CHAPTER 3. CULTURE, HERITAGE, AND THE ARTS
INTRODUCTION

Pagosa Springs identifies, values and promotes its diverse culture rooted in its history, heritage and the arts, with Native American, Spanish, Mexican and American influences. The hot springs attracted many nationalities and cultures to the area, with the Town physically and culturally evolving from the center of the Mother Pool. This cultural evolution creates a truly unique and authentic community that desires to protect and celebrate its culture, heritage and arts.

COMMUNITY IDENTITY

VISION

Pagosa Springs is aware of its past and present, and is working toward its future through a solid expression of its collective identity.

Pagosa Springs evolved from a confluence of geothermal waters and the San Juan River. The confluence became a sacred place for the Native American cultures. Later, an outpost formed around the Mother Pool and the area was settled with people attracted to the area for timber, ranching, trade and tourism. This blending of cultures, heritage and history creates a truly unique community identity and character that will be celebrated and protected.

GOAL CI-1

Facilitate and support programs that identify and showcase community character and cultural heritage.

Actions

A. Support all events and opportunities that bring the various elements of the community together.

B. Advocate for boards and other groups to expand education and provide outreach regarding the Town’s history and regional rural heritage.

C. Explore opportunities to support historic vocational trades and occupations that are applicable to today’s economic climate.

D. Work with the Pagosa Springs Area Tourism Board, Community Development Corporation and neighboring Tribal Nations to celebrate and share the area’s history, culture and community heritage to deepen awareness and understanding.

E. Support non-profits that provide educational opportunities to learn about the heritage and history of Pagosa Springs.
 Pagosa Springs embraces, sustains, and preserves its historic landmarks, sites, districts, and structures; the Town celebrates its history and cultural heritage.

Pagosa Springs has many historic structures dating back to the late 1800s that help tell the story of our heritage. Human development and natural disasters in and around downtown have dramatically altered the historic fabric of the Town, and many people are concerned about losing relics of the Town’s heritage. The Town’s rich and colorful heritage and history includes Ancestral Puebloans, Navajos and Utes using the hot springs as a sacred place of healing. Trappers, explorers, miners, and expeditions also discovered the hot springs, with the US Army setting up Camp Lewis, later called Fort Lewis, in 1878 and Camp Pagosa Springs in 1880. The Town of Pagosa Springs was platted in 1883 and incorporated in 1891. Over the area’s history, the hot springs have been claimed by the Navajo and Ute nations, Spain as a part of New Spain, Mexico in its independence from Spain and the United States as the Colorado Territory and then as the 38th state.

The Denver and Rio Grande Southern San Juan railroad extension to Gato (Pagosa Junction) in 1881 brought mass transit within 20 miles of the Town. The railroad opened the Town up for hot springs tourism with several bath houses and hotels marketing around the hot springs, timbering, ranching and limited mining. The Rio Grande, Pagosa & Northern Railroad reached Pagosa Springs from Gato in 1900 primarily for the timber industry. The railroad line was abandoned in 1936 as the Pagosa Lumber Company moved on to new forests. In 1938 the highway over Wolf Creek Pass opened as an eastern route into the area, and a commercial ski area opened on the north side of the pass, complete with a rope tow powered by a Chevy truck. The development of the Wolf Creek Ski Area on the south side of the pass started in 1955 and accelerated in the early 1970s with additional improvements and skiing terrain.

The tourism and development era boomed after 1955 with strong growth into the 1970s due to the scenic beauty, the San Juan National Forest, downhill skiing, four wheeling, the San Juan River, fishing, rafting and other area outdoor activities.

The Town and the surrounding landscape have a story worth remembering. The Town aims to inform the public about its history through preservation. The Town has established a local historic register program to nominate structures for local preservation. Historic preservation of structures and features produces economic benefits in communities. The Town seeks to work with community partners throughout the Town and County to share in these benefits.
HISTORY OF PAGOSA SPRINGS

When John Macomb, a U.S. Topographical Engineer came across Pagosa Springs in 1859, he saw well-worn trails branching out in every direction. The area had long been home to Native American tribes who revered the springs for their healing powers. The area has some of the earliest evidence of humans in Colorado, dating back about 10,000 years. Since then, the Pueblo people inhabited the area from about 750 to 1150 AD before migrating south to the Rio Grande. Then, Navajo, Ute, and Apache tribes entered for hunting and the hot springs. The name Pagosa comes from the Ute word Pah meaning water and gosah meaning either boiling, healing, or with foul odor.

In the 1860s, the United States began exploring the area for mining. A mining road between Silverton and New Mexico passed through Pagosa Springs, introducing mining interests. After the Civil War, the U.S. focused on securing the San Juan Mountains around Pagosa Springs for mining from the Utes. The Brunot Agreement of 1873 opened 3.7 million acres (about 5,780 square miles) of former Ute land to U.S. mining operations. White miners and settlers streamed in and President Hayes designated 1 square mile for a town site in 1877. Due to conflicts between the new settlers and the Utes, the U.S. Army opened Camp Lewis to surround and protect the town. Soon, the U.S. Army stationed 213 troops there and it became Fort Lewis. The army bolstered the town’s economy with its business and attracted new residents with its promise of safety and security.

Development slowed as the Fort moved closer to Durango and its booming mining and population in 1882. A proposed railroad also bypassed the town.

Regardless, the Pagosa Springs area continued to grow through the next few decades. A public bath house opened at the hot springs and settlers continued to purchase lots and build a school and telephone lines. The town became incorporated in 1891 and businesses sprung up on the west side of the river, on present day Pagosa Street. During the following decade, four lumber mills opened.
in town, providing employment and eventually drawing the railroad to Pagosa Springs in 1900. Cattle ranchers also took advantage of the railroad and the town grew and prospered. The town’s population doubled in the first decade of the railroad and the town grew and prospered. The town’s population doubled in the first decade of the railroad and the town grew and prospered. The town’s population doubled in the first decade of the railroad and the town grew and prospered. The town’s population doubled in the first decade of the railroad and the town grew and prospered. The town’s population doubled in the first decade of the railroad and the town grew and prospered.

The town fell on harder times that same decade. In 1911, a devastating flood took out the railroad, all the bridges, and the town’s electricity and water. Though the town rebuilt, seven disastrous fires damaged buildings between 1893 and 1942 and a 1921 ordinance required building walls be “constructed of either, brick, stone, or concrete.” Timber companies, a primary industry in Pagosa, exhausted the nearby lumber supply and many closed operations. The Great Depression devastated the remaining sectors of the economy, slowing tourism and decreasing cattle prices. The railroad stopped service to Pagosa in 1936.

After World War II, tourism and recreation became the primary industry in Pagosa Springs. The San Juan National Forest, 1.8 million acres of natural land, was designated in 1905, surrounding the town with natural beauty. In the 1950s, Wolf Creek Ski Area built a tow line and buildings opened at the hot springs to improve the visitor experience. New motels lined the main roads to accommodate the increasing number of tourists visiting the area. An intense flurry of platting occurred in the early 1970s creating some of the largest subdivisions in the country along with opportunities for people from across the spectrum to own a piece of a Colorado mountain town. As part of the National Forest the Weminuche Wilderness was designated in 1975, further promoting the natural recreation and scenic amenities that draw increasing numbers of visitors. The Weminuche was expanded in 1980 and again in 1993—now at almost a half-million acres, it is the largest wilderness area in Colorado. Today, tourism continues to thrive and the hot springs alone attract 175,000 people to the area annually, summer visitors fill shops and restaurants, and second homes dot the landscape.
PRINCIPLES FOR RURAL EDGE DESIGN

The urban rural edge is the transition area between rural, agricultural, lower density areas and the higher density urban town area. As new development occurs in the transition areas between the town and rural county, best practices suggest following these principles:

1. Establish a clear distinction between the area designated for urban level growth and the surrounding rural, agricultural land.
2. Promote a compact form for growth in the urban area through appropriate lot sizes and densities.
3. Maintain, develop, and enhance connections between existing and planned development. New developments should have soft surface trails or roadside paths to connect to commercial areas, existing neighborhoods, and on-street pedestrian networks.
4. Utilize tools such as urban service area maps and a three-mile plan to identify future capacity and service limitations as well as areas for higher and lower density growth.
5. Utilize and provide sustainable and cost-effective “green” infrastructure for all new development and re-development.
6. Ensure proposed development preserves existing native trees and plants and landscaping features native and drought resistant species.
7. Cluster new structures to preserve the functionality of wildlife habitats, agricultural land, and open space. Clustered development also encourages walking and bicycling within the neighborhood and reduces infrastructure costs.
8. Design and locate buildings to respect the characteristics of the surrounding natural landscape. Buildings should follow the local architectural pattern and be located at the toes of slopes or edges of meadows. Those locations allow for natural windbreaks and reduce visual impacts.
9. Promote and provide diverse housing types and opportunities for housing choices for all, understanding that housing type and densities are context sensitive to rural and urban areas.
10. Employ traffic calming measures on nearby roads to improve safety and encourage walking. Narrow streets and posted speed limits reduce the volume and speed of vehicles and make the space more hospitable to all street users, including pedestrians and cyclists.
Pagosa Springs moves forward into the future based on a foundation of six (6) major and supportive actions that help advance the vision for heritage and historic preservation.

**GOAL HHP-1**

Preserve and enhance the historic downtown and the character of older neighborhoods in and around downtown.

**Actions**

A. Consider designating additional historic districts, including the Lewis Street neighborhood, Hermosa Street neighborhood and Pagosa Street (from 1st to 3rd).

B. Maintain and periodically update design guidelines for renovation and infill in the Downtown Historic District and other areas with distinct historic character.

C. Revisit the Historic District and Local Landmark Design Guidelines to ensure appropriate infill development and appropriate scale development in areas with historic resources.

D. Revisit the historic structure survey and re-evaluate surveyed resources for local landmark eligibility and potential to contribute to a national, state or local historic district(s).

E. Town will encourage retention and reuse of historic buildings within the community.

F. Support Historic Preservation through the review of application for state and federal tax credits as an incentive for renovating and rehabilitating historic properties and provide alternative assistance and incentives for the maintenance and preservation of historic properties.

G. Advocate for best practices learned from attendance at regional, state and national conferences.

H. Pursue advancing the Town’s Colorado Main Street Community designation from Affiliate status to Candidate status (and toward Designated and ultimately Graduate status) to protect and promote the historic downtown.

**GOAL HHP-2**

Consider amending the LUDC to strengthen the preservation and protection of historic structures in the Town.

**Actions**

A. Develop technical assistance and educational programs to encourage private property owners to designate eligible properties and structures as Local Historic Landmarks.

B. Revisit the LUDC Historic Preservation requirements to ensure that contributing and supporting structures will be protected and preserved, allowing demolitions for structures only after making substantial findings to warrant demolition.

C. Consider an ordinance to allow review of all demolition applications for contributing structures and explore alternatives to demolition.

D. Consider including Historic Preservation Board members on other boards and commissions, such as Planning Commission and encourage members from other boards and commissions to consider Historic Preservation Board membership to facilitate cross-communication and cooperation.

**GOAL HHP-3**

Continue to provide incentives and education programs that encourage and promote historic preservation efforts.

**Actions**

A. Create an active awards program that recognizes outstanding rehabilitations, additions, and alterations.

B. Actively educate property owners with historic structures on the importance of historic preservation and promote state and federal tax credits as an incentive for renovating/rehabilitating historic properties.

C. Provide assistance and incentive programs for the maintenance, renovation and rehabilitation of historic properties. Connect property owners with state and federal partners that have financial resources, grants and other incentive programs.

D. Encourage private preservation through use of conservation easements and similar tools.
GOAL HHP-4

Support programs and events that identify and showcase community cultural heritage and artistic expression.

Actions
A. Support all boards and other groups that expand education, provide outreach and support events that share the Town’s history, rural and cultural heritage and art in all forms.
B. Consider the creation of a history and heritage museum in the historic downtown area that is focused on the Pagosa Springs area that educates, spurs cultural/heritage tourism, promotes economic development and ties to any future arts district. This museum may support efforts of the San Juan Historical Society or add to them.
C. Provide presentation areas in the museum or adjoining grounds for programs and presentations on Native American, Spanish and American influences that shaped the Town.
D. Continue to include historic/heritage educational programs in conjunction with community events including the County Fair.
E. Support non-profits that provide educational opportunities to learn about the heritage and history of Pagosa Springs.
F. Support the creation of a Pagosa Springs walking tour that documents key historical sites in the downtown area.
G. Collaborate with organizations that have similar interests and goals to identify common objectives, share resources, and coordinate the community’s efforts regarding the preservation of history and culture.

GOAL HHP-5

Work with Archuleta County to create a regional preservation entity that preserves the rural landscape and promotes continued ranching and agriculture outside the Town.

Actions
A. Draft a formal mechanism to outline opportunities to expand Historic Preservation efforts to preserve historic and cultural resources at the regional level.
B. Regional preservation efforts will include retaining the rural landscape characteristics including historic structures and directing development away from outlying areas and into Town and surrounding areas.
C. Encourage developers to use best practices and principals in rural design for developments outside of the downtown core.
D. Support activities that create and sustain a vibrant local rural economy including farmers’ markets, festivals, equestrian events and other activities that support productive agriculture and ranching.
E. Support conservation and celebration of the area’s cultural sites and resources to protect and celebrate the area’s heritage including Ute and Chimney Rock cultural and archaeological sites, Jicarilla Apache, Navajo Nation, and Southern Ute heritage and resources.

GOAL HHP-6

Pagosa Springs should advocate for preservation efforts at established and potential designated sites.

Actions
A. Consider preservation practices for natural historic assets such as the geothermal aquifer and the historic river corridor.
B. Explore and develop a greater understanding of potential national landmark designation for the hot springs Mother Pool.
ARTS

VISION

Pagosa Springs supports and promotes a diverse offering of cultural and arts, events, opportunities, and venues that enrich the lives of residents and visitors.

Pagosa Springs desires to build upon and expand the existing arts and event opportunities in the community for both residents and visitors. Arts and events along with our traditional cultural events and festivals contribute to an innovative and creative environment in our community. Arts and events promote civic pride, contribute to economic vitality, celebrate the diversity of our community (adding to its vibrancy), and stimulate dialogue and learning. Arts and cultural events comprise a desired cornerstone for the community and are integral to the health, community character and economic diversity. The Town desires to foster creativity and innovation, diversity, collaboration and access to the arts for all segments of the population and visitors. To this end, the Plan provides four (4) major goals and associated actions to realize the arts vision.
GOAL A-1

Develop and support a Community Arts Plan that celebrates creativity, community identity, economic development, traditions and the lifestyle of the community in literature, art, music, dance, theater or other cultural elements or artistic expressions.

Actions

A. Establish an Arts Advisory Board to foster the arts in the community and to develop the Community Arts Plan in collaboration with the Pagosa Springs Arts Council.

B. Consider obtaining technical assistance grants to aid in the development of the Community Arts Plan.

C. Ensure all segments of the community, including all age groups, are consulted in the development of the Community Arts Plan, including Native American, Hispanic and other communities that contribute to the diversity of the Town.

GOAL A-2

Support and encourage the arts through events, fairs, festivals, markets, studio tours and public spaces that celebrate our artists, heritage and diversity.

Actions

A. Explore obtaining Colorado Creative District Certification from Colorado Creative Industries (CCI) for an area(s) of Pagosa Springs that meets certification guidelines.

B. Encourage and support the development of the Creative District once it has been approved by CCI.

C. Encourage and support financial assistance program applications to private, federal and state agencies such as CCI and its Space to Create, Public Art, Poetry Out Loud, Colorado Music and Arts Education programs.

D. Explore establishing an arts coordinator position in the Town to coordinate arts events, collaborate with the tourism department, facilitate the success of the Creative District, and to staff the Arts Advisory Board, possibly in collaboration with the Pagosa Springs Arts Council.

E. Work with businesses and organizations in the community to continue to support festivals, maker expos, fairs, studio tours, and events and promote local events beyond the region.

F. Consider the creation of an arts market area or repurpose an existing public or private space for vendors to display and sell their art.

G. Work with businesses and various private organizations to promote the arts, culture, and heritage of the community.

H. Create incentives and public-private partnerships to assist local artists and grow the arts community.
GOAL A-3

Support integrated facilities, venues, and public spaces in the community.

Actions

A. Support the efforts of existing facilities, including the library, history museum, Pagosa Springs Center for the Arts and other public or private facilities.

B. Explore the possibility of a Children’s Museum, Community Studio or some combination of multi-purpose facility or facilities to serve the needs of the community.

C. Develop an inventory of existing and possible venues and their appropriate uses as well as real property that could be developed for venues.

D. Provide incentives to rehabilitate and upgrade existing venues or to develop live/work spaces or studios (i.e., Space to Create).

E. Provide incentives and encourage collaboration among businesses and private organizations to use existing facilities for events and education.

F. Maximize the use of Reservoir Hill as a venue for performing arts while respecting its open space and recreational values.

GOAL A-4

Support and encourage public art.

Actions

A. Support the display of art in public places that fits with the community and reinforces the Town’s culture, history and folklore.

B. Support Town staff time to coordinate with arts and cultural organizations in our community to bring art to public places either as temporary or permanent exhibits.

C. Develop a public art program to work with local artists to place and showcase local art in public spaces throughout the community to strengthen the community identity.

D. Look for opportunities for more children’s art programming and to integrate children into the arts community.

E. Where possible, provide public art in municipal public works projects (i.e., buildings, furnishings, and landscapes) that reflects the community.

F. Look for opportunities for art in the downtown area such as murals on the sides of buildings and streetscape elements that can be purposed as functional art (benches, bike racks, street signs).

G. Identify locations and develop inventory of possible public art spaces such as the Riverwalk or Lewis Street.
**CONNECTING COMMUNITY IDENTITY, HERITAGE AND THE ARTS**

Taos and Santa Fe are two cities linked to the Town’s history, heritage, and culture by early trappers, transit routes, and trade. Both of these places have shown the success, activity, character, and vitality of integrating history, heritage, and the arts into the community. Pagosa Springs can likewise be successful in celebrating and promoting its unique culture, heritage, history, and the arts that are the heart and soul of the community. This will allow the community to maintain and enhance its authentic character for its residents and visitors while also promoting economic development.

**GOAL ALIGNMENT TABLE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Community Identity</th>
<th>Heritage and Historic Preservation</th>
<th>Arts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td>Goal CI-1, Actions B and E</td>
<td>Goal HHP-4, Actions A, F and G</td>
<td>Goal A-2, Action C Goal A-4, Action D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community Events</strong></td>
<td>Goal CI-1, Action A</td>
<td>Goal HHP-4, Actions D and E</td>
<td>Goal A-2, Actions D and E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Space</strong></td>
<td>Goal CI-1, Action B</td>
<td>Goal HHP-4, Actions B, C and D</td>
<td>Goal A-4, All Actions Goal A-3, Actions A and F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Embrace Diversity</strong></td>
<td>Goal CI-1, Action D</td>
<td>Goal HHP-4, Action D Goal HHP-5, Action E</td>
<td>Goal A-1, Action C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Increasing Town Involvement</strong></td>
<td>Goal CI-1, Action D</td>
<td>Goal HHP-1, Action E</td>
<td>Goal A-4 Action B Goal A-2 Action D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>