



THE TAOS NEWS

In 2007 Voted Best Weekly Newspaper in the U.S. by the National Newspaper Assoc.

Economic report prepped for town: Local economy ‘in a fragile period and is changing’

The report found that between 2006 and 2011, Taos and the surrounding communities lost working-age residents (age 20 to 54) while seeing an increase in retirement age residents.

By J.R. Logan

The Taos News, 11/2/2013

An economic report prepared for the town of Taos lays out a series of action items to improve a faltering regional economy that can no longer rely on its “natural evolution” to succeed.

The 2013 Taos Economic Development Action Plan, prepared by town contractor LeapPartners, says the local economy is “in a fragile period and is changing.” The report makes dire predictions about Taos’ future unless there is concerted effort from public and private entities to curb a number of challenging trends.

“If we do nothing it is likely the Enchanted Circle’s economic conditions will continue to worsen and the recession will deepen,” the report’s executive summary reads.

The report found that between 2006 and 2011, Taos and the surrounding communities lost working-age residents (age 20 to 54) while seeing an increase in retirement age residents.

Business activity in the county fell by 10 percent and there was a loss of nearly 750 jobs.

The report also noted that the Taos area is heavily reliant on tourism and related industries, which have struggled to rebound following the worldwide economic crash a few years ago.

The report noted that “our heavy reliance on this sector is fraught with potential disaster” because it provides mostly low wage and low skilled jobs. The report noted that leaders should not abandon tourism, but should instead look at developing other sectors.

Planners have long been pushing to diversify Taos’ economy but with limited success, thanks in part to Northern New Mexico’s isolation, lack of modern infrastructure and trouble sustaining a qualified workforce.

To turn things around, the report recommended that a “Regional Economic Development Organization” be created that would represent governments, nonprofits, and business interests around the Enchanted Circle.

The report suggests that area services be “regionalized,” and that collaboration between the public and private sector be encouraged.

Matthew Spriggs of LeapPartners told *The Taos News* such an organization would require funding contributions from everyone at the table to hire qualified staff that could coordinate regional economic development effort and improve communication.

The report was presented to the town of Taos Planning and Zoning Commission in September, though it has yet to go before the town council.

To download a copy of the action plan and executive summary, find this story at taosnews.com.