

## **County and City Data Analysis from a recent appraisal**

### **CITY DATA**

Hobbs is the largest city in Lea County. The most recent population figures available from the 2000 Census indicate a population of 28,657 in Hobbs. This is a decrease of 458 people or a 1.6% decline in population from 1990 to 2000. Lea County has a population of 55,511, which is a decrease of .5% since 1990. In effect, the local population has been fairly stable over the last 10 years.

The city of Hobbs is located in the southeastern quadrant of New Mexico a short distance from the Texas border. The major access routes through Hobbs are U.S. Highway 180-62 and State Road 18

(which is the North Lovington Highway). Transportation is primarily by personal vehicle and transport trucks.

The principle industry in the area is oil and gas. A 1200 bed, private operated, medium-security was recently built at the Hobbs Industrial Air Park. Approximately 250 permanent positions are required to operate the prison. Lea County estimates the prison and subsidiary industries will contribute at least \$50 million into the county's economy. Utilities and city services are adequate. Health services are adequate for a city the size of Hobbs. The school system in Hobbs is generally considered adequate.

The most current labor report, preliminary in January of 2005 indicates a labor force of 25,950 with a 3.7% unemployment rate. The employed labor force has decreased from one year ago. This indicates little to no growth in the local economy. The majority of the new development in Hobbs is north of Marland Street (Hobbs' main east/west highway). The development is both residential and commercial/industrial. Most of the new commercial development is along Joe Harvey Boulevard and further north along the North Lovington Highway. There are several vacant land sales in these areas. This is an indicator that the growth that is occurring in the area is generally north of the subject.

The oil and gas portion of the economy has been fairly stable, with some recent improvement, even considering the unsettled world market conditions. Demand in the residential portion of the economy has recently increased and improved due to lower interest rates, local economic improvement and lack of housing. Overall, economic improvement is expected to continue. A new Super Wal-Mart, which is located on Joe Harvey Boulevard was completed in the fall of 2002. New restaurants that include national chain such as Chili's and

Applebee's have recently opened on Joe Harvey Boulevard. Other locally owned operations have recently opened. In addition a Home Depot home improvement chain recently opened. A new casino race track opened recently that has realized an increase in local tourism. The rack track will have only a 45 day race season that will begin in October. Hobbs, as a whole, has adequate space for continued growth. As the economy continues to improve, additional growth is expected.

## COUNTY DATA

Lea County is located in the southeastern corner of the southeast quadrant of New Mexico. It is bordered by Texas on the east and south sides. The county seat is Lovington. The county contains 4,394 square miles. The elevation averages approximately 3,615 feet. Per the 2000 Census, the county population is 55,511, a population density of less than thirteen people per square mile. This population figure reflects a decrease of 0.5% since 1990. In effect, the local population has been fairly stable over the last ten years.

Per the current New Mexico Department of labor statistics, Lea County had an unemployment rate of 3.7% as of January of 2005. This is a decrease from August 2003 unemployment rate of 5.5% with a current employed labor force of 25,950 people. This indicates a stable labor force in Lea County.

The county property tax is regulated by the county and state. Property taxes are not excessive when compared to surrounding states. Therefore, property taxes are not considered to be repressive.

Recent additions to the Lea County economic base include some the following new developments. A 1200-bed, private operated, medium-security prison was recently built at the Hobbs Industrial Air Park. Approximately 250 permanent positions are required by the new prison. Lea County estimates the prison and subsidiary industries will contribute at least \$50 million annually into the county's economy. The Lea County Cheese Plant, which is located just south of Lovington, currently handles 1.7 million pounds of milk per day. It is being expanded by an additional 40% and will then handle up to 2.4 million pounds of milk daily. Approximately 100 people are employed at the cheese plant.