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Filemon Sanchez Park & Softball Fields

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MASTER PLAN
Acronym List

ADA     Americans with Disabilities Act
BLM     Bureau of Land Management
BMP     Bicycle Master Plan
CIP     Capital Improvement Plan
COPD    Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease
FEMA    Federal Emergency Management Agency
FIFA    Federation Internationale de Football Association
FTE     Full Time Equivalent employee
JPA     Joint Powers Agreement
MOU     Memorandum of Understanding
MP      Master Plan
NM      New Mexico
NMGRT   New Mexico Gross Receipts Tax
NMRA    New Mexico Recreation and Parks Association
NREPA   National Recreation and Park Association
PRAB    Parks and Recreation Advisory Board
TCA     Taos Center for the Arts
TCA     Taos Community Auditorium
TLT     Taos Land Trust
TMS     Taos Municipal Schools
TOT     Town of Taos
TPL     Trust for Public Land
UNESCO  United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
US      United States
USFS    United States Forest Service
USSA    United States Softball Association
YFC     Youth and Family Center
The proposed plans strike a balance between purposely planned recreational use and dedicated open space. Each recommended site master plan for the town’s primary park and recreation facilities builds on existing assets and outlines suggested improvements.

**Kit Carson Park**

In the heart of downtown and central to the community consciousness, Kit Carson Park will continue to serve as a cherished open space environment, providing a picturesque shade of towering cottonwood trees, expansive lawns, and a range of active and passive recreational activities.

**Fred Baca Park**

Strategic enhancements to Fred Baca Park will expand its park area, restore its wetland, and convert the adjacent new park areas.

**Taos Eco Park**

The continued build-out of Taos Eco Park and its transformation into a multi-sport facility with park amenities can establish it as a regional destination for a range of competitive sports.

**Taos Youth and Family Center**

Already distinguished as a regional recreation facility, expanded indoor facilities complemented by additional outdoor recreational offerings will bolster its use by local and regional sports enthusiasts.

The plan recommends following design standards that align with the inherent characteristics of each facility while improving recreational offerings to meet public needs.

The plan recommends following design standards that align with the inherent characteristics of each facility while improving recreational offerings to meet public needs.

**Implementation**

Taos parks are at a crossroads: continuing along the current path of maintaining facilities and providing minor upgrades with incremental funding or identifying funding strategies and funding larger investments in park improvements. In either case, public and private funds should be spent judiciously and in a way that aligns with the ultimate goals and vision for each park, as set forth in this plan. A failure to do so on a consistent basis—whether improvements are small or larger—could result in the erosion of public trust and the eventual degradation of the essence and character of each facility.

In the past, Taos has benefited economically from the use of its parks for large public and private events, concerts, particularly the Fred Baca Park and Kit Carson Park. Moving forward, it must also be cautious to balance economic gains with continued stewardship and re-investment in park infrastructure rehabilitation in order to maintain the health, safety, and beauty of its facilities.

In consideration of funding realities, park master plans outlined in this document are intended to be implemented in phases, depending on funding availability and priorities set by the Town. The plan acknowledges that regular users of town parks and recreation facilities extend far beyond town boundaries. Efforts to fund future major improvements must be pursued at a larger scale in order to distribute expenses among residents and visitors alike. The plan recommends following design standards that align with the inherent characteristics of each facility while improving recreational offerings to meet public needs.
CHAPTER 1

Introduction
Plan Purpose and Need

The Taos Parks + Recreation Master Plan provides a framework for future improvements to the Town’s parks and recreation offerings. The goal of this document is to provide a guide to reimagine Taos parks in a way that honors the past and promotes the future of this unique town. Taos parks and recreation facilities are widely used for both passive and active recreation. Each has a distinct character and array of recreational offerings. The purpose of the plan is to propose improvements to the existing system of parks and recreation facilities to meet existing and future needs. Detailed existing conditions assessments and plans were generated for the following facilities: - Kit Carson Park - Fred Baca Park - Taos Eco Park - Taos Youth and Family Center

The 2018 Taos Parks + Recreation Master Plan is the primary planning document for the Town of Taos Parks and Recreation Department designed to assist Town leaders, staff, and citizens with managing current future needs and resources. As priorities and demands shift over time, so too is the need to engage in comprehensive planning to help guide decision-making within this dynamic process.

Part of a Suite of Planning Documents

The Taos Vision 2030 Master Plan recommended developing a Master Plan for Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Natural Resource Protection. The Taos Vision 2030 Plan outlined the need to inventory existing natural resources worth preserving, plan an open space network that connects to these resources, make recommendations for phased land acquisition, and identify funding opportunities. As such, this document should be considered as part of a suite of recent planning efforts with a focus on parks, open space, trails, and recreation.

A Plan for Everyone

Taos is a diverse community and its parks and recreation facilities serve an even broader community with a wide range of needs, interests, and preferences for parks and recreation facilities. With such a diversity of users, understanding the types of facilities that best serve users needs, including amenities within each park or recreation facility, is crucial to the planning, design, and programming of future facilities. This plan intends to address the needs and preferences of all Taos residents of different demographic and interests. Some of the primary user group categories include:

- Residents of different ages:
  - Sports Groups
  - Recreation Center Users
  - Outdoor Recreation

- Visitors / Tourists

The 2018 Taos Parks + Recreation Master Plan (this document) guides the improvement and expansion of the town’s park and recreation system to meet public needs.

While the 2018 Taos Parks + Recreation Master Plan examines the broader park and recreation context and provides recommendations at the larger scale, its primary focus is to establish a vision for existing facilities and outline improvements to existing parks and recreation facilities to meet existing and future needs. Detailed existing conditions assessments and plans were generated for the following facilities:

- Kit Carson Park
- Fred Baca Park
- Taos Eco Park
- Taos Youth and Family Center

Image 1-1: Fred Baca Park and the Rio Fernando wetland.
The Town of Taos Parks and Recreation Master Plan builds on a series of community plans and initiatives that have been adopted over the last few decades, including the Vision 2020 Plan and the Taos Trails Plan. Recent more regionally-focused planning efforts have been conducted with assistance from the Trust for Public Lands (TPL) to more comprehensively map, analyze, and direct community conservation and development.

The Taos County Community Conservation and the Enchanted Circle Trails Plan illustrate this larger scale planning. A common element of these plans is the protection and preservation of existing cherished assets combined with the thoughtful implementation of recreational improvements that address the needs of a growing community.

Multiple plans identify the need to expand the trail system and connect safely to parks and other area destinations.

Several current planning initiatives are calling for the preservation of existing open space combined with the integration of cultural and historical components. The Rio Fernando Park, directly east of Fred Baca Park, is an example of this, where the Taos Land Trust is planning a new park that incorporates local agricultural traditions, historical components. The Rio Fernando Park, for the preservation of existing open space combined with the integration of cultural and historical components. The Rio Fernando Park, directly east of Fred Baca Park, is an example of this, where the Taos Land Trust is planning a new park that incorporates local agricultural traditions, and offers a range of passive and active uses. Located in a densely populated area of town close to the Plaza, it is well-visited by tourists and locals alike.

The youth + Family Center is a regional recreation destination for swimming and ice sports. Additional outdoor facilities (skate park, playground) attract local residents.

Additional open spaces and recreation areas are owned and operated by private entities, Taos Municipal Schools, local non-profits, or governmental agencies. These have been acknowledged and considered in the evaluation (see Figure 3-1: Taos Open Space + Trails Map).
Benefits of Parks + Recreation

TOWN OF TAOS PARKS + RECREATION

Communities across New Mexico recognize that outdoor recreation supports health, contributes to a high quality of life and—perhaps most importantly—attracts and sustains employers and families. Investing in outdoor infrastructure attracts employers and active workforces, energizing these communities thrive economically and socially.

Benefits of Parks and Recreation

Source: National Recreation and Parks Association - Why Parks and Recreation are Essential Community Services, 2010

− Improve individual and community health and wellness
− Promote places to be physically active
− Enable low-income children, adults and seniors to access parks

Infrastructure

Parks and recreation programs generate revenue directly from fees and charges, but more importantly, provide significant indirect revenues to local and regional economies from sports tournaments and special events, and sales of recreation-related products. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, creating, improving and maintaining parks and other outdoor recreation areas are the top three reasons that business cite in relocation decisions in a number of studies.

Economic Value

Parks improve the local tax base and increase property values. It is proven that private property value increases the value of privately owned land by as much as $1,000 per year for every $100 spent for all parks and recreation activities. Parks and recreation facilities provide locations for not only active and passive recreation but also venues for community events and concerts. This serves both local residents and visitors. As a known tourist destination, Taos’ parks and open space system is an integral part of the town’s vibrant cultural identity that visitors experience. As a known tourist destination, Taos’ parks and open space system is an integral part of the town’s vibrant cultural identity that visitors experience.

Taos and its surroundings is well known for its beauty and bountiful recreational opportunities. Hiking, biking, river rafting, climbing, hunting and fishing, and skiing are all accessible within a 20-mile radius. Taos is home to this range of outdoor recreational opportunities is a major draw for both tourists and new residents. It also contributes to the local economy. In Taos County, Taos Ski Valley, for example, generates between $13 million and $14 million annually, an amount that is expected to increase to $22 million annually by 2015.

Within the town of Taos, parks and open space provide locations for not only active and passive recreation but also venues for community events and concerts. This serves both local residents and visitors alike. An array of local sports organizations such as Taos Youth Soccer and Taos Little League, which are held at these facilities where feasible, which helps the local economy. There is a strong demand among organized sports groups for improved and expanded facilities in order to increase the number of opportunities hosted in Taos for a broader range of sports.

Social and Community Interaction

Parks and recreation programs provide places for healthy, active family, friends, and neighbors to gather and play. This helps the local economy. As a known tourist destination, Taos’ parks and open space system is an integral part of the town’s vibrant cultural identity that visitors experience.

Social Importance

Parks are the places that people go to get healthy and stay fit. Parks are the places that people go to get healthy and stay fit. Parks are a tangible reflection of the quality of life in a community. They provide identity for citizens and are a major factor in the perception of quality of life in a given community. Parks and recreation programs are critical to improving the health of communities and are important in the education of youth and adults.

Parks provide gathering places for families and social groups as well as for individuals of all ages and ability levels. Parks provide gathering places for families and social groups as well as for individuals of all ages and ability levels.

Public Safety

The Taos Land Trust, in coordination with Holy Cross Hospital is working on instituting a Park Rx program to link patients and healthcare providers with area parks and trails. Coordinating efforts to improve trails and walking paths within parks with this initiative is a first step to ensuring that the Taos community has a strong and connected parks system that serve the health benefits of Taos residents who exercise at least three times per week.

Economic Value

Parks improve the local tax base and increase property values. It is proven that private property value increases the value of privately owned land by as much as $1,000 per year for every $100 spent for all parks and recreation activities. Parks and recreation facilities provide locations for not only active and passive recreation but also venues for community events and concerts. This serves both local residents and those who participate in recreational, community, and other activities are more likely to have better mental and physical health and live longer lives.

Parks and recreation programs provide places for healthy, active family, friends, and neighbors to gather and play. This helps the local economy. As a known tourist destination, Taos’ parks and open space system is an integral part of the town’s vibrant cultural identity that visitors experience. As a known tourist destination, Taos’ parks and open space system is an integral part of the town’s vibrant cultural identity that visitors experience.

Community Health

Access to recreation and the outdoors contributes directly to the health of the local community. This is especially important in Taos, where community health assessments conducted in 2016 (Holy Cross Hospital) indicate major concerns in levels of obesity and chronic diseases as compared to national rates. Taos Health Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percent difference in National rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obesity</td>
<td>33.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic Disease</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic COPD</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only 58.6% of Taosenos get regular vigorous exercise, 11% lower than the national average. Despite this, the interest in attending educational classes to improve health is present in the community. In a recent community survey, the top three educational classes of interest to respondents were about Fitness, Wellness, and Nutrition. The community health condition is exacerbated by persistent poverty and an associated lack of access to health care, substance abuse treatment resources, and adequate diets. 

Pretrails

The Taos Land Trust, in coordination with Holy Cross Hospital is working on instituting a Park Rx program to link patients and healthcare providers with area parks and trails. Coordinating efforts to improve trails and walking paths within parks with this initiative is a first step to ensuring that the Taos community has a strong and connected parks system that serve the health benefits of Taos residents who exercise at least three times per week.

Just as water, sewer, and public safety are considered essential public services, parks are vital to establishing and maintaining the quality of life in a community, ensuring the health of families and youth, and contributing to the economic and environmental well-being of a community and a region.

The Taos Eco-Park trails community events and social gatherings throughout the year.

CHAPTER 1 | INTRODUCTION
The Taos Parks Master Plan included an extensive public outreach process within a focused time frame. This process brought the park master plan project to the attention of sports leagues, local schools, businesses, and neighboring residents.

The planning team worked with the Town of Taos to outline a broad public outreach strategy to maximize feedback and participation. A range of electronic, paper, and social media was utilized to facilitate communication (e-mail notices, town facebook page, newspaper press releases, etc). Notices and links on the Town’s webpage provided up-to-date information on upcoming meetings and links to documents.

A significant component of the public process involved an online survey for feedback on the park vision and goals, park program elements, and their arrangement on the site. This input directly impacted the direction of the park plans. Public meetings were held at the Town council chambers, centrally located in downtown Taos.

Survey - Park Programming
An online survey was conducted the month of November 2017 with a total of 762 respondents. Children 18 and under were asked to participate in the survey through the youth and Family Center, and represented almost 20% of the responses. Survey responses gave the planning team information on the public’s vision for the park facilities and also identified desired adjustments to current parks and recreation facilities. For an overview of survey results, see Chapter 4: Public Input; for complete survey sample and results, see Appendix B: Programming.

Interest Group Meetings
Informational meetings were conducted with key representatives from user groups affiliated with activities outlined in an initial program set by the Town of Taos. The goal was to acquire preliminary input on each group’s concerns, document how they currently utilize the parks, and anticipate needs and requirements to better serve each interest group. Each interest group met with the planning team over the course of two days.

The following interest groups were represented at the meetings:
- Organized Sports Leagues
- Educational Institutions
- Aecquia Association
- Taos Tree Board

A dominant theme that surfaced from these meetings was the need to improve maintenance and provide more facilities to accommodate increased interest in organized sports and park use in general.

Staff Input
Input sessions with Town of Taos staff highlighted challenges associated with providing community services and maintaining existing facilities with a small staff and limited operating budget. Staff were able to offer perspectives as citizens and users of the facilities as well as from the standpoint of town employees. Major concerns included limited funds, improving communication with the public, providing better safety and security, and centralizing maintenance operations.

Agencies
As partners and neighbors to Town parks and recreation properties, the following agencies were consulted and included in the planning process:
- Taos Land Trust (T LT)
- Taos Municipal Schools (TMS)
- Taos Center for the Arts / Taos Community Auditorium (TCA)
- Taos County

TOWN OF TAOS PARKS + RECREATION MASTER PLAN

INTRODUCTION

The first Taos Parks Master Plan public involvement meeting was held on Wednesday, December 13, 2017 (5:30 - 7:00 p.m.), 52 individuals signed in at the meeting with an estimated 80 people attending.

The meeting was conducted as an open house with a brief presentation early in the meeting to introduce the project. The meeting provided information on the park master plan project and allowed the public to provide input on the proposed park program and character.

Public comments were collected by documenting preferences and feedback at each park station and on project information boards. Some of the primary concerns raised by those who gave comments were:
- lack of maintenance of existing park elements
- feeling unsafe when visiting Town parks
- concerns about drug use and homelessness at Kit Carson Park
- interest in improved facility conditions and offerings

Public Input Survey
November 15 – 28, 2017
- existing conditions feedback
- existing conditions survey
- project introduction
- park gap analysis
- existing conditions assessment overview
- park + recreation overall recommendations
- proposed master plan - Taos Eco Park
- proposed master plan - Fred Baca Park
- proposed master plan - Kit Carson Park

Public Input Survey
February 24, 2018
- open public input on proposed master plans for Taos Eco Park, Fred Baca Park, and Kit Carson Park. 77 individuals signed in and an estimated 85 people attended.

The meeting was organized into three 1-hour segments, with each segment focusing on one of three Taos parks (Kit Carson Park, Taos Eco Park, Fred Baca Park) preceded by a brief Parks Master Plan overview presentation. An open house allowed attendees to view analysis maps and provide input on proposed park master plans.

Some of the primary concerns raised by those who gave comments included:
- Ecoland scheduling and functionality with multiple sports using fields
- Fred Baca wetlands being a sensitive resource near a proposed dog park
- further engaging acequia communities when revitalizing / relocating acequias
- request to engage both School and County representatives to support the plan.

Agencies Meetings
November 15, 2017 – Taos Aecquia Association
- Taos County
- Taos Center for the Arts
- Taos Community Auditorium (TCA)
- Taos Tree Board

Public Input Meeting 1 - programming
Tuesday, December 13, 2017
- project introduction
- survey results
- demographic
- park program feedback

Public Input Meeting 2 - master plan drafts
Saturday, February 24, 2018
- project introduction
- park gap analysis
- existing conditions assessment overview
- park + recreation overall recommendations
- proposed master plan - Taos Eco Park
- proposed master plan - Fred Baca Park
- proposed master plan - Kit Carson Park

Taos Town Council
Tuesday, May 22, 2018
- master plan review / approval
Although the Town of Taos was formally incorporated into a municipality in 1834, the area’s history of inhabitation goes back centuries and is closely tied to the Taos Pueblo, which borders the Town of Taos on its north side. Built between 1000 and 1450 A.D., Taos Pueblo is one of the oldest continually inhabited communities in the United States and continues to flourish.

Captain Hernando Alvarado was the first Spanish explorer to arrive in the Taos valley on August 29, 1540 as part of the Francisco Vasquez de Coronado Spanish expedition. The initial Spanish and Indian meeting was peaceful and marked the beginning of possible co-existence between two distinct cultures. Over the next seventy-five years, Spanish immigrants slowly settled the area and established small ranches and outposts. Not until around 1615 was the area’s history of inhabitation goes back centuries. The Taos Pueblo remains an amicable neighbor and the inherent culture and beauty of the area. The Taos Pueblo is a significant relic we see today were built. The fortified Taos plaza and surrounding buildings were built for protection and a place for gathering and trading.

Mexican War of Independence

Politics and war abroad eventually impacted the small village of Don Fernando de Taos in a big way. France invaded Spain in 1808 and Mexico was formally established as an American Territory in 1848. The Treaty outlined a significant boundary configurations, for 62 years before America’s independence. Years later, Mexico was officially established by don Juan de Onate.

Since becoming the state of New Mexico in 1912 Modern Day

“Taos is now a community overflowing with a long proud history, three cultures living side by side, and a heritage of colorful people, its diversity makes Taos a very interesting and desirable place to live and do business.” - town of Taos

Taos Timeline of Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1540</td>
<td>Coronado’s Entrada into New Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1610</td>
<td>Taos Pueblo declared a village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1680</td>
<td>Pueblo Revolt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1692-96</td>
<td>DeVargas’ reconquest of New Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1700’s</td>
<td>Land Grant Villages established in the Taos Valley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1808</td>
<td>Mexico establishes independence from Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1821</td>
<td>Mexico declares independence from Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1835</td>
<td>Padre Martinez brings the printing press to the Taos Valley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1847</td>
<td>Taos Rebellion; Taos Hispanics and Indians under attack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1848</td>
<td>Mexican - American War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1859</td>
<td>kit Carson’s massacre in the Taos Valley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>Civil War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>Taos Ski Valley resort founded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Taos Eco Park - Phase I opens</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Demographics

The Town of Taos is roughly 5.4 sq. mi. and is isolated directly south of the historic Taos Pueblo, west of the Carson National Forest, and north of the village of Ranchos de Taos. Taos is considered as part of the Taos micropolitan area. Taos is a small mountain town in Northern New Mexico. Taos is located in Taos County, which is situated directly south of the historic Taos Pueblo, west of the Carson National Forest, and north of the village of Ranchos de Taos. Taos is considered part of the Taos micropolitan area.

Population

In 2016, the population of the Town of Taos was estimated at 5,763 (US Census Population and Housing Estimates). Compared to the 5,716 population recorded within the Town’s limits in the 2010 Census, this reflects a very modest increase in growth (0.8% total growth / 0.14% annual growth).

Historic Growth

The recent stagnation in growth is in stark contrast to historic population trends within the Town limits. Over the last 60 years, population growth in Taos has averaged a 21% increase each decade (from 1,815 in 1950 to 5,716 in 2010). With the exception of the central eastern portion of the Town that has seen a 23% population increase over the last decade, the bulk of significant growth has occurred in the county to the west, outside town limits. This trend reflects the availability of land for housing.

Projected Growth

Due to recent adjustments in growth compared to historic trends, it is difficult to project future growth in Taos. At the very least, assuming a 0.14% annual growth rate, the population in 2040 could be 5,960, or an additional 197 people. In typical average annual growth is assumed at 3.58% (average annual town growth 1950-2010), the population in 2040 could be as high as 10,126, or an additional 4,383 people.

Gender

The town is comprised of 53.8% female and 46.2% male inhabitants, indicating a slight female majority population than other areas. State and national statistics are more gender balanced with 50.8% female and 49.4% male (New Mexico), and 50.8% female and 49.2% male (US).

Ethnicity

The majority of Town residents are of Hispanic descent (52%), with 40% claiming White/Anglo origin and nearly 5% American Indian heritage. By comparison, nationally this proportion is Hispanic (17%), White (62%) and Native American (1%). The remaining town population (3%) identify as another race including African American, Asian, and Pacific Islander.

Taos’ racial makeup is diverse and is experiencing changes; most of the growth is occurring in Hispanic and White populations. This is expected to continue in the future.

Income and Poverty

Historically, the median income of Taos households has been well below state and national averages. This has contributed to chronic poverty among almost a quarter of residents who live below the national poverty line. Compounding this, Taos has one of the highest Native American populations (NMIDR 8.5%) in the state. Taos County’s tax rate is lower than the state.

The unemployment rate in Taos is 7.20%, compared to 5.9% statewide and 4.10% nationally. With a large portion of income in Taos coming from inactive sources (interest, rents, dividends - 21% and government assistance -31%), there is a lack of business activity and employment opportunities for working age residents, which aligns with demographic trends.

Population Distribution

The greatest density of population (represented by darker color tones) is concentrated in the north part of town, the traditional town center, with the least dense area located in the southeast or newer developments. Geographically, households with children are more likely to live in neighborhoods not directly adjacent to the Taos Pueblo along the northern town boundary.

Households

The total number of households in the Town of Taos was 2,672 in 2010. Although households with children or youth under the age of 18 account for 70% or 26.4% of the total town population, almost 45% of households in the town are occupied by the families. The other 55% of households are either those living alone (49%) or with roommates or unmarried partners (6%).

Despite an apparent lack of affordable housing in the Town, there is a vacancy rate of almost 20% in the current housing stock.

18
The prominent of the mountains is evident both visually and culturally, serving as a recreational destination for hiking, skiing, and other outdoor activities. Just north of Taos, Wheeler Peak, the highest point in New Mexico, extends to 13,161 feet. At an elevation of 6,867 feet above sea level, Taos has a semi-arid climate with extreme variations of temperature and low rainfall (12.3 inches/year average). Waterways in the vicinity of Town include the Rio Pueblo de Taos and the Rio Fernando de Taos. The Rio Pueblo, a tributary of the Rio Grande and a contributor to the Rio Grande, forms the eastern periphery of town, the steeper sloped foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains to the east, the Town of Taos to the west. These corridors have occasional pinon / juniper trees. Dry arroyo beds visible by the level terrain and mature perimeter willow, siberian elm). The arroyos serve as wildlife corridors connecting the foothills to the rivers to the west. The riparian corridors along the Rio Pueblo and Rio Fernando extend from the northern and eastern foothills across the northern portion of the town to the west. These corridors have flowing water for most of the year and help sustain local wildlife and a host of riparian plant plantings of deciduous trees (often cottonwood, willow, siberian elm). Riparian The riparian corridors along the Rio Pueblo and the Rio Fernando extend from the northern and eastern foothills across the northern portion of the town to the west. Those corridors have flowing water for most of the year and help sustain local wildlife and a host of riparian plant communities.
CULTURAL CONTEXT

Identified over thousands of years ago as a place of settlement, the climate and resources of the Taos area have contributed to its rich cultural history. With the adoption of farming as a means of subsistence around 3000 BC, shelters became more elaborate and social structures more extensive.

Taos Pueblo as it is known today is believed to have been built over a thousand years ago. Considered the longest continuously inhabited community, the Taos Pueblo consists of two main adobe structures (the north and south houses) with a central court bisected by the Rio Pueblo. Today, about 150 people live within the Pueblo full time with over 1,900 Taos Indians living on Taos Pueblo lands. Taos' important cultural heritage has been recognized by its designation as a National Historic Landmark (1965), the return of Blue Lake to the Pueblo (1970), and its admittance as a UNESCO World Heritage Site (1992) as one of the most significant cultural landmarks in the world.

The advent of Spanish exploration in the region began in 1540 when a detachment of soldiers from Coronado’s artillery along with a Catholic chaplain were welcomed by pueblo representatives. This begins a long and troubled relationship between Taos Pueblo Indians and Spanish settlers. In addition to the Catholic religion, the Spanish bring a tradition of farming and irrigation through a system of ditches, or acequias.

Anglo settlers arrived in the early 1800’s for trade and settlement. More recently, Taos became a haven for artists, beginning in 1888 when Ernest Blumenschein and Bert Phillips arrive. They form the Taos Society of Artists in 1915 and help attract a number of notable artists.

Taos Pueblo Lands

The Taos Pueblo, a sovereign nation with over a population of 1,135 (2010 Census), is comprised of land totaling almost 111,380 acres. A spiritually significant portion of this land (48,711.8 acres) is the watershed of the Rio Pueblo, which originates at Blue Lake in the Carson National Forest (Sangre de Cristo Mountains) east of the Pueblo. Other Pueblo lands include an area of the Taos Plateau along the east bank of the Rio Grande and north of the Rio Pueblo and a smaller triangular section of land northwest of town near Arroyo Seco.

Agricultural Lands / Acequias

Instituted during Spanish settlement, a fine grained network of acequias transported water from the Rio Lucero, Rio Pueblo, and Rio Fernando to agricultural lands in the northern part of town and along the rivers. While many of these acequias have been filled or build upon, some sections remain. The Taos Valley Acequia Association actively participates to "ensure the longterm stability of the traditional agricultural communities of the Taos Valley by protecting water rights and strengthening the acequia system." (taosacequias.org)
Planning

LAND USE AND ZONING

The growth of Taos has occurred gradually over the last 60 years both in the Town, adjacent traditional communities, and entire valley. Limited by Pueblo lands to the north, the Town’s growth has emanated from the traditional historic center toward the south along the Paseo and on previous agricultural lands.

More recently, new subdivisions in the southeast part of town have occupied the more arid plateau where there is more undeveloped land. Opportunities for infill in more established neighborhoods still exist. Based on current zoning, it is anticipated that most new higher density neighborhoods will be developed north and south of the Youth and Family Center and lower density growth in the south and west part of town.

The Town limits are not readily discernible, indicating that growth has happened opportunistically, not as dictated by zoning or tax incentives. Beyond the Town limits, planning is entirely in the jurisdiction of Taos County. A previously created Extra Territorial Zone that extended one mile beyond the town boundary was rescinded in 2006.

Of primary importance to Taos is the preservation of open space and agricultural lands, a central component of Taos’ economy, quality of life, spiritual, and cultural core. Higher densities are preferred in areas with existing infrastructure in order to maintain the dispersed open spaces and greenbelt around the Town.

Historic Preservation Overlay Zone

The Taos Land Use Development Code designates a Historic Preservation Overlay Zone to protect, enhance, and perpetuate areas of historical, cultural, architectural, artistic, or geographical significance located within the Town of Taos. Kit Carson Park lies within this overlay zone.

Vision 2020 Open Space / Natural Resource Protection (selected priorities)

• Require that new developments plan for preservation and enhancement of natural resources through the use of conservation easements, environmental corridors, greenbelts, landscape easements, or open space purchases.
• Require all subdivisions and mobile home parks to include an increased percentage of usable open space for hiking and biking opportunities for voluntary conservation of private land. The Taos Land Trust has been instrumental in both initiating planning efforts to identify natural and culturally significant open space resources and acquiring properties for preservation.

Figure 2-4: Overall priorities map (TPL)

Trails

As outlined in the Taos Bicycle Master Plan, the Enchanted Circle Trails Plan and the Greenprinting process, a network of trails and bikeways is needed to connect Parks, Open Space areas and Recreation Centers to neighborhoods and to one another.

LAND OWNERSHIP

A survey of ownership of public lands and their distribution serves as a basis to evaluate future open park and open space development to serve existing and future residents.

Town of Taos

Available town-owned land (oranges) beyond walk areas to existing parks exists in small parcels. Some of these are occupied with public facilities or are remnant road right-of-way segments. With the exception of the 15-acre ‘Gravel Pit’ parcel on the town southern corridor, no significant open space has been reserved for future park use.

Taos County

Taos County-owned land (purple) is also largely occupied with existing public facilities and improvements.

Federal

BLM and US Forest Service lands do not extend into town limits. Although these lands serve as valuable natural open space for hiking and biking for area residents, trail connections from town need to be more clearly established.

Pueblo Lands

Sovereign lands to the northeast and northwest of town are not open to public use.

Figure 2-5: Town of Taos - Open Space / Parks Land Ownership
Facility Overview

The Town of Taos maintains one recreation facility, the Taos Youth and Family Center, and three parks. The Kit Carson Park is located east of the historic downtown, Fred Baca Park is located on the west town boundary along the Rio Fernando, and the Taos Eco Park is located 1/2 mile south of the Fred Baca Park also on the town’s western boundary. The facilities are fairly evenly distributed around town within a 3/4 to 2 mile distance from each other. Each park has a distinct character that can be attributed to its site-specific ecology combined with the park and recreation amenities offered in each location (see Chapter 3: Existing Facilities for an in-depth overview of each park).

The parks are well used by organized sports leagues, residents, and visitor. Additional public spaces (e.g. Taos Plaza), streetscapes, municipal building grounds, and open space areas are also managed and maintained by the Town.

Other recreation facilities in the town are maintained by Taos Municipal Schools, Taos County, private or charter schools and local non-profits (see Figure 3-1 for park distribution overview map).

PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES

Parks and recreation facilities in Taos are owned and maintained not only by the Town (summarized in this document), but by an array of public, private, and non-profit entities. As a whole, these parks, recreation facilities, and open space areas provide residents with a greater diversity of active and passive open space areas.

Table 3-1: Park Facilities Inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kit Carson Park</td>
<td>Town Park</td>
<td>Taos High School concessions, bleacher seating, synthetic turf football field, multi-use lawn, baseball field (2-Little League), trailhead, trails, storage units (3), Riverwalk Trail, softball fields (3), tennis courts / dog off-leash area</td>
<td>Taos Municipal Schools</td>
<td>Taos, New Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred Baca Park</td>
<td>Community Park</td>
<td>Taos Charter School play equipment, amphitheatre basketball court</td>
<td>Taos Municipal Schools</td>
<td>Taos, New Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth and Family Center</td>
<td>Special Use</td>
<td>Taos Youth and Family Center play equipment, skate park, on-ramp, tennis courts, multi-use lawn</td>
<td>Taos Municipal Schools</td>
<td>Taos, New Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taos Plaza</td>
<td>Special Use</td>
<td>Taos Plaza skate park, on-ramp, tennis courts, multi-use lawn</td>
<td>Taos Municipal Schools</td>
<td>Taos, New Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Facilities</td>
<td>Neighborhood Park</td>
<td>Taos Community Park play equipment, skate structure, picnic tables, resident unit, concessions stand, basketball court (3), softball fields (3)</td>
<td>Taos County</td>
<td>Taos, New Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guadalupe Gymnasium</td>
<td>Neighborhood Park</td>
<td>Taos Guadalupe Gymnasium play equipment, picnic tables, shade structures, basketball court</td>
<td>Taos County</td>
<td>Taos, New Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunset Park</td>
<td>Neighborhood Park</td>
<td>Sunset Park play equipment, picnic tables, shade structure</td>
<td>Taos County</td>
<td>Taos, New Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rio Fernando Park</td>
<td>Neighborhood Park</td>
<td>Rio Fernando Park (3), tennis courts / dog off-leash area</td>
<td>Taos County</td>
<td>Taos, New Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taos High School</td>
<td>School Facility</td>
<td>Taos High School concessions, bleacher seating, synthetic turf football field, multi-use lawn, basketball court (3), softball fields (3)</td>
<td>Taos Municipal Schools</td>
<td>Taos, New Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taos Middle School</td>
<td>School Facility</td>
<td>Taos Middle School play equipment, amphitheater basketball court</td>
<td>Taos Municipal Schools</td>
<td>Taos, New Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taos Charter School</td>
<td>School Facility</td>
<td>Taos Charter School play equipment, baseball court</td>
<td>Taos Municipal Schools</td>
<td>Taos, New Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taos Elementary School</td>
<td>School Facility</td>
<td>Taos Elementary School play equipment, multi-use lawn, softball field</td>
<td>Taos Municipal Schools</td>
<td>Taos, New Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Office</td>
<td>School Facility</td>
<td>Taos Central Office play equipment, multi-use lawn, softball field</td>
<td>Taos Municipal Schools</td>
<td>Taos, New Mexico</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3-1: Town of Taos - Parks, Open Space, and Trail Map
Currently, municipal parks and recreation facilities are of two sorts: diverse park facilities and sport-focused facilities. Kit Carson Park and Fred Baca Park have a wide range of active and passive program elements while the Eco-Park and the Youth and Family Center have facilities more focused on specific sports.

The detailed evaluation of existing municipal park and recreation facilities (see Appendix A: Existing Conditions Assessment), combined with input from leagues and area residents suggests future relocations, consolidations, and expansion of facilities to better serve existing and future community needs. As Taos expands south, there is a greater need for more diversified park facilities in the center/south side of town and for addressing community recreational needs.

Recommendations for addressing public needs include:

- consolidate and expand field sports in a dedicated sports complex at the Eco Park (in coordination with Flamen Sanchez Park improvements);
- transition single-purpose field sports to multi-purpose fields that can address community needs for more playables areas;
- establish a critical number of fields, courts, or facility space to host tournaments in a greater variety of sports;
- distribute specialized sports in locations that address community need and ease of access;
- expand the Youth and Family Center to include desired sports not available regionally and capitalize on opportunities for sport and sports programs organized from a staffed facility; and
- enrich existing diverse parks by enhancing their natural ecology and strengthening connections to perimeter neighborhoods.

**TOWN OF TAOS PARKS + RECREATION MASTER PLAN**

**EXISTING FACILITIES**

Existing Distribution

Park facilities include well-established parks with a diversity of recreational activities (Kit Carson Park, Fred Baca Park) and sports-focused recreation facilities constructed over the last 20 years (Youth and Family Center, Eco Park).

**Proposed Distribution**

Expanding the sports-focused facilities to include a greater diversity of recreational activities will result in a more balanced access to park facilities throughout the town. Additional sport facilities at these locations and other town-owned lands can address public desires for more specialized recreation opportunities (e.g., indoor gym, disc golf, skate park, pump track).

**SERVICE AREA**

The area serviced by Town of Taos parks and recreation centers goes well beyond town boundaries. This is evident based on sports league membership information and visitation data for the Youth and Family Center. The projected service extends into the southern area of Taos County and beyond its borders to include the towns of Questa, Tres Piedras, Ojo Caliente, Panasco, and Angel Fire. The approximate population for this extended area is more than 20,000 residents; compared to the Town’s population of 5,763 (2016 population).

The Town’s location along a major highway combined with its recreational facility offerings not available in area smaller towns make it a logical destination for sports and recreation. Visititation data collected over the last four years (2014-17) for the Youth and Family Center documents an average of 201,290 visits per year. While visitation data has not been collected for other municipal parks, the Town has committed to collecting this information on a seasonal basis to better understand the breadth of the service area and park visitor trends.

The Town of Taos is the largest town in Taos County and is located at the intersection of the scenic ‘Enchanted Circle’, a series of communities along US 64, NM 38, and NM 523 which include Angel Fire, Eagle Nest, Red River, and Questa.

Taos is 136 miles north of Albuquerque and 65 miles north of Santa Fe, the state capital.

*Who Uses Parks?*

According to a national study, “Americans typically visit their local parks and recreation facilities an average of 29 times per year.” Most of those who visit parks are Milenials (approx. 18-35), those of Hispanic origin, and parents of children. Baby Boomers (approx. 55-75) visit parks less frequently. The main reasons people use parks and recreation facilities is to: 1) be with family and friends, 2) for exercise/physical activity, and 3) be closer to nature.

NRPA Survey 2016: Americans’ Engagement With Parks
Taos parks are distinctive facilities that serve the recreational needs of residents and visitors. The character of each facility is defined by the unique ecology, setting, and combination of recreational offerings that contribute to a sense of place. The four municipal Taos parks and recreation facilities are located on mid-to-large sized parcels ranging in size from 11.4-acres to 23.2-acres.

**PARK CLASSIFICATION**

For planning purposes, parks are classified according to size and type of services. This allows for communities to provide the appropriate level of service for area residents.

- **Neighborhood Park**
  - Fred Baca Park
  - Kit Carson Park
  - Taos Eco Park
  - Taos Youth and Family Center

A Neighborhood Park is a small, centrally located park or open space within biking or walking distance of area residents. It serves a neighborhood and contributes to neighborhood identity.

- **Pocket Park**
  - A Pocket Park is a small park or open space within a neighborhood that provides active and passive recreation opportunities to several neighborhoods and the community at large.

- **Community Park**
  - A Community Park is a large to medium park that provides active and passive recreation opportunities for several neighborhoods and the community at large.

- **Park Classification Description**
  - Neighborhood Park: Provides diverse recreation opportunities near a neighborhood hub. Sits within a neighborhood and provides access to a park and a central area of the town. Includes a combination of active and passive recreation opportunities including play fields, courts, group shelters, and restrooms.
  - Community Park: Provides a range of active and passive recreation opportunities for several neighborhoods and the community at large. Includes an array of active recreation opportunities including play fields, group shelters, and restrooms.
  - Town Park: Accommodates a large group of recreation activities and serves a broad geographic area. Includes an array of active recreation opportunities including play fields, group shelters, and restrooms.

**Park Classification Description**

- **Taos Eco Park**
  - Size: 23.2 acres
  - Type: Neighborhood Park
  - Amenities: Tennis court / basketball court, playground, group picnic shelter, distributed picnic tables, multi-purpose lawn, walking path, restroom, water fountain, wetland nature trail.

  The Taos Eco Park is a joint venture between the Town of Taos and Taos Municipal Schools who retains ownership of the land. Opened in 2011, it serves as a soccer facility for visiting teams and the community alike. It represents the first phase of a planned 3-field soccer complex with associated amenities. Situated within the open arid landscape of the Taos Plateau, the Taos Eco Park offers sweeping views in all directions. Its prominent location on Salazar Road across from the Fireman Sanchez Park softball complex has the potential to transform this area of town into a multi-sport recreation/complex. See Chapter 5, p. 65 for existing conditions plan.

- **Fred Baca Park**
  - Size: 11.7 acres
  - Type: Community Park
  - Amenities: tennis court / basketball court, playground, group picnic shelter, distributed picnic tables, multi-purpose lawn, walking path, restroom, water fountain, wetland nature trail.

  The Fred Baca Park is comprised of 7.3-acre traditional park bordered on the east side by a natural wetland for the Rio Fernando. This distinctive riparian ecology of cattails and willows combined with its setting within a rural agricultural neighborhood serves as a foreshadow to stunning vistas of the surrounding mountains. One of the few perennial streams, the Rio Fernando and its riparian corridor attracts many forms of wildlife. The trail network provides seasonal access to the wetland. Interpretive signs help explain the ecology and wildlife of the area. Access to the traditional park and riparian corridor attracts many families and visitors to gather and enjoy nature. See Chapter 5, p. 61 for existing conditions plan.

- **Kit Carson Park**
  - Size: 20.2 acres
  - Type: Town Park
  - Amenities: multi-purpose lawn areas, little league fields (2), with amenities, 11 ball fields, (1), group picnic shelter, bandstand, event stage, restrooms, walking paths, playground, dog off-leash area, basketball courts (2), volleyball courts (2), parking maintenance facility / storage.

  The Kit Carson Park is home to the Historic Kit Carson Memorial Cemetery (established in 1876) and offers a range of passive and active uses. It is centrally located within the historic downtown along Paseo del Pueblo Norte, the primary roadway through Taos. A frequent site for community events, concerts, fairs, and gatherings, it is well-visited by tourists and locals alike and a central part of the town identity. The old, towering cottonwood trees that line the historic routes of the acequias that flowed through it combined with the expansive open spaces contribute to its iconic image as an open space for public use. See Chapter 5, p. 52 for existing conditions plan.

- **Taos Parks + Recreation Master Plan**

  Taos parks are distinctive facilities that serve the recreational needs of residents and visitors. The character of each facility is defined by the unique ecology, setting, and combination of recreational offerings that contribute to a sense of place. The four municipal Taos parks and recreation facilities are located on mid-to-large sized parcels ranging in size from 11.4-acres to 23.2-acres.

  **Table 3-2: Level of Service (LOS), Town of Taos Recreation Master Plan (2018)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Park Classification</th>
<th>Service Radius</th>
<th>Typical Size</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Park</td>
<td>More than 2 miles</td>
<td>Less than 0.5 acre</td>
<td>Includes passive recreation, no active recreation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Park</td>
<td>Less than 0.5 mile</td>
<td>1/4 mile</td>
<td>Includes a combination of active and passive recreation opportunities including play fields, courts, group shelters, and restrooms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town Park</td>
<td>Less than 0.5 mile</td>
<td>1/4 mile</td>
<td>Includes active recreation opportunities including play fields, group shelters, and restrooms.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Image Gallery**

- Image 3-1: Kit Carson Park - side entry off of Civic Drive
- Image 3-2: Fred Baca Park - looking north across wetland
- Image 3-3: Taos Eco Park - open space with field to right
Swimming, regional tournaments and events in hockey and specialized facilities, it serves as a venue for court sports. Due to its size, location, and facility on an annual basis. Over summer programs and specialized sports recreation facility for local schools and provides operated by the Town of Taos. It serves as a recreation complex for the northern New Mexico region. The center is owned and operated by the Taos Municipal School facilities include indoor gymnasiums and outdoor facilities - playgrounds Taos Municipal School facilities include indoor gymnasiums and outdoor facilities - playgrounds and recreational fields - at their school. The Taos Senior Center (Phil Lovato Senior Center) offers educational classes and recreational programs to its members. It also sponsors the Senior Olympics, which provides opportunities for seniors to participate in competitive recreational games. Quail Ridge Located northeast of Taos within the Taos Municipal School facilities area. Guadalupe parking lot, Kit Carson Road, Fred Baca Park, Taos Plaza, La Loma

Additional Services
- Janitorial Services
- Building Maintenance
- Grounds Maintenance

Building Maintenance
- facilities
- operations and maintenance of all town facilities (buildings and grounds department) also maintains the trash cans at the Plaza, and the landscaping around town buildings. The Parks Division is entrusted with the maintenance of Taos County parks and open space.

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB) The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board was created to advocate for the interests of the Buildings and Grounds Department by promoting the different recreation programs designed and the community's needs and interests. A total of 13 voting members are appointed by the Mayor and may include representatives of both the Town of Taos and Taos County that reflect the diversity of the area residents. The Board is no longer active.

Operations
Operations and maintenance are essential to providing facilities that are safe, healthy, enjoyable, and protect public investment over time. The intention is to enhance the quality of life for Taos residents by offering access to a diversity of parks, facilities, and recreational services that address public needs and reflect the diversity of its residents.

Parks Division / Facilities and Events The Taos Parks and Recreation Division has 6 full-time employees and runs maintenance operations out of buildings in Kiit Carson Park. The Parks Division is Part of the Facilities and Events Department, which is headquartered in the facility and maintains all town facilities (buildings and grounds department) and activities. The Mayor and City Council also organizes a number of community events throughout the year and helps host larger concerts.

Youth and Family Center The Youth and Family Center provides an indoor facility and runs programs for area youth from the facility with a staff of 12-13 people. The Youth and Family Advisory Board has established guidelines for improvements and serves as an interface with the community.

Figure 3-6: Town of Taos Facilities Department - Organizational Chart

Town of Taos Facilities Department
- Building + Grounds Division
- Parks Division
- Youth and Family Center
- Social Services
- Maintenance
- Swimming Pool
- Tennis
- Pool
- Kayak
- IPad
- Youth Programs

Youth and Family Center
- gymnasium
- ice skating, etc., Over 200,000 area residents and visitors use the facility on an annual basis. During warmer months, the open air arena is utilized as a multipurpose arena for indoor court sports. Due to its size, location, and specialized facilities, it serves as a venue for regional tournaments and events in hockey and swimming.

Image 3-4: Youth + Family Center - main entry

Other Area Recreation Facilities
Some area recreation facilities within or near the town are well used by area residents to complement municipal facilities:

Ranchos Elementary Fields
The fields at Ranchos Elementary in Ranchos de Taos are utilized by local youth leagues for practices and games. Two large multipurpose grass fields - 225’ x 415’ and 280’ x 565’ - allow for youth field sports in many sizes and configurations. The school also has a little league field in grass outfield.

Guadalupe Gymnasium
The Guadalupe Gymnasium, part of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in downtown Taos, is an indoor gymnasium well used by area sports enthusiasts. During winter months the town leases the gym for community use. Groups including adult basketball, picnics, and restrooms / locker rooms, computer lab, concessions area, offices, and restrooms / locker rooms (after parking) - 122 cars, skate park, playground

Town of Taos Parks Division
The Parks Division is entrusted with the maintenance of Kiit Carson Park, Fred Baca Park, Taos Plaza, La Loma Room, and the landscaping around town buildings. The Parks Division also maintains the trash cans at the following locations: Dunn parking lot, Our Lady of Guadalupe parking lot, Kiit Carson Road and Bent Street. We are also responsible for the care and maintenance of the main public restrooms in the downtown area. Daily maintenance of the parks includes grass cutting, tree trimming, litter patrol and the monitoring of events. During the winter the division provides snow removal to help guide improvements and serves as an interface with the community.

The Division also heads up annual Town-wide ‘trash drives’, in the past five years have collected the disposal of over 16 tons of trash. For this program, unique “Clean, Green and Safe”. This program is made possible through assistance from the Governor’s Tourism Department. The financial resources received from the grant are used to purchase supplies and to bolster participation through volunteer organizations who receive contributions for the active participation of their member volunteers.

Ultimately the primary function of the Parks Department is to help guide improvements and to keep them “Clean, Green and Safe”. Source: http://www.taosgov.com/recreation/parks.php

Operations
Operations and maintenance are essential to providing facilities that are safe, healthy, enjoyable, and protect public investment over time. The intention is to enhance the quality of life for Taos residents by offering access to a diversity of parks, facilities, and recreational services that address public needs and reflect the diversity of its residents.

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Youth and Family Center
- gymnasium
- ice skating, etc., Over 200,000 area residents and visitors use the facility on an annual basis. During warmer months, the open air arena is utilized as a multipurpose arena for indoor court sports. Due to its size, location, and specialized facilities, it serves as a venue for regional tournaments and events in hockey and swimming.
Organized Sports Leagues
Taos has a well-organized group of privately-organized sports leagues for both youth and adult sports that cater to local sports enthusiasts. In total, over 1,175 area youth participate in soccer, football, little league / tee ball, and hockey leagues. These represent a sizeable number of participants for the population of Taos and surrounding area. Over 585 area adults participate in soccer, baseball, softball, basketball, and hockey leagues. In some cases, park and recreation facilities are not available or adequate for league play so adult leagues make arrangements with the municipal schools for use of their facilities (e.g. baseball).

The leagues utilize municipal parks and recreation facilities for practice and games, but there is little interface between parks division staff and league representatives. Staff typically conducts routine maintenance of the facility (mowing, irrigation, trash pickup, minor repairs) and leagues supplement maintenance and operations of the facility with volunteers. No formal agreements are signed or fees paid for use of facilities.

Tournaments
Currently, the only leagues hosting regular annual tournaments are hockey and swimming. Town staff project that up to 5 larger concert events could be hosted in town per year, drawing up to 5,000 - 8,000 attendees. Some past concerts with large attendance have featured Michael Franti and Alabama Shakes.

COMMUNITY + SPECIAL EVENTS
The Parks Division organizes and runs a host of community events at area parks and public facilities, something the community values deeply. They also assist with special events and concerts organized by other entities by scheduling events and providing support with preparations before, during, and after events. Staff estimate efforts to organize and / or facilitate the hosting of these community and special events consumes more than 25 percent of their time.

Town-organized Community Events
Community events organized by Parks Division staff are held for community benefit. A diversity of events range in size, venue, and content to attract a broad cross section of the community.

Some Town-organized community events include:

- April: Pitch, Hit and Run
- Summer Movies on the Green (Wednesday)
- June: Fish Fiesta (Eagle Rock Lake)
- July: Hometown 4th July Celebration
- August: Town of Taos Touch-A-Truck
- Oct: Children’s Halloween Party
- Dec: Farolito Lighting
- Downtown Lighting and Tree Lighting

Additional events are hosted for the community at the Youth + Family Center by TYFC staff with assistance from Parks Division staff. These include the following events:

- February: Valentine Craft Making
- April: Wet & Wild Easter
- May: Mother’s Day Project
- June: Father’s Day Project
- Aug: Town of Taos Touch-A-Truck
- Dec: Ornament and Craft Making

Privately-organized Events
Taos is well-known for hosting a diversity of arts and cultural events throughout the year. Kit Carson Park, with its large lawn and proximity to the downtown historic area, is a popular location for festivals and concerts. These multi-day events attract many residents and tourists and contribute greatly to the local economy.

Some privately-organized events include:

- May: Mother’s Day Concert
- May: Taos Lilac Festival
- June: Taos Tuba Fest
- Aug: Taos Wine Festival
- Sept: The Piano Project
- Sept: Michael Franti’s Big Barn Dance Music Festival

Privately-organized concerts and events are also held at the private Kit Carson Park, with its large lawn and proximity to the downtown historic area. These include the following events:

- June: Cavalry Taos Car Show
- Aug: Taos Pride
- Oct: Town of Taos Touch-A-Truck
- Dec: Kit Carson Yuletide Caroling and Tree Lighting
- Dec: Annual Ornament Lighting

Some privately-organized events include:

- May: Mother’s Day Concert
- May: Taos Lilac Festival
- June: Taos Tuba Fest
- Aug: Taos Wine Festival
- Sept: The Piano Project
- Sept: Michael Franti’s Big Barn Dance Music Festival

Larger concerts with well-known headliners are hosted at Kit Carson Park during summer months and vary in number depending on the year. Park staff project that up to 5 larger concert events could be hosted in town per year, drawing up to 5,000 - 8,000 attendees. Some past concerts with large attendance have featured Michael Franti and Alabama Shakes.
An on-line survey was available to the community during the month of November 2017. Outreach to participate in the survey was conducted through email solicitations, social media, and focus group meeting representatives. An article in the Taos News explained the project and provided a link to the survey. The survey was also available on the town’s website. The complete results of the community survey are documented in Appendix B: Survey and Survey Results.

Survey Participants

Seventy-three and sixty-two people responded to the online community survey. Over 65 percent of survey respondents were female. - 40 percent were aged 46-65; 10 percent were younger than 18 or under; 14 percent were over 66; The least represented age group was ages 25-34 (19 percent). - Only 20 percent of respondents identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino. - Over 48 percent of respondents live in households with children. - 22 percent of respondents live within a mile of a park while 38 percent live 5 miles or more from a park. - Over 93 percent get to parks by driving their cars and only 34 percent walk or ride to area parks.

Hispano/Hispanic versus Anglo Responses

The Town of Taos’ population is 52 percent Hispano/Hispanic but only 20 percent of survey respondents identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino. Comparatively, 63 percent of respondents identified themselves as White/Anglo, a relative 40 percent of the Town’s population.

This discrepancy has significance for the types of recreational opportunities desired in municipal parks based on racial preferences. Studies indicate that recreational decision drivers for Hispanic populations are based on amenities, children’s play areas, dog parks, shade, picnic areas, trails, tracks or paths, water fountains, and open fields for sports.

Surveys were conducted in order to gather community interest and solicit feedback during the community engagement process, some provided input through focus group meetings, interviews, community survey, and public meetings.

Key Themes

During the community engagement process, some key themes emerged, including the following:

- Over the course of 6 months, the community effort was conducted on behalf of the town, there was fair with the exception of restrooms, which did collect residency location information; Taos Park versus County Responses

- The least represented age group was ages 25-34 (19 percent).

- The key to exceptional park facilities, as indicated by respondents, include good maintenance / cleanliness of facilities, adequate safety and security, funding for improvements, and good facilities. In other words, bike trails, walking paths, playgrounds and dog off-leash areas ranked highest.

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STAKEHOLDER INPUT

A series of interest group meetings were convened with representatives from area organized sports leagues, educational institutions, natural resource protection associations, and local non-profit organizations. Complete records of meetings with stakeholders can be found in Appendix B: Interest Group Meeting - Records.

Key Observations

In addition to the key themes outlined previously in public input (p. 38), information came forward through conversations with stakeholders that could improve existing park facilities and offer better service to area residents by the Town of Taos.

- Programs and facilities do not exist for teens (ages 13-17) previously enrolled in organized sports leagues, support exists for multi-use fields as a way to accommodate this for multiple sports.
- There is a large and consistent desire on the part of organized groups to improve / expand sports facilities so tournaments can be held in Taos, both for youth and adult sports. Support exists for multi-use fields as a way to accommodate this for multiple sports.
- The Taos Land Trust's 20-acre parcel west of Fred Baca Park is currently being master planned as the Rio Fernando Park - which will be a section of the Rio Fernando River, bring an acequia back to life, and restore the once-productive agricultural lands of the property. Rehabilitation efforts to improve Rio Fernando water quality, restore the wetlands, and improve wildlife habitat would be pursued jointly by the Town and TLT, since it is a shared resource. Parking, access, and trail connectivity between the two parks would facilitate public access.
- Mature trees in Kit Carson Park and Fred Baca Park require management on an annual basis for removal, trimming, pasting and overall tree health. Outsourcing tree management or hiring a certified arborist would help address these issues and preserve the trees.
- There is a large and consistent desire on the part of organized groups to improve / expand sports facilities so tournaments can be held in Taos, both for youth and adult sports. Support exists for multi-use fields as a way to accommodate this for multiple sports.

Adjoint Property Owners

Adjacent property owners were contacted as part of the planning efforts for Kit Carson Park (Taos Center for the Arts - TCA), Fred Baca Park (Taos Land Trust - TLT), and Taos Eco Park (Taos County). These meetings outlined potential mutually beneficial improvements and programs.

Taos Center for the Arts (TCA)

The TCA occupies the southern border of Kit Carson Park. The TCA is interested in improving communications with the town to better coordinate event venues in Kit Carson Park with programs scheduled for the adjacent community auditorium. Large events at Kit Carson Park impact TCA use due to parking, circulation, and noise issues. The TCA is also open to design changes on its property to improve its operations and create a better experience for event attendees.

Taos Land Trust (TLT)

The Taos Land Trust's 20-acre parcel west of Fred Baca Park is currently being master planned as the Rio Fernando Park - which will be a section of the Rio Fernando River, bring an acequia back to life, and restore the once-productive agricultural lands of the property. Rehabilitation efforts to improve Rio Fernando water quality, restore the wetlands, and improve wildlife habitat would be pursued jointly by the Town and TLT, since it is a shared resource. Parking, access, and trail connectivity between the two parks would facilitate public access.

Taos County

Taos County owns and operates the Filemon Sanchez Park softball fields. Future improvements should be coordinated with Taos Eco Park improvements to provide a recreation complex that best addresses community needs.
In addition to ascertaining public and stakeholder interest and concerns on town park and recreational offerings, it is important to determine how Taos compares to other comparable communities. A number of organizations collect information on parks and recreation and complete studies. This plan includes comparisons to these national standards, but also recognizes Taos as a smaller town with a different land area and demographic profile that make comparisons unsuitable.

National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) The NRPA collects data and generates typical NRPA Park Metrics on number of parks per population, park acres per 1,000 residents, park staff per 10,000 residents, per capita operating expenditures, and percent of agencies offering outdoor recreation facilities at the youth and family center. This is useful as a benchmark for comparison and to gain more funding support, improve operations, and better serve the community. NRPA recognizes that each community is different and must determine its own standards, hence it no longer publishes a ‘national standard.’ The 2017 report includes data from 925 park and recreation agencies across the United States.

ParkScore - The Trust for Public Land A number of organizations group smaller agencies of 20,000 residents or less in one category. National standards provide a glimpse as to how town parks compare to national agency averages.

An analysis of comparative park agency data reveals the following about Taos: Taos has a high acreage of park land compared to other analogous towns but since the parks are larger (11-23 acres), the number of residents per park is high, almost double that of some other communities. Other towns have a higher number of smaller sized parks. Average annual parks and recreation budget expenditures for Taos is $227 per capita. While the national average is $76.44 per capita (NRPA 2017), compared to analogous communities Taos ranks in the mid-level (Ruidoso: $160/capita, Salida: $267/capita, Gunnison: $204/capita). Comparative towns offer programs at all their parks and recreation centers, while Taos only offers this at the YFC.

- The number of staff allocated to park operations varies by town. The number of FTE per 11 acres of park, which is comparable to Gunnison, CO (1 FTE / 10.5 acres of park) but significantly higher than other analogous towns. In other words, staff are responsible for a disproportionately large area of park land (in some cases double and triple) than that of other comparative communities.

- Taos Parks Division should consider joining NRPA to gain the benefits of the expertise of members and help establish metrics that are more in line with the town's needs.

- Taos, a "..." analysis reveals that most Taos parks are located on the outside perimeter of the town boundary and provide this amenity to areas remote to residents in the County.

- While these areas do not have developed municipal parks, some residents do live in the vicinity of private parks or undeveloped open spaces with trails.

Benchmarks / Gap Analysis

GAP ANALYSIS

An access to parks gap analysis was performed for towns comparable to Taos in size, region, and focus. Since national agencies group smaller agencies of 20,000 residents or less in one category. National standards provide a glimpse as to how town parks compare to national agency averages (TPL, 2017). Results indicate the following:   - great need for parks in East / Central Taos   - moderate need for parks in Southeast Taos

It is worthwhile to note that the Parks Master Plan includes the Youth and Family Center as a recreation facility, something the Greenprinting Park Gap Analysis does not. In other words, a 500-acre area of land with very high and high gaps in park access according to the Greenprinting being served by indoor and outdoor recreation facilities at the Youth and Family Center.

Park Access A worthy goal and metric for park distribution is provided when you are within a 10-minute (or 1/2 mile) walk to all residents (78% ParkScore). In Taos, a "Park Access" analysis reveals that most Taos residents live within a 10-minute walk to a park. This is encouraging, especially since three Taos parks are located on the outside perimeter of the town boundary and provide this amenity to areas remote to residents in the County.

- Town of Taos (2010) population living within 10 min. walk to Park 3,581 63% longer than 10 min. walk to Park 2,135 37%

Gaps in park access are largely in the central eastern part of town and the south side of town and should be addressed as part of future planning. While these areas do not have developed municipal parks, some residents do live in the vicinity of private parks or undeveloped open spaces with trails.
Overview

The Town of Taos Parks + Recreation Master Plan offers a vision and guiding framework to enhance existing parks and facilities and develop new areas to meet current and future public needs. The Plan is intended to guide the development of park improvements that offers a unique and enriching recreational and educational experience, building on the existing characteristics and assets of each park. It can be implemented in phases, depending on funding availability and priorities set by the Town.

THE VISION
Town of Taos Parks will be distinctive and beautiful public landscapes that provide recreational options for the health and well being of the community to address current and future needs.

• Embrace and celebrate the unique character of each Taos Park facility
• Include the community in the design process to result in parks that address community needs and desires
• Outline and implement a regular maintenance strategy
• Prioritize safety and security in the design, execution, and operation of the parks
• Provide a variety of park activities and use areas for different ages and interests
• Balance active recreation areas with passive play and natural areas
• Connect the parks with a system of safe, enjoyable trails
• Consider the local and regional needs of organized sports leagues for active play opportunities
• Use durable materials, quality construction, and efficient use of resources
• Incorporate sustainable features and design elements to conserve resources and model best practices
• Establish realistic operating budgets for park maintenance and programs
• Identify and pursue funding capital so improvements can be implemented in phases

GUIDING PRINCIPLES
• Establish realistic operating budgets for park maintenance and programs
• Identify and pursue funding capital so improvements can be implemented in phases
Kit Carson Park

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The 20.2-acre Kit Carson Memorial Park is centrally located in the downtown Taos Plaza along Paseo del Pueblo Norte. It serves as a popular venue for many cultural and recreational events for both residents and visitors alike. It holds a prominent central position in the town’s identity.

Kit Carson Park was acquired by the Town of Taos from the State of New Mexico in 1988. At that time 30 years ago, most of the park improvements currently in place had already been implemented in the last 15 years.

The entire footprint of the Kit Carson Park is within the Historic Overlay Zone and the western portion of Kit Carson Park, including the historic Kit Carson Cemetery is within the town’s Arts and Cultural District (established 2009).

TOWN OF TAOS PARKS + RECREATION

MASTER PLAN

The Kit Carson Memorial Cemetery, a separate 1.4-acre tract of land within the park, is in the New Mexico State Register of Historic Properties and serves as the final resting place for many prominent Taosenos, including Christopher ‘Kit’ Carson, Padre Antonio Martinez, and Mabel Dodge Lujan. The non-catholic cemetery opened in 1847 on land donated by Oсорa Todero Martinez Romero for the burial of American soldiers and civilians killed during the Taos Rebellion of 1847. Known then as the ‘American Cemetery’, it was expanded in 1852. In May 1897, when the bodies of Kit Carson and Mrs. Carson were buried there, the cemetery was called ‘Kit Carson Cemetery’.

Considered a highly controversial and polarizing figure by many, Kit Carson Park was briefly changed to Red Willow Park in 2014, a decision later rescinded by the local governing body a few months later after public outcry.

Historic Acequias

The Acqua Madre del Pueblo directly northeast of the park historically fed a series of major and secondary acequias which historically supplied water to the Kit Carson Park and re-introduce the traditional flows.

The entire footprint of the Kit Carson Park is within the Historic Overlay Zone and the western portion of Kit Carson Park, including the historic Kit Carson Cemetery.

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Public concerns about the safety due to the presence of drug use and a vagrant / homeless population that sometimes occupies portions of the site; surface obstructions (tree stumps, etc.) are a hazard

Accessibility: sections of pathways and primary access corridors are not ADO compliant

Maintenance: routine maintenance and repairs of utility infrastructure, structures, and park elements are needed to protect existing assets and for public welfare; buildings are generally in disrepair and need upgrades to meet current codes

Restrooms: vault restrooms require repairs; consider redesigned permanent restrooms in location of current unusable restrooms

Fencing: perimeter permanent fencing and special event temporary fencing need to be coordinated as part of access control both when events are being held and when the park is open for public use

Landscape: an integrated tree management plan is necessary for tree health, preservation of cultural landscape, and for public welfare; an integrated weed management plan is needed for weed control

Events: upgrade infrastructure to allow for different events, integrate aesthetically into park so it doesn’t detract from the park experience; configure events so areas of the park are still open for public use

Recommendations from an existing conditions assessment and strengthening / rehabilitating key features of the park’s identity. Public feedback concerning future improvements focused on the following topics:

- No significant additions to the park have been implemented in the last 15 years.
- The entire footprint of the Kit Carson Park is within the Historic Overlay Zone and the western portion of Kit Carson Park, including the historic Kit Carson Cemetery (established 2009).

Kit Carson Park should focus on addressing some of the primary issues outlined in the existing conditions assessment and strengthening / rehabilitating key features of the park’s identity. Public feedback concerning future improvements focused on the following topics:

- Historic Acequias: revise the acequia system within the park and provide educational information about the history and traditional acequia culture
- Activities: distribute, add, and expand park recreational activities and give priority to areas that accommodate multiple uses, including lawn area, picnic areas, playgrounds; move away from single-purpose programs
- Restrooms: upgrade / replace restrooms; place strategically for park use and event use
- Park Maintenance: relocate park maintenance functions off site or to the perimeter of the site; retain storage for necessary maintenance supplies
- Events: upgrade infrastructure to allow for different events, integrate aesthetically into park so it doesn’t detract from the park experience; configure events so areas of the park are still open for public use

Adjustments to the park program at Kit Carson Park should focus on addressing some of the primary issues outlined in the existing conditions assessment and strengthening / rehabilitating key features of the park’s identity. Public feedback concerning future improvements focused on the following topics:

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**KIT CARSON PARK - EXISTING CONDITIONS**

**Site Inventory**

The following amenities exist at Kit Carson Park, see locations on aerial photo to right:

- Walking Path
- Information Kiosk
- Historical Marker
- Multipurpose Lawn
- Broadcast/Temporary Stage
- Playground
- Basketball Courts
- Volleyball Court
- Tennis Courts/Dog Run
- Batting Cage
- Gathering/Event Shelter
- Baseball/Softball Field and affiliated amenities
- Tee Ball Field and affiliated amenities
- Kit Carson Memorial Cemetery
- Drinking Fountain
- Concessions
- Restroom
- Restroom - composting
- Support Storage Building
- Maintenance Facility

**MASTER PLAN**

The Master Plan for Kit Carson Park represents an opportunity to outline a vision for the park that can guide future improvements in a comprehensive and cohesive manner. The plan calls for enhancing and strengthening existing assets and carefully editing and redistributing park programs to activate the park and connect areas together.

A set of broad concepts provide direction and cohesiveness to the Kit Carson Park Master Plan:

- **recreational nodes**
  - The framework acequia laterals serve as logical corridors for a series of ‘recreational nodes’ with distinct physical and programmatic characteristics. Park activities have been organized in these nodes to generate a synergy in these areas.

- **access**
  - A clear, connected, visible system of access points, parking areas, and pathways will link areas of the park together and to the local and regional community.

- **historic features**
  - The trademark landscapes of mature cottonwoods along drainageways and wide open fields along with the historic acequias and memorial cemetery will guide park development. The Plan outlines a strategy for integrating these components while addressing concerns of resource efficiency, stormwater management, and historic preservation.

**Key Master Plan Features**

The Master Plan describes a series of improvements that will help to create a distinctive town park for the 21st century. Key strategies are driven by:

- **Integrated Historic Elements:** the revived and re-established primary acequia laterals serve as distinct landscapes that connect areas of the park; entry points to the Kit Carson Cemetery are pronounced to establish entries clearly and integrate better with park circulation.

- **Activity Core:** a diversity of active and passive park elements are distributed into recreational nodes along the core area of the park, according to complementing characteristics.

- **Connectivity:** a network of non-vehicular, shared-use paths weave across the park, connecting activity nodes to each other and the adjacent community, separate from vehicular traffic.

- **Community Lawns:** grass lawn areas serve as flexible use areas for active sports, passive recreation, community events, and concerts; picnic tables, and shade structures will be amply sited throughout the site to provide opportunities for community interaction.
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**Activity Corridor**

The Activity Corridor occupies a narrow and long portion of the center of the park and aligns with the rejuvenated acequia system. This zone is intended to attract residents and visitors of all ages and interests throughout the four seasons and serve as the core of active uses within the park.

**Program Activities**

- urban plaza / playscape with water feature
- basketball courts / multipurpose surface
- playgrounds (distributed in multiple locations)
- game area (table tennis, bocce, chess, etc.)
- acequia water / stormwater holding pond
- fruit orchard
- medium-sized picnic shelter
- picnic / seating (dispersed)
- sand volleyball
- restrooms
- connecting paths
- interpretive signage
- include medium and small-sized picnic shelters along the corridor adjacent to use areas. Consider the setting and views (e.g. place a new shelter in the fruit orchard with views to Taos Mountain).
- refurbish existing permanent bathrooms to meet codes and address security and vandalism issues. Create a generous paved plaza area around restroom areas to encourage pedestrian traffic and use.
- include art and sculpture within the corridor to reinforce Taos arts and cultural heritage.
- standardize and upgrade site furnishings for the park that are low maintenance, durable, and aesthetically appropriate for the park. These include: benches, picnic tables, bike racks, trash / recycling cans.
\textbf{Community Lawns} A series of different sized lawn areas punctuate the park perimeter and establish it as a place for shade, respite, and rejuvenation. These also double as multi-functional areas for informal play, leisure sports, family, gatherings, community events, and larger concerts / events.

\textbf{Program Activities} - lawns - pathways - seating - picnic areas - dog off-leash area (small) - interpretive signage

\textbf{Program Activities} - pathways - seating - interpretive signage

\textbf{Recommendations} - dog Off-Leash Lawn: establish a designated dog off-leash area (small) - Northeast side lawns: relocate tee-ball field dugouts, fence, and amenities to the northeast corner of the lawn so area is more open and accessible to park users. Formulate pathway system so there is a clear hierarchy between pathways with direct access to picnic shelters - Dog Off-Leash Lawn: establish a designated small dog off-leash area north of the parking boulevard. Area to be fenced with 4 ft. fence. Provide a 20-30 ft. landscape buffer to the west and north with a walking trail. - Acequia Revitalization' - Acequia corridors can be expressed as wide, shallow, and gentle grass-lined swales or narrow rock-lined channels, depending on the amount of space available adjacent to other uses. Designs should be evaluated for work flows when flows are present and aesthetically pleasing during the remainder of the time. - A policy for addressing off-site access to the park should be developed with neighboring property owners. - Acequia corridors will terminate within the park. - Acequia corridors should be re-graded so the corridors can double as water harvesting swales (e.g. from parking areas, paved surfaces). - Provide bridges or culverted crossings at intersections between pathways and acequias to accentuate the two systems. - Establish a common vocabulary of materials and details for acequia designs that is aesthetically pleasing and culminating in appropriate (channels, crossings, interpretive signage, plant palette, etc.). - Design acequia outfalls at Paseo and Dragoon Lane in anticipation of continuous water flow in the future. Until then, acequia corridors will terminate within the park. - Acequia corridors can be expressed as wide, shallow, and gentle grass-lined swales or narrow rock-lined channels, depending on the amount of space available adjacent to other uses. Designs should be evaluated for work flows when flows are present and aesthetically pleasing during the remainder of the time. - Establish the central holding pond as a location to keep acequia water for irrigation and to support the acequia landscape. Site areas adjacent to acequia corridors should be re-graded so the corridors can double as water harvesting swales (e.g. from parking areas, paved surfaces). - Provide bridges or culverted crossings at intersections between pathways and acequias to accentuate the two systems. - Establish a common vocabulary of materials and details for acequia designs that is aesthetically pleasing and culminating in appropriate (channels, crossings, interpretive signage, plant palette, etc.). - Paseo del Pueblo Norte Park street frontage design along Paseo del Pueblo Norte could be re-designed and upgraded to provide better street presence, visual connectivity into the park, and generous pedestrian access. - Dragoon Lane The acequia lateral that flows on the west side of the cemetery historically extended south towards Couse Pasture on the west side of Dragoon Lane. Efforts need to be made to maintain these flows and create an ‘acequia trail’ that connects along this lateral.
Since the long term master plan for Kit Carson Park is dependent on relocating some park programs off-site, an interim plan outlines initial steps towards realizing the full plan.

The interim plan focuses improvement efforts on the central activity corridor area. A secondary focus is addressing perimeter park edges along Paseo del Norte and adjacent to the TCA. All improvements should be completed to work towards the long term master plan for Kit Carson Park. Interim improvements should prioritize the following community concerns:

- universal access code issues
- restroom concerns
- safety
- security
- regular maintenance
- long term vegetation health

**‘Acequia Revitalization’**

Initiate acequia revitalization by adjusting the ditch alignments according to the proposed master plan (see description and recommendations on p. 56). Begin coordinating with Acequia Association representatives and the Majordomo of the Acequia Madre del Pueblo.

**Acequia Landscape Feature**

Initiate acequia revitalization by adjusting the ditch alignments according to the proposed master plan (see description and recommendations on p. 56). Begin coordinating with Acequia Association representatives and the Majordomo of the Acequia Madre del Pueblo.

**Orchard**

A component of the revitalization project is establishing a demonstration fruit orchard with heritage fruit trees that can be flood irrigated when the acequia is flowing. For this to happen, the existing tennis courts need to be removed, the area needs to be re-graded and proper infrastructure installed for flood irrigation, and the soils need nutrients and amending for proper orchard establishment.

**Activity Corridor**

Begin activating the central corridor by focusing on visual access and path connectivity. Simultaneously, add new park elements to help activate the corridor (see program elements and recommendations outlined on p. 54).

**Community Plaza**

A major impediment to the visual openness of the park is the park maintenance buildings north of the events lawn. These buildings currently block internal views of the park and segregate it into two separate use areas. A plan for the removal of some or all of these buildings should be developed in concert with the relocation of park maintenance facilities off site. Once this area has been cleared, new designs for this area should focus on creating a welcoming community plaza that is activated by a variety of uses (e.g. urban fountain, cafe, seating, bandstand).

**East Promenade**

A new access corridor to the little league fields can provide a more generous connection to the southern park use areas. This promenade integrates the existing restroom building, which could be refurbished to serve as a permanent restroom facility to serve the eastern portion of the park.
Fred Baca Park

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The 11.7 acre Fred Baca Park is a community park on the east side of Taos located off Camino del Medio. The park is marked by two distinct areas: the traditional park, which occupies the northern 7.3 acres of the site, and the Rio Fernando wetlands, which forms the park’s southern border. In Fred Baca Park the Rio Fernando, one of few perennial streams in Taos, is distinguished by its expansive riparian habitat and associated wetland. The park is well-used by the community for both active recreation and passive use. Visitors come to walk the wetland nature trail and photograph wildlife within the wetland.

Fred Baca Park is named for Fernando F. Baca, a local resident, owner and operator of Fred Baca’s Coronado Pharmacy, and former mayor of Taos. Formerly a waste water treatment facility, it was converted to a park sometime around 1975. Directly to the east of the park on the opposite side of the Rio Fernando, the Taos Land Trust owns a 20-acre parcel which is being master planned as the Rio Fernando Park. The town owns an additional 22-acres of undeveloped land along Camino del Medio south of the park.

Figure 5-7: Fred Baca Park adjacent public lands

The following amenities exist within Fred Baca Park, see locations on aerial photo to right:

- Multi-Purpose Lawn / Field
- Tennis Courts (2)
- Basketball Court
- Playground
- Exercise Station
- Large Gathering / Event Structure
- Small Shade Structure / Picnic Table
- Drinking Fountain
- Acequia de Los Lovatos

The following amenities exist within Fred Baca Park along with public and stakeholder input include the following:

- Safety: health concerns about Rio Fernando water quality; issues with proximity of playground to wetland with no buffer / barrier; evidence of drug use within wetland nature area - difficult to access; winter weather makes wetland trail hazardous
- Mobile Home: remove the vacant mobile home and re-purpose this area of the park for additional public use
- Accessibility: a few sections of pathways are not compliant with Ada codes; interface with buildings are not ADA code compliant; upgrade nature trail boardwalk for accessibility and safety
- Maintenance: routine maintenance and repairs of utility infrastructure, structures, and park elements are needed to protect existing assets and for public welfare; buildings are generally in disrepair and need upgrades to meet current codes
- Restrooms: vault restrooms require repairs; consider redesigned permanent restrooms in proximity to current mobile home
- Wetland Restoration: restore the wetland by removing invasive plants and encouraging native riparian ecological diversity
- Drainage: the Acequia de los Lovatos along Camino del Medio floods the roadway - consider rerouting it within the park

Existing Conditions Assessment

Recommendations from an existing conditions assessment of Fred Baca Park along with public and stakeholder input include the following:

- Safety: health concerns about Rio Fernando water quality; issues with proximity of playground to wetland with no buffer / barrier; evidence of drug use within wetland nature area - difficult to access; winter weather makes wetland trail hazardous
- Mobile Home: remove the vacant mobile home and re-purpose this area of the park for additional public use
- Accessibility: a few sections of pathways are not compliant with Ada codes; interface with buildings are not ADA code compliant; upgrade nature trail boardwalk for accessibility and safety
- Maintenance: routine maintenance and repairs of utility infrastructure, structures, and park elements are needed to protect existing assets and for public welfare; buildings are generally in disrepair and need upgrades to meet current codes
- Restrooms: vault restrooms require repairs; consider redesigned permanent restrooms in proximity to current mobile home
- Wetland Restoration: restore the wetland by removing invasive plants and encouraging native riparian ecological diversity
- Drainage: the Acequia de los Lovatos along Camino del Medio floods the roadway - consider rerouting it within the park

The full detailed assessment can be found in Appendix A: Existing Conditions Assessment.

Site Inventory

The following amenities exist within Fred Baca Park, see locations on aerial photo to right:

- Multi-Purpose Lawn / Field
- Tennis Courts (2)
- Basketball Court
- Playground
- Exercise Station
- Large Gathering / Event Structure
- Small Shade Structure / Picnic Table
- Drinking Fountain
- Acequia de Los Lovatos

Buildings

- Restroom
- Restroom - Vault Toilet
- Residence (Mobile Home)

Figure 5-8: Fred Baca Park - Existing Conditions (Aerial Photo, ca. 2016)

Figure 5-8: Fred Baca Park - Existing Conditions (Aerial Photo, ca. 2016)
Adjustments to the park program at Fred Baca Park should focus on utilizing available park space more efficiently and providing upgrades to slight expansion of existing established park elements. Public feedback concerning future improvements focused on the following topics:

- Trails: upgrade existing pathway system; complete portion of new urban trail along the Rio Fernando (include future off-site connections).
- Park Amenities: expanded playground / destination playground, new medium-sized picnic shelter, upgraded basketball court, upgrade tennis court and stripe for pickleball (consider relocation to more central facility), more parking / efficient parking.
- Buildings: upgrade restrooms, provide storage area for park maintenance.
- Dog Park: locate a small and large dog off-leash area a safe distance from wetland; separate parking area; trail connections. Some proposed park elements for Fred Baca Park included community gardens, a botanical garden, and an outdoor classroom. These elements are appropriate in this area, given the agricultural setting and existing wetland, but are more suitable at the adjacent Rio Fernando Park, which can be managed by Taos Land Trust staff.

The Fred Baca Park Master Plan retains the character of the current beloved park and focuses on perimeter improvements that increase park use areas and provide greater efficiency of available space. A refinement and expansion of the trail system creates a portion of the Rio Fernando Trail within the park and extends it to future off-site connections.

**Program Activities**
- Perimeter trails
- Basketball courts / multipurpose surface
- Child playgrounds (distributed in multiple locations)
- Restrooms / storage building
- Picnic shelters / picnic tables

**Recommendations**
- Expand park into previous mobile home area.
- Reconfigure north parking lot for greater efficiency and capacity.

**PARK CHARACTER**
Public feedback on the character of Fred Baca Park overwhelmingly supports retaining its natural, wild identity with a range of informal activities. It is a place where the community can experience a balance of conservation ecology and recreational activities; a habitat for wildlife alongside a selection of amenities for unstructured recreation.
EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Taos Eco Park is a 23.2 acre facility owned and operated by the Town of Taos on land owned by Taos Municipal Schools. Originally conceived as a premier soccer facility with 3 fields and associated amenities to attract professional teams for high-altitude training and tournaments, only one field has been installed to date. A JPA (Joint Powers Agreement) between the town and the school district outlines the ownership, use, and management of the facility. In April 2011, a regulation size synthetic turf soccer field was completed that achieved a FIFA 2 Star field certification from the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA). Improvements include a parking lot, restroom building, perimeter walking path, stadium seating, sports field lighting (Musco), and solar array. A master plan for the site, completed in April 2009, includes two additional regulation-sized soccer fields and associated amenities.

Future park improvements should consider off-site planning efforts to create a more integrated facility. Taos county has planned upgrades to the Filemon Sanchez Park softball fields so they meet USSAA guidelines. Urban trails exist along Sanchez Road (on-road bike lanes) and future trails are planned to the west of the site to connect to other area destinations (e.g. Fred Baca Park / Rio Fernando Park).

Existing Conditions Assessment

Since the facility is only 7 years old and has received regular maintenance, it is in good condition. Recommendations from an existing conditions assessment of Taos Eco Park (see detailed assessment in Appendix A: Existing Conditions Assessment), along with public and stakeholder input include the following:

- Storage / Restroom: reorganize storage area for more efficient use of space; consider allocating a portion for park maintenance needs
- Maintenance: routine maintenance and repairs of irrigation infrastructure and proper landscape maintenance are needed for landscape health; continue regular turf maintenance to protect asset

Park Program Assessment

Considerations should be made to transition the facility from its current use as a dedicated soccer facility to a multi-sport complex with community amenities that address the needs of the Taos area. Public feedback concerning future improvements focused on the following topics:

- Fields: add new synthetic turf fields and stripe them as multi-purpose fields to accommodate a variety of field sports; include a baseball field as part of the new design
- Field Amenities: add locker rooms, bleachers (shaded), food truck area, and expanded parking to create a more functional recreation complex
- Park Amenities: expand the trail; add exercise stations, picnic areas (large + small), and playgrounds for more diversified community use

Site Inventory

The following amenities exist on the 23.2 acre Taos Eco Park, see locations on aerial photo to right:

- Synthetic Turf Field
- Grandstand
- Water Harvesting Basin
- Restroom / Storage Building
- Future Field Area
- Trail
- Restroom / Storage Building
- Parking Lot
- Restroom / Storage Building
- Baseball Field

Figure 5-12: Taos Eco Park - Existing Conditions (Aerial Photo, ca. 2016)

Image 5-11: Synthetic turf field; existing conditions

Image 5-12: Restroom / Storage Building

Image 5-13: Restroom / Storage Building

Image 5-12: Restroom / Storage Building
‘Sports Fields’
Two new sports fields will address the present needs of the Taos organized sports league community, offering a place for football, lacrosse, field hockey, rugby, and baseball as well as soccer. Field and facility amenities will contribute to a well-functioning and attractive location for holding games, tournaments, and regular team practices.

Program Activities
- soccer field
- multi-use field
- multi-use field w/ baseball
- locker rooms
- spectator seating
- food truck / concessions area
- parking expansion

Recommendations
- Stripe multi-use fields for multiple sports; provide a location for storing goals and specialized equipment to the side of the fields.
- Provide shade over spectator seating areas.
- Establish a formalized schedule to manage the multi-sport use of the facility in a way that accommodates league sport schedules and maximizes use of the facility. Communicate with key stakeholders to provide schedule updates on a regular basis.
- Develop tournament-scenario plans to identify locations of additional utilities and amenities that will lead to more user-friendly and positive tournament experiences.

‘Park Amenities’
The addition of park amenities distributed throughout the facility will allow community use and create a more appealing facility.

Program Activities
- playgrounds
- exercise equipment
- landscaped areas
- picnic shelter / picnic tables
- seating
- perimeter trails

Recommendations
- Build playgrounds and distribute play equipment in key areas in view of each field so families can watch games and allow children to play in close proximity.
- Place outdoor exercise equipment stations along the perimeter walking trail.
- Add picnic tables / picnic areas for family and group use in strategic areas close to parking / pathway access.
- Utilize stormwater from impermeable surfaces to help establish landscaped areas.
- Integrate walkway and trail alignments with off-site improvements and future trail connections. Provide generous connections across the major drainageway that runs through the property.

The Taos Eco Park Master Plan builds on the existing facility by adding new fields and associated amenities. The new vision of the Eco Park is a facility that accommodates multiple sports and serves as a community park with the addition of some park amenities. All improvements to the facility will be done in coordination with Taos Municipal Schools, the owner of the land.

The Taos Eco Park Master Plan is a document that outlines the plans for the future development of the Taos Eco Park. The plan builds on the existing facility by adding new fields and associated amenities. The new vision of the Eco Park is a facility that accommodates multiple sports and serves as a community park with the addition of some park amenities. All improvements to the facility will be done in coordination with Taos Municipal Schools, the owner of the land.
Land Management
- Tosa Eco Park: Pursue an alternate legal framework between the Town of Taos and Tosa Municipal Schools for the management and improvement of the Tosa Eco Park in a way that is mutually beneficial to both parties.
- Fred Baca Park: Consider adopting a legal framework for Taos Parks + Recreation to manage the Rio Fernando wetland preserve trail and conservation area.
- Do not allow dogs within Fred Baca Park to allow for the preservation of wildlife habitat along the Rio Fernando wetlands for bird and direct dog owners to a newly created off-leash dog area in proximity to the park.

Acquire land for future recreational facilities in proximity to the park.

Coordinate with Taos county to identify a location for new recreational facilities as development occurs.

Continue to explore opportunities for acquiring easements to simplify trails and connect parks with open area space.

Additional Studies / Surveys / Information
- Conduct a study to identify relocate park facilities and operations that serve low use facilities.
- For Fred Baca Park, partner with the Taos Land Trust to prepare a baseline biological assessment of wildlife / wildlife movement, and ecological systems. Include recommendations for soil rehabilitation, habitat enhancement, conservation of grassland restoration, invasive species removal, erosion control, and guidelines for wildlife habitat / corridor protection measures.
- Conduct a study to identify relocate park maintenance facilities from Fred Baca Park to another centralized location. Identify costs and phasing plans. Retain smaller storage facilities at each park for park-specific supplies and maintenance equipment.
- Remove existing maintenance buildings in Kit Carson Park.

Restrooms
- Adopt a policy and establish standards for restroom design and maintenance that addresses public concerns.
- Consider and fund the re-establishment of permanent restrooms that are vandal-proof and have more sophisticated access controls. Utilize portable restrooms for special events only.
- Establish permanent restrooms in areas adjacent to utilities and near high use recreational facilities. Plan locations for portable restrooms for events that serve events on a temporary basis to remove, and do not detract from the overall experience of the park on a daily basis.

Restoration / Cultural Preservation
- Explore opportunities to integrate art and culture in town to promote the strong sense of arts and culture in Taos.

- Work with the Acequia Association to determine whether the Acequia de los Latinos can be reactivated at the north end of Fred Baca Park to alleviate flooding issues along Camino del Medio.
- Explore opportunities to integrate art and sculpture in each park and recreation facility in town to promote the strong sense of art and culture in Taos.

Trail Planning
- As part of the process, trails and paths were identified as the most desired program element and the highest priority for funding.
- Prioritize walkway and path improvements within parks in concert with the proposed master plans for each park.
- Work with local trail advocates, non-profit entities, and land owners to outline a master plan for trail development within the town.
- Establish priority projects and outline funding mechanisms to implement improvements.

Park Maintenance
- Generate and adopt site management and operations plans for each facility.
- Train staff in best management practices for park improvement, conduct regular training sessions for all staff.
- Consider membership with NRPA to share information with other members and benefit from the expertise of the organization’s members.

- Outsource portions of privately organized events and be more proactive so parks staff can focus their efforts on regular park maintenance and operations functions and community programs.

- Overhaul and modernize the irrigation systems for each park for greater efficiency and plant health. Track and publish water use data.

In response to climate change, take steps toward making park landscapes more resilient: evaluate planting selection and turf varieties through drought-tolerance; create wetlands and dry retention ponds to make beneficial use of rainfall from storm events.
This master plan for Town of Taos Parks and Recreation Space is aspirational in its approach and commitment and will require the collaboration of multiple public and private groups. The master plan document and its appendices present a vision for the open space to be implemented in phases over time as funding allows. The vision represents the input and expertise of people who dedicated their time and efforts to this design process.

The goal of this master plan document is to provide a guide for the Town of Taos to improve and expand parks and recreation in a way that honors the past and safeguards the future of these significant landscape and open space assets.

The implementation of the Taos Parks and Recreation Master Plan promotes a conscientious approach to addressing the recreational needs of the community, preserving quintessential features of park landscapes, and attracting visitors from afar to the beauty of Taos.

Implementation Prioritization Plan

The funding of improvements to the parks and expansion of program offerings to the community will require a multi-pronged approach. Since town residents already contribute a high property tax and gross receipts tax rate compared to other areas of the state, any new taxes will need to be vetted with area residents. Nevertheless, a benefit of all the community planning the town and county has conducted over the last years is that it has raised public consciousness about needs for improvement. The community is interested in making things better. Follow-through on these planning efforts with real physical improvements and expanded programs is necessary and will illustrate the competence of the governing body to carry out community plans.

Funding

Funding options for park master plan improvements include the following:

- **Grant Funding**
  - Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
  - USDA Community Facilities Grant / Loan
  - Rivers, Trails + Conservation
  - Baseball Tomorrow
  - US Tennis Association
  - Skatepark Grants
  - Tony Hawk Foundation
- **Private**
  - non-profit / friends of ....
  - foundation support
  - philanthropic donations / legacy funds

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<th>Funding Options</th>
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<td>CIP funding</td>
<td>- General Obligation Bond</td>
<td>- Recreation District (Mili Levy)</td>
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<td>Existing GRT Allocation to Parks + Recreation Infrastructure</td>
<td>- ‘Quality of Life’ dedicated Gross Receipts Tax</td>
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<td>Lodgers Tax (1%)</td>
<td>- Sales (personalized bricks, benches, trees, etc.)</td>
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Appendix

APPENDIX

A EXISTING CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT
Kit Carson Park
Fred Baca Park
Taos Eco Park
Taos Youth and Family Center

B PROGRAMMING / PUBLIC PROCESS
Interest Group Meeting (NGO Sports Organizations) - Record
Interest Group Meeting (Educational) - Record
Interest Group Meeting (Tree Board) - Record
Interest Group Meeting (Baseball / Softball) - Record
Interest Group Meeting (First Responders) - Record
Interest Group Meeting (Maintenance + Facilities) - Record
Interest Group Meeting (Taos Land Trust) - Record
Interest Group Meeting (Taos County) - Record
Interest Group Meeting (Acequias) - Record
Interest Group Meeting (Taos Center for the Arts) - Record
Public Input Meeting 1 (Programming) - Record
Public Input Meeting 2 (Draft Master Plan) - Record
Survey and Survey Results

C SITE ANALYSIS MAPS
Ownership
Open Space and Trails
Zoning
Census Data
Population + Demographics
Gaps in Local Park Access
Cultural Landscape Characteristics
Kit Carson Park / Site Analysis
Fred Baca Park / Site Analysis
Taos Eco Park / Site Analysis
Youth and Family Center / Site Analysis

D SUPPLEMENTAL PLANS
Alexander Guadet / Taos Eco-Park (Living Design Group, April 2009)
Flemion Sanchez Park & Softball Fields (Living Design Group, 2017)

E PROGRAM AREA ESTIMATES
Kit Carson Park / Fred Baca Park / Taos Eco Park

F PARK METRICS / BENCHMARK COMPARISONS

G TAOS YOUTH AND FAMILY CENTER MASTER PLAN