

IDENTIFYING DIGITALLY UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES: EL PASO, TEXAS

The Hunt Institute for Global Competitiveness at The University of Texas at El Paso



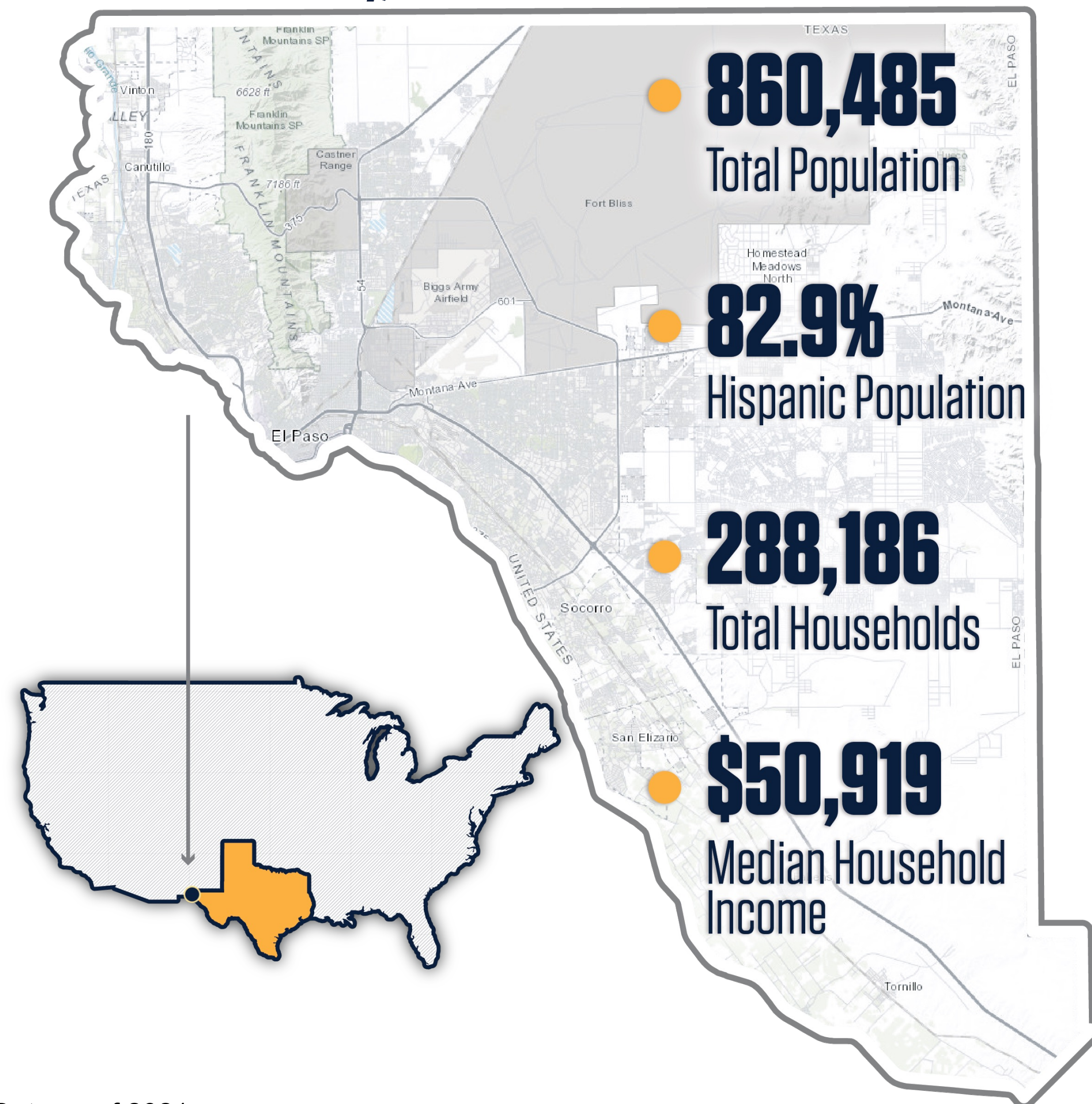
Introduction

High-speed internet is vital for:

- ▶ Telework
- ▶ Telehealth
- ▶ Remote Education

El Paso, Texas, finds itself as a **digitally underserved county**. The El Paso Community Foundation and the Rio Grande Council of Governments teamed up to tackle these digital challenges, working in collaboration with the Hunt Institute to conduct a study, develop proactive action plans, and secure private and public investments for **enhancing broadband infrastructure in the Paso del Norte region**.

El Paso County, Texas



Note: Data as of 2021
Source: Hunt Institute methodology using data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Objective

This study aims to identify and characterize **digitally underserved** and **unserved communities** in El Paso County and elucidate the **areas with broadband infrastructure gaps** and in most need of funding.

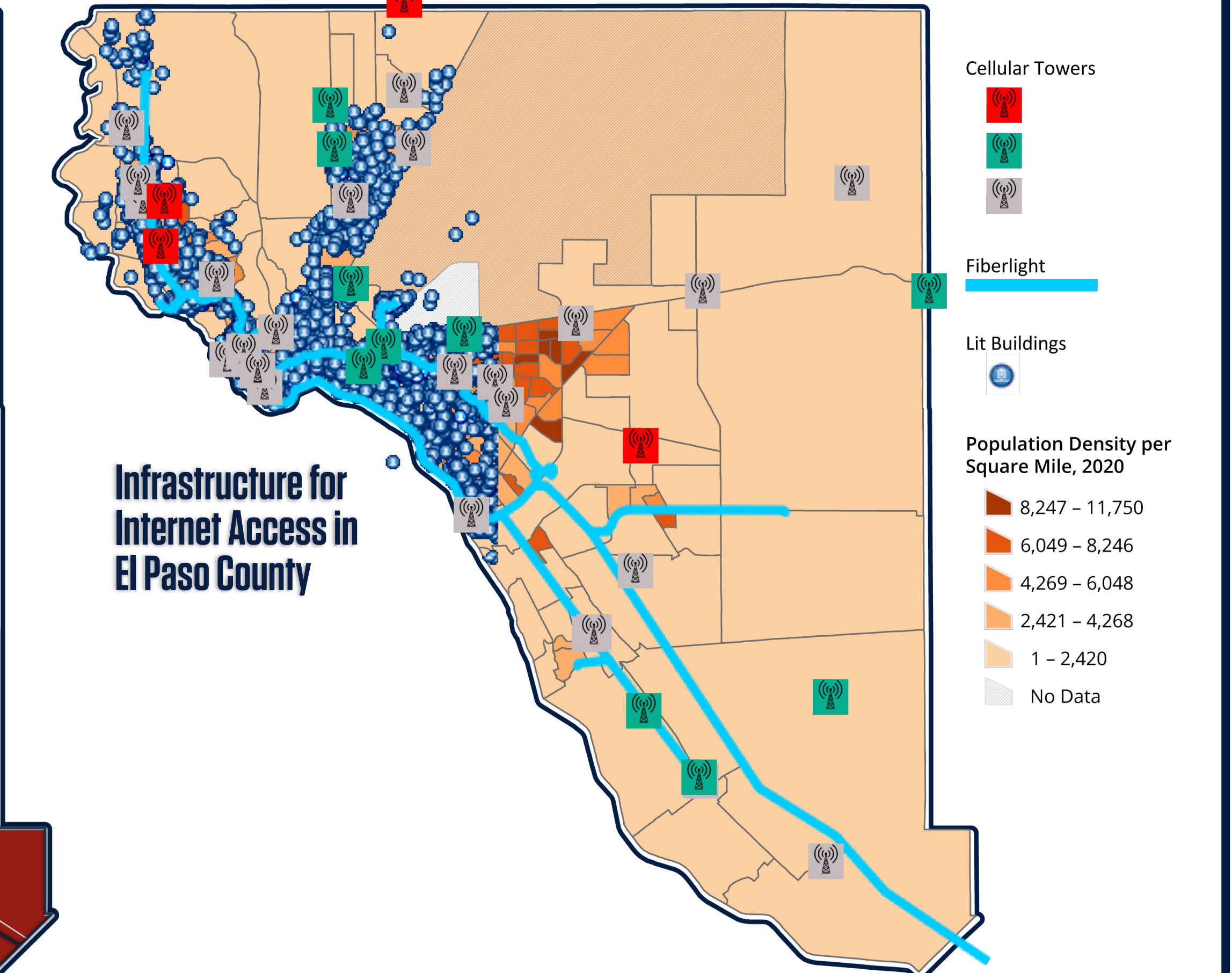
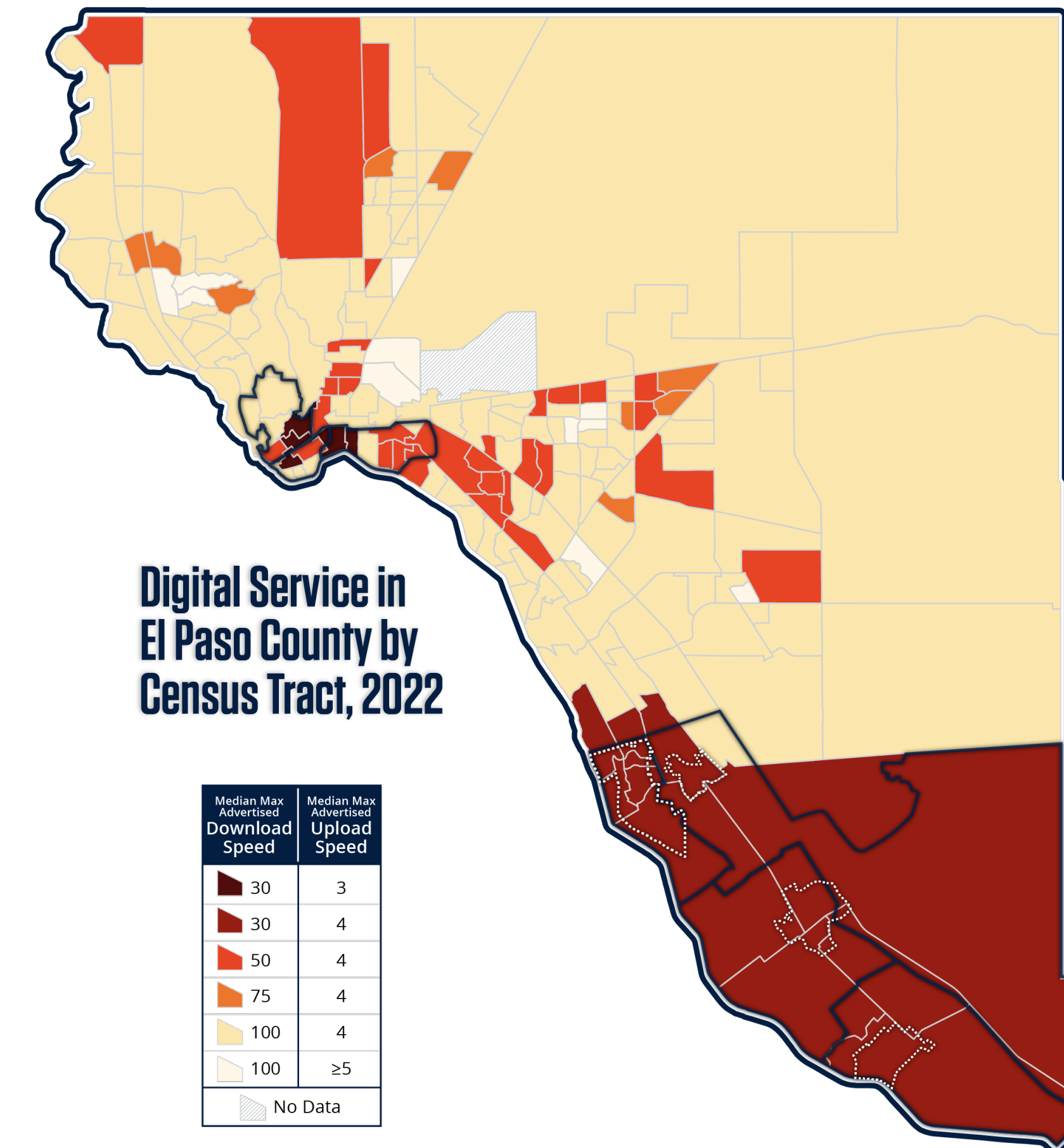
Methods

The Hunt Institute mapped specific demographic indicators from the U.S. Census Bureau against broadband connectivity requirements:

- **Data Mapping:** An in-depth analysis was conducted mapping the data related to fixed broadband usage, encompassing both residential and business segments.
- **Speed Evaluation:** The analysis included an evaluation of the maximum advertised download and upload speeds at the census block level, utilizing data sourced from the FCC.
- **Deficiency Identification:** The Institute cross-referenced these speed metrics with identified deficiencies in broadband infrastructure within El Paso.
- **Asset Map Creation:** To provide a comprehensive view, the Institute utilized a range of databases to create an asset map that visually illustrates the existing broadband infrastructure and service gaps in El Paso, particularly for public broadband access.

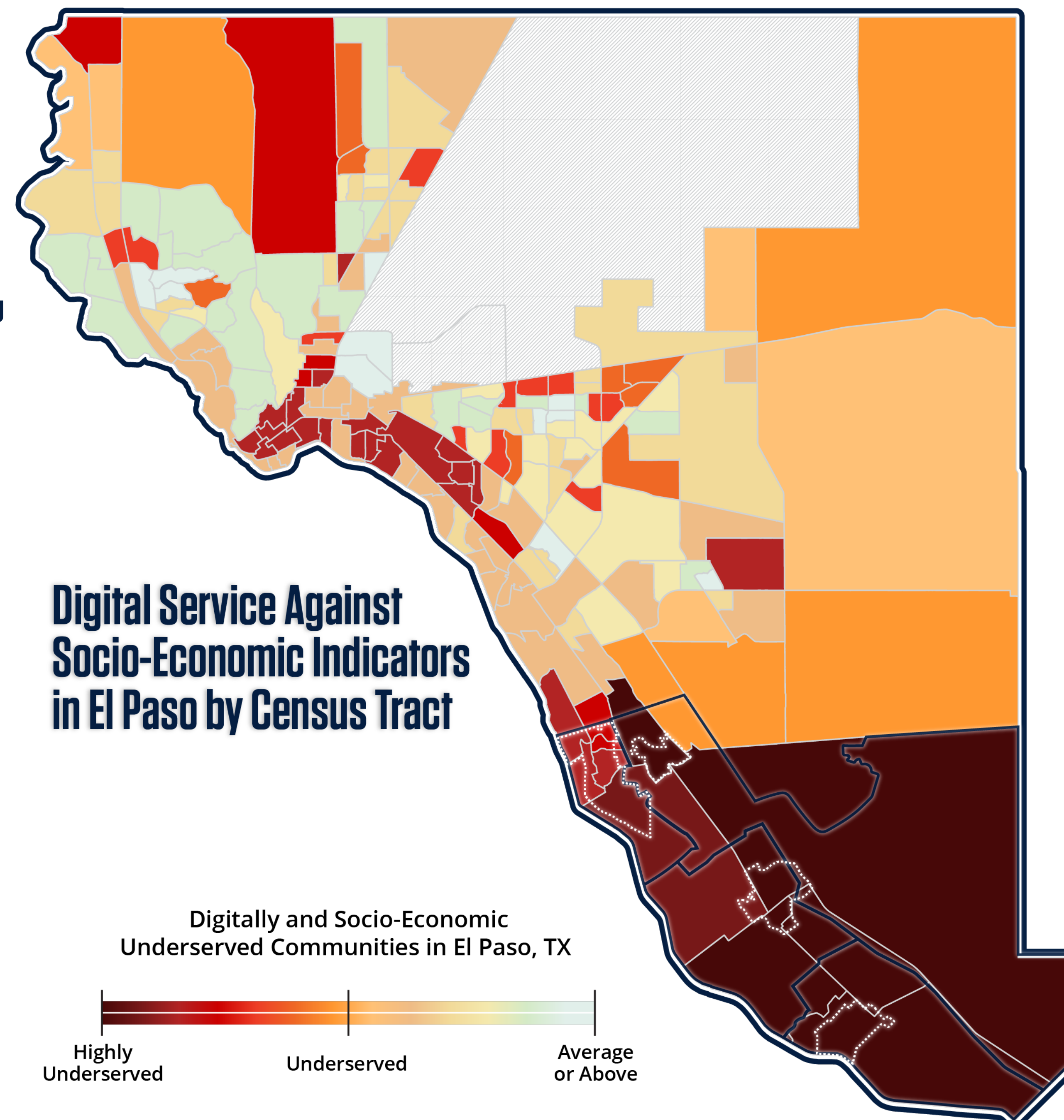
Key Findings

- **Broadband Speed Disparities:** The study revealed **notable disparities in broadband speeds** within El Paso County.
- **Socioeconomic Factors:** These areas with slower broadband speeds also tended to have **lower median incomes** and **higher poverty levels**. This highlights the intersection of **digital connectivity issues with socioeconomic challenges**.
- **Broadband Infrastructure Gaps:** The study **identified gaps in broadband infrastructure** within El Paso County. This information was derived from both existing and external databases, which were used to create maps outlining the current state of broadband infrastructure in the county.
- **Guiding Future Efforts:** These maps serve as valuable tools for guiding future efforts aimed at **addressing the broadband needs of digitally underserved communities** within El Paso County.



Results

- **Broadband Speed:** The map takes into account census tracts with a slower median of the maximum advertised download speeds.
- **Socio-economic Indicators:** These areas must also fall below predetermined cut-off points for several socio-economic indicators, including:
 - ▶ Population density
 - ▶ Housing density
 - ▶ Business density
 - ▶ Percentage of Hispanic or Latino population
 - ▶ Median household income
 - ▶ Percentage of people living below the poverty level



Note: Data as of June 30, 2022
Source: Hunt Institute methodology using data from the Federal Communications Commission and the U.S. Census Bureau.

Conclusions

- **Data Sources:** This report utilizes data from the U.S. Census Bureau and FCC.
- **Focus on Digital Underservice:** The study identifies digitally underserved areas in El Paso County, primarily in specific Zip Codes and census tracts.
- **Correlation Analysis:** Data on broadband speeds is correlated with key socio-economic indicators, including population density, Hispanic population percentage, income, and poverty levels.
- **Underserved Areas:** The most affected areas include downtown and central El Paso, along with eastern Lower Valley communities (Clint, Fabens, San Elizario, Tornillo).
- **Impact on Activities:** Slow broadband speeds hinder telework, telehealth, and remote education.
- **Equity Focus:** Addressing these issues is critical for equitable participation in essential activities.

Acknowledgments



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