

The logo for Los Alamos County, featuring the words "LOS ALAMOS" in a sans-serif font. The letter "O" in "LOS" is replaced by a blue globe icon, and the letter "O" in "AMOS" is replaced by a red circular icon containing a stylized plant or leaf design.

LOS ALAMOS

COUNTY

# NORTH MESA HOUSING STUDY

OCTOBER 2020 DRAFT

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# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## CONTEXT

Los Alamos County is experiencing an acute shortage of housing. The County's Comprehensive Plan, the Economic Vitality Strategic Plan and Strategic Leadership Plan all prioritize increasing the supply of attainable housing. A recent Housing Market Needs Analysis (2019) found that there is an immediate need for 1,310 units of rental housing and 379 units for homeownership. The housing shortage is particularly acute for middle- and lower-income households. Most new housing developments are either market rate, starting at +/- \$400,000, or workforce housing that targets households with incomes of \$40,000 or less for a family of four. This leaves a gap in the supply of housing for households with incomes ranging from \$40,000 - \$100,000, the so-called 'missing middle' housing. In addition to the current demand for housing, Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) is planning to hire over 1,000 new employees over the next 5-7 years, which will further increase the demand for housing.

Due in part to the high cost and limited options for housing, the Los Alamos Public School District (LAPS) has been struggling to hire and retain staff. Most teachers and support staff cannot afford the average cost of a home in Los Alamos County; many



*North Mesa views to the southeast*

commute from lower cost communities outside the County. Based on the existing housing shortage and the projected increase in demand, the County and LAPS, owner of a 30-acre site adjacent to Los Alamos Middle School, decided to commission a study to determine the feasibility of developing housing on the North Mesa site. This study focuses on the feasibility of developing the North Mesa site, with the primary goal of providing housing options for households unable to afford the average home prices in Los Alamos.

At the outset of the project, the project team articulated a set of goals to guide the project:

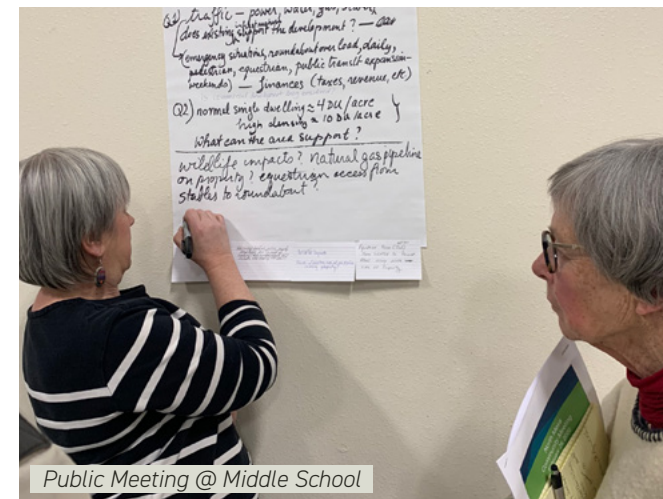
-  **Address the community-wide need for quality, affordable housing;**
-  **Develop a scenario under which the school district could generate recurring revenue**
-  **Provide a mix of quality housing types for various households and associated homeowner needs**
-  **Balance the development so that traffic impacts are mitigated both internally and externally to the site**
-  **Incorporate amenities such as community/school uses, trails and parks -connections to existing amenities**
-  **Create a development that employs sustainable development practices**

## PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS

Over a six month timeframe, the project team and LAPS facilitated a workshop and three public meetings to garner input from the community. After completing an existing conditions analysis, the project team conducted a workshop with the steering committee to generate initial concepts that could be shared with the greater community. The workshop explored a range of housing types, densities, layouts and circulations to better understand how the site could be developed. The workshop helped inform a draft design framework for the site that proposed overall circulation, trails, open space and varying housing densities.

Following the workshop, the County hosted an open house with the public to share preliminary designs and solicit input on the concept of developing the site for housing. The open house was well attended and generated a lot of discussion on the proposed framework, the potential impacts to surrounding neighborhoods, traffic generation and the larger question of how best to create new housing that met the demand of households in the 'missing middle.'

Following the public open house, the County Council and LAPS Board held a joint session on February 11th to discuss the project and solicit additional input. The meeting focused on the role of LAPS in any proposed development. Meeting participants wanted to understand the goals of LAPS in terms of creating housing specifically for school district employees, their financial targets for a return on the proposed development and their role in actual



Public Meeting @ Middle School



Precedent study board presented during public meeting



Public Meeting @ County Council Chambers

development. Public comments ranged from support for attainable housing to questions about potential traffic impacts.

The third public meeting was hosted by LAPS on February 26th at Los Alamos Middle School. LAPS facilitated roundtable discussions focused on various topics related to housing, development and the role of LAPS.

All the public input was considered by the project team in drafting recommendations for moving forward. The project team looked to balance the dire need for creating new housing with the concerns of neighbors that any new development on the North Mesa should not have a deleterious impact on existing residents.

## FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

### Design Concept

The purpose of this study was to determine the feasibility of developing housing on the North Mesa site. From a land development perspective, the site is suitable for creating new housing; it has good access from North Mesa and San Ildefonso Roads with existing infrastructure for utilities and gently sloping topography. The site can be configured in multiple ways to create housing that aligns with the 'missing middle' housing need. This generally means that the density of housing should be higher than typical single-family detached neighborhoods that

average 5-7 homes per acre. But given the proximity to existing neighborhoods with predominantly lower density single-family detached housing, this study recommends a development program of medium density housing, in the range of 7-12 dwelling units per acre, with a majority of homes that are owned instead of for-rent properties. Over the 30-acre site, this would create somewhere in the range of 210-360 new homes at full build-out.

The concept design framework proposes a perimeter trail, a central neighborhood-scale park and preservation of existing, mature stands of trees in the northwest and southeast corners of the site. It proposes that the general density of housing transitions from lower densities towards the middle school to higher densities on the east side.

This study recommends that Los Alamos County and the Los Alamos Public School District formally adopt a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to agree on how to structure a partnership to begin the multi-step process of transforming vacant land into a new neighborhood. Given the fact that neither LAPS nor the County have the expertise to undertake a development of this nature, this study recommends that a master development team, with the financial, legal, design and construction expertise required, is selected early in the process to undertake the more detailed planning, design and land use approval processes that are necessary prior to actual construction. If the County and LAPS decide to move forward, the diagram below illustrates one potential sequence of steps towards implementation.

If the County and LAPS decide to move forward, Table 1. illustrates one potential sequence of eight steps towards implementation.





**FIGURE 1. FINAL STUDY CONCEPT**



# INTRODUCTION

## CONTEXT

Los Alamos County is experiencing an acute shortage of housing. The County's Comprehensive Plan, the Economic Vitality Strategic Plan and Strategic Leadership Plan all prioritize increasing the supply of attainable housing. A recent Housing Market Needs Analysis (2019) found that there is an immediate need for 1,310 units of rental housing and 379 units for homeownership. The housing shortage is particularly acute for middle- and lower-income households. Most new housing developments are either market rate, starting at +/- \$400,000, or workforce housing that targets households with incomes of \$40,000 or less for a family of four. This leaves a gap in the supply of housing for households with incomes between \$40,000 - \$100,000, the so-called 'missing middle' housing. In addition to the current demand for housing, LANL is planning to hire over 1,000 new employees over the next 5-7 years, which will further increase the demand for housing.

Due in part to the high cost and limited options for housing, the Los Alamos Public School District (LAPS) has been struggling to hire and retain staff. Most teachers and support staff cannot afford the average cost of a home in Los Alamos County; many commute from lower cost communities outside the County. Based on the existing housing shortage and the projected increase in demand, the County and LAPS, owner of a 30-acre site adjacent to Los



informal trail at the North Mesa site

Alamos Middle School, decided to commission a study to determine the feasibility of developing housing on the North Mesa site. Recognizing the County's expertise in managing/reviewing land use decisions and the overall development process, LAPS agreed to have the County take the lead in managing the feasibility study. LAPS board members participated in the feasibility study, providing input at project meetings and helping to articulate project goals. Both the LAPS Board and the County Commission took an active role in the study, participating in workshops and providing input on overall concepts.

## PROJECT GOALS & ASSUMPTIONS

The overarching goal of the study was to determine the feasibility of creating housing on the North Mesa site that would be targeted towards meeting the

demand of the 'missing middle,' providing housing options for households unable to afford the average home prices in Los Alamos. At the outset of the project, the County and LAPS Board identified a list of considerations to guide the project:



**Address the community-wide need for quality, affordable housing**



**Develop a scenario under which the school district could generate recurring revenue**



**Provide a mix of quality housing types for various households and associated homeowner needs**



**Balance the development so that traffic impacts are mitigated both internally and externally to the site**



**Incorporate amenities such as community/school uses, trails and parks -connections to existing amenities**



**Create a development that employs sustainable development practices**

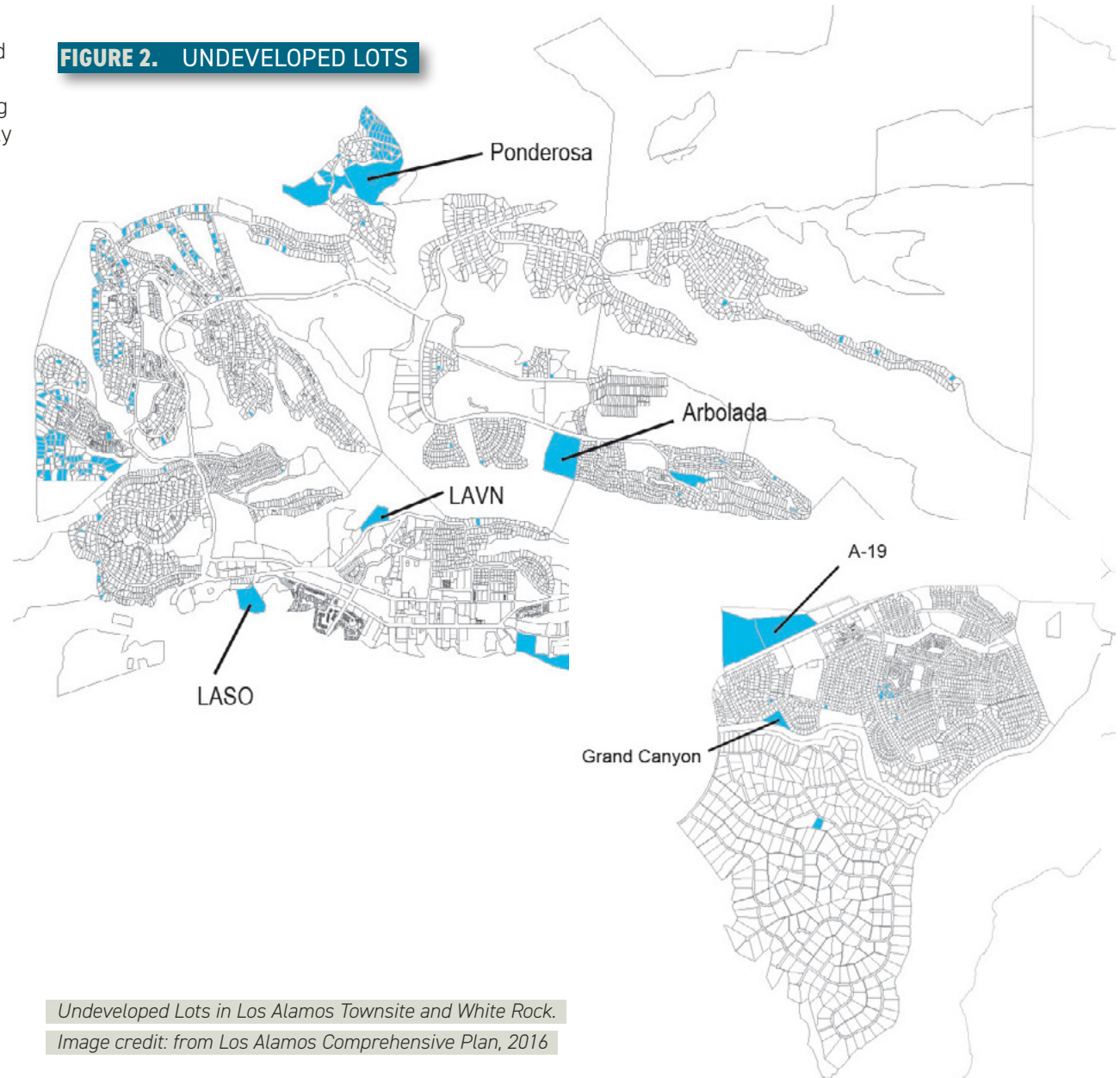
## WHY THIS SITE

Los Alamos County has a limited quantity of land available for development. As the accompanying exhibit illustrates, most of the vacant parcels are small and/or have development constraints. The North Mesa site, approximately 30 acres in size, is one of the larger vacant parcels suitable for

development. The North Mesa site is also supported by the Los Alamos County Housing Analysis completed in late 2019, which recommends focusing on the few existing sites in the County with relatively flat topography and in close proximity to existing utilities.

## STUDY SCOPE

In 2019, Los Alamos County hired Dekker/Perich/Sabatini (D/P/S) to determine the feasibility of creating housing on the North Mesa site. The scope of the study was for D/P/S to provide a conceptual design framework for varying housing types and densities and an overall recommendation on the suitability of the site as part of the final report. In addition, the County asked that the report include potential strategies for maintaining the affordability of housing if the project was developed. This study is the first step in the development process to determine whether development at North Mesa is feasible and/or supported.



*Undeveloped Lots in Los Alamos Townsite and White Rock.*

*Image credit: from Los Alamos Comprehensive Plan, 2016*

# 2. PLANNING PROCESS

## PUBLIC OUTREACH

At the outset of the project, a Steering Committee was formed, consisting of County Council members, representatives of the Los Alamos Public School Board and community members to provide input at each stage of the study. The project included three meetings with the Steering Committee, a Design Workshop, three public meetings and presentations to County Council and the LAPS Board.

In addition, a project website was created to provide timely project information and solicit feedback through an online survey. Approximately 500 community members participated in the process, either through the online survey or at the public meetings.

## OUTREACH VENUES

Below is a summary of the various outreach events and a table with frequently asked questions and issues raised during the outreach events.

### Design Workshop

The goal of the design workshop was to generate development concepts that addressed the goals



Steering Committee Workshop



Groups working to revise design concepts



Groups presenting back on their revised concepts

articulated at the outset of the project. The design workshop explored different development alternatives to identify a general design concept that could be carried forward. This 'preferred' design concept was then refined to become the starting point of a discussion with the overall community.

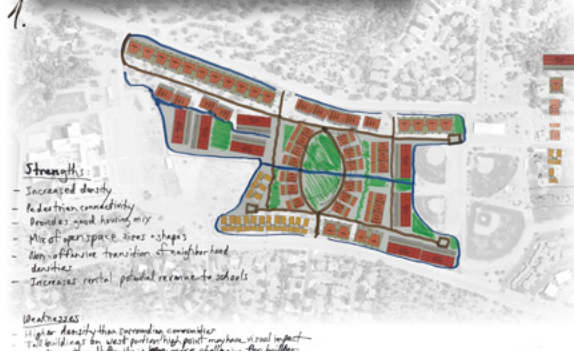
At the beginning of the design workshop, D/P/S gave a presentation to provide information on the regulatory framework, existing conditions and precedent studies as well as introduce three preliminary design concepts. Following the presentation, participants worked in three groups to evaluate and revise one of the design concepts.

Each group identified the strengths and weaknesses of the revised design concepts and presented it back to the larger group. The participants then identified elements that a 'preferred' design concept should incorporate.

The following is a list of elements that participants identified to be included in a 'preferred' design concept:

- Cottage development at the western portion to provide lower density closer to the school and to potentially serve as senior housing or housing for school employees
- Locate high density development closer to the ballfields to allow views to be maintained from all areas of the site
- Trails that connect various elements, especially the school and ballfields

**FIGURE 3. REVISED DESIGN**



Revised design concepts created during the Design Workshop

- Open space dispersed throughout
- Preserve existing mature stands of trees in the northwest and southeast corners
- Focus higher density product in southeast portion of site, close to existing multi-family

Public Meeting

The goal of this meeting was to inform the public of the North Mesa Housing Study project and solicit input on the concepts created during and after the design workshop. Over 65 stakeholders and community members participated. The meeting was held at the County Council chambers where the project team displayed boards with summaries from the existing conditions analysis, precedent studies and the design concepts created during the design workshop. In addition, a new design concept was displayed based on the elements identified during the design workshop (a description of the design workshop and the list of elements is detailed on page 10).

At the beginning of the meeting, stakeholders were invited to explore the different boards, ask the project team questions and add notes to the boards to provide feedback on the concepts. The initial open house was followed by a presentation on the project and the process to date. After the presentation, stakeholders and the project team engaged in a Q&A Session. (A summary of the Q&A Session is located on page 13).



Public Meeting at County Council



Precedent boards displayed during the meeting



Will Gleason from D/P/S presenting on the housing study

## Los Alamos Public School Board Meeting

At a School Board Meeting in February, the project team provided an update on the project and solicited feedback from meeting participants. Comments ranged from concerns about the potential for higher density housing adjacent to existing lower density neighborhoods to personal testimonies about the lack of affordable housing options in the County. Overall the meeting participants, including the LAPS Board, expressed support for continuing to explore the feasibility of creating housing on the 30-acre site but for also clarifying the role of LAPS and options for creating housing geared towards LAPS teachers and staff (a summary of the Q&A session is located below).



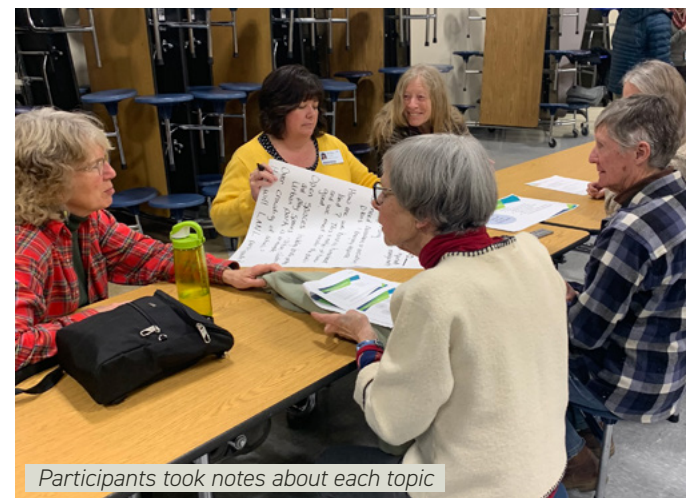
Site tour during the meeting to answer questions about the site

## Los Alamos Public Schools Workshop

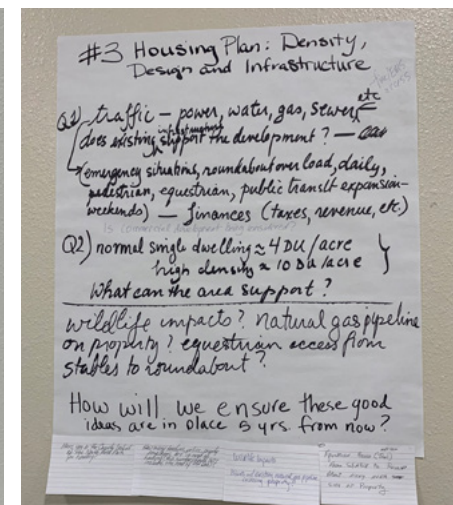
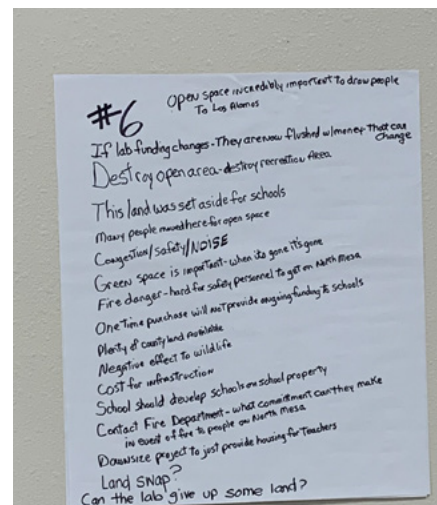
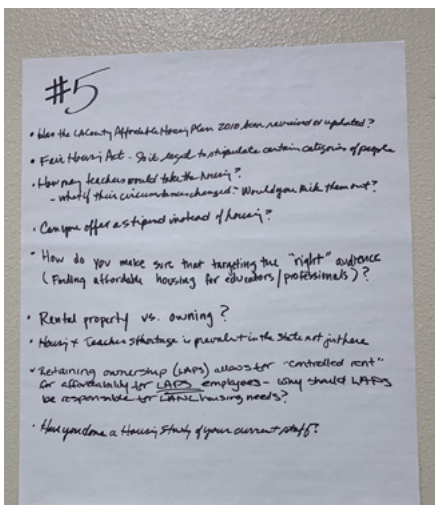
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Seven tables were setup with different discussion topics



Participants took notes about each topic



Each table and topic were later displayed on the wall, here showing three excerpts of seven

The following FAQ summarizes some of the questions most frequently asked during the public meetings and corresponding responses from the project team.

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Q: If the development focused on providing housing for teachers and other school district employees, some of the adjacent residents seemed to be more likely to support the development.**

A: The general strategy at this early point is to focus on creating housing for the 'missing middle,' the segment of the population who cannot afford most of the new housing that is available in the County and who make too much money for subsidized housing. While LAPS is very interested in creating housing geared towards its teachers and staff, it is too early in the process to make firm commitments about how many units would be reserved/dedicated to LAPS teachers and staff.

**Q: How is the School District going to keep it affordable?**

A: It is too early in the process to answer these questions but there are mechanisms for ensuring that housing remains affordable. If the project moves forward, the School Board and the County will have a formal agreement for their respective roles in the project.

**Q: Why were residents not included in the work session?**

A: Because concepts needed to be devised with a small workgroup of key personnel within the County

and LAPS who have been fielding inquiries about the lack of middle housing for their teacher workforce. This initial workshop in December provided the opportunity to explore and devise concepts to present for an optimal, more meaningful starting discussion at the first public meeting in January.

**Q: What will be done to address the traffic impacts from the project?**

A: A traffic impact study would be required by the County as part of a site development plan application.

**Q: Were there other sites considered?**

A: The Comprehension Plan identified a number of sites within County for potential housing developments. The North Mesa Site is one of the largest and most readily developable sites. The School Board consulted with the County about the potential to develop this site.

**Q: When will the County/School District decide to move forward or not with the project?**

A: The timeline for the project as shown in the PowerPoint indicates multiple "decision points" and include provisions for public input.

**Q: What about trails?**

A: Trails are being considered for the perimeter of the site and across the site.

**Q: How is the site getting designed?**

A: The site has not yet been designed but early test fits of the site support the idea of having higher density towards the sports fields.

**Q: Why does LAPS need sources for recurring income?**

A: 90% of funding for LAPS comes from the State funding formula. Schools need creative ways to increase funding available for a range of programs and activities.

**Q: Why is LAPS engaging in this project?**

A: The school employee salary is often not sufficient to afford housing in Los Alamos and LAPS has difficulties finding and retaining employees. This project could provide attainable housing for LAPS employees and generate recurring income for the school district.

**Q: How will affordability be retained, and the housing be rented to LAPS employees?**

A: There are a number of strategies to retain affordability and focus on school employees as tenants. These strategies will be explored in more depth if the project moves forward.

**Q: Does existing infrastructure support more development?**

A: Any development at North Mesa will trigger an extensive infrastructure review and traffic impact study. The infrastructure will be improved as required.

**Q: What types of densities would different development types yield?**

A: Given the size of the site (30 acres), early studies of potential housing indicate that the site could generate 210-360 new residential units.

# 3. EXISTING CONDITIONS/ DATA ANALYSIS

The following section is an analysis of the existing conditions framework including site-specific conditions and constraints, existing regulatory documents and studies pertaining to housing. In the first part, the regulatory framework is analyzed to understand the County's goals pertaining to housing. In the second part, site-specific opportunities and constraints are analyzed to better understand the 30-acre parcel. The County policies and site-specific analysis helped inform preliminary design concepts and the recommended site framework.

## REGULATORY DOCUMENTS

### Comprehensive Plan

In 2016, Los Alamos County adopted a new Comprehensive Plan. The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to guide the physical development of the County through goals and policies established to implement the shared community vision. The plan emphasizes three key elements: Housing, Neighborhoods and Growth; Development, Redevelopment and Downtown; and Open Space, Trails and Mobility.

The Housing, Neighborhoods and Growth element goals include planning for modest growth, providing more housing choices and protecting the character of existing residential neighborhoods. The Plan emphasizes the need for new and varied housing types.

The Comprehensive Plan focuses on increasing affordable workforce housing, including housing for temporary employees at LANL and retirees recognizing that each group requires different housing types.

#### **SUMMARY:**

- > *Housing is one of three key areas of focus*
- > *Emphasizes need for new and varied housing stock*
- > *Designates potential housing sites as "Mixed-Use"*
- > *Emphasizes providing housing that targets specific demographic groups*

### Economic Vitality Strategic Plan 2019

The Economic Vitality Strategic Plan (EVSP) 2019 focuses on the County's efforts to improve and enhance the community's living and working environment. This Plan, created by members of the County Manager's Economic Vitality Action Team (EVAT), recognizes that activity at LANL drives much of the region's economic vitality and that housing has a direct impact on LANL's ability to attract new employees. Creating a range of housing types at

different price points is therefore vital to maintaining the County's economy.

One of the main goals identified in the EVSP is to increase the availability of housing, particularly for-rent products and smaller, for-sale homes/townhomes. The study identifies actions needed to broaden the housing inventory including identifying developable properties and incentivizing the development of housing geared towards the 'missing middle.'

#### **SUMMARY:**

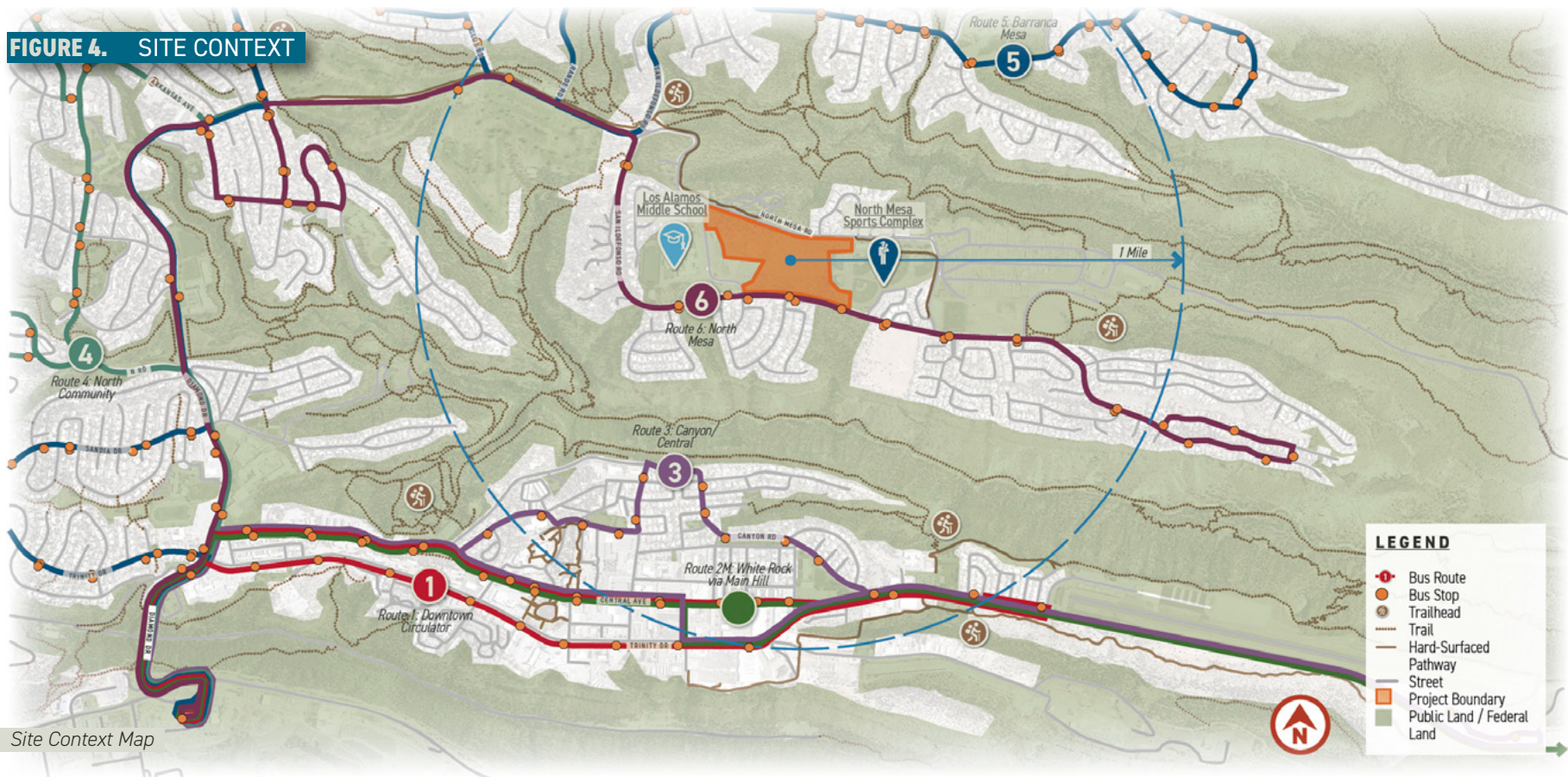
- > *Increase the availability of quality housing*
- > *Identify and assess the development potential for vacant parcels*
- > *Create a broader range of housing types*

### Strategic Leadership Plan

The Los Alamos County Strategic Leadership Plan was drafted in 2019 and outlines seven strategic priorities. Each priority identified has associated action items to define a pathway for success. One of the seven goals focuses on increasing the amount and types of housing options. The priority outlines the provision of housing for all segments of the community from affordable, entry-level and live-work housing to new options for those interested in downsizing or moving closer to central areas of the community.



**FIGURE 4. SITE CONTEXT**



Site Context Map

## SITE ANALYSIS

### Location

The North Mesa site sits in the central portion of the County, in between Bayo and Pueblo Canyons. The site is informally part of the Los Alamos Middle School campus, with pathways connecting the school to the North Mesa Sports Complex to the east.

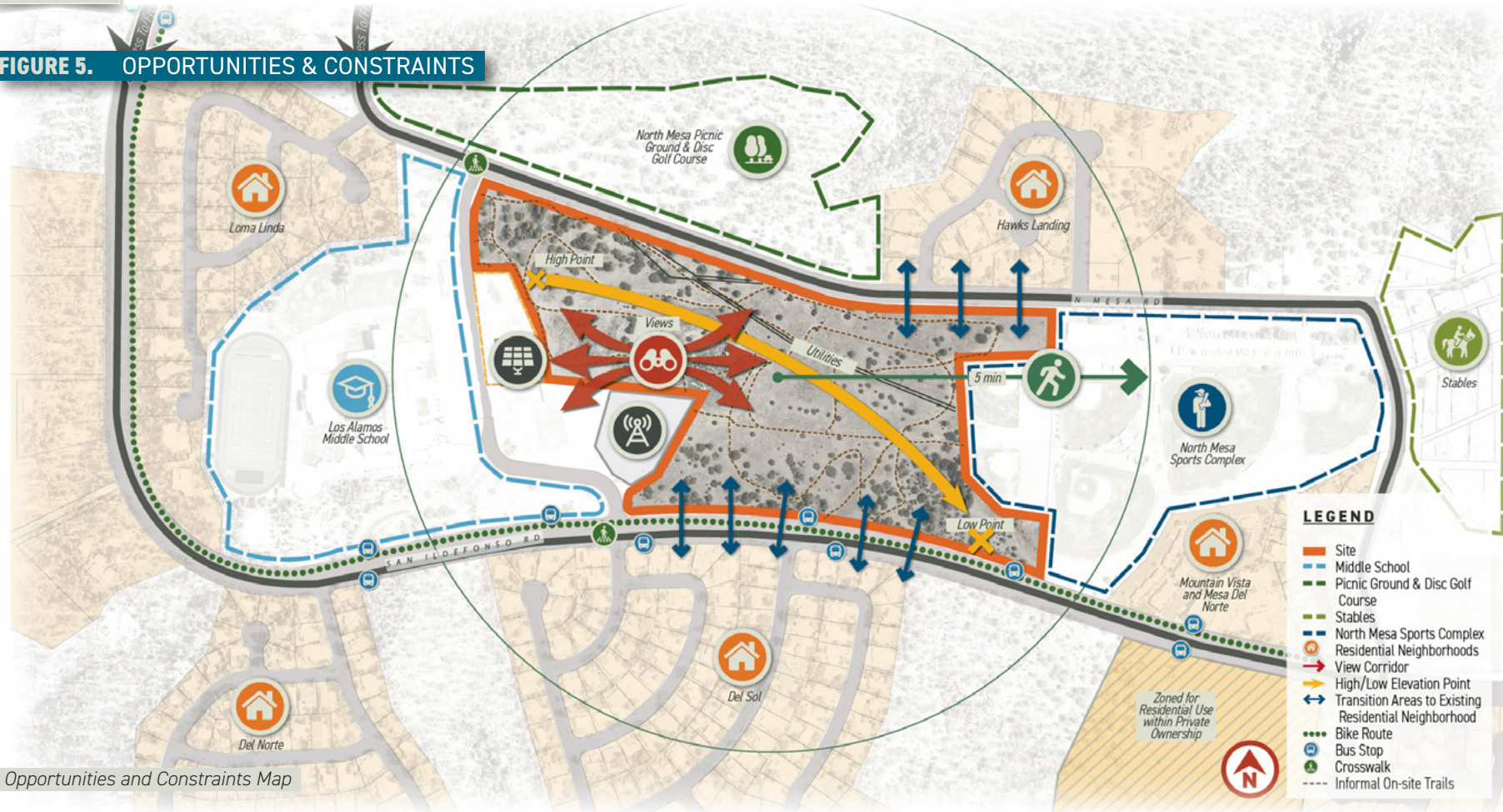
### Context

The North Mesa currently has approximately 1,000 homes and apartments that are in four neighborhoods, with the majority of them accessed off of San Ildefonso Road. In addition to the Los Alamos Middle School site, the North Mesa also has extensive horse stables, multiple parks and trailheads, and the Sheriff’s Posse facility.

### Land Use / Zoning

The North Mesa site is owned by Los Alamos Public Schools and is currently zoned as a Public Land District intended to accommodate local government and school district uses and structures, designed to support community needs and the public health, safety and welfare. In order to permit the development of housing on this site, a rezoning action would need to occur. The site is currently surrounded by existing recreational, residential and institutional uses.

**FIGURE 5. OPPORTUNITIES & CONSTRAINTS**



Opportunities and Constraints Map

### Infrastructure / Environmental Conditions

There is a utilities easement passing through the site from the northwest border to the eastern border. Los Alamos has a semi-arid climate with moderately warm summer days with average highs reaching 81 degrees Fahrenheit and cold winters with average high temperatures at 40 degrees Fahrenheit.

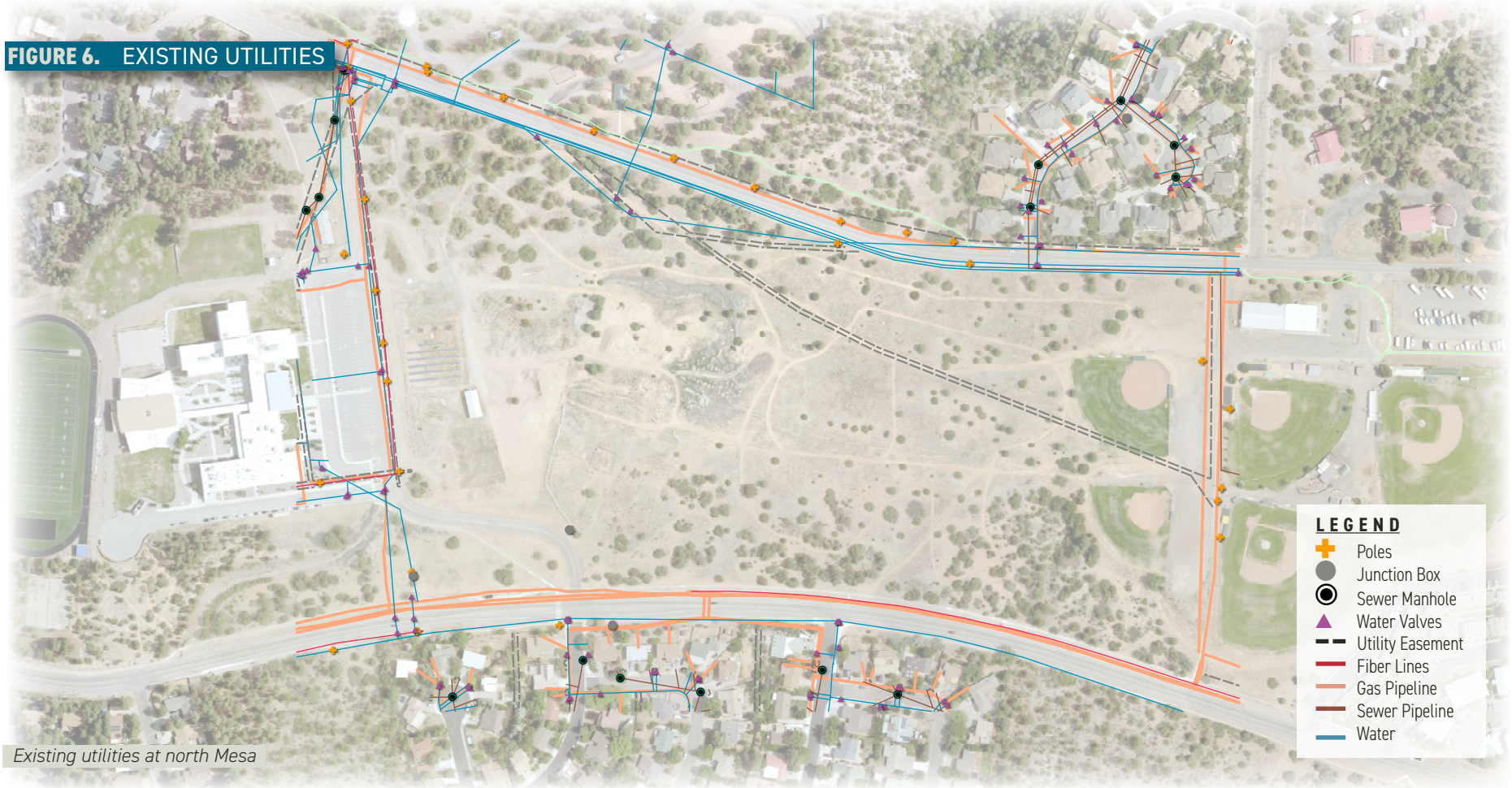
Rainfall totals are highest in July and August averaging 2 to 3 inches. Average snowfall throughout the winter months reaches 10 to 13 inches.

### Slopes / Drainage / Views

The project site is situated on the North Mesa, one of the four mesas that comprise the Los Alamos

Townsite. The land slopes to the east, affording extensive views across the Rio Grande Valley to the peaks of the Pecos Wilderness. The high point is located in the northwest corner of the site at 7,368 feet elevation and the low point is located at the southeast corner at 7,290 feet elevation, averaging a 4 percent slope across the site. Stormwater drains off the site either to a ditch along North Mesa Rd or to the southeast corner where it flows through a

**FIGURE 6. EXISTING UTILITIES**



culvert that drains under San Ildefonso Rd to Pueblo Canyon.

### Mobility and Transportation Network / Access and Circulation

The site is bordered by North Mesa Road to the north and San Ildefonso Road to the south. These

two roads loop around to connect to each other to the southeast and northwest, creating a circular connection around the North Mesa that surrounds the middle school, the site and the North Mesa Sports Complex. Bike routes and sidewalks exist on both sides along San Ildefonso Rd as well as a crosswalk to connect the adjacent neighborhood to the school. Road connections to greater Los Alamos are limited to one access point to the northwest of

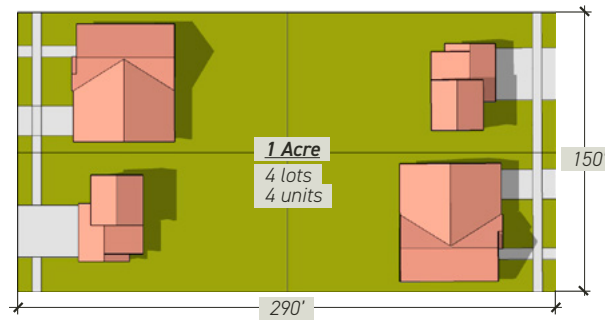
the site at Diamond Drive. Atomic City Transit Bus Route 6 runs along San Ildefonso Rd, with buses running every half hour throughout the morning and evening and every hour through midday.

## DENSITY STUDIES

As part of this report, the project team performed a density analysis to illustrate different types of densities and unit counts. The following is an exercise that illustrates a one-acre lot and how different housing development types fit onto this lot. It also illustrates the number of units that can be accommodated on this parcel. As a footnote, there are a number of configurations that may fit more or less units. For the purpose of this study, our configurations are outlined below.

### Housing types

#### SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL



Low density housing is widely considered to consist of primarily single-family houses. A majority of American households reside in single-family houses. Similar to the national housing type composition, most neighborhoods in Los Alamos County are single-family residential neighborhoods. Depending on the lot size, 4-7 units are typical for single-family residential neighborhoods. For the purpose of this study, we assume between 4 and 8 units an acre for a purely single-family neighborhood.

#### DUPLEX



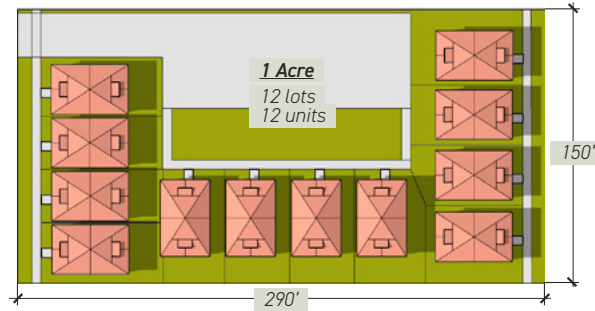
Duplexes generally fit well into low density residential neighborhoods as they outwardly appear as single-family units. They typically have two individual entrances, located within a single structure. These units are often located side by side but may be situated to have one unit on top or behind the other. The duplex housing configuration has the benefit of almost doubling the density of the neighborhood.

## TOWNHOUSE/ROWHOUSE



Townhouses or rowhouses are buildings that contain three or more dwelling units that are connected side by side in a row. These units typically have their own individual entrances, and can appear to be one single building or several distinct structures. Townhouses can be constructed on their own lot or on a shared lot as condominiums.

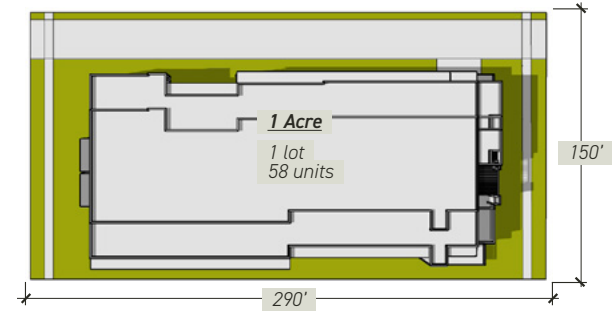
## COTTAGE



Cottage housing is a collection of small houses—usually less than 1,000 square feet in gross floor area. The cottages are arranged around a common open space, or courtyard, with parking screened from public view. In addition to shared outdoor amenities, some developments also share common indoor spaces such as kitchens or gyms.

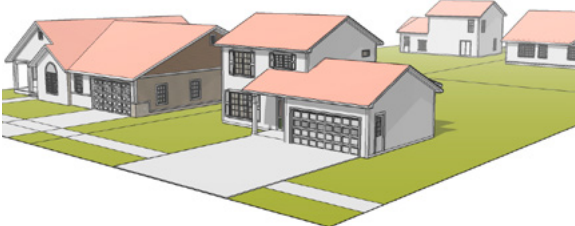
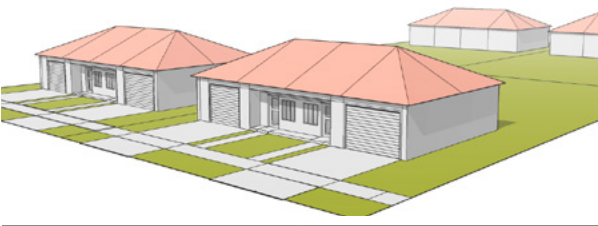


Cottages provide higher density while retaining some of the perks of a single-family home. They can be built either on individual lots or on a single lot, like condominiums. They can have attached garages or shared parking. Cottages have become popular because they can be relatively affordable. Nationwide, cottages have been built for a number of different purposes including housing for seniors and teachers.

## MULTI-FAMILY



Multi-family housing consists of a number of apartments or condominiums located in a building of multiple stories. Building types vary significantly; some structures appear to be similar to homes in their design, while others are distinctly apartment buildings. Shared amenities have become popular with apartment buildings. Many developments provide shared gardens, dog parks, parks, gyms and outdoor patios. Because of the density and number of units gained, apartments can provide affordable housing options.

*Housing Types Tables*

TABLE 2. HOUSING TYPES					
DESCRIPTION		SINGLE-FAMILY		DUPLEX	
<p>The images in this row illustrate an axonometric view of the one-acre development shown on the previous pages.</p>					
<p>The images in this row illustrate precedent images of developments of this type. Most of the examples are from Los Alamos townsite and White Rock.</p>					
<p>Typical densities and stories</p>		<p><b>DENSITIES:</b> 4-8 DU/ACRE</p> <p><b>STORIES:</b> 1-2</p>		<p><b>DENSITIES:</b> 8-12 DU/Acre</p> <p><b>STORIES:</b> 1-2</p>	
<p>Total site area and total developable area that subtracts land that may not be developable or designated as open space. This number is hypothetical at this point and will need to be revisited during the design phase.</p>		<p><b>TOTAL SITE AREA:</b> 30 acre</p> <p><b>TOTAL DEVELOPABLE AREA:</b> 24 acre</p>		<p><b>TOTAL SITE AREA:</b> 30 acre</p> <p><b>TOTAL DEVELOPABLE AREA:</b> 24 acre</p>	
<p>Unit count is obtained for entire site. It is unlikely that the whole site will be developed with one housing type, but rather it will be a mix of housing. Thus the total unit number will be achieved when the unit mix is known. The current number is hypothetical in nature and will need to be revisited during the design phase.</p>		<p><b>NUMBER OF UNITS:</b> 96 - 192</p>		<p><b>NUMBER OF UNITS:</b> 192 - 288</p>	

**TOWNHOUSE**



**DENSITIES:**  
8-15 DU/Acre

**STORIES:**  
1-2

**TOTAL SITE AREA:**  
30 acre

**TOTAL DEVELOPABLE AREA:**  
24 acre

**NUMBER OF UNITS:**  
192 - 360

**COTTAGE**



**DENSITIES:**  
10-15 DU/Acre

**STORIES:**  
1-2

**TOTAL SITE AREA:**  
30 acre

**TOTAL DEVELOPABLE AREA:**  
24 acre

**NUMBER OF UNITS:**  
240 - 360

**MULTI-FAMILY**



**DENSITIES:**  
20-40 DU/Acre

**STORIES:**  
2-3

**TOTAL SITE AREA:**  
30 acre

**TOTAL DEVELOPABLE AREA:**  
24 acre

**NUMBER OF UNITS:**  
480 - 960



Looking east at the North Mesa site

## MARKET ANALYSIS

The Los Alamos Housing Market Needs Analysis, 2019 (Housing Analysis) was commissioned by Los Alamos County to address current and future housing needs. The Housing Analysis estimates the unmet need for rental and for-sale homes in Los Alamos and proposes future actions the County can take to increase the supply of housing. This study used the findings of the Housing Analysis to inform the approach and concepts for the North Mesa site. The following paragraphs summarize the main points of the Housing Analysis assessment.

- The Housing Analysis characterizes the current housing market in Los Alamos, quantifying the current cost and availability of housing for sale and for rent. The average price for a single-family home in Los Alamos was \$460,000 in September 2019. Rental rates for a two-bedroom apartment ranged from \$920 - \$1375 per month. Supply of homes for sale and rental units is tight; less than 40 residential permits for homes and apartments were issued in 2017 and 2018. (p. 24, Los Alamos Housing Market Needs Analysis, 2019).
- The Housing Analysis identified an immediate need for 1,310 units of rental housing and 379 units for homeownership. The need is distributed among all income ranges but is particularly acute for middle- and lower-income households (p. 6 Los Alamos Housing Market Needs Analysis, 2019).

- Through surveys and focus groups, the Housing Analysis found that many residents are dissatisfied with their current housing whether they own or rent. People who currently live outside the County but work in Los Alamos are more likely to consider moving than those that live within the County yet a significant number of people who already live in the County would also consider moving. A large share of every demographic group surveyed expressed dissatisfaction with available housing options. Those that currently live in Los Alamos do not occupy a residence at the appropriate size for their needs (i.e. "right-housing"). There is also a preference towards owning instead of renting and a desire for new or better-quality housing. Much of the housing stock in Los Alamos is 50-60 years old and maintenance has not kept up with the age of these residences.
- While households of all incomes experience the lack of housing options, the ones hardest hit are households with incomes between \$60,000 - \$100,000. Households in this income bracket have fewer housing options in Los Alamos. The housing products that they are likely to afford – townhomes, duplexes and apartments – are in limited supply. Housing products suitable for these households are known as the 'missing middle' housing. Missing middle housing can be defined as a range of multi-unit or clustered housing types compatible in scale with detached single-family homes, but at a higher density to make housing more affordable. Depending on where this missing middle housing is developed, it can take many forms,



including cottage courts, townhomes, duplexes or triplexes and courtyard apartments.

*Missing middle housing is a range of multi-unit or clustered housing types—compatible in scale with detached single-family homes—that help meet the growing demand for walkable urban living.*

- The Housing Analysis recommends a wide range of policy and implementation measures to increase the supply of housing. The ones that are most relevant to the North Mesa site include:
  - > Consider small lots, attached housing products and multi-family housing in infill sites and as a component of the housing mix in future large transfer tracts. (Implementation Table, p. 60)
  - > Coordinate housing planning with LAPS Facility Master Plan (Implementation Table, p. 63)

In conclusion, the Housing Analysis identifies the North Mesa site as having good potential to create missing middle housing and outlines a number of implementation measures that can inform options for development. The analysis determines that 240 units of condos and townhomes could be located at the North Mesa site.



**TABLE 3. NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

INCOME RANGE	MAX. HOUSING PRICE	UNMET NEED/ UNITS	MAX. RENT	UNMET NEED/ UNITS
Under \$20,000	NA	NA	\$ 500	251
\$20,000-\$34,999	\$185,000	106	\$ 875	324
\$35,000-\$49,999	\$265,000	110	\$ 1,250	341
\$50,000-\$74,999	\$396,000	96	\$ 1,875	112
\$75,000-\$99,999	\$400,000+	80	\$ 2,500	48
\$100,000-\$124,999	\$400,000+	51	\$2,500+	126
\$125,000+	\$400,000+	111	\$2,500+	110
<b>Total</b>		<b>554</b>		<b>1,312</b>



Looking slightly northeast at the North Mesa site

# AFFORDABILITY STRATEGIES

## CONTEXT

Affordability was one of the major concerns voiced during the public outreach events organized for this study. Los Alamos County and LAPS are not alone in the struggle to determine how to provide affordable housing and what mechanisms to employ to retain affordability long-term. Communities and school districts all over the country are faced with similar challenges and have adopted varying strategies to increase housing options that work for a majority of middle class households.

Housing affordability challenges in the County are in part linked to the limited housing supply. Challenging terrain reduces the land that can be developed and the predominance of vintage, large lot single-family homes has fueled a housing crisis where few options exist for households looking to rent or purchase smaller, more economical housing. In many respects, Los Alamos can be compared with small resort communities like Aspen, Park City, Breckenridge and areas in California where housing has become so expensive that middle income range households are priced out of the local market. These communities struggle with similar challenges related to a limited housing supply and income gap between high value households and service workers that struggle to find any housing that is affordable. In addition to the scarcity of available land, issues like density, neighborhood opposition and zoning

restrictions exacerbate the challenge of significantly increasing the inventory of attainable housing.

Regionally, communities are taking action and developing strategies to provide affordable housing options. Aspen, for example, has created over 2,900 deed-restricted affordable housing units designated for their seasonal and long-term workforce. More recently, Aspen and Pitkin County have added a number of tiny homes as one way to increase the supply of affordable housing. Qualification for these housing units is determined by the household size, maximum gross income and net assets. Applicants are grouped into five categories with incomes that range from 50% AMI and below to 204% AMI (APCHA Employee Housing Guidelines, 2018). This allows the community to offer housing to earners that traditionally would not be served by low income housing assistance programs that generally only support applicants below 80% of AMI.

### **AREA MEDIAN INCOME**

*The Area Median Income (AMI) is the household income for the median household in a defined area. If you were to compare all the households in a given area and arrange them from lowest to highest income, the median household would be located at the middle point of the group. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) calculates the AMI for each metropolitan area of the country on an annual basis. Eligibility for many federal, state and local housing assistance programs is determined by a household's AMI.*

Park City has taken another approach that requires new commercial developments to provide housing for 20% of their employees. Established in the 2017 Housing Resolution, Park City requires developers to provide housing for 20% of the employees generated by a new development. The City adopted a table that outlines each use and the estimated number of new employees it will generate.

There are a number of mechanisms and strategies that can be used to achieve and maintain long term affordability in a housing project either in full or in part. This study focuses on the most common and likely to be achieved. Some of the strategies are implemented on a policy level with revisions to the zoning code or the adoption of ordinances that encourage or mandate the development of affordable housing projects / units. The Los Alamos Affordable Housing Ordinance No. 676, that was adopted in 2018, constitutes such a policy tool that authorizes the donation or discount of the sale of public lands to support affordable housing. The Canyon Walk Apartments, a 70-unit apartment complex, was the first project that took advantage of the ordinance. Land was donated with the condition that it would successfully receive an allocation of Low Income Housing Tax Credits from the New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority.

Further policy tools are explored in the Los Alamos County Housing Market Needs Assessment to achieve affordability more broadly. Other strategies include deed restrictions, mandates to developers to maintain a percentage of a development affordable and housing management models. This study only describes the strategies that are considered as potential mechanisms suitable for the North Mesa

site and does not outline all other strategies but refers back to the County Housing Market Needs Assessment for details and recommendations.

### **LIMITED-EQUITY HOUSING CO-OPS (LEHCS)**

***Housing co-ops are organizations of residents in multi-family buildings in which each household owns a share of the building.***

Limited-Equity Housing Co-Ops (LEHCs) are business corporations in which residents share ownership of a building. LEHCs are different from conventional housing co-ops as the purchase price and appreciation of a unit are controlled to preserve affordability. Unit owners enjoy most rights connected to home ownership, including the right to pass on property to descendants; however, the right to sell the unit at market price is restricted. This restriction in the resale price ensures that the co-op shares are affordable to the next buyer.

In a cooperative, the purchaser does not receive a deed to their unit but becomes a shareholder in the corporation which owns the deed to the building. The purchaser receives shares and the right to a long-term lease (typically 99 years), known as an occupancy agreement or proprietary lease, to the unit. When shares are sold, the co-op recoups a percentage of the equity earned to subsidize the next shareholder. Because co-op boards usually require members to live in their unit, co-ops are not commonly purchased as investments.

To initiate a LEHC, a corporation is formed that then obtains a blanket mortgage to cover the initial costs of the property and members generally obtain

share loans to finance their own units. Many LEHCs require a subsidy when first created, as with many low-income housing developments. LEHCs are typically run by a board that is responsible for the cooperative, oversight, budget, finances, resales, evictions and committees.

LEHCs are popular because they have been proven to support long-term residential stability and affordability, create a path to homeownership and foster community pride.

### **COMMUNITY LAND TRUST**

***Community land trusts are community-run, nonprofit landholding organizations that sell or rent the units while still owning the land beneath the units, usually with the intent of keeping that housing affordable in perpetuity.***

A Community Land Trust (CLT) is a private, nonprofit organization formed to acquire land to make housing more affordable. Under the CLT, the land is held permanently by the trust, while buildings constructed on the land are leased (typically 99 years) to the occupants. When the homeowner sells, the family earns only a portion of the increased property value. The remainder is kept by the trust, preserving the affordability. By separating the ownership of land and housing, market factors are prevented from causing prices to rise significantly and housing remains more affordable. The sale of buildings is governed by a resale formula which gives the CLT the first right of purchase, allowing it to control the value of the properties and serve to enforce affordability restrictions and income targeting. In some cases, the trust collects a



*The Sawmill Community Land Trust was established in Albuquerque in 1996 and offers affordable homes for sale and rent.*

percentage of the appreciation when an owner sells, providing the funds to subsidize the next buyer.

Both occupants and the entity that owns the land are typically involved in overseeing the trust in the form of a board. Organizers of the CLT can tailor the ownership structure within the buildings by income-targeting, service provision and rent restrictions to adjust to local needs. Buildings may include owner-occupied single-family homes or rental units and buildings. Often, members can get down payment assistance and low-interest mortgages from the trust.

#### **SAWMILL COMMUNITY LAND TRUST**

*The Sawmill Community Land Trust in Albuquerque has operated a CLT on a 34 acres piece of land since 1996. Sawmill provides 93 affordable single-family ownership homes and three affordable rental apartments.*

Starting a CLT requires initial investment and organizing on many levels to fund, develop and manage the CLT. This can be obtained from individuals and institutions, government entities through community development funds, other non-profit organizations and local businesses and banks. Once funding is obtained the target population needs to be identified in order to understand the housing types required and amount of subsidies needed.

#### **HOUSING LOTTERY**

Housing Lotteries are employed in communities that struggle to provide affordable housing. The community develops or facilitates development

of housing and sells or rents those units at a discount to community members who fulfill certain criteria. This strategy requires funding which can be obtained through a percentage of sales tax, real estate taxes and/or in-lieu fees. The community acts as a transaction broker representing both buyer and seller by either building housing directly or having a developer build housing. The housing is then sold to people with full-time jobs in the community and with incomes in a certain range. Due to high demand, the housing is allocated by lottery.

Aspen, CO has developed a Housing Lottery program to help the local workforce achieve homeownership in a market where many are priced out. Employees in Aspen are eligible for the Housing Lottery if they have worked in the County for at least four years. These employees will automatically receive five "chances" in the lottery. For each year that the person continues to work in the County, an additional chance is granted. Therefore, the longer a person has worked in Aspen, the better their chances of getting a home through the lottery. Units offered are priced according to income categories and the difference is subsidized through City funds. For each sale that is made, the Aspen Housing Authority earns two percent of the unit cost. Housing in the lottery remains deed-restricted forever. Eventually a buy-down fund will be created to lower the price of deed-restricted homes that are no longer affordable.

#### **EMPLOYER ASSISTED HOUSING**

In resorts and other areas with rising land and housing prices, housing is limited or unavailable for those in lower paying jobs. To provide housing to this group, some communities and businesses

are creating a linkage between housing and jobs. Starting in the 1980s, employers began to offer housing assistance to their workers as an employee benefit. Employers see multiple benefits that go beyond recruitment, retention, and productivity issues. Employers find that they can realize long-term appreciation of property values while helping their employees save money on housing. One strategy is to purchase housing bonds to provide below-market loans to their workforce. Another strategy is to offer mortgage guarantees to lower or eliminate down payment requirements. Employer assisted housing (EAH) can take many forms but essentially is an employer-provided benefit that helps employees become homeowners. EAH plans are different, and are tailored and customized to meet the needs and circumstances of the local employer and workforce. Most programs fall into one of two categories:

1. *Demand-based programs that enhance the affordability of existing housing to enable employees to obtain housing already available on the market; or*
2. *Supply-based programs that add affordable units to the local housing market through the development of additional units.*

The following pages describe a number of case studies that are divided into three categories. The first category includes teacher housing developments that are developer-driven, the second category includes instances where the district sold or leased land to a developer and the third category includes projects that are run and executed by the school district.

Table 4. outlines the affordability strategies discussed in this section to understand the development steps.

<b>TABLE 4. AFFORDABILITY STRATEGIES</b>				
	<b>COMMUNITY LAND TRUST</b>	<b>LIMITED-EQUITY HOUSING CO-OPS (LEHCS)</b>	<b>HOUSING LOTTERY</b>	<b>EMPLOYER ASSISTED HOUSING</b>
<b>Development Steps</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Determine scope</li> <li>2. Determine CTL Structure (e.g. establish 501(c)(3))</li> <li>3. Form a Board</li> <li>4. Draft organizational documents (articles of incorporation, bylaws etc.)</li> <li>5. Establish execution 5 year plan</li> <li>6. Determine land disposition (CLT acts as developer, CLT purchases land and building, Developer approaches CLT )</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Determine scope</li> <li>2. Determine LEHCS Structure</li> <li>3. Form a Board</li> <li>4. Draft organizational documents (articles of incorporation, bylaws etc.)</li> <li>5. Establish execution 5 year plan</li> <li>6. Determine land disposition (LEHCS acts as developer, LEHCS purchases land and building, Developer approaches LEHCS)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Create housing fund</li> <li>2. Determine Policy Scope</li> <li>3. Draft Policy</li> <li>4. Adopt Policy</li> <li>5. Determine land disposition</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Coordinate with employers</li> <li>2. Determine Policy Scope</li> <li>3. Draft Policy</li> <li>4. Adopt Policy</li> <li>5. Determine land disposition</li> </ol>
<b>Achieving County/LAPS Goals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Maintains long-term affordability</li> <li>-Does not generate reoccurring revenue, money obtained by the CLT generally is reinvested</li> <li>-Depending on funding can(t) target school employees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Maintains long-term affordability</li> <li>-Does not generate reoccurring revenue, money obtained by the LEHCS generally is reinvested</li> <li>-Depending on funding can(t) target school employees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Creates opportunities for affordable housing</li> <li>-Does not generate reoccurring revenue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creates opportunities for affordable housing</li> <li>Does not generate reoccurring revenue</li> <li>Does not target LAPS employees</li> </ul>
<b>Advantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-CLTs are a proven model to create long-term affordability in a project. As they can have rental and ownership units it can also serve to build equity for its residents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-LEHCS are a proven model to create long-term affordability in a project. As they can have rental and ownership units it can also serve to build equity for its residents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The housing lottery can become a route for residents to obtain affordable housing units.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Put burden of new housing on employers that generate the demand</li> </ul>
<b>Disadvantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Complicated process to establish</li> <li>-Requires a dedicated team/board to establish and manage</li> <li>-Once established County/LAPS have no control of the development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Complicated process to establish</li> <li>-Requires a dedicated team/board to establish and manage</li> <li>-Once established County/LAPS have no control of the development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Is not based on most pressing need but chance</li> <li>-Incremental approach, slow to mitigate housing shortage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Would only apply to new development, and burdens developers with additional cost</li> </ul>






*The Sawmill Community Land Trust was established in Albuquerque in 1996 and offers affordable homes for sale and rent.*

Table 5. the existing conditions analysis, the project team generated three draft design concepts. The concepts were informed by the overall project goals and existing physical opportunities and constraints. The three concepts are characterized by a range of densities and development forms.




**TABLE 5. SCHOOL DISTRICT HOUSING PROJECTS EXAMPLES**

**1. DEVELOPER DRIVEN**

	UNION MILL, (BALTIMORE, MD)	OXFORD MILLS, (PHILADELPHIA, PA)	TEACHERS VILLAGE, (NEWARK, NJ)
			
<b>Opened:</b>	2012	2014	2013
<b>Land Owner/Developer/Property Manager:</b>	Seawall Development	D3 Real Estate Development	RBH Group, Calello Agency
<b>Financing:</b>	Historic tax credits, New Market Tax Credit	Historic tax credits, New Markets Tax Credit	New Markets Tax Credit, Qualified School Construction Bonds, Redevelopment Area Bonds, New Jersey Urban Transit Hub Tax Credits, Private Investments
<b>Number of Units:</b>	56	114	204
<b>Unit mix:</b>	1 and 2-bedroom, 600-900 square feet	1 and 2-bedroom	1, 2 and 3-bedroom
<b>Acres:</b>	3.69	-	-
<b>Construction type:</b>	Rehabilitation	Rehabilitation	New construction
<b>Cost:</b>	\$23 million	\$36 million	\$150 million
<b>Limit in Tenure:</b>	None	None	None
<b>Priority Determination:</b>	First come, first served	68 reserved for teachers, 46 market rate	70% of units are reserved for teachers that receive discounted rents, 20% of units are reserved for individuals earning up to 80% of AMI, 10% are rented at market rates
<b>Rent:</b>	Teachers get \$300-600 discount on monthly rent	40% at market rate, 60% reserved for teachers at 25% discount on market rate Commercial Component: 160,000 SF	\$700 to \$1,400
<b>Amenities:</b>	Resource center with copy machines, fitness center, free on-site parking, courtyard, apartment and nonprofit lounges, coffee shop	Courtyard, fitness center, business resource rooms with copiers, resident lounges, on-site parking, café, yoga studio, bike parking, on-site car share, electric car charging stations	Communal spaces, fitness center, parking




## SCHOOL DISTRICT HOUSING PROJECTS EXAMPLES (CONTINUED)

### 2. DISTRICT-LED - LAND SOLD TO DEVELOPER

	TEACHERS VILLAGE (CHICAGO, IL)	GROUND LEASE SAGE PARK APARTMENTS (LOS ANGELES, CA)	SELMA COMMUNITY HOUSING (LOS ANGELES, CA)
			
<b>Opened:</b>	TBD	2015	2016
<b>Land Owner/Developer</b>	IFF/ RBH Group	99-year Ground Lease / BRIDGE Housing	66- year Ground Lease / Abode Communities
<b>Financing:</b>	New Markets Tax Credits	Low Income Housing Tax Credits	Low Income Housing Tax Credits
<b>Number of Units:</b>	116	156	66
<b>Unit mix:</b>	84 for rent units, 30 market rate loft apartments	1, 2 and 3-bedroom	1, 2 and 3-bedroom
<b>Acres:</b>	2.37	3.5	-
<b>Construction type:</b>	Rehabilitation	New construction	New construction
<b>Cost:</b>	-	\$28 million	\$32.9
<b>Limit in Tenure:</b>	-	-	-
<b>Priority Determination:</b>	20 % will be reserved as affordable, 30% as middle-income, and 50 % market rate	30-60% AMI. Applicants enter a lottery, which gives preference to school district employees	30-60% AMI; school district employees have priority in 50% of units
<b>Rent:</b>	-	\$425 to \$1,222 depending on income, household and apartment size	-
<b>Amenities:</b>	Nonprofit office/flex space and a 10,000 square foot "community as campus" space	4,000 ft. indoor meeting space, 16,000 sf. outdoor patio and garden areas, and community room	Resident resource center, computer lab, laundry facilities, central courtyard with a tot lot, and a landscaped rooftop terrace

SCHOOL DISTRICT HOUSING PROJECTS EXAMPLES (CONTINUED)

3. DISTRICT-LED – DISTRICT-RUN

	ROARING FORK, CO	COLLEGE VISTA (SAN MATEO, CA)	CASA DEL MAESTRO (SANTA CLARA, CA)
			
<b>Opened:</b>	TBD (under construction)	2005	Phase I – 2002, Phase II – 2009
<b>Land Owner/Developer</b>	Roaring Fork School District / District bought new constructed housing units	San Mateo County Community College District / Education Housing Partners, LLC, an affiliate of Thompson   Dorfman	Santa Clara Unified School District / Thompson   Dorfman Partners, Education Housing
<b>Financing:</b>	\$15 million in bond dollars	School district financed with Certificates of Participation	School district financed with Certificates of Participation
<b>Number of Units:</b>	61	44	70
<b>Unit mix:</b>	1, 2 and 3-bedroom	1, 2 and 3-bedroom	1 and 2-bedroom
<b>Acres:</b>	-	2.75	3.5
<b>Construction type:</b>	New construction	New construction	New construction
<b>Cost:</b>	-	\$9.3 million	\$6 million
<b>Limit in Tenure:</b>	5 years	7 years	7 years
<b>Priority Determination:</b>	Full-time school district employees apply through lottery system	45% of units are set aside for faculty and 55% are set aside for classified district employees	First come, first served - School district employees for less than 10 years, household income under \$136,000
<b>Rent:</b>	Rents are capped at 26-30 % of household income	\$800-1,200	60% market rent
<b>Amenities:</b>	-	Clubhouse	Clubhouse

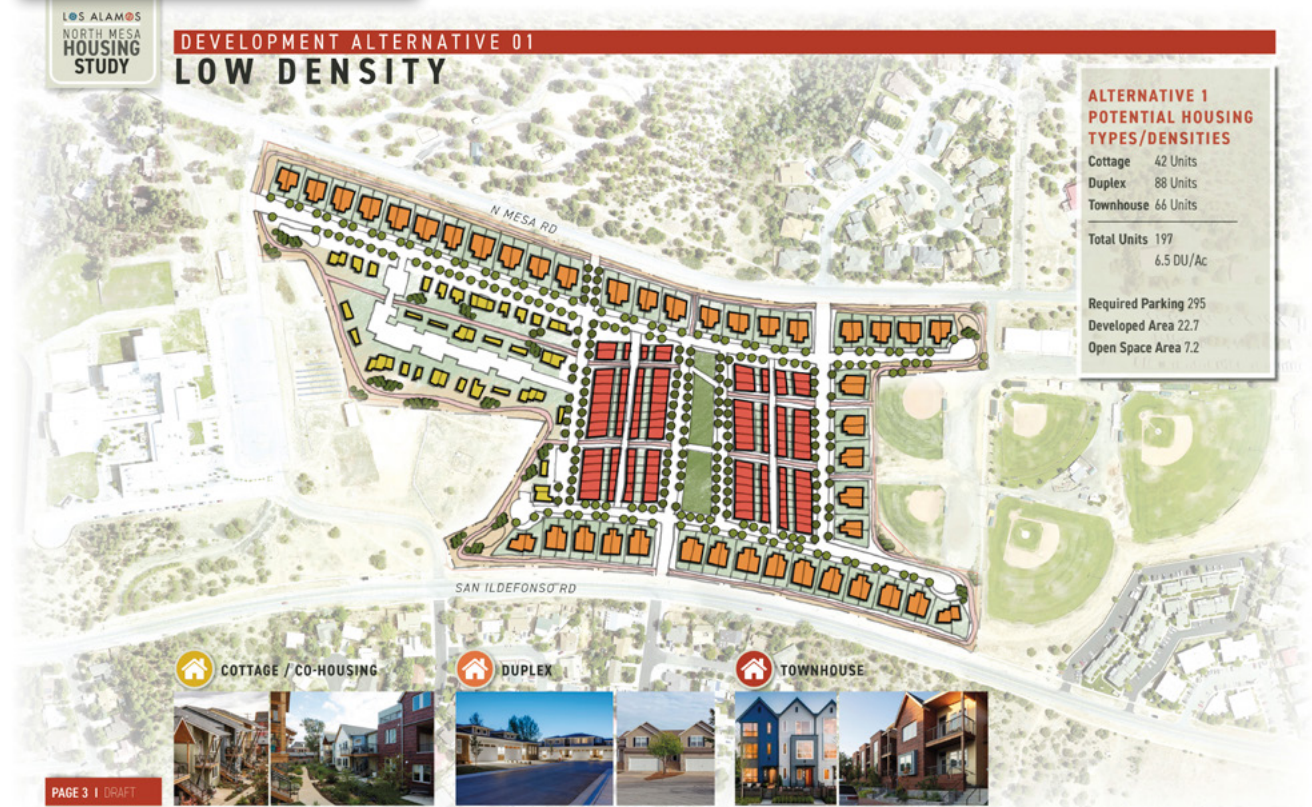




# 5. DRAFT CONCEPTS

Following the existing conditions analysis, the project team generated three draft design concepts. The concepts were informed by the overall project goals and existing physical opportunities and constraints. The three concepts are characterized by a range of densities and development forms.

**FIGURE 7. DRAFT CONCEPT 1**



## PROJECT TEAM CONCEPT 1:

Concept one is characterized by medium density development with a unit mix of duplex and townhouses. Its grid pattern is modeled after a more traditional development framework with a central open space feature and no direct through access to avoid increased traffic traveling through the site. Two access points are located on North Mesa Rd and one on San Ildefonso Rd and Hawk

Dr with the main access off of San Ildefonso Rd. Trails are provided along the perimeter of the site and connect throughout the site. Lower density housing is located at the periphery of the site to create a transition to the existing single-family neighborhoods, with a cottage development adjacent to the middle school to provide single family housing for school district employees. This development would achieve a totla of 197 units.

**FIGURE 8. DRAFT CONCEPT 2**



**PROJECT TEAM CONCEPT 2:**

The second concept is characterized by higher density development with townhouses and multi-family units. Its framework is organized around a linear park that creates a visual and physical connection from middle school to ballfields. A north-south road connects San Ildefonso Rd and North Mesa Rd directly. Two access points are provided on North Mesa Rd and one off of San Ildefonso

Rd. Trails are provided along the perimeter of the site and connect throughout the site. Lower density housing is located at the periphery of the site to create a transition to the existing single-family neighborhoods, while the multi-family units are concentrated at the interior of the site. This development would achieve an excess of 424 units.

**FIGURE 9. DRAFT CONCEPT 1**



is located at the center of the site with four multi-family buildings. On the west side, townhouses and cottages border the middle school site. Open space is utilized as a buffer to established neighborhoods. This development would achieve an excess of 278 units.

## WORKSHOP & REVISED DRAFT CONCEPTS

In early December 2019, Los Alamos County held a Design Workshop for the Steering Committee to generate ideas for design concepts for the North Mesa site. During this Workshop, participants split up into three groups, to discuss the draft concepts prepared by the project team. Each group revised one of the concepts as illustrated below and summarized its strengths and weaknesses.

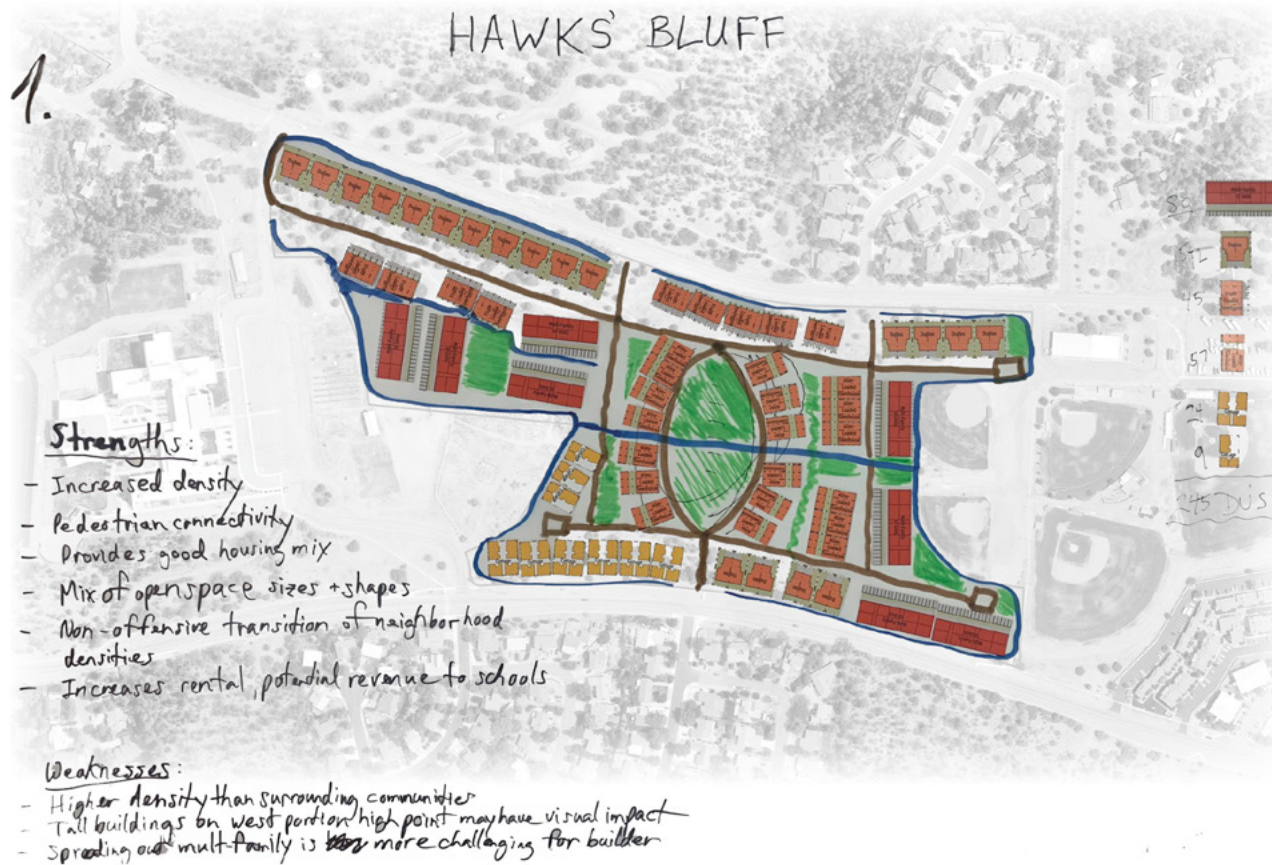
### PROJECT TEAM CONCEPT 3

Concept three is characterized by two distinct development nodes. The east development node is organized around a central plaza/community space to create a town center-like activity node. The west development node is organized around a park feature

to create a more suburban character. There is no direct through access to avoid increased traffic going through the site. Three access points are located on North Mesa Rd and one off of San Ildefonso Rd.

Trails are provided along the perimeter of the site and connect throughout the site. Higher density

**FIGURE 10. REVISED CONCEPT 1**



**STRENGTHS**

- Increases density
- Pedestrian connectivity
- Provides good housing mix
- Mix of open space sizes and shapes
- Non-offensive transition of neighborhood densities
- Increases rental, potential revenue to schools

**WEAKNESSES**

- Higher density than surrounding communities
- Tall buildings on west portion which may have a negative visual impact
- Spreading out multi-family is more challenging for builder

**REVISED CONCEPT 1**

The revised concept organizes the development around a football-shaped greenspace at the center of the development. The general alignment of the road network was maintained. Higher density multi-family housing is located along the western

boundary in close proximity to the school as well as at the eastern boundary adjacent to the ballfields. This concept increases the total number of units from 197 units to 245 total units. Participants identified the following as the strengths and weaknesses of this concept:

**FIGURE 11. REVISED CONCEPT 2**



**STRENGTHS**

- Keeps existing trails and more dense tree areas
- Works with topography with higher density in lower elevations
- Provides buffer areas to existing neighborhoods
- Removes blighted solar panels area
- Provides a linear connection from school to ball fields
- Communal play areas close to school are good for school employees and families with kids
- No straight through access for vehicles

**WEAKNESSES**

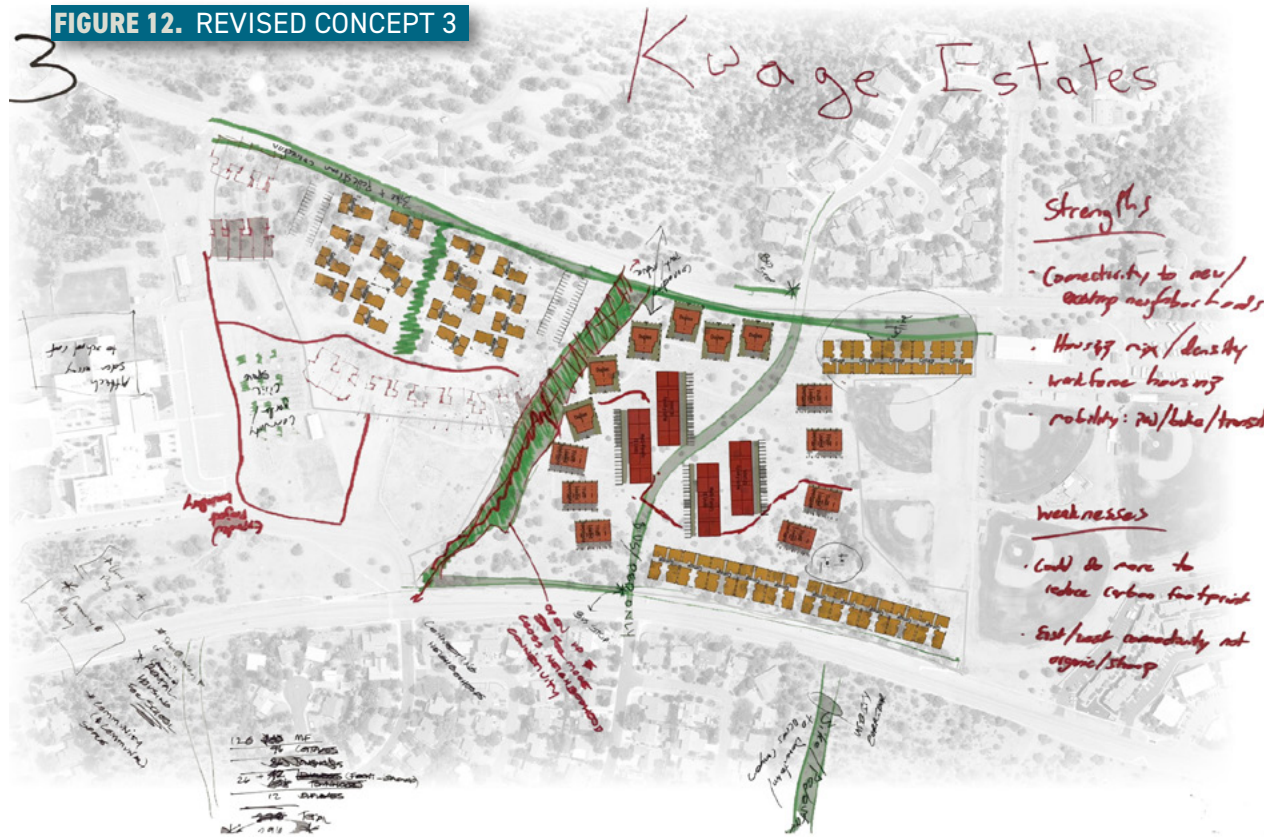
- Radio tower cannot be removed
- Multi-family proximity to ball fields

**REVISED CONCEPT 2**

The revised concept discards the original alignment of the roads and utilizes the existing informal trail network as an organizing feature. The existing growths of trees and vegetation in the east and west are protected and an additional green space located in a centralized location is added. Higher density development is located adjacent to the ballfields signifying the lowest point of the site. Lower density

development is located closer to the school. There is no direct through access apart from one road running through the eastern portion of the site. This concept also incorporates the area where the solar panel and telecommunications tower land are located. Density is increased from 424 to 496 total units. Participants identified the following as the strengths and weaknesses of this concept:

**FIGURE 12. REVISED CONCEPT 3**



**REVISED CONCEPT 3**

The revised concept maintains the basic framework of the original design. It utilizes a central corridor running north-south as a wildlife corridor and through access for pedestrian and bicyclist. The cottage development in the western portion of the site is expanded to increase the number of micro-units for school district employees or to serve as senior housing. This concept also incorporates the

area where the solar panels are located to make space for a community garden.

The overall design makes development as pedestrian-focused as possible with little consideration for parking requirements. Density is increased from 278 to 296 total units.

**STRENGTHS**

- Connectivity to new/existing neighborhoods
- Good housing mix/density
- Workforce housing is considered with cottages/co-housing next to school
- Multi-modal mobility is considered with pedestrian/bike/transit accommodations

**WEAKNESSES**

- Could do more to reduce carbon footprint
- East/west connectivity is not included

From the three revised design concepts a list of elements was identified. This list to inform and guide a new design concept.

**PREFERRED DESIGN ELEMENT LIST**

- Provides lower density closer to the school which could serve as senior housing or housing for school employees
- Coordinate building height/density with topography to maintain view corridors
- Focus higher density product in southeast portion of site, close to existing multi-family housing
- Trails that connect various elements, especially the school and ballfields
- Open space dispersed throughout
- Preserve existing mature stands of trees in the northwest and southeast corners
- Consider overall increased density
- Consider expanding the boundaries to include site of solar panels

The project team used the list of elements as a basis to create the recommended design concept.

# 6. FINAL STUDY CONCEPT

## GENERAL DENSITY CONSIDERATION

The revised design concept builds upon the work generated at the design workshop and the input from public meetings. Given that the driving motivation for the study was to address the housing shortage in the County, the design concept focuses on a framework that would result in creating housing options for the 'missing middle.' This generally means that the density of housing should be higher than typical single-family detached neighborhoods, more in the range of 8-12 dwelling units per acre, versus the 5-7 dwelling units per acre that typify most single-family detached developments. The final design concept, the Concept Design Framework, does not go into identifying lot configurations or building footprints but is kept at a land use level to allow flexibility for implementing overall project goals. This next section outlines a Concept Design Framework that shows overall site access, circulation and intensity of development. It is intended to provide guidance for more detailed site development plans that would be required if the project moves forward.

**FIGURE 13. CONCEPTUAL PROGRAMMING**



## CONCEPTUAL PROGRAMMING

The recommended site design is informed by the list of elements identified during the workshop, the existing condition discussion, and the general consideration of providing housing affordable to the Los Alamos workforce. The bubble diagram outlines the general site framework with the trunk road infrastructure, residential areas and open space areas. As identified during the workshop, the areas of the existing growths of trees and vegetation in

the southeast and northwest corners should be maintained. This serves several purposes: it creates a natural buffer to the existing neighborhoods, it can be utilized as drainage areas and it can be used for recreational purposes. Four areas are identified for residential development with one opportunity area to the west located where the existing solar panels are installed. The blue arrows identify connections between the open space to the north and the existing neighborhoods to the south. This corridor serves the pedestrian and bicycle traffic and wildlife. The other corridor runs east-west and connects the ballfields with the middle school.



**FIGURE 14. FINAL STUDY CONCEPT**



## FINAL STUDY CONCEPT

### Trails and Open Space

The final study concept proposes a perimeter trail and open space elements that surround the site and mitigate the potential impacts of the development on the adjacent neighborhoods. Trails circulate throughout the site to allow connectivity within the

residential areas and to external sites specifically between the middle school and the ballfields. The existing growths of trees and vegetation in the southeast and northwest are maintained and serve as an open space feature. A neighborhood-scale park is located at the center of the site.

### Access and Connectivity

The site is accessed through two access points off of North Mesa Rd and one off of San Ildefonso Rd. Traffic is directed around the central part from north-south and east-west which eliminates through traffic. Trails parallel one side of the road going north to south and along portions of the east to west running road. The emphasis of this site concept is on enhancing the pedestrian experience and creating a walkable environment while aiming to eliminate vehicle traffic throughout.

### Densities

Densities within this design concept are proposed to transition from lower densities towards the middle school and higher densities on the east side. In order to achieve affordability, densities here should range between 7-12 dwelling units per acre. This would translate to approximately 210-360 new apartments, townhomes and cottages at full build-out.

# 7. RECOMMENDATION & IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The following section outlines recommended strategies for the feasibility of housing at the North Mesa site. The recommendations are focused on residential uses only, which is in line with the tasks of the initial project scope. During the public outreach, other uses for the site were discussed, however, the project team did not provide strategies or consideration for those as this was not part of the initial scope.

This study recommends that Los Alamos County and the Los Alamos Public School District formally adopt a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to agree on how to structure a partnership to begin the multi-step process of transforming vacant land into a new neighborhood. Given the fact that neither LAPS nor the County have the expertise to undertake a development of this nature, this study recommends that a master development team, with the financial, legal, design and construction expertise required, is selected early in the process to undertake the more detailed planning, design and development work that is needed to successfully develop the site.

The next section outlines a series of recommended actions that the County and LAPS can undertake to move in a deliberate and transparent manner towards implementation of project goals.

LAPS first needs to determine its level of active participation in the overall development, whether it wants to take on the role of being a developer or whether it wants to sell the land with certain provisions, such as the creation of housing for district employees. The question of creating housing geared towards school district employees is one part of a larger land disposition strategy for the entire 30 acres. LAPS needs to articulate an overall strategy that balances the potential returns associated with developing the property with the risks that are part of every development process. The flowchart below broadly outlines different pathways for LAPS and the steps associated with each route.

Table 6. identifies eight major steps that are recommended in order to move this project forward. The steps are described in more detail in the following pages.

TABLE 6. DEVELOPMENT STEPS		
STEPS		TYPE
STEP 1		Memorandum of Understanding
↓		
STEP 2		Determine Land Disposition Strategy
↓		
STEP 3		Select An Affordability Strategy
↓		
STEP 4		Select Development Partner
↓		
STEP 5		Initiate Master Plan/Rezoning/ Subdivision Process
↓		
STEP 6		Site Plan
↓		
STEP 7		Extension of Infrastructure
↓		
STEP 8		Construction of Housing

## STEP 1. FORMALLY ADOPT A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH THE COUNTY

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) would articulate the respective roles of the County and LAPS in pursuing development of the 30-acre site owned by LAPS. The MOU can help to guide the decision-making process going forward, articulating long term goals and objectives.

The MOU should define overall goals, including the following:

- *Targets for the percentage of housing that is obtainable for the "missing middle"*
- *Housing that may be specifically designated for LAPS teachers and staff*
- *Targets for sustainability, including the goal of creating a net zero energy development*
- *Create recurring revenue for LAPS*
- *Define roles and responsibilities for LAPS and for the County. The County should take the lead in managing the development process. It knows how to structure requests for proposals for land development and the logistics of extending infrastructure for a project of this nature. The County can also take advantage of the Affordable Housing Ordinance to structure agreements with a master developer. LAPS should be consulted*

*and be part of the negotiations at each step to ensure that its goals for the project, particularly creating housing for its teachers and staff, are addressed. The MOU should outline how decisions will be made and procedures for resolving disagreements. This likely will include a Steering Committee composed of LAPS and County representatives. This Steering Committee would be the organizing entity that could initiate the sequence of actions outlined below.*

- *The MOU should be formally adopted by the LAPS Board and the Los Alamos County Council.*

### **Timeframe for Finalizing an MOU:**

4 Months



## STEP 2. DETERMINE THE LAND DISPOSITION STRATEGY

LAPS and the County should determine an overall land disposition strategy that aligns with the project objectives and each organization’s long-term goals. The recommendation of this study is to sell most if not all of the land, to a development partner at the appropriate time in the development process. This could be facilitated under the Affordable Housing Ordinance which enables the County to donate or discount land in exchange for a commitment to create housing that is affordable.

Table 7. summarizes the range of potential approaches for either retaining ownership of the land, conducting a land swap or allowing it to be sold. While the concept of a long term lease would enable LAPS to retain ownership, it likely would limit the pool of potential development partners, make financing more challenging and lower the overall returns to LAPS. It is possible that LAPS could retain a portion of the land that would be dedicated to housing specifically targeted for LAPS teachers and staff. A land swap, where LAPS obtains another comparable parcel of land in exchange for all or a portion of the North Mesa land is also a possibility but this requires multiple steps and the availability of other land suitable for housing. In general, fee simple ownership of the land aligns with how projects get financed and how the overall real estate market, including homeowners, builders and developers are accustomed to working. The terms and timing of any sales can be articulated

in a development agreement with the selected development partner.

### Timeframe for Determining a Land Disposition Strategy:

3 Months

**TABLE 7. LAND DISPOSITION STRATEGIES**

STRATEGY	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES	COMMENTS	RECOMMENDATION
<b>Sell Land/Developer Builds Housing</b>	-Lowest Risk -Aligned with Market Expectations	-Less Control of Outcome -No recurring revenues	-Path of least resistance -Quickest path to implementation	-Pursue strategy to solicit an RFP for a master developer
<b>Lease Land/ Developer Builds Housing</b>	-Potential Appreciation of Land Asset -Retain Land Ownership	-Harder to Finance -Smaller Pool of Potential Developers	-Feasible but need to find the right development partner	-Consider retaining a portion of site to develop as teacherage on leased land
<b>District Builds/Owns Housing Development</b>	-More Control -Potential Appreciation of Asset	-More Risk/Exposure -Not core skillset of LAPS	-Would need to identify a third party with development expertise	-Potential to do a part of the parcel with this. Sell 25 acres: retain 5 acres
<b>Land Swap W/County Or Private Party</b>	-Potential to swap land and have 30 acres developed	-Lack of suitable land for exchange. -Length/complexity of transaction	-Land exchanges take considerable time to execute	-Quickly assess potential and decide whether or not to pursue.
<b>Leave Undeveloped</b>	-No impact to the surrounding communities	-Does nothing to address housing crises	-Policy decision for LAPS and County	-Not recommended by this study

The study recommends to sale the land or a portion to a suitable developer. The subsequent development agreement and deed restrictions will ensure that the affordability goals as well as the eligibility criteria are achieved and implemented. This recommendation is based on the fact that

LAPS has limited experience with land/housing development and management. The mission of LAPS should remain focused on educating students, not managing apartments.

### STEP 3. SELECT A AFFORDABILITY STRATEGY

In close coordination with the deliberations on the land disposition strategies LAPS and the County should identify the most effective strategies for creating and maintaining affordable housing. There are a number of mechanisms and strategies that can be used to achieve and maintain long term affordability in a housing project either in full or in part. Some strategies, such as creating a community land trust, may seem attractive but are not feasible due to the timeframe and increased costs associated with long term oversight. This study focuses on the strategies that have the highest potential to be implemented in a timely and effective manner. They are informed by the success of similar projects in comparable towns, as documented in the prior section of this report. They need to meet the following criteria:

- *Timeframe to move forward. A good program that can be enacted in a year is better than an ideal program that will take five years*
- *Minimize need to expand County/LAPS role in long term management; leverage existing local capacity/non profit expertise in housing*
- *Ability to maintain affordability over time, as properties are sold or leased to different parties*
- *Compatibility with market mechanisms, e.g. ability for property to be financed and sold*

To create and maintain access to affordable housing, the following strategies are recommended:

- *Focus more on for-sale housing that is obtainable to the “missing middle.” While some for-rent product may be part of the overall development mix, for-sale housing is more suitable given the surrounding context of predominantly single family detached neighborhoods*
- *Identify target goals for housing dedicated to LAPS employees. This report recommends a baseline of 50 homes, or a minimum of 25% of the overall development, that are specifically targeted for LAPS staff/teachers*
- *Use a lottery to create a transparent and equitable process that enables LAPS employees to s have equal chances of accessing the housing*
- *•Explore partnership with a housing nonprofit to assist in development and long term oversight of affordability*
- *Build affordability into resale provisions to ensure longer term access to obtainable housing*
- *These strategies should be integrated into the Memorandum of Understanding between the County and LAPS and carried through as part of the process for evaluating development partners/site development plans.*



*the Sterling in downtown Albuquerque, a affordable housing development in an urban setting.*

## STEP 4. SELECT A DEVELOPMENT PARTNER

On a parallel track with determining the land disposition and affordability strategies, LAPS and the County should conduct a search for the appropriate development entity with which to team to move the project forward. The development entity should have the capacity and expertise to partner with LAPS and the County and carry the project through to vertical construction. This may be a master developer who in turn teams with more specialized builders that focus on a particular building type. A development agreement that spells out responsibilities, phasing, profit-sharing and contractual obligations will help articulate the path forward. The development agreement should also spell out the affordability production goals, by product, tenure and management type. The table below outlines the range of options for the type and legal structure of development entities. The recommendation of this study is to find a development partner with a good track record of developing attainable housing that aligns well with the preferred concept for housing as described in this study.

### Timeframe for Selecting a Development Partner:

9 Months

The total timeframe for completing this sequence of steps is difficult to predict with any precision but likely would be a minimum of two years to get to the point where actual construction could begin on the site. Some of the four steps outlined above could

STRATEGY	SELECT TRADITIONAL MASTER DEVELOPER	ESTABLISH A COMMUNITY LAND TRUST	LAPS AS DEVELOPER: BUILD/OWN HOUSING DEVELOPMENT
<b>Potential to achieve County/LAPS Project Goals</b>	- Shifts risk away from LAPS/County to master developer. - Creates revenue at time of sale. - Likely to result in mix of housing types/price ranges	- Ensures long term affordability - Allows County and LAPS to retain measure of control. - Prioritizes affordable/obtainable housing	- Creates long-term affordable housing - Can determine the number of units set aside for LAPS employees
<b>Timeframe</b>	- Quickest to implementation – aligns with market mechanisms	- Development/negotiation to create a CLT will require more time	- Slow to implement as LAPS has little experience developers
<b>Market Feasibility</b>	- Most feasible option as the process is driven by a developer that guides each decision by what the market can support	- Smaller pool of potential development entities. - County has completed prior projects with CLT's	- Feasible only if County/LAPS can hire a developer consultant that works on a fee basis
<b>Advantages</b>	- Most feasible and least complicated option. The developer will plan, construct and manage the project.	- Retain long term ownership - Potential to generate recurring revenue	- This option will allow the County/LAPS to retain full control - Will generate recurring income
<b>Disadvantages</b>	- No recurring revenue - Less control over outcome	- Likely lower returns on project due to ownership structure. - Atypical land arrangement – less attractive to homeowners	- Complicated and time-consuming to develop, construct and manage
	★★★★★	★★★	★★

overlap so that the total estimated time could be shorter than the four timeframes combined.

## STEP 5-8. INITIATE MASTER PLAN/LAND REZONING/SUBDIVISION PROCESS

With a developer partner committed to working with LAPS and the County, the development team can move through the regulatory steps needed to make development possible. This includes any additional market analysis to identify the specific housing types most in demand, a master development plan, rezoning, subdivision and specific site development plans. Throughout this process, the development team will need to generate iterative proforma analyses to ensure that the development remains viable. Each of these actions will include some form of public notice, hearings and provision for public input, as required and spelled out in the County's land development process.

The site can be configured in multiple ways to create housing that aligns with the 'missing middle.' This generally means that the density of housing should be higher than typical single-family detached neighborhoods that average 5-7 homes per acre. But given the proximity to existing neighborhoods with predominantly lower density, single family detached housing, this study recommends that a development program of medium density, in the range of 7-12 dwelling units per acre, with a majority of homes that are owned versus for-rent product. Figure 16. illustrates some product types that are suitable for the North Mesa site.

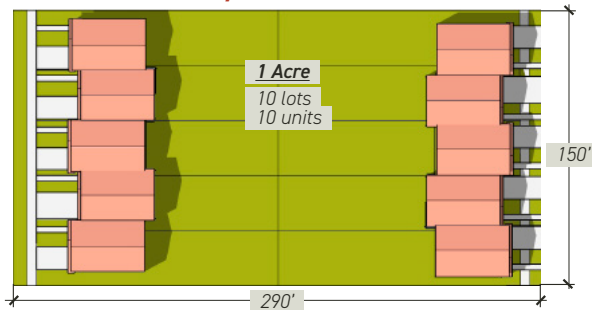
Over the 30-acre site, this would create somewhere in the range of 210-360 new homes at full build

**FIGURE 16. DEVELOPMENT TYPES**

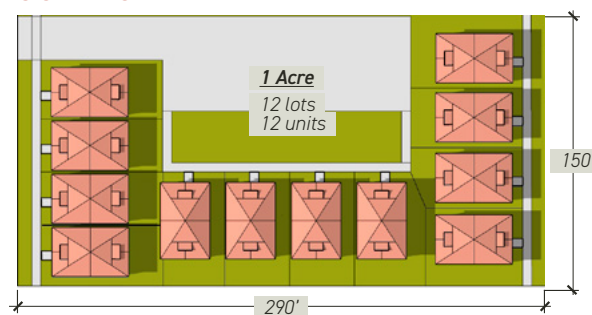
### DUPLEX



### TOWNHOUSE / ROWHOUSE



### COTTAGE



out. The concept design framework proposes a perimeter trail, a central neighborhood-scale park and preservation of existing, mature stands of trees in the northwest and southeast corners of the site. It proposes that the general density of housing transitions from lower densities towards the middle school to higher densities on the east side.

### **Timeframe for Master Plan, Rezoning and Subdivision Process: 12-18 Months**

The total timeframe for completing this sequence of steps is difficult to predict with any precision but likely would be a minimum of two years to get to the point where actual construction could begin on the site. Some of the four steps outlined above could overlap so that the total estimated time could be shorter than the four timeframes combined.



## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to determine the feasibility of developing housing on the North Mesa site. The short answer is that the site is feasible to develop. While there are valid concerns about the impacts on adjoining neighborhoods and traffic, these are issues that can be studied in more detail prior to approval of a site development plan.

There are three critical “legs” for a successful development strategy:

1. *Los Alamos Public Schools. LAPS controls the property and needs to make the strategic decision to allow this land to be developed for housing. It can help guide the process with the goal of creating quality housing that is accessible to its teachers and staff, while creating a neighborhood that is compatible with the operations of the adjacent middle school.*

2. *Los Alamos County. With technical expertise in planning and infrastructure development, the County can help facilitate a development of this scale. It has experience in land disposition, soliciting requests for proposals, development agreements, and tools for affordable housing.*

3. *The Development Community. A development of this scale requires a nuanced understanding of the real estate/housing market and the ability to deliver housing products that match consumer preference and budget. It requires the financial backing and capacity to invest considerable sums of money well in advance of potential returns. Los Alamos and the region in general has a limited number of development entities with the design, planning, engineering, and construction expertise to successfully create a new neighborhood of this scale on the North Mesa. The selection of the right development partner to complete the three legged stool is critical to the implementation of this project.*

Given the immediate need for new housing in the County and the lack of readily developable sites, the North Mesa site could help alleviate the housing shortage and create a good neighborhood that is compatible with the surrounding residential areas. The North Mesa site could become a model development for providing housing that aligns with the need of the “missing middle” and create a sustainable community that is attractive, efficient and resilient. LAPS needs to determine if they are committed to moving forward with the project; this is a decision that has long-term implications for the School District and for the County as a whole. A new neighborhood with provisions for housing accessible to the school district employees could be an enduring success story for the entire community.



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# 8. APPENDICES

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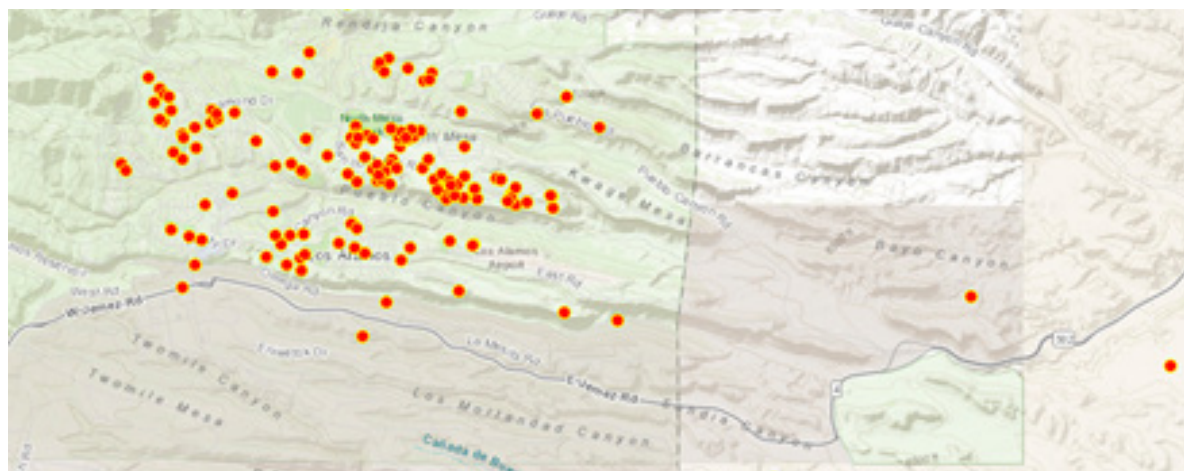
## Survey Results

At the beginning of the project the project team created a survey to supplement the public outreach effort. The survey was designed to ask stakeholders about what kinds of housing and community amenities they thought were most suitable for the site. A total of 264 stakeholders participated in the survey. Most of the survey participants were employed by LANL, followed by retirees and public and private sector employees, as illustrated in Figure 29.

Spatially, survey respondents were well distributed across the County, as illustrated in Figure 27 and 28.

In the Los Alamos Townsite, 53% of participants reported to be in the age range between 18 to 44, 35% from 44 to 64 years old, and 11% from 65 to 85 years old. All participants reported to be living in a single-family home and all participants selected parks as the most important amenity to live in close proximity to. All participants also selected affordable housing as the housing type most needed in Los Alamos.

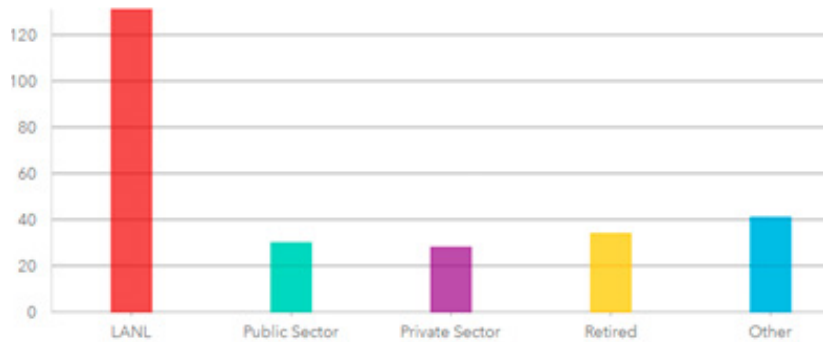
**FIGURE 17. SURVEY PARTICIPANTS LOCATION IN LOS ALAMOS TOWNSITE**



**FIGURE 18. SURVEY PARTICIPANTS LOCATION IN WHITE ROCK**

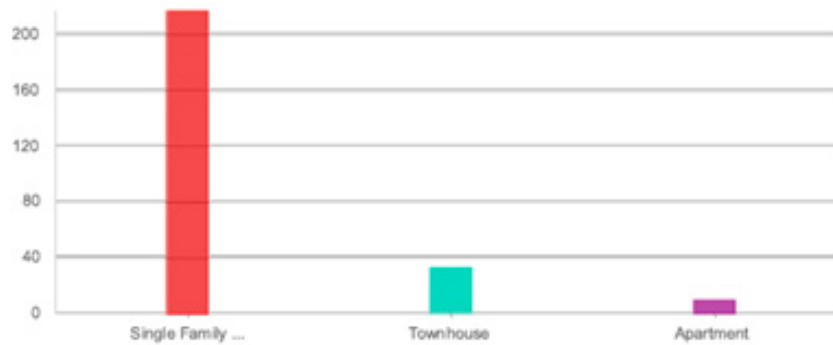


**FIGURE 19. SURVEY PARTICIPANTS PLACE OF WORK**



When asked what type of housing people would choose when looking for a place to live in Los Alamos, 81% chose a single-family home, 12% chose townhouses and only 3% chose apartments as illustrated in Figure 5.

**FIGURE 20. DEVELOPMENT TYPE PREFERRED BY PARTICIPANTS**



When asked which development participants would not like to be located next to, participants overwhelmingly reported apartments to be the least desirable neighbor as shown in Figure 6.

**FIGURE 21. LEAST PREFERRED DEVELOPMENT TYPE**



When asked which development participants would build if constructing a new project in Los Alamos, the responses were less unanimous, with 48% choosing single family residential, 35% choosing townhouses and 15% choosing apartments as shown in Figure 7.

**FIGURE 22. DEVELOPMENT TYPE PARTICIPANTS WOULD CONSTRUCT**

