

As the planning team for the 2021 Taos Comprehensive Plan update, we would like to provide an overview of what Comprehensive Plans are, what topics they generally include, and how the 2021 Taos Comprehensive Plan update is being structured.

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**Community Values & Comprehensive Planning**

*Every place is home to a diversity of viewpoints and experiences; a diversity of philosophies. Across such a diversity there can be certain points where principles intersect, bridging groups through shared values, and binding a collection of people into a community.*

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*Generally, a Comprehensive Plan is an official public document adopted by the local government as a policy guide to inform municipal decisions, primarily about the physical development of the community. It presents what the community wants with regards to development in the ensuing 20 to 30 years. The plan incorporates community values with planning tools to set policies that anticipate change, maximize strengths, mitigate risks, coordinate efforts, and address critical issues in order to achieve community goals.*

A Comprehensive Plan translates a community's values into policy guidance to inform development decisions, laws, regulations, and ensure that priorities and efforts remain focused to reflect the community's vision over the long range.

*While the 2021 Comprehensive Plan Update is mainly a physical plan, some physical aspects relate to quality of life and community well-being. We'll explain some of those connections in the description of plan subjects below.*

*A Comprehensive Plan can be defined as a long-range plan intended to direct the growth and physical development of a community for 20 to 30 years or longer.*

**Plan Sources & References**

*We will be updating the town's 1999 Comprehensive Plan, Vision 2020 plan. Since that plan was written, the Town has worked to implement portions of that plan and over time has developed several supplemental plans and updates for specific planning topics.*

*The planning team for the 2021 plan update is not starting from scratch; we will be assessing and revising this library of existing planning work and incorporating it into the new plan update.*

THE TAOS COMP PLAN WILL INCORPORATE AND INTEGRATE EXISTING PLANNING MATERIAL AND STRATEGIES FROM MANY PLANS WITH RELEVANT INPUT ABOUT THE VARIOUS TOPICS IMPORTANT TO THE TAOS COMMUNITY.

*Plan Topics & Approach*

*The updated 2021 Taos Comprehensive Plan will cover the following subjects: land use, economic development, housing, transportation, town facilities, utilities, and parks, and hazards mitigation.*

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**Land Use** is in some ways the “keystone” to a Comprehensive Plan because it relates to all the other plan elements described below. Land use planning includes analyzing the existing land use patterns in the Town, potential for uses that may conflict with one another, opportunities for growth, and opportunities for redevelopment. Future land use mapping shows the desired pattern of land use which reinforces community character and quality of life, while accommodating projected population growth.

The Taos land use element establishes principles and policies for conservation of important natural resources and preservation of historic resources, and character and discourages development from locating where there are natural hazards, such as floodplains or in forests prone to forest fires. Goals and policies and future land use in the Comprehensive Plan directly relate to the Town’s Land Development Code concerning zone districts, subdivision regulations, development standards, design standards, and the development permitting process.

PLANS AND STUDIES WITH RELEVANT MATERIAL THAT WE INTEND TO INCORPORATE INTO THE 2021 PLAN INCLUDE:

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

*One of the policy directions in the Vision 2020 plan is: “Update the Land Use Development Code to revise the zoning map, strengthen natural resource protection, and enhance community character through performance-based community design.”*

*Municipal codes establish requirements and standards for property development and maintenance through legally adopted ordinances. Periodic amendments to code ordinances are essential to update and clarify specific language or address emerging issues. The Town of Taos has adopted various code amendments over the past 20 years to do just this, including addressing short-term rentals in Ordinance 20-08 (2020).*

*Over time, piecemeal amendments accumulate and can result in contradictions and confusion. Periodic major code rewrites are needed to reset the code itself; to reconcile and integrate various code amendments, clarify language, and address any needed revisions.*

*First, the 2021 Comprehensive Plan will update the policies that relate to the Land Development Code. Once the Comprehensive Plan update is complete, we will conduct a more detailed evaluation of the Land Development Code with recommendations for the major code rewrite.*

*The 2021 Comprehensive Plan should be a bridge to a new code.*

*Annexation strategies and extraterritorial planning, platting, and zoning will also be addressed as part of land use.*

***Economic Development***, as a topic in the Comprehensive Plan, is a broad umbrella covering the range of factors affecting the local economy and outlining strategies to improve the economic well-being of the community. The range of factors includes understanding the economy and workforce through data and research, reviewing, and assessing recent strategic plans and efforts, understanding available tools and resources, and identifying potential strategies for improving outcomes. Developing strategies includes coordination and collaboration among governmental levels, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and residents of the community.

*The economic development element seeks to assure that economic development efforts support and compliment the goals of the community and the goals and policies in other elements of the comp plan, such as land use, parks and recreation, utilities, and transportation.*

PLANS AND STUDIES WITH RELEVANT MATERIAL ABOUT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INCLUDE:

- *Vision 2020 plan*
- *Town's Community Economic Development Strategic Plan and Element of Comp Plan (2011)*
- *Strong at Heart (2020)*
- *Taos Arts and Cultural District Plan (2012)*
- *Economic/fiscal impact and marketing analyses, such as for Mumford & Sons and Sting concerts, and for Taos Air flights*

*The Community Economic Development Strategic Plan and Element of Comp Plan (2011, 2013) was developed to provide more current and specific direction than the Vision 2020 plan. The strategic plan addressed retention of existing businesses, various segments of existing and emerging tourist economies, potential target industries, the importance of affordable housing to economic development, creating organizational capacity, and creating financing mechanisms for improvements through a Metropolitan Redevelopment District, tax increment financing, and the New Mexico Local Economic Development Act (LEDA).*

**Housing** is a top concern in Taos and the housing element of the Comprehensive Plan covers housing needs by incorporating recommendations from the 2020 Affordable Housing Plan regarding affordable and subsidized housing, market rate housing, and housing rehabilitation. The Plan update will also include new material evaluating locations for new housing and Reducing impediments to the creation of affordable housing and expanding opportunities for alternative housing types. Affordability is a major concern to be addressed in housing element policies. In general, affordable housing enables residents to be able to afford to live in the community and advances social welfare.

THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLAN WAS PREPARED BY NORTH CENTRAL NEW MEXICO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT AND APPROVED IN JUNE 2020. THIS RECENT PLAN WILL BE THE PRIMARY INPUT INTO THE COMP PLAN'S HOUSING ELEMENT.

**Transportation** encompasses facilities and infrastructure for vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians, bus transit system, and airport facilities. This includes trails and paths as well as roadways. Roads are one of the most important type of facilities provided by a municipality and very important to virtually all residents, shoppers living in or out of the community, commuters, and visitors for access. The street network is also critical to serve land uses, emergency response, and shared right-of-way for public and private utilities. The transportation element will contain an inventory of available information on the transportation facilities and services, including the street network, functional classification of streets, parking, sidewalks, and bicycle lanes, trails and routes. The Plan will summarize key current plans and studies (see list below), their policies and recommended actions, as well as provide updated policies and recommendations and assess opportunities for new facilities.

PLANS AND STUDIES RELATED TO TRANSPORTATION INCLUDE:

- Vision 2020 Comprehensive Plan
- Taos Congestion Relief Study Phase 1B Report Detailed Evaluation of Alternatives (Gannett Fleming West, Inc., subsequently Souder Miller)
- New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) plan for Paseo del Pueblo Sur y Norte
- Strong at Heart, regarding the downtown area
- Infrastructure Capital Improvements Plan (ICIP)
- Town of Taos annual budget
- Town of Taos Bicycle Master Plan 2008
- Enchanted Circle Trails Plan 2017

- *Safe Routes to School (2008)*
- *Safe Routes to Parks (Taos Land Trust) 2021*
- *North Central Regional Transit District Routes and Schedules (regional route and local Chile Line Red routes)*
- *North Central Regional Transit District (NCRTD) Update of the 2006 Service Plan*
- *Taos Regional Airport Master Plan (Armstrong, 2020 draft)*

REGULATORY PROVISIONS RELATED TO TRANSPORTATION INCLUDE:

- *Land Development Code standards and sidewalks (subdivision) and landscaping requirements*
- *Fire code affecting number of units that can be served by single access, narrow streets*

**Facilities and Utilities**

*Facilities include Town of Taos buildings and properties such as town hall, public library, fire department, Coronado Hall, community auditorium, and visitors center. Utilities focus on town public utilities of water, sewer, and recycling, but also include consideration of non-town utilities serving the town such as Kit Carson Electric Cooperative electricity and fiber-optic cable, and New Mexico Gas. Typically, utilities are regional or have regional implications. El Valle Water and Sanitation District serves mainly Ranchos de Taos but also a small area within Town boundaries. North of the Town of Taos is El Prado Water and Sanitation District. Taos Pueblo has independent utilities, while the Town treats the Pueblo’s wastewater. The Town is interested in serving Taos Airport, a municipal facility, with Town water and sewer; the airport is several miles from current Town boundaries. The comp plan will summarize and provide some updates to existing plans and studies, develop policies to guide facilities and utilities development and maintenance, and will recommend approaches and actions for improving and managing facilities and utilities in the future.*

PLANS AND STUDIES RELEVANT TO FACILITIES AND UTILITIES INCLUDE:

- *Water and Sewer Master Plan (Souder Miller) 2015*
- *Town of Taos Facility Conditions Assessment (Dude Solutions & Alpha Facilities Solutions) 2019*

**Parks and Recreation**

*The Town of Taos has several cherished parks and the excellent and well-utilized Youth and Family Center. Parks are highly valued by residents and serve to generate economic activities benefiting the Town tax base and private business activities through such events as concerts and sports tournaments. In addition, trails in general and vehicular access to parks are integral to parks and recreation planning. Open space such as the Taos Land Trust’s Rio Fernando open space adjacent to Fred Baca Park complements park uses and the protection of natural land and wildlife. The parks and recreation element will integrate the Parks & Recreation Master Plan and adapt, update,*

*and modify the parks policy framework somewhat to incorporate new strategies for improving and maintaining parks and recreational facilities in the Town.*

PLANS AND STUDIES RELEVANT TO PARKS AND RECREATION INCLUDE:

- *Town of Taos Parks & Recreation Master Plan (design office, consultants) 2018*
- *Youth and Family Center Master Plan*
- *Alexander Gusdorf Eco-Park Plan (Living Designs Group Architects) 2009*