**Town of Taos Comprehensive Plan**

**Land Use Goals, Policies and Actions/Strategies**

**November 5, 2021 Draft**

**Goals**

1. Encourage positive development including environmentally sensitive and sustainable development, infill - especially affordable housing, employment and mixed use centers, neighborhood commercial, recreational and cultural amenities, and economic development uses
2. Designate future land uses that incorporate anticipated growth over the next 20 to 30 years
3. Develop nodes along Paseo del Pueblo Sur
4. Support and further develop existing employment centers or districts
5. Develop new employment centers
6. Protect the unique character of Taos neighborhoods
7. Identify and establish Ranchitos and Canon Greenbelts
8. Annex a logical portion of the greenbelt to better guide conservation land use practices.
9. Protect wetlands, wildlife habitat, scenic views, and other ecologically important areas

**Policies and Actions/Strategies**

1. Encourage continuing development in the Central Business District (Plaza/Downtown)
   1. Provide places for people in the downtown to socialize and opportunities for the community to come together. (Strong at Heart)
2. Provide a variety of housing choices affordable to people who live and work in the community.
3. Promote missing “middle (density) housing”, including allowing higher density and heights in the CBD, R-14, C-2, C-1, & M-1 zones, (Strong at Heart)
   1. Develop during the Land Development Code update a hybrid form-based and conventional zoning approach to allow “missing middle” building types that allows duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, even more units if small in a building, or possibly assembly of cottages, while respecting the neighborhood scale.
   2. Do not allow adding on top of or demolition and replacement of historic structures
4. Make neighborhood-by-neighborhood improvements and enhancements, such as making downtown area neighborhoods into “complete neighborhoods” that are walkable and have parks, trails, and varied types of housing
5. Protect the character of historic neighborhoods
   1. Retain the historic overlay zone
      1. Periodically update the historic district guidelines and standards
      2. Provide training to Historic Preservation Committee members in principles and procedures for review and approval of certificates of appropriateness
   2. Retain the historic pattern of dirt roads and lanes in more rural areas
6. Encourage traditional appearance and natural setting of new commercial development
   1. Minimize commercial lighting
7. Encourage property owners throughout the Town to maintain their properties
   1. Mitigate unsightly properties negative effects, including regulating the size and abundance of weeds
8. Encourage continuing development along Paseo del Pueblo (Sur and Norte)
9. Update the Land Development Code and zoning map utilizing the future land use map as a general guide
   1. Utilize RA zoning to manage growth in certain areas where land is not yet needed to meet 20-years growth land requirements and where utilities and roads are not yet adequate to serve an area for eventual urban development visualized in the future land use map
10. Utilize the future land use map to identify nodes
11. Develop nodes following the criteria below:
    1. Nodes are intended to be efficient in space, generate co-located activity, accommodate walking, biking and transit users, be safe and convenient for growing elder population as well as youngest population, promote better design and placemaking to create or strengthen the character of a neighborhood district
    2. Nodal development is different from strip commercial that typically has separate uses not related to or complimentary with uses on adjacent properties, auto-oriented for users, separate access and parking, and separate signage
    3. Nodes are typically mixed-use and may be focused on:
       1. Businesses that build employment (such as a business park)
       2. Complementary retail uses that one can park once and walk among, or mix of residential and commercial uses or live-work where residents and workers might be on-site.
       3. Assemblage of hotels designed with ancillary uses, such as park space that hotel guests may enjoy, shared parking, restaurants, and gas stations
       4. Public uses such as a hospital, which may include nearby medical offices, continuum of care housing complexes, assisted living, prescription walking trails, and housing
       5. Public uses such as a college campus
    4. Nodes should be limited in land area to approximately a quarter mile radius (125 acres)
    5. Nodes should have higher intensity than linear (strip) development, typically with somewhat larger buildings and greater height
    6. Nodes should be served by transit
    7. Nodal development usually requires large parcel master planning, cooperation among a few property owners and builders, and local government guidance and participation
    8. Create development and design standards for nodes in the Land Development Code accompanied by design guidelines
12. Consider identifying different or additional areas for nodal development than shown on the future land use map
13. Create a pattern of dispersed mixed use centers that are neighborhood-serving
14. Site commercial and industrial uses to minimize the adverse effects of noise, lighting, pollution, and traffic on residential environments
15. Avoid development in streams, arroyos and flood-prone areas
16. Pursue phased annexation utilizing the following criteria
    1. Addresses current, or the potential with likelihood of, failing septic systems that threaten groundwater quality and that the Town is able to serve with sanitary sewer - (high priority areas that mainly correspond to Town identified areas 1-5).
    2. Creates readily definable Town limits, getting away from the confusion from little ins and outs, making a regular geography that the Town can serve in all its capacities, simplifying the map for the emergency service providers
    3. Avoids Traditional Historic Communities, based on Section 3-7-1 (NMSA 1978), while recognizing that annexation is allowed by state statute through a petition of a majority of the qualified electors.
       1. El Prado traditional historic community
       2. Ranchos de Taos is seeking to form a Traditional Historic Community to the south of the Town, while the boundaries of this new district are not settled
    4. Creates a boundary within which the Town can plan for urban development needed for future growth, logically associated with the Town, and guided by the future land use map
    5. Creates a boundary that contains a portion of the “greenbelt” around the Town to continue in rural uses and preserve its character.
       1. This requires the Town to take responsibility to regulate land uses and pursue conservation measures within the greenbelt such as rural zoning districts, acquisition of selected sensitive lands, conservation easements, and mandatory conservation subdivisions that set aside portions of development areas to remain in agricultural or natural conditions.
       2. The Town needs to coordinate with Taos County and Traditional Historic Communities in this. Taos County and Traditional Historic Communities have their own responsibilities to regulate land use in the Taos greenbelt area, particularly agricultural lands to the east and south of the Town - an area larger than what is proposed for Town annexation.
17. Phase annexations to achieve the scheme over a number of years, following annexation methods proscribed in state statutes, coordinating with Town and non-Town utilities, working with property owners, reviewing, revising or possibly devising new zone districts, coordinating with the county and traditional historic communities
18. Provide density bonuses for agriculturists and large land owners in exchange for keeping more of their land as open space
19. Purchase easements from farmers and large land owners to be used as agricultural conservation easements
20. Encourage the use of conservation subdivision design
    1. Require conservation subdivisions in greenbelt areas with significant agricultural resource lands, irrigation by historic acequias, areas that are prone to flooding or have wetlands, and areas designated as having a significant positive visual impact
21. Allow agricultural uses in the open space areas of cluster developments
22. Encourage growth of Taos Regional Airport and airport business park development through annexation or other means
23. Revive the Town/County extraterritorial review of subdivisions utilizing a tiered approach where development standards are generally higher and more urban for properties adjacent to Town and lower and more rural for areas farther away
24. Update the Land Use Development Code to revise the zoning map, strengthen natural resource protection, and enhance community character through performance-based community design, addressing areas such as, but not limited to:
    1. Clarity and consistency, particularly provisions adopted through incremental code amendments over the years
    2. Definitions
    3. Efficiency of development review
    4. Provisions for conservation subdivisions
    5. Affordable housing provisions
    6. Replace stating permitted and conditions uses by zone with a use table for all zones
    7. Replace dimensional requirements by zone with one table for all zones
    8. Replace form-based code approach area near Youth & Family Center/Chamisa Verde with conventional zones to achieve mixed income, mixed use, work/live development
    9. Consider view planes from scenic parks
    10. Mobile home park subdivision development and design standards
    11. Nodal development types (commercial nodes on Paseo del Pueblo, business park/complex nodes)
    12. Review signage standards, to make sure signs are not excessively large, limited in number of graphical elements, and integrated in architecture
    13. Replace dimensional requirements by zone with one table for all zones
    14. Add illustrations to accompany code provisions where needed
    15. Replace form-based code approach area near Youth & Family Center/Chamisa Verde with conventional zones to achieve mixed income, mixed use, and work/live development
25. Improve the Town’s capacity for building and zoning code enforcement
    1. Consider additional measures regarding the maintenance of dilapidated vacant buildings, particularly in the CBD
    2. Contact the New Mexico Construction Industries Division (CID) to determine if and how CID can accomplish building code enforcement in Taos
    3. Build Town staff capacity for zoning code, nuisance and other related ordinance enforcement, including involvement of Town police to either provide the service or to supplement Town planning staff role with law enforcement when needed.
    4. Work with the municipal judge on procedures for citing offenders of code violations, assessing fines and taking other enforcement actions.
       1. Improve Land Development Code provisions as needed to assure that code compliance provisions are clear and code enforcement is defensible
26. Staff the Community Development Department sufficiently to help implement the comprehensive plan, administer the Land Development Code and other portions of the Town Code for which the department is responsible, undertake code enforcement, review and process land use applications in desired expedited timeframes, staff the Planning and Zoning Commission, Historic Preservation Committee, and other committees related to community development, Town Council for applications and communications regarding planning and community development, coordinate with other staff on community development, and communicate with the public on community development.