

TOWN OF TAOS



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
JUNE 14, 2022

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**TOWN OF TAOS
RESOLUTION 22-28**

**RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN OF TAOS TOWN COUNCIL
TO ADOPT THE 2022 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

WHEREAS, the comprehensive plan is a long-range policy guide to decisions about the physical development of the town, addressing municipal governance capacity, land use, green network (including parks, greenbelts and greenways), economic development, assets (public facilities and utilities), housing, transportation, and implementation; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Taos has an adopted comprehensive plan, the Vision 2020 comprehensive plan (1999), which needs to be updated based on changes in the community, assessment of and incorporation of recommendations and policy directions in various plans and studies completed for the town since Vision 2020, a current assessment of conditions and ways to better meet needs of the community, and changes in town policy directions; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council of the Town of Taos is enabled through New Mexico Statutes to adopt a comprehensive plan which makes recommendations on a variety of subjects; and

WHEREAS, the comprehensive plan gives long-range and comprehensive context and support for the Infrastructure Capital Improvement Program, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), US Department of Agriculture grants, and updates to the Town's land development code, as well as giving policy direction to discretionary decisions and administration of the land development code; and

WHEREAS, the town, with planning consultants, conducted a series of public input meetings on the plan held via Zoom on October 14, 2021, October 15, 2021, and November 10, 2021, and conducted a community survey open between August 10, 2021 and March 1, 2022 with a total of 1,115 survey responses, conducted a survey of community groups in Taos, conducted various focus group discussions and interviews, and hosted a website for the comprehensive plan which provided information on the project, draft plan and opportunity for the public to submit comments; and

WHEREAS, Town Council heard progress reports on the plan at regular council meetings on August 24, 2021, September 28, 2021, January 25, 2022 and May 10, 2022, conducted

ADOPTION ORDINANCE

a workshop on the draft plan on May 23, 2022 and held a public hearing regarding the plan on June 14, 2022; and

WHEREAS, on May 4, 2022, the Planning and Zoning Commission recommended Town Council to adopt the comprehensive plan; and

WHEREAS, the town management team discussed the draft plan at meetings on January 24, 2022 and March 28, 2022 and provided comments on the draft plan; and

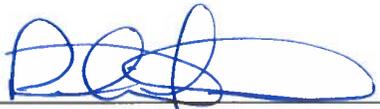
WHEREAS, the planning director regularly met with planning consultants to give guidance on plan development during the duration of the plan project;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Town Council adopts the 2022 Comprehensive Plan with changes identified at the June 14, 2022 meeting.

PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED, THIS 14th DAY OF JUNE, 2022, at the Regular Meeting of the Town Council by the following vote:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|------------|
| Mayor Pro-Tem Darien D. Fernandez | <u>yes</u> |
| Councilmember Nathaniel Evans | <u>yes</u> |
| Councilmember Marietta S. Fambro | <u>yes</u> |
| Councilmember Corilia I. Ortega | <u>yes</u> |

TOWN OF TAOS



Pascualito M. Maestas, Mayor

ATTEST:



Francella R. Garcia, Town Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM



Christopher Stachura, Town Attorney



RESOLUTION 22-01

**Resolution of the Town of Taos Planning and Zoning Commission
To Recommend Adoption of the 2022 Comprehensive Plan**

WHEREAS, the comprehensive plan is a long-range policy guide to decisions about the physical development of the town, addressing municipal governance capacity, land use, green network (including parks, greenbelts and greenways), economic development, assets (public facilities and utilities), housing, transportation, and implementation; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Taos has an adopted comprehensive plan, the Vision 2020 comprehensive plan (1999), which needs to be updated based on changes in the community, assessment of and incorporation of recommendations and policy directions in various plans and studies completed for the town since Vision 2020, a current assessment of conditions and ways to better meet needs of the community, and changes in town policy directions; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council of the Town of Taos is enabled through New Mexico Statutes to adopt a comprehensive plan which makes recommendations on a variety of subjects; and

WHEREAS, the comprehensive plan gives long-range and comprehensive context and support for the Infrastructure Capital Improvement Program, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), US Department of Agriculture grants, and updates to the Town's land development code, as well as gives policy direction to discretionary decisions and administration of the land development code; and

WHEREAS, the town with planning consultants conducted a series of public input meetings on the plan held via Zoom on October 14, 2021, October 15, 2021, and November 10, 2021, and conducted a community survey open between August 10, 2021 and March 1, 2022 with a total of 1,115 survey responses, conducted a survey of community groups in Taos, conducted various focus group discussions and interviews, and hosted a website for the comprehensive plan which provided information on the project, draft plan and opportunity for the public to submit comments; and

WHEREAS, planning consultants made progress reports to the Town Council on the plan at regular council meetings on August 24, 2021, September 28, 2021, and January 25, 2022; and

WHEREAS, planning consultants presented the draft plan to the Historic Preservation Commission on January 19, 2022 and to the Planning and Zoning Commission on February 10, 2022 and April 6, 2022; and

WHEREAS, town management team discussed the draft plan at meetings on January 24, 2022 and March 28, 2022 and provided comments on the draft plan; and

WHEREAS, the planning director regularly met with planning consultants to give guidance on plan development during the duration of the plan project; and

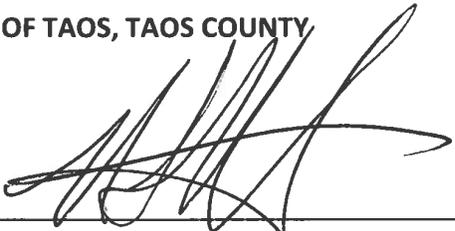
WHEREAS, the planning and zoning commission conducted a public meeting on May 4, 2022 on the comprehensive plan

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Town of Taos Planning and Zoning Commission recommends Town Council adoption of the 2022 Comprehensive Plan with changes identified at the May 4, 2022 meeting and additional technical editing of the document.

APPROVED THIS 4th DAY OF MAY 2022.

TOWN OF TAOS, TAOS COUNTY

BY:



**NORBERT MONDRAGON, CHAIRMAN
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION**

ATTEST:



**NATHAN J SANCHEZ, DIRECTOR
PLANNING, COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THANKS TO THE COMMUNITY OF TAOS, WHOSE DEDICATION, TIME, AND WORK BUILT THIS PLAN.

Town of Taos

Town Council

2022

Pacualito Maestas, Mayor
Nathaniel Evans, Councilor
Darien Fernandez, Councilor
Marietta Fambo, Councilor
Corilia Ortega, Councilor

2020-2021

Daniel R. Barrone, Mayor*
Nathaniel Evans, Councilor
Darien Fernandez, Councilor
George "Fritz" Hahn, Councilor*
Pascualito Maestas, Councilor

Planning and Zoning Commission

2022

Norbert Mondragon, Chair
Bob Bresahan, Commissioner
Herbert Foster, Commissioner
James Gooch, Commissioner
Ken Martinez, Commissioner
Tets Nambe, Commissioner
Genevive Oswald, Commissioner

2020-2021

Norbert Mondragon, Chair
Ken Martinez, Commissioner
Cynthia Spray, HPC Chair & Substitute
David Henry, HPC Member & Substitute
James Gerkin, HPC Member & Substitute
Peter Kolshorm, HPC Member & Substitute

Andrew Gonzales, Interim Town Manager 2022

Richard P. Bellis, Town Manager 2020-2021*

Nathan Sanchez, Planning, Community & Economic Development Director, Project Administrator

Lynda Perry, Assistant Town Manager & Grants & Revenue Development Director

Karina Armijo, Public Affairs & Tourism Director

Francella Garcia, Town Clerk

Francisco Espinoza, Public Works / Utilities Director

Mitch Miller, Facilities & Special Events Director

Tony Struck, Youth & Family Center Director

Tim Corner, Geographic Information Systems Analyst

Dinah Gonzales, Senior Planner, Planning, Community & Economic Development Department

Conrad Cordova, Information Technology Director

John Wentz, Chief of Police

Taos County

Brent Jaramillo, County Manager

Edward Vigil, Planning Director

Rudy Perea, Planning Department

Andy Jones, Planning Department

*Former town officials serving through March 31, 2022

Village of Taos Ski Valley
Patrick Nicholson, Planning & Community
Development Director

**North Central New Mexico
Economic Development District**
Monica Abeita, Executive Director

Taos MainStreet
Charles Whitson, Executive Director

Northern Regional Housing Authority
Terry Baca, Executive Director

Taos Municipal Schools
Dr. Lillian Torrez, Superintendent

Taos Ski Valley, Inc.
David Norden, Chief Executive Officer

Rio Fernando de Taos Revitalization Collaborative
Chyna Dixon, Fellow

Taos Land Trust
Kristina Ortez, Executive Director

Enchanted Circle Trails Association
Carl Colonius, Director

Rocky Mountain Youth Corps
Herbert Foster, Development Director

Kit Carson Electric Cooperative
Luis Reyes, Jr., Chief Executive Officer

North Central Regional Transit District
Anthony J. Mortillaro, Executive Director
Byrce Gibson, Planning & Projects

Paseo Project
J. Matt Thomas, Executive Director

LOR Foundation
Sonya Struck, Taos Program Officer

Taos Board of Realtors
Brian Stenum

Community Advisors
Andres Aragon
Frank Beurskens
Louis Jeantete
Jim Pollard
Mark Yaravitz
Max Baca

Project Planning Team
Architectural Research Consultants, Incorporated
Liza Miller, Project Manager
Steve Burstein, AICP, Senior Planner

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INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

This plan updates the current Town of Taos Comprehensive Plan: Vision 2020 Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 1999. This plan update incorporates primary, adopted plans and chapter updates to the Vision 2020 Plan and integrates secondary community plans, studies, and reports, and various local, state, and federal ordinances and policies, including municipal code and development standards, permitting guidelines, and development plans.

This plan incorporates and integrates no less than 47 existing plans, studies, & reports.

GENERAL PURPOSE

The Taos Comprehensive Plan is intended to guide decisions about the physical development of the community over the coming decades. It presents in a general way how the community wants the town to develop and serves to assist decision makers in preparing for the future by anticipating change and providing guidance for maximizing strengths and addressing weaknesses. The plan sets policies to address critical issues facing the community, achieve goals according to priority, and coordinate public and private efforts.

PLAN SOURCES

This planning effort provided an opportunity to review a compendium of existing Taos community plans, reports, and studies representing a wealth of valuable community time, thought, and resources.

With extensive community input to update material, these resources have been integrated with updated narratives and recommendations for this plan.

A Comprehensive Plan is :

A POLICY GUIDE

The Comprehensive Plan is an official public document adopted by Town Council as a policy guide to decisions about the physical development of the community.

A REFLECTION OF THE COMMUNITY

It presents in a general way how the community wants the town to develop in the ensuing 20 to 30 years.

PROACTIVE

The plan will set policies that anticipate change, maximize strengths, mitigate risks, and address critical issues to achieve community goals and coordinate efforts.

LONG RANGE

The plan will provide recommendations to implement development or improvement strategies that may take years to realize.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANS ARE OFFICIALLY ADOPTED, LOCAL POLICY GUIDELINES.

MORE ON PURPOSE OF COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Taos Comprehensive Plan provides long-range guidance for development activities integrated across the different disciplines and subjects of physical development of the town. The plan lays out the town’s general, long-range approach to be considered when making decisions about any new development, infrastructure, or improvement programs. As a general policy document, the plan does not carry regulatory authority. It constitutes a comprehensive plan or a master plan, as enabled in the New Mexico State Statutes.

The Taos Comprehensive Plan encompasses all functional elements that bear on physical development in an internally consistent manner including land use, economic development, facilities and utilities, parks and recreation, transportation, housing, and hazards mitigation as well as municipal capacity.

The plan encompasses all geographic parts of the incorporated town area, and strongly encourages continuing cooperation with planning for Taos County and regional partners.

See Implementation Plan for additional guidance on using and implementing the comprehensive plan.

PLANNING AUTHORITY

LEGAL & ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORK

The authority of a municipality to prepare a comprehensive plan (comp plan) is established in New Mexico state statutes.

The following discussion presents an overview of the legal framework for local planning authority as

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING SCOPE

Comprehensive plans provide local planning at a scale that encompasses the broad range of factors driving conditions, the interconnections between those issues, and the broader, regional forces and effects relating to them. Comprehensive plans are long-range plans and include recommendations and considerations with immediate impact as well as those that may take decades to realize. Comprehensive plan topics in New Mexico cover, at minimum: land use, economic development, housing, transportation, utilities, facilities, and hazards mitigation.

granted through relevant statutory provisions and state regulations. This is a general discussion and should not substitute for legal consultation or advice. The full and up-to-date statutes and regulations should be consulted for detail and accuracy.

STATE STATUTES OVERVIEW

GENERAL POWERS OF COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES

New Mexico Statutes enable the preparation of a comprehensive plan by local governments, including both municipalities and counties. Most of the statutory provisions regarding comprehensive plans are written specifically for municipalities.

Section 3-19-9 New Mexico Statutes Annotated (NMSA) 1978 addresses the general purpose of a master, or comprehensive, plan. Subsection (A) states:

... a municipal planning commission shall prepare and adopt a master plan for the physical development of the municipality and the area within the planning and platting jurisdiction of the municipality, which in the planning commission’s judgment, bears a relationship to the planning of the municipality.

SUBJECTS ON WHICH THE PLAN MAY MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS

Section 3-19-9(B) NMSA 1978 allows that, in addition to recommendations for the physical development of the municipality and its planning jurisdiction, the master plan may also address:

... streets, bridges, viaducts, and parkways; parks and playgrounds; floodways, waterways and waterfront development, airports and other ways, grounds, places and space; public schools, public buildings, and other public property; public utilities and

terminals, whether publicly owned or privately owned; community centers and neighborhood units and the replanning of blighted districts and slum areas; and public ways, grounds, places, spaces, building properties, utilities or terminals.

ZONING CONFORMANCE TO PLAN

The most specific statutory provision relating to land use regulations is Section 3-21-5 NMSA 1978, entitled “Zoning Conformance to Comprehensive Plan.” Subsection (A) states: “The regulations and restrictions of the county or municipal zoning authority are to be in accordance with a comprehensive plan...”

APPROVAL OF CHANGES TO PUBLIC PROPERTY AND RIGHTS-OF-WAY

Section 3-19-11 NMSA 1978 addresses the legal status of a municipality’s master plan, including:

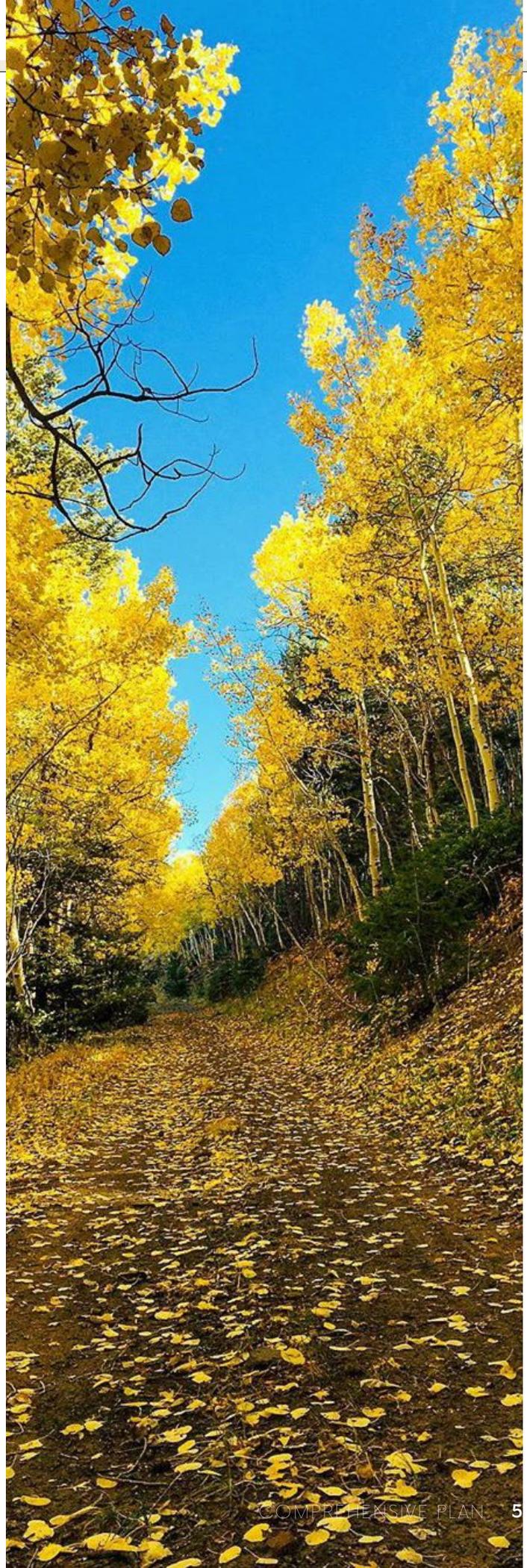
(A) After a master plan... has been approved and within the area of the master plan... the approval of the planning commission is necessary to construct, widen, narrow, remove, extend, relocate, vacate, abandon, acquire, or change the use of any:

(1) park, street, or public way, ground, place or space;

(2) public building or structure; or

(3) utility, whether publicly or privately owned.

(B) The failure of the planning commission to act within sixty-five days after submission of a proposal to it constitutes approval of the proposal unless the proponent agrees to an extension of time. If the planning commission disapproves a proposal, it must state its reasons to the governing body. The governing body may overrule the planning commission and approve the proposal by a two-thirds vote of all its members.



2022 TAOS COMP PLAN UPDATE PROCESS

In 2021, the Town of Taos contracted Architectural Research Consultants, Incorporated (ARC) to update the town's comprehensive plan: Taos Vision 20/20 Master Plan, adopted in 1999. While the town had engaged in many long-range planning projects since 1999, few planning documents had been adopted and most had been stand-alone. The land use element, pivotal to the comprehensive plan, had not been updated, and the town determined that the land development code was also in need of a major update, which would proceed after the comprehensive plan.

The 2021 comprehensive plan project was divided into two phases. During phase I, the ARC Planning Team developed the comprehensive plan update. In phase II (concurrently in process), the team is tasked to develop recommendations containing a higher level of detail to guide the major update to the Land Development Code and to conduct a few special land use studies supporting those recommendations.

PHASE I

PROJECT INITIATION AND PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The Phase I planning process consisted of four primary steps:

- Step 1: Project Initiation
- Step 2: Discovery
- Step 3: Synthesis
- Step 4: Report and Adoption

COMPONENTS OF PHASE I STEPS

- **Project Initiation** included kickoff of the project with town administration and staff, informing Town Council about the approach and tasks; more detailed outline of the project, and determining community participation approach, methods and stakeholders.
- **Discovery** included review of existing plans and reports (some 47 separate documents), assessing and validating recommendations in those plans, and collecting and compiling data to describe existing conditions. Much of the discovery and assessment work was done through discussions with town staff, but also with community groups and members.

- **Synthesis** consisted of interpreting data and information collected, drafting findings, and engaging individual members of the public and focus groups. Public engagement was paramount to developing a better understanding of conditions, issues, community values and community priorities.
- **Report and Adoption** involved preparation of the draft plan document, review of the draft conducted by town staff, by joint advisory boards consisting of the Historic Preservation Commission and Planning and Zoning Commission, public meetings and online venues for public feedback, Town Council workshop and public hearing, and Town Council adoption.

Public engagement activities were interlaced throughout all steps following project initiation.

Since the plan process occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic, all public meetings and nearly all meetings with staff occurred as virtual meetings on the Zoom platform.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STRATEGIES

Robust public engagement, feedback, and participation was a primary focus of the planning team throughout the planning process. Planners conducted extensive outreach including surveys, meetings, and interviews, were directly available to the community via published contact information which yielded frequent one-on-one and email discussions with individuals to answer questions or discuss issues and ideas.

To overcome the barriers limiting hands-on community engagement imposed by social health measures in place during the pandemic, the planning team worked with town staff and project administrators to develop equitable strategies for inclusive community input including openly accessible online meetings capable of including call-in participation, direct emails to hundreds of community members through town and partner mailing lists as well as a planning project mailing list with over 500 individual contacts.

The resulting public response was robust throughout the process

LOCAL MEDIA

To announce the plan project to the community, the planning team and town representatives conducted a radio interview on a local KTAO radio program, and provided the local newspaper, The Taos News, with periodic press releases, updates, and interviews describing the plan project, purpose, process, and announcing and describing outreach efforts and major public meetings.

The planning team also went to social media including a local Facebook group page, to discuss and notify the public of upcoming activities.

In late summer, 2021, the planning team also conducted two public surveys.

Plan survey discussion and findings are included in the Appendix.

PROJECT WEBSITE

A dedicated project website, taoscompplan.org, provided public access to:

- Comprehensive Plan Update project description and background information
- Notification of events, updates, news and news links
- Project material
 - Planning presentations
 - Data & analysis
- Document library containing relevant reference plans and reports

From the site, the public was able to link to project surveys and join live public meetings, sign up to receive notifications, or submit comments and questions directly to the planning team. All comments received via the project website were answered directly from staff email addresses to allow back and forth communication and were considered in the development of this plan.

Throughout the process, planning team direct emails and company contact information was available to the public with open invitations to contact. Town project administration and management contact information was also provided in all communications and venues.

No sign-ins or program installation was needed to participate at any level or access any material or interactive platform.

This feature of the project was intended to be an easy way for the public to engage in the planning process, especially important during the pandemic. The website was also a means for the public to stay informed of planning progress by simply visiting the site or joining the mailing list. The website served as a very effective platform to exchange information and ideas.

ADDITIONAL ONLINE & MEDIA OUTREACH

The Town of Taos regularly posted notifications and links directly on the town homepage, including links to join live events and participate in surveys. Notifications were posted to town and partner social media accounts and shared extensively; regular notifications of events, and important dates went out on the local KTAO radio station.

Exhibit 1-01: Taos Comprehensive Plan Project Website



This plan was informed by the Taos community through outreach and discussions conducted during this plan update process including surveys, community discussions, and interviews, but also through the extensive community outreach and input conducted and documented in the development of all the reference plans that served to inform and guide this plan update.

Throughout the process, the planning team distributed newsletters detailing progress and upcoming events or engagement opportunities such as surveys. Newsletters were also shared via Town accounts and sites and partner outreach.

COUNCIL PROGRESS REPORTS

The planning team gave presentations to Town Council on several occasions to update council on the progress of the project and stand for questions, comments, and suggestions. These events also served as one means of public notification during the isolation of the pandemic; like all Taos Town Council meetings, these events streamed live on the town website. Council members did suggest or request certain schedule adjustments in order to extend public participation opportunities. The plan Milestone Activities calendar reflects those adjustments and notes the dates for each council presentation, public meeting, and other public engagement milestone dates.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

TAOS COMP PLAN UPDATE | PUBLIC MEETING #1

ONLINE AT WWW.TAOSCOMPPLAN.ORG

TO CALL IN DIAL (720) 707-2699 & USE PASSCODE 594545

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 13</p> <p>KICKING OFF THE PLAN UPDATE</p> <p>OPEN HOUSE</p> <p>CHAT WITH PLANNERS</p> <p>LIVE ONLINE</p> <p>11-2PM & 4-7PM</p> <p>WWW.TAOSCOMPPLAN.ORG</p> <p>Drop in anytime to GET UP TO SPEED BROWSE OUR PLAN LIBRARY FOR INFO DATA BACKGROUND PLANS REPORTS</p> | <p>THURSDAY OCTOBER 14</p> <p>LIVE ONLINE PRESENTATION: PLAN INTRO & OVERVIEW</p> <p>FOLLOWED BY Q&A, & OPEN DISCUSSION</p> <p>JOIN IN LIVE ONLINE 11:30-1PM</p> <p>ENCORE EVENING EVENT 5PM-6:30PM</p> <p>Q'S? CHAT WITH PLANNERS</p> <p>1-2PM & 4-5PM LIVE ONLINE</p> <p>WWW.TAOSCOMPPLAN.ORG</p> |
|--|--|

QUESTIONS? CONTACT LIZA MILLER, PROJECT MANAGER LMILLER@ARCPLANNING.COM OR NATHAN SANCHEZ, TOWN OF TAOS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR NSANCHEZ@TAOSGOV.COM

The planning team held two public meeting events during the process; both online to protect public health. Meeting notifications were provided via newsletter to various mailing lists, posted on the project and town websites, publicized and shared on social media, announced on local radio, and in articles in the local paper.

PLANNING OPEN HOUSE

The first was a planning open house intended to introduce the project to the community and initiate feedback. It was designed as a two-day event hosted through the plan website (and linked through the town website). Background material and planning document libraries were available on the site for the public to access and browse at their leisure. Each day of the event featured publicized hours during which the planning team was available live online to answer questions or discuss ideas or issues.

A live, online presentation was provided by the planning team outlining the planning project and purpose, briefly reviewing existing plans, and providing initial data and analysis on each planning topic for feedback and discussion. No session during the two-day event was widely attended by the public, though discussions with several of those who did were meaningful and in-depth.

TAOS COMP PLAN UPDATE | PUBLIC MEETING #2

PUBLIC COMMENT: DRAFT GOALS & POLICIES

WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 10TH

6PM | ONLINE AT WWW.TAOSCOMPPLAN.ORG

QUESTIONS? CONTACT LIZA MILLER, PROJECT MANAGER LMILLER@ARCPLANNING.COM OR NATHAN SANCHEZ, TOWN OF TAOS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR NSANCHEZ@TAOSGOV.COM

DRAFT GOALS & POLICIES WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW AT WWW.TAOSCOMPPLAN.ORG BEGINNING MONDAY NOVEMBER 8TH

Exhibit 1-02: Public Meeting Announcements

PUBLIC MEETING TWO

The second public meeting was held to solicit feedback and comment on draft goals and policies for each planning topic. The event was structured as a live, online presentation by the planning team presenting the draft material with background on each topic. Originally intended to last an hour and a half, the meeting went past three hours and was attended, at peak, by over 50 community members.

FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS & INTERVIEWS

The project planning team, ARC planners and the Community and Economic Development Director, conducted various focus group meetings and interviews throughout the process. Most meetings were conducted remotely and the future land use workshop and final draft review with staff were conducted in person.

GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS FOCUS GROUPS

- ^a Taos County Planning
- ^a Taos Leadership Group
- ^a Rio Fernando de Taos Revitalization Collaborative
- ^a North Central NM Regional Transit District
- ^a Bicycle & Trails Advocacy Organizations

INTERNAL FOCUS GROUPS

- ^a GIS Review and Request for Maps and Data
- ^a Infrastructure and Facilities Meeting
- ^a Economic Development and Tourism Meeting
- ^a Town Development Review Committee
- ^a Future Land Use Workshop

INTERVIEWS

- ^a Kit Carson Electric Cooperative
- ^a LOR Foundation
- ^a Northern NM Regional Housing Authority
- ^a Paseo Project
- ^a Taos Board of Realtors
- ^a Taos Land Trust
- ^a Taos MainStreet
- ^a Town Facilities & Special Events
- ^a Town GIS Analyst
- ^a Town Grants & Revenue Development
- ^a Town Manager
- ^a Town Parks & Recreation
- ^a Town Public Affairs & Tourism
- ^a Town Public Works/Utilities
- ^a Taos Rotary Club
- ^a Town Youth & Family Center
- ^a Village of Taos Ski Valley

The project team requested a meeting with Taos Pueblo to consult with Pueblo leaders on the plan, but the meeting did not occur.

DOCUMENTATION

Videos of both online meeting events were made available to the public via the project website following each event, as was a transcript of the chat discussion that occurred during the second meeting (with personal contact information and political campaign support comments redacted).

The following are provided in the Appendix of this plan: public meeting chat transcript, community survey tabulations and comments, as well as meeting presentations

PROJECT MILESTONES

Exhibit 1-03: Milestones of the Comprehensive Plan Project

| Comprehensive Plan Milestone Activities | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Activity | Date |
| Project initiated | 12/29/20 |
| Presentation to Town Council on plan process | 1/26/21 |
| Weekly meetings with Town Community Development Director | From 2/4/21 throughout plan process |
| Meetings with Town Staff, Other Governments, Community Organizations | 2-20-21 through 10-15-21 |
| Taos site visit | 5/21/21 |
| Community organizations survey release | 6/15/21 |
| Project website launch | 8/10/21 |
| Community survey release | 8/10/21 |
| Presentation to Town Council: plan progress report | 8/24/21 |
| Presentation to Town Council: plan progress report | 9/28/21 |
| Public Meeting #1 (multiple meetings) | 10/14/21 and 10/15/21 |
| Public Meeting #2: draft goals and policies | 11/10/21 |
| Review of early draft plan by Town staff | 12/15/2021 to 1/10/22 |
| Public (first) draft plan posted for review | 1/12/22 |
| Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) review of first draft plan | 1/19/22 |
| Second draft plan for review | 3/23/22 |
| Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) review of second draft | 4/6//22 |
| P&Z adoption of resolution recommending Council adoption | 5/4/22 |
| Presentation to Town Council: plan progress report | 5/10/22 |
| Town Council workshop on recommended draft plan | 5/23/22 |
| Town Council public hearing and consideration of adoption of plan | 6/14/22 |

PHASE II

DEVELOPMENT CODE ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATIONS

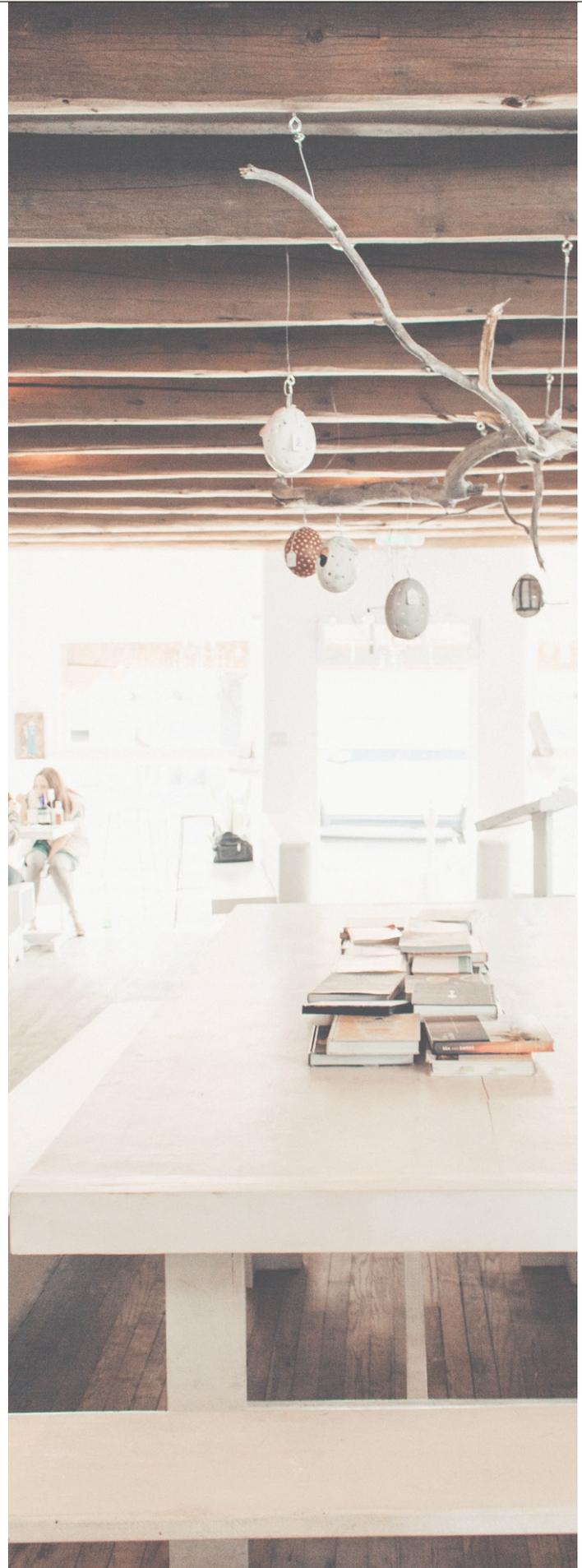
Phase II of the planning process has started concurrently with Phase I described above, and will continue after the comprehensive plan is adopted. The intent of Phase 2 is to serve as a bridge from the comprehensive plan to the major land development code update.

Task 1 of Phase II is to develop a recommended approach to updating town Land Development Code. This task includes a detailed assessment of the code's current zones, overlay zones, performance standards and subdivision regulations, recommending code administration of permit processes, and recommending a new code structure.

Task 2 involves developing a recommended approach to extraterritorial area concurrent or coordinated town/county subdivision review and zoning. This task includes an evaluation of growth potential and the extension of town services' development potential and economic opportunities, and considering tiered subdivision standards and development review.

Public engagement activities accompanying Phase II tasks will include: interviews and focus groups, a public meeting to review preliminary recommendations on the approach to updating the code, a public meeting on the subarea plan direction, and a final presentation to Town Council on recommendations.

The Phase II findings will be presented for consideration of adoption as a new chapter or sub-chapter of this comprehensive plan.



COMMUNITY VALUES AND THEMES

This plan is intended to represent the community’s vision for the Town of Taos and to provide guidance, in accordance with that vision, to local decision makers working independently or with partners to achieve that vision.

This plan was developed through input from three main sources:

- **The community of Taos**
 - Representing the public, primarily, but also, to an extent, community groups working in Taos
- **Existing reference plans and reports**
 - Totalling no less than 47, these references each represent the community’s voice; many were conducted with extensive outreach and provide robust documentation of community input
- **The public servants of Taos**
 - Taos municipal staff, especially department heads, as well as Town Council and various commissions, provided invaluable input to aid the planning team in understanding the capacity and needs involved in meeting the expectations of the public

WHO IS TAOS?

The following provides an overview of the community of Taos, described through data and in their own words through community survey results. Community context, including an overview of the community groups at work in Taos; and the existing planning work that has served as the groundwork for this plan.

The rich Taoseño culture is built along the historic agricultural network of acequias and backset by Taos’ stunning natural beauty, which has inspired artists for centuries and supports the region’s famous fine arts economy and its growing recreational economy.

The Town of Taos is the commercial and cultural hub of Taos County in North Central New Mexico.

The Taos community, through the various avenues informing this plan, defined the values that serve as the cardinal directions guiding the recommendations, goals, and policies outlined within this plan.

THE PEOPLE

Town Residents
County & Neighbors
Part-Time Residents, Visitors

THE COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Nonprofits
Associations
Clubs

THE MUNICIPALITY

Town Government
Departments & Staff
Committees, Town Council

THE PUBLIC PARTNERS

Local & Regional Governments
Departments & Agencies
Councils & Organizations

WE ARE TAOS

Town of Taos | pop. 6,474
Taos County | pop. 34,489
Taos Pueblo | pop. 2,805

COMMUNITY THEMES

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY KEEP IT LOCAL

- Taos for Taoseños
- Improve life for locals
- Support housing access for local residents
- Support local businesses serving local people

SUSTAINABLE FUTURE KEEP IT GREEN

- Prioritize trails, parks, & outdoor recreation
- Support solutions to limit impacts (clean energy, recycling, ecological protections)
- Protect natural resources: water is life

TOPICS OF COMMUNITY VALUES AND CONCERNS

Conversation, research, engagement and other community input outlined a broad but cohesive set of community values in Taos that can be distilled into the broad categories: “Keep it Green,” and “Keep it Local,” each representing a deeper set of priorities and values. Following is a summation of community values and concerns based upon community survey results and public meetings during this process.

LOCAL HOUSING

Improve housing access for locals

- Critical lack of affordable housing options
 - *(not necessarily subsidized, just affordable)*
- Support for alternative housing options
- Housing for local residents over short-term rentals
 - Strict limits and regulation of short-term rentals

GREEN DEVELOPMENT

Limit development overall, constrain development to mitigate environmental impacts

- Limit new development
- Conserve limited resources
- Plan for and work to mitigate contributions to climate change
- Prioritize sustainability and ecological preservation in development considerations
- Prioritize water resources over development
 - Consider water the top constraint on development
- Promote infill over greenfield development (sprawl)
- Protect agriculture and wetlands over development
- Keep traffic congestion in mind and multimodal safety prioritized
- Prioritize access to transportation and transit, especially for housing development
- Support off-grid lifestyles and self-reliance (i.e. local agriculture)

GREEN NETWORK

Develop and expand trails, open space, and a diversity of parks

- Improve connectivity and accessibility of trails
- Focus on pedestrian safety and access
- Prioritize sidewalks, crosswalks, multi-modal trails improvements and expansions
- Expanded recreation options, ball courts, dog park

TAOSEÑOS PRIDE

Respect our heritage, fight for our community

- Agriculture and acequias built and sustain Taos
 - Preserve our agricultural lands, heritage, and capacity
 - Ecological and resource conservation, restoration, and protection, is our heritage, and defines our future
 - Grow local, feed local
- Support youth to remain or return to the community
- Address housing shortage, low wages, and other gaps for transitioning youth and young families
 - Expand opportunities for young people including activities and after-school and internship programs
- Preserve and improve community character
 - Preserve the historic character of the town, especially downtown
 - Prioritize cultural preservation efforts
 - Improve landscaping and street design to beautify the community
- Focus economic development on community first
 - Prioritize efforts to support small, local businesses
 - Expand services and amenities geared toward locals over visitors
 - Continue Music in Kit Carson Park but work to address resident concerns
- Protect and support the vulnerable
 - Address inequity including poverty, low wages, and health care, child care accessibility
 - Provide behavioral health support and treatment

These values are echoed in existing community plans, in the priorities of the many community groups at work in the region, and throughout the feedback and input provided during the development of this plan.

In the Appendix are the report of community survey results, group survey results, and list of community groups in Taos

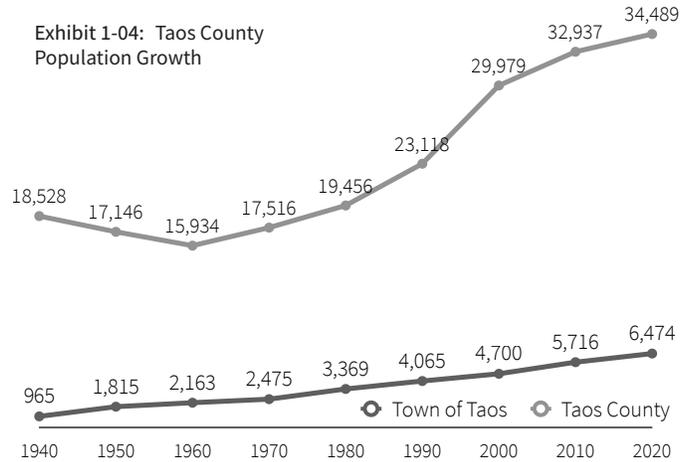
COMMUNITY TRENDS

POPULATION GROWTH

Taos is a growing community. After steep growth in the county overall in the late 1900's, growth slowed but has still continued to 2020.

Town population growth has been slower, but steady, adding nearly 2,000 since the turn of the century.

For this plan update, ARC developed population growth projections (see *Land Use*). Over the next 20 years, ARC projects the Town of Taos to grow by 1,100.



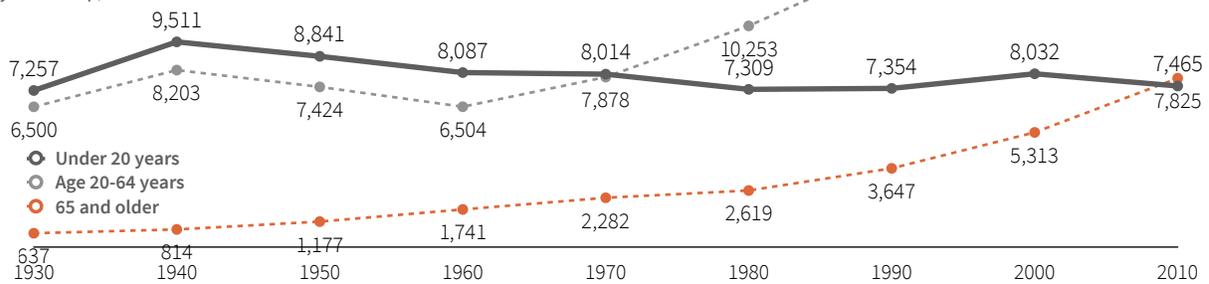
County Population Projected Change by Age Group, 2020-2040 (above, in 5-year age increments beginning with 0-5yr at the top)

AGE & BIRTHS

Like many, Taos is an aging community. With the county birth rate falling by over half since 1990 alone, the number of children in the community has fallen, even as the population overall has grown. Growth has been mostly in age groups over 65. This trend is projected to continue into 2040 (left); losses in school-aged and later, working-aged groups, will be offset by gains in later child-bearing and early working-aged groups, and significant growth in later retiree groups.

The chart to the left shows the projected change in county population by age group, with the youngest group (5 years old and under) at the top and progressing by 5-year increments to the bottom category, 85 years and older. Important social groups are highlighted; school-aged (5-19) at the top followed by main child-bearing ages (20-34), main working age (35-64), and retirees at the bottom.

Exhibit 1-05: Taos County Population by Age Groups, 1930-2010



ECONOMICS

Historically an agricultural community, Taos began to develop a fine art culture the 1900's that spurred its thriving arts and culture economy.

Geographically isolated and far from major interstates or rail, recent work to build air transportation capacity has been a focus for long-term, regional capacity-building for business and industry in the region.

Low wages and income disparity is a deepening issue creating barriers for historic families and residents and driving a growing sense of displacement and frustration.

Source (All on Page): US Census

HOUSING

Dwindling access to housing is a primary concern or people living in Taos. Several factors have driven the housing shortage including a high number of long-term rentals converted to short-term rentals in recent years, a growing share of seasonal or second homes, and stagnation of new construction, among others. The supply of dwindled housing prices rose sharply while already-low wages stagnated.

COMMUNITY

The Taos community is strong, diverse, passionate, and proud, and the dedication and passion for community in Taos is a powerful asset.

EXISTING PLANS

PRIMARY REFERENCE PLANS

| |
|--|
| <i>Strong at Heart: Downtown Strategy Report, 2018</i> |
| <i>Taos Airport Master Plan, 2020 Draft</i> |
| <i>Taos County Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2018</i> |
| <i>Taos Regional 40-Year Water Plan (Region 7), 2016</i> |
| <i>Taos Vision 20/20 Master Plan, 1999</i> |
| <i>Taos Youth And Family Center Master Plan, 2018</i> |
| <i>Town of Taos Affordable Housing Plan, 2020</i> |
| <i>Town of Taos Community Tree Care Plan, 2019</i> |
| <i>Town of Taos Facility Condition Assessment, 2019</i> |
| <i>Town of Taos Parks + Recreation Master Plan, 2018</i> |
| <i>Town of Taos Updated Community Economic Development Strategic Foundational Plan & Community Economic Development Element of the Taos Comprehensive Plan, 2011, 2013</i> |
| <i>Water And Sewer Master Plan for the Town of Taos, 2015</i> |

This plan references and was informed by the existing Taos Plans, reports and documents noted here, as well as various ordinances, development plans, and other resources.

They can be categorized hierarchically, by type and relevance to this plan, as follows.

Primary reference plans are municipal plans that are current and remain relevant. These plans are generally recent and many of them were developed as chapter updates to the original Vision 20/20 Comprehensive Plan of 2012. These were identified by the Town of Taos as required plans for integration into the Comprehensive Plan Update.

Many of these plans provide the topic-specific, detailed planning that is essential for managing and developing select geographies (such as downtown) or assets (such as utilities or parks). This level of detail is beyond the scope and scale of comprehensive plans, which by definition take a broader view encompassing many topics. Both scales of planning are vital and should be developed and used complementary.

The central recommendations provided in the primary reference plans are summarized here, and discussed in context throughout the plan.

Secondary reference plans are generally older plans, unadopted plans, and plans developed by or for non-municipal parties. These provide excellent background and context and practical opportunities for collaboration.

SECONDARY REFERENCE PLANS

| |
|--|
| <i>(Re)Vision 2020, 2013</i> |
| <i>(Re)Vision 2020, Affordable Housing Element, 2013</i> |
| <i>Acequia Aqui ´ - Preservation of Acequia Del Madre Del Rio Pueblo, 2018</i> |
| <i>Enchanted Circle Trails Plan, Taos Land Trust, 2017</i> |
| <i>Historic Plaza Cultural Landscape Report, 2016</i> |
| <i>Recreation Trails Master Plan, 2008</i> |
| <i>Redevelopment Districts- Metropolitan Redevelopment; NM Main Street, 2018</i> |
| <i>Smartcode Charrette Report & Manual, 2007</i> |
| <i>Taos Affordable Housing Report, 2010</i> |
| <i>Taos Arts & Cultural District Report, Resource Team Assessment, 2009</i> |
| <i>Taos County Community Conservation Plan, Trust For Public Land, 2017</i> |
| <i>Taos Historic Plaza Cultural Landscape Report, 2016</i> |
| <i>The Town Of Taos Alexander Gusdorf Eco-Park Master Plan, 2010</i> |
| <i>Town Of Taos Bicycle Master Plan, 2017</i> |
| <i>Town Of Taos Economic Development Foundational Plan, 2010</i> |
| <i>US 64-NM 68 Cultural Resource Survey (NMDOT), 2018</i> |
| <i>Water & The Historic Character Of The Town Of Taos, 2018</i> |
| <i>Weaving Together Past, Present & Future, UNM, 2010</i> |

A range of **Additional Reports & Studies** informed this plan, the most notable of which are listed here. These resources included internal municipal reports and analyses, technical planning reports for infrastructure projects, unused plans, legislation and regulations, and a range of other material. These references generally served to fill in gaps in understanding of historic influence or legal parameters, and provide insight into functional mechanisms, planned projects, and partnerships.

ADDITIONAL REPORTS & STUDIES

Alignment Study Report Phase 1b - Detailed Evaluation of Alternatives NM 68/Us 64 In Taos (NMDOT)

Economic/Fiscal Impact & Marketing Analyses of: Sting In Taos, Taos Air Flier, & Michael Hearne's 17th Annual Big Barn Dance Music Festival, 2019

Historic Taos County Courthouse – Conditions Assessment & Preservation Plans, 2013

La Posta Road to Camino De La Placita, 2016

Long Range Planning Work Program, 2019

NM68 – Hwy. Corridor Study (NMDOT, EPA), 2018

Outdoor Recreation Atlas Pilot Study, 2021

Permitting Efficiency Report, 2014

Rio Fernando de Taos Revitalization Project Work Plan, 2018

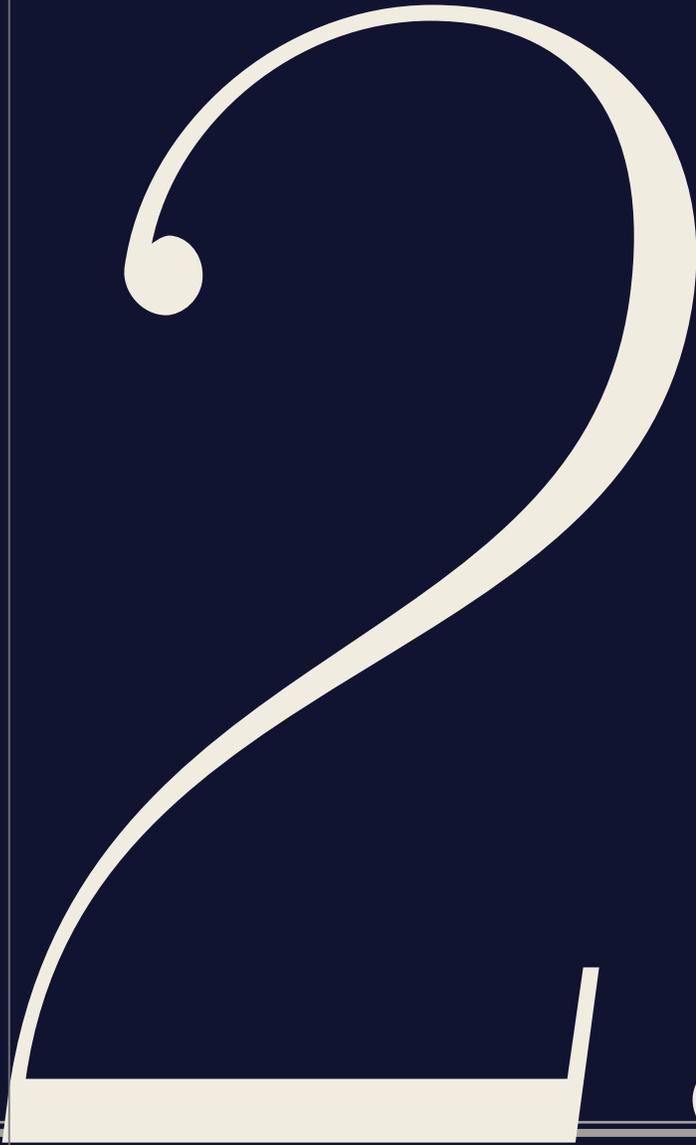
Taos Congestion Relief Study Phase 1b (NMDOT), 2016

Taos Smart Growth Implementation Assistance: Concepts For The Paseo Del Pueblo Sur Corridor (US EPA), 2007

Taos Walkability Workshop And Report, 2018

Taos Walking Map Of Historical Architectural Styles, 2016

Town Of Taos ICIP, 2021



IMPLEMENTATION

Hand Made

IN

TAOS



IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation plan is a kind of executive summary of the plan since it encompasses all subjects of the comprehensive plan. This chapter presents specific, priority actions that the town should take to implement the overall comprehensive plan and realize the goals outlined in it. Priority actions are derived from the full set of recommendations, goals and policies provided throughout the body of the plan.

The Implementation Plan does not stand alone. It should be used as a handy reference and quick guide for implementing the plan. The body of the plan provides the full road map to implementation.

INTRODUCTION

The comprehensive plan chapters cover the primary matters affecting the physical development of the community of Taos including: land use, housing, economic development, transportation, parks and recreation, facilities, utilities, transportation, and hazards mitigation, as well as municipal capacity.

Each chapter includes context describing conditions and factors with recommendations and guidelines addressing specific issues or needs. Each chapter concludes by establishing Goals, Policies, and Actions (*see definitions, right*). Actions, primarily, as well as certain recommendations and guidelines, have been prioritized and then clarified as complete, step-by-step instructions for accomplishing the goal.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

METHODOLOGY

Actions included in the implementation plan were identified as “priority actions” based on the following factors:

- **Achievability** - a measure of real municipal capacity and/or availability of additional resources needed to implement the action
- **Need** - identifying actions that must be implemented before others can or actions that require immediate action to mitigate or address pressing issues
- **Potential Impact** - a measure of the action or overarching goal's potential for positive impact and significant benefit in the community
- **Community Support** - a measure of the level and breadth of community support for the goal, as exhibited throughout the planning process and through planning references

DEFINITIONS

Goals

Overarching statements describing desired outcomes

Policies

Identifying general strategies for achieving goals

Actions

Specific steps to take that will make the plan strategies succeed

Recommendations

Detailed actions and guidance for specific, individual topics to address particular issues or needs; in support of the overall goals and policies

Guidelines

Guiding principles, best practices, and considerations to inform decision-making in general terms

For the sake of connecting actions to the policy framework subject-by-subject, the action statements in this chapter also appear at the end of each element of the plan.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Exhibit 2-01: Town of Taos Comprehensive Plan Implementation

| Implementation Plan | | |
|--|-----------|---|
| Action | Timeframe | Lead Agency |
| Land Development Code Update Implementing Land Use and Housing Goals and Policies | | |
| 1 Prepare a major update to the Land Development Code that improves clarity and consistency in procedures, improves efficiencies in permitting, improves opportunities for affordable housing, clarifies and further guides development and design performance standards, develops new zoning for nodes, advances sustainability, and supports economic development | 1-2 years | Planning, Community and Economic Development (CD) Department, Town Manager, Town Attorney, Code Consultant Team |
| 1.a. Prioritize code amendments and consider phasing of code amendments if needed to manage the major code update process | 1st year | Town Council, Town Manager, CD Department, Code Consultant Team |
| 1.b. Study the displacement risk of the proposed set of affordable housing strategies | 1st year | CD Department, Code Consultant Team |
| 1.c. Develop a Zoning Framework for adoption by Council by resolution, including an early public process of summer night neighborhood workshop(s) | 1st year | CD Department, Town Council, Code Consultant Team |
| 1.d. Update and clarify definitions, better present dimensional requirements and uses, and make consistent review procedures | 1-2 years | Code Consultant Team with CD Department |
| 1.e. Make zoning and building permitting processes more efficient by reducing steps for small residential projects | 1-2 years | Code Consultant Team with CD Department |
| 1.f. Allow more opportunities for affordable housing types in selected residential zones, including but not limited to: accessory dwelling units, duplexes, triplexes and fourplexes | 1-2 years | Code Consultant Team with CD Department |
| 1.g. Allow increased height limits for affordable housing, particularly in designated nodes that are served by transit | 1-2 years | Code Consultant Team with CD Department |
| 1.h. Consider inclusionary zoning that requires mixed-income housing or cash-in-lieu for use by a housing authority/ trust to develop affordable housing | 1-2 years | Code Consultant Team with CD Department |
| 1.i. Create nodes zones or zoning overlay districts and a design review process for development in nodes | 1-2 years | Code Consultant Team with CD Department |
| 1.j. Consider adding development and design performance standards that guide commercial architecture | 1-2 years | Code Consultant Team with CD Department |

* Use public engagement techniques to assure public input on zoning code and zoning map changes. Public interest will likely be great when it comes to regulations, while the comp plan survey showed strong support for affordable housing distributed in the community. Public education about affordable housing should be incorporated in the process.

| Implementation Plan | | |
|--|------------------------------|---|
| Action | Timeframe | Lead Agency |
| 1.k. Develop provisions for conservation subdivisions and require such subdivisions in greenbelt areas | 1-2 years | Code Consultant Team with CD Department |
| 1.l. Strengthen subdivision street criteria and street master planning and require stub-outs for continuous local streets in order to accommodate in-fill development | 1-2 years | Code Consultant Team with CD Department, Public Works Department |
| Land Use | | |
| 1 Create a fee schedule for all development review applications | 1-2 years | CD Department |
| 2 Develop a downtown Metropolitan Development Area plan | 1-2 years | MainStreet Taos, CD Department |
| 3 Identify and implement regulations, clean-up programs and possible incentives for the maintenance of dilapidated vacant buildings, particularly commercial properties | 1-2 years | CD Department |
| 4 Develop with Taos County a Greenbelt Plan for the Area West of Taos, including mapping of greenbelt, land uses and sensitive lands; development performance standards; utilities coordination; ETZ; annexation; and emergency services | 1-2 years | CD Department, Town Manager, County Planning, County Manager |
| 4.1 Develop an annexation phasing scheme | 3 years | CD Department, Town Manager |
| 4.2 Pursue phased annexation according to the annexation strategy and criteria | 1-10 years | CD Department |
| 4.3 Develop land use regulations that are consistent between the town and county to guide development in greenbelt areas | 2-3 years | CD Department, County Planning, Town Attorney, County Attorney |
| 4.4 Revive the town/county extraterritorial review of subdivisions utilizing a tiered approach where development standards are generally higher and more urban for properties adjacent to Town and lower and more rural for areas farther away | 1st year | CD Department, County Planning |
| 5 Develop neighborhood plans | Prepare a plan each year | CD Department |
| 6 Staff the Community Development Department sufficiently to help implement the comprehensive plan | 1st Year. Regularly revisit. | Town Manager, Town Council |
| 7 Coordinate staff and elected officials meeting the New Mexico Construction Industries Division (CID) to determine if and how CID can accomplish building code enforcement in Taos | 1st year | Town Manager, Town Council, State Legislators, CD Department, CID |
| 8 Conduct regular training session for Planning and Zoning Commission | Annual, on-going | CD Department |
| 9 Conduct regular training session for Historic Preservation Commission | Annual, on-going | CD Department |

| Implementation Plan | | |
|---|-----------|--|
| Action | Timeframe | Lead Agency |
| 10 Develop bylaws for the Development Review Committee | 1st year | CD Department |
| 11 Provide regular opportunities for planning staff training and professional development | Ongoing | CD Department |
| 12 Periodically update the historic district guidelines and standards | Ongoing | CD Department |
| 13 Meet with the municipal judge or district judge to work on procedures for citing offenders of land development code violations, assessing fines and taking other enforcement action | 1st year | CD Department, Town Attorney, Municipal Judge |
| 14 Consider enfoldng building permitting back into the Town Community Development Department, or arriving at a regional approach to building inspection, permitting and enforcement with surrounding municipalities and the county | Ongoing | CD Department, Town Manager |
| 15 Periodically review development and design performance standards and update as needed | Ongoing | CD Department |
| Housing | | |
| 1 Conduct a study evaluating the idea of creating a Taos Plateau joint Town-County area for the purpose of cooperating between the Town and County to both enact inclusionary housing, short-term rental restrictions, and other housing programs identified in both the Town and County affordable housing plans | 1st year | Town Manager, CD Department, Taos County, NCNMEDD |
| 2 Hold a regionalism summit to consider creating a land or housing trust in the North Central Economic Development District, town-county or other entity. Identify candidate options for programs that the multi-jurisdictional housing entity could have and determine the desired programs (also under economic development) | 1st year | Town Manager, CD Department, Taos County, NCEDD |
| 3 Create a housing trust or authority entity, preferably regional, however, the advantages of a local program may outweigh regional | 3rd year | Town Manager, CD Department |
| 4 Identify, evaluate and select options for raising funds to build affordable housing, to be administered by the housing entity | 3rd year | Town Manager, CD Department |
| 5 Conduct periodic evaluation of the effectiveness of the short-term rental ordinance | 2nd year | CD Department |
| 6 Conduct regular meetings with Northern Regional Housing Authority to assess program performance and opportunities for collaboration | Ongoing | Town Manager, CD Department, Northern Regional Housing Authority |
| 7 Identify reduced-cost or at-cost town land that can be used for affordable housing | 2nd year | CD Department |
| 8 Develop neighborhood plans for build-out and in-fill in areas | 5th year | CD Department |

| Implementation Plan | | |
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| Action | Timeframe | Lead Agency |
| 9 Work with employers on employer-built housing including dormitories, apartment complexes built by private developers or through public/private partnerships, single family homes, and conversion of old motels. | 2nd year | Town Manager, Major Employers |
| 9.a. Identify locations for employer housing | 2nd year | Town Manager, CD Department, Major Employers |
| 10 Continue to support the development of LIHTC projects | Ongoing | Town Manager, CD Department |
| Green Network | | |
| 1 Hold regular internal Parks & Recreation workshops and reviews with leadership to review proposed and planned projects and identify priority projects based on magnitude of positive impact, availability of resources including funding and staff, and public support. | Ongoing | Parks and Plaza Department |
| 2 With the Taos Tree Board and the public, identify and establish a format for public interface to serve as a conduit for communications between the Parks and Plaza Department and the public | | Parks and Plaza Department |
| 3 Prioritize projects and actions in support of expansions and improvements to Fred Baca Park as a public park, open space, and trails element | Ongoing | Parks and Plaza Department |
| 4 Prioritize projects and actions to make improvements to Kit Carson Park, Town Plaza, and other town parks identified in the Parks Plan implementation actions | Ongoing | Parks and Plaza Department |
| 5 Engage Taos Public Schools to identify a strategy for ownership and management of Eco Park that works to the benefit of the town, the schools, and the public | | Town Manager, Parks and Plaza Department |
| 6 Develop a green network plan, including a mapping exercise for greenways, with town guidance and technical support identifying potential green network links and green nodes, public access routes, segments with no public access, maintenance responsibilities, future extensions, trailheads, posting of maps and rules of use | 1st year | Parks and Plaza Department, Town Manager, local and regional environmental and recreational groups and regional stakeholders |
| 6.a Engage local and regional partners to conduct mapping exercise with Town support, organization, direction, and resources. | 1st year | |
| 6.b. Review land use, property ownership, and other maps provided in the Comprehensive Plan to identify potential links and assets for a green network throughout the Town of Taos. | 1st year | |
| 6.c Partner with the Taos Land Trust for conservation mapping. | 1-5 Years | |

| Implementation Plan | | |
|---|-----------|--|
| Action | Timeframe | Lead Agency |
| 6.d Review existing plans and include relevant projects in future mapping. | Ongoing | |
| 6.e Develop priority and alternate scenarios for developing a future green network. | Ongoing | |
| 6.f Prioritize scenarios that align with community priorities as documented in this plan, the Parks and Trails plans, and other existing planning and outreach resources. | 1st year | |
| 6.g Acquire and develop properties, rights-of-way, and easements identified through green network mapping | | |
| 7 Identify rights and responsibilities as established in existing regulation pertaining to public access and provide landowners and the public with clear outlines of the legal parameters within which each must abide | | Town Attorney |
| 8 Identify gaps in existing regulation, including unclear or conflicting elements, and establish local regulation addressing rights of access as appropriate | | Town Attorney |
| 9 Provide support for community volunteers including defining responsibilities and goals, reliable funding, regularly scheduled meetings and workshops with staff, and established procedures for appointments, recommendations, public engagement, conduct, and communications protocols | | Parks and Plaza Department |
| Economic Development | | |
| 1 Hold a preliminary sub-regional economic development summit including Taos County and the Taos Ski Valley to establish a unified vision, goals and priorities | 1-2 years | Town Manager |
| 1.a Consider regional governance frameworks that foster long-range decision-making, equitable sharing of resources and responsibilities, and cooperative leadership and representation | | |
| 1.b Conduct staff-level regional discussions to consider opportunities for regional collaboration and coordination | | |
| 2 Convene a regional summit to work to improve regional collaborative efforts regarding economic development as well as transportation, housing, land use regulations, water and sewer systems, shared staffing and recreational leagues and facilities | 1-2 years | Town Manager, Town Council, elected officials in counties and neighboring jurisdictions, NCEDD |

Implementation Plan

| Action | Timeframe | Lead Agency |
|--|-----------|----------------------------|
| 3 Establish a regional commission to pursue economic development projects and strategies and provide recommendations to local and regional decision-makers, and address other topics agreed upon by members | 2 years | Town Manager, Town Council |
| 3.a Build off of the Enchanted Circle Council of Governments | | |
| 3.b Consider expanding member representation to multiple seats to expand the range of interests represented and dilute political pressure | | |
| 4 Develop town or town/county economic development plan prioritizing local community sustainability and regional collaborations that will: | 5 years | Town Manager |
| 4.a Provide economic development strategies and goals and up-to-date, comprehensive data and market analysis | | |
| 4.b Prioritize target industries | | |
| 4.c Provide potential incentives and strategies for business attraction | | |
| 4.d Develop policies and actions based on community input to support local businesses and entrepreneurs | | |
| 4.e Establish an index of current funding sources outlining funding parameters and requirements | | |
| 4.f Identify potential local LEDA projects and incentives | | |
| 4.g Serve as the community's strategic economic development plan in support of regional economic development | | |
| 5 Work with local businesses through public private partnerships to cultivate economic opportunities, support job creation, and provide living wages | Ongoing | Town Manager |
| 6 Update local LEDA ordinance to include all recent amendments to state LEDA regulations | 1st year | Town Manager, Town Council |
| 6.a Work with the regional representative of the New Mexico Economic Development Department | | |
| 6.b Expand the use of local LEDA, including potential participation from regional and state LEDA, to support economic development | | |
| 6.c Develop and publicize a list of potential local LEDA incentives | | |

| Implementation Plan | | |
|--|-------------------|--|
| Action | Timeframe | Lead Agency |
| 6.d Consider convening regular regional workshops, including town, county, state departments and agencies (including NMEDD), local economic development organizations, local institutions, business and industry, and community groups to identify potential incentives and partnerships | | |
| 6.e Independently, or with regional partners, identify improvement projects eligible for state LEDA investment in land, buildings, and infrastructure | | |
| 7 Work with the state Economic Development Department to develop and complete projects to improve the Town’s ability to attract development and investment | Ongoing | Town Manager |
| 8 Designate the economic development chapter of the Comprehensive Plan update, 2022 as the community’s current economic development strategic plan until such time as a dedicated economic development plan is developed and adopted | 1st year | Town Manager, Town Council, Marketing and Tourism Department |
| 9 Actively support Taos MainStreet to continue working to develop projects promoting economic vibrancy in the core of Taos | Ongoing | MainStreet Taos |
| 10 Develop a downtown Metropolitan Development Area plan (action also in Land Use) | Year 3 | MainStreet Taos, CD Department |
| 11 Apply for a Great Blocks of MainStreet grant for a project such as redeveloping and improving Civic Plaza Drive or an alternative project | Year 3 | MainStreet Taos, CD Department |
| 21 Continue producing entertainment events as an economic development and community service | Ongoing | Marketing and Tourism Department, Parks and Plaza Department |
| Capacity and Public Assets | | |
| 1 Convene Town Council and town management team to evaluate the potential benefits and need for professional services to conduct a review of municipal needs and capacities and provide a prioritized action agenda for projects and needs on a one-time or regular basis, possibly including conducting municipal visioning | 1st year, ongoing | Town Manager |
| 2 Establish protocols for municipal department managers to convene to discuss and coordinate priorities, projects, needs, and progress | 1st year, ongoing | Town Manager |
| 3 Establish support and requirements for municipal management to participate in regular ICIP training | 1st year, ongoing | Town Manager |

| Implementation Plan | | |
|---|-------------------|---|
| Action | Timeframe | Lead Agency |
| 4 Develop mechanisms including policies, training and internship guidelines, record keeping, and communication guidelines to minimize the loss of institutional knowledge with turnover | 1st year, ongoing | Town Manager |
| 5 Develop an asset management plan and inventory system, considering community growth and change affecting needs, renovations and expansions of facilities, location of facilities serving neighborhoods, maintenance requirements, and opportunities for shared use (such as with schools, county, sports clubs and other organizations) | 1st year | Public Works Director, Town Management Team |
| 6 Conduct topic-specific workshops of town working with non-governmental organizations in the Town | 1st year, ongoing | Town Manager |
| 7 Create a water budget for the Town of Taos that explains best available information to the public regarding the water supply and existing and projected water demand. | Year 2 | Public Works Director |
| 8 Consider developing facilities master plans | Year 5 | |
| 9 Develop annual report on the progress made on comprehensive plan implementation actions and recommendations, conduct comp plan follow-up workshops of the Planning and Zoning Commission and convey report to the Town Council | Annual, ongoing | CD Department |
| Transportation | | |
| 1 Develop a transportation master plan for the town | 1-5 years | Public Works Department, CD Department |
| 2 Develop a bicycle facilities master plan utilizing the Enchanted Circle Trails Plan and draft Town of Taos Bicycle Master Plan, as updated, for consideration of adoption as a stand-alone master plan or within a transportation master plan. | 1-5 years | CD Department, Public Works Department |
| 3 Develop policies as part of a transportation master plan that ensure transit-supportive infrastructure when building town projects and in review of private development proposals | 1-5 years | Public Works Department, CD Department, NCRTD |
| 4 Validate, prioritize and program specific bicycling and walking improvements recommended in the Strong at Heart plan. | 1-2 years | Public Works Department, CD Department |
| 5 Conduct a parking study/audit and feasibility study of a shared parking garage in the CBD | 1-2 years | Public Works Department, CD Department |
| 6 Pursue improvements to Taos Regional Airport to enhance safety and increase air service for tourists/visitors, residents, businesses, and potentially logistics and other business operations. | On-going | Public Works Department, Town Manager |
| 7 Work with Taos Air on their provision of commuter air service. | On-going | Marketing and Tourism Department |

| Implementation Plan | | |
|--|-----------|---|
| Action | Timeframe | Lead Agency |
| 8 Coordinate with the North Central Regional Transit District (NCRTD) in the provision of transit services and transit-supporting developments. | On-going | Public Works Department, CD Department, NCRTD |
| 9 Develop a plan for the location of stations for recharging electric vehicles(EV) in strategic locations through the town | 1-2 years | Public Works Department, CD Department, NCRTD |
| 10 Maintain sidewalks so that they are passable in winter from snow and ice and in summer from weeds | On-going | Public Works Department |
| 11 Add NCRTD to the Development Review Committee | On-going | CD Department |
| 12 Work with NCRTD on identifying suitable locations for a transit-oriented development and potential public private partnerships to develop mixed use or residential projects | 1st year | CD Department, NCRTD |
| 13 Develop plans for addition town-directed streetscape enhancements to Paseo del Pueblo in coordination with NMDOT | 3rd Year | Public Works Department, CD Department, NMDOT |
| 14 Continue to prepare the annual ICIP including transportation infrastructure projects | On-going | Public Works Department |
| <p>Note: Town Manager may assign leads to Assistant Town Manager/Grants and Revenue Director, and other staff</p> <p>Actions are discussed in respective elements of the plan's issues and opportunities and goals and policies. For further information, please refer to those chapters of the plan.</p> | | |

IMPLEMENTATION METRICS

Metrics are useful to help describe conditions of the community and provide indicators for how the town of Taos is performing or should perform. They are a useful way to evaluate how the town is doing in implementing the plan. In some cases, desired metrics are either not available at the time of writing or require further study.

Following are metrics that should be tracked on an annual basis and presented to the Town Council for their discussion. Additional metrics or more refined measures will likely change this list over time.

Exhibit 2-02: Town of Taos Comprehensive Plan Implementation Metrics Table

| Town of Taos Plan Implementation Metrics |
|--|
| 1. Percent of funded positions in town government that are vacant, affecting municipal capacity |
| 2. Percent of land development code that has been reviewed and updated as needed per year and within five years |
| 3. Number of working days between submittal of a complete business license application and issuance of the license |
| 4. Number of working days between submittal of a complete sign code permit application and issuance of the permit |
| 5. Number of working days between submittal of a complete application and issuance of a residential zoning compliance sign-off for building permits (Note: the town is responsible for the zoning compliance sign-off and the State Construction Industries Division issues the building permit after zoning compliance) |
| 6. Number of emergency management exercises conducted per year |
| 7. Transit ridership by North Central Regional Transit District routes per year |
| 8. Traffic volume in average daily trips on key streets |
| 9. Median total income and median wages |
| 10. Population change in relation to projected population, Comprehensive Plan, page 48 |
| 11. Housing units change and target housing mix per decade, Comprehensive Plan, page 135 |
| 12. Demand for moderately priced and workforce housing, Comprehensive Plan, page 135; Affordable Housing Plan, page 55 |
| 13. Housing affordability calculations: gap between median income and median price of single family house, Comprehensive Plan, page 137 |
| 14. Water use per capita per day |
| 15. Municipal wells water level soundings |
| 16. Water budget (recommended in Comprehensive Plan) |
| 17. Percent of total energy use provided by sustainable energy generation |
| 18. Electric vehicles mix in town fleet |
| 19. Miles of sidewalks and trails |
| 20. Miles of bicycle lanes, trails and routes |

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5.

CAPACITY

MUNICIPAL CAPACITY

The municipality of Taos functions well: it is effective, efficient, and capable. A culture of service and dedication is supported by experienced and capable management and staff to provide the community with a wide range of quality services, conscientious management of public assets. A regional and long-range planning perspective supports a culture of results-driven projects and work to develop sustained local and regional capacity. Maintaining capacity will require safe-guarding existing beneficial practices and institutional knowledge; strengthened capacity will be built on improved coordination and collaboration.

INTRODUCTION

Town staff currently succeeds in accomplishing, with impressive dexterity, accountability, and professionalism, a considerable range and quantity of tasks, and does so well and with limited resources and a surprisingly small staff.

This chapter will provide a brief overview of municipal capacity, brief review of internal town planning, and recommendations legacy planning and other measures to sustain and improve municipal capacity over time.

FOUNDATIONS COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Community survey respondents' expectations of the functional roles and responsibilities of town government are primarily of infrastructure development and maintenance followed by the provision of services (fire, police, library, etc.) then public health and safety.

These priority responsibilities are followed by land use and development regulation, economic and business development, and finally social well-being.

Comments and feedback from the community and especially community groups often stressed the importance of social well-being, county effort, and the work of a number of community groups and nonprofits that support social well-being efforts with municipal assistance wherever possible.

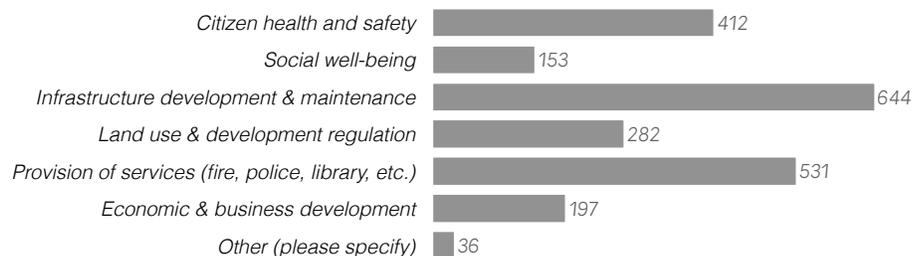
GOVERNING BODY MISSION & GOALS

PRESERVE OUR TOWN'S NATURAL BEAUTY, CULTURE, AND HISTORICAL VALUES, WHILE PROVIDING SUPERIOR SERVICES.
TAOS TOWN COUNCIL MISSION STATEMENT

The town council maintains its **5-Year Strategic Plan** outlining goals across a comprehensive range of topics with specific objectives for each and identified activities to meet them. Progress is tracked and updated regularly on the town website.

Exhibit 3-01: Community feedback about government priorities

In your view, what are the top two functional roles & responsibilities of Town government?



Council Goals cover topics and issues including but not limited to:

- a Affordable housing
- a Airport project
- a Beautification
- a Community gardens
- a Community planning
- a Development
- a Disk golf course improvements
- a Economic development
- a Economic diversification
- a Improved personal income
- a Land use regulation including design code
- a Limiting illegal dumping & water hook-ups
- a Master planning (comprehensive planning)
- a Municipal revenues
- a Public private partnerships
- a Recycling
- a Regional trails
- a Street improvements
- a Tree canopy improvements
- a Watershed protection
- a Youth and family services

LONG-RANGE WORK PROGRAM

The Town of Taos' Long-Range Work Program for the Planning, Community and Economic Development Department establishes a listing of current projects and priorities with descriptions and status tracking of progress. The program was not updated for 2020/21 due to disruptions from Covid-19, but is otherwise reviewed and updated annually.

ICIP PLANNING

A local infrastructure capital improvement plan (ICIP) is a plan that establishes planning priorities for anticipated capital projects. The state-coordinated ICIP process encourages entities to plan for the development of capital improvements so that they do not find themselves in emergency situations, but can plan for, fund, and develop infrastructure at a pace that sustains their activities.

The town's current ICIP (2022-26) includes streets, sidewalk, utilities, facilities, and airport improvements, parks and recreational projects and improvements, affordable housing funding and projects, and emergency response training and equipment funding.

REVIEW

Together the council's mission statement, council's strategic plan, long-range work program and ICIP constitute a solid groundwork for continued municipal planning for priority programs, projects and resource management. Regular review of these planning tools should be folded together and structured to include the Comprehensive Plan's goals, policies, actions, and implementation plan. A deliberative and collaborative process bridging departments, leadership, management, and the public will allow the town to maximize resource allocation, minimize duplicative or conflicting efforts, and provide a mechanism for public input and review.

RECOMMENDATION: MUNICIPAL PLANNING

ESTABLISH ANNUAL OR SEMI-ANNUAL REVIEWS OF MUNICIPAL PLANNING PRIORITIES INCLUDING COUNCIL GOALS, THE ICIP, THE LONG-RANGE WORK PROGRAM, AND THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN THAT INCLUDES:

- Departmental review of priorities, needs, barriers, and progress
- Interdepartmental discussions to coordinate priorities and review opportunities for collaboration
- Leadership review with management of progress and priorities
- Municipal progress reporting to highlight municipal accomplishments, assess community support for priorities, discuss barriers to progress, and invite collaborative solutions.

The town may consider an additional round of review to include local and regional public and private partners (ideally occurring before public progress reporting)

CONTEXT

MUNICIPAL FUNCTION

RESPONSIBILITIES & INITIATIVES

Town of Taos municipal services include:

- Emergency response (police and fire)
- Utility services (water, wastewater and solid waste)
- Land use regulation (zoning, development regulation and review)
- Public asset management and maintenance (facilities, streets, equipment, etc.)
- Services and amenities (parks, recreation, library)
- Administrative and legal support and services are provided by human resources, town clerk, finance, and court management and staff.
- Technical services include internal municipal functions as well as maintaining and updating the municipal website and developing and utilizing the town's extensive spatiality information (GIS) technologies capabilities and database.
- Community and economic development provided by the town can be considered as three legs supporting economic development: (1) proactive local business support through grant writing assistance and partnerships; (2) marketing and outreach with high-quality, multi-platform visitor-ship campaigns, and business recruitment; and (3) event development and production
- Services such as affordable housing and transit not generally solvent for small, disperse populations are addressed through regional partnerships and collaborations.

Various boards and commissions support municipal functions.

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

MUNICIPAL CAPACITY

SUSTAINABILITY

Building on municipal planning tools already in place, regular internal progress review sessions will promote communication and encourage the alignment of priorities across municipal ranks. Ultimately, the process should provide each department and branch with clear goals and directives, enabling staff to work securely in the knowledge that their effort represents meaningful progress toward a shared goal. This can be a powerful tool for focusing energies and brightening convictions among municipal staff.

The multitude of plans in place, coupled with various communication impediments between departments and the public, limits that ability to distinguish clear goals and leave staff with unclear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in meeting them, which can erode a sense of purpose and deteriorate the impact of efforts.

A clear and established municipal vision provides town staff and interdepartmental guidance to frame their mission, priorities, expectations, and goals and, thereby, confidently prioritize efforts and devote resources to projects with the expectation that the work will represent definitive steps moving the ball forward towards common and attainable goals that meet community needs.

RETENTION AND LEGACY PLANNING

The practices and culture in place now support highly effective town government. Establishing these practices through policy and procedures may help maintain the current level of capacity through future staff and administrative changes.

Current practices to consider institutionalizing include:

- regular review and quantitative impact analysis of efforts, particularly economic development programs including events, and
- regional, long-range planning prioritization and collaboration.

Additional municipal cultural assets that may be essential but are less concrete or more individualized per department likely resides in the institutional knowledge and experience of individual staff members. Legacy planning to download and document this type of knowledge and provide adequate training time for replacement staff will be vital to maintaining a high level of service as long-time town staff retire or move on.

RECOMMENDATION | LEGACY PLANNING

Establish policies and procedures to guide municipal management.

DEVELOP AND INSTITUTE LEGACY PLANNING STRATEGIES INCLUDING ESTABLISHED PROCEDURES FOR LONG-TERM AND OUTGOING STAFF TO RECORD OR OTHERWISE DOCUMENT STRATEGIES, TIPS, AND KNOWLEDGE RELEVANT TO THEIR POSITION, AND PROVIDING FOR STAFFING OVERLAP PERIODS SUFFICIENT FOR TRAINING REPLACEMENT STAFF.

Regular annual or semiannual documentation of “lessons learned” may promote more complete knowledge transfer but are far more likely to fall out of practice than exit reporting.

ADDITIONAL CAPACITY

CONSULTING SERVICES

Currently, capacity gaps can result from a strain on existing staff hours. Additional public support and funding to fill or add positions is unlikely. Grants and outside funding can help bridge gaps through limited contracts strategically deployed to support existing staff.

Consulting capacity can be harnessed to improve municipal capacity as an outside perspective in a supportive advisory role as well, as outlined in the following sections on municipal vision and mandate.

RECOMMENDATION | ADDITIONAL CAPACITY

PURSUE FUNDING FOR CONTRACTED PROFESSIONAL CONSULTING SERVICES TO FILL STAFFING GAPS AND TO EVALUATE AND PROVIDE RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE MUNICIPAL STRATEGIES, BUDGETING, AND CAPACITY TO SUPPORT MUNICIPAL GOALS

MUNICIPAL MISSION AND VISION

The town council has a short and powerful mission statement. A more extensive community exercise of visioning would provide an opportunity to build on that mission statement and establish common agreement on the role of the municipal government, the responsibilities it should oversee, and the goals those responsibilities should be working to meet. Aligned expectations support collaborative partnerships and promote citizen satisfaction and strong staff morale.

VISIONING

A visioning effort would provide a productive framework for establish and align expectations for municipal efforts both internally and between staff and the community. Visioning work should begin with a series of internal municipal workshops to identify the various goals and capacities of departments and leadership.

Work with the community and with community groups should follow to identify and align expectations, roles, and responsibilities with the goal of defining a common vision for the role of the town, and the goals it should prioritize.

Finally, internal visioning review should provide department heads and staff with tools to apply that vision to their mission and identify goals and goalposts for meeting them.

To a large extent, some of this work has been done through this planning process. Additional work is needed to address roles and responsibilities that are not yet in agreement including social services, and to define a clear mission for the town.

RECOMMENDATION | VISIONING

CONTRACT WITH NEUTRAL THIRD-PARTY FACILITATOR TO CONDUCT A SERIES OF INTERNAL AND PUBLIC WORKSHOPS WITH THE GOAL OF IDENTIFYING A COMMON VISION FOR THE TOWN OF TAOS & REVIEW OF PROGRESS ON GOALS THROUGH:

- Internal town workshops with staff
- Community workshops to identify and align expectations
- Visioning workshops to define clear vision and goals for municipal functions
- Internal review of priorities, needs, and barriers
- Identification of department-specific goals and goalposts to meet them
- Establish and maintain regular report-out sessions to communicate progress, hurdles, and considerations in meeting goals with constituents

MUNICIPAL ROLES: SOCIAL SUPPORT

A priority issue to align in visioning is the municipal responsibility in providing social services and assistance. Town capacity is limited in this respect and municipal roles have traditionally focused on infrastructure, public works, economic development, and recreation, though the town regularly works with the county and local providers to support social service efforts. Local community groups and public feedback indicate a strong expectation for social and equity support and frustration. Aligning expectations of the role of local government regarding social services seems a prudent measure.

Until agreement and a common understanding is reached as to what expectations are, all parties will find either their expectations unmet or their efforts unsatisfactory. This issue comes into sharpest contrast on issues involving economic development and funding priorities.

COMMUNITY CAPACITY

There is considerable capacity in the community and region, including regional governments, agencies and departments, an array of active and capable community groups, and a diverse and passionate community of residents.

VOLUNTEER PARTICIPATION

Volunteer efforts, including commissions and boards or initiatives and drives, still require municipal resources and staff hours to initiate, organize, provide direction, directives, support, and rely on sustained volunteer dedication and perseverance.

Community volunteer service is currently in extraordinarily short supply. Following the enforced isolation periods in 2020-2022, filling boards or committees, not to mention stoking broader volunteer efforts, has been exceedingly difficult.

Beyond the pressing and functional volunteer service needs, including a full complement of planning and zoning commissioners, an important unfulfilled community volunteer role in Taos is the now-disbanded Parks and Recreation Advisory Board. The board once served as the liaison between the community and the parks department;

communicating community needs to the department and department progress and hurdles to the community.

Given the high value the community finds in parks and outdoor recreation and the earnest and effective work the department continues to do to meet community needs and expectations, filling this gap in communications should be a priority focus for volunteer engagement by the town.

PARTNERSHIPS

ORGANIZED COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Collaboration with existing community advocacy organizations has great potential for producing substantial additive effects on municipal capacity.

The range of issues that community groups in the area address are all comprehensive plan topics and goes well beyond those topics to address many community needs that are not practically addressable by small municipalities. These groups support and expand the community's capacity to address needs.

The town currently collaborates with many community groups to realize goals and and expand municipal capacity. These partnerships are invaluable and should be prioritized for maintained support.

Building and retaining additional productive relationships and enabling improved cooperation and collaboration between community groups should be strongly considered as well.

Even indirect collaboration can be invaluable. Proactive coordination with community groups and institutions working with them to align and distinguish goals between them, publicize their capacity and promote their projects, and coordinate their efforts in order to prevent gaps or redundancies can multiply successful outcomes with very little investment of municipal resources.

RECOMMENDATION | COMMUNITY PARTNERS

MAINTAIN AND STRENGTHEN COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY GROUPS AND CONSIDER ESTABLISHING A STAFF ROLE OR STRUCTURE TO ENSURE REGULAR COMMUNICATION AMONG GROUPS TO COORDINATE EFFORTS AND FACILITATE COLLABORATIONS.

COMMUNITY GROUPS COLLABORATION

The depth and range of these groups' talents and passions represent a potential to significantly expand municipal capacity with relatively minimal investment. Work to pool energy and resources and align goals and priorities with and among community groups is likely to improve real outcomes in realizing goals for community groups, for the municipality, and ultimately for the citizens of Taos.

The goals and missions of various community groups create a complex "landscape" which is sometimes difficult for town officials to understand and to identify activities the town and one or more organizations may work together on. A coordinating council of community groups would be helpful for guiding collaboration among the groups and with the town.

RECOMMENDATION | COMMUNITY PARTNERS

ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY GROUPS AND NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS TO FORM A COORDINATING COUNCIL WHICH HELPS PRIORITIZE ACTIVITIES, DETERMINE WHERE GROUPS WORK TOGETHER COLLABORATIVELY AND IDENTIFY JOINT TOWN-COMMUNITY GROUPS ACTIVITIES.

REGIONAL PARTNERS

As a small, rural community, regional collaboration is a foundational building block of municipal capacity in Taos. By pooling resources and efforts, regional stakeholders can accomplish exponentially more than each partner individually could realistically consider. Building capacity by improving on already substantial and often successful regionalism efforts has risen throughout the planning process as a central theme across nearly all topics for the municipality.

During the comprehensive planning process, economic development, airport area development, transportation including transit, trails and roads, affordable housing expansion through a regional trust or authority (including short-term rental and inclusionary zoning), building permitting, development codes, inspections, and enforcement, and other subjects have been identified as being best addressed through regional collaboration or by local collaboration between the town/county/Ski Valley.

This plan includes as a fundamental recommendation that the town continue to work with regional partners to innovate and establish improved structural strategies for supporting regional economic

development, housing, transplantation, and other efforts.

ENCHANTED CIRCLE COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Currently, the town supports regional long-range planning partnerships as a foundational member of the Enchanted Circle Council of Governments.

The Enchanted Circle Council of Governments currently serves as a regional entity representing and authorized by regional municipalities and governments. The ECCOG was established, in part, based on economic development recommendations adopted in 2013.

Though innovative and often productive, the entity has faced certain structural impediments to full collaboration on regional goals; many of which grew from political concerns inherent in decision-making that favor long-range, regional strategies over short-term, hyper-local results. Adjustments to the underlying structure may alleviate these pressures and promote productive regional collaboration.

Reflections on Geography

The geography of the Enchanted Circle as the range for collaborative partnerships is both poetic and intuitive. However, there are several other potentially beneficial arrangements of regional geographies that could shift the strengths and capabilities of collaborative efforts such as:

- ^a The municipal borders of the Town of Taos
 - ^a Neighborhoods may constitute sub-geographic units
- ^a Taos Plateau (including town, selected county sub-areas identified as functioning in the same housing market, and Taos Pueblo)
- ^a Enchanted Circle (portions of Taos and Colfax Counties, including all municipalities and tribal entities)
- ^a Taos-Espanola-Santa Fe-Los Alamos
- ^a Taos-Rio Arriba-Colfax Counties
 - ^a Inclusion of San Miguel and Mora Counties in shared cultural and family ties
- ^a Sangre de Cristo Mountains
- ^a Northern New Mexico
- ^a Skiing Rockies of northern NM and West Slope of Colorado

REGIONALISM STRATEGIES

In order to determine the most effective structure for regional collaboration, the Town of Taos should consider options for collaborative regional strategies and aggressively pursue that deemed most promising.

Prudent governance in this case will entail responsible town leadership to honestly advocate for collaborative allegiances while retaining open but independent strategies for accomplishing goals.

The favored approach presented in the discussion of the topic in this plan is to enfold the Enchanted Circle COG into North Central Economic Development District, becoming a commission and having professional staff within the EDD. This option is reliant on political and staffing conditions but the underlying recommendation is to convene a discussion among partners with the goal of reorganizing a regional collaborative structure in order to facilitate long-range regional decision-making.

RECOMMENDATION | REGIONALISM

THE TOWN OF TAOS SHOULD PROACTIVELY ENGAGE POTENTIAL PARTNERS TO EXPLORE POTENTIAL STRUCTURAL OPTIONS FOR IMPROVING REGIONAL COLLABORATION WHILE MAINTAINING AN INDEPENDENT STRATEGY FOR ACCOMPLISHING GOALS LOCALLY.

The planning process employed in the development of the 40-Year Regional Water Plan should be reviewed and can serve as a template for organizing future regional efforts.

The effort produced exceptional buy-in and lasting collaborative efforts. It employed a plan steering committee representing key regional stakeholders with the authority and agency to engage other groups and organizations, and to delegate planning and implementation work as suited by capability and interest among the many stakeholders. The agency afforded to partner groups in determining priorities and identifying projects that align with their values, capabilities, and interests likely further built on the value of the process and strengthened convictions to realizing the plan.

The town's steadfast dedication to regional collaboration, to building regional capacity and work regionally towards long-range goals will remain essential and will be the most reliable and potentially successful strategy for expanding capacity to realize goals and develop projects.

Contract Services for Aligned Local Functions

Several important services are provided on a long-term contract basis including Taos MainStreet and the Stray Hearts Animal Shelter.

Contract services should be maintained .

The StrayHearts Animal Shelter saw a significant influx of rescue animals during the pandemic resulting in shortfalls in a static budget set by contract with supporting partners including the town. This highlighted a need for improved flexibility in the basic framework of municipal contracts to accommodate funding needs by contract services and to meet fluctuating demand for the important services they provide.

RECOMMENDATION | CONTRACT SERVICES

REVIEW SERVICE CONTRACT LANGUAGE AND UPDATE TO INCORPORATE FLEXIBILITY TO RESPOND WITH ADEQUATE FUNDING SUPPORT AS NEEDED TO MEET CHANGING CONDITIONS.

MUNICIPAL CAPACITY CONSIDERATIONS

As noted in the Introduction, significant municipal capacity is required to achieve the goals of comprehensive plans. This, like most modern comprehensive plans, calls into service all municipal departments and staff--from public works to parks, to commissions and administration, but relies most significantly on the planning department.

This section of the plan is provided in order to identify opportunities to improve municipal capacity across the board, and to advocate for support thereof. Many issues faced by the community and voiced during the planning process will remain difficult to tackle without additional municipal capacity to do so. This holds true for most branches of municipal government but is especially stark for community planning. The multitude of responsibilities and limited resources to meet them are outlined here and, for reference, in the Land Use chapter.

This plan was made possible through the efforts of the dedicated planning department staff who aided in the development of this plan and whose continued support will be essential to completing Phase II of this project--the comprehensive code analysis in preparation for the major code update at which point even more will be asked of this department to implement the many recommendations provided through both phases of this project.

GOALS & POLICIES

1 GOAL

Municipal capacity is maintained and expanded to ensure quality of services and efficacy remain high

- A| *Institute policies and procedures to establish current successful strategies as municipal institutional practices and provide guidance for future staff persons*
- B| *Establish and enforce legacy planning measures to ensure retention of knowledge as staff turns over*

2 GOAL

Municipal project planning and prioritization is interdepartmental, and regularly reviewed through collaborative sessions with staff, management, leadership, and the public

- A| *Establish structure and schedule for regular review sessions as outlined in this chapter*
- B| *Consider engaging professional consultant services to review department needs, priorities, and projects with staff and leadership as outlined in this chapter*

3 GOAL

Municipal partnerships fully engage community groups and volunteer efforts

- A| *Establish capacity and procedures for working with community groups to track goals and progress, assist in managing barriers, partner on joint projects, and coordinate efforts between groups*
- B| *Identify strategies for regional collaborations; refer to regionalism recommendations in Economic Development chapter*

4 GOAL

The Taos community and the Town of Taos are united behind a single vision for municipal priorities and town staff are provided with a clear, purposeful overarching mandate of service

- A| *Conduct visioning workshops to identify and align municipal and community expectations for the town and establish a clear and meaningful identity mission for town staff and priorities*

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LAND USE



LAND USE

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Land Use element is to guide the pattern of future land use in the town and adjacent unincorporated county area over the next 20 years. The Land Use element presents a broad vision of current and future distribution and character of land uses. The Land Use element is the “keystone” in any comprehensive plan and integrates all plan components. Consequently, it should be consistent with and supported by the other elements of the plan.

FOUNDATIONS

PLANNING REFERENCES

The Land Use element supports and builds on the following existing plans and studies:

- *Vision 2020 Comprehensive Plan* (1999)
- *Strong at Heart* (2020)
- *Taos Historic Plaza Cultural Landscape Report* (2016)
- *Permitting and Licensing Efficiency Study* (2014)
- *Paseo Del Sur SmartGrowth EPA Study* (2007) (secondary resource)
- *Taos NM Smart Code* (2008) (secondary resource)
- *Taos County Hazards Mitigation Plan* (2018) (secondary resource)

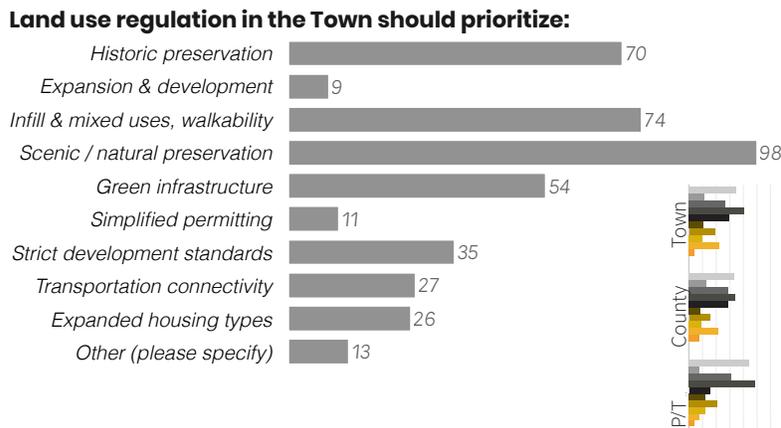
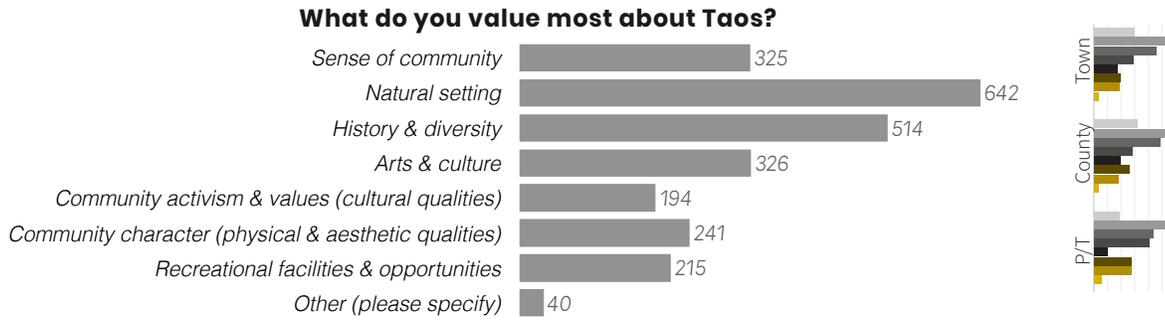
COMMUNITY SURVEY

Respondents valued most the natural setting of Taos, followed by history and diversity of the community. Arts and culture ranked third among residents (“yes”) and county residents (“no”), while part-time/seasonal residents ranked third a tie between community character, and recreational facilities and opportunities.

Regarding priorities in land use regulations, all three groups favor protection of scenic/natural assets as the highest priority, with historic preservation as the second highest priority. Infill and mixed-use walkability comes third, but considerably lower. Town and unincorporated county residents are more evenly distributed among the choices, compared to the part-timers. Green infrastructure is high in priorities among town and county residents but not part-timers. Expanded housing types is less popular among part-timers.

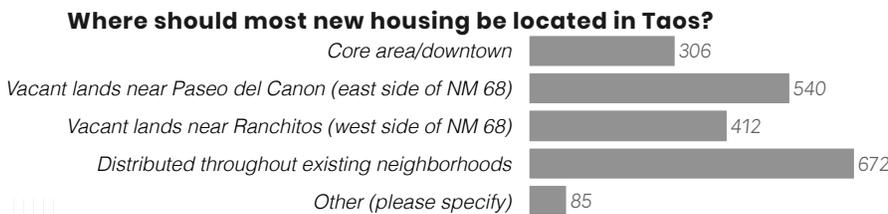
The graphs on the following pages depict survey questions and a summary of tabulated responses related to land use.

Exhibit 4-01: Taos Community Survey - Values, Land Use



Respondents favored distributing new housing throughout existing neighborhoods highest, followed by vacant lands near Paseo del Canon East, but not overwhelmingly over the choices of west side and downtown.

Exhibit 4-02: Taos Community Survey - Housing



COMMUNITY SURVEY AND PUBLIC MEETING COMMENTS

Survey respondents and participants in public meetings made a number of comments relevant to land use, which fit into the following general themes:

- Water over development, some consider water the number one constraint on development
- Protect agriculture and wetlands over development
- Promote infill, ecological preservation, and off-grid development
- Some respondents favor limiting new development, limiting new use of resources, redistributing affordability, reuse over new development, and/or anti-growth
- Historic preservation

-
- Protect “character” of downtown
 - Cultural preservation
 - Some long-term residents want growth - more places to shop, places to live
 - Sustainability in all endeavors and plan for climate change - building codes must evolve as the climate changes, water consumption should be limited
 - The regulations (zoning, subdivision, master planning, building requirements), the market, Town Council, Planning & Zoning Commission, Historic Preservation Commission, and staff all play roles in determining the character of what gets built
 - Regulations should discourage residential development projects that are large scale, high end, and consume a lot of land and resources which do not also provide houses that are affordable to locals for rent or purchase
 - The permitting process can be too difficult for small and mid-sized projects. NM Construction Industries Division building inspectors coming from Santa Fe and differing codes in town and county contribute to difficulties
 - Development should locate where it can be served by existing infrastructure, which is cheaper than building new infrastructure
 - Annexation would allow residents to limit use of personal septic systems and move onto a municipal wastewater system, less prone to failing
-

CONTEXT

Long-term demographic and economic trends tend to shape the future of communities. While the past does not dictate the future, the dynamics of long-range trends generally continue with some momentum into the future, unless unforeseen conditions intervene. While Taos has never been a boom town, it has experienced long-term population growth and has the potential either to increase its rate of growth in the future or decline in population.

DEMOGRAPHICS

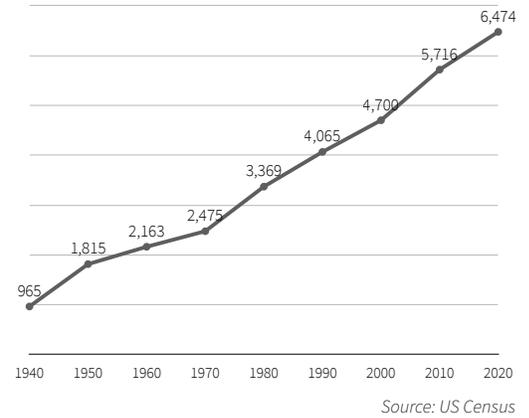
POPULATION

HISTORIC POPULATION

The Town of Taos has grown each decade since 1940. On average, the town added 666 persons per decade between 1960 and 2020 and grew at an average annual rate of 1.8% during the past sixty years. The most recent decade, 2010-2020, saw growth of 1.3% per year on average, somewhat slower than past decades. For comparison, Taos County grew by an average of 2,478 persons per decade and at a rate of 1.0% per year from 1960 to 2010.

The Town of Taos has an older population than the county or nation. Median age of the Town of Taos changed from 42.2 years in 2010 to an estimated 50.8 years in 2019 (Source: U.S. Census 2010 and ACS 5-Year Average 2019). The U.S. median average age changed from 36.9 years in 2010 to 38.1 years in 2019. Taos County went from 44.1 years to 48.2 years from 2010 to 2019.

Exhibit 4-03: Taos Historic Population



AGE

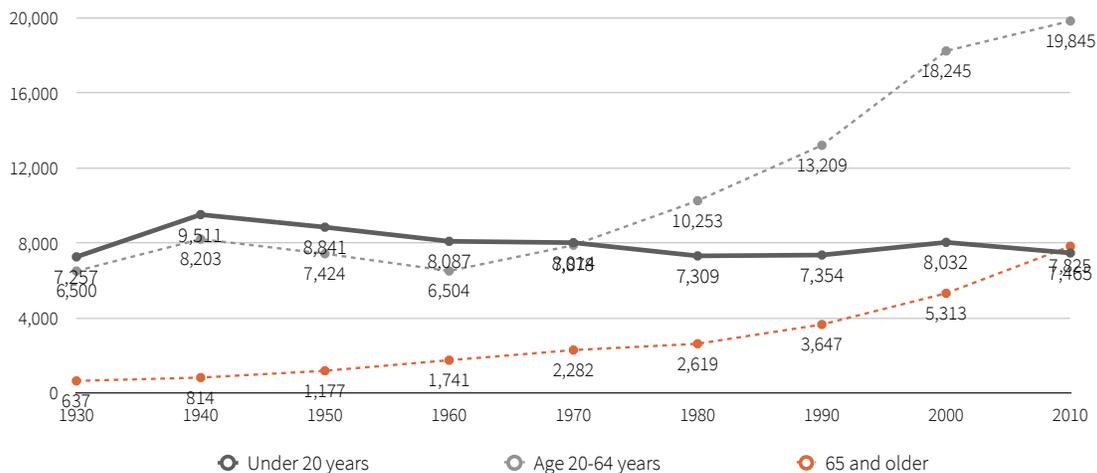
Taos County population under 20 years of age declined slightly from 1940-2010. The primary working age group (20-64 years) grew from 6,500 persons in 1930 to 19,845 in 2010. It represents a steadily increasing share of the total population from 45% to 60%. The 65 and older population also has grown steadily, becoming a larger group than the under 20-years by 2010.

Exhibit 4-04: Taos Historic Population Change

| Town of Taos Historic Population | | | |
|----------------------------------|------------|--------|-----------------------|
| Year | Population | Change | Annual Rate of Change |
| 1940 | 965 | | |
| 1950 | 1,815 | 850 | 6.5% |
| 1960 | 2,163 | 348 | 1.8% |
| 1970 | 2,475 | 312 | 1.4% |
| 1980 | 3,369 | 894 | 3.1% |
| 1990 | 4,065 | 696 | 1.9% |
| 2000 | 4,700 | 635 | 1.5% |
| 2010 | 5,716 | 1,016 | 2.0% |
| 2020 | 6,474 | 758 | 1.3% |

Exhibit 4-05: Taos County Population by Age Groups: 1930-2010

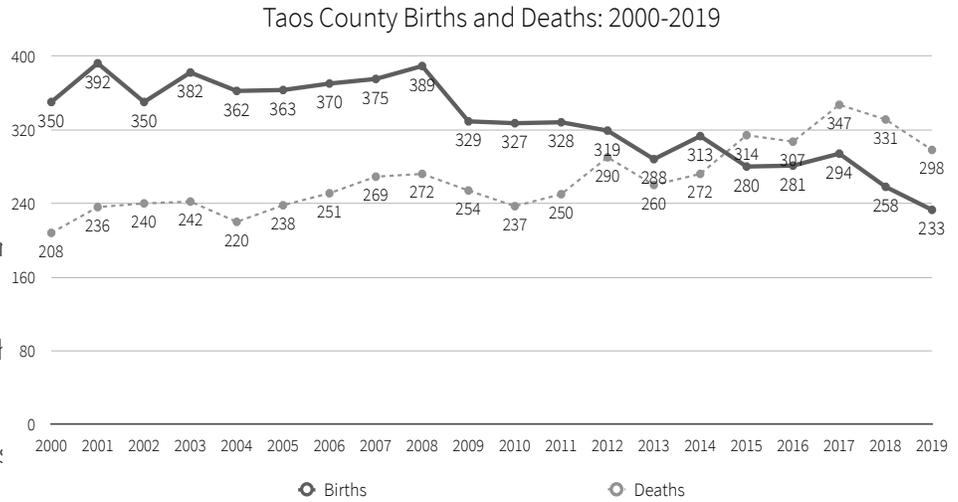
Source: US Census



BIRTHS AND DEATHS

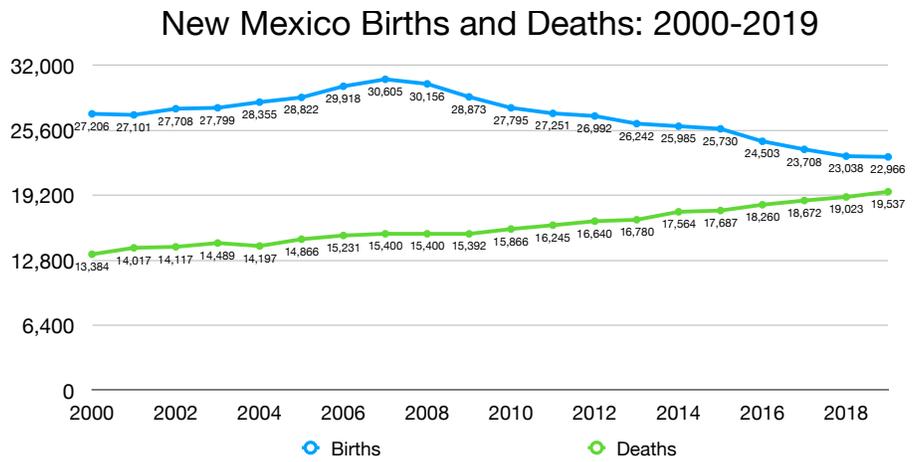
Over the 20-year period of 2000 to 2019, Taos County births have exceeded deaths. However, the number of deaths has been higher than births in each year since 2015. This is significant for many reasons, including that natural population increase is not occurring; only net in-migration can increase population. In contrast, U.S. births have consistently surpassed deaths, while deaths have been increasing. In New Mexico, births have exceeded deaths over the 20-year period, however, the lines have been gradually converging since 2007.

Exhibit 4-06: Taos County Births and Deaths: 2000-2019



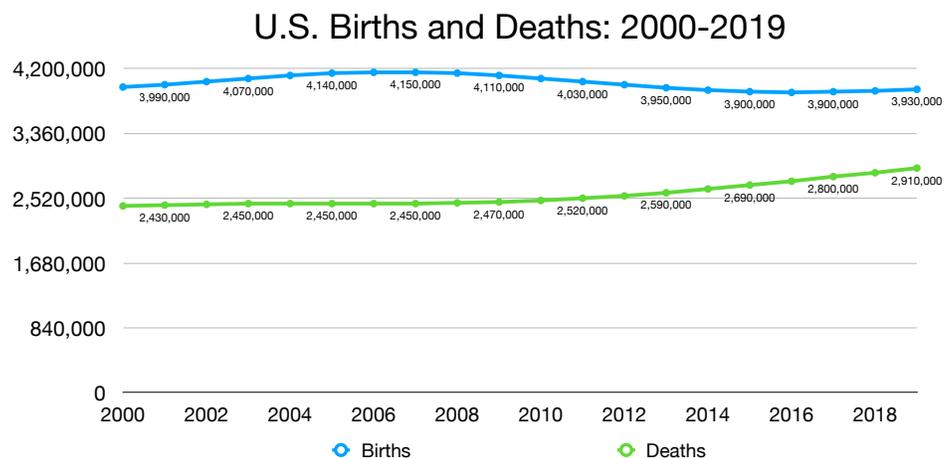
Source: New Mexico Department of Health

Exhibit 4-07: New Mexico Births and Deaths: 2000-2019



Source: New Mexico Department of Health

Exhibit 4-08: U.S. Births and Deaths: 2000-2019

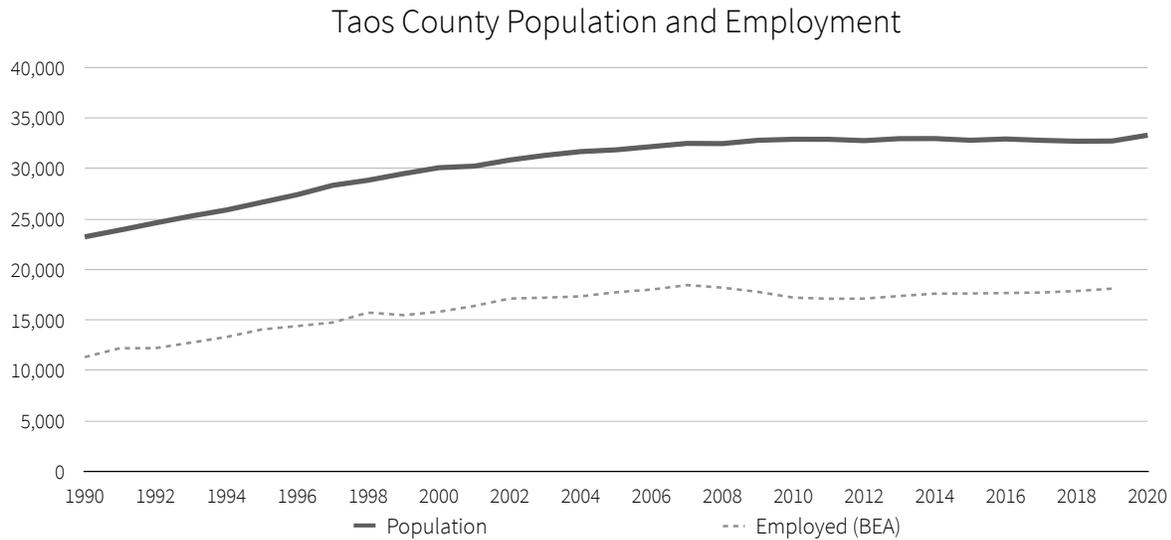


Source: <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/births-and-deaths-projected-to-2100?time=2000..2099&country=-USA, United>

EMPLOYEE TO POPULATION RATIOS

ARC used employee-to-population ratios to develop population projections, considering that economic development and job creation are key to population change. Population and employment tracked quite consistently during the past 30 years. The ratio for employee-to-population averaged 1 resident to 0.53 employee from 1990 to 2019. Looking at employment, the 20-year average, from 2000 to 2019, is 131 net new jobs per year. The 5-year average, from 2015 to 2019, is 99 net new jobs per year.

Exhibit 4-09: Taos County Population and Employment: 1990-2020



Sources: U.S. Census population and population estimates; U.S. Department of Commerce, 2020. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Economic Accounts, reported by Headwaters Economics' Economic Profile System.

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

ARC prepared low-, mid-, and high-range population projections for the Town of Taos. The low-range is based on the UNM Geospatial Population Studies (GPS county projection series); mid-range is based on job creation at a slightly higher level than historic, and high-range is based on stronger job creation.

The Town of Taos grew in the decade of 2010-2020 at an average annual rate of 1.3%, faster than the county at 0.5%. GPS was very conservative in their projections based partly on estimates that population declined by 2019. ARC's mid- and high-range projections expect Taos County and the Town of Taos to grow at average rates of 0.8% and 1.3% per year respectively.

ARC also evaluated Taos County's historic population growth in relation to comparable adjacent counties in Colorado: La Plata and Archuleta. All three counties have grown historically.

The mid- and high-range of the population projection series were based on employment growth and aggressive employment growth scenarios. Many variables are in play correlating population and employment, such as: workers who live outside the county, portion of elderly and youths in relation to prime working age population, residents who do not work (unemployed, workforce participation), residents working outside county, and residents receiving income from non-wage sources. Nonetheless, in balance, the employee-to-population ratios have been consistent and provide a valid tool for generating population projections.

Exhibit 4-10: Town of Taos Population Projections

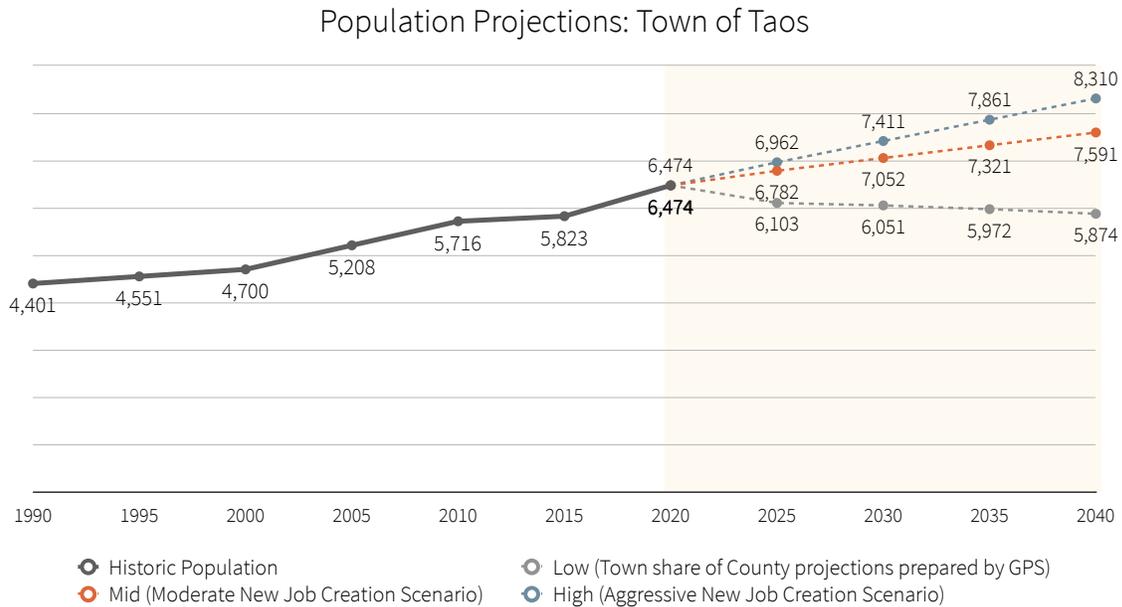


Exhibit 4-11: Population Series 2020 to 2040

| Average Annual Rates of Change: 2020 to 2040 | |
|--|---|
| Low series: | -0.5%, anticipating a loss of 600 persons |
| Mid series: | +0.8%, anticipating growth by 1,10 persons |
| High range: | +1.3%, anticipating growth by 1,900 persons |

Low-Range series: UNM GPS publishes county-by-county population projections using a births, deaths, migration model. Their last projections were from 2017, prior to release of 2020 census data. UNM GPS projected Taos County population will decline from 33,008 in 2010 to 31,412 by year 2040, change of -5%. This is consistent with Census Bureau estimates through 2019 and trends in most of rural NM, including declining birth rates, net domestic out-migration, and aging population—increasing death rates and smaller family formation

Mid-range series: the county employment growth scenario assumes 150 net new jobs and a ratio of 1 net new resident to 0.52 net new employee to arrive at county population. The town is assumed to have 18.7% of county population.

High-range series: the county employment growth scenario assumes 250 net new jobs and a ratio of 1 net new resident to 0.52 net new employee to arrive at county population. The town is assumed to have 18.7% of county population.

It is difficult to compare 2021 population with the population projections in the Vision 2020 plan, prepared in 1999. The estimated population of the town in 2000 was 5,836, 1,100 more than the census count; and growth was projected to reach 7,243 by 2010 and 8,695 by 2020, all much higher than actual counts.

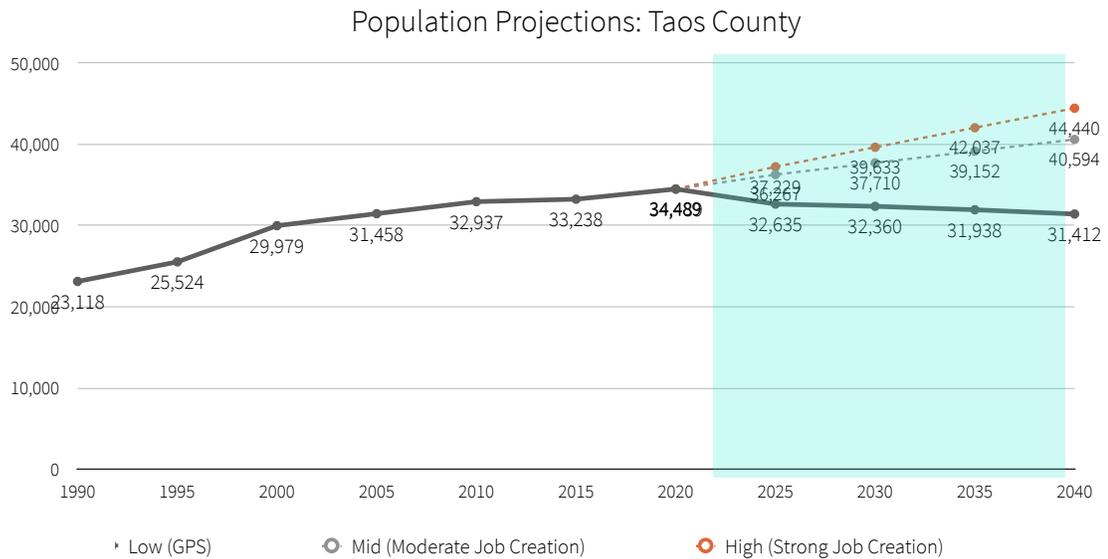
Population projections and projection charts for both town and county are based upon the same set of assumptions.

COMPARING GROWTH WITH PEER COUNTIES

The three peer counties share commonalities in being in the same region, remote from metro areas, and having ski areas and active summer tourism. La Plata (Durango) and Taos Counties have airports with direct commercial passenger service. Archuleta County (Pagosa Springs) has a general aviation airport.

The average annual rates of growth since 1970 are: Taos Co. at 1.3%, La Plata Co. at 1.8%, and Archuleta Co. at 2.8%. Based on this comparison, future growth of Taos County and Town of Taos is plausible.

Exhibit 4-12: Taos County Population Projections



SETTING

The Town of Taos is located in Taos County, surrounded by traditional communities such as Ranchos de Taos, Cañon, Ranchitos, and El Prado. The town sits on the east side of a plateau bordered by the Sangre de Cristo Mountains with the Rio Grande traversing the plateau north to south. The Rio Pueblo de Taos, with headwaters in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, is the main drainage for the community. The Rio Fernando de Taos flows west from the canyon through the community and into the Rio Pueblo de Taos, which enters the Rio Grande seven miles to the southwest.

Taos is part of the scenic Enchanted Circle, which includes the communities of Angel Fire, Eagle Nest, Red River, and Questa located along US 64, NM 38, and NM 522. The Town of Taos is located 70 miles north of Santa Fe, the state capitol, an hour-and-a-half drive on NM 68 which turns into US 84/285. It is approximately 44 miles from the Colorado border on NM 522 and is 2.5 hour drive from Raton on US 64. Southeast of Taos on NM 3 is Las Vegas, home to New Mexico Highlands University. Albuquerque, the state’s largest city and home of the state’s international airport, lies 132 miles to the south and is accessed by US Interstate 25.

The Town of Taos (as well as the state’s major metropolitan areas in Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and Las Cruces) is located in the Rio Grande Valley, a deep and wide gorge cut by source waters from the Colorado Rockies through layers of volcanic basalt. The waters of the Rio Grande, originating from the peak of the San Juan Mountains, travel through southwestern Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas before reaching the Gulf of Mexico.

The Rio Grande Valley is bordered by part of the front range of the Rockies to the east, the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, and also by a series of volcanic formations to the west. Apart from the upthrusts of crust that formed the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, much of the current geology is a result of relatively recent volcanic activity. Lava flows provided the basalt that forms the base of soil for Taos County. Runoff waters from the mountain range as well as from the flow of the Rio Grande cut a steep canyon through the basalt layer, creating a drop of hundreds of feet from surrounding plateaus to the river basin. The Rio Pueblo de Taos runs along a similar canyon before joining the Rio Grande.

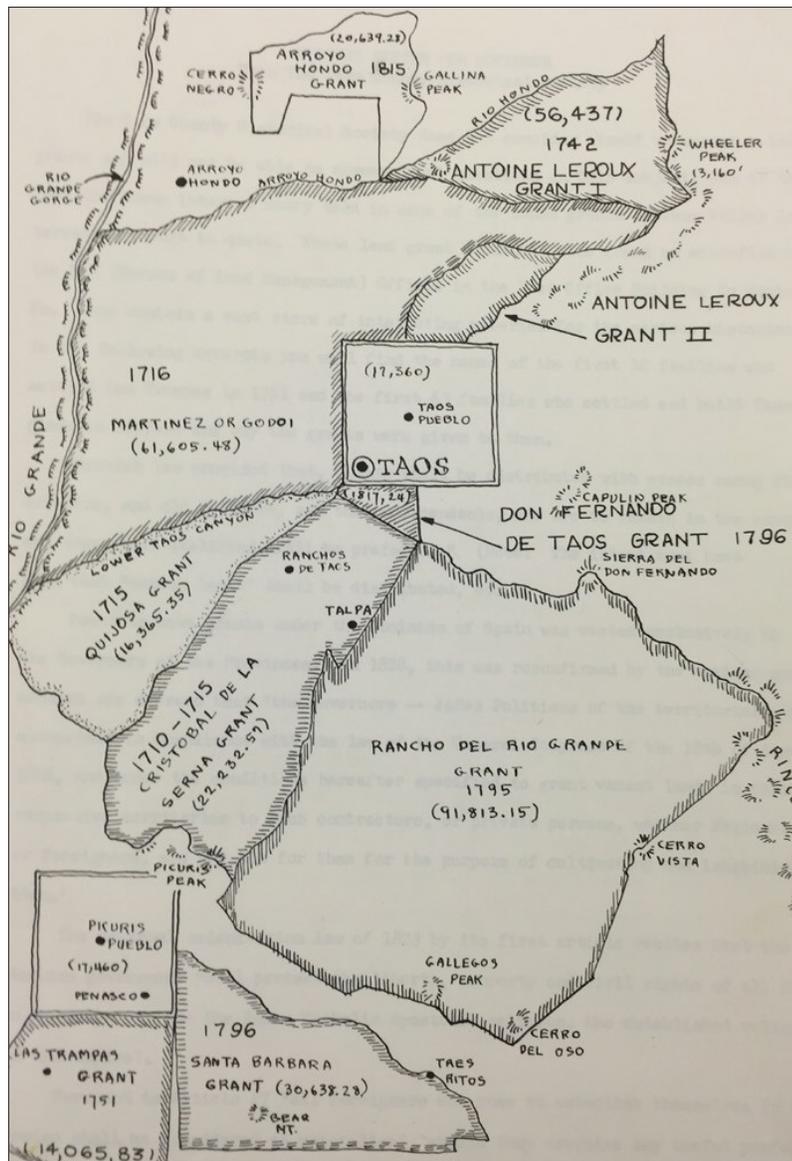
Volcanic activity also formed the existing peaks and mesas along the west of the river valley. The geological forces that formed the Taos Valley are at work along the entire Rio Grande Valley, creating a distinct and unique geography for northern New Mexico.

The Rio Grande provides a natural division of Taos County, separating the east and west portions of the region. To the west of the river, the land is composed of high lava mesas, ranging in elevation from 6,000 feet in the south to 8,000 feet in the north. The lower elevation is covered with sage and grasslands. To the east, the landscape changes to the forests of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. The eastern elevation reaches 13,151 feet at the summit of Wheeler Peak, the highest point in the state. The Sangre de Cristo range is northeast of town, while the Fernando mountain range is southeast. To the north of Taos, the land climbs to meet the San Luis Valley at an elevation of over 7,500 feet. To the south, the land descends into the broader valleys of the Rio Grande and its tributaries at an elevation of 5,500 feet.

HISTORIC SETTLEMENT MILESTONES: TAOS VALLEY

The following map shows the historic land grants in and around Taos. The original community of Taos is on the Taos Pueblo Land Grant. The Don Fernando de Taos Land Grant, where much of the town lies, is a triangular shaped area south of the Taos Pueblo Land Grant and north of the Cristobal de la Serna Land Grant.

Exhibit 4-02: Historic Land Grants Near Taos



Source: Taos Historic Plaza Cultural Landscape Plan, 2016

The following timeline highlights some notable events in the rich history of the area around the present-day Town of Taos.

Exhibit 4-13: Historic Timeline

| Timeline of Historic Milestones | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 900 | AD Pre-Pueblo Peoples Permanently Settle in the Taos Valley |
| 1450 | Taos Pueblo Built |
| 1540 | Coronado's Entrada Into New Mexico: Alvarado Arrives at Taos Pueblo |
| 1573 | Law of the Indies, Establishing Town Planning Principles |
| 1598 | Oñate Establishes First Colonial Capital at San Juan Pueblo |
| 1610 | Taos Pueblo Mission Established |
| 1615 | Taos Pueblo Declared a Village; Pueblo of Taos Had Been Granted a "Four-League" Area of Land by the King of Spain, Confirmed by US Congress in 1858 |
| 1680 | Pueblo Revolt |
| 1692-1696 | De Vargas' Reconquest of New Mexico |
| 1715 | Resettlement and Reestablishment of Spanish Civil Government in the Taos Valley |
| 1700s | Land Grant Villages Established in the Taos Valley |
| 1790 | Town of Taos Plaza Was an Open Square Surrounded by a Continuous Residential Block |
| 1796 | Don Fernando De Taos Was Established as a Land Grant With a Fortified Plaza |
| 1815 | San Francisco De Asis Church in Ranchos De Taos Is Built |
| 1800-1821 | Regional Markets Open, Use of Currency Begins, American Trappers and Traders Arrive in Taos |
| 1821 | Mexico Declares Independence From Spain |
| 1821 | Santa Fe Trail Opens |
| 1826 | Padre Martinez Establishes the First School in the Taos Valley |
| 1835 | Padre Martinez Brings the Printing Press to the Taos Valley |
| 1843 | Kit Carson Makes His Permanent Home in Taos |
| 1836 | Texas Declares Independence From Mexico |

Timeline of Historic Milestones

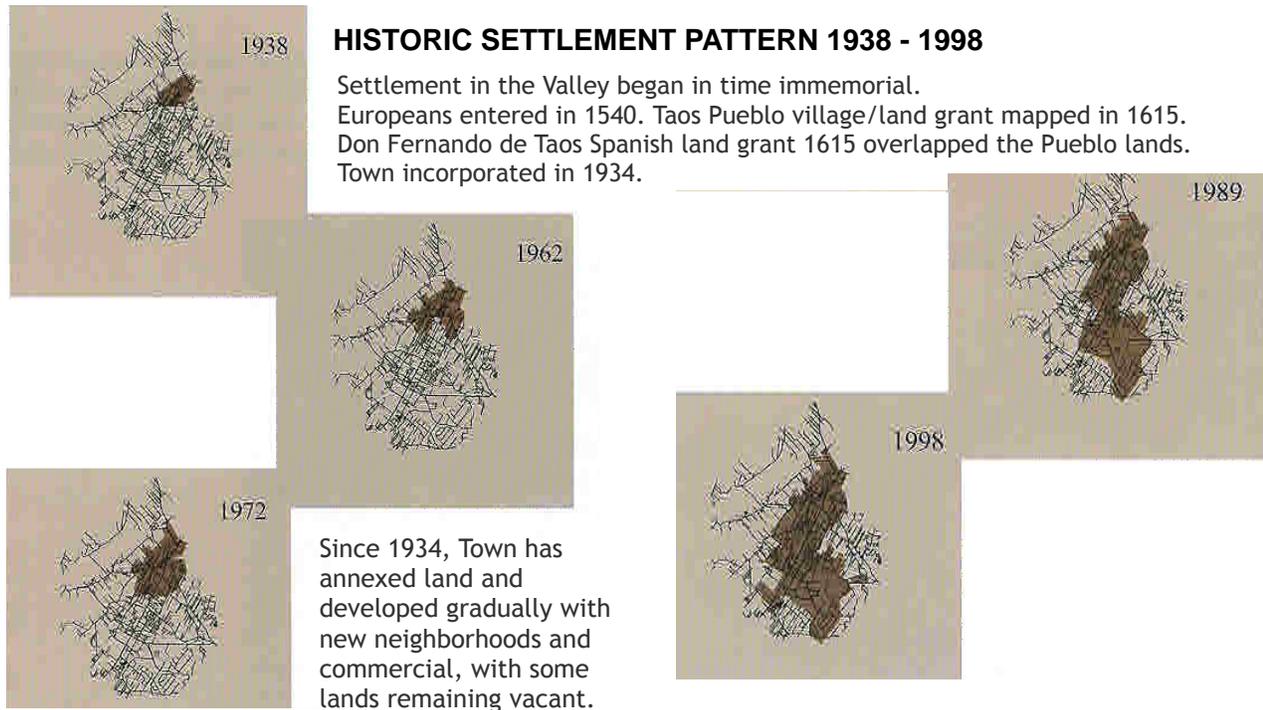
| | |
|-----------|--|
| 1846 | US Declares War on Mexico; General Kearny Enters Las Vegas and Claims New Mexico for the United States |
| 1847 | Taos Hispanos and Indians Murder Territorial Governor Charles Bent |
| 1848 | US-Mexican War Ends, New Mexico Ceded to the US and Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo Is Signed |
| 1850 | New Mexico Declared a US Territory |
| 1852 | Taos County Established |
| 1860s | Discovery of Gold in Red River |
| 1861-1865 | US Civil War |
| 1879 | Arrival of First Train Into New Mexico |
| 1880s | Taos Plaza Is Developed in the Territorial Style |
| 1898 | Artists Ernest Blumenschien and Bert Phillips Come to Taos |
| 1908 | Carson National Forest Established |
| 1912 | New Mexico Becomes a State |
| 1915 | Taos Society of Artists Founded |
| 1929-1942 | the Great Depression |
| 1930s | Fiestas De Taos Is Conceived by Plaza Merchants |
| 1934 | Town of Taos Incorporates as a Municipality |
| 1939-1945 | World War II |
| 1955 | Ernie Blake Starts Taos Ski Valley |
| 1960s | Hippie Communes Formed Near Town |
| 1970 | Federal Government Returns the Blue Lake Watershed to Taos Pueblo |
| 1996 | Taos Ski Valley Incorporates as a Municipality |
| 2013 | Taos Ski Valley Sold to Louis Bacon |

Sources: *Vision 2020 Plan, 1999, Taos Historic Plaza Cultural Landscape Plan, 2016, augmented by ARC*

HISTORIC URBAN FORM

The historic district of Taos has a compact, mixed-use urban form. In addition to the plaza, old Taos County Courthouse, remaining old houses and commercial buildings, the artists colony contributed to the development character of the core area. The “core area” has a contiguous, walkable urban fabric.

Exhibit 4-14: Historic Settlement Pattern in Taos



Source: Vision 2020 Comprehensive Plan, 1999

Artists moved into and added onto many of the old adobe buildings near the plaza, creating rambling, asymmetrical structures that remain today (for example, the Bert Phillips Gallery, Andrew Liebert Home, and Couse House).

New architectural trends, such as the Bungalow style, arrived and mixed with the Spanish-Pueblo Revival style to create a distinctive northern New Mexico revival style associated with the tourist communities of Taos and Santa Fe. A series of fires destroyed many of the buildings around the plaza, and they were rebuilt in the new Spanish-Pueblo Revival style, giving Taos the appearance it has today.

At the same time, the shift from agrarian agriculture to tourism and recreation created a need for hotels, filling stations, restaurants, and commercial buildings along the growing transportation corridors in town.

Source: Cultural Resource Survey for Proposed Improvements Along US 64/NM 68 in Town of Taos, prepared by Okun Consulting Solutions for Souder Miller & Associates, 2018

HISTORIC OVERLAY ZONE DISTRICT

The town's Historic Overlay Zone, including Downtown and La Loma National Register Historic Districts, has a distinct urban form, as displayed by building footprints in the following map.

Exhibit 4-15: Downtown and La Loma Plaza Historic Overlay Zone Districts



Source: Taos Historic Plaza Cultural Landscape Plan, 2016

Cottonwood trees grow well in Taos at 7,000 feet. The core area and valleys have magnificent old cottonwoods that contribute to positive character of the community in combination with spectacular mountain views, adobe architecture, and open acequia-irrigated agriculture.

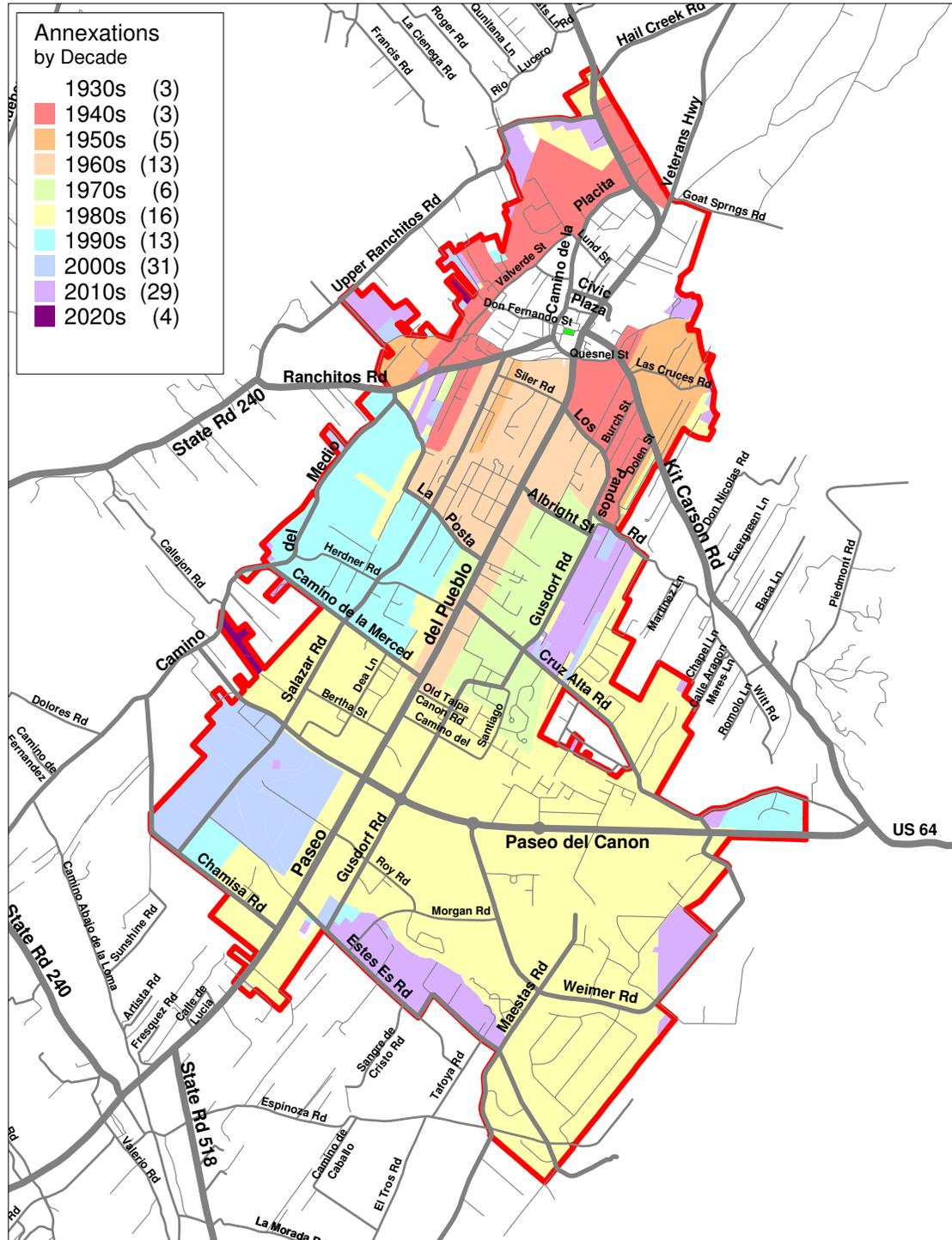
As the town grew during the twentieth century, automobile-oriented commercial development was established along the Paseo del Pueblo corridor and a number of mid-century and newer subdivisions of predominantly single family houses were developed. Several distinct residential neighborhoods are located south of the core area. The town has a mix of housing, commercial, and an industrial and warehouse district in the Salazar Road area. The town has a number of isolated residential subdivisions, most of which have limited access from street network due to loops, cul-de-sacs and dead ends, surrounded in full or part by vacant land. To the furthest south, the Wiemar Loop area has contiguous low density single family residential character set in both Llano and forest.

Source: Taos Historic Plaza Cultural Landscape Plan, 2016

HISTORIC ANNEXATIONS

The town was incorporated in 1934. From the 1930s to 1970s, the town approximately doubled its land area in the north section annexations in the 1980s that resulted in adding a large area to the south. Smaller areas were annexed in the past three decades, beginning in the 1990s. Jagged boundaries indicate numerous annexations of small assemblages of parcels.

Exhibit 4-16: Annexations by Decade



Source: ARC, 2020

HISTORIC DISTRICTS AND LANDMARKS

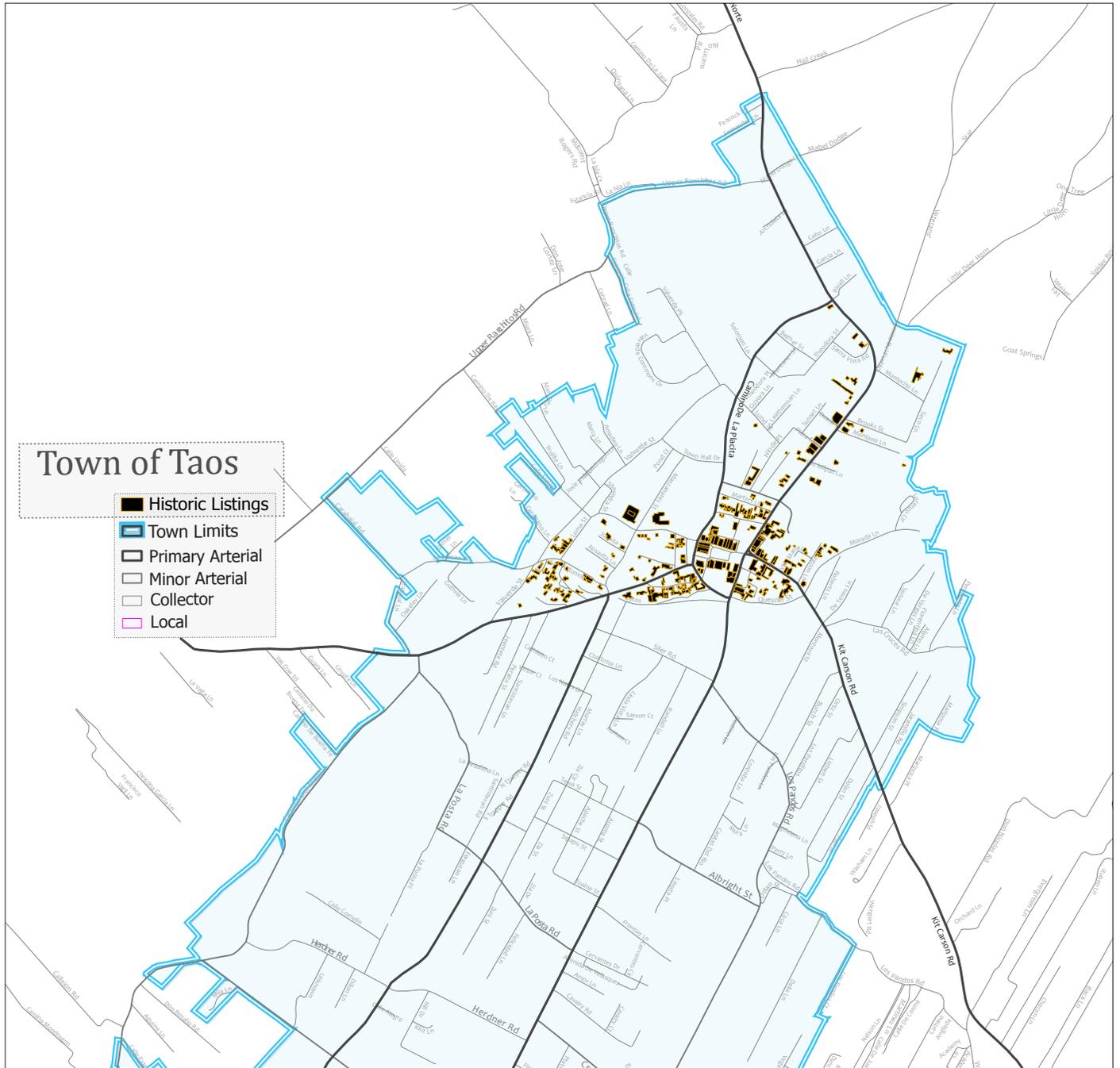
Taos has a great deal of history. Following are the historic districts and individual historic landmark properties listed on the National and State Registers of Historic Places. Some properties listed are only on the State Register (noted SR only).

Exhibit 4-17: Historic Districts

| Historic Districts and Properties on National and State Registers | | | |
|---|-------|----------|--|
| | Added | Number | Note |
| Taos Downtown Historic District | 1982 | 82003340 | See Also: Couse, Eanger Irving House and Studio & NM 3 and NM 240, Taos |
| La Loma Plaza Historic District | 1982 | 82003339 | NM 240, Taos |
| Beimer, Bernard J., House | 2006 | 06000156 | 215 Beimer Ave., Taos |
| Bent, Gov. Charles, House | 1978 | 78001831 | Bent St., Taos |
| Blumenschein, Ernest L., House | 1966 | 66000495 | Ledoux St., Taos |
| Carson, Kit, House | 1966 | 66000948 | Kit Carson Ave., Taos |
| Couse, Eanger Irving, House and Studio | 2005 | 05001096 | Sharp, Joseph Henry, Studios; Also known as: Taos Downtown Historic District, 146 Kit Carson Rd., Taos |
| Fechin, Nicholai, House | 1979 | 79001558 | NM 3, Taos |
| Gaspard, Leon, House | 1979 | 79001559 | Also known as Gaspard House Museum, Raton Rd., Taos |
| Harwood Foundation | 1976 | 76001200 | Also known as Simpson, Smith, H., House, LeDoux St., Taos |
| Hennings, E. Martin, House and Studio Historic District | 1990 | 90001028 | SE corner of Dolan St. and Kit Carson Rd., Taos |
| Luhan, Mabel Dodge, House | 1978 | 78001832 | Also known as Big House; St. Teresa House, Luhan Lane, Taos |
| Martinez, Severino, House | 1973 | 73001153 | Also known as Martinez, Pascual, House, 2 mi. from Taos Plaza, on the Lower Ranchitos Rd. (outside Town of Taos) |
| Taos Inn | 1982 | 82003341 | Camino del Pueblo Norte, Taos |
| Manby House | | | Paseo del Pueblo Norte, north of Taos Inn, SR only |
| Old Taos Guesthouse | | | 1028 Witt Road, SR only (outside Town of Taos) |
| Taos County Courthouse | | | SR only |

Source: NM State Historic Preservation Officer Historic Places Arranged by County, 2012

Exhibit 4-18: Historic Listed Buildings

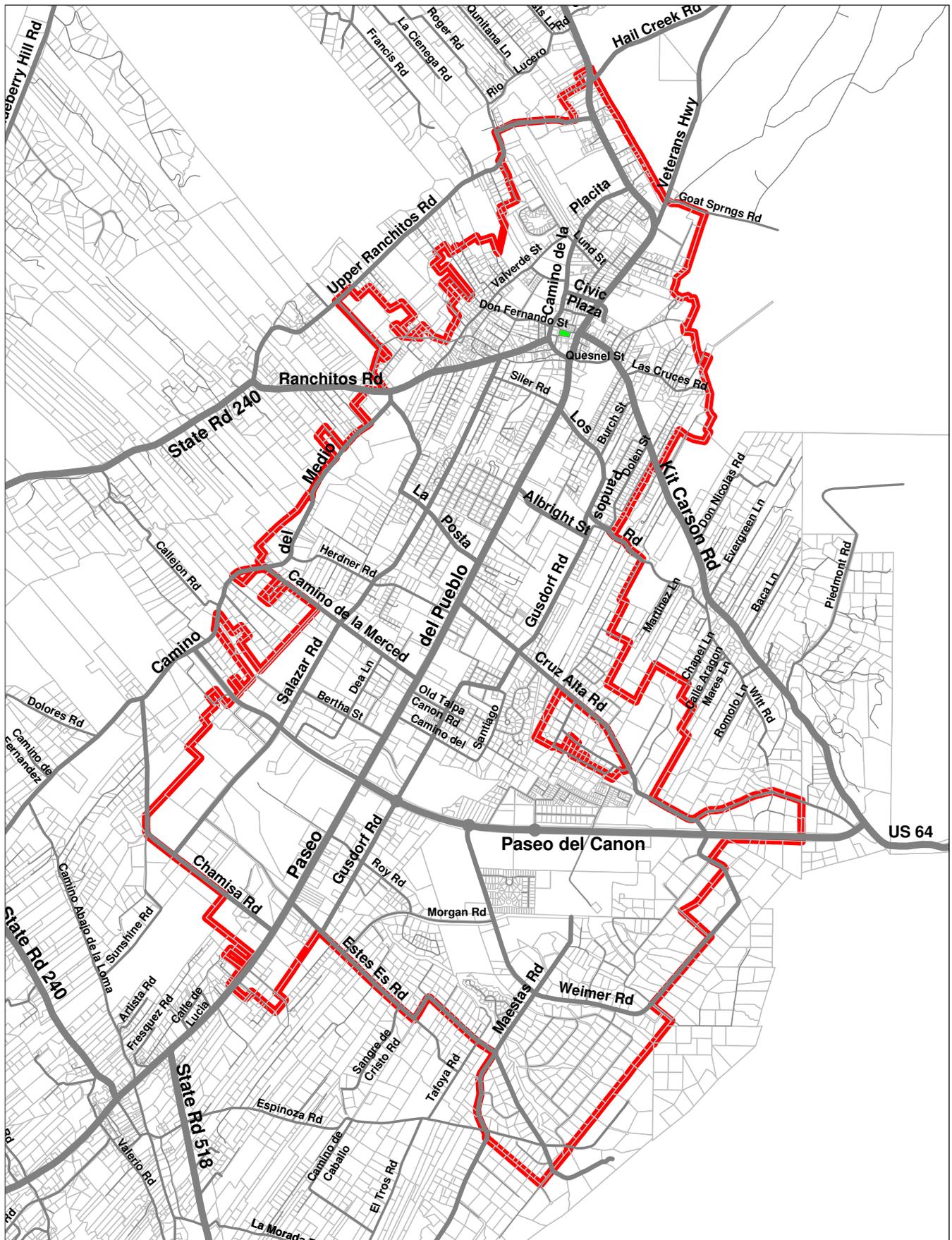


PARCELS

The core area of town generally has the smallest parcels arranged in a coherent street and block configurations, while there are some large properties in the northern end of town that have not been subdivided. Elsewhere we see parcels by individual subdivisions in varying sizes, with some large undivided parcels. Interestingly, many properties in the largely agricultural wetland south of the town have been divided into smaller parcels.

Source: ARC

Exhibit 4-19: Parcel Map

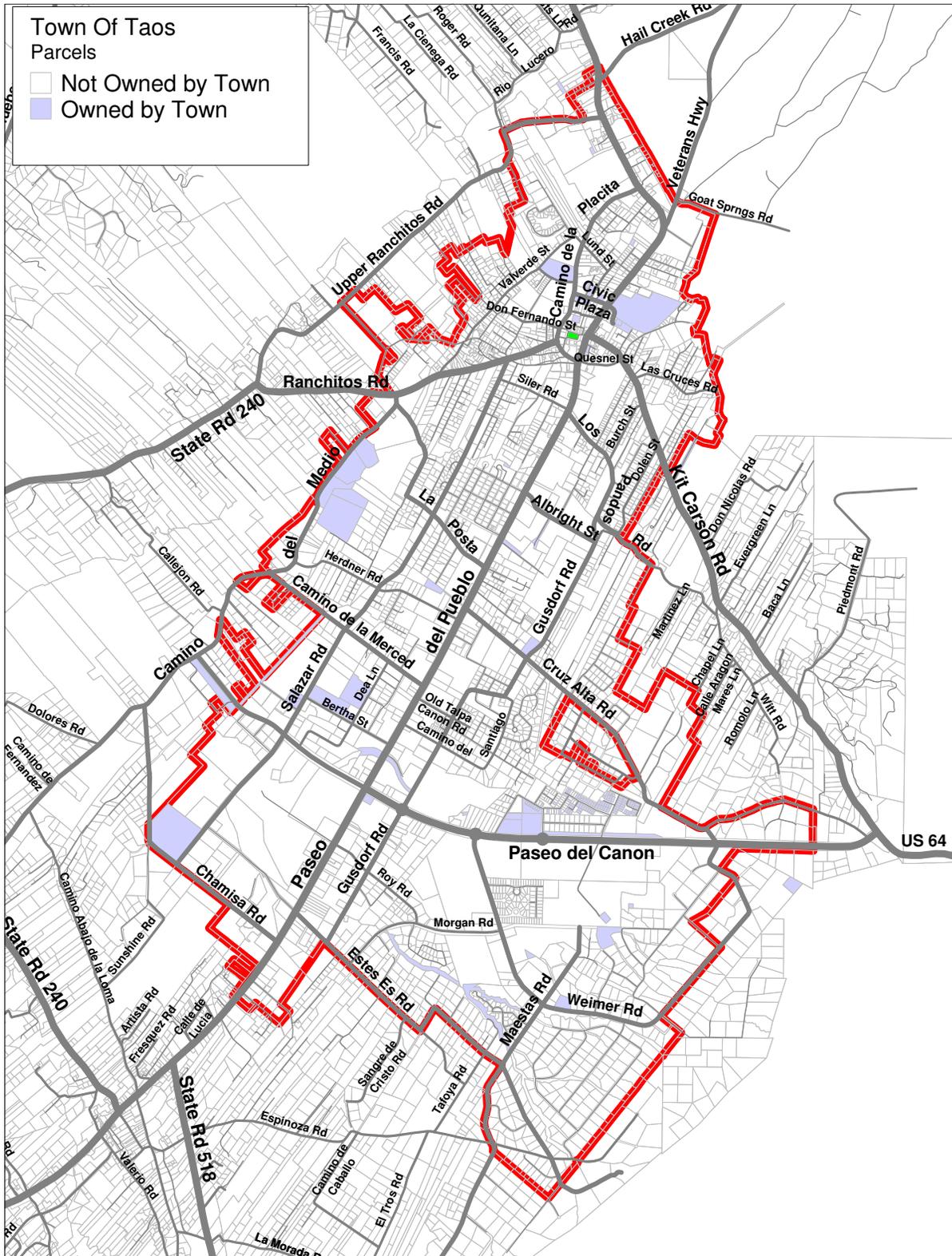


Source: ARC

TOWN-OWNED PARCELS

The Town of Taos owns various properties, most of which are developed. The major vacant properties include a large parcel in the far southwest corner of the town and most of the Chamisa Verde Subdivision northeast of the Youth and Family Center.

Exhibit 4-20: Town Owned Parcels



Source: ARC

EXISTING LAND USE

The town consists of 3,880 acres, or 6.06 square miles. The largest land uses are:

Single family residential with 1,211 acres (31%)

Vacant land with 1,216 acres (31%)

Commercial land with 292 acres (8%)

COMMENTS ON PARTICULAR LAND USES:

Residential acreage is skewed towards single family residential. Multi-family residential consists of approximately 85 acres, only 7% of the land area used for single family residential. Mobile home parks take 30 acres of land area.

Public properties occupy approximately 73 acres and consist of town-owned and county properties. Quasi-public includes churches and fraternal organizations and require 57 acres.

^a Industrial land use includes shops and warehouses and adds up to approximately 100 acres.

^a Town parks total nearly 68 acres.

^a Street rights-of-way occupy approximately 423 acres.

The maps on the following pages highlight these areas of land use.

Exhibit 4-21: Land Use Inventory

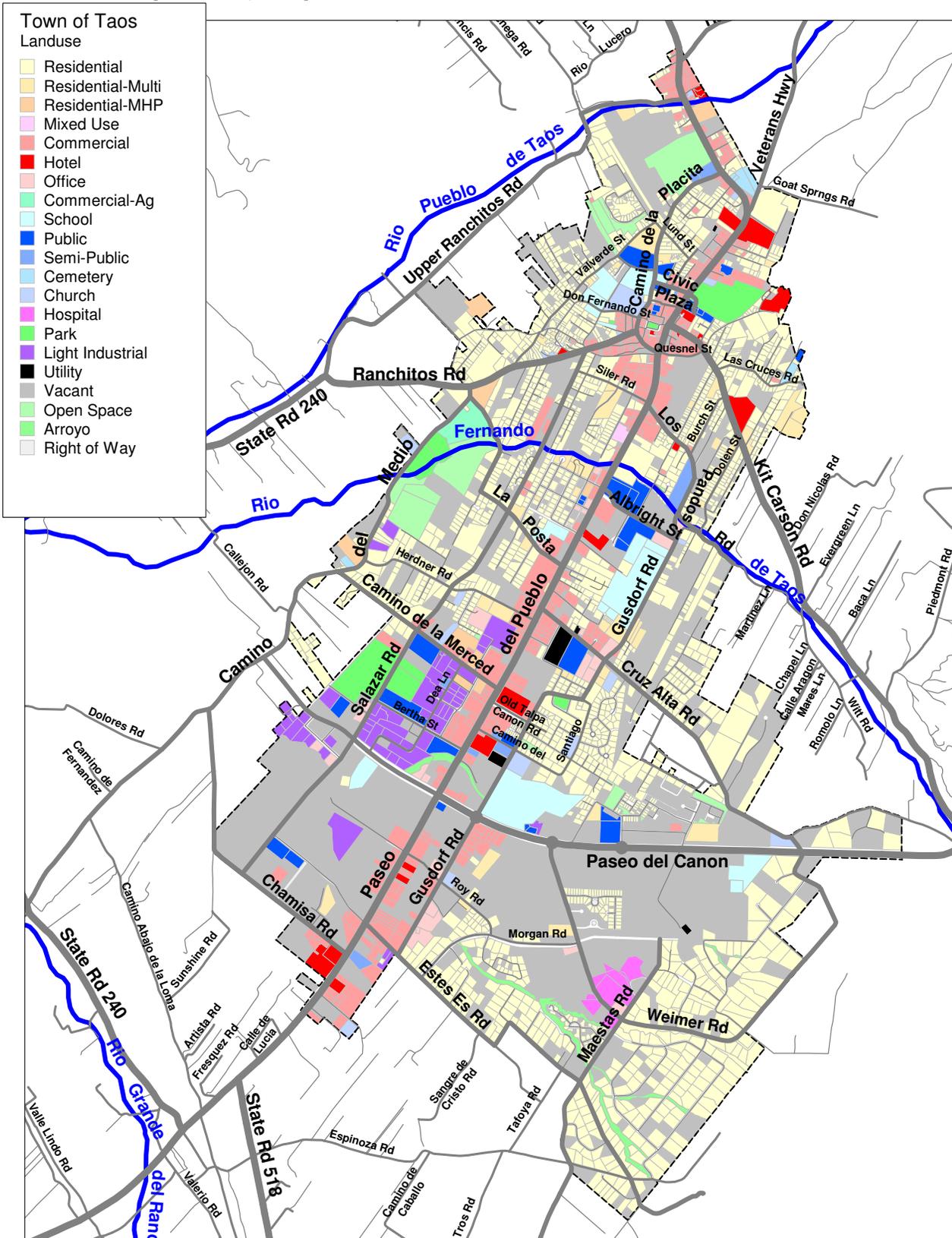
| Town of Taos Existing Land Use Inventory | | | |
|--|-------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Uses | Number of Parcels | Acres | Portion of Total |
| Single Family Residential | 2,060 | 1,210.7 | 31% |
| Multi-Family Residential | 59 | 84.6 | 2% |
| Mobile Home Parks Residential | 9 | 30.0 | 1% |
| Commercial | 397 | 291.8 | 8% |
| Hotels and Motels | 20 | 51.7 | 1% |
| Office | 27 | 35.7 | 1% |
| Public | 37 | 72.9 | 2% |
| Schools | 18 | 105.2 | 3% |
| Quasi-public | 32 | 57.1 | 1% |
| Hospital | 8 | 20.0 | 1% |
| Parks | 9 | 67.9 | 2% |
| Industrial | 63 | 99.5 | 3% |
| Vacant | 817 | 1,216.6 | 31% |
| Open Space and Arroyos | 30 | 113.1 | 3% |
| Rights-of-Way | 30 | 422.9 | 11% |
| Total | | 3,880.0 | 100% |

"Quasi-public" includes cemetery, church, and such uses as fraternal organizations.

Source: ARC, existing land use inventory mapping, August 2021

Hotel areas are highlighted as one of the important types of commercial uses in the following map:

Exhibit 4-23: Existing Land Use Emphasizing Hotels and Motels



Source: ARC

VACANT LANDS

Of the 1,200 acres of vacant land, there are almost 200 acres zoned commercial (C-2 especially). The largest combined areas are in the southwest and southeast portions of the community. The following table shows vacant and developed lands by zone districts.

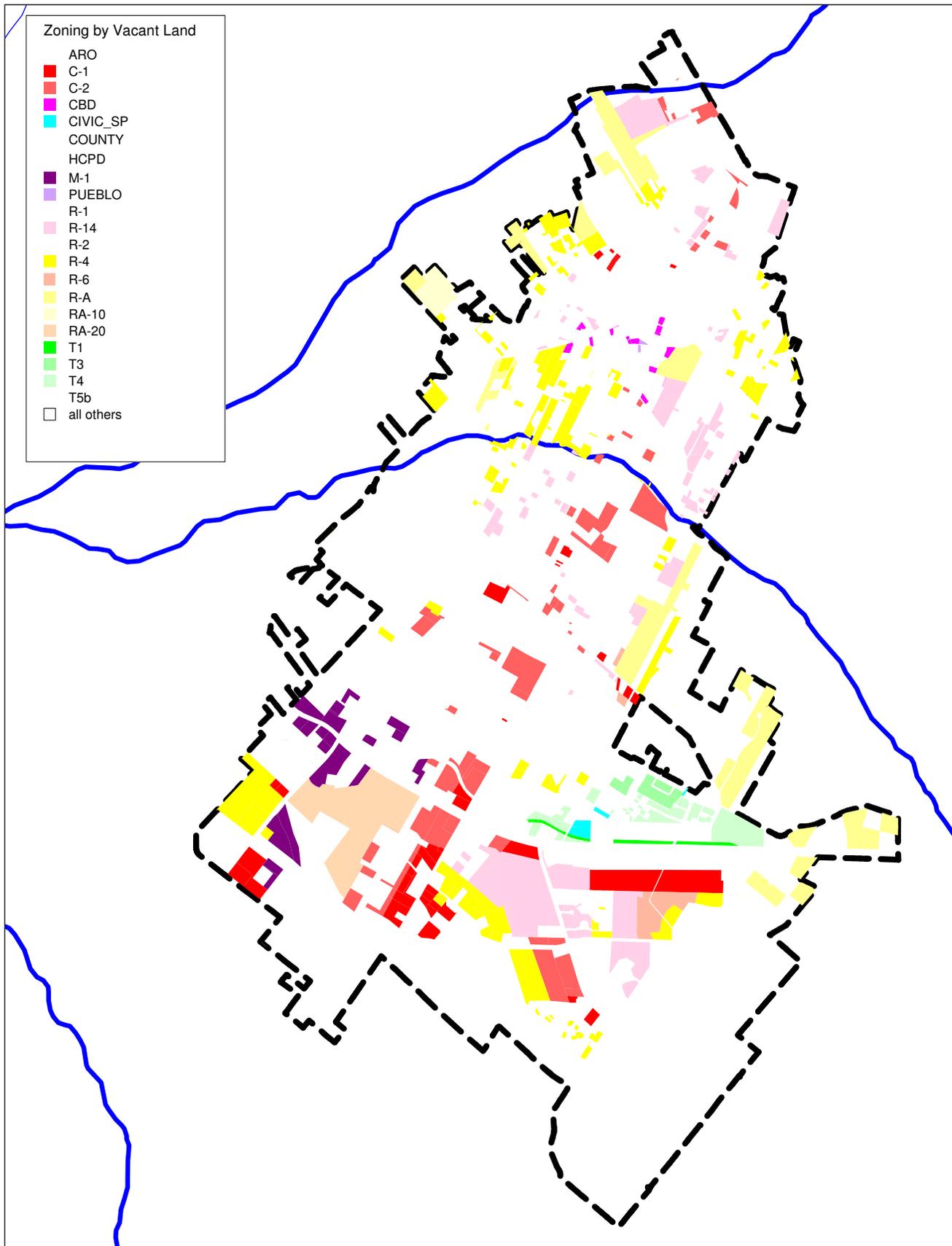
While some members of the public expressed their opinion that Taos has very limited places to grow, the vacant land inventory demonstrate that there are considerable opportunities for growth, including new master-planned and new subdivision development areas as well as smaller subdivisions and infill development within existing subdivisions.

The included map shows vacant lands by current zoning.

Exhibit 4-24: Developed and Vacant Land by Zone

| Town of Taos Developed and Vacant Land by Zone (Acres) | | | |
|---|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Zoning | Total Area | Developed | Vacant |
| ARO | 117.69 | 72.61 | 45.08 |
| C-1 | 196.42 | 117.91 | 78.51 |
| C-2 | 480.64 | 368.31 | 112.33 |
| CBD | 64.67 | 60.11 | 4.56 |
| CIVIC_SP | 21.11 | 17.10 | 4.01 |
| COUNTY | | | 0.11 |
| HCPD | 170.98 | 83.83 | 87.15 |
| M-1 | 207.84 | 166.24 | 41.60 |
| PUEBLO | 0.64 | 0.19 | 0.44 |
| R-1 | 384.10 | 304.60 | 79.49 |
| R-14 | 537.61 | 377.80 | 159.80 |
| R-2 | 499.53 | 355.91 | 143.62 |
| R-4 | 610.19 | 446.30 | 163.89 |
| R-6 | 23.22 | 5.79 | 17.43 |
| R-A | 354.10 | 213.55 | 140.56 |
| RA-10 | 12.11 | 0.47 | 11.65 |
| RA-20 | 81.34 | 14.68 | 66.66 |
| T1 | 13.68 | 8.01 | 5.68 |
| T3 | 26.00 | 16.06 | 9.94 |
| T4 | 62.93 | 30.65 | 32.28 |
| T5B | 15.45 | 3.66 | 11.80 |
| Total | 3,880.27 | 2,663.78 | 1,216.61 |

Exhibit 4-25: Vacant Parcels by Zone



Source: ARC; Vacant areas provide considerable opportunities for growth

CURRENT LAND USE REGULATIONS

The town's land development code consists of zoning regulations, subdivision regulations and performance standards. The Land Development Code is Chapter 16 of the Municipal Code.

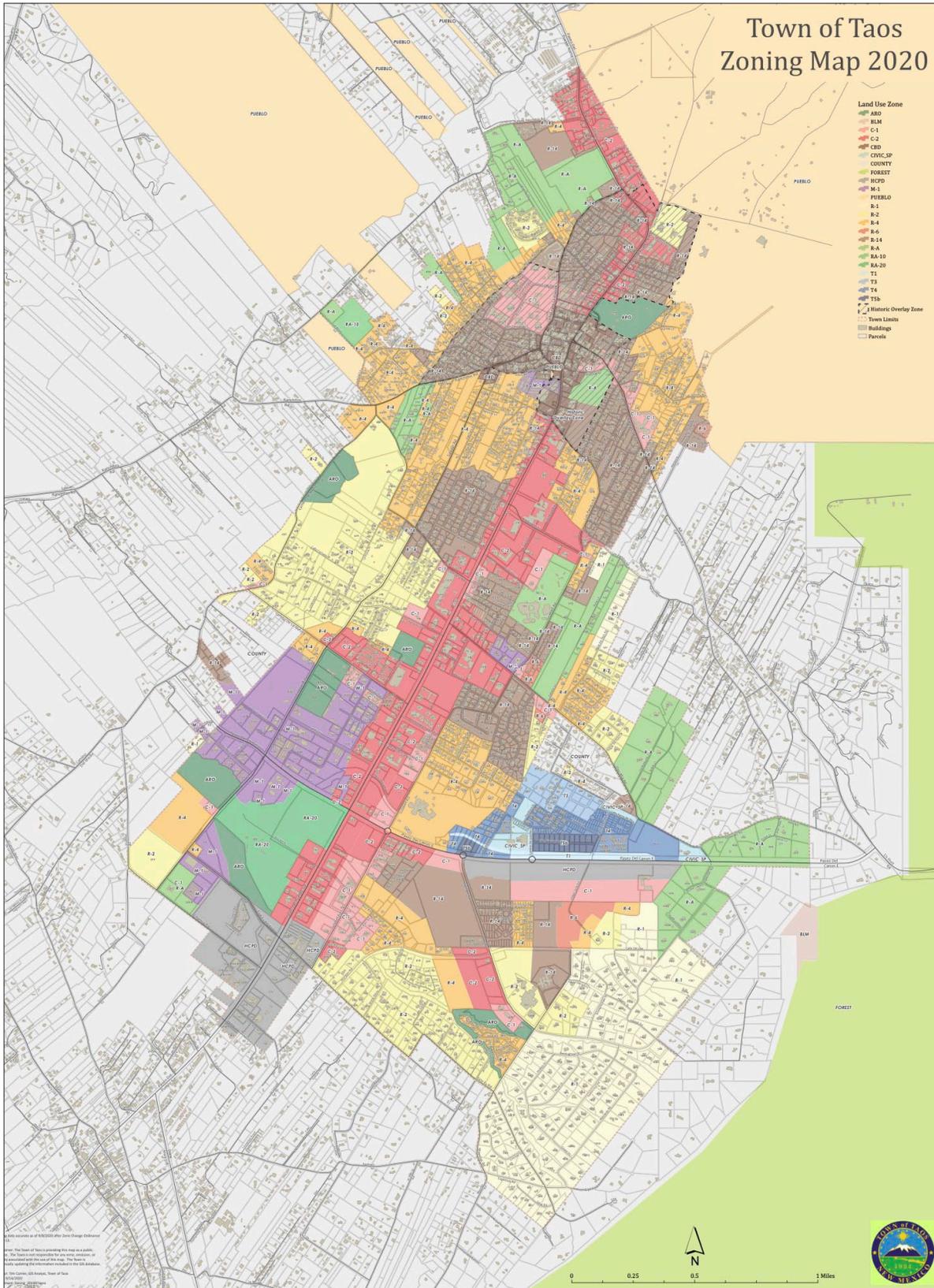
Zones include: ARO, RA-20, RA-10, RA-6, RA, R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4, R-6, R-14, C-1, C-2, CBD, Highway Corridor Protection, and M-1.

Overlay zones include: Planned Unit Development (PUD), Short Term Rental, Neighborhood Preservation, Historic, Rural Historic Landscape Protection, Hotel, Special Use, Traditional Neighborhood Development, and Medical Cannabis Facilities.

Overlay zones serve the purpose of providing additional regulations on top of the underlying zone district. For example, the historic overlay addresses historic preservation of historic buildings in the zone and requires design review by the Historic Preservation Commission in considering and issuing certificates of appropriateness for proposed modifications, additions, or new buildings. In addition to town historic district regulations are guidelines for any alterations of structures listed on the national and state register of historic places. While these guidelines are not mandatory, the state has the option of rescinding historic structure tax credits if changes are considered inappropriate. Historic preservation design review is further discussed in the Historic Preservation and Historic Districts section of this chapter.

Below is the town's current official zoning map showing all zoning districts.

Exhibit 4-26: Official Zoning Map, 2020



Source: Town of Taos GIS Analysis; 2020

As mentioned in the Introduction chapter, one of the major driving forces behind the comprehensive plan update is to undertake a major code update.

Phase II of this project will go into more depth in recommending: changes to the code for clarity, considerations regarding zone standards, possible zone district map modifications, consider changes to planning permit applications, and code enforcement.

DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

The town has followed a course of developing a comprehensive and relatively strict set of land use regulations which has evolved over many years. Community design is an important subject to residents of Taos.

Performance standards in Title 16 address many subjects of community design, including: landscape regulations, solar rights regulations, dark skies regulations, sign regulations, wireless telecommunications towers and antennas, commercial, industrial and multi-family permitting procedures and building size limitations, height limitations, off-street parking, road design standards, environmental standards, home occupations, site development plans, public park dedication, and usable open space.

Many of the performance standards need to be evaluated in the code update process.

- Height restrictions in the town have been flagged as a potential restriction on affordable housing.
- Murals in the Central Business District (CBD) have been a recent topic of interest that may be addressed in performance standards; it will be discussed in Phase II of the plan project. The town should add to its sign code a prohibition against painting over historic wall signs or historic murals. The Historic Preservation Commission can review the design (not content) as public art. For example, the City of Ellensburg, WA has an ordinance that allows its Arts Council to review the design of murals and restricts murals to the side or rear of non-historic buildings.
- Property maintenance and treatment of abandoned buildings are potentially a new area for performance standards. The subject is also closely related to nuisance regulations, addressed in Title 8 of the Municipal Code.
- Viewsheds represent a potential performance standard topic, where specified views from key public properties are protected. Protecting the view of private properties that may be affected by neighbors proposing to build within allowed dimensional requirements would be more difficult to regulate, and may not be desirable.
- Flood damage prevention is closely related to land use but addressed in Title 15, Buildings and Construction, of the Municipal Code. The subject is particularly important because drainages may potentially be used to define a system of greenways through the community, addressed in the Green Network element..
- Home businesses are broadly allowed in residential zones and widely used by property owners. The town may consider whether there are particular practices that are not compatible in those residential zones, while continuing to allow most home offices and business activities.
- The town adopted the High Performance Building Program through an ordinance. This ordinance establishes higher energy and water use standards, which have largely been incorporated into the state building code administered by the Construction Industries Division.

RECENT ADDITIONS TO LAND USE REGULATIONS

SHORT-TERM RENTALS

Short-term rentals were a subject of great concern to the town. The Town Council adopted Ordinance 20-08 in 2020 to cap the number of short-term rental properties in the town and restrict new short-term rentals in the Central Business District zone. This was an important step to stem the conversion of long-term rentals, many of which were affordable workforce housing. Many of the short-term rentals can continue to operate legally through obtaining business permits and meeting safety requirements. Consequently, the town may not see a dramatic reduction in units for several years.

CANNABIS REGULATIONS

The town also recently passed regulations of recreational cannabis, as required by state law with the legalization of recreational cannabis. Already on the books are regulations dealing with the sales and growing of medical cannabis. The new ordinance will be included in the land development code to address retail sales and growing operations, as well as business licenses. Since the state law precludes local governments adding many restrictions on operations, the town ordinance does not give very much guidance on allowable locations and conditions of these businesses.

NODES IN TAOS

The concept of nodal development is to create or transform existing development into centers that are more efficient in space than linear or dispersed development patterns, can generate co-located activity, and have more complete facilities for walking, biking, and transit users. Nodes are typically safer and more convenient for the growing elder population as well as the youngest population. They may promote better design and placemaking to further strengthen downtown and to build better places in other areas of the community.

The Vision 2020 Plan made recommendations and set general policies supporting nodal development but did not present criteria for, nor map, where future nodes should be located. The Paseo Del Sur SmartGrowth EPA Study (2007, not adopted) explored mixed-use nodes on this largely strip commercial street, including some mapping. Both of these plans have provided guidance on the nodal concept promoted in this plan.

Nodes are likely small scale in a small community like Taos, approximately a quarter mile radius (125 acres), and served by transit.

Current nodes in Town of Taos include:

- The Central Business District/Plaza and nearby neighborhoods is the main “node” of Town of Taos
- The area around Albertsons, nearly a node with a large destination business and several smaller complementary businesses in and near by the shopping center, while it is not mixed-use
- Holy Cross Medical Center and nearby medical offices and congregate living is a special purpose node
- The Youth and Family Center is a large community use with some nearby housing and more planned residential.

SCAN OF NEIGHBORHOODS AND VACANT LANDS

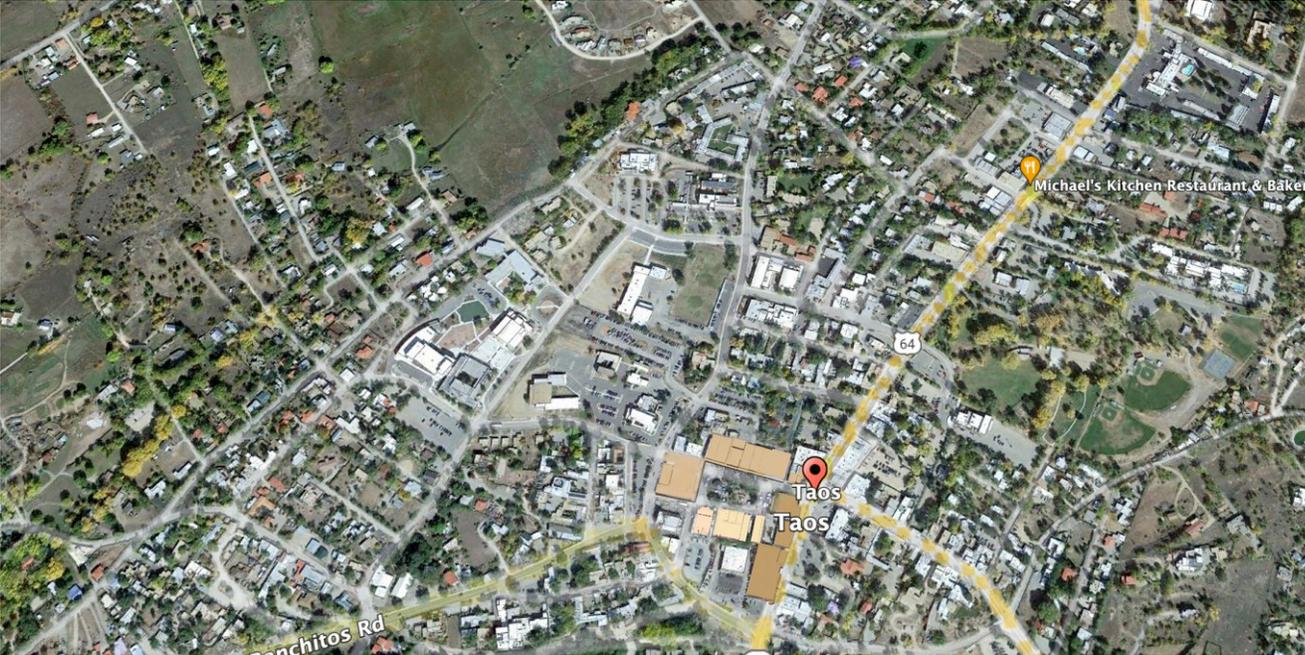
The aerial imagery on pages 82-83 shows existing neighborhoods and some of the vacant areas that are potentially available for new residential development. The existing Land Use map shows the 1,200 acres of vacant lands by parcels, allowing a more detailed examination.

In summary, each of these neighborhood areas with the exception of the downtown has considerable vacant lands.

- In the area in proximity of Salazar Road north of La Posta, vacant land could be infilled along existing streets and new connecting streets into a finder grid.
- In the area east of Paseo del Pueblo Sur and north of Paseo del Canon, significant vacant properties could be infilled, however, many of the properties will require new streets or extensions of existing streets that are not stubbed out, thus making it complicated.
- The area east of Paseo del Pueblo Sur and near Paseo del Canon has the largest contiguous vacant land that can accommodate housing.
- The area west of Paseo del Pueblo Sur also has large contiguous vacant land, however, with more business development to the north and scattered in this quadrant, this area is most suitable for expanding predominantly business uses rather than used for large residential subdivisions.
- As mentioned above, many respondents to the community survey and participants in meetings favor infill and dispersal of affordable housing throughout the community.
- Opportunities for building new affordable housing, redevelopment, and securing existing housing to remain affordable should be further examined. Redevelopment, in particular, needs to be further evaluated. The housing market along with property owners’ interests, private and public developers, and town zoning and subdivision regulations largely determine what ultimately gets built and where.

Exhibit 4-28: Aerial Imagery of Taos Neighborhoods

Neighborhoods on east side of Paseo del Pueblo Sur



Town Plaza and nearby neighborhoods



Neighborhood near Salazar Road north of La Posta Road



Neighborhoods south of Paseo del Canon



Source: Google Maps

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS

Section 16.12.010 of the municipal code establishes that the mayor appoints a town employee as code administrator. This position has a set of duties to administer the code, assign staff, staff the Planning and Zoning Commission and Historic Preservation Commission, prepare reports, and ensure compliance with public notice requirements. Currently, the town manager is the code administrator and the Community Development Department is assigned to staff the body of functions set by code. The town should periodically review whether the code administrator position should be the town manager or community development director, as there may be advantages to each arrangement.

PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

The Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) is established in Section 16.12.020.1 of the municipal code. It is a key commission in the town responsible to review applications for subdivisions, appeals to the actions of the code administration, variances, annexations, planned unit developments, and rezonings. The commission is also charged with approving the comprehensive plan and any updates to the master plan, also called comprehensive plan.. In its absence, Town Council can serve as the planning commission, but this should be a temporary situation. Periodic training of P&Z members should be conducted, including review of commissioners' duties, managing of meetings, highlights of the land development code and any code updates in progress, comprehensive plan, legal decision-making for planning commissioners including differences between quasi-judicial and legislative proceedings, ex-parte communication, findings of fact, making the record, roles of staff planner, staff reports and town attorney, and public involvement.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Section 16.16.220 of the Town Code establishes the town's historic district regulations, including historic district standards and guidelines. The town's Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) is responsible for issuing certificates of appropriateness to allow development activities within the boundaries of the historic overlay zone based on the Commission's design review. Historic architectural review does not include review of proposed use As further discussed below, the HPC is a very important commission in a town such as Taos that has a rich history and appreciation for its historic resources.

Periodic training of HPC members should be conducted, including review of commissioners' duties, managing of meetings, highlights of the land development code historic overlay zone, contributing and non-contributing properties, comprehensive plan, difference between the national and state listing of historic districts and properties and the regulatory town historic overlay zone, difference between design standards and guidelines, findings of fact, making the record, roles of staff planner, staff reports, and town attorney, and public involvement, educating private property owners about the value of historic preservation, and available financial incentives.

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE

The Development Review Committee (DRC) is established in Section 16.12.025 of the municipal code. The committee's purpose is to conduct a staff level review of applicable development applications and/or permitted events. The board is tasked to "address technical issues, including, but not limited to, issues such as impacts on utilities, drainage, traffic (vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle) circulation and safety, public transit, public safety services, environmental impacts, and compliance with town ordinances, policies, master [comprehensive] plan or other adopted plan. Such analyses should also examine any cost issues related to the Town of Taos public services and/or infrastructure." Applicants for development review may meet with the board to discuss their projects and receive staff questions and comments prior to the formal review process. These reviews can be very efficient for the applicants and the town because they cover a breadth of subjects, and often result in creative solutions through synthesizing various points of view.

The review process should be improved through refinements of scheduling of meetings, memoranda regarding completeness of applications, timelines for review steps, checklists identifying subjects to be reviewed by the DRC, guidelines that provide information on best practices, and updates of specific review criteria in the code. At some meetings, critically important staff have not been in attendance, hampering the committee's work. This should be addressed through formal scheduling of meetings. In addition, since part of the purpose of the meetings is to form the town's position on a project that may require interdepartmental discussions, a portion of their meetings should be staff-only, while other portions should be conducted by staff with the applicant.

DOWNTOWN PLANNING (INCLUDING MRA)

TAOS STRONG AT HEART PLAN, 2018

The *Strong at Heart Downtown Strategy* (SAH) was prepared for the town by community builders in 2017 and 2018. The planning process utilized a great deal of public engagement and consensus building, tapping into intense public interest in the success of the downtown. The downtown strategy presents goals, policies and recommendations for improving the downtown, incorporated into the comprehensive plan.

SAH Goals For Downtown Include:

A Walkable and Bikeable Downtown

Create a downtown that is safe to walk and bike and easy to access.

Create a network of streets, alleys and pathways that connect people to places.

Places for People

Provide places for Taoseños to socialize and opportunities for the community to come together.

Offer fun and unique things for Taoseños to do and see.

A Strong Economy and Thriving Local Businesses

Create a place where local businesses and entrepreneurs can thrive.

Support a strong and diverse local economy that expands opportunity for the people who live here.

A Real Place Where Locals Want to Be

Be an authentic place that reflects our creativity, culture and heritage.

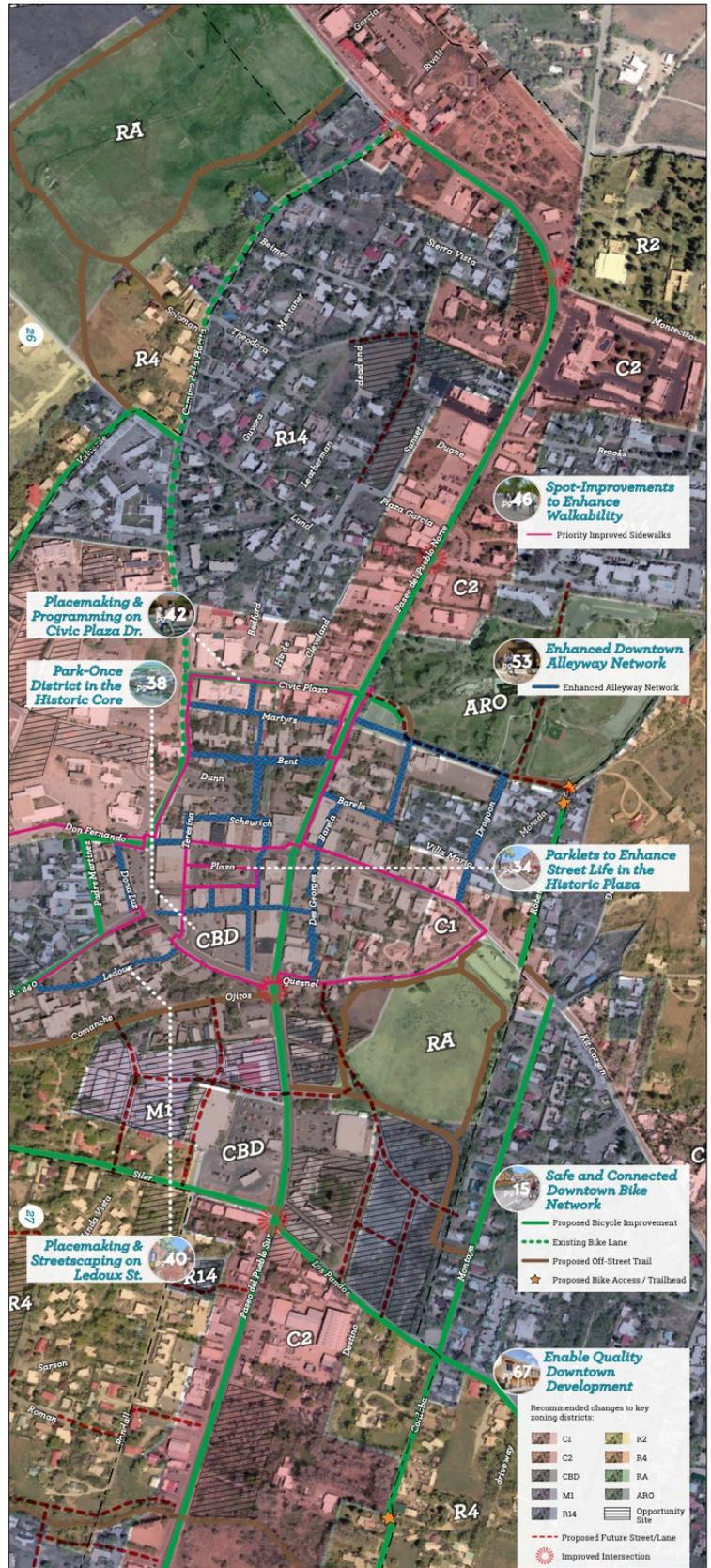
An Affordable Place to Live

Provide a variety of housing choices affordable to people who live and work here.

Improve Street Life and Vitality

Great streets are vital for successful downtowns. In addition to providing mobility and access, streets play

Exhibit 4-29: Downtown Strategy Plan Map



Source: Strong at Heart Downtown Strategy

a key role in shaping the character of a community. Walkable streets that encourage street life are essential for creating a vibrant downtown and strong local economy. This strategy focuses on several priority projects on Civic Plaza Drive, the Historic Plaza, LeDoux, and other key downtown streets that enhance street life and improve walkability in the downtown.

Expand and Enhance the Downtown Alley Network

Alleys are an important component of a well-connected downtown transportation system. Downtown Taos has a terrific network of alleys that not only provide important connections and access to local businesses, but are an essential piece of the history and authenticity of the downtown. The potential receives strong community support and supports several downtown goals.

Create a Safe and Connected Downtown Bike Network

Bicycling is an integral part of the vision for strengthening Downtown Taos. Creating a network of interconnected bicycle routes was identified as a top priority by the community. Successfully connecting downtown to the larger community with a safe and convenient bike network will create a public amenity that offers many benefits to downtown businesses and Taos residents.

Enable Quality Downtown Development

When it comes to future development, the Strong at Heart process revealed a desire to expand housing choices and affordability, create more and better employment opportunities, and expand options for local businesses that meet the everyday needs of Taoseños. This strategy provides a policy framework that encourages quality downtown development in smart places, as well as guidance for building the financial and organizational capacity needed to get there.

RECOMMENDATIONS | LAND USE, STRONG AT HEART PLAN

- Provide places to socialize and opportunities for the community to come together
- Provide a variety of housing choices affordable to people who live and work here. Promote missing “middle (density) housing”, including allowing higher density and heights in Central Business District (CDB), R-14, C-2, C-1, & M-1 zones (not adding on top of or demolition and replacement of historic structures).
- Neighborhood-by-neighborhood improvements and enhancements, such as make Placitas a “complete neighborhood” walkable, parks, trails, downtown housing; improve walkability on Paseo del Pueblo Norte.

METROPOLITAN REDEVELOPMENT AREA (MRA) PLANNING

DOWNTOWN MRA PLAN

New Mexico state statute 3-60A empowers municipalities to establish “Metropolitan Redevelopment Areas” or MRAs in downtown areas suffering from blight, physical and economic deterioration, and/ or facility underutilization. The statute grants municipal bodies the ability to implement certain activities within these areas that can stimulate economic development, including:

- Land and building acquisition
- Adaptive reuse or demolition
- Rezoning and modification of zoning
- Transportation improvements
- Community facilities
- Housing projects

Developing a Downtown MRA plan, as recommended here and in the Strong at Heart plan, will enable the town and MainStreet Association to utilize additional revitalization tools to support and improve downtown

The MRA designation provides the City with various tools to promote economic development, including:

- ^a Entering into public-private partnerships, such as a development agreement
- ^a Funding projects through revenue bonds
- ^a Acquiring funding through Community Development Block Grants and other state and federal sources
- ^a Implementing Tax Increment
- ^a Financing (TIF) districts
- ^a Employing the Local Economic Development Act (LEDA)

Taos. A detailed MRA plan would create a more specific tool for guiding the MainStreet program to implement many of the Strong at Heart plan recommendations, such as:

- identifying catalytic projects and determining steps to make those projects happen
- moving forward on the highest priority streets, sidewalks, and parking projects
- be prepared to take advantage of a Great Streets project
- consider new funding sources such as a tax increment financing district enabled by state statutes for MRA's

The MRA plan is an opportunity to vet specific projects, prioritizing them based on available support, resources, impact, and feasibility. The MRA plan will arrive at a comprehensive implementation plan.

Taos MainStreet is the primary body responsible for the MRA Plan. The organization is based on a commitment to creating high-quality places and to building stronger communities through preservation-based economic development. Taos MainStreet consists of a board, director, and part-time staff and is supported by town and state funding.

GREAT BLOCKS PROJECTS DOWNTOWN

Another program that can go hand-in-hand with an MRA Plan is “Great Blocks on MainStreet.” It focuses on a viable core two-to-three block commercial area, and aims to develop an innovative and intensive design redevelopment project within the MainStreet/Arts & Cultural district resulting in “shovel-ready” construction documents. This public infrastructure investment is meant to catalyze and leverage private sector reinvestment, resulting in higher economic performance.

IMPORTANCE OF THE PLAZA

The Taos Plaza is the historic center of the town and has played critical roles in the formation of the community, major community events, and anchors historic buildings, including the historic county courthouse and many others. The Plaza is also the core of the excellent pedestrian character and unique architectural character of the historic district which emanates throughout the historic district, the Central Business District, and nearby residential neighborhoods.

The Plaza is an incredibly important place in the community. Its landscape treatment should adhere to guidance given in the “Taos Historic Plaza Cultural Landscape Report” (2016). Taos County owns the property, while the town is responsible for making and maintaining the ground improvements. Strong at Heart made recommendations for functions and aesthetics of its surrounding streets that should be considered.

Taos County has plans in the works to stabilize the old County Courthouse on the north side of the Plaza to bring it into compliance with access requirements under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), including adding an elevator, installation of energy-efficient equipment, and upgrading public restrooms. The plan also includes the preservation of historic murals on the second floor commissioned in 1934 by the Works Progress Administration during the Great Depression. This project is also important since the building will likely host economic development organizations.

Arts & downtown are natural partners

Public art is a foundational element of public space; sculpture gardens, interactive installations, and temporary light shows or performance events are huge draws inviting community engagement and tourism.

The world-class arts and culture resources in Taos, including local, successful, innovative, contemporary arts projects such as The PASEO or regional groups such as Meow Wolf should be considered as partners in developing the Taos Green Network as a spectacular showcase for innovative arts and parks collaborations.

SHORT-TERM RENTAL RESTRICTIONS

One of the unintended consequences in the town's short-term rental ordinance is that it applies to rentals for periods of up to 30 days. Properties rented for longer than 30 days may be used as "mid-term" rentals for tourists but also as accommodations for visitors doing work in the area and are not required to receive permits nor are subject to lodgers tax. This is one of several challenges in designing and implementing a new ordinance, which may require modifications.

IN GENERAL, THE TOWN SHOULD MONITOR OUTCOMES RELATED TO THE SHORT-TERM RENTAL ORDINANCE TO ASSURE THAT IT IS MEETING THE TOWN'S OBJECTIVES.

DEVELOPMENT NODES

RECOMMENDATIONS | DEVELOPMENT NODE DESIGNATION CRITERIA

The following are a set of criteria to guide the development of nodes (or centers):

NODES SHOULD BE DESIGNED TO BE EFFICIENT IN SPACE, GENERATE CO-LOCATED ACTIVITY, ACCOMMODATE WALKING, BIKING AND TRANSIT USERS, BE SAFE AND CONVENIENT FOR THE GROWING ELDER POPULATION AS WELL AS YOUNGEST POPULATION, AND PROMOTE BETTER DESIGN AND PLACEMAKING TO CREATE OR STRENGTHEN THE CHARACTER OF A NEIGHBORHOOD DISTRICT

- Nodal development must be differentiated from strip commercial that typically has separate uses not related to or complementary with uses on adjacent properties, auto-oriented for users, separate access and parking, and separate signage
- Nodes should have higher intensity than linear (strip) development, typically with somewhat larger buildings and greater height
- Nodes are typically mixed-use and tend to focus on the following issues:
 - Businesses that build employment (such as a business park)
 - Complementary retail uses that one can park once and walk among, or mix of residential and commercial uses or live-work where residents and workers might be on-site.
 - Assemblage of hotels and motels designed with ancillary uses, such as a park or trail that hotel guests may enjoy, shared parking, restaurants, and gas stations
 - Public uses such as a hospital, which may include nearby medical offices, continuum of care housing complexes, assisted living, prescription walking trails, and housing
 - Public uses such as a college campus, while the campus of UNM-Taos is outside the town
- Nodes should consist of approximately a quarter mile radius (125 acres)
- Nodes should be served by transit
- Nodal development usually requires large parcel master planning, cooperation among a few property owners and builders, and local government guidance and participation
- Development and design standards for nodes should be added to the Land Development Code, accompanied by adopted stand-alone design guidelines
- Different locations of nodes or additional areas for nodal development than shown on the future land use map may be considered

PASEO DEL PUEBLO SUR CORRIDOR AND NODES

The Paseo del Pueblo Sur corridor serves as both the main shopping and lodging area for the town and region and as the primary highway through the community. It has an auto-oriented (or strip commercial) character.

Auto-oriented character can be characterized by the presence of driveways, roads, and at-grade parking that accounts for about 65 to 85 percent of the development area, significantly exceeding the area of buildings as a percentage of land cover.

Source: Luis Núñez, *Commercial Corridor Redevelopment Strategies, 2021, citing Kendig and Keast 2011.*

Without many vacant lots or vacant buildings, Paseo del Pueblo Sur is not a failing commercial corridor from a market perspective. It has many thriving businesses that serve the town and region, and is adding new businesses. The corridor largely lacks local or Taos Valley architectural character, with mainly corporate architecture and little landscaping. It was developed primarily beginning in the 1970s and lacks buildings that are historic. Paseo del Pueblo Sur is very important to the community since it establishes the first visual impression of Taos's built environment. It also arguably has the greatest potential for accommodating growth of commercial, mixed-use, and lodging in the community. Innovative, design-appropriate investments and land uses today and in the near-future could avert the fate that many commercial corridors suffer in failing businesses, disinvestment, and blight.

The vision for the corridor is a vibrant, mixed-use corridor that encourages walking and biking with buildings fronting onto the street and a range of commercial retail, hotels/motels, and office uses located close to new and existing residential development. Some targeted areas should emerge as cohesive "nodes" for one-stop parking, pedestrian access, and a collection of uses that are synergistic. Landscaping should provide visual beauty, shade, and habitat interspersed through front-facing parking areas and seating areas. Commercial uses will continue to serve both local and regional markets and require adequate parking and safe ingress and egress. Development should be orderly along the corridor, limiting visual pandemonium such as through greatly divergent architectural styles and chaotic signage. Corridor resiliency should be enhanced by working to improve walkability, bikeability, and livability through mixed-use development and multimodal streetscape improvements to reduce car use and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The Land Development Code addresses a portion of the corridor in the Highway Corridor Protection District (HPCD). The purpose of the HPCD is stated in the code :

"to encourage safe and orderly development in a manner which retains the architectural styles of the Taos Valley."

Source: *Town of Taos Land Development Code*

Currently the HPCD zone district is a rather small area at the southern entrance to the town. Most of Paseo del Pueblo Sur is in the C-2 zone.

The town should create a new zone or zoning overlay for nodes on Paseo del Pueblo Sur and consider design review for development within the nodes. Consideration should be given to subsuming the HPCD into a node zone or adding development and design provisions to the zone and expanding the district.

In addition, C-2 development standards should be evaluated and revised to encourage a higher level of architectural and site design features. For example, parking requirements should be evaluated to assure that excessive space is not required. The code should also encourage location of parking on the sides or rear of commercial buildings to create a more visually interesting and pedestrian frontage.

DESIGN REVIEW IN NODES

Design review should be conducted for buildings in designated nodes. Consideration should be given to reviewing only those buildings over size and height thresholds, to be determined in the major code update process. This approach is focused on capturing the larger developments, which have greater impacts on their immediate surroundings and on the community as a whole. Design review is intended to assure that larger

buildings do not adversely affect the predominantly low- and small-scale of town architecture, views from prominent public places, and landscape palette.

Within a node, zone, or zoning overlay, design standards and guidelines should address:

- Building siting
- Building proportion and scale
- Building facades
- Architectural features
- Building materials
- Roofing patterns
- Building articulation
- Entrances
- Upper-level step-backs
- Transparency at ground floor
- Concealing mechanical equipment
- Signage
- Parking lots location, screening, and shared use
- Landscaping
- Lighting
- Green infrastructure

Design Review

Design review is not a process for stopping development by neighborhood activists.

People opposing a development often level their objections at the wrong target. If they believe that someone is proposing too much density or too tall of a building—elements that are codified within the zoning ordinance—they need to spend time with the town council when it reviews plans and ordinances. Design review is not the place to wage land-use battles.

Source: Design Review - Guiding Better Development, 2018, by Mark Hinshaw, FAICP, and Marya Morris, FAICP

CONSIDERATION OF INCENTIVE ZONING

“INCENTIVE ZONING” SHOULD BE CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPMENT NODES.

Incentive zoning is a tool that offers flexibility for developers in exchange for a public benefit. Incentive zoning would allow the town to leverage variations in zoning standards by offering such things as density bonuses and height extensions to accomplish public goals, such as the provision of affordable housing, parks, and other public amenities as part of the node.

MARKET ANALYSIS AND WORKING WITH PRIVATE SECTOR

TO BETTER INFORM THE DESIGNATION OF NODES AND ZONING REGULATIONS FOR NODES, A MARKET ANALYSIS OF THE PASEO DEL PUEBLO SUR CORRIDOR SHOULD BE CONDUCTED.

The market analysis will evaluate the performance of different market sectors and identify actions to make market conditions more favorable for investment. It is critical to work with private partners up front to develop or redevelop. Developers and investors may become more willing partners in the redevelopment process as a result. Market findings also serve as a reality check for early planning stages.

The market analysis should also identify catalyst sites or properties that would make the best development or redevelopment starting point for remaking the character of the corridor. These opportunity sites are ideally in nodes, but may also be smaller projects outside designated nodes that contribute positively to the small business character at a more intimate fabric and scale along the corridor.

For the most successful redevelopment interventions, private investment must outweigh public investment

Source: Luis Núñez, Commercial Corridor Redevelopment Strategies, 2021, citing Kendig and Keast, 2011

HISTORIC DISTRICTS AND PRESERVATION

The Town of Taos has a long and rich experience in historic preservation and specifically in the administration of the two contiguous historic overlay zone districts in the downtown, La Loma Plaza Historic District and the Taos Downtown Historic District.

Historic preservation is extremely important work in Taos for many reasons including protection of the town's unique character that is world famous. This plan affirms the principles of historic preservation and historic district regulations. The intent and purpose for the historic overlay zone in Section 16.16.220.1 of the Municipal Code is:

The Town intends to protect, preserve, and perpetuate areas of historical, cultural, architectural, artistic or geographical significance located within the Town of Taos. The Town finds it desirable to protect and enhance the Town's economic base by attracting tourists, visitors and residents; to stabilize and improve property values; to foster civic pride by protecting the Town's unique cultural heritage by prohibiting the unnecessary destruction and defacement of its cultural assets; to preserve historic architectural design and integrity; and to ensure the harmonious, architecturally sympathetic, orderly and efficient growth and development of the Town.

Source: Taos Municipal Code, Section 16.16.220.1, Ord. 99-05, 1999

The town should consider targeted updates to its historic district regulations as part of the major code update project intended to commence after the comprehensive plan.

TAX CREDITS AND FUNDING

Designation of historic districts and properties in the state and national registers helps to recognize, preserve, and protect important properties in Taos' history.

It bestows a special status for a property that is a source of community and property owners' pride. Designation also opens up eligibility to participate in grant programs funded by the Historic Preservation Fund, as well as the federal historic preservation tax incentives (20% investment tax credit) and state tax credits for certified rehabilitation of listed structures. Technical assistance is also available through the New Mexico Historic Preservation Division (HPD).

Listing of a property in the National Register places no restrictions on what a private owner may do with property, up to and including destruction, unless the property is involved in a project that receives federal assistance, usually funding or licensing/ permitting. If federal funding or a federal permit are involved, proposed changes to the listed property are subject to review by HPD and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. If state funding or town funding are used, proposed changes to a state-listed property are also subject to review by HPD. While designation does not enable state or national historic preservation offices to prohibit certain development or improvement projects, such projects may endanger a structure's qualification for tax credits if the changes significantly alter the historic nature of the structure.

The State Historic Preservation Grants Program has assisted in the past with funding for preservation planning and stabilization projects, State and National Register nominations, public education and outreach activities, conferences, publications and surveys, plans, and assessments.

The Certified Local Government (CLG) Program was established by Congress in 1980 to assist local governments with integrating historic preservation initiatives at the local level. The Town of Taos is a CLG and is eligible to apply for federal historic preservation grants, review National and State Register nominations, and receive technical assistance from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability deals with concerns of climate change, adequacy of water supply, clean air and water, renewable

energy, and environmental protection of land forms and biological functions. The notion of a sustainable community is one that is livable, healthy, and self-sustaining. According to a 1987 United Nations report, sustainability is “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

While the parameters of sustainability are broader than land use, the pieces of sustainability in land use include: practices that protect surface and groundwater, protecting riparian areas, water conservation in buildings and yards, efficiency in the use of land, efficiencies in the proximity of uses to minimize auto travel, energy efficiency of buildings, open space preservation, and avoidance of building on steep slopes.

BIORETENTION

Bioretention ponds and rain gardens can serve some of the same functions as wetlands, by capturing and cleaning urban runoff before the water reaches the river. These treatments can be small, taking up the space of a single parking spot, but provide significant benefit, including slowing storm surges, limiting erosion, promoting aquifer recharge, and improving water quality in the river. Bioretention ponds and rain gardens should be constructed in areas where runoff flows into the river unmitigated.

In many ways water is the fundamental resource in Taos. Ensuring it is used and managed properly will be essential to maintaining the sustainability of the community.

RIPARIAN AREAS

The Rio Fernando and Rio Pueblo riparian areas provide many important services to the community beyond improving biodiversity, cooling, and beautifying the town. For example, riparian areas provide flood protection and water remediation. They slow and capture storm runoff, limiting the need for hard flood-protection infrastructure. As captured water soaks down, it recharges groundwater stores. These areas also clean and cool urban runoff, improving ecological health and promoting biodiversity. Riparian areas and wetlands in the town should be protected and restored where needed.

The community has a lengthy history of relocating arroyos then developing areas that previously had flooding. In some areas, flooding remains a problem, while in other areas the new drainage courses function well to convey stormwater. Typically, such intervention disturbs or entirely replaces riparian areas. Wetlands in and close to the town have been protected and preserved. The Rio Fernando de Taos Revitalization Collaborative has been working on riparian areas protection.

The town should consider discouraging or prohibiting building in sensitive riparian areas, as well as in proximity to the Rio Fernando riverbed where disturbances easily cause erosion issues. Policies for treatment of arroyos should be further considered in the course of determining “greenways,” proposed in the Parks and Open Space Element.

HIGH PERFORMANCE BUILDING STANDARDS

Section 15.04.040 of the Taos Municipal Code (identified also as Ordinance 09-03) High Performance Building Program established energy and water efficiency standards for new single family, multi-family, commercial, and live-work buildings, modular homes, and remodels. When the New Mexico Construction Industries Division was assigned to administer the town’s building inspections and issuance of building permits, the state building code is used instead of local building code and related ordinances. Fortunately, many of the state provisions are similar to the town’s. Nonetheless, the town is hampered in its ability to require the levels of efficiency compliance that it had articulated in its ordinance, or may choose to require in the future.

SUSTAINABLE LAND USE GUIDELINES

- Protect and restore riparian areas and wetlands in the town
- Discourage or prohibit development in riparian areas and wetlands
- Incorporate bioretention ponds and bioswales to remediate urban runoff and limit flooding
- Encourage xeriscaping and promote native species for planting projects and landscaping
- Discourage or prohibit development on riverbanks, steep slopes, or arroyos to prevent erosion
- Encourage or require drainage plans to protect neighboring properties and minimize erosion
- Discourage additional impervious surfaces by eliminating or minimizing parking requirements
- Protect agricultural lands, acequias, and other waterways
- Use conservation easements and acquisitions to retain open lands
- Support agricultural land uses and irrigation infrastructure
- Encourage or incentivize sustainable development, including:
 - a| ***Climate-appropriate design, including passive solar and xeriscaping***
 - b| ***Alternative energy integration, such as utility-scale solar fields***
 - c| ***LEED (Leadership in Energy Efficiency in Design) certification***
 - d| ***Insulated windows, walls, and ceilings***
 - e| ***High-efficiency appliances***
 - f| ***LED lighting***
 - g| ***Climate appropriate design, such as south-facing windows***
- Maintain municipal water lines to minimize leaks and consider implementing a digital monitoring system to identify and mitigate leaks in real time
- Do not prohibit responsible use of gray water on yards or the collection of rainwater
- Support energy-wise construction projects and promote green building practices

Refer to the Public Assets chapter in this plan for additional information and guidance on hazards mitigation and sustainable development practices.

VISUALIZING HOUSING TYPES

Examples of housing types discussed in the comprehensive plan are shown in the following series of photographs. These images come from visual preference resource material in the Strong at Heart Plan and the last two from (Re)Vision 2020 Land Use Element draft from 2014. While Strong at Heart focused on asking participants to rank images for suitability in the downtown, these housing types, which scored high, are relevant in other areas of the community.



Duplex



Single Family Infill



Small Scale Apartment Building 5-10 Units



Triplex or Fourplex



Duplex in Housing Complex



Multi-Family with Single Entrance



Two Story Apartments



Three or Four Story Apartments



Small Lot Single Family



Accessory Dwelling Unit



Duplex Within Housing Complex



Small Lot Single Family

NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING

Neighborhood planning gives residents the opportunity to take an active role in planning at a smaller scale of the community. It can focus on long-range as well as short-term and mid-term strategies and actions. It can give guidance to town-elected and appointed officials in their various roles of advising, acting and decision-making affecting the neighborhood area. Some communities pursue visioning, developing goals and policies, and even zoning crafted in a neighborhood plan.

The town should consider advancing neighborhood planning through delineating neighborhoods, meeting with residents, and determining the gaps that developing neighborhood-level planning would fill. One example of a neighborhood planning role is for neighborhood associations to serve as the convener of “early notification” meetings between developers proposing significant development and residents. Such meetings give nearby residents a forum for expressing their views, and allow developers to present conceptual plans, answer questions and receive comments from neighbors early enough in the process to consider ways to resolve any concerns and build consensus.

FUTURE LAND USE

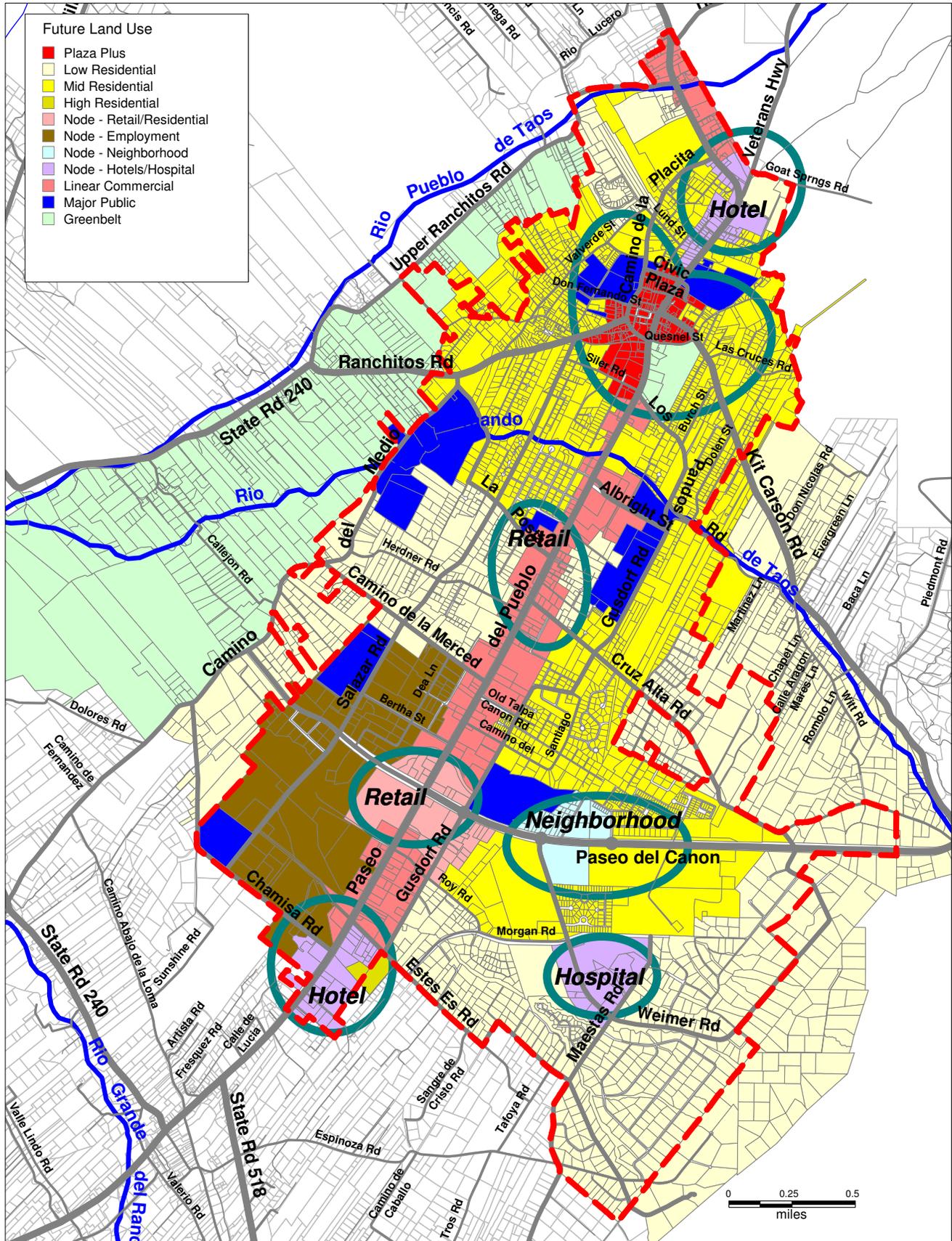
The future land use map provides a generalized view of how land in the town is intended to be used. It does not necessarily show land use as it exists today and it does not show zoning information. It is arguably the most important map in a comprehensive plan.

The future land use map emphasizes the following themes:

- Reflect the goals and policies in the comprehensive plan
- Respect residential neighborhoods, while developing vacant lands and infill, focusing mainly on moderate density
- Accommodate projected population and housing increase
- Encourage nodal development
- Expand employment/business district, encouraging master planned business parks that are mainly nonresidential
- A generalized map depicting future land use appears on the following page.

While this following future land use map is generalized, it should give guidance to the zoning map and rezonings.

Exhibit 4-30: Future Land Use Map



Source: ARC GIS

Future land use categories are described in the following table.

Exhibit 4-31: Categories of Potential Land Uses

| Future Land Use Categories | |
|--|---|
| Land Use | Summary Characteristics |
| 1 Plaza Plus | Retail, hotels, public/institutional/cultural spaces & buildings, single family, ADUs, middle housing, offices |
| 2 Low Residential | Predominantly detached housing at densities up to 4 units/acre, including single family, ADU, duplexes, home occupations, small scale office neighborhoods, incidental public uses |
| 3 Mid Residential | Predominantly detached housing at densities over 4 units/acre, including single family on small lots, commons, retirement, MHP's, ADU, middle housing, home occupations, small scale office neighborhoods, incidental public uses |
| 4 High Residential (No Area on Map) | Mostly multi-family, condos, duplexes, cottages, tiny homes, and single family detached. Standard density over 30 units/acre |
| 5 Node: Retail/Residential | Small town transit-oriented development with mix of shops and residential |
| 6 Node: Employment: Business/Industrial | Business park office, industrial, art production, warehouse, flex space, big box retail, retail, gas station |
| 7 Neighborhood Commercial Node | Small scale mostly close to neighborhoods |
| 8 Node: Hotel, Retail, Residential | Hotel-based node, with lodging, apartments, condos, pocket park, retail, transit |
| 9 Linear Commercial | Retail stores of various types and sizes usually with own access and parking lots, strip malls, hotels, both existing and new |
| 10 Major Public | Parks, schools, government, and other large public uses |
| 11 Greenways | Linear green infrastructure through town, such as rivers with trails, major trail or route connections between parks, schools and USFS lands |
| 12 Greenbelt | Agriculture, including acequia-irrigated fields, some conservation subdivisions, USFS, Taos Pueblo-held lands (exempt from local government jurisdiction) |

ANNEXATION STRATEGY

The intent for the town's annexation strategy is to:

- Address current, or the potential likelihood of, failing septic systems that threaten groundwater quality and that the town is able to serve with sanitary sewer - (high priority areas that mainly correspond to town-identified areas 1-5)
- Create definable town boundaries with the intent to develop a small portion of annexed areas and conserve greenbelt lands
- Create a regular geography that the town can serve in all its capacities, including providing clarity for emergency service providers
- Avoid traditional historic communities, coordinating with them and Taos County based on Section 3-7-1 (NMSA 1978), while recognizing that annexation is allowed by state statute through a petition of a majority of the qualified electors
- Encourage preservation in greenbelt through various means including allowing conservation subdivisions, purchase easements, and agriculture land preservation incentives

Greenbelt preservation is a primary reason for annexation. The future land use map indicates a very limited area intended for urban density development. The town will take on responsibility to preserve the primarily agricultural lands to its west that are highly valued open lands, working with property owners to continue agricultural uses while anticipating that some new development will continue to occur. New development should be accommodated mainly in conservation subdivisions, minimizing the displacement of agricultural lands. The contiguous agricultural belt is much larger than the annexation area. Consequently, Taos County and the proposed traditional historic community of El Valle also have responsibilities to assure that the unincorporated portions of the larger greenbelt are conserved. The town will seek to work with the county and other entities to develop consistent regulatory and nonregulatory strategies for conservation.

ANNEX ACCORDING TO A PHASING PLAN

The map shows 2,230 acres in the draft ultimate annexation area (shaded green). With the current 3,880 acres inside town limits, the town would total 6,212 acres.

FOLLOWING ARE PRINCIPLES THAT APPLY TO ANNEXATION APPLICATIONS MADE BY INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY OWNERS OR INITIATED BY THE TOWN:

- Contiguity of the annexed area must meet statutory requirements
- Applications for proposed annexation must describe: boundary lines, total acreages, existing easements, streets and utilities rights-of-way and easements dedicated at the time of annexation, phasing of development if annexation is more than 50 acres (or another land area to be specified), floodplain areas for all drainageways, other natural conditions such as prominent land forms or vegetation, and the names of property owners of record within 100 feet of the subject property.
- Findings should be made to the satisfaction of the town regarding the following:
 - The annexation does not adversely affect the city fiscally
 - The town has water and sewer capacity to serve the area, or a development agreement is in place to recover or mitigate costs of extending utilities
 - The annexed area should contribute to the city urban buffer area when an open land buffer would be consistent with this Comprehensive Master Plan
 - Streets in the annexation shall be laid out to integrate with existing streets, built to town standards, and dedicated to the town upon the town's approval of the streets
- Applications for an annexation shall comply with applicable zoning and subdivision regulations,

EXTRATERRITORIAL ZONE (ETZ) LAND USE PLANNING AND REGULATIONS

An Extraterritorial Zone (ETZ) is an area of land in proximity to municipal borders within which land use regulation, including land use planning, platting (subdivision regulation), and zoning, is shared between the county and the municipality. Authority may be exercised separately, concurrently, or jointly by the city and county.

ETZ planning can serve to ensure that development in the ETZ meets acceptable requirements for municipal annexation or to protect sensitive and valuable land and land uses.

The following provides an overview of the subject for consideration.

PURPOSES OF EXTRATERRITORIAL PLANNING, PLATTING, AND ZONING

The main purposes of extraterritorial planning, platting, and zoning include:

- Assurance that lands likely to be annexed are developed to the standards of the town so that upon annexation, major upgrading is not required at the expense of the town
- Cooperative planning for land development activities to proceed in locations where they can be supported in a timely and efficient way
- Assurance that environmental conditions affecting areas in the unincorporated county and municipality, such as drainages or steep hillsides, are appropriately protected or that impacts of development are mitigated
- Guidance to ensure the desired character of gateways to the town and areas of interface between urban and rural land use/development pattern
- Use of a tiered approach to establish development standards within the town's ETZ should differentiate planning, platting, and zoning standards and responsibilities, and be crafted for the categories in the following table. Tiers 2 and 3 would likely have more rural standards, such as all-weather streets, pathways rather than sidewalks, and septic systems. This would make town and county zoning districts and standards more consistent and complementary in the ETZ.

Exhibit 4-33: Development Standard Categories

| Development Standard Categories for Town/County Consistency by Tiers in ETZ | |
|---|---|
| Standard | Description |
| Streets | Public right-of-way width |
| Streets | Dedication or easement |
| Streets | Pavement, all-weather gravel and base standards |
| Streets | Curb and gutter |
| Streets | Sidewalks or trails (describe where required, width required) |
| Streets | Bicycle lanes or trails |
| Streets | Maximum grade, grade at intersections |
| Easements | Land easements for irrigation ditches, drainages |
| Streets | Maximum block length, maximum cul-de-sac length, and connectivity |
| Streets | Signalized intersections |
| Street Lights | |
| Double Fronted Lots | |
| Utilities | Gas and electric in rights-of-way |
| Utilities | Required connection to public sewer line |
| Utilities | Standards for septic systems & minimum lot size for septic and well |
| Utilities | Domestic water pipe size |
| Exemptions | Exclusions from definition of subdivision and subdivision standards |
| Minor Subdivisions | Summary review process |
| Terrain Management | Grading and drainage plan |
| Storm Water Detention | |
| Flood Hazard Areas | |
| Fire Hydrants | |
| Requirements for Survey | |
| Plats | Information required on plats |
| Bonding | Bonds for improvements through a subdivision agreement |
| Enforcement | |
| Master Planning | Planning and phasing of large developments |
| Fees | Fees for roadway facilities, public safety facilities, parks/recreation/trails, and drainage facilities |

STATUTORY AUTHORITY FOR ETZ PLANNING, PLATTING, AND ZONING

The State of New Mexico enables and directs the application of extraterritorial planning, platting, and zoning through several statutes, including:

- Establishment of boundaries of the extraterritorial planning and platting jurisdiction in Section 3-19-5 New Mexico Statutes Annotated (NMSA) 1978
- Subdivision regulations in municipal planning and platting jurisdiction in Section 3-19-6 NMSA 1978
- Master planning in Section 3-19-9 NMSA 1978 » Concurrent jurisdiction of subdivisions in Section 3-20-5 NMSA 1978
- Extraterritorial zoning in Section 3-21-3 NMSA 1978
- Extraterritorial zoning and subdivision regulations in Section 3-21-3.1 NMSA 1978

Counties and municipalities are enabled but not required to establish a joint municipal-county zoning authority for purposes of adopting, amending, and regulating subdivision regulations.

Regarding subdivision review, while the New Mexico Subdivision Act specified exemptions to the definition of subdivisions that counties must follow, statutes on municipal subdivisions do not require the same exemptions for municipalities. Section 3-21-3.1 states “... such subdivision ordinances and regulations may define ‘subdivision’ in a manner which differs from the definitions set forth in Subsection A of Section 3-20-1 NMSA 1978 and in Subsection I of Section 47-6-2 NMSA 1978...” which define county subdivision exemptions.

Consistent with state statutes, the jurisdictional area for extraterritorial planning and platting for communities the size of the Town of Taos, with a population of fewer than 25,000 persons, is territory within three miles of the town limits. State statute enables the town to establish a jurisdictional area for extraterritorial zoning within one mile of its city limits. The statute allows two miles for municipalities with a population of 20,000 or more persons.

Extraterritorial zoning, planning, and subdivision regulations: The statutes allow for a one-mile extraterritorial area for zoning and a three-mile extraterritorial area for planning and platting (subdivision).

Section 3-21-2(B) NMSA 1978 states:

A municipal zoning authority may adopt a zoning ordinance applicable to the territory within the municipal boundaries and, if not within a class A county with a population of more than three hundred thousand persons according to the last federal decennial census, shall have concurrent authority with the county to zone all or any portion of the territory within its extraterritorial zoning jurisdiction that is within...

(2) one mile of the boundary of any municipality having a population of one thousand five hundred or more but less than twenty thousand persons, provided such territory is not within the boundaries of another municipality...

Source: *New Mexico Statutes Annotated (NMSA), 1978*

Section 3-19-5(A) states:

Each municipality shall have planning and platting jurisdiction within its municipal boundary. Except as provided in Subsection B of this section, the planning and platting jurisdiction of a municipality...

(2) having a population of less than twenty-five thousand persons includes all territory within three miles of its boundary and not within the boundary of another municipality.

Source: *New Mexico Statutes Annotated (NMSA), 1978*

The town and county should consider reviving the ETZ process utilizing a tiered approach to development standards.

ETZ and annexation strategies are integrally linked. If the town annexes areas of highest interest for various purposes described above, then ETZ may not be needed. In either case, aligning development policies and regulations between the town and county is of paramount importance.

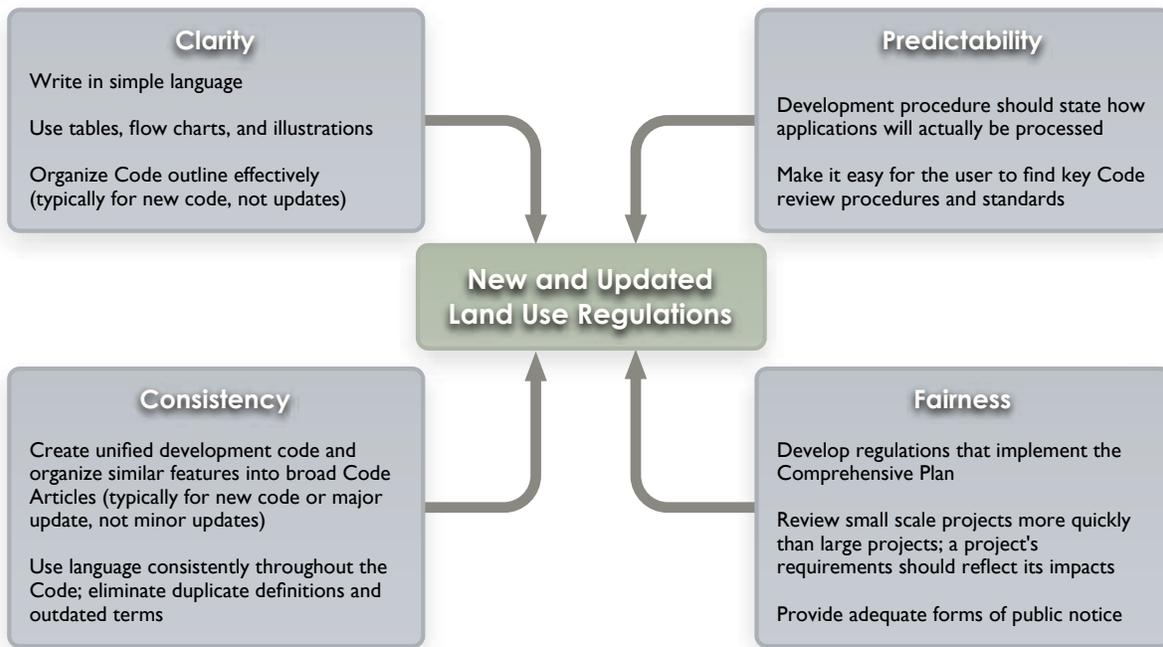
MAJOR CODE UPDATE

More detail will be developed in Phase II of the comprehensive planning process. Many topics have been identified and recommendations have been made in Phase I, and these will be further examined and added to in Phase II.

Successful regulations are written with clarity, predictability, consistency, and fairness. All code writing, whether involving small changes, major updates, or additions, should follow the principles for successful regulations, illustrated here.

Exhibit 4-34: Principles for Successful Regulations

Principles for Successful Regulations



CODE SIMPLIFICATION AND PERMITTING EFFICIENCY

Code simplification and greater efficiency in the development permitting process has been identified as one of the goals in the major code update. In 2014, the town contracted with Architectural Research Consultants to conduct an evaluation and make recommendations to improve efficiencies in processing business permits, building permits, and zoning permits. The report, dated February 3, 2014, made 22 recommendations in areas of resources for improving permitting performance, amendments to the code including process flow charts that simplified and set time goals on steps, and administrative resources. These recommendations appear to remain relevant, while the town should reevaluate the recommendations in detail during the major code update.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

The Community Development Department is tasked with providing guidance and coordination for all land planning and development activities throughout the town and implementing a set of regulations and policies of the town in areas of land use, development, and building. The department seeks to provide its services in a manner that will ensure a safe and healthy environment, maintain town character, and also promote a high quality of life as a goal. It is a highly collaborative department and works closely with all of other departments of the town. The department has a lot of responsibilities and needs sufficient staff and periodic consultant services to fulfill its roles.

While the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) & Mapping is a separate department, close coordination occurs between the GIS and Community Development Department. Mapping is essential to planning and community development, including maintaining the official zoning map, and mapping of town boundaries, approved subdivisions, streets rights-of-way, historic structures, utilities and many other physical features critical to the community. GIS is also a great platform for the recording of zoning and other permits, which supports improved efficiencies in the Community Development Department.

One of the big tasks anticipated by the Community Development Department is major update to the Land Development Code. Piecemeal code amendments have led to some confusion. Some code amendments identified and conceptualized have been deferred that address needed revision to development and design standards. Some review processes set by the code should be simplified. Many of the policies and recommendations in the comprehensive plan are tied to the major code update.

The Community Development Department staffs the Planning and Zoning Commission and Historic Preservation Commission and frequently presents projects and recommendations to the Town Council. It also convenes the multi-departmental Development Review Committee that reviews project applications, as discussed above. Currently, the State Construction Industries Division (CID) processes building permits in the town, while the town is responsible for issuing a zoning permit needed prior to issuance of a building permit.

Town of Taos Planning, Community and Economic Development Department

The Town of Taos planning department is the primary party responsible for implementing the land use recommendations provided here.

These recommendations include values and goals voiced by the public (see above), and observations from staff and the planning team provided throughout the plan process.

Currently, the municipal planning department is short staffed. Planners are responsible for the following:

- ^a Upon Comprehensive Plan completion, undertake major update of the Land Development Code
- ^a Periodically revise the Land Development Code to be responsive to changing needs
- ^a Ensure that comprehensive plan policies and recommendations are integrated into the code, zoning map, and development review process
- ^a Continue to:
 - ^a Process development and land use applications in a timely fashion
 - ^a Work with residents and businesses to prepare neighborhood plans
 - ^a Review and issue building permits
 - ^a Conduct building and development inspections
 - ^a Implement effective, proactive code enforcement and issue citations when necessary, then provide the follow-up to ensure violations are addressed including notification, litigation, enforcement, and additional inspections
 - ^a Coordinate planning activities across Town Departments
 - ^a Work with neighborhood associations and Traditional Historic Communities to align strategies and meet needs
 - ^a Coordinate with county planners to regulate land use and development

Code enforcement is a particularly difficult task for an understaffed community development department. The Town does not have an individual assigned to seek out zoning code noncompliance. As with most communities that are not especially proactive in code enforcement, most violations are flagged based upon complaints by residents. While not ideal, this can be fairly effective and lead to Town enforcement actions. The Town has very limited recent experience with pursuing zoning code violations that lead to abatement or fines. The Community Development Department and Town attorney should establish a relationship with a municipal judge or district judge to work on procedures for citing offenders of code violations, assessing fines, and taking other enforcement actions.

Another enforcement challenge is how to deal with building code enforcement issues. Since CID has lead responsibility for the building permits process, CID should also be in a position to find and, if necessary, “red tag” building permit violations. Additional arrangements are needed in order for CID to play this role. Alternately, the town should continue to consider enfolding building permitting back into the Town Community Development Department, or arriving at a regional approach to building inspection, permitting and enforcement with surrounding municipalities and the county.

GOALS, POLICIES, & ACTIONS

1 GOAL

Land development of the town is environmentally sensitive and sustainable, including infill with affordable housing, employment and mixed-use centers, neighborhood commercial, and recreational and cultural amenities

2 GOAL

The downtown has a strong economy with thriving local businesses, provides places for Taoseños to socialize, hosts events for the community to come together, provides a variety of housing choices, and is walkable and bikeable

- A| *Encourage continuing development in the Central Business District (Plaza/ Downtown).*
 - a| *Provide places for people in the downtown to socialize and opportunities for the community to come together*
 - b| *Provide a variety of housing choices affordable to people who live and work in the community.*
 - c| *Promote missing “middle (density) housing”, including allowing higher density and heights in the Central Business District (CBD), R-14, C-2, C-1, & M-1 zones*
 - d| *Consider allowing accessory dwelling units only if provisions prohibiting illegal conversion to short-term rental or seasonal housing can be made legal and enforceable*
 - e| *Do not allow higher densities in currently dense areas with insufficient water and sewer, restrictively narrow streets, small lots that are built out, and lack of garages so residents mainly park on the street*
 - f| *Do not allow adding housing units on top of historic structures*
- B| *Develop during update to the Land Development Code a hybrid, form-based, and conventional zoning approach to allow “missing middle” building types that allows duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, and more units if small in a building, or possibly assemblage of cottages, while respecting the neighborhood scale*
- C| *Make neighborhood-by-neighborhood improvements and enhancements, such as making downtown area neighborhoods into “complete neighborhoods” that are walkable and have parks, trails, and varied types of housing*
- D| *Develop a downtown Metropolitan Development Area plan that gives further guidance on downtown improvements and enables the use of revenue-generating tools*

3 GOAL

The town designates land uses to accommodate anticipated growth over the next 20 to 30 years

- A| *Update the Land Development Code and zoning map utilizing the future land use map as a general guide*
- B| *Utilize RA zoning to manage growth in certain areas where land is not yet needed to meet 20-years growth land requirements and where utilities and roads are not adequate to serve an area for eventual urban development visualized in the future land use map*

- C| *Utilize the future land use map to identify nodes*
- D| *Accommodate an increased portion of new development through infill on vacant parcels in developed areas, in southern quadrants of the town having substantial contiguous vacant lands, through redevelopment of existing properties, and where increased density is encouraged in the future land use map.*
- E| *Direct higher density development to areas where adequate services and infrastructure exist or are within a reasonable distance and where such developments have minimal impact on existing and future agriculture uses and visual and physical access to open places*
- F| *Support low-density residential development only in more rural areas of the town and ETZ*
- G| *Encourage subdivisions to be designed with a variety of affordable housing types in downtown and other areas of town, including duplexes, triplexes, possibly fourplexes, and accessory dwelling units, and other “missing middle” housing types*
- H| *Support low-density, and particularly conservation subdivisions, in more rural areas of town and ETZ*
- I| *Developers of subdivisions should seek to connect or offer the opportunity for future street connections to adjacent undeveloped properties.*
- J| *Consideration should be given in review of subdivision proposals for the potential of proposed streets to accommodate bike route, lane or trails*

4 GOAL

Nodes are developed as focal areas that have some intensity of complementary uses, are walkable and are served by transit along Paseo del Pueblo and in other areas of the community

- A| *Encourage continuing development along Paseo del Pueblo (Sur and Norte)*
- B| *Develop nodes that follow criteria in the comprehensive plan*
- C| *Establish a nodes zone or zoning overlay*
- D| *Develop in code a design review process for nodes including procedures for review, assigning review either to staff or a board*
- E| *Develop design guidelines that provide guidance with some flexibility for creative design solutions in nodes*
- F| *Consider identifying different or additional areas for nodal development than shown on the future land use map*

5 GOAL

Existing employment centers and districts are retained, improved, and further developed to house businesses

- A| *Create a pattern of dispersed, mixed-use centers that are neighborhood-serving*

6 GOAL

New employment centers are built to provide additional business development, while minimizing impacts on nearby residential areas

- A| *Site commercial and industrial uses to minimize the adverse effects of noise, lighting, pollution, and traffic on residential environments*

7 GOAL

The unique character of Taos neighborhoods is protected.

- A| *Protect the character of historic neighborhoods*
- B| *Retain the historic overlay zone*
- C| *Periodically update the historic district guidelines and standards*
- D| *Provide training to Historic Preservation Committee members in principles and procedures for review and approval of certificates of appropriateness*
- E| *Retain the historic pattern of dirt roads and lanes in more rural areas*
- F| *Encourage traditional appearance and natural setting of new commercial development*
- G| *Consider design standards that guide commercial architecture*
- H| *Evaluate and enhance as appropriate site development and design standards for commercial development*
- I| *Minimize commercial lighting*

8 GOAL

Property owners throughout the town maintain their properties.

- A| *Mitigate unsightly properties' negative effects, including regulating the abundance of weeds*

9 GOAL

Los Ranchitos and Cañon greenbelts are delineated and development activity is guided by conservation principles

- B| *Work with Taos County to map greenbelt areas, some of which are inside the town currently or in the future, and some of which is in the unincorporated county*
- C| *Promote consistent land use regulations to guide development in greenbelt areas*

10 GOAL

The town annexes a portion of the greenbelts to better guide conservation land use practices, minimize environmental hazards and transition urban to rural character

- A| *Pursue phased annexation utilizing the following criteria:*
 - a| *Address current, or the potential with likelihood of, failing septic systems that threaten groundwater quality and that the town is able to serve with sanitary sewer - (high priority areas that mainly correspond to town identified areas 1-5)*
 - b| *Create readily definable town limits that avoid the confusion from small, irregular areas in or out of the town, make a regular geography that the town can serve in all its capacities, and simplify the map for emergency service providers*
 - c| *Avoid Traditional Historic Communities, based on Section 3-7-1 (NMSA 1978), while recognizing that annexation is allowed by state statute through a petition of a majority of the qualified electors within those communities*
 - d| *Create a boundary within which the town can plan for urban development needed for future growth, logically associated with the town, and guided by the future land use map*
 - e| *Create a boundary that contains a portion of the "greenbelt" around the town to continue in rural uses and preserve its character*
 - f| *Adhere to the principle that the town takes a share of responsibility to regulate land uses and pursue conservation measures within the greenbelt such as rural zoning districts, acquisition of selected*

sensitive lands, conservation easements, and mandatory conservation subdivisions that set aside portions of development areas to remain in agricultural or natural conditions

- g| The town shall coordinate with Taos County and Traditional Historic Communities in the annexation process, while Taos County and Traditional Historic Communities have their own responsibilities to regulate land use in the Taos greenbelt area, particularly agricultural lands to the east and south of the town, an area larger than what is proposed for town annexation
- h| Phase annexations to achieve the scheme over a number of years, following annexation methods allowed in state statutes, coordinating with Town and non-Town utilities, working with property owners, reviewing, revising or possibly devising new zone districts, coordinating with the county and traditional historic communities
- B| Consider providing density bonuses for agriculturists and large landowners in exchange for keeping more of their land as open space
- C| Consider purchase of easements or development rights from farmers and large landowners to be used as agricultural conservation easements
- D| Encourage the use of conservation subdivision design
- E| Require conservation subdivisions in greenbelt areas with significant agricultural resource lands, irrigation by historic acequias, areas that are prone to flooding or have wetlands, and areas designated as having a significant positive visual impact
- F| Allow agricultural uses in the open space areas of cluster developments. Encourage growth of Taos Regional Airport and airport business park development through annexation or other means

11 GOAL

Town is a sustainable and resilient community through sustainable development practices

- A| Periodically review the state building code to assure that it contains sufficient provisions to require energy and water efficiency
- B| Advocate for the state code to include any missing components of the town's High Performance Building Program
- C| Review the town's landscaping requirements to assure that they require or encourage climate-appropriate xeriscaping
- D| Encourage LEED (Leadership in Energy Efficiency in Design) certification, high-efficiency appliances, and LED lighting
- E| Support energy-wise construction projects and promote green building practices

12 GOAL

Wetlands, wildlife habitat, scenic views, and other ecologically important areas are protected

- A| Avoid development in streams, arroyos, and flood-prone area

13 GOAL

The development pattern transitions from urban densities inside the Town to rural densities, agricultural uses, and conservation lands on the outskirts of the Town and into contiguous areas outside the Town

- A| Revive the town/county extraterritorial review of subdivisions utilizing a tiered approach where development standards are generally higher and more urban for properties adjacent to town, and lower and more rural for areas farther away

14 GOAL

The Land Development Code updates strengthen natural resource protection and enhances community character through performance-based community design, addressing areas such as, but not limited to:

- A| *Assure that code compliance provisions are clear and code enforcement is defensible*
- B| *Improve the clarity and consistency of the code, particularly provisions adopted through incremental code amendments over the years*
- C| *Add to and assure the clarity of definitions in the code*
- D| *Revise provisions in the code and in code administration that improves the efficiency of development review*
- E| *Add provisions for conservation subdivisions, including designation of areas on the zoning map that contribute to the greenbelt where conservation subdivisions are mandatory*
- F| *Replace narrative that lists permitted and conditional uses by zone with a use table for all zones*
- G| *Replace dimensional requirements by zone with one table for all zones*
- H| *Replace form-based code approach area near Youth & Family Center/Chamisa Verde with a hybrid of conventional zones with form performance standards to achieve mixed income, mixed use, and work/live development*
- I| *Consider adding provisions to conserve view planes from scenic parks*
- J| *Consider changes to development and design standards such as height and allowance of murals*
- K| *Enhance mobile home park subdivision development and design standards*
- L| *Develop standards for nodal development types, such as commercial nodes, hotel nodes, and business park/complex nodes*
- M| *Review signage standards to make sure signs are not excessively large, limited in number of graphical elements, and integrated in architecture*
- N| *Replace dimensional requirements by zone with one table for all zones*
- O| *Add illustrations to accompany code provisions where needed*
- P| *Consider additional measures regarding the maintenance of dilapidated vacant buildings, particularly in the CBD*
- Q| *Consider making limitations on code enforcement actions that can be appealed to Town Council*

15 GOAL

The town has sufficient staff, training for staff and commissions, and coordination among Town departments and outside agencies to fulfill the responsibilities of community development

- A) *Work with the municipal judge on procedures for citing offenders of code violations, assessing fines, and taking other enforcement actions*
- B) *Staff the Community Development Department sufficiently to help implement the comprehensive plan, administer the Land Development Code and other portions of the Town Code for which the department is responsible, undertake code enforcement, review and process land use applications in desired expedited time frames, staff the Planning and Zoning Commission, Historic Preservation Commission, Development Review Committee, and other committees related to community development, use Town Council for applications and communications regarding planning and community development, coordinate with other staff on community development, and communicate with the public on community development*
- C) *Conduct annual training for Planning and Zoning Commission members, including review of commissioners' duties, managing of meetings, highlights of the land development code and any code updates in progress, comprehensive plan, legal decision-making for planning commissioners including differences between quasi-judicial and legislative proceedings, ex-parte communication, findings of fact, making the record, roles of staff planner, staff reports, and town attorney, and public involvement*
- D) *Conduct annual training for the Historic Preservation Commission members, including review of commissioners' duties, managing of meetings, highlights of the land development code historic overlay zone, contributing and non-contributing properties, comprehensive plan, difference between the national and state listing of historic districts and properties and the regulatory town historic overlay zone, difference between design standards and guidelines, historic architectural review does not include review of proposed use, findings of fact, making the record, roles of staff planner, staff reports, and town attorney, and public involvement, educating private property owners about the value of historic preservation, and available financial incentive*

ACTIONS

ACTION | Assure that code compliance provisions are clear and code enforcement is defensible

ACTION | Improve the clarity and consistency of the code, particularly provisions adopted through incremental code amendments over the years

ACTION | Add to and assure the clarity of definitions in the code

ACTION | Revise provisions in the code and in code administration that improves the efficiency of development review

ACTION | Add provisions for conservation subdivisions, including designation of areas on the zoning map that contribute to the greenbelt where conservation subdivisions are mandatory

ACTION | Replace narrative that lists permitted and conditional uses by zone with a use table for all zones

ACTION | Replace dimensional requirements by zone with one table for all zones

ACTION | Replace form-based code approach area near Youth & Family Center/Chamisa Verde with a hybrid of conventional zones with form performance standards to achieve mixed income, mixed use, and work/live development

ACTION | Consider adding provisions to conserve view planes from scenic parks

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ACTION | Enhance mobile home park subdivision development and design standards

ACTION | Develop standards for nodal development types, such as commercial nodes, hotel nodes, and business park/complex nodes

ACTION | Review signage standards to make sure signs are not excessively large, limited in number of graphical elements, and integrated in architecture

ACTION | Replace dimensional requirements by zone with one table for all zones

ACTION | Add illustrations to accompany code provisions where needed

ACTION | Consider additional measures regarding the maintenance of dilapidated vacant buildings, particularly in the CBD



GREEN NETWORK



TAOS GREEN NETWORK

INTRODUCTION

The Town of Taos has several cherished parks and the excellent and well-utilized Youth and Family Center complemented by a bevy of outstanding outdoor treasures. Taos' natural setting is highly valued by residents, and also serves to generate economic benefit to the town tax base and private business activities through events including concerts and sports tournaments. Trails and multimodal access and safety both in and outside the town center are a priority for improvements and integral to parks and recreation planning.

Open space, including publicly-owned and private land such as the Taos Land Trust's Rio Fernando open space adjacent to Fred Baca Park, complements park uses and promotes the protection and appreciation of native ecologies and wildlife.

The green network chapter will integrate parks, recreation, trails, transportation, land use, and economic development planning into strategies for improving and expanding Taos' outdoor assets as an interconnected green network providing residents and visitors with a world class outdoor experience of the exquisite and precious natural beauty of the Taos Valley.

FOUNDATIONS

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Under the umbrella of a "Taos green network," this chapter covers parks and recreation and addresses a constellation of related topics, issues, and opportunities that have been identified as a **top priority and core value** by the Taos Community.

TRAILS AND OPEN SPACE COLLABORATIVE PLANNING

The Enchanted Circle Trails Plan and Taos County Community Conservation Plan were developed by the Trust for Public Land in collaboration with the Taos Land Trust, the Enchanted Circle Trails Association, the National Parks Service, and the Town of Taos with support from LOR Foundation, the Town of Taos, Taos County, The National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program, Taos Land Trust, the Enchanted Circle Trails Association, and The Trust for Public Land.

Taos green network topics include trails, parks, recreation, natural setting, and ecological preservation and appreciation.

Community survey results and other community feedback illustrate widespread public support and prioritization of green network topics.

Community support is especially strong for improved connectivity of an expanded trails system with links to multimodal urban connections and improved safety and access.

Community Green Network Priorities

- Park Improvements & Maintenance
- Expanded Recreational Opportunities
- Preserved Open Spaces
- Expanded Trails Network
- Improved Multimodal Safety (trails, streets, sidewalks, bike lanes, etc.)
- Improved Connectivity



PLANNING REFERENCES

EXISTING PLANNING

Several topic-specific plans address and provide recommendations regarding various elements of a Taos green network including: parks, open space, outdoor recreation, multimodal trails and pathways, and conservation. These are listed below. Topics discussed in these and other Taos area plans also include greenbelts, acequias, and recreational economic development.

Plans and studies relevant to parks and recreation include:

- Town of Taos Parks + Recreation Master Plan (2018)
- Taos Recreation Trails Master Plan (2008)
- Town of Taos Bicycle Master Plan (2002, Revised 2017)
- Taos Youth and Family Center Master Plan (2018)
- The Town of Taos Alexander Gusdorf Eco-Park Master Plan (2010)
- Town of Taos Bicycle Master Plan (2017)
- Town of Taos Community Tree Care Plan (2019)
- Enchanted Circle Trails Plan, Trust for Public Land (2017)
- Town of Taos Vision 2020 Comprehensive Plan (1999)
- Taos County Community Conservation Plan, Trust for Public Land (2017)
- Taos Walkability Workshop And Report (2018)
- Taos Walking Map Of Historical Architectural Styles (2016)
- Taos Arts And Cultural District Report, Resource Team Assessment (2009)
- Acequia Aquí Preservation of Acequia Del Madre Del Rio Pueblo (2018)
- Water and The Historic Character of the Town of Taos (2018)
- Outdoor Recreation Atlas Pilot Study, 2021

These plans serve as a valuable resource and reference for green network planning in Taos, providing a wealth of data, historic, community and partnership context, as well as recommendations with goals and projects. Projects and recommendations developed in these plans should be prioritized where appropriate and relevant.

PRIMARY PLAN REFERENCES

This plan supports and builds on, as the primary resources and foundations for this chapter, the **Town of Taos Parks + Recreation Master Plan**, (2018), or Parks Plan, and the **Enchanted Circle Trails Plan**, or Trails Plan.

The Town of Taos Park + Recreation Master Plan provides:

- Conditions assessment of existing facilities, with project recommendations
- Comprehensive mapping of public & private recreation, trail, & open space assets
- Detailed town park conditions assessments & site maps
- Park classification definitions & level of service matrix
- Overview of parks & recreation goals in other existing plans
- Detailed comprehensive listing of Taos recreational spaces, uses, and league schedules
- Detailed Parks Division responsibilities
- List & schedule of town and private events
- Detailed history of each town park
- Documentation of public recommendations and feedback
- Extensive documentation of community input including survey responses and comments
- Evaluation of future needs with recommended strategies and priorities

Taos Parks + Recreation Plan

The Taos Parks + Recreation Master Plan, adopted in 2018, is comprehensive, extremely well-documented, well-researched, and informative. It should serve as the primary planning reference and resource for parks and recreation in Taos.

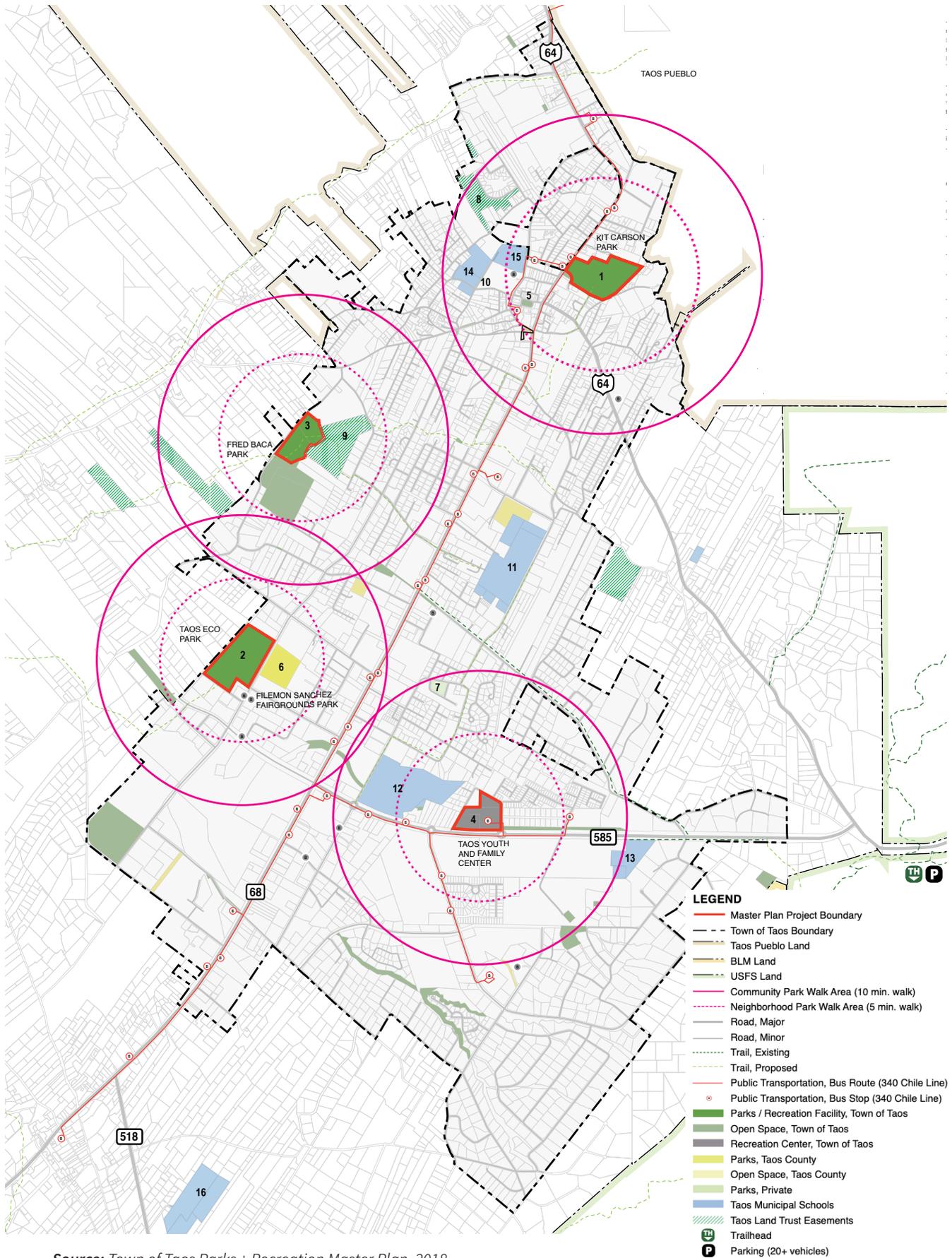
The Plan is based on an extensive public outreach process and thorough conditions assessments, and the goals it outlines are prioritized by the public, interest groups, park neighbors, stakeholders, and town staff.

It is designed to work with other existing plans including the Enchanted Circle Trails Plan and the Community Conservation Plan.

The Parks and Trails Plans provides detailed review and planning work specific to parks, recreation and trail management and projects.

Bicycle routes, sidewalks, & pedestrian accessibility is addressed in the Transportation chapter.

Exhibit 5-01: Exhibit: Parks, Open Space and Trails Map



Source: Town of Taos Parks + Recreation Master Plan, 2018

The Enchanted Circle Trails Plan

The **Enchanted Circle Trails Plan**, developed in 2017 by the Trust for Public Land, provides a blueprint for a regional trails network encompassing the “Enchanted Circle” region, a large area defined by the Enchanted Circle Scenic Byway. The plan provides preliminary priority projects and a set of strategies for developing the network.

The Trails Plan provides the foundational work that local jurisdictions, agencies, and community groups can build on with additional local-level assessments and site-specific project planning and funding.

TRAIL NETWORK PRIORITIES

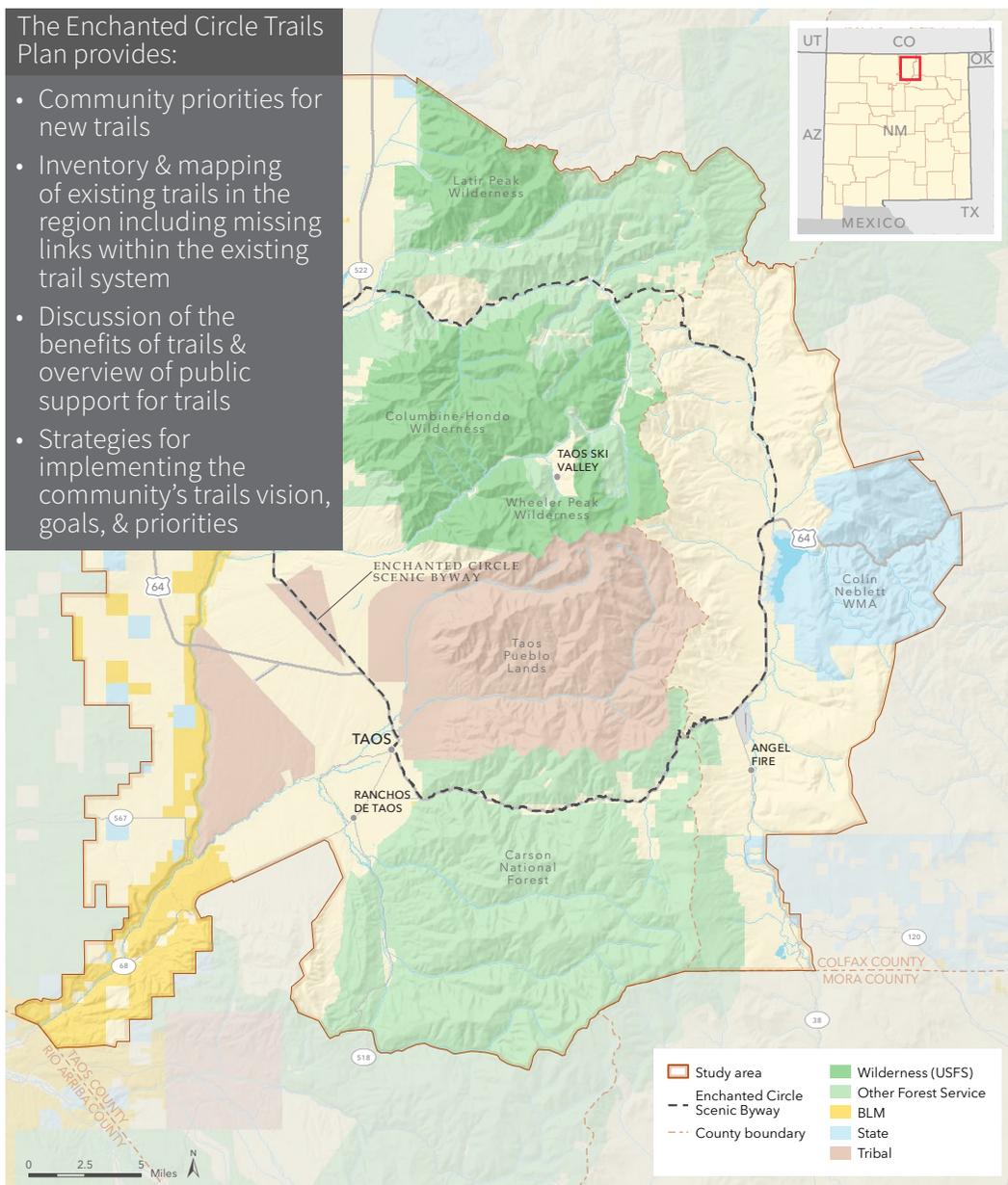
The community identified road improvements in the Town of Taos as a top priority in trail building and provided specific improvement projects to prioritize. Recommendations focus mainly on improving bike trails within the town.

See Transportation chapter for additional bike lane discussion and recommendations.

Exhibit 5-02: Enchanted Circle Planning Area

The Enchanted Circle Trails Plan provides:

- Community priorities for new trails
- Inventory & mapping of existing trails in the region including missing links within the existing trail system
- Discussion of the benefits of trails & overview of public support for trails
- Strategies for implementing the community’s trails vision, goals, & priorities



Bike lane projects that widen roads should weigh community character and safe driving habits promoted by narrower roads with the benefits of expanded bicycle access.

Open Space

The Taos County Community Conservation Plan, also developed in 2017 by the Trust for Public Land, is focused on opportunities for voluntary conservation of private land.

As such, the plan includes one recommendation specifically for the town which is to adopt a resolution in support of the plan and incorporate the work into municipal planning.

The plan identifies the top four conservation priorities for Taos County based on community outreach results:

- Protect water quality and quantity
- Protect cultural resources, including traditional agriculture
- Protect wildlife habitat
- Provide access to recreational opportunities

The map on the preceding pages presents priority sites in each of these categories overlaid to show overall priority locations for conservation and recreation projects as identified by the community.

This plan supports the Taos Community Conservation Plan and recommends continued town support for the effort.

Message from Enchanted Circle Trails Association

Northern New Mexico has extraordinary natural assets, and the Enchanted Circle Trails Association is committed to using the Trails Plan as a guide to create alternative transportation infrastructure, enhanced signage and branding of trails, and easier access to recreational amenities. As a nonprofit organization, the Enchanted Circle Trails Association links multiple jurisdictions and user groups to a trail system.

—Carl Colonius, Enchanted Circle Trails Association

[THE ENCHANTED CIRCLE TRAILS PLAN] REPRESENTS A LONG-TERM VISION FOR THE STUDY AREA. THERE ARE 23 OVERALL TIER 1 PRIORITY TRAILS COVERING 135 MILES. THE ENCHANTED CIRCLE ROAD-BIKING PRIORITIES INCLUDE 17 ROAD SEGMENTS COVERING 164 MILES. THERE ARE ALSO PRIORITY TRAILS FOR EACH OF THE 13 TRAIL PLANNING AREAS. WITHIN PLANNING AREAS, LOCAL COMMUNITIES CAN DEVELOP NEW PRIORITIES OVER TIME WITH AN EMPHASIS ON EQUITABLE ACCESS, DIVERSE TRAIL TYPES, OR OTHER FACTORS AS APPROPRIATE.

—Enchanted Circle Trails Plan

Message from The Trust for Public Land

The Trust for Public Land is awed by the level of community interest and engagement in this trail-planning effort. Trails are a powerful tool for increasing quality of life and community health, and they are a critical element of The Trust for Public Land's mission to "ensure healthy, livable communities for generations to come." Trails can connect us to iconic landscapes and to community centers—from mountaintops to Main Street. If designed and sited carefully, trails can also help improve social equity. There's a tremendous opportunity in the Enchanted Circle right now to bring together diverse groups to ensure equitable access to safe in-town routes for biking and walking and spectacular backcountry routes to some of the most beautiful and iconic landscapes in the world. We are thrilled that this Trails Plan can be part of making this vision a reality.

—Greg Hiner, Southwest Director of Land Protection, The Trust for Public Land

OUR VISION IS A TAOS COUNTY WHERE CULTURAL TRADITIONS ARE EMBRACED AND QUALITY OF LIFE IS EXCELLENT BECAUSE EVERYONE IS CONNECTED TO THE LAND AND COMMITTED TO SUSTAINABLE STEWARDSHIP OF OUR UNIQUE NATURAL AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPES BY AND FOR OUR COMMUNITY.

—Taos Community Conservation Plan

PARKS AND TRAILS PLANS PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

In developing parks and trails projects, the Town may consider addressing projects identified in these plans based on opportunity as well as prioritization as defined in these plans rather than considering prioritization alone.

PARKS AND TRAILS COMMUNITY RESOURCES

The complex, resource-intensive effort of parks and trails development and maintenance has a substantial base of support in Taos. Not only is it a top priority for the community, there are a number of effective and capable groups focused on matters related to the issue.

Current collaborations and partnerships already play an essential role in the town's work to maintain, expand, and improve parks and trails. Maintaining and expanding collaborative partnerships and continued support of the important work these groups do will be elemental in successful efforts to come.

Parks & Trails Plans provide an overview of the extensive collaborative potential & array of capacities available through local and regional parks, recreation, and conservation groups.

RECOMMENDATION | TRAILS PLANNING

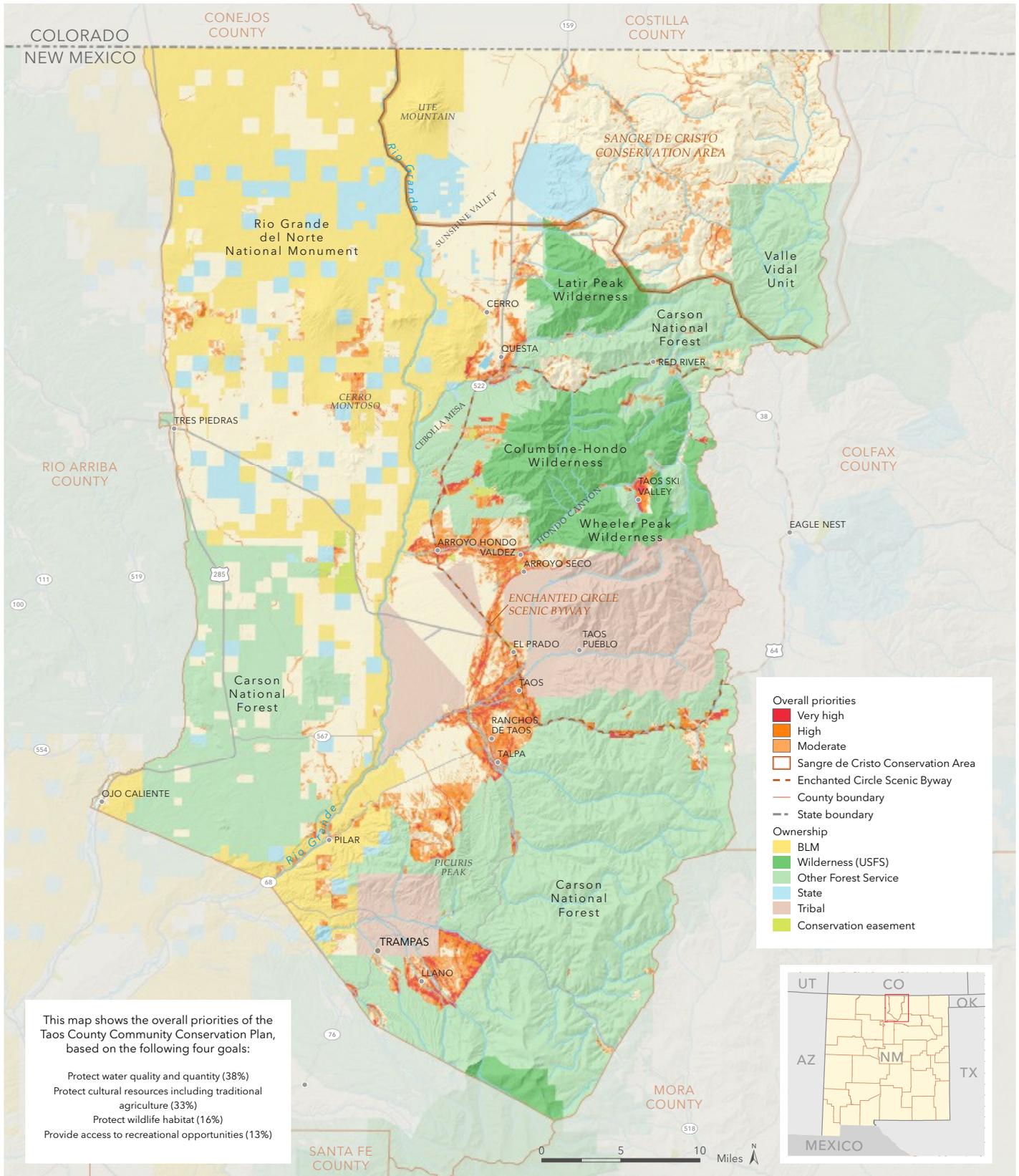
TOWN PROJECTS AND COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS SHOULD BE PRIORITIZED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PARKS AND TRAILS PLANS AND AS OPPORTUNITIES ARISE.

The TOWN OF TAOS PARKS DEPARTMENT'S mission is: To provide support services, maintenance and monitoring for all town-owned parks and recreation. Taos Parks – Clean Green and Safe.

The TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to creating parks and protecting land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come.

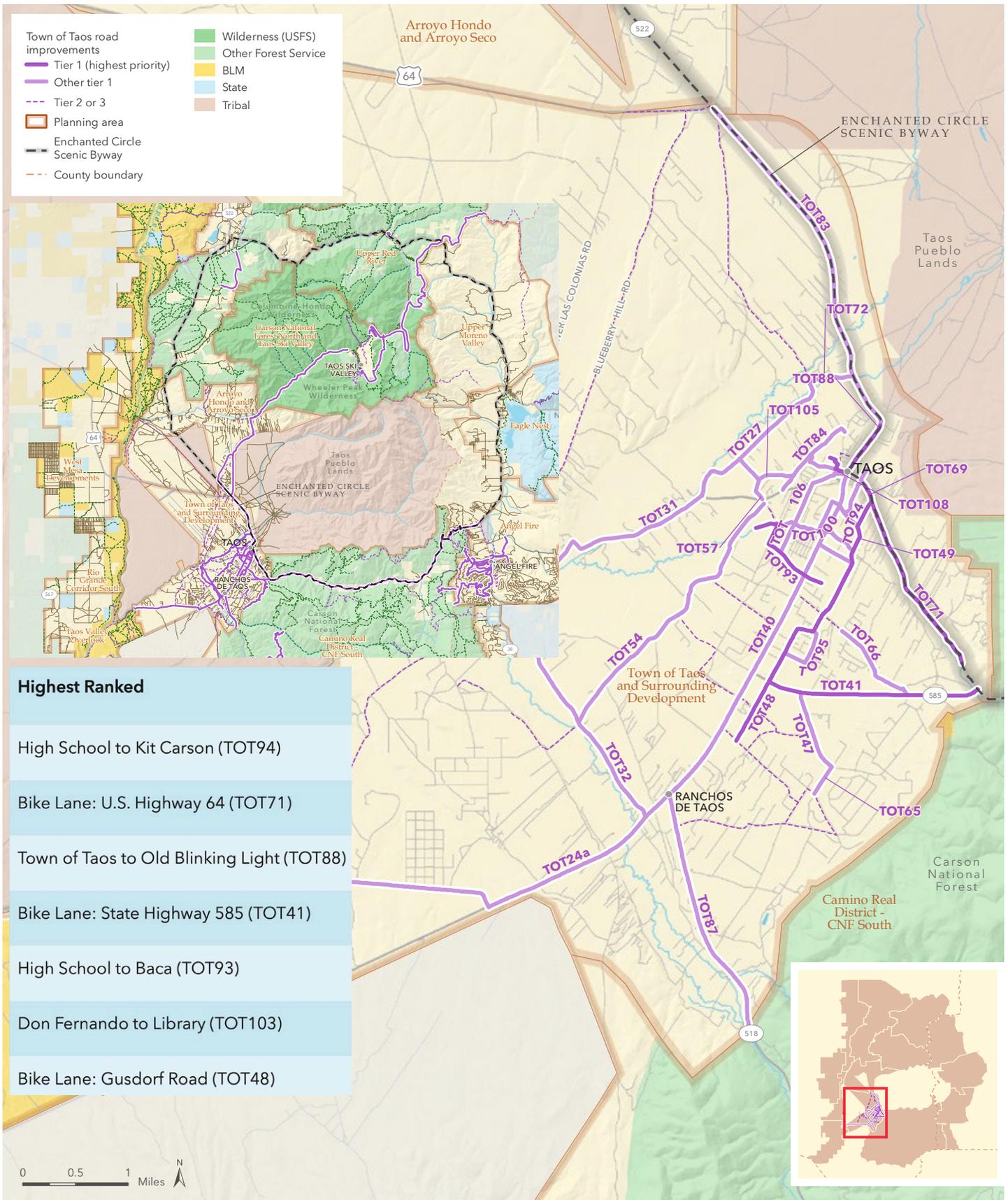
The ENCHANTED CIRCLE TRAILS ASSOCIATION develops, maintains and promotes trails in the Enchanted Circle region of Northern New Mexico. It is dedicated to the creation of a trail system to positively affect community health, increase economic development through recreational tourism, and improve the quality of life in the region.

Exhibit 5-03: Overall Priority Areas for Conservation, Taos Community Conservation Plan



Source: Trust for Public Lands, Taos Community Conservation Plan

Exhibit 5-04: Priority Projects for Trails Network Development in Taos



Source: Enchanted Circle Trails Plan

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Planning Priorities & Themes

Regional collaboration in developing, maintaining, promoting, and supporting parks and recreational assets with regional groups, governments, and stakeholders has significant potential.

The area's historic relationships with resort towns and establishments, variety of natural assets, proactive and capable community groups, high level of public support and interest, and high-caliber marketing capability and name recognition represent unique and valuable assets to support a regional recreation strategy.

Previous efforts to build on regional recreational capacity focused on sports training and tournaments which failed to gain the public support needed to reach critical momentum.

Strategies focused on improving recreational opportunities for the community while protecting and preserving natural resources and improving connectivity and safety may align more closely with community priorities presently. Existing, successful sports tournament draws should remain a priority and serve as a template for expanding future efforts.

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY:

Improve Taos for the people of Taos first. People love to visit places where people love to live.

GREENBELT PLANNING

A **greenbelt** is a policy and land-use zone designation used in land-use planning to retain areas of largely undeveloped, wild, or agricultural land surrounding or neighboring urban and developed areas.

Several existing plans, including Vision 2020, include recommendations supporting the idea of establishing a “greenbelt” around Taos.

However, the various recommendations do not establish regulatory and policy tools that are needed to guarantee a greenbelt zone that is free from development in perpetuity.

Strategies supporting greenbelts are not necessarily regulatory, though land purchase, use restrictions, and conservation easements are the most reliable strategies.

Other, non-regulatory strategies can include encouragement for farmers to continue farming, careful and limiting utility extension policies that require timing for when properties can hookup, support for acequia groups working to maintain the irrigation networks, and supporting the economic role of agriculture.

Collaboration with regional partners including the county and neighboring traditional historic communities is essential in developing and deploying any greenbelt strategy.

This plan supports the goal of a Taos green belt, and provides a thorough discussion and strategy for conserving greenbelt lands as outlined in the Annexation Strategy in the Land Use chapter.

GREEN NETWORK PLANNING

Developing and expanding existing outdoor recreation and conservation assets into an interconnected green network would serve to address two of the community's top priorities (improving connectivity and promoting conservation and recreation) and be an important economic development strategy. To begin the work of accomplishing this, a potential green network must be mapped out to identify priority areas for inclusion and development. This effort may draw on the region's extensive community capacity by forming and establishing a community committee to lead the effort.

Ideally, the effort should be led by a group focused on developing a broad array of regional green assets. A regional Parks & Recreation group would be an ideal candidate but as yet does not exist.

GREEN MAP COMMITTEE

The primary task for establishing and developing a green network in Taos will be identifying existing and potential “green nodes” (parks, recreation facilities and outstanding natural features) and connections composing the network.

STEP ONE

Convene and host a series of mapping sessions with regional and local partners and provide mapping assistance and data to aid in identifying assets, properties, links, gaps, and potential sites for development as elements of a town and regional green network.

A **Taos green network** concept consists of parks, open space, trails, greenbelt (large swaths of agricultural land or National Forest that define the urban extent), and greenways (linear green systems internal to the community). Greenways may consist of rivers, arroyos, acequias, and may have multi-modal trails and pathways. Public and private recreational facilities and resources may be included in a green network concept as well.

GREEN NETWORK MAPPING

The Town of Taos can engage knowledge, experience, data, and assistance from a wide base of resources to develop a future green network map. Such a group will need guidance and structure that can be provided by the town in its formation.

Town Support for the Green Map Committee should include:

- Identification of goals and priorities including deliverables
- Establishing communication and reporting procedures
- Designating decision-making roles and responsibilities
- Identifying and inviting participants,
- Designing mapping sessions and mapping review process
- Identifying Green Map (and, ultimately, green network) parameters and limitations
- Establishing provisions for municipal adoption and implementation of findings
- Providing resources and tools for mapping work sessions including meeting space, GIS capacity & expertise, other materials as needed including printing, etc.
- Establishing protocols and schedules for map review, adoption, and updates.

Local and regional interest groups will play an integral role in developing a local green network priorities map as partners in the identification, establishment, and maintenance of the network.

Prioritize partnerships with the Trust for Public Land and Taos Land Trust in devising a green network in Taos and ways to acquire easements and properties.

Potential partners include:

- Taos Land Trust
- Trust for Public Lands
- US Forest Service and NM Forestry/State Parks
- Taos Soil and Water Conservation District/NRCS
- Rio Fernando de Taos Revitalization Collaborative
- Rocky Mountain Youth Conservation Corps
- Enchanted Circle Trails Association
- Taos Valley Acequia Association
- Rio Bravos
- Taos Mainstreet
- Taos Municipal Schools
- Community Wildfire Protection Plan(CWPP) / Firewise Collaborative
- Taos Tree Board

Regional partners may be included in the initial mapping exercises, or may be called on to review maps developed by the group, but should be central in planning, developing, and supporting regional network connections and assets.

Regional Partners

- Taos County
- Taos Ski Valley
- Taos Pueblo
- Enchanted Circle Council of Governments
- North Central NM Economic Development Department

NETWORK PLANNING RESOURCES

INTEGRATING EXISTING PLANS

All participants invited to assist in the effort should be asked to review all relevant existing source plans including those referred to in this plan with special attention given to parks and pedestrian and bicycle trails, routes and lanes. A clear knowledge of these plans and the issues, projects, and priorities outlined in them will be essential to green network mapping efforts.

Projects identified in existing plans that remain priorities for the community should be included in future green network development and identified in final mapping scenarios along with projects identified through the network mapping exercise.

Crowd-sourcing may be organized to provide on-the-ground mapping of desire paths, condition issues, access barriers, and user behaviors to support mapping efforts and town asset management efforts.

COMMUNITY INPUT

Source plans provide analysis and documentation representing extensive community feedback that should serve as a basis for understanding the community's values, concerns, priorities and ideas pertaining to green network elements.

Community input serves as the foundation for identifying and prioritizing green network elements in Taos and additional outreach may be needed to validate findings.

Trails, trail safety, youth recreation and activities, natural setting, environmental stewardship and appreciation, sustainability and resource conservation, and outdoor recreation were identified as top priorities for the community during this planning effort, and should be a priority for municipal and partner group efforts in turn.

TOWN TRAILS NETWORK

General guidance and priority roads for bike and pedestrian improvements in the town provided in the Trails Plan should serve as a starting point for detailed, evaluation of potential local trails and linkages.

Local-level trails' needs and opportunities should consider and integrate off-road trails, desire paths, and connections to green assets and trails within the town as well as to regional trails, with a priority focus on safety and access considerations discussed later in this chapter.

TOWN PARKS & RECREATION NEEDS

Identifying and prioritizing potential park and recreation elements in the network should be informed by and referred to the Parks Plan which provides extensive documentation of community input for informing needs. The clear and detailed master planning for existing park amenities provided in the Park Plan should not be superseded by network development projects, though unique opportunities may present themselves that justify prioritization of other parks and recreation projects over Parks Plan priorities.

An additional asset produced by network mapping efforts will be identification of all existing trails and assets including ownership, access, and condition issues that can be digitized and integrated into asset inventory and management, and developed as a marketing/ information resource for trails and recreation uses.

NETWORK CONSIDERATIONS

Town Open Space and additional network development considerations are provided under Priority Projects later in this chapter. These should serve as parameters for designating network nodes and connections.

The Land Use development strategy focusing on "nodes" recommended in this plan may provide a framework for focusing green network improvements & projects.

PROPOSED NETWORK MAPS

The goal of the mapping sessions will be to develop a series of maps identifying **existing and proposed** nodes and links in future Taos green network scenarios.

Priority projects and a preferred scenario should be identified among the potential mapping scenarios, with alternate scenarios in place should priority projects prove unworkable.

GREEN NETWORK MAPS

Green Network Connections & Links can include:

- Walking and hiking trails & pathways
- Sidewalks & bike lanes
- Multimodal trails (possibly including low-volume rural roadways)
- Walking tour routes
- Transit routes

Green Network Nodes should include:

- Parks and outdoor recreation facilities
- Indoor facilities such as the Recreation Center
- Ecological features
- Publicly accessible elements such as school or church playgrounds, gardens
- Private and semi-public features such as recreational businesses and support such as equipment sale/ rental, experience and event providers (tours, etc)
- Refer to the Outdoor Recreational Atlas Report, discussed in the Economic Development chapter, additional listings and definitions of outdoor recreation elements to consider including.

GIS & GREEN NETWORK MAPPING

Taos GIS data can serve as an excellent resource for the committee in identifying potential sites and routes composing a network for Taos.

Town of Taos GIS Capability & Database Assets

Data layers to consider:

- Existing parks and opens space (public-owned including town, county and other public))
- Conservation and agriculture lands (privately held)
- Vacant Land (public & private)
- Land use, zoning, & regulatory districts
- Hydrology
- Flood Risk (FIRM flood risk analysis mapping)
- Slope
- National wetland mapping
- New Mexico crucial habitat assessment
- Taos tree data
- Existing & proposed trails
- Açequias
- Sidewalks
- Safe Routes to School
- Future land use, provided in Land Use chapter
- Existing walking tour routes
- Rail and roadways
- Existing bike lanes
- Transit routes
- Proposed trails & improvement projects
- Rights-of-way and easements

Additional Map & Data Resources

- The Taos Parks + Recreation Master Plan provides excellent maps covering a wide range of considerations relevant to green network mapping efforts. The Park Plan should be the primary starting point for understanding issues and opportunities for developing a green network in Taos
- The Taos Land Trust
- Taos County
- CWPP / Firewise Collaborative

GREEN NETWORK STAGING

MUNICIPAL ACTION

In-house, municipal fact checking and proof of concept evaluation, leading to legal and financial feasibility analyses will be needed before designating priority sites for acquisition and development.

Follow-up from mapping/plan to action must be conducted within a reasonable timeframe to ensure the relevance of recommendations.

STEP TWO

Municipal due diligence & feasibility analysis to designate priority green network expansion sites.

GREEN NETWORK DEVELOPMENT

With priority target projects identified and vetted, the Town can adopt strategies and seek/ dedicate funding streams to support green network master planning which will provide a clear understanding of potential costs and benefits and identify a preferred development strategy.

The Town and partners can begin taking steps to secure the access, development rights, and partnerships necessary to incorporate properties into the network.

STEP THREE

Identify partners and priority projects and establish a strategy and policies for development of network elements.

POLICY & INITIATIVES

Municipal policy with dedicated funding and staffing, and sustained, active public support will be needed to develop, realize, and maintain a green network at the local level.

The maps developed by the Green Map Committee will provide the town with a framework for expanding and improving Taos trails, parks, open space, features, and amenities.

Mapping Exercise Steps Summary:

Engage local and regional partners to conduct mapping exercise with town support, organization & direction, and resources

Review existing plans and include relevant projects in future mapping

Understand considerations including those provided here (under Priority Projects)

Develop priority and alternate scenarios for developing a future green network

Understand and prioritize scenarios that align with community priorities as documented in this plan, the Parks and Trails Plans, and other existing planning and outreach resources

NETWORK MANAGEMENT & POTENTIAL

Managing and utilizing a green network once it is established will involve certain considerations and resources.

MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

The maintenance requirements of any proposed green network projects should be a factor in considering feasibility roles. Any partnerships or agreements forged in the designation and development of the network should consider long-term maintenance costs and prioritize projects that will result in sustained community benefit in the long term. Expanded town recreation elements and park spaces, will expand the responsibilities of municipal staff as they work to provide continuous maintenance and management of the added assets.

Municipal staff charged with maintaining town parks and recreation assets currently succeed in meeting a large number and range of responsibilities. Additional resources should be provided to the department to meet any additional responsibilities and requirements resulting from expanded green network amenities.

NETWORK DESIGN & POTENTIAL

What to do with an asset like a green network is nearly a blue sky scenario. Meeting the needs of locals, fostering community, and supporting the values and culture of Taos should always remain the top priority for consideration of potential uses.

The network can host any variety of attractions and amenities identified as needs and priorities by the public and will be a substantial asset for improving the quality of life for residents and also as added attractions to draw visitors, investors, and businesses.

Taos can build on its range of existing natural and cultural assets to support and develop events, attractions, features, and amenities. Integrating elements of Taos' unique identity into project designs or event themes will honor local values while building on and reinforcing the Taos identity in the cultural landscape.

Elements reflecting Taos values and identity may reflect any number of aspects unique to Taos including its:

- Traditional and contemporary arts and creative culture
- Established festivals and events
- Natural features and outdoor recreation assets
- Sustainable values and solutions like earthships, hay bail construction, tiny homes, or shipping container building
- Historical and cultural elements such as açequia networks and traditional agriculture

Attracting tourism and visitation is certainly an important element of the Taos economy, identity, and culture, that could and should be supported by a green network, but projects should be accessible, affordable, appealing, and beneficial to local residents as a primary goal, with priority and considerations made for limited disruption and inconvenience to local life.

Art and Parks are natural partners.

Public art is a foundational element of public recreational space; sculpture gardens, interactive installations, and temporary light shows or performance events are huge draws inviting community engagement and tourism.

The world-class arts and culture resources in Taos, including local, successful, innovative, contemporary arts projects such as The PASEO or regional groups such as Meow Wolf should be considered as partners in developing the Taos green network as a spectacular showcase for innovative arts and parks collaborations.

To support conservation and enable recreational and commuter travel from and to town among nearby community areas, network mapping should consider the following:

- Identify connections in need of easements and rights-of-way for public access on trails that extend into the National Forest.
- Prioritize network elements that enable recreational and commuter travel from and to town among nearby community areas.

PUBLIC ACCESS AND PRIVATE RESTRICTIONS ON ACCESS

Respecting the rights and privacy of private property owners is foundational. Access onto and through private property by the public should always be regulated under access agreement or other legal means and the limitations and parameters of such understood and respected by all parties.

Access may be purposefully limited in some instances.

Acequia access is under the jurisdiction of acequia managers and is frequently limited to protect the resource they carry. While integrating and showcasing the area's traditional irrigation systems and agriculture culture should be a focus of green network development, honoring the security needs and privacy considerations of acequia users is paramount.

Certain ecological considerations may restrict access as well. Habitat and floodplain spaces should be given due berth and conscious efforts not to disturb river denizens, especially beavers, should be prioritized.

IMPROVING ACCESS

Understanding the legal parameters of trail access including rights-of-way and easements has been an issue of contention between property owners and trail users in Taos. Currently, town legal staff are working to parse out the issue and the town should continue work to delineate rights and responsibilities and educate the public and property owners as to the responsibilities of each on the issue.

PRIORITIES FOR PARKS, RECREATION AND TRAILS

The community has provided priority parks, recreation, and trails improvements through various outreach throughout the planning process and covers topics including:

- Need for dog parks, pickleball courts, and community gardens
- Strong support for expanded youth recreation with suggestions for specific projects
- Support for expanded bike trails, paths, and lanes.
- Improved park maintenance
- Expanded amenities and services
- Several noted opposition to concert series in Kit Carson Park

A complete listing of comments related to parks and recreation is included in the Appendix of this plan.

Complete listing of the specific recommendations for trail connections and improvement projects listed in the Enchanted Circle Trails Plan is included in the Transportation chapter.

PARKS DEPARTMENT PRIORITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS

Additional parks department priorities and needs identified by staff at this time are listed below.

- The parks department would like to develop or expand capacity in the following areas but does not have the staff or funding resources to do so at this time:
 - Expanded programming developed and run in-house by the parks department, in collaboration with the Youth and Family Center and serving a range of age and interest groups.
 - Restoration of a Parks Commission to serve as a communication conduit between the department and the public.
 - Additional and expanded maintenance and improvements capacity.

Priority Parks Projects & Needs

Kit Carson Park

- Identifying a strategy for reconciling land ownership of family plots in Kit Carson Cemetery
- Improving safety; installing lighting
- Sidewalk improvements, utility infrastructure
- Improve children’s area
- Updating and expanding tree canopy
- Maintaining and expanding venue uses as a national professional venue, improving power access, signage, and lighting

Fred Baca Park

- Improve children’s area
- Continue maintaining wetland and acequias
- Plan for development and expansion

Taos Plaza

- Continue progress towards park improvements
- Upgrade drainage and water

Eco Park

- Work with school district to identify a strategy for ownership and maintenance

GOALS, POLICIES, & ACTIONS

1 GOAL

Green Network: The Town of Taos supports an accessible, safe network of green spaces including parks, open space, trails, and recreational amenities.

- A) **Continue work to expand the Taos green network by developing a variety of open spaces, trails, parks, park types, and recreational opportunities throughout the Town of Taos as outlined in the Parks & Recreation Master Plan and as new opportunities and needs arise.**
- B) **Work with the county, state, and other public entities, community groups and foundations, and the public to establish and develop land as elements and connections of a green network.**
 - a) **Employ existing, and through green network mapping develop additional geospatial (GIS) data to identify parks and recreational assets, maintenance issues, and conservation priorities**
 - b) **Prioritize developing Fred Baca Park and the properties adjacent to it as a natural wetlands park and open space with improved and expanded amenities.**
 - c) **Prioritize projects that promote connectivity, ecological restoration and protection, public safety, and protect agricultural and cultural assets including the acequia network.**
- C) **Continue work to develop parks projects as outlined in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan**
 - a) **Continue work to design a regional park as identified in the Park Master Plan to include disc golf, BMX track, walking trail, bathrooms, parking lot, picnic area, dog walking trail, and multimodal transportation.**
- D) **Consideration should be given by developers for whether a green network segment may be located in a proposed development area, identifying any significant ecological aspects of the development site, such as drainages, location in proximity or potential accessibility to community**

parks or recreational facilities and National Forest, including the possibility of partnerships and potential for easements or rights-of-way.

2 GOAL

Public access to trails, open space, easements, and rights-of-way is protected and enforced.

A| Work to ensure landowners and the public understand and comply with public access regulation regarding to trails, open space, easements, and rights-of-way to trails, open space, easements, and rights-of-way

3 GOAL

Community engagement, adequate resources, master planning, and management tools support a robust and proactive Town of Taos Parks & Facilities Department.

A| Continue to support of the Taos Tree Board's work to ensure that Taos' tree canopy is well-maintained and healthy, and expanded wherever possible

ACTIONS

Specific instructions to make strategies succeed.

ACTION | Review land use, property ownership, and other maps provided in the Comprehensive Plan to identify potential links and assets for a green Network throughout the Town of Taos.

ACTION | Partner with the Taos Land Trust for conservation mapping.

ACTION | Engage local and regional partners to conduct mapping exercise with town support, organization & direction, and resources.

ACTION | Review existing plans and include relevant projects in future mapping.

ACTION | Develop priority and alternate scenarios for developing a future green network.

ACTION | Understand and prioritize scenarios that align with community priorities as documented in this plan, the Parks and Trails Plans, and other existing planning and outreach resources.

ACTION | Identify rights and responsibilities as established in existing regulation pertaining to public access and provide landowners and the public with clear outlines of the legal parameters within which each must abide.

ACTION | Identify gaps in existing regulation, including unclear or conflicting elements, and establish local regulation addressing rights of access as appropriate.

ACTION | Engage the Taos Public Schools to identify a strategy for ownership and management of Eco Park that works to the benefit of the town, the schools, and the public.

ACTION | Provide support for community volunteers including defining responsibilities and goals, reliable funding, regularly scheduled meetings and workshops with staff, and established procedures for appointments, recommendations, public engagement, conduct, and communications protocols.

ACTION | Hold regular internal parks & recreation workshops and reviews with leadership to review proposed and planned projects and identify priority projects based on magnitude of positive impact, availability of resources including funding and staff, and public support.

ACTION | With the Taos Tree Board and the public, identify and establish a format for public interface to serve as a conduit for communications between the Parks and Recreation Department and the public.

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HOUSING



HOUSING

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the housing element is to identify existing and projected future housing needs in the Town of Taos. Affordable housing is of particular concern since the cost of housing has increased dramatically and availability of affordable rental and owner-occupied housing is in critical shortage. Affordable housing is in critical need not only in the town, also in the county and region. The housing element establishes long-range priorities, goals, and policies both to guide town efforts and to assist in coordination with the regional housing authority, town-county collaborative efforts, and various private and nonprofit entities engaged in providing housing in the community. The housing element provides guidance to meet demands for new housing and improving housing quality.

FOUNDATIONS

PLANNING REFERENCES

The Housing chapter supports and builds on the following existing plans and studies:

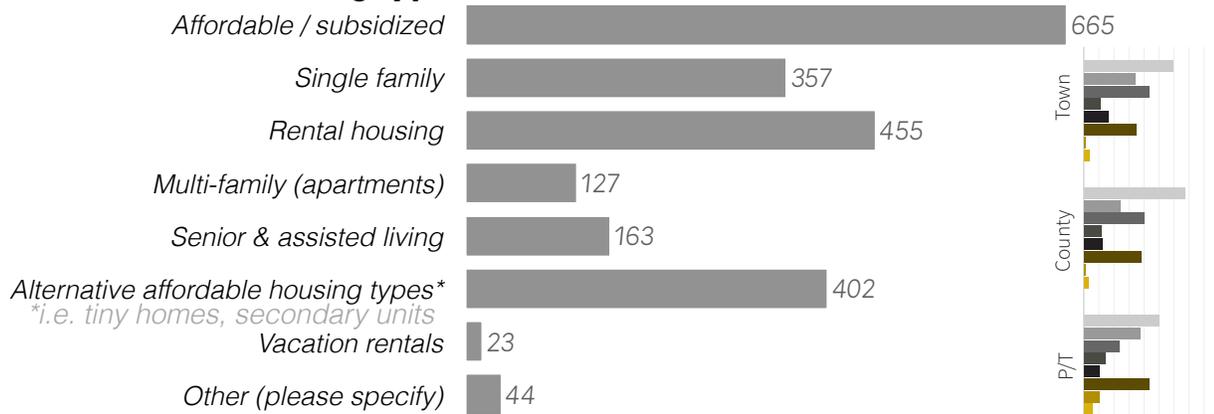
- *Town of Taos Affordable Housing Plan (adopted in 2020)*
- *Vision 2020 Comprehensive Plan (adopted in 1999)*
- *Strong at Heart (2020)*

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Community survey respondents strongly identified affordable/subsidized housing as the type of housing most needed in Taos. Affordable housing was not an exclusive choice, since it can be a component of all the other survey choices, with the exception of vacation rentals, nor does it necessarily mean “subsidized,” only that it is affordable in its economic context. Rental housing was the second most needed housing type, followed by alternative affordable housing types (including tiny homes and secondary - also called accessory dwelling units (ADUs). Respondents who are county residents and part-time residents most strongly favored alternative housing types. Part-time resident respondents selected single family housing as the third most in need housing type in Taos.

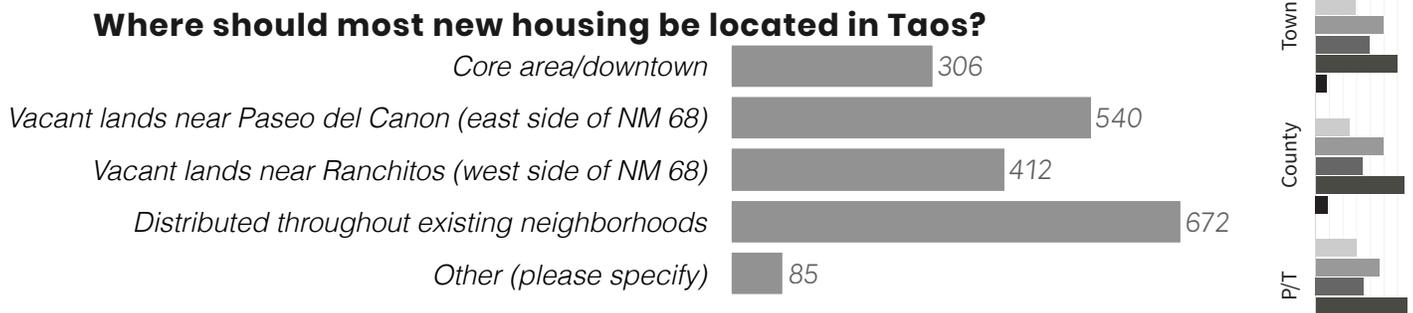
Exhibit 6-01: Community Survey Graph - Housing Needs

What housing type(s) is Taos most in need of? (choose 2)



Respondents favored distributing new housing throughout existing neighborhoods highest, followed by vacant lands near Paseo del Canon East, but not overwhelmingly over the choices of the west side and downtown.

Exhibit 6-02: Community Survey Graph - Housing Location



COMMUNITY SURVEY AND PUBLIC MEETINGS COMMENTS

Community survey respondents and participants in public meetings made a number of comments relevant to housing, which fit into the following themes:

- Affordable housing is badly needed
- Displacement of long-time residents is a major concern and should be mitigated
- Keep the youth in town, requiring affordable housing and living wage jobs
- Support for limiting short-term rentals
- No new development due to limited resources, need to redistribute affordability, reuse, and/or anti-growth
- Focus on locals not tourists and second home folks
- Historic preservation should protect the character of downtown to include cultural preservation and reduce gentrification
- Sustainability, including planning for climate change, should be stressed in all endeavors
 - Affordable housing should be well-built and energy efficient especially since climate change will increase temperatures, storms, flooding, fire events, and high winds.
 - Taos High Performance Buildings Ordinance 09-03 addresses energy efficiency, water use, and should be enforced
 - Water conservation should be taken extremely seriously
- Some participants believe there is no available land for housing in Taos. Others pointed out that land is available along Paseo del Canon and west of Salazar and north and south of Este Es
- Homeownership of affordable housing should be promoted, not only rentals
- Housing cooperatives have a place in Taos
- The Community Reinvestment Act, enacted by Congress in 1977, requires banks to invest a portion of their assets in community development. Some of this investment should be in affordable housing
- Better wages are an important component of affordability
- The town should show support for the state of homelessness
- Taxing short-term rentals to generate revenues for affordable housing

Affordable Housing

Many participants who attended the second public comprehensive planning public meeting, held on November 10, 2021 (online, via Zoom), identified affordable housing as their biggest concern. Many voiced concern that local needs were being superseded and their community’s long-term sustainability threatened by outside forces.

Themes of Community Input on Housing

Community input on housing generally fell into the following themes:

- Affordable housing is badly needed
- Affordable housing should be distributed throughout existing neighborhoods as appropriate
- Displacement of long-time residents is a major concern and should be addressed
- Support for limiting short-term rentals
- Restrict new development due to limited resources, need to redistribute affordability, reuse, and/or anti-growth
- Focus on the needs of local residents
- Historic preservation should protect the character of downtown and include cultural preservation and reduction of gentrification
- Sustainability, including planning for climate change, should be stressed in all endeavors

Exhibit 6-03: Example of Local Housing Structure



C O N T E X T

HOUSING SUPPLY AND MARKET CHARACTERISTICS

The Affordable Housing Plan prepared in 2020 by North Central New Mexico Economic Development District contains a great deal of background information about housing supply and demand and is the guide to the comprehensive plan's housing element. The following discussion of existing conditions utilizes several of the charts from the Affordable Housing Plan, as cited, as well as additional information collected for this plan.

OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS BY TENURE

The number of occupied housing units increased by nearly 1,200 units between 2000 and 2010 and by nearly 500 units between 2010 and 2020. However, from 2000 to 2010, the town lost 345 rental units. In the 2010-2020 decade, the town gained only one rental housing unit to its total supply. If the town had not gained affordable housing through Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) projects during the decade, the number of rental-occupied housing would have been even smaller. Working with partners, the Town of Taos has helped facilitate the development of 297 new, affordable housing units in six separate Low Income Housing Tax Credit projects during the last decade that balanced the count of rental units even as the net loss in private market rental units seen in the previous decade continued.

These data support the sentiment expressed throughout the planning process that the extent of conversions of long-term rental units to short-term rentals, such as Airbnbs, has dramatically depleted the available housing supply in Taos.

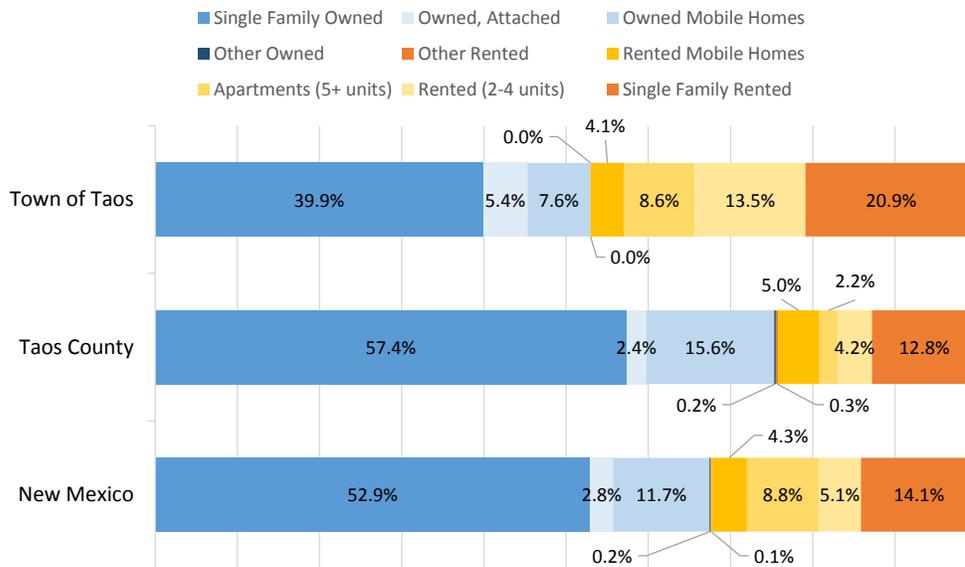
Exhibit 6-04: Occupied Housing Inventory in Town of Taos: 2000 - 2020

| Town of Taos Occupied Housing Inventory | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|-----------|-----------|
| | | | | Change | |
| | 2000 | 2010 | 2020 | 2000-2010 | 2010-2020 |
| Total Occupied | 2,110 | 3,318 | 3,812 | 1,208 | 494 |
| Owner occupied | 1,119 | 2,672 | 3,165 | 1,553 | 493 |
| Renter occupied | 991 | 646 | 647 | -345 | 1 |
| | Source: 2000 DEC Summary File 4 Demographic Profile, DP-1 | Source 2010 DEC Redistricting Data (PL-171) | Source 2020 DEC Redistricting Data (PL-171) | | |

For more about programs and partners facilitating affordable housing development, see Low Income Housing Tax Credits.

The Taos Affordable Housing Plan notes that the Town of Taos has a lower home-ownership rate than New Mexico and Taos County. Of all occupied households in Taos, 53% are owned and 47% are rented. With a large portion of rental units and apartments, the town's housing inventory resembles an urban center.

Exhibit 6-05: Housing Units by Mortgage Status



Source: Affordable Housing Plan, 2020.

HOUSEHOLD SIZE

Household size in the Town of Taos has declined from 2.2 persons per household in 2000 to 1.7 persons per household in 2020.

Exhibit 6-06: Average Persons Per Household: 2000 - 2020

| Town of Taos Persons Per Household | | |
|--|---|---|
| 2000 | 2010 | 2020 |
| 2.23 | 1.72 | 1.70 |
| DEC Summary File 4 Demographic Profile, DP-1 | Source 2010 DEC Redistricting Data (PL-171) | Source 2020 DEC Redistricting Data (PL-171) |

An estimated 80% of the households in the town are 1-person and 2-person households. Based on a trend of declining persons per household and an overwhelming portion of small households, the space (square footage) in housing units should trend down.

Such a high portion of Taos households being 1-person and 2-person households (80%), along with an aging population, should mean that smaller housing units, some in attached housing, would best meet demands.

Exhibit 6-07: Estimated Portion of Households by Number of Residents: 2019

| Household Size | Percent of Occupied | |
|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | Estimate | Percent of Occupied |
| 1-person household | 1,234 | 45.8% |
| 2-person household | 945 | 35.1% |
| 3-person household | 324 | 12.0% |
| 4-or-more-person household | 190 | 7.1% |

Source: 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimate Subject Table

USE OF VACANT HOUSING UNITS

An estimated 30% of the Town’s housing units are vacant, not as high as in Taos County, 42%, but higher than in New Mexico, 17%. Seasonally occupied housing was estimated to be 42% of all vacant housing units in the town and 48% of vacant units in the county. The Census Bureau does not have a specific category for short-term rental units; consequently they may be estimated or counted as either renter-occupied or vacant.

Exhibit 6-08: Housing Units by Mortgage, Rent and Vacant Status: Town, County and NM

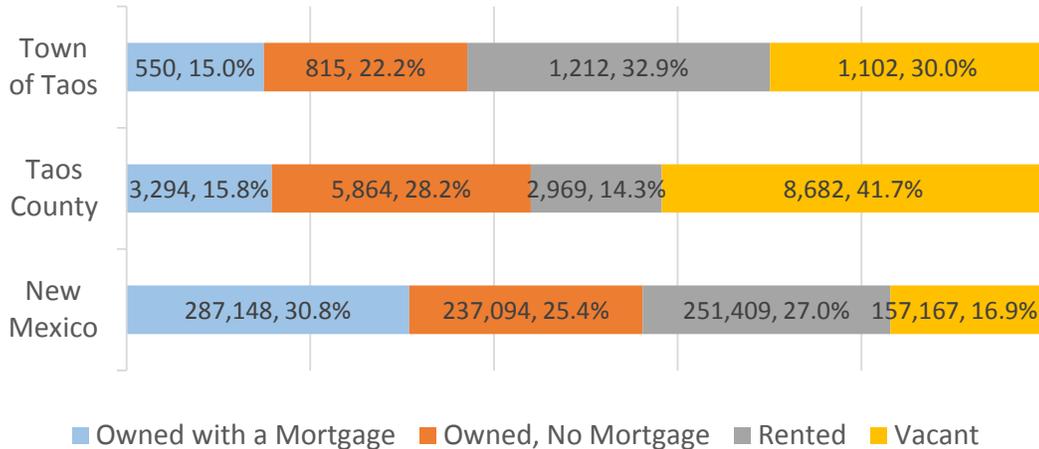
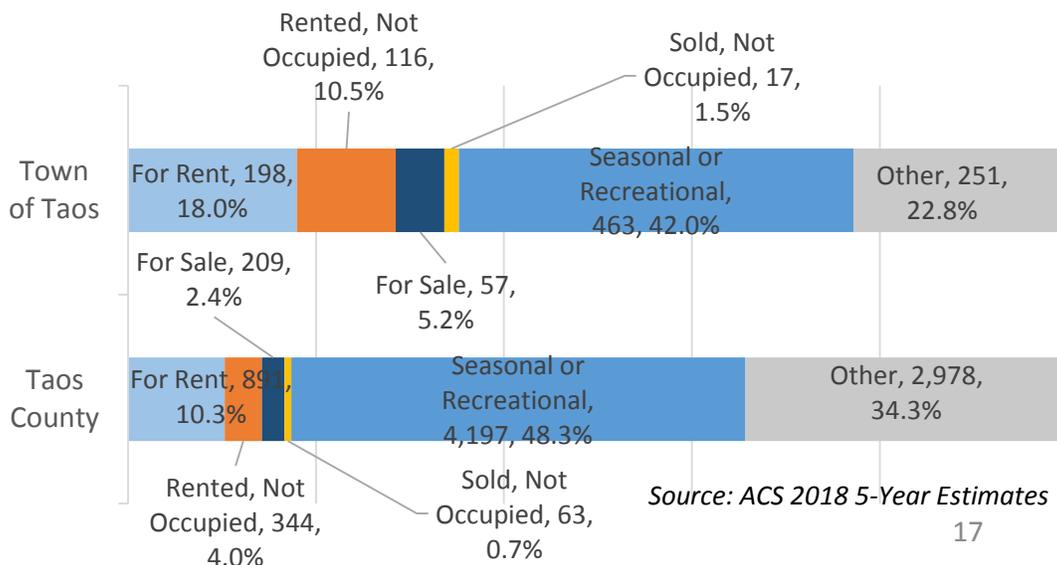


Exhibit 6-09: Use of Vacant Units in Taos and Taos County



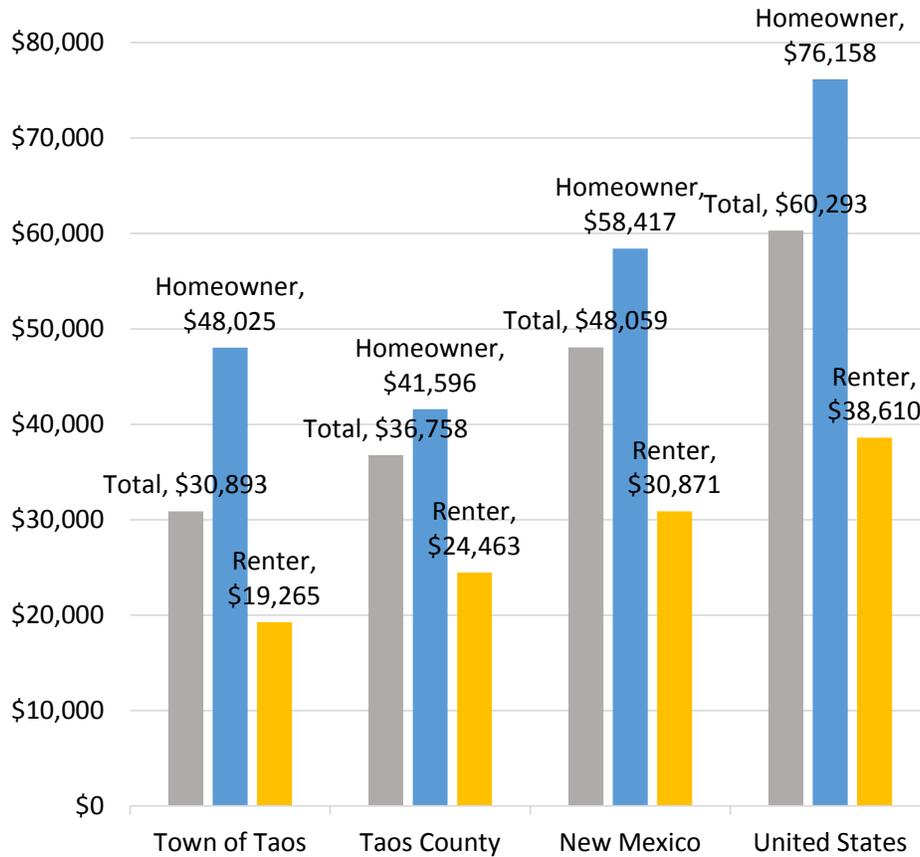
Source: Town of Taos Affordable Housing Plan, 2020

While the Town of Taos has a high portion of vacant housing units, many of which are used for seasonal and recreational purposes, Taos County has an even greater percentage. This demonstrates the “resort economy” of the town and nearby communities of the overall market area.

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY HOMEOWNER AND RENTER

Taos County has one of the lowest median household incomes in the state at \$36,758, estimated in 2018. This is \$11,000 less than the state median income and \$23,500 less than the U.S. median income. The Town of Taos has a lower total median income than the county at \$30,893. There is a large discrepancy between homeowners' and renters' median income in Taos, but also in the county, state, and nation.

Exhibit 6-10: Median Household Income in Taos, Taos County, NM and U.S.



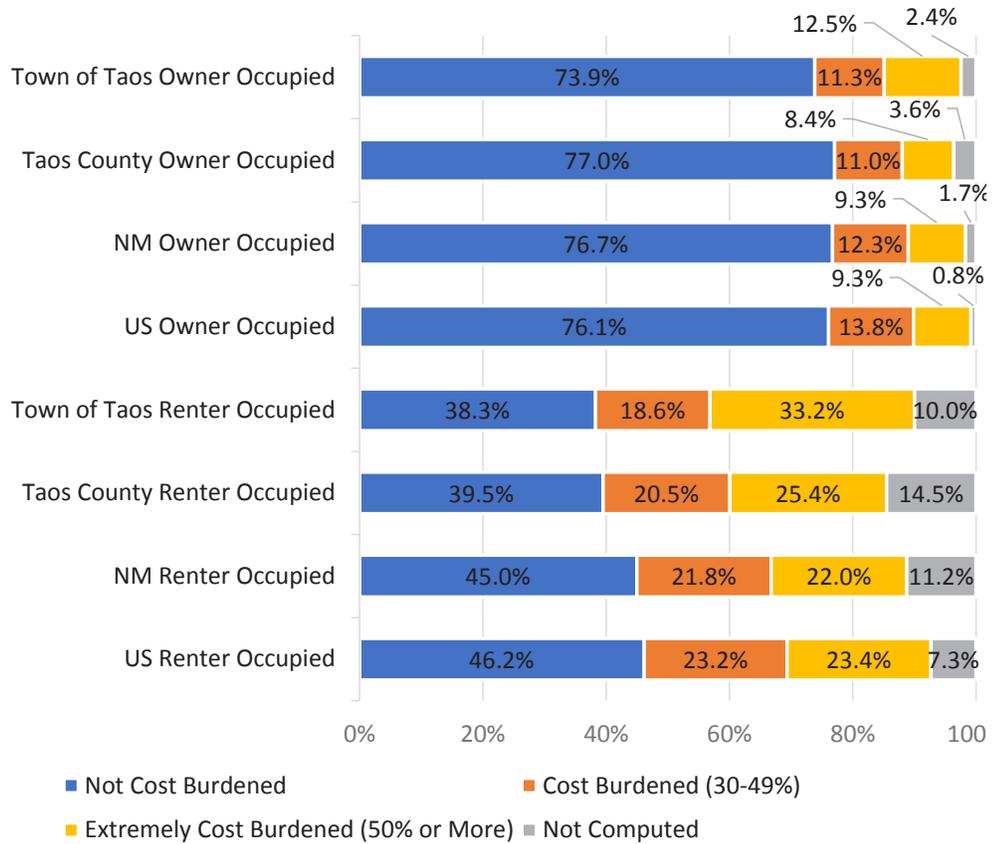
Source: Town of Taos Affordable Housing Plan, 2020

Low household income in the town and county particularly among renters, is a structural disconnect with the high cost of housing in the community.

COST BURDEN IN TAOS, TAOS COUNTY AND NEW MEXICO

Cost burden describes households that pay more than 30% of income in housing costs. Households paying more than 50% of income in housing costs are considered extremely cost burdened. For renters, Taos County and the town have higher rates of cost burden than New Mexico. For households paying between 30% and 49% of income on rent, the percentage is lower than the state. However, 33% of town renters are extremely cost-burdened, compared to 22% in New Mexico. This drives the total percentage of cost-burdened renters to a high rate of 52% in the Town of Taos compared to 44% in New Mexico.

Exhibit 6-11: Cost Burden in Taos, Taos County, NM and U.S.



Source: Town of Taos Affordable Housing Plan, 2020

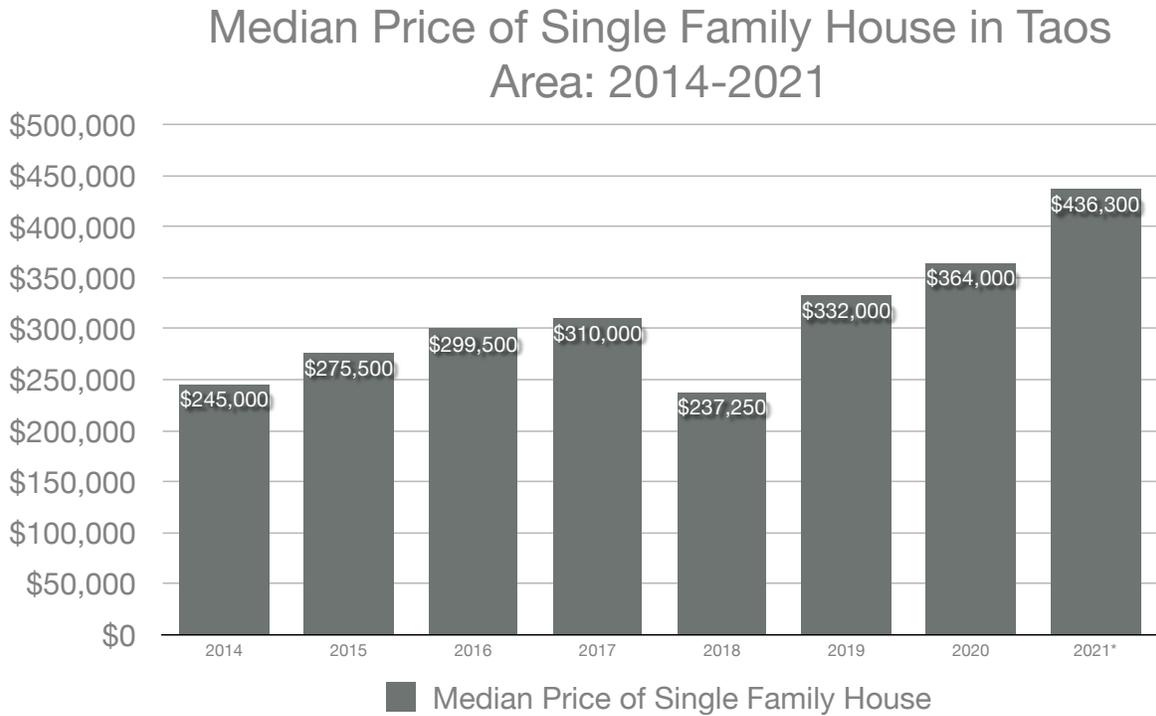
A more nuanced measurement notes that this simple income ratio oversimplifies the issue of housing affordability; “If your income is \$500,000 a year, you can pay 40 percent and still have money left. But if your income is \$20,000 a year, it will be hard to make ends meet if you’re paying 30 percent of your income on rent.”

Source: Rental Burdens - Rethinking Affordability Measures, HUD

MEDIAN PRICE OF HOMES AND HOUSING STARTS

The median price of single family houses in the Taos Area increased since 2014 each year, except in 2018 when it dipped. The average annual increase is over \$27,000 over the past seven years. Since the “Taos area” geography used by the Taos County Association of Realtors (TCAR) is larger than the town proper, area median prices may differ from in-town median prices. The 2021 median price for the first nine months was over \$436,000, another substantial gain from the prior year. A recent TCAR report showed \$448,000 for full year 2021. Prices are very high relative to wages, making it difficult for many locals to purchase a house, exacerbating high cost burden, and spurring other housing accessibility issues documented in the 2020 Taos Affordable Housing Plan.

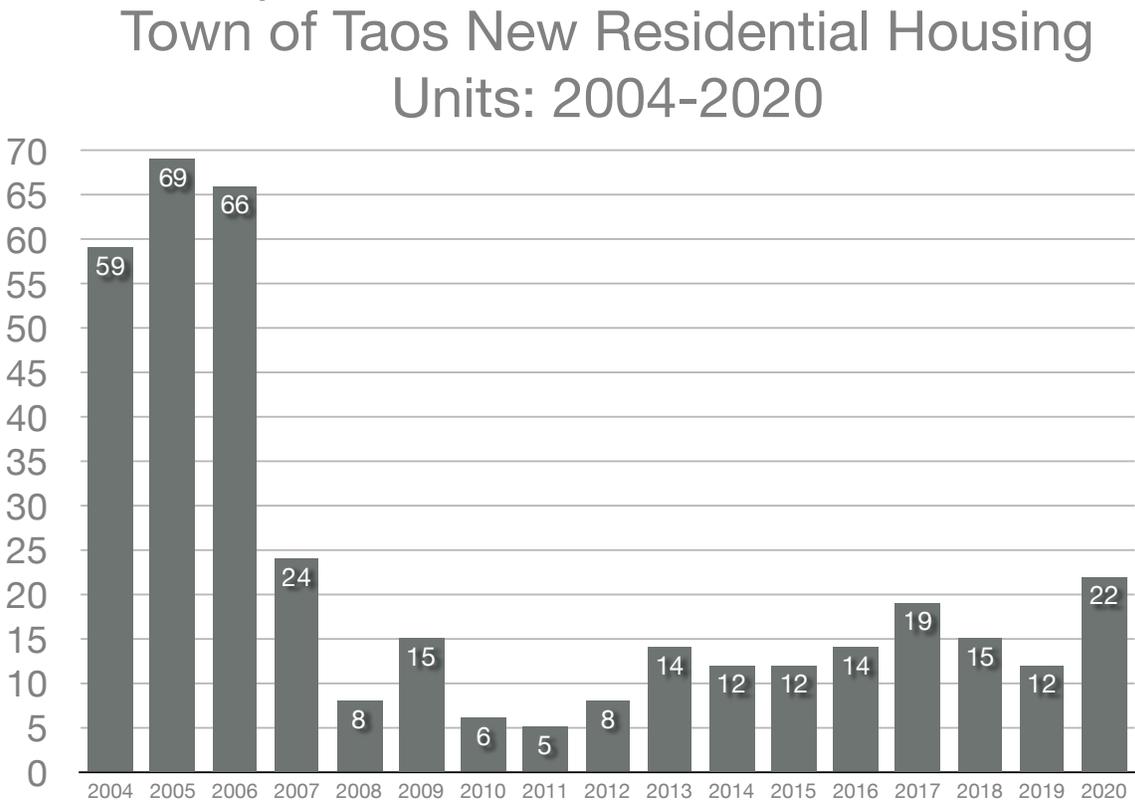
Exhibit 6-12: Median Price of Single Family Home



Source: Taos County Association of REALTORS

New housing starts slowed down substantially from the 2004-2006 period, when they averaged 65 units per year. From 2007 to 2020, new housing starts averaged 14 units per year.

Exhibit 6-13: New Residential Building Starts



Source: Town of Taos Community Development Department

PUBLIC HOUSING AND SECTION 8 HOUSING VOUCHERS

PUBLIC HOUSING

The Affordable Housing Plan reports there are 169 low-rent public housing units in the Town of Taos, Peñasco and Questa reserved for this population. Taos alone has 108 HUD public housing units at five sites.

HOUSING VOUCHERS FOR PRIVATE MARKET HOUSING

The Northern Regional Housing Authority (NRHA) is utilizing 375 Section 8 vouchers throughout Taos County, enabling households in this income range to rent privately owned housing. NRHA estimated that it has 448 vouchers available but cannot use some of them due to the lack of smaller units, and rents that do not meet fair market rent limits.

The NRHA executive director indicated in October 2021 that there are currently not enough owners of rental properties in Taos willing to accept Section 8 vouchers, consequently some of the available vouchers go unused. The demand, however, remains unmet. (Source: Taos County Association of Realtors (TCAR), Local Real Estate Market Stats.)

Public housing and Section 8 housing vouchers are primarily for use by households earning 30% or less of the Area Median Income (AMI). Eligibility breaks out by family size and degree according to HUD income limits to determine the level of assistance available. The following table describes the AMI in Taos County and calculations for income ranges. HUD income limits are updated annually.

Exhibit 6-14: Taos County HUD Income Limits for Subsidized Low Income Housing

FY 2020 Income Limits Summary

| FY 2020 Income Limit Area | Median Family Income Explanation | FY 2020 Income Limit Category | Persons in Family | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|--|--|-------------------|--------|--------|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| Taos County, NM | \$48,800 | Very Low (50%) Income Limits (\$) Explanation | 19,250 | 22,000 | 24,750 | 27,450 | 29,650 | 31,850 | 34,050 | 36,250 |
| | | Extremely Low Income Limits (\$)*) Explanation | 12,760 | 17,240 | 21,720 | 26,200 | 29,650* | 31,850* | 34,050* | 36,250* |
| | | Low (80%) Income Limits (\$) Explanation | 30,750 | 35,150 | 39,550 | 43,900 | 47,450 | 50,950 | 54,450 | 57,950 |

* The FY 2014 Consolidated Appropriations Act changed the definition of extremely low income to be the greater of 30/50ths (60 percent) of the Section 8 very low-income limit or the poverty guideline as [established by the Department of Health and Human Services \(HHS\)](#), provided that this amount is not greater than the Section 8 50% very low income limit. Consequently, the extremely low income limits may equal the very low (50%) income limits.

Source: U.S. Housing and Urban Development Department

In FY 2021, median family income for Taos County went up slightly to \$50,000. For comparison, the FY 2021 national median income is \$79,900 and the Albuquerque metro area is \$67,500.

LOW INCOME HOUSING TAX CREDIT PROPERTIES

There are 494 units priced at 60% AMI in Taos, of which 80, in Ochenta, were recently built. All of these units are located within eight LIHTC properties. The federal LIHTC program recently began to allow mixed incomes up to 80% AMI provided that the average AMI for the property remain at 60%.

NRHA is considering leading another LIHTC project to provide 40 to 50 additional units in Taos.

Exhibit 6-15: Town of Taos Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) Properties

| LIHTC* or Low-Income Property | Year Built | Address | Units |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------|
| Ochenta* | 2018 | 120 Herdner, 812 Gusdorf | 80 |
| Tierra Montosa I and II* | 1999, 2016 | 750 Gusdorf, 745 Gusdorf | 70 |
| Taos Haus* | 2012 | 918 Gusdorf, 631 Paseo del Pueblo Sur | 30 |
| El Cerrito* | 2005 | 250 Paseo del Canon East | 61 |
| Loma Parda* | 2001 | 1200 Camino de la Cruz | 60 |
| Bella Vista Apartments* | 2000 | 110 Otono Rd. | 40 |
| Cielo Azul (USDA 515) | 1996 | 400 Weimer Rd. | 22 |
| Mariposa Apts. (USDA 515) | 1980 | 201 Mariposa Place | 51 |

Source: Town of Taos Affordable Housing Plan 2020

The LIHTC program was created in 1986 and is an indirect federal subsidy used to finance the construction and rehabilitation of low-income, affordable rental housing.

The LIHTC gives investors a dollar-for-dollar reduction in their federal tax liability in exchange for providing financing to develop affordable rental housing. Investors' equity contribution subsidizes low-income housing development, thus allowing some units to rent at below-market rates. In return, investors receive tax credits paid in annual allotments, generally over 10 years.

LIHTC establishes that the developer comply with investment regulations for 15 years and meet affordable rent requirements for at least 30 years, although some states have implemented longer affordability periods. Monitoring compliance involves regularly certifying that only targeted income-eligible households live in assisted units and are paying associated rents and conducting housing quality inspections. Investors in projects that fail to comply can lose their tax benefit. LIHTC is the most successful program in the US at this time. Since it is a complicated program, most LIHTC projects are in larger cities, so the development of so many units in Taos is a remarkable success.

HOMELESSNESS FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Services for unhoused individuals living in Taos include:

- Taos Men’s Shelter – 18 beds for men, owned and operated by the Taos Coalition to End Homelessness
- Community Against Violence - five beds, domestic violence shelter for women and children
- Heart House – emergency and transitional housing and case management services for up to 15 women and children
- DreamTree Project – emergency teen shelter and transitional housing in five northern NM counties

According to a report entitled “Covid-19 in Taos County: Humanitarian Impacts,” prepared by Marjorie Luckey M.D. in 2021, prior to the pandemic, Taos County had the greatest disparity between incomes and housing costs in the state of New Mexico. Since Covid, New Mexico was rated third in the nation for housing insecurity, with 13% of New Mexicans expressing limited confidence in their ability to pay the coming month’s mortgage or rent. Nonprofits, with assistance from federal, state and local funds, more than doubled emergency shelter with hotel vouchers. Despite those efforts, the growing rate of homelessness has appeared to increase. Dreamtree Project has a growing waitlist for homes for youth ages 16-24 and the street outreach team is seeing higher and higher numbers of newly unsheltered youth living on the street. Taos Municipal School District reported that the number of unhoused students has more than tripled.

A F F O R D A B L E H O U S I N G N E E D S

Exhibit 6-16: Target Affordable Housing Needs

| Housing Need | Target Units | Figure 57: Goals and Objectives Summary Table |
|--|--------------|--|
| Homeless Emergency Shelter Affordable Housing | 50 70 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Support the efforts of the State of Homelessness in Taos Collaborative to provide shelter and permanent housing for people experiencing homelessness. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage donations of homes or apartments to add beds and housing units in the community • Support potential LIHTC project for permanent affordable housing |
| Low-Income Rentals 30% AMI and below 60% AMI and below | 298 302 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increase the impact of Northern Regional Housing Authority. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in and partner with NRHA • <u>Support NRHA efforts to</u> apply for additional rental assistance vouchers • <u>Support NRHA efforts to</u> request a reevaluation of fair market rents from HUD to enable use of all Section 8 vouchers • <u>Partner with NRHA on mixed-income LIHTC projects that produce additional 30% AMI units</u> ➤ Continue to sponsor new Low-Income Housing Tax Credit projects. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program 30% AMI units into new LIHTC projects |
| Moderately Priced/ Workforce Rentals 60%-80% AMI 80% - 120% AMI | 162 90 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Develop moderately-priced and workforce rentals from 60% and 120% AMI. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program 80% AMI units into new LIHTC projects • Utilize employer-assisted housing strategies to provide workforce rentals within the Town • Program workforce rental housing into land trust development (see Goal 8) ➤ Provide development incentives for private sector projects that commit to long-term affordability. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow density bonuses consistent with Taos Strong at Heart recommendations (CBD= 60 DU/Acre, R-14=49 DU/Acre, C-2=54 DU/Acre, C-1=45 DU/Acre) • Allow middle housing as permitted uses in C-1, C-2, R-4 and R-6 zones ➤ Consider adopting inclusionary zoning to require that affordable units be built with all new development. ➤ Consider increasing height limits to three stories and providing development standard flexibility for new rental development, especially affordable housing. |
| First-Time Homebuyers | 164 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Establish a land trust to develop new starter homes with long-term affordability. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish or identify an entity to form a Community Land Trust • Consider donation of town-owned or privately-owned land that can receive the state tax credit |
| Housing Rehabilitation | 65 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Expand the use of current rehabilitation programs and pilot new funding opportunities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase outreach and awareness of existing rehabilitation programs • Design a pilot program with MFA to provide state tax credit vouchers to individuals who donate to home rehab |
| Public Policy & Financing | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Place limits on vacation rentals in the Town. ➤ Implement a real estate transfer tax on high-price sales with proceeds directed to affordable housing. |

Source: Town of Taos Affordable Housing Plan, 2020

Affordable housing needs in the Town of Taos according to the assessment in the Affordable Housing Plan include:

- 298 rental units for 30% AMI & below
- 356 rental units for 30%-60% AMI
- 137 rental units for 60%-80% AMI
- 140 rental units for 80%-120% AMI
- 165 new housing units for first-time home buyers
- 65 units rehabilitation
- Emergency shelter - 50 beds
- Affordable housing for special needs individuals and homeless - 70 beds

Source: *Town of Taos Affordable Housing Plan, 2020*

The assessment takes into account the inventory of existing housing units by household income, overcrowding, and a growth factor. The plan contains a strategy for NRHA, LIHTC, land trust and housing rehabilitation roles in building some of the needed affordable housing units. It does not contain a specific timeline for when new, updated, or rehabilitated affordable housing units are needed.

HOUSING NEEDS BASED ON PROJECTED GROWTH AND CHANGE

Additional housing in Taos is needed in order to meet unmet needs resulting from three factors:

- population growth
- pent-up demand from existing residents
- housing development for the “second homes” market that the town and county are experiencing and will likely continue to experience.

The following projection of housing needs includes both market rate and subsidized housing based on the population projections presented in the Land Use Element and the Affordable Housing Plan’s assessment of housing needs. The growth factor overlaps with affordable housing needs identified in the Affordable Housing Plan (presented above), thus a strictly additive approach is not applied in the calculation.

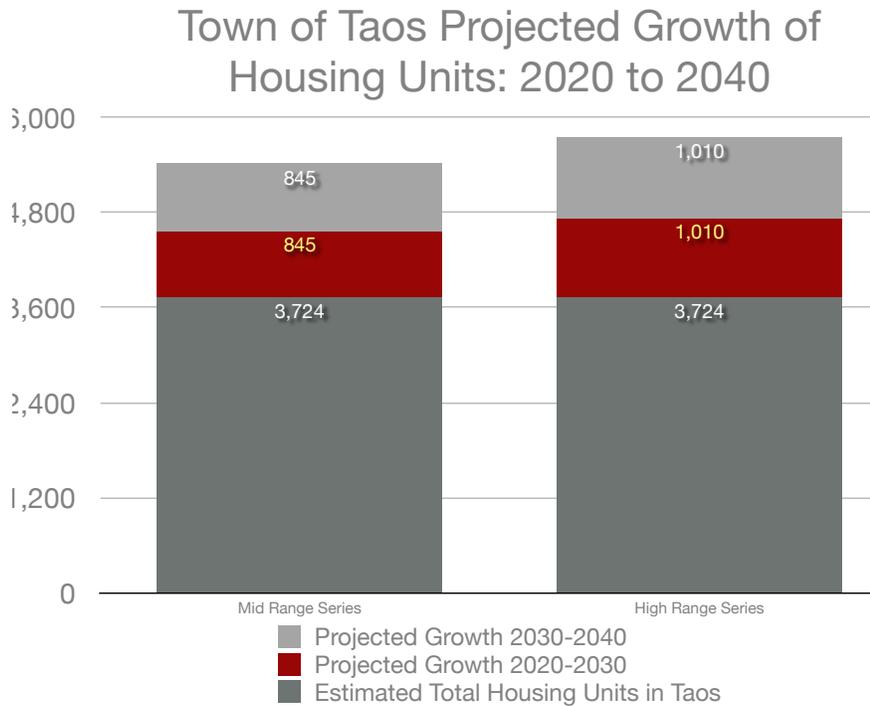
PROJECTED HOUSING GROWTH

Projected growth in Taos housing inventory includes:

- growth projected according to the mid- and high- population projections: 340-550 units per decade
- pent-up demand for affordable housing: 310 units per decade
- growth in second homes (counted as vacant by Census Bureau): 200 units per decade

The total projected increase in housing units is a range of 845 to 1,010 units per decade over the next two decades. This amounts to an average total building of 84-101 units per year, which is a higher level than during the last 14 years, but not much higher than housing starts during the early three years of the period, 2004-2007.

Exhibit 6-17: Projected Housing Growth



Housing demand is expected to be met through various housing types, including detached, attached, accessory units on a single family lot, and mixed-use. Some should be in nodes, others in conservation subdivisions, as outlined in recommendations provided in the Land Use Element.

The following tables present two scenarios for the mid-range population and housing projections. Since many policy alternatives are available, there is no single, precise target housing mix.

Sources: U.S. Census 2019 - ACS 5-Year Estimates for total housing units in Taos; ARC mid range and high range projections of housing growth by decades of 2020-2030 and 2030-2040

Exhibit 6-18: Table of Housing Target Ranges

| Housing Range Characteristics | |
|---|---|
| Mid-Range Target Housing Mix Per Decade | |
| 50 | ADU's Affordable Long Term Rental |
| 270 | Affordable Attached Housing Long Term Rental, Some Owner-Occupied |
| 175 | Single Family - Workforce Rental and Owner Occupied |
| 240 | Single Family - Market Rate, Higher Income Owner and Occupied, Some 2nd Homes |
| 110 | Condos - Market Rate Occupied and Second Homes |
| 845 | Total |
| Mid-Range Greater Affordability Target Housing Mix Per Decade | |
| 50 | ADU's affordable long term rental |
| 300 | Affordable attached housing long term rental, some owner-occupied |
| 200 | Single family - workforce rental and owner occupied |
| 150 | Single family - market rate, higher income owner and occupied, some 2nd homes |
| 145 | Condos - market rate occupied and second homes |
| 845 | Total |

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

SUMMARY

Taos faces a big problem in affordable housing in that residents earning a median household income or less are left with few options as average housing values have increased to nearly half a million dollars, after almost doubling in less than a decade.

An increasing shortage of available and affordable housing in Taos is the result of direct pressures from the recent sharp increases in cost, conversions of units to short-term rentals, a years-long slowdown in residential construction, a low share of home ownership, a high share of town and county housing unavailable (vacant or seasonal use), and a falling household size drawing down the number of residents that the Taos housing stock will serve. The underlying forces driving these pressures are multifaceted and often reciprocal; as low wages and economic stagnation, brain drain, and limited educational opportunities are representative of fundamental demographic and economic trends such as aging populations and increasing income inequality.

The impacts of housing shortages are widespread, reaching from the humanitarian to the social and the economic, and the solutions are often complex and beyond local influence or capacity. In Taos, the hard work of local governments and nonprofits have already and continue to strive towards providing relief and solutions to this complex issue.

Fortunately, there are potential strategies that can and have already made inroads to adjusting the housing trajectory in Taos back to a course making housing an accessible and equitable foundation for a strong and stable community moving forward.

An estimated 30% of the town's housing units are vacant, not as high as in Taos County, 42%, but higher than in New Mexico, 17%. Seasonally occupied housing was estimated to be 42% of all vacant housing units in the town and 48% of vacant units in the county. The Census Bureau does not have a specific category for short-term rental units; consequently they may be estimated or counted as either renter-occupied or vacant.

Compared to New Mexico, the Town of Taos has a smaller percentage of population younger than 40 years and a larger percentage of population older than 40 years. Sixteen percent of the population is over 70 years of age compared to 11% in New Mexico. Town of Taos follows a similar trend, with 38% or 980 out of the 2,577 of households being seniors. The senior households in Taos differ from those in the county, state, and the U.S. in that the largest percentage live alone rather than with family.

The table below illustrates the disconnect between the income of a typical wage earner in Taos and the cost of housing here. A family of four earning a median income of \$48,000 in Taos can afford to purchase a home costing \$146,000. However, the median price of a home sold in Taos was \$436,600 in 2021, which, to be affordable, requires an income of over \$104,000.

Exhibit 6-19: Housing Affordability Calculations in Taos

Housing Affordability Calculations in Taos: Gap Between Median Income and Median Price of Single Family House

| Family of 4 | Annual Income | 30% of Annual Income | Monthly Housing Costs | Monthly payment minus \$160/ month for utilities | Affordable Home Price |
|---|---------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--|-----------------------|
| Median Family Income in Taos County | \$48,800 | \$14,640 | \$1,220 | \$1,060 | \$146,000 |
| Median Family Income Required to Afford a Median Price Home in Taos | \$104,240 | \$31,272 | \$2,766 | \$2,606 | \$436,300 |

Assumptions: U.S. HUD listed the median family income in Taos County at \$48,800 FY 2020. Taos County Association of Realtors calculated the median price of a single family house in Taos was \$436,600 in 2021. Calculations of ability to purchase a house assume: affordable monthly housing costs not exceeding 30% of income, 5.1% interest on a 30-year fixed loan, mortgage payment, 9% down payment, private mortgage insurance (PMI) at 0.5% and utilities. Utility costs were assumed to average \$160 per month. Mortgage and PMI payments were calculated using <http://www.mortgagecalculator.org>.

P O T E N T I A L A P P R O A C H E S

Taos currently has a number of approaches to maintain and augment affordable housing including: public housing operated by Northern Regional Housing Authority headquartered in Raton, housing vouchers, an active Habitat for Humanity building some new units, short-term rental ordinance, LIHTC properties, homeless services providers, Chamisa Verde subdivision that can be replatted and further developed for affordable or mixed income housing, and a recent affordable housing plan that provides a great deal of information, analysis, and policy guidance. Of course, Taos' challenges are large as a high housing cost community.

Displacement and gentrification are significant issues that community members are concerned about. Some believe that this is the most pressing issue that the town faces. It is not a new threat in Taos, but it is progressing to higher levels and could be exacerbated in the future. Some tourist and resort communities have gone “over the cliff” where the community caters mainly to guests and well-to-do residents and second homeowners, while workforce housing is in woefully short supply inside the community. In those communities, workers mainly commute from outside areas. Some communities experience workforce shortages due to unaffordable housing that cripple local businesses and threaten the culture and character of those communities.

Inclusive housing provides options serving a diversity of residents and range of incomes including low and moderate. This range is usually enabled through interventions in the current housing market through regulations and subsidies. On the regulatory side are, for example:

- allowance in more zones for accessory units, duplexes or triplexes for long-term rentals, providing additional options for more affordable housing (to be explored in Phase II code analysis and recommendations of this project)
- inclusionary zoning that requires developers to sell or rent a percentage of new residential units to lower-income residents
- inclusionary zoning option that allows developers to pay cash-in-lieu of siting affordable housing units in their projects, funds from which are used to build deed-restricted workforce housing
- restrictions on short-term rentals (adopted through Ordinance 20-08 in 2020)

SUBSIDIZATION

Subsidization strategies include:

- public housing and housing vouchers (currently in use in Taos)
- establishing a land trust or housing trust to operate a program with activities including building affordable housing using tax credits, grants and loans, and funds from inclusionary zoning cash-in-lieu. Additional funding sources are typically needed to support such a housing program
- weatherization and rehabilitation of existing homes, typically through local utilities, NM Mortgage Finance Authority, HUD or USDA funding

MIXED-INCOME HOUSING

Market-rate housing offers another strategy to address the existing need for affordable housing, as well as projected demand. Market rate housing includes owner- and renter-occupied housing and second homes (classified as vacant by the Census Bureau). For example, condominiums may have a place in Taos which could take some of the pressure off the existing housing stock. In the end, affordable and market-rate housing needs to be balanced to adequately serve a community.

WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY AND NONPROFITS

Collaboration with community partners to assist in affordable housing is an important component of dealing with the issue of shortage in supply. Nonprofit organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, Inc., Taos Coalition to End Homelessness, Heart of Taos, Dreamtree Project, Taos Men's Shelter, and Community Against Violence

provide valuable services. Tierra Realty has done an outstanding job in developing successful LIHTC projects. The town should continue to work with these parties and encourage their efforts.

In addition, individual property owners should be encouraged to do their parts to build units that are offered for sale or rent affordable to locals in need of affordable housing and rent existing units affordably. When in the future, the town expands the housing inventory with new accessory units, duplexes, triplexes, manufactured and maybe tiny homes, more should be available at affordable costs.

TAOS AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLAN STRATEGIES

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ADOPTED TAOS AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLAN OF 2020 INCLUDE:

- Continue to sponsor new Low-Income Housing Tax Credit projects.
- Establish a land trust to develop new starter homes with long-term affordability.
- Develop moderately-priced and workforce rentals from 60% to 120% AMI.
- Increase the impact of Northern Regional Housing Authority.
- Place limits on vacation rentals in the Town.
- Implement a real estate transfer tax on high-price sales with proceeds directed to affordable housing.
- Consider adopting inclusionary zoning to require that affordable units be built with all new development.
- Provide development incentives for private sector projects that commit to long-term affordability.
- Consider increasing height limits to three stories and providing development standard flexibility for new rental development, especially affordable housing.
- Expand the use of current rehabilitation programs and pilot new funding opportunities.
- Support the efforts of the state of homelessness in Taos Collaborative to provide shelter and permanent housing for people experiencing homelessness.

SUMMARY OF HOUSING RECOMMENDATIONS IN THIS PLAN

- There are no “silver bullets” to solve the affordable housing problem. Many of the recommended approaches and techniques need to be further studied and evaluated for whether they are appropriate in Taos and how they may be modified to work in Taos. The town should consider pursuing several approaches, but not expect to do all of them.
- Consideration should be given to allowing increased height limits for affordable housing, particularly in designated nodes that are served by transit.
- Consider exploring an appropriate location for mixed income condominiums focused around a natural or view amenity besides the historic downtown area, which is largely built-out and is restricted by historic district guidelines and regulations. Work with developers to assure that projects are designed to complement the architectural character and beauty of the community and overall are a positive development in the town.
- Consider the following changes to the Land Development Code to create more affordable housing:
 - Allow accessory dwelling units (ADUs) for long-term residency only. This is likely to create a modest number of workforce housing units or “mother-in-law flats” in scattered locations. In most communities that allow ADUs, few homeowners take advantage of the provision.
 - Consider allowing “missing middle” housing in most residential zones. “Missing middle” housing types include duplexes and triplexes, which can be allowed by right, and multiple family with smaller units, that can be allowed by conditional use. All missing middle housing should be kept within the scale of the neighborhoods’ footprints and bulk. Further study is needed to arrive at the appropriate

building forms, which may vary by neighborhood. This recommendation supports the approach in Strong at Heart for downtown infill, with the intent of making housing available for local Taoseños in the core area. The comprehensive plan recommends not specifying the density range, emphasizing the building form, and considering the approach in other neighborhoods in town.

- Retain the town’s short-term rental ordinance. Periodically evaluate its effectiveness. Purposes served by the short-term rental housing ordinance that caps the number of units and disallows them in the Central Business District include: to maintain or increase availability of mostly affordable long-term rental housing; reduce traffic congestion, curtail illegal parking and excessive noise in residential neighborhoods; enhance visitor stays in lodging;
- Require registration of all short-term rental units; and assure that lodgers tax is collected from short-term rentals.
- Consider creating a Taos Plateau joint town-county area for the purpose of cooperating between the town and county to both enact inclusionary housing, short-term rental restrictions, and other housing programs identified in both the Town and County affordable housing plans
- Consider creating a land or housing trust in the North Central Economic Development District, town-county, or other entity with responsibilities such as:
 - Promoting and packaging LIHTC affordable housing or mixed-income projects
 - Purchasing land and building affordable housing. Aspen, Telluride, and Crested Butte, CO and Whistler, B.C. are a few of the communities that have devoted decades to this approach. These communities have achieved success in creating employee housing, while they decided additional measures were needed due to the severity of the housing problem.
 - Buying homes to deed restrict for affordable housing
 - Coordinating with Northern Regional Housing Authority on public housing maintenance and expansion
 - Working with employers to develop housing through public-private partnerships. Many major employers in Taos expressed concern that housing is their biggest problem in recruiting and keeping employees. Taos Ski Valley employs approximately 150 persons in summer and 800 in winter. The school district has 350 employees. This approach could create deed-restricted additional multi-family housing, dormitories, converted old motels. Aspen, CO has had some success in this approach
- Considering an “InDEED” program. This is a concept pioneered in Vail, CO with considerable success to purchase deed restrictions on existing housing units. Property owners voluntarily enter into a deed restriction that restricts housing to be occupied by a household that contains at least one “qualified resident,” a person who works at least 30 hours per week in a business within the county. The property’s owner may be the qualified resident or may rent to the resident. Although the agreement does not limit the resale price or rent that the owner may seek, the occupancy requirement effectively shrinks the market of buyers by tying the asking price to local wages. In 2018, the Vail InDEED program purchased 23 deed restrictions at \$21,000 each in an apartment building. Mountain Village outside Telluride recently started an InDEED program, but reportedly has no units added because in the current escalating real estate market, property owners are not interested in participating

- Consider means to finance the land trust’s building programs, selecting the ones that make most sense for Taos, including:
 - State housing tax credit (if funds are available)
 - Inclusionary zoning cash-in-lieu funds
 - Real estate excise tax, with proceeds used to develop affordable housing. The transfer tax should be limited to high-priced home sales, as described in the Affordable Housing Plan. A graduated tax is now being used in the State of Washington. City of Santa Fe considered a real estate excise tax but it was defeated
 - “Empty house” tax (also called “speculation and vacant housing tax”). Vancouver, B.C. started a program in 2016. Each year, all property owners must self-declare the status of their residential homes. If they are living in their own homes, nothing further is required from them. A unit will be considered vacant if it has been unoccupied for more than six months during the previous calendar year. Owners who declare their properties are vacant will be required to pay the tax. Funds raised by the tax go into a housing priority initiative’s special account, and must be used to fund housing, shelter, or rental initiatives. Crested Butte, CO recently placed it on a ballot but it did not pass
 - Creating a dedicated gross receipts tax option
 - Dedicated portion of lodgers tax for affordable housing
 - Lobbying and Community Reinvestment Act funding
- Coordinate with Northern Regional Housing Authority on maintenance and possibly expansion of HUD public housing in Taos, housing vouchers, and development projects involving LIHTC
- Identify locations for tiny homes in Taos
- Enhance mobile home subdivision standards

GOALS, POLICIES, & ACTIONS

1 GOAL

Taos family of median income should be able to afford an average priced home. (Aspirational goal).

2 GOAL

Taos neighborhoods, both existing and new, contain a mix of housing types affordable to all Taos residents.

3 GOAL

Economic development initiatives bring up wage income for Taos residents to better afford market-rate housing.

4 GOAL

Code amendments in the major code update are targeted to encourage more affordable housing in the downtown area and dispersed elsewhere in the community.

- A| *Provide a variety of housing choices affordable to people who live and work in the Downtown.*
- B| *Allow “missing middle” housing types in Downtown’s predominantly single-family zones, including duplexes, triplexes and fourplexes, with no more than 1 parking space per unit, that fit into a compatible building envelope and form.*
- C| *Allow multi-family or tiny homes projects with densities (dwelling units per acre) higher than triplexes “missing middle” that fits into a compatible building envelope and form as a conditional use in the downtown area.*
- D| *Provide a variety of affordable housing choices throughout the town.*
- E| *Consider allowing duplexes or triplexes by right in all or some residential zoning districts, assuring that units are not used as short-term rentals unless allowed in compliance with the short-term rental ordinance.*
- F| *Consider allowing densities higher than duplexes “missing middle” housing types in other zoning districts of the town.*
- G| *Consider increasing height limits to three stories and provide other development standard flexibility for new rental development, especially affordable housing targeted in nodes.*
- H| *Provide development incentives for private sector projects that commit to long-term affordability.*
- I| *Encourage larger subdivisions and attached housing projects to have a mix of housing units by size and price.*
- J| *Consider inclusionary zoning that requires mixed-income housing or cash-in-lieu for use by housing authority/trust to develop affordable housing.*
- K| *Regulate short-term rental housing (accomplished) to restrict short-term rentals in the Central Business zone and cap the number of short-term rentals in other town zones.*
- L| *Open up some or all residential zones to accessory dwelling units (ADU’s) as a use by right, not restricted to guest homes or to blood relatives, nor subject to conditional use permits.*
- M| *Property owners must assure that the ADU’s are not used as short-term rentals unless permitted in compliance with the short-term rental ordinance.*
- N| *Do not allow ADU’s in areas where utilities have limited capacity that could be exceeded by added households.*

5 GOAL

The Land Development Code permits affordable housing options that are suitable in locations within the communities.

- A| Study the “displacement risk” of housing strategies, including:
- 1| Map the community for what is affordable and what is not affordable.
 - 2| Consider the effects of such strategies as:
 - a| Accessory dwelling units (ADU's) as they might help an existing property owner with additional revenue stream.
 - b| Allow duplex conversion of single-family houses and new duplexes in most residential zones.
 - c| Creation of more affordable missing-middle housing which may give opportunities for existing residents/youths from old families to stay in the community.

6 GOAL

An affordable housing program executes a multi-pronged strategy to retain and create additional affordable housing units.

- A| Create a housing trust or authority, whether through the town or a regional entity, with development capacity, the ability to package public-private housing developments and the ability to buy deed restrictions on existing homes.
- B| Determine who should manage the trust, such as: a new town housing authority-community land trust, a new Enchanted Circle regional housing authority, or Northern Regional Housing Authority or North Central Economic Development District.
- C| Consider funding a limited number of vouchers through the housing trust.
- D| Provide reduced-cost or at-cost town land and reduced fees and costs for infrastructure, where appropriate. These leveraged resources will be offered only with the guarantee from for-profit or not-for-profit developers that they will develop affordable housing as defined by the Town of Taos.
- E| Determine appropriate local public revenue sources for support of affordable housing, such as to support a housing trust or comparable organization, including but not limited to:
- 1| Affordable housing general obligation bond.
 - 2| Gross receipts tax option dedicated to affordable housing.
 - 3| Real estate transfer tax on high-price sales with proceeds directed to affordable housing.
 - 4| Lodger tax portion dedicated to affordable housing.
 - 5| Cash-in-lieu from inclusionary zoning.

- B| Expand the use of current housing rehabilitation programs and pilot new funding opportunities for housing rehabilitation .
- C| Support and plan for additional Low Income Housing Tax Credit projects.
- D| Utilize NM Affordable Housing Tax Credits in addition to LIHTC to subsidize affordable housing.
- E| Coordinate with major employers to build employee housing
- F| Work with such groups as Taos Ski Valley, Northern Regional Transit Authority, Kit Carson Electric Cooperative, and Taos Municipal Schools on employer-built housing for employees that may include dormitories, apartment complexes built by private developers or through public-private partnerships, single family homes, and conversion of old motels. Individual housing projects may be packaged to serve more than a single employer.
- G| Identify locations for desired employee housing dormitories.
- H| Assure that a portion of affordable housing is ADA accessible, and suitable for special needs residents.

7 GOAL

A regional strategy safeguards existing and promotes creation of new affordable housing both in the town and in surrounding areas of Taos County that are within the same market area.

- A| Work with Taos County on a joint town-county approach to inclusionary regulations, considering a "Taos Plateau" area.
- B| Encourage Taos County to develop a short-term rentals ordinance and work with the county on consistency in short-term rental housing provisions.
- C| Work with the Northern Regional Housing Authority to increase their impact on affordable housing. The housing authority can act as a developer, a regional land trust, and sponsor additional mixed-income LIHTC projects.
- D| Work with Northern Regional Housing Authority to address the need for additional rental units through vouchers for low-income residents (<30% AMI).
- E| Consider means to open up more housing units to accept Section 8 vouchers, such as a town ordinance prohibiting landlords from discrimination against tenants based on the source of rental payment (note: legislation proposed in House Bill 111 (NM 2021 session), Modernization of State Housing Code included a provision but the legislation did not get passed).
- F| Work with State of New Mexico vouchers and other voucher programs in addition to Section 8.

8 GOAL

Housing protects the health, safety, and welfare of the occupants in safe, beautiful neighborhoods that enhance residents' quality of life.

- A| *Update development and design standards in the Land Development Code for mobile home subdivisions and parks.*
- B| *Create walkable neighborhoods in addition to the downtown area that can accommodate different housing types, including small-footprint buildings, townhouses, mixed income, tiny homes, and smart mixed use.*
- C| *Develop new neighborhoods in opportunity areas such as the Paseo del Canon East vicinity.*
- D| *Build out existing neighborhoods that have street connectivity and utilities.*
- E| *Build out and in-fill in areas that retrofit a segmented or incomplete street circulation pattern with new streets and lanes that facilitate new development.*
- F| *Strengthen subdivision street criteria and street master planning and require stub-outs for continuous local streets.*
- G| *Encourage and support creative design professionals and developers to apply their skills to create new neighborhoods and infill projects that meet town goals and standards.*
- H| *Encourage sustainable low-energy use and low-water-use housing*
- I| *Support through the New Mexico Construction Industries Division a residential green building code addressing home energy and water efficiency standards, such as use of all-electric heat pumps for space heating and cooling, potential for micro-grid, passive solar design, healthy air flow, and insulation.*

9 GOAL

The town supports nonprofit programs to address the needs of the unhoused population of the community.

- A| *Support the efforts of the State of Homelessness in Taos Collaborative to provide shelter and permanent housing for people experiencing homelessness.*
- B| *Support organizations providing housing and services to unhoused such as the Men's Shelter, HEART, and DreamTree, subject to the availability of funds and staff time.*

ACTIONS

Specific instructions to make strategies succeed.

ACTION | Study the displacement risk of the proposed set of affordable housing strategies

ACTION | Write amendments to the Land Development Code in the major code update that allow for greater density and affordable housing types in selected residential zones, including but not limited to: accessory dwelling units, duplexes, triplexes and fourplexes,

ACTION | In major code update, allow increased height limits for affordable housing, particularly in designated nodes that are served by transit.

ACTION | In major code update, write code amendments making zoning and building permitting processes more efficient by reducing steps for small residential projects.

ACTION | Consider inclusionary zoning that requires mixed-income housing or cash-in-lieu for use by a housing authority/trust to develop affordable housing.

ACTION | Strengthen subdivision street criteria and street master planning and require stub-outs for continuous local streets in order to accommodate infill development.

ACTION | Conduct a study with community engagement to evaluate the idea of creating a Taos Plateau joint town-county area for the purpose of cooperating between the town and county to both enact inclusionary housing, short-term rental restrictions, and other housing programs identified in both the town and county affordable housing plans.

ACTION | Hold a regional summit to consider creating a land or housing trust in the North Central Economic Development District, town-county or other entity. Identify candidate options for programs that the multi-jurisdictional housing entity could have and determine the desired programs.

ACTION | Create a housing entity, preferably regional, however, the advantages of a local program may outweigh regional.

ACTION | Identify, evaluate, and select options for raising funds to build affordable housing, to be administered by the housing entity.

ACTION | Conduct an evaluation of the effectiveness of the short-term rental ordinance.

ACTION | Conduct regular meetings with Northern Regional Housing Authority to assess program performance and opportunities for collaboration.

ACTION | Identify reduced-cost or at-cost Town land that can be used for affordable housing.

ACTION | Develop neighborhood plans for the build out and infill in areas.

ACTION | Work with employers on employer-built housing including dormitories, apartment complexes built by private developers, or through public-private partnerships, single family homes, and conversion of old motels.

ACTION | Identify locations for employer housing.

ACTION | Continue to support the development of LIHTC projects.

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

OPEN



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

Economic development, as a topic in the Comprehensive Plan, is a broad umbrella covering the factors affecting the local economy and strategies to improve the economic well-being of the community. Factors include analysis of the economy and workforce through data and research, review and assessment of recent strategic plans and efforts, understanding available tools and resources, and identifying potential strategies for improving outcomes. Developing strategies includes

coordination and collaboration among governmental levels, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and residents of the community.

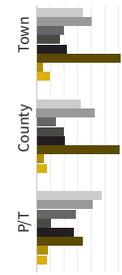
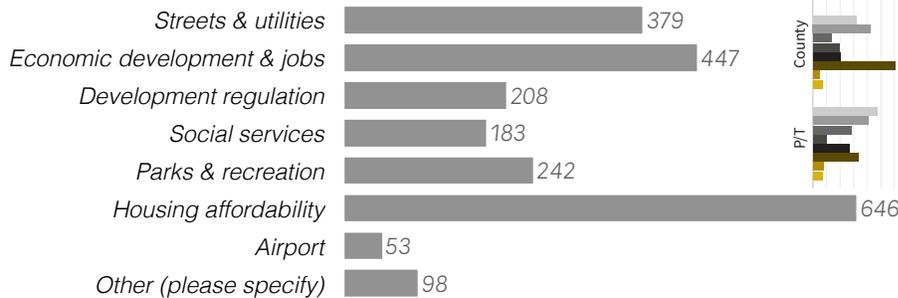
The economic development strategies provided here are intended to support and compliment the goals of the community, and the goals and policies in other elements of the comprehensive plan, such as land use, green network, public assets, and transportation.

FOUNDATIONS

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Exhibit 7-01: Survey - Improvements with Greatest Impact

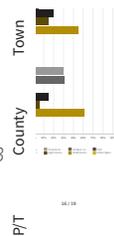
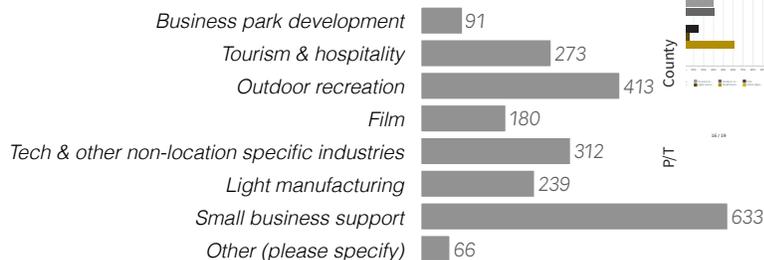
Improvements in what two areas would have the greatest impact for the community?



Community survey results indicate that the economy is a top priority for the community, with improved economic development and jobs placing only behind housing affordability as the area that would have the greatest impact for the community.

Exhibit 7-02: Survey - Economic Development Priorities

What should the Town prioritize for economic development? (choose 2)



Of economic development strategies to prioritize, the survey respondents valued most small business support followed by outdoor recreation, in line with the prevailing community themes in Taos.

Support is also strong for strategies focusing on tech and other non-location specific industries, and the traditional tourism and hospitality economy in Taos.

PLANNING REFERENCES

The Economic Development chapter supports and builds on the following existing plans and studies:

- *The Taos Community Economic Development Strategic Plan (2011, 2013)*
- Vision 2020 Plan (1999)
- Strong at Heart (2020)
- Taos Arts and Cultural District Plan (2012)
- Economic/fiscal impact and marketing analyses, including impact analyses for local music events and Taos Air flights

2013 PLAN PRIMARY PLAN REFERENCE

This plan supports and builds on, as the primary resource and foundation for this chapter, the Community Economic Development Strategic Plan and Element of Comp Plan, 2013 (2013 Plan).

The 2013 Plan was developed to provide more current and specific direction on economic development than the Vision 2020 plan of 1999. The plan addressed retention of existing businesses, various segments of existing and emerging tourist economies, potential target industries, the importance of affordable housing to economic development, creating organizational capacity, and creating financing mechanisms for improvements through a Metropolitan Redevelopment District, tax increment financing, and the New Mexico Local Economic Development Act (LEDA).

2013 Plan | Regional Strategies

Focus on regional strategy through collaborations

Commitment to community economic development principals

Community economic development (CED) strategy is an approach to local economic development that is driven by a community's social, environmental and economic priorities. It is shaped by those who live, work and run businesses and public services within that community.

2013 Plan Principal Recommendation

“Our principal recommendation is to create and develop a Regional Economic Development Organization. Currently there is no single entity that has as its sole focus the development of the economy of the Enchanted Circle region. We believe that without such an entity the remainder of this Action Plan will be moot.”

To be successful this new regional economic development entity must be:

- A private nonprofit organization that has a public/private partnership that provides oversight and funding
- Held accountable annually and be required to produce measurable results
- Must have as its sole focus the transition, stabilization and growth of the Enchanted Circle's economy and will work solely with those businesses that export goods and services and import community wealth
- Able to coordinate and work in partnership with existing entities such as TEN, Taos County Chamber of Commerce, Taos County Economic Development Corporation, etc.

2013 PLAN | REGIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Annually convene the Taos Economic Transition Round Table to reassess the direction and results achieved during the previous year
- Produce Taos Economic Report Card annually and provide a wide distribution of the Report Card
- Work to improve communication and collaboration among and within private sector industries and between the public and private sectors
- Continue to regionalize public services that serve the region
- Enable cooperation and goals alignment between existing economic groups
- Develop intern program
- Promote tech-related degree programs at UNM

"TRUE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IS FOCUSED SOLELY ON RETAINING, EXPANDING, ATTRACTING AND EVEN INCUBATING BUSINESSES THAT SEND OUT GOODS AND SERVICES AND BRING IN NEW MONEY."

Community Economic Development Strategic Plan, 2013

2013 PLAN | Development strategies

- Location neutral business attraction
- Need: on-demand meeting/ office space, improved broadband, air service, diversity of housing, and marketing
- "Maintain Taos" effort supporting small businesses
- Formal business retention and expansion program
- Identify needs: baseline survey to inform proactive retention strategies, task force to implement
- Business incubation
- Support NGO's, promote or enable adaptive reuse of public assets (convention center, courthouse)
- Tourism: heritage/cultural tourism; eco-tourism; adventure/experiential tourism; and sporting tourism
- Facilitate through partnerships: revamp courthouse as cultural interpretive center through partnership
- Create tourism portal website
- Art / Craft production
- Address housing affordability
- Events & festivals
- Facilitate coordination among promoters and merchants
- Consider project participation agreements

2013 PLAN | Regional target industries:

- Film and Media
- Alternative Energy
- Solar Installation, Maintenance, and Repair
- Value Added Agriculture
- High Altitude/Hypoxic Training (this initiative failed to gain traction and is no longer a focus or prioritization)

2013 PLAN | Targets

Shore up and stabilize traditional sectors

- Tourism (accommodations, food services, tourism retail)
- Art, entertainment & Recreation
- Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting

"...SECTORS TO SHORE UP HAVE GREAT CULTURAL AFFINITY AND IMPORTANCE IN TAOS, BUT PROVIDE MINIMAL ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION... ECONOMIC BASE JOBS ARE THE PRIMARY NEED; FOCUS EFFORTS ON POTENTIAL GROWTH INDUSTRIES."

- Focus substantial investment of time, effort and money to develop:
 - Information technology
 - Professional, scientific and technical services
 - Light manufacturing"

Many aspects and recommendations in these plans are still relevant and will be integrated into this plan's recommendations, goals, and policies, and all should serve as a reference for future thinking on economic development in the region and town as an excellent resource for historic data, potential strategies, and insight and perspective.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Since 2000, Taos County population growth has lagged behind the national average. Employment growth has still grown faster than the population has, but more slowly than the national average.

Personal incomes, however, grew at a slightly higher rate than average, but remain well below national averages at \$32,007 compared to \$63,443. However, weekly wages have remained stagnant since 2001.

After fluctuation in 2020 unemployment stabilized back to pre-pandemic levels, remaining well above the state average (6.7% compared to 3.9%).

Non-labor income, like social security payments, constitute a significant share of total Taos incomes; 60% over the US average of 37%, reflecting the growing popularity of Taos as a retirement and second home community.

Exhibit 7-03: Taos Economic Indicators, 2019

| Indicators | Taos County Economic Indicators, 2019 | Taos County, NM | United States |
|------------|---|-----------------|---------------|
| Trends | Population, % change, 2000-2018 | 9% | 16% |
| | Employment, % change, 2000-2018 | 14% | 21% |
| | Personal Income, % change, 2000-2018 | 47% | 41% |
| | Average Earnings per Job, % change, 2000-2018 | -5% | 7% |
| | Per Capita Income, % change, 2000-2018 | 35% | 22% |
| Prosperity | Avg. Earnings per Job, 2018 | \$32,007 | \$63,443 |
| | Per Capita Income, 2018 | \$39,148 | \$55,426 |
| | Services, Avg. Annual Wages, 2018 | \$30,511 | \$56,366 |
| | Non-Services, Avg. Annual Wages, 2018 | \$38,379 | \$66,999 |
| | Government, Avg. Annual Wages, 2018 | \$41,004 | \$58,696 |
| Stress | Unemployment Rate, change 2000-2018 | -0.003 | -0.001 |
| | Unemployment Rate, 2018 | 0.064 | 0.039 |
| Structure | Proprietors, % of Jobs, 2018 | 0.3561 | 0.231 |
| | Non-Labor Income, % of Pers. Income, 2018 | 60% | 37% |
| | Services, % of Jobs, 2018 | 72% | 73% |
| | Non-Services, % of Jobs, 2018 | 16% | 15% |
| | Government, % of Jobs, 2018 | 12% | 12% |
| | Net inflow of labor earnings of inter-county commuters* | 1% | 0% |

Source: Headwaters Economics' Economic Profile System, 2020

Adjusting for inflation to 2020 dollars, weekly wages in Taos County were \$653 in 2001, and fluctuated in a narrow range from \$712 in 2010 to \$652 in 2016.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Covered employment & wages in the US

TAOS JOBS & INDUSTRY

Exhibit 7-04: Taos County Employment in Top Sectors

| Top 15 Sectors of Employment in Taos County in 2019 | |
|---|-----------|
| Sector | Employees |
| Accommodation, Food Services | 2,563 |
| Government | 2,151 |
| Health Care, Social Assistance | 2,084 |
| Retail Trade | 1,900 |
| Arts, Entertainment, Recreation | 1,709 |
| Construction | 1,080 |
| Professional, Scientific, Tech. | 962 |
| Other Services (excl. public admin.) | 959 |
| Real estate, Rental, Leasing | 864 |
| Admin., Waste Services | 592 |
| Manufacturing (incl. forest products) | 456 |
| Mining (incl. fossil fuels) | 437 |
| Educational Services | 435 |
| Finance, Insurance | 366 |
| Information | 269 |

The economy of Taos County has traditionally been driven by tourism and agriculture. The largest employment categories are tourism-related services (retail and arts, entertainment, recreation, hospitality, food services), education/healthcare, professional services.

Data Source: U.S. Department of Commerce. 2020. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Economic Accounts, Washington, D.C., reported by Headwaters Economics' Economic Profile System, headwaterseconomics.org/eps.

INCOME & POVERTY

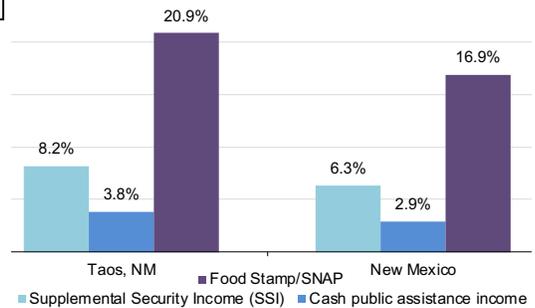
Exhibit 7-05: Taos County Earnings & Income

| Economic Indicators: Earnings | Taos County | Town of Taos | New Mexico |
|-------------------------------|-------------|--------------|------------|
| Per Capita Income | \$23,642 | \$23,340 | \$26,085 |
| Median Household Income | \$36,758 | \$30,893 | \$48,059 |
| Share of households by Income | | | |
| Less than \$10,000 | 11.2% | 13.3% | 9.2% |
| \$10,000 to \$14,999 | 11.0% | 15.5% | 6.0% |
| \$15,000 to \$24,999 | 11.6% | 14.6% | 12.0% |
| \$25,000 to \$34,999 | 14.1% | 10.3% | 10.9% |
| \$35,000 to \$49,999 | 15.9% | 15.1% | 13.6% |
| \$50,000 to \$74,999 | 14.0% | 11.9% | 17.3% |
| \$75,000 to \$99,999 | 8.2% | 9.6% | 11.3% |
| \$100,000 to \$149,999 | 7.3% | 4.8% | 11.8% |
| \$150,000 to \$199,999 | 4.3% | 3.1% | 4.2% |
| \$200,000 or more | 2.2% | 1.8% | 3.7% |

Higher shares of Taos households' incomes are in brackets below \$50,000, and incomes for individuals and households on average are below state averages.

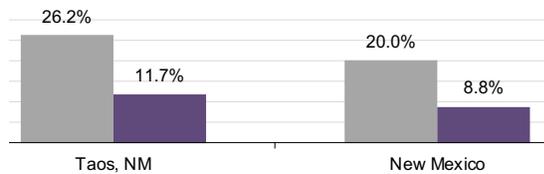
Shares of households in the lowest brackets are highest in the Town of Taos; almost 10% more town households have incomes below \$25,000 than in the county.

Exhibit 7-09: Taos County Earnings & Income



Poverty and deep poverty in Taos (37.9% in total) is higher than state average (28.8% total), which is already among the highest in the nation (13.4%, 2019).

Exhibit 7-07: Poverty & Deep Poverty* in Taos



Yet, just in the past eight years, from 2010 to 2018, poverty in Taos has fallen; for individuals by 8.8% overall, by 9.7% for families, and by 6.2% for single-mother families.

Exhibit 7-08: Change in Poverty Rates from 2010 to 2018

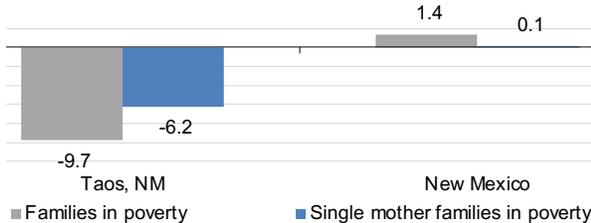
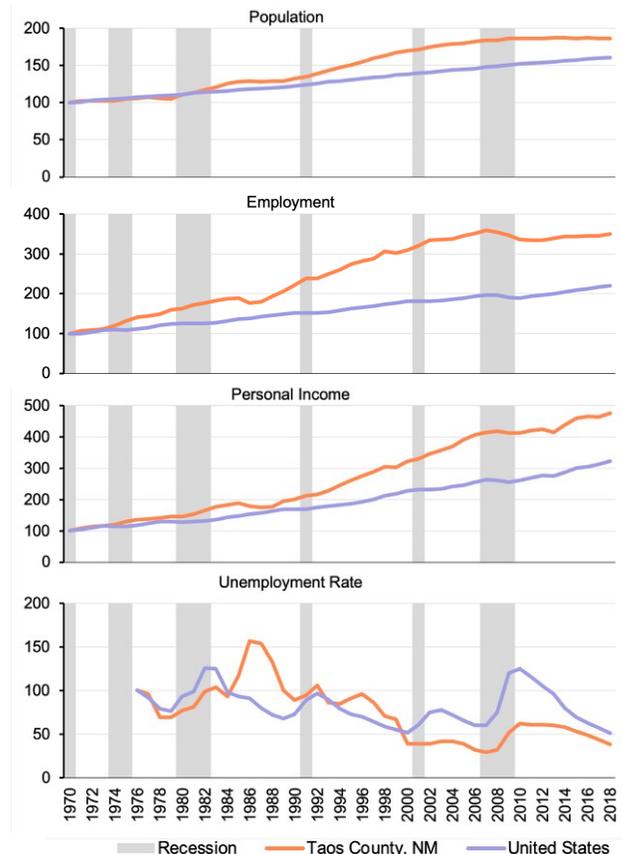


Exhibit 7-06: Taos County Economic Indicators, Historic Trends



ECONOMIC TRENDS

Positive trends range across economic indicators in Taos, in fact. Population growth and rising incomes have been steady, employment and incomes have risen overall, and unemployment has dropped. While all indices took some measure of hit or slowdown following the 2008 recession, none succumbed to trend reversals and all show resiliency, still trending positive.

Certain indicators remain worrisome, however, including weekly wages, which have stagnated, and persistent high unemployment.

Source (All on Page): Headwaters Economics' Economic Profile System, 2020

* Deep poverty is defined by the Census as earning less than half of the federal poverty level.

TOWN OF TAOS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Town of Taos has worked to realize progress and substantive results on the major goals set out in the 2013 Plan.

TOWN OF TAOS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Town of Taos economic development work has focused on development strategies presented in the 2013 Plan, and produced notable progress in many respects. In very brief summation, town efforts and flagship projects have met goals pertaining to:

- Expanding regional transportation capacity & developing infrastructure including solar for improved business attraction
 - Resulting Action: Airport expansions and nearby site development (infrastructure) including solar energy storage project with KCEC
- Local business support for local projects to promote business retention & expansion
 - Resulting Action: Annual business support
- Tourism & events: including recreation, arts, and culture
 - Resulting Action: Music series (Kit Carson Park)
- Marketing and tourism
 - Resulting Action: Ongoing, in collaboration with Enchanted Circle Marketing Co-op
- Film production
 - Established & defined local capacity & needs, working to engage regional collaboration

LOCAL BUSINESS SUPPORT

A formal business retention and expansion program is in place in Taos to develop partnerships with local businesses to support improvements and expansions through grant writing that has produced impressive results.

A local business with potential and capacity to develop projects that will result in net positive jobs, gross revenue and community improvements, is selected according to strict criteria, and vetted through public hearings and due diligence by state agencies to ensure solvency. The town partners with the entity and provides support through grant writing and serving as fiscal agent to secure grants--generally Community Development Block Grants, which are matched by the partner entity.

A summary of several of these projects including funding source and benefits to the town is provided in the table below.

Exhibit 7-10: Town of Taos Economic Development Projects & Outcomes

| Public/Private Partnership | GRANT | MATCH | CREATION OF NEW JOBS | ADDITIONAL BENEFITS TO TOWN |
|---|---|--|---|---|
| The Don Fernando Pulled out of foreclosure | CDBG Economic Development Grant \$500,000 | Batra Hospitality Match \$609,892 | 41 Full-Time 9 Part-Time | 126 Additional Rooms added Town Lodging Base Increased GRTs & Lodgers Taxes Increased Property Taxes |
| Hotel Willa (Previously Indian Hills) Blighted Property | CDBG Economic Development Grant \$500,000 | Casetta Investors \$500,000 | Upon completion of the project, 15 Full-Time 15 Part-Time | 50 Additional Rooms added to Town Lodging Base Beautified a blighted hotel at the entrance to the historic district. Upon completion, increased Lodgers' Taxes and Property Taxes |
| Humble Brands (Organic Deodorant) | USDA - \$250,000 Grant for the Purchase of Production Equipment | Humble Brands - Match \$25,000 | Upon installation of equipment resulting in 4 additional production lines. 10 Full-Time Employees And promoting 13 Part-Time to Full-Time | Expansion of product line to add lip balm and bar soap. Increased GRTs and Gross Domestic Product Diversification of the Taos economy |
| Airport Passenger Terminal 10,000 SF 2 Story facility | Legislative Appropriation - \$5,400,000 | Maintenance & Operation Match provided by Town | Up to 30 Employees Ticketing, Baggage Claim, Car Rental, Tourism Kiosks, Business Center, Café, FBO | |
| Taos Air - Air Service Development Dallas, Austin, San Diego, LA | TSVI - \$7.5 Million Purchase of Planes | | | |

Source: Town of Taos

Traditionally, arts and culture and recreational tourism have been a central economic pillar in Taos and remains a primary focus for development. Several municipal efforts to support the industry, improve the community, and support local businesses illustrate these local efforts. Additional examples illustrate town efforts to build up regional transportation capacity.

CASE STUDIES IN PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS & REGIONALIZATION

2017-2019 Don Fernando Hotel



stay multiple days, and then eat, drink and shop here were substantially reduced.

With tourism representing 40% of the Taos economy, the need for quality hotels was at an all time high, thus the town began a vigorous campaign to force fire, health and building code violations to be corrected, encourage new management where improvements had not taken place and to encourage new ownership where the resources or willingness did not exist to correct these issues. It was during this campaign that the town encouraged Jay Batra, who had purchased and remodeled the Hampton Inn, to take a serious look at the Don Fernando Hotel. The hotel had gone into foreclosure proceedings and was left in a state of disrepair. The abandoned hotel became a hotspot for drug activity, vandalism, prostitution, as well as an eyesore for the community.

At the urging of the town, Jay Batra of the Batra Hospitality Group, Inc., purchased the foreclosed Hotel Don Fernando

of Taos. Located on the main thoroughfare to Taos, the hotel offered 126 rooms, a restaurant, conference center, tennis courts and an indoor swimming pool on five acres which was the largest hotel property in the community.

Through a public/private partnership, the town applied for a CDBG economic development grant of \$500,000 which was matched by Batra Hospitality of \$609,892 for the purchase of inventory. The public/private partnership increased tourism by capturing more hotel days, increased lodgers taxes, increased GRTs (from meals, beverage, lodging, entertainment and accompanying retail sales, and more importantly created 51 local jobs.

Background: Tourism is the main economic driver for Taos funneled through adventure recreation, art, history and cultural experiences. Though the community has a population of 5,500 residents, over 100,000 tourists visit Taos annually. In 2006, two years ahead of the nation, Taos slipped into a recession and continued to be in a recession. The unemployment rate in Taos County in 2014 was 8.9% and in 2015 the rate was 8.1%. Parallel to the unemployment rate, the 6,000 hotel rooms available declined dramatically to less than 1,000 rooms due to hotel foreclosures, Section 8 housing and code violations. As a result, the revenues from tourists to our community that normally would

CASE STUDIES IN PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS & REGIONALIZATION

Hotel Willa, 2019-Present

Through a public private partnership, the Town of Taos and the Taos Hotel Associates, LLC, (THA) applied for a Community Development Block Grant in the amount of \$500,000 matched by \$500,000 by THA for the renovation and upgrading of the property formerly known as the Indian Hills Inn. The property is located at the entrance to the Taos Downtown Historic District and had been in a serious state of blight for years. The improvements total approximately 30,000 square feet on three acres consisting of 55 hotel rooms, a swimming pool, multiple retail spaces, a new poolside restaurant, event venue, and artist- in-residence program.

After purchasing the hotel, THA immediately involved the community with the naming of the hotel. Community members were able to submit their name ideas and THA hosted an after-hours event to announce the winner and the name. The hotel was named after Willa Cather, an author in the 1920s. THA’s engagement with the community also extended to commissioning local artists for rooms and public spaces, partnering with the Paseo Project to manage the artist-in-residency program and to curate gallery space. THA is also committed to being environmentally conscious and engaged a local architect to build stucco walls using recycled materials.

The economic benefits include the creation of 30 new jobs with competitive wages and full benefits, increased tourism by capturing more hotel days, increased lodgers taxes, increased

gross receipts taxes (from meals, beverages, entertainment and accompanying retail sales), and increased property taxes. The project will also increase economic activity through its destination event venue that is expected to attract large wedding parties, family retreats and corporate events, in addition to local community events. In addition, the owners plan to offer an on-site artist-in-residence program that will provide housing, adjacent studio space and gallery/exhibition space. Furthermore, the location of this property at the gateway to the Taos Downtown Historic District is particularly important, and its improvement will greatly increase the appeal of Taos.

Hotel Willa made national news in December 2021 with its nomination of being one of, “The Most Anticipated New Hotel Openings of 2022,” through Vogue magazine.



New Mexico’s traditional adobe-style architecture. The interiors, by Los Angeles design studio Electric Bowery, will be adorned with textured terra-cotta-colored plaster walls, rich earth-tone fabrics, and what they describe as a painterly palette.

<https://www.vogue.com/article/the-26-most-anticipated-new-hotel-openings-of-2022>

CASE STUDIES IN PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS & REGIONALIZATION

Taos Air – Public Private Partnership for Rural Air Service Development, 2018-Present

Until 2018, the Taos Regional Airport had no regularly scheduled air service. Through a public/private partnership, the Town of Taos and Taos Ski Valley, Inc., developed the innovative idea of forming their own air service to begin utilizing the Taos Regional Airport with the goal to boost the economy and tourism.

In the early fall of 2018, Taos Air was



launched with winter service connecting Taos with Austin and Dallas, Texas

for the 2018-2019 ski season. Taos Air operates under DOT Part 135 regulations as a Section 380 public charter utilizing a 30-seat Dornier 328 Jet. The winter program was an enormous success, generating a load factor above 70% in both markets, exceeding first year forecasts by some 20 points. An economic impact study conducted by Southwest Planning and Marketing showed that the resorts of Taos Ski Valley, Red River, and Angel Fire saw an increase in visitation from the new air service. In addition, the communities around the Enchanted Circle region saw an average of 25% increase in

lodgers tax, GRTs, as well as non-ski related tourism, business, and family visits. The positive reviews of the service by residents of the region demonstrated that Taos Air was used by locals and visitors.

With the success of the first year, Taos Air expanded into Southern California for the 2019-2020 ski season. Regional airports in Los Angeles and San Diego counties were added to the offered services. Prior to shutdowns driven by Covid-19 pandemic, the new California services were meeting more aggressive expectations, and the Texas services demonstrated year-over-year growth. Air service commenced during the summer of 2021 (July through September).

Impact studies comparing the 2019 and 2021 service are as follows:

Total fliers during the 2018-2019 Winter equaled 3,790. Of these, 1,881 originated their travel in Taos, 955 originated in Austin and 954 originated in Dallas. The total number of fliers who originated in Texas during the study period was 1,909. The average travel party size was 2.9 for fliers from Texas, yielding an estimated 658 flier parties from Texas.

Total flier trips during Summer 2021 equaled 2,164. Of these, 803 originated in Taos, 439 in Austin, 408 in Dallas, 256 in San Diego, and 258 in Los Angeles. The total number of flier trips originating in Texas/California combined during the study period was 1,361. The average combined travel party size was 1.8 for fliers from Texas/California, yielding an estimated 756 out-of-state flier parties.

Taos Air Service has generated significant momentum towards the long-term goal of expanded service and new destinations. In time, the Taos Regional Airport will be a major economic driver for northern New Mexico opening the door to film, technology, and other industries.

Exhibit 7-11: Estimated Economic Spending Impact - Texas

| Community | Total Direct Spending | Induced/ Indirect Impact of Direct Spending | Total Economic Impact of Direct Spending |
|-----------------|-----------------------|---|--|
| Eagle Nest | \$ 7,612 | \$ 3,045 | \$ 10,657 |
| Angel Fire | \$ 121,488 | \$ 48,595 | \$ 170,084 |
| Red River | \$ 83,382 | \$ 33,353 | \$ 116,735 |
| Questa | \$ 9,613 | \$ 3,845 | \$ 13,459 |
| Taos | \$ 523,298 | \$ 209,319 | \$ 732,617 |
| Taos Ski Valley | \$ 1,028,547 | \$ 411,419 | \$ 1,439,966 |
| Total | \$ 1,773,942 | \$ 709,577 | \$ 2,483,518 |

Source: Town of Taos

Exhibit 7-12: Estimated Economic Spending Impact - Texas or California, 2021

| Community | Total Direct Spending | Induced/ Indirect Impact of Direct Spending | Total Economic Impact of Direct Spending |
|-----------------|-----------------------|---|--|
| Angel Fire | \$ 283,764 | \$ 113,505 | \$ 397,269 |
| Eagle Nest | \$ 16,075 | \$ 6,430 | \$ 22,505 |
| Questa | \$ 5,812 | \$ 2,325 | \$ 8,136 |
| Red River | \$ 135,847 | \$ 54,339 | \$ 190,186 |
| Taos County | \$ 788,976 | \$ 315,590 | \$ 1,104,566 |
| Taos Ski Valley | \$ 274,117 | \$ 109,647 | \$ 383,764 |
| Town of Taos | \$ 743,344 | \$ 297,337 | \$ 1,040,681 |
| Total | \$ 2,247,934 | \$ 899,174 | \$ 3,147,108 |

Source: Town of Taos

CASE STUDIES IN PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS & REGIONALIZATION

Constructed in 1999, the Youth and Family Center offers an array of multigenerational indoor/outdoor activities and recreation to a multicultural economically disadvantaged population, serving almost 200,000 visitors annually.

Recreational activities include a competitive swimming pool utilized by the local high swim team and residents; a national hockey league-size ice skating rink which also converts to a multipurpose area during off season for roller blading, basketball, roller derby, etc.; a therapy pool utilized by physical therapists for patients undergoing therapy; shallow water kiddie pool with water features; a male and female locker room with 11 showers each (22 total) and the showers are also utilized by disadvantaged residents who do not have running water; a youth lounge that has a pool table, TV, free Wi-Fi, and video games utilized by students who are dropped off from the school buses to wait for their parents; a skate board park; and community rooms utilized by seniors for bridge, birthdays, showers, etc.

Economic Impact: Sports and recreation play an important role in the health of a community. Benefits include improving

the health and well-being of individuals, contributing to the empowerment of individuals, and promoting the development of inclusive communities. The 2008 plan, "Recreation as Economic Development," acknowledges tournaments as an important economic generator and a way to diversify the economy. Typically, Taos hosts approximately seven tournaments for hockey and the swim team. The following is a revenue model of a typical youth sports tournament:

| | # Tournaments | # of Teams | # of Days | Estimated Annual Revenue |
|--------------|---------------|------------|-----------|--------------------------|
| Hockey | 4 | 8 | 3 | \$1,912,500 |
| Swim | 3 | 7 | 2 | \$825,000 |
| Total | 7 | 15 | 5 | \$2,737,500 |

Utilizing the financial model as developed in the 2008 plan, 8 teams will bring an average of 500 nonlocal visitors, and daily spending of \$125 to include lodging, food, entertainment. The multiplier effect utilized is 1.2.

By 2015, the Youth and Family Center's exterior walls and roof were showing serious deterioration caused primarily by moisture intrusion causing buckling and deterioration of the stucco lamina, corrosion of the steel framing, and damage to the roofing system. The Town of Taos and Taos County collaborated on a joint grant CDBG application and were the first town/county to be awarded funding in the state of New Mexico! The award of \$1,000,000 was matched by \$200,000.



MUSIC & EVENTS

Taos' efforts to expand events and festivals has focused on building live music events and has followed a careful strategy of brand-building, marketing, analysis, and ancillary projects to extend the economic reach of these events.

Events are well-publicized, produced, and managed by town staff, and have been able to attract artists with high name recognition, building Taos' reputation as an event destination.

"[TO SEE MUMFORD & SONS,] TICKET HOLDERS ARE COMING FROM 46 STATES AND SEVERAL FOREIGN COUNTRIES, AS WELL AS ALL ACROSS NEW MEXICO. THE TOWN OF TAOS IS CAPITALIZING ON THE INFLUX OF VISITORS BY HOSTING A STREET FAIR ON CIVIC PLAZA DRIVE, WHICH RUNS PERPENDICULAR TO THE CONCERT VENUE OF KIT CARSON PARK IN THE TOWN'S CENTER."

Taos News- June, 2013



IMPACT ANALYSIS

The town conducted economic impact analyses of major events in 2019 and found that taxes collected from sales including lodging, meals, outdoor recreation, transportation and tickets were over \$305,000 from two of that year's events (Sting live in concert and a Barn Dance event, see summaries below).

Ongoing review and analyses of events provides the town with important metrics and insight into costs and benefits enabling them to fine tune event planning to prioritize events that maximize positive impacts while minimizing detrimental impacts such as traffic congestion.

Impact analyses of events indicates that large single-day events produce economic impacts similar to smaller multi-day events, which do not produce the same level of traffic or accommodation pressures.

RECOMMENDATION: INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES

Objective reviews of strategy outcomes, such as impact analyses of music event production for economic development, should be established as a regular municipal practice to ensure that future municipal servants understand the mechanics and importance of measuring outcomes to understand costs and benefits and refine strategies as needed.

MARKETING & TOURISM

The Town of Taos marketing and tourism director works with the Taos Marketing Committee which meets monthly, often jointly with the Lodgers Tax Commission. Marketing collaborators include NM True, Enchanted Circle Marketing Co-op, the Taos Chamber of Commerce, and regional partners including the Taos Ski Valley and Taos Air to promote visitation.

Taos marketing and branding is wide-reaching, multi-platform, professional, and user-friendly, and is tracked with analytics to ensure efficacy.

TAOS AIRPORT & BUSINESS PARK

Key regional strategy promoting economic development and transportation improvements.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Fundamental, regional constraints on economic growth and development resulting from limited access to transportation suppress visitation and tourism, business development and attraction, and manufacturing by limiting the movement of goods and people.

To begin to address this constraint, the town has worked with regional partners, especially the Taos Ski Valley, to expand and improve capacity at the Taos Airport, and develop land suitable for business development in the area around the airport.

PROJECT

The Town of Taos completed an Airport Master Plan Study for the Taos Regional Airport, and worked concurrently designing a new passenger terminal building to accommodate recently initiated commercial charter passenger service and increasing corporate and private passengers and aircraft operations. The facility is being designed to include customer, employee, and support space for airlines, rental cars, and Fixed Base Operations (FBO) as well as a business center, conference room and offices, and a restaurant/café.

The terminal development is projected to yield 20 to 34 employees, depending on the size and amenities of the facility, based on a factor of 500 sf per employee from the Commercial Tourist (CT) land use factor.

AIRPORT PLANNING

The **Airport Master Plan** is an extensive study of the project, providing: the framework needed to guide future airport development that will cost-effectively satisfy local and regional aviation demand, while producing an efficient and economically feasible facility that meets the current Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) design standards. As part of the planning process, consideration will be given to the potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts associated with alternative development concepts as well as the possible means of avoiding, minimizing, or mitigating potential impacts to sensitive resources.

The master plan report describe the long-term development concepts of the airport. The document also presents the concepts graphically in the master plan drawing set and includes the supporting data and logic on which the concepts are based.

Utility services expansion to serve the area will likely be arranged through a memorandum of understanding with the county and may be a subject for annexation.

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

The primary struggle facing economic development in Taos at this time is the need for improved collaboration to build capacity at the regional, local, and community level. The following recommendations address the priority areas for focus to improve capacity through collaborations.

REGIONAL & LONG-RANGE PLANNING

The following discussion provides background and resources for informed decision-making and recommendations regarding regional collaboration on economic development and should be used as a resource for developing regional collaborations in areas including, but not limited to, housing and transportation .

The principal recommendation of the 2013 Plan, to develop a regional entity to lead economic development, was realized to an extent and will be discussed at length later in this chapter.

REGIONAL AND LONG-RANGE PLANNING

As discussed in the Capacity chapter, regional partnerships are an essential strategy for expanding the capacity of the town, especially in accomplishing projects requiring significant resources. Long-range planning is a bedrock aspect of regionalism where goals may take years to realize. Foresight must be backed by a political will to dedicate resources now to a cause whose benefits may not be realized immediately and sustained by mechanisms to guide succeeding decision-makers in the necessary measures they must be willing to take to realize goals.

The structure of such a mechanism or the nature of the collaborative outfit that can foster productive and dedicated regional partnerships in the Taos region has yet to be perfected. Potential strategies are outlined in the Appendix of this plan that may lead to the germination of a successful strategy and can provide some substance upon which a conversation on the topic may be started.

The recommendation of this plan, as outlined in

the Capacity chapter is to hold a regional summit of partners to evaluate barriers and workshop solutions in framing a partnership structure that will effect meaningful collaborative regional long-range planning in the Enchanted Circle.

RECOMMENDATION | REGIONALISM

A collaborative Regional Summit should be considered to spearhead a renewed dedication to regional collaborative partnerships. Such a summit should have a professional facilitator, white paper for all participants, and one or more panel discussions to provide insights and ideas. For example, a panel on regional organizations, joint planning departments, and a joint economic development corporation. Invitees to the summit should include elected officials of town and county, managers and department heads of town and county, Taos Pueblo, and others, maybe many others. The facilitator should be tasked with developing the overall agenda.

CONSIDER POTENTIAL STRUCTURES FOR REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS IN THE ENCHANTED CIRCLE`



THE ENCHANTED CIRCLE COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

The Enchanted Circle Council of Governments (ECCoG) is a regional entity recognized by and formed under a JPA approved by the State of New Mexico for the purpose of regional economic development and collaboration. It consists of Taos and Colfax County, the Villages of Angel Fire, Questa and Eagle Nest, and the Towns of Red River and Taos. The Board of Directors consists of the chief elected official and manager/administrator of each jurisdiction. The ECCoG Board, as a legally recognized stand-alone government entity, is empowered through the JPA to act collectively on-behalf of all the member governments.

The Enchanted Circle Council of Governments seeks to find ways to strengthen, diversify, expand and build a more resilient regional year-round economy. Initiatives agreed upon and ratified by resolution are: support of the Taos Regional Airport including air service, electric vehicle charging stations, and the creation of a regional film office.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

With a functional structure in place for regional collaboration and long-range planning, the combined capabilities of all members can be pooled and focused to support effective project development in many areas supporting economic development as well as transportation, housing, and utilities which in turn support economic development further.

Any regional entity tasked with promoting regional economic development should be responsible for establishing regular and structured collaborative protocols with and among local municipal and county economic development and marketing staff. Additional regional capacity can be supported by developing and providing reliable support in certain key areas, including recruiting and supporting film production.

FILM PRODUCTION

Taos has until recently had no organized or focused mechanism for recruiting or supporting film production in the area, though it is identified as a regional target for economic development. Recently, the Town of Taos Marketing and Tourism Director has worked to establish official recognition as a “film liaison” by the State of New Mexico and is working to develop a website to promote and enable recruitment and development of film production, and conducted the research to understand the capabilities needed to successfully fill the role and to conduct the economic impact analysis to do so responsibly.

Staffing and funding constraints on the department put meeting those needs out of reach for the department working alone but establishing this capacity regionally would not require significant resources. It would require commitment from regional partners to fund and empower the region as a whole.

RECOMMENDATIONS | REGIONAL FILM LIAISON

Film should be included as a priority for regional collaboration efforts, beginning with the establishment and dedication of sustained funding streams for a regional film liaison position in equitable shares from all regional partners, with clearly defined and universally supported goals and priorities, functional protocols and responsibilities with supporting resources such as office and meeting space, and regular interface with local leadership and staff.

WORK WITH THE NEW MEXICO FILM OFFICE TO IDENTIFY NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES AND DEVELOP REGIONAL CAPACITY.

Film Liaison

A state-appointed position enabled for each municipality

Position is not funded by the state

Film promotion, including liaisons, may not be funded using lodgers tax

Funding should be established by local general funds and/or private entities

The State of New Mexico recently approved a measure to increase funding for regional film liaisons

Film Recruitment Guidelines

Requirements for a local/ regional film liaison should include :

- Proactive outreach
- Reliability and availability to meet needs and solve problems at all hours
- Local knowledge of sites, regulations
- Local contacts and communication with leaders and officials

SEMI-PUBLIC GROUPS & PARTNERS

Semi-public organizations and entities play an important role, not just in economic development but in many areas of community improvements such as housing, parks and recreation, and the provision of services.

Groups at work in the Taos area include the Regional Housing Authority, North Central Regional Transit District, various utility districts, and others with regards to economic development.

Special consideration should be made by any regional entity working to serve the region and consistent contact and collaboration goals, protocols, and guidelines should be established in the development of a regional entity.

The capacities of existing organizations must be assessed initially, individually, and objectively in order to best determine the most promising strategy for promoting regionalism in the Taos/Enchanted Circle area.

For example, the Affordable Housing Plan recommends increasing the impact of Northern Regional Housing Authority on affordable housing initiatives in Taos. The regional housing authority can act as a developer, package LIHTC projects, and serve as a regional land trust. However, it currently lacks the the capacity to pursue a housing trust. The town should have further discussions with the Northern Regional Housing Authority, but should also consider supporting a housing function within the Northern NM Economic Development District.

Regional partners should include:

- Federal agencies:
 - Bureau of Land Management
 - National Parks
 - National Forest Service
- Regional institutions, businesses and governments

TAOS MAINSTREET

One of the most important semi-public partners in the Town of Taos is the Taos MainStreet Organization, a contract agent of the Town of Taos. In 2019, the Town of Taos adopted by resolution enabling the establishment of a Metropolitan Redevelopment Area in downtown Taos. This allowed the formation and staffing of Downtown Taos MainStreet, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that serves as the action-based implementation organization coordinating with the Town of Taos, Taos County, businesses, property owners, and community partners to achieve a shared vision of Taos' Historic Downtown District.

Taos MainStreet became an accredited MainStreet program in August 2019.

[TAOS MAINSTREET IS] COMMITTED TO REVITALIZING THE ECONOMY OF DOWNTOWN TAOS WHILE PRESERVING ITS CULTURE.

The MainStreet organization itself is a valuable partner who can, and already are, playing a significant role in developing projects and supporting redevelopment and growth downtown.

Taos MainStreet projects focus on three main strategies: physical improvements in the district, economic revitalization, and capacity building .

Recent efforts include the Business Alive initiative in collaboration with the LOR Foundation. Business Alive was developed in 2021 to help connect merchants with Taos high tech in order to create e-commerce solutions at an affordable cost and stem losses resulting from the shutdowns associated with the Covid-19 pandemic.

Additional MainStreet capacity and future efforts to support local businesses and develop improvement projects should be a priority for the town.

MRA PLANNING

The MRA designation alone enables certain economic development tools otherwise unavailable to communities. State statute grants municipal bodies the ability to implement certain activities within MRA-designated areas that can stimulate economic development, including:

- Land and building acquisition
- Rezoning and modification of zoning regulations

- Community facilities projects
- Transportation improvements
- Housing projects

Adaptive reuse or demolition An essential step in developing MainStreet capacity will be developing and adopting an MRA Plan.

Steps for the Town of Taos:

- Adopt a resolution to approve the MRA Plan planning grant
- Complete and submit a completed application to NMFA to secure local government planning funds for up to 50K & provide additional funds as needed to complete the plan
 - The project scope of work has been developed and approved by the New Mexico Economic Development Department, and will be provided by Taos MainStreet.
- Issue a letter of support for the grant through New Mexico MainStreet
- A template for this letter can be provided by the New Mexico Economic Development Department

The MRA Plan will provide:

- Long-range goals and projects to fundamentally improve the community over time with clear, simple steps to begin now to complete a comprehensive MRA improvement action plan
- Analysis, research, and information
- Market analysis with consumer trends, gap analysis, building inventory, workforce profile, opportunities for development, and priority industry recommendations

GREAT BLOCKS IN THE TAOS MRA

Focusing on a viable core two-to-three block commercial area, Great Blocks on MainStreet (GBoMS) is an innovative and intensive design redevelopment project within the MainStreet/Arts & Cultural district resulting in “shovel-ready” construction documents. This public infrastructure investment is meant to catalyze and leverage private sector reinvestment, resulting in higher economic performance.

A candidate Great Blocks project may be Civic Plaza Drive.

The MRA Plan should be designed to be used in tandem with the comprehensive plan. The comprehensive plan covers overall town topics and issues and the MRA Plan covers issues and topics more specifically relevant to the downtown area. The MRA Plan should build on recommendations in the comprehensive plan so that, taken together, the two plans constitute a comprehensive roadmap for improving the community as a whole and strengthening its central core. Ideally, the plans should be used together, as a pair.

The MRA Plan will provide essential analysis and recommendations that are not covered in this plan but are essential to understanding and delivering community improvements for Taos including prioritizing projects to focus resources and achieve goals.

The MRA Plan should also provide a detailed review and update of relevant projects outlined in the Strong at Heart Plan and develop strategies for achieving progress in realizing the vision set forth in that plan.

The plan will also provide a review of potential projects and goals such as developing or expanding the boundaries and use of special districts that can provide access to redevelopment tools and developing initiatives, collaborations and project, and working to engage and support the community in focused, results-driven efforts.

COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS IN THE REGION

In addition to collaborating with regional economic development and marketing staff, a key strategy for both regional and local economic development will be to efficiently capitalize on the economic resources available beyond the public sector, including the wide range of organizational capacities, resources, expertise, interests, and experience represented by the many economic partners vested to work to improve Taos.

Any regional entity as well as the town independently should proactively coordinate with these local economic development groups and institutions to align goals, track capacity and projects, and coordinate efforts between groups to prevent gaps or redundancies.

Getting efforts from all sides progressing in the same direction, each working with their resources, interests, and talents, towards a unified goal will greatly enable progress. Coordination of these groups is also important to prevent duplicative or counterproductive activities between them, and will allow efficient distribution of activities and resources to prevent gaps or overlap.

SOCIAL INVESTMENTS

The significant range of organizational capacity frequently focuses attention on social welfare, including efforts categorized by the groups themselves as “economic development” efforts. Defining “economic development” and the role in it of activities that could be categorized as “social welfare,” or the role of government in those activities, is by no means a settled debate. These efforts can certainly be considered essential work in the pursuit of economic development as the vehicle by which human capacity is cultivated that can build on public investments in large scale endeavors like infrastructure to realize growth and prosperity. (see “Economic Development Definitions and Roles in the Appendix”).

Regardless of the nuances of economic development theory and definitions, this work is highly valued and important for the community. Work to align goals and define roles should be a priority in order to foster a spirit of collaboration at minimum and realize vastly greater economic development potential ideally.

CAPACITY MAPPING

The Taos area is host to a multitude of regional organizations focusing on a number of different social and environmental topics. A number of these groups participated in a survey of community groups conducted by the planning team in the development of the Comprehensive Plan Update. Results are included in the plan’s Appendix and provide a listing of focus issues, capabilities, and current projects for those organizations who participated. Not all local community groups participated; this is a partial, voluntary listing.

RECOMMENDATIONS | LOCAL COLLABORATION: COMMUNITY GROUPS

A coordinating council for community organizations operating in Taos should be formed with the objective of working together where appropriate. This is particularly important when collaborating with the town and/or county on a shared project or in a shared arena. Commission structure, rules, positions, goals, and responsibilities should be clearly defined. The commission can conduct regular meetings to discuss progress and projects with municipal leadership. Responsibilities should include:

- Proactively coordinate with local economic development groups and institutions to align goals, track capacity and projects, and coordinate efforts between groups to prevent gaps or redundancies
- Develop and maintain a catalog of active groups including information regarding the groups’ mission, strategies, capacities, projects, collaborations, and contact information.

LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACT

New Mexico’s Local Economic Development Act (LEDA) allows municipalities and counties to make public investments in certain, qualifying economic development projects. LEDA was adopted by the state in response to the Anti-Donation Clause in the state constitution, in order to promote economic development.

To enact and enable local LEDA investments, a community adopts an ordinance creating an economic development organization and a strategic plan.

This enables public support of certain economic development projects (essentially, public/ private partnerships) that foster, promote, and enhance local economic development efforts while continuing to

protect against the unauthorized use of public money and other public resources.

The Town of Taos has passed a LEDA ordinance and can participate in local and state incentives.

The capacities and process for use of LEDA are described in the Appendix.

RECOMMENDATIONS | IMPLEMENTING LEDA

IMPLEMENT AN ADOPTED LOCAL LEDA ORDINANCE TO SUPPORT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Develop and publicize a list of potential local LEDA incentives
- Consider convening a special committee, including town, county, state departments and agencies (including NMEDD), local economic development organizations, local institutions, business and industry, and community groups to identify potential incentives and partnerships
- Identify improvement projects eligible for state participation, including investment in land, buildings, and infrastructure
- Identify gaps in services and assets that limit development projects and other potential improvement projects that may be eligible for state assistance
- Work with the state to develop and complete projects to improve the town's ability to attract development and investment

GOALS, POLICIES, & ACTIONS

OVER-ARCHING GOAL

Through local efforts and regional partnerships, the economy of Taos continues to build and diversify economic base jobs, develop emerging industries, strengthen and grow cultural industries including tourism and art, and to support its local workforce and residents by prioritizing the sustainability of the community, culture, and natural resources

- A| *Improve and maintain a formal partnership with regional governments and partners through a formal and equitable structure and agreements to work in collaboration in the development and support of long-range, regional economic development goals*
- B| *Pursue regional collaboration along the outlined actions provided here*

1 GOAL

The Taos economy supports the local community with high quality jobs, a diversity of local services, and attractions for locals and visitors

- A| *Support the growth of traditional arts and culture, and innovative and emerging industries*
- B| *Enable local businesses and entrepreneurs to thrive as fostered and supported by local patrons, organizations, and public resources where appropriate*
- C| *Work at the local and regional levels in collaboration with local businesses, industry, and institutions to cultivate economic opportunities*
- D| *Engage and coordinate efforts by local community groups promoting collaborative projects and partnerships and enable alignments of efforts, priorities, and projects*

2 GOAL

Regional cooperation supports projects and initiatives through long-range planning and on-going efforts dedicated to shared goals and realized through equitable resource investment to build capacity, opportunities, and sustainable economies that improve lives throughout the region

- A| *Support through regional cooperative investment efforts to build economic development capacity representing regional interests*
- B| *Build on and expand regional efforts to develop infrastructure, attract emerging industries, support existing arts and culture economies, and build on local outdoor recreational opportunities*

3 GOAL

The Taos economy fully engages all available resources in building and supporting the local economy

- A| *Support LEDA (Local Economic Development Act) local economic development projects, and partner on regional and state LEDA projects*
- B| *Use LEDA projects in collaboration with regional and state partnerships to build infrastructural capacity for economic development in Taos*

GOAL 4

Local efforts continue to support local business development and revitalization while expanding economic base stability and diversity

- C| *Continue to support downtown Taos as a pillar of community and economic importance*
- D| *Support Taos MainStreet in economic development efforts in its role as a leader in pursuing and developing projects to improve downtown Taos*
- E| *Support development of a Taos Metropolitan Redevelopment Plan to provide guidance for realizing improvements in downtown Taos*

GOAL 5

The local outdoor recreational opportunities, including town parks, are priorities for improvement and expansion to serve the local community and attract visitors to expand the destination economy in Taos.

- F| *Findings from green network mapping work (see Green Network chapter) informs and supports a robust green network including attractions in support of current and future work to build Taos as an entertainment and recreation destination*

GOAL 6

Taos economic development efforts and general policies prioritize and support projects that promote sustainability goals for the community and local resources

ACTIONS

ACTION | Hold a preliminary sub-regional economic development summit including Taos County and the Taos Ski Valley to establish a unified vision, goals, and priorities

- Consider regional governance frameworks that foster long-range decision-making, equitable sharing of resources and responsibilities, and cooperative leadership and representation

- Conduct staff-level regional discussions to consider opportunities for regional collaboration and coordination

ACTION | Convene a regional summit to work to improve regional collaborative efforts regarding economic development as well as transportation, housing, land use regulations, water and sewer systems, shared staffing, and recreational leagues and facilities

ACTION | Establish a regional commission to pursue economic development projects and strategies and provide recommendations to local and regional decision makers, and address other topics agreed upon by members

- Build off of the Enchanted Circle Council of Governments

- Consider expanding member representation to multiple seats to expand the range of interests represented and dilute political pressure

ACTION | Develop town or town/county economic development plan prioritizing local community sustainability and regional collaborations that will:

- Provide economic development strategies and goals and up-to-date, comprehensive data and market analysis

- Prioritize target industries

- Provide potential incentives and strategies for business attraction

- Develop policies and actions based on community input to support local businesses and entrepreneurs

- Establish an index of current funding sources outlining funding parameters and requirements

- Identify potential local LEDA projects and incentives

- Serve as the community's strategic economic development plan in support of regional economic development

ACTION | Work with local businesses through public private partnerships to cultivate economic opportunities, support job creation, and provide living wages.

ACTION | Update local LEDA ordinance to include all recent amendments to state LEDA regulations

Work with the regional representative of the New Mexico Economic Development Department
Expand the use of local LEDA, including potential participation from regional and state LEDA, to support economic development

Develop and publicize a list of potential local LEDA incentives

Consider convening regular regional workshops, including town, county, state departments and agencies (including NMEDD), local economic development organizations, local institutions, business and industry, and community groups to identify potential incentives and partnerships

Independently, or with regional partners, identify improvement projects eligible for state LEDA investment in land, buildings, and infrastructure

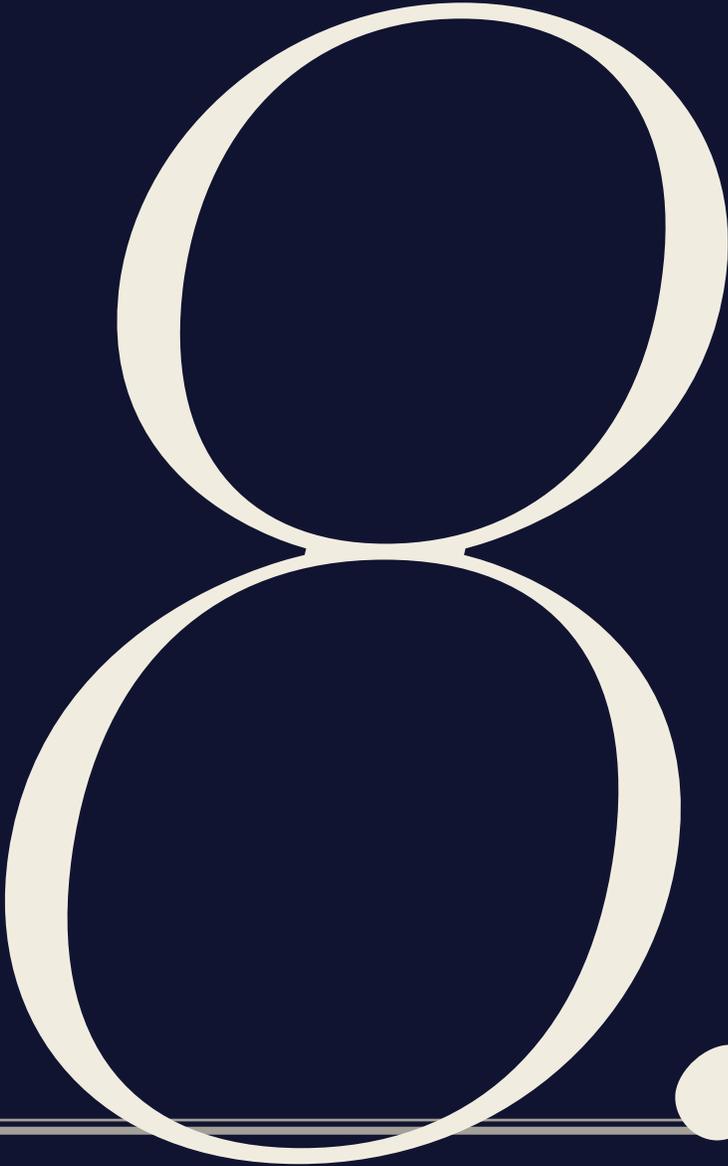
ACTION | Work with the state Economic Development Department to develop and complete projects to improve the town's ability to attract development and investment

ACTION | Designate the economic development chapter of the Comprehensive Plan update, 2022 as the community's current economic development strategic plan until such time as a dedicated economic development plan is developed and adopted

ACTION | Actively support Taos MainStreet to continue working to develop projects promoting economic vibrancy in the core of Taos

ACTION | Develop a downtown Metropolitan Development Area plan (action also in Land Use)

ACTION | Apply for a Great Blocks of MainStreet grant for a project such as redeveloping and improving Civic Plaza Drive or an alternative project



PUBLIC ASSETS



PUBLIC ASSETS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter addresses utilities, facilities, and hazards mitigation with discussion pertaining to parks and recreation, as well as sustainability, and municipal governance.

Public assets in the Town of Taos include municipal facilities, utilities, and property. Maintaining this inventory properly to meet assets' expected useful life and adjusting it to meet the changing needs of the community, is a significant responsibility. Taos staff and management have shown impressive results managing the town's inventory with a small staff and limited funds, and have made concrete steps toward improving the town's capacity for monitoring and tracking inventory, repairs, issues and other asset management information that will serve as an invaluable foundation in the further development of management systems and inventory to ensure that public assets are put to their best and highest use, and meet the needs of the community to the best of the town's capacity.

This chapter will provide a brief overview of municipal assets, guiding principles, and priority issues driving resource allocation, and recommendations to provide staff and the community with additional tools for minimizing inefficiencies, expanding communications, and improving the tools available to asset managers to understand and meet the needs of the public and to access community input and resources more easily.

FOUNDATION

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

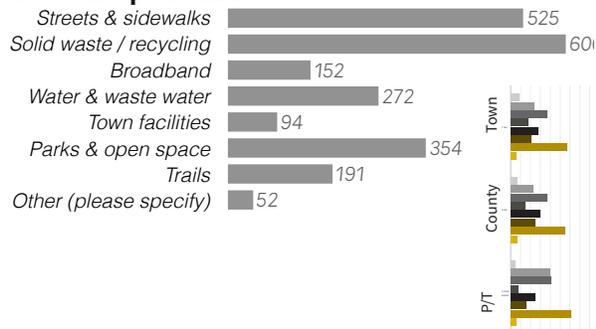
According to survey respondents, the primary role and responsibility of municipal government is: infrastructure development and maintenance; the provision of services including fire, police, and library; and citizen health and safety.

Specifically, the community supports:

- Expanded and improved walking, biking trails and safety, including sidewalks;
- Expanded park and recreational opportunities; and
- Provision of solid waste and recycling services.

Exhibit 8-01: Survey - Public Works

What two public works improvements should the Town prioritize?



PLANNING REFERENCES

The Public Assets chapter supports and builds on the following plans and studies:

- Town of Taos Facility Condition Assessment (2019)
- Region 7: Taos Regional 40-Year Water Plan (2016)
- Water and Sewer Master Plan for the Town of Taos (2015)
- Taos County Hazard Mitigation Plan (2018)
- Airport Master Plan (2020 Draft)
- Town of Taos ICIP, 2021
- Town of Taos Community Tree Care Plan (2020)
- Community Wildfire Protection Plan (2016)

Together, the following primary reference plans provide a detailed overview of the facility and utility assets under town management, the water resources and needs of the community, and measures to protect these assets and the people they serve.

These primary reference plans for facilities, utilities, and hazards constitute a comprehensive overview of inventory conditions and considerations, and recommended actions and strategies for improving, maintaining, and managing assets and services. The following summaries should serve as an index for navigating, referencing, and utilizing these planning resources.

Region 7: Taos Regional 40-Year Water Plan (2016)

Provides information related to water planning in the Taos region and evaluates projections of future water supply and demand for the region with recommendations for priority projects.

This regional plan provides an overview of water issues including legal, mechanical, operational, and demand, environmental considerations, existing water infrastructure, sources, condition and quality, administrative water supplies, uses, and projections for future water needs based on population projections with recommendations for system improvements, and measures to ensure future water needs are met.

The plan also includes implementation planning with strategies, projects, and policies including regional collaboration recommendations.

Water And Sewer Master Plan for the Town of Taos (2015)

Documents Taos' existing water and sewer system facilities and identifies existing deficiencies in the systems to recommend future improvements.

This municipal plan documents the existing water and sewer system and identifies existing deficiencies in the systems with recommendations for future improvements. The plan provides an excellent overview of the water system infrastructure, rights, management, context and related issues including implications of the Abeyta Water Settlement with a detailed technical review of infrastructure needs and administrative considerations.

These plans should continue to serve as the primary technical planning resources for town facility, town utilities, and hazard mitigation in the Town of Taos.

Town Of Taos Facility Condition Assessment (2019)

Forecasts facility needs and justifies funding requirements using a predictive approach to asset management used to anticipate funding and maintenance needs (in support of ICIP)

This technical report provides summaries of facility improvement and repair needs and costs by system, year (projected out), and facility. Site assessments include general facility and site condition including pavement and asphalt on the site. Utilities and ADA assessments are not included.

This report does provide an outline of the prioritization ranking system used by project categories and other methodology notes that may inform municipal asset management strategies.

Taos County Hazard Mitigation Plan (2018)

Demonstrates the county and participating jurisdictions' commitment to reducing risks from hazards and serves as a tool to help decision makers direct mitigation activities and resources.

This regional plan, adopted by the town in 2018, was developed and is managed under the county's Office of Emergency Management (OEM). The plan is in effect through 2024 and the OEM office is currently working on a grant to commence a rewrite.

The plan provides an overview of hazards risks in the county with an inventory of county, municipal, and special governments planning and technical/administrative capabilities, assets, and existing hazard collaborations. The plan documents hazards including event history and risk assessment with prioritized mitigation recommendations.

PLANNING NEEDS & RESOURCES

MASTER PLANNING

These resources do not include formal master planning for systems, networks, or assets. Master planning generally serves to guide resource management in a focused strategy towards a specific goal or vision. For example, a facilities master plan can develop a strategy for addressing facility needs that can involve facility repairs, replacement, or reorganization and provide a step-by-step procedure for accomplishing the goal with limited disruption to services and minimal resource use. Master plans are typically longer-range than asset management plans and consider expected needs for additional space and capacity based on projected growth and changing conditions.

At some point in the future, master planning for utilities and facilities should be developed, but the Town of Taos is in no immediate need of facility or infrastructure master planning, and existing planning resources provide adequate planning for those assets at this time.

HAZARDS MITIGATION PLANNING

Hazards mitigation planning is managed by Taos County Office of Emergency Management (OEM).

Additional hazards mitigation planning support is provided by the regional Community Wildfire Protection Plan Agency which manages and maintains CWPP planning and efforts in the region and is highly effective as a regional collaboration.

EXISTING PLANS: RECOMMENDATIONS OVERVIEWS & TOPIC NOTES

Town Of Taos Facility Condition Assessment (2019)

Recommendations are primarily relatively minor and specific to repair and upgrades but include some long-range planning considerations such as updating HVAC and electrical systems.

FACILITY CONDITION ASSESSMENT NOTE:

Taos facilities are generally in good to fair condition. This speaks to a level of municipal diligence and attention in maintaining these assets that is relatively rare and often difficult for small communities to accomplish.

Exhibit 8-02: Town Buildings Inventory

| Facilities Inventoried in Town Facility Conditions Assessment | | |
|---|------------|--------------------|
| Building and Grounds | Year Built | Area (Square feet) |
| Coronado Hall | 1974 | 11,171 |
| Don Fernando Hall | 1974 | 8,000 |
| El Pueblo Hall | 1993 | 4,390 |
| Fire Department sub station Library | 2010 | 2,980 |
| Kit Carson Park Office | 1979 | 2,627 |
| Library | 1995 | 14,565 |
| Old PD | 1990 | 5,030 |
| Taos Community Auditorium | 2009 | 12,215 |
| Taos Visitor Center | 1992 | 5,645 |
| Town Hall | 2009 | 18,578 |
| Youth & Family Center | 1998 | 61,179 |

Source: Town of Taos Facility Condition Assessment, Alpha Facilities Solutions and Dude Solutions, 2019

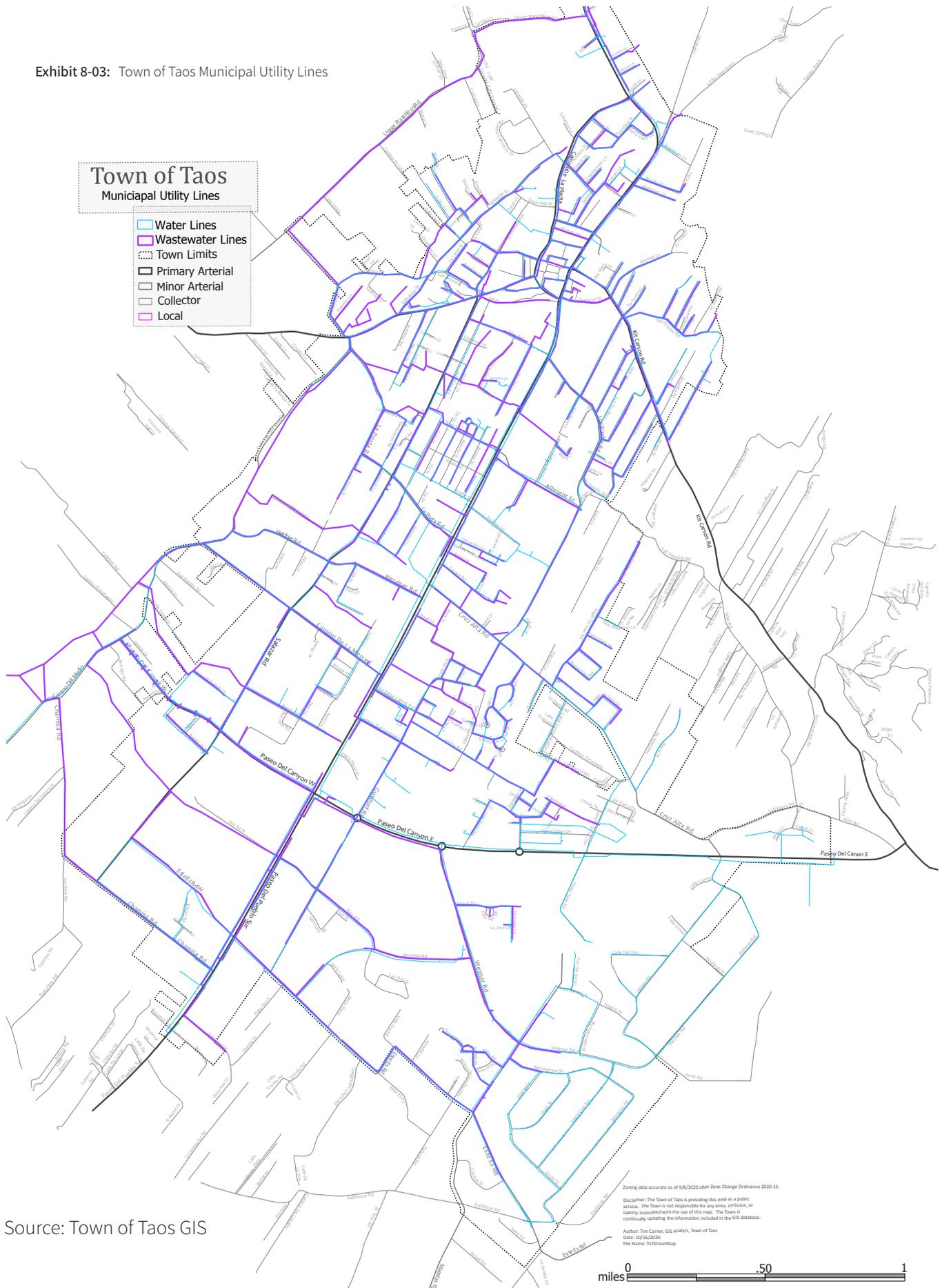
The town's Public Works Department office, shops, and yard are not evaluated in the assessment.

Water And Sewer Master Plan for the Town of Taos (2015)

Recommendations include:

- Develop asset inventory and management plan
 - Improve reporting and documentation for GIS, end goal to develop asset management plan/program
- Update/ revise operations and emergency response plans, provide additional training
- Abeyta Settlement:
 - Improve efficiency of operations and balance of well operations before Abeyta wells come online
 - Track rights transfers to monitor compliance with Abeyta Settlement
 - Consider Abeyta wells in future system upgrades and renovations
- Goal to regionalize water and wastewater to improve efficiencies, services, and minimize groundwater pollution from personal septic systems
 - Provides specific measures to determine potential for connecting in neighboring systems and capacity for current users and future growth
 - Solar power, effluent reuse, water conservation measures, and compost reuse recommendations

Exhibit 8-03: Town of Taos Municipal Utility Lines



Source: Town of Taos GIS

WATER AND SEWER MASTER PLAN NOTES:

Existing water and wastewater infrastructure capacity is adequate with room for growth. The primary limiting factor on future growth will not be the infrastructure, it will be the resource availability and the Abeyta Settlement parameters.

- Abeyta adjudication stipulates future rights, diversions, well locations, a replacement well operation, and maintenance
 - Existing treatment process is good and capable of accommodating 20-year growth.
- Regionalizing water and wastewater systems should be studied further. Infrastructure connections and utility service crossover already exist in some places.
 - The town currently provides emergency water support to neighboring systems when needed.
- Extending existing infrastructure from the town's well field up to airport will require additional pump and lift station, storage, and on-site development. This would not be a stand-alone system but would be tapped into existing infrastructure.
- Regionalizing water systems may be a component of broader regionalization efforts along with transportation, housing, economic development, and others.
- Functional monitoring, repair and maintenance recommendations provided in the Water And Sewer Master Plan should inform municipal asset management strategies.
- Existing management strategies for estimating future water use rely on calculations based on allowable densities as defined in the municipal zoning code.

With regards to effluent reuse it should be noted that the distance from the town of the water treatment plant inhibits most effluent reuse in the town, though it is currently in use at the Taos Country Club golf course.

PROGRESS: REGIONAL WATER SYSTEMS

Work to understand the feasibility and promote the realization of implementing regional water systems is currently underway with a feasibility study slated to begin in 2023 with a feasibility study. The study will evaluate the status of the existing systems and propose the infrastructure necessary to provide emergency water supplies and fire flows through an interconnection. Some systems may elect bulk water supply while others only emergency service.

This will be followed by the design of transmission lines from the new deep wells to the town's municipal supply and distribution system that will loop the system and will provide for the potential interconnection with multiple mutual domestics.

Region 7: Taos Regional 40-Year Water Plan (2016)

Recommendations cover a range of water-related topics including: system management improvement measures (asset management), planning and modeling needs, equipment upgrades for system-wide improvements, water and wastewater system infrastructure, water conservation, watershed restoration, flood prevention, water reuse, water rights, water quality, and data collection. All are housed within a regional strategy framework.

Specific recommendations include: operation planning as groundwork for asset management planning, meter improvements, storage and system improvements, and solar power to offset water treatment facility operations costs. Specific goals and projects are provided with detailed implementation plans.

40-YEAR WATER PLAN NOTES

The implementation plans provide an excellent level of specificity and identifies public and private partners across the Taos region to provide resources and support in realizing plan goals.

The 40-Year Water Plan effort overall represents an exemplary process that was uniquely successful in creating and supporting a collaborative regional effort from inception through implementation.

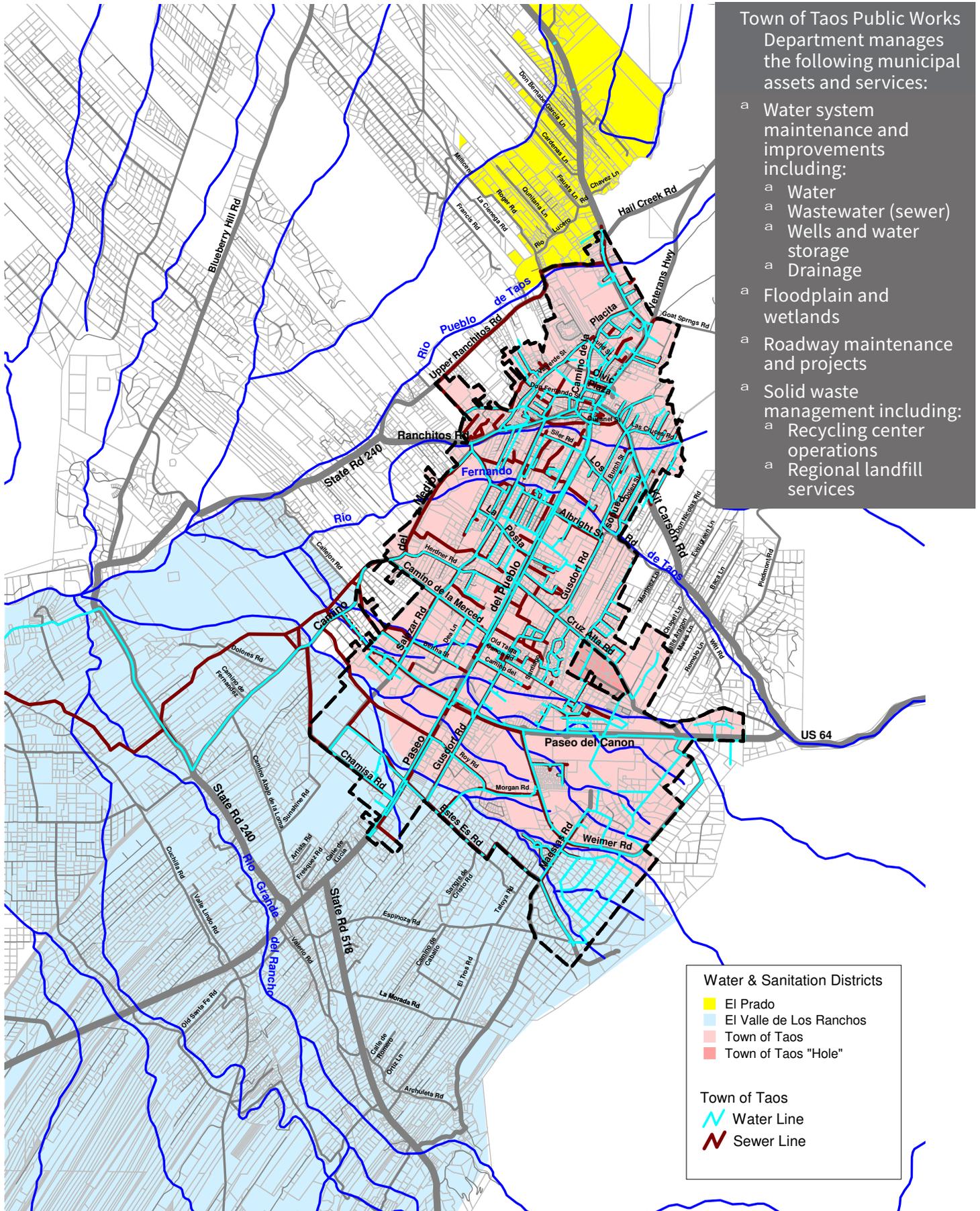
What is the Abeyta Settlement?

"THE SETTLEMENT IS ESSENTIALLY A WATER-SHARING AGREEMENT FOR THE TAOS VALLEY AMONG THE MAJOR WATER USERS AND WATER RIGHTS HOLDERS. IN 1969, NEW MEXICO WENT TO FEDERAL COURT TO TALLY ALL THE WATER RIGHTS IN THE LOCAL WATERSHEDS AND ESTABLISH WHO OWNS HOW MUCH. TO AVOID THE COSTLY, AMBIGUOUS NATURE OF A COURT BATTLE OVER THIS, THE MAJOR PLAYERS CAME TOGETHER TO CRAFT [THIS] SOLUTION."

"What is the Abeyta Settlement? Why should I care?," Cody Hooks. Taos News, 3/21/2019

Abeyta Settlement Parties: The Town of Taos, Taos Pueblo, El Prado Water and Sanitation District, 12 mutual domestic water associations, and dozens of acequias, represented by the Taos Valley Acequia Association (TVAA). The state of New Mexico and the United States are also parties.

Exhibit 8-04: Water and Sanitation Districts and Town Utility Lines



C O N T E X T

Facilities, utilities, and hazards mitigation have many intersections, but all are fundamentally matters of resource management; both public and natural; and responsible resource management is the key strategy to building sustainability.

F A C I L I T I E S O V E R V I E W

Facilities include Town of Taos buildings and properties such as town hall, public library, fire department, Coronado Hall, community auditorium, and visitors center.

The following list of municipal facilities includes conditions notes and needs from the Taos Facilities Assessment.

Repairs & refurbishments (R&R)
Regular maintenance (RM)

- *Don Fernando Hall – good, effectively maintained*
- *El Pueblo Hall – poor, old so needs higher level of maintenance*
- *Fire Department substation – good, effectively maintained*
- *Kit Carson Park Office - fair, R&R*
- *Library - fair, R&R*
- *Old PD - fair, R&R*
- *Taos Community Auditorium – good, RM*
- *Taos Visitor Center - good, RM*
- *Town Hall – good, RM*
- *Youth & Family Center – good, RM*
- *Coronado Hall – fair, some repairs & refurbishments (R&R) could extend useful life, regular maintenance recommended (RM)*
- *Don Fernando Hall – good, effectively maintained*
- *El Pueblo Hall – poor, old so needs higher level of maintenance*
- *Fire Department substation – good, effectively maintained*
- *Kit Carson Park Office - fair, R&R*
- *Library - fair, R&R*
- *Old PD - fair, R&R*
- *Taos Community Auditorium – good, RM*
- *Taos Visitor Center - good, RM*
- *Town Hall – good, RM*
- *Youth & Family Center – good, RM*

The Taos Public Library is a special town public facility that provides a breadth of direct services to the public, offering books to lend, place for study and research, internet access, and many other resources serving residents. Upkeep of the library building, technology enhancement, and space expansion are all important to continue to effectively respond to changing needs and continue to best serve the public.

U T I L I T I E S O V E R V I E W

Town utilities include water, wastewater, and recycling. New Mexico Gas provides natural gas, and Kit Carson Electric Cooperative provides electricity and fiber-optic cable internet. Other internet providers include Xfinity, CenturyLink, and TaosNet.

The Taos Water Planning Region, which includes Taos County and a portion of the Embudo watershed in southeastern Rio Arriba County (Figure ES-1), is one of 16 water planning regions in the State of New Mexico. Regional water planning was initiated in New Mexico in 1987, its primary purpose being to protect New Mexico water resources and to ensure that each region is prepared to meet future water demands.

Between 1987 and 2008, each of the 16 planning regions, with funding and oversight from the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission (NMISC), developed a plan to meet regional water needs over the ensuing 40 years. The Taos Regional Water Plan (RWP) was completed in April 2008 and accepted by NMISC that same year

40-Year Water Plan, 2008

REGIONAL UTILITIES

WATER

In New Mexico especially, water is a regional issue with regional implications. The State of New Mexico encourages regional approaches to water planning and provides assistance for regional water planning (40-Year Water Plans).

Several water districts and associations serve areas adjacent to and near the Town of Taos.

El Valle Water and Sanitation District serves mainly Ranchos de Taos but also a small area within town boundaries. North of the Town of Taos is El Prado Water and Sanitation District. Taos Pueblo has independent utilities and the town treats the Pueblo's wastewater.

For irrigation, there are several important acequia associations managing the hundred-years-old networks in and around Taos.

The 40-Year Water Plan provides recommendations and

considerations regarding water regionalization in Taos.

ELECTRIC (KCEC)

Kit Carson Electric Cooperative, Inc. (KCEC) has approximately 23,000 electric members, 7,000 broadband customers and 3,300 propane customers serving Taos, Colfax and Rio Arriba Counties.

KCEC has approximately 2,900 miles of electric and high-speed fiber-optic lines reaching 29 communities comprising roughly 29,000 member-owners, 3,600 businesses, and 183 institutions such as schools, hospitals, and government. Kit Carson Internet (KCI) provides 1 gigabit (Gb) service with simultaneous upload and download speed.

ELECTRIC TRANSMISSION

The Lucky Corridor, or Vista Trail transmission line, is a proposed 65-mile 345kv transmission line that will connect electric transmission lines from Springer to a Taos substation. It's objective is to bring electricity generated at wind farms in eastern New Mexico to north central New Mexico, and to connect to transmission lines in an interstate electric grid. The project's stated goal is to enable transition to sustainable energy sources by bolstering energy transition.

RESOURCE SUSTAINABILITY

RECYCLING

The Town of Taos Recycling Center has operated for 13 years providing a drop-off recycling center accepting material from town and regional residents and received funding assistance from Taos County. The center ran at an operational deficit averaging about \$78,000 annually and was briefly closed in 2020 by vote from the Taos Regional Landfill Board. Several issues affect the ability to maintain the service including liability, commodity prices, diversion rates, landfill costs, and regional support.

The town recently voted to reopen the center as part of an "eight-point intermediate and long-term plan for sustainable, community wide recycling." Along with reopening the center, the plan includes an outline that supports the national Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act; a goal for additional state-level plastic and recycling regulations; continued "green waste" recycling at the landfill (refrigerators, washing

machines, tires, etc.); incentivizing the private recycling sector; creating a regional community recycling board; regulating single-use disposables; and focusing on public education.

Several groups in the Taos area focus on waste sustainability including Recycle Ranger, Plastic Free Taos, and Conscientious Taos and others on broader sustainability in general, such as Renewable Taos.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Renewable energy efforts include solar collection and storage projects, and electric vehicle infrastructure.

KCEC has completed 15 solar projects in the past 15 years and has 19.8 Mw of solar arrays installed. The Co-op is constructing distributed energy resources (DER) with storage capacity to service 100% of KCEC's daytime peak energy requirements by 2022.

Many KCEC solar projects have been accomplished in partnership with the Town of Taos, including the DER storage project which is located by the Taos Airport. Taos Ski Valley is also an active partner in expanding energy sustainability in Taos, as are several sustainability groups including Sustainable Taos. One primary focus of this coalition is the development of a complete electronic vehicle (EV) charging station network as well as a transit and transportation network connecting visitors and employees between home and work/ play destinations in the region including the Ski Valley and airport.

See the Transportation Chapter for additional discussion of the potential for EV and transit / transportation networks in Taos, and recent and planned EV projects.

HAZARDS MITIGATION

Hazards mitigation planning is largely managed county-wide by the Taos County Office of Emergency Management who is responsible for the county's Hazards Mitigation Plan, and by various state and federal agencies. Taos Pueblo has its own hazards mitigation plan. Local emergency response departments in Taos include the Taos Fire Department and Police Department, both of whom coordinate with county and regional efforts.

The county's Hazards Mitigation Plan identifies fire hazard as the highest risk for the planning area as well as drought, landslide, avalanche, earthquake, and winds. Mitigation measures pertaining to all risks are provided in the plan and supported by this plan.

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

FACILITIES & UTILITIES CONSIDERATIONS : MEETING FUTURE NEEDS

This plan projects town population to grow by about 1,100 residents by 2040 (see Land Use chapter) and Taos County to grow by 6,000-10,000 persons by 2040. Current development trends and prevailing sentiment indicates that infill development may be less likely than expansion as the dominant development trend in the future. However, the ability of the town to absorb significant infill development, including large-scale developments, and benefits to the community and the environment of infill development, may be currently under-appreciated.

Infill also minimizes costs by limiting the need to extend infrastructure out to new development. Town sewer should serve all new development in the corporate limits of Taos. Infill, in terms of utility services in Taos, also includes incorporating town properties currently served by private wells and septic systems. As the Water and Sewer Plan notes, infill and conversion from septic or personal wells provides the biggest potential growth of customer base. Converting existing septic systems to municipal water will also limit groundwater pollution and water waste as private septic tanks and systems are more prone to leaks than municipal systems.

However, growth and expansion beyond existing development envelopes should be expected and taken into account in infrastructure planning for the town.

RECOMMENDATIONS | FUTURE FACILITY & UTILITY NEEDS

UNDERSTANDING FUTURE NEEDS

To inform efforts to prioritize projects, municipal staff and leadership should review and utilize the projections and development discussion provided in the Land Use chapter, particularly the Annexation Strategies and future land use mapping as a guide.

PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The capacity to absorb infill growth is laid out in the Land Use chapter of this plan and should be integrated into municipal policies and considered by the community as a direct and effective strategy for promoting green, sustainable development and improved community vibrancy overall. *(Resource sustainability is addressed later in this chapter)*

ENABLING MUNICIPAL CAPACITY

Developing and implementing a more accurate utility needs estimation tool that is based on current, projected, and historic uses should be a priority for municipal management.

Municipal utility management currently relies on future land use mapping & zoning to project future water use.

Population growth and other demographic trends should inform park and recreational facility planning, housing priorities, transportation and transit, facilities and utilities.

Taos currently has adequate vacant land within the town to support significant *infill development*.

Infill development supports the close-knit tapestry of urban and semi-urban development that consistently proves most appealing, safe, desirable, and sustainable.

Infill development supports:

Walkable, mixed-use, accessible communities

Lower carbon footprints & lower transportation costs

Closer-knit communities & neighborhoods

Safer streets with greater pedestrian & multi-modal activity

Support for small, local businesses & services

Lower infrastructure costs per capita to support population growth

The Town of Taos can support significant *infill development*. Vacant and under-used land accounts for over 30%, or 1,200 acres of land within the town alone.

Primary Development Constraint: Water

As noted earlier, water resource availability as a limitation on development and growth will not be defined by estimations of groundwater resources but as determined by water rights allocated by the Abeyta Settlement.

CLIMATE CHANGE & HAZARDS

Climate change has been identified as an underlying, foundational concern for the community. The effects of climate change are likely to have particularly noticeable effects in the arid, high desert, mountainous agricultural community in and around Taos, and are directly related in many cases to hazards.

Briefly, consequences of climate change relevant to Taos include the following:

- Rising temperatures and longer hot season; longer growing season (related hazards: drought, extreme heat)
- Increased evaporation of reservoirs and surface waters/evapotranspiration (evaporation through plants) / soil evaporation (related hazards: drought)
- Increased fire threat and intensity (hazard)
- Declines in ecological resiliency to drought, flood, disease, and ecological degradation or alterations (exacerbating factor for hazards)
- Decreased snowfall and snow pack (drought)
- Declines in irrigation waters; lower and shorter surface water flows (drought)
- Precipitation is expected to be more concentrated and intense, leading to increased projected frequency and severity of flooding. Coupled with increased fire risk, the risk of landslides also increases (increased hazard intensity)

Community-level impacts include:

- Declining aquifers and drops in surface water levels
- Limited capacity to support irrigated agriculture
- Depleted ecological diversity and capacity

Beyond the intrinsic value of diverse and healthy natural biomes, ecological systems and functions can provide valuable and resilient risk mitigation and community services such as:

- Water cleaning and remediation of pollutants
- Flood mitigation
- Aquifer recharge
- Shade and heat island effect reduction
- Retention of soil and ambient moisture
- Recreational and aesthetic enrichment

The Taos community has made it clear that addressing climate change and transitioning to sustainable and renewable strategies across the board is a top priority for a multitude of reasons, responsible resource management and sustainability chief among them. While such efforts will culminate globally to shift the tide of global warming, immediate measures to manage the impending impacts of climate change must still be put in place.

HAZARDS MITIGATION

In the traditional sense, the purpose of hazards mitigation in comprehensive planning is to identify preventative measures that could minimize the extent of damage resulting from potential hazard events, as well as resources available to inform, in more detail, decisions regarding hazards mitigation.

Hazards mitigation is linked to other elements in the comprehensive plan in a variety of ways. For example, stormwater runoff must be managed to prevent damage to town streets and cleaned to prevent ecological contamination, drought can impact agriculture and economic development, and town facilities must be protected from the risks of flooding and wildfire. The preceding discussion illustrates the relationship between natural resource management, land use, recreation, and hazards.

Wherever possible, strategies utilizing “green” infrastructure such as wetlands and bioretention ponds should be investigated and prioritized where appropriate. These solutions can offer significant cost savings and prove more effective in the long run while providing a range of additional benefits.

DROUGHT

Drought, a condition of water availability in relation to water use, is a frequent condition in New Mexico and one that precipitates a range of hazard risks, hazard amplification, and community stresses including increased fire and flooding risk, depleted aquifers, excessive heat and ecological degradation.

Local mitigation efforts include water conservation and efficiency measures, acquisition of additional water use right or improved water storage capacity, promotion or requirements of low-water landscaping or water catchment.

Green infrastructure strategies, outlined later in this chapter, can provide a low-cost, high impact mitigation strategy when implemented correctly under the right conditions.

In Taos, per capita current water use is already at the lowest target rate identified in the 40-year Water Plan. The implication is that conservation efforts may be of little to no effect in countering what is currently a non-issue. Improved conservation measures are always a benefit, however, and efforts to pursue opportunities to bring use down further should be pursued to a reasonable extent.

The constraints on water rights imposed through the Abeyta Settlement limit municipal capacity to acquire additional rights, leaving the town with somewhat limited available drought mitigation strategies.

One area where conservation efforts may prove meaningful is improvements and upgrades to municipal water metering. Faults in metering can result in resource losses that go unaccounted both in use tallies such as that in the 40-Year Water Plan, but also in utility billing. Upgraded metering, as noted in the 40-Year Plan can result in significant municipal savings and / or increased revenues.

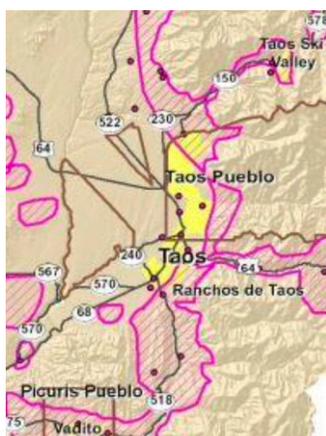
Improved landscaping, drainage, and erosion control regulations may provide one additional avenue for water savings as addressed in the sustainable land use guidelines in the Land Use chapter.

WILDFIRE

The majority of risk to wildfire in Taos County is in the forested areas east of town and the Weimer neighborhood in Taos (pink areas in the map to the right from the county's Hazard Mitigation plan; the urbanized area is indicated in yellow). Risk of wildfire within Taos is relatively minor, but implementing protective measures to limit risk to structures and homes is nevertheless recommended for the town and the public.

Creating a perimeter around structures clear of brush, wood, and other potential fuel sources, known as defensible space, limits the risk of fire transmission and provides a level of protection for homes and other structures. The town

Exhibit 8-05: Wildland Urban Interface Area



should work with local and county fire managers develop guidelines for creating and maintaining defensible space for all town facilities and buildings. Specific fuels-reduction prescriptions should be developed with the consultation of a representative of Taos County, a qualified fire mitigation specialist, and a forester or landscape architect, depending on vegetation.

Strategies for encouraging defensible space practices on private property include coordination between local fire fighting professionals and the public for trainings and consultations to identify fire risks and recommend mitigation strategies and less intensive efforts such as public information campaigns, incentive programs, or assistance programs for tree cutting services, or free yard waste pick up.

WILDFIRE PLANNING RESOURCES

The 2016 Taos County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) covers county jurisdiction and provides an overview of wildfire risks and recommendations for improving response capacity and public outreach, reducing risk to structures, and identifying specific fuel treatments. The CWPP Agency manages the plan and consists of regional representatives of several Taos communities working in collaboration to accomplish regional, long-range goals. This agency represents one of the Enchanted Circle's most successful efforts to maintain regional partnerships and goals.

FLOOD

Although flooding is not identified as a high-risk hazard for Taos, flooding and drainage relate directly to municipal policy in certain ways that are relevant to comprehensive planning.

Stormwater runoff from streets and parking lots can carry contaminants into the Rio Fernando River system, damaging river health and ecologies. Stormwater also poses an urban flooding risk if drainage systems become backed up.

Areas in the town identified by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to be at risk of flooding are subject to municipal development and land use restrictions under the town's Flood Hazard Prevention ordinance. These guidelines and restrictions are supported in the Land Use chapter.

Earth-moving projects and inadequate drainage planning can cause flooding and erosion issues that impact neighboring properties. Regulating drainage and earth-moving projects is discussed in the Land Use chapter.

NATURAL DROUGHT & FLOOD MITIGATION

Drought and flooding are risks intrinsic to the environment in Taos and ones that the community has faced for centuries. Drought depletes ground cover and can deplete groundwater resources from a lack of recharge which further contributes to dry conditions and limits the permeability of soils, increasing the risk of floods and further limiting the capacity for groundwater recharge.

Employing natural, green infrastructure to support mitigation efforts where possible has the added benefits of infrastructure construction, maintenance, and repair cost savings, opportunities to protect or restore local keystone ecologies, and improved or expanded recreational opportunities and quality of life.

One essential measure for employing this strategy is the restoration and protection of wetlands, or bosque areas. In their natural state, these areas provide flood protection and water remediation, limiting the

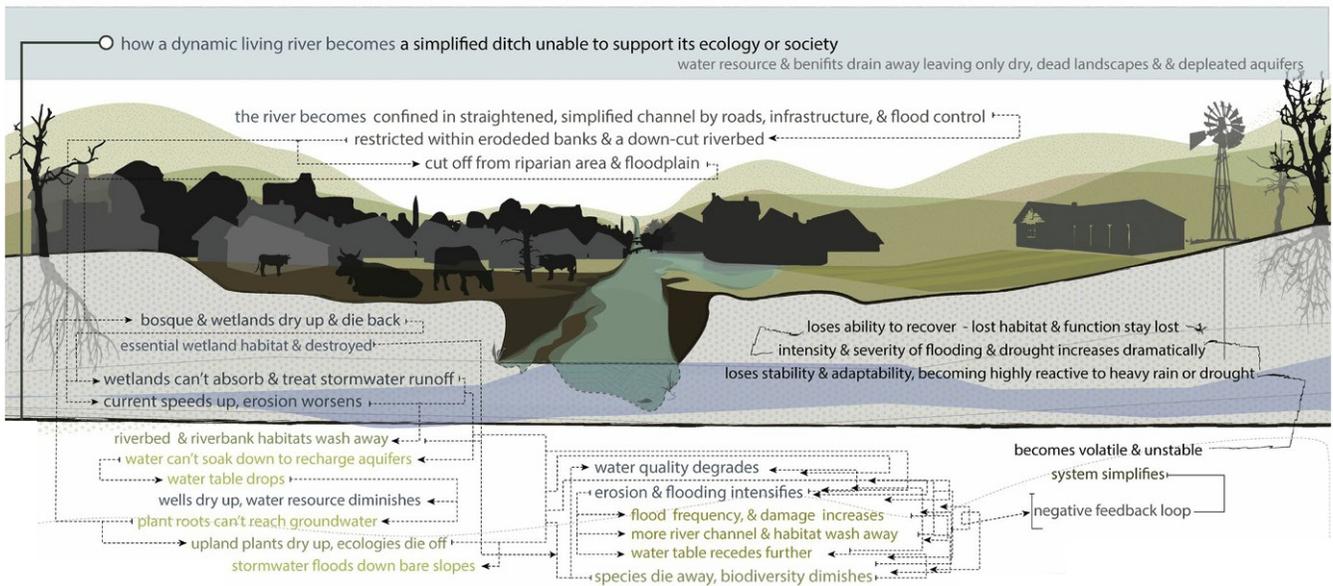
need for hard flood-protection infrastructure. Storm runoff is slowed and captured in the sponge-like riparian soils and plants. Rather than draining off less absorbent surfaces and out of the community, captured storm runoff water has time to soak into the ground and is cleaned and filtered as it sinks down to recharge groundwater stores. The greater the size and vitality of these areas, the greater the storm surge it can absorb, protecting lives and property from flooding. These areas also clean and cool urban runoff, improving ecological health and promoting biodiversity. Riparian areas and wetlands in the town should be protected and restored where needed.

The town should consider adopting policies prioritizing the protection and rehabilitation of sensitive riparian areas and limiting development and disturbances, in and in close proximity to, riverbeds where disturbances easily cause erosion issues.

SPOT TREATMENTS: BIORETENTION PONDS & RAIN GARDENS

Bioretention ponds and rain gardens can serve some of the same functions as wetlands, by capturing and cleaning urban runoff before the water reaches the river. These treatments can be small, taking up the space of a single parking spot, but provide significant benefit, including slowing storm surges, limiting erosion, promoting aquifer recharge, and improving water quality in the river. Bioretention ponds and rain gardens should be constructed in areas where runoff flows into the river unmitigated.

Exhibit 8-06: Dynamic Ecology of Taos Region



UTILITIES & HAZARD MITIGATION STRATEGIES

REGIONALIZATION

As noted earlier, water is understood as a regional issue and approached as so through state-level planning (40-Year Water Regional Plans) that informs local decision-making on the topic.

In Taos, regional water implications affect local decision-making through legal obligation set forth in the Abeyta Settlement. The collaboration among regional players in abiding by the settlement may serve as a starting point for expanding a regional water strategy to include neighboring water systems and districts for emergency or municipal water service. If neighboring communities were to connect to the town's water system, they will already have existing water rights, wells, storage tanks and system piping and water services. The town will be increasing the service area and population but the infrastructure will be in place so little change will occur to the town's system. The Taos Water and Sewer Master Plan provides additional discussion and considerations of the issue and the town may consider the subject if developing a regional emergency water system would provide additional security or other efficiency or cost benefits.

In any event, water should certainly be included as a primary focus for regionalization efforts and prioritized as a unifying interest for all players in the region.

RESOURCE SUSTAINABILITY

Water is the primary limiting factor for growth and development and is a top priority for protection and careful management by the community as indicated in survey comments and feedback provided throughout the planning process. Ensuring it is used and managed properly will be essential to maintaining the sustainability of the community.

Many community members identified water as the highest priority consideration for new development and others identified water availability as the primary consideration in evaluating potential development projects and placing the higher value on protecting water resources over promoting development.

Difficulty remains in quantifying the extent of groundwater resources available in Taos. The 40-Year Water Plan does not provide these estimations but does indicate that at current use levels the supply will meet future demands.

As noted, the Abeyta Agreement will be the primary determinant of water availability, providing not only mandate but concrete limits on water use in the region.

Municipal capabilities to promote resource conservation include:

Conversion to electric vehicle fleet and outfitting of municipal facilities with solar panels, LED lighting, xeriscaping, high efficiency HVAC systems, and other energy and resource saving measures

Conversion of fleets and facilities may be undertaken incrementally over time, as opportunities arise and where feasible

Continued collaboration with regional energy providers to provide efficiency incentives and insulation assistance, promote energy and water auditing for customers, and ultimately to transition to renewable energy sources and develop infrastructure in support of renewable energy such as battery storage

Collaborations with partners to develop clean energy projects such as the recently developed battery storage expansion project near the Taos airport is an example in a history of successful installations of solar photovoltaic projects.

Collaboration with local and neighboring communities and employers to develop transit, electric vehicles use, and multimodal connections between work, home, and area attractions

The Taos Ski Valley, Kit Carson Electric Co-op, and several community groups have expressed avid support for this strategy and, along with the town, have begun installing electric vehicle charging stations throughout the Enchanted Circle region, completing around 50 at the time of writing

Development standards requiring energy efficient building techniques, landscaping guidelines, limited hardscaping, and promotion of walkable community design including complete streets and mixes of uses

See Land Use for further discussion



Utility & Emergency Services

The following provides some general context regarding the nature of local utility and emergency services.

As a customer oriented service and product, but also an essential commodity subject to state and federal regulation as such, utilities represent a slightly different category of asset than facilities or equipment for the municipality.

State and federal agencies monitor compliance to regulations and standards but also provide funding support enabling even small communities to meet those standards.

Along a similar vein, emergency services relevant to hazards mitigation are supported and regulated at scales well above the local municipal level.

As such, to a large extent, management guidelines and practices pertaining to these assets tend to be established beyond the influence of local municipalities.

This is especially true with regards to hazards mitigation which is locally planned and managed at the county level and relies on collaborative efforts between local, county, state, and federal agencies along orders of operation and procedure that are beyond local influence for the most part.

Similarly, utility management and maintenance is largely directed by forces beyond local control, though utilities are under slightly broader local control than hazards mitigation. Importantly, this includes local determination of where to develop and extend local utility infrastructure and services which have particularly long-lasting implications.

With these considerations in mind, this chapter provides guidance for:

Hazards mitigation measures and education at the local and non-emergency level, and

Utility asset tracking and development/expansion considerations and resource management.

OVERVIEW

The primary intersection between the topics covered in this chapter is public resource management. Public resources are invested in municipal assets including facilities, utilities, and services and careful management of those assets protects that public resource investment by ensuring maximized utility of those assets. Careful asset management protects public investments while promoting natural resource conservation: maintenance limits water leaks and aquifer contamination, efficiency improvements limit carbon footprint as well as costs, electric vehicles, solar powered mechanical systems. Taos has maintained sustainability-friendly policies for some time and has an impressive track record in supporting alternative energy expansion projects and in maintaining its assets mindfully to protect both public and natural resources.

This work is ongoing, and some recommendations for prioritization of municipal efforts are provided here.

MANAGING ASSETS

MUNICIPAL ASSET MANAGEMENT

The Taos Public Works Department manages and maintains an extensive list of services and responsibilities including local streets, water and wastewater, and solid waste. With the Taos Parks Division, the staff supporting Public Works manage, maintain, operate, develop, and coordinate the bulk of Taos' municipal assets.

These departments have upheld an extraordinary level of service, especially given the size of the departments and the breadth of assets and services they maintain.

Facility conditions are objectively good to fair overall. Public comments during this planning process rarely, if ever, noted maintenance issues of facilities or service issues with public utilities. Adequate and up-to-date planning and evaluations of facilities and utilities are in place and scheduled for update and improvement. Infrastructure is well-maintained and the few recommendations for improvements provided in existing planning are underway or planned, for the most part. This list of accomplishments is impressive

and illustrates excellent management and utilization of public funds and resources.

The ability of asset managers to track assets and monitor the resource expenditures needed to maintain and manage them improves managers' ability to stay ahead of condition issues and to efficiently allocate staff and funding, and ultimately better protect the town's public and natural resources.

Tracking and monitoring can also help ease pressures on limited staff that often result in the reactionary spiral of chronic firefighting trying to respond to immediate needs and leaving little time or capacity for long-range planning.

ASSET MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Town staff are currently working to develop, establish, and implement central management system programs and practices that will allow managers to consider facilities from a holistic viewpoint and begin developing long-term maintenance plans.

These efforts have laid the groundwork for two major, upcoming steps in accomplishing comprehensive asset management and planning; a streets and facility assessment and a water and wastewater plan. These projects are described in the current ICIP.

Significant effort has been invested and progress made already in the work of improving asset management tools in Taos. The following discussion and recommendations are provided to support this ongoing work and expand it over time to encompass the full range of asset management and planning tools.

In addition to planned inventory and assessment work, additional measures to support these efforts include:

- establishing standard operating procedures for asset management and tracking
- facilitating interdepartmental prioritization through guidelines, and
- establishing additional asset inventories and tracking tools
- facilities master planning

Additional asset planning and management work:

Scheduled to take place this year:

Water/Sewer Asset Management Plan

Development of a Utilities Asset Management Plan which will address: Current State of Assets including location, conditions, remaining useful life, value, and energy consumption; Desired Level of Service including efficiency, unaccounted water, conservation savings, and minimum pressures; Criticality to Sustained Performance including probability and consequences of failure; Life Cycle Cost including initial construction of installation, operation and maintenance, repair and rehabilitation, and disposal costs; Long Term Funding Strategy including possible grants/loans, increased user costs, and local funds.

Consistent with the Town’s Water & Sewer 40 Year Plan.

Scheduled to begin this year:

Town Street & Facilities Engineering Assessments & Property Appraisals

Update structural assessment & property appraisals for all town-owned facilities and properties.

GUIDELINES | GENERAL ASSET MANAGEMENT

These guidelines apply to all departments responsible for municipal asset management and are essential elements of a comprehensive Municipal Asset Management Plan.

BEST PRACTICES

- Continued regularly scheduled and standardized inventory updates & conditions assessments with intervening interviews or surveys of staff to ascertain needs and facility adequacy
- Clear designation of specific maintenance responsibilities with schedules
- Policy guidance & prioritization of projects promoting energy and water conservation
- Procedures and criteria for identifying and tracking inter-departmental and internal short-, mid-, and long-range priority projects and goals
- Staff infrastructure capital improvement planning (ICIP) training with procedures for identifying and prioritizing projects to include in the ICIP
- Regular maintenance and use of an asset library cataloging including:
 - Equipment warranties and manuals
 - User notes
 - Invoices
 - Account information
- Repair and maintenance log with personnel notes and documents
- Equipment inventory linked to mandatory check in/ out log for locating equipment and tracking use
- Needs list for compiling and tracking equipment, repair, maintenance, and information needs to serve as a checklist and data resource for management

Comprehensive maintenance planning can result in additional savings due to improved maintenance of facilities and equipment.

ASSET MANAGEMENT PLANNING STRATEGY

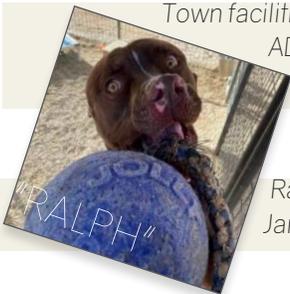
Supporting the ongoing work to establish and implement management tools including CMS, the Asset Management Plan will establish regular maintenance and replacement cycles for equipment and systems, identify Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan (ICIP) projects, house a regularly updated inventory of town assets, and create an orderly library of all facilities' documents such as warranties, receipts, repair history, equipment descriptions and budget information.

This is a strategic and proactive approach, based on data and collaboration, to develop a comprehensive long-term view of infrastructure and asset management.

GUIDELINES | ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN:

- Cover all town assets, including facilities, streets, sidewalks, utilities, and other infrastructure, parks and open space, information technology infrastructure, and all town equipment, vehicles, and property
- Establish standard operating procedures for identifying interdepartmental priorities for maintenance and projects
- Establish measures to anticipate needs including asset management plans and inventories and project documentation
- Establish administrative, fiscal, and technical management strategies to ensure that town assets reach expected life cycles and are utilized efficiently and effectively to serve the public interest
- Establish preventive maintenance protocols and clearly identify the asset management responsibilities of staff and departments
- Identify future facility and infrastructure needs and coordinate with Capital Improvement Planning
- Establish procedures for maintaining and updating GIS databases
- Establish protocols for recording and databasing repairs, modifications, and issues. These records should be integrated into the asset plan's facility document library
- Prioritize projects and goals that support the town's Comprehensive Plan, Parks and Recreation Master Plan, Tree Plan, and other town plans to coordinate and strategically implement projects and plan for expenditures
- Integrate digital record keeping and tracking tools to improve outcomes
- Be designed to work with future plans that the town may develop, including a transportation master plan or green network plan
- Be regularly maintained and updated

Town facilities and assets, including streets and sidewalks should be reviewed in the development of ADA (Americans with Disability Act) Compliance Plan. Until an ADA plan is in place, all facility repairs and renovations should include ADA upgrades as feasible.



Ralph and others pictured here were temporary residents of Stray Hearts Animal Shelter in January, 2022. Photo Credit: Stray Hearts Website, strayhearts.org.

GIS DATABASE & INVENTORY

Asset management and planning measures should be supported by continued development and maintenance of geographic information systems (GIS) databases of assets information.

Already in place, well-maintained, and with ongoing work to develop complete inventories of public assets, Town of Taos GIS capacity is a valuable asset.

Many options are available for software to assist in the collection and management of GIS information, and integration of these systems along with ongoing staff work to input data will round out a comprehensive GIS strategy to asset management and planning.

GUIDELINES | GIS

Integrate GIS inventory and tracking into asset management and planning strategies by continuing to inventory assets, tracking repairs and issues, and updating GIS records regularly.

GUIDELINES | RECORDS & TRACKING

Modernize operations by integrating and updating digital systems to improve the accuracy and delivery of services, organize information, streamline functions, and maintain compliance with transparency requirements

- Digitize city records and services including legal documents, maintenance records and documents, land use documents and maps, and online city services including permitting, fee payment, and requests

Geographical Information System (GIS)

- Implement a city GIS database including utilities, maintenance tracking, infrastructure, emergency and hazards, land use and permitting data, and other geolocated data to aid resource and asset management and improve decision-making outcomes, especially for underground infrastructure

Asset & Document Management

- Integrate digital record keeping and tracking tools to improve asset management for community development and other departments
- Implement phased development of a document management system to manage documents and improve operations

APPLYING INTEGRATED GIS DATA

A comprehensive GIS database will provide the town with an important decision-making tool. By integrating information across topics, priority projects can be identified and outcomes may be improved.

Integrating GIS databases of infrastructure and permitting with future land use mapping and population projections provided in this plan will provide informed guidance when planning for and utility and infrastructure expansions and priorities.

GIS tracking of traffic incidents, drainage issues, and requests for service can inform infrastructure repair and improvement priorities.

INFRASTRUCTURE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PLAN (ICIP)

The local Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan (ICIP) is a plan that establishes planning priorities for anticipated capital projects. The state coordinated local ICIP process allows local governments with capital improvement needs but limited funding to avoid emergency situations by planning for and establishing long-term funding streams to develop infrastructure over time. This allows communities to identify and prioritize future infrastructure needs and fund them at a sustainable pace.

ADMINISTRATION

Collaboration between departments should be regularly scheduled with the stated goal of aligning priorities, projects, and understanding resource needs. This will assist in the development of the Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan. Training should be provided to understand the ICIP process and enable Town staff to utilize the ICIP as a resource planning tool in the future.

ADDITIONAL FACILITY NEEDS

Currently the Town of Taos Facility Conditions Assessment serves to document and prioritize the conditions and needs of town facilities.

Facilities for contracted services are not included in the work. Most pertinent of these is the Stray Hearts Animal Shelter who receives lost, abandoned, and strayed animals from the town's Animal Control staff.

STRAY HEARTS ANIMAL SHELTER

The assessment does not include Stray Hearts Animal Shelter, a town-supported facility that is operated by volunteers and staff. The shelter facility is in need of repairs and improvements.

The service that Stray Hearts provides is a vital one; in 2020 the shelter managed 1,753 animals and provided 871 spay and neuter procedures. The shelter saw a significant influx of rescue animals during the Covid-19 pandemic resulting in shortfalls in a static budget set by contact with supporting partners including the town. This highlights a need for improved flexibility in the framework of municipal contracts to accommodate funding needs by construct services to meet escalating and fluctuating demand for important services.

The shelter's facility is currently near or at capacity most times and will need expansion in the near future. The current facility needs significant updates and improvements in order to continue to meet the needs of our animals with care and respect and the preferred option will be a new facility. Work to identify a site and house shelter animals during construction will require town assistance and resources. Sites for consideration may include a town-owned vacant lot adjacent to the current shelter location which may be a candidate for land swap.

Additional discussion of Stray Hearts Animal Shelter is included in the Capacity chapter.

RECOMMENDATION | STRAY HEARTS ANIMAL SHELTER

SUPPORT AND ASSIST IN SECURING A SITE AND CONSTRUCTING AN EXPANDED FACILITY FOR STRAY HEARTS ANIMAL SHELTER IN THE NEAR FUTURE

Stray Hearts' strategy and goals for shelter expansion include:

1. Land-swap with the town to transition into to newly built facility to include a community veterinary center.
2. Replacement of existing kennels with new, state-of-the art animal housing, which would necessitate on-site transitional pet housing for noise abatement and minimal upset in the lives of our animal residents.
3. We would develop a long-range Plan and Capital Campaign to identify resources in the public and private sector including donors, estate planning, foundations, and government.

RECOMMENDATION | CONTRACT SERVICES

REVIEW SERVICE CONTRACT LANGUAGE AND UPDATE TO INCORPORATE FLEXIBILITY TO RESPOND WITH ADEQUATE FUNDING SUPPORT AS NEEDED TO MEET CHANGING CONDITIONS.

THE TOWN OF TAOS HAS PROGRAMMED IN THE ICIP TO PREPARE AN ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN.

Likely this would be done through professional contract, though close collaboration with town staff will be important to ensuring the plan captures the needs and priorities of the town and develops management strategies within the town's means to accomplish. The plan should draw extensively from existing primary resource plans and other reports and plans that describe the town's asset inventory and conditions.

IN THE LONG-RANGE, THE TOWN SHOULD CONSIDER DEVELOPING A FACILITY MASTER PLAN TO COMPLEMENT THE ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN.

A **Facilities Master Plan** (FMP) should:

- Include facility condition assessments to evaluate and take into consideration the physical condition of existing facilities, and an ADA compliance evaluation. The condition assessments will identify needed repairs, renovations, and replacement, and will include preliminary capital improvement project (CIP) descriptions and costs for use in long-range town capital planning. A facility ADA evaluation is needed to understand improvements needed to bring town facilities into federal ADA compliance. The FMP should be long-range (at least 10 years) and strategic, recommending actions to implement the town's facilities goals
- Include a clear strategy for transitioning to higher efficiency LEED (Leadership in Energy Efficiency in Design) buildings, which have 20% lower maintenance costs and a 10% greater asset value (U.S. Green Building Council, 2020)
- Include a comprehensive cost/benefit analysis and provide comparative scenarios of potential facility projects and phasing so the town can make an informed decision in selecting a preferred scenario to improve facilities
- Provide or inform a strategic facilities master plan implementation procedure to guide the town through a phased reorganization of facilities and assets to accomplish its preferred scenario
- Consider and accommodate the needs and recommendations listed by department

Goal setting is a key component of facility planning efforts.

As part of both the Facilities Needs Assessment and FMP efforts, the town should establish goals for long-range facility planning and management, including sustainability upgrades, accessibility, long-term adequacy considering growth, and technical upgrades

GOALS & POLICIES

1 GOAL

The Town of Taos regularly maintains and improves utility infrastructure, and provides safe, reliable water, wastewater, and solid waste utility services to Taos customers

- A| Residents have access to reliable utility services, including recycling
- B| The Town of Taos prioritizes projects to expand renewable energy and efforts to improve and promote sustainable resource management, including solid waste recycling
- C| The existing Taos and Taos region utilities, facilities, and hazards plans listed in this document shall continue to serve as the primary policy documents guiding improvement plans and management of water and wastewater infrastructure in the town

2 GOAL

Town assets are well managed and tracked and are maintained and used to their best & highest use

- A| Utilize town asset management planning, with other operational management tools to manage assets
- B| Develop and implement an Asset Management Plan to ensure efficient use and maintenance of town assets and to guide decision-making to appropriately allocate resources and limit waste.
- C| Develop and utilize a complete asset inventory including GIS locations and records library for all town assets according to the guidelines provided in this plan
- D| Prioritize infrastructure projects based on projected land use and population growth models outlined in this plan and supported by data including GIS databases and inventories
- E| Consider developing a facilities master plan which is long-range and strategic

3 GOAL

Taos is prepared for, and has taken preventative measures to mitigate, impacts of high-risk hazard events and other emergencies or crises.

- A| Conscientiously and proactively establish measures to protect the residents and resources of Taos from risk of hazards
- B| Maintain and improve municipal capacity to prepare for, and respond to, emergencies and crises
- C| Implement defensible space measures to mitigate risk from wildfire to municipal buildings and assets wherever appropriate
- D| Continue to ensure that town water reservoirs are appropriately protected from risks
- E| Continue enforcing town flood-zone development restrictions
- F| Continue to improve drainage systems in the town, to prevent road damage and potential flooding issues
- G| Manage urban runoff to minimize ecological contamination and damage in the Rio Fernando River (see Land Use chapter)

4 GOAL

All utility infrastructure is managed and planned for with consideration of regional growth projections and trends, and prioritizes options that maintain or improve the quality of services and remain sustainable both in terms of natural resources, especially water, and costs

- A| *Refer to population projections and discussion included in this plan*
- B| *Consider regionalization options as outlined in the 40-Year Water Plan*
- C| *The town strives for concurrent availability of adequate public facilities, services, and infrastructure prior to approving new developments*
- D| *As the town expands its infrastructure, new developments must access that infrastructure, in cases through phasing to assure orderly sequential development of utilities and residential or commercial buildings*
- E| *Require new developments that do not plan to connect up to the town of Taos wastewater treatment system to have secondary wastewater treatment on all installed wastewater treatment facilities.*
- F| *Evaluate proposed water use by companies proposing to develop in the town to assure that their water use is appropriate for arid environments, not excessive and that the company commits to conservation practices, including not to use more water than projected*
- G| *The town should consider a wireless network within the Plaza area to provide free wifi service*

5 GOAL

Town departments and individual facilities are supported and well maintained.

- A| *Continuously consult with department heads to understand individual department and facility needs and concerns, and work expediently to address them*
- B| *Prioritize departmental and facility needs and establish funding and other resources to address issues in a phased strategy that provides adequate resources for current and future projects*

Actions for Public Assets are stated in the Capacity chapter

For transportation infrastructure recommendations, refer to this plan's Transportation chapter, the Strong at Heart Plan, and regional transportation plans developed by the New Mexico Department of Transportation and the North Central Regional Transit District regarding streets goals, policies, recommendations, and projects



TRANSPORTATION



TRANSPORTATION

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the transportation element is to inventory and assess the existing modes and facilities of transportation in the community including roads, sidewalks and trails for pedestrians, bicycle facilities on and off the streets network, transit and airport. The assessment considers how the various modes relate to one another and to land use, utilities, and other major physical systems of the community. The transportation element also seeks to create a framework for integrated transportation facilities maintenance and improvements, including context sensitive design, “complete streets”, and street connectivity. The street system is critical support for land use. For example, infill and new development require access that must either be extended from existing streets or built new.

The transportation element establishes long-range goals and policies to guide town efforts and to assist in coordination with the federal, state, and regional transportation planning and funding entities.

FOUNDATIONS

PLANNING REFERENCES

The Transportation chapter supports and builds on the following existing plans and studies:

PLANNING DOCUMENTS

- *Vision 2020 Comprehensive Plan (adopted in 1999)*
- Gannet Fleming Bypass Assessment
- Taos Traffic Network Study
- NMDOT plan for Paseo del Pueblo del Sur (NM 68) and del Norte (US 64)
- ICIP (annual 5-year set of highway and arterial road projects)
- Town of Taos annual budget (includes projects and programs not in ICIP)
- Enchanted Circle Trails Plan 2018
- Town of Taos Bicycle Master Plan (draft) 2008
- Strong at Heart (2020)
- North Central Regional Transit District (NCRTD) Long-Range Strategic Plan (2005) and Transit Service Plan Update 2021
- Northern Pueblos Regional Transportation Plan 2020-2045 (2020 draft)
- Taos Regional Airport Master Plan (2020 draft)
- Safe Routes to School (2008)

Regulatory documents related to transportation include:

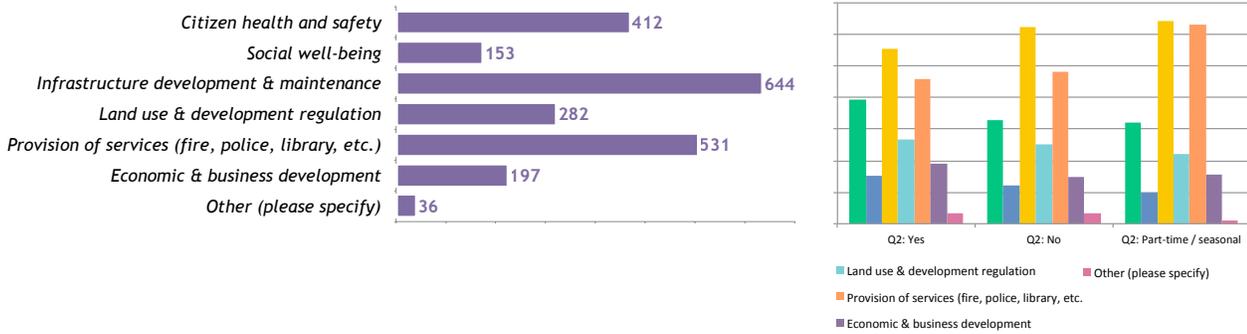
- Land Development Code standards and sidewalks (subdivision), landscaping requirements
- Fire code affecting number of units that can be served by single access, narrow streets

COMMUNITY SURVEY

The graphs below depict survey questions and a summary of tabulated responses.

Exhibit 9-01: Community Survey - Government Roles & Responsibilities

In your view, what are the top two functional roles & responsibilities of Town government?

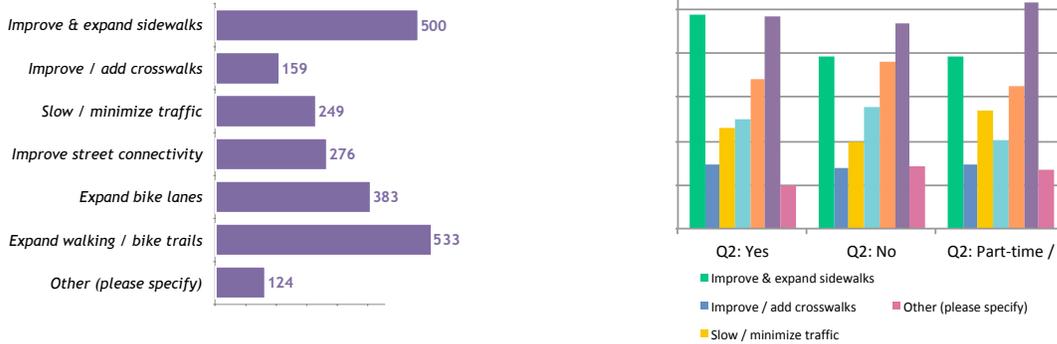


Community survey respondents identified infrastructure development and maintenance as the top functional role and responsibility of town government. Infrastructure includes transportation assets of streets, sidewalks, trails, bus stops and the airport.

Survey respondents rated expanding walking/biking trails as the best way for the town to improve transportation. The next most popular choice was improving and expanding sidewalks, followed by expanding bike lanes. All three choices are closely related to each other, and present a strong set of priorities.

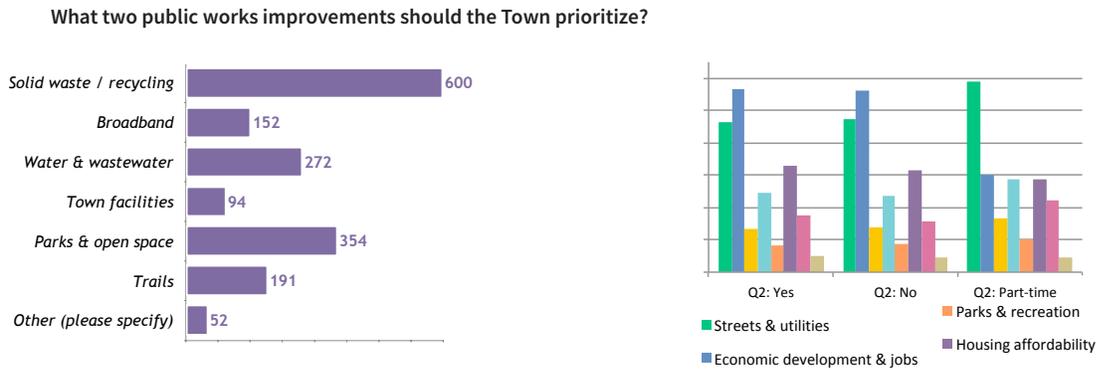
Exhibit 9-02: Community Survey - Transportation Improvement

How could the Town improve transportation?



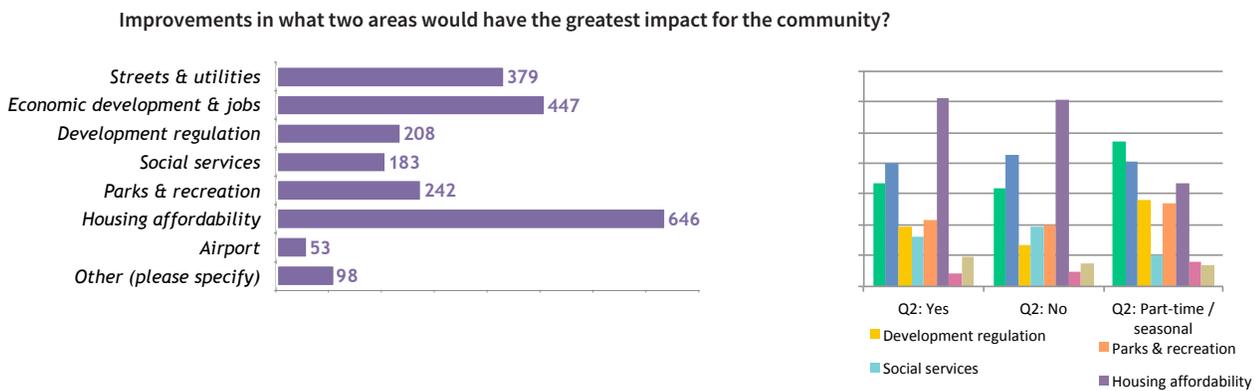
Streets and sidewalks ranked second to solid waste and recycling as public works priorities among survey respondents.

Exhibit 9-03: Community Survey - Transportation Priorities



For survey respondents, streets and utilities ranked third after housing affordability, then economic development and jobs in improvements that would have the greatest impact on the community.

Exhibit 9-04: Community Survey - Improvements with Greatest Impact



COMMUNITY SURVEY AND MEETINGS COMMENTS

Survey respondents and participant in public meetings made a number of comments relevant to transportation, which fit into the following general themes:

- Trails for bicycling and walking
- Pedestrian and multi-modal safety
- Trailheads need permanent access through clear, legal easements or rights-of-way, signage ideally before development / trail / or other legal and permanent access is not marked and documented before the fact of development
- Traffic congestion on Paseo del Pueblo through downtown
- Airport could be a major asset for the town, not just for the purpose of tourism, but transportation for local residents and economic development
- Some respondents oppose the high priority on airport development, considering that other community problems deserve higher priority
- Sidewalks have been added to some streets; maintenance is important in both summer and winter
- Largest traffic generators in town are the grocery stores, mostly accessed by automobiles
- Electric vehicles are becoming more popular and EV charging stations are needed
- Recreational and commuter road biking is different than urban biking, where one is going to stores, the library and doing errands. Both should be safely accommodated to be a seriously bike friendly community
- Expanded bus service is needed
- Design guidelines for streets, sidewalks, pedestrian lighting, alleys and other public realm spaces are needed

CONTEXT

TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES AND SERVICES

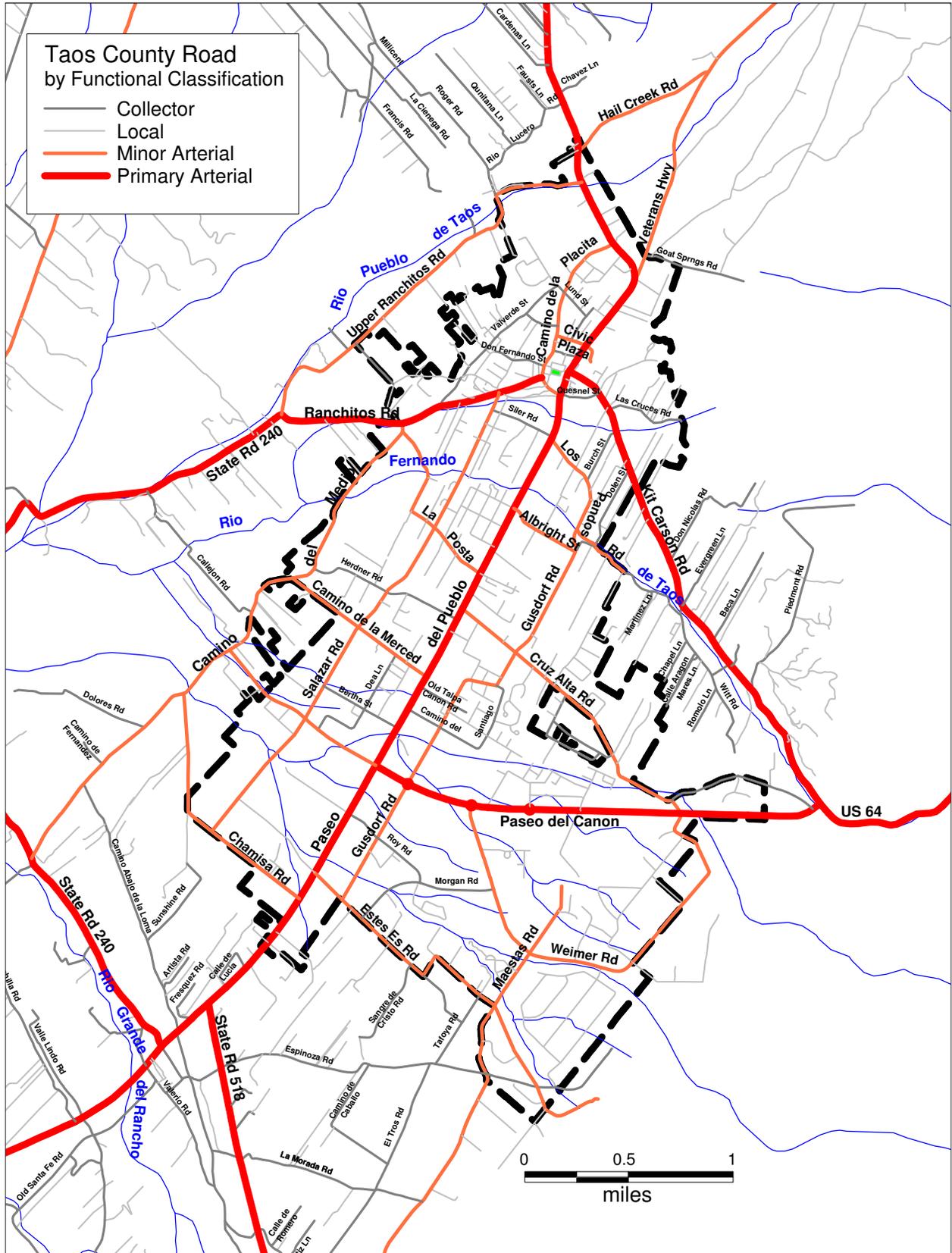
STREET NETWORK

The street network can be classified by functions of local streets, collectors, minor arterial streets, and major arterial streets. The major arterial streets are state highways or federal highways. The town has 134.3 miles of streets. By functional classification, there are:

- Primary arterial: 9.9 miles
- Minor arterial: 23.8 miles
- Collector: 23.7 miles
- Local: 77.0 miles

The map on the following page depicts each of these roadways by functional classification.

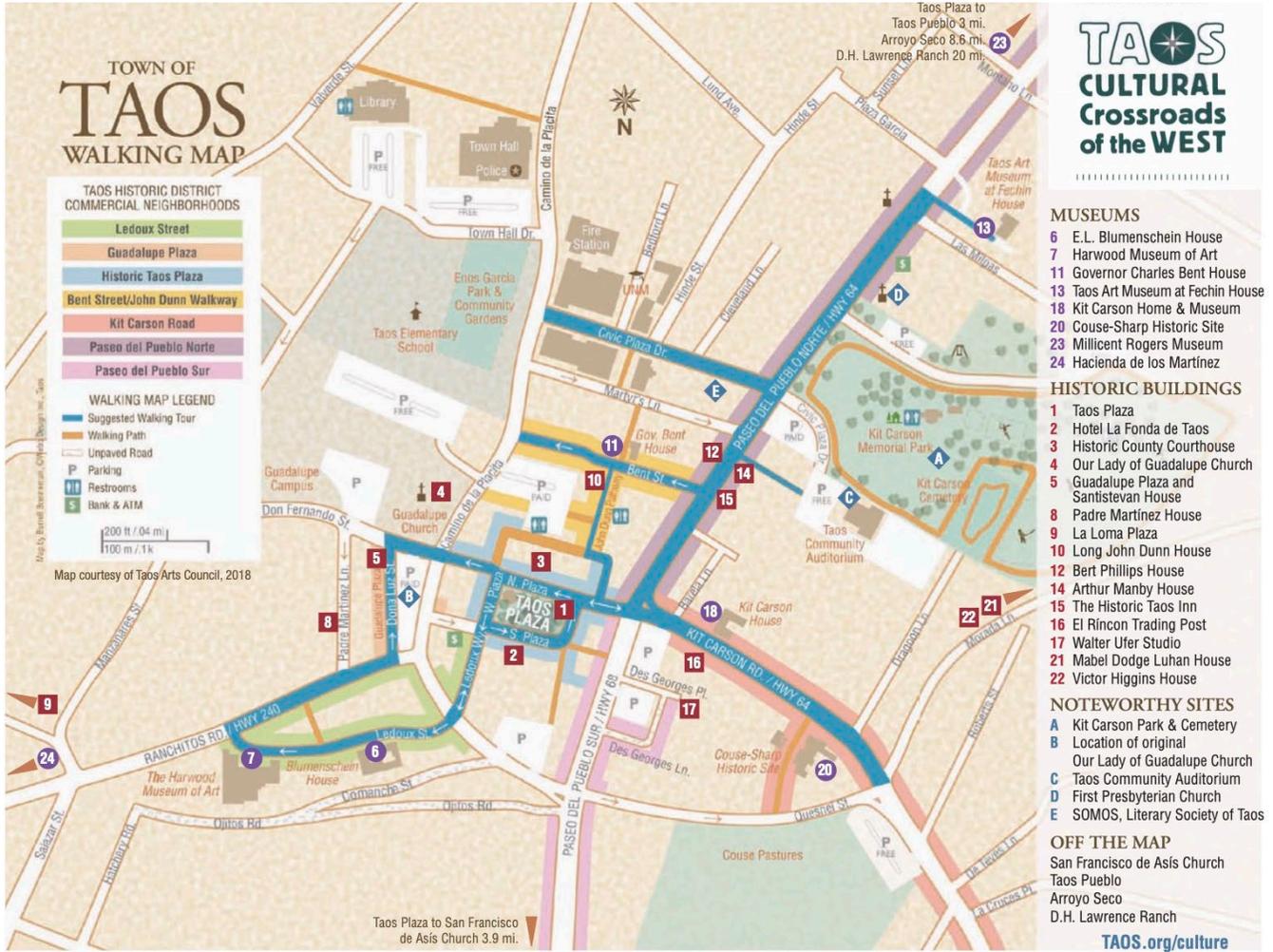
Exhibit 9-05: Streets by Functional Class



SIDEWALKS

The town has an extensive system of sidewalks in most areas of the community. While there may be no map showing all sidewalks, the downtown area is so important for visitor and local pedestrians, the town and Taos Arts Council created a walking map to access historic places of interest. The downtown area also has alleys, which are addressed as a significant asset in the Strong at Heart Downtown Strategy.

Exhibit 9-06: Downtown Walking Map



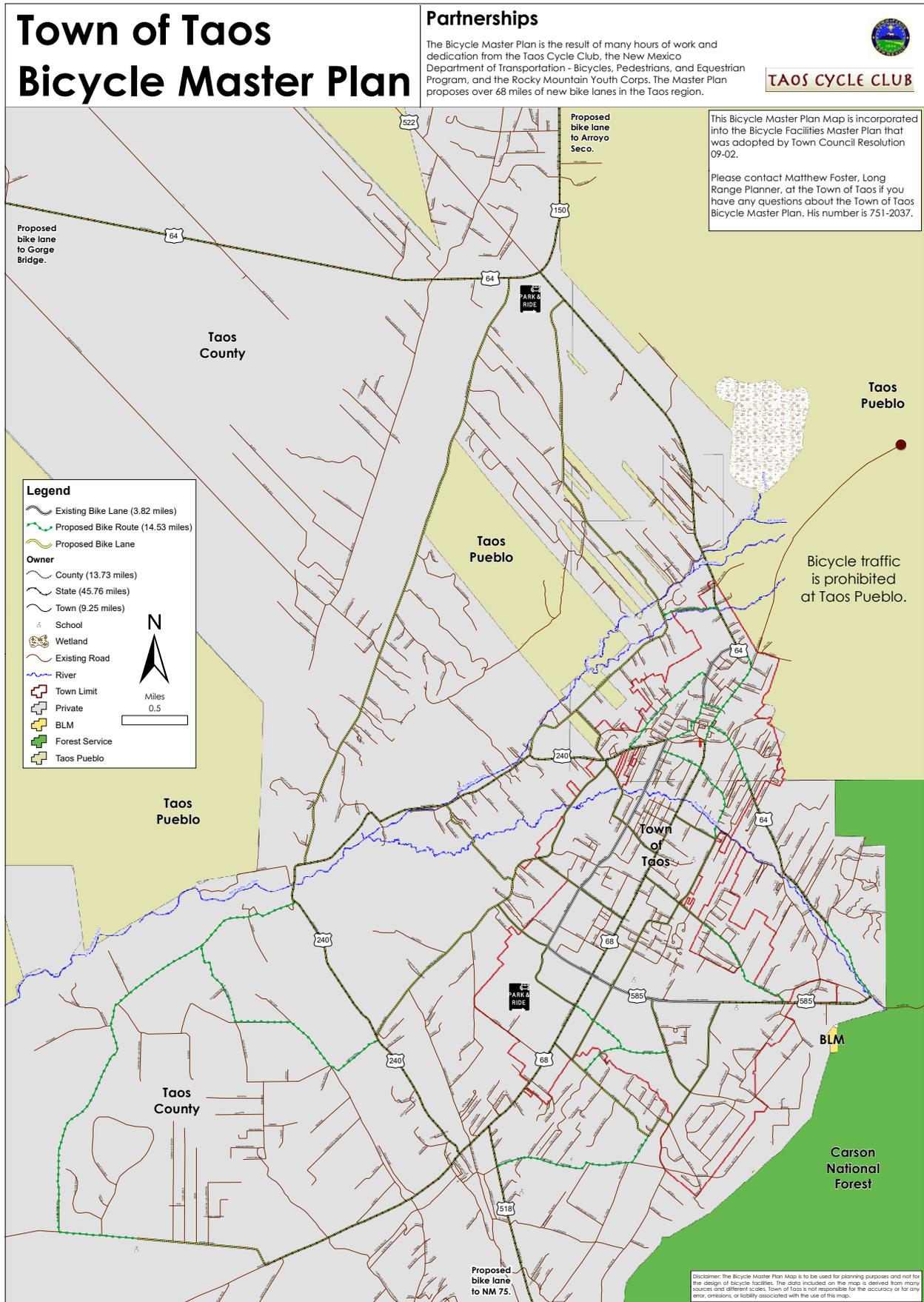
BICYCLE FACILITIES

The map on the following page shows bicycle lanes, as prepared by the town as part of the 2008 Bicycle Master Plan (not adopted). Lanes are located on Salazar Road, Camino del Canon, and Camino de La Placita, and total 3.8 linear miles. The NMDOT improvements to Paseo del Pueblo will include a shared lane through downtown.

TRAILS PLANNING

Both the town and Enchanted Circle Trails Association have mapped routes where future improvements are desired to enhance the system. The 2008 plan proposed over 68 miles of bicycle lanes and 14 miles of bike routes.

Exhibit 9-08: Town of Taos Bicycle Master Plan Map



The “Loops Riding Map” was adopted by the Town Council in 2002. The Loops Map is very similar to the 2008 draft bicycle master plan map, however, a few segments are different. This may not be a critical issue at this time, but should be sorted out in a final bicycle master plan for adoption.

The Enchanted Circle Trails Association Plan (2018) includes the following recommended improvements in the table below. Many of the improvements are shown inside the town, or just outside with direct connectivity from the town.

Below is a list of rankings from the *Tier 1: Town of Taos Road Improvements to Improve Safety and Connectivity* initiative.

HIGHEST RANKED

- High School to Kit Carson (TOT94)
- Bike Lane: U.S. Highway 64 (TOT71)
- Town of Taos to Old Blinking Light (TOT88)
- Bike Lane: State Highway 585 (TOT41)
- High School to Baca (TOT93)
- Don Fernando to Library (TOT103)
- Bike Lane: Gusdorf Road (TOT48)

SECOND HIGHEST RANKED

- Town of Taos to Ranchos de Taos (TOT40)
- Bike Route: Valverde Street (TOT84)
- Bike Lane: Ranchitos Road (TOT 107)
- Bike Lane: State Highway 518 (TOT87)
- Town of Taos to Old Blinking Light (TOT83)

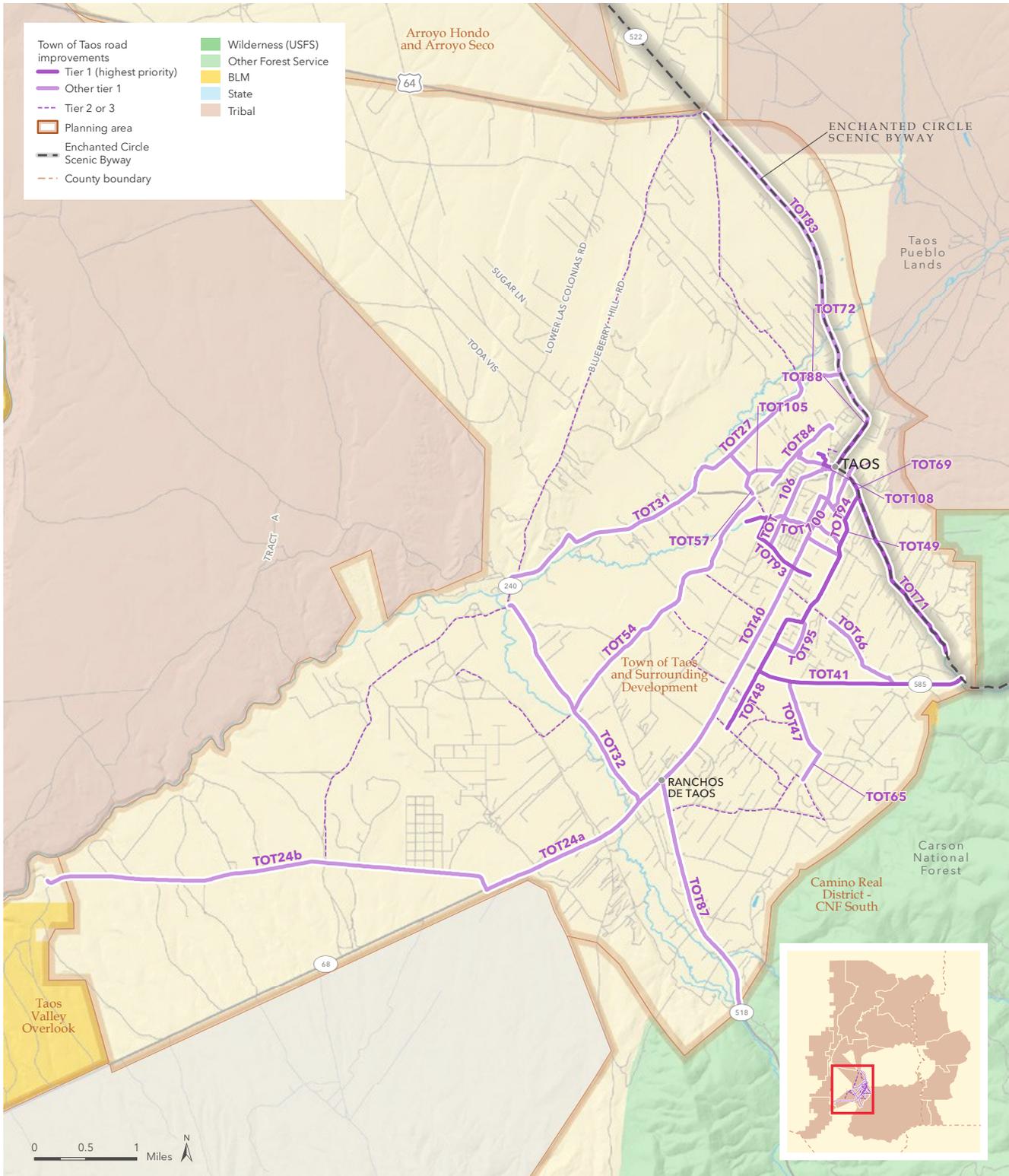
THIRD HIGHEST RANKED

- Bike Lane: Weimer Road (TOT47)
- Bike Route: Cruz Alta Road (TOT66)
- Bike Lane: Upper Ranchitos Road (TOT27)
- Bike Lane: State Highway 240 (TOT31)
- Bike Lane: Carabajal Road (TOT57)
- Bike Lane: Albright Road (TOT68)
- Bike Route: Salazar Road (TOT 106)
- Bike Route: Los Pandos Road (TOT49)
- Don Fernando to Saavedra (TOT104)
- Bike Route: U.S. Highway 64 (TOT69)

FOURTH HIGHEST RANKED

- Kit Carson to Baca Connector— Alternative 1 (TOT100)
- Bike Lane: State Highway 240 (TOT32)
- Upper Ranchitos Road (TOT72)
- Bike Lane: La Lomita Road (TOT105)
- Bike Lane: Cam del Medio (TOT54)
- High School to Youth and Family Center (TOT95)
- Rio Fernando Pedestrian and Bike Path (TOT8)
- Bike Lane: Ranchos de Taos to UNM and Taos Valley Overlook (TOT24b)
- Bike Lane: Maestas Road (TOT65)
- Bike Lane: Ranchos de Taos to UNM and Taos Valley Overlook (TOT24a)
- 39 Ranchito Rd through the Plaza (TOT108)

Exhibit 9-09: Enchanted Circle Trails Plan Tier 1 Bicycle Facilities in Taos



Tier 1 Priorities: Town of Taos road improvements

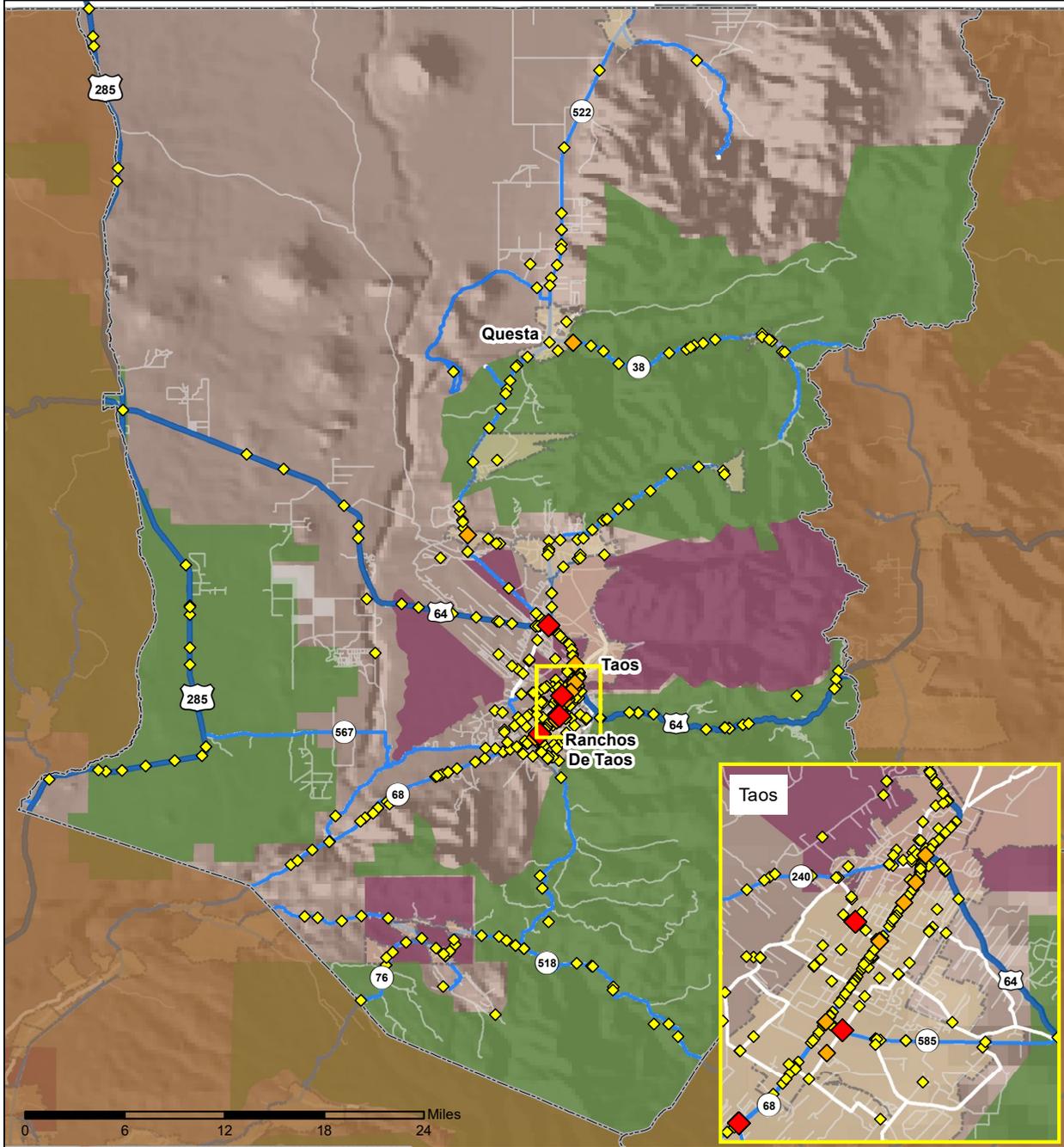
ENCHANTED CIRCLE TRAILS PLAN





Crashes in Taos County, New Mexico, 2019

Map created by the Traffic Research Unit, Geospatial & Population Studies at UNM



Legend



- Forest & Wildlife Areas
- Reservations & Pueblos
- County Boundaries
- City Boundaries
- Interstate Highways
- U.S. Highways
- State Highways
- Streets & Roadways

Crashes 2019

- ◆ 1 - 2 Crashes
- ◆ 3 - 4 Crashes
- ◆ 5 - 11 Crashes

Data Source: NMDOT Crash File 2019
<http://tru.unm.edu> CO#6093 tru@unm.edu

Source: University of New Mexico Traffic Research Unit, Crashes, 2019.

CRASH DATA

While most crashes occurred on Paseo del Pueblo Sur, Gusdorf Rd. and Paseo del Canon, and La Posta Rd. west of Ferguson Ln., each had 5-11 crashes in 2019, the most recent year of data available.

CONGESTION RELIEF ALTERNATIVE STUDY

Paseo del Pueblo is the only significant north-south route through the town. While Paseo del Pueblo Sur is a four-lane highway with many curb cuts to accommodate business use, the route bottlenecks in the downtown area just south of the intersection with La Placita and Quisnel Streets. Congestion through the downtown has been a feature of Taos for decades. The idea of a bypass had been considered and rejected many times, leaving the NMDOT and town in a quandary.

The Congestion Relief Study, prepared for New Mexico Department of Transportation was an important transportation planning exercise, that has resulted in the selection and building of the Paseo del Pueblo improvements. Consultants considered a “no build” and seven build alternatives to relieve traffic congestion, improve existing roadways, and provide alternative “bypass” travel routes in Taos. The one-way pair concept (Alternative 5) was recommended for further evaluation and advancement into planning. Enhancement of the NM 68 three-lane section alternative was also recommended for additional evaluation.

The current NMDOT NM 68/US 64 project will create a safer traffic flow while it will result in little improvements to the functions of intersections (affecting capacity). In the downtown core, Paseo del Pueblo will have ADA compliant sidewalks; bicycles and motorized vehicles will share the road. Consideration of a one-way pair, which would add capacity, is still possible in the future. Its desirability depends on a number of factors, including adequate parking both north and south of downtown.

INFRASTRUCTURE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM

The town identifies and prioritizes projects in the ICIP with estimated costs and time frames within the next five years. The town’s short-term and mid-term priority transportation projects from the 2020 ICIP are shown in the table below. The town is currently developing a new plan for 2021.

Exhibit 9-11: ICIP Transportation Projects

Source: Town of Taos ICIP FY 2021

| ICIP Transportation Projects | | | | |
|--|--|---|------------------|-------------|
| Projects in order of Project Ranking (*Many other projects in ICIP higher lower) | | Year | Total Budget | |
| 1 | Ranchitos Road | Between Salazar Road and Carabajal Lane | 2022 | \$1,410,153 |
| 2 | Airport Industrial Park Development Plan | Conduct a feasibility study, business plan and site development plan, including utilities for aviation related warehousing, manufacturing and commercial light industrial park with airport access. | 2022 | \$3,500,000 |
| 3 | Camino del Medio | Full roadway construction | 2022-2026 | \$5,015,000 |
| 4 | Multi Street Rehabilitation | Cold milling, placement of plant mix bituminous paving, utility grade adjustments and traffic control | 2022-2026 | \$5,000,000 |
| 5 | Sidewalk Replacement | Design and installation and/or the replacement of deteriorating sidewalks, meeting NMDOT standards and addressing ADA requirements | 2022-2026 | \$475,000 |
| 6 | Airport Entrance Road and Parking Lot | | 2022 | \$75,000 |
| 7 | Camino de la Merced | Full roadway construction; CDBG eligible project. | 2022-2023 | \$1,950,000 |
| 8 | Siler Road & Linda Vista | Full roadway construction | 2024, 2025, 2026 | \$2,550,000 |
| 9 | Des Georges Lane Rehabilitation | Reconstruction/rehabilitation of the roadway to accommodate New Mexico 68 reconstruction | 2024 | \$480,000 |
| 10 | Gusdorf Place Area Infrastructure Improvements | Cold milling, placement of plant mix bituminous paving, utility grade adjustments and traffic control | 2024, 2025, 2026 | \$1,345,000 |
| 11 | Dragoon Lane, Ojitos Lane & Roberts Rehabilitation Project | Water line and roadway | 2024 | \$735,000 |
| 12 | Destino Lane and Cordoba Lane Water Line Replacement | Replacement of aged water lines. Roadway reconstruction | 2024 | \$220,000 |
| 13 | Quesnel Reconstruction | Construct approximately 1,000 ft. of roadway | 2024-2025 | \$1,250,000 |
| 14 | Sunset Road Roadway and Infrastructure Improvement | Full roadway construction | 2025 | \$994,500 |
| 15 | Weimer Area Road Improvements | (a) approximately 1521 Weimer, (b) the intersection of Weimer and Maestas, and (c) the intersection of Espinoza and Monterey. | 2025 | \$200,000 |
| 16 | Camino de la Cruz | Full roadway construction; eligible for CDBG | 2026 | \$334,000 |
| 17 | Chamisa Verde Infrastructure Improvements | Provide infrastructure for the development of affordable housing. | 2026 | \$900,000 |
| 18 | La Posta Extension | Extend La Posta road in a westerly direction to Camino del Medio providing east and west connectivity from SR 240 to NM 68. | 2026 | \$205,000 |
| 19 | La Posta Trail Project (Taos Land Trust) | Trail from THS to Fernando Park and Fred Baca Park along La Posta Road. | 2026 | \$415,000 |

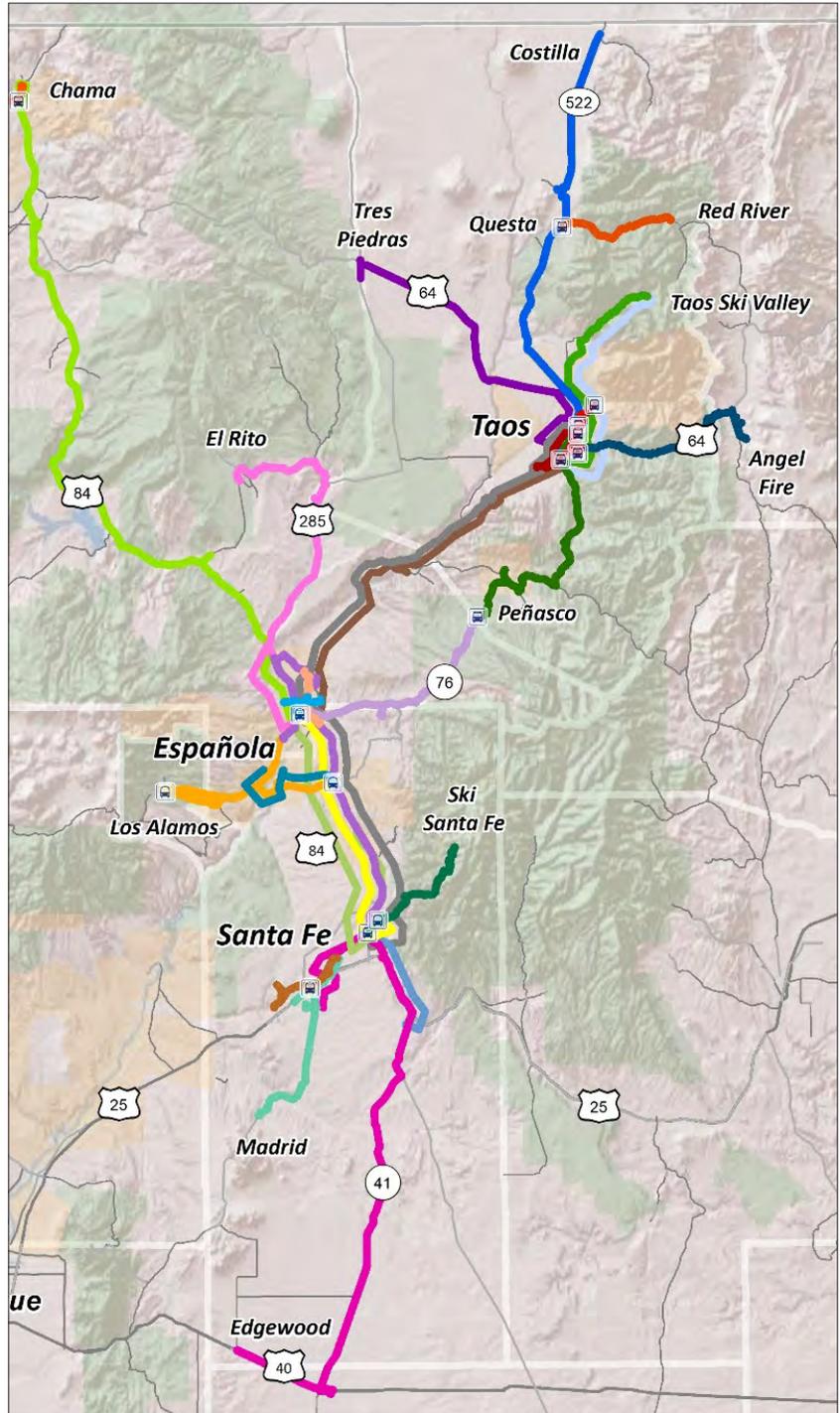
The ICIP is a planning document, and the selected projects do not need to be “shovel-ready.” However, once a project is on an approved ICIP, in order to move forward and be eligible for funding by NM Department of Transportation or Federal Highway Administration, it must be shovel ready. A “shovel ready” construction project is where planning and engineering is advanced enough that, with sufficient funding, construction can begin within a very short time. For example, early or intermediate stage engineering construction documents must be in place for improvements to Los Pandos Road before the project can be deemed to be “shovel ready.” With funding committed, 90/100% engineering documents would then be completed, enabling the town to issue a request for proposals/bids.

EXISTING TRANSIT SYSTEM

Taos is one of the two hubs of NCRTD transit services, with local Chile Line and other routes in the valley, routes to nearby communities to the north and east, and bus service to Española and farther south.

Exhibit 9-12: NCRTD Transit System

Source: NCRTD Transit Service Plan Update



The main fixed route bus service within Taos consists of the Chile Line Red, TSV Green Line, and UNM Taos Line, as described in the following table.

Exhibit 9-13: NCRTD Fixed Routes Serving Taos

| Summary of NCRTD Fixed Routes in Taos | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|--|
| Route | 340 <i>Chile Line Red</i> | 341 <i>TSV Green</i> | 350 <i>UNM Taos</i> |
| Type | Local | Regional/ Rural/ Ski Bus Service | Local |
| Major Destinations | Taos Pueblo entrance, Taos Mountain Casino, Convention Center, Public Library, Holy Cross Hospital, Taos Plaza, Taos Youth & Family Center, Taos Middle School, RV Park, Post office | Town of Taos, El Prado, Arroyo Seco, Valdez, Taos Ski Valley | UNM Taos Klauer, Ranchos Post Office, Taos County Admin, Guadalupe Parking lot |
| Connection Points | Our Lady of Guadalupe Church Parking Lot, Ranchos de Taos Post Office, Taos Taos County Administration | Taos County Administration | Taos County Administration |
| Connections | RTD Routes - 300, 330, 350, 360 | - | - |
| Service Days | MTWTF | MTWTFS | MTWTF |
| Service Hours | 7:30 a.m.-5:31 p.m. (continuous) | Winter M-Th-7:30 a.m.- 6:08 p.m. (6 round trips each Northbound and Southbound) Winter F-Sun- 7:30 7:30 a.m.-5:31 p.m. (continuous) a.m.- 6:08 p.m. (3 round trips each morning and evening and 2 midday round trips) Non-Winter-9:00 a.m.-6:06 p.m. (3 round trips) | 8:30 a.m.-6:25 p.m. (4 round trips) |
| Headways | Varies | Varies | 3 hr. |
| | 35 min-1 hr. | 30 min/ 1 hr. 40 min | |
| | - | 4.5 hr. / 2.5 hr. | - |

Source: North Central Transit District, Transit Service Plan Update, January 22, 2021

Other routes serving Taos include:

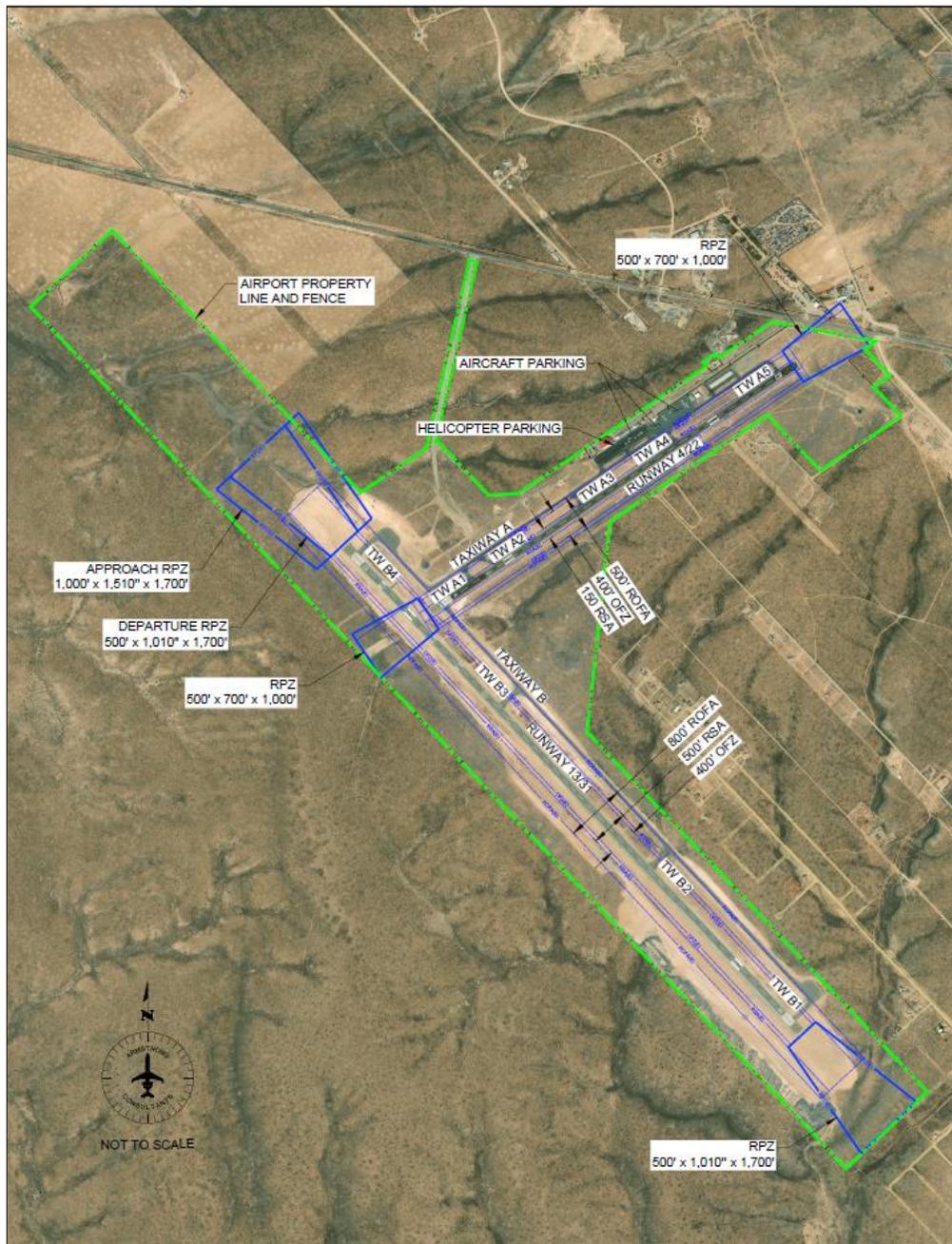
- 200/300 Taos- Santa Fe Commuter
- 305 Taos Express Taos-Espanola-Santa Fe
- 320 Questa Taos
- 330 Peñasco
- 360 Tres Piedras
- 380 Night Rider Taos-El Prado-Arroyo Seco-Taos Ski Valley
- 800 Angel Fire

TAOS REGIONAL AIRPORT

The regional airport provides accessibility to both general aviation and commercial services for tourists, businesses, and locals to and from nearby communities and major tourist destinations in the Enchanted Circle and adjacent areas. Taos Air is a charter commuter service providing seasonal, scheduled air service to Texas and California cities, beginning in 2018.

Airport infrastructure has been improved and plans call for additional improvements. The dual-runway, consisting of the primary runway and crosswind runway, can handle planes weighing 60,000 lbs. and 24,000 lbs. respectively. The airport is equipped with precision instrument and non-precision runway markings, lighting and visual aids. The airport passenger terminal building is 1,430 square feet, seating approximately 30 passengers.

Exhibit 9-15: Taos Regional Airport Runways



Source: Armstrong Consultants, Inc.

Interest has been expressed in building a new terminal building sized between 10,000 and 17,000 square feet. (Taos Regional Airport Conceptual Design).

The FAA projects an increase in air traffic (measured in aircraft hours) by 0.7% per year on average through 2040. Armstrong Consultants developed three projection scenarios showing the potential for commercial air service to increase operations from 730-1,890 air carrier operations.

Conceptual plans have been developed for a 122-acre airport business park west of the existing airport.

Both new terminal building and business park require water and sewer facilities, which the town has considered providing in tandem with annexation.

Exhibit 9-16: Taos Regional Airport Conceptual Design of New Terminal

CONCEPT

View from Roadway | looking SE



Source: Concept Design, Gensler, 2020.

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

THE STRONG AT HEART DOWNTOWN PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The Strong at Heart Downtown Strategy makes a number of recommendations to improve the transportation system in the downtown area. Some of the recommendations are very specific based on a walking audit, some are broad, and others are thoughtful ideas that may need further evaluation and study before they are actionable.

- Transition Placitas neighborhoods into a “complete neighborhood” with sidewalks and trails to parks, local businesses, and affordable options for downtown housing.
- Connect Paseo del Norte neighborhood with comfortably walkable sidewalks or trails to the historic core and other neighborhood centers.

- Make Paseo del Sur neighborhood walkable to the historic core
- On Camino de la Placita: add bike and arrow pavement stencil after each intersection, continue striping of 5' minimum on-street bike lanes from Bent Street to Don Fernando. In long term, widen south of Don Fernando to Paseo del Pueblo Sur to provide continuous sidewalks and on-street bike lanes.
- On Quesnel: replace bike lane with sidewalk, move on-street parking to same side as bike lane/sidewalk, paint crosswalks at Quesnel and Paseo and bring sidewalks at Quesnel and Paseo into compliance with ADA.
- Create new bike and trail opportunities along Rio Fernando, as well as new bike lanes or signed routes on Albright, Los Pandos, Cordoba, and Siler.
- Allow parklets on adjacent streets around the Historic Plaza.
- Convert Ledoux into a shared street.
- Conduct a parking study/audit and feasibility of a shared parking garage by the Historic Plaza.
- Make Civic Plaza Drive into a festival street that can be closed off.
- Widen sidewalks and enhance pedestrian crossings on Paseo del Pueblo Norte as part of the NM 68/US 64 resurfacing project.
- Repaint all crosswalks in the downtown core and by schools.
- Put up flashing crosswalk signs near the schools to alert drivers of crossings. Explore Safe Routes to School resources.
- Develop an ADA Transition Plan.
- Create a "Sidewalk Angels" program to help fill the gap between the town's limited budget and the need for safe, accessible places to walk. Model after City of Santa Fe program.
- Increase visibility of crosswalk on Kit Carson with high visibility markings, illumination, better signage, advance stop bars (a widened gap between automobile stop line and pedestrian crossing), signals, or other enhancements.
- Paint or repaint all crosswalks around Enos Garcia Elementary school.
- Install or repair flashing crosswalk signs near school to alert drivers of crossings.
- Install sidewalk on one side of Ranchitos Road.
- Trim bushes and vegetation along both sides of Ranchitos Rd. to improve walkability along shoulders.
- Install speed radar sign to help control speeding on La Posta Rd.
- Put up speed limit sign on Siler Rd at Los Pandos Rd.
- Repave Siler Rd.
- Reset timing at crosswalk signal at Paseo del Pueblo and Los Pandos intersection to increase crossing time and accommodate those with mobility challenges.
- Place signage on Los Pandos to warn of upcoming blind curve and to share the road with bicyclists.
- Reach out to property and business owners to let them know about interest in enhancing the alley network and encourage participation in relevant action steps, assess opportunities and challenges, prioritize alleys, and complete design of alley system.
- Improve bicycle lanes with restriping and signage additions.
- Review plans, proposals, and upcoming projects to advance downtown bicycle network when opportunities arise.
- Add bicycle parking throughout downtown.
- Experiment with temporary installations of bike infrastructure as a cost-effective way to test out different types of facilities.

Vision 2020 Plan Recommended Goals and Policies Still Relevant

The Vision 2020 comprehensive plan's policy framework contains goals, objectives, and policies to guide road design decisions and infrastructure investment priorities that remain relevant.

Goal: Develop Infrastructure for roads, parking, and utilities while preserving and enhancing Taos' visual and natural resources.

- Site infrastructure to preserve key natural resources.
- Develop adequate parking at densities, locations, and in a manner that minimizes the amount of land dedicated to parking and the visual impact of parking lots.
- Landscape municipal and public parking lots to make them aesthetically pleasing.
- Require that landscaping provide for a significant proportion of the site improvements where developments have the greatest visual impact on the public adjacent to rights of way.

Goal: Ensure the concurrent availability of adequate public facilities, services, and infrastructure prior to approving new developments.

Goal: Identify gaps in existing infrastructure, and bring existing development up to the standards required for new development. The town expands its infrastructure, as it requires new developments to access that infrastructure.

Goal: Reduce traffic congestion through the development of new transportation infrastructure, including new roads, improved public transit, and nonmotorized transportation.

- Require the provision of bike lanes and sidewalks on new arterials.
- Add sidewalks and bike lanes to existing major streets and arterials whenever possible given existing road and rights-of-way widths.
- Improve existing public transportation.

Goal: Enhance safety for all modes of transportation.

- Make new streets safer for pedestrian and bike traffic by encouraging narrower, slower-moving street design with sidewalks and bike paths.
- Design narrow, more intimate roadways in residential neighborhoods that correspond to the scale and impact of development.
- Require all proposed major developments to prepare traffic studies.
- Require all proposed major developments to make provisions for mass transit and pedestrian and bicycle traffic.
- Create pedestrian friendly streets.
- Develop tree-lined wide streets in places and narrow curvy streets in other areas.
- Provide nonmotorized linkages and public transit.
- Limit unnecessary clearing and paving of natural vegetation.

OPPORTUNITIES TO ENHANCE TRANSIT SERVICE

North Central Regional Transit District (NCRTD) provides very valuable transit service to and from Taos. Voters support a 1/8th percent GRT in the NCRTD's four-county service area dedicated to public transit, supplementing federal funds. This provides a stable base for transit service.

In addition to the fixed routes in Taos described above, NCRTD provides on-demand service to and from the regional airport through a contract with the Town of Taos. The town could contract for additional services like they do for the airport. For example, the Town may wish to arrange for augmented bus service for large music or cultural events.

The town and NCRTD have mutually supportive responsibilities in a variety of ways and must work together. Shared responsibilities include the selection of transit routes, improvements to sidewalks for transit users, bus turnarounds, and collaboration on location of maintenance facilities and of developments such as apartment complexes or commercial destination that needs transit service. The town is generally responsible for the street and sidewalk infrastructure, while the NCRTD provides the bus service, signage for routes and perhaps some street furniture and other amenities at bus stops. Another example is that the town and NCRTD could consider creating a hub of bus routes for ease of transferring from one route to another.

Public transit can help reduce household spending on transportation. Public transit and compact development support one another. Investment in public transit can help shape more efficient land use patterns by supporting more compact development in areas that can be well served by transit. NCRTD seeks to participate in local land use planning, subdivision review regarding transit accessibility, and development activities to support its goals.

NCRTD is working on important initiatives in Taos, including: developing a new maintenance and operations facility, implementing its ADA plan, investigating building a mixed-use transit oriented development, putting electric buses on routes (including recharging stations), offering "micro-transit", on-demand trips, and exploring development of workforce housing in Taos for NCRTD employees.

LOCAL STREETS CONNECTIVITY

The subdivision pattern in some parts of the town have a discontinuous local streets network. This hampers the ability to infill development and leads to an inefficient land use pattern, plus places a larger reliance on use of collector and major streets for circulation, which tends to favor dependency on auto travel. Requiring "stub-outs" in new subdivisions is an important way to develop street connectivity. Existing subdivisions are a greater challenge, but the town should seek to retrofit streets for connectivity where opportunity exists.

Another issue in connectivity is the allowance of private streets. Gated communities restrict access to the general public, which can create a blockage in an overall street network. Other public streets likely limit access and, again, hamper the build-out of the street network. The town should develop policies that restrict or limit the creation of private streets or define where they can be appropriate and the street construction standards in the event that they be dedicated to the town.

CONTEXT SENSITIVE DESIGN AND COMPLETE STREETS

The principles of context sensitivity are to design streets so that they complement the character of the urban and rural environments that they serve. In some cases, state transportation departments and municipalities have notoriously designed oversized streets that ignored the adjacent uses, pedestrian activity, topography, vegetation, and vistas. In a community with as much natural and built environment beauty and character, context sensitivity is extremely important. As noted above, policies supporting context sensitivity have been in place in Taos at least since the Vision 2020 Plan was prepared in 1999.

“Complete streets” is a set of principles that emphasize that streets should be designed to accommodate all modes of transportation. Private vehicles are important, but so are buses, pedestrians, bicyclists, even skateboarders and electric scooters. The concepts of context sensitivity and complete streets are highly complementary.

In some cases, the town should fund their own enhancements to state or federal highways in addition to the NMDOT or U.S. Department of Transportation-funded projects to assure that they are context sensitive and complete. The NMDOT project to make improvements to Paseo del Pueblo may necessitate this approach in order to create an appropriately beautiful and fully functional streetscape.

ADDRESSING SAFETY ISSUES ON TOWN STREETS

The town has an ongoing need to assess safety issues on its streets and to address them. Crashes are one indicator that the town studies regularly. Los Pandos Road is an example of a minor arterial street that is in need of improvements. Several survey respondents cited the need for safety improvements of several segments of the street. As discussed above, the ICIP is an important planning tool for identifying safety and other transportation projects.

TRANSPORTATION MASTER PLAN

The town has engaged in many transportation planning processes, however, preparation of a transportation master plan is the best way to pull those plans together in order to pursue a coherent, long-range and multimodal strategy. It would identify gaps in existing infrastructure and guide strategies and improvements for all transportation facilities and services

As discussed, the town and the NMDOT have conducted various studies and planning projects that provide a great deal of guidance. The Public Works Department has also proactively used the ICIP process to program streets improvements needed in five-year increments. The bicycle community has also been active as shown in plans prepared by the town (unadopted), by the Enchanted Circle Trails Association, and the Rocky Mountain Youth Corps.

The master plan can be designed to encompass all of topics cited in this plan element, or it may be more narrowly scoped with the expectation of some topics in stand-alone plans. For example, airport master planning is a specialty that is probably most appropriately assigned to experts in that one field.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS IN THIS PLAN

Following are primary recommendations looking to the future:

- Develop a transportation master plan as an overarching long-range, multimodal plan to guide strategies and improvements for all transportation facilities and services
- Work with the Enchanted Circle Trails Association, Rocky Mountain Youth Corps, and interested residents to develop a long-range bicycle master plan for town adoption
- Consider the needs for recreational, commuter and shopper, and youth bicycling groups
- In prioritization of bicycle facilities, consider the relative ease and difficulty of the project, opportunity for an improvement as an enhancement in conjunction with other public works projects, and cost
- Utilize Strong at Heart transportation recommendations as a guide to downtown area transportation improvements, while validating that the recommended projects are appropriate and needed to meet the goals of Strong at Heart and the comprehensive plan
- Support public transit in transportation infrastructure design processes and in transit-supporting land use, particularly on transit corridors

GOALS, POLICIES, & ACTIONS

GOAL 1

Transportation infrastructure is designed and sited using “context sensitive” design principles to preserve and enhance Taos’ scenic, aesthetic, historic, and natural resources, and minimal disruption to the community, businesses, and facility users.

- E| *Require preparation of “context sensitive” guidelines as part of the design of major infrastructure projects.*
- F| *Develop adequate parking at densities, locations, and in a manner that minimizes the amount of land dedicated to parking and the visual impact of parking lots.*
- G| *Landscape municipal and public parking lots to make them aesthetically pleasing.*
- H| *Require that landscaping provide for a significant proportion of the site improvements where developments have the greatest visual impact on the public, adjacent to rights-of-way.*
- I| *Design tree-lined wide streets in places and narrow curvy streets in other areas.*
- J| *Design narrow, more intimate roadways in residential neighborhoods that correspond to the scale and impact of development.*

GOAL 2

Traffic congestion is reduced through retrofitting of old and development of new transportation infrastructure, including roads, improved public transit, and nonmotorized transportation.

GOAL 3

Missing segments of transportation infrastructure networks are identified and completed to support all modes of transportation

- A| *Pursue development of safe routes to schools, routes between parks and schools, and routes to public lands trailheads in conjunction with “greenways” through Taos*
- B| *Develop a transportation master plan for the town, integrating current plans, especially cross-topic, include all or some of the following components:*
 - a| *Major streets plan, including identifying future alignments*
 - b| *Street conditions assessment considering: pavement condition, sidewalk condition, including any missing links*
 - c| *Safe Routes to Schools*
 - d| *Local streets connectivity policy*
 - e| *Private streets policy*
 - f| *Bicycle route, lane and trail plans*
 - g| *Rio Fernando Trail*
 - h| *Downtown parking study*
 - i| *Strong at Heart follow-up planning and budgeting for street improvements*
 - j| *Accidents database and safety assessments (cars, pedestrians, bicyclists)*
 - k| *Complete streets policies and sections, particularly where nodal development - commercial hubs, one-stop shop, and business parks*
 - l| *NCRTD transit facilities*
 - m| *Consideration of truck routes*

- n| *Transportation corridor planning and design process and protocols*
- C| *Require all proposed major developments to prepare traffic studies*
- D| *Develop a plan for the location of stations for recharging electric vehicles (EV) in strategic locations through the town, including near apartment buildings, businesses, and destinations such as hotels and restaurants*
- E| *Pursue transportation improvements recommended in the Strong at Heart plan for downtown*
- F| *Improve walkability on Paseo del Pueblo Norte*
 - a| *Target near-downtown neighborhoods of Placitas, Paseo del Norte, and Paseo del Sur with better sidewalks and trails connectivity to the historic core, neighborhood centers, and parks*
 - b| *Validate and program for specific bicycling and walking improvements recommended for: Camino de La Placita, Quesnel, Ledoux, Civic Plaza Drive (festival street), Paseo del Pueblo Norte, Ranchitos (sidewalk on one side and trim bushes), crosswalks in downtown and by schools, Los Pandos (signage), La Posta Rd. (speed radar), Siler Rd at Los Pandos Rd. (speed limit sign), reset timing at crosswalk signal at Paseo del Pueblo and Los Pandos*
 - c| *Create new bike and trail opportunities along Rio Fernando, as well as new bike lanes or signed routes on Albright, Los Pandos, Cordoba, and Siler*
- G| *Conduct a parking study/audit and feasibility of a shared parking garage by the Historic Plaza*
- H| *Develop an ADA transition plan*
- I| *Create a "Sidewalk Angels" program to help fill the gap between the town's limited budget and the need for safe, accessible places to walk, modeled after City of Santa Fe program*
- J| *Add bicycle parking throughout downtown*
- K| *Experiment with temporary installations of bike infrastructure as a cost-effective way to test out different types of facilities*
- L| *Reach out to property and business owners to let them know about interest in enhancing the alley network and encourage participation in relevant action steps, assess opportunities and challenges, prioritize alleys, complete design of alley system*
- M| *Review plans, proposals, and upcoming projects to advance downtown bicycle network when opportunities arise*

GOAL 4

The town develops and maintains a comprehensive network of bicycle facilities.

- A| *Require the provision of bike lanes and sidewalks on new arterials*
- B| *Develop a bicycle route, lane, and trail plan utilizing the Enchanted Circle Trails*
- C| *Plan a Town of Taos Bicycle Master Plan, as updated and adopted*
- D| *Consider adding designation for separated bike paths*
- E| *Identify new priority trails for a variety of user groups and skill levels*
- F| *In prioritization of bicycle facilities, consider the relative ease and difficulty of the project, the opportunity for an improvement as an enhancement in conjunction with other public works projects and community needs*
- G| *Identify active transportation routes, including in-town and backcountry trails that connect communities to each other and that provide access to unique local cultural, historical, natural, and recreational features.*
- H| *Develop a community-based trail plan that guides future trail development efforts*
- I| *Improve safety as the highest priority for investing in trails*
- J| *Develop close-to-home trails and organized programming such as walking programs endorsed by health providers*
- K| *Respond to the priorities and needs of longtime residents, newcomers and visitors for pedestrian and bicycling facilities, which are sometimes different*
- L| *Leverage additional funds to match limited town funds to improve the bicycle network.*
- M| *Budget town funds for bicycle facility maintenance in the annual budget.*
- N| *Install signage which corresponds with the three loop rides identified in the Loop Rides Map.*
- O| *Adopt and implement a policy to build bicycle and pedestrian facilities in all major street resurfacing.*
- P| *Pursue an approach that favors making improvements when the opportunity emerges (project, ease, & budget) rather than prioritization.*
- Q| *Consider an amendment to the open space dedication requirement of the Land Use Development Code to provide for additional rights-of-way that may be necessary to provide for the bicycle facility identified in the Master Plan Map.*
- R| *Secure easements or rights-of-way for trail access to public lands.*
- S| *Create and maintain rights-of-way and public access easements to trails on adjoining national forest trails.*
- T| *Participate in and support regional trails planning and projects. Include regional trails in topics addressed by the Enchanted Circle Council of Governments, including joint planning and funding opportunities.*

GOAL 5

Sidewalks and bike lanes are added to existing major streets whenever possible given existing rights-of-way and road widths.

- A| *Make new streets safer for pedestrian and bike traffic by encouraging narrower, slower moving street design with sidewalks and bike paths*
- B| *Maintain sidewalks so that they are passable in winter from snow and ice and in summer from weeds*

GOAL 6

Public transportation serves the needs of residents and visitors for travel in town and in the region.

- A| *Require all proposed major developments to make provisions for bus transit and pedestrian and bicycle traffic.*
- B| *Coordinate with the North Central Regional Transit District (NCRTD) in the provision of transit services and transit-supporting developments*
- C| *Include NCRTD in the Development Review Committee review of proposed projects and initiatives*
- D| *Work with NCRTD on identifying suitable locations for a transit-oriented development and potential public private partnerships to develop mixed use or residential projects*
- E| *Continue to work with NCRTD on transit service from the airport, other identified transit needs outside the general routes, and improving bus stops*
- F| *The Town of Taos should assist the NCRTD to improve ridership in key areas and ensuring transit-supportive infrastructure be built as part of town projects and private development, especially along transit corridors*
- G| *Strive to ensure that sidewalks are available on both sides of the street on transit routes*
- H| *Consider transit signal priority in transportation projects where feasible*
- I| *Balance bus turn radius needs with pedestrian needs for sidewalk bulbs that facilitate safe crossing at intersections*
- J| *Allow or provide bus stop pullouts where suited*
- K| *Consider layover needs of the NCRTD during roadway design*
- L| *Accommodate bus boarding and alighting safety needs by appropriately spacing street trees at bus stops. Plan with the NCRTD areas that can accommodate park-and-ride facilities or transit centers.*
- M| *Conduct transportation planning and design processes with an inclusive approach to stakeholder participation*
- N| *Include NCRTD staff as stakeholders during the design phase for corridor redevelopment/resurfacing projects and new roadway projects. Include new transit facilities and/or improve existing transit facilities when appropriate, including bus pull offs, shelters, seating, waste receptacles, bicycle infrastructure, and connecting pedestrian infrastructure. Every effort should be made to ensure existing transit facilities are not removed from corridor improvement projects*

GOAL 7

Promote a land use pattern that can be well-served by transit.

- A| *Plan mixed-use, medium-density development within walking distance to transit which can provide many benefits, such as reduced transportation costs, more efficient transit, reduced sprawl saving farms, forests, open space, and reduced transportation related pollution.*
- B| *Provide for efficient land uses*
- C| *Encourage mixed-use projects in key locations that could encourage transit-oriented development in the town*
- D| *Consider ways to enhance transit-oriented development such as amending regulations and reducing parking requirements to encourage use of public transit*

GOAL 8

Pursue needed improvements to Taos Regional Airport supporting general aviation, commuter air service, and additional business operations.

- A| *Support improvements to Taos Regional Airport to enhance safety and increase air service for tourists/visitors, residents, businesses, and other business operations.*
- B| *Continue to work on developing a new terminal building*
- C| *Work with Taos Air on their provision of commuter air service which benefits the town and region*
- D| *Seek opportunities for logistical operations and other services related to cargo air transportation that may create living wage jobs and economic activity beneficial to the community*

ACTIONS

Specific instructions to make strategies succeed.

ACTION | Develop a transportation master plan for the town

ACTION | Develop a bicycle facilities master plan utilizing the Enchanted Circle Trails Plan and Town of Taos Bicycle Master Plan, as updated, for consideration of adoption as a stand-alone master plan or within a transportation master plan.

ACTION | Validate, prioritize, and program specific bicycling and walking improvements recommended in the Strong at Heart plan.

ACTION | Conduct a parking study/audit and feasibility study of a shared parking garage by the Historic Plaza.

ACTION | Pursue improvements to Taos Regional Airport to enhance safety and increase air service for tourists/visitors, residents, businesses, and other business operations.

ACTION | Work with Taos Air on their provision of commuter air service.

ACTION | Coordinate with the NCRTD in the provision of transit services and transit-supporting developments.

ACTION | Develop policies as part of a transportation master plan that ensure transit-supportive infrastructure when building town projects and in review of private development proposals

ACTION | Develop a plan for the location of stations for recharging electric vehicles(EV) in strategic locations through the town,

ACTION | Maintain sidewalks so that they are passable in winter from snow and ice and in summer from weeds

ACTION | Add NCRTD to the Development Review Committee

ACTION | Work with NCRTD on identifying suitable locations for a transit-oriented development and potential public private partnerships to develop mixed-use or residential projects

ACTION | Continue to prepare the annual ICIP including transportation infrastructure projects

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Town of Taos
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2022



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