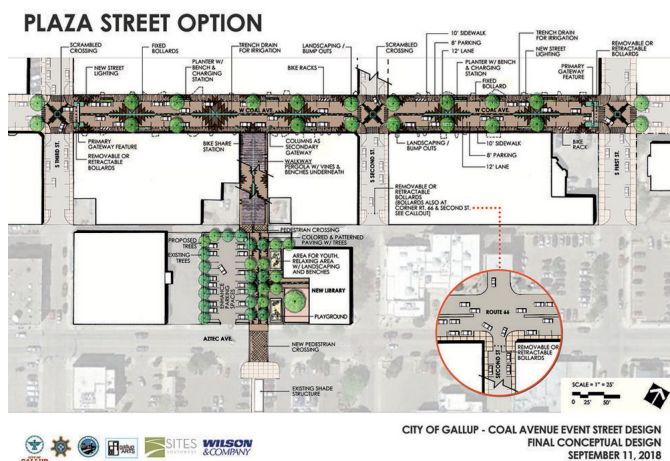


Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent
Thursday, 18 July 2019 23:40



Plan targets key areas for growth

After over a year of development, the final draft of the McKinley County Vision 2020 Comprehensive Plan was presented to the Board of Commissioners during their recent regular meeting by the Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments, July 9.

NNMCG works with the region's local governments to support community development,

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promote strategic innovation and propel regional competitiveness, according to their website.

Last year, NNMCG also participated in McKinley County Day, hosted the interim Legislative Finance Committee in Gallup in May, and increased their funding for the Gallup Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial up to \$77,000.

Angelina Grey, associate planner for NNMCG, said the comprehensive plan is a roadmap for the county, put together through extensive planning by the council.

"The goal of the plan is to identify strategies and opportunities to establish short-term and long-term goals for where the county should go," she said.

This means figuring out how to best use county assets and resources for investments in projects.

The plan also calls for creating economic opportunities for local citizens through these projects.

One example of NNMCG working with and for local initiatives is the current state of Coal Avenue Commons. Last year, the City of Gallup along with gallupARTS and NNMCG received a \$150,000 *Our Town* grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. The project helped Coal Avenue be redesigned as an event street.

NNMCG also contributed to the construction of Gallup Skate Park, assisting legislators and the city by raising over \$350,000 in legislative and other grants on behalf of the City of Gallup for construction.

Grey said a series of public input workshops was held from June to November last year where NNMCG sought input on how to structure the plan and what areas to target.

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Out of these workshops, Grey determined that some of the top priorities for the plan should include infrastructure, unemployment, public safety, drug use, and housing.

Grey made a presentation to the county detailing some of the goals outlined within the *Vision 2020* plan, as well as policies that would accompany them.

For one thing, she said:

The county's goal with infrastructure would focus on countering local socioeconomic challenges, and help identify assets and resources to complete projects including roads, bridges, and utilities.

This would complement one of NNMCG's organizational highlights from 2018, where staff from their Northwest Regional Transportation Planning Organization helped develop and support applications for two critical McKinley County road projects that were funded.

Those projects were Deerspings Road in Mexican Springs Chapter for about \$1.14 million, and County Road 19 near Casamero Lake and Littlewater Chapters for about \$1.21 million.

The county's goal for public safety would be to enhance and expand services, facilities, and interjurisdictional cooperation, meaning the county could identify strategies, opportunities, and stakeholders to assist with strengthening partnerships and relationships with local and regional organizations and programs.

Other facets of public safety include developing a county disaster response and recovery plan, establishing local public safety facilities and programs, and supporting FirstNet, the First Responder Network Authority.

Georgene Dimas, communications director for McKinley County's Metropolitan Dispatch

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Authority, said it would take upwards of 10 years to fully implement FirstNet as instructed in the plan.

Jason Carlisle, county fire chief, said the county currently does not support FirstNet, but that procedures are in place to allow them to communicate and relay information in the event of a disaster.

"If traditional cell towers go down or overload, first responders would get priority on the network," he said.

As for land use, Grey said, the county's goal should involve the promotion of sustainable use of land within the county, which will result in a balance between preservation, open space, growth and development.

Policies associated with this goal would help preserve the sensitive lands and scenic qualities of McKinley County, locate the most development in identified growth areas, and promote a balanced, inclusive, mixed-industry energy policy and development in the county.

These policies would also allow the county to support agricultural land use within the county, promote intergovernmental cooperation in land use planning, and promote guidance for new land development.

Grey said the county should exercise "the 4Cs" to meet local needs using local resources. The 4Cs stand for Communicate, Cooperate, Collaborate, and Coordinate.

By taking these actions, Grey said the county can encourage both Navajo chapters and Pueblo of Zuni to develop their own regional policies and plans, which would allow multiple parties to share their investments and distribute resources equitably.

The Board of Commissioners had no questions about the plan, but Commissioner Billy Moore

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did voice his appreciation for the amount of work that went into developing it.

The board approved the comprehensive plan with a 3-0 vote.

By Cody Begaye
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