



# Taos Destination Stewardship Plan

PREPARED BY:

International Institute  
of Tourism Studies

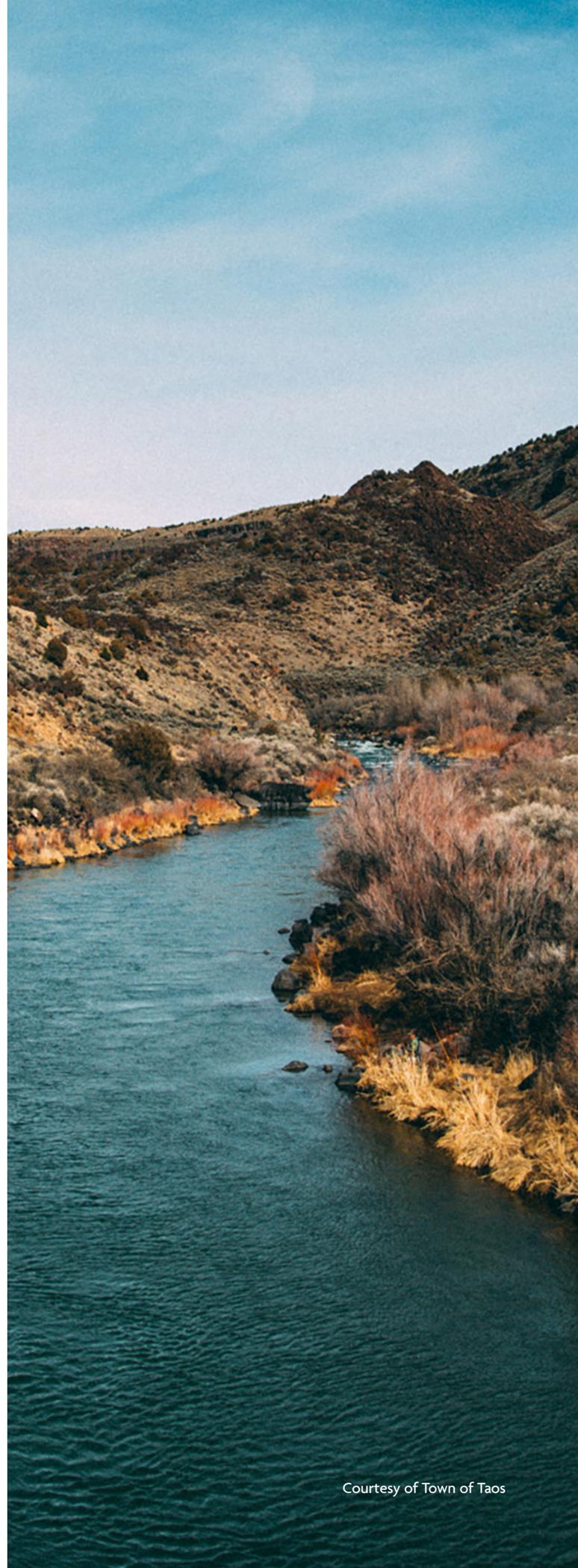
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# FOREWORD

We, the Town of Taos, in collaboration with the Project Steering Committee, are honored to present the Taos Destination Stewardship Plan (DSP), a comprehensive community blueprint for the future of tourism. Tourism serves as a vital engine for economic and social progress in our region, yet its unchecked growth can pose significant challenges to our environment, culture, and communities. With this in mind, Taos needs proactive and collaborative tourism management.

The Taos DSP is the culmination of extensive research, consultations, and engagement with our local community and stakeholders. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the thousands of residents, businesses, community leaders, and tourism stakeholders who contributed in shaping this plan through surveys, meetings, focus groups, workshops, and work sessions. Your invaluable input has informed every aspect of the Taos DSP, from our shared vision and values to the nine stewardship goals and two priority initiatives necessary to realize our community aspirations. We are confident that every participant can see their thoughts reflected within this plan. While the primary focus of the Town of Taos DSP lies in the Town itself, the priority initiatives outlined and their impacts will reverberate regionally. Hence, the consultation process involved Taos County, Taos Pueblo, and other pivotal jurisdictions.

This plan offers a framework for the sustainable development and stewardship of tourism, with a focus on enhancing the quality of life for residents, fostering a robust economy that is benefiting all communities in Taos, enriching the visitor experience, safeguarding our natural environment, and nurturing a supportive environment for tourism. It sets forth specific measures to promote responsible tourism practices, elevate visitor experiences and communications, and preserve our rich natural and cultural heritage.

The development of the Taos DSP was characterized by inclusivity, constructive dialogue, patience, trust-building, and a shared commitment to collective responsibility. Its successful implementation hinges on our collective willingness to assume shared responsibility for tourism management across all jurisdictions and communities.

We call upon all stakeholders to unite and work collectively to implement the priority actions outlined in the Taos DSP in order to achieve the expected outcomes outlined in the Taos DSP, forging a future for tourism that is both prosperous and resilient – a future that will make us all proud. We urge continued engagement and collaboration, for in unity of purpose lies our greatest strength.

The groundwork is done, marking the beginning of Taos' journey towards a sustainable future in tourism. Your continued involvement is crucial as we embark on this transformative endeavor.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pascualito Maestas', written over a horizontal line.

Pascualito Maestas  
Mayor, Town of Taos

# Acknowledgments



## Destination Stewardship Plan Steering Committee

Amy Simms	Recreation and Lands Staff Officer, Carson National Forest
Anita Bringas	Strategic Support Manager, University of New Mexico-Taos
Bradley Higdon	Planning and Environmental Specialist, U.S. Bureau of Land Management
Charles Whitson	Executive Director, Taos MainStreet
Chelsea Reidy	Executive Director, Taos Center for the Arts (TCA)
Christopher Madrid	Deputy County Manager, Taos County
Corilia Ortega	Town of Taos Councilor
David Mapes	Owner and Artist, David Anthony Fine Art
FR Bob Romero	Taos County Commissioner
Francisco “Cisco” Guevara	Founder and President, Los Rios River Runners
Hon. Pascualito Maestas	Mayor, Town of Taos
Horacio Trujillo	Political Economist; Professor of Political Economy and Advisor to Global Socioeconomic Development Initiatives
Ilona Spruce	Tourism Director, Taos Pueblo
Jessica Stern	Economic Development Director, Taos County
Karina Armijo	Executive Director, Outdoor Recreation Division, New Mexico Economic Development Department
Lawrence “Larry” Szczech	Founder, Workingman’s Taos LLC
Luis Reyes	Chief Executive Officer and General Manager, Kit Carson Electric Cooperative, Inc.
Mona Nozhackum	Community Relations Manager, Taos Ski Valley Inc.
Pedro Sanchez	Owner of Rosita’s Mexican Store
Peter Rich	Forest Planner, Carson National Forest
Rose Reza	Executive Director, University of New Mexico-Taos HIVE
Ruben Hernandez	Owner, Razor Sharp Productions Taos NM LLC
Shemai Rodriguez	Community Outreach and Membership Manager, Harwood Museum of Art
Tami Torres	Recreation Program Manager, Carson National Forest

## Town of Taos

Hon. Pascualito Maestas	Mayor
Andrew Gonzales	Town Manager
Christopher Stachura	Town Attorney
Karina Armijo	Outgoing Director of Marketing and Tourism, spearheaded initiation of the Taos DSP project
Contessa Trujillo	Community Engagement Facilitator, managed the Taos DSP project
John Rodriguez	Community Relations Director

## Consulting Team

Seleni Matus	Executive Director, George Washington University International Institute of Tourism Studies
Wesley Espinosa	Executive Director, Center for Responsible Travel (CREST)
Sue Muncaster	Communications Specialist, GW International Institute of Tourism Studies
Martine Bakker	Research Scholar, GW International Institute of Tourism Studies
Edward Hall	Executive in Residence, Indigenous Economic Development and Tourism, GW International Institute of Tourism Studies
Mary Isgro	Destination Sustainability Analyst, GW International Institute of Tourism Studies
Alix Collins	Project Manager, Center for Responsible Travel (CREST)

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# Executive Summary



The Taos Destination Stewardship Plan (DSP) is a five-year blueprint guiding Taos towards a more sustainable and equitable future. For Taos, sustainability means protecting its natural resources, preserving its diverse cultures and heritage, and making sure tourism's economic benefits are distributed equitably among all communities. Designed to address the complex inter-related challenges posed by tourism, the Taos DSP emphasizes a delicate balance between the needs of visitors, residents, businesses, and safeguarding natural and cultural heritage.

The Taos DSP is the culmination of year-long planning and stakeholder engagement led by the Town of Taos and guided by a 23 member Steering Committee. By coordinating efforts among various stakeholders including local governments, industry leaders, nonprofit organizations, and community members, the Taos DSP aims to holistically manage all aspects of Taos' tourism ecosystem. The process involved receiving feedback from thousands of residents, business owners, and community leaders, ensuring that the vision and values are reflective of Taos' diverse communities.

## Community Vision

We are Taos—a vibrant tapestry woven from diverse communities. Acknowledging the hard truths of our past, we unite to honor our multicultural heritage and embrace tourism as a catalyst for positive change, benefiting all our communities. Encouraging innovation and preserving traditions, we prioritize authenticity, education and environmental stewardship. Together, we cultivate a tourism economy that enriches our lives while safeguarding Taos' heritage for future generations.

The Taos DSP supports the following community values:

### BELONGING

We cherish Taos as our home, embracing and celebrating its diverse communities as integral to our vibrant identity. Our children and families encourage our connections and teach us empathy, anchoring us across generations. We take pride in our inclusive community, where individuals of all ages, backgrounds, and interests are valued, nurturing a sense of belonging and mutual support. We extend warm hospitality to visitors, encouraging respectful and responsible visitation.

### COLLABORATION

By working collaboratively and maintaining a spirit of cooperation to achieve shared goals and objectives, we create the future for tourism we envision.

### PRESERVATION

We cherish our diversity and rich heritage, striving to provide equitable opportunities for all our cultures and communities, and safeguarding our collective heritage. Our commitment to accessibility for abundant outdoor activities nourishes our spiritual, mental, and physical well-being.

### EQUITY

We take pride in our welcoming community, where people of all ages, backgrounds, and interests are valued, fostering a sense of belonging and mutual care. Our leadership places a high priority on inclusivity, diversity, and equity in decision-making processes. Guided by principles of sustainable growth, we strive to create opportunities that benefit all communities.

### STEWARDSHIP

We care deeply about the land, water, and air that sustain us physically, spiritually, and mentally. Through responsible stewardship, we ensure the sustainable use and conservation of our natural resources and ecosystems for the benefit of present and future generations. We hold Taos Pueblo in high regard as exemplars of harmonious coexistence with our natural environment.

### EDUCATION

We transparently communicate our histories, challenges, values, and aspirations to both residents and visitors, shaping attitudes and behaviors within our community and beyond.

### CREATIVITY

We cherish Libertad, embodying a community steeped by centuries of evolving traditions that embrace individual and collective expression. Our vibrant creative culture not only fuels our economy and drives innovation but also enriches our lives with diverse arts and cultural activities, ensuring a vibrant and fulfilling existence.

The Town of Taos has experienced a notable increase in visitor numbers, mirroring a nationwide trend observed in other mountain communities, particularly during and after the global pandemic. This upsurge underscores the need for sustainable destination management. As a main driver of Taos' economy, tourism requires careful planning and nurturing to safeguard its enduring viability while mitigating adverse impacts on local communities. The Taos DSP seeks to strike a balance by managing tourism collaboratively and supporting inclusivity and equitable distribution of economic benefits while offering innovative immersive experiences for visitors. This is done with the goal of preserving Taos' intrinsic character and enhancing residents' quality of life. Recognizing the paramount importance of community-driven tourism management, the Town of Taos is committed to a responsible approach that prioritizes the well-being of residents, businesses, and visitors alike. As a guiding framework, the Taos DSP aims to ensure that the prosperity of Taos remains intricately linked with the welfare of its inhabitants, the preservation of its environment, and the safeguarding of its cultural heritage.



# Focus Areas and Stewardship Goals



**01 Stewardship Communication**  
Foster collaborative destination stewardship communications and education among residents, businesses, and visitors.

**02 Inclusion and Equity**  
Facilitate fair distribution of economic benefits from tourism.

**03 Workforce Stability**  
Increase tourism workforce stability.

**04 Protect Authenticity**  
Protect and elevate Taos' authentic character.

**05 Workforce Housing**  
Advocate for workforce housing solutions.

**06 Sustainable Mobility**  
Promote sustainable mobility for residents and visitors.

**07 Sustainable Practices**  
Promote sustainable tourism practices and resilience to environmental risks.

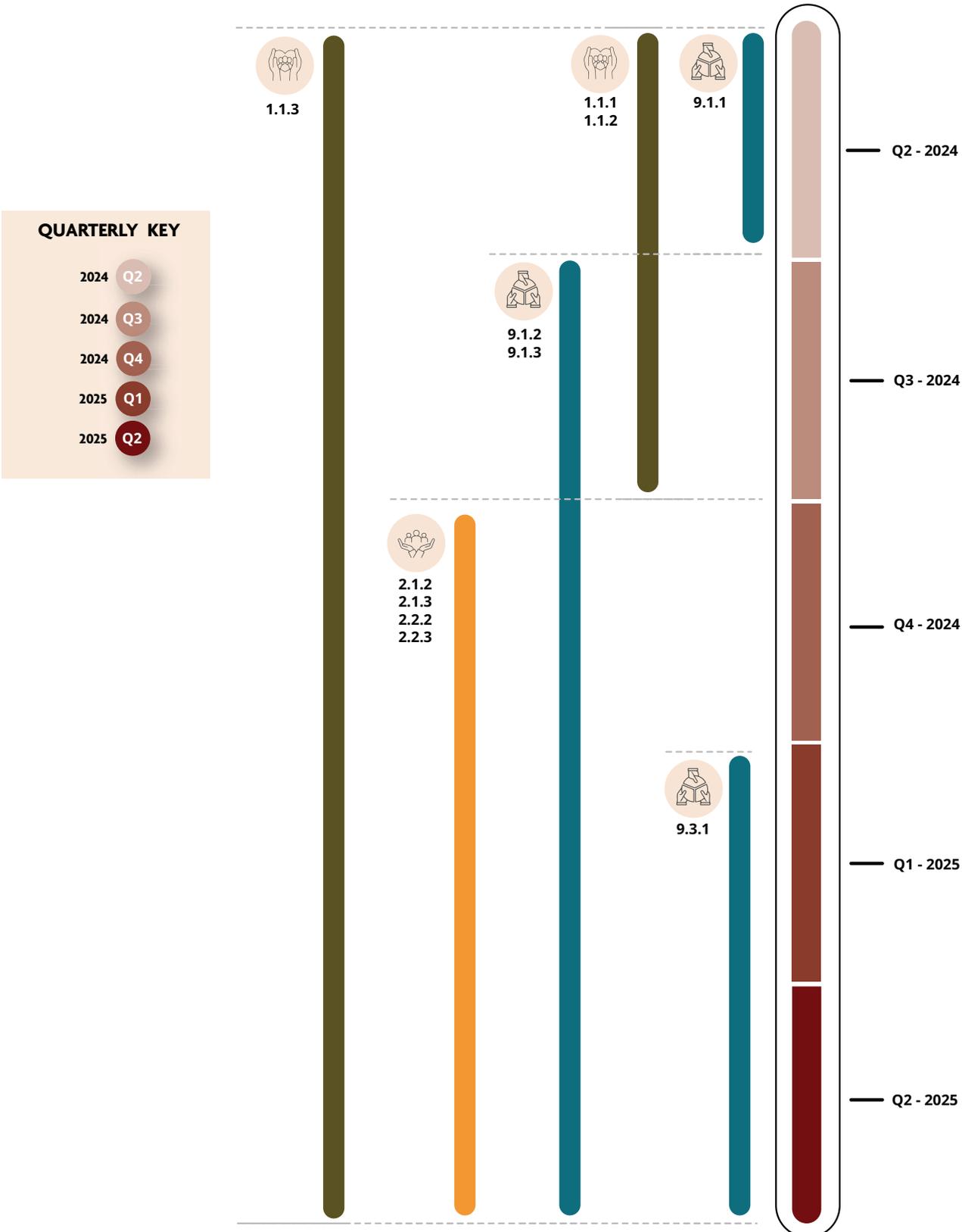
**08 Monitoring and Reporting**  
Monitor and manage tourism and its impacts on people and place.

**09 Collaborative Management**  
Maintain collaborative tourism management and plan implementation.

These nine stewardship goals, supported by 23 strategic initiatives along with their respective priority actions, have emerged from extensive community engagement, including focus groups, workshops, town hall meetings, and interviews. The Taos DSP serves as a dynamic framework for collective action, designed to be adaptable to ever-evolving local realities. It is intended to be updated as a living document, ensuring its continued relevance and effectiveness in guiding the sustainable development of the destination over time.

Year One priority actions are summarized below. For full details regarding each priority action summarized below, please refer to Section 4: Action Plan.

## YEAR ONE PRIORITY ACTIONS TIMELINE





### 1.1.1 Assign the responsibility for community engagement around tourism to the Town of Taos' newly hired Community Relations Director who is responsible for communications, marketing and tourism.

The Community Relations Director should be supported in this role by the proposed Manager of Destination Stewardship Network (see Goal 9 for details), and coordinate all activities through the Destination Stewardship Network that will include Taos Pueblo and Taos County.

Q2

Q3



### 1.1.2 Devise and implement a six-month (May-October 2024) campaign to publicize official adoption of the Taos DSP by the Town of Taos in coordination with:

Taos County and other partner organizations that form part of the Taos DSP Project Steering Committee including but not limited to the Taos Pueblo, key cultural associations, public land managers, Taos Ski Valley Inc., Main Street and the Taos and Taos Ski Valley Chambers of Commerce. Host a series of community town hall celebration events to present the plan, introduce the interim Destination Stewardship Network, educate the community on Lodger's Tax, solicit feedback, and build trust in the community. Consider whether a stand-alone website separate from the Town of Taos and Taos.org is needed. Ensure bilingual, inclusive and non-digital communications are included in outreach.

Q2

Q3



### 9.1.1 Design network structure and scope of work for the Destination Stewardship Network.

Destination Stewardship Network Design Recommendations:

- The Town of Taos and Taos County will co-convene and co-chair the network.
- A network manager (contractor) will oversee operational tasks.
- An executive group of select Destination Stewardship Network organizations will facilitate efficient decision-making.
- Destination Stewardship Network member organizations will be divided into action teams focused on quick-win priority actions, with members having the option to join multiple teams as needed.

Primary roles and responsibilities of the Destination Stewardship Network will include:

- Guiding implementation activities and monitoring progress of the Taos DSP in the short-term.
- Supporting collective action through involvement in action teams and quick-win projects.
- Ensuring ongoing communication with key stakeholder groups including residents about progress on the Taos DSP.
- Facilitating activities to promote trust, knowledge sharing, and learning among participating organizations within the network.
- Promoting engagement and participation from additional organizations as required to enhance network effectiveness.
- Maintaining accountability for Taos DSP implementation to tourism stakeholders and the wider community.

Q2



### 9.1.2 Establish a Destination Stewardship Network based on the existing Taos DSP Steering Committee.

- Expand the Destination Stewardship Network by adding representatives from stakeholder groups currently not represented.
- Allocate funding for a consultant to oversee the management of the Destination Stewardship Network.
- Aim to launch the interim structure and contract a network manager by the end of July 2024, coinciding with key Taos DSP dissemination activities.

Q3

Q1

Q4

Q2



### 9.1.3 Choose 2-3 quick-win Taos DSP priority actions for Year 1 implementation, with the potential for repetition throughout the lifespan of the Destination Stewardship Network.

- Collaborate with the Town of Taos and Taos County to secure funding for Year 1 priority actions.
- Organize Destination Stewardship Network members into action teams based on agreed quick-win priority actions, allowing network members to join one or more teams.
- Ensure Destination Stewardship Network involvement in guiding all Priority Action 1.1.2 focused on Taos DSP launch and widespread dissemination throughout the community

Q3

Q1

Q4

Q2



### 2.1.2 Create new tourism products and low-impact experiences with the Hispano and Latino communities to promote agri-tourism:

- Collaborate with farmers, ranchers, and agricultural organizations to create an Enchanted Circle acequia loop, farm loop, and specific farm product tours that showcase traditional farming practices, local produce, and cultural heritage in particular acequia communities.
- Design guided tours that allow visitors to explore farms, orchards, and vineyards while learning about the region's agricultural history and culinary traditions.
- Develop and offer educational and immersive experiences such as harvesting, cooking demonstrations, demonstration of construction of hornos (i.e., large domed adobe oven), and farm-to-table dining experiences.



### 2.1.3 Promote key aspects of tangible and intangible culture, such as adobe architecture, to showcase deep connections among the Hispano, Latino and Native American communities:

- Collaborate with The Adobe Alliance to restore and repurpose adobe buildings, creating versatile spaces that can serve as educational hubs, venues for showcasing adobe architecture to visitors, among other uses.
- Integrate existing and restored adobe buildings into new tours, e.g., agritourism tours or to serve as a venue for tourism related activities, such as a farm-to-table restaurant, visitor center or venue for experiential tours and educational workshops.
- Create a themed adobe architecture tour connecting Taos Pueblo and the Town of Taos. This tour will narrate the nuanced story of the communities and the origins of key structures and attractions, exploring how adobe architecture has been shaped and evolved by the sensibilities and technology of Native American and Hispano cultures.



### 2.2.2 Establish a Community Events Fund:

- Create a dedicated fund to support community-led events that promote and preserve Taos' unique cultural heritage. The fund should consider providing large and small grant opportunities. Fund organizers should develop and publicly communicate its priorities, application process and timeline, clearly defined selection criteria, and event impact monitoring framework. Consider allocating funding to events scheduled during the off-peak season to distribute visitation more evenly.
- Allocate a portion of the Lodger's Tax (Town of Taos and Taos County) and/or seek funding from grants and partnerships for creation and ongoing management and monitoring of the Community Events Fund.



### 2.2.3 Promote cultural event grant programs to support the develop of events:

- Develop and publicize grant programs specifically for organizing cultural events in Taos; include large and small grant opportunities.
- Provide assistance in the application process and ensure accessibility to funding for local community groups and organizations; it is recommended that this application open twice a year.
- Streamline the event permitting process.



### 9.3.1 Establish a permanent collaborative management structure for destination management and marketing.

The Town of Taos and Taos County lead discussions with the Destination Stewardship Network and key stakeholders, including the New Mexico Department of Tourism, to explore options for a permanent collaborative tourism management structure. After wide consultation, consensus is sought on the preferred option and timeline for establishing this permanent structure.



### 1.1.3 Sustain community engagement in tourism management and decision-making.

Maintain the recently launched community engagement platform [taos.org/tourism-revisited](https://taos.org/tourism-revisited) and the associated newsletter to serve as a hub for information releases such as data and research updates, impact and progress reports, and surveys.



This report makes the case that a brighter, more prosperous future for the communities of Taos is within reach. Through collaborative tourism management that prioritizes community engagement, inclusion, and equitable distribution of economic opportunities, alongside a steadfast commitment to completing necessary initiatives and actions, Taos will preserve its character, enhance its economy and resident quality of life, and safeguard its environment for generations to come.



# 1. Introduction

## WHERE ARE WE NOW?

This section of the plan provides an overview of tourism in the Town of Taos and a high-level analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The full Situation Analysis Report is presented separately and serves as the foundation of the Taos DSP.



## Purpose of the Plan

Taos is a premier tourism destination, shaped by the enduring influences of its historically significant communities—the Native American (Tiwa) and Hispano (Spanish/Taoséño) communities. Nature and culture intertwine, forming the essence of these vibrant communities. Unique natural and cultural wonders, deeply rooted in this place, define Taos.

From the awe-inspiring vistas of the sacred Taos Mountains in the Sangre de Cristo Range to the Taos Pueblo, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, which has been continuously inhabited since ancient times, Taos reflects a rich tapestry of natural and cultural heritage. The Taos Valley has been home to the Tiwa people and their ancestors, who served as the original stewards of these lands, since time immemorial. The “acequia” system, established by Hispano subsistence farmers, demonstrates a deep connection to the land and a legacy of sustainability. This traditional community-operated watercourse channels snow runoff from the mountains or from river water to nourish distant fields, a vital lifeline and a source of cultural vitality for centuries.

Taos has also flourished as a haven for artists and innovators. Since the arrival of the pioneering members of the Taos Society of Artists in the late 19th century, the community has embraced the profound connection between art and culture. Today, Taos

boasts world-renowned museums, galleries, and festivals that celebrate both traditional and contemporary art, highlighting the intricate interplay between historical legacies and modern expressions of creativity in the region.

These diverse communities have contributed significantly to shaping the distinctive character and allure of this exceptional destination. GPS data shows that the number of overnight visitors in 2022 slightly surpassed 2019 pre-pandemic levels and data for the first four months of 2023 also showed a continuation of this trend. This steady influx of visitors, coupled with the presence of second homeowners and the surge in short-term rentals, has given rise to a complex scenario that demands careful management to address the distinctive challenges confronting Taos. As tourism remains the cornerstone of Taos' economy, careful management is imperative for long-term vitality, socio-economic balance and resident quality of life.

The Taos DSP fosters a shared vision for the future of tourism in Taos and greater coordination, cooperation and collaboration among stakeholders for the shared management of tourism. This plan examines all the ways tourism is affecting the area — positively and negatively — and uses intentional design to support benefits and reduce or eliminate negative impacts. The Taos DSP responds to the most significant tourism related challenges ahead for Taos County with holistic priority actions. The Taos Destination Stewardship Plan (DSP) serves as a flexible framework for collective action, adaptable to evolving local conditions. It functions as a living document, subject to regular updates, ensuring its ongoing relevance and effectiveness in guiding the destination's sustainable development.

## Destination Stewardship Approach

Community feedback indicates that a new approach to tourism in Taos County is essential. Tourism plays a crucial role in the local economy, with nearly half (49%) businesses surveyed stating that 60% or more of their income depends on tourism. Residents overwhelmingly express the view (87%) that tourism is vital to the local economy. To align the tourism economy with the needs of local residents, there is a call for destination management planning, with 83% of respondents in a resident sentiment survey indicating the need for planned and controlled tourism development in Taos.



The Taos DSP employs a stewardship lens to balance the needs of visitors with the well-being of the local community, businesses, and the environment. Aligned with the United Nations Tourism's definition of destination management, the Taos DSP strategically coordinates planning, development, marketing, and monitoring to prioritize resident's quality of life and ensure the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of the destination. This community-focused stewardship approach underscores the importance of responsible practices in making tourism a valuable asset for both the local community and visitors alike.

## Community Involvement

This plan was created for and with the community. Thousands of people gave generously of their time:

- 3,348 residents took the Resident Sentiment Toward Tourism Survey made available in English and Spanish.
- 1,286 travelers' online reviews were analyzed for 17 popular attractions.
- 95 businesses participated in the business survey that focused on tourism development and its effects on their business, the local economy, and Taos more broadly.
- 22 Steering Committee members – elected officials, public land managers, and community members – participated in 7 monthly meetings.
- 40 stakeholders representing public, private and nonprofit/civic sectors participated in two full-day and two half-day in-person visioning and planning workshops.
- 68 people participated in focus groups (43 in July, 25 in October).
- 297 residents participated in Town Halls (offered in Taos and Talpa communities).
- 25 community leaders from the private, public and civic sectors participated in 1:1 interviews.

## Process and Methodology

The Taos DSP project began in spring 2023 with the establishment of a Steering Committee consisting of representatives from all key stakeholder groups who were tasked with guiding the plan's development process.

A comprehensive review of the current situation was the first step in composing a comprehensive picture of how tourism interacts with Taos County and the people who live there. The economic, social, and environmental impacts of tourism were assessed to shed light on the holistic impact of tourism on the area. The areas of assessment are described below.

- **Quality of economy and work:** tourism demand trends, economic contributions of tourism, implications of sustained tourism demand
- **Quality of life:** resident sentiment toward tourism
- **Quality of visitor experience:** inventory of tourism products and providers, visitor satisfaction
- **Natural environment:** impacts of tourism on public lands, impacts of a changing climate on public lands and the destination, natural resource protection and conservation
- **Enabling environment for tourism:** tourism governance, existing sustainability efforts, institutional capacity of tourism stakeholders for collaborative stewardship of the destination

The Taos DSP Situation Analysis Report (SAR) consolidates data, information, and insights from a wide range of sources and key stakeholder groups—local and state government, public land managers, elected officials, business community, residents, immigrant communities, and the civic sector. It served as the most comprehensive baseline assessment to date of tourism in Taos County. It can also be used as a reference document for research and to inform decision-making.



A total of 189 tourism stakeholders, residents, and elected officials helped to validate the main findings of the Taos Situation Analysis in July 2023. The Taos DSP Steering Committee reviewed the draft SAR and provided comprehensive feedback.

Conducting a resident survey is a vital component of the Taos DSP process, providing invaluable insights into residents' current perceptions of tourism in Taos and their aspirations for the future. The online survey was deployed from July 15 to September 25, 2023, was available in English and Spanish, and had 3,348 respondents. The survey was open to anyone 18 and older who lives or works in Taos, making it an inclusive endeavor to ensure all communities' voices are heard.

Business owners were also consulted through an online survey from September 14 to October 10, 2023, and 95 businesses completed responses. The survey included a total of eight closed and open-ended questions allowing respondents to express their views on tourism development and its effects on their business, the local economy, and Taos more broadly.

To understand visitor feedback and sentiment about tourism attractions, 1,286 Tripadvisor online reviews were analyzed for 17 popular attractions located at least partially within Taos County. Destination managers can use analyses of online travel reviews to inform decision-making about improvements of attractions, amenities, and experiences to meet visitor needs and expectations.

The additional research helped to fill gaps in available information and present a snapshot of the county's current situation. Taken together, the SAR, the analysis of resident sentiment, and the analysis of visitor feedback create a holistic perspective that is essential for future planning. The insights distilled from the SAR and the research results were then used to map the issue areas that matter most to each stakeholder group — tourism stakeholders, residents, and visitors. The aim of this step was to find common ground among stakeholders and to ensure that every stakeholder group had an equal opportunity to shape the scope of the Taos DSP.

As a result of inclusive and comprehensive stakeholder engagement, nine priority issues were identified as the most important to address in the Taos DSP. These priority issues were presented to and discussed with 237 tourism stakeholders and residents during vision and planning workshops, focus groups, and community meetings held in November 2023. At these meetings, the community validated the main issue areas and brainstormed initial solutions for addressing them. The SAR, resident survey, analysis of online travel reviews, and outcomes of stakeholder consultations serve as the foundation of the Taos DSP.



## Plan Framework

The Taos DSP provides a strategic medium-term community vision and framework for the future of tourism in Taos, including the surrounding areas where appropriate. The main components of the strategic framework are described below.

### VISION STATEMENT

(Page 30)

Using the SAR, the Taos communities' resident survey responses and comments from the workshops, focus groups and community meetings, an aspirational vision was created for Taos tourism.

### VALUES

(Page 30-33)

Values provide the moral and ethical anchor for the Taos DSP. They represent community-defined convictions and priorities that guide Taos DSP goals and activities.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

(Page 30-33)

Principles guide decision-making associated with the implementation of the strategy. Principles help keep the strategy alive and agile. Stakeholders need commitment to shared values and guiding principles.

### FOCUS AREAS AND STEWARDSHIP GOALS

(Page 34)

The plan's nine interrelated goals address the main tourism-related challenges identified as most important by tourism stakeholders from the public sector, private sector, and civic sector as well as residents and visitors. Understanding the links among the goals will result in more effective decision-making about plan implementation.

### PRIORITY INITIATIVES

(Page 35-36)

Strategic initiatives are focused, high-priority actions aligned with Focus Areas and Stewardship Goals.

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

(Page 37-38)

Outcome statements make the goals more concrete. Identified here are the five areas of expected change over the next five years in the implementation of the Taos DSP.

### ACTION PLAN AND KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

(Page 39-95)

How we get there: the action plan provides a map for the road ahead, detailing specific steps, responsibilities, and timelines to effectively implement strategies and achieve defined objectives.

Goals articulate the desired outcomes, providing a clear direction and measurable targets for individuals or organizations to work towards, aligning efforts with the vision.

### GOVERNANCE AND IMPLEMENTATION

(Page 96-99)

The governance and implementation recommendations create a foundation for Taos DSP success. As a community plan, the Taos DSP is a framework that will need to adapt over time to the ever-changing landscape.

# 2. Current Situation

## WHERE ARE WE NOW?

This section of the plan provides an overview of tourism in the Town of Taos and a high-level analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The full Situation Analysis Report is presented separately and serves as the foundation of the Taos DSP.



## Background

Celebrated for its cultural diversity, the Town of Taos is a vibrant tapestry of Native American, Hispano, Latino, and Anglo influences, interwoven into a thriving arts community. Its eclectic mix of culture and natural wonders have drawn people from all corners of the world as visitors and as residents. Currently, Taos and its tourism economy are at a pivotal juncture.

In the seven years leading up to the Covid-19 pandemic, visitor spending in the Town of Taos has steadily increased from \$229.2 million to \$288.2 million, reflecting a compound annual growth rate of 3.3%. Despite a temporary decline in 2020 due to the pandemic, visitor spending rebounded swiftly in 2021, nearly reaching pre-pandemic levels with just a \$10 million decrease from 2019 figures. Tourism also plays a significant role in job creation, with the industry generating 2,619 jobs in 2021 alone. This translates to 28.5% of the Town of Taos population being employed in tourism, a notably higher figure compared to the 13.5% of the New Mexico population engaged in similar activities. Tourism contributes over \$80 million in labor income to the local economy. Furthermore, tourism generated \$22.2 million in state and local taxes in 2021 (nearly back to the 2019 figure of \$22.5 million), underscoring its vital role in funding public services and infrastructure.

A notable feature of the Town of Taos' tourism ecosystem is the prevalence of locally owned and operated businesses in key sectors such as accommodations (92%), restaurants (90%), and retail shops (89%). This strong presence of local ownership not only bolsters the community's economic sustainability but also contributes to its unique character and charm.

Residents of Taos overwhelmingly recognize the economic significance of tourism, with 87% of resident survey respondents acknowledging its importance to the local economy. In the resident sentiment survey conducted during the Taos DSP development process, a majority of respondents expressed confidence in tourism's ability to stimulate local investment (71%), support local businesses (79%), and provide desirable employment opportunities (58%). These findings underscore tourism's crucial role in driving economic growth and improving community well-being in Taos. Additionally, in a business survey conducted as part of the Taos DSP development process, almost half (49%) of the respondents (owners or managers) said that 60% or more of their income depends on tourism.

Nonetheless, not all communities in Taos are reaping the positive economic rewards of tourism. While 45% of all resident survey respondents stated that tourism contributes to their household income, this figure rises to 51% among respondents aged 30–64. Native American respondents were slightly more inclined (48%) to report that tourism contributes to their household income, whereas Hispanic or Latino respondents were slightly less likely





Courtesy of Town of Taos

(42%) to do so. During the Taos DSP stakeholder consultation process, it became increasingly clear that the Hispano and Latino communities felt marginalized within the tourism industry and not fully capitalized in its benefits.

Despite fluctuations during the pandemic years, overnight visitor days in Taos surpassed 2019 figures by 10.8% in 2022, showcasing resilience and recovery in Taos' tourism sector. Notably, while the total number of overnight visitor trips remained lower in 2022 compared to 2019, the trend indicates a preference for longer stays, with an increase in average length of stay from 2.7 days in 2019 to 2.9 days in 2022. Accommodation providers experienced their highest average annual occupancy rates in 2022, particularly during the summer high season months of July through September, with occupancy rates reaching peak levels. However, the average occupancy rate for other months hovers around 40%.

An interesting shift is observed in visitor demographics, with single-day visitors constituting a larger proportion of tourists compared to 2019, possibly influenced by the growing trend in outdoor recreation. Day visitors predominantly originate from Albuquerque and Santa Fe, while Texas emerges as the top state for overnight visitors, underscoring the regional significance of Taos as a tourist destination. There has been an increase in visits during the shoulder seasons, reflecting a broader trend observed in other U.S. destinations and contributing to overall visitor growth in Taos during 2022.

Visitor perceptions of Taos attractions are overwhelmingly positive, as indicated by an analysis of online travel reviews for 17 popular attractions. Across all nine major topics (i.e., mentioned in more than 10% of reviews), the average sentiment was 86% positive.

All these trends indicate a trajectory of sustained growth in tourism.

Despite its recognition of the importance of tourism in Taos, Taos is also grappling with challenges such as a high cost of living combined with relatively lower household incomes, exacerbating income inequality in recent years. The community faces a pressing housing crisis characterized by a lack of affordable housing options including accommodations for a tourism workforce. Resident survey findings revealed that 73% feel that users of accommodation-sharing services contribute to inflation of rents and cost of living in Taos, and 45% feel that the benefits of these platforms do not outweigh the drawbacks. The business survey findings indicated that the cost and availability of workforce housing are the main issues affecting business operations, followed by the increasing cost of utilities and supplies as well as labor shortages and staff recruitment. These economic strains are compounded by a lack of youth opportunities within the tourism industry, reflecting broader concerns about inclusive economic development.

## 2. Current Situation

While the vast majority (74%) of resident survey respondents acknowledge the non-economic benefits of tourism, such as increased recreational activities (54%) and beautification efforts (50%), there remains a concern among 40% of respondents who feel that tourism does not help protect the community's character. Survey results also indicated that 50% of respondents feel that attractions and leisure facilities are becoming overcrowded because of the number of visitors, and 81% feel that visitors add to traffic congestion and parking problems.

Public sentiment regarding tourism development in Taos reflects a widespread concern regarding the balance between economic benefits and residents' quality of life. A significant portion of respondents (51%) express dissatisfaction with the current efforts to strike this balance. The majority (83%) of resident survey respondents emphasize the necessity for planned and controlled tourism development, with nearly half (46%) indicating apprehension about the pace of tourism growth and a considerable portion (45%) lacking confidence in the ability of local authorities to effectively manage the impacts of tourism on the community. Additionally, 55% of business survey respondents feel that the government is not providing enough support to the Taos tourism sector.

The governance framework for tourism in the Town of Taos primarily focuses on destination marketing and lacks comprehensive destination management strategies. Traditionally, the Town of Taos has shouldered the responsibility for marketing and promoting the broader Enchanted Circle region. Taos County lacks dedicated tourism governance, highlighting a gap in strategic

oversight within the region. Funding for tourism programs predominantly prioritizes marketing and branding initiatives at both state and local levels, with the Town of Taos funding tourism activities through the Lodger's Tax, primarily spent in marketing efforts and visitor center operations. There is a strong emphasis on economic impact monitoring while social and environmental impacts remain largely unmonitored.

There is a prevailing sentiment (57%) among residents in Taos that their influence over tourism development is insufficient, with over half (52%) feeling unheard in decision-making processes. These findings underscore a strong need for greater community engagement and more opportunities for residents to participate in tourism government to make sure that residents' voices and concerns are addressed in the future development of Taos tourism. Such efforts will foster ownership and inclusivity, ultimately contributing to the sustainable and equitable growth of the tourism industry while preserving the unique character and quality of life for residents.

Overall, 61% of resident survey respondents agree that the benefits of tourism outweigh the drawbacks. The vast majority of survey respondents think tourism visitation in the spring (83%), fall (82%), winter (80%) and summer (74%) should remain the same or increase; and that tourism should be actively promoted in Taos (69%). Respondents of the business survey indicated that working together, developing business clusters, and broadening partnerships should be a priority for the future of tourism coupled with strengthening the arts and culture scene and the outdoor visitor facilities.



As part of the Taos DSP Situational Analysis Report (SAR) validation process, tourism stakeholders (public, private and civic sectors) identified and prioritized the main issues requiring attention in the Taos DSP. These priority issues were cross-referenced with the primary concerns expressed by residents in the tourism sentiment survey and the issues highlighted by visitors in the analysis of online travel reviews for 17 popular attractions. This mapping exercise facilitated the identification of recurring priority issues across all stakeholder groups. The priority issues that emerged from this exercise include: lack of affordable workforce housing, negative impacts of gentrification on local culture, uneven distribution of economic benefits, inadequate coordination and management of tourism, insufficient sustainable mobility options for residents and visitors, shortages in the tourism workforce, lack of coordinated response to environmental risks, absence of sustainability guidelines, and inadequate monitoring of the holistic impacts (economic, social, and environmental) of tourism on the community.



Courtesy of Town of Taos

## Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

A thorough review of the current situation reveals several key strengths:

### Quality of Economy and Work

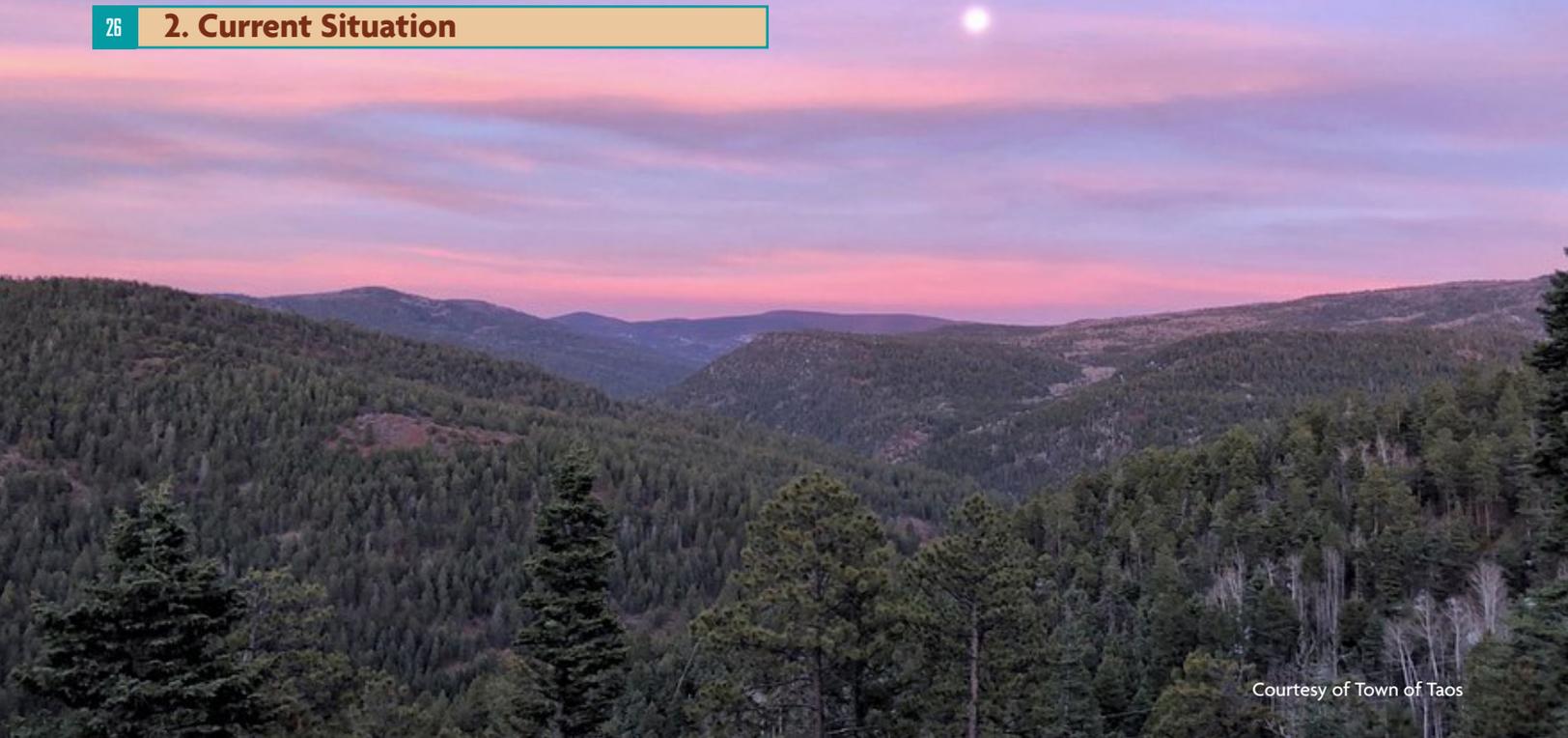
- **High Visitor Demand and Spending:** The high level of visitor demand, particularly from an upper-income market, along with substantial visitor spending, indicates a strong economic contribution from tourism.
- **Locally Owned Businesses:** The majority of accommodations, restaurants, and retail shops that are locally owned and operated (92%, 90%, and 89%, respectively) supports the community's economic sustainability and contributes to its distinct character.
- **Employment Generation:** In 2021, 28.5% of the Town of Taos population was employed in tourism, compared to 13.5% of the New Mexico population.
- **Tourism Tax Revenue:** In 2021, the tourism industry generated \$22.2 million in state and local taxes for Taos County, nearly back to the 2019 figure of \$22.5 million.
- **Visitor Spending:** Total visitor spending in Taos County was \$278.1 million in 2021, an increase from \$229.2 million in 2020 and nearly back to the pre-pandemic level of \$288.2 in 2019.

### Quality of Life

- **Rich Cultural Interaction and Unique Community:** The community's resistance to conformity and "homogenization" over hundreds of years has created a unique, multi-layered cultural environment.
- **Commitment to Resident Recreation:** The potential expansion of hiking, walking, and biking trails indicates a commitment to enhancing recreational and contemplative opportunities, improving walkability, and connecting communities within Taos County.

### Quality of Visitor Experience

- **Year-Round Attractions and Diverse Offerings:** Taos offers a wide range of attractions throughout the year, including arts, culture, and nature, providing a diverse and appealing experience for visitors.
- **Taos Pueblo UNESCO World Heritage Site:** The Taos Pueblo's rich history and cultural significance as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and National Historic Landmark contribute to the destination's unique appeal.



Courtesy of Town of Taos

- **Vibrant Art Scene:** The vibrant art scene, with a high concentration of artists per capita and support from multiple NGOs, enhances Taos's cultural richness and attractiveness.
- **Positive Tour Operator Ratings:** The high average online ratings (no lower than 4.7 out of 5.0) for tour operators across all types indicates the high quality and value of tour offerings, contributing to positive visitor experiences.
- **Positive Ratings of Attractions:** Visitor perceptions of Taos attractions are overwhelmingly positive, as indicated by an analysis of online travel reviews for 17 popular attractions. Across all nine major topics (i.e., mentioned in more than 10% of reviews), the average sentiment was 86% positive.

### Natural Environment

- **Acequia Culture:** A robust dedication within the local community to support traditional agricultural communities of the Taos Valley through safeguarding water rights and fortifying the acequia systems.
- **Night Sky Protection:** The Night Sky Protection Act and the potential for Dark Sky Certification demonstrate a commitment to preserving the natural environment and enhancing the stargazing experience for visitors

### Enabling Environment

- **Preservation of Cultural and Historical Heritage:** Strict zoning regulations in the historical center and specialty zones for preserving the town's culture and history contribute to maintaining the authenticity of Taos.
- **Support for Cultural Tourism:** There is widespread support amongst Taos' NGOs for tourism development that preserves Taos' culture and heritage.

Tourism in Taos faces diverse weaknesses and threats:

### Quality Of Economy and Work

- **Labor Shortage in Tourism and Hospitality:** A shortage of labor in the tourism and hospitality sector results in poorer service, lower capacity, and reduced operating hours.
- **Benefits from Tourism Unfairly Distributed Throughout All Communities:** While tourism contributes to household income for some residents, disparities exist among age and ethnic groups. During DSP stakeholder consultations and based on resident survey findings, it became clear that Hispano and Latino communities are marginalized within the tourism industry, lacking full access to its benefits.
- **Seasonal Challenges:** The shoulder season for tourism can be slow, posing challenges for small local businesses, and the winter tourism season is weather-dependent.

**Quality Of Life**

- **Housing Crisis:** Taos faces a severe housing crisis with low availability of affordable housing, leading to a 67% shortfall in affordable housing in Taos County. Over 40% of renters are cost burdened.
- **Lack of Youth Engagement in Tourism:** There is a lack of education and engagement of youth in the tourism industry, with little vocational training and few internships available, leading to youth leaving the area for employment.
- **Resident Concerns:** Residents have raised key concerns about tourism, including activities taking away local opportunities, lack of respect from visitors, fear of losing local cultures, and inequitable distribution of economic benefits.
- **Public Safety and Access to Healthcare:** Taos County scores poorly in public safety (39%), crime (50%), and access to health care (37%). Business survey respondents identified traveler safety as a notable weakness of the destination.
- **Tension Over Outdoor Recreation:** The popularity of outdoor recreation, particularly trail use near town, is creating tension between user groups and traditional communities, and there is confusion about trail access, private property, and historic land use.

**Quality Of Visitor Experience**

- **Limited Transportation Development:** Transportation between the Ski Valley and the Town of Taos is limited.
- **Inconsistent Business Operations:** Visitors report that restaurants, shops, and attractions are closed or close earlier than posted signs indicate, potentially influenced by the workforce shortage.
- **Limited ADA-compliant Infrastructure:** ADA-compliant infrastructure is lacking, and few hikes in the destination are wheelchair accessible.
- **Exclusion of Local Voices:** Local Spanish/Tiwa voices and languages are often left out of interpretation in museums.

**Natural Environment**

- **Limited Visitor Impact Monitoring:** There is very limited monitoring of visitor impact on noise and air pollution, solid waste management, or resource use. Lack of monitoring makes it difficult to plan for future growth and improvements.
- **Limited Climate Change Response:** Taos is currently only reacting to climate change with adaptation actions and lacks mitigation actions to reduce the impacts.



### Enabling Environment

- Support for Destination Management: The Town of Taos has dedicated tourism governance that supports destination marketing but not destination management.
- Government Support: Of the business survey respondents, 55% feel that the government is not providing enough support to the Taos tourism sector.
- Ease of Doing Business: In 2022, New Mexico scored low on the CNBC “doing business” ranking, at number 46 of 50 states.
- Limited Data on Tourism Demand: The availability of data on key demand and economic impact indicators across key market segments is limited, making it difficult to assess demand trendlines and provide accurate tourism forecasts.
- Limited Visitor Impact Monitoring (Social and Environmental): Limited monitoring exists for social and environmental impacts of visitors, despite strong economic impact monitoring.

## A Way Forward

Together, the Situation Analysis Report, findings of the resident sentiment toward tourism survey, business survey, analysis of online travel reviews for popular attractions, and stakeholder consultations serve as the foundation of the Taos DSP. Please note that the complete Situation Analysis Report, along with reports on resident and business surveys, as well as analysis of online travel reviews, are presented separately. You can find the reports at: <https://taos.org/tourism-revisited/>.

The key to a thriving Taos is a shared sense of responsibility and mutual respect among residents, businesses, and visitors. The foundation of a successful Taos DSP is active participation by all local communities in sustainable development decision-making and management of tourism. Preservation of Taos’ historical assets, collaborative environmental responses, and strengthened tourism workforce stability align with our commitment to resilience and authenticity.



**“WE CAN MAKE SOMETHING  
BEAUTIFUL FOR US THAT  
OTHERS CAN ENJOY.”**

— RESIDENT SURVEY RESPONDENT

# 3. STRATEGY

## WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO FROM HERE?

This section of the plan presents the five-year strategic framework for sustainable tourism in Taos. It outlines the vision, expected outcomes, values, guiding principles, goals, priority initiatives, and metrics that will be used to measure expected outcomes.

The Taos DSP begins with a collaborative vision for the future determined by the stakeholders' core values and guiding principles. These in turn determine the Taos DSP's goals, priority initiatives, and expected outcomes.

## Community Vision

We are Taos—a vibrant tapestry woven from diverse communities. Acknowledging the hard truths of our past, we unite to honor our multicultural heritage and embrace tourism as a catalyst for positive change, benefiting all our communities. Encouraging innovation and preserving traditions, we prioritize authenticity, education and environmental stewardship. Together, we cultivate a tourism economy that enriches our lives while safeguarding Taos' heritage for future generations.

## Visión comunitaria

Somos Taos: un vibrante tapiz tejido por diversas comunidades. Reconociendo las duras verdades de nuestro pasado, nos unimos para honrar nuestro patrimonio multicultural e impulsar el turismo como un catalizador de cambio positivo que beneficie a todas nuestras comunidades. Fomentando la innovación y preservando las tradiciones, priorizamos la autenticidad, la educación y el cuidado ambiental. Juntos, cultivamos una economía turística que enriquece nuestras vidas y protege el patrimonio de Taos para las futuras generaciones.

## Values and Guiding Principles

Core values and guiding principles are a set of agreed-upon approaches, practices, and behaviors that are integral to Taos tourism plan and its implementation. These values and principles are shaped by residents and community leaders and are embedded in all key elements of the plan.

### Belonging

We cherish Taos as our home, embracing and celebrating its diverse communities as integral to our vibrant identity. We take pride in our inclusive community, where individuals of all ages, backgrounds, and interests are valued, nurturing a sense of belonging and mutual support.

### Guiding Principles

We extend warm hospitality to visitors, encouraging respectful and responsible visitation.

We open our hearts and minds to each other, to all the children and families in all Taos communities in order to nurture stronger connection and empathy and anchor us across generations.

### Preservation

We cherish our diversity and rich heritage, striving to provide opportunities for all our cultures and communities, thereby safeguarding our collective heritage. Our commitment to accessibility and abundant outdoor activities nourishes our spiritual, mental, and physical well-being.

### Guiding Principles

We are dedicated to celebrating the diverse cultures that give Taos its unique character.

We advocate for multiculturalism, empowering individual communities to govern their cultural practices and decisions.

We respect and recognize the diversity within our larger Taos community, valuing the different perspectives that coexist and allowing each group to determine how they share their culture.

We respect the sovereignty of Taos Pueblo.

We are dedicated to preserving tangible and intangible aspects of cultural heritage such as artifacts, historical sites, stories, and traditional knowledge.

### Collaboration

By working collaboratively and maintaining a spirit of cooperation to achieve shared goals and objectives, we create the future for tourism we envision.

### Guiding Principles

We recognize and balance the diverse aspirations, concerns, and contributions of all stakeholder groups.

We support transparent and honest communication, the foundation for building trust and understanding among collaborators.

We are committed to collective action and impact and will be guided by the DSP which is our common agenda.

### Equity

Our leadership places a high priority on inclusivity, diversity, and equity in decision-making processes. Guided by principles of sustainable growth, we strive to create opportunities that benefit all communities.

### Guiding Principles

We work hard to make economic opportunities, resources, and support accessible to all members of the community.

We regularly seek feedback so that tourism development aligns with the needs and values of all communities.

We are committed to balanced tourism development that prioritizes residents.

## Stewardship

We care deeply about the land, water, and air that sustains us physically, spiritually, and mentally. Through responsible stewardship, we ensure the sustainable use and conservation of our natural resources and ecosystems for the benefit of present and future generations. We hold Taos Pueblo in high regard as exemplars of harmonious coexistence with our natural environment.

## Guiding Principles

We protect and support stewardship of the land.

We promote, educate and raise awareness of the importance of environmental conservation and our shared responsibility.

We look to traditional Native systems and values to guide an integrated approach to our land stewardship.

We work to keep land in the hands of the people of Taos.

We develop land responsibly and equitably to protect our environmental future.

## Education

We transparently communicate our histories, challenges, values, and aspirations to both residents and visitors, shaping attitudes and behaviors within our community and beyond.

## Guiding Principles

We educate through consistent, sustainable visitor and community communications.

We actively and effectively communicate our high community standards and expectations to influence visitor behavior and impacts.

We are committed to tourism development that matches community needs.

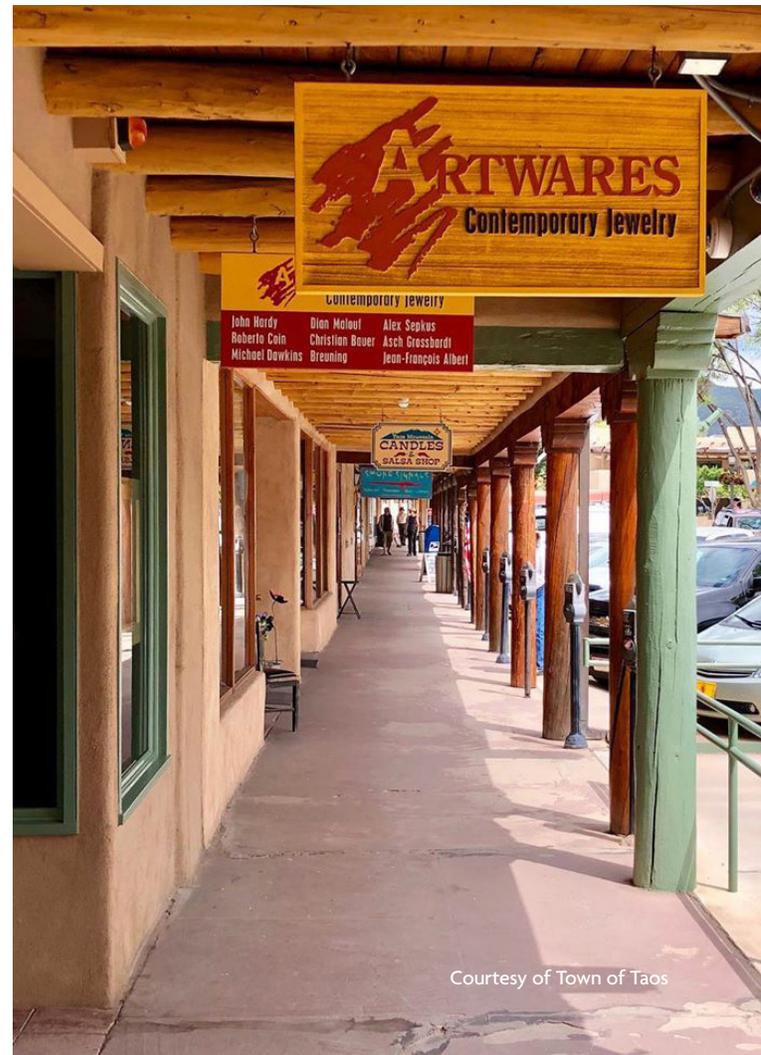
## Creativity

We cherish our artistic communities and centuries of artistic and cultural expression steeped in tradition at the same time we invite and welcome new voices and additions to our creative legacy.

## Guiding Principles

We foster the creative culture that fuels our economy, drives innovation, and enriches our lives with diverse arts and cultural activities.

We commit to doing things differently—through inclusion and collaboration—and giving new ideas a chance.



## Valores y principios fundamentales

Los valores y principios fundamentales constituyen un conjunto de enfoques, prácticas y comportamientos acordados que son esenciales para el plan de cuidado de destino de Taos (DSP) y su implementación. Estos valores y principios, forjados por los residentes y líderes comunitarios de Taos, se integran en todos los elementos clave del plan.

### La pertenencia

Queremos a Taos como nuestro hogar, acogiendo y celebrando sus comunidades diversas como partes integrantes de nuestra identidad vibrante. Nos enorgullece nuestra comunidad inclusiva, en la cual se aprecia a individuos de todas las edades, orígenes e intereses, cultivando un sentido de pertenencia y soporte mutuo.

### Principios fundamentales

Brindamos hospitalidad cálida a quienes nos visitan, promoviendo un comportamiento respetuoso y responsable.

Nos abrimos de corazón y mente unos a otros, y a todos los niños y familias en las comunidades de Taos con el objetivo de fortalecer nuestra conexión y empatía y consolidarnos a través de las generaciones.

### La colaboración

Al trabajar en colaboración y preservar un espíritu de cooperación para lograr metas y objetivos compartidos, creamos el futuro del turismo que visualizamos.

### Principios fundamentales

Reconocemos y equilibramos las diversas aspiraciones, preocupaciones y contribuciones de todos los grupos de interés.

Promovemos una comunicación transparente y honesta, la base para construir confianza y entendimiento entre los colaboradores.

Nos dedicamos a la acción colectiva y al impacto, y seguimos la guía del DSP, que es nuestra agenda compartida.

### Preservation

Celebramos nuestra diversidad y herencia, las cuales nos impulsan a brindar oportunidades para todas nuestras culturas y comunidades, protegiendo así nuestro patrimonio colectivo. Nuestro compromiso con la accesibilidad y con ofrecer una abundancia de actividades al aire libre nutre nuestro bienestar físico, mental y espiritual.

### Principios fundamentales

Estamos dedicados a celebrar las diversas culturas que otorgan a Taos su carácter único.

Promovemos el multiculturalismo, empoderando a cada comunidad para que gestionen sus propias prácticas y decisiones culturales.

Respetamos y apreciamos la diversidad en nuestra comunidad extensa de Taos, valorando las diferentes perspectivas que coexisten y dejando que cada grupo decida cómo compartir su cultura.

Respetamos la soberanía de Taos Pueblo.

Estamos dedicados a preservar los aspectos tangibles e intangibles del patrimonio cultural, como artefactos, sitios históricos, relatos y conocimientos tradicionales.

### La equidad

Nuestro liderazgo se centra en la inclusividad, la diversidad y la equidad durante la toma de decisiones. Guiados por principios de crecimiento sostenible, buscamos crear oportunidades que beneficien a todas las comunidades.

### Principios fundamentales

Nos esforzamos por hacer accesibles las oportunidades económicas, los recursos y el apoyo a todos los integrantes de la comunidad.

Buscamos retroalimentación continua para que el desarrollo turístico refleje las necesidades y valores de todas las comunidades.

Estamos comprometidos con un desarrollo turístico equilibrado que prioriza a los residentes.

## El cuidado

La tierra, el agua y el aire son esenciales para nuestra existencia física, espiritual y mental, y nos comprometemos a su cuidado. Mediante un cuidado responsable, aseguramos el uso y conservación sostenibles de nuestros recursos naturales y ecosistemas para el bien de las generaciones actuales y futuras. Tenemos en alta estima al Taos Pueblo como ejemplo de coexistencia armónica con nuestro entorno natural.

## Principios fundamentales

Protegemos y apoyamos el cuidado responsable de la tierra. Impulsamos, educamos y elevamos la sensibilización sobre la importancia de la conservación ambiental y nuestra responsabilidad compartida. Nos guiamos por los sistemas y valores nativos para orientar un enfoque integrado en el cuidado de nuestra tierra. Trabajamos para mantener la tierra en manos de la gente de Taos. Desarrollamos la tierra de forma responsable y equitativa, asegurando la protección de nuestro futuro ambiental.

## La educación

Comunicamos de manera transparente nuestras historias, desafíos, valores y aspiraciones tanto a residentes como a visitantes, moldeando actitudes y comportamientos dentro de nuestra comunidad y más allá.

## Principios fundamentales

Impartimos educación a través de comunicaciones consistentes y sostenibles tanto con visitantes como con la comunidad. Difundimos de manera activa y efectiva nuestros altos estándares y expectativas de la comunidad, buscando influenciar el comportamiento y el impacto de los visitantes. Estamos comprometidos con un desarrollo turístico que responda a las necesidades de la comunidad.

## La creatividad

Valoramos nuestras comunidades artísticas y siglos de expresión artística y cultural arraigada en la tradición, al mismo tiempo que invitamos y damos la bienvenida a nuevas voces y añadidos a nuestro legado creativo.

## Principios fundamentales

Potenciamos la cultura creativa que impulsa nuestra economía, promueve la innovación, y llena nuestras vidas de diversas actividades artísticas y culturales. Nos comprometemos a hacer las cosas de manera diferente — mediante la inclusión y colaboración - dando paso a nuevas ideas.



## Focus Areas and Stewardship Goals



## Priority Initiatives

01

### Stewardship Communication

Foster collaborative destination stewardship communications and education among residents, businesses, and visitors.



- 1.1 Sustain community engagement in tourism management and decision-making.
- 1.2 Implement an education strategy that informs visitors and community members about their shared responsibilities in stewarding Taos' history, diverse cultures, and fragile environment.
- 1.3 Develop a visitor marketing and communication strategy that promotes responsible stewardship behaviors in the destination and engages local tourism stakeholders in spreading a cohesive message to visitors.

02

### Inclusion and Equity

Facilitate fair distribution of economic benefits from tourism.



- 2.1 Develop and promote new tourism experiences and products that celebrate culture, preserve land, and benefit marginalized communities.
- 2.2 Support and finance community events that preserve and celebrate Taos' diverse cultures.
- 2.3 Enhance market readiness of emerging tourism enterprises.

03

### Workforce Stability

Increase tourism workforce stability.



- 3.1 Increase leadership and collaboration within the business community to enhance tourism workforce recruitment.
- 3. Improve employee retention.

04

### Protect Authenticity

Protect and elevate Taos' authentic character.



- 4.1 Build coalitions and put into action placekeeping initiatives to counteract gentrification.
- 4.2 Identify and advocate for regulatory changes to protect historical assets.
- 4.3 Secure financing for the preservation of lands and infrastructure threatened by gentrification.

05

### Workforce Housing

Advocate for workforce housing solutions.



- 5.1 Advocate for policies that improve workforce housing access, diversity, and affordability, aligning with ongoing efforts.
- 5.2 Increase affordable housing options for middle- and low-income residents to support the community and a thriving tourism workforce.

06

### Sustainable Mobility

Promote sustainable mobility for residents and visitors.



- 6.1 Enhance active transportation, trail, and mobility infrastructure.
- 6.2 Advance cultural placekeeping and community-first spaces.
- 6.3 Promote resident focused transit and connectivity.

07

**Sustainable Practices**

Promote sustainable tourism practices and resilience to environmental risks.



7.1 Develop and implement a “Stewardship Certified” good practices program for tourism businesses.

7.2 Identify and respond to destination risks from environment-related threats.

08

**Monitoring and Reporting**

Monitor and manage tourism and its impacts on people and place.



8.1 Establish an accessible and routinely updated tourism impact monitoring database.

8.2 Produce an annual report on indicators.

09

**Collaborative Management**

Maintain collaborative tourism management and plan implementation.



9.1 Create a destination stewardship council to guide DSP implementation in the short-term.

9.2 Increase awareness and understanding of the DSP among tourism stakeholders and the broader community.

9.3 Establish a permanent collaborative management structure for destination management and marketing.



## Expected Outcomes and Metrics

This Taos DSP addresses critical tourism challenges and outlines 22 priority initiatives. Over the next five years, we anticipate significant changes in key areas outlined below. The proposed key performance indicators (KPIs) will undergo review, and a final framework of indicators and performance measures will be established during year-one activities.

### OUTCOME 1

#### Implementation of Effective Collaborative Tourism Management

Collaborative tourism management in Taos tourism involves a collective commitment from stakeholders across various sectors—public, private, and civil society—to address priority challenges and pursue a shared agenda, i.e., the Taos DSP, for the future of tourism. Success will be assessed by the establishment of a short-term collaborative management structure capable of sustaining momentum and implementing quick-win projects. Additionally, progress on Taos DSP implementation will be publicly reported, stakeholder coordination and collaboration will be enhanced, and a permanent structure for destination management and marketing, with regional support and accountability, will be established. Furthermore, the routine publication of comprehensive tourism impact reports stemming from the implementation of a destination-level monitoring system will contribute to transparent decision-making and accountability.

### OUTCOME 2

#### Enhanced awareness of destination stewardship principles and a collective commitment to behavioral changes among residents, businesses, and visitors.

We envision a widespread embrace of shared responsibility for preserving and nurturing Taos among residents, tourism businesses, and visitors alike. Success will be gauged by various indicators: heightened community engagement and participation in tourism events, positive resident sentiment toward tourism, increased website engagement and favorable visitor feedback regarding sustainability education and messaging, and a general sense of visitor welcome. Additionally, success will be reflected in the growing number of businesses participating in the “Stewardship Certified” program. At the Town of Taos level, a noticeable shift from destination promotion to education and engagement will be observed. Furthermore, a decline in visitor impacts will be monitored through a comprehensive tourism impact monitoring system.

### OUTCOME 3

#### Equitable distribution of economic benefits across all communities and increased visitor appreciation and understanding of Taos’ cultural diversity through new immersive tourism experiences.

We envision broader communities reaping the rewards of tourism. Success will be quantified by heightened participation of Hispano and Latino communities in tourism, evidenced by the creation of novel immersive cultural tourism experiences and entrepreneurial ventures. Additionally, the celebration and preservation of traditions across all communities will be facilitated through the establishment of new cultural events funded by a dedicated cultural events fund. These immersive cultural experiences and events will serve to draw conscientious, sustainability-minded visitors seeking more profound experiences. These visitors will arrive better educated on how to care for Taos and will embody the qualities of a respectful, engaged traveler, thereby lessening their impact on the natural resources and communities of Taos.



Courtesy of Town of Taos

**OUTCOME 4**

Enhanced community empowerment, historic preservation, sustainable mobility, and collaborative gentrification responses.

We envision strengthening support for placekeeping initiatives in tourism to counteract the impacts of gentrification, preserving Taos's cultural identity and appealing to like-minded visitors. Community-first spaces will become commonplace, with revitalized areas widely used by residents and visitors alike. Improvements in connectivity, particularly between the Town of Taos and the Taos Ski Valley Inc., will enhance safety and enjoyment for pedestrians and cyclists. Success will be measured by heightened community engagement, increased investment in restoring historical landmarks, growing pride and stewardship, a rise in structures blending contemporary needs with tradition, and improvements in walkability and bikeability scores.

**OUTCOME 5**

Achieving a stable and inclusive tourism workforce with enhanced access to affordable housing options.

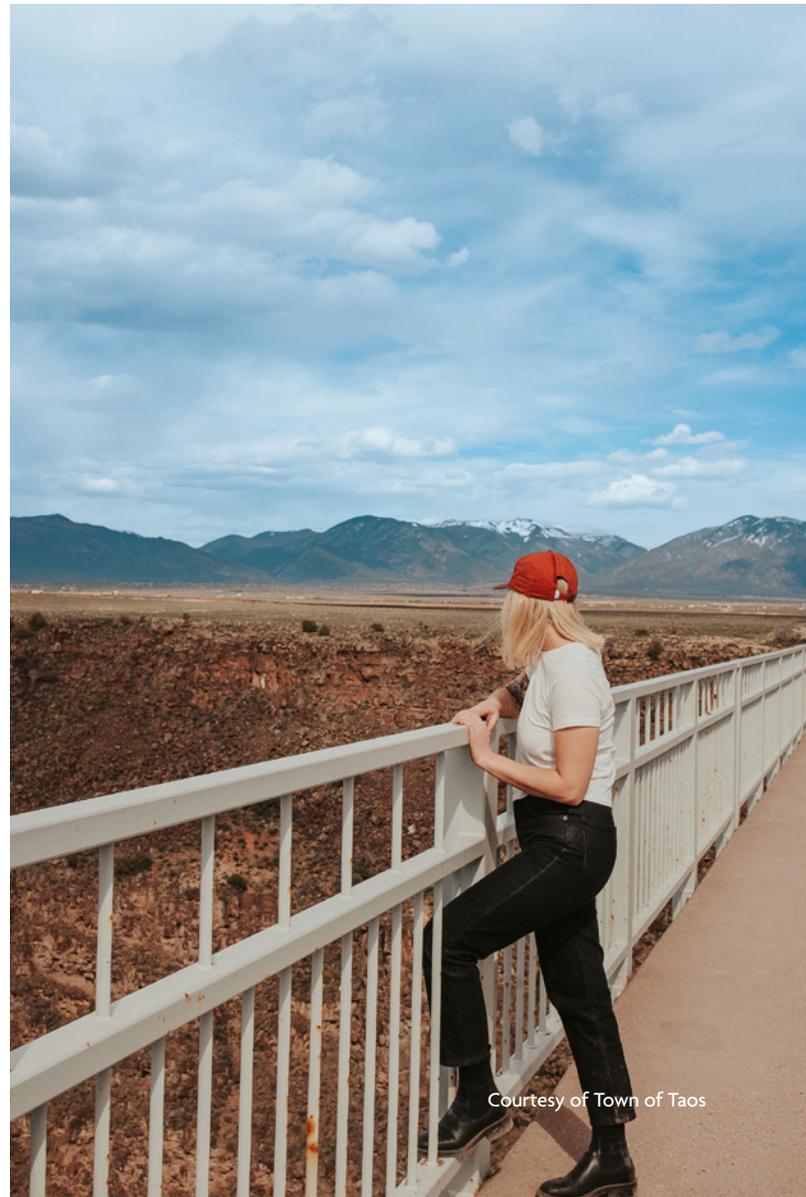
We envision a resilient and thriving tourism workforce that consistently delivers exceptional service. Success will be measured by the implementation of an industry-wide initiative, funded by businesses, aimed at providing comprehensive benefits, including employer assisted housing programs, continuous education, skill enhancement, and increase in employer participation in housing solutions. This effort will result in increased youth retention in Taos, achieved through collaborative resource pooling and collective problem-solving.

**OUTCOME 6**

Measurable reduction in environmental threats and improved destination resilience.

The community's proactive environmental stewardship has not only preserved the natural beauty and resources for future generations, but has also positioned Taos as a model for sustainable tourism practices, attracting visitors who appreciate and respect the destination's commitment to environmental conservation.

We envision building on this collective commitment by the establishment of baseline environmental indicators, and key monitoring metrics track progress toward unified environmental action, guiding future decisions and fostering sustainable tourism development in Taos.



Courtesy of Town of Taos

# 4. ACTION PLAN

## HOW DO WE GET THERE?

This section of the plan outlines 23 recommended priority initiatives across the nine goals of the Taos DSP. The action plan presents comprehensive details for each proposed initiative, encompassing objectives, priority action descriptions, potential resources, partner organizations, an implementation timeline, and key performance indicators (KPIs). Related focus areas are also clearly indicated to provide a holistic understanding of the strategic approach.



## Goal 1

### Foster collaborative destination stewardship communications and education among residents, businesses, and visitors.

A united sense of responsibility around tourism—especially among visitors, residents, and tourism stakeholders—can be achieved when each group understands its role in respecting the land and communities of Taos and the greater Enchanted Circle<sup>1</sup>, which can be supported through a robust shift away from destination promotion to educational communications, and a focus on quality, not quantity, of visitors.

Recognition of the need to transition marketing resources to support a broader visitor education and community engagement effort has been evident during Taos DSP development community meetings and feedback sessions, and this shift will help create greater harmony and wider knowledge around tourism.

Taos' marketing efforts to date have been campaign-based and have not followed an overarching marketing and communications plan. Ushering in a new vision for tourism in the area provides a good opportunity to create a marketing plan that is aligned with the Taos DSP and supports its goals for tourism management.

Visitor education influences visitor behavior, and Taos strongly needs to send messages about responsible visitation to be used and amplified by frontline tourism businesses and stakeholders. The strategy and content must be driven by the values of the Native American, Hispano and Latino communities who have stewarded the land for generations. All communications will ideally include youth-focused messaging, using appropriate technology platforms; consulting youth ambassadors would be especially helpful to determine a youth strategy.

The development of the Taos DSP gave the many communities of Taos a platform to voice their aspirations in tourism planning for the first time. This helped them to understand the impacts and benefits of tourism. Developing a resident engagement and feedback loop is critical to achieving the Taos DSP goals, and that includes periodic monitoring of resident and tourism stakeholder sentiment. Trust will be built through transparency, ongoing updates and information-sharing, and by giving residents a role and a voice in the process of future tourism planning.

Existing businesses have and will be heard from at each step, and will have an opportunity to develop and promote environmental and cultural stewardship programs that educate visitors on how they can visit respectfully and minimize their impact. An established culture of engagement and collaboration will enjoy the support of other stakeholder groups, including elected officials and the state tourism office.

### Measuring Success

1. Completion and execution of a marketing strategy that strategically repositions a portion of resources toward visitor education and community engagement rather than an exclusive focus on destination promotion.
2. The community demonstrates true partnership behavior through ongoing engagement in tourism management conversations. This is measured by the volume of participation in key touch points such as community tourism meetings, the number of resident sentiment and tourism stakeholder surveys completed bi-annually, results on the surveys which indicate an increase in tourism stakeholder and resident sentiment toward tourism has improved, and total impressions on the website, [taos.org/](https://taos.org/) increased.
3. A comprehensive tourism dashboard for Taos collects data on visitor use, visitor and resident sentiment, and visitation impacts, ultimately developing an industry-leading tourism dashboard that's regularly updated (linked to Goal 8).
4. Visitors behave more responsibly and respectfully, as shown by reduced negative environmental and cultural impacts expressed by the community in resident sentiment and tourism stakeholder surveys.
5. Increasing local participation of volunteer or paid ambassadors in the cultural and recreation spaces creates a welcoming and positive educational exchange between visitors and residents.

<sup>1</sup> The Enchanted Circle is an area in northern New Mexico that includes Taos, Questa, Red River, Eagle Nest and Angel Fire.

## INITIATIVE 1.1: Sustain community engagement in tourism management and decision-making.

Over the past year, the community engagement efforts surrounding the Taos DSP have set a strong foundation for resident involvement. Going well beyond economic impacts, this process has educated residents about the complexities of tourism and continued community engagement remains vital for ensuring residents remain active partners in shaping tourism initiatives.

### INITIATIVE 1.1 Sustain Community Engagement in Tourism Management and Decision-Making

**Implementation Timeline** Years 1–5

#### Objectives

1. Maintain a data-driven feedback loop of community engagement on tourism to build confidence in the tourism industry, while providing the community suitable platforms to have a voice.
2. Obtain a high level of buy-in for the Taos DSP in the private sector, public sector, civic sector, and the wider community.
3. Continue to provide opportunities for feedback, periodic education, and reports on tourism to the community (residents, businesses, and all tourism stakeholders).

#### Priority Actions

- 1.1.1** Assign the responsibility for community engagement around tourism to the Town of Taos' newly hired Community Relations Director who is responsible for communications, marketing and tourism. The Community Relations Director should be supported in this role by the proposed Manager of Destination Stewardship Network (see Goal 9 for details), and coordinate all activities through the Destination Stewardship Network that will include Taos Pueblo and Taos County. While this responsibility will lie initially within the Town of Taos, eventually it should lie within the permanent destination management and marketing organization. The Community Relations Director and/or Destination Stewardship Network Manager will manage continued community outreach and education programming throughout the implementation of the Taos DSP.
- 1.1.2** Devise and implement a six-month (May-October 2024) campaign to publicize official adoption of the Taos DSP by the Town of Taos in coordination with: Taos County and other partner organizations that form part of the Taos DSP Project Steering Committee including but not limited to the Taos Pueblo, key cultural associations, public land managers, Taos Ski Valley Inc., Main Street and the Taos and Taos Ski Valley Chambers of Commerce. Host a series of community town hall celebration events to present the plan, introduce the interim Destination Stewardship Network, educate the community on Lodger's Tax, solicit feedback, and build trust in the community. Consider whether a stand-alone website separate from the Town of Taos and Taos.org is needed. Ensure bilingual, inclusive and non-digital communications are included in outreach.
- 1.1.3** Maintain the recently launched community engagement platform [taos.org/tourism-revisited](https://taos.org/tourism-revisited) and the associated newsletter to serve as a hub for information releases such as data and research updates, impact and progress reports, and surveys.
- 1.1.4** Conduct bi-annual (every two years) resident sentiment and tourism business and stakeholder surveys to maintain feedback and benchmark resident sentiment.
- 1.1.5** Create and deploy a simple, collaborative visitor sentiment survey bi-annually that can be widely shared and distributed by all tourism businesses. Analyze and share data with Taos residents and tourism stakeholders.
- 1.1.6** Host "The State of Taos Tourism" stakeholder and "community town hall events to present data monitoring and tourism performance indicators, education and marketing campaigns, solicit feedback and engagement from community attendees on tourism performance, and build trust in the community. These events could be organized in collaboration with the Taos Pueblo and feature a presentation on their tourism initiatives. At a minimum, these events should be held annually, with tourism stakeholder meetings ideally held more frequently (2- 4 times per year).

#### Partner Organizations

Town of Taos, Taos County, Taos Pueblo, Taos and Taos Ski Valley Chambers, Taos Main Street, Enchanted Circle Marketing Cooperative.

**INITIATIVE 1.1 Sustain Community Engagement in Tourism Management and Decision-Making****Potential Resources**

- Lodger's Tax funding and staff time to coordinate efforts of surveys development, distribution, analysis, coordination of community town hall meetings, and any marketing efforts to promote all engagement initiatives.
- Visit Taos (currently managed by the Town of Taos) [taos.org/tourism-revisited](https://taos.org/tourism-revisited).

**KPIs**

- Recruitment of a contracted or full-time equivalent community engagement manager, serving the Destination Stewardship Network and eventual permanent Destination Management and Marketing Organization.
- Number of resident and tourism stakeholder surveys completed annually.
- Number of attendees at community tourism town hall meetings.
- Increased number of satisfied residents and overall increase in resident sentiment survey scores.
- Quality and quantity of the data collected and communicated on visitor use, visitor and resident sentiment, and visitation impacts the tourism dashboard that's regularly updated.

**Related Focus Areas**

Sustainable practices, monitoring and reporting, collaborative management.



**INITIATIVE 1.2:** Implement an education strategy that informs visitors and community members about their shared responsibilities in stewarding Taos' history, diverse cultures, and fragile environment.

Destination marketing and communications should align to support all Destination Stewardship Network goals and educate the community on the new approach to tourism. A new integrated destination marketing and communications strategy needs development spearheaded by the Town of Taos' Marketing Committee with oversight from the Destination Stewardship Network Action Teams—to encourage residents to lead by example and visitors to be more responsible and respectful. The values of Indigenous and Hispano cultures who have stewarded the land for generations needs to drive the new strategy and content.

**INITIATIVE 1.2: Implement an education strategy that informs visitors and community members about their shared responsibilities in stewarding Taos' history, diverse cultures, and fragile environment.**

**Implementation Timeline** Years 2–5

**Objectives**

1. Emphasize the shared responsibilities of visitors and community members (residents and tourism businesses) around destination stewardship; residents have pride and take better care of Taos and visitors feel welcome and clear on how to behave respectfully.
2. Identify key themes that have common cross-cultural threads shared by all Taoseños.
3. Build a bridge between land-focused organizations (acequia, ranchers) and recreationalists, and environmental activists.
4. Shift a portion of marketing resources away from destination promotion and toward educational communications that align marketing efforts with the Taos Destination Stewardship Network and the values of the Taos community.
5. All activities and messages encourage deeper interactions between visitors and residents to create an atmosphere of mutual respect.

**Priority Actions**

- 1.2.1** Establish a Stewardship Communications Action Team through the Destination Stewardship Network to oversee education and outreach programs and campaigns with a mandate that they target the community as well as visitors. Participating members should include Taos County, Pueblo, Hispano and Acequia groups, and public land agencies. Until a new tourism governance structure is in place, the Stewardship Communications Action Team will inform the Town of Taos' Community Relations Officer who will be responsible for oversight on campaign messaging and the use of Lodger's Tax funds and other resources.
- 1.2.2** Consider the Global Sustainable Tourism Council Criteria, local Pueblo and Hispano knowledge, and existing replicable programs such as Leave No Trace/Tread Lightly/Responsible Recreation to establish cohesive stewardship guidelines, the baseline to measure success, monitoring metrics, and a strategy to communicate stewardship success to the residents. This priority action aligns closely with actions proposed under Goal 8. See Goal 8 for more details on monitoring and reporting.
- 1.2.3** Draft and ratify a policy resolution that recommends the Town of Taos/Taos County/Enchanted Circle of Government invest in destination stewardship education and marketing that prioritizes both visitor and resident stewardship education communications.
- 1.2.4** Drive awareness and excitement by hosting a community art contest for a Stewardship campaign logo.
- 1.2.5** Building on existing Taos County Extension and New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension Service work to create a local's guide to stewardship in Taos—specifically for residents and second homeowners—on how to protect and respect the land, water, and cultures of Taos. Enlist the real estate industry, local governments, and community groups to distribute and potentially help fund the project. See [Jackson Hole Mountain Neighbor Handbook](#) for an example.

**INITIATIVE 1.2: Implement an education strategy that informs visitors and community members about their shared responsibilities in stewarding Taos' history, diverse cultures, and fragile environment.**

**Priority Actions**

**1.2.6** Update guidelines for *Filming in Taos/Enchanted Circle* focusing on respectful cultural representation, environmental stewardship, and responsible recreation.

**1.2.7** Secure funding for unified signage and wayfinding that incorporate stewardship branding and a message that integrates cultural and historical elements into existing and new trail designs.

**Partner Organizations**

Town of Taos Marketing Committee, Town of Taos, Taos County, Taos Pueblo, Destination Stewardship Network, Enchanted Circle Marketing Cooperative, Enchanted Circle Council of Governments, Taos Extension Office, Taos Valley Acequia Association, Paseo Project, Taos Arts Council, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, hunting/ fishing/cultural tour guides, Enchanted Circle Trails Association, Taos Ski Valley Inc., Taos Main Street, Taos County Chamber of Commerce, Taos Ski Valley Chamber of Commerce, Taos County Association of Realtors, NMSU Cooperative Extension Service, New Mexico Tourism Department, New Mexico Office of Recreation, New Mexico Fish and Game, New Mexico State Land Office.

**Potential Resources**

Funding: Town of Taos Lodger's Tax/Marketing Budget, Taos County Lodger's Tax, Taos County Public Land Agency Grants, New Mexico State Department of Recreation, New Mexico State Tourism Department, Arts and Culture Grants, Taos County Association of Realtors.

Resources for establishing guidelines:

- Taos County Extension
- Taos Soil and Water Conservation District
- VISION 2020
- Strong at Heart
- Town of Taos Bicycle Master Plan
- Enchanted Circle Trails Plan
- Town of Taos Parks Master Plan
- Taos Mainstreet Municipal Redevelopment Plan
- 100% Taos
- Global Sustainable Tourism Council
- Leave No Trace
- American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association
- Quivira Coalition
- Center for Southwest Culture

**KPIs**

- Establishment of the Stewardship Communications Action Team within the proposed Destination Stewardship Network (i.e., proposed interim governance structure for Taos DSP implementation).
- Number distributed: *Local's Guide to Stewardship in Taos*.

**Related Focus Areas**

Stewardship communications, sustainable practices, monitoring and reporting, collaborative management.

**INITIATIVE 1.3:** Develop a visitor marketing and communication strategy that promotes responsible stewardship behaviors in the destination and engages local tourism stakeholders in spreading a cohesive message to visitors.

This initiative introduces a new approach to responsible visitor education, convening frontline tourism stakeholders who are currently working in education and communications into a task force to oversee the development of consistent, streamlined messaging and communication within the overall marketing strategy. This taskforce will be formed as part of the Destination Stewardship Network which is the proposed interim governance structure for Taos Destination Stewardship Network implementation.

**INITIATIVE 1.3: Develop a visitor marketing and communication strategy that promotes responsible stewardship behaviors in the destination and engages local tourism stakeholders in spreading a cohesive message to visitors**

**Implementation Timeline** Years 2-3

**Objectives**

1. Ensure tourism management messaging is shaped with regional input.
2. Implement a consistent visitor education campaign that promotes a unified message developed through collaboration among tourism stakeholders.
3. Increase local business participation in stewardship good practices including local and international certification programming, guide certification, and training programs Increase visitor awareness of tourism businesses participating in stewardship certification to help inform choices to support sustainable businesses in Taos.
4. Acequia and Hispano culture is highlighted and interpreted as an integral part of the tourism industry in Taos.

**Priority Actions**

**1.3.1** Develop an integrated marketing and communications strategy that includes the key elements outlined within this priority initiative. Utilize the Stewardship Communications Action Team to oversee education programs and ensure outreach campaigns integrate visitor education in all destination marketing efforts. Support the full reactivation of the Enchanted Circle Marketing Cooperative to get regional input and collaborate on the integrated marketing and communications strategy. With its recent reinstatement of nonprofit status, the Enchanted Circle Marketing Cooperative is poised to become a permanent mechanism for regional marketing endeavors.

**1.3.2** Develop “How to Taos” guidelines specifically for visitors that outline “know before you go” trip planning, principles of responsible recreation, environmental stewardship, respectful interactions with the arts and cultural communities, reciprocity, and general local etiquette and tips.

Tap into elder wisdom. Invest in gathering strong storytelling assets. Consider a Taoseño voices podcast. Enlist community elders from the Pueblo, Hispano, immigrant, and artist communities in a storytelling initiative to develop content for educational marketing.

**INITIATIVE 1.3: Develop a visitor marketing and communication strategy that promotes responsible stewardship behaviors in the destination and engages local tourism stakeholders in spreading a cohesive message to visitors**

**Priority Actions**

- 1.3.3** Develop content distribution strategies to ensure consistency and continuity of responsible visitor messaging and campaigns among frontline stakeholder groups, and use platforms that reach visitors throughout their experience (at the planning stage, pre-arrival, and while in the destination).  
Incorporate educational messaging into the Town of Taos' Visit Taos traditional marketing, branding, and social campaigns and key messaging on Visit Taos.
- Consider touch points such as video content in the airport, digital marketing and social media in stores, lodgings, rental homes and restaurants, Provide local businesses with training and a toolkit for disseminating responsible visitor education and messaging among their employees, including frontline workers and guide services. Include local businesses and frontline workers in tourism ambassador program opportunities.
- Provide local businesses with a toolkit to help amplify content and key messaging of any marketing campaigns launched.  
Consider free wifi terms of usage like All Together Sante Fe where anyone who uses the free wifi reads and agrees to certain behaviors in exchange for use of free wifi.
- 1.3.4.** Establish a "Stewardship-Certified" Small Business Campaign. See Initiative 7.1 for more details regarding the proposed "Stewardship Certified" good practices program.
- 1.3.5** Create local volunteer or paid Ambassador Programs to connect knowledgeable locals with visitors on the trails, campgrounds, and cultural attractions (like the Plaza). Prioritize local youth in this initiative.
- 1.3.6** Develop and market itineraries for stewardship/cultural-minded visitors and voluntourism opportunities for the public such as resilience, sustainability, and regeneration initiatives, and create a way to accept climate offset donations from visitors and donate proceeds to local organizations (such as tours of Acequias, Develop communications to promote these opportunities. See Initiatives 2.1 and 2.2 for new tourism product experiences and events to include in these efforts.
- 1.3.7** Consider developing sub-brands or capitalize on the NM True certification for tourism products inspired and led by the Hispano, Latino, Native American and other prominent communities. See [Visit Charlottesville Black Cville sub-brand](#) as an example.
- 1.3.8** Develop a visitor (and resident) contribution fund (opt-out or opt-in) for supporting local sustainability and destination management actions.
- 1.3.9** Host Media FAM Tours for writers and influencers, matching them with local experts and resources to promote Taos' destination stewardship guidelines and practices.
- 1.3.10** Create a collaborative destination-wide method for collecting, monitoring, and reporting visitor satisfaction on an ongoing basis.

**Partner Organizations**

Town of Taos Marketing Committee, Town of Taos, Taos County, Taos Pueblo, Destination Stewardship Network, Enchanted Circle Marketing Cooperative, Taos County Chamber of Commerce, Taos Ski Valley Chamber of Commerce, U.S. Forest Service, Taos Arts Council, Dr. Kathryn & Tessa Córdova/other fishing/cultural tour guides, Taos Pueblo Business Association, Acequia leadership, Enchanted Circle Trails Association, Taos Ski Valley Inc., Taos Main Street, museums docents, youth tour guides, Trail Ambassadors, New Mexico Tourism Department, New Mexico Office of Recreation, New Mexico Fish and Game.

**INITIATIVE 1.3: Develop a visitor marketing and communication strategy that promotes responsible stewardship behaviors in the destination and engages local tourism stakeholders in spreading a cohesive message to visitors**

**Potential Resources**

Funding: Lodger's Tax funds to support the development of a training program and materials; New Mexico State Tourism Department/NM True, Arts and Culture Grants La Coalición "Lectures Series" and video recordings that preserve/document people's stories.

Stewardship/Sustainability Guidelines:

- [Sustainable Tourism Impact Report](#)
- [Sustainable Tourism: The Rise of Impact-Conscious Traveler](#)
- NYU Stern Center for Sustainable Business [Communicating your sustainability strategy: A guide to transparency and responsibility](#)
- Good Tourism Institute: [How to communicate sustainability effectively](#)
- Plan an [Effective Sustainability Communications: A Best Practice Guide for Brands & Marketers](#)

**KPIs**

- Establishment of the Stewardship Communications Action Team within the proposed Destination Stewardship Network (i.e., proposed interim governance structure for SDMP implementation).
- Number of visitor guides distributed.
- Number of frontline workers trained.
- Number of businesses engaged in visitor education.

**Related Focus Areas**

Stewardship communications, sustainable practices, monitoring and reporting



## Goal 2

### Facilitate fair distribution of economic benefits from tourism.

Tourism plays a pivotal role in shaping the vibrant character of Taos, serving as both an economic engine and a cultural cornerstone. According to a recent resident tourism sentiment survey, a resounding 87% of respondents view tourism as vital to the local economy, recognizing its significant contributions to fostering local investment and supporting businesses.

Within this understanding of tourism's economic significance, concerns emerge about the equitable distribution of tourism's benefits among Taos' diverse communities. While 71% of respondents believe tourism encourages local investment and 79% affirm its support for local businesses, sentiment diverges on how benefits are distributed. Respondents who identify as Hispanic or Latino see less of a contribution to their households from tourism and see fewer non-economic benefits. Only 46% of Hispanic or Latino respondents agreed that the benefits of tourism outweigh its drawbacks. Moreover, while 58% of respondents recognize tourism as a source of desirable employment opportunities, challenges persist in making sure opportunities exist for all segments of the Taos workforce.

The survey illuminates disparities in how tourism impacts different segments of the Taos community, reflecting the broader national discourse on economic inequality. Recognizing the imperative to address these economic disparities, Taos DSP initiatives are rooted in entrepreneurship and tourism product development that aim to ensure inclusion, fairness, and community empowerment, and are guided by a commitment to creating a tourism landscape that benefits all communities.

Preserving heritage and cultures in Taos requires a balanced approach that respects authenticity and integrity while promoting responsible economic activities. This entails fostering partnerships with local Hispanic, Latino, and Indigenous communities and prioritizing their involvement in tourism development. By emphasizing authenticity, sustainability, and cultural values, Taos can create genuine and mutually beneficial interactions between visitors and residents while avoiding commodification pitfalls.

## Measuring Success

The success of the proposed initiatives encompass various facets of community engagement, cultural preservation, economic development, and entrepreneurship.

1. Tourism product development: number of new tourism experiences that are led and benefit the Hispano and Latino communities, new tourism experiences that create deeper linkages between the Taos Pueblo and the Hispano and Latino communities.
2. Tourism entrepreneurship: number of micro- and small tourism entrepreneurs completing incubation programs and classified as "visitor ready"; attendance rates and satisfaction scores for workshops and events; the percentage of emerging businesses connected with financing options.
3. Celebrating and preserving culture and traditions: increase in cultural events, utilization rate of the Community Events Fund, and the number of grant applications received signify a vibrant and collaborative community landscape.
4. Integration of new tourism products into destination marketing: effectiveness of marketing strategies promoting new tourism products and experiences; increases in sales attributed to promotional efforts.



## INITIATIVE 2.1: Develop and promote new tourism experiences and products that celebrate culture, preserve land, and benefit marginalized communities.

This initiative aims to develop and promote new tourism experiences and products that honor and celebrate the diverse cultures of Taos, safeguard its land, and uplift marginalized communities in the tourism industry.

At its core, this initiative is about fostering a deeper connection between visitors and the essence of Taos. It aims to highlight, preserve, and celebrate local historical and cultural treasures, so they are not only cherished but passed down to future generations. By engaging local communities and businesses in the preservation and promotion of these assets, this initiative also seeks to create a more informed and respectful visitor base, fostering positive interactions between locals and guests.

Moreover, this initiative is committed to maximizing the economic benefits of tourism for all communities, particularly those who have been historically underrepresented in the tourism industry. By creating new opportunities in agri-tourism, ecotourism, and cultural experiences, this initiative aims to empower Hispano, Latino, and Pueblo communities, allowing them to share their traditions, knowledge, and talents with visitors in meaningful and sustainable ways. Through collaborative efforts with local farmers, ranchers, Indigenous communities, and cultural organizations, this initiative envisions a tourism landscape that not only enriches the lives of visitors but also strengthens the fabric of Taos' diverse community. It is critical that these opportunities are led by those who will benefit, ensuring community leaders from respective groups guide development with care and determine the direction of product development initiatives.

### INITIATIVE 2.1 Develop and promote new tourism experiences and products that celebrate culture, preserve land, and benefit marginalized communities.

**Implementation Timeline** Years 1–3

#### Objectives

1. Increase economic benefits from tourism to currently under-benefited communities.
2. Highlight, preserve, and celebrate local historical and cultural assets and stories.
3. Create a deeper investment in land-based cultural practices and stewardship.
4. Create better informed and more respectful visitors.
5. Promote more positive interactions between locals and visitors.

#### Priority Actions

- 2.1.1** Establish a Tourism Product Development Action Team as part of the Destination Stewardship Network (see Initiative 9.1) to oversee all strategic initiatives outlined under Goal 2. Facilitate discussions with community leaders for each of the various product development ideas outlined in 2.1.2 and develop community guidelines that articulate the aspirations and objectives of community leaders and establish clear parameters for product development spearheaded and overseen by individuals from the communities who will directly benefit.
- 2.1.2** Create new tourism products and low-impact experiences with the Hispano and Latino communities to promote agri-tourism:
- Collaborate with farmers, ranchers, and agricultural organizations to create an Enchanted Circle acequia loop, farm loop, and specific farm product tours that showcase traditional farming practices, local produce, and cultural heritage in particular acequia communities.
  - Design guided tours that allow visitors to explore farms, orchards, and vineyards while learning about the region's agricultural history and culinary traditions.
  - Develop and offer educational and immersive experiences such as harvesting, cooking demonstrations, demonstration of construction of hornos (i.e., large domed adobe oven), and farm-to-table dining experiences.

## INITIATIVE 2.1 Develop and promote new tourism experiences and products that celebrate culture, preserve land, and benefit marginalized communities.

### Priority Actions

**2.1.3** Promote key aspects of tangible and intangible culture, such as adobe architecture, to showcase deep connections among the Hispano, Latino and Native American communities:

- Collaborate with The Adobe Alliance to restore and repurpose adobe buildings, creating versatile spaces that can serve as educational hubs, venues for showcasing adobe architecture to visitors, among other uses.
- Integrate existing and restored adobe buildings into new tours, e.g., agritourism tours or to serve as a venue for tourism related activities, such as a farm-to-table restaurant, visitor center or venue for experiential tours and educational workshops.
- Create a themed adobe architecture tour connecting Taos Pueblo and the Town of Taos. This tour will narrate the nuanced story of the communities and the origins of key structures and attractions, exploring how adobe architecture has been shaped and evolved by the sensibilities and technology of Native American and Hispano cultures.

**2.1.4** The Taos Pueblo has prioritized the development of new nature-based (ecotourism) experiences as part of its tourism planning for the future. There is a strong interest in forming partnerships with stakeholders in Taos to create new experiences to cater to this niche market. Therefore, there is an opportunity to support the Taos Pueblo to develop ecotourism experiences:

- Facilitate dialogue and explore partnership between Town of Taos tourism leaders and conservation organizations and other local outdoor recreation providers to explore synergies and ideas for potential collaboration.
- Incorporate cultural interpretation and storytelling to deepen visitors' appreciation for the natural world and indigenous perspectives on land stewardship.

**2.1.5** Encourage stronger connections among the Hispano, Latino, and Pueblo communities through initiatives promoting cross-cultural exchanges and cultural experiential workshops. These efforts aim to inspire new ideas for tourism product development.

- Facilitate cultural exchange workshops for locals and visitors led by Hispano, Latino, and Pueblo community members, focusing on traditional arts, crafts, music, dance, and culinary practices.
- Offer hands-on experiences such as pottery making, weaving, traditional cooking classes, adobe architecture, and dance performances that allow residents visitors to engage directly with cultural bearers of these communities.

### Partner Organizations

Town of Taos, Taos County, New Mexico Ag Ext. Officer / Taos Water Soil Conservation District, Taos Valley Acequia Association, Taos County Economic Development Corporation, Amigos Bravos, Martinez Museum & Hacienda, Taos Historic Museum, Taos Pueblo, LOR Foundation, Taos Community Foundation, MainStreet, Small Business Development Center (SBDC) - University of New Mexico - Taos, Bridges Project, University of New Mexico-Taos Hub of Internet-based Vocation and Education (HIVE), Community Alliance for Sustainable Adobe (CASA), The Adobe Alliance, Trout Unlimited, Enchanted Circle Trails, Elders, Rocky Mountain Youth Corp, Big Brothers Big Sisters, YMCA, Kit Carson Electric, Lodger Tax Committee, Fiesta Council, Taos Visitor's Center, Taos Youth and Family Center, Center for Southwest Culture, Taos County Chamber of Commerce, Society of the Muse of the Southwest (SOMOS), Alianza Agricultura de Taos, Millicent Rogers Museum.

### Potential Resources

- County Lodger's Tax
- New Mexico Tourism Department
- USDA Rural Development Program
- Office of Indian Economic Development
- First Peoples Fund
- Foundations such as Thornburg Foundation
- New Mexico Agritourism Symposium
- Colorado Agritourism Association
- University of Vermont Agritourism Resources

**INITIATIVE 2.1 Develop and promote new tourism experiences and products that celebrate culture, preserve land, and benefit marginalized communities.****KPIs**

- Number of new tourism experiences that are led and benefit the Hispano and Latino communities
- Number of new tourism experiences that create deeper linkages between the Taos Pueblo and the Hispano and Latino communities
- Number of micro- and small tourism entrepreneurs completing incubation programs and classified as “visitor ready”
- Attendance rates and satisfaction scores for workshops and events

**Related Focus Areas**

Stewardship communications, protect authenticity.



## INITIATIVE 2.2: Support and finance community events that preserve and celebrate Taos' diverse cultures.

Cultural events promote cultural exchange and understanding, help preserve cultural heritage and build community cohesion. This initiative embodies a commitment to preserving and celebrating the rich tapestry of Taos' cultural heritage by supporting and financing community events that showcase its unique identity.

This initiative is fundamentally about fostering a sense of belonging and pride among Taos' residents while inviting visitors to immerse themselves in the region's diverse cultures. By conducting an inventory of existing community events and working closely with Hispano, Latino, and Pueblo communities, this initiative aims to identify opportunities for new events and fill gaps in the cultural landscape. Through collaborative efforts, community-led events will emerge, each offering a window into the soul of Taos.

Central to success is the establishment of a dedicated Community Events Fund, funded by a portion of the Lodger's Tax (Town of Taos and Taos County) and supplemented by grants and partnerships. This fund will serve as a catalyst for creativity, providing the necessary resources for local groups and organizations to bring their cultural visions to life. Additionally, by promoting cultural event grant programs and offering technical support and resources to entrepreneurs, this initiative seeks to democratize access to funding and empower grassroots initiatives.

Collaboration among community groups is critical as collective efforts yield greater impact. Through networking events, workshops, and partnerships, cultural organizations will combine their resources and expertise to create larger-scale events that resonate deeply with both residents and visitors alike. By regularly evaluating and recognizing the success of these events, Taos will not only celebrate its cultural vibrancy but also lay the groundwork for a sustainable and inclusive future.

<b>INITIATIVE 2.2 Support and finance community events that preserve and celebrate Taos' diverse cultures.</b>
<b>Implementation Timeline</b> Years 2–3
<p><b>Objectives</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Celebrate Taos' unique cultures through engaging community events that bring people together.</li> <li>2. Increase access to funding for cultural events across community groups.</li> <li>3. Promote collaboration among community groups to create unique, engaging, cultural events.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Priority Actions</b></p> <p><b>2.2.1</b> Conduct an inventory of existing community events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a database of existing cultural events to identify opportunities for additional cultural events.</li> <li>• Work with Hispano, Latino, Pueblo and Anglo communities to fill gaps in events and develop additional event ideas.</li> </ul> <p><b>2.2.2</b> Establish a Community Events Fund:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a dedicated fund to support community-led events that promote and preserve Taos' unique cultural heritage. The fund should consider providing large and small grant opportunities. Fund organizers should develop and publicly communicate its priorities, application process and timeline, clearly defined selection criteria, and event impact monitoring framework. Consider allocating funding to events scheduled during the off-peak season to distribute visitation more evenly.</li> <li>• Allocate a portion of the Lodger's Tax (Town of Taos and Taos County) and/or seek funding from grants and partnerships for creation and ongoing management and monitoring of the Community Events Fund.</li> </ul>

**INITIATIVE 2.2 Support and finance community events that preserve and celebrate Taos' diverse cultures.****Priority Actions**

**2.2.3** Promote cultural event grant programs to support the develop of events:

- Develop and publicize grant programs specifically for organizing cultural events in Taos; include large and small grant opportunities.
- Provide assistance in the application process and ensure accessibility to funding for local community groups and organizations; it is recommended that this application open twice a year.
- Streamline the event permitting process.

**2.2.4** Facilitate collaborations among community groups:

- Organize networking events or workshops to encourage collaboration among different cultural organizations and community groups. Early networking events should consider focusing on addressing the historic mistrust amongst different communities.
- Foster partnerships to combine resources and expertise for larger-scale cultural events.

**2.2.5** Provide technical support and resources to new and existing entrepreneurs:

- Offer technical assistance and resources such as event planning workshops, marketing guidance, and logistical support.
- Create an online platform or toolkit with templates and best practices for organizing successful community events.

**2.2.6** Regularly evaluate events and recognize successful ones:

- Establish criteria for evaluating the impact and success of funded events, including economic benefits for local communities. Evaluate criteria annually.
- Recognize and showcase successful events through awards, media coverage, and promotional materials.

**Partner Organizations**

University of New Mexico - Hub of Internet-based Vocation and Education (HIVE), Town of Taos Marketing Committee, Taos County, Destination Stewardship Network, Taos Arts Council, Taos Community Foundation, Taos Fiesta Council, Youth Folklorico Dance (Luzita Trujillo), Community Alliance for Sustainable Adobe (CASA), The Adobe Alliance, Society of the Muse of the Southwest (SOMOS), Azteca Dance, People/ Holders of knowledge, culture, etc.: Anita Rodriguez (The Adobe Alliance), Dr. Tessa Cordova & DR. Catherine Cordova (Taos Historical Tours, Educator, Scholar), Don Francisco Trujillo (Fiestas de Taos), Churches - Mayordomos, Dr. Bob Romero (Historian, Scholar)

**Potential Resources:**

Potential Funding Resources:

- Town of Taos and Taos County Lodger's Tax
- New Mexico Tourism Department
- New Mexico Office of Outdoor Recreation
- LOR Foundation
- Center for Southwest Culture

**KPIs**

- Increase in the number of new cultural events developed each year
- Percentage of the Community Events Fund expended annually
- Increase in the number of grant applications received from local community groups and organizations
- Number of collaborative projects or events initiated between community groups
- Percentage of entrepreneurs accessing technical support and resources for event planning
- Evaluation scores of funded events based on predefined criteria, including economic benefits for local communities

**Related Focus Areas**

Stewardship communications, protect authenticity

### INITIATIVE 2.3: Enhance market readiness of emerging tourism enterprises.

Micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) play a pivotal role in shaping the visitor experience and driving economic growth in most tourism destinations. This initiative embodies a commitment to enhancing the market readiness of emerging tourism enterprises in Taos, in particular entrepreneurs who will be developing new tourism products and experiences as recommended in Initiatives 2.1 and 2.2, providing the necessary support and resources for their success.

This initiative is about leveling the playing field and ensuring that all aspiring entrepreneurs, especially those from underrepresented communities, have equal access to opportunities within the tourism sector. By enhancing existing business incubation programs and creating specialized initiatives tailored to tourism-related enterprises, Initiative 2.3 aims to provide mentorship, training, and resources to help entrepreneurs develop viable business plans and strategies.

Central to its success is the facilitation of connections between emerging tourism businesses and financing options such as grants, loans, and investment opportunities. By partnering with financial institutions and offering specialized funding programs, this initiative seeks to remove barriers to entry and empower entrepreneurs to bring their visions to life.

Continuous learning and skill development in the competitive tourism industry is essential. Through tourism business development workshops, networking events, and industry conferences, entrepreneurs will have the opportunity to hone their skills, connect with potential partners and investors, and stay abreast of industry trends.

This initiative also emphasizes the development and promotion of existing and newly developed products and experiences, creating market linkages between tourism businesses, tour operators, and travel advisors. By developing a targeted regional marketing campaign and participating in joint marketing efforts with the New Mexico Tourism Department, Taos will amplify the reach and visibility of its tourism offerings, attracting visitors from near and far. Through these concerted efforts, this initiative seeks to foster a thriving ecosystem of tourism entrepreneurship in Taos, driving innovation, diversity, and economic prosperity.

#### INITIATIVE 2.3 Enhance market readiness of emerging tourism enterprises.

**Implementation Timeline** Years 2–4

##### Objectives

1. To provide support for small and medium tourism enterprises.
2. To increase representation within tourism businesses among marginalized communities.

##### Priority Actions

- 2.3.1** Develop a business incubation program based on existing local resources specifically tailored to tourism-related enterprises.
- Provide mentorship, training, and resources to help entrepreneurs develop viable business plans and strategies.
- 2.3.2** Connect emerging tourism businesses with financing options such as grants, loans, or investment opportunities.
- Partner with financial institutions to create specialized funding programs for tourism startups.
- 2.3.3** Develop tourism business development workshops to support new and existing entrepreneurs
- Offer workshops and training sessions focused on topics relevant to tourism business development, such as marketing, customer service, and sustainable practices.
- 2.3.3** Develop tourism business development workshops to support new and existing entrepreneurs
- Offer workshops and training sessions focused on topics relevant to tourism business development, such as marketing, customer service, and sustainable practices.
  - Invite industry experts and successful entrepreneurs to share their insights and experiences.

**INITIATIVE 2.3 Enhance market readiness of emerging tourism enterprises.****Priority Actions**

**2.3.4** Encourage tourism businesses in Taos to join existing networking events, industry conferences, or trade fairs where tourism entrepreneurs can connect with potential partners, investors, and customers.

- Foster a supportive ecosystem where businesses can share knowledge and collaborate on joint ventures.

**2.3.5** Increase promotion of existing and newly developed products and experiences

- Create market linkages between tourism businesses, tour operators, and travel advisors.
- Develop a marketing campaign to promote tourism products and newly developed agritourism, nature-based (ecotourism), and cultural experiences offered by entrepreneurs in Taos. See Initiatives 1.2 and 1.3 for details.
- Participate in joint marketing campaigns or co-op advertising opportunities with the New Mexico Tourism Department to amplify the reach and visibility of Taos' tourism offerings.

**Partner Organizations**

University of New Mexico–Taos, University of New Mexico–Hub of Internet-based Vocation and Education (HIVE), New Mexico Tourism Department, New Mexico State University's Hospitality and Tourism program, Taos Community Foundation, MainStreet, Taos County Chamber of Commerce, Small Business Development Center at University of New Mexico–Taos, Taos County Economic Development Corporation, Taos Pueblo, Trout Unlimited, Kit Carson Electric, Taos County, Lodger Tax Committee, Fiesta Council, LOR Foundation, Taos Visitor's Center

**Potential Resources**

- Taos County Economic Development Corporation
- USDA Small Business Grants
- USDA Rural Development Program
- Small Business Development Center at University of New Mexico

**KPIs**

- Number of entrepreneurs successfully completing business incubation programs
- Percentage of emerging tourism businesses connected with financing options
- Attendance rates and participant satisfaction scores for tourism business development workshops
- Number of tourism entrepreneurs participating in networking events, conferences, or trade fairs.
- Increase in sales or bookings attributed to promotion and marketing efforts.

**Related Focus Areas**

Stewardship communications, protect authenticity.



## Goal 3

### Increase tourism workforce stability.

As we strive to establish a stable and thriving tourism workforce, our collective aim extends beyond mere economic prosperity to encompass the well-being of our community members. According to the Business Tourism Sentiment Survey, 49% of Taos businesses surveyed said that 60% or more of their income depends on tourism. The lack of workforce availability was cited by businesses as one of the biggest challenges affecting their operations; those surveyed cited working together, developing business clusters, and broadening partnerships should be a priority in overcoming workforce and other business-related challenges. The labor shortage crisis in the hospitality and tourism sector throughout the United States is an ongoing challenge, and it is essential to address it urgently at a local level in Taos.

Addressing the workforce challenge means greater youth engagement, developing higher-paying jobs, creating career advancement pathways, and cultivating a workforce ecosystem that nurtures and retains local talent. In Taos, this commitment holds particular significance because we also want to empower our youth, support our residents, and foster a sense of belonging that transcends mere employment. We need to not only envision but create a future where Taos' youth can find fulfillment and opportunity within our tourism industry.

Our dual strategy underscores the critical role of leadership and collaboration within the business community to address the persistent problem of workforce shortages. We must encourage business leaders to harness their collective wisdom, resources, and influence to increase recruitment and retention of talent from within the community to the greatest extent possible.

## Measuring Success

1. Decrease in employee turnover/increase in employee longevity at local businesses.
2. Increase in mental health resources available to the workforce.
3. Percentage of youth participants in tourism-related skill-building activities, percentage of youth participants who choose to remain in Taos for further education or career opportunities, and number of youth employed or pursuing careers within the tourism sector or related industries.
4. Number of businesses participating in training programs, the adoption rate of best practices among participating businesses, and the percentage of businesses that report increased stability or expansion as a result of training initiatives.



Courtesy of Town of Taos

### INITIATIVE 3.1: Increase leadership and collaboration within the business community to enhance tourism workforce recruitment.

Initiative 3.1 is a strategic framework designed to forge stronger connections between local businesses, educational institutions, and prospective employees.

This initiative emphasizes the establishment of a Tourism Workforce Development Network, spearheaded by the Taos County Chamber of Commerce, MainStreet, and University of New Mexico Taos. This network can serve as a platform for coordinating and implementing programs to tackle the pressing workforce shortages. Additionally, the initiative introduces a training and investment fund designed to fuel the network's initiatives, including job fairs, internship programs, mentorship opportunities, and the provision of training, certifications, and scholarships.

The success of this initiative hinges on the engagement and nurturing of Taos' youth by offering them opportunities to develop skills related to culture, heritage, and history while forging connections with local businesses. By cultivating a pipeline of talent poised to engage in the tourism economy, this initiative not only addresses immediate workforce needs but also cultivates a sustainable future for Taos' tourism industry.

Through the creation and expansion of business training opportunities, local entrepreneurs and businesses are empowered to adopt the latest best practices, leading to continued growth and vitality of both their operations and the tourism workforce.

#### INITIATIVE 3.1 Increase leadership and collaboration within the business community to enhance tourism workforce recruitment.

**Implementation Timeline** Years 2-4

##### Objectives

1. Assess current skills gaps and identify relevant educational programs to address them effectively.
2. Pool resources and create strategic partnerships for an industry-level workforce recruitment initiative.
3. Increase the number of prospective and qualified workers—in particular, youth, Native Americans, retirees, Hispanic, and Latino.

##### Priority Actions

- 3.1.1** Establish a Tourism Workforce Recruitment Action Team as part of the Destination Stewardship Network (see Initiative 9.1), jointly led by the Taos County and Taos Ski Valley Chambers of Commerce, with participation from MainStreet, University of New Mexico Taos, and key high schools. This action team will collaborate to design and implement an initiative aimed at addressing workforce shortages in the tourism industry, including mapping out skill gaps and cross educational curriculum and programs that can help address these gaps.
- 3.1.2** Create a workforce recruitment fund that pools resources from businesses (scaled contributions) through the associations to create strategic partnerships for an industry-level workforce recruitment initiative. The fund will cover the costs for contracting a workforce facilitator/project manager who will oversee recruitment, job postings, incentives and media promotion as well as digital promotional activities.
- 3.1.3** Assess feasibility and activate advocacy to increase the Lodger's Tax by one percent (1%) to be able to generate urgently needed funding to respond to critical threats, such as tourism workforce recruitment, retention and housing.

### INITIATIVE 3.1 Increase leadership and collaboration within the business community to enhance tourism workforce recruitment.

**3.1.4** Tourism workforce recruitment will create stronger linkages between local employers and the Taos talent pool (youth, retirees, immigrants) by providing:

- Job Fairs
- Internship, mentorship and placement programs, with a focus on providing support to micro and small businesses to cover internship stipends. This assistance ensures that these businesses can afford to participate in internship and mentorship programs.
- Training, certifications, and scholarships
- An online portal for workforce connections and networking
- A digital marketing campaign to help educate on job fairs, internships, training, career paths and more

The workforce recruitment initiative should target and address the different needs for seasonal and year-round employees, and increase the number of prospective and qualified workers, in particular youth, retirees, and immigrants. Recruiting youth is essential for establishing a stable workforce in the tourism industry. Additionally, tapping into the increasing number of retirees seeking supplementary employment in response to rising inflation and higher wages offered by employers presents an opportunity. Moreover, collaborating with Pueblos across New Mexico can help create a more robust pipeline of enthusiastic and engaged talent for the tourism sector.

**3.1.5** Develop opportunities for Taos' youth to learn skills related to culture, heritage, and history, and connect with local businesses/ organizations that offer the opportunity to stay in Taos and engage in the tourism economy, e.g., future tourism guides, public land managers, business owners, and other opportunities for careers in the arts, outdoors, and cultural tourism. For example, consider partnering with The Adobe Alliance to create apprenticeships and training opportunities related to restoring Adobe buildings; similar partnerships can be developed for outdoor recreation opportunities.

**3.1.6** Create and expand business training opportunities for local entrepreneurs and businesses so business owners and managers can learn the latest best practices for recruiting and maintaining a thriving workforce.

#### Partner Organizations

Taos County Chamber of Commerce, University of New Mexico Taos, University of New Mexico—Hub of Internet-based Vocation and Education (HIVE), Taos MainStreet, Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) Foundation, Kit Carson Electric Company, Taos News, The Adobe Alliance, Taos Ski Valley Inc., New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions, Taos Ski Valley Chamber of Commerce, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (once activated), Mark Goldman/Anita Rodriguez, Taos High Flex Fridays Program, Rocky Mountain Youth Corps, Miguel Santistevan, Carlos Arguello, Counselor Ortega

#### Potential Resources

- Business pooling resources through associations
- County and State agencies
- New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions

#### KPIs

- Number of participants in internship and mentorship programs
- Number of individuals completing training or certification programs
- Percentage of youth participants in tourism-related skill-building activities
- Number of youth employed or pursuing careers within the tourism sector or related industries
- Number of businesses participating in training programs
- Funding generated for workforce recruitment, retention and housing by private sector pooling resources together as well as advocating for increase in Lodger's Tax.

#### Related Focus Areas

Workforce housing, sustainable practices.

### Initiative 3.2: Improve employee retention.

Rooted in a commitment to create a stable and thriving tourism workforce, this initiative addresses the multifaceted challenges that contribute to high turnover and instability in the workforce.

This initiative aims to lift employees above the poverty threshold, recognizing the barriers posed by reliance on social services and the fear of losing access to essential benefits. To achieve this, the initiative proposes pooling resources through the Tourism Workforce Development Network to provide access to affordable healthcare for employees of small businesses. Additionally, the scaling up of the Wonder School initiative to offer training and certification for in-home childcare and eldercare businesses can alleviate the burden on working families while creating new opportunities for local residents.

Moreover, this initiative prioritizes the promotion of employee quality of life through minimum wage increases and a focus on succession planning and upward mobility opportunities. It also focuses on an investment in the holistic well-being of tourism employees by increasing access to mental health services.

#### INITIATIVE 3.2 Improve employee retention.

**Implementation Timeline** Years 2–4

##### Objectives

1. Support employee physical and mental health to cultivate a thriving workforce and reduce turnover.
2. Enhance social support services and capacity-building to promote employee mobility and help employees rise above poverty and reluctance to lose access to social services, Medicaid, food assistance, and low-income housing assistance to obtain skilled labor or better job opportunities.

##### Priority Actions

**3.2.1** The workforce recruitment fund, as outlined in Initiative 3.1.2, can serve as a catalyst for securing additional funding aimed at offering industry-level benefits to incentivize employee retention. Another potential funding source could be tax revenue from cannabis, which can be allocated towards enhancing mental health resources and training for marginalized workers. By pooling these resources, industry-wide employee benefits could be provided, including:

- Public transportation
- Access to childcare
- Medical care and mental health services
- Housing options—look to public-private partnership opportunities for housing; see Goal 5: Advocate for workforce housing solutions.
- Local resources for immigration assistance

**3.2.2** Build partnerships that can help to deliver on industry-wide benefits programs. For instance, support the scaling up of Wonder School initiative to provide training/certification to local residents to establish in-home childcare businesses (that do not exist presently) to help working families. And, expand Wonder School initiative to include training/certification for in-home eldercare.

**3.2.3** Invest in employee quality of life through succession planning from within to support local workforce upward mobility.

**3.2.4** Explore a minimum wage requirement for all Taos businesses and encourage the adoption of a competitive livable wage.

##### Partner Organizations

Taos County Chamber of Commerce, Taos Ski Valley Chamber of Commerce, MainStreet, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (once activated), Taos Public Health, The Wonder School, Town of Taos and County of Taos.

**INITIATIVE 3.2 Improve employee retention.****Potential Resources**

- Business pool resources through associations
- County and State agencies
- New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions

**KPIs**

- Increase in employee satisfaction
- Decrease in employee turnover/increase in employee longevity at local businesses
- Increase in health, mental health and other benefits and resources available to the tourism workforce

**Related Focus Areas**

Workforce housing, sustainable practices.



## Goal 4

### Protect and elevate Taos' authentic character.

There's a pervasive sentiment in Taos that public infrastructure, particularly on public lands, prioritizes visitor needs over those of residents. Shifting this narrative by catering to the needs of Taos' diverse communities first will attract visitors seeking authentic, non-extractive, educational experiences and products.

Empowering underrepresented groups, particularly the Hispano and Latino communities, by advocating for their inclusion in leadership positions within the tourism industry, is a top priority of the community. Through targeted efforts to highlight their valuable contributions and provide opportunities for leadership development, we make sure that diverse voices are represented in tourism development decision-making processes.

In response to the pressing need to address gentrification and the unequal distribution of economic benefits from tourism in Taos, New Mexico, the following priority initiatives facilitate the protection and preservation of lands and infrastructure. By convening local stakeholders and prioritizing actions to support historic building restoration, promote land stewardship, and foster the development of micro and small tourism businesses, these initiatives seek to empower communities and promote sustainable economic growth while preserving Taos' cultural and environmental heritage.

Advocacy efforts must be prioritized to prompt changes to local and state laws where needed, ensuring regulatory frameworks align with Taos' preservation goals before it's too late — a crucial lesson learned from similar circumstances.

## Measuring Success

1. Increased numbers of disenfranchised community members participating in educational/mentoring initiatives that empower individuals and communities with the knowledge and skills needed to leverage land stewardship and historic building restoration for economic benefit and environmental preservation.
2. Increased access to funding for the restoration of aging historic buildings and homes will preserve Taos' architectural heritage and enhance residential spaces, mitigating gentrification pressures. Development and implementation of quick-win place-keeping initiatives and events that celebrate local cultures and businesses. In particular, reinvigoration of the Town Plaza for community use is a high priority across communities.
3. Taos residents, particularly youth, realize a deeper sense of place and stewardship of the land and culture by enjoying regional outdoors, scenery, arts, and other opportunities visitors enjoy.
4. These key performance indicators will guide the assessment of the initiatives' impact in addressing gentrification, housing challenges, and the inequitable distribution of economic benefits in Taos while advancing sustainable development and cultural preservation efforts.



## INITIATIVE 4.1: Build coalitions to put into action placekeeping initiatives to counteract gentrification.

Coalition building and advocacy against gentrification represent a proactive strategy in Taos to confront the multifaceted challenges associated with cultural preservation and socio-economic disparities. This initiative seeks to promote diverse representation and collaboration among stakeholders, including government entities, community organizations, and local leaders. Developing and implementing strategies that celebrate and preserve the diverse local cultures and businesses empowers marginalized residents, creates economic opportunities, and fosters inclusivity within the tourism sector. Through initiatives such as quick-win placekeeping efforts, increased engagement with tourism amenities, and the creation of community spaces, Taos aims to address gentrification while promoting inclusion.

### INITIATIVE 4.1 Build coalitions and put into action placekeeping initiatives to counteract gentrification.

**Implementation Timeline** Years 2–4

#### Objectives

1. Encourage diverse representation of voices in decision-making that impacts the tourism economy, culture, and land use.
2. Develop and implement quick-win placekeeping initiatives that celebrate local cultures and businesses.
3. Create opportunities for marginalized residents to benefit economically from the tourism industry.
4. Increase participation, especially among the youth, in tourism amenities such as outdoor recreation, arts/culture, and events.

#### Priority Actions

- 4.1.1** Create a community-led Placekeeping Action Team that forms part of the Destination Stewardship Network (see Initiative 9.1) with representation from the Town, County, Main Street, civic, land use and agricultural organizations, and community leaders to develop and implement projects that celebrate and preserve local cultures and land.
- 4.1.2** Increase the number and diversity of community members on political, civic and community nonprofit boards by creating a bilingual directory of local non-profit and civic board opportunities and providing free board member training to people interested in pursuing those opportunities. Expand on existing resources identified by Taos Community Foundation. This database ideally becomes a one-stop resource for funding opportunities. (Example: <https://www.trpc.org/343/Grant-Sources>). Expand this database over time to include mentoring opportunities, education, and funding for local youth to access local recreation and art assets, experiences, and amenities.
- Include volunteer, mentoring, internship, and job opportunities.
- 4.1.3** Identify, prioritize, and work with Town/County/and Private landowners to coordinate the development, funding, and implementation of placekeeping initiatives that:
- Improve existing and create new community spaces and park infrastructure that promote local commerce (arts, clothes, food), events, meal programs, and educational opportunities. The community spaces should also serve as hubs for multicultural education and facilitate ongoing exchanges and learning opportunities between the Pueblo and Hispanic/Latino communities by creating shared spaces or venues that support cultural preservation and celebrate culture and heritage.
  - Create or restore old schools and spaces into community centers in outlying communities (Questa, Amalia, Arroyo Hondo, Arroyo Seco, Ranchitos, Llano).
  - Explore opportunities for a community “Maker Space,” especially for youth, to learn from local artists and tradespeople.
  - Support existing and create new events that bring communities (including youth) together to revive and celebrate the diverse local cultures, history, ranching and farming traditions, local cuisine, music, performing, and traditional arts. This action is closely aligned to actions outlined in Initiative 2.2 and should be considered in conjunction with them.

**INITIATIVE 4.1 Build coalitions and put into action placekeeping initiatives to counteract gentrification.****Priority Actions**

- 4.1.4** Engage local communities, realtors and businesses to preserve and promote local history, stories, and culture. This action is closely aligned with actions outlined in Initiatives 1.2 and 1.3 and should be considered in conjunction with them.
- Create a Taos community asset map that highlights existing and neglected cultural assets. This action should be completed through Taos County's "Cultural and Outdoor Asset Mapping Study for Equitable and Sustainable Development" that commenced in 2024.
  - Design and implement a "Local Treasures" program to formally preserve Taos' cultural, environmental, and community sites.
  - Collect local history and stories through a StoryCorps storytelling project; invite elders to share their stories and youth to assist in the collection of stories.
  - Partner with University of New Mexico Taos to create educational material to share with visitors, including second homeowners, that highlights local assets and stories, and how visitors can respectfully interact and engage with the community, culture, and land; share with businesses, realtors, hotels, Airbnb, and tour operators so they can share with visitors.
  - Provide talking points on history and local culture for businesses to share with guests.
  - Create an incentive program for local businesses that encourages and rewards them for actively engaging in promoting and preserving Taos' history and culture.
  - Develop an ongoing program of regional local discounts for tourism-specific businesses and experiences.
- 4.1.5.** Expand the database to support and promote non-profit, civic, and school programs encouraging outdoor recreation through equitable access to public lands and the associated recreational infrastructure. Address transportation challenges for marginalized communities to access recreation.
- 4.1.6** Revive the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce to create a centralized voice for the Hispanic/Latino entrepreneur and business community.

**Partner Organizations**

Taos Main Street, Town of Taos, Taos County, 100% Taos County, HIVE, Taos Pueblo, Chambers of Commerce University of New Mexico Taos, Cultural Affairs Office, Department of Workforce Services, Taos Pueblo Collective, Taos Arts Council, Taos Community Foundation, Friends of Rio Grande del Norte NM, Taos Ski Valley Inc., outfitters and guides, Kit Carson Electric Cooperative, Carson National Forest, US Bureau of Land Management, Taos Housing Partnership

*Volunteer/Mentoring/Youth Opportunities:*

Taos High School Flex Fridays Program, Workforce Solutions Youth Internship Program, Veterans OffGrid, Taos Youth and Family, Charles Romero Snowsports Program, Big Brothers Big Sisters, YMCA, Rocky Mountain Youth Corps, Taos Rivers and Birds, Heritage Inspirations, Enchanted Circle Fire Association

**Potential Resources**

## Funding

- Lodger's Tax
- 2016 Native American Act tourism funding
- [National Resources for Native Businesses](#)—Department of the Interior Indian Affairs
- [Office of Indian Economic Development](#)
- LOR Foundation
- Federal environmental justice groups

## Additional Resources

- Taos County's "Cultural and Outdoor Asset Mapping Study for Equitable and Sustainable Development" project
- Strong at Heart

**INITIATIVE 4.1 Build coalitions and put into action placekeeping initiatives to counteract gentrification.****KPIs**

- Number of projects adopted and implemented by the action team
- Number of local markets held and growth of attendance
- Number of participants and educators using the Maker Space
- Number of action team meetings held
- Percentage partner attendance and frequency of participation in the action team
- Number of projects adopted and implemented by the action team
- Number of cultural, environmental, and community sites formally preserved through the “Local Treasures” program
- Number of stories collected through the StoryCorps storytelling project

**Related Focus Areas**

Stewardship communications, equity and inclusion, workforce stability, collaborative management.



**INITIATIVE 4.2: Identify and advocate for regulatory changes to protect historical assets.**

Advocating for regulatory changes requires both time and effective efforts. It's crucial to prioritize regulations that are most feasible to change and hold the highest potential for meaningful impact. Additionally, while regulatory measures are important, exploring non-regulatory initiatives is also essential for a comprehensive approach to safeguarding historical assets. These initiatives can complement regulatory efforts and enhance overall preservation efforts.

**INITIATIVE 4.2 Identify and advocate for regulatory changes to protect historical assets.**

**Implementation Timeline** Years 2–5

**Objective**

1. Cultural land preservation is increased by mitigating the impact of escalating property values on housing affordability and farmland, thereby preventing the displacement of long-standing residents.

**Priority Actions**

- 4.2.1** Coalition Building and Advocacy: Utilize the Plackeeping and/or Housing Advocacy Action Teams (with representation from the Town and County, existing civic, land use, and agricultural organizations) to advocate for new regulations and access to financing for protection and the preservation of lands and infrastructure.
- Solicit stakeholder input through a structured community engagement process prior to implementation.
- 4.2.2** Work with the Town Council and County Elected officials to recognize the threat of gentrification and ratify an agreement of intent to address gentrification by all legal means.
- 4.2.3** Create an action plan to present to regulatory bodies by identifying, determining the legality, and prioritizing potential regulations and policy changes. Some examples:
- Enact a real estate sales tax on new home sales to fund community programs such as affordable housing initiatives, community infrastructure and social services.
  - Create tiered property taxes or fees for second homeowners and non-resident landowners to create additional revenue to invest in affordable housing and address gentrification issues.
  - Implement Inclusionary Zoning to require new developments to provide a percentage of workforce/affordable housing ownership and rental opportunities for public service workers such as social workers, firefighters, and teachers (see below).
  - Create and enforce building codes that require new business construction to align with the historical aesthetics of Taos.
  - Pass regulations that minimize the negative impact and maximize the benefits of short-term vacation rentals for local homeowners such as creating ordinances requiring local ownership of STRs and tax incentives for renting long-term.
  - Loosen regulations for RV and mobile homes on private property.

**Partner Organizations**

Town and County Elected officials and legal teams, Taos County Association of Realtors, Taos Land Trust

**INITIATIVE 4.2 Identify and advocate for regulatory changes to protect historical assets.****Potential Resources**

- Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- Federal environmental justice groups such as [EPA Environmental Justice Community Grants](#)
- Mark Goldman (Adobe architecture—restore and/or build adobe structures)

**KPIs**

- Number of policies adopted and enacted by the regulatory bodies.
- Number of new land-based tourism product and services businesses
- Dollars granted for restoring buildings and aging infrastructure
- Acreage of land preserved through initiatives promoting land stewardship

**Related Focus Areas**

Inclusion and equity, protect authenticity, collaborative management



### INITIATIVE 4.3: Secure financing for the preservation of lands and infrastructure threatened by gentrification.

Access to finance is tightly linked to regulatory frameworks. Strengthening regulations and improving financial access are pivotal for preserving Taos' historical assets and addressing economic disparities sustainably.

#### INITIATIVE 4.3: Secure financing for the preservation of lands and infrastructure threatened by gentrification.

**Implementation Timeline** Years 2–5

#### Objective

1. Secure sustainable funding to preserve lands and infrastructure at risk from gentrification.

#### Priority Actions:

- 4.3.1 The community-led Placekeeping Action Team (see Initiative 4.1) should focus on current and future funding opportunities for placekeeping projects outlined in Initiative 4.2. Funding sources could include the Real Estate industry, National Endowment for the Arts, New Mexico Department of Tourism Infrastructure Grants.
- 4.3.2 Placekeeping Action Team should advocate for the enhancement of community grant programs to support access to low-interest capital for restoring aging historic buildings and homes to provide residential spaces for current residents.
- \*NOTE: This currently exists to some extent through various land trusts and cultural restoration grant programs listed below, but is not collaborative or spearheaded by any government agency or a destination management organization.
- 4.3.3 Create educational programs and mentoring opportunities around ways of leveraging land/land stewardship to keep land in agriculture such as land trusts, agritourism, local food production. See Initiatives 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3.

#### Partner Organizations

Taos Valley Acequia Association, Alianza Agri-Cultura de Taos, Kit Carson Electric Coop, County Extension Office, Cultural Affairs Office, North Central Regional Transit District.

#### Potential Resources

- Funding
- Taos Land Trust and other state/federal land grant organizations,
- Federal environmental justice groups
- American Farmland Trust
- Taos Housing Partnership
- Centinel Bank of Taos
- USDA, HUD
- Native American Agriculture Fund
- Real Estate sales (likely requires legislation)
- New Mexico Finance Authority
- New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs
- New Mexico True Destination Forward Grants
- New Mexico Department of Tourism
- New Mexico Economic Development Department

#### Additional Resources

- Taos County Community Conservation Plan
- American Farmland Trust (will come do presentations)
- El Salto Water Association (originally La Merced Land Grant)
- De la Tierra a la Cosecha Group
- Rio Fernando de Taos Revitalization Collaborative

#### KPIs

- Number of people participating in educational/mentoring opportunities
- Number of new land-based tourism product and services businesses
- Dollars granted for restoring buildings and aging infrastructure
- Acreage of land preserved through initiatives promoting land stewardship

#### Related Focus Areas

Inclusion and equity, protect authenticity, collaborative management

## Goal 5

### Advocate for workforce housing solutions.

In Taos, the concept of home deeply resonates within its diverse communities. The rich culture, combined with a vibrant creative atmosphere and iconic adobe architecture, epitomize Taos' identity. Its soaring mountains, along with unparalleled outdoor spaces and recreational activities, attract visitors and second-home buyers alike. In recent years, a rise in second-home ownership and the conversion of housing into short-term rentals have considerably reduced the availability of housing units. An influx of out-of-state buyers has led to a sharp increase in housing prices, creating one of the state's most severe disparities between incomes and housing costs. While the Town of Taos' Airbnb permitting policy and Short-Term Rental (STR) ordinance aim to regulate the market, Taos continues to face challenges in curbing non-resident ownership, particularly at the county level. Despite the town's STR ordinance aimed at regulating development in key districts and imposing necessary taxes and fees to support affordable housing, the demand for housing far exceeds supply, with a 67% shortfall in affordable housing in Taos County and over 40% of renters spending more than 30% of their income on housing costs.

Taos is experiencing a labor shortage across many industries, particularly in tourism and hospitality, exacerbated by the pandemic. Despite tourism being a significant economic driver and job creator, tourism opportunities are often seasonal and low-wage. In Taos, the average cost of living for a single adult in 2020 was \$34,051, and the average income was \$36,758, underscoring the need for more affordable workforce housing. Meanwhile, home prices have soared, with the median home price increasing from \$245,000 in 2014 to \$364,000 in 2020, and Redfin listings showing a median price jump from \$499,000 in March 2021 to \$701,000 by December 2023. Nearly 45% of cost-burdened households who rent are paying unaffordable housing costs, and this issue affects 20% of homeowners as well. Despite local employers increasing hourly wages to attract staff, finding enough workers continues to be challenging.

The vibrancy and sustainability of Taos' tourism sector depends on the availability of affordable housing for both seasonal and

permanent workers. However, aligning housing availability with tourist demand is increasingly difficult, particularly due to a rise in second-home ownership that intensifies the lack of affordable options. This scarcity not only strains the tourism workforce but also degrades service quality and visitor experiences. Recognizing these challenges, the Town of Taos developed its 2020 Affordable Housing Plan which outlines objectives to support the workforce essential to the tourism industry, objectives which the Taos DSP endorses and seeks to promote and support, especially:

- Developing moderately-priced housing and workforce rentals priced between 60% and 120% Area Median Income (AMI).
- Encouraging the provision of development incentives for private sector projects committed to long-term affordability.
- Implementing a real estate transfer tax on high-price sales, with proceeds funneled into the Town of Taos Affordable Housing Trust Fund, to alleviate the housing crisis.
- Limiting the number of vacation rentals within the town to preserve housing stock for local residents and the tourism workforce.

To achieve these and other goals set forth in the Affordable Housing Plan, the town and county have established the Taos Housing Partnership. This organization aims to improve housing accessibility and affordability, shape housing policy, and initially concentrate on below-market rentals. The Taos DSP is committed to backing, advocating for, and reinforcing these initiatives, which include strategies for below-market development, homebuyer counseling and education, mortgage assistance programs, preservation, policy education and advocacy, and community education, outreach, and innovation.

During the Taos DSP planning process, a series of stakeholder engagement meetings and workshops led to the identification of several priority initiatives. These initiatives, outlined below, seek to amplify and support existing community efforts through targeted advocacy, enhanced access to resources and information for the tourism workforce, and promotion of a cooperative strategy to expand the availability of Employer-Assisted Housing (EAH) options offered by tourism businesses.

## Measuring Success

1. Increase in the tourism workforce's access to affordable housing units, reflecting successful advocacy and policy change. The tourism workforce will demonstrate an increase in occupancy of innovative and alternative housing solutions, such as Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs).
2. Quantifiable growth in the use of housing resources and funding by the tourism workforce, indicating improved understanding and access fostered by the initiative.
3. Policy changes are reflected in the number of full-time residents able to supplement their income through permitted short-term rentals without impacting long-term housing availability.
4. The successful establishment of Employer-Assisted Housing Programs across businesses, as evidenced by the number of tourism workers assisted, and an increase in employer participation in housing solutions, measured by the distribution of educational materials and the number of employer-led housing options created.
5. The conversion of underutilized properties into affordable housing units, tracked through the number of projects initiated and completed.

### **INITIATIVE 5.1: Advocate for policies that improve workforce housing access, diversity, and affordability, aligning with ongoing efforts.**

Advocacy to create a more enabling environment for affordable housing in Taos also depends on a tourism workforce population that is empowered and equipped with the knowledge and resources to access housing. A communications campaign, stemming from the Destination Stewardship Network but trickling down through multiple sectors in the tourism industry, will be critical to garnering support for the collective, creating meaningful change in advocacy forums, and working towards policies that reflect the needs of the workforce.

This initiative emphasizes collective action, enhancing the efforts of the Taos Housing Partnership and aligning with the goals of both the 2020 Affordable Housing Plan and the housing initiatives in Taos' Comprehensive Plan. The immediate advocacy focus should be on short-term rental ordinances, aiding the action team (as detailed in priority action 5.1.1) in achieving advocacy success at the local level initially. Additionally, a communications campaign initiated by the Destination Stewardship Network, extending across the tourism sector, is vital for building support for collective efforts, influencing advocacy forums, and shaping policies to meet workforce needs.

#### **INITIATIVE 5.1 Advocate for policies that improve workforce housing access, diversity, and affordability, aligning with ongoing efforts.**

**Implementation Timeline** Years 2-6

##### **Objectives**

1. Promote understanding and access among the tourism workforce to housing resources, market insights, and available funding, ensuring they are well-informed to make housing decisions.
2. Restrict non-resident ownership of short-term rentals through improved policies, balancing the need for community housing with the opportunities for residents to earn secondary income.
3. Employer-led workforce housing empowerment through education and resources that improve access to housing and financing options.

##### **Priority Actions**

**5.1.1** Form a Housing Advocacy Action Team as part of the Destination Stewardship Network (See Initiative 9.1) that is focused on supporting the Taos Housing Partnership's efforts to address workforce housing issues and identify opportunities for improvement and advocacy. The Housing Advocacy Action Team should aim to particularly mobilize tourism businesses/employers to participate in the action team and engage deeply on advocacy-related actions.

**INITIATIVE 5.1** Advocate for policies that improve workforce housing access, diversity, and affordability, aligning with ongoing efforts.

**5.1.2** Through the Housing Advocacy Action Team, and in conjunction with the Taos Housing Partnership, investigate short-term rental (STR) policies from other communities and consequences of these policies to develop ordinances that work for Taos and in turn, recommend the adoption of language in the current town, and future county, (STR) ordinances that address non-resident ownership of STRs and support a more diversified ownership by full-time residents.

- Advocate for language within the STR ordinances that allow for short-term rentals of ADUs/casitas.

Work with town and county officials to evaluate potential loopholes in current STR ordinances, using language that does not make it more difficult for middle and low-income residents to access permits for short-term rentals.

**5.1.3** Work with the Housing Advocacy Action Team to create alignment between community, housing advocacy leaders, and officials on the Land Use Development Code (LUDC) update, and encourage a fast-tracking of the code to support more diversified housing for the tourism workforce.

- Encourage the adoption of alternative and diversified housing types in the LUDC update, particularly those that create income opportunities amongst local landowners and full-time residents. Low-hanging fruit for the LUDC include the development of both short and long-term rentals as ADUs, alternative buildings/material designs, land trusts to develop new starter homes, workforce rentals, as well as other rental developments that would alleviate low-income families burdened by housing costs.
- In line with the Taos Downtown Metropolitan Redevelopment Area (MRA) Plan, pursue opportunities to fast-track the LUDC to support infill and mixed use development on vacant parcels, and collectively identify strategies to ensure that workforce housing can be included in these updates.
- Involve tourism businesses in the action team so that needs of the workforce are effectively communicated between Destination Stewardship Network (See Initiative 9.1), Taos Housing Partnership, and town and county officials responsible for updating the LUDC.

**5.1.4** Leverage the networks of the members of the Housing Advocacy Action Team to organize regular forums for dialogue with real estate agents and developers, exploring opportunities for incorporating affordable housing units into new development projects.

**5.1.5** Leverage the strength of the Housing Advocacy Action Team to support the Taos Housing Partnership's rental development goals outlined in their three-year housing roadmap, particularly by strengthening and supporting advocacy for state-level policy initiatives that would allow initiation of workforce housing projects (rental projects for those at 60-80% AMI).

**5.1.6** Launch a Taos workforce housing education campaign with the action team that facilitates better access to funding/lending and housing options in the county for the tourism workforce.

- Engage tourism business owners, both large businesses and small operators, in the dissemination of information and resources to their employees.
- Provide employers with digital and physical resources to share with employees, providing information on buying homes, accessing local lenders and on low-income housing tax credits..
- Partner with local banks and lenders to discuss potential discounts or programs to finance tourism workforce housing.
- Provide training to local landowners on how-to and the benefits of developing housing/ADUs on their properties that support seasonal and full-time renters in the tourism workforce.
- Launch an informational campaign aimed at new property owners and 2nd home owners on the impacts of home ownership, short-term rentals, and playing their part in creating a more equitable housing market in Taos.

**INITIATIVE 5.1** Advocate for policies that improve workforce housing access, diversity, and affordability, aligning with ongoing efforts.

**Partner Organizations**

- Taos Housing Partnership
- Local Government Housing Authorities
- New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority
- Taos County Chamber of Commerce
- Real Estate Developers and Associations
- Affordable Housing Advocacy Groups
- Local Business Coalitions
- Financial Institutions and Credit Unions
- Taos Land Trust
- LOR Foundation
- Taos Pueblo Housing Authority
- State Housing Agencies
- North Central Regional Transit District
- North Central New Mexico Economic Development District

**Potential Resources**

- Local and State Government Grants
- Private-Activity Bonds
- Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC)
- Employer Contributions and Investment Funds
- Non-Profit Housing Development Funds
- Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs)
- Philanthropic Foundations
- Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Programs
- Public-Private Partnership Investments
- USDA's Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program

**KPIs**

- Number of policy improvements proposed/adopted that enhance housing for the tourism workforce
- Percentage increase in tourism workforce understanding of housing resources and funding
- Number of full-time residents trained to utilize their property for secondary income through STRs
- Reduction in the number of non-resident owned STR properties at town and county level
- Volume of tourism employers participating in housing solutions and educational programs

**Related Focus Areas**

Inclusion and equity; workforce stability; protect authenticity; sustainable mobility; collaborative management

## INITIATIVE 5.2: Increase affordable housing options for middle- and low-income residents to support the community and a thriving tourism workforce.

This initiative focuses on addressing the urgent housing requirements of Taos' expanding tourism workforce by promoting widespread employer-assisted housing and pioneering housing solutions. It aims to unite the efforts of local employers, housing developers, and community groups to increase affordable housing for middle- and low-income individuals, thereby benefiting the community and the critical tourism sector. At the heart of this effort are structured Employer-Assisted Housing Programs (EAH) and innovative approaches to repurpose local resources and properties, enhancing housing availability and creating a welcoming environment for tourism employees. By leveraging employer financial contributions, transforming underused properties, and initiating inventive projects like Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), the initiative seeks to significantly improve housing access for the core of Taos' tourism workforce, demonstrating a dedication to fostering a vibrant, sustainable tourism industry supported by adequate housing.

### INITIATIVE 5.2 Increase affordable housing options for middle- and low-income residents to support the community and a thriving tourism workforce.

**Implementation Timeline** Years 2-8

#### Objectives

1. Develop a pool of financial resources for housing projects with local employers.
2. Improve tourism workforce access to housing through employer support.
3. Implement creative housing strategies that utilize existing local resources and properties to expand the housing stock for low to medium-income residents.

#### Priority Actions

- 5.2.1** Develop a structured Employer-Assisted Housing Program (EAH) for the region in partnership with tourism businesses who commit to individually and collectively provide support, housing, and resources for workers seeking housing.
- Create a mechanism and framework within the EAH Initiative for employers to provide financial/rental assistance to their employees, while also leveraging the collective pool to support tourism workers broadly.
  - Promote matched savings by employers and employees to help purchase a home.
  - Conduct research and if feasible, implement EAH initiative to create a fund or loan program to finance the construction of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) with the requirement that they be used for workforce/affordable housing for a set period of time.
- 5.2.2** Develop a local incentive or trust fund, in collaboration with tourism businesses, for converting underutilized properties into affordable housing units, focusing on long-term rentals and workforce housing.
- With support from the business community, research opportunities to purchase, remodel and provide affordable housing in some of the buildings not currently in use (old hotels for example).
  - Work with stakeholder groups involved in construction and skilled trades to identify and remove barriers to the construction of workforce housing and identify avenues to reduce construction related costs.

#### Partner Organizations

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taos Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>• Taos Ski Valley Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>• Questa Economic Development Fund</li> <li>• Taos County Economic Development Corporation</li> <li>• New Mexico Economic Development Department</li> <li>• Taos Ski Valley Inc.</li> <li>• Housing Development Corporations</li> <li>• Construction and Skilled Trades Networks</li> <li>• Community Land Trusts</li> <li>• Housing and Urban Development Agencies</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Financial Institutions and Banks</li> <li>• Taos Land Trust</li> <li>• LOR Foundation</li> <li>• Workforce Integration Network Groups</li> <li>• Regional Planning Commissions</li> <li>• Town of Taos</li> <li>• Taos Housing Partnership</li> <li>• Taos Pueblo Housing Authority</li> <li>• State of New Mexico (State Land Offices)</li> <li>• Real Estate Groups and Associations</li> <li>• Metropolitan Downtown Redevelopment Area (MRA) Plan</li> <li>• Acequia Community / Mayordomos</li> </ul> |
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**INITIATIVE 5.2 Increase affordable housing options for middle- and low-income residents to support the community and a thriving tourism workforce.**

**Potential Resources**

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employer-Assisted Housing Program Funds</li> <li>• State and Federal Housing Grants</li> <li>• Investment from Local Businesses</li> <li>• Low-Interest Loan Programs</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crowdfunding and Community Shares</li> <li>• In-kind Support from Construction Trades</li> <li>• Tax Incentives for Housing Development</li> <li>• Land Donations for Housing Projects</li> <li>• Conversion Grants for Underutilized Properties</li> </ul> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

**KPIs**

- Number of affordable housing units created through EAH Programs
- Amount of funding raised through local incentive programs for housing conversion
- Number of properties converted into affordable housing units
- Percentage reduction in housing cost burden for middle and low-income tourism workers
- Increase in the number of tourism employees accessing housing through the EAH Program

**Related Focus Areas**

Inclusion and equity, workforce stability, protect authenticity, sustainable mobility, collaborative management



## Goal 6

### Promote sustainable mobility for residents and visitors

Today, Taos' infrastructural landscape is marked by a patchwork of aging thoroughfares and evolving community spaces, collectively telling a story of a community in flux. Current projects—highlighted by Kit Carson Electric Cooperative's robust partnership with Taos County to expand broadband and non-carbon energy sources, the state Department of Transportation's (DOT's) rework of Highway 68, and Taos Pueblo's partnership with Enchanted Circle Trail Association to develop a multi-use path bridging Arroyo Seco and El Hondo—demonstrate progress towards infrastructure that prioritizes community needs before visitor needs.

The community stands at the crossroads of tradition and transformation, where its cultural heritage and modern economic development needs meet head on. The town's historic downtown area and its linkages to surrounding communities present both challenges and opportunities in the pursuit of more multi-modal, sustainable mobility options. In this pursuit of progress and in addressing challenges, the Taos DSP aims to address tourism-related infrastructure challenges by fostering multi-sector stakeholder collaboration, without duplicating existing efforts. Notably Taos' Comprehensive Plan and the Downtown Metropolitan Redevelopment Area (MRA) Plan lay the foundation for the infrastructure initiatives described in the Taos DSP, offering a unified vision for Taos' future.

These plans set forth a framework congruent with the Taos DSP's aim to enhance cultural placekeeping and strengthen community spaces. Focused on revitalizing key areas such as the downtown plaza, they underpin efforts to create pedestrian-friendly zones, integrate traditional building practices into modern infrastructure, and promote economic vitality through community-first redevelopment. By providing comprehensive guidelines for growth and preservation, these plans support the initiatives aimed at creating a connected, vibrant, and culturally rich Taos that

honors its past while innovatively building towards its future. In Taos' majestic landscapes, pedestrian and cycling trails are vital, offering visitors a connection to nature and enabling residents to steward their lands. Trails like those envisioned in the Enchanted Circle Trails Plan (ECTP) by the Enchanted Circle Trail Association, or in the Taos Bicycle Master Plan, are essential for future community infrastructure and tourism. In Carson National, while systems trails exist, many trails are unplanned - meaning they remain unsigned, unmaintained, and without advertisement. Projects such as the Talpa Ridge Area Trail conceptual proposal (in the 2017 ECTP Plan), highlight the importance of community consensus. The conceptual trail has fostered intense debate between different trail users, community members, and adjacent neighbors, revealing the complexities of balancing recreational use with environmental conservation, easements, and cultural preservation. As the Taos DSP aims to promote a more sustainable multimodal infrastructure, the community's endorsement and collective benefit remain essential.

Growth in visitation has resulted in a congested transit system heavily reliant on vehicles, which discourages walking and isolates communities—from the town to the ski valley, between neighboring communities, and even from Santa Fe to Taos. The Taos DSP prioritizes alternative modes of transportation and aims to foster a sense of ownership and inclusion among Taos' residents, particularly promoting local use of public spaces, natural areas, and recreational assets.



## Measuring Success

1. As evidenced by established metrics, a significant increase in the use of non-motorized trails by residents reflects the effective enhancement and community-driven promotion of an interconnected network. This is complemented by improved walkability and bikeability across Taos, making the town more accessible and enjoyable for both walking and cycling.
2. Active community and stakeholder engagement in trail planning, feedback sessions, and related events and a measurable rise in resident participation in placekeeping projects. These efforts underline a deepening connection to Taos' cultural core and an enhanced public understanding of the town's redevelopment and placekeeping initiatives.
3. The advancement of preservation efforts that celebrate Taos' cultural diversity, witnessed through the growth of spaces that integrate modern needs with traditional values. This includes the establishment of community-first spaces, highlighting a shift towards more inclusive and culturally rich public areas supported by both residents and visitors.
4. Increased use of public transportation by both residents and visitors, indicating a move away from vehicle dependency towards more sustainable transit options. This includes a greater number of public transportation and shuttle service routes, enhancing connectivity between downtown, local communities, and key tourism destinations.
5. Improved resident accessibility and affordability to engage in local dining, outdoor recreation, and tourism experiences. A broader sense of community ownership and pride in local assets, demonstrating the success of initiatives aimed at integrating community needs with tourism development.



## INITIATIVE 6.1: Enhance active transportation, trail, and mobility infrastructure.

In Taos, the landscape is etched with trails that should serve as vital connectors of communities, history, and culture. However, the growth of tourism has fostered a sentiment that trails and the outdoors in Taos have been designed for visitors, and have not been planned with sufficient regard for resident's needs. The Enchanted Circle Trails Association has been at the forefront of efforts to expand and improve trails in Taos, and has made strides in working towards a cohesive system that enhances recreational opportunities and access. Their work, alongside other community efforts, reflect a commitment to nurturing outdoor spaces that encourage healthy lifestyles and environmental stewardship. As the community has grown and strains on Taos' vehicle-dependent infrastructure have increased, the need for expanded, improved, and more accessible multimodal mobility has become clear.

One focal point of community dialogue and planning has been the Talpa Ridge area conceptual trail, where the community has voiced strong opinions about the value and impacts of trail-based recreation. That's why, it is essential to ensure future mobility efforts are centered on community needs and involve all of Taos' communities in the trail planning, development, and stewardship process. With trails that run through Taos' sacred lands and alongside precious natural resources, multi-modal mobility and infrastructure improvement must prioritize community connectedness, and balance recreational use with environmental conservation and cultural preservation. This approach, looking at the Talpa Ridge Trail as a case study, stands as a testament to the passionate interest of Taos' residents in the future of their outdoor spaces, illustrating both the challenges and opportunities in expanding the trail network. The following priority initiatives aim to address the aspirations and concerns of the Taos community, enhancing non-motorized mobility infrastructure in a way that honors the land and its people. The actions proposed seek to address these challenges head-on, fostering a more connected, accessible, and culturally rich trail system. By supporting the Enchanted Circle Trails Association's efforts, improving trail interconnectivity, and ensuring community voices are heard in the development process, Taos can look forward to a future where its trails are not only pathways through nature but also bridges between the past and the future.

### INITIATIVE 6.1 Enhance active transportation, trail, and mobility infrastructure.

**Implementation Timeline** Years 2-5

#### Objectives

1. Promote the development of an extensive network of non-motorized trails that link Taos' downtown to surrounding communities and natural landscapes.
2. Improve walkability and bikeability in Taos to promote healthy lifestyles, foster better use of community spaces, and decrease congestion.
3. Integrate cultural, agricultural, and historical narratives into the trail experience to enhance cultural appreciation and education.
4. Foster community engagement in the planning and continuous improvement of non-motorized transportation paths.

#### Priority Actions

- 6.1.1** Support the Enchanted Circle Trails Association and civil society's efforts to improve trail interconnectivity, while also supporting a continuous dialogue and feedback loop for residents on trail improvements. This action recognizes existing and past dialogue forums for trail development, and seeks to build upon those with facilitation support from the Destination Stewardship Network (see Initiative 9.1). Dialogue between community members, public land managers, private landowners, and trail project leaders will be crucial to ensure that trail infrastructure, easements, and access meet community needs and respect the land.
- Effectively engage the community in trail planning and development to promote equitable access to the outdoors.
  - Link community-centered trail development with the development of agritourism products highlighted in the Taos DSP. See Initiative 2.1 for more details.

**INITIATIVE 6.1 Enhance active transportation, trail, and mobility infrastructure.**

**6.1.2** Initiate comprehensive mapping of Taos' existing non-motorized trails and those in planning, develop digital guides to the trails and implement a communications strategy through the Destination Stewardship Network to distribute trail information to residents.

- Engage community members in identifying preferred routes and potential routes.
- Crowd source trail routes to support map content development.
- Highlight community-linking routes to encourage use, for example highlight the NM150 trail development for residents of El Prado and Arroyo Seco.

Update popular map/routing options (i.e., Google Maps, Waze etc) with existing and new bike paths, trails, and sidewalks to direct users toward them.

**6.1.3** Establish clear and accessible pedestrian zones and bicycle boulevards in high-traffic areas, including a pilot project on Bent Street. These pedestrian zones can provide spaces for youth, Hispanic and arts communities to sell their art, food or showcase culture, and enjoy a communal space without motorized vehicles in the downtown.

- In Taos' downtown area, pursue these efforts in line with the Downtown Metropolitan Area Redevelopment (MRA) Plan's strategies to develop flexible/festival street areas.

**6.1.4** Launch a public education campaign to increase resident usage and knowledge of trail systems and pedestrian zones.

- Ensure resident involvement in the development of signage and interpretive information along trails, creating buy-in and a sense of community ownership over trails. Signage - both wayfinding and interpretive - should incorporate ideas, historical context, and cultural information from Taos' many diverse communities, which will tie its non-motorized infrastructure to the stewards of the land. Interpretive and storytelling components can be incorporated into the Downtown Taos Wayfinding Plan - strengthening existing wayfinding frameworks.
- Ensure road/trail designs consider all users, including those with disabilities.
- Identify opportunities to work with local artists and incorporate their creativity into interpretive / cultural signage.

**6.1.5** With Town and County officials, advocate for codified funding for trails and alternative transportation solutions, with a certain percentage of allocation from new construction permits and road developments to be designated to sustainable, non-motorized infrastructure.

- Advocate for bike lanes and safe pedestrian walkways in planning for road construction and reconstruction projects.

**6.1.6** Explore models for a mobility manager, within an existing public sector department or through civil society, to liaise with communities to gather input, support fundraising for trail developments, and implement initiatives with town and county officials that make Taos a more bikeable/walkable community.

**6.1.7** Install secure bicycle parking in strategic locations in town, near trailheads, and in connecting communities to encourage adoption of alternative transportation.

- Work with the community to determine high-use areas and user needs for station placement.
- Seek sponsorships from local businesses for funding.

**6.1.8** Support communication and implementation of Taos' Comprehensive Plan and Metropolitan Redevelopment Plan, particularly in advances in bikeability and walkability.

**Partner Organizations**

Enchanted Circle Trails Association, Taos MainStreet, Carson National Forest, US Bureau of Land Management, Town of Taos Marketing Committee, Town of Taos, Taos County, Destination Stewardship Network, Taos Arts Council, Taos Community Foundation, Taos Housing Partnership, Taos Land Trust, New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT), North Central Regional Transit District, Kit Carson Electric Coop, Local schools, Amigos Bravos, Taos Pueblo, Acequia Community and Mayordomos, residents.

**INITIATIVE 6.1 Enhance active transportation, trail, and mobility infrastructure.****Potential Resources**

- Town of Taos Infrastructure Capital Improvements Plan (ICIP)
- Comprehensive Plan of Taos
- Metropolitan Redevelopment Plan
- Technical support from urban planning and trail design experts
- State and federal funding for transportation and recreation projects
- Volunteer support for trails

**KPIs**

- Number of miles of new trails developed and existing trails improved
- Increase in trail usage by residents measured through surveys or trail counters
- Number of community engagement events on bikeable boulevards/pedestrian-only zones held and participation rates in those events
- Completion of pedestrian zone pilot projects and measured impact the pilots have on local traffic and business activity
- Increase in public knowledge about non-motorized trails and infrastructure, assessed through pre- and post-campaign surveys
- Creation of digital guides and physical maps and their distribution metrics
- Feedback from the community on the improvements and overall satisfaction with the non-motorized infrastructure

**Related Focus Areas**

Stewardship communications, inclusion & equity, protect authenticity, workforce housing, sustainable practices, monitoring and reporting, collaborative management



## INITIATIVE 6.2: Advance cultural placekeeping and community-first spaces.

The initiative to advance cultural placekeeping and emphasize community-first spaces is a strategic effort in Taos to weave the area's rich historical heritage into its contemporary social fabric.

Focused on the holistic well-being of its residents, initiative 6.2 prioritizes the revitalization of the plaza and downtown areas as hubs of local activity and cultural exchange. It encourages an increased understanding and active engagement among both residents and visitors regarding ongoing placekeeping efforts, with an emphasis on educational outreach and historical preservation stemming from the Comprehensive Plan and Metropolitan Redevelopment Plan.

With objectives spanning from the celebration of Taos' cultural mosaic to the enhancement of traditional yet functional communal structures, the initiative sets the stage for a future where development is conscious of its past and where modern amenities are integrated with time-honored practices. Measurable success will be seen through the vibrancy of community participation, the safeguarding of diverse heritages, and the creation of spaces that prioritize local needs and historical authenticity.

<b>INITIATIVE 6.2 Advance cultural placekeeping and community-first spaces.</b>	
<b>Implementation Timeline</b>	Years 2-10
<b>Objectives</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increased use of the plaza and downtown area as cultural hubs and gathering spaces for Taos' residents.</li> <li>2. Boost awareness and education among residents and visitors regarding Taos' efforts in placekeeping and redevelopment, especially those outlined in the Comprehensive and Metropolitan redevelopment plans.</li> <li>3. Preserve the histories of Taos' diverse communities and its rich collective heritage.</li> <li>4. Maintain a dialogue about development of structures and spaces that offer modern conveniences but are rooted in traditional building practices.</li> </ol>	
<b>Priority Actions</b>	
<p><b>6.2.1</b> Form a Placekeeping Action Team that forms part of the Destination Stewardship Network (see Initiative 9.1) that embeds diverse community narratives and practices into the beautification of Taos and infrastructural enhancements. Include diverse organizations to ensure that placekeeping projects embrace a strong sense of place, celebrate culturally significant seasonal events, safeguard acequias, and nurture learning.</p> <p><b>6.2.2</b> Organize regular food truck events in a pedestrian-only zone of downtown Taos, creating a vibrant and walkable space and gathering place for youth and various Taos communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate for streamlined permitting of food trucks to ensure that numerous local businesses can take part in these events.</li> </ul> <p><b>6.2.3</b> Collaborate with local government to explore easing permitting requirements for traditional owner-built structures, thereby fostering traditional construction practices. Advocate for these changes in tandem with the housing action team described in priority action 5.1.1.</p> <p><b>6.2.4</b> Support the Town of Taos' development and implementation of the Downtown Metropolitan Redevelopment (MRA) Plan through a Destination Stewardship Network communications strategy that bolsters resident use and ownership of the plaza and downtown areas. This communications strategy would be developed as a part of the "Residents First" priority action described in 6.3.3.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design this communication strategy to also teach visitors about the significance of the plaza and downtown areas to Taos' cultural and historical fabric.</li> </ul>	
<b>Partner Organizations</b>	
Destination Stewardship Network, Taos MainStreet, Town of Taos, Taos County, Taos Arts Council, Taos Community Foundation, Taos Pueblo, TiLT (Taos Initiative for Life Together), Local schools and educational institutions, Local acequia associations, Historical preservation societies	

**INITIATIVE 6.2 Advance cultural placekeeping and community-first spaces.****Potential Resources**

- Downtown Metropolitan Redevelopment Area (MRA) Plan
- Comprehensive Plan
- Grants from cultural heritage and historical preservation funds
- Local business sponsorships for community events and projects
- Volunteer contributions for task force activities and community events

**KPIs**

- Number of community events held in the downtown area.
- Percentage increase in resident participation in placekeeping initiatives.
- Reduction in the time taken for permitting owner-built structures.
- Number of visitors engaged through the communications strategy

**Related Focus Areas**

Stewardship Communications, Inclusion and Equity, Protect Authenticity, Sustainable Practices, Collaborative Management

**INITIATIVE 6.3: Promote resident focused transit and connectivity.**

In Taos, transportation challenges impede connectivity and access to its breathtaking landscapes and the region's vibrant community life. The North Central Regional Transit District (NCRTD) offers valuable services within Taos and to surrounding areas, yet gaps in service frequency, coverage, and alignment with community needs leave many residents and visitors reliant on personal and rented vehicles. This reliance is particularly evident among visitors flying into Santa Fe or Albuquerque, who are without any other option, so often rent cars to reach Taos. This contributes to congestion along the main road into town—the single artery for daily commutes, tourist traffic, and essential service deliveries.

While Taos Ski Valley Inc. is a key driver of tourism to Taos, some residents feel that the ski resort has become increasingly inaccessible and unaffordable for residents. Although public transportation to Taos Ski Valley village in the winter has created an important alternative form of transportation to the area, future infrastructure developments should continue to prioritize interconnectedness and resident access. Resident-centered transit, connectivity, and access should focus on prioritizing locals, where existing ideas such as priority reservation phone lines for residents at local restaurants provide a good example of creative ways to connect tourism to residents.

Congestion not only affects the quality of life but also underscores environmental concerns and the sustainability of local tourism. As Taos looks toward the future, addressing these transportation and connectivity issues becomes paramount in sustaining the town's growth and ensuring that its development benefits all community members.

Initiative 6.3, "Promoting resident focused transit and connectivity," aims to address these multifaceted challenges by advocating for improved public transportation options, enhancing connectivity between Taos and its surrounding areas, and prioritizing experiences that cultivate community pride. By focusing on accessible and sustainable mobility solutions, this initiative seeks to reduce the dependency on personal and rental vehicles, alleviate congestion, and ensure that attractions like the Taos Ski Valley feel welcoming and accessible and responsive to residents. The initiative harnesses local needs to shape a transit system that truly serves the community, interconnecting Taos' neighborhoods, cultural sites, and natural wonders into a cohesive network.

**INITIATIVE 6.3 Promote resident focused transit and connectivity.****Implementation Timeline** Years 2-10**Objectives**

1. Improve public transportation connection and corridors between Taos and surrounding areas and points of interest.
2. Foster a sense of pride and belonging among Taos residents by bridging them physically to local tourism experiences.
3. Increase community use of public transportation in routes around Taos.

**Priority Actions**

- 6.3.1** Work closely with transportation authorities, in line with the Town of Taos Infrastructure Capital Improvements Plan, to advocate for improved frequency of existing public transit routes and development of additional routes that address transit service gaps. Focus on service expansion should include:
- Public transportation between downtown Taos and surrounding communities and towns.
  - Connection between Taos and Taos Ski Valley, especially for residents, with more frequent public transit in all seasons.
  - Linking public transportation and trails systems.
  - Shuttle service between Santa Fe airport and Taos.
  - Promote use of Microtransit service (MyBlue) app to book trips
- 6.3.2** Initiate community feedback mechanisms in partnership with NCRTD leadership, such as surveys and public forums, to gather insights and suggestions for transit enhancements.
- 6.3.3** Develop a “Residents First” communications initiative led by the Destination Stewardship Network in partnership with the business community to ensure ‘tourism’ products, services, infrastructure, and experiences are accessible to residents, emphasizing their importance to the local economy and culture. Within this resident-focused initiative, actions should include partnering with local businesses to expand the adoption of restaurant reservation priority for residents, offer discount opportunities at Taos Ski Valley Inc, and encourage resident access and participation in other tourism experiences.
- Ensure this communications initiative incentivizes public transit use by demonstrating how it can connect riders to key destinations in town, stimulate local economies, and better connect them to place.
  - Identify opportunities to support Taos Land Trust to advance the Safe Routes to School initiative through this campaign.
- 6.3.4** Partner with the local business community and North Central Regional Transit District to expand park and ride opportunities in Taos’ downtown area.
- 6.3.5** With local government and transportation authorities, launch a ridership campaign aimed at residents’ use, awareness of, and access to outdoor recreation sites in Taos.

**Partner Organizations**

Town of Taos, Taos County, North Central Regional Transit District (NCRTD), Taos Ski Valley Inc., Local Business Community, Taos MainStreet, Destination Stewardship Network, Taos Pueblo, Kit Carson Electric Coop, New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT), Taos Chamber of Commerce, Northern Pueblos Regional Transportation Planning Organization, North Central New Mexico Economic Development District.

**Potential Resources**

Federal and State Transportation Grants, Local Government Funding, Private Sponsorship, Taos Ski Valley Inc.

**KPIs**

- Increase in the frequency of public transit routes connecting key areas within Taos and to surrounding communities.
- Growth in NCRTD ridership numbers, particularly among Taos residents, for routes serving local attractions and amenities
- Expanded park-and-ride facilities usage, as measured by occupancy rates and user feedback
- Successful launch and adoption of “Residents First” initiatives, evidenced by participation rates and resident satisfaction metrics
- Number of trailheads served by public transit

**Related Focus Areas**

Stewardship Communications, Inclusion and Equity, Workforce Stability, Protect Authenticity, Sustainable Practices

## Goal 7

Promote sustainable tourism practices and resilience to environmental risks.

In striving for a collaborative response to environmental risks in Taos, it's crucial to recognize that “top-down” government-run initiatives often fall short. Taos Ski Valley Inc. has ambitious goals as part of their B-corp certification, but these have not been adopted in the community, and there is some concern that the Taos Ski Valley's growth, associated water usage and trail access issues are in conflict with environmental stewardship.

Genuine progress must stem from the communities that have long stewarded the land. While numerous ambitious groups are working towards environmental stewardship, agreement on common goals and coordinated efforts are needed. A unified approach, driven by community input and collaboration, is essential.

Some Taos residents believe that the most pressing threat to environmental sustainability is the inequitable growth and development of the built environment, which disproportionately affects those least equipped to adapt. Economic inequality exacerbates the issue, the benefits of tourism and gentrification being unevenly distributed. In-migration of the wealthy and their higher environmental burden further strains limited resources. In addressing these challenges, it's crucial to recognize environmental issues as intrinsically linked to the sustainability of economic development patterns. Failure to address inequitable growth jeopardizes an equitable adaptation to climate change and undermines the long-term sustainability and harmony of the community.

Prioritizing local environmental and economic sustainability lays the foundation for addressing broader climate change concerns. Community threats such as water quality and quantity, fire risk, air quality, growth demand on resources, and soil health can be tackled systematically and comprehensively.

In crafting a Taos DSP, it was vital to integrate strategies that address the community's top environmental threats. Some residents expressed a desire to determine a “carrying capacity” for Taos specifically based on water availability. While this is beyond the scope of this tourism stewardship plan, a watershed-wide strategy for the conservation and protection of this limited resource is certainly an urgent first step to environmental sustainability.

## Measuring Success

1. Increased collaboration achieved among various environmental conservation organizations and community stakeholders will be a critical measure of progress in addressing Taos' environmental threats.
2. Developing a baseline of environmental indicators and implementing a monitoring strategy will provide crucial insights into the effectiveness of environmental stewardship initiatives. The establishment of baseline data enables the measurement of progress over time and informs future decision-making processes.
3. Properly managed tourism demand contributes economically without systemic impact on the socio-economy-environment. Monitoring changes in specific environmental metrics, such as the impact from forest fires, water quality, air quality, and waste diversion due to composting, will gauge the impact of environmental stewardship actions. Positive changes in these metrics signify progress towards mitigating environmental risks and enhancing destination resilience.



Courtesy of Town of Taos

**INITIATIVE 7.1:** Develop and implement a “Stewardship Certified” good practices program for tourism businesses.

<b>INITIATIVE 7.1 Develop and implement a “Stewardship Certified” good practices program for tourism businesses</b>
<b>Implementation Timeline</b> Years 3-4
<p><b>Objectives</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote and facilitate the widespread adoption of sustainable operating practices among tourism businesses and government agencies, civic organizations, and nonprofits.</li> <li>Foster regional collaboration among tourism businesses to educate visitors on preserving the cultural integrity of Taos and mitigating environmental threats.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Priority Actions</b></p> <p><b>7.1.1</b> Create community-wide training and “Stewardship-Certified” designation initially targeting tour operators and accommodations and subsequently retail and restaurant businesses. Many programs use the Global Sustainable Tourism Standard for Hotels and Tour Operators as the framework for their sustainability practices. Two such examples are: Vail’s <a href="#">Actively Green</a> program that is applicable to any business and Jackson Hole’s <a href="#">Business Emerald Sustainability Tier (BEST) Certification Program</a> that focuses on accommodation providers and tour operators.</p> <p><b>7.1.2</b> Provide local businesses with training and a toolkit for distributing responsible stewardship education materials to visitors and to employees, including frontline workers and guide services.</p> <p><b>7.1.3</b> Create and implement technical education to support improvement in small tourism businesses’ marketing reach, such as SEO, reservations, social media best practices.</p> <p><b>7.1.4</b> Work with the Stewardship Communication Action Team (to be established as part of the Destination Stewardship Network) which will devise a campaign to identify and promote Stewardship Certified Businesses to visitors in the planning, booking, in-the-destination, and post-visit stages.</p>
<p><b>Partner Organizations</b></p> <p>Towns of Taos, Taos County, Enchanted Circle Marketing Cooperative, Ski Valley, Chambers of Commerce, Tribal Governments, Taos County Economic Development Corporation, Taos Arts Council, Public Land Managers</p>
<p><b>Potential Resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Town and County Tax Revenue, LOR Foundation, Federal government agencies (U.S. Forest Service–Carson National Forest, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, State &amp; regional government agencies (New Mexico forestry, New Mexico EMNRD State Parks Division, Interstate Stream Commission, Regional Economic Development Initiative)</li> <li>Additional Resources:</li> <li>Global Sustainable Tourism Council Criteria for Hotels and Tour Operators</li> <li>Green Destinations’ “Good Travel Seal” business certification program</li> <li>Leave No Trace</li> <li>Tread Lightly</li> </ul>
<p><b>KPIs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of Stewardship Certified tourism businesses</li> <li>Visitor feedback on sustainability efforts</li> </ul>
<p><b>Related Focus Areas</b></p> <p>Protect authenticity, sustainable practices, stewardship communications, collaborative management</p>

**INITIATIVE 7.2: Identify and respond to destination risks from environment-related threats.**

When diverse individuals unite to exchange scientific insights and local wisdom concerning their socio-environmental challenges, they envision a sustainable future and devise solutions to strengthen social and ecological resilience.

**INITIATIVE 7.2 Identify and respond to destination risks from environment-related threats.**

**Implementation Timeline** Years 2–3

**Objectives**

1. County-wide and or regional collaboration to protect the natural environment, enhance resiliency, and minimize environmental threats.
2. Include and consider traditional groups/voices to enhance scientific insights with local wisdom (and vice versa).
3. Existing initiatives become more efficient and impactful through collaboration.

**Priority Actions**

- 7.2.1** Create an Environmental Stewardship Action Team as part of the Destination Stewardship Network to develop an inventory of what is already being done in the community, identify and prioritize local environmental risks, and help consolidate and coordinate future action. Alternatively, use the existing “Community Resilience Coalition” to lead this action.
- Revisit existing resources such as the “The Forest and Water Climate Adaptation Plan,” the State of New Mexico’s 2021 Climate Recommendations, and the Global Sustainable Tourism Council-Destination Criteria to create an environmental stewardship action plan and science-based targets for the community. Establish a collaborative, regional, actionable plan and resiliency goals.
  - Send representatives to the [Mountain Towns 2030 Annual Conference](#) to learn from other communities.
  - This community-led group becomes the formal recommending body to the Destination Stewardship Network and public officials.
- 7.2.2** Determine a baseline from which to measure progress and establish mechanism(s) for monitoring and ongoing coordination.
- Consider the Rio Hondo Watershed as the boundaries for a pilot project to model collaborative monitoring efforts. of environmentally-related threats.
- 7.2.3** Create a Memorandum of Understanding for the Enchanted Circle partners (town, county, public land, private sector, and nonprofit organizations) to sign confirming their commitment to implementing environmental stewardship action initiatives.
- Regularly inform public officials on priorities for potential regulations such as energy efficiency mitigation in new buildings, water quality and quantity changes, and any others.
  - Develop a centralized, collaborative grant writing strategy.
- 7.2.4** Work to fund and implement quick-win, grassroots projects that address common environmental stewardship in the short-term. Resident’s suggestions include:
- Countywide composting that removes food waste from the landfill, creates local jobs, and provides regenerative agricultural material for growing, gardening, and soil health.
  - Fire reduction education.
  - Countywide repurposing infrastructure to repurpose plastic and glass, rather than landfill dumping or pretending to recycle.
  - Repurpose plastic and turn plastic waste into perimeter walls.
  - Repurpose glass to create garden mulch, aggregate, or other options.
  - Neighborhood/Trails Clean Up projects.
  - Earth Day Celebration that highlights sustainable organizations, and educates residents on local opportunities to reduce their impact (green building, solar).
  - Wood smoke reduction program.
  - Enforcement of dark skies ordinances.

**INITIATIVE 7.2 Identify and respond to destination risks from environment-related threats.****Priority Actions**

**7.2.5** Explore existing political will and funding for a Watershed Development Plan recommended by the EPA to address water quality and quantity issues as a top priority. This might be possible by expanding the scope of the [Taos County Wildfire Org](#)/Tres Rios initiative.

**7.2.6** Once local environmental threats have successfully been identified and prioritized, develop a thorough Climate Action Plan and strategies for responding to environmental challenges of a warming Taos. Consider sustainable destination certification.

- Establish reduction targets specific to the tourism economy, lodging, transportation, and events.

**7.2.7** Work with the Stewardship Communications Action Team to provide transparent updates, data monitoring, elicit resident input, offer opportunities for civic involvement, and educate residents and visitors on their part in stewarding the destination. (see Initiative 1.2)

- For residents and visitors, create and market a database of community groups working toward environmental stewardship with contacts and volunteer opportunities.
- Consider an interactive “I see change” campaign, including an app.

**Partner Organizations**

Towns and County Government, Enchanted Circle of Governments, Taos County Wildlife Plaza (Taos County Watershed), Tribal governments (Taos Pueblo and Picuris Pueblo), TiLT, Town of Taos, Taos County Economic Development Corporation, Taos County Extension, Taos Public Schools, LOR Foundation, Taos Water Soil Conservation District, Taos Valley Acequia Association, Amigos Bravos, Taos Pueblo, Trout Unlimited, Enchanted Circle Trails, Elders, Rocky Mountain Youth Corp, Town of Taos, Taos County, Lodger’s Tax Committee, Fiesta Council, Rio Fernando Collaborative, Taos Tree Society, The Climate Project, Maliptan Mine, scientific community, New Mexico Water Resources Institute

**Potential Resources**

## Funding

- Town and County Tax Revenue
- LOR Foundation
- Federal and State Funding (EPA)
- NM [Resilient Communities Fund](#)
- Maliptan Mine
- Federal government agencies (U.S. Forest Service–Carson National Forest, US Bureau of Land Management, FEMA, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service)
- State & regional government agencies (New Mexico forestry, New Mexico EMNRD State Parks Division, Interstate Stream Commission, Regional Economic Development Initiative)

## Additional Resources

- [State of New Mexico Climate Action](#)
- New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
- VISION 2020
- Town of Taos Bicycle Master Plan
- Enchanted Circle Trails Plan
- Global Sustainable Tourism Council
- [Mountain Towns 2030 Climate Solutions Summit](#)
- Leave No Trace/Tread Lightly/Responsible Recreation campaigns
- [EPA: Watershed Plans](#)
- NM Solar Energy Association
- NM Water Resources Institute
- Department of the Interior Indigenous Climate Action Funding

**KPIs**

- Number of community participants in environmental stewardship initiatives
- Number of signatories to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for environmental stewardship action
- Establishment of baseline data and monitoring strategy
- Amount of funding secured for quick-win grassroots projects
- Changes in specific environmental stewardship metrics: impact from forest fires, water quality, air quality, waste diversion due to composting (amount of compost produced)

**Related Focus Areas**

Sustainable practices and resilience, stewardship communications, inclusion and equity, collaborative management

## Goal 8

Monitor and manage tourism and its impacts on people and place.

Effective destination stewardship requires monitoring tourism's impacts on the economy and local communities. The DSP Situation Analysis Report revealed that while the Town of Taos does monitor various indicators, its range is limited primarily to demand trends and economic impacts, and monitoring activities are inconsistent. Taos lacks a comprehensive system that aggregates data on a wider range of socio-economic, destination management, and environmental indicators, which hinders informed decision-making, forecasting, and resource allocation.

To address this gap, it's crucial to develop a holistic set of indicators that encompasses key pillars of sustainability, such as the quality of the economy and work, resident quality of life, quality of the natural environment, quality of the visitor experience, and the enabling environment for tourism. These indicators will provide Taos with a comprehensive understanding of the full impacts of tourism, guiding future planning and management efforts.

The following initiatives outline priority actions needed to enhance current tourism impact monitoring efforts.

## Measuring Success

Key measures of success are outlined below.

1. A destination monitoring action team is formed. The action team will convene regularly and oversee all aspects of the destination monitoring framework, from definition of indicators to data collection and public reporting.
2. Relevant impact indicators are identified and tracked annually.
3. An annual or bi-annual (every two years) report is published.
4. Long-term trends are improving and backed by validated monitoring.



## INITIATIVE 8.1: Establish an accessible and routinely updated tourism impact monitoring database.

Many destinations have adopted the Global Sustainable Tourism Council-Destination (GSTC-D) standard as the basis for their comprehensive monitoring systems. This standard serves as a framework for selecting core and supplemental indicators, providing guidance on measuring various aspects of sustainability in tourism destinations.

### INITIATIVE 8.1 Establish an accessible and routinely updated tourism impact monitoring database.

**Implementation Timeline** Year 2-3

#### Objective

1. Establish an accessible destination data bank that is regularly updated with comprehensive and valid data from a diverse group of community stakeholders.

#### Priority Actions

- 8.1.1** Establish a Tourism Monitoring Action Team within the Destination Stewardship Network (see Initiative 9.1) composed of diverse community stakeholder organizations to identify key indicators being tracked currently. The Taos DSP Situation Analysis Report can be used as a definitive guide for this first step since it provides baseline data on a wide range of indicators.
- Determine which sectors need to have their data represented in the destination data bank.
  - Identify at least one representative organization for each sector, invite them to participate, and confirm their availability to participate in ongoing meetings.
  - Establish terms of reference for action team contributions including anticipated timeline for activities and actions for the initial/baseline scope of work.
  - Coordinate an initial meeting to define the monitoring themes using the GSTC-D standard as a guide, determine action team coordination, select core indicators using GSTC-D as guide, identify data sources, and define guidelines for data collection, validation, interpretation, and reporting.
- 8.1.2** Define monitoring themes for data reporting and connect with organizations that have the information readily available. Potential monitoring themes may include (but are not limited to):
- Quality of local economy and work: jobs, workforce earnings, tourism and sales taxes, other fees collected; tourism demand (e.g., visitation/visitor trends, overnight visitors: rooms night sold, occupancy rate).
  - Quality of life: resident sentiment toward tourism: economic and non-economic impacts tourism development, mobility and infrastructure.
  - Quality of natural environment: energy, water, waste, risks from changing climate, ecosystem health.
  - Quality of the visitor experience: visitor satisfaction.
  - Enabling environment for tourism: collaborative management structures such as the Destination Stewardship Network and funding Taos DSP implementation.
- 8.1.3** Identify and catalog all core impact indicators, including data sources and contact information for participating organizations. Existing data sources include (but are not limited to):
- Indicators reported in the Taos DSP Situational Analysis Report (SAR); the Tourism Monitoring Action Team can use indicators included in the SAR as example indicators and data sources.
  - Indicators from previous community reporting.

#### Partner Organizations

Town of Taos, Taos County, Taos Pueblo, New Mexico Department of Tourism, New Mexico Hospitality Association, New Mexico Economic Development Department, U.S. Forest Service, Taos Land Trust, Taos County Chamber of Commerce, Taos Ski Valley Chamber of Commerce, Taos Ski Valley Inc, University of New Mexico Taos.

**INITIATIVE 8.1 Establish an accessible and routinely updated tourism impact monitoring database.****Potential Resources**

- In-kind contribution from organizations already collecting data relevant to the core indicators of the tourism impact monitoring system to be developed
- New Mexico Department of Tourism
- Town of Taos and Taos County Lodger's Tax
- Other state level grant funding

**KPIs**

- Core indicators for a holistic tourism impact monitoring system identified
- Accuracy and timeliness of data collected and analyzed

**Related Focus Areas**

Stewardship communications, collaborative management, sustainable practices, protect authenticity, workforce housing, sustainable mobility.

**INITIATIVE 8.2: Produce an annual report on indicators.**

Once the database is established, the next step is data analysis and interpretation. It is recommended that an independent third-party interpret destination data trends and analyze potential impacts and prepare an annual report. This approach fosters community confidence in the process and information provided.

**INITIATIVE 8.2 Produce an annual report on indicators.**

**Implementation Timeline** Years 3-5

**Objective**

1. To publicly track and report on the holistics impacts of tourism on the community and cultural and natural assets.
2. Inform decision making, priority setting and resource allocation.

**Priority Actions**

- 8.2.1** The Tourism Monitoring Action Team should consider partnering with an independent third-party such as a university or contractor that will conduct the data analysis and interpretation to communicate the full scope of tourism's impacts on the economy, community and natural and cultural assets. The partner should prepare the tourism impact monitoring report in close collaboration with the monitoring action team.
- Annually convene the monitoring action team to validate and ensure collection of all relevant impact indicators.
  - Collaborate with an independent third-party to facilitate team discussions regarding data interpretation and analysis of trends from the previous season and preceding years.
  - Compile an objective report summarizing data findings, facilitated by an independent third-party, to provide an objective overview of the insights gained. The report should weave together a compelling narrative that highlights the interconnectedness of the community, tourism, and sustainability. This narrative should be conveyed through a blend of data, infographics in a dashboard format and storytelling techniques to engage stakeholders effectively.
  - The report should encompass updates and trends on indicators from the Taos DSP SAR, community-defined impact indicators, user capacity indicators, and destination's sustainability performance
- 8.2.2** Annually release the report to the public through easily accessible media channels.

**INITIATIVE 8.2 Produce an annual report on indicators.****Partner Organizations**

Town of Taos, Taos County, Taos Pueblo, New Mexico Department of Tourism, New Mexico Hospitality Association, New Mexico Economic Development Department, U.S. Forest Service, Taos Land Trust, Taos County Chamber of Commerce, Taos Ski Valley Inc. Chamber of Commerce, Taos Ski Valley Inc., University of New Mexico Taos.

**Potential Resources**

- In-kind contribution from organizations that already collect data relevant to the core indicators of the tourism impact monitoring system being developed
- New Mexico Department of Tourism
- Town of Taos and Taos County Lodger's Tax
- Other state level grant funding

**KPIs**

- Number of annual reports published over time
- Number of views of online reports; number of report downloads
- Number of instances the impact report is referenced in other publications

**Related Focus Areas**

Stewardship communications, collaborative management, sustainable practices, protect authenticity, workforce housing, sustainable mobility



## Goal 9

Maintain collaborative tourism management and plan implementation.

The Town of Taos recognizes the urgent need for structured governance, a mechanism for coordinating, cooperating and collaborating, to effectively manage the impacts of tourism on the community and its assets. Resident and business sentiments underscore the necessity for deliberate and controlled tourism development, with concerns raised about the pace of growth and confidence in local authorities' ability to manage its effects.

A significant portion of the business community feels undersupported by government efforts, advocating for enhanced collaboration, clustering, and partnership expansion to shape the future of tourism. In response, the Taos DSP outlines recommendations for a specific network structure, a Destination Stewardship Network, to sustain multi-sectoral dialogue, cooperation, and collaboration in the short term. This interim structure will provide a bridge between present and future tourism management and provides a pathway for convening and building trust among regional stakeholders to deliberate and agree on a permanent destination management and marketing structure. To mitigate tourism's negative impacts and extend its benefits equitably across all communities, Taos needs collaborative management supported by a backbone organizational structure.

This foundational work underpins all other goals in our pursuit of a sustainable future for tourism.

## Measuring Success

Success will be measured by:

1. The establishment and successful operation of effective short-term structure for collaborative management and Taos DSP implementation.
2. Enhanced coordination across all jurisdictions and communities, regular communication with stakeholders to manage expectations, and widespread buy-in for our vision among all sectors of our community.
3. The establishment of a permanent collaborative management and marketing structure that builds from the short-term structure established.

United, the region will chart a course toward a more sustainable future for tourism that enhances the well-being of all communities, supports local enterprises, and respects and celebrates its diversity, while safeguarding its pristine landscapes for future generations.



## INITIATIVE 9.1: Create a Destination Stewardship Network to guide the Taos DSP implementation in the short-term.

To realize the community vision and shared goals articulated in the Taos DSP, Taos will need to create both short-term and long-term collaborative management structures. An interim destination management network, dubbed the Destination Stewardship Network (Destination Stewardship Network), is proposed to bridge the gap between the current situation and a future permanent structure, sustaining the momentum generated by the Taos DSP's inclusive planning process.

The interim Destination Stewardship Network will consist of key individuals and organizations crucial to Taos DSP implementation, leveraging the foundation laid by the existing Taos DSP Steering Committee. This arrangement capitalizes on the diverse expertise and local insights of Taos DSP Steering Committee member organizations to expedite decision-making and implementation of Year 1 priority initiatives outlined in the Taos DSP.

During the planning process, tourism leaders highlighted several benefits of the proposed Destination Stewardship Network structure. They noted that the Destination Stewardship Network can signal a commitment to action within the community, offering an avenue to showcase coordination and collaboration. It provides organizations with an opportunity to contribute and emphasizes shared responsibility among stakeholders, rather than placing sole responsibility on the Town of Taos.

While the Destination Stewardship Network will serve as an experimental platform for trust-building, coordination and collective action, it's essential not to become complacent with this short-term solution. The interim network must develop a clear roadmap for transitioning to a permanent governance structure for collaborative destination management and marketing, ensuring transparency in communication with stakeholders and the wider community.

### INITIATIVE 9.1 Create a Destination Stewardship Network to guide the Taos DSP implementation in the short-term.

#### Implementation Timeline Year 1

#### Objective

1. Establish an interim structure for plan implementation that maintains momentum and a sense of shared responsibility for Taos DSP implementation.

#### Priority Actions

##### 9.1.1 Design network structure and scope of work for the Destination Stewardship Network.

- Destination Stewardship Network Design Recommendations:
  - The Town of Taos and Taos County will co-convene and co-chair the network.
  - A network manager (contractor) will oversee operational tasks.
  - An executive group of select Destination Stewardship Network organizations will facilitate efficient decision-making.
  - Destination Stewardship Network member organizations will be divided into action teams focused on quick-win priority actions, with members having the option to join multiple teams as needed.

Primary roles and responsibilities of the Destination Stewardship Network will include:

- Guiding implementation activities and monitoring progress of the Taos DSP in the short-term.
- Supporting collective action through involvement in action teams and quick-win projects.
- Ensuring ongoing communication with key stakeholder groups including residents about progress on the Taos DSP.
- Facilitating activities to promote trust, knowledge sharing, and learning among participating organizations within the network.
- Promoting engagement and participation from additional organizations as required to enhance network effectiveness.
- Maintaining accountability for Taos DSP implementation to tourism stakeholders and the wider community.

### INITIATIVE 9.1 Create a Destination Stewardship Network to guide the Taos DSP implementation in the short-term.

#### Priority Actions

**9.1.2** Establish a Destination Stewardship Network based on the existing Taos DSP Steering Committee.

- Expand the Destination Stewardship Network by adding representatives from stakeholder groups currently not represented.
- Allocate funding for a consultant to oversee the management of the Destination Stewardship Network.
- Aim to launch the interim structure and contract a network manager by the end of July 2024, coinciding with key Taos DSP dissemination activities.

**9.1.3** Choose 2–3 quick-win Taos DSP priority actions for Year 1 implementation, with the potential for repetition throughout the lifespan of the Destination Stewardship Network.

- Collaborate with the Town of Taos and Taos County to secure funding for Year 1 priority actions.
- Organize Destination Stewardship Network members into action teams based on agreed quick-win priority actions, allowing network members to join one or more teams.
- Ensure Destination Stewardship Network involvement in guiding all Priority Action 1.1.2 focused on Taos DSP launch and widespread dissemination throughout the community.

#### Partner Organizations

Town of Taos; County of Taos, Taos DSP Steering Committee members.

#### Potential Resources

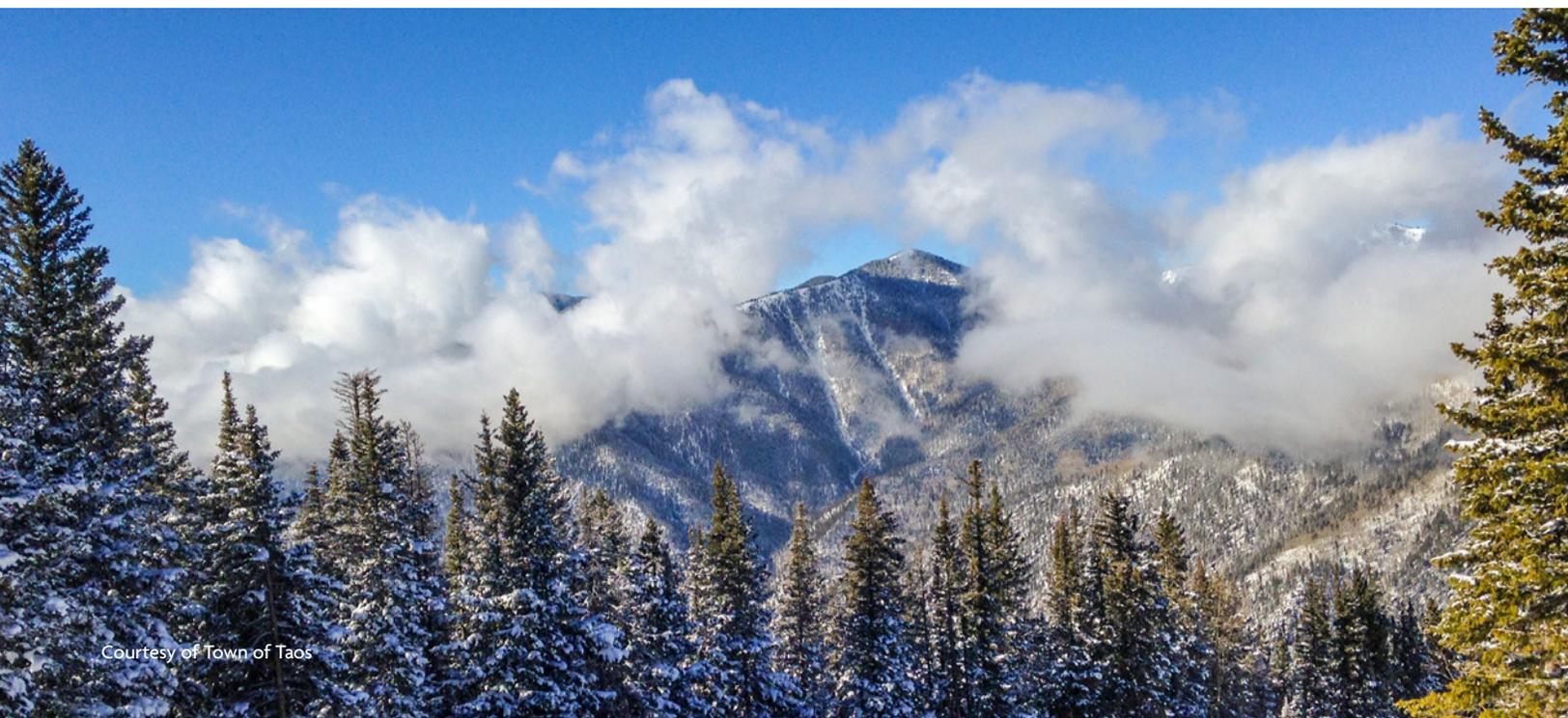
- Town of Taos and Taos County Lodger's Tax funding for contracting destination stewardship network manager
- In-kind (i.e., non-monetary contribution of goods or services offered free of charge) contribution of time and effort of all key organizations participating in the destination stewardship network
- In-kind contribution Town of Taos and Taos County's time and effort involved in co-chairing the network

#### KPIs

- Functioning destination stewardship network that has representation from all key stakeholder groups.
- Two to three quick-win Taos DSP priority actions implemented in Year 1.

#### Related Focus Areas

Stewardship communications, inclusion and equity, workforce stability, protect authenticity, workforce housing, sustainable mobility, sustainable practices, monitoring and reports.



## INITIATIVE 9.2: Increase awareness and understanding of the Taos DSP among tourism stakeholders and the broader community.

Raising awareness about the Taos DSP goals and expected outcomes is paramount to building support and gaining buy-in from the diverse array of stakeholders crucial for plan implementation. By effectively communicating the objectives and potential benefits of the Taos DSP, stakeholders can better understand its significance and actively advocate for and contribute to its implementation. This proactive approach to awareness-building sets the stage for collaborative efforts that align with the overarching goals of the Taos DSP.

<p><b>INITIATIVE 9.2 Increase awareness and understanding of the Taos DSP among tourism stakeholders and the broader community.</b></p>
<p><b>Implementation Timeline</b> Year 1</p>
<p><b>Objective</b></p> <p>1. Secure broad support for the Taos DSP across the tourism industry and the broader community.</p>
<p><b>Priority Actions</b></p> <p>These activities are complemented by the additional priority actions outlined in section 1.1.2 of this document.</p> <p><b>9.2.1</b> Launch a comprehensive campaign to introduce the Taos DSP, engaging tourism businesses, public-sector agencies, NGOs, and the community. Coordinate planning and events through the interim destination stewardship network.</p> <p><b>9.2.2</b> Present the Taos DSP to the Taos Town Council, Taos County Board of County Commissioners and Taos Pueblo, seeking formal adoption/endorsement by elected officials.</p> <p><b>9.2.3</b> Publish quarterly Taos DSP status reports, updating stakeholders and the community on goals, initiatives, and progress. Coordinate reports through the interim destination stewardship network and establish two-way communication channels.</p> <p><b>9.2.4</b> Coordinate with key organizations responsible for local, regional, and state-level plans aligned with Destination Stewardship Network goals, including the Comprehensive Plan, MainStreet’s urban redevelopment, transportation, housing, and climate action initiatives.</p>
<p><b>Partner Organizations</b></p> <p>Town of Taos, Taos County, Taos Pueblo, Taos DSP Steering Committee members, organizations to serve on the Destination Stewardship Network</p>
<p><b>Potential Resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-kind (i.e., non-monetary contribution of goods or services offered free of charge) contribution of all organizations involved in the process</li> <li>• Town of Taos Marketing budget for implementation of Taos DSP launch activities</li> </ul>
<p><b>KPIs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quarterly public reporting of progress on Taos DSP goals</li> <li>• Increase in public-private-community support for the Taos DSP and its implementation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Related Focus Areas</b></p> <p>Stewardship communications, inclusion and equity, workforce stability, protect authenticity, workforce housing, sustainable mobility, sustainable practices, monitoring and reports.</p>

### INITIATIVE 9.3: Establish a permanent collaborative management structure for destination management and marketing.

While the Taos DSP's primary focus is on the Town of Taos, the priority initiatives and their impacts will reverberate throughout the region. Establishing a permanent collaborative management structure is essential for realizing the community vision and stewardship goals outlined in the Taos DSP. This structure makes permanent the core values and principles of the Taos DSP, emphasizing trust-building, inclusivity, transparency, and accountability to all Taos communities.

Effective destination management and marketing go hand in hand, as outlined in the Taos DSP's community vision and stewardship goals. Stakeholders have emphasized the importance of local-level destination management responsive to community needs, alongside regional stewardship of destination marketing efforts. While the Town of Taos has historically overseen regional marketing, greater regional cooperation and resource allocation are needed to align marketing strategies as recommended in the Taos DSP.

Further discussions are warranted to explore whether the recently reactivated Enchanted Circle Marketing Cooperative, as a nonprofit entity and with dedicated support, could address this gap. Regardless, marketing endeavors must align with destination management priorities outlined in the Taos DSP, guiding efforts toward sustainable and inclusive tourism development in Taos. The Taos DSP calls for the development of an integrated marketing and communications strategy that supports Taos DSP goals.

As previously mentioned, the Destination Stewardship Network is envisioned as a short-term collaborative management structure, likely lasting 1-3 years. During this time, stakeholders will work to develop a permanent structure for destination stewardship efforts. In some destinations, ad-hoc Destination Stewardship Networks have evolved into independent nonprofits, such as the Columbia Gorge Tourism Alliance. In other cases, the public sector has enhanced its capacity for destination stewardship, maintaining the Destination Stewardship Network as a multi-sectoral forum for collaboration. The Destination Stewardship Network acts as a transitional bridge, providing the Town of Taos an opportunity to explore and test different approaches to collaborative management, ultimately leading to informed recommendations for the permanent structure.

#### INITIATIVE 9.3 Establish a permanent collaborative management structure for destination management and marketing.

**Implementation Timeline** Year 1-3

##### Objective

1. Define the optimal permanent organizational framework for collaborative tourism management.
2. Garner support from all essential stakeholder groups for the establishment of a permanent collaborative management structure.
3. Secure funding for the initial setup and continued operation of the collaborative management framework.

##### Priority Actions

**9.3.1** The Town of Taos and Taos County lead discussions with the Destination Stewardship Network and key stakeholders, including the New Mexico Department of Tourism, to explore options for a permanent collaborative tourism management structure. After wide consultation, consensus is sought on the preferred option and timeline for establishing this permanent structure. Governance options initially discussed as part of the Taos DSP development process are outlined below:

##### **Option 1: Town of Taos expands its tourism remit to include destination management.**

- Destination Management: The Town of Taos hires a Destination Development Officer who will be responsible for ensuring ongoing implementation of the Taos DSP and other destination stewardship efforts that may emerge over time.
- Destination Marketing: The Town of Taos Community Relations Director retains responsibility for destination marketing, overseeing development of an integrated marketing plan that aligns with the Taos DSP.
- The Destination Stewardship Network continues its role, offering guidance to the Destination Development Officer and Community Relations Director.
- Key considerations: Does this structure inspire trust from residents, businesses, and the public sector; is sustainable funding available for the Destination Development Offer position and Destination Stewardship Network activities; does this structure ensure longevity in context of changes in administrations; how will this structure remain accountable to all key stakeholder groups.

### **INITIATIVE 9.3 Establish a permanent collaborative management structure for destination management and marketing.**

#### **Option 2: Hybrid approach in which two or more organizations (existing; or new and existing) share responsibility for different aspects of destination marketing and management.**

- Destination Marketing: to be managed regionally through a singular regional and jointly funded organization that sits outside of government; fund and empower the existing Enchanted Circle Marketing Cooperative to serve as the regional marketing organization.
- Destination Management: Town of Taos hires a Destination Development Officer to spearhead local destination stewardship initiatives and oversee implementation of the Taos DSP; regional marketing should be aligned to the Taos DSP overarching values and guiding principles.
- Key considerations: How will responsibilities be shared between these entities; Is there involvement needed from key stakeholder groups in decision-making about resources and actions; are there sustainable sources of funding for this hybrid approach; how do these entities maintain accountability to all stakeholder groups?

#### **Option 3: Establish a new organization to oversee destination management and marketing. This option recognizes limitations with the existing ecosystem of organizations and seeks to establish a new organization to take on the challenge.**

- Establish an independent organization to direct destination management and marketing, following models like Vancouver Island's 4VI. This organization, akin to a social enterprise, aims to generate social value for the community, uphold complete transparency, and ensure representation from all stakeholder groups, including residents, in its destination management and marketing endeavors.
- Key considerations: does the governance structure permit the organization to have representation from key stakeholder groups; are there sustainable sources of funding; how do these entities maintain accountability to all stakeholder groups.

#### **9.3.2 Secure funding to establish the preferred permanent collaborative management structure.**

- Advocate for the allocation of Lodger's Tax revenue to fund the structure.
- Develop a comprehensive fundraising strategy targeting key funding sources at the local, state, and federal levels, and work to secure financial support needed.

#### **Partner Organizations**

Town of Taos, Taos County, Taos Pueblo, Taos DSP Steering Committee members, organizations to serve on the Destination Stewardship Network, New Mexico Department of Tourism.

#### **Potential Resources**

- Town of Taos and Taos County Lodger's Tax
- Contributions from other jurisdictions
- In-kind (i.e., non-monetary contribution of goods or services offered free of charge) contribution from organizations serving on the Destination Stewardship Network
- New Mexico Department of Tourism

#### **KPIs**

- Functioning permanent structure for collaborative management of tourism.
- Funding and human resources secured for start-up and ongoing operation of the permanent structure for collaborative management of tourism.

#### **Related Focus Areas**

Stewardship communications, inclusion and equity, workforce stability, protect authenticity, workforce housing, sustainable mobility, sustainable practices, monitoring and reports.

# 5. GOVERNANCE & IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

## ARE WE GETTING THERE?

This section of the report provides an overview of the proposed implementation schedule for priority initiatives. It also provides additional information to guide further community discussions on the possible governance options for sustainable destination management.



## Shared Responsibility for Implementation

Collaborative management is the commitment of Taos tourism stakeholders from all key sectors—public, private and civil society—to work on a common agenda that tackles priority inter-related challenges posed by tourism, using a structured form of collaboration. Creating lasting, large-scale change in Taos to address the inter-related socio-economic and environmental challenges posed by tourism requires ongoing coordination, cooperation and collaboration guided by clearly defined goals.

The Town of Taos DSP presents a community vision and agenda with defined goals, supported by the proposed Destination Stewardship Network (Destination Stewardship Network) outlined in Initiative 9.1. This council serves as a collaborative management network, similar to structures used in other destinations like Jackson Hole and regions in Oregon such as the North Coast Tourism Management Network and Columbia Gorge Tourism Alliance. These structures have effectively guided destination stewardship efforts.

While the Taos DSP primarily targets the Town of Taos, its effects will extend regionally. Collaborative management therefore requires joint efforts between the Town of Taos and Taos County to adopt the Taos DSP, allocate funds for a Destination Stewardship Network manager (contractor) and Destination Stewardship Network network events, and provide initial funding for quick-win projects. Co-chairing the Destination Stewardship Network by both entities is proposed to ensure coordinated leadership and facilitation, fostering sustained engagement from all key stakeholders.

As depicted in the diagram below, the Taos DSP offers clear guidance addressing all five critical conditions for collaborative management and collective impact: common agenda, mutually reinforcing efforts, shared measurement, continuous communications, and a backbone support organization.



## Implementation Schedule

The implementation schedule below offers a suggested timeline for rolling out the priority initiatives outlined in this document. A phased approach is recommended, considering the interconnected nature of many initiatives. While the proposed timelines serve as a guide, adjustments may be necessary based on dynamic circumstances and the actual launch of the Destination Stewardship Network, which provides a short-term structure for collaborative management of tourism and Taos DSP implementation.

Year 1-5



**1.1** Sustain community engagement in tourism management and decision-making.

Year 2-5



**1.2** Implement an education strategy that informs visitors and community members about their shared responsibilities in stewarding Taos' history, diverse cultures, and fragile environment.

Year 2-3



**1.3** Develop a visitor marketing and communication strategy that promotes responsible stewardship behaviors in the destination and engages local tourism stakeholders in spreading a cohesive message to visitors.

Year 1-3



**2.1** Develop and promote new tourism experiences and products that celebrate culture, preserve land, and benefit marginalized communities.

Year 2-3



**2.2** Support and finance community events that preserve and celebrate Taos' diverse cultures.

Year 2-4



**2.3** Enhance market readiness of emerging tourism enterprises.

Year 2-4



**3.1** Increase leadership and collaboration within the business community to enhance tourism workforce recruitment.

Year 2-4



**3.2** Improve employee retention.

Year 2-4



**4.1** Build coalitions and put into action placekeeping initiatives to counteract gentrification.

Year 2-5



**4.2** Identify and advocate for regulatory changes to protect historical assets.

Year 2-5



**4.3** Secure financing for the preservation of lands and infrastructure threatened by gentrification.

Year 2-6



**5.1** Advocate for policies that improve workforce housing access, diversity, and affordability, aligning with ongoing efforts.

Year 2-8



**5.2** Increase affordable housing options for middle- and low-income residents to support the community and a thriving tourism workforce.

**Year 2-10****6.1** Enhance active transportation, trail, and mobility infrastructure.**Year 1-5****6.2** Advance cultural placekeeping and community-first spaces.**Year 2-10****6.3** Promote resident focused transit and connectivity.**Year 3-4****7.1** Develop and implement a “Stewardship Certified” good practices program for tourism businesses.**Year 2-3****7.2** Identify and respond to destination risks from environment-related threats.**Year 2-3****8.1** Establish an accessible and routinely updated tourism impact monitoring database.**Year 3-5****8.2** Produce an annual report on indicators.**Year 1****9.1** Create a Destination Stewardship Network to guide Taos DSP implementation in the short-term.**Year 1****9.2** Increase awareness and understanding of the Taos DSP among tourism stakeholders and the broader community.**Year 2-3****9.3** Establish a permanent collaborative management structure for destination management and marketing.

# APPENDICES



## Appendix A – Implementation Priorities for Year 2 and Year 3

### Year 2 Priority Actions

Priority Actions	Q1 2025	Q2 2025	Q3 2025	Q4 2025
<p><b>1.1.4</b> Conduct bi-annual (every two years) resident sentiment and tourism business and stakeholder surveys to maintain feedback and benchmark resident sentiment.</p>				
<p><b>1.1.6</b> Host “The State of Taos Tourism” stakeholder and community town hall events to present data monitoring and tourism performance indicators, education and marketing campaigns, solicit feedback and engagement from community attendees on tourism performance, and build trust in the community. These events could be organized in collaboration with the Taos Pueblo and feature a presentation on their tourism initiatives. At a minimum, these events should be held annually, with tourism stakeholder meetings ideally held more frequently (2- 4 times per year).</p>				
<p><b>1.2.1</b> Establish a Stewardship Communications Action Team through the Destination Stewardship Network to oversee education and outreach programs and campaigns with a mandate that they target the community as well as visitors. Participating members should include Taos County, Pueblo, Hispano and Acequia groups, and public land agencies. Until a new tourism governance structure is in place, the Stewardship Communications Action Team will inform the Town of Taos’ Community Relations Officer who will be responsible for oversight on campaign messaging and the use of Lodger’s Tax funds and other resources.</p>				
<p><b>1.2.3</b> Draft and ratify a policy resolution that recommends the Town of Taos/Taos County/ Enchanted Circle of Government invest in destination stewardship education and marketing that prioritizes both visitor and resident stewardship education communications.</p>				
<p><b>1.2.4</b> Drive awareness and excitement by hosting a community art contest for a Stewardship campaign logo.</p>				
<p><b>1.3.7</b> Consider developing sub-brands or capitalize on the NM True certification for tourism products inspired and led by the Hispano, Latino, Native American and other prominent communities. See Visit Charlottesville Black Cville sub-brand as an example.</p>				
<p><b>2.1.4</b> The Taos Pueblo has prioritized the development of new nature-based (ecotourism) experiences as part of its tourism planning for the future. There is a strong interest in forming partnerships with stakeholders in Taos to create new experiences to cater to this niche market. Therefore, there is an opportunity to support the Taos Pueblo to develop ecotourism experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate dialogue and explore partnership between Town of Taos tourism leaders and conservation organizations and other local outdoor recreation providers to explore synergies and ideas for potential collaboration.</li> <li>• Incorporate cultural interpretation and storytelling to deepen visitors’ appreciation for the natural world and indigenous perspectives on land stewardship.</li> </ul>				

Priority Actions	Q1 2025	Q2 2025	Q3 2025	Q4 2025
<p><b>2.2.5</b> Provide technical support and resources to new and existing entrepreneurs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer technical assistance and resources such as event planning workshops, marketing guidance, and logistical support.</li> <li>• Create an online platform or toolkit with templates and best practices for organizing successful community events.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>2.2.1</b> Conduct an inventory of existing community events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a database of existing cultural events to identify opportunities for additional cultural events.</li> <li>• Work with Hispano, Latino, Pueblo and Anglo communities to fill gaps in events and develop additional event ideas.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>2.1.5</b> Encourage stronger connections among the Hispano, Latino, and Pueblo communities through initiatives promoting cross-cultural exchanges and cultural experiential workshops. These efforts aim to inspire new ideas for tourism product development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate cultural exchange workshops for locals and visitors led by Hispano, Latino, and Pueblo community members, focusing on traditional arts, crafts, music, dance, and culinary practices.</li> <li>• Offer hands-on experiences such as pottery making, weaving, traditional cooking classes, adobe architecture, and dance performances that allow residents visitors to engage directly with cultural bearers of these communities.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>2.2.4</b> Facilitate collaborations among community groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize networking events or workshops to encourage collaboration among different cultural organizations and community groups. Early networking events should consider focusing on addressing the historic mistrust amongst different communities.</li> <li>• Foster partnerships to combine resources and expertise for larger-scale cultural events.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>2.3.5</b> Increase promotion of existing and newly developed products and experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create market linkages between tourism businesses, tour operators, and travel advisors.</li> <li>• Develop a marketing campaign to promote tourism products and newly developed agritourism, nature-based (ecotourism), and cultural experiences offered by entrepreneurs in Taos. See Initiatives 1.2 and 1.3 for details.</li> <li>• Participate in joint marketing campaigns or co-op advertising opportunities with the New Mexico Tourism Department to amplify the reach and visibility of Taos' tourism offerings.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>3.1.1</b> Establish a Tourism Workforce Recruitment Action Team (as part of the Destination Stewardship Network (see Initiative 9.1 for more details), jointly led by the Taos County and Taos Ski Valley Chambers of Commerce, with participation from MainStreet, University of New Mexico Taos, and key high schools. This action team will collaborate to design and implement an initiative aimed at addressing workforce shortages in the tourism industry, including mapping out skill gaps and cross educational curriculum and programs that can help address these gaps.</p>				

Priority Actions	Q1 2025	Q2 2025	Q3 2025	Q4 2025
<p><b>3.1.3</b> Assess feasibility and activate advocacy to increase the Lodger's Tax by one percent (1%) to be able to generate urgently needed funding to respond to critical threats, such as tourism workforce recruitment, retention and housing.</p>				
<p><b>3.1.4</b> Tourism workforce recruitment will create stronger linkages between local employers and the Taos talent pool (youth, retirees, immigrants) by providing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job Fairs</li> <li>• Internship, mentorship and placement programs, with a focus on providing support to micro and small businesses to cover internship stipends. This assistance ensures that these businesses can afford to participate in internship and mentorship programs.</li> <li>• Training, certifications, and scholarships</li> <li>• An online portal for workforce connections and networking</li> <li>• A digital marketing campaign to help educate on job fairs, internships, training, career paths and more.</li> <li>• The workforce recruitment initiative should target and address the different needs for seasonal and year-round employees, and increase the number of prospective and qualified workers, in particular youth, retirees, and immigrants. Recruiting youth is essential for establishing a stable workforce in the tourism industry. Additionally, tapping into the increasing number of retirees seeking supplementary employment in response to rising inflation and higher wages offered by employers presents an opportunity. Moreover, collaborating with Pueblos across New Mexico can help create a more robust pipeline of enthusiastic and engaged talent for the tourism sector.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>3.1.5</b> Develop opportunities for Taos' youth to learn skills related to culture, heritage, and history, and connect with local businesses/organizations that offer the opportunity to stay in Taos and engage in the tourism economy, e.g., future tourism guides, public land managers, business owners, and other opportunities for careers in the arts, outdoors, and cultural tourism. For example, consider partnering with The Adobe Alliance to create apprenticeships and training opportunities related to restoring Adobe buildings; similar partnerships can be developed for outdoor recreation opportunities.</p>				
<p><b>3.2.4</b> Explore a minimum wage requirement for all Taos businesses and encourage the adoption of a competitive livable wage.</p>				
<p><b>4.1.1</b> Create a community-led Placekeeping Action Team that forms part of the Destination Stewardship Network (see Initiative 9.1) with representation from the Town, County, Main Street, civic, land use and agricultural organizations, and community leaders to develop and implement projects that celebrate and preserve local cultures and land.</p>				

Priority Actions	Q1 2025	Q2 2025	Q3 2025	Q4 2025
<p><b>4.1.3</b> Identify, prioritize, and work with Town/County/ and Private landowners to coordinate the development, funding, and implementation of placekeeping initiatives that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve existing and create new community spaces and park infrastructure that promote local commerce (arts, clothes, food), events, meal programs, and educational opportunities. The community spaces should also serve as hubs for multicultural education and facilitate ongoing exchanges and learning opportunities between the Pueblo and Hispanic/Latino communities by creating shared spaces or venues that support cultural preservation and celebrate culture and heritage.</li> <li>• Create or restore old schools and spaces into community centers in outlying communities (Questa, Amalia, Arroyo Hondo, Arroyo Seco, Ranchitos, Llano).</li> <li>• Explore opportunities for a community “Maker Space,” especially for youth, to learn from local artists and tradespeople.</li> <li>• Support existing and create new events that bring communities (including youth) together to revive and celebrate the diverse local cultures, history, ranching and farming traditions, local cuisine, music, performing, and traditional arts. This action is closely aligned to actions outlined in Initiative 2.2 and should be considered in conjunction with them.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>4.2.1</b> Coalition Building and Advocacy: Utilize the Gentrification and/or Housing Action Teams (with representation from the Town and County, existing civic, land use, and agricultural organizations) to advocate for new regulations and access to financing for protection and the preservation of lands and infrastructure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solicit stakeholder input through a structured community engagement process prior to implementation.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>4.2.2</b> Work with the Town Council and County Elected officials to recognize the threat of gentrification and ratify an agreement of intent to address gentrification by all legal means.</p>				
<p><b>4.3.1</b> The community-led Placekeeping Action Team (see Initiative 4.1) should focus on current and future funding opportunities for placekeeping projects outlined in Initiative 4.2. Funding sources could include the Real Estate industry, National Endowment for the Arts, New Mexico Department of Tourism Infrastructure Grants.</p>				
<p><b>4.3.2</b> Placekeeping Action Team should advocate for the enhancement of community grant programs to support access to low-interest capital for restoring aging historic buildings and homes to provide residential spaces for current residents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• *NOTE: This currently exists to some extent through various land trusts and cultural restoration grant programs listed below, but is not collaborative or spearheaded by any government agency or a destination management organization.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>4.3.3</b> Create educational programs and mentoring opportunities around ways of leveraging land/land stewardship to keep land in agriculture such as land trusts, agritourism, local food production. See Initiatives 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3.</p>				

Priority Actions	Q1 2025	Q2 2025	Q3 2025	Q4 2025
<p><b>5.1.1</b> Form a housing advocacy action team (as part of the Destination Stewardship Network; See Goal 9 for more details) that is focused on supporting the Taos Housing Partnership's efforts to address workforce housing issues and identify opportunities for improvement and advocacy. The Destination Stewardship Network should aim to particularly mobilize tourism businesses/employers to participate in the action team and engage deeply on advocacy-related actions.</p>				
<p><b>5.1.2</b> Through the Destination Stewardship Network action team and in conjunction with the Taos Housing Partnership, investigate short-term rental (STR) policies from other communities and consequences of these policies to develop ordinances that work for Taos and in turn, recommend the adoption of language in the current town, and future county, (STR) ordinances that address non-resident ownership of STRs and support a more diversified ownership by full-time residents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate for language within the STR ordinances that allow for short-term rentals of ADUs/casitas.</li> <li>• Work with town and county officials to evaluate potential loopholes in current STR ordinances, using language that does not make it more difficult for middle and low-income residents to access permits for short-term rentals.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>5.1.3</b> Work with the action team to create alignment between community, housing advocacy leaders, and officials on the Land Use Development Code (LUDC) update, and encourage a fast-tracking of the code to support more diversified housing for the tourism workforce.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage the adoption of alternative and diversified housing types in the LUDC update, particularly those that create income opportunities amongst local landowners and full-time residents. Low-hanging fruit for the LUDC include the development of both short and long-term rentals as ADUs, alternative buildings/material designs, land trusts to develop new starter homes, workforce rentals, as well as other rental developments that would alleviate low-income families burdened by housing costs.</li> <li>• In line with the Taos Downtown Metropolitan Redevelopment Area (MRA) Plan, pursue opportunities to fast-track the LUDC to support infill and mixed use development on vacant parcels, and collectively identify strategies to ensure that workforce housing can be included in these updates.</li> <li>• Involve tourism businesses in the action team so that needs of the workforce are effectively communicated between Destination Stewardship Network, THP, and town and county officials responsible for updating the LUDC.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>5.1.5</b> Leverage the strength of the action team to support THP's rental development goals outlined in their 3-year housing roadmap, particularly by strengthening and supporting advocacy for state-level policy initiatives that would allow initiation of workforce housing projects (rental projects for those at 60-80% AMI).</p>				

Priority Actions	Q1 2025	Q2 2025	Q3 2025	Q4 2025
<p><b>6.1.1</b> Support the Enchanted Circle Trails Association and civil society’s efforts to improve trail interconnectivity, while also supporting a continuous dialogue and feedback loop for residents on trail improvements. This action recognizes existing and past dialogue forums for trail development, and seeks to build upon those with facilitation support from the Destination Stewardship Network (see Initiative 9.1). Dialogue between community members, public land managers, private landowners, and trail project leaders will be crucial to ensure that trail infrastructure, easements, and access meet community needs and respect the land.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effectively engage the community in trail planning and development to promote equitable access to the outdoors.</li> <li>Link community-centered trail development with the development of agritourism products highlighted in the Taos DSP. See Initiative 2.1 for more details.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>6.1.2</b> Initiate comprehensive mapping of Taos’ existing non-motorized trails and those in planning, develop digital guides to the trails and implement a communications strategy through the Destination Stewardship Network to distribute trail information to residents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage community members in identifying preferred routes and potential routes.</li> <li>Crowd source trail routes to support map content development.</li> <li>Highlight community-linking routes to encourage use, for example highlight the NM150 trail development for residents of El Prado and Arroyo Seco.</li> <li>Update popular map/routing options (i.e., Google Maps, Waze etc) with existing and new bike paths, trails, and sidewalks to direct users toward them.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>6.1.3</b> Establish clear and accessible pedestrian zones and bicycle boulevards in high-traffic areas, including a pilot project on Bent Street. These pedestrian zones can provide spaces for youth, Hispanic and arts communities to sell their art, food or showcase culture, and enjoy a communal space without motorized vehicles in the downtown.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In Taos’ downtown area, pursue these efforts in line with the Downtown Metropolitan Area Redevelopment (MRA) Plan’s strategies to develop flexible/festival street areas.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>6.1.8</b> Support communication and implementation of Taos’ Comprehensive Plan and Metropolitan Redevelopment Plan, particularly in advances in bikeability and walkability.</p>				
<p><b>6.2.1</b> Form a placekeeping task force through the Destination Stewardship Network (see Goal 9) that embeds diverse community narratives and practices into the beautification of Taos and infrastructural enhancements. Include diverse organizations to ensure that placekeeping projects embrace a strong sense of place, celebrate culturally significant seasonal events, safeguard acequias, and nurture learning.</p>				
<p><b>6.2.2</b> Organize regular food truck events in a pedestrian-only zone of downtown Taos, creating a vibrant and walkable space and gathering place for youth and various Taos communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocate for streamlined permitting of food trucks to ensure that numerous local businesses can take part in these events.</li> </ul>				

Priority Actions	Q1 2025	Q2 2025	Q3 2025	Q4 2025
<p><b>6.3.2</b> Initiate community feedback mechanisms in partnership with NCRTD leadership, such as surveys and public forums, to gather insights and suggestions for transit enhancements.</p>				
<p><b>7.2.1</b> Create an Environmental Stewardship Action Team within the Destination Stewardship Network to develop an inventory of what is already being done in the community, identify and prioritize local environmental risks, and help consolidate and coordinate future action. Alternatively, use the existing “Community Resilience Coalition” to lead this action.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revisit existing resources such as the “The Forest and Water Climate Adaptation Plan,” the State of New Mexico’s 2021 Climate Recommendations, and the Global Sustainable Tourism Network-Destination Criteria to create an environmental stewardship action plan and science-based targets for the community. Establish a collaborative, regional, actionable plan and resiliency goals.</li> <li>• Send representatives to the Mountain Towns 2030 Annual Conference to learn from other communities.</li> <li>• This community-led group becomes the formal recommending body to the Destination Stewardship Network and public officials.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>7.2.2</b> Determine a baseline from which to measure progress and establish mechanism(s) for monitoring and ongoing coordination.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider the Rio Hondo Watershed as the boundaries for a pilot project to model collaborative monitoring efforts. of environmentally-related threats.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>7.2.3</b> Create a Memorandum of Understanding for the Enchanted Circle partners (town, county, public land, private sector, and nonprofit organizations) to sign confirming their commitment to implementing environmental stewardship action initiatives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regularly inform public officials on priorities for potential regulations such as energy efficiency mitigation in new buildings, water quality and quantity changes, and any others.</li> <li>• Develop a centralized, collaborative grant writing strategy.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>7.2.4</b> Work to fund and implement quick-win, grassroots projects that address common environmental stewardship in the short-term. Resident’s suggestions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Countywide composting that removes food waste from the landfill, creates local jobs, and provides regenerative agricultural material for growing, gardening, and soil health.</li> <li>• Fire reduction education.</li> <li>• Countywide repurposing infrastructure to repurpose plastic and glass, rather than landfill dumping or pretending to recycle.</li> <li>• Repurpose plastic and turn plastic waste into perimeter walls.</li> <li>• Repurpose glass to create garden mulch, aggregate, or other options.</li> <li>• Neighborhood/Trails Clean Up projects.</li> <li>• Earth Day Celebration that highlights sustainable organizations, and educates residents on local opportunities to reduce their impact (green building, solar).</li> <li>• Wood smoke reduction program.</li> <li>• Enforcement of dark skies ordinances.</li> </ul>				

Priority Actions	Q1 2025	Q2 2025	Q3 2025	Q4 2025
<p><b>8.1.1</b> Establish a tourism monitoring action team within the Destination Stewardship Network (see Initiative 9.1) composed of diverse community stakeholder organizations to identify key indicators being tracked currently. The Taos DSP Situation Analysis Report can be used as a definitive guide for this first step since it provides baseline data on a wide range of indicators.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine which sectors need to have their data represented in the destination data bank.</li> <li>Identify at least one representative organization for each sector, invite them to participate, and confirm their availability to participate in ongoing meetings.</li> <li>Establish terms of reference for action team contributions including anticipated timeline for activities and actions for the initial/baseline scope of work.</li> <li>Coordinate an initial meeting to define the monitoring themes using the GSTC-D standard as a guide, determine action team coordination, select core indicators using GSTC-D as guide, identify data sources, and define guidelines for data collection, validation, interpretation, and reporting.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>8.1.2</b> Define monitoring themes for data reporting and connect with organizations that have the information readily available. Potential monitoring themes may include (but are not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality of local economy and work: jobs, workforce earnings, tourism and sales taxes, other fees collected; tourism demand (e.g., visitation/visitor trends, overnight visitors: rooms night sold, occupancy rate).</li> <li>Quality of life: resident sentiment toward tourism: economic and non-economic impacts tourism development, mobility and infrastructure.</li> <li>Quality of natural environment: energy, water, waste, risks from changing climate, ecosystem health.</li> <li>Quality of the visitor experience: visitor satisfaction.</li> <li>Enabling environment for tourism: collaborative management structures such as the destination stewardship council and funding DSP implementation.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>8.1.3</b> Identify and catalog all core impact indicators, including data sources and contact information for participating organizations. Existing data sources include (but are not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indicators reported in the Taos DSP Situational Analysis Report (SAR); the Tourism Monitoring Action Team can use indicators included in the SAR as example indicators and data sources</li> <li>Indicators from previous community reporting</li> </ul>				
<p><b>9.2.3</b> Publish quarterly Taos DSP status reports, updating stakeholders and the community on goals, initiatives, and progress. Coordinate reports through the interim destination stewardship network and establish two-way communication channels.</p>				
<p><b>9.2.4</b> Coordinate with key organizations responsible for local, regional, and state-level plans aligned with Taos DSP goals, including the Comprehensive Plan, MainStreet's urban redevelopment, transportation, housing, and climate action initiatives.</p>				

Priority Actions	Q1 2025	Q2 2025	Q3 2025	Q4 2025
<p><b>9.3.1</b> The Town of Taos and Taos County lead discussions with the Destination Stewardship Network and key stakeholders, including the New Mexico Department of Tourism, to explore options for a permanent collaborative tourism management structure. After wide consultation, consensus is sought on the preferred option and timeline for establishing this permanent structure. See more details associated to this initiative in Section 4: Action Plan.</p>				

\*See Section 4: Action Plan for detailed description of initiatives and full list of implementation organizations

## Year 3 Priority Actions

Priority Actions	Q1 2026	Q2 2026	Q3 2026	Q4 2026
<p><b>1.1.5.</b> Create and deploy a simple, collaborative visitor sentiment survey bi-annually that can be widely shared and distributed by all tourism businesses. Analyze and share data with Taos residents and tourism stakeholders.</p>				
<p><b>1.2.5</b> Building on existing Taos County Extension and New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension Service work to create a local's guide to stewardship in Taos– specifically for residents and second homeowners–on how to protect and respect the land, water, and cultures of Taos. Enlist the real estate industry, local governments, and community groups to distribute and potentially help fund the project. See Jackson Hole Mountain Neighbor Handbook for an example.</p>				
<p><b>1.2.7</b> Secure funding for unified signage and wayfinding that incorporate stewardship branding and a message that integrates cultural and historical elements into existing and new trail designs.</p>				
<p><b>1.3.1</b> Develop an integrated marketing and communications strategy that includes the key elements outlined within this priority initiative. Utilize the Stewardship Communications Action Team to oversee education programs and ensure outreach campaigns integrate visitor education in all destination marketing efforts. Support the full reactivation of the Enchanted Circle Marketing Cooperative to get regional input and collaborate on the integrated marketing and communications strategy. With its recent reinstatement of nonprofit status, the Enchanted Circle Marketing Cooperative is poised to become a permanent mechanism for regional marketing endeavors.</p>				
<p><b>1.3.2</b> Develop “How to Taos” guidelines specifically for visitors that outline “know before you go” trip planning, principles of responsible recreation, environmental stewardship, respectful interactions with the arts and cultural communities, reciprocity, and general local etiquette and tips.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tap into elder wisdom. Invest in gathering strong storytelling assets. Consider a Taoseño voices podcast. Enlist community elders from the Pueblo, Hispano, immigrant, and artist communities in a storytelling initiative to develop content for educational marketing.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>1.3.3</b> Develop content distribution strategies to ensure consistency and continuity of responsible visitor messaging and campaigns among frontline stakeholder groups, and use platforms that reach visitors throughout their experience (at the planning stage, pre-arrival, and while in the destination).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporate educational messaging into the Town of Taos' Visit Taos traditional marketing, branding, and social campaigns and key messaging on Visit Taos.</li> <li>• Consider touch points such as video content in the airport, digital marketing and social media in stores, lodgings, rental homes and restaurants. Provide local businesses with training and a toolkit for disseminating responsible visitor education and messaging among their employees, including frontline workers and guide services. Include local businesses and frontline workers in tourism ambassador program opportunities.</li> <li>• Provide local businesses with a toolkit to help amplify content and key messaging of any marketing campaigns launched.</li> <li>• Consider free wifi terms of usage like All Together Sante Fe where anyone who uses the free wifi reads and agrees to certain behaviors in exchange for use of free wifi.</li> </ul>				

Priority Actions	Q1 2026	Q2 2026	Q3 2026	Q4 2026
<p><b>1.3.6</b> Develop and market itineraries for stewardship/cultural-minded visitors and voluntourism opportunities for the public such as resilience, sustainability, and regeneration initiatives, and create a way to accept climate offset donations from visitors and donate proceeds to local organizations (such as tours of Acequias, Develop communications to promote these opportunities. See Initiatives 2.1 and 2.2 for new tourism product experiences and events to include in these efforts.</p>				
<p><b>2.3.3</b> Develop tourism business development workshops to support new and existing entrepreneurs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer workshops and training sessions focused on topics relevant to tourism business development, such as marketing, customer service, and sustainable practices.</li> <li>• Invite industry experts and successful entrepreneurs to share their insights and experiences.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>2.3.1</b> Develop a business incubation program based on existing local resources specifically tailored to tourism-related enterprises.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide mentorship, training, and resources to help entrepreneurs develop viable business plans and strategies.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>2.3.2</b> Connect emerging tourism businesses with financing options such as grants, loans, or investment opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with financial institutions to create specialized funding programs for tourism startups.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>3.1.2</b> Create a workforce recruitment fund that pools resources from businesses (scaled contributions) through the associations to create strategic partnerships for an industry-level workforce recruitment initiative. The fund will cover the costs for contracting a workforce facilitator/project manager who will oversee recruitment, job postings, incentives and media promotion as well as digital promotional activities.</p>				
<p><b>4.1.2</b> Increase the number and diversity of community members on political, civic and community nonprofit boards by creating a bilingual directory of local non-profit and civic board opportunities and providing free board member training to people interested in pursuing those opportunities. Expand on existing resources identified by Taos Community Foundation. This database ideally becomes a one-stop resource for funding opportunities. (Example: <a href="https://www.trpc.org/343/Grant-Sources">https://www.trpc.org/343/Grant-Sources</a>). Expand this database over time to include mentoring opportunities, education, and funding for local youth to access local recreation and art assets, experiences, and amenities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include volunteer, mentoring, internship, and job opportunities.</li> </ul>				

Priority Actions	Q1 2026	Q2 2026	Q3 2026	Q4 2026
<p><b>4.1.4</b> Engage local communities, realtors and businesses to preserve and promote local history, stories, and culture. This action is closely aligned with actions outlined in Initiatives 1.2 and 1.3 and should be considered in conjunction with them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a Taos community asset map that highlights existing and neglected cultural assets. This action should be completed through Taos County's "Cultural and Outdoor Asset Mapping Study for Equitable and Sustainable Development" that commenced in 2024.</li> <li>• Design and implement a "Local Treasures" program to formally preserve Taos' cultural, environmental, and community sites.</li> <li>• Collect local history and stories through a StoryCorps storytelling project; invite elders to share their stories and youth to assist in the collection of stories.</li> <li>• Partner with University of New Mexico Taos to create educational material to share with visitors, including second homeowners, that highlights local assets and stories, and how visitors can respectfully interact and engage with the community, culture, and land; share with businesses, realtors, hotels, Airbnb, and tour operators so they can share with visitors.</li> <li>• Provide talking points on history and local culture for businesses to share with guests.</li> <li>• Create an incentive program for local businesses that encourages and rewards them for actively engaging in promoting and preserving Taos' history and culture.</li> <li>• Develop an ongoing program of regional local discounts for tourism-specific businesses and experiences.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>4.1.5</b> Expand the database to support and promote non-profit, civic, and school programs encouraging outdoor recreation through equitable access to public lands and the associated recreational infrastructure. Address transportation challenges for marginalized communities to access recreation.</p>				
<p><b>4.1.6</b> Revive the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce to create a centralized voice for the Hispanic/Latino entrepreneur and business community.</p>				
<p><b>4.2.3</b> Create an action plan to present to regulatory bodies by identifying, determining the legality, and prioritizing potential regulations and policy changes. Some examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enact a real estate sales tax on new home sales to fund community programs such as affordable housing initiatives, community infrastructure and social services.</li> <li>• Create tiered property taxes or fees for second homeowners and non-resident landowners to create additional revenue to invest in affordable housing and address gentrification issues.</li> <li>• Implement Inclusionary Zoning to require new developments to provide a percentage of workforce/affordable housing ownership and rental opportunities for public service workers such as social workers, firefighters, and teachers (see below).</li> <li>• Create and enforce building codes that require new business construction to align with the historical aesthetics of Taos.</li> <li>• Pass regulations that minimize the negative impact and maximize the benefits of short-term vacation rentals for local homeowners such as creating ordinances requiring local ownership of STRs and tax incentives for renting long-term.</li> <li>• Loosen regulations for RV and mobile homes on private property.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>5.1.4</b> Employ the networks of action team members to organize regular forums for dialogue with real estate agents and developers, exploring opportunities for incorporating affordable housing units into new development projects.</p>				

Priority Actions	Q1 2026	Q2 2026	Q3 2026	Q4 2026
<p><b>5.1.6</b> Launch a Taos workforce housing education campaign with the action team that facilitates better access to funding/lending and housing options in the county for the tourism workforce.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage tourism business owners, both large businesses and small operators, in the dissemination of information and resources to their employees.</li> <li>Provide employers with digital and physical resources to share with employees, providing information on buying homes, accessing local lenders and on low-income housing tax credits..</li> <li>Partner with local banks and lenders to discuss potential discounts or programs to finance tourism workforce housing.</li> <li>Provide training to local landowners on how-to and the benefits of developing housing/ ADUs on their properties that support seasonal and full-time renters in the tourism workforce.</li> <li>Launch an informational campaign aimed at new property owners and 2nd home owners on the impacts of home ownership, short-term rentals, and playing their part in creating a more equitable housing market in Taos.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>5.2.1</b> Develop a structured Employer-Assisted Housing Program (EAH) for the region in partnership with tourism businesses who commit to individually and collectively provide support, housing, and resources for workers seeking housing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a mechanism and framework within the EAH program for employers to provide financial/rental assistance to their employees, while also leveraging the collective pool to support tourism workers broadly.</li> <li>Promote matched savings by employers and employees to help purchase a home.</li> <li>Conduct research and if feasible, implement EAH initiative to create a fund or loan program to finance the construction of ADUs with the requirement that they be used for workforce/ affordable housing for a set period of time.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>6.1.4</b> Launch a public education campaign to increase resident usage and knowledge of trail systems and pedestrian zones.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure resident involvement in the development of signage and interpretive information along trails, creating buy-in and a sense of community ownership over trails. Signage - both wayfinding and interpretive - should incorporate ideas, historical context, and cultural information from Taos' many diverse communities, which will tie its non-motorized infrastructure to the stewards of the land. Interpretive and storytelling components can be incorporated into the Downtown Taos Wayfinding Plan - strengthening existing wayfinding frameworks.</li> <li>Ensure road/trail designs consider all users, including those with disabilities.</li> <li>Identify opportunities to work with local artists and incorporate their creativity into interpretive / cultural signage.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>6.1.5</b> With Town and County officials, advocate for codified funding for trails and alternative transportation solutions, with a certain percentage of allocation from new construction permits and road developments to be designated to sustainable, non-motorized infrastructure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocate for bike lanes and safe pedestrian walkways in planning for road construction and reconstruction projects.</li> </ul>				

Priority Actions	Q1 2026	Q2 2026	Q3 2026	Q4 2026
<p><b>6.1.7</b> Install secure bicycle parking in strategic locations in town, near trailheads, and in connecting communities to encourage adoption of alternative transportation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with the community to determine high-use areas and user needs for station placement.</li> <li>• Seek sponsorships from local businesses for funding.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>6.2.3</b> Collaborate with local government to explore easing permitting requirements for traditional owner-built structures, thereby fostering traditional construction practices. Advocate for these changes in tandem with the housing action team described in priority action 5.1.1</p>				
<p><b>6.2.4</b> Support the Town of Taos' development and implementation of the Downtown Metropolitan Redevelopment (MRA) Plan through a Destination Stewardship Network communications strategy that bolsters resident use and ownership of the plaza and downtown areas. This communications strategy would be developed as a part of the "Residents First" priority action described in 6.3.3.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design this communication strategy to also teach visitors about the significance of the plaza and downtown areas to Taos' cultural and historical fabric.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>6.3.1</b> Work closely with transportation authorities, in line with ICIP, to advocate for improved frequency of existing public transit routes and development of additional routes that address transit service gaps. Focus on service expansion should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public transportation between downtown Taos and surrounding communities and towns.</li> <li>• Connection between Taos and Taos Ski Valley, especially for residents.</li> <li>• Linking public transportation and trails systems.</li> <li>• Shuttle service between Santa Fe airport and Taos.</li> <li>• Promote use of Microtransit service (MyBlue) app to book trips</li> </ul>				
<p><b>6.3.3</b> Develop a "Residents First" communications initiative led by the Destination Stewardship Network in partnership with the business community to ensure 'tourism' products, services, infrastructure, and experiences are accessible to residents, emphasizing their importance to the local economy and culture. Within this resident-focused initiative, actions should include partnering with local businesses to expand the adoption of restaurant reservation priority for residents, offer discount opportunities at Taos Ski Valley Inc, and encourage resident access and participation in other tourism experiences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure this communications initiative incentivizes public transit use by demonstrating how it can connect riders to key destinations in town, stimulate local economies, and better connect them to place.</li> <li>• Identify opportunities to support Taos Land Trust to advance the Safe Routes to School initiative through this campaign.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>6.3.4</b> Partner with the local business community and NCRTD to expand park and ride opportunities in Taos's downtown area.</p>				

Priority Actions	Q1 2026	Q2 2026	Q3 2026	Q4 2026
<p><b>7.1.1</b> Create community-wide training and “Stewardship-Certified” designation initially targeting tour operators and accommodations and subsequently retail and restaurant businesses. Many programs use the Global Sustainable Tourism Standard for Hotels and Tour Operators as the framework for their sustainability practices. Two such examples are: Vail’s Actively Green program that is applicable to any business and Jackson Hole’s Business Emerald Sustainability Tier (BEST) Certification Program that focuses on accommodation providers and tour operators.</p>				
<p><b>7.1.2</b> Provide local businesses with training and a toolkit for distributing responsible stewardship education materials to visitors and to employees, including frontline workers and guide services.</p>				
<p><b>7.1.3</b> Create and implement technical education to support improvement in small tourism businesses’ marketing reach, such as SEO, reservations, social media best practices.</p>				
<p><b>7.1.4</b> Work with the Stewardship Communication Action Team to devise a campaign to identify and promote Stewardship Certified Businesses to visitors in the planning, booking, in-the-destination, and post-visit stages.</p>				
<p><b>7.2.3</b> Create a Memorandum of Understanding for the Enchanted Circle partners (town, county, public land, private sector, and nonprofit organizations) to sign confirming their commitment to implementing environmental stewardship action initiatives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regularly inform public officials on priorities for potential regulations such as energy efficiency mitigation in new buildings, water quality and quantity changes, and any others.</li> <li>• Develop a centralized, collaborative grant writing strategy.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>7.2.5</b> Explore existing political will and funding for a Watershed Development Plan recommended by the EPA to address water quality and quantity issues as a top priority. This might be possible by expanding the scope of the Taos County Wildfire Org/Tres Rios initiative.</p>				
<p><b>7.2.6</b> Once local environmental threats have successfully been identified and prioritized, develop a thorough Climate Action Plan and strategies for responding to environmental challenges of a warming Taos. Consider sustainable destination certification.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish reduction targets specific to the tourism economy, lodging, transportation, and events.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>7.2.7</b> Work with the Stewardship Communications Action Team to provide transparent updates, data monitoring, elicit resident input, offer opportunities for civic involvement, and educate residents and visitors on their part in stewarding the destination. (see Initiative 1.2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For residents and visitors, create and market a database of community groups working toward environmental stewardship with contacts and volunteer opportunities.</li> <li>• Consider an interactive “I see change” campaign, including an app.</li> </ul>				

Priority Actions	Q1 2026	Q2 2026	Q3 2026	Q4 2026
<p><b>8.2.1</b> The Tourism Monitoring Action Team should consider partnering with an independent third-party such as a university or contractor that will conduct the data analysis and interpretation to communicate the full scope of tourism's impacts on the economy, community and natural and cultural assets. The partner should prepare the tourism impact monitoring report in close collaboration with the monitoring action team.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annually convene the monitoring action team to validate and ensure collection of all relevant impact indicators.</li> <li>Collaborate with an independent third-party to facilitate team discussions regarding data interpretation and analysis of trends from the previous season and preceding years.</li> <li>Compile an objective report summarizing data findings, facilitated by an independent third-party, to provide an objective overview of the insights gained. The report should weave together a compelling narrative that highlights the interconnectedness of the community, tourism, and sustainability. This narrative should be conveyed through a blend of data, infographics in a dashboard format and storytelling techniques to engage stakeholders effectively.</li> <li>The report should encompass updates and trends on indicators from the Taos DSP SAR, community-defined impact indicators, user capacity indicators, and destination's sustainability performance</li> </ul>				
<p><b>8.2.2</b> Annually release the report to the public through easily accessible media channels.</p>				
<p><b>9.3.2</b> Secure funding to establish the preferred permanent collaborative management structure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocate for the allocation of Lodger's Tax revenue to fund the structure.</li> <li>Develop a comprehensive fundraising strategy targeting key funding sources at the local, state, and federal levels, and work to secure financial support needed.</li> </ul>				

\*See Section 4: Action Plan for detailed description of initiatives and full list of implementation organizations



PREPARED BY:

International Institute  
of Tourism Studies

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY



CENTER FOR  
RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL