



# The Village of La Bajada Community Plan **DRAFT** January 2019



# LA BAJADA COMMUNITY PLAN ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



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## LA BAJADA COMMUNITY PLAN INTENT & PURPOSE

The community planning process establishes a role for community members to participate in shaping the future of the community through developing a vision for the community.

This plan provides an ability for the community to inform the context of the overall County through analysis, examination and implementation of the desired future for the community.

The intent of this planning process is to ensure that the community's voice is represented and that future development is in harmony and in balance with both natural and human systems creating a lifestyle that works within the natural environment and cultural setting.

The purpose of this plan is to reinforce the unique, historical, rural character of the plan area while serving evolving community needs.

There is a need for intergovernmental coordination in order to address complex issues in the community such as water, roads, and access. A thread throughout this plan is to work towards approaches to problem solving and cross-jurisdictional understandings in order to address issues of mutual interest and concern.

The Sustainable Growth Management Plan lays the foundation for building more effective regional partnerships in the County. The health of Santa Fe County's communities, including Traditional Communities, tribal governments, the incorporated municipalities, the rural areas of the County and the welfare of the region are interconnected. Intergovernmental cooperation may involve two or more jurisdictions to communicate and address and resolve issues of mutual interest. Establishing greater efficiency and effectiveness in the planning process is an on-going effort that the County in coordination with its communities seeks to improve upon. Good governance also lays the foundation for building more effective regional partnerships in the County and is a key ingredients for community sustainability.



## VISION

*The Village of La Bajada is beautiful and peaceful, a 'piece of heaven'. In La Bajada, future generations will continue to learn from the land and lead self-sufficient lifestyles to include growing food, raising livestock, earning a living from the land, and enjoying a high quality of life.*

*La Bajada residents have created several small-scale, successful enterprises which harness the community's unique natural and cultural heritage inspired by the village's historic role as a paraje on a longer journey.*

*La Bajada will be a vibrant and safe community which includes a town square, community center, and community water infrastructure. The residents will have fulfilling relationships with the surrounding communities and share in gatherings for feast days and celebrations, and trading and leasing land for agriculture use and other traditional resources.*



## BRIEF HISTORY

La Bajada has been continuously settled since 1732. The area has been known by several names throughout its history, including 'San Miguel de Dominguez', 'San Miguel de La Majada', 'Rancho de San Miguel', 'San Miguel de La Bajada', and since 1827, it has been known as 'La Bajada'. La Bajada has a historic pattern of diverse and mixed land uses which has carried through to the present including residential, agricultural, and until approximately 1940, also included limited transportation service and transient lodging.

La Bajada village is located at "Las Bocas," or mouth of the Santa Fe River. It was built in response to the increasing number of travelers using the corridor to move between the high grounds of La Bajada Mesa and the lower lands of La Majada Mesa. The corridor, referred to as El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro (El Camino Real), translated as "The Royal Road of the Interior Lands," was a major transportation network between Mexico City and northern New Mexico and was the main corridor used by the Spanish while founding the colonies. Along with its use as a transportation corridor, it also served as a source of communication and trade. La Bajada was established as an area of rest before an exhausting trip through the river canyon to the northern communities, including Santa Fe. The area worked well for a settlement since the location of the river created a prime location for agriculture and the escarpment served as protection for the occupants.





Traditionally land was divided into private ownership in long rectangular lots which bisect all of the major 'life zones' of the local ecology, including river, riparian regions, fertile bottom land, upland scrub, piñon-juniper forest and badlands. These 'long lots' are referred to as riparian lots when the original deed describes the river as one of the boundaries.

In 1926, during the rise of the automobile era, the El Camino Real corridor became part of the Route 66 Federal Highway System. A tourist camp and service station were constructed adjacent to the acequia before the steep incline up the La Bajada Mesa. Remnants of the camp are visible today, as well as a dirt segment of the Route 66 switchbacks. The U.S. Census of 1920 shows the Montoya family as the most numerous of families in the village. By the 1940s they were joined by the Gallegos, Sánchez, Ortiz, Gonzales, Dimas, Baca, Armijo, Lucero, Valdez, Martínez, Lueses and Benavides families, among others. With the arrival of the U.S. highway system and the ultimate bypassing of the village in 1932, La Bajada Village struggled to subsist and deal with the massive changes that came in waves over the next eight decades.

In 2004, La Bajada village was identified as a "High-Potential Historic Site" by the National Park Service and the BLM State Office in the Final Impact Statement for El Camino Real Historic Trail Comprehensive Management Plan. In 2005, National Old Trails Road Historic District at La Bajada and Route 66 were listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The district includes six miles of roadway, associated structures, the 1926 timber bridge across the Río Santa Fe and the Walden Tourist Camp.

The village's leaders have engaged in diplomacy with their neighbors, Cochiti Pueblo to the north and west, Kiwa Pueblo (Santo Domingo) to the south, BLM and USDA Forest Service to the northeast. That the Village of La Bajada has maintained a continuous presence from the time of the establishment of the La Majada Land Grant in 1908 which was 54,404 acres, to today's acreage of 78.5 acres is a testament to the resiliency of the people of the Village of La Bajada. The future of the village is entwined with the continued flow of water in the Santa Fe River and the relationships of those that live alongside.

## KEY ISSUES

- Community access
- Road maintenance
- Intergovernmental coordination
- Agricultural viability
- Infrastructure funding
- Land preservation tools and incentives
- Special Valuation for agricultural land
- Surface water
- Preservation of water rights
- Inter-jurisdictional land ownership
- Public land access
- Emergency services



## PROCESS

The La Bajada Community Ditch & Mutual Domestic Water Association Registered Organization and La Bajada Traditional Village Community ORganization submitted a Letter of Intent to form the La Bajada Community Planning Committee on April 29, 2017. This letter was submitted based on a series of community meetings beginning in May 2016 that established the justification for a community planning process based on community needs and key issues identified at left.

The Village of La Bajada Planning committee was established via Resolution 2017-55 on May 30th 2017. This Resolution authorized the community planning process for the La Bajada Traditional Community.

The Kick-off meeting for the La Bajada Community planning process was held on July 15th, 2017. At this meeting, staff facilitated a discussion about Planning Committee protocol which included discussion on the requirements for community planning meetings in accordance with the Sustainable Growth Management Plan (SGMP) and Sustainable Land Development Code (SLDC).

Planning committee meetings are open to the public and advertised throughout the community and conducted through a consensus process as determined by the committee that decisions would be made by coming to general agreements, rather than majority vote. It was noted that the planning committee meetings would provide an opportunity for all residents of La Bajada to have their voice heard in all matters pertaining to the future of their community.

Subsequent meetings were held on the following dates: November 18, 2017; April 7, 2018; April 19, 2018; May 3, 2018; May 17, 2018; June 14, 2018, June 28th, 2018, and January 26th, 2019. Site visits were also conducted with community members and allowed planning staff to get an important perspective into the history and lifestyle enjoyed by residents of La Bajada.

Road Map

Timeline

## LAND USE ELEMENT

*Land use guides future development and designates future uses of the land, and serves as a basic guide for desirable use of land for future development. Land use plans protect existing assets and features of the community landscape such as irrigable and arable agricultural land, acequia corridors, and riparian zones while encouraging future development in appropriate areas.*

*The goal of a successful, comprehensive land use plan is to ensure that resources are available to sustain future generations.*





## LAND USE ELEMENT: TRADITIONAL COMMUNITY

The entire village is identified as a Traditional Community in the Santa Fe County Sustainable Growth Management Plan. The first permanent settlements in Santa Fe County were traditional communities with continuous settlement exhibiting historic patterns of diverse and mixed community land uses which continue to the present. Each traditional community has historic structures or developed features, the existence of an entryway, a corridor and a village center or centers.

Traditional Communities have been in existence for over 100 years, but were formally recognized under the 1980 General Plan and the 1999 General Plan, which recognized a total of 29 Traditional Communities. These designations were established with the intent for these villages to accommodate a mixture of uses such as agriculture, residential, large scale residential community service, institutional, nonresidential or recreational uses anywhere inclusive of the boundaries of the village, provided the performance standards and criteria set forth by the Land Development Code were met.

La Bajada has a zoning designation of 'Traditional community', which has a base density of 1 dwelling unit per .75 acres. The uses and density of the Traditional Community zone reflects the distinct land use patterns and mixture of agricultural, residential and non-residential uses historically present in traditional communities and which continue to the present.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Village of La Bajada Traditional Community consists of the following:

- 78.53 acres within boundary divided into 33 parcels.
- 15 residential parcels totaling 40.05 acres.
- 18 undeveloped parcels totaling 38.02 acres.
- 19 residential structures , 5 of which are mobile homes, 14 are site-built homes,
- San Miguel Church
- Multiple agricultural and accessory structures
- A total of 12 parcels are currently receiving special valuation for agriculture

The residences are clustered toward the southeastern end of the village, near the entrance to the community and also along the northeastern end of the parcels that border the La Bajada Road, This is a traditional development pattern featured in riparian long lots, which clusters development upland, near the circulation networks to preserve the continuity of open arable farmland downslope from the acequia for agricultural uses.

12 of the parcels in La Bajada are currently receiving special valuation for agriculture, according to the 2018 Assessors map of Agriculture and Livestock accounts. The church was donated to the community and is located on a residential property and traditionally has served as a place of gathering for the community. There is also a barn and some accessory structures on a parcel of land adjacent to the church that are potentially available to be developed for uses supportive to the community's future vision.

In addition to the continuity of the traditional land uses and development patterns, the community is interested in designating land uses that would support the sales of produce, arts and crafts, agri-tourism and/or eco-tourism, bed and breakfasts or other similar hospitality services. Small scale businesses have existed historically in La Bajada, and the vision for future land uses of this nature include the condition that such enterprises would be operated by village land-owners. The approval of the community would need to be sought for the establishment of a business that would bring increased outside traffic through the Village or for one that incurred a substantial use of community resources.



## LAND USE ELEMENT: COMMUNITY LIFESTYLE & LIVELIHOODS

Sustaining community lifestyle and supporting livelihoods characteristic to the area is key in developing a future land use plan. A self-sufficient community is able to grow and sell food and earn a living from the land. In La Bajada the living agricultural heritage and strong cultural mores inform distinct possibilities for future small scale businesses. This could include creating a cooperative to grow high value crops, community services, artisanal business or cultural, eco- and agricultural tourism.

During the 60s, anticipating the development of the Cochiti reservoir, La Bajada community members had been looking forward to economic benefits associated with the culture of lakeside recreation. According to community members, the owners of the Walden tourist camp had discussed opening a bait and tackle shop, lake store, or boat rental outfit.

The lake used to be part of the economic development vision for the community, it may still play a role in future economic development strategies. There is an opportunity for economic vitality as there is a distinct season for recreation and tourists from April 15th to November 15th at the Tetilla Peak Recreation Area every year when Tetilla Peak Road opens up.









# LAND USE ELEMENT: FUTURE LAND USE MAP

## Village of La Bajada Land Use Categories

### 1. Traditional Community:

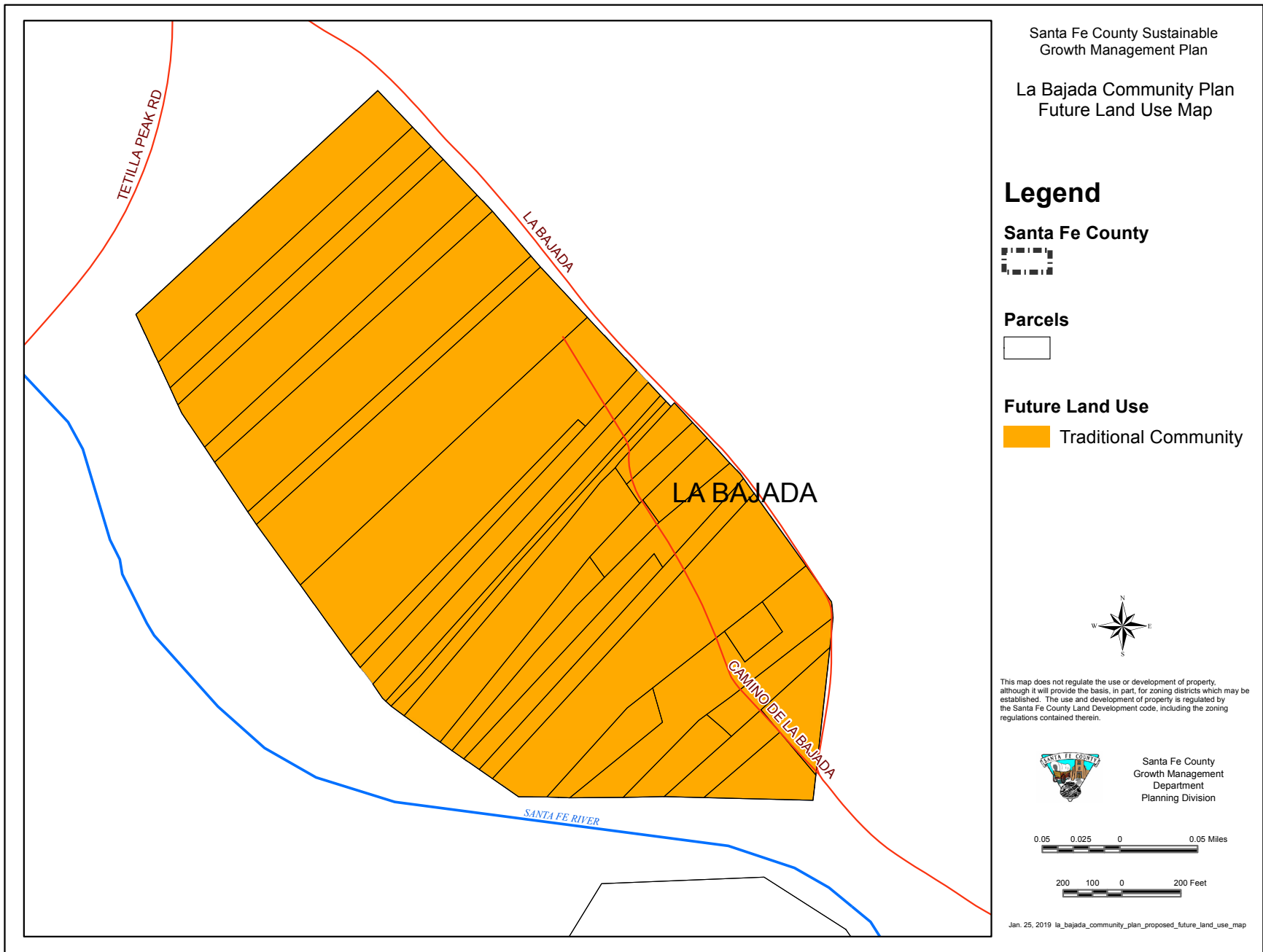
The Traditional Community (TC) land use designation identifies areas suitable for residential, small-scale commercial and traditional agricultural uses consistent with the existing development patterns of traditional communities. The TC recognizes and accommodates traditional community land use patterns, preserves historic and cultural landscapes, and protects agricultural uses, including traditional agriculture with acequia systems. Clustered development and transfers of development rights are appropriate for this area to support continued farming and/or ranching activities, conserve open space, and protect scenic features and environmentally sensitive areas.

### 2. Agricultural Overlay:

This overlay is applied over the base land use and zoning designation. The purpose for establishing a La Bajada Agriculture Overlay is to support the village's on-going agricultural activities which foundational to the community's way of life. The overlay would accommodate the continuance and development of agricultural uses, food processing, and appropriately scaled agricultural businesses. This overlay is appropriate for areas where agriculture and ranching locate because of traditional, established land use patterns, and agricultural potential in either greenhouse or land-based environments. The overlay is intended to allow a mixture of agricultural land uses in appropriate scale and intensity for these uses for the Village of La Bajada.

### 3. Rural Commercial Overlay:

This overlay is applied over the base land use and zoning designation. The purpose for developing a La Bajada Rural Commercial Overlay is to accommodate appropriately scaled development of agriculture business, commercial, service-related, and limited industrial activities. This overlay is intended for areas where such development best fit because of established uses and land use patterns and proposed future land uses. Although this designation is established for a mixture of land uses, they should be appropriately scaled and appropriate regulations should be established to minimize or buffer any nuisances caused by such land uses.



## LAND USE ELEMENT: OVERLAYS

**Agricultural Overlay.** The area designated as appropriate for the La Bajada Agricultural Overlay is identified on the future land use map and is bounded to north by the Gallegos Ditch, and to the east, south and west by the La Bajada Community District boundary. In addition to those uses allowed in the traditional community, the La Bajada Agricultural Overlay supports the following types of uses:

- crop production greenhouses, hoop-houses, other controlled-environment agricultural structures and related season extension structures for personal and/or commercial use
- agricultural-related structures, including, but not limited to, barns, sheds, farm buildings, animal housing, propagation houses, for accessory agricultural uses and seasonal protection for livestock or horses
- cold storage for agricultural uses and products
- fermenting (manufacturing) wine. Any structure necessary for any stage of the process relating to the harvest, storage, fermentation of wine or any other beverage
- food processing
- traditional agricultural structures including thermal walls, subterranean root cellars
- farm stands or other similar structures for selling products grown or crafted by La Bajada community members

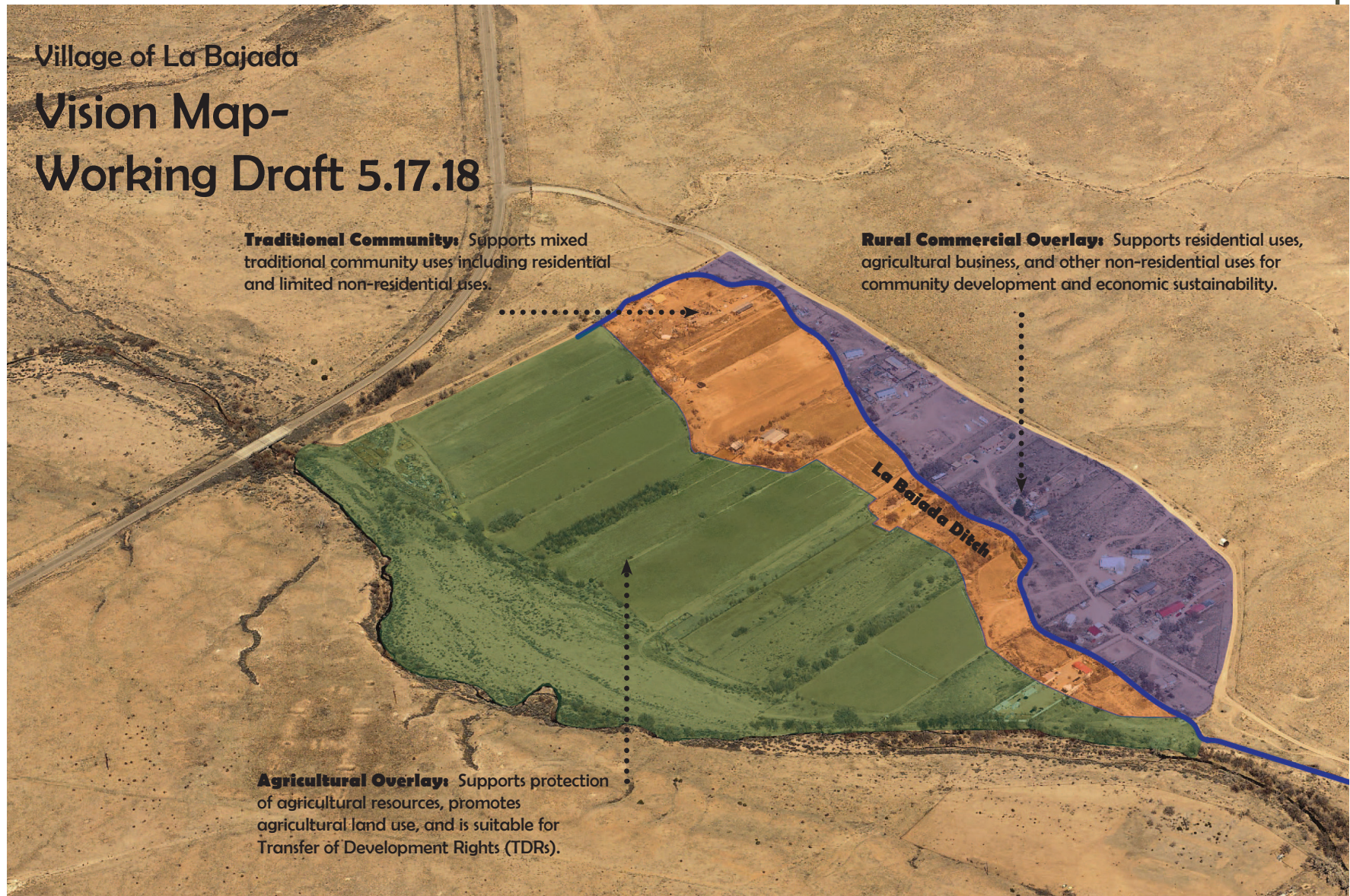
**Rural Commercial Overlay.** The La Bajada Rural Commercial Overlay is appropriate for the areas identified in the La Bajada community adjacent to the La Bajada Village Road.

Uses in the La Bajada Rural Commercial Overlay should include all uses identified in the traditional community designation. In addition to those uses, the following uses are supported in the La Bajada Rural Commercial Overlay:

- Agriculture production, storage and food processing facilities, business, service, and commercial establishments
- Commercial greenhouses, plant nurseries, and landscapers
- Kennels, animal shelters, veterinary hospitals
- Animal feed stores, tack shops, farm equipment sales
- Day-care and child-care services
- Cemeteries



# AGRICULTURAL & RURAL COMMERCIAL OVERLAY MAP



## LAND USE ELEMENT: TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS

Transfer of development rights are a tool to promote preservation of agriculture, rural open space and character, scenic vistas, natural features, areas of special character or special historic, cultural or aesthetic interest or value, and environmental resources for the benefit of the residents of Santa Fe County. La Bajada community members have identified this tool as a way to preserve their agricultural land and water rights. The Santa Fe County Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program is a voluntary, incentive-based and market-driven whereby qualifying landowners are able to receive financial compensation without having to sell or fully develop their land. Developers are able to purchase development rights in order to increase density or changes to intensity to incentivize development in designated growth areas.



Reserved

## LAND USE ELEMENT: GOALS & ACTIONS

Land Use Element Goals and Actions



# AGRICULTURAL ELEMENT



Looming above the canyon are volcanic-capped mesas and high, fluted rocks known as Peñasco Blanco or, more currently, La Bajada Mesa—where abundant springs and productive soil allowed a large pre-European pueblo village to prosper. Once known as Tzenatay, most likely a Queres-speaking pueblo, it was later referred to as Pueblo Quemado (Burnt Pueblo), like so many abandoned sites in the region. Archaeological discoveries in 1915 indicated that nearby sandy grasslands had been put to agricultural use early on.

In order to irrigate their crops, pueblo-dwellers diverted the river and dug ditches (the Spanish would call them acequias), utilizing both shores of the stream. They may have also used a series of check-dams to distribute the water that flowed down from the mesa during rainstorms. Above the mesa they built waffle gardens similar to those at Zuni Pueblo, which depended solely on rainfall. As the pueblo grew, so did its agriculture. Its location was also blessed by cold-water springs situated near what would eventually be called El Río Santa Fe (Santa Fe River), just 2 miles east of El Río del Norte (Río Grande).

The origin of La Bajada village stems from the establishment of Spanish Colonies in 1598 and the Spanish Land Grants that followed. On Feb. 10, 1695, Gov. Diego de Vargas granted Jacinto Peláez La Merced del Ojito (the little cold spring land grant) in compensation for services rendered as a soldier during the reconquest campaign. La Merced del Ojito was conferred as pasturelands for stock with La Majada being the corral for stock near the majadal.





## AGRICULTURAL ELEMENT

The grazing lands of La Majada, the majadal, nurtured large quantities of beef and mutton in addition to hides, wool and agricultural produce for trade or barter in nearby communities and also La Villa de Santa Fe. The majada (a natural overnight shelter for sheep) was located upriver from the village of La Bajada near a pond on the north side of the Río Santa Fe.

The Village at La Bajada continued its slow growth, favored by springs, river water, fertile soil, grazing land for stock and protection provided by the escarpment. Families settled at the base of the large mesa at Las Bocas del Cañón protecting the ojito frío, digging acequias, building their houses, and creating a permanent village at the former paraje site. With the establishment of the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 1862, Eastern-style concepts and methods of commercialized farming and ranching were introduced. Such concepts and methods were out of place in a region like the Southwest. The fragile environment of the Territory of New Mexico contained populations who knew how to survive and had indeed managed to thrive for centuries in this delicate land because of their deep-seated respect for the earth, the waters and everything that was part of the natural world.

The Partido Partidario—a contract sharing sheep with sheepherders—was initiated again in 1865 with venture capitalists, who purchased merino sheep in Missouri, brought them to New Mexico and began contracting with sheepherders who could no longer find markets for their native churro sheep. The venture capitalists encouraged land grantees to use their common and pasture lands for grazing this new breed that drank more water and needed more pasture. The new market-centered system encouraged a few of the wealthier native ranchers to take on more stock and overgraze their pasturelands, thereby contributing to their depletion, including parts of La Majada and La Bajada land grants and mesas.



According to William Dunmire's New Mexico's Livestock Heritage, cattle barons such as John Chisum from Texas arrived in southeastern New Mexico in 1870 with large herds and the authority of the Homestead Act to move onto "public domain" lands in order stake their claims. A severe drought from 1870 to 1883 made matters worse. The cattle barons brought in thousands of cattle—too many for the grazing lands they had purchased. Residents on La Majada land grant and in the village of La Bajada suffered with their livestock during that period due to cyclical droughts but not due to overgrazing. They had cared for the land in the same manner as their ancestors and reduced their herds during this drought even though they had to sell at a lower price.

Historic orchard crops grown in La Bajada included apples, peaches, pears, cantaloupes, watermelons, and grapes. Peaches, plums, cherries, and apricots were reestablished after the drought in the 1930s and a vine restoration initiative begun in the 1970s is still in progress. Young orchards of various trees are present in the long lot fields. Despite the continuance of agriculture over the years there has been a significant decline in irrigated lands.

Field and traditional subsistence crops were common on the irrigated lands of La Bajada in the 60s. Today alfalfa remains the primary crop and has been since the 1960s. Villagers also produce small crops of vegetables such as tomatoes, carrots, spring onions, asparagus, and historic crops such as corn, beans, and squash.

Around 1983 Victor Gallegos purchased the land formerly known as the Wheeler Ranch at the western end of La Bajada for agricultural purposes. At that time, the land had a dense vegetation of sabinos trees and shrubs. The property was cleared and has been used for numerous agricultural activities including alfalfa, grazing horses and cattle.





## AGRICULTURAL ELEMENT

In the 80s, the Gallegos family transitioned their land into an organic farming business called La Bajada Ranch. They were among the first organic farms certified in New Mexico through the state of California, as the New Mexico had not yet established a state organic certification program. The farm grew a wide variety of vegetables on over 40 acres, including greens, tomatoes, herbs, onions, root crops, cucumbers, squash, , beans and corn. They had a diversified marketing model, which included both wholesale accounts and direct sales. They supplied their produce to area grocery stores, restaurants, as well as having a presence at the Santa Fe Farmers Market. A period of prolonged drought in the early 2000s affected the farm so dramatically that La Bajada Ranch stopped production due to the unpredictable and scant water supply.

Other community members have described their experiences with field restoration, the process of returning productivity to fields that had been left fallow and had become overrun with weeds. He had five garden areas, and planted rye, and a wide variety of other crops, including tomatoes, cucumbers, squash, and greens. His experience was that the La Bajada growing season microclimate was between that of the Albuquerque and Santa Fe regions, and he experienced typical growing challenges of the area including drought and extreme temperature variation.

Medicinal herbs are very important to the traditional lifestyle of people in La Bajada. Several generations of western herb lists mention La Bajada as a distinct area for rare medicinal herbs. Herbs are also used in a distinct way in La Bajada, as compared with traditional uses in other communities.

La Cienega woman Lenora Curtain conducted ethonobotanical studies in New Mexico and developed extensive content relating to the rio abajo (lower river) microclimate around La Bajada. She identified herbs that are exclusive to the region with its a distinct ecosystem that supports the growth of rare medicinal plants.



## AGRICULTURAL ELEMENT: HORSE CULTURE

Horses are an essential part of the lives and livelihood in La Bajada. Traditionally, and to the present day, they serve many purposes, including herding the livestock, means of transportation, and are relied upon in the event of an emergency. For example, if there was a dramatic flood that cut off access to the road, people would be able to ride out on horseback through the canyon. Horses are not considered ‘pets’, but are working farm animals---vehicles “just like your truck. You just have to feed them differently.” It was noted by several community members that in the last 10 years, horses had been employed in field cultivation on various occasions. Horses are integral to the folkway of life still lived in La Bajada. Horses were traditionally raced all over northern New Mexico in town plazas that were converted to racing tracks. People would travel to different towns to gather and share in the entertainment of the horse races. The Montoya family used horses for everything, and Pat Montoya commented that her grandfather had been a horse whisperer, or jiñete. A jiñete has a special way with horses, and she shared that the horses loved him and responded to him in a way that they would not respond to other family members, including her father.

The Village of La Bajada had also been a historic paraje, or resting place where travelers could stop and prepare for the challenging journey into the canyon. It was a place where one could change out horses, as it was the last known place with solid pasture to feed, water, and rest the horses. Travelers would get their fresh horses ready for continuing along the difficult northbound trail to La Cienega and then Santa Fe. One of the joys of life in the village has always been the ability to get on a horse and take off to go see and be out in the country. Today there is still a vast network of trails and terrain surrounding the village that has traditionally been traversed on horseback. The spectacular landscape, river, and living history provide ample opportunities for tourism, including cultural interpretation and scenic tours, and there is a great potential for horses to be incorporated into the village’s future economic development strategy. Horses would play an important role in this type of economic development activity, as visitors could experience the expansive area and learn about its history while on horseback.



## AGRICULTURAL ELEMENT: RANCHING

Ranching has continued in and around the Village of La Bajada for hundreds of years, and there were vast acreages of lands available for ranching. Nowadays La Bajada residents can't run the volume of cattle that they had historically as they have to rely on land-swaps or are limited to small acreage ranching due to shifts in land ownership patterns, loss of their commons lands, and disputes regarding access and easements.

In 1941, the Village of La Bajada obtained grazing permits for use on surrounding lands owned by the US Forest Service and Cochiti Pueblo. A legacy of almost 75 years of grazing ended in 2014, when the lease expired and was not renewed. One community member described the situation as it being like an invisible barrier to the way of life as it had been for decades. Currently they have to resort to trucking the livestock to the rangelands. They cannot get to the land by way of the canyon as it's considered trespassing. It's a 60 mile round trip by roads to get up to the mesa where the cattle are, and the method of trucking the cattle completely alters the sustainable way that ranching had historically been done on horseback.



## AGRICULTURAL ELEMENT: LA BAJADA COMMUNITY DITCH

The acequia system was rooted in Spanish colonial tradition, and implemented to irrigate fields in the arid New Mexico climate. The La Bajada acequia is a defining feature of the community landscape, as it has shaped the circulation pattern and defined field and farmland. As in typical Northern New Mexican traditional community landscapes, residential development generally occurred upslope from the acequia adjacent to roadway access in order to minimize road compaction and maximize the irrigable pasture and farmland.

The acequia does not just serve the agricultural needs of the village; it also serves as a form of local government. The La Bajada Community Ditch and Mutual Domestic Water Association is led by a Mayordomo and various members who serve to issue watering days to the village as well as maintenance activities such as the spring cleaning of the ditch.

The acequia runs in a northwest-southwest direction and is a gravity-fed system that pulls its main source of water from the Santa Fe River at La Presa. Water is diverted here into the La Bajada Ditch (Acequia Madre) where it closely parallels the river to the north, crossing a culvert under Historic Route 66 before entering a small reservoir or tanque. Water is stored for use during dry times and released from the reservoir in a regulated manner to a second segment of the ditch, where it follows the contour of the land into the village along the northeast edge of the fields.





## AGRICULTURAL ELEMENT: LA BAJADA COMMUNITY DITCH

The fields are oriented in a linear northeast-southwest direction so that the northeast edge of each has access to the ditch. Regadores or small diversion gates divert water from the ditch to the individual fields. The Acequia Madre is diverted in the center of the village. The main channel continues in a northerly direction, while the Sangria Acequia Diversion continues south. Both meet at the Desague, the end point where the water drains back into the river. Water flows through the fields in a southwest direction, following the contours of the land and is then re-deposited into the Santa Fe River in a complete cycle. A series of diversionary ditches or sangrias have been built in the fields off the main ditch. Although a concrete/basalt stone headgate, flumes, and sluices were added to the acequia system by the Soil Conservation Service in the 1940s, the acequia retains its original earthen form and a high degree of historic integrity.



## AGRICULTURAL ELEMENT: LA BAJADA COMMUNITY DITCH

In 1927 La Bajada Community Ditch, an organization of local property owners and farmers, filed a declaration of water right (0569) with the Office of the State Engineer. The declaration stated that the community owned approximately 300 acres of land within the exterior boundaries of La Majada Grant and that the appurtenant water rights amounted to approximately 600 acre feet. This constituted the entire normal flow of the Santa Fe River at the point of diversion. Popular crops grown during this period included corn, beans, squash, tomatoes, chile, and wheat. Although crops of corn, beans, squash, and chile continued to be grown into the twentieth century, alfalfa became a staple crop and was used to feed village livestock as well as being bundled and sold. Gradually the irrigated lands began to diminish with the condemnation of 135 acres north of the village by the US Bureau of Reclamation in the 1960s for the construction of the Cochiti Dam.

The La Bajada Community Ditch and Mutual Domestic Water Association documents the acequia in HAER no. NM-18 and notes that 'Although some modernization of the acequia is evident, the existing system, associated landscape and settlement patterns still retain integrity and the characteristics that convey a sense of the historic agricultural development in the area. Erosion and the construction of a secondary acequia in the 1980s have caused some minor changes to the original alignment, but the Acequia Madre or "Mother Ditch" has essentially maintained a consistent configuration. It retains earthen-lined ditches, and the setting is still consistent with its historic period. Most importantly, the acequia continues to serve agricultural needs in the community as well as traditional cultural values and practices.'

In 1975 the District Court for Santa Fe County issued an order to the Office of the State Engineer to conduct a hydrographic survey for claims on the use of water from the Santa Fe Stream System. Declaration 0569 filed in 1971 reflects the 1827 priority date for La Bajada water rights. The storage reservoir, constructed in 1918 to store water for irrigation was measured at 1.2 acres. The crop irrigation requirements are 1.5 acre feet per acre per year. The acreage recorded as being under irrigation in 1976 was 32.6 acres. Acreage recorded that had been fallow from 1-4 years was totaled at 11.4 acres, for a total of 44 acres, approximately half of the current land in La Bajada Village.

At periods of time, throughout history and continuing to the present, water availability has been challenging. In the early 2000s, a community member recalled that the entire river went dry and everything in the river died, including vegetation, aquatic life. Wildlife patterns were altered during this time as they came down out of the canyon, looking for food and water. In response to the river's water shortage, communities on the Santa Fe River formed the Santa Fe River Traditional Community Collaborative to collectively address issues of water availability. Also during this time, around 2010, beavers were found to have created multiple dams, and the OSE Water Master reported that up to 200 acre feet of water had been impounded by these beaver dams, which greatly reduced the flow of the river and negatively impacted his ability to farm. 'With no water, crops die pretty quickly in the summer. You can't rely on monsoon either any more.'

## AGRICULTURAL ELEMENT: GOALS & ACTIONS

### Agricultural Goals & Actions

1. Support the legacy of agriculture in La Bajada
2. Support the economic viability of agricultural enterprises
3. Ensure a continued consistent water supply for agricultural irrigation
4. Retain all existing water rights for use on land irrigated by the La Bajada Community Ditch.
5. Collaborate with the Santa Fe City and County to ensure continuous flow of water in the Santa Fe River during the agricultural growing season.
6. Coordinate with neighboring land owners to establish access agreements for the La Bajada Community Ditch, Reservoir and diversion from Santa Fe River







# INFRASTRUCTURE ELEMENT



# ROADS & CIRCULATION MAP

Reserved



# LA BAJADA MUTUAL DOMESTIC COMMUNITY WATER SYSTEM

Water has been the life blood of La Bajada since the ancient times. The early settlements used water from spring sources, as well as directly from the Santa Fe River. Residents from La Bajada would draw water from the river for irrigation, drinking, and cooking, and for almost 2 centuries there was no centralized water system for the community.

The advent of the railroad brought modern technology to the forefront. In March 1880, the ATSF railroad line between Lamy Junction and Albuquerque was completed. A railroad station and water supply point was established in Wallace, as town named after Territorial Governor Lew Wallace. Growth in the area was slow despite agricultural production in the surrounding towns like Pena Blanca. For a year the town of Wallace struggle to survive. The main obstacle to progress was the lack of water. The only secure water source was from the spring located at the Santa Fe River. ATSF officials moved quickly to construct the gallery and pipeline needed to supply water to Wallace and to the associated railroad infrastructure so that the ATSF could ship agricultural produce from Pena Blanca and mining products from Golden and San Pedro.

From about 1880 to 1921 the water system primarily served the ATSF water storage facilities. In 1921, ATSF officials drafted an agreement that recognized La Bajada's ownership of the water rights from the Santa Fe River and that they were being inconvenienced during periods of heavy water use by the railroad. In exchange for the historic use of the water, and of its continued use the agreement stipulated that ATSF provide a 1" pipeline diverting water from a valve junction box at Station 294 + 38, running to La Bajada Village and ending at a spilt level 1,000 gallon concrete storage tank in the village.



The La Bajada Community water system consists of the original mortared stone infiltration gallery which is now decommissioned, and an underground storage tank that currently collects the spring water. The gravity-flow distribution system consists of a 6 mile pipeline that extends west to two water storage tanks at the community of Domingo on the ATSF. A valve junction box located 2 miles west of the new gallery diverts water via a 1" pipeline first to a 9,000 gallon storage tank and then flows north to supply La Bajada.

The old infiltration gallery is located roughly 2.5 miles southeast of La Bajada. It was built to enclose a natural spring that emerges from an area known as 'Las Bocas' where the Santa Fe River Canyon constricts. The original infiltration gallery consists of a circular infiltration/containment structure measuring 20' in diameter, made from courses of roughly shaped, locally quarried limestone blocks that vary in size.

There is a 200' lateral pipe that is also now decommissioned which connects the gallery to the new water storage gallery, a replacement underground storage tank located to the south of the river.

From 1921 until the late 1960s, the water line operated via the stream bed alignment. During this time, improvements to the system included the addition of a new 500 gallon underground storage tank. In the 1960s, the City of Santa Fe obtained a discharge permit for its wastewater treatment plant which allowed the city to discharge treated effluent into the Santa Fe River. At this time, the original infiltration gallery was decommissioned in order to prevent the wastewater from entering the new water storage gallery. With the decommissioned water line at the stream bed, a new route for the water line to Domingo was laid out along the north slope of the Santa Fe River canyon walls. A trench was excavated along the contours of the slope traveling west towards the valve junction box and reconnecting with the line going to Domingo. The old water line at the stream bed was subsequently abandoned, and though the course of the river has changed and been contoured, sections of the original pipe are still visible in several dry portions of the streambed.

With the decline of the steam-powered locomotives in the mid-twentieth century, ATSF officials drafted a termination agreement on May 17, 1974. The agreement specified that all ATSF water rights would be returned to the community of La Bajada. In addition, all rights, title and interest of ATSF in the pipeline from the Santa Fe River together with all water tanks and appurtenances were conveyed to the La Bajada Community Ditch, Inc., which is now the La Bajada Community Ditch and Mutual Domestic Water Association.

## INFRASTRUCTURE ELEMENT: ROADS & ACCESS

The Río Santa Fe flows through El Cañón de las Bocas (Santa Fe River Canyon) to the southern end of La Majada land grant. El Cañón de las Bocas was used by colonists and caravans traveling El Camino Real. The scouting party of the Coronado expedition came through the area between 1540 and 1541, and encountered the difficult task of scaling the massive escarpment. The entered El Cañón de las Bocas and moved upstream through the canyon until reaching Tzeguma and Guicú pueblos—the upriver location of today's La Cieneguilla and La Ciénega.

For the next eight decades, Spanish caravans from the south passed through this area as they approached the end of their protracted journey. A paraje (permanent campsite) near La Boca (the mouth of the Río Santa Fe) likely offered fresh water before carts, mules, oxen, cattle and herds of smaller domestic animals were herded through the canyon into La Villa de Santa Fe, founded by 1610. Before long, mule teams began to scale the mesa, following a faster, less dangerous route to Santa Fe via La Majada's grassy mesa to the top of La Bajada Mesa at La Boca.

Access to La Bajada is critically important for both the local inhabitants and for those passing through who would come to know and respect the community for its culture and unique natural setting.

The Village is currently in dialogue with the Federal Government and Pueblos in order to come to an agreement to provide necessary easements and access for the community roads and water.





The La Bajada road access was traditionally through Route 66 coming into the Village from the South. This route was also aligned with the El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro National Scenic Byway. These roads have provided continuous uninterrupted access between federally managed recreation areas over since the 1920s and provided access to the La Bajada Community Ditch and La Bajada Mutual Domestic Water System. The Federal government obtained the land subject to the easement, and it is now held in trust. La Bajada access issues occurred after the Cochiti Pueblo fenced the area at two locations including the southern access that had provided the traditional legal access to and from the historically and culturally significant village.

La Bajada cultural hallmarks and values are still intact. The sentiment, Keep la mas tranquilo, as long as the water keeps flowing and we can get home, demonstrates the ongoing passion for their community's traditional way of life. According to a community member:

Without road access there is a threat to our micro culture. All potential for La Bajada to be enjoyed in context relies on its historic tie to the roads, river and canyon, which are major elements of its historical and cultural identity. My grandma's gallery was dependent on the casual passersby to go check in with the lady of the house to get water, some fresh air, and then they would discover that she had paintings. How many relationships were formed with passersby from the road or folks that just needed to use the phone? As I look at it, the village my kid is living in is not same La Bajada. It's missing the connection to outside world, the passersby, the hang gliders, the folks being brought into the space. There is a delicate balance between too little and too many people.

# INFRASTRUCTURE ELEMENT: UTILITIES

Electricity



## INFRASTRUCTURE ELEMENT: CONNECTIVITY

Wifi- Broad band- communications



## INFRASTRUCTURE ELEMENT: GOALS & ACTIONS

1. Coordinate with neighboring land owners to develop legal road access agreements
2. Coordinate with neighboring Pueblos to establish access agreements for maintenance and monitoring of the La Bajada Community Water System
3. Coordinate with New Mexico Environment Department to establish water quality monitoring protocols





## CULTURAL & NATURAL RESOURCES ELEMENT





# COMMUNITY IDENTITY

The village of La Bajada was formed as a paraje where the Camino Real enters the Santa Fe River Canyon. The Santa Fe River canyon cannot be separated from the Camino Real, and both landscape features are critical to the culture and identity of La Bajada. The river was the road, and ‘Continuity of the Camino Real is essential to the identity and character of the community.’ Travelers had to go that way or go all the way over and around through Galisteo. Until 2016, villagers have continued to take cattle up through the canyon to La Cienega. Community members are emphatic about the connectedness of the Camino Real to the Village of La Bajada.

Signage is an asset that would support the village’s connection to the greater landscape of traditional communities along the Santa Fe River. Identification of La Bajada in the greater context of the watershed is critical for a holistic understanding of the village’s current context, as its location is tied to the larger geographical picture, the bigger narrative of the Santa Fe region. There is a living acequia culture that still exists in La Bajada and it is becoming more and more rare nowadays that acequias are still organizational aspects of community life. The acequia

The village currently is lacking any signage that indicates a traditional community exists in the midst of the vast landscape. It is important to recognize the village, as many of the other 29 traditional communities in Santa Fe County have been acknowledged for their distinct characteristics and historic longevity. Signage would also provide for safety and environmental awareness so that passersby and tourists would be made aware of the village’s proximity and watch their speed and pack out their waste.



## COMMUNITY GATHERING

The San Miguel Church is the spiritual and social heart of the community. In 1737, with the help of Franciscans, the residents of La Bajada built a small church dedicated to San Miguel de Domínguez de La Majada, according to uncatalogued papers at the Archives of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe.

The Church of San Miguel is the traditional center of the village of La Bajada. In the early 1970s, San Miguel Church, with its original base, walls and collapsed roof was saved from ruin by Florinda Lucero Barreras, daughter of Cipriano and Guadalupe Lucero. She and her husband, Enrique Barreras, devoted their time, resources and artwork from her studio/gallery at the village. Barreras brought the village back to life and revived La Fiesta de San Miguel as “Country Day,” an annual fundraiser for the San Miguel church.





Reserved





## CULTURAL RESOURCES: ARCHITECTURAL VERNACULAR

Montoya adobe is the oldest continuously inhabited structure in the village. It was built in the 1820's with a basalt foundation typical of that time period. The adobe walls are a 1.5' to 2' depth, with load bearing walls being up to 3' deep.



Reserved





## CULTURAL & NATURAL RESOURCES ELEMENT

Reserved







# NATURAL RESOURCES

Natural Resources



# NATURAL RESOURCES

Reserved



## CULTURAL & NATURAL RESOURCES ELEMENT: GOALS & ACTIONS

Cultural & Natural Resources Goals and Actions



# VILLAGE OF LA BAJADA ACTION PLAN

Reserved for Implementation Matrix



