

Village of Taos Ski Valley
Master Plan

LAND USE & NATURAL RESOURCES ELEMENT

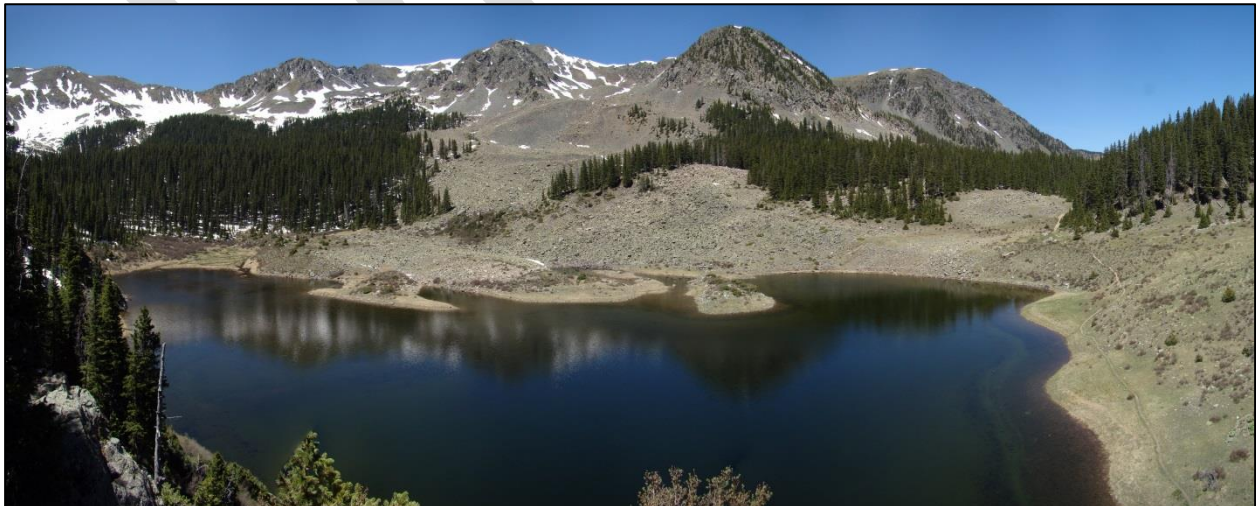
EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Village of Taos Ski Valley is located within the Carson National Forest approximately 19 miles northeast of the Town of Taos. The Wheeler Peak Wilderness Area borders much of the Village on the south. Wheeler Peak, located within the Wilderness Area, is the highest peak in New Mexico (elevation 13,161') and is located approximately 1 ½ miles south of the Village boundary. The Hondo-Columbine Wilderness Area forms the Village's northern border. See the Existing Land Use Map for the location and proximity of the Village to nearby points of interest.



**Kachina and
Wheeler Peaks**

Williams Lake



Currently, the Village encompasses 2.36 square miles. The base elevation of the Core Village is 9,207 feet. The Kachina area is located at approximately 10,200 feet. The Valley's steep yet diverse terrain varies from riparian habitat to alpine tundra. Alpine tundra covers Wheeler and nearby peaks. Flower species include stonecrop and forget-me-nots. Cottonwood trees are common along the Rio Hondo while bristlecone pine, Engelmann spruce, and sub-alpine fir predominant the tree species in the area. The natural diversity provides habitat to over 250 different plant species. An abundance of wildlife is found in the vicinity, including big horn sheep, elk, mule deer, golden eagles, many kinds of songbirds, marmots, bears. Bird species include blue grouse, hawks, flycatchers, magpies, Gray jays, woodpeckers, chickadees, and many others.

The surface water within the Upper Rio Hondo watershed includes the Lake Fork Creek and the Rio Hondo. The Village's drinking water supply is from the natural springs located in the upper watershed.

The Village is divided into three distinct areas. These areas are Amizette, the Village Core, and Kachina. Amizette is located in the Rio Hondo canyon along NM 150. Amizette is predominantly occupied by residences and hotels. The Village Core is where a majority of commercial development is located. The TSV, Inc. offices, ski operations, ticket sales, ski rentals and retail are all located within the Core Village. Residential and lodging developments include the Edelweiss, Snakedance, Sierra Del Sol, and the St. Bernard among others. The Kachina area is located at the base of the Kachina lift, and includes the mixed-use Kachina Subdivision, the Blue Jay Ridge residential lots and contiguous mixed-use properties identified as the Kachina Center in the 2010 Wetland Park. Current development includes the Phoenix, the Bavarian Restaurant & Lodge, the Wheeler Peak Condominiums, and scattered residential uses. A number of residential subdivisions are located between the Village Core and the Kachina area and to the north along the North Fork Creek towards the Bull of the Woods area.

Land use and development decisions are regulated by zoning regulations and a zoning map, the subdivision ordinance, and related development standards for landscaping, outdoor lighting, and signage. The Village Council appoints members to the Planning and Zoning Commission to approve the master plan, recommend amendments to the zoning regulations and review applications for conditional use permits, special use permits, zone changes, variances, and other regulations delegated to them by the Village Council. The Council also appoints a member of the Village staff to serve as the Planning Officer. The Planning Officer is required to enforce the zoning regulations and act as support staff to the Planning and Zoning Commission on all matters related to land use and development. Building permits are issued by the Village's building inspector.

Prior to incorporation in 1996, development activity was regulated by Taos County; however, since incorporation, the Village adopted a Comprehensive Plan in 1997 and the Village Master Plan in 2006 and 2010. Zoning regulations were also adopted and have been amended several times to include additional zones and development standards in anticipation of the redevelopment of the Village Core.

Future development is limited by the steep slopes and access to the Village’s centralized water and sewer systems. The Village’s distance to Taos (and the labor market) contributes to the high costs of construction, further limiting the development potential within the Village.

Existing land uses are illustrated on the **Existing Land Use Maps**. Each type of land use is summarized below with the number of acres and the number of parcel for each type of land use.

LAND USE	ACRES	PARCELS
hotel	2.0	6
maintenance	0.1	1
mixed use (commercial + residential)	0.5	3
municipal	8.8	14
office	0.5	1
open space	2.4	5
multifamily condo	14.1	14
single family	78.1	128
recreation	1.1	3
retail	1.1	2
undeveloped	1591.1	168
TOTAL	1699.8	345

The vast majority of land is “undeveloped” in large part because of the 1,330 +/- acre owned by the Pattison Trust. This parcel is zoned as Farming and Recreation. The development potential of this parcel as commercial or residential developments is limited due to the steep slopes, avalanche shoots, and distance from utilities. Accordingly, this parcel is currently being used for fee-based recreation.

PREVIOUS PLANS & ORDINANCES

The Village has had adopted a number of plans since the Village was first incorporated in 1996. Below is a summary of these plans and a brief description of the land use and natural resources conservation projects that have been considered. Taos County, the US Forest Service, property owners other planning agencies have adopted land use and natural resources plans that impact the Village. A brief summary of these plans is also included.

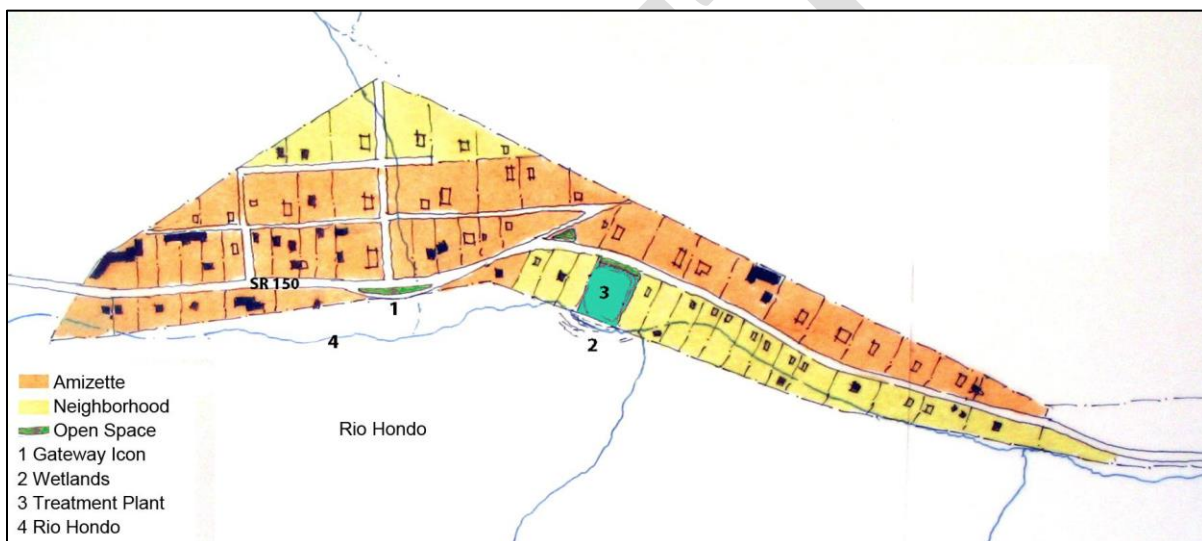
2007 Comprehensive Plan

The 2007 Comprehensive Plan did not call out Land Use as a separate Element; however, the plan does address a number of issues related to land use. The major themes of the 2007 Comprehensive Plan related to land use set a priority for economic diversification, protection of natural resources, and clustering commercial development to create a high-quality urban design, encourage pedestrian amenities, and to increase the capacity and efficiency of public services and infrastructure.

2010 Master Plan

The 2010 Master Plan reflected many of the same values that were articulated in the 2007 Comprehensive Plan. Environmental protection, pollution prevention, and mixed-use developments that preserve open spaces were major themes of the 2010 Master Plan. This plan included specific ideas for improving the Amizette, Village Core, and Kachina areas.

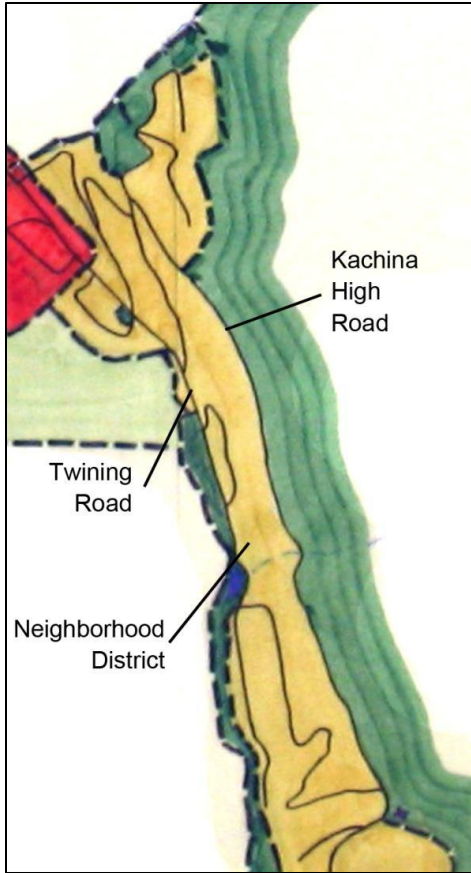
Amizette is described as the “gateway” to the Village. The recommendations for Amizette included a wastewater treatment plant, continued housing and lodging developments, a wetland interpretive park, a trail connecting the Amizette to the Village Core, and roadway improvements for NM 150.



The Amizette Land Use Plan from 2010.

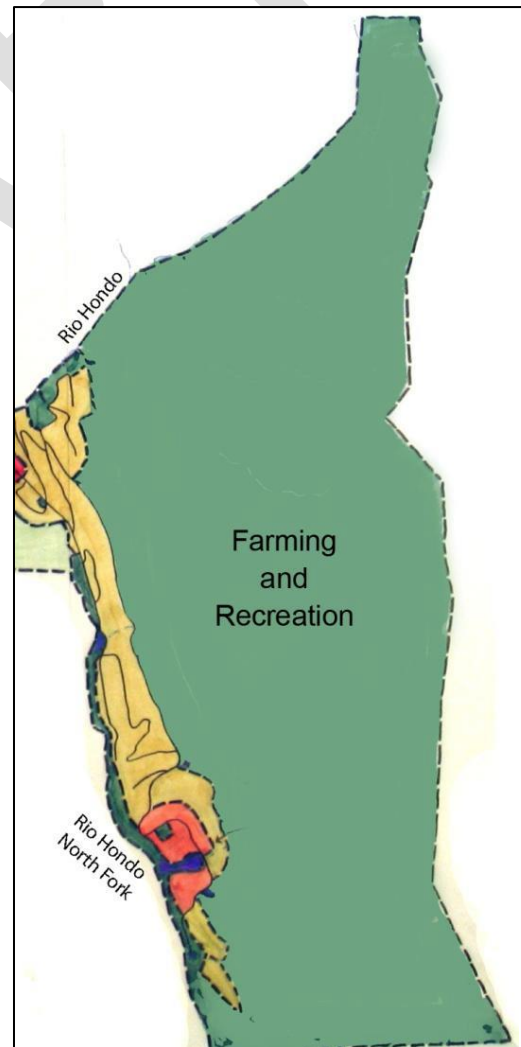
The **Village Core** is described as the “heart” of the Village. Recommendations for the Core Village included landscaping improvements to Armadillo Road, mixed-use developments, public spaces and pedestrian facilities.

Kachina is described as “a ‘node’ of activity set amongst the serene beauty of the Kachina area.” The proposed developments included retail and restaurants with a wetland that “courses through the center” of the development. Preserving the views of nearby mountain peaks is a priority.



Neighborhood District

The Master Plan describes a "Neighborhood District," which includes the residential subdivisions along Twining, Zap's, and Porcupine. These areas are recommended for continued developments of single-family homes.



Farming & Recreation

"The pristine natural environment offers nearly unlimited opportunities for recreation experiences ranging from hiking, equestrian and winter sports."

Parcel Conceptual Plan

The Zoning Regulations require all land owners within the Core Village Zone to submit a Parcel Conceptual Plan prior to submitting a site plan or preliminary sketch plat for a subdivision. The Planning and Zoning Commission is responsible for reviewing each parcel conceptual plan. Site-specific development plans need to be consistent with each parcel conceptual plan. The Parcel Conceptual Plan is a master planned approach to development within the core. The process is intended to integrate snow storage, open space, parking, landscaping, utilities and other improvements between individual parcels due to the complexity of infill development and the scarcity of land and rights-of-way within the Core Village.

The Planning and Zoning Commission approved a Parcel Conceptual Plan for six parcels on June 11, 2014.

Once approved, a parcel Conceptual Plan shall serve as the approved Conceptual Plan for each individual parcel and shall be updated or amended as appropriate to accommodate each individual phase of development, subdivision plat or site plan within that parcel. Parcel Conceptual Plans shall be amended as needed in conjunction with any density transfers or other proposed land use development.

Infrastructure Capital Improvements Plan (ICIP)

The ICIPs between 2012 and 2016 consistently included one project that related directly to land use and natural resources. The Village has planned for the sedimentation control of the Beaver Pond and riparian restoration over the last several years. The cost estimates of the project were between \$50,000 and \$150,000.

Regional Plans

- Taos County Comprehensive Plan & Growth Management Plan

The County Commissioners adopted a comprehensive plan in 2004. This plan combines land use and water resources. The plan outlines the goals, objectives, and strategies for addressing a variety of community development issues. The plan focuses heavily on preserving rural land from inappropriate development and preserving water resources.

The Growth Management Plan was initiated as the next step from the Comprehensive Plan towards adopting zoning ordinances for the County's neighborhood associations.

Because the Village is a municipality with its own zoning regulations, and the fact that the Village is literally surrounded by US Forest Serves land, the Village is not likely to be impacted by land use regulations adopted by the County's neighborhood associations.

- Taos Regional Water Plan

The Taos Regional Water Plan was created through a committee of stakeholders during 2008. The addressed the following issues:

- the Rio Grande compact and availability of water rights
- drought vulnerability
- infrastructure needs
- water quality
- public education
- protection of agriculture
- protection of water rights
- planning for growth
- watershed protection
- data gaps

One of the main components of the Plan was the public welfare statement. The public welfare statement is a written proclamation of the importance of water resources to the community. It is to be used by the State Engineer in determining if approving or denying a request to the transfer of water rights is in the best interest of the public.

The Interstate Stream Commission is updating the Regional Water Plan in 2015.

- Rio Hondo Watershed Restoration Action Strategy

The Village participated in the Watershed Restoration Action Strategy (WRAS) and Non-Point Source Abatement Plan in 2006. The WRAS is “a non-regulatory, voluntary approach to addressing non-point source impacts to water quality.” - p. 36. The WRAS identified a number of concerns regarding water quality in the upper Rio Hondo watershed, including sedimentation from grazing and steep slope trials and developments, the impacts of future resort development, prevention of catastrophic wildfire, application of salt and sand to roadways and parking lots for maintenance.

“There continues to be significant concern from downstream communities in the watershed about past and potential impacts from the wastewater treatment plant”

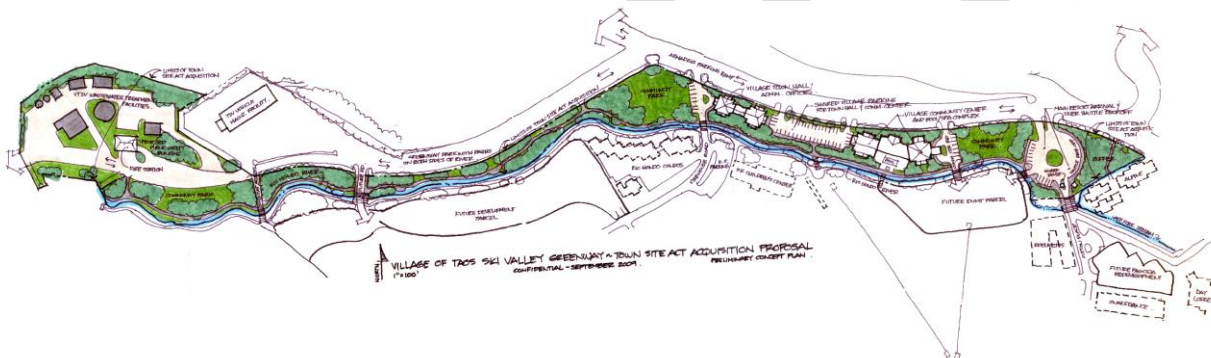
Upper Rio Hondo Watershed Restoration Action Strategy (WRAS) and Non-Point Source Abatement Plan – p. 44

- US Forest Service

The Carson National Forest is beginning the process of revising their Forest Plan. The current plan was adopted in 1986. According to the Forest Service, the revised plan will incorporate changed conditions, best available science, and new public issues. It is intended to be a "science based framework for integrating resource management"; which will promote healthy, resilient, diverse, and productive national forest grasslands with a range of social, economic and ecological benefit not and for future generations." (www.fs.usda.gov/detail/carson/landmanagement/planning/?cid=stelprdb5443166).

The Forest Plan is expected to be available for public review and comment in the Fall/Winter of 2017.

The illustration below was developed by the Village as a part of a proposal to the US Forest Service to acquire land for future development of recreation and community facilities through the Townsite Act. This plan was not accepted by the US Forest Service.



- Master Development Plans

A planning consultant prepared a Redevelopment Plan for TSV, Inc. for the Core Village area in 2010. This plan formed the background for the addition of the Core Village Zone and related development standards and procedures. Other land owners have collaborated in preparing master development plans for the Kachina area. None of the plans were formally adopted by the Village. The limiting factors in supporting new development in Kachina were water and fire suppression capacity and limitations of the wastewater treatment plant.

EXISTING ORDINANCES

Zoning Regulations & Zoning Map

The zoning regulations contained in Ordinance 14-30 govern land use, building envelopes and set-backs, grading, and drainage, architecture, snow storage, parking, site grading and drainage, utilities, building permits, landscaping, signage and outdoor lighting standards.

Subdivision Ordinance

This ordinance regulates the subdivision of land according to state law. It controls the density of proposed development and includes specific provisions for the developer to provide adequate infrastructure and utilities.

DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

The Land Use Element includes an analysis of the development potential of the Village. The analysis seeks to answer these important questions:

- What if every parcel of land was developed to the maximum potential under the current zoning?
- How much land is undeveloped, where is it, and is it feasible to develop on these parcels under the current zone?
- What would be the impacts to the Village water and sewer systems of each parcel was fully developed?
- Does the Planning and Zoning Commission need to amend the zoning map to reduce the amount of development that could be permitted?
- Would the charm and character of the Village be damaged if all parcels were developed?

The analysis of the development potential includes an inventory of all existing land uses. The **Existing Land Use Maps** illustrates the distribution of land uses. The inventory is used to identify the location and size of the undeveloped parcels. The current zone and permitted density of each undeveloped parcel determines the maximum development capacity of the Village. **Table #1 – Zoning of Undeveloped Parcels** outlines the number of acres of undeveloped parcels according to zone.

TABLE #1 ZONING OF UNDEVELOPED PARCELS	
ZONE	ACRES
residential	52
farming and recreation	1351
core village zone	12
commercial business	171

There is a total of 1,586 acres of undeveloped land. The **Development Capacity** for the remaining undeveloped parcels is outlined in **Table #2**. The calculations are based on assumptions about the maximum development potential due to the limited access to utilities, density requirements (derived from set-backs and building height), and steep slopes which severely limits development potential.

TABLE #2 DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY		
AREA / PARCEL	CAPACITY	
	units	commercial square feet
CORE VILLAGE		
"Hole in the Ground"	60	40,000
Parcel D	55	16,400
Parcel G	87	19,450
T-Bird Site	40	10,000
Strawberry	40	0
Pioneer	50	0
SUBTOTAL	332	85,850
RESIDENTIAL		
all parcels	50	0
AMIZETTE		
residential	25	0
commercial	0	15,000
KACHINA		
residential	50	0
commercial	0	80,000
FARMING & RECREATION		
residential	10	0
commercial	0	20,000
TOTAL	467	200,850

* a "unit" includes a single family residence, a single hotel room or a condominium

Although the analysis of the full development potential can be instructive, the numbers of assumptions that must be made about the development potential of each parcel render the results very unreliable. Consequently, the Village will work with property owners to create master development plans in order to develop a more accurate and feasible analysis of the total development capacity of the Village.

New commercial and mixed-use development is most likely to occur in the Core Village in the next few years due to the value of property (and proximity to the skiing) and availability of infrastructure and utilities. Any significant commercial development is not anticipated in the Kachina area until a new water tank is installed which will provide adequate fire protection and domestic water service to

the area. New development in Amizette is limited by the fact that centralized water and sewer services are not available, which requires any new development to include separate water well and a vault to store waste water, greatly increasing the costs of development.

PREFERRED LAND USES

The preferred land uses are illustrated on the **Preferred Land Plan Maps**. The preferred land use was selected for each parcel based on the current land use, current zoning designation, and the practical development potential of the parcel. The designations for preferred land use will to be used to evaluate zoning applications.

GOAL, POLICES & OBJECTIVES

The goal, policies, and objectives present a framework for evaluating new development proposals and for implementing land use and natural resources conservation projects.

Goal

Land use and development activity sustain and enhance the Village economy and natural resources.

Land Use Polices

1. The Village believes that land development should not exceed the development capacity of the land and natural resources. The Village will consider an application for a zone change to increase the density of a development when the application demonstrates that the proposed development will not have long-term negative impacts to the beauty and integrity of the land and natural resources of the community.
2. Development applications must be substantially consistent with and further the goals, policies, and objectives of the Master Plan. Staff reports must include an analysis of the consistency between the proposed development and the provision of the Master Plan.

3. The Village will encourage water and energy conservation in new development and renovations.
4. The Village will invest in renewable energy production and conservation measures in Village facilities in order to save energy, water, and reduce impacts to land resources.
5. Planning is most effective when there is clear community support for the plan and transparency in development decisions. Transparency in the planning process increases accountability for elected officials, appointed officials, and staff who are expected to implement the plan. The Village affirms that the entire community deserves the most accurate and timely information about land use and development decisions; therefore, all ages and cultures will be included in public outreach and education efforts as a means to accommodate diversity while promoting equity and a sense of community.
6. The Village will utilize the most popular and accessible formats of public participation and education, including email notices, print and radio media, web pages and blogs, social media, public hearings, charrettes, and open house events. The Town will be proactive in providing land use and development planning information to the public rather than assume the public will receive information by coincidence.
7. The Village recognizes that land use planning and development decisions have impacts beyond the Village boundaries. No single government entity has full legal jurisdiction, political power, or funding capacity to implement all of the goals, policies, and objectives of the Master Plan. There are many factors that influence development decisions, including market forces and economic trends, budget limitations, and county, federal, state, and tribal plans and regulations. The Town's policy is therefore to collaborate with Taos County, Taos Pueblo, federal and state agencies as well as local community organizations in land use planning and development decisions.

Natural Resources Policies

1. Natural resources not only sustain our lives but they define the character, economy, and quality of life in the Village. Accordingly, natural resources must be protected because of their cultural, environmental, and economic benefits.
2. The Village recognizes that open space, forests, riparian areas, and wetlands within the watershed clean water and reduce air pollution through natural infiltration. The Village will support development that utilizes natural systems to infiltrate rain and snow into the ground.

3. The Village will evaluate new development for its impacts to natural resources. The Village will require natural resources conservation through sustainable design and innovation during the initial phases of site selection, design and development planning.
4. Land development and building construction has long lasting impacts on natural resources. The Town will encourage water and energy conservation in new development and construction.
5. The Town will encourage water conservation through public education and outreach initiatives.
6. The Village will continue to evaluate its water rights in comparison to demands and will update projections periodically to account for changing conditions.
7. The Village supports projects when the design and implementation of green infrastructure manages storm water and utilize best management practices, such as increasing tree canopy, using bio-swales, permeable pavers, bio retention, green roofs, downspout disconnection, landscaping with native vegetation and other proven practices for water quality and habitat protection.

Land Use Objectives

1. Update the zoning regulations to address the following:
 - require an annual update to the zoning map,
 - add open space zone and revise open space dedication requirements,
 - clarify the development review process with regard to the certificate of compatibility as it relates to other zoning actions.
2. Create a comprehensive database that utilizes Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for decision support, monitoring development applications, and code violations.

GIS is a very powerful tool for implementing the Master Plan. It should be used to evaluate the infrastructure impacts of development projects, prioritize land conservation programs, evaluate infrastructure investments, refute "takings" claims, and generate maps and produce data for the public and other government agencies. GIS can be integrated with a searchable database so the staff can review prior approval dates of nascent development projects, identify code violations, create public notification letters, and a variety of time and location sensitive issues.

3. Update the Land Use Element at Least Every Five Years.

The Master Plan will be more manageable and relevant when updated regularly. Updates will reflect the most current goals, policies, and objectives of the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Village Council. The update to the Plan will be

accompanied by a brief report. The report will include, at minimum, the following:

- the number of objectives that have been accomplished, including a revised list of objectives to be implemented over the following five years,
- the overall effectiveness of each policy,
- the challenges, threats, or new opportunities that have emerged,
- the data that needs to be updated,
- the recommended changes and updates to maps and other data.

Natural Resources Objectives

1. The Village will work with TSV, Inc. and the US Forest Service to improve storm runoff conditions and snow storage to prevent surface water pollution.
2. Improve the sedimentation of the Beaver Pond for future uses as a potential fishery and a water source for firefighting.
3. Maintain Village roads regularly to minimize dust pollution.
4. Work with private land owners along the Lake Fork Creek and Rio Hondo to provide a connected trail and open space network along the riparian areas.

Amizette Area Objectives

1. Identify properties for snow storage.

Core Village Area Objectives

1. Expand the Core Village Zone boundaries to include the Children's Center.
2. Adopt a Parcel Conceptual Plan for all parcels within the Core Village Zone.
3. Terry's building condemnation.
4. Adopt a river restoration plan for all properties adjacent to the Rio Hondo and the Lake Fork Creek
5. Negotiate with property owners for public easement or land exchanges for future development of trail corridors and riparian restoration projects.

Kachina Area Objectives

1. Complete and adopt a master development plan. The plan should address at last the following priorities:
 - a. architecture standards to reflect the mining history of the community,
 - b. preserve wetlands and surface water,
 - c. adequate snow storage and parking,
 - d. maximize views from public spaces,
 - e. infrastructure and utility capacities,
 - f. facilities for public events.

The master plan will leverage the work already completed in past efforts.

Residential Areas Objectives

1. Negotiate with property owners for public easement or land exchanges for future development of trail corridors and riparian restoration projects.

Farming and Recreation Area Objectives

1. Work with the Pattison Trust and adjacent other property owners in developing and adopting a Master Development Plan. The Master Plan should address the following priorities:
 - a. preserving steep slopes and natural resources,
 - b. preserving the natural beauty,
 - c. identifying the developable areas for potential commercial and residential development,
 - d. identify avalanche chutes,
 - e. alternatives for providing water, sewer, roadway access, and energy for heat and electricity (e.g. – solar).

CONCLUSIONS

To be continued.....