



**Taos County**  
New Mexico

# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

DRAFT MARCH 2025



CONSENSUS

PLANNING

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# Taos County

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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*Taos County thanks the hundreds of community members who took time to offer input on the planning effort for the update to the Comprehensive Plan. Your thoughts and recommendations have shaped this document and created a meaningful vision to guide Taos County.*

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CHAPTER 1  
**Executive Summary**



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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Taos County is located in north-central New Mexico and is truly second to none for its vast and breathtaking scenic resources, rich cultural and historic traditions, and outdoor recreation opportunities. Taos County is bordered by the New Mexico state line and Colorado to the north, Mora and Rio Arriba counties to the south, Colfax and Mora counties to the east, and Rio Arriba County to the west.

Taos County is primarily a rural county that relies on tourism, outdoor recreation, arts and culture, and agriculture to help sustain its economy and rural lifestyle that residents cherish and want to maintain for the future. The *Comprehensive Plan* addresses all aspects of the community and its future growth through the goals, objectives, and strategies crafted under each plan element.

## 1.2 PURPOSE

The *Taos County Comprehensive Plan* is the key policy document intended to guide and manage decision-making by elected officials related to the future growth and physical development of the County. The *Comprehensive Plan* strives to be:

- 1) **Inclusive** - the planning process sought out a wide range of community voices and viewpoints, which means the *Comprehensive Plan* addresses all geographical areas of Taos County and the functional elements that impact community growth and development;
- 2) **General** - the Plan provides general guidance, not detailed regulations or mandates, that address a wide range of community issues and aspirations; and
- 3) **Long Range** - the Plan describes, through words and graphics, a 20-year vision to guide future growth and development and capital expenditures based on community priorities.

The *Comprehensive Plan* is also intended to foster cooperation and collaboration between the Board of County Commissioners and elected officials in the four municipalities of the Town of Taos, Questa, Red River, and Taos Ski Valley, as well as other community partners that serve the community,

such as the University of New Mexico-Taos, Taos Housing Partnership, North Central New Mexico Economic Development District, North Central Regional Transit District, Taos County Chamber of Commerce, Holy Cross Hospital, and the Taos, Questa, Mesa Vista, and Peñasco school districts.

## 1.3 KEY PLANNING THEMES

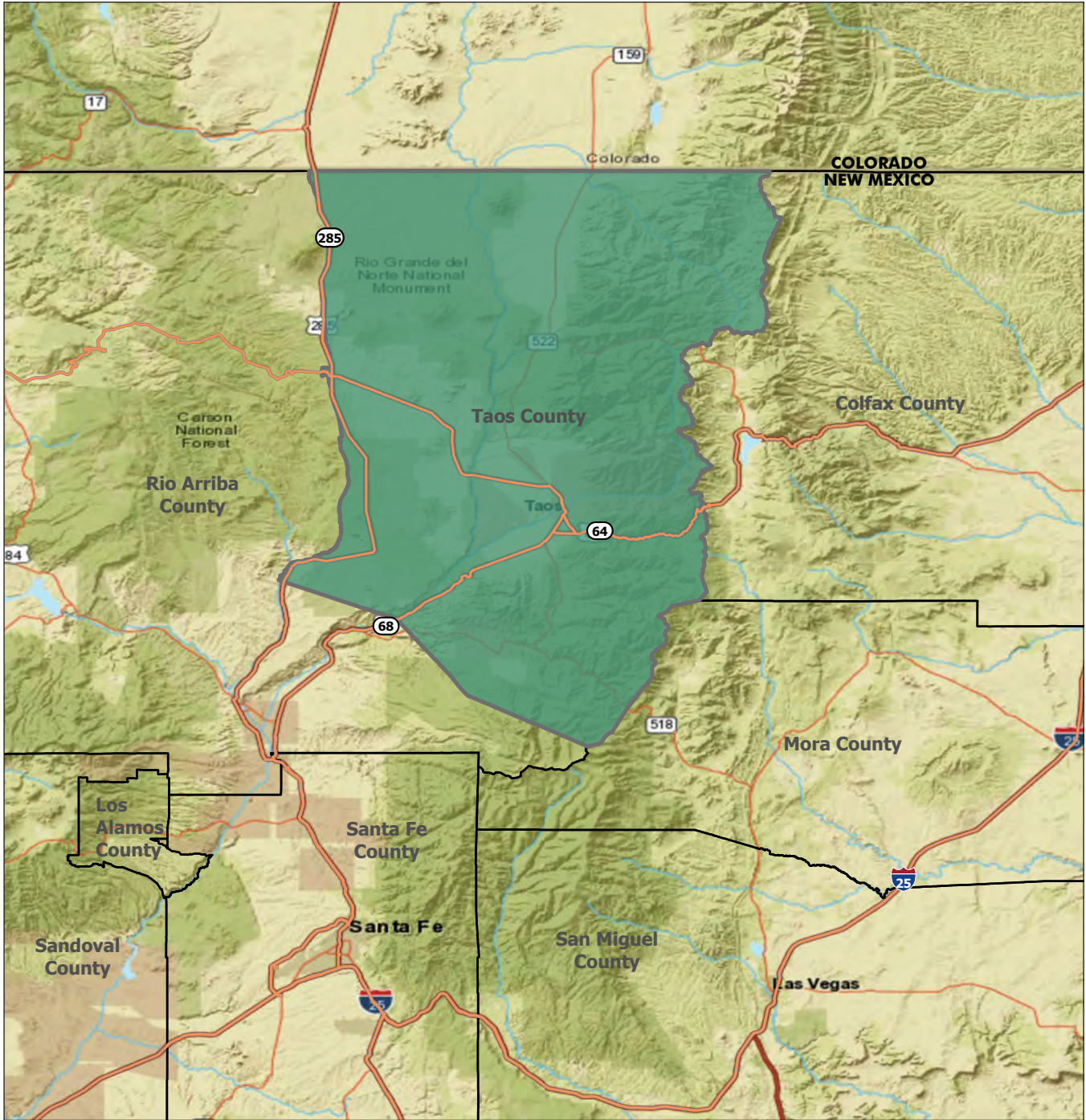
There are several key planning themes that run throughout the *Comprehensive Plan*. These themes have been drawn from the deep values and aspirations expressed and held by Taos County residents and identified through the planning process.

### PLANNING EQUITY

Planning equity starts with the recognition that some community members do not have access to the same opportunities and outcomes, and are often left out of the public engagement process. To reach community members in the beginning of the planning process, the consultants created a community survey in English and Spanish and worked with Taos County to ensure it was widely distributed in hard copy and online. Over 1,100 people responded to the survey, which is unusual in a planning process for a large, rural county like Taos County. Each of the public meetings were held at two different times on the same day to accommodate community members that do not go out at night and others who work during the day. Taos County also held additional meetings in some of the smaller communities to ensure their voices were heard as well. The consultants evaluated existing conditions throughout Taos County and crafted goals, objectives, and strategies with the intent of being fair and equitable without regard to social status, age, gender, disability, etc. An overarching goal of the *Taos County Comprehensive Plan* is to strive for an equitable distribution of community amenities and services, and to continue engaging with residents and groups throughout Taos County.

### FILLING THE HOUSING GAP

Expanding Taos County's existing housing stock is a critical planning theme and driver of the *Taos County Comprehensive Plan*. The lack of



REGIONAL VICINITY

affordable, workforce, and market rate housing and continuously rising housing costs impact all aspects of community well-being, education, growth and economic development, transportation, and the delivery of community services in Taos County. The housing gap is a significant threat to Taos County, as it is to many New Mexico communities, and many Taos County residents work more than one job to stay afloat. The *Comprehensive Plan* provides the framework for Taos County to be proactive in working to expand the housing stock by pursuing public/private partnerships and creating incentives to encourage developers and builders to build new single-family, multi-family, and workforce housing units. Addressing the gap in available housing will have a significant and positive impact on the quality of life for current and future Taos County residents.

### WATER IS LIFE

The impact of climate change on all communities cannot be understated, and Taos County is no exception. Prolonged drought conditions and high temperatures, combined with groundwater depletion and reduced snowpack, are increasing the likelihood of water supply shortages throughout New Mexico. In Taos County, this is particularly concerning since it impacts Taos County's traditional practice of irrigating from acequias and groundwater is becoming harder to access. The *Comprehensive Plan* recognizes and addresses these challenges, which if left unchecked, will start to restrict new and existing development and life in Taos County.

### COMMUNITY PARTNERING

Taos County is blessed with a large and impressive array of organizations and community members who all strive to improve the community through their individual areas of interest and expertise. This is exemplified in the number of initiatives addressing economic development and prosperity; multi-modal transportation; water and acequia associations; education and engagement of youth; art and culture; historic preservation; etc. The *Comprehensive Plan* brings these community voices and issues together under one cohesive document and seeks to shepherd changes in the

community that will improve the quality of life for existing and future residents.

### STEWARDSHIP-BASED TOURISM

Taos County has long benefited from being a major tourist destination with its vast historic, cultural, art, and recreational assets and resources drawing people from throughout the country and beyond. Like many other major tourist destinations, it is incumbent upon Taos County to protect and minimize impacts to its natural and cultural landscapes and the people who call Taos County home. The *Comprehensive Plan* celebrates the tourism industry while acknowledging that it must be tempered and the community protected against overuse.

### DIVERSIFY THE ECONOMY

The Taos County economy is reliant on a few important industries, but lacks diversity. Many people find they cannot live in Taos County due to the housing challenges mentioned above, but also because the economy is heavily weighted towards a select few industries and household income is lagging behind. Taos County and its community partners should continue to pursue a more diversified, resilient, and equitable economy that benefits both residents and business owners and allows for a more prosperous quality of life for all.

## 1.3 PLAN ELEMENTS

The *Taos County Comprehensive Plan* contains 11 chapters, including:

- ◀ Executive Summary (Chapter 1);
- ◀ Community Profile (Chapter 2);
- ◀ Community Culture (Chapter 3);
- ◀ Land Use (Chapter 4);
- ◀ Housing (Chapter 5);
- ◀ Economic Development (Chapter 6);
- ◀ Transportation (Chapter 7);
- ◀ Water Resources & Infrastructure (Chapter 8);
- ◀ Community Services & Facilities (Chapter 9)
- ◀ Hazard Mitigation (Chapter 10); and
- ◀ Implementation Plan (Chapter 11).

The Comprehensive Plan is supplemented by appendices that contain a Glossary of Terms, Vision Statements, Community Survey Results, and Funding Sources. Starting with Land Use, and with the exception of the Implementation Plan, each of the major plan elements contain a profile of existing conditions, discussion of issues and opportunities, and goals, objectives, and strategies that are intended to synthesize and convey the community's vision for the future of Taos County.

A brief summary of each of the major elements of the Comprehensive Plan follows below:

### LAND USE

The Land Use element (Chapter 4) provides a description of existing land use and land ownership; detailed descriptions of the existing *Taos County Land Use Regulations*, official zoning map, and *Subdivision Ordinance*; land use and zoning issues; descriptions of other regulations and ordinances; overview of historic and cultural resources; and the Future Land Use Scenario, which includes narrative and graphically depicts how Taos County should grow in the next 20 years in the Future Land Use Scenario.

The Land Use goals, objectives, and strategies address growth and development over the next 20 years by providing a mix of land uses and adoption of a *Unified Development Ordinance* and promoting growth and development in key locations; protecting and preserving traditional agricultural uses and acequia systems; and

preserving and improving the visual appearance of Taos County.

### HOUSING

The Housing element (Chapter 5) provides a housing profile; a summary of housing costs and affordability; description of housing needs for special populations; summary of existing housing initiatives and organizations; and an overview of housing issues and opportunities. The lack of affordable, workforce, and market rate housing and rising housing costs is one of the primary challenges for Taos County.

The Housing goals, objectives, and strategies address increasing the housing supply to include a diversity of housing types, unit sizes, and price ranges through the establishment of a Housing Trust Fund and other incentives; promoting new housing that provides a variety of housing development types in appropriate locations and through public/private partnerships; rehabilitation of existing dilapidated, vacant, and/or abandoned housing; and reducing the rate of homelessness in Taos County by pursuing funding for a homeless shelter.

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Economic Development element (Chapter 6) includes an economic profile captured in narrative and metrics of Taos County's employment, industries and occupations, labor force and unemployment, income and poverty level, tax revenues, etc.; descriptions of Taos County's major industries; overview of economic development organizations and initiatives; identification of economic development opportunities including entrepreneurs, value-added agriculture, warehousing and distribution, healthcare, film production, and renewable energy.

The Economic Development goals, objectives, and strategies address the need to pursue a diversified, resilient, and equitable economy through actions including updating the Taos County LEDA ordinance, assisting businesses that need high-speed Internet, developing a cooperative warehousing and distribution facility, and public art initiatives; support for current and future economic development initiatives including the Business

Innovation & Resources Center, pursuing funding for a new medical care facility in a currently under-served area, pursuing “site-ready” funding, and developing a support local business program; and developing a responsible, stewardship-based tourism economy that markets Taos County as the North Central New Mexico destination for cultural and historic attractions and regional outdoor recreation opportunities, public education on minimizing impacts to the natural and cultural landscapes, and marketing Taos County as a community with unmet needs for new restaurants, lodging, etc.

## TRANSPORTATION

The Transportation element (Chapter 7) promotes and strives for creating a balanced multi-modal system that serves the mobility needs of the Taos County community at a local and regional level. The chapter describes the existing roadway system, including functional classification, traffic safety and crash data, and maintenance; transportation modes, including personal vehicles, transit service, and air travel; scenic routes and rest stops; road improvement priorities and a map illustrating the roads that participants in the Community Survey thought should be improved; long range transportation planning, including the *Northern Pueblos Regional Transportation Plan* and the *North Central Regional Transit District Long Range Strategic Plan*; and project prioritization as identified in Taos County’s ICIP and recommended projects under the Transportation Project Fund.

The Transportation goals, objectives, and strategies emphasize maintaining safe roadway conditions throughout Taos County by prioritizing and funding improvements to Blueberry Hill Road, Tom Holder Bridge/Road, Aguas Calientes Bridge, etc., seeking funding for a Transportation Asset Management Plan, creating a preventative street maintenance plan, evaluating daily traffic counts, and pursuing funding from NMDOT’s programs; expanding transit services in unincorporated Taos County; and expanding air travel and general aviation operations at the Taos Regional Airport through upgrades as identified in the *Airport Master Plan* and determining level of interest in expanding business aviation activity and passenger service.

## WATER RESOURCES & INFRASTRUCTURE

The Water Resources & Infrastructure element (Chapter 8) summarizes existing state and regional water plans; describes water supply, including water rights; groundwater, including water quality, water associations, and wells; surface water, including acequias, acequia associations, and acequia assistance; drainage, including flooding, flood mapping, and existing dams; wastewater disposal; waste management, Taos Regional Landfill, and recycling; and utilities, including natural gas, electricity, renewable energy, and broadband.

The Water Resources & Infrastructure goals, objectives, and strategies address the need to promote sustainable and efficient management of water resources through conservation, including creating a 40-year Water Plan, assisting acequia and community ditch systems on future applications to the Acequia and Community Ditch Fund and creating a water conservation education and public outreach program; maintaining a safe and sustainable water supply by collaborating on the establishment of a Taos County Regional Water Committee, supporting funding requests, lobbying the State Legislature and supporting the Office of the State Engineer on allocating funds to implement the Abeyta Settlement; protecting groundwater supply from degradation; increasing Taos County’s capacity to handle major storm events by creating a stormwater design standard, incorporating Low Impact Development techniques into the subdivision regulations, etc.; and expanding affordable access to broadband and quality Internet services.

## COMMUNITY SERVICES & FACILITIES

The Community Services & Facilities element (Chapter 9) highlights the quality of life services that residents rely on for socialization, learning, and leisure time; public safety; education; and community health care. This element describes public safety services, including Taos County Fire/EMS Department and Fire Districts, Taos County Sheriff’s Office, Taos Central Dispatch, Adult Detention Center and their respective needs; community facilities including those owned and managed by Taos County and those

by the municipalities; public health including health rankings and metrics, healthcare providers, including services provided by Holy Cross Medical Center, and mental and behavioral health; and public education provided at the primary and secondary levels by Taos Municipal Schools, Peñasco Independent School District, Mesa Vista Consolidated Schools, Questa Independent School District, Charter Schools, and True Kids 1 and at the post secondary level provided by the University of New Mexico-Taos, Northern New Mexico College, and Santa Fe Community College; and the ICIP, which identifies improvements to public service facilities and departments.

The Community Services & Facilities goals, objectives, and strategies address maintaining an adequate level of law enforcement and fire protection and emergency services by completing needs assessments and implementing their recommendations and pursuing funding for identified projects; increasing access to public facilities and programs through creating a systematic preventative maintenance and replacement program for all County-owned facilities and completing a needs assessment for senior services and implementing those recommendations; supporting equal access to public education and life-long learning opportunities by initiating and participating in a dialogue with community education partners, supporting increased access to after school programs; expanding access to healthcare and mental health services and clinical care by being a conduit of information on available services, expanding mental health and substance abuse and detox services and facilities by working with the municipalities, New Mexico Department of Health, and the State Legislature, developing a feasibility study for a medical care facility within a currently under-served area, and continuing to fund the Health Care Assistance Program.

## HAZARD MITIGATION

The Hazard Mitigation element (Chapter 10) describes the process and actions needed to create resilient communities by reducing the risks and impacts to people and property during natural and human-caused disasters. The chapter describes key principles of hazard mitigation

planning and building resiliency; emergency preparedness provided by the Taos County Office of Emergency Management, Taos County Local Emergency Planning Committee, *Taos County All Hazards Emergency Operations Plan* and notification systems and procedures. It also describes existing major hazards faced by Taos County as identified in the *Taos County Hazard Mitigation Plan*, primarily wildfires, flooding and dam failure, and severe weather, and also addresses newer hazards such as drought, and pandemics and infectious disease. The goals, objectives, and strategies provide direction on how to reduce these risks and impacts through good planning practices, training, public information, and allocation of resources by Taos County, regional partners, and community members.

The Hazard Mitigation goals, objectives, and strategies address making Taos County less vulnerable to hazards through warning systems, radar coverage, and accommodations at emergency shelters; reduction of flooding hazards and dam failures through updates to floodplain and floodway maps, improvements to culverts, low water crossings, and bridges, and continuation in the National Flood Insurance Program; reduction of wildfire disasters through the creation of defensible space, and working with water associations on increasing water storage capacity for fire suppression; improving the capacity of critical and vulnerable facilities to better respond to hazardous spills and accidents by providing funding to Taos Fire/EMS County for equipment, ongoing training, and staffing.

## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The Implementation Plan element (Chapter 11) provides guidance on creating a system of checks and balances to ensure implementation of the *Comprehensive Plan* and series of tables organized by plan element that list each of the strategies that will help achieve the community's vision for the future of Taos County. The tables identify a time frame and responsible lead entity and potential partners for accomplishing each of the strategies. The implementation time frames are defined as follows:

- ◀ 2025-2027 (short);
- ◀ 2028-2032 (medium);

- ◀ 2033-2040 (long);
- ◀ On-going (no end date).

The implementation schedule is intended to assist the Taos County Commission, Planning Commission, County staff, and the community in measuring the successful progress and overall implementation of the *Comprehensive Plan*.

## 1.5 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement ensures the *Comprehensive Plan* is an expression of the values and aspirations of residents. The community engagement process for Taos County included a Steering Committee, eight public meetings, a Community Survey, and numerous stakeholder interviews.

### STEERING COMMITTEE

Taos County established a Steering Committee to provide “on-the-ground” input to the consultants tasked with updating the *Comprehensive Plan*. Steering Committee members included business owners, local community leaders, agency representatives, and other interested residents. As a group, the Steering Committee provided input on the strengths and weaknesses of the previous *Comprehensive Plan* and throughout the planning process by meeting with the consultants and reviewing and providing input at each major milestone. Several individual Steering Committee members who represented other agencies or community groups were also interviewed by the consultants. Taos County staff participated in all meetings with the Steering Committee.

## PUBLIC MEETINGS

### April 8, 2024

Two visioning meetings were held at the Taos County Commission Chambers (with Consensus Planning and County Planning staff), as well as one meeting held at the Senior Center in Questa on April 30, 2024, and one meeting held at the Senior Center in Chamisal on May 2, 2024, (with Taos County Planning staff). The purpose of the meetings was to introduce the community to the *Comprehensive Plan* process and to conduct a visioning process with the participants. After a brief introduction by Rachel Romero (Taos County Planning Director), Jackie Fishman (Principal, Consensus Planning) gave a presentation on why planning is important, *Comprehensive Plan* elements, guiding principles for public outreach, and planning process and general project timeframes. She also summarized the key takeaways from the results of the ongoing Community Survey designed to provide broad community input on important issues to be addressed in the *Comprehensive Plan*. After the presentation, the participants were asked the following questions:

1. How would you describe Taos County to someone who has never been to Taos County and was thinking about moving here?
2. What are the three most important aspects of Taos County that should be preserved for the future?
3. What are the three most important aspects of Taos County that should be changed or improved?



The first of two visioning meetings held at the Taos County Commission Chambers in April 2024.



The first of two draft alternative meetings held at the Taos Senior Center in October 2024.

4. It's now 2045, how would you describe Taos County to someone who is thinking about moving here?

For Question #4, the participants were invited to write visions for Taos County on note cards. See Appendix B for the vision statements written by Community Members at these two meetings.

#### **October 7, 2024**

The second public meetings were held on October 7, 2024, from 2:30 to 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. at the Taos Senior Center. The purpose of the meetings was to present and receive public input on draft goals and objectives organized by planning element and alternative future land use scenarios. Participants were asked to “vote” on each goal and objective, with a green dot signifying they thought the goal or objective was good to go, a yellow dot signifying they liked the goal or objective but thought it needed rewording, and a red dot signifying they did not like the goal or objective. Participants were encouraged to write comments under the draft goals and objectives.

After they completed the goals and objectives exercise, Consensus Planning presented two alternative land use scenarios and explained the commonalities and the differences between the two scenarios. Participants were asked to vote on their preferred land use scenario and provide written comments on a worksheet created by Consensus Planning. The input provided by the

public at this meeting was incorporated into the *Comprehensive Plan*.

#### **March 10, 2025**

The third and final set of public meetings were held on March 10, 2025, from 2:30 to 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. at the Taos County Commission Chambers. The purpose of the meetings was to present the draft Comprehensive Plan and receive input from the participants. The draft Comprehensive Plan was posted on the project website for review prior to the public meetings.

**WILL ADD TO THIS DESCRIPTION AFTER THE MEETING HAS OCCURRED**

## COMMUNITY SURVEY

The consultants, in conjunction with the Steering Committee, created a Community Survey that ran from February 9 to April 15, 2024, and was available in English and Spanish, and in hard copy and on Survey Monkey. The Community Survey contained a series of 41 questions covering a wide range of issues pertinent to Taos County. A total of 1,146 people took the surveys. A brief summary of the key takeaways from the Community Survey results follow below; see Appendix C for the full survey results.

### PROFILE

- ◀ The majority of the participants, 63%, were female, and a nearly equal amount (approximately 28% each) were aged 25 to 49, 50 to 64, and 65 to 74.
- ◀ Approximately 59% described themselves as “White” and 21% described themselves as “Hispano or Latino”; 39% identified as “Spaniard” and 29% as “Mexican American/ Chicano”.
- ◀ Total household income was relatively evenly spread out, with a moderately larger group over \$100,000.
- ◀ 51% have lived in Taos County for more than 20 years.
- ◀ The majority of participants, 91%, live in Taos County full time; 44% live in unincorporated Taos County, 23% in the Town of Taos, and 21% indicated they live in other Taos County communities.
- ◀ 77% said they are likely to live in Taos County for the next five years.
- ◀ Asked why they live in Taos County, 58% of the responses were “they like the location”; 50% were “rural lifestyle”; and 31% were “family is here”. Other responses included the traditional culture and the landscape.
- ◀ Asked what would cause them to leave Taos County, 40% of the responses were “lack of housing options” and 39% were “lack of living wages”.

### QUALITY OF LIFE

- ◀ Asked their favorite aspects of Taos County, 80% of responses were “visual beauty”; 70% were “traditional cultures”; 68% were “outdoor recreation”; and 66% were “rural lifestyle”.
- ◀ Asked what regional attractions they use, 80% of responses were “Carson National Forest”; 71% were “Rio Grande Gorge”; 69% were “Taos Plaza”; and 53% were “Taos Pueblo”.
- ◀ Asked their level of satisfaction with public safety services 32% of the responses were “excellent” or “good” and 60% were “fair” or “poor”.
- ◀ Asked what areas of improvement to the visual appearance of the County are needed, 66% of responses were “reduce litter”; 52% “streetscapes”; 47% were “commercial buildings or properties”; 44% were landscaping; other answers included clean-up graffiti, weed control, and improve roads and sidewalks.

### EMPLOYMENT

- ◀ 66% are employed; of those, 72% have full-time jobs and 34% have more than one job.
- ◀ 56% have in-person jobs; 17% work a hybrid of in-person and remote; and 12% work remotely.
- ◀ Asked the type of employment they are engaged in, 15% of the responses were “Administrative”; 14% were “Education”; 14% were “Arts, Entertainment”; and 14% were “Government”.
- ◀ Of the participants who are unemployed, 79% said they were retired.
- ◀ Asked if they needed job training, what type would it be, 19% of the responses were “computer technology”; 13% were “building trades”; and 11% were “business administration”.

## GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

- ◀ Asked their level of satisfaction with commercial retail/services available in Taos County, 62% of the responses were “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied”.
- ◀ Asked where they shop, 75% of the responses were “Taos”; 69% were “Santa Fe”; and 50% were “online”.
- ◀ Asked what is limiting growth in Taos County, 77% of the responses were “lack of affordable housing”; 61% were “lack of living wages”; and 42% were “lack of healthcare access”; Other answers included growth should be limited, water, and education.
- ◀ Asked what areas of economic development should Taos County focus on, 60% of the responses were “healthcare services”; 54% were “renewable energy”; 52% were “agriculture”; and 52% were “outdoor recreation”.

## TRANSPORTATION

- ◀ Asked what transportation modes they use, 99% of the responses were “personal car, truck, or motorcycle” and 26% were “walk”.
- ◀ Asked what their level of satisfaction is with the current roadway conditions and maintenance, 43% of the responses were “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” and 57% were “very dissatisfied” or “somewhat dissatisfied”.
- ◀ Asked which roads or intersections were most in need of improvement, the top roads needing improvement included Blueberry Hill, Hondo Seco Road, NM 240, US 64, US 68, etc.

## WATER

- ◀ Asked how they access water, 61% of the responses were “private well”; 20% were

“municipal water system”; and 14% were “water association”.

- ◀ Asked to identify the biggest issues facing the County’s water supply, 73% of responses were “limited water supply for a growing population”; 38% were “water rights challenges” and 36% were “water systems need updates”.

## HOUSING

- ◀ 80% said they own or are purchasing their home.
- ◀ Asked if they rent, why haven’t they purchased a home, 69% of responses were “cannot afford the mortgage and ongoing costs”; 63% were “cannot afford the down payment” and 44% were “cannot qualify for a mortgage”.
- ◀ Asked if they can’t qualify for a mortgage, what obstacles are preventing them from qualifying, 80% of responses were “cannot find a home in an affordable price range”; 47% were “cannot find an affordable home where I want to live”; 30% were “cannot find an affordable home that met my family’s size needs”.
- ◀ Asked what their level of agreement is regarding increasing the supply of affordable housing in Taos County, 88% agreed or strongly agreed.
- ◀ Asked what housing development types are needed, 86% of responses were “affordable housing”; 69% were “starter homes”; and 56% were “rentals”.
- ◀ Asked what housing types are needed, 74% of the responses were “single-family detached homes”; 61% were “apartments”; and 44% were “duplexes”.
- ◀ Asked what the most important housing issue is in Taos County, 34% of the responses were “lack of affordable home ownership options” and 27% were “rent too expensive”.

CHAPTER 2  
**Community  
Profile**



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## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Taos County is in north-central New Mexico surrounded by scenic views and mountain landscapes beloved by residents and travelers alike. Taos County is known for its rich cultural assets, traditional communities, and vast outdoor recreation opportunities. Communities within Taos County include Taos Pueblo and Picuris Pueblo; the incorporated communities of Taos, Red River, Questa, and Taos Ski Valley; and the unincorporated communities of Peñasco, Tres Piedras, Ojo Caliente, Costilla, Amalia, and many other small villages.

## 2.2 ECOREGION & GEOLOGY

Taos County encompasses diverse ecoregions and geological formations, contributing to its rich natural landscape. One prominent ecoregion within Taos County is the Southern Rocky Mountains, characterized by rugged terrain, high peaks, and alpine meadows. This ecoregion supports diverse flora and fauna adapted to mountainous environments, including coniferous forests dominated by ponderosa pine, douglas fir, and aspen species.

Adjacent to the Southern Rocky Mountains, Taos County also includes portions of the Colorado

Plateau ecoregion, known for its striking mesas, canyons, and desert landscapes. Geologic formations, such as the Rio Grande Rift and the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, contribute to the region's unique topography. The Colorado Plateau ecoregion supports vegetation adapted to arid conditions, including juniper woodlands, sagebrush steppe, and desert shrublands.

In addition to these ecoregions, Taos County is influenced by the geology of the Rio Grande Rift, a prominent tectonic feature that extends from Colorado to Mexico. This rift zone has shaped the region's landscape, creating valleys and basins along the course of the Rio Grande. Geologic formations within Taos County include volcanic rocks, sedimentary layers, and uplifted fault blocks, providing valuable insights into the region's geological history and processes.

Taos County's ecoregions and geology contribute to its ecological diversity and scenic beauty, attracting visitors worldwide to explore its natural wonders and outdoor recreational opportunities. Preserving and managing these landscapes is essential for maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem health in this culturally and ecologically significant area of New Mexico.



Rio Grande Gorge.

## 2.4 DEMOGRAPHICS

### POPULATION

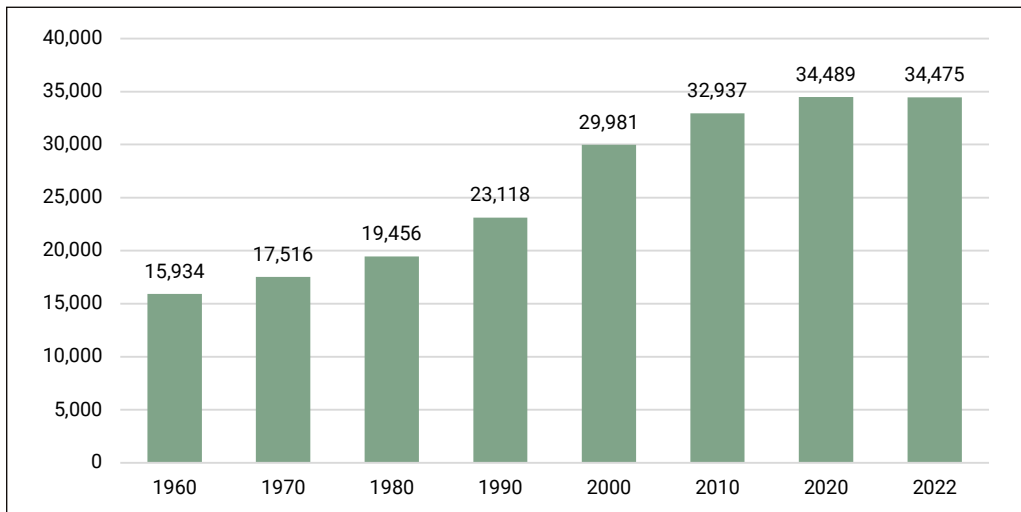
In 1960, the population of Taos County was just under 16,000. The most significant population growth occurred between 1990 and 2000, with an increase of 30%. The population of Taos County has stabilized in recent years. By 2022, the population had grown to 34,475 people (see Figure 2.1).

In 2022, Taos County had a population density of 15.6 per square mile. Economic factors, such as job availability and the lack of affordable housing, continue to influence population trends in the area.

Population shifts also occurred in the incorporated communities. Taos Ski Valley experienced 1.5% loss and Red River experienced a limited 0.6% growth between 2012 and 2022. In comparison, the Town of Taos and Questa Village experienced positive growth of 14% and 31%, respectively (see Figure 2.2).

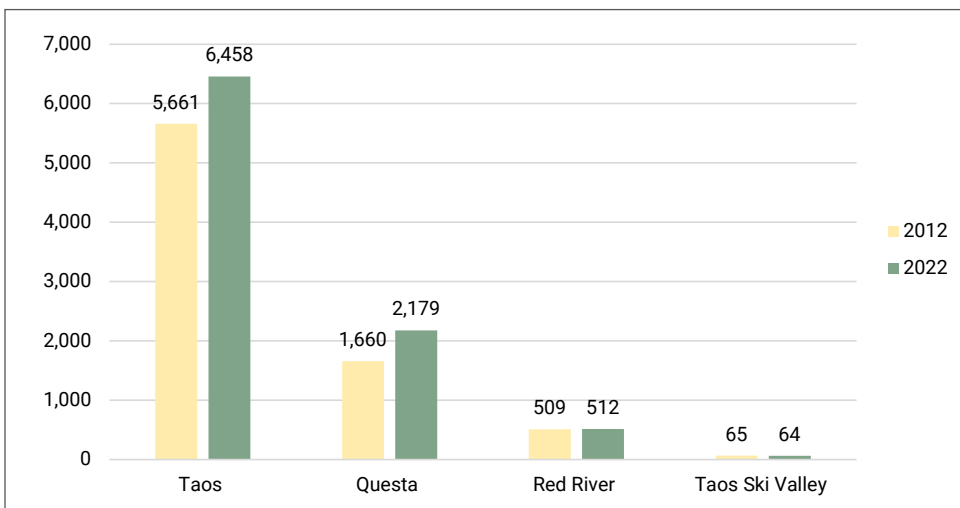
Population characteristics are influenced by birth and death rates, migration patterns, and local economic conditions. Between 2012 and 2022, the median age in Taos County increased by 9.7%, from 45.4 to 49.8 years. This is a significantly older median age compared to New Mexico, which increased by 5.5%, from 36.6 to 38.3 years.

FIGURE 2.1: TAOS COUNTY HISTORICAL POPULATION



Source: UNM Bureau of Business & Economic Research (BBER) and ACS, 5-Year Estimates, 2022.

FIGURE 2.2: INCORPORATED COMMUNITIES POPULATION



Source: ACS, 5-year Estimates, 2022.

Between 2012 and 2022, the overall population in Taos County grew by 5.2%, from 32,775 to 34,475. Major shifts occurred in the age cohorts of less than 15 years and those 60 years and above in Taos County. Between 2012 and 2022, there was a 29.9% decrease in the under 5 years cohort, a 3.5% decrease in individuals aged 5 to 9, and a 5.1% decrease in those aged 10 to 14. As for the senior population, there was a 66.5% increase in

those 65 years and older. Between 2012 and 2022, the number of individuals aged 75 to 79 increased by 92.1%, and those aged 80 to 84 increased by 143.7%.

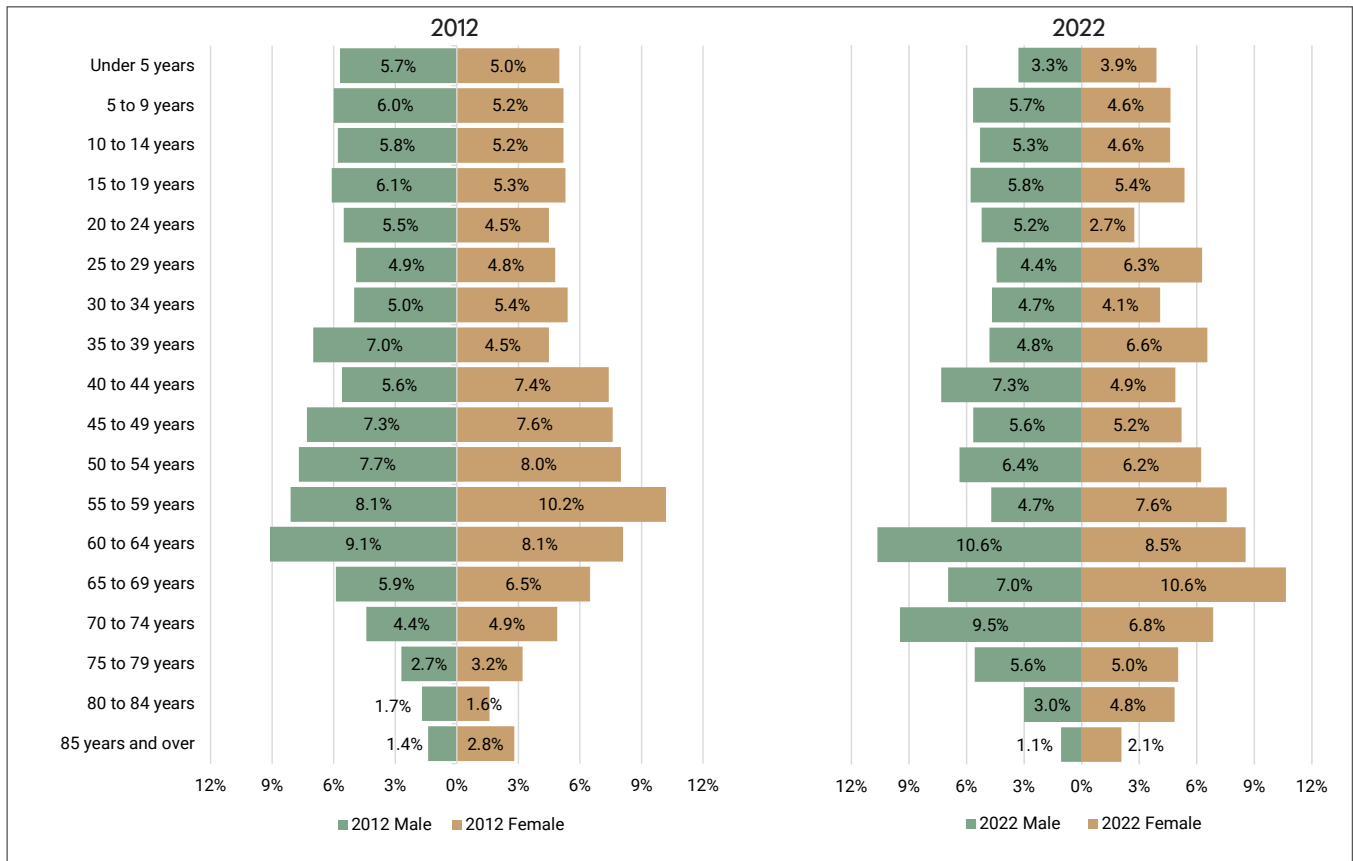
In comparison, the New Mexico average of individuals 65 years and older has increased by 38.9%, with those 75 to 79 increased by 29.4% and those 80 to 84 increased by 25.4% (see Table 2.1).

**TABLE 2.1: POPULATION - 2022 & 2012**

	Taos County			New Mexico		
	2012	2022	% Change	2012	2022	% Change
Total population	32,775	34,475	5.2%	2,055,287	2,112,463	2.8%
Male	16,132	17,035	5.6%	1,015,710	1,052,858	3.7%
Female	16,643	17,440	4.8%	1,039,577	1,059,605	1.9%
Under 5 years	1,770	1,241	-29.9%	143,870	115,927	-19.4%
5 to 9 years	1,835	1,772	-3.5%	141,815	129,584	-8.6%
10 to 14 years	1,803	1,710	-5.1%	141,815	143,228	1.0%
15 to 19 years	1,868	1,923	2.9%	147,981	143,986	-2.7%
20 to 24 years	1,639	1,368	-16.5%	143,870	145,830	1.4%
25 to 29 years	1,606	1,850	15.2%	139,760	140,466	0.5%
30 to 34 years	1,704	1,508	-11.5%	127,428	139,012	9.1%
35 to 39 years	1,868	1,963	5.1%	125,373	136,561	8.9%
40 to 44 years	2,130	2,099	-1.5%	123,317	127,780	3.6%
45 to 49 years	2,425	1,870	-22.9%	139,760	117,716	-15.8%
50 to 54 years	2,556	2,171	-15.1%	145,925	119,360	-18.2%
55 to 59 years	3,015	2,119	-29.7%	135,649	131,274	-3.2%
60 to 64 years	2,819	3,304	17.2%	121,262	139,067	14.7%
65 to 69 years	2,032	3,043	49.8%	88,377	127,201	43.9%
70 to 74 years	1,540	2,806	82.2%	67,824	102,515	51.1%
75 to 79 years	950	1,826	92.1%	51,382	66,508	29.4%
80 to 84 years	557	1,358	143.7%	34,940	43,819	25.4%
85 years and over	688	544	-21.0%	32,885	42,629	29.6%
Under 18 years	5,826	5,838	0.2%	515,877	473,478	-8.2%
65 years and older	5,753	9,577	66.5%	275,408	382,672	38.9%
Median age (years)	45.4	49.8	9.7%	36.6	38.6	5.5%

Source: ACS, 5-year Estimates, 2012 and 2022.

FIGURE 2.3: TAOS COUNTY AGE COHORTS BY GENDER, 2012 & 2022



Source: ACS, 5-year Estimates, 2012 and 2022.

Population pyramids provide a graphic representation of the changes in age cohorts. The population pyramid of Taos County in 2012 in Figure 2.3 shows a relatively even distribution of males and females cohorts up through 30 to 34 years. The 35 to 39 cohort skewed towards males, and starting at 45 to 49, distribution between males and females were more even.

In contrast, the 2022 population pyramid shows a more unbalanced profile, with somewhat smaller young and working-age populations and a larger senior population. The differences between males and females were somewhat more pronounced in 2022, particularly starting with the 60 to 64 cohort and above. The overall lower rate of young cohorts, be it male or female, means in the future there will be fewer people replacing those who leave the workforce as they reach or exceed retirement age.

### BIRTH RATES

Birth rates are another important factor when analyzing the changes in population over time. The

birth rate in Taos County was 7.2 births per 1,000 population, lower than the New Mexico average, which was 10.9 births per 1,000 population. The lower birth rate is reflected in the population changes between 2012 and 2022, where as mentioned above, shows a significant drop in the under 5 years cohort.

### RACE & ETHNICITY

Race and ethnicity are typically self-identified. The U.S. Census Bureau provides categories for residents to choose the race or races they most closely identify. Ethnicity options is limited to whether someone is of Hispanic or Latino origin, which includes people of all races.

In 2022, the Hispanic population represented 56.8% of the total population in Taos County. Between 2012 and 2022, there was a 6.5% increase in the Hispanic population, from 18,376 to 19,575, which outpaced the 5.2% in overall population growth of Taos County.

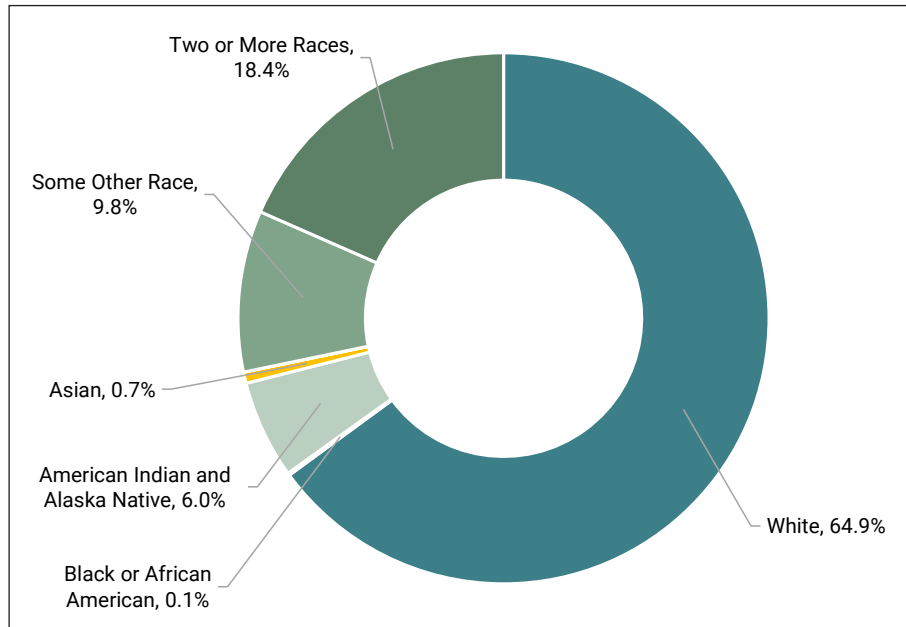
In comparison, the Hispanic population in New Mexico, 49.8%, was lower than Taos County in 2022. Notably, this population grew at a higher rate, 10.4%, than Taos County between 2012 and 2022.

In 2022, 64.9% of Taos County residents identified their race as “White”. Between 2012 and 2022, this segment of the population increased by 19.4%, from 18,757 to 22,387. In 2022, 18.4% of residents identified as “Two or more races”, representing a significant increase from 2012. Between 2012 and

2022, Taos County residents that identified as “Some other race” decreased by 66.9%.

These race and ethnicity metrics for Taos County were in stark contrast to New Mexico, where residents that identified as Hispanic or Latino increased by 10.4% and residents that identified as “White” decreased by 16.2% between 2012 and 2022. New Mexico residents that identified as “Some other race” decreased at a significantly smaller rate of 2.6% as compared to Taos County.

FIGURE 2.4: TAOS COUNTY RACE BREAKDOWN, 2022



Source: ACS, 5-year Estimates, 2022.

	Taos County			New Mexico		
	2012	2022	% Change	2012	2022	% Change
<b>Total population</b>	32,775	34,475	5.2%	2,055,287	2,112,463	2.8%
<b>Ethnicity</b>						
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	18,376	19,575	6.5%	952,569	1,051,626	10.4%
Not Hispanic or Latino	14,399	14,900	3.5%	1,102,718	1,060,837	-3.8%
<b>Race</b>						
White	18,757	22,387	19.4%	1,492,641	1,250,614	-16.2%
Black or African American	158	48	-69.6%	41,634	44,894	7.8%
American Indian and Alaska Native	1,945	2,063	6.1%	189,785	198,140	4.4%
Asian	254	236	-7.1%	26,855	34,400	28.1%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	4	3	-25.0%	1,344	1,849	37.6%
Some Other Race	10,225	3,382	-66.9%	240,189	233,978	-2.6%
Two or More Races	1,432	6,356	343.9%	62,839	348,588	454.7%

Source: ACS, 5-year Estimates, 2012 and 2022.

## MIGRATION

Migration patterns provide additional insight into population changes within a community. People relocate for a variety of reasons, including job opportunities and family needs. The Census Flows Mapper provides the number of individuals entering and leaving Taos County to calculate the net migration.

In 2020, the total in-migration for Taos County was 1,903, including 807 people from different states, 987 from other New Mexico counties, and 109 from outside the United States. The total out-migration for Taos County was 702, including people that moved out of New Mexico and 470 for those who moved to a different county within New Mexico (see Figure 2.6).

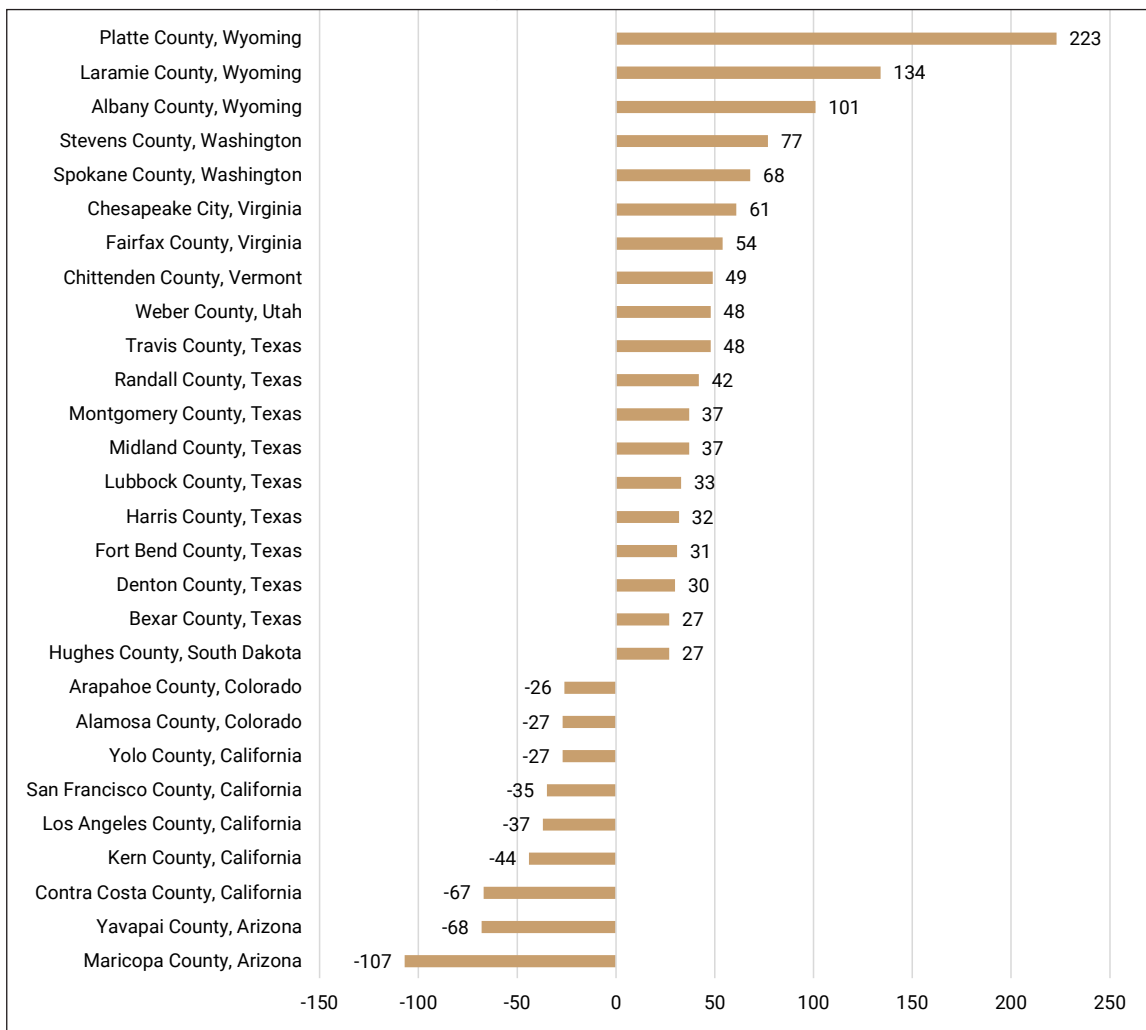
## POPULATION PROJECTIONS

The University of New Mexico Geospatial and Population Studies provides population projections on a county level to 2050. Projections show that Taos County will increase while the surrounding counties will all decrease in population by 2050. Colfax County and Mora County show the most significant reductions, 47.4%, and 64.2%, respectively. In comparison, the population of Taos County is projected to expand by 4.5% from 34,488 in 2020 to 36,048 by 2050 (see Figure 2.5).

## 2.5 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The link between educational achievement and quality of life is well-established. A higher level of education benefits the individual person as

FIGURE 2.5: TAOS COUNTY MIGRATION, 2020

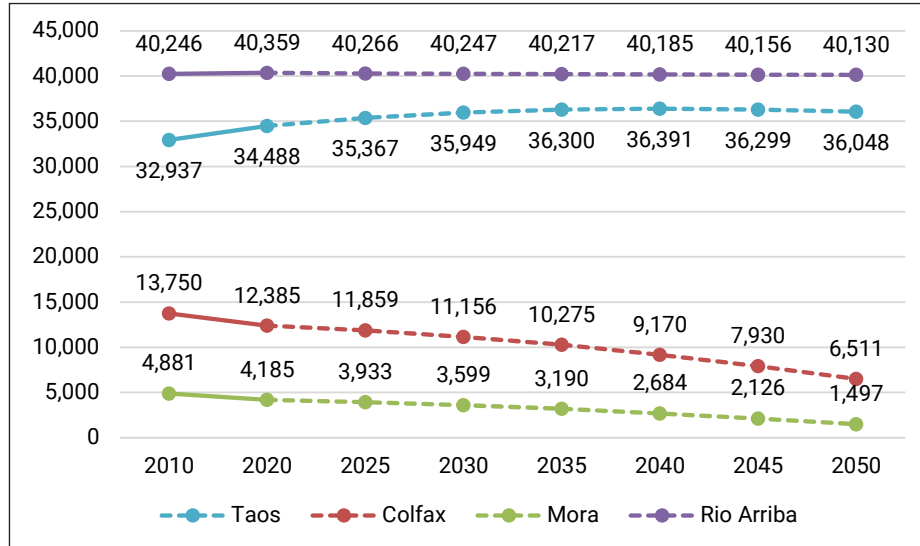


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Data Flows Mapper, 2016-2020.

well as the community. Between 2012 and 2022, educational attainment for Taos County residents aged 25 and over showed significant improvement. Residents with a high school diploma or higher

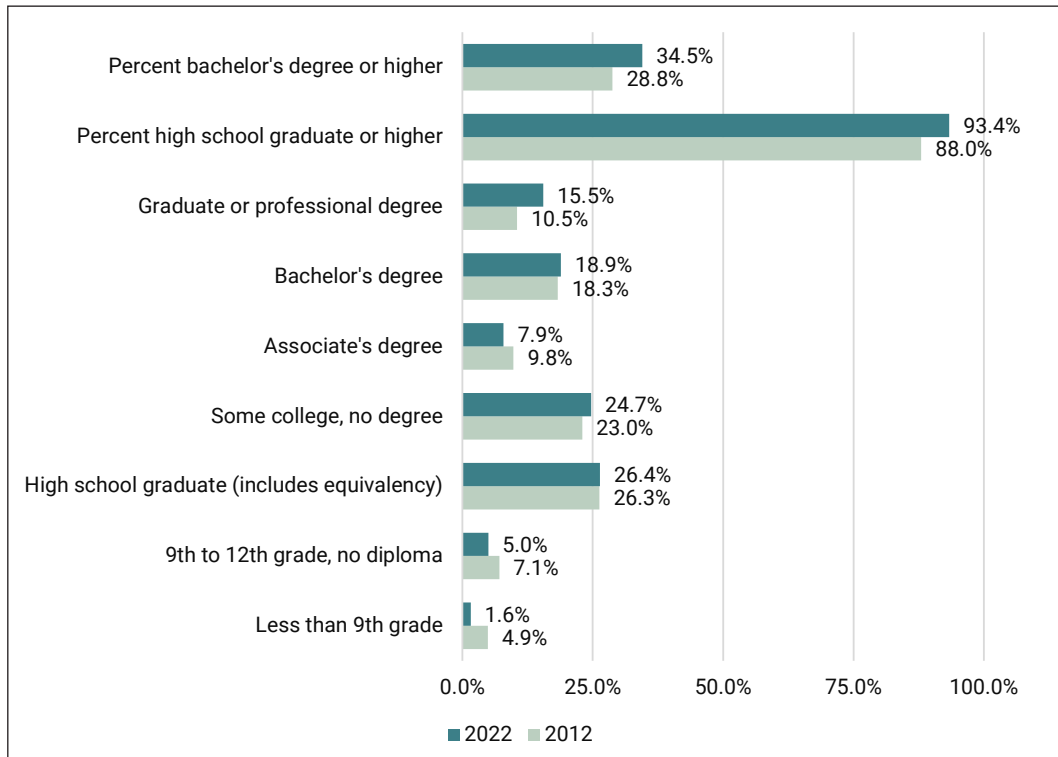
increased from 88.0% in 2012 to 93.4% in 2022. Residents with a bachelor's degree or higher also increased from 28.8% to 34.5% during the same period (see Figure 2.7).

FIGURE 2.6: POPULATION PROJECTIONS



Source: University of New Mexico Geospatial and Populations Studies.

2.7: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



Source: ACS, 5-year Estimates, 2022.

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CHAPTER 3  
**Community  
Culture**



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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Taos County has a rich and proud cultural identity, where cultural melding is evident in the built environment, ethnic identities, and land settlements. The people of Taos County have maintained their cultural heritage throughout generations, even as the region has undergone significant transformation. This chapter aims to explore the unique cultural significance of Taos County and how it has been preserved over time.

### 3.2 HISTORY OF TAOS COUNTY

Taos County's history is influenced by Native American, Spanish, and American cultures. People have been living in this area for about 8,000 years, starting from the hunting and gathering Archaic Period. Around 1,000 A.D., many now abandoned pueblos were found throughout Taos Valley. Archaeological evidence suggests that the Taos Indigenous people settled in Pot Creek after migrating from the Four Corners region. Around 1320, the village was abandoned and the residents moved to what is now Taos and Picuris Pueblos.

The colonization of New Mexico began in 1598, Fray Francisco de Zamora was sent by Spanish Governor Don Juan de Oñate to establish a mission at Taos Pueblo. Despite resistance from the tribe, the first Catholic Church in the Pueblo, San Geronimo de Taos, was built around 1620.

In 1689, Spanish governor Diego de Vargas legally recognized the Pueblos' right to at least a portion of their ancestral lands and waters by issuing land grants of about 17,500 acres to each Pueblo. Through reacquisition of the Blue Lake tract and other purchases, Taos Pueblo comprises approximately 100,000 acres and Picuris Pueblo comprises 15,000 acres. Subsequent Spanish land grants could not infringe on Pueblo grants, and the Spanish government provided legal protection and advocates for the Pueblos. In all, there were once 35 land grants in Taos County comprised mostly of community grants that were communally owned and managed by the local community.

New Mexico was annexed into the United States subsequent to the Mexican-American War through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. Taos

County was formed in 1852 as one of the original nine counties of the New Mexico Territory and New Mexico became the 47th state in 1912. The Town of Taos, the largest municipality in Taos County was incorporated in 1934.

### 3.3 TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

#### TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY

The Pueblos of New Mexico are self-governing with decision making over laws and policies, interaction with federal, state, and local governments. Pueblos engage independently in business, commercial, and administer a wide-range of public services - law enforcement, housing, social services, elder care, environmental protection, and health and safety. Within Taos County boundaries are Taos Pueblo and Picuris Pueblo, who are valuable partners with the County in maintaining land and water rights and protecting the environment.

#### TAOS PUEBLO

Taos Pueblo is the northernmost of the 19 Pueblos in New Mexico and is located in north-central Taos County, near the sacred Blue Lake. Taos Pueblo estimates that this location was part of a series of settlements established in the early 13th and 14th centuries as the ancestors migrated out of Chaco Canyon and Mesa Verde. The main part of the existing buildings is believed to have been constructed between 1000 and 1450 A.D., and has been continuously inhabited since that time. The Pueblo has developed programs to teach youth and adults their language to ensure the continuation of their native Tiwa language. Approximately 150 people live within the walls of the Pueblo, with approximately 1,900 living on surrounding Taos Pueblo lands.

In 1965, Taos Pueblo was declared a National Historic Landmark. In 1970, Taos Pueblo recovered 48,000 acres of wilderness, including the sacred Blue Lake, that was taken by the U.S. Government to become part of the National Forest lands. Blue Lake provides the Pueblo with a continuous water source and is an integral part of its spiritual, cultural, and physical identity. In 1992, Taos Pueblo was admitted into the World Heritage Society as one of the most significant historic and cultural landmarks in the world.

## PICURIS PUEBLO

Located in southeastern Taos County lies Picuris Pueblo, whose lands run along the Rio Pueblo in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. The native Tiwa name for Picuris is P'iwweltha. Picuris is the smallest of New Mexico's Pueblo Tribes, with approximately 75 people living within the tribal lands.

The land of the Picuris contains adobe structures, excavated dwellings, the restored San Lorenzo de Picuris Church and the Picuris Museum. In recent years, Picuris Pueblo became a member of the Inter-Tribal Bison Cooperative, which works to restore bison to tribal lands. Bison now number over fifty and the herd continues to grow.

## 3.4 HISPANO SETTLEMENTS

By 1615, a number of Spanish families had settled in the fertile Taos Valley, with Ranchos being the first settlement. The Spanish introduced innovations in adobe architecture, which the Pueblo people were already utilizing. Adobe was used as the primary material for houses, municipal buildings, and churches. The Spanish also provided practices in agriculture utilizing irrigation techniques including a web of waterways called acequias that provided water to each farm parcel. Spanish land parcels were long and rectangular, and each parcel connected to the acequia to redeem their allotted water supply. This land settlement is still evident in the land pattern of rural Taos County today.

## LAND GRANTS

Spain, and later Mexico, made grants to individuals, towns, and groups to promote development in the southwestern United States, including New Mexico. Pueblo tribes were also the receivers of land grants. Common land was set aside within each land grant for communal use. Under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which formally ended the Mexican-American War, the United States agreed to recognize property ownership including community land grants that did not have individual owners.

There are approximately 35 land grants in Taos County. The earliest community land grants in Taos County are Cristobal de la Serna (1710), Gijosa,

which became Ranchos (1715), and Embudo (1725). Heirs of the traditional Hispano Land Grants continue to adjudicate rights to land grants through land grant boards and activist organizations.

There are thousands of "lineas" in Taos County, which are parcels carved out of land assumed to be common land. Lineas are evident throughout Taos County, particularly within the Cristobal de Serna Land Grant, just south of the Town of Taos. These lineas are extremely narrow, sometimes only several feet wide and hundreds of feet long. This land use pattern does present challenges for development and land ownership.

## HISTORIC CHURCHES

Churches are at the heart of Taos County communities, demonstrating the 500 year history of Spanish settlements in Northern New Mexico. The architecture is modeled on the marble and stone gothic cathedrals of Europe, instead using local available materials of clay and straw for adobe bricks and piñon trees for vigas and structural support. The interiors are decorated with retablos (paintings of saints) and santos (carved wooden statues of saints and other biblical figures).

Northern New Mexico religious art is typically created with local materials and tools. This art is distinctive to the region and was the main decoration of the local churches for centuries. The adobe churches of Taos County reflect the blending of cultures. The churches on Pueblo lands contain paintings of Pueblo spirit beings depicted alongside Catholic iconography. Communities hold fiestas and feast day celebrations centered on the churches and the saints they are named after.

The San Francisco de Asis Church, located in Ranchos de Taos, is a historic and an architecturally significant Catholic Church. Construction of the church began around 1772 and was completed in 1815. The church was at the center of the plaza, which provided protection against Comanche attacks. The distinctive architecture made the church iconic with its twin bell towers, an arched portal entrance, hand crafted ceilings beams, hand-carved corbels, and buttresses that project from several portions of the main walls. The church is also home to "The Shadow of the Cross" painted



Top: Sagrado Corazon in Costilla, c. 1890. Bottom left: Concepcion Immaculada in Tres Piedras, c. 1900; Bottom right: San Jose de Garcia in Las Trampas, c. 1760-1776.

in 1896 by Henri Ault, which appears to glow in the dark for no apparent reason. In 1970, the San Francisco de Asis Church was designated as a National Historic Landmark, and today it stands as one of the few remaining original buildings in Taos.

### ACEQUIA CULTURE

Agriculture and acequia culture are woven into the fabric of Taos County. The County's lifeblood is its agriculture, and made possible by the water that flows through the acequia system. Prior to the arrival of the Spanish, the Pueblo people had been sharing water for centuries. The Spanish brought

technical knowledge and governance frameworks for the waterways, similar to those in Spain from the Moors' occupation.

Acequias collect water from nearby springs, rivers, or mountain streams and divert it to the community. They are more than water distribution systems; they provide social and economic cohesion through customs that uphold community control of water distribution and acequia health. The fundamental principle of acequia culture is that water is a communal resource, not a mere commodity.

Acequia water is distributed equitably to *parciantes* (members), regardless of wealth. Members do not just use the water in a ditch; they *belong* to the acequia and have both physical and spiritual responsibilities to maintain this sacred resource. Every spring, acequia associations gather to clean the acequias in preparation for the water to flow to each parcel of land. The local community blesses the acequia before the release of the sacred water, representing hopes for sustenance and bounty.

With the Anglo-American colonization of the area, communal rights to the water have been contested in an effort to establish private ownership of the acequias. The State of New Mexico has provided statutory protections to protect acequia culture. In 1907, New Mexico passed the “Acequia Act”, which designated acequias as political subdivisions of the state and defined membership criteria, rules and election duties of the *comisión* (commission) and *mayordomo* (ditch overseer) and allowed for civil penalties to be imposed on *parciantes* who fail to provide labor, payments, or who damage the acequia.

In 1987, New Mexico recognized the acequia associations’ power to acquire and own water rights, allowing the acequia to use and transfer the water rights and protect them from loss through non-use. Irrigation water rights are attached to

the land on which water is used, but can be taken from the land and transferred to another tract with a permit from the Office of the State Engineer. Although, in 2003, statutes were enacted to protect acequias from water right transfers if such transfers will harm the acequia or its members. It takes water to move water, so when water is transferred out of an acequia system, the system will no longer function properly because there will not be enough water to reach the land at the end of the acequia. Under these laws, an acequia association has decision-making authority over proposed water right transfers, and the Office of the State Engineer cannot approve the transfer unless written approval is received by the *comisión*.

The *Abeyta Water Rights Adjudication Settlement Agreement* negotiations began in 1989 between Taos Pueblo, Taos Valley Acequia Association (including its 55 member acequias), Town of Taos, El Prado Water & Sanitation District, and 12 Taos area Mutual Domestic Water Consumers Associations. The purpose of the negotiations was an effort to settle Taos Pueblo’s water rights claims to the Rio Hondo and Rio Pueblo de Taos stream systems. After more than 23 years of negotiations, the Agreement was signed in 2012. In exchange for adjudication of the Pueblo’s water rights with senior priorities, the Agreement provides funding for Mutual Benefit Projects and mitigation mechanisms



Acequia and agricultural land in Amalia.

for offsetting surface water depletion effects of groundwater pumping, preserves existing acequia water uses and historic water sharing arrangements between the Pueblo and non-Pueblo acequias on the Rio Lucero and Rio Pueblo, and also authorizes the United States to allocate 2,621 AFY of water supply contracts from the San Juan-Chama Project for the Pueblo, Town of Taos, and the Mutual Domestic Water Associations.

### ***Organizations and Associations***

There are approximately 100 acequia associations in Taos County. The largest is the Taos Valley Acequia Association, which manages 53-member acequia associations. The Taos Valley Acequia Association provides assistance to members, adjudicates water rights, and advocates for regulations to protect the acequias and the traditional agricultural way of life in Taos County.

Available resources for acequia associations include the New Mexico Acequia Association a non-profit organization, and the New Mexico Acequia Commission, established through the Local Government Division of the New Mexico Department of Finance and Administration. The New Mexico Acequia Association provides technical assistance to acequia associations, youth education, farming training and policy advocacy. It hosts the Congreso de las Acequias, which is

gathering of acequias and supporters from New Mexico and Colorado. The New Mexico Acequia Association publishes the Acequia Governance Handbook, which provides information on New Mexico water rights, adjudication, and acequia association governance organization and bylaws.

The New Mexico Acequia Commission is made up of local acequia members to advise the state on matters affecting acequia associations throughout New Mexico. The commission reviews the current level of litigation, level of litigation expected in the next year, and amount of work needed to amend, correct or adjudicate omitted water rights.

### **AGRICULTURE**

Farming and irrigation from acequias is based in Taos County culture, land, and ancestral traditions. Growing crops requires great care and respect for the water and acequia culture. Farming is practiced throughout Taos County, with the largest concentration of farms around Cerro and Costilla where acequias and historic Spanish land settlements are visible and small family farms are passed down through generations. Traditional crops include the three sisters; squash, corn, and beans. Crop cultivation has expanded to include alfalfa and specialty organic fruits and vegetables.



Ranchos de Taos, a Traditional Historic Community. Source: Taos News.

Animal raising is also a traditional agricultural activity in Taos County. Traditionally, animal raising included sheep and some cows, but today, cattle are the primary source of livestock. Many families manage grazing allotments, which allow special permits for grazing on BLM or US Forest Service lands for cattle or sheep. These allotments are often, inherited and are a source of pride and provide for the continuation of traditional practices of animal raising in Taos County.

### **Taos Land Trust**

The Taos Land Trust is an organization dedicated to preserving land in Taos County for future generations by creating voluntary conservation easements. The Taos Land Trust helps landowners create these voluntary conservation easements, ties the water resources to the land, and permanently restricts development so the land is always available for agricultural uses. The Taos Land Trust holds 42 conservation easements in Taos County and two properties open to the public, with easements held by the Santa Fe Conservation Trust. These include Rio Fernando Park (19.7 acres) and Rio Hondo Fishing Park (22.2 acres).

## **TRADITIONAL HISTORIC COMMUNITIES**

A New Mexico Traditional Historic Community is a legal designation provided by the New Mexico State Legislature to allow historic communities in unincorporated areas to maintain historic identity and autonomy. Traditional Historic Communities are addressed under two state statutes.

NMSA 3-7-1.1, Traditional historic community; qualifications; annexation restrictions. This statute dictates that a Traditional Historic Community is protected from annexation from neighboring municipalities and must meet certain qualifications, including documentation of at least 100 years of existence and have a distinctive character or traditional quality including structures or landmarks associated with the identity of the place.

NMSA 3-21-1, Zoning authority of county or municipality provides the process for designation. Under this Statute, the signatures of 25% of the

registered voters within the Traditional Historic Community must be collected and presented to the County Governing Body, which makes the final declaration. Traditional Historic Communities are excluded from extraterritorial zoning jurisdiction and the area is protected from annexation, unless the majority of registered voters petition for annexation.

The original statutory language only allowed Traditional Historic Communities to be designated in Santa Fe County. In 2019, this was expanded to include the entire state. In 2021, El Prado became the first Traditional Historic Community designated in Taos County. Las Comunidades del Valle de Los Ranchos, which includes the neighborhoods of La Cordillera, Los Cordovas, Llano Quemado, Ranchos de Taos, and Talpa, was designated in 2022. These communities identified cultural identities and traditions rooted in agriculture, family histories, churches, moradas, and acequias.

## **3.5 ARTS & CULTURE**

### **TAOS ART COLONY**

Taos County is internationally known for its long and vibrant arts scene and community of artists. The Taos Art Colony was the first significant art colony in the American West. In 1915, the Taos Society of Artists was founded by six artists drawn to the area by the landscape, cultures, clear air, and sunlight which dazzled the colors on the palette. The Taos Society of Artists promoted exhibitions and sale of the art across the United States. Taos became known as an arts center, which continues to this day.

The Taos art scene was further solidified by Mabel Dodge Luhan when she arrived in 1917 and was married to Tony Luhan from Taos Pueblo. The couple constructed a large hacienda where they hosted American and European artists, writers, and luminaries in Taos, including DH Lawrence, Georgia O'Keefe, Alfred Stieglitz, and Ansel Adams at Mabel's invitation. Over subsequent decades, Taos continued to attract artists and became the home of renowned figures such as R.C. Gorman, Ouray Meyers, and Nicolai Fechin.



Mabel Dodge Luhan house, the center of Taos arts and education for nearly 100 years.

### CURRENT ART COMMUNITY

Taos continues to have a vibrant art community with over 100 art galleries and an estimated 250 or more working artists. There are over 15 museums in Taos County, mostly in the Town of Taos. These internationally known museums are a draw for artists and visitors alike.

Ensuring that the creative arts culture in Taos is inclusive and equitable to Native American and Hispano artists is vital to the growth and sustainability of the arts scene in Taos.

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CHAPTER 4  
**Land Use**



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## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The Land Use element provides the primary framework for the Comprehensive Plan and is closely interdependent with other planning elements, such as Housing, Transportation, and Infrastructure. Land use planning helps promote social engagement and ensure community values are reflected in the built and natural environment, and determines how to accommodate growth and development in a sustainable and equitable way.

Taos County is primarily a rural county with over 68% of the land in public ownership. There are four incorporated towns and villages in Taos County, along with smaller unincorporated areas each carrying distinct identities and representing an important aspect of the County's rural character.

Participants in the Community Survey expressed their desire for small-scale growth, including commercial services. Responses showed support for county-wide zoning and protections for agricultural land, acequias, and scenic views and areas. Several responses pointed to the need for a more streamlined development process that allows development while protecting Taos County lands and assets.

## 4.2 EXISTING LAND USE

Taos County contains approximately 1,411,068 acres. Of that, approximately 446,078 acres (32%) are privately-owned. Historically, private land holdings or land grants in Taos County were owned by individuals, groups, or families with areas of land owned communally. Today, most private lands are owned by individual property owners and communal lands have been platted to allocate lots to heirs, resulting in lineas (see *Table 4.1 and Taos County Land Ownership map, page 34*).

### RESIDENTIAL

Taos County is comprised of small communities that contain rural residential land uses, many combining residential and small agricultural uses. Residential use is comprised of single-family homes on minimum one-acre lots, with most being larger than two-acres. There are some platted subdivisions in communities near the Town of Taos,

such as the Chamisa Vista Subdivision within the Upper Las Colonias Neighborhood and La Isla Subdivision located just outside of the Town of Taos municipal limits.

### AGRICULTURE

Taos County has a long tradition of farming and animal raising. The primary agricultural products are hay and grass and livestock. Irrigated agriculture is located in areas throughout Taos County, but concentrated in northern Taos County near Costilla, Amalia, and El Rito. A characteristic land use pattern in Taos County is the long narrow lots that are reflective of traditional Spanish land allotments. These land development patterns are evident in the rural parts of Taos County and are tied to the acequia systems that carry water for irrigation of agricultural lands. The USDA estimated in 2022, a total of 8,977 acres in Taos County was irrigated.

### COMMERCIAL

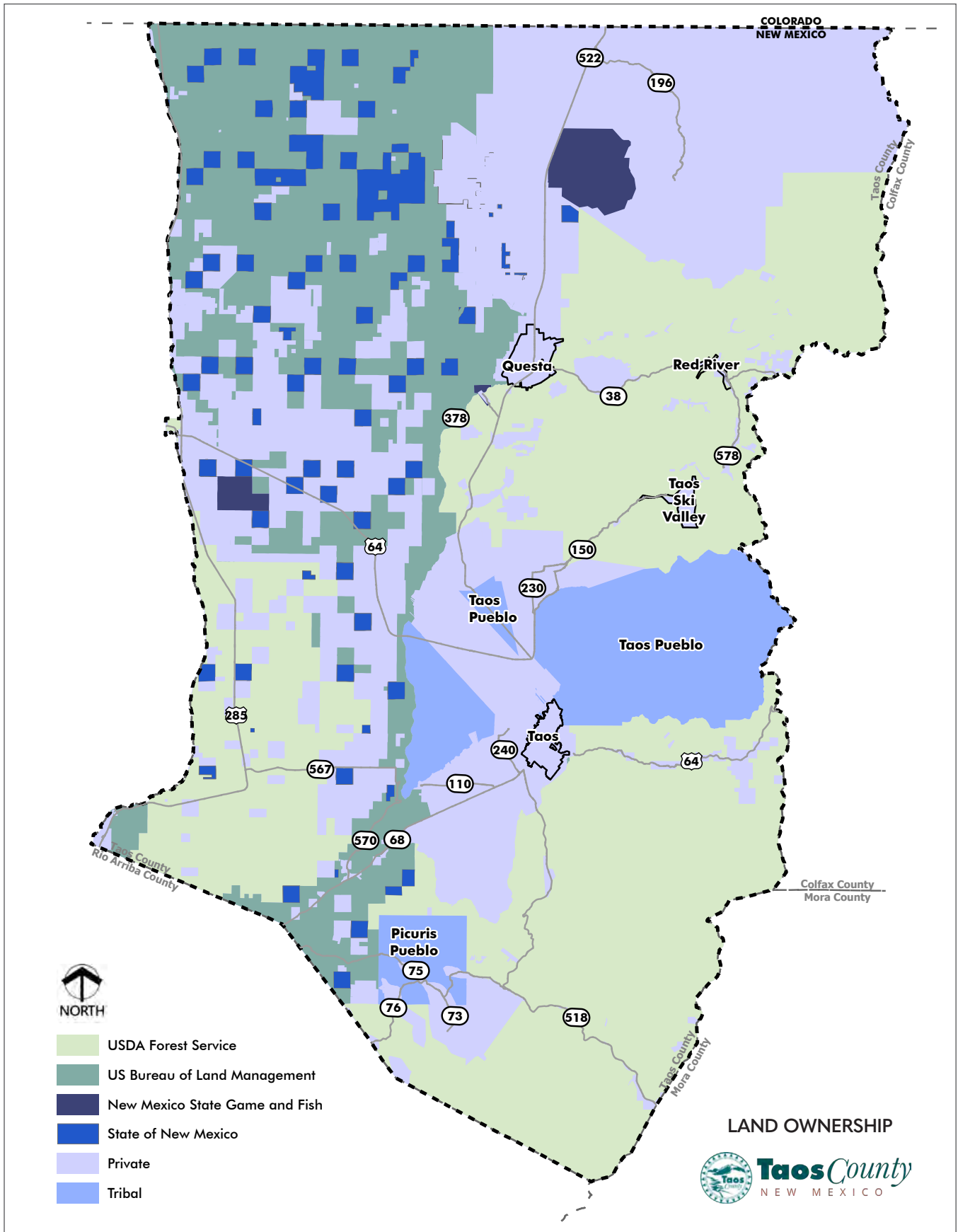
Commercial use is primarily located along highways and within the incorporated towns and villages in Taos County. Commercial use consists of small, locally-owned businesses such as shops, restaurants, and services such as rafting and spas. Smaller unincorporated communities in Taos County, such as Arroyo Seco, Arroyo Hondo, Peñasco, and Ojo Caliente, provide commercial retail and service uses that cater to local residents and draw in visitors.

## 4.3 LAND OWNERSHIP

### FEDERAL LAND

The USDA Forest Service manages approximately 519,463 acres of forest land comprising the Carson National Forest in Taos County. The US Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages 250,092 acres and includes the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument. Traditional communities can access federal land for uses that are vital for community cohesion and survival. The *Carson National Forest Land Use Plan (2022)* outlines the following important or traditional uses that are supported by the National Forest Service:

- ◀ Use of common waters (streams and acequias) for drinking, irrigating crops, and watering livestock



**TABLE 4.1: LAND OWNERSHIP**

Owner	Acres
New Mexico Game and Fish	16,564
Private	446,078
State of New Mexico (SLO)	61,625
Tribal	116,924
US Bureau of Land Management	250,092
USDA Forest Service	519,464
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,410,747</b>

Source: Taos County.

- ◀ Use of common pasture land for grazing
- ◀ Wood gathering for fuel wood, building materials, and ceremonial use
- ◀ Collection of soils and rocks for building materials and other purposes
- ◀ Gathering of plants and plant products
- ◀ Hunting and fishing for food and ceremonial purposes
- ◀ Religious and ceremonial uses of lands and waters, including for cemeteries, pilgrimages, calvarios, and shrines
- ◀ Recreational uses for weddings, family reunions, and dispersed camping

**STATE LAND**

The State Land Office manages 61,625 acres of state land within Taos County (*shown in dark blue on the Land Ownership map*). The land is held in trust for more than 20 beneficiaries, including public schools, state universities, hospitals, and other entities. The most prominent use on state lands within Taos County is grazing.

New Mexico Game and Fish manages two regions in Taos County totaling 16,564 acres (*shown in dark purple on the Land Ownership map*). The Urraca Wildlife Management Area encompasses 13,304 acres and is located approximately 12 miles north of Questa. The Tres Piedras Wildlife Area is approximately 3,260 acres and located in western Taos County near US 64. The Red River Fish Hatchery, located approximately 20 miles north of Taos, is one of six fish hatcheries throughout the state that is operated by the New Mexico Game and Fish Department. It is the state’s largest production hatchery providing about 1.7 million

rainbow trout a year, including more than 500,000 catchable 9-10 inch fish for stocking statewide.

**TRIBAL LANDS**

Tribes are distinct entities with sovereign rights. There are two tribes with land within Taos County, including Taos Pueblo and Picuris Pueblo. Tribal lands encompass 116,924 acres in Taos County (*shown in medium blue on the Land Ownership map*).

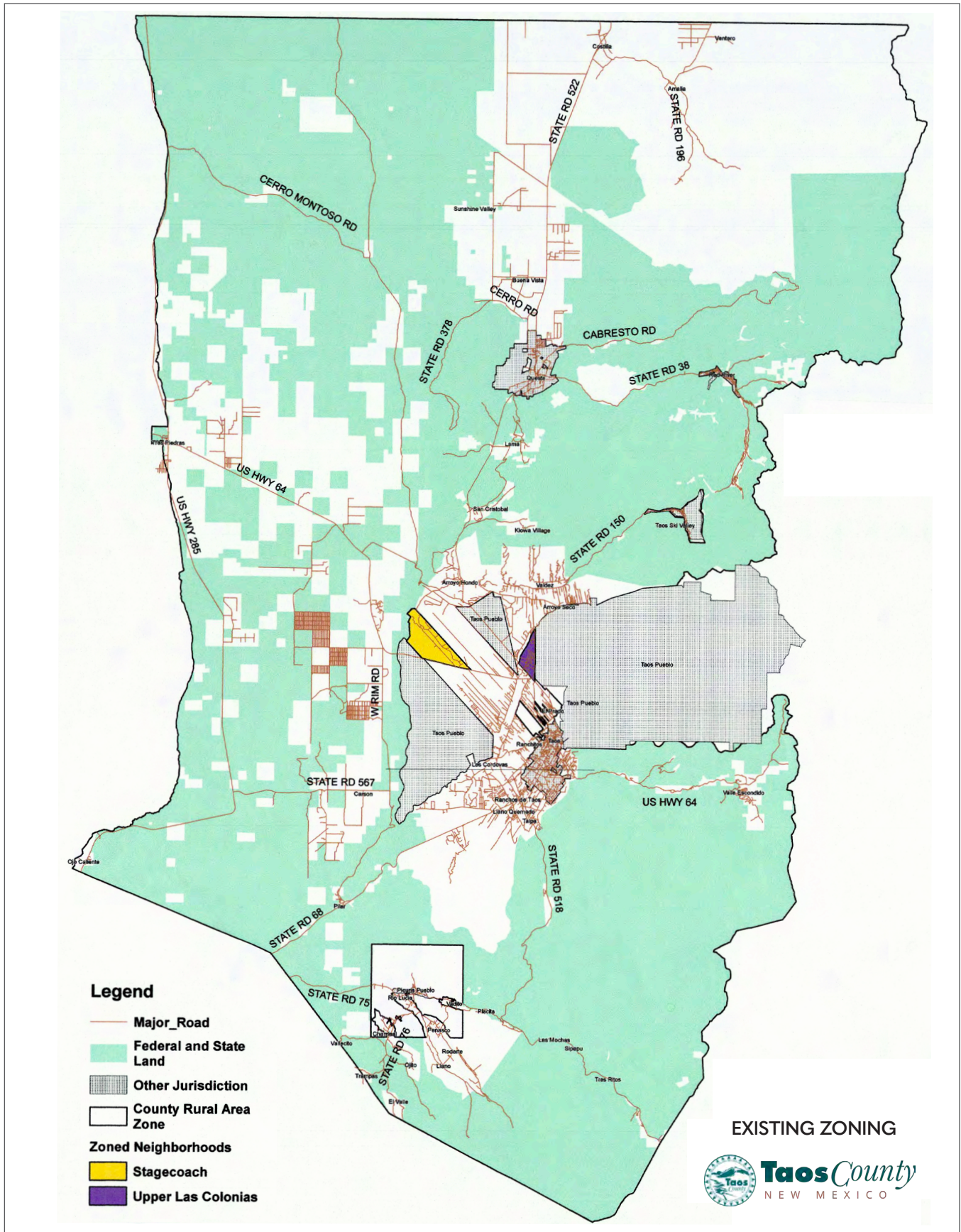
Taos Pueblo owns three separate tracts of land, including Tracts A, B, and C. They are located in close proximity to each other and encompass 48,000 acres. Tract C, located adjacent to the Town of Taos, is the largest, encompassing 101,338 acres. It contains the Pueblo center, Blue Lake, and mountainous terrain.

Picuris Pueblo is located in the southern portion of Taos County in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Picuris land encompasses 17,347 acres.

**4.4 LAND USE & ZONING REGULATIONS**

New Mexico state statutes (*Chapter 3, Articles 19-21, NMSA 1978*) require that local regulations must “be in accordance” with the Comprehensive Plan. The current *Taos County Land Use Regulations* were adopted by the Taos County Commission (Ordinance No. 2018-02) in September 2018 and amended in July 2019 (Amendment No. 2019-04). The goal of the *Taos County Land Use Regulations* is “to create a orderly, harmonious, and economically sound framework that promotes public health, safety, and welfare in the County.” The *Land Use Regulations* apply to the majority of Taos County, which is zoned County Rural Area, with the exception of two neighborhoods, Upper Los Colonias and Stagecoach, that have separate zoning regulations. The Neighborhood Zone functions as an overlay zone, applying standards to properties zoned County Rural Area.

The *Taos County Land Use Regulations* contains a permit review process for five types of development in Taos County. Taos County does not zone properties by use; therefore, no development can occur by right. Development is done on a lot-by-lot basis.



Article 4 delineates the process and performance standards for each development type, which include Residential Zoning Clearance, Commercial Zoning Clearance, Administrative Zoning Clearance, Special Use Zoning Permit, and Major Development Zoning Permit. All development requires notification and review by the Taos County Planning Department and an approved permit. Residential, commercial, and administrative permits are reviewed and processed by the Planning Director. Special use permits are reviewed and approved by the Taos County Planning Commission. Major developments are subject to review and recommendation by the Planning Commission and final approval by the Taos County Commission. All approved permits must meet the performance standards for each use as delineated in the regulations.

Article 5 provides the general zoning procedures and regulations for establishing “Community and Neighborhood Zones” and Planned Unit Developments. However, there are exceptions for specifically prohibited and allowed uses, commercial approvals, and the performance standards may be more or less stringent. The two Neighborhood Zones in Taos County are Upper Los Colonias (*Ordinance 2003-1, which amended Ordinance No. 1997-4*) and Stagecoach (*Ordinance 2006-8, which amended Ordinance No. 2005-10*). Both ordinances define zoning, permitted uses, and performance standards specific to each neighborhood.

## STAGECOACH NEIGHBORHOOD ZONE

The Stagecoach Neighborhood Zone applies to the area located northeast of US 64 and south of the Rio Grande Gorge. The Stagecoach Neighborhood Association Development Standards Advisory Board provides analyses and findings to Taos County on any proposed improvements, subdivisions, special use permits, or other activities affecting the neighborhood. Objectives of the Stagecoach Neighborhood Zone are to preserve view sheds of adjacent parcels, landscaping and xeriscaping, and reduce the number of driveway cuts along US 64.

The Stagecoach Neighborhood Zone contains the following five sub zones:

- ◀ **Sub Zone 1 – Highway Corridor Protection District:** The purpose of this sub zone is to provide for commercial and services along the major roads leading in and out of Taos County.
- ◀ **Sub Zone 2 – Transitional Commercial / Residential (Transitional) Zone:** This sub zone is intended for neighborhood-oriented, small-scale, commercial uses in a convenient location for the residents and neighborhoods of the area which they are located. Mixed-use is encouraged in Sub Zone 2.
- ◀ **Sub Zone 3 – Single-family Residential (R 2.5):** This sub zone is intended for low-density, single-family residential areas with a minimum lot size of 2.5 acres where municipal water and wastewater may or may not be allowed. The majority of lots in this zone contain Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions (CC&Rs) that are attached to the land deeds.
- ◀ **Sub Zone 4 – R ¾ Don Filiberto Martinez Zone:** The R ¾ Zone is intended for low-density, single-family residential areas with a minimum lot size of .75-acres where municipal water and wastewater may or may not be allowed.
- ◀ **Sub Zone 5 – A 20 Don Patricio Martinez (A 20) Zone Agricultural/Ranching:** The A 20 Zone is intended for agricultural and/or ranching activities that are a minimum of 20 acres.

## UPPER LAS COLONIAS NEIGHBORHOOD ZONE

The Upper Las Colonias Neighborhood Zone is bordered by Valencia Road to the northwest, NM 522 to the southwest, NM 150 to the east, and NM 230 to the north. The Upper Las Colonias Neighborhood Association provides analyses and findings to Taos County on any proposed improvements, subdivisions, special use permits, or other activities affecting the neighborhood. Overall requirements include restrictions on artificial light, reductions on solar energy for adjacent properties, noise limited to 60dB, preservation of view sheds, limiting access to NM 150 and NM 522, and

defining architectural styles in the neighborhood as territorial revival or Spanish pueblo.

The Upper Las Colonias Neighborhood Zone contains seven sub zones. The sub zones provide allowed and prohibited uses, and performance criteria that reflect the existing development patterns and provide guidance for future development to ensure the area’s character is maintained. All of the sub zones allow agricultural use. A brief summary of each sub zone is provided below:

- ◀ **Sub Zone 1:** Allows for a variety of uses and slightly higher density residential development. The intent is to create a “compound” type of development with adobe stucco walls, multi-family residential, and a “plaza” type character.
- ◀ **Sub Zone 1A and 1M:** Primarily a residential zone that allows agricultural, single-family, cottage industries, multi-family residences, and low impact businesses. Sub Zone 1M allows the same as 1A, but includes mobile homes.
- ◀ **Sub Zone 2:** Allows single-family residential, multi-family residential, and bed and breakfast operations.
- ◀ **Sub Zones 3 and 3A:** Sub Zone 3 allows single-family and cottage industries restricted to only two employees at any given time. Sub Zone 3A applies to areas of existing residences, cottage industry activities, mixed architectural styles, and some mixed agricultural uses on lots of varying sizes, reflecting subdivisions by families over time.
- ◀ **Sub Zone 4:** Allows agricultural uses as defined in Section 5 of the *Taos County Land Use Regulations*. It provides restrictions on animal density and a minimum parcel size of two acres.

## 4.5 SUBDIVISION ORDINANCE

Similar to zoning ordinances, subdivision ordinances are intended to implement the community vision expressed in the Comprehensive Plan. They are also intended to protect the public and ensure development is consistent with state and local laws and regulations. The *Taos County*

*Subdivision Ordinance* was adopted by the Board of County Commissioners in August 2005 and has been identified by Taos County as needing a major update and integration with the *Land Use Regulations* into a Unified Development Code.

The stated purpose of the Subdivision Ordinance is as follows:

- A. To provide for and protect the public health, safety, and general welfare of the County;
- B. To guide the future growth and development of the County in accordance with ordinances adopted by the Board of County Commissioners;
- C. To provide for adequate light, air, and privacy; to secure safety from fire, flood, and other danger; and to prevent overcrowding of the land and undue congestion of population;
- D. To protect and conserve the value of land throughout the County and the value of buildings and improvements upon the land, and to minimize the conflicts among the uses of land and buildings;
- E. To provide the most beneficial relationship between the uses of land and buildings and the circulation of traffic throughout the County, having particular regard to the avoidance of congestion in the streets and highways, and to facilitate pedestrian traffic movements appropriate to the various uses of land and buildings; and to provide for the proper location and width of streets;
- F. To establish reasonable standards of design and procedures for subdivisions and resubdivisions in order to further the orderly layout and use of land, and to ensure proper legal descriptions and monumenting of subdivided land;
- G. To prevent the pollution of air, soil and water, and erosion of soil; to assure the adequacy of drainage facilities; to safeguard the water table, and to encourage the wise use and management of natural resources throughout the County in order to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the community and the value of the land; and

- H. To protect natural vegetation, drainage courses, historical sites and structures, and similar community assets.

The Subdivision Ordinance identifies the procedures for five types of subdivisions, which are defined by the number of lots and lot sizes.

## SUMMARY REVIEW

The summary review process is designed for Type Three subdivisions containing five or less parcels and all Type Five subdivisions containing a maximum of 24 lots, each of which is 10 acres or larger. Review and approval/disapproval is by the Planning Director. Subdivision plat applications are required to provide the same documentation as preliminary plats.

## PRELIMINARY PLATS

This section of the Subdivision Ordinance lists the typical elements that are required for a Preliminary Plat, including water availability, use, conservation, and quality requirements; liquid waste and solid waste disposal; access, dedication, and maintenance of roads; utilities and utility easements; fire protection and access for emergency vehicles; terrain management; cultural properties; development phasing; and conveyances.

The Subdivision Ordinance defines maximum water use, which is 0.5 acre feet per lot. Commercial subdivisions are required to prepare an annual water budget in accordance with the Office of the State Engineer standards. There is a provision for restricting water use in critical management areas and stream corridor areas and the subdivider is required to demonstrate a valid water right in these areas. The water use limits do not impact any surface water rights that attach to any lot within the subdivision. The subdivider is also required to demonstrate that the subdivision has a sufficient source of water for 50 years. Where a well is proposed to serve the subdivision, the Ordinance restricts a shared well to parcels containing a maximum of three acres and a maximum of six lots to be served by a single well.

The Subdivision Ordinance requires review of preliminary plats by several state and local agencies.

The agency response time is 30 days from receiving the preliminary plat. A public hearing before the Planning and Zoning Commission is scheduled within 30 days from the receipt of public agency comments. Notice is published twice in the local newspaper within Taos County; posted at the proposed subdivision site; and transmitted to public agencies; other interested people who requested notice; property owners within 1,000 feet of the subject property; and neighborhood, community associations, acequia associations, and utility companies with easements on the subject property.

Preliminary plats are held at a quasi-judicial hearing of the Planning and Zoning Commission, which reviews and provides a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners for final action. The hearing before the Board of County Commissioners is held within 30 days of the Planning and Zoning Commission hearing. Approval of a preliminary plat is in effect for two years and will expire if the subdivider fails to submit a final plat during that time. The subdivider may request a 12-month extension to the approval.

## FINAL PLATS

The approval of a Final Plat requires demonstration of conformity with the preliminary plat, filing and map specifications, and other data requirements, including certifications from utility providers and the Planning Department; an affidavit; and certificate for dedication of land or easements. The subdivider is also required to construct improvements or agree to complete improvements under an agreement between the subdivider and Taos County. Review of the final plat is by the Board of County Commissioners within 45 days of the final plat being deemed complete. Once the final plat is approved, it is recorded with the County Clerk.

## MOBILE HOME SUBDIVISIONS

Mobile home subdivisions follow the procedures for preliminary and final plats unless they fall under the summary review procedure. In addition, a sketch plan is also required to be submitted. Mobile home subdivisions are limited to eight mobile home spaces per acre, 20-foot clearance between mobile homes, and a 10-foot setback. Other requirements include a 25-foot setback from

public streets or highways, two parking spaces per mobile home lot, walkways between mobile home lots to common areas, shielded lighting, perimeter landscaping, and a disclosure statement.

### CLUSTER HOUSING SUBDIVISION

Cluster housing subdivisions are allowed by right under the *Taos County Subdivision Ordinance*. They are required to follow the typical subdivision process.

### EXEMPTIONS

The *Taos County Subdivision Ordinance* includes a process for claiming an exemption from the requirements of the *New Mexico Subdivision Act* and the *Taos County Subdivision Regulations*. As used in the *New Mexico Subdivision Act*, there are 13 different exemptions that subdividers can claim. The *Subdivision Ordinance* requires specific documentation depending on the type of exemption being claimed (e.g. certified survey, document of conveyance, birth certificate or adoption certificate in the case of a family transfer), transfer, or an IRS exemption (in the case of a donation). The Taos County Planning Department reviews and decides within 30 days whether to grant the exemption. If approved, the subdivider may file their deed and survey with the Taos County Clerk's Office.

In accordance with the *New Mexico Subdivision Act*, Exemption 9 addresses the family transfer exemption, which allows a land division for the purpose of selling or donating as a gift to an immediate family member. The exemption allows the seller or donor to sell or give no more than one parcel per tract of land per immediate family member. The Taos County Planning Department has identified the need for a major update to the *Subdivision Ordinance* to include, but not be limited to adding additional requirements to the family transfer exemption and procedures for creating a subdivision plat. The summary plat procedures have been identified by the public as being unnecessarily onerous, and as an unintended consequence, have encouraged subdividers to seek a family exemption.

The *Subdivision Ordinance* addresses the issue of subdividers unlawfully claiming an exemption. It

requires the avoidance of a "common promotional plan", defined by the *New Mexico Subdivision Act* as "any plan or scheme of operation, undertaken by a single subdivider or a group of subdividers acting in concert, to offer for sale or lease parcels of land where such land is either contiguous or part of the same area of land or is known, designated, or advertised as a common unit or by a common name." The *Subdivision Ordinance* references the New Mexico Attorney General's two tests to determine whether a subdivider has taken advantage of an exemption or engage in an illegal subterfuge designed to circumvent the law.

Taos County may want to consider adding additional language that either limits the number of lots that can be created through the family transfer exemption or a prohibition on the sale of a lot created through this exemption for a number of years. For example, Sandoval County includes the following language:

"Any parcel of real property that is transferred pursuant to this provision may not be transferred within eighteen (18) months of the date of recording of the plat creating said parcel to any individual who is not an "immediate family member" of the grantor as defined by these Regulations, except by probate proceedings, an order from the District Court, or a transfer on death deed executed pursuant to applicable New Mexico statutes."

## 4.6 LAND USE & ZONING ISSUES

### LAND DEVELOPMENT & SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS

Land development codes, including zoning and subdivision regulations, should be periodically reviewed and updated based on best practices, legal precedent, and changing expectations for development. It is important that land development codes allow for efficient management and administration by the local government staff, commissions, and governing bodies.

The current *Taos County Land Use Regulations* contain one overarching zone for all privately-owned land and two neighborhood zones. All

development is required to go through a permit process to obtain approval in order to build on the property. A developer or property owner may submit an application for clearance, and the decision lies with either the Planning Director, Planning Commission, or the County Commission to approve or disapprove the project based on the performance criteria. The process is cumbersome and somewhat unpredictable.

### *Unified Development Code*

The current *Taos County Land Use Regulations and Subdivision Ordinance* are not consistent with the goals and vision expressed in the *Comprehensive Plan*. As such, a major update to both is recommended to follow the adoption of the *Comprehensive Plan* and become a *Unified Development Code* that addresses zoning and subdivision regulations in one cohesive document.

As Taos County strives to manage growth, it is important that the future *Unified Development Code* responds to the need for clearer regulations that require less interpretation than is the current case. The two existing neighborhood zones, Stagecoach and Upper Las Colonias, should be integrated into the future *Unified Development Code*. Permissive uses, conditional uses, special uses, and prohibited uses should be considered for application to all areas of the unincorporated Taos County.

The procedures and regulations for summary, preliminary, and final plats should be reviewed and revised, as necessary, to address the concerns identified by the Taos County Planning Department and the public. The update should focus on the summary plat and exemption procedures to ensure the public interest is protected and the exemptions do not continue to be overused or misapplied.

## PUBLIC LANDS

Public land can create conflicts with rural traditional communities pertaining to access and use of the forest for traditional activities. Taos County can support traditional communities by maintaining strong relationships with the Carson National Forest and the BLM. Taos County should continue to communicate and stay involved with

Carson National Forest Service's planning initiatives that support surrounding communities.

## GROWTH MANAGEMENT

As the population of Taos County continues to increase, the County must contend with how to manage land development while allowing for growth that protects the public health, welfare, safety, and community resources of its communities. Adoption of more robust set of land development regulations in the future *Unified Development Code* would provide the necessary tool for growth management in Taos County. The regulations should provide protections for traditional neighborhoods and ensure that uses, such as commercial, industrial, and higher density residential, are located in areas with enough resources and should include limitations on potential negative impacts.

## 4.7 OTHER REGULATIONS

### SHORT-TERM RENTAL ORDINANCE

The Taos County Commission adopted the *Taos County Short Term Rental Ordinance* (No. 2024-4) in August 2024, which is an amendment to the existing *Land Use Regulations*. The Ordinance regulates the short-term rental of dwelling units within the unincorporated areas of Taos County and aims to:

- ◀ Provide an annual short-term rental permit;
- ◀ Prescribe the number of permits available;
- ◀ Establish operating rules for short-term rental units;
- ◀ Provide penalties for violations and enforcement mechanisms;
- ◀ Require zoning clearance and registration of short-term rental units; and
- ◀ Support economic opportunities for residents while protecting public health, safety, and quality of life.

The Ordinance addresses neighborhood concerns, tax payments, and the impact on the local housing market. It includes provisions for obtaining a short-term rental permit and specific requirements for owner-occupied and non-owner-occupied rental permits.

The Ordinance requires all short-term rentals to have a local contact person that resides in Taos County and is available 24/7 during rental periods. The Ordinance limits the number of short-term rental permits to 400 at any time, including both owner-occupied and non-owner-occupied rentals, but does not include legal non-conforming permits or permits that meet the exemption requirements under Section 4.19.9 of the Ordinance. Permits are issued on a first-come, first-served basis, and once the cap of 400 permits is reached, no new permits will be issued until existing permits expire or are revoked. The Ordinance states that a wait list will be established for applications submitted after the cap has been reached. It also includes penalties for non-compliance with the regulations. The Ordinance should be integrated into the future *Unified Development Code*.

### RURAL ADDRESSING ORDINANCE

The *Taos County Rural Addressing Ordinance* (No. 2017-1) was adopted on April 4, 2017, and has been identified by Taos County as needing a major update. The purpose of the Ordinance is to provide a uniform system of naming roads and creating physical addresses for all addressable structures throughout Taos County, provide an accurate and systemic means of identifying property, ensure expedient emergency response, and to eliminate duplication and unapproved road names and addresses. The Ordinance is administered by the Rural Addressing Coordinator, who has the authority to name roads and assign an address to all structures along that road in accordance with the Address Numbering System. New subdivisions are required to apply for an address from the Rural Addressing Coordinator in accordance with *2005-8 of the Taos County Subdivision Ordinance*.

### FLOOD PREVENTION

The Taos County Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance (No.2009-01) was adopted in March 2, 2009, repealing the previous Ordinance (No. 1988-4). The purpose of the Ordinance is to provide limits on land uses in certain flood hazard areas; establishing permit procedures for development in flood hazard areas; controlling the alteration of natural floodplains, stream channels, and protective

barriers; and controlling development that may increase flood damage. The Taos County Planning Department is the Floodplain Administrator, which reviews and ensures compliance with the Ordinance. The Ordinance provides standards for development within flood zones as identified by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

### DARK SKIES PROTECTION ACT

The *Taos County Dark Skies Protection Act* (Ordinance 2006-9) was adopted on November 20, 2006 and has been identified by Taos County as needing a major update. This Act supplements the *New Mexico Dark Skies Protection Act*, which regulates outdoor lighting in order to reduce or prevent light pollution. The Ordinance requires all outdoor lighting to be hooded, shielded, and aimed downward. The Ordinance lighting requirements are based on lumen or wattage output. The update to this Ordinance should be integrated into the future *Unified Development Code*.

### CANNABIS REGULATIONS

Taos County regulates the production, manufacturing, retailing, and other cannabis-related activities in Ordinance No. 2021-1, which like the *Short-Term Rental Ordinance*, is an amendment to the existing *Land Use Regulations*. The Ordinance complies with New Mexico Cannabis Regulation Act (Section 26-2C-1 - 42 NMSA). All commercial cannabis activity in Taos County requires review by the Planning Department and approval by either the Planning Director, Planning Commission, or the County Commission. The Ordinance allows for interested parties to apply for Cannabis Producer Microbusiness Permit, Small Cannabis Producer Permit, Large Cannabis Producer Permit, Major Cannabis Production Permit, Cannabis Manufacturer Permit (Class I, II, III, IV), or a Cannabis Retail Permit. The approval process is outlined in the existing *Land Use Regulations*, which would be the same process for any commercial use (i.e. Commercial Zoning Clearance, Administrative Zoning Clearance, Special Use Zoning Clearance, Major Development Zoning Clearance).

## 4.8 HISTORIC & CULTURAL RESOURCES

Historic preservation is a major contributor to Taos County’s sense of place. Preserving historic structures and districts keeps their stories alive, and brings vibrancy, diversity, and longevity to a place.

The New Mexico Historic Preservation Division (HPD) administers the National Park Service’s National Register of Historic Places, which lists properties nominated and accepted for national historic significance, and the State Register of Cultural Properties, which also lists properties of statewide significance. For consideration, properties must generally be at least 50 years

old, look much the way it did in the past, and be associated with events, activities, or developments of importance. Nominated properties may be single buildings, sites, structures, objects, or an entire district. Listing on the National Register is voluntary and provides a first step towards eligibility for historic tax credits.

Taos County contains many historic and cultural resources that are integral to the story of Taos County. There are 27 historic structures or cultural resources in unincorporated Taos County that are listed on the New Mexico State Register of Cultural Properties and 16 of those are also listed on the National Register of Historic Places (see Table 4.2).

Resource	Location	SR Date	NR Date
Carson School	Carson	11/22/1985	2/13/1986
Chapel of Santa Cruz	Ojo Caliente	12/30/1971	4/14/1975
Church and Chapel of the Most Holy Trinity	Arroyo Seco	12/21/2008	-
Dasburg, Andrew, House and Studio	Ranchos de Taos	9/4/1981	-
Duran Chapel	Ranchos de Taos	9/1/1978	-
Hacienda de los Torres	Tres Piedras	9/9/1999	-
Harding Mine	Dixon	1/20/1978	-
Howiri-ouinge	Ojo Caliente	1/14/1983	4/7/1983
Las Trampas Historic District	Las Trampas	10/15/1966	5/28/1967
Laureano Cordova Mill	Vadito	3/21/1969	11/5/1974
Lawrence, D.H., Ranch Historic District	San Cristobal	8/8/2003	1/15/2004
Morada de San Antonio	Arroyo Seco	11/17/2000	-
Molino de los Duranes	Ranchos de Taos	8/22/1975	2/3/2020
Ojo Caliente Hot Springs Round Barn	Ojo Caliente	5/7/1977	10/6/2003
Ojo Caliente Mineral Springs	Ojo Caliente	8/3/1985	11/17/1985
Peñasco High School	Peñasco	9/12/2022	1/26/2023
Ranchos de Taos Plaza	Ranchos de Taos	3/21/1969	10/2/1978
Saint Vrain’s Mill Site	Ranchos de Taos	10/31/1980	-
San Francisco de Assisi Mission Church	Ranchos de Taos	4/15/1970	4/15/1970
San Ignacio de Loyola Morada	Arroyo Seco	2/21/1997	-
San Jose de Gracia Church	Las Trampas	4/15/1970	4/15/1970
San Ysidro Oratorio	Los Cordovas	9/16/1980	1/5/1984
Talpas Alter Screen	Talpa	5/23/1969	-
Tres Piedras Administrative Site, Old	Tres Piedras	8/5/1993	8/5/1993
Tres Piedras Railroad Water Tower	Tres Piedras	1/20/1978	2/2/1979
Turley Mill and Distillery Site	Arroyo Hondo	2/21/1969	-
Vigil Torreon	Ranchos de Taos	8/22/1975	-

Source: New Mexico Historic Preservation Division “SR Date” refers to the State Register of Cultural Properties; “NR Date” refers to the National Register of Historic Places.

The cultural resources listed include historic churches, residences, and commercial sites and buildings. The earliest historic designation was the Las Trampas Historic District, which was listed in 1966 and 1967 on the State and National Registers, respectively. The most recent listing was Peñasco High School, listed in 2022 and 2023. There are also 18 historic and cultural resources located in the Town of Taos and seven in Red River.

## 4.9 FUTURE LAND USE SCENARIO

The Future Land Use Scenario provides a graphic representation of how growth and development over the next 20 years should occur in Taos County. It is intended to support growth near the incorporated areas of the Town of Taos, Questa, and other unincorporated areas and communities, and focuses only on private lands within Taos County. It does not propose any new land uses on publicly-owned land. The Future Land Use Scenario builds on existing and traditional land uses and development patterns, and assumes the economy of Taos County will continue to be focused on outdoor recreation and tourism, locally-owned commercial retail and services, and to a lesser degree, agriculture and ranching. Land uses are illustrated on the Future Land Use Scenario and are described below:

### RURAL RESIDENTIAL

The Rural Residential land use category is located throughout Taos County and is characterized by single-family development on lots that may include agricultural uses, including animal raising and small farms or gardens irrigated by acequias. The Future Land Use Scenario provides 300,817-acres of Rural Residential land use, approximately 21.3% of Taos County's total land area.

### MIXED-USE

The Mixed-Use land use category is shown along major roadways, intersections, and where it currently exists with residential and commercial uses. The intent of the Future Land Use Scenario is to support this traditional land use pattern of development by designating an increase of Mixed-Use in specific areas of Taos County, including along NM 68 within Llano Quemado and Ranchos de

Taos, NM 230 and NM 150 within Arroyo Seco and Upper Las Colonias, NM 567 through Carson, NM 522 north of Questa, and US 64 within Stagecoach, Lower Las Colonias, and El Prado, at the area of US 64 and US 285 within Tres Piedras, and along US 285 in proximity to existing residential development. The Future Land Use Scenario provides 14,104-acres of Mixed-Use, approximately 1.0% of the total land in Taos County.

### INDUSTRIAL

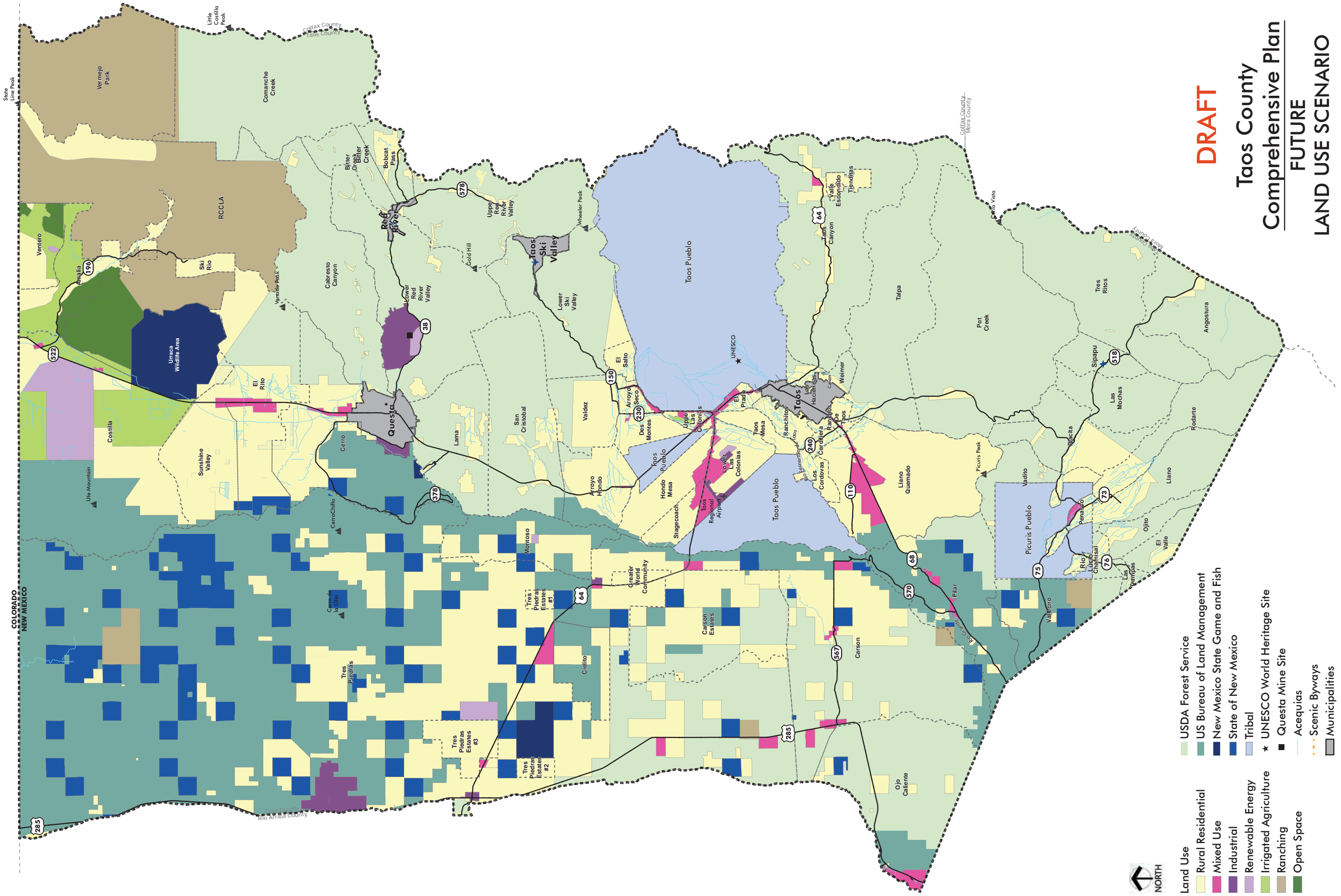
The Industrial land use category allows for light manufacturing, production or fabrication, warehousing, and distribution. The Future Land Use Scenario shows several areas suitable for Industrial land use with a large area adjacent to Taos County's west boundary and north of Tres Piedras, two small areas along US 64 north of Greater World Community, an existing Industrial land use area adjacent to and west of Questa, and the former molybdenum mine site and tailing facility between Questa and Red River. The Future Land Use Scenario provides 7,887-acres of Industrial use, approximately 0.5% of the total land in Taos County.

### RENEWABLE ENERGY

The Renewable Energy land use category primarily allows for utility-scale solar fields. The Future Land Use Scenario shows a Renewable Energy use west of NM 522, near Costilla, an area east of Tres Piedras Estates #3 north of US 64, and an area north of NM 38, adjacent to the former molybdenum mine site and tailing facility between Questa and Red River. There are also three existing solar facility sites, including an area off Los Cordovas Road near the Treatment Plant, a large area near the Taos Regional Landfill off US 64, and an area between Questa and Costilla on NM 522. The Future Land Use Scenario provides 11,353-acres of Renewable Energy land use, approximately 0.8% of the total land in Taos County.

### IRRIGATED AGRICULTURE

The Irrigated Agriculture land use category is characterized by larger-scale agricultural production that excludes residential uses. Irrigated agriculture is limited to northern Taos County around Costilla and Amalia where this use already exists. The Future Land Use Scenario provides 21,874-acres of Irrigated Agriculture land use, approximately 1.6% of the total land in Taos County.



- Land Use**
- Rural Residential
  - Mixed Use
  - Industrial
  - Renewable Energy
  - Irrigated Agriculture
  - Ranching
  - Open Space

- USDA Forest Service
- US Bureau of Land Management
- New Mexico State Game and Fish
- State of New Mexico
- Tribal
- UNESCO World Heritage Site
- Questa Mine Site
- Acequias
- Scenic Byways
- Municipalities
- Communities

**DRAFT**

**Taos County  
Comprehensive Plan  
FUTURE  
LAND USE SCENARIO**



## RANCHING

The Ranching land use category is intended for large-scale livestock grazing. Ranching is primarily located in northeast Taos County, including the RCCLA and Vermejo Park land holdings, and smaller areas within northwest and southwest Taos County. The Future Land Use Scenario does not delineate or quantify grazing on BLM managed land. It provides 90,788-acres of Ranching land use, approximately 6.4% of the total land in Taos County.

## OPEN SPACE

The Open Space land use category is located in northern Taos County near ranching and irrigated agriculture uses in Amalia and Ventero, north of the Urraca Wildlife Area. Open space is characterized as undeveloped wilderness. The Future Land Use Scenario provides 11,413-acres of Open Space, approximately 0.8% of the total land in Taos County.

## 4.10 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, & STRATEGIES

### LAND USE GOAL 1

**Provide a balanced mix of land uses to accommodate new housing and business/employment opportunities in appropriate areas of Taos County.**

#### Objectives

- ◀ *To identify areas in unincorporated Taos County for future residential, commercial, alternative energy, light manufacturing, and parks and open space.*
- ◀ *To provide a more sustainable lifestyle for residents of Taos County.*
- ◀ *To ensure new commercial uses are sited appropriately in areas that are not harmful to existing residential development or the natural environment.*

#### LAND USE STRATEGY 1.1

Complete a major update to the current *Taos County Land Use Regulations and Subdivision Ordinance* and combine land use and zoning regulations with subdivision regulations in a

*Unified Development Code* that addresses but is not limited to:

- ◀ Creating new residential, mixed-use, and non-residential zoning districts that provide a list of permissive and conditional land uses
- ◀ Allowing small-scale manufacturing, cottage industries, home occupations, accessory dwelling units, cluster development, agrihoods, and co-housing as permissive or conditional uses and creation of applicable development standards for those uses
- ◀ Development standards for residential and non-residential uses (e.g. minimum lot sizes, setbacks, building height, parking, landscaping, buffers between non-compatible uses, screening, lighting and dark sky provisions, etc.)
- ◀ Integration of the Stagecoach and Upper Las Colonias neighborhood zones into the overall code
- ◀ Review and approval processes for zone changes, permissive uses, conditional uses and variances, special use permits, site plans, and master plans
- ◀ Updated Cannabis regulations
- ◀ Short-Term Rental Permit requirements
- ◀ Delineation of individual roles and responsibilities for the Planning Department, Planning Commission, and the Taos County Commission
- ◀ Notification procedures, appeal processes, and non-conformities
- ◀ Updated and expanded definitions
- ◀ Sign regulations that define size, frequency, location, and content-neutral provisions
- ◀ Design criteria for renewable energy projects that considers the impact to scenic views
- ◀ Subdivision design and lot layout, including provisions for traditional and non-traditional subdivision types and requirement that large subdivisions incorporate common open space and trails, where applicable
- ◀ Subdivision exemption requirements
- ◀ Roadway design, access, and circulation

- ◀ Liquid waste disposal requirements
- ◀ Water rights requirements and documentation
- ◀ Grading and drainage design and stormwater management, including Low Impact Development (LID) standards for on-site stormwater retention and water harvesting
- ◀ Green building construction techniques and water efficient practices
- ◀ Dry utilities (gas, electricity, Internet, telephone)
- ◀ Enforcement and violation procedures, and penalties

#### LAND USE STRATEGY 1.2

Promote new growth and development in key locations within unincorporated Taos County within the general parameters of providing a range of residential densities; mixed-use or commercial development along key highway corridors and intersections; agriculture use with access to acequias; industrial use with access to highway corridors and in less populated areas, and alternative energy locations as shown on the Future Land Use Scenario.

#### LAND USE STRATEGY 1.3

In conjunction with Economic Development Strategy 2.7, which calls for pursuing “site-ready” funds from the Economic Development Department, identify appropriately located sites as shown on the Future Land Use Scenario where land is or can be made “site-ready” for new development.

#### LAND USE STRATEGY 1.4

Create a GIS-based zoning map and dashboard that is consistent with the Future Land Use Scenario and the future Unified Development Code, and that allows Taos County staff and the public to view zoning data online.

## LAND USE GOAL 2

Protect and preserve traditional agricultural uses and the acequia systems in Taos County.

### Objectives

- ◀ *To ensure agriculture, ranching, and their associated uses remain viable.*
- ◀ *To honor and maintain Taos County’s cultural heritage.*
- ◀ *To ensure state and federal plans for public lands in Taos County do not inhibit agricultural activities.*
- ◀ *To promote best practices in regenerative agriculture and rangeland management.*

### LAND USE STRATEGY 2.1

Promote the technical expertise of the New Mexico Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program, Taos County Extension Office, and the Taos County Economic Development Corporation’s Regenerative Ranching Mentorship Program on best practices in agriculture, pasture management, and regenerative ranching and climate-smart best practices.

### LAND USE STRATEGY 2.2

Create a “Right to Farm” ordinance that addresses and protects the property right of existing agricultural producers operating within generally accepted agricultural practices and in conformity with federal, state, and local regulations from potential nuisance suits.

### LAND USE STRATEGY 2.3

Engage agricultural producers in reviewing the future land use and zoning regulations that may impact their operations to ensure their views are considered in the update process.

### LAND USE GOAL 3

Improve the visual appearance of Taos County.

#### Objectives

- ◀ *To preserve the scenic value of major highway corridors (i.e. US 285, US 64, NM 68, and NM 518).*
- ◀ *To promote and encourage community pride and investment.*
- ◀ *To mitigate the negative impact of blighted properties on the community.*

#### LAND USE STRATEGY 3.1

Incorporate regulations that restrict billboards and other signage along the major highway corridors within Taos County into the future *Unified Development Code*.

#### LAND USE STRATEGY 3.2

Create a nuisance ordinance that addresses dilapidated and unsafe structures, abandoned/inoperable motor vehicles, junk, disposal of tires, overgrowth of weeds, conformance with the International Property Maintenance Code, and fines for non-compliance.

#### LAND USE STRATEGY 3.3

Determine and implement adequate staffing levels to enforce Taos County future nuisance regulations as described under Land Use Strategy 3.2.

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# CHAPTER 5 Housing



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## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

Housing is central to Taos County’s priorities. The resiliency of traditional communities, reducing income disparities, and economic development that is sustainable and appropriate for the region. The provision of safe, affordable, housing in a range of options, including single-family homes, townhouses, apartments, as well as owner-occupied and rental properties, that will help serve the basic human need for shelter. Without the provision of new housing, Taos County will continue to lose some of its most precious resources, the people, who currently reside in Taos County who cannot afford housing costs.

The Community Survey responses reflect the housing issues facing Taos County. Respondents ranked lack of affordable housing as the main reason they would leave the County and as the number one reason for limiting growth. The high cost of housing is also preventing renters from purchasing homes, because they cannot afford down payments or the mortgage and ongoing costs and they cannot find an affordable home in their price range.

## 5.2 HOUSING PROFILE

### HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

The US Census categorizes households as family households, whose members are related by birth or marriage, or non-family households whose members are not related or living alone. The housing profile for Taos County reveals that households are decreasing and aging.

Between 2012 and 2022, total households and average household size in Taos County grew by 2.7% and 2.5%, respectively (see Table 5.1). Family households decreased, while non-family households increased during this time period. Taos County’s households are aging, as evidenced by the -24.2% decrease in households with one or more people under 18 and the increase of 37.0% in

households with one or more people over 60 years. Taos County households are aging slightly more than New Mexico as a whole, which experienced a -6.9% decrease of households under 18 years and a smaller increase of 31.4% for households with members 60 years or older. Taos County saw a high increase in householder living alone among those 65 years and older, which increased by 112.6%, much higher than New Mexico at 46.3%.

### HOUSING UNITS & OCCUPANCY

In 2022, the total housing units in Taos County were 20,950, a 4.1% increase from 2012 (see Table 5.2). Occupied housing units comprised 65.6% of the total units in Taos, a slight decrease from 2012. For comparison, occupied housing units in New Mexico were much higher at 86.2% in 2022.

Vacant housing units overall in Taos County went up, by .1%. Homeowner vacancy rates remained relatively steady between 2012 and 2022, 3.0% to 3.1%. Renter vacancy rates increased from 15.5% to 18.9%. Renter vacancy rates are much higher in Taos County than state-wide, which was 6.7% in 2022.

TABLE 5.1: HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

	2012	2022	% Change
Total Households	13,373	13,736	2.7%
Average Household Size	2.4	2.5	2.5%
Total Families	7,955	7,367	-7.4%
Average Family Size	3.2	3.5	10.8%
Non-family Households	5,418	6,369	17.6%
Households with one or more people under 18 years	24.8%	18.3%	-24.2%
Households with one or more people 60 years over	44.1%	58.8%	37.0%
Householder living alone	34.8%	39.5%	16.6%
65 years and over	11.9%	21.7%	112.6%

Source: ACS 5-year Estimates, 2012 and 2022.  
\* Percent change calculated using base numbers.

TABLE 5.2: HOUSING UNITS and OCCUPANCY

Unit Tenure	2012		2022		% Change
Total Housing Units	20,116	100%	20,950	100%	4.1%
Occupied Housing Units	13,373	66.5%	13,736	65.6%	2.7%
Vacant Housing Units	6,743	33.5%	7,214	34.4%	7.0%
Homeowner Vacancy Rate	N/A	3.0%	N/A	3.1%	.1%
Renter Vacancy Rate	N/A	15.5%	N/A	18.9%	3.8%

Source: ACS 5-year Estimates, 2012 and 2022  
\* Percent change calculated using base numbers.

## HOUSING TYPE

In 2022, 1-unit, detached housing represented 71.1% of the housing in Taos County, an increase of 9.5% from 2012 (see Figure 5.1). The County has a high percentage of mobile homes, which represented 15.1% of all housing types. Both are similar to the New Mexico averages of 64.6% and 16.1% respectively.

Housing types with more than one unit per structure are primarily between 2 to 9 units, representing approximately 8.8% of total housing. Housing with more than 10 to 15 units or 20 or more units represented only 2.7%. New Mexico as a whole was comparable in the 2 to 9 unit category at 8.6%, but had a higher percentage of housing with more than 10 units, which represents 7.0% of total housing stock state-wide.

## HOUSING AGE

The housing stock in Taos County is aging. In 2022, 9% of Taos County's housing stock was built before 1939 and only 2% was built since 2010 (see Figure 5.2). In comparison, in New Mexico housing stock age was 4% and 10.9%, respectively. The median year for housing built in Taos County was 1983, similar to New Mexico, which was 1984.

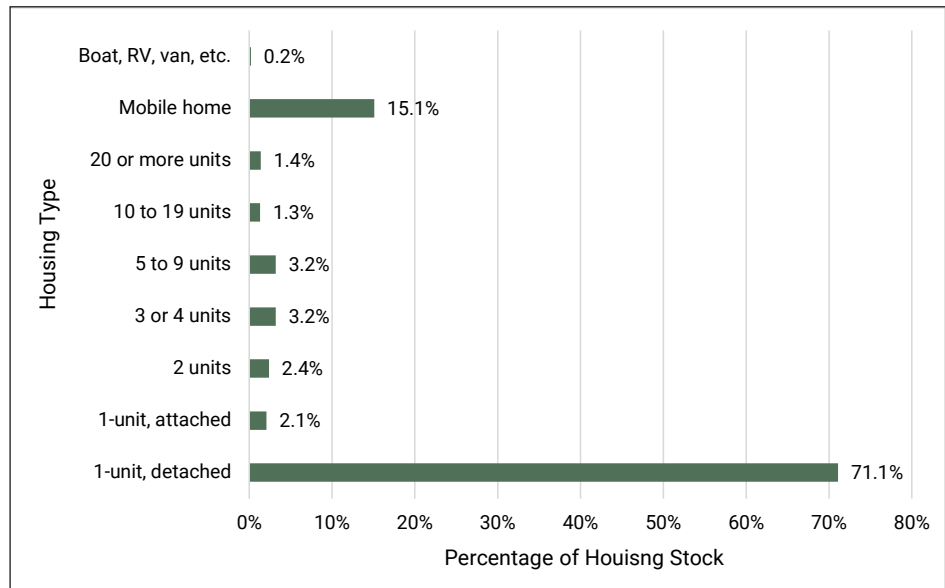
## PROPERTY VALUES

Property values in Taos County have been increasing over time. In 2022, 30% of the owner-occupied housing stock in Taos County was valued at between \$300,000 to \$499,999, followed by 20.5% of property valued between \$200,000 to \$299,999 (see Figure 5.3). For comparison, in New Mexico 2022 property values in these categories were 24.9% and 8.1%, respectively.

The 2022 property values were significantly higher than 2012. A stark example of rising property

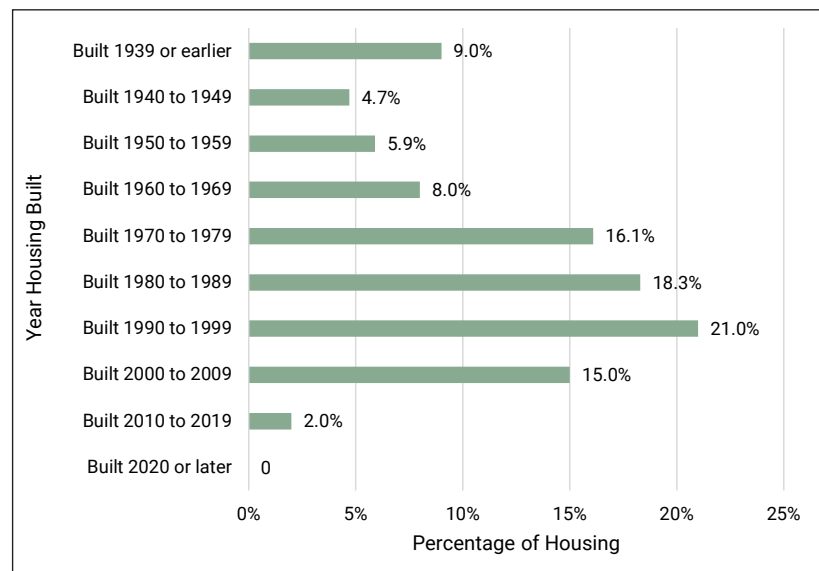
values in Taos County can be seen in the change of property values between 2012 and 2022 (see Table 6.3). Properties valued below \$199,999 decreased in value, while properties above \$200,000 increased. The most notable were increases in properties valued at \$500,000 to \$999,999 (244.2%) and those \$1 million or more (249.4%). In New Mexico, increases in these property values were 80.9% and 84.7% respectively. Median property values in Taos County increased by

FIGURE 5.1: HOUSING TYPE



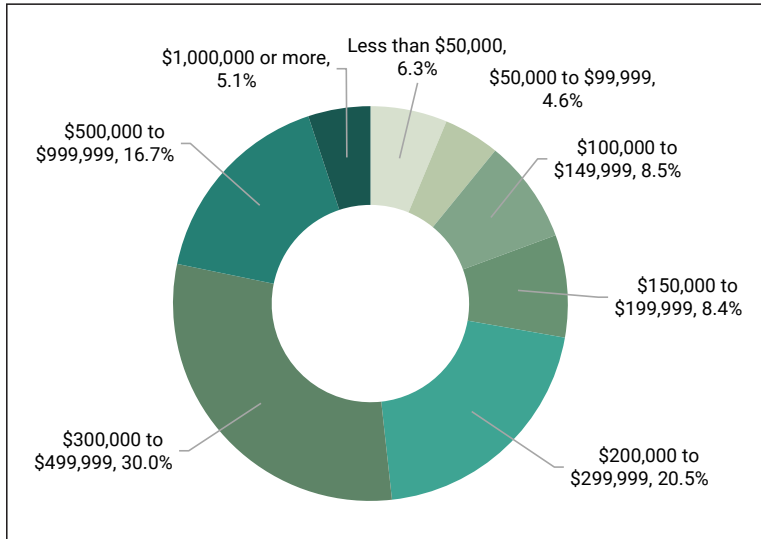
Source: ACS, 5-year Estimates, 2022.

FIGURE 5.2: HOUSING AGE



Source: ACS, 5-year Estimates, 2022.

FIGURE 5.3: PROPERTY VALUES, 2022



Source: ACS, 5-year Estimates, 2022.

53.8%, significantly higher than New Mexico, which was 33.7%.

## 5.3 HOUSING COSTS & AFFORDABILITY

### MORTGAGE COSTS

In 2022, the largest portion of Taos County households with a mortgage, 33%, paid between \$1,000 to \$1,400 per month, which was followed by 25% in the \$1,500 to \$1,999 range. This represented an increase from 2012 of 23.5% and 47.4%, respectively. Between 2012 and 2022, the portion of owner-occupied households that spent \$2,000 or more in monthly mortgage costs increased by 92.2%. The median housing costs also increased by 29%, from \$1,186 to \$1,530.

In comparison, the 2022 median housing cost for New Mexico households were similar to Taos County households. However, the median housing cost between 2012 and 2022 increased at a slower rate of 17.1% (versus 29% in Taos County) and the portion of households that paid more than \$2,000 per month increased by a far less rate of 31.7% (versus 92.2% in Taos County).

### GROSS RENTS

Gross rent in Taos County showed significant increases in recent years. In 2022, the largest portion of renters paid between \$500 to \$999 per month, a decrease of 56% between 2012 and 2022. However, renter-occupied households that paid between \$1,000 to \$1,499 increased by 18.0% and those that paid \$1,500 or more in gross rent increased by 627%.

Between 2012 and 2022, the median gross rent in Taos County grew by 31.1%, from \$749 to \$982, similar to the New Mexico rate of 31.3%. These metrics reflect a large increase in rental cost, likely prohibitive for many Taos County residents.

TABLE 5.3: SELECTED HOUSING COSTS, 2022

Owner Costs with a Mortgage	2022
Less than \$500	0.3%
\$500-999	14.6%
\$1,000 to 1,499	33.1%
\$1,500 to 1,999	25.0%
\$2,000 to \$2,499	11.4%
\$2,500 to \$2,999	10.7%
\$3,000 or more	4.8%
Median (dollars)	\$1,530
Gross Rent	2022
Less than \$500	14.4%
\$500 to \$999	37.4%
\$1,000 to \$1,499	30.6%
\$1,500 to \$1,999	16.2%
\$2,000 to \$2,499	1.0%
\$2,500 to \$2,999	0.0%
\$3,000 or more	0.4%
Median (dollars)	\$982

Source: ACS, 5-year Estimates, 2022.

## COST-BURDENED HOUSEHOLDS

Housing costs, is typically the largest monthly expenses for most households. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) considers a household “cost-burdened” when 30% or more of the monthly gross income is dedicated to housing costs. Households with 50% of their monthly gross income dedicated to housing area are considered “severely cost-burdened”. Households

whose housing costs exceed these thresholds are likely to struggle to pay for other basic needs.

In 2022, there were a total of 11,060 owner-occupied housing units with and without a mortgage in Taos County. Of those, 21.7% were considered cost-burdened and 12.1% were considered severely cost-burdened (see Figure 6.4). In comparison, 20.2% of New Mexico owner-occupied households were cost-burdened and 9.0% were severely cost-burdened.

Renter-occupied households tend to be cost-burdened at a higher rate than owner-occupied households. In 2022, there were a total of 2,676 renter-occupied units in Taos County. Of those, 43.0% were cost-burdened and 22.6% were severely cost-burdened. In comparison, 43.9% of New Mexico renter-occupied households were cost-burdened and 22.1% were severely cost-burdened.

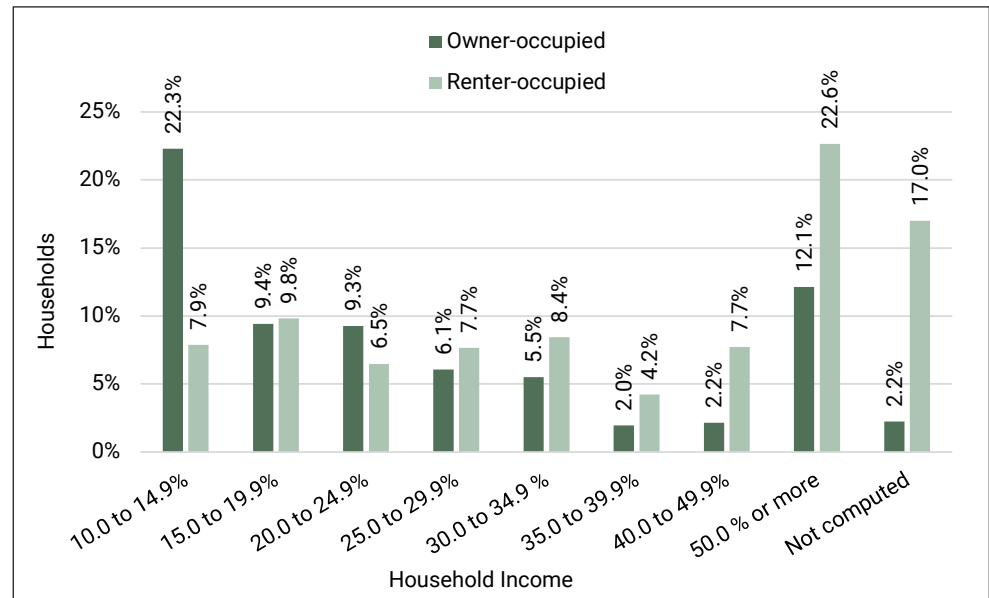
## 5.4 SPECIAL POPULATIONS

### SENIORS

Taos County seniors are served by two senior housing projects in the Town of Taos:

- ◀ **Taos Retirement Village:** Provides independent living for seniors and assisted living units. Services are provided in a community-based environment.

FIGURE 6.4: HOUSEHOLD INCOME SPENT ON HOUSING



Source: ACS, 5-year Estimates, 2022.

- ◀ **Taos Living Center:** Offers skilled nursing and rehabilitation services for outpatients and residents. The facility contains 102 beds, an outpatient rehabilitation clinic, and a specialized Alzheimer’s program.

### VETERANS

Veterans receive housing services and support from three organizations in the Town of Taos:

- ◀ **Not Forgotten Outreach:** Veterans and their families are provided with recreational, therapeutic, and farming activities. The organization runs a respite center and plans to build a tiny home project for veterans.
- ◀ **Veterans off Grid:** Provides housing for homeless veterans on 50 acres in the Carson National Forest. The program plans to house 50 veterans in duplexes and triplexes they build with others.

### UNHOUSED POPULATION

Taos County is served by several providers that support the unhoused population with shelters and transitional housing. All of the providers are located within the Town of Taos.

- ◀ **Taos Men’s Shelter:** Provides emergency shelter for 18 men and support services such as, food, laundry, showers, peer support, and

case management. It is owned and operated by the Taos Coalition to End Homelessness.

- ◀ **Community Against Violence:** Provides shelter for women and children. The site has five beds on-site and 26 beds within 11 homes in the community. The organization also provides medical, counseling, and community outreach programs.
- ◀ **Heart House:** Provides emergency and transitional housing for up to 15 women and children. The house focuses on housing stabilization.
- ◀ **Dream Tree Project:** Provides emergency youth shelter and transitional housing for youth ages 12-17 in Colfax, Rio Arriba, San Miguel, and Taos Counties. The Dream Tree youth shelter has eight beds. The transitional housing consists of nine casitas with 24 beds.

## 5.5 HOUSING INITIATIVES & ORGANIZATIONS

### TAOS HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

The Taos Housing Partnership is a non-profit organization that works within Taos County to develop equitable housing opportunities. The Taos Housing Partnership also provides financial literacy and homebuyer education courses, mortgage assistance programs, and lower cost mortgages for prospective homebuyers.

The Taos Housing Partnership was launched in 2022 as one of the key recommendations in the *Taos County 3-Year Recommended Housing Roadmap*, which was a result of a robust community dialogue around the housing needs in Taos County. It is a three-year approach to developing new rental and purchase housing opportunities in Taos County and includes a detailed needs assessment and a comprehensive framework of strategies and activities as follows:

#### *Below Market Development Strategies*

- ◀ Launch a Pre-development Fund to identify and prioritize development opportunities for public investment
  - Activate Chamisa Verde subdivision to provide affordable finished lots

- Activate publicly-owned sites that are viable for development
- Launch a formal land banking program using donated sites
- Sponsor a Low Income Tax Credit Project
- Pilot an infrastructure initiative with the Town of Taos Capital Outlay Funds

#### *Homebuyer Counseling and Education*

- ◀ Launch homebuyer education classes and counseling

#### *Mortgage Assistance Programs*

- ◀ Develop a below mortgage 30-year loan product

#### *Preservation*

- ◀ Pathways to Preservation

#### *Housing Policy, Education, and Advocacy*

- ◀ Short-term Rental Policies
- ◀ Land Use Code Review participation and support for updates to local land use laws
- ◀ Identify long-term funding for an Affordable Housing Trust Fund

#### *Community Education, Outreach, and Innovation*

- ◀ Community Learning Sessions providing detailed information on issues related to housing affordability, best practices, etc.
- ◀ Community Conversations with direct service providers on issues related to housing affordability, homelessness etc.
- ◀ Engage with Housing New Mexico, banks, and other key partners to develop new housing resources for program implementation
- ◀ Use website to provide continuous information and to update main programs and initiatives

The Taos Housing Partnership is pursuing the implementation of the strategies outlined in the *Housing Roadmap*. Coordination with Taos County is crucial to ensure the *Housing Roadmap* continues to be viable and the key strategies are completed.

## NORTHERN REGIONAL HOUSING AUTHORITY

The Northern Regional Housing Authority (NRHA) region is comprised of Taos, Rio Arriba, Santa Fe, San Miguel, Mora, Union, Harding, San Juan, Sandoval, and McKinley counties. Housing New Mexico considers regional housing authorities as the primary housing service providers in rural areas. The regional housing authorities are responsible for working with governmental and private entities to plan, finance, and create affordable housing. The NRHA is also responsible for operating federal programs, such as Housing Choice Vouchers Programs (Section 8) and the Low Rent Program for households that earn less than 80% of the area median income. The NRHA merged with the Raton Housing Authority in 2021 and is now based in Raton.

## TAOS COUNTY AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLAN

The North Central New Mexico Economic Development District (NMEDD) developed the *Taos County Affordable Housing Plan*, which was adopted by Taos County in 2021 (along with an Affordable Housing Ordinance) and approved by Housing New Mexico, as required by the New Mexico Affordable Housing Act. The Plan covers Taos County and the Town of Questa.

The *Affordable Housing Plan* analyzed the housing needs of seniors, persons experiencing homelessness, special needs populations, first-time homebuyers, and renter-occupied and owner-occupied households who are cost-burdened (paying more than 30% of their household income on housing costs). The *Affordable Housing Plan* identified goals and quantifiable objectives to increase housing options for these populations based on the area median income for Taos County.

The *Affordable Housing Plan* identified approximately 4,300 owner-occupied households and 2,367 renter-occupied households who are earning less than \$40,000 per year. Housing rehabilitation and additional entry-level housing options are needed to meet the housing needs of low and moderate-income homebuyers in Taos County. Rental housing is also scarce, as there

are few market-rate apartments available in Taos County. Most of the rental housing consists of single-family homes or mobile homes.

There were 865 households considered very-low income that earned 30% or below AMI. The Northern Regional Housing Authority is utilizing 448 Section 8 vouchers throughout Taos County and estimated the unmet need of 425 households.

The *Affordable Housing Plan* identified the following steps Taos County has taken to ensure affordable housing is available to residents:

- ◀ **Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) Projects:** Development by a local resident that provided 340 units of rental housing for households earning 60% AMI and below.
- ◀ **Land Donations:** Land trades between Taos County and the Town of Taos enabled the construction of an 80-unit LIHTC project in 2017. Additional creative partnerships are being explored to increase affordable housing with the adoption of the *Affordable Housing Act*.
- ◀ **Viable Public Housing:** The Taos County Housing Authority coordinated with the Northern Regional Housing Authority to preserve 450 Section 8 vouchers for 169 low-rent units County-wide. These housing sources are essential for extremely low-income renters earning 30% AMI or below.
- ◀ **Dedicated Homeless and Special needs Service Providers:** Homeless providers in Taos have created a collaborative environment to develop collective estimates for housing needs for those experiencing homelessness. The collaborations are leading to positive results in addressing homelessness.

The *Affordable Housing Plan* identified goals and quantifiable objectives for Taos County (see *Table 5.3*). The goals and objectives are categorized by Housing Need, Target Units to meet unmet needs, and objectives that Taos County should take to increase affordable housing.

TABLE 5.3: TAOS COUNTY AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLAN GOALS and OBJECTIVES SUMMARY TABLE		
Housing Need	Target Units	Goals and Objectives
Homeless Emergency Shelter Affordable Housing	- -	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◀ Support the efforts of the State of Homelessness in Taos Collaborative to provide shelter and permanent housing for people experiencing homelessness.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage the donation of homes or apartments to add beds and housing units in the community.</li> <li>• Support potential LIHTC project for permanent affordable housing.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Rental Housing 30% AMI and below 60% AMI and below 80% AMI and below 80% - 120% AMI	127 152 58 60	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◀ Increase the impact of the Northern Regional Housing Authority.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in and partner with NRHA.</li> <li>• Support NRHA efforts to apply for additional rental assistance vouchers.</li> <li>• Support NRHA efforts to request a reevaluation of fair market rents from HUD to enable use of all Section 8 vouchers.</li> <li>• Partner with NRHA on mixed income LIHTC projects that produce additional 30% AM units.</li> </ul> </li> <li>◀ Pursue and partner with the Town of Taos on Low-Income Housing Tax Credit and other affordable housing projects.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider scattered site LIHTC development in areas that can support higher densities.</li> </ul> </li> <li>◀ Develop workforce rentals Questa and in other locations throughout the County.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to rehabilitate and rent homes through the Questa Lodging Project.</li> <li>• Engage in partnerships with employers to realize land donations and/or rent guarantees.</li> <li>• Encourage private-sector affordable housing by allowing affordable multi-family housing through an administrative permit and partnering with water and sanitation districts to identify and develop affordable housing sites.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
First-time Homebuyers	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◀ Establish a land trust to develop new starter homes with long-term affordability.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with the Town of Taos to establish or identify an entity to form a Community Land Trust.</li> <li>• Consider donation of public property or privately-owned land that can receive the state tax credit.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Housing Rehabilitation	435	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◀ Expand the use of current rehabilitation programs in Taos County and pilot new funding opportunities.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase outreach and awareness of existing rehabilitation programs.</li> <li>• Design pilot program with Housing New Mexico to provide state tax credit vouchers to individuals who donate to home rehab.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Public Policy & Financing	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider limiting the number of vacation rentals in the County or within a defined radius around the Town of Taos.</li> <li>• Consider implementing a real estate transfer tax on high-price sales with proceeds directed to affordable housing.</li> </ul>

Source: Taos County Affordable Housing Plan, 2021.



Single-family house in Las Colonias.

## HOUSING NEW MEXICO

Housing New Mexico (*formerly named New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority*) is a quasi-governmental entity that provides financing to make quality affordable housing and other related services available to low- and moderate-income New Mexicans. Using funding from housing bonds, tax credits, and other federal and state agencies, Housing New Mexico provides resources to build affordable rental communities, rehabilitate aging homes, supply down payment assistance and affordable mortgages, emergency shelter, and administer rental assistance and subsidies.

Housing New Mexico partners with lenders, realtors, non-profit organizations, local governments, tribal communities and developers throughout the state to make these programs and services available to all eligible New Mexicans (*see Appendix B for more information on funding resources for housing by Housing New Mexico*).

## USDA RURAL HOUSING SERVICES

The USDA Rural Housing Service offers a variety of programs to build or improve housing and essential community facilities in rural areas. The federal program offers loans, grants, and loan guarantees for housing, public safety facilities and equipment, hospitals, libraries, nursing homes, schools, and farm labor housing. Housing grants and loans support single-family and multi-family projects. Individuals can apply for grants and loans to rehabilitate housing units in need of repair to plumbing, sewer, structural, and other projects. This program also

provides technical assistance for loans and grants available through non-profit organizations, Indian tribes, and government agencies.

## 5.6 HOUSING ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

### ISSUES

#### *Lack of Affordable Housing*

Housing costs are rising across New Mexico, outpacing median household income and thereby causing a crisis in affordable housing. In Taos County, rising housing costs are threatening traditional communities, stifling economic growth, and causing residents to move away from Taos County. The logical solution is to support the development of new rental and owner housing that meets the needs of current and future Taos County residents.

Taos County has available resources to develop more affordable housing as recommended in the *Affordable Housing Plan* and the *Recommended Housing Roadmap*. Implementation of these plans relies on Taos County's continued coordination and strategic planning with the Northern Regional Housing Authority (NRHA) and the Taos Housing Partnership. These organizations are available to assist Taos County, but may not be utilized to their fullest potential. Ongoing communication and coordination with these two housing organizations and pursuing housing developers will help alleviate the lack of affordable housing in Taos County.

### *Housing Rehabilitation*

Taos County has a housing stock that is aging and in need of rehabilitation. Housing rehabilitation is particularly important for elderly and disabled residents that may not have the capability or resources to repair their homes or pay for costly maintenance.

Housing New Mexico identified the following as necessary repairs to homes:

- ◀ Upgrades to meet applicable codes;
- ◀ Standards or ordinance compliance;
- ◀ Essential improvements;
- ◀ Energy-related improvements;
- ◀ Lead-based paint hazard reduction;
- ◀ Accessibility for disabled persons;
- ◀ Repair or replacement of major housing systems;
- ◀ Incipient repairs and general property improvements of a non-luxury nature;
- ◀ Site improvements; and
- ◀ Utility connections.

Taos County can assist community members with housing rehabilitation by connecting homeowners with funding available through Housing New Mexico and HUD. The *Taos County Affordable Housing Plan* provides Taos County with the ability to contribute to affordable housing programs, projects, and rehabilitation.

### *Lack of Affordable Housing Trust Fund*

One of the strategies in the *Recommended Housing Roadmap* is to identify long-term funding for an Affordable Housing Trust Fund. A housing trust fund can help homeowners with down payment requirements or subsidize other costs related to homeownership. Taos County should work with the Taos Housing Partnership on establishing a committee to identify potential funding mechanisms for an Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

## OPPORTUNITIES

### *Agrihoods*

Local and food production is an important aspect of Taos County culture, which is rooted in traditional agricultural practices and acequia culture. A residential development model that would support Taos County's agricultural roots

and would fit well in rural county areas is an agrihood; a neighborhood that is centered around a working farm and provides healthier, more sustainable lifestyle in line with existing Taos County neighborhoods. Agrihoods are intended to connect people to the land by placing a focus on growing organic and sustainable agriculture, increasing access to green spaces, and promoting social interaction.

In Taos County, an agrihood can partner with local organizations such as the Taos County Economic Development Corporation, which focuses on sustainable agricultural and food production. According to the Urban Land Institute, agrihoods can support an attractive return on investment: studies have found as much as a 15 to 30% increase in the value of properties adjacent to parks and open space, which can include working farms.

The Agrihood is a 12-acre development in Las Cruces that was created in 2017. Rows of organic produce are surrounded by residential dwelling units. The organic produce is sold in local restaurants, to food trucks, and at the Las Cruces Farmers and Crafts Market. Drip irrigation minimizes the amount of water required for irrigation.

### *Cluster Housing Development*

Cluster housing allows for the development of smaller lots than what would be normally allowed under existing zoning regulations in exchange for the preservation of a certain percentage of open space within the development. The open space is typically preserved and dedicated by subdivision plat in perpetuity and owned in common and maintained by all of the property owners within the development. Cluster housing has long been used as a development option that is sensitive to and preserves natural features of the land, such as steep topography, views, rock outcroppings, etc. Cluster development could also be used as a means to preserve acequias, traditional farms, and community land.

Some local codes offer density bonus for cluster housing developments or easing some of the typical development standards or review processes. There are many examples of cluster housing development in Albuquerque's North Valley, where

residents have placed a high value in preserving visual open space, community gardens and access to acequias, and relief from the monotony of traditional development.

### Community Land Trusts

Community land trusts are a form of shared equity homeownership that provide an option for affordable housing development over the long-term. They are typically managed as a non-profit or quasi-government organization that owns and holds land in trust for the benefit of the community and to preserve housing affordability in perpetuity. Homeowners own the building while the community land trust retains ownership of the land, thereby reducing the cost of homeownership. As a condition of the long-term ground lease, homeowners agree to specific restrictions on resale to preserve affordability for future buyers. Homeowners typically pay a low monthly land lease. Community land trusts can also include other uses, such as agriculture, commercial, rental properties, and schools.

New Mexico provides grants and low-interest loans, works with non-profits to acquire land at a discount, and provides tax incentives for community land trust developments. The qualifying criteria for establishing a community land trust includes having a 501(c)3 non-profit status, a mission that aligns with adopted principles of community land trusts, sufficient financial resources and organizational capacity, record of successful housing project management, and support within the designated community or jurisdiction where the community land trust will operate.

Examples of successful community land trusts in New Mexico include:

- ◀ The Sawmill Community Land Trust was founded in 1996 on 27 acres in Albuquerque's Sawmill District. It expanded to 34 acres and includes 93 homes, three apartment complexes, community gardens, playgrounds, and a plaza.
- ◀ The Tierra Madre Land Trust was established in 1995 by the Sisters of Charity in Sunland Park as an alternative, self-sustaining, and

intercultural community to address the needs of people living in poverty and the degradation of the earth along the United States and Mexico border. The Tierra Madre Land Trust is a community of 38 units of solar-based housing with straw bale construction and uses HOME funds from Housing New Mexico to help run the Trust.

## 5.7 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, & STRATEGIES

### HOUSING GOAL 1

**Increase the housing supply in Taos County to include a diversity of housing types, unit sizes, and price ranges.**

#### Objectives

- ◀ *To encourage the development of market rate, affordable, and workforce housing to meet the needs of Taos County residents.*
- ◀ *To ensure the housing needs of special needs populations, such as the disabled, elderly, veterans, single parent households, and homeless, can be met.*
- ◀ *To reduce housing costs for low-income renter- and owner-occupied households.*

#### HOUSING STRATEGY 1.1

Establish a Housing Trust Fund with a dedicated funding stream for the purpose of providing funding support to eligible affordable housing activities and projects.

#### HOUSING STRATEGY 1.2

Identify County-owned properties and buildings that are appropriate and available for donation to an affordable housing program.

#### HOUSING STRATEGY 1.3

Develop incentives for developers to build affordable housing for income-qualified households, including but not limited to special populations. Incentives should include but not be limited to density bonuses; reduction or waiver of fees; land or building donations; long-term leases or discounts on County-owned land; cost sharing for on- or off-site infrastructure improvements; and expedited permitting.

**HOUSING STRATEGY 1.4**

Work with the Taos Housing Partnership on creating incentives for housing developers to set aside an appropriate percentage of affordable units in new residential developments.

**HOUSING STRATEGY 1.5**

Coordinate with the Taos Housing Partnership and Northern Regional Housing Authority on community outreach that provides information on available affordable housing programs, credit counseling, first-time home buyer programs; rehabilitation and maintenance assistance programs for seniors and veterans; down payment and closing cost assistance; and referrals to local lenders approved by Housing New Mexico.

**HOUSING GOAL 2**

Promote new housing development that offers a variety of housing development types.

**Objectives**

- ◀ *To encourage the development of new residential projects that are located with access to outdoor amenities, community services, and the roadway network.*
- ◀ *To support alternative housing developments that allow for the preservation of Taos County's agricultural traditions and multi-generational community building.*

**HOUSING STRATEGY 2.1**

Identify appropriate locations for new mixed-density developments on vacant properties within Taos County, including but not limited to areas shown on the Future Land Use Scenario (see Chapter 4, Land Use).

**HOUSING STRATEGY 2.2**

In coordination with Land Use Strategy 4.1.1, promote agrihoods, cluster development, and co-housing as sustainable alternatives to traditional subdivisions. This strategy should include incorporating appropriate development standards into the Taos County Land Development Code that address density, setbacks, buffers, and maintenance of common areas.

**HOUSING STRATEGY 2.3**

Identify and pursue public-private partnerships with private or non-profit housing developers on new, mixed-income LIHTC projects.

**HOUSING STRATEGY 2.4**

Require master planning for large residential developments to ensure there is adequate capacity to serve the project at full build-out. Encourage a variety of residential types and densities, neighborhood parks, and connections to trails and other community amenities.

**HOUSING STRATEGY 2.5**

Recruit a senior living developer/operator that offers assisted living, memory care, and skilled nursing services to allow Taos County residents to age-in-place.

**HOUSING GOAL 3**

Support the rehabilitation of existing dilapidated, vacant, and/or abandoned housing units in Taos County.

**Objectives**

- ◀ *To ensure existing housing is safely maintained and halt the deterioration of Taos County's existing housing stock.*
- ◀ *To address the negative impact that blighted housing conditions have on the quality of life and the potential for attracting illicit activities.*

**HOUSING STRATEGY 3.1**

Develop a land bank program to acquire vacant and abandoned houses with clear title that can be later purchased for the development of new housing by homebuilders or non-profit housing providers.

**HOUSING STRATEGY 3.2**

Identify opportunities and coordinate with the Northern Regional Housing Authority and local and regional non-profit housing developers on applying for rehabilitation funds for single family homes from the HOME Investment Partnership Program and USDA Rural Development Section 504 Home Repair Grants for eligible seniors aged 62 and older.

### HOUSING STRATEGY 3.3

Apply for grants to the New Mexico Clean & Beautiful program to fund beautification projects, litter control, recycling, xeriscape, graffiti eradication, and community stewardship.

## HOUSING GOAL 4

**Reduce the rate of homelessness in Taos County.**

### *Objectives*

- ◀ *To address the housing and service needs of people experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness.*
- ◀ *To create transitional housing for people experiencing chronic homelessness.*

### HOUSING STRATEGY 4.1

Work with the Town of Taos and non-profit entities on applying for capital outlay to fund the development of a homeless shelter.

### HOUSING STRATEGY 4.2

Coordinate with local providers to address healthcare issues that contribute to homelessness, including mental and behavioral health.

### HOUSING STRATEGY 4.3

Disseminate information regarding available services and programs for individuals and families experiencing homelessness, community members in need of transportation to behavioral health appointments, and other peer and career counseling services.

CHAPTER 6

# Economic Development



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## 6.1 INTRODUCTION

Economic development provides the framework for identifying regional strengths, expanding key industries, and growing the economy to ensure Taos County households achieve a high level of economic prosperity. In a place as diverse as Taos County, the overarching goal is to achieve equitable economic development that focuses on dismantling barriers to economic mobility and expanding opportunities for all citizens, with special emphasis on vulnerable communities. Economic development is most effective when it embraces strategies to create jobs and wealth within a resilient and flexible economy.

To gauge Taos County residents' needs, the Community Survey asked a range of questions related to economic development. Participants were generally satisfied with available commercial retail and services in Taos County and indicated their commercial retail needs were being met in the Town of Taos. Of the participants that are employed, a large portion have more than one job and many are working remotely or a hybrid of in-person and remote. Most of the participants in the Community Survey indicated their interest in having economic

development be focused on healthcare services, renewable energy, and agriculture.

## 6.2 ECONOMIC PROFILE

### INDUSTRY CONTRIBUTIONS TO GDP

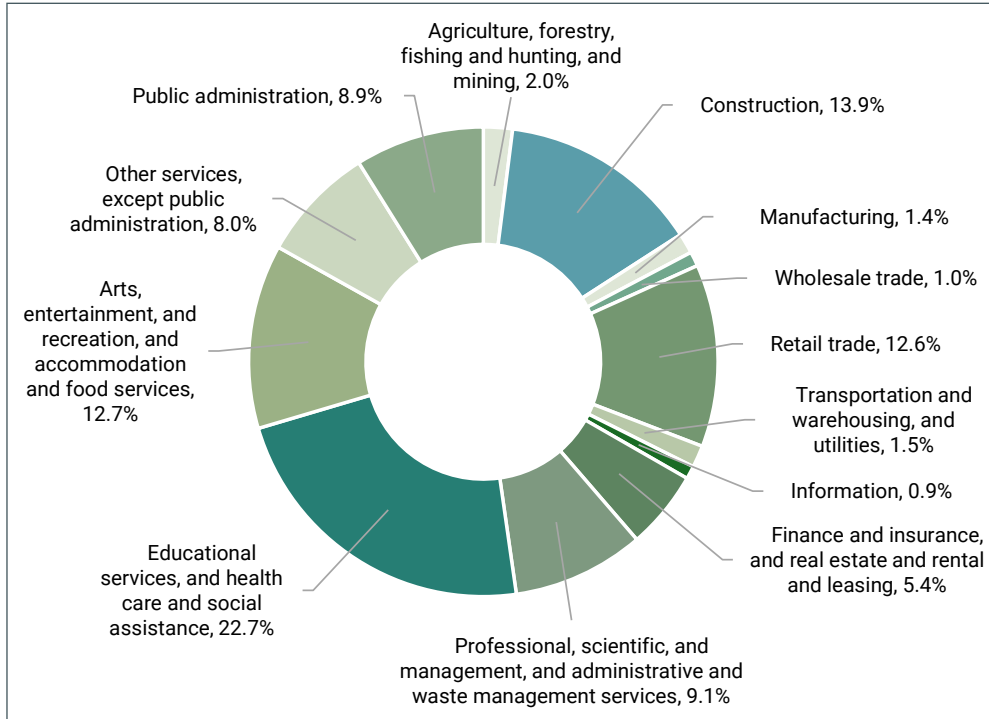
The Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) produces economic statistics, including the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for national, state, and local areas. The BEA estimates that in 2024, the "Real estate" industry had the highest contribution to Taos County's GDP with \$271,074 followed by "Government and government enterprises" at \$243,921 and "Health care and social assistance" at \$132,754. Other contributions include "Accommodation and foods services" at \$120,387 and "Retail trade" at \$101,395. These numbers reflect the economic affect on Taos County from rising housing costs and the importance of government employment.

### EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

The American Community Survey (ACS) estimated that in 2022, 50.9% of the Taos County population 16 years and over were in the labor force, a decrease of 9.0% since 2012. The level of participation in the workforce in Taos County is lower than New Mexico as a whole, which was 57.6% in 2022.

In 2022, the largest employment by industry category, 22.7%, was in "Educational services, Health care, and Social Assistance". This was followed by "Construction" at 13.9% and "Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, and Accommodation and Food Services" at 12.7%. New Mexico's rates of employment within these industries were 25.4%, 7.4%, and 10.3%, respectively.

FIGURE 6.1: EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY



Source: ACS, 5-year Estimates, 2022.

## OCCUPATIONS

While industry is the type of business a company engages in, occupation is the work an employed person does. In 2022, 38.4% of residents in Taos County were employed in Management, Business, Science, and Arts occupations, 22.3% in Service occupations, and 18.6% were in Sales and Office occupations (see Figure 6.2).

## CLASS OF WORKER

The class of worker categorizes employment based on the ownership type of the employer. The majority of the occupations in Taos County were Private Wage and Salary workers (64.5%). This was followed by Government workers (22.3%) and Self-employed (12.8%). In comparison, these occupation categories for New Mexico as a whole were 70.3%, 22.8%, and 6.6%, respectively. The significant difference between the rate of self-employed workers in Taos County versus New Mexico is particularly striking, revealing a strong entrepreneurial approach.

## MAJOR EMPLOYERS

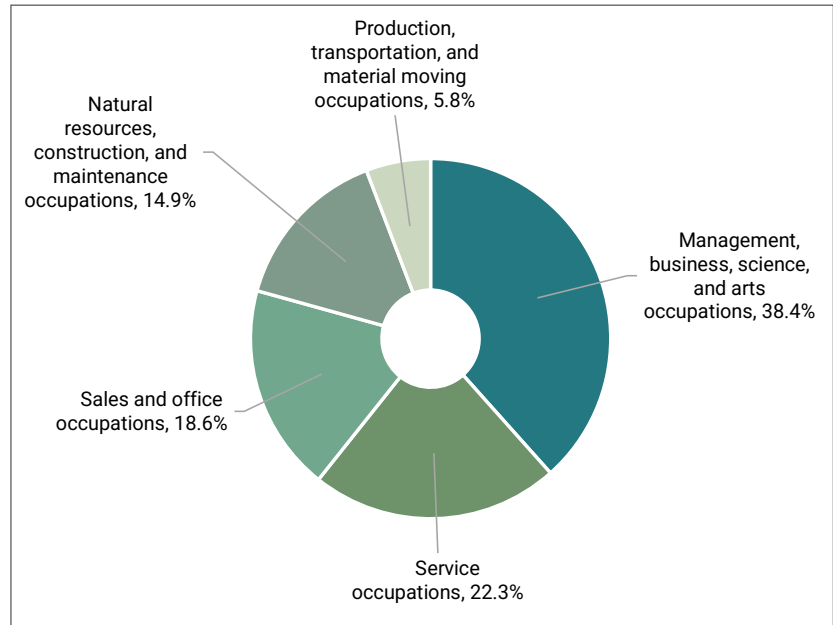
The following major employers in Taos County include those in public administration, health care, education, and commercial retail:

- ◀ Taos County
- ◀ Town of Taos
- ◀ United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- ◀ Taos Municipal Schools
- ◀ UNM Taos
- ◀ Holy Cross Medical Center
- ◀ Kit Carson Electric Cooperative
- ◀ Wal-Mart
- ◀ Smith's
- ◀ Albertson's Market

## UNEMPLOYMENT

According to New Mexico Workforce Solutions, Labor Analysis Statistics and Economic Research (LASER), the unemployment rate in Taos County decreased by 1.3% between 2017 and 2023. In 2023, the unemployment rate in Taos County was 4.4%,

FIGURE 6.2: OCCUPATIONS



Source: ACS, 5-year Estimates, 2022.

TABLE 6.1: UNEMPLOYMENT, 2017 - 2023

	2017	2023	% Change
TAOS COUNTY	5.1%	4.4%	-1.3%
Colfax County	5.3%	3.3%	-2.0%
Mora County	7.7%	5.1%	-2.6%
Santa Fe County	4.2%	3.2%	-1.0%
Rio Arriba County	5.3%	3.3%	-2.0%
New Mexico	5.1%	3.6%	-2.5%

Source: New Mexico Workforce Solutions LASER.

higher than surrounding counties and the New Mexico average, with the exception of Mora County (see Table 6.1).

## MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME & WAGES

### Median Household Income

The 2022 median household income in Taos County was \$55,145, an increase of 63.0% from 2012 (see Table 6.2). This was a significantly higher rate of change as compared to New Mexico, which grew by 30.8% between 2012 and 2022. While the rate of change in New Mexico fell below that of Taos County, the New Mexico median income in 2022 was still higher at \$58,722 than Taos County.

In 2022, the largest portion of households in Taos County, 18.0%, fell into the \$50,000 to \$74,000 income bracket. The second largest portion

of households, 14.3%, was in the \$100,000 to \$149,999 income bracket. Between 2012 and 2012, the households that experienced the largest increase, 375.1%, were in the \$200,000 or more income bracket, which was followed by an increase of 170.5% in the \$150,000 to \$199,999 income bracket. These metrics demonstrate that Taos County median household income has risen because of strong growth in the highest income brackets, skewing the median household income.

**Wages**

Between 2012 and 2022, average weekly wages increased in Taos County by 36.6%, from \$573 to \$783. Taos County is similar to surrounding counties, except for Santa Fe County, which has the highest weekly wages. New Mexico statewide weekly wages in 2022 were \$1,063 in 2022, significantly higher than Taos County (see Table 6.3).

**INCOME BY INDUSTRY**

Analyzing income by industry reveals income disparities and the need for many Taos County residents to have more than one job. Between 2012 and 2022, most industry wages increased; however, there are notable exceptions. Three of the largest industries decreased in wages; Arts, entertainment and recreation, accommodation and food services by -39.7%, Construction by -37.5%, and Retail trade by -4.3%. These industries represent three out of the four largest industries in Taos County. The reason for wage decreases is difficult to ascertain.

The COVID-19 pandemic followed by inflation and a slowdown in construction and tourism may have had an impact. The data reveals real difficulties for workers trying to earn a living wage in Taos County (see Table 6.4).

**TABLE 6.2: MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME**

	2012	2022	% Change
Less than \$10,000	11.6%	6.6%	-41.7%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	9.9%	6.3%	-34.7%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	16.2%	13.8%	-12.5%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	13.5%	7.8%	-40.5%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	15.1%	11.4%	-22.4%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	13.7%	18.0%	35.1%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	8.3%	9.2%	13.4%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	7.9%	14.3%	85.4%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	2.3%	5.9%	170.5%
\$200,000 or more	1.4%	6.5%	375.1%
Median Household Income	\$33,835	\$55,145	63.0%

Source: US Census, ACS 5-year Estimates, 2012 & 2022.

**TABLE 6.3: WEEKLY WAGES, 2012-2022**

	2012	2022	% Change
TAOS COUNTY	\$573	\$783	36.6%
Colfax County	\$562	\$784	39.5%
Mora County	\$569	\$761	33.7%
Santa Fe County	\$790	\$1,061	34.3%
Rio Arriba County	\$613	\$856	39.6%
New Mexico	\$783	\$1,063	35.8%

Source: New Mexico Workforce Solutions LASER.

**TABLE 6.4: INCOME BY INDUSTRY**

	2012	2022	% Change
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	\$46,615	\$51,081	9.6%
Construction	\$44,375	\$27,755	-37.5%
Manufacturing	\$46,719	\$76,429	63.6%
Wholesale trade	\$23,639	\$55,357	134.2%
Retail trade	\$26,172	\$25,045	-4.3%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	\$58,696	\$74,485	26.9%
Information	\$22,633	\$54,012	138.6%
Finance and insurance, and real estate, and rental and leasing	\$31,893	\$62,266	95.2%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative, and waste management services	\$39,375	\$46,705	18.6%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	\$25,703	\$37,860	47.3%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	\$30,625	\$18,459	-39.7%
Other services, except public administration	\$26,607	\$29,338	10.3%
Public administration	\$31,894	\$44,438	39.3%

Source: ACS, 5-year Estimates, 2012 & 2022.

## POVERTY STATUS

Poverty levels decreased in Taos County between 2012 to 2022 (see Figure 6.4). The most substantial decrease was among those under 18 years, which went from 41.5% to 18.7%. The smallest decrease was among those over 65 years 15.4% to 14.0% and likely because this cohort is aging out of the workforce. Taos County is slightly lower or statistically even with New Mexico in all categories.

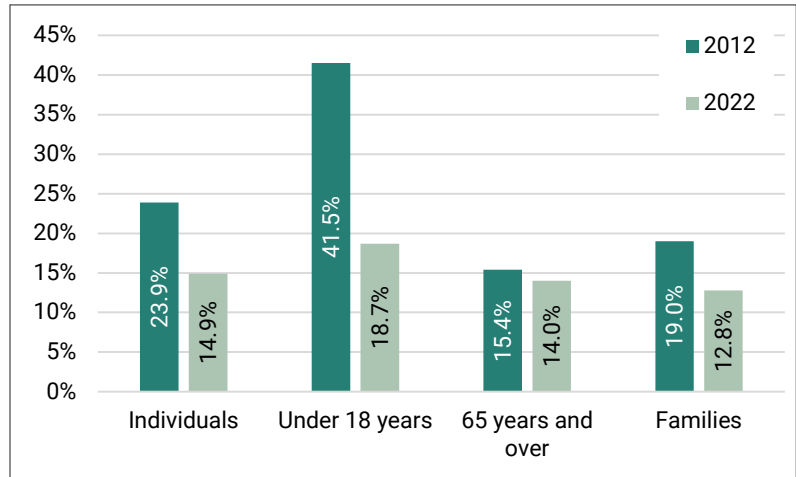
Considering the poverty status of Taos County at the census tract level, the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) designated three high poverty areas, three areas that could be high poverty areas, and four areas that are not high poverty areas (see *EDA-Census Poverty Status Map, this page*). The high poverty areas have fewer opportunities for employment and include remote areas of Taos County that are far from the economic hub of the Town of Taos.

## GROSS RECEIPTS TAX

Taxable Gross Receipts (GRT) are the total amount of monies imposed on businesses from a variety of activities, including:

- ◀ Selling, leasing, or licensing New Mexico property;
- ◀ Granting a right to use a franchise in New Mexico;
- ◀ Performing services in New Mexico; and
- ◀ Selling research and development services performed outside New Mexico in which the product is initially used in New Mexico.

FIGURE 6.4: POVERTY STATUS



Source: ACS, 5-year Estimates, 2012 and 2022.

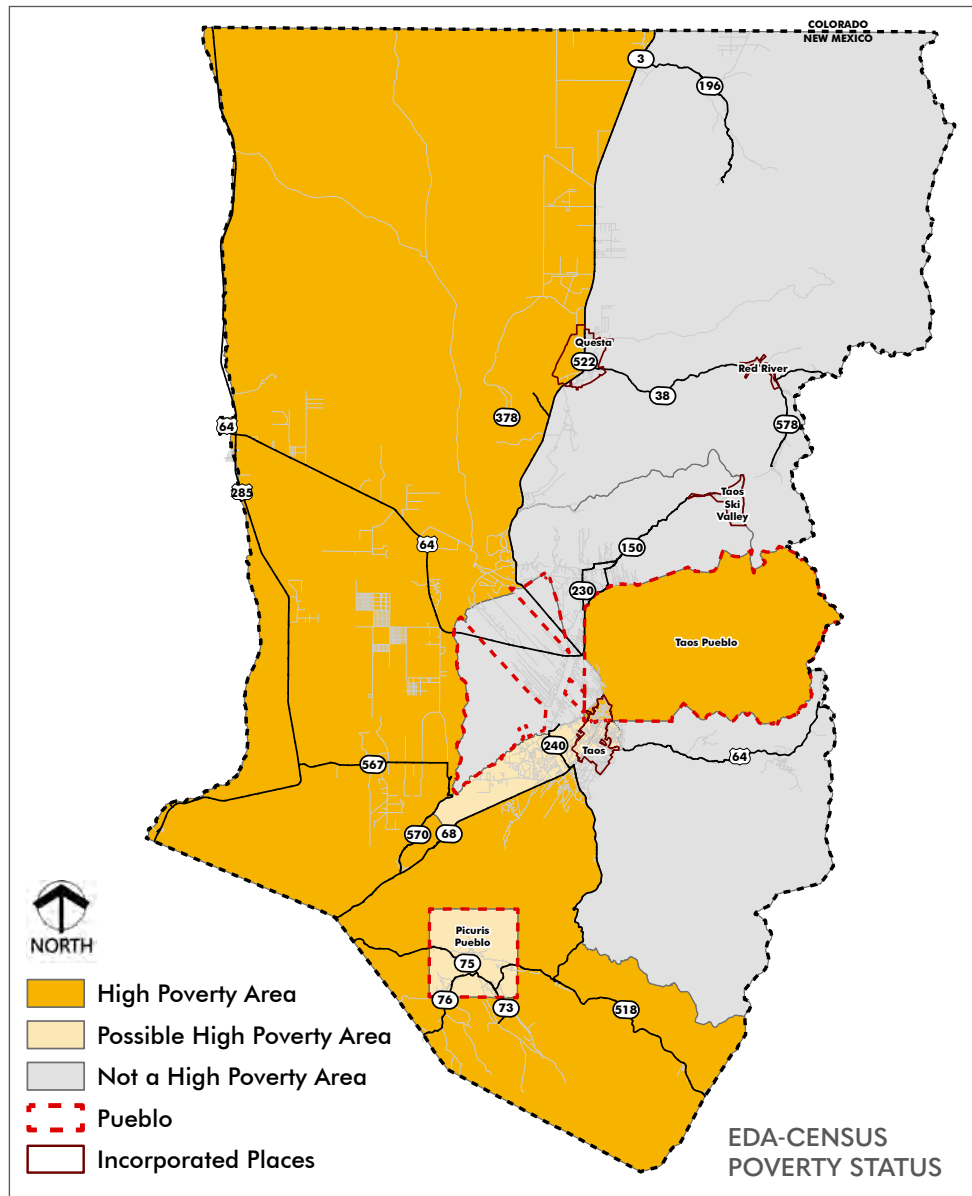
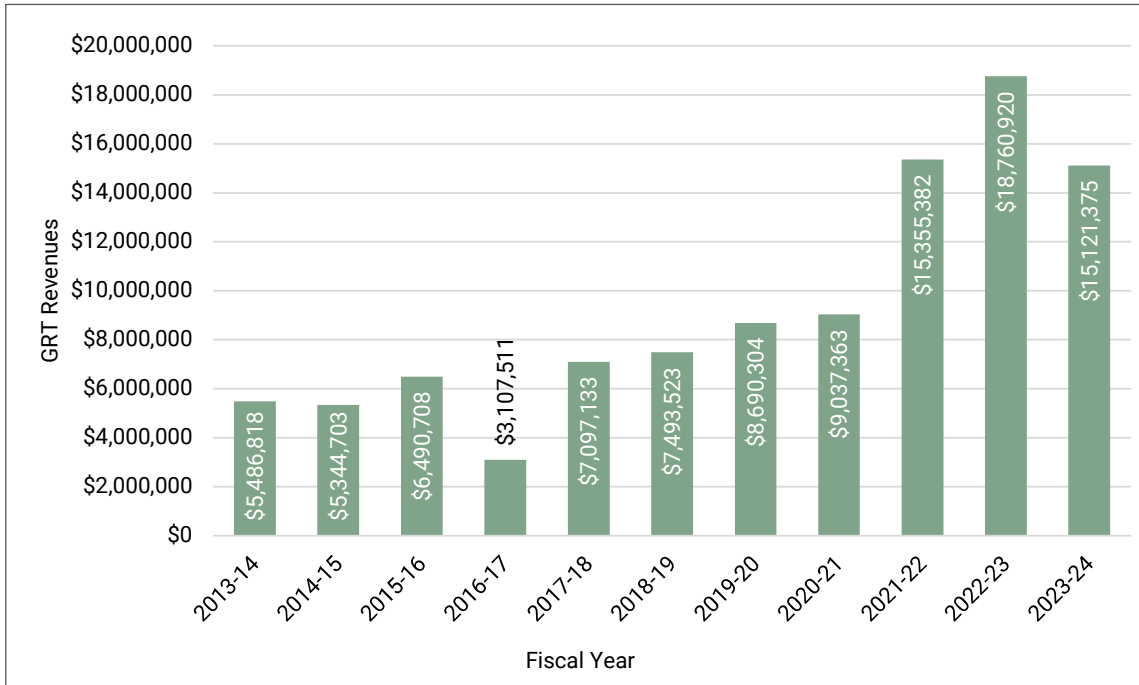


FIGURE 6.5: GROSS RECEIPTS REVENUES



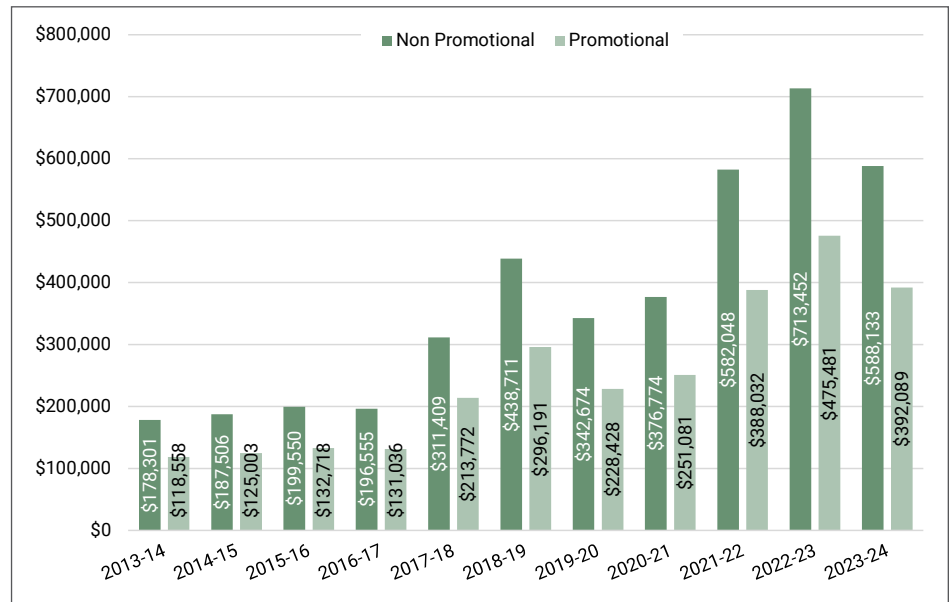
Source: Taos County, 2013 - March 2024.

The GRT rate varies throughout New Mexico from 5.0% to 9.3%. Taos County’s GRT rates grew steadily from 2013 to 2020. In 2021, GRT revenue grew to over \$15 million and reached over \$18 million in 2022-2023, its highest level (see Figure 6.5). Based on GRT revenue over the ten year period, GRT is increasing and is contributing to the County’s general fund.

### LODGER’S TAXES

Lodger’s tax is levied on commercial lodging establishments, providing revenue for tourism-related activities. In Taos County, lodger’s taxes are managed by the Lodger’s Tax Advisory Board and administered by the Economic Development Director with oversight by the Lodger’s Tax Manager. The County assesses a 5% lodger’s tax. Lodger’s taxes are assessed as non-promotional (revenue can be used for a broad array of tourism-related facilities and attractions only)

FIGURE 6.6: LODGERS’ TAXES



Source: Taos County, Fiscal Year 2013 - March, 2024.

and promotional (can only be used for promoting tourism). In FY 2013-2014, the County collected \$296,859, and by 2022-2023 it increased to over \$1.18 million. This is in part due to the increase in short-term rentals in Taos County during this time period as well as the efforts by the County to collect lodger’s taxes on existing short-term rental operators (see Figure 6.6).

## 6.3 MAJOR INDUSTRIES

### VISITOR ECONOMY

To quantify the significance of tourism on the New Mexico economy, the New Mexico Tourism Department compiles data to study how the visitor economy impacts New Mexico counties in various categories, such as spending, income, employment, and taxes. The *Economic Impact Study* completed in 2022 found that Taos County was ranked sixth amongst the 33 New Mexico counties in visitor spending at \$320.7 million, a 16.7% increase from 2018 spending levels. Between 2018 and 2022, the economic impact of tourism in Taos County grew in all categories, except for direct and total employment, which declined by 2.1% and 3.4%, respectively.

Taos County has long been a destination for visitors that want to experience its beautiful landscapes, rich cultural heritage, art and creative endeavors. The visitor economy employs a large portion of Taos County residents through accommodation, food services, recreation, and the arts, and supports local retail.

Taos County continues to draw tourist income into the state and its local economy. According to the New Mexico Tourism Department Visitor Volume Report, in 2022, New Mexico recorded \$8.3 billion in direct visitor spending, exceeding estimates and setting a new record. Approximately 70,433 new jobs were sustained through direct visitor spending and contributions to state and local taxes generated \$782 million in 2022, a 10% increase from 2021. Total economic impact was estimated at \$11.2 billion, which encompasses direct visitor spending and indirect and induced impacts. Approximately 48% of all visitor spending occurred in rural communities.

#### *Taos Destination Stewardship Plan*

Protecting local communities is vital when developing a tourist economy. The *Taos Destination Stewardship Plan*, developed for the Town of Taos in cooperation with Taos County and regional partners, aims to foster a shared vision in for the future of tourism in and around the Town of Taos. The Plan lays out a framework for managing the strain of high

	2018	2022	% Change
Visitor Spending	\$274.8 M	\$320.7 M	16.7%
Direct Labor Income	\$72.0 M	\$87.4 M	21.4%
Total Labor Income	\$81.4 M	\$96.1 M	18.1%
Direct Employment	2,828	2,769	-2.1%
Total Employment	3,064	2,959	-3.4%
State and Local Taxes	\$21,501,000	\$25,225,000	17.3%
Federal Taxes	\$27,356,000	\$30,272,000	10.7%

Source: New Mexico Tourism Department, *Tourism Economic Impact for State and Counties, 2018 & 2022*.

visitor volume on the quality-of-life of local residents, while providing strategies to equitably distribute the economic benefits of the tourism industry. The planning process for the *Destination Stewardship Plan* involved extensive public input through surveys and public meetings and input sessions.

#### *Taos Pueblo*

Taos Pueblo is an UNESCO World Heritage Site and is renown for its iconic adobe structures and being one of the oldest communities in North America. Taos Pueblo is generally open daily to visitors and guided tours are available. Visitation is subject to change based on tribal ceremonies, which are closed to the public. Visitors can enter the multi-story, adobe structures that have been continuously inhabited for over 1000 years, and the San Geronimo Church. Taos Pueblo ceremonial events run from January through September, and visitors must adhere to a strict code of conduct, including limiting photos to structures and landscape and no photography at ceremonies.

#### *Picuris Pueblo*

Picuris Pueblo rests on the banks of the Rio Pueblo. It is nestled in a scenic area of Taos County surrounded by mountain peaks, cottonwoods, aspens, and wildlife. Visitors are invited to enjoy the stocked fishing pond and attend specified dances and ceremonies. Picuris Pueblo hosts the annual San Lorenzo Feast Day on August 10th, which includes dancing, pole climbing, and a morning footrace. The High Country Tri-Cultural Arts and Crafts Fair is held in early June, and features pottery, painting, beadwork, jewelry, weaving, and

more. Trout fishing is available at the Pu-na Lake as are self-guided tours of excavated structures.

### Historic Churches

The Taos County Lodgers Association and the Town of Taos published a brochure called the *Historic Churches of Taos and Northern New Mexico*, which provides directions and a brief history of local communities and their churches. Some of the most famous churches in Taos County are San Francisco de Assisi (c. 1810) in Ranchos de Taos, San Geronimo de Taos (c. 1850) on Taos Pueblo, and San Antonio de Padua (c. 1840) in Questa. For more information on historic churches in Taos County communities, see Section 3.4.

### Ojo Caliente

Ojo Caliente Mineral Springs Resort and Spa, located at 50 Los Baños Drive, is one of the oldest natural health resorts in the country. Ojo Caliente offers natural spring-fed soaking, spa treatments, farm-to-table dining, lodging, yoga classes, and opportunity to experience the local area through hiking, biking, and birdwatching.



San Francisco de Assisi Church.



Ojo Caliente.



Taos Pueblo, an UNESCO World Heritage Site.

### Taos Plaza

The Taos Plaza, located west of the intersection of US 64 (Kit Carson Road) and NM 68 within the Town of Taos, is at the center of the Taos Historic District. Hotel La Fonda de Taos, built in 1820 as the St. Vrain Mercantile Store, is a stunning historic structure that borders the Plaza. It was recently discovered in 2024 that Taos County owns the Taos Plaza and the County has taken over maintenance. Locals and visitors alike come to Taos Plaza for farmers' markets, live music, traditional celebrations, shops, and art galleries.



Historic photo at Taos Plaza, c. 1940.

### OUTDOOR RECREATION

Taos County has a rich and diverse range of outdoor recreation and trail use. The County's immense scenic beauty and geography provides world-class recreational amenities and opportunities. Recreation is vital to the economy of New Mexico and Taos County, and is a major reason why residents live in Taos County.

Outdoor enthusiasts living in or visiting Taos County can take advantage of a diverse range of natural resources for activities, such as boating, fishing, bird watching, biking, hiking, skiing, and camping. The results of the Community Survey showed a high visitation rate by the respondents at the Carson National Forest, Rio Grande Gorge, Taos Plaza, and Taos Pueblo.

In 2019, the New Mexico Economic Development Department (NMEDD) opened the Outdoor Recreation Division to focus on supporting outdoor oriented businesses and marketing opportunities for outdoor recreation. In 2020, endeavor New Mexico was launched to expand the outdoor recreation economy.

According to the US Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), the outdoor



Taos Plaza.

recreation economy in New Mexico grew by 1.8% between 2021 and 2022. Outdoor recreation created \$2.4 billion in value added for New Mexico and accounted for 1.9% of state GDP, including nearly 28,000 jobs. Taos County is an important part of the outdoor recreation economy due to its vast and scenic assets and the large service industry that has grown up around it.

In 2019, the New Mexico State Legislature established the Outdoor Equity Fund and a program designed to encourage under-served youth take to get outside and inspire future participants in the outdoor recreation economy. The following narrative is a summary of Taos County’s outdoor recreation opportunities and amenities.

**Carson National Forest**

The Carson National Forest is a strong economic driver in Taos County. Of the four counties within the Carson National Forest, the economies of Taos and Rio Arriba counties are the most positively impacted.

The Carson National Forest covers 1.5 million acres in Northern New Mexico, rising in elevation from 6,000 feet to 13,167 feet at Wheeler Peak. Within Taos County, the Camino Real, Questa, and Tres Piedras Ranger Districts are managed for many multi-use purposes. Visitors enjoy picnicking, fishing, hunting, hiking, mountain biking, camping, downhill and cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, tubing, sledding, and snowmobiling. The Enchanted Forest Snowplay Area offers groomed trails for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. Other points of interest include Amole Canyon, Cebolla Mesa, La Junta Canyon, East Fork Trail 56, Eagle Rock Lake, Wheeler Peak, and several campgrounds across Taos County.

According to the *National Forest and Grassland Economic Contributions Report*, in 2019, Carson National Forest contributed in total 1,880 jobs, \$63.4 million in labor income, and \$117.6 million to the total GDP of the region. Table 6.6 shows the Carson National Forest’s top three industries for jobs were Accommodation and Food Services; Agricultural Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting; and Public Administration and the top three industries for labor income were Accommodation and Food Services; Public Administration; and Mining,

**TABLE 6.6: CARSON NATIONAL FOREST ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS, 2019**

Top Three Industries by Jobs	# of Jobs
Accommodation and Food Services	740
Agriculture Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting	240
Public Administration	200
Top Three Industries by Labor Income	Labor Income
Accommodation and Food Services	\$19.5 million
Public Administration	\$11.7 million
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	\$4.0 million

Source: National Forest and Grassland Economic Contributions Report, 2019.

Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction. Overall, the primary economic value generating activities by Carson National Forest were ranching, recreation and wildlife visits, timber harvests, and operation activities related to the National Forest.

**Wheeler Peak**

Wheeler Peak is the highest natural point in New Mexico. It is situated within the Carson National Forest and lies approximately 21 miles northeast of the Town of Taos. The Wheeler Peak trail is open for hiking, horseback riding, cross country skiing, and snowshoeing. The Wheeler Peak Summit trail is open for day hiking.

**Rio Grande del Norte National Monument**

The Rio Grande del Norte National Monument, established on March 25, 2013, comprises approximately 242,555 acres of public land that spans an area of Northern New Mexico into southern Colorado, most of which is managed by the Bureau of Land Management. The Monument is comprised of rugged, wide-open plains at an average elevation of 7,000 feet, dotted by volcanic cones, and cut by steep canyons with rivers tucked away in their depths.

The Monument can be accessed within Taos County at the Taos Junction Bridge and Orilla Verde, Taos Valley Overlook, Rio Grande Gorge “High Bridge” and West Rim Trail, John Dunn Bridge Recreation Site, Central Volcanoes, Wild Rivers Area, and the Taos Plateau Prairie. The Monument provides a wide range of opportunities for picnicking, hiking, camping, whitewater rafting, hunting, fishing, mountain biking, and wildlife viewing.

The Rio Grande Gorge is one of Taos County's biggest draws and is home to a multitude of wildlife, including big horn sheep, river otter, and the Rio Grande cutthroat trout. Visitors can view the Rio Grande flowing through the Rio Grande Gorge from the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge.

Another popular attraction for visitors to Taos is the *Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River*, which is a federal designation that conserves and protects the land in and around the Rio Grande. Visitors to the Wild Rivers Recreation Area and the Orilla Verde Recreation Area can fish, picnic, and launch their rafts from docking points.

### ***Enchanted Circle Scenic Byway***

The Enchanted Circle Scenic Byway follows US 64/NM 38/NM 522 through the Carson National Forest. It begins in Taos and connects the communities of Angel Fire, Eagle Nest, Red River, and Questa. The Enchanted Circle offers many opportunities for hiking, camping, skiing, and fishing at Cabresto Lake, Mallette Canyon,

Eagle Nest Lake State Park, and the Red River Fish Hatchery.

### ***State Parks***

State Parks are economic generators that bring people from across New Mexico and the United States. The Community Survey showed a high rate of visitation by the participants to Cimarron Canyon, Coyote Creek, and Eagle Nest Lake State Parks, which are all outside of Taos County.

- ◀ **Cimarron Canyon State Park:** Cimarron Canyon State Park is located approximately nine miles east of Eagle Nest in the Colin Neblett Wildlife Area. The Park offers beautiful views, interesting geology, camping, fly fishing, hiking, equestrian trails, and wildlife viewing.
- ◀ **Coyote Creek State Park:** Coyote Creek State Park is located approximately 41 miles southeast of Taos in the Sangre de Cristo mountains. Visitors to the Park can enjoy fly fishing, camping, hiking, and birding.



Wheeler Peak.



Eagle Nest Lake State Park (Colfax County).

- Eagle Nest Lake State Park:** Eagle Nest Lake is located in western Colfax County along the Enchanted Circle and close to Taos County. The Park offers stunning views of the high mountains of the Moreno Valley with views of Wheeler Peak, campsites and opportunities for fishing, boating, kayaking, picnicking, wildlife viewing, hiking, biking, and special events. It also includes a visitor center with offices, restrooms, a classroom/multi-purpose room, and permanent exhibits. The New Mexico State Parks Division recently completed improvements to the existing campground.

Camping at Eagle Nest Lake State Park is by reservation only from May through September. Eagle Nest Lake State Park contains three day-use areas open year-round with parking, picnic tables, vault toilets, and trail access to the Lake, and one campground with 19 camper and RV ready campsites. A second campground is planned in the future, per the *Eagle Nest Lake State Park Management Plan (Consensus Planning, 2024)*.



Cimarron Canyon State Park.

**Trails**

Taos County offers a variety of trails that cater to all skill levels and interests. Hikers, bikers, and nature lovers can enjoy breathtaking views and landscapes, encounter diverse wildlife, and explore canyons, forests, and alpine meadows through Taos County’s abundance of trail networks.

The Enchanted Circle Trails Association is actively engaged with Rocky Mountain Youth Corps and other agencies and area land managers to develop new trails and trail systems identified in



Equestrian and biker meet on the trail. Source: Enchanted Circle Trails Association.

the *Enchanted Circle Trails Plan* (see *Proposed and existing trails map*, page 81). Completed and ongoing trail projects within Taos County include:

- ▶ Bull of the Woods to Middle Fork Trail
- ▶ Outward Link Trail
- ▶ Horsethief Mesa Trail
- ▶ Talpa Ridge Trail
- ▶ Rio Grande Trail
- ▶ Miranda Canyon Trail
- ▶ Questa to Red River Trail
- ▶ NM 150 Multi-Use Pathway

### **Ski Resorts**

The Taos Ski Valley Resort, Red River Ski & Summer Area, Sipapu Ski and Summer Resort, Enchanted Forest Cross Country Ski Area, and the Angel Fire Ski Resort are located within Taos County or in close proximity. Each resort offers a unique experience with diverse terrain suited for skiers and snowboarders of varying skill levels. Alongside skiing, visitors can find accommodations, dining, entertainment, and shopping options at the resorts.

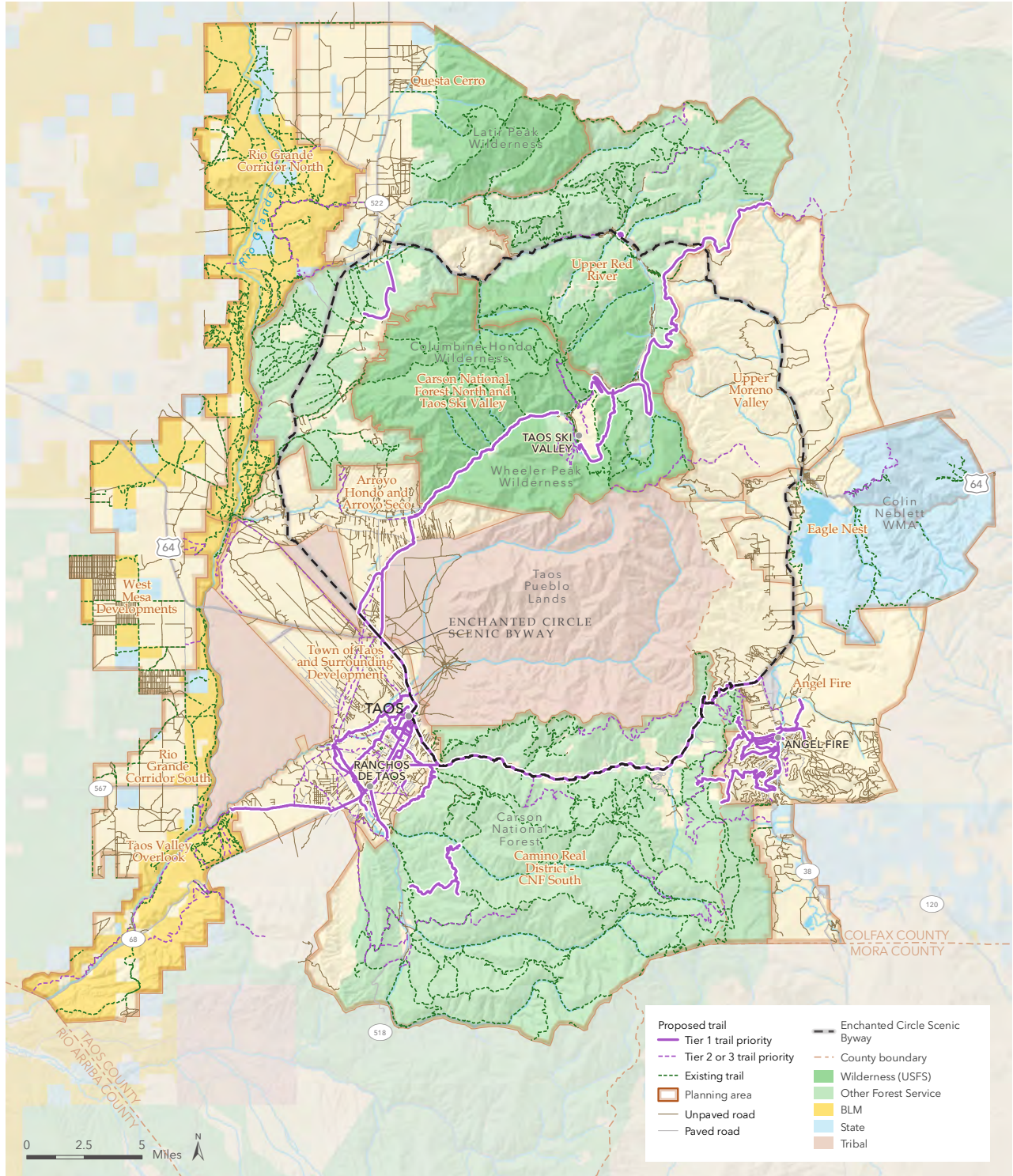
Taos Ski Valley is located approximately 32 miles northeast of the Town of Taos. Taos Ski Valley Resort is renowned for its skiing, offering beginner and intermediate runs. Outdoor activities, such as

hiking, fishing, rock climbing, and river rafting, are available year round. The Taos Ski Valley Village offers shopping, lodging, and dining in a beautiful mountain village environment.

The Sipapu Resort is located about 20 miles south-southeast of the Town of Taos and is surrounded by the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. The family-oriented resort is open year round and has over 40 trails, six lifts, and terrain parks for all skill levels of skiers and snowboarders. Summer activities include fishing along the Rio Pueblo, disc golf, hiking, camping, and geocaching.

The Red River Ski Area is located within the Town of Red River and along the Enchanted Circle. Red River Ski Area is a family-owned resort that is open year-round, with 209 ski-able acres, 64 trails, and seven lifts offering skiing and snowboarding activities in the winter. Summer activities include scenic chairlift rides, hiking trails, summer mountain tubing, an aerial park obstacle ropes course, zip line, mini golf, disc golf, and live music at the mountaintop restaurant.

The Enchanted Forest Cross Country Ski Area is New Mexico's only full-service cross-country ski and snowshoe area. Located three miles east of



# Proposed and existing trails

ENCHANTED CIRCLE TRAILS PLAN



Red River, the ski area operates under a special use permit in the Carson National Forest. In the winter, 30 kilometers of trails are available for classic skiing and skate skiing, as well as 15 kilometers for snowshoe trails. In the summer, 27 miles of looped trails are available for hiking and mountain biking, and Yurt rentals that can accommodate six to ten people dependent on the size rented. All yurts are semi-primitive and accessible only by hiking or mountain biking.

### CREATIVE ECONOMY

Creative economy refers to the potential of creative assets to contribute to economic growth and development. Creative economies interact with tourism and art and encompass artists, art workforce, educators, entrepreneurs, vendors, policymakers, and funders that produce and distribute creativity-based goods and services. Within Taos County, the creative economy is much more than the visual arts sector, as it includes music, theater, film, graphic design, marketing, culinary arts, literature, and many additional sub-industries.

According to the New Mexico Creative Industries Division, in 2022, New Mexico’s creative economy contributed \$6 billion in annual economic activity and \$1.6 billion in taxable annual wages. It estimated that 12% of all GRT establishments are within the creative industries and that the “arts, entertainment, and recreation” sector would grow by 118% through 2023 (see page 88 for more information on the *Creative Industries Division*).

#### Taos County

There are over 100 galleries and 15 museums in Taos County. Most are in the Town of Taos, but small communities, such as Questa, Arroyo Seco, and Red River, also have galleries that feature local and regional artists. In addition to galleries, many artists sell their products through small shops and by mail order. Artisan wares include furniture, pottery, jewelry, weaving, and other unique products.

Americans for the Arts completed the *Arts & Economic Prosperity 6*, an economic and social impact study of the nation’s nonprofit arts and culture industry in 2022. The study detailed findings on 373 regions across the country (including Taos County) and Puerto Rico, including rural, suburban, and large urban areas.

In 2022, the study showed the nonprofit arts and culture sector in Taos County generated \$70,736,600 in total industry expenditures, including \$15,934,861 by organizations and \$54,801,739 by audiences (see *Table 6.7*). The industry supported a total of 958 jobs and generated a total of \$11,346,663 in tax revenue.

The total attendance at arts and culture events in Taos County was 567,620, with 32.9% being local attendees and 67.1% being nonlocal attendees. The total event-related spending in 2022 was \$54,801,739, with \$5,695,783 by local attendees and \$49,105,956 by nonlocal attendees. The average spending per person on events was \$96.60.

**TABLE 6.7: TAOS COUNTY NONPROFIT ARTS & CULTURE**

Economic Activity & Impacts	2022
<b>Total industry expenditures</b>	<b>\$70,736,600</b>
Organizations	\$15,934,861
Audiences	\$54,801,739
<b>Total employment (Jobs)</b>	<b>958</b>
Organizations	358
Audiences	600
<b>Personal income paid to residents</b>	<b>\$31,340,301</b>
Organizations	\$10,547,326
Audiences	\$20,792,975
<b>Total tax revenue generated</b>	<b>\$11,346,663</b>
Organizations	\$3,119,622
Audiences	\$8,227,041
<b>Total attendance</b>	<b>567,620</b>
Local attendees (32.9%)	186,747
Nonlocal attendees (67.1%)	380,873
<b>Total event-related spending</b>	<b>\$54,801,739</b>
Local attendees	\$5,695,783
Nonlocal attendees	\$49,105,956
<b>Average per person, per event expenditure</b>	<b>\$96.60</b>
Local attendees	\$30.50
Nonlocal attendees (67.1%)	\$128.93

Source: Americans for the Arts, *Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 (A&EP6)* study.

Taos County Economic Development (TCED) held a series of summits between September 2023 and April 2024 to develop strategies for creating a more equitable creative economy in Taos County. The groups identified several actions to advance the creative economy in Taos County:

- ◀ Define “creative economy” as a community focusing on economic activity that creates value and incorporates technology and innovation;
- ◀ Many existing assets and opportunities to expand the creative economy;
- ◀ Identify and connect with community partners;
- ◀ Identify and pursue financial and structural support from national programs; and
- ◀ Develop recommendations for regional governments to support opportunities through budgeting, taxes, and planning and zoning incentives.

## AGRICULTURE

Taos County has a rich agricultural heritage that the residents cherish. Family farms connected by acequias are disbursed throughout Taos County. While agriculture is a small portion of the Taos County economy, residents that participate in this industry continue to grow products that are utilized by small manufacturers.

The following profile utilizes data from the U.S. Census of Agriculture, which releases data on a five-year basis. In 2022, there were 622 farms in Taos County with an average size of

368 acres (see *Table 6.8*). The total land in farms decreased to 229,122 acres; however, the average size of farms increased due to the growth in farms between 500-599 acres. Farms in Taos County were typically under 50 acres with most farms being between 10 to 49 acres.

In 2022, the market value of products sold in Taos County was \$7,732,000, ranking Taos County at 31 out of the 33 counties in New Mexico (see *Table 6.9*). Government payments for Taos County farms totaled \$545,000, a 101.9% increase from 2017. Farm related income of \$433,000 represented a decrease of 20.6% from 2017. Total farm production expenses were significantly higher in 2022 at \$10,656,000, resulting in a 3.7% increase from 2017. These metrics underscore the challenges faced by the agricultural sector in Taos County and the need for strategic interventions.

**TABLE 6.8: LAND IN FARMS**

	2017	2022	% Change
Number of Farms	824	622	-24.5%
Total Average size of farm (acres)	346	368	6.3%
Land in farms (acres)	285,130	229,129	-19.6%

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, 2017 and 2022.

**TABLE 6.9: TOTAL MARKET VALUE OF FARMS**

	2017	2022	% Change
Market value of products sold	\$7,634,000	\$7,732,000	1.3%
Government payments	\$270,000	\$545,000	101.9%
Farm-related income	\$545,000	\$433,000	-20.6%
Total farm production expenses	\$10,274,000	\$10,656,000	3.7%
Net cash farm income	-\$1,822,000	-\$1,946,000	6.8%

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, 2017 and 2022.

**TABLE 6.10: TOTAL FARM SALES**

	2017	Rank	2022	Rank	% Change
<b>Crops</b>	<b>\$4,201</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>\$3,484</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>-17.1%</b>
Vegetables, melons, potatoes, sweet potatoes	\$336	16	\$385	20	14.6%
Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, sod	\$832	8	\$179	14	-78.5%
Other crops and hay	\$2,524	15	\$2,516	14	-0.4%
<b>Livestock, poultry, and products</b>	<b>\$3,434</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>\$4,248</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>23.7%</b>
Poultry and eggs	\$30	13	\$42	13	40.0%
Hogs and pigs	\$3	19	\$11	13	266.7%
Sheep, goats, wool, mohair, milk	\$101	20	\$75	20	-25.7%
Horses, ponies, mules, burros, donkeys	\$147	21	\$107	25	-27.2%
Other animals and animal products	\$85	12	\$873	1	927.1%

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, 2017 and 2022.



Cerro Vista Farm, an 18-acre farm surrounded by 2,200 acres of pastures and alfalfa fields.

Between 2017 and 2022, Taos County experienced significant changes between farms that raised crops and those that raise animals. In 2017, crops represented most of farm sales (see *Table 6.10*). By 2022, crop sales decreased by 17.1% and livestock, poultry, and animal products sales increased by 23.7%. The biggest increases were in “Other animals and animal products” (927.1%), “Poultry and eggs” (266.7%), and “Hogs and pigs” (40%).

### REAL ESTATE

The real estate industry saw significant growth in Taos County between 2020 and 2022 due in large part to the growth in population and home sales, primarily around the Town of Taos and Taos Ski Valley. As reported by the Bureau of Economic Analysis, the real estate industry contributes the most of any industry to Taos County’s GDP. The American Community Survey data showed between 2012 and 2022, the “Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing” industry grew by 35.7%.

The *New Mexico Economic Development Department Quarterly Report* for FY2023 showed the “Real estate rental and leasing” industry experienced a year-over-year increase of approximately \$2.7 million (27%) for a total of \$12 million in FY2023. According to the Enchanted Circle Association of Realtors, Taos County may be experiencing course correction from the previous

year’s growth, with home sales decreasing in 2024, but still remaining above pre-pandemic levels.

### CONSTRUCTION

The growth in real estate and home sales coincides with the increases in the construction industry. Between 2012 and 2022, the construction industry workforce in Taos County grew by 58.3% and comprised 13.9% of the total workforce in 2022.

The *New Mexico Economic Development Quarterly Report* for FY2023 showed the “Construction” industry had a 34% increase from 2022 in revenue (the largest of all industries) of \$15 million resulting in total revenue of \$60 million in 2023. This industry also showed an increase in taxable gross receipts of 78%, approximately \$76 million. As home sales begin to plateau, the construction industry may also experience a slowdown; however, it remains a strong industry and employer in Taos County.

### SMALL-SCALE MANUFACTURING

Several small-scale manufacturers are located in Taos County. Small-scale manufacturing businesses include breweries, personal-care products, hot sauce, and furniture making. Many small-scale manufacturers have developed businesses utilizing traditional Pueblo and Hispano techniques with locally grown crops and wild herbs to create unique products that resonate outside of the Taos County and are shipped across the United States.

## 6.4 ECONOMIC ORGANIZATIONS & ASSETS

Taos County’s economy is supported by several local and state organizations and resources. Brief descriptions of these organizations and resources are provided in this section.

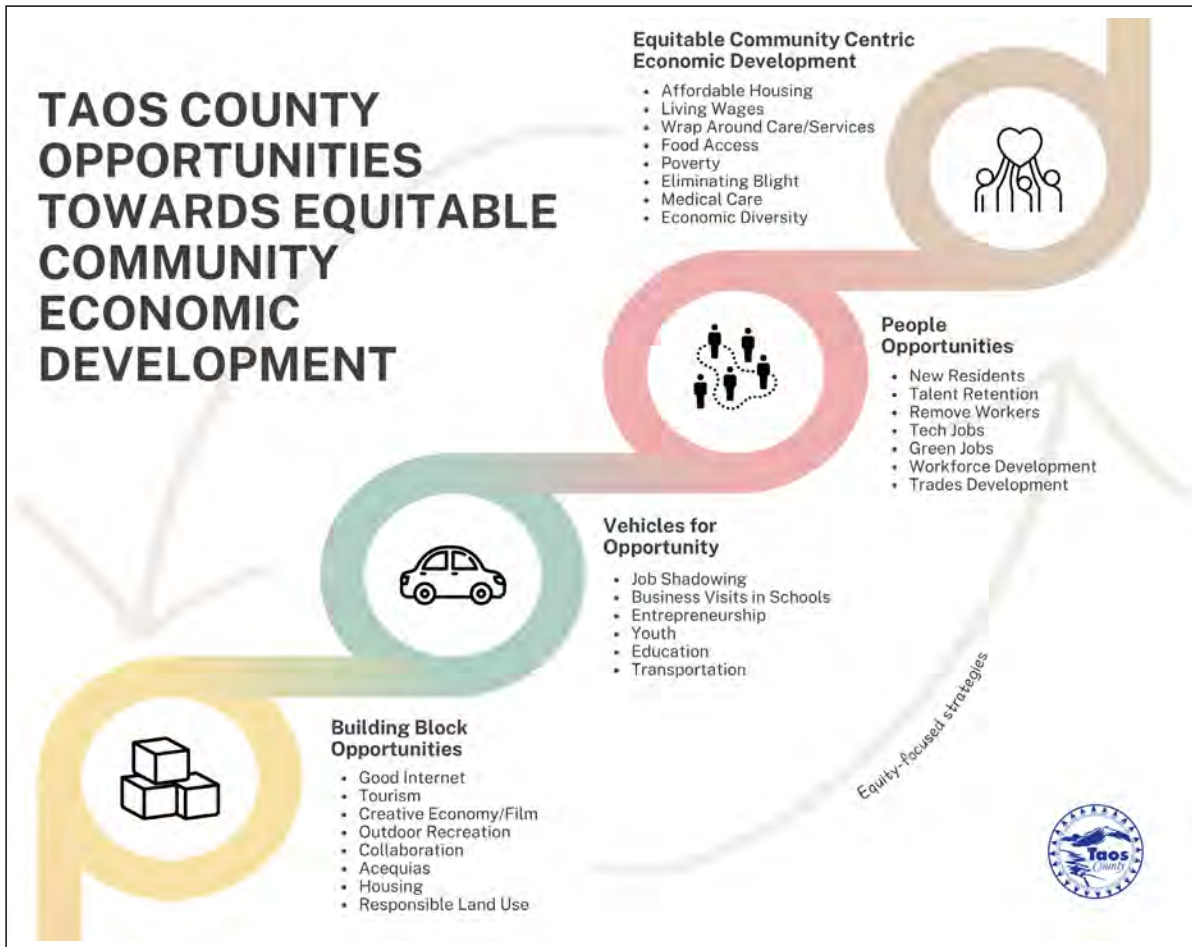
### TAOS COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In 2021, Taos County established the Department of Economic Development to support responsible business and community economic development throughout Taos County. The Department has established strong partnerships with local organizations and municipalities within Taos County.

Taos County Economic Development (TCED) is currently working to increase opportunities to expand the creative economy in Taos County. In 2023, Taos County was a recipient of the inaugural

Creative Industries Grant funded by the New Mexico Economic Development Department. The \$100,000 grant enabled Taos County to continue a youth internship program at the Taos Center for the Arts that places young people in paid interships with arts and cultural organizations and also fund weekend business development workshops across Taos County for artists and creative entrepreneurs.

TCED is currently working to lay a strong foundation of equitable community economic development across all sectors of the Taos County economy. In 2024, TCED held a series of summits with stakeholders to identify opportunities towards equitable community economic development. They also identified needs to achieve “Equitable Community Centric Economic Development” and three opportunity areas; “Building Block Opportunities, Vehicles for Opportunity, and People Opportunities” (see *Taos County Opportunities Towards Equitable Community Economic Development graphic below*).



Source: Taos County Economic Development, 2024.

Starting in 2024, Taos County has been conducting a cultural and outdoor asset mapping study, which is anticipated to continue to 2026. The study will document cultural and land-based treasures to gain an understanding of how these assets can be safeguarded while also leveraging opportunity for equitable growth and development across Taos County.

TCED will develop an Economic Development Plan that reflects the community's needs and respects the traditions and culture of Taos County. Ongoing efforts by Taos County Economic Development are to create a one-stop business center, build a formal business retention and expansion program, and working with County-wide partners to create conditions for robust business opportunity and growth.

TCED has been working in partnership with the Town of Taos, Taos MainStreet, UNM-Taos Small Business Development Center, Taos County Chamber of Commerce, and UNM-Taos HIVE on creating a one-stop business services center for entrepreneurs, start-up businesses, and existing businesses. The Business Resources & Innovation Center (BRIC) will serve as a central location for the partner entities and will be managed by Taos MainStreet. The BRIC will be located in the Town of Taos and is anticipated to be open by late 2025.

## TAOS COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Taos County Chamber of Commerce advances the business, agriculture, and commercial sectors of the Taos County economy. The Chamber is a 501(c)6 and has over 400 members. Visitors and members utilize the Chamber for business resources, information on local events and activities, and to maximize exposure to the local community. The Chamber works closely with smaller chambers throughout Taos County to develop tourism and outdoor recreation opportunities through the State Tourism Department and the Outdoor Recreation Division. The Chamber partners with local and regional organizations, such as the Taos Art Council, UNM-Taos, Los Alamos National Labs, and Taos MainStreet to promote the Taos County economy.

The Chamber sponsors several events around Taos County including:

- ◀ Mix and Meet Networking Events
- ◀ Taos Plaza Live Music
- ◀ Business Expo and Job Fair

## TAOS COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Taos County Economic Development Corporation (TCEDC) is a community-based organization that provides educational opportunities, assets, and tools for the community to support and protect the environment and agricultural sector of the Taos Valley. The TCEDC coordinates projects and programs focused on bringing together diverse communities, strengthen families and support a way of life that puts people first. The TCEDC offers resources including the Taos Kitchen and the Mobile Matanza.

The Taos Kitchen is a 5,000-square-foot commercial kitchen available to rent by local food producers. The TCEDC is open 24/7 to allow producers to access the kitchen, as needed. The TCEDC hosts several annual events that focus on sustainable agriculture and business development.

Mobile Matanza was founded by the TCEDC in 2007 to provide local farmers access to livestock processing. In 2020, the TCEDC was awarded a New Mexico Food Security Grant to build a small-scale, meat processing facility near the Taos County Landfill. The facility is expected to be fully functional in 2025 and will have the capacity to process 25 head per week for ranchers in Taos, Rio Arriba, San Juan, Colfax, San Miguel, and Santa Fe counties.

## UNM-TAOS SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER

The Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at UNM-Taos provides services to small businesses and future entrepreneurs in Taos County and nearby communities in Rio Arriba and Mora Counties. The Taos SBDC is located in Downtown Taos at 115 Civic Center Drive, which allows the SBDC to be visible and accessible to all Taos County residents.

The SBDC provides the following services:

- ◀ Business Plan Development

- ◀ Access to Capital and Local Lenders
- ◀ Financial and Bookkeeping Preparation
- ◀ Human Resources
- ◀ Information on Taxes
- ◀ Marketing
- ◀ Government Contracting and Procurement
- ◀ International Trade
- ◀ Cybersecurity
- ◀ Disaster Preparedness

The Taos County SBDC staff hosts training and workshops in Taos County communities and Pueblos. The SBDC organizes in-person gatherings to facilitate on-line workshops and training to ensure residents with limited internet access can participate, share resources, and express concerns for small business owners. The SBDC is partnering with TCED to create a one-stop business resource center at the SBDC location in Downtown Taos. This will allow interaction with local entrepreneurs in person, which is the most effective communication strategy for many Taos County residents.

### UNM-TAOS HIVE

The UNM-Taos Hub of Internet-Based Vocation and Education (HIVE) is a public-private partnership between UNM-Taos, Kit Carson Electric Cooperative, and the Taos Community Foundation. NM-Taos HIVE is a part of the Rural Innovation Network of the Center on Rural Innovation, a collection of 38 rural communities working together on the following five direct drivers of economic diversification:

- ◀ Tech workforce development and support
- ◀ Scalable tech entrepreneurship support and incubation
- ◀ Access to tech jobs
- ◀ Access to capital
- ◀ Inclusive tech culture building

UNM-HIVE provides the following programming:

- ◀ Math and writing tutoring
- ◀ Computer support and tutoring
- ◀ Youth coding league
- ◀ Grant management course

The UNM-HIVE will be offering a new series of technology workshops for skills and competencies needed for IT roles.

**STEMarts LAB**

**LEARN FROM SCIENTISTS  
CREATE WITH ARTISTS**  
EXPLORE. PLAY. GET PAID

**Become a STEMarts Ambassador**

- Learn from science behind the universe: Particle physics, astrophysics and space science.
- Explore space with artists using extended reality (XR/VR/AR) technologies.
- Gain experience in event production, international collaboration and sci-art communication.
- Become a paid experience guide at exciting Art and Science festivals.
- Qualify for Ambassador Travel Award.
- In-Person/Virtual Training Available.

**Agess 14 - 25**

**Contact:**  
505-819-3905  
stemartslab@gmail.com

### TAOS COUNTY COOPERATIVE EXTENSION OFFICE

The Taos County Cooperative Extension Office, located at 202 Chamisa Road in the Town of Taos, offers knowledge, research, and education to residents of Taos County through informal and formal educational programs and research conducted by the Agricultural Science Centers throughout New Mexico. Major program areas include 4-H Youth Development, agriculture, community resource development, and home economics. The mission of the Cooperative Extension Office is to “support the food, land, water, and cultures of the people of Northern New Mexico”.

The Cooperative Extension Office offers as-needed technical advice for food and agriculture-related inquiries. It also provides safety training for pesticides, herbicides, and insecticides, as well as pasture management in partnership with the

Taos Soil and Water Conservation District and the Department of Agriculture. The Extension Office also supports the Taos County Fair annually. The pens and livestock arena at the fairgrounds are in critical need of improvements.

The USDA recently provided funding for managing pests in apple orchards in Taos County. The funds were intended to ensure continuous support for orchard management with the ultimate goal of bringing the harvested apples to market. The workshops for the pilot program were held in February and March 2024. In July 2024, the Extension Office collaborated with the Taos Valley Acequia Association and Alianza Agri-Cultura de Taos on pest management and marketing.

### NORTH CENTRAL NEW MEXICO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

The North Central New Mexico Economic Development District (NCNMEDD) is the regional Council of Governments for North Central New Mexico, which includes Taos County. The NCNMEDD assists local governments with economic development and project initiatives. The NCNMEDD published the *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs), 2021-2025*, which identified economic goals to help align public and private investment and the following eight industry sectors that were ranked highest by the community for growth and development:

- ◀ Outdoor Recreation
- ◀ Film and Television
- ◀ Health Care
- ◀ Professional and Scientific and Technical Services
- ◀ Specialty Manufacturing
- ◀ Green Energy
- ◀ Agriculture
- ◀ Educational Services

The *CEDs* included an Action Plan with goals and actions to grow the industries listed above.

### NEW MEXICO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

The New Mexico Department of Economic Development works to create economic opportunities in and support business development

in New Mexico through its six regional offices. Taos County is within the North-Central Region along with Rio Arriba, Santa Fe, and Los Alamos counties. The NMEDD assists local governments and businesses with the following resources:

- ◀ Providing incentives for business development;
- ◀ Marketing the New Mexico globally;
- ◀ Supporting community development;
- ◀ Providing technical assistance for business growth; and
- ◀ Working to address systemic inequities and barriers for entry into entrepreneurship.

Taos County has participated in several NMEDD programs and initiatives including:

- ◀ **Job Training Incentive Program (JTIP):** Funds training for new jobs in expanding or relocating business;
- ◀ **Local Economic Development Act (LEDA):** Provides grants to local governments to help businesses expand or relocate;
- ◀ **JEDI Office:** Helps socially and economically disadvantaged businesses connect with services, resources, and financing;
- ◀ **Local Economic Assistance and Development Support (LEADS):** Provides funding to create jobs, develop the tax base, and provide incentives for business development.

### New Mexico Creative Industries Division

In 2023, the New Mexico Legislature passed House Bill 8 to create the Creative Industries Division of the New Mexico Economic Development Department (NMEDD). The Creative Industries Division (CID) is charged with supporting the creative industries by:

- ◀ Increasing and advancing creative industry based economic development in New Mexico;
- ◀ Supporting entrepreneurs and small businesses in creative industries;
- ◀ Assisting organizations that support creative industry companies and workers;
- ◀ Supporting educational and workforce training initiatives that facilitate creative industry growth and success;

- ◀ Identifying and helping establish public infrastructure to support creative industries;
- ◀ Serving as an information clearinghouse by providing resources and opportunities to creative industry stakeholders; and
- ◀ Acting as a liaison between creative industries-related businesses and organizations.

In 2024, the CID initiated a study to help shape a strategic plan. The study was completed in partnership with Creative Startups, and contained the results of asset mapping, current needs, future opportunities, CID success metrics, and the pillars for CID success, including:

- ◀ **Ensure the CID Thrives:** Provide citizens of New Mexico with beneficial resources that ensures elected officials continue to support the CID.
- ◀ **Equip Communities to Lead from Within:** Pursue strategies that equip local communities to implement projects and plans that are relevant to their communities.
- ◀ **Invest in Ecosystems:** Cultivate innovation networks that traverse economic sectors, including rural and urban, traditional, artistic, and creative tech entrepreneurs, investors, and market channels.
- ◀ **Engage Beyond New Mexico:** Expand the capacity of New Mexico’s creative businesses to reach markets beyond the state borders.

The CID is a valuable resource for growing Taos County’s creative economy and other economic development strategies Taos County is pursuing.

## LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACT (LEDA)

Taos County adopted its Local Economic Development Act (LEDA) Ordinance in 2017 (*Ordinance No. 2016-6*) as permitted by the State of New Mexico Economic Development Act (5-10-1 to 5-10-13 NMSA 1978). The purpose of the LEDA is to allow public financial support of local economic development projects that comply with the legal facets of LEDA and projects that demonstrate:

- ◀ Significant community impact and support;
- ◀ Rural and under-served areas of New Mexico;
- ◀ Increased wages and job creation;

- ◀ Significant new capital investment; and
- ◀ Environmentally sustainable outcomes.

LEDA provides a mechanism for Taos County and the State of New Mexico via the New Mexico Economic Development Department to contribute funding for the purchase, lease, grant, construction or improvement of land, buildings, or infrastructure; make public works improvements; or provide secured loan guarantees. Taos County completed a LEDA project with Red River Brewing Company in 2024.

The Taos County LEDA Ordinance is referenced as the “Economic Development Plan Ordinance”. It defines a qualifying entity as an existing or proposed corporation, limited liability company, partnership, joint venture, syndicate, association, or other person that is one or a combination of two or more of the following:

- A. An industry for the manufacturing, processing or assembling of agricultural or manufactured products;
- B. A commercial enterprise for storing, warehousing, distributing or selling products of agricultural, mining, or industry, but, other than provided in Paragraph (D) of this subsection, not including any enterprise for the sale of goods or commodities at retail or for the distribution to the public of electricity, gas, water, or telephone or other services commonly classified as public utilities;
- C. A business in which all or part of the activities of the business involves the supplying of services to the general public or to governmental agencies or to a specific industry or customer, but, other than provided in Paragraph (D) of this subsection, not including business primarily engaged in the sale of goods or commodities at retail;
- D. A telecommunications sales enterprise that makes the majority of its sales to persons outside New Mexico;
- E. A facility for the direct sales by growers of agricultural products, commonly known as farmers’ markets;
- F. A business that is the developer of a metropolitan redevelopment project;

- G. A cultural facility; and
- H. A retail business.

In 2017, the State Legislature amended the Act by specifically adding broadband telecommunications network facilities to permitted economic development projects, while a 2019 amendment excluded the acquisition of water rights from permissible uses of LEDA funds. In 2020, SB118 added a definition for “economic base jobs” to more easily sort projects into three groups - economic base employment, rural retail, and rural site infrastructure. SB118 also created an economic development support fund and clarified project participation requirements.

In 2021, the State Legislature passed SB49, which amended the definition of a “retail business” to allow local LEDA support for local government with populations over 15,000. It also removed a requirement that such retail project not directly compete with any existing local businesses. HB11 amended certain definitions and created a program under the New Mexico Finance Authority to provide recovery grants for New Mexico businesses hit by falling revenue during the COVID-19 pandemic. Lastly, SB1 allowed LEDA support for certain large projects with at least \$350 million of construction and infrastructure costs over a 10-year period.

The LEDA legislation allows municipalities and counties to enter into Joint Powers Agreements to plan and support regional economic development projects. Examples of LEDA projects in other New Mexico communities include funding support to employers in the television and film industry, information technology, food and agricultural processing, pharmaceuticals, solar panel processing, and other growing industries.

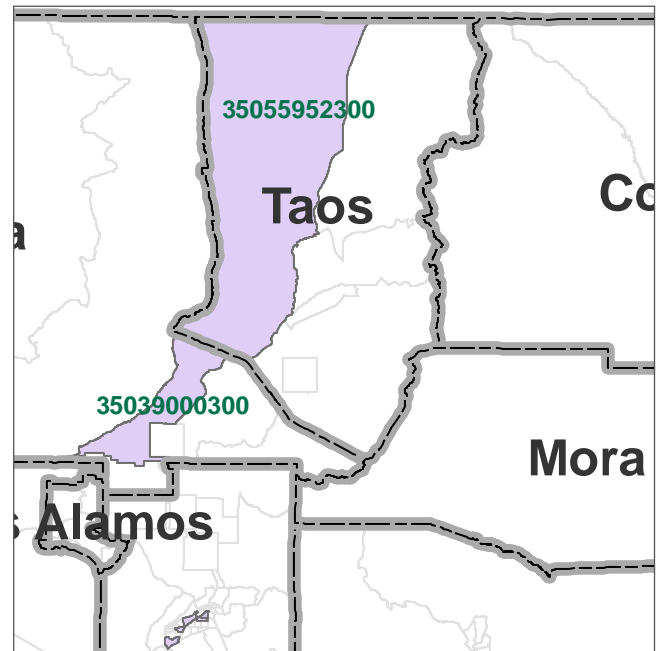
Taos County should focus on attracting desired employers and businesses through its LEDA program. It should also consider an update to its LEDA Ordinance that would make it consistent with legislative requirements and best practices in economic development, which should include new and updated definitions, goals that address target industries, clawback provisions, and a five-year review and update process.

## TAOS COUNTY OPPORTUNITY ZONE

In 2018, the U.S. Department of the Treasury designated 63 Opportunity Zones in New Mexico, including one in Taos County. This economic development program provides tax advantages for certain types of private investment, targeted for economically distressed areas. The New Mexico Economic Development Department offers incentives as part of its LEDA program and will guarantee an additional \$1 million in LEDA funds for projects that meet specific criteria and fall within one of the nine key industries for New Mexico, including aerospace, biosciences, cybersecurity, film and television, global trade, intelligent manufacturing, outdoor recreation, sustainable and green energy, and sustainable value-added agriculture.

Census Tract 35055952300, approximately 920 square miles, is on the west side of Taos County. As a Qualified Opportunity Zone, it will retain this designation for at least 10 years from its designation. The Opportunity Zone spans Taos County from north to south. It includes the communities of Tres Piedras, Ojo Caliente, Cielto, Greater World Community, Carson, and Carson Estates. The Opportunity Zone corresponds closely with the EDA-Census Poverty areas (see page 72).

### TAOS COUNTY OPPORTUNITY ZONE



Source: New Mexico Economic Development Department.

The census tract contains a checkerboard of BLM, State Land Office, and private land holdings. The area is primitive with few improved roads or development. There are some areas suitable for light industrial development near NM 64 or US 285, as shown on the Future Land Use Scenario (see page 47-48).

## 6.5 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

### ENTREPRENEUR DEVELOPMENT

Taos County's economy relies heavily on small businesses and local entrepreneurs. These small businesses are engaged in agriculture, creative industries, tourism, light manufacturing, and outdoor recreation endeavors. The Business Resources and Innovation Center (BRIC) will provide the spaces to allow entrepreneurs to collaborate, network, and utilize resources. The business incubator will be operated by Taos MainStreet. The business incubator should assist Taos County artists and small business entrepreneurs in developing business plans, access resources, and create connections with other entrepreneurs.

### VALUE-ADDED AGRICULTURE

Agricultural products grown in Taos County provide an ideal opportunity to develop value-added agriculture by providing the resources to transform raw goods into a product. Taos County can support the Taos County Economic Development Corporation in maintaining and potentially expanding the commercial kitchen and the Matanza processing plant. Other potential value-added agriculture endeavors in Taos County include specialty crop products, such as jams or salsas, health and beauty products, and herbal remedies.

### WAREHOUSING & DISTRIBUTION

Specialty manufacturing in Taos County is a potential growth area of the economy. A crucial component of manufacturing is the ability to store and distribute the products to customers. While Taos County does not have direct access to freight corridors, facilitating a cooperative warehousing and distribution facility to accommodate products

from small-scale manufacturers would help support this industry segment. The Questa Business Park or another location within Taos County with access to US 64, US 285, NM 68, or NM 522 should be evaluated for the development of a warehouse and distribution facility.

### HEALTHCARE & SENIOR CARE

Taos County is the hub for providing healthcare in north-central New Mexico. Holy Cross Hospital provides emergency and general medical services to residents of Taos, Rio Arriba, Colfax, and Mora counties. Medical clinics that provide urgent or urgent/emergency care alleviate capacity at Holy Cross and provide non-life threatening care to the region.

Four urgent care facilities are located throughout Taos County. NextCare Urgent Care is located within the Town of Taos and is open 7 days a week from 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Mogul Medical is located within the Village of Taos Ski Valley and is open in the winter from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. when the ski lifts are running. Main Street Medical Center, located in Red River, is open Monday to Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Family Practice Associates of Taos also conducts a walk-in clinic for colds, flus, and other urgent care needs and is open Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Community Survey results identified healthcare as an area of economic development that Taos County should focus on. Taos County has the potential to become a regional medical hub by focusing on attracting more healthcare workers to the area through providing affordable housing options for traveling healthcare professionals.

Home caregivers for the aging population are also in demand throughout Taos County. There are only a few assisted living facilities in Taos County. To prevent residents from relocating to larger cities of Santa Fe or Alamosa, Colorado for elder care, there is an opportunity for Taos County to support seniors aging-in-place by pursuing senior living developers/operators and home health aides and care-giving jobs.

## FILM PRODUCTION

As reported by the New Mexico Film Office, in FY2023, the film industry contributed \$794 million in direct spending to the New Mexico economy. There were 82 total film projects in the state contributing to a total of 551,059 worker days. FY2022 was the highest film year on record with 109 new projects and total direct spending of \$855 million. The New Mexico Film Office estimated that film production has generated more than \$5.75 billion in spending in New Mexico.

Film production provides jobs and has a ripple effect on a wide range of industries, such as construction, lodging, and services. UNM-Taos Department of Fine Arts, Film, and Digital Media offers a Film Technician Certificate and a variety of professional development resources to assist students in starting and maintaining a film career.

Taos County has a history of film production and films shot in the area, including *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1979), *Natural Born Killers* (1994), and *Batman vs. Superman* (2015). Taos County has an opportunity to collaborate with the four incorporated municipalities within the County to establish film-friendly ordinances, and create a regional film office that will support film production and ancillary business activity in the region.

## RENEWABLE ENERGY

Taos County, like much of New Mexico, is a good candidate for solar energy generation. While Kit Carson Electric Cooperative has achieved its goal of 100% daytime solar production (as described in Chapter 8: *Water Resources & Infrastructure*), the continued shift away from fossil fuels and towards renewable energy will increase the demand for solar power. With continued federal and state incentives to develop additional solar capacity, Taos County has the potential to capitalize on sustainable energy production. Renewable energy development and operations can provide a significant number of temporary construction and permanent operational jobs in Taos County, increase tax revenues, and create a more resilient and sustainable community.

To capture solar power for later use, utility-scale battery storage facilities are in increasing demand. Taos County can pair its solar capacity with battery energy storage systems to increase regional energy resilience and provide more on-demand energy.

Taos County may also be suitable for geothermal production. As reported in New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources *Sunshine Valley Hydrology Study* (February 2020), “previously unrecognized geothermal resources may be present beneath Sunshine Valley, particularly in an area a few miles south of Costilla.” Geothermal energy can serve as a sustainable source of heat and/or electric power.

From 2022 to 2024, the U.S. Department of Energy’s Communities Local Energy Action Program (LEAP) partnered with Kit Carson Electric Cooperative (KCEC) and other stakeholders in Questa to discuss options to reuse Chevron’s former molybdenum mine site and tailing facility that are located between Questa and Red River. The National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) provided technical assistance to assess the economic feasibility of constructing solar photo voltaic-powered hydrogen facilities to further support KCEC’s clean energy transition, create jobs, and boost the local and regional economy.

NREL’s final economic impact study showed positive results, suggesting that 20 full-time positions could be created in New Mexico, with about 11 positions located between the two sites



Kit Carson Electric Cooperative’s solar array in Amalia.

near Questa. This study was the first step in the process to redevelop the sites, which are currently undergoing remediation. In November 2024, the Taos County Commission unanimously passed a resolution of support for KCEC’s Green Hydrogen Project, including the potential to lease Village of Questa property for this project, which was recently awarded with \$231 million by the Empowering Rural America Program through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

## 6.6 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, & STRATEGIES

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOAL 1

Pursue a diversified, resilient, and equitable economy that strengthens Taos County’s economic base.

#### Objectives

- ◀ To foster self-determination and entrepreneurial activity in Taos County.
- ◀ To position Taos County for target industry growth.
- ◀ To stem market leakage and capture a greater share of economic activity.

#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 1.1

Update the Taos County LEDA Ordinance/ Economic Development Plan to reflect current priorities and identify goals and projects related to target industries for establishment or expansion in Taos County. The updated LEDA should include, but not be limited to:

- ◀ Creating clear goals and strategies that can assist Taos County in developing a roadmap for future economic development;
- ◀ Identifying the framework and procedures for the Taos County Economic Development Department in regard to advising Taos County on economic development decisions and potential LEDA projects;
- ◀ Identifying targeted industries and/or industry clusters that would benefit Taos County and help focus the County’s economic development recruitment efforts and land use priorities;
- ◀ Researching and identifying policy opportunities to create a local LEDA fund that

would allow Taos County to invest directly into local businesses;

- ◀ Encouraging projects that utilize or process locally-grown or raised agricultural products, film production, renewable energy, tourism support services, food manufacturing, value-added agriculture, warehousing and distribution, etc.;
- ◀ Employing a cost/benefit analysis that illustrates the impact of the project on Taos County and the recoup time for the County’s investment;
- ◀ New and updated definitions consistent with the New Mexico Local Economic Development Act;
- ◀ Provisions for joint powers agreements between Taos County and municipalities within Taos County; and
- ◀ Revisions to implementation policies and procedures, including clawback provisions that allow Taos County to recoup its investment if specific conditions are not met by the qualifying entity that received funding.

#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 1.2

Work with partners, such as Kit Carson Electric Cooperative and UNM-Taos HIVE, to continue building on technology-based infrastructure that supports diverse tech-based economic and business activities:

- ◀ Support, promote and leverage resources to realize KCEC’s Green Hydrogen and Solar projects;
- ◀ Identify and leverage resources to support remote workers living in Taos County; and
- ◀ Identify and support business development for tech entrepreneurs and technology-based businesses.

#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 1.3

Work with local and regional economic development entities on developing a cooperative warehousing and distribution facility for products generated by small-scale manufacturers in Taos County. As part of this strategy, evaluate potential locations, which may include the Questa Business Park or other property within Taos County with convenient

access to US 64, US 285, NM 68, or NM 522 and shown on the Future Land Use Scenario as appropriate for light industrial development.

#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 1.4

In collaboration with the Taos County Extension Office and the Taos County Economic Development Corporation, provide technical assistance and support to agricultural producers to:

- ◀ Expand small- and mid-scale food processing and agricultural enterprises in Taos County;
- ◀ Expand food storage and distribution capacities;
- ◀ Expand and maintain regenerative agricultural practices; and
- ◀ Increase access to financial tools and funding resources to help expand food processing and distribution.

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOAL 2

Support economic development initiatives to expand existing businesses, attract new well-paying jobs and business opportunities, and facilitate small business development.

#### Objectives

- ◀ To expand business and employment opportunities for Taos County residents.
- ◀ To maintain and facilitate the development of home-grown businesses that are consistent with and complement the unique character of Taos County.
- ◀ To facilitate the growth of creative enterprises, small-scale manufacturing, value-added agriculture, building trades, and technology.
- ◀ To increase economic prosperity for Taos County households and reduce the need for residents to hold multiple jobs.

#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2.1

Continue Taos County's support for the development of the Business Resources & Innovation Center (BRIC) as a one-stop business services center that offers services to entrepreneurs, start-ups, and existing businesses.

#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2.2

Develop, launch, and sustain a Business Retention and Expansion Program across Taos County that creates a feedback loop for businesses and service providers to continually understand business challenges while responding to immediate and systematic needs to improve the Taos County's business environment.

#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2.3

Work with the Taos County Chamber of Commerce and the Taos County Economic Development Department on developing and promoting a "Support Local Business" program to help retain and grow existing businesses.

#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2.4

As identified in Economic Development Strategy 2.2, once the Business Retention and Expansion Program has been established, identify the primary creative industry growth opportunity areas and support business development of those industries, including:

- ◀ Identify opportunities for artist live/work spaces and support these developments (both private and public);
- ◀ Determine the feasibility of a 1% for the Arts program, which would allocate a portion of funding from County capital projects to be spent on public art;
- ◀ Work with business support services to provide technical assistance and business development opportunities for creative entrepreneurs;
- ◀ Support the development of a well resourced Arts Council/Cultural Commission or other arts-service entity that provides support and advocacy to the creative sector;
- ◀ Support the development of new ordinances that regulate and permit the film industry throughout Taos County; and
- ◀ Support the development of a regional film office.

#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2.5

Promote and work with existing and future local employers on applying for workforce investment funding (Job Training Incentive Program - JTIP)

from the New Mexico Economic Development Department.

#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2.6

In coordination with Land Use Strategy 1.1, incorporate small-scale manufacturing into the future *Taos County Unified Development Code* as a conditional use that requires review and approval by the Taos County Planning and Zoning Commission to ensure the use will not be harmful to adjacent properties.

#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2.7

Utilizing the results of the medical care facility feasibility study identified in Community Services & Facilities Strategy 5.4, pursue capital outlay for the development of a new medical care facility in a currently under-served area of Taos County.

#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2.8

Identify blighted, brownfield, and potential adaptive reuse sites for redevelopment and new development. Coordinate that effort with Land Use Strategy 1.3, which calls for identifying appropriately located sites for new development.

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOAL 3

Develop a responsible, stewardship-based tourism economy throughout Taos County.

#### Objectives

- ◀ *To recognize the unique historic, cultural, and recreational assets within Taos County.*
- ◀ *To ensure tourism activities benefit the community while respecting and protecting the local residents' quality of life.*
- ◀ *To embrace stewardship as a guiding practice related to the tourism industry and tourism-related economic activity.*
- ◀ *To foster the expansion of tourism-related businesses, including restaurants, hotels, and outdoor recreation retail and services.*

#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 3.1

Continue investment in and support of the Destination Stewardship Network (DSN) and the strategies outlined in the *Destination Stewardship Plan*. Work with the DSN, DSN Manager, and DSN Action Teams to develop a permanent Destination Stewardship organizational structure and ongoing development of tourism-related

economic activities that shift economic benefit to entities and communities traditionally left out of the tourism industry.

#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 3.2

Using information provided by the Cultural & Outdoor Asset Mapping Study, develop a public education and messaging program focused on the protection of and minimization of impacts to natural and cultural landscapes, understanding of local cultures, and the overall benefits of environmental stewardship.

#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 3.3

Incubate and foster locally-owned tourism-related businesses and operators that align with the goals and strategies of the *Destination Stewardship Plan*, while attracting values-aligned businesses and entities that can support a stewardship-based tourism economy.

#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 3.4

In partnership with the Destination Stewardship Network and existing outdoor recreation entities, identify and leverage opportunities for industry growth, development, environmental stewardship, and business support.

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOAL 4

Create a well-trained workforce to meet the needs of existing and future employers.

#### Objectives

- ◀ *To ensure Taos County residents are adequately prepared for new employment opportunities in target industries (i.e. specialty manufacturing; renewable energy; outdoor recreation; creative industries; film production; entertainment; and healthcare).*
- ◀ *To help Taos County households achieve economic prosperity by raising the median household income.*
- ◀ *To create opportunities and pathways for local residents and youth to remain in Taos County.*

#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOAL 4.1

Support and promote "Talent-to-Industry Exchanges" to expand the labor supply and identify what job skills employers need in key industry sectors.

#### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOAL 4.2**

Support and partner with local businesses and public school districts, UNM-Taos, and Northern New Mexico College to address filling skill gaps by expanding existing workforce training and dual credit programs related to existing and future business clusters in the region, including outdoor recreation, film and digital media, visual arts, renewable energy, health sciences, value-added agriculture, environmental education, etc.

#### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 4.3**

Promote the online classes and continuing education programs offered by Northern New Mexico College and UNM-Taos.

#### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 4.4**

Identify and support programs that offer paid work-based learning and workforce development opportunities for youth and young adults in target industries.

#### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 4.5**

Sponsor and promote job expos that focus on STEAM technologies, including life sciences, engineering, computer programming, natural sciences, media arts, etc., to encourage young adults in Taos County to enter these fields.

CHAPTER 7  
**Transportation**



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## 7.1 INTRODUCTION

Transportation systems facilitate the movement of people and goods, and support basic societal functions and economic activity. Transportation infrastructure plays a vital role in facilitating access to workplaces, educational institutions, shopping centers, and recreational opportunities. In addition, having an efficient transportation system in Taos County is critical to maintaining and enhancing tourism. The transportation network in Taos County consists of roadways, public transit, bike lanes, sidewalks, trails, air travel, and connection to nearby rail in Santa Fe County.

While there are a broad range of transportation options, 24.4% of respondents to the community survey selected “lack of transportation” as a factor that is limiting growth in Taos County. The Transportation chapter identifies how the current system can be improved to support present and future residents and visitors to assist in County-wide decision-making and prioritization for capital improvements.

## 7.2 EXISTING ROADWAY SYSTEM

Similar to most rural areas, the majority of travel in Taos County takes place on public roadways, whether it be by personal vehicle, public transit, or traveling by bicycle or by foot. The Taos County roadway system connects the unincorporated areas of the County with municipalities, such as the Town of Taos, Red River, Questa, and Taos Ski Valley. Additionally, major roads connect Taos County residents to municipalities outside of the County, including Española, Santa Fe, Albuquerque, Angel Fire, and Alamosa, Colorado (see *Roadway Functional Classifications map, page 100*).

The major roadways in Taos County are generally U.S. Highways and State roads. The New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) maintains these routes, including seasonal snow removal.

US 285 runs north to south through both Tres Piedras and Ojo Caliente on the western edge of Taos County and provides a connection between this part of the state south to Interstate 25 in Santa Fe, and further south to Interstate 40 at Clines Corners. US 64 crosses US 285 east to west at

Tres Piedras. US 64 runs east-west, forms the southern half of the Enchanted Circle, connecting Angel Fire to Taos, El Prado, the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge, and up through to Tres Piedras.

NM 522 connects Taos north to the Colorado state line, passing through Arroyo Hondo, Questa, and Costilla. NM 522, NM 518, and NM 68 provide north-south connectivity through the County with NM 522 connecting to US 64 at El Prado. NM 38 connects Questa to Red River and Eagle Nest. In the southwest corner of the County, NM 567/570 connects NM 68 to US 285, although this route has several miles of rough, unpaved road that often requires a 4x4 vehicle to travel through the steep, windy slope. NM 68 is a more direct route between Española and the Town of Taos, known by several names, such as the “River Road to Taos”, “Low Road to Taos”, or by most locals as the “Canyon Road”. A parallel route to the east is NM 76, NM 75, and NM 518, which is commonly called the “High Road to Taos”.

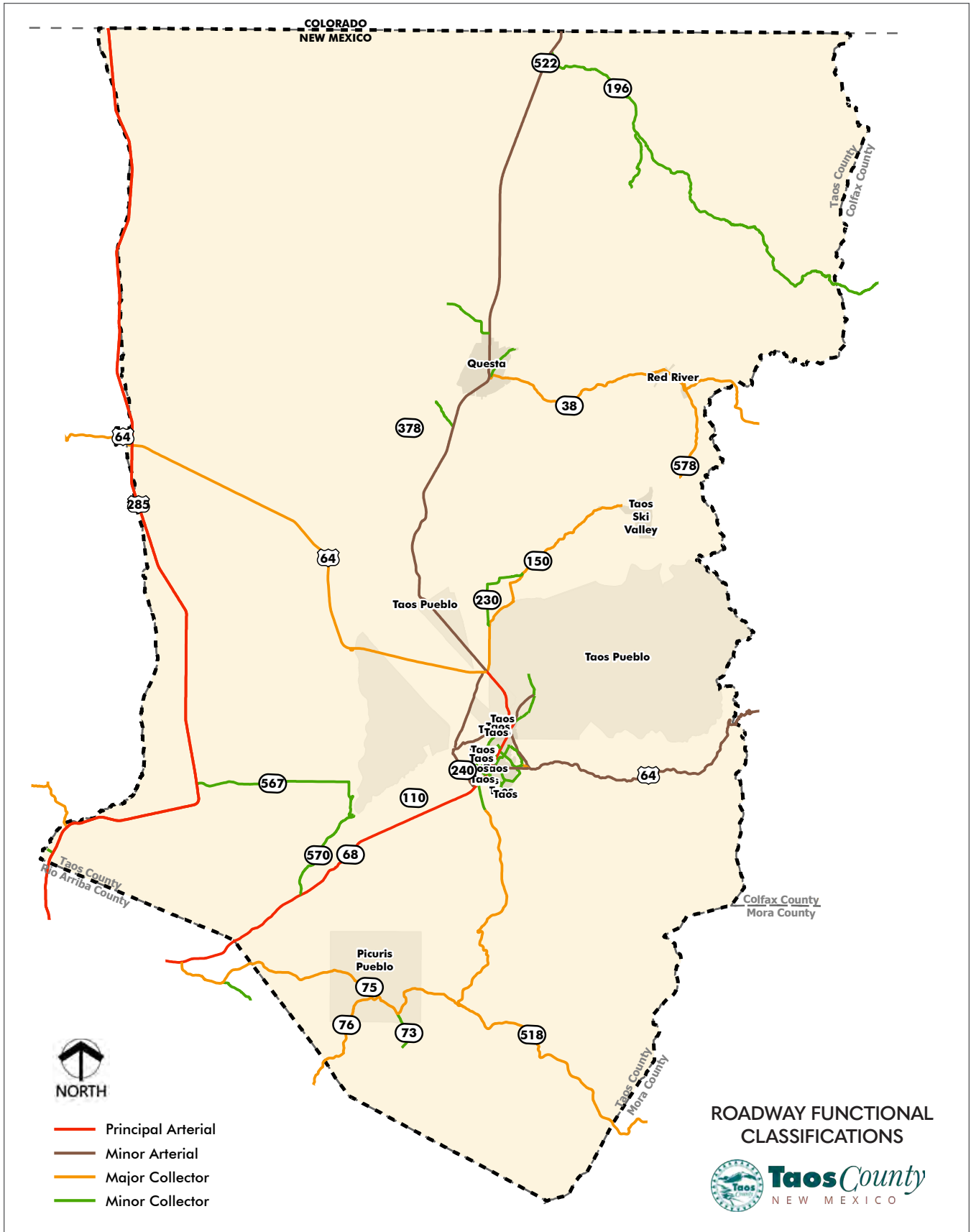
Taos County owns and maintains 327 linear miles of roadway. These roadways provide access and connection to most areas of Taos County, reaching more of the County than the NMDOT facilities that serve as major corridors through the region.

Each incorporated municipality maintains its local streets. Local streets have the lowest speed limits and capacities but have the highest access to bordering properties. They typically provide direct access to residential areas.

### FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION

The functional classification system defines roadways by the type and level of service which they provide. The functional classification of roadways is informed by roadway design, intended travel speeds, vehicle volumes, and the relationship to existing and future land uses. Roadway facilities are classified as Principal Arterial – Other, Minor Arterial, Major Collector, Minor Collector, and Local.

US 285 from the New Mexico state boundary down across Taos County to Ojo Caliente is classified as a Principal Arterial, which is the third highest classification after interstates and freeways. Other Principal Arterials include NM 68 heading south



from the Town of Taos, and the portion of US 64 heading west from Taos to the intersection of US 64 and NM 522. Principal Arterials serve as the major roadway system and are designed for large amounts of traffic.

Minor Arterials serve slightly less traffic at lower speeds than Principal Arterials. NM 522 is classified as a Minor Arterial. US 64 heading east of the Town of Taos is classified as Minor Arterial while to the west of El Prado, it is classified as Major Collector.

Major and Minor Collectors collect traffic from local roads and connect them to larger arterial roadways. NM 75 and NM 518 are classified as Major Collectors. Other Major Collectors include NM 38 between Questa and Red River; NM 150 between El Prado and Taos Ski Valley; NM 518 heading south from Ranchos de Taos; NM 75 heading west from Rock Wall, Rio Pueblo, and Peñasco. Minor Collectors include NM 576/570 adjacent and running through Carson, and NM 196 east of Costilla.

## TRAFFIC SAFETY

Traffic safety is influenced by road design, posted speed limits, and user behavior. An analysis of crash data in Taos County shows significant crashes on NM 68, NM 240, NM 75, NM 522, and US 64 and US 285.

There have been serious injury and fatality crashes across Taos County as depicted on the crash map (see *page 102*). In its evaluation of vulnerable road user crashes between 2012 and 2022, focusing on bicyclists and pedestrians, NMDOT identified Paseo del Pueblo in the Town of Taos and extending beyond the Town limits to the south as a corridor in the top 10% of corridors with vulnerable road user concerns in New Mexico (#80 of 87), as well as the intersection of NM 522 and Lawrence Ranch Road to the north of the Town of Taos as an intersection of concern (#239 of 350).

## MAINTENANCE

Active NMDOT improvements within Taos County include the US 285 Tres Piedras roadway improvement (addition of new 6-foot wide shoulders, rehabilitation of the mainline, extension

of drainage culverts, and traffic control measures), and NM 68/US 64 (correct physical and geometric deficiencies, reduce congestion, and improve pedestrian safety and mobility). Towards the end of 2021, the Taos Pueblo Tribal Council signed a resolution to allow the NMDOT to amend the current right-of-way on NM 150 for a multi-use pathway between El Prado and Arroyo Seco.

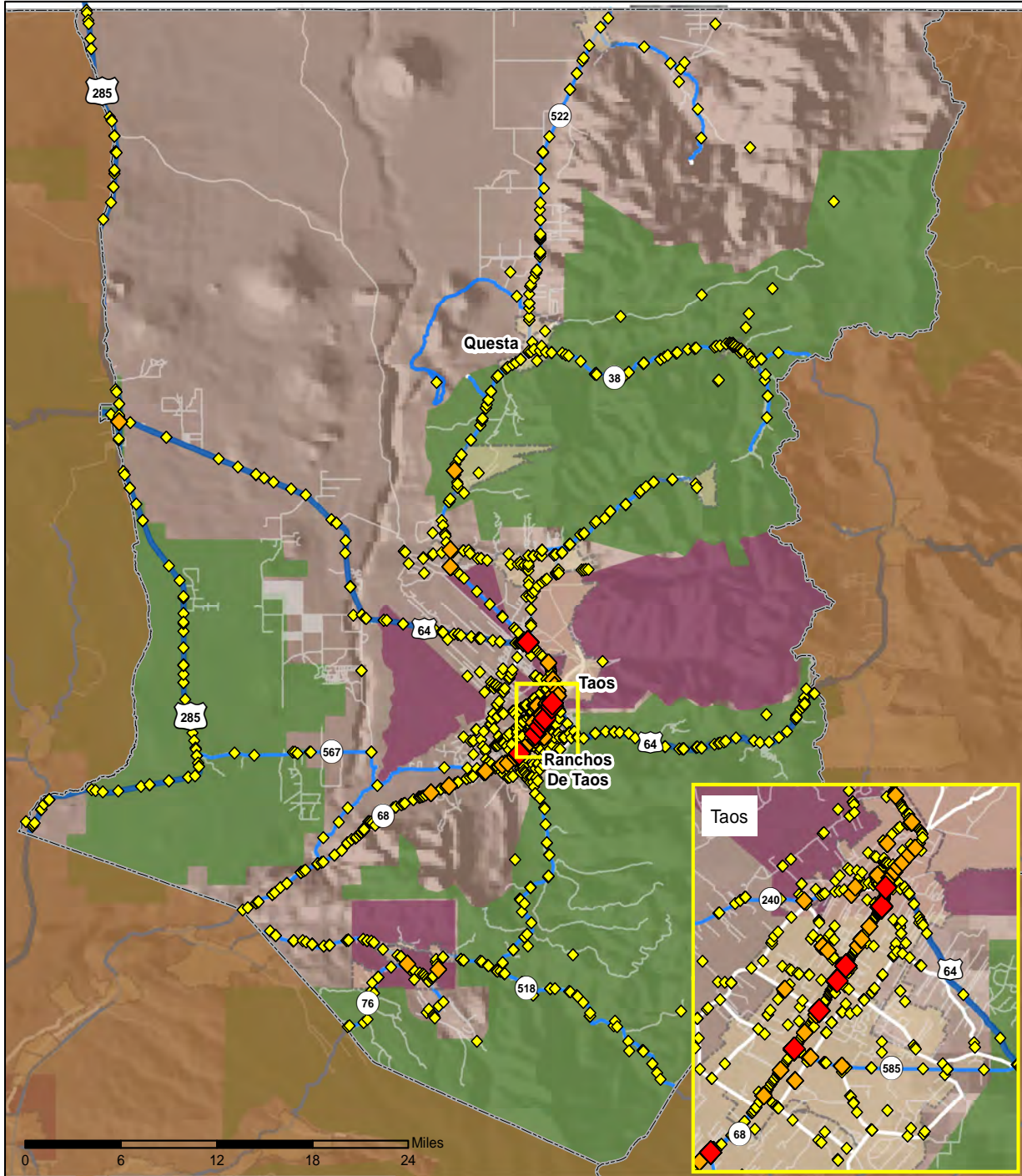
County road maintenance is carried out by the Taos County Public Works Department according to the five districts within Taos County. District foremen and operators evaluate roads within their district, consider input from residents who report road issues, and determine which roads need improvements.

The Public Works Director identified a need for additional staff to ensure better coverage of road maintenance, especially during the winter. Aging vehicles need to be replaced with better units to prevent disruption in the maintenance schedules.



# Crashes in Taos County, New Mexico, 2016 - 2020

Map created by the Traffic Research Unit, Geospatial & Population Studies at UNM



## Legend

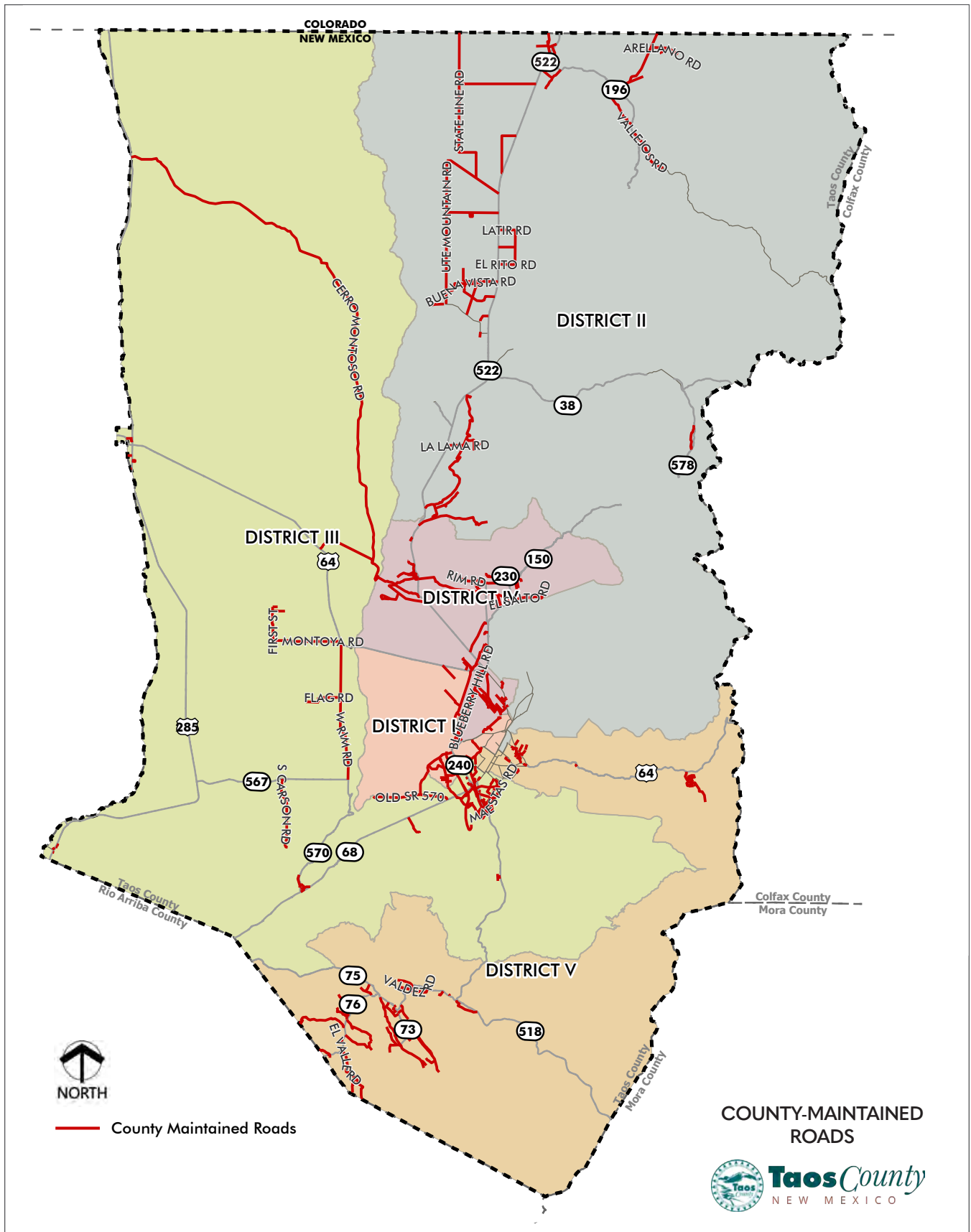


- Forest & Wildlife Areas
- Reservations & Pueblos
- County Boundaries
- City Boundaries
- Interstate Highways
- U.S. Highways
- State Highways
- Streets & Roadways

## Crashes 2016-2020

- 1 - 5 Crashes
- 6 - 20 Crashes
- 21 - 45 Crashes

Data Source: NMDOT Crash File 2016-2020  
<http://tru.unm.edu> CO#6093 tru@unm.edu



## 7.3 TRANSPORTATION MODES

### COMMUTING TIME & DISTANCE

In 2022, Taos County residents commuted an average of 23 minutes for work. About 21.9% of residents spent less than 10 minutes traveling to work while about 7.7% commuted between 45 and 59 minutes to work. Figure 7.1 shows the different modes of commuting to work in Taos County and New Mexico.

### PERSONAL VEHICLES

The Community Survey showed 98.8% of the respondents utilize personal cars and trucks for transportation. Typical of rural regions, residents often need to travel long distances, whether for work or for errands. According to the US Census data, in 2022, 79.6% of commuting to work was done by car, truck, or van in Taos County. In 2021, 6,057 employees lived and worked in Taos County; of these, 3,238 people worked in Taos County and commuted in from elsewhere and 3,167 people lived in Taos County and traveled to work in another county.

### TRANSIT SERVICE

According to the ACS, in 2022, only 1.4% of Taos County residents commuted to work by public transportation. However, a higher number - approximately 4.6% of the participants in the Community Survey - said they utilize transit for transportation purposes. The North Central Regional Transit District (NCRTD) provides public transit in Taos, Rio Arriba, Santa Fe, and Los Alamos counties, while Miner's Transit is a rural public transportation service in the Town of Red River.

#### North Central Regional Transit District

The North Central Regional Transit District (NCRTD), also known as "The Blue Bus", provides free and premium

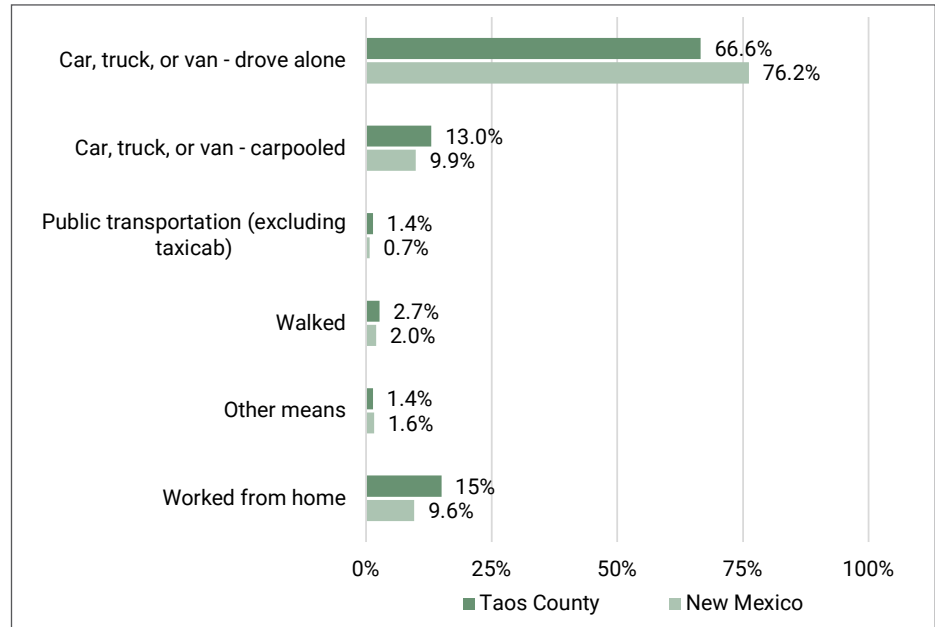
fare-based bus transit connecting communities and pueblos throughout the counties in North Central New Mexico. These services include fixed routes, microtransit, paratransit, and on-demand services. The NCRTD owns and maintains 68 vehicles across the service area. Improvements to the service are influenced by the short-term *Transit Service Plan* and the long-term planning documents discussed below.

#### Blue Bus Services

The North Central Regional Transit District is engaged in a range of changes to its services and scope, including:

- ◀ Implementing its *Zero Emissions Bus Transition Plan* to reduce the agency's carbon footprint;
- ◀ Constructing a new Taos Operations and Maintenance Facility to include maintenance space, a fueling station, EV charging, administrative offices, employee support facilities such as training rooms, locker rooms, wellness space, and potential future workforce housing;
- ◀ Enhancing its services by introducing a high-frequency Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system covering the Town of Taos, Española, and

FIGURE 7.1: TAOS COUNTY COMMUTING, 2022



Source: ACS, 5-year Estimates, 2022.

Santa Fe, and develop Mobility Hubs along the BRT routes;

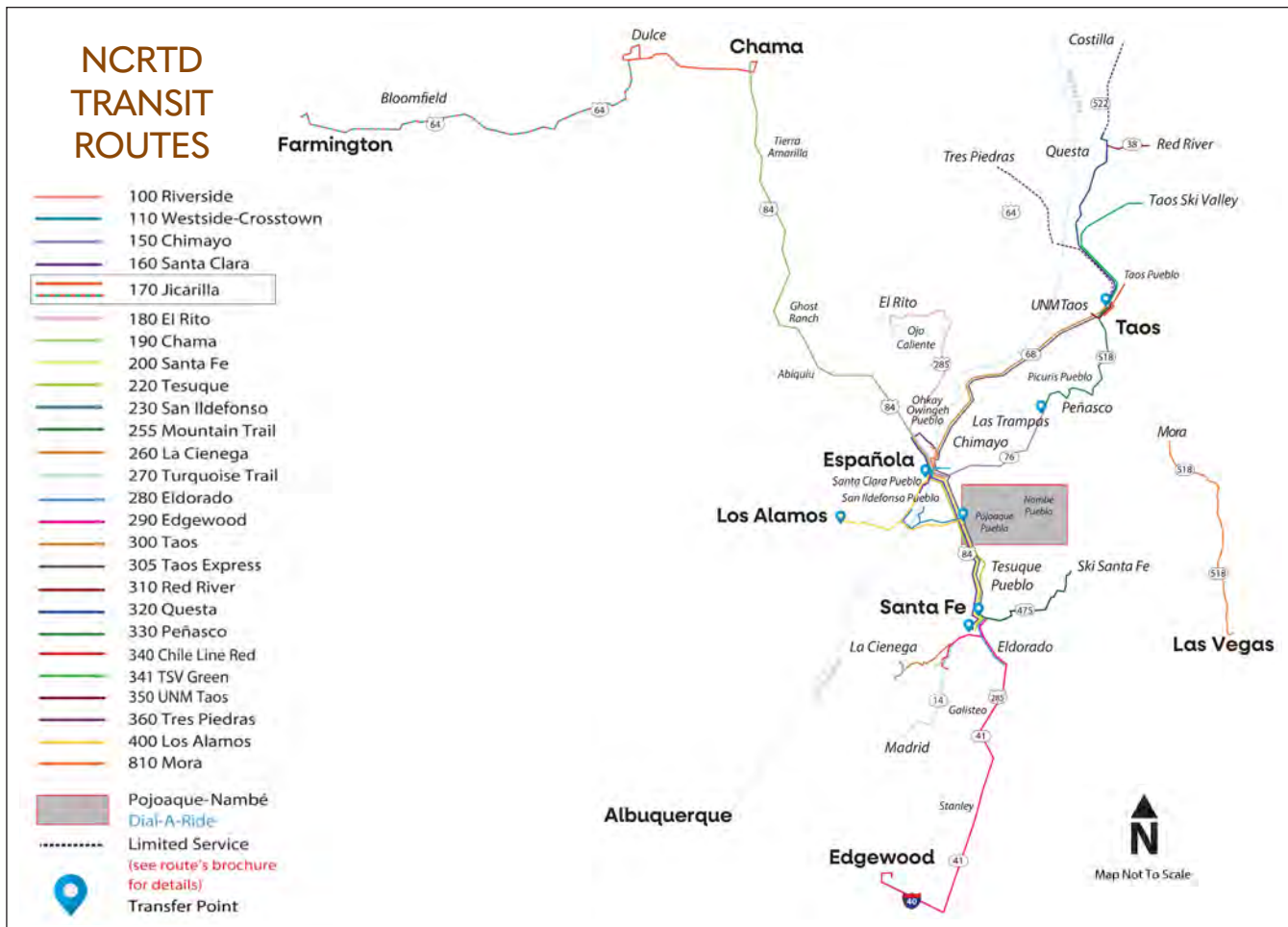
- ◀ Potential collaboration with Taos County on workforce housing development, potentially a land transfer from Taos County to The North Central Regional Transit District for transit-oriented development; and
- ◀ Collaborating with UNM-Taos to potentially develop and initiate a fixed route that matches the students’ schedules. The North Central Regional Transit District and UNM-Taos are also considering coordination to promote bus driver positions as a viable career path.

The NCRTD has reduced its services due to difficulty in recruiting and retaining drivers. Driver safety concerns and the rural locations have impacted its ability to hire and retain. With several people experiencing homelessness and substance abuse disorders taking refuge on transit facilities,

there have been concerns, reports, and challenges maintaining stops and stations.

### BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

Walking and biking in rural regions is generally split into different categories for places and types of travelers. Within communities, people often feel safe walking and biking despite the lack of formal sidewalks and bike paths or lanes due to the slower speeds and lower volumes of vehicular traffic. In rural areas between communities, people typically rely on personal motorized vehicles to travel longer distances for work and play, though there are also more confident bicyclists who enjoy the rural highways for longer recreational bike rides. The American Community Survey showed 2.7% of Taos County residents walked to work in 2022. When asked how they travel in general, 25.8% of the respondents to the Taos County Community Survey said they walk and 13.4% said they use bicycles.



Additionally, there are trails, parks, and activity areas throughout Taos County for year-round recreation, including hiking, biking, horseback riding, motorized off-road vehicles, and winter adventures on cross-country skis and snowshoes. Trails range from the relatively level hike along the west rim of the Rio Grande Gorge, to the Wheeler Peak, the highest natural point in New Mexico, which also takes you past Williams Lake.

### **Regional Improvements**

In addition to the five-mile multi-use pathway on NM 150 between the intersection of NM 150 and US 64 from Taos to Arroyo Seco, the Enchanted Circle Trails Association is working on a 14-mile multi-use trail connecting the Village of Questa to the Town of Red River, and six other trails in the region. The Taos Mountain Bike Association also creates, enhances, and protects riding opportunities in and around Taos County and Northern New Mexico, and the Rocky Mountain Youth Corps improves trails and outdoor activity spaces throughout the County.

### **New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division**

The New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division funds a range of access and amenity improvements, along with educational and outreach efforts. The Division provided almost \$2.7 million in funding for 31 projects across Taos County between 2020 and 2024 between their three funding programs, including the Outdoor Recreation Trail+ Grant, Outdoor Marketing Grant, and Outdoor Equity Fund. Those funds have supported the improvements to Horsethief Mesa Trails near Arroyo Hondo and La Junta Trail outside of Questa, universal-access trails in Rio Fernando Park. The Pueblo of Picuris used Outdoor Recreation Trail+ Grant funds to develop a bike park for BMX bikes, mountain bikes, beginning riders, and adaptive-optimized mountain bikes, and the Village of Questa is developing trails for hiking, biking, and horseback riding, along with rock-climbing areas. The largest award to the region was \$430,034 to Taos Pueblo for the non-motorized trail along NM 150 and the restoration of wilderness trails for emergency and cultural access.

## **AIR TRANSPORTATION**

Taos County is served by the Taos Regional Airport and the Questa Municipal Airport. Other nearby airports include the Ohkay Owingeh Airport, Santa Fe Municipal Airport; Jicarilla Apache Nation Airport; Angel Fire Airport; and San Luis Valley Regional Airport in Alamosa, Colorado to the north.

### **Taos Regional Airport**

The Taos Regional Airport is a public-use airport serving general aviation needs and is owned and operated by the Town of Taos. The Airport is located approximately eight miles northwest of the Town of Taos within Taos County. Taos Air (JSX) currently offers non-stop flights between Taos and Austin, Texas; Denver/Boulder, Colorado; and Las Vegas, Nevada, but schedules and destinations change occasionally based on the season and anticipated demand.

The Taos Regional Airport is a dual-runway facility designed to serve all types of general aviation and regional jet aircraft up to 60,000 pounds. The primary runway, Runway 13/31, is 8,600 feet by 100 feet. The crosswind runway, Runway 4/22, is 5,504 feet by 75 feet. There are two full-length parallel taxiways and two aircraft parking aprons.

Taos County is within the service area of the Taos Regional Airport and provides some financial support. The Airport is served by the Taos County Sheriff's Department and the Taos County Fire District/EMS.

The draft *Airport Master Plan* (Armstrong Consultants, Inc., 2024) for the Taos Regional Airport examined alternative developments to accommodate the forecast aviation demand and facility requirements for a 20-year planning period. The following recommendations were provided based on input from the Taos Regional Airport Master Plan Technical Advisory Committee, NMDOT, and the FAA:

- ◀ Runway 13/31 and 4/22 existing runway length remains the same but plan for continued pavement maintenance
- ◀ Expand commercial, general aviation and itinerant aircraft parking apron and ramp areas
- ◀ Construct dedicated helicopter parking pad



- ◆ Relocate AWOS System/RCO, segmented circle and wind cone
- ◆ Protect for future Air Cargo Distribution facilities
- ◆ Terminal Building Expansion to accommodate existing and possible future Part 380 activity
- ◆ Expand FBO hangar and facilities
- ◆ Snow Removal Equipment storage building expansion/replacement
- ◆ Construct additional hangar facilities to accommodate demand as needed

- ◆ Expand existing AvGas and Jet-A fuel storage tanks to accommodate bulk storage needs
- ◆ Expand vehicle parking areas and reconstruct existing airport access road
- ◆ Relocate terminal area fencing and install controlled access gates

In 2021, the Federal Aviation Administration awarded \$4.86 million for taxiway reconstruction and runway construction. Other reconstruction included improvements to the runway surface.

That same year, Taos County also received \$1.7 million in Local Economic Development Act (LEDA) funding for improvements to the Airport Industrial Park for a water line extension. In 2022, NMDOT provided \$3 million in funding to the Taos Regional Airport, which included both federal and state funding, to rehabilitate and complete the commercial aircraft parking apron. The NMDOT awarded Taos County with a total of \$11.4 million in 2024 in Rural Air Service Enhancement grant funding to support additional flights to more destinations, such as Denver and Dallas, to bolster the Taos Regional Airport as a regional transportation hub.

## 7.4 SCENIC ROUTES & REST STOPS

Taos County's diverse landscape is connected by roads that offer scenic beauty, cultural richness, and historical significance to the region. There are three nationally-designated Scenic Byways within Taos County, and a rest stop with a spectacular view, all of which supports economic development and regional tourism.

### SCENIC BYWAYS

#### *High Road to Taos Scenic Byway*

The High Road to Taos Scenic Byway begins at the Santa Fe Plaza and ends at the Saint Francis Plaza in Ranchos de Taos Plaza. The road spans 52 miles and comprises paved two-lane and three-lane sections of US 84 and US 285, as well as NM 76, NM 75, and NM 518.

#### *Enchanted Circle Scenic Byway*

The Enchanted Circle Scenic Byway is a 90-mile, paved, two-lane road that runs in a loop through NM 522, NM 38, and US 64. The loop begins in the Town of Taos, passes through Arroyo Hondo, Questa, Red River, Eagle Nest, and Angel Fire, and then returns to Taos.

#### *Wild Rivers Scenic Byway*

The Wild Rivers Scenic Byway is a 30-mile two-lane loop that begins at the La Junta Overlook where the Red River meets the Rio Grande. It runs through NM 378 and NM 522, and ends at the Questa Visitor Center.

## REST STOPS

### *Rio Grande Gorge Rest Area*

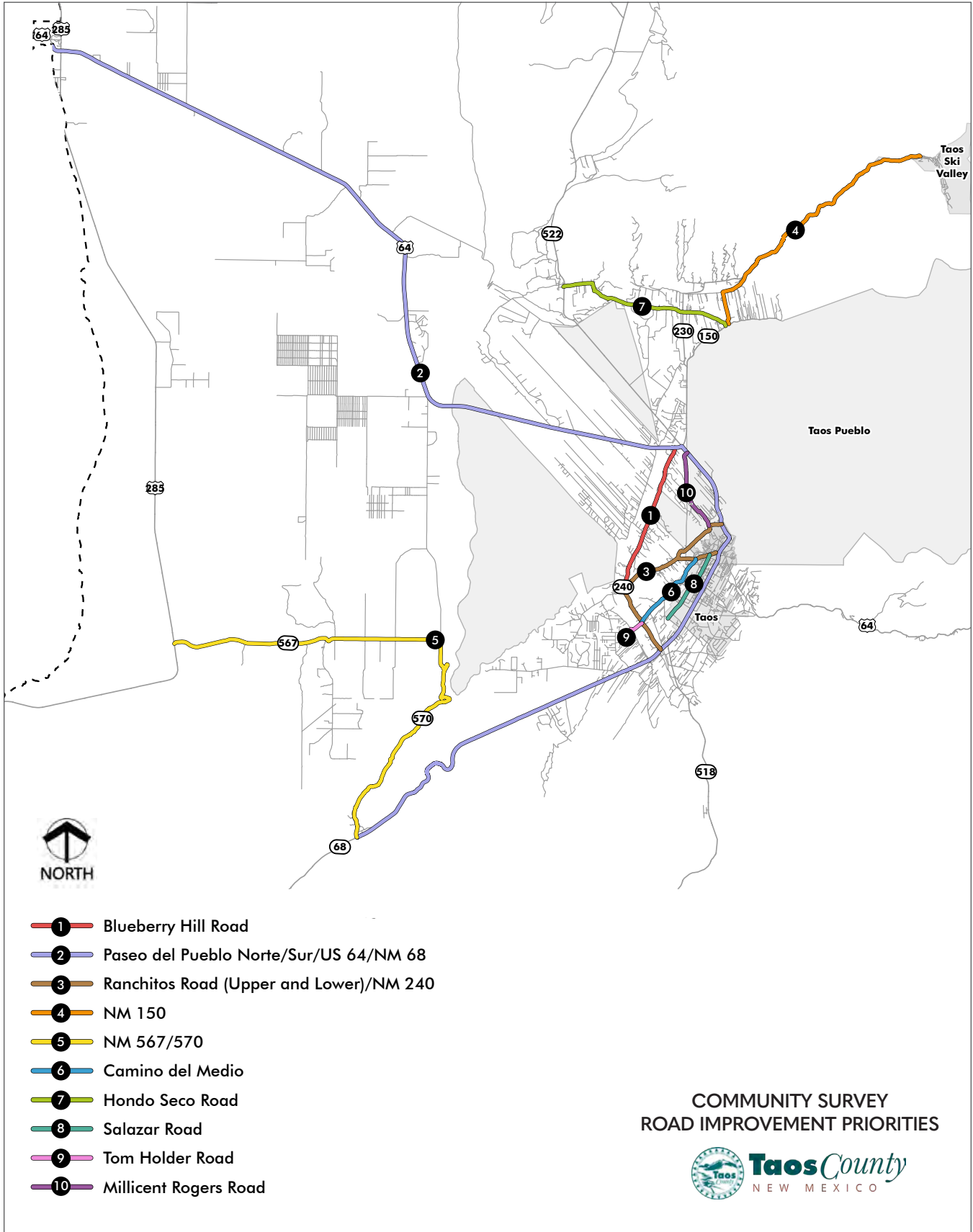
The Rio Grande Gorge Rest Area is located along US 64, west of the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge, which is on both the State Register of Cultural Properties and the National Register of Historic Places. Parking is available for 22 autos, five handicap-accessible vehicles, and RVs can park along the edge of the road. The rest area includes the trailhead of the West Rim Trail, a 3.8 there-and-back trail that is popular for hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding.

## 7.5 ROAD IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES

An efficient and safe transportation system is essential to address increasing demands from local and regional growth and development. These improvements anticipate and respond to the varying land use demands and transportation infrastructure of different areas within Taos County.

Community members were asked about roadway conditions, maintenance, and improvements as part of the Community Survey. Approximately 57% of respondents said they were somewhat or very dissatisfied with Taos County's current roadway conditions and maintenance. Respondents were asked to identify the top three roads or intersections within unincorporated Taos County that they believed were most in need of improvement.

The Road Improvement Priorities map (see page 109) shows the top 10 prioritized roads for improvement in Taos County as identified by the Community Survey Participants, with Blueberry Hill Road being the road that received the highest number of votes. NMDOT's Annual Average Daily Traffic data notes that the average daily number of vehicles on Blueberry Hill Road grew from 1,194 in 2018 to 2,970 in 2023. Blueberry Hill Road and the other nine roads identified in the Community Survey as being the roads most in need of improvement are also prioritized in Taos County's Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan and the Northern Pueblos RTPO project list, both of which are described in more detail in Section 7.7 Project Prioritization.



## 7.6 LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

### NORTHERN PUEBLOS REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The *Northern Pueblos Regional Transportation Plan* was developed by the Northern Pueblos Regional Transportation Planning Organization (NPRTPO), a regional advisory committee consisting of representatives from tribal and local public agencies in Taos, Rio Arriba, Los Alamos, and rural Santa Fe counties. The *Northern Pueblos Regional Transportation Plan* identified a vision for the region and goals, objectives, and strategies that can help implement and achieve the vision. The goals are listed below:

- ◀ **Safety:** Improve safety for all transportation system users
- ◀ **Mobility & Accessibility:** Efficiently and equitably invest in infrastructure and technology to provide reliable multi-modal access and connectivity, improve mobility, foster economic growth, and minimize transportation's contribution to climate change
- ◀ **Program Delivery:** Deliver transportation programs through approaches and processes that improve resiliency, respect New Mexico's unique cultures, and promote fiscal and environmental stewardship
- ◀ **Asset Management:** Optimize spending to cost effectively preserve our transportation assets in the best possible condition over the long-term
- ◀ **Economic Development:** Connect and align transportation system development and maintenance with the *North Central New Mexico Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy*

### NORTH CENTRAL REGIONAL TRANSIT DISTRICT LONG-RANGE STRATEGIC PLAN

The *NCRTD Long-Range Strategic Plan*, adopted by the NCRTD Board in May 2023, identified the direction for NCRTD over the next 20 years with a clear vision and framework for the future

of transit in its large geographical area. Strategies for recommended mobility improvements in Taos County are covered in detail in the *NCRTD Long Range Strategic Plan*, and are summarized below:

- ◀ Convert some low-volume routes to on-demand ridesharing, which is operating within and around Taos to increase flexibility and responsiveness;
- ◀ Convert high-volume routes to Bus Rapid Transit;
- ◀ Expand services where and when possible, coordinating with regional transit and other agency partners;
- ◀ Coordinate with local institutions to establish CDL, electrification training and maintenance, and other related curricula; and
- ◀ Work with local partners to promote land use development that supports transit service; pursue development projects that support Equitable Transit-Oriented (eTOD) policy in Taos.

## 7.7 PROJECT PRIORITIZATION

The Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan (ICIP) prioritizes improvement projects on a five-year schedule. The Taos County FY2025-2029 ICIP identified the following three transportation improvement projects to plan, design, remove, replace, and construct the following roadway segments:

- ◀ **Blueberry Hill Road:** Re-pavement of seven miles of existing roadway in El Prado.
- ◀ **Tom Holder Bridge/Road:** Property acquisition and completion of environmental studies, design, and construction of the bridge in Ranchos de Taos.
- ◀ **Aguas Calientes (Pilar) Bridge Phase 1, 2, & 3:** Property acquisition and construction utilizing structural steel and concrete for a 210-foot bridge plus abutments in Pilar.

Taos County has also participated in the Northern Pueblos Regional Transportation Planning Organization's project prioritization process by submitting applications to be rated and ranked in the Regional Transportation Improvement

Program Recommendations for the New Mexico Transportation Project Fund:

- ◀ **Rio Chiquito Bridge:** Replacement with a new one-lane bridge with a slightly longer modern bridge barrier railing and approach.
- ◀ **Blueberry Hill Road:** Roadway reconstruction and intersection safety improvements.
- ◀ **Leo Valencia Road:** Bank stabilization and roadway and intersection paving and drainage.
- ◀ **Tom Holder Road:** Design and construction for reconstruction and widening.

## 7.8 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, & STRATEGIES

### TRANSPORTATION GOAL 1

Maintain safe roadway conditions throughout Taos County.

*Objectives:*

- ◀ *To create a long-range maintenance and funding plan for roadway improvements.*
- ◀ *To identify roadways and intersections that function below Level of Service C and program available funding accordingly.*
- ◀ *To ensure roadways are developed, extended, and/or improved to meet adopted functional classification standards.*

#### TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY 1.1

Prioritize and complete roadway improvements to Blueberry Hill Road, Tom Holder Bridge/Road, Aguas Calientes Bridge as identified in the Taos County ICIP and the Rio Chiquito Bridge, Blueberry Hill Road, Leo Valencia Road, and Tom Holder Road as determined by the Northern Pueblos Regional Transportation Planning Organization’s prioritization process.

#### TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY 1.2

Submit a grant application to the New Mexico Finance Authority for a Transportation Asset Management Plan that contains:

- ◀ A Pavement Management Program that identifies all roadway and bridge assets and existing conditions;
- ◀ Cost projections for future needs and improvements to the roadway system;

- ◀ Funding strategies;
- ◀ Phased list of prioritized projects according to existing condition, traffic volume served, support for public services and tax base, and leveraging potential; and
- ◀ Coordination of projects with the Taos County Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan (ICIP).

#### TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY 1.3

Create a preventative street maintenance plan that prioritizes and secures funding for resurfacing and reconstruction of deteriorated streets, and annual maintenance activities, including resurfacing, paving, crack sealing, and pavement marking.

#### TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY 1.4

Evaluate average daily counts for major roadway facilities within Taos County to determine whether changes to the current functional classifications are needed based on capacity, travel speeds, and adjacent land use and access. Coordinate those findings with the Northern Pueblos Regional Transportation Planning Organization and the NMDOT.

#### TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY 1.5

Pursue funding for roadway improvement projects through NMDOT’s programs, including the Local Government Road Fund; Municipal Arterial Program; Cooperative Projects; Safety Projects; and Transportation Alternatives Program, and coordinate with the Northern Pueblos Regional Planning Organization.

### TRANSPORTATION GOAL 2

Establish a safe and efficient pedestrian and bike system in Taos County.

*Objectives*

- ◀ *To reduce the dependence on passenger vehicles and promote a more active lifestyle.*
- ◀ *To balance the mobility needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians with motorists.*

#### TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY 2.1

Create a recreation and trails master plan that is designed to provide linkages between communities, neighborhoods, schools, and

other destinations within Taos County. Utilize best practices and the most recent American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Guide for Development of Bicycle Facilities standards.

#### TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY 2.2

Pursue funding for regional trail projects from the Outdoor Recreation Trails+ Grant program managed by the New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division; Bicycle/Pedestrian/Equestrian Program; and the federal Recreational Trails Program.

### TRANSPORTATION GOAL 3

Expand transit services in the unincorporated areas of Taos County with proximity to the Town of Taos, Town of Red River, and the Village of Questa.

#### Objectives

- ◀ To encourage a more efficient and eco-friendly transportation option.
- ◀ To identify areas with concentration of jobs and workers within the unincorporated areas of Taos County that could be reasonably served with transit.
- ◀ To accommodate the transportation needs of the elderly, disabled, residents, and students that do not own or wish to drive personal vehicles.

#### TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY 3.1

Work with the North Central Regional Transit District on expanding access to transit services for Taos County residents and the UNM-Taos Campus and identify other areas within Taos County that have a concentration of jobs and workers that would benefit from expanded transit services.

#### TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY 3.2

Participate in the North Central Regional Transit District's strategic planning to help determine route adjustments, scheduling changes, on-demand ridesharing zones and Bus Rapid Transit, mobility hub locations, and zero-emission vehicles and infrastructure.

#### TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY 3.3

Collaborate with the North Central Regional Transit District and UNM-Taos on promoting bus driver jobs and recruitment.

### TRANSPORTATION GOAL 4

Expand air travel and general aviation operations at the Taos Regional Airport.

#### Objectives

- ◀ To increase airport capacity and optimize operations.
- ◀ To determine current and projected air traffic demand for the region.
- ◀ To meet current FAA design criteria and respond to changes in the general aviation industry.
- ◀ To expand aviation access for air cargo, local business, tourism, and personal flying activities.

#### TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY 4.1

Support upgrades at the Taos Regional Airport as identified in the *Airport Master Plan*, including ongoing maintenance and improvements to runways, aircraft parking apron and ramp areas, helicopter parking pad, terminal building, FBO hangar and facilities, snow removal storage building, fencing, parking, etc.

#### TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY 4.2

Coordinate with the Town of Taos on its efforts to pursue available aviation funding from the FAA and the NMDOT - Aviation Division grant and funding programs.

#### TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY 4.3

Work with local and regional tourism and business representatives to determine the level of interest in expanding business aviation activity and passenger service.

### TRANSPORTATION GOAL 5

Provide appropriate roadway access to existing and future development in Taos County.

#### Objectives

- ◀ *To ensure access to future development is provided through new roads or upgrades to existing roads.*
- ◀ *To plan for and support transportation improvements for economic development purposes.*
- ◀ *To ensure adequate right-of-way for future road and intersection expansion.*

#### TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY 5.1

Incorporate context sensitive design and placemaking into new roadway design, and minimize the impact to the natural terrain, where feasible.

#### TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY 5.2

Develop a policy that all new roadways in unincorporated Taos County will be coordinated with adjacent land uses and designated, designed, and built to functional classification standards.

#### TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY 5.3

In conjunction with NMDOT, evaluate and determine the feasibility of adding bicycle lanes within arterial rights-of-way. New bicycle lanes should be designed in compliance with AASHTO (American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials), as amended.

### TRANSPORTATION GOAL 6

Reduce the level of vehicle emissions in Taos County.

#### Objectives

- ◀ *To incorporate electric vehicle and charging systems into existing public facilities.*
- ◀ *To foster the development of electric vehicle infrastructure along major transportation corridors.*

#### TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY 6.1

Determine locations along the segments of US 285, US 64, NM 38, and NM 522 that have the highest Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) for the installation of EV charging stations.

#### TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY 6.2

Provide EV charging stations at Taos County public facilities and prioritize those locations with existing three-phase power.

#### TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY 6.3

Pursue available funding from the NMDOT Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Grant Program.

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CHAPTER 8  
**Water Resources &  
Infrastructure**



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## 8.1 INTRODUCTION

The supply, delivery, and protection of Taos County's water is key to the long-term sustainability of life in Taos County. Water plays a critical role in ensuring the viability of the community while also meeting the basic needs of its residents. This chapter provides the framework for future water planning and conservation and other elements of infrastructure systems, including drainage and solid waste management.

## 8.2 WATER PLANNING

This section provides information from the state and regional water plans relevant to Taos County. The plans focus on promoting regional water planning and employs strategies to meet future demand, including water conservation.

### STATE WATER PLAN

*The New Mexico State Water Plan* serves as an educational tool and resource guide to provide information about established water-related programs and to help elected officials support and advance the current policies, procedures, and programs that provide the baseline for creating New Mexico's water future. The plan is intended to be used by legislators, state agencies, county commissioners, local governments, public water suppliers, planners, businesses, irrigators, industry professionals, and residents of New Mexico. It is designed to be helpful in planning, policy making, project implementation, decision-making, seeking resources, and for pursuing funding opportunities.

A brief summary of the three state statutes that govern regional and state water planning are as follows:

- ◀ **NMSA 72-14-3.1:** This statute provides the structure to implement a comprehensive State Water Plan in collaboration with the Interstate Commission, State Engineer, and Water Trust Board. The State Water Plan is a strategic management tool to promote stewardship of the state's water resources, the protection of water rights, water supply, and water quality while providing a basis for prioritizing infrastructure investment through statewide
- continuity of policy and water resources management. The plan includes water budgets for all major river basins and aquifer systems, water conservation strategies and policies, and drought management plan. It also includes consultation with the Indian nations.
- ◀ **NMSA 72-14-43:** This statute requires that New Mexico's water needs be met by allowing each region of the state to plan for its water future. The statute allows the state to assist in planning by implementing a state appropriation program to ensure an adequate supply of water in each region.
- ◀ **NMSA 72-14-44:** This statute provides authorization to the Interstate Stream Commission to appropriate groundwater or purchase water rights on behalf of the state's various regions. It also authorizes the Interstate Stream Commission to grant or loan funds for regional water planning.

### 50-YEAR WATER ACTION PLAN

The Office of the Governor released the *50-year Water Action Plan (2023)* which is an action plan to increase the water security in New Mexico. The Action Plan focuses on Water conservation through the reduction of leaks, improved water storage, and incentivizing agricultural water conservation.

The Action Plan recommends seeking new water supplies by establishing a \$500M strategic water supply to spur investments in desalination and wastewater treatment. The Action Plan advises the adoption of policies to expand potable and non potable water reuse. It also encourages the cleanup and protection of the watershed by identifying contaminated groundwater sites and controlling pollution through discharge permitting program.

### TAOS REGIONAL WATER PLAN

The *Taos Regional Water Plan* includes Taos County and a portion of the Embudo watershed in southeastern Rio Arriba County, is one of 16 water planning regions in the State of New Mexico. Its primary purpose being to protect New Mexico water resources and to ensure that each region is prepared to meet future water

demands. Each of the 16 planning regions, with funding and oversight from the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission (NMISC), developed a plan to meet regional water needs over the ensuing 40 years.

The *Taos Regional Water Plan* identified strategies that will help the County prepare to balance the gap between supply and demand and to address other future water management challenges. The plan emphasizes the determination of infrastructure needs, protection of existing resources and water quality, and the need to maximize limited resources through water conservation and reuse. It identifies conservation strategies and watershed management policies for future water management needs and goals.

The *Taos Regional Water Plan* uses the gallons per capita per day (GPCD) calculator to arrive at the per capita usage in the region. The GPCD calculation determines the baseline for usage and ultimately the success of an implemented water conservation technique.

Agriculture is the largest water use in the region. The *Taos Regional Water Plan* highlights the potential benefits of conservation in this sector. It also discusses conservation techniques, such as aquifer storage and recovery to replace some reservoir storage. Additionally, evaporation can be mitigated by storing water at higher elevations or constructing deeper reservoirs with less surface area for evaporation. Other examples include lining or piping acequias to reduce seepage losses associated with conveyance. Techniques such as drip irrigation and center pivots are proven methods to reduce the amount of water diverted.

The *Taos Regional Water Plan* provides analysis of the current demand and projected future demand of water usage but does not provide specific measures on how to implement water conservation techniques. The development and adoption of a water conservation ordinance for Taos County will include implementation measures, water conservation measures for residential and commercial water uses, and prohibits water waste.

◀ **Santa Fe County Case Study:** Santa Fe County is one of the few counties in New Mexico that has adopted a water conservation ordinance. The Santa Fe County Water Conservation Ordinance includes the prohibition of outdoor irrigation between 11:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. from May through September. Indoor conservation measures include the requirement to repair leaking private water lines and requires low flow toilets, lavatory and kitchen faucets, and shower heads in new construction and replacement of existing fixtures.

The Ordinance also sets penalties for violations, and includes a voluntary domestic well use metering program. In the event of excess usage, the property owner can be fined and required to submit meter reading reports more regularly.

Taos County should determine the feasibility of creating a water conservation ordinance. The Santa Fe County Water Conservation Ordinance would be a good model for Taos County to follow, with consideration given for the unique aspects of Taos County's traditional agriculture and water use.

## 8.3 WATER SUPPLY

### WATER RIGHTS

The Rio Grande is fully appropriated; therefore, any new diversion of surface water or groundwater requires the transfer of a valid water right or application for a new domestic or livestock well to the Office of the State Engineer. The availability of water rights may be a limiting factor in meeting the future water needs of the region. The following water users are:

- ◀ 3 Regional acequia associations
- ◀ 97 acequia associations
- ◀ Taos and Picuris Pueblos
- ◀ 26 mutual domestic water consumer associations
- ◀ Four incorporated municipalities
- ◀ Two water and sanitation districts

In 1969, New Mexico went to federal court to tally the water rights in the local watersheds and establish the amount of water of water rights owed by each

entity. To avoid expensive litigation costs, several entities came together to reach an agreement. The *Taos Pueblo Water Rights Settlement*, also known as the *Abeyta Water Rights Settlement Agreement*, determined the water rights for the Town of Taos, Taos Pueblo, El Prado Water and Sanitation District, 12 mutual domestic water associations, Taos Valley Acequia Association (TVAA), State of New Mexico, and the United States.

### 8.4 GROUNDWATER

The Taos County region is situated in three physiographic regions, including the Taos Plateau, Costilla Plains, and the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Groundwater is mainly found in the Quaternary Alluvial sediments above the Servilleta Formation and underlying Santa Fe Group. The depth of groundwater ranges from less than 1 foot to 275 feet below the ground. The groundwater in the region is within the Rio Grande Underground Water Basin and is primarily used for commercial purposes, mining, public water supply, and domestic household use. Taos County residents either get water for residential uses from mutual domestic water users associations, municipal water systems, regional water and sanitation districts, domestic wells, or by use of rainwater catchment systems.

#### WATER QUALITY

Since the drinking water systems in Taos County rely on groundwater, it is critical that the resource be protected from contamination. There are two primary types of groundwater contamination - point sources and non-point sources. There can also be water quality issues due to naturally occurring substances in the groundwater. At the completion of the *Taos Regional Water Plan*, the groundwater was determined to not be contaminated.

The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED), through the New Mexico Source Water Assessment and Protection Program, aids communities, water utilities, and service providers. It evaluates the susceptibility of wells and surface water intakes of contamination and then help these entities develop source water protection strategies.

### WATER ASSOCIATIONS

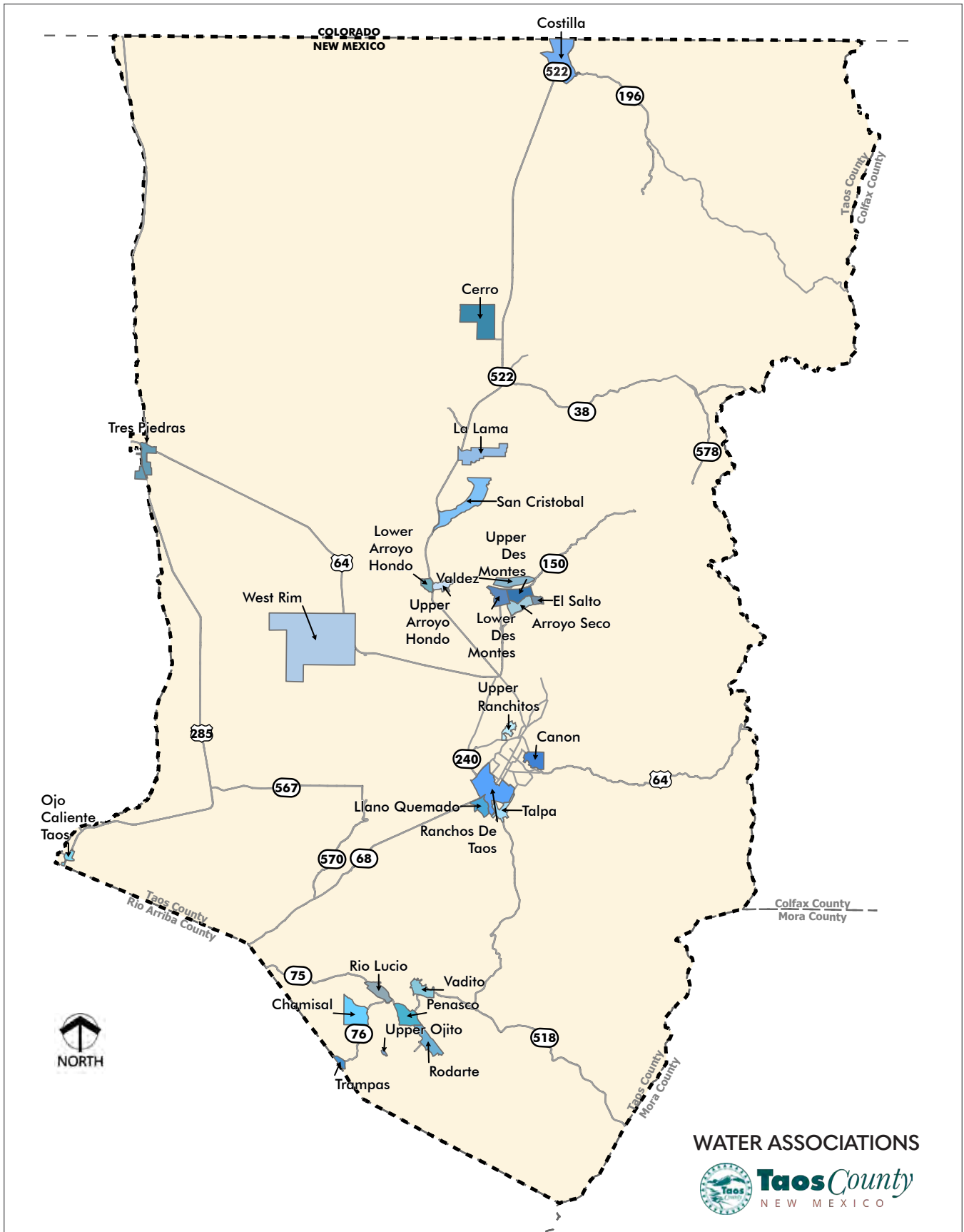
Water associations provide water services to its members. Each water association is a member of the New Mexico Rural Water Association (NMRWA), which is a non-profit membership organization committed to helping communities provide safe drinking water and wastewater services through on-site technical assistance, specialized training, and legislative support.

Mutual Domestic Water Consumer Associations (MDWCA) are public water systems and a political subdivision of the State of New Mexico. In 2024, there were 26 Mutual Domestic Water Users Associations in Taos County (see *Table 8.1 and MDWCA map, page 118*). Each MDWCA has one

**TABLE 8.1: MUTUAL DOMESTIC WATER CONSUMER ASSOCIATIONS**

MDWCA	Connections	Population served	Average Daily Production (GPD)
Arroyo Seco	182	444	50,600
Canon	179	200	33,333
Cerro	3	232	-
Chamisal	146	550	55,000
Costilla	100	244	-
El Salto	96	232	23,200
La Lama	8	45	800
Llano Quemado	240	848	36,000
Lower Arroyo Hondo	63	180	9,000
Lower Des Montes	112	319	13,700
Ojo Caliente	103	226	2,000
Peñasco	200	549	50,000
Ranchos de Taos	236	750	10,000
Rio Lucio	140	342	21,000
Rodarte	47	115	7,500
San Cristobal	58	165	2,600
Talpa	275	700	64,300
Trampas	54	132	5,000
Tres Piedras	84	350	29,200
Upper Arroyo Hondo	65	195	9,750
Upper Des Montes	78	222	10,300
Upper Ojito	8	19	5,260
Upper Ranchitos	8	222	23,400
Vadito	80	122	10,000
Valdez	37	100	38,880
West Rim	1	113	21,600

Source: Office of the State Engineer.





Rio Grande Gorge.

or multiple supply wells to serve its members. The Talpa Water Association, with highest amount of connections and population served has multiple wells and provides distribution lines to users homes. The West Rim Water Association is unique in that it provides drinking water at a fill station with drive-up services on the west plateau.

Each MDWCA is required to meter and monitor water quantity and quality. In Taos County, the MDWCA's provides the average daily usage, number of connections and population served from those connections to the Office of State Engineer. Arroyo Seco, Chamisal, Peñasco, and Talpa all extract 50,000 gallon per day (GPD) or more of drinking water for residents and livestock. In comparison, La Lama, Ojo Caliente, and San Cristobal produce under 3,000 GPD (see Table 8.1).

## WELLS

According to Taos Regional Water Plan there are over 7,400 individual domestic wells in Taos County permitted for drinking, agriculture, and livestock.

Most wells are intended for domestic use and range in depth from shallow, hand-dug wells to public supply wells that are 200 to 300 feet deep. Approximately 150 wells are located on the Taos Plateau, and an estimated 50 to 100 shallow wells are in the Rio Ojo Caliente valley.

Numerous wells are located in Sunshine Valley in the Costilla Plains. Questa pumps from the Costilla Plain and Red River pumps its water from the valley near the Red River in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Near Tres Piedras, wells average about 780 to 960 feet in depth and yield about 1 gpm (Source: Taos Regional Water Plan).

The largest well field in the County is the one operated by the Town of Taos, consisting of wells at various locations over an approximately 10-square mile area. The Town of Taos has developed a small well field for the San Juan-Chama diversion project.

## RAINWATER CATCHMENT SYSTEMS

Water is critical to life, especially so in Northern New Mexico, and so many individuals within Taos County are utilizing rain catchment systems that can be used for either commercial or residential use. Taos has an average rainfall of 13 inches; therefore, a house with 2,000 square feet of roof area can catch almost 15,000 gallons of rainwater a year.

A rainwater catchment system, also known as a rainwater harvesting system or rainwater collection system, is a technology that collects and stores rainwater for human consumption. The system begins with the roofs, which are usually a smooth surface to allow the water to drain into gutters. Pipes direct the water into a filter that is then moved into a storage tank where a pump moves the water from the tank to where it needs to be directed (i.e. into the home, irrigation system, etc.).

New Mexico is a leader when it comes to rainwater harvesting. An estimated 100,000 residential rainwater harvesting systems are in use in the United States and its territories. Rainwater harvesting is recognized as a sustainable, high-quality water source, and is an important water conserving measure. It also reduces the volume

of storm water, thereby lessening the impact on erosion and decreasing the load on storm sewers. By decreasing storm water volume, this also helps keep storm water pollutants, such as pesticides, fertilizers, and petroleum products, out of the rivers and groundwater. Regular maintenance is required for rainwater catchment systems which include purging the first-flush system, regularly cleaning the roof, gutters, and tanks, maintaining pumps, and filtering water.

## 8.5 SURFACE WATER

Surface water from the watershed on the Carson National Forest lands is the primary source of water for the Taos Water Planning Region, accounting for approximately 80% of the water diverted according to the *Taos Regional Water Plan*. The water is mainly used for irrigated agriculture and livestock, with a smaller amount used for mining purposes. The Rio Grande and its tributaries, including Costilla Creek, Cabresto Creek, Red River, Rio Hondo, Rio Lucero, Rio Pueblo de Taos, Rio Fernando de Taos, Rio Grande del Rancho, Rio Pueblo, and Rio Santa Barbara, are the primary surface water features in the region.

Another significant source of water supply for the region is the San Juan-Chama Project. Through this project, the US Bureau of Reclamation provides water to the following entities:

- ◀ Taos Pueblo (2,215 acre-feet);
- ◀ Town of Taos (766 acre-feet);
- ◀ Town of Red River (60 acre-feet)
- ◀ El Prado Water and Sanitation District (40 acre-feet); and
- ◀ Village of Taos Ski Valley (15 acre-feet).

### ACEQUIAS

Acequias are recognized under New Mexico law as political subdivisions of the state. They are integral to the culture and history of Taos County and Northern New Mexico. In New Mexico, each water right permits the use of water from a designated source for a specific location and purpose. An irrigation water right is tied to a specific parcel of land. These rights remain valid as long as the land is irrigated consistently, and without significant breaks. Most irrigation rights in New Mexico were established through historical and ongoing use.



Acequia gate.

Surface water rights established before 1907 are valid today without any permits or documentation, provided the use continues. The land does not need to be cultivated; even irrigated pastures or lawns qualify for water rights as long as there is a diversion of water and it is used beneficially.

To acquire new surface water rights after 1907, a permit from the State Engineer must be obtained. The application must demonstrate surplus water availability in the stream system, a condition no longer met in New Mexico’s stream systems.

A “water right” under state regulations is distinct from a “ditch right,” which typically refers to compliance with specific acequia rules. While ditch rights can be temporarily lost by not paying dues, this does not impact the water right. However, once a water right is forfeited under state law, it is permanently lost.

### TAOS VALLEY ACEQUIA ASSOCIATION

The Taos Valley Acequia Association (TVAA) was founded in 1989 and is a 501(c)(3) non-profit. The TVAA supports 55 acequias used by an estimated 10,000 parciantes. Acequias are drawn from the Rio Chiquito, Rio Fernando, Rio Grande del Rancho, Rio Hondo, Rio Lucero, and Rio Pueblo.

Each acequia sets and uses by-laws to determine how often to irrigate. The majority of water durations are a product of time and acreage. The maintenance of the acequia is the responsibility of the landowner; however, landowners can seek assistance from the Taos Soil and Water Conservation District and the Interstate Stream

Commission for capital outlay and funding. The biggest concerns of the TVAA are future development, the need to get younger generations involved, climate change, and the impact of drought on the local community.

## ACEQUIA ASSISTANCE

The New Mexico Acequia Association provides technical assistance on bylaws, water rights, acequia mapping, one-on-one consulting, and legal assistance. It offers culturally relevant and place-based educational presentations, training, leadership development, and hands-on learning opportunities.

The Taos Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), created in 1941, is a political subdivision of the state. Its mission is to gather available technical, financial, and educational resources to meet the needs of the local community. The Acequia Program, funded by the state, can be used for technical/cost-share assistance towards natural resource projects that positively impact irrigated private land within the SWCD's service area. Acequia projects are cost-shared between the District (85%) and landowner (15%) and have initial funding allocations of up to \$7,500.

The Interstate Stream Commission provides financial assistance for acequia and community ditch systems through the Acequia and Community Ditch Fund. This assistance provides funding for hydrological studies, technical and legal research, and other services necessary to conserve and protect water.

- ◀ **The Loan Program:** Loans are made at 2.5% interest and the usual repayment period is 10 years.
- ◀ **90/10 Acequia Grant Program:** 90% of the project cost, up to \$150,000 per project can be covered by the grant. Total construction costs under this program are capped at \$167,000.
- ◀ **Corps Section 215 and 1113 Acequia Programs:** The federal government funds 75% of the total project costs.

## 8.6 DRAINAGE

### FLOODING

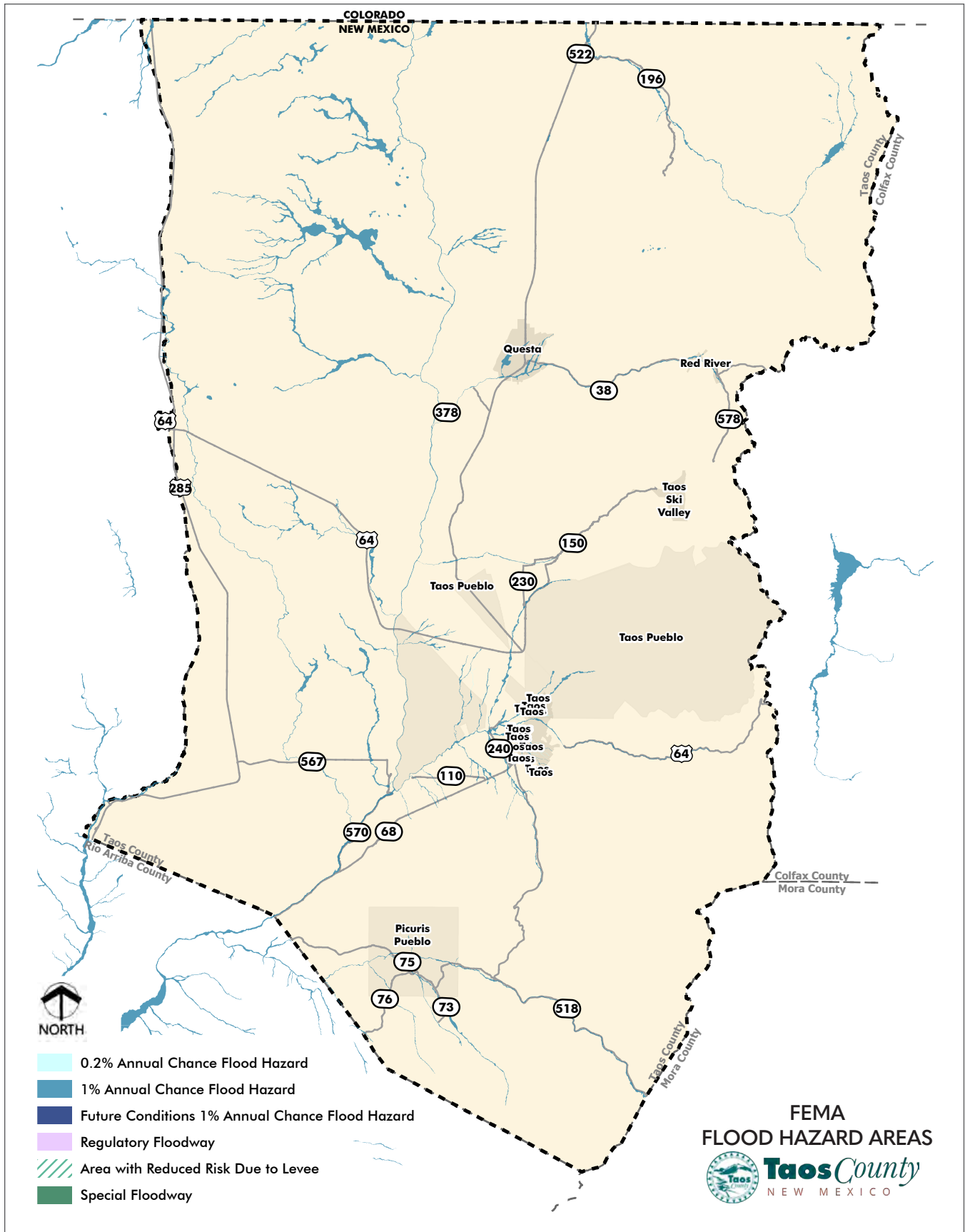
Flooding is a recurring risk in much of Taos County (see *Chapter 10: Hazard Mitigation for more information on flooding*). Taos County implemented a Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance in 2009. FEMA approved the Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM), which is based on engineered Flood Insurance Studies with designated areas likely to experience flood events. The widely accepted flood standard is the 1% annual average event known as the "100-year flood".

As shown on the Flood Zones map (see *page 124*), Zone A is mapped to represent areas subject to the 1% annual chance of flooding. Due to the high snow packs melting and intermittent rainfall, most, if not all major waterways have a 1% chance of annual flooding, including the Rio Grande, Red River, Costilla Creek, Rio Hondo, and Rio Pueblo de Taos. The areas east of Questa face the largest potential of flooding; however, mapped Zone X indicates a 0.2% annual chance of flood hazard.

### DAMS

The Dam Safety Bureau, New Mexico Office of the State Engineer (NMOSE), periodically conducts inspections to assess dam safety issues under its jurisdiction. The Dam Safety Bureau ensures that dams in New Mexico are designed, constructed, operated, and maintained as safely as possible. The Legislature approved more than \$10 million for dams and other flood control projects in 2019. Dams that equal or exceed 25 feet in height, which exceed 15 acre-feet of storage, or dams that equal or exceed 50 acre-feet storage, which equal or exceed 6 feet in height, are under the jurisdiction of the NMOSE.

Taos County is within the NMOSE District 6 area. There are seven dams within Taos County; three dams have been rated satisfactory, one was rated as fair, and two were rated as poor (see *Table 8.2 for a list of dams and their respective ratings in Taos County*). With the exception of the Upper Fawn Lake Dam, the dams in Taos County have been rated high in the Hazard Potential Classification, which means failure or mis-operation will probably cause loss of human life.





Cabresto Lake Dam.

The Taos Soil and Water Conservation District is currently working with the Town of Taos and Taos Pueblo to rehabilitate the Las Cruces Arroyo Dam. The Dam is situated on Taos Pueblo land off Las Cruces Road above El Monte Sagrado. It is one of two dams rated as poor and potentially will fail if an extreme precipitation event occurs.

Cabresto Dam was recently rehabilitated. The original Cabresto Dam was a 45-foot-tall earthen dam constructed on top of a natural landslide dam. The reservoir is used for irrigation supply, flood control, and recreation. The dam required rehabilitation to address numerous safety issues related to overtopping, inadequate spillway capacity, uncontrolled seepage, and concerns regarding the structural, hydraulic, and geotechnical adequacy.

## 8.7 WASTEWATER

The Ground Water Quality Bureau of the New Mexico Environment Department regulates and permits the disposal of wastewater in New Mexico. The permits regulate the disposal or reuse of treated wastewater effluent and enforce treatment standards for above-ground and subsurface discharge. A Groundwater Discharge Permit is required for wastewater discharges from all industrial users and from domestic wastewater systems that are over 5,000 gallons per day. Permits are issued for five years and must be renewed to provide continuous coverage.

The El Valle de Los Ranchos Water and Sanitation District was incorporated in 1979 to serve the water and wastewater needs of Talpa, Ranchos de Taos, Llano Quemado, La Cordillera, and Los Cordovas. In 1999, El Valle was authorized by the Taos County Commission to impose a mill levy tax on the property owners within the District to generate a source of revenue to design and construct the system. Phase I of the El Valle system now provides service to these residents. The El Prado Water and Sanitation District is north of the Town of Taos and serves the residents and businesses in the area. The system has limited capacity and will require expansion as the area grows.

The Taos Valley Regional Wastewater Treatment and Reclamation Facility (WWTP) is located at 182 Los Cordovas Road in Ranchos de Taos. It is operated as an extended aeration facility and serves the Town of Taos, Taos Pueblo, El Prado, communities within the El Valle de Los Ranchos area, and individual residences within the

TABLE 8.2: DAMS IN TAOS COUNTY				
Dam	Location (nearest municipality/community)	Year Constructed	Condition	Hazard Potential Classification
Upper Fawn Lake Dam	Molycorp Mine Complex	Undetermined	Not Rated	Significant
Costilla Dam	Amalia	1920	Fair	High
Carson Dam	Carson	1935	Poor	High
Questa Tailing Dam 1	Questa	1966	Satisfactory	High
Questa Tailing Dam 4	Questa	1980	Satisfactory	High
Las Cruces Arroyo Dam*	Taos	1967	Poor	High
Cabresto Dam	Questa	2012	Satisfactory	High

Source: Office of the State Engineer, Dam Safety Bureau. \*Also referred to as the Cc&D Measure 83 Dam.

surrounding Taos County area. Average daily flows are approximately 1.2 MGD and current capacity is 2.0 MGD. The Treatment Plant sells nearly 500,000 gallons of treated effluent to the Taos Country Club for irrigation of the greens.

## 8.8 WASTE MANAGEMENT

The Solid Waste Administration of Taos County provides a comprehensive solid waste collection, diversion, and disposal system. Taos County provides eight solid waste transfer stations at Arroyo Hondo, Cerro, Chamisal, Costilla, Los Cordovas, Ojo Caliente, Pilar, and Tres Piedras. The Taos Regional Landfill is located at 24670 US 64 and is operated by the Town of Taos and managed by the Taos Regional Landfill Board, which is comprised of Taos County, Town of Taos, Village of Questa, Town of Red River, Village of Taos Ski Valley, and the Village of Eagle Nest.

The Taos Regional Landfill accepts municipal solid waste, construction and demolition waste, green waste, scrap tires, scrap metal, and sludge. It is open Monday through Friday and has a fill rate of approximately 84 tons per day. The Taos Regional Landfill has seven cells on 100 acres within 230 fenced acres of property. The expected life of the Landfill is 114 years.

Taos County Ordinance No. 2014-7 provides the terms for collection and disposal of solid waste, solid waste disposal fees, contract terms for non-exclusive franchise agreements with private haulers, enforcement and penalties for violations, and severability. Taos County assesses an annual solid waste management fee of \$100 to every occupied residence within the unincorporated area of Taos County.

## RECYCLING

There is a relatively high rate of participation in recycling from residents and businesses in Taos County. Recycling has many benefits, from extending the life of the Taos Regional Landfill to saving natural resources. The County has a goal that 50% of solid waste be recycled by 2030.

Recyclable materials are collected at the Los Cordovas Transfer Station located at 184 Los Cordovas Road. The operating hours are 8:00

a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday. The recycle collection center is open to all Taos County and Town of Taos residents.

Specific recyclable materials are accepted at one or more of the transfer stations:

- ◀ Cardboard (Los Cordovas)
- ◀ Aluminum (Los Cordovas)
- ◀ Tin cans (Los Cordovas)
- ◀ Rechargeable batteries (lithium, lead acid, nickel-cadmium, and lithium ion) Mixed-paper (Los Cordovas)
- ◀ Motor oils and cooking oils (Arroyo Hondo, Cerro, Chamisal, and Costilla transfer stations)
- ◀ White goods, including washers, dryers, etc., and scrap metal (all transfer stations)

## 8.9 UTILITIES

### NATURAL GAS

The New Mexico Gas Company is the main provider of natural gas services in Taos County. Various programs help residential and business customers save on natural gas bills, focusing on high-efficiency appliances and energy efficiency. The natural gas rate for residential customers in Taos County is \$17.68 per thousand cubic feet. This is higher than other locations in New Mexico; in November 2023, rates averaged \$11.58 per thousand cubic feet.

### PROPANE

Several companies provide propane to property owners throughout Taos County. Propane is an alternative fuel that is a byproduct of natural gas processing and petroleum refining. It is not toxic or caustic and does not pollute the atmosphere. It has the lowest carbon content of any fossil fuel, thus minimizing carbon monoxide, hydrocarbon, and greenhouse gas emissions. The average price for residential consumers in Taos County is about \$2.76 per gallon, which is lower than the average price of \$3.16 per gallon in New Mexico.

### ELECTRICITY

The electric providers in Taos County are the Kit Carson Electric Cooperative (KCEC). The KCEC is a member-owned cooperative serving Taos, Colfax, and Rio Arriba counties since 1944. The

KCEC focuses on renewable energy, aiming for 100% daytime solar energy production. It offers net metering, allowing customers to sell unused electricity back to the grid, and report an average residential electricity price of 15.88 cents per kilowatt-hour. The average monthly residential electricity bill with the KCEC is approximately \$82.77. In comparison, the statewide average electricity rate is around 16 cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh), and residents typically spend approximately \$140 per month on electricity.

### RENEWABLE ENERGY

The KCEC and Guzman Energy have announced in 2024 that they have executed a power purchase agreement for the installation of a second solar array in Amalia. The new solar array, called “Amalia II”, will complement the existing “Amalia I” array, and increase energy production in the area to a total of 10 megawatts. The expansion of the Amalia solar supply will make it the cooperative’s second-largest solar array in its county-wide 50-megawatt network. The Amalia array came online in May 2012, and Amalia II is expected to be functional by mid-2025.

In addition to expanding the overall network, the new array will also feature 8.75 megawatts of battery storage. In 2022, the KCEC achieved its goal of providing 100% daytime solar power after activating its 15 megawatt Taos Mesa Solar Array, which spans 170 acres northwest of Taos (see Table 8.3)

Renewable Taos, Inc. is a non-profit organization located in the Town of Taos dedicated to facilitating a full transition to emission-free electricity while building a resilient community in Taos County and the surrounding region. Its Strategic Plan outlines goals, objectives, strategies and action plans for the next five years.

### BROADBAND/INTERNET

The definition of broadband is high speed Internet access with download speeds of 100 megabits per second and upload



Kit Carson Electric Cooperative solar array.

TABLE 8.3: KIT CARSON SOLAR PROJECTS

Project Name	Commercial Operation Date	Size of Array (kW) AC Voltage
UNM Taos Array	11/1/2009	445 kW
KCEC Array (canopy)	1/14/2010	82 kW
KTAO Array (canopy)	2/13/2010	38 kW
Peñasco Schools	12/30/2010	50 kW
Taos High School	12/30/2010	50 kW
Chevron	2/1/2010	1,050 kW
Amalia Array (RCCLA)	5/21/2012	1,250 kW
Taos Eco Park (canopy)	2/30/2011	60 kW
Taos Charter School (community solar)	8/27/2012	100 kW
Blue Sky Energy	8/1/2012	1,250 kW
Eagle Nest Elementary	8/24/2015	100 kW
Tres Piedras Solar Array	8/1/2017	2,000 kW
Picuris Pueblo	12/18/2017	1,000 kW
Eagle Nest Lake	10/5/2018	1,040 kW
Northern New Mexico College	12/19/2019	1,500 kW
El Rito North Questa	1/2/2020	1,500 kW
KCEC Taos Water Treatment	5/16/2020	3,000 kW
Town of Taos Waste Water Treatment	7/30/2021	1,000 kW
Taos Mesa Solar	6/9/2022	15,000 kW
Taos Mesa Battery Storage	6/9/2022	12,500 kW
Angel Fire Solar	6/29/2023	7,500 kW
Angel Fire Battery Storage	6/29/2023	3,750 kW
Net Metering (696)	Ongoing	3,160 kW
Total KCEC Solar	-	41.2 MW
Total KCEC Battery	-	16.25 MW
Total Capacity	-	57.4 MW

Source: Kit Carson Electric Cooperative, 2023.

speeds of 20 megabits per second. The Federal Communication Commission National Broadband Map shows Century Link, HughesNet, Kit Carson Internet, Starlink, and Taos Net providing Internet with greater than 100 and up to 1000 Mbps down/5-1000 Mbps up service in most of Taos County. Choice Wireless and Viast provide 0.2-10 Mbps down/0.2-10 Mbps up in limited areas.

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), under the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program, provides grant funding to states broadband grants application. In 2021, the State Legislature established the Office of Broadband Access and Expansion (OBAE) and Connect New Mexico Council to connect all New Mexicans with affordable, reliable, high-speed Internet and break down the barriers that limit them.

The OBAE is responsible for an annual update to the Governor and Legislature on the statewide Broadband Plan, which aims to achieve four major goals:

- ◀ Universal availability of terrestrial-based high-speed, scalable broadband networks;
- ◀ Widespread adoption and meaningful usage of the Internet;
- ◀ Advancement of Next-Generation statewide networks; and
- ◀ Program stewardship.

The NTIA awarded nine New Mexico Tribal entities with grants totaling over \$169 million through the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program in 2022. Taos Pueblo was awarded \$477,817 for a comprehensive engineering analysis. Picuris Pueblo was awarded \$3.7 million to install fiber directly connecting 79 unserved Native American households, 15 Tribal offices, two Tribal businesses, and three community anchor institutions with qualifying broadband service with up to 1 Gbps symmetrical speeds. Nearly 400 miles of fiber will be built to complete the projects, which will begin after permitting, right-of-way access, labor contracts, and supply purchases are complete.

In August 2024, the New Mexico Office of Broadband Access and Expansion announced it had awarded \$40 million in state grants to Internet service providers, telephone cooperatives, Pueblos,

and a tribal company to expand broadband access in the state. In Taos County, Peñasco Valley Telephone Cooperative was awarded \$4.9 million for two projects and Picuris Pueblo was awarded \$4 million. The funding is part of the State of New Mexico's Connect New Mexico Fund, a \$70 million program to increase Internet access in the state. Throughout New Mexico, many rural areas lack high-speed Internet access and are considered under-served, which means the only available broadband connection is less than 100 download/20 Mbps.

Installing conduit during road construction projects is one way to reduce costs of providing broadband fiber optic service. Many communities adopt a "Dig Once" policy to reduce excavation costs, minimize disruption in public rights-of-way, and encourage broadband deployment. "Dig Once" requires installation of conduit whenever a trench is opened in a public right-of-way. That conduit is then available later when providers are ready to extend fiber optic lines.

## 8.10 GOAL, OBJECTIVES, & STRATEGIES

### WATER RESOURCES & INFRASTRUCTURE GOAL 1

**Promote the sustainable and efficient management of water resources through conservation.**

#### *Objectives*

- ◀ *To ensure the water supply has the capacity to meet the current and future water demand during drought conditions and climate change.*
- ◀ *To conserve the Rio Grande Underground Water Basin for drinking water purposes.*
- ◀ *To ensure the surface water supply and the acequias remain available for irrigated agriculture and livestock.*

#### WATER RESOURCES & INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY 1.1

Create a 40-Year Water Plan for Taos County that complies with the New Mexico Office of the State Engineer requirements and determines current water use, future water demand, and water conservation measures.

**WATER RESOURCES & INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY 1.2**

Provide assistance to acequia and community ditch systems on their future applications to the Interstate Stream Commission's Acequia and Community Ditch Fund for improvements to the systems and hydrological studies, where applicable.

**WATER RESOURCES & INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY 1.3**

Collaborate with the New Mexico Hydrology Bureau and the US Geologic Survey on monitoring groundwater levels in Taos County.

**WATER RESOURCES & INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY 1.4**

Create a water conservation ordinance that addresses implementation, water conservation measures for residential and commercial water use, and prohibits water waste, including but not limited to:

- ◀ Irrigation frequency and time of day restrictions;
- ◀ Regionally and climate appropriate plant materials list;
- ◀ Repair of leaking water lines;
- ◀ Low flow fixtures in new construction and replacement of existing fixtures;
- ◀ Voluntary domestic well use monitoring; and
- ◀ Penalties for violations.

**WATER RESOURCES & INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY 1.5**

Create a water conservation education and public outreach program that provides:

- ◀ Printed and online materials explaining the benefits of water conservation;
- ◀ Expanded use of passive water collection and greywater for residential gardens and landscapes;
- ◀ Principles and practices of xeriscape landscape design; and
- ◀ A list of low water plant materials, including deciduous and evergreen trees, shrubs, groundcovers, and turf, that are adapted to and appropriate for north central New Mexico.

**WATER RESOURCES & INFRASTRUCTURE GOAL 2**

**Maintain a safe and sustainable water supply in Taos County.**

**Objectives**

- ◀ *To ensure the water supply remains capable of supporting existing communities and future development in Taos County.*
- ◀ *To manage the impact of new developments to the groundwater supply and existing supply wells and domestic wells.*

**WATER RESOURCES & INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY 2.1**

Collaborate on the establishment of a Taos County Regional Water Committee to provide the necessary structure for regional collaboration between water systems and projects and to ensure water systems have the capacity to meet current and future demand.

**WATER RESOURCES & INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY 2.2**

Support funding requests for improvements to community water systems in Taos County, including replacements to water tanks and water lines, looping water systems, interconnections between community water systems, and other steps to improve capacity to meet current and future demand.

**WATER RESOURCES & INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY 2.3**

Lobby the State Legislature and support the Office of the State Engineer on allocating funds to implement the *Abeyta Settlement*, which requires a 25% match for every federal dollar allocated to implement projects listed in the *Settlement*.

### WATER RESOURCES & INFRASTRUCTURE GOAL 3

Protect Taos County's groundwater supply from potential degradation.

#### Objectives

- ◀ To protect the public from groundwater contamination.
- ◀ To educate residents and commercial business owners on the best practices for the discharge of liquid waste, storage and disposal of toxic materials, and groundwater protection.
- ◀ To encourage the replacement of individual septic tanks and leach fields with more eco-friendly systems, where feasible.

#### WATER RESOURCES & INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY 3.1

Develop an educational program on groundwater protection that addresses liquid waste and hazardous materials. This should include but not be limited to information on required separation between septic tanks and wells; required clearances between the bottom of trenches and groundwater; potential waterborne illnesses resulting from contamination; safe and proper disposal of household and commercial hazardous waste; and financial assistance programs.

#### WATER RESOURCES & INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY 3.2

Promote the use of pre-engineered package wastewater treatment plants in existing and new subdivisions as a sustainable and eco-friendly alternative to septic tanks and leach fields.

### WATER RESOURCES & INFRASTRUCTURE GOAL 4

Increase Taos County's capacity to handle major storm events.

#### Objectives

- ◀ To protect the residences and businesses in unincorporated Taos County from flooding and preserve property values.
- ◀ To minimize damage to public facilities, including critical infrastructure, roads, dams, and dry utilities.
- ◀ To allow for more on-site drainage to reduce the impact of flooding.

#### WATER RESOURCES & INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY 4.1

Create a stormwater design standard in Taos County's Subdivision Ordinance that establishes criteria to ensure drainage is handled properly with new development.

#### WATER RESOURCES & INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY 4.2

Promote and incorporate Low Impact Development (LID) techniques in the Taos County Subdivision Ordinance that address stormwater detention and retention, such as water harvesting, bio-retention, rain barrels and cisterns, rain gardens, green roof systems, permeable pavement, etc.

#### WATER RESOURCES & INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY 4.3

Provide maintenance and improvements to existing drainage channels and other storm drainage conveyances.

**WATER RESOURCES & INFRASTRUCTURE  
GOAL 5**

Expand affordable access to broadband and to quality Internet services to residents, businesses, and schools in Taos County.

*Objectives*

- ◀ *To become more competitive for economic development purposes.*
- ◀ *To provide adequate bandwidth to allow for more residents to work or learn online from home.*

**WATER RESOURCES & INFRASTRUCTURE  
STRATEGY 5.1**

Work with current and prospective telecommunications providers to upgrade and expand wireline and wireless broadband coverage in Taos County.

**WATER RESOURCES & INFRASTRUCTURE  
STRATEGY 5.2**

Determine the preferred option to provide widespread affordable broadband access to residential and business users in Taos County.

**WATER RESOURCES & INFRASTRUCTURE  
STRATEGY 5.3**

Develop and implement a “Dig Once” policy that requires public and private excavators to coordinate with Taos County to install fiber conduit during construction within public rights-of-way.

**WATER RESOURCES & INFRASTRUCTURE  
GOAL 6**

Expand the community’s participation in reducing, reusing, and recycling initiatives.

*Objectives*

- ◀ *To increase community awareness and education in the environmental benefits of reducing, reusing, and recycling.*
- ◀ *To divert materials sent to and extend the life of the Taos Regional Landfill.*
- ◀ *To increase the capture rate of recyclable materials that can be used to manufacture new products.*

**WATER RESOURCES & INFRASTRUCTURE  
STRATEGY 6.1**

Pursue capital outlay from the State Legislature, New Mexico Environmental Department, and/ or the New Mexico Finance Authority for improvements that allow for additional materials to be accepted and processed at all of the solid waste transfer stations in Taos County.

**WATER RESOURCES & INFRASTRUCTURE  
STRATEGY 6.2**

Pursue grants or loans from the New Mexico Environment Department Solid Waste Bureau’s Recycling and Illegal Dumping Program and the Rural Infrastructure Revolving Loan Program to address tire abatement, e-waste recycling, and illegal dumping in Taos County.

**WATER RESOURCES & INFRASTRUCTURE  
STRATEGY 6.3**

Pursue funding for the development of a joint composting facility with the Town of Taos and other jurisdictions within Taos County.

**WATER RESOURCES & INFRASTRUCTURE  
STRATEGY 6.4**

Continue and expand upon the public educational program to encourage more residents and businesses to reduce, reuse, and recycle.

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CHAPTER 9

# Community Services & Facilities



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## 9.1 INTRODUCTION

Community services and facilities aim to protect public health, safety, and welfare of the community, as well as to enhance the quality of life for residents. Given their significant impact on the quality of life, ensuring an adequate distribution of essential community services and facilities, including public safety, community facilities, public health, and public education in Taos County is a primary planning objective. The availability and level of these services and facilities should be consistent, reliable, and accommodate population growth over time.

Community services and facilities within Taos County are managed by the County itself, along with other tribal and local public agencies. It is important to ensure current needs are addressed and to plan ahead to accommodate future growth in Taos County.

## 9.2 PUBLIC SAFETY

### TAOS COUNTY FIRE/EMS DEPARTMENT

The Taos County Fire/EMS Department is comprised of 13 volunteer fire districts that cover approximately 2,200 square miles of unincorporated Taos County (see *Table 9.1 for a list of fire districts in Taos County*). The municipalities of Questa, Red River, Taos, and Taos Ski Valley each maintain their own fire departments.

The Fire/EMS Department provides 911 emergency medical care, and transport, fire protection, and rescue operations. Paid personnel include the Fire and EMS Chief, Deputy Fire Chief, Deputy EMS Chief, and a billing technician.

The volunteer firefighters receive training from the New Mexico State Fire Training Academy or the Enchanted Circle Regional Fire Protection Association. The Emergency Management Technicians are New Mexico State licensed EMT-Basic, EMT-Intermediates, and Paramedics.

#### ISO Ratings

The Insurance Services Office (ISO) classification system reflects a community's local fire protection for property insurance rating purposes. The ISO classifies communities from 1 (best) to 10 (worst) based on how well they score on the ISO Fire

TABLE 9.1: TAOS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICTS

Fire District	ISO Class
Amalia Fire District	9
Carson Fire District	9
Cerro Fire District	9
Costilla Fire District	7
Hondo-Seco Fire District	6
La Lama Fire District	9
Latir Fire District	8B
Ojo Caliente District*	-
Peñasco Fire District	7
Rio Fernando Fire District	9
San Cristobal Fire District	10
Tres Piedras Fire District	9
Wheeler Peak Fire District	8B

Source: 2018 Taos County Hazard Mitigation Plan. \*ISO not listed.

Suppression Rating Schedule, which features water supply, fire department equipment and personnel, and emergency communications systems. The ISO ratings indicate there is a strong need to improve the fire response and suppression capabilities of the fire districts in Taos County (see *Table 9.1*).

### TAOS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

The Taos County Sheriff's Office, located at 599 Lovato Place in the Town of Taos, is the primary emergency response agency in Taos County and operates out of one station. The Sheriff's Office has proprietary jurisdiction throughout Taos County with statutory obligations that include patrol, court securities, prisoner transport, civil process, and animal control. Approximately 98% of service calls in Taos County are picked up by the Sheriff's Office.

Covering about 2,200 square miles and 39 individual communities, the average response time falls between 30 to 45 minutes. Deployment would be more efficient, effective, and safe if the Department were able to hire more deputies and construct an additional station. The Sheriff's Office identified the need for at least ten deputies on each shift deployed to the north and south to reduce response times to three minutes.

Other law enforcement agencies that provide public safety services in Taos County include the New Mexico State Police, Town of Taos Police Department, Questa Police Department, Red River

Marshal's Office, and the Taos Ski Valley Police Department.

The Taos County Sheriff's Office supports the community by volunteering with Taos Little League and being present at school athletic programs. However, staff shortages limit their engagement in the community. There have been challenges with recruitment and retention due to pay and competition from other law enforcement agencies.

### **Animal Control**

The Sheriff's Department provides animal control services and a safe environment for unwanted, stray, abused, and impounded animals. It also provides education to the public about responsible companion and animal ownership and processes adoptions for homeless animals at the shelter, which is located at the Sheriff's Office.

The *Taos County Animal Control Ordinance* was amended by the Taos County Commission in 2015. It contains provisions that address care, maintenance, housing, restraint, and transportation standards; required license and permits; prohibited activities; impoundment of animals; lost and found animals; rabies; and administrative hearings and penalties. The Animal Service Officers and the Sheriff's Department are responsible for the administration and enforcement of the *Animal Control Ordinance*.

### **Law Enforcement Needs**

Due to the unique geographies, diverse demographics, and extensive responsibilities of the Sheriff's Office, the Department is in need of approximately 40 additional patrol deputies. To attract and retain qualified candidates, it is imperative that the deputies are offered competitive rates that reflect the demands of the job and the cost of living in Taos County.

### **TAOS CENTRAL DISPATCH**

The Taos Central Dispatch, located at 105 Albright Street in the Town of Taos, maintains a consolidated Public Service Answering Point



Taos County Judicial Complex. Source: HB Construction.

system within Taos County, serving Taos County, municipalities, and tribes. Central Dispatch receives all police, fire, and emergency calls and dispatches the appropriate agency to the location. Taos Central Dispatch is governed by the Taos County E911 Governance Board, which is comprised of participating local governments, and meets on a monthly basis at the Taos County Commission Chambers.

### **ADULT DETENTION CENTER**

The Taos County Adult Detention Center, located at 105 Albright Street in the Town of Taos, is an 88-bed facility housing both male and female detainees. The Detention Center opened in 2011 and is owned and managed by Taos County. The facility can house offenders on a longterm basis, which reduces or eliminates the need to transport detainees to other facilities.

### **DWI PROGRAM**

The Taos County DWI Program seeks to prevent drinking and driving in Taos County through prevention, education, enforcement, adjudications, and sanctions. Community involvement and participation plays a vital role in ensuring a reduction in DWI throughout Taos County. The DWI Program works in collaboration with other agencies and non-profit organizations to provide community outreach. The 10-member Taos County DWI Planning Council meets on a monthly basis.

## PAYMENT IN LIEU OF TAXES (PILT)

Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) are Federal payments that help local governments offset losses in property taxes due to the existence of non-taxable federal lands within their boundaries. The PILT program provides financial assistance for local services, such as firefighting and police protection, construction of public schools and roads, and search-and-rescue operations. The funds come from the U.S. Department of Interior and are determined by population, the amount of federal land, and shared payments. In 2023, Taos County received \$2.129 million from the PILT program.

## 9.3 COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Quality community facilities support a healthy community and provide the structure for essential public services. The Community Facilities map shows the distribution of community centers, public libraries, and senior centers in Taos County. It can be noted that these facilities are generally located in existing communities and are lacking in the western and southeast regions of Taos County.

### ADMINISTRATION COMPLEX

The Taos County Administration Complex is located at 105 Albright Street in the Town of Taos. The Administration Complex is comprised of three wings; the North wing houses the Adult Detention Center, the East wing houses the Courthouse, and the South wing houses the Administrative offices.

The complex accommodates over 150 Taos County employees and over 100 court employees.

### JUAN I. GONZALES AGRICULTURAL CENTER

The Juan I. Gonzales Agricultural Center, located at 202 Chamisa Road in the Town of Taos, is comprised of a 28,000-square-foot 4-H indoor arena, a 4,850-square-foot exhibit hall/meeting space, and a small conference room. Capital outlay funds have been provided for expansion of the arena with a covered livestock handling area, 7,200-square-foot wing with restrooms, concession area, open space, and a canopy over the livestock pens.

There is a desire to expand programming to include a teaching kitchen, food preservation classes, and diabetes awareness classes. Classrooms at the Juan I. Gonzales Agricultural Center have been under construction for many years. The completion of these classrooms will allow for the expansion of programs for the County Extension Office.

### PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Public libraries in Taos County are located in the Town of Taos, Questa, and Red River, and are owned and managed by those municipalities (see *Table 9.2*).

- ◀ **Questa Public Library:** Serves Questa and Northern Taos County and provides a book collection, DVD collection, computer access,



Questa Public Library.

computer classes, databases, and programs for adults and children. Programs include book readings, discussions, and musical programs, used book sales, a book club, and an informal group of handcrafters.

- ◀ **Taos Public Library:** Located at 400 Camino de la Placita in the Town of Taos and provides a large book collection, public access computers, Internet and wireless access, a community meeting room, and a study room available by reservation, online services, and inter-library loans.
- ◀ **Red River Public Library:** Located at 700 E. Main Street in Red River and provides a 13,500 book collection, a photo exhibit, computer terminals, Internet and wireless access, and an online catalog.
- ◀ **UNM-Taos Library:** Provides a research center, book collection, online collections, databases, and a computer lab.

TABLE 9.2: COMMUNITY FACILITIES	
Public Libraries	Location
Questa Public Library	6 1/2 Municipal Park Road, Questa
Red River Public Library	702 E. Main Street, Red River
Taos Public Library	402 Camino de la Placita, Taos
UNM-Taos Library	1157 County Road 110, Ranchos de Taos
Senior Centers	Location
Amalia Senior Center	583 State Road 196, Amalia
Chamisal Senior Center	1272 State Road 76, Chamisal
Questa Senior Center	148 Embargo Road, Questa
Taos County Senior Center	601 Lovato Place, Taos
Community Centers	Location
Amalia Community Center	578 NM-196, Amalia
Arroyo Hondo Community Center	26 Lower Arroyo Hondo, Arroyo Hondo
Arroyo Seco Community Center	498 NM 150, Arroyo Seco
Carlos Cisneros Youth & Family Center	7 Questa Park Road, Questa
Cerro Community Center	151 NM 372, Cerro
Juan I. Gonzales Agricultural Center	202 Chamisa Road, Taos
Llano Community Center #32	15 Upper Llano Road, Llano
Llano Quemado Community Center	6 Miranda Canyon Road, Ranchos de Taos
Los Cordovas Community Center	60 Los Cordovas Road, Ranchos de Taos
Peñasco Community Center	14136 NM-75, Peñasco
Red River Community House	116 E. Main Street, Red River
Rio Lucio Community Center	1264 NM 75, Rio Lucio
San Cristobal Community Center	38 Cam del Medio, San Cristobal
Talpa Community Center	3 Archuleta Road, Ranchos de Taos
Taos Youth & Family Center	407 Paseo del Cañon, Taos
Vadito Community Center	5 Picuris Road, Vadito

### SENIOR CENTERS & SERVICES

The Senior Program is governed by the Taos County Commission. There are four senior centers located in Amalia, Chamisal, Questa, and Taos, and are owned and managed by Taos County.

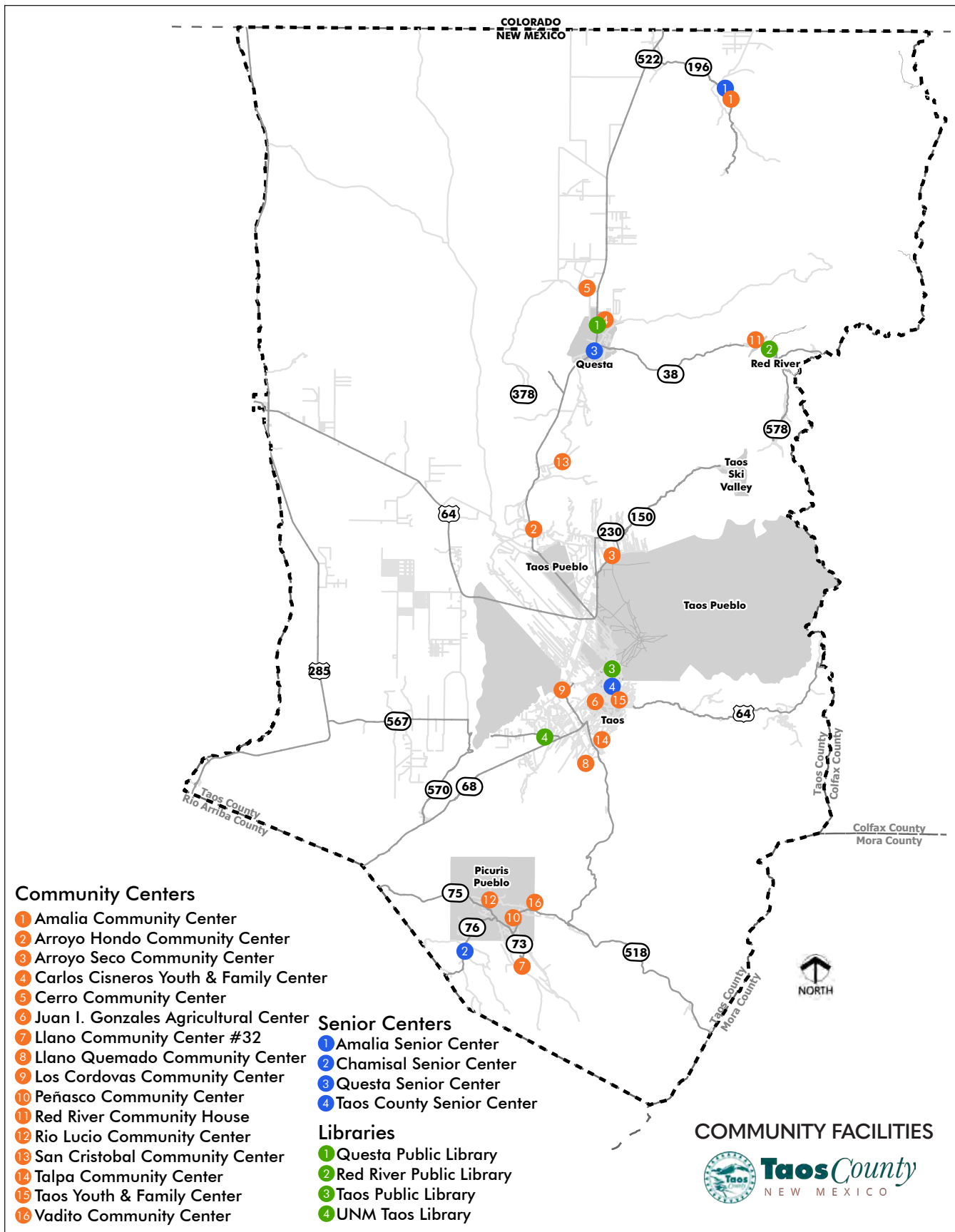
The Senior Program provides congregate meals, home-delivered and weekend meals for seniors 60 years and older, transportation, and activities at all four centers. An average of 8,000 meals are provided on a monthly basis. Activities offered include bingo, low-impact exercise, Tai-Chi, thread circle, and swimming. There is a need for computers for senior use.

Other services provided through the Senior Program include the Senior Companion Program and the Foster Grandparent Program. Through the Senior Companion Program, volunteers 55

years and older volunteer at the homes of seniors to provide companionship to frail and homebound clients. The Foster Grandparent Program receives volunteers 55 years and older who volunteer in classrooms to help teachers with students that need more one-on-one help.

### COMMUNITY CENTERS

There are 16 community centers in Taos County, which are listed in Table 9.2 and shown on the Community Facilities map (see *Community Facilities map, page 137*). The community centers are maintained and operated by the community members, and provide space for classes, events, and gatherings.



## TAOS COUNTY COOPERATIVE EXTENSION OFFICE

The Taos County Cooperative Extension Office, located at 202 Chamisa Road in the Town of Taos, provides knowledge, research, and education to Taos County residents through informal and formal educational programs and research conducted by the Agricultural Science Centers in New Mexico. Major program areas include 4-H Youth Development, agriculture, community resource development, and home economics.

The County Extension Office offers as-needed technical advice for food and agriculture-related inquiries. It also provides safety training for pesticides, herbicides, and insecticides, as well as pasture management in partnership with the Taos Soil and Water Conservation District and the Department of Agriculture. During this year’s Summer Day School at Taos Pueblo, the Extension Agent will serve as an instructor for ecology and agriculture for a week.

The USDA, through NMSU, recently provided funding for managing pests in apple orchards in Taos County. The funds were intended to ensure continuous support for orchard management with the ultimate goal of bringing the apples to market. The workshops for the pilot program were held in February and March 2024. Residents who participated received access to materials, data monitors, organic insecticides, and borrowable backpack sprayers for their orchards. For the next phase, the Extension Office is collaborating with the Taos County Economic Development Corporation, Taos Valley Acequia Association, and Alianza Agri-Cultura de Taos for the next fiscal year starting in July. Programming will include workshops on pest management and marketing.

The County Extension Office supports the County fair annually. The pens and livestock arena are in critical need of improvements.

## 9.4 PUBLIC HEALTH

Public health emphasizes both the physical and mental well-being of Taos County residents. The health of individuals within the community has wide-ranging effects, influencing economic

Length of Life	Taos County	New Mexico
Premature death YPLL*	12,100	11,600
Quality of Life		
Poor or fair health	17%	18%
Poor physical health days	3.4	3.3
Poor mental health days	5.0	4.7
Low birthweight	11%	9%

\*Years of Potential Life Lost  
 Source: County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, 2024

prosperity, educational attainment, and engagement in social and recreational activities. This section looks at the latest health outcome data for Taos County, and the medical services accessible to its residents.

## TAOS COUNTY HEALTH RANKINGS

The annual County Health Rankings report (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps Program, University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute) offers actionable data, evidence, guidance, and stories to support community-led efforts to grow community power and improve health equity. The 2024 report focuses on the connection between civic health and thriving people and places. Civic health reflects the opportunities residents have to participate in their communities, while civic infrastructure creates opportunities for civic participation.

The report ranks and groups a variety of factors for each county into two summary reports categorized under Health Outcomes and Health Factors. The following summary can assist Taos County and public health agencies in determining priorities for expanding and improving Health Outcomes and Health Factors for County residents.

### Health Outcomes

Health outcomes tell us how long people live on average within a community, and how much physical and mental health people experience in a community while they are alive.

- ◀ **Length of Life:** Length of life measures premature death, life expectancy, premature age-adjusted mortality, child, and infant mortality to identify what might have led to early deaths and inform which health factors

**TABLE 9.4: HEALTH FACTORS, 2024**

Health Behaviors	Taos County	New Mexico
Adult smoking	14%	14%
Food environment index	6.8	4.5
Alcohol-impaired driving deaths	53%	29%
Access to exercise opportunities	80%	75%
<b>Clinical Care</b>		
Uninsured	12%	13%
Primary care physicians	1,150:1	1,340:1
Preventable hospital stays	1,143	1,905
<b>Social and Economic Factors</b>		
High school completion	93%	87%
Children in single-parent households	49%	30%
Injury deaths	137	121
<b>Physical Environment</b>		
Air pollution - particulate matter	5	4.5
Severe housing problems	15%	17%

Source: County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, 2024.

should be addressed to improve length of life. Premature death measures the years of potential life lost before age 75 per 100,000 population (see Table 9.3).

- Quality of Life:** Quality of life is measured by the percentage of adults reporting poor or fair health, the number of physically and mentally unhealthy days within the last 30 days, and the percent of low-birth-weight newborns.

**Health Factors**

Health factors represent those things that help people to live longer and healthier lives. As shown

in Table 9.4, notable health factor metrics for Taos County include:

- Health Behaviors:** Taos County has a higher percentage of people with access to exercise opportunities, which is evident from the various opportunities for outdoor recreation available in the County. The County has a much higher number of alcohol-impaired driving deaths than the state average.
- Clinical Care:** Taos County has a slightly lower number of uninsured residents than the state average. The County has a lower ratio of population to primary care physicians and a lower number of hospital stays that could have been prevented by outpatient treatment.
- Social and Economic Factors:** Taos County has a much higher percentage of children living in single-parent households. The County has a very high percentage of adults with a high school diploma or equivalent.
- Physical Environment:** Taos County has a slightly higher level of air pollution and a lower percentage of households with at least one of four housing problems: overcrowding, high housing costs, lack of kitchen facilities, or lack of plumbing facilities.

**HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS**

*Holy Cross Medical Center*

The Holy Cross Medical Center, located in the Town of Taos, has been serving the residents of Taos County since 1936. Holy Cross plays a vital role in providing accessible, high-quality healthcare services



Holy Cross Medical Center.

through Holy Cross Hospital, Holy Cross Cardiology, Holy Cross Primary Care, Holy Cross Surgical Specialties, Holy Cross Women's Health Institute, and Taos Clinic for Children and Youth. Services provided include birth services, cancer care, diabetes care, diagnostic procedures, endoscopy, family practice, imaging and radiology, orthopedics, pharmacy, physical therapy and rehabilitation, surgical services, urology, and wound care.

In addition to providing medical care, Holy Cross Medical Center is actively involved in community outreach and health education initiatives through programs for rural OB and maternal services, health insurance enrollment assistance, parenting support, cancer support services, and a community-based coalition to reduce substance abuse among Taos County youth.

### ***El Centro Family Health***

El Centro Family Health is a network of medical and behavioral care clinics, dental clinics, and school-based health centers that provides services to communities in Northern New Mexico. El Centro has a medical and behavioral health clinic located in the Town of Taos and Peñasco, a dental care clinic in Peñasco, and school-based clinics in Taos Middle and High School, and Peñasco School.

### ***Presbyterian Medical Services - Questa Health Center***

Presbyterian Medical Services (PMS) provides quality health care, childhood education and social services across New Mexico. Services offered at the Questa Health Center include medical care, dentistry, and behavioral health. The Questa Health Center is the only PMS facility in Taos County.

## **MENTAL & BEHAVIORAL HEALTH**

Prioritizing mental and behavioral health in communities is essential for promoting individual well-being, strengthening families, fostering social connections, enhancing workplace productivity, and building resilient and thriving communities. Communities with accessible mental health resources, supportive social networks, and stigma-free environments are better equipped to address mental health issues, respond to crises, and promote recovery and healing.

### ***Taos Behavioral Health***

Taos Behavioral Health is a non-profit organization serving the mental health needs of adults, children, families, and veterans in Taos County. Taos Behavioral Health has the largest licensed and credentialed behavioral health staff in Northern New Mexico. Youth programs include in-school counseling, suicide prevention, after-school programs, and summer/holiday programs. About one in five Taos County students receive one or more of Taos Behavioral Health youth services. Adult programs include adult, children, and family counseling; couples counseling; non-violence awareness classes; supervised visitation; and restorative parenting.

## **HEALTH CARE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

The Health Care Assistance Program provides essential professional clerical assistance to medically indigent patients who are residents of Taos County. This program is specifically designed to assist individuals who are unable to afford medical care, ensuring that they receive the help they need when applying for indigent assistance.

## **9.5 PUBLIC EDUCATION**

### **SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

Taos County is served by four public school districts, including Taos Municipal Schools, Peñasco Independent School District, Questa Independent School District, and Mesa Vista Consolidated Schools (see Table 9.5 for a list of schools by district).

Taos Municipal Schools is comprised of seven schools that serve the communities of Taos, Cañon, Ranchitos, El Prado, Arroyo Seco, Des Montes, Arroyo Hondo, San Cristobal, Ranchos de Taos, Llano Quemado, Talpa, Cordillera, and Taos Pueblo. In 2022, Taos Municipal Schools had a total enrollment of 1,854 students and a graduation rate of 67%.

The Peñasco Independent School District serves the communities of Peñasco, Chamisal, Rio Lucio, Vadito, Santa Barbara, Llano, El Valle, a portion of Ojo Sarco, and the nearby Picuris Pueblo. The District is comprised of three schools. In 2022, Peñasco Independent School District had a total

**TABLE 9.5: PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN TAOS COUNTY**

<b>Taos Municipal Schools District</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Grade Levels</b>
Anansi Charter School	57 NM-230, El Prado	K-8
Arroyos Del Norte Elementary School	405 Hondo Seco Road, Arroyo Seco	K-5
Chrysalis Alternative School	310 Camino de la Placita, Taos	9-12
Enos Garcia Elementary School	300 Don Fernando Street, Taos	Pre K-5
Ranchos de Taos Elementary School	200 Sanders Lane, Ranchos de Taos	K-5
Taos Cyber Magnet School	310 Camino de Placitas, Taos	9-12
Taos High School	134 Cervantes Street, Taos	9-12
Taos Middle School	235 Paseo Del Cañon E, Taos	6-8
Taos Tiger Connect K-12 Online Academy	N/A	K-12
<b>Peñasco Independent School District</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Grade Levels</b>
Peñasco Elementary School	13 School Road, Peñasco	Pre K-5
Peñasco Middle and High School	13 School Road, Peñasco	6-12
<b>Questa Independent School District</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Grade Levels</b>
Alta Vista Elementary and Intermediate School	Highway 522 #4 Wildcat Road, Questa	Pre K-6
Questa Middle School	57 Sagebrush Road, Questa	6-8
Questa High School	57 Sagebrush Road, Questa	9-12
<b>Mesa Vista Consolidated Schools</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Grade Levels</b>
El Rito Elementary School	ST 571 Highway 554 10 Elementary Road, El Rito	K-6
Ojo Caliente Elementary School	68 Highway 111, Ojo Caliente	K-6
Mesa Vista Middle & High School	Highway 285, Junction 111, Ojo Caliente	7-12
<b>Charter Schools/Sponsor</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Grade Levels</b>
Taos International School/State	118 Este Es Road, Taos	K-8
Taos Municipal Charter School/TMSD	1303 Paseo Del Cañon E, Taos	K-8
Taos Integrated School of the Arts/TMSD	118 Toalne Street, Taos	K-8
Roots & Wings Community School/State	35 La Lama Road, Questa	K-8
Red River Valley Charter School/State	500 East High Street, Red River	K-8
Taos Academy Charter School/State	110 Paseo del Cañon W, Taos	5-12
Vista Grande Charter School/State	213 Paseo del Cañon E, Taos	6-12

enrollment of 284 students and a graduation rate of 90%.

The Questa Independent School District serves the Village of Questa, Town of Red River, Lama, Cerro, Costilla, Amalia, and Ventero. The District is comprised of three schools. In 2022, Questa Independent School District had a total enrollment of 326 students and a graduation rate of 79%.

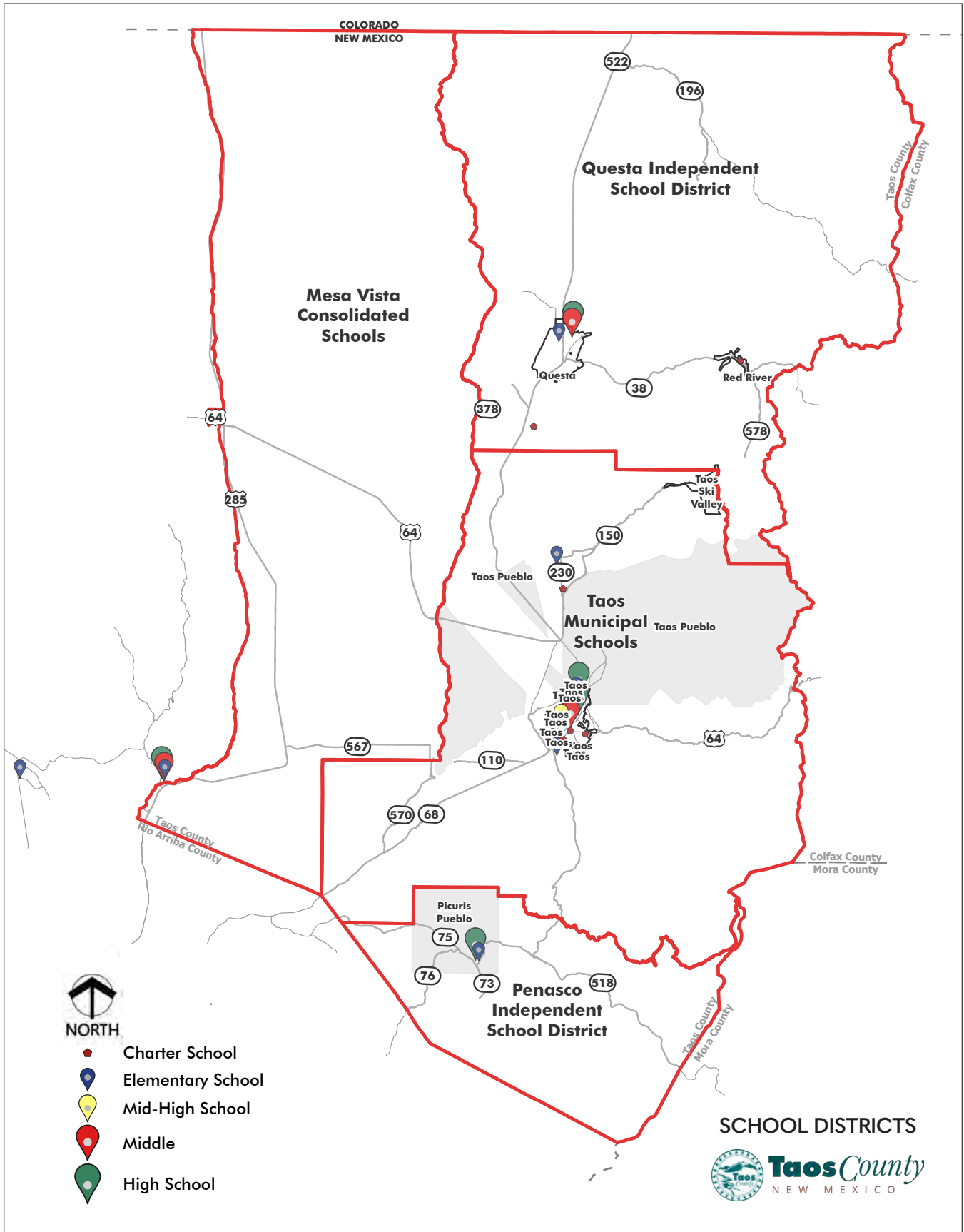
A portion of the Mesa Vista Consolidated Schools is located in western Taos County and includes Ojo Caliente, Tres Piedras, Carson, and other rural communities in western Taos County. The District is comprised of three schools. In 2022, Mesa Vista Consolidated Schools had a total enrollment of 246 students and a graduation rate of 73%.

### CHARTER SCHOOLS

Charter schools are elementary and secondary schools that offer focused educational programs and are authorized by the state or by the district where they operate. Taos County is served by eight charter schools located in El Prado, Questa, Red River, and Taos (see Table 9.5). In 2022, 1,296 students in Taos County were enrolled in charter schools.

### TRUE KIDS 1

True Kids 1 was founded in 2017 with the mission to provide New Mexico’s youth with the media skills, tools, and opportunities that open career paths and promote media education and digital citizenship. True Kids 1 partners directly with



public and charter schools to offer an educational media production and literacy curriculum for K-12 classrooms supported by professional workshops and real-world, project-based learning. In-school, after-school, and out-of-school programs are available. True Kids 1 currently serves Taos, Mora, and Colfax counties.

## POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

The University of New Mexico and Southern Methodist University both have campuses in Taos County. Residents of Taos County can receive post-secondary school education from these two campuses or nearby colleges, including Northern New Mexico College in Española, Northern New Mexico College Branch Community College in El Rito, and Santa Fe Community College. The Red Willow Education Center provides training opportunities for Native American youth and adults in Taos County.

### *University of New Mexico-Taos*

The University of New Mexico-Taos (UNM-Taos) has two campuses in Taos County, the Klauer Campus in Llano Quemado, and the Civic Plaza Campus in the Town of Taos. UNM-Taos offers 10 two-year degree programs and 18 certificates in humanities, social and behavioral sciences, health sciences, math and science, art and design, professional skills and community engagement. UNM-Taos partners with organizations in the County to provide classes in culinary arts, construction, and sustainable agriculture.

Student enrollment ranges from 1,200 to 1,500, varying by term. This includes degree-seeking students, high school students taking dual credit classes, and remote students taking online classes at UNM-Taos. The dual credit program is far-reaching in Taos County and surrounding counties serving students from Questa, Peñasco, Dulce, Española, Santa Fe, the Enchanted Circle, Mora, and home-schooled students.

UNM-Taos has approximately 77 staff, the majority of which are full-time. There are about 20 full-time faculty and at least 50 adjunct faculty. Lack of affordable housing in Taos County has had a big impact on attracting and retaining out-of-county hires.

In 2023, UNM-Taos Nursing Program was selected as a recipient of the New Mexico Hospital Association Commitment to Community award. The program was nominated by Holy Cross Medical Center as recognition of their important partnership dedicated to the development of an exceptional and committed nursing workforce.

Veterans Upward Bound at the Taos campus is the only veterans Federal TRIO Program funded by the United States Department of Education in the State of New Mexico. The program is designed to assist veterans in the development of academic and other requisite skills necessary for acceptance and success in a program of post-secondary education. All services are free to eligible veterans.



UNM-Taos Campus.

### *Northern New Mexico College*

Northern New Mexico College is an open-admissions institution serving rural communities of Northern New Mexico at two campuses, including Española and El Rito. Per the 2023-2024 self-reported institutional data published online, Northern New Mexico College is the most affordable four-year college in New Mexico. Northern New Mexico College offers over 50 bachelor's, associate, and certificate programs in arts and human sciences, film and digital media, STEM programs, business, education, liberal arts, and nursing.

### *Southern Methodist University-Taos*

The Southern Methodist University-Taos is located within the community of Pot Creek, which is approximately 10 miles from the Town of Taos. Founded in 1973, the University has owned Fort Burgwin, a 423-acre campus that provides the perfect complement to the main campus in Dallas, Texas. Undergraduate courses are offered during the summer and winter breaks. These short terms allow students to get ahead or stay on track for graduation. A wide variety of classes in art, engineering, business and science are offered. Other courses are offered that are adjusted to utilize the surrounding environment, such as a course in field botany, which is sometimes offered in the summer or wellness classes centered around winter sports.

### *Santa Fe Community College*

The Santa Fe Community College provides affordable, high-quality educational programs that serve the social, cultural, technological, and economic needs of the community. SFCC offers more than 100 associate degree and certificate programs to students, including Accounting; Business Administration; Creative Writing; Nursing; Paralegal Studies; Psychology, and short-term professional certificates including Art, Studio and Craft; Automotive; Culinary; Distributed Energy; Film; Health care; Massage Therapy; Teacher Education; and Web Development. Classes are offered online and in-person.

### *Taos Education and Career Center*

The Taos Education and Career Center, located on the UNM-Taos Klauer Campus, offers free

education courses to residents of Taos and the surrounding areas who are 16 years or older. These courses are intended to help students obtain their High School Equivalency, improve their English language skills, prepare for college, and begin training for new careers. The Taos Education and Career Center provides personalized tutoring, reading and writing classes, assistance with college applications, and computer classes, and is a fiscally-sponsored project of the Taos Community Foundation.

### *Red Willow Education Center*

The Taos Pueblo Education & Training Division provides education, training, and employment services to youth and adults through the Red Willow Education Center. While some of the services are only for the members of Taos Pueblo, a majority of the services are available to all Native Americans residing in Taos County.

## 9.6 INFRASTRUCTURE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The ICIP prioritizes improvement projects according to a five year schedule. The ICIP FY2025-29 identified the following public service improvement projects:

- ◀ **Amalia Senior Center Building:** Design, purchase, construct, renovate, rehabilitate, furnish and re-construct the Amalia Senior Citizen Center building.
- ◀ **Amalia Senior Center Vehicles:** Purchase, install, and equip new vehicles for the Amalia Senior Center.
- ◀ **Chamisal Senior Center:** Plan, design, purchase, equip, furnish, re-construct and repair, and paving.
- ◀ **Chamisal Senior Center:** Purchase and equip new vehicles.
- ◀ **Historic County Courthouse:** Design, construct, renovate, equip, and furnish.
- ◀ **Detox Building Remodel:** Renovate and remodel a detox building.
- ◀ **Taos County Sheriff's Vehicles:** Purchase and equip patrol vehicles for the Sheriff's Department.

- ◀ **Sheriff's Office Admin Building:** Plan, design, construct, and equip a Sheriff's Office administrative building.
- ◀ **Sheriff's Office Rescue Vehicle:** Purchase a rescue vehicle, a light trailer to haul it, and operator training.
- ◀ **Fire EMS Building:** Plan, design, construct, and equip an EMS and fire administrative building.
- ◀ **Ambulance:** Purchase and equip a new ambulance for Taos County Ambulance Department.
- ◀ **Fire Department Apparatus and Equipment:** Fire apparatus for multiple Taos County Fire Districts.
- ◀ **Fire Department:** Plan, design, construct, and equip the 5a Fire Department on NM 64.

## 9.7 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, & STRATEGIES

### COMMUNITY SERVICES & FACILITIES GOAL 1

Maintain an adequate level of law enforcement services in Taos County.

#### Objectives

- ◀ *To maintain the safety and security of Taos County residents, businesses, and visitors.*
- ◀ *To achieve shorter response times to calls for emergency services.*
- ◀ *To foster positive engagement between the Taos County Sheriff's Department and community members.*

### COMMUNITY SERVICES & FACILITIES STRATEGY 1.1

Develop a Public Safety Needs Assessment and plan that addresses current and future needs over the next five years:

- ◀ Data collection on past calls for non-emergency and emergency services, including ambulance transport;
- ◀ Identification of current and future programming, training, and certification needs;
- ◀ Identification of technology, equipment, vehicle, and dispatch needs for law enforcement officers and emergency transport;
- ◀ Identification of adequate staffing levels to improve the response time to emergency calls;
- ◀ A determination of competitive salaries for all levels of personnel based on other law enforcement departments and recruitment strategies; and
- ◀ Implementation schedule for replacement or improvements to facilities; equipment and vehicle purchases; and staffing based on existing and future growth in Taos County.

### COMMUNITY SERVICES & FACILITIES STRATEGY 1.2

Based on the Public Safety Needs Assessment and the current ICIP, pursue and prioritize

funding to purchase new equipment, patrol vehicles, and a rescue vehicle and trailer; increase staffing in the Taos County Sheriff's Office; and provide ongoing training and certification for current and future law enforcement officers.

### COMMUNITY SERVICES & FACILITIES STRATEGY 1.3

Pursue funding for a new Sheriff's Office administrative building, per the current FY2025-29 ICIP.

### COMMUNITY SERVICES & FACILITIES STRATEGY 1.4

Continue engagement efforts with the community and solicit feedback on public safety issues from residents, business owners, and youth.

## COMMUNITY SERVICES & FACILITIES GOAL 2

Improve fire protection and emergency services in Taos County.

### Objectives

- ◀ To ensure Taos County residents and businesses have adequate fire protection and capacity to respond to calls for emergency services.
- ◀ To reduce the response time and achieve a better ISO rating for the Taos County's 13 volunteer fire departments.
- ◀ To continue coordination and partnership with the Town of Taos Fire Department.

### COMMUNITY SERVICES & FACILITIES STRATEGY 2.1

Develop a Fire Safety Needs Assessment and plan that addresses current and future needs over the next five years including:

- ◀ Data collection on past calls for emergency medical care, transport, fire protection, and rescue operations;
- ◀ Identification of current and future training, programming, and certification needs, including hazmat training;
- ◀ Identification of technology, equipment, vehicle, and dispatch needs for fire response and emergency transport;

- ◀ Identification of improvements to be made to achieve a better ISO rating, emergency response times, and volunteer recruitment; and
- ◀ Implementation schedule for replacement or improvements to facilities and equipment and vehicle purchases based on existing and future growth in Taos County.

### COMMUNITY SERVICES & FACILITIES STRATEGY 2.2

Based on the Public Safety Needs Assessment and the current ICIP, pursue and prioritize funding to purchase new equipment and fire apparatus, ambulance, and engine and ladder trucks; increasing the volunteer staffing level at the fire districts; and provide ongoing training and certification for current and future firefighters and emergency medical technicians.

### COMMUNITY SERVICES & FACILITIES STRATEGY 2.3

Pursue capital outlay for a new EMS and fire administration building, per the current FY2025-29 ICIP.

## COMMUNITY SERVICES & FACILITIES GOAL 3

Increase Taos County residents' access to public facilities and programs.

### Objectives

- ◀ To work with the Town of Taos on providing more opportunities for Taos County residents to receive and participate in educational and social services and programs.
- ◀ To improve Taos County residents' health and quality of life through participation in social and recreational activities.

### COMMUNITY SERVICES & FACILITIES STRATEGY 3.1

Create and maintain a systematic preventative maintenance and replacement program for all County-owned facilities.

### COMMUNITY SERVICES & FACILITIES STRATEGY 3.2

Complete a Senior Services Needs Assessment that analyzes and determines existing and future building and programming needs at senior

centers in Amalia, Chamisal, Questa, and the Town of Taos.

**COMMUNITY SERVICES & FACILITIES  
STRATEGY 3.3**

Pursue funding to meet the capital and program needs at Taos County’s four senior centers as recommended in the Senior Center Needs Assessment.

**COMMUNITY SERVICES & FACILITIES  
STRATEGY 3.4**

Contribute funding to the Taos Library to meet capital and ongoing program needs to serve Taos County residents who are currently using the library services.

**COMMUNITY SERVICES &  
FACILITIES GOAL 4**

Support equal access to high-quality, public education and life-long learning opportunities for Taos County residents.

*Objectives*

- ◀ *To provide a full spectrum of education and learning opportunities for youth, adults, and seniors.*
- ◀ *To facilitate ongoing community dialogue on raising the graduation rate and educational attainment level in Taos County.*

**COMMUNITY SERVICES & FACILITIES  
STRATEGY 4.1**

Initiate and participate in a community dialogue between Taos County, Town of Taos, Taos Municipal Schools, Peñasco Independent School District, Questa Independent School District, Mesa Vista Consolidated Schools, UNM-Taos, and Holy Cross Medical Center on educational initiatives related to STEM technologies; raising the high school graduation rate; expanding dual credit courses for high school students; and employment opportunities for high school and college graduates.

**COMMUNITY SERVICES & FACILITIES  
STRATEGY 4.2**

Collaborate with Taos Municipal Schools, True Kids 1, and True Kids I Youth Council on expanding access and participation in after school programs and summer camps to support

youth in developing their recreational, creative, and educational skills in a safe and caring environment.

**COMMUNITY SERVICES & FACILITIES  
STRATEGY 4.3**

Collaborate with UNM-Taos and the Taos Education & Career Center on promoting the adult education services that are available to Taos County residents in-person, through the Distance Education Program, and the one-on-one tutoring program.

**COMMUNITY SERVICES &  
FACILITIES GOAL 5**

Expand Taos County residents’ access to healthcare and mental health services and clinical care.

*Objectives*

- ◀ *To maintain a high ranking for health outcomes in Taos County.*
- ◀ *To increase the number of primary care physicians, and mental health and healthcare professionals to serve Taos County residents.*
- ◀ *To address the high rate of substance abuse in Taos County.*

**COMMUNITY SERVICES & FACILITIES  
STRATEGY 5.1**

Disseminate information to the public on the healthcare services offered by the Holy Cross Medical Center and Taos County Public Health office in the Town of Taos.

**COMMUNITY SERVICES & FACILITIES  
STRATEGY 5.2**

Collaborate with Holy Cross Medical Center and UNM-Taos on a strategic plan for attracting and retaining healthcare professionals and specialists in Taos County. The plan should also address incentives for graduates from health care education programs to return to the community.

**COMMUNITY SERVICES & FACILITIES  
STRATEGY 5.3**

Coordinate and work with the Town of Taos, Questa, Red River, Taos Ski Valley, Taos Behavioral Health, New Mexico Department of Health, and the State Legislature on expanding

mental health and substance abuse and detox services and facilities for Taos County residents.

**COMMUNITY SERVICES & FACILITIES  
STRATEGY 5.4**

Develop a feasibility study for the development of medical care facility within a currently underserved area of Taos County that would help address the gap in medical services and relieve pressure on Holy Cross Hospital. The feasibility study should include but not be limited to a determination of community needs, identification of programming to meet current and future needs, market assessment, site location and analysis, and an operations analysis resulting in a business plan.

**COMMUNITY SERVICES & FACILITIES  
STRATEGY 5.5**

Continue to fund the Health Care Assistance Program for medically indigent Taos County residents who are unable to pay for their medical and ambulance transport expenses.

CHAPTER 10

# Hazard Mitigation



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## 10.1 INTRODUCTION

A hazard is a process, phenomenon or human activity that may cause loss of life, injury or other health impacts, property damage, social and economic disruption or environmental degradation. Hazard mitigation planning is the process through which hazards are identified, likely impacts determined, mitigation goals set, and appropriate mitigation strategies determined, prioritized, and implemented. This helps Taos County prepare before a disaster and reduce impacts when a disaster occurs.

Planning for community resiliency is crucial in reducing hazard vulnerability in Taos County. Resiliency is highly dependent on increased awareness of hazards, educating stakeholders, and gaining support for policies and improvements that mitigate those hazards. Integrating hazard mitigation into the Comprehensive Plan will establish resilience as an overarching value of a community and provide the opportunity to continuously manage development in a way that does not lead to increased hazard vulnerability.

The Hazard Mitigation element provides information on hazard vulnerabilities within the County and the various efforts within Taos County to cooperatively address emergency planning and disaster mitigation. It also includes key underlying principles Taos County can employ to further its hazard mitigation efforts.

## 10.2 KEY PRINCIPLES of HAZARD MITIGATION PLANNING

The impacts of climate change include record-breaking heat waves on land and in the ocean, heavy rainfall, severe floods, prolonged droughts, and intense wildfires. Extreme and uncertain weather events continue to endanger lives and negatively impact people, property, and the environment. Communities must prepare and adapt to the changing climate and the emergencies that may occur. Hazard mitigation planning helps state, tribal and local governments:

- ◀ Increase education and awareness of natural hazards and community vulnerabilities;

- ◀ Build partnerships with government, organizations, businesses, and the public to reduce risk;
- ◀ Identify long-term strategies for risk reduction with input from stakeholders and the public;
- ◀ Identify cost-effective mitigation actions that focus resources on the greatest risk areas;
- ◀ Integrate planning efforts and risk reduction with other community planning efforts;
- ◀ Align risk reduction with other state, tribal, or community objectives; and
- ◀ Communicate priorities to potential funders.

## COMMUNITY RESILIENCY THROUGH HAZARD MITIGATION PLANNING

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recommends building resiliency into the following planning elements:

- ◀ **Historic Properties and Cultural Resources:** Policies aimed at protecting and preserving historic and cultural sites, buildings, and resources can be integrated with mitigation strategies to prevent harm from hazards, especially considering the irreplaceable nature of such resources. These policies can be tailored to preserve location, design, or materials.
- ◀ **Natural Resource Protection:** To preserve or enhance environmental areas of concern, such as wetlands, riparian corridors, and floodplains. Policies are often designed to avoid or minimize development in hazard areas. These policies build community resilience by not only protecting lives and property from hazards but also maintaining natural and beneficial functions of systems that often act as buffers against those hazard effects.
- ◀ **Land Use and Future Development:** Guide growth and development away from areas with known hazards and ensure design standards for new and improved construction take hazards into account. Land use policies can build community resiliency by taking information on the location, frequency, and severity of hazards into consideration and

setting forth recommendations that influence development to mitigate hazard vulnerability.

- ◀ **Transportation:** Adopt design standards that withstand the effects of hazards so that the transportation structure still functions in the event of an emergency or disaster. Community resiliency through transportation planning can be accomplished by implementing policies that direct growth away from hazards.
- ◀ **Housing and Neighborhoods:** Focus on policies and programs that strengthen or replace structures identified as vulnerable to hazards. The Housing element should support community resiliency by ensuring the location and design of new or improved housing complies with building codes that keep hazards in mind.
- ◀ **Economic Development:** Hazard mitigation can be integrated into economic development policies by steering commercial and industrial development away from areas that are disrupted by hazards. Resiliency is built by strategically locating businesses where they will not be burdened by hazards and building capacity within businesses to withstand the effects of hazards.
- ◀ **Public Facilities and Infrastructure:** Employing well thought-out strategies for land use will assist in locating facilities and infrastructure out of vulnerable zones. This element also provides opportunities to establish goals and policies in support of mitigation projects. Resiliency is built through the establishment of policies that steer the physical location of public facilities and infrastructure.

## 10.3 EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

### TAOS COUNTY OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

The mission of Taos County's Office of Emergency Management (OEM) is to *"educate the citizens of the community in emergency preparedness and protection, to mitigate dangers through comprehensive coordination and planning with both the public safety and public service agencies, and to respond to and recover from all hazards, natural and man-made."* The OEM leads the County Local Emergency Planning Committee and maintains the operations of the County Emergency Operations Center.

### TAOS COUNTY LOCAL EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Taos County Local Emergency Planning Committee was established under the 1986 Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act. The purpose of the Taos County Local Emergency Planning Committee is to *"minimize damage and loss of life resulting from natural or man-made disasters through careful planning and identification of natural hazards and hazardous materials, to provide the public with information regarding hazardous chemicals within the County and to assist local emergency management."*

### TAOS COUNTY EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN

The *Taos County All Hazards Emergency Operations Plan* responds to all declared emergencies and disasters that involve unincorporated area of Taos County, and Taos, Questa, Taos Ski Valley, Red River, Taos Pueblo, and Picuris Pueblo, regardless of the point of origin of the incident. The 2018 Plan update was prepared by members of the Taos County Local Emergency Planning Committee based on current FEMA and New Mexico Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management requirements.

The *All Hazards Emergency Operations Plan* outlines the process to activate the Emergency Operations Center, identifies relevant local, state, and federal entities and their respective

responsibilities in the case of an emergency. These responsibilities include directions and control, communications and warning, logistics and resources, public health, evacuation, transportation, mass care, recovery, law enforcement, fire and rescue, and response to terrorism.

### EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SYSTEM

Taos County utilizes the AlertMe App from Regroup to communicate about weather closures, safety notifications, emergency alerts, and important events. Residents who sign up for Taos County mass notifications through this app receive information even when cell phone towers are down or overloaded. In case of an emergency, residents can be found based on their location.

### DISASTER DECLARATION IN TAOS COUNTY

Disaster declarations are granted when the severity and magnitude of the event’s impact surpass the ability of the local government to respond and recover and state and federal assistance is necessary. According to FEMA’s Summary of Disaster Declarations, Taos County has experienced ten Federally-Declared Disasters since 1973, including:

- ◀ **Flooding:** 1973, 1979, and 2013
- ◀ **Biological:** 2020 (2)
- ◀ **Fire:** 2000 (2)
- ◀ **Severe Storm:** 2006 and 2011
- ◀ **Hurricane:** 2005 (*related to residents having to evacuate during Hurricane Katrina*)

## 10.4 TAOS COUNTY HAZARDS

The *Taos County Hazard Mitigation Plan* was consulted to identify the hazards in Taos County. The HMP is a multi-jurisdictional plan that includes the unincorporated area of Taos County, and the Town of Taos, Town of Red River, Village of Questa, and the Village of Taos Ski Valley. The Plan identified relevant hazards and vulnerabilities, and outlined strategies to reduce risk and increase resiliency and sustainability in the community. The threats faced by Taos County are wildfire, thunderstorm, severe winter weather, landslide/mudslide/rockfall, high wind, flood, hazardous materials, drought, earthquake, and dam failure.

TABLE 10.1: TAOS COUNTY HAZARD SUMMARY

Hazard	Probability	Severity
Wildfire	Highly Likely	Critical
Drought	Likely	Negligible
High winds	Likely	Limited
Landslide and rockfall	Likely	Limited
Severe winter weather	Highly Likely	Limited
Hazardous materials	Likely	Limited
Severe thunderstorms	Likely	Negligible
Flooding	Likely	Limited
Earthquake	Unlikely	Limited
Dam failure	Unlikely	Limited

Source: 2018 Taos County Hazard Mitigation Plan.

The *Taos County Hazard Mitigation Plan* defines the probability of future occurrences of hazards as follows:

- ◀ **Unlikely:** Less than 1% probability of occurrence in the next year, or has a recurrence interval of greater than every 100 years.
- ◀ **Occasional:** Between a 1 and 10% probability of occurrence in the next year, or has a recurrence interval of 11 to 100 years.
- ◀ **Likely:** Between 10 and 90% probability of occurrence in the next year, or has a recurrence interval of 1 to 10 years.
- ◀ **Highly Likely:** Between 90 and 100% probability of occurrence in the next year, or has a recurrence interval of less than 1 year.

### WILDFIRE

A wildfire is a fire burning uncontrolled on lands covered wholly or in part by timber, brush, grass, grain or other inflammable vegetation. Wildfires occur as a result of natural ignition, unauthorized human-caused fire, or escaped prescribed fire. There is a predominance of natural forests and wildlands in Taos County that make wildfires a primary natural disaster concern in the region. Recent fires in Taos County include the 1996 Hondo Fire, 2003 Encebado Fire, and the 2022 Hermits Peak/Calf Canyon fires.

Taos County faces a wildfire threat from April to October each year, with some fires occurring outside of this period. The most severe fires usually

happen from April to July before the monsoon season begins. The HMP committee noted that Taos County typically experiences three wildfires annually. Limited egress/access in some areas may compromise evacuation and suppression. Critical facility risks include fire stations, schools, communication facilities, and potable water facilities.

### **Community Wildfire Protection Plans**

There are several communities within Taos County that are located in high-risk Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas. Fuel loads have grown progressively, and communities have grown in the WUI. All of this may result in fires that can devastate property, damage watersheds, and result in injuries and loss of life. Communities are encouraged to develop a Community Wildfire Protection Plan, which identifies areas that need vegetative fuels removed to reduce wildfire risk and severity, suggests methods to reduce structural ignitability, and evaluates a community's firefighting capacity.

### **Taos County CWPP**

The *Taos County CWPP* completed in 2022 emphasizes the innate connection between human communities and the forested ecosystems and watersheds upon which these communities rely. The CWPP framework is based on accepting wildfire as a natural and inevitable process and embracing fire-adapted practices at the community and the landscape scale to improve collective resiliency in the future. The CWPP addresses landscape-scale treatment priorities, traditional uses, and economic development opportunities, emergency fire response, and preparing for fire and post-fire recovery.

The CWPP Core Team rated the risk to 61 Taos County communities using the National Fire Protection Association Form 299/1044. This resulted in a numerical hazard rating for each community. These numerical ratings were then categorized to define "High" (equal to or greater than 70), "Medium" (between 60 and 70), and "Low" (less than or equal to 59) community risk. Communities with high ratings include Tres Ritos, Apache Canyon, El Salto, Shady Brook, Cabresto Canyon, Village of Taos Ski Valley, Pinabete Hills, Angostura, Gallina Canyon, Lama, Latir/El Rito, Cañon Heights, Deer Mesa, Sipapu, Turley Mill,

El Valle, Upper Red River Valley, Two Peaks, Valle Escondido, Pot Creek, Three Peaks, Vallecitos, and Picuris Pueblo.

### **Taos County Wildfire Plaza**

The Taos County Wildfire Plaza is a service of Taos County, in partnership with tribes, land grants, neighborhoods, non-profits, and federal, state, and local agencies. The *Taos County 2022 CWPP* recommended specific actions that officials and residents can take together to mitigate the risks that wildfires pose to towns and villages across the County. These actions inform the various projects and initiatives that exist as part of the Taos County Wildfire Plaza. Initiatives include CWPPs, Tres Rios Watershed Coalition, Taos Valley Watershed Coalition, Forest Mayordomo projects, Taos County Firewise Network, and the Enchanted Circle Wildfire Crisis Strategy Landscape.

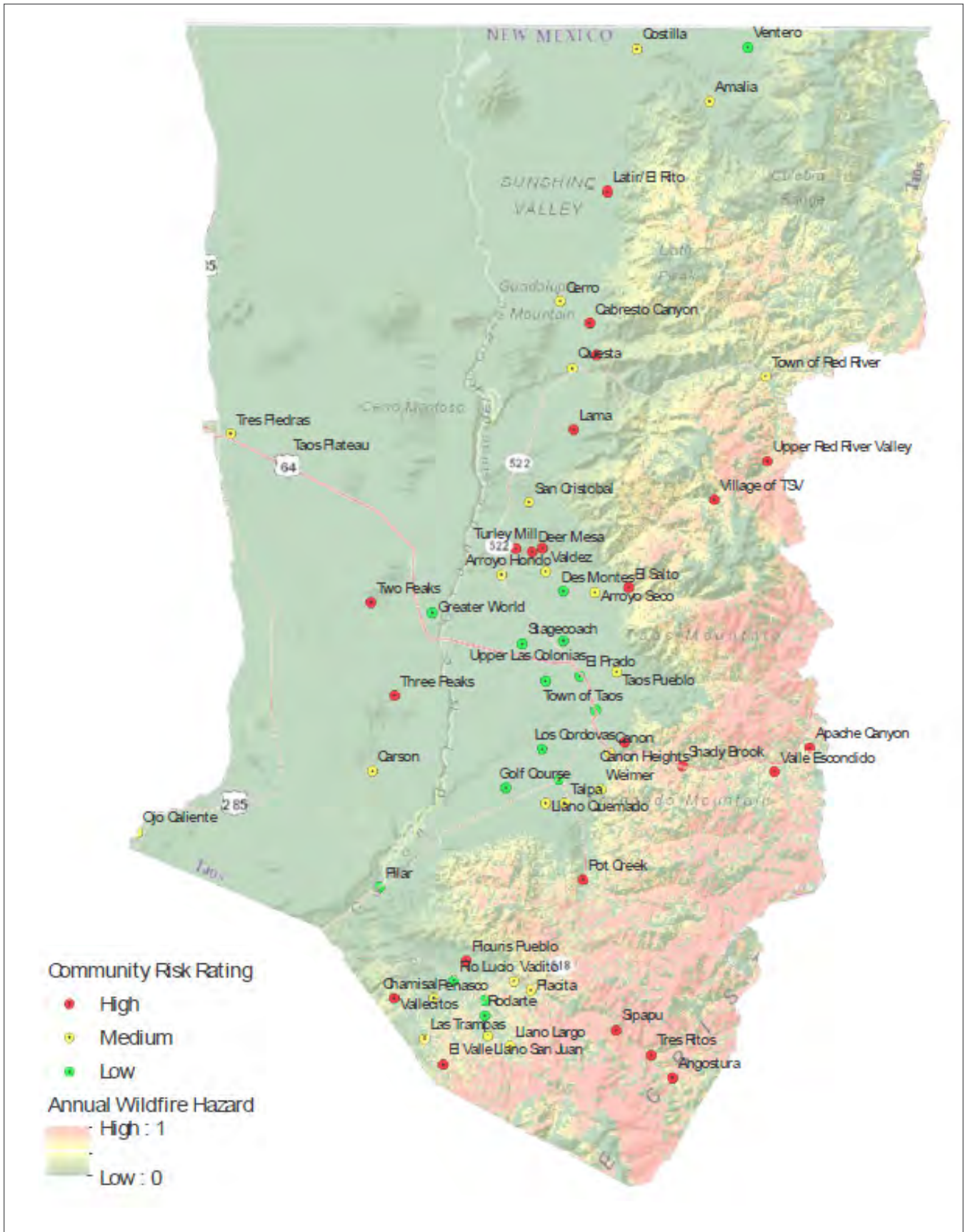
### **Firewise Sites**

The Firewise USA program is administered by the National Fire Protection Association and is co-sponsored by the USDA Forest Service and the National Association of State Foresters. This program provides a collaborative framework to help neighbors in a geographic area get organized, find direction, take action to increase the ignition resistance of their homes and community, and reduce wildfire risks at the local level.

As of March 6, 2024, there were approximately 28 Firewise sites in Good Standing across New Mexico, ten of which are in Taos County. Firewise Communities in Taos County include Carson, El Salto, Greater Gallina Canyon, Latir/El Rito, Pot Creek, San Cristobal, Taos Canyon, Taos Ski Valley, Turley Mill, and Valle Escondido.

### **Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon Fire**

The Hermits Peak Fire began on April 6, 2022, as a result of the Las Dispensas prescribed fire in the Pecos Wilderness area of the Santa Fe National Forest. Unexpected winds in the late afternoon caused the fire to spread outside the project boundary. Rugged terrain prevented firefighters from accessing and controlling the fire. The Calf Canyon Fire was caused by a pile burn holdover from January that remained dormant under the surface before reemerging in April. Sustained



Source: Communities at Risk and Annual Wildfire Hazard, Taos County 2022 CWPP Update.

critical fire weather conditions caused the two fires to merge and grow. The fire burned over 341,000 acres in San Miguel, Mora, and Taos Counties. Impacts of the fire include severe soil burn, destruction of homes and structures, flooding, and threats to watershed and water supply.

### ***Cibola National Forest Air Tanker Base***

There has been a surge in the frequency and severity of wildfires in New Mexico and the Region. Funding for the upgrades to the Cibola Air Tanker Base at Kirtland Air Force Base was secured in 2022 and it became operational in April 2024. These upgrades represent proactive measures to enhance preparedness and response to future wildfire threats. Air tankers fighting wildfires out of the Cibola National Forest and National Grasslands ATB (Air Tanker Base) previously had a capacity of 3,000 gallons of fire retardant. The new landing pad site can handle the weight and size of VLATs (very large air tankers) each carrying about 9,400 gallons of retardant. The Cibola National Forest and National Grasslands ATB is now one of two bases in the United States that can simultaneously fill two VLATs, expanding the ATB's reach. The new facilities have four fire-retardant tanks with a capacity to hold 25,000 gallons of fire retardant each, including one mixing tank, two holding tanks, and one loading tank. The ATB covers Southwestern, Rocky Mountain, Intermountain, and Southern Regions, as well as Arizona, California, Colorado, Louisiana, Texas, and Utah.

## **DROUGHT**

Drought occurs when a normal amount of precipitation is not available to satisfy an area's usual water-consuming activities. Drought in Taos County occurs in cycles due to weather patterns. The duration of droughts that have adverse impacts can vary, ranging from intense short-term droughts lasting for months to prolonged droughts that last for years.

According to the New Mexico Office of the State Engineer, droughts occur on average every 10 years within the state. The *Taos Regional Water Plan* suggests that climate change is likely

to cause severe drought conditions and associated wildfires. Additionally, there will be more extreme precipitation events. Over time, climate change is also expected to reduce the availability of water and negatively impact its quality.

Agriculture is the largest water user in the region, followed by mining. Ski areas, rafting companies, and other businesses supporting tourism are also dependent on adequate precipitation and water resources. The dependence of the regional economy on agriculture and tourism makes the area more susceptible to drought impacts.

## **FLOODING**

There are multiple rivers, streams, creeks, and arroyos within Taos County. Flooding is the rising and overflowing of a body of water onto normally dry land. In Taos County, this occurs as a result of rainstorms, snowmelt, and cloudburst storms. Monsoon storms often result in large amounts of runoff. Monsoon season in Taos County starts in May and lasts through October. It is characterized by heavy to severe downpours, lasting anywhere from five minutes to an hour. Such downpours can create flash floods.

Taos County, Town of Taos, Questa, and Red River participate in the National Flood Insurance Program, which prohibits building in a defined floodplain unless specific mitigation measures have been taken. However, both Red River and the Town



Road closure on NM 240 due to flooding in 2022. Source: NMDOT.

of Taos have a considerable number of structures in flood hazard areas.

Major floods and flash floods have been recorded in the area over the years. The State of New Mexico Preparedness Area 3 has a 29% chance of flash flooding occurring in a given year.

### DAM FAILURE

According to the National Inventory of Dams, there are ten dams located within Taos County, all of which have been rated as High Hazard. This rating implies that in the event of a failure, there is a high probability of loss of life. Four of these dams have an Emergency Action Plan (EAP). Taos County, Town of Taos, Village of Questa, and Town of Red River all have dams within watersheds that drain into the jurisdictions. From a hazard standpoint, the RC & D Project Measure 83 Dam, Questa Tailings Dams, and the Carson Dam pose the greatest potential for downstream impacts should failure occur.

### HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

A hazardous material is any item or agent (biological, chemical, physical) that has the potential to cause harm to humans, animals, or the environment, either by itself or through interaction with other factors. Hazardous materials can exist in various forms, such as gas, solid, or liquid. Basic household and commercial waste, fuel trucks, and sewer/septic trucks are transported daily across Taos County. Most of these shipments move across the County without incident.

Organizations and businesses in the United States with hazardous chemicals above certain quantities are required by the EPA to fill out Tier II reports. According to the HMP, there are ten Tier II hazardous materials facilities located in Taos County. The *Taos County Hazard Mitigation Plan* committee noted that the molybdenum mine in the Red River Valley and tailing ponds located near Questa could be an issue if an uncontrolled release occurred. Since 1970, Taos County has had eight hazardous materials incidents recorded between the unincorporated County, Town of Taos, and the Village of Questa. Based on the PHMSA data, hazardous materials incidents occur on average once every five years.

### HIGH WINDS

High winds are commonly associated with severe thunderstorm winds (exceeding 58 mph) as well as tornadoes, hurricanes, and tropical storms. High winds can also occur in the absence of other definable hazard conditions, events often referred to as windstorms. Winds in Taos County are typically straight-line winds, which are generally any thunderstorm wind that is not associated with rotation or tornadic. These winds can overturn mobile homes, tear roofs off, topple trees, snap power lines, shatter windows, and sandblast paint from cars.

Southern Taos County is located in a 'Special Wind Region', as defined by FEMA (increased potential for strong downslope winds because of its topography) due to its topography and geographic setting. High winds are a common occurrence in Taos County every year.

### SEVERE WINTER WEATHER

Severe winter weather includes severe winter storms, extreme cold, and avalanche. Winter storms occur when precipitation and freezing temperatures mix to produce a significant accumulation of snow or ice. Extreme cold can occur on its own but often accompanies or follows a winter storm. An avalanche is a mass of snow sliding down a mountainside. Avalanches can occur in the higher elevations and steep terrain in Taos County, primarily in and around Taos Ski Valley. Taos County receives snowfall mostly between October and April. Due to the size of average storms, every area of Taos County is usually affected but the higher elevations of the eastern County can have the greatest snow accumulations. Winter storms with snow, avalanches, and freezing temperatures are frequent events, occur annually, and thus have a highly likely rating. A secondary impact of extreme cold is the increased usage of natural gas for heating purposes, which has previously caused natural gas shortages across New Mexico.

### LANDSLIDES & ROCKFALL

Landslides are the downward and outward movement of loose material on slopes. A rockfall is the falling of a detached mass of rock from a cliff

or down a very steep slope. Based on the history of occurrences within Taos County, the highest level of damage from landslides within the planning area is Level 5 on the Alexander Landslide Scale (Very Serious), but this is likely to be isolated to limited areas in Taos Ski Valley. Red River can have indirect impacts from highway infrastructure in the Red River Valley. Given the sloped terrain along many of the roads within Taos County, landslide and rockfall hazards are likely to continue in the future.

### SEVERE THUNDERSTORMS

Severe thunderstorms in Taos County are generally characterized by heavy rain, often accompanied by strong winds and sometimes lightning and hail. According to the National Weather Service, a thunderstorm is classified as severe when it contains one or more of the following phenomena: hail that is 3/4" or greater, winds in excess of 50 knots (57.5 mph), or a tornado. In an average year, Taos County experiences 51 thunderstorm days, usually occurring between April and September. The entire County is susceptible to any of the effects of a severe thunderstorm, including monsoon, hail, and lightning. Small-scale lightning, hail, and localized heavy rains are an annual occurrence in Taos County.

### EARTHQUAKE

An earthquake is caused by a sudden movement or slip in the earth's crust along a fault line. The earth's outer layer experiences stress, which causes the sides of the fault to be pushed together. This stress builds up over time, and when the rocks slip suddenly, it releases energy in waves that move through the earth's crust, causing the shaking that is felt during an earthquake.

Taos County lies near several major boundary faults of the Rio Grande Rift in north central New Mexico. The County is northeast of three local fault systems in Northern New Mexico, including the Pajarito Fault, Guaje Mountain Fault, and Rendija Canyon. According to the USGS Earthquake Hazards Program, three earthquakes were recorded in May 2014 near Ranchos de Taos and Picuris Pueblo. The 2023 National Seismic Hazard Model's Geologic Deformation Model forecast a 4-8% change of a slight or greater

damage earthquake from the south Sangre de Cristo fault in the next 100 years. Although Taos County has experienced relatively small instrumentally recorded earthquakes in recent history, it is potentially susceptible to earthquakes of greater magnitude and intensity.

### PANDEMIC

A pandemic is a disease epidemic that spreads to a large number of people on a worldwide scale, and is considered a public health emergency. The National Emergency was declared in response to the novel coronavirus known as SARS-COV-2, which caused a global pandemic outbreak of the COVID-19 disease. FEMA issued a Major Disaster Declaration for all local jurisdictions in the State of New Mexico on April 4, 2020.

The 2023 *State of New Mexico Hazard Mitigation Plan* does not address pandemics, and the *Taos County Hazard Mitigation Plan* was adopted in 2018 before the COVID-19 pandemic. Future updates to the *Taos County Hazard Mitigation Plan* would benefit from lessons learned locally during this global pandemic event and in coordination with public health officials to ensure ongoing education on vaccines, preventive measures, and the provision of testing kits and sites for coronavirus and other infectious diseases.

## 10.5 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, & STRATEGIES

### HAZARD MITIGATION GOAL 1

Reduce Taos County's vulnerability to natural and man-made hazard events.

#### Objectives:

- ◀ *To provide residents with adequate warning for major hazard events, including wildfires, flooding and dam failure, severe winter weather, and thunderstorms.*
- ◀ *To develop greater capability and capacity to mitigate hazards and experience a shorter recovery time after hazards have occurred.*
- ◀ *To increase emergency preparedness and response during natural hazard events.*

#### HAZARD MITIGATION STRATEGY 1.1

Provide information and encourage residents to sign up on the AlertMe App emergency warning system for notification before and throughout the duration of a severe storm, wildfire, flood, tornado, or other major event.

#### HAZARD MITIGATION STRATEGY 1.2

Create an emergency sheltering plan that addresses:

- ◀ Designating public facilities that can provide emergency shelter during a major hazard event;
- ◀ Installing generator hook-ups;
- ◀ Providing accommodations during hazard events, including food and water, and basic health care; and
- ◀ Accommodations for domestic animals.

#### HAZARD MITIGATION STRATEGY 1.3

Identify critical infrastructure facilities and install generator hook-ups to protect against power loss during hazard events or other types of power failures and harden/improve vulnerable water and wastewater infrastructure in targeted areas.

#### HAZARD MITIGATION STRATEGY 1.4

Purchase mobile generators and electric heating/cooling combination systems to use in power outages at designated emergency shelters and critical infrastructure facilities.

#### HAZARD MITIGATION STRATEGY 1.5

Develop an emergency routing and evacuation system for passenger vehicles, trucks, and emergency vehicles during major hazard events.

#### HAZARD MITIGATION STRATEGY 1.6

Coordinate and encourage ongoing collaboration between the Taos County, Town of Taos, Village of Questa, Town of Red River, State of New Mexico, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency on mitigating natural and man-made hazard events.

#### HAZARD MITIGATION STRATEGY 1.7

Create a GIS database layer that maps major hazard events, critical infrastructure, wildland-urban interface areas, and floodplain areas throughout Taos County.

### HAZARD MITIGATION GOAL 2

Reduce Taos County's vulnerability to wildfires.

#### Objectives

- ◀ *To work with the Town of Taos, Town of Red River, Village of Questa, Village of Taos Ski Valley, Carson National Forest, and other communities in Taos County on fuel reduction activities within urban/rural interface areas and removal of invasive species along the Rio Grande.*
- ◀ *To coordinate with the Carson National Forest on the schedule and implementation of prescribed burns.*
- ◀ *To improve the fire prevention and suppression capabilities of all communities within Taos County.*
- ◀ *To educate residents on best practices in wildfire prevention.*

#### HAZARD MITIGATION STRATEGY 2.1:

Develop a public awareness program on wildfire mitigation that addresses:

- ◀ Creating wildfire buffer zones around structures;
- ◀ Removing combustible materials around homes; and
- ◀ Creating an emergency supply kit (e.g., water, food, batteries, flashlights, first aid kit, phone chargers, etc).

### HAZARD MITIGATION STRATEGY 2.2

Work with the USDA Forest Service on developing a program for weed and brush removal along natural waterways and wildland-urban interface areas at risk for wildfires.

### HAZARD MITIGATION STRATEGY 2.3

Implement the actions identified in the Taos County Community Wildfire Protection Plan:

- ◀ Identifies and prioritizes areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatments;
- ◀ Recommends appropriate types and methods of treatment on public and private land;
- ◀ Recommends actions to protect critical infrastructure; and
- ◀ Identifies measures to reduce ignitability of structures.

### HAZARD MITIGATION STRATEGY 2.5

Provide information and encourage communities within Taos County to become Firewise sites and take preventative actions to reduce their fire risks and protect their communities and the surrounding watershed.

### HAZARD MITIGATION STRATEGY 2.6

Submit grant applications to the Community Planning Assistance for Wildfires program for assistance with wildfire mitigation.

## HAZARD MITIGATION GOAL 3

**Minimize Taos County's vulnerability to flooding and dam failure.**

#### Objectives

- ◀ *To build greater capacity to mitigate flooding and flash floods.*
- ◀ *To limit development in the mapped floodplain areas along waterways.*
- ◀ *To work with communities, municipalities, and Tribal governments within Taos County on taking actions to reduce the risk of flooding.*

### HAZARD MITIGATION STRATEGY 3.1

In coordination with stormwater management goals in the Infrastructure chapter, increase the number and capacity of detention basins and drainage conveyance structures, complete

improvements to existing culverts and arroyos, improve low water crossings, and install new culverts to reduce the impact from major storm events and protect the community from future flooding.

### HAZARD MITIGATION STRATEGY 3.2

Work with the Town of Taos, Village of Questa, Town of Red River, and the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers to reduce obstructions and overgrowth that impede the free flow of floodwater in the major tributaries.

### HAZARD MITIGATION STRATEGY 3.3

Continue Taos County's participation in and compliance with the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

### HAZARD MITIGATION STRATEGY 3.4

Coordinate with the Town of Taos, Village of Questa, Town of Red River, and Taos Pueblo on applying for capital outlay for improving dams within those communities.

## HAZARD MITIGATION GOAL 4

**Build Taos County's resilience and preparedness in responding to pandemics and infectious disease.**

#### Objectives

- ◀ *To ensure the impact from pandemics and infectious disease on Taos County residents is minimized.*
- ◀ *To reduce vulnerability to and transmission rates of viruses amongst Taos County residents.*

### HAZARD MITIGATION STRATEGY 4.1

Provide ongoing public education on the benefits of getting vaccinated and other preventative measures to reduce the spread of viruses in Taos County.

### HAZARD MITIGATION STRATEGY 4.2

Distribute tests and provide testing sites for coronavirus and other infectious diseases throughout Taos County, with a focus on reaching disadvantaged and high-risk populations.

CHAPTER 11

# Implementation Plan



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## 11.1 INTRODUCTION

The Taos County Comprehensive Plan consists of seven major planning elements, including Land Use, Housing, Economic Development, Transportation, Water Resources and Infrastructure, Community Services and Facilities, and Hazard Mitigation. Each of these elements contain goals, objectives, and strategies that were developed based on research, existing conditions, public engagement, consultation with the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee and Taos County staff, and best practices in community planning.

The Implementation Plan is intended to help Taos County plan and secure funding for capital improvements and allocating resources for administrative changes or amendments. The Implementation Plan is intended to be non-binding and flexible, and dependent on available funding, staff resources, and Taos County's ability to engage in partnerships with other local and regional entities. Appendix D contains a comprehensive list of agencies and resources that can be pursued for funding capital improvements.

Successful implementation of the Comprehensive Plan requires diligence and accountability to ensure the strategies identified through the planning process are implemented and the goals and objectives are referenced when determining whether a development application is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. It is recommended that the Taos County Commission create a system of checks and balances that should include:

- ◀ Appointing Taos County staff to oversee the progress towards implementation of the Comprehensive Plan and tasks that include:
  - Tracking the completion of the implementation strategies by Plan element and preparing and submitting progress reports to the Taos County Commission;
  - Preparing recommendations for amendments to the Plan as needed;
  - Monitoring changed conditions in the community that may have an impact on the Plan;

- Staying abreast of funding sources and programs that could be utilized for implementation of capital improvements;
  - Monitoring state legislation and plans in order to ensure consistency with state policy and programs; and
  - Representing Taos County in regional water, infrastructure, transportation planning, and economic development efforts.
- ◀ Developing and maintaining partnerships with other public and private sector entities to accomplish the implementation strategies.
  - ◀ Linking Taos County's ICIP to the implementation strategies and priorities identified in the Comprehensive Plan.
  - ◀ Basing future grant applications on implementation strategies and priorities identified in the Comprehensive Plan.

## 11.2 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The Implementation Plan tables start on page 164 and provide the complete list of strategies organized by Comprehensive Plan element. Projected time frames for completion of the strategies and responsible entities are identified in the Implementation Plan tables. For additional information and background on the strategies crafted to achieve the community's goals and objectives, refer to the specific chapter. The Implementation Plan tables are organized as follows:

- ◀ Chapter 4: Land Use (pages 166-167)
- ◀ Chapter 5: Housing (pages 168-169)
- ◀ Chapter 6: Economic Development (pages 170-172)
- ◀ Chapter 7: Transportation (page 173-174)
- ◀ Chapter 8: Water Resources & Infrastructure (pages 175-176)
- ◀ Chapter 9: Community Services & Facilities (pages 177-178)
- ◀ Chapter 10: Hazard Mitigation (page 179-180)

The time frames for implementing the strategies as identified are Short-Term (2025-2027); Medium-Term (2028-2032); Long-Term (2033-2040); and On-Going (no end date).

CHAPTER 4: LAND USE IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES		
Strategy	Date	Responsible Entity
<p>Land Use Strategy 4.1.1: Complete a major update to the current Taos County Land Use Regulations and Subdivision Ordinance and combine land use and zoning regulations with subdivision regulations in a Unified Development Code that addresses but is not limited to: 1) Creating new residential, mixed-use, and non-residential zoning districts that provide a list of permissive and conditional land uses; 2) Allowing small-scale manufacturing, cottage industries, home occupations, accessory dwelling units, cluster development, agrihoods, and co-housing as permissive or conditional uses and creation of applicable development standards for those uses; 3) Development standards for residential and non-residential uses (e.g. minimum lot sizes, setbacks, building height, parking, landscaping, buffers between non-compatible uses, screening, lighting and dark sky provisions, etc.); 4) Integration of the Stagecoach and Upper Las Colonias neighborhood zones into the overall code; 5) Review and approval processes for zone changes, permissive uses, conditional uses and variances, special use permits, site plans, and master plans; 6) Updated Cannabis regulations; 7) Short-Term Rental Permit requirements; 8) Delineation of individual roles and responsibilities for the Planning Department, Planning Commission, and the Taos County Commission; 9) Notification procedures, appeal processes, and non-conformities; 10) Updated and expanded definitions; 11) Sign regulations that define size, frequency, location, and content-neutral provisions; 12) Design criteria for renewable energy projects that considers the impact to scenic views; 13) Subdivision design and lot layout, including provisions for traditional and non-traditional subdivision types and requirement that large subdivisions incorporate common open space and trails, where applicable; 14) Subdivision exemption requirements; 15) Roadway design, access, and circulation; 16) Liquid waste disposal requirements; 17) Water rights requirements and documentation; 18) Grading and drainage design and stormwater management, including Low Impact Development (LID) standards for on-site stormwater retention and water harvesting; 19) Green building construction techniques and water efficient practices; 20) Dry utilities (gas, electricity, Internet, telephone); 21) Enforcement and violation procedures, and penalties.</p>	<p>Short-Term            (2025-2027)</p>	<p>TC Planning Dept.</p>
<p>Land Use Strategy 4.1.2: Promote new growth and development in key locations within unincorporated Taos County and within the general parameters of providing a range of residential densities; mixed-use or commercial development along key highway corridors and intersections; agriculture use with access to acequias; industrial use with access to highway corridors and in less populated areas, and alternative energy locations as shown on the Future Land Use Scenario.</p>	<p>On-Going            (no end date)</p>	<p>TC Planning Dept.,            Taos Housing Partnership, and            TC Economic Development            Dept.</p>
<p>Land Use Strategy 4.1.3: In conjunction with Economic Development Strategy 2.7, which calls for pursuing "site-ready" funds from the Economic Development Department, identify appropriately located sites as shown on the Future Land Use Scenario where land is or can be made "site-ready" for new development.</p>	<p>On-Going            (no end date)</p>	<p>TC Planning Dept. and TC            Economic Development Dept.</p>
<p>Land Use Strategy 4.1.4: Create a GIS-based zoning map and dashboard that is consistent with the Future Land Use Scenario and the future Unified Development Code, and that allows Taos County staff and the public to view zoning data online.</p>	<p>Short-Term            (2025-2027)</p>	<p>TC Planning Dept.</p>
<p>Land Use Strategy 4.2.1: Promote the technical expertise of the New Mexico Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program, Taos County Extension Office, and the Taos County Economic Development Corporation's Regenerative Ranching Mentorship Program on best practices in agriculture, pasture management, and regenerative ranching and climate-smart best practices.</p>	<p>On-Going            (no end date)</p>	<p>TC Planning Dept. and TC            Economic Development Dept.</p>

CHAPTER 4: LAND USE IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES		
Strategy	Date	Responsible Entity
Land Use Strategy 4.2.2: Create a “Right to Farm” ordinance that addresses and protects the property right of existing agricultural producers operating within generally accepted agricultural practices and in conformity with federal, state, and local regulations from potential nuisance suits.	Short-Term (2025-2027)	TC Planning Dept.
Land Use Strategy 4.2.3: Engage agricultural producers in reviewing the future land use and zoning regulations that may impact their operations to ensure their views are considered in the update process.	Short-Term (2025-2027)	TC Planning Dept.
Land Use Strategy 4.3.1: Incorporate and enforce regulations that restrict billboards and other signage along the major highway corridors within Taos County into the future <i>Unified Development Code</i> .	Short-Term (2025-2027)	TC Planning Dept.
Land Use Strategy 4.3.2: Create a nuisance ordinance that addresses dilapidated and unsafe structures, abandoned/inoperable motor vehicles, junk, disposal of tires, overgrowth of weeds, conformance with the International Property Maintenance Code, and fines for non-compliance.	Short-Term (2025-2027)	TC Planning Dept.
Land Use Strategy 4.3.3: Determine and implement adequate staffing levels to enforce Taos County future nuisance regulations as described under Land Use Strategy 3.2.	Short-Term (2025-2027)	TC Planning Dept.

CHAPTER 5: HOUSING IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES		
Strategy	Date	Responsible Entity
Housing Strategy 5.1.1: Establish a Housing Trust Fund with a dedicated funding stream for the purpose of providing funding support to eligible affordable housing activities and projects.	Short-Term (2025-2027)	TC Planning Dept., Taos Housing Partnership, Finance Dept., and TC Administrative Office
Housing Strategy 5.1.2: Identify County-owned properties and buildings that are appropriate and available for donation to an affordable housing program.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Planning Dept. and Taos Housing Partnership
Housing Strategy 5.1.3: Develop incentives for developers to build affordable housing for income-qualified households, including but not limited to special populations. Incentives should include but not be limited to density bonuses; reduction or waiver of fees; land or building donations; long-term leases or discounts on County-owned land; cost sharing for on- or off-site infrastructure improvements; and expedited permitting.	Short-Term (2025-2027)	TC Planning Dept. and Taos Housing Partnership
Housing Strategy 5.1.4: Work with the Taos Housing Partnership on creating incentives for housing developers to set aside an appropriate percentage of affordable units in new residential developments.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Planning Dept. and Taos Housing Partnership
Housing Strategy 5.1.5: Coordinate with the Taos Housing Partnership and Northern Regional Housing Authority on community outreach that provides information on available affordable housing programs, credit counseling, first-time home buyer programs; rehabilitation and maintenance assistance programs for seniors and veterans; down payment and closing cost assistance; and referrals to local lenders approved by Housing New Mexico.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Planning Dept., Taos Housing Partnership, and Northern Regional Housing Authority
Housing Strategy 5.2.1: Identify appropriate locations for new mixed-density developments on vacant properties within Taos County, including but not limited to areas shown on the Future Land Use Scenario (see Chapter 4, Land Use).	Short-Term (2025-2027)	TC Planning Dept., Taos Housing Partnership, and TC Economic Development Dept.
Housing Strategy 5.2.2: In coordination with Land Use Strategy 4.1.1, promote agrihoods, cluster development, and co-housing as sustainable alternatives to traditional subdivisions. This strategy should include incorporating appropriate development standards into the future Taos County Land Development Code that address density, setbacks, buffers, and maintenance of common areas.	Short-Term (2025-2027)	TC Planning Dept., Taos Housing Partnership, and TC Economic Development Dept.
Housing Strategy 5.2.3: Identify and pursue public-private partnerships with private or non-profit housing developers on new, mixed-income LIHTC projects.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Planning Dept., Taos Housing Partnership, and TC Economic Development Dept.
Housing Strategy 5.2.4: Require master planning for large residential developments to ensure there is adequate capacity to serve the project at full build-out. Encourage a variety of residential types and densities, neighborhood parks, and connections to trails and other community amenities.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Planning Dept. and Taos Housing Partnership
Housing Strategy 5.2.5: Recruit a senior living developer/operator that offers assisted living, memory care, and skilled nursing services to allow Taos County residents to age-in-place.	Medium-Term (2028-2032)	TC Planning Dept., Taos Housing Partnership, and TC Administrative Office
Housing Strategy 5.3.1: Develop a land bank program to acquire vacant and abandoned houses with clear title that can be later purchased for the development of new housing by homebuilders or non-profit housing providers.	Medium-Term (2028-2032)	TC Planning Dept., Taos Housing Partnership, and TC Administrative Office

CHAPTER 5: HOUSING IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES		
Strategy	Date	Responsible Entity
Housing Strategy 5.3.2: Identify opportunities and coordinate with the Northern Regional Housing Authority and local and regional non-profit housing developers on applying for rehabilitation funds for single family homes from the HOME Investment Partnership Program and USDA Rural Development Section 504 Home Repair Grants for eligible seniors aged 62 and older.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Planning Dept., Taos Housing Partnership, and TC Administrative Office
Housing Strategy 5.3.3: Apply for grants to the New Mexico Clean & Beautiful program to fund beautification projects, litter control, recycling, xeriscape, graffiti eradication, and community stewardship.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Economic Development Dept. and TC Administrative Office
Housing Strategy 5.4.1: Work with the Town of Taos and non-profit entities on applying for capital outlay to fund the development of a homeless shelter.	Short-Term (2025-2027)	Taos Housing Partnership and TC Administrative Office
Housing Strategy 5.4.2: Coordinate with local providers to address healthcare issues that contribute to homelessness, including mental and behavioral health.	On-Going (no end date)	Taos Housing Partnership and TC Health Care Assistance Program
Housing Strategy 5.4.3: Disseminate information regarding available services and programs for individuals and families experiencing homelessness, community members in need of transportation to behavioral health appointments, and other peer and career counseling services.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Health Care Assistance Program

CHAPTER 6: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES		
Strategy	Date	Responsible Entity
<p>Economic Development 6.1.1: Update the Taos County LEDA Ordinance/ Economic Development Plan to reflect current priorities and identify goals and projects related to target industries for establishment or expansion in Taos County. The updated LEDA should include, but not be limited to: 1) Creating clear goals and strategies that can assist Taos County in developing a road map for future economic development; 2) Identifying the framework and procedures for the Taos County Economic Development Department in regard to advising Taos County on economic development decisions and potential LEDA projects; 3) Identifying targeted industries and/or industry clusters that would benefit Taos County and help focus the County's economic development recruitment efforts and land use priorities; 4) Researching and identifying policy opportunities to create a local LEDA fund that would allow Taos County to invest directly into local businesses. 5) Encouraging projects that utilize or process locally grown or raised agricultural products, film production, renewable energy, tourism support services, food manufacturing, value-added agriculture, warehousing and distribution, etc.; 6) Employing a cost/benefit analysis that illustrates the impact of the project on Taos County and the recoup time for the County's investment; 7) New and updated definitions consistent with the New Mexico Local Economic Development Act; 8) Provisions for joint powers agreements between Taos County and municipalities within Taos County; and 9) Revisions to implementation policies and procedures, including clawback provisions that allow Taos County to recoup its investment if specific conditions are not met by the qualifying entity that received funding.</p>	<p>Short-Term (2025-2027)</p>	<p>TC Economic Development Dept.</p>
<p>Economic Development 6.1.2: Work with partners, such as Kit Carson Electric Cooperative and UNM-Taos HIVE, to continue building on technology-based infrastructure that supports diverse tech-based economic and business activities: 1) Support, promote and leverage resources to realize KCEC's Green Hydrogen and Solar projects; 2) Identify and leverage resources to support remote workers living in Taos County; and 3) Identify and support business development for tech entrepreneurs and technology-based businesses.</p>	<p>On-Going (no end date)</p>	<p>TC Economic Development Dept., Kit Carson Electric Cooperative, and UNM-Taos HIVE</p>
<p>Economic Development 6.1.3: Work with local and regional economic development entities on developing a cooperative warehousing and distribution facility for products generated by small-scale manufacturers in Taos County. As part of this strategy, evaluate potential locations, which may include the Questa Business Park or other property within Taos County with convenient access to US 64, US 285, NM 68, or NM 522 and shown on the Future Land Use Scenario as appropriate for light industrial development.</p>	<p>Medium-Term (2028-2032)</p>	<p>TC Economic Development Dept. and TC Planning Dept.</p>
<p>Economic Development 6.1.4: In collaboration with the Taos County Extension Office and the Taos County Economic Development Corporation, provide technical assistance and support to agricultural producers to: 1) Expand small- and mid-scale food processing and agricultural enterprises in Taos County; 2) Expand food storage and distribution capacities; 3) Expand and maintain regenerative agricultural practices; and 4) Increase access to financial tools and funding resources to help expand food processing and distribution.</p>	<p>On-Going (no end date)</p>	<p>TC Economic Development Dept., TC Extension Office, and TC Economic Development Corporation</p>
<p>Economic Development 6.2.1: Continue Taos County's support for the development of the Business Resources &amp; Innovation Center (BRIC) as a one-stop business services center that offers services to entrepreneurs, start-ups, and existing businesses.</p>	<p>Short-Term (2025-2027)</p>	<p>TC Economic Development Dept., TC &amp; Town of Taos Planning Depts., UNM-HIVE &amp; UNM-SBD, Taos MainStreet</p>

CHAPTER 6: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES		
Strategy	Date	Responsible Entity
Economic Development 6.2.2: Develop, launch, and sustain a Business Retention and Expansion Program across Taos County that creates a feedback loop for businesses and service providers to continually understand business challenges while responding to immediate and systematic needs to improve the Taos County’s business environment.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Economic Development Dept. and TC Chamber of Commerce
Economic Development 6.2.3: Work with the Taos County Chamber of Commerce and the Taos County Economic Development Department on developing and promoting a “Support Local Business” program to help retain and grow existing businesses.	Short-Term (2025-2027)	TC Economic Development Dept. and TC Chamber of Commerce
Economic Development 6.2.4: As identified in Economic Development Strategy 2.2, once the Business Retention and Expansion Program has been established, identify the primary creative industry growth opportunity areas and support business development of those industries, including: 1) Identify opportunities for artist live/work spaces and support these developments (both private and public); 2) Determine the feasibility of a 1% for the Arts program, which would allocate a portion of funding from County capital projects to be spent on public art; 3) Work with business support services to provide technical assistance and business development opportunities for creative entrepreneurs; 4) Support the development of a well resourced Arts Council/Cultural Commission or other arts-service entity that provides support and advocacy to the creative sector; 5) Support the development of new ordinances that regulate and permit the film industry throughout Taos County; and 6) Support the development of a regional film office.	Medium-Term (2028-2032)	TC Economic Development Dept., TC Planning Dept., and Taos Housing Partnership
Economic Development 6.2.5: Promote and work with existing and future local employers on applying for workforce investment funding (Job Training Incentive Program - JTIP) from the New Mexico Economic Development Department.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Economic Development Dept.
Economic Development 6.2.6: In coordination with Land Use Strategy 1.1, incorporate small-scale manufacturing into the future <i>Taos County Unified Development Code</i> as a conditional use that requires review and approval by the Taos County Planning Commission to ensure the use will not be harmful to adjacent properties.	Short-Term (2025-2027)	TC Economic Development Dept. and TC Planning Dept.
Economic Development 6.2.7: Utilizing the results of the medical care facility feasibility study identified in Community Services & Facilities Strategy 5.4, pursue capital outlay for the development of a new medical care facility in a currently under-served area of Taos County.	Medium-Term (2028-2032)	TC Economic Development Dept.
Economic Development 6.2.8: Identify blighted, brownfield, and potential adaptive reuse sites for redevelopment and new development. Coordinate that effort with Land Use Strategy 1.3, which calls for identifying appropriately located sites for new development.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Economic Development Dept. and TC Planning Dept.
Economic Development 6.3.1: Continue investment in and support of the Destination Stewardship Network (DSN) and the strategies outlined in the Destination Stewardship Plan. Work with the DSN, DSN Manager, and DSN Action Teams to develop a permanent Destination Stewardship organizational structure and ongoing development of tourism related economic activities that shift economic benefit to entities and communities traditionally left out of the tourism industry.	Medium-Term (2028-2032)	TC Economic Development Dept. and TC Administrative Office
Economic Development 6.3.2: Using information provided by the <i>Cultural &amp; Outdoor Asset Mapping Study</i> , develop a public education and messaging program focused on the protection of and minimization of impacts to natural and cultural landscapes, understanding of local cultures, and the overall benefits of environmental stewardship.	Medium-Term (2028-2032)	TC Economic Development Dept., TC Chamber of Commerce, Town of Taos Tourism and Marketing Dept., Lodgers’ Tax Advisory Board

CHAPTER 6: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES		
Strategy	Date	Responsible Entity
Economic Development 6.3.3: Incubate and foster locally-owned tourism-related businesses and operators that align with the goals and strategies of the <i>Destination Stewardship Plan</i> , while attracting values-aligned businesses and entities that can support a stewardship-based tourism economy.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Economic Development Dept.
Economic Development 6.3.4: In partnership with the Destination Stewardship Network and existing outdoor recreation entities, identify and leverage opportunities for industry growth, development, environmental stewardship, and business support.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Economic Development Dept. and UNM-Taos HIVE
Economic Development 6.4.1: Support and promote “Talent-to-Industry Exchanges” to expand the labor supply and identify what job skills employers need in key industry sectors.	Medium-Term (2028-2032)	TC Economic Development Dept. and UNM-Taos HIVE
Economic Development 6.4.2: Support and partner with local businesses and public school districts, UNM-Taos, and Northern New Mexico College to address filling skill gaps by expanding existing workforce training and dual credit programs related to existing and future business clusters in the region, including outdoor recreation, film and digital media, visual arts, renewable energy, health sciences, value-added agriculture, environmental education, etc.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Economic Development Dept., Public School Districts, UNM-Taos, Northern New Mexico College
Economic Development 6.4.3: Promote the online classes and continuing education programs offered by Northern New Mexico College and UNM-Taos.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Economic Development Dept., UNM-Taos, and Northern New Mexico College
Economic Development 6.4.4: Identify and support programs that offer paid work-based learning and workforce development opportunities for youth and young adults in target industries.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Economic Development Dept.
Economic Development 6.4.5: Sponsor and promote job expos that focus on STEAM technologies, including life sciences, engineering, computer programming, natural sciences, media arts, etc., to encourage young adults in Taos County to enter these fields.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Economic Development Dept.

CHAPTER 7: TRANSPORTATION IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES		
Strategy	Date	Responsible Entity
Transportation Strategy 71.1: Prioritize and complete roadway improvements to Blueberry Hill Road, Tom Holder Bridge/Road, Aguas Calientes Bridge as identified in the Taos County ICIP and the Rio Chiquita Bridge, Blueberry Hill Road, Leo Valencia Road, and Tom Holder Road as determined by the Northern Pueblos Regional Transportation Planning Organization's prioritization process.	Short-Term (2025-2027)	TC Public Works
Transportation Strategy 71.2: Submit a grant application to the New Mexico Finance Authority for a Transportation Asset Management Plan that contains: 1) A Pavement Management Program that identifies all roadway and bridge assets and existing conditions; 2) Cost projections for future needs and improvements to the roadway system; 3) Funding strategies; 4) Phased list of prioritized projects according to existing condition, traffic volume served, support for public services and tax base, and leveraging potential; and 5) Coordination of projects with the Taos County Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan (ICIP).	Short-Term (2025-2027)	TC Public Works
Transportation Strategy 71.3: Create a preventative street maintenance plan that prioritizes and secures funding for resurfacing and reconstruction of deteriorated streets, and annual maintenance activities, including resurfacing, paving, crack sealing, and pavement marking.	Short-Term (2025-2027)	TC Public Works
Transportation Strategy 71.4: Evaluate average daily counts for major roadway facilities within Taos County to determine whether changes to the current functional classifications are needed based on capacity, travel speeds, and adjacent land use and access. Coordinate those findings with the Northern Pueblos Regional Transportation Planning Organization and the NMDOT.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Public Works
Transportation Strategy 71.5: Pursue funding for roadway improvement projects through NMDOT programs, including the Local Government Road Fund; Municipal Arterial Program; Cooperative Projects; Safety Projects; and Transportation Alternatives Program, and coordinate with the Northern Pueblos Regional Planning Organization.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Public Works
Transportation Strategy 72.1: Create a recreation and trails master plan that is designed to provide linkages between communities, neighborhoods, schools, and other destinations within Taos County. Utilize best practices and the most recent American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Guide for Development of Bicycle Facilities standards.	Medium-Term (2028-2032)	TC Planning Dept., TC Economic Development Dept., and Enchanted Circle Association
Transportation Strategy 72.2: Pursue funding for regional trail projects from the Outdoor Recreation Trails+ Grant program managed by the New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division; Bicycle/Pedestrian/Equestrian Program; and the federal Recreational Trails Program.	On-Going (no end date)	Economic Development Dept.
Transportation Strategy 73.1: Work with the North Central Regional Transit District on expanding access to transit services for Taos County residents and the UNM-Taos Campus and identify other areas within Taos County that have a concentration of jobs and workers that would benefit from expanded transit services.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Planning Dept, UNM-Taos, NCTRD, Public Works, and TC Economic Development Dept.
Transportation Strategy 73.2: Participate in the North Central Regional Transit District's strategic planning to help determine route adjustments, scheduling changes, on-demand ridesharing zones and Bus Rapid Transit, mobility hub locations, and zero-emission vehicles and infrastructure.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Planning Dept, NCTRD, Public Works, and TC Economic Development Dept.
Transportation Strategy 73.3: Collaborate with the North Central Regional Transit District and UNM-Taos on promoting bus driver jobs and recruitment.	On-Going (no end date)	NM Workforce Solutions, NCTRD, UNM-Taos, and TC Economic Development Dept.

CHAPTER 7: TRANSPORTATION IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES		
Strategy	Date	Responsible Entity
Transportation Strategy 7.4.1: Support upgrades at the Taos Regional Airport as identified in the <i>Airport Master Plan</i> , including ongoing maintenance and improvements to runways, aircraft parking apron and ramp areas, helicopter parking pad, terminal building, FBO hangar and facilities, snow removal storage building, fencing, parking, etc.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Planning Dept., Economic Development Dept., and Town of Taos
Transportation Strategy 7.4.2: Coordinate with the Town of Taos on its efforts to pursue available aviation funding from the FAA and the NMDOT - Aviation Division grant and funding programs.	On-Going (no end date)	Economic Development Dept. and Town of Taos
Transportation Strategy 7.4.3: Work with local and regional tourism and business representatives to determine the level of interest in expanding business aviation activity and passenger service.	On-Going (no end date)	Economic Development Dept., TC Chamber of Commerce, and Taos Visitors' Center
Transportation Strategy 7.5.1: Incorporate context sensitive design and placemaking into new roadway design, and minimize the impact to the natural terrain, where feasible.	Short-Term (2025-2027)	TC Public Works and NMDOT
Transportation Strategy 7.5.2: Develop a policy that all new roadways in unincorporated Taos County will be coordinated with adjacent land uses and designated, designed, and built to functional classification standards.	Medium-Term (2028-2032)	TC Public Works and TC Planning Dept.
Transportation Strategy 7.5.3: In conjunction with NMDOT, evaluate and determine the feasibility of adding bicycle lanes within arterial rights-of-way. New bicycle lanes should be designed in compliance with AASHTO (American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials), as amended.	Medium-Term (2028-2032)	TC Public Works, NMDOT, and Enchanted Circle Trails Association
Transportation Strategy 7.6.1: Determine locations along the segments of US 285, US 64, NM 38, and NM 522 that have the highest Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) for the installation of EV charging stations.	Medium-Term (2028-2032)	TC Public Works and NMDOT
Transportation Strategy 7.6.2: Provide EV charging stations at Taos County public facilities and prioritize those locations with existing three-phase power.	Short-Term (2025-2027)	TC Construction Manager
Transportation Strategy 7.6.3: Pursue available funding from the NMDOT Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Grant Program.	Short-Term (2025-2027)	TC Grant Coordinator

CHAPTER 8: WATER RESOURCES & INFRASTRUCTURE IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES		
Strategy	Date	Responsible Entity
Water Resources & Infrastructure Strategy 8.1.1: Create a 40-Year Water Plan for Taos County that complies with the New Mexico Office of the State Engineer requirements and determines current water use, future water demand, and water conservation measures.	Short-Term (2025-2027)	TC Planning Dept., Town of Taos, El Valle de Los Ranchos Sanitation, and El Prado Water & Sanitation
Water Resources & Infrastructure Strategy 8.1.2: Provide assistance to acequia and community ditch systems on their future applications to the Interstate Stream Commission's Acequia and Community Ditch Fund for improvements to the systems and hydrological studies, where applicable.	On-Going (no end date)	Taos Soil & Water Conservation District and Taos Valley Acequia Association
Water Resources & Infrastructure Strategy 8.1.3: Collaborate with the New Mexico Hydrology Bureau and the US Geologic Survey on monitoring groundwater levels in Taos County.	Short-Term (2025-2027)	TC Planning Dept. and Taos Soil & Water Conservation District
Water Resources & Infrastructure Strategy 8.1.4: Create a water conservation ordinance that addresses implementation, water conservation measures for residential and commercial water use, and prohibits water waste, including but not limited to: 1) Irrigation frequency and time of day restrictions; 2) Regionally and climate appropriate plant materials list; 3) Repair of leaking water lines; 4) Low flow fixtures in new construction and replacement of existing fixtures; 5) Voluntary domestic well use monitoring; and 6) Penalties for violations.	Medium-Term (2028-2032)	TC Planning Dept.
Water Resources & Infrastructure Strategy 8.1.5: Create a water conservation education and public outreach program that provides: 1) Printed and online materials explaining the benefits of water conservation; 2) Expanded use of passive water collection and greywater for residential gardens and landscapes; 3) Principles and practices of xeriscape landscape design; and 4) A list of low-water plant materials, including deciduous and evergreen trees, shrubs, groundcovers, and turf, that are adapted to and appropriate for north central New Mexico.	Medium-Term (2028-2032)	Taos Soil & Water Conservation District
Water Resources & Infrastructure Strategy 8.2.1: Collaborate on the establishment of a Taos County Regional Water Committee to provide the necessary structure for regional collaboration between water systems and projects and to ensure water systems have the capacity to meet current and future demand.	Medium-Term (2028-2032)	TC Planning Dept., Taos Soil & Water Conservation District, Taos Valley Acequia Association, all Mutual Domestic Water Associations, Town of Taos, El Valle de Los Ranchos Sanitation, and El Prado Water & Sanitation
Water Resources & Infrastructure Strategy 8.2.2: Support funding requests for improvements to community water systems in Taos County, including replacements to water tanks and water lines, looping water systems, interconnections between community water systems, and other steps to improve capacity to meet current and future demand.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Administrative Office, Taos Soil & Water Conservation District, El Prado Water & Sanitation, and El Valle de Los Ranchos Water & Sanitation
Water Resources & Infrastructure Strategy 8.2.3: Lobby the State Legislature and support the Office of the State Engineer on allocating funds to implement the <i>Abeyta Settlement</i> , which requires a 25% match for every federal dollar allocated to implement projects listed in the <i>Abeyta Settlement</i> .	On-Going (no end date)	TC Administrative Office, Taos Soil & Water Conservation District, El Prado Water & Sanitation, and El Valle de Los Ranchos Water & Sanitation
Water Resources & Infrastructure Strategy 8.3.1: Develop an educational program on groundwater protection that addresses liquid waste and hazardous materials. This should include but not be limited to information on required separation between septic tanks and wells; required clearances between the bottom of trenches and groundwater; potential waterborne illnesses resulting from contamination; safe and proper disposal of household and commercial hazardous waste; and financial assistance programs.	On-Going (no end date)	Taos Soil & Water Conservation District and NM Environment Dept.

CHAPTER 8: WATER RESOURCES & INFRASTRUCTURE IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES		
Strategy	Date	Responsible Entity
Water Resources & Infrastructure Strategy 8.3.2: Promote the use of pre-engineered package wastewater treatment plants in existing and new subdivisions as a sustainable and eco-friendly alternative to septic tanks and leach fields.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Planning Dept.
Water Resources & Infrastructure Strategy 8.4.1: Create a stormwater design standard in Taos County's Subdivision Ordinance that establishes criteria to ensure drainage is handled properly with new development.	Short-Term (2025-2027)	TC Planning Dept.
Water Resources & Infrastructure Strategy 8.4.2: Promote and incorporate Low Impact Development (LID) techniques in the Taos County Subdivision Ordinance that address stormwater detention and retention, such as water harvesting, bio-retention, rain barrels and cisterns, rain gardens, green roof systems, permeable pavement, etc.	Short-Term (2025-2027)	TC Planning Dept.
Water Resources & Infrastructure Strategy 8.4.3: Provide maintenance and improvements to existing drainage channels and other storm drainage conveyances.	Medium-Term (2028-2032)	TC Public Works, Town of Taos Public Works, Taos Soil & Water Conservation District, and NMDOT
Water Resources & Infrastructure Strategy 8.5.1: Work with current and prospective telecommunications providers to upgrade and expand wireline and wireless broadband coverage in Taos County.	Medium-Term (2028-2032)	Kit Carson Telecom
Water Resources & Infrastructure Strategy 8.5.2: Determine the preferred option to provide widespread affordable broadband access to residential and business users in Taos County.	Medium-Term (2028-2032)	TC Economic Development Dept. and Kit Carson Telecom
Water Resources & Infrastructure Strategy 8.5.3: Develop and implement a "Dig Once" policy that requires public and private excavators to coordinate with Taos County to install fiber conduit during construction within public rights-of-way.	Short-Term (2025-2027)	TC Public Works
Water Resources & Infrastructure Strategy 8.6.1: Pursue capital outlay from the State Legislature, New Mexico Environmental Department, and/or the New Mexico Finance Authority for improvements that allow for additional materials to be accepted and processed at all of the solid waste transfer stations in Taos County.	Short-Term (2025-2027)	TC Solid Waste Dept.
Water Resources & Infrastructure Strategy 8.6.2: Pursue grants or loans from the New Mexico Environment Department Solid Waste Bureau's Recycling and Illegal Dumping Program and the Rural Infrastructure Revolving Loan Program to address tire abatement, e-waste recycling, and illegal dumping in Taos County.	Short-Term (2025-2027)	TC Solid Waste Dept.
Water Resources & Infrastructure Strategy 8.6.3: Pursue funding for the development of a joint composting facility with the Town of Taos and other jurisdictions within Taos County.	Medium-Term (2028-2032)	TC Solid Waste Dept.
Water Resources & Infrastructure Strategy 8.6.4: Continue and expand upon the public educational program to encourage more residents and businesses to reduce, reuse, and recycle.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Solid Waste Dept.

CHAPTER 9: COMMUNITY SERVICES & FACILITIES IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES		
Strategy	Date	Responsible Entity
Community Services & Facilities Strategy 9.1.1: Develop a Public Safety Needs Assessment and plan that addresses current and future needs over the next five years: 1) Data collection on past calls for non-emergency and emergency services, including ambulance transport; 2) Identification of current and future programming, training, and certification needs; 3) Identification of technology, equipment, vehicle, and dispatch needs for law enforcement officers and emergency transport; 4) Identification of adequate staffing levels to improve the response time to emergency calls; 5) A determination of competitive salaries for all levels of personnel based on other law enforcement departments and recruitment strategies; and 6) Implementation schedule for replacement or improvements to facilities; equipment and vehicle purchases; and staffing based on existing and future growth in Taos County.	Short-Term (2025-2027)	TC EMS/Fire Dept.
Community Services & Facilities Strategy 9.1.2: Based on the Public Safety Needs Assessment and the current ICIP, pursue and prioritize funding to purchase new equipment, patrol vehicles, and a rescue vehicle and trailer; increase staffing in the Taos County Sheriff's Office; and provide ongoing training and certification for current and future law enforcement officers.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Sheriff
Community Services & Facilities Strategy 9.1.3: Pursue funding for a new Sheriff's Office administrative building, per the current FY2025-29 ICIP.	Short-Term (2025-2027)	TC Sheriff
Community Services & Facilities Strategy 9.1.4: Continue engagement efforts with the community and solicit feedback on public safety issues from residents, business owners, and youth.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Sheriff
Community Services & Facilities Strategy 9.2.1: Develop a Fire Safety Needs Assessment and plan that addresses current and future needs over the next five years including: 1) Data collection on past calls for emergency medical care, transport, fire protection, and rescue operations; 2) Identification of current and future training, programming, and certification needs, including hazmat training; 3) Identification of technology, equipment, vehicle, and dispatch needs for fire response and emergency transport; 4) Identification of improvements to be made to achieve a better ISO rating, emergency response times, and volunteer recruitment; and 5) Implementation schedule for replacement or improvements to facilities and equipment and vehicle purchases based on existing and future growth in Taos County.	Short-Term (2025-2027)	TC EMS/Fire Dept.
Community Services & Facilities Strategy 9.2.2: Based on the Public Safety Needs Assessment and the current ICIP, pursue and prioritize funding to purchase new equipment and fire apparatus, ambulance, and engine and ladder trucks; increasing the volunteer staffing level at the fire districts; and provide on-going training and certification for current and future firefighters and emergency medical technicians.	On-Going (no end date)	TC EMS/Fire Dept.
Community Services & Facilities Strategy 9.2.3: Pursue capital outlay for a new EMS and fire administration building, per the current FY2025-29 ICIP.	Short-Term (2025-2027)	TC EMS/Fire Dept.
Community Services & Facilities Strategy 9.3.1: Create and maintain a systematic preventative maintenance and replacement program for all County-owned facilities.	Short-Term/Ongoing (2025-2027/ no end date)	TC Facilities Dept.
Community Services & Facilities Strategy 9.3.2: Complete a Senior Services Needs Assessment that analyzes and determines existing and future building and programming needs at senior centers in Amalia, Chamisal, Questa, and the Town of Taos.	Short-Term (2025-2027)	TC Senior Program

CHAPTER 9: COMMUNITY SERVICES & FACILITIES IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES		
Strategy	Date	Responsible Entity
Community Services & Facilities Strategy 9.3.3: Pursue funding to meet the capital and program needs at Taos County's four senior centers as recommended in the Senior Center Needs Assessment.	Medium-Term (2028-2032)	TC Senior Program
Community Services & Facilities Strategy 9.3.4: Contribute funding to the Taos Library to meet capital and ongoing program needs to serve Taos County residents who are currently using the library services.	On-Going (no end date)	Board of County Commissioners
Community Services & Facilities Strategy 9.4.1: Initiate and participate in a community dialogue between Taos County, Town of Taos, Taos Municipal Schools, Peñasco Independent School District, Questa Independent School District, Mesa Vista Consolidated Schools, UNM-Taos, and Holy Cross Medical Center on educational initiatives related to STEM technologies; raising the high school graduation rate; expanding dual credit courses for high school students; and employment opportunities for high school and college graduates.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Economic Development Dept.
Community Services & Facilities Strategy 9.4.2: Collaborate with Taos Municipal Schools, True Kids 1, and True Kids I Youth Council on expanding access and participation in after school programs and summer camps to support youth in developing their recreational, creative, and educational skills in a safe and caring environment.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Economic Development Dept.
Community Services & Facilities Strategy 9.4.3: Collaborate with UNM-Taos and the Taos Education & Career Center on promoting the adult education services that are available to Taos County residents in-person, through the Distance Education Program, and the one-on-one tutoring program.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Economic Development Dept. and NM Workforce Solutions
Community Services & Facilities Strategy 9.5.1: Disseminate information to the public on the healthcare services offered by the Holy Cross Medical Center and Taos County Public Health office in the Town of Taos.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Health Care Assistance Program
Community Services & Facilities Strategy 9.5.2: Collaborate with Holy Cross Medical Center and UNM-Taos on a strategic plan for attracting and retaining healthcare professionals and specialists in Taos County. The plan should also address incentives for graduates from health care education programs to return to the community.	On-Going (no end date)	Economic Development Dept.
Community Services & Facilities Strategy 9.5.3: Coordinate and work with the Town of Taos, Questa, Red River, Taos Ski Valley, Taos Behavioral Health, New Mexico Department of Health, and the State Legislature on expanding mental health and substance abuse and detox services and facilities for Taos County residents.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Health Care Assistance Program
Community Services & Facilities Strategy 9.5.4: Develop a feasibility study for the development of medical care facility within a currently underserved area of Taos County that would help address the gap in medical services and relieve pressure on Holy Cross Hospital. The feasibility study should include but not be limited to a determination of community needs, identification of programming to meet current and future needs, market assessment, site location and analysis, and an operations analysis resulting in a business plan.	Short-Term (2025-2027)	Economic Development Dept.
Community Services & Facilities Strategy 9.5.5: Continue to fund the Health Care Assistance Program for medically indigent Taos County residents who are unable to pay for their medical and ambulance transport expenses.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Health Care Assistance Program

CHAPTER 10: HAZARD MITIGATION IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES		
Strategy	Date	Responsible Entity
Hazard Mitigation Strategy 10.1.1: Provide information and encourage residents to sign up on the AlertMe App emergency warning system for notification before and throughout the duration of a severe storm, wildfire, flood, tornado, or other major event.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Emergency Management
Hazard Mitigation Strategy 10.1.2: Create an emergency sheltering plan that addresses: 1) Designating public facilities that can provide emergency shelter during a major hazard event; 2) Installing generator hook-ups; 3) Providing accommodations during hazard events, including food and water, and basic health care; and 4) Accommodations for domestic animals.	Short-Term (2025-2027)	TC Emergency Management
Hazard Mitigation Strategy 10.1.3: Identify critical infrastructure facilities and install generator hook-ups to protect against power loss during hazard events or other types of power failures and harden/improve vulnerable water and wastewater infrastructure in targeted areas.	Short-Term (2025-2027)	TC Emergency Management
Hazard Mitigation Strategy 10.1.4: Purchase mobile generators and electric heating/cooling combination systems to use in power outages at designated emergency shelters and critical infrastructure facilities.	Short-Term (2025-2027)	TC Emergency Management
Hazard Mitigation Strategy 10.1.5: Develop an emergency routing and evacuation system for passenger vehicles, trucks, and emergency vehicles during major hazard events.	Short-Term (2025-2027)	TC Emergency Management, TC Sheriff, Town of Taos Police, TC EMS/Fire Dept.
Hazard Mitigation Strategy 10.1.6: Coordinate and encourage ongoing collaboration between the Taos County, Town of Taos, Village of Questa, Town of Red River, State of New Mexico, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency on mitigating natural and man-made hazard events.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Emergency Management
Hazard Mitigation Strategy 10.1.7: Create a GIS database layer that maps major hazard events, critical infrastructure, wildland-urban interface areas, and floodplain areas throughout Taos County.	Short-Term (2025-2027)	TC Planning Dept. and TC Emergency Management
Hazard Mitigation Strategy 10.2.1: Develop a public awareness program on wildfire mitigation that addresses: 1) Creating wildfire buffer zones around structures; 2) Removing combustible materials around homes; and 3) Creating an emergency supply kit (e.g., water, food, batteries, flashlights, first aid kit, phone chargers, etc).	Short-Term (2025-2027)	WUI Coordinator
Hazard Mitigation Strategy 10.2.2: Work with the USDA Forest Service on developing a program for weed and brush removal along natural waterways and wildland-urban interface areas at risk for wildfires.	On-Going (no end date)	WUI Coordinator
Hazard Mitigation Strategy 10.2.3: Implement the actions identified in the Taos County Community Wildfire Protection Plan: 1) Identifies and prioritizes areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatments; 2) Recommends appropriate types and methods of treatment on public and private land; 3) Recommends actions to protect critical infrastructure; and 4) Identifies measures to reduce ignitability of structures.	On-Going (no end date)	WUI Coordinator
Hazard Mitigation Strategy 10.2.4: Provide information and encourage communities within Taos County to become Firewise sites and take preventative actions to reduce their fire risks and protect their communities and the surrounding watershed.	On-Going (no end date)	WUI Coordinator
Hazard Mitigation Strategy 10.2.5: Submit grant applications to the Community Planning Assistance for Wildfires program for assistance with wildfire mitigation.	On-Going (no end date)	WUI Coordinator and JR Logan

CHAPTER 10: HAZARD MITIGATION IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES		
Strategy	Date	Responsible Entity
Hazard Mitigation Strategy 10.3.1: In coordination with stormwater management goals in the Infrastructure chapter, increase the number and capacity of detention basins and drainage conveyance structures, complete improvements to existing culverts and arroyos, improve low water crossings, and install new culverts to reduce the impact from major storm events and protect the community from future flooding.	Short-Term (2025-2027)	TC Planning Dept., TC Public Works, Town of Taos Public Works, Taos Soil & Water Conservation District
Hazard Mitigation Strategy 10.3.2: Work with the Town of Taos, Village of Questa, Town of Red River, and the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers to reduce obstructions and overgrowth that impede the free flow of floodwater in the major tributaries.	On-Going (no end date)	Taos Soil & Water Conservation District and TC Emergency Management
Hazard Mitigation Strategy 10.3.3: Continue Taos County's participation in and compliance with the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).	On-Going (no end date)	TC Planning Dept.
Hazard Mitigation Strategy 10.3.4: Coordinate with the Town of Taos, Village of Questa, Town of Red River, and Taos Pueblo on applying for capital outlay for improving dams within those communities.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Emergency Management
Hazard Mitigation Strategy 10.4.1: Provide ongoing public education on the benefits of getting vaccinated and other preventative measures to reduce the spread of viruses in Taos County.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Emergency Management
Hazard Mitigation Strategy 10.4.2: Distribute tests and provide testing sites for coronavirus and other infectious diseases throughout Taos County, with a focus on reaching disadvantaged and high-risk populations.	On-Going (no end date)	TC Emergency Management

APPENDICES

A: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

B: VISION STATEMENTS

C: COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

D: FUNDING SOURCES





**Acequia:** Referring to both the irrigation ditch and the organization of parciantes who use the ditch. The acequia transports surface water from its source, e.g. a stream, a spring, watershed, a river, or a reservoir, to irrigate lands used primarily for agricultural purposes. An acequia is also a form of public corporation that is a political subdivision of the State of New Mexico. Like all other political subdivisions, acequias are competent to exercise those powers the legislature has delegated to them, expressly or by necessary implication.

**Acequia Commission:** Elected parciantes serving as the governing body for an acequia to manage legal and business matters of the acequia.

**Affordable Housing:** Defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development as rental or ownership housing and utilities whose monthly cost burden represents no more than 30% of the gross income of an individual or a family. Affordable housing is supported and incentivized by many programs administered through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

**Agrihood:** A type of planned community that integrates agriculture into a residential neighborhood. The purpose is to facilitate food production as well as provide green space, recreation, aesthetics, and value for a community.

**Bed and Breakfast:** A house with a permanent resident and up to 6 guestrooms which may be rented for overnight lodging with breakfast served to overnight guests only; guestrooms may be in an accessory dwelling unit. This use is subordinate and incidental to the main residential use of the house.

**Buffer:** A strip of land intended to create physical, visual, and/or open space maintained for various purposes, including the reduction of erosion and siltation along surface waters and wetlands, reduction of poaching and wind erosion along roads and field edges, provision of wildlife travel corridors and habitat, and for separation of adjacent land uses or properties from one another.

**Buildable Area:** The portion of a lot exclusive of easements, minimum setbacks, and yard area requirements.

**Cluster Development:** A development type that concentrates single-family detached dwellings on smaller lots than would otherwise be allowed in the zone district in return for the dedication and preservation of common open space within the same site, on a separate lot, or in an easement. Maintenance of the common open space in perpetuity by the homeowners' association established for the subdivision. The intent of cluster development is to create an innovative development pattern that is sensitive to natural features and topography and creates more area for open space, recreation, and social interaction.

**Co-Housing:** A cooperative community where residents live in private homes clustered around a shared community space, which may include, but not limited to a large kitchen and dining area, laundry, and recreational spaces.

**Community Facility:** A building or structure owned and operated by a governmental agency to provide service to the public, such as community center, school, senior center, and police station.

**Community (Public) Water Supply System:** A Public Water System (PWS) is any water system that serves at least 25 individuals daily at least 60 days out of the year. All PWSs must meet the requirements of the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SWDA) and State Drinking Water Regulations. A community water supply includes municipal water supply systems.

**Density:** The number of families, individuals, dwelling units, households, or housing structures per unit of land.

**Density Bonus:** An increase of allowable density given as an incentive for concentrating lot coverage on specific areas and allowing land to be used for common activities, such as open space, recreation, preservation, or some other public benefit.

**Development Standards:** Regulations that control the size of structures and the relationships of structures and uses to each other and to open areas and lot lines. Development standards include regulations controlling maximum building height, minimum lot area, minimum lot frontage, minimum setbacks, etc.

**Dwelling:** Any building that contains one or two dwelling units used, intended, or designed to be built, used, rented, leased, let or hired out to be occupied, or that are occupied for living purposes.

**Dwelling Unit:** A single unit providing complete independent living facilities for one or more persons, including permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation.

**Easement:** A legal right to use another person's land for a specific, limited purpose, typically within private ways. The purpose may include, but is not limited to, installing and maintaining stormwater drainage, water and sanitary sewer lines, fire hydrants, landscaping, ingress/egress, and other infrastructure improvements. Easements may also be granted for open space, view protection, or other specific uses.

**Economic Development:** The process by which a community improves the local economy and social well-being of the people. This could include an improvement in the number of jobs, incomes, education levels, organization capacity, or other forms of capital.

**Economic Base Job:** A job in which services or goods provided are exported outside the local economy (i.e., sold to outside customers) and bring new money into the economy.

**Electric Vehicle Charging Station:** An electric power device that recharges batteries of electric-powered or hybrid-powered vehicles. Electric Vehicle Charging Station is incidental to the primary use of the property.

**Flood Zone:** A flood hazard area as defined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, categorized by the likelihood and depth of flooding expected annually.

**Gateway:** A monument, signage, and/or landscape feature that provides a sense of entry and arrival to a community.

**Geographic Information System (GIS):** A computer-based system for generating maps comprised of different informational elements, such as topographical data, roadways, property lines, land use, etc.

**Gross Receipts:** The gross amounts realized on the sale or exchange of property, the performance of services, or the use of property or capital (including rents, royalties, interest and dividends) in a transaction that produces business income.

**Groundwater:** The supply of freshwater under the surface in an aquifer or geologic formation that forms the natural reservoir for potable water.

**Historic District:** An area that contains, within definable geographic boundaries, properties or buildings that contribute to the overall historic character of the designated historic area. Historic districts contain both "contributing" properties (those that are deemed historic and may be on historic registers) and "non-contributing" properties (those that do not have historic significance due to age or condition).

**Historic Preservation:** The protection, rehabilitation, and restoration of the districts, sites, buildings, structures, and artifacts, significant in history, architecture, archaeology, or culture.

**Housing New Mexico:** Housing New Mexico provides financing for housing and other related services to low- to moderate-income New Mexicans. There are 37 state and federal programs administered by Housing New Mexico that provide financing for housing, including low interest mortgage loans and down payment assistance, weatherization, green building and rehabilitation, and tax credit programs. Housing New Mexico partners with lenders, realtors, non-profit, local governments, and developers. All state and federal housing programs are administered by Housing New Mexico, including Section 8 housing funds and other HUD projects.

**Infrastructure Capital Improvement Program (ICIP):** The multi-year scheduling of public physical improvements for the community that is typically prepared five years in advance with a clear priority of what is needed most by the community and includes a cost estimate.

**Infrastructure:** Facilities and services needed to sustain all land use activities, including water and sewer lines and other utilities, streets and roads, communications, and public facilities, such as firehouses, parks, and schools.

**Kitchen:** An area of a dwelling unit that is principally intended to be used for cooking where there is a sink of adequate size and shape for washing dishes; a cooking stove, range, or oven for food preparation; and a refrigerator for storing perishable food items.

**Land Use:** Denotes how a parcel of land is currently used, what activities are or are not permitted on a parcel of land, and the possible requirements for future uses.

**Local Economic Development Act (LEDA):** Legislation that allows for the public support of economic development to foster, promote, and enhance local economic development efforts while continuing to protect against the unauthorized use of public money and other public resources (i.e., Anti-Donation Clause in the New Mexico Constitution). Public entities use LEDA to enter into a public/private partnership for an economic benefit.

**Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC):** Under the Emergency Planning and Community Right-To-Know Act (EPCRA), LEPCs develop an emergency response plan, review the plan at least annually, and provide information about chemicals in the community to citizens.

**Lot:** A designated parcel, tract, or area of land established by plat, subdivision, deed, or as otherwise permitted by law, to be separately owned, used, developed, or built upon.

**Mayordomo:** The ditch superintendent elected by the parciantes to oversee the operations and maintenance of an acequia.

**Manufactured Home:** A movable or portable single-family dwelling unit with a heated area of at least 36 feet by 24 feet and at least 864 square feet designed to be moved on its own chassis in one or more separate units, installed with or without a permanent foundation, and constructed in a factory to the Housing and Urban Development National Manufactured Housing Construction and Safety Standards Act of 1974.

**Mobile Home:** A movable or portable single-family dwelling unit with a heated area larger than 40 feet by 8 feet and is more than 320 square feet

designed to be moved on its own chassis, installed without a permanent foundation which cannot be construed as real property, and constructed in a factory prior to 1976 but not to the Housing and Urban Development National Manufactured Housing Construction and Safety Standards Act of 1974. Mobile home does not include a recreational vehicle or recreational travel trailer.

**Mobile Home Park (MHP):** The Mobile Home Parks use type consists of a site where two or more lots are rented or leased, or held out for rent or lease, to accommodate a fixed in place or not fixed in place manufactured home or mobile home used for human habitation.

**Modular Home:** A factory-built home that is constructed in modules and built to the same International Building Codes as site-built homes, and transported to and installed on the home site, but not built on a chassis. Modular home does not include manufactured home.

**Mixed-use:** Development with residential and non-residential uses combined on the same lot, premise, or in the same building. The non-residential uses are limited to those allowed as permissive or conditional in the zone district in which the mixed-use development is located.

**Multi-modal:** Transportation infrastructure that allows for the safe and effective travel of all users by providing multiple transportation choices, including options for motor vehicles, public transit, bicycles, pedestrians, and other users.

**Neighborhood Association:** An organization of property owners and/or residents that has been incorporated under the laws of the State of New Mexico, has recorded its bylaws with the Clerk of the County of Taos, and has been approved by the Board of County Commissioners.

**Net Metering:** A utility billing mechanism available in New Mexico that offers a credit to residential and business customers who are making excess electricity with their solar panel systems and sending it back to the grid.

**New Mexico Economic Development Department (NMEDD):** The NMEDD houses a variety of economic development programs that provide

direct assistance to New Mexico businesses and support community development. NMEDD administers the Local Economic Development Act, Job Training Incentive Program, FUNDIT, MainStreet Program, Rural and Economic Development Council, and Business Incubator Certification, amongst others.

**New Mexico Finance Authority (NMFA):** The NMFA assists qualified governmental entities in the financing of capital equipment and infrastructure projects at any stage of completion- from pre-planning through construction - by providing low-cost funds and technical assistance through a variety of financing resources.

**Ordinance:** A statute or legislative action adopted by a local government that has the force of law.

**Outdoor Recreation:** Activities that occur outdoors in natural environments and in outdoor urban man-made environments, including hiking and camping; hunting and fishing; canoeing, kayaking, and rafting; sailing and motor-boating; biking; rock climbing; horseback riding; skiing; and restoration and conservation activities.

**Parciante:** A member of an acequia, or holder of an acequia water rights.

**Plat:** A plan or a map of a plot of land, containing a description of the property and everything on it, including roads, boundaries, and real property.

**Public Health:** The study and promotion of the overall health of a population as opposed to looking at the health of individuals alone. Public health includes efforts to improve health outcomes in a community by addressing factors that may impact many residents, such as pollution, disease exposure, access to clean water, access to health facilities, etc.

**Public Nuisance:** A public nuisance consists of knowingly creating, performing or maintaining anything without lawful authority affecting any number of citizens, which is:

- 1) Injurious to public health, safety, or welfare; or
- 2) Interferes with the exercise and enjoyment of public rights, including the right to use public property.

**Redevelopment:** The process of renovating, replacing, and improving the built environment through reinvestment, new construction, and reuse. Redevelopment usually involves occupation and habitation of vacant buildings, rehabilitation of older buildings, construction of new facilities, public investment in infrastructure, and other economic development activities.

**Renewable Energy:** An energy resource that is rapidly replaced by a natural process, such as power generated from the sun or from wind. Includes biomass resources, such as agriculture, animal waste, or small diameter timber, but does not include energy generated by the use of fossil or nuclear energy.

**Resolution:** A formal expression of the opinion or will of a local government adopted by a vote. Unlike ordinances, resolutions do not have the force of law.

**Reparto or Repartimiento:** The process the Mayordomo uses to determine the availability and schedule of water for distribution to parciantes.

**Right-of-way:** The public property that is dedicated or deeded for public use, under the control of a public agency, and intended to be occupied by a street, water line, sanitary sewer or other public utilities or facilities.

**RV Park or Campground:** Any lot or parcel of land upon which two or more recreational vehicle sites or campsites are located, established, or maintained for occupancy by recreational vehicles or camping units of the general public as temporary living quarters for recreation or vacation purposes.

**Sacar la Acequia/La Limpia:** The communal effort to clean the acequia each spring and fall.

**Setback:** The distance between a structure and any lot line, water course, or acequia. Minimum setbacks define the building envelope and establish required distances from front, rear, and side property boundaries.

**Short-Term Rental:** A lease or license of any dwelling unit, accessory dwelling unit, or bedroom for a term of thirty (30) days or less.

**Short-Term Rental Unit:** A dwelling unit, accessory dwelling unit, or bedroom, which is at any time subject to a lease or license of thirty (30) days or less.

**Subdivision:** The division of land, lot, tract, or parcel into two or more lots, tracts, parcels, plats, or sites, or other divisions of land.

**Subdivision Ordinance:** A set of laws or regulations set forth and adopted by a governmental authority, usually a city or county, to control the division of land by requiring development according to design standards and procedures.

**Substandard Building:** Any building or portion thereof, including any dwelling unit, guest room or suite of rooms, or the premises on which the same is located, in which there exists conditions to an extent that endangers the life, limb, health, property, safety or welfare of the public or the occupants.

**Terrain Management:** The control of floods, drainage and erosion, and measures required for adapting the proposed development to existing soil characteristics and topography.

**Vacant Building:** A dwelling, dwelling unit, efficiency dwelling unit, habitable space, residential building, or structure lacking the continuous habitual presence of human beings who have a legal right to be on the premises for a period of 90 days or longer but excluding property under a listing agreement with a real estate agent licensed in New Mexico.

**Variance:** Exceptions to dimensional standards or variations from the strict application of standards contained in an ordinance where such variance will not be contrary to the public interest and where, owing to conditions peculiar to the property and not the result of actions of the applicants, a literal enforcement of title would result in unnecessary and undue hardship.

**Wind Energy Conservation System (WECS):** All necessary devices that together convert wind energy into electricity, including the rotor, nacelle, generator, WECS Tower, and electrical

components, WECS foundation, transformer, and electrical cabling from the WECS Tower to the substation(s) and their support facilities, including transmission lines.

**Wireless Transmission Facility (WTF):** Unmanned facilities used for wireless communications, usually consisting of a support structure for antennas, equipment shelters or cabinets, and/or other transmission and reception devices used for business or commercial purposes.

**Xeriscaping:** The practice of designing landscapes that conserve water in arid regions by using plant materials that require little water, placing plants with similar water needs together, and employing efficient irrigation techniques.

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## INTRODUCTION

As part of the two public meetings held on April 11, 2024, participants were asked a series of visioning questions. The last question was, “It’s now 2045, how would you describe Taos County to someone who is thinking about moving here?” The vision statements written by the participants provided good insight into their values and aspirations and are incorporated into the goals, objectives, and strategies contained in this *Comprehensive Plan*:

- ◀ *Back in 2024, Taos County made some radical decision regarding our future. They made water, environment/nature, and community their priorities. Now in 2045, we are one of the most beautiful and functional counties in the country. All new buildings must have roofs with rainwater collection. Solar is king. Bike lanes on every road. Wide open spaces. EV stations more than gas stations. Short-term “lottery” regulations that turn over every three years – allowing for affordable long-term rentals for the services industry population. Protected agricultural lands. We set a great and prosperous example for the world.*
- ◀ *They had a plan 20 years ago to make changes to improve life here but didn’t budget or provide dedicated staff to implement it or fund it, so nothing changed except that climate refugees moved here to escape drought and heat from parts of the county that became uninhabitable due to the planet warming and set up habitation in the public lands we so fiercely value.*
- ◀ *Taos is a place where visitors and new residents can come to learn about and respect cultures, they knew little about before Indigenous, Spanish, Chicano, to realize America is a lot older than they knew. It is a place of incredible beauty that inspires people and is being managed to preserve that beauty. There is a healthy balance between preserving traditional culture and new jobs and sustainable industries that have arrived in the area.*
- ◀ *Taos is a place where diverse cultures dialogue with each other and seek the good and the healing of one another. A world for the rest of the country.*
- ◀ *Taos got gentrified. Developers here changed the landscape it used to be an art colony. It looks more like Cerillos Road.*
- ◀ *It’s a clean city with low crime. Buildings are beautiful and representative of care for environmentally engaging sustainable living at a maximum level. Off grid houses, water is used several times before it is done. There are bike trails along rivers and many places to hike and explore. Recycling is the standard in our community. Trash and litter are a non-issue here. A tiny house community is thriving here with communal gardens. Culture and history are a priority here. Dialogue and respect abound.*
- ◀ *Walkable communities throughout Taos County. Places to gather in each community. Activities to celebrate the seasons. More agricultural community gardens. Planned communities with multiple types of housing in each area. Small homes, medium sized, homes and larger homes, condominiums. Multiple types in the same community. Shopping, working, playing, in walkable communities. Walking trails. Planned communities, not just environmentally conscious planning and development.*
- ◀ *Welcome to Aspen (not what I want).*
- ◀ *The residents of Taos in 2045 will look back on the Taos County of 2024 wistfully, knowing that their present-day community lacks many of the qualities that made it a good place to live. It is quite likely that by 2045, Taos County will have a population roughly twice the population of 2024 – in the range of 60,000 to 70,000. Development will mostly be in the areas currently populated: between Llano Quemado on south, Talpa and Canon on the east, to Arroyo Seco in*

the north, with some increased density going towards Arroyo Hondo, then back down to Los Cordovas and back to Llano Quemado. What I'm saying is, basically land ownership patterns will cause settlement to mostly concentrate in existing areas through infill. The infill will follow existing patterns, 60-65% manufactured housing, 35-40% site-built housing. There will be a marked diminution of irrigated farmland, and the network of roads will continue to be awkward and will not reach most residential areas without congestion and slow travel. Commercial areas will still remain concentrated and wealthy enclaves will remain isolated from the bulk of the general populated areas. There will continue to be cultural and social segregation. The water resources will be strained by increased population and there will be more multi-family housing, by necessity. There will be significant social tensions between long-term residents who have their networks and relationships and recently arrived "newcomers" who are not invested in the community.

- ◀ Taos County has been able to improve its education system, so students leave high school knowing how to read and write. People will want to stay in Taos because of the embracing of innovation that permeates the community. Adobe construction abounds and people are able to earn a living wage and able to build their own homes again. Sustainable architecture.
- ◀ Abundant opportunities for our children who will want to stay in our community.
- ◀ Taos has been urbanized and gentrified. It does not have the diversity that existed 20 years ago. Water is in short supply and much of the formerly irrigated land is now dry and not capable of growing crops. Climate change has resulted in less snowpack and spring runoff for irrigation. Dreaded non-native vegetation has crowded out native species. Chinese elm and Russian olive have proliferated because many believed shade was more important than eliminating them and propagating. On the positive side, some traditional communities worked to preserve

our cultures and lifestyles as there are small pockets of "Old Taos" that still exist.

- ◀ Taos County shaped a better future because it: 1) Paid attention to the gap between rich and poor; 2) Gave its youth a voice in its "adult" conversations; 3) Worked hard to both mitigate and adapt to climate change; 4) Moved beyond a culture of individualism to one of the common good.
- ◀ With a thoughtful eye to the future, Taos County has avoided the errors and mistakes made by other dominant / famous areas with ski resorts such as Vail/Eagle County. It has maintained its cultural heritage and world class art status while also improving the water, road, and healthcare infrastructure and keeping alive its traditional agricultural base.
- ◀ One day in the 2020's we kind of collectively woke up, for the last 20 years we have successfully preserved some of the essential elements that help Taos to "stay Taos"... water, cultural diversity, rural-agrarian, values, respect for the past, while alerting inevitable changes with an appropriately skeptical outlook. To someone that would want to move here, "Bring a sense of humor; we are all here because we're not all there."
- ◀ Maintained historic areas. Water settlements working well. Young, interested persons elected to Taos County Commission, Continued involvement by community members in issues government – local and national.
- ◀ Have we avoided catastrophic fire? Are more self-reliant, especially concerning producing food. Do we have neighborhood services; grocery, health, transportation without cars? How do people connect?
- ◀ Diverse, very cultural people who value their heritage. Sleepy, not much going on. Native people don't get involved. Hopefully at that point on the road to being self-supporting.
- ◀ Education is culturally diverse. Commercialism is prevalent while Taos' natural beauty is still shining through. There would be centers for youth and more affordable childcare. Higher livable wage paying jobs. Forests preserved.

- ◀ *Come to Taos County where we have preserved our rural living and historic culture. Don't come if you don't embrace continuing this.*
  - ◀ *Community gardens, soil restoration. Prospects and businesses up and down the Valley. Operating to benefit the restoration of soil and water. Communities and co-operatives. Building together alternative housing focusing on like interests. Green, green, green. Everywhere with music, and an abundance of food.*
  - ◀ *A unique traditional community that was successfully maintained and honored. Taos very unusual and specific historical and cultural heritage. That Taos is internationally known for, in a manner that honors and supports local people with a high quality of life for present and future generations. Future should be the result of thoughtful planning that maintains and advances Taos unique arts and cultures, agriculture, water heritage, and natural beauty.*
  - ◀ *Taos modernized its rural economy to address key issues like: green energy, high paying tech jobs, affordable and sustainable housing.*
  - ◀ *In the future - Taos is distinct from other American towns. The people are positive and open. They can live full and safe lives because of strong family and community bonds built on a distinct culture and active way of life. They are involved in maintaining community gatherings and celebrations. There are a wide range of economic opportunities for young adults. Careers are possible.*
  - ◀ *Unfortunately, unless we in Taos decide in 2024 to step up towards a really cooperative community model, I fear that in 2045, Taos will be dominated by wealthy upper class "Anglos" and be a community that talks about how good it used to be.*
- ◀ *To take a Pollyanna-ish utopian vision of what I'd like Taos to be in 21 years, here are a few things to hope for:*
    1. *A continuance of the acequias as viable social and political structures, both as water delivery systems, and as a means of community organization for continued collaborative division of labor and sharing of resources.*
    2. *The continued viability of languages that have been nurtured in the Taos Valley, Tewa and the unique idiom of Spanish that has been shaped by life in the Valley with inputs from many other Indigenous languages of the region. The survival of languages is essential to the survival of the culture.*

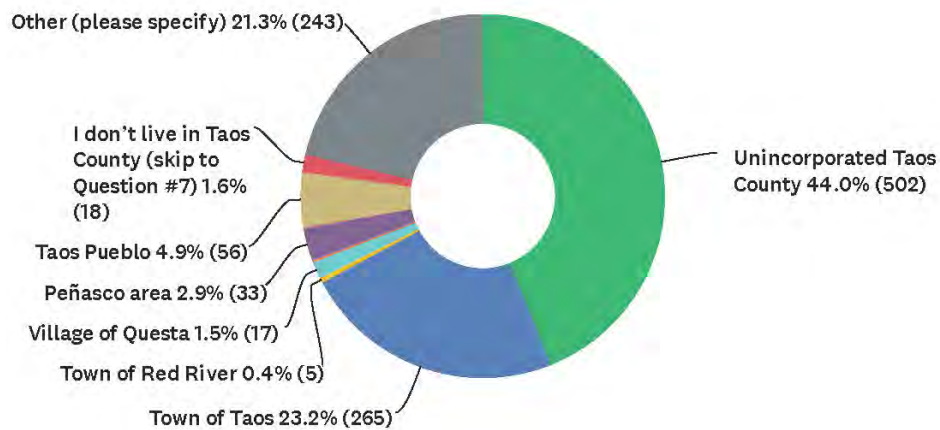
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## INTRODUCTION

As part of the planning process to update the Comprehensive Plan, Consensus Planning designed and administered a community survey to gain public input on a wide range of community issues. Responses were collected between February 9 and April 15, 2024. The Community Survey was available in English and Spanish, both electronically via Survey Monkey and in printed versions distributed at various locations across the County. A total of 1,141 people responded in English and 5 people responded in Spanish. The combined survey results are shown in the charts below. The written comments from the survey participants were extensive and on file at the Taos County Planning Department. The Comprehensive Plan incorporates key takeaways from the Community Survey within each relevant section.

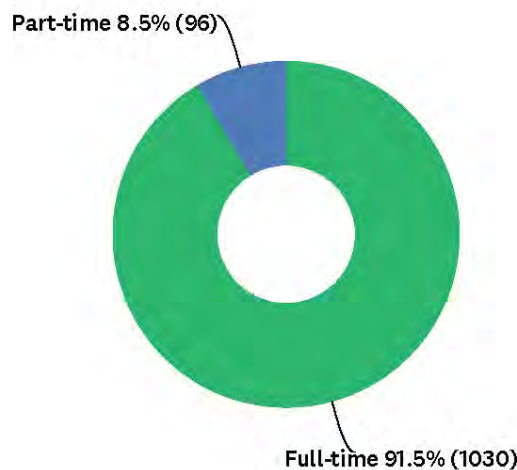
### Q1 Where do you live in Taos County?

Answered: 1,142 Skipped: 4



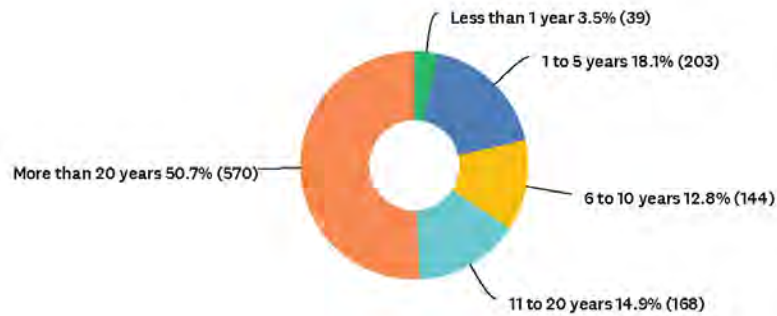
### Q2 Are you a full-time or part-time resident of Taos County?

Answered: 1,126 Skipped: 20



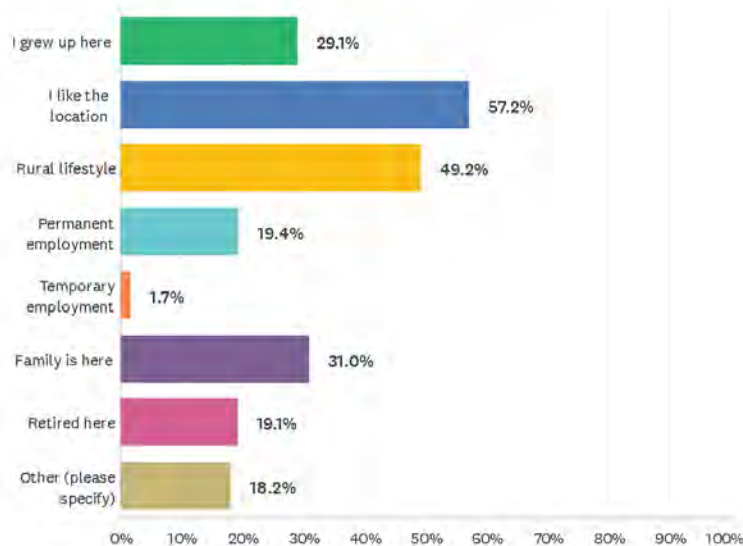
### Q3 How long have you been a resident of Taos County?

Answered: 1,124 Skipped: 22



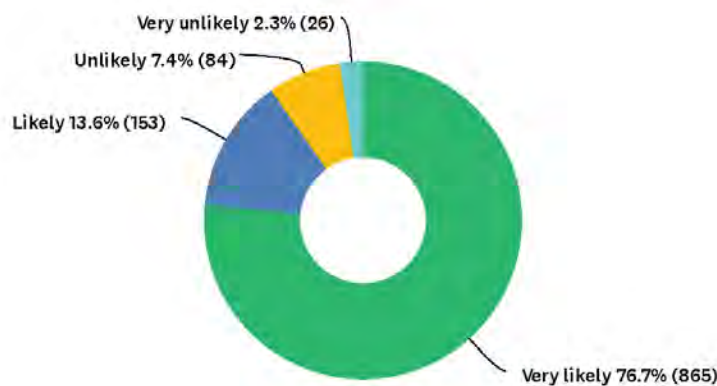
### Q4 What are the reasons why you live in Taos County? (choose all that apply)

Answered: 1,125 Skipped: 21

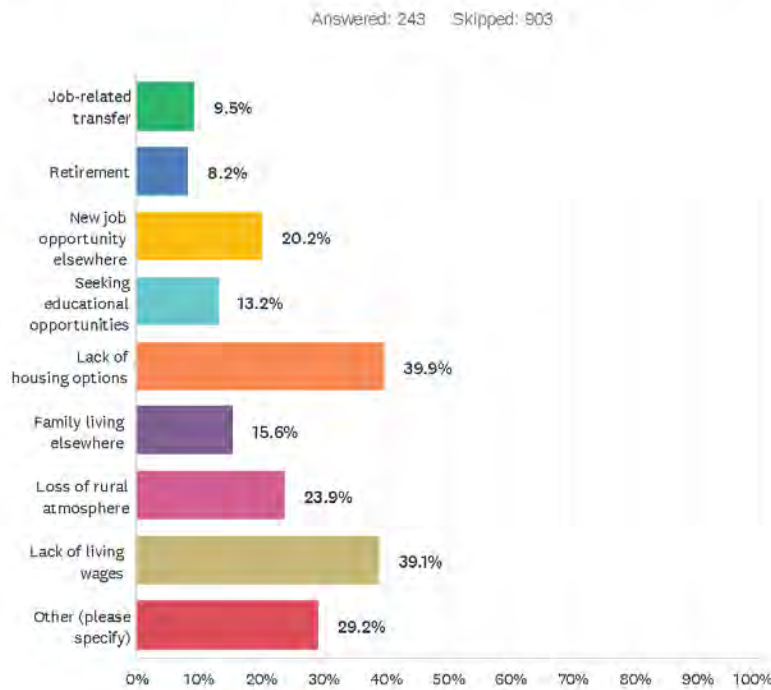


### Q5 How likely are you to live in Taos County for the next 5 years?

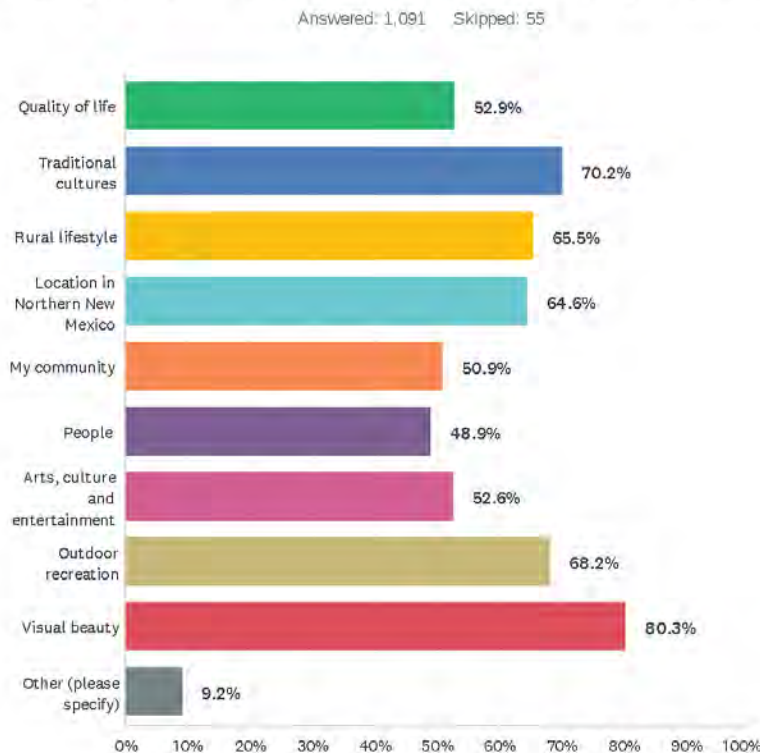
Answered: 1,128 Skipped: 18



Q6 If you answered “Unlikely or Very unlikely to Question #5, which of the following reasons would cause you to leave Taos County? (choose all that apply)

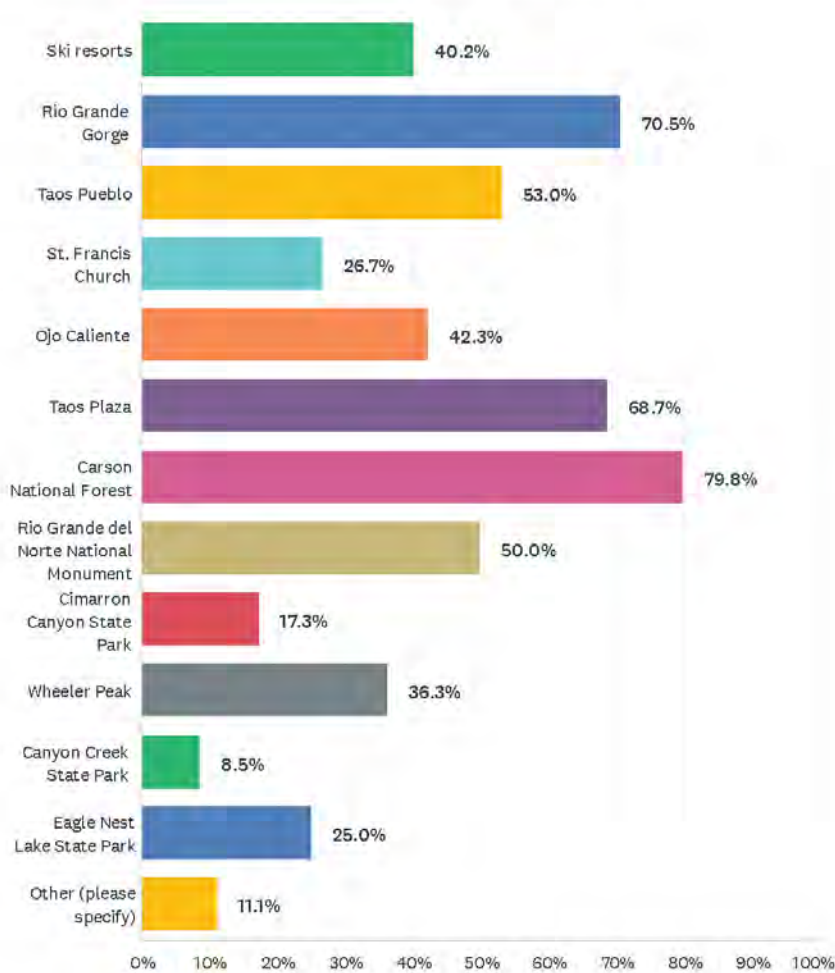


Q7 What are your favorite aspects of Taos County? (choose all that apply)



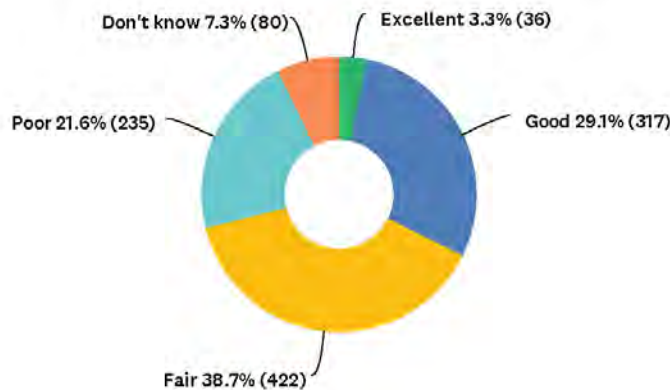
Q8 Please indicate the regional attractions that you or members of your family currently use or visit (choose all that apply)

Answered: 1,085 Skipped: 61

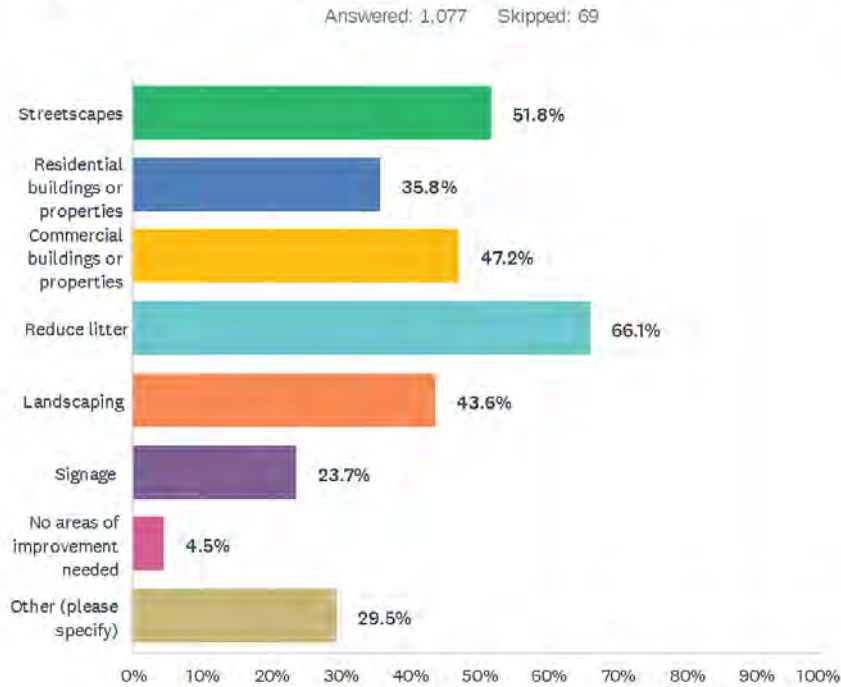


Q9 What is your level of satisfaction with public safety services in Taos County?

Answered: 1,090 Skipped: 56

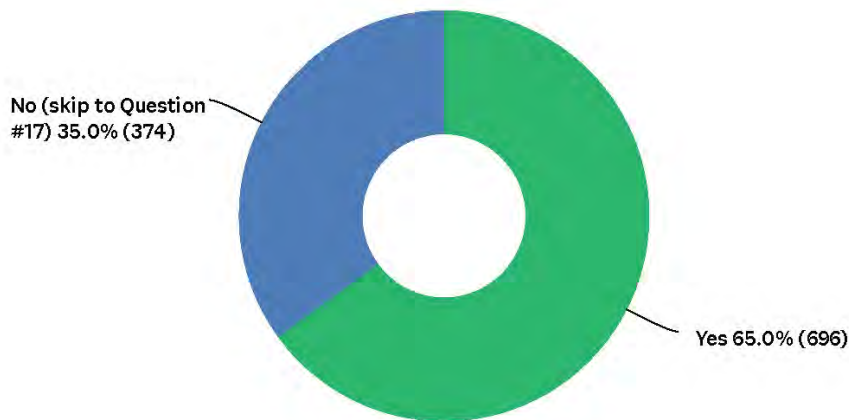


### Q10 What areas of improvement to the visual appearance of Taos County do you feel are needed, if any? (choose all that apply)



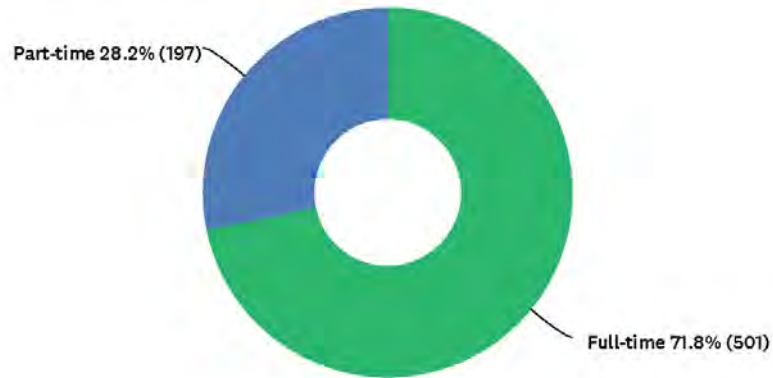
### Q12 Are you currently employed?

Answered: 1,070 Skipped: 76



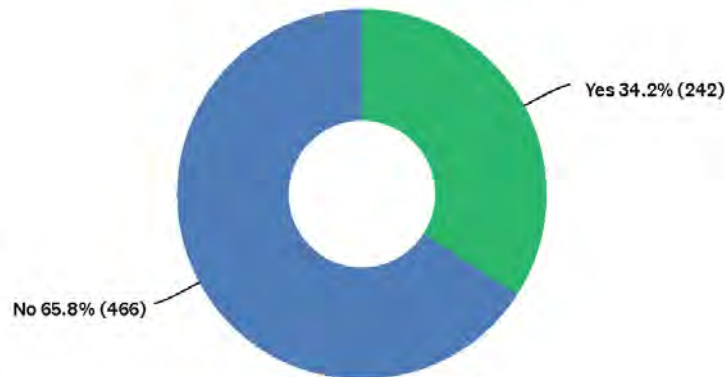
### Q13 Is your job full-time or part-time?

Answered: 698 Skipped: 448



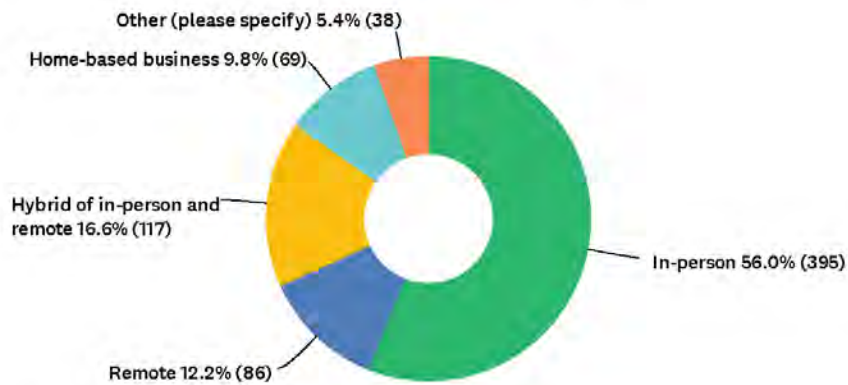
### Q14 Do you have more than one job?

Answered: 708 Skipped: 438



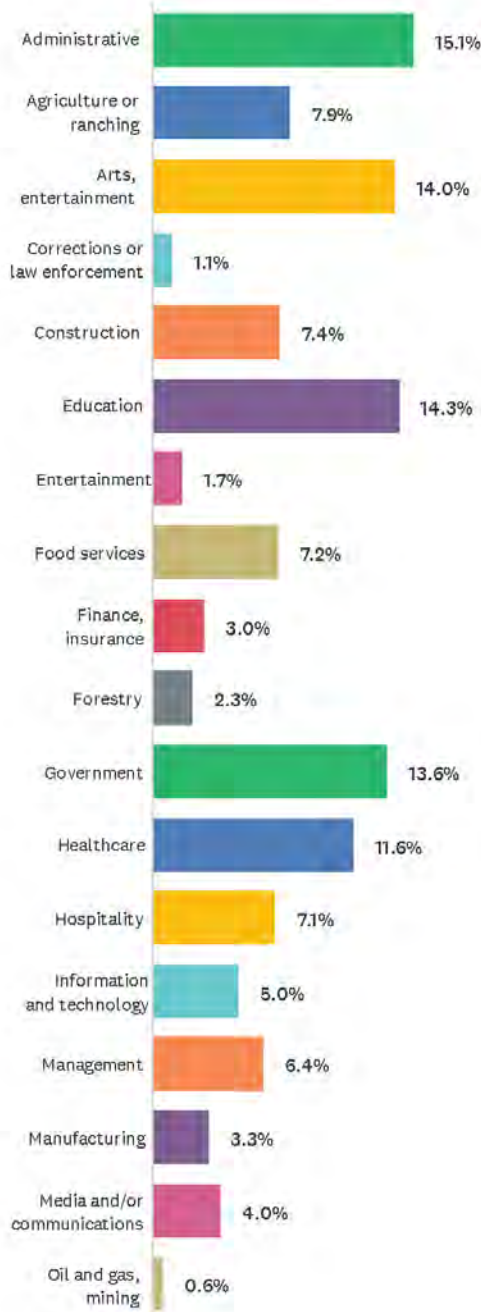
### Q15 How would characterize your job location?

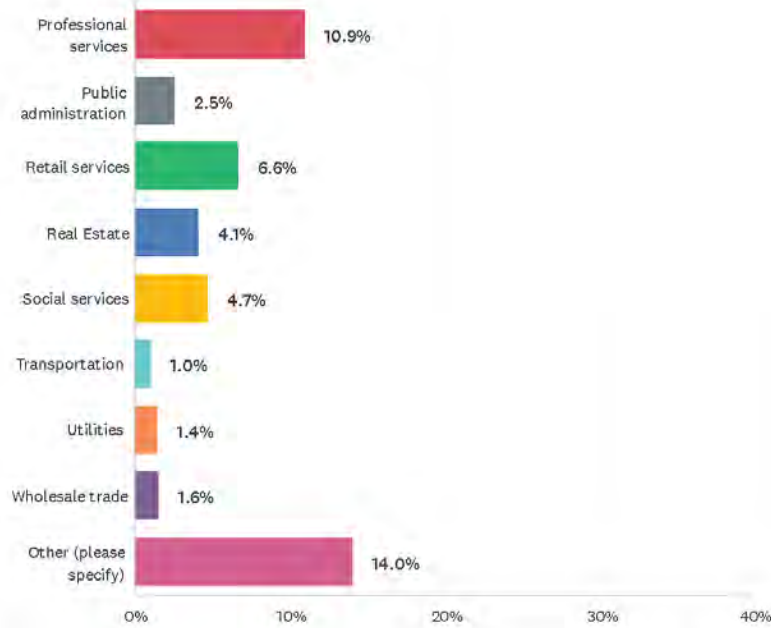
Answered: 705 Skipped: 441



### Q16 If your answer to Question #12 was yes, what type of employment are you engaged in? (choose all that apply)

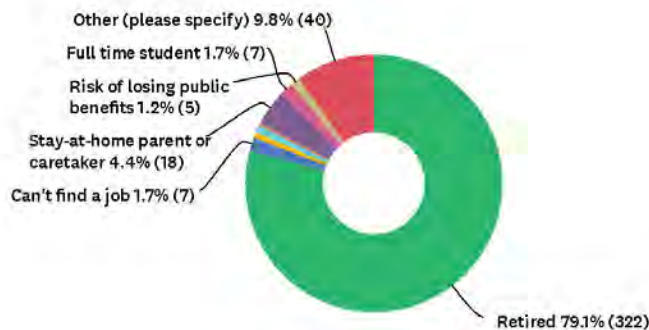
Answered: 707 Skipped: 439





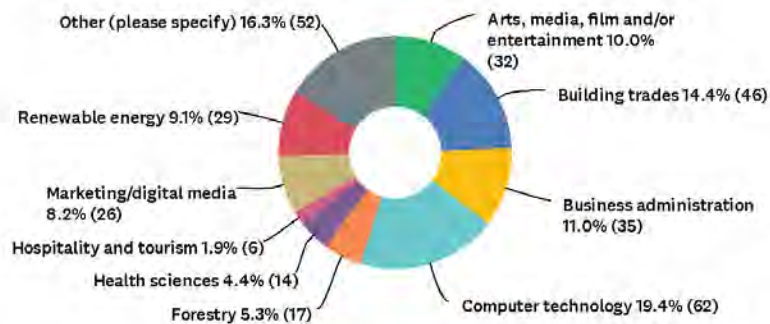
Q17 If you are unemployed, what is the main reason that has prevented you from getting a job?

Answered: 407 Skipped: 739



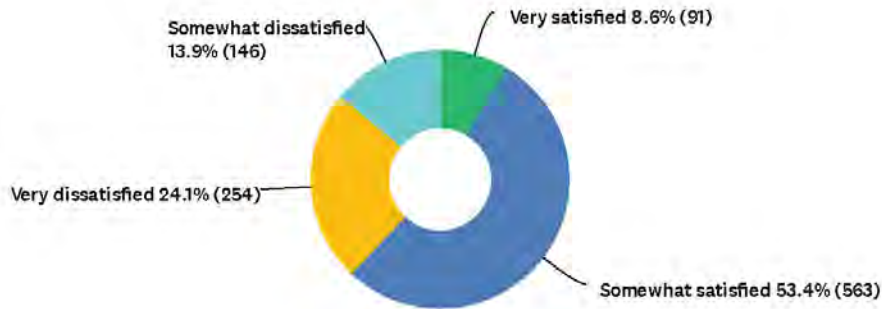
Q18 If you feel like you need more job training, what type of training or education would that be?

Answered: 319 Skipped: 827



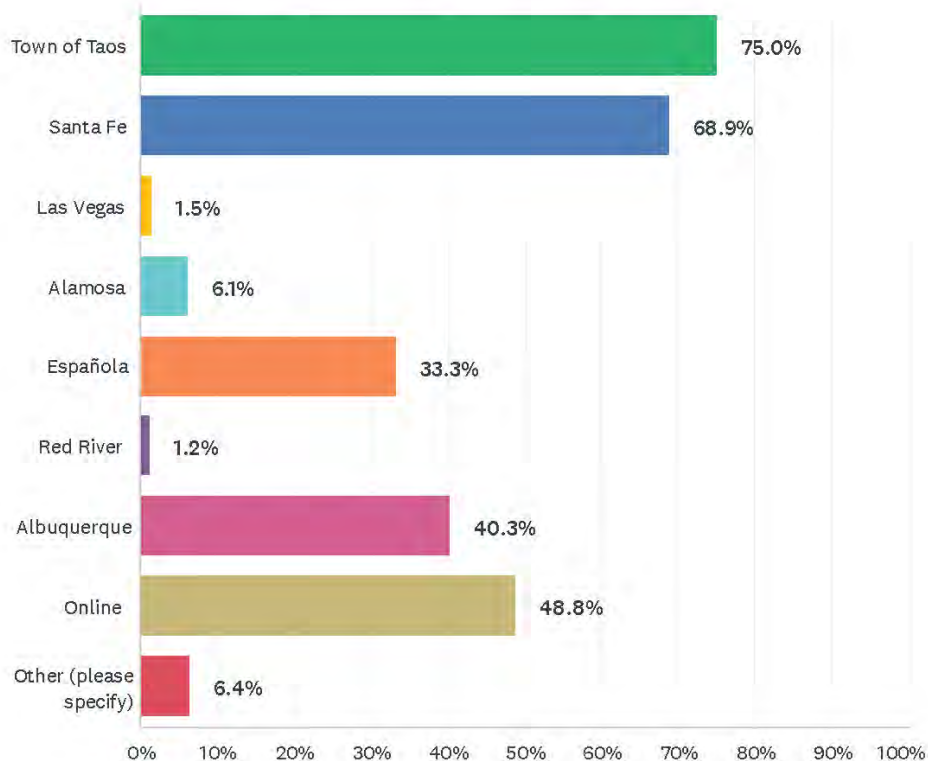
### Q19 What is your level of satisfaction with commercial retail and services available in Taos County?

Answered: 1,054 Skipped: 92



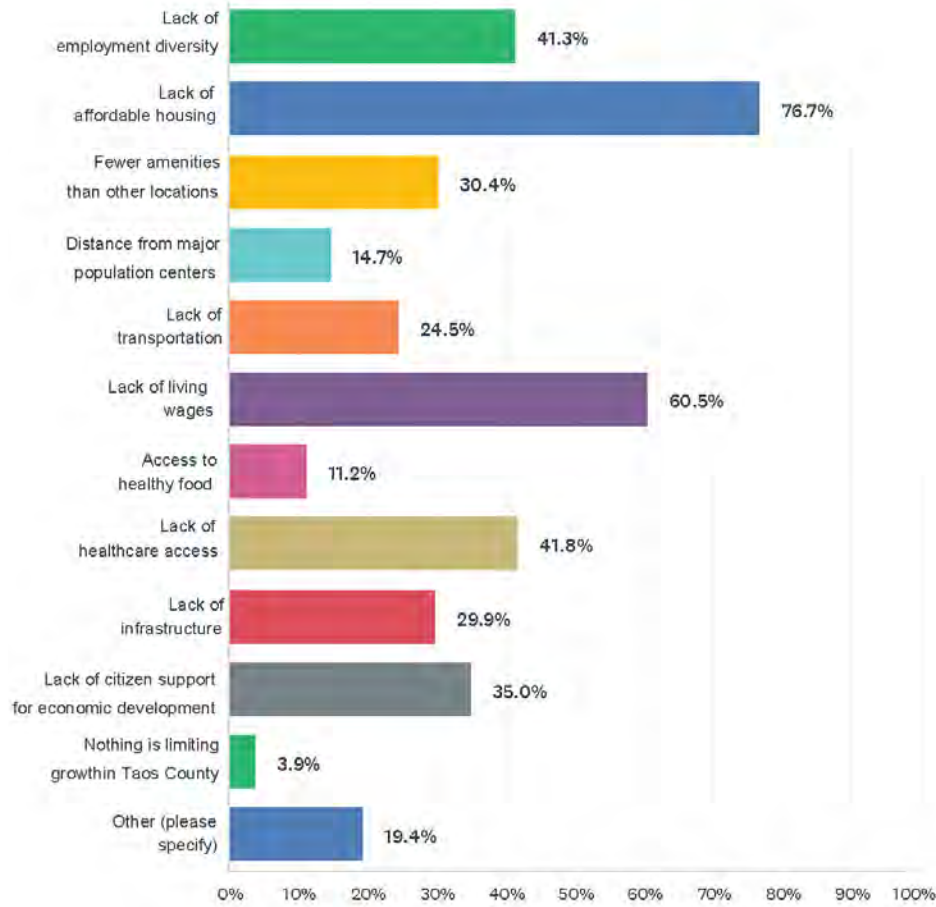
### Q20 Where do you currently go for shopping and commercial services? (choose all that apply)

Answered: 1,066 Skipped: 80



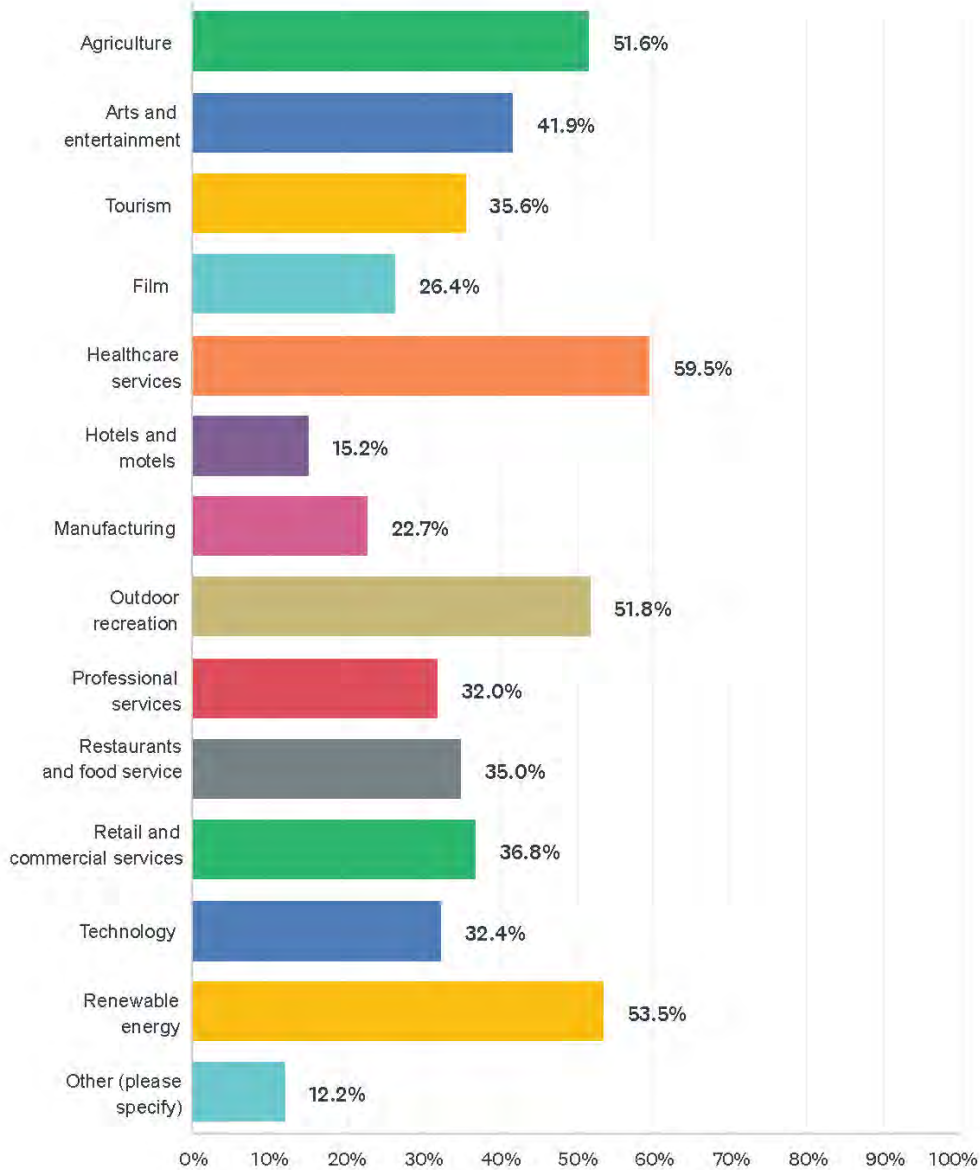
### Q21 What, if anything, do you feel is limiting growth in Taos County? (choose all that apply)

Answered: 1,050 Skipped: 96



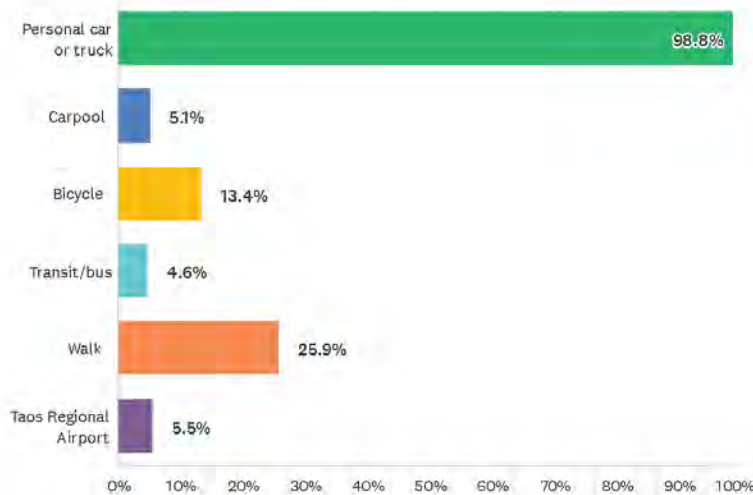
### Q22 What areas of economic development should Taos County focus on? (choose all that apply)

Answered: 1,051 Skipped: 95



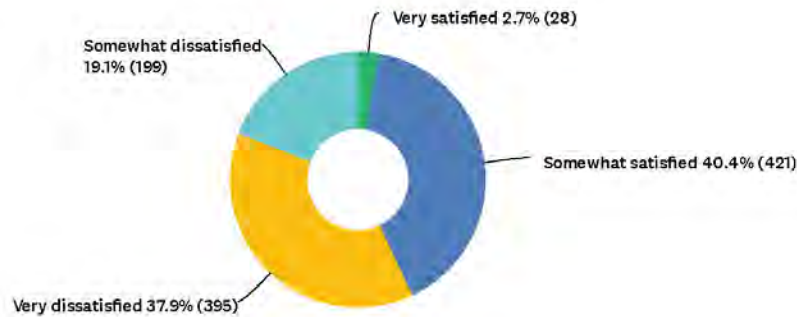
Q23 Please indicate the transportation modes you currently use (choose all that apply)

Answered: 1,043 Skipped: 103



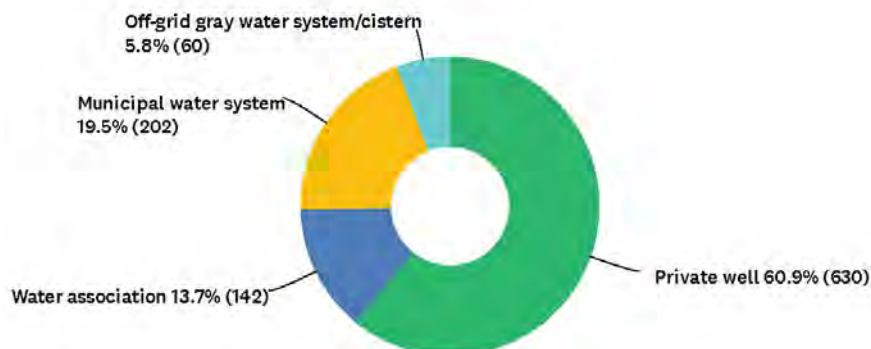
Q24 What is your level of satisfaction with Taos County's current roadway conditions and maintenance?

Answered: 1,043 Skipped: 103



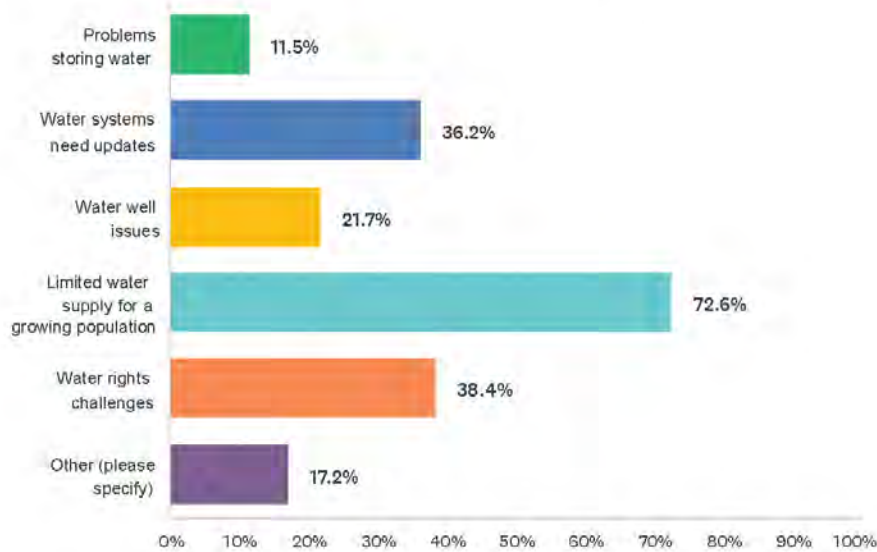
Q26 How do you access water at your home?

Answered: 1,034 Skipped: 112



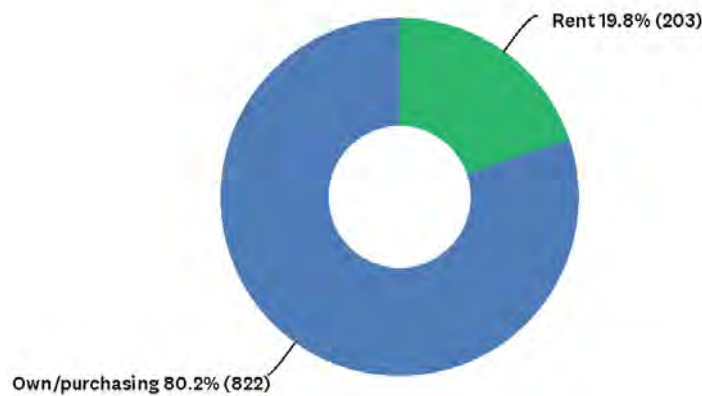
### Q27 What are the biggest issues facing Taos County's water supply? (choose all that apply)

Answered: 938 Skipped: 208



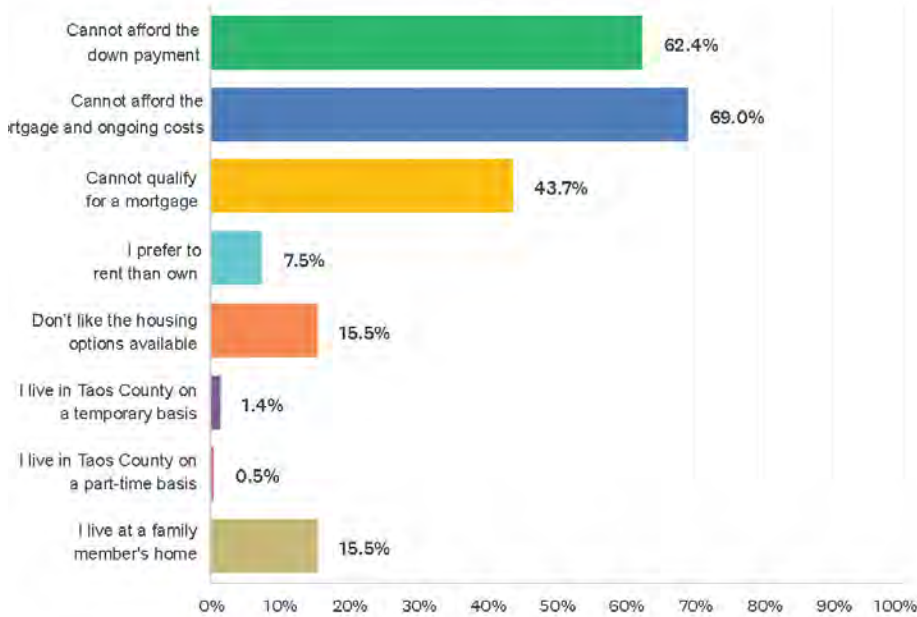
### Q28 Do you rent or own your home?

Answered: 1,025 Skipped: 121



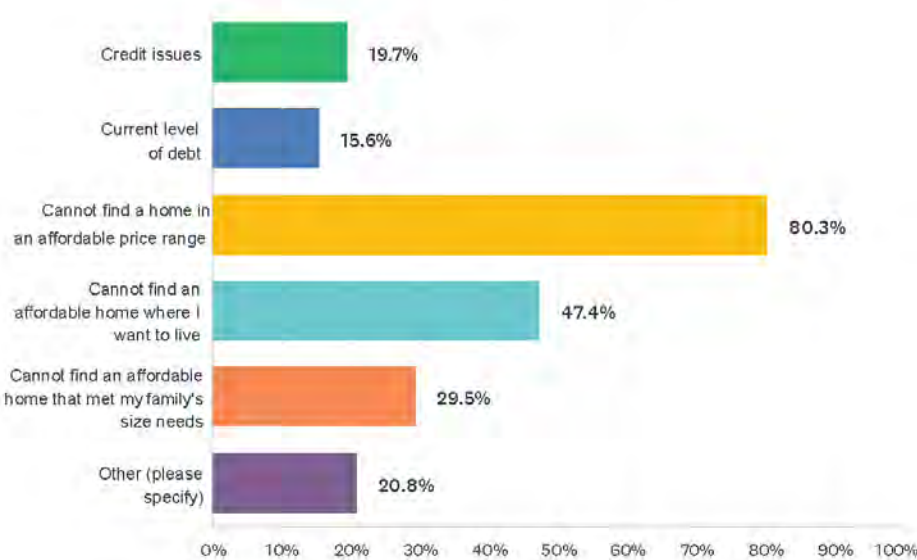
Q29 If your answer to Question #28 was “Rent”, why have you not purchased a home? (choose all that apply)

Answered: 213 Skipped: 933



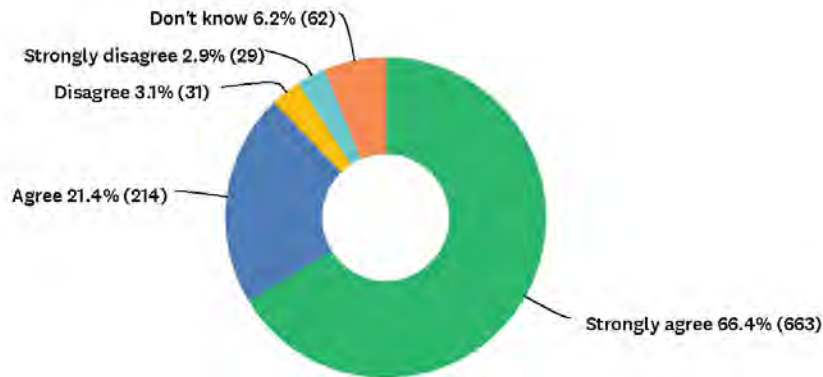
Q30 If your answer to Question #29 was “Cannot qualify for a mortgage”, what obstacles are preventing you from being able to qualify? (choose all that apply)

Answered: 173 Skipped: 973



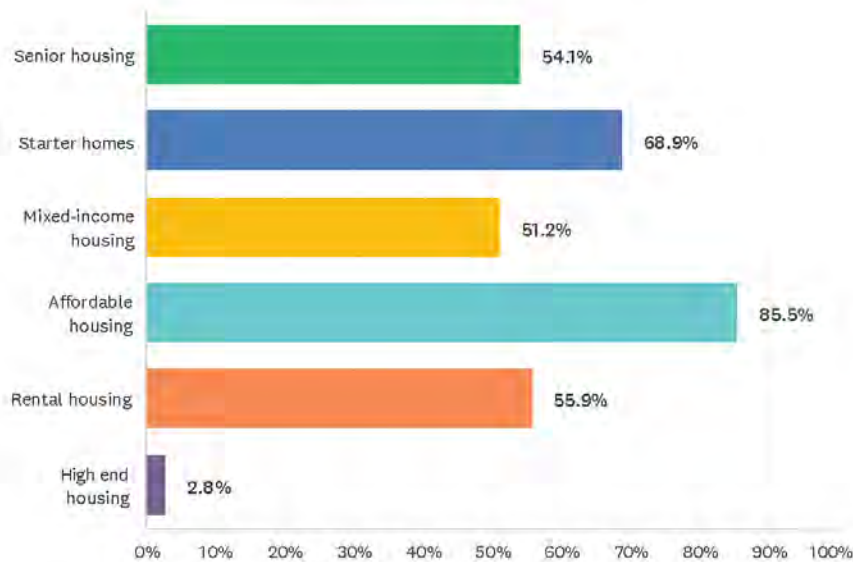
Q31 What is your level of agreement regarding increasing the supply of affordable housing in Taos County? (defined as housing for which occupants are paying no more than 30% of household income on housing and utilities).

Answered: 999 Skipped: 147

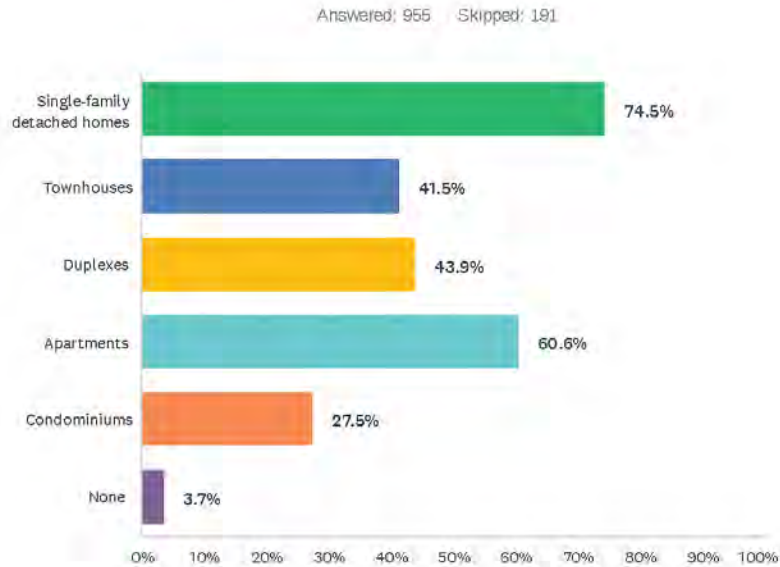


Q32 What housing development types does Taos County need more of? (choose all that apply)

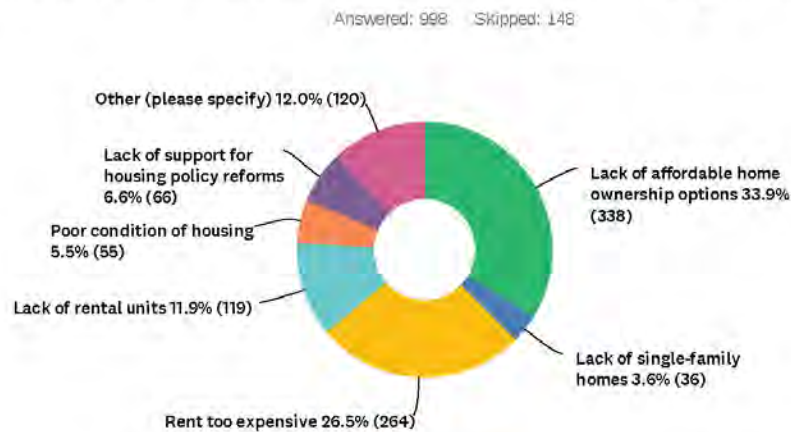
Answered: 994 Skipped: 152



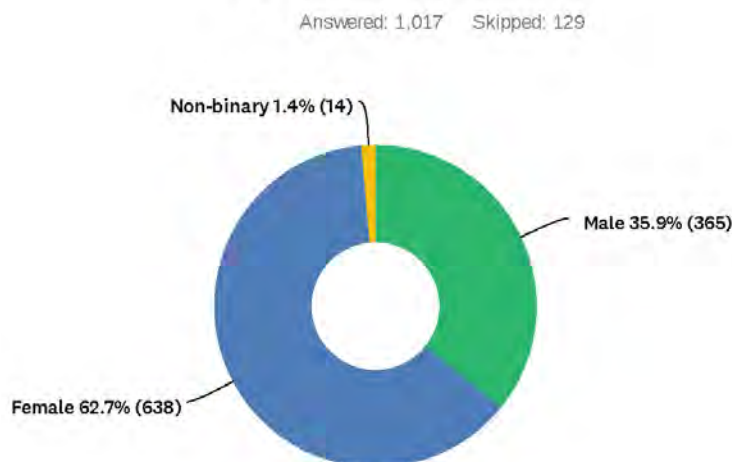
Q33 What housing types does Taos County need more of? (choose all that apply)



Q34 What is the most important housing issue facing Taos County?

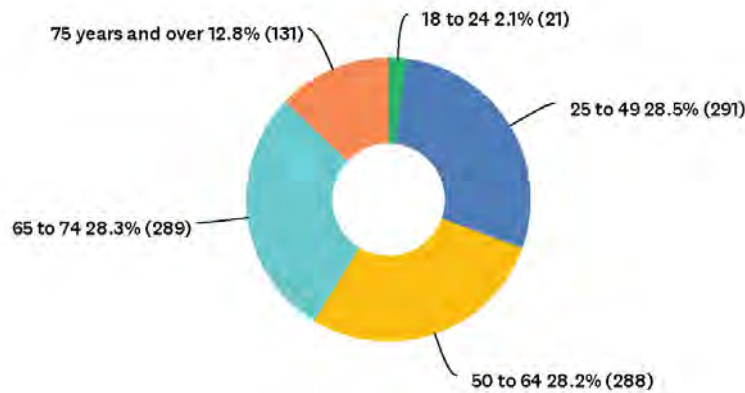


Q35 What is your gender?



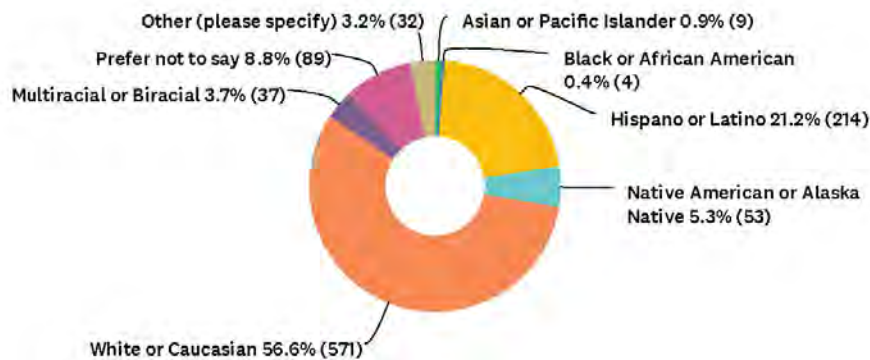
### Q36 What is your age category?

Answered: 1,020 Skipped: 126



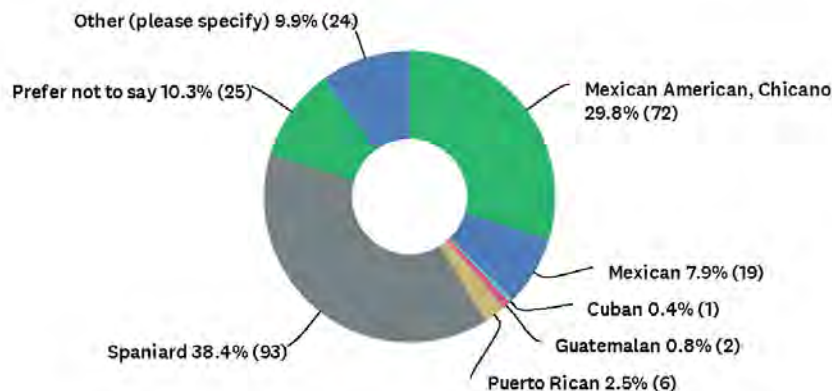
### Q37 How do you describe yourself?

Answered: 1,009 Skipped: 137



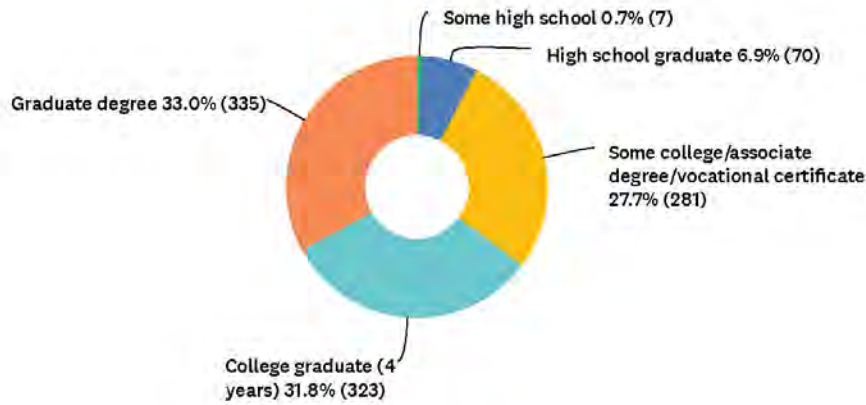
### Q38 If your answer to Question #37 was "Hispanic or Latino", please indicate of what origin.

Answered: 242 Skipped: 904



Q39 What is the highest level of education you have attained?

Answered: 1,016 Skipped: 130



Q40 Which of the following categories best describes your total household income?

Answered: 977 Skipped: 169



## INTRODUCTION

This section includes a brief list and description of federal and state resources available to both local governments and people involved in historic preservation, community development, agriculture, transportation, outdoor recreation, arts and culture, business development, and housing assistance. Each of these programs requires applicants to meet certain qualifications in order to be eligible for funding.

## WILDFIRE ASSISTANCE

### *Community Planning Assistance for Wildfire*

CPAW works with communities to provide land use planning solutions to better manage their wildland-urban interface (WUI). Towns, cities, tribal communities, and counties can apply for a one-year customized course from the CPAW team of professionals. CPAW services include: land use planning recommendations for wildfire protection through land use codes, plans, and ordinances; hazard assessments that model and map wildfire hazard at neighborhood and community scale; workshops and trainings to share best practices; and customized research with online interactive and data visualization tools.

Contact: Headwaters Economics / CPAW Division  
270 W. Kagy Suite G  
Bozeman, MT 59771  
Phone: (303) 358-9589  
Website: [planningforwildfire.org](http://planningforwildfire.org)

### *Community Wildfire Defense Grant Program*

The Community Wildfire Defense Program assists at-risk communities, including Tribal communities, with planning for and lowering wildfire risks on tribal, state, and privately-managed land. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law authorizes the \$1 billion for the five-year CWDG Program.

In the 2024 funding round, West Latir Ditch Association received an award for the West Latir Collaborative Forest Fuel Reduction and Watershed Protection Initiative to implement high priority fuels reduction work to reduce fuel loading, improve defensible space and create fuel breaks within and adjacent to the unincorporated/underserved communities El Rito and Latir in northeast Taos County.

Contact: USDA Forest Service  
Southwestern Region  
333 Broadway SE  
Albuquerque, NM 87102  
Phone: (505) 842-3292  
Website: [www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/fire-grants/cwdg](http://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/fire-grants/cwdg)

### *Wildfire Risk Reduction Program for Rural Communities*

The Wildfire Risk Reduction Program for Rural Communities was established in 2005 under the National Fire Plan to assist communities throughout New Mexico in reducing their risk from wildland fire on non-federal lands. The New Mexico Association of Counties (NMAC), a non-profit community foundation, partnered with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to administer the program and distribute awards. Projects require a minimum 10% cost share.

Contact: NMAC - Wildfire Risk Reduction Program  
444 Galisteo Street  
Santa Fe, NM 87501  
Phone: (505) 395-3403  
Website: [www.nmcounties.org/programs](http://www.nmcounties.org/programs)

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION

### *National Trust for Historic Preservation*

The National Trust for Historic Preservation is a non-profit organization that provides leadership, education, advocacy, and resources to save America's diverse historic places and revitalize our communities. The National Trust Preservation Fund offers several types of financial assistance to non-profit organizations, public agencies, for-profit companies, and individuals involved in preservation-related projects. Grants can range from \$2,500 to over \$150,000. Information is available for Special Grant Programs on the NTHP website.

Contact: National Trust for Historic Preservation  
2600 Virginia Avenue NW, Suite 1100  
Washington, DC 20037-2117  
Phone: (202) 588-6000 or (800) 944-6847  
Email: [info@nthp.org](mailto:info@nthp.org)  
Website: [www.savingplaces.org](http://www.savingplaces.org)

### ***State Tax Credit for Registered Cultural Properties***

This program is available to owners of historic structures who accomplish qualified rehabilitation on a structure or stabilization or protection of an archaeological site. The property must be individually listed in, or contributing to a historic district listed in the State Register of Cultural Properties. The credit is applied against New Mexico income taxes owed in the year the project is completed and the balance may be carried forward for up to four additional years. Maximum in eligible expenses is \$50,000 for a tax credit of \$25,000, unless the project is within a state-approved and certified Arts and Cultural District, in which case the maximum is \$50,000. There is no minimum project expense. This program has provide accessible and useful for small projects that can include facade improvements.

Contact: Department of Cultural Affairs -  
New Mexico Historic Preservation  
Bataan Memorial Building  
407 Galisteo Street, Suite 236  
Santa Fe, NM 87501  
Phone: (505) 827-6320  
E-mail: nm.shpo@state.nm.us  
Website: www.nmhistoricpreservation.org

## **ENVIRONMENTAL**

### ***New Mexico Clean and Beautiful Program***

The Tourism Department provides funding and technical assistance to municipalities, counties, Tribal Governments, and units of government on litter eradication, waste reduction, and community beautification initiatives. This grant requires a 25% match. Eligible projects must contribute to the following established goals:

- ◀ End littering
- ◀ Reduce waste
- ◀ Beautify communities
- ◀ Empower youth
- ◀ Increase program capacity

Contact: Tourism Development Department  
491 Old Santa Fe Trail  
Santa Fe, NM 87501  
Phone: (505) 992-9687  
Website: www.newmexico.org

### ***NMED - Liquid Waste Assistance Fund***

The Liquid Waste Assistance Fund helps low-income homeowners to construct, replace or repair wastewater treatment and disposal systems or to connect to sewer systems. Eligible applicants must own or be in the process of purchasing the property, must meet the program income guidelines, and the home value must not exceed HUD's median home value for the county.

Contact: New Mexico Environment Department  
1190 St. Francis Drive, Suite N4050  
Santa Fe, NM 87505  
Phone: (505) 827-1840  
Website: www.env.nm.gov

## **OUTDOOR RECREATION**

### ***International Mountain Biking Association***

The International Mountain Biking Association provides Trail Accelerator Grants to jump-start the pace of trail building in communities that have the interest and political support to develop trail systems but need assistance to get projects up and running. Grants typically range from \$5,000 to \$30,000 and require a one-to-one match. Projects that will be considered include those that will increase access to mountain bike experiences; leverage additional resources to ensure success of the project; and promote community development, including engaging marginalized community members. There are two grant application periods; in spring and summer.

Contact: International Mountain Bicycling  
Association  
PO Box 20280  
Boulder, Colorado 80308  
Phone: (303) 545-9011  
Website: www.imba.com

### ***Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)***

The LWCF is a federal program administered by the National Park Service. The state side of the LWCF provides matching grants to states and local governments for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities. The New Mexico State Parks Division administers the state program.

Contact: National Park Service  
1849 C Street, NW, Org-2225  
Washington, D.C. 20240  
Website: www.nps.gov

### *New Mexico Outdoor Recreation*

The New Mexico Outdoor Recreation is a division of the New Mexico Economic Development Department. It was created to grow and champion outdoor recreation in New Mexico as a powerful economic engine to expand wealth and job opportunities. The New Mexico Outdoor Recreation administers three funding programs:

**Outdoor Equity Fund** - This fund aims to support transformative outdoor experiences for New Mexico youth that foster stewardship and respect for New Mexico lands, waters, and cultural heritage. Applicants must be from an area that serves a population where at least 40% of youth are low income. Awards range from \$1,500 to \$15,000.

**Outdoor Recreation Trails+ Grant** - This grant program supports shovel-ready projects that are open to the public, increase access to outdoor opportunities, and demonstrate a clear economic benefit to the community through improved quality of life, better health outcomes, and/or increased eco-tourism. Awards range from \$25,000 to \$500,000.

**Outdoor Marketing Grant** - This grant will support communities' and eligible non-profits' investments in their outdoor recreation marketing programs. Awards range from \$15,000 to \$30,000.

Contact: New Mexico Economic Development  
Outdoor Recreation Division  
1100 South St. Francis Drive  
Santa Fe, NM 87505  
Phone: (505) 827-0300  
Website: [www.nmoutside.com](http://www.nmoutside.com)

## ARTS AND CULTURE

### *ArtPlace America, National Creative Placemaking Fund*

ArtPlace America focuses on creative placemaking and works with foundations, federal agencies, and financial institutions in order to position arts and culture as a core sector of community planning and development. The National Creative Placemaking Fund is a competitive national program that invests money in communities across the country in which artists, arts organizations, and arts and culture activity help drive community development.

Contact: ArtPlace America  
195 Montague Street, 14th Floor  
Brooklyn, New York 11201  
Phone: (347) 853-7817  
Website: [www.artplaceamerica.org](http://www.artplaceamerica.org)

### *National Endowment for the Arts*

The National Endowment for the Arts is the largest funder of the arts and arts education in communities nationwide and a catalyst of public and private support for the arts. By advancing equitable opportunities for arts participation and practice, the NEA fosters and sustains an environment in which the arts benefit everyone in the United States.

**Our Town Grant** - supports creative placemaking projects that integrate arts, culture, and design into local efforts that strengthen communities over the long-term. Applicant organizations must have completed at least 3 years of arts programming prior to the application deadline. Applicants may request an amount between \$25,000 and \$150,000, with a required minimum nonfederal cost share/match equal to the grant amount.

**Grants for Arts Projects** - The program supports opportunities for public engagement with the arts and arts education, for the integration of the arts with strategies promoting the health and well-being of people and communities, and for the improvement of overall capacity and capabilities within the arts sector. Applicants may request cost share/matching grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$100,000.

Contact: National Endowment for the Arts  
400 7th Street SW  
Washington, DC 20506  
Phone: (202) 682-5400  
Website: [www.arts.gov/gants/apply-for-a-grant](http://www.arts.gov/gants/apply-for-a-grant)

### *New Mexico Arts*

New Mexico Arts is a division of the Department of Cultural Affairs. Its primary function is to provide financial support and technical assistance or arts services and programs to non-profit organizations statewide and to administer the 1% public art program for the State of New Mexico. The organization enters into arts services contracts with eligible organizations that perform specified arts

services within a particular time period. All funding must provide a 50% match by the applicant organization, at least half of which must be in cash. New Mexico Arts is a partner of the New Mexico Arts and Cultural Districts program.

Contact: New Mexico Arts  
Bataan Memorial Building  
407 Galisteo Suite 270  
Santa Fe, New Mexico  
Phone: (505) 827-6490  
Website: [www.nmarts.org](http://www.nmarts.org)

## CONSERVATION

### *Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund*

The Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund is a dedicated source of recurring state funding for conservation, prioritizing land and water stewardship, forest and watershed health, outdoor recreation and infrastructure, agriculture and working lands, historic preservation, and wildlife species protection. The Fund comprises 10 existing state programs spread across 6 state agencies (Energy, Minerals, & Natural Resources Department, New Mexico Department of Agriculture, New Mexico Environment Development, New Mexico Economic Development Department, New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs, and Department of Game & Fish). A \$50 million expendable fund is available for annual disbursements beginning July 1, 2024, to existing state programs that are shovel-ready, have a proven track record of success, are popular in communities, or have rarely been funded to their full potential. Also available is an investment fund managed by the State Investment Council. Interest earned would be disbursed to state programs.

Contact: Website: [www.enchantmentfund.org](http://www.enchantmentfund.org)  
(additional information found on individual agency websites)

### *Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area*

Established by the US Congress in 2006, the Northern Río Grande National Heritage Area (NRGNHA) encompasses Río Arriba, Santa Fe, and Taos counties and is dedicated to conserving and sustaining the varied cultural, historical, archaeological, and natural resources of Northern New Mexico. The NRGNHA administers several

programs to distribute funds for a wide array of projects within the Heritage Area including:

**Annual Grants Program:** Communities, tribal and local governments, land grant associations, non-profit 501c3 organizations, youth programs, historical and archaeological societies, and preservation groups are encouraged to apply for grant funding up to \$10,000 that support the NRGNHA's mission and goals.

**Indigenous Language Project:** The Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area is offering grants to support Indigenous Language Projects in Rio Arriba, Taos, and Santa Fe Counties. Eligible organizations, including non-profits, local governments, and Indigenous communities, are invited to propose projects that preserve, revitalize, or promote Indigenous languages, acknowledging their cultural significance and the threats they face from historical processes of colonization and assimilation. Grants of up to \$43,000 for a 6-month duration are available, with a 2:1 in-kind match requirement.

**Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area Grant:** Filmmakers may apply for up to \$5,000 in the Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area Grant. Both narrative and documentary projects will be considered, and filmmakers of any age and background may apply. However, filmmakers must reside in Santa Fe, Rio Arriba or Taos counties, or have graduated from a high school in one of these counties.

**Los Luceros Grant:** A \$10,000 grant will be awarded to a filmmaker dedicated to creating a film made at or about the Los Luceros site. Both narrative and documentary projects will be considered, and filmmakers of any age and background may apply. However, filmmakers must reside in Santa Fe, Rio Arriba or Taos counties, or have graduated from a high school in one of these counties.

Contact: Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area  
Plaza de Española  
101 Calle de las Españolas  
Española, NM 87532  
<https://riograndenha.org/>

## CLEAN ENERGY

### *Clean Energy Performance Financing*

The Energy Savings Performance Contracting (ESPC) is a process that facilitates facility improvements without the need for up front capital funding from the agency.

### *New Mexico Renewable Energy Tax Incentives*

Tax incentives are available for the development of sustainable and renewable energy projects. Tax credits are available for sustainable buildings; agricultural biomass; geothermal heat pump; biodiesel facilities; renewable energy production; and solar market. New Mexico also provides a Gross Receipts Tax Exemption for wind and solar systems. The federal government provides tax credits, rebates, and savings for renewable energy projects.

Contact: EMNRD Energy Conservation and Management Division  
1220 South St. Francis Drive  
Wendell Chino Building, First Floor  
Santa Fe, NM 87505  
Phone: (505) 476-3310  
[www.emnrd.nm.gov/ecmd](http://www.emnrd.nm.gov/ecmd)

### *Home Energy Rebates Programs*

The Home Energy Rebates Programs are federal funds made available to state energy offices and tribal entities through the Inflation Reduction Act for Home Electrification and Appliance Rebates and Home Efficiency Rebates. New Mexico has launched the Home Electrification and Appliance Rebates (HEAR) portion of the rebate program. Low-income single-family homeowners and low- and middle-income renters can receive up to \$14,000 for energy-efficiency improvements such as an electric load service center, insulation and air sealing, and heat pumps for space heating or cooling.

Contact: EMNRD Energy Conservation and Management Division  
1220 South St. Francis Drive  
Santa Fe, NM 87505  
Website: <https://clean.energy.nm.gov/>

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

### *Local Government Planning Fund (LGPF)*

The LGPF provides capital necessary to allow for proper planning of vital public projects, including infrastructure, water and wastewater preliminary engineering reports, long-term master plans, water conservation plans, economic development plans or energy audits. LGPF is limited to \$50,000 per Planning Document and \$100,000 per entity per 24-month period. Applications are accepted monthly and grants are made on a reimbursement basis.

Contact: New Mexico Finance Authority  
207 Shelby Street  
Santa Fe, NM 87501  
Phone: (505) 984-1454  
Toll Free: (877) ASK-NMFA  
Website: [www.nmfinance.com](http://www.nmfinance.com)

### *NMED - Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund*

This fund provides low-cost financing for the construction of and improvements to drinking water facilities throughout New Mexico in order to protect public health and drinking water quality. Eligible project include new and replacement water sources, treatment, transmission and distribution lines, supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) systems, etc. Loans of up to 30 years at fixed, below-market interest rates are available.

Contact: New Mexico Finance Authority  
207 Shelby Street  
Santa Fe, NM 87501  
Phone: (505) 984-1454  
Website: [www.nmfinance.com](http://www.nmfinance.com)

### *Public Project Revolving Fund*

The PPRF offers many examples of the New Mexico Finance Authority's investment of time, expertise, and capital. Created in 1994, the PPRF program assists a wide range of public credits in accessing the capital markets with advantage of offering to all borrowers (regardless of their credit worthiness) fixed 'AAA' - insured interest rates.

Contact: New Mexico Finance Authority  
207 Shelby Street  
Santa Fe, NM 87501  
Phone: (505) 992-9639  
Toll Free: (877) ASK-NMFA  
Website: [www.nmfinance.com](http://www.nmfinance.com)

### ***Small Cities Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG)***

This program is administered by the State of New Mexico through the Local Government Division of the Department of Finance and Administration for communities with populations under 50,000. Funds can be applied towards planning projects, economic development activities, emergency activities, construction or improvement of public buildings, and rehabilitation or repair of housing units. CDBG funds can be used for towns engaged in downtown revitalization including redevelopment of streets and fund facade improvement programs. There is a \$500,000 grant limit per applicant (\$50,000 maximum for planning efforts) and a 5% cash match by the applicant is required.

Contact: NM Local Government Division  
407 Galisteo Street,  
Santa Fe, NM 87501  
Phone: (505) 827-4966  
Website: [www.nmdfa.state.nm.us](http://www.nmdfa.state.nm.us)

### ***Resilient Communities Fund***

The Resilient Communities Fund provides financial support for locally-driven, community-based economic development projects statewide. Awards are made in the areas of design and planning, organizational capacity building, marketing and promotions, business development, civic/youth engagement, and environmental stewardship.

Contact: New Mexico Resiliency Alliance  
1232 Apache Avenue  
Santa Fe, NM 87505  
Website: [www.nmresiliencyalliance.org](http://www.nmresiliencyalliance.org)

### ***USDA Rural Development Programs***

The USDA provides assistance to rural communities, including loan and grant programs that address small businesses and rural businesses, rural housing, rural community facilities, and rural utilities. The USDA provides loan programs such as the B&I Loan and also grant programs. USDA Rural Development grants can be made directly to small businesses that are accomplishing innovative economic development work or energy efficiency installations, but must flow through a non-profit or local government intermediary. The Albuquerque Field Office covers Sandoval County. Assistance

may be available through the following programs:

- ◀ Business and Industry Loan Guarantees
- ◀ Business Development Grants
- ◀ Single Family Housing Direct Home Loans (Section 502)
- ◀ Single Family Housing Guaranteed Loan Program (Section 502)
- ◀ Multifamily Housing Direct Loans
- ◀ Multifamily Housing Loan Guarantees (Section 538)
- ◀ Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Program
- ◀ Single Family Housing Repair Loans and Grants (Section 504)
- ◀ Water and Waste Disposal Loan and Grant Program

Contact: USDA Rural Development -  
Albuquerque Field Office  
100 Sun Avenue NE, Suite 130  
Albuquerque, NM 87109  
Phone: (505) 761-4950  
Website: [www.rd.usda.gov/nm](http://www.rd.usda.gov/nm)

### ***Water Trust Board - Water Project Fund***

This program provides funding for a variety of water projects statewide. The Water Trust Board provides recommendations to the Legislature projects to be funded through the Water Project Fund. Awards are a combination of grants and loans. There are no limitations on the number of applications a qualified entity may submit, however, the Water Trust Board may not award more than 15% of the annual available funds to any one project. The net available funds for the 2024 cycle is approximately \$ 133.1 million. Eligible project types include:

- ◀ Water conservation or recycling, treatment, or water reuse projects
- ◀ Flood prevention projects
- ◀ Endangered Species Act (ESA) collaborative projects
- ◀ Water storage, conveyance or delivery projects
- ◀ Watershed restoration and management projects

Contact: New Mexico Finance Authority  
207 Shelby Street  
Santa Fe, NM 87501  
Phone: (505) 984-1454  
Website: [www.nmfinance.com](http://www.nmfinance.com)

## AGRICULTURE

### *New Mexico Department of Agriculture*

The New Mexico Department of Agriculture promotes a fair marketplace, food protection, marketing, and economic development, and supports the beneficial use and conservation of natural resources. The Agricultural Programs and Resources and the Marketing and Development Divisions oversee the following programs:

**Acequia and Community Ditch Fund** - The Acequia and Community Ditch Fund provides financial assistance for acequia and community ditch systems. This assistance helps develop hydrological studies, acquire technical and legal research, and other services necessary to conserve and protect water. Acequia/ditch associations constituting a majority of acequias/ditches in adjudication or separately administered portion of an adjudication suit qualify for funding.

**Agricultural Workforce Development Program** - The Agricultural Workforce Development Program offers incentives to the state's agricultural businesses to hire interns. The AWD Program is intended to provide hands-on educational opportunities for students aspiring to careers in agriculture, as well as young or beginning farmers and ranchers.

New Mexico Department of Agriculture will reimburse qualified agricultural businesses up to 50 percent of the actual cost of hiring a qualified intern, not to exceed \$15,000 per internship. An agricultural business may request funding to hire as many as three interns per calendar year. Each intern must be provided with at least one hundred thirty (130) hours of work experience, not exceeding one (1) year in duration per intern.

**Healthy Soil Program** - The Healthy Soil Program provides grants of up to \$100,000 to local governmental entities with proven land management capacity to support healthy soil and individuals, businesses, and non-profits directly engaged in farming, ranching, and/or other forms of land management.

**Specialty Crop Block Grant Program** - The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program assists with improving the competitiveness of specialty

crops by promoting, supporting research, and providing access to specialty crops. Grant funds are disbursed on a reimbursement basis. Over \$500,000 in funding is available through this program.

**Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program** - The Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program is to develop and administer state coordinated initiatives to build resilience across the middle of the State's food supply chain for food crops. Infrastructure grant applicants can apply for a minimum of \$100,000 and a maximum of \$3 million and are required to contribute 50% of the total proposed project cost as a match to federal funding.

Contact: New Mexico Department of Agriculture  
1050 Stewart Street  
Las Cruces, NM 88003  
Phone: (575) 646-3007  
Website: [www.nmdeptag.nmsu.edu](http://www.nmdeptag.nmsu.edu)

## TRANSPORTATION

### *Cooperative Agreements Program (COOP) - Local Government Road Fund*

The COOP assists local governments and other public entities to improve, construct, maintain, repair, and pave highways and streets and public parking lots. Funds must be used for the construction, maintenance, repair, and the improvements of public highways, streets, and parking lots. The local match is 40% and awards range from \$9,000 to \$192,000. Funds are made available at the beginning of the fiscal year and must be encumbered and spent no later than the end of the fiscal year.

Contact: NMDOT, Maintenance Section  
1120 Cerrillos Road  
P.O. Box 1149  
Santa Fe, NM 87504-1149  
Phone: (505) 827-5498  
Website: [www.dot.nm.gov](http://www.dot.nm.gov)

### *Municipal Arterial Program (MAP) - Local Government Road Fund*

This program assists municipalities construct and reconstruct streets that are principal extensions of the rural highway system and other streets which qualify under New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) criteria. Municipalities

are required to contribute 25% to the cost of the project. There is no set limit to the amount of awards, but the state share typically ranges from \$50,000 to \$1.1 million per project. Applications must be received by March 15th for funding to be considered by the fiscal year beginning July 1.

Contact: NMDOT, Engineer Maintenance Section  
1120 Cerrillos Road  
PO Box 1149  
Santa Fe, NM 87504-1149  
Phone: (505) 827-5498  
Website: [www.dot.nm.gov](http://www.dot.nm.gov)

### ***Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Grant Program***

The Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) grant program was established through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and funded with \$1 billion over the next 5 years. The program funds removing, retrofitting, or mitigating transportation facilities like highways or rail lines that create barriers to mobility, access, or economic development through technical assistance and grant funding for planning and capital construction projects that reconnect communities and improve peoples' lives.

Contact: U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE  
Washington, DC 20590  
Phone: (855) 355-4200  
Website: [www.transportation.gov/grants/rcnprogram/about-rcp](http://www.transportation.gov/grants/rcnprogram/about-rcp)

### ***Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)***

The TAP is a federal aid funding program authorized through the FAST Act as part of the new Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) Program. TAP funds can generally be used for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and activities. Each state's DOT administers the program using its own competitive process, in accordance with the law. Approximately every two years, the NMDOT coordinates with the state's seven RTPOs and five MPOs on soliciting TAP applications.

Contact: NMDOT District 5 Office  
7315 Cerillos Road  
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87502  
Phone: (505) 795-0533  
Website: [www.dot.nm.gov](http://www.dot.nm.gov)

### ***Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Program - U.S. Department of Transportation***

The Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Competitive Program makes \$390 million in funding available to states and direct recipients to replace, rehabilitate and purchase buses and related equipment and to construct bus-related facilities, including technological changes or innovations to modify low or no emission vehicles or facilities. Funding is provided through formula allocations and competitive grants.

Eligible applicants include designated recipients that allocate funds to fixed-route bus operators, States (including territories and Washington D.C.) or local governmental entities that operate fixed route bus service, and Indian tribes. Eligible subrecipients include all otherwise eligible applicants and also private non-profit organizations engaged in public transportation.

The federal share of eligible capital costs is 80 percent of the net capital project cost, unless the grant recipient requests a lower percentage. Funds remain available for obligation for four fiscal years.

Contact: U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Transit Administration  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590  
Phone: 202-366-4043  
Website: [www.transit.dot.gov/bus-program](http://www.transit.dot.gov/bus-program)

### ***Transportation Enhancement - U.S. Department of Transportation***

The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) manages the Transportation Enhancement (TE) program, which offers funding opportunities to help expand transportation choices and enhance the transportation experience through 12 eligible TE activities. The eligible activities relate to surface transportation, including pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and safety programs, scenic and historic highway programs, landscaping and scenic beautification, historic preservation, and environmental mitigation.

Contact: USDOT Federal Highway Administration  
New Mexico Division  
4001 Office Court Drive, Suite 801  
Santa Fe, NM 87507  
Phone: (505) 820-2021  
Website: [www.fhwa.dot.gov](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov)

## BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

### *DreamSpring New Mexico*

DreamSpring New Mexico makes loans to small businesses that may not qualify for bank loans, and also provides business support services.

Contact: DreamSpring New Mexico  
2000 Zearing Avenue NW  
Albuquerque, NM 87104  
Phone: (800) 508-7624  
Website: [www.dreamspring.org](http://www.dreamspring.org)

### *High Wage Jobs Tax Credit*

A taxpayer who is an eligible employer may apply for and receive a tax credit for each new high-wage economic-base job. The credit amount equals 8.5% of the wages and benefits paid for each new economic-base job created. Qualified employers can take the credit for four years. The credit may only be claimed for up to one year after the end of the four qualifying periods. The credit can be applied to the state portion of the gross receipts tax, compensating tax, and withholding tax. Any excess credit will be refunded to the taxpayer.

Contact: NM Taxation and Revenue Dept.  
1100 South St. Francis Drive  
Santa Fe, NM 87504  
Phone: (505) 827-0700  
Website: [www.gonm.biz](http://www.gonm.biz)

### *Job Training Incentive Program (JTIP)*

The JTIP is one of the most valuable incentives offered to new employers in New Mexico and can be used effectively in recruitment packages. This program reimburses 50 to 70% of employee wages and required travel expenses during an extended training period for new hires to new and expanding companies in New Mexico. The JTIP must be applied for and approved prior to reimbursable wages being paid.

Contact: NM Economic Development Department  
Joseph M. Montoya Building  
1100 S. St. Francis Drive  
Santa Fe, NM 87505-4147  
Phone: (505) 827-0249  
Website: [www.gonm.biz](http://www.gonm.biz)

### *New Markets Tax Credit Program*

The NMTCP is a federally funded program designed to provide businesses in rural or low-income communities with greater access to capital

in order to increase job creation and development activities.

Contact: New Mexico Finance Authority  
207 Shelby Street  
Santa Fe, NM 87501  
Phone: (505) 984-1454  
Website: [www.nmfinance.com](http://www.nmfinance.com)

### *SBA 7A Loan Program*

SBA 7A Loan Program is the standard SBA loan guarantee program. Up to 80% of a bank loan to a private business can be guaranteed. Banks still accomplish normal due diligence, but may be willing to accept slightly more risk. This program increases the aggregate amount of funds available to small business in the banking system. It can also serve to extend term.

Contact: U.S. Small Business Administration, NM  
625 Silver Avenue SW, Suite 320  
Albuquerque, NM 87102  
Phone: (505) 248-8225  
Website: [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov)

### *New Mexico Manufacturing Extension Partnership*

The New Mexico Manufacturing Extension Partnership provides efficiency training, training in lean manufacturing, and ISO 9000 certification (now temporarily suspended) to the state's small and medium-sized businesses. Edgewood is served by the Albuquerque Office.

Contact: New Mexico Manufacturing Extension Partnership, Albuquerque  
8600 San Mateo Blvd NE #100  
Albuquerque, NM 87113  
Phone: (505) 262-0921  
Website: [www.newmexicomep.org](http://www.newmexicomep.org)

### *New Mexico Partnership*

The New Mexico Partnership is a private, non-profit organization that offers assistance to businesses looking to expand or relocate to New Mexico. It can assist businesses on a variety of business initiatives including:

- ◆ Initiate real estate searches;
- ◆ Coordinate site-selection trips;
- ◆ Personalize briefings and orientations;
- ◆ Assist in evaluating and applying for incentives;
- ◆ Organize strategic meetings with key government and community officials;

- ◀ Collaborate on media and public relations; and
- ◀ Provide data on key business factors.

Contact: New Mexico Partnership  
500 Marquette Avenue NW, Suite 710  
Albuquerque, NM 87110  
Phone: (505) 247-8500  
Website: [www.nmpartnership.com](http://www.nmpartnership.com)

### **Opportunity Enterprise Revolving Fund**

The OERF was created by the Opportunity Enterprise Act in 2022 as a loan program that provides financing for building or renovation projects to increase the inventory of commercial space that will attract businesses to New Mexico, allow existing businesses to expand their operations, and achieve economic benefits for the State. Loan amount available is up to \$17.5 million.

Contact: New Mexico Finance Authority  
207 Shelby Street  
Santa Fe, NM 87501  
Phone: (505) 992-9687  
Website: [www.nmfinance.com](http://www.nmfinance.com)

### **Regional Development Corporation**

The Regional Development Corporation (RDC) is a private non-profit 501(c) 3 organization dedicated to improving economic development in Northern New Mexico. The RDC provides private investment opportunities and technical assistance to facilitate job growth and diversify the economies of communities in Los Alamos, Mora, Rio Arriba, Sandoval, San Miguel, Santa Fe, and Taos Counties and Native American Pueblos therein. Funding opportunities available through its Business Retention and Expansion Program include:

**Micro-Grant Fund** - Grants of up to \$3,000 are available to small businesses in the seven-county RDC service area.

**Team/Manufacturing Fund** - No-interest loans of up to \$20,000 are available to technology and manufacturing businesses in the seven-county RDC service area.

**Tribal Economic Diversity Fund** - Grants of up to \$8,000 are available to companies owned 51% or

more by a federally-recognized Indian tribe or tribal member in the seven-county RDC service area.

Contact: RDC Offices  
441 Greg Avenue  
Santa Fe, NM 87501  
Phone: 505 820-1226  
Website: [www.rdcnm.org](http://www.rdcnm.org)

### **SMART Money Loan Participation Program**

This program is administered by the New Mexico Finance Authority (NMFA) and intended to leverage funds provided by local New Mexico banks for businesses that create quality jobs. The program provides bank participation loans, direct loans, and loan and bond guarantees on behalf of private for-profit and non-profit entities. The program is designed to create greater access to capital for businesses throughout New Mexico, lower the cost for the borrower, and share the risk with the bank creating a benefit to both the bank and borrower. Business loans must result in job creation and economic benefit and carry a minimum of risk.

Contact: New Mexico Finance Authority  
207 Shelby Street  
Santa Fe, NM 87501  
Phone: (505) 992-9638  
Website: [www.nmfinance.com](http://www.nmfinance.com)

### **The Loan Fund**

The Loan Fund provides loans, training, and business consulting to small businesses that do not qualify for a bank loan, but still have a viable need for a loan and the ability to pay it back. This program started out as a micro-lending organization, but can now make loans up to \$200,000 in exceptional circumstances. Loans carry a higher than market rate to compensate for risk.

**SBA 504 Loan Program** - SBA 504 Loan Program is a cooperative loan program between the SBA, a bank, and a certified development corporation. An SBA 504 loan is a participation loan in which the SBA loans money directly to a business in participation with a bank. This loan can only be used for fixed asset financing. The primary benefit to borrowers is that it allows for minimal equity (10%) and it can also serve to extend the term.

**SBA Microloan Program** - Loans to small businesses up to \$50,000. Loans can be used for working capital, inventory or supplies, furniture or fixtures, machinery or equipment. Loans less than \$10,000 carry interest rates of 8.7%. Loans above \$10,000 carry interest rates of 7.875%. All loans can have up to 6 years for repayment.

Contact: The Loan Fund  
423 Iron Avenue SW  
Albuquerque, NM 87102-3821  
(505) 243-3196  
Website: [www.loanfund.org](http://www.loanfund.org)

### **UNM-Taos Small Business Development Center**

The Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at UNM-Taos provides entrepreneurs with professional business consulting at no cost and low-cost business training.

Contact: UNM-Taos SBDC  
115 Civic Plaza Drive,  
Taos, NM  
Phone: (575) 737-6219  
Website: [www.nmsbdc.org/taos](http://www.nmsbdc.org/taos)

### **WESST**

WESST is a non-profit, economic development organization that provides business skills training, product marketing, development opportunities, and small loans to viable start-up or growing New Mexico businesses owned by women and minorities. WESST provides training to create and grow self-sufficient, successful small businesses in Sandoval County. WESST is also a participant in the Small Business Administration (SBA) Microloan Program.

Contact: WESST Santa Fe  
Santa Fe Women's Business Center  
3900 Paseo del Sol, Suite 351  
Santa Fe, NM 87507  
Phone: (505) 474-6556  
Website: [www.wesst.org](http://www.wesst.org)

## **HOUSING ASSISTANCE**

### **Housing New Mexico**

Housing New Mexico (formerly New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority) provides financing for housing and other related services to low- to moderate-income New Mexicans. There are 37 state and federal programs administered by

Housing New Mexico that provide financing for housing, including low interest mortgage loans and down payment assistance, weatherization, green building and rehabilitation, and tax credit programs. Housing New Mexico partners with lenders, realtors, non-profit, local governments, and developers. All state and federal housing programs are administered by Housing New Mexico, including Section 8 housing funds and other HUD projects. Some of the primary rental and homeownership programs administered by Housing New Mexico include:

### **HOME Investment Partnerships Program**

- Assistance is provided to income qualified homeowners who lack the resources to make necessary repairs to their homes. Assistance can be used for reimbursement of costs for rehabilitation, including applicable codes, standards or ordinances, rehabilitation standards, essential improvements, energy-related improvements, lead-based paint hazard reduction, accessibility for disabled persons, repair or replacement of major housing systems, incipient repairs and general property improvements of a non-luxury nature, site improvements and utility connections. Non-profits, housing authorities, and local governments administer the HOME program. Funds are awarded through a RFP application process. Housing New Mexico has also reserved funds for the Reservation Rehabilitation program to provide loans to homeowners on a house-by-house, first-come, first-served basis.

**New Mexico Housing Trust Fund** - Provides flexible funding for affordable housing initiatives for persons or households of low or moderate income served by non-profit and for-profit organizations, governmental housing agencies and entities, regional housing authorities, tribal governments and housing agencies, etc. Interest rates are approximately 1 to 5% per annum. Construction is up to three years (current maximum is \$1.5 million). Long term amortizing up to 30 years (current maximum is \$500,000). Income requirements for rental households are those earning 60% or less AMI, and for single family households, at or less than 80% AMI.

### **New Mexico Affordable Housing Tax Credit**

- This program encourages private investment in affordable housing by providing donors to qualified housing developments with a credit on their state taxes. The donation must be made to an affordable housing development that has been approved by Housing New Mexico. Donors receive investment vouchers for up to 50% of the value of the donation, which they can use towards a tax deduction on their state taxes. Eligible projects include the development of single family homes and multifamily rental housing.

**Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC)** - The LIHTC provides federal income tax credits to individuals or organizations that develop affordable housing through either new construction or acquisition and rehabilitation. The tax credits provide a dollar for dollar reduction in the developer's tax liability for a 10 year period. Tax credits can also be used by non-profit or public developers to attract investment to an affordable housing project by syndicating, or selling, the tax credit to investors. In order to receive tax credits, a developer must set-aside a number of units for households below 60% AMI and the units must remain affordable for a minimum of 30 years. In addition to tax credits, the financing "gap" for certain LIHTC projects may be filled with a below market rate HOME loan. Tax credits and rental HOME loans are awarded annually through a competitive application process according to the state's Qualified Allocation Plan.

Contact: Housing New Mexico  
7425 Jefferson Street NE  
Albuquerque, NM 87109  
Phone: (505) 843-6880  
Website: [www.housingnm.org](http://www.housingnm.org)

### ***New Homes Tax Credit Act***

The recently introduced New Homes Tax Credit Act seeks to provide private investors with a tax credit when they invest capital to construct qualified entry-level homes and renovate single-family housing. The New Homes Tax Credit will be administered under the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund and will be exchanged for cash from investors by Housing Development Entities. Approximately \$15 billion in new home tax credits are designated for the calendar years

2025 through 2031. The New Homes Tax Credit Act allows a Home Development Entity to allocate up to 20% of the median area sales price for new construction projects and 15% for renovation projects. After completing the qualified project, the HDE will transfer the investment capital to the qualified construction business. Additionally, eligible homebuyers must have an income below 120% of the area median income.

Contact: [https://www.heinrich.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/new\\_homes\\_tax\\_credit\\_act\\_one-pager.pdf](https://www.heinrich.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/new_homes_tax_credit_act_one-pager.pdf)  
<https://www.heinrich.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/heinrich-leads-legislation-to-build-and-renovate-homes-for-working-families>