



Taos County Comprehensive Plan Update 2017: Vision, Goals and Strategies

*Prepared for:
Taos County Board of Commissioners
and
Taos County Planning Department
Taos, New Mexico*



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Adopted February 7, 2017

Acknowledgements

Taos County Comprehensive Plan Update 2017

Taos, New Mexico

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Cover photo: Rio Grande Gorge looking north at Red River Confluence

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I. Introduction

This document updates the 2004 Taos County Comprehensive Plan to describe and respond to conditions in 2017. The changing needs and conditions in the County have been studied and this update to the Taos County Comprehensive Plan reflects the current needs and vision of the community residents. The Taos County Comprehensive Plan is a policy document that establishes what the residents, property owners and other stakeholders would like to see in the future for the County. Through a framework of community values, goals and strategies, the Comprehensive Plan defines the direction in which the County Commissioners should guide the County.

The Comprehensive Plan does not change any existing, nor create any new, laws, regulations or requirements, but it does recommend policies that suggest changes to these implementation tools. An approved Comprehensive Plan is an advisory document of the County that establishes a basis for the regulations and programs necessary to manage current and future development within the County. The Plan identifies and analyses growth and development issues and indicates how the local residents and their elected officials want the community to develop in the next 10 years.

The Comprehensive Plan defines a community vision and establishes goals and strategies for the following Elements as per the guidelines of the NM Department of Finance and Administration Local Government Division:

- Land and Water
- Economic Development
- Housing
- Transportation
- Infrastructure/Community Facilities
- Hazards Mitigation
- Implementation

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A set of Goals and Implementation Strategies are established for each Element.

- Goals are statements of a desirable state or condition to be achieved in the future;
- Implementation strategies are action tasks such as policy statements, new regulations, or "next steps" needed to achieve the desired goal. The Implementation Strategies are prioritized in the Implementation Element.

It should be noted that the implementation of some of these strategies, such as for grants, may require a match of monies or in-kind services from the County, or require an increase in County expenditures for maintenance or capital improvements. The Comprehensive Plan should also be used as a basis for reviewing and evaluating development projects that are proposed in the County.

The Taos County Comprehensive Plan Update is a living document that is intended to be updated and amended as programs and regulations are implemented and conditions within the County change and evolve.

A planning grant to prepare the Taos County Comprehensive Plan Update 2017 was provided by the NM Finance Authority.

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History and Culture

Prepared by Ernie Atencio

Earliest evidence of people living on this landscape dates to about 8,000 years ago during the hunting and gathering Archaic Period. Those hunter-gatherers could very well be the same people who took to agriculture and permanent settlements and became the Tiwa-speaking peoples of Taos and Picuris Pueblos. Around 1000 A.D. Pueblo ancestors starting building permanent structures, and today pithouse sites and abandoned pueblos are found throughout Taos Valley, from Arroyo Hondo to Los Córdovas and Llano Quemado, up Pot Creek, and around Picuris Pueblo. The current location of Taos Pueblo was settled in the 14th century. The Picuris area was settled in the late 12th century. Land use throughout the first 500 years of permanent settlement was primarily irrigated farming in the fertile lowlands, supplemented by abundant hunting and gathering in the mountains and mesas surrounding the Pueblos. Much like the acequia tradition that persists today, communal irrigation farming required a high level of community organization and cooperation. Clustered housing units, like we see today at Taos Pueblo, were densely populated, leaving farmlands and hunting and gathering areas undeveloped. Overall population density was low and the natural resource base was not overtaxed. Simple agriculture of primarily corn and beans, along with silt from flood irrigation, naturally replenished the soil rather than depleting it. In all, Taos Pueblo once used approximately 300,000 acres of surrounding land for subsistence. Both Pueblos were relatively isolated, compared to southern Pueblos, but were cultural crossroads and trade centers for nomadic plains tribes, Utes, Apaches, Navajos, and Tewa Pueblos from the south. Hunters from both Pueblos occasionally traveled to the eastern plains for buffalo, as well. The ecological setting of Taos Pueblo between fertile valleys and wildlife-rich mountains, and the economy that maximized resources with a balance of farming, hunting, and gathering, created an exceptional



Valdez

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abundance in the area. Fray Francisco Dominguez wrote in 1776 that “everything yields such an abundant harvest that when there is scarcity in most of the kingdom, everyone goes to Taos and leaves there well supplied, not just once, but many times.” The land represented more than physical sustenance, however. Upland areas were also used for ceremonial activities, as Taos Pueblo’s Blue Lake Wilderness is still, and the people were guided in proper land use and in striking an ecological balance with nature not only by pragmatic concerns, but also by “the divine instructions given to the people.” According to Pueblo Historian Joe S. Sando, “There were guidelines for well-ordered living. What the Pueblos have now as an unwritten ‘Tribal Code’ was essentially in operation in ancient times, remembered and obeyed as though carved in stone. The Code was respected, understood, and taught from generation to generation.” This was the nature of land use planning and practice in Taos County for many centuries.

The first Spanish entrada into what is now New Mexico was led by Francisco Vásquez de Coronado in 1540. Hernando de Alvarado visited Taos that year as part of the Coronado expedition and saw the same multistoried pueblos that still stand today, but there was no permanent Spanish presence or influence in the area for nearly 60 more years. Picuris Pueblo probably did not have any direct contact with the Spanish until Gaspar Castaño de Sosa visited in 1591. In 1598 Juan de Oñate led the first party of colonists into the region. These first “Spanish” settlers already carried a mixed heritage of blood, customs, and traditions from Moorish and Sephardic Judaic cultures, but also included a large percentage of Tlaxcalan Indians from Mexico. The first decades of Spanish colonization involved an encomienda system that required Indians to pay “tithes” to the church and the civil government in the form of labor or material tribute. At the same time, native religious activities were severely repressed. After 80 years of this, all the Pueblos in the Southwest joined together in the 1680 Pueblo Revolt, which succeeded in driving the Spanish out of the territory for 12 years. At the time of the revolt, the Taos Valley was still a remote frontier of New Spain and only about 70 Spanish settlers were living in the area. It was a successful revolt in that when the Spanish returned, in general it was with greater deference and respect for Pueblo culture and lands.

In 1689, the Spanish governor Diego de Vargas legally recognized Pueblo rights 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 now controls approximately 100,000 acres; Picuris about 15,000 acres). From then on, non-Indians were not allowed to live on Indian lands (which was not always strictly enforced). Subsequent Spanish land grants could not infringe on Pueblo grants and the Spanish government provided legal protection and advocates for the Pueblos. After the revolt, the encomienda system never returned and there was far more religious tolerance.

As the Spanish settled in the area and established new communities, they had very clear guidelines for land use planning and management in a document called *Recopilacion de Leyes de los Reynos de las Indias*, or *Laws of the Indies*. The *Laws of the Indies* has been called a blueprint for bioregional sustainability. It prescribed everything from the basic qualities and resources that the land required for establishing a new settlement to specific urban planning requirements including lot sizes for different uses. Other laws required the construction of acequias to irrigate crops. Acequias were usually built first, even before the church. The cooperation that was required to build and maintain an acequia was the foundation of democratic community governance. If all the requirements of the *Laws of the Indies* were met, a community of settlers could petition the Spanish government for a grant of land. That land grant would include a house site and enough land for gardening and farming for each family, plus the ejido lands that were owned and managed communally for livestock grazing, timber and firewood, hunting, and control of watersheds that fed the acequias. Like Indian pueblos, Spanish towns and

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villages were built in clustered units. Clustered pueblos or villages were more defensible in the event of an attack, but also maximized the surrounding irrigated farmland and natural resource base. The characteristic central plaza was a vital public space for social and ceremonial activities, local commerce, and day-to-day interaction with neighbors. The *resolana*, or sunny side of the plaza, was a communication center where generations of villagers engaged in idle gossip or shared news and opinions about recent activities. *Resolana* is a cultural concept and practice that is still important to local communities.

Despite a difficult beginning to the relationship between the Pueblos and Spanish settlers, over the centuries there has been intermingling of blood, traditions, and adaptations for survival. For defensive reasons, Hispano settlers lived within Taos Pueblo on and off until the end of the 18th century. The new settlers borrowed from well-adapted Pueblo architecture, settlement patterns, and crops to blend the ancient institution of the *acequia* with existing Pueblo irrigation practices. The Pueblos adopted from the settlers domesticated animals, fruit orchards, and the distinctive *horno adobe* oven. Over time, villages, farming techniques, land use patterns, staple foods, and even a few ceremonies all began to look alike. "Their shared experiences under the same sun, on the same land that is nourished by the same water have brought aspects of the two cultural views together, leaving a unique legacy to New Mexico," according to one sociologist.

As Hispano populations grew and land grants were established, communities were concentrated around both Taos and Picuris Pueblos, reflecting the choice areas for building and agriculture already selected by the native communities. New communities were always established along streams where villagers could have easy access to water for drinking and irrigation. Prominent land grants in Taos County included both the Pueblo grants, a large section of *Sangre de Cristo* at the northern end of the County, *Antoine Leroux* in the *Rio Hondo* watershed, *Arroyo Hondo* and *Antonio Martinez* or *Lucero de Godoi* in the northern part of Taos Valley, *Don Fernando de Taos* at the current location of the Town of Taos, *Cristóbal de la Serna* and *Gijosa* in the southern end of Taos Valley, and parts of *Embudo*, *Las Trampas*, and *Santa Barbara* at the southern end of the County. In all, there were once 35 land grants or parts of land grants in Taos County comprising nearly half of the land area. Most of these were community grants that were communally owned and managed by the local community.

In 1846, just before the U.S. conquest, about 95 percent of Pueblos and Hispanos were still directly dependent on the land and age-old subsistence activities, with limited trading of surplus produce and other goods. Taos Valley continued to be a vibrant regional trade center with the Taos Trade Fair becoming an annual event.

Early US residents, mostly trappers and mountain men, had been making their way to Taos since the early 1800s. In the late 1840s, the U.S. Army under General Watts Kearney invaded and annexed New Mexico, making it a territory of the U.S. Soon after the conquest, most of the land grants on which local communities survived were lost during an adjudication process that favored the U.S. government and private land speculators over the land grant residents. The new economy, with railroad transport and expanded markets to the east, encouraged destructive land use practices, including extreme overgrazing and forest clearcutting which caused the severe erosion that local watersheds and agricultural lands are still recovering from today. Land and economy have always gone hand in hand in this region and the combination of these changes led to chronic poverty in many local communities. In his book, *Forgotten People*, George Sanchez describes Taos County in the 1930s as an area with serious land management problems, extreme poverty, and little opportunity.

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These economic and land use problems led to a slew of Federal New Deal projects in the 1930s and 40s. As part of what was called the "Hispanic New Deal," the Taos County Project pursued a variety of programs intended to revitalize local lands and communities. Activities included helping Costilla and Amalia buy back historic grant lands (Rio Costilla Park), leasing other private lands for livestock grazing, developing a new irrigation system for Cerro, helping communities organize to get access to better Forest Service grazing permits and gain control of the local soil conservation district, setting up a successful cooperative marketing association, and conducting public education on soil conservation and agricultural production.

The War on Poverty in the 1960s continued similar efforts. The Northern Rio Grande Resource Conservation and Development Project established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture attempted to use local initiative and local leadership to address the region's persistent poverty. Projects included development of recreation areas, wildlife habitat improvement, acequia rehabilitation, and new processing and marketing facilities for local agricultural products.

A few years later, in 1972, Regional Forest Supervisor William Hurst wrote a new policy directive to help address the "economic and social needs of the people of Northern New Mexico." Acknowledging the land grant history of the area, Hurst recognized that local Native and Hispano cultures have close ties to the land and that their economic well-being is closely bound to national forest resources. In the mid-1990s the Camino Real District of the Carson National Forest made an effort to implement Hurst's directive with its Collaborative Stewardship program, working with local communities to conduct forest thinning for the mutual benefit of ecosystem health and local economic health.



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Demographics

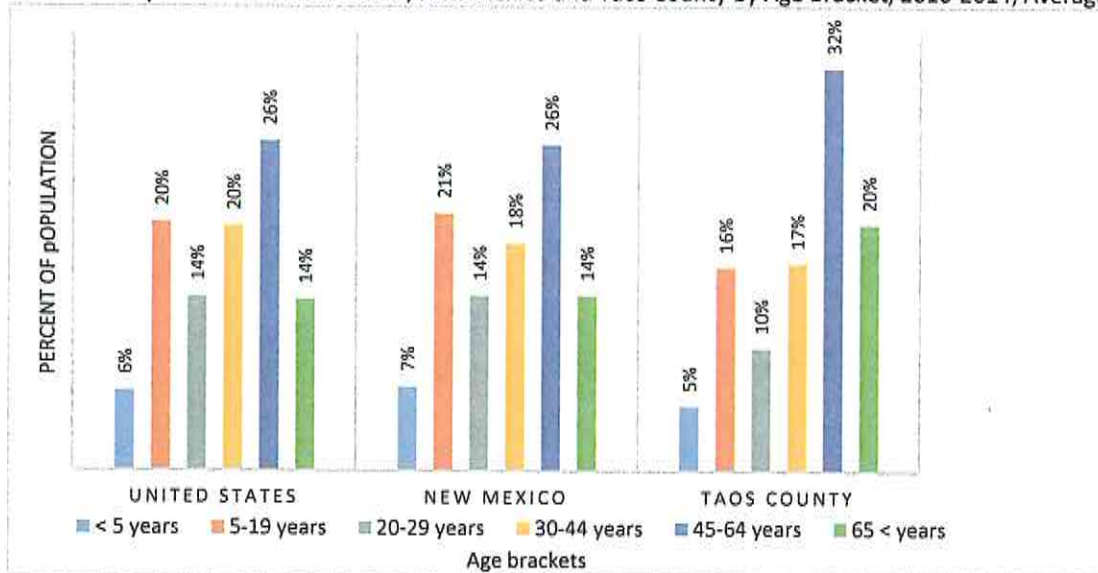
Population

The County saw increasing rates of population growth from the 1960's through the early 2000's, with much of this growth attributed to in migration from out of State. Between 1990 and 2000, the County saw particularly strong population growth at an average annual rate of 2.39% per year but the Great Recession brought decreased geographic mobility, decreased incomes for retirees and a decrease in the demand for second homes nationally, essentially halting all non-natural population growth. This combined with a decidedly more concerning fast paced out-migration of the legacy Hispano population at a rate of -1.94% per year between 2000 and 2010, has left Taos County in a state of nearly stagnant, slightly negative population growth, with an estimated average annual rate of -.02% between 2010 and 2015. Most recent projections from University of New Mexico's Geospatial Population Studies¹ estimate a -2.03% population loss in Taos County between 2010 and 2030.

Age

The median age in Taos County is 48.1 years – much higher than we see in the statewide (37.3)². Looking at Figure 3 below we can see that just over half of the population is over the age of 44 – compared to 40% of the population statewide and nationally. This leads to a high aged dependency ration in Taos County at – 32.6%, compared to 23.2% statewide and 21.9% nationwide.

FIGURE 1. Population of United States, New Mexico and Taos County by Age Bracket, 2010-2014, Average.



Race and Ethnicity.

As of 2010 Hispanics make up 55.8% of the population in Taos County. While there is overall growth in the Hispanic population in Taos (5.8% between 2000 and 2010) the story is more complex than one of net growth. Firstly, Hispanics overall are accounting for a smaller percentage of the overall population than they did in 2000 – down from 57.9%. Secondly, Hispanics identifying as being of Mexican origin account for almost all of the growth among Hispanics, and are the ethnic group with, by far and away,

¹ Rhatigan, Robert (November, 2015) 'New Mexico Population Estimates and Projections', New Mexico Data User's Conference. University of New Mexico Geo Spatial Population Studies.

² Census Bureau Population Estimates Program, 2015 Estimate.

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the strongest and largest population growth in the decade – increasing 170.7% and now accounting for 18.4% of the total population of the County. Conversely, the legacy Hispano community of Taos is decreasing at a worrying rate – down 19.4% over the decade³. 2000 was likely the last year Taos' legacy Hispano community accounted for over half of the population of the County. Today, legacy Hispanos account for just over 1/3 (36.8%) of the population of Taos County.

The Native American population overall is growing at a healthy rate – 17% over the decade. However very little of this growth is among those identifying with the Pueblo communities located in the County. Those identifying as being of Pueblo origin grew 1.8% over the decade – and have gone from representing 5.2% of the total population to 4.8%. 31 other tribal groups are represented in Taos County, with the largest non-Pueblo groups, who account for the largest percentage of the growth in the population being Navajo and Apache⁴. The 'White, not Hispanic' or 'Anglo' population in Taos grew 18.1% over the decade and accounts for 36.8% of the total population, up from 33.8% in 2000. All other racial and ethnic groups account for small fractions of the population and the growth or contraction we see in their populations must be looked at in light of their small numbers.

Table 1. Race and Ethnicity for Taos County, 2000 and 2010.

	TOTAL POP 2000	% OF TOTAL POP 2000	TOTAL POP 2010	% OF TOTAL POP 2010	% CHANGE 2000-2010
Total Population	29,979	100%	32,937	100%	10.9%
Race					
White	20,177	67.3%	23,996	72.9%	18.8%
Black or African American	185	0.6%	275	0.8%	48.7%
American Indian/Native American	2,291	7.6%	2,680	8.1%	17.0%
Pueblo*	1,554	5.2%	1,582	4.8%	1.8%
Asian	193	0.6%	361	1.1%	87.0%
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	57	0.2%	50	0.2%	-12.3%
Some other race	8,333	27.8%	7,289	22.1%	-12.9%
Ethnicity					
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	17,370	57.9%	18,381	55.8%	5.8%
Mexican	2,244	7.5%	6,074	18.4%	170.7%
Puerto Rican	63	0.2%	159	0.5%	152.4%
Cuban	20	0.1%	22	0.1%	10.0%
Other Hispanic or Latino	15,043	50.2%	12,126	36.8%	-19.4%
Not Hispanic or Latino	12,609	42.1%	14,556	44.2%	15.4%
White alone	10,122	33.8%	11,958	36.3%	18.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 2000 and 2010.

³ The category 'Other Hispanic', used by the U.S. Census Bureau consists almost entirely of populations identifying as 'Spanish American, Spaniard, and other colloquial terms used to identify with northern New Mexico's traditional Hispanic population. It is not a perfect proxy – it is possible the category is catching a very small population who does not identify with any other Hispanic origin. The category also misses those traditional Hispanics who identify as being of Mexican origin.

⁴ US Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 2000 and 2010.

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Housing

According to the most recent estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau there are a total of 20,296 housing units in Taos County. The housing stock is dominated by detached single units (69%). Attached units are few in numbers and tend to be 2-4 unit complexes, suggesting multi-unit housing in Taos County is dominated by condominium style housing and not the more affordable apartment style housing. Indeed, where over a quarter of all housing structures in the United States consist of five or more units, not even 10% of housing in Taos County is made up of structures with five or more units. Affordable housing in the County is dominated by mobile homes which make up 17% of all housing in the County – compared to just 6.4% nationally.

Table 2. Housing by Unit Type, United States, New Mexico and Taos County.

	UNITED STATES	NEW MEXICO	TAOS COUNTY
1-unit, detached	61.7%	64.8%	69.0%
1-unit, attached	5.8%	3.7%	2.2%
2 units	3.7%	1.9%	4.1%
3 or 4 units	4.4%	3.6%	3.0%
5 or more units	17.9%	9.2%	4.6%
5 to 9 units	4.8%	2.7%	2.7%
10 to 19 units	4.5%	2.6%	1.1%
20 or more units	8.6%	3.9%	0.8%
Mobile home	6.4%	16.5%	17.0%
Boat, RV, van, etc.	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey Five Year Estimates 2011-2014.

Occupancy rates among housing units in Taos County are very low – over a third of all housing units are vacant, nearly twice the vacancy rate we see statewide. Table 3 below allows us to better understand this high vacancy rate. Here we see that roughly 23% of all homes in Taos County are for seasonal, recreational or occasional use.

Table 3. Vacant Housing by Type, United States, New Mexico and Taos County.

	UNITED STATES	NEW MEXICO	TAOS COUNTY
Vacant housing units	12.5%	15.7%	34.8%
For rent	2.3%	2.4%	3.1%
Rented, not occupied	0.5%	0.4%	0.7%
For sale only	1.2%	1.4%	1.1%
Sold, not occupied	0.5%	0.5%	1.0%
For seasonal, recreational, or occasional use	4.0%	5.7%	22.7%
For migrant workers	0.0%	0.1%	0.5%
Other vacant	4.0%	5.3%	5.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey Five Year Estimates 2011-2014.

The Federal Government defines ‘housing stress’ as the expenditure of 30% or more of household income on housing. In Taos County, nearly 60% of all renters are suffering from housing stress

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compared to just over half of all households in the State and nation. 14.5% of all individuals occupying non-owner occupied housing units within the County are paying no rent at all, compared to just 7.6% statewide and 5.4% nationally – these are likely arrangements where individuals are trading services for housing or are living in family owned properties without exchanging rent for housing.

Table 4. Gross Rent as a Percentage of Income, United States, New Mexico and Taos County.

	UNITED STATES	NEW MEXICO	TAOS COUNTY
Less than 15.0 percent	11.7%	13.6%	12.8%
15.0 to 19.9 percent	12.1%	12.2%	8.2%
20.0 to 24.9 percent	12.5%	11.9%	12.9%
25.0 to 29.9 percent	11.5%	11.4%	8.1%
30.0 to 34.9 percent	9.1%	8.7%	5.7%
35.0 percent or more	43.2%	42.2%	52.3%
No cash rent paid*	5.4%	7.6%	14.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey Five Year Estimates 2011-2014.

*Those who do not exchange cash for rent are not counted among the population at risk for housing stress and therefore are not included in the number of renters spending less than 15% of income on rent.



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III. Community Participation

A community-based planning process was used in developing the Comprehensive Plan for Taos County. This approach involved citizen driven process which had three major components: a Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee; interviews with community leaders and stakeholders; and input through five public meetings held on the draft plan.

The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee was comprised of community leaders and residents of Taos County representing diverse interests, organizations and agencies. Their input was integral in the development of this plan, providing insights on community values, process and issues to be addressed during the plan completion. The Steering Committee met approximately ten times and were central in drafting the vision, goals statements and implementation strategies.

A distribution list of over 50 individuals and organizations was also used to disseminate information and draft plan materials as they were developed by the steering committee for a broader base of input during the planning process.

Public workshops were conducted in Taos County at two Taos County Planning Commission meetings, the Penasco Community Center, the Questa Village Hall, and a work session and public meeting before the County Commissioners. In these workshops the participants were asked to prioritize the Implementation Strategies to achieve the goals for each of the Elements. The results of this prioritization are in the Implementation Element.

The final plan was presented at a Taos County Commissioners work study session on December 15, 2016 and at the adoption public meeting on February 7, 2017.



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IV. Vision, Goals and Strategies

Comprehensive Plan Guiding Principles

Guiding principles serve as a basis of reasoning and action; a set of beliefs that lead, show the way and direct the decisions of the plan. They are the fundamental basis for any decision. They shape the solutions and define the way strategies are developed. Guiding principles define the ground rules for the process and development of the plan:

- Growth and change will continue to occur in the future and will likely continue to alter our rural/agricultural landscape.
- Growth can create great places to live and work if the community crafts a vision and sets standards and reasonable codes for development that express how and where it wants to grow or change.
- A mixture of commercial land uses accommodates business growth and supports economic diversity.
- A diversity of housing types and densities are available to a wide range of income levels, age groups and abilities are essential to creating healthy communities.
- Greenbelt/wildlife corridors help define growth in communities.
- Communities are desirable places to live when they include a system of connected streets, infrastructure, pedestrian paths, and bike routes to commercial, educational, recreational, and residential destinations.
- Agricultural land and agricultural production are important to the local culture, economy and food security.
- Resiliency to natural and manmade hazards is important to the protection and security of the residents.
- Growth and development standards and decisions that are clear, predictable, consistent, fair, timely, and cost effective serve the community and build confidence in local government.
- Fundamental roles of the County are to maintain fiscal soundness and protect community health and welfare.

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IV. Vision, Goals and Strategies

Vision Statement

Taos County is comprised of a number of unique communities that share strong land and water connections and a rich cultural heritage. In our neighborhoods, generations of families live and work, unifying around shared goals and respecting our diversity. We strive to sustain our cultures and traditions in creating vibrant neighborhoods. We support our locally-based economic development, care for our natural and agricultural resources, and protect the health, safety and prosperity of all our citizens.



Lower Des Montes

IV. Vision, Goals and Strategies

Land and Water Element

Goal 1. Secure, protect and maintain safe and sustainable water quality and quantity through effective and coordinated watershed and aquifer management.

- a) *Implement the Taos Regional Water Plan to enhance active water management programs and projects for the surface and ground water resources.*
- b) *Promote and coordinate Best Management Practices to protect and sustain bio-diversity by creating mosaics of canopy openings to provide the greatest diversity for all native species. Continue to pursue funding to implement the Taos County Aquifer Monitoring and Mapping Program as a decision making tool for Taos County. Encourage broad local, State and Federal partnerships to protect and enhance water resources.*
- c) *Coordinate and integrate water and watershed planning with the Carson National Forest Ten Year Plan, BLM Resources Management Plan, Taos County Regional Water Plan, NM State Water Plan and the NM State Forest Watershed Plans.*
- d) *Promote and demonstrate domestic water conservation efforts, such as the use of drip irrigation, gray-water, water harvesting, low-flow fixtures, xeriscape landscaping through education programs and in the Land Use and Subdivision Regulations.*
- e) *Continue to participate as a charter member of the Rio Grande Water Fund and support the Taos Valley Watershed Coalition and Community Wildfire Protection Plan Corps Team/Taos Valley Watershed Coalition Subcommittee to implement and continually refine the Taos Valley Watershed Coalition Landscape Restoration Strategy.*

Goal 2. Restore and protect our riparian areas which include rivers, arroyos, streams lakes and wetlands.

- a) *Promote and educate the public on riparian restoration, re-vegetation, fencing enclosure projects and the use of herbicides.*
- b) *Promote land conservation easements and land trusts that protect unique wildlife habitats such as riparian areas and critical wetlands and springs.*
- c) *Provide incentives to land owners who implement restoration and preservation guidelines on the portions of their property that are identified as wildlife corridors, wetlands, and riparian habitats.*
- d) *Develop conservation zoning and subdivision tools that provide incentives for protecting critical resource lands including habitat, wetlands, and riparian areas while allowing for resource-sensitive development.*
- e) *Support and encourage State legislation to protect the Rio Grande Corridor from the infestation of non-native invasive species and protect riparian areas.*

IV. Vision, Goals and Strategies

Goal 3. Protect and maintain vegetation in order to manage wildlife opportunities and protect habitat and migration corridors.

- a) *Promote best land management practices in National Forests, conservation easements and land trusts that protect riparian areas and critical wetlands and springs, with an emphasis on headwater wetlands.*
- b) *Adopt a Cluster Development Option and/or a Planned Unit Development (PUD) provision in the Land Use regulations that protects watersheds, utilizes community water/wastewater systems, and promotes cluster development in family transfers/exemptions through incentives of fee waivers and density bonuses.*

Goal 4. Restore and protect our irrigated agricultural lands and acequias and promote local sustainable agriculture.

- a) *Adopt an "Irrigated Agricultural Overlay Zone" that provides incentives to set-aside the irrigated agricultural land from development.*
- b) *Introduce State legislation that encourages return flow credits for agricultural activities by overturning the "Use it or lose it" scenario and encouraging the use of the acequia banking and acequia water transfer.*
- c) *Work with the County Agricultural Extension Office, Taos Valley Acequia Association, the New Mexico Acequia Association, and the Acequia Commissioners, to assure all acequias within the County have updated bylaws, and educate property owners of their water rights transfer options.*
- d) *Support amending State legislation regarding property assessment of agricultural lands.*
- e) *Support and encourage programs for USDA Organic certification in partnership with the County Extension Office and Taos County Economic Development Corporation (TCEDC).*
- f) *Explore a program in the Land Use Regulations allowing for Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs) that will transfer development rights to appropriate receiving areas away from agricultural lands, or for the Purchase of Development Rights (PDRs), that will preserve the agricultural lands under a conservation easement or deed restriction.*
- g) *Support Alianza Agri-Cultura de Taos (ACT) and Taos Land Trust in developing a Taos County Food and Agriculture Policy Council to create and coordinate food and agriculture related topics such as preserving agricultural lands, food security, and food and agriculture education.*

Goal 5. Promote sustainable development in areas near existing incorporated towns where water and infrastructure is available to support the new growth without a loss of agricultural lands.

- a) *Identify and map significant agricultural lands, prioritize lands for preservation, and work with the Taos Land Trust and other non-profit conservation organizations to place conservation easements where appropriate.*

IV. Vision, Goals and Strategies

- b) *In partnership with the USDA and NM State Cooperative Extension Service, inform and encourage ranchers and farmers to place conservation easements on their property and take advantage of the tax benefits offered by State and Federal legislation.*
- c) *The County will cooperate with municipalities to establish common subdivision standards for their respective platting and planning jurisdictions.*
- d) *Define an appropriate minimum lot size in the Land Use Regulations, Subdivision Regulations, and/or Neighborhood Zoning Plans.*

Goal 6. Encourage preservation and restoration of historical and cultural buildings, places and landscapes.

- a) *Encourage the charitable donation of land by landowners for historic, cultural, and scenic easements to non-profit land banks/land trust organizations to reduce State and Federal income and inheritance taxes under NM Laws 1995, Chapter 137.*
- b) *Encourage Neighborhood Associations to establish historic/traditional or contemporary Plaza Neighborhood Overlay Zones that consider preservation and restoration guidelines, and identify programs and incentives for rehabilitation of historic and cultural properties.*

Goal 7. Protect open space areas and create a network of open space connections.

- a) *Implement the recommendations of the Taos County Enchanted Circle Trail Plan, and the Community Conservation Plan, when adopted, in partnership with other involved stakeholders.*
- b) *Amend the Subdivision Regulations to define requirements, options and/or incentives for dedicating access to public open space, recreation, and trails.*
- c) *Develop a plan for dedicated trails access to public lands in areas that are expected to experience new development.*
- d) *Adopt and implement a County Recreation Plan, assess the feasibility of creating a County Parks Department, and identify funding strategies.*

Goal 8. Encourage cooperation and partnerships with all local water and sanitation districts, mutual domestics, neighborhood associations, Municipalities, State, Federal, and Tribal jurisdictions, acequia associations, and community organizations in determining future land and water uses.

- a) *Increase and encourage networking, participation, and communication with private and non-profit organizations to better inform the participating towns, agencies and organizations of proposed programs, developments and improvements.*
- b) *Support and participate in the annual Land and Water Conference to increase and encourage networking, participation, and communication with local stakeholders, including private and non-*

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profit organizations, to better inform the participating towns, agencies and organizations of proposed programs, developments and improvements for advancing the management and development of the region's land and water resources.

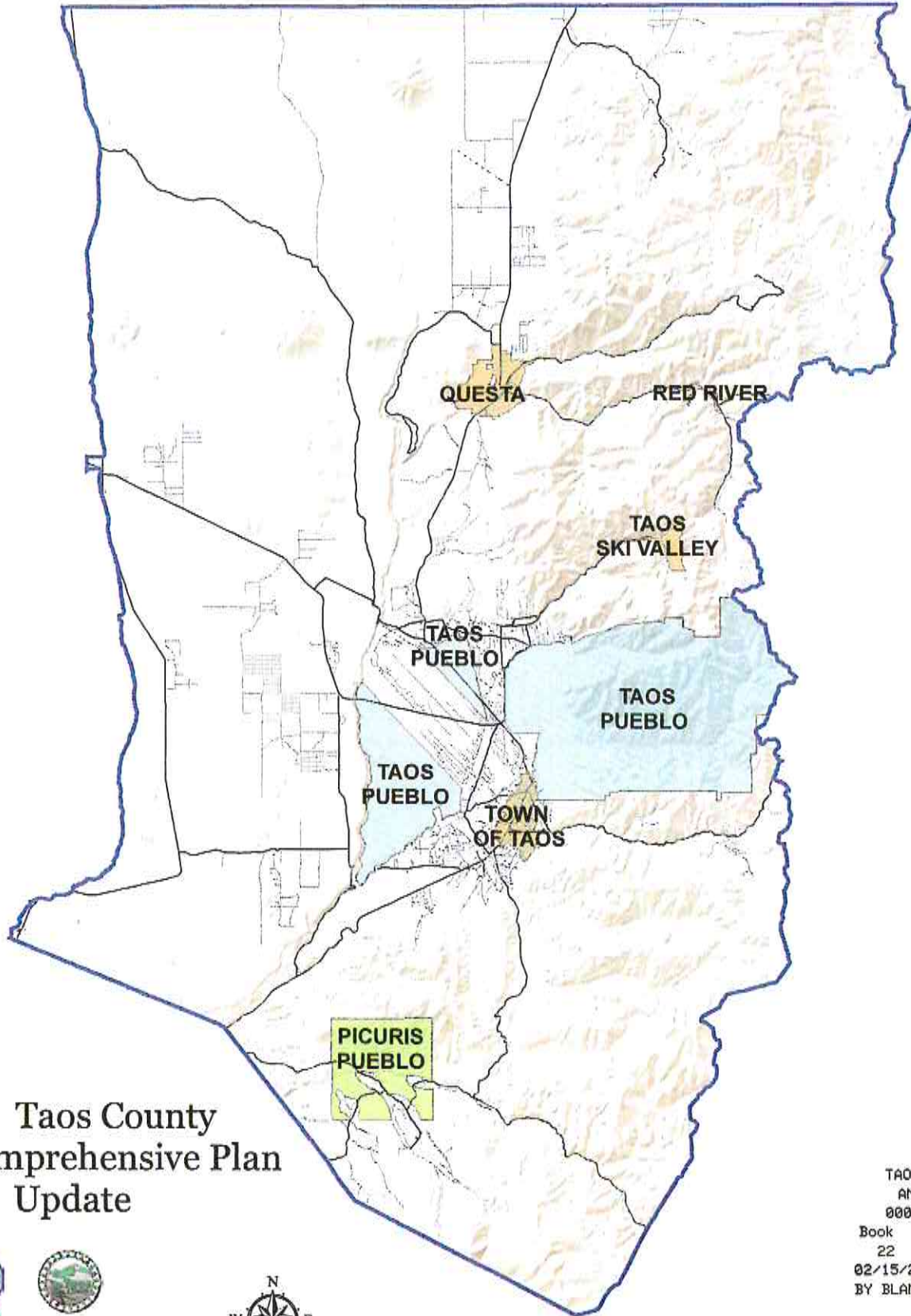
- c) *Work with the Neighborhood Associations to prepare and adopt neighborhood based zoning plans. The plans may include land use and density designations, open space and trail plans, natural resources conservation strategies, infrastructure improvements, and recommendations for public facilities and services.*



Ranchos de Taos

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MUNICIPALITIES/PUEBLOS



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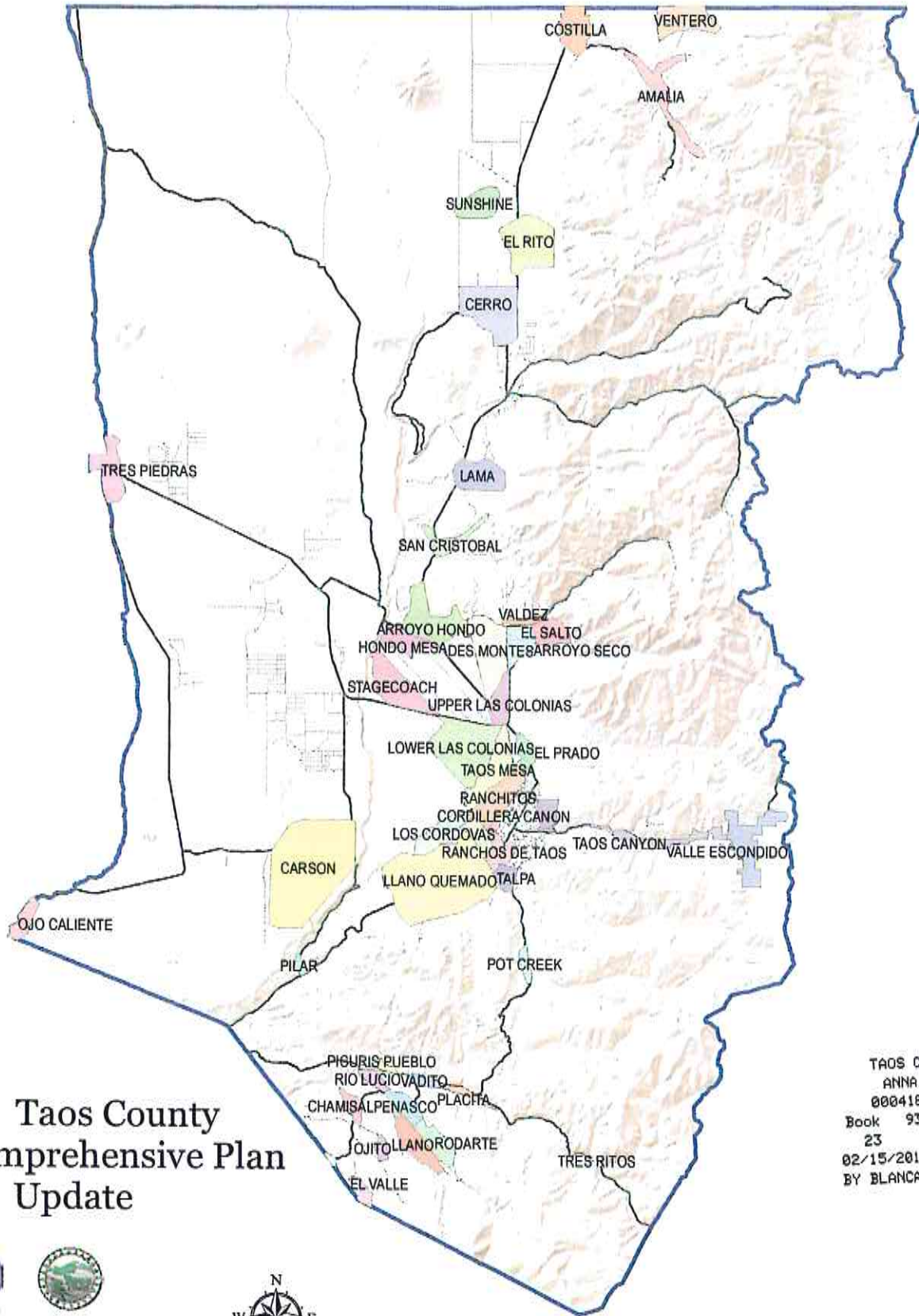


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Data Sources: Taos County, ESRI

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NEIGHBORHOODS



Taos County Comprehensive Plan Update



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Economic Development Element

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Goal 1. Identify and support opportunities to expand the capacity of the local business and workforce community with a broad range of skill and education levels.

- a) *Collaborate with municipalities within the County to develop an Economic Development Department to be housed in the County and hire an Economic Development Planner. The Economic Development planner should: 1) Facilitate an Economic Development Council comprised of public and private economic development organizations to coordinate and consolidate economic development efforts; 2) Identify opportunities to streamline the business startup process in the County; and 3) Consolidate and promote business development resources. In the absence of an Economic Development Department, the Taos County Administration would serve as the Economic Development Department.*
- b) *The Economic Development Council should develop industry cluster subcommittees to support development of particular clusters for development including creative industries, green industries, and integrative and holistic healthcare.*
- c) *Amend and implement the tools in the Local Economic Development Act (LEDA) Ordinance to offer business development incentives such as public/private partnerships, land, infrastructure development, funding, and tax incentives.*
- d) *Work with economic development organizations such as Workforce Solutions, University of New Mexico, TCEDC, Taos Chamber of Commerce or TEN to survey sole-proprietor businesses and identify roadblocks to business expansion and develop business expansion training and support services.*
- e) *Identify opportunities to provide free broadband in public areas and County-owned public facilities and work with Kit Carson Co-op to make broadband prices nationally competitive and within the reach of the average County resident.*
- f) *Utilize the LEDA (Local Economic Development Act) to provide space for a County creative/business incubator. The Economic Development Council should work together to identify the appropriate entity to run the incubator.*

Goal 2. Promote economic development that will equitably increase median income.

- a) *Identify opportunities to decrease seasonal fluctuations in employment including investment in industries and clusters with consistent year-round employment such as healthcare, light manufacturing, innovative and green building and applied creative industries.*
- b) *Focus on economic development opportunities that employ local residents at higher wages, with an emphasis on Hispanic and Native populations and invest in research to identify the appropriate minimum wage in Taos County to support State and Federal legislation.*
- c) *Work with the Taos County Workforce Connection Office and the Northern Area Local Workforce Development Board to expand provision of Pro-Tec Program to Taos County. Pro-Tec provides*

IV. Vision, Goals and Strategies

month-long intensive training in job readiness skills, Microsoft Office certifications and professional applications for social media with opportunities to get in-office training with local businesses.

Goal 3. Provide increased employment for younger generations at a viable living wage.

- a) *Work with the County Economic Development Council and UNM Taos to identify mismatches in local labor force and industry/cluster needs and develop programming at UNM to bridge the gap.*
- b) *Support organizations and agencies aimed at youth employment development, such as the Rocky Mountain Youth Corp and the Taos School District "Discovery" program.*
- c) *Work with HELP NM (Home Education Livelihood Program New Mexico) and the Northern Area Local Workforce Development Board to expand WIOA (Workforce Investment Opportunity Act) work experience, occupational skills, incentives, job readiness and financial literacy services for qualifying youth in Taos.*
- d) *Identify the appropriate entity to develop and run business incubator services to help new and expanding businesses grow. Use LEDA to provide space and support for the development of the incubator.*
- e) *Work with locally-owned sole-proprietor businesses to scale up and become job creators.*

Goal 4. Identify green industries as a cluster for development.

- a) *Develop a green industry economic development "cluster" task force that will identify weaknesses in the cluster. This cluster should include green building and relevant light manufacturing as well as restoration-based resource management including sustainable forestry.*
- b) *Participate/sponsor a Green and Innovative Building and Resource Management Symposium that will highlight local innovators, create opportunities to network with innovators outside of Taos County and New Mexico and provide a tourism development opportunity.*
- c) *Support and pursue the designation of NEPA-approved Federal lands for the harvesting of small diameter forest products.*

Goal 5. Identify the creative and cultural economy as a cluster for development.

- a) *Identify the creative and cultural economy as major cluster for development and create a creative economy task force within the County Economic Development Council. The creative economy taskforce should be broadly representative of the local community and the full creative economy cluster beyond the traditional arts focus– including applied and tech-related creative industries.*
- b) *Identify local creative economy endeavors appropriate for production at scale (light manufacturing) and support their development in incubator development – jewelry, value-added food products, woodwork, tinwork, fiber arts, etc. would all be examples.*

IV. Vision, Goals and Strategies

- c) *Identify applied and tech related creative economy development as a particular focus. Back-end film work, graphic design, animation, software development. Partner with UNM Taos and the public school districts to develop appropriate curriculum to prepare youth for jobs in applied creative industries.*
- d) *Work with tourism and marketing experts to better understand the changing trends in the cultural tourism industry and develop and promote programming that better meets the interests of the modern tourist. Focus on developing opportunities for hands-on experience, opportunities to engage the local community and local cultural activities, learning and skill building experiences, agro-tourism, culinary tourism and adventure tourism.*
- e) *Leverage the Old County Courthouse to support promotion and development of the creative economy. Partner with appropriate organizations including UNM Taos and Taos Municipal Schools and others to develop programming that will engage local youth, bring locals back to the plaza, and represent Taos County's cultural heritage.*
- f) *Research the "NM Arts and Cultural Compound" designation for appropriate locations within the County and consider submitting an application to the NM MainStreet program.*

Goal 6. Promote and support a diverse export economy that focuses on tourism and light manufacturing.

- a) *Identify tourism, particularly Cultural Tourism, Adventure Tourism, Eco-Tourism and Agro and Culinary Tourism as an area for cluster development under Creative Economy and expand tourism narratives in marketing efforts and program development to appeal to broader and more contemporary markets. Initiatives should encourage greater diversity, more opportunities for engagement and emphasis on cultural and community renewal.*
- b) *Evaluate current marketing efforts and tourism infrastructure to identify gaps including geographic (with focus on rural and less visited areas of the County); cultural (expand narratives to be more inclusive of contemporary culture and Hispano culture); and types of offering (focus on interactive, immersive and community-oriented programming).*
- c) *Identify industries for development in which Taos County already has comparative advantage and which belong to clusters already targeted for further development such as natural health and beauty products, value-added food products, and regional artisan and crafts, green and innovative building and technology products.*
- d) *Provide trainings in communities regarding marketing and sales for home-based light manufacturing opportunities through internet platforms.*
- e) *Work with the NM Economic Development Department to identify opportunities in the export economy that can capitalize on the Department's LEDA Closing fund for job creation and their Job Training Incentive Program (JTIP) funding for workforce training.*

IV. Vision, Goals and Strategies

Goal 7. Enhance the economic viability and diversity of the agricultural sector.

- a) *Identify agriculture, local food, value added food products and agro- and culinary tourism as an economic cluster for focus and work with the Alianza Agri-Cultura de Taos to develop a Taos County Food and Agriculture Policy Council. The Council should serve as the subcommittee for agriculture in the cluster development effort.*
- b) *Develop and work to implement a County Agricultural and Ranching Implementation Plan in collaboration with the Taos County Food and Agriculture Policy Council.*
- c) *Work with the Northern New Mexico food hub, Taos County Economic Development Corporation, and/or La Montanita Co-op on opportunities to distribute agricultural products grown in Taos to the larger region.*
- d) *Work with New Mexico Landlink to expand use of the program in Taos to increase land in production, number of farms and availability of labor and training opportunities.*



Ranchos de Taos

IV. Vision, Goals and Strategies

Housing Element

Goal 1. Increase availability of affordable housing for all residents.

- a) *Review development codes to allow for higher density residential development giving priority to areas with access to infrastructure such as paved roads, community water and wastewater systems.*
- b) *Work with existing domestic water and sewer associations to apply for Community Development Block Grants, rural economic development assistance via the United States Department of Agriculture, and other grantors to create a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) "development pool" that would fund the extension of utilities and infrastructure to incentivize housing development.*
- c) *Develop an affordable housing ordinance and use the ordinance, property consolidation or through other opportunities to subsidize development, provide incentives for the development of high-density rental properties.*
- d) *Allow for fast track review and permitting of affordable housing projects and reduce or offset development fees for affordable housing projects.*
- e) *Require inclusionary housing provisions in all subdivision developments.*
- f) *Prepare and implement a countywide affordable housing plan aimed at increasing the efficient use of resources for housing development and related supportive services, and provide incentives and give priority to rental market development.*
- g) *Collaborate with the Town of Taos and other municipalities within the County to create an organization that will coordinate affordable housing development and homeownership activities in the Town and the County.*
- h) *Define an appropriate minimum lot size in the Land Use Regulations, Subdivision Regulations, and/or Neighborhood Zoning Plans.*

Goal 2. Support affordable property taxes for low-income residences, especially those with agricultural lands.

- a) *Cooperate with the New Mexico State Cooperative Extension Service to support increased agricultural production and provide incentives to low income residents to put their retired agricultural lands into production through land banks and/or land leases to third parties.*
- b) *Prepare and adopt an Affordable Housing Plan as per State statute that provides a County property-tax exemption for qualifying low income residences*

Goal 3. Improve quality-housing standards for conventional and manufactured housing.

- a) *Pursue and acquire sufficient funding for zoning enforcement efforts.*
- b) *Apply for HOME Investment Partnership Program Funds to rehabilitate sub-standard housing.*

IV. Vision, Goals and Strategies

- c) *Work with Rocky Mountain Youth Corps and other relevant youth job training programs to engage local youth in housing rehabilitation, such as Habitat for Humanity and AmeriCorps.*

Goal 4. Encourage innovative and energy-efficient building materials and techniques.

- a) *Identify green and innovative building as an economic development cluster.*
- b) *The Green Building Cluster subcommittee should work with Northern New Mexico Association of Public Safety Officials (NNMAPSO) to identify and work with the NM Construction Industries Division to identify and address needs of green and innovative building community in State building codes*
- c) *Collaborate with UNM-Taos to expand innovative and green building course offerings.*
- d) *Apply for funding for a Community Energy Outreach Project through Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants from the U.S. Department of Energy and work with the Northern Regional Housing Authority.*
- e) *Sponsor with the Town of Taos and other relevant regional actors, the development of a green and innovative building symposium in Taos that will highlight techniques, cultivate public interest, honor local innovators, and provide tourism opportunity.*

Goal 5. Promote diverse housing types to meet a variety of community needs.

- a) *Permit the development of mixed-use development to encourage residential and neighborhood scale commercial mix where appropriate.*
- b) *Permit and encourage the use of various lot and housing sizes to provide variety as well as affordability.*

Goal 6. Improve and expand services for homeless/at-risk populations.

- a) *Establish a recurring forum for networking among social service agencies, State and local government agencies, and private and other non-profits to coordinate the efforts to serve these populations and determine gaps in service.*

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Transportation Element

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Goal 1. Expand multi-modal public transportation to outlying and isolated rural areas.

- a) *Partner with the North Central Regional Transit District (NCRTD) to survey local residents to assess actual and potential needs for public transportation.*
- b) *Pursue funding sources and partner with the NCRTD and other jurisdictions in the County in maintaining the existing shuttle system and seek out future funding sources to expand the system.*
- c) *Create a multi-modal coordinator, through reassigning an existing position or with a new position, to integrate with community and State transportation efforts to effect multi-modal planning and improvements.*
- d) *Work with NCRTD to promote existing services.*
- e) *Include public transit facilities as a component to new and existing roadway projects.*
- f) *Partner with the Northern Pueblos Regional Transportation Planning Organization to participate in the Long Range Multi-Modal Transportation Plan.*

Goal 2. Support a network of non-motorized transportation modes throughout the County.

- a) *Implement the Taos County Enchanted Circle Trail Plan and the Taos County Community Conservation Plan. Coordinate with the Town of Taos Bicycle Master Plan, BLM Taos Resource Area/Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River Corridor Plan, Carson National Forest Ten Year Management Plan, the BLM Rio Grande National Monument Plan, and the Statewide Rio Grande Trail Planning.*
- b) *Include dedicated bike and pedestrian facilities in new roadway projects when feasible.*

Goal 3. Improve the development and maintenance of safe roads and bridges, especially related to emergency and school vehicles.

- a) *Review the highway accident statistics and prioritize the five highest-risk roadways and their causes, and working with the NMDOT, program these safety improvements in the STIP (State Transportation Improvements Program), e.g., the Gorge Bridge, State routes 518 and 68, etc.*
- b) *Encourage the implementation of enhanced safety features at the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge.*
- c) *Work cooperatively with private landowners to acquire right-of-way for collector streets to improve accessibility and connectivity to improve public health, safety and welfare.*
- d) *Seek funding to prepare a Road Management and Maintenance Program that evaluates the overall roadway system and develops level of service standards, maintenance program, and safety and drainage improvements that reflect traffic volumes.*

IV. Vision, Goals and Strategies

- e) *Meet regularly with the Northern Pueblo RTPO and New Mexico Department of Transportation to maintain a prioritized list of roadways in need of improvements that are eligible for potential funding.*
- f) *Consider wildlife connectivity in design and development of roadways and in designing retrofits to existing roadways and work with NM DOT to encourage wildlife-sensitive road design.*

Goal 4. Encourage the use of fuel-efficient and low emission vehicles and reduce vehicle miles traveled.

- a) *Consider a pilot project on including alternative fuel vehicles in the County fleet.*
- b) *Encourage employee car-pooling and institute programs for flexible work hours and home-telecommuting.*
- c) *Expand the Park and Ride program and locations throughout the County.*

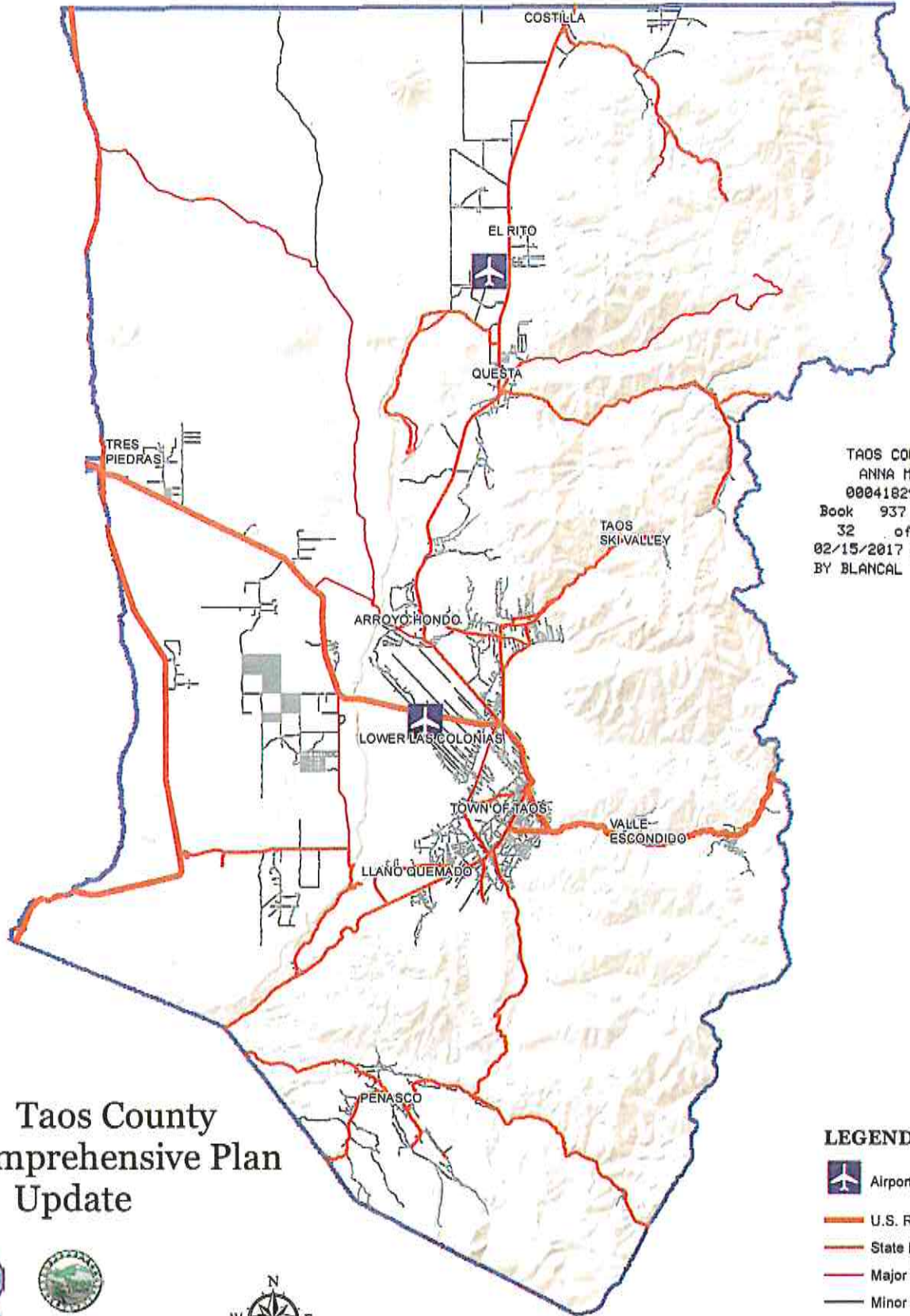
Goal 5. Increase and maintain access to public lands.

- a) *Work to acquire, when available, public right-of-way from existing prescriptive easements or new easements, to assure access to public lands.*
- b) *Coordinate with neighborhoods in identifying where these connections should occur in their specific areas.*



Hondo Mesa

TRANSPORTATION



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LEGEND

-  Airports
-  U.S. Route
-  State Route
-  Major Roads
-  Minor Roads

Data Sources: Taos County, RGIS, ESRI

IV. Vision, Goals and Strategies

Infrastructure/Community Facilities Element

Goal 1. Ensure proper disposal of solid waste, including hazardous materials, and promote recycling.

- a) *Work with the Town of Taos and other municipalities in continuing to expand the existing recycling program to include recycling bins at the Transfer stations that will reduce transportation costs, reduce tonnage to the regional landfill, and be subsidized from recycled material revenue.*
- b) *Develop an educational program for residents, in cooperation with the schools, on recycling opportunities and the Fire-Wise program's brush clean-up activities.*
- c) *Continue to expand towards a wide variety of sanitation services, including household recycling pick-up, public access and reuse of Class A sludge for soil improvement, and more effective and efficient transfer stations and encourage the public to stop littering public and private land.*
- d) *Develop a Hazardous Waste Pick-up Day at the Solid Waste Transfer Stations for residents.*

Goal 2. Support the upgrade and expansion of water and wastewater infrastructure to meet current and projected needs.

- a) *Assist and support the improvement and expansion of existing and new Water and Sanitation Districts and Mutual Domestics on water and wastewater management.*
- b) *Prioritize the programs and projects for the County as identified in the Taos Regional Water Plan.*

Goal 3. Improve the maintenance and accessibility of educational, recreational, health, senior, youth, and other community facilities.

- a) *Provide assistance in the planning, development and funding of new community service facilities and assist existing community service facilities with rehabilitating and/or expanding their centers, such as in meeting ADA requirements, and partner with other entities to seek funding.*
- b) *Assist the community service organizations in optimizing the use, maintenance and expansion of their programs.*
- c) *Partner with neighborhood associations, communities and developers to provide multiple-purpose facilities, such as community centers, parks, and trails to ensure adequate recreational amenities and health/wellness facilities for residents.*
- d) *Partner with schools, religious institutions, and community groups and organizations, to share facilities for recreational, educational, and community activities.*
- e) *Provide funding for a feasibility study on a Detox Center for drug abuse and mental health rehabilitation facilities and partner with the hospital and medical providers.*

IV. Vision, Goals and Strategies

Goal 4. Improve accessibility and responsiveness of County administrative services to the citizens.

- a) *Expand the use of the County's website and social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) in providing information on County services to the residents.*
- b) *Initiate County Commissioner community listening sessions in various locations throughout the County, especially on matters of high public concern, to maximize public participation.*

Goal 5. Improve services to stray and neglected animals.

- a) *Periodically review and update the County's Animal Control ordinance and provide for adequate protection of the citizens and animals.*
- b) *Coordinate with the local municipalities and other organizations in addressing the adequacy of animal control facilities.*
- c) *In partnership with the municipalities, explore the options for a publically-owned Animal Control Center and include performance measures to the organization that operates the facility.*

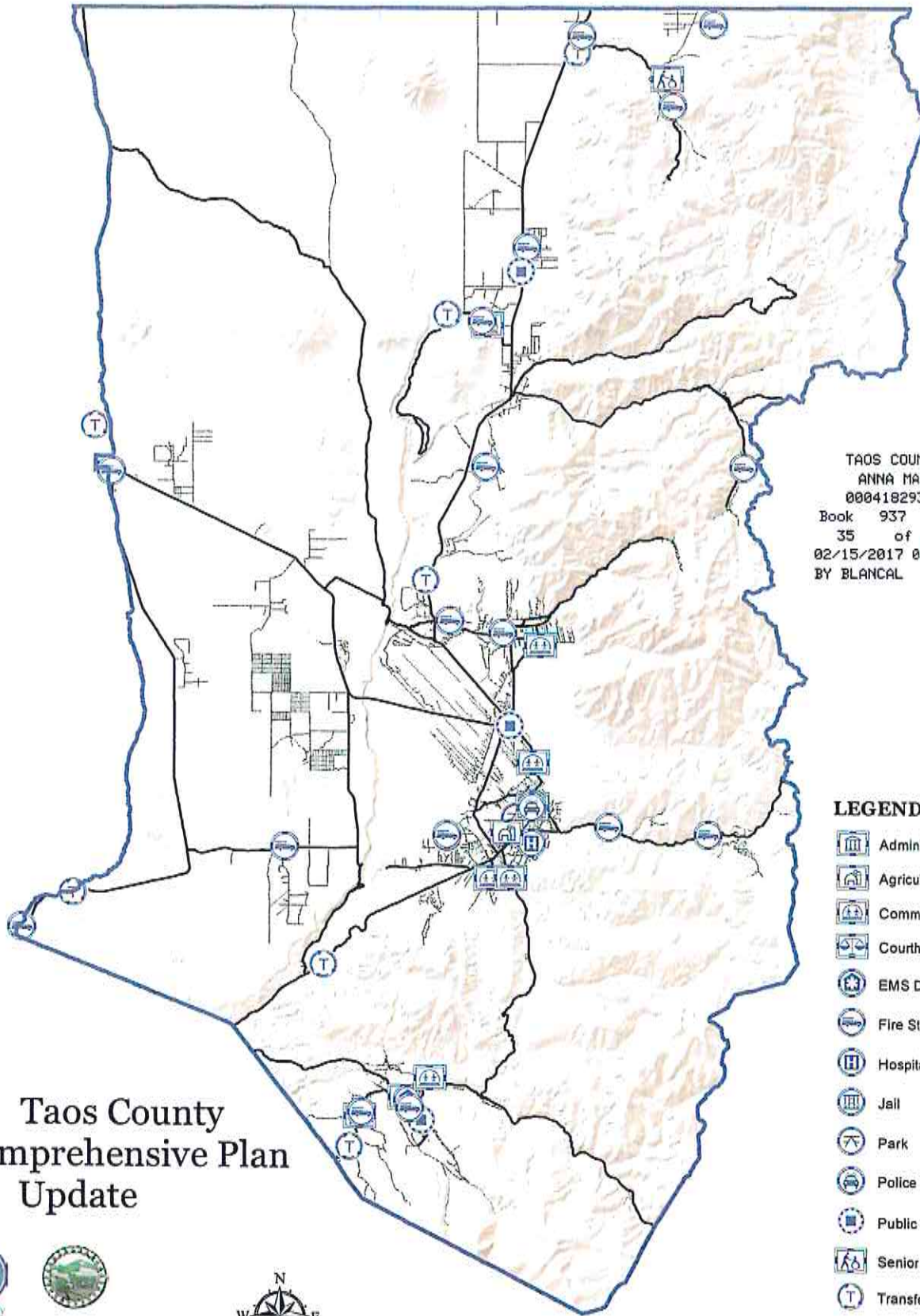
Goal 6: Seek to improve the reliability and diversity of the electric and natural gas utilities.

- a) *Partner with Kit Carson Electric Cooperative and New Mexico Gas Company on identifying steps the County can assist on improving the reliability of the electric and natural gas utilities and encourage renewable energy investments.*



Stagecoach

COUNTY COMMUNITY FACILITIES



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LEGEND

-  Administration
-  Agricultural Center
-  Community Center
-  Courthouse
-  EMS Depot
-  Fire Station
-  Hospital
-  Jail
-  Park
-  Police Station
-  Public Works
-  Senior Center
-  Transfer Station

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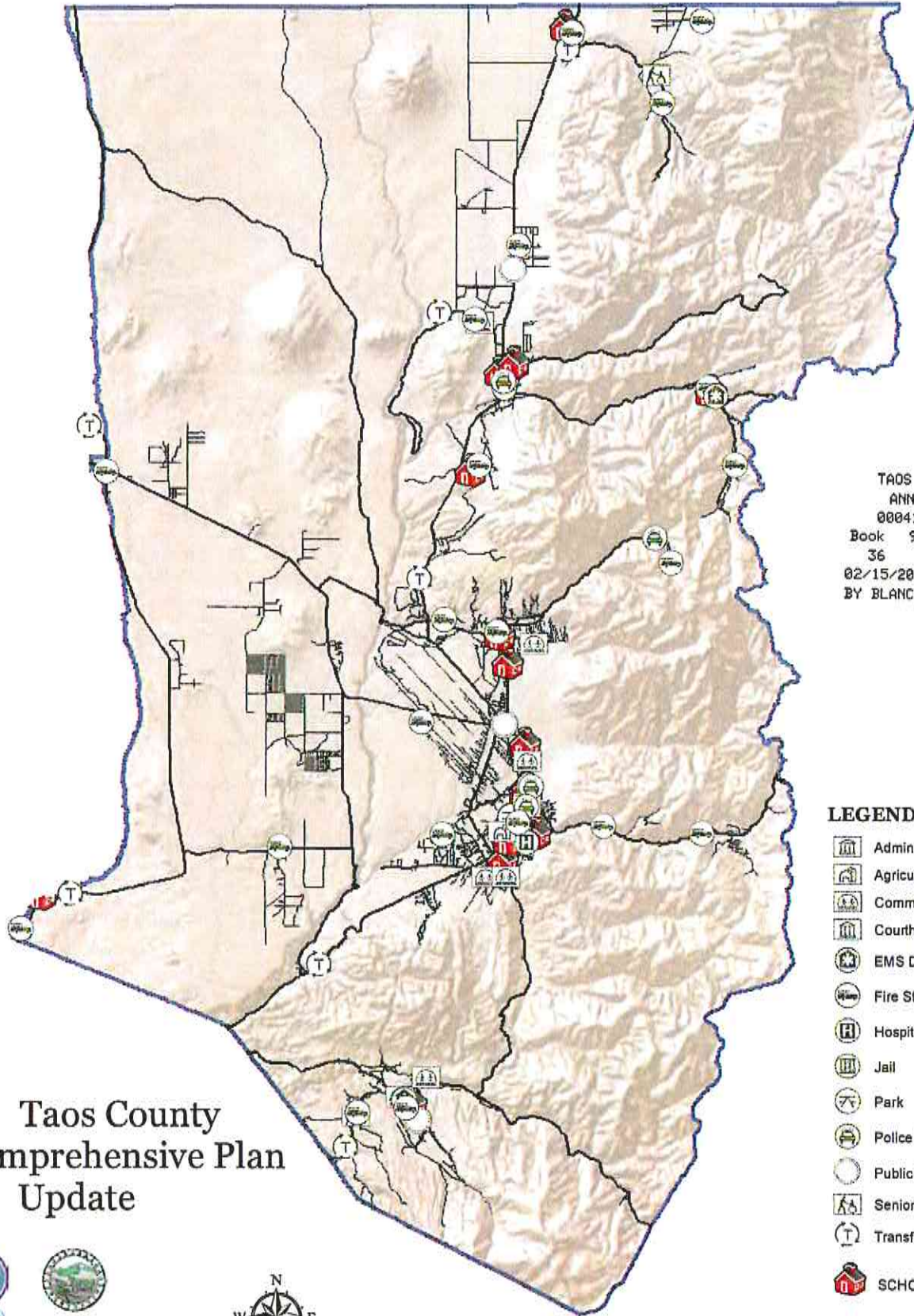
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SIGNIFICANT COMMUNITY LOCATIONS



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LEGEND

-  Administration
-  Agricultural Center
-  Community Center
-  Courthouse
-  EMS Depot
-  Fire Station
-  Hospital
-  Jail
-  Park
-  Police Station
-  Public Works
-  Senior Center
-  Transfer Station
-  SCHOOLS

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Hazards Mitigation Element

Goal 1. Upgrade and improve emergency services throughout the County to meet current and projected needs.

- a) *Continue to enhance the County's 911 dispatch system and rural addressing program, and encourage joint or multiple use facilities for law enforcement, fire fighters, and rescue services.*
- b) *In cooperation with other municipalities, ensure there is adequate law enforcement, fire and EMS to serve the residents and seek funding from local, State and Federal sources.*
- c) *Area law enforcement agencies will strive to promote "Neighborhood Watch" programs throughout the County.*
- d) *Involve the NCRD in mutual aid/emergency response programs.*

Goal 2: Increase community resiliency from all hazards such as wildfires, flooding, drought, severe weather, landslide, avalanche and contaminants.

- a) *Implement the projects identified in the forthcoming Taos County Hazard Mitigation Plan.*
- b) *Update and improve the County All-Hazard Emergency Operations Plan, including development of an all-hazard emergency notification system.*
- c) *Work with Taos Soil and Water Conservation District to develop a County-wide Storm Water Management Plan that addresses flood protection and erosion control and leads to implementation of soil stabilization and flood control projects such as dikes and culverts.*
- d) *Develop Capital Improvement Plans to identify and seek local, State and Federal funding for priority emergency management and hazard mitigation projects.*
- e) *Implement a public education campaign to educate County residents on hazard mitigation topics such as wildfire prevention through defensible space creation, vegetation management and fuel reduction; flood protection through on-site retention and purchase of flood insurance; water conservation techniques and retrofitting; and actions to take during an emergency situation.*
- f) *Implement the recommendations of the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), and continue to seek funding to regularly update and further disseminate the CWPP.*

Goal 3. Improve land-use planning and regulation of development in hazard zones such as floodplains and wildland-urban interface areas.

- a) *Complete and update County mapping of geologic hazards and the 100 Year Floodplain and complete the LIDAR mapping program.*
- b) *Encourage development to be located outside of the floodplain and significant geologic hazards except on properties where there are no feasible development sites outside of the floodplain or outside of*

IV. Vision, Goals and Strategies

significant geologic hazards; where floodplain or significant geologic hazards cannot be avoided, mitigation standards will be implemented to minimize risk to public health and safety.

- c) *Promote and coordinate the Best Management Practices for Taos County's watersheds with the Federal, State local agencies and private land owners to protect and sustain safe and defensible fire safety buffers zones around Taos County communities.*

Goal 4: Upgrade and enhance the County's emergency response system to ensure that all areas have adequate police, fire and emergency services.

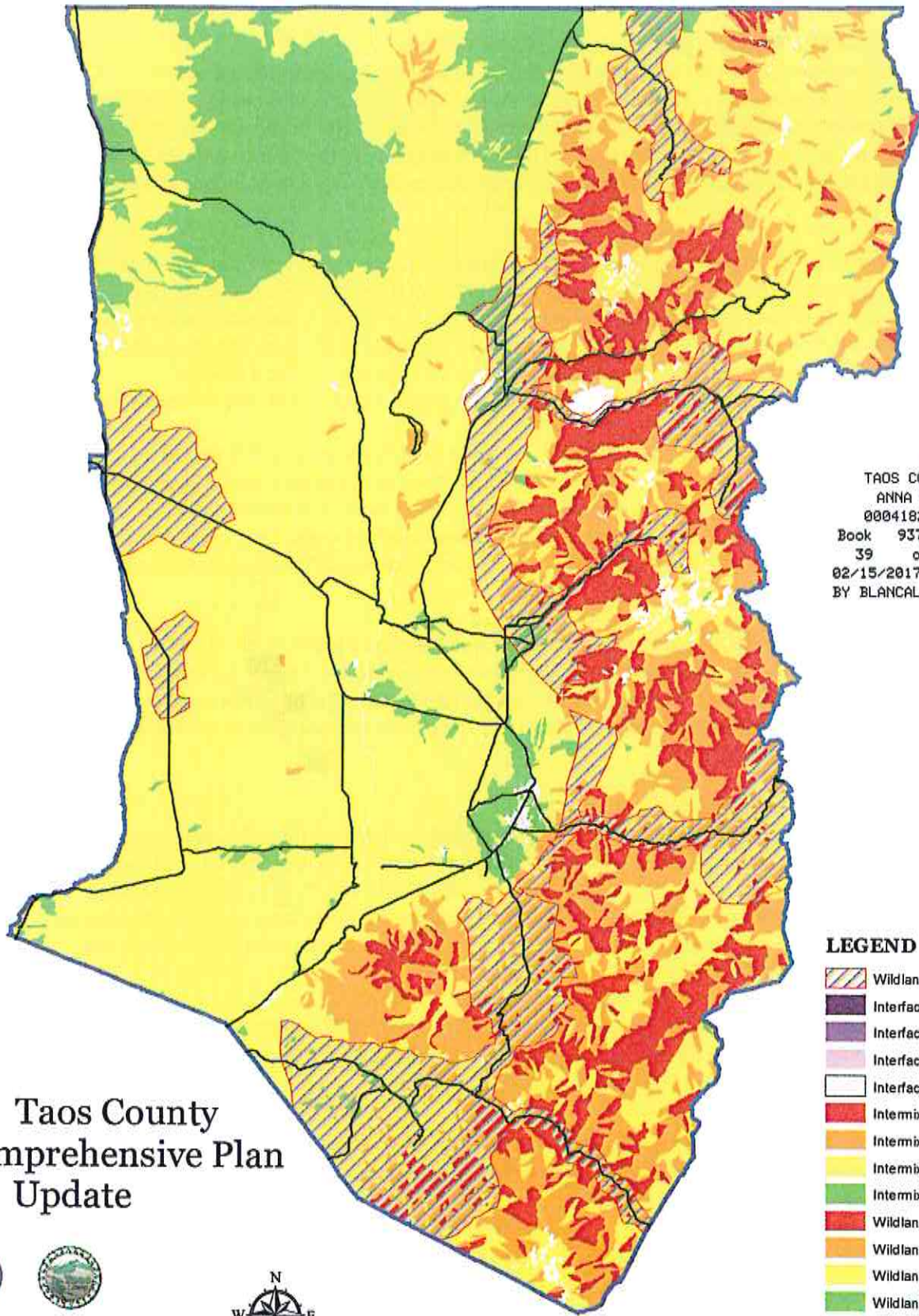
- a) *Increase the telecommunications system through partnerships with the private providers, State and Federal agencies.*
- b) *Continue to enhance the County's 911 dispatch system and rural addressing program, and encourage joint or multiple use facilities for law enforcement, fire fighters, and rescue services.*

Goal 5: Propose new land use policies to support wildfire risk reduction in the wildland-urban interface.

- a) *Consider adopting additional Building Codes that pertain to fire-resistant construction methods and building materials in wildfire prone areas to reduce ignition potential and structure vulnerability from wildfire, including direct flames, radiant heat and ember attacks.*
- b) *Implement vegetation management (often referred to as defensible space) within the Home Ignition Zone – an area that extends at least 100 feet from the structure – to ensure thinning and other landscaping techniques are used for hazardous vegetation.*
- c) *Structure density and development location recommendations based on wildfire risk.*
- d) *Implement planning and growth management tools—such as transfer of development rights and conservation easements—to ensure a safe, resilient and sustainable Taos County;*
- e) *Integrate fire risk reduction measures with other hazard mitigation efforts, such as water quality and availability, forest health and droughts.*

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WILDFIRE RISK



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LEGEND

- Wildland Urban Interface
- Interface High
- Interface Moderate
- Interface Low
- Interface Smoke Risk
- Intermix Very High
- Intermix High
- Intermix Moderate
- Intermix Low
- Wildland Very High
- Wildland High
- Wildland Moderate
- Wildland Low

Taos County Comprehensive Plan Update



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Revised
 Plot Date: 1/31/2017

Data Sources: Headwaters Economics,
 Anchor Point, Taos County

IV. Vision, Goals and Strategies

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Implementation Element

Comprehensive Plan Administration, Amendment and Update

The Taos County Comprehensive Plan is intended to be a dynamic document that should be implemented and reviewed on a continuous basis. As priorities and conditions change, so should these changes be reflected in the Plan. The Comprehensive Plan should be informally reviewed twice a year for refinements or minor updates. There should be a formal update of the County-wide Plan every five years, using updated information from the Census and other sources on socio-economic and geographic data.

The implementation of the Comprehensive Plan should be guided by an Implementation Committee that will be appointed by the County Commissioners and be representative of the diverse community interests. The role of the Implementation Committee will be to coordinate, facilitate and direct the implementation of the strategies identified for each of the Elements of the Plan. The Committee will report directly to the County Manager and Commissioners on their activities and provide recommendations on the capital improvement plan, and legislative budget requests and initiatives.

This Plan Update recognizes the Neighborhood Associations and residents as a vital part of the planning process and its implementation. The neighborhood associations and residents will be involved in the review of proposed developments, including variances, which are being considered in their area. The County will encourage the neighborhood associations and residents to analyze the proposals and provide their comments and recommendations to the County Planning office, Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners.

The Comprehensive Plan should be used as a basis for reviewing and evaluating development projects that are proposed for conformance to the Plan's goals and strategies. The County will also ensure that proposed developments be in conformance with the appropriate Neighborhood Plans and seek input from the affected Neighborhood Association prior to the developer submitting their development applications and plans to the County.

Prioritized Implementation Strategies

The following strategies represent the community's priorities as identified through a polling process in which the forty participants from the steering committee and community meetings who responded chose their prioritized strategies (of the 124 in the plan) they felt the County should implement in a shorter timeframe. These are the community's priorities and are advisory to the County Commissioners and administration. Implementation of these strategies will be contingent on available funding and approval of the County administration.

- a) *Coordinate and integrate water and watershed planning with the Carson National Forest Ten Year Plan, BLM Resources Management Plan, Taos County Regional Water Plan, NM State Water Plan and the NM State Forest Watershed Plans. (Land and Water)*
- b) *Work with the County Agricultural Extension Office, Taos Valley Acequia Association, the New Mexico Acequia Association, and the Acequia Commissioners, to assure all acequias within the County have updated bylaws. (Land and Water)*
- c) *Collaborate with municipalities within the County to develop an Economic Development Department to be housed in the County and hire an Economic Development Planner. The Economic Development*

IV. Vision, Goals and Strategies

- planner should: 1) Facilitate an Economic Development Council comprised of public and private economic development organizations to coordinate and consolidate economic development efforts; 2) Identify opportunities to streamline the business startup process in the County; and 3) Consolidate and promote business development resources. In the absence of an Economic Development Department, the Taos County Administration would serve as the Economic Development Department. (Economic Development)*
- d) Encourage Neighborhood Associations to establish historic/traditional or contemporary Plaza Neighborhood Overlay Zones that consider preservation and restoration guidelines, and identify programs and incentives for rehabilitation of historic and cultural properties. (Land and Water)*
 - e) Focus on economic development opportunities that employ local residents at higher wages, with an emphasis on Hispanic and Native populations and invest in research to identify the appropriate minimum wage in Taos County to support State and Federal legislation. (Economic Development)*
 - f) Introduce State legislation that encourages return flow credits for agricultural activities by overturning the "Use it or lose it" scenario and encouraging the use of the acequia banking and acequia water transfer. (Land and Water)*
 - g) Cooperate with the New Mexico State Cooperative Extension Service to support increased agricultural production and provide incentives to low income residents to put their retired agricultural lands into production through land banks and/or land leases to third parties. (Land and Water)*
 - h) Pursue funding sources and partner with the NCRTD and other jurisdictions in the County in maintaining the existing shuttle system and seek out future funding sources to expand the system. (Transportation)*
 - i) Define an appropriate minimum lot size in the Land Use Regulations, Subdivision Regulations, and/or Neighborhood Zoning Plans. (Land and Water/Housing)*
 - j) Provide funding for a feasibility study on a Detox Center for drug abuse and mental health rehabilitation facilities and partner with the hospital and medical providers. (Infrastructure and Community Facilities)*
 - k) In cooperation with other municipalities, ensure there is adequate law enforcement, fire and EMS to serve the residents and seek funding from local, State and Federal sources. (Hazard Mitigation)*

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V. Appendix:

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Appendix A: Taos County Existing Conditions

Appendix B: Community Meeting Flyers/Display Ads

Taos County Existing Conditions

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Land and Water Existing Conditions

Land use in Taos County has revolved around farming, ranching, mining, hunting, and lumbering for hundreds of years. When Coronado brought sheep here in 1540, they became an important part of the economy. At its height the Taos wool trade exported blankets to Mexico. Under the land grant system extensive land was given usually to a group of families in areas the Crown wanted settled. These grant families shared communal land for sheep grazing and each family also owned a smaller portion of the grant as their own where they raised food crops and built their dwellings.

This system was in place until 1846 when the United States took control of New Mexico. Beginning in 1854 the U. S. surveyed the grants and most of the land that was held in common was taken by the Federal government or went to public domain or to Anglo businessmen and ranchers who were moving into the area to take advantage of the Donation Act of 1854 and the Homestead Act of 1862. The Donation Act gave parcels of land to white male citizens of the United States. Persons of Mexican or Spanish heritage were not allowed to file. The Homestead Act gave 160 acres to each settler. This idea obviously came from the East where a 160 acre farm was reasonable. However, in the arid west settlers soon became discouraged and cattle barons were happy to help them out by purchasing the settlers' "worthless" land for nearly nothing. The cattle industry boomed in the 1880's, with many ranchers acquiring vast holdings.

Ranchers were not the only enemy of land grant owners. Many unscrupulous lawyers "helped" grant owners get the title to their grant guaranteed by the U.S. government. These lawyers' fees in many cases were land instead of money. In the end over 80% of Spanish land grants in the State were lost by their owners. Many families in northern New Mexico lost the land that for generations had been their sheep raising property. Territorial records report several cases of land fraud in Taos County. Throughout the 1900's entire communities were deserted because of this loss of communal lands. These events along with drought, the overgrazing of the Colorado plateau, and the introduction of synthetics brought the once important sheep business to virtually nonexistent following World War II.

Cattle ranching flourished and continued to do well until more recent times. However, conditions are now undergoing drastic changes. Traditional ways of living have been replaced largely by tourist driven businesses and government jobs. Many ranchers that still run cattle must get permits to graze in the National Forest in order to have enough grazing land. Mining played a role in the County historically, but in modern times only the molybdenum mine, started in Questa in 1923, has been of any importance. At its peak in 1981, it employed over 1000 people in its mining operations. With the fall of molybdenum prices most of the miners were laid off and the mine currently employs 150 full time employees.

Taos County Water Uses

Taos County is comprised of the following water users; 147 acequia associations, 2 pueblos, 32 mutual domestic water consumers association, 4 incorporated municipalities and 2 water and sanitation districts. The Taos Pueblo, the Town of Taos, the Taos Valley Acequia Association and several of the MDWCDs are participants in Abeyta water rights agreement. According to the 2016 Taos Regional Water Plan, the Taos County population projects for 2030 are between 40,000 and 37,000 residents. The 2016 Regional Water Plan projects approximately between 20,000 to 80,000 acre-feet shortage between demand and supply on the year 2030, depending on drought conditions.

Many of our outlying communities are unincorporated and are dependent on the mutual domestic water consumers associations for their drinking water needs. Also the fastest growing component of

Taos County Existing Conditions

Taos County water use is the estimated 7,400 individual domestic water well users. Many rural communities in Taos County have deteriorating water infrastructure systems and are generally not competitive at securing State and Federal funding. The proliferation of septic tank use presents a threat to water quality and complicates Taos County water supply protection.

The acequias and pueblos are dependent on the base flow of streams as supplied by the relative watershed health on Carson National Forest lands. All other water uses in Taos County are ground water uses, which depends on development from the County's aquifers. There are also allotments of San Juan Chama Project water that may be developed under the Abeyta agreement. These water uses including the 7,400 individual domestic well owners will also depend on development from the County's groundwater aquifers. Furthermore the two regional planning groups downstream of Taos County have identified water transfers from Taos County as an alternative water supply for their own regions. Taos County is compelled to decide whether such groundwater development can be sustained from existing water supplies.

During the negotiations of the San Juan Chama Project most water storage in northern New Mexico was designated to the large municipalities of Albuquerque and Santa Fe in the Middle Rio Grande Basin along the Rio Chama. Taos County has only two small water storage reservoir facilities and they serve a small fraction of Taos County irrigators on the Costilla and Cabresto watersheds. All other Taos County water uses are derived from either surface water stream flow or groundwater aquifer storage. This makes watershed and aquifer management the way to plan and manage water supplies in Taos County.

Taos County Water Rights and Legal Agreements

Pueblo and acequia water rights and water uses in Taos County pre-date the United States and are guaranteed by treaty. These senior water rights and water uses are unique in American history. The water users of Taos County are primarily committed to comply with The Rio Grande and Rio Costilla Interstate River Compacts. These agreements dictate the use of these two river systems while in Taos County. In almost all stream systems water claims exceed the natural supply of stream flow.

Collectively, Taos County acequia associations own nearly 60,000 ac/ft. of surface water rights. The Town of Taos owns nearly 1500 ac/ft of exclusively groundwater rights. Allocation of San Juan Chama Project water may give the Town of Taos water rights for short term water use. Long term water use for the Town of Taos will require acquisition and transfer of local water rights. Many of the mutual domestic water consumer district associations and water and sanitation districts are currently struggling to fulfill their current water rights needs and are more challenged to meet future demands.

The Village of Questa owes the NM OSE nearly 2000 ac/ft. of groundwater rights but the Village is negotiating water rights for their current use. The Town of Red River and the Taos Ski Valley both have enough water rights to meet their current needs and both have small future allocations of San Juan Chama Project water that they may develop.

The largest segment of growing water use is represented by the 7,400 individual domestic wells. Their impacts have had little assessment and their water quantity is not identified in any existing water supply data. The New Mexico Constitution prohibits the State Engineer from allocating water that is already appropriated but the New Mexico Domestic Well Statute permits the groundwater development of individual wells with little regard to impairment which will inevitably lead to lawsuits and adjudications between conflicting water rights private property owners.

Taos County Existing Conditions

Existing Water Supply

Based on OSE water use categories, irrigated agriculture has historically been and continues to be by far the largest water use in Taos County, with much of this use as non-potable surface water. The remaining uses of water in the County are public and domestic water supply and livestock, mining and commercial applications.

The US Geologic Survey, the NM Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources, the Taos Soil and Water Conservation District and Taos County have been gathering and compiling geologic data of Taos County's aquifers for nearly twenty years. Currently the NMBGMR is preparing the majority of hydrologic data interpretations for Taos County from funding secured from the NM Legislature. Taos County has also established an aquifer monitoring program. These data bases were incorporated and reconciled with the water budgets of the 2016 Taos County Regional Water Plan..

Taos County Land and Water Management

Roughly 50% of Taos County's 1,444,480 acres is Federal land and 38% is private. Native American and State lands make up the remaining 12% in ownership. The National Forest public lands were established and justified under the "Organic Administration of 1897" for the purpose of "securing favorable water flow", from the Federal lands and forests to fulfill the mandates for State and local water rights and uses. A majority of Taos County upper watersheds are managed by the Carson National Forest by activities identified in their Carson National Forest Ten Year Plan. Much of the open mesa of the Taos Plateau is managed by the Bureau of Land Management in the Department of Interior. The BLM Taos Resource Area also manages the Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River which is managed according to the Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River Corridor Plan. The Río Grande del Norte National Monument, established in 2013 by Presidential Proclamation, is a 242,500 acre area comprising the Rio Grande gorge, volcanic cones, and numerous prehistoric sites. NM State Trust Land in Taos County occurs mostly on the Taos Plateau and along the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains and a Department of Game and Fish Urracca Wildlife Reserve. Other major land owners are the Taos and Picuris Pueblos, the Rio Costilla Cattle and Livestock Associations and several land grants.

Most development, whether residential, commercial or industrial, will require a long-term water supply. The local governments charged with approving such development must take into account a development's anticipated water needs and balance that with the available supply. The duration of water availability is also an important consideration in land-use decisions, particularly if ground water is the source of supply, as these resources are finite and are not replenished quickly. High-water-use developments may be inappropriate in water-scarce areas.

Proper stewardship also mandates that the quality of water supply sources be protected. Land uses that produce contaminants must include provisions for containing, treating, and/or disposing of contaminants in a manner that will prevent contamination of the water supply, in accordance with State laws and regulations. Once contaminated, water supply sources may not be usable for certain uses without expensive treatment. Local governments use zoning and land-use regulations and design criteria to effectively mitigate many undesirable aspects of development. Land use regulations can assure that development will be restricted to appropriate areas, and design criteria can be used to promote water use efficiency, moderate water use and protect water quality.

When a community water system is used, adequate water rights and permits must be obtained. The permitting process requires a rigorous determination of water availability, assessment of off-site effects, possible impairment of existing water rights, and the opportunity for notice and protest. Domestic wells,

Taos County Existing Conditions

on the other hand, are automatically issued and not subject to a thorough review. As a consequence, domestic wells can adversely impact senior water rights and the ability to meet interstate stream compact obligations, and can reduce the availability of limited water supplies.

The use of septic tanks, particularly in areas where the water table is shallow, may contaminate water supplies. The County should consider the advantages offered by community wastewater treatment systems, including the potential to use treated effluent to augment stream flows or to provide water for non-potable community reuses such as landscaping. In comparison, the water discharged to septic tanks is often lost to evaporation and transpiration or moves as contamination to underlying aquifers. (ISC State Water Plan, 2003)

Taos County's private land outside of incorporated municipalities are under the jurisdiction of the New Mexico Subdivision Act, the Taos County Land Use Regulations and the Taos County Subdivision Regulations. Land and water jurisdiction within the four incorporated municipalities of Taos, Taos Ski Valley, Red River and Questa are directed by those communities' municipal planning documents and land use and zoning ordinances. Taos County is currently experiencing sub-urban development within a predominately rural setting. Unplanned growth has demonstrated to be a threat to rural land based communities. Establishing the community's values and goals through a planned growth approach will serve to connect land use decisions and water supply availability with development and population growth decisions.

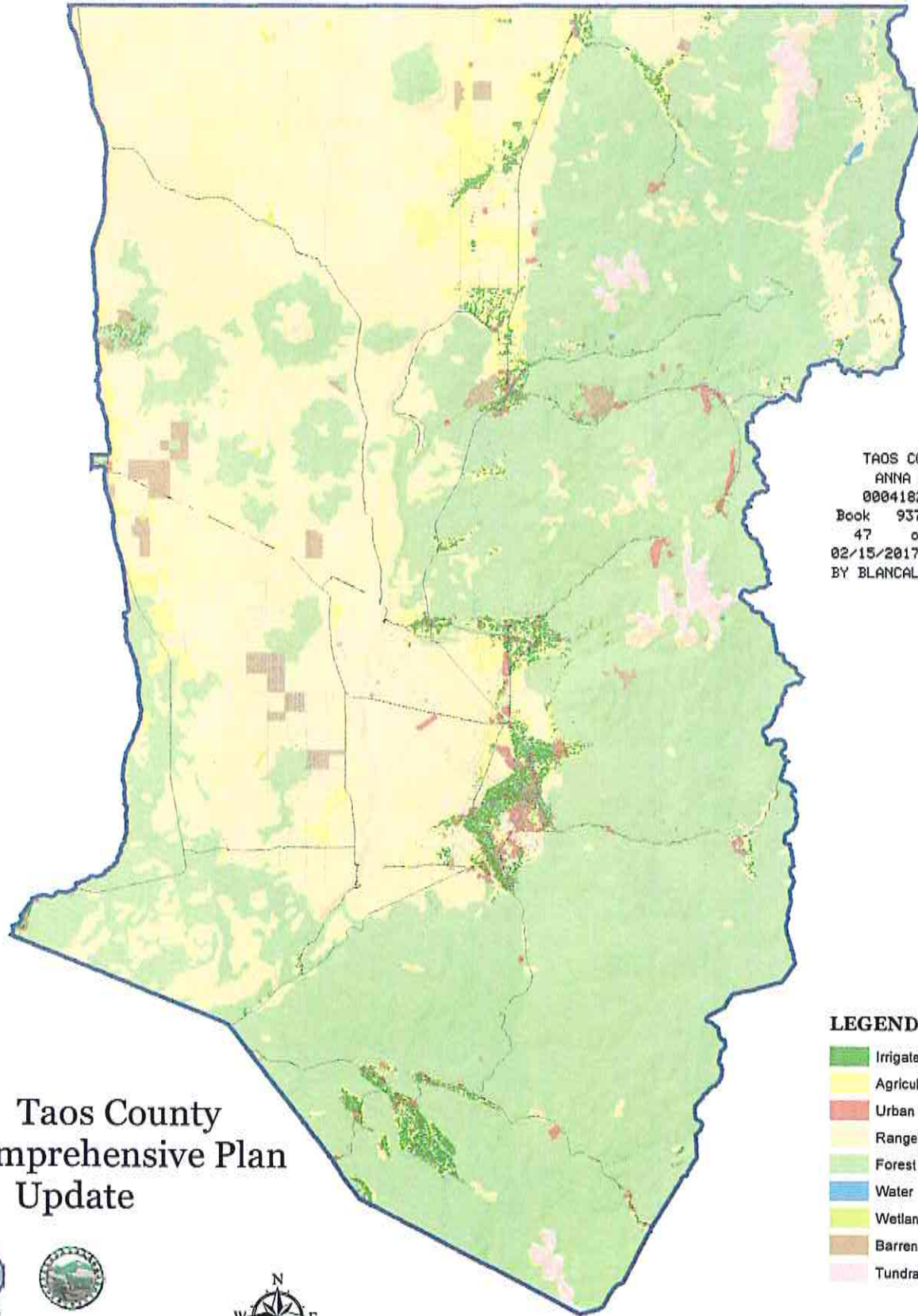
Irrigated Agricultural Lands

Taos County has a long history of irrigated agricultural lands, the majority of them irrigated through the traditional acequias system under the management of the acequia associations, and relying largely on gravity surface water flows. There are areas in north Taos County that utilize center-pivot irrigation systems using pumped groundwater.

The 2012 Census of Agriculture for Taos County identifies total acreage of farmland in Taos County at 88,346 acres. In 2007, there was 191,048 acres in farmland, for a loss of 102,702 farmland acres. This decline warrants serious concern. Of even more concern is that of this 2012 acres in farmland, 14,458 acres of it is defined as irrigated agricultural land. In 2007, the Census identified 19,411 acres as irrigated land within the County. This is a loss of 4,953 acres of irrigated land over a five year period, for an average of 1,000 acres of irrigated lands being lost per year. Much of this loss can be attributed to the drought conditions over this time period, with some of the 753 farms not producing crops. Some of this loss is also associated with water transfers and/or conversion of agriculture land to other uses such as residential development. There is a strong need to implement measures to reduce this loss of irrigated lands over the next twenty years. Many strategies are identified in this Comprehensive Plan to protect and keep these lands in production.

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LAND USE/LAND COVER (2011)



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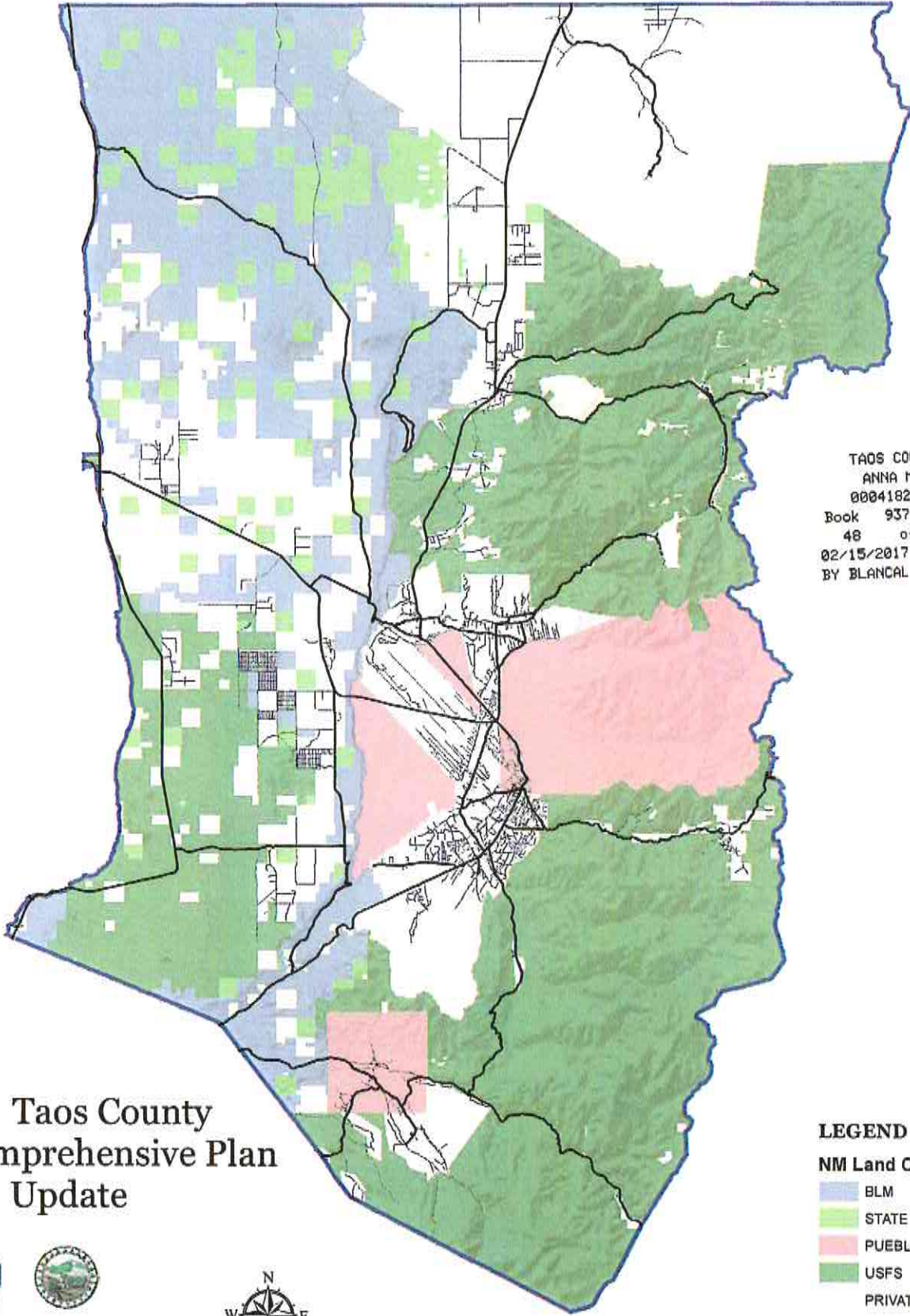
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Data Sources: Taos County, USDA

LEGEND

- Irrigated Ag Land (2007)
- Agricultural Land
- Urban or Built-Up Land
- Rangeland
- Forest Land
- Water
- Wetland
- Barren Land
- Tundra

LAND OWNERSHIP



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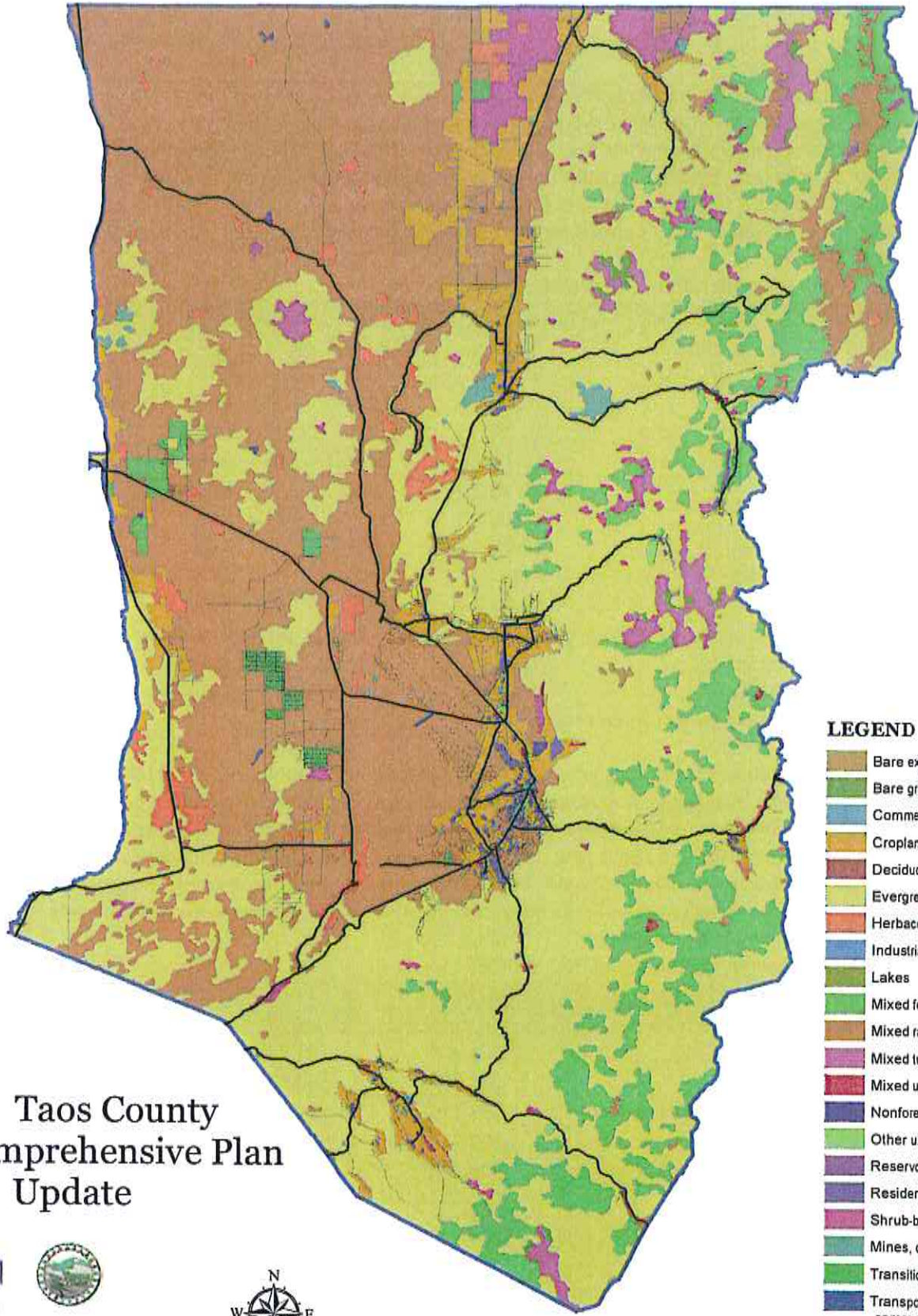
Data Sources: Taos County, RGIS

LEGEND

NM Land Ownership

-  BLM
-  STATE TRUST
-  PUEBLO
-  USFS
-  PRIVATE

USDA LAND USE



LEGEND

- Bare exposed rock
- Bare ground
- Commercial and Services
- Cropland and pasture
- Deciduous forest land
- Evergreen forest land
- Herbaceous Rangeland
- Industrial
- Lakes
- Mixed forest land
- Mixed rangeland
- Mixed tundra
- Mixed urban or built-up land
- Nonforested wetland
- Other urban or built-up land
- Reservoirs
- Residential
- Shrub-brushland rangeland
- Mines, quarries & gravel pits
- Transitional areas
- Transportation, communications & services

Taos County Comprehensive Plan Update



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Plot Date: 9/30/2016

Data Sources: Taos County, USDA

Economic Development Existing Conditions

Unemployment

The official annual average unemployment rate for Taos County for 2015 was 9.3% - noticeably higher than the 6.6% we see for the State and the 5.3% we see nationally. Unemployment rates have been higher in Taos than at larger geographies since the peak of the Great Recession and have failed to decline at the notable rates we see nationally nor the more meager rates we see statewide.

Overall in Taos County we see depressed incomes below what we see both statewide and nationally. Median household income in Taos County is an impressive 40% below what we see nationally and 17% what we see statewide.

Table 1. Income for the United States, New Mexico and Taos County.

	US	NEW MEXICO	TAOS COUNTY
Less than \$10,000	7.2%	9.6%	12.7%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	5.3%	6.5%	9.3%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	10.7%	12.8%	16.0%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	10.2%	11.3%	11.2%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	13.5%	14.2%	16.0%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	17.8%	16.9%	14.5%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	12.2%	11.4%	8.6%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	13.0%	10.6%	7.9%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	5.0%	3.8%	2.6%
\$200,000 or more	5.0%	2.9%	1.3%
Median household income	\$53,483	\$44,969	\$35,824
Mean household income	\$74,597	\$62,137	\$49,813

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2011-2015.

While incomes are depressed for all populations in Taos County we see notable disparities between racial and ethnic groups. Our Native American/American Indian households have a median income 21% below that of our Anglo households and 6% below that of our Hispanic households. Our Hispanic Households have a median income 15% below that of our Anglo households. These numbers are less pronounced than we see nationally or statewide but the less extreme disparities are not because our minority populations are doing better in Taos County than in other places, but because our White, not Hispanic or Anglo population is doing worse.

Table 2. Household Income by Ethnicity of Householder.

	UNITED STATES	NEW MEXICO	TAOS COUNTY
White	\$56,900	\$47,835	\$37,928
Black or African American	\$35,600	\$40,960	N/A
American Indian and Alaska Native	\$37,170	\$31,562	\$30,625
Asian	\$73,244	\$58,744	\$26,250
Some other race	\$40,300	\$34,423	\$27,830
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	\$42,396	\$37,184	\$32,386
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	\$58,847	\$54,464	\$37,888

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2011-2015.

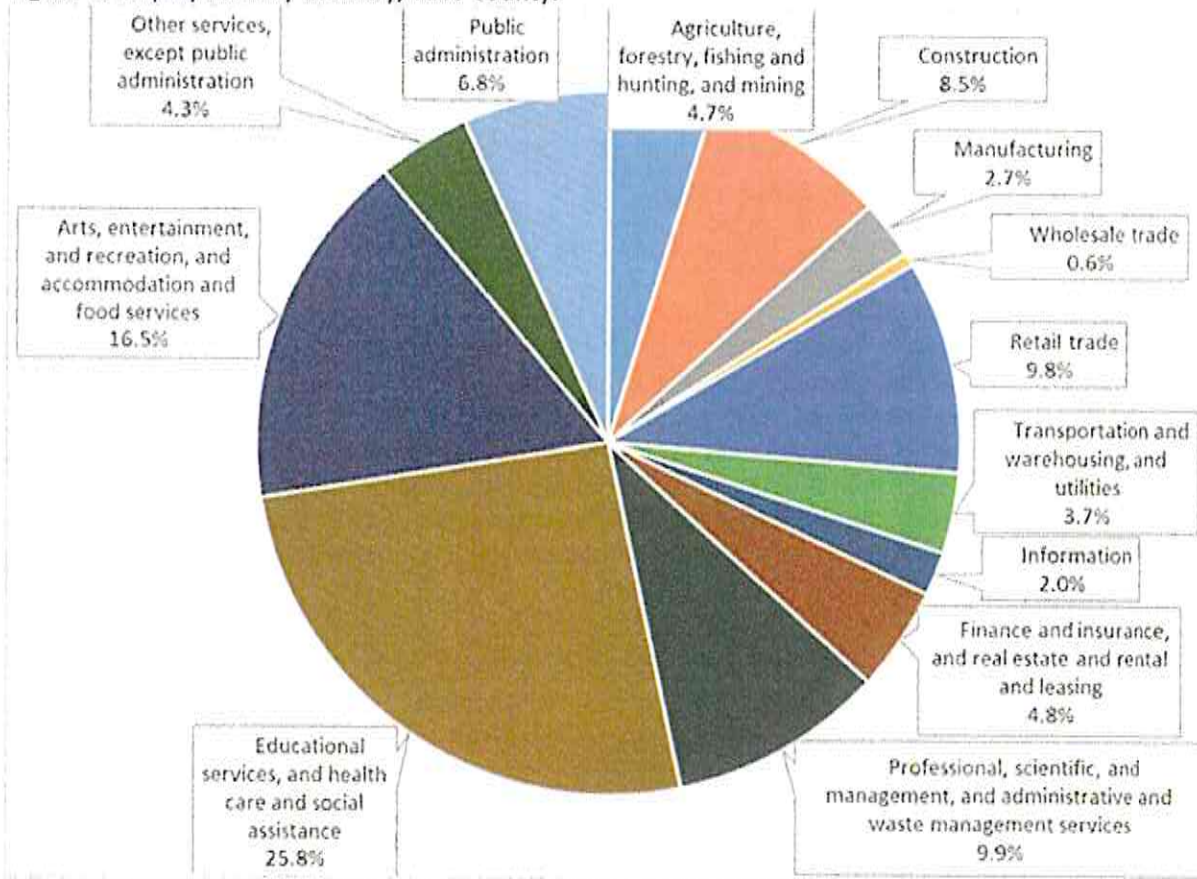
Taos County Existing Conditions

Industry

Below we see the basic breakdown of the Taos economy by industry. Education, healthcare and social services make up just over a quarter of the Taos economy, seconded by, essentially, the tourism industry as represented by 'Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodations and food services'. Professional services, administrative services and waste management come in third as 1/10th of the economy, and construction, despite the challenges this industry faces in the post-Recession era in Taos still provides 8% of the jobs in the County. This data may be bolstered by a few somewhat larger projects that happened toward the beginning of the five year period this data covers and may be smaller in future data.

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Figure 1. Employment by Industry, Taos County.

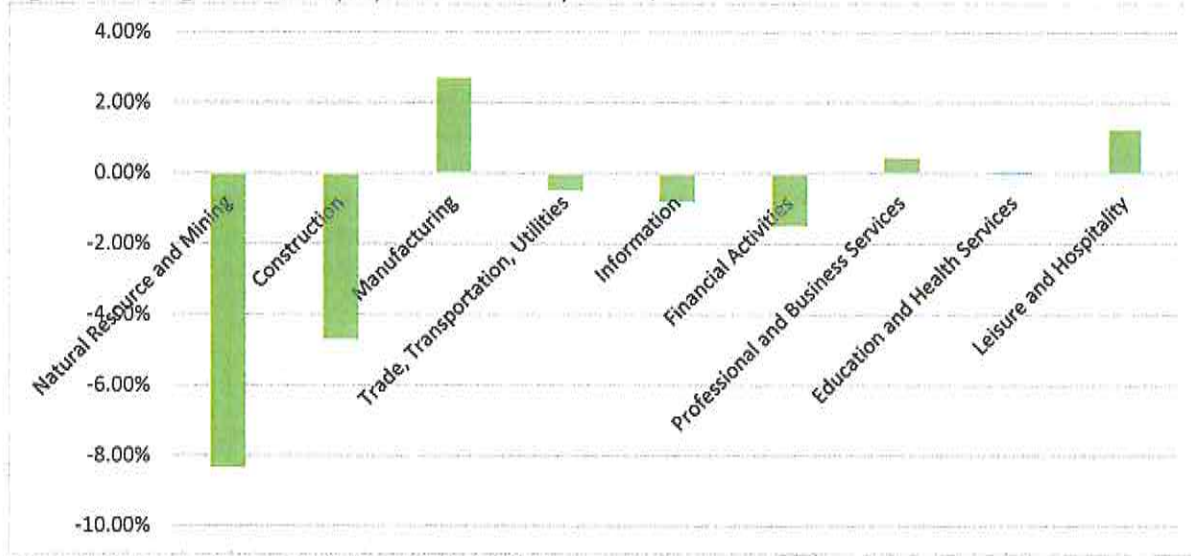


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Five Year Estimates, 2010-2014.

Taos County Existing Conditions

There are few bright spots in the Taos economy in the past decade during which the Great Recession took its toll on the economy of Taos County. The majority of sectors have suffered losses over the decade, with the loss of the Mine in Questa having notable effects on the natural resources and mining sector, and the stagnation of the local residential construction market having devastating effects on construction. Manufacturing has seen the greatest growth over the decade, though at just 2.7% and representing a small fraction of the overall economy, these are not impressive numbers. Leisure and Hospitality has also seen marginal growth, however, representing a much larger portion of the economy, these numbers represent a greater effect on the overall economy.

Figure 2. Average Annual Employment Growth by Sector, 2006-2015.



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, QCEW, 2016.

Housing Existing Conditions

Housing in Taos County is dominated by stand-alone units (69%) and to the extent we see multi-unit housing, it's generally relatively low density condominium style housing – not the often more affordable, higher density apartment style development. The high cost of housing in Taos, combined with depressed incomes leads to a proliferation of mobile homes in the County. While mobile homes provide a functional alternative to a housing market that is outsized for local incomes, they do not provide the opportunity to build equity and are, in many areas of the County, potentially subject to displacement as development pressures expand.

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Taos County Existing Conditions

Table 3. Housing Units by Type, 2011-2014, U.S. New Mexico and Taos County.

	UNITED STATES	NEW MEXICO	TAOS COUNTY
1-unit, detached	61.7%	64.8%	69.0%
1-unit, attached	5.8%	3.7%	2.2%
2 units	3.7%	1.9%	4.1%
3 or 4 units	4.4%	3.6%	3.0%
5 or more units	17.9%	9.2%	4.6%
5 to 9 units	4.8%	2.7%	2.7%
10 to 19 units	4.5%	2.6%	1.1%
20 or more units	8.6%	3.9%	0.8%
Mobile home	6.4%	16.5%	17.0%
Boat, RV, van, etc.	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5 Year Estimates, 2010-2014.

Taos County has a noticeably higher home ownership rates than larger geographies, but while this would traditionally be touted as an indicator of community and economic health, in Taos these higher home ownership rates are affected by two factors that speak to the dysfunctions of Taos' housing situation: Firstly, the prevalence of mobile homes, as mentioned above. Not only do mobile homes not allow for the same level of equity accrual as other housing types, but, in order to count as home ownership by the U.S. Census Bureau, the property on which a mobile home does not have to be owned by the home owner – meaning that all those who rent the pad on which their mobile home is located are counted within these numbers, thus contributing indicators of stratification and generational poverty.

Secondly, this represents as much of a push out of the rental market as it does a pull into the home ownership market. The stock of rental units is relatively small, is made smaller by the size of the vacation rental market, and is priced at a level that requires a large portion of renters in Taos to live in a state of housing stress. The dearth and cost of rental units in Taos (in relationship to incomes) may be contributing to the high median age within the County, as those in the age demographics most likely to rent (18-34) may be pushed out of the County due to challenges acquiring affordable rental housing.

Table 4. Occupied Housing Units by Tenure; United States, New Mexico and Taos County; 2010-2014.

	UNITED STATES	NEW MEXICO	TAOS COUNTY
Occupied housing units	87.5%	84.3%	65.2%
Owner occupied	64.4%	68.2%	72.5%
Renter occupied	35.6%	31.8%	27.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey. Five Year Estimates 2010-2014.

Just over one third of all housing units in Taos are vacant. This is a very high number – more than twice what we see state-wide and nearly three times what we see nationally. This is predominantly due to the proliferation of second homes in Taos – 22.7% of all homes in the County are for seasonal, recreational or occasional uses – compared to just 5.7% of all homes in New Mexico and just 4% of homes nationwide. We see slightly higher rates of vacant rentals in Taos, likely do to challenges of rental affordability for the local population.

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Taos County Existing Conditions

Table 5. Vacant Housing by Type; United States, New Mexico and Taos County; 2010-2014

	UNITED STATES	NEW MEXICO	TAOS COUNTY
Vacant housing units	12.5%	15.7%	34.8%
For rent	2.3%	2.4%	3.1%
Rented, not occupied	0.5%	0.4%	0.7%
For sale only	1.2%	1.4%	1.1%
Sold, not occupied	0.5%	0.5%	1.0%
For seasonal, recreational, or occasional use	4.0%	5.7%	22.7%
For migrant workers	0.0%	0.1%	0.5%
Other vacant	4.0%	5.3%	5.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey. Five Year Estimates 2010-2014.

The median income for renters in Taos County is \$21,611 while the median monthly rent is \$762 – meaning that 58% of all renters in Taos suffer housing stress as defined by the Federal government. This is not drastically higher than we see at the State and national levels, however, Taos’ numbers would be decidedly higher were it not for a surprising data point – 14.5% of renters in Taos do not exchange cash for rent – compared to 7.6% statewide and 5.4% nationally. This group comprises long-term house sitters, those trading services for rent, those living free of charge in housing owned by family members.

Table 6. Gross Rent as a Percentage of Income, United States, New Mexico and Taos; 2011-2014.

	UNITED STATES	NEW MEXICO	TAOS COUNTY
Less than 15.0 percent	11.7%	13.6%	12.8%
15.0 to 19.9 percent	12.1%	12.2%	8.2%
20.0 to 24.9 percent	12.5%	11.9%	12.9%
25.0 to 29.9 percent	11.5%	11.4%	8.1%
30.0 to 34.9 percent	9.1%	8.7%	5.7%
35.0 percent or more	43.2%	42.2%	52.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey. Five Year Estimates 2010-2014.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the median home value in Taos County increased noticeably between 2000 and 2010 from \$124,886 to \$210,892. The latest five year estimate places median home value in the County at \$211,900. According to a 2010 study by UNM’s Bureau of Business and Economic Research, fewer than 10% of working households in Taos County could afford the median home price in 2010⁵ – which has gone up slightly since 2010 and can be expected to continue increasing as the local and national economy continue to rebound after the Great Recession.

The median household income of owner-occupied housing units in Taos County is \$41,694. 43% of homeowners in the County with a mortgage suffer housing stress, compared to 33.6% statewide and

⁵ The Market for Affordable Housing (August 2010) Jeffrey Mitchell, PhD and Michael O’Donnell, MS, JD. Published by University of New Mexico Bureau of Business and Economic Research. Funding provided by University of New Mexico Taos Branch and the Town of Taos.

Taos County Existing Conditions

34.2% nationwide, and 16.5% of homeowners without a mortgage suffer housing stress, compared to 11.5% of those statewide and 15% nationwide. The greater level of housing stress among homeowners with a mortgage in comparison to those at larger geographies can be explained by a housing market out of step with the local economy and reliant on retirees and second home buyers from outside the local economy.

Table 7. Housing Costs as a Percentage of Income for Owner Occupied Housing Units with a Mortgage; U.S. New Mexico and Taos; 2011-2014.

	UNITED STATES	NEW MEXICO	TAOS COUNTY
Less than 15.0 percent	11.7%	13.6%	12.8%
15.0 to 19.9 percent	12.1%	12.2%	8.2%
20.0 to 24.9 percent	12.5%	11.9%	12.9%
25.0 to 29.9 percent	11.5%	11.4%	8.1%
30.0 to 34.9 percent	9.1%	8.7%	5.7%
35.0 percent or more	43.2%	42.2%	52.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey. Five Year Estimates 2010-2014.

Table 8. Housing costs as a percentage of income for owner-occupied housing units for units without a mortgage, U.S., New Mexico and Taos 2011-2014.

	UNITED STATES	NEW MEXICO	TAOS COUNTY
Less than 10.0 percent	40.7%	50.8%	44.7%
10.0 to 14.9 percent	19.9%	17.8%	17.6%
15.0 to 19.9 percent	12.0%	10.0%	11.1%
20.0 to 24.9 percent	7.5%	6.1%	6.9%
25.0 to 29.9 percent	4.9%	3.8%	3.2%
30.0 to 34.9 percent	3.4%	2.7%	4.1%
35.0 percent or more	11.6%	8.8%	12.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey. Five Year Estimates 2010-2014.

Taos County Housing Authority

The U.S. Housing Act of 1937 authorized local Public Housing Authorities', by individual states, to establish and initiated the public housing program. At the time, the public housing program began, PHA adopted a production approach to providing affordable housing for low-income families. Due to the Depression Era emphasis on job creation and slum elimination began and the local PHAs owned and managed public housing.

The Taos County Housing Authority underwent a reorganization that consolidated the County and Town of Taos housing programs. The Taos County Housing Authority's 86 housing units were constructed in 1977-1978 under a HUD funded program known as Operation Breakthrough. Conceived as a catalyst for

Taos County Existing Conditions

developing new technologies that could readily be applied to affordable housing, Operation Breakthrough was responsible for hundreds of housing projects throughout the U.S. In Taos County, Operation Breakthrough was responsible for housing developments in Taos, Questa and Penasco consisting of 34, 26 and 24 housing units respectively for a total of 84 units.

Additionally, a community/office building was constructed in the Taos site, and a small office building was constructed in the Questa site. At the Penasco site, one of the housing units was modified slightly to provide for a maintenance/storage room. Later on, it was decided, that there was not a need for an office in Questa site, and was converted into an efficiency unit. Over the years the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban development mandated that five-percent Low Public Housing units must comply with ADA requirements. A four-bedroom unit in the Taos Site was converted to two one-bedroom ADA units, thereby increasing the housing stock to 86 units.

The Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, enacted the Section 8 Program. This legislation signaled a significant shift in the Federal housing strategy from locally owned public housing to tenant based assistance. The Section 8 Existing Housing Program was established in 1977 to provide tenant-based subsidies. Under this program, sometimes called the "finders keepers" or "certificate" program, (today known as the Voucher Program) families select their own housing, and the subsidy follows the family when the family moves. Today payments are made directly to the Landlords and not the tenant.

Transportation Existing Conditions

Taos County Transportation

The Taos County Road Department maintains the roads in the five districts of Taos County. The Road Department is responsible for the maintenance of over 318 miles of County Roads, most of which are dirt and gravel. There is no public transportation system available in the County, although the Town of Taos operates a transit system, the Chile Line, within the Town limits. There are two private shuttle providers in the Town with connections to Albuquerque and Colorado Springs.

Airports

The Town of Taos owns and operates the Taos Regional airport (KSKX). The airport is 6,000' long and presently does not have commercial flights available, but the Town is working to re-establish this service. There is a fixed base operator that provides aircraft services and maintenance. A crosswind runway is currently under construction that will provide additional safety measures for airport operations.

The Village of Questa owns and operates the Questa Municipal Airport (N24). This airport is a single-runway facility with a 6,800' long runway. There are no fuel or hangar facilities at the airport.

Transit Services

The North Central Regional Transit District began service in 2007. It provides free and premium fare-based bus transit connecting communities and pueblos throughout the counties of north central New Mexico including Los Alamos, Rio Arriba, Santa Fe and Taos. Further expanding its reach, the signature RTD Blue Buses provide riders with connections to New Mexico Rail Runner, Santa Fe Trails, New Mexico Park and Ride, Los Alamos Atomic City Transit, Taos Chile Line and Red River Miner's Transit. All of its buses are ADA accessible and equipped with bicycle racks. The RTD provides service on 20 fixed routes and two Demand Response routes.

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Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)

New Mexico's Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) is the State's transportation preservation and capital improvement program, listing projects for the six-year period from FY2004 to FY2009. The NM Department of Transportation (DOT) Transportation Planning Division, State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Development Group is charged with developing a six-year statewide transportation improvement program that is cooperatively and/or consultatively planned, comprehensive in scope through the innovative use of Federal and State resources, while being fiscally constrained and attempts to address the multimodal transportation needs of New Mexico's transportation customers. There are \$25 million of improvements planned to the State Highway system in Taos County for the years 2016-2021.

Infrastructure/Community Facilities Existing Conditions

Taos County Solid Waste

The County presently provides eight solid waste transfer station locations at Arroyo Hondo, Cerro, Chamisal, Costilla, Los Cordovas, Ojo Caliente, Pilar, and Tres Piedras. The regional landfill site is managed by the Town of Taos and Taos County under a joint powers agreement and is located near the Taos Airport. In 1996 there was an ordinance adopted providing for Solid Waste Management and Collection in Taos County (Ordinance No. 1996-3). In 1997 a resolution passed establishing procedures for Solid Waste Disposal Billing and Collections pursuant to ordinance No. 1996-3 (Resolution No. 1997-40). The ordinance and resolution indicated above applies to all persons, businesses, and residents within Taos County. This ordinance was created to make the transfer stations pay for themselves. In the past, Taos County has absorbed the operating costs for this service from its general fund. Taos County eventually reached a point where they realized they could no longer afford to support this program alone, which is why the fees are now distributed to the resident's within the County. This fee is assessed to every homeowner within the unincorporated area of Taos County at a semi-annual billing in the amount of \$40.95 per structure.

Water and Wastewater Services

Taos County is comprised of the following water users; 147 acequia associations, 2 pueblos, 32 mutual domestic water consumers association, 4 incorporated municipalities and 2 water and sanitation districts. 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 County Commissioners to impose a mil 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 is now providing service to these residents. The El Prado Water and Sanitation District lies north of the Town of Taos and serves the residents and businesses in this area. Presently, there is little capacity in this system and it will require expansion as this area grows.

Hazards Mitigation Existing Conditions

Hazards Mitigation addresses multiple natural and human-caused emergencies and hazards which may endanger the health, safety, and welfare of the residents of Taos County. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the subsequent creation of the US Department of Homeland Security focused attention on these threats, resulting in funding for communities to plan for and implement actions for hazard mitigation. Severe weather, flooding, drought, wildfires, dust storms, earthquakes, and human-

Taos County Existing Conditions

caused hazards, such as hazardous materials releases, are potential risks. Of these, the County is most susceptible to fire, flooding, and drought.

Wildfire Urban Interface Fire Safety Hazard

Historically, Taos County watersheds were dominated by small and moderate scale wildfires. Although some Pueblo and Spanish settlements altered Taos County watersheds by timber harvesting and intentionally setting fires, most watersheds were predominately impacted by natural fire disturbance before 1800. With American settlement, large scale timbering and in some cases clear cut timbering became increasingly common into the 1900s. In the early 1900s, the forest service management priorities were a policy of fire suppression and moderate commercial timbering. In the latter half of the century commercial timber harvesting decreased due to timber market conditions and increased environmental regulation. The accumulation of these management conditions created fuel loaded even aged mature forests throughout Taos County.

Large scale catastrophic wildfires have occurred in Taos County; the Lama/Hondo Wildfire in 1994 and the Taos Pueblo Encebado Fire in 2003. Subsequent monsoon storm seasons on these burned areas impacted watersheds by causing large scale sheet erosion of slopes, the washing out of riparian areas and the net loss of soils from the watersheds. These soil losses cause damage to water rights and water uses at lower elevations by the loss of watershed and riparian water retention and storage.

The Taos County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) 2016 update identifies several watersheds as high risk wildfire urban interface. Federal and State land management funds have been dedicated to thin fuel loaded forests in areas adjacent to population areas throughout the southwest's watersheds. Many of the Taos County population centers and dispersed communities are either bordered by and or are surrounded by forested lands. Due to land management practices over the last century a large percentage of Taos County's land mass is covered in fuel loaded forest conditions. The combination of years of drought and the many seasons of fuel loading have created high fire risks throughout Taos County. These areas of heavy fuel loading also create extensive fire safety hazards to private property, the watersheds and the soils and waters of Taos County. The CWPP has identified creating defensible buffers between private property and Federal lands as a management and funding priority. They have also identified as a priority the protection and forest thinning along evacuation routes of egress from high risk communities.

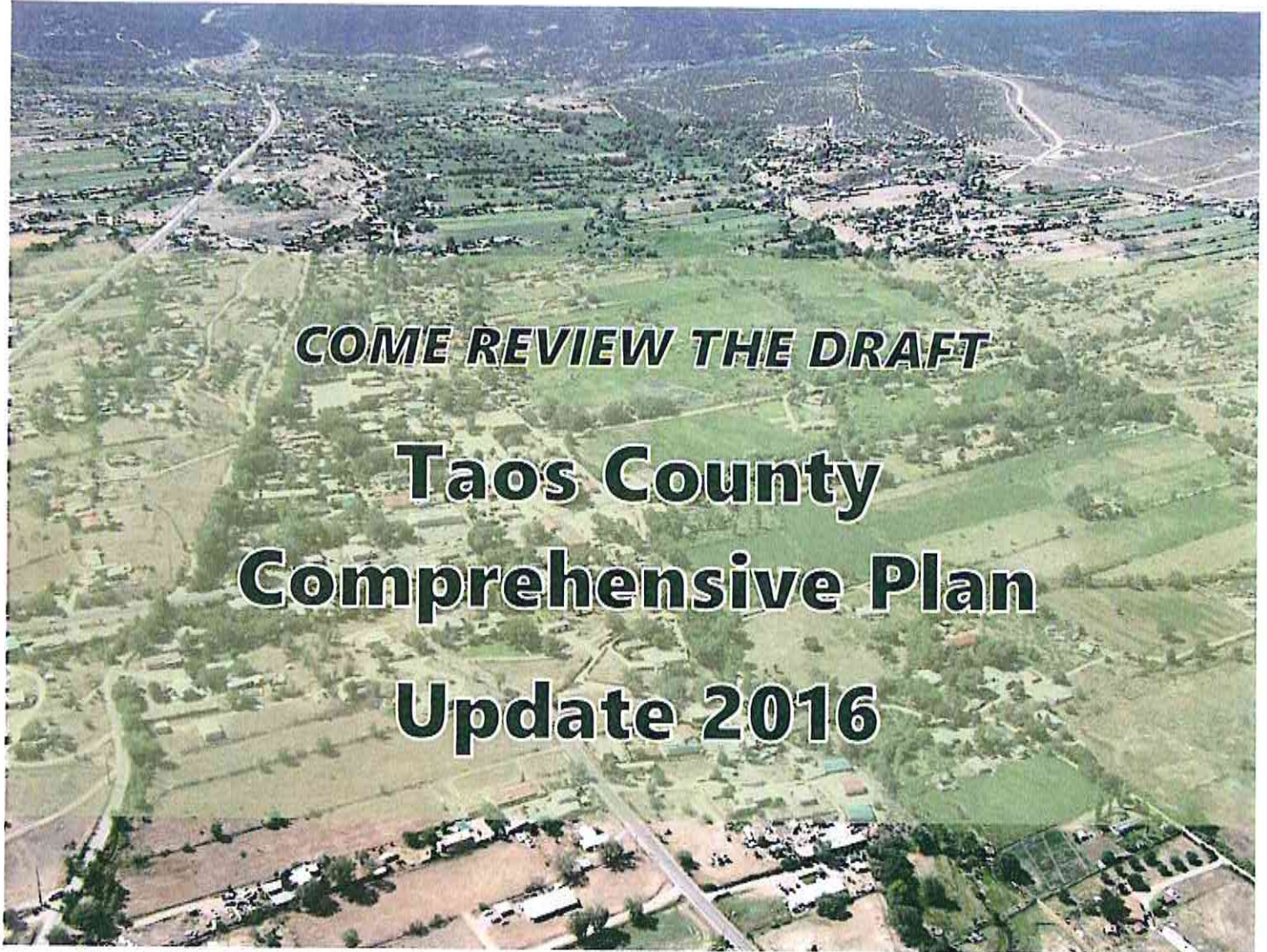
Drought

New Mexico typically experiences drought about every ten (10) years. The decade preceding this plan update has been unusually dry and climate models suggest the trend may continue. Droughts in Taos County reduce water supplies used for human consumption, livestock, agriculture, forests, firefighting, recreation and wildlife, and also affect water quality. Water conservation is a primary tool to protect the County from the impacts of drought.

Human-Caused Hazards

Terrorism and hazards created by human error are difficult to predict or prevent because they can occur anywhere. In the case of Taos County, potential hazards relate to hazardous materials transportation through the County on the State Highways. Human-caused hazards are best mitigated by focusing on key facilities and emergency service providers.

COMMUNITY MEETING



COME REVIEW THE DRAFT

Taos County Comprehensive Plan Update 2016

The Draft Taos County Comprehensive Plan Update 2016 is available for review at the Taos County Planning Office, 105 Albright Street, or on the www.CommunityByDesign.biz website

**WEDNESDAY,
NOVEMBER 9 AT 6 PM**

Taos County Planning and Zoning Commission Meeting
Taos County Administration Building
County Commissioners Hearing Room
105 Albright Street

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Nathan Sanchez, Chief Planner, 575-737-6443, Nathan.sanchez@taoscounty.org or
Charlie Deans, CommunityByDesign, at 505-471-4218, charlie@communitybydesign.biz



COMMUNITY MEETING



COME REVIEW the Draft Taos County Comprehensive Plan Update 2016

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THURSDAY,

or

SATURDAY,

DECEMBER 1, 6 PM

DECEMBER 3, 1 PM

Village Of Questa Council Chambers
2500 Old State Road 3

Peñasco Community Center

For Special Needs and Additional Information Contact:

Nathan Sanchez, Chief Planner, 575-737-6443, Nathan.sanchez@taoscounty.org or
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