

# TOWN OF TAOS PARKS + RECREATION

## MASTER PLAN 2018



PRODUCED FOR THE TOWN OF TAOS

PREPARED BY: DESIGN OFFICE

May 2018

TOWN OF TAOS **PARKS + RECREATION**  
MASTER PLAN

PREPARED FOR:

**TOWN OF TAOS**

PREPARED BY:

**design office**  
landscape planning urbanism

with

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#### MASTER PLAN

# Acronym List

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act	NRPA	National Recreation and Park Association
BLM	Bureau of Land Management	PRAB	Parks and Recreation Advisory Board
BMP	Bicycle Master Plan	TCA	Taos Center for the Arts Taos Community Auditorium
CIP	Capital Improvement Plan	TLT	Taos Land Trust
COPD	Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease	TMS	Taos Municipal Schools
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency	TOT	Town of Taos
FIFA	Federation Internationale de Football Association	TPL	Trust for Public Land
FTE	Full Time Equivalent employee	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
JPA	Joint Powers Agreement	US	United States
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding	USFS	United States Forest Service
MP	Master Plan	USSAA	United States Softball Association
NM	New Mexico	YFC	Youth and Family Center
NMGRT	New Mexico Gross Receipts Tax		
NMRPA	New Mexico Recreation and Parks Association		

The Town of Taos is a destination for its rich array of arts, culture and the vast recreational offerings in the region. Within the picturesque surroundings of the Sangre de Cristo mountains, the Taos Plateau, and the Rio Grande gorge, residents and visitors alike enjoy hiking, biking, rafting, fishing, and a range of winter sports activities. Within the town limits, the unique collection of parks, open space, and recreational facilities offer locations for a range of passive and active recreation, community events, and preserved open space. These areas help reinforce community values and provide locations for community interaction, recreation, and cultural events.

In Taos, parks and open spaces play a vital role to preserve natural resources and have contributed real economic benefit for the community. They provide important locations for improving the overall health and wellness of all its citizens.

### *Planning Process*

As the first master plan conducted by the town dedicated to Parks and Recreation, the 2018 Town of Taos Parks and Recreation Master Plan provides the opportunity to clarify a vision for parks and recreation in Taos that imbues the values, desires, and qualities which distinguishes this community and its recreational resources.

A three-pronged evaluation process included assessing the condition of existing facilities, documenting public recommendations / desires, and evaluating future needs to determine the most appropriate strategies for the town. The detailed existing conditions assessment of current town parks and recreation facilities documents existing assets and needed improvements. Public input in the form of a survey, focus group input, and public meetings at multiple stages in the process guided the plan to better align with public desire. Future needs are informed by population projections, a gap analysis, and recreational trends coordinated with opportunities for economic development. An analysis of existing analogous communities offers insight as to how the town compares with other comparable towns.

The large turnout at public meetings and high participation rate in the public survey illustrates the level of concern locals have for quality parks and recreation facilities and a desire to ensure improvements meet the community's needs.

### *Parks and Recreation Master Plan*

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan is one part of a suite of planning documents that provide guidance on the preservation and development of area parks, recreational facilities, trails, open space, and natural resources. In coordination with the Community Conservation Plan and the Enchanted Circle Trails Plan which provide a broader planning context, the Taos Parks and Recreation Master Plan's focus is town parks and recreation facilities.

The plan documents the existing array of recreational offerings and recommends a re-distribution of some programs to better serve Taos residents. The plan also takes a closer look at established area parks, providing an in-depth existing conditions analysis and detailed site master plans for key properties owned by the town.

The Taos Parks and Recreation Master Plan offers a vision and guiding framework to refine and expand these public open space properties in a way that preserves the inherent character of each facility while improving recreational offerings to meet public needs.

The proposed plans strike a balance between purposely planned recreational use and dedicated open space. Each recommended site master plan for the town's primary park and recreation facilities builds on existing assets and outlines suggested improvements.

#### *Kit Carson Park*

In the heart of downtown and central to the community consciousness, Kit Carson Park will continue to serve as a cherished open space enriched by cultural events, acequia flows, the shade of towering cottonwood trees, expansive lawns, and a range of active and passive recreational activities.

#### *Fred Baca Park*

Strategic enhancements to Fred Baca Park will expand its park areas, restore its wetland, and connect it to adjacent new park areas.

#### *Taos Eco Park*

The continued build-out of Taos Eco Park and its transition into a multi-sport facility with park amenities can establish it as a regional destination for a range of competitive sports.

#### *Taos Youth and Family Center*

Already distinguished as a regional recreation facility, expanded indoor facilities complemented by additional outdoor recreational offerings will bolster its use by local and regional sports enthusiasts.

The plan recommends following design standards that strengthen the sense of place and create low-impact, sustainably designed improvements that are durable and low maintenance.

Parallel with physical improvements to town parks, increased programming by town staff and better community interface will help ensure the community is being served.

### *Implementation*

Taos parks are at a crossroads: continuing along the current path of maintaining facilities and providing minor upgrades with incremental funding or identifying funding strategies and funding larger investments in park improvements.

In either case, public and private funds should be spent judiciously and in a way that aligns with the ultimate goals and vision for each park as set forth in this plan. A failure to do so on a consistent basis - whether improvements are small or larger - could result in the erosion of public trust and the eventual degradation of the essential qualities of each facility,

In the past, Taos has benefitted economically from the use of its parks for large public and private events and concerts, particularly in Kit Carson Park. Moving forward, it must also be cautious to balance economic gains with continued stewardship and re-investment in park infrastructure rehabilitation in order to maintain the health, safety, and beauty of its facilities.

In consideration of funding realities, park master plans outlined in this document are intended to be implemented in phases, depending on funding availability and priorities set by the Town. The plan acknowledges that regular users of town parks and recreation facilities extend far beyond town boundaries. Efforts to fund future major improvements must be pursued at a larger scale in order to distribute expenses among residents the facilities serve.

### *Legacy*

Parks and recreation facilities in Taos will continue to be unique destinations for recreation, education, and preservation. Set within distinct settings and offering disparate arrays of recreational opportunities, these facilities will serve as destinations for community interaction, health and wellness, and enjoyment for generations to come.

The continued oversight and involvement of dedicated interest groups, agencies, and private citizens will help build public trust and ensure that improvements align with community needs.

# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction



# Plan Purpose and Need

The Taos Parks + Recreation Master Plan provides a framework for future improvements to the Town’s parks and recreation offerings. The goal of this document is to provide a guide to re-imagine Taos parks in a way that honors the past and promotes the future of this unique town.

Taos parks and recreation facilities are widely used for both passive and active recreation. Each has a distinct character and array of recreational offerings. The purpose of the plan is to propose improvements to the existing system of parks, recreation and open space facilities that make best use of inherent park assets and also enhance the quality of life for all town residents, visitors, and businesses. A primary goal of the plan is to align the Town’s parks, open space, trails, and recreational offerings to meet current and future public needs.

As the first Parks + Recreation Master Plan for the Town of Taos, this plan allows the Town to better understand existing community needs and how best to address future needs within the next 5-10 years. The plan provides an assessment of existing facilities, outlines detailed upgrades to existing park and recreation facilities, and offers a series of recommendations for implementation. The plan is intended to be flexible in order to take into account current trends, changing public preferences, and available funding.

While the 2018 Taos Parks + Recreation Master Plan examines the broader park and recreation context and provides recommendations at the larger scale, its primary focus is to establish a vision for existing facilities and outline improvements to existing parks and recreation facilities to meet existing and future needs. Detailed existing conditions assessments and plans were generated for the following facilities:

- Kit Carson Park
- Fred Baca Park
- Taos Eco Park
- Taos Youth and Family Center

*The 2018 Parks + Recreation Master Plan is the primary planning document for the Town of Taos Parks and Recreation Department designed to assist Town leaders, staff, and citizens with managing current future needs and resources. As priorities and demands shift over time, so too is the need to engage in comprehensive planning to help guide decision-making within this dynamic process.*

### Part of a Suite of Planning Documents

The Taos Vision 2020 Master Plan recommended developing a Master Plan for Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Natural Resource Protection. The Vision 2020 Plan outlined the need to inventory existing natural resources worth preserving, plan an open space network that connects to these resources, make recommendations for phased land acquisition, and identify funding opportunities.

As such, this document should be considered as part of a suite of recent planning efforts with a focus on parks, open space, trails, and recreation.

#### *Parks and Recreation*

The 2018 Taos Parks + Recreation Master Plan (this document) guides the improvement and expansion of the town’s park and recreation system to meet public needs.

#### *Open Space and Natural Resource Protection*

Identified as a significant component of Taos identity and culture, open space preservation and natural resource protection strategies are outlined in the 2017 Taos County Community Conservation Plan. The Taos community strongly supports the need to protect water resources, preserve local traditions, and provide more close-to-home access to nature.

#### *Trails*

An important component of a comprehensive recreational plan, trails serve not only to link residents to town parks and destinations, they also provide access to perimeter open space recreation areas and provide opportunities for . The Enchanted Circle Trails Plan, a plan focused on both local and regional trail systems, serves as the primary guide for trail planning for the Taos Parks + Recreation Master Plan.

### A Plan for Everyone

Taos is a diverse community and its parks and recreation facilities serve an even broader community with a wide range of needs, interests, and preferences for parks and recreation facilities. With such a diversity of users, understanding the types of facilities that best serve users needs, including amenities within each park or recreation facility, is crucial to the planning, design, and programing of future facilities. This plan intends to address the needs and preferences of all Taos residents of different demographic and interests. Some of the primary user group categories include:

- Residents of different ages:
- Sports Groups
- Recreation Center Users
- Outdoor Recreation
- Visitors / Tourists

Image 1-1: Fred Baca Park and the Rio Fernando wetland.



## Relationship to Other Plans

The Town of Taos Parks and Recreation Master Plan builds on a series of community plans and initiatives that have been adopted over the last few decades, including the Vision 2020 Plan and the Taos Trails Plan. Recent more regionally-focused planning efforts have been conducted with assistance from the Trust for Public Lands (TPL) to more comprehensively map, analyze, and direct community conservation and development.

The Taos County Community Conservation Plan and the Enchanted Circle Trails Plan illustrate this larger scale planning. A common element of these plans is the protection and preservation of existing cherished assets combined with the thoughtful implementation of recreational improvements that address the needs of a growing community.

Multiple plans identify the need to expand the trail system and connect safely to parks and other area destinations.

Several current planning initiatives are calling for the preservation of existing open space combined with the integration of cultural and historical components. The Rio Fernando Park, directly east of Fred Baca Park, is an example of this, where the Taos Land Trust is planning a new park that incorporates local agricultural traditions, wetland restoration, and acequia revival.

A challenge for the Town of Taos has been identifying funding to initiate some of the recommendations outlined in these recent plans.

### Community Plans

#### ***Vision 2020 (1999)***

The Town of Taos Vision 2020 Plan provides a long-range plan to guide the physical development of the community in a way that reflects local social and economic values. Recreational goals include identifying areas for campgrounds, public fishing areas, large open space parks, outdoor recreation areas, small pocket parks, and open spaces linked by multi-use trails.

#### ***Taos County Community Conservation Plan / Greenprinting (2017)***

The Trust for Public Lands collaborated with Taos community members to develop a shared vision, shared goals, and practical action steps toward voluntary implementation of community conservation.

The top four conservation priorities for Taos County are:

- (1) *Protect water quality and quantity;*
- (2) *Protect cultural resources, including traditional agriculture;*
- (3) *Protect wildlife habitat; and*
- (4) *Provide access to recreational opportunities.*

Taos County Community Conservation Plan Final Report, p. 10

#### ***Strong at Heart (2018)***

This planning initiative (*in process*) is intended to create a vision for a thriving downtown that reflects shared community values. The plan will include an action plan for implementation.

### Trails Plans

#### ***Taos Trails Plan (2002)***

The Town of Taos adopted the Taos Trails Plan, a guide to implementing a network of multi-use trails as an alternative to existing transportation systems. A map outlines suggested routes.

#### ***Taos Bicycle Master Plan (2009)***

The Town of Taos Bicycle Master Plan proposes 68 miles of bicycle lanes, 14 miles of bike routes, and two park and ride facilities to provide an interconnected network of bicycle facilities. The plan outlines a series of policies to achieve BMP goals. A goal of the plan is to have Taos recognized as a Bicycle Friendly Community by the League of American Bicyclists. An outcome of the plan was the establishment of an Alternative Transportation Advisory Committee to guide the implementation of the plan.

#### ***Enchanted Circle Trails Plan (2017)***

A conceptual trails plan for trails in a 1,310 square mile study area around the Enchanted Circle Scenic Byway covering four counties (Taos County, Colfax County, Mora County, and Rio Arriba County). The plan proposes to add nearly 400 miles of new trails and provides tools for communities to prioritize and implement trails.

### Facility Overview

The Town of Taos maintains a variety of parks, public open spaces, special use facilities, natural resource areas, streetscapes, and green spaces within the town. As part of this plan, the following parks and recreation facilities were assessed. A full inventory of park facilities, their condition, and recommendations for upgrades can be found in *Appendix A: Site Inventory Assessment*.

#### ***Kit Carson Park***

The 20.2-acre Kit Carson Park in the northwest portion of the town is home to the Historic Kit Carson Memorial Cemetery (established in 1876) and offers a range of passive and active uses. Located in a densely populated area of town close to the Plaza, it is well-visited by tourists and locals alike.

#### ***Fred Baca Park***

The 11.7-acre Fred Baca Park is comprised of a traditional park and a natural wetland formed by the Rio Fernando on its eastern border.

#### ***Taos Eco Park***

The 23.2-acre Taos Eco Park, a joint venture between the Town of Taos and Taos Municipal Schools, serves as a soccer facility for visiting teams and the community alike.

#### ***Youth and Family Center***

The Youth + Family Center is a regional recreation destination for swimming and ice sports. Additional outdoor facilities (skate park, playground) attract local residents.

Additional open spaces and recreation areas are owned and operated by private entities, Taos Municipal Schools, local non-profits, or governmental agencies. These have been acknowledged and considered in the evaluation (see *Figure 3-1: Taos Open Space + Trails Map*).

Figure 1-1: Town of Taos - Parks + Recreation context map



# Benefits of Parks + Recreation

Taos and its surroundings is well known for its beauty and bountiful recreational opportunities. Hiking, biking, river rafting, climbing, hunting and fishing, and skiing are all accessible within a 20 mile radius of the town. Access to this range of outdoor recreational opportunities is a major draw for both tourists and new residents. It also contributes to the local economy. In Taos County, Taos Ski Valley, for example, generates between \$13 million and \$14 million annually, an amount that is expected to increase to \$22 million annually by 2015.

Within the town of Taos, parks and open space provide locations for not only active and passive recreation but also venues for community events and concerts. This serves both local residents and visitors alike. An array of local sports organizations utilize town facilities for youth and adult sports such as little league, soccer, youth football, basketball, and hockey. Tournaments are held at these facilities where feasible, which helps the local economy. There is a strong desire among organized sports groups for improved and expanded facilities in order to increase the number of tournaments hosted in Taos for a broader range of sports.

*Communities across New Mexico recognize that outdoor recreation supports health, contributes to a high quality of life and—perhaps most importantly—attracts and sustains employers and families. Investing in outdoor infrastructure attracts employers and active workforces, ensuring those communities thrive economically and socially.*

Outdoor Industry Association, [https://outdoorindustry.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/OIA\\_RecEcoState\\_NM.pdf](https://outdoorindustry.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/OIA_RecEcoState_NM.pdf)

## Community Health

Access to recreation and the outdoors contributes directly to the health of the local community. This is especially important in Taos, where community health assessments conducted in 2016 (Holy Cross Hospital) indicate major concerns in levels of obesity and chronic diabetes as compared to national rates.

Taos Health Indicators		
Indicator	% Taos pop	difference to National Average
Obesity	33.7%	11.0%
Chronic Diabetes	18.6%	50.9%
Chronic COPD	6.8%	71.6%

Only 50.6% of Taosenos get regular vigorous exercise, 11% lower than the national average. Despite this, the interest in attending educational classes to improve health is present in the community. In a recent community survey, the top three educational classes of interest to respondents were about Fitness, Health and Wellness, and Nutrition.

The community health condition is exacerbated by persistent poverty and an associated lack of access to health care, substance abuse treatment resources, and adequate diets.

Holy Cross Hospital, Taos, NM Community Health Needs Assessment + Implementation Strategy 2016 [http://taoshospital.org/uploads/files/Holy\\_Cross\\_Hospital\\_-\\_Community\\_Health\\_Need\\_Assesment\\_-\\_2016.pdf](http://taoshospital.org/uploads/files/Holy_Cross_Hospital_-_Community_Health_Need_Assesment_-_2016.pdf)

## Prescription Trails

The Taos Land Trust, in coordination with Holy Cross Hospital is working on instituting a Park Rx program to link patients and healthcare providers with area parks and trails. Coordinating town efforts to improve trails and walking paths within parks with this initiative is a first step to providing a pleasant and encouraging environment for this initiative.

Prescriptions for Better Health at Taos Parks + Trails, White Paper, 2017 (Taos Land Trust, Headwaters Economics, Trust for Public Land, National Park Service)

## Social and Community Interaction

Park and recreation facilities provide locations for engaging with family, friends, and neighbors, thereby increasing social capital and community cohesion. These are directly related to improved mental health and overall well-being. In addition, it has been shown that people who feel connected to their community and those who participate in recreational, community, and other activities are more likely to have better mental and physical health and live longer lives.

Parks and recreation facilities are important for area youth. Access to welcoming and fun parks and recreation opportunities has been strongly linked to reductions in crime and reduced juvenile delinquency.

As a known tourist destination, Taos' parks and open space system is an integral part of the town's vibrant cultural identity that visitors experience.

## Benefits of Parks and Recreation

Source: National Recreation and Parks Association - Why Parks and Recreation are Essential Community Services, 2010

*Just as water, sewer, and public safety are considered essential public services, parks are vitally important to establishing and maintaining the quality of life in a community, ensuring the health of families and youth, and contributing to the economic and environmental well-being of a community and a region.*

### Economic Value

*Parks improve the local tax base and increase property values. It is proven that private property values increase the value of privately owned land the closer such land is to parks. This increase in private property value due to the proximity to parks increases property tax revenues and improves local economies.*

*Quality parks and recreation are cited as one of the top three reasons that business cite in relocation decisions in a number of studies.*

*Parks and recreation programs generate revenue directly from fees and charges, but more importantly, provide significant indirect revenues to local and regional economies from sports tournaments and special events such as arts, music, and holiday festivals. Economic activity from hospitality expenditures, tourism, fuel, recreational equipment sales, and many other private sector businesses is of true and sustained value to local and regional economies.*

### Health and Environmental Benefits

*Parks and recreation programs and services contribute to the health of children, youth, adults, and seniors.*

*According to studies by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, creating, improving and promoting places to be physically active can improve individual and community health and result in a 25% increase of residents who exercise at least three times per week.*

*Parks and protected public lands are proven to improve water quality, protect groundwater, prevent flooding, improve the quality of the air we breathe, provide vegetative buffers to development, produce habitat for wildlife, and provide a place for children and families to connect with nature and recreate outdoors together.*

*Parks are the places that people go to get healthy and stay fit.*

### Social Importance

*Parks are a tangible reflection of the quality of life in a community. They provide identity for citizens and are a major factor in the perception of quality of life in a given community. Parks and recreation services are often cited as one of the most important factors in surveys of how livable communities are.*

*Parks provide gathering places for families and social groups, as well as for individuals of all ages and economic status, regardless of their ability to pay for access.*

*Parks and recreation programs provide places for health and well-being that are accessible by persons of all ages and abilities, especially to those with disabilities.*

*Access to parks and recreation opportunities has been strongly linked to reductions in crime and to reduced juvenile delinquency.*

*Parks have a value to communities that transcend the amount of dollars invested or the revenues gained from fees. Parks provide a sense of public pride and cohesion to every community.*

Image 1-2: The multi-use lawn at Fred Baca Park is a popular place organized and unstructured activities.



Image 1-3: The Taos Eco Park hosts community league events and school events throughout the season.



Image 1-4: The wetland boardwalk at Fred Baca Park provides a unique respite for visitors and is popular among birders.



# Plan Development Process

The Taos Parks Master Plan included an extensive public outreach process within a focused time frame. This process brought the park master plan project to the attention of sports leagues, local schools, businesses, and neighboring residents.

The planning team worked with the Town of Taos to outline a broad public outreach strategy to maximize feedback and participation. A range of electronic, paper, and social media was utilized to facilitate communication (e-mail notices, town facebook page, newspaper press releases, etc). Notices and links on the Town's webpage provided up-to-date information on upcoming meetings and links to documents.

A significant component of the public process involved asking the public for feedback on the park vision and goals, park program elements, and their arrangement on the site. This input directly impacted the direction of the park plans. Public meetings were held at the Town Council Chambers, centrally located in downtown Taos.

## Survey - Park Programming

An online survey was conducted the month of November 2017 with a total of 762 respondents. Children 18 and under were asked to participate in the survey through the Youth and Family Center, and represented almost 20% of the responses. Survey responses gave the planning team information on the public's vision for the park facilities and also identified desired adjustments to current parks and recreation facilities. For an overview of survey results, see *Chapter 4: Public Input*; for complete survey sample and results, see *Appendix B: Programming*.

## Interest Group Meetings

Informational meetings were conducted with key representatives from user groups affiliated with activities outlined in an initial program set by the Town of Taos. The goal was to acquire preliminary input on each group's concerns, document how they currently utilize the parks, and anticipate needs and requirements to better serve each interest group. Each interest group met with the planning team over the course of two days.

The following interest groups were represented at the meetings:

- Organized Sports Leagues
- Educational Institutions
- Acequia Association
- Taos Tree Board

A dominant theme that surfaced from these meetings was the need to improve maintenance and provide more facilities to accommodate increased interest in organized sports and park use in general.

Image 1-5: Public Meeting 1



## Staff Input

Input sessions with Town of Taos staff highlighted challenges associated with providing community services and maintaining existing facilities with a small staff and limited operating budget. Staff were able to offer perspectives as citizens and users of the facilities as well as from the standpoint of town employees. Major concerns included limited funds, improving communication with the public, providing better safety and security, and centralizing maintenance operations.

## Agencies

As partners and neighbors to Town park and recreation properties, the following agencies were consulted and included in the planning process:

- Taos Land Trust (TLT)
- Taos Municipal Schools (TMS)
- Taos Center for the Arts / Taos Community Auditorium (TCA)
- Taos County

Image 1-6: Public Meeting 1 - Open House



## Public Meeting 1

The first Taos Parks Master Plan public involvement meeting was held on Wednesday, December 13, 2017 (5:30 - 7:00 p.m.). 52 individuals signed in at the meeting with an estimated 60 people attending.

The meeting was conducted as an open house with a brief presentation early in the meeting to introduce the project. The meeting provided information on the park master plan project and allowed the public to provide input on the proposed park program and character.

Public comments were collected by documenting preferences and feedback at each park station and on project information boards. Some of the primary concerns raised by those who gave comments were:

- lack of maintenance of existing park elements
- improved trail connectivity between parks
- feeling unsafe when visiting Town parks
- concerns about drug use and homelessness at Kit Carson Park
- interest in improved facility conditions and offerings

Image 1-7: Public Meeting 2 - Presentation



## Public Meeting 2

The second Taos Parks Master Plan public involvement meeting was held on Saturday, February 24, 2018 to collect public input on proposed master plans for Taos Eco Park, Fred Baca Park, and Kit Carson Park. 77 individuals signed in and an estimated 85 people attended.

The meeting was organized into three 1-hour segments, with each segment focusing on one of three Taos parks (Kit Carson Park, Taos Eco Park, Fred Baca Park) preceded by a brief Parks Master Plan overview presentation. An open house allowed attendees to view analysis maps and provide input on proposed park master plans.

Some of the primary concerns raised by those who gave comments included:

- Eco Park scheduling and functionality with multiple sports using the fields.
- Fred Baca wetlands being a sensitive resource near a proposed dog park.
- further engaging acequia commissioners when revitalizing / relocating acequias.
- request to engage both School and County representatives to support the plan.

Image 1-8: Public Meeting 2 - Public Comment



## Public / Interest Group Involvement

### Public Input Survey

November 3-31, 2017

- existing conditions feedback
- desired improvements / programs

### Interest Group Meetings

November 15 + 16, 2017

- existing park use
- concerns / improvements
- desired programming elements

May 10, 2018 (Youth + Family Center Facility)

- existing facility use
- concerns / desired improvements

### Agency Meetings

November 22, 2017 - Acequia Association

December 28, 2018 - Taos Lilac Festival

January 17, 2018 - Taos Community Auditorium

February 12, 2018 - Taos Land Trust

### Public Input Meeting 1 - programming

Tuesday, December 13, 2017

- project introduction
- survey results
- demographics
- park program feedback

### Public Input Meeting 2 - master plan drafts

Saturday, February 24, 2018

- project introduction
- park gap analysis
- existing conditions assessment overview
- park + recreation overall recommendations
- proposed master plan - Taos Eco Park
- proposed master plan - Fred Baca Park
- proposed master plan - Kit Carson Park

### Taos Town Council

Tuesday, May 22, 2018

- master plan review / approval

# CHAPTER 2

## Community Profile



Although the Town of Taos was formally incorporated into a municipality in 1934, the area's history of inhabitation goes back centuries and is closely tied to the Taos Pueblo, which borders the Town of Taos on its north side. Built between 1000 and 1450 A.D., Taos Pueblo is one of the oldest continually inhabited communities in the United States and continues to flourish.

Captain Hernando Alvarado was the first Spanish explorer to arrive in the Taos valley on August 29, 1540 as part of the Francisco Vasquez de Coronado Spanish expedition. The initial Spanish and Indian meeting was a peaceful and marked the beginning of amicable co-existence between two distinct cultures. Over the next seventy-five years, Spanish immigrants slowly settled the area and established small ranches and outposts. Not until around 1615 was the small village, which would later become the Town of Taos, officially established by Don Juan de Onate.

Over time, the peaceful co-existence between the two cultures eroded. Religious differences and resentment led to the Pueblo revolt of 1640 in which the Taos Pueblo priest and many Spanish settlers were killed and as relations tensed between Spanish and Native Americans up and down the Rio Grande Valley a conflict was on the horizon. Taos Pueblo joined the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, effectively driving the Spanish out of New Mexico for twelve years.

The reconquest of New Mexico by the Spanish occurred between 1692 and 1696 when Don Diego de Vargas' military expedition reestablished rule.

### Don Fernando de Taos

The small Spanish Village was subsequently renamed "Don Fernando de Taos" in 1760 by Spanish settlers in honor of Captain Don Fernando de Chavez. Historians believe that Chavez was a community leader prior to the rebellion and in reference to the native people referred to as "Tao" by Picturis Pueblos, as interpreted by Juan Belarde in 1598.

It was during the 18th century that many of the historical buildings and cultural landscape relics we see today were built. The fortified Taos plaza and surrounding buildings were built for protection and a place for gathering and trading.

### Mexican War of Independence

Politics and war abroad eventually impacted the small village of Don Fernando de Taos in a big way. France invaded Spain in 1808 and 'New Spain' (Mexico) initiated a movement for independence. Years later, Mexico was officially free of Spanish rule under the Treaty of Cordoba in 1821. Large territories of land in modern day New Mexico were settled by Mexican and Spanish settlers (many of which were granted large tracts of land by the King of Spain).

### Mexican - American War

It was only a short time later that war impacted the region again. The Mexican - American war was an armed conflict that lasted between 1846 and 1848. Instigated by the annexation of the independent Republic of Texas. After two years of fighting the remnant government of Mexico conceded, signing the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. The Treaty outlined a significant Mexican cession to the United States, including the Republic of Texas, which included most of modern day New Mexico.

### United States Statehood

Shortly after the Mexican - American War, New Mexico was formally established as an American Territory in 1850. It existed, with varying boundary configurations, for 62 years before becoming the state of New Mexico in 1912.

### Modern Day

Even before Statehood, people have been attracted to Taos for its clear blue skies, cultural landscapes, and rich past. Art, architecture, and outdoor recreation represent the area's distinct inherent natural beauty and is a significant draw to the Taos area. Taos has a robust art scene, galleries, and museums that preserve the inherent culture and beauty of the area. The Taos Pueblo remains an amicable neighbor and the cultural differences are celebrated, contributing to Taos's unique identity.

*"Taos is now a community overflowing with a long proud history, three cultures living side by side, and a heritage of colorful people. Its diversity makes Taos a very interesting and desirable place to live and do business."*

- Town of Taos

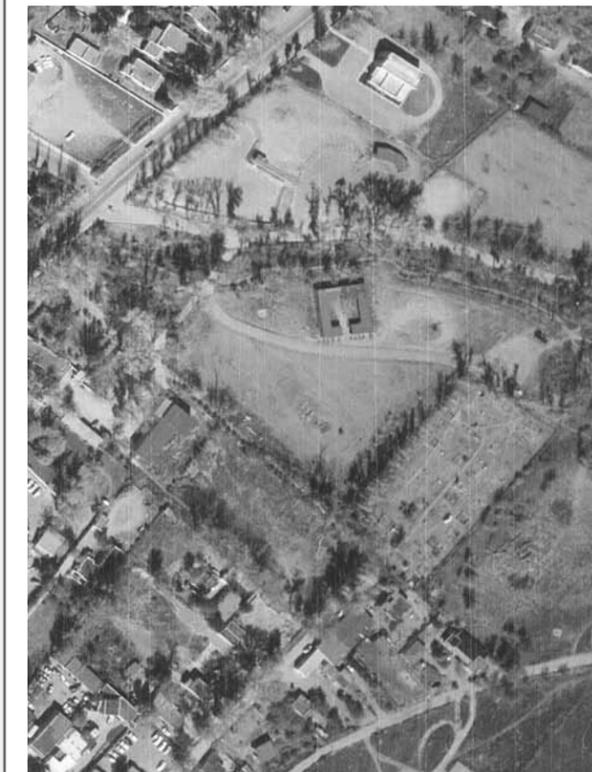
Taos Timeline of Events		
900AD	pre-Pueblo peoples permanently settle in the Taos Valley	
1450	Taos Pueblo built	
1540	Coronado's Entrada into New Mexico Alvarado arrives at Taos Pueblo	
1598	Onate establishes first colonial capital at San Juan Pueblo	
1610	Taos Pueblo Mission established	
1615	Taos Pueblo declared a village	
1680	Pueblo Revolt	
1692-96	DeVargas' reconquest of New Mexico	
1715	Resettlement and reestablishment of Spanish civil government in the Taos Valley	
1700's	Land Grant Villages established in the Taos Valley	
1815	San Francisco de Asis Church in Ranchos de Taos is built	
1800-21	Regional markets open, use of currency begins. American trappers and traders arrive in Taos	
1821	Mexico declares independence from Spain Santa Fe Trail Opens	
1826	Padre Martinez establishes the first school in the Taos Valley	
1835	Padre Martinez brings the printing press to Taos Valley	
1843	Kit Carson makes Taos his permanent home	
1836	Texas declares independence from Mexico	
1846	US declares war on Mexico	
		General Kearny enters Las Vegas and claims New Mexico for the United States
1847	Taos Rebellion; Taos Hispanos and Indians murder Territorial Governor Charles Bent	
		American Cemetery established on the site of Kit Carson Park (renamed Kit Carson Cemetery in 1869)
1848	US-Mexican War ends, New Mexico ceded to the US	
1850	New Mexico declared a US Territory	
1852	Taos County established	
1861-65	US Civil War	
1908	Carson National Forest established	
1912	New Mexico becomes a state	
1915	Taos Society of Artists founded	
1929-42	The Great Depression	
1934	Town of Taos incorporates as a municipality	
1939-45	World War II	
1955	Taos Ski Valley resort founded	
1975	Fred Baca Park transitions from wastewater treatment plant to Park	
1988	Town acquires Kit Carson Park land from the State of New Mexico	
1996	Taos Ski Valley incorporates as a municipality	
1999	Youth and Family Center opens	
2011	Taos Eco Park - Phase I opens	

expanded from 2020 Vision document timeline

Image 2-1: Kit Carson Memorial Cemetery



Image 2-2: Kit Carson Park and Cemetery, circa 1961



# Demographics

The Town of Taos is roughly 5.4 sq. mi. and is situated directly south of the historic Taos Pueblo, west of the Carson National Forest, and north of the village of Ranchos de Taos. Unless otherwise noted, demographic data reflects 2010 Census statistics within Town of Taos limits.

## Population

In 2016, the population of the Town of Taos was estimated at 5,763 (*US Census Population and Housing Estimates*). Compared to the 5,716 population recorded within the Town's limits in the 2010 Census, this reflects a very modest increase in growth (0.8% total growth / 0.14% annual growth).

### Historic Growth

The recent stagnation in growth is in stark contrast to historic population trends within the Town limits. Over the last 60 years, population growth in Taos has averaged a 21% increase each decade (from 1,815 in 1950 to 5,716 in 2010). With the exception of the central eastern portion of the Town that has seen a 23% population increase over the last decade, the bulk of significant growth has occurred in the county to the west, outside town limits. This trend reflects the availability of land for housing.

### Projected Growth

Due to recent adjustments in growth compared to historic trends, it is difficult to project future growth in Taos. At the very least, assuming a 0.14% annual growth rate, the population in 2040 could be 5,960, or an additional 197 people. If typical average annual growth is assumed at 3.58% (average annual town growth 1950-2010), the population in 2040 could be as much as 10,126, or an additional 4,363 people.

## Gender

The town is comprised of 53.8% female and 46.2% male inhabitants, indicating a slight female majority population than other areas. State and national statistics are more gender balanced with 50.6% female and 49.4% male (New Mexico), and 50.8% female and 49.2% male (US).

## Ethnicity

The majority of Town residents are of Hispanic descent (52%), with 40% claiming White/Anglo origin and nearly 5% American Indian heritage. By comparison, nationally this proportion is Hispanic (17%), White (62%) and Native American (1%). The remaining town population (3%) identify as another race including African American, Asian, and Pacific Islander.

Taos' racial makeup is diverse and is experiencing changes; most of the growth is occurring in Hispanic and White populations. This is expected to continue in the future.

## Age

Compared to state and national statistics, the Town of Taos is comprised of a relatively older population with a median age of 44 years. Nationally in 2010, the median age was 38.0 and the State of New Mexico's median age was 36.7.

In the last Census, 27% of the Town's population was over 60 years old, likely attributed to the Town's attractiveness as a place for retirees.

Children under 18 made up 21% of the population in the Town of Taos. The smallest group was young adult (18-24), which account for only 8% of the population.

## Households

The total number of households in the Town of Taos was 2,672 in 2010. Although households with children or youth under the age of 18 account for 705 or 26.4% of the total town population, almost 45% of households in the town are occupied by families. The other 55% of households are either those living alone (49%) or with roommates or unmarried partners (6%).

*American Community Survey, 2015 data*

Despite an apparent lack of affordable housing in the Town, there is a vacancy rate of almost 20% in the current housing stock.

## Income and Poverty

Historically, the median income of Taos households has been well below state and national averages. This has contributed to chronic poverty among almost a quarter of residents who live below the national poverty line. Compounding this, Taos has one of the highest tax rates (NMGRT 8.5%) in the state. Taos County's tax rate is lower (NMGRT 7.3125%).

### Median Household Income:

Taos	\$30,500
New Mexico	\$45,674
United States	\$55,322

*United States Census 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5 year Estimates*

The unemployment rate in Taos is 7.20%, compared to 5.5% statewide and 4.10% nationally. With a large portion of income in Taos coming from inactive sources (interest, rents, dividends - 21% and government assistance -31%), there is a lack of business activity and employment opportunities for working age residents, which aligns with demographic trends.

*Us Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, February 2018  
Leap Partners, 2013 Taos Economic Development Action Plan*

Figure 2-1: Town of Taos - Census Information (2010) and Historic Growth Patterns

## LEGEND

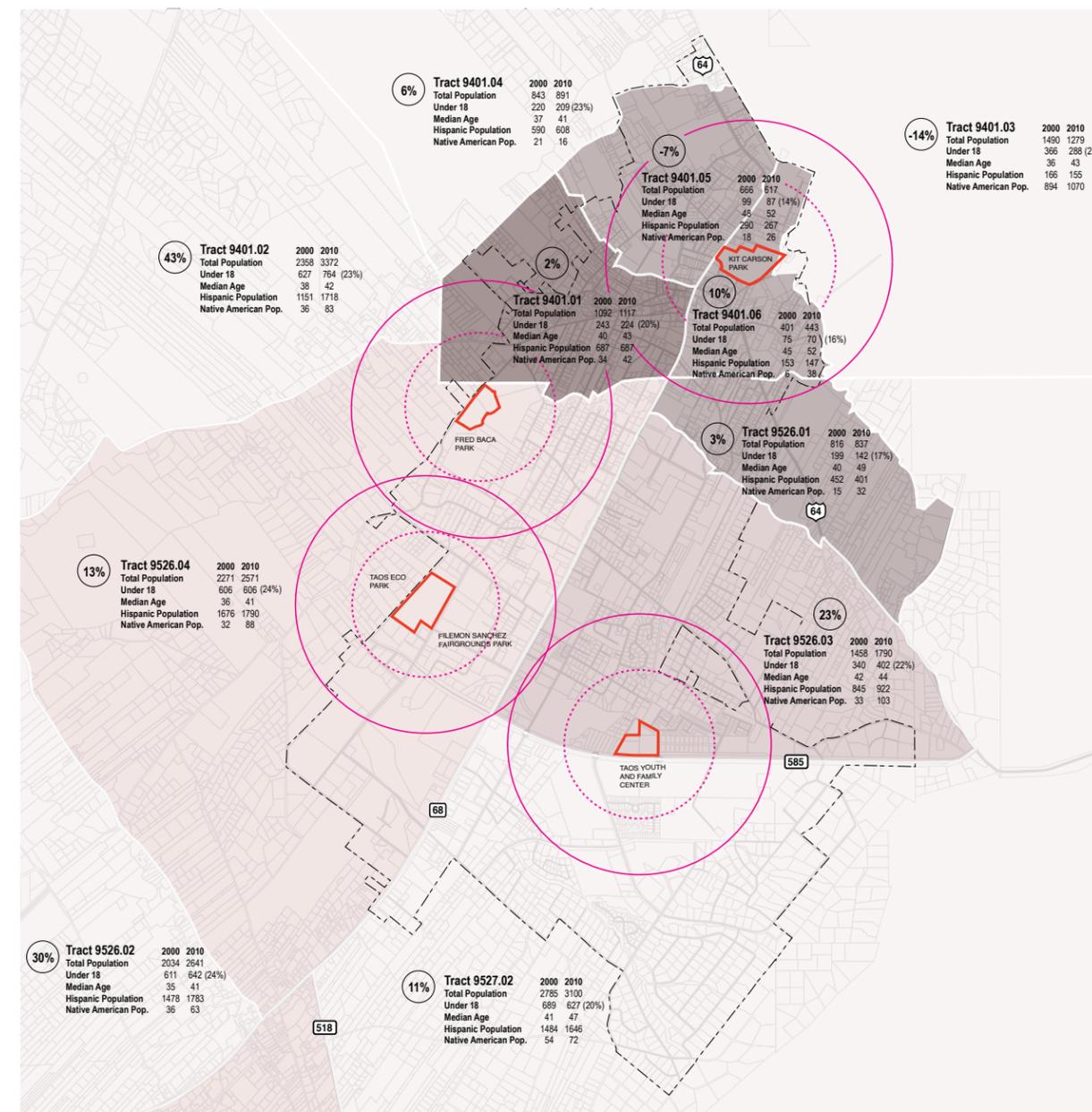
- Master Plan Project Boundary
- - - Town of Taos Boundary
- Road, Major
- Road, Minor
- Community Park Walk Area (10 min. walk)
- Neighborhood Park Walk Area (5 min. walk)
- 2010 People per Acre 0-0.50
- 2010 People per Acre 0.51-1.00
- 2010 People per Acre 1.01-1.50
- 2010 People per Acre 1.51-2.00
- 2010 People per Acre 2.01-2.5

Population Growth Rate, Percentage Increase from 2000 to 2010

## Population Distribution

The greatest density of population (represented by darker color tones) is concentrated in the north part of town, the traditional town center, with the least dense area located in the southeast or newer developments. Geographically, households with children are slightly more prevalent in the central and southern areas of town than in the more dense, northern part of town. Hispanic populations are more likely to live in neighborhoods not directly adjacent to the Taos Pueblo along the northern town boundary.

Source Data - see appendix



# Physical Context

Nestled in the shadow of the Taos Mountain to the north and the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains to the east, the Town of Taos is marked by strikingly different landscapes. The geology of the Taos area is defined by the towering Taos Range of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, which extend north/south to the east of the Sangre de Cristo fault zone at the base of the foothills; the wide open Taos Plateau, part of the San Luis Basin of the Rio Grande Rift, which straddles the Rio Grande; and the Picuris Mountains to the south.

At an elevation of 6,967 feet above sea level, Taos has a semi-arid climate with extreme variations of temperature and low rainfall (12.3 inches / year average). Waterways in the vicinity of Town include the Rio Pueblo de Taos and the Rio Fernando de Taos. The Rio Pueblo, a tributary of the Rio Grande and a contributor to the agriculturally productive plateau, extends from the mountains near the Taos Pueblo north of town southwest to the Rio Grande. The Rio Fernando, a smaller stream, traverses the central section of town west to connect with the Rio Pueblo.

The prominence of the mountains is evident both visually and culturally, serving as a recreational destination for hiking, skiing, and other outdoor activities. Just north of Taos, Wheeler Peak, the highest point in New Mexico, extends to 13,161 feet. About 10 miles to the west of Taos, the Rio Grande Gorge cuts an 800 foot canyon into the Taos Plateau. This designated Wild and Scenic River provides recreational opportunities ranging from fly-fishing, rafting and kayaking (Class II to Class V rapids).

## LANDSCAPE TYPOLOGIES

### Sangre de Cristo Foothills

Located on the eastern periphery of town, the steeper sloped foothills of the Sangre de Cristo mountains are characterized by dense, tall pinon / juniper tree cover.

### Taos Plateau

The dominant landscape type in the Taos area, the arid Taos Plateau landscape is evident by large swaths of sagebrush, grasses, and occasional pinon / juniper trees. Dry arroyo beds that begin at the base of the foothills traverse the plateau and cut deeper and wider grooves in the terrain as they drain west into the Rio Fernando, Rio Pueblo, and ultimately the Rio Grande. These arroyos serve as wildlife corridors connecting the foothills to the rivers to the west.

### Agricultural Lands / Acequias

Fed by a system of surface ditches (acequias), the agricultural lands comprise the northern half of the town area. While many of these acequias are no longer evident or maintained, areas of this formerly productive landscape are clearly visible by the level terrain and mature perimeter plantings of deciduous trees (often cottonwood, willow, siberian elm).

### Riparian

The riparian corridors along the Rio Pueblo and the Rio Fernando extend from the northern and eastern foothills across the northern portion of the town to the west. These corridors have flowing water for most of the year and help sustain local wildlife and a host of riparian plant communities.

Image 2-3: Sangre de Cristo Foothills Landscape



Image 2-4: Taos Plateau / Pinon + Juniper Landscape



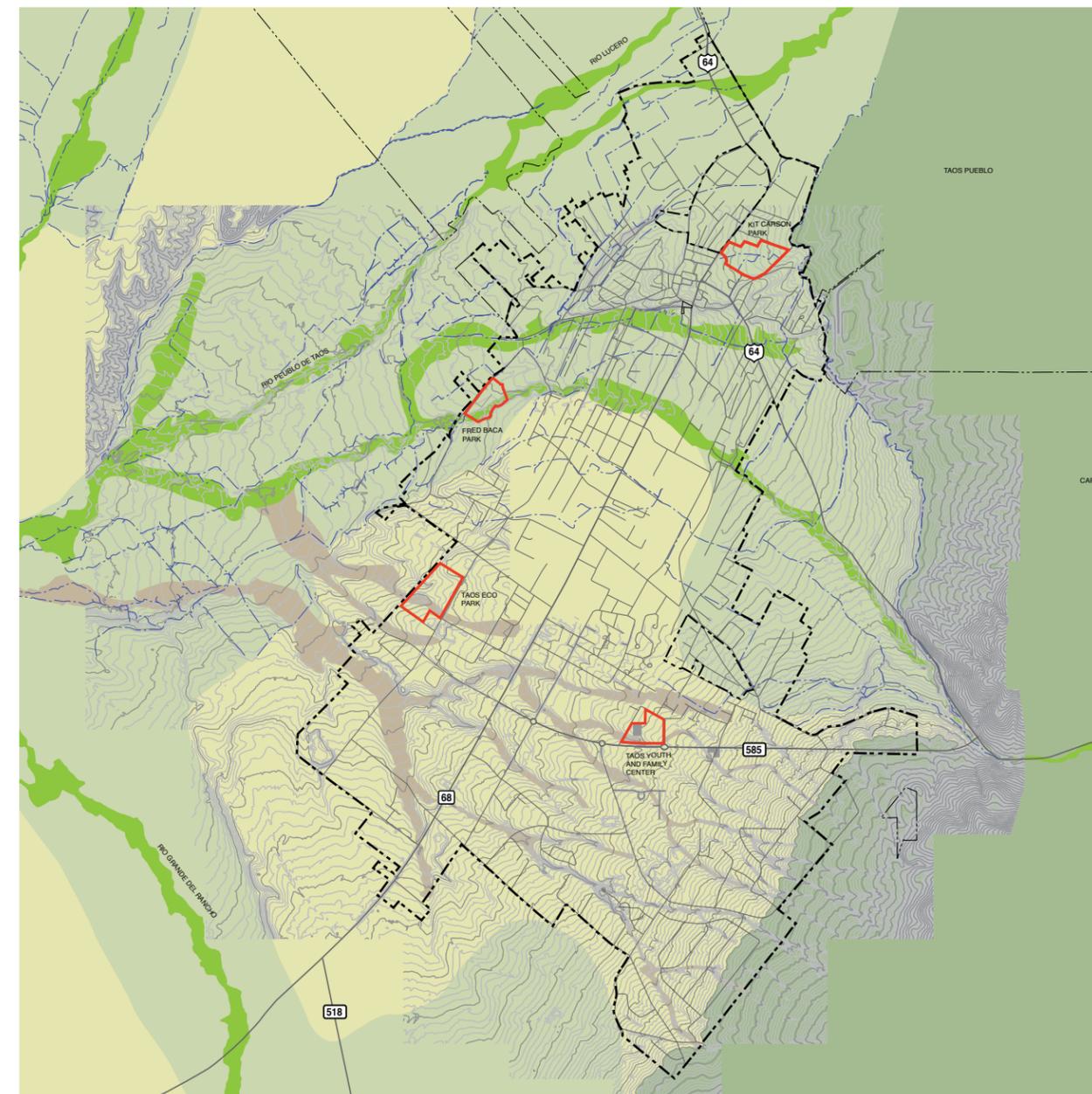
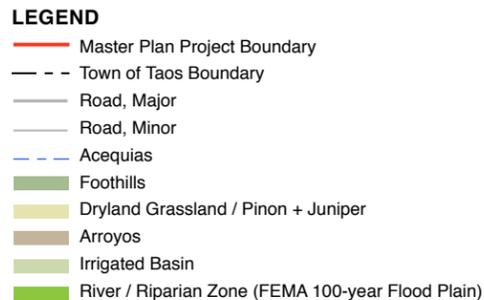
Image 2-5: Agricultural Lands / Acequia Landscape



Image 2-6: Riparian Landscape



Figure 2-2: Landscape Characteristics Map



Source Data - see appendix



### CULTURAL CONTEXT

Identified over thousands of years ago as a place of settlement, the climate and resources of the Taos area have contributed to its rich cultural history. With the adoption of farming as a means of subsistence around 3000 BC, shelters became more elaborate and social structures more extensive.

Taos Pueblo as it is known today is believed to have been built over a thousand years ago. Considered the longest continuously inhabited community, the Taos Pueblo consists of two main adobe structures ( the north and south houses) with a central court bisected by the Rio Pueblo. Today, about 150 people live within the Pueblo full time with over 1,900 Taos Indians living on Taos Pueblo lands. Taos' important cultural heritage has been recognized by its designation as a National Historic Landmark (1965), the return of Blue Lake to the Pueblo (1970), and its admittance as a UNESCO World Heritage Site (1992) as one of the most significant cultural landmarks in the world.

The advent of Spanish exploration in the region began in 1540 when a detachment of soldiers from Coronado's artillery along with a Catholic Chaplain were welcomed by pueblo representatives. This begins a long and troubled relationship between Taos Pueblo Indians and Spanish settlers. In addition to the with Catholic religion, the Spanish bring a tradition of farming and irrigation through a system of ditches, or acequias.

Anglo settlers arrived in the early 1800's for trade and settlement. More recently, Taos became a haven for artists, beginning in 1898 when Ernest Blumenschein and Bert Phillips arrive. They form the Taos Society of Artists in 1915 and help attract a number of notable artists.

<http://taospueblo.com/about/>, <http://taoscountyhistoricalsociety.org/taoshistory.html>

#### Taos Pueblo Lands

The Taos Pueblo, a sovereign nation with over a population of 1,135 (2010 Census), is comprised of land totaling almost 111,380 acres. A spiritually significant portion of this land (48,711.8 acres) is the watershed of the Rio Pueblo, which originates at Blue Lake in the Carson National Forest (Sangre de Cristo Mountains) east of the Pueblo. Other Pueblo lands include an area of the Taos Plateau along the east bank of the Rio Grande and north of the Rio Pueblo and a smaller triangular section of land northwest of town near Arroyo Seco.

<https://www.taospueblo.org/images/cms/msd/new/Lands-Owned-by-Taos-Pueblo-November-2016.pdf>

#### Agricultural Lands / Acequias

Instituted during Spanish settlement, a fine grained network of acequias transported water from the Rio Lucero, Rio Pueblo, and Rio Fernando to agricultural lands in the northern part of town and along the rivers. While many of these acequias have been filled or build upon, some sections remain. The Taos Valley Acequia Association actively participates to "ensure the longterm stability of the traditional agricultural communities of the Taos Valley by protecting water rights and strengthening the acequia system." ([taosacequias.org](http://taosacequias.org))

Image 2-7: Taos Pueblo Cultural Landscape



Image 2-8: Agriculture Cultural Landscape



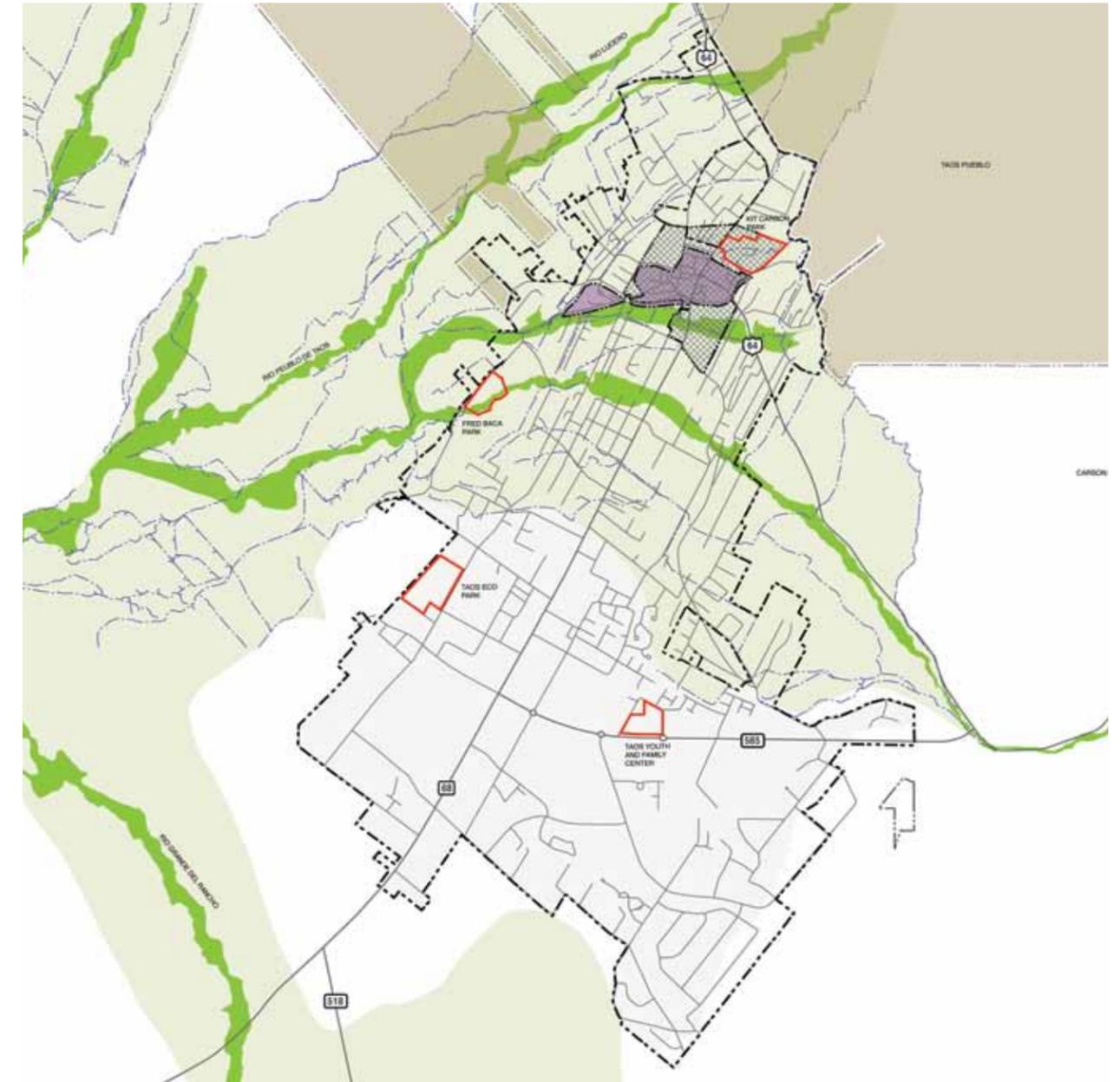
Image 2-9: Acequia Cultural Landscape



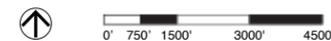
Figure 2-3: Cultural Landscape Characteristics Map

#### LEGEND

- Master Plan Project Boundary
- - - Town of Taos Boundary
- Road, Major
- Road, Minor
- - - Acequias
- Historic District
- Arts and Culture District
- Taos Pueblo
- Historic Agriculture Extents
- River / Riparian Zone (FEMA 100 yr Flood Plain)



Source Data - see appendix



## LAND USE AND ZONING

The growth of Taos has occurred gradually over the last 60 years both in the Town, adjacent traditional communities, and entire valley. Limited by Pueblo lands to the north, the Town's growth has emanated from the traditional historic center toward the south along the Paseo and on previous agricultural lands.

More recently, new subdivisions in the southeast part of town have occupied the more arid plateau where there is more undeveloped land. Opportunities for infill in more established neighborhoods still exist. Based on current zoning, it is anticipated that most new higher density neighborhoods will be developed north and south of the Youth and Family Center and lower density growth in the south and west part of town.

The Town limits are not readily discernible, indicating that growth has happened opportunistically, not as dictated by zoning or tax incentives. Beyond the Town limits, planning is entirely in the jurisdiction of Taos County. A previously created Extra Territorial Zone that extended one mile beyond the town boundary was rescinded in 2006.

Of primary importance to Taos is the preservation of open space and agricultural lands, a central component of Taos' economy, quality of life, spiritual, and cultural core. Higher densities are preferred in areas with existing infrastructure in order to maintain the dispersed open spaces and greenbelt around the Town.

### Historic Preservation Overlay Zone

The Taos Land Use Development Code designates a Historic Preservation Overlay Zone to protect, enhance, and perpetuate areas of historical, cultural, architectural, artistic, or geographical significance located within the Town of Taos. Kit Carson Park lies within this overlay zone.

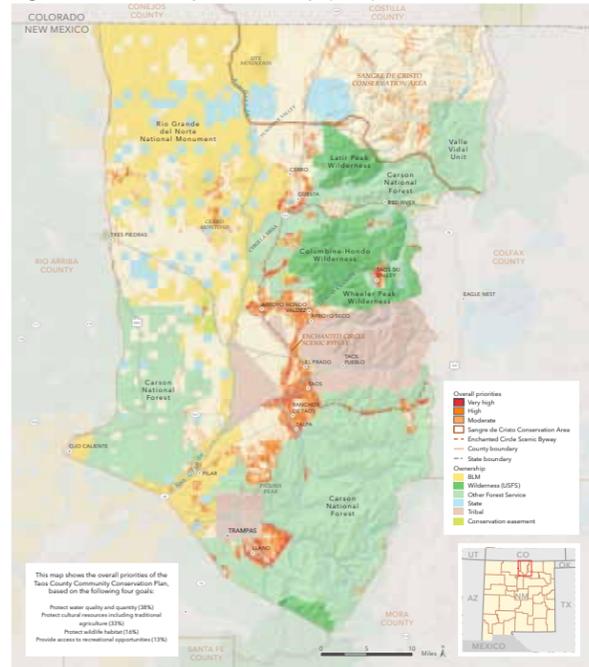
### Vision 2020 Open Space / Natural Resource Protection (selected priorities)

- Require that new developments plan for preservation and enhancement of natural resources through the use of conservation easements, environmental corridors, greenbelts, landscape easements, or open space purchases.
- Require all subdivisions and mobile home parks to include an increased percentage of usable open space, such as small private areas for each family, common play areas, pocket parks, bike and walking trails.
- Require developers to link up to the Town of Taos open space network.

### Trails

As outlined in the Taos Bicycle Master Plan, the Enchanted Circle Trails Plan and the Greenprinting process, a network of trails and bikeways is needed to connect Parks, Open Space areas and Recreation Centers to neighborhoods and to one another.

Figure 2-4: Overall priorities map (TPL)



**Overall priorities**  
TAOS COUNTY COMMUNITY CONSERVATION PLAN

### Natural Resource Protection

Through the Taos County Community Conservation Plan process, the Taos community has identified community priorities and identified opportunities for voluntary conservation of private land. The Taos Land Trust has been instrumental in both initiating planning efforts to identify natural and culturally significant open space resources and acquiring properties for preservation.

## LAND OWNERSHIP

A survey of ownership of public lands and their distribution serves as a basis to evaluate future park and open space development to serve existing and future residents.

### Town of Taos

Available town-owned land (orange) beyond walk areas to existing parks exists in small parcels. Some of these are occupied with public facilities or are remnant road right-of-way segments. With the exception of the 15-acre 'Gravel Pit' parcel on the town's southwest corner, no significant open space has been reserved for future park use.

### Taos County

Taos County-owned land (purple) is also largely occupied with existing public facilities and improvements.

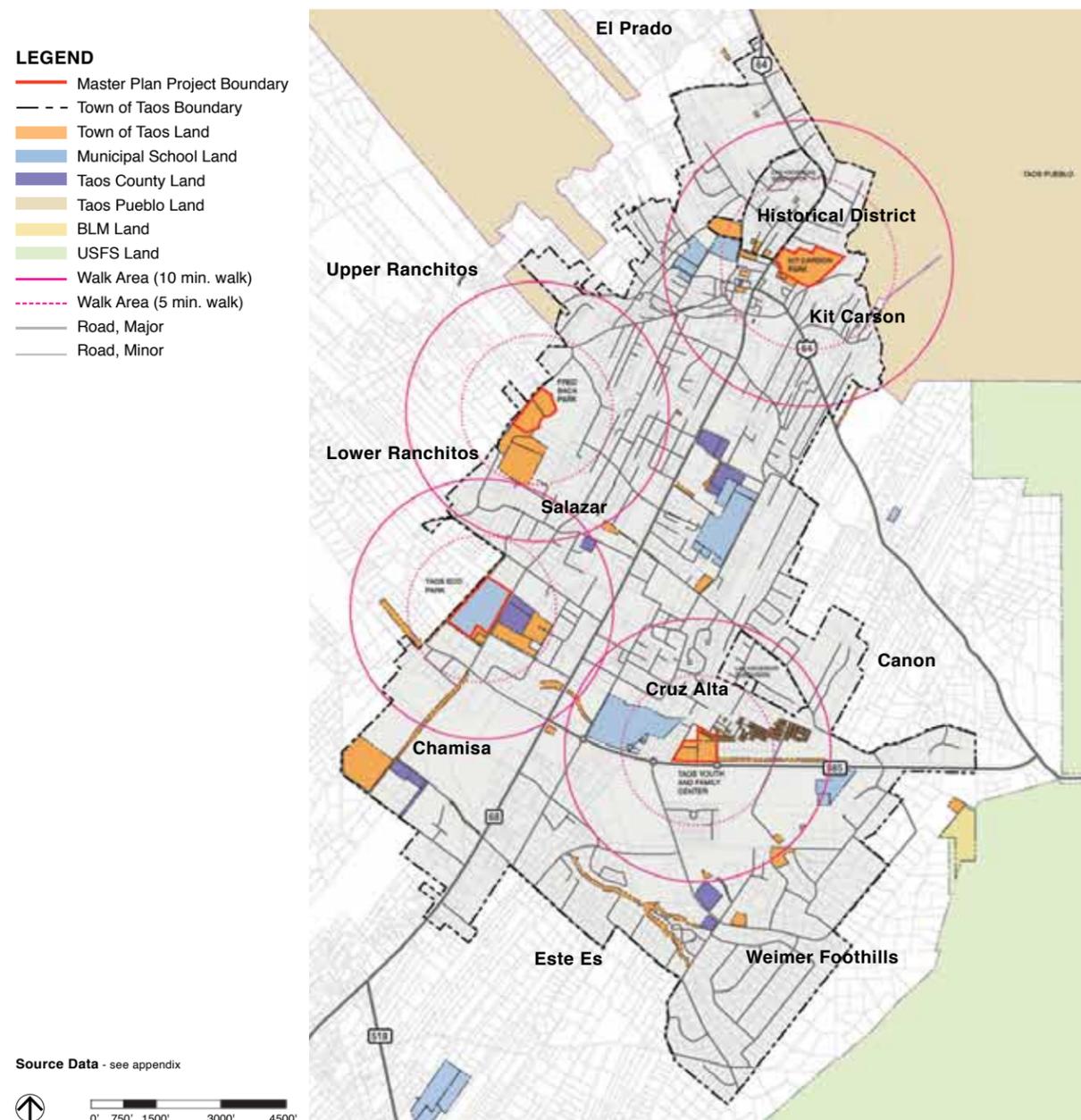
### Federal

BLM and US Forest Service lands do not extend into town limits. Although these lands serve as valuable natural open space for hiking and biking for area residents, trail connections from town need to be more clearly established.

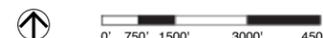
### Pueblo Lands

Sovereign lands to the northeast and northwest of town are not open to public use.

Figure 2-5: Town of Taos - Open Space / Parks Land Ownership



Source Data - see appendix



# CHAPTER 3

## Existing Facilities + Programs



# Facility Overview

The Town of Taos maintains one recreation facility, the Taos Youth and Family Center, and three parks. The Kit Carson Park is located east of the historic downtown, Fred Baca Park is located on the west town boundary along the Rio Fernando, and the Taos Eco Park is located 1/2 mile south of the Fred Baca Park also on the town's western boundary. The facilities are fairly evenly distributed about town within a 3/4-mile to 2-mile distance from each other. Each park has a distinct character that can be attributed to its site-specific ecology combined with the park and recreation amenities offered in each location (see Chapter 3: Existing Facilities for an in-depth overview of each park).

The parks are well used by organized sports leagues, residents, and visitor. Additional public spaces (e.g. Taos Plaza), streetscapes, municipal building grounds, and open space areas are also managed and maintained by the Town.

Other recreation facilities in the town are maintained by Taos Municipal Schools, Taos County, private or charter schools, and local non-profits (see Figure 3-1 for park distribution overview map).

## PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES

Parks and recreation facilities in Taos are owned and maintained not only by the Town (summarized in this document), but by an array of public, private, and non-profit entities. As a whole, these parks, recreation facilities, and open space areas provide residents with a greater diversity of active and passive open space areas.

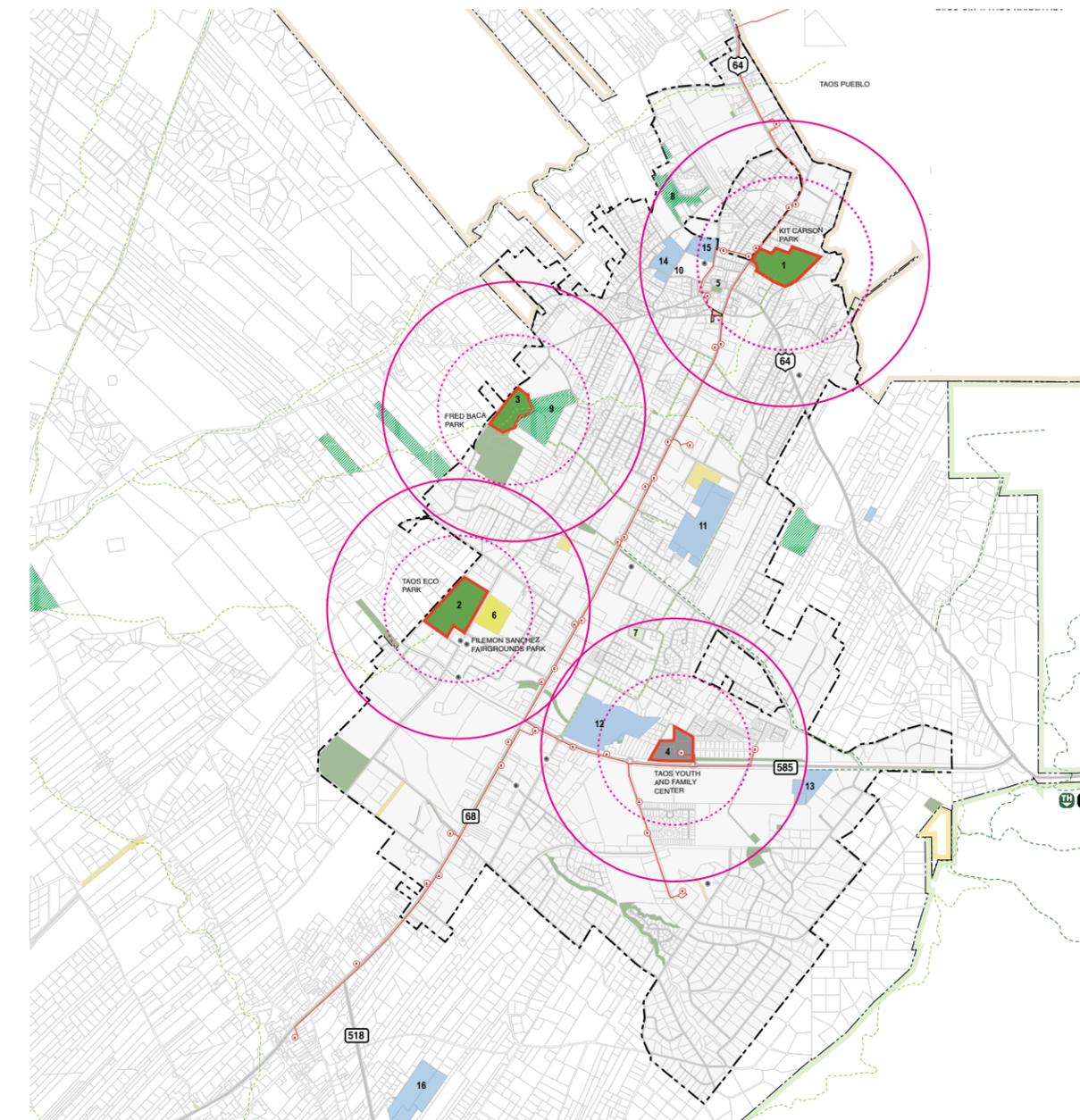
Table 3-1: Park Facilities Inventory

Town Parks / Recreational Facilities					
#	Name	Classification	Amenities	Sport Fields / Areas	Ownership
1	Kit Carson Park	Town Park	play equipment, picnic tables, benches, grills, group shelters, paths, cemetery, stage, maintenance bldg., concessions bldg., restrooms (3), storage units (3)	multi-use lawn, baseball field (2 Little League, 1 Tee ball), volleyball courts (3), basketball courts (2), tennis / dog off leash area	Town of Taos
2	Taos Eco Park	Special Use	restroom / storage bldg.	synthetic turf soccer field	Municipal Schools / Town of Taos
3	Fred Baca Park	Community Park	play equipment, picnic tables, benches, group shelters, paths, restroom bldg., maintenance bldg., exercise stations, wetland / viewing platform, residential unit	multi-use lawn, tennis courts (2), basketball courts (2)	Town of Taos
4	Youth and Family Center	Special Use	play equipment, skate park, ice rink, swimming pool, multi-purpose rooms	n/a	Town of Taos
5	Taos Plaza	Special Use	benches, performance area, memorial	n/a	Town of Taos
Other Facilities					
6	Filemon Sanchez Park	Community Park	play equipment, shade structures, picnic tables, residential unit, concessions bldg.	basketball courts (2), softball fields (3)	Taos County
7	Gusdorf Park	Neighborhood Park	play equipment, picnic tables, shade structures	basketball court	Housing Authority
8	Sunset Park	Neighborhood Park	trailhead, trails	n/a	Taos Land Trust easement
9	Rio Fernando Park	n/a	TBD	n/a	Taos Land Trust easement
10	Guadalupe Gymnasium	Special Use	gymnasium	n/a	Our Lady Guadalupe Church
11	Taos High School	School Facility	concessions, bleacher seating	synthetic turf football field, track, grass hardball field, synthetic turf softball field	Taos Municipal Schools
12	Taos Middle School	School Facility	n/a	multi-use grass field, track, basketball courts (2)	Taos Municipal Schools
13	Taos Charter School	School Facility	play equipment, amphitheater	basketball court	Taos Municipal Schools
14	Enos Garcia Elementary	School Facility	play equipment	basketball courts (3)	Taos Municipal Schools
15	Central Office	School Facility	garden	multi-use grass field	Taos Municipal Schools
16	Ranchos Elementary	School Facility	play equipment	multi-use grass field, youth baseball field, basketball courts (2)	Taos Municipal Schools

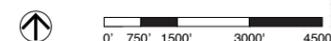
Figure 3-1: Town of Taos - Parks, Open Space, and Trails Map

**LEGEND**

- Master Plan Project Boundary
- Town of Taos Boundary
- Taos Pueblo Land
- BLM Land
- USFS Land
- Community Park Walk Area (10 min. walk)
- Neighborhood Park Walk Area (5 min. walk)
- Road, Major
- Road, Minor
- Trail, Existing
- Trail, Proposed
- Public Transportation, Bus Route (340 Chile Line)
- Public Transportation, Bus Stop (340 Chile Line)
- Parks / Recreation Facility, Town of Taos
- Open Space, Town of Taos
- Recreation Center, Town of Taos
- Parks, Taos County
- Open Space, Taos County
- Parks, Private
- Taos Municipal Schools
- Taos Land Trust Easements
- Trailhead
- Parking (20+ vehicles)



Source Data - see appendix



RECREATION FACILITY DISTRIBUTION

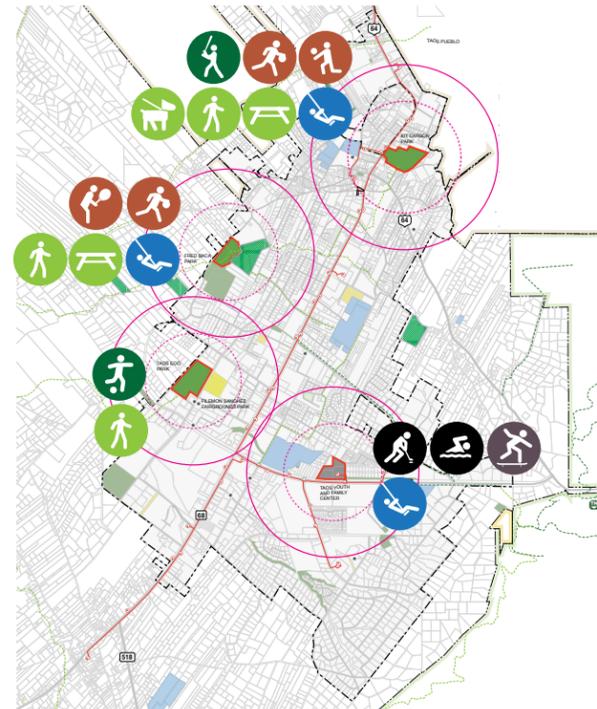
Currently, municipal parks and recreation facilities are of two sorts: diverse park facilities and sport-focused facilities. Kit Carson Park and Fred Baca Park have a wide range of active and passive program elements while the Eco Park and the Youth and Family Center have facilities more focused on specific sports.

The detailed evaluation of existing municipal park and recreation facilities (see Appendix A: Existing Conditions Assessment), combined with input from leagues and area residents suggests future relocations, consolidations, and expansion of facilities to better serve existing and future community needs. As Taos expands south, there is a greater need for more diversified park facilities in the center / south side of town and for addressing community recreational needs.

Recommendations for addressing public needs include:

- consolidate and expand field sports in a dedicated sports complex at the Eco Park (in coordination with Filemon Sanchez Park improvements);
- transition single-purpose field sports to multi-purpose fields that can address community needs for more playable area;
- establish a critical number of fields, courts, or facility space to host tournaments in a greater variety of sports;
- distribute specialized sports in locations that address community need and ease of access;
- expand the Youth and Family Center to include desired sports not available regionally and capitalize on opportunities to offer sports programs organized from a staffed facility; and
- enrich existing diverse parks by enhancing their natural ecology and strengthening connections to perimeter neighbors / neighborhoods.

Figure 3-2: Park Program Distribution - Existing



LEGEND

- Field Sports
- Court Sports
- Passive Park Uses
- Playground
- Indoor Sport Facilities
- Specialized Sports

Existing Distribution

Park facilities include well-established parks with a diversity of recreational activities (Kit Carson Park, Fred Baca Park) and sports-focused recreation facilities constructed over the last 20 years (Youth and Family Center, Eco Park).

Figure 3-3: Park Program Distribution - Proposed



Proposed Distribution

Expanding the sports-focused facilities to include a greater diversity of recreational activities will result in a more balanced access to park facilities throughout the town. Additional sport facilities at these locations and other town-owned lands can address public desires for more specialized recreation (e.g. climbing, indoor gym, disc golf, skate park, pump track).

SERVICE AREA

The area serviced by Town of Taos parks and recreation centers goes well beyond town boundaries. This is evident based on sports league membership information and visitation data for the Youth and Family Center. The projected service extends into the southern area of Taos County and beyond its borders to include the towns of Questa, Tres Piedras, Ojo Caliente, Penasco, and Angel Fire. The approximate population for this extended area is more than 20,000 residents, compared to the Town's population of 5,763 (2016 population).

The Town's location along a major highway combined with its recreational facility offerings not available in area smaller towns make it a logical destination for sports and recreation.

Visitation data collected over the last four years (2014-17) for the Youth and Family Center documents an average of 201,290 visits per year. While visitation data has not been collected for other municipal parks, the Town has committed to collecting this information on a seasonal basis to better understand the breadth of the service area and park visitor trends.

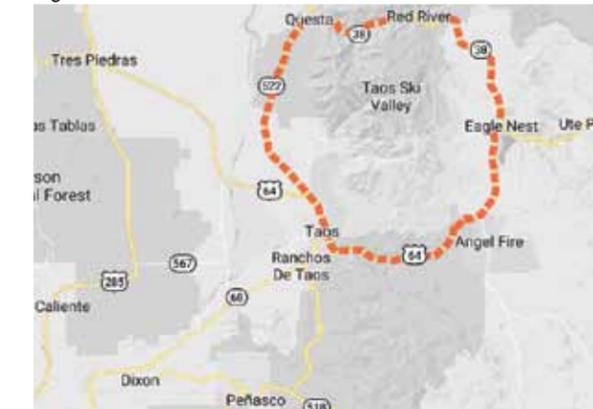
Figure 3-4: Taos Parks + Recreation Service Area



The Town of Taos is the largest town in Taos County and is surrounded by the traditional communities of Ranchos de Taos, Canon, Ranchitos, and El Prado. Taos is part of the scenic 'Enchanted Circle', a series of communities along US 64, NM 38 and NM 522 which include Angel Fire, Eagle Nest, Red River, and Questa.

Taos is 135 miles north of Albuquerque and 65 miles north of Santa Fe, the state capitol.

Figure 3-5: Taos Context with Enchanted Circle



Who Uses Parks?

According to a national study, "Americans typically visit their local parks and recreation facilities an average of 29 times per year." Most of those who visit parks are Millennials (approx. 18-35), those of Hispanic origin, and parents of children. Baby Boomers (approx. 55-75) visit parks less frequently.

The main reasons people use parks and recreation facilities is to: 1) be with family and friends, 2) for exercise / physical activity, and 3) be closer to nature.

NRPA Survey 2016, Americans' Engagement With Parks

# Parks and Recreation Facilities

Taos parks are distinctive facilities that serve the recreational needs of residents and visitors. The character of each facility is defined by the unique ecology, setting, and combination of recreational offerings that contribute to a sense of place. The four municipal Taos parks and recreation facilities are located on mid- to large-sized parcels ranging in size from 11.4-acres to 23.2-acres.

## PARK CLASSIFICATION

For planning purposes, parks are classified according to size and type of services. This allows for communities to provide the appropriate level of service for area residents.

### Town Park

A Town Park is a larger park central to the identity of the community and provides a range of recreational and cultural opportunities. It generally serves the whole town and communities outside town limits.  
- *Kit Carson Park*

### Community Park

A Community Park is a medium to large park that provides active and passive recreation opportunities to several neighborhoods and the community at large.  
- *Fred Baca Park*

### Neighborhood Park

A Neighborhood Park is a small, centrally located park or open space within biking or walking distance of area residences. It serves a neighborhood and contributes to neighborhood identity.

### Pocket Park

A Pocket Park is a small park or open space within a neighborhood that serves a limited population or specific age group (e.g. tots, seniors).

### Special Use Park / Facility

A Special Use Park / Facility provides specialized uses in a central location to serve residents from both local areas and the broader region.  
- *Taos Eco Park*  
- *Taos Youth and Family Center*

Table 3-2: Level of Service (LOS), Town of Taos Recreation Master Plan (2018)

Park Classification	Description	Service Radius	Typical Size	Characteristics
<b>Town Park</b>	Accommodates large groups activities, events, and sports; Contributes to identity of the town	More than 2 miles - park serves the Town and regional population	20+ acres	Includes an array of recreation activities including playgrounds, play fields, dog parks, etc. Provides space for large and small events.
<b>Community Park</b>	Provides diverse recreation for multiple neighborhoods and preserves open space	2 miles - radius encompasses multiple neighborhoods	11-25 acres	Includes a combination of active and passive recreation activities including play fields, courts, group shelters, and trails.
<b>Neighborhood Park</b>	Provides diverse recreation opportunities based on neighborhood needs. Contributes to neighborhood identity	1/2 mile - radius encompasses one neighborhood but depends on residential density of the neighborhood	less than 10 acres	Includes passive recreation activities such as picnics, paths, and playgrounds. Can include limited active sports activities.
<b>Pocket Park</b>	Place of respite or minimal recreation	1/4 mile - park serves the immediate neighborhood	less than 0.5 acre	Activities are limited to passive recreation. Includes playgrounds, and picnic areas.
<b>Special Use Park / Facility</b>	Programmed for specialized activities and serves a broad population	More than 2 miles - park serves the regional population and special populations.	Varies	Primary recreation activities focus on special use. Example activities: shooting range, zoo, competition fields.

## Kit Carson Park

*size:* 20.2 acres  
*type:* Town Park  
*amenities:* multi-purpose lawn areas, little league fields (2) with amenities, t-ball field (1), group picnic shelter, bandstand, event stage, restrooms, walking paths, playground, dog off-leash area, basketball courts (2), volleyball courts (3), park maintenance facility / storage

The Kit Carson Park is home to the Historic Kit Carson Memorial Cemetery (established in 1876) and offers a range of passive and active uses. It is centrally located within the historic downtown along Paseo del Pueblo Norte, the primary roadway through Taos.

A frequent site for community events, concerts, fairs, and gatherings, it is well-visited by tourists and locals alike and a central part of the town identity. The old, towering cottonwood trees that line the historic routes of the acequias that flowed through it combined with the expansive open lawn areas contribute to its iconic image as an open space for public use.

see Chapter 5, p. 52 for existing conditions plan

Image 3-1: Kit Carson Park - side entry off of Civic Drive



## Fred Baca Park

*size:* 11.7 acres  
*type:* Community Park  
*amenities:* tennis court / basketball court, playground, group picnic shelter, distributed picnic tables, multi-purpose lawn, walking path, restrooms, water fountain, wetland nature trail

The Fred Baca Park is comprised of 7.3-acre traditional park bordered on the east side by a natural wetland formed by the Rio Fernando. This distinctive riparian ecology of cottonwoods and willows combined with its setting within a rural agricultural neighborhood serves as a foreground to stunning vistas of the surrounding mountains.

One of the few perennial streams, the Rio Fernando and its riparian corridor attracts many forms of wildlife. The nature trail provides seasonal access to the wetland. Interpretive signs help explain the ecology and wildlife of the area. The combination of traditional park and riparian corridor attracts many families and members of the community.

see Chapter 5, p. 61 for existing conditions plan

Image 3-2: Fred Baca Park - looking north across wetland



## Taos Eco Park

*size:* 23.2 acres  
*type:* Special Use - Recreation Facility  
*amenities:* competition synthetic turf soccer field (FIFA 2 Star rated), a restroom/storage building, a perimeter walking path, parking, and a solar array

The Taos Eco Park is a joint venture between the Town of Taos and Taos Municipal Schools, who retains ownership of the land. Opened in 2011, it serves as a soccer facility for visiting teams and the community alike. It represents the first phase of a planned 3-field soccer complex with associated amenities.

Sited within the open arid landscape of the Taos Plateau, the Taos Eco Park offers sweeping views in all directions. Its prominent location on Salazar Road across from the Filemon Sanchez Park softball complex has the potential to transform this area of town into a multi-sport recreational complex.

see Chapter 5, p. 65 for existing conditions plan

Image 3-3: Taos Eco Park - open space with field to right



**Taos Youth and Family Center**

*size: 11.4 acres, 57,000 sf*  
*type: Special Use - Recreation Facility*  
*amenities: (building) open air Olympic-size ice arena, swimming pool, commons area, computer lab, concessions area, offices, and restrooms / locker rooms (site) parking - 122 cars, skate park, playground*

The Taos Youth and Family Center, with direct access off of NM 64 / Paseo del Canon East, serves as a recreation complex for the northern New Mexico region. The center is owned and operated by the Town of Taos. It serves as a recreation facility for local schools and provides a range of programs for area youth, including summer programs and specialized sports (swimming, hockey, ice skating, etc.). Over 200,000 area residents and visitors use the facility on an annual basis.

During warmer months, the open air ice arena is utilized as a multipurpose arena for indoor court sports. Due to its size, location, and specialized facilities, it serves as a venue for regional tournaments and events in hockey and swimming.

Image 3-4: Youth + Family Center - main entry



**OTHER AREA RECREATION FACILITIES**

Some area recreation facilities within or near the town are well used by area residents to complement municipal facilities.

**Ranchos Elementary Fields**

The fields at Ranchos Elementary in Ranchos de Taos are utilized by local youth leagues for practice and games. Two large multipurpose grass fields - 225' x 415' and 280' x 565' - allow striping for youth field sports in many sizes and configurations. The school also has a little league field with grass outfield.

**Guadalupe Gymnasium**

The Guadalupe Gymnasium, part of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in downtown Taos, is an indoor gymnasium well used by area sports enthusiasts. During winter months the town leases the gym for community use. Groups including adult basketball, pickleball, indoor soccer, among others use the facility.

**Taos Municipal School Facilities**

Taos Municipal School facilities include indoor gymnasiums and outdoor facilities - playgrounds and recreational fields - at their school sites. While some of the facilities are utilized occasionally by area leagues, no formal MOU agreements are in place between the district and the town for use of facilities.

**Sunset Park**

Sunset Park is a 10-acre undeveloped open space with a trailhead and soft surface walking trails northeast of downtown. Formerly agricultural land, a conservation easement held by Taos Land Trust preserves it as open space in perpetuity. The Sunset Park nonprofit group manages the property and has begun efforts to restore the land.

**Filemon Sanchez Park**

The Filemon Sanchez Park, located across from the Taos Eco Park on Sanchez Road, is a major destination for adult softball in summer months. Taos County owns and maintains three softball fields with sports lighting for evening use. A picnic area, basketball courts (2), playground, and large parking area are directly north of the fields and help make it a more diversified facility. When needed, overflow parking can be accommodated in the County Fairgrounds parking lot north of the park.

**Gusdorf Park**

Gusdorf Park is a small open space area set within the Gusdorf Housing Development. The privately-owned and managed neighborhood park has a playground, gazebo, picnic tables, basketball court, and fruit orchard.

**Senior Centers**

The Taos Senior Center (Phil Lovato Senior Center) offers educational classes and recreational programs to its members. It also sponsors the Senior Olympics, which provides opportunities for seniors to participate in competitive recreational games.

**Quail Ridge**

Located northwest of Taos within the county, Quail Ridge is a private facility with 10 hard courts and a swimming pool / hot tub. It is the largest facility in the Taos area with courts for tennis and pickleball and also offers instructional programs.

# Operations

Operations and maintenance are essential to providing facilities that are safe, healthy, enjoyable, and protect public investment over time. The intention is to enhance the quality of life for Taos residents by offering access to a diversity of parks, facilities, and recreational services that address public needs and reflect the diversity of its residents.

*Parks Division / Facilities and Events*

The Taos Parks Division has 6 full time employees and runs maintenance operations out of buildings in Kit Carson Park. The Parks Division is part of the Facilities and Events Department, which is responsible for the operations and maintenance of all town facilities (buildings and spaces). The department also organizes a number of community events throughout the year and helps host larger concerts.

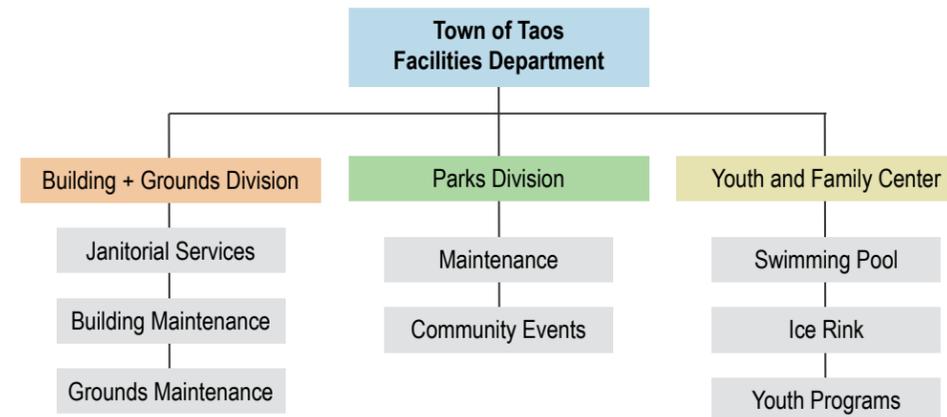
*Youth and Family Center*

The Youth and Family Center provides an indoor facility and runs programs for area youth from the facility with a staff of 12-13 people. The Youth and Family Advisory Board has been established to help guide improvements and serves as an interface with the community.

*Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB)*

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board was created to advocate for the interests of the Buildings and Grounds Department by promoting the different recreation programs designed around the community's needs and interests. A total of 13 voting members are appointed by the Mayor and may include residents of both the Town of Taos and Taos County that reflect the diversity of the area residents. The Board is no longer active.

Figure 3-6: Town of Taos Facilities Department - Organizational Chart



**TOWN OF TAOS Parks Division**

*The Parks Division is entrusted with the maintenance of Kit Carson Park, Fred Baca Park, Taos Plaza, La Loma Plaza, and the landscaping around town buildings. The Parks Division also maintains the trash cans at the following locations: Dunn Street parking lot, Our Lady of Guadalupe parking lot, Kit Carson Road and Bent Street. We are also responsible for the care and maintenance of the main public restrooms in the downtown area.*

*Daily maintenance of the parks includes grass cutting, tree trimming, litter patrol and the monitoring of events. During the winter the division provides snow removal for all Town of Taos facilities and any minor park improvements required.*

*The Division also heads up annual Town-wide 'trash drives', which in the past five years have netted the disposal of over 16 tons of trash. For this program, volunteers work with Parks Division Supervisor to fill dumpsters with trash collected from several points around Taos, with a major focus on public view corridors and open space.*

*This program is made possible through assistance from a grant received from the Governor's Tourism Department. The financial resources received from the grant are used to purchase supplies and to bolster participation through volunteer organizations who receive contributions for the active participation of their member volunteers.*

*Ultimately the primary function of the Parks Department is to maintain all of the Town of Taos parks and keep them "Clean, Green and Safe".*

*Source: <http://www.taosgov.com/recreation/parks.php>*

# Programs

At present the Parks Division does not conduct programs in Taos parks for area residents. The Taos Youth and Family Center offers some sports programs, but only at their facility. These include aquatic sports and ice sports.

## Organized Sports Leagues

Taos has a well-organized group of privately-organized sports leagues for both youth and adult sports that cater to local sports enthusiasts. In total, over 1,175 area youth participate in soccer, football, little league / tee ball, and hockey leagues. This represents a sizeable number of participants for the population of Taos and surrounding area.

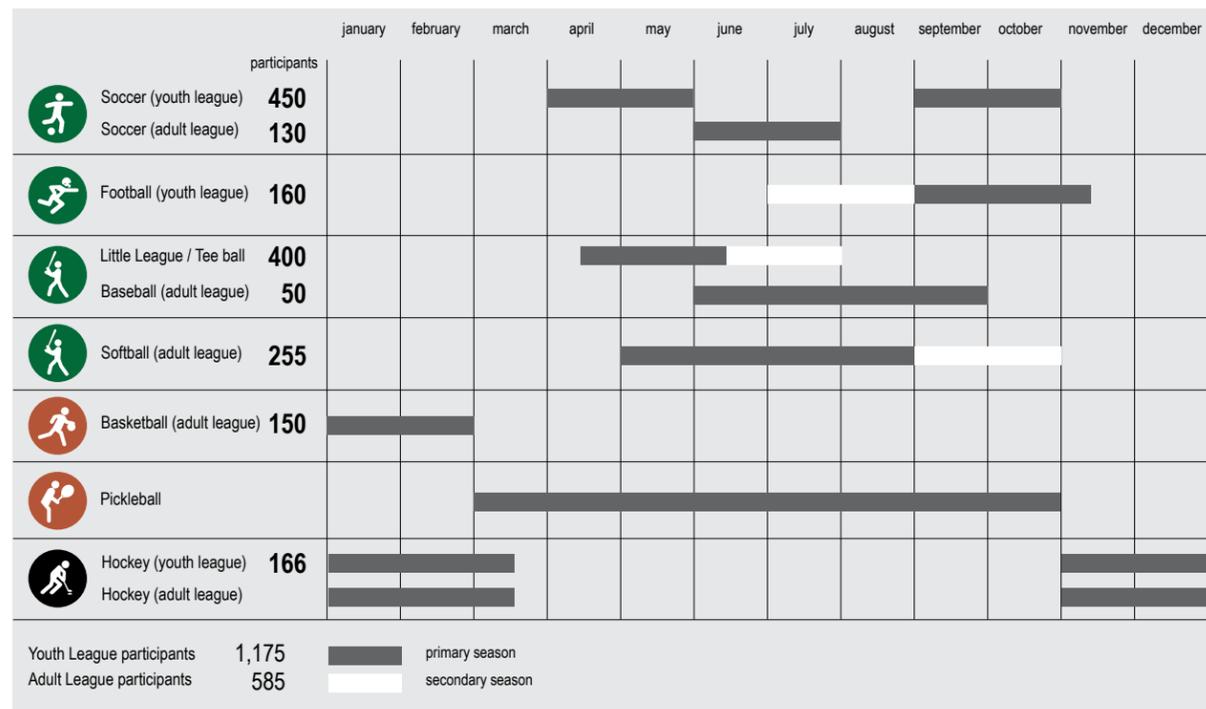
Over 585 area adults participate in soccer, baseball, softball, basketball, and hockey leagues. In some cases, park and recreation facilities are not available or adequate for league play so adult leagues make arrangements with the municipal schools for use of their facilities (e.g. baseball).

The leagues utilize municipal parks and recreation facilities for practice and games, but there is little interface between parks division staff and league representatives. Staff typically conducts routine maintenance of the facility (mowing, irrigation, trash pickup, minor repairs) and leagues supplement maintenance and operations of the facility with volunteers. No formal agreements are signed or fees paid for use of facilities.

## Tournaments

Currently, the only leagues hosting regular annual tournaments are hockey and swimming. These are held at the Youth and Family Center and draw large attendance from New Mexico and beyond. Across all sports, there is great interest among both adult and youth leagues for improved facilities to be able to host tournaments.

Figure 3-7: Taos Organized Sports League Schedule / Participation (2017)



Note: Since there is no centralized contact for organized sports leagues within the Town of Taos, the data collected above represents information gathered directly from area league representatives. There may be additional sports not listed on the chart that exist in Taos and there may be additional leagues not represented in the above numbers.

## COMMUNITY + SPECIAL EVENTS

The Parks Division organizes and runs a host of community events at area parks and public facilities, something the community values deeply. They also assist with special events and concerts organized by other entities by scheduling events and providing support with preparations before, during, and after events. Staff estimate efforts to organize and / or facilitate the hosting of these community and special events consumes more than 25 percent of their time.

### Town-organized Community Events

Community events organized by Parks Division staff are held for community benefit. A diversity of events range in size, venue, and content to attract a broad cross section of the community.

Some Town-organized community events include:

- April Pitch, Hit and Run
- Summer Movies on the Green (Wednesdays)
- June Fish Fiesta (Eagle Rock Lake)
- July Hometown 4th July Celebration
- August Town of Taos Touch-A-Truck
- Oct. Children's Halloween Party
- Dec. Farolito Lighting
- Yuletide Caroling and Tree Lighting

Additional events are hosted for the community at the Youth + Family Center by TYFC staff with assistance from Parks Division staff. These include the following events:

- February Valentine Craft Making
- April Wet 'N' Wild Easter
- May Mother's Day Project
- June Father's Day Project
- August Town of Taos Touch-A-Truck
- Dec. Ornament and Craft Making

### Privately-organized Events

Taos is well-known for hosting a diversity of arts and cultural events. In particular, Kit Carson Park, with its large lawn and proximity to the downtown historic area is a popular location for festivals and concerts. These multi-day events attract many residents and tourists and contribute greatly to the local economy.

Some privately-organized events include:

- May Mother's Day Concert
- May Taos Lilac Festival
- June Cavalry Taos Car Show
- Summer Taos Plaza Live
- July "El Vibaron" Fiesta de Taos Children's Parade
- Taos Fall Arts Festival
- August Taos Pride
- Sept. The Paseo Project
- Sept. Michael Hearne's Big Barn Dance Music Festival
- Oct. Taos Wool Festival

Larger concerts with well-known headliners are hosted at Kit Carson Park during summer months and vary in number depending on the year. Park staff project that up to 5 larger concert events could be hosted in town per year, drawing up to 5,000 - 8,000 attendees. Some past concerts with large attendance have featured Michael Franti and Alabama Shakes.

Image 3-5: Taos Lilac Festival (2017)



Image 3-6: Michael Hearne's Big Barn Dance Music Festival



Image 3-7: Taos Wool Festival (2017)



# CHAPTER 4

## Needs Assessment + Benchmarks



The 2018 Taos Parks + Recreation Master Plan provided multiple venues for public input to gauge community interest and solicit feedback (see Chapter 1: Plan Development Process). Over the course of 6 months, the community provided input through focus group meetings, interviews, community survey, and public meetings.

### Key Themes

During the community engagement process, some key themes emerged, including the following:

- maintenance and upkeep of existing park facilities is very important to residents
- better / cleaner restrooms are a priority
- key social issues like vagrancy, homelessness, and drug use are adversely affecting park goers and need to be addressed as part of a larger community effort
- park facilities that are lacking or missing that need to be addressed include: dog park, more bike trails / walking paths, tennis courts / pickleball courts, disc golf course
- a connected system of trails needs to be established to connect the parks to each other and to area residents.

### SURVEY RESULTS

An on-line survey was available to the community during the month of November 2017. Outreach to participate in the survey was conducted through email solicitations, social media, and focus group meeting representatives. An article in the Taos News explained the project and provided a link to the survey. The survey was also available on the town's website. The complete results of the community survey are documented in *Appendix B: Survey and Survey Results*.

#### Survey Participants

- Seven hundred and thirty six people responded to the online community survey.
- Over 65 percent of survey respondents were female.
  - 40 percent were ages 46-65; 10 percent were youth 18 or under; 14 percent were over 66. The least represented age group was ages 19-25 (3 percent).
  - Only 20 percent of respondents identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino.
  - Over 48 percent of respondents live in households with children.
  - 22 percent of respondents live within a mile of a park while 38 percent live 5 miles or more from a park.
  - Over 93 percent get to parks by driving their cars and only 34 percent walk or ride to area parks.

#### Hispano/Hispanic versus Anglo Responses

The Town of Taos' population is 52 percent Hispano/Hispanic but only 20 percent of survey respondents identified themselves as Hispano/Hispanic. Comparatively, 63 percent of respondents identified themselves as White/Anglo, a relative 40 percent of the Town's population.

This discrepancy has significance for the types of recreational opportunities desired in municipal parks based on racial preferences. Studies indicate that recreational decision drivers for Hispanic populations are based on the type of facility provided and suitability for visiting with family and extended family. Typical facilities desired by Hispanic populations include bathrooms, children's play areas, BBQ grills, shade pavilions, tracks or trails, water fountains, and open fields for sports.

2011, Jodie J. Madsen, Utah State University; 'Recreation Patterns and Decision Drivers for Hispanics / Latinos in Cache Valley, Utah

#### Town versus County Responses

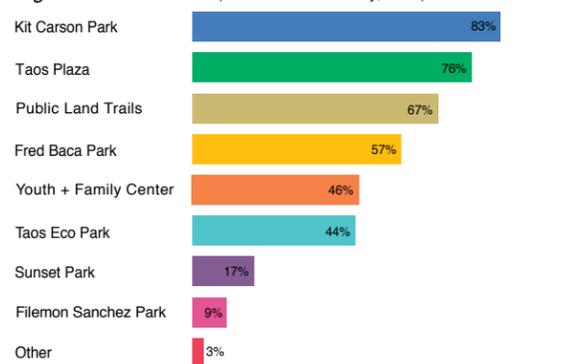
No survey data was collected on location of residency (within the town limits or in Taos County), so location can only be inferred by data collected on distance to area parks. 38 percent of respondents live more than 5 miles or more from a park, which indicates they do not live within town limits. Subsequent public meetings did collect residency location information; Taos residents represented 38 percent and 58 percent of participants at the first and second public meetings respectively.

It is important to note that while this planning effort was conducted on behalf of the town, there is clearly a large interest in park and recreation planning by county residents. This may be due to the importance of the town's facilities as the primary park and recreation facilities offered in the greater Taos area to meet certain recreational needs.

#### Current Park Use

Existing public parks are well used. More than 44 percent of survey respondents use all four facilities that are the focus of this plan. The primary purpose for visiting parks is walking / jogging or another form of non-structured exercise (74%), to be outdoors (66%), to attend organized events / concerts (57%), to attend family events / picnics (51%), and to participate in organized recreational activities (40%).

Figure 4-1: Park Use (TOT Parks MP survey, 2017)



#### Issues with Current Facilities

The primary issues for survey respondents concerning existing facilities centered around the maintenance and cleanliness of the parks. When asked about the condition and cleanliness of the facilities, most responses indicated the facilities were fair with the exception of restrooms, which was rated fair/poor (see below). Open ended responses outlined issues at particular facilities.

Figure 4-2: Current Facility Ratings (TOT Parks MP survey, 2017)

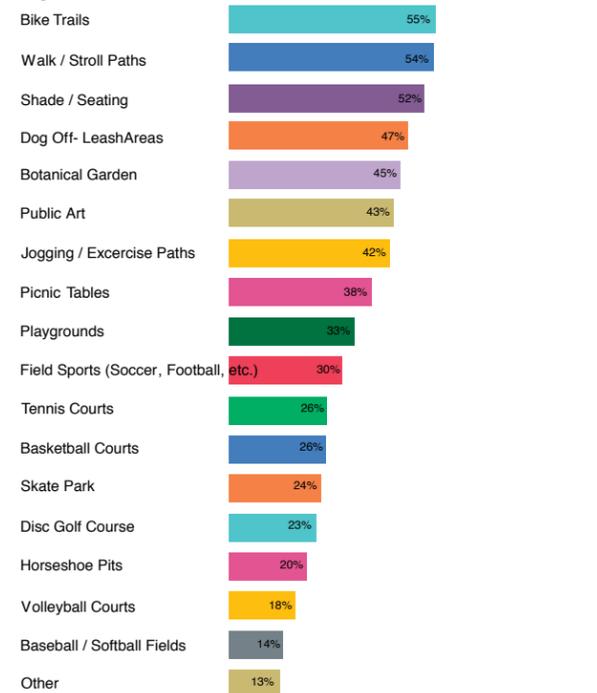


#### Park Elements

Existing important park elements most often cited by survey respondents in an open-ended response included trails and paths, play structures, landscaping and trees, grass, open space, and recreational fields, among others.

Desired park elements ranking highest (chart below) focused on passive activities such as trails, paths, seating, dog park, etc. Facilities for more active sports (field / court sports) were ranked highly, but of secondary importance. In open ended responses, desired programs not fully being met by existing parks included dog park(s), tennis courts, disc golf course, pickleball courts, and fields for lacrosse, among others.

Figure 4-3: Desired Park Elements (TOT Parks MP survey, 2017)

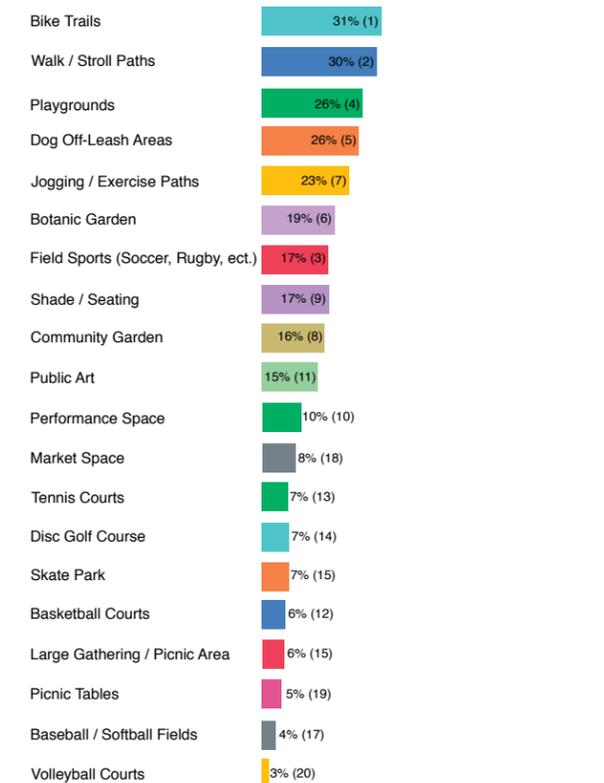


#### Funding Prioritization

When asked what should receive priority for funding of improvements, survey respondents largely aligned with responses to needed facilities. In other words, bike trails, walking paths, playgrounds and dog off-leash areas ranked highest.

The key to exceptional park facilities, as indicated by respondents, include good maintenance / cleanliness of facilities, adequate safety and security, funding for improvements, and better / cleaner restrooms.

Figure 4-4: Park Funding Prioritization (TOT Parks MP survey, 2017)



## STAKEHOLDER INPUT

A series of interest group meetings were convened with representatives from area organized sports leagues, educational institutions, natural resource protection associations, and local non-profit organizations. Complete records of meetings with stakeholders can be found in *Appendix B: Interest Group Meeting - Records*.

### Key Observations

In addition to the key themes outlined previously in public input (p. 38), information came forward through conversations with stakeholders that could improve existing park facilities and offer better service to area residents by the Town of Taos.

- Programs and facilities do not exist for teens (ages 13-17) previously enrolled in Little League Baseball before they can join an adult league. This age represents a particularly vulnerable group in the community.
- There is a large and consistent desire on the part of organized sports groups to improve / expand sports facilities so tournaments can be held in Taos, both for youth and adult sports. Support exists for multi-use fields as a way to accommodate this for multiple sports.
- The historic system of acequias needs to be revived and integrated in the parks (in coordination with the Acequia Association); provide interpretive educational signage.
- The perception is that the town provides community events and hosts concert venues at the expense of routine maintenance and the health of the landscape.
- Better communication and coordination between facility maintenance and leagues would improve the community experience.

### Adjacent Property Owners

Adjacent property owners were contacted as part of the planning efforts for Kit Carson Park (Taos Center for the Arts - TCA), Fred Baca Park (Taos Land Trust - TLT), and Taos Eco Park (Taos County). These meetings outlined potential mutually beneficial improvements and programs.

#### Taos Center for the Arts (TCA)

The TCA occupies the southern border of Kit Carson Park. The TCA is interested in improving communications with the town to better coordinate town events in Kit Carson Park with programs scheduled for the adjacent community auditorium. Large events at Kit Carson Park limit TCA use due to parking, circulation, and noise issues. The TCA is also open to design changes on its property to improve its operations and create a better experience for event attendees.

#### Taos Land Trust (TCA)

The Taos Land Trust's 20-acre parcel west of Fred Baca Park is currently being master planned as the Rio Fernando Park - which will "revitalize a section of the Rio Fernando River, bring an acequia back to life, and restore the once-productive agricultural lands of the property." Rehabilitation efforts to improve Rio Fernando water quality, restore the wetlands, and improve wildlife habitat should be pursued jointly by the Town and TLT, since it is a shared resource. Parking, access, and trail connectivity between the two parks would facilitate public access.

#### Taos County

Taos County owns and operates the Filemon Sanchez Park softball fields. Future improvements should be coordinated with Taos Eco Park improvements to provide a recreation complex that best addresses community needs.

Image 4-1: Undeveloped landscape between Kit Carson + TCA



Image 4-2: Rio Fernando Park riparian habitat



Image 4-3: Softball activities - Filemon Sanchez Park



# Department / Town Concerns

The Town of Taos Facilities and Maintenance Department maintains and operates Taos Parks and Recreation facilities. Staff is responsible for building janitorial services and grounds maintenance for parks, streetscapes, and public open spaces.

### Key Observations

The Parks Division is interested in better serving the public, but is limited in resources.

- Park staff is not trained to directly address vagrant, homeless, and drug use problems; rather, they have been asked to report issues to the police, who are responsible for dealing with incidents. This leads to a perception of inaction by the public.
- Irrigation systems at parks are antiquated and require constant maintenance and monitoring. A comprehensive overhaul of irrigation systems updated with new technology would provide more efficient water use (and tracking), less staff time for maintenance, and healthier landscapes.
- Park maintenance is currently centralized in the center of Kit Carson Park in retrofitted buildings. While the central location is convenient, the storage area is inadequate, there are conflicts between maintenance activities and general park use, and offices are insufficient for staff. Relocating maintenance activities with adequate space would help with operations. Retaining smaller storage buildings for park maintenance equipment and supplies would assist with overall park maintenance. Park maintenance knowledge is still being developed.
- Mature trees in Kit Carson Park and Fred Baca Park require management on an annual basis for removal, trimming, pest control, and overall tree health. Outsourcing tree management or hiring a certified arborist would help address these issues and preserve existing trees.
- No strong relationship with league representatives currently exists since the department does not reserve sites, collect fees, or permit use of the facilities. The department is eager to develop a better line of communication.
- Public interface is limited to spontaneous interactions with maintenance staff. A protocol for public interface, such as a revival of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, would provide a forum for collecting and addressing public concerns.
- Staff feels over-worked and under-appreciated for their efforts. They contribute much time and resources towards community events (over 25 percent of resources is spent on concert and community events). They feel 25 percent understaffed.

Image 4-4: Viable park area used for maintenance material storage



Image 4-5: Infrastructure requires frequent maintenance / repair



Image 4-6: Public congregation has challenging social issues



# Benchmarks / Gap Analysis

In addition to ascertaining public and stakeholder interest and concerns on town park and recreational offerings, it is important to determine how Taos compares to other comparable communities. A number of organizations collect information on parks and recreation and compile results. This plan includes comparisons to these national standards, but also recognizes Taos as a smaller town with a different land area and demographic profile that make comparisons unsuitable.

### National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)

The NRPA collects data and generates typical NRPA Park Metrics on number of parks per population, park acres per 1,000 residents, park staff per 10,000 residents, per capita operating expenditures, and percent of agencies offering summer camps and afterschool programs. It is useful as a benchmark for comparison and to gain more funding support, improve operations, and better serve the community. NRPA recognizes that each community is different and must determine its own standards, hence it no longer publishes a 'national standard.' The 2017 report includes data from 925 park and recreation agencies across the United States.

### ParkScore - The Trust for Public Land

The Trust for Public Land evaluates public land and publicly-opened school grounds within the 100 most populated cities and ranks them according to acreage, facilities and investment, and access. Of particular interest is the metric assessing percentage of population within a ten-minute (half-mile) walk from a park. This assesses distribution of parks and access to them by local residents.

## PARK COMPARISON

In order to evaluate how Town of Taos parks compare to other communities, data was gathered for towns comparable to Taos in size, region, and focus, since national averages group smaller agencies of 20,000 residents or less in one category. National standards provide a glimpse as to how town parks compare to national agency averages.

Table 4-1: Parks and Recreation Resources in Comparable Municipalities

	Taos, NM	Smaller agency (<20k residents) National Average	Typical recreation agency National Average*	Ruidoso, NM	Salida, CO	Gunnison, CO	Breckenridge, CO
Population (2010 Census)	5,716	-	-	8,029	5,236	5,854	4,540
Population (per square mile)	1,065	-	-	573	1,983	1,407	758
Land area (acres)	3,435	-	-	8,960	1,689	2,662	3,834
Number of public parks	4	-	-	7	6	9	4
Public park area (acres)	66	-	-	78	19	42	47
Public park acres / 1000 residents	11.5	10.5	9.6	9.8	3.6	7.1	10.4
Residents per 1 park	1,429	1,331	2,266	1,147	873	650	1,135
Public park % of town area	1.9%	-	-	0.9%	1.1%	1.6%	1.2%
Parks department full time employees	6 parks, 12 rec.**	-	-	10 parks, 2 rec.	4 parks, 4 rec.	4 parks, 7 rec.	8 parks & rec.
Annual parks and recreation operations budget	\$1.3 million	-	-	\$1.2 million	\$1.4 million	\$3.2 million	-

Note: Park information includes formalized park program areas only. Lakes, trails, and open spaces recreation areas are not include.  
 \* National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) park metrics, 2017. National benchmarks for parks are no longer set by the NRPA in acknowledgement that communities are different and will set benchmarks in response to community needs and site conditions.  
 \*\* Taos FTE include the Facilities & Events department (6), the Youth and Family Center Aquatics division (4), and the Youth and Family Center Recreation Division (8).

An analysis of comparative park agency data reveals the following about Taos:

- Taos has a high acreage of park land compared to other analogous towns, but since the parks are larger (11-23 acres), the number of residents per park is high, almost double that of some other communities. Other towns have a higher number of smaller sized parks.
- Average annual parks and recreation budget expenditures for Taos is \$227 per capita. While the national average is \$76.44 per capita (NRPA 2017), compared to analogous communities Taos ranks at the mid-level (Ruidoso: \$150/capita, Salida: \$267/capita, Gunnison: \$546/capita).
- Comparative towns offer programs at all their parks and recreation centers, while Taos only offers this at the YFC.
- The number of staff allocated to park operations and maintenance averages 1 FTE per 11 acres of park, which is comparable to Gunnison, CO (1 FTE / 10.5 acres of park) but significantly higher than other analogous towns. In other words, staff are responsible for a disproportionately large area of park land (in some cases double and triple) than that of other comparative communities.
- Taos Parks Division should consider joining NRPA (or NMRPA) to benefit from the expertise of members and help establish metrics that are more in line with the town's needs.

## GAP ANALYSIS

An access to parks gap analysis was performed for the Town of Taos utilizing the recently completed analysis from the Greenprinting exercise (TPL, 2017). Results indicate the following:

- great need for parks in East / Central Taos
- moderate need for parks in Southeast Taos

It is worthwhile to note that the Parks Master Plan includes the Youth and Family Center as a recreation facility, something the Greenprinting Park Gap Analysis does not. In other words, a 500-acre area of land with very high and high gaps in park access according to the Greenprinting is being served by indoor and outdoor recreation facilities at the Youth and Family Center.

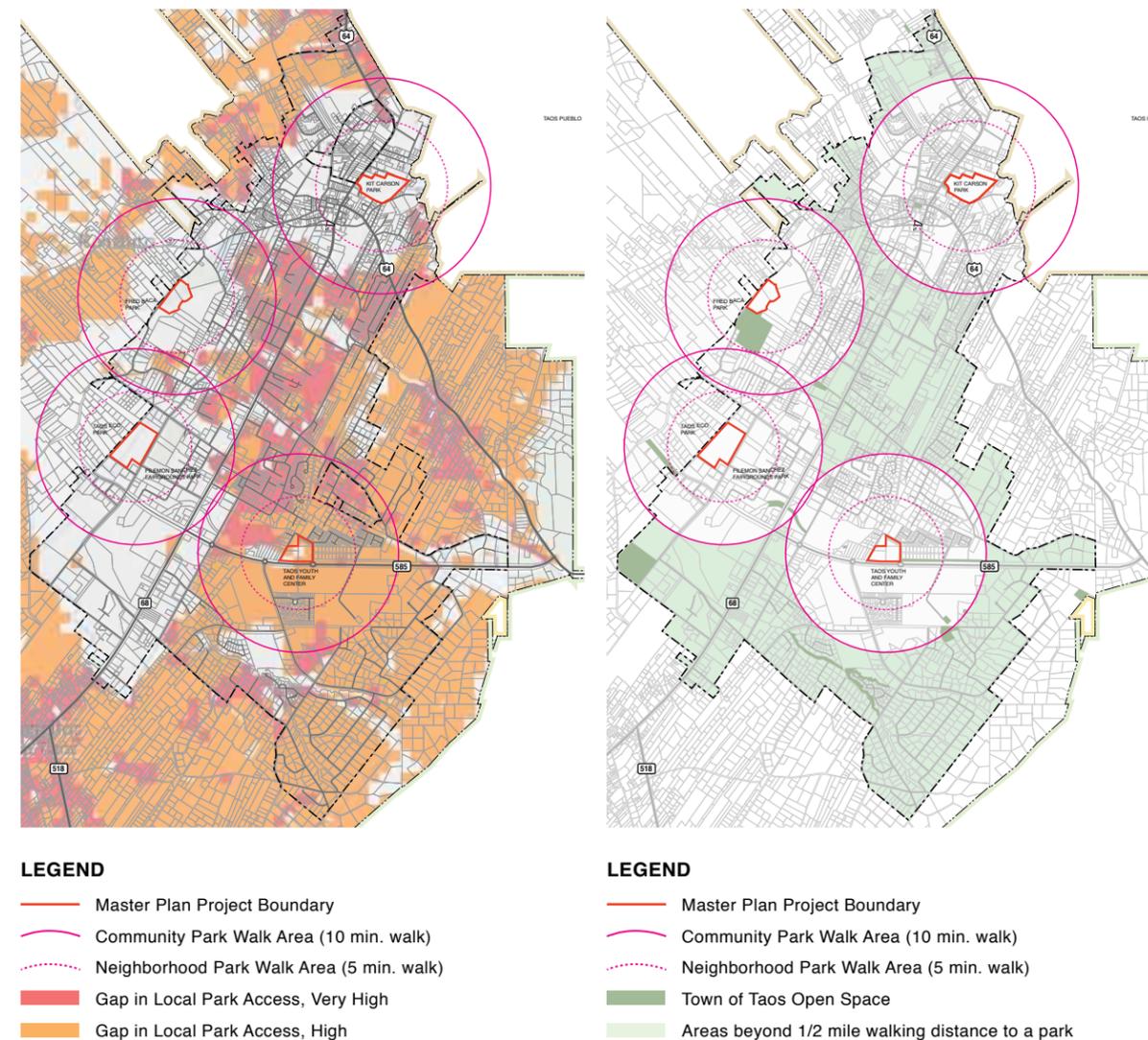
### Park Access

A worthy goal and metric for park distribution is providing parks within a 10-minute (or 1/2 mile) walk to all area residents (TPL ParkScore). In Taos, a "Park Access" analysis reveals that most Town residents live within a 10-minute walk to a park. This is encouraging, especially since three Taos parks are located on the outside perimeter of the town boundary and provide this amenity to area residents in the County.

Town of Taos (2010) population living....  
 within 10 min. walk to Park 3,581 63%  
 longer than 10 min. walk to Park 2,135 37%

Gaps in park access are largely in the central eastern part of town and the south side of town and should be addressed as part of future planning. While these areas do not have developed municipal parks, some residents do live in the vicinity of private parks or undeveloped open spaces with trails.

Figure 4-5: Town of Taos - Gaps in Park Access (Greenprinting 2017) Figure 4-6: Town of Taos - 1/2 mile walk to park (w/in circle)



# CHAPTER 5

## Park Master Plans



## Overview

The Town of Taos Parks + Recreation Master Plan offers a vision and guiding framework to enhance existing parks and facilities and develop new ones to meet current and future public needs. The Plan is intended to guide the development of park improvements that offers a unique and enriching recreational and educational experience, building on the existing characteristics and assets of each park. It can be implemented in phases, depending on funding availability and priorities set by the Town.



### THE VISION

Town of Taos Parks will be distinctive and beautiful public landscapes that provide recreational options for the health and well being of the community to address current and future needs.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Embrace and celebrate the unique character of each Taos Park facility
- Include the community in the design process to result in parks that address community needs and desires
- Outline and implement a regular maintenance strategy
- Prioritize safety and security in the design, execution, and operation of the parks
- Provide a variety of park activities and use areas for different ages and interests
- Balance active recreation areas with passive play and natural areas
- Connect the parks with a system of safe, enjoyable trails
- Consider the local and regional needs of organized sports leagues for active play opportunities
- Use durable materials, quality construction, and efficient use of resources
- Incorporate sustainable features and design elements to conserve resources and model best practices
- Establish realistic operating budgets for park maintenance and programs
- Identify and pursue funding capital so improvements can be implemented in phases

# Kit Carson Park

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

The 20.2 acre Kit Carson Memorial Park is centrally located 1,000 ft northeast of the downtown Taos Plaza along Paseo del Pueblo Norte. It serves as a popular venue for many cultural and recreational events for both residents and visitors alike. It holds a prominent central position in the town's identity.

Kit Carson Park was acquired by the Town of Taos from the State of New Mexico in 1988. At that time 30 years ago, most of the park improvements currently in place had already been constructed. Park improvements under town ownership included a second little league field, the bandstand, converting the basketball courts into a lawn / picnic shelter area, converting the ice rink into a basketball court / volleyball court area, and a playground. No significant additions to the park have been implemented in the last 15 years.

The entire footprint of the Kit Carson Park is within the Historic Overlay Zone and the western portion of Kit Carson Park, including the historic Kit Carson Cemetery is within the town's Arts and Cultural District (established 2009).

### Historic Acequias

The Acequia Madre del Pueblo directly northeast of the park historically fed a series of major and minor acequia laterals to irrigate sections of the park. Mature stands of cottonwood trees - visible in aerial photographs - delineate many of these acequia laterals. Recently, efforts have been made to clear out some of the acequias within the park and re-introduce the traditional flows.

Image 5-1: Kit Carson Park - 1991 Historical Aerial Photo, 3 years after acquisition by the Town of Taos (USGS, Google earth)



### Kit Carson Cemetery

The Kit Carson Memorial Cemetery, a separate 1.4-acre tract of land within the park, is in the New Mexico State Register of Historic Properties and serves as the final resting place for many prominent Taosenos, including Christopher 'Kit' Carson, Padre Antonio Martinez, and Mabel Dodge Lujan. The non-Catholic cemetery opened in 1847 on land donated by Dona Teodora Martinez Romero for the burial of American soldiers and civilians killed during the Taos Rebellion of 1847. Known then as the 'American

Cemetery', it was expanded in 1852. In May 1869, when the bodies of Kit Carson and Mrs. Carson were buried there, the cemetery was called 'Kit Carson Cemetery'.

Considered a highly controversial and polarizing figure by many, Kit Carson Park was briefly changed to Red Willow Park in 2014, a decision later rescinded by the local governing body a few months later after public outcry.

## Existing Conditions Assessment

Recommendations from an existing conditions assessment of Kit Carson Park along with public and stakeholder input include the following. The full detailed assessment can be found in *Appendix A: Existing Conditions Assessment*.

- **Safety:** public concerns about the safety due to evidence of drug use and a vagrant / homeless population that sometimes occupies portions of the site; surface obstructions (tree stumps, etc.) are a hazard
- **Visibility:** obstructions (buildings, vegetation) limit sight lines, hinder visibility of large areas of the park, and affect public safety
- **Accessibility:** sections of pathways and primary access corridors are missing or not compliant with ADA codes; interface with buildings and some building interiors are not ADA code compliant
- **Maintenance:** routine maintenance and repairs of utility infrastructure, structures, and park elements are needed to protect existing assets and for public welfare; buildings are generally in disrepair and need upgrades to meet current codes
- **Restrooms:** vault restrooms require repairs; consider redesigned permanent restrooms in location of current unusable restrooms
- **Fencing:** perimeter permanent fencing and special event temporary fencing need to be coordinated as part of access control both when events are being held and when the park is fully open for public use
- **Landscape:** an integrated tree management plan is necessary for tree health, preservation of cultural landscape, and for public welfare; an integrated weed management plan is needed for weed control

## Park Program Assessment

Adjustments to the park program at Kit Carson Park should focus on addressing some of the primary issues outlined in the existing conditions assessment and strengthening / rehabilitating key features of the park's identity. Public feedback concerning future improvements focused on the following topics:

- **Walking /Jogging Paths:** upgrade and expand the existing pathway system to create a system of interconnected loops, conform to ADA accessibility code requirements, connect to off-site trails, paths, and destinations
- **Acequias:** revive the acequia system within the park and provide educational information the history and traditional acequia culture
- **Activities:** distribute, add, and expand park recreational activities and give priority to areas that accommodate multiple uses, including lawn area, picnic areas, playgrounds; move away from single-purpose programs
- **Restrooms:** upgrade / replace restrooms; place strategically for park use and event use
- **Park Maintenance:** relocate park maintenance functions off site or to the perimeter of the site; retain storage for necessary maintenance supplies
- **Events:** upgrade infrastructure to allow for different events, integrate aesthetically into park so it doesn't detract from the park experience; configure events so areas of the park are still open for public use



Image 5-2: Park vegetation along acequia (view from Civic Dr.)



Image 5-3: Multi-purpose lawn



Image 5-4: Cemetery gateway / access from Dagoon Lane

KIT CARSON PARK - EXISTING CONDITIONS

Site Inventory

The following amenities exist at Kit Carson Park, see locations on aerial photo to right:

- 1 Walking Path
  - 2 Information Kiosk
  - 3 Historical Marker
  - 4 Multi-purpose Lawn
  - 5 Bandstand / Temporary Stage
  - 6 Playground
  - 7 Basketball Courts
  - 8 Volleyball Court
  - 9 Tennis Courts / Dog Run
  - 10 Batting Cage
  - 11 Gathering / Event Shelter
  - 12 Baseball / Softball Field and affiliated amenities
  - 13 Tee Ball Field and affiliated amenities
  - 14 Kit Carson Memorial Cemetery
  - 15 Drinking Fountain
- Buildings
- A Concessions
  - B Restroom
  - C Restroom - composting
  - D Equipment Storage Building
  - E Maintenance Facility

Figure 5-1: Kit Carson Park - Existing Conditions (Aerial Photo ca. 2016)



MASTER PLAN

The Master Plan for Kit Carson Park represents an opportunity to outline a vision for the park that can guide future improvements in a comprehensive and cohesive manner. The plan calls for enhancing and strengthening existing assets and carefully editing and redistributing park programs to activate the park and connect areas together.

A set of broad concepts provide direction and cohesiveness to the Kit Carson Park Master Plan:

**recreational nodes**

The framework acequia laterals serve as logical corridors for a series of 'recreational nodes' with distinct physical and programmatic characteristics. Park activities have been organized in these nodes to generate a synergy in these areas.

**access**

A clear, connected, visible system of access points, parking areas, and pathways will link areas of the park together and to the local and regional community.

**historic features**

The trademark landscapes of mature cottonwoods along drainageways and wide open fields along with the historic acequias and memorial cemetery will guide park development. The Plan outlines a strategy for integrating these components while addressing concerns of resource efficiency, stormwater management, and historic preservation.

Figure 5-2: Acequia Alignments

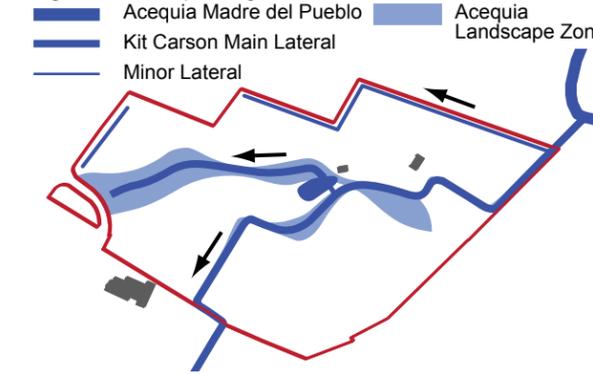


Figure 5-3: Kit Carson Park Circulation

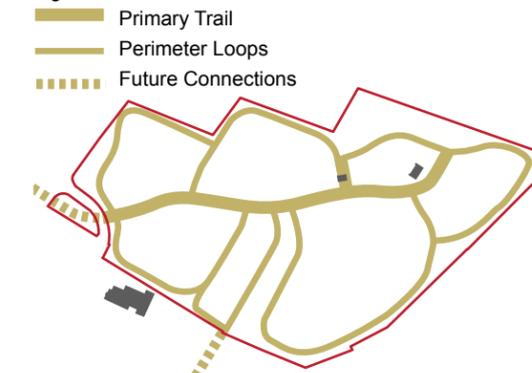


Figure 5-4: Activity Areas



**Key Master Plan Features**

The Master Plan describes a series of improvements that will help to create a distinctive town park for the 21st century. Key strategies are driven by:

**Integrated Historic Elements:** the revived and re-established primary acequia laterals serve as distinct landscapes that connect areas of the park; entry points to the Kit Carson Cemetery are pronounced to establish entries clearly and integrate better with park circulation.

**Activity Core:** a diversity of active and passive park elements are distributed into recreational nodes along the core area of the park, according to complementing characteristics.

**Connectivity:** a network of non-vehicular, shared-use paths weave across the park, connecting activity nodes to each other and the adjacent community, separate from vehicular traffic.

**Community Lawns:** grass lawn areas serve as flexible use areas for active sports, passive recreation, community events, and concerts; picnic tables, and shade structures will be amply sited throughout the site to provide opportunities for community interaction.

MASTER PLAN - LONG TERM

The Master Plan for Kit Carson Park represents an opportunity to outline a vision for the park that can guide future improvements in a comprehensive and cohesive manner. The plan calls for enhancing and strengthening existing assets and carefully editing and redistributing park programs to activate the park and connect areas together.

The Kit Carson Park Master Plan is organized around a central activity corridor surrounded by two large and two smaller community lawn areas. A comprehensive system of primary and secondary pathways connect the areas and provide access from internal parking and perimeter points of access / entry.

'Activity Corridor'

The Activity Corridor occupies a narrow and long portion of the center of the park and aligns with the rejuvenated acequia system. This zone is intended to attract residents and visitors of all ages and interests throughout the four seasons and serve as the core of active uses within the park.

Program Activities

- urban plaza / playscape with water feature
- basketball courts / multipurpose surface
- playgrounds (distributed in multiple locations)
- game area (table tennis, bocce, chess, etc.)
- acequia water / stormwater holding pond
- fruit orchard
- medium-sized picnic shelter
- picnic / seating (dispersed)
- sand volleyball
- restrooms
- connecting paths
- interpretive signage

Recommendations

- Re-establish the west edge of the activity corridor as an inviting place to be and entice users to experience the full extent of the park. Prioritize visual openness and punctuate with focal points. (Relocate Parks + Recreation maintenance facilities off-site and demolish buildings that are not code compliant or meet park needs.)
- Enhance the entry to Kit Carson Cemetery along the activity corridor pathway with interpretive signage, an explanation of the grave site outside the cemetery, a gateway, and seating
- Distribute playgrounds along the corridor with different equipment and themes. Group equipment according to age and ability. Integrate areas within and alongside playgrounds for caregivers to interact, sit, and observe children at play.
- Provide court areas striped for multi-purpose use (e.g. basketball court with pickleball). Locate court areas adjacent to picnic shelters where feasible. Minimize or eliminate perimeter fencing to retain openness of park.
- Include medium and small-sized picnic shelters along the corridor adjacent to use areas. Consider the setting and views (e.g. place a new shelter in the fruit orchard with views to Taos Mountain).
- Refurbish existing permanent bathrooms to meet code and address security and vandalism issues. Create a generous paved plaza area around restroom areas to encourage pedestrian traffic and use.
- Include art and sculpture within the corridor to reinforce Taos arts and cultural heritage.
- Standardize and upgrade site furnishings for the park that are low maintenance, durable, and aesthetically appropriate for the park. These include: benches, picnic tables, bike racks, trash / recycling cans.

KIT CARSON PARK - MASTER PLAN

LEGEND

- Master Plan Project Boundary
  - - - Town of Taos Boundary
  - Easement
  - Asphalt, Parking
  - Base Course, Parking
  - Concrete
  - Landscape, Lawn
  - Landscape, Riparian
  - Landscape, Park
  - Landscape, Native
  - Playground
  - Dog Run
  - ▨▨▨▨ Planning Area, Future
  - - - Fence
  - - - Acequia
  - Trees, Canopy
  - Trees, Fruit
- 1 Streetscape
  - 2 Acequia Landscape
  - 3 Paseo Events Lawn
  - 4 Performance Stage
  - 5 Community Plaza
  - 6 Basketball Court
  - 7 Playground A
  - 8 Kit Carson Memorial Cemetery
  - 9 Irrigation Basin
  - 10 Morada Community Green
  - 11 Playground B
  - 12 Orchard
  - 13 Orchard Picnic Shelter
  - 14 Community Lawn / Tee-ball Field
  - 15 Volleyball Courts
  - 16 Gathering Shelter
  - 17 Promenade
  - 18 Restroom Building
  - 19 Dog Park
  - 20 Dog Park Shelter
  - 21 Boulevard Parking

Source Data - see appendix



Figure 5-5: Kit Carson Park - Proposed Master Plan (long term)



### 'Community Lawns'

A series of different sized lawn areas punctuate the park perimeter and establish it as a place for shade, respite, and rejuvenation. These also double as multi-functional areas for informal play, league sports practice, family gatherings, community events, and larger concerts / events.

#### Program Activities

- lawn areas
- pathways
- seating
- picnic areas
- dog off-leash area (small)
- interpretive signage

#### Recommendations

- Paseo Lawn: upgrade the existing lawn area by the TCA by regrading the acequia swale into a gentle sloped grassy swale and connecting it with the treed lawn area along Paseo so it is perceived as one area.
- Morada Green: establish a new multi-purpose community green at the southeast corner of the site. Include new tree plantings and a walking trail along its perimeter. Provide pedestrian connections to the south.
- Northeast side lawns: relocate tee-ball field dugouts, fence, and amenities to the northeast corner of the lawn so area is more open and accessible to park users. Formalize pathway system so there is a clear hierarchy between paths with direct access to picnic shelters
- Dog Off-Leash Lawn: establish a designated small dog off-leash area north of the parking boulevard. Area to be fenced with 4 ft. fence. Provide a 20-30 ft. landscape buffer to the west and north with a walking trail.

### 'Acequia Revitalization'

The revitalized acequia corridors traverse the park and are distinguished by a dense canopy of deciduous shade trees. All acequia improvements need to be coordinated with the Acequia Association and the appropriate Majordomo.

#### Program Activities

- water conveyance / infiltration
- pathways / seating
- interpretive signage

#### Recommendations

- Design acequia outfalls at Paseo and Dagoon Lane in anticipation of continuous water flow in the future. Until then, acequia flows will terminate within the park.
- Acequia corridors can be expressed as wide, shallow, and gentle grass-lined swales or narrow rock-lined channels, depending on the amount of space available adjacent to other uses. Designs should be engineered to work when flows are present and aesthetically pleasing during the remainder of the time.
- Establish the central holding pond as a location to keep acequia water for infiltration and to support the acequia landscape.
- Site areas adjacent to acequia corridors should be re-graded so the corridors can double as water harvesting swales (e.g. from parking areas, paved surfaces).
- Provide bridges or culverted crossings at intersections between pathways and acequias to accentuate the two systems. Establish a common vocabulary of materials and details for acequia designs that is aesthetically pleasing and culturally appropriate (channels, crossings, interpretive signage, plant palette, etc.).

### 'Looped Pathways'

A hierarchy of pathways connect perimeter walkways and parking areas to interior park use areas. A walking / jogging loop along the perimeter park boundary links use areas and activates the buffer area between the park and neighboring properties.

#### Program Activities

- pathways
- seating
- landscape buffer

#### Recommendations

- Establish a pathway hierarchy of major and minor pathways that are distinguished by width and amenities. Major pathways are typically concrete, 8-10 ft. wide, and have benches at designated points. Minor pathways are typically concrete or asphalt and are 5-8 ft. wide. Tertiary paths are soft surface paths or trails that parallel major pathways or connect to other areas of the park.
- Where pathways cross internal roadways with parking, raised walkways should be installed with continental striping. These help reinforce the pedestrian environment and serve as speed tables to slow cars.
- A policy for addressing off-site access to the park should be developed with neighboring property owners.

### Events

Kit Carson Park is considered a prime location for community events and private concerts / events. The careful planning and execution of events must be done in such a way that works with the particular event but still allows the community access to remaining areas of the park.

#### Perimeter Access Control / Fencing

For ticketed events, perimeter fencing and access control is necessary to contain the event area and address emergency access requirements. A combination of limited perimeter permanent fencing and temporary fencing should be provided for these situations. Efforts should be made to limit the amount of time temporary fencing is up so the park is open and available for public use. Options include: 1) installing infrastructure that is unobtrusive and allows for the rapid assembly and dismantling of temporary fencing; 2) requiring private organizers to erect and dismantle temporary fencing within given timeframes as part of the facility use agreement.

#### Infrastructure

Provide base utility infrastructure (power, lighting) for a range of event types and sizes that integrates with the park during normal operation. Identify a location (paved area) for portable restrooms that is easily accessed for delivery and removal of restroom structures. Remove portable event amenities promptly.

#### Noise Considerations

Notify neighbors of upcoming events and make adjustments to event setup to address concerns due to noise, parking, access / circulation, and other issues.



Image 5-5: Outdoor performance / use area between TCA and the park



Image 5-6: Park street edge with perimeter use area, inviting feel, and open plan



Image 5-7: Quick assembly temporary event fencing

### Off Site Coordination

Kit Carson Park will benefit from coordinating improvements along its perimeter with key adjacent property owners to enhance the park experience and address issues of neighboring property owners.

#### Taos Center for the Arts

A coordinated effort between the town and the TCA could be mutually beneficial, particularly since cultural events are being staged by both entities in close proximity. Improvements could result in an enhanced interface between the Taos Community Auditorium and the park; increased efficiency and capacity of the parking areas; shared cost for needed building additions (e.g. green room, stage areas); and improved vehicular and pedestrian circulation between Paseo, the TCA, and the park. Designs should explore outdoor performance areas and other landscape improvements that benefit both properties.

#### Paseo del Pueblo Norte

Park street frontage design along Paseo del Pueblo Norte should be redesigned and upgraded to provide better street presence, visual connectivity into the park, and generous pedestrian access.

#### Dagoon Lane

The acequia lateral that flows on the west side of the cemetery historically extended south towards Couse Pasture on the west side of Dagoon Lane. Efforts should be made to maintain these flows and create an 'acequia trail' that connects along this lateral.

MASTER PLAN - SHORT TERM

Since the long term master plan for Kit Carson Park is dependent on relocating some park programs off-site, an interim plan outlines initial steps towards realizing the full plan.

The interim plan focuses improvement efforts on the central activity corridor area. A secondary focus is addressing perimeter park edges along Paseo del Norte and adjacent to the TCA. All improvements should be completed to work towards the long term master plan for Kit Carson Park. Interim improvements should prioritize the following community concerns:

- universal access code issues
- restroom concerns
- safety
- security
- regular maintenance
- long term vegetation health

**'Acequia Revitalization'**

Initiate acequia revitalization by adjusting the ditch alignments according to the proposed master plan (see description and recommendations on p. 56). Begin coordinating with Acequia Association representatives and the Majordomo of the Acequia Madre del Pueblo.

*Orchard*

A component of the revitalization project is establishing a demonstration fruit orchard with heritage fruit trees that can be flood irrigated when the acequia is flowing. For this to happen, the existing tennis courts need to be removed, the area needs to be re-graded and proper infrastructure installed for flood irrigation, and the soils need nutrients and amending for proper orchard establishment.

**'Activity Corridor'**

Begin activating the central corridor by focusing on visual access and path connectivity. Simultaneously, add new park elements to help activate the corridor (see program elements and recommendations outlined on p. 54).

*Community Plaza*

A major impediment to the visual openness of the park is the park maintenance buildings north of the events lawn. These buildings currently block internal views of the park and segregate it into two separate use areas. A plan for the removal of some or all of these buildings should be developed in concert with the relocation of park maintenance facilities off site. Once this area has been cleared, new designs for this area should focus on creating a welcoming community plaza that is activated by a variety of uses (e.g. urban fountain, cafe, seating, bandstand).

*East Promenade*

A new access corridor to the little league fields can provide a more generous connection to the southern park use areas. This promenade integrates the existing restroom building, which could be refurbished to serve as a permanent restroom facility to serve the eastern portion of the park.

KIT CARSON PARK - INTERIM PLAN

LEGEND

- Master Plan Project Boundary
  - - - Town of Taos Boundary
  - Easement
  - Asphalt, Parking
  - Base Course, Parking
  - Concrete
  - Landscape, Lawn
  - Landscape, Riparian
  - Landscape, Park
  - Landscape, Native
  - Playground
  - Dog Run
  - ZZZZ Planning Area, Future
  - - - Fence
  - - - Acequia
  - Trees, Canopy
  - Trees, Fruit
- 1 Community Plaza
  - 2 Events Lawn
  - 3 Basketball Court
  - 4 Volleyball Courts
  - 5 Irrigation Basin
  - 6 Acequia Landscape Feature
  - 7 Kit Carson Memorial Cemetery
  - 8 Promenade
  - 9 Restroom Building
  - 10 Orchard
  - 11 Orchard Picnic Shelter
  - 12 Community Lawn / Tee-ball Field

Source Data - see appendix

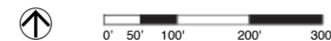


Figure 5-6: Kit Carson Park - Proposed Master Plan (short term)



# Fred Baca Park

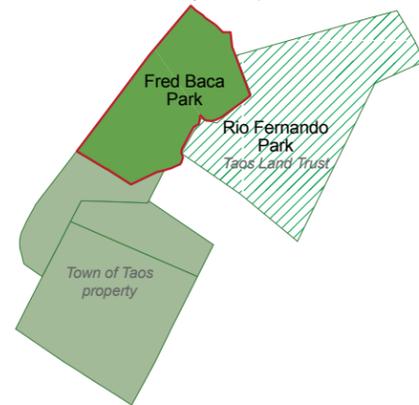
## EXISTING CONDITIONS

The 11.7 acre Fred Baca Park is a community park on the east side of Taos located off Camino del Medio. The park is marked by two distinct areas: the traditional park, which occupies the northern 7.3 acres of the site, and the Rio Fernando wetlands, which forms the park's southern border. In Fred Baca Park the Rio Fernando, one of few perennial streams in Taos, is distinguished by its expansive riparian habitat and associated wetland. The park is well-used by the community for both active recreation and passive use. Visitors come to walk the wetland nature trail and photograph wildlife within the wetland.

Fred Baca Park is named for Fernando F. Baca, a local resident, owner and operator of Fred Baca's Coronado Pharmacy, and former mayor of Taos. Formerly a waste water treatment facility, it was converted to a park sometime around 1975.

Directly to the east of the park on the opposite side of the Rio Fernando, the Taos Land Trust owns a 20-acre parcel which is being master planned as the Rio Fernando Park. The town owns an additional 22-acres of undeveloped land along Camino del Medio south of the park.

Figure 5-7: Fred Baca Park adjacent public lands



### Existing Conditions Assessment

Recommendations from an existing conditions assessment of Fred Baca Park along with public and stakeholder input include the following. The full detailed assessment can be found in *Appendix A: Existing Conditions Assessment*.

- Safety: health concerns about Rio Fernando water quality; issues with proximity of playground to wetland with no buffer / barrier; evidence of drug use within wetland nature area - difficult to access; winter weather makes wetland trail hazardous
- Mobile Home: remove the vacant mobile home and re-purpose this area of the park for additional public use
- Accessibility: a few sections of pathways are not compliant with ADA codes; interface with buildings are not ADA code compliant; upgrade nature trail boardwalk for accessibility and safety
- Maintenance: routine maintenance and repairs of utility infrastructure, structures, and park elements are needed to protect existing assets and for public welfare; buildings are generally in disrepair and need upgrades to meet current codes
- Restrooms: vault restrooms require repairs; consider redesigned permanent restrooms in proximity to current mobile home
- Wetland Restoration: restore the wetland by removing invasive plants and encouraging native riparian ecological diversity
- Drainage: the Acequia de los Lovatos along Camino del Medio floods the roadway - consider rerouting it within the park



Image 5-8: Park / wetland vegetation; looking east



Image 5-9: Floating boardwalk section; looking north



Image 5-10: Multi-purpose lawn; looking northeast

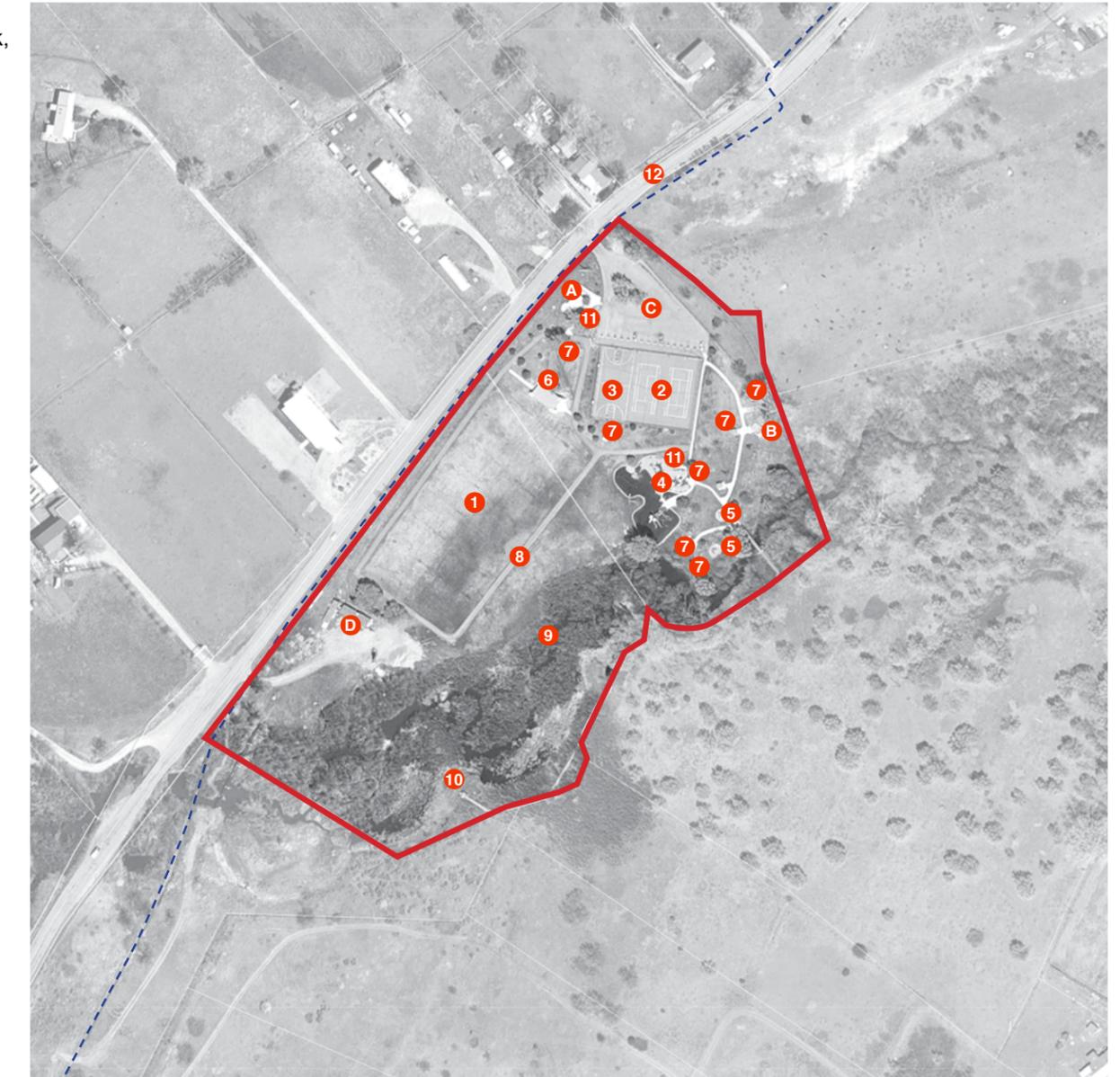
## FRED BACA PARK - EXISTING CONDITIONS

### Site Inventory

The following amenities exist within Fred Baca Park, see locations on aerial photo to right:

- 1 Multi-Purpose Lawn / Field
  - 2 Tennis Courts (2)
  - 3 Basketball Court
  - 4 Playground
  - 5 Exercise Station
  - 6 Large Gathering / Event Structure
  - 7 Small Shade Structure / Picnic Table
  - 8 Walking Path
  - 9 Rio Fernando / Wetland
  - 10 Wetland Viewing Platform / Boardwalk
  - 11 Drinking Fountain
  - 12 Acequia de Los Lovatos
- Buildings
- A Restroom
  - B Restroom - Vault Toilet
  - C Parking Lot
  - D Residence (Mobile Home)

Figure 5-8: Fred Baca Park - Existing Conditions (Aerial Photo, ca. 2016)



**Park Program Assessment**

Adjustments to the park program at Fred Baca Park should focus on utilizing available park space more efficiently and providing upgrades / slight expansion of existing established park elements. Public feedback concerning future improvements focused on the following topics:

- Trails: upgrade existing pathway system, complete portion of new urban trail along the Rio Fernando (include future off-site connections)
- Park Amenities: expanded playground / destination playground, new medium-sized picnic shelter, upgraded basketball court, upgrade tennis court and stripe for pickleball (consider relocation to more central facility), more parking / efficient parking
- Buildings: upgrade restrooms, provide storage area for park maintenance
- Dog Park: locate a small and large dog off-leash area a safe distance from wetland; separate parking area; trail connections

Some proposed park elements for Fred Baca Park included community gardens, a botanical garden, and an outdoor classroom. These elements are appropriate in this area, given the agricultural setting and existing wetland, but are more suitable at the adjacent Rio Fernando Park, which can be managed by Taos Land Trust staff.

**Park Character**

Public feedback on the character of Fred Baca Park overwhelmingly supports retaining its natural, wild identity with a range of informal activities. It is a place where the community can experience a balance of conservation ecology and recreational activities; a habitat for wildlife alongside a selection of amenities for unstructured recreation.

**MASTER PLAN**

The Fred Baca Park Master Plan retains the character of the current beloved park and focuses on perimeter improvements that increase park use areas and provide greater efficiency of available space. A refinement and expansion of the trail system creates a portion of the new Rio Fernando Trail within the park and extends it to future off-site connections.

**'Park Zone'**

The Park Zone is the traditional park area defined by the Rio Fernando to the south, Camino del Medio to the northwest, and the property border to the east.

*Program Activities*

- lawn area
- basketball courts / multipurpose surface
- playgrounds (distributed in multiple locations)
- parking
- restrooms / storage building
- picnic shelters / picnic tables

*Recommendations*

- Expand park into previous mobile home area.
- Reconfigure north parking lot for greater efficiency and capacity.

Figure 5-9: Park Zone Diagram



**'Wetland Zone'**

The Wetland Zone flanks the Rio Fernando and is intended to be a wild, dense, riparian wetland.

*Program Activities*

- nature trail
- interpretive signage

*Recommendations*

- Restore wetland ecosystem, remove invasive species, protect and enhance wildlife habitat areas.
- Coordinate restoration efforts, planning, and trail connections with Rio Fernando Park.

**'Fernando Dog Park'**

An added program element separate from Fred Baca Park is a new off-leash dog park on town property south of the Rio Fernando.

*Program Activities*

- large dog-off leash area (4' min. perimeter fence; 150 ft buffer to wetland)
- small dog off-leash area (4' min. fence)
- shade structure, picnic area, water fountain
- parking area
- perimeter trails

Figure 5-10: Fred Baca Park Circulation



**FRED BACA PARK - MASTER PLAN**

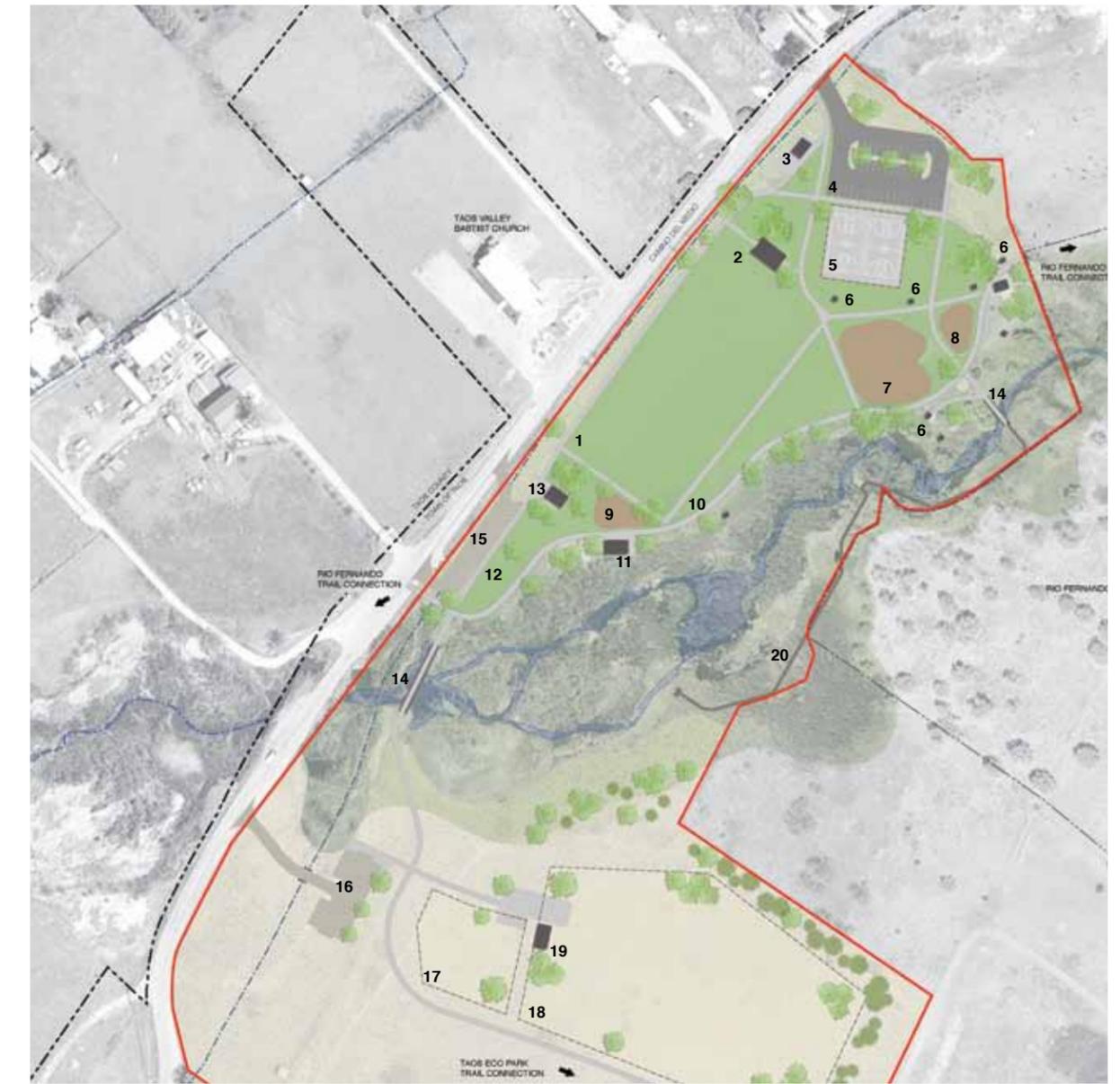
**LEGEND**

- Master Plan Project Boundary
  - Town of Taos Boundary
  - Asphalt, Parking
  - Base Course, Parking
  - Concrete
  - Landscape, Lawn
  - Landscape, Wetland
  - Landscape, Park
  - Landscape, Native
  - Playground
  - Dog Run
  - Fence
  - Drainage
  - Acequia
  - Trees, Deciduous
  - Trees, Evergreen
- Multi Use Lawn (existing)
  - Gathering Shelter (existing)
  - Restroom Building (existing)
  - Parking Lot A
  - Basketball Courts / Pickleball Courts
  - Picnic Shelter
  - Playground A
  - Playground B
  - Playground C
  - Rio Fernando Trail
  - Wetland Gathering Shelter
  - Passive Park Area
  - Restroom Building
  - Pedestrian Bridge
  - Parking Lot B
  - Parking Lot C
  - Dog Park, Small Dogs
  - Dog Park, Large Dogs
  - Shade Shelter
  - Wetland Boardwalk and Viewing Platform (existing)

Source Data - see appendix



Figure 5-11: Fred Baca Park - Proposed Master Plan



## EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Taos Eco Park is a 23.2 acre facility owned and operated by the Town of Taos on land owned by Taos Municipal Schools. Originally conceived as a premier soccer facility with 3 fields and associated amenities to attract professional teams for high-altitude training and tournaments, only one field has been installed to date. A JPA (Joint Powers Agreement) between the town and the school district outlines the ownership, use, and management of the facility. In April 2011, a regulation size synthetic turf soccer field was completed that achieved a FIFA 2 Star field certification from the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA). Improvements include a parking lot, restroom building, perimeter walking path, stadium seating, sports field lighting (Musco), and solar array. A master plan for the site, completed in April 2009, includes two additional regulation-sized soccer fields and associated amenities.

Future park improvements should consider off-site planning efforts to create a more integrated facility. Taos County has planned upgrades to the Filemon Sanchez Park softball fields so they meet USSAA guidelines. Urban trails exist along Sanchez Road (on-road bike lanes) and future trails are planned to the west of the site to connect to other area destinations (e.g. Fred Baca Park / Rio Fernando Park).

## Existing Conditions Assessment

Since the facility is only 7 years old and has received regular maintenance, it is in good condition. Recommendations from an existing conditions assessment of Taos Eco Park (see *detailed assessment in Appendix A: Existing Conditions Assessment*), along with public and stakeholder input include the following:

- Storage / Restroom: reorganize storage area for more efficient use of space; consider allocating a portion for park maintenance needs
- Maintenance: routine maintenance and repairs of irrigation infrastructure and proper landscape maintenance are needed for landscape health; continue regular turf maintenance to protect asset

## Park Program Assessment

Considerations should be made to transition the facility from its current use as a dedicated soccer facility to a multi-sport complex with community amenities that address the needs of the Taos area. Public feedback concerning future improvements focused on the following topics:

- Fields: add new synthetic turf fields and stripe them as multi-purpose fields to accommodate a variety of field sports; include a baseball field as part of the new design
- Field Amenities: add locker rooms, bleachers (shaded), food truck area, and expanded parking to create a more functional recreation complex
- Park Amenities: expand the trail, add exercise stations, picnic areas (large + small), and playgrounds for more diversified community use



Image 5-11: Synthetic turf field; looking northeast



Image 5-12: Perimeter walking path



Image 5-13: Restroom / Storage Building

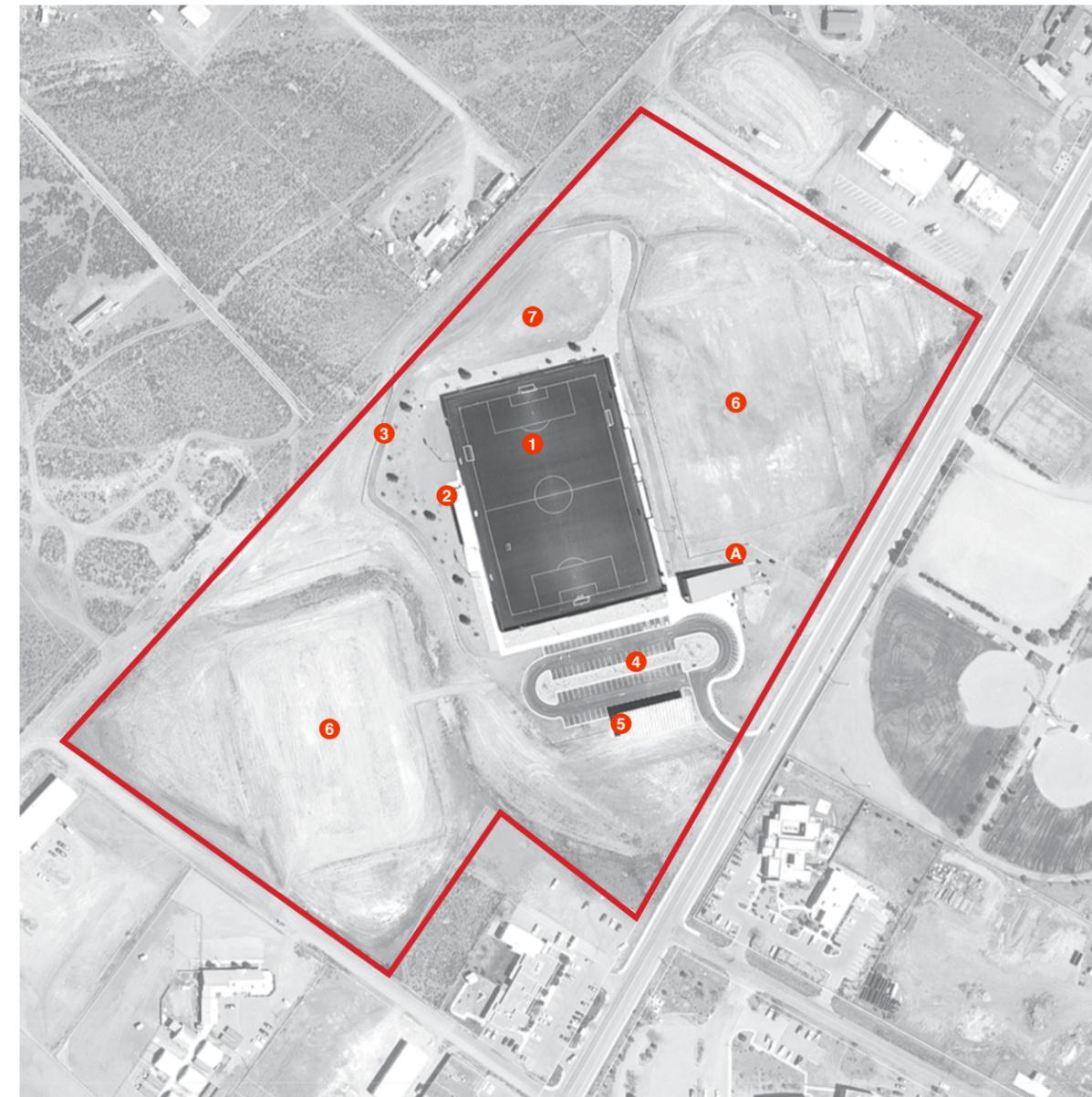
## TAOS ECO PARK - EXISTING CONDITIONS

## Site Inventory

The following amenities exist on the 23.2 acre Taos Eco Park, see locations on aerial photo to right:

- 1 Synthetic Turf Field
- 2 Grandstand
- 3 Walking Path
- 4 Parking Lot
- 5 Solar Panels
- 6 Future Field Area
- 7 Water Harvesting Basin
- Buildings
- A Restroom / Storage Building

Figure 5-12: Taos Eco Park - Existing Conditions (Aerial Photo, ca. 2016)



**MASTER PLAN**

The Taos Eco Park Master Plan builds on the existing facility by adding new fields and associated amenities. The new vision of the Eco Park is a facility that accommodates multiple sports and also serves as a community park with the addition of some park amenities. All improvements to the facility will be done in coordination with Taos Municipal Schools, the owner of the land.

**'Sports Fields'**

Two new sports fields will address the present needs of the Taos organized sports league community, offering a place for football, lacrosse, field hockey, rugby, and baseball as well as soccer. Field and facility amenities will contribute to a well-functioning and attractive location for hosting games, tournaments, and regular team practice.

**Program Activities**

- soccer field
- multi-use field
- multi-use field w/ baseball
- locker rooms
- spectator seating
- food truck / concessions area
- parking expansion

**Recommendations**

- Stripe multi-use fields for multiple sports; provide a location for storing goals and specialized equipment to the side of the fields.
- Provide shade over spectator seating areas.
- Establish a formalized schedule to manage the multi-sport use of the facility in a way that accommodates league sport schedules and maximizes use of the facility. Communicate with key stakeholders to provide schedule updates on a regular basis.
- Develop tournament-scenario plans to identify locations of additional utilities and amenities that will lead to more user-friendly and positive tournament experiences.

**'Park Amenities'**

The addition of park amenities distributed throughout the facility will allow community use and create a more appealing facility.

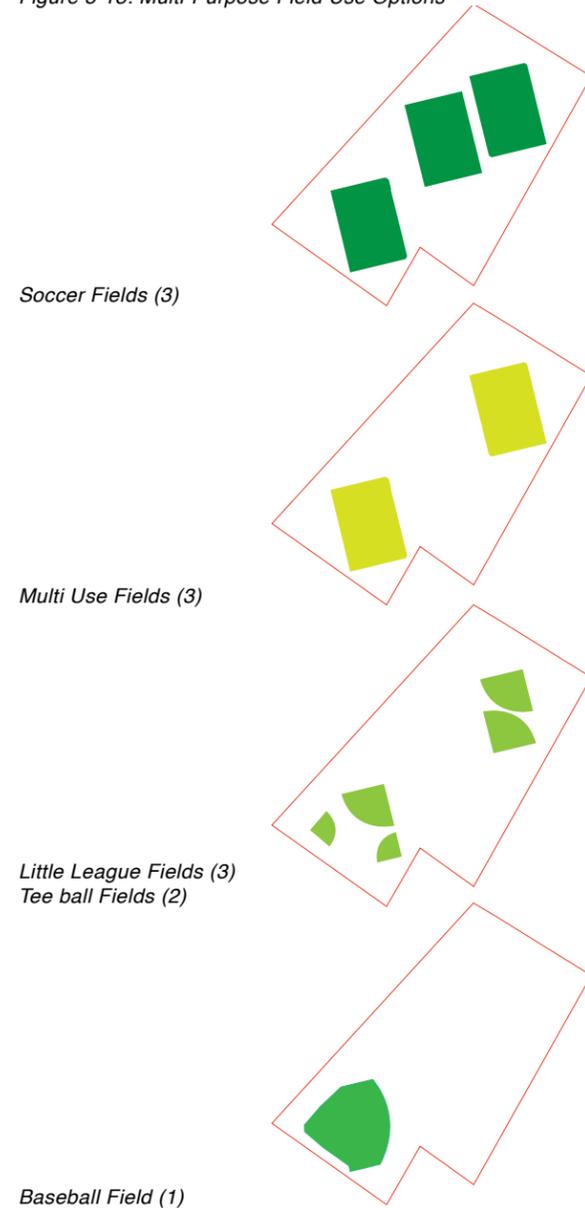
**Program Activities**

- playgrounds
- exercise equipment
- landscaped areas
- picnic shelter / picnic tables
- seating
- perimeter trails

**Recommendations**

- Build playgrounds and distribute play equipment in key areas in view of each field so families can watch games and allow children to play in close proximity.
- Place outdoor exercise equipment stations along the perimeter walking trail.
- Add picnic tables / picnic areas for family and group use in strategic areas close to parking / pathway access.
- Utilize stormwater from impermeable surfaces to help establish landscaped areas.
- Integrate walkway and trail alignments with off-site improvements and future trail connections. Provide generous connections across the major drainageway that runs through the property.

Figure 5-13: Multi-Purpose Field Use Options



**TAOS ECO PARK - MASTER PLAN**

**LEGEND**

- Master Plan Project Boundary
  - - - Town of Taos Boundary
  - Asphalt, Parking
  - Base Course, Parking
  - Concrete
  - Turf, Synthetic
  - Turf, Synthetic
  - Landscape, Park
  - Landscape, Native
  - Playground
  - ▨▨▨▨ Planning Area, Future
  - - - Fence
  - - - Drainage
  - Trees, Deciduous
- 1 Multi Use Field (soccer, baseball, Little League, tee-ball)
  - 2 Dugouts and Bleachers
  - 3 Pedestrian Bridge
  - 4 Synthetic Turf Field, Soccer (existing)
  - 5 Grandstands (existing)
  - 6 Entrance Plaza
  - 7 Food Truck / Bus Parking
  - 8 Solar Panels (new and existing)
  - 9 Expanded Parking
  - 10 Restroom / Storage (existing)
  - 11 Locker Rooms
  - 12 Gathering Area
  - 13 Multi Use Field (soccer, Little League, football, etc)
  - 14 Playground
  - 15 Exercise Equipment
  - 16 Grandstands

Source Data - see appendix



Figure 5-14: Taos Eco Park - Proposed Master Plan



# CHAPTER 6

## Recommendations



# Recommendations

As a result of the planning process, the following series of recommendations are brought forth to help realize the goals and objectives of the Taos Parks + Recreation Master Plan.

## New Parks / Land Acquisition

- Research opportunities to acquire land in the east central portion of town and the southeast portion of town to address current needs for parks.
- Diversify park and open space land holdings to include smaller parks and open space areas (0.5 - 2 acre parcels) with limited amenities.
- Work with Taos County to identify a location for future recreational fields to address imminent demand for additional recreational fields as league participation increases.
- Continue to explore opportunities for acquiring easements to extend trails and connect parks with area open space.

## Land Management

- Taos Eco Park: Pursue an alternate legal framework between the Town of Taos and Taos Municipal Schools for the management and improvement of the Taos Eco Park in a way that is mutually beneficial to both parties.
- Fred Baca Park: Consider adopting a legal framework for Taos Land Trust to manage the Rio Fernando wetland preserve trail and conservation area.
- Do not allow dogs within Fred Baca Park to allow for the preservation of wildlife habitat along the Rio Fernando. Instead, direct dog owners to a newly created off-leash dog area in proximity to the park.

## Public Interface / Programming

- Reinstate the Parks + Recreation Advisory Board to serve as an advisory board and interface between the public and the administration. Include representatives from the town and the county.
- Improve the Parks + Recreation website to provide more information on park offerings, enable on-line space reservations and a system of payment for events, and establish a community calendar of events.
- Coordinate sports league programs through a dedicated town parks + recreation coordinator to provide better interface between park use and community initiated sports programs.
- Integrate Park Rx programs within the parks; install signage at trail locations and provide access to maps on the town website. Coordinate with local care givers and agencies to make them aware of available facilities.
- Develop additional programs at municipal park and recreation sites to address public needs.
- Coordinate events and event set-up (particularly at Kit Carson Park) in a way that allows the public access to areas of the park. Remove temporary fencing as soon as possible after events.

## Additional Studies / Surveys / Information

- Collect park user data for all town parks on a seasonal basis; data collection to include visitor numbers, age, zip code, reason for visiting, impressions, etc.
- Commission topographic, utility, and boundary surveys for all parks in order to have an accurate record of existing condition information.
- Develop utility master plans for each facility that takes into account proposed improvements and the incremental upgrades of utilities to meet current standards and future needs.
- Install flow meters at each park irrigation system and track annual water use. Establish protocols for water use monitoring and conservation measures.
- For Fred Baca Park, partner with the Taos Land Trust to prepare a baseline biological assessment of wildlife / wildlife movement, and ecological systems. Include recommendations for soil rehabilitation, habitat restoration, grassland restoration, invasive species removal, erosion control, and landscape-wide wildlife habitat / corridor protection measures.
- Conduct a study to identify relocate park maintenance facilities from Kit Carson Park to another centralized location. Identify costs and phasing plans. Retain smaller storage facilities at each park for park-specific supplies and maintenance equipment. Remove existing maintenance buildings in Kit Carson Park.

## Restrooms

- Adopt a policy and establish standards for restroom design and maintenance that addresses public concerns.
- Consider and fund the re-establishment of permanent restrooms that are vandal-proof and have more sophisticated access controls. Utilize portable restrooms for special events only.
- Locate permanent restrooms in areas adjacent to utilities and near high use recreational facilities. Plan locations for portable restrooms for events that serve events, are easy to setup / remove, and do not detract from the overall experience of the park on a daily basis.

## Restoration / Cultural Preservation

- Remove invasive trees and hazards from Kit Carson Park and Fred Baca Park. Implement guidelines and best management practices as outlined in the Tree Management Plan.
- Work with the Acequia Association to outline plans for reviving the acequias in Kit Carson Park for beneficial use in a way that aligns with park use and management.
- Work with the Acequia Association to determine whether the Acequia de los Lovatos can be rerouted at the north end of Fred Baca Park to alleviate flooding issues along Camino del Medio.
- Explore opportunities to integrate art and sculpture in each park and recreation facility in town to promote the strong sense of arts and culture in Taos.

## Trail Planning

As part of this process, trails and paths were identified as the most desired program element and the highest priority for funding.

- Prioritize walkway and path improvements within parks in concert with the proposed master plans for each park.
- Work with local trail advocates, non-profit entities, and land owners to outline a master plan for trail implementation within the town. Establish priority projects and outline funding mechanisms to implement improvements.

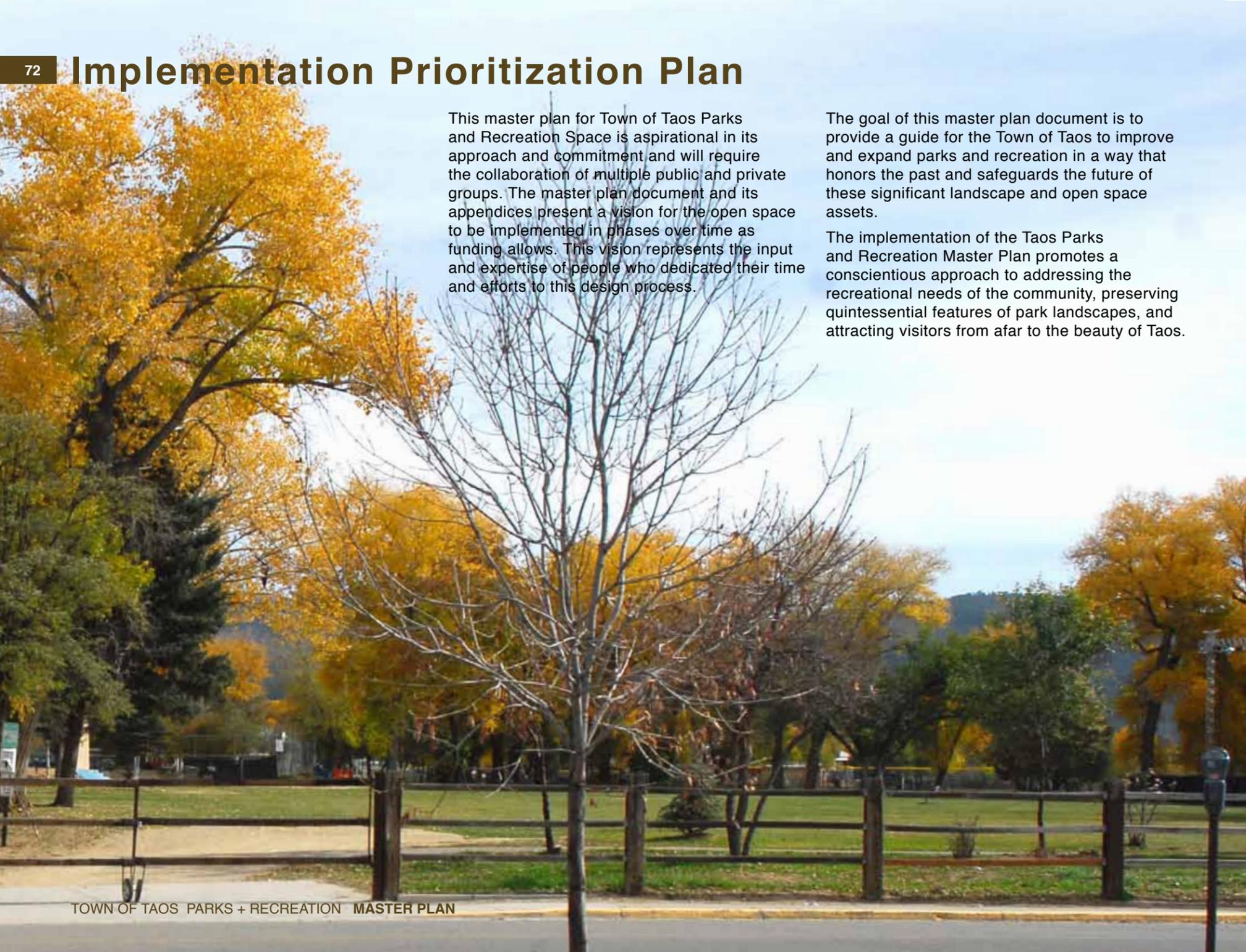
## Park Maintenance

- Generate and adopt site management and operations plans for each facility.
- Train staff in best management practices for park maintenance. Conduct regular training sessions for all staff.
- Consider membership with NRPA to share information with other members and benefit from the expertise of the organization's members.
- Outsource portions of privately organized events and concerts so parks staff can focus their efforts on regular park maintenance and operations functions and community programs.
- Overhaul and modernize the irrigation systems for each park for greater efficiency and plant health. Track and publish water use data.
- In response to climate change, take steps toward making park landscapes more resilient: evaluate plant selections and turf varieties for drought-tolerance; orchestrate water harvesting within parks to make beneficial use of rainfall from storm events.

## Code Compliance

A number of buildings, park pathways, and areas within parks do not meet existing local and national codes. Compliance with codes is a priority and will help minimize risk to the town and ensure the safety of visitors and citizens who use town parks and recreation facilities.

- Conduct an assessment of required ADA parking stall numbers at each facility and review access code compliance from parking areas to park internal destinations. Prioritize repairs.
- Determine building interior code compliance upgrades in light of overall building plan recommendations.
- Phase utility infrastructure upgrades in coordination with site improvements to meet code requirements and minimize disturbance to other improvements. Establish a plan of action to address life safety hazards.



This master plan for Town of Taos Parks and Recreation Space is aspirational in its approach and commitment and will require the collaboration of multiple public and private groups. The master plan document and its appendices present a vision for the open space to be implemented in phases over time as funding allows. This vision represents the input and expertise of people who dedicated their time and efforts to this design process.

The goal of this master plan document is to provide a guide for the Town of Taos to improve and expand parks and recreation in a way that honors the past and safeguards the future of these significant landscape and open space assets.

The implementation of the Taos Parks and Recreation Master Plan promotes a conscientious approach to addressing the recreational needs of the community, preserving quintessential features of park landscapes, and attracting visitors from afar to the beauty of Taos.

The funding of improvements to the parks and expansion of program offerings to the community will require a multi-pronged approach. Since town residents already contribute a high property tax and gross receipts tax rate compared to other areas of the state, any new taxes will need to be vetted with area residents.

Nevertheless, a benefit of all the community planning the town and county has conducted over the last years is that it has raised public consciousness about needs for improvement. The community is interested in making things better. Follow-through on these planning efforts with real physical improvements and expanded programs is necessary and will illustrate the competence of the governing body to carry out community plans.

Funding options for park master plan improvements include the following:

**Town of Taos**

- CIP funding
- General Obligation Bond
- Existing GRT Allocation to Parks + Recreation Infrastructure
- Lodgers Tax (1%)
- NM State Legislature capital improvement funding request
- Sales (personalized bricks, benches, trees, etc.)

**Taos County / Town of Taos**

- Recreation District (Mill Levy)
- 'Quality of Life' dedicated Gross Receipts Tax

**Fees**

- use fees
- membership fees

**Grant Funding**

- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
- USDA Community Facilities Grant / Loan
- Rivers, Trails + Conservation
- Baseball Tomorrow
- US Tennis Association
- Skatepark Grants
- Tony Hawk Foundation

**Private**

- non-profit / friends of ....
- foundation support
- philanthropic donations / legacy funds

## Photography Credits

All photography by Design Office unless otherwise noted

### Chapter 2 - Community Profile

Image 2-1..... Center for Southwest Research  
Image 2-2..... New Mexico Department of Transportation  
Image 2-3..... <https://www.tripadvisor.com>  
Image 2-4..... Google Street View  
Image 2-5..... Unknown  
Image 2-6..... <http://www.riofernandopark.org>  
Image 2-7..... <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org>  
Image 2-8..... <http://www.taosvillagefarm.com>  
Image 2-9..... <http://taosartschool.org>

### Chapter 3 - Existing Facilities

Image 3-5..... <http://www.taoslilacfestival.com>  
Image 3-6..... <http://bigbardance.com>  
Image 3-7..... <http://taoswoolfestival.org>

### Chapter 4 - Needs Assessment + Benchmarks

Image 4-3..... <https://taosnews.com>  
Image 4-6..... <https://taosnews.com>

### Chapter 5 - Park Master Plans

Image 5-1..... Google Earth  
Image 5-5..... <https://madamechireau.wordpress.com>  
Image 5-6..... <http://desertsea.blogspot.com>  
Image 5-7..... <https://www.bluedogfences.com.au>, <http://lifemustgoon.us>

# Appendix

## APPENDIX

### A EXISTING CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT

Kit Carson Park  
Fred Baca Park  
Taos Eco Park  
Taos Youth and Family Center

### B PROGRAMMING / PUBLIC PROCESS

Interest Group Meeting (NGO Sports Organizations) - Record  
Interest Group Meeting (Educational) - Record  
Interest Group Meeting (Tree Board) - Record  
Interest Group Meeting (Baseball / Softball) - Record  
Interest Group Meeting (Field Sports) - Record  
Interest Group Meeting (First Responders) - Record  
Interest Group Meeting (Maintenance + Facilities) - Record  
Interest Group Meeting (Taos Land Trust) - Record  
Interest Group Meeting (Taos County) - Record  
Interest Group Meeting (Acequias) - Record  
Interest Group Meeting (Taos Center for the Arts) - Record  
Public Input Meeting 1 (Programming) - Record  
Public Input Meeting 2 (Draft Master Plan) - Record  
Survey and Survey Results

### C SITE ANALYSIS MAPS

Ownership  
Open Space and Trails  
Zoning  
Census Data  
Population + Demographics  
Gaps in Local Park Access  
Land Characteristics  
Cultural Landscape Characteristics  
Kit Carson Park - Site Analysis  
Fred Baca Park - Site Analysis  
Taos Eco Park - Site Analysis  
Youth and Family Center - Site Analysis

### D SUPPLEMENTAL PLANS

Alexander Gusdorf / Taos Eco-Park (Living Design Group, April 2009)  
Filemon Sanchez Park & Softball Fields (Living Design Group, 2017)

### E PROGRAM AREA ESTIMATES

Kit Carson Park / Fred Baca Park / Taos Eco Park

### F PARK METRICS / BENCHMARK COMPARISONS

### G TAOS YOUTH AND FAMILY CENTER MASTER PLAN