



A. DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Demographic Characteristics

Key demographic findings:

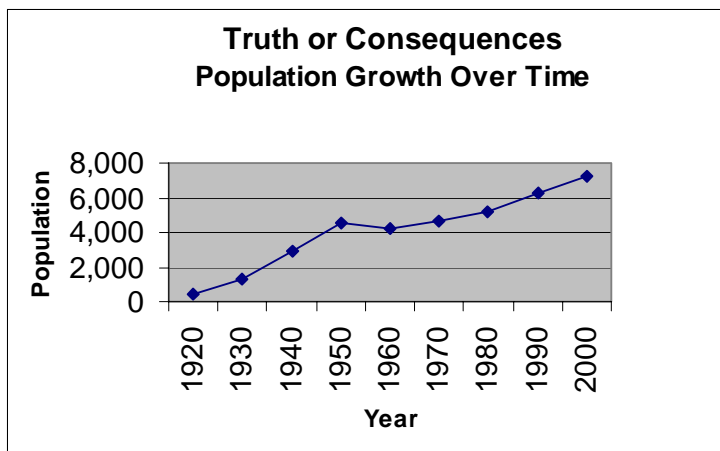
- Truth or Consequences is predominately a retirement community, however, there is a growing youth population;
- Truth or Consequences has a limited college-age and middle-age population;
- Truth or Consequences maintains a high level of tourism and provides many service related jobs; and
- Truth or Consequences continues to attract new residents.

Demographics are found throughout this document, especially as they relate to specific planning elements such as economic development or housing. The information found below provides general socioeconomic demographics. This information is useful for many of the planning recommendations found throughout the document.

Identifying population growth and other demographic data is an important tool for planning purposes. Demographics provide clues about future growth patterns, housing, community facilities and workforce needs which enable planners and forecasters to

make educated recommendations for future policies and actions. Using current and historic census data show trends and changes over time. For example, an increase in young couples to the area would create a need for parks, schools, and recreational facilities, while an increase in elderly would identify a need for medical facilities, and specialized housing.

Chart 7.1: Population Growth



Source: 2000 US Census

Since its incorporation as Hot Springs, New Mexico, Truth or Consequences has seen a steady increase

in population. Census year 1960 was the only exception, when the City lost 300 residents. Chart 1 above illustrates the growth for Truth or Consequences over time. Beyond 1960, the City has enjoyed a growth rate of greater than one percent annually. Today, Truth or Consequences boasts a population of 7,289, the highest to date. As Table 1 below shows, growth is occurring in all the communities in Sierra County. Therefore, this Plan recommends a regional approach to planning. Each community in



7. Background

Sierra County is dependent on the others for economic development, infrastructure, and addressing other regional issues such as housing.

Truth or Consequences, the county seat of Sierra County, is expected to grow steadily over the next 30 years, according to the University of New Mexico Bureau of Business and Economic Research. The Regional Populational Projections chart shows the projected population growth for Sierra County to the year 2030. Based on the age of the population in

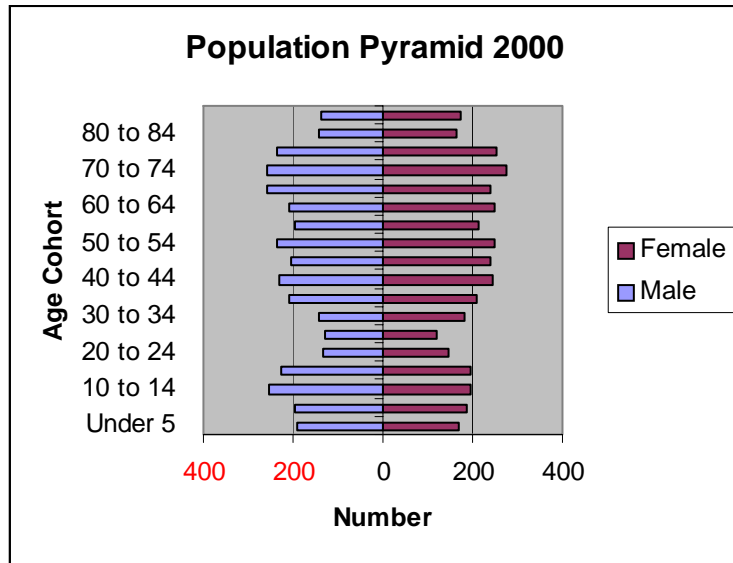
Truth or Consequences from 1990 to 2000, it is anticipated that there will continue to be a significant percentage of the population over the age of 60, along with an increasing number of teens from age 10 to 19. Therefore, it is all the more imperative to balance the needs of the young and the old when making community development decisions. The provision of parks, recreational amenities, employment, and education can be designed to suit the sometimes divergent needs of both youth and seniors.

At a County level, Sierra County is expected to experience population growth, however, the rate of growth is decreasing each year. From 2000 to 2010, population growth rates are anticipated to reach 25.1%, while from 2010 to 2020, the growth rate drops to 18.7%, and from 2020 to 2030 the rate drops another to 14.2%, according to the Bureau of Business and Economic research.

a. Age

Truth or Consequences has a relatively older population compared to other communities in New Mexico. According to the 2000 Census, the median age is 48 years, which is just under the 48.9 median age for Sierra County but well above the 34.6 years for the State of New Mexico. As mentioned earlier, the population by age cohort from 1990 to 2000 has shifted from an older population to include a younger population. The largest age cohorts are those 65 and older, which is represented in the chart above. Adults 65 and older amount to 30% of the total population, which is higher than that of the county at 27% and the State of New Mexico at 11.7%. The population pyramid for Truth or Consequences shows the age distribution by cohort. The pyramid shows a large number of seniors and younger kids but a shortage of people aged 20 - 34 years, the age group that makes up a significant portion of the labor force. Retention of this group is critical for the City in order to diversify its economy.

Chart 7.2: Population Pyramid



Source: 2000 US Census



b. Households

Truth or Consequences had 3,450 households according to the 2000 Census, representing one half of the total households in Sierra County. In Truth or Consequences, 45% of homes are classified as single-family detached, and 33% are classified as manufactured homes, which is lower than the County's figures, where 45% of the households are manufactured homes. The housing stock is fairly old, with only ten homes built since 1990. 26% were built prior to 1959. The median value of a home in Truth or Consequences is \$66,500. 22% percent of householders are over 65 years of age, while 20% have a child under the age of 18.

B. PUBLIC INPUT AND THE PLANNING PROCESS

Planners rely on the local knowledge and expertise of community members to assist in setting a direction for a Comprehensive Plan. The community's residents are the ones with experience and insight into the most pressing issues of the community. Coupled with the institutional knowledge of elected and appointed local officials, the planner can gain understanding into how to frame the Comprehensive Plan to meet the often divergent needs of the public and private sector. In Truth or Consequences, there are many short and long-term goals for the community, which arose from several public meetings and a Citizen's Steering Committee driving the process.

1. Regional Stakeholder Meeting

The planning process began with a regional stakeholder meeting. The purpose of the regional stakeholders meeting was to gather insight and perspective on issues affecting the neighboring communities of Williamsburg and Truth or Consequences. The meeting was structured as a facilitated discussion, where critical issues were identified. Stakeholders represented a variety of different backgrounds from economic development to housing to social service interests. Comments were arranged by planning element with the following comments being considered the most essential:

- Water and sewer needs to be coordinated, especially when considering future annexation and growth (infrastructure);
- Job growth needs to occur and be facilitated by job/training and vocational training (economic development);
- Community character promotion and identity is a priority (community character);
- Regional transit system would benefit seniors and youth (Community facilities);



- ADA accessibility is a major issue throughout the region and should be part of any future infrastructure projects (Transportation);
- Housing is available in Truth or Consequences; and
- Truth or Consequences zoning map needs to be revised to ensure newly annexed land is zoned.

2. Citizen Steering Committee (CSC)

The CSC was comprised of stakeholders from a variety of social service agencies, City staff, and local business owners. The CSC participated in the regional stakeholders meeting, which included City and County staff, ranchers and farmers, and representatives from City, County and State social service organizations. With help from the local project manager, the CSC met to craft goals and objectives according to each element of the Comprehensive Plan.

3. Public Meetings

Two public meetings occurred, which provided opportunities for residents to voice their opinions about the future direction of the City and how the Comprehensive Plan can provide guidance. The first public meeting was geared towards issue identification. Participants were asked to write their three main aspirations for the community on an index card and place each card on a board according to a Comprehensive Plan element. The most frequent comment from residents related to their desire to have measures in the Comprehensive Plan that would work to build community pride. Through streetscape improvements, historic district nomination, manufactured home design standards and increased promotion of the natural hot springs community pride can increase. Complete results of the public meetings are included in the Appendix.

C. HISTORY

Truth or Consequences is the county seat of Sierra County. The built core of the community is bounded by Interstate 25 to the west, the Rio Grande to the east, Elephant Butte to the north and Williamsburg to the south. Truth or Consequences began as Hot Springs, New Mexico and was incorporated in 1914. In 1951, the Town opted to enter a contest with popular game show host Ralph Edwards. Hot Springs won, and as a result, the game show was broadcast from the town. A special election was then held and the residents voted to change the name to Truth or Consequences. Still today, people request that the name return to Hot Springs since there are natural thermal springs in the community, in an effort to increase tourism. However, there are



Community mapping workshop



other residents who think the name Truth or Consequences must remain because of its uniqueness. There are communities named Hot Springs in six other states but only one Truth or Consequences.

According to Robert Julyan, Place Names of New Mexico, the Spanish name *Alamocitos*, meaning little cottonwoods, has been attached to the locality where Truth or Consequences is located. Historical records indicate that Mimbres and Apache Indians have used the thermal springs. Apache Chief Geronimo wrote in his book, Geronimo's Story of His Life, the use of thermal waters were the most peaceful time in his life. Today, Truth or Consequences is poised to utilize its thermal waters and natural surroundings to continue to draw tourists to the community.

Only two hours south of Albuquerque, one hour north of Las Cruces, and five miles from Elephant Butte Lake, Truth or Consequences has been a stopping off point for visitors traveling north and south along Interstate 25. The oldest portion of the community is the Downtown Hot Springs area, where businesses have thrived on the thermal waters that are located within many of the hotels. At the time the Elephant Butte dam was constructed, Truth or Consequences saw many visitors and a rise in development.

Elephant Butte reservoir, constructed between 1911 and 1916 brought construction workers, families and general recognition to the area. The dam, which results in creating the largest body of water in New Mexico, offers unique recreational opportunities including boating, water skiing, and other water-related activities. Indeed, the combination of water-related recreation and the high desert and mountainous areas surrounding Truth or Consequences provide a unique recreational amenity.

D. EXISTING DOCUMENTS

As the county seat and largest community in Sierra County, Truth or Consequences utilizes several natural resources and community-oriented planning documents.

1. Comprehensive Planning and Zoning Code

The Zoning Code was passed as Ordinance 492, adopted June 25, 2001 and was the result of a grant from the South Central Council of Governments. The following zoning districts exist in Truth or Consequences:

1. R-1 Single Family, Low Density Residential
2. R-2 Medium Density Residential District
3. R-3 High Density Residential District
4. R-4 Rural Residential
5. RR-1 Riverside Residential District
6. C-1 General Commercial
7. M-1 Light Manufacturing
8. T-1 Transition Zone



One interesting observation is that the zone code does not include a district for heavy industrial uses. Instead, heavy industrial uses are treated as conditional uses and must be approved by the Planning and Zoning Board. Other general provisions in the Zoning Ordinance regulate:

- Home Occupations
- Design Standards for Manufactured Homes
- Design Standards for Recreational Vehicle Parks
- Landscaping
- Walls/Fences
- Signs
- Site Plan Submittal Requirements for C-1 and M-1 over one acre in size

2. Subdivision Code

The Subdivision Code was adopted in November of 2002. The Subdivision Code requires that any improvements to, or the creation of, a subdivision requires Final Plat and a formal review of any proposal. The City requires Master Plans for the following types of development:

1. Phased
2. Multiple Land Uses
3. Annexation
4. A subdivision with more than 100 lots

Also included in the Subdivision code are submittal requirements for lot and block standards, parks, sewers, water, streets, and other necessary infrastructure. Financial guarantees are required.

3. Forty Year Water Development Plan

The Water Development Plan details the projected need for water rights into the year 2042. By the year 2042, the population for Truth or Consequences is expected to reach 12,800 residents, and the total amount of the City's approved water rights is only 6% more than the projected need. New or additional water rights must be acquired through transfer of valid water rights. If the City plans to develop the area around the airport, future water rights will need to be secured. Using rights dedicated for irrigated agriculture crops and for domestic sanitary purposes is one method to meet any future development at the airport.

4. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) -- South Central Council of Governments

The CEDs for 2001-2002 identified six goals for the Sierra, Socorro and Doña Ana County districts to bolster economic development. The goals include:

1. Grow public support for economic development projects.
2. Increase the value of goods and services produced in the region



which are purchased with dollars from outside the region.

3. Increase export trade of region's products.
4. Increase the level of private investment in productive enterprise within the region.
5. Increase the purchase of goods and services by tourists.
6. Decrease the flow of dollars which purchase goods and services outside the region.

5. Sierra Community Initiative

In the summer of 2003, the New Mexico Economic Development Department (NMEDD) announced a program called the Certified Communities Initiative (CCI). The purpose of the program is to facilitate the recruitment, retention, expansion, and/or creation of economic-based jobs, which are defined as those jobs that export goods and services outside the State of New Mexico. Through this initiative, it is hoped that there can be an increase in public/private partnerships that will establish a stable, diversified economy. The CCI enables the NMEDD to partner better with communities in promoting job creation through the benefits of becoming a CCI community. An overview of the document is located in the Economic Development section of this plan.

E. CONCLUSIONS

This Comprehensive Plan is the compilation of public input, socioeconomic demographics, growth forecasts, and analysis of existing conditions and systems. The Plan presents a set of goals, objectives, policies and implementation actions designed specifically for the community of Truth or Consequences, and intended to help the City guide development, growth, and community wishes for the next five to twenty years. The Plan should be updated on a regular basis, and/or as significant changes occur within the community. Once adopted, the Plan should be viewed as City policy, and the intent of the Plan should be followed when making future community decisions. As Sierra County and the City of Truth or Consequences grow, this Plan can help the area bolster its economy, manage its land uses, and develop regional cooperation far into the future.