

*SECTION IV*

*SITE AND FACILITY RECOMMENDATIONS*

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## ***SITE AND FACILITY RECOMMENDATIONS***

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### ***A. INTRODUCTION***

Our evaluation presented in Section III regarding the existing conditions of the Southwest convention center market, the meeting planner survey, and our analysis of existing meeting facilities in Las Cruces, indicate that there is support for a public convention center with 40,000 square feet of net meeting space, and approximately 80,000 square feet of gross building area. The next step in our evaluation process is to identify those sites in Las Cruces that would be most suitable for such a convention center.

As part of our field research, we inspected 11 development sites identified by the City of Las Cruces as being available for a potential convention center. Each site was analyzed in terms of access and visibility from major highways, location relative to hotel supply, ambiance of the surrounding area, and size and topography relative to required facilities, among other variables.

Accordingly, the following section first provides an overview of these 11 potential development sites, and then focuses on the four most suitable sites that we deem most appropriate for the development of a convention center in Las Cruces. Based on our fieldwork, the results of the meeting planner survey, interviews with competing and comparable facilities, and our knowledge of the industry, this section also provides our recommendations on the configuration and operation of the proposed facility. Architectural renderings of the proposed convention center, prepared by Ellerbe Becket, are presented at the end of this section. Ellerbe Becket is one of the nation's largest architectural firms, with considerable expertise in the planning and design of convention centers.

### ***B. OVERVIEW OF THE POTENTIAL SITES***

#### ***1. Introduction***

As indicated previously, we inspected and analyzed 11 sites that were identified to us by the City of Las Cruces as being available for the development of a potential convention center. These 11 sites, which are presented in the order in which they were inspected, are summarized below. The map on the following page highlights their location within the City of Las Cruces.

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**2. Site Analysis**

**a. New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum (Site A)**

The New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum is a modern state facility that displays the history of agriculture in the region. The museum, a division of the Office of Cultural Affairs, features approximately 25,000 square feet of indoor display space for permanent and changing exhibitions, a farmer's market, restaurant and store, indoor and outdoor theatres, and a working farm and ranch with live animals. We understand that this facility was shown to us under the premise that it could potentially be converted or expanded into a convention center. The site is currently zoned as A-2 (Rural Agricultural).

<b>Site A Analysis</b>					
	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Poor</b>
Visibility					X
Accessibility to Highways					X
Proximity to Lodging/Number of Rooms Nearby					X
Proximity & Accessibility to Airport (long-term)					X
Attractiveness of Surrounding Area		X			
Expansion Potential (acreage)		X			
Long-Term Strategic Potential				X	

**b. Golf Course Site Near Las Alturas Drive and Geothermal Road (Site B)**

We understand that Marriott International was considering this site for the development of a hotel. Although this site has attractive surroundings, is proximate to the NMSU 18-hole golf course, and could be acquired without cost, it has a somewhat remote location. The site is located on state land, thus does not fall under the jurisdiction of City of Las Cruces zoning ordinances.

<b>Site B Analysis</b>					
	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Poor</b>
Visibility					X
Accessibility to Highways					X
Proximity to Lodging/Number of Rooms Nearby				X	
Proximity & Accessibility to Airport (long-term)				X	
Attractiveness of Surrounding Area		X			
Expansion Potential (acreage)		X			
Long-Term Strategic Potential				X	

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**c. University and Interstate-25 Site (Site C)**

This approximately 16-acre site (at Triviz Drive and Payne Street) has excellent visibility, and very good access to both Interstates 10 and 25, is adjacent to the NMSU Pan American Center, and could be acquired without cost. The Comfort and Sleep Inns, with a combined total of 124 rooms, are situated nearby. The site is located on state land, thus does not fall under the jurisdiction of City of Las Cruces zoning ordinances. We understand that the site would be acquired only if it were to be incorporated into the City of Las Cruces.

<b>Site C Analysis</b>					
	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Poor</b>
Visibility	X				
Accessibility to Highways		X			
Proximity to Lodging/Number of Rooms Nearby				X	
Proximity & Accessibility to Airport (long-term)			X		
Attractiveness of Surrounding Area				X	
Expansion Potential (acreage)		X			
Long-Term Strategic Potential		X			

**d. South Main Street and Farney Drive Site (Site D)**

This is an approximately 48-acre site that we understand could be acquired by the City of Las Cruces without cost. The site has several negative characteristics, including unattractive surroundings, proximity to railroad tracks, and distance from a cluster of hotels. The site is currently zoned as C-2 (General Commercial).

<b>Site D Analysis</b>					
	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Poor</b>
Visibility					X
Accessibility to Highways					X
Proximity to Lodging/Number of Rooms Nearby				X	
Proximity & Accessibility to Airport (long-term)					X
Attractiveness of Surrounding Area				X	
Expansion Potential (acreage)			X		
Long-Term Strategic Potential					X

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**e. So-Lo Site at Main Street and Picacho Avenue (Site E)**

The city-owned site is improved with a commercial outlet (So-Lo) near the downtown Las Cruces outdoor mall. The site has poor accessibility and is not close to any hotels. The site is currently zoned as CBD (Central Business District).

<b>Site E Analysis</b>					
	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Poor</b>
Visibility					<b>X</b>
Accessibility to Highways					<b>X</b>
Proximity to Lodging/Number of Rooms Nearby					<b>X</b>
Proximity & Accessibility to Airport (long-term)					<b>X</b>
Attractiveness of Surrounding Area				<b>X</b>	
Expansion Potential (acreage)					<b>X</b>
Long-Term Strategic Potential					<b>X</b>

**f. Las Cruces Home Builders Association Site (Site F)**

As highlighted previously, the Las Cruces Home Builders Association is proposing an events center to be located on North Main Street on a 7.5-acre site near the Citizen's Bank branch building. The building, which has yet to attain zoning and planning approval, is proposed to be approximately 45,000 gross square feet with some 5,000 square feet for offices, 5,000 square feet for kitchen, storage, and equipment rooms, and 35,000 square feet usable for events, exhibits, and meeting rooms. The budgeted cost is approximately \$2.5 million to be funded by private capital. A portion of the site is zoned C-2 (General Commercial) and another portion is O-1 (Office).

<b>Site F Analysis</b>					
	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Poor</b>
Visibility					<b>X</b>
Accessibility to Highways					<b>X</b>
Proximity to Lodging/Number of Rooms Nearby					<b>X</b>
Proximity & Accessibility to Airport (long-term)					<b>X</b>
Attractiveness of Surrounding Area				<b>X</b>	
Expansion Potential (acreage)					<b>X</b>
Long-Term Strategic Potential					<b>X</b>

**g. Las Cruces Dam Site (Site G)**

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Located near the Hilton and Foothill Drive, this site is part of a larger 550-acre parcel known as the Lohman Extension Project. It is understood that the site, which is zoned A-1 (Flood Control), is in a flood zone. Although the site would have long-term strategic potential given its location near the commercial hub of Las Cruces, the fact that it is in a flood zone would hinder its development as a convention center.

<b>Site G Analysis</b>					
	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Poor</b>
Visibility			X		
Accessibility to Highways			X		
Proximity to Lodging/Number of Rooms Nearby		X			
Proximity & Accessibility to Airport (long-term)			X		
Attractiveness of Surrounding Area			X		
Expansion Potential (acreage)		X			
Long-Term Strategic Potential			X		

***h. Hickory Loop and Hickory Drive (Site H)***

This site, which has excellent visibility and accessibility from Interstate 10, is close to the largest hotel cluster in the city (618 rooms), and is proximate to Old Mesilla. The approximately 29-acre site is currently zoned C-2c (General Commercial - conditional).

<b>Site H Analysis</b>					
	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Poor</b>
Visibility	X				
Accessibility to Highways	X				
Proximity to Lodging/Number of Rooms Nearby		X			
Proximity & Accessibility to Airport (long-term)		X			
Attractiveness of Surrounding Area				X	
Expansion Potential (acreage)	X				
Long-Term Strategic Potential		X			

***i. West Amador Avenue and Valley Drive (Site I)***

This site is on city-owned land, but is located in a somewhat undeveloped part of Las Cruces. The site is currently zoned C-2 (General Commercial).

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Site I Analysis					
	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
Visibility					X
Accessibility to Highways					X
Proximity to Lodging/Number of Rooms Nearby					X
Proximity & Accessibility to Airport (long-term)					X
Attractiveness of Surrounding Area				X	
Expansion Potential (acreage)					X
Long-Term Strategic Potential					X

**j. Hickory Drive and Campbell Drive Site (Site J)**

Similar to Site H, this nearly 25-acre site has excellent visibility and accessibility from Interstate-10, is close to the largest hotel cluster in the city (618 rooms), and is proximate to Old Mesilla. The site is zoned C-2 (General Commercial) and M-1 (Light Manufacturing).

Site J Analysis					
	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
Visibility	X				
Accessibility to Highways	X				
Proximity to Lodging/Number of Rooms Nearby		X			
Proximity & Accessibility to Airport (long-term)		X			
Attractiveness of Surrounding Area				X	
Expansion Potential (acreage)	X				
Long-Term Strategic Potential		X			

**k. Mesilla Valley Mall Site (Site K)**

Based on our discussions with the City of Las Cruces, we understand that a 125,000-square-foot exterior portion of the Mesilla Valley Mall could potentially accommodate a convention center as an annex to the mall. The Mesilla Valley Mall opened in 1981 and has 115 stores, including Dillard's, JC Penney, and Sears. The mall, which has recently been experiencing financial difficulties, will be sold at the end of November to an unidentified entity. The mall has excellent visibility and accessibility from Interstate-25, and is proximate to the 206-room Hilton, the largest and highest quality hotel in Las Cruces. The site is zoned C-2 (General Commercial).

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Site K Analysis					
	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
Visibility	X				
Accessibility to Highways	X				
Proximity to Lodging/Number of Rooms Nearby		X			
Proximity & Accessibility to Airport (long-term)			X		
Attractiveness of Surrounding Area				X	
Expansion Potential (acreage)					X
Long-Term Strategic Potential		X			

**C. SELECTED SITES**

**1. The Four Selected Sites**

As presented, we have conducted an analysis of the 11 sites that were brought to our attention by the City of Las Cruces. After accounting for such variables as visibility and accessibility to highways, proximity to the Las Cruces hotel inventory, as well as the site selection criteria indicated via the demand surveys, it is our opinion that Sites C, H, J, and K are the most suitable for a potential convention center.

It is our opinion that Site C (University Avenue and Interstate 25) is superior for the following specific reasons:

- *Excellent visibility from Interstate-25;*
- *Very good accessibility to Interstate-25;*
- *Proximity to NMSU, a major university with extensive facilities; and*
- *Available land that allows for future expansion plans.*

It is our opinion that Site H (Hickory Loop and Hickory Drive) and Site J (Hickory Drive and Campbell Drive) are superior to the other seven non-selected sites for the following reasons:

- *Excellent visibility from Interstate-10;*
- *Excellent accessibility to Interstate-10;*
- *Immediate proximity to the largest cluster of hotel rooms in the city (618 rooms);*
- *Proximity to Historic Mesilla, with its various stores and restaurants;*
- *Proximity to Las Cruces Airport, which eventually could undergo expansion; and*
- *Available land that allows for future expansion plans.*

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In addition, Site K (Mesilla Valley Mall) has been selected as one of the most suitable sites for the development of a potential convention center for the following reasons:

- *Excellent visibility from Interstate-25;*
- *Excellent accessibility to Interstate-25;*
- *Proximity to the 206-room Hilton Las Cruces, the largest and highest quality hotel room in the city; and*
- *Location in the northern portion of Las Cruces, the commercial hub of the city.*

At the time of writing this report, it is our understanding that Sites H and J, which are currently vacant, would be available for sale to the City of Las Cruces, and that all the required utilities (underground electric, sewer, water, and gas) are already in place. With regard to Site K, we have assumed that the new owner of the Mesilla Valley Mall would be willing to cooperate with the City of Las Cruces in annexing a convention center facility to the existing Mesilla Valley Mall.

### ***2. Additional Site for Consideration***

At the request of the City of Las Cruces, an additional site proximate to the above-mentioned Site C (University Avenue and Interstate 25) was brought to our attention *after* the completion of our fieldwork. This NMSU-owned site is located to the north of University Avenue (near Wisconsin Avenue), and is comprised of approximately 20 acres. It is our opinion that this site benefits from the same attributes as Site C.

## ***D. FACILITY RECOMMENDATIONS***

### ***1. Introduction***

As supported by our market analysis in Section III, it is recommended that the proposed convention center in Las Cruces provide approximately 80,000 square feet of gross building area, including 40,000 square feet of net meeting space. The recommended net meeting space should include a 25,000-square-foot exhibit hall, representing an exhibit hall-to-net-meeting-space ratio of approximately 62 percent, which is comparable to the average indicated by competitive convention centers operating in the Southwest.

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It is our opinion that the recommended net square footage is sufficient for the City of Las Cruces to accommodate the indicated and potential demand levels to be generated from national, regional, and state associations; banquet, social, and civic functions; and consumer shows.

### **2. Concept and Design**

The plan diagram for the proposed convention center in Las Cruces has been conceived with a focus on flexibility, efficiency of use, the importance of visibility to residents and visitors, and the possibility of long-term expansion with a future performing arts center. A rendering of the plan diagram, prepared by Ellerbe Becket, is provided on the following page. On the four pages that follow the plan diagram, are the aerial views of the four selected sites (C, H, J, and K), including a superimposed plan of the proposed convention center on each site. The footprint and potential location of a future performing arts center on each site is also provided.

Each of the three selected sites (C, H, J, and K) under consideration has the benefit of providing immediate access from both major freeways and downtown Las Cruces. Each will benefit from the visibility (both daytime and nighttime), that results from that adjacency.

The proposed convention center is organized around the idea of the "Great Hall" concept. This exhibit hall, which should be comprised of approximately 25,000 square feet, will be the most visible and exciting component of the building, and will define its character. The entry lobby/pre-function space will be the memorable experience in visiting the convention center. The exhibit hall will be a dynamic glass-walled room, modulated by steel columns and trusses, filled with natural light predominantly from the south, providing views of the landscaped site, outdoor terraces, and the hills beyond.

The linear nature of the geometry will serve the exhibit hall and meeting rooms in a clearly understandable way, and will provide exciting nighttime and daytime views into the facility during operation. This linear geometry provides maximum visibility from the freeways and will allow for logical expansion in the future.

The balance of the plan is organized into two wings, each of which contains four large meeting rooms, a complement of eight smaller breakout rooms, service access from the kitchen and storage, and the necessary toilet rooms. The strength of the

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plan diagram is its simplicity and the visual connection made to the exhibit hall from all public corridor spaces.

All services are handled at the rear of the building. Loading docks/compactors are centralized and adjacent to the kitchen storage, and the main service corridors, which link directly to the exhibit hall. The logical plan diagram contributes to ease of all back-of-house operations.

Schematic

*SITE AND FACILITY RECOMMENDATIONS*

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C

*SITE AND FACILITY RECOMMENDATIONS*

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H

*SITE AND FACILITY RECOMMENDATIONS*

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J

*SITE AND FACILITY RECOMMENDATIONS*

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K

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**3. Summary**

We recommend the exhibit hall to be at least 25,000 square feet, based on the space required to attract large association meetings and consumer shows. Additionally, a room this size will accommodate over 1,700 people seated comfortably for a large banquet dinner or national convention. However, as not all banquet dinners will be of this size, the main exhibit hall should be divisible into two smaller sections of 12,500 square feet, which could be used simultaneously. In addition, we recommend four divisible and adjacent meeting rooms with a total of 11,000 square feet, coupled with eight, separate 500-square-foot breakout meeting rooms for smaller gatherings, situated at the sides of the proposed facility. The following table provides a summary of the recommended facilities at the proposed convention center in Las Cruces.

<b>Summary of Recommended Facilities Proposed Convention Center in Las Cruces, New Mexico</b>	
<b>Facility</b>	<b>Square Feet</b>
<u>Exhibit Hall</u>	12,500 x 2
<b>Subtotal of Exhibit Hall</b>	<b>25,000</b>
<u>Meetings Rooms:</u>	
1)	5,000 (2,500 x 2)
2)	2,500 (1,250 x 2)
3)	2,500 (1,250 x 2)
4)	1,000
<b>Subtotal of Meeting Rooms</b>	<b>11,000</b>
<u>Breakout Rooms:</u>	
1)	500
2)	500
3)	500
4)	500
5)	500
6)	500
7)	500
8)	500
<b>Subtotal of Breakout Rooms</b>	<b>4,000</b>
<b>Subtotal of Net Meeting Space</b>	<b>40,000</b>
<u>Additional Space:</u>	
Back-of-	19,000
House/Corridors/Dock	15,000
Pre-function/Entry	8,000
Kitchen/Kitchen Equipment	6,000
Public Circulation	<b>48,000</b>
<b>Subtotal of Additional Space</b>	
<b>Gross Square Feet of</b>	<b>84,000</b>

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<b>Building Area</b>	
Source: <i>Ellerbe Becket and PKF Consulting</i>	

According to Ellerbe Becket, the proposed convention center would require the following additional support (site work) areas.

<b>Summary of Support Areas (Site Work) Proposed Convention Center in Las Cruces, New Mexico</b>	
<b>Area</b>	<b>Square Feet</b>
Security/Site Lighting/Graphics	208,000
Parking/Roads (for approximately 600 cars)	195,000
Terrace/Landscape	13,000
<b>Gross Area</b>	<b>208,000</b>
Source: <i>Ellerbe Becket</i>	

As such, it is recommended that the proposed convention center in Las Cruces be comprised of 84,000 square feet of gross building area, including 40,000 square feet of net meeting space, and 48,000 square feet of additional support space (back-of-house/corridors/dock, pre-function/entry, kitchen/kitchen equipment, and public circulation).

After deriving the appropriate sizing of the proposed convention center, the next step is to estimate the level of utilization that would be generated by the recommended facility, presented in the following Section V.