

## Existing Conditions

### LAND USE

#### AGRICULTURAL USES

The character of the East Mountain Area has been dramatically altered from what it was 30 years ago. Prior to the 1970s, the East Mountain Area was primarily agricultural. Currently, less than 1% of land uses in the East Mountains can be classified as agricultural (refer to Table #4, Land Use). What agricultural pursuits do exist are small-scale ranching and family farm operations located primarily in the eastern and southern portions of the East Mountain Area. Agricultural uses in the East Mountain Area, while not as prevalent as they were in the past, continue to have an important impact upon the existing character of the Area.

Agriculture played an important part in the area's physical, social, and environmental character, yet development and economic pressures have eliminated most of the historically agricultural areas. The few East Mountain Area agricultural fields and open pastures serve as a reminder of agriculture's preeminence among the original settlers of the East Mountain Area. As land development and growth pressures continue, the financial returns from agricultural production are outweighed by the land's potential value for residential or commercial development.

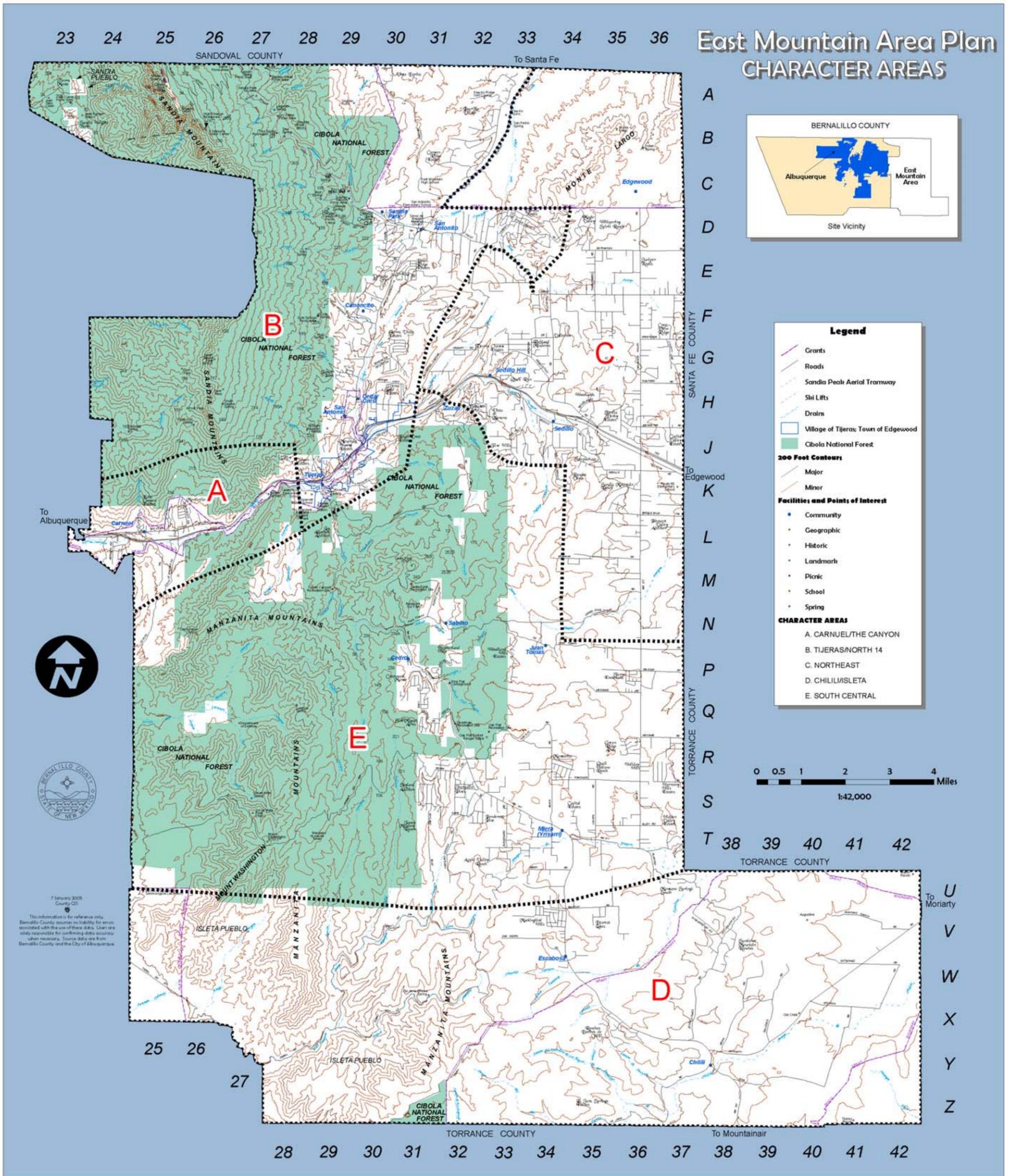
Specific areas that have continued agricultural practices include the La Merced del Pueblo de Chilili Land Grant, the Isleta Indian Reservation, and the San Pedro Land Grant. In addition to these areas, the entire area south of I-40 derives much of its scenic and rural character from scattered agricultural uses, particularly along Highways 217 and 222 (Martinez Road). These agricultural practices include the following:

- pinto bean farms and mixed agricultural uses;
- cattle, horse and burro pasture;
- dairy farming (cattle and goat);
- other livestock farming;
- other dry land farming.

## SCENIC AREAS

A significant component of the East Mountain Area's scenic quality is the visual character of existing scenic roadways. On June 15<sup>th</sup> 2000, the Federal Highway Administration designated two roads in the East Mountain Area as National Scenic Byways: the Turquoise Trail and Route 66. The Turquoise Trail begins in Tijeras heading north on Highway 14 to the top of Sandia crest (Highway 536) and continues north on Highway 14 to Santa Fe. Route 66 travels the entire length of New Mexico and in the East Mountains begins in Carnuel and runs east to Moriarity. The Salt Mission Trail is a designated scenic byway from State Highway 337 to Moriarity. Other roadways important to the visual character of the East Mountain Area that could be considered for scenic designation, include the following:

- Frost Road from Sandia Knolls to the east County line;
- Hwy. 217 (including Mt. Valley Road and that portion formerly called Hwy. 222);
- Zamora Road;
- County Line Road;
- Sedillo Road;
- The route comprising Gutierrez Canyon Road and Rider Road;
- Martinez Road to the east County line and beyond, with the cooperation of Torrance County ;
- The road network from Oak Flat Picnic Ground to Hwy. 217 (formerly Hwy. 222) which includes Forest Road 413 and Anaya Road;
- The road connecting Hwy. 337 (S. 14) to Hwy. 217 through Juan Tomas, including Sabino Canyon Road and Juan Tomas Road.



## CHARACTER AREAS

The designated character areas were based on citizen input, from the 1991 Plan for the East Mountains. The area may be divided into five distinct character regions as follows (see Map # 2 Character Area Map):

### A. Carnuel and the “Canyon”

The part of Bernalillo County east of Albuquerque city limits and west of Tijeras village limits. This is the gateway through which all traffic must pass (via Historic Route 66 or I-40) between Albuquerque and the East Mountain Area. The area contains the Cañon de Carnué Spanish land grant, which is a self-managing, cooperative-style community. This area has high scenic value to the entire area from the undeveloped “Canyon” corridor and the Tres Pistolas area between the existing development and the Forest Service lands to the north.

### B. Tijeras/North 14

The part of Bernalillo County east of the Cibola National Forest boundary and east of the west limits of Tijeras Village and bounded on the south by the National Forest boundary and southern Tijeras Village limits and on the east by the San Pedro grant (east of N. Hwy. 14), the eastern edge of Sandia Knolls, and Rider and Gutierrez Canyon Roads. This is the most densely populated part of the East Mountain Area and serves as the main node of commercial activity in the East Mountain Area. The City of Albuquerque owns a 300-acre parcel of Open Space in Gutierrez Canyon, which provides a natural buffer between developed areas.

### C. Northeast Area

The part of Bernalillo County east of the intense development (above) which extends south to the City of Albuquerque land lying north of Juan Tomas Road and west of the National Forest boundary (including consideration of the Edgewood and Tarrant and Santa Fe Counties to the East). This area is typified by mixed open space and scattered residential development, with commercial enterprises concentrated along I-40. There are some small-scale agricultural enterprises and home-based businesses, particularly along Frost Road. The area includes the San Pedro Grant that is located in the far northeast corner of the County, and is presently open grazing land.

### D. Chilili/Isleta

The part of Bernalillo County south of the “Second standard parallel north” (line just north of Isleta Reservation boundary) and including all of the La Merced del Pueblo de Chilili Land Grant. This area is dominated by visual open space, agriculture, scattered residential development, and small commercial activities in the town of Chilili. The cultural aspects of this area are unique to the East Mountain Area with lifestyles dominated and development determined by the long-standing cultural tradition of an agriculture-based economy and traditional Hispanic and Indian village lifestyles.

## E. South Central

The rest of the East Mountain Area including the part of Bernalillo County lying south of character area “B” and “C” above and north of “D” and including that portion of National Forest lying east of S. 14 (Hwy 337) and consideration of the proximity of character area “B” and Edgewood as “major” commercial centers. This area is made up of large lots, green-belts, open space, pastoral and scenic views, traditional dry land farming and small-scale livestock production. Existing commercial is primarily limited to agricultural and home-based operations, except in the Ponderosa (Kuhn Road) area.

## PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

Unlike in other parts of Bernalillo County, property ownership in the East Mountains is diverse, with a major distinction between public and private ownership. According to 2004 data from the Bernalillo County Assessor’s records, about 48.8 (approximately 103,500 acres) percent of the more than 210,000 total acres in the East Mountain Area of Bernalillo County is privately owned. Of the East Mountain Area, approximately 40 percent of the land is under public ownership. These lands are within the jurisdiction of various Federal Government agencies including the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Army, and the Army Corps of Engineers. The City of Albuquerque and Bernalillo County each own relatively small quantities of land in the area. Finally, about 10 percent falls under Tribal jurisdiction, namely the Isleta Pueblo (about 22,900 acres), with a small quantity (about 45 acres) belonging to the Sandia Pueblo. About half of the private land falls within land grant areas. The distribution of property by Owner Type within the Plan Area is depicted on the Map for Property Ownership (Map #3). The numerical distribution is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
2004 East Mountain Area Characteristics  
Property Ownership

Owner Type	# Parcels	Acres	% Acres
City	55	2,713.03	1.28%
County	33	994.05	0.47%
Federal	213	76,234.74	35.91%
Private	15,625	103,561.27	48.78%
State	111	4,278.57	2.02%
Tribal	64	22,904.22	10.79%
Unknown	96	1,627.34	0.77%
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,197</b>	<b>212,313.22</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: 2004 Bernalillo County Assessor's Data

## Private Land

Nearly half the land in the East Mountain Area is under private ownership and is under the jurisdiction of Bernalillo County. The East Mountain Area has primarily developed as large-lot, low-density residential subdivisions, although there are some subdivisions of medium-density, small lots (i.e. in 1990 Sandia Knolls alone contained 10 percent of the East Mountain Area population). Most of the vacant land is currently zoned for agricultural and large-lot residential development (A-2).

Zoning has existed in Bernalillo County since the 1973. The current zoning categories include the following:

- A-1 - Rural Agricultural Zone (minimum lot size 1 acre)
- A-2 - Rural Agricultural Zone (minimum lot size 2 acres)
- R-1 - Single-Family Residential (minimum lot size .75 acre)
- R-2 - Apartment Zone (multiple dwellings)
- M-H - Mobile Home and Single-Family Residential Zone (minimum lot size .75 acre)
- O-1 - Office and Institutional Zone
- C-N - Neighborhood Commercial Zone
- C-1 - Neighborhood Commercial Zone
- C-2 - Community Commercial Zone
- M-1 - Light Industrial Zone
- M-2 - Heavy Manufacturing Zone

All of these zones are found in the East Mountains in addition to properties without zoning, such as Indian Land and Federal Government Land. However, according to 2005 County Zoning data, about 94% of the zoned land has A-2 zoning, about 2% has M-H or R-1 zoning; about 3% has A-1 zoning, less than 1% has commercial zoning (C-N, C-1, C-2), and less than 1% has industrial zoning (M-1, M-2). Many of these parcels have yet to develop, but this zoning prescribes future land use and lot size requirements. If the existing zoning continues, most privately owned properties (with A-2 zoning) may develop with residential uses, and properties may be subdivided, provided they meet the minimum lot size requirement of 2 acres for each lot.

Bernalillo County building records show that by October 2004 there were 152 Special Use Permits on 4300 acres. A Special Use Permit is a permit that allows a specified use with a time limitation that is categorized under a different zoning than that of the existing site. An application for a Special Use Permit for a Specific Use must include substantial neighborhood support and a site plan. The application must be approved by Board of County Commissioners and conditions are typically placed on the granting of the permit. The underlying zoning remains the same and a Special Use Permit remains tied to the land even if it is sold. A Special Use Permit may be revoked if the owner is in violation or verifies that the permit is no longer being used. In the East Mountain Area, Special Use Permits have been granted for a range of activities, from contractor's yards to the storage of fuel.

### Subdivisions

According to 2005 parcel data for the East Mountains, there are approximately 16,200 parcels within the Plan Area (Property Ownership, Table #1). A majority of this land (about 131,000 acres in 2880 individual tracts), about half of which is in public ownership, is unplatted. In addition there are about 1200 subdivisions with 5 or less tracts in them, covering about 24,000 acres. Finally, there are 352 subdivisions of 6 or more lots (now known as Major Subdivisions). These cover about 47,000 acres.

### Land Grants

New Mexico was a part of Spain until independence was granted in 1810 and the Mexican Republic gained ownership of the territory. Both of these governments made claim to land that was sparsely populated by Native Americans and granted it to their citizenry. These land grants were issued as part of the process of settling the vast New Mexican frontier. When the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed in February 1848 and later when New Mexico became a state in 1912, the property rights of Mexican citizens were guaranteed to be upheld by the newly governing United States Government. As such, Land Grants were preserved and continue to have autonomy within the land grant. Therefore, although included in the geographical boundaries of the East Mountain Area, land grants are exempt from the policies in this plan. Most land grants continue to be held in common by heirs of the original settlers and each is governed and overseen by a board of directors. It should be noted that located within these Grant areas are individually owned lands and private subdivisions.

The residential area of the East Mountains includes three separate Spanish and Mexican land grants, which total more than 55,000 acres. The Canyon de Carnué Grant is located in and around the Tijeras Canyon and covers more than 2020 acres of private and communally owned land. The San Pedro Grant, part of which is now under private ownership, is located in the northeast corner Bernalillo County and encompasses more than 20,000 acres. The La Merced del Pueblo de Chilili (Chilili Land Grant) includes more than 30,000 acres within the southeast portion of the County. Small portions of other land grants are also found in the East Mountains, namely the Elena Gallegos Land Grant (northwest), the Isleta Pueblo Land Grant (southeast), and the Los de Padilla Land Grant (south).

In July 2004, the State of New Mexico granted all land grants the authority to establish zoning and land use regulations on communally held land<sup>2</sup>. The Board of Directors of the Cañon de Carnue Land Grant has drafted and adopted the Cañon de Carnue Land Grant Comprehensive Land and will implement the Comprehensive Plan through a land use planner. The Comprehensive Plan is intended to guide the land use process on common land, including zoning, capital improvements, residential development and economic development. The New Mexico Local Government Division of the Department of Finance and Administration is expected to approve the Comprehensive Plan in 2005. The

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<sup>2</sup>State of New Mexico Senate Bill 142, Effective July 1, 2004

Department of Finance and Administration is authorized to be involved in settlement of conflicts between land grants and neighboring municipalities and counties.

### Villages

The Village of Tijeras is the only incorporated municipality within the area. The village covers about 650 acres and is governed by a mayor and town council. The I-40 corridor and Route 66 split the Village into two sub-areas, with most development on the south side of the highways. The area around Historic Route 66 constitutes the “Main Street” for many residents. Tijeras has its own system of zoning, which was updated in 2002. It includes the zoning for the following uses: Residential, Commercial, Industrial, Governmental and Institutional and Special Use. Other rural communities exist, which have not incorporated as municipalities, include Chilili, Juan Tomas, Escobosa, Ponderosa Pine, Cedro, San Antonio, Sandia Park, Cedar Crest, Sedillo, and Carnuel. These communities still operate under County zoning regulations.

### Town of Edgewood

In 2001, the Town of Edgewood (Santa Fe County) approved the annexation of 19,000 acres from surrounding Bernalillo, Santa Fe and Sandoval Counties. The annexed land included a portion of the master planned community Campbell Ranch and private lands between Campbell Ranch and Edgewood Town limits. According to the Campbell Corporation website, Campbell Ranch will include over 4,000 acres of open space, 4,023 homes, two golf courses, a resort hotel, four village community centers, two town centers and a research and development technology park.

## Non-Residential Areas

### National Forest

The Cibola National Forest covers most of the western and southern portion of the East Mountain Area. The National Forest Service owns more than 33 percent (approximately 70,000 acres) of the land in the East Mountain Area and manages the Sandia, Manzano, and the northern portion of the Manzanita Mountains. These areas provide a wide range of active and passive recreational uses. The Cibola National Forest adopted a Forest Management Plan in 1985 that identified goals and priorities for the Forest Service lands for the next 20 years. The Plan was amended in 1996, and work on the revision is scheduled to begin in 2007.

### DOE Withdrawal

Starting in 1943, land from the southern portion of the Manzanita Mountains was withdrawn from Forest Service use for Department of Energy and U.S. Air Force uses. The withdrawal area is currently 18,675 acres, and is used for a variety of testing, storage, and safety buffer activities. Due to the nature of its use, recreational activities are prohibited. However, unauthorized recreation and other trespassing uses occur regularly on the Military Withdrawal. In 1996 the forest service in cooperation with the Department of Energy, Kirtland Area Office, Department of Defense, and the Kirtland Air Force Base published a joint Environmental Analysis: *Ecosystem*

*Management Plan for Lands Adjacent to the Military Withdrawal.* The Plan proposed 5 management alternatives. The alternative selected returned 1096 acres of the Military Withdrawal area back to public use. To discourage trespassing on to the Withdrawal area, in 2003 Kirtland Air Force Base initiated a proposal to construct a fence on Withdrawal lands in the vicinity of Otero Canyon. The plan has raised controversy because the proposed fence would block access to the Otero Canyon Trail that is widely used by residents and visitors. Since the time of the fence proposal, concerned citizens have been attending meetings and petitioning legislative and local officials to oppose the construction of the fence.

#### Reservation Land

A substantial amount of Indian Land is found within the East Mountains. The easterly portion of the Isleta Pueblo encompasses more than 20,000 acres within the southwest portion of the East Mountain Area, and there are about 50 acres owned by the Sandia Pueblo within the northeast portion of the Sandia Mountains.

#### New Mexico State Land Office

New Mexico State Land Office (SLO) owns and manages approximately 3500 acres in the East Mountain Area. With the exception of 640 acres that has a proposed residential subdivision, these lands are currently leased for grazing.

#### City of Albuquerque Open Space

The City of Albuquerque has jurisdiction over more than 2000 acres in the East Mountain Area. Most of these open space and are managed to conserve natural and archaeological resources and provide opportunities for outdoor education and low impact recreation.

##### *City Open Space Properties:*

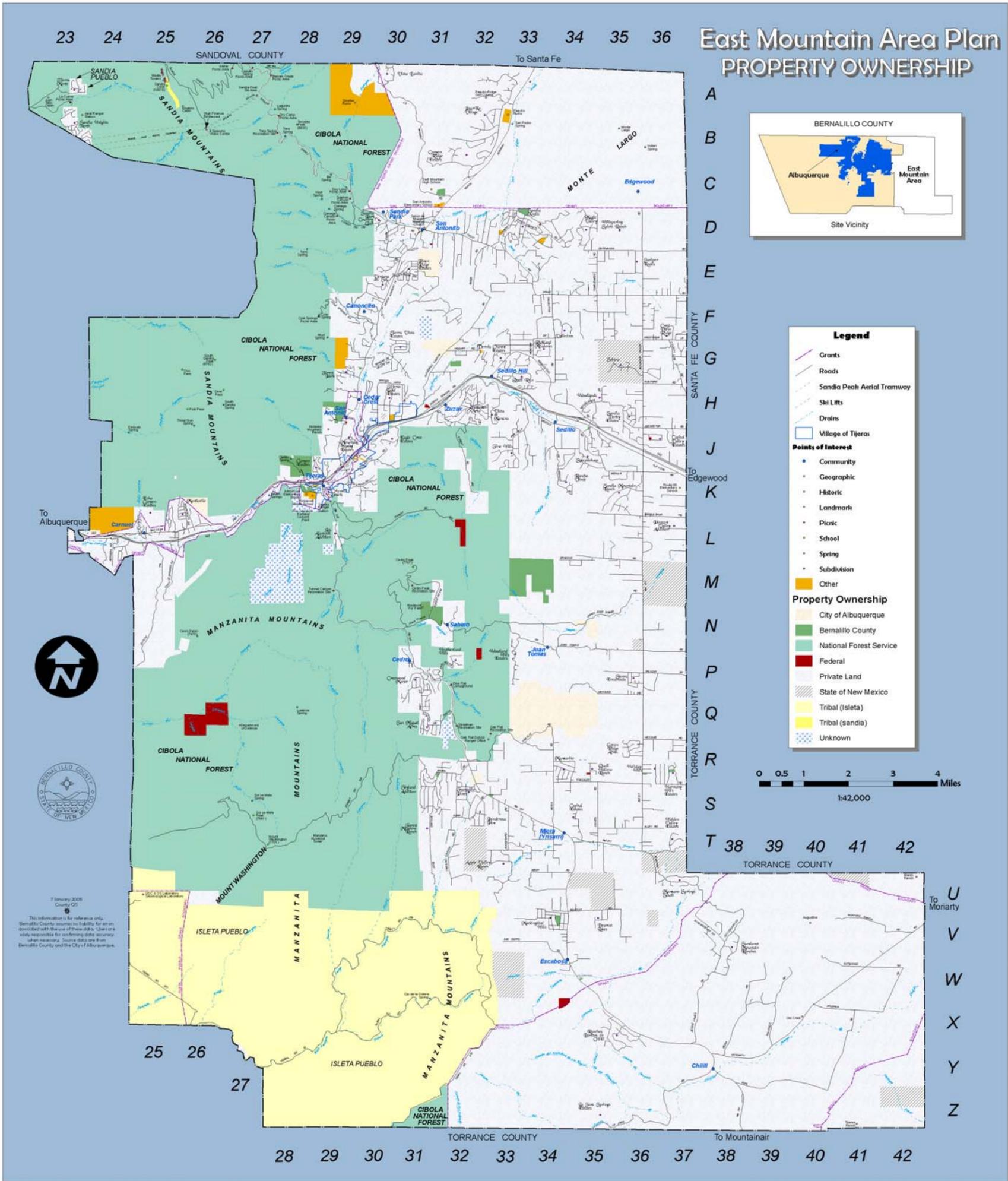
- San Antonito is a 168.5 acre parcel purchased in 1968.
- Gutierrez Canyon is a 300 acre parcel purchased in 1963.
- Juan Tomas is a 1,455 acre parcel purchased in 1983.
- Tres Pistolas is a 430 acre parcel purchased jointly by the City of Albuquerque, Bernalillo County and U.S. Forest Service in December 1997.

#### Bernalillo County Open Space

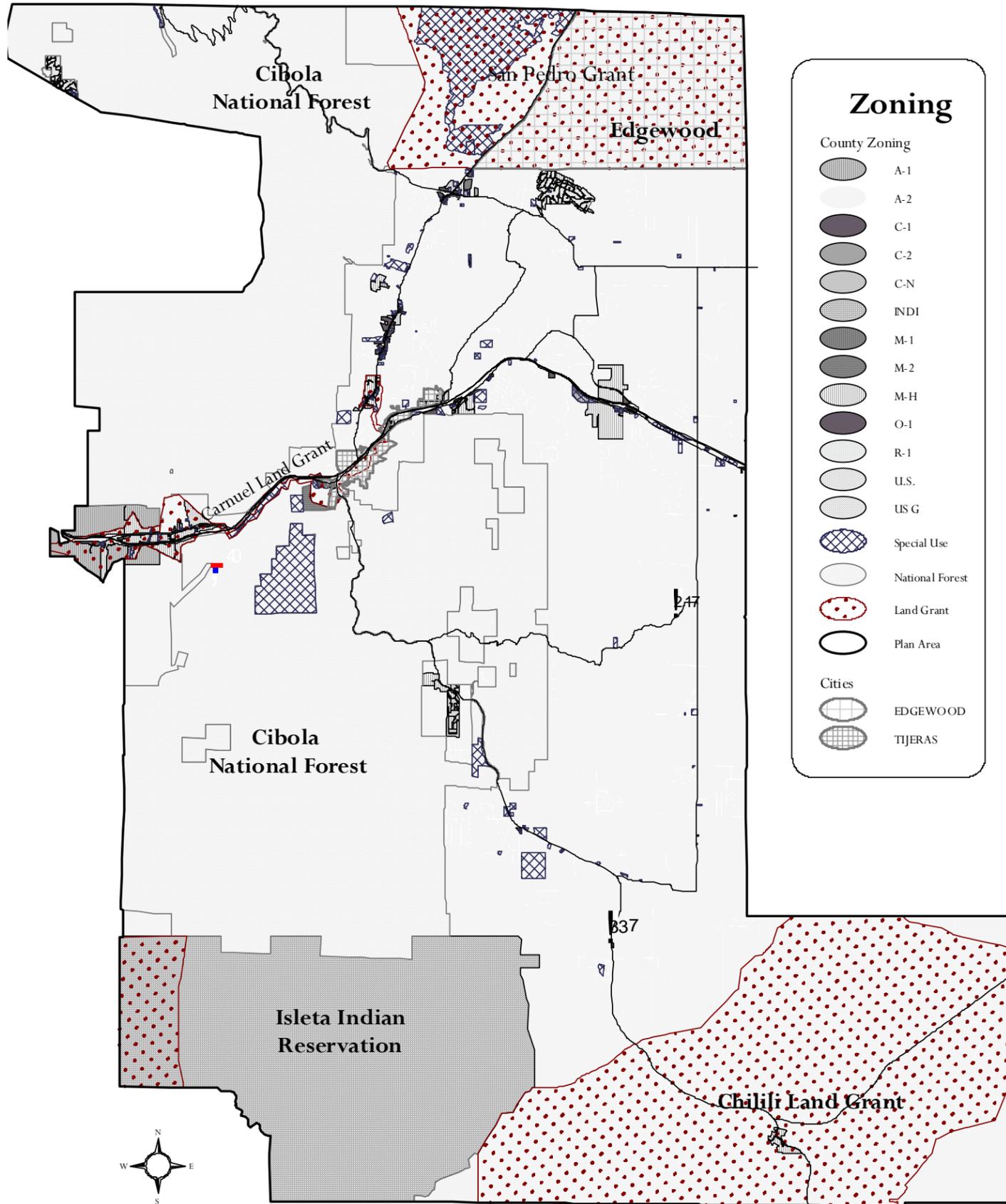
Both in 1998 and 2000, the residents of Bernalillo County approved a mill levy property tax for the purchase of open space. As a result, the Bernalillo County Open Space has acquired just under 1,000 acres in the East Mountain Area. The acquisition of these properties protects them from development and provides the community with many options for passive and resource based enjoyment of the outdoors. The county Open Space Properties in the East Mountain Area are currently closed until the government and citizen committees finish the planning process.

*County Open Space Properties:*

- Carlito Springs is a 177-acre parcel of forested land purchased in December 2000.
- Sedillo Ridge (Loma Ponderosa) is a 540-acre parcel purchased in January 2000.
- Ojito de San Antonio (Los Manzanares) is a 88-acre parcel purchased in July 1999.
- Sabino Canyon is a 117-acre parcel purchased in October 1999.



# East Mountain Area Plan



## CARRYING CAPACITY/LAND USE ANALYSIS

## Land Use

With the help of Geographic Information Systems, improved analysis of parcel data from the County Assessor's Office that covers land use is possible. For tax purposes, land throughout the County is classified into four possible property classes: Commercial, Residential, Vacant, and Unknown. For the East Mountain Area of the County this data can be summarized by the number of parcels, and the total number of acres. For the year 2003, the data is as follows:

**Table 2**  
2003 East Mountain Area Characteristics  
Property Class (Land Use)

Class (Use)	# Parcels	Acres	% Acres
Commercial	197	9,757.76	4.76%
Residential	6,770	23,679.86	11.34%
Vacant	9,095	174,639.88	83.66%
Unknown	131	672.57	0.32%
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,193</b>	<b>208,750.07</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

*Data includes private and Indian land.*

*Source: 2003 Bernalillo County Assessor's Data*

Thus, according to this data, which includes private, public, as well as Indian land, more than 83.8% of the land in the East Mountain Area is vacant (undeveloped), with about 11.3% developed with residential uses. As noted previously in Table 1, about 103,560 acres (15,625 parcels) are under private ownership, so that about 49% of the land is privately owned and the remaining East Mountain Area is "Public" (Federal, State, County, City of Albuquerque, and Indian).

## Carrying Capacity

The East Mountain Area of Bernalillo County covers approximately 321 square miles with the population showing dispersal throughout the region. The population density in 2000 was .095 people/acre, an increase from approximately .06 people/acre in 1990, which is low considering the dispersal of the population and the acreage of the East Mountain Area. The East Mountain Area is still sparsely populated overall, with 3.5% of the County's population on 23% of the County's total land. Even if the approximately 50% of the area that is publicly owned is removed from the potential population area, the density is still only .19 people/acre.

Of the private land (103,561 acres), about 33,000 acres are developed with residential and commercial uses and about 78,400 acres (8669 parcels) are vacant and presumably can be developed. Therefore it may be helpful to examine the vacant, private land more closely and attempt to determine about how much growth this land might accommodate. The breakdown of this land according to parcel size, again using Assessor's data, is shown below.

**Table 3**  
2003 East Mountain Area Characteristics  
Vacant Private Land

Size (acres)	# Parcels	% Parcels	# Acres	% Acres
0 - .7499	1468	16.93%	700.17	0.89%
0.75 - 1.99	2483	28.64%	3,132.52	3.99%
2.00 - 3.99	2,096	24.18%	5,405.58	6.89%
4.00 - 9.99	1,570	18.11%	9,414.14	12.01%
10.0 - 39.99	740	8.54%	14,553.35	18.56%
40.0 - 1307	312	3.60%	45,208.40	57.65%
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,669</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>78,414.16</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

*Source: 2003 Bernalillo County Assessor's Data*

Table 3 provides some interesting results about vacant, private land (43%) in the East Mountains. It shows that there is a much larger number of vacant small to medium sized parcels than very large parcels. However, most of the actual vacant land is held within the very large parcels. As shown above, nearly half of the vacant, private land is in tracts of 100 or more acres, while more than 75% of the vacant parcels are less than 5 acres.

Such a distribution might provide information about future land use and settlement patterns in the area. If we assume that all the parcels' can be developed and that zoning is A-2 (97% actually have A-2 zoning), which now allows a minimum lot size of 2 acres, about 3900 or 45% of the parcels could be viewed as sub-standard. This could have an impact on natural resource utilization and efficiency of on-site waste systems. If more than 75% of the parcels are less than five acres, it could be concluded that settlements have become increasingly compact and that the large tracts of land of the past are now giving way to higher density subdivisions or developments, where agriculture and other rural activities are becoming less prevalent.

Future development potentials might also be projected. If there are close to 2000 tracts of land (or about 66,000 acres) which could be subdivided under A-2 zoning, (in addition to the approximate 12,000 acres (6000 tracts) that cannot be subdivided further), the maximum build-out (assuming there are no constraint to development) of the vacant private land would be about 41,000 additional parcels. Using the current household size of 2.2, this vacant land could accommodate 88,000 more people.

Similar conclusions might be obtained from City of Albuquerque land use data, which is based upon existing zoning, aerial photographs, and building permits, and covers a larger area due to different tract boundaries. Even though these areas extend beyond the Plan Area Boundary they still provide a general perspective on land use in the East Mountains, as this land classification covers 12 categories. The classification is shown below.

**Table 4**  
2004 East Mountain Area Characteristics  
City of Albuquerque Land Use Data

Land Use	Acres	% Acres
Agriculture	269.09	0.069%
Commercial Retail	150.23	0.039%
Commercial Services	543.61	0.140%
Drainage & Flood Control	12.81	0.003%
Industrial & Manufacturing	2,462.16	0.635%
Multi Family	5.33	0.001%
Parks & Recreation	107,616.49	27.775%
Public & Institutional	106,256.73	27.424%
Single Family	22,009.46	5.680%
Transportation & Utilities	48.31	0.012%
Vacant/ Other	148,059.34	38.213%
Wholesale & Warehousing	26.94	0.007%
<b>Total</b>	<b>387,460.50</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: AGIS (City of Albuquerque GIS)

According to this table, which classifies land use for the East Mountain Area, about 38% of the land is classified as vacant/other (including Indian land), slightly less (37%) is publicly-owned (including the Kirtland Withdrawal Area), and about 19% is devoted to parks and recreation, namely the National Forest. Of the East Mountain Area, about 6% is in residential use, with less than 1% in commercial use, 0.6% in industrial use and 0.6% in agriculture. As with the above analysis of County Assessor's data, this suggests that there is still substantial land available for development in the East Mountain Area

Population growth in the East Mountain Area can be expected to continue if natural resources continue to be made available. Increasing development pressures have resulted in a proliferation of mobile homes, conventional “stick-built” homes, and subdivisions. Commercial uses have also increased and grown in a somewhat haphazard manner. The result in many cases has been development that is not compatible with the rural character of the area.