

# Business Questionnaire

## Tourism and Visitation

1-20-2025

Kevin Holsapple circulated a questionnaire requesting local business participation during the first two weeks of January 2025 to increase his understanding of local business opinions and perceptions related to his work as a member of LTAB. The questionnaire was circulated via LACDC/Chamber of Commerce/MainStreet, the Los Alamos Local Business Coalition, the LA Reporter, and the LA Daily Post. This document presents analysis and comments from the responses collected.

## Key Takeaways:

Local businesses in Los Alamos County expressed a range of opinions and concerns regarding tourism in the area, highlighting a desire for **greater engagement, transparency, and support from the County**. Key themes that emerge from the business questionnaire responses gathered in the first two weeks of January 2025 include:

- **Limited Awareness and Understanding of County Tourism Efforts:** Many businesses reported being "not familiar" (36%) or only "somewhat familiar" (52%) with the County's tourism activities, suggesting a **need for improved communication and outreach**. Some comments expressed confusion about the County's approach to tourism and a lack of clarity regarding who is accountable for progress.
- **Support for High Level Tourism Plan Goals** - All goal areas scored highly with most receiving "Very important" or "Important" ratings.
- **Desire for Greater Business Engagement and Transparency:** Responses emphasized the importance of "engaging local businesses in tourism planning and decision-making" and "transparency in funding and resources". They felt that local business input was often overlooked and that communication from the County could be improved.
- **Concerns about Tourism Personnel and Expertise:** Several comments voiced concerns about the **lack of experienced tourism professionals** within the County government. They questioned whether the existing staff lacked the necessary experience and expertise to be effective.
- **Focus on Gaining Greater Economic Benefit from All Types of Visitors:** Responses recognized the importance of attracting a **diverse range of visitors**, including overnight tourists, business travelers, and day-trippers. They indicate an interest in identifying and evaluating projects to increase visitor spending at local businesses. They emphasized the need to **develop attractions and activities that would encourage visitors to stay longer and spend more money within the community than is done currently**.

These themes suggest a clear desire among respondents for a **more collaborative and strategic approach to tourism development in Los Alamos County**.

Questionnaire Response Snapshot						
Questionnaire Responses Gathered first two weeks of January 2025						
25 Business Responses						

**How would you rate your current understanding of the County's activities related to visitor and tourism promotion?**

Somewhat Familiar	52.0%					
Not Familiar	36.0%					
Very Familiar	12.0%					
<u>Comments</u>						

I only recently discovered that we have a visitor guide. I have been in business in Los Alamos for 10 years and would have been trying to participate in that had I known.

I read The Daily Post and The Reporter, attend some meetings and wife served on boards

I worked at the County. I am familiar with the Tourism Strategic Plan.

I would love to learn more and help if needed.

I'm only as familiar as the average informed citizen, probably.

Not enough though.

What the County is doing is fairly confusing to understand. I've looked at the tourism plan and it generally makes sense, but it is unclear who in the county or community is accountable for progress

Chamber reaches out occasionally to promote certain events and request business engagement. Most efforts I become aware of after the fact or with insufficient notice. Other activities I notice after the fact. Some are outdated like walking signs that point to restaurants where there are no longer restaurants.

When will the County improve wayfinding signage for LAC and visitor centers

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

**How important are the following potential work areas for an effective approach to visitor and tourism promotion?**

	Very Important	Important	Neutral or No Opinion	
Engaging Local Businesses in tourism planning and decision-making processes	68.0%	32.0%	0.0%	
Enhancing the Visitor Experience	68.0%	24.0%	8.0%	
Increasing the Economic Benefits from Visitors and Tourists to Local Businesses.	68.0%	20.0%	12.0%	
Transparency in Funding and Resources	60.0%	36.0%	4.0%	
Identifying the Target Market and Targeted Marketing	52.0%	36.0%	12.0%	
Defining and Communicating Goals and Objectives	48.0%	40.0%	12.0%	

<u>Comments</u>							
Goals and objectives definition sounds like wasting more money on consultants. Support housing that retail staff can afford, allow new restaurants/businesses to thrive and the tourists will show up							
If the county is collecting more taxes, they need to better explain how it helps LA, not neighboring county							
need to understand and get more business from people coming here as visitors and tourists -- more important than bringing even more people here who aren't spending anything here.							
It is pretty fuzzy what the funding and resources are for working on tourism and whether they know what they are doing.							
On engaging local businesses, this has been a challenge in the past due to the challenge of local business owners and managers to find time to participate. Likewise on transparency as often the challenge is getting feedback until something is close to final.							
The fact that we have a team of employees at the county tasked with tourism is great. Unfortunately, I don't believe they have the training or experience necessary to truly increase tourism to our city. We need to hire someone with proven track record and proven metrics to increase tourism to Los Alamos.							
The goals are already defined in the Tourism Strategic Plan. Who's in charge of Tourism in LAC? How can any of this be achieved without a dedicated tourism professional (who has tourism experience) working here in LAC? Sunny 505, an outside contractor, plays a role for advertising, but can't be relied on as the sole tourism provider.							
We need to help with lower rent and capital for new and existing businesses.							
As many daily visitors do not live in our community, I feel defining the target audience is hugely important to be able to capture more of the daily traffic as if it were tourist traffic.							
We need tourism professionals, not inexperienced volunteers.							
Tourists are not just here to experience our lovely environment; they're interested in trying out local cuisine and shopping, and we need their dollars.							
Stop emphasizing subsidized nonprofits to engage in tourism sales.							
<b>In your experience, how much benefit does your business currently derive from the following kinds of visitors? (Visitors are defined as people whose permanent residence is greater than 50 miles distance from Los Alamos County)</b>							
			Significant	Helpful	Insignificant	None	Don't Know
Repeat business visitors			44.0%	24.0%	12.0%	12.0%	8.0%
Repeat leisure visitors			36.0%	20.0%	12.0%	20.0%	12.0%
Overnight (or multi-night) tourism or leisure visitors to Los Alamos County			32.0%	24.0%	20.0%	20.0%	4.0%
Short-term visitors (less than a week at a time) to Los Alamos for business purposes (e.g. LANL and other business related visitors)			32.0%	24.0%	20.0%	24.0%	4.0%
Longer-term visitors (more than a week at a time) to Los Alamos for business purposes (e.g. LANL, hospital, and other business-related visitors)			28.0%	28.0%	24.0%	16.0%	4.0%
Day visitors to Bandelier and other attractions			16.0%	24.0%	28.0%	32.0%	0.0%

**Does your business currently offer or are you interested in offering products or services that you believe are of interest to the following kinds of visitors?**

	Yes	Yes, but I am interested in offering more if I can generate more visitor traffic into my business	Depends on whether I can generate visitor traffic into my business	No
Longer-term visitors (more than a week at a time) to Los Alamos for business purposes (e.g. LANL, hospital, and other business-related visitors)	37.5%	29.2%	25.0%	8.3%
Short-term visitors (less than a week at a time) to Los Alamos for business purposes (e.g. LANL and other business related visitors)	33.3%	29.2%	25.0%	12.5%
Day visitors to Bandelier and other attractions	33.3%	16.7%	25.0%	25.0%
Overnight (or multi-night) tourism or leisure visitors to Los Alamos County	29.2%	41.7%	8.3%	20.8%

<p><b>Is there anything else you would like to share?</b></p>						
<p>I believe tourism is critical for diversifying our local economy and bringing more direct engagement between visitors and local businesses. By organizing unified marketing campaigns, creating themed experiences, and offering cross-promotion opportunities, we can showcase the unique qualities of Los Alamos while encouraging travelers to spend time and money across multiple local establishments.</p>						
<p>At SALA, we're working to renovate our theater to include immersive technology—potentially developing an interactive experience that highlights Los Alamos' history, the Manhattan Project, and our surrounding landscapes. By collaborating with other tourism-oriented organizations, we can create a cohesive, memorable attraction that connects visitors more deeply to our community. This immersive experience would not only entertain and inform, but also drive foot traffic to nearby businesses, strengthening the local economy. Ultimately, these efforts, supported by a unified promotional campaign, would help tell Los Alamos' story to the world in an engaging way—benefiting both our residents and our businesses alike.</p>						
<p>We sell Los Alamos souvenirs such as t-shirts, magnets, stickers, cutting boards, mugs, kerchiefs, etc.</p>						
<p>Encourage more off the hill businesses to sell there with less stipulation so more businesses want to go up that way.</p>						
<p>We are the only consignment store in Los Alamos and we have been voted top 5 consignment stores in New Mexico. It is very common for people to visit Consignment and thrift shops when they visit new places. That is something that we should be promoting to get people to come to town.</p>						
<p>Hire tourism professionals. We absolutely do not need to invent tourism; it's been done before. We are losing precious time and small businesses experimenting with how to implement tourism..</p>						
<p>I would like to get races such as Spartan obstacle course and up hill triathlon into town. Spartan races can bring thousands of racers and their families. These folks need places to stay so would need bus service down to Pojoaque where there are big hotels.</p>						
<p>I want to discuss doing more to promote outdoor recreation.</p>						
<p>I recently counted and there are literally 19 brick and mortar stores in Los Alamos and White Rock. 19. (That are not part of a chain or subsidized by the or non-profit) It seems to me that all 19 of us could be included in visitor guides relatively easily. The tourism money that is spent could be actively used as a tool to help local businesses increase their revenue to be able to stay in business. This could further the county's agenda of increasing the viability of retail in our town. There is a direct relationship between tourism and economic vitality of local business. Because of how I do my business, I get 25 to 50% of my revenue from tourists. They come into my shop every single day. There are both local tourists from places like Albuquerque and Taos, medical tourists who are only coming up because they have a doctor's appointment but take time to stop at Boomerang, international tourists, and tourists from other states.</p>						
<p>I think that building a robust town with plenty of activities for locals will draw the type of tourism that this town would benefit from. Fewer giant bashes and more solid, consistent, programming.</p>						
<p>I'm happy to see so many people working together to make Los Alamos a better place!</p>						
<p>Is the Tourism Strategic Plan being followed? Why did the Tourism Implementation Task Force go away? LTAB meeting monthly is not enough. It's very important to Los Alamos County and there isn't a position to lead tourism. The County needs a Tourism Manager to lead the recommendations in the plan and to accommodate the rise in tourism.</p>						
<p>My business is in manufacturing, not really affected by tourism, however I do have a laser engraver and could make tourism swag if someone/business needs some for tourism or advertising needs.</p>						
<p>Thank you for asking good questions and getting involved to try to improve things</p>						
<p>We need to have a lower rent or assistance for New Business or existing business.</p>						
<p>We're wasting an opportunity to draw and/or retain visitors for longer by putting zero effort into our trail system and outdoor recreation. It's an embarrassment.</p>						
<p>Advertising for local businesses - placement ads in local hotels, billboards, maybe joint advertising in the newspaper, awareness of opportunities like concert sponsorship, local TV advertising (?)</p>						
<p>Tourism definition - post docs and researchers who are here for 2yrs could be defined as tourists, new comers within first 3 months are tourists, unique experiences marketed towards surrounding communities for weekends and holidays</p>						
<p>Business involvement in tourist events - notification and concept assistance, brochures at events</p>						
<p>Running an event - Pajarito Hill Climb and other fun run or outdoor based activities</p>						