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# REPORT

## COMMUNITY SWOT ANALYSIS

### RUIDOSO, NEW MEXICO



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RUIDOSO VALLEY CHAMBER CONFERENCE  
ROOM, RUIDOSO, NEW MEXICO

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## COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS

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Ruidoso, New Mexico, a community in Lincoln County, is located on State Highway 48 four miles north of US Highway 70. Interstates 10 and 25 can be accessed at Las Cruces 114 miles away. It is situated at an elevation of 6,937. Ruidoso covers a total area of 14.38 square miles. Lincoln County has 4,831.25 square miles. 2002 Ruidoso population is estimated at 8,004. Lincoln County's population is 19,814. Based on the 2000 census, its population is 7,698, which is an increase of 67.3% from the 1990 census of 4,636. Lincoln County had a 59% change in population from 1990 to 2000. Population of Ruidoso from the 1980 census was 4,260, 1970 census was 2,216, which means that the population is rapidly growing. Based on the 2000 census, Ruidoso has 3,653 males, 4,045 females. Median age is 46.2. Population of 18 years and over is 6,117. Population of 21 years and over is 5,895. Population of 62 years and over is 1,660. In Lincoln County 2002 estimates of persons of Hispanic or Latino origin comprise 26.3%. White persons, not of Hispanic/Latino origin, comprise 70%. American Indian comprises 2%. Ruidoso has 7,584 total housing units of which 3,434 are occupied housing units. Of the occupied housing units, 2,575 are owner-occupied, 859 are renter-occupied, 4,150 are vacant housing units. The homeowner vacancy rate is 4.6% compared to Lincoln at 4.18%. The rental vacancy rate is 19.6% compared to Lincoln County at 15.4%. The unemployment rate in Lincoln County as of November 2003 is 3.9%. Largest industry employers for Lincoln County include the retail trade sector, government sectors (federal, state, local); accommodations & food service sector, arts, entertainment & recreation sector; health care & social services sector. From the agricultural sector in Lincoln County, there are 214 farms whose average size is 5,861. The market value of agricultural products sold is \$14,026,000. The top commodities include cattle & calves (\$10,032,000), sheep, lambs & wool (\$3,480,000), horses & ponies (\$52,000). Ruidoso has a K-12 school district that covers 165 square miles with a total student enrollment of 2,437 and 6 public schools. The student/teacher ratio is 16.1. In Ruidoso, based on the population of 25 years and older, 7% have less than a 9<sup>th</sup> grade education, 7.6% have attended 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> but did not receive a diploma, 25.2% have graduated from high school including equivalency, 28.7% have some college, but no degree. Eastern New Mexico University-Ruidoso serves the area. Ruidoso has a mayor-council form of government which provides water, sewer, and solid waste. Its annual operating budget is \$22,459,585, with annual revenues of \$5,003,543, total GO bonds outstanding of \$8,984,454. It has of 6. The residential property tax mill rate is 26, nonresidential property mill rate of 32.87 and gross receipts tax rate of 7%. Ruidoso has a regional medical center. The closest commercial airport is in Roswell, New Mexico. The mean travel time to work is 20.9 minutes. For 2001 in Lincoln County, the per capita personal income is \$17,428. The annual average wage per job is \$19,899. In Lincoln County, in 2002 there were 707 business establishments, a decrease from 709 in 1998. 2000 gross receipts from retail trade was \$206,765,000, an increase from 1998 which was \$206,499,000. Ruidoso received \$7.4 million in gross receipt for fiscal year 2002-2003.

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## SWOT DATA

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### STRENGTHS

#### General

- Marketable community
- Beauty of the area, high mountain resort
- Climate
- Location
- Community involvement - diversity of retirees and relocated business employees bring experience and more cosmopolitan attitudes
- Community works together and uses synergy of special events than in the end empowers the community to not be afraid of change
- Positive attitude of community
- Volunteerism – community has lots of special events and is dedicated to enlisting volunteers which provide the base support for special events
- Strong marketing effort compared to other resort destinations, wise use of lodgers tax, have research in small business issues with strong website, marketed everywhere

#### Cultural

- Community has the ability to pull together i.e., the airport development and convention center
- Kids have access to strong church youth groups
- Cultural diversity is a real strength
  - Welcomes newcomers including not only US residents, but also German military located at Holloman AFB and Mexican nationals who bring in new dollars and attitude
- Great senior center including RSVP, hospice, Meals on Wheels programs

#### Infrastructure

- Technology is improving for cellular, have DSL, expanded phone service through Valor
- Water-just passed a 40 year comprehensive water use plan
- Have developed a master plan in 2004, developed plans in 1960, 1970 and 1988
- Excellent EMS, Police and fire response teams with real coordination between Ruidoso, Ruidoso Downs, Forest Service, and Mescalero

#### Telecommunications

#### Health

- Have a regional hospital that is part of a regional organization, Presbyterian Health Services

#### Agricultural/Land Base

- Forests health is supported by programs and plans in place that are bringing our forest back to a health state
  - US Forest Service has provided grant dollars that have flowed increasing business development
  - Help with using small diameter trees for entrepreneurial balance
  - Forest health has become a regional issue. The area has made the process successful with remarkable cooperation between Federal/State/Local entities
- 1,700+ residents of El Paso own property in Lincoln County, 600 Midland/Odessa residents own property in Ruidoso which represents a shift over the past several years from the Midland/Odessa market to the El Paso market

#### Education:

- Eastern New Mexico University-Ruidoso

- Program for incubating businesses
- Class list includes entrepreneurial classes that are flexible for local business community
- One stop center
- Offers distance learning from bachelors to graduate courses
- Offers leadership strengths to the community
- Very creative programs at the public schools in Ruidoso
- Strong arts programs and pregnancy reduction programs
- Result is due to strong leadership and lots of support by the general community
- Regional cooperation between schools in District 9 which includes Lincoln and Otero Counties

**Economic Development:**

- Destination Resort
  - Tourism diversity is changing from primarily Texas visitors to include visitors from Arizona, more New Mexicans, more Mexican nationals and with the last couple of years, more Midwest and international visitors
- Ruidoso has many special events to attract visitors to the area. A complete listing can be found on the Ruidoso.net website
- Newspaper subscriptions – well over half of subscribers to Ruidoso News who live outside Lincoln County reside in Texas, Arizona 3%; generally out of town subscribers have a vested interest in the community
- Lodgers Tax is a tool for tourism advertisement
- Lodging is related to special interest events and keeps the lodges full
  - Organized groups that have the capacity to organize are critical to the success of special interest events (such as real estate association, chamber, homebuilders, etc)
- Great Chamber of Commerce with a proportionally large membership that has stayed consistent with its membership (approximately 675 members from Ruidoso)

**Transportation**

- When highway construction is completed, will have cross-country 4-lane access

**WEAKNESSES**

**General**

- Difficult to think regionally
- Marketing weakness
  - Ruidoso is still an unknown commodity
    - Is it an identity problem?
  - Marketing strategy has hit a wall
  - Have we developed a community personality?
    - Research is indicating that new tourists:
      - 90% are from the outside and come for the amenities
      - 10% imported from Texas and use casinos
      - 1% is from the Albuquerque and Phoenix areas
  - Reasons for the visits drive the attendance and usage of local special events

**Cultural**

- Lincoln County politics
- NIMBY (not in my backyard) mentality among some residents

Perception exists that Lincoln County/Village of Ruidoso don't work together, when in fact the entities are working together. This includes the entities of: Ruidoso, Ruidoso Downs, Mescalero, Carrizozo, Lincoln County

**Infrastructure**

Water issue – lack of water is an education issue  
Forest – have same constraints that other mountainous, forested communities deal with on environmental concerns  
Planning and zoning process is difficult  
Affordable housing  
Parking

**Health:**

Substance abuse with local kids is very worrisome, because kids have nothing to do  
Hospital is funded through mill levies and a little gross receipts tax

**Economic Development:**

Contractually, Ruidoso created an inability not to be able to advertise in bigger markets even though its lodgers tax is the third largest in the state. This has resulted in zero requests for special events  
All kinds of insurance costs for small business are a constraint

**Job Growth:**

Depth of service labor pool is thin. Labor pool leaves when school year starts up  
Ruidoso tends to export young people during their income producing years  
Affordable wages need to be comparable to the local cost of living

**Telecommunication**

Ruidoso needs more high speed internet speed as high speed internet access drives home based businesses  
High quality cell service is a constraint for the area.

**Transportation**

Current construction on Highway 70 (East and West) and Highway 48 and 54 are causing traffic problems  
Area lacks public transportation increasing parking and congestion problems

**OPPORTUNITIES**

**General**

With county political issues, an opportunity exists to find common threads to continue to unite the area (i.e. a percentage increase in tourism in Ruidoso provides the same or greater percentage increase in helping county revenues)  
Examples include: the airport regional cooperation where “rising tides may float all the boats”; regional cooperation on solid waste have provided successes that can be built upon with other contentious issues

**Cultural**

Ruidoso needs stronger youth organizations including a youth community center and more youth organizations

**Infrastructure**

Need affordable housing; none is available for students working during the summer season and for young families  
Ruidoso has a regional airport but been unable to obtain a major, consistent commercial air service; opportunity to collaborate with other areas in the region

Based on a need for 1100 new, affordable housing units and because Ruidoso has the land, developers and planning and zoning covenants, housing need provides an opportunity to work with Mescalero Tribe to meet these needs

Growth in the area is moving north to Capitan, New Mexico

Have an opportunity to consult and greater cooperative environment between Village of Ruidoso and Lincoln County through waste water treatment issues, leading to greater cooperation on other regional issues; municipal boundaries in the Lincoln County are not as evident as before

**Health:**

Work with congressional delegation for better reimbursement of health costs

**Agricultural/Land Base:**

Forests – concept of forest health has opportunities to increase education on the process and thinning of forests

**Education:**

Help Eastern New Mexico University's facility in Ruidoso to become a branch; administration is currently working on legal status

**Economic Development:**

**Tourism:**

Current research is showing that the demographics of visitors are 50+ and visit Ruidoso in groups of 2-4. This is an opportunity for Ruidoso begin focusing some marketing toward a younger age group so that it can maintain consistent and increasing tourism in the area as the aging visitors will begin making less frequent visits.

Look for ways to broaden visitor traffic during the shoulder season in the spring and fall; an example is to expand mountain biking which would target the "under 30 crowd", lowering the average of the visitor

Forests – entrepreneurial opportunities to use wood as valued-added businesses plus improving watershed

Sustain the flow of forest materials to maintain economic development opportunities that has resulted from US Forest Service grants for business development

Opportunity to educate on the role and relationship of federal lands priorities and economic development

Regional cooperation is a model for how to cooperate on other issues

Look for and focus on lessons learned from other mountain resort communities

**Transportation:**

Explore how tourism, trucking opportunities can be expanded with improved highways for growth

Explore how to provide free transportation to special events to reducing parking and congestion problems

Highway construction can give the business community an opportunity to get business infrastructure in line with the area's growth potential

## **THREATS**

**Cultural:**

A number of different groups, especially the Hispanics, are not participating in the political process

**General:**

Ruidoso looks fairly affluent when in fact it suffers from many of the same issues as the rest of New Mexico

**Education:**

The need for voc-tech training needs to be addressed. Eastern New Mexico University in Ruidoso is great but not everyone is college bound.

**Infrastructure:**

The waste water treatment plant with the environmental restrictions that have been placed will require a huge investment

**Agricultural/Land Base:**

Forest – lack of federal and state dollars; not enough education on human caused forest fires

**Economic Development:**

Small business tax structure

911 and Homeland Security issues have reduced Mexican nationals visitations

NM Department of Tourism – Ruidoso is not receiving its fair share of tourism funds

**Job Growth:**

All of NM would like higher paying, higher skilled jobs, with a low impact on the environment. Because of our protective stance of our area, Ruidoso tends not to consider most manufacturing even if they did want to come to Ruidoso. So, the threat is that Ruidoso needs to become more creative and a little more open minded about what kind of industry would actually bring the jobs we want without hurting the area in the long run.

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## NEXT STEPS

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1. Recognizing that municipal boundaries in the Lincoln County are not as evident as before, Ruidoso would like to begin education about the need for a "regional" attitude on almost all areas of concern. A next step would be to conduct and coordinate regional cooperative meetings in a facilitated forum.
2. Ruidoso would like to develop multi-level, revitalized cooperative marketing strategies. A next step would be to include local invested groups using lodgers tax dollars, state cooperation using New Mexico tourism funds and input into national promotions.
3. Ruidoso has a seasonal economy and it has an opportunity to develop special events in its off seasons, fall and spring. A next step would be to focus on "Growth Targeted" new events to maximize off season potentials, i.e. art shows, dog shows, rodeo, food and wine festival, etc.
4. A next step is to consider the viability of establishing a Ruidoso County.
5. The highway construction has expanded Highway 70 into a four lane road. A next step would be for Ruidoso to look at opportunities and threats that the highway expansion is going to have on the area.
6. Drought has had a broad impact on the area. A next step is to address real conservation measures, not just automatic water restrictions
7. A next step is to enlist the help of the state and federal agencies and lobby for their support of issues that Ruidoso is facing.