

STATE OF THE COUNTY 2025

The past year has been one of challenges and uncertainty due mostly to changes in the federal government. The County experienced higher costs, delays, and an as-yet unfulfilled FEMA funding commitment. Changes at our largest employer resulted in a significant decrease in gross receipts taxes. We also endured the longest government shutdown in history that resulted in federal employees being furloughed and activities at our local parks being closed or curtailed for over a month. Despite these challenges, the County's performance in 2025 was very productive and the County is moving forward in many ways. But that doesn't mean there aren't issues and challenges that still need to be addressed.

One of the things I like to do at the end of each year is try to remember what happened throughout that year. I went through my calendar and the agendas of every Council meeting and, with additional input from County staff, came up with an extensive list of accomplishments that were sorted by the five goals and 22 objectives of our strategic leadership plan. I don't plan to read the entire list; it is included as an attachment to tonight's agenda. However, I think it's important to mention some of the key accomplishments and challenges in the top five objectives from the 2024 National Community Survey. Those objectives are effective, efficient, and reliable services; local business; housing; fiscal stewardship; and communication and engagement.

Effective, Efficient, and Reliable Services

There are many services that County staff provide that aren't explicitly mentioned in the strategic plan summary. Although Broadband is a separate objective, it's important to mention that Council approved a \$40 million bond for a Community Broadband project, which is expected to deliver a reliable, affordable, open-access fiber network that supports residents, businesses, education, and emergency services. There were four communications outages this year, so it's also important to note that Council approved a grant to San Ildefonso Pueblo to support installation of a middle mile fiber optic line that will help prevent future communications outages.

Local Business

Council established a Working Group to work with business owners and the Local Business Coalition to discuss the challenges facing businesses and recommend changes. An action plan was developed to address the recommendations and will be reviewed at least quarterly to track progress. One of the actions implemented by County staff is the Small Retail Local Economic Development Act (LEDA) process that establishes new tools to support local businesses. Council also adopted the East Downtown Los Alamos Metropolitan Redevelopment Area Plan to help target reinvestment and revitalization.

Housing

Housing delivery advanced through multiple transformative approvals, including 87 deed-restricted affordable studio apartments on Ninth Street, a mixed-use development on 20th Street that will bring approximately 285 market-rate housing units and 25,000 square feet of retail, and a purchase,

sale, and development agreement with Servitas for 380 affordable and market-rate homes on the A-8-A parcel along DP Road. In addition, the Hill apartments, consisting of 149 market-rate units, began leasing in November this year. There are many additional projects in the early planning stages.

Fiscal Stewardship

Gross receipt taxes make up 72% of the County's overall budget and the largest source of those revenues is the Laboratory. After many years of growth, the Laboratory's budget appears to be leveling, and the County is projecting a 14% decrease in GRT revenues in FY25. In anticipation of future decreases, and to continue to advance many of the projects and services expected by the community, Council voted to raise the gross receipts tax rate by 5/8% effective July 1, 2026. Council also approved budget guidance for FY27 that reflects a conservative approach due to continued uncertainty in gross receipts tax performance and the lower-than-expected FY25 GRT outcome. County departments have been instructed to maintain flat budgets wherever possible, accommodating only essential inflationary increases for personnel, group health insurance, contractual obligations, and interdepartmental charges. To balance these necessary cost increases, all other non-labor budget categories were guided to implement a 10% reduction.

Communication and Engagement

As evidenced by the large number of items listed under Communication and Engagement, the County provides many opportunities for community members to provide feedback through surveys, town halls and open houses, County booths at various events, comments at public meetings, and Council and/or staff attendance at various events. Despite these efforts, we are not always successful at getting out information to, or requesting feedback from, all affected parties. Recently, Council asked for the Parks and Recreation Board to review the Brewer Arena project to provide additional opportunities for public input. And County staff developed lessons learned from two major infrastructure projects to address communications and other issues. Council has also intentionally delayed decisions on major projects to ensure the public has an opportunity to comment.

If you've ever received one of my annual letters, you know that I like to summarize the year in rhyme. So, I will summarize the state of the county with this:

2025 was a year of uncertainty.

There were issues and challenges to address.

But through the efforts of staff and volunteers,

The State of the County continues to progress.

2025 STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP PLAN

QUALITY GOVERNANCE

Communication and Engagement

- Lessons Learned on DP Road and Bathtub Row projects
- Surveys
 - Ice Rink Cover, Arts in Public Places Board, Atomic City Transit (Saturday MyRide pilot program), Emergency Management evacuation survey, electric vehicle infrastructure, East Downtown Los Alamos Metropolitan Redevelopment Area plan, artificial turf and field realignment, Mesa Public Library proposed outdoor classroom, phase out of natural gas and transition to all-electric appliances, furnaces and water heaters.
- Launched the Rep'd AI chatbot on the County website, a tool that also includes functionality to record and post quick video answers to community questions.
- Town Halls/Open Houses
 - Conceptual Ice Rink Cover (4 public meetings)
 - Fleet EV Transition Plan and Community Wide Charging
 - Business workshop: Before you sign your lease
 - Wildland fire preparedness meeting hosted by LEPC
 - Fire Station 4 replacement project neighborhood meeting
 - Capital Improvement Projects open houses in White Rock & Los Alamos
 - North Mesa Recreation plan
 - Electrification Town Hall
 - Communication outage
 - Helicopter services
 - Wildland Urban Interface
 - Guaje Pines Cemetery Master Plan
 - Artificial turf
 - County Assessor veterans' outreach
 - North Mesa picnic grounds renovations
 - Home business workshop: Basics for permits, planning & pathways to growth
 - Local businesses workshop: Prepare for an emergency hosted by LEPC
 - Los Alamos Airport Open House
 - Small Retail LEDA Q&A
 - Procurement workshop with local businesses
 - National Emergency Preparedness month
 - Metropolitan Redevelopment Area plans (White Rock & East Downtown Los Alamos)
- County booths at Farmer's Markets, County Fair, Summer Concerts
- LA Sportsmen's Club Banquet

- Ribbon Cuttings (Beehaus Ecodesign and Marketing, Urban Trail Project, Kinnikinnik Park ADA, Veterans Memorial Park in Espanola, Smith's Grand Re-opening, Golf Cart EVs, Kylee's Atomic City Fades, Leisure Lagoon Artwork, North Mesa Pickleball/Tennis, East Park Basketball)
- Quarterly Boards and Commissions Luncheons, Council liaison assignments
- LA Daily Post Council meeting summaries
- National Association of Counties, New Mexico Municipal League
- Annual Police Memorial
- UNM-LA Graduation
- Veteran's Day celebration and proclamation
- Meeting with Group from Nagasaki, Japan
- UNM-LA 45 Years celebration
- Monthly meetings with Los Alamos Public Schools and UNM-Los Alamos
- Utilized "Have Your Say" platform for collection of citizen feedback on various topics

Intergovernmental, Tribal, and Regional Relations

- Continued capital project reimbursement for Rio Arriba County and City of Espanola including increased funding for Rio Arriba County Nursing Home
- State Legislative Dinner
- San Ildefonso Pueblo Feast Day
- Meeting with San Ildefonso Council
- Contract agreements for State and Federal lobbyists
- Approved 2026 Los Alamos County State Legislative Agenda
- Monthly CoDel Meetings
- Federal Advocacy Trip to Washington, D.C.
- Los Alamos County Day at State Legislature
- NM Energy Policy Symposium (Espanola)
- Tour of County for Legislative Representatives
- Tour of Espanola
- Participation in the North Central New Mexico Economic Development District meeting to develop a comprehensive economic vitality development strategy
- Landfill Feasibility Study with Rio Arriba and City of Espanola
- San Ildefonso Pueblo, Public Works and Emergency Management Meeting regarding Guaje and Rendija Canyon Road
- North Central Regional Transit District Monthly Meetings
- Hosted the Northern Pueblos Regional Transportation Planning Organization Meeting
- Hosted the Legislature's Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Meeting

Fiscal Stewardship

- Received the following Government Finance Officers Association awards:
 - Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting, 32nd consecutive year
 - Award for Distinguished Budget Presentation for the Annual Budget, 13th consecutive year
 - Annual Comprehensive Financial Report Award, 32nd consecutive year
 - Award for Popular Annual Financial Report, 7th consecutive year
 - Triple Crown Honor, which recognized the County's receipt of the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting,
 - Award for Popular Annual Financial Reporting
 - Award for Distinguished Budget Presentation
- FY2026 budget approved by Council
- Financial transparency portal “Open Books” launched
- Launched eProcurement system
- FY2024 Annual Comprehensive Report submitted to and received by State Auditor (no findings, received unmodified and clean opinion)
- Electric rates and sewage service rates approved
- Quarterly financial overviews
- Approved Time-of-Use and Residential Demand Electric Rates effective July 1, 2026
- Approved 5/8 cent gross receipts tax increase effective July 1, 2026
- Approved budget guidance for FY2027

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Effective, Efficient, and Reliable Services

- 34 commercial permits issued through June 2025; average turnaround time is 3 business days
- 406 residential permits issued through June 2025; average turnaround time is 2 business days
- New Environmental Services Route Optimization System
- Electrical reliability as measured by the System Average Interruption Duration Index (SAIDI) was 47 minutes as of June 2025 (goal is less than 60 minutes in a calendar year)
- Environmental Services provided enhanced brush collection in the spring in response to elevated wildfire risk.
- Conducted study of Los Alamos electrical distribution system to analyze current infrastructure and to model and forecast future electric demand along with associated infrastructure upgrade and replacement

Infrastructure Asset Management

- Denver Steels Road & Utility Improvements design and award for construction

- DP Road Phase II Road & Utility Improvements completed
- Bathtub Row Road & Utility Improvements completed
- Approved Hybrid Road Diet Option for Trinity Road Safety & ADA Improvements between Oppenheimer and Knecht St.
- North Mesa Road, San Ildefonso Road, 35th, 36th, 37th and 39th Streets Pavement Rehabilitation completed
- North Mesa and White Rock Pavement Crack Sealing completed
- New Facilities Asset Management Software & Work Order System
- LA Little Theatre Fire Suppression System completed
- Mesa Public Library Siding Replacement completed
- Powerhouse (aka Red Cross) Building Roof Replacement completed
- Community Building Roof Replacement completed
- Justice Center Drainage Improvements completed
- Fire Station 4 Replacement Design near completion
- Jemez Mountains Fire Protection Project tank installation and water/electric installation
- White Rock Water Resource and Reclamation Facility
- Completed State Route 4 water production line replacement along with installation of new conduit for future middle-mile fiber optic lines
- Approved replacement of antenna on North Mesa water tower
- Approved installation of communications cell tower at White Rock Overlook Park
- The construction of the non-potable Bayo Booster Tank was selected as the Best Municipal & Utilities Project of the Year for 2025 by the Associated General Contractors of America.
- Maintain 620,000 square feet across 47 County facilities

Employee Recruitment and Retention

- Job vacancies are at 5% as of December 2025, compared with 7.2% this time last year. The County Management Action Plan identifies a goal to be less than 10%.
- Eric Martinez selected as Public Works Department Director
- Elias Isaacson hired as CDD Director
- Bernadette Martinez hired as HR Manager
- FY25 Salary Plan
- Wendy Survey appointed as Interim Fire Chief (Chief Troy Hughes retirement) and Erik Litzenberg as Fire Chief (12/16)
- Approved collective bargaining agreement with Los Alamos Firefighters' Association Local 3279
- Approved salary adjustments for County Manager, County Attorney, and Utilities Manager
- Approved change of Emergency Management FTE from Limited Term to Regular

- Approved conversion of an overfill full-time employee to a new regular full-time employee position in the Electric Distribution Division
- Increased 0.5 FTE Library Associate Position to 0.75 FTE Position
- Employee Appreciation Lunch
- About 22 Utilities employees were promoted in 2025, the majority of which resulted from additional education and industry certifications.
- Alternate 4/10 work schedules were successfully implemented for utility field crews during Daylight Savings Time.

ECONOMIC VITALITY

Housing

- January 2025 -- new contract with the Santa Fe Community Housing Trust for homebuyer and rehabilitation programs.
- Budget guidance during 2026 budget review to dedicate 1/4% of gross receipts tax (GRT) to a “Housing Fund.”
- Approved an agreement to provide 87 deed-restricted affordable studio apartments on 9th street.
- The Hill Apartments (149 market rate units behind the hospital) began leasing in November.
- Approved purchase, sale, and development agreement for the 20th Street mixed use development to RBMM Development LLC and Brott Real Estate LLC. Includes approximately 285 housing units (market rate rental apartments) and about 25,000 sf of retail space.
- Approved Purchase, Sale, and Development Agreement to Servitas for 380 Affordable and Market Rate Housing on the A-8-A Parcel (DP Road).
- North Mesa Transportation and Utilities Infrastructure Study completed.
- Northern NM Housing Luncheon

Local Business

- Hired Anita Barela as the Economic Development Program Manager to liaise with local businesses
- Beer and wine licenses issued to Origami, Wolf and Mermaid
- Council approved the Small Business/Retail LEDA process and allocated \$400K initially to support the program. This process provides grants to expand or enhance existing and new small businesses. Twenty inquiries have been received, and two applications are under review.
- The Council formed a Small Business Working Group to gather information and make recommendations. Their report and a report from the Local Business Coalition were presented in September. Initial action plan was developed and presented to Council on December 2.

- Several workshops with businesses including Before You Sign Your Lease, Business Emergency Preparedness, Home Business Basics, Q&A Session on Small Retail LEDA, Procurement Workshop, MRA Plans Q&A for Los Alamos and White Rock
- The County began working with Cities Work to provide an outside perspective and recommendations for small/local business support. Awaiting the report.
- A local business directory module (to enhance searchability and promote Los Alamos County businesses) was purchased and is currently under construction to be added to the VisitLosAlamos.org website. Expected to launch first quarter of CY26.
- A LEDA application for UbiQD is currently under review
- Presentations and tabling at Creative Industries, Women in Small Business, Business Coalition, Leadership Los Alamos, Santa Fe Business Expo
- BPU and Council supported C-PACE, the Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy alternative source of financing for improvements to commercial properties. This state-authorized program requires counties to opt in to the program via resolution before local projects can benefit from it.

Downtown Revitalization

- East downtown Los Alamos Metropolitan Redevelopment Area Plan was approved. Applications will be accepted by the Community Development Department beginning January 5, 2026.
- The Council approved the purchase of several buildings along Longview Drive in White Rock to allow roadway realignment and enhancement for future development.
- Mainstreet and Creative District:
 - Small business Saturday
 - Community cash eGift card
 - Night market during Sciencefest
 - ProjectY cowork
 - Tuesdays at the Square
 - Days of Arts and Culture

Educational, Arts, Cultural, and Historical Amenities

- Los Alamos Historical Society Community-Focused Lectures: Growing Up in Los Alamos; The U-Cube; 25th Anniversary of the Cerro Grande Fire; and Special Exhibit: Michnovicz: Life Through His Lens
- National Theater Live: *Hamlet*
- Library policies revised; new library website launched
- 29th Annual Los Alamos Photographers Show
- NM State Cooperative Extension Office programs
- Jeff Segler Painting Petition Decision

- Little Theater Asbestos Abatement
- Art in Public Places Board Policies updated
- Rose Garden Fence installation

Tourism and Special Events

- Tourism in Los Alamos was up 13% through July 2025 compared with the same time frame in 2024 but subsequently declined due to the Bandelier shuttle suspension and then the federal government shutdown in October and November. Final visitation totals are pending and are expected to be similar to or lower than 2024's 502,784 visitors.
- Jemez Mountain Trail Run (400+ participants)
- County Fair and Rodeo; Gymkhana
- Summer Friday Concert series (15 concerts between May and August): Average attendance of approximately 5,100 per concert, drawing audiences from Los Alamos as well as Jemez Springs, Española, Taos, Santa Fe, and Albuquerque. Performing bands represent communities across New Mexico and other states, and the number of vendors has doubled compared with last year.
- Los Alamos Airport Open House
- July 4 Drone Show held at Ashley Pond
- Approved new agreement with Destination IQ for Tourism Marketing Services
- ScienceFest
- Earth Day Festival, Bear Festival
- Atomicon
- ChamberFest
- Booths at the State Fair Balloon Fiesta and the Santa Fe Visitor Tour Guide Association and Industry Day at San Ildefonso
- Outdoor Recreation gathering in Los Alamos for regional businesses and nonprofits
- Trick-or-Treat on MainStreet and Pumpkin Glow
- Several Arts and Crafts Fairs sponsored by the Art Center
- Held a tourism group discussion (3 museums, 3 National Parks, Arts Council and the Community Services Dept.) to merge calendar events to one location on the VisitLosAlamos.org website.
- WinterFest (includes the Holiday Tree lighting, Holiday Light Parade, Ashley Pond lights and more).
- Los Alamos Airport Santa Fly-in
- DPU launched public tours of the White Rock Water Resource Reclamation Facility (WRRF). In response to requests from tour participants, they launched a second tour series: the Los Alamos Water System Tour showcasing wells, boosters' stations, tanks and SCADA. For this second tour, Atomic City Transit provided bus transportation for participants.

Community Broadband

- San Ildefonso Grant Match for Middle Mile fiber optic line
- Approval of the high-level design.
- Issuance of Bonds for Community Broadband approved; infrastructure assessment and low-level design underway
- Development of the low-level design is underway including utility field data collection to examine existing and proposed overhead and underground routes (Construction is expected to begin in 2026).
- Completed the SR-4 conduit installation for middle mile fiber.
- Completed the Los Alamos Canyon middle mile fiber installation.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Health, Well-Being, and Social Services

- Implemented Closed Loop Referral System with contracted social service providers and completed training on new software
- Hosted Deep Dive into Grief and Loss event
- Received 21 applicants for a “train-the-trainer” program, in partnership with the Association of Nature and Forest Therapy Guides, aimed at teaching community leaders forest therapy practices to improve mental and physical well-being
- Held twice monthly “Social Services at the Library” outreach events
- County contractor activities included Make a Pizza Day (Pi Day); Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey Data overview; Toddler Tunes; Zoo Field Trip; and Drop-in Developmental Playgroup
- Monthly Hawk Hangouts for middle school students (1,314 attendees)
- 25 Year Cerro Grande Fire recognition
- Personal Income Tax Rebate approved for low-income taxpayers for 2025-2028
- Generous community members donated \$32,317.83 in 2025 to the Utility Assistance Program, which helped utility customers in need cover \$27,121.32 in utility expenses.
- Visited Social Services Hubs in Glendale AZ and Espanola
- County and community partners launched “I Can Help” program to provide emergency food meal kits

Inclusion, Access, and Belonging

- Held Night to Remember Prom for individuals with special needs and disabilities.
- Celebrated cultural months such as Native American, Spanish, African American, and others.
- Continued organizational membership in the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE)

- Kinnikinnik Park ADA improvements
- Adopted the Guaje Pines Cemetery Master Plan
- Pride Festival
- Inclusivity Task Force
- Lunch with Canes and Canines group

Mobility

- Completed work on Phase I and II of Urban Trail, a 10-foot-wide concrete multi-use trail from Trinity Drive/20th Street to Aquatic Center
- Atomic City Transit (ACT) Saturday Service Pilot
- ACT provided transportation to LAMC, various medical providers as well as Senior Centers, Aquatic Center, and All Individual First day center
- Pedestrian Master Plan adopted
- Canyon Rim Trail Phase III design completed
- NM 4 Crossing & Multiuse Trail design near completion
- Los Alamos Airport 8 Unit T-Hangar Bid & Construction

Open Space, Parks, and Recreation

- Ice Rink Chiller Replacement and Parking Lot Improvements completed
- Electric Golf Carts purchased and Clubhouse Charging Infrastructure completed
- Golf Course Improvements completed
- North Mesa pickleball/tennis courts
- East Park basketball court
- Service Agreement approved for Aquatic Center Resurfacing and Restoration (scheduled for March-October 2026)
- Scheduled monthly volunteer dates for trail maintenance
- Awarded contract for 37th Street and Pinon Park Improvements
- Approved revisions to Policy 1735 "Use and Rental of County Facilities/Lands"
- Achieved national accreditation by Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies; received Finalist for 2025 National Gold Medal Award Program for Public Class V
- Mud Volleyball Tournament

Public Safety

- Distracted Driving Ordinance passed
- Automated Speed Cameras Ordinance passed and allocated funding for 2 additional officers
- Los Alamos Police Department was re-accredited through the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA).

- Los Alamos Police Department is working on providing speed monitoring signs to San Ildefonso Pueblo.
- Annual Jail Inspection
- Three emergency exercises conducted with county departments and regional partners (Wildland fire drill; COOP tabletop exercise; Summer concert series exercise)
- NM 502/Camino Entrada Intersection Road Safety Audit with LANL, Texas A&M, and NMDOT
- NM 502 Rumble Strip Coordination with NMDOT
- Provided public education and outreach efforts including Wildfire Day and Firefighter for a Day
- Distributed public education materials at the CommuniTree and during National Fire Prevention Month
- Preliminary planning for an Emergency Operations Center adjacent to Fire Station 3 in White Rock is underway.
- Comparing crime reported to police in the second quarter of 2025 with the second quarter of 2024, overall crime was down 33%.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Natural Resources Protection

- Wildlife Urban Interface Ordinance approved to enhance wildfire safety and help address insurance concerns
- Contract approved for Forest Treatment Management Services
- Los Alamos Fire Department conducted a wildfire mitigation project to reduce fuels using robotic masticators along the Canyon Rim Trail, Bayo Canyon and Canada del Buey trails
- Wildfire mitigation on Barranca Mesa
- One-year anniversary of Bee City USA – 7000 sq ft of pollinator gardens added at the golf course
- Wildlife Feeding Ordinance passed
- Adopted the 2025 Open Space and Trails Management Plan
- DPU created a Hydration Station Kit to lend out for community events to promote local tap water and refilling of reusable water vessels.

Water & Energy Conservation

- Accepted Artificial Turf and Site Improvements Feasibility Study
- DPU received the 2025 Sustainable Los Alamos Award from the Los Alamos Chamber of Commerce.
- Debut of Garden on a Postcard at Farmer's Market

- Reclaimed water usage for FY25 is about 120 million gallons vs about 100 million gallons in FY24
- Continued the PEEC education Contract: Waterwise Hike with 3rd Grade, Energy Bike Field Trip with 4th Grade and Home Energy Management

Greenhouse Gas Reduction

- EV charging stations installed at Municipal Building
- Obtained NMDOT grant funding for 2 EV chargers at Mesa Public Library
- Conducted energy audits at Municipal Building and Pajarito Cliff Site to improve energy efficiency
- County No-Idling Policy
- Robotic electric mowers acquired and used at golf course driving range and two North Mesa athletic fields (prevented combustion of 100 gallons of diesel)
- Transition from gas to all-electric golf carts

Carbon-Neutral Energy Supply

- Construction of 170 MW of solar with 80 MW of battery storage at Foxtail Flats underway – will supply most of County's daytime needs when complete

Waste Management

- New Environmental Services Route Optimization System
- Bear Resistant Roll Cart Distribution
- Summer of Sewer Campaign to combat clogged pipes and broken lift stations
- Cleanup Los Alamos Day
- Regional Landfill Study underway
- Investigating in-vessel food composting options
- Completed expanded compost facility to support the bio-solids from White Rock
- DPU education events: Bears vs. Lineman, Prep for winter, house of horrors, and grease/flushable wipes demonstrations