

Graham County Resilience Action Plan

October, 2023



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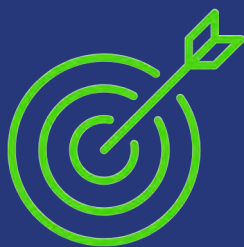


Prepared by



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Plan Overview

Freeport-McMoRan sponsored this Graham County Resilience Action Plan to help the community identify risks that could negatively impact residents and public and private operations. Interviews with community leaders were used to identify risks. Challenges were identified related to the economy, climate, housing, mental health, and nonprofits.

This plan outlines strategic actions to mitigate risks and enhance overall community resiliency. Each strategy includes specific actions and resources for project leads and partners to utilize to create a resilient future.

Economy

Graham County relies on the mining industry, yet dependence on a single sector can be risky, as it leaves the community vulnerable to fluctuations in the copper market and potential mine closures in the long run. To enhance resilience, it is crucial to diversify the local economy by promoting businesses that export goods and services beyond the region. Supporting the growth of existing businesses and operations can have a substantial impact on job creation and tax contributions, ultimately enhancing Graham County's economic resilience.

1 | Business Expansion Program

Market research and strategic planning to support the growth of second-stage export-oriented companies for industry diversification.

Lead: Graham Economic Partnership

2 | Commercial Space Resources

Resources to ease the transition from a home-based setup to commercial space provides businesses visibility and room for growth.

Lead: Graham Economic Partnership

3 | B2B Support

Facilitation of business-to-business services and products reduces reliance on external suppliers and strengthens the local business ecosystem.

Lead: Graham County Chamber of Commerce

Water Availability

Graham County's climate risks are drought, wildfire, and riverine flooding. Drought poses threats to water resources vital for agriculture, industry, and daily life. Wildfire risks are exacerbated by long-term droughts, threatening lives, and property. Many properties are at risk of flash floods.

Housing

The need for workforce housing hinders expansion efforts of local employers. Various factors, including a slow housing market that results in a lower price per square foot compared to peer counties, construction costs, and market dynamics, deter developers from investing in housing projects. Despite evidence of housing demand in Graham County, lower returns for developers necessitate incentives and support measures to encourage housing development that aligns with local demand.

1 | Tamarisk Removal

Tamarisks contribute to drought, wildfire, and flooding, impacting climate resilience. Support tamarisk removal and native vegetation restoration.

Lead: Gila Watershed Partnership

2 | Water Wise Program

An educational and rebate program to promote water conservation among residents and agricultural producers.

Lead: University of Arizona Cooperative Extension

1 | Housing Needs Assessment

A study of current and future housing needs and market dynamics to inform policy and prompt new development.

Lead: SouthEastern Arizona Governments Organization

2 | Regional Housing Conference

A platform to explore innovative housing solutions and foster partnerships to facilitate the development of housing strategies tailored to the region's needs.

Lead: SouthEastern Arizona Governments Organization

3 | Prepackage Development Projects

Local governments and landowners collaborate to identify parcels, streamlining permits, and market land to increase developer interest.

Lead: Graham Economic Partnership

Mental Health

Graham County's mental health care infrastructure is limited, with a high provider-to-population ratio, and high rates of deaths related to despair and suicide. Good mental health fosters community resilience by enhancing individuals' ability to cope with stress, adapt to challenges, and contribute positively to their community during times of crisis.

1 | Crisis Management Procedure

Healthcare providers and emergency responders create a coordinated procedure for serving patients experiencing a mental health crisis.

Lead: Graham County Health Department

2 | Mental Health Resources

Promote mental health resources to community and insurance carriers who provide mental health coverage to local employers.

Lead: Graham County Health Department

3 | Support Groups

Support groups provide valuable emotional and practical support for individuals facing similar challenges, fostering a sense of community and shared understanding.

Lead: Graham County Health Department

Nonprofits

Local nonprofits are vital in aiding socially vulnerable populations. However, nonprofits often struggle to secure the necessary operational funding, which hinders their capacity to provide essential services and support to at-risk individuals, highlighting the importance of addressing nonprofit financial sustainability to enhance community resilience.

1 | Joint Fundraising Event

A joint fundraising event is a cost-effective way to reach a wider audience, increasing public awareness about their causes and missions.

Lead: United Way of Graham & Greenlee Counties

2 | Nonprofit Training

Provide nonprofits with resources and training to enhance their operational sustainability, bolstering their capacity to make a significant community impact.

Lead: United Way of Graham & Greenlee Counties

Risk Matrix

A variety of stakeholders were interviewed to learn what risks and challenges the County either currently has, or potentially could have, which negatively impacts on the community. A Mobilization Team—representing a variety of community stakeholders—provided input on how the compiled list of risks and challenges should be ranked on the on the following matrix according to the “Severity of Impact” and the community’s “Ability to Mitigate.” The risks in the red quadrant have the most severe consequences and are also most feasible to mitigate.

Ability to Mitigate	Severity of Impact			
	Low	Medium	Major	Catastrophic
High	Road Maintenance	Road Safety Lack of Awareness & Utilization of Small Business Funding Opportunities Lack of Operational Funding for Nonprofits Bad Employer/ Employee Relationships Lack of Communication with Community Lack of Collaboration/ Duplication of Efforts Broadband Redundancy Low Youth Development	Lack of Strategic Economic Development Business Sustainability	
Medium	Travel for Medical Care Lack of Interest in White Collar Work	Food Security for At-Risk Populations Lack of Walkable Neighborhoods	Car Dependent Lack of Diverse Tax Base Drug Addiction Lack of Exporting Industries Difficulty Hiring & Retaining Qualified Teachers Invasive Tamarisks	Lack of Housing Supply Chain Issues Mental Health Water Availability
Low	Local Businesses Unable to Compete with Mine on Wages Inflation Businesses Close Early Decrease in Social Cohesion	High Rates of Alzheimer's, Hypertension, Lower Respiratory, Skin Cancer, & Type 1 Diabetes Aging Population	Decline in Agriculture Drought ADOT Planned Bypass	Wildfire Flood Pandemic

Addressed Risks

This Resilience Action Plan addresses the items in the red quadrant and select items in the orange quadrant. Recommendations were grouped into the following categories:

Economy – Recommendations to (1) help local businesses grow, (2) reduce barriers for home-based businesses to expand into commercial space, and (3) support business-to-business transactions to address the risks of: *Lack of Strategic Economic Development, Business Sustainability, Lack of Diverse Tax Base, Lack of Exporting Industries, Lack of Awareness & Utilization of Small Business Funding Opportunities, Bad Employer/Employee Relationships.*

Water Availability – Recommendations to (1) support removal of tamarisks and plant native vegetation, and (2) launch a Water Wise program to support residents, businesses, and agricultural producers in reducing water consumption to address the risks of: *Invasive Tamarisks, Water Availability, Decline in Agriculture, Drought, Wildfire, Flood*

Housing – Recommendations to (1) conduct a housing needs assessment, (2) host an annual regional housing conference, and (3) prepackage projects to attract developers to address the risks of: *Lack of Housing, Difficulty Hiring & Retaining Qualified Teachers*

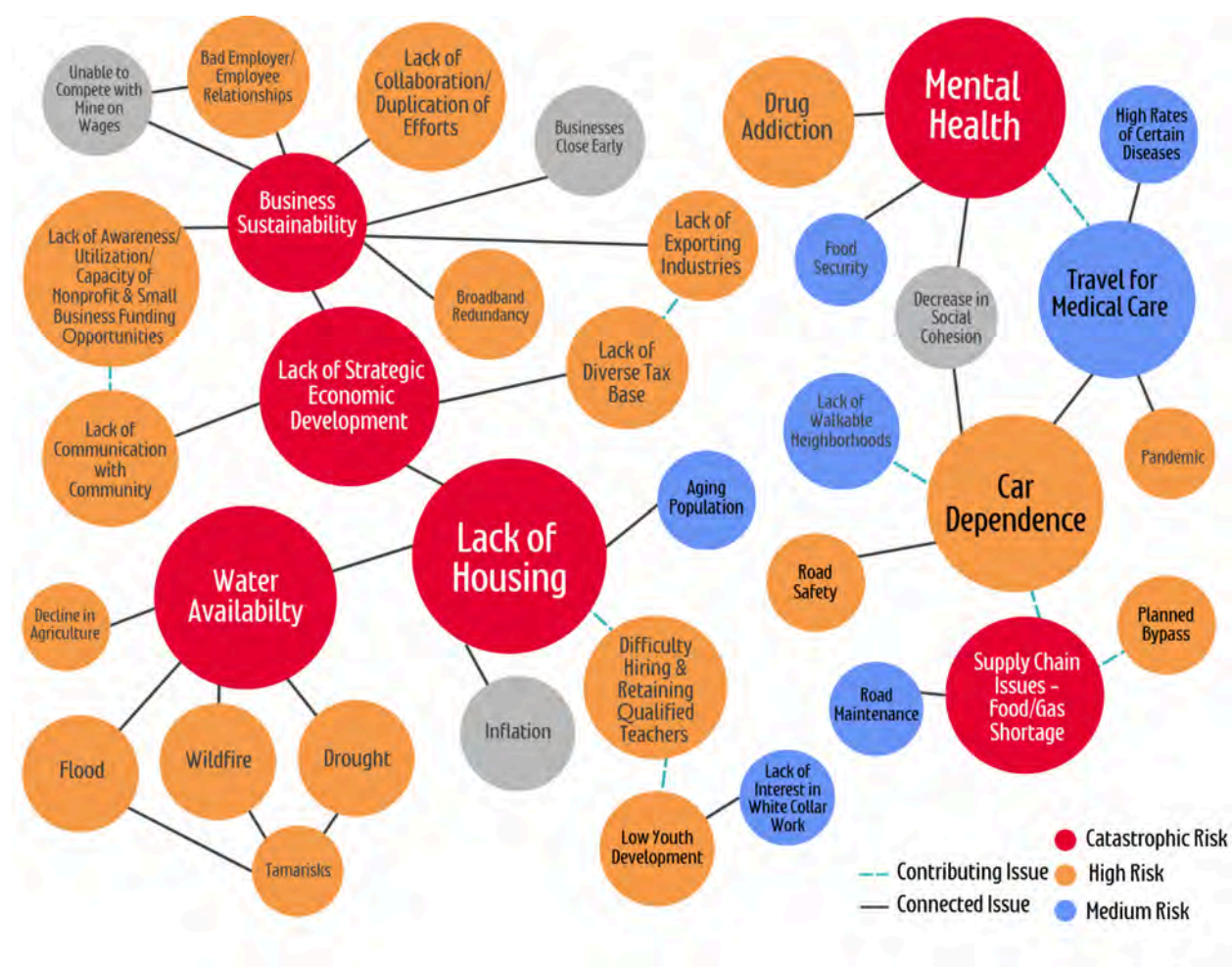
Mental Health – Recommendations to (1) establish interagency coordinated crisis management procedure, (2) promote mental health resources, and (3) coordinate and fund support groups for community members to address the risks of: *Mental Health and Drug Addiction.*

Nonprofits – Recommendations to (1) support fundraising efforts and (2) provide best-practices training to address the risks of: *Lack of Operational Funding for Nonprofits, Lack of Communication with Community, and Lack of Collaboration/ Duplication of Efforts.*

Other Risks

No specific actions are recommended for some of the risks in the orange quadrant or any of the risks in the yellow or green quadrants, but many of these risks should be monitored and addressed as the more critical actions outlined in this document are completed.

Many of the risks faced by Graham County are interconnected, and efforts to mitigate one risk will likely impact other risks as well. For example, the recommendation to facilitate the removal of tamarisks to reduce the risk of wildfires and floods is addressed under climate—but it may also have economic implications since the removal of tamarisks may help increase the appeal of river-based recreation; according to a report by [Audubon Arizona](#), water-based outdoor recreation in Graham County generates \$10 million annually and supports 900 jobs.



Plan Implementation

Process for Implementation

Each of initiatives identified in this Action Plan are designed as stand-alone opportunities for Graham County to enhance its resilience. Each strategy lists a lead organization who is responsible for the implementation of that action item, along with suggested partners and resources. The following implementation process provides accountability and support for the leads in their efforts to accomplish the identified actions.

Implementation Timeline: Each lead organization is responsible for establishing a timeline to accomplish the sub-tasks associated with their initiatives.

Defining the time-bounds for each action enables the lead organization to track progress and be accountable for implementation.

Report Progress: The Freeport-McMoRan Strategic Community Development Manager will host regular meetings every-other month for leads to provide a brief report on their progress-to-date. The report template is provided in [Appendix II](#). Lead organizations should submit their report to the Freeport-McMoRan Strategic Community Development Manager one week prior to the meeting, and the compiled report packet will be emailed to the group in advance of the meeting.

The report enables the lead organizations to regularly assess whether goals are met and adjust strategies as needed.

Celebrate Achievements: Lead organizations should post brief celebratory updates on their social media whenever a task is completed. Example template post verbiage is: "[Organization Name] is helping Graham County's [Overarching Topic] become more resilient. Recent progress includes [Specific Action Item]. Join us in creating a stronger and more resilient community for everyone! #ResilienceMatters #CommunityStrong #GrahamCounty"

Recognize and celebrate successes, both big and small, to maintain community motivation and enthusiasm.

Use of Implementation Grant

Freeport-McMoRan is providing a \$10,000 implementation grant to facilitate the implementation of this plan. The use of these funds is flexible and available to project leads to help facilitate their action items. Potential uses include (but are not limited to) hiring a grant writer to obtain further funding, promoting initiatives, and hiring consultants. Leads are also encouraged to use the Arizona Economic Resource Center to assist with project implementation capacity support and grant writing services.



Economy

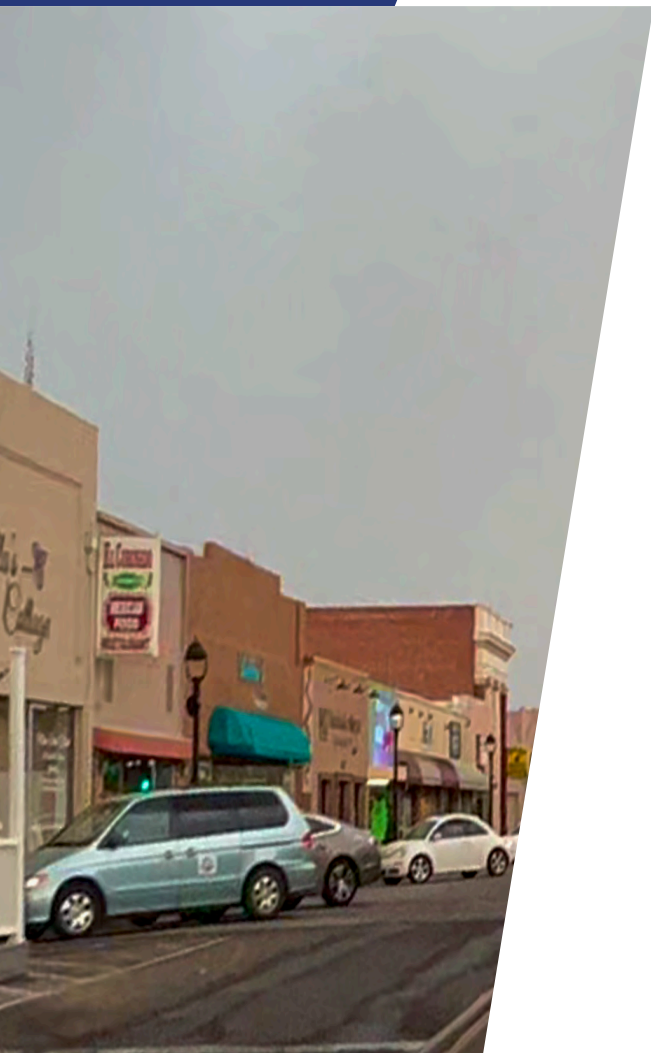
A diverse local economy increases economic resilience and provides a more stable employment base. Pursuing opportunities to diversify the local economy will enable Graham County to adapt to changing economic conditions.

Economic Reliance on the Mine

A diverse local economy is more resilient and less vulnerable to economic shocks and downturns. When a community relies heavily on a single industry or sector, any negative impact on that sector can have devastating effects on the entire community.

The largest industries in Graham County, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics and Arizona State University, are Retail Trade (73 establishments that employ 1,513), Mining (3 establishments that employ at least 1,270), and Healthcare (86 establishments that employ 1,249). These 3 industries dominate employment and wages in the County.

The mining industry represents a lion's share of the wealth generated and contained within Graham County (with an estimated 63% of the County's gross domestic product in 2021). [Freeport-McMoRan's operations generated](#) \$194 million in economic benefits for Graham County in 2022. This includes \$156 million in direct impacts through wages, business taxes, and vendor purchases, and \$38 million in indirect impacts through spending from employees, tax revenues, pension income, and vendor purchases. While the mine is anticipated to continue in operation for decades, changing prices in the copper market drive demand and production—therefore if copper prices dip it can lead to layoffs which cause a ripple effect on the local economy. In the very long-term mining operations, however expansive and complex, are not permanent. Eventually, once the most accessible and valuable materials are extracted, the mines will be closed.



The economic resilience of a region relies heavily on its capacity to export goods—meaning they sell to clients outside of the immediate community. When businesses sell their products and services outside the region, it introduces new wealth to the local economy. This influx of external revenue is then circulated within the County's economy through local businesses providing goods and services to residents. “Businesses that export goods and services generate the revenue that funds smaller, local, service businesses. Both types of firms are necessary, and the service firms may not survive if the exporting firms close or move away” (Kotval et al. 1996).

The closure of a major export business can cause a ripple effect of subsequent closures in other businesses. Multipliers are used to measure this impact, representing the industry's estimated influence on the broader economy and potential consequences of significant changes in the region's export sector. The mining industry in Graham County has an [estimated multiplier effect](#) of 4 total jobs created for each new mining job (the mining job plus an additional 3 supporting jobs in the local economy). The loss of the mine would potentially cause both a loss of employment for those working for the mine (1,270 employees in Safford operations per the most recent report) plus the loss of an estimated additional 5,000 jobs spread across all other industries in the local economy as local businesses supported by the mine and its employees lose a significant portion of their income and patronage.

Opportunities to Support Business Growth

In Graham County, the mine (FMI) is the single largest employer—with 1,270 employees—and FMI struggles to find enough local workers to meet its needs. As of August 2023, there were 112 jobs posted on the FMI website seeking workers for Safford and Morenci. Due to the limited local workforce, FMI often relies on outside contractors to fill temporary positions. This makes the traditional economic development approach of recruiting large firms challenging as it would worsen the issue of both workforce availability and constrained workforce housing (see [Housing section](#)). Instead, the community can focus on developing the small business ecosystem to foster a diverse export-base for enhanced economic resilience. Although individual small businesses may not match the mine's scale, the collective impact should not be underestimated. In 2019, Arizona saw a total of 7,848 recognized businesses engaging in exports worth \$23.2 billion. [Small businesses accounted for](#) 86.8% of these exporters, contributing \$5.6 billion, or 24% of all identifiable business exports. Supporting small export-oriented businesses can lead to a more sustainable and diversified economy in Graham County.

Graham County boasts a distinct characteristic in its entrepreneurial landscape: a remarkably high number of solopreneurs operating home-based businesses. The prevalence of solopreneurs is anecdotally tied to two key demographic groups—spouses of mine workers and a culture of creative artists/artisans. According to the U.S. Census Bureau *County-Level Annual Business Applications* (2018-2022 average) and *Business Dynamic Statistics* (2016-2020 average), the County has a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem with an average of 295 business applications per year and 237 net jobs created each year. The solopreneurs in Graham County present a promising opportunity for the County's economic development, with potential to grow into a diverse business ecosystem that fosters resilience and adaptability.

Economy Strategy 1

Local Business Expansion Support



Objective Conduct business growth support program.

Lead Graham Economic Partnership

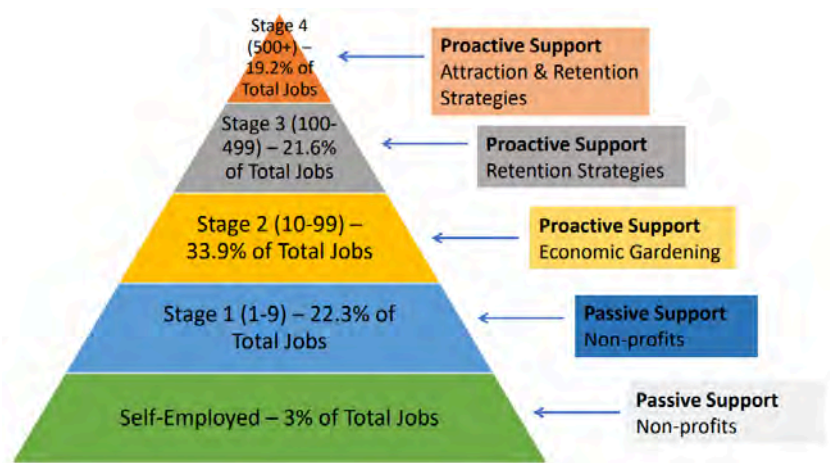
Partners Small Business Development Center, Graham County Chamber of Commerce, [AZ Venture Development Corporation](#)

Graham County can strategically assist local microbusinesses and small businesses grow to enhance its economic resilience. “In terms of job creation and tax contributions, the expansion of businesses and operations, not new operations, has the greater impact in most communities over time” (Gordon 2001).

The Graham Economic Partnership can strategically facilitate business growth by providing customized information to second-stage companies—addressing their strategic issues and enabling them to grow. This targeted assistance includes market research, competitive intelligence, strategic planning, and access to expert networks.

The Graham Economic Partnership is a collective economic development organization in Graham County focused on business attraction and job growth supported by Pima, Thatcher, Safford, Graham County, and many other local member corporations and entities.

The business growth support program should focus on export-oriented second-stage companies; businesses that have advanced beyond the startup phase but haven't reached maturity.



Source: [NADO / Edward Lowe Foundation](#)

Action Steps

- ☐ Survey local businesses to identify (1) which businesses are interested in and ready for expansion assistance, (2) what support would be needed, and (3) insights on the specific needs and challenges of local businesses.
- ☐ Select a handful of businesses to work with based on capacity. Invite businesses to participate in the business growth support program.
- ☐ Conduct site visits to selected businesses and meet with owners to identify their specific needs. Create a support plan for each business that includes: (1) objective(s) and timeline for assistance (approximate start and end dates), and (2) what assistance will be provided.
- ☐ Design and implement support services, such as market research, competitor analysis, strategic planning workshops, marketing assistance, and access to capital, to address the specific needs of businesses. Create a network of subject matter experts, including business advisors, mentors, industry specialists, and market researchers, who can provide targeted assistance to participating businesses.

Resources

- [USDA – Rural Innovation Stronger Economy](#)
- [EDA – Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance Programs](#)
- [USDA – Rural Business Development Grant](#) (Feasibility studies to support expansion)
- [Arizona Business, Market, Industry Research Resources](#)
- [Arizona Commerce Authority – Small Business Services](#)
- [SizeUp Arizona](#)
- [DreamBuilder](#) – a free online learning program developed for women who want to start or grow their own small businesses
- [Local First Microloan Fund](#)
- [Community Investment Corporation](#)

Economy Strategy 2

Commercial Space Support

Picture: Safford Downtown Association



Objective	Reduce barriers to businesses expanding into commercial space.
Lead	Graham Economic Partnership
Partners	Local governments, property owners, Safford Downtown Association, local real estate agents

Expanding into commercial space can provide small businesses with increased visibility, improved professional image, and room for growth. However, major hurdles faced when a business expands from a home-based setup into a commercial space include additional overhead costs, upfront investment in deposits and renovations, new staffing needs, regulatory compliance, and operational changes to adapt to the different work environment. A central “matchmaker” between businesses and commercial brokers and property owners can help facilitate business owners’ efforts to expand into commercial space.

There is a low stock of available commercial properties in Graham County, with CoStar reporting a ten-year average vacancy rate of 4.3% for retail space and 3.9% for office space. No average vacancy rate data was available for industrial, as CoStar reported that industrial spaces in the County are 100% occupied.

Action Steps

- ☐ Maintain and regularly update a database of available commercial spaces within the community. Make this information easily accessible to businesses seeking to expand, helping them find suitable locations that meet their needs.
 - Compile information for listed properties, including photos, sales and rent per square foot, floor plan, zoning and building code conditions or restrictions, and contact information for broker or property owner.
 - If there is unlisted vacant commercial property in key commercial areas, contact the owner and learn more about its availability and the owners' plans for the sites.
- ☐ Champion the creation of shared business-spaces (such as incubator, makerspace, or shared retail space such as the local cooperative Copper & Cotton Lifestyle Co) to provide businesses with a first-step low-cost expansion opportunity to help home-based businesses take the first step to grow into a commercial space with reduced risk.

Resources

- Commercial property listings (via [CoStar](#), [LoopNet](#), local MLS, etc.)
- Site selection mapping software (via [GIS WebTech](#), [BlueRaster](#), etc.)



Economy Strategy 3

B2B Support



Objective	Help local businesses provide business-to-business (B2B) services and products.
Lead	Graham County Chamber of Commerce
Partners	Graham Economic Partnership, Small Business Development Center

Business-to-Business (B2B)

Supporting local businesses that offer business-to-business (B2B) services and products can have significant positive effects on the local economy. When local businesses supply goods or services to other local enterprises, it reduces the community's reliance on external suppliers, making it more resilient to economic fluctuations and disruptions.

Additionally, B2B transactions often result in a multiplier effect. When one local business supplies another, the funds exchanged continue circulating within the local economy. This not only supports the businesses directly involved but also generates additional economic activity as those businesses, in turn, spend money on various local goods and services. It bolsters employment opportunities, generates tax revenue for public services, and contributes to the overall economic well-being of the community. Moreover, it fosters a sense of interconnectedness among local businesses, leading to collaborative opportunities and a stronger business ecosystem. In essence, helping local businesses thrive in B2B interactions can lead to a more robust, self-sustaining, and prosperous local economy.

The Graham County Chamber of Commerce's mission is to advance the quality of life for everyone in the Gila Valley through Connection, Leadership, and Tourism by recruiting an exemplary, professional, and ethical team.

Action Steps

- ☐ Coordinate with the Small Business Development Center to continue the “How to Do Business With” series to help local businesses learn best practices on providing B2B services and products.
- ☐ Promote the “How to Do Business With” series broadly among local businesses.
 - Note—the low participation levels of this program are identified as a key challenge so the promotion of the program is an important area of focus. Identify messaging and promotional strategies that particularly appeal to local business owners. Host a focus group for business owners to discuss directly how they would like to learn about this resource.
 - Consider using A/B advertising technique to expand reach and test which methods are most successful.
- ☐ Host B2B sourcing events.
 - Plan events for specific industries, products, services, and general business networking. Include both informative content and opportunities for businesses to interact and connect. Allocate space for vendors to showcase their products or services.
 - Invite local businesses, startups, suppliers, manufacturers, retailers, and relevant stakeholders. Utilize mailing lists, social media, local media outlets, and business associations to promote the event and attract attendees.

Resources

- [Total Addressable Market Information](#)
- [B2B Marketing Resource List](#)
- [USDA – Rural Business Development Grant](#)



Water Availability



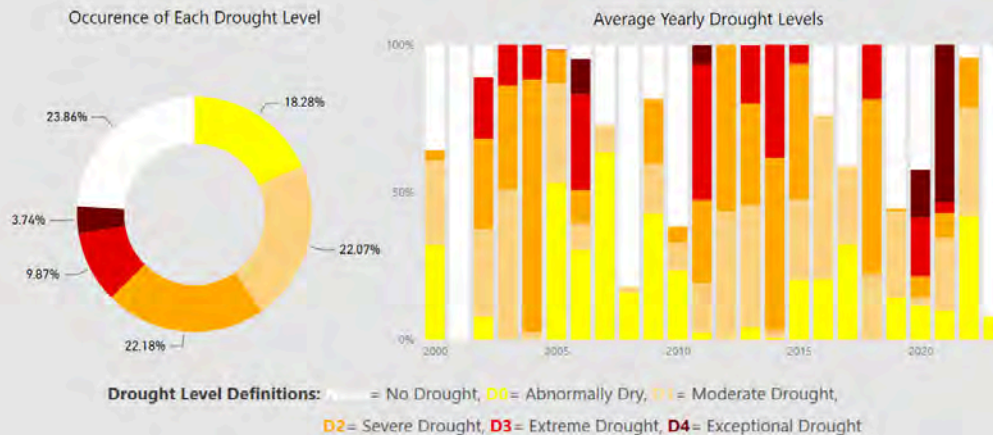
The climate plays a crucial role in Graham County's resilience. According to the [FEMA National Risk Index](#), the expected loss each year due to natural hazards is highest for drought (\$5.4 million), wildfire (\$1.4 million), and riverine flooding (approximately \$6 million). All three of these risks were identified by community members as pressing concerns for the County. Recognizing the interconnectedness of these climate-related risks is vital for building a resilient community that can effectively respond to and recover from natural disasters and severe weather that pose a threat to health, safety, property, and infrastructure. Natural disasters can occur seasonally or without warning, subjecting the community to periods of insecurity, disruption, and economic loss.

Drought

Drought and limited water availability impacts water resources essential for agriculture, industry, and daily life. Water availability is important for sustaining ecosystems and the growth of businesses and the County's workforce.

Like the rest of the planet, Arizona is experiencing the effects of climate change. The southwestern United States is [particularly sensitive to changes in temperature](#) and is thus vulnerable to drought, as even a small decrease in water availability in this arid region can stress natural systems and further threaten water supplies. Temperatures in Arizona have risen about 2.5°F since the beginning of the 20th century. The most recent decade has been [the warmest period on record for the state](#).

Drought in Graham County 2000 to Present



Arizona is currently in a long-term drought that has lasted more than 20 years. From 2000 to the present, Graham County was [in a drought 76% of the time](#). Multiyear periods of high and low precipitation can cause significant variations in reservoir supplies. A variety of factors influence future water availability and demand in the County, including:

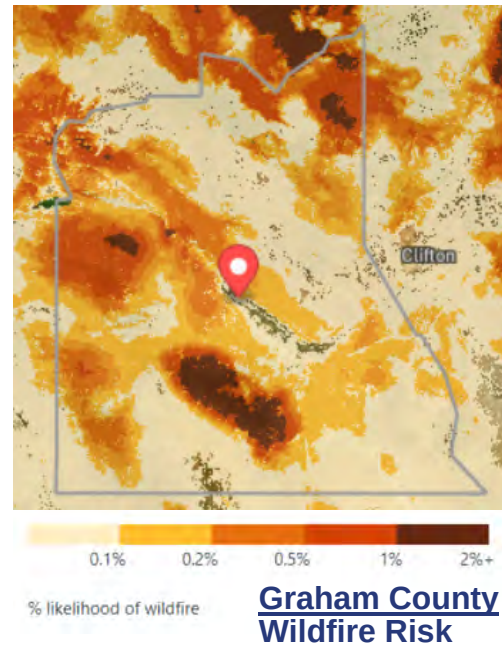
- Population Growth:** Graham's population grew at an average rate of 0.73% annually between 2000 and 2021, increasing the demand and need for sustainable water supplies. Available water supplies are important for new housing development. When a parcel of land in Graham County is subdivided into 5 or more lots, the Arizona Department of Water Resources requires an analysis to identify whether there is "Adequate Water Supply"—enough clean water to be legally and continuously available for 100 years. Housing may be built regardless of the report's outcome, but building homes without adequate water supplies impacts the community's ability to add housing and increase the local workforce.
- Water Agreements & Water Rights:** Surface water and groundwater in Graham County are affected by [complex legal proceedings and governance structures](#) that influence the availability of water supplies for communities, Tribes, agriculture, and industry. Combined with increasing water scarcity, this complicated legal framework creates uncertainty about how water users are impacted by a potentially increasing gap in water supply and demand.
- Sustainable Agriculture:** [Agriculture accounts for the largest water demand](#) in Graham County (96.4%). Municipal use (residential and commercial) accounts for 2.4% of total demand, while industrial use, including mining, makes up the remaining 1.2%. Agriculture is an important cultural and economic mainstay of the region. Water-efficient farming practices and sustainable irrigation techniques can contribute to reduced water use. In February 2021, policymakers took steps to improve producers' ability to be land stewards by making changes to the outdated "use it or lose it" policy—now farmers and ranchers can create a [ten-year conservation plan](#) that enables them to conserve water without losing their water rights.

Wildfire

The threat of wildfires requires preparedness to safeguard lives, properties, and the natural environment. Long-term droughts—such as the drought in Graham—[raises the risk of wildfires](#). According to the [FEMA National Risk Index](#), there is a 0.55% chance of wildfire in Graham County per year.

[9 wildfires were recorded](#) near Graham County between 1984 and 2021.

The risk of wildfire is anticipated to [grow over the next 30 years](#), with 15,966 properties at risk now and an anticipated 16,343 properties at risk in 2053.



Flood

Arizona's monsoon season, with its predilection for sudden, torrential and localized rainfall, and a landscape with washes and gullies, makes perennial rivers—such as the Gila River—ripe for dangerous [flash floods](#). There are 2,161 properties in Graham County that have a greater than a 26% chance of being severely affected by [flooding over the next 30 years](#), representing 18% of all properties in Graham County.

Graham County is sponsoring the [Gila Valley Flood Protection and Watershed Improvement Project](#). This involves coordination with the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service to conduct a Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment to address flood protection and watershed improvements and agriculture water management.



Note, the [Justice40 Initiative](#) directs 40% of Federal investments in priority areas to [disadvantaged communities](#), which includes Graham County. Applicable Justice40 funding opportunities in the resource section are marked “J40.”

Picture: Derell Licht

Water Availability Strategy 1

Tamarisk Removal



Objective Enable property owners, via education and resources, to remove invasive tamarisks and plant native vegetation.

Lead Gila Watershed Partnership

Partners Graham County

River Restoration

Restoring natural riverine ecosystems can mitigate the impacts of climate change and prevent floods. Healthy river systems can:

- Absorb excess rainfall, reducing the risk of flooding in downstream communities.
- Act as carbon sinks, sequestering greenhouse gases and helping combat climate change.
- Support biodiversity, improving overall ecosystem health and fostering habitat for various species.

The Gila Watershed Partnership (GWP) is a 501(c)3 comprised of community members, representatives from businesses, organizations, and local, state, and federal agencies. The Gila Watershed Partnership works to improve watershed health and water quality of the Upper Gila Watershed through locally led efforts.

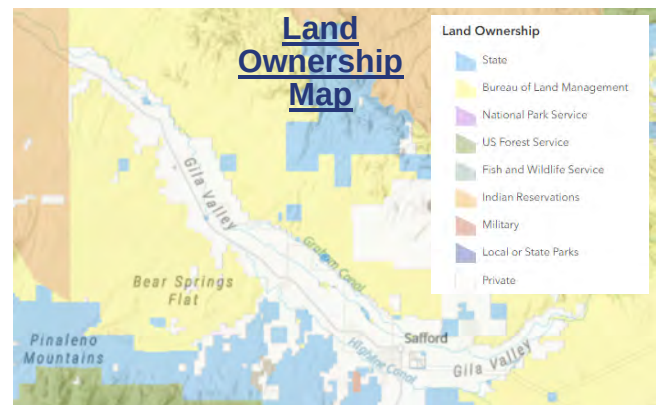
Invasive Tamarisks

Tamarisk (also known as tamarix or salt cedar) is an invasive shrub with a deep tap root tolerant of poor soils—allowing them to spread aggressively and [crowd out native trees](#). The tamarisks along the Gila River contribute to drought, wildfire, and flood; making their removal a key priority for climate resilience.

- **Drought:** The tamarisk is known for its thirst; experts estimate that one large tamarisk has the potential to absorb up to [200 gallons of water per day](#)—twice the amount the average person uses in the same timeframe. Tamarisks have infested an estimated 3.3 million acres in the western United States—posing a serious threat to the West’s water supply.
- **Fire:** Riversides are relatively resistant to wildfire owing to the high moisture content of the vegetation, even during drought periods. However, the invasion of the river ecosystem by tamarisks changes riparian areas from “barriers” to “pathways” for the ignition and spread of fire due to near-continuous distribution of fine-textured fuels that are susceptible to wildfire. Tamarisk is considered the [most significant hazardous fuel in riparian areas](#) of the interior western United States.
- **Flood:** Tamarisks grow in dense stands along rivers, and change water flow patterns, making rivers shallower and more [susceptible to flooding](#).

Efforts to Eradicate

Tamarisks grow in thickets [along waterways](#), and most of the land in Graham County along the Gila River is [privately owned](#). Therefore, while the invasive species creates a risk for the entire community—it is individual landowners who will ultimately be responsible for dealing with the tamarisks on their stretch of the river. The Gila Watershed Partnership (GWP) is taking the lead on coordinating efforts to remove tamarisks and plant native species.



The introduction of the tamarisk leaf beetle has helped with defoliation of plants; however, while this biocontrol offers a cost-effective means to reduce tamarisks in the long term, wildfire risk may increase in the short-term due to the build-up of dead fuels. (Additionally, the GWP reported progress made by beetle defoliation is much slower than originally anticipated and that the beetle’s effectiveness is inconsistent.)

An additional challenge to the removal of tamarisks is that Southwestern Willow Flycatchers, an endangered bird species, nests in tamarisks since their natural habitat has been [crowded out by the tamarisks](#). Native cottonwood and willow habitats provide more multilayered physical structure than tamarisks, and they support more [diverse insect prey for birds](#). Use of the tamarisk beetle as a biological control causes decline in bird populations by at least 30%, but this decline is ameliorated in the presence of native vegetation. Therefore, [active restoration of native vegetation](#) is important after the removal of tamarisks. [The reestablishment of desirable vegetation provides benefits](#) in addition to creating wildlife habitat, including bank stabilization, erosion control, and the prevention of re-invasion by tamarisks.

Action Steps

- ☐ Pursue grant opportunities that support invasive species removal and habitat restoration projects. Seek funding for removal equipment, dumpsters for disposal, educational materials, professional assistance, etc. AmeriCorps volunteers could assist with removing tamarisks and planting native vegetation.
- ☐ Identify partners for sharing resources, such as equipment (chainsaws, protective gear), volunteers, or access to disposal sites.
- ☐ Conduct educational outreach.
 - Develop educational materials to raise awareness of the negative impacts of invasive tamarisks and provide guidance on safe and legal removal methods.
 - Host workshops on tamarisk removal and restoring native habitats.
 - Engage property owners, neighborhood associations, and other community stakeholders to garner participation in the removal project.
- ☐ Organize community workdays and volunteer efforts to physically remove invasive tamarisks and plant native species to restore the cleared areas.
 - Provide resources and equipment for removal, such as chainsaws, protective gear, dumpsters for disposal, and guides on proper removal techniques.
- ☐ Monitor the progress and effectiveness of tamarisk removal and native vegetation restoration efforts, and promote efforts of property owners to inspire others.
 - Track the growth of native species, monitor the re-emergence of tamarisks, and collect data on the ecological benefits achieved through removal and restoration. (A dashboard or story map can be used to both track progress and promote successful remediation. Before/after slider pictures and a map that shows where removal projects are needed, planned, underway, and completed are powerful visual tools to show progress.)
 - Providing yard signs to community members who complete remediation projects on their property, to publicly praise their achievement and to increase awareness of neighbors that there are community members putting in the effort and that there are resources to help them with removal of their tamarisks.
 - Take before-and-after pictures of tamarisk remediation projects and share the success story of the invasive tamarisk removal project with the wider community through various channels, including local media, social media, and newsletters.

Resources

- [RiversEdge West Resource Library](#)
- [Landscape Scale Restoration Competitive Grant Program](#)
- [Arizona Water Protection Fund](#)
- [Watershed Management Group](#)
- [AmeriCorps VISTA Volunteers](#) J40
- [AmeriCorps NCCC Volunteers](#) J40
- [Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Program](#) J40
- [Landscape Scale Restoration Program](#) J40
- [Healthy Forest Initiative Grants](#) J40



Picture: John Loo

Water Availability Strategy 2

Water Wise Program



Objective Launch and promote a Graham County Water Wise Program.

Lead University of Arizona Cooperative Extension

Partners Gila Watershed Partnership, Gila Valley Irrigation District

Water Wise Program

The [Cochise County University of Arizona Cooperative Extension created a Water Wise program](#) to help residents lower their water consumption. A Water Wise program in Graham County would support the efforts of County residents and businesses to conserve water. This would include practical tips on how to use water more efficiently in landscaping and indoors, water conservation consultations, information about available rebate programs, and workshops on topics such as water, climate, and local flora and fauna.

Note—according to the Cochise County Water Wise team, the Water Wise program had an unsuccessful attempt to serve Willcox previously, as a program focused on residential water conservation was not well received since residents knew that agriculture was their primarily local water user. Given that [agriculture](#) accounts for 96% of Graham County's water usage, the conservation efforts made by farmers and ranchers can significantly influence overall water conservation outcomes. As the Water Wise program is customized to serve Graham County, in addition to compiling informational materials and resources for residents and businesses, the program should also provide information for agricultural water conservation. This could include helping farmers and ranchers (1) learn techniques to help them manage their water resources,

(2) invest in new equipment and technology to reduce water loss, or (3) explore other crops suited to the desert climate. The Graham County Water Wise program can help provide the technical assistance needed to help interested agricultural producers enhance their water conservation efforts.

Action Steps

- ☐ Survey residents, businesses, and agricultural producers to identify their specific concerns and interests related to water conservation resources.
- ☐ Coordinate with Cochise County Water Wise staff to customize the Cochise Water Wise Informational Materials for the Upper Gila Watershed. Utilize local experts to tailor the materials and resources to be relevant for Graham County, adding agricultural strategies to increase impact.
- ☐ Develop digital and printed materials for distribution, including fact sheets and a dedicated webpage.
- ☐ Utilize social media, local newspapers, radio, etc. to promote the Water Wise program and its benefits. Conduct outreach activities to disseminate information about the program to residents, schools, local businesses, farmers, ranchers, and community groups.
- ☐ Organize workshops and community events to raise awareness about water conservation and the resources available through the Water Wise program.
- ☐ Collect feedback from participants and adjust the program as needed based on the data and input received.

Resources

- [ADWR – Community Water Systems Resources](#)
- [ADWR – Agricultural Assistance Programs](#)
- [Arizona Water Protection Fund](#)
- [State-wide and Local Resource List](#)
- [Conserve to Enhance \(C2E\)](#)
- [Desert Water Harvesting Initiative](#)
- [ADOR – Agricultural Water Conservation Credit](#)
- [Bureau of Reclamation – WaterSMART Water & Energy Efficiency Grants](#)
- [NRCS – Agricultural Management Assistance Program](#)
- [NRCS – Conservation Stewardship Program](#)
- [NRCS – Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#)
- [USDA – Conservation Loan Program](#)
- [USDA – Farm Ownership & Operating Loan Programs](#)
- [USDA – Livestock Forage Disaster Program](#)
- [SARE – Farmer/Rancher Research & Education Grant](#)
- [USDA – Agriculture and Food Research Initiative Competitive Grants](#)
- [USDA – Conservation Reserve Program](#)

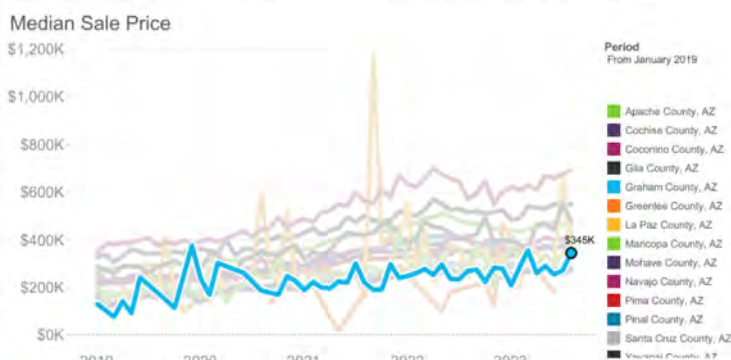
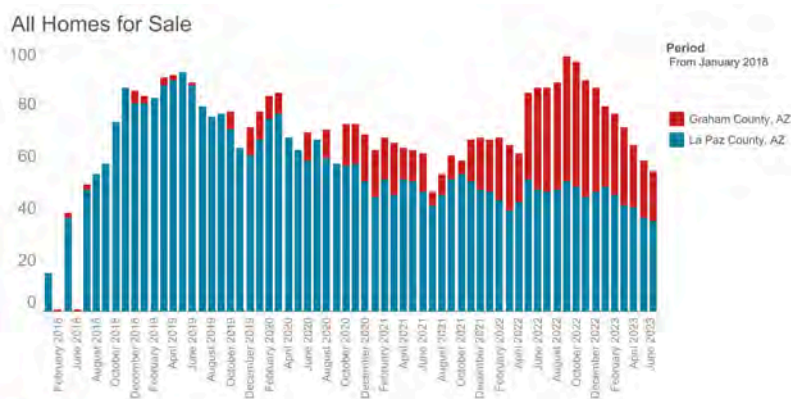


Housing



Employers in Graham County reported a high need for workforce housing, with multiple businesses stating their efforts to expand are curtailed due to workforce availability, and potential hires cite an inability to find housing as the primary impediment that deters would-be employees from moving into the region.

Graham County's housing market is slower than would be expected given its size, with fewer homes available for sale in Graham for every quarter in the last five months when compared with La Paz County (a county with a similar number of housing units in its housing stock). Because of this, the market price per square foot of homes lags below peer counties across the state.



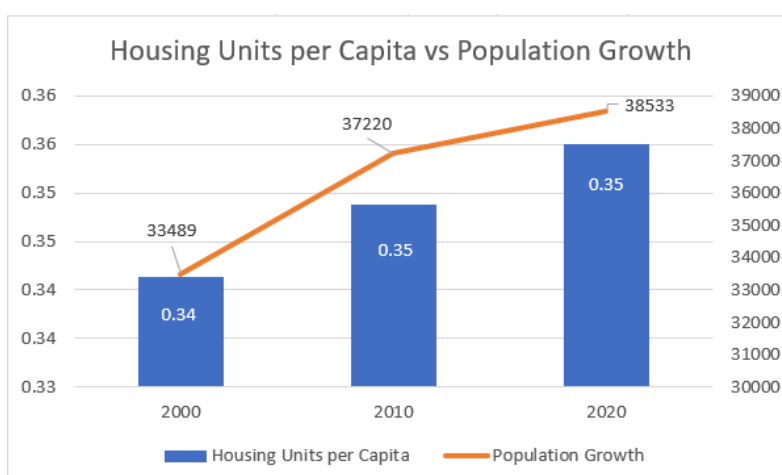
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[Residential Housing Data](#)

35% of the people who work in Graham County live outside the County, and 30% of the County's workers commute 25 miles or further to get to their place of work. Longer commutes can lead to increased stress and reduced productivity. If potential employees were able to find suitable and affordable housing, they would be more inclined to move to or stay in Graham County. Per stakeholders, this is limiting the labor market's ability to supply staff for the college, local healthcare facilities, the mine, and other employers as well as limiting the number of students, teachers, doctors, nurses, and other professionals who could live in the county and contribute to its economy.

Housing Demand

Graham County's population has grown consistently, but so has the number of units available, leading to a similar growth in housing units available per capita over the last three decennial census estimates. Note, the similarity in increase could be a symptom of the constrained market since it only captures those who were successful in acquiring a home and living in the area and is unable to capture families that would move to the area if additional housing stock were made available.



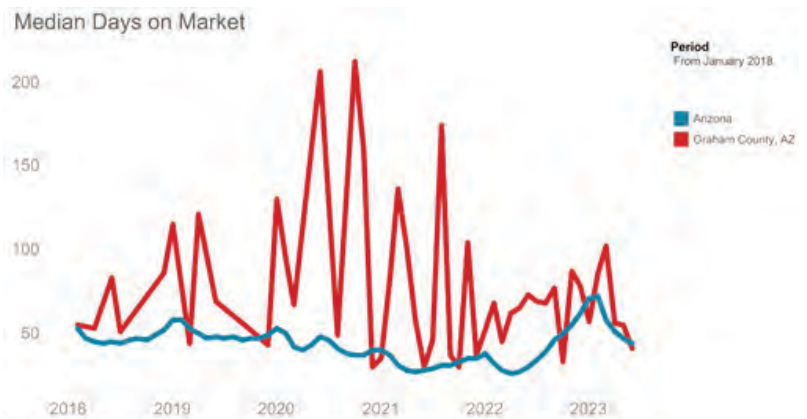
The rural characteristics of Graham's housing market put it at a disadvantage compared to metro areas. The sales price per square foot in Graham County averaged \$163 between June 2022 and June 2023. Sales price per square foot was 34% higher in Pima County and 63% higher in Maricopa County over the same period. In addition to these price differentials, construction expenses are higher in the County, due to the need to transport materials and contractors in to build homes. Combined, these factors make Graham County less financially attractive for developers to invest in construction projects. For the rental stock, a local property management firm reported that the market for rentals is tight, with an average waitlist of 7 families at any given time over the past 3 years; however, development of rental stock is not supported by the market because of the payback period on that property type.

Housing Inventory

Days On Market (DOM) is a datapoint that specifies the time between when a home is listed for sale and when the home is taken off the market. A market with low average DOM indicates that there's strong competition from buyers and that there is a strong demand for the local housing stock.

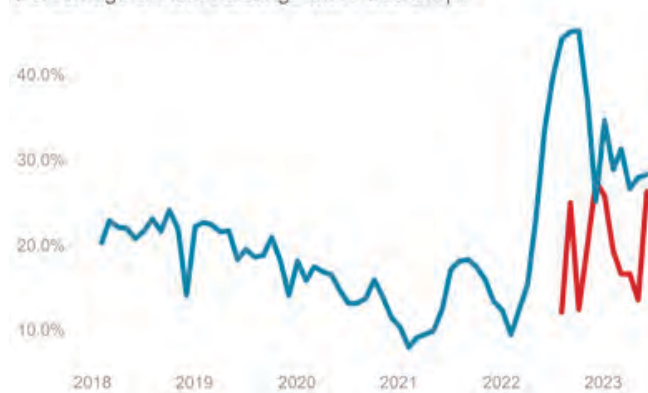
Graham County's median DOM is often at or above the State's, meaning that the County's market is not showing significant signs of latent demand (with homes getting snatched up as soon as they become available).

However, given the relatively few transactions that are occurring, it is possible that there are outliers in the data that are skewing this figure. As more transactions are happening locally, the data seems to be more in-line with state averages. The same is true with other data points that reveal tightness in the County's housing market, including the percent of active listings with price drops, as well as homes moved to pending within two weeks of listing. These indicators show signs of tightness, but are still close to state metrics.



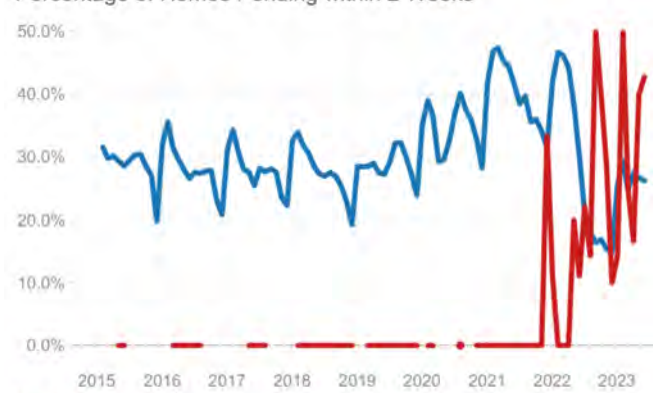
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Percentage of Active Listings with Price Drops



REDFIN

Percentage of Homes Pending within 2 Weeks



REDFIN

Period
From January 2015

There seems to be sufficient evidence to show there is demand for housing in Graham County, and that it is on par with the demand for housing in other parts of Arizona. However, the returns that developers are likely to receive are demonstrably lower. Therefore, incentives and other support activities may be necessary to increase development in the region. According to a local broker, houses that sell the fastest—and are therefore in the highest demand—are those within the \$250-350K price range. This poses a barrier to housing development that aligns with demand, as contractors don't want to build smaller homes because there is less profit in them and banks do not want to finance smaller mortgages because they carry [more risk for less profit](#).

Housing Strategy 1

Housing Needs Assessment



Objective

Conduct a regional housing needs assessment to quantify latent demand.

Lead

[SouthEastern Arizona Governments Organization](#)

Partners

Major employers (Freeport, federal and state prisons, Eastern Arizona College, Mount Graham Regional Medical Center, etc.), Graham County, Graham Economic Partnership

Housing Needs Assessment

A housing needs assessment is a comprehensive study that evaluates a community's current housing situation and forecasts future housing needs and trends. It serves as a valuable tool for local policymakers and developers to understand the dynamics of the housing market and make informed decisions regarding housing development, affordability, and infrastructure planning.

One crucial aspect of a housing assessment is its ability to quantify latent demand. Latent demand represents the unmet housing needs within a community that are not reflected in current housing statistics. This unmet demand can arise from various factors, such as population growth, changes in demographics, economic development, or shifts in housing preferences. By conducting surveys, analyzing demographic data, and considering economic and employment trends, a housing assessment can identify segments of the population that may require specific types of housing, like affordable housing options, senior housing, or workforce housing. This data-driven approach helps quantify the latent demand for housing units that the existing market has not yet addressed, providing a clear understanding of the gap between supply and demand in the local housing market. This information is instrumental in guiding housing policy decisions, attracting developers, and promoting housing projects that align with the community's evolving needs.

End User

The Housing Needs Assessment is NOT just an informational study—the community is aware of the housing shortage and does not need to have a study to confirm the shortage. **It is critical that this assessment is useful for garnering action and investment.** The housing study author needs to meet with developers, builders, SouthEastern Arizona Governments Organization, and groups such as the Southern Arizona home builders association to determine what the study needs to contain to propel a developer from outside Graham County to complete a project in Graham. The final document should be composed for the use of developers as the end user.

Action Steps

- ☐ Survey major employers to quantify the number of new jobs that will be needed within the next two years, and how many jobs are currently filled by employees who live outside Graham County.
- ☐ Use the findings from the survey to estimate the number of new homes needed in the next two years. Take the total increase and reduce the estimate by a factor based on the jobs filled from outside the County to account for people who would choose to commute even if housing were available.
 - As needed, incorporate jobs per household into this calculation. (Households often fill multiple jobs, so one job does not necessarily equate to one new housing unit needed.)
 - Multiple factors can be used to conduct a range of housing needs based on sensitivity.
 - Local survey to determine the number of homes eligible for ADUs and the number of interested homeowners who would develop alternative housing options.

Resources

- [USDA – Rural Business Development Grant](#)
- [HUD – Community Development Block Grant](#)
- [AARP Community Challenge Grant – Accessory Dwelling Unit Design Competitions](#)

Housing Strategy 2

Regional Housing Conference



Objective	Host an Annual Regional Housing Conference to facilitate collaboration and problem solving among local and regional stakeholders.
Lead	SouthEastern Arizona Governments Organization
Partners	Local governments, Graham Economic Partnership, Urban Land Institute , developers, real estate agents, lenders, and major employers

Regional Housing Conference

The purpose of a regional housing conference is to bring together key stakeholders, including local government officials, developers, housing advocates, and community members, to collaboratively address housing challenges and opportunities within Graham and Greenlee Counties. This conference would serve as a platform for discussing housing availability, exploring innovative housing solutions, and fostering partnerships that can lead to the development of housing strategies tailored to the unique needs of the region.

The objectives of the conference include promoting collaboration, knowledge exchange, and collective action towards ensuring access to housing for all residents within the region.

Action Steps

- ☐ Present and review findings from the housing needs assessment.
- ☐ Invite stakeholders to come to the conference prepared to present potential solutions to address the regional housing needs.

- ☐ Invite developers to share what they see as the pros and cons of pursuing projects in Graham and Greenlee Counties.
- ☐ Facilitate discussion regarding potential solutions and what the partners can do to address housing needs:
 - Determine what types of units / structures would fill workforce needs, what is allowed based on zoning and land use plans, and what housing structure types are appropriate for each community.
 - Identify where new construction can be located.
 - Determine if any existing housing stock can be rehabilitated in the region.
 - Address impediments in zoning, planning, permitting, etc. that prevent new construction.
 - Identify strategies to add to the rental unit housing stock and alternative housing, such as accessory dwelling units, basement apartments, or creating a [Community Land Trust](#).
 - Identify strategies that enable major employers to directly support the development of new housing stock. Employers know what housing their workers need, including the size and price range most appropriate for their employees and the number of new homes needed. Potential example strategies include:
 - [Employers directly fund the development of homes that are sold at-cost to employees](#), adding to the housing stock without becoming landlords.
 - Partner with developers by guaranteeing to purchase a percentage of the homes built if they are not sold within a specified period after completion. This reduces the risk for developers to encourage them to develop in Graham and Greenlee. For small developers who build only a few homes per year, consider an agreement similar to the [LDS Sales Guarantee](#) (developers build and market each home in the usual way, but if the home does not sell on the open market the employer is committed to buy the completed home. If the homes are not all sold directly by the developer, then employers can then sell or lease these homes to their workers as best suits their needs).
- ☐ Identify policy changes and incentives that can stimulate the development of new housing stock in desired areas.
- ☐ Create ideas for master-planned communities that combine housing and amenities, such as retail, recreation, food, and entertainment.
- ☐ Determine best regional strategies to secure interest from developers and funding from FDICs, banks, [CDFIs](#), and other lending institutions.
- ☐ Form housing coalition to coordinate ongoing efforts to enact strategies identified through the housing conference and be primary lead for efforts to create housing.

Resources

- [RCAC – Housing Development Support](#) (for nonprofit organizations to develop affordable housing)
- [USDA – Rural Housing Preservation Grant](#) (to assist low-income homeowners repair and rehabilitate homes)
- [USDA – Rural Community Development Initiative](#) (intermediary provides a program of financial and technical assistance to recipients to develop capacity for housing projects)

Housing Strategy 3

Prepackage Development Projects



Objective Prepackage housing projects to attract developers.

Lead Graham Economic Partnership

Partners SouthEastern Arizona Governments Organization, local governments, lending institutions

Prepackage Projects

By identifying parcels that municipalities deem highly desirable for housing development and simplifying the development process through zoning adjustments and permit streamlining, local governments create a favorable environment for developers. The coordination with landowners to market these parcels with a clear vision for development increases the appeal, making them more enticing for private developers, especially if state or federal lands are involved.

These coordinated efforts align the interests of both public and private sectors, making the rural county a more appealing destination for developers seeking opportunities in the housing market.

Action Steps

- ☐ Identify parcels that municipalities find highly desirable as locations for new housing developments.
- ☐ Identify and execute any strategies the municipalities can accomplish to simplify the development process (such as adjusting zoning, streamlining permits, etc.)
- ☐ Coordinate with landowners to publish brochure or webpage that presents the parcels as available for development.
 - Include a vision of the desired development in marketing materials.
 - If there is state or federal owned land desired for development, the local governments can purchase land to make them more appealing to private developers.
- ☐ Coordinate participation of major employers and regional stakeholders in facilitating development of new housing stock of needed size and price-point to meet workforce needs. See potential solution ideas in the [Annual Housing Conference](#) action steps.

Resources

- [United Way of Graham & Greenlee Counties – Grants](#)
- [Union Home Mortgage Foundation – Grants](#)
- [USDA – Multifamily Housing Programs](#)
- [Prestamos CDFI](#)



Mental Health



Mental health plays a profound role in shaping individual and collective resilience, as it influences the ability of community members to cope with stress, adapt to change, and maintain overall well-being.

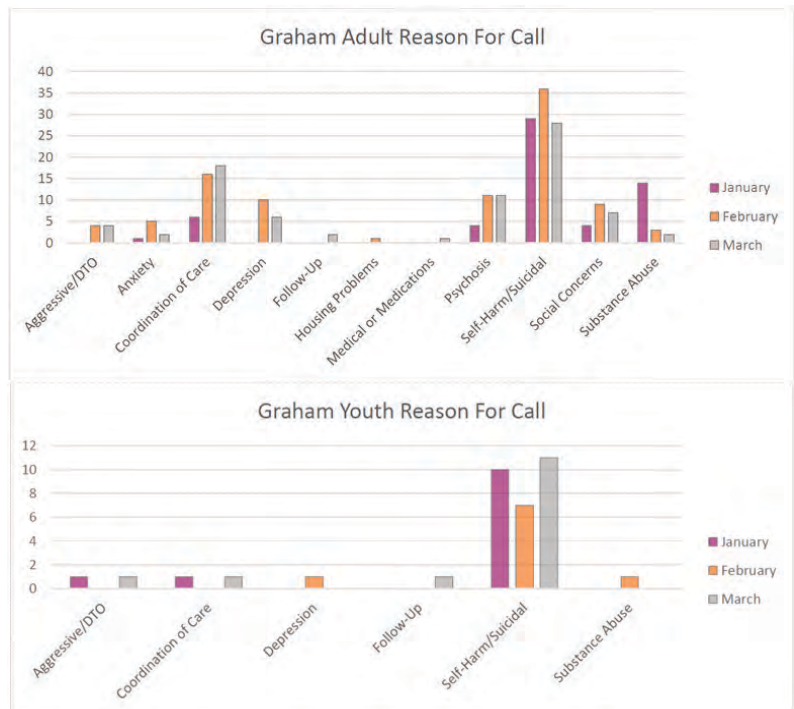
Many community members in Graham County grapple with mental health challenges; 14% of adults report frequent mental distress, and the number of deaths caused by despair and suicide in Graham County is higher than rates for both the state and the nation.

Metric	Graham County	AZ	US
Poor Mental Health Days (out of every 30 days)	4.8	4.4	4.4
Frequent Mental Distress (% of adults reporting 14 or more days of poor mental health per month)	16%	14%	14%
Mental Health Providers to population ratio	2,440:1*	590:1	340:1
Deaths of Despair /100K	62.0	56.5	47.5
Deaths due to Suicide /100K	18	18	14
Sources: US News & County Health Rankings			

*Note—this number has likely changed in the past few months, as the County Health Department, Mount Graham Regional Medical Center, and Canyonlands Healthcare Safford & Safford Integrated Clinics reported there have been a very recent increase in the service providers in the County not reflected in the 2023 reports.

The Graham County Health Department, with generous funding from the United Way of Graham & Greenlee Counties, has started a mental health division with contracted program health specialists who address various community health concerns, including mental health, substance abuse, nutrition, and physical activity.

The Graham & Greenlee Counties Justice and Crisis Systems report that the calls to the crisis line for both adults and youth are primarily related to self-harm and suicidal intentions.



Mental Health Care in Graham County

Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System provides Complete Care health plans to provide both physical and behavioral health services to Medicaid/AHCCCS/KidsCare members who have mental or behavioral health needs. These services are provided by contracted Regional Behavioral Health Authorities (RBHAs), and Arizona Complete Health is the RBHA for Graham County.

[Arizona Complete Health](#) provides crisis services including crisis telephone response, mobile crisis response, and facility-based stabilization (up to 24 hours of observation and detox).

Stakeholders in Graham County are working together to address the mental health challenges faced by community members. The United Way funded a Mental Health Coordinator position at the County Health Department to:

- Coordinate the new Gila Valley Mental Health Action Committee and support collaboration of mental health stakeholders across Graham County to facilitate a comprehensive mental health system for the County.
- Provide mental health education and awareness in schools, and an “Easy Access” program in high schools.
- Setup support groups, which currently include a grief support group and a senior wellness group.
- Collaborate with community and regional stakeholders to support mental health care.

Mental Health Strategy 1

Interagency Crisis Management Procedure



Objective	Enhance the mental health crisis healthcare response by establishing interagency coordinated crisis management procedure.
Lead	Graham County Health Department
Partners	Mount Graham Regional Medical Center, Canyonlands Healthcare Safford & Safford Integrated Clinics, Easterseals Blake Behavioral Health Graham & Greenlee Counties, first responders

Mental Health Crisis Care

A mental health crisis refers to a situation in which an individual's mental or emotional state becomes severely distressed, overwhelming, or unmanageable. It can manifest in various forms, including acute anxiety, severe depression, thoughts of self-harm or suicide, psychosis, extreme agitation, or other symptoms that significantly impair a person's ability to function or poses a risk to their safety or the safety of others. Mental health crises require immediate attention and intervention to ensure the individual's well-being and safety. These crises can vary in severity and duration, and prompt access to appropriate mental health care and support is essential for resolution and recovery.

When an individual experiences a mental health crisis, the individual is generally taken to a care facility (the hospital or a clinic) by a relative, friend, police officer, or referred by a mental health agency (such as Easterseals Blake Behavioral Health) or local crisis team (Community Bridges Inc.). Mental health care providers in Graham County reported that since emergency triage, admissions, and discharge procedures are designed to support acute physical illness and injury—patients experiencing mental health crisis are often either have very long wait times for care or are discharged too early or without sufficient coordination with the case manager or behavioral health clinic.

Case Managers

A case manager is an individual appointed to help individuals suffering from mental and behavioral health with their recovery. The case manager prepares the patient's care plan, and so is familiar with the patient's background, medical records, and their recovery goals and strategies. Case managers advocate for their patients in healthcare or social service environments, guide patients through the processes and regulations related to their cases and facilitate case coordination and information sharing. Case managers also assist the patient's family navigate the at-home care, and as needed setup respite for the family so they could take a break to prevent getting burnt out.

Local mental healthcare providers recommend establishing a case manager contact system as a priority in addressing mental health crises. This system would facilitate direct collaboration between medical staff and the patient's advocate when a mental health crisis occurs, ensuring continuity in their treatment.

Action Steps

- ☐ Create a case manager contact system for mental health providers, to facilitate quick communication during mental health crises with the person most familiar with the patient's situation.
 - Add a question regarding case manager to admission process when the patient is brought to the clinic by family or friend.
- ☐ Collaboratively develop enhanced protocols and guidelines for responding to mental health crises, and clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each agency or organization involved in mental health crisis response. Ensure perspective of all agencies are included in the development of protocols, as the issues faced by first responders, hospital staff, and behavioral clinic staff all vary.
- ☐ Train personnel across agencies on the enhanced protocols. This includes crisis intervention training and mental health first aid for first responders.
- ☐ Establish secure and compliant mechanisms for sharing relevant information among agencies, ensuring that critical details about individuals in crisis are accessible to authorized responders.
- ☐ Establish specialized crisis stabilization facility to provide immediate care and assessment for individuals in crisis, diverting them from the emergency room when appropriate.

Resources

- [HRSA – Rural Health Network Development Planning Program](#)
- [SAMHSA – Cooperative Agreements for Innovative Community Crisis Response Partnerships](#)
- [Collaborative Crisis Response and Intervention Training Program](#)
- [NIH – Innovative Mental Health Services Research](#)

Mental Health Strategy 2

Mental Health Resources



Objective	Encourage employers to offer mental health insurance coverage and raise awareness of available mental health resources in the community.
Lead	Graham County Health Department
Partners	Mount Graham Regional Medical Center, Canyonlands Healthcare Safford & Safford Integrated Clinics, Easterseals Blake Behavioral Health Graham & Greenlee Counties, Graham County Chamber of Commerce, Graham Economic Partnership, La Frontera-SEABHS, Community Partners Integrated Health

Need for Insurance that Covers Mental Healthcare

Arizonans are [over 3 times more likely to be forced out-of-network for mental health care](#) than for primary health care — making it more difficult to find care and less affordable due to higher out-of-pocket costs. In the [2023 Graham County Community Health Assessment](#), community members reported that the top reasons for not seeking help were “cost of service or visit” (33%), “long wait time for an appointment” (30%), “no qualified provider or service in my area” (28%), and “service or visit not covered by insurance” (27%). The Health Assessment pointed out that while the top concern for survey respondents was the cost of service or visit, the decision to seek help is also “complicated by unclear insurance policies that may or may not cover certain mental health services.”

While individuals on Medicaid/AHCCCS/KidsCare are provided care through Arizona Complete Health—the Regional Behavioral Health Authority for Graham County—individuals on private insurance plans often do not have access to needed mental healthcare, case managers, or medication.

Need for Resources

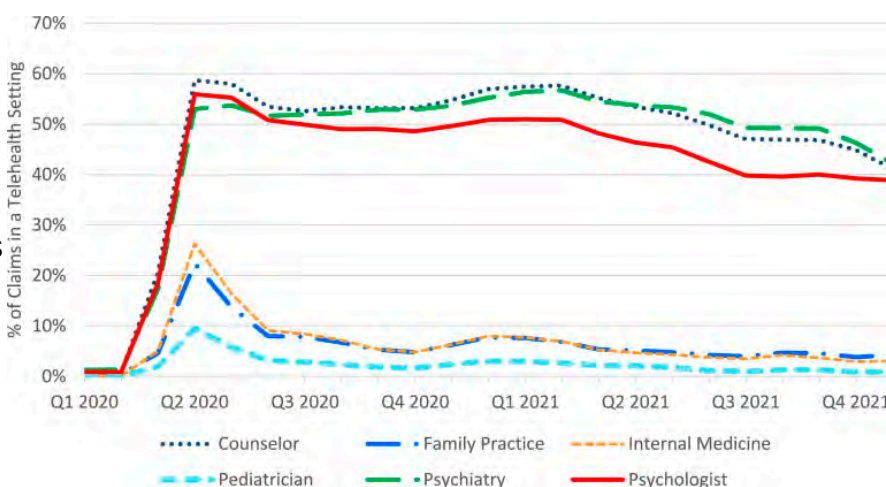
For both mental health and substance use disorders issues, respondents of the [2023 Graham County Community Health Assessment](#) survey cited more mental health resources as the top solution to reducing these problems in our community.

One of the Graham County Health Department's Mental Health Goals for 2023 is to share mental health education and resources at 12 community events and in schools to 1,000 students in the next year. The Mental Health Department has launched an "Easy Access" pilot program in high schools, funded by Blue Cross Blue Shield Arizona Community Foundation, and has started a youth-specific mental health action committee.

Telehealth as a Resource

According to [a study by Mulvaney-Day, Norah et al.](#), while use of telehealth increased for many medical providers in early 2020, those for mental health and behavioral health were used twice as much as general practitioners (i.e., pediatricians and those in general medicine or family practice), and the mental and behavioral health providers continued to use telehealth while general practitioners use of telehealth rapidly fell to almost pre-pandemic levels after the April 2020 peak.

Their findings indicate that "the COVID-19 pandemic introduced a major systemic change in the delivery of behavioral health care in the United States...data suggests that individuals are continuing to use telehealth, despite the widespread return to in-person activities in health care settings, workplaces, and other public spaces. This persistence in the use of telehealth for behavioral health conditions indicates that at this point, use of telehealth is likely not simply about safety concerns but also convenience, comfort, and costs."



Telehealth services can play a crucial role in providing accessible mental health care—especially for individuals who are not diagnosed as SMI and for non-crisis care. Through telehealth, individuals can receive mental health services remotely, connecting with qualified providers via video conferencing or phone calls. This approach eliminates the constraints of geographical distance and allows community members to access mental health support from the comfort of their own homes or local clinics. By leveraging telehealth technology, Graham County can bridge the gap in mental health services, ensuring community members have greater access to the care they need to support their mental well-being.

Action Steps

- ☐ Encourage local businesses to provide insurance coverage options for their employees that include mental health coverage, including covering case manager expenses, therapy, and medications.
 - Compile a list of insurance providers who provide coverage for mental healthcare.
 - Coordinate with Graham County Chamber of Commerce and Graham Economic Partnership to provide this list to local employers, along with a brochure on the role of case managers, to promote use of carriers that provide the needed coverage.
- ☐ Continue to compile resources to support mental health and make available from a central location—the [County's Mental Health webpage](#).
- ☐ Create educational materials that explain the benefits and process of accessing mental health services.
 - Clearly outline the steps for seeking help, including how to find providers, schedule appointments, and navigate the technology required.
 - Launch community-wide awareness.
- ☐ Develop and regularly update comprehensive directories or online databases of mental health providers in Graham County and via telehealth.
 - Include information on the specialties, credentials, and contact details of providers, as well as any insurance or payment options available.
 - Distribute these directories through local healthcare facilities, community centers, libraries, other local public buildings, and online platforms.
- ☐ Identify location for telemedicine access in the County (potentially at the library or a behavioral health clinic).
- ☐ Pursue a USDA Distance Learning & Telemedicine Grant to purchase audio, video, and interactive video equipment as needed to create a space for community members to access telehealth services.

Resources

- [USDA – Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program](#)
- [HRSA – Service Area Competition](#)
- [Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona Foundation for Community & Health Advancement – Mental Health Grant](#)
- [USDA – Distance Learning & Telemedicine Grants](#)
- [HRSA – Rural Public Health Workforce Training Network Program](#)
- [HRSA – Telehealth Technology-Enabled Learning Program](#)

Mental Health Strategy 3

Support Groups



Objective	Organize support groups for community members in need of emotional and psychological assistance.
Lead	Graham County Health Department
Partners	NAMI Sierra Vista District

The Role of NAMI

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) hosts support groups for people with mental health conditions and for family members, significant others, and friends of people with mental health conditions.

There were well attended NAMI support groups in the County a decade ago, but funding was lost, and the program closed. The Graham County Health Department Mental Health Coordinator is working with the NAMI Sierra Vista District to get these support groups running again.

Action Steps

- ☐ Identify qualified individuals who could lead the support groups.
- ☐ Coordinate with NAMI to train local support group leads for the peer support group and family and friends support group.
 - Collaborate with community organizations, schools, and faith-based groups to create safe spaces for open discussions about mental health.
- ☐ Pursue funding to provide childcare and a meal during support groups. (This enables parents who need to attend the support group to do so.)
 - Funding needs are anticipated to be small, less than \$10,000 annually.
 - A sustainable funding model can ensure the programs continuation.
- ☐ Host "NAMI Basics" course for parents of diagnosed kids.
- ☐ Identify community groups that would benefit from support groups. (Aging population, LGBTQ+, substance abuse, etc.)

Resources

- [Arizona Complete Health – Corporate Giving](#)
- [HRSA – Rural Health Network Development Program](#)



Nonprofits



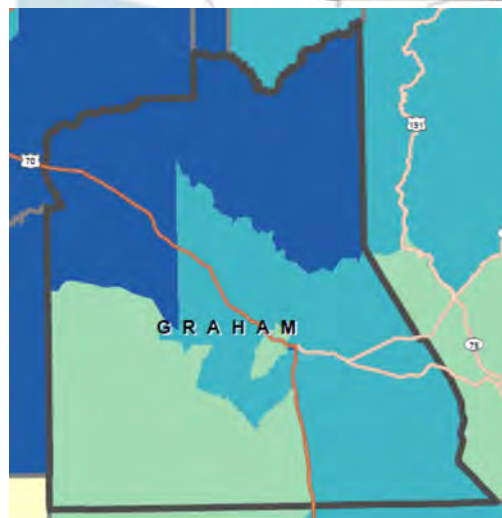
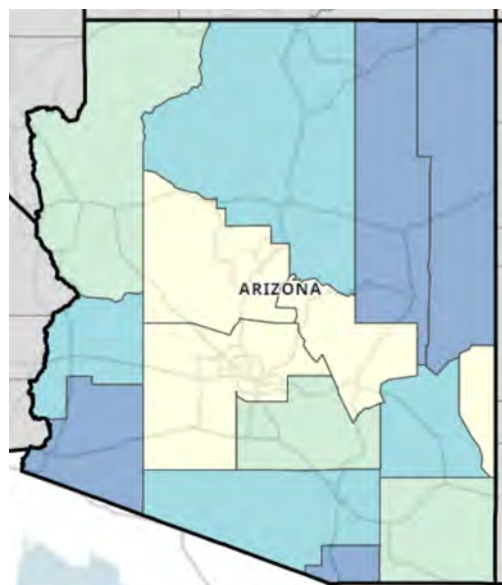
A community's social conditions can impact how the community handles disasters. The [CDC Social Vulnerability Index](#) identifies areas that will most likely need support before, during, and after a hazardous event. Vulnerability rankings are analyzed on social factors such as unemployment, minority status, disability, poverty, vehicle access, etc.

According to the CDC Social Vulnerability Index, Graham County's overall social vulnerability ranking is Medium High.

Low
Low Medium
Medium High
High

The northern end of the County has the highest level of overall social vulnerability.

Low (bottom 4 th)
Low Medium
Medium High
High (top 4 th)



Nonprofits in Graham County play a significant role in helping socially vulnerable populations. According to [Nonprofits: A Public Policy Tool for the Promotion of Community Subjective Well-being](#),

“By acting as the backbone of civic life, nonprofits of all types, including service and advocacy nonprofits, give people opportunities for fellowship, companionship, sociability, and integration which can lead to increases in the quantity and quality of social capital in a community (Musick and Wilson 2008; Smith 1974; Tocqueville [1835, 1840] 1972). Even nonprofits not typically associated with traditional ideas of local community engagement, like museums, medical research centers, or international relief organizations, add to civic life when they gather individuals with a common interest, engage board members, organize local awareness campaigns, or host fundraising events...Through their contributions to the production of social capital alone, nonprofits should be associated with community-level subjective well-being.”

Funding Needs

Representatives from several local nonprofits reported that one of their primary challenges is securing sufficient funding to support their daily operations. Grant funds for nonprofits are often limited to use for program-specific initiatives, however the financial sustainability of nonprofits depends on securing resources for operational expenses. These expenses encompass essential aspects such as staff salaries, administrative costs, and facility maintenance. Without adequate operational funding, nonprofits are unable to efficiently deliver their programs and services, limiting their overall impact in the community.

Nonprofits play a significant role in supporting community members in Graham County, with 15% more nonprofits per capita in Graham County than in the state of Arizona overall.* Supporting nonprofits’ ability to fund their operations and deliver effective programs can have a significant impact in increasing the resilience of at-risk populations in the County.

**This calculation includes tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organizations (IRS.gov, 07/10/2023) with assets and revenue of \$1 or more (per their most recent IRS filing).*

The United Way of Graham & Greenlee Counties is a nonprofit organization that has served the community since 1978. The United Way improves local communities and the lives of those who live in them by focusing on three the building blocks for a quality life: education, health, and financial stability.

Nonprofits Strategy 1

Joint Fundraising Event



Objective

Host a joint fundraising event for local nonprofits to support the general operations of participating local nonprofits.

Lead

United Way of Graham & Greenlee Counties

Partners

Graham County Chamber of Commerce

Benefits of a Joint Fundraising Event

The joint fundraising event can be more cost-effective compared to individual fundraising campaigns. Shared expenses, such as venue rentals, marketing materials, event logistics, and even staff or volunteer support, can be divided among the participating organizations, reducing the financial burden on each organization.

The event would enable multiple nonprofits to raise funds that provide vital support for the day-to-day functioning, sustainability, and impact of the nonprofits. By focusing on supporting general operations, the event seeks to address the organizations' ongoing needs, such as administrative expenses, program development, staff salaries, technology upgrades, facility maintenance, and other essential operational costs, costs often not eligible for grant funding.

Participating organizations can pool their resources, networks, and supporters, resulting in a larger fundraising potential. By combining efforts, the event can attract a larger audience, increase the overall donation amount, and potentially reach new donors who are more inclined to contribute to a collective cause. The combined marketing and promotional efforts reach a wider audience, generating increased public awareness about the causes and missions of the organizations. This heightened visibility can lead to new supporters, partnerships, and community engagement.

Action Steps

- ☐ Determine the event format, such as a gala dinner, charity auction, fun run, biking contest, benefit concert, or community fair. Consider the preferences and target audience of the nonprofits and donors involved—with an objective to bring-in donors and participants from neighboring Counties.
- ☐ Choose a venue and date.
 - Create a detailed timeline to plan, promote, and execute the event.
 - Select a venue that accommodates the expected attendees and event format.
 - Select a date that avoids conflicts with other community events. An ideal date would be to plan the event to occur on [Arizona Gives Day](#).
- ☐ Develop a budget with all anticipated expenses (i.e. venue rental, catering, entertainment, marketing materials, and permits).
 - Identify sources of revenue (i.e. ticket sales, sponsorships, donations, grants).
 - Ask local businesses and philanthropic organizations to sponsor the event.
 - Provide sponsors with opportunities for recognition at the event.
- ☐ Arrange event (i.e. permits, vendors, catering, audiovisual, and registration).
- ☐ Collaborate with participating nonprofits to determine their fundraising goals and develop strategies for soliciting donations during the event.
 - Explore options like silent auctions, raffles, donation drives, or crowdfunding campaigns to engage attendees and generate additional contributions.
 - Create an engaging event program that includes speeches, presentations, live performances, or testimonials. Include emotional pleas and information on how donations will impact the community. Incorporate activities that allow attendees to learn more about the missions and impact of each organization.
- ☐ Utilize various marketing channels, such as social media, websites, email newsletters, press releases, and community partnerships, to raise awareness about the event and reach a broader audience.
 - Craft a compelling event message that highlights the collective impact of the participating nonprofits and the exciting event lineup.
 - Require participating nonprofits to support efforts to get participants committed to attend. (For example, make each nonprofit responsible for filling a specific number of tables.)
 - Invite partners to participate in a committee to support event promotion.
- ☐ Execute the event and follow-up.
 - Follow up with attendees, sponsors, and donors after the event to express gratitude and provide updates on the impact of their support.
 - Evaluate the event's success, including financial outcomes, attendee feedback, lessons learned, and areas for improvement. Use this evaluation to inform future joint fundraising events and strengthen collaborative efforts.

Resources

- [AZ Gives](#)
- [Event Planning for Non-Profits: An Essential Guide](#)

Nonprofits Strategy 2

Nonprofit Training



Objective

Empower local nonprofits with the knowledge and resources needed to fund their operations.

Lead

United Way of Graham & Greenlee Counties

Partners

Eastern Arizona College, Community Foundation for Southern Arizona, Legacy Foundation, Arizona Community Foundation, Arizona Alliance of Nonprofits

Benefits of Training

By equipping local nonprofits with the essential knowledge and resources required to sustain and support their day-to-day operations, these organizations will be better able to navigate the complexities of fundraising, financial management, and resource allocation, ultimately enhancing their ability to fulfill their missions effectively. Empowering these nonprofits with the skills and insights needed for financial sustainability not only ensures their continued existence but also strengthens their capacity to make a meaningful impact on the community.

Action Steps

- ☐ Organize workshops to train nonprofits on best practices to fund their operations. These sessions could provide practical tips, templates, and real-world examples to guide nonprofits in crafting compelling funding strategies.
 - Cover topics such as: operating and expense budgets, grant writing, donor engagement, budget management, diversifying funding sources, differences between program costs and operational cost and capital costs, what to include in a budget for a grant request based on the type of grant it is, how to demonstrate to potential funders their plans to cover requested operational or program costs by other sources of funding such as earned income, donations, or other sources of income generation over a period of time.
 - Conduct direct outreach to all the nonprofits in the County—especially those that have not participated in past trainings to ensure they are aware of these resources.
 - Encourage nonprofits to utilize the Arizona Economic Resource Center for technical assistance and grant writing assistance.
- ☐ Curate and share resources like funding guides, sample proposals, and case studies. This repository of useful materials can simplify local nonprofits' process of obtaining funding.
- ☐ As needed, provide one-on-one coaching and mentorship to nonprofits, offering tailored guidance based on the specific needs and challenges each organization faces. This could involve helping them create fundraising plans, reviewing grant applications, or suggesting fundraising tactics.
- ☐ Provide grant research assistance to help nonprofits identify grant opportunities that align with their mission and programs. This could involve helping them research grants, understand eligibility criteria, and tailor their proposals accordingly. Inform nonprofits about free databases, such as Grantmakers.io and Grants.gov, and consider subscribing to a grant database, such as Grant Gopher or FundsforNGOs to find additional grant opportunities.
- ☐ Advocate for the importance of operational funding for nonprofits at the community and policy level. Raise awareness about the value of supporting nonprofits' day-to-day operations.

Resources

- [Grant Gopher](#)
- [FundsforNGOs](#)
- [Grantmakers.io](#)
- [Arizona Gives – Training Resources for Nonprofits](#)
- [Community Foundation for Southern Arizona – CORE Grants](#)
- [Arizona Economic Resource Center](#)



Appendices

Appendix I: Acknowledgments

Special thanks for input on this strategic plan from the following:

Local Businesses & Economic Development Professionals

- Danny Smith, Mt Graham Regional Medical Center, and Graham Economic Partnership
- Eric Bejarano, Small Business Development Center
- Kym Gifford, KeyHole Properties
- Royce Hunt, Roycycled
- Sean Wenham, Freeport-McMoRan Social Performance Manager
- Torey Cranford, Ocotillo collective, Cakes with TLC, Graham County Board
- Vance Bryce, Graham Chamber of Commerce
- Vaughn Grant, Countrywide Financial

Education & Workforce Development

- Charmaine Chidester, Eastern Arizona College
- Donna McGaughey, Graham County School Superintendent

Mental Health Professionals & Emergency Responders

- Autumn Hunziker, Easterseals Blake Behavioral Health Graham & Greenlee Counties
- Eliza Coll, Current President of the Arizona Association of Emergency Managers, and past Board of Directors of the Arizona Public Health Association
- Jennifer Labrum, Graham County Health Department
- Lance Johnson, Canyonlands Healthcare Safford & Safford Integrated Clinics
- Pefy Cunningham, Easterseals Blake Behavioral Health Graham & Greenlee Counties
- Rosa Contreras, Graham County Health Department

Regional Organizations

- Ann George, Freeport-McMoRan Sr. Scientist - Biodiversity & Sustainability
- Denise Benton, United Way of Graham & Greenlee Counties
- Keith Dennis, SouthEastern Arizona Governments Organization
- Stephen Petterson, SouthEastern Arizona Governments Organization

Local Leaders

- Dustin Welker, Graham County Board of Supervisors
- Heath Brown, Town of Thatcher
- Jaime Embick, Town of Safford
- John Howard, Graham County Board of Supervisors
- Paul David, Graham County Board of Supervisors

Appendix II: Report Template

Task	Deadline	Progress-To-Date

Adjustments to Strategies (as needed)

Planned Celebration / Announcement of Achievements

Funding / Resource Help Needed

Appendix III: Grant Verbiage

This appendix provides basic narrative text that can be used as a starting point when drafting grant applications. Informational text about the initiatives and their needs can be taken directly from the body of the Action Plan as needed. The language provided in this appendix includes key points typically requested by grant applications for each of the priorities in this Action Plan. The typical grant application topics include:

Community Challenges/Needs: Some of the backgrounds of the challenges often addressed by the organizations/programs that will be seeking funding. Narrative that provides a persuasive argument that there is a need.

Efforts Underway or Accomplished to Address the Challenges/Needs: Grantors like to see that there is already some positive momentum in addressing the needs that the funding will go towards. It shows that the project does matter to the community/organization and that there is likely to be follow through with the project.

Beneficiaries & Community Benefits: Every grant asks who the project/program they are funding will serve. While the nonprofits will have to adjust slightly according to their specific projects, there are generally both immediate beneficiaries and more widespread ones.

Geographic Area & Community Demographics: Almost every grant will ask for information about the community. Include both normal demographic information, and some detail about the community and area that is unique to them.

Since this information is the same for all projects, see [Appendix IV: County Data](#) for this information. Please note, however, that the data will vary from year-to-year, so grant applicants should be sure to use up-to-date statistics, which can be found at [data.census.gov](#) or by using [Better City's free Graham County Data Dashboard](#).

ECONOMY

Community Challenges/Needs

There is a strong need to diversify the economy in Graham County and reduce the heavy reliance on the mining industry. The County is a community that depends on the mining industry as its main source of tax contributions and jobs. The mining industry had an estimated 63% of the County's gross domestic product in 2021. Freeport-McMoRan's mining operations generated nearly \$314 million in economic benefits for Graham County in 2021. The Safford mine is the single largest employer—with 1,270 employees—and FMI struggles to find enough local workers to meet its current workforce needs. This dependence on one industry creates substantial risk and leaves Graham County vulnerable to fluctuations in the copper market and potential mine closures, thus exposing the County to potential layoffs which will further cause a ripple effect on the economy.

Efforts Underway or Accomplished to Address the Challenges/Needs

Graham County is working in conjunction with its partner organizations—the Graham Economic Partnership, the Small Business Development Center and the Graham Chamber of Commerce—to diversify the economy. Working under three core strategies, the County is working to bring a variety of businesses and new jobs.

1. Growing local businesses by providing customized information to second-stage companies—addressing their strategic issues and enabling them to grow. This targeted assistance includes market research, competitive intelligence, strategic planning, and access to expert networks.
2. Reducing barriers to businesses expanding into commercial space. Expanding into commercial space can provide small businesses with increased visibility, improved professional image, and room for growth.
3. Helping local businesses provide B2B services and products. When local businesses supply goods or services to other local enterprises, it reduces the community's reliance on external suppliers, making it more resilient to economic fluctuations and disruptions.

Beneficiaries & Community Benefits

The entire community will benefit from a diversified economy, and the more diverse tax income will also allow the County to provide better resources for its residents. This will make Graham County a better place to live and work for its current and future residents.

Reducing the reliance Graham County has on the mining industry has a variety of benefits for the community. It creates a more stable economy that is less likely to collapse due to fluctuations in the mining industry and more stable jobs for residents. It also creates a more diversified source of jobs that provide for residents with varied skills, education and backgrounds. It also makes a stronger portfolio for the County's tax revenues and allows the County to attract businesses in various sectors.

Water Availability

Community Challenges/Needs

Climate-related risks and natural disasters pose an issue for Graham County's resilience. Graham County's primary climate challenges are drought, wildfire, and riverine flooding. Arizona is currently in a long-term drought that has lasted more than 20 years. From 2000 to the present, Graham County was in a drought 76% of the time, per Arizona's drought dashboard. According to the FEMA National Risk Index, there is a 0.55% chance of wildfire in Graham County per year. There are 2,161 properties in Graham County that have a greater than a 26% chance of being severely affected by flooding over the next 30 years, representing 18% of all properties in Graham County.

According to the FEMA National Risk Index, the expected loss each year due to natural hazards is highest for drought (\$5.4 million), wildfire (\$1.4 million), and riverine flooding (approximately \$6 million). All three of these risks were identified by community members as pressing concerns for the County.

Efforts Underway or Accomplished to Address the Challenges/Needs

With the support of the Gila Watershed Partnership, Graham County is working to mitigate water availability risks by implementing two core strategies:

1. Encouraging residents to remove tamarisk from their property. The invasive tamarisk contributes to drought, wildfire, and flooding along the Gila River, making its removal a critical step for climate resilience. To accomplish this, the Gila Watershed Partnership will conduct educational outreach to residents, organize community workdays, track progress and effectiveness of tamarisk removal, and provide signage to residents who have removed tamarisk.
2. Implement the Water Wise Program to promote water conservation among residents and agricultural producers, including rebate programs and educational workshops. This includes practical tips on how to use water more efficiently in landscaping and indoors, water conservation consultations, information about available rebate programs, and workshops on topics such as water, climate, and local flora and fauna.

Beneficiaries & Community Benefits

The benefits of a more climate resilient Graham County are vast. Homeowners, landlords, and residents benefit from mitigation efforts, knowledge, and tools as property and lives are protected. The climate resilience programs and efforts implemented in Graham County will also have a ripple effect that will benefit neighboring counties and can serve as an example for similar communities.

HOUSING

Community Challenges/Needs

A lack of affordable housing inventory has posed an issue for Graham County and meeting the needs of the workforce which plays a key role in attracting businesses to the County. Employers in Graham County reported a high need for workforce housing, with multiple stakeholders stating their efforts to expand are curtailed due to workforce availability, and potential hires cite an inability to find housing as the primary impediment that keeps them from taking the jobs. The limited housing stock deters many would-be employees from moving into the region.

The rural characteristics of Graham's housing market put it at a disadvantage compared to metro areas. The sales price per square foot in Graham County averaged \$163 between June 2022 and June 2023. Sales price per square foot was 34% higher in Pima County and 63% higher in Maricopa County over the same period.

Efforts Underway or Accomplished to Address the Challenges/Needs

Graham County is working in conjunction with the Graham Economic Partnership to diversify housing options. Working under three core strategies, the County is working to bring a variety of housing options that will support the local workforce:

1. Conducting a housing needs assessment that evaluates the housing situation, forecasting future housing needs to help stakeholders understand housing market dynamics, identify unmet housing needs, and make informed policy and development decisions.
2. Hosting a regional housing conference to create a platform for exploring innovative housing solutions and fostering partnerships that can lead to the development of housing strategies tailored to the unique needs of the region. The conference will bring together key stakeholders, including local government officials, developers, housing advocates, and community members, to collaboratively address housing challenges and opportunities.
3. Creating pre-packaged housing projects to attract developers. By identifying parcels that municipalities deem highly desirable for housing development and simplifying the development process through zoning adjustments and permit streamlining, local governments create a favorable environment for developers. The coordination with landowners to market these parcels with a clear vision for development increases the appeal, making them more enticing for private developers, especially if state or federal lands are involved.

Beneficiaries & Community Benefits

These coordinated efforts align the interests of both public and private sectors, making Graham County a more appealing destination for developers seeking opportunities in the housing market. Residents benefit from having a variety of affordable housing options along with businesses that are able to ensure there is sufficient housing available.

MENTAL HEALTH

Community Challenges/Needs

Mental health plays a profound role in shaping individual and collective resilience, as it influences the ability of community members to cope with stress, adapt to change, and maintain overall well-being.

14% of adults in Graham County report frequent mental distress, and the number of deaths caused by despair and suicide in Graham County is higher than rates for both the state and the nation.

Efforts Underway or Accomplished to Address the Challenges/Needs

Graham County is in the process of implementing three steps to address the mental health disparity. In conjunction with the Graham County Health department the following actions will address the need:

1. Creating an Interagency Crisis Management Procedure to foster collaboration with local healthcare providers and emergency responders to create a coordinated procedurl health coverage by encouraging local employers to offer suitable insurance carriers.
2. Encouraging employers to offer mental health insurance coverage and raising awareness of available mental health resources in the community.
3. Creating support groups to provide valuable emotional and practical support for individuals facing similar challenges and fostering a sense of community and shared understanding.

Beneficiaries & Community Benefits

Residents of these efforts will be the primary beneficiaries. Creating a safe environment for everyone to deal with mental health issues will have a trickle-down effect on the community by also supporting families of those who are having mental health issues, making Graham County a more positive, benevolent place to live for all.

NONPROFITS

Community Challenges/Needs

A community's social conditions can impact how the community handles disasters. According to the CDC Social Vulnerability Index, Graham County's overall social vulnerability ranking is Medium High. The northern end of the County has the highest level of overall social vulnerability. Representatives from several local nonprofits reported that one of their primary challenges is securing sufficient funding to support their daily operations.

Efforts Underway or Accomplished to Address the Challenges/Needs

The County is increasing funding support for local nonprofits by working with United Way of Graham & Greenlee Counties to do the following:

1. Hosting a fundraising event for nonprofits to reach a wider audience and increasing public awareness about their causes and missions. The event enables multiple nonprofits to raise funds to provide vital support for the day-to-day functioning, sustainability, and impact of the nonprofits.
2. Hosting nonprofit trainings to provide local nonprofits with resources and knowledge that enhances their operational sustainability, enabling them to navigate fundraising and financing effectively to bolster their capacity to make a significant community impact.

Beneficiaries & Community Benefits

Underprivileged community members benefit from the services provided through Graham County's nonprofits. Nonprofits benefit as they receive administrative and funding support to stabilize their revenue and expenses. Nonprofits play a significant role in supporting community members in Graham County, with 15% more nonprofits per capita in Graham County than in the state of Arizona overall, per an analysis of the IRS non-profit database. Supporting nonprofits' ability to fund their operations and deliver effective programs has a significant impact in increasing the resilience of at-risk populations in the County.

Appendix IV: County Data

