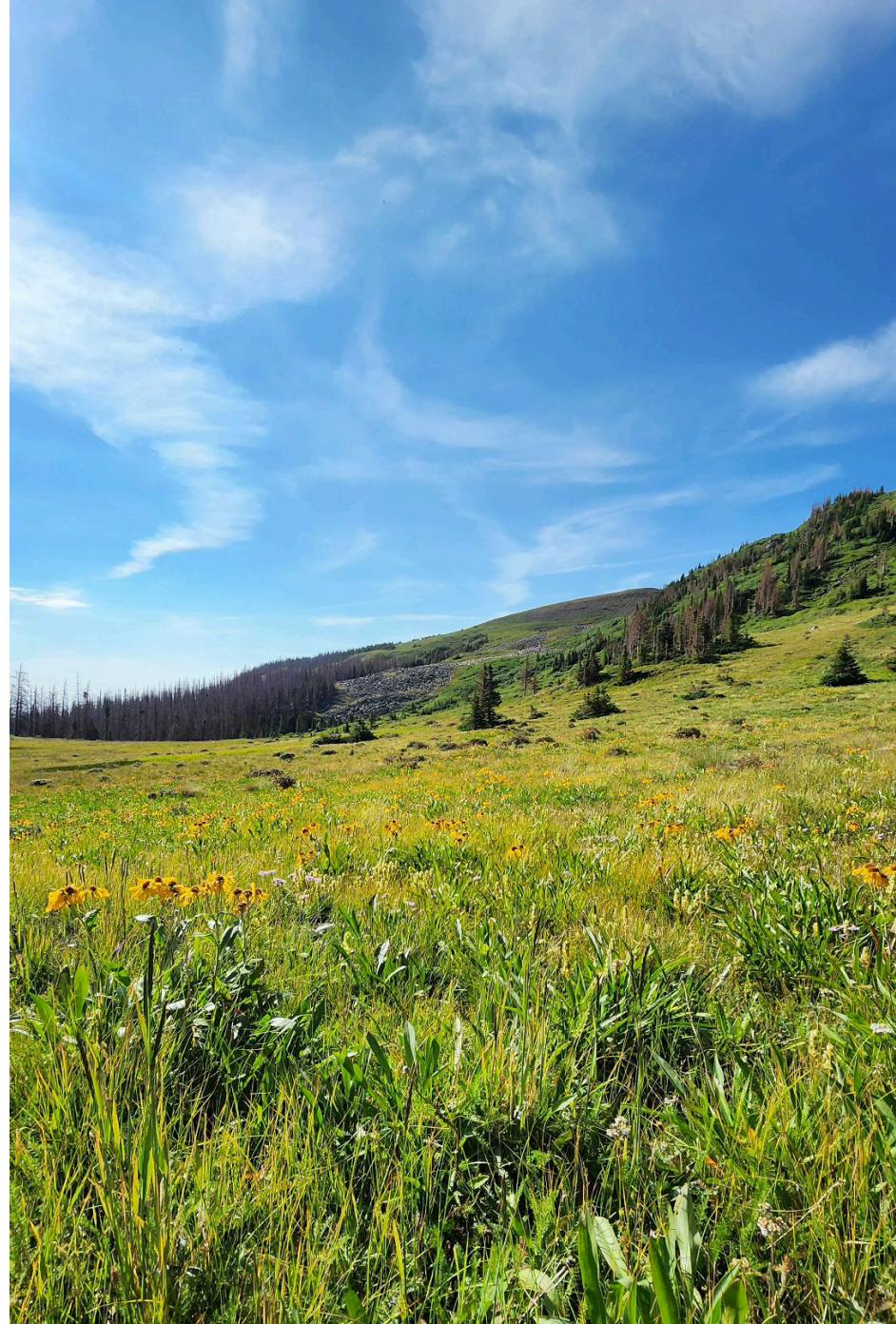
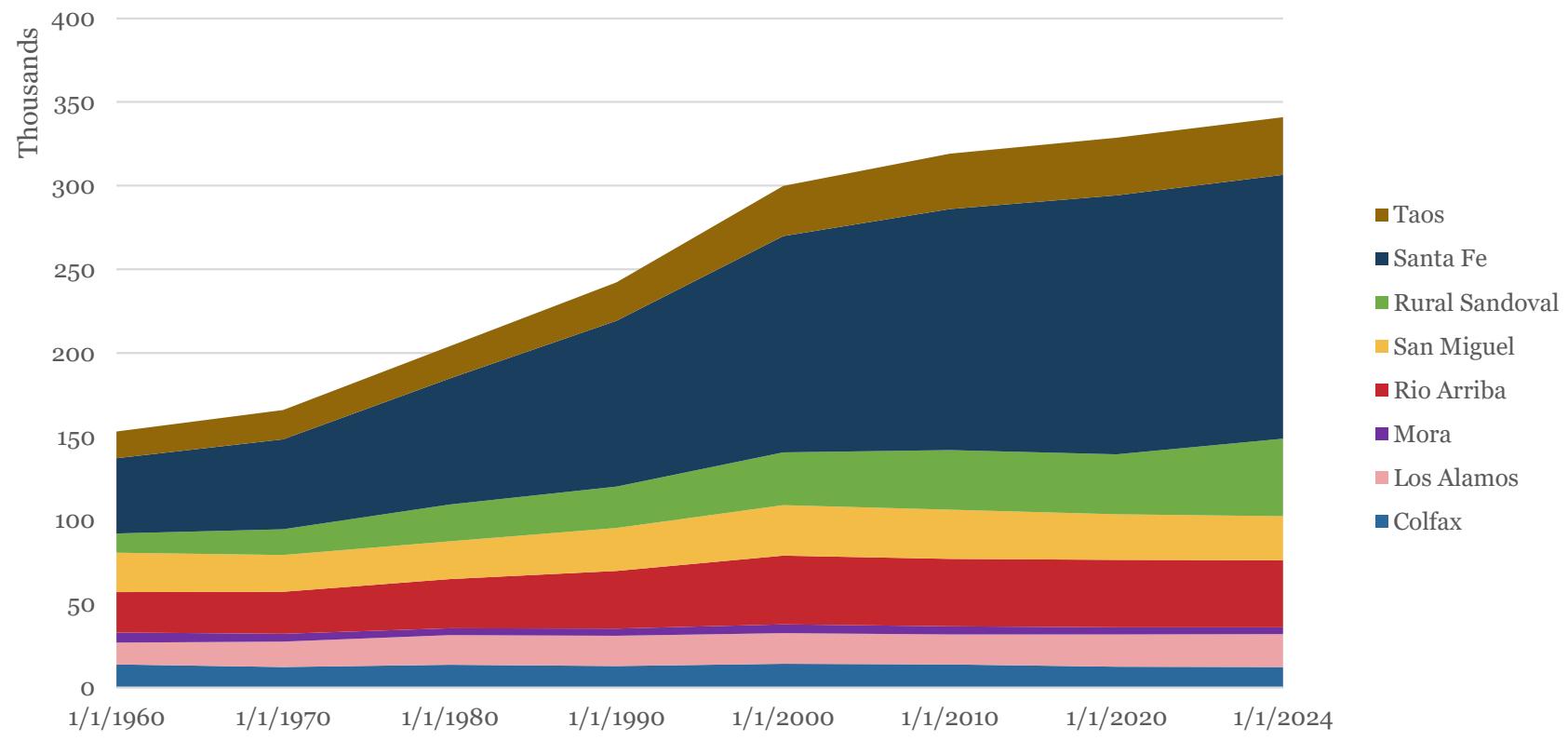


Chart 1 – North Central Population Growth (1960-2024)



% Change	Colfax	Los Alamos	Mora	Rio Arriba	San Miguel	Rural Sandoval	Santa Fe	Taos	North Central
1960–2020	<b>-10.3%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>-30.5%</b>	<b>66.8%</b>	<b>-15.9%</b>	<b>208%</b>	<b>244.3%</b>	<b>116.4%</b>	<b>114.7%</b>
2010–2020	<b>-9.9%</b>	<b>8.2%</b>	<b>-14.2%</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>-7.5%</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>7.4%</b>	<b>4.7%</b>	<b>3.0%</b>

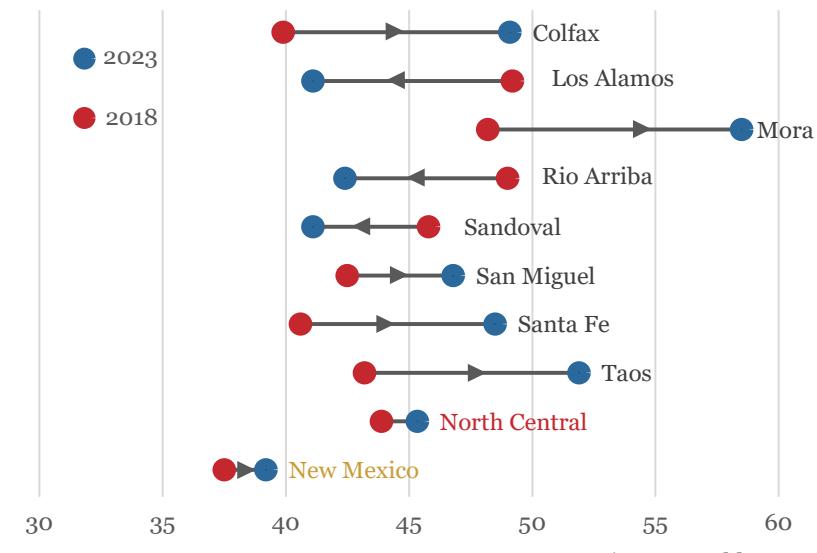
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program

Note: These chart only shows the data for “Rural Sandoval” County, which removes Rio Rancho and Bernallillo from the analysis.

All of the counties have a median age that is higher than the state's median age of 39.2 years. The region's median age (estimated at 45.3 years) increased an average of 1.4 years between 2019 and 2023<sup>1</sup>. There are large differences between the counties. Mora County, for example, experienced the largest growth in median age (up 10.3 years), while Los Alamos experienced the smallest (down 8.1 years).

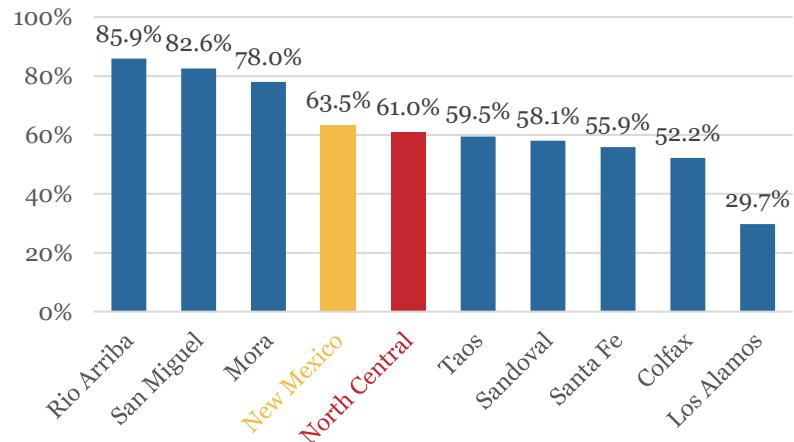
The region ranges from an 86% minority share in Rio Arriba (where two-thirds of the population is of Hispanic or Latino origin and 16% are Native American) to a 30% minority share in Los Alamos. Overall, the region has a weighted-average minority share of 60%, lower than the state's share of 64%.

Chart 2 – Median Age Growth (2018 to 2023)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates, Table S0101

Chart 3 – Minority Share by County



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates, Table B02001, B03001

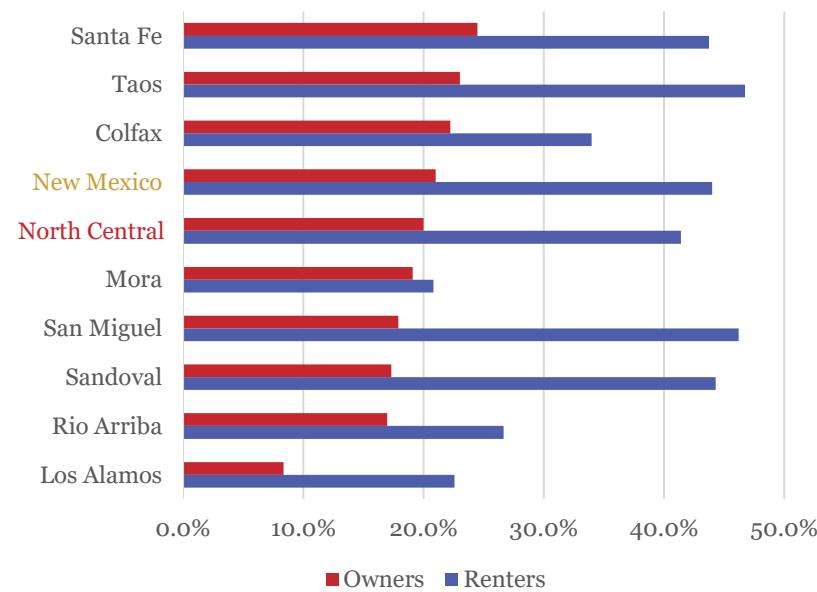
<sup>1</sup>All regional averages used in this report are weighted averages based on the population counts for each county (housing counts are used for housing measures).

## Housing

One of the most consistent issues identified by stakeholders throughout the region was housing availability and affordability. Owning a unit is very common for the region, with 76.5% of occupied units being owned (either outright or with a mortgage). Renter-occupied units are less common in the region compared to the State (at 69%).

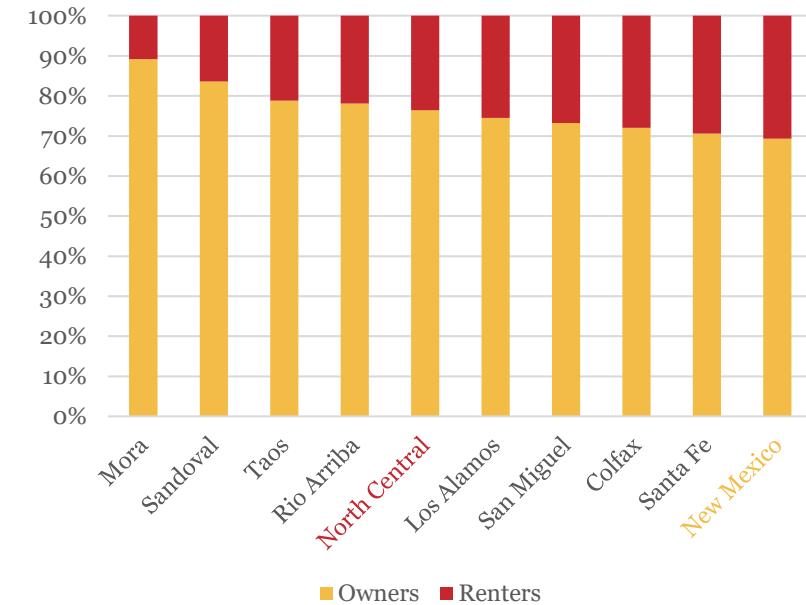
2 out of every 5 renters and 1 out of every 5 owners is housing cost burdened, meaning that they have housing costs (including utilities, taxes, rent, mortgages, or HOA fees) that are 30% or more of their household income. Overall, approximately 30% of the region's households are cost burdened, slightly lower than the state (32.5%). Taos has the highest share of cost-burdened households (35%) followed by Santa Fe (34%).

Chart 4 – Share of Housing Cost Burdened Households



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-year Estimates, Table S2503

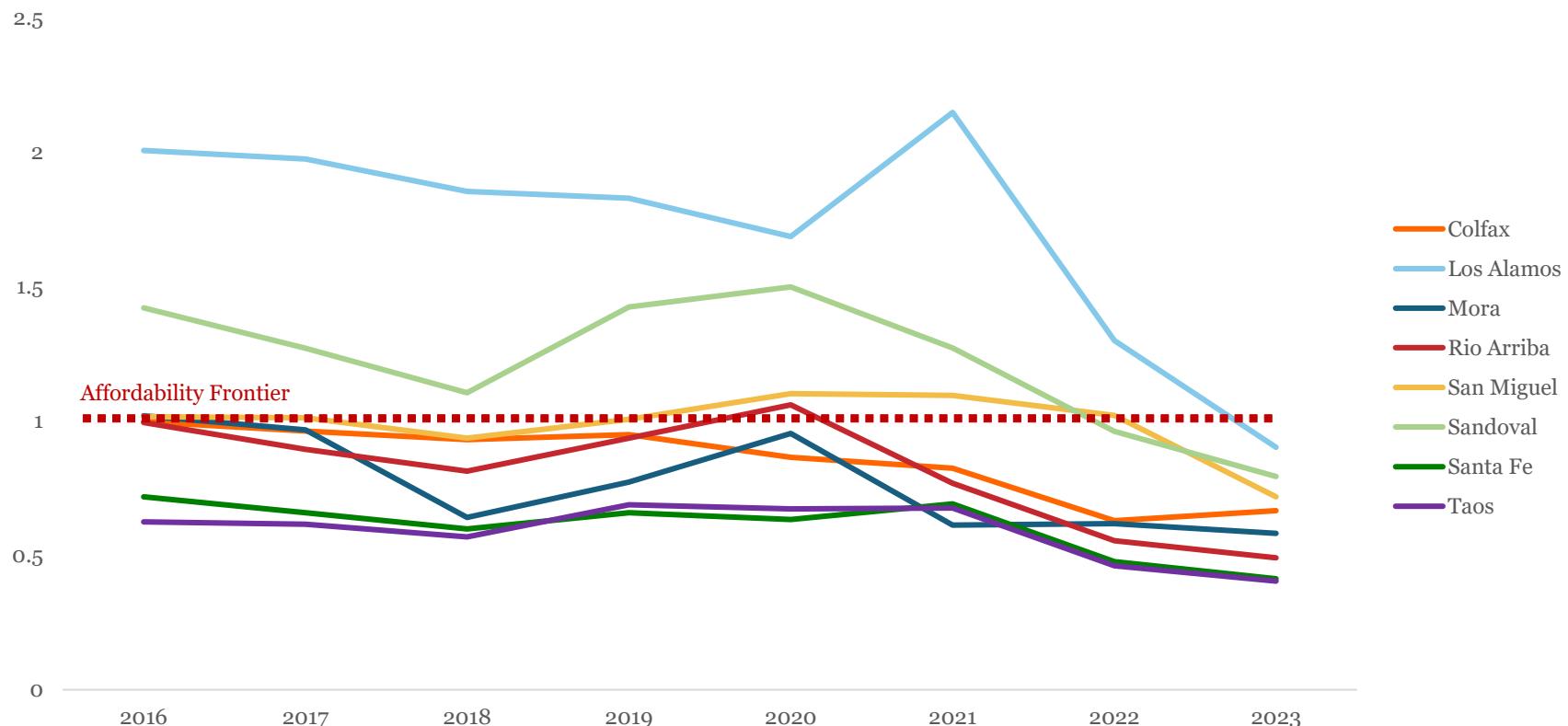
Chart 5 – Households by Ownership Type



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Table B25003

While Chart 5 shows the housing cost burden for current/existing households, it isn't able to capture the affordability of the housing market and the experience of households that are looking to change homes or move into the region. Chart 6 shows the Home Affordability Index, which shows the relative ability of the median-earning household to buy the median home, where 1 represents the "Affordability Frontier", or where the median household would be able to qualify for and purchase the median home. Every county dropped below the affordability frontier in 2023. This trend reflects the impact of rising interest rates and home prices that have exceeded income growth.

Chart 6 – Home Affordability Index (2016-2023)

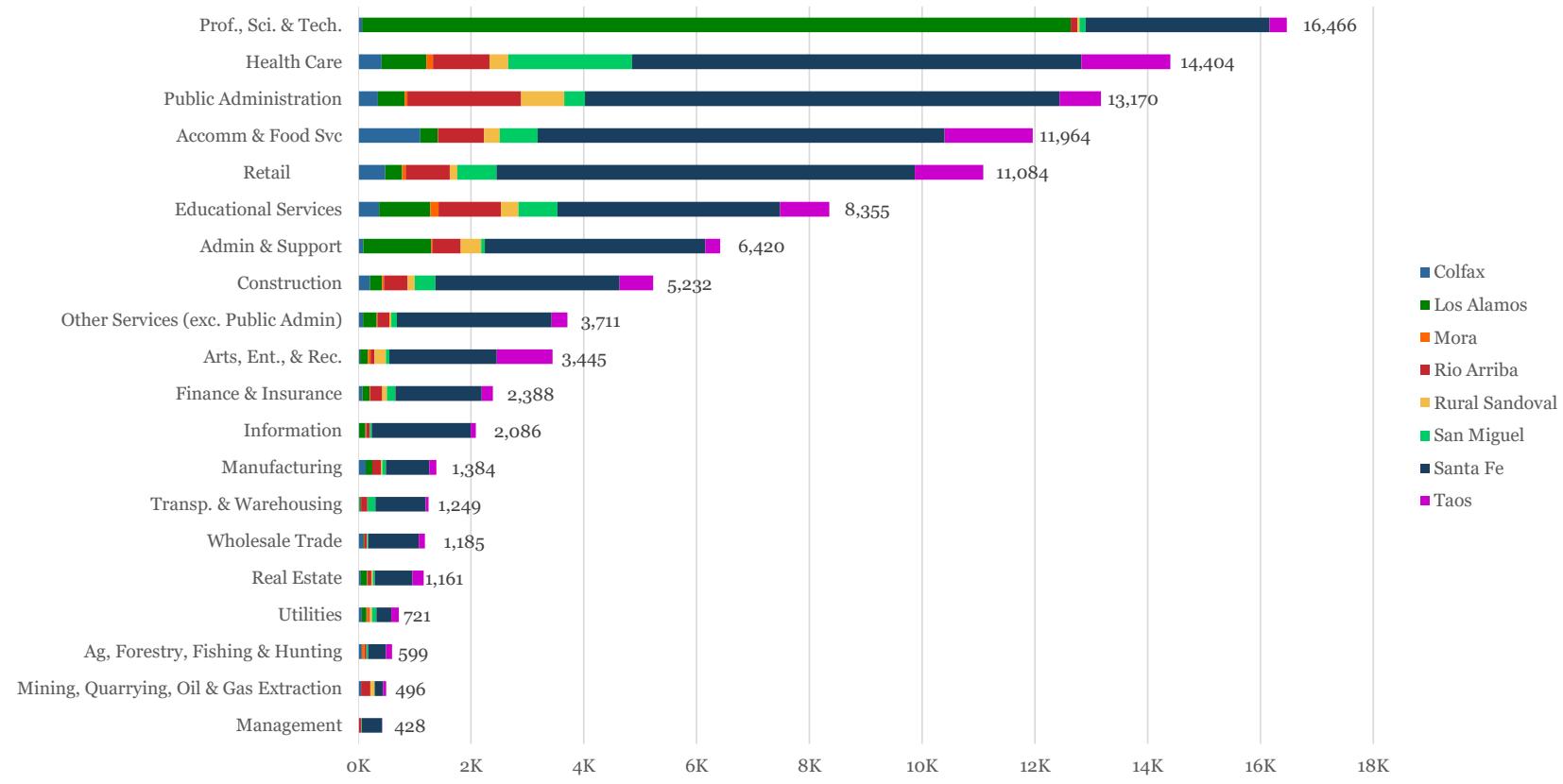


Sources: Realtor.com; Freddie Mac; U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates; Better City  
Adapted from Texas A&M's Home Affordability Index, with Median Household Income used in place of Median Family Income, average annual national 30-year mortgage rate used in place of regional Core Logic rate, and 28% qualifying ratio.

## Industry and Workforce

The professional and scientific industry is the largest sector for primary job counts in the region (estimated 16,466 jobs), followed by healthcare (14,404 jobs), public administration (13,170 jobs), and accommodation and food services (11,964 jobs). Los Alamos has 76% of the jobs in the leading industry, showing the region's reliance on this sector for its jobs. Santa Fe is the main driver of jobs across the other industries.

Chart 7 – Jobs by Industry (2022)

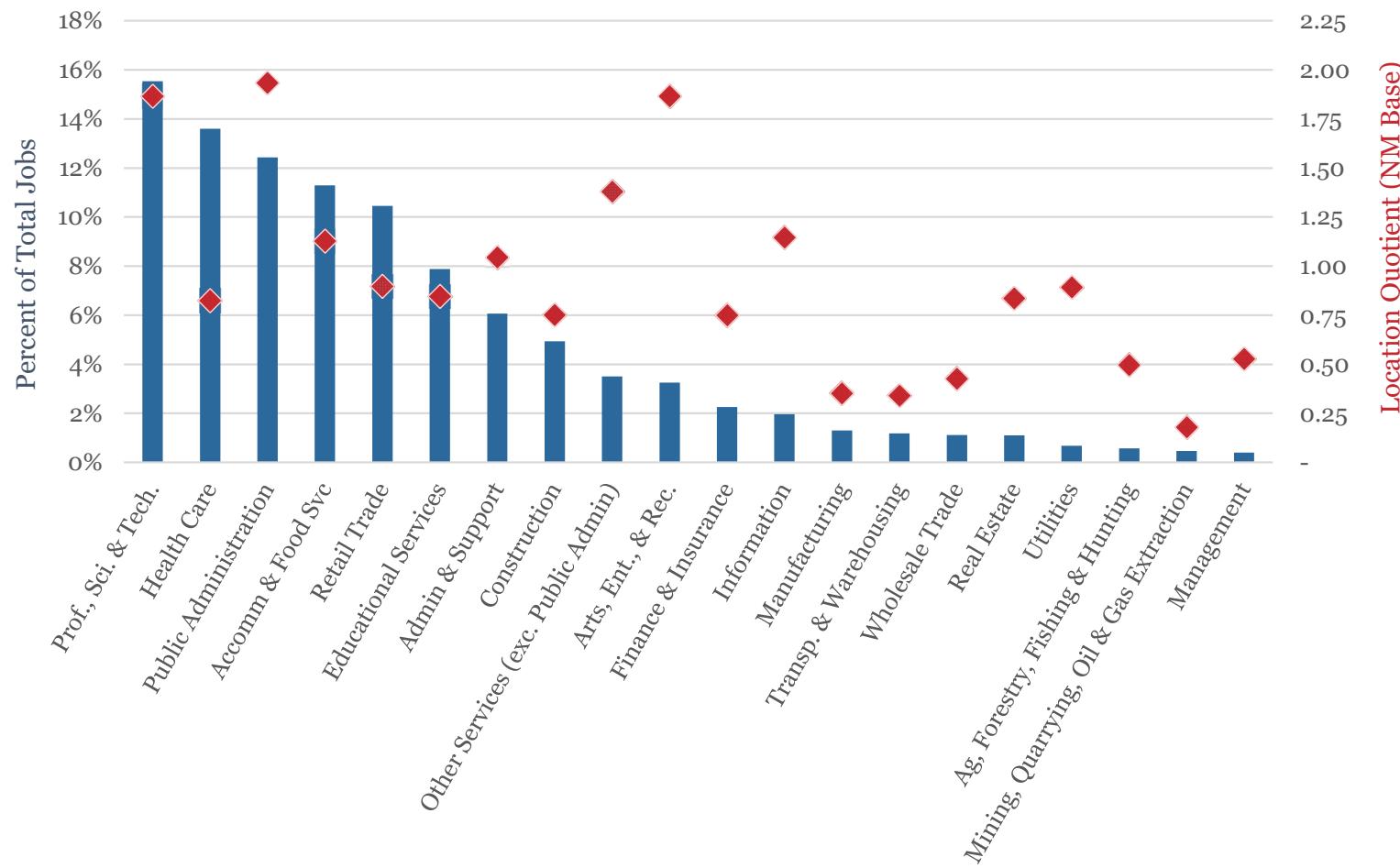


Source: U.S.Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies, LEHD

Note: This chart only shows the data for "Rural Sandoval" County, which removes Rio Rancho and Bernallillo from the analysis.

A common way to analyze industry concentration is through a location quotient (LQ). This measure calculates the relative share of jobs compared to the share of jobs for a baseline geography.<sup>1</sup> When comparing to the state, the North Central region has high concentration in “professional, scientific, and technical”, “public administration”, “arts, entertainment, and recreation”, and “other services”. These industries represent major job clusters throughout the region.

Chart 8 – Industry Share and Location Quotient (North Central)

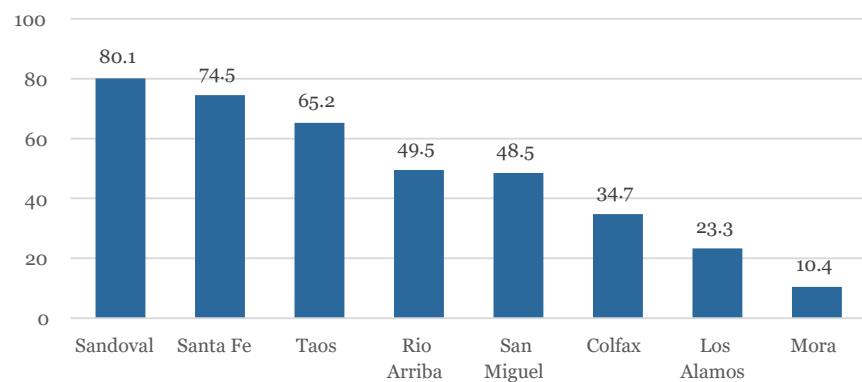


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies, LEHD; Better City

<sup>1</sup>LQ is calculated by dividing the industry's share at the local level to the share at the baseline level. Values above 1.25 generally indicate exporting industries that add money beyond what the economy would generate with its own population, while values below 0.75 indicate importing industries.

The relative size of industries for each county is also important to consider, especially when thinking about long-term resilience. The Hachman Index shows industry diversification by county in comparison to the US and combines LQ scores for each of the counties. A Hachman Index score of 100 indicates that a county's distribution of industries is exactly similar to the US distribution. Lower scores indicate that a county's economy is more reliant on one or two industries. For example, Mora County has three large industries (Agriculture, Government, and Finance) that make up 83% of the county's Gross Domestic Product (GDP); in contrast, Sandoval's three largest industries make up 59% of its GDP. A diversified industry mix is generally preferred to reduce economic vulnerability.

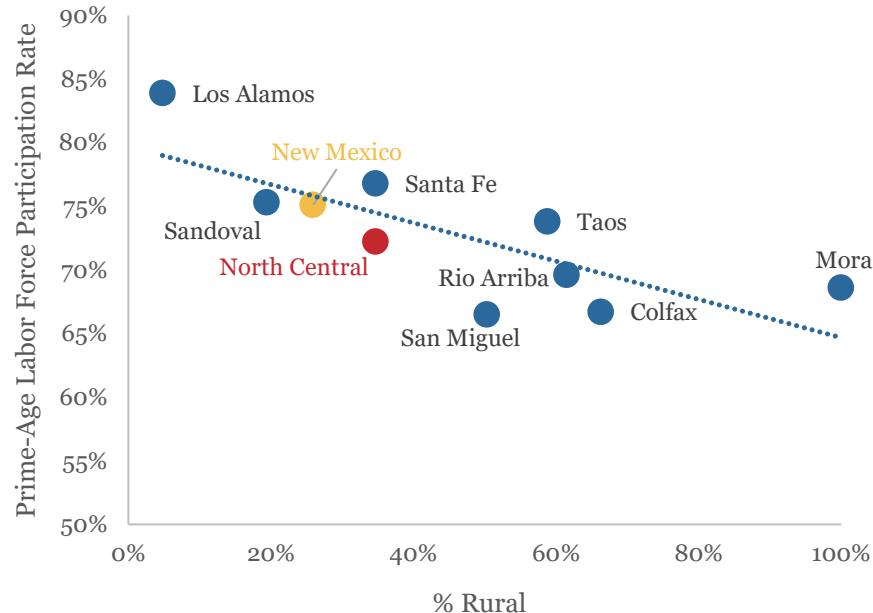
**Chart 9 – Hachman Index by County (GDP with US as Base)**



*Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census on Employment and Wages.*

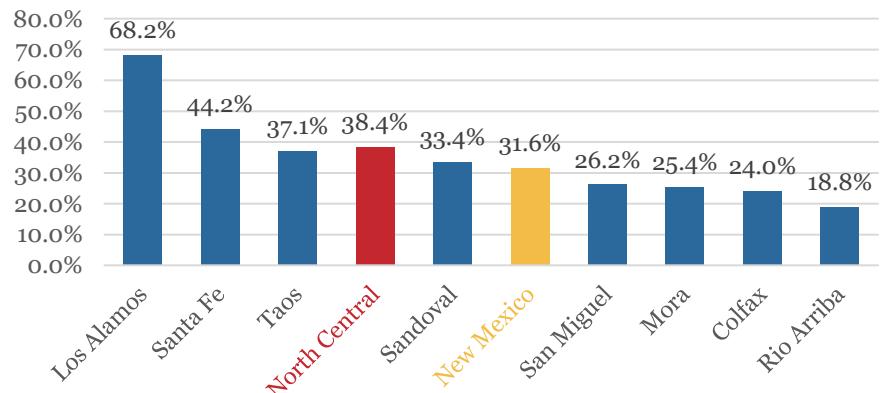


Chart 10 – Prime-Age Labor Force Participation Rate (2023)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-year Estimates, Table S2301

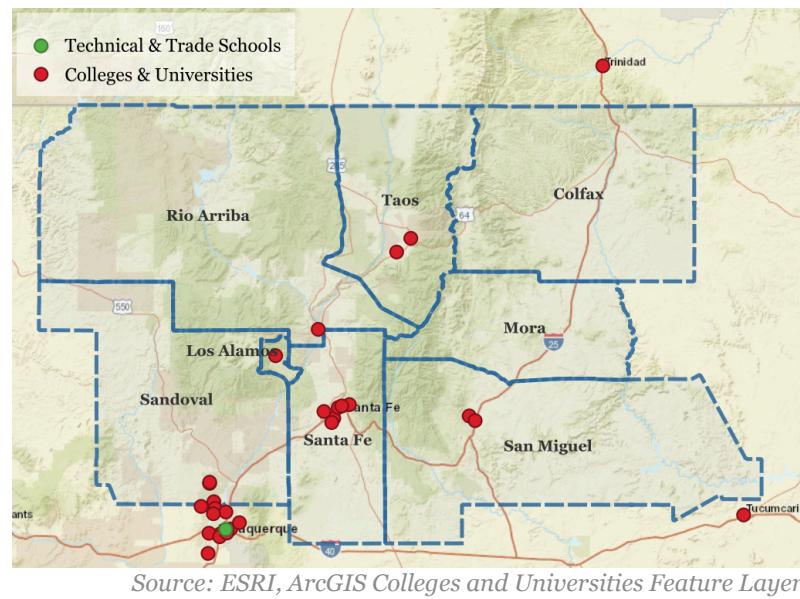
Chart 11 – Bachelor’s Degree or Higher (Population 25+)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-year Estimates, Table S1501

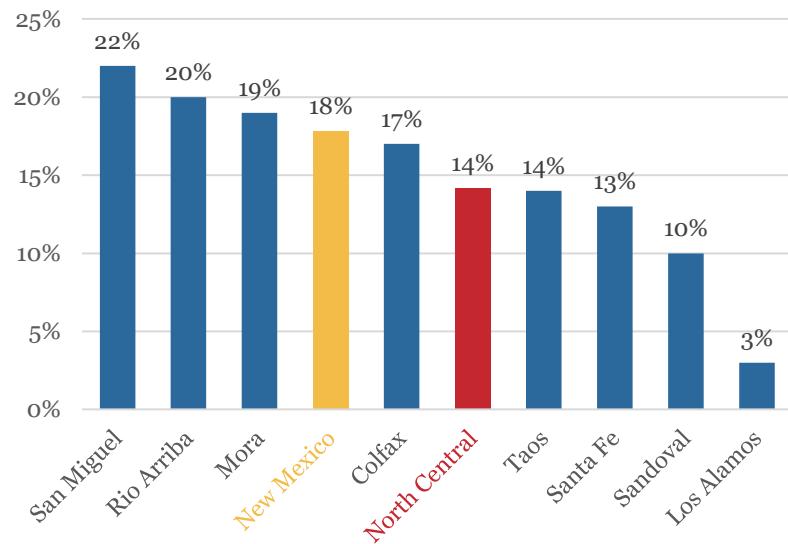
The region's prime-age labor force participation rate (LFPR) of 72% is lower than the state's rate of 75%. There is a strong negative correlation (-0.77) between the LFPR and share of rural housing units, meaning that the more rural counties tend to have lower labor force participation.

Educational attainment varies significantly between counties, with 68% of people 25+ having a Bachelor's or higher in Los Alamos and fewer than 19% with this attainment in Rio Arriba. The region's 37% average Bachelor's attainment is higher than the state (32%). Post-secondary schools are only in 5 of the 8 counties, with the eastern and western edges of the region having limited access to these institutions.



Source: ESRI, ArcGIS Colleges and Universities Feature Layer

Chart 12 – Population Living Below the Poverty Level



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-year Estimates, Table S1701

The region's weighted-average median household income (MHI) is \$75,400. This is \$13 thousand higher than the state's MHI of \$62,000. These outcomes are influenced by the outlier income values in Los Alamos. For example, if Los Alamos is removed from the MHI estimate, the region drops to \$69,000 MHI, much closer to the state's MHI.

The region's poverty rate of 13% is 5 percentage points lower than the state's (18%) and is close to the U.S. rate of 12.5%. However, wide disparities exist throughout the region, suggesting that poverty is highly geographic. In San Miguel, Rio Arriba, and Mora 1 out of every 5 live below the poverty level.

Chart 13 – Median Household Income



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-year Estimates, Table 19013

## SWOT Analysis

A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis considers the internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) and external factors (opportunities and threats) that influence economic development activities within the region. The SWOT analysis organizes and documents the assets the region possesses and the challenges the region and its communities are facing. The table on the following page summarizes the SWOT items. Detailed descriptions for each pillar are found on the following pages.



Pillar	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<b>Housing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional priority</li> <li>• Housing authorities</li> <li>• Redevelopment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aging stock</li> <li>• Zoning issues</li> <li>• Construction workforce</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low income housing tax credits</li> <li>• Land banking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rising costs</li> <li>• Climate risks</li> </ul>
<b>Foundational Infrastructure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning tools</li> <li>• Broadband growth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failing systems</li> <li>• Low walkability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tech hub</li> <li>• Infrastructure funds</li> <li>• Regional transit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inflation</li> <li>• Low local capacity</li> </ul>
<b>Economic Mobility, Workforce Development, &amp; Quality of Life</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career and technical education</li> <li>• Colleges</li> <li>• Local programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth out-migration</li> <li>• Few job pipelines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paid internships</li> <li>• Dual-credit programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brain drain</li> <li>• Program awareness</li> </ul>
<b>Diversification and Business Success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entrepreneurial hubs and support</li> <li>• Tourism and outdoor recreation assets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site readiness</li> <li>• Access to capital</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Industry clusters</li> <li>• Outdoor recreation</li> <li>• Youth entrepreneurs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over reliance on tourism</li> <li>• Retail competition</li> </ul>
<b>Government Efficiency, Capacity, and Collaboration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong partners</li> <li>• Main Street efforts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local government staff turnover</li> <li>• Resource gaps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared staffing</li> <li>• Planning funds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate risk</li> <li>• Fragmented governance</li> </ul>
<b>Other</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural pride</li> <li>• Grassroots energy</li> <li>• Community volunteerism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generational disconnect</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural funding</li> <li>• Youth return</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of traditions</li> <li>• Climate damage</li> </ul>

# Housing

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing is recognized as a regional priority.</li> <li>Communities are willing to adopt affordable housing plans.</li> <li>Vacant building inventories are being utilized in places like Raton and Las Vegas.</li> <li>The housing vision includes integration with Main Street programs, youth retention, and revitalization.</li> <li>Several communities have adopted planning tools (e.g., Metropolitan Redevelopment Acts) to guide revitalization.</li> <li>Many communities have underutilized public facilities and vacant buildings that can support infrastructure or economic development.</li> <li>Traditional, alternative, and eco-friendly building techniques</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vacant buildings with unclear ownership obstruct redevelopment.</li> <li>There are many vacant and deteriorating buildings, often with absentee owners and complicated title issues.</li> <li>High housing costs in areas like Los Alamos, Santa Fe, and Taos limit worker proximity to jobs.</li> <li>There is insufficient housing production for the workforce, seniors, and special needs populations.</li> <li>Small communities have limited capacity to manage housing codes and ordinances, with many vacant properties in probate or disrepair with no reuse options.</li> <li>Public resistance to affordable and higher-density housing persists.</li> <li>High living costs and lack of workforce housing impede entrepreneurship and business retention.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funding for broadband, water, roads, housing, and resilience.</li> <li>Expanding workforce housing access via incentive zones, ADU policies, and employer-supported housing.</li> <li>Housing working group for regional collaboration.</li> <li>Regulatory reform at local and state levels to enable greater housing development and reuse.</li> <li>Promotion of housing that supports seniors' needs.</li> <li>Developing communication strategies to improve perceptions of affordable housing.</li> <li>Offering relocation/housing stipends and tools to attract entrepreneurs.</li> <li>Resources available through land grant-mercedes and acequias to develop affordable housing in rural areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rising housing costs and cost of living outpacing wage growth, discouraging relocation or retention.</li> <li>High renovation costs for existing housing stock make reuse financially prohibitive.</li> <li>Second-home/vacation rental markets and LANL-driven demand put pressures on local housing supply.</li> <li>Disjointed or outdated zoning and land-use policies that hinder housing density and mixed-use development.</li> </ul>

# Foundational Infrastructure

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional public transportation, e.g. NCRTD and micro-transit hubs.</li> <li>Existing regional infrastructure and coordination with partners like NMED and RCAC, focusing on water/wastewater and emergency planning.</li> <li>Funding available through NMFA Local Government Planning Fund, CDBG, NMED, NMDOT, etc. for enhancing services and infrastructure resilience.</li> <li>Increased collaboration among jurisdictions for broadband infrastructure and water system regionalization.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited ability to create “capital” stack to fully fund projects.</li> <li>Low utilization of funding outside of capital outlay.</li> <li>Limited resources and outdated core infrastructure, particularly water/wastewater and roads.</li> <li>Insufficient pedestrian infrastructure, public transit options, and wayfinding signage.</li> <li>High-speed broadband access in households.</li> <li>Inadequate K-12 prep, CTE programs, and work-based learning lead to inadequate workforce for industry clusters.</li> <li>Vulnerabilities in critical infrastructure exposed by disasters, such as failures in water treatment systems.</li> <li>Limited government staff capacity and technical expertise delay infrastructure projects and funding pursuits.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Infrastructure training for local governments.</li> <li>Increasing planning capacity and resource accessibility.</li> <li>Modernizing signage, transit, and way-finding systems.</li> <li>Developing multi-modal transportation networks for workers and youth.</li> <li>Collaborating on cross-jurisdictional water, sewer, and emergency services to enhance funding and access.</li> <li>State-led efforts to regionalize small water systems for better sustainability and resilience.</li> <li>Expanding broadband and technical infrastructure for access, emergency alerts, and digital literacy.</li> <li>Supporting beautification projects and historic structure reactivation to attract visitors and boost economy.</li> <li>Advocating for a collaborative regional approach to enhance community economies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth and skilled labor migrating to urban areas due to poor infrastructure and lack of quality of life amenities.</li> <li>Aging water systems and limited emergency services increase risks.</li> <li>Infrastructure cost inflation and supply chain delays hinder upgrades.</li> <li>Fire-prone areas and extreme weather events threaten health and safety.</li> <li>Many small communities lack the capacity for revitalization.</li> <li>Volunteer fatigue and limited governance could lead to institutional decline.</li> <li>Complicated state processes deter communities from addressing safety issues.</li> </ul>

# Economic Mobility, Workforce Development, and Quality of Life

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A strong higher education ecosystem features community colleges and regional universities creating workforce- aligned programs for students, including collaboration with school districts for CTE/Dual Credit trainings.</li> <li>Innovative programs include heritage trades, wildfire resiliency training, broadband infrastructure, and partnerships with LANL.</li> <li>Active collaboration between education, business, and government sectors such as Kit Carson Electric and broadband workforce training.</li> <li>Youth engagement efforts include career days, work-based learning pilots, mentorship, and leadership.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mismatch between training and job needs in high-skill sectors.</li> <li>Limited wraparound supports such as public transit and childcare reduces participation in training and employment.</li> <li>Staff turnover and insufficient project management training impede implementation of quality of life infrastructure.</li> <li>Local capacity to make quality of life investments is impacted by leadership and limited resources.</li> <li>Lack of training and project management skills.</li> <li>Insufficient financial and workforce resources for historic restoration.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arts and culture entrepreneurship to preserve traditions and generate jobs.</li> <li>Education aligned with employment using stackable credentials and apprenticeships to fill skill gaps.</li> <li>Utilize digital platforms for remote work and training.</li> <li>Train workers for diverse seasonal jobs, linking tourism, agriculture, clean energy, and other sectors.</li> <li>Access state and federal workforce funding for initiatives.</li> <li>Focus on planning and assessments as a first step in order to fund revitalization projects.</li> <li>Foster public-private partnerships and collaborate with universities to tackle workforce challenges.</li> <li>Build community centers, quality of life, and recreational infrastructure for residents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth out-migration due to limited career opportunities.</li> <li>Workforce shortages in education, healthcare, energy, and trades.</li> <li>Insufficient construction workforce for new builds and rehabilitation.</li> <li>Persistent youth out-migration due to lack of job pathways and entrepreneurship training.</li> <li>Continued rural depopulation leads to building abandonment, economic stagnation, and underutilized infrastructure.</li> <li>The trend of people moving away results in empty, poorly maintained properties.</li> </ul>

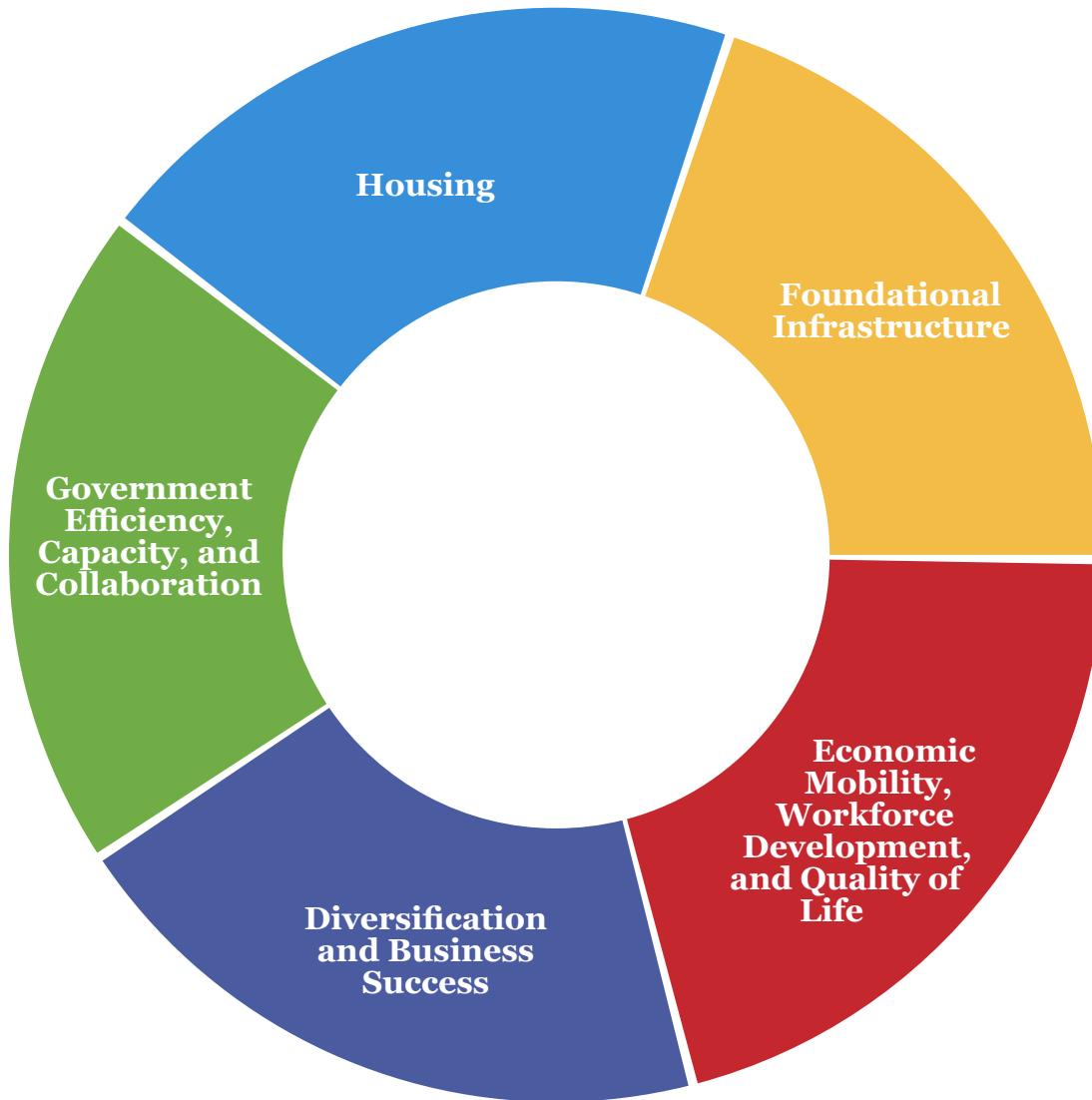
# Diversification and Business Success

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unique landscapes, cultures, and outdoor recreation attract tourism.</li> <li>Support from NM Tourism Dept. and NMEDD.</li> <li>Strong entrepreneurial culture with a focus on digital and micro-enterprise.</li> <li>Entrepreneurial hubs in Santa Fe, Taos, and Raton with support organizations.</li> <li>Interest in artisan products, cultural tourism, and branding.</li> <li>Communities aim to retain legacy businesses and promote youth entrepreneurship.</li> <li>Partnerships with schools for entrepreneurial pipelines.</li> <li>Historic downtowns, cultural sites, and outdoor recreation are assets for economic revitalization and tourism.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to capital for locally owned small business.</li> <li>Communities market themselves individually, missing opportunities for regional branding and joint tourism efforts.</li> <li>Burdensome permitting/zoning.</li> <li>Lack of ready business sites and spaces.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Value chain development in regional industry clusters.</li> <li>Destination stewardship tourism that highlights cultural and natural assets while preserving community integrity.</li> <li>Leverage outdoor recreation to complement cultural tourism and boost local economies.</li> <li>Strengthen regional identity through tourism, artisan branding, and specialty crop development.</li> <li>Business succession and youth entrepreneur programs, including microgrants and competitions.</li> <li>Strengthen connections to small business resources (e.g., SBDC, Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, UNM Rainforest), in order to access capital and technical assistance.</li> <li>Create local funding mechanisms for economic development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tourism pressures that risk commodifying or eroding authentic cultural practices.</li> <li>Dependence on a limited number of industries (e.g., LANL or tourism) without diversified growth.</li> <li>Regulatory burdens and lack of local government capacity to support small business growth.</li> <li>Local small businesses struggle to compete with national chains and e-commerce, threatening their viability in rural markets.</li> </ul>

# Government Efficiency, Capacity, and Collaboration

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local governments familiar with and utilize Infrastructure Capital Improvement Planning.</li> <li>Strong local government technical assistance ecosystem.</li> <li>NMFA Local Government Planning Fund (LGPF).</li> <li>Collaboration with RCAC, NM Environment Department, NM Outdoor Recreation Division, and local school districts and colleges.</li> <li>Support for regional coordination and collaboration.</li> <li>Support for forming regional task forces and workgroups for economic development, emergency response and resiliency planning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited local government capacity.</li> <li>Poor coordination between jurisdictions impedes public safety, houseless response, and emergency preparedness.</li> <li>Lack of political will, local capacity, and resources results in high government turnover and competing priorities.</li> <li>Many rural communities lack the financial, staffing, and technical capacity to clean up, plan, or implement revitalization projects.</li> <li>Low capacity to create a capital stack for projects or to pursue alternate funding sources (e.g., PIDDS, TIDDS, tax credits).</li> <li>Emergency preparedness and disaster recovery efforts are siloed, with limited coordination across jurisdictions and between levels of government.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build capacity and leadership.</li> <li>Regionalization and collaboration.</li> <li>Apprenticeships and pipeline programs can be established for emergency responders, public works, and government positions, especially targeting youth. Aligning local and regional efforts with state and federal priorities.</li> <li>Improve emergency response and preparedness through planning and hazard mitigation.</li> <li>DHSEM and FEMA support to implement mitigation measures and strengthen community preparedness and capacity.</li> <li>Partnerships with NM Land Grant Council, Acequia Commission, and NM Acequia Association</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communities are heavily dependent on state/federal aid with limited local taxing capacity or bonding authority.</li> <li>Political or bureaucratic barriers (e.g., corruption, silos, lack of cross-county collaboration) impede progress.</li> <li>Property neglect, absentee owners, and lack of code enforcement contribute to the persistence of unsafe or unsightly buildings and parcels, which hinder revitalization efforts.</li> <li>Increased frequency and intensity of weather events-fires, floods, drought, hailstorms-are causing devastating, compounding disasters that outstrip local response capacity.</li> </ul>

# Strategic Direction and Action Plan



This section of the report outlines the objectives, strategies, and high-level action steps the region will pursue to drive economic growth, improve quality of life, and enhance sustainability. This action plan is created based on the input of the past plan review, economic conditions, stakeholder input, and careful consideration of the region's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

The section is broken into 5 sections (herein referred to as "Pillars") which separate the objectives and strategies into different focus areas and identify different strategic partners and collaborators for each pillar.

If you are viewing a digital version of this document, you can click on any of the pillar titles in the graphic on the right to jump to that section.

# Strategies Overview

Objective	#	Strategy
<b>Pillar 1 — Housing</b>		
<b>The region has a good supply of quality, affordable homes.</b>	1.a	Participate in housing working groups and efforts to support collaboration, planning, and capacity.
	1.b	Develop Workforce Housing in cooperation with local employers.
	1.c	Adopt or create affordable housing plans, resolutions, and ordinances to support workforce and higher density housing.
	1.d	Support reuse, clean up, and redevelopment of vacant and abandoned building stock.
	1.e	Provide technical assistance and support policy changes to improve estate planning and transitions.
<b>Pillar 2 — Foundational Infrastructure</b>		
<b>The region has sufficient planning, funding, and capacity to meet infrastructure needs.</b>	2.a	Support planning and studies to qualify for funding.
	2.b	Build on broadband projects that are already funded and need additional investment and support.
	2.c	Support the development of wind, geothermal, hydrogen and solar energy to support energy independence.
<b>The region has a resilient infrastructure that can withstand stressors and will provide quality of life and multi-modal transit options.</b>	2.d	Provide planning and implementation services to address decreasing water resources, support regionalization of small water systems, and enhance conservation efforts.
	2.e	Provide funding options and technical support to local governments for their infrastructure needs.
	2.f	Support the adaptive re-use of commercial and residential parcels.
<b>Pillar 3 — Economic Mobility, Workforce Development, and Quality of Life</b>		
<b>The region's child, youth, and workforce development programs provide a quality and relevant workforce pipeline.</b>	3.a	Expand trade & technical certification programs to create a pipeline connecting middle, high school students and beyond to jobs and workforce development.
	3.b	Support apprenticeship-to-employment pipelines.
	3.c	Create accessible workforce training in underserved areas.
<b>The region's natural and cultural assets balance economic development and quality of life.</b>	3.d	Apply the “Destination Stewardship” approach to balance tourism activities with resident quality of life.
	3.e	Support beautification and revitalization projects.

# Strategies Overview

Objective	#	Strategy
<b>Pillar 4 – Diversification and Business Success</b>		
<b>The region has a strong and diversified business mix.</b>	4.a	Leverage technology assets to make North Central a center for advanced manufacturing and technology.
	4.b	Invest in key industries to diversify & strengthen the region's economy.
	4.c	Leverage small business assets to impact business retention and expansion at the regional level.
<b>The region has a quality business infrastructure that is creating and supporting small businesses in multiple sectors.</b>	4.d	Support projects with a focus on site readiness, commercial real estate inventories, and business park and commercial real estate development.
	4.e	Create funding mechanisms for cultural, outdoor recreation, economic development, and heritage investments locally.
<b>Pillar 5 – Government Efficiency, Capacity, and Collaboration</b>		
<b>Local governments have skilled, knowledgeable, and effective staff and access to technical assistance organizations.</b>	5.a	Increase local government capacity to plan, pursue, and administer capital projects.
	5.b	Improve financial and asset management processes and compliance efforts for federal and state funding.
<b>Local governments effectively collaborate to improve revenue utilization, services, and emergency response.</b>	5.c	Foster collaboration among local governments to improve outcomes for community members.
	5.d	Support planning and policy development for emergency and disaster preparedness.
	5.e	Seek training for and adoption of effective and ethical use of AI tools in government business practices.

## Pillar 1 — Housing

Housing is critical to the economic success of the region. However, housing's dual role as a consumption good (used and depreciated) and an investment good (expected to appreciate and generate returns) has disrupted the ability to develop affordable and workforce housing. Local stakeholders must act to address the crisis and provide homes for critical industry sectors and occupations.

**Objective - The region has a good supply of quality, affordable homes.**

**Strategy 1.a** – Participate in housing working groups and efforts to support collaboration, planning, and capacity.

Housing working groups will share learnings, best practices, and create model strategies that can be used by the region's communities. Working groups will include government leaders and staff, housing non-profits and authorities, housing developers and consultants, funders, and technical assistance providers. Working groups will meet as needed to address housing issues as they emerge.

**Strategy 1.b** – Develop Workforce Housing in cooperation with local employers.

Local employers have a major stake in ensuring that the supply of housing meets the needs of their employees. Larger employers should be engaged to understand what their demand is for employees and how that might change in the near term. Employers will be asked to support the development of housing for employees. Even public entities can support the development of housing, such as the 15 units that were developed by Central Consolidated Schools in Shiprock.

## OBJECTIVE 1

### Participating Organizations

- Housing NM
- New Mexico Finance Authority, Local Government Planning Fund (NMFA LGFP)
- Anchorum Foundation
- Local, Tribal, and Special District Governments

### Metrics

- Number of housing working group meetings held each year
- Percent of local governments that have an affordable housing plan
- Percent of region's existing housing stock that is vacant or abandoned
- Number of housing ordinances or strategies adopted



New Teacher Housing Project in Shiprock, NM completed April 2021.

**Strategy 1.c – Adopt or create affordable housing plans, resolutions, and ordinances to support workforce and higher density housing.**

The EDD will support communities to develop or adopt affordable housing plans and pursue housing related funding. This will also help local governments to address issues with transacting real property under the state's anti-donation clause.

The EDD will monitor and share the innovative ways communities are addressing housing within the state and share those best practices with local stakeholders. Where appropriate, the EDD will create and/or support the passing of resolutions and ordinances that will support the development of homes, especially the promotion of medium-density homes such as twin homes, town homes, and small apartments, as well as starter homes and accessory dwelling units.

**Strategy 1.d – Support reuse, clean up, and redevelopment of vacant and abandoned building stock.**

The EDD will provide best practices, model ordinances, and strategies that promote the reuse, clean up, and redevelopment of vacant and abandoned homes. These are often located in historically developed areas with good access to jobs, schools, and other public infrastructure.

**Strategy 1.e – Provide technical assistance and support policy changes to improve estate planning and transitions.**

Some of the most difficult properties to address are those which are given to multiple or unwilling inheritors. This leads to homes which are functionally abandoned. The region's communities can work to improve estate planning and property management that builds equity and higher levels of occupancy.

## Pillar 2 — Foundational Infrastructure

Infrastructure supports the economic activities that provide wealth to communities throughout the region, as well as provides important road, water, and other connections between the region's communities and with the rest of the nation and world. The EDD provides critical services to address infrastructure needs and supports projects that span across political boundaries.

**Objective 1 - The region has sufficient planning, funding, and capacity to meet infrastructure needs.**

**Strategy 2.a** – Support planning and studies to qualify for funding.

Infrastructure capital projects are costly and often require a funding stack that includes local, state, and federal funding. The EDD will support local, tribal, and special district governments, such as land grants, acequias, and mutual domestic water and wastewater associations, in prioritizing and planning projects, evaluating impacts, and identifying and securing the funds for infrastructure projects.

**Strategy 2.b** – Build on broadband projects that are already funded and need additional investment and support.

Federal and state monies have been invested in several new broadband projects throughout the region.

The region must support the implementation of these projects and identify supplemental projects that can leverage all of these previous efforts. The EDD will support the completion of the previously funded projects and help communities identify new supporting projects that provide high-quality broadband access for businesses and residents.

## OBJECTIVE 1

### Participating Organizations

- NMFA Local Government Planning Fund (LGPF)
- Local, Tribal, and Special District Governments
- NM Department of Information Technology (NM DoIT)
- Redi-Net
- Kit Carson Electric Co-op and other rural electric co-ops

### Metrics

- Number of ICIP projects funded by the state
- Number of major infrastructure projects completed
- Number of Local Government Planning Fund grants utilized

## OBJECTIVE 2

### Participating Organizations

- NMED
- EMNRD
- NMFA
- Infrastructure Planning and Development Division (IPDD)
- Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC)
- NM Department of Transportation (NMDOT)
- NM Department of Finance and Administration (DFA)

### Metrics

- Water efficiency projects completed by local, tribal, and special district governments
- Number of hazard mitigation projects completed
- Number of mutual domestic water consumer associations that have made steps toward regionalization

#### Strategy 2.c – Support the development of wind, geothermal, and solar energy to support energy independence.

The EDD will support the development of renewable and alternative energy sources to increase the region's resilience and to provide energy independence. This can also ensure the region has a variety of sources of energy to provide consistent and cost-effective services and to make the region more competitive.

**Objective 2 – The region has a resilient infrastructure that can withstand stressors and will provide quality of life and multi-modal transit options.**

#### Strategy 2.d – Provide planning and implementation services to address decreasing water resources, address water rights, support regionalization of small water systems, and enhance resource conservation efforts.

A March 2022 NM Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources report detailed the impact of climate change on New Mexico's water resources:

*All water users in the state will experience decreased water availability as the climate warms and aridification occurs. The declining mean and increasing variability in the surface-water supply is not cyclical, and recovery periods will be fewer and farther between. This will require difficult and divisive policy and management decisions, undoubtedly accompanied by an increase in disputes and litigation. (Page ix)*

In the short term, the region's local, tribal, and special district governments must support reductions in water use and conservation of water resources. The EDD's role will be to support these efforts and to push for solutions that can increase the efficiency of water use and reclamation. If water resources become more constrained over time, the EDD will support planning for distribution and allocation of water resources.

As part of this effort, the EDD will support the regionalization of small water systems, which reduces overhead costs, takes advantages of efficiencies of scale, and provides better redundancy in case of water supply issues.

## Strategy 2.e – Provide funding options and technical support to local, tribal, and special district governments for their infrastructure needs.

Many local, tribal, and special district governments need funding and technical support for resilient water, road, and emergency response infrastructure. The EDD will support feasibility studies, planning, preliminary engineering reports, road safety audits, comprehensive safety action plans, and hazard mitigation such as back-up generators and portable heating/cooling systems.

The EDD will also support quality of life infrastructure such as parks, bike and pedestrian pathways, sidewalks, beautification projects, community facilities, and safety and mobility projects, including the NCRTD project to develop 7 mobility hubs between Santa Fe and Taos, creating new multi-modal transit options for many of the region's residents.

## Strategy 2.f – Support the adaptive re-use of commercial and residential parcels.

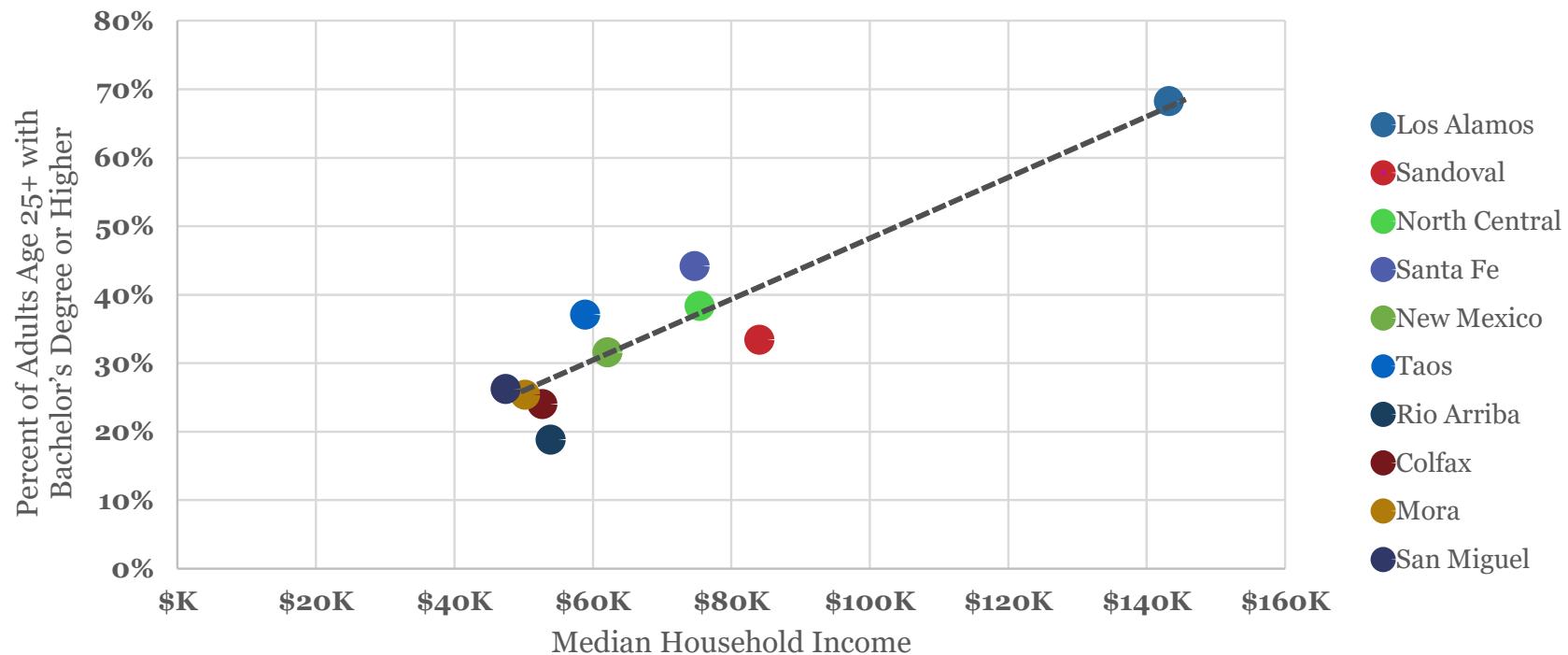
Many of the region's larger parcels within the core areas, such as abandoned hotels, vacant storefronts, and underparked lots, are ideal for adaptive re-use that will have a more significant impact on the community. The EDD will support studies, plans, policy changes, and other projects that will adapt these parcels and provide for a more walkable, intimate built environment that supports mobility, safety, quality of life, and increases visitation and local and visitor spending.



The redevelopment of the Santa Fe Railyard area is an example of a successful adaptive reuse project. The site includes transit-oriented mixed-used buildings with arts and entertainment (museums and movie theater), shopping, restaurant, commercial, civic (city offices & visitor center), and residential uses.

## Pillar 3 – Economic Mobility, Workforce Development, and Quality of Life

A defining feature of a successful regional economy is its ability to foster economic mobility, creating conditions where individuals and households—regardless of background or starting point—can improve financial well-being and access a higher quality of life. A key relationship that predicts social mobility is education and skills attainment. Early childhood education and programs which connect middle and high school students to career and college pathways have a strong correlation with increased future income and social mobility. Counties with a higher level of educational attainment tend to have higher median household incomes. Education, trade and technical certifications, apprenticeships, and training programs are pathways to increased social mobility, and are a main focus area for the EDD.





## Objective 1 - The region's child, youth, and workforce development programs create skilled individuals who can connect to a quality and relevant workforce pipeline.

### Strategy 3.a – Expand Trade & Technical Certification Programs to create a pipeline connecting middle, high school students and beyond to jobs and workforce development.

Certification programs (often referred to as Career and Technical Education or Vocational Schools) offer middle, high school, and post-secondary students specific technical and knowledge based skills for entry into occupations that require credentials or experience within the given field. These programs are a great alternative to 4-year college and pay an average of 27% more than occupations that only require a high school diploma.

The EDD will support these programs to encourage the development of in-demand local occupations, including nursing, computer and information sciences, and construction trades such as HVAC, plumbing, and electrical.

### Strategy 3.b – Support Apprenticeship-to-Employment pipelines.

Apprenticeship and work-based learning programs provide important connections between employers and potential employees. A 2022 Department of Labor study found that the typical employer who participates in apprenticeship programs experiences more than \$17,800 in net benefits per apprentice, or an annualized return on investment of 6.3%, with 68% of employers realizing a positive net return within 5 years. Employers also experienced benefits such as higher retention, easier hiring processes, and increased pipeline strength.

The EDD will advocate for and support increased programming between schools and employers to provide better pathways to local jobs as well as retain local workforce talent to better sustain the region's workforce base.

## OBJECTIVE 1

### Participating Organizations

- Colleges, Universities, and Vocational Schools
- School districts
- NM Department of Workforce Solutions
- Regional Development Corporation
- Workforce nonprofits
- Local, Tribal, and Special District Governments

### Metrics

- Prime-age labor force participation rate
- Current openings in top 10 industries (Northern Workforce Region)

## OBJECTIVE 2

### Participating Organizations

- Local Governments (Town of Taos as model community)
- NM Tourism Department
- NM Outdoor Recreation Division
- NMDOT

### Metrics

- Visitor spending by county
- Trails+ and Destination Forward grant funding secured
- Number of quality of life and outdoor recreation infrastructure projects completed
- Number of historic preservation/ restoration projects planned, started, and completed

### Strategy 3.c – Create accessible workforce training in underserved areas.

As shown in the map on page 16, there are several areas of the region that have poor access to higher education, especially vocational training. The EDD supports the development of innovative training alternatives to provide new opportunities for residents in these underserved areas. One regional example of this is the Raton Film and Media Training Center, which secured more than \$5 million in state and federal funding to develop a virtual reality and extended reality training studio that will serve regional residents. Other similar innovative approaches will be needed to fill necessary workforce skills gaps and to build and diversify the region's economy.

### Objective 2 - The region's natural and cultural assets balance economic development and quality of life.

### Strategy 3.d – Apply “Destination Stewardship” approach to balance tourism activities with resident quality of life.

Destination Stewardship is the responsible management of tourism assets that balances the needs of visitors, residents, and the environment to ensure that tourism is sustainable and that natural assets can be protected and maintained from over-use. This approach ensures that the development and marketing of tourism is balanced and contextualized. Taos County is a leader in this area and will share best practices throughout the region.

### Strategy 3.e – Support beautification and revitalization projects.

Many of the region's communities have historic and/or depreciating downtowns or project areas, which are often the social, cultural, and economic heart of a community. The EDD supports efforts to beautify these spaces, adaptively reuse historic and/or vacant buildings, and activate downtowns and commercial and cultural centers.

## Pillar 4 – Diversification and Business Success

Approximately 53% of the region's jobs are concentrated in 4 industries (see Chart 7). This share is even more extreme for several of the region's counties (Los Alamos, San Miguel, and Rio Arriba). The region must continue building out its industries to grow and diversify the region's economic base. Supporting small and medium business enterprises in particular will create jobs, drive innovation, and increase the region's wealth.

### Objective 1 - The region has a strong and diversified business mix.

#### Strategy 4.a – Leverage technology assets to make North Central a center for advanced manufacturing and technology.

The region has strategic proximity to two national labs: Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) and Sandia National Laboratories (SNL) in Albuquerque. These labs together have more than 31,000 high-skilled staff members, many of whom live and work within the region. The EDD will support leveraging this knowledge and skill base to create advanced manufacturing and technology centers that can develop new technologies, enhance existing businesses with new skill sets, and create new businesses in emerging sectors such as AI, robotics, and energy.

#### Strategy 4.b – Invest in key industries to diversify & strengthen the region's economy.

The EDD will focus on building out the following industry clusters:

1. Healthcare
2. Skilled Trades

## OBJECTIVE 1

### Participating Organizations

- Local, Tribal, and Special District Governments (Santa Fe County and City of Santa Fe as model communities)
- NMSU Arrowhead Center
- Los Alamos National Laboratory Feynman Center
- Los Alamos Commerce and Development Corporation
- Local businesses

### Metrics

- Number of manufacturing and technology jobs created
- Number of manufacturing and technology businesses established
- Hachman Index by County

## OBJECTIVE 2

### Participating Organizations

- NMSU Arrowhead Center
- WESST
- RDC
- Small Business Development Centers
- Economic Development Organizations
- NM Economic Development Department
- Local, Tribal, and Special District Governments (Santa Fe, Taos, and Raton as model communities)

### Metrics

- Nonemployer revenues by entity
- Percent of nonemployer businesses
- Number of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)
- Percent of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs)
- Site-readiness and utility infrastructure funding secured
- Number of active local economic development organizations

3. Manufacturing (including specialty crop production and value added product development)
4. Outdoor recreation
5. Tourism
6. Film and creative industries

The EDD will pursue innovative approaches to build these industries, such as by enhancing cross-industry workforce pools<sup>1</sup> and by supporting value-chain development so business-to-business purchases can be procured locally.

**Objective 2 - The Region has a quality business infrastructure that is creating and supporting small businesses in multiple sectors.**

### Strategy 4.c – Leverage small business assets to impact business retention and expansion at the regional level.

The region has a successful small business support ecosystem, especially in the Santa Fe metropolitan area, Town of Taos, and Raton. The EDD will leverage this ecosystem to support small business development and support in rural, tribal, and underserved areas of the region. The City of Santa Fe and Santa Fe County provide a model for these efforts.

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<sup>1</sup>A cross-industry workforce pool is where complementary workforce needs are strategically addressed. For example, an agriculture business that requires workers in the spring, summer, and fall to grow and harvest crops shares workers with a resort who needs workers in the winter. Having a cross-industry workforce allows the businesses to meet their needs when demand is highest as well as provides better stability to the workers who otherwise have seasonal and temporary employment.

**Strategy 4.d** – Support projects with a focus on site readiness, commercial real estate inventories, and business park and commercial real estate development.

The State has recently focused on site readiness and industrial park development to increase New Mexico's competitiveness and attract high-quality jobs (see [2025 SB 169](#) and [2025 SB 170](#)). The State is funding this effort and wanting to "characterize" potential development sites so that the sites are best positioned to respond to site inquiries from major firms. The region's communities should take advantage of these funds to make improvements and/or develop out their industrial and business park sites. Additionally, the EDD will support sharing best practices for communities to inventory, market, and prepare sites so they can be eligible for the programs and ready to respond to inquiries.

**Strategy 4.e** – Create funding mechanisms for cultural, outdoor recreation, heritage, and economic development investments locally.

The EDD will support efforts to dedicate funding and staff resources to economic development activities, including by supporting the creation of economic development funds (see [2019 SB 479](#)) and other cultural, recreational, or other quality of life improvements.



## OBJECTIVE 1

### Participating Organizations

- New Mexico Association of Counties
- New Mexico Municipal League
- Infrastructure Planning and Development Division (IPDD)
- Local, Tribal, and Special District Governments
- Department of Finance and Administration

### Metrics

- Amount of grant funding secured by year
- Number of EDA funded projects moving into construction phase and completed
- Number of CDBG projects closed out
- Number of entities released from fiscal agency requirements

## Pillar 5 – Government Efficiency, Capacity, and Collaboration

The region's large geographic size means that it contains a wide variety of government entities, each with their own capacity and resources. One of the primary activities performed by North Central EDD is to provide technical assistance to these governments and to share best practices, provide training and support, and apply for funding to enhance and leverage the resources that exist.

**Objective 1 - Local, tribal, and special district governments have skilled, knowledgeable, and effective staff and access to technical assistance organizations.**

**Strategy 5.a - Increase local, tribal, and special district government capacity to plan, pursue, and administer capital projects.**

The EDD will provide training, technical assistance, and best practices to government staff and elected officials. It will also participate in the technical assistance ecosystem to support infrastructure development, capital project plan development, state and federal infrastructure grant applications and grant and project administration. There will be a special focus on providing services and support to the region's communities that lack capacity or where volunteers do the work rather than hired staff.

**Strategy 5.b - Improve financial and asset management processes and compliance efforts for federal and state funding.**

The EDD will support improvements to government processes such as identifying and writing grant applications, complying with grant and state funding reporting requirements, and being the fiscal agent for state and federal funds.

**Objective 2 - Local, tribal, and special district governments effectively collaborate to improve revenue utilization, services, and emergency response.**

**Strategy 5.c - Foster collaboration among local, tribal, and special district governments to improve outcomes for community members.**

The EDD is uniquely positioned to support inter-governmental collaboration on key issues such as infrastructure, transportation, and services. The EDD will identify overlaps or redundancies that can benefit governments if approached at a Regional or sub-regional level. It will also support the transition to intergovernmental approaches, and share template Intergovernmental Agreements (IGA) to support implementation of shared infrastructure or services.

**Strategy 5.d - Support planning and policy development for emergency and disaster preparedness.**

The EDD will provide planning and policy development support so that communities can access federal funding for hazard mitigation planning and implementation. It will also support other types of emergency and disaster preparedness planning and mitigation, such as for mutual domestics, acequias, and land grants.

**Strategy 5.e - Seek training for and adoption of effective and ethical use of AI tools in government business practices.**

As AI tools become more powerful and customized for government uses, local governments will consider adopting these tools to improve outcomes, increase service quality and speed, and ensure compliance. The EDD will seek and distribute resources for AI tools and process improvements to ensure that its members are leveraging this technology and seeing improved outcomes from its adoption.

## OBJECTIVE 2

### Participating Organizations

- Northern Pueblos Regional Transportation Planning Organization (NPRTPO)
- Northeast Regional Transportation Planning Organization (NERTPO)
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- NM Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM)

### Metrics

- Number of emergency and disaster preparedness plans adopted
- Amount of mitigation funding secured



## Evaluation Framework

North Central EDD intends to work on all of the strategies described in this report. Tracking progress is an important way to ensure that the strategies are being worked on and that efforts are being made toward bringing the region closer to its vision. The tables on the following pages summarize the objectives and strategies described within this CEDS Report. The strategies summarized in this CEDS form the workplan for NCNMEDD for the coming 5 years.

North Central created an online dashboard that represents active projects and work in our region. Readers are invited to explore the dashboard and learn about projects completed and work underway in each of the region's counties.



## Pillar #1 – Housing

Objective	Strategy	Participating Organization	Metrics
<b>The region has a good supply of quality, affordable homes.</b>	1.a Participate in housing working groups to support regional collaboration, planning, and capacity.	• Anchorum Foundation	• Number of housing working group meetings held each year
	1.b Develop workforce housing in cooperation with local employers.	• Local employers	• Percent of local governments with affordable housing plans
	1.c Adopt or create affordable housing plans, resolutions, and ordinances to support workforce and higher density housing.	• Housing NM NMFA LGPF	• Number of housing ordinances or strategies adopted
	1.d Support reuse, clean up, and redevelopment of vacant and abandoned building stock.	• Local Governments NMED Brownfields Program	• Percent of region's housing stock that is vacant or abandoned
	1.e Provide technical assistance and support policy changes to improve estate planning and transitions.	• Local, Tribal, and Special District Governments	

## Pillar #2 — Foundational Infrastructure

Objective	Strategy	Participating Organization	Metrics
<b>The region has sufficient planning, funding and capacity to meet infrastructure needs.</b>	2.a Support planning and studies to qualify for funding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NMFA LGPF</li> <li>• Local, Tribal, and Special District Governments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of ICIP projects funded each year</li> </ul>
	2.b Build on broadband projects that are already funded and need additional investment and support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NM DoIT</li> <li>• Redi-Net</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of major infrastructure projects completed</li> </ul>
	2.c Support the development of wind, geothermal, hydrogen and solar energy to support energy independence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kit Carson Electric Co-Op and other rural electric co-op</li> </ul>	
<b>The region has a resilient infrastructure that can withstand stressors and will provide quality of life and multi-modal transit options.</b>	2.d Provide planning and implementation services to address decreasing water resources, support regionalization of small water systems, and enhance conservation efforts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NMED</li> <li>• IPDD</li> <li>• RCAC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water efficiency projects completed by local, tribal, and special district governments</li> </ul>
	2.e Provide funding options and technical support to local governments for their infrastructure needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IPDD</li> <li>• NMDOT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of hazard mitigation projects completed</li> </ul>
	2.f Support the adaptive re-use of commercial and residential parcels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local, Tribal, and Special District Governments</li> <li>• NMED</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of mutual domestic water associations that have made steps toward regionalization</li> </ul>

Pillar #3 — Economic Mobility, Workforce Development, and Quality of Life				
Objective	Strategy		Participating Organization	Metrics
<b>The region's child, youth, and workforce development programs provide a quality and relevant workforce pipeline.</b>	3.a	Expand trade & technical certification programs to create a pipeline connecting middle, high school students and beyond to jobs and workforce development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher Education Partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ UNM-LA</li> <li>▪ UNM Taos</li> <li>▪ NNMC</li> <li>▪ SFCC</li> <li>▪ NMHU</li> <li>▪ LCC</li> </ul> </li> <li>• K-12 Schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prime-age labor force participation rate</li> <li>• Number of openings in top 10 industries</li> </ul>
	3.b	Support apprenticeship-to-employment pipelines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DWS</li> <li>• RDC</li> <li>• Local, Tribal, and Special District Governments</li> </ul>	
	3.c	Create accessible workforce training in underserved areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher education partners</li> <li>• School districts</li> <li>• Nonprofit workforce partners</li> </ul>	

Pillar #3 — Economic Mobility, Workforce Development, and Quality of Life				
Objective	Strategy		Participating Organization	Metrics
<b>The region's natural and cultural assets balance economic development and quality of life.</b>	3.d	Apply the “Destination Stewardship” approach to balance tourism activities with resident quality of life.	• Local, Tribal, and Special District Governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visitor spending by county</li> <li>• Trails+ and Destination Forward grant funding secured by county</li> </ul>
	3.e	Support beautification and revitalization projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local, Tribal, and Special District Governments</li> <li>• NM Tourism</li> <li>• NM Main Street</li> <li>• NMDOT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of quality of life and outdoor recreation infrastructure projects completed</li> <li>• Number of historic preservation/ restoration projects planned, started, and completed</li> <li>• Number of forest and watershed restoration projects completed.</li> </ul>

Pillar #4 – Diversification and Business Success				
Objective	Strategy		Participating Organization	Metrics
<b>The region has a strong and diversified business mix.</b>	4.a	Leverage technology assets to make North Central a center for advanced manufacturing and technology.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NMEDD</li> <li>• Local, Tribal, and Special District Governments</li> <li>• NMSU Arrowhead Center</li> <li>• LANL</li> <li>• Sandia National Laboratory</li> <li>• Feynman Center</li> <li>• Los Alamos Commerce and Development Corporation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of manufacturing and technology jobs created</li> <li>• Number of manufacturing and technology businesses established</li> <li>• Hachman Index by County</li> </ul>
	4.b	Invest in key industries to diversify & strengthen The region's economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NMEDD</li> <li>• WESST</li> <li>• RDC</li> <li>• EDA</li> <li>• Local, Tribal, and Special District Governments</li> <li>• Local businesses</li> </ul>	

Pillar #4 – Diversification and Business Success				
Objective	Strategy		Participating Organization	Metrics
<b>The region has a quality business infrastructure that is creating and supporting small businesses in multiple sectors.</b>	4.c	Leverage small business assets to impact business retention and expansion at the regional level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NMSU Arrowhead</li> <li>• WESST</li> <li>• RDC</li> <li>• Local SBDC branches</li> <li>• Local Economic Development Organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nonemployer revenues by entity</li> <li>• Percent of nonemployer businesses</li> <li>• Number of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)</li> </ul>
	4.d	Support projects with a focus on site readiness, commercial real estate inventories, and business park and commercial real estate development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NMEDD</li> <li>• Local, Tribal, and Special District Governments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percent of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs)</li> <li>• Site-readiness and utility infrastructure funding secured</li> </ul>
	4.e	Create funding mechanisms for cultural, outdoor recreation, economic development, and heritage investments locally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NMEDD</li> <li>• Local, Tribal, and Special District Governments</li> </ul>	• Number of active local economic development organizations

Pillar #5 — Government Efficiency, Capacity, and Collaboration				
Objective	Strategy		Participating Organization	Metrics
<b>Local governments have skilled, knowledgeable, and effective staff or access to technical assistance organizations.</b>	5.a	Increase local, tribal, and special district governments' capacity to plan, pursue, and administer capital projects.	• IPDD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amount of grant funding secured by year</li> </ul>
	5.b	Improve financial and asset management processes and compliance efforts for federal and state funding.	• Local, Tribal, and Special District Governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of EDA funded projects moving into construction phase and completed</li> <li>• Number of CDBG projects closed out</li> <li>• Number of entities released from fiscal agency requirements</li> </ul>
<b>Local governments effectively collaborate to improve revenue utilization, services, and emergency response.</b>	5.c	Foster intergovernmental collaboration to improve outcomes for tribes, counties, and municipalities.	• NVRTPO • NERTPO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of emergency and disaster preparedness plans adopted.</li> </ul>
	5.d	Support planning and policy development for emergency and disaster preparedness.	• EMNRD • FEMA • DHSEM • NM Acequia Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amount of mitigation funding secured</li> </ul>
	5.e	Seek training for and adoption of effective and ethical use of AI tools in government business practices.		



## Appendices

This section provides complementary materials that support the CEDS document. The appendices included in this document are below:

Appendix I – Regional Data	50
Appendix II – Acronyms Guide	64

## Appendix I – Regional Data

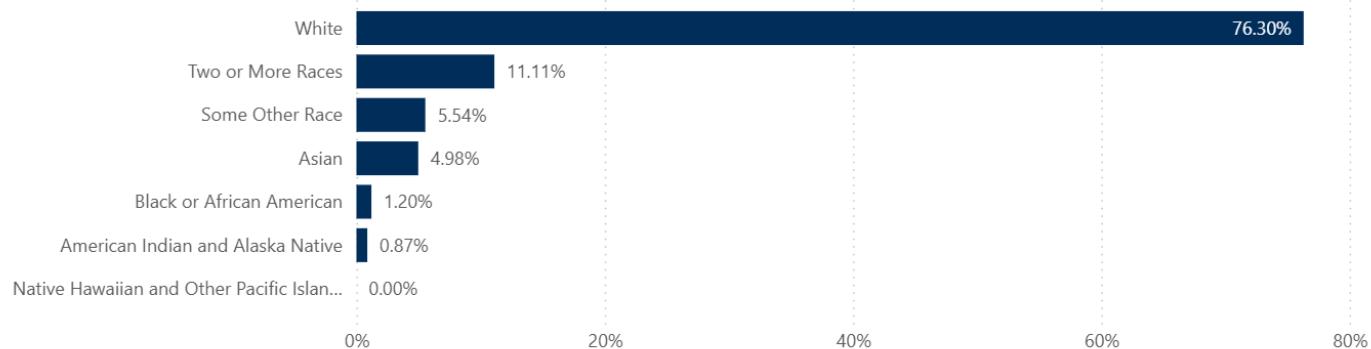
This is an extract of the interactive regional data dashboard, available on the [NCNMEDD website](#). There is a dropdown filter on the top-right of each page that allows the viewer to select a county that is persistent across all pages. Only one county is shown for each page in this appendix. The final page, titled “Regional Comparison”, shows a regional map with data for all counties to allow for comparison across the counties (or for a selection of counties when analyzing a smaller subset of the region).



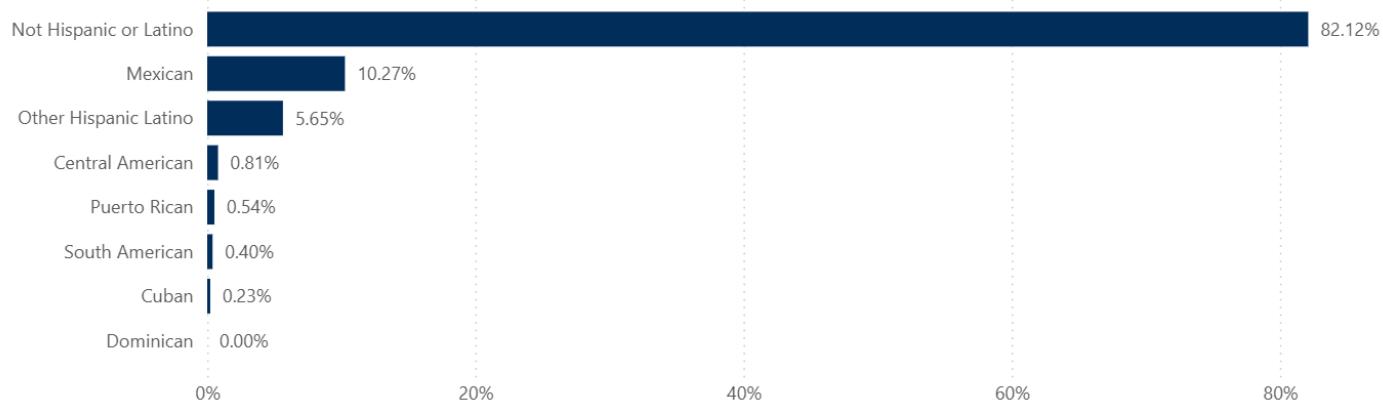
## Race and Ethnicity

Los Alamos

### Population by Race



### Population by Ethnicity

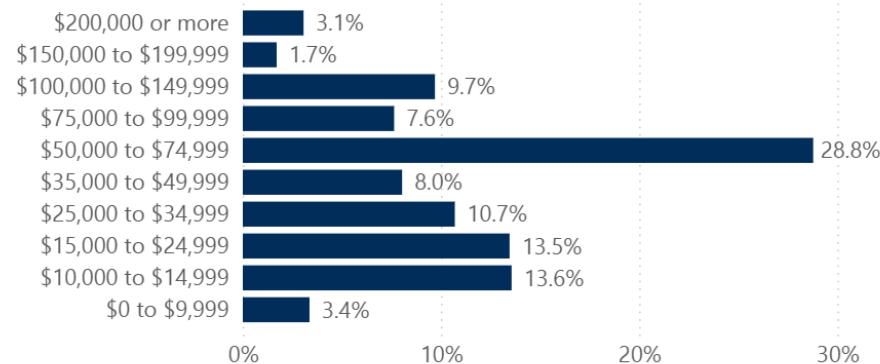


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## Income and Expenditures

Mora

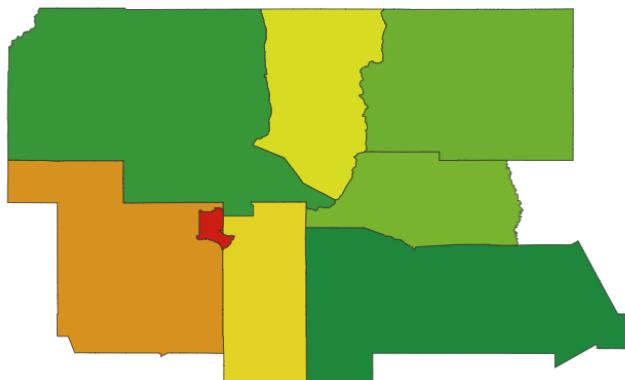
### Households by Income



### Median Household Income

**\$50.18K**

### Total Expenses by County



### Time Period

Annual

Monthly

### Family Type

2 adults, 1 child

### Expense Type

### Cost

Expense Type	Cost
Transportation	\$17,808
Healthcare	\$17,232
Taxes	\$9,684
Housing	\$9,540
Food	\$8,928
Childcare	\$8,112
Other Necessities	\$6,540
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$77,844</b>

**27**

State Income Rank

**11**

State Cost Rank

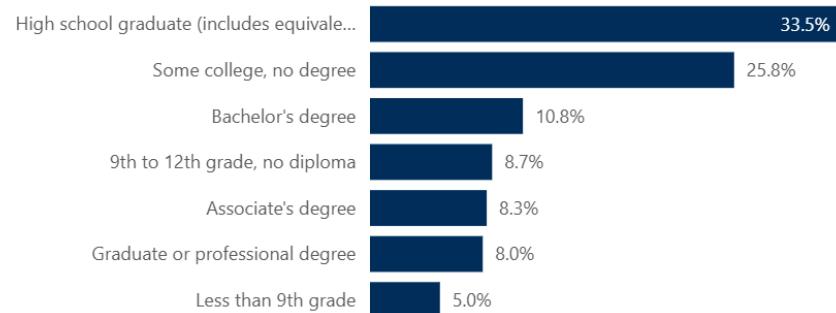
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## Education

Rio Arriba

### Educational Attainment (25 Yrs. and Older)



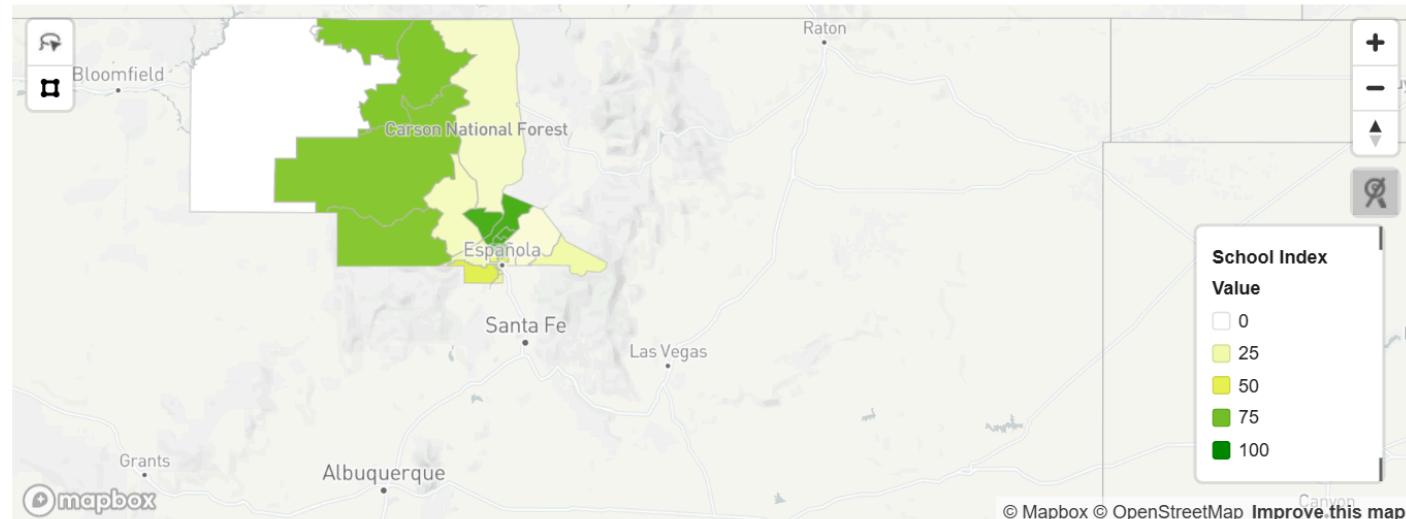
**86.4%**

% HS Graduate or Higher

**18.8%**

% Bachelor's Degree or Higher

### School Proficiency Index

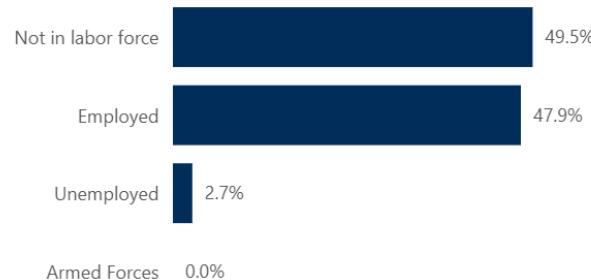


Pg. 6

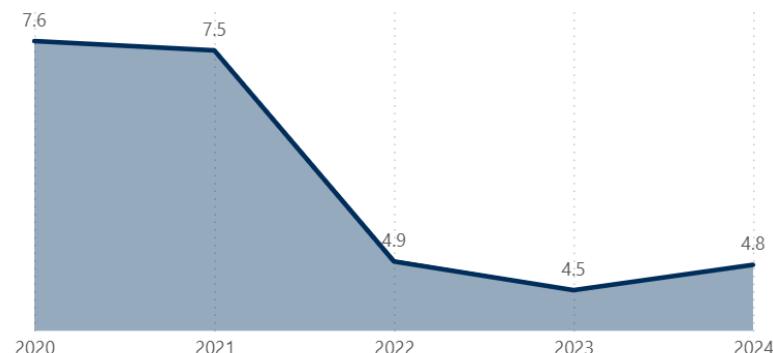
## Workforce

San Miguel 

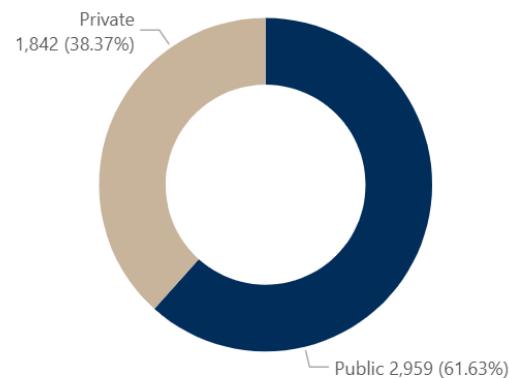
### Labor Force Status



### Unemployment Rate Over Time



### Employment by Type



### Top Occupations (County Residents)

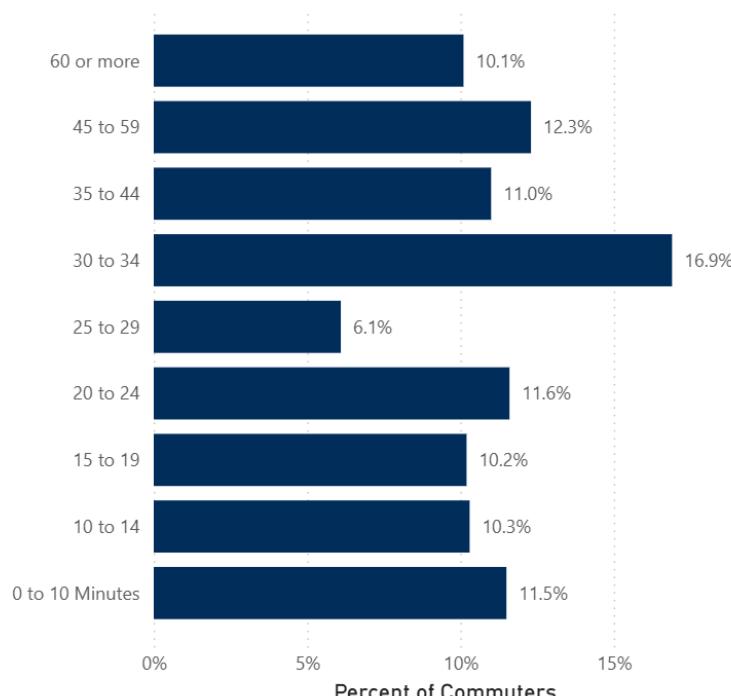


Pg. 7

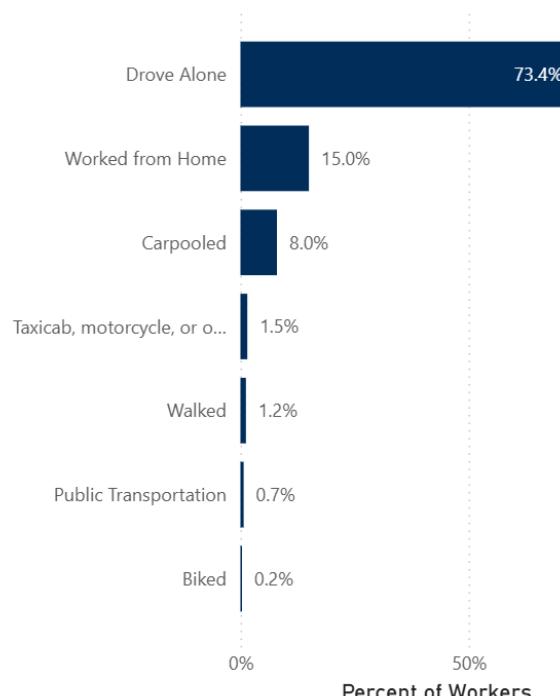
## Workforce

Sandoval

### Travel Time to Work (In Minutes)



### Method of Transportation to Work



**-127K**

Commuting Population Gain/Loss

**58.5**

Mean Travel Time to Work (in minutes)

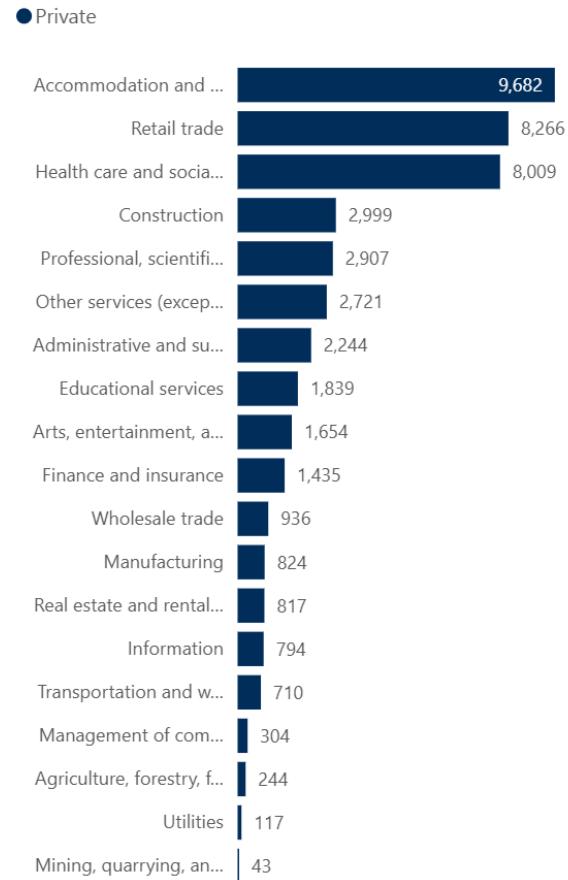


Pg. 7

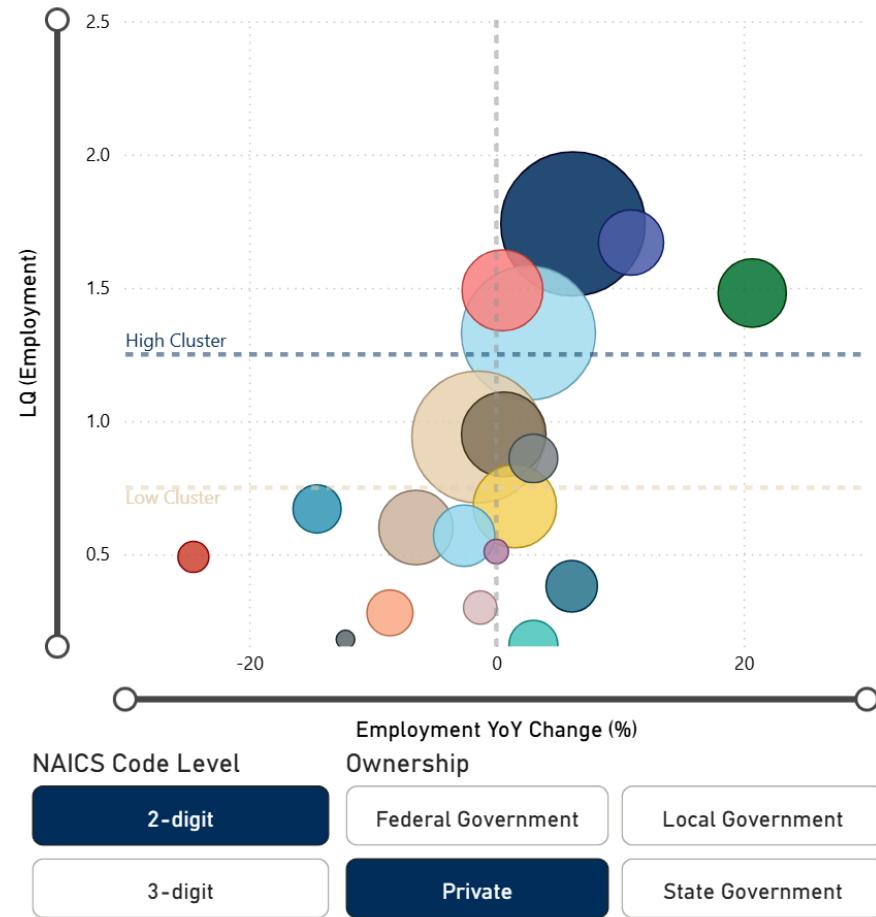
## Industry Clusters

Santa Fe

### Average Annual Employment by Industry



### Average Annual Employment Growth, LQ, and Number of Employees

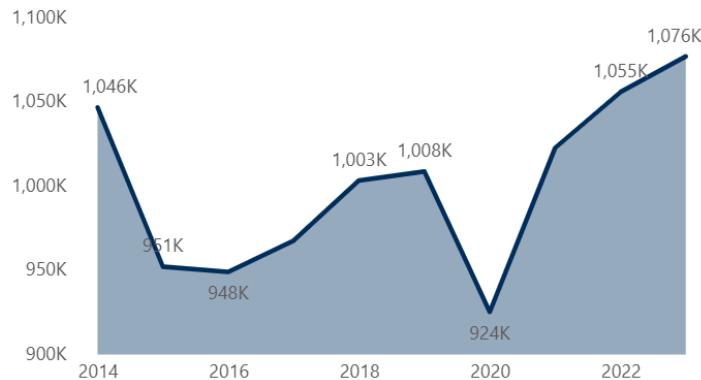


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## Gross Domestic Product

Taos

Total GDP by Year (Thousands of 2017 Dollars)

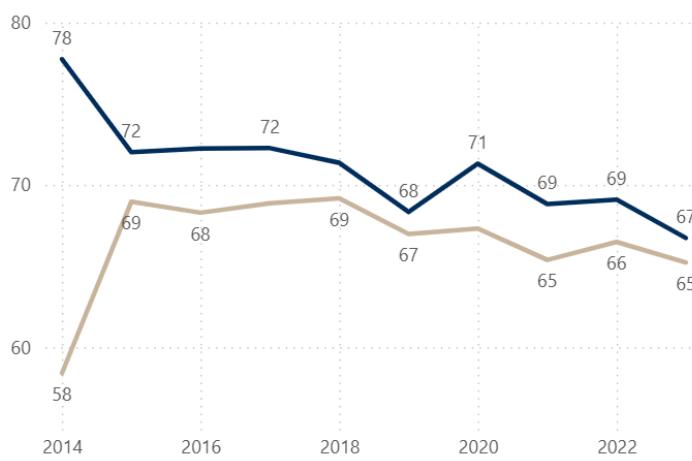


GDP Growth by Year (Thousands of 2017 Dollars)

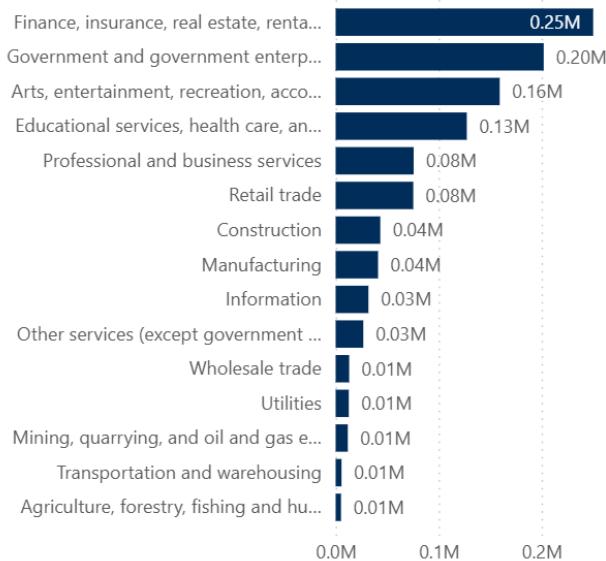


Hachman Index (Distribution Similarity)

● Hachman Index (vs NM) ● Hachman Index (vs US)



GDP by Industry (Thousands of 2017 Dollars)



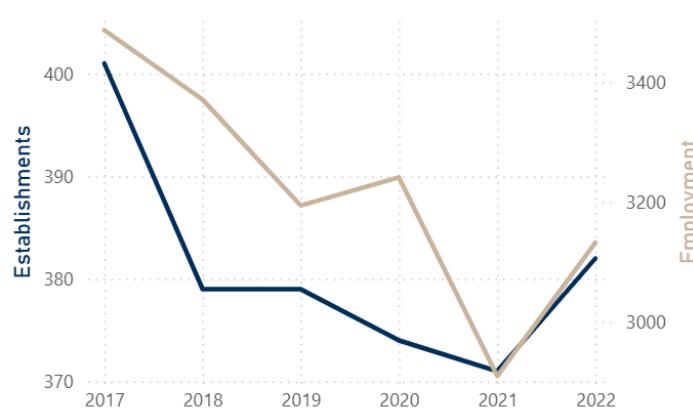
Pg. 9



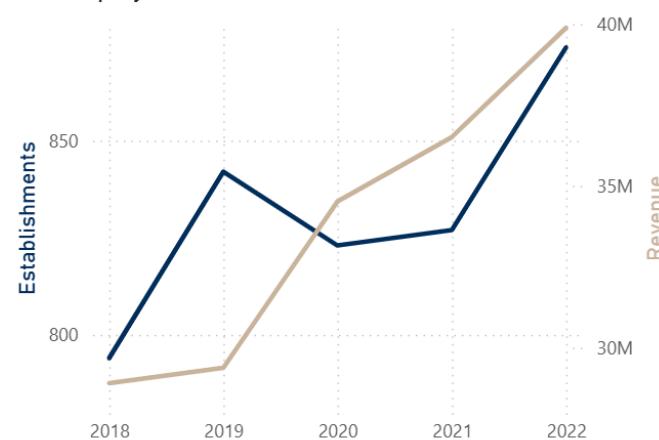
## Business and Entrepreneurship

Colfax

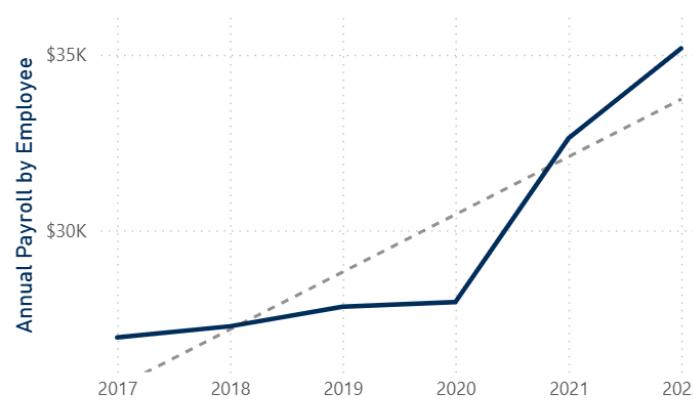
Establishments and Employment by Year (Employer Businesses)



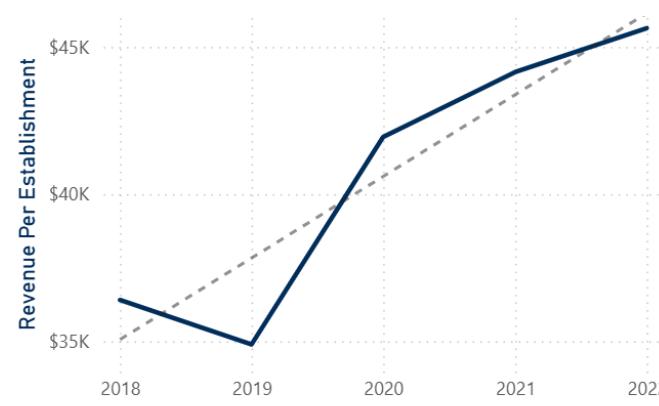
Nonemployer Establishments and Revenues over Time



Annual Payroll by Employee by Year (Employer Businesses)



Nonemployer Revenue Per Establishment

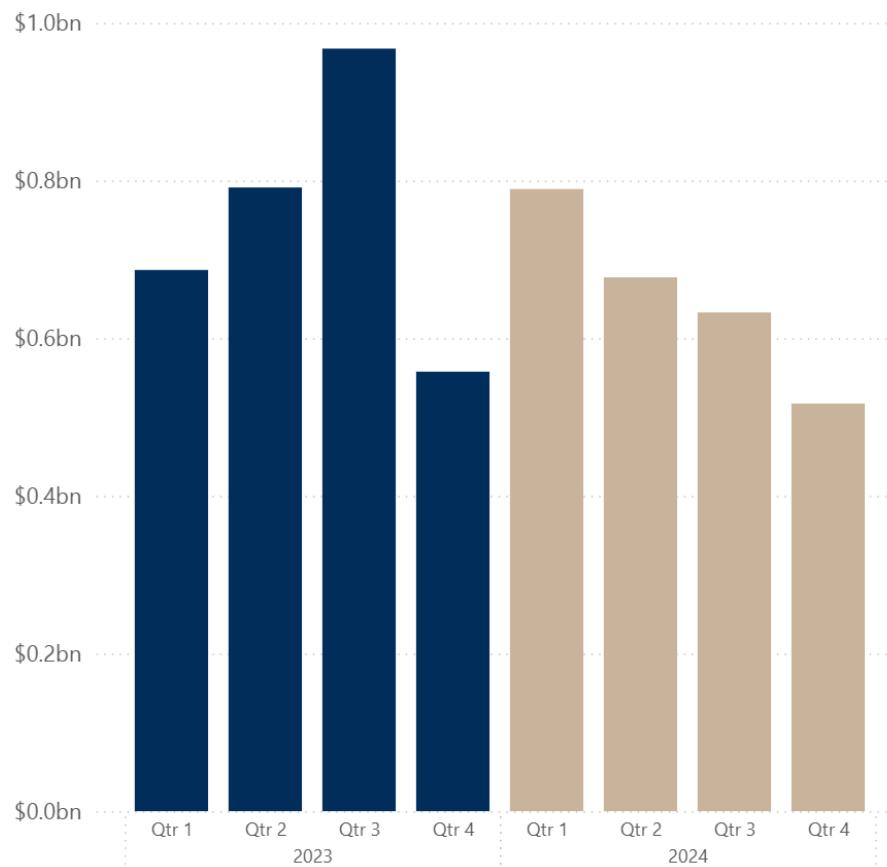


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## Gross Receipts Tax

Los Alamos

### Total GRT by Year, Quarter and Year



Ctrl+Click to select multiple industries

Industry Name	Total GRT
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	\$4,593,956,382
Retail Trade	\$239,934,969
Construction	\$219,723,025
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	\$124,307,496
Other Services (except Public Administration)	\$82,281,374
Health Care and Social Assistance	\$81,070,735
Accommodation and Food Services	\$80,583,634
Unclassified Establishments	\$41,832,054
Information	\$38,296,123
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	\$36,307,662
Manufacturing	\$28,489,350
Wholesale trade	\$23,973,225
Finance and Insurance	\$12,875,369
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	\$6,811,624
Educational Services	\$4,651,300
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	\$1,799,652
Utilities	\$618,959
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	\$603,870
Transportation and Warehousing	\$336,176
Public administration	\$192,977
Management of Companies and Enterprises	\$170,380
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5,618,816,337</b>

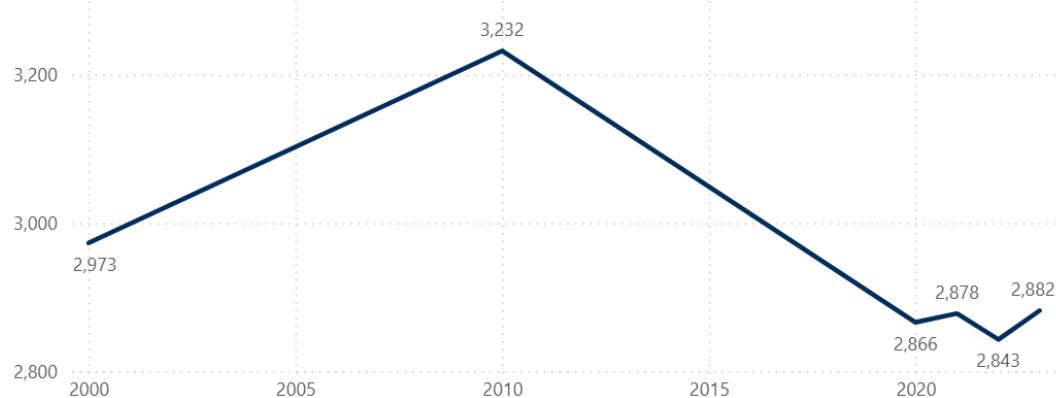
Pg. 11



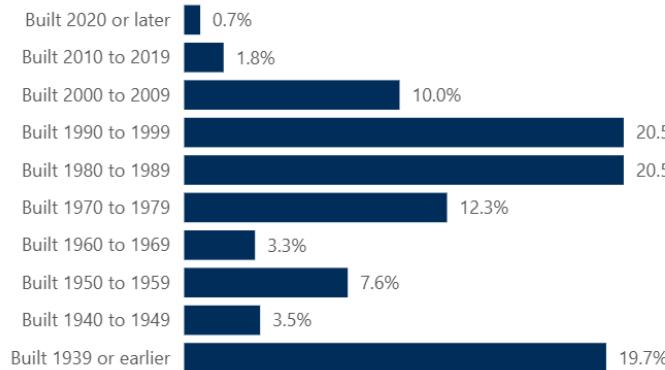
## Housing Availability

Mora

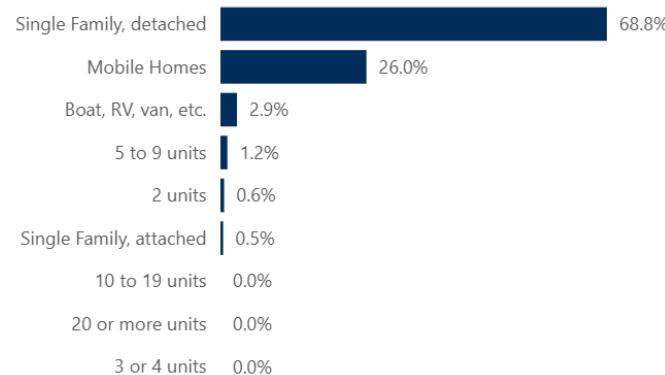
Total Housing Units Over Time



Housing Units by Year Built



Total Housing Units by Structure Type



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## Housing Affordability

Rio Arriba

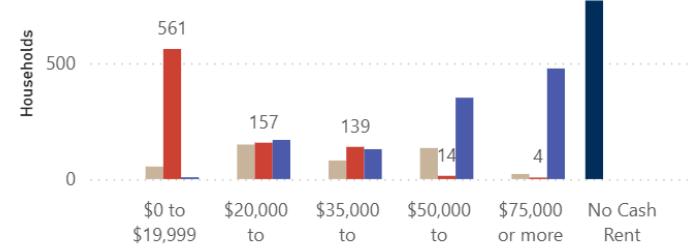
### Monthly Housing Cost Burden (Owners)

● 20 to 29 Percent ● 30 Percent or More ● Less than 20 Percent

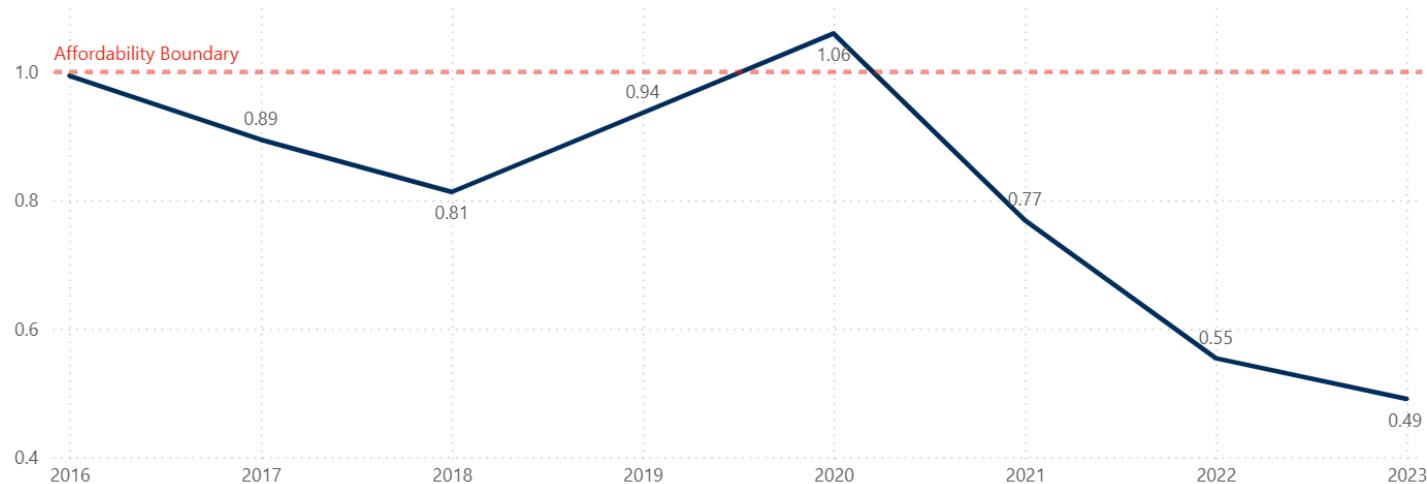


### Monthly Housing Cost Burden (Rental)

● (Blank) ● 20 to 29 Percent ● 30 Percent or More ● Less than 20 Percent



### Home Affordability Index Over Time



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## Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan Requests

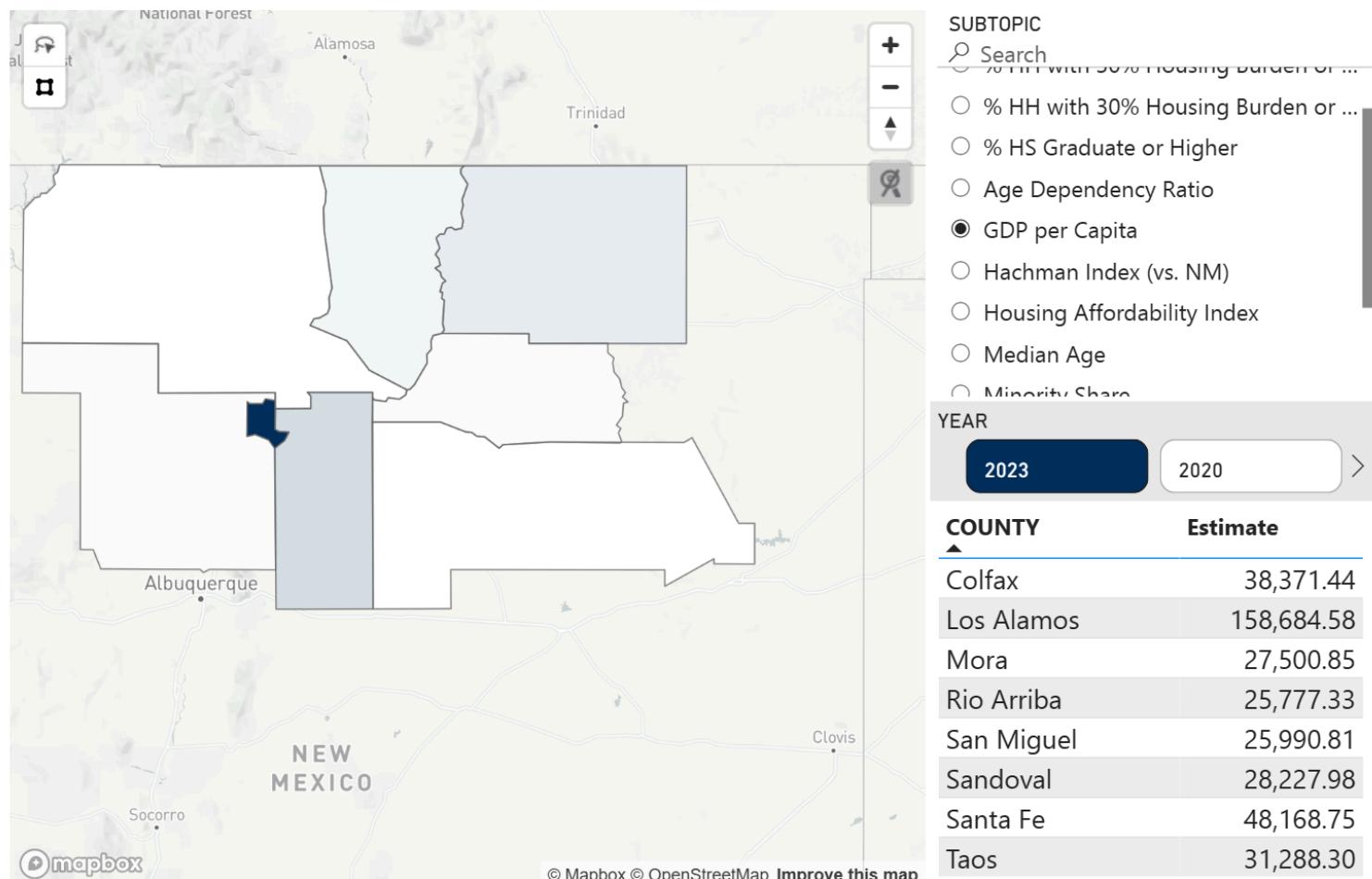
San Miguel

Entity	Year					
All	FY 2026					
Entity Name	Rank	Project Title	Total Project Cost	Request Amount	Funded to Date	Not Yet Funded
Department of Health	1	New Facility - NMBHI Forensics	\$133,000,000	\$60,000,000	\$73,000,000	\$60,000,000
Pendaries Village MDWCA	1	Water System Improvements	\$30,584,031	\$30,084,032	\$499,999	\$30,084,032
New Mexico Highlands University	9	New Mexico Reforestation Center	\$25,000,000	\$25,000,000	\$0	\$25,000,000
Las Vegas	1	Peterson Dam Rehabilitation	\$22,600,000	\$7,000,000	\$9,600,000	\$13,000,000
Las Vegas	15	Rodriguez Sports Complex Improvements	\$17,500,000	\$675,000	\$3,500,000	\$14,000,000
New Mexico Highlands University	4	Donnelly Library Renovation	\$16,769,514	\$0	\$0	\$16,769,514
New Mexico Highlands University	8	Housing Property, Health/Safety Deferred Maintenance	\$16,000,000	\$7,600,000	\$0	\$16,000,000
Luna Community College	2	Campus Improvements	\$15,000,000	\$0	\$0	\$15,000,000
East Pecos MDWCA	1	East Pecos Sewer Connect	\$14,954,831	\$6,457,800	\$2,036,400	\$12,918,431
Las Vegas	5	Fire Station/Training Facility	\$10,000,000	\$5,000,000	\$0	\$10,000,000
Luna Community College	8	LCC Wellness Center	\$9,000,000	\$0	\$0	\$9,000,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>776</b>		<b>\$499,262,853</b>	<b>\$225,891,90</b>	<b>\$111,160,55</b>	<b>\$388,102,295</b>
			6	8		



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## Regional Comparison



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## Appendix II – Acronyms Guide

This guide provides definitions for acronyms used throughout the 2026–2030 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) to support clarity and accessibility for all readers.

Acronym	Full Name	Acronym	Full Name
<b>ADU</b>	Accessory Dwelling Unit	<b>LQ</b>	Location Quotient
<b>AI</b>	Artificial Intelligence	<b>MHI</b>	Median Household Income
<b>CDBG</b>	Community Development Block Grant	<b>NCNMEDD</b>	North Central New Mexico Economic Development District
<b>CEDS</b>	Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy	<b>NCRTD</b>	North Central Regional Transit District
<b>CTE</b>	Career and Technical Education	<b>NERTPO</b>	Northeast Regional Transportation Planning Organization
<b>DFA</b>	Department of Finance and Administration	<b>NM DoIT</b>	New Mexico Department of Information Technology
<b>DHSEM</b>	Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management	<b>NMEDD</b>	New Mexico Economic Development Department
<b>EDD</b>	Economic Development District	<b>NMED</b>	New Mexico Environment Department
<b>EMNRD</b>	Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department	<b>NMFA</b>	New Mexico Finance Authority
<b>FEMA</b>	Federal Emergency Management Agency	<b>NMDOT</b>	New Mexico Department of Transportation
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product	<b>NPRTPO</b>	Northern Pueblos Regional Transportation Planning Organization
<b>HOA</b>	Homeowners Association	<b>RCAC</b>	Rural Community Assistance Corporation
<b>HVAC</b>	Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning	<b>RDC</b>	Regional Development Corporation
<b>ICIP</b>	Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan	<b>RTPO</b>	Regional Transportation Planning Organization
<b>IGA</b>	Intergovernmental Agreement	<b>SBDC</b>	Small Business Development Center
<b>IPDD</b>	Infrastructure Planning and Development Division	<b>SME</b>	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise
<b>LANL</b>	Los Alamos National Laboratory	<b>SNL</b>	Sandia National Laboratories
<b>LFPR</b>	Labor Force Participation Rate	<b>SWOT</b>	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
<b>LGPF</b>	Local Government Planning Fund	<b>WESST</b>	Women's Economic Self-Sufficiency Team

