

***DRAFT* CURRENT CONDITIONS REPORT**  
for the  
Village of Ruidoso  
**Comprehensive Plan Update**  
**April 2019**



Current Conditions Report  
Village of Ruidoso Comprehensive Plan Update

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# Introduction

## Overview

### Purpose

The purpose of this Comprehensive Plan Update is to assess where Ruidoso is today and document what residents and community leaders in the Village want for the future. The Comprehensive Plan outlines the steps to achieve the community's vision through goals, policies, and measurable actions. The Comprehensive Plan serves as a guide for current and future decision making while identifying needs that support the Village's capital funding requests within an Infrastructure Capital Improvements Plan (ICIP). Additionally, the plan helps to build public support and consensus for Village projects and programs, document the purpose and need for Village policies, and make Village grant applications more competitive.

This Plan will meet the State of New Mexico's comprehensive plan requirements. The State encourages communities to update their plans every five years to remain relevant and to be considered recent; these updates make the communities more competitive for state and grant funding. The Village of Ruidoso is particularly interested in land use and the future of Village-owned land, parks and recreational opportunities, and tourism and economic development; these topics will be addressed in more detail.

The Comprehensive Plan Update will include the following elements:

1. Introduction
2. Community Character
3. Natural Resources
4. Land Use
5. Housing
6. Community Services
7. Parks and Recreation
8. Transportation
9. Utilities
10. Water Resources
11. Hazard Mitigation
12. Economic Development
13. Implementation

This Current Conditions Report includes chapters 1 through 11. The Economic Development Strategy is a standalone report which accompanies this report. The Implementation Chapter will be written once the goals, policies, and actions for each element are confirmed.

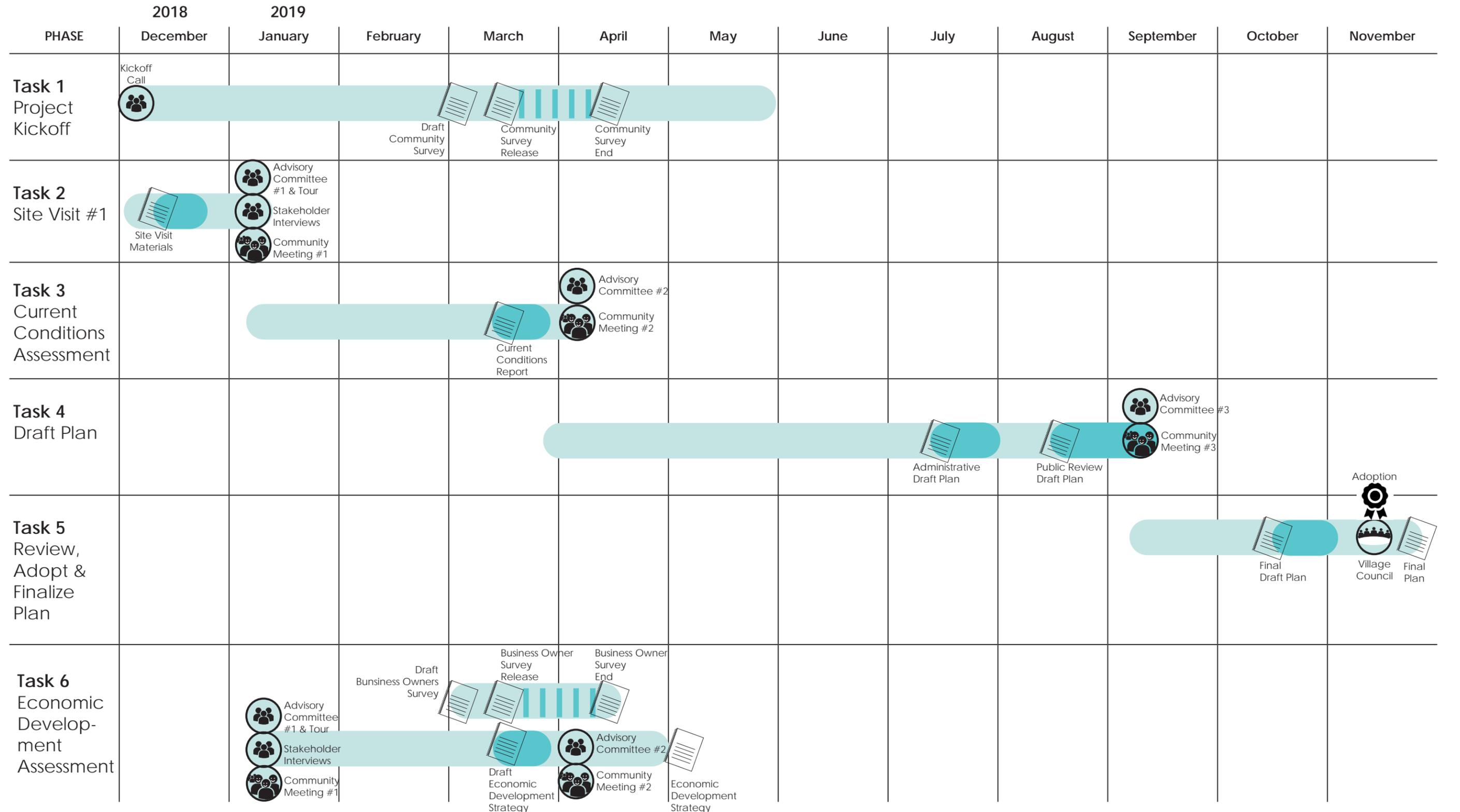
### Process

- 1) The Plan is anticipated to be completed in three phases: The first phase included a series of meetings with Ruidoso's community, stakeholders, and leaders in January 2019. The input from these meetings informed the second phase.
- 2) The assessment of current conditions and preliminary recommendations are the second phase; these findings and ideas will be vetted with the community and leaders in April 2019.
- 3) In the third phase, the draft Comprehensive Plan Update will be written building on the first two phases. The draft Plan Update will be presented in the fall of 2019 for community input. It will be finalized and adopted in October/November 2019 as shown in the following schedule.

# PROPOSED SCHEDULE

## VILLAGE OF RUIDOSO COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND ZONING UPDATE

Last Updated 2.18.19



## Public Engagement

To begin the Comprehensive Planning process, the Village invited community members, leaders, and stakeholders to a series of topic meetings. On January 16 and 17, 2019, Sites Southwest, Bridge Economic Development, and Bohannon Huston, Inc. facilitated 9 stakeholder roundtable meetings with small groups with similar interests, one advisory committee meeting, and one community meeting. Details on each meeting are listed below.

### *Stakeholder Meetings*

The topics and groups for the stakeholder meetings included Economic Development, Village Staff, Local Organizations, Industry Growth, Recreation, Developers/ Brokers, Public Agencies, Land Use, Planning & Zoning, and Transportation. The purpose of these meetings was to learn what priorities Ruidoso's stakeholders have for the Village, hear what needs to be addressed in the plan, and to supplement quantitative data. The following topics were addressed in nine stakeholder meetings:

- **Economic Development Partners Meeting:** The purpose of this group was to understand ongoing programs that support economic development and present Ruidoso Competitive Benchmarking (included in appendix).
- **Village Staff Meeting:** In order to align internal programs with economic development opportunities, we discussed economic development roles with Village department leaders.
- **Local Organizations Meeting:** This meeting was facilitated to understand the services provided, services lacking, and goals of local organizations in the community.
- **Industry Growth Meeting:** The goal of this meeting was to understand the traded-sector industry growth opportunities that can pertain to the Village.
- **Recreation Meeting:** In order to understand the local demand for parks, sports facilities, and recreation (Village facilities and surrounding public land), this meeting was facilitated to discuss the current scheduling of parks, fields, other facilities. Additionally, the condition of existing buildings, parks, trails was discussed to determine what is missing that people are asking for and how participants work with and share with public schools.
- **Developers/Brokers Meeting:** The purpose of this meeting was to understand real estate market opportunities and perceived barriers to growth.
- **Public Agencies Meeting:** The purpose of this meeting was to understand plans, policies and projects of other public agencies and the Mescalero tribe that will inform the plan.
- **Land Use, Planning and Zoning Meeting:** This meeting aimed to receive Planning and Zoning Commissioners' and Village Staffs' insights into the requests that come before them and land use and planning issues to address in the plan.
- **Transportation Meeting:** This meeting aimed to understand transportation needs in Ruidoso, including tourism-related challenges; issues related to neighborhood traffic calming; desired improvements for different travel modes (roadways, walking, biking, transit); and access to major destinations inside and outside of the Village.

### *Advisory Committee Meeting*

An advisory committee meeting was held on January 16, 2019 with the goal of educating the committee members on the purpose of the Comprehensive Plan, discussing their vision for Ruidoso and goals for the future, and identifying the issues that should be addressed in the plan. Sites Southwest delivered a brief presentation and asked each member of the committee to introduce him/herself and asked them to share what they believe to be the critical issues to address in the Comprehensive Plan. The committee will meet two more times throughout the process.

### *Community Meetings*

The Village of Ruidoso hosted a community meeting to kick-off its Comprehensive Plan Update on January 16, 2019. This was a well-attended event with more than 150 people in attendance; 139 attendees signed in. The meeting agenda was as follows.

#### *Meeting Overview and Presentation*

The purpose of the meeting was to inform the community about the Comprehensive Plan Update and gather initial ideas that will be integrated into the plan. Mayor Lynn Crawford was present to welcome the community and relay the importance of getting everyone's input. The consultant team gave a brief presentation on the purpose of the Comprehensive Plan, the topics it covers and provided a demographic and economic snapshot of where Ruidoso is today. Suzy Lawrence from the New Mexico State Tourism Department gave a short presentation on New Mexico True's tourism programs and how to create long-lasting economic development. This great event ended with a motivational entertainer who ended his presentation with a challenge to all stakeholders.

#### *Visioning Exercise*

Following the presentation, the attendees worked in groups to share their vision and ideas for Ruidoso and hear from others. The exercise helped the planning team understand what the community loves and values about Ruidoso and what the community would like to change about Ruidoso. To facilitate the discussion, each group was asked: **What do you love about Ruidoso?** and **What would you change about Ruidoso?** Following the exercise, the comments were collected and the themes that emerged are summarized as follows.

What do you love about Ruidoso?

The following infographic displays results from the visioning exercise at the community meeting. The percentage of participants that commented on each category are shown below.

# What do you ❤️ about Ruidoso?



- Climate & Nature: 39%
- Outdoor Recreation: 16%
- People & Community: 16%
- Small Town Feeling: 13%
- Convenient Location: 3%
- Entertainment: 2%
- Schools: 2%
- Tourism: 2%
- Potential for Growth: 1%
- Diversity: 1%
- Architecture: 1%
- Safety: 1%
- History: 1%
- Employment Opportunities: 1%
- Affordability: 0.5%

## What would you change about Ruidoso?

The following are results from the comment cards distributed at the Community Meeting. Comments were sorted following the meeting into the Comprehensive Plan categories. The percentage of comments for each category are shown below. Most of the comments concerned economic development (37%), followed by community services (27%), and Transportation/Roads (12%). The rest of the categories had fewer than 10% of the comments.

Community Character:	1.6%
Natural Resources:	2.0%
Land Use:	0.4%
<b>Economic Development:</b>	<b>37.3%</b>
Housing:	8.3%
<b>Community Services:</b>	<b>27%</b>
Parks & Recreation:	6.3%
<b>Transportation/ Roads:</b>	<b>11.5%</b>
Water & Wastewater Infrastructure:	3.2%
Storm Drainage:	0.4%
Water Resources:	0.4%
Hazard Mitigation:	1.6%

The specific concerns and issues for each of these topic areas have been incorporated into the suggested goals in the following sections.

### Vision

The feedback we received during the community meeting visioning exercise prioritized the natural beauty, desirable climate, plentiful outdoor recreation opportunities, supportive community and friendly people in the small-town atmosphere, which should be represented in the Village's established vision statement:

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### *LIVING IN NATURE'S PLAYGROUND...*

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*From the slopes of Ski Apache to the thundering hooves at Ruidoso Downs Racetrack, Ruidoso is the premier year-round playground of the Sacramento Mountains. Ruidoso is a tight-knit community of longtime residents, second-homeowners and loyal visitors—all of which play a vital role in the day-to-day business that takes place in the Village. Those who live and work here are proud to call it home. Those who visit come back time and again. That says it all...*

## Emerging Goals

Based on the most common comments made at the community meeting, stakeholder meetings, and advisory committee meeting, as well as written comments submitted in January, the emerging goals to be addressed in the plan are as follows.



### **Support our residents**

- Increase affordable housing options for residents, employees, and students to retain young adults and attract families
- Create more activities for youth, families, and seniors



### **Maintain and enhance our small-town feel**

- Continue efforts to revitalize and develop Midtown
- Encourage property maintenance
- Make it easy to walk and bike around town



### **Treasure our natural resources**

- Improve hazard mitigation by enforcing wildfire protection measures and educating residents and visitors
- Encourage sustainable practices through stormwater treatment, building codes, and waste management



## **Improve utilities infrastructure**

- Improve broadband service
- Increase water, sewer, and electrical infrastructure to accommodate peaks and growth



## **Diversify our economy**

- Provide more living wage job opportunities
- Take advantage of ENMU and other resources for workforce training
- Support local and new businesses to build tourist economy and serve residents
- Create more year-round economic development opportunities that take advantage of each season

## Community Character

The Village of Ruidoso is located along US-70, 115 miles northeast of Las Cruces and 135 miles northeast of El Paso, Texas in south central New Mexico. The Village is situated on the eastern slope of the Sacramento Mountain, at the foot of Sierra Blanca Peak in Lincoln County. Surrounded by Lincoln National Forest and the Sierra Blanca mountains, Ruidoso's natural beauty draws people from all over New Mexico, west Texas, and north Mexico. Its wooded setting, winding mountain roads, rustic architecture, and meandering creeks and river give it a small-town feel unlike any other place in the state.

### History

The Village of Ruidoso derived its name from Rio Ruidoso, meaning "noisy river" and was incorporated as a Village in 1946. However, traces of human inhabitation date back 1000 years. These first traces are attributed to the Jornada Mogollon peoples that are said to have inhabited this area from 1000 AD to 1687 AD.<sup>1</sup> Following the Jornada Mogollon peoples, Mescalero Apache tribes settled in Lincoln County in around 1400 AD, using the Sacramento Mountains for hunting and fishing purposes. During the 1540s, the first Spanish explorers crossed New Mexico, but never officially settled the area.

The Village of Ruidoso was first established in 1869 by Captain Paul Dowlin, when he constructed a mill along the Rio Ruidoso. The town was then named after the mill, 'Dowlin's Mill.' In 1885 Dowlin's Mill was renamed 'Ruidoso.' Initially the economy was based on mining and ranching.

Ruidoso has a strong history rooted in tourism. In the 1930s, when the automobile became more widely available, horse racing, skiing, and other recreational opportunities attracted visitors from throughout the region. Starting in the 1940s and 1950s Ruidoso began to attract visitors from around the country to enjoy its mountainous environment. Upper Canyon was one of the first tourist-oriented areas to develop with small cabins and remains a historic destination for current visitors.

Ski Apache, previously "Sierra Blanca Ski Resort," opened Christmas 1961 and as one of the few ski resorts in southern New Mexico, it has boosted the local economy as a popular tourist destination. Since 1963, the resort has been owned and operated by the Mescalero Apache Tribe.

In the 1970s, the Village experienced an influx of retirement homes, second homes, and resort-type cabins. This trend continues today, as the local economy is principally based on tourism supported by short-term rentals and recreation.

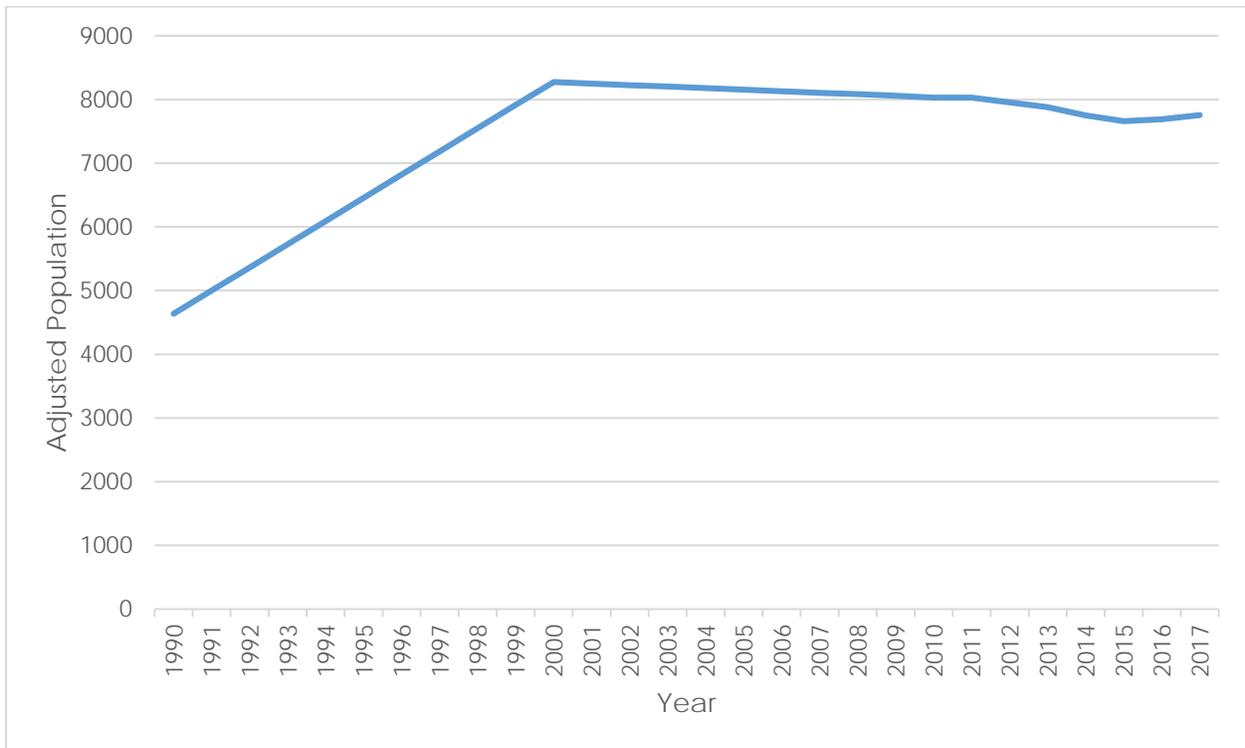
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<sup>1</sup> Village of Ruidoso Affordable Housing Plan, 2015.

## Population

Ruidoso is the largest municipality in Lincoln County. The Village's population increased from 1990 to 2000, but has decreased since then as shown in Figure 2-1. The chart is adjusted population due to possible inaccuracies in estimated date from the US Census. In 2017, Ruidoso had a permanent population of 7,740 residents (American Community Survey). The Village is a popular destination for tourists so the Village's population can increase to 30,000 people during peak tourism months.

**FIGURE 2-1. VILLAGE OF RUIDOSO'S POPULATION**

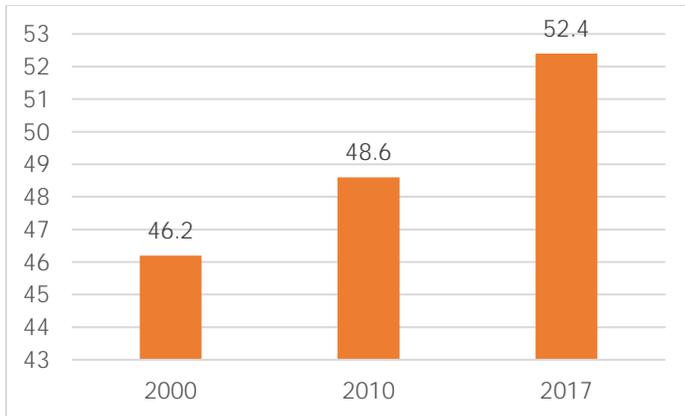


Source: US Census; 2000, 2010

## Age

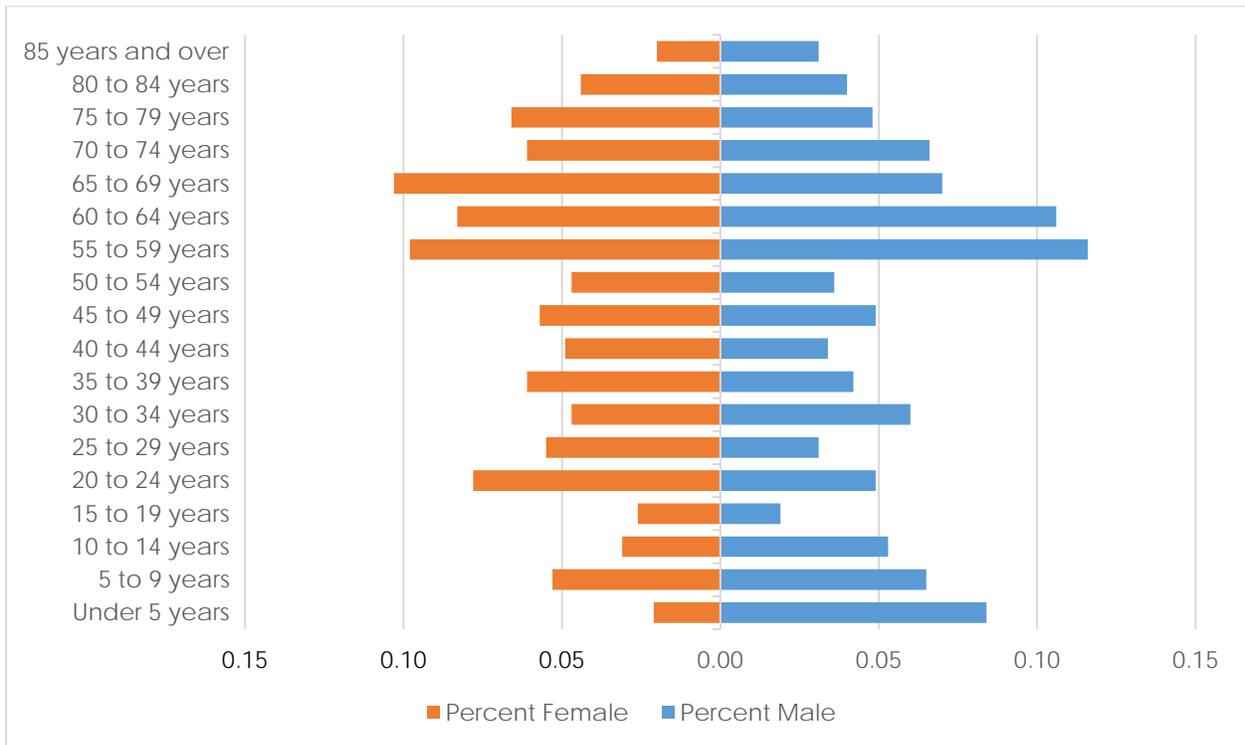
Ruidoso's population is steadily aging as shown in Figure 2-2. The median age has increased by 6.2 years between 2000 and 2017. In 2017, the largest age range of people in Ruidoso was between 55 and 59 years of age at 10.7 percent of the total population (see Figure 2-3). Ruidoso Downs' largest age range of people in 2017 was 30- to 34-year-olds at 12.2 percent. More than 50 percent (51.9 percent) of the population is older than 50 years old in Ruidoso, whereas only 29.6 percent of the population is older than 50 years old in Ruidoso Downs. Millennials (currently 23 to 38 years old) make up approximately 21 percent of Ruidoso's total population in 2017 according to the US Census' four age brackets ranging from 20- to 39-year-olds.

**FIGURE 2-2. VILLAGE OF RUIDOSO'S MEDIAN AGE**



Source: US Census; ACS

**FIGURE 2-3. VILLAGE OF RUIDOSO AGE RANGE POPULATION IN 2017**

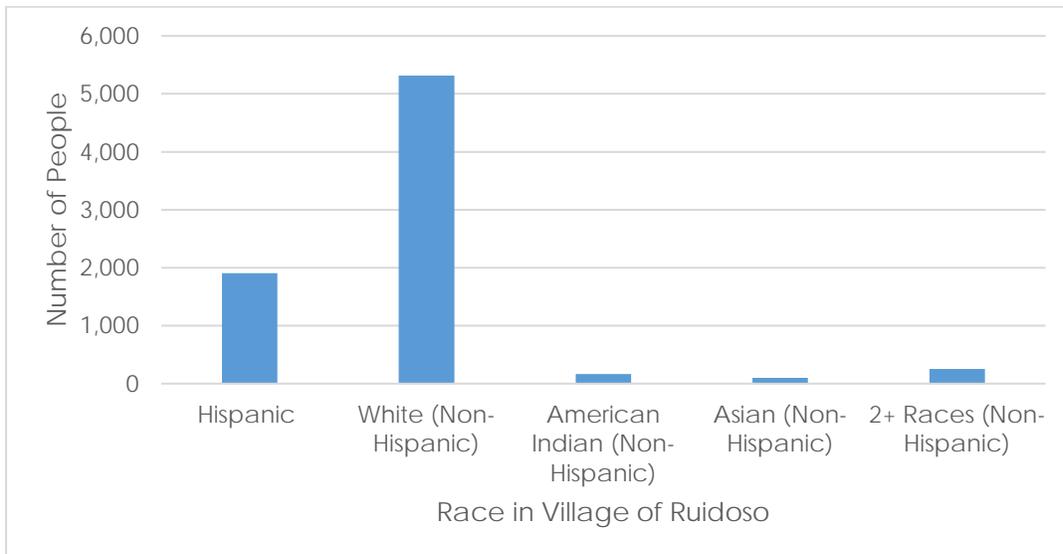


Source: US Census; ACS

*Race, Ethnicity, Nationality*

Ruidoso’s population is predominately White as shown in Figure 2-4.

**FIGURE 2-4. VILLAGE OF RUIDOSO RACE IN 2017**



Source: US Census; ACS 5-Year Estimates

*Income and Poverty*

*Income*

As shown in Figure 2-5, the median household income in Ruidoso has decreased by \$4,342 between 2010 and 2017. Following this trend, the per capita income, median family income, and mean family income have also decreased by \$1,423, \$5,012, and \$11,851, respectively.

**FIGURE 2-5. VILLAGE OF RUIDOSO INCOME**

	New Mexico		Village of Ruidoso	
	2010	2017	2010	2017
<b>ACS 1-Year Estimates</b>				
<i>Median Household Income</i>	\$43,820	\$46,718	\$46,120	\$41,778
<b>ACS 5-Year Estimates</b>				
<i>Per Capita Income</i>	\$22,966	\$25,257	\$27,398	\$25,975
<i>Median Family Income</i>	\$52,565	\$57,436	\$60,156	\$55,144
<i>Mean Family Income</i>	\$66,508	\$76,126	\$79,069	\$67,218

Source: US Census; ACS

### Poverty

Approximately 16 percent of the population in Ruidoso live in poverty. The national average is slightly less, at 14 percent and New Mexico's poverty rate is higher, at 20 percent. There are more females aged 35-44 living in poverty than any other demographic or age range.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, 47 percent of renters and 26 percent of owners are spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing, which compromises their ability to pay for other basic services, such as food and health insurance.<sup>3</sup>

### Educational Attainment

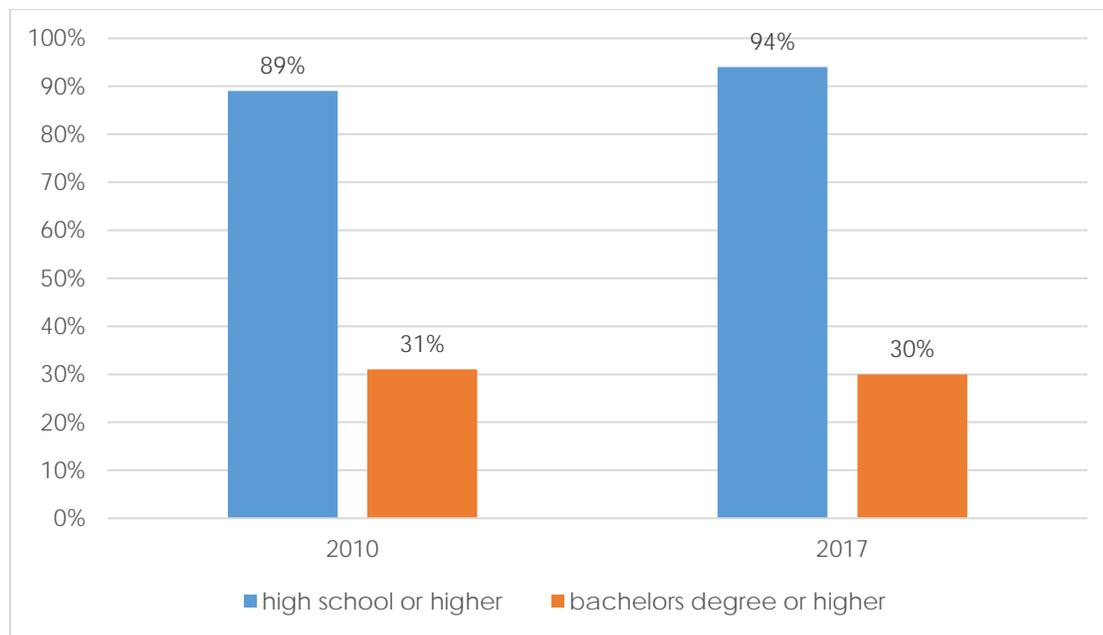
#### High School Graduates

As shown in Figure 2-6, the percent of adults who are high school graduate or higher has increased by 5.7 percent within the years of 2010 and 2017. However, the percent of adults who have a bachelor's degree or higher has decreased by 1% in the seven-year span.

#### University Enrollment

In 2018, there were 631 students enrolled at Eastern New Mexico University–Ruidoso, which was a slight increase from 2017, when the enrollment was 615 students.<sup>4</sup>

**FIGURE 2-6. VILLAGE OF RUIDOSO'S PERCENTAGE OF ADULTS WHO ARE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES OR HAVE BACHELOR'S DEGREES OR HIGHER**



Source: US Census; ACS

<sup>2</sup> <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/ruidoso-nm/#economy>

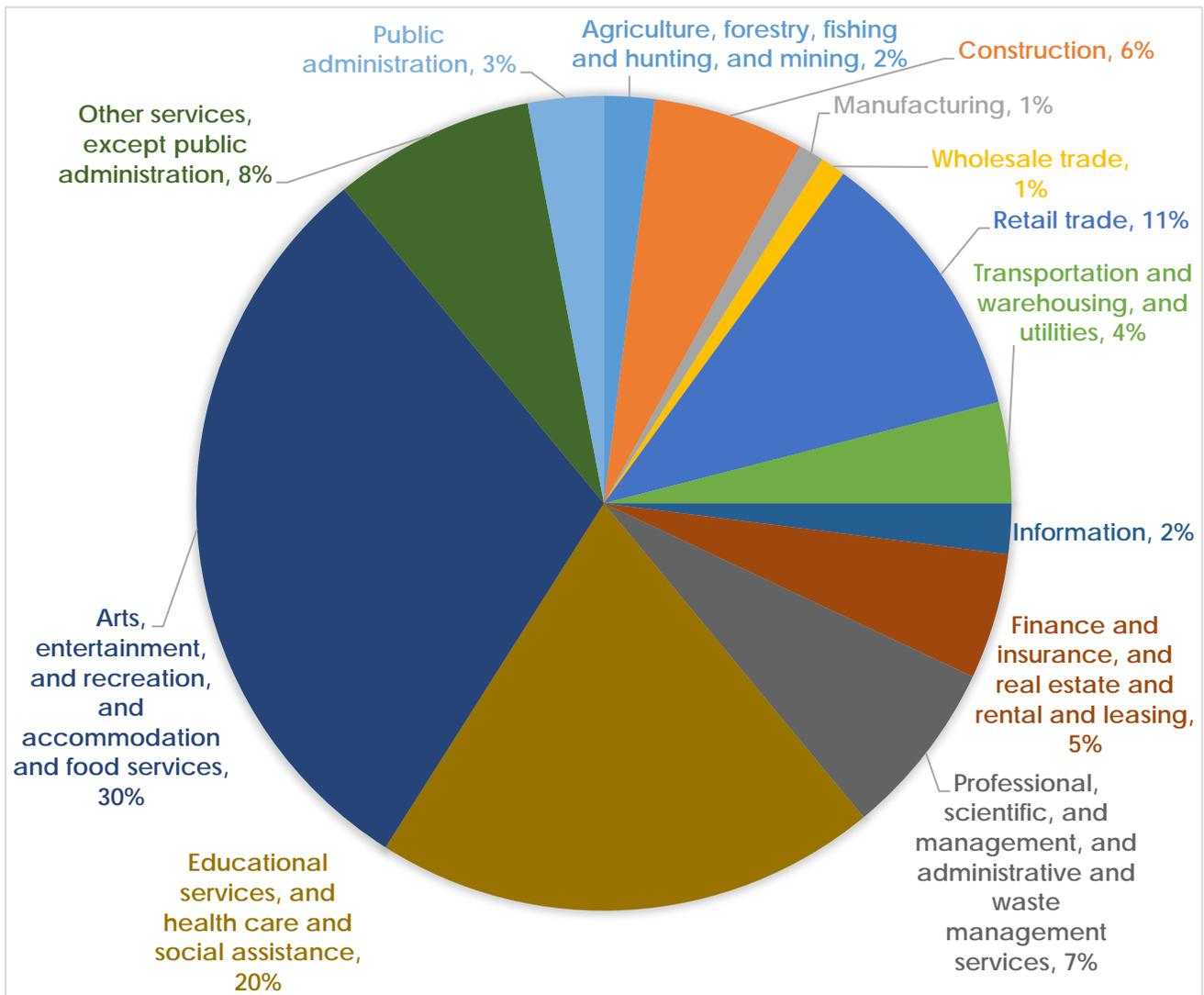
<sup>3</sup> <https://affordablehousingonline.com/housing-search/New-Mexico/Ruidoso>

<sup>4</sup> <https://ruidoso.enmu.edu/enrollment-grows/>

## Employment

Thirty percent of Ruidoso residents are employed in the Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services industries, as shown in Figure 2-7. The next largest category is educational services, and health care and social assistance with 20 percent of the of residents employed in these industries.

**FIGURE 2-7. VILLAGE OF RUIDOSO EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY**



Source: US Census; ACS

## Natural Resources

The Village's natural setting and abundant resources are some of its prime assets. This chapter describes Ruidoso's natural setting and resources, including Lincoln National Forest, Rio Ruidoso, lakes, and creeks.

### Current Conditions

Ruidoso's natural resources are described in the following sections: Mountains and Forests and Bodies of Water.

#### *Mountains and Forests*

Village forests are an integral part of the natural beauty of the area. Ordinances recognize this aspect and require protection of trees in developments and retention of the forested aspect throughout the Village.

- **Lincoln National Forest.** The Village of Ruidoso sits within the Smokey Bear District of Lincoln National Forest under the jurisdiction of the US Forest Service at an elevation of approximately 6,900 feet. The district's elevation ranges from 5,400 feet to 11,580 feet and offers a range of plant life (pine, juniper, spruce, fir, oak, maple, aspen, and high-elevation grasses) wildlife (predominantly deer, elk, black bears, and smaller species such as squirrels and rabbits, and over 200 species of birds), and numerous outdoor recreation opportunities.<sup>1</sup> Lincoln National Forest encompasses the Sacramento Mountains, the White Mountain Wilderness, Sierra Blanca range, and Capitan Mountains Wilderness.<sup>2</sup>
- **Fort Stanton–Snowy River Cave National Conservation Area.** The Village airport, Sierra Blanca Regional Airport, lies within the Fort Stanton–Snowy River Cave National Conservation Area (NCA), which is managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).<sup>3</sup> The NCA was established to conserve the historic and natural resources of Fort Stanton and its surrounding area. The Fort Stanton Cave, which 31 miles long, is largest cave managed by the BLM. Snowy River, a passage within Fort Stanton Cave, is the longest cave formation in the world.
- **Sacramento/Sierra Blanca Mountains.** Sierra Blanca (White Mountain) peak dominates Ruidoso's western skyline, rising to an elevation of 11,981 feet.<sup>4</sup> As the southernmost 11,000-foot-plus peak in the US, Sierra Blanca is home to the Ski Apache and Inn of the Mountain Gods resorts on the Mescalero Apache reservation. The surrounding Sierra Blanca Range is a sub-range within the larger Sacramento Range that extends 85 miles from Nogal in the north to the communities of Tiberon and Piñon southeast of Alamogordo.
- **Moon Mountain.** Moon Mountain has a peak elevation of 7,335 feet. It is due east of the Village boundaries within the Lincoln National Forest and larger Sacramento Range (see Figure 3-1). The property is owned by the New Mexico State Land Office. The Village will expand recreational opportunities on the site under a 25-year lease that expires in 2042. According to its recreation plan (described in more detail in the Parks and Recreation chapter), the mountain could be improved with fuels management and restricts hunting and motorized vehicles.<sup>5</sup>
- **Wildland-Urban Interface.** Developed and partially developed areas in or near forest land, referred to as the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) make up much of the Ruidoso area. They

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.discoverruidoso.com/lincoln-national-forest>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.fs.fed.us/ivm/index.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.blm.gov/visit/fort-stanton-snowy-river-cave-nca>

<sup>4</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sierra\\_Blanca\\_\(New\\_Mexico\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sierra_Blanca_(New_Mexico)); <https://www.paulitasnewmexico.com/love-southwest-sierra-blanca-mountains-part-1/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ruidosonews.com/story/news/local/community/2018/03/28/ideas-differ-future-uses-ruidosos-moon-mountain/467599002/>

are particularly at risk of damage from wildfire and potential fires. These areas, their restrictions, and protection efforts are described in the Hazard Mitigation chapter.

- **Timber Management.** A fuels management plan is currently being prepared by the New Mexico State Forestry Department and the Village of Ruidoso Forestry Department that will determine priorities for both forest health improvement and fire mitigation opportunities.
- **Environmental Stewardship.** The local non-profit organization, EcoServants offers a year-long AmeriCorps program for youth to learn and practice environmental stewardship. The program addresses areas affected by the Little Bear Fire, promotes land ethic and invasive plant management, and repairs and builds miles of new trails every year.

### *Bodies of Water*

- **Rio Ruidoso.** The Rio Ruidoso extends more than 30 miles from its headwaters on the flanks of Sierra Blanca Peak a few miles west of the Village. The Village's namesake river (meaning "noisy river") has long been a primary attraction of the region, resulting in extensive development, both residential and commercial, along its banks. Carrying runoff from the surrounding mountains, and often subject to flash flooding during the summer monsoon season, the river's water level can vary significantly, and periodically jumps its banks. In 2008, a 100-year flood caused significant damage when runoff exceeded the defined channel and caused extensive damage to bridges, roads, and adjacent properties along the river. This event was declared a disaster. As has been the case since development along the river began, various methods have been implemented in an attempt to control of the river and attempt to keep it in its banks. These include ill-planned quick fixes such as gabion or shotcrete bank lining (recently used on almost four miles of river bank) and adding or rebuilding private timber, block, and stone retaining walls that have caused the river to lose its natural character and begin significantly incising. The Village has recently used more naturalistic approaches that include boulder grade control structures and armored, but vegetated, bank protection to the channel and riverbank, along with related fish habitat structures at Two Rivers Park located just east of Midtown at the junction of Rio Ruidoso and Carrizo Creek, based on improvements that were recommended in the Rio Ruidoso Assessment (described later in this chapter).
- **Alto Lake.** Located on the northern edge of the Village, Alto Lake is a manmade 17-acre off-channel storage reservoir that is periodically stocked with fish. <sup>6</sup> The reservoir was originally built in 1964 to provide a source for drinking water to the communities of Ruidoso and Capitan. Currently, the reservoir's primary purpose is for storage of water for use at the Village of Ruidoso's Alto Crest Water Treatment Plant; it no longer provides water for Capitan. The lake is a popular destination, especially during summer months and holiday weekends. It offers parking, restrooms, picnic areas, and non-motorized boating (permit required). The lake is surrounded by a 2-mile trail that follows Eagle Creek and passes two waterfalls (the trail is a recent improvement that was recommended in the Rio Ruidoso Assessment).
- **Grindstone Lake.** Located near the southwest edge of the Village, Grindstone Lake is an off-channel storage reservoir impounded by a concrete dam with a primary purpose of storing water for treatment at the Grindstone Water Treatment Plant. The resulting reservoir stocked with fish, and non-motorized boats and trolling motors are allowed (with permits).<sup>7</sup> Wildlife, including bears, mule deer, elk, as well as many birds of prey are commonly seen from the

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ruidosoparksandrec.com/alto-lake>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ruidosoparksandrec.com/grindstone-lake-trail-system>



lake's wildlife viewing area. Its recreational opportunities are described in more detail in the Parks and Recreation chapter.

- **Carrizo Creek.** Flowing from Mescalero Lake (south of Ruidoso), this perennial creek meets Rio Ruidoso at Two Rivers Park. In 2010, Carrizo Creek had the best fish habitat of all the streams in the area, including the Rio Ruidoso.<sup>8</sup> This prime fish habitat lies within a wide floodplain between Grindstone Canyon Road and Tomahawk Road. It also has some damaged areas due to culverts, floodplain modifications, and grade modifications that are "easy to repair."
- **Cedar Creek.** This perennial creek runs north-south through Paradise Canyon (parallel to Cedar Creek Drive throughout much of town) and flows into Rio Ruidoso at Midtown.<sup>9</sup> It is a popular recreation area with picnic areas and three campsites. The creek does not have enough water in most parts to sustain fish habitat. It has been impacted by development and stormwater runoff.
- **Eagle Creek.** This creek feeds into Alto Lake and is ephemeral downstream of the reservoir. During periods of high runoff, a bypass channel carries water around Alto Lake. The remainder of the year, groundwater (possibly originating from the lake) supplies the creek just south of the dam, allowing that stretch to be perennial.<sup>10</sup> Eagle Creek and the North Fork Eagle Creek wellfield are Ruidoso's primary source of water, providing approximately 70% of the Village's water.
- **Gavilan Canyon Creek.** This is a mostly intermittent creek located south of Eagle Creek and north of Cedar Creek, mostly outside of the Village limits with the exception of a stretch south of Warrior Drive.<sup>11</sup> It also suffers from nearby development, runoff, illegal ponds, and trash. It runs near Ruidoso High School, which is above a natural spring (Bog Spring). The Village recently created a wetland area in the Bog Spring drainage next to Ruidoso High School that allows Gavilan Canyon Creek's natural ecosystem to work and provides a space for an outdoor education on watershed management and wetland restoration.
- **Toss No Mas.** Keep Ruidoso Beautiful hosts an annual clean up and cleaned 7 miles along Ruidoso River, Carrizo Creek, Eagle Creek, Alto Lake, Grindstone Lake, and Bog Springs waterways.

### Requested Changes

"Living in nature's playground," Ruidoso residents are surrounded by beautiful natural resources, but protection of, and access to, those resources could be improved. Priority programs and improvements that have been requested for improved maintenance and recreational access include:

- **River and Trail Access.** At the kick-off of the comprehensive planning process, stakeholders expressed interest in improving access to the river, creeks, and lakes, with trails and connections through town and the forest.
- **Wildlife Protection.** Many have expressed the need for wildlife protection, including providing safe wildlife crossings on busy thoroughfare in town. Elk and deer populations have grown in town due to changes to their natural habitat, lack of predators, and people feeding them in town; this makes the animals sick, creates hazards on the roads, and could make the Village susceptible to diseases they may carry. The sensitive Spotted Owl habitat requires limits to activities in the forest in March due to breeding season and August due to fledglings.

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<sup>8</sup> Van Clothier and Steve Vrooman. "Rio Ruidoso Assessment." (2010): 30-35.

<sup>9</sup> Van Clothier and Steve Vrooman. "Rio Ruidoso Assessment." (2010): 12-18.

<sup>10</sup> Van Clothier and Steve Vrooman. "Rio Ruidoso Assessment." (2010): 19-20.

<sup>11</sup> Van Clothier and Steve Vrooman. "Rio Ruidoso Assessment." (2010): 26.

## Existing Plans and Policies

- **Rio Ruidoso Assessment, 2010.** This plan, cited throughout this chapter, reviewed the health of Rio Ruidoso and four tributaries: Carrizo Creek, Cedar Creek, Eagle Creek, and Gavilan Canyon Creek. The findings from this assessment have been noted in the descriptions of the bodies of water above and its recommendations include:<sup>12</sup>
  - Widen the floodplain of Gavilan Canyon Creek to restore the delta zone and prevent the nearby ballfields from flooding. The ballfields parking lot could be modified to prevent runoff into the creek.
  - Reconstruct driveway crossing culverts to improve fish habitat and bank stability along Cedar Creek between the US Forest Service boundary to the creek's junction with Rio Ruidoso, particularly between the river and Hart Avenue.
  - Raise the water table by restoring the legacy headcuts on Cedar Creek between the US Forest Service boundary and Mechem Drive.
  - Improve the fish habitat in Carrizo Creek between the Rainbow Lake RV Park to Barney Rue Sand and Gravel by removing fish barriers and dams that inhibit fish habitat and prohibiting adjacent property owners from mowing the floodplain.
  - Reconstruct bridges that cross the river and ensure the river's ecosystem and fish habitat are prioritized in the design. The 2008 Dolly Flood declared disaster resulted in 10 bridges in need for reconstruction.
  - Create water harvesting basins along Avalon Road and the Walmart parking lot to treat the hillside's and parking lot's runoff, replant native species and stabilize the river's banks.
  - Restore the fish habitat in Rio Ruidoso between the cement plant and Avalon Road by reconstructing the meander, replanting the banks, and addressing adjacent grazing.
  - Redirect or create filtration improvements the Parker Road Energy Dissipator's ditch so it can irrigate nearby farmland and/or be slowed, treated, or absorbed before flowing into the river.
  - Repair two of the river's meander cut-offs on Stansell Ranch to improve fish habitat, restore the bank vegetation, and improve the health and water quality downstream.
  - Repair the irrigation diversion on Lazy H Ranch so it is not a fish barrier, replant and prevent grazing for bank revegetation, and re-channelize a portion that has excess sediment.
- **New Mexico Statewide Natural Resources Assessment, Strategy and Response Plan, 2010.** According to the statewide plan, Ruidoso rates high as one of the most important habitat areas with fish and wildlife priority, it rates medium for wildlife occurrence, medium/high for rare plant occurrence, medium for Threatened and Endangered (T&E) Potential Habitat, high for The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) Conservation Areas, and high for Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy's (CWCS) Key Areas. The plan also notes Ruidoso has a mixture of medium, medium/high and high ratings for its Forest Sub-model's Fish and Wildlife Priority," which is defined as forest area that provides habitat for plants and animals. The plan also looks at the economic development potential associated with the state's natural resources. Ruidoso ranks high in economic potential, biomass availability, and recreation; it ranks medium to medium/high in timber availability, range production, and accessibility. In terms of forest health and susceptibility to insect and disease outbreaks, Ruidoso has a mix of low/medium, medium, and medium/high pockets.

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<sup>12</sup> Van Clothier and Steve Vrooman. "Rio Ruidoso Assessment." (2010): 50-53.

- **Northern Sacramento Mountain Watershed and Forest Restoration Strategy, 2018.** Written by a subcommittee of the Greater Ruidoso Area Wildland-Urban Interface Working Group and the New Mexico Forest & Watershed Restoration Institute, the strategy focused on reducing fuels and restoring forest health in the Northern Sacramento Mountains. The Working Group is comprised of the US Forest Service, New Mexico State Forestry Division, Mescalero Apache Tribe, Village of Ruidoso Forestry Department, Upper Hondo Soil and Water Conservation District, Carrizozo Soil and Water Conservation District, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Littler Bear Forest Reform Committee, Lincoln County Land and Natural Resources Advisory Committee, Lincoln County, EcoServants, Eastern New Mexico University—Ruidoso, and South Central Mountain Resource Conservation and Development Council. The strategy identifies six focus areas to reduce fuels and restore forest health using forest treatments (such as chemicals, controlled burns, thinning, and maintenance). The strategy also focuses on long-term partnerships to fundraise, raising awareness of the general public through communication and education, and creating a wood products industry that can make use of the forest's removed fuel/materials.

### Preliminary Recommendations

The following recommendations should be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan to maintain and enhance Ruidoso's natural resources:

- **Create a Watershed-based Plan.** Work with the State of New Mexico to create a Watershed-based Plan in compliance with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards.
- **Continue to Protect and Maintain Forest Land.** Ruidoso is a high priority area for the improvement of forest health and the protection of watershed as identified in the recently approved Northern Sacramento Mountain Watershed Strategy. The mountains and forests are main attractions for tourists and residents; they make Ruidoso special. The Village, US Forest Service, EcoServants, Forest Foundation, BLM, and Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) should continue to work together to maintain and protect these lands as a top priority through fuels management, development of trails, and educational programs.
- **Protect and Restore Waterways from Development.** Rio Ruidoso and the creeks running through town are Village assets that should be protected and restored to maintain their natural beauty, wildlife habitat, and healthy ecosystems. Update development standards to ensure new construction and renovation are not detrimentally impacting the waterways. The Village should identify and protect watershed areas.
- **Renovate Existing Infrastructure to Mitigate Impacts to Waterways.** Existing infrastructure (especially culverts/bridges and removing gabion baskets) should be renovated to improve the health of Ruidoso's river and creeks. Look into opportunities to implement grade control structures in waterways to prevent further incising.
- **Improve Stormwater/Water Harvesting.** Build on the Development Standards' Landscaping requirements (Sec. 54-135), the Grading, Drainage and Development Plan requirements (Sec. 54.283(d)(1)d1), and Drainage and Storm Sewer requirements (Sec. 54-285) that require property owners to properly manage stormwater so waterways are not negatively impacted by development runoff and are able to continue to be a beautiful, natural resource.
- **Continue to Tap into Wildlife Habitat, Forest Restoration, and Watershed Health Funding Resources.** Several programs offer funding for projects related to habitat improvement at the state and national levels (e.g., New Mexico River Conservation and Restoration Fund, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grants, USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Big Game Habitat Enhancement Fund, Habitat Management and Access Validation Fund, Game Protection Fund, Habitat Stamp Program

Fund, Native Plant Society of New Mexico grants, and EPA 319 funding). The requirements of each funding source differ, but many of these funds can be used towards major capital projects provided they are enhancing the natural environment.

- **Improve Wayfinding to Promote Natural Resources.** A comprehensive wayfinding plan that guides visitors to the many natural attractions that Ruidoso and the region have to offer, will help promote their use. Build on the Forest Service’s wayfinding plan in place.
- **Promote Nature Programs for Youth.** Build on Ecoservants’ success at fostering environmental stewardship in our youth, improve public health, and provide more activities for young people. Consider using the State’s new Outdoor Equity Fund to create outdoor programs for youth.<sup>13</sup>
- **Identify Riverbank and Creek Areas for Acquisition.** The Village should consider acquiring property adjacent to its waterways to allow for waterway restoration, trail access, and flood control.

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.hcn.org/articles/social-justice-new-mexico-lawmakers-focus-on-equity-in-the-outdoors>



## Land Use

This chapter describes the existing land uses and development patterns, Village-owned property, Midtown's characteristics, and address land use issues identified by the public and key stakeholders. Preliminary recommendations will support Village goals for future development and stewardship of Village character.

### Current Conditions

The Village of Ruidoso is 14.3 square miles.

### Zoning

Fourteen zoning districts regulate the types of land uses allowed and standards for development (See Figure 4-1). The zoning districts include:

- **R-1 Single-Family Residential District.** The vast majority of Ruidoso (688 acres) is zoned as Single-Family Residential District (R-1). This use allows low-density (no more than 4 dwellings per acre), single-family detached homes and public parks, along with complementary, conditional uses, which include day care centers, utility stations, public buildings, churches, schools, and bed and breakfasts (with fewer than 5 guest rooms on a minimum of one-acre sites). Only one kitchen is allowed on properties within this district, so the district does not allow for accessory dwellings. Home businesses are allowed in this district provided that only the residents are employed and the business activity does not change the character of the district or increase vehicular traffic/parking by more than one vehicle.<sup>1</sup>
- **Other Residential Districts.** Three other types of Residential Districts are sprinkled throughout the Village and allow the same uses and include the same conditional uses as R-1. Small pockets of R-2 Two-Family Residential Districts (which allow two residences on a parcel) are sprinkled throughout the Village and somewhat larger clusters of R-3 Multiple-Family Residential Districts (which allow up to 14 dwelling units/acre and are not allowed to exceed 6 dwellings per site or developments or up to 135 feet in length) are primarily located in the southeastern part of the Village and south of Sudderth Drive. Group homes are considered as a conditional use in the R-3 district. A handful of pockets of R-4 High-Density Residential Districts (which allow up to 20 dwellings per acre) are located along Mechem Drive, Meadows Drive, Jack Little Drive, Granite Drive, Racquet Drive, Lower Terrace Drive, and the southernmost corner of the Village on Carrizo Canyon Road. There is also one agricultural/residential zone (AR) that allows farmland with an associated farm house in the southeastern most corner of the Village.
- **Mobile Home Districts.** In addition to the above-listed residential districts, there are two mobile home districts meant to promote affordable housing, including M-1 Low-Density (which allows no more than five dwelling per acre) and M-2 Medium-Density (which allows no more than 10 dwellings per acre). Like the other residential districts, these two districts have the same conditional uses, but they do not allow public parks. M-1 takes up a large amount of land in the northwest section of the Village along Porr Drive and Brady Canyon Drive, along with some smaller pockets on either side of Mechem Drive at the northernmost part of the Village, and along Signal Peak Road at the south end. There are only four small districts of M-2: Ranier Road, Paradise Canyon Drive, Highway 70 (adjacent to the C-4 Heavy Commercial Districts), and S Evergreen Road.
- **Commercial Districts.** The Village has four commercial districts, which are primarily flanking its main streets: Sudderth Drive, Mechem Drive, Vision Drive, Main Road, Gavilan

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<sup>1</sup> Division 6, Sec. 54-221

[https://library.municode.com/nm/ruidoso/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances?nodeId=COOR\\_CH54LAUS\\_ARTIIIZO\\_DIV6HOOC](https://library.municode.com/nm/ruidoso/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=COOR_CH54LAUS_ARTIIIZO_DIV6HOOC)

Canyon Drive, Highway 70, and their cross streets. The districts include those meant to serve neighborhoods as local shopping centers (C-1), low-intensity commercial centers along arterials (C-2), the denser Midtown shopping district with shops closely spaced and residential uses allowed on upper floors (C-3), and heavy, construction-oriented businesses and services (C-4), which are only located along US Highway 70 at the southern edge of the Village.

- **Planned Unit Development Districts.** The Village has two Planned Unit Development Districts (PUDs) that allow for more flexible standards and a mix of uses. The PUD allows a mix of housing and local commercial as permitted in the R and C-1 Districts; the Links at Sierra Blanca, the area surrounding Grindstone Lake, a small area on Country Club Drive, and large area west of Mechem Drive bounded by Avalanche Trail. The M-PUD allows any combination of land uses; there are two areas with such zoning: A small M-PUD site is located on Mechem Drive at the northernmost part of the Village; and a large area flanks State Highway 532, which includes the Alto Lake Dam area. The M-PUD around Alto Lake aims to restrict development in this sensitive watershed area.<sup>2</sup>
- **Industrial District.** There are only two parcels zoned as Industrial (I-1) in the Village; they are adjacent to one another in the northeast corner off Gavilan Canyon Road.

### *Land Ownership*

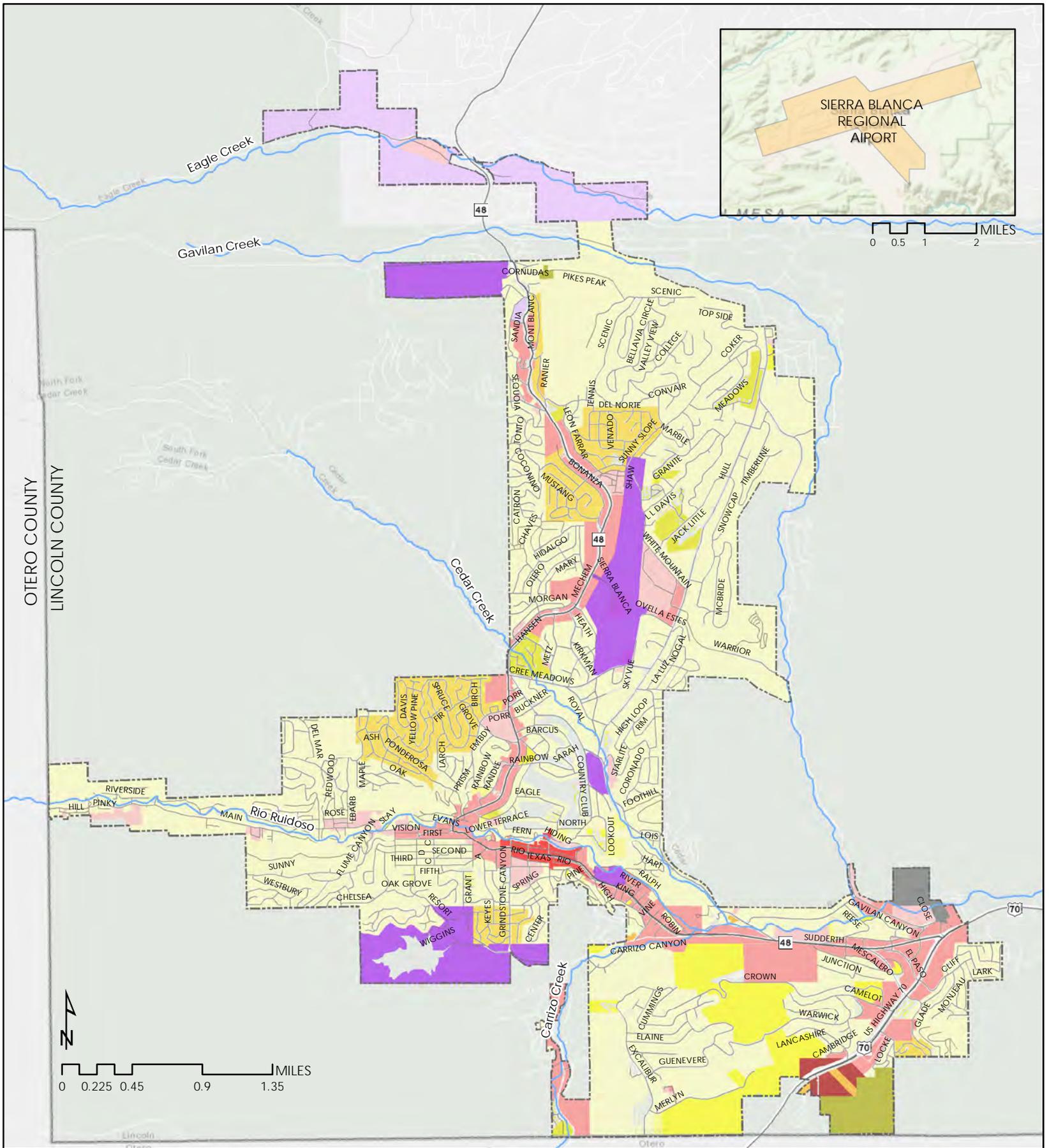
In addition to the zoning districts that regulate what types of land uses are allowed in the Village, it is important to note where land is vacant, where land is owned by US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Mescalero Tribe, and where the airport is located. These uses are described below and shown on Figure 4-2: Land Ownership)

- **Vacant Land.** There is a significant amount of vacant land within the Village boundaries although much of it is on steep terrain or in floodplains that are not suitable for development. Given the limitations that Ruidoso's terrain creates on development, vacant land should be reviewed for its potential to provide housing or other needed land uses; refer to the 2015 Affordable Housing Plan identification of potential sites.
- **US Forest Service.** The Lincoln National Forest, which is managed by the US Forest Service, surrounds Ruidoso.
- **Mescalero Apache Tribe.** Abutting Ruidoso's southern boundary is the Mescalero Apache Reservation in Otero County. Many of Ruidoso's visitors travel to Mescalero to visit the Inn of the Mountain Gods Resort and Casino. The Mescalero Apache Tribe runs Ski Apache Ski Resort and leases the land from the US Forest Service.
- **Sierra Blanca Regional Airport.** The Sierra Blanca airport is a public airport owned and operated by the Village of Ruidoso located 15 miles from downtown Ruidoso (refer to the Community Services and Transportation chapters for more details about the airport).<sup>3</sup>
- **Bureau of Land Management.** The area surrounding the Sierra Blanca Regional Airport is owned by the Bureau of Land Management, which includes Fort Stanton National Conservation Area (NCA). Fort Stanton is operated by the State.

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<sup>2</sup> Planning and Zoning Commission, Regular Meeting Minutes, AX01-001 Annexation, February 20, 2001, Governing Body, Village of Ruidoso, Regular Meeting Minutes, March 27, 2001, and Ordinance 2001-02.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ruidoso-nm.gov/airport-index>



SOURCE: VILLAGE OF RUIDOSO, 2019

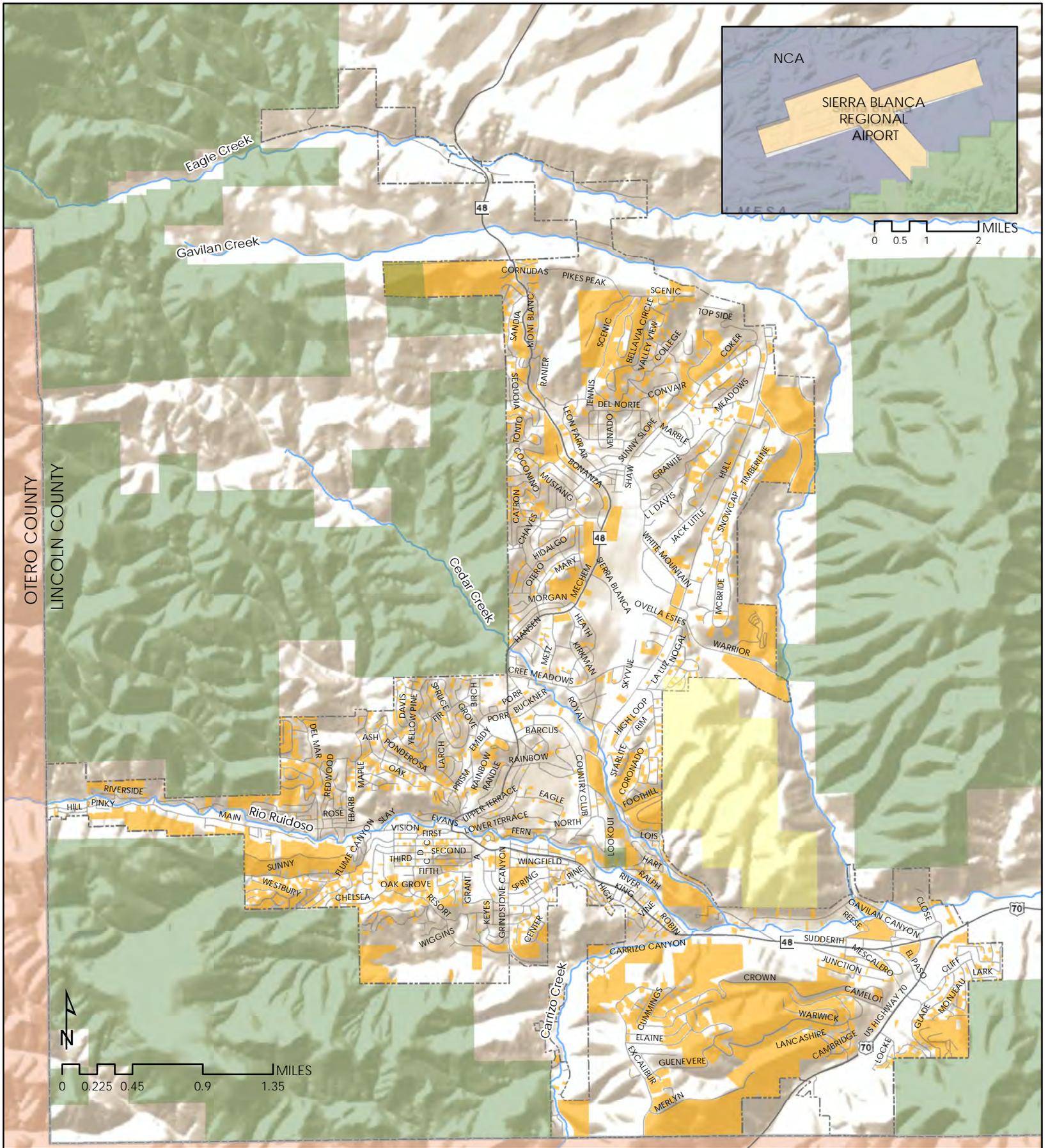
FIGURE 4-1. ZONING DISTRICTS

LEGEND

-  VILLAGE OF RUIDOSO
-  RIVERS AND CREEKS

COMMERCIAL	RESIDENTIAL	MIXED USE	INDUSTRIAL
 C-1	 R-1	 PUD	 I-1
 C-3	 R-3	 M-PUD	
 C-2	 R-2		
 C-4	 R-4		
	 AR-1		
	 R-4		
	 M-2		
	 M-1		





SOURCE: VILLAGE OF RUIDOSO, 2019

FIGURE 4-2. LAND OWNERSHIP

LEGEND

- VILLAGE OF RUIDOSO
- RIVERS AND CREEKS
- VACANT
- BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
- LINCOLN NATIONAL FOREST
- MESCALERO TRIBE
- STATE



## Requested Changes

Village residents and stakeholders have expressed the need for a number of uses that could be addressed through updates to the Village's land use policies and zoning ordinances, including:

- **Industrial/Storage.** Warehouses at or near the airport to support business and light industrial areas could attract business.
- **Parks and Recreation.** More sports fields (particularly outdoor fields) and a recreation center that can be used by multiple users throughout the day and night and throughout the seasons was a repeated request. The existing fields and courts are being used by several groups for various sports, which complicates scheduling and limits playing time. Having more dedicated fields would allow locals more opportunities for field use and would also allow growth of existing tournaments in the Village. Places for young children and families to spend time and more campgrounds that have space for RV parking were also requested.
- **Housing.** More affordable and workforce housing options were requested by community members and stakeholders (see the Housing chapter).
- **Building Vacancies and Maintenance.** Unsightly or unused buildings along Sudderth Drive were mentioned as detrimental to the Village's impression; when buildings sit vacant or in bad condition, it sends the message that the Village is not open for business. In general, "failing infrastructure and aging buildings" are contributing to the challenges that the Village faces.<sup>4</sup>

## Existing Plans and Policies

- **Village of Ruidoso Managers Report, 2018.** There are opportunities to partner with the school district at Nob Hill elementary school to house teachers and two funding sources that the Village can look into address housing, including Low Income Tax credit and the National Housing Trust Fund.
- **Village of Ruidoso Strategic Plan, 2018.** The Village's Strategic Plan was completed in November 2018 and identified short-term and long-term goals and priorities. The Village annually evaluates and updates its Strategic Plan.

## Planned Improvements

According to the Village's 2018 Village of Ruidoso Manager's Report and Strategic Plan, the following land use improvements are underway:

- **Affordable Housing.** Workforce Housing Advisory Board voted to issue a request for proposals for qualified housing developers to develop the Village-owned property in Midtown with affordable housing.
- **Horton Complex.** The Village also plans to move all Village offices into Horton Complex to make a one-stop shop for residents and builders.
- **Increase Campsites.** The Village's Strategic Plan identified the long-term goal of building campsites at Grindstone and Bonito lakes. A campsite is currently being constructed at Grindstone (see Parks and Recreation chapter).
- **Acquisition of Property.** Part of the Forest Thinning and Fire Mitigation Capital Outlay Project is focused on acquiring easements and rights-of-way to improve watershed health.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ruidosonews.com/story/news/local/community/2018/12/28/ruidoso-adopts-strategic-plan-lists-threats-goals/2435323002/>

## Preliminary Recommendations

The following recommendations should be addressed in the comprehensive plan to maintain and enhance Ruidoso's land use distribution:

- **Revise Zoning to Allow for More Affordable Housing.** This could include changing residential districts to allow accessory units, changing some single-family residential districts to multi-family or high-density residential districts, or making multifamily housing a permissive use in commercial districts. This could be done by creating character zones.
- **Consider Rezoning Sensitive Environmental Areas.** Consider creating another zoning district or an overlay zone to that restrict development in areas intended to protect the watershed and land, such as Alto Dam.
- **Draft Policy to Incentivize Remodeling, Redevelopment, and Infill Projects.** Focus on sustainable building practices, such as providing tax incentives for repurposing fire-treated building materials, prioritizing new construction on locations that have less impact on natural resources, and rehabbing existing cabins.
- **Update GIS and Readdressing throughout the Village.** In order to more efficiently manage the Village's resources and to improve emergency response and wayfinding, the Village GIS data and mapping capabilities should be enhanced to show all resources, including natural resources, existing land uses<sup>5</sup>, and property footprints and addresses.

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<sup>5</sup> Village of Ruidoso does not currently record or map existing land use per staff correspondence with Stephanie Warren, February 2019.

## Housing

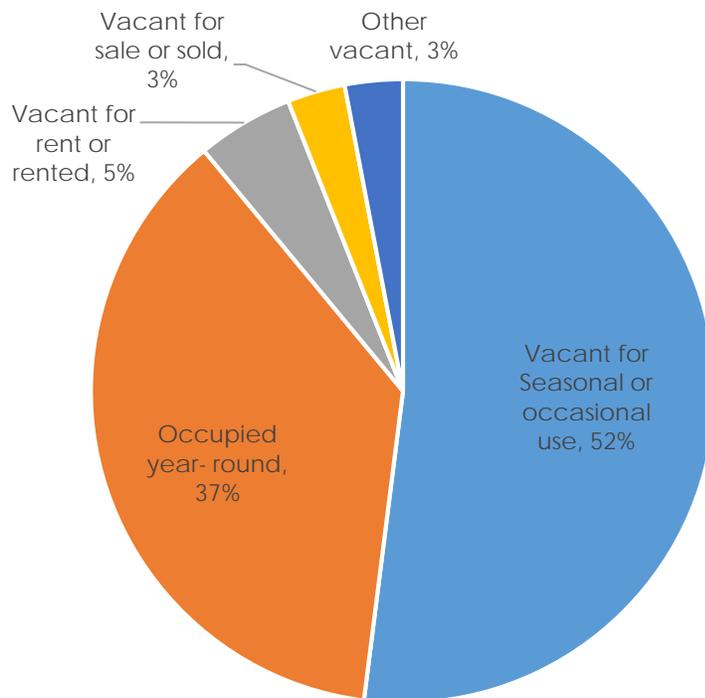
One of the central goals of comprehensive planning is addressing the need for adequate housing. The Village's 2015 Affordable Housing Plan's vision and goals are referenced in this chapter. Recognizing that the housing plan focuses on affordable and workforce housing, the Comprehensive Plan will extend the analysis to address the community's need for market rate housing for permanent residents and the anticipated demand for seasonal housing.

### Current Conditions

#### Housing Occupancy

As shown in Figure 5-1, more than half (52 percent) of housing in Ruidoso is vacant for seasonal or occasional use. Following that, 37 percent is occupied year-round. Eleven percent of housing in Ruidoso is vacant—either for sale or sold, for rent or rented, or for other reasons.

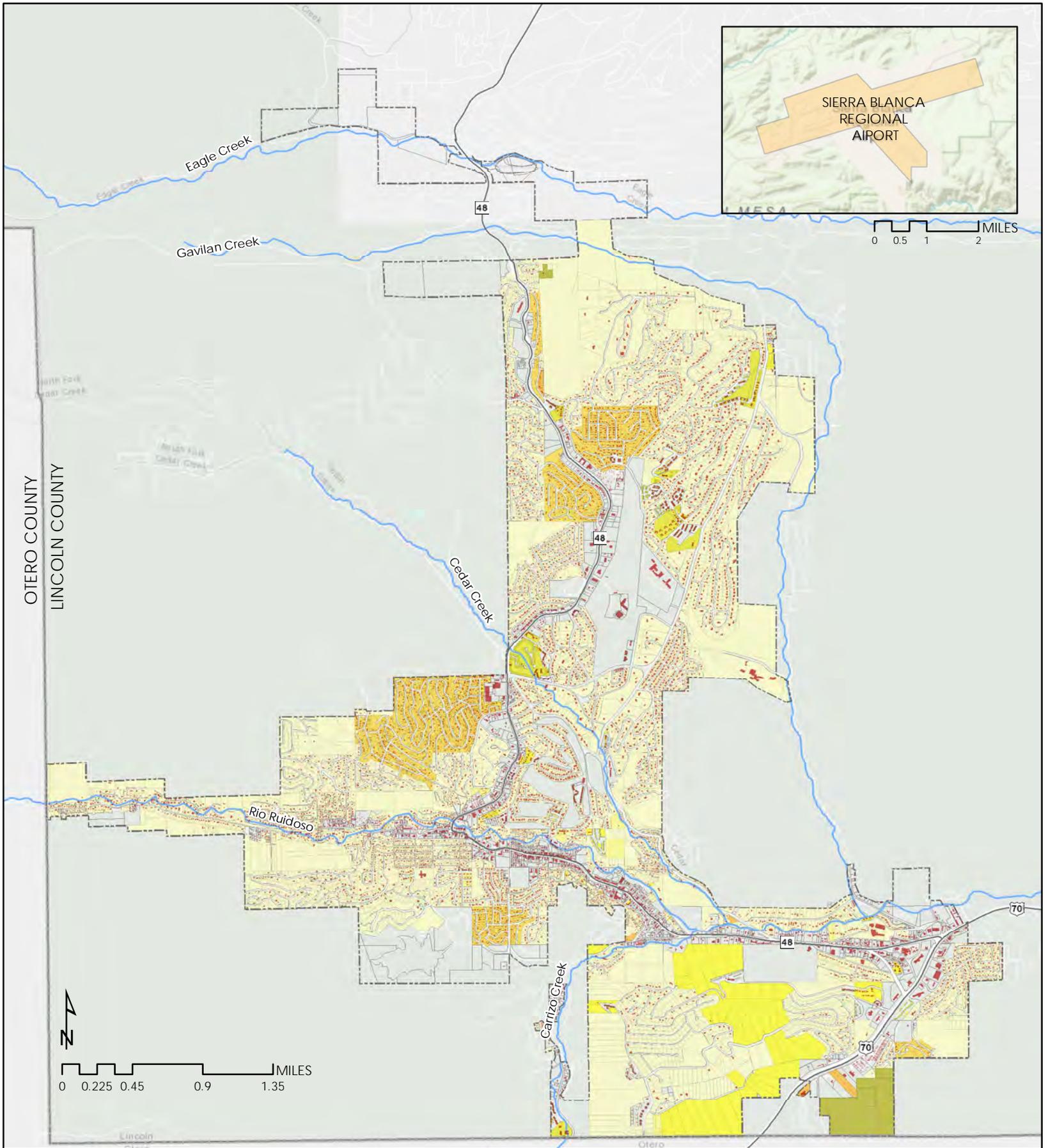
**FIGURE 5-1. HOUSING OCCUPANCY**



Source: US Census; ACS

#### Types of Housing

Although the Village does not have data on existing land uses, including the type of housing constructed, the Village's zoning districts dictate what types of housing is allowed. The vast majority of land in Ruidoso (688 acres) is zoned for single-family detached homes, which fits within the R-1 district (see Figure 5-2). The second-largest area (393 acres) that allows housing is the mixed-use planned unit development zoning district (M-PUD), which is the most flexible of any district and allows any combination of residential and commercial types, followed by the mixed-use planned unit development zoning district (PUD) which occupies 196 acres. The fourth-largest area (158 acres) is zoned for low-density mobile homes (no more than 5 dwelling units per acre); this zone aims to allow for affordable homes.



SOURCE: VILLAGE OF RUIDOSO, 2019

FIGURE 5-2. HOUSING DISTRICTS

LEGEND

-  VILLAGE OF RUIDOSO
-  RIVERS AND CREEKS
-  BUILDING FOOTPRINTS

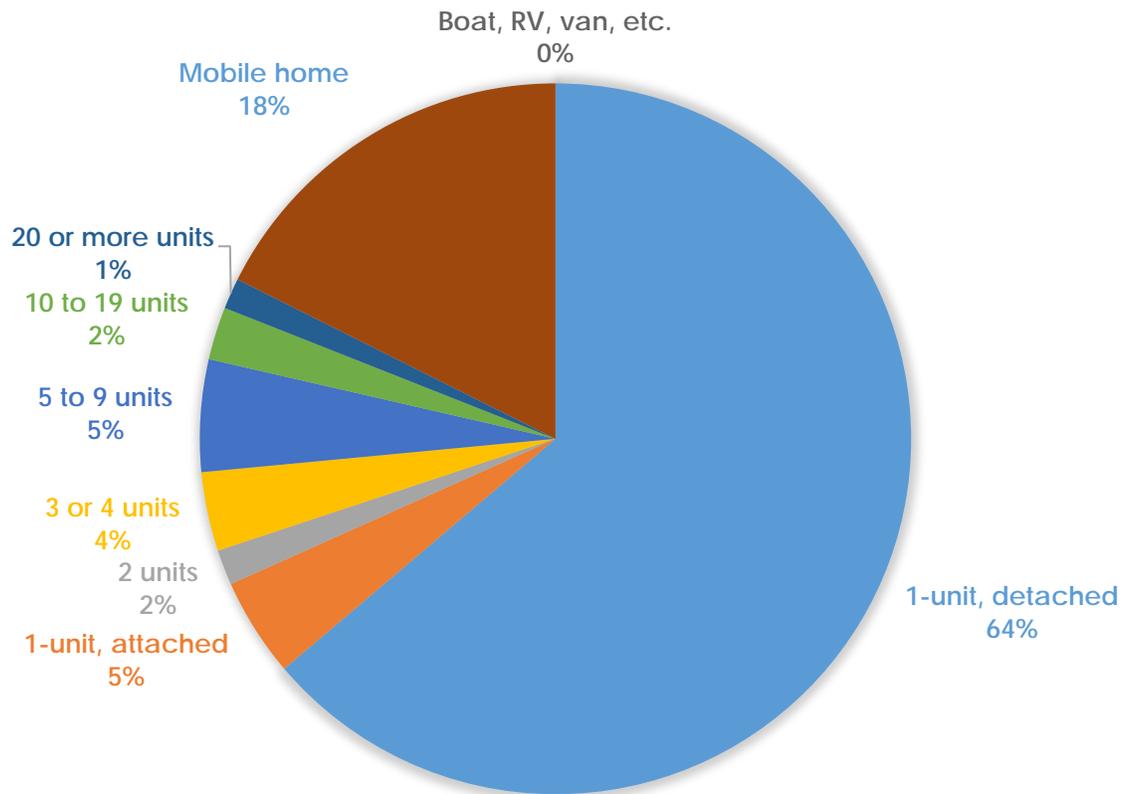
RESIDENTIAL

- |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |
| R-1   | R-3   | AR-1  | M-2   |
|  |  |  |   |
| R-2   | R-4   | M-1   |   |



According to the American Community Survey, the largest amount of housing in Ruidoso in 2017 is single unit, detached houses at 64 percent of the total housing. The second largest amount of housing is mobile homes at 18 percent of the total housing. The remaining housing in Ruidoso only accounts for 19 percent of the total, as shown in Figure 5-3.

**FIGURE 5-3. TOTAL HOUSING UNITS BY TYPE**

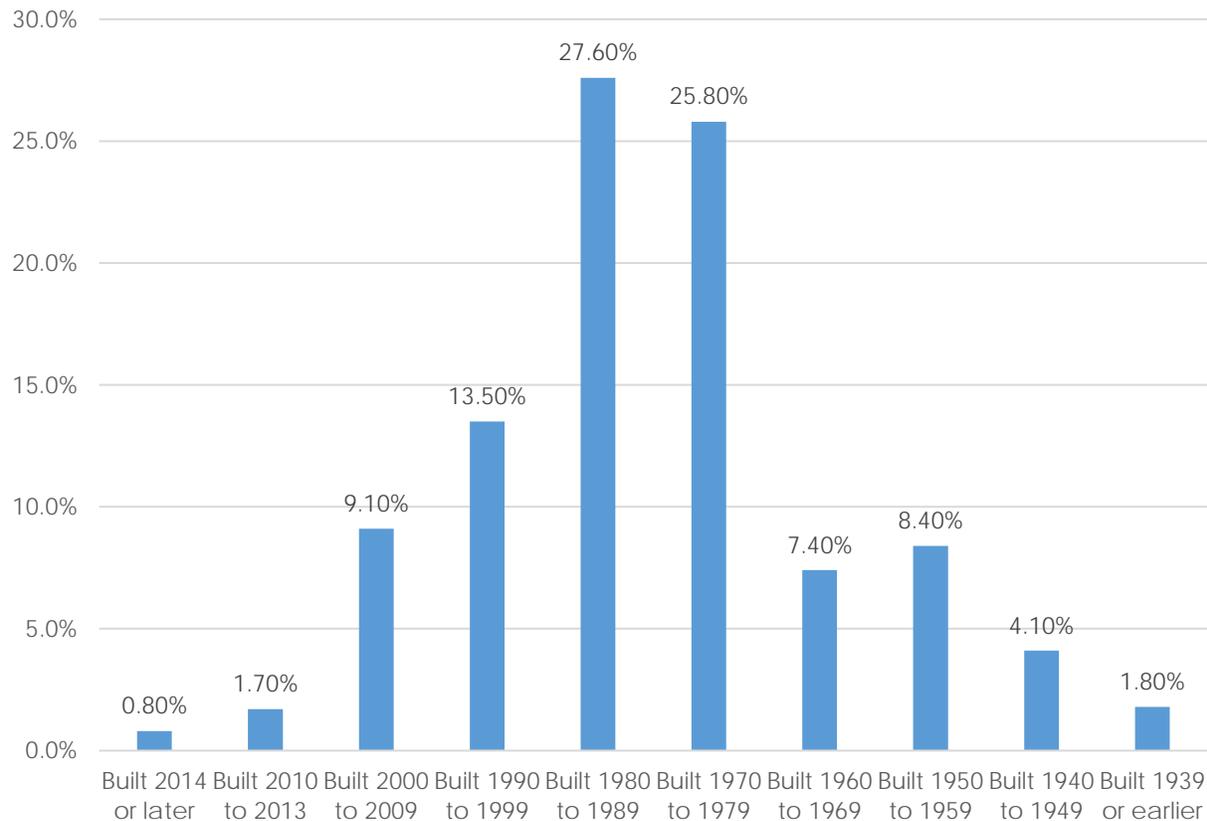


Source: US Census; ACS

### Housing Stock

More than half the housing stock in Ruidoso was built between 1970 and 1989, as shown in Figure 5-4, making it at least 30 years old. Only 11.6 percent of the housing stock was built after 2000.

**FIGURE 5-4. AGE OF HOUSING STOCK, 2017**



Source: US Census; ACS

### Home Values

In 2017, the median home value in Ruidoso was \$176,872.<sup>1</sup> Figure 5-5 shows the home values in Ruidoso. The largest percent of homes sold in 2017 fell in the \$150,000 – \$199,000 range. Following close behind were the homes sold within the \$200,000 – \$299,999 range, and then the homes sold in the \$100,000 – \$149,999 range.

The identified needs from the Village of Ruidoso Affordable Housing Plan are: increasing the amount of affordable rental housing, adding single family homes with three or more bedrooms, improving senior housing and housing for people with disabilities, increasing rehabilitation and repair programs, adding more transitional housing, and emergency housing assistance.

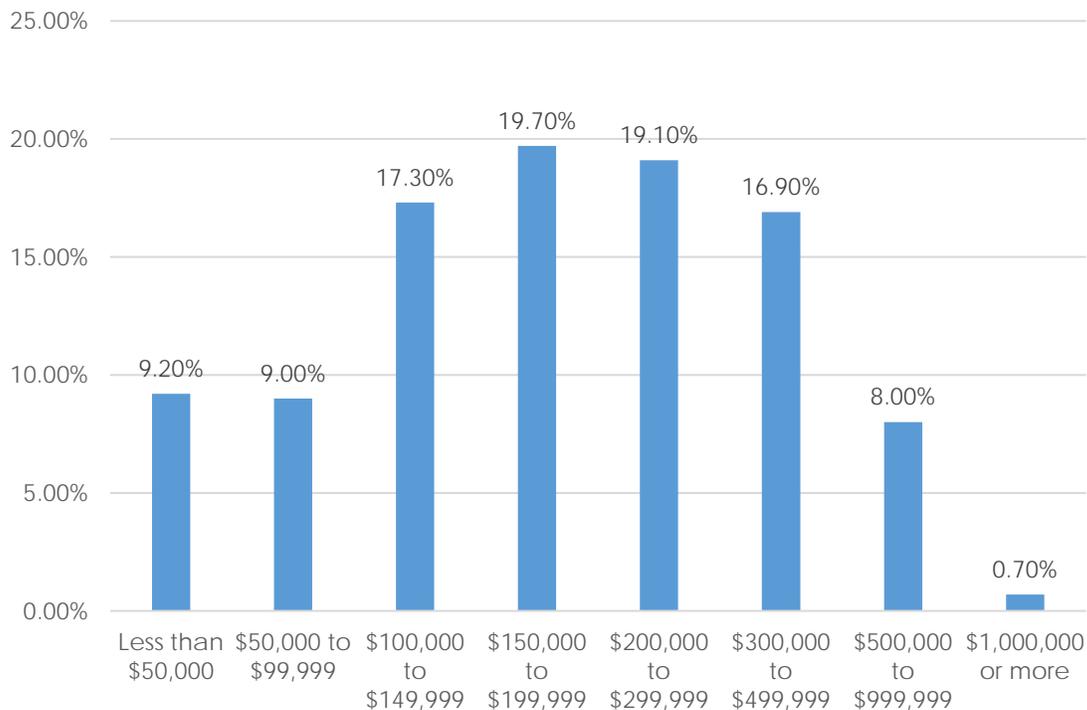
More than 46 percent of households who rent are cost burdened in Ruidoso (cost burdened is defined by households who pay more than 30 percent of their gross income on rent).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [www.neighborhoodscout.com](http://www.neighborhoodscout.com)

<sup>2</sup> <https://affordablehousingonline.com/housing-search/New-Mexico/Ruidoso>

According to the Village of Ruidoso Affordable Housing Plan, in 2014, the maximum house price affordable to households at 100 percent of the area median income (AMI) in Lincoln County was \$190,000. Additionally, 40 percent of the units affordable to households with income below 80 percent of the area median income were condominiums in 2014. The Affordable Housing Plan determined that the greatest need for rental housing is one- and two-bedroom apartments for households with incomes below 40 percent of area median income. Additionally, because of the affordable housing shortage, 71 percent of people who work in Ruidoso commute from outside the village.<sup>3</sup>

**FIGURE 5-5. VALUES OF HOMES SOLD IN 2017**



Source: US Census; ACS

### Requested Changes

Village residents and stakeholders have expressed concern with the current state of housing stock in the Village and the need for a variety of housing types that could be addressed with updates to the Village’s land use policies and zoning ordinances, including:

- **Affordable/Workforce Housing.** More affordable and workforce housing options, which could take the form of multifamily dwellings or accessory units in single-family neighborhoods given the limited land available and that as much as half of the Village’s housing is vacant for seasonal or occasional use.<sup>4</sup> The Village’s short-term rentals are needed for tourists, but there needs to be affordable housing available for people who live and work in Ruidoso year-round.

<sup>3</sup>

[https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57cf2dbf1b631b3eb2d911db/t/5b1aef28f950b7c363860d8c/1528491827846/Ruidoso\\_Affordable\\_Housing\\_Plan.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57cf2dbf1b631b3eb2d911db/t/5b1aef28f950b7c363860d8c/1528491827846/Ruidoso_Affordable_Housing_Plan.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> US Census, ACS

- **Student Housing.** Similar to workforce housing, housing that is affordable to ENMU students is limited and needed. In addition, the community expressed a need for more housing options that would appeal to a younger demographic and allow Ruidoso's youth to stay in town after they finish high school.
- **Senior Housing.** Senior housing options, as well as senior in-home support options are limited in Ruidoso. The community expressed a need for more opportunities for housing for seniors. This could be addressed by multifamily housing, as well as accessory dwelling units, which would allow caregivers to live onsite in a separate dwelling unit.
- **Accessory Unit Dwellings.** Accessory units provide a viable and affordable option for workforce, student, caregiver, senior, or seasonal/ temporary housing. Incentivizing more accessory units was expressed by the community.

### Existing Plans and Policies

- **Village of Ruidoso Affordable Housing Plan, 2015.** The purpose of this plan was to identify housing needs and barriers to housing development within the village and propose goals and implementation steps aimed at addressing housing needs. The plan includes a community profile, housing needs assessment, land use and policy review, and goals, policies, and quantifiable objectives. The identified needs in the study are: rental housing, homeownership, senior housing, housing for people with disabilities, rehabilitation and repair programs, transitional housing, and emergency housing assistance. The Village Council proposed to address the needs through policy and regulatory changes, development partnerships, assistance to non-profit housing providers, and funding/ financing that uses Village resources to leverage other public and private resources.
- **Short-term Residential Overlay District.** In 2017, the Village adopted an ordinance (Section 54-106) to allow short-term rentals in residential districts and to prevent impacts on residential neighborhoods. The ordinance requires a permit that is good for one year. It specifies that owners must make renters aware of Village rules and requirements regarding fire safety and code compliance, and get gross receipts tax number certification and lodgers' tax registration number.

### Recent and Planned Improvements

- **Affordable Housing.** Since the adoption of the Affordable Housing Plan in 2015, the Village sold vacant Village-owned parcels to create a trust fund and has identified locations that are appropriate for affordable housing. The Workforce Housing Advisory Board is using the Improvement plan process to track the progress and the recommendations of the housing study. The Advisory Board voted to issue a request for proposals for qualified housing developers to develop the Village-owned property in Midtown with affordable housing and/or purchase Village property for best use development. It is also planning and organizing a local housing fair to be held in summer 2019.
- **Workforce Housing.** At the New Mexico 2018 Housing Summit, Village leaders learned about historic tax credit and low-income tax credit projects. There is an opportunity to work with Ruidoso School District to redevelop their property located at Nob Hill into a teacherage (teacher housing provided by a school).

## Preliminary Recommendations

The following recommendations should be addressed in the comprehensive plan to maintain and enhance Ruidoso's housing options:

- **Continue to Prioritize Housing Development.** The Comprehensive Plan should prioritize housing development with policy, goals, and projects to support the Village and Housing Advisory Board's work at identifying housing opportunity sites and developers. This goal can be realized by continuing the acquisition of additional property that is appropriate for housing and by prioritizing utilities infrastructure on appropriate, undeveloped properties.
- **Incentivize Home Improvements.** The dilapidated housing could be put to better use if it was made inhabitable. Provide incentives to property owners to renovate homes. The National Housing Trust Fund can be used for rehab projects and donors can receive certificates for cash or property donations as a tax deferral strategy. Local donors could apply the donation to the Village's local trust fund.
- **Promote Accessory Dwellings for Increased Workforce, Student, and Seasonal Infill Housing.** Large homes that can be divided or have accessory dwellings added provide an opportunity for increased housing options for the in-flux of the seasonal workforce.
- **Transition Mobile Home Zones into Permanent Multifamily and Townhomes.** Update zoning to allow permanent multifamily and/or townhomes in existing mobile home zoning districts.
- **Promote Green Building Technologies.** Combined with the incentives above, building techniques that follow national green building standards could be promoted as a workforce training model and a sustainable solution to housing. Organizations like the Green Building Council could be of assistance.



## Community Services

### Current Conditions

#### *Existing Community Services*

The Village of Ruidoso provides the following services for the Ruidoso community (See Figure 6-1 for locations):

- **Sierra Blanca Regional Airport.** The Sierra Blanca airport is a public airport owned and operated by the Village of Ruidoso. Located 15 miles from downtown Ruidoso, it has two runways, stores more than 100 aircraft, and accommodates more than 14,000 flights annually with an average of 39 flights per day.<sup>1</sup>
- **Community Center.** The Ruidoso Community Center (RCC) offers games (pool, ping pong, and shuffleboard), exercise programs, language lessons, art classes, breakfasts, weekly potluck lunches, and other activities for residents and hosts. The RCC provides free exercise equipment, a public computer, and Wi-Fi access and is available for rent for private events.<sup>2</sup>
- **Convention Center.** The Ruidoso Convention Center provides flexible spaces, technology, catering services, free Wi-Fi, security for social events, copy, print, and fax, and helpful support staff. The Center has a spacious exhibit hall and six meeting rooms that can be broken down in various ways to create an intimate feel, depending on the event.<sup>3</sup> The Convention Center has been added to the Community Development Department.
- **Community Economic Development.** The Community Economic Development (CED) Department creates and implements policies that support business development and economic growth for the Village of Ruidoso.<sup>4</sup> For more information, please refer to *Economic Development Strategy* that supplements this plan.
- **Forestry.** The Ruidoso Forestry Department provides recommendations on forest health issues, insect issues, recommendations on landscaping and other forestry-related issues to landowners within the Village. The Department also participates in numerous activities for public outreach on forestry-related issues, evaluates properties for landowners, and enforces fuels mitigation requirements. The Forestry Department's mission is "to address Ruidoso's forest health challenges and to protect this community's values at risk to the hazards of wildfire."<sup>5</sup> For more information, please refer to *Chapter 11: Hazard Mitigation* of this plan.
- **Library.** The Ruidoso Public Library provides books, education, and a free meeting place for the community. Programs and services offered through the library include job location, book clubs, movie matinees, family history search, a family pass to museums, baby and preschool story times, elementary story club, streaming e-books for kids, weekly bereavement support group, language learning, and other various events. Currently the library has a staff of six and 1,500 patrons that check out more than 100,000 books, DVDs, and CDs annually. Additionally, the Ruidoso Public Library has an advisory board that meets five times per year.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ruidoso-nm.gov/airport-index>

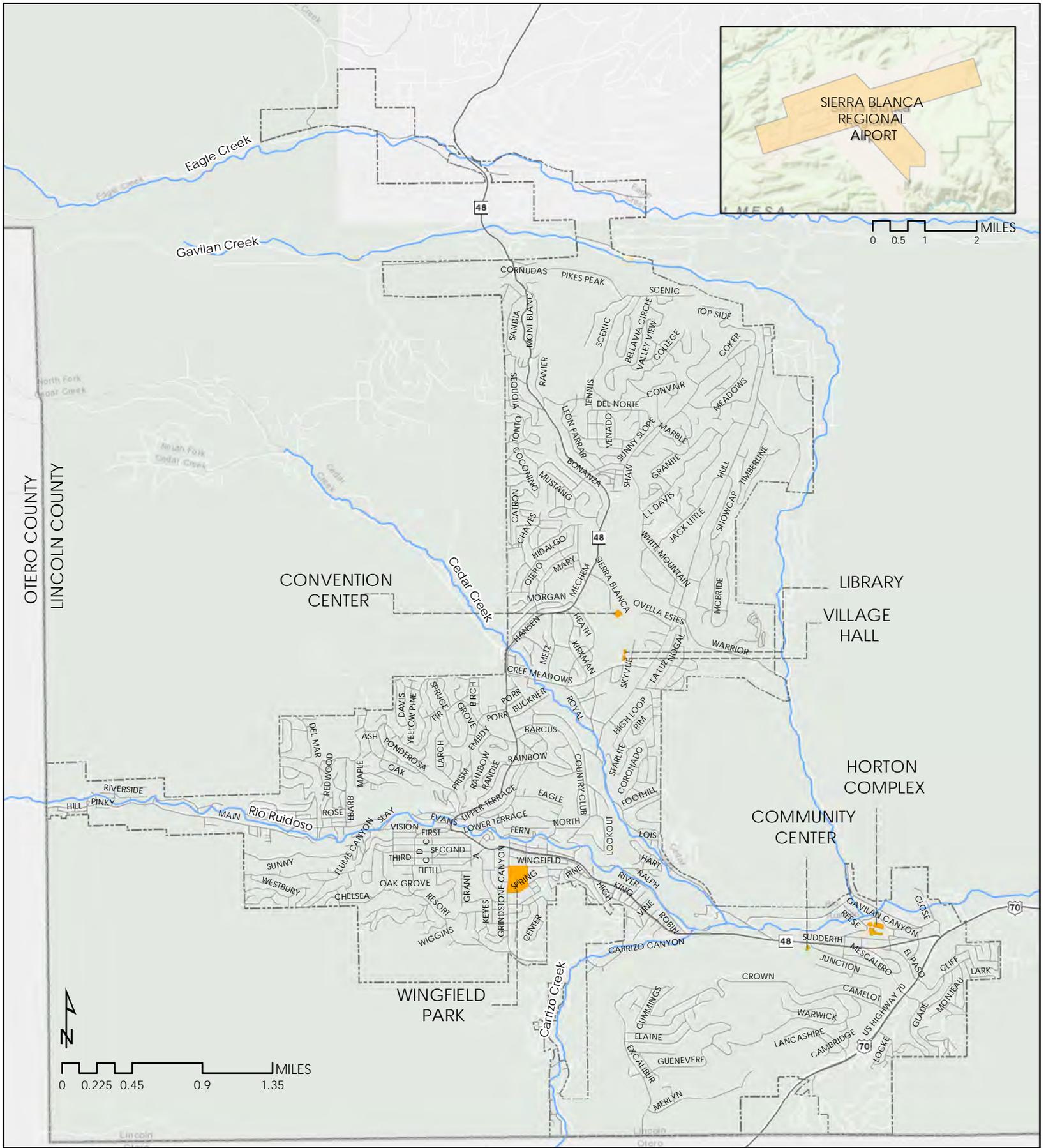
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ruidoso-nm.gov/community-center>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ruidosoconventioncenter.com/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ruidoso-nm.gov/community-economic-development-1>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ruidoso-nm.gov/forestry>

<sup>6</sup> <https://ruidosolibrary.org/>



SOURCE: VILLAGE OF RUIDOSO, 2019

FIGURE 6-1. COMMUNITY SERVICES

LEGEND

-  VILLAGE OF RUIDOSO
-  RIVERS AND CREEKS
-  COMMUNITY SERVICES



- **Parks & Recreation.** The mission of the Village of Ruidoso Parks & Recreation Department is “to provide exceptional parks, facilities, programs and services that are designed to improve the quality of life for everyone who lives in or visits our beautiful mountain Village.”<sup>8</sup> For more information, please refer to *Chapter 7: Parks and Recreation* of this plan.
- **Community Development.** The Ruidoso Community Economic Development Department ensures development and land use plans that support sustainable, livable neighborhoods. The planning division works with the Village Council, Ruidoso Planning Commission, and citizens to help inform land use and development. For more information on land use and zoning, please refer to *Land Use Chapter*. The Department also operates the airport, building permits, and inspection services to ensure compliance with local and state regulations and codes.<sup>10</sup> The required permits and inspections of residential and commercial construction and renovations are intended to improve public health and safety.
- **Regional Wastewater, Solid Waste, Utility Billing, and Water Conservation.** The public health and environment of the community is protected and enhanced by the Village’s wastewater- treatment services, solid waste services, utility billing, water conservation program, water and sewer. For more information, please refer to *chapters 9 and 10* of this plan.
- **Street Works.** The Village of Ruidoso Streets Department helps efforts to repair, construct, and maintain Village alleys, streets, rights-of-way, signs, and drainage structures to ensure the proper flow of traffic; it assists all other departments in the case of an emergency.<sup>11</sup> For more information, please refer to *Chapter 8: Transportation* of this plan.
- **Public Safety.** The Village of Ruidoso provides public safety services including fire, police, emergency preparedness, and municipal court. The Village of Ruidoso Police Department provides a diverse range of services including: 911 emergencies, record keeping, parking enforcement, specialty units, investigations, and a victim support team.<sup>12</sup> The Village and City of Ruidoso Downs will be consolidating dispatch 911 Services. For more information on emergency plans, please refer to *Chapter 11: Hazard Mitigation* of this plan.
- **Citizen Complaint/Resolution Procedures.** The Village initiated a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) recently to assist the Village Council, staff, and citizens with complaints or requests to the Village. The primary purpose of the SOP is to document and track any complaint or concern and to ensure that every complaint is addressed and /or resolution was accomplished. The SOP provides a form to be completed so that staff can follow-up and verify if the citizen or requestor was communicated with and their request or complaint was addressed.

In addition to the services provided by the Village, the following institutions service Ruidoso residents in partnership with the Village:

- **Ztrans Public Transportation.** Ztrans partners with the Village and Lincoln County to serve Ruidoso via a fixed “Red Route.” This route links Ruidoso to Ruidoso Downs, Capitan, and Carrizozo twice a day on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday each week.<sup>13</sup>
- **Ruidoso Municipal Schools.** The Ruidoso Municipal School District (RMSD) owns and operates Ruidoso High School, Ruidoso Middle School, White Mountain Elementary School, Sierra Vista Primary School, and Nob Hill Early Childhood Center.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.ruidosoparksandrec.com/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.ruidoso-nm.gov/planning-zoning-1>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.ruidoso-nm.gov/street-department>

<sup>12</sup> <https://ruidosopolice.com/about>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.ztrans.org/>

- **Eastern New Mexico University–Ruidoso.** The ENMU–Ruidoso campus is located on Mechem Drive in the center of the Village and offers associate and certificate programs and the first two years of a bachelor’s degree.<sup>14</sup> It offers a dual credit enrollment for Lincoln County high school students who enroll in ENMU’s classes.
- **Region 9 Education Cooperative.** The Cooperative provides Ruidoso and surrounding municipalities and school districts a range of services, including developmental services, home visiting programs, early head start, head start, educational services, and school-based health services.<sup>15</sup>
- **Chamber of Commerce.** The Ruidoso Valley Chamber of Commerce has a mission “to foster growth, development and prosperity for Ruidoso, Ruidoso Downs and the surrounding area.” The Commerce is governed by a member volunteer board and was incorporated in 1941.<sup>16</sup>
- **Ruidoso Mainstreet.** Ruidoso Mainstreet was founded to strengthen the downtown by providing organization, promotion, and design to provide economic vitality for the Midtown region.<sup>17</sup>
- **Presbyterian Medical Services and Presbyterian Healthcare Services.** The Lincoln County Medical Center provides a multitude of services for the Ruidoso region. It is currently owned by Lincoln County but is leased and managed by Presbyterian Healthcare Services.<sup>18</sup>

#### *Community Boards, Commissions, and Committees*

The Village of Ruidoso provides community boards that play an important role in improving the quality of life for Ruidoso residents and visitors. The boards, commissions, and committees include the following:

- **Village Council.** The Village Council is Ruidoso's legislative body. There are 6 elected members. Besides enacting legislation, the Village Council approves the Village's budget and has oversight powers for the activities of Village agencies.<sup>19</sup>
- **Planning Commission.** The Village of Ruidoso Planning Commission holds a regular meeting every month and currently has eight members.
- **Lodger's Tax Committee.** The Lodger’s Tax Committee meets once a month with eight current members.
- **Parks & Recreation Commission.** The Parks & Recreation Commission meets once a month with five current members.
- **Workforce/ Affordable Housing Advisory Board.** The Workforce Housing Advisory Board has eight current members. The Workforce Housing Advisory Board’s mission is “to assist the Village administer its Affordable Housing Program, advocate relevant workforce housing opportunities, and shall be entrusted to review and make policy recommendations to the Mayor and Village Council.”
- **Economic Development Committee.** The Economic Development Committee is responsible for shaping and implementing policies that promote a sustainable and prosperous future for the Village of Ruidoso. The following has been identified as economic development priorities for the Village: Water – remains #1 priority; Broadband connectivity; NM MainStreet for the Mid-town District; Affordable Housing; Tourism Recreation – Ruidoso as a destination; Quality of Life services and programs.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> <https://ruidoso.enmu.edu/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.rec9nm.org/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://ruidosonow.com/about-2/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://ruidosomainstreet.com/about>

<sup>18</sup> <https://lincoln-county-medical-center.phs.org/about/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.ruidoso-nm.gov/index-Village-officials>

<sup>20, 13</sup> State of the Village, 2018 Report of Progress by Mayor Lynn Crawford

- **Development Review Committee.** The Development Review Committee meets monthly to discuss proposed business activity and planning cases. The responsibility of the Committee is to provide more clarity to land use issues, delivery of services, available utilities and development standards.<sup>21</sup>
- **Watershed Advisory Committee.** Established in 2018, the Village of Ruidoso's Watershed Advisory Committee recognizes water as a precious resource and its protection as crucial to the Village as a whole. The Committee is comprised of leaders from the Village's Water, Parks and Recreation, Forestry, and Planning and Zoning departments to promote watershed projects, policy, and management.
- **Regional WasteWater Treatment Plant Joint Use Board.** The Joint Use Board oversees the Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant. In 2016, the Village of Ruidoso and City of Ruidoso Downs revised the 1974 joint powers agreement to include 3 members from the Village and two members from the City.
- **DWI Planning Council.** As a part of the state DWI Planning Affiliate, the Council works to use funds from DWI offenses for local needs.
- **Library Advisory Board.** This board helps to direct, guide, and make recommendations for the library regarding resources, development, and direction.
- **Boys & Girls Club of Sierra Blanca.** Located in the former Ruidoso Middle School building, the Boys & Girls Club serves 125 kindergarten through high school students kids every day in afterschool programs.<sup>22</sup> It also offers a Summer Food Service Program. Both programs are tailored to each age group.
- **Utilities Committee.** This committee meets quarterly and discusses the progress and number of projects that are in motion, as well as citizen requests for utility service.

In addition to these boards and committees, the following committees and community boards are volunteer community-based or non-profit organizations serving the community:

- Friends of the Library Board
- Keep Ruidoso Beautiful Committee
- Lincoln County Adult Literacy Board
- Village of Ruidoso Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) Committee
- Cemetery Board
- Joint Use Board (Ruidoso/ Ruidoso Downs)
- Green Tree Solid Waste Authority

### *Annual Events*

The Village hosts many annual events that attract residents and visitors throughout the year, including:

- Aspenfest Parade
- Vines in the Pines
- Last Month of the Season at Ski Apache
- Mountain Living Home & Garden Show
- 12 Hours in the Wild West
- AspenCash Motorcycle Rally
- Ruidoso Downs Race Track Season
- Ruidoso Pickleball Championships
- Smokey Bear Stampede

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.bqcsierrablanca.org>

- Mescalero Apache Ceremonial Dances and Rodeo
- Lincoln County Art Loop Studio Tour
- Fort Stanton Live!
- Alto Artists Studios Tour
- Old Lincoln Days
- Ruidoso Antique Show
- Annual Golden Aspen Motorcycle Rally
- All American Gun and Western Collectible Show
- Annual Lincoln County Cowboy Symposium
- Christmas Jubilee
- Festival of Lights Parade and After Party
- Torch Light Parade and Dummy Gelunde Contest

### Requested Changes

The following list summarizes what the community, advisory committee, and stakeholders have stated are important community services that need to be updated, changed, or added.

- **Airport.** The community and stakeholders desire to improve shuttle service to and from airport. Additionally, developing the airport for warehousing or other aviation economic businesses would promote regional economic development, such as charter flights, aviation maintenance, aerial acrobatics, etc.).
- **Building Permits and Inspections.** The community, advisory committee, and stakeholders suggested to continue to relocate all Village services to the Horton Complex for one-stop permitting and services.
- **Community Center.** It was recommended to develop a community recreation center dedicated to recreation and the local community, as well as seniors and youth. Also, the community suggested the center could be located on the current dog park property.
- **General Economic Development.** In general, the community desires more efforts to support local businesses, tourism, and the community, including job opportunities, workforce training, marketing support, broadband, and other local amenities and events. Specific economic development improvements are addressed in the Economic Development Strategy; specific land use changes are addressed in the Land Use chapter. Specific improvements for recreation are addressed in the Parks and Recreation chapter.
- **Healthcare.** The community addressed the need for improved healthcare including better hospital services and drawing more quality providers into the region.
- **Education.** It is recommended by the community that the Village continues to improve educational extra-curricular opportunities and the quality of its public schools.

### Existing Plans and Policies

- **Village of Ruidoso Progress Reports.** The Village of Ruidoso 2017 and 2018 Progress Reports – State of the Village address community services by reporting Village accomplishments, the Village’s dedication to water conservation through specific measurable actions, public safety accomplishments, community services additions and actions (outlined below), and new public works and infrastructure projects. The following community service additions are described within the report:
  - Children’s Storytime and Activities
  - Ruidoso Convention Center Improvements
  - Ruidoso Community Center Events

- Community Service Project
  - 2016 Legislative Appropriations — New Mexico Aging & Long-Term Services
  - Hired a new full-time administrative assistant for Short-Term Rentals
  - Building Official Dave Myers completed and received Electrical Inspector Certification
  - Engaged in a community comprehensive master planning process
  - Purchase of Host Compliance and started implementation of the software for Short-Term Rentals
  - Streamlined the short-term residential rental registration process, reducing time to issue the permit working in collaboration with the Lincoln County Realtors
  - Implemented the collection of the Lodgers Tax on all Short-Term Rentals
  - Enhanced and created the check list for Development Review
  - Implemented an improvement plan process to ensure implementation of the department's goals and objectives
- **2018 Village of Ruidoso Manager's Report.** The Village of Ruidoso Manager's Report was drafted in November 2018 and lists recent projects underway, status reports from committees and boards, and other updates about community services within the Village, including:
    - Library
    - Recreation & Special Events
    - Ruidoso Community Center
    - Keep Ruidoso Beautiful
    - Police Department
- **2018 Village of Ruidoso Strategic Plan.** The Village of Ruidoso Strategic Plan identifies short-term and long-term objectives and goals, which influence the community services the Village provides, many of which address the requests of community members. The plans it identified are described in the following section.

### *Planned Improvements*

The Village of Ruidoso's planned improvements compiled from the 2018 Strategic Plan are listed below.

- Move into Horton Complex and consolidate offices and services along with courthouses in one location
- Change Community Center back to Senior Center
- Change internet providers
- Improve Records Management System
- Revise ordinances
- Implement better maintenance for all buildings and track on a Village-wide schedule
- Build a Recreation Complex to include sports fields and swimming pool.

### *Preliminary Recommendations*

The following recommendations should be addressed in the comprehensive plan to maintain and enhance Ruidoso's community services:

- **Draft Policy that Addresses the Provision of Convenient Community Services.** This policy could include objectives to make community-related services easily accessible, to provide shuttle service to the airport, to meet the recreation demand with more facilities, and to meet the needs of seniors in the community center.

- **Promote Ruidoso as a Desirable Place to Live.** In order to attract quality healthcare professionals and providers and to attract quality educators, continue to strengthen existing healthcare options and educational systems.

## Parks and Recreation

Ruidoso exists as it is today because of its beautiful natural setting and the recreational opportunities within it. These opportunities contribute to the local economy and quality of life that are so important to both residents and visitors to Ruidoso. As such, the Parks and Recreation section of the plan is detailed and coordinated with the natural resources and economic development chapters of this report.

### Current Conditions

Ruidoso is known for its natural beauty and outdoor recreation opportunities. This section of the plan inventories the area's recreation areas, including outdoor open spaces, fields, and parks, as well as indoor facilities. The Village of Ruidoso's Parks and Recreation Department operates 15 parks, sites, and open spaces, including trails, open space, parks, and recreation centers, which are described in detail in the department's Activities Guide 2018-2019, as well as the Parks, Facilities, and Locations Guide (2018).<sup>1</sup> They are summarized in the following sections grouped by recreation in nature (which makes up 80 percent of the Village's parkland) and parks and recreation centers. Some recreation areas outside the Village are included given their popularity as destinations for residents and visitors.

### Recreation in Nature

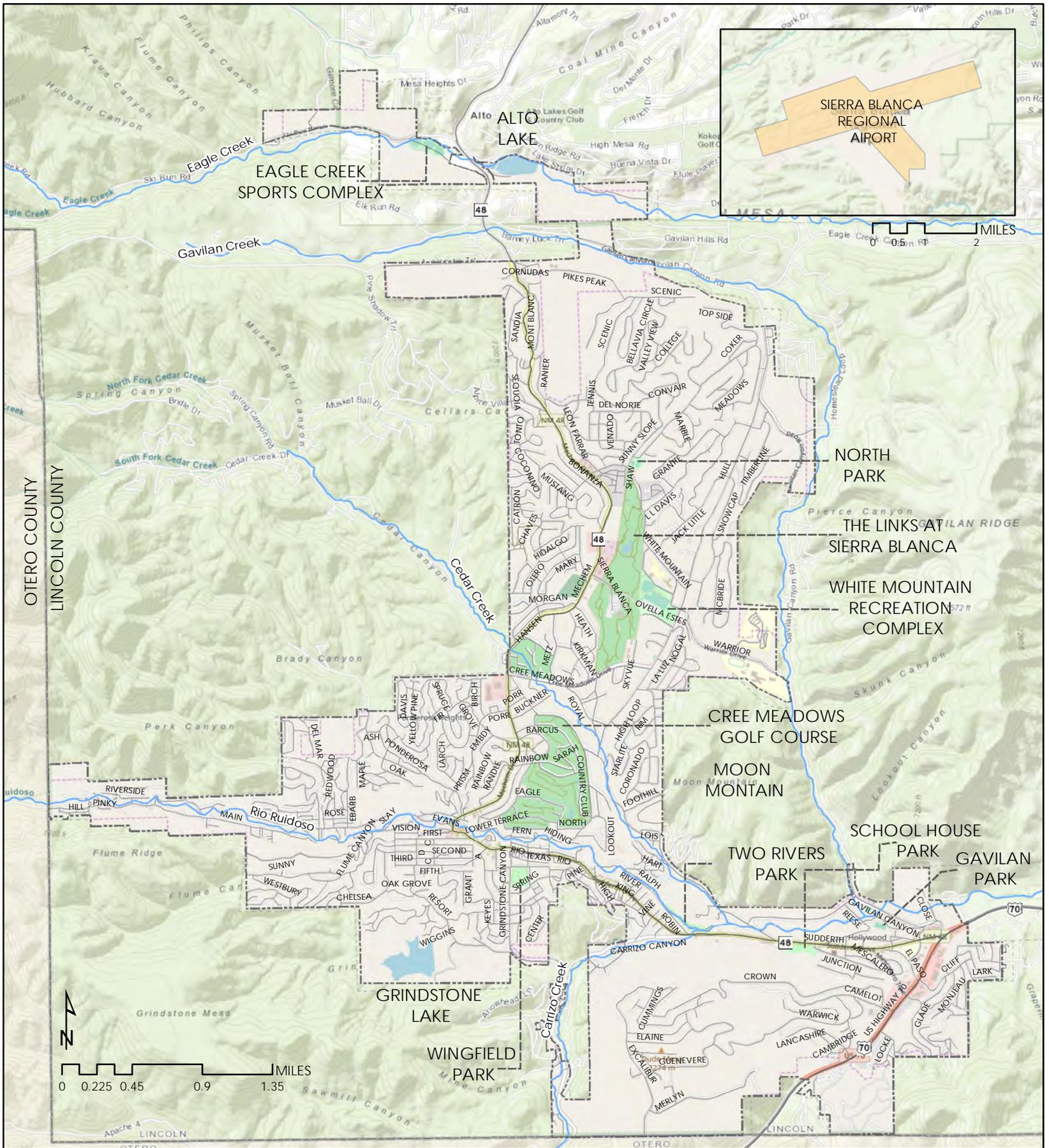
#### Lakes and Recreation Areas

- **Alto Lake.** On the northside of town, Alto Lake is a popular recreation destination for non-motorized boating, fishing, and picnics. The recreation area totals 166 acres. It is the trailhead for Eagle Creek hiking trail, which leads to waterfalls. The lake is regularly stocked with fish and offers four picnic tables and a vault toilets.
- **Grindstone Lake.** This manmade lake at the southwest edge of town offers Ruidoso's opportunities to swim, fish, and boat; it is a popular destination throughout the year for fishing. The area surrounding the lake offers concessions, picnic tables (22), vault and portable toilets, and an 18-hole disc golf course. Grindstone Lake also offers swimming, kayak and paddleboard rentals from Memorial Day through Labor Day, and offers electric trolling motors on boats. In total, it comprises 182 acres.
- **Moon Mountain.** Moon Mountain, comprised of 640 acres with a peak elevation of 2,189 meters, is just east of Ruidoso Highschool and the Village limits. Fuels mitigation measures and forest health and management measures are currently being developed by the Village Forestry Department. See later sections for the planned recreation opportunities.
- **Rio Ruidoso.** As described in the Natural Resources chapter, The Ruidoso River is a great asset, however public access is very limited and continued degradation compromises its value as a resource. Two Rivers Park provides about a mile of access to the river, which attracts fishing. This area has had seen two separate fishing habitat projects with the hope of increase fishing opportunities for users. Another popular fishing area is where the Ruidoso River crosses Gavilan Canyon Road, which has a small shoulder on a bridge, which has a very large amount of fishing activity.
- **Bonito Lake.** Although outside of the Village, Bonito Lake is a popular destination for fishing, camping, and hiking. The water quality was affected in the Little Bear Fire and has been closed to visitors while its being restored. It is expected to reopen in Spring 2020.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Activities Guide, 2018-2019 by the Village of Ruidoso Parks & Recreation Department and Parks, Facilities, and Locations Guide by the Village of Ruidoso's Parks and Recreation Department, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ruidosonews.com/story/news/local/community/2018/08/08/first-dredged-bonito-lake-material-ready-haul-away-aug-20/935026002/>



SOURCE: VILLAGE OF RUIDOSO, 2019

FIGURE 7-1. VILLAGE OF RUIDOSO PARKS AND RECREATION

LEGEND

- VILLAGE OF RUIDOSO
- LAKE
- RIVERS AND CREEKS
- PARKS AND RECREATION



SITES  
SOUTHWEST

## Trails

There are 25 miles of trail within the Village limits.<sup>3</sup>

- **Alto Lake Trail.** A 1-mile loop with natural surface starts and ends at the lake's parking lot.
- **Eagle Creek Trail.** A 2-mile loop that has two pedestrian bridge creek crossings and overlooks waterfalls.
- **Cedar Creek Fitness Trail.** Located off Mechem and Cedar Creek drives, the 1.3-mile trail is a popular destination for hiking and jogging. Dogs and bikes are not permitted. Parking is available at the Smokey Bear Ranger District Office.
- **Cedar Creek Trails.** There are 13 miles of trails with 3 trailheads for hiking, horseback riding, and mountain biking.<sup>4</sup> Considered moderate for mountain biking, there are some trails within the system exclusively for biking.
- **Grindstone Lake Trails.** More than 18 miles of trail, including three loops are open to hiking, horseback riding, and mountain/cross-country biking. The trail starts at Grindstone Lake, where it then climbs elevation to Grindstone Mesa.
- **Ruidoso River Trail.** Within Two Rivers Park is a 2.5-mile paved trail along the river. There is also a scenic overlook behind Midtown overlooking the river.
- **The Links at Sierra Blanca Trail.** Along the perimeter of The Links at Sierra Blanca property, are several paved loops amenable for strollers and pedestrians, with distances ranging from 1 mile to 4.3 miles.<sup>5</sup> It is also home of the annual Turkey Trot in November.
- **Wingfield Park Trail.** The centrally located park has two quarter-mile walking loops made with crushed gravel.

Refer to the Transportation chapter for further information about the trail system in relation to the overall transportation system.

Outside of the Village, Lincoln National Forest is home to many more trails easily accessible to Ruidoso's residents and visitors.<sup>6</sup>

- **Perk Ridge Trail.** This 4.8-mile loop is open to hiking, horseback riding, and dogs.
- **South Fork of Rio Bonito Trail.** North of town in an area damaged by the Little Bear Fire, this 11.4-mile hiking trail offers scenic views, wildlife sightings, and allows dogs on-leash.
- **Other trails.** In addition to the trails listed above, Lincoln National Forest offers miles of trails, including: Willie White and Wills Canyon Loop Trail; Sierra Blanca at Ski Apache Trail; Telephone Canyon; Miner's Road, Eagle Creek Loop; Lookout Mountain Loop Trail; Mills Canyon Trail to Monjeau Peak Trail; and Dry Mills Trail.

## Campgrounds

There are dozens of privately-owned RV campgrounds in Ruidoso, which are not in the Parks and Recreation Department's jurisdiction. The following campgrounds are also outside of the Village, in Lincoln National Forest, and operated by the Smokey Bear District of the Forest Service.

- **Sam Tobias Memorial Group Campground (Cedar Creek Campground).** This campground is just west of the Village limits in Lincoln National Forest along Cedar Creek. It has three group campgrounds that can host 60 to 100 guests and offers drinking water, picnic tables, and vault toilets.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Parks, Facilities, and Locations Guide by the Village of Ruidoso's Parks and Recreation Department, 2018, p 7.

<sup>4</sup> Activities Guide, 2018-2019 by the Village of Ruidoso Parks & Recreation Department, p 12.

<sup>5</sup> Activities Guide, 2018-2019 by the Village of Ruidoso Parks & Recreation Department, p 10 and Parks, Facilities, and Locations Guide by the Village of Ruidoso's Parks and Recreation Department, 2018, p 7.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.discoverruidoso.com/blog/best-wildlife-trails-in-lincoln-national-forest?rq=cedar%20creek%20trail> and <https://www.alltrails.com/explore/trail/us/new-mexico/north-cedar-creek-trail>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/lincoln/recarea/?recid=34216>

- **Monjeau Lookout Camping Area.** Further north outside of town, Monjeau Lookout is on the National Register of Historic Places and offers RV and tent camping.<sup>8</sup>
- **Oak Grove Camping Area.** Near Monjeau Lookout, north of town, Oak Grove includes 30 tent and RV sites with fireplaces, vault toilets, drinking water, and picnic tables.
- **Southfork Campground.** Northeast of Monjeau Lookout, Southfork is one of the most popular camping areas given its proximity to Bonito Lake. It offers tent and RV campsites, picnic tables, toilets, and drinking water.
- **Skyline Campground.** Just south of Monjeau Lookout, Skyline offers tent camping, with picnic tables and toilets.
- **Three Rivers Campground.** At the base of Sierra Blanca, this campground is west of Ruidoso and includes sites for tents, RVs, picnic tables, toilets, drinking water, and the Three Rivers Trail trailhead.

### *Parks and Recreation Centers*

The Village of Ruidoso has seven athletic fields for baseball, softball, soccer, and football, which are available for rent, and 11 parks.<sup>9</sup>

- **Community Center.** The Parks and Recreation Department also oversees the community center. It is described in the Community Services chapter.
- **Eagle Creek Recreational Sports Complex.** The 22-acre complex on the northwest edge of town has a concession stand, restrooms, a portable zipline, Ruidoso Winter Park (a snow play area in the winter), three lighted multi-use softball/baseball fields, and hosts adult men, women, co-ed, and youth leagues, including 50/70 Division of Little League Baseball, as well as tournaments, including the Softball USSSA Sports Association. It offers 10 picnic tables.
- **Gavilan Field (Warrior Field).** Located on Gavilan Canyon Road on the southeast edge of town, the lighted field is owned by Ruidoso Schools, but is utilized by Parks and Recreation for local adult and youth leagues. These leagues consist of youth fast pitch softball, little league baseball, and kickball. It offers a concession stand, press box, and restrooms. It is home to the Minors and Majors Division of Little League baseball and is used for Tournaments.
- **Horton Gymnasium (Boys & Girls Club).** The multiuse gym located within the Horton Complex offers volleyball, basketball, and pickle ball courts, has a concession stand and restrooms, and is used by home school families on a daily basis. It currently hosts the following activities:
  - Youth Volleyball League
  - Co-Ed Volleyball League
  - Adult Open Gym Volleyball
  - Open Gym Basketball
  - Pickle Ball
  - Little League Basketball
  - Braves Youth Wrestling Group
  - Lincoln County Home School Group
- **Kids Konnection.** Located near the White Mountain Recreational Complex, Kids Konnection has play areas for 2- to 5-year and 5- to 12-year old children, a basketball court, restrooms, and a picnic pavilion.
- **North Park Little League Baseball Field.** The park includes a baseball field, a lighted 16,000-square foot skate park, and bike track (with portable toilet) next to The Links at Sierra Blanca

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.ruidoso.net/visitor-information/outdoors/hiking/camping>

<sup>9</sup> Parks, Facilities, and Locations Guide by the Village of Ruidoso's Parks and Recreation Department, 2018, p 1,3-8.

walking trail and golf course. The baseball field is used by the Farm/T-Ball Divisions of Little League and is also rented for tournament use.

- **Ruidoso Dog Park.** Located just east of the convention center and south of the White Mountain Recreation Complex, the 1.6-acre fenced park allows dogs to run off-leash and offers three picnic tables.
- **Ruidoso Municipal Swimming Pool.** The Village pool is located off Sudderth Drive east of Midtown and is available for all ages. It offers a concession stand, swim classes, season passes, water slides, and pool party rentals.
- **School House Park.** Located between Ruidoso Municipal Swimming Pool and the Community Center, this park provides four lighted tennis courts, restrooms, 23 picnic tables, a 2- to 5-year old play area, and two barbecue grills.
- **Two Rivers Park.** At the junction of Rio Ruidoso and Carrizo Creek, this popular park offers a paved trail along the river, a play area for 2- to 5-year old children, restrooms, 27 picnic tables, and 11 barbecue grills.
- **White Mountain Recreational Complex.** The 33.5-acre complex has a concession stand, two restrooms, a sand volleyball court, eight pickleball courts, two tennis courts, 6 acres of multi-use fields that can be used for football, soccer, baseball, or open space, and 11 picnic tables. It accommodates the following sports and is rented for tournaments:
  - Ruidoso Highschool Warrior Baseball
  - Ruidoso Oso Professional Baseball<sup>11</sup>
  - The Fall Brawl Baseball Tournament, which hosted 66 teams
  - Flag Football Playoff and Championship games
  - Soccer
  - King of the Mountain
  - Youth Baseball Tournament on Memorial Day Weekend
  - Spring and Fall Little League Soccer
  - UTEP Football Camp
  - High School Boys and Girls Soccer
  - Pickle Ball Tournaments
- **Wingfield Park.** Just south of Midtown, the 8-acre park hosts numerous events year-round in its event meadow, including the Aspenfest Festival, Grindstone Trail Runs, Carnivals, and Brewdoso. It has restrooms, a playground for 4- to 12-year-olds, a large lighted pavilion, 20 picnic tables, interpretive signs, walking path, and a botanical garden.

In addition to the Village-operated recreation centers, there are two public golf courses in Ruidoso: The Links at Sierra Blanca and Cree Meadows, as well as several fitness centers with indoor personal training, fitness classes, indoor swimming pools, and courts.

#### Picnic Shelters/Pavilions

The Village of Ruidoso has eight picnic shelters/pavilions available for community use. Like the sports fields, use of pavilions is secured through an online reservation form and reservation fee.<sup>12</sup> Other parks in town have picnic tables without shelters, which are not included here.

- Kids Konnection
- School House Park (3 pavilions in total)
- Two Rivers Park Pavilions (4 pavilions in total)

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<sup>11</sup> Facilities Joint Use Agreement Horton Complex Gymnasium, Village Council Packet, March 29, 2011, pp. 181-199.

<sup>12</sup> Parks, Facilities, and Locations Guide by the Village of Ruidoso's Parks and Recreation Department, 2018, p 1.

## Requested and Recent Improvements

Given the village's popularity as a recreation destination, the capacity of its parks and recreation facilities is important to understand. There is a delicate balance between providing recreation opportunities and conserving the area's natural beauty and resources; the two should go hand-in-hand. Community members and Village staff have identified the following:

- **Recreation Center/Complex.** Many village residents and stakeholders have expressed the desire for a recreation center that includes an indoor pool/water park, courts, and possibly an ice rink, as well as outdoor sports fields; such a complex has been identified as a long-term goal in the Village's 2018 Strategic Plan.<sup>13</sup>
- **Trails and Connections.** Connect existing trails through town, especially along the river so there are more ways to bike, run, and walk throughout the village. Additional mountain biking trails and wayfinding signs were also requested to inform visitors of options and rules.
- **Fishing.** Alto Lake has a similar amount of traffic to Grindstone Lake, but due to the much smaller parking area, it cannot accommodate as many people. By enlarging the parking area, the Village could vastly increase the recreation traffic to this area. The Village should pursue the acquisition of property along the Ruidoso River as opportunities arise that can provide additional access to the river as well as limiting development in the critical areas of the Village's watershed.

Recent improvements include:

- **Campsites.** Building campsites at Grindstone and Bonito lakes are identified as long-term goals in the Village's 2018 Strategic Plan. The Village is currently building 22 primitive campsites and 6 RV Spaces at Grindstone Lake; they will be completed in 2019.
- **Exercise Equipment.** New exercise equipment along the walking trail that circles the perimeter of the Links at Sierra Blanca, which was funded by the Lincoln County Community Health Council and Presbyterian Healthcare Services.<sup>14</sup>

## Existing Plans and Policies

- **Moon Mountain Recreation Master Plan, 2019.** A recreation master plan was completed at the start of 2019 and honors the programs that were allowed in the lease, including hiking and mountain biking trails, an 18-hole disc golf course, a community observatory, as well as parking and signage for these uses.<sup>15</sup> During the planning process, the community debated which uses should be allowed on the mountain.<sup>16</sup> Fuels management projects and forest health improvements will be implemented upon the completion of the Forest and Fuels Management Plan.
- **Parks, Facilities, and Locations Guide, 2018.** The Village of Ruidoso's Parks and Recreation Department inventoried the breadth of parks, open spaces last year. Of the Village's 15 square-miles (9,600 acres), the department's park and open space system takes up 700 acres. This guide, along with the department's webpage and DiscoverRuidoso.com was referenced throughout this chapter to describe the recreation opportunities offered.
- **Village of Ruidoso Ordinance 2016-06: Parks and Recreation, Article II. Grindstone and Alto Lakes Rules and Regulations, 2016.** In 2016, the Village amended the lake rules at the request

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<sup>13</sup> Village of Ruidoso Strategic Plan, November 2018.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.ruidosoparksandrec.com/news-information/2019/2/8/new-gym-equipment-installed-at-thee-links-walking-path>

<sup>15</sup> <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B7v5RFRmuxaoM0sxNVBxNFZLFpVZzhvWUFvRU0tZzVmdXlv/view>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.ruidosonews.com/story/news/local/community/2018/03/28/ideas-differ-future-uses-ruidosos-moon-mountain/467599002/>

of the Parks and Recreation Commission to expand lake rules to Alto Lake.<sup>17</sup> The ordinance allows concessionaires, non-motorized boating, and fishing in designated areas with the appropriate licenses during posted hours. The ordinance prohibits people and dogs from swimming and wading in Alto Lake; dogs are allowed on the lake surroundings provided they are on leash. People and dogs are allowed to swim in Grindstone during designated times and in designated areas.

- **Joint Use Agreements, 2011.** The Village and Ruidoso Municipal Schools entered into a joint use agreement to share joint use and responsibilities for utilities, and insurance at the White Mountain Recreational Complex, Gavilan Field, School House Park Tennis Courts, and the Horton Athletic Complex in order to provide more opportunities for community recreation. The Village is primarily responsible for the maintenance.

### *Planned Improvements*

- **Moon Mountain.** The 2018 Strategic Plan and the Moon Mountain Master Plan identify the long-term goal of expanding Moon Mountain trails. Improvements on Moon Mountain are planned to include new hiking and biking trails, and other recreation opportunities and amenities noted in the previous section.

### *Preliminary Recommendations*

The following preliminary recommendations should be addressed in the comprehensive plan to maintain and enhance Ruidoso's parks and recreation facilities:

- **Expand Public Fishing Areas on Rio Ruidoso.** By providing more public access to Rio Ruidoso and restoring fish habitat and the river's ecosystem, Ruidoso's namesake's value could be restored as both a natural resource and recreational destination.
- **Identify Future Needs.** Identify future needs based on anticipated growth in population and tourism and confirm desired standards of service to guide decisions and prioritization of additional facilities. These could include:
  - Additional multi-use trails that allow mountain biking and Off Highway Vehicles (OHV).
  - Biking and walking paths within town connecting to popular destinations.
  - Additional campsites and RV parking.
  - A recreation center with indoor and outdoor facilities, such as dedicated pickleball and basketball courts, soccer and baseball/softball fields, a swimming pool/water play area, and ice rink.
- **Expand and Enhance Recreation Opportunities.** Continue to research outdoor recreation opportunities that could benefit tourism and diversify the package of amenities offered in Ruidoso by prioritizing recreation in the Comprehensive Plan policies. These could include:
  - Outdoor programs geared toward youth could benefit Ruidoso's families and the environment; grants are available from the State's Outdoor Equity Fund from the New Mexico Office of Outdoor Recreation.<sup>18</sup>
  - Wayfinding signage that provides directions to all Ruidoso's recreation resources.
- **Consider Dedicating County Sales Tax to Recreation.** Given the popularity and draw of the region's recreational opportunities, it would be conceivable to dedicate a portion of the county sales tax to pay for capital improvements for recreation facilities and operations.

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<sup>17</sup> [https://library.municode.com/nm/ruidoso/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances?nodeId=COOR\\_CH62PARE\\_ARTIIGRALLARURE](https://library.municode.com/nm/ruidoso/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=COOR_CH62PARE_ARTIIGRALLARURE)

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.hcn.org/articles/social-justice-new-mexico-lawmakers-focus-on-equity-in-the-outdoors>

- **Build Upon Partnerships.** Evaluate options related to agreements and partnerships with Ruidoso Municipal Schools, Boys & Girls Club, US Forest Service, Lincoln County, and Mescalero Tribe.

## Transportation

### Roadways and General Transportation Conditions

The Village of Ruidoso transportation system is comprised of primarily rural and neighborhood roadways that connect the two main arterials through the Village: Mechem Drive and Sudderth Drive. Both roadways are part of NM 48, which is owned and maintained by the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT). US 70, another NMDOT facility, traverses the southeastern portion of the Village and provides connections to Tularosa and Alamogordo to the southwest and Roswell and destination in Texas to the east.

Many of the Village-owned roadways are narrow two-lane facilities that are shaped and constrained by the local topography. Due to roadside swales and hilly embankments, the costs to widen roads or provide parallel facilities are costly. As a result, options for travel across the Village are somewhat limited.

Despite the steep conditions of many roads, there is growing interest in alternative modes of transportation and reducing reliance on single-occupancy vehicles through the center of the Village. Part of this interest is borne of a desire for a broader range of economic activities, including recreational bicycling, as well as providing increased transportation options for residents and visitors.

### *Maintenance*

The Village of Ruidoso Roads Departments performs nearly all maintenance activities on Village roads, which makes Ruidoso unusual compared to communities of similar sizes. Activities include general road repairs, pavement preservation treatments, and snow removal. Maintenance activities are confined to roadways owned by the Village of Ruidoso; NMDOT maintains the roadways and sidewalks on Sudderth Drive and Mechem Drive, including all traffic signals, striping, and other roadway elements. The exception is for snow removal, which Village staff perform on Mechem Drive and Sudderth Drive under an agreement with NMDOT.

The Roads Departments follows current NMDOT standard specifications for highway and bridge construction on all maintenance and construction projects. Department needs include ongoing equipment replacement.

### Travel Patterns and Commuting Characteristics

The high levels of auto use among Village of Ruidoso residents is demonstrated by Census Bureau commuting data in Figure 8-1. According to the 2013-2017 American Community Survey, more than 91 percent of Ruidoso residents commute to work by car, though a higher share of residents carpool than the state average. A relatively high share of employed residents of Ruidoso walk to work (3.7 percent).

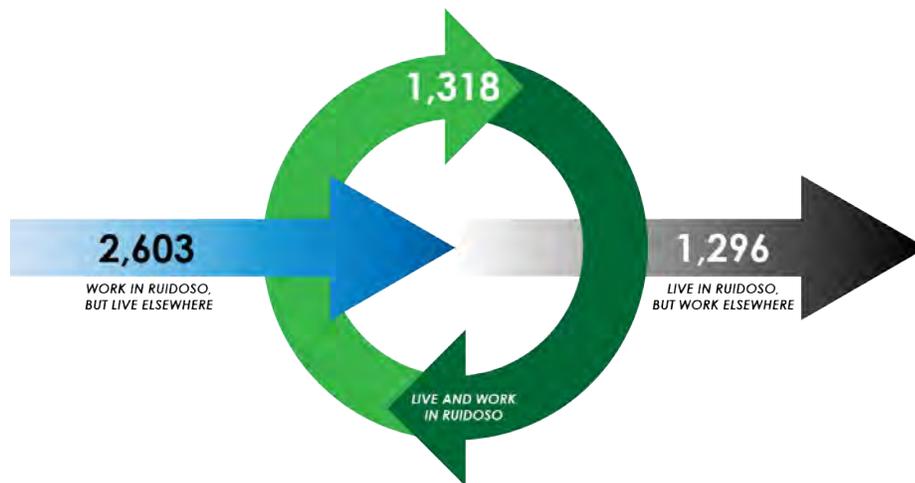
Ruidoso is something of a regional center for employment and approximately 3,900 individuals work within the Village of Ruidoso; however, only about half of the 2,600 employed residents also work in the Village (see Figure 8-2). Overall, about two-thirds of jobs located within the Village of Ruidoso are filled by individuals who reside outside of Village limits, creating a strain on the transportation system and increasing driving distances. While many employees prefer to reside and commute in from surrounding communities, at least part of the commuting distance is related to high housing costs within the Village.

**FIGURE 8-1. RUIDOSO COMMUNITY DATA**

Mode	Village of Ruidoso	New Mexico
Drive Alone	75.9%	80.2%
Carpool	15.3%	9.8%
Walked	3.7%	2.1%
Work at Home	4.1%	4.8%
Other	1.1%	3.1%

Source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey

**FIGURE 8-2. COMMUTING PATTERN**



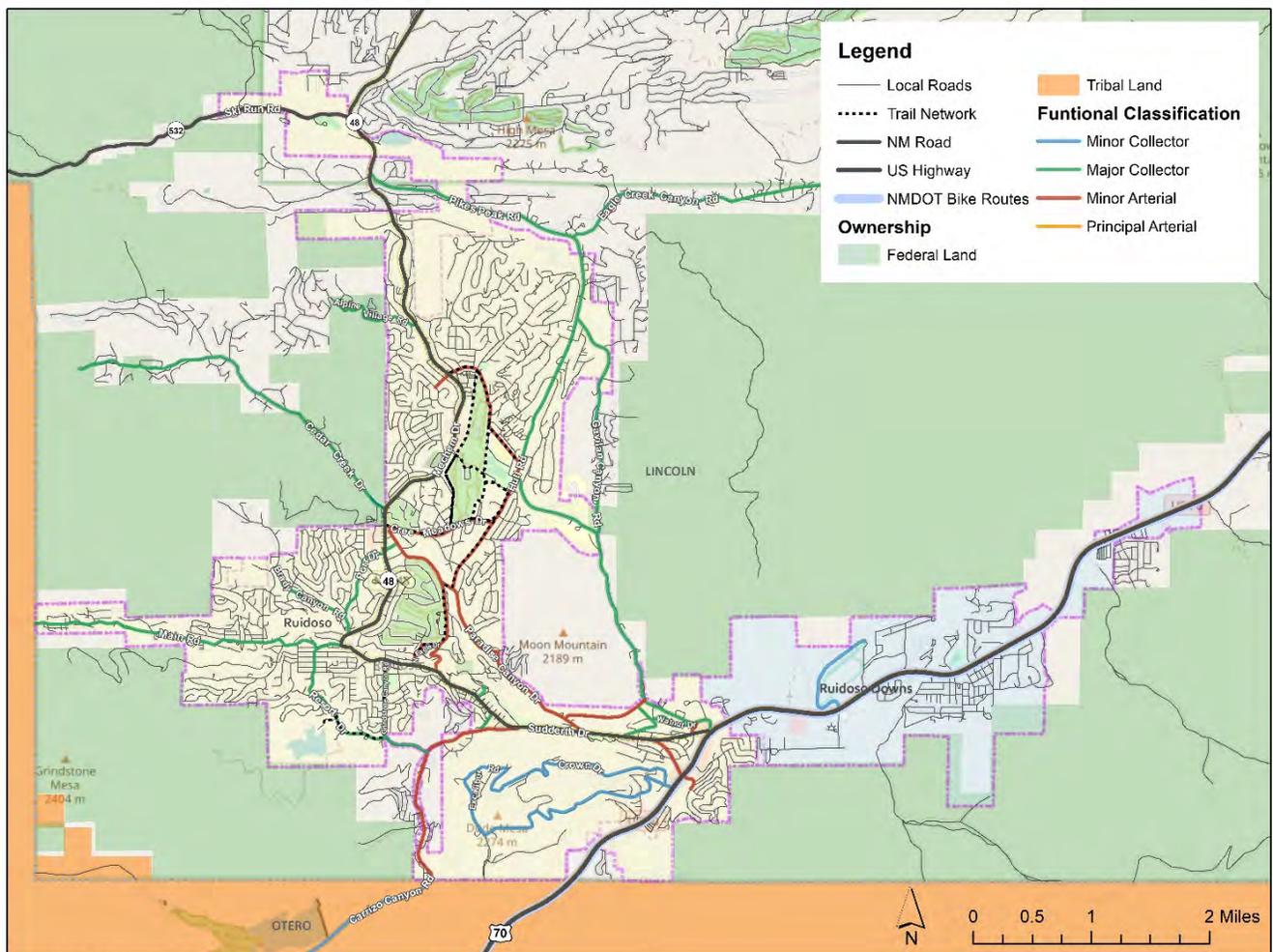
## Traffic Issues

### Midtown

Ruidoso is subject to high degrees of seasonal traffic congestion in the Midtown area (and throughout the Village), most notably during the summer and winter weekends and during the racing season at Ruidoso Downs. Many Ruidoso residents report avoiding the Midtown area altogether during these periods, and Village officials have observed queues of up to ½-mile to the west of the traffic light at Center Street and Sudderth Drive. Traffic signals along Sudderth Drive are owned and maintained by NMDOT (as shown in Figure 8-3), but the Village has a strong working relationship with the District 2 office and both jurisdictions have been able to respond to traffic demands through flexible and innovative signal timing practices. For example, staff has observed that converting the traffic signal at Center Street to a four-way flashing red is more effective in the peak tourist season than a standard all-way signal. However, the flashing red lights can create a hazard for pedestrians who must cross four lanes of traffic.

The Midtown area presents an unusual challenge where vehicle speeds are also higher than desired outside of the tourist seasons and traffic calming techniques, though not yet widely accepted publicly, have been introduced to address the issue. Techniques that have been applied include speed bumps and radar speed signs to alert drivers of their speeds.

**FIGURE 8-3. RUIDOSO ROADWAY NETWORK**



### *Secondary Roads and Bypass Routes*

Some of the Village's secondary roads, including Gavilan Canyon Road, Hull Road, and Paradise Canyon Drive are frequently used as bypass roads, especially when main roadways through Ruidoso become congested during the peak tourist seasons. However, these roadways also serve residential areas and Ruidoso residents have expressed a desire for traffic calming efforts along many of the Village's secondary routes. Measures, such as speed humps, have been applied on Buckner Drive and other secondary roadways. During the off-season, vehicle speeds through Midtown are often excessive and Speed humps, flashing beacons, and radar speed control signs have been applied.

### *General Issues*

Other traffic management issues include access to businesses along Sudderth Drive and Mechem Drive, including the Lincoln County Medical Center. Coordination with NMDOT over traffic impacts and turning movements associated with business access is ongoing.

### *Ongoing Projects*

The intersection of Sudderth Drive (NM 48), US 70, and Gavilan Canyon Road presents recurring traffic challenges as multiple high-volume roadways converge in an offset design. A roundabout has been proposed for the site and an application to NMDOT for Congestion Mitigation Air Quality funding has been submitted to conduct a feasibility study.

### Parking Management

Parking in the Midtown area is a recurring challenge during the peak seasons. Moreover, studies have shown that a significant share of traffic congestion in urbanized areas is attributable to motorists searching for parking spaces. In addition to on-street parking, the Village has attempted to address the problem by adding a series of public parking lots along side streets and adjacent to Sudderth Drive. The lots are well marked and offer a substantial number of spaces and support a "park once and walk" philosophy in which residents and visitors access multiple destinations without returning to their vehicles. Encouraging visitors—and recreational vehicles in particular—to utilize designated parking lots is an especially high priority.



### Bikeways and Pedestrian Facilities

Participants in the Comprehensive Plan outreach process indicated a strong desire for more walking and biking options. Benefits include reduced reliance on single-occupancy vehicles and enhanced livability through greater transportation options and improved public health outcomes. Businesses and Village officials also recognize that additional means for visitors and residents to access Midtown and other shopping areas can help commercial establishments and reduce parking demand.



At present, infrastructure for active transportation modes is limited. Sidewalks within the Village of Ruidoso are located almost exclusively along Sudderth Drive and Mechem Drive. In the Midtown area, where pedestrian activity is heaviest, sidewalks are narrow in places and become crowded during the tourist seasons. Village officials and residents also indicate high levels of jaywalking. The frequency of crossing locations may need to be examined more closely to allow for crossing options at regular intervals, including between signalized intersections. Along secondary roads, the lack of pedestrian options leads to people walking along the streets.

Improving conditions for bicyclists emerged as a major issue in the Comprehensive Plan outreach process. However, introducing bike lanes or other infrastructure is challenging given the topography and design of most Village roadways; speeds and volumes on many Ruidoso roadways are too high for shared use facilities (i.e., sharrows but no bike lanes). A further challenge is that the primary routes through the Village are owned by NMDOT. On-street bike lanes are feasible on a limited number of roadways and would likely require a road diet with lane reductions on Sudderth Drive.



*Striped path for pedestrians and bicyclists along Rio Street*

Creating an on-street bikeway network would likely involve a combination of shared use facilities, parallel routes to the main roads, and improved and expanded trails. Nevertheless, options exist for a network of bikeways comprised of multi-use trails and on-street facilities located along lower-volume secondary streets. Introducing bike lanes on Sudderth Drive was proposed by various participants in the Comprehensive Plan development process. Such an improvement would require further study and coordination with NMDOT.

### Recreational Trails

As described in the Parks and Recreation Chapter, the Village of Ruidoso offers a growing network of multi-use trails that mainly serve recreational purposes. The Village is considering building additional facilities and connections to enable their use for a wider range of trips. There are also numerous recreation trails and biking facilities on nearby federal land, some of which

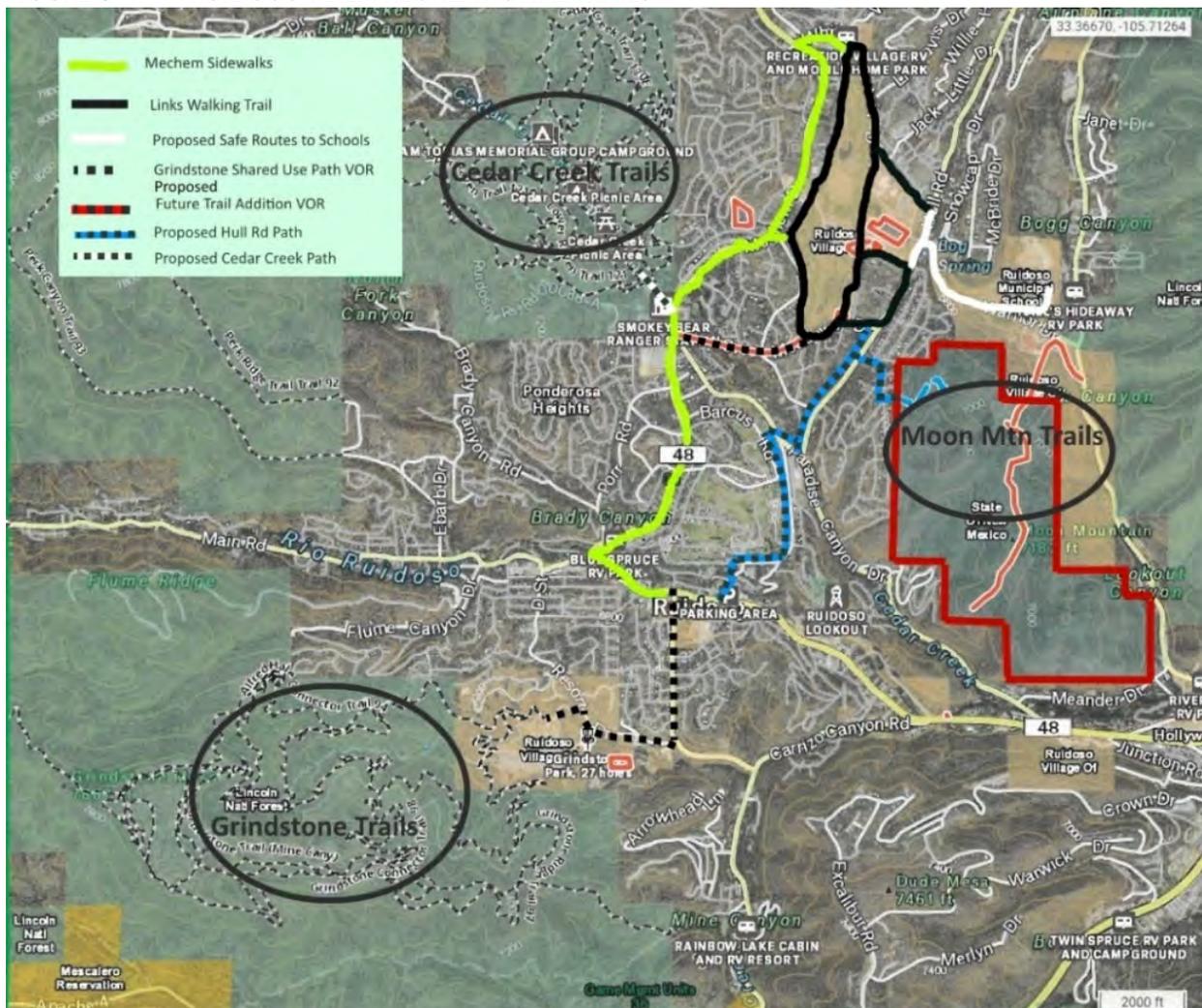
passes through Village limits. Connections between trails would allow recreational bicyclists to access different trail networks without getting in a car, permit residents and visitors to travel more easily within Ruidoso, and provide an alternative option for accessing Midtown, thus alleviating some parking challenges. Connecting these facilities through a network on on-street bikeways and multi-use trails through the Village could create further opportunities for recreational tourism.

To ensure the expansion of the trails network takes places in a coordinated manner, the Village is pursuing a Trails Master Plan. That Plan should consider the intended users; major destinations that should be connected, including schools and community facilities; and integration with walking and on-street bicycling networks.

### Ongoing Projects

The Village of Ruidoso is pursuing state funding for a Trails Master Plan plus design of connections to the River Trail. An additional project under consideration is a 0.6-mile trail along Cree Meadow Road from Village Hall to Mechem Drive. The Cree Meadows Trail would connect to the Links Trail and the Sierra Blanca Trail.

**FIGURE 8-4. RUIDOSO AREA RECREATIONAL TRAILS**



Source: Village of Ruidoso

## Public Transit

ZTrans based in Alamogordo currently operates demand response service in the Ruidoso area, as well as inter-city routes across the region, and is considering fixed route service through the Village. ZTrans officials note that identifying routes and stop locations is made difficult by the lack of pedestrian facilities on most roadways.

Expanded transit service would provide benefits in terms of increased transportation options for Village residents, could bring workers into town from surrounding communities to access basic services and medical care, and would have the added benefit of reduced parking demand.

## Air Travel

The Sierra Blanca Regional Airport, constructed in 1988, is classified as a commercial service airport that currently serves charter and private travel, including more than 100 flights per day during the summer months. Maintaining status as a commercial service is considered a priority, though such status requires additional standards, inspections, personnel training, and equipment, including airport, rescue, and firefighting (ARF) services. Village officials believe there is an opportunity to formalize charter or commercial services to regional destinations, similar to services offered between Taos, NM and major markets in Texas.

The airport includes two runways:

- Runway 624, the primary commercial runway, can accommodate aircraft up to the size of a 737. Runway 624 features an instrument landing system, a ground-based system that provides guidance to pilots in times of low visibility. There is property available to extend the runway to the east.
- Runway 1230, features a GPS landing system and is not a commercial service runway.

In addition to the two runways, the airport has a large apron area that requires a high level of maintenance. Airport officials have identified a need for additional hangars (several are owned by the Village, while others are privately-owned). The airport also features a development area to the west of the runway 624, though the area is not currently served by taxi-lanes and access to the area is complicated by change in elevation.

## Requested Improvements

Needs that emerged from the stakeholder group meeting, included:

- Improve biking conditions
- Increase walkability
- Address left-turn movements
- Improve school access and safe conditions for youths
- Address emergency response during congested periods
- Improve trail connectivity
- Enhance public transit
- Manage speeds with traffic calming improvements

## Preliminary Recommendations

### *Parking Management*

- **Create Maps Displaying Public Parking Lot Locations.** An electronic version of map could be included in a visitor app, that identifies public parking sites, number of available spaces, and special vehicle accommodations, such as recreational vehicles.

### *Bikeways*

- **Conduct a Bikeway Study.** The study should identify potential bikeways through the Village, including trail locations and design techniques that are appropriate for Village roadways.
- **Conduct a Bikeshare Study.** The Village of Ruidoso should conduct a feasibility study to examine the appropriate scale, cost of operating, and the logistics associated with a bike share program. Potential station locations include the Main Road lodging area, Grindstone Lake recreation area, public parking sites, and Midtown.

### *Recreational Trails*

- **Develop a Trails Plan.** The Village should develop a plan that considers the intended users; major destinations that should be connected, including schools and community facilities; and integration with walking and on-street bicycling networks.
- **Expand the Trails Network.** Pursue connections among existing facilities.
- **Introduce Signing and Wayfinding.** So that residents and visitors are aware of trail connections and distances to destinations, the Village could prioritize a wayfinding program.

### *Transit*

- **Continue Partnerships.** Maintain partnership with ZTrans to develop fixed route service.
- **Identify Pedestrian Improvements to Support Stop Locations.** These improvements would enable greater access to transit.

### *Traffic Calming*

- **Produce a Traffic Calming Guide.** Identify the techniques that may be applied on Village roadways and the types of locations where those techniques are most appropriate. The guide should provide a clear decision-making process to aid Village staff in the implementation of traffic calming measures.
- **Confirm Street Hierarchy.** Identify which secondary routes should be high speed and higher volume roadways, and which roadways may be appropriate for traffic calming. During the Comprehensive Plan outreach, Gavilan Canyon Road was cited as an appropriate facility for higher speed travel, while Hull Road was identified as appropriate for lower speed travel.
- **Improve Waterway Crossing Standards.** Create standards for waterway crossings that mitigate impacts on the waterways.

### *Roadway Design*

- **Roadway design standards.** Pursue design standards specific to Village of Ruidoso transportation system. Improve waterway crossing standards to mitigate impacts to waterways.

## Utilities

### Water

#### *Consumer Supply and Demand*

There are 8,000 year-round water customers in Ruidoso, but this number can surge seasonally to 20,000 based on tourism events. The population is not projected to grow substantially in the next 20 years and may even decrease in line with the projected decline in the New Mexican population. The Village has sufficient water rights to continue supplying its population in the foreseeable future if water management remains a priority; the challenge for the system is not the quantity of water available but its conveyance to customers and the conditions on water rights permits. See the Water Resources section for discussion of long-term water supply.

#### *System Overview*

The Village of Ruidoso has difficult mountainous geography resulting in a largely decentralized system with various water treatment plants, tanks, and pressure zones. The numerous facilities are located throughout the Village in areas of moderate slope and with access roads; the large amount of facilities in the distribution system is unusual considering the small size (based on capacity) of the system. The redundant facilities ensure that topographically isolated areas are serviced.

#### *System Makeup*

The system consists of five water treatment plants. Of these, two are surface water treatment plants with similar treatment schemes focused on removing particulate matter and providing disinfection. The remaining three treatment plants are groundwater treatment facilities which provide only disinfection as that is all that is needed to make the groundwater potable. The water system is owned and maintained by the Village. Treated water is distributed by approximately 300 miles of pipeline. In addition, the system consists of 13 potable water storage tanks, 15 pumping stations, and 35 pressure reducing stations. The system has 7,766 water service connections of which only 5,700 are active. Full fire flow is provided to customers.

#### *Existing Conditions and Basic Issues*

Aging infrastructure is an issue as most of the infrastructure was constructed in the 1970s and 80s. Aging infrastructure can lead to issues such as leakages or complete pipe failures. Areas of high pressure are a concern especially when combined with aging infrastructure as they can be vulnerable points to pipe breakages. Through a general obligation bond to fund capital improvements, the Village is replacing leaking and outdated infrastructure at a rapid pace. This program is voted on every two years and has been supported by an overwhelming majority of voters.

A water audit conducted by the Village based on the 2014 American Water Works Association (AWWA) protocol revealed that 53 percent of water delivered to the distribution system was non-revenue water meaning that it was either an apparent loss or a real loss. Apparent losses are the result of unauthorized consumption, metering inaccuracies, or systematic data errors, while real losses are due to leakages at points in the system.

Transmission flexibility between the Alto, Grindstone, and Cherokee service areas is also a priority in order to ensure redundancy in the system and make sure that water rights are available where they are needed. Redundancy ensures that in the event of an emergency where traditional water sources are not available, water can be acquired easily and quickly from neighboring areas to make sure supply is sufficient.

### *Policies and Recommended Improvements*

The 2018 PER recommends the construction of potable water interconnections with both the city of Ruidoso Downs and the Alto Lakes W&S District. Both systems are in close proximity to the Ruidoso system, which minimizes the potential construction costs, and have enough capacity to provide significant volumes to the Village of Ruidoso system. These interconnections would also be mutually beneficial to the Ruidoso Downs and the Alto Lakes W&S Systems as they have similar mountainous geography, common system challenges, and would allow for jurisdictions to purchase water from the Village of Ruidoso as needed. These interconnections would increase redundancy in the three systems.

In addition, the 2016 Water Development Plan highlights areas that require improvement, mainly due to water rights and water supply concerns. Although Ruidoso has sufficient water rights, accessibility to these rights throughout the year can be a challenge. Improvements that aid in the ability to transfer water between the Eagle Creek and Rio Ruidoso Drainages would help to balance the withdrawal limitations in the individual watersheds. Furthermore, to be able to continue to supply residents with water in the future the system needs increased ability to move water between the Alto, Grindstone, and Cherokee Service areas as well as increased storage options to help balance water demands throughout the system.

In addition to the interconnection improvements and Water Development Plan recommendations, the following planned capital improvements are identified in the 2018 PER and funded through general obligation funds:

- Water tank replacement
- Improve surface water filtration systems
- Complete the construction of water laboratory facilities
- Commence the PRV upgrade project
- Increase the in-lab testing capability at water treatment plants
- Increase the water quality compliance testing within the system
- Construct system interconnection to provide for additional looping
- Construct regional metering to detect zones of excessive water loss
- Construct a pump station
- Construct water line replacements

Aging system components need to be replaced in a timely manner in order to keep the system in good functioning order and reliably supply customers. The Village has begun instituting measures to combat the high-pressure locations in the system, mainly adding pressure valves on the customer side of the meter connection in the high-pressure areas.

### *Existing Plans and Policies*

PER for the Village of Ruidoso Regional Potable Water System Improvements (5/21/18), Stantec

## Wastewater System

### *Population/System Capacity*

The residents of the Village of Ruidoso are not fully connected to the wastewater treatment system. It is estimated by the April 2017 PER Prepared by Molzen Corbin that although the population is not expected to increase in the next 20 years, the effort by the Village to connect existing residents to the infrastructure will increase service connections by 3,500 connections by the year 2036 with most of the connections (2,700) due to connecting onsite treatment systems to the grid and the remainder due to growth and seasonal housing.

The system consists of 63 miles of interceptors, more than 700 manholes, and numerous other minor collector lines and service connection laterals. The wastewater treatment plant has a capacity of 2.7 MGD peak month average day flow. The Ruidoso Wastewater Treatment Plant still has additional capacity at current build out, and has one additional bay to expand into to handle the 2.7 MGD design.

### *Basic Issues*

The overall issues named in the 2017 PER for the Village of Ruidoso are aging infrastructure, with the most pressing concerns currently being the lift stations and connecting the remaining residents to the system. Connecting the remaining residents to the system may be difficult due to the difficult topography in the area, which precludes some new connections to be collected by gravity, as well as the fact that existing onsite systems are owned and maintained by the residents themselves.

### *Policies and Recommended Improvements*

#### *Lift Stations*

According to the 2017 PER, the lift stations, connections to residents, and the system interceptors are the main priorities. Although rehabilitation efforts were undertaken by the Village in 2016 for lift stations that were critical or had equipment failures, it is expected that the lift stations will continue to need additional maintenance/replacement. See the April 2017 PER by Molzen Corbin for additional information regarding costs of improvements.

The preferred approach in the event that a lift station needs replacement is the use of gravity interceptors as appropriate. If gravity interceptors are not applicable as replacement options for certain lift stations, then rehabilitation is the next option, with complete replacement of the structure and equipment only recommended when deterioration is so severe that rehabilitation is not possible. A supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) system is also recommended to assist in monitoring and operating the lift stations.

#### *Residential Connections*

Connections to residents are recommended to be a combination of gravity collection and low-pressure grinder systems depending on the situation at the connection. Gravity collection is the favored method, but a low-pressure grinder system is recommended where the geography is too difficult for gravity collection to function adequately.

#### *Capacity*

An increase in the capacity of the interceptors in the system is recommended but may be difficult based on the locations that the interceptors were originally constructed in. Where the location of the current interceptors makes it difficult to replace using traditional open trench methods, trenchless methods are recommended. Where trenchless methods are inappropriate due to the limited capacity for size increase, depth of bury, or other factors affected by the original construction location of the pipe, parallel interceptors are recommended to provide the needed capacity.

#### *General Maintenance*

Future improvements to the Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) would likely revolve around updating aging infrastructure as there is no current failure in the system. The WWTP is currently meeting its permitted effluent limits. It is also recommended that the replacement of component parts in the system is carried out as they reach their expected lifetimes in order to keep the system working effectively.

## Dry Utilities

### Broadband

#### System Overview

Most of the Village of Ruidoso has two internet providers: 1) TDS Telecom provides cable and fiber internet for residences and covers 92.6 percent of the Village of Ruidoso; and 2) Windstream provides DSL and Fiber internet to 90.2 percent of the residences in Village of Ruidoso.<sup>1</sup> The Eastern New Mexico University–Ruidoso Branch Campus Library and Ruidoso Public Library both provide publicly funded internet access for the community.

#### Requested and Planned Improvements

Improving broadband access is a priority for Ruidoso community members and stakeholders due to intermittent service. The Village has identified improving broadband connectivity as a goal in its 2018 Strategic Plan.

### Gas

#### System Overview

Zia Natural Gas provides service to 13,500 customers and to the entirety of Lincoln County. The system can support current demand. Gas usage usually peaks in the winter due to tourists visiting the Village and colder temperatures. Currently, Zia Natural Gas does not have any expansion plans. If the Village increases development in Gavilan Canyon, it would affect Zia's ability to meet demand.

The company provides various energy efficiency programs including rebates for space heating, water heating, new construction, low income energy efficiency, and commercial energy.<sup>2</sup>

### Electric

#### System Overview

Public Service Company of New Mexico (PNM) provides the Village of Ruidoso with electricity. Currently, PNM uses 17 percent renewable energy. Additionally, PNM provides multiple programs and benefits for its customers. Some of the programs include Home Energy Checkups, a Refrigerator Recycling Program, Cooling & Heat Pump Rebates, Rebates on Swimming Pool Pumps, Home Lighting Discounts, and PNM Power Saver Programs. PNM also provides Quick Saver Customer Profiles summarizing what their customers do for improved energy efficiency to share with the public.<sup>3</sup>

## Preliminary Recommendations

- **Construct Potable Water Interconnections with the City of Ruidoso Downs and the Alto Lakes W&S District.** To increase redundancy in the Village's water supply system, the Village should take advantage of the proximity to adjacent systems and lower construction costs by constructing new interconnections and replacing aging system components.
- **Continue to Prioritize Lift Stations in Need of Replacement or Rehabilitation.** Monitor lift stations with supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) system and replace or rehabilitate those in need.
- **Continue to Ensure Quality Waste Water Service Is Provided.** By increasing residential connections, monitoring system capacity with growth forecasts, and providing general maintenance, the Village can be prepared to meet current and future demand.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.broadbandnow.com](http://www.broadbandnow.com)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.zngc.com/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.pnm.com/web/pnm.com/home>

- **Improve Broadband Services.** The Village and community have voiced a need for improved broadband services throughout the Village of Ruidoso in order to continue to do business as well as attract visitors and new business.
- **Update Utilities Capacity.** If Ruidoso continues to develop to its full capacity, the current utility systems would not be able to sufficiently meet demand. Utilities infrastructure is needed to accommodate new development on undeveloped properties.
- **Pursue Energy Conservation Strategies.** Explore improvements or changes to management of system to reduce energy consumption



## Water Resources

### Water Supply and Long-Term Planning

As stated in the May 2018 Water System Improvements PER by Stantec for the Village of Ruidoso, the water system is supplied by three surface water sources—Grindstone Reservoir, Upper Eagle Creek Diversion, and Alto Reservoir—as well as various wells. The currently held water rights are 3,694.16 acre-foot per year or approximately 975,000 million gallons per year. In the 2017 fiscal year, 700 million gallons of water were treated and provided to customers.

Of the 16 water planning regions in New Mexico, Ruidoso falls in the Lower Pecos Valley Planning Region which roughly coincides with the lower reach of the Pecos River Watershed. The Lower Pecos Valley Regional Water Plan was completed in 2001 by the Pecos Valley Water Users Association and was updated in 2016; its principal aim is to develop a plan to meet regional water needs in the future.

### Existing Conditions and Basic Issues

According to the Village of Ruidoso Water/Sewer Webpage, Ruidoso is currently under Phase 5 water restrictions due to the impact the Little Bear fire had on the Village's water rights. The watershed was altered due to the fire and caused a deterioration in the quality of the surface water, forcing the village to rely on only groundwater for an extended amount of time and using a significant amount of those water rights. Under Phase 5 restrictions, lawn watering is not allowed unless a resident is on a well and watering of vegetable plants and fruit trees is to be done by hand. Residents are also encouraged to strive to conserve water.

As related to source water, the main challenges identified by the 2014 Source Water Protection plan are drought, possible groundwater depletion, natural and manmade contamination, wildfires, and flooding. Drought is especially concerning in the Ruidoso region as it relates to the mandatory water debt to Texas even in years of drought in addition to a heightened probability of wildfire with dry vegetation caused by the drought. The Watershed Advisory Committee report should be consulted for recent information on water quality, current impairments on streams, and total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) in the area.

There are also several issues outlined in the updated 2016 water plan that currently impact the Lower Pecos Valley Region:

- Most of the water in the Pecos River Basin is in the lower basin and its use must comply with the 1948 Pecos River compact, specifically as relating to the amount of water rights available for use by the entities in the region.
- Recent droughts have caused record low flows in the Pecos river making it difficult to meet the minimum Carlsbad project supply target in addition to creating water supply issues for systems in the region.
- Physical watershed management technique impacts on the net water supply are not yet quantified for practices that have been implemented.
- Continued compliance with the 2003 Pecos Settlement and the 1988 U.S. Supreme Court Amended Decree.
- Stress on aquifers and impacts to the Pecos River from oil and gas development in the Capitan and Carlsbad basins.

### *Water Conservation Efforts*

The Water Conservation Plan (December 2015) identifies steps the Village of Ruidoso can take to ensure the Village remains a responsible steward of its water supplies. The purpose of the Water Conservation Plan is to “promote the efficient use of potable water supplies, reduce customer consumption, identify and reduce system non-revenue water and efficiency.” The Plan also asserts the need to track long-term trends in water usage. Specific efforts include replacement of leaking waterlines, an updated rate structure, installation of new water meters, and the lining of Grindstone Dam to reduce leakage. According to the Plan, these efforts are to be funded through general obligation bonds.

### *Policies and Recommended Improvements*

Specific proposed infrastructure capital improvement projects to address the basic water resource needs that regional stakeholders are interested in pursuing (as included in the updated water plan) are:

- Alto Dam Compliance and Improvements
- Water Storage Tank Improvements (for various tanks in the system)
- Drainage Improvements
- Fire Hydrant Replacement
- Fort Stanton Water Line Improvements
- Water Infrastructure Improvements
- Water Maintenance Facility
- Alto Water Treatment Plant Upgrade
- New Wastewater Reuse Projects

The 2014 Source Water Protection Plan also names action items to assist in the protection of the water sources. These action items include:

- Testing water wells at specified intervals for general chemistry to be able to identify changes in groundwater chemistry.
- Measuring and reviewing water levels in supply wells.
- Performing a water audit, identifying and repairing leaks, upgrading aging drinking water infrastructure.
- Reviewing water usage data to determine if newly instated tiered rate structure encourages water conservation.
- Reviewing the water conservation webpage for possible improvements.
- Developing a formal outreach program to local schools.
- Exploring interest in developing a regional or county-scale Source Water Protection Plan.

### *Storm Drainage and Watershed Management*

The Pecos River watershed is composed of Upper and Lower reaches that make up the Pecos River Basin, Ruidoso falls within the lower reach which encompasses the area from Sumner Dam to the Texas state line. Forest management also has an impact on watershed management as it relates to forest fire risks, surface water runoff, and erosion. The Village maintains a Forestry Department, which is unusual for a community the size of Village but a reflection of the unique geography of the Village and the need to manage natural resources, including maintain the mountain appeal of the community while mitigating risks due to wildfires.

### *Existing Conditions and Basic Issues*

The main threat to the watershed in the Ruidoso area is wildfire and the ensuing consequences due to damage to the environment by the fire events. As related to village water resources, areas near municipal water storage reservoirs and water treatment plants need to be

particularly protected in order to ensure water quality and protect the infrastructure investments. In addition, upstream areas in the watershed need to be maintained in order to minimize the possibility of flooding and debris-flows after a fire event. Critical reservoirs in the vicinity of Ruidoso include Grindstone Lake, Alto Reservoir, and Bonito Lake. Of these, the surface water sources for Ruidoso include Grindstone Lake, Alto Reservoir, and the Upper Eagle Creek Diversion.

### *Policies and Recommended Improvements*

The April 2018 North Sacramento Mountains Watershed and Forest Restoration Strategy aims to provide increased fire protection in the region by mitigating the threat of wildfires in wildland-urban interface areas where the vegetation is vulnerable to wildfires. The recommended forest treatments outlined in the 2018 report include reducing fuel loads as well as keeping treated areas maintained in order to ensure healthy forests. These treatments can be done by mechanical means, by hand, by using chemicals, or by using fire. These are recommendations are addressed in the Hazard Mitigation Chapter.

### *Preliminary Recommendations*

The following recommendations should be addressed in the comprehensive plan to maintain and enhance Ruidoso's water resources:

- **Implement the Water Plan's Recommendations.** To ensure water supply is in compliance and of high quality, the Village should make the recommended improvements to water supply and storage infrastructure, including Alto Dam, water storage tanks, drainage, fire hydrants, Fort Stanton water line, maintenance facilities, treatment plants, and reuse projects.
- **Monitor and Audit Water Supply Wells and Surface Water Supplies.** To ensure water quality is not compromised and usage rates fall within in normal ranges, conduct regular audits of water wells as recommended in the 2014 Source Water Protection Plan.
- **Expand the Reach of the Watershed Demonstration Projects.** The Watershed Committee has developed demonstration projects to protect the health of the watershed. These projects should be implemented throughout the forestland through coordinated efforts.
- **Perform Regular Updates to Water Resource Management Plans.** Review and amend the Water Development Plan and the Source Water Protection Plan every 5-10 years.
- **Implement the Water Conservation Plan.** The Plan should be revised every 5-10 years.
- **Pursue Vegetation Management.** Improve management of riparian and wetland areas and identify funding and/or staffing to develop a comprehensive strategy for vegetation management.
- **Implement a Stormwater Management and Drainage Program.** Develop a Drainage Master Plan that identifies water flows and sites of recurring flooding, as well as storage facilities and potential improvements. Identify water quality improvements.



## Hazard Mitigation

Comprehensive Plans are required to include a section documenting hazard mitigation that is coordinated with local emergency management and wildfire protection plans. This element summarizes information regarding existing hazards and mitigation efforts and includes recommendations to consider that will improve mitigation success and emergency response.

### Current Conditions

#### Service Area

The Village of Ruidoso is responsible for addressing hazards within the Village limits and has coordinated hazard mitigation efforts with Lincoln County and the following regional jurisdictions for more than 12 years:<sup>1</sup>

- US Forest Service
- Mescalero Apache Tribe
- Bureau of Land Management
- NM State land, Forestry Division
- Capitan
- Corona
- Carrizozo
- Ruidoso Downs

As a result of coordinated efforts, government agencies have made efforts to reduce the risk of wildfire on public land and have helped landowners with similar efforts on private land throughout Lincoln County, including fuel reduction projects, establishing defensible space around structures, coordinated interagency cooperative burns, and Firewise training.

#### Condition

Despite these ongoing efforts, the nature of Ruidoso, its proximity to forest land considered “heavy fuel loads,” make it a Wildland Urban Interface and its terrain, make the Village’s wildfire risk high and result in a NFPA Hazard Rating of “High.” These natural conditions, together with the lack of defensible space surrounding structures, fire hydrants, and sprinkler systems, and the prevalent use of combustible building materials of homes, decks, and porches, and above-ground electrical utilities make wildfire the greatest hazard to the Village. Wildfires also increase the possibility of other hazards, including landslides and dam failure. Figure 11-1 illustrates the wildland-urban interface (WUI) areas, which are particularly threatened by wildfire.

In addition to wildfire, the Lincoln County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan identifies the hazards that could impact Ruidoso as follows:

- **Floods.** Rio Ruidoso, which carries snowmelt from Sierra Blanca through Ruidoso is the Village’s primary source of seasonal flash floods due to excessive runoff. Since the Little Bear Fire in 2012, areas outside of the floodplains have been impacted by flooding from Rio Bonito and Eagle Creek. Areas with a one percent annual chance of flooding (100-year floodplain) along Rio Ruidoso, Cedar Creek, and Carrizo Creek are shown in Figure 11-1.
- **Severe Weather.** High winds, thunderstorms, lightning, hail, winter storms, and extreme heat are potential hazards in Lincoln County. Of them, extreme heat has the lowest probability of affecting Ruidoso.
- **Drought.** As of 2017, Lincoln County was in its fifth year of drought and drought-like conditions are expected every other year based on statistical analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> Lincoln County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2017, p. 49.

- **Dam Failure.** Alto Lake Dam and Grindstone Canyon Dam are within the Village of Ruidoso's jurisdiction, however three other dams (Bonito Dam, Upper Rio Hondo Site No. 1 Dam, and Lake Mescalero) are near the Village and could have downstream impacts. If Lake Mescalero or Grindstone Canyon dams failed the resulting waterflow would increase Rio Ruidoso 40 feet above its banks throughout the Village of Ruidoso and Ruidoso Downs.<sup>2</sup> Both these dams have required Emergency Action Plans. There have been no dam failures in Lincoln County, however the State ranks these dams as high hazard potential due to the expected loss of life that could result from their failure.
- **Earthquakes.** The Alamogordo fault extends into Lincoln County, however the probability of earthquakes and subsequent landslides in the county is low.
- **Tornadoes.** Ruidoso has experienced tornadoes, but the probability is low; southeastern Lincoln County has a greater risk due to its wind conditions.
- **Hazardous Materials.** US Route 54 and Union Pacific Railroad are possible routes used to transport hazardous materials in Lincoln County, however, there have been no incidents to date and the probability is low.
- **Terrorism or Active Shooter.** The possibility of terrorist acts exists anywhere, but Ruidoso is not considered a to be a probable location.
- **Communicable Disease Outbreak.** While it is not easy to predict where outbreaks will occur, historically Lincoln County has had fewer rates of outbreaks per capita than the state.

### Capacity

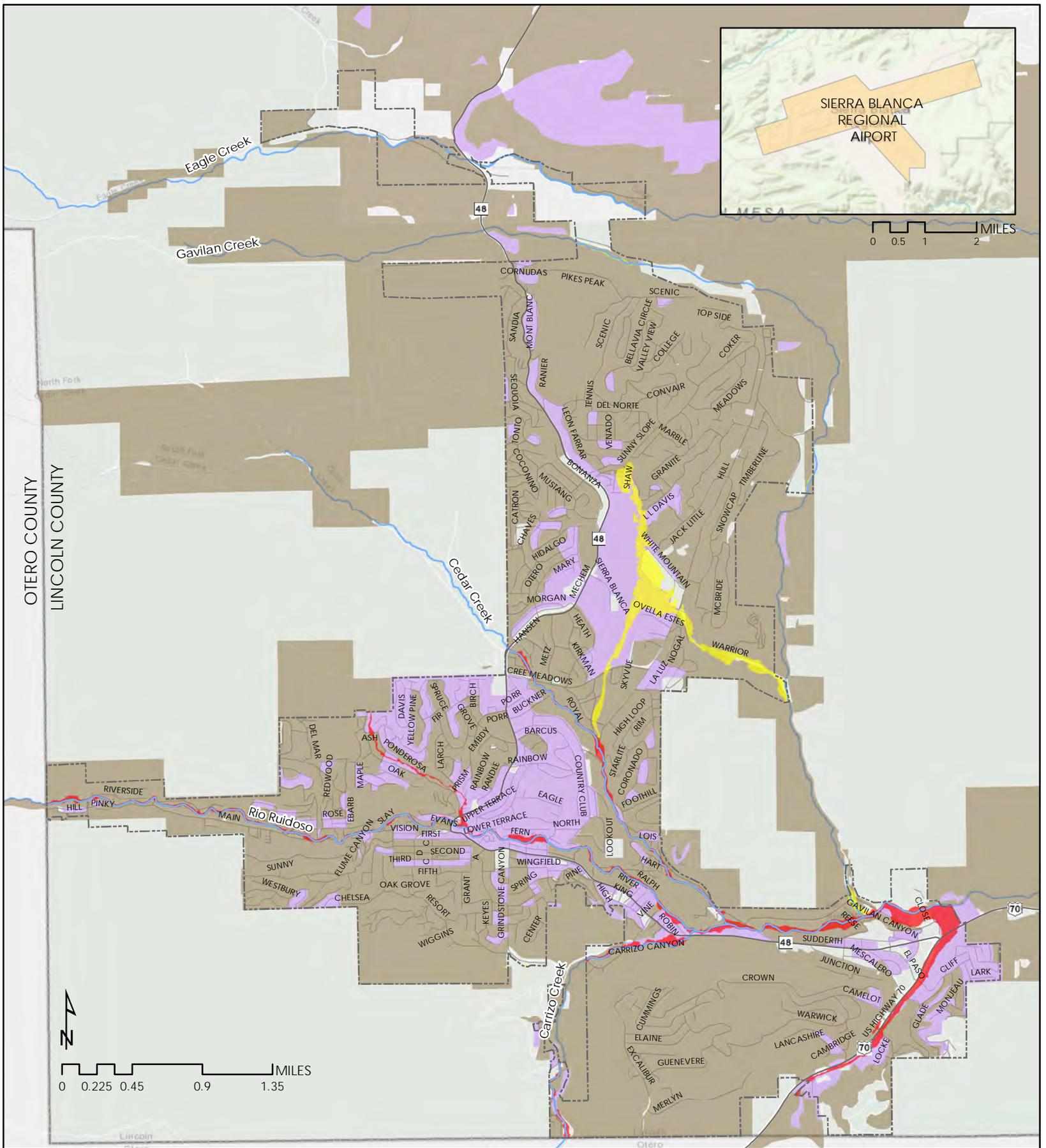
The Village and the agencies represented within the Greater Ruidoso Area have been working to address the threat of wildfire and improving education and fire restrictions. They remain real and constant threats given the Village's proximity to forestland. Village stakeholders have expressed their priorities for more wildfire and safety services, improved education around the threat of wildfire, and fuel management/fire restriction enforcement.

- **Village of Ruidoso Fire Department.** The Village currently has six fire fighters on duty every day, but as the Village grows the capacity will need to increase to provide adequate protection.<sup>3</sup> Staff is supported by Search and Rescue teams near Cedar Creek and Bonito Lake area if needed. Improved signage and education have helped prevent accidents and improve rescue efforts; they communicate where hikers/campers can go and what rules to follow. However, the US Forest Service has put a signage plan for Cedar Creek on hold. Given the high fire risks between March and June, fires and charcoal are prohibited; these fire restrictions need extra enforcement, which is difficult due to lack of education; when so many users are visitors who do not know the rules, signage, educational outreach, and enforcement is critical.
- **US Department of Agriculture Forest Service.** The US Department of Agriculture Forest Service's Lincoln National Forest is adjacent to the Village of Ruidoso's eastern and western boundaries. Within Lincoln National Forest there are three districts; the Smokey Bear Ranger District overlaps with the Village and assists in the Village's firefighting capacity.<sup>4</sup> To identify and address forest issues in the District and Lincoln National Forest, the Smokey Bear Collaborative comprised of area stakeholders was formed.

<sup>2</sup> Lincoln County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2017, p. 81.

<sup>3</sup> Village of Ruidoso Fire Department Assistant Fire Chief, Cody Wilson at Stakeholder Meeting January 16, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Lincoln County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2017, p 49.



SOURCE: VILLAGE OF RUIDOSO, 2019

FIGURE 11-1. HAZARD MITIGATION

LEGEND

-  VILLAGE OF RUIDOSO
-  RIVERS AND CREEKS

FLOOD ZONE

-  100 - YEAR FLOOD PLAIN W/O BASE ELEVATION (A)
-  100 - YEAR FLOOD PLAIN (AE)

WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE (WUI)

-  INTERFACE
-  INTERMIX



- **Village of Ruidoso Department of Forestry.** In 2002, the Village became a Firewise community and initiated a planned progression of fuels reduction projects on both public and private property within the Village boundaries. The Village created its own Forestry Department in 2003, which led to the revision of fire-safety ordinances and an education program which includes Firewise workshops and demonstrations on how to make a home fire resistance on television. The Village was awarded a Firewise Community USA and a National US Forest Service Rural Communities Assistance Sprit award.<sup>5</sup>
  - **Hazardous Fuels Reduction.** The Village of Ruidoso is “high at risk for a catastrophic wildfire community” according to the Community Wildfire Protection Plan. There are approximately 13,500 acres within the Village limits and another 1,500 acres at the Sierra Blanca Regional Airport. Most of the Village-owned property is heavily timbered and adjacent to schools, subdivisions, water tanks, and other critical areas. There is about 580 acres of timbered Village-owned property at the Airport that has not been treated and is a threat to the investments at the airport. Ordinances were passed requiring fuels reduction on all properties within the Village boundaries. Since the initiation, the Village has systematically required landowners to thin their properties to reduce fuel concentrations subdivision by subdivision throughout the Village. In 2017, the first cycle of thinning was complete. The Village has managed to get approximately 90 percent of Village and private property within the Village thinned to Village Fuels Management Standards. The Forestry Department has established a 10-year rotational certification process to ensure compliance with the fuels management ordinances on all properties within the Village. From 2012 to the present, there has been a major bark-beetle infestation in the Village that has killed thousands of trees. Due to the mortality from the bark beetle and the natural reproduction of conifers and sprouting of alligator juniper, properties must be maintained to keep up with the natural fuels accumulation.
  - **Department of Forestry Web Resources.** The department has a webpage dedicated to tips homeowners can take to remove flammable material from around their homes in order to protect forest land and their properties from wildfire.<sup>7</sup> The webpage provides cost estimates, possible contractors who are qualified to clear and thin properties of dead trees and other flammable materials, and the requirements these contractors must meet. The department’s webpage also has list of links that provide information on the Fuels Management Ordinance (also referred to as the thinning standards), presentations on Ruidoso’s Wildland-Urban Interface, fire behavior, and management, and cost sharing opportunities and checklists for property owners to use in order to thin the trees on their properties and comply with the Fuels Management Ordinance.
- **Greater Ruidoso Area Wildland Urban Interface Working Group.** Involving Federal, State, Tribal, Local agencies and the public. The group is chaired by the Ruidoso Director of Forestry. The group was responsible for initiating mitigation recommendations for the Greater Ruidoso area that stretched from the Mescalero reservation to Capitan to Lincoln and back to Ruidoso. This was a group that collaborated and produced the first Community Wildfire Protection Plan for the greater Ruidoso area in 2004. This plan established priorities for treatment and was the basis for the progression of the mitigation strategy for the Village of Ruidoso. Each agency had their own piece of the pie with the overall objective of

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<sup>5</sup>

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57cf2dbf1b631b3eb2d911db/t/580fbbb8b3db2b9be8ca3362/1477426107593/SW+S+Ruidoso+case+study+2008+with+pics+%28updated+10-08%29.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ruidoso-nm.gov/forestry>

protecting the populated parts of the area. The plan was updated and included in the 2014 update of the Lincoln County Community Wildfire Protection Plan. Another update is planned for 2019. The group remains active and has quarterly meetings for the purpose of collaboration on projects and assessing fuels mitigation needs. The group is very active in evaluating projects and community outreach activities.

- **Greater Ruidoso Area Wildland Urban Interface Working Group.** Involving Federal, State, Tribal, and local agencies, the group was responsible for implementing fire mitigation measures using the “best available science”, restoring and monitoring forest health, protecting communities, and engaging private investment in forest-based economies, maintaining high quality of life in forest areas, and sustaining real estate and tourism.

### *Existing Plans and Policies*

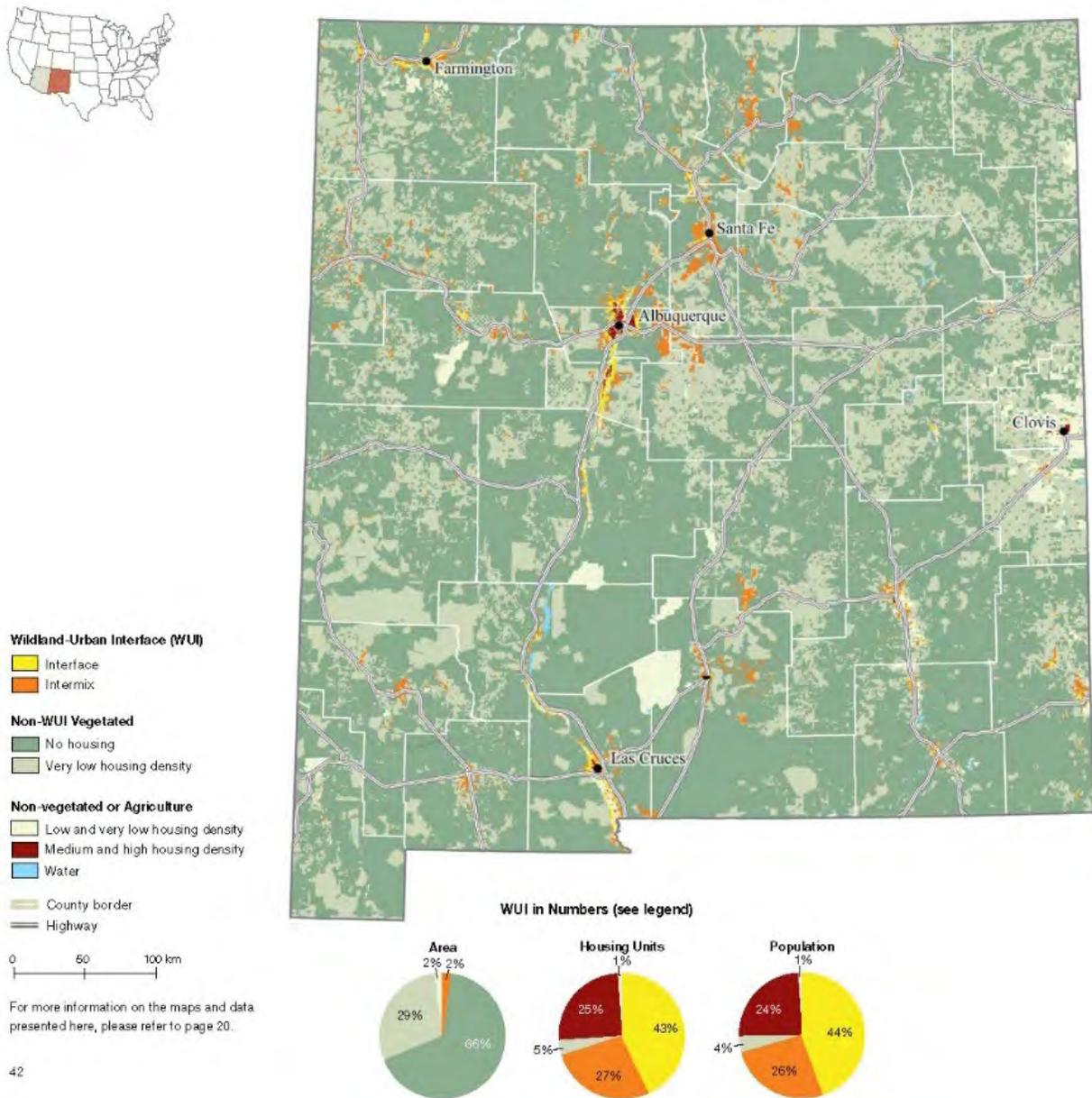
#### National Plans

- **A Profile of Development and Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) in Lincoln County, NM, 2019.** Taking data from across the country, this report compares Lincoln County’s wildland-urban interface to that of the state and western United States using 2010 data with a focus on WUI areas with homes. WUI is defined here as “private forestlands that are within 500 meters of public forestlands” and is also referred to as “fire-prone lands.” Although Lincoln County has the smallest amount of WUI area in the eleven western continental states (40 square miles total), it has the highest percentage of WUI with homes (32.5 percent). This is important because wildfire is considered “a natural disturbance” in forests and when it is suppressed over time to protect adjacent private property and homes, forest undergrowth or “fuel buildup” increases the probability of large, uncontrollable fires. More than one-third (36.1 percent) of Lincoln County’s homes are in the WUI and almost half (49.3 percent) of those are second homes. The report looks at the prevalence of second homes because more than \$1 billion is spent per year to protect homes from forest fires and “it puts the cost and danger of protecting homes into a context...are lives being risked, and billions of dollars being spent, to protect people’s vacation homes?” According to the report, the density of the homes is also a factor: the larger the lot size, the more it costs to protect them from fire; conversely, a dense subdivision is less costly since more homes are located within a smaller land area. Most notably, the report finds that Lincoln County ranks in the 91<sup>st</sup> percentile in the state when it comes to existing risk, which means it has a high amount of forested land where homes have already been built next to public forest land. This risk is costly and likely to become more costly if more homes are built in the WUI.
- **Fire Wise Plant Materials.** New Mexico State University in conjunction with the US Department of Agriculture, and the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department prepared a guide for homeowners to protect their home from wildfire risks by creating defensible space by planting and maintaining specific fire-resistant plants and trees.<sup>8</sup> The manual includes a detailed list of appropriate species, guidance for spacing between plants, and maintenance instructions. These recommendations are currently shared with all Ruidoso property owners.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us/SFD/FireMgt/documents/FireWisePlantMaterialsNMSU.pdf>

- The 2010 Wildland-Urban Interface of the Conterminous United States.** This report details the conditions and risks of the wildland-urban interface (WUI) areas; it defines WUI as “the area where structures and other human development meet or intermingle with undeveloped wildland.”<sup>9</sup> It stresses that the WUI is where wildfires have the greatest impact on people because fire can spread quickly from wildlands’ forest and grasslands into neighborhoods and homes. Unlike the Profile of Development and WUI report, it focuses on the environmental impacts that building next to wildlands has on wildlife and their habitat, in addition to the economic impacts. The trend to develop next to wildlands is leading to forest fragmentation and loss of habitat and an increase in domestic animals—both of which are interfering with native species and ecosystems, in addition to increasing the risks of wildfire threatening homes and people.



<sup>9</sup> <https://www.nrs.fs.fed.us/pubs/48642>

When compared to the rest of the country, New Mexico has one of the highest percentages of homes in the WUI relative to the total homes in the state (surpassed only by Wyoming, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and West Virginia. The report identifies New Mexico as one of a handful of states that has greater than 80 percent of its seasonal homes located in the WUI. It acknowledges that such homes can be a good draw for tourism and related economies, but it also recognizes that seasonal home owners can be harder to coordinate when it comes to maintaining their properties to reduce fire risk. Most notable is 70 percent of the state's population live in the WUI. The report's WUI map of New Mexico shows the Ruidoso area almost entirely as WUI area.

#### State Plans

- **State of New Mexico Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2018.** This plan addresses hazard mitigation statewide and specifically notes the following hazards that could impact Lincoln County and the Ruidoso area:
  - **Dam Failure.** Within the Ruidoso area are Grindstone Canyon Dam, Alto Lake Dam, Bonito Lake Dam, Upper Rio Hondo Site No. 1 Dam, and Two Rivers Dam, all of which are considered to have high hazard potential.<sup>10</sup> The Little Bear Fire in 2012, which burned much of the Bonito Lake Dam watershed, has resulted in hydrologic problems.
  - **Land Subsidence.** Lincoln County is considered to have “highly to extremely hydrocompaction susceptible soils” on and near Capitan Mountains, Oscura Mountains and other solitary peaks.”<sup>11</sup>
  - **Tornadoes.** Lincoln County last experienced a significant tornado in 2017, which was accompanied by golf-ball sized hail.
- **Living with Fire: A Guide for the Homeowner, New Mexico, 2018.** To help New Mexican property owners “live more safely with the threat of wildfire,” the New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (New Mexico State Forestry Division and New Mexico Energy Conservation and Management Division), New Mexico Office of Emergency Management, Bureau of Land Management, and USDA Forest Service sponsored a descriptive guide illustrating how to better prepare and safeguard property from fire risks. The manual outlines the steps property owners should take to reduce the wildfire threat in four zones in and around the property: the access zone that allows emergency vehicles to locate the property, defensible space zone surrounding the structure, the built zone, and the interior zone. The Village of Ruidoso shares these recommendations with all Ruidoso property owners, along with several other publications distributed by Firewise.<sup>12</sup>

#### County Plans

- **Lincoln County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2017.** The latest Hazard Mitigation Plan is in compliance with the Stafford Act and the Disaster Mitigation and described in Capacity and Conditions sections earlier in this chapter.
- **Lincoln County New Mexico Community Wildfire Protection Plan Update, 2014.**<sup>13</sup> The Lincoln County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) was last updated in 2014 with the support of the County, Village of Ruidoso, Smokey Bear Ranger District, Capitan District, Greater Ruidoso Area WUI Working Group, and Bureau of Indian Affairs. The Plan also serves

<sup>10</sup> [https://drought.unl.edu/archive/plans/GeneralHazard/state/NM\\_2018.pdf](https://drought.unl.edu/archive/plans/GeneralHazard/state/NM_2018.pdf), p 44.

<sup>11</sup> [https://drought.unl.edu/archive/plans/GeneralHazard/state/NM\\_2018.pdf](https://drought.unl.edu/archive/plans/GeneralHazard/state/NM_2018.pdf), p 437.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us/SFD/Publications/PubsMain.html>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us/SFD/FireMgt/documents/Rev2014LincolnCountyCWPPUpdateFinal.pdf>

as an update to the Greater Ruidoso Area CWPP. The plan documents completed fuel treatment areas, references the Village of Ruidoso's fire safety ordinances (including forest thinning and fuel management), lists its goals and objectives, and makes recommendations for management.

- **Lincoln County All Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2012.** This plan was the predecessor of and impetus of the 2017 Hazard Mitigation Plan and was the result of a multi-agency process in compliance with the Stafford Act and the Disaster Mitigation Act approved by FEMA in 2012. The 2017 plan serves as its update.

#### Village Plans and Policies

- **Village of Ruidoso Fire Ordinance (Ordinance 2009-01).** The Village of Ruidoso adopted its Fire Ordinance in 2009 to amend sections in Chapter 42, Fire Prevention and Protection of the municipal code. The ordinance addresses the penalties resulting from violations and the fees from such violations.<sup>14</sup> It also addresses the requirements for fire safety inspections of buildings whenever a change in occupancy occurs; business registration or license is received; or building permit for construction or renovation is received, and the associated fees.
- **Village of Ruidoso Fuels Management Standards (Section 42-80).** These standards, also referred to as Ordinance 42-80, specify exactly what all properties within the Village limits must follow to minimize fire risk.<sup>15</sup> The standards are categorized into zones according to their proximity to structures.
- **Village of Ruidoso Urban-Wildland Interface Code (Section 54-151).** The Village adopted its urban-wildland interface code (U/WIC) 2002 and was amended in 2004 and 2007. It addresses regulations to mitigate fire risks, including: 1-hour fire-resistive building materials; enclosed eaves, fascias, and soffits; forest debris removal; and references to the Fuels Management Standards (Section 42-80).
- **Community Forest Management Plan (2000).** The Village wrote and implemented a Community Forest Management Plan (CFMP) that then was used in developing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan in 2004. These plans resulted in ordinances which require property owners to reduce fire risks on their properties. The CFMP led to an increase in forest contractors and natural resource-related jobs.
- **Ready, Set, Go! Wildland Fire Action Guide and Other Publications.** The Village shares many guides to educate the public on fire mitigation online as well as at community events. The measures in these publications are part of the principles used in creating the 42-80 ordinance that property owners in Ruidoso are required to use for fuel mitigation within the Village. The Wildland Fire Action Guide was produced by the International Association of Fire Chiefs to help property owners prepare for wildland fire threats.<sup>16</sup> It provides guidance on creating defensible space around properties, creating a more fire-resistant "hardened" home, and includes a step-by-step checklist for homeowners to follow in case of a fire.
- **Village of Ruidoso Fire Restrictions.** The Village of Ruidoso's Fire Department announces what level of risk the Village is experiencing on its website and categorizes the fires restrictions into

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<sup>14</sup>

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57cf2dbf1b631b3eb2d911db/t/590b8c7459cc6849fc2f6169/1493929077354/vor+fire+ordinance.pdf>

<sup>15</sup>

[https://library.municode.com/nm/ruidoso/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances?nodetd=COOR\\_CH42FIPRPR\\_ARTIIISTFISAFIHA\\_S42-80FUMAST](https://library.municode.com/nm/ruidoso/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodetd=COOR_CH42FIPRPR_ARTIIISTFISAFIHA_S42-80FUMAST)

<sup>16</sup>

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57cf2dbf1b631b3eb2d911db/t/590c8fc06a4963faa86bfb88/1493995919710/Ruidoso+Wildland+Fire+Action+Guide.pdf>

levels I to III, with one being the least restrictive and III being the most restrictive.<sup>17</sup> Each level's restrictions are listed in detail.

- **CallMeRuidoso.com.** The Village of Ruidoso's website currently has an option for individuals to sign up for emergency notifications from Ruidoso Police and Fire via voice, text, and email messages.<sup>18</sup>
- **Other Fire/Emergency Information.** The Village of Ruidoso's website also provides links to New Mexico Fire Information, Emergency Preparedness, Wildland Fire Action guide, and New Mexico Prevention Resources, and Smokey Bear Wildfire Protection on its Fire Department webpage.<sup>19</sup> The "Emergency Preparedness" links to another Village webpage that repeats some of the links on the Fire Department page and provides more links to sites that range from advice on reducing wildfire risks to agency websites, including FEMA Preparedness, [Ready, Set, Go!](#) (a national program that serves as resource for residents to prepare for a wildland fire), [Lincoln County Emergency Alert System](#) (another way citizens can sign up to be notified of emergency situations), [US Forest Service](#), [New Mexico State Forestry](#), New Mexico Department of Homeland Security, [Firewise](#), and [Wildfire Safety](#).
- **Grindstone Dam Emergency Action Plan.**
- **Alto Dam Emergency Action Plan.**

### *Planned Improvements*

The 2016 Lincoln County Hazard Mitigation Plan lists the following projects:<sup>20</sup>

- Public awareness campaign to increase education using public service announcements to share information about all types of hazards.
- Working with electrical providers to assure rights-of-way of are regularly maintained.
- Improving floodplain management by updating allowable land uses in floodplains, updating zoning, enforcing regulations, and controlling alternation to the floodplain and waterways, including filling, grading, dredging and any development that has the possibility of increasing chances of flooding.
- Improving the response process for emergencies and coordinating with Otero County and Mescalero Tribe on shared bodies of water.
- Protecting the public from manmade hazardous material spills by conducting a hazardous materials flow study.
- Establishing an early warning system that is cost effective and coordinated with other jurisdictions.

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.ruidoso-nm.gov/fire-restrictions>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.ruidoso-nm.gov/ruidoso-fire-department/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.ruidoso-nm.gov/ruidoso-fire-department/>

<sup>20</sup>

[https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57cf2dbf1b631b3eb2d911db/t/5824c20e37c5811416702d18/1478803983968/Lincoln\\_County\\_HMP\\_Projects\\_List.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57cf2dbf1b631b3eb2d911db/t/5824c20e37c5811416702d18/1478803983968/Lincoln_County_HMP_Projects_List.pdf)

## Preliminary Recommendations

The following recommendations should be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan to maintain and enhance Ruidoso's hazard mitigation system:

- **Continue to Improve Emergency Preparedness.** The Comprehensive Plan should include policies to uphold the Community Wildfire Protection Plan and continue to prioritize interjurisdictional cooperation and collaboration between the Village, Lincoln County, US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Mescalero Tribe, Ruidoso Downs, Carrizozo, and other agencies with jurisdiction over land. The Village is working with the State to ensure funding to continue forest thinning and fire mitigation efforts.<sup>21</sup>
- **Continue to Educate Property Owners.** Prioritize education and enforcement so residents understand the importance of defensible space and learn how to adapt their buildings and properties so that residential landscapes in high hazard areas maintain adequate zones of defensible space in the event of wildfire.
- **Provide Clear Direction.** There are many resources available to help people respond to an emergency, whether it be a fire or a flood. The Village lists many of them, but it could be helpful to simplify the choices and the links to these resources and provide all residents, businesses, and visitors clear and specific directions to follow so everyone knows the rules. A comprehensive signage plan, educational outreach, and enforcement could be prioritized actions in the Comprehensive Plan.
- **Confirm Appropriate Allowable Uses in U/WIC and WUI.** The Comprehensive Plan should identify policies that address allowable uses in the Villages' U/WIC and the regional WUI. It should also identify additional fire protection regulations or enforcement to Village's existing Standards for Fire Safety and Fire Handling, if needed.

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<sup>21</sup> Capital Outlay Project No A18C2527 in Village of Ruidoso Mangers Report, 2018.





SITES  
SOUTHWEST



**Bohannon & Huston**