

# *Precinct 2 Newsletter*

EL PASO COUNTY COMMISSIONER DAVID C. STOUT'S PRECINCT UPDATE

Dear Friend:

We are well into 2021, and all indications are that the pandemic continues to be part of our lives. COVID-19 variations, along with seasonal flu, require us to maintain caution and take preventive measures. To that end the County continues to follow health and safety guidance and encourage all El Pasoans to get their Flu shot as soon as they can, and to seek out a COVID-19 booster if and when they are approved by the Food and Drug Administration.

Our community has done exceptionally well in terms of seeking out COVID-19 vaccines and wearing masks as advised by the Local Health Authority. As we continue to navigate this reality my office continues to advocate for access to health and mental healthcare including to the fair and equitable distribution of the vaccine.

Vaccinations are one facet in our community response. Others include support for small business, food distribution, people who are homeless, immigrants, and housing assistance. It has been an all-out response at all levels of government, including the federal government, which has provided multiple assistance packages to help the economy from crashing while supporting vaccinations and a range of much-needed personnel and services.

To this point the County has received about half of the \$163 million allocation from the American Rescue Act, the most recent of three legislative actions taken by Congress. The Commissioners Court has at present allocated a large part of this funding to help University Medical Center, provide water/waste water access to those living outside the city limits, as well as funding to continue to mitigate the pandemic and stimulate the economy.

While Covid response continues to be a large part of our focus, the County has a broad range of programs, services, and activities. The newsletter touches on some of those, including:

- An update on the formation of a redistricting committee that will draw Justice of the Peace and County Commissioner districts, keeping County Commissioners out of the process as much as legally possible;
- Ascarate Park updates;
- Historic District and Segundo Barrio Historic District updates; and
- The TXDOT proposal to widen I-10 and add frontage roads around and through Downtown.

# *County Budget and Taxes*

On Aug. 30, 2021, El Paso County has adopted a tax rate of \$0.470181 per \$100 taxable property value. This is a TAX CUT from the Tax Year 2020 rate of \$0.488997, and was the second rate cut for our major entities in the County. On Sept. 27, the County adopted a \$415.5 million general fund budget.

Previously, the County Commissioners Court approved the Hospital District tax rate of \$0.258146 cents per \$100 assessed valuation, a tax rate cut from the current \$0.267747 cents per \$100 assessed valuation.

Commissioner Stout advocated for a 2022 tax rate cut from the beginning of budget talks months ago. Since he has been on Commissioners Court, it has raised taxes once, in 2020, and cut taxes once, in 2019. The Court has maintained the same tax rate in the other years.

Residential valuations are up by more than 10 percent on average citywide, and homeowners are paying an ever-increasing share of property taxes. The County has maintained reserves over the past several years that allow us to take this action while maintaining county operations.

"The pandemic has given folks enough to contend with. And we know all too well that the pandemic is far from over," said Commissioner Stout. The economic impacts associated to the pandemic continue to be felt by all in our community and by those who reside within Precinct 2."

Regarding the County Hospital District tax rate, the cut reduces estimated hospital revenues. However, the County has committed to providing the hospital district with more than \$17 million in American Rescue Plan funds for this fiscal year and the same amount for next fiscal year, for a total of more than \$34 million.

Commissioner Stout expressed concern over the allocation of ARPA funds, saying that the funds should go to hospital operations to help deal with the ongoing pandemic, as opposed to sitting as cash reserves that simply help the district improve its bond rating so it can issue bonds later this year to pursue new construction.

The budget also increases the hospital district minimum wage of \$11 per hour by \$1 per hour starting in April, several months earlier than initially proposed, with another \$1 an hour added in July, to ending up at \$13 per hour. The County similarly will be increasing wages at the bottom of its pay scale. Commissioner Stout:

- Pushed for improvements to Ascarate Park, El Paso's regional "central park," which is in the heart of the community just to the east of the Chamizal and El Paso County Coliseum.
- Led the way to implement the El Paso Sheriff's Department Crisis Intervention Teams, which pair patrol officers with mental health experts to help de-escalate interactions. This benefits the individual or individuals involved and the Sheriff's department.
- Got funding for the Healthy Food Financing Initiative, which provides small business grants to food providers to provide sustainable options for buying and selling fresh produce and other health foods.
- Added funding for Community IDs, which allow members of the community who don't have identification to access certain services, such as banking. Estimates indicate up to 100,000 El Paso residents might use a Community ID.
- Supported provision of water and sewer services in the County, where most of the growth in our community has taken place, but where basic services have lagged behind development.

"I'm very pleased with that, because I have been advocating for an increase in the wages of our lowest-paid employees," said Commissioner Stout. "These tax rates will allow us to maintain vital services in both the County and in the County Hospital District, while being fiscally responsible at a time when taxpayers most need it."

# COVID Update

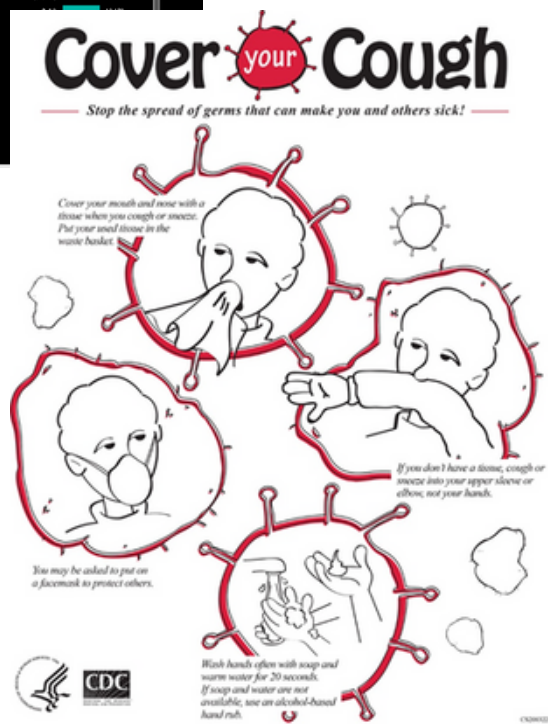
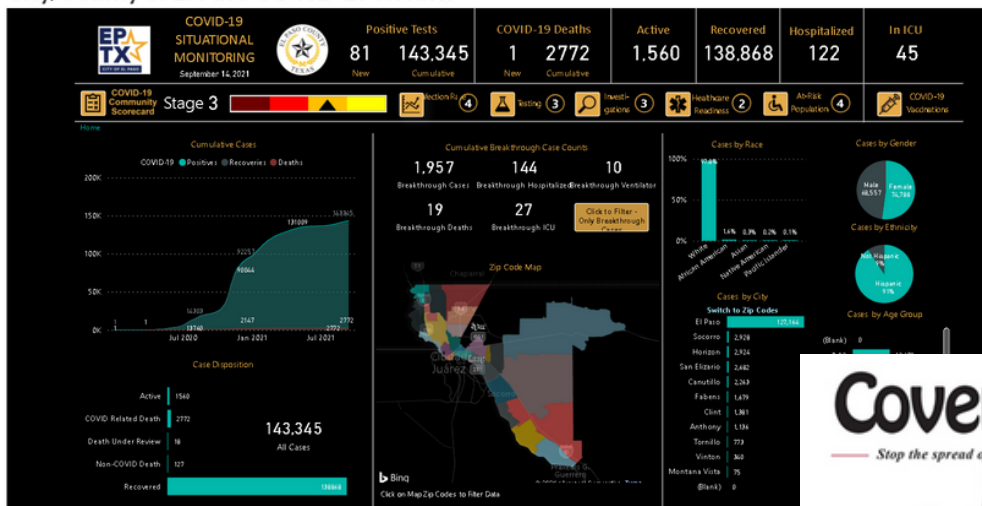
The overwhelming consensus continues to be that besides getting vaccinated, the best way to slow the spread of Covid, and reduce severity of illness when it's transmitted, is wearing a mask, washing hands often, and keeping a distance from others when possible.

While the details of the guidance, especially with masks, have varied, this basic formula has remained the same since the pandemic was first identified a year and a half ago.

The Delta variant has surged elsewhere in Texas, but perhaps because of our high vaccination rates - more than 70 percent compared to a state average of about 50 percent - and public health position on requiring masks, El Paso has not suffered the same effects.

So, take some basic common sense precautions. Wear a mask, cover when coughing, wash hands, rest, and use common sense to take care of yourself and others.

## City/County of El Paso COVID-19 Results



### HOW TO WEAR A MASK?



## *Naked Harem/Alameda property and Onward Alameda*

The county is beginning a process of working with the community to transform the site that holds the “Naked Harem” building, which once housed the Valley Theater, and later was turned into an “adult entertainment” club that broke numerous laws.

One of the first things items to be taken care of is take down the “Naked Harem” sign, which we did last week.

The site is actually three lots, which together take up 1.67 acres. The owners were convicted of various crimes, and the property seized by the District Attorney’s office in 2014 after 10 years of litigation. Late last year, the D.A. donated the property to the County under Chapter 59 in the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure, which requires the following uses for the site:

- Mental health, drug, or rehabilitation service, or
- Services for victims or witnesses of criminal offenses or instances of abuse, or
- The provision of training or education related to the first two.

The County’s goal is quite simple: To meet the requirements of the law, and to do so in a way that the community feels adds value to that location.

That means the County will be working very closely with nearby neighborhoods, and particularly the Sambrano-Corbin neighborhood, which is between Alameda and North Loop, and other community stakeholders. Commissioner Stout wants to ensure that the County serves those who it is obligated to serve through Chapter 59, and also serves constituents by creating a safe space that adds value to the community.

At the same time that the County is working on this project, the City is evaluating Alameda Street from Downtown to the city limit at Socorro. The City has called it the Onward Alameda Corridor Plan, and “seeks to gather big-picture input from the citizens of El Paso and establish a long-term vision for the future of the Alameda Corridor area and how it should evolve in the coming years.”

It’s possible that the City and County could work together on the former Naked Harem site as part of the Onward Alameda study. Commissioner Stout is eager to explore the possibilities!



## *Redistricting Advisory Commission Update*

The El Paso County Redistricting Commission is finally in operation and meeting regularly! Commissioners Court created the Commission after Commissioner Stout brought the idea forward earlier this year.

The Commission, which consists of 11 volunteers, is charged with redrawing the four County Commissioner precincts and the seven Justice of the Peace precincts based on the 2020 U.S. Census count. The Commission has been meeting weekly and is working toward an October 18, 2021, deadline, which is when any new maps will be presented to the Court.

Ideally, the Commission would make final decisions on Commissioners Court Precinct maps, but state law does not allow the County to delegate that responsibility. So the County did what it could to set up a commission free of political influence by setting criteria for commission members that, among other things, eliminated people who had recently run for office, donated large amounts, or were active on political campaigns or for political parties.

"I really want to thank all the members, but especially my appointees Katherine Vandertulip and Quirino Villa, for the dedication of time and energy to this process," Commissioner Stout said.

According to the Census figures released last week, El Paso County's population is now 865,657, an eight percent increase from 2010. While the increase is the smallest in many many decades, and about half of Texas's 16 percent rate, it's still more than the national rate of 7.4 percent.



## *Redistricting Cont.*



When redistricting, the commission is to consider population – so all Commissioners Court precincts have a similar number of constituents – as well as maintaining geographic integrity, keeping communities of interest such as neighborhoods together, and other factors meant to ensure fairness and full representation.

Census figures released in August indicated that most of the growth was outside the City limits, where the population grew 23 percent since 2010. Commissioners Court has four precincts, so the target population for each precinct is 216,000. It looks like Precinct 2 will need to gain close to 20,000 residents, while Precinct 3 will be above the target of 216,000 and need to give up some of its population.

Further, there is a significant debate whether to redistrict Justice of the Peace precincts, which provide specialized service to the public that isn't correlated to a particular geographic area or population.

With all that, the Commission delivered drafts of suggested maps earlier this month, with an October 2 workshop to draw as a Commission, and present to Commissioners Court October 18. The Court will have three weeks to discuss with final adoption by November 8 – ahead of the November 13 primary election filing season. Precinct 2 is likely in for some big changes (see next page, or go to <http://www.epcounty.com/redistricting/documents/Proposed%20CC%20Map%202.PDF>)!

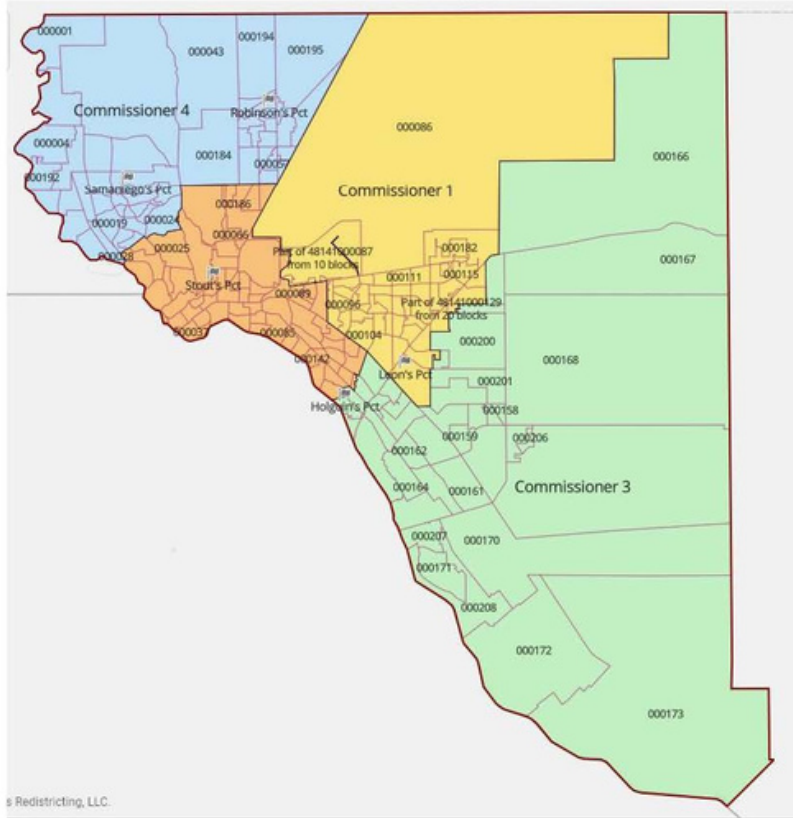
# Redistricting Cont.

## Proposed Illustrative El Paso County Commissioners Map #2 (Target Pop 216,414)

Author:  
League of Woman Voters, El Paso

Date Submitted:  
8/30/21

**Illustrative Map # 2**



Population in District

Comm. 1	216,374
Comm. 2	216,576
Comm. 3	216,546
Comm. 4	216,161

Deviation: **.019%**  
Four Lean Democratic  
No District lean  
Republican  
4 Majority-Minority  
Districts

Compact: Yes  
Contiguous Yes  
Equal Population  
Map looks very compact  
and contiguous. The  
Difference among the  
highest and lowest  
Commissioners is 415  
residents

**Precinct Boundaries:**

- District 1:** 86,93-128,Pt 129,130,174-175,182,Pt 87,190-191,196,197-198
- District 2:** 25,29-42,60-85,Pt 87,88-92,132-144,146,148,Pt 149,185-187, Pt 189
- District 3:** Pt 129,131,145,Pt 149,150-173,179-181,183,199-208
- District 4:** 1-24,26-28,43-59,176-178,184,192-195

**General Comments:**

- 1 Commissioner 1 increase the number of precincts he serves, gains Fort Bliss
- 2 Commissioner 2 is centralized in Downtown area, increase some Westside precincts
- 3 Commissioner 3 losings some precincts but remains almost the same.
- 4 Commissioner 4 increases Northeast precincts, losing some Westside precincts.

## *Healthy Food Financing Initiative*

The Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI) provides grants for small business development that results in sustainable businesses that provide healthy foods in underserved neighborhoods and communities in El Paso County.

The County approved the first round of grants last year, just as the pandemic took hold. Still, three projects got underway, and in late August, County Commissioners Court approved four more awards.

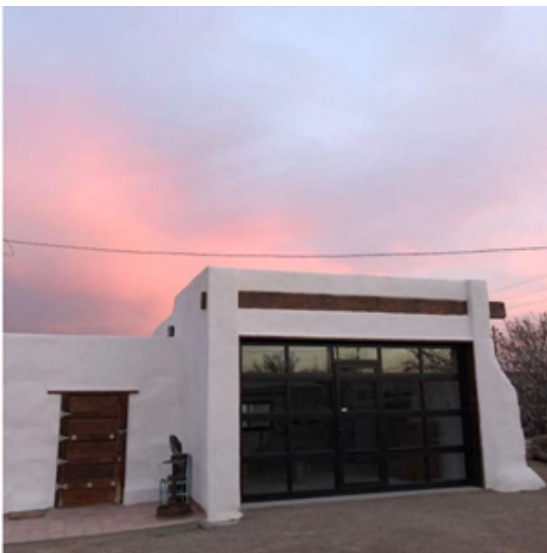
The first three projects were:

- Bodega Loya in Socorro was awarded \$63,366 to renovate an existing structure on a family heritage farm. They operate a farm stand at 10257 Socorro Road and offer local produce and other food products. They accept SNAP, deal with local vendors such as Alameda Eco, Flicks Farm, Full Circle Mushrooms, Licon Dairy, and West Texas Poultry, and grow produce and feature items like Mexican squash, onions, peaches, okra, mushrooms, pecans, radishes, watermelon, kale, lettuce, tomatoes, collard greens, asadero, duck & chicken eggs, and cucumbers.
- Desert Spoon Food Hub in Central El Paso, at 1714 Yandell, which was awarded \$ 150,000 for produce processing and box assembly, cold storage, a refrigerated van, and development of a micro-grocery store.
- XCF Kitchen in Horizon City, which was awarded \$18,613 to purchase equipment and hire staff to expand food prep offerings and delivery.

The HFFI initiative was first created through partnerships of local governments in Philadelphia and the Food Trust, a non-profit organization. It provides a one-time capital infusion to projects that increase the availability of healthy and affordable food in high-need areas in El Paso County.

Funding comes from \$500,000 from the County and \$500,000 in loans from PeopleFund, a community development financing institution.

Grants will generally not exceed \$150,000, and 30-50% of the proposed project's total cost should include financing or owner equity. ALL applications undergo financial review and verification of credit worthiness, among other proposal vetting.





## *Healthy Food cont.*

Of the projects approved in late August, two are in the Valley, and two in Central El Paso:

- \$76,000 to the Please and Thank You Company for an addition to their San Elizario space that will serve as a farmers market stand, which also will offer jams and canned seasonal vegetables. The existing building will offer active living programming, nutrition education, and health screenings.
- \$143,000 to Brown Street Market to restore and renovate a historic building that housed Moon Grocery for many decades. The Acuna family has begun to procure locally produced foods such as kombucha, coffees, and hummus to help support fellow small businesses while encouraging healthy habits.
- \$76,000 for Roots Mobile Farm Market to redevelop an 84 square foot trailer into mobile market. They have coordinated with local and regional food producers to offer a variety of staple grocery items at locations in Clint, Fabens, Tornillo, and San Elizario. They will target isolated elderly members of the community and plan to include wheel chair accessibility on the extensions to be installed on the outside of the mobile market.
- \$150k for Border City Distribution to support the redevelopment of a storefront space in their food processing facility in Central El Paso. They plan to offer low cost staple grocery items and to-go foods, sourced through local vendors where possible, and redevelop their parking lot to serve as event space for an ongoing weekly farmers market.

“One of the joys of working in local government is to see the direct impact programs like this can have,” Commissioner Stout said. “In this case, we are supporting small business for relatively low costs, and those businesses have a positive impact on health and community quality-of-life.”

“This creates spaces that improve communities, and make them more attractive both for existing residents and for newcomers,” he said. “It’s a true win-win and I’m very proud to have brought this program to El Paso, and thankful for the support of Commissioners Court, County Staff, PeopleFund, and our partners with the UT Health School of Public Health, which helped develop and administer the program.”



# *Ascarate/Parks Master Plan*

On December 16, 2019, Commissioners Court approved the contract for Comprehensive Park and Recreation Master Plan Services with HALFF Inc. The work was interrupted by the pandemic, but on Aug. 19 HALFF Inc. returned to present a Master Plan concept for the countywide parks system. This is to help guide infrastructure investments, programs, maintenance and department operations for the next 10 to 15 years.

The master plan addresses such planning criteria as the county's changing demographics, the existing level of service of parks, potential development and maintenance, recreation programming and partnerships, and funding, which includes our Capital Improvement Program and grants.

Some of the system-wide highlights from the last couple of years include receiving the All-Abilities Playground Grant for Ascarate, Gallegos, and Risinger Parks, a Texas Parks & Wildlife grant for San Felipe Park, hiring Special Events Division Marketing staff, the Coyote Park Grand Opening, and of course, the parks master plan, which includes Ascarate Park.

The plan for Ascarate includes dredging and repairing the lake, creating an events location, and extending the loop road to potentially create a new entrance at Fonseca Drive.

"I'm very excited to add to, and maintain, the crown jewel not only of the County parks system but also, frankly, of regional parks that have been developed," Commissioner Stout said. "Ascarate Park is more than 400 acres total, and even without the golf course, which is 280 acres, it still boasts a 45-acre lake, open space, walking trails, trees, picnic areas, playgrounds, and ballfields."

The County has invested about \$5 million over the past four years for various improvements to the aquatics center, restrooms, picnic areas and more.

"The potential improvements to Ascarate are exciting, but we also have to keep in mind that the park is already amazing. Through surveys and public meetings, our consultants found that Ascarate is by far the most used County park, with the golf course and pool as consistent attractions," Commissioner Stout said. "We also found that trails, shade, and natural and picnic areas are the public's priorities. In other words, while the public appreciates and uses the attractions, it's just a great place to sit by the lake under a tree and relax, or to come have a picnic with the family.

## ASCARATE PARK VISION CONCEPT ACTIONS/SEQUENCE

- Master Plan
- Dredge/repair lake
- Enhance promenade
- Continue to enhance all abilities play area
- Lakeside amphitheater/entertainment node
- Create events location
- Relocate golf to allow loop road to continue
- Improve second access
- Relocate CoEP fire training site (long range)



"I do understand the need for attractions to generate revenue, and look forward to specific plans and funding proposals, but the priority should be the basics asked for by the public," he said. "Ascarate is the people's park, for all of El Paso, and I am excited to help maintain what it has while building its future."



## ***Sports Commission Contract***

The El Paso County Coliseum is managed through a contract between the County of El Paso and the El Paso County Sports Commission. The contract has been in place for over 20 years. In July, Commissioners Court approved two new contracts, one to manage the Coliseum and one for sports tourism. Both are for two years with an automatic renewal for a third year if they meet a certain revenue performance metric.

The changes will produce more transparency in accounting, allowing Commissioners Court to review and evaluate Coliseum and sports tourism management. Performance reporting, quarterly reports, and profit-sharing are key elements of new agreement.

Commissioner Stout supported this contract amendment because he does not believe it is good governmental practice to have contracts last so long. Even if they are re-awarded to the same entity, it is good practice to go out to bid to understand where the market is and to ensure the taxpayers are getting the biggest bang for their buck. As far as he knows this is the only contract of its kind; all other contracts go out to bid, usually every three to five years at the latest.

“The Sports Commission has done a good job at running the coliseum and attracting sports tourism,” said Commissioner Stout. “However, a contract as long as this one is not standard practice. We need to do all we can to ensure we are getting the best service possible at a competitive price.”

While the county works on the specifications for the new bid, the Sports Commission contract was amended requiring quarterly updates to the Commissioners Court and additional accountability measures to track how the Sports Commission spends Hotel Occupancy Taxes (HOT), their main source of revenue.

Commissioner Stout said that he is optimistic for what the future holds for the Coliseum and Sports Tourism in the County of El Paso.

## ***Segundo Barrio Historic District/Downtown Historic District Update***

The Segundo Barrio Historic District designation from the federal government is on its way!

It's hard to imagine a place more fundamental to El Paso's identity than the Segundo Barrio, which was wild, natural space only 150 years ago. From the application, speaking of Segundo Barrio in the 1850s, “Segundo Barrio remained marked as “bosque”—or forest habitat found along flood plains of streams and rivers in the Southwest—on the plat map.”

But by the turn of the century, development was taking place.

“The relative lack of dense development in the southern portion of Segundo Barrio at the time facilitated construction of additional rail spurs on the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe line between 1902 and 1905 (fig. 4). Mixed-use development in Segundo Barrio quickly followed.”

## Update cont.

After this period of growth, the highways played the major role in the modern urban history of El Paso, both pre- and post-World War 2.

“Two routes connecting Segundo Barrio with the international bridges received U.S. highway designations from the 1920s through the 1950s – with Paisano Street/Stanton Street designated as part of the official route of U.S. Highway 85 and Santa Fe Street as part of U.S. Highway 54 (fig. 40). ... Additional highway construction along the southern boundary of Segundo Barrio began in the 1970s, leading to and from the rail yards west of Segundo Barrio (figs. 47 and 48). ... The project also razed all structures and erased the historic street grid south of Ninth Avenue, making Ninth Avenue the southern boundary of the Segundo Barrio Historic District today (maps 1-9).”

“I expect the Segundo Barrio Historic District to be approved,” said Commissioner Stout. “Meanwhile, however, the Downtown Historic District application is with the National Park Service in a sort of limbo. It meets all the criteria, but because more than 50 percent of property owners, by a very slim margin, oppose the district, it has not been approved.”

Nationally designated Historic Districts come with no property rights restrictions, but they do provide financing tools that give property owners incentives to renovate their properties. Certain restrictions on the property do apply if, and only if, property owners decide to use those financing tools, typically tax credits.

“I hope that once property owners Downtown see how it works in the Segundo Barrio district, they will withdraw their objections, which are based on misinformation about their property rights in a nationally recognized historic district,” said Commissioner Stout. “Meanwhile, I’m very excited to see the Segundo Barrio District one step closer to being realized!”

### Segundo Barrio Historic District, El Paso County, Texas

Figure 12. Original plat of the American town of “El Paso” (formerly known as “Franklin”), drawn by Anson Mills in 1859. Note that development stops south of Overland Street. Source: Alice White, “The Development of Irrigation in the City of El Paso,” *Password of the El Paso County Historical Society* vol. IV no. 1 (January 1959): 32.



## *Reimagine I-10 / Downtown 10*

On July 26, Commissioners Court considered and approved two significant items:

- Hiring a third-party consultant to evaluate the Downtown I-10 Segment 2 Project data set regarding traffic projections for the project.
- Providing public comment regarding the inclusion of Downtown 10 in the TXDOT Unified Transportation Program, or UTP. This is the document that lays out a 10-year, statewide funding plan.

The project goal to widen the highway and add frontage roads between Cobia and Executive - a six-mile stretch - is based on a "purpose and need" statement. This in large part is driven by a very technical formula called the Travel Demand Model - what highway planners think future freeway traffic will look like. A small handful of consultants nationally understand it completely.

That's why TXDOT, the state agency, and the Metropolitan Planning Org, the local transportation agency, known as the MPO, contract the work out. Even their experts are dependent on these consultants. There are very few independent experts who do not do business with TXDOT.

The public deserves an evaluation by an independent expert given the significance of this data to the process, and that's what a majority of Commissioners voted to support.

The project as promoted makes the highway worse. TXDOT may find ways to make its proposal "less worse," but after 50 years of air pollution, increasing heat island effect, noise, and vibrations, we deserve better. This is especially so given acknowledgement at the highest levels of govt, from the White House to the Secretary of Transportation, of the general effect of highways, and of the specific effect on black and brown communities throughout the country.

El Paso is no exception. US 54 between Austin Terrace and Government Hills and Chivas Town? That was part of our urban fabric, blocks and blocks of neighborhood. Or what about Lincoln Park, much of which was demolished for the Spaghetti Bowl; or the Saipan neighborhood, which even until recent years was plagued by flooding south of the freeway and was bought out by the City. The highway is a major source of natural runoff disruption, leading to problems south of the freeway.

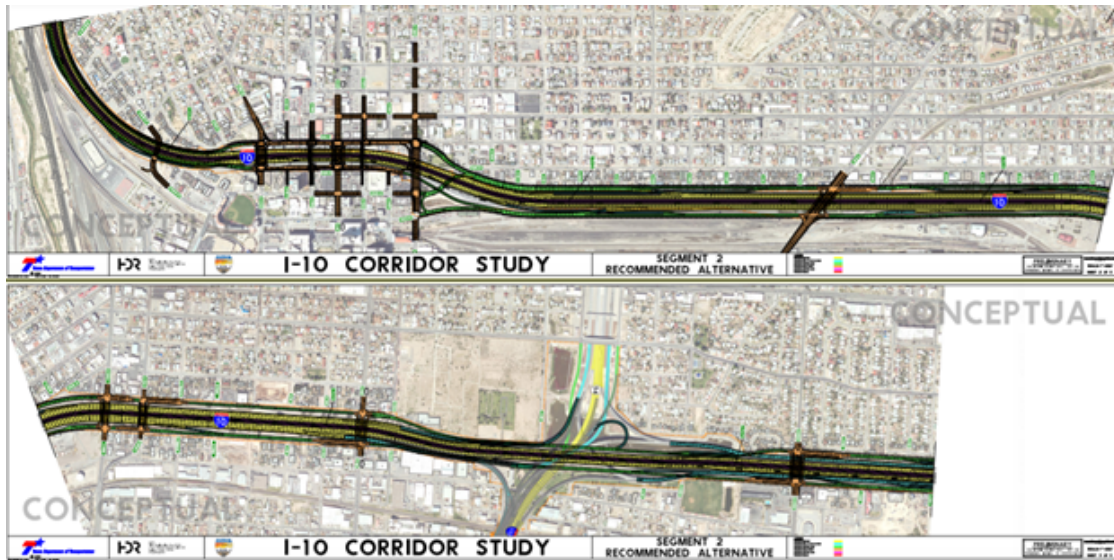
These are just a few of the neighborhoods disrupted or destroyed by the highway. That time has passed.

Regarding the funding for the proposed Downtown 10 widening and frontage roads, the concept matches the poor design of the project. Regarding the project, Commissioner Stout doesn't want to see hundreds of millions of dollars put into I-10, which has already done enough damage to our community, especially in a time of climate change, with heat island effect, flooding, air pollution, and other external costs that are paid by residents of this community.

But the proposal by TXDOT would not even fund the project completely, AND it would require El Paso to commit to the project as proposed, which is to say, widening and frontage roads.

"Out of one side of their mouth, project proponents are telling us that we're overreacting, and TXDOT may not widen the highway or add frontage roads, and out of the other," Commissioner Stout said. "They're telling us to take the deal, where El Paso gets \$4 million for a \$750 million project, but commits to accepting the project as proposed, which is ... you guessed it, widening and frontage roads."

## *Downtown 10 cont.*



Further, they're also claim the project is critical not only for local traffic but for national and international traffic. So if it's so important for the state, why isn't the state fully funding it?

Many in the community don't want a project that makes existing damage to the community worse, and especially don't want to pay for it with local dollars!

"To be clear, the court wasn't taking a position on the project as a whole. These items were specific to the data evaluation, and to the funding," Commissioner Stout said. "I definitely oppose it, and hope that as we go through the process I will be able to convince ALL of my fellow members of the Court of this position."

The plan and process so far has been completely one-sided. In fact, on March 8, El Paso Commissioners' Court unanimously approved submitting a public comment to TXDOT requesting that the agency continue studying two alternatives they are preparing to abandon for the project known as Downtown 10. TXDOT refused, and further, still has not provided answers to questions raised in a letter sent by Commissioner Stout and Precinct 3 Commissioner Iliana Holguin more than three months ago.

Evaluating the data simply puts the County exactly where it should be – responding to Community requests for more information, which is not being provided by TXDOT. One does not have to share Commissioner Stout's feelings about the project to see the value in responding to this data, which could be helpful to TXDOT itself!

Finally, one of the project proponents said during the meeting that change is hard, implying that the almost 20 members of the community who called in – by far the most seen at the court in many many many meetings – were simply being naysayers.

"That is condescending and insulting. The community members who want better alternatives for work on the freeway are diverse and forward-looking," Commissioner Stout said. It is this project that represents the status quo, spending huge amounts of money for more of the same; displace folks, separate communities, and build more roads. El Paso deserves much better, and that's what I'm fighting for."

## *Community IDs*

Commissioners Court has set aside up to \$500,000 for an El Paso Community Identification Card. It may not survive the budget process by the end of September, or even if it does we may never be able to implement it because Commissioners' Court is not unanimous in support – although we passed a resolution in support of Community ID in late July - but it's there for now.

Many El Paso County residents—including but not limited to the homeless, children and students, transgender persons, the indigent, the disabled, the elderly, immigrants and mixed-status families, runaway youth or youth exiting the foster-care system, justice involved individuals, survivors of domestic violence, and others—are currently unserved or underserved by existing official identification (ID).

This population, which numbers well beyond 100,000 - more than 10 percent of the County's total population - needs access to some form of government issued identification.

The lack of official identification impedes the ability of these persons to exist in their daily lives, restricting their access to emergency services, financial services, other government services, and civic life more broadly, and particularly reinforces reservations held by these communities that lead them to not report crimes to the police or to bear witness in criminal investigations, a well-documented problem in communities across this state and this nation.

Such reservations about interacting with local authorities without proper ID leads these communities to likewise under-report labor, health, and housing violations, which combined with under-reporting of criminal activity, means that our communities are less safe for all residents. This lack of identification also significantly increases the chances that mixed-status families are divided by deportation.

In terms of contributing to the life of the community, persons lacking valid identification are often unable to open bank accounts, leaving them in a cash-based economy that makes them particularly likely targets for robberies and assaults. Further, the inability to access bank accounts makes these individuals unable to acquire financial services, such as home or auto loans, checking accounts, or savings accounts, that they need to prosper financially, thus making the entire community less dynamic and prosperous.

An El Paso Community Identification Card would fill a void by providing an official form of personal identification for the tens of thousands of El Paso residents who face the challenges described above as they try to live their lives without such identification.

It would help to unify the El Paso community, make it safer and more secure, more prosperous and economically dynamic, and facilitate participation in public and private aspects of city life.

The Cities of New Haven, Connecticut, San Francisco, California, Oakland, California, Newark, New Jersey, New York, New York, Hartford, Connecticut and Richmond, California are among those who have implemented such municipal ID programs. They have uniformly reported an increases in the reporting of crimes in those cities, as well as other signs of increased civic integration and community success.

So for these reasons, I am fighting for El Paso Community Identification Cards.

## *Asylum Seekers and Office of New Americans*

El Paso is used to welcoming folks into the community, from the last influx of migrants in 2018 to the current influx of unaccompanied minors to Afghan refugees now arriving. Since 2018, Commissioner Stout has advocated for the creation of a County Office of New Americans, which was finally funded and established in FY 2020-2021.

With one full time staff person, the office works to be a conduit of resources for those who are newly calling the United States home.

From assisting individuals with Citizenship Workshops, community assistance, to connecting individuals with the Chambers of Commerce to assist with small business development, this office is meant to be a one stop shop for folks calling El Paso home.

“El Paso is the new Ellis Island,” said Commissioner Stout. “Folks are no longer traveling by boat to New York City, they’re making the trek through Mexico from Central America and from all parts of the world, and I’m proud that we’re ready to welcome them with even more services and assistance so that they can begin contributing to the collective American Dream.”

The Office of New Americans is housed under the County’s Community Services Department and can be contacted at 915-775-2718 or by contacting Lorey Gonzalez-Flores, the Community Outreach Coordinator for the Office at [LoFlores@epcounty.com](mailto:LoFlores@epcounty.com).

## *Resolutions*

June 3 – Immigrant Heritage Month: America is, always has been, and always will be a Nation of Immigrants, from our founding as an independent state to the defining words on the Statute of Liberty, from which “her beacon-hand glows world-wide welcome.” There is more work to be done to extend the full promise of America to all, including the nearly 11 million people in this country who are undocumented.

June 7 – Pride Month: We declared June 2021 as PRIDE Month in El Paso County, Texas, and ordered that the PRIDE Flag be flown at the El Paso County Courthouse throughout the month of June every year to celebrate and honor the LGBTQIA+ Community. By doing this, we celebrate our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual El Pasoans, and encourage all residents to take pride in our diverse community.

June 14 – Juneteenth: Juneteenth celebrates June 19, 1865, when in 1865 Union Major-General Gordon Granger read General Order No. 3. This is both an incredibly significant moment - legal freedom - and also just a first step. Following this, America broke so many promises of freedom and full participation in the economic, political and social life. Juneteenth is a celebration and a moment to take stock and vow to continue our work.

June 14 – Women Veterans Day: Women have formally been a part of the United States Armed Forces since the establishment of the Army Nurses Corps in 1901, but have informally served since the inception of the United States military. El Paso County designated June 12th as “Women Veterans Recognition Day” to recognize the service and sacrifices of women veterans of El Paso County who have served both those still living and those who died in the service of this country; and most proudly to commemorate the 73rd Anniversary of the signing of the Women's Armed Forces Integration Act of 1948.



## *Resolutions*

June 21 – EP County 1115 Waiver: El Paso County Commissioners Court passed a resolution encouraging the Department of Health and Human Services and CMS to approve an extension of the DSRIP program to at least September 30, 2022; should an extension not be granted, the El Paso County Commissioners Court requested the Texas Legislature make available contingency funds to replace those lost by the expiration of the DSRIP program, to ensure uninterrupted and much-needed healthcare and mental health funding.

June 21 – Father Ed: Father Ed Rosen-Lucero served as a strong advocate for those without economic, social, or political power in the greater El Paso community for over 40 years, both in and out of church; Father Ed is currently transitioning to the Archdiocese of Santa Fe so as to be closer to his family and loved ones.

July 12 – Bebe Moore Campbell: The Bebe Moore Campbell National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month was established by Congress in 2008 to start changing this; this year's theme is Strength in Communities, which includes highlighting alternative mental health supports addressing the mental health needs of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), as well as queer and trans BIPOC (QTBIPOC), focusing on three topic areas: community care, self-directed care, and cultural care.

July 12 – No Lost Food: Food waste is estimated by USDA's Economic Research Service at between 30-40 percent of the food supply, corresponding to approximately 133 billion pounds and \$161 billion worth of food in 2010; no Lost Food has grown to match food providers - ranging from individual donors, stores, bakeries, restaurants and more - in a safe, legal, and systemic way with volunteers and with hungry individuals and families in El Paso and Juarez.

July 26 – Community IDs: many El Paso County residents—including but not limited to the homeless, children and students, transgendered persons, the indigent, the disabled, the elderly, immigrants and mixed-status families, runaway youth or youth exiting the foster-care system, justice involved individuals, survivors of domestic violence, and others—are currently unserved or underserved by existing official identification (ID).

Aug. 2 – Make a Wish Foundation: Make-A-Wish® has one program, granting wishes for children facing critical illness; a Sunshine Box can greatly help bring a smile to the nearly 100 kids in the El Paso area that are waiting to receive their wish; we encouraged El Paso County Employees, Departments, and Offices to consider sponsoring individual or group Sunshine Boxes to bring much-needed smiles to these special kids in our community as they wait for their wishes to be fulfilled and further recognized August 2021 as Sunshine Month in El Paso County.

Aug. 9 - Kayla Gomez: Kayla Gomez is a proud El Pasoan and has earned numerous titles distinguishing herself internationally in her chosen sport of boxing; Kayla has accumulated 54 wins and only 4 losses over the course of her career; she is a 13 time National Champion and 2 time International Champion; and Team USA for three years running as well as a proud Under Armour Female Athlete of the year USA Boxing National Championship in April 2021 2021 Junior Pan American Games Qualifier.

Aug. 23 – Ralph Cloud: Yucca Neighborhood Association in the Bel Air area was proudly led and served by Mr. Ralph Cloud for more than 15 years until his passing on Tuesday, August 17th, 2021; we extended our heartfelt and sincere condolences to the Cloud family, reminding them that Mr. Cloud's service was appreciated by all of us and that his service will continue to live through the community.

# Resolutions cont.

Aug. 30 - Commissioners Court designated September as “Suicide Prevention Awareness Month” in El Paso County. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for people aged ten to thirty-four, and fourth leading cause of death for people aged thirty-four to fifty-four. El Pasoans can text “NAMI” to 741-741 to access the Crisis Text line, or call the Emergence Health Network Crisis line at 915-779-1800, if they or a loved one are experiencing a mental health crisis.

Aug. 30 - Commissioners Court also congratulated the actors, writers, producers, director and crew of “El Otro Tom,” thanks the Paso Del Norte Film Fund for its work, and expressed its support for further development of the creative arts industry in El Paso. The film has been accepted to a prestigious festival in Venice, Italy. El Pasoans Julia Chavez and Israel Rodriguez, age 10, star as a single mother and son dealing with his behavioral difficulties while facing challenges on numerous fronts.



*WHEREAS, members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, plus (LGBTQIA+) community are part of our local, state, and national society, making up our family, friends, neighbors, and colleagues; and*

*WHEREAS, the month of June has been the time to commemorate the anniversary of the Stonewall Rebellion in New York City, which many consider to be the birth of the modern LGBTQIA+ movement, where LGBTQIA+ patrons fought back against brutality; and*

*WHEREAS, June is officially recognized as Pride Month by the LGBTQIA+ community, and many Pride events still occur on the last Sunday in June to commemorate the anniversary of Stonewall with marches and gatherings; and*

*WHEREAS, these important community events play a key role in raising the profile of the community and commemorating the history of the LGBTQIA+ social movement, while Pride also marks an opportunity for the community to come together and take stock and recognize the advances made and setbacks endured; and*

*WHEREAS, Pride events illustrate the diversity of the LGBTQIA+ community in the United States and abroad, equally as diverse as our nation as a whole; and*

*WHEREAS, even a pandemic could not stop Sun City Pride from organizing a successful, socially distant, car parade last year and Sun City Pride is back this year with the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual El Paso Sun City Pridefest Block Party on Saturday, June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021; and*

*WHEREAS, we celebrate our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual community, honoring the sacrifices they have made and continue to make in our social, political, and economic sphere and that we encourage all residents to take pride in our diverse community;*

*NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the El Paso County Judge and Commissioners Court that we order that the PRIDE Flag be flown at the El Paso County Courthouse throughout the month of June, every year, to celebrate and honor the LGBTQIA+ Community and further declare June 2021 as*

**“Pride Month”  
in El Paso County, Texas**

SIGNED, this 7<sup>th</sup> day of June 2021

Commissioner Carlos Leon, Pct. 1

Commissioner David Stout, Pct. 2

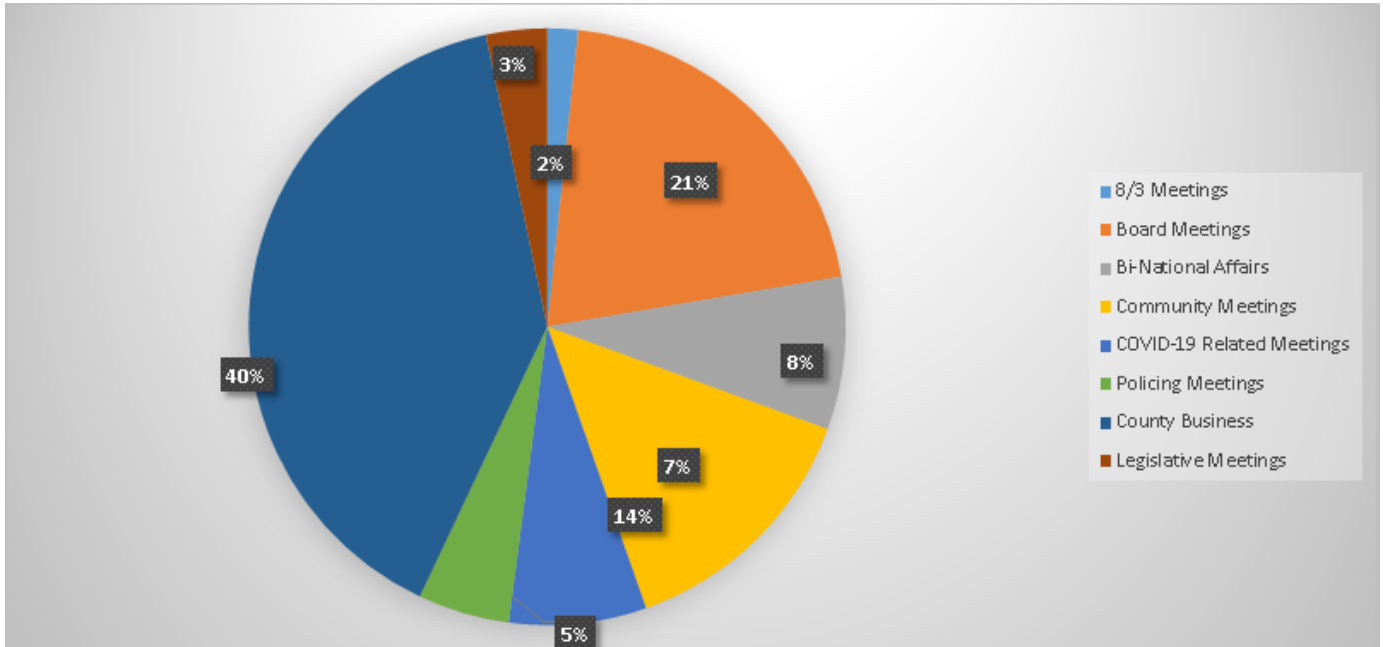
Commissioner Iliana Higuera, Pct. 3

Commissioner Carl Robinson, Pct. 4

Ricardo A. Samaniego, County Judge

# *Precinct 2 by the Numbers*

## **Office Meetings in Q1: Total 107**



\*between June 1, 2021 and August 31, 2020

### **Office Statistics**

- 17 Commissioners Court meetings since January 1, 2021
- 14 resolutions sponsored
- 3 op-eds published

# *Commissioner Stout in the News*

<https://www.ktsm.com/news/notorious-naked-harem-sign-removed-after-15-years-post-shut-down-in-central-el-paso/>

<https://spectrumlocalnews.com/tx/south-texas-el-paso/news/2021/09/20/el-paso-county-commissioners-formally-welcome-afghan-refugees>

<https://kfoxtv.com/news/local/el-paso-county-plans-to-renovate-deteriorating-county-parks>

<https://www.ktsm.com/local/el-paso-county-to-study-proposed-i-10-expansion-data/>

<https://www.ktsm.com/local/el-paso-news/el-paso-county-breaks-ground-for-an-all-abilities-playground/>

<https://www.elpasotimes.com/story/news/local/el-paso/2021/08/31/el-paso-county-commissioners-court-lowers-tax-rate-3-6/5664258001/>

<https://www.ktsm.com/local/el-paso-news/el-paso-county-adopts-2022-budget-reduces-tax-rate/>

<https://www.elpasotimes.com/story/opinion/2021/08/26/expanded-voter-access-helps-el-paso-county-voters-heard-david-stout/5601302001/>

<https://www.ktsm.com/local/future-el-paso-events-monitored-as-covid-19-cases-rise/>

<https://elpasomatters.org/2021/08/16/university-medical-center-plans-to-cut-tax-rate-get-34-7-million-federal-relief-funds-from-county/>

## **Follow Us Online!**

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DavidStout**

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**Questions?**

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