

# STATE OF THE COMMUNITY REPORT

## PRESIDIO COUNTY, TEXAS



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## Executive Summary

Presidio County, Texas is nestled in far west Texas (Trans-Pecos) next to Big Bend National Park. This county presented a unique challenge due to the limited amount of information available to the general public. Request for information were sent via email to county officials and well as the Mayor of Marfa and Presidio Cities. This report covers the state of the community including the people, economy, housing, land use and environment, and transportation infrastructure. Data was collected from the US Census Bureau, the Texas Real Estate Center, the Texas Almanac and various published articles available on the internet. We address issues and concerns that were discussed via telephone with Ann Dunlap, the Mayor's wife of Marfa, Texas.

Marfa has had a major impact on the community and region since the early 1970's with the influx of arts and culture, spawned from Donald Judd and the Chinati Foundation while Presidio remains one of only seven border crossings into Mexico in the US. There are many opportunities to grow and thrive within the community as discussed in this report as well as issues and concerns.

In conclusion, Presidio County offers a great location where ranchers and artists intermingle creating one of the most interesting counties in Texas. This mix mash is not normal where cowboys bring the dirt and grime and painters capture the moment making beautiful sculptures and paintings.

## Introduction

### Presidio County, TX

Located in the Trans-Pecos region and partially in the Chihuahuan Desert, Presidio County was formed from Bexar County in 1850 and was originally the largest county in the US covering some 12,000 square miles. The boundaries were changed in 1883 dividing it into 3 other counties giving way to its current shape, covering 3,856 square miles making it the fourth largest county in Texas (Smith, 2010). The population fluctuated with the coming and going of US Troops supported at two Army bases in the county from World War I to shortly after World War II. The economy is primarily agriculture and tourism. The county has limited transportation infrastructure to cover the vast lands. The total road network of the county consists of 288.6 miles to cover the almost 4,000 square miles.

### City of Marfa, TX

Originally established as a water stop for the rail lines in the 1880's, Marfa's roots include cattle trade and military outposts (O'Conner and Thompson, 2014). Located in northern Presidio County, Marfa is Texas' highest incorporated city that is also a major tourist destination for the arts industry thanks to a man named Donald Judd (Rao, 2015). This highly acclaimed art critic brought an entire new industry to Marfa while it was on the brink of collapsing. All the hype seems to be disappearing and has a new energy spurred by younger, trendy art gurus (Rao, 2015).

The Marfa lights is a unique phenomenon that draws thousands of visitors each year to the Marfa Lights festival every Labor Day weekend (2015, Marfa). First seen over a hundred

years ago, this sighting is a regular occurrence which some believe they are distant headlights while other say it's from out of this world.

### **City of Presidio, TX**

Presidio is located at the US Mexico border and is one of seven international trade routes. As the largest city in the county, Presidio is thought to be the “oldest continuously cultivated area in the United States,” as far back as 1500 B.C. (O’Conner and Thompson, 2014). The people here are predominantly Hispanic and much of the workforce stems from homeland security and the school district.

### **Why Presidio County?**

Due to the decentralization of information, Presidio presents a difficult challenge limited by the amount of public information available. Since the early 1970’s, Presidio County has been revitalized by the arts and culture industry mixing cowboys and artists. There is much to learn on how a completely different industry can take a town by the horns and revitalize it. Some people think gentrification is happening while others are skeptical and believe it will fade away (Rao, 2015). What remains true in this county is one thing, and that while people come and go, the land will always be here.

## Population

### Size

According to 2000 and 2010 United States Census Bureau population statistics for Presidio County, City of Marfa and City of Presidio, it is easy to see immediately that they experienced different growth rate. According to 2010 census, the population in the Presidio County, Texas is 7,818. Compare with the 2000 census' population 7,304, the county experienced a 7.04% of growth rate during the past ten years. The county seat: City of Marfa has population of 1,981(2010 Census). From 2000, the population decreased 6.60%. In contrast, the population in the City of Presidio (4,426 based on 2010 census) raised 6.22%. At the same time, the state and national population growth rates are 20.59% and 9.71% respectively which are much higher than the county and cities population growth<sup>1</sup>.

Table 1. The population size in Presidio County, City of Marfa, Presidio and Texas (2000 & 2010)

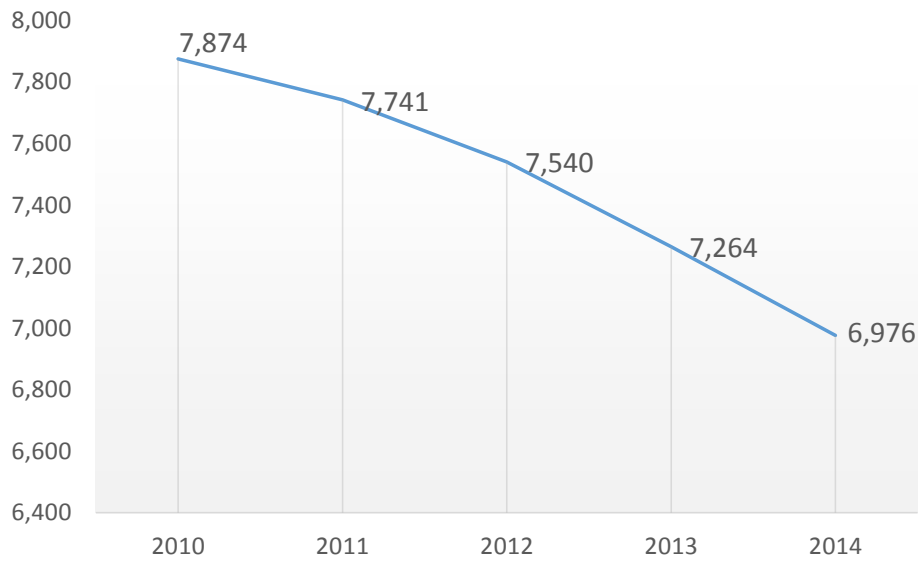
	Presidio County	City of Marfa	City of Presidio	Texas
Population 2000	7,304	2,118	4,167	20,851,820
Population 2010	7,818	1,981	4,426	25,145,561
Percent change	+7.04%	-6.60%	+6.22%	+20.59%

Source: U.S Census Bureau, 2000 &2010

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.usa.com/presidio-tx.htm>

The American Community Survey provide estimation for the population, according to the estimation of annual population, Presidio County have a significant reduction during 2010-2014, from 7,874 in 2010 to 6,976 in 2014 (See Figure 1).

Figure 1. The population Estimates of Presidio County, 2010-2014



**Density**

From the table above, it is clear that 82% of the county population clustered around two major cities: The City of Marfa in the north and the City of Presidio in the southwest. The density of the Presidio County is 2.03/sq. mi (2010 Census). Compared with the whole population density in the state of Texas which is 103.1/sq. mi, the density is extremely low in this area. While the census tract of Marfa has 1,215.79/sq. mi and Presidio has 1,720.83/sq. mi., this illustrates that the spatial distribution of the Presidio County is extremely uneven (See Figure 2).

Figure 2. Population Density in Presidio County by Block Group





## Race

The distribution of race is another factor that illustrate the characteristics of the population. In Presidio County, the distribution of race can be seen in the Table 2 where the most prevalent race is “white alone” which accounts for 85.89% (6,715 according to 2010 Census), while “Some other race alone” accounts for about 10% of the whole population. This area is closer to the border of the U.S and Mexico, which the distribution of Hispanic population needs to be taken into consideration. The Hispanic population is 6,521 which account for 83.41% of the total population (See Table 3). Among all the Hispanic population, the Mexican takes the significant percentage, 79.5% (6,218) whereas 16.6% of the population is “Not Hispanic or Latino.”

Table 2. Population by Race, 2010 Census

	Counts	Percentages
American Indian and Alaska native alone	57	0.73%
Asian alone	76	0.97%
Black or African American alone	47	0.60%
Some other race alone	771	9.86%
Two or more races	152	1.94%
White alone	6,715	85.89%

Source: U.S Census Bureau, 2010

Table 3. Population by Hispanic or Latino, 2010 Census

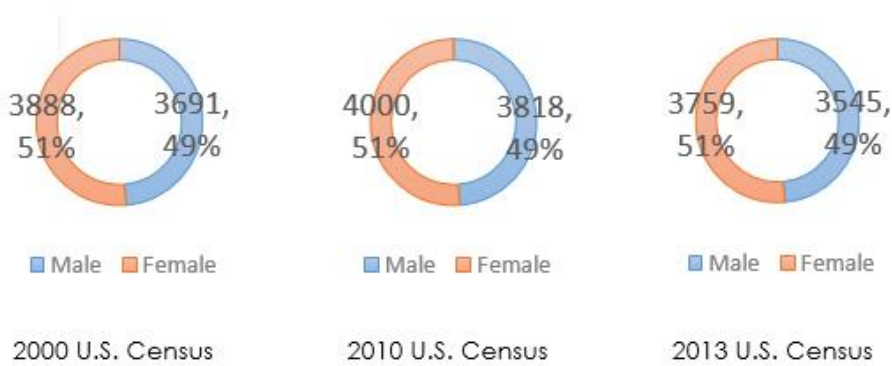
	Count	Percentage
Hispanic or Latino(of any race)	6,521	83.4%
Mexican	6,218	79.5%
Puerto Rican	18	0.2%
Other Hispanic or Latino	285	3.6%
Not Hispanic or Latino	1,297	16.6%

Source: U.S Census Bureau, 2010

**Sex and Age**

The male population is 3,818 which accounts for 48.8% and the female population is 4,000 which accounts for 51.2% according to 2010 census. The 2000 census also shows the percentages are 48.5% (male) and 51.5% (female). The 2013 American community Survey estimates the male will account for 48.7% and the female will be 51.3%. Figure 3 below demonstrates that the sex distribution remain stable during the time period and in the future.

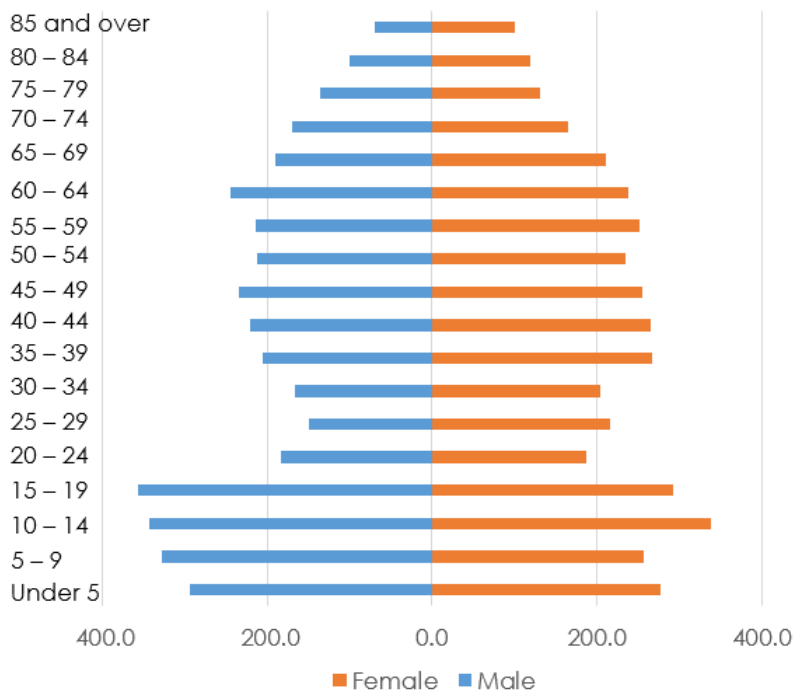
Figure 3. Population by Sex



The largest three age groups according to the 2010 U.S census are 10-14, 15-19 and 5-9. The median age in 2000 was 32.8 while 2010 was 38.50 which illustrates that age demographic of Presidio County was still middle-aged and the trend was become higher. The median in 2010 is higher than the state and nation’s median age 33.60, 37.20 respectively.

The age pyramid (Figure4) shows the age distribution by sex. The median age of male is 37.5 and the female is 39.5. Population under 18 years is much higher than the other age level. The trend of median age in the future will be lower since the population of age groups under 19 are much higher than others.

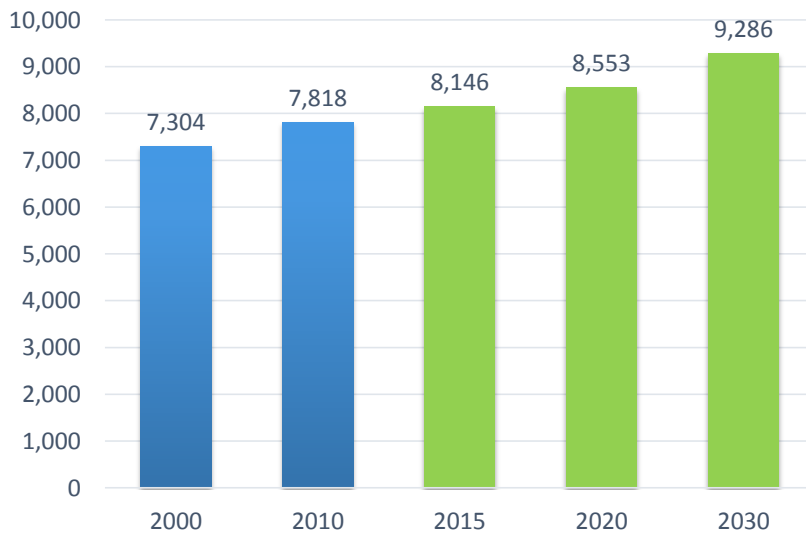
Figure 4. Presidio County Age & Sex Pyramid, 2010



**Population Projection**

According to the American Community Survey, estimation that the population in Presidio County is decreasing while the Texas Population Projections Program, which using cohort-component projection techniques, estimates the population will raise in the future. Three changes are included in separate projection: Fertility, mortality and migration. Using the Texas State Demographer’s projection for 0.0 migration scenario which assumes that immigration and outmigration are equal. The projection can be seen as the Figure 7 below:

Figure 5. Presidio County Population Projection<sup>2</sup>



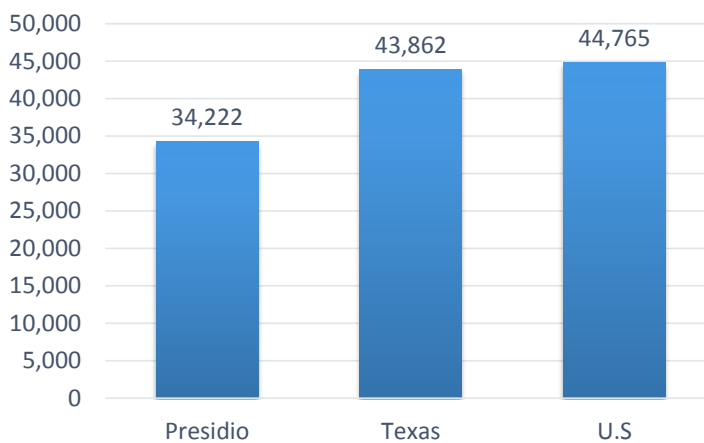
Year of 2015, 2020 and 2030 population estimations show that the population will increase in the future.

<sup>2</sup> osd.state.tx.us

## Economy

Presidio County does not belong to any major metropolitan area or metropolitan statistical area (MSA). The per capita personal income (PCPI) in 2013 is \$34,222. This was 78% of the Texas average income (which is \$43,862) and 76% of the national average income (which is \$44,765).

Figure 6. Per Capita Personal Income, 2013<sup>3</sup>



The income change rate compare with 2012 and 2013 was 5.1% while the state average was 1.4% and the national average was 1.3% at the same time. From the Figure below illustrate the state PCPI remain stable with national PCPI and the Presidio County experienced a fast growth.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.bea.gov/regional/bearfacts/action.cfm?FIPS=48377>

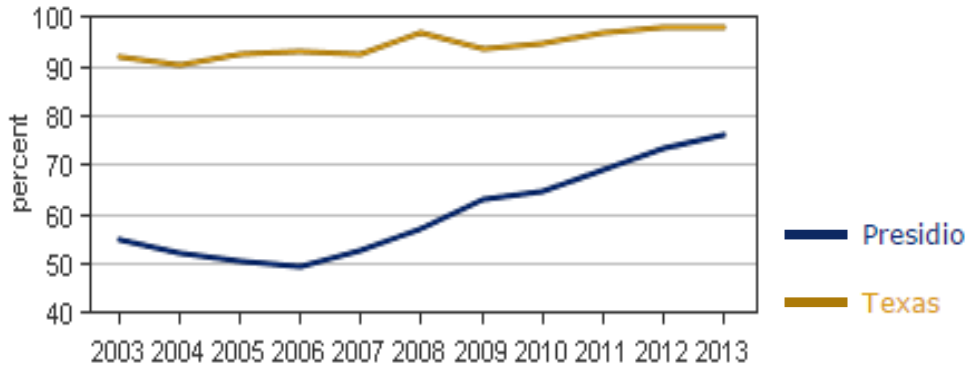


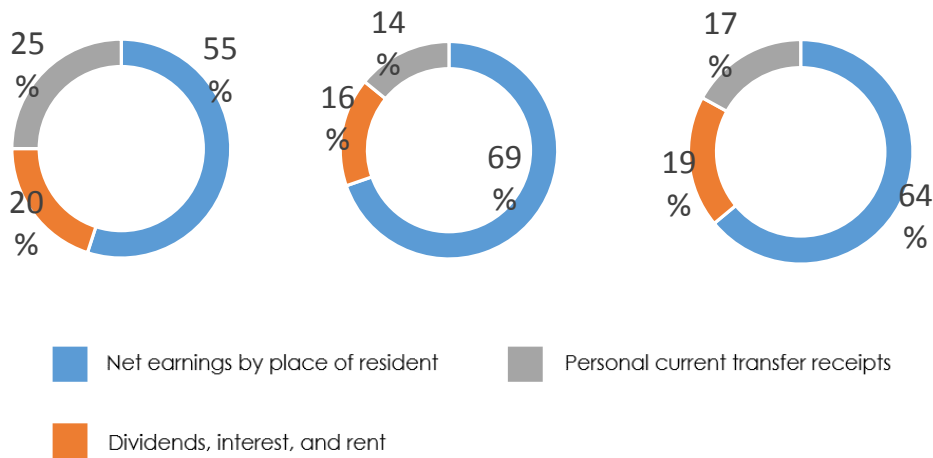
Figure 7. Per Capita Income as a Percent of the United States<sup>4</sup>

From the Bureau of Economic Analysis data, the total personal income combined with three components: Net earnings by place of resident; Dividends, interest, and rent; Personal current transfer receipts. The result shows the current transfer receipts took a larger percentage compare with state and nation. Often they are payments by governments and businesses to individuals and nonprofit institutions serving individuals<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.bea.gov/regional/bearfacts/action.cfm?FIPS=48377>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.bea.gov/regional/pdf/spi2005/06%20Personal%20Current%20Transfer%20Receipts.pdf>

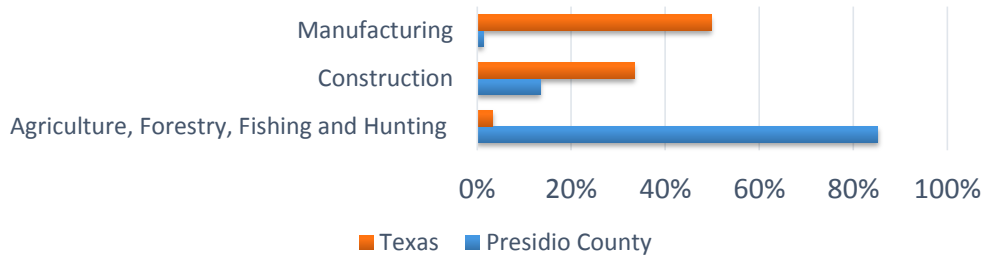
Figure 8. 2013 Percent Contribution to Total Personal Income  
(Presidio, Texas, the U.S)



Next we compare the economic structure for Presidio County and the whole Texas. Since there are only three NAISC industry sectors are involved in the county in 2011, we will only examine these components. As the Figure shows, the economy in Presidio County is highly specialized in “Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting” while the “Manufacturing” is significantly lower when compared with the state of Texas. This demonstrates that the Presidio County is not highly developed and its economic structure is still focused on the primary industry.



Figure 9. Economic Structure for State of Texas and Presidio County, 2011<sup>6</sup>



Retrieving data from On the Map, based on the inflow/outflow analysis from the year 2011 presented in Figure, the all job counts in 2011 is 4,7607. Out of the whole amount, 797 (16.7%) have lived and been employed in the Presidio County. 1,069 (22.4%) have employed in the County and live outside. While most are employed outside and live in the Presidio County which account for 60.9%.

<sup>6</sup> <http://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>  
<sup>7</sup> <http://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>

Figure 10. Inflow/Outflow Analysis, Presidio County, 2011



- 1,069 - Employed in Selection Area, Live Outside
- 2,894 - Live in Selection Area, Employed Outside
- 797 - Employed and Live in Selection Area

## Housing

Housing is a concern in Presidio County due to the aging stock of the houses. Approximately 47.8% of the housing stock was built prior to 1979 as seen in Table 4. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) we can assume that those houses built prior to 1978 contain lead based paint, which can be detrimental to young children. Also, a large portion of the housing units, 21.7% where built prior to 1939 and unless regular maintenance was performed, these are due to be replaced soon.

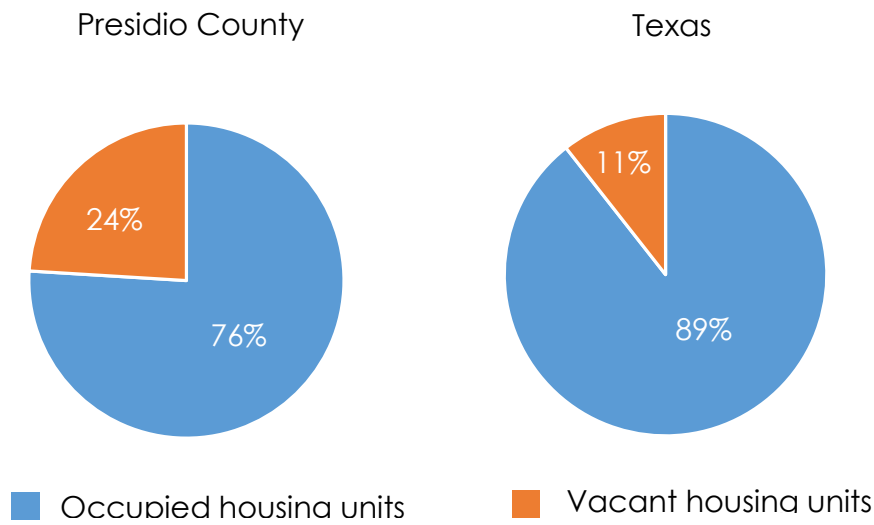
Table 4. Age of Housing Stock, Presidio County, TX

	Estimate	Percent
Total Housing Units	3,831	100%
2010 or Later	34	0.9%
2000 to 2009	411	10.7%
1990 to 1999	710	18.5%
1980 to 1989	842	22.0%
1970 to 1979	342	8.9%
1960 to 1969	276	7.2%
1950 to 1959	107	2.8%
1940 to 1949	277	7.2%
1939 or Earlier	832	21.7%

Source: U.S Census Bureau, 2009-2013 ACS 5 Year Estimates

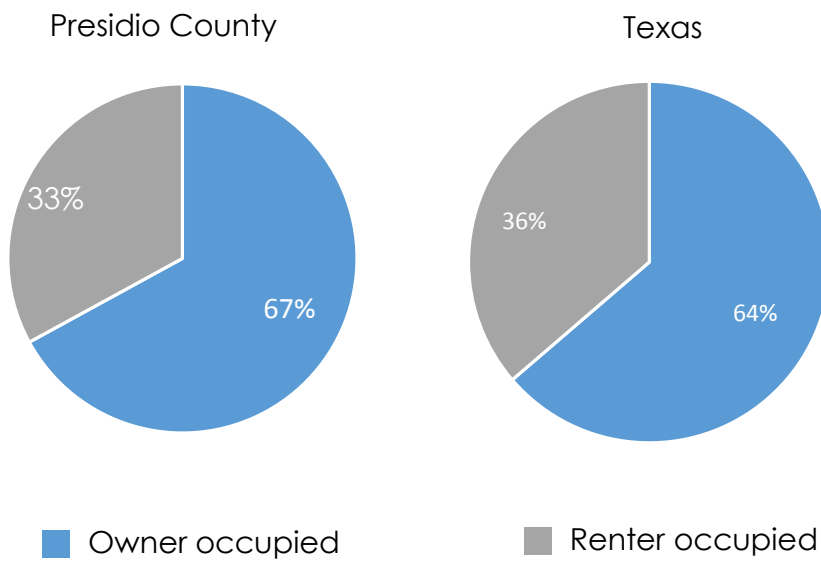
According to 2013 ACS estimation, the housing occupancy statuses can be seen from Figure 11. In Presidio County, 24% of the housing units are vacant when compare with the average vacant percentage of Texas (which account for 11%) this percentage is much higher. The occupancy statuses often connected to the housing demand. Though the county’s housing demand is increasing due to its development, but is still in a relative low level.

Figure 11 The Occupancy Statues in Presidio County and Texas (2013 ACS)



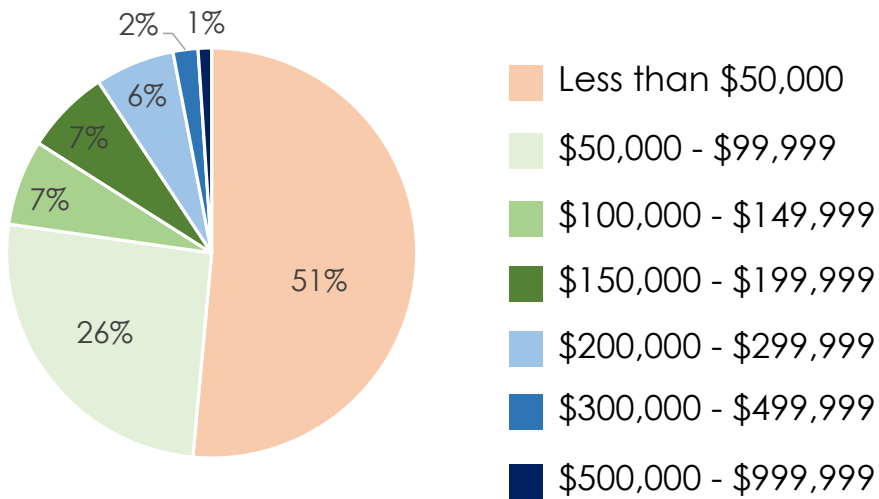
The tenure statistics of Presidio county and Texas can be seen in the Figure 12. Among all the occupied housing units, 67% of the tenure is owner occupied while 33% is renter occupied. When compare with the data of whole Texas, which the owner occupied takes for 64% and the renter occupied takes for 36%. It is clear that for the tenure statues, there are not much difference between Presidio County and Texas.

Figure 12 Tenure Statues for Presidio County and Texas (2013 ACS)



Housing value in Presidio County is of particular interest when more than half (51%) of the housing stock is valued at less than \$50,000. The housing value which is between \$50,000 - \$99,999 accounts for 26% (Figure 12). This illustrates the housing value in Presidio County is still relatively low. The median household value is \$48,500 for owner-occupied units.

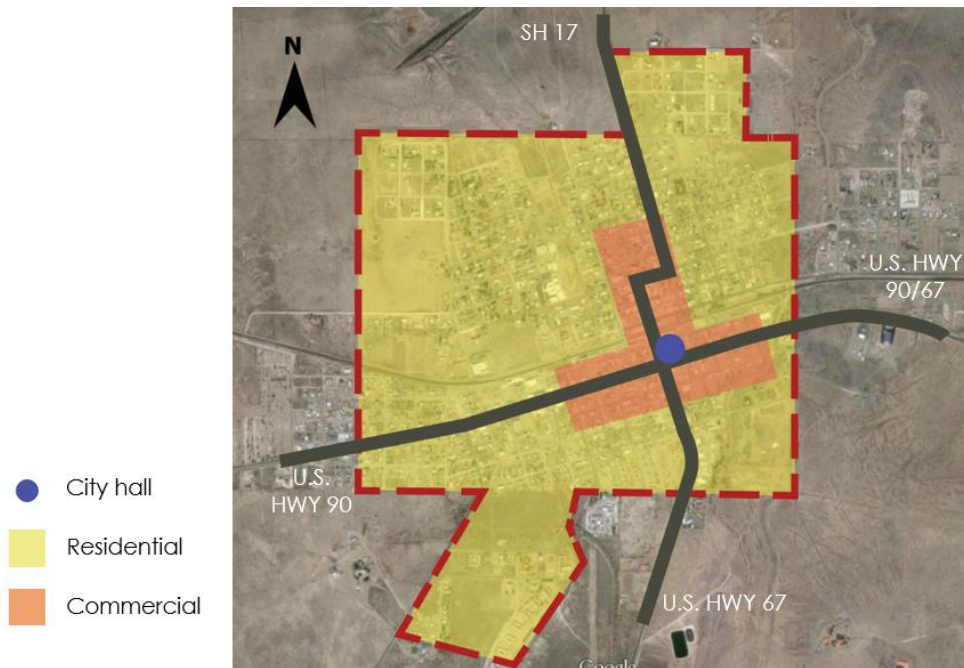
Figure 12 Housing Value Distribution in Presidio County (2013 ACS Estimates)



## Land Use

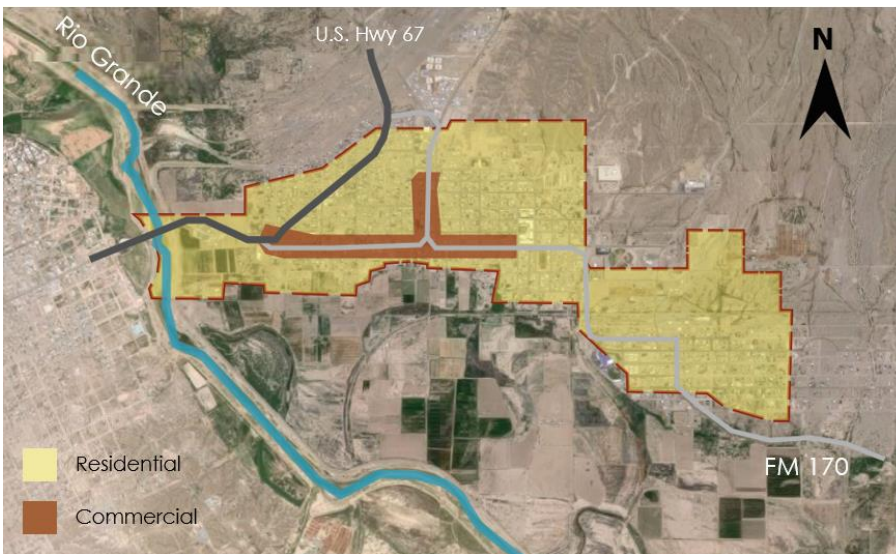
Both the City of Marfa and Presidio have similar land use patterns. First, the City of Marfa has a central commercial district along to the main arterials, such as SH 17 and US Highway 90/67. This commercial district has a central point as a city hall. Excluding this area, a majority of Marfa is comprised of residential areas. However, outside the city boundary, the primary land use is reserved for agricultural purposes.

Figure 11. Land use map for the City of Marfa



This land use patterns also can be seen in the City of Presidio. The City of Presidio has a long commercial district along the main arterials, US Highway 67 and FM 170. Additionally, along the Rio Grande River, the City of Presidio has large amount of agricultural lands outside the city boundary.

Figure 12. Land use map for the City of Presidio



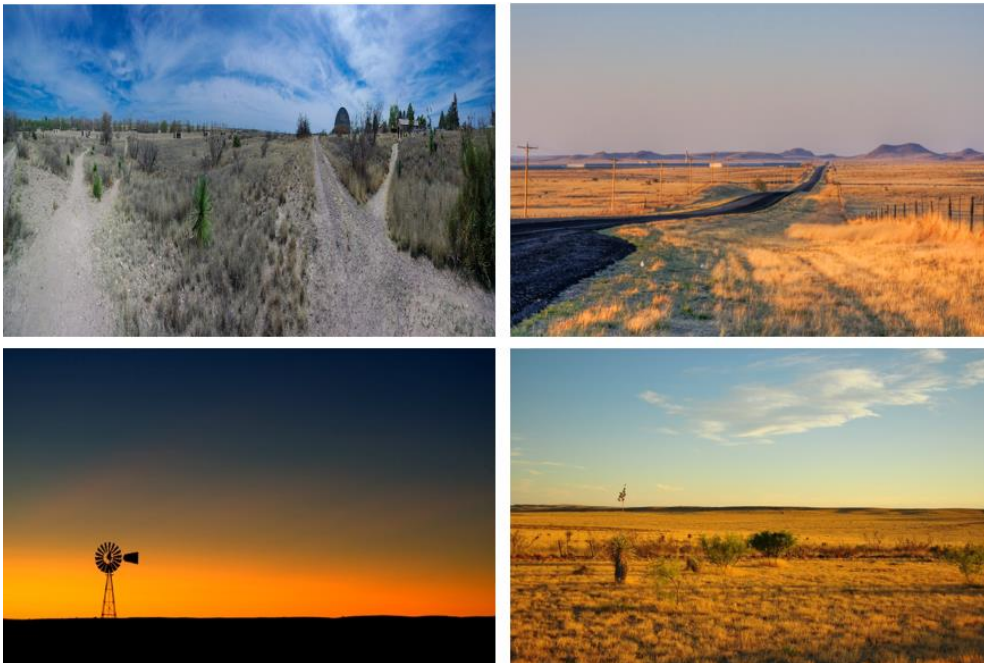


## Environment

### Topography

Presidio County comprises 3,857 square miles of contrasting topography, geology, and vegetation. The prairies, mountains, desert, and river give Presidio County an unusual beauty. Altitudes in the county vary from 2,518 to 7,728 feet above sea level (Smith. 2010).

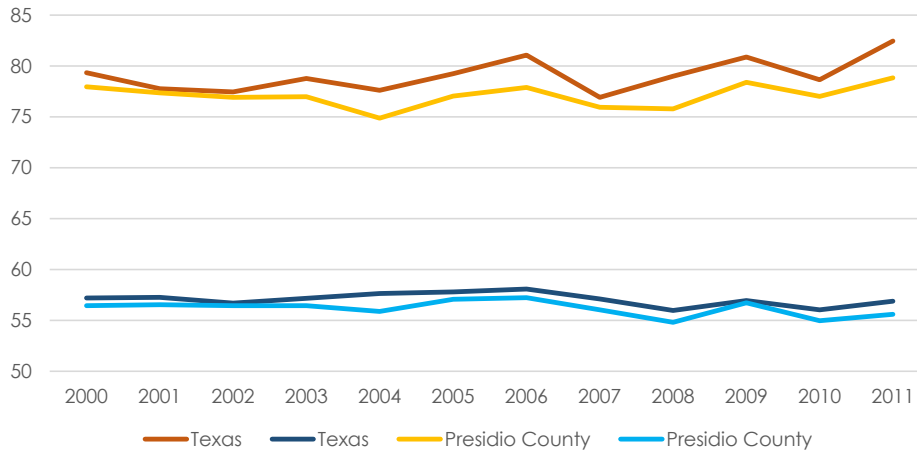
Figure 13. Natural environments in Presidio County, TX



**Climate**

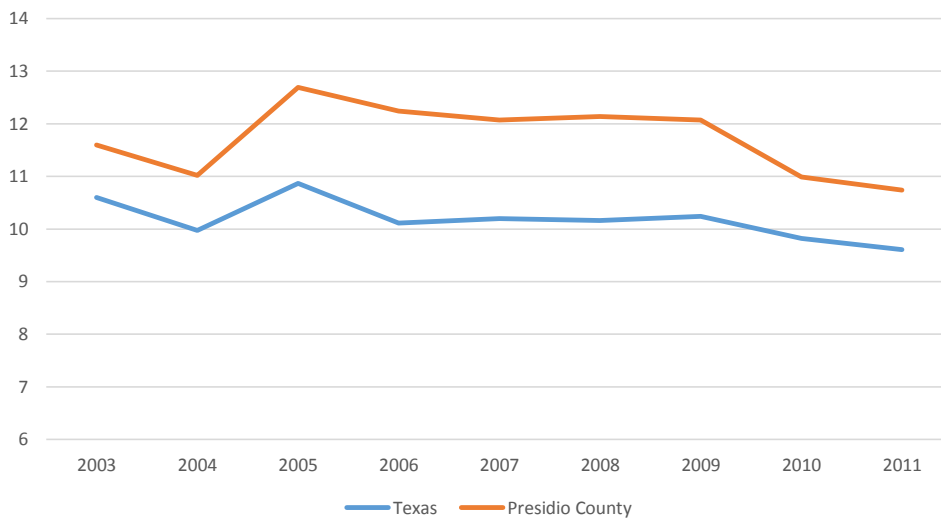
On average, Presidio County has a lower temperature than Texas. In 2011, Presidio County’s average daily max air temperature was 78.85 °F, which is about 3 °F lower than average Texas max temperature.

Figure 14. Average Daily Max and Min Air Temperature (°F)



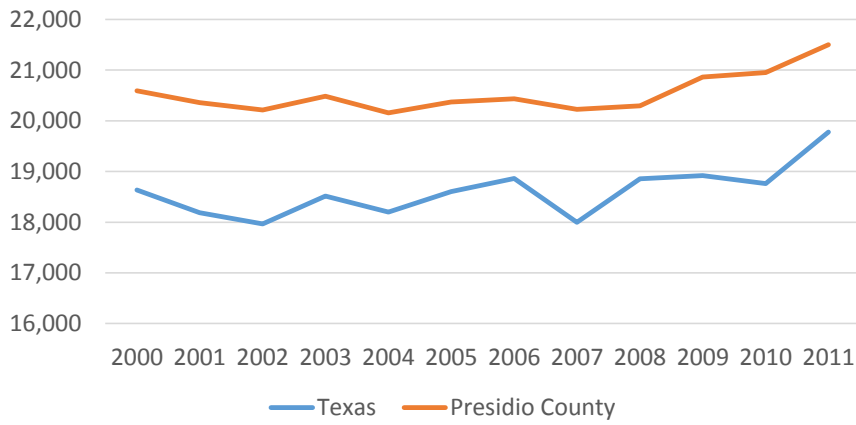
Fine Particulate Matter refers to the index of air quality that shows PM2.5 particles, air pollutants with an aerodynamic diameter less than 2.5 micrometers. The higher value means more polluted air quality (CDC WONDER). Presidio County has showed higher PM2.5 value than Texas State due to the environmental condition such as huge area of desert and lack of precipitation (see Figure 17).

Figure 15. Fine Particulate Matter (PM2.5) ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ )



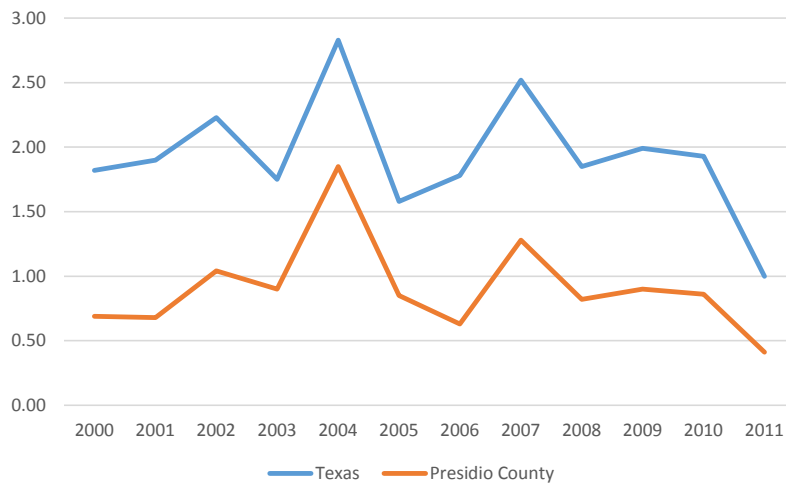
Daily Sunlight value refers to average daily insolation, reported in kilojoules per square meter (KJ/m<sup>2</sup>) (CDC WONDER). Presidio County showed larger amount of average daily insolation than Texas average.

Figure 16. Daily Sunlight (KJ/m<sup>2</sup>)



Presidio County has had less amount of average daily precipitation than Texas average amount. It has an influence on the dry weather condition and air quality in Presidio County. Since the lack of precipitation could bring about the degradation of water resources, Presidio County should prepare an appropriate strategies within their comprehensive plan.

Figure 17. Daily Precipitation (mm)

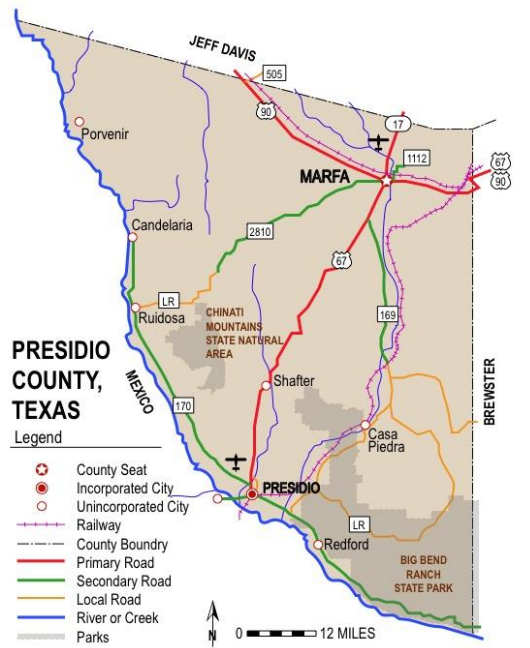


## Transportation & Infrastructure

Transportation in Presidio County is extremely limited. There are no Interstate Highways that enter or traverse the county. The closest is Interstate 10, approximately 45 miles to the north. There are only three major highways in the county, US Highway 90, 67 and State Highway 17. The few remaining roads are county owned and maintained in order to connect the other unincorporated towns. The total miles of Highways, both US and State is only 130.7 miles. The remainder of the local farm to market and ranch to market roads total another 157.9 miles. The western entrance to Big Bend Ranch State Park (not to be confused with Big bend National Park) is located in Presidio County, 4 miles east of Presidio on FM 170.

There are two main railroads that traverse Presidio County and are primarily used for freight and passenger travel. The east-west rail is owned by Union Pacific Railroad Company and sees from 20-30 million annual rail tons in addition to service from two Amtrak passenger lines, Sunset Limited and the Texas Eagle (TXDOT, 2010). The north-south rail is owned by Texas Pacifico Transportation Limited and averages up to 10 million annual rail tons of freight. This rail is one of only seven border crossings at the US-Mexico boarder. Unfortunately the

Figure 18. Infrastructures in Presidio County, TX



bridge burned in 2008 and has not been replaced. One interesting item of note is that Presidio County is home to the highest railway in the State of Texas. It is located just 14 miles east of Marfa at a height of 5,074 feet above sea level (Alvarez, 2014).

Air transportation in Presidio County is limited to Marfa Municipal Airport (MRF) and Presidio Lely International Airport (PRS). Both are unlit and only operational from sunrise to sunset. Marfa Municipal Airport is located 4 miles to the north of Marfa and experiences light traffic and averages 41 flights per day of which 67% are transient general aviation and 33% local general aviation. There are no rental cars or shuttles at this airport in which the city offers limited transportation to and from the city. Presidio Lely International Airport is located 5 miles north of Presidio and averages 75 flights a month with similar statistics to Marfa.



Figure 19. A portion of the international rail bridge between Presidio and Ojinaga was burned in February 2008. Arson was suspected as the cause of the blaze that destroyed the bridge.

The county seat is located in Marfa and was built in 1886 and is recognized as a Texas Historic landmark and listed on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places. The county has two school districts, Marfa ISD and Presidio ISD. Schools include an elementary and a combined Junior/Senior High School in Marfa and Presidio

As of 2009, the city of Marfa no longer has a police department but is patrolled by the Sheriff's Department and the Texas Highway Patrol. Marfa has one volunteer fire department as well as Presidio but is in a paid volunteer rotation where volunteers get paid per call if they meet certain training and a minimum number of calls. Both Marfa and Presidio have a public library and activity center where people can go to beat the heat.

## SWOT Analysis

### Strengths

- Arts and Culture Industry
- Diversity of population
- Location of National and State Parks
- International Dark Sky Gold Tier Rating
- Marfa has a Chamber of Commerce catering to businesses

### Weaknesses

- Lack of Regional/Comprehensive Plan
- Non-existent multi-family Housing
- More than half of housing stock is below \$50K
- Lack of medical care within 200 miles
- Road network is vast and extremely limited
- Air transportation limited to daylight hours

### Opportunities

- Develop a land use plan that meets the needs of the communities
- Develop a county comprehensive plan to forecast future needs
- Create a destination for the arts and culture within Texas
- Repair train crossing to stimulate the economy
- Bring additional hotels or business center

### Threats

- Area subject to frequent drought
- Rio Grande river is subject to flash flooding from south of the border
- Air quality is rated poor
- Population (birth/death rates)
- Lack of diverse industrial base



## Issues and Concerns

In a phone interview with the Mayor's wife, Ann Dunlap, she discussed some areas of concern for the City of Marfa. Weekends are popular in Marfa for the tourists when the airport sees about 7-9 private jets. There is no rental car company in Marfa, forcing those to walk or rely on the city to get them from the airport to downtown. She also mentioned the need for a veterinary clinic as well as a dry cleaners. These may seem miniscule in the grand scheme of things but they are needed.

Multi-family housing in Marfa is extremely limited by current zoning regulations. A design challenge was held to bring attention to this shortfall through DesignMarfa.com, which drew competition from around the world. As the tourism industry picks up pace, the need for housing for full time residents will also increase with the vacation rentals and part time residences disappearing. The main purpose of this competition was to promote dialogue on how to improve the housing shortage.

Lastly, drought fears continue in this far western town. There are serious concerns of over the severe degradation of rangeland and water due to poor ranching activities and water usage (O'Conner and Thompson, 2014). In this desert environment, the Rio Grande River is also subject to flash flooding from the mountains in Mexico where the Rio Conchos meets.

## Conclusion

In the end, the art industry may end up helping this county after all. The number of visitors in the Marfa Visitors Center has more than tripled in the last three years alone. Mixing cowboys and culture might seem like a bad idea, but that's just what this area needs. Ann Dunlap stated "there may be no pharmacy, no dry cleaners, or veterinary clinic, but that doesn't seem to bother anyone here." The silence may be deafening to some but to others, it is pure happiness.

In a county where the front page of the regional newspaper is headlined with the Presidio airport getting a new beacon, you can't expect too much nor can you expect too less (Lely Airport, 2015). This is a remarkable county loaded with culture, history, and awe-inspiring beauty that attracts people from around the world. If the county has the fortitude to address their threats and weaknesses, they will prosper and thrive in an uncertain time where people may come and go, but the land will always be here.

## Appendix

Table 5. Average Daily Max and Min Air Temperature (°F)

Year	Texas		Presidio County, TX	
	Max	Min	Max	Min
2000	79.35	57.21	77.97	56.45
2001	77.76	57.28	77.36	56.55
2002	77.44	56.71	76.93	56.44
2003	78.78	57.18	76.99	56.45
2004	77.6	57.64	74.87	55.88
2005	79.26	57.8	77.05	57.07
2006	81.06	58.08	77.88	57.24
2007	76.91	57.11	75.94	56.05
2008	78.99	55.97	75.79	54.82
2009	80.88	56.95	78.39	56.73
2010	78.65	56.03	77.00	54.96
2011	82.45	56.88	78.85	55.60

Table 6. Fine Particulate Matter (PM2.5) ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ )

Year	Texas	Presidio County, TX
2003	10.6	11.6
2004	9.97	11.02
2005	10.87	12.69
2006	10.11	12.24
2007	10.2	12.07
2008	10.16	12.14
2009	10.24	12.07
2010	9.82	10.99
2011	9.61	10.74

Table 7. Daily Sunlight (KJ/m<sup>2</sup>)

Year	Texas	Presidio County, TX
2000	18,634.76	20,591.42
2001	18,189.52	20,359.56
2002	17,962.91	20,215.24
2003	18,513.75	20,482.24
2004	18,197.06	20,155.04
2005	18,601.97	20,370.66
2006	18,862.96	20,435.75
2007	17,999.03	20,224.93
2008	18,857.41	20,297.58
2009	18,920.14	20,865.42
2010	18,762.59	20,949.27
2011	19,779.58	21,500.35

Table 8. Daily Precipitation (mm)

Year	Texas	Presidio County, TX
2000	1.82	0.69
2001	1.90	0.68
2002	2.23	1.04
2003	1.75	0.90
2004	2.83	1.85
2005	1.58	0.85
2006	1.78	0.63
2007	2.52	1.28
2008	1.85	0.82
2009	1.99	0.90
2010	1.93	0.86
2011	1.00	0.41

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Comment [WL1]: Format of citation needs attention