

2026 Work Plan for Los Alamos County Boards and Commissions

Board or Commission Name: Planning and Zoning Commission

Date Prepared: 12/10/25

Date Approved by Council:

Prepared By: Planning and Zoning Commission

Purpose:

The purpose of the work plan is to provide a detailed outline of tasks, activities, timelines, and resources required by this Board or Commission to achieve its annual goals. The purpose of most boards is to gather public input, to review policy recommendations by staff when requested, and to make policy recommendations to the County Council.

Process Timeline:

November: County Council Strategic Planning

December: Boards and Commissions review and develop work plans (primary item on December agenda)

January: Finalize and submit work plans for Council review.

Due Date: February 1

Time Frame: This work plan will be accomplished in the following time frame:

January 1, 2026, through December 31, 2026.

Members: List members, term start and end dates, and term number.

Member	Start/End Dates	Term (1st or 2nd)
Karen Easton, Chair	4/1/2025-3/31/2028	2
Benjamin Hill, Vice	4/1/2024-3/31/2027	2
Katherine Bruell	4/14/2023-3/31/2026	1
Rachel Adler	4/1/2023-3/31/2026	2
Rebecca White	4/1/2025-3/31/2028	2
Stephanie Nakhleh	4/1/2023-3/31/2026	2
Robert Chrien	4/1/2025-3/31/2028	1
Ronald Nelson	4/1/2021-3/31/2027	1
Marlon Brown	4/1/2024 - 3/31/2027	1

Chairperson: Karen Easton

Department Director: Elias Isaacson

Work plan developed in collaboration with Department Director? (Y/N) Y

Staff Liaison: Danyelle Valdez

Administrative Support: Desirae J. Lujan

Council Liaison: Ryn Herrmann

Work plan reviewed by Council Liaison? (Y/N) Yes

1.0 Previous Calendar Year Work Plan Highlights

1.1 List the top five activities for the previous calendar year.

1.1.1

Completed formal training on quasi-judicial procedures to ensure consistent due-process protections, defensible decision-making, and compliance with New Mexico case law.

1.1.2

Presented annual P&Z update to County Council on September 16, 2025

1.1.3

Conducted joint discussions with staff and other boards related to zoning, standards, and regulatory efficiency improvements.

1.1.4

Provided feedback to staff to improve clarity in reports and presentations, enhancing Commissioner understanding of technical topics and supporting more informed decision-making.

1.1.5

Encouraged community members to participate in public hearings and provide input, supporting community engagement in land-use decision-making.

1.2 List the top five accomplishments for the previous calendar year.

1.2.1

Maintained a full Planning & Zoning Commission roster, including on-boarding one(1) new Commissioner and continuous education to support board effectiveness.

1.2.2

Reviewed and approved development and land-use applications that support Council priorities for housing, economic development, and public safety, including entitlements for 137 new dwelling units, a 60-unit hotel (40,786 sq. ft.), and the replacement of Fire Station 4.

1.2.3

Conducted seventeen (17) public hearings, resulting in multiple development approvals and two (2) recommendations forwarded to Council, including targeted amendments to Chapter 16 that improved clarity and administrative efficiency.

1.2.4

Successfully managed a full schedule of hearings — meeting all Open Meetings Act obligations — improving consistency and transparency of Commission deliberations and decisions.

1.2.5

Made meaningful improvements to public engagement and staff-commission collaboration, resulting in better understanding of code criteria, applicant expectations, and decision rationale.

1.3 List the lessons learned for the previous calendar year.

1.3.1

Consistent attendance is essential for maintaining quorum and ensuring fair, timely decisions for applicants and the community.

1.3.2

Ongoing training — especially on legal standards, substantial evidence, and quasi-judicial responsibilities — is necessary to ensure defensible, consistent decision-making.

1.3.3

Clearly articulating findings that reference adopted code criteria is vital to uphold procedural integrity and ensure decisions are legally defensible.

1.3.4

Early and thorough preparation (reading staff reports, understanding application requests and code) improves the quality and efficiency of Commission deliberations.

1.3.5

Effective communication between Commissioners and staff during public hearing presentations promotes procedural clarity, reduces confusion during deliberations, and results in more transparent and equitable outcomes for applicants.

2.0 Calendar Year 2026 Work Plan

2.1 List any special projects or assignments given to this Board/Commission by Council or the Department Director.

2.1.1

Participate in the Comprehensive Plan working group, providing input on land use, housing, redevelopment, and infrastructure to ensure alignment with County goals.

2.1.2

Continuing education and training focused on zoning intent, Development Code, and voting requirements for quasi-judicial decisions.

2.1.3	Canyon Rim Protections and Height Restrictions
2.1.4	Parking Analysis
2.1.5	Variance Cases 2023 - Present

2.2 List other projects and/or activities being proposed by this Board/Commission, in priority order.

2.2.1	Support staff in identifying code amendments or procedural updates that align with the forthcoming Comprehensive Plan and simplify implementation for applicants and reviewers.
2.2.1	Increase Commissioner understanding of land use application processes to enhance review consistency and applicant communication.
2.2.2	Evaluate Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) allowances within selected zoning districts to determine potential for expanded housing opportunities while mitigating neighborhood impacts.
2.2.3	Revisit parking requirements in Chapter 16 to evaluate opportunities for right-sizing standards, improving efficiency and understanding the broader impacts on redevelopment and infill development.
2.2.4	Housing Gap Analysis; single and multi-family.
2.2.5	

2.3 List the guiding documents or plans used by this Board/Commission.

2.3.1

Los Alamos County Comprehensive Plan (2016)
Los Alamos County Code of Ordinances, Ch.16, Development Code (2023)
Los Alamos Downtown Master Plan (2021)
White Rock Town Center Master Plan (2021)
Strategic Leadership Plan (2025; updated annually)

3.0 Identify interfaces with County departments and/or other Boards/Commissions that are necessary to achieve this work plan.

3.1

Community Development Department (Planning & Economic Development)

3.2

County Attorney's Office

3.3

Community Services Department

3.4

Public Works and Department of Public Utilities.

3.5

Boards: Environmental Sustainability, Parks and Recreation, Transportation, and Historic Preservation Advisory.

4.0 List any special events this Board/Commission plans to participate in that will support this work plan.

4.1

N/A

4.2

4.3

4.4

4.5

5.0 List active Working Groups within this Board/Commission, if any, along with the purpose and member names of each one.

5.1

The 2026 Comprehensive Plan Update Working Group consists of Planning and Zoning Commission members Karen Easton, David Hampton, and Stephanie Nahkleh, who will be participating in public meetings, engaging with community members, and providing feedback to consultants and the Community Development Department throughout the public input and draft review process.

5.2

Attachment A

Place an X in the column on the right if the Council priority is related to the work of the Board or Commission:

Quality Governance	
Quality governance is participatory, consensus-oriented, transparent, accountable, effective, efficient, and responsive to the present and future needs of stakeholders.	
Communication and Engagement	
Inform, educate, and solicit feedback from the community and boards and commissions on County projects, policies, and priorities to promote a culture of open communication and collaboration and foster exceptional customer service.	X
Intergovernmental, Tribal, and Regional Relations	
Collaborate and problem-solve with the County's major employers; community partner organizations; neighboring Pueblos; and regional, state, and national governmental entities.	
Fiscal Stewardship	
Maintain fiscal sustainability, transparency, and compliance with applicable budgetary and financial regulatory standards.	
Operational Excellence	
Operational excellence involves having structures, processes, standards, and oversight in place to ensure that effective services are efficiently delivered within available resources and that services continuously improve.	
Effective, Efficient, and Reliable Services	
Deliver customer-focused, accessible, reliable, and sustainable services to the community through sound financial management, collaborative decision-making, and efficient implementation.	X
Infrastructure Asset Management	
Evaluate the County's assets and infrastructure and prioritize funding to first maintain and protect those investments and second to inform new investments.	
Employee Recruitment and Retention	
Attract and employ diverse and highly qualified staff; retain staff through development opportunities, compensation, and benefits; and promote staff to address increasingly complex challenges.	
Economic Vitality	
Economic vitality encompasses the ability of the community to diversify, develop, grow, and sustain the many elements necessary for a local economy to flourish.	
Housing	
Increase the capacity for new housing development and the amount and variety of housing types to meet the needs of a changing and growing population, particularly middle- and lower-income households.	X
Local Business	
Encourage the retention of existing businesses, facilitate the startup of new businesses, and assist in opportunities for growth.	X
Downtown Revitalization	
Revitalize the downtown areas of Los Alamos and White Rock by facilitating development opportunities in accordance with the downtown master plans.	X
Tourism and Special Events	
Sponsor special events, support major employer and community events, and promote tourism by enhancing amenities, utilizing facilities and contract services, and encouraging overnight stays.	
Community Broadband	
Provide community broadband as a basic essential service that will enable reliable high-speed internet services throughout the County at competitive pricing.	

Quality of Life Quality of life is a reflection of general well-being and the degree to which community members are healthy, comfortable, welcomed, included, and able to enjoy the activities of daily living.	
Health, Wellbeing, and Social Services	
Improve access to behavioral, mental, and physical health and social services and amenities to address identified issues and promote wellbeing in the region.	
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity	
Promote diversity, equity, and inclusivity through community awareness training, targeted events, and expanded opportunities for diverse interests.	
Mobility	
Improve and expand access to, and all-ability accommodations for, alternative modes of travel including public transit, cycling, and walking amenities and services.	X
Educational, Historical, and Cultural Amenities	
Promote educational and cultural opportunities, in coordination with community partners, and provide for the preservation and restoration of historic buildings and the protection of archaeological sites.	X
Open Space, Parks, and Recreation	
Manage County open space and maintain and improve parks and recreation facilities, trails, and amenities as defined by adopted plans and approved projects.	X
Public Safety	
Ensure overall community safety through proactive and sustained implementation of police, fire hazard mitigation, and emergency response plans.	
Environmental Stewardship Environmental stewardship is the responsible use and protection of the natural environment through active participation in conservation efforts and sustainable practices in coordination with community and organizational partners.	
Natural Resource Protection	
Take actions to protect the wildlife and wildland interface, safeguard water, and mitigate tree loss in the community.	X
Greenhouse Gas Reduction	
Establish targets for achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions and integrate sustainability and resiliency practices into County policies and operations.	X
Carbon-Neutral Energy Supply	
Achieve carbon neutrality in electrical supply by 2040 through diversified carbon-free electric sourcing and phase out natural gas supply by 2070 through energy-efficient, all-electric buildings.	
Water Conservation	
Reduce potable water use and increase non-potable water use and water harvesting for irrigation where suitable.	X
Waste Management	
Manage waste responsibly by diversion of solid waste from landfills through recycling, re-use, composting, and waste reduction programs and zero-waste education campaigns; and pursue efficient long-term solutions for disposal of solid waste.	