

# PAGOSA SPRINGS VISION 2050

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Leadership Discussion Summary Report  
March 2025



## Executive Summary

This document outlines the results of the goal setting sessions focused on developing a 25-year vision for the Town of Pagosa Springs. The sessions took place over two days with the Town Council and the Town Departmental leadership working to define the vision and priority goals for the town's future. Intentional input and deliberate, robust thought were critical to the creation of the vision statement. The Town Council has developed a Vision Statement and Priority Goals that will work towards Vision 2050.



## Priority Goals for Vision 2050

- **We have a cultural infrastructure with inviting spaces**
  - There are spaces and programs to explore a variety of interests

- **Our downtown is the center of gravity**

- **Residents are involved in the Town's activities and direction**

- **We have the necessary infrastructure: people, recreation, technology, utilities**
  - We seek favorable partnerships
  - We have protections for our water resources and nature
  - Our town is easy to navigate as a pedestrian

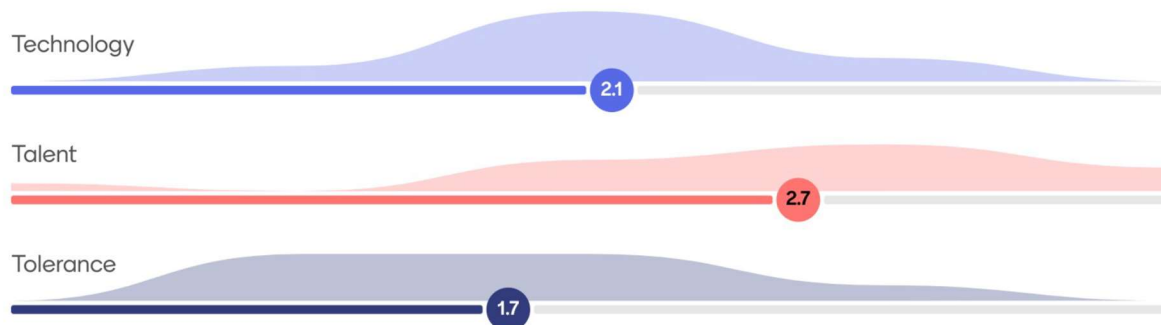
- **Our growth is planned, sustainable, and beneficial to our residents**
  - We have a diverse economy
  - There is land preserved for the future

### Process

The Town of Pagosa Springs employed a third-party expert to facilitate the process. The consultant used an agile planning process to develop the vision statement and priority goals. The input for this document was internally focused to capture the essential building blocks for a plan that could help guide the Town's future and clearly communicate the direction of the Town for the organization, the residents and the community. Components included one-on-one meetings with each of the Town Council Members and each of the Town's Department Heads. Following those meetings, information was collected that was used in an intensive collaboration with all of those who were interviewed. Equipped with information and input from the Town's Department Heads, the Town Council spent an additional half-day developing the Vision and Priority Goals.

## Technology, Talent and Tolerance

As a group, they explored the premise of Richard Florida's "Rise of the Creative Class" where the categories of technology, tolerance and talent are essential in creating a place that attracts people to Pagosa Springs who will create jobs and contribute to a prosperous economy. The group scored Pagosa Springs based on their experiences.



As a result of this scoring and discussion, the category of Talent scored the highest. Pagosa Springs is fortunate to have many residents who bring skills and life experiences to the Town. A very descriptive comment was made that "we outpunch our size." Pagosa Springs' talent has yet to be fully tapped but the potential of realizing that talent in the forms of career training, volunteering and connecting the second-home residents' expertise with the town needs makes this the highest scoring of the three categories. The second highest score was Technology. Pagosa Springs is on the brink of improving technology with the broadband fiber ring installation so everyone expects that this score will increase. The lowest scoring of the three categories was Tolerance. The discussion centered around two areas: racial/ethnic and economic. It was felt that Pagosa Springs could help enhance racial and ethnic understanding through education and communication about the importance of understanding the interdependency of those living in Pagosa Springs. In regards to economic tolerance, it was felt that more opportunities to engage and connect those with economic resources would benefit the entire community. There is a large amount of wealth from the second-home residents that benefits Pagosa Springs but it is largely disconnected from the part of the population of Pagosa Springs who are required to work multiple jobs in order to afford housing and other living expenses. There is also some discord with the large tourism industry that also economically benefits the community.

## Community Challenges

During the individual interviews, key challenges were identified. This chart represents a summary of the challenges facing Pagosa Springs.



## Community Strengths



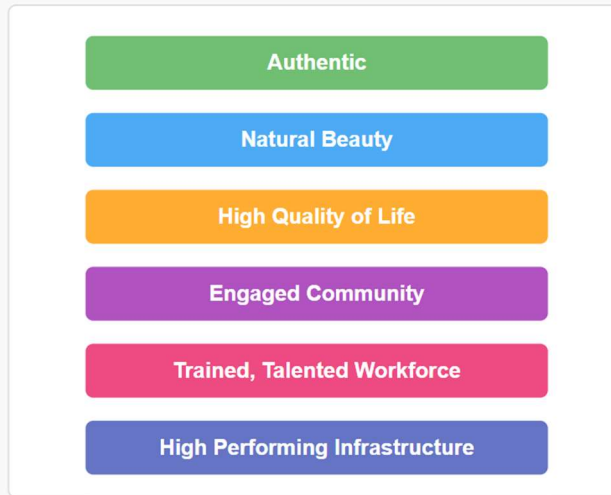
After reviewing the key challenges, the leadership group worked on zeroing in on the areas that were important to incorporate in building a vision and priority goals to help Pagosa Springs for the future. The following graphic shows a Word Cloud based on what defines the Pagosa Springs community and its unique characteristics. Discussions around the rural setting and the community's inherent isolation from neighboring towns helped shape a more refined description of Pagosa Springs and its potential.

### What Defines Pagosa Springs?



Following the discussion of key characteristics of Pagosa Springs, the leadership group honed in on descriptors that were identified as strengths for the community. The following six terms were ranked as important factors to be considered in building the vision statement.

## Community Strengths



## Community Identity

The Town Council invested additional time during the second day to explore some fundamental topics about Pagosa Springs' identity. The Town Council agreed that Pagosa Springs is a *destination* but should generally not be described as a resort town. The



Council emphasized the importance of honoring the hot springs and their legacy including the desire to increase public access to additional springs in the future. In regard to Pagosa Springs' history, there was consensus that there needed to be additional emphasis on embracing and educating residents and visitors alike through signage, museums/displays and events. It is desired that the downtown area be viewed as the soul of the community with its unique retail offerings and public art. An additional opportunity which was discussed was capitalizing on the water resources and wellness: from the sacred and healing aspects of the springs to the spiritual significance of Chimney Rock.

The term "community" kept surfacing throughout the process. The Town Council defined an engaged community as ensuring there are involvement pathways for every type of resident; expecting involvement from everyone; and, caring for others.

The Town Council identified key attributes they want to ensure Pagosa Springs embodies:

- Engaged community with high quality of life
- Opportunities to live and work
- Authentic character with beautiful location
- Outdoor lifestyle with good, caring people
- Preservation of natural beauty and environment
- Strong sense of identity honoring culture and history
- Trained and talented workforce
- Sustainability with a tradition of visitation
- Clean air and water with outdoor recreation
- High-performing, cost-effective infrastructure and utilities

## Industry Balance

The Town Council also generated a list of industries that are a natural fit for Pagosa Springs. These industries leverage the community's resources and surroundings and are viewed as compatible with Pagosa Springs' vision for sustainable growth. This list will be important should the town desire to generate an economic development plan with target industries.

**Arts & Crafts**

**Health Care**

**Recreation Tourism**

**Trades/Tech Training**

**Construction**

**Forestry/Ag**

**Wellness**

**Scientific Research**

**Cultural Tourism**

**Real Estate**

**Hospitality**

**History/Museum**

**Utilities/Government**

**Manufacturing**

**Professional Services**

## Future Steps

The Town Council used a model developed for the International City/County Management Association as a guide on the essential steps to explain the roles from adopting a vision to implementing the workplan. This exhibit demonstrates that the first two steps of the process have been completed and now the Town Council and the Executive Leadership can begin to work together on establishing priority action items. It should be noted that these results are dynamic and should be reviewed, updated and changed on an annual basis or as needed.



## Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by Karen Daly who facilitated the process at the behest of Pagosa Springs. She is grateful for the input and engagement of the following people:

Mayor Shari Pierce

Mayor Pro Tem Matt DeGuise

Councilmember Leonard Martinez

Councilmember Matt deGraff

Councilmember Gary Williams

Councilmember Brooks Lindner

Councilmember Madeline Bergon

Town Manager David Harris

April Hessman, Town Clerk/Finance Director

Jennifer Green, Tourism Director

Candace Dzielak, Courts Administrator

Karl Johnson, Public Works Director

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James Dickhoff, Development Director

Bill Rockensock, Police Chief