Globalization and the Transborder Metropolis: El Paso-Ciudad Juarez

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Submitted for presentation at the Lineae Terrarum meeting at El Paso, Tx, Ciudad Juarez, Chih. and Las Cruces, NM.
March 27-30, 2006
(Draft no subject for citation without the authorization of the author)

Abstract. This paper explores the degree to which the El Paso-Ciudad Juarez metropolitan area functions as a transborder metropolis. It is shown that the border is quite porous, especially for the work and shopping. In addition, the two metropolitan economies are much more complementary than competitive, with Ciudad Juárez primary functions as a manufacturing center, based on maquiladora while El Paso specializing in services related with the maquiladora industry. However, much more cooperation and collaboration are needed in several areas; improving trade infrastructure, addressing deficit in social infrastructure (especially in Ciudad Juarez); making border crossings more user-friendly; more priority to environmental problems, especially air quality, etc.

Key words: Transborder Metropolis: Ciudad Juarez-El Paso; U.S.-Mexico border

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**Introduction**

This paper explores the degree to which the El Paso-Ciudad Juarez metropolitan area functions as a transborder metropolis. The economies of both cities are much more complementary than competitive as a result of the U.S.A-Mexico economic integration through an increasing flow of goods, capital and labor. The Mexican city has been receiving a huge amount of foreign direct investment in *maquiladora* plants, which through inter-regional as well through intra-industry trade has generated linkages with the manufacturing sector on the USA side of the border. According to Hanson (1996:942) the logic of looking at borders and frontiers as natural centers of production has intensified the intra-industry trade in the urban conurbations on the U.S.A-Mexico border creating binational centers of production.

As a result of this interaction, transmigration is considered as the expression of a transborder labor market. Thousands of transmigrant workers commute on both directions (north-south; south-north) across the border for daily work. Many workers who live in the U.S. side of the metropolis works in the *maquiladora* in Ciudad Juarez. And many Mexican are working in El Paso in service and industrial activities related with the maquiladora industry located in the Mexican side of the border. Besides, a huge amount of people who work in another sectors in El Paso many of them without any legal rights to work. Another key element in this transborder metropolis relationship is the retail trade. Many Mexican residents cross the border in a weekly basis to shop in El Paso.

The paper is organized of the following form; the first section presents a theoretical framework. Section 2 describes demographic patterns on both cities. The third
section outlines the urban patterns of both cities. The fourth section presents some indicators of the transborder economy. Section 5 discusses the legal obstacles to implement transborder planning in the region.

I. Theoretical Framework of Transborder Processes in the U.S.-Mexico Border

This section intent to delineate conceptually the type of links and flows that characterized or distinguish border communities to identify the key areas of interaction (maquiladora, retail trade, tourism, transmigrants). The definition of the national, transnational and transborder processes according to the location of the elements of the binational relations. These processes can be transborder when the actors only move in a transborder context, and transnational when the actors move in a national scale.

Alegría (1992) differentiates among different processes: national and binational which can be divided into transnational and crossborder. The national process, according to him is characterized by those activities or government services directed to the local population. The transnational process refers to the phenomena that takes place in both countries and whose origin and destination is ubiquitous and do no depend of border location (export, imports, and immigration). The crossborder processes are those that its origin and destination take place at the regional level and that are the result of the “contiguous differences”.

The presence of contiguous differences is a key concept that characterized the U.S-Mexico border phenomena. The asymmetries between the two countries complementing each other and taking place in an adjacent location it is what makes the crossborder flows and links unique or different. These contiguous differences take a tangible form in the price of goods and services that would be cheaper in the U.S. side
such as gasoline, electronic goods, clothing, financial services, etc. On the other hand, U.S. residents will take advantage of the difference on price to purchase goods and services such as medicines, dental and medical services, auto mechanic services.

Table 1 taken from Alegría (1992) presents some activities considered as a typical crossborder phenomena. Among the most important crossborder phenomena are the maquiladora industry, tourism, labor commuters, retail trade, services (health, education, etc) and illegal traffic.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

II. Population Growth on El Paso-Ciudad Juarez Region.

The transborder metropolis El Paso-Ciudad Juarez, currently is a conurbation of approximately two million people, where almost one third lives (637,859) in El Paso, Texas and two thirds (1’217,818) in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico. Historically, the population of El Paso (77,560) was larger than Ciudad Juarez (43,138) in 1950. The population in Ciudad Juarez has tripled in 30 years from 407,370 in 1970 to 1,217,818 in 2000. The population in El Paso has grown at a slower pace during the same period, population in El Paso almost double from 359,291 in 1970 to 679,622 in 2000 (see Table 2). According to population projections made by Peach & Williams (2000) the population of El Paso and Ciudad Juarez in 2020 will triple reaching about 3.5 million, where two thirds will live in Ciudad Juarez.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE
Pick et al (2000) developed a commonality index\(^1\) to analyze the spatial arrangement of population characteristics for Ciudad Juarez-El Paso. According to them the total population is concentrated in the central parts of Ciudad Juarez. For El Paso, it is concentrated in the downtown areas as well as the northwest and parts of the east.

### III. Internal Organization of El Paso-Ciudad Juarez’s Urban Space

The transborder metropolis El Paso and Ciudad Juarez (CJ) currently extends for 134,029 acres (209 square miles or approximately 541 square kilometers). El Paso accounts for 59.5% of the developed land but only 34.4% of the population living in El Paso, as a result El Paso has a population density of .799 persons per acre; meanwhile, Ciudad Juarez’s population density is 22.4 persons per acre\(^2\).

El Paso and Ciudad Juarez have experienced not only different rates of growth but also different patterns of growth, which have had an impact on their urban form, density, and the rate in which they have expanded their urban boundaries. The urban boundary of CJ in the last decade (1990-2000) has increased its size 1.5 times whereas, the urban boundary of El Paso in the same decade grew by a factor of .855, almost half the rate of Ciudad Juarez (City of El Paso, 1999).

The population growth has transformed the dimensions of the city, pushing urban landscapes into previously fringe zones. During every year since 1986, Ciudad Juárez has added as much as 121.4 hectares of land (Cabral, 1991). Growth on the periphery has occurred primarily west up the lower flanks of the Sierra Juárez, south along the railroad.

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\(^1\) The communality index is based on the principle of cluster overlap. Since clustering is based on the similarity of attributes within the geographical areas that are identified as part of the cluster, the extent of overlap of the geographical regions in a cluster across the U.S. and Mexico would be an indicator of the extent of similarity between the U.S. and Mexico.

\(^2\) Information comes from The Plan for El Paso, the Municipal Institute for Planning and Research (IMIP) in Ciudad Juarez, and National Institute of Geographic Information and Statistics (INEGI).
and Pan American Highway corridor to Chihuahua City and east into previously cultivated land. As a result that the part of the irrigation district closest to Ciudad Juárez has seen a decline of more than 1,000 hectares (2,471 acres) as a result of conversion to urban use (JMAS).

The expansion west and southwest is primarily in residential areas, organized in a one-to three-mile radius from the central plaza and populated by squatters who have invaded public lands since 1960 (Ugalde, 1974; Valencia, 1969). The city’s irregular settlements cover approximately 35% of the urban land (Caraveo, 1993). Most of them were located towards the northwest and southwest. The growth east and southeast is similarly one to three miles from the center but is mostly middle –to upper-income-, residential development (Lloyd, 1986).

In 1980 the city limits had an encompassed 15,227 hectares, of which 9,385 hectares were urban land. The residential use occupied 6,061 hectares, industrial use 378, commerce and service 688, open spaces 401 and internal roads 1,857. Four years later the urban area reached 13,170 hectares, with 6,452 hectares to residential use, 681 industrial, 380 commerce and service, 461 open space, 1,529 urban vacant land, 2,150 internal roads, and 656.5 other uses (see Table 3).

(Insert Table 3 about here)

The industrial growth toward the northeast and southeast also demanded the establishment of residential and commercial areas. From 1984 to 1988 the land with residential and industrial uses increased by 337.49 and 159.13 hectares respectively. For 1988 existed 4 new industrial parks that occupied 175.8 hectares more, all of them were established southward and had a smaller size.
In 1995 the urban land represented 18,767 hectares, the residential use reached 8,416 hectares, industrial use 1,209, commerce and services 1,075, mixed use 617, open spaces 446, internal roads 4,785 and vacant urban land 2,219.

The land use of the city has not modified substantially since 1995. The residential use corresponds to 45.17% of the urban area; the roads system has reduced its percent in three points with respect to 1995 (22.78%); industrial land use has increased its proportion from 6.44% in 1995 to 8.34% in 2001; the commerce and service land area has increased to 7.40% (see Table 3).

Table 3 show that in relative terms the residential use of land has been participating in similar proportion since 1984. However, land used for industrial purposes has been increasing from 5.7% in 1984 to 8.3% in 2001. Since 1995, nine industrial parks were added, representing a total of 23. It is important to mention that the last nine industrial parks are located near the working class neighborhoods and main roads.

Table 4 shows the share of industrial land in El Paso went only from 1.3% to 1.6%. In 1988 were allocated 5,828 acres to industrial land and by 1999 the number increased to 8,376 marginal increment of 1,078 acres. It is important to emphasize that some building classified as industrial in El Paso have been empty for quite some time particularly those used by textile companies such as Farah, Levis & Strauss, etcetera but there have been new industrial sites not only in El Paso but also in the neighboring county of Dona Ana located in New Mexico which has tried to take advantage of NAFTA by investing in roads and related infrastructure.
IV. The Transborder Economy

The economies of El Paso and Ciudad Juarez have become highly integrated along the last three decades. The economic base of the region has been transforming along the last three decades. Ciudad Juarez pass from service and commerce oriented to manufacturing industry. In 1970 the economic base of the city was specialized in the tertiary sector (commerce [17.8%] and services [31.1%] of the economic active population respectively). During the 80’s started the economic transformation increasing the presence of the manufacturing sub-sector representing 21.6%, meanwhile the sub-sectors of commerce (14.3%) and services (15%) reduced its participation. In 1990 the manufacturing sub-sector represented 41.3% of the economic active population, meanwhile commerce and service represented 14.6 and 26.6% respectively.

In 1990 the mayor employers in El Paso were heavy and light industry (27%), small retail (31%), and services 42% (health [12%]; education [19%]; government [11%])

There are two areas that are of particular importance for this study: manufacturing and retail trade. Employment in these two areas to some extent captures the degree of interrelationship and dependence of the two economies of the region.

a) The Maquiladora

Ciudad Juarez is one of the cities where the maquiladora program has had more success.
It is considerate the city that attracted the highest proportion of the foreign direct investment (FDI)\(^3\) in the manufacturing sector in Mexico. The origin of the capital came mainly from Multinationals\(^4\) of United States 78.9 percent, South Korea 8.96 percent, Canada 5.75 percent, Italy 3.65 percent and Japan 2.1 percent. As a result of it the city has experienced a tremendous expansion of maquiladora plants and workers over the last four decades (Fuentes, 2001).

The city has attracted the greatest number of maquiladora jobs industry in Mexico. From 1966 to 2000, the employee growth rate was higher than that of maquiladoras plants. In 1975, the number of workers rose to 19,775, representing 30% of all maquiladora workers in Mexico. In 1985, the number of workers reached 77,592, representing 36% of all maquiladora workers in the country. In 2000 the number of employees totaled 249,509. Since 2000, the sector experienced a deep recession\(^5\) and the city lost more than 60,000 employees. In 2005 the sector has been recovered at the same level that had in 2000 (Fuentes, 2000).

The number of plants increased with an annual growth rate of 18 percent between 1970 and 1980. During the 1980s, the number of plants grew steadily with an annual average growth rate of 12.8%, in 1980 the number of plants rose 121, representing 20% of all maquiladoras plants in Mexico. During the 1990, they experienced a negative rate

\(^3\) The Mexican border cities attracted 72.5 percent of the FDI in the manufacturing sector of all the Mexican northern border’s states (See table 1). Ciudad Juarez and Tijuana were the cities that received the highest amount of FDI in the manufacturing sector, 34.86 and 26.38 percent, respectively (Fuentes, 2002).

\(^4\) Multinational corporations have been the principals driving force of globalization. Multinational manufacturing corporations have increasingly shifted production from developed to developing countries to exploit the advantages of inexpensive labor.

\(^5\) The lost of positions in the maquiladora industry has been considerate product of different aspects: 1) the recession of the US economy, 2) Major competence of China and Central America, 3) Overvaluation of the Mexican peso, 4) The new fiscal regime of the maquiladora industry, etc.
of growth (-1.3%). Since the passage of the NAFTA, the maquiladora growth rate has been modest at 2.7%.

The maquiladora industry in Ciudad Juarez has evolved from being a highly labor intensive industry to a more sophisticated industry where some R&D is taking place. Some authors (Carrillo & Hualde, 1996) argued that the maquiladora that is currently in Mexico is a third generation\(^6\) type characterized for incorporating some R&D; as a matter of fact, the Delphi plant a former General Motors subsidiary and now an independent firm located in Ciudad Juarez is a world leader firm on patents of auto parts and Ciudad Juarez has developed a cluster of industries related to auto parts, electric and electronic equipment.

It is arguing that the region is becoming a binational center of production therefore the fate of manufacturing needs to be related to liberalization of trade in Mexico that accelerated after 1982 when the country shift strategy from an import substitution strategy towards an export-led growth and where the signing of NAFTA in 1993 became the ice on the cake.

The maquiladora industry has been fundamental to the generation of employment in El Paso because it has been estimated that 20 to 37% of the new jobs created in El Paso are related to the establishment of maquiladoras in Ciudad Juarez (Vargas, 2001). Hanson (1996) reported that in the case of Ciudad Juarez-El Paso there is a strong positive correlation between U.S. border city employment growth and growth in maquiladora value added. At the same time, the employment’s elasticity of one U.S.

\(^6\) A first generation is characterized by labor intensives industries that employed a large proportion of female labor force (e.g. textile). A second generation is characterized by combining labor saving as well as capital intensive technologies an example of this is the assembly car industry. A third generation includes R&D and design and employs a more qualified and professional labor force mainly engineering and management.
border city with respect to production exported from Mexico is between 0.11 and 0.2. It means that an increment in the manufacturing exports of one Mexican border city carried out an increment of in the employment of 1.1 to 2.0% in the U.S. twin city.

Time series data for manufacturing since 1970 shows that El Paso became more specialized and it reached its peak in 1995 and then there is a decline in the LQ\(^7\). El Paso’s economy was known as the jeans capital of the world where a lot of manufacturing jobs were related to the textile industry. The transition from a manufactured based economy to a service base economy in the USA economy gave as a result a relocation of industries to location where firms could take advantage of lower wages to remain competitive. In summary, figure 1 show that El Paso’s manufacturing sector had decline particularly after 1995 and that decline may be in part attributed to NAFTA but nevertheless El Paso continues having a LQ greater than one\(^8\). The manufacturing sector in El Paso has had mix effects, there is not doubt that overall industry has decline but also there have been some sectors that have grown and these are sectors related to the maquiladora industry.

The employment data for El Paso from 1993 to 1997 supports what we have already argued and that the apparel manufacturing industry declined while some other sectors related to supply inputs and services to the maquiladora industry have grown. The

\[
LQ = \frac{\frac{e_i}{E_i}}{\frac{e_T}{E_T}}
\]

\(^7\) See Klosterman (1990) for a more detail explanation.

\(^8\) Location quotients simply represent a ratio of the employment of the region under study (ei/eT) with respect to a reference region (Ei/ET). A location quotient of one means that the region is not different or not specialization exists with respect to the reference region and a location quotient greater than one shows some specialization and the opposite is also true a location quotient less than one means the region is not specialized in that particular industry.
sectors shown in the table were purposely selected because we believe these are the ones associated with maquiladora industry of Juarez and also service related employment that offers some services and logistical support to the maquiladora industry such as transportation and warehousing, and more importantly some industries that supply inputs to the maquiladora industry such as electrical and electronic equipment, rubber and plastics which had a robust growth. In general manufacturing industry after NAFTA and prior to the 2000 recession in the USA grew by about 13%, while apparel and textile declined 11%. On the opposite side, electronics and electronic equipment grew 62.5% and trucking and warehousing above 50%. The data supports the argument that El Paso’s economy is now more dependent on the maquiladora industry located in Ciudad Juarez. In summary, the economy of both cities is becoming more interdependent economically speaking.

At the national level on key industries in Mexico as a matter of fact the average of the location quotient for manufacturing in Ciudad Juarez from 1990 to 2000 was 1.75 that means a higher specialization in this industry than the national average. The Mexican data also supports the arguments we have been emphasizing regarding the economic interdependence of the El Paso-Ciudad Juarez region. From 1988 to 2001 the maquiladora has concentrated in two key industries textiles and leather goods that accounts for about 20% of the jobs as well as in metal products and machine equipment which accounts for about 60% of the jobs. Overall, employment in Ciudad Juarez from 1980 to 1999 more than quadrupled from 39,402 to 217,155 whereas the number of plants more than double from 121 to 266. Ciudad Juarez’ maquiladora employment has also concentrated in the two industries identified above and also the city along with
Tijuana are the ones that concentrate the largest share of the maquiladora industry with about 55%. Overall about three quarters of the labor force in the manufacturing sector in Ciudad Juarez is employed in the sector specialized in metal equipment including surgical precision equipment within this industry there are two subsectors that employed about 70% of the labor force which are the assemble of electric and electronic equipment.

b) Retail Trade

Retail trade is also another area because the price differential and the quality of durable consumer goods as well as some non-durable such as clothing sold in the USA side compared with the options in Mexico.

The time series data in figure 4 shows the LQ for retail trade and as it can be seen LQ for the sector fluctuates widely over time. It is important to point out that there are clearly two important swings around 1982 and 1995 where the LQ falls dramatically. The Mexican peso devaluation is an explanation for these swings in 1982 and 1994 the Mexican economy faced two of the most severe crises resulting in a substantial devaluation of the currency consequently making local imports more expensive. Furthermore, the data shows an upswing of the LQ from about 1988 to 1994; this upswing is related to the fact that during those years Mexico experience an economic boom and credit was loose fostering retail sales. In sum, the faith of the retail trade sector is associated with the exchange rate of the Mexican peso. Authors such as Peña (2003) had made estimation that about 33% of retail trade in El Paso can be attributed to crossborder trade.
c) Transmigration

One of the most critical interactions between Ciudad Juarez and El Paso is the degree of transmigration that is considered as the expression of a transborder labor market. Most of the transmigrants live in Ciudad Juarez and work in El Paso. In 1996, in Ciudad Juarez, there were 17,279 (4.6 of the working population WP\textsuperscript{10}) of the labor force in Ciudad Juarez works in El Paso, Texas and to a lesser degree in Las Cruces, New Mexico located about 50 miles west of El Paso. By 1998, the number had diminished to 15,164 (3.5% of the WP).

There are transmigrants that live in El Paso and work in Ciudad Juarez. The creation of a Dedicated Commuter Lane (DCL) a few years ago is an indicator of how important the transborder labor market is for the El Paso-Ciudad Juarez. The DCL is an example of what Pick (2001) calls the facilitator function of the trans-boundary relationship. According INS office “The goal of the DCL is [to] facilitate entry for low risk, frequent border commuters, while maintaining the integrity of the inspections process.” In order to obtain a DCL permit, users are required to go through a criminal background check, demonstrate the need (work, study, family, etc.) for it, and, in addition pay fees in Mexico and the U.S. that together add up to more than $400 dollars. The main advantage of the DCL is the time difference crossing the border whereas in the DCL takes only a few minutes to cross the border in the bridges waiting times are normally an hour. The capacity of the lane was to say to be to accommodate 8,000 users. In 1999 when the DCL opened 829 passengers and 229 vehicles were approved and by 2003 there

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\textsuperscript{9} The definition of transmigrants are persons who live in one country and work on the daily basis in the other.

\textsuperscript{10} Persons who were working full or part time at the moment the survey or census are applied.
are 17,011 users and 11,033 vehicles approved. Right now is operating a new DCL in the Zaragoza bridge.

V) Transborder Planning\textsuperscript{11}

Although the transborder metropolis Ciudad Juarez-El Paso experience a very strong interaction and integration, managing urban development or coordinating policies in both side of the border has been extremely difficult because the region lack of legal powers or authority to subscribe legally binding agreements. However, since the implementation of NAFTA, some border cities, both in Mexico and the U.S. are establishing increasing bilateral planning relations. Interestingly, these relations have been taking place outside the diplomatic framework of international relations. Instead, border cities and more specifically their planning departments have started to work our bilateral plans. Thus, while in the past planning was undertaken internationally, regionally and bilaterally through diplomatic means, it is currently being carried out from city-to-city or from planning department-to-planning department (Vazquez, 2001).

In this context, the El Paso City Planning has been collaborating with IMIP\textsuperscript{12} in different aspects like discussions about transborder planning, environmental planning, etc. However, much more cooperation and collaboration are needed in several areas; improving trade infrastructure, addressing deficit in social infrastructure (especially in Ciudad Juarez); making border crossings more user-friendly; more priority to environmental problems, especially air quality, etc.

\textsuperscript{11} Transborder planning is a process in which two countries through their institutions, planners, and communities collaborate in order to address common planning issues, alternatives at a local, state and regional/international levels.

\textsuperscript{12} Municipal Institute of Planning and Research of Ciudad Juarez.
In this moment seems to be complicate to advance in the transborder cooperation or collaboration as a result of the war against terrorism the nation-state has reasserted its right to protect its spatial territory and its border had reacquired new functions and meanings. The unilateral approach has imposed higher costs to border communities in both sides (Peña, 2002).

Bibliography


Table 2
Population trends in El Paso and Ciudad Juarez Region, 1900-2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>El Paso</th>
<th>Ciudad Juarez</th>
<th>ElP-CJ regional</th>
<th>% in El Paso</th>
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<td>1920</td>
<td>77,560</td>
<td>43,138</td>
<td>120,698</td>
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<td>1960</td>
<td>130,485</td>
<td>131,308</td>
<td>261,793</td>
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<td>276,687</td>
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<td>701,687</td>
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<td>479,889</td>
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<td>798,499</td>
<td>1,313,841</td>
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<td>2020</td>
<td>1,166,900</td>
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<th>1995</th>
<th>2001</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Surface (hectares)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>6,452</td>
<td>48.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>681</td>
<td>5.7</td>
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<td>Commerce and Service</td>
<td>380</td>
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<td>Mixed Use</td>
<td>656.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Open Space</td>
<td>461</td>
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<td>Internal Road</td>
<td>2,150</td>
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<td>Vacant land</td>
<td>1,529</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>13,170</td>
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Table 4: El Paso Land Use (1988 and 1999) acres

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Land Use</th>
<th>1988 Surface (acres)</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>1999 Surface (acres)</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>22,080</td>
<td>13.9</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Office/Commercial</td>
<td>3,136</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>4,550</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Franklin Mountain</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vacant</td>
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<td>42.0</td>
<td>54,622</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Acres</td>
<td>158,080</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Developed (platted) Acres</td>
<td>67,835</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Total Land Franklin</td>
<td>362,239</td>
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Source: El Paso City Planning.

Figure 1