



BUREAU OF BUSINESS  
& ECONOMIC RESEARCH



# An Analysis of Tourism Opportunities and Challenges in the Town of Bernalillo

Prepared for the Town of Bernalillo

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We take full responsibility for any errors or oversights that may be contained within this report.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Acknowledgments</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>vi</b>
The Tourism Industry Nationally	vi
Tourism in Bernalillo	viii
Building a Robust Tourism Industry	ix
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. Study Background	1
1.2. Purpose of the Study	1
<b>Background</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1. The Town of Bernalillo: Current Tourism Structure	3
2.1.1. Outsourcing Tourism Efforts: Sandoval County Tourism Alliance	3
2.2. The Town of Bernalillo: Events	4
2.2.1. External Events Management	4
2.3. The Town of Bernalillo: Population Characteristics	5
2.4. Bernalillo: At the Crossroads	10
2.5. Conclusion	16
<b>Methodology</b>	<b>17</b>
3.1. Introduction	17
3.2. Data and Methodology	17
3.2.1. Event Surveys	17
3.2.2. Tourism Trend Analysis	19
3.2.3. Local Business Owner and Event Planner Interviews	19
3.2.4. Town Meeting	19
3.2.5. Cost Analyses	19
<b>National Trends in Tourism</b>	<b>20</b>
4.1. Current Trends in Tourism Nationally	20

4.1.1.	Survey of Public Participation in the Arts	20
4.1.2.	Mintel Report: Vacation Plans & Priorities 2025 – US	24
4.1.3.	IBIS World Industry Report: Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation in the US, October 2024	25
4.1.4.	Outdoor Industry Association’s 2023 Outdoor Participation Trends Report	26
4.1.5.	Mintel Report: Outdoor Vacation Activities – U.S. – February 2021	28
4.1.6.	IBIS World Industry Report: Historic Sites in the US, March 2024	30

## **Bernalillo Tourism and Marketing Analysis** **32**

5.1.	Digital Media	33
5.1.1.	Website	33
5.1.2.	Social Media	35
5.2.	Event Marketing	37
5.3.	Marketing SWOT Analysis	40
5.3.1.	Strengths	41
5.3.2.	Weaknesses	43
5.3.3.	Opportunities	44
5.3.4.	Threats	50
5.4.	Discussion	52

## **Options for Strengthening Tourism** **53**

6.1.	Organizational and Business Planning	53
6.1.1.	Building Resilience into the Tourism Industry	53
6.1.2.	A Tourism Hub, Gateway, or Dedicated Position	54
6.1.2.1.	Tourism Hub or Gateway	55
6.1.2.2.	Dedicated Tourism Position	56
6.2.	Marketing Plan	56
6.2.1.	Preface	57
6.2.2.	Marketing Objectives	57
6.2.3.	Target Audiences	57
6.2.4.	Brand Positioning & Messaging	57
6.2.5.	Marketing Strategies	59
6.2.6.	Metrics for Success	60
6.2.7.	Conclusion	60

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## Appendix A: Survey and Interview Questions A-1

A.1.	Event Attendee Survey	A-1
A.2.	Local Business Interview Protocol	A-4
A.3.	Event Planner Interview Protocol	A-5
A.4.	Town Meeting Agenda, September 11, 2024	A-6

## Appendix B: Full Event Survey Results A-7

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## Appendix C: References A-9

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### Table of Figures

Figure 1. Bernalillo Workers' Commute Time	6
Figure 2. Basic Bernalillo Household Classification	6
Figure 3. Detailed Bernalillo Household Classification	7
Figure 4. Bernalillo Housing Occupancy	7
Figure 5. Household Owner vs. Renter Occupancy	8
Figure 6. Detailed Household Owners vs. Renters	8
Figure 7. Structure Ages	9
Figure 8. Rental Structure Ages	9
Figure 9. Locations of Some of the Traffic Cameras Near Bernalillo and AADT Counts	10
Figure 10: Vehicular Traffic Along Highway 550, 2021-2023	11
Figure 11: Vehicular Traffic in Bernalillo, 2021-2023	11
Figure 12: Rail Runner System Map, courtesy of Rio Metro Regional Transit District	13
Figure 13: New Mexico Rail Runner "Rider Off" Counts for Select Stations, 2024	15
Figure 14: Resident and Visitor Survey Response Rates	18
Figure 15: Survey Response Rates by Event	18
Figure 16. In-Person Performance Attendance, Select Responses	21
Figure 17. In-Person Performance Attendance, Select Responses, detailed	21
Figure 18. Informative Source Figures	22
Figure 19. Location of Performance Attended, Select Responses	22

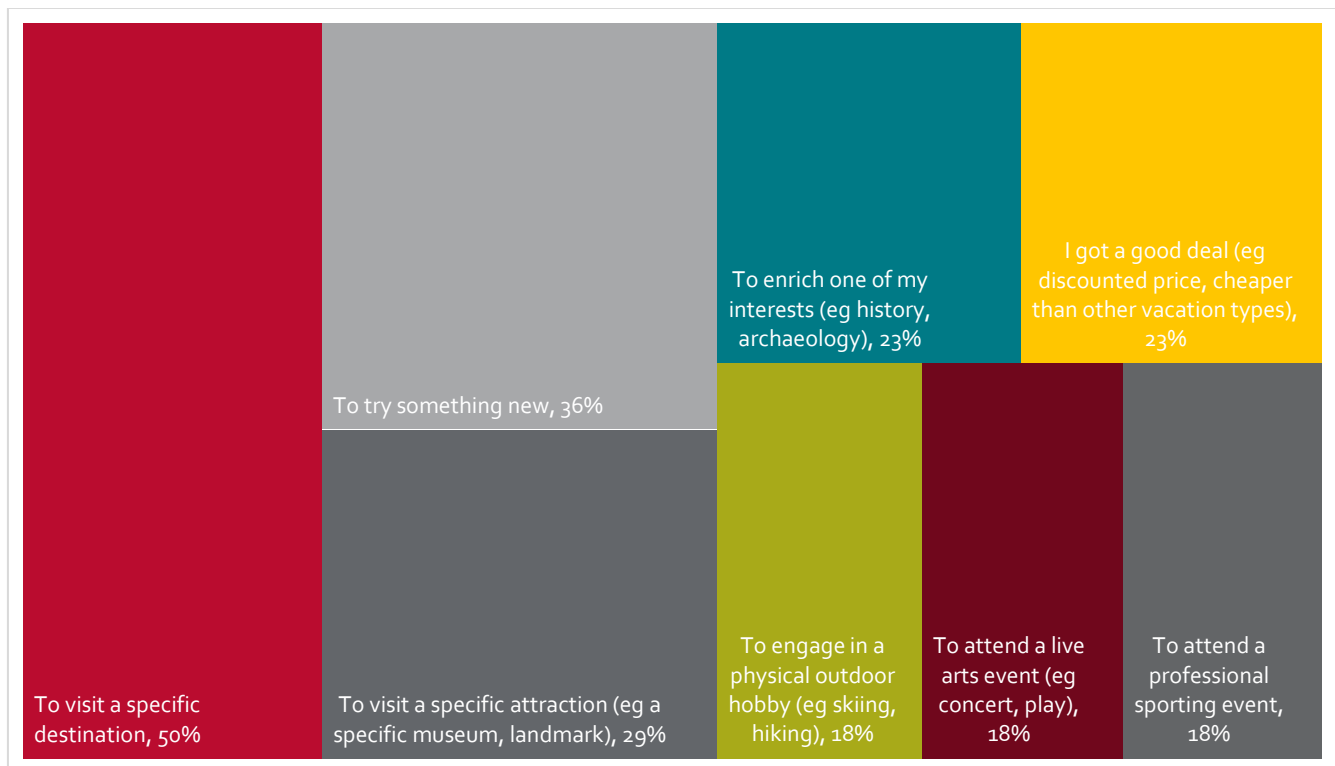
Figure 20. Leisure Activities, Select Responses	23
Figure 21. Year-Over-Year Industry Revenue Growth	25
Figure 22. Year-Over-Year Outdoor Recreation Numbers [Graphic property of OIA]	27
Figure 23. Growth Rate of Outdoor Activities, 2021-2022	28
Figure 24. Percent of Respondents Who Indicated Participating in an Outdoor Recreation Activity by Season, 2019 and 2020	29
Figure 25. Historic Site Tourism Trends	30
Figure 26. Year-Over-Year Historic Site Tourism Revenue Growth	31
Figure 27. Ratios of Bernalillo Residents at Events and Events are the Reason for Non-residents in Town	32
Figure 28. Repeat Visitors to Bernalillo	33
Figure 29. Key Considerations for Web Design	34
Figure 30. How Attendees Heard About Mountain West Brew Fest	38
Figure 31. How Far in Advance Respondents Planned to Attend the Mountain West Brew Fest	38
Figure 32. Participants Likelihood of Returning to Town Events in the Future	39
Figure 33: Heat Map Showing Attendees' Places of Residence, New Mexico Only	40
Figure 34. Bernalillo Marketing SWOT Analysis	41
Figure 35. Words Given by Visitors to Describe Bernalillo	41
Figure 36. Words Given by Residents to Describe Bernalillo	42
Figure 37. Comparison of Social Media Platform Usage Among Bernalillo Event Attendees vs. National Popularity	43
Figure 38. Topics of Improvements Suggested at Events	43
Figure 39. Ways Business Owners and Event Planners Would Like More Help From Bernalillo	44
Figure 40. Previous Social Media Posts That Reflect Opportunities	46
Figure 41. An Example of Banner Advertising	47
Figure 42. Activities Bernalillo Visitors Are Interested In	48
Figure 43. Locations Visited by Bernalillo Event Attendees	49
Figure 44. Examples of BBER's Thematic Marketing Tools	50
Figure 45. Screenshots of Recent Reviews on Facebook	51
Figure 46. Tourism Hub vs. Tourism Gateway in Bernalillo	56
Figure 47: UNM Design Standards	58

# Executive Summary

## The Tourism Industry Nationally

The tourism industry has continued to expand nationally since the resolution of the COVID-19 pandemic. The results of national surveys show that visitors to art exhibits, historic sites, and performances are increasing annually and that outdoor recreation continues to be a priority for both tourists and locals. The Mintel report forecasting “vacation plans and priorities” for 2025 shows that 84% of consumers in the United States plan to take an overnight vacation in 2025 and that over half of those travelers plan to spend more money on their trips in 2025 than they did in 2024.<sup>1</sup> Citing U.S. Census and Bureau of Economic Analysis statistics, the authors note that national travel and tourism generated \$688 billion in 2024, a year still considered part of the post-COVID recovery. They project tourism revenue to grow to nearly \$9 billion by 2029.

According to multiple industry reports on tourism, people’s vacation interests are piqued by curiosity about the destination and often they are seeking a unique, authentic experience. They are becoming increasingly skeptical of online reviews in the age of artificial intelligence, but social media is still the primary way visitors decide what activities to engage in while on vacation. In fact, “pop-up art exhibitions and niche festivals” have seen a surge in consumer interest, demonstrating that if an idea is unique and well-marketed, it could see strong visitor numbers. The figure below illustrates the responses from 1,685 surveys gathered by Mintel for their 2025 report in response to the question, “Why are you planning on taking a vacation in the next 12 months?” Respondents could select as many responses as applied.



<sup>1</sup> Gallinari, Mike. 2025. “Vacation Plans & Priorities: 2025 – US – 2025 [Industry Report]. Mintel. <https://www.mintel.com/>

Although 79% of the vacationers said they wanted to visit a specific destination or attraction, 36% wanted to try something new and 23% were looking to enrich their interests. These are the visitors who would benefit from targeted marketing about the uniqueness of Bernalillo. Additionally, 18% of respondents indicated they wanted to engage in an outdoor hobby; these vacationers would benefit from hearing more about Bernalillo's excellent climate and proximity to myriad outdoor activities. Consumer interests align with what Bernalillo has to offer, it is just a matter of showcasing the offerings to the right markets.

In both our survey results and the tourism literature, word of mouth is also a primary way in which tourists learn of activities they want to try. They may find information directly from someone they know who has experienced an activity or event. This means that the goal is not only to get the tourists to visit but also to tell their friends and family about how enjoyable their vacation was.

With the change in the U.S. federal administration and the resulting economic uncertainty<sup>2</sup> as well as the past few years of increased inflation, consumers have cut back on both their day-to-day spending and on booking larger vacations.<sup>3</sup> February 2025 saw the greatest month-over-month decline in consumer confidence since August 2021, according to the Conference Board. Attracting local spending may be key to building a tourist economy under current conditions.

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<sup>2</sup> The University of Michigan 2025. "Consumer Confidence Index." <http://www.sca.isr.umich.edu/> and The Conference Board. 2025. "Consumer Confidence Dropped Sharply in February." Latest Press Release: February 25, 2025. <https://www.conference-board.org/topics/consumer-confidence>

<sup>3</sup> IBIS World. 2024. "Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation in the US [Industry Report]."



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## Tourism in Bernalillo

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The Town of Bernalillo is located approximately 18 miles north of Albuquerque and 47 miles southwest of Santa Fe along Interstate 25. It sits at the terminus of Highway 550, the principal artery connecting the major cities of New Mexico with the northwest corner of the state. The Rail Runner, the regional train connecting Valencia, Bernalillo, Sandoval, and Santa Fe Counties, has two stops within the Town's boundaries. This exceptional geographic positioning makes Bernalillo an ideal stopping point for travelers throughout the north and center of the state. However, according to traffic and train data, relatively few make their way into the Town.

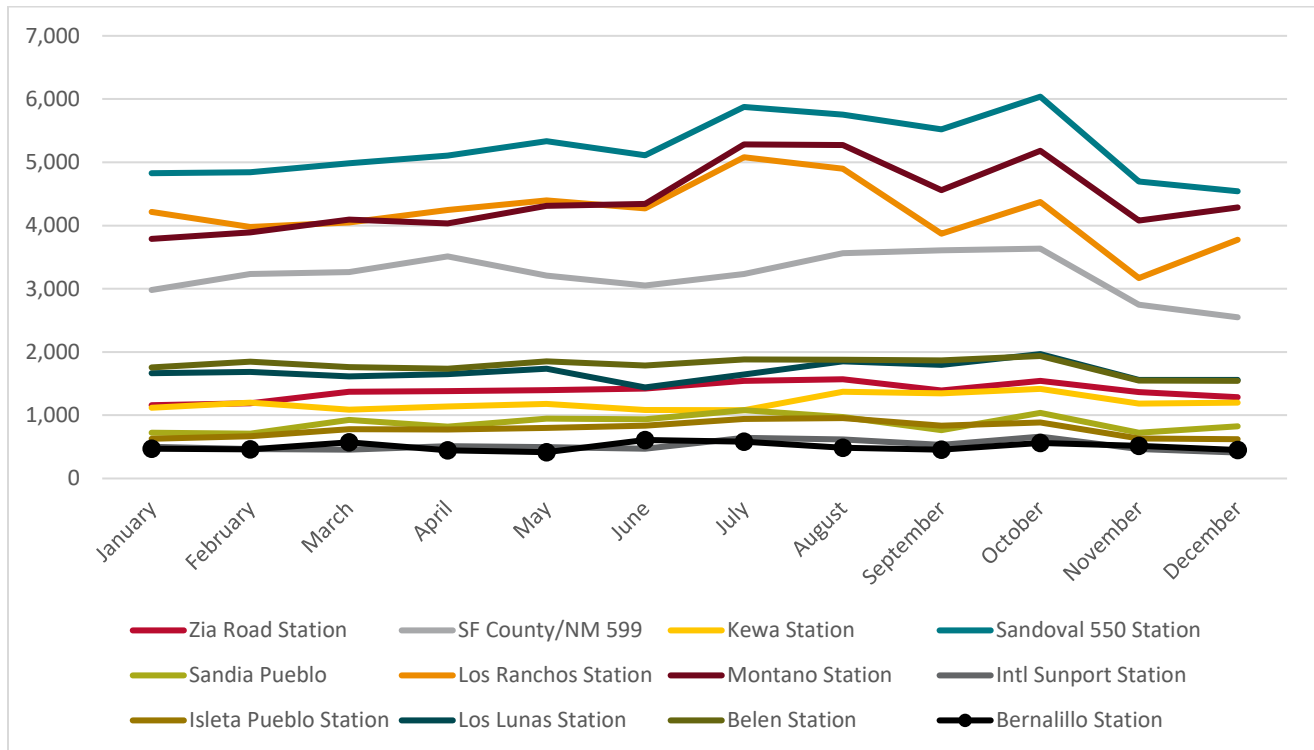
The Town of Bernalillo features multiple events throughout the calendar year. It has taken great care to ensure there are specially designed events to aid or entertain local residents, and some to attract tourists.

Tourism does not have its own department within the Town of Bernalillo. Instead, various individuals in the Town of Bernalillo's government structure are involved in promoting tourism. Job duties for both the economic development director and the museum director include different aspects of managing tourism for the Town. This arrangement can work in locales with small-scale tourism ventures, but Bernalillo is not only growing; it is at an ideal geographic location to capture tourism dollars.

Looking at the numbers, the Town could focus resources on improving the curb appeal of the Avenida Bernalillo exit, drawing more visitors to Bernalillo from the south; adding signage and improving the curb appeal of Camino Del Pueblo at its northern terminus, drawing more traffic from Highway 550, or both. Although many of the businesses on Highway 550 are still part of the Town and do generate revenue, Bernalillo quickly loses that jurisdiction and would benefit from drawing attention to itself in various ways to capture more visitor dollars.

BBER's survey results indicate that Bernalillo is already seeing success in its tourism efforts as slightly more than 75% of the attendees of events are not Town residents. When talking to the out-of-town visitors, nearly 90% said that their entire reason for being in Bernalillo at that time was for the event. Almost 95% had been to Bernalillo previously. Exceptionally, not one person surveyed at any of the events said they would not attend the event again.

The Town of Bernalillo has much to offer regarding tourism but doesn't have the visitor numbers it could. Traffic counts, Rail Runner data, and gaps in available amenities illustrate that the Town has room to grow its businesses and generate more interest in what makes Bernalillo uniquely Bernalillo. A small sample of the train data from 2024 illustrates the room for improvement in attracting regional visitors to the downtown.



Based on the reduced visitor attendance to Town events in 2024 and the desire to grow the tourism industry, we suggest that Bernalillo utilize a targeted advertising campaign that showcases the distinctive offerings the Town has. One simple way to start this campaign is by using free digital marketing tools such as Google Analytics, which allows the user to track website traffic and user behavior, monitor revenue impact from marketing efforts, analyze traffic sources to see where visitors are coming from, and integrate with other Google tools like Google Ads.

Creating advertisements focusing specifically on the history of the Town, the unique and rich culture, the local food and beverages that can't be missed, or the music and community celebrations and the notable ways to explore and experience them could boost visitor numbers. Bernalillo could advertise with one or multiple versions of these materials at various locations, considering how a history pamphlet might appeal to Coronado Historic Site visitors and a local food and beverage pamphlet might appeal to people who have been outdoors all day, like at Valles Caldera. For specific Town events, posters or flyers could also be placed at strategic locations to garner regional interest.

Bernalillo, New Mexico is a historic Town with a rich cultural heritage, stunning natural beauty, and a welcoming community. Promoting Bernalillo as a prime destination for tourists looking to escape the hustle and bustle of city life and seeking out controlled development to bring in new businesses that can also serve residents will enhance the Town's visibility and appeal.

## Building a Robust Tourism Industry

The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic upended the tourism industry. Businesses had to close their doors, events were canceled, and people stayed at home. Economic losses were incurred to protect against loss of life. Communities with a tourist-focused economy took some of the hardest hits. Now that the world has moved

beyond the lockdowns, the tourism industry is once again thriving. But careful consideration needs to be made when rebuilding an industry that could be subject to such great losses.

One of the recommended pathways to economic resilience in the tourism industry is one Bernalillo already supports: orienting all tourist endeavors to be community-centered.<sup>4</sup> This ties neatly into the aforementioned consumer desires for authentic, unique, and localized experiences. Marketing Bernalillo in ways that residents feel proud of and want to showcase should not only draw in visitors but should also inspire locals to be involved. Local involvement in the tourism industry, whether it is seen through local events, restaurants, or attractions such as the museum, helps to generate what is called “collective creativity.”<sup>5</sup> Collective creativity, in this context, occurs when the community comes together to help institutions adapt to changing events. Localized community support can be the difference between the success and failure of a business in times of crisis.

The grassroots organization, Strong Towns, discusses economic resilience as “small bets,” which are incremental changes to improve overall well-being within a community.<sup>6</sup> What this means is that if communities are seeking to make small positive changes in a variety of spaces, even if one change fails, the others are there to continue to forward momentum. They focus on ensuring that development within communities comes from local visions, not external developers. Albuquerque has the largest Strong Towns organization in the country and may be worth engaging with to discuss strategies for community development that benefit residents and tourists alike.

Another strategy for building resilience in the tourism industry in Bernalillo is the development of adaptive infrastructure. During the COVID-19 shutdowns, the City of Albuquerque capitalized on the good weather in this region and helped restaurants turn parking lots into outdoor eateries. Some of these pop-up patios have remained even after the lockdown was lifted. The National Restaurant Association reports that patio dining is a draw for tourists and residents alike, with 69% of adults preferring restaurants that have outdoor seating options.<sup>7</sup> Developing spaces for both visitors and locals benefits the community overall. According to the same study, \$3 of every \$10 spent in a restaurant comes from tourists. Clearly, 30% is an important figure, but marketing to that 70% is also critical. With the climate in Northern New Mexico and the appeal of a small-town main street like Camino del Pueblo, Bernalillo is well-positioned to create more enticing outdoor opportunities that could prove critical in the face of future crises.

Finally, improving accessibility to key Town features would also benefit Bernalillo in the long run. Consensus Planning’s Comprehensive Plan, adopted by Bernalillo in 2022, discusses accessibility extensively in Chapter 6: Transportation. Notably, with regard to tourism, the Plan recommends improved sidewalks, particularly on main thoroughfares. This suggestion was supported by the community survey that Consensus Planning conducted and is also a way to encourage tourists to spend more time in the downtown area, seeing what the Town has to offer. Accessibility can look like benches, protected crosswalks, shade trees, and bike lanes. All of these improvements generate a connected outdoor space that encourages tourists and residents to visit more locations, boosting visibility and convenience for everyone.

<sup>4</sup>Higgins-Desbiolles, Freya. 2020. “Socialising Tourism for Social and Ecological Justice after COVID-19.” *Tourism Geographies*, 22(3), 610-623.

<sup>5</sup> Richards, Greg and Julie Wilson, eds. 2007. *Tourism, Creativity, and Development*. Routledge: London.

<sup>6</sup> Price, Andrew. 2016. “Small Bets.” <https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2016/6/14/making-small-bets>

<sup>7</sup> National Restaurant Association. 2023. “State of the Restaurant Industry 2023.”

# Introduction

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## 1.1. Study Background

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The Town of Bernalillo received a tourism grant from the Federal Economic Development Administration in 2022. In Fall 2023, BBER began work on the project offering the Town technical assistance in the development of a more comprehensive tourism plan. We focused on three primary topics to guide a tourism plan: visitor experiences at local events, business owner and event planner experiences with tourism and navigating Town regulations, and local desires for a larger tourist impact on the Town without the loss of its unique character.

Throughout the research process, we held frequent meetings with department heads in the Town to validate our processes and to update them on current findings. We held formal meetings in June, September, and December 2024 to deliver presentations and question-and-answer sessions, further shaping the direction of the research.

This report summarizes the results of the study.






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## 1.2. Purpose of the Study




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The Town of Bernalillo is uniquely situated between two of New Mexico's largest cities: Albuquerque and Santa Fe. Both draw in tourists and with the international airport located in Albuquerque, most visitors going to Santa Fe will pass Bernalillo along the way. Further, a major highway connecting Northwest New Mexico to Interstate 25, Highway 550, runs directly through Bernalillo. With all of this built-in traffic, Bernalillo becomes a crossroads, and the Town is seeking to better understand how to increase tourist and traveler appeal, generating more local revenue.

To that end, the purpose of this report is to:

-  Assess current marketing and advertising strategies and offer suggestions for improvement.
-  Analyze current trends in tourism and report on the ones that have the potential to affect Bernalillo the most.
-  Identify strengths, opportunities, weaknesses, and threats to Bernalillo's tourism industry.
-  Offer suggestions for weathering unexpected changes in tourism, focusing on major events like the COVID-19 shutdowns.
-  Generate rough cost estimates for various scenarios in which the Town may develop a tourism hub or hire additional employees to focus solely on tourism.

This report is limited in three regards.

-  The study focuses on one year of tourist experiences and, by all accounts locally, 2024 saw far fewer visitors to local events than the two years previous.
-  With changing personnel, Bernalillo has already begun to employ some of the suggestions we offered during formal presentations and generate some of their own strategies, and we cannot catalog living actions in a static document.
-  Though we made many efforts to reach as many individuals with varying perspectives as possible, the primary data collected from local business owners and event planners was voluntary and, therefore, may not be a perfect representative sample of the Town's interests.

# Background

## 2.1. The Town of Bernalillo: Current Tourism Structure

Tourism does not have its own department within the Town of Bernalillo. Instead, various individuals in the Town of Bernalillo government structure are involved in promoting tourism. Job duties for both the economic development director and the museum director include different aspects of managing tourism for the Town. This arrangement can work in locales with small-scale tourism ventures, but Bernalillo is not only growing, it is at an ideal geographic location to capture tourism dollars.

Because tourism does not exist as its own department in the Town of Bernalillo, the aforementioned departments that may not traditionally have much to do with tourism have to take over to fill the gaps. The economic development director in Bernalillo is responsible for administrative budgets, lodger's tax budgets, community outreach tourism, tourism marketing and social media management, promoting and marketing Town events, booking large events at Town facilities, acting as the film liaison, as well as other tourism-related duties. All of these responsibilities are added to the economic development and community development duties required of an economic development director.

The museum director in Bernalillo manages the tourism website and business listing. They also handle a portion of the marketing, support, and social media for the Town, local events, and nonprofits in the area. Again, these responsibilities are added to the standard job description for a museum director. This arrangement can work with a small enough tourism industry and the right staff in place but becomes difficult to maintain when tourism grows or when new employees are hired and find they are not prepared for the job requirements outside of their field of study.

### 2.1.1. Outsourcing Tourism Efforts: Sandoval County Tourism Alliance

Another way in which Bernalillo has partially filled the gap of not having a specific tourism department is by participating in the Sandoval County Tourism Alliance (SCTA). Each year the Town pays into SCTA to receive promotional services from the organization. SCTA serves all of Sandoval County and does not charge a flat rate for its services. This means that although Bernalillo pays the highest dollar amount to the organization, they receive equal coverage as smaller municipalities that cannot afford to pay as much. While subsidizing these communities is generous and promotes tourism to the area on the whole, Bernalillo sees no specific perks from being the top contributor.

Rio Rancho used to be the top financial contributor to SCTA, however they opted out a couple of years ago. Their businesses continue to be featured on the SCTA website and application, despite Rio Rancho not paying anything to the organization. When Rio Rancho left the alliance, it successfully created its own tourism department within the city's government.

SCTA maintains a website, an application, and other forms of marketing for Sandoval County events and businesses. Using the online resources, visitors can select from different types of activities they may be interested in doing in Sandoval County, and find overnight accommodations or places to eat and drink.

There is no official visitor center for the Town of Bernalillo. The visitor center located at El Zocalo is run by the county, but it is not open to the public for normal visitor hours. Individuals must call and make an appointment

or ring the doorbell and wait for staff. Should Bernalillo choose to create its own tourism department or hire a tourism-specific staff member, the person could work out of Town Hall until Bernalillo has an independent visitor location. At the time of this writing, the Town has submitted a Capital Projects proposal to turn the Molino Building into the new Museum location, with the front half of the building dedicated to being a staffed visitor center. Should this plan come to fruition, the Town will need to create clear signage so visitors are not confused by the presence of two visitor centers. However, having a visitor center that is open and staffed full-time would be a major step forward for the tourism infrastructure in Bernalillo.

## 2.2. The Town of Bernalillo: Events

Bernalillo is a small Town, and its residents wish to maintain its small-town and historic character. This is an important point to note when developing tourism strategies and localized events. In the past, Bernalillo held a renowned wine festival, which was fitting as it is noted as the first region in the country to have grown grapes for wine. Sadly, natural disasters and the prohibition era hit the vineyards hard in the early 1900s, and the historic flood of 1949 completed the destruction.<sup>8</sup> Bernalillo has focused on other types of festivals in recent years, hosting its last wine festival in September 2014.

Summers in Bernalillo are the perfect time to promote events-based tourism with the Town's spectacular views and warm weather. Currently, the Town hosts two brew fests and other localized events such as movie nights. The Farmhouse Ale Country and Blues Festival is sponsored by a local business, and the other, Mountain West Brew Fest, is sponsored by the Town itself. Additionally, the Town's largest event is held in August, a three-day historic and religious festival called "Fiestas de San Lorenzo." In conjunction with this event, the Town holds a secular event called "Música y Más" featuring regional bands, a play area for children, and many food and beverage vendors. In the Fall, Bernalillo Public Schools host a harvest festival at the high school and the Town hosts the Fiesta de Música y Cultura.

Future plans include changing the Mountain West Brew Fest into a more family-friendly event and moving it to the first Saturday in October to align with the Balloon Fiesta events. It will be rebranded as the Mountain West Fall Fest and though it will retain some of its original offerings, the plans are to expand the event to appeal to a wider audience. The Town is also planning a variety of Route 66 events for the Centennial in 2026.

Since Bernalillo is a close-knit community, some events are not necessarily designed to draw in tourists. In December, Bernalillo hosts a Christmas parade and the annual tree lighting ceremony. The parade is especially well attended, but the tree lighting is a meaningful community event. In Spring, Bernalillo hosts a local event that draws some attention from neighboring Towns called Eggstravaganza. This is an Easter egg hunt held in conjunction with the Easter holiday.

### 2.2.1. External Events Management

From spring 2019 to 2024, the Indian Arts Festival was held by an external nonprofit each year in May. Unfortunately, due to changing fee structures, lack of accessibility, and the need for artists to protect their work from the elements, the festival has chosen to move to Balloon Fiesta Park in 2025. This will allow both an indoor and outdoor space for artists.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.coronadoswcd.org/history-of-the-piedra-lisa-dam.html#:~:text=The%20Big%20Flood.%20On%20September%2030%2C%201949%2C,Mountains%20sent%20flood%20waters%20rushing%20toward%20Bernalillo.>

The Farmhouse Ale Country and Blues Festival is a highly successful event that the Town participates in but is not the primary organizer of. The event's website describes it as, "Every year Kaktus Brewing Company has partnered with the Town of Bernalillo, Visit ABQ, artists, musicians, food trucks, and businesses to create the largest Fathers Day celebration in Albuquerque. With sponsors like UN-17 (non-profit), Kaktus Brewing Co., Town of Bernalillo Lodgers Tax, and New Mexico True, this event is always a success, bringing hundreds of families together for an unforgettable Father's Day celebration."

## 2.3. The Town of Bernalillo: Population Characteristics

Each year, the United States Census Bureau conducts hundreds of surveys throughout the U.S. Two of these surveys are the American Community Survey (ACS) and the Current Population Survey (CPS). These particular surveys are sent to a sample of approximately 3.5 million addresses and ask questions about information not found on the Census itself, including questions about employment, housing tenure and vacancy, and other factors useful to this study. The ACS links that data to changing community composition over time. For this study, we use 2022 and 2023 ACS and CPS data to update some of the information found in the Town of Bernalillo Master Plan and to glean information about how local issues may relate to the ideas of economic development we are exploring.

### *2.3.1. Income, Employment Status, Means of Transportation to/from Work, and Travel Time to Work*

In 2023, the Town of Bernalillo's population was estimated at 9,114 people, and the median annual household income was \$61,624, just under the state median of \$62,125.

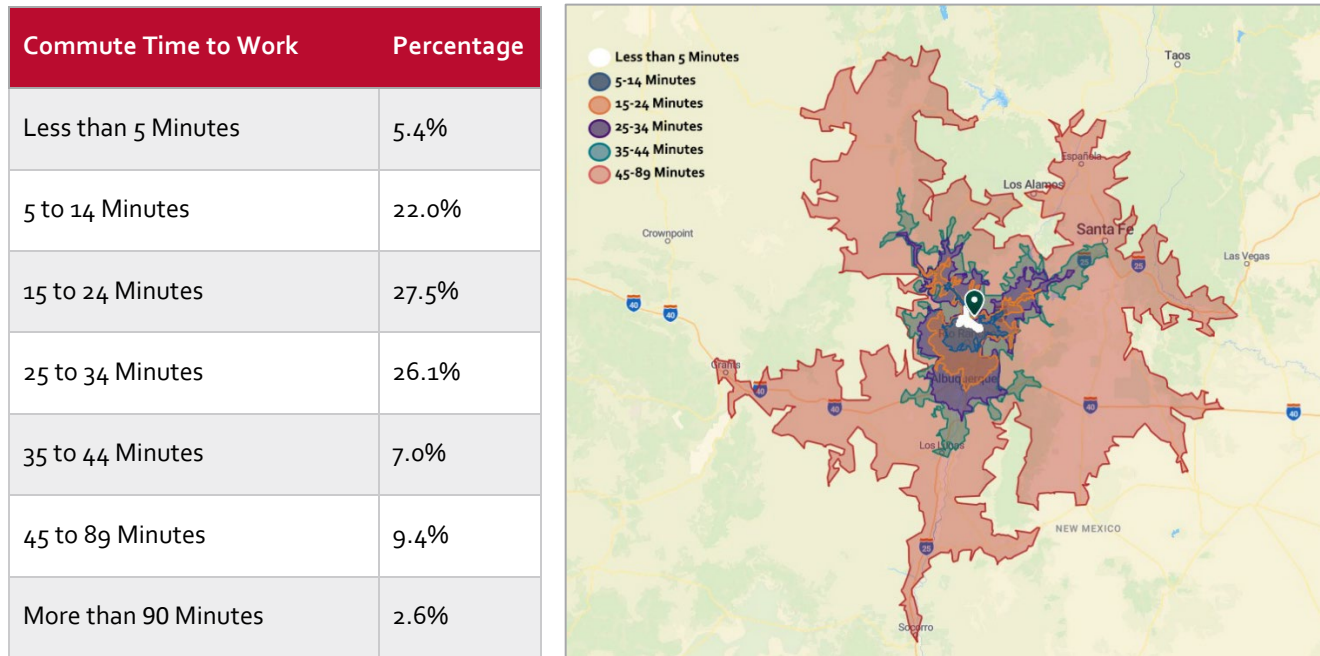
According to the ACS estimates, the Town of Bernalillo had an overall unemployment rate in 2023 of 3.0%, with a 1.1% margin of error. Comparatively, New Mexico as a whole is reported at 3.4% unemployment with a 0.1% margin of error. This is down from 6.2% and 4.8%, respectively. Bernalillo's unemployment rate significantly improved year-over-year and is better than the state average.

78.4% of working individuals in Bernalillo reported driving a car, truck, or van to their place of employment. The vast majority of these workers drove alone, although 8.1% reported carpooling. Walking and bicycling to work came in as the next highest means of transportation (1.2% and .8%, respectively), but those figures had very high margins of error and are, therefore, difficult to predict accurately. These figures do not represent the whole of Bernalillo's working population. In fact, 18.9% of workers reported they were working from home in 2023, a 4% increase from 14.9% in 2022, thereby not needing transportation to or from their place of employment.

The 2023 data show that most Bernalillo workers who travel for work have commutes of approximately 15 to 24 minutes (27.5%). Interestingly, the new data also show an uptick in longer travel times. Although the majority travel less than 35 minutes to their place of employment, the percentage is lower in the 2023 estimates, decreasing from 84.2% in 2022 to 81% in 2023, indicating residents may be experiencing increased commute times. Longer commutes indicate less leisure time in the place of residence and the potential to spend money outside of the community. Overall, the majority of Bernalillo residents have 25-to-34-minute commutes to their place of work at 26.1%. Later in this section, we discuss the availability of public transportation.



Figure 1. Bernalillo Workers' Commute Time

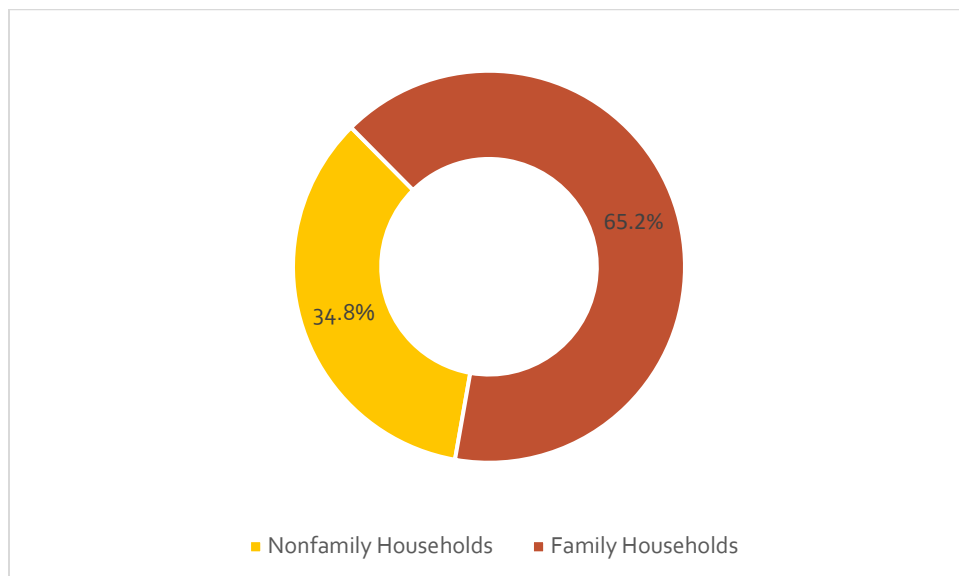


### 2.3.2. Household Type and Composition

In 2023, there were approximately 3,836 households in the Town of Bernalillo, down from 3,908 in 2022. This reduction in the number of households is not necessarily reflected in the number of residents; household composition has changed year-over-year.

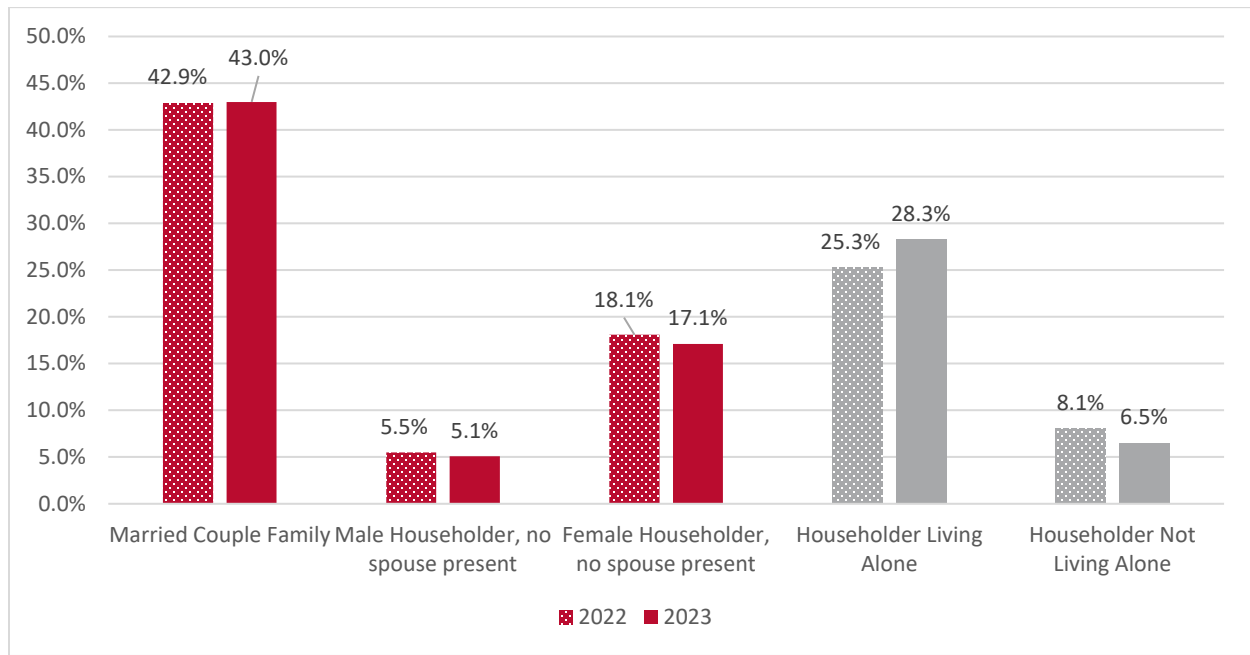
The Census Bureau categorizes households into “family” and “nonfamily” living arrangements. In Bernalillo, 65.2% of households are characterized as family households and 34.8% are nonfamily.

Figure 2. Basic Bernalillo Household Classification



Family and nonfamily households can further be broken down into the type of structure within the home. The cherry red columns below indicate what percentage of Bernalillo's family households fall into the three Census categories. The silver columns illustrate the composition of nonfamily households from 2022 to 2023.

Figure 3. Detailed Bernalillo Household Classification

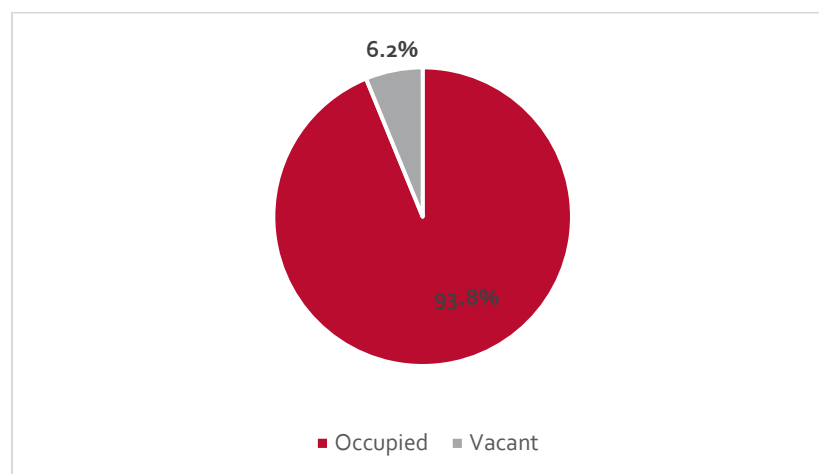


The average size of a household in Bernalillo is 2.3 individuals. Approximately 26.4% of households include children under the age of 18, and 42.7% include individuals over the age of 65.

### 2.3.3. Housing Units, Tenure, Occupancy Characteristics, and Vacancy Status

The Town of Bernalillo has between 3,792 and 4,410 housing units, with the Census official estimate at 4,073. Of these housing units, 93.8% are occupied, and only 6.2% are vacant.

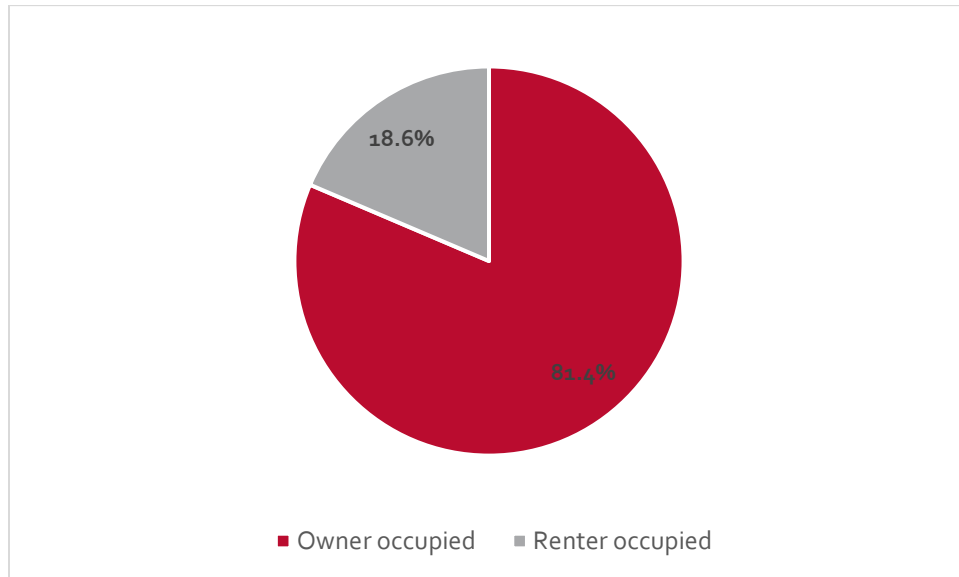
Figure 4. Bernalillo Housing Occupancy



81.4% of housing units are owner-occupied, and 18.6% are occupied by a renter. This is higher than New Mexico's average rate of owner-occupied units, which stands at 69.3%, and also higher than Bernalillo's rate of

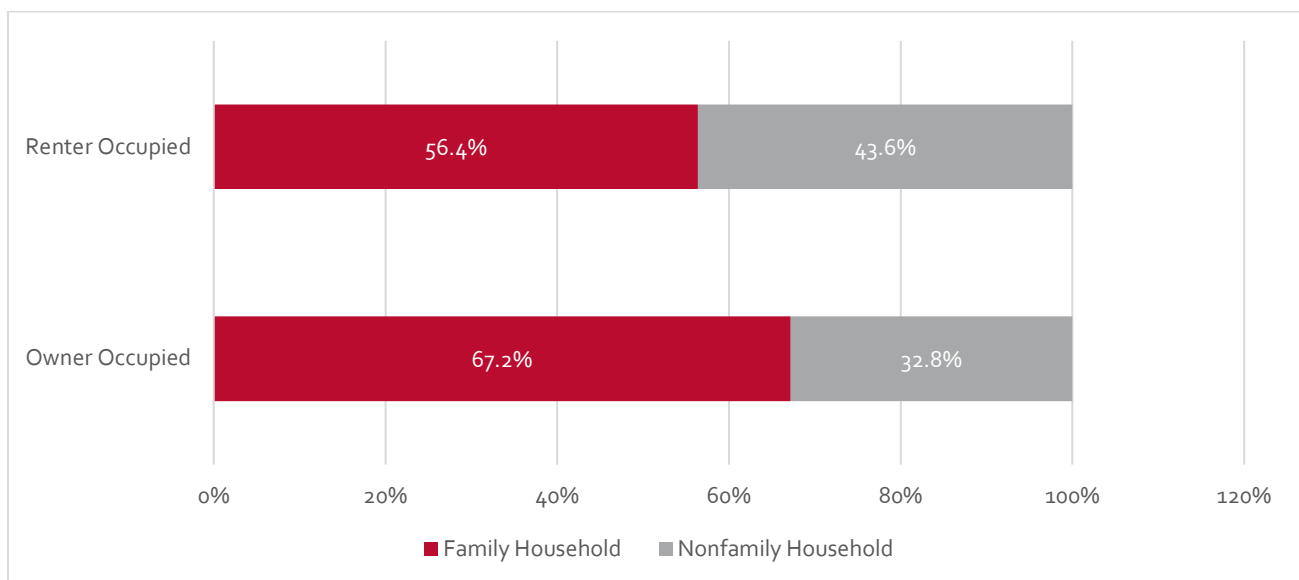
ownership in 2022, which was estimated at 76.8%. More residents own their homes in 2023 than did in 2022. New Mexico's overall homeownership rate did not change significantly as Bernalillo's did and is in fact estimated at losing 0.2% of homeowners.

Figure 5. Household Owner vs. Renter Occupancy



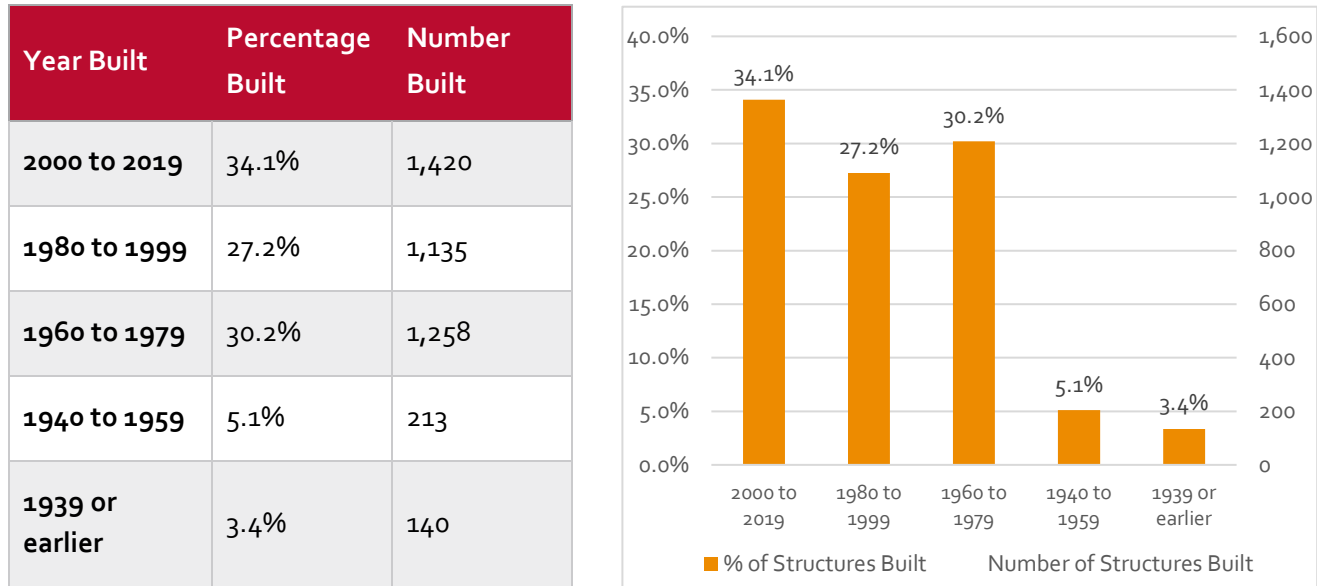
Family households occupy 67.2% of all owned housing units in Bernalillo, with nonfamily households only owning 32.8% of those units. Similarly, 56.4% of rental units are occupied by family households. This figure corresponds with the fact that the majority of households in Bernalillo are families, at 65.2%.

Figure 6. Detailed Household Owners vs. Renters



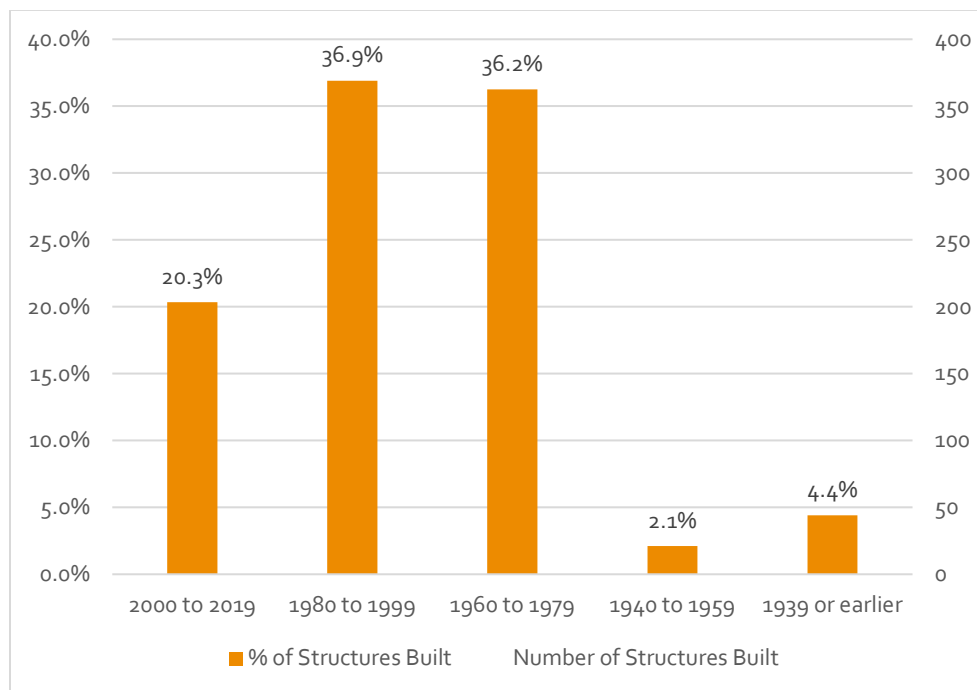
The median year a housing structure was built within Town limits is 1987, however, the greatest number of structures were added between 2000 and 2019. No new structures were reported as being built between 2020 and 2022.

Figure 7. Structure Ages



The majority of structures currently rented in Bernalillo were built between 1960 and 1999, with a combined addition of 662 buildings out of 905 total rental structures during this time period.

Figure 8. Rental Structure Ages



At the time of the 2022 ACS, 237 units were unoccupied in the Town of Bernalillo, down from 258 in 2022. Of these, 74 were for rent, eight were for sale, and 16 were deemed for recreational or occasional use by their owners. 138 were listed as “other vacant,” which could indicate abandoned properties, second homes currently not in use, or other reasons for vacancy. Because the 137 properties represent such a small figure, the margin of error indicates the Census Bureau cannot accurately predict why these properties were unoccupied.

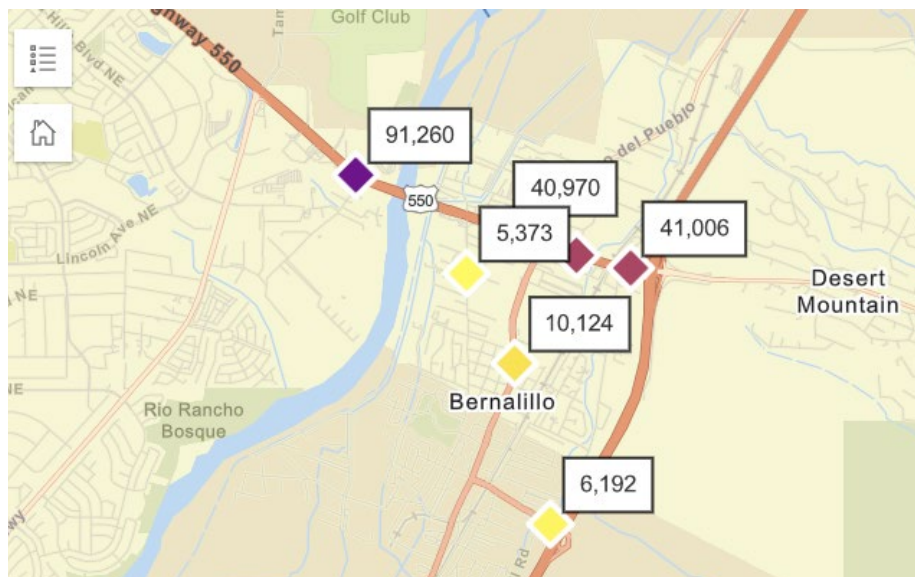
## 2.4. Bernalillo: At the Crossroads

The Town of Bernalillo is located approximately 18 miles north of Albuquerque and 47 miles southwest of Santa Fe along Interstate 25. It sits at the terminus of Highway 550, the principal artery connecting the major cities of New Mexico with the northwest corner of the state. This unique geographic positioning makes Bernalillo an ideal stopping point for travelers throughout the north and center of the state. However, relatively few make their way into the Town. In this section, we look at Department of Transportation and New Mexico Rail Runner Express numbers to understand how Bernalillo might target these passersby and bring them into the Town to generate tourism revenue.

The New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) collects traffic counts annually to assess vehicular statistics, including volume and type of vehicle. The Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) count consists of PA (Passenger Vehicles) counts and BC (business/commercial vehicles).<sup>9</sup> Motorcycles, passenger cars, and four-tire, single-unit vehicles are considered passenger vehicles. Vehicles with two or more axles (Class 4 and above) are considered business/commercial vehicles. When utilizing traffic counts, it's important to note that because traffic counters are set up to count all vehicles, "double counting" is embedded in the estimates. For example, if a vehicle were to travel westbound on Highway 550 and then go south on Camino del Pueblo, traffic counters on those roads would each count the vehicle separately, even though it is the same vehicle.

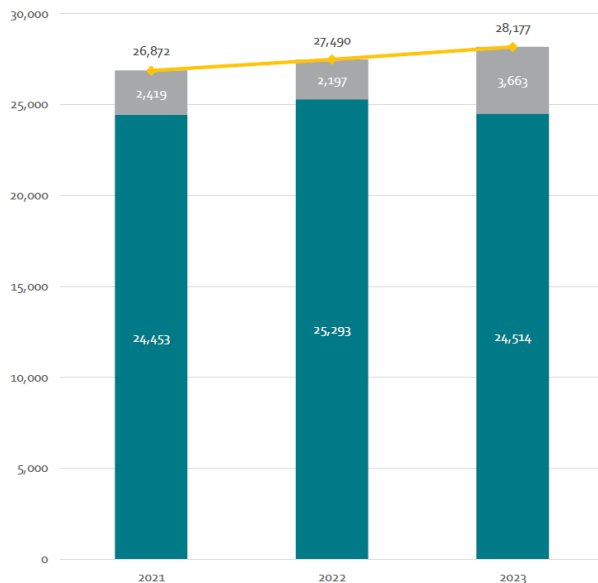
To illustrate traffic patterns into and past Bernalillo, we use the AADT for four traffic counters: Highway 550 at I-25, Highway 550 just west of 313, Avenida Bernalillo at I-25 and Camino del Pueblo at Calle Don Vicente. These figures should give a strong estimate of traffic passing by Bernalillo and the amount that enters the Town itself.

Figure 9. Locations of Some of the Traffic Cameras Near Bernalillo and AADT Counts



<sup>9</sup> To calculate the AADT, NMDOT uses the following equation:  $AADT = VOL \times SF \times AF$ , where VOL = 24-hour volume count, SF = applicable month/day combination seasonal factor, AF = applicable axle-correction factor.

Figure 10: Vehicular Traffic Along Highway 550, 2021-2023



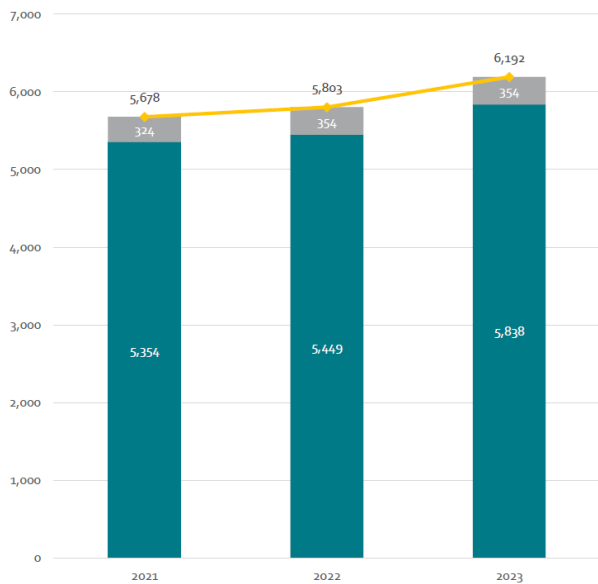
Highway 550 at I-25, ID: 32214



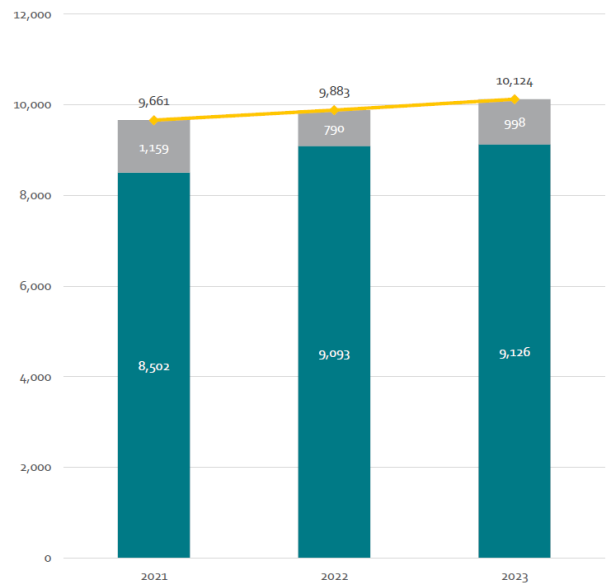
Highway 550 west of Highway 313, ID: 32220

Passenger Vehicles Business/Commercial Vehicles Total

Figure 11: Vehicular Traffic in Bernalillo, 2021-2023



Avenida Bernalillo at I-25, ID: 21008



Camino del Pueblo at Calle Don Vicente, ID: 32474

Passenger Vehicles Business/Commercial Vehicles Total

Traffic along Highway 550 at I-25 consisted of 24,514 passenger vehicles and 3,663 business or commercial vehicles in 2023. Passenger traffic at Avenida Bernalillo and I-25 was approximately 25% of that total (5,838) and less than 10% for commercial or business traffic (354). Clearly, comparing Avenida Bernalillo to Highway 550 is like comparing apples to oranges, but if the Town were able to attract even a fraction of the 550 traffic to its Avenida Bernalillo exit, visitors could drive through the downtown and see what it has to offer. Camino Del Pueblo at Calle Don Vicente has slightly stronger traffic numbers than Avenida Bernalillo, demonstrating that the downtown thoroughfare is capturing much of its traffic from other directions.

Looking at the numbers, the Town could focus resources on improving the curb appeal of the Avenida Bernalillo exit, drawing more visitors to Bernalillo from the south; adding signage and improving the curb appeal of Camino Del Pueblo at its northern terminus, drawing more traffic from Highway 550, or both. Although many of the businesses on Highway 550 are still part of the Town and do generate revenue, Bernalillo quickly loses that jurisdiction and would benefit from drawing attention to itself in various ways to capture more visitor dollars.

Additional locations that could benefit from additional signage and visual improvement are the Bernalillo Rail Runner stops. The Rail Runner is a regional train connecting Valencia, Bernalillo, Sandoval, and Santa Fe Counties. A full map, Figure 12: Rail Runner System Map, courtesy of Rio Metro Regional Transit District, is on the next page.

BBER toured both the 550 and Bernalillo stops, looking for signs welcoming visitors to the Town. We noted the 550 stop is primarily a park-and-ride type of location, whereas the Bernalillo stop is adjacent to downtown. Signs, murals, or something welcoming would potentially encourage visitors to step off of the train and learn more about the Town. The Mid-Region Council of Governments provided BBER with ridership data for 2024. In every month but June, Bernalillo Station has the lowest number of riders exiting the train.



# SYSTEM MAP

## Belen to Santa Fe

North to Española  
Los Alamos  
Taos

ZONE

South Capitol

Santa Fe Depot

Santa Fe Co. / NM 599

Kewa (Santo Domingo Pueblo)

Sandoval Co. / US 550

Downtown Bernalillo

Sandia Pueblo

Los Ranchos / Journal Center

Montaño

Downtown Albuquerque

Bernalillo Co.

Isleta Pueblo

Los Lunas

Belen

Rio Grande

International Sunport

Interstates: 25, 40, 550, 599

Connections Available at Each Station

- Park and Ride Lot (P)
- Fixed-Route Bus Service
- Dial-a-Ride Bus Service
- Shuttle
- Airport Shuttle
- Casino Shuttle

Customer Service

866.795.RAIL (7245)  
www.riometro.org

Monday - Friday: 5 am - 10:30 pm  
Saturday: 7:30 am - 11:30 pm  
Sunday: 7 am - 10 pm

RIO METRO  
REGIONAL TRANSIT DISTRICT

RAIL RUNNER  
PATRON

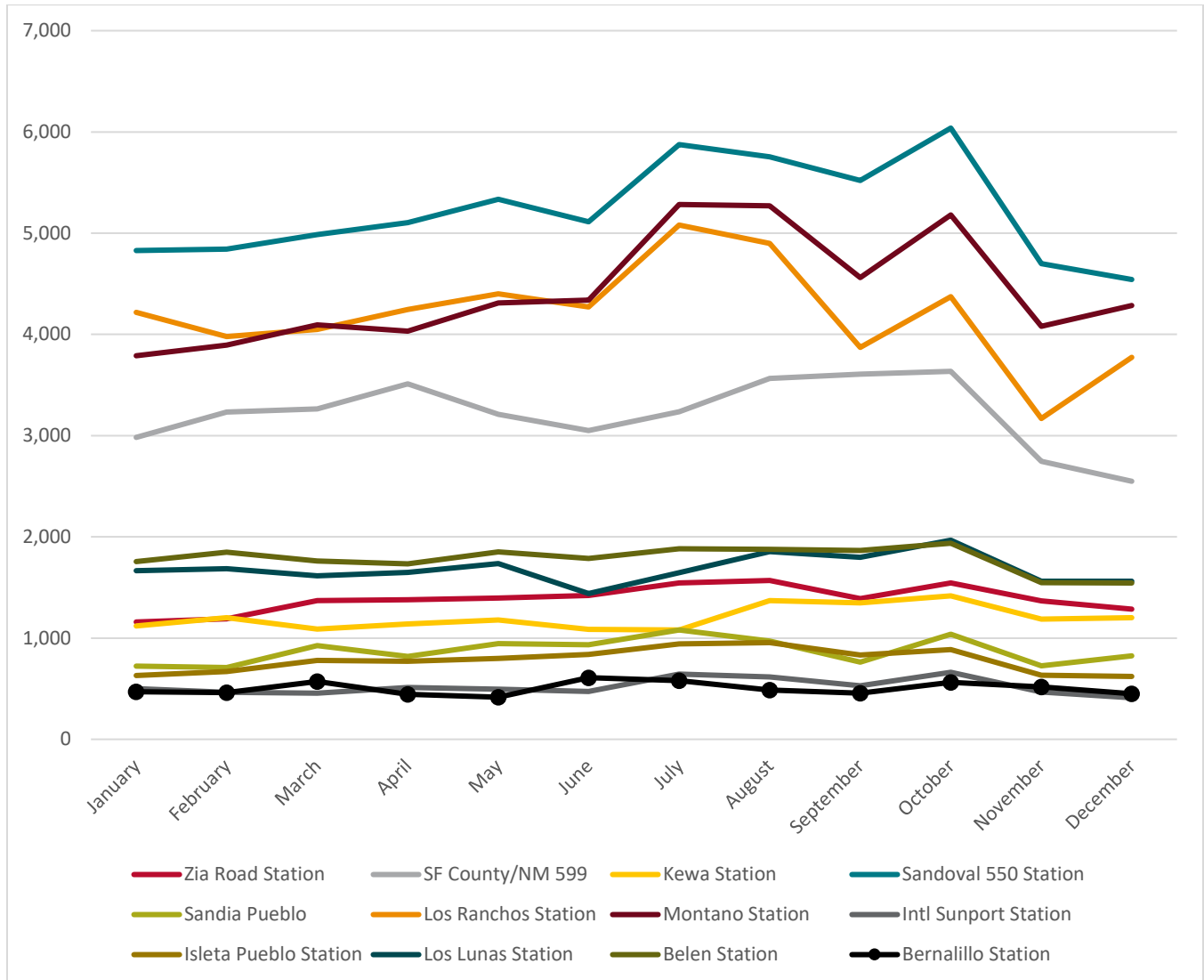


Table 1. New Mexico Rail Runner "Rider Off" Counts, 2024

	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
<b>Santa Fe Depot Station</b>	9,681	8,982	10,177	9,591	11,024	11,655	14,184	12,420	10,376	13,060	9,161	9,744
<b>South Capitol Station</b>	4,961	4,974	4,927	5,396	5,036	4,567	5,236	6,329	5,026	5,326	4,333	4,501
<b>Zia Road Station</b>	1,159	1,189	1,370	1,380	1,395	1,421	1,544	1,569	1,390	1,545	1,366	1,287
<b>SF County/NM 599</b>	2,982	3,232	3,265	3,511	3,210	3,050	3,236	3,565	3,608	3,635	2,747	2,549
<b>Kewa Station</b>	1,120	1,201	1,088	1,139	1,178	1,085	1,080	1,371	1,347	1,417	1,186	1,201
<b>Sandoval 550 Station</b>	4,827	4,843	4,985	5,105	5,336	5,112	5,875	5,755	5,520	6,038	4,698	4,542
<b>Bernalillo Station</b>	471	461	571	445	416	609	580	486	457	562	518	451
<b>Sandia Pueblo</b>	723	709	927	820	946	935	1,080	970	763	1,039	725	825
<b>Los Ranchos Station</b>	4,218	3,979	4,048	4,245	4,400	4,272	5,080	4,899	3,871	4,372	3,169	3,773
<b>Montano Station</b>	3,789	3,894	4,094	4,031	4,311	4,340	5,283	5,271	4,561	5,181	4,079	4,284
<b>Albuquerque Station</b>	7,340	7,528	7,827	8,088	8,106	8,310	10,176	9,262	9,131	10,351	7,691	7,593
<b>Intl Sunport Station</b>	502	464	456	513	494	472	644	616	530	662	468	410
<b>Isleta Pueblo Station</b>	629	670	780	772	799	837	943	955	834	886	634	621
<b>Los Lunas Station</b>	1,666	1,684	1,615	1,648	1,737	1,440	1,647	1,854	1,797	1,967	1,561	1,561
<b>Belen Station</b>	1,756	1,849	1,760	1,734	1,850	1,788	1,883	1,878	1,865	1,937	1,548	1,544

Removing the stations with the highest rider off rates, it is easier to see how disparate Bernalillo Station's numbers are. The Rail Runner has 40,000-60,000 riders each month; if Bernalillo could capture even a few of these riders, more people would get to know the downtown and ideally spend time and money in the space.

Figure 13: New Mexico Rail Runner "Rider Off" Counts for Select Stations, 2024



Public transportation outside of the Rail Runner is limited and includes commuter bus routes that connect with the train service and locations along 550. There is no intercity bus service that stops in Bernalillo off Highway 550.

One strong consideration for the Town is the development of the Molino building. This building sits adjacent to the Rail Runner's Bernalillo Station stop. Should it be redeveloped into a combination visitor center and museum, it would be well-positioned to grab the attention of train passengers and would be an ideal welcome to Bernalillo's downtown amenities. Providing a centralized location for visitor information at a transportation hub would streamline the tourist experience and help orient visitors based on their interests.

Another concern that affects both visitors and residents is the need for additional business development within the Town. The Town of Bernalillo Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 2022 and written by Consensus Planning,

noted that not only do residents have to leave the Town to shop for certain goods and services, but they also are dissatisfied with the retail options available in the Town, especially restaurant options and arts and entertainment venues. The development of additional options for Bernalillo residents would also benefit tourism.

As we will discuss in National Trends in Tourism, the market for locally-specific sites, outdoor recreation, and locally themed foods is booming. Building on Bernalillo's current character and strengths and advertising those to surrounding communities could help get visitors off of the highway, off of the train, and into the Town. Another example is that although Highway 313 is a popular route for cyclists to take from Albuquerque to Bernalillo, upon entering Bernalillo, bike shoulders and lanes end, and signage to local businesses is unclear. Further, there are not any shops that could help with a flat tire or serve as a hub to point visitors to local gathering places. With a few minor changes, such as clearer signage, a self-serve bicycle and water station, and perhaps a clearly marked bike route that has safer riding conditions, cyclists may stop and stay more often. This would serve the community by encouraging visitors without generating additional traffic.

The opportunity to capture tourist dollars is ideal with Bernalillo's geographic positioning. The difficulty will be in developing eye-catching ways to make visitors stop, stay, and spend rather than bypass the Town for another destination.

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## 2.5. Conclusion

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The Town of Bernalillo has much to offer in terms of tourism but doesn't have the visitor numbers that it could. Traffic counts, Rail Runner data, and gaps in available amenities illustrate that the Town has room to grow its businesses and generate more interest in what makes Bernalillo uniquely Bernalillo.

In the next chapter, we summarize the primary and secondary data sources BBER used to generate the analysis found throughout the rest of the report.

# Methodology

## 3.1. Introduction

To better understand tourism in Bernalillo, we had to investigate the following:

- Who was already coming to the Town as a tourist;
- What's working to draw people in and what's not;
- How businesses and event planners could be better supported by the Town;
- What promotional opportunities are available for Town use;
- What are the current trends for tourism in the United States?

Additionally, we provide different scenarios for hiring a tourism specialist or creating a tourism hub, using the information we gathered in our primary data collection and regional occupational data. The purpose of this section is to lay out the methods we used to obtain the information for the analytic sections that follow. Additionally, we will discuss response rates and the quality of the data.

## 3.2. Data and Methodology

The primary data for this study come from survey and interview data. Event surveys were conducted by BBER staff and students between December 2023 and August 2024. Formal, in-depth interviews were conducted between May 2024 and January 2025. Throughout the research, we also conducted informal interviews and had many conversations with local professionals and tourism experts throughout New Mexico. Our interview and survey methods are detailed in the sections below, and the questions we asked are included in Appendix A: Survey and Interview Questions. Totals throughout the report may not total 100% due to rounding.

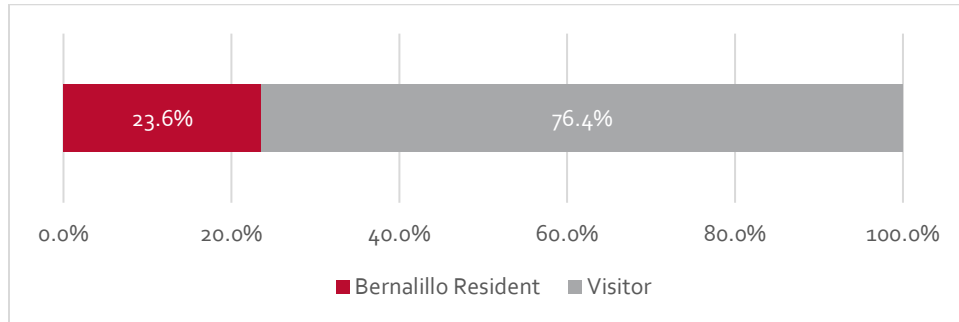
Secondary data was also compiled and analyzed to better understand tourism trends in the United States and how other locales staff and fund formal tourism departments or initiatives.

### 3.2.1. Event Surveys

In November 2023, the event survey was piloted internally by BBER staff and the Town of Bernalillo staff directly responsible for the study's oversight. Survey questions ranged from strictly quantitative responses to short answer questions.

The survey questions were then fine-tuned, and the two authors of this report administered the surveys in person at Bernalillo's Christmas Tree Lighting on December 1, 2023. Responses were collected on paper and online using Qualtrics XM survey software provided by UNM. Respondents could choose whether to complete the paper survey solo, complete it with BBER employees, or use a QR code to complete it online. A total of 165 surveys were completed at Town of Bernalillo events over the course of this study, 76.4% to non-residents and 23.6% to residents. While the study focuses on tourism, it is important to embed any tourism development within local interests. Therefore, we felt it critical to survey the interests of not only visitors but also individuals who live in Bernalillo.

Figure 14: Resident and Visitor Survey Response Rates

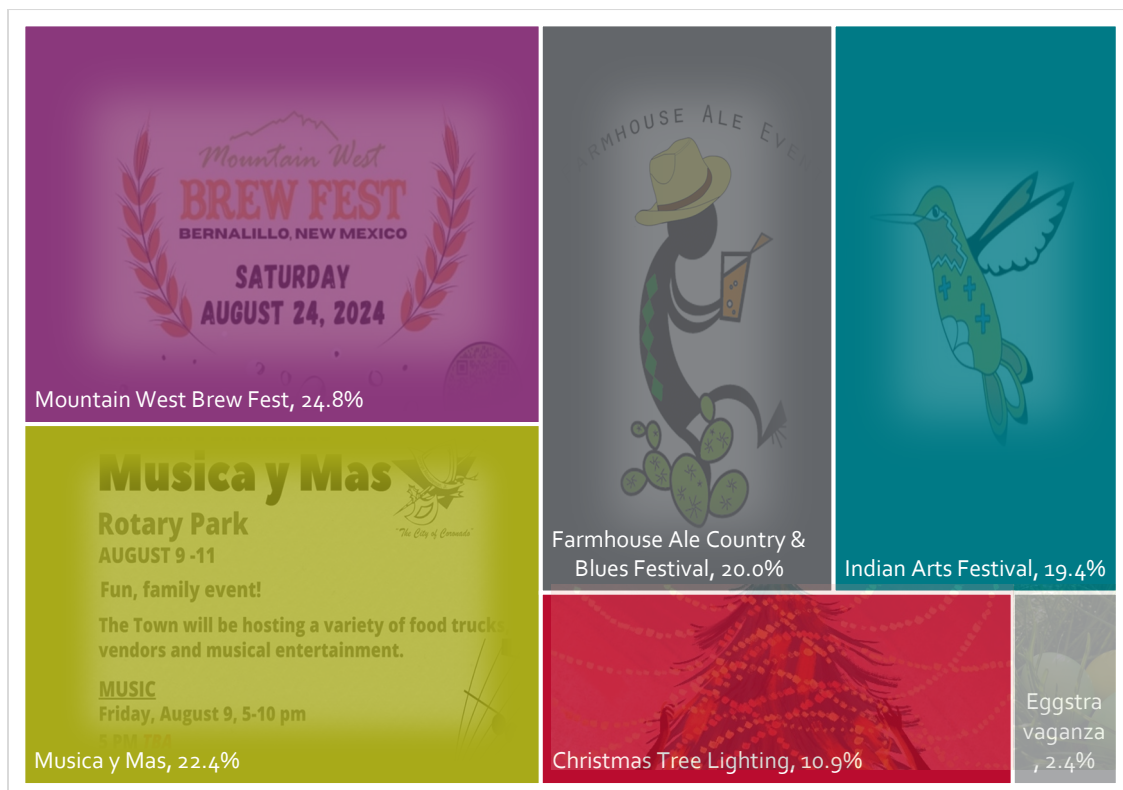


A combination of BBER staff and students attended the following Town events and administered surveys to visitors, performers, and vendors.

- Christmas Tree Lighting, December 2023
- Indian Arts Festival, May 2024
- Farmhouse Ale Country & Blues Festival, June 2024
- Fiestas de San Lorenzo/Música y Más, August 2024
- Mountain West Brew Fest, August 2024

Additionally, the museum staff had QR codes available at the Christmas Parade in December 2023 and the Eggstravaganza Easter Event in March 2024.

Figure 15: Survey Response Rates by Event



### 3.2.2. Tourism Trend Analysis

To complete a tourism trend analysis, BBER relied on secondary sources that conduct surveys on a regular basis. We utilized the marketing reports from Mintel, IBIS, and the Outdoor Industry Association, as well as the Census Bureau's Survey of Public Participation in the Arts. We utilize the data from these sources to generate a snapshot of both national interest in different types of activities and how those activities are discovered by participants. Our full analysis of these secondary sources is included in Chapter 4: National Trends in Tourism.

### 3.2.3. Local Business Owner and Event Planner Interviews

As BBER was conducting surveys at local events, we were also developing interview questions for local business owners, event coordinators, and other individuals tied to the tourism industry. These questions have a reasonable amount of overlap as our primary goal was to learn how these individuals felt the Town of Bernalillo could better support business and tourist initiatives. The interview protocols for event coordinators and local business owners can be found in Appendix A: Survey and Interview Questions. In May 2024, we began these formal interviews, reaching out to 23 unique business owners or event coordinators.

After the initial contact was made, BBER staff worked to schedule a window of approximately one hour to conduct each interview. We were able to conduct seven in-depth, confidential interviews with local business owners/managers, six with event coordinators, and three with individuals related to the local tourism industry, for a total of 16 interviews. Interviews ranged from 45-75 minutes and were used to shape our recommendations to the Town throughout this report. When possible, we include direct quotes from the interviews to support our findings.

### 3.2.4. Town Meeting

In September 2024, the authors of this report provided a presentation and held a listening session for Town department heads and any Town elected officials who wished to attend. The meeting was also open to the public. We provided preliminary survey results and discussed some of the interview responses. All participants were also asked to take part in answering some of the qualitative survey questions as a group. We recorded all responses and integrated them into the final analyses presented in this report.

### 3.2.5. Cost Analyses

A cost analysis for each possible iteration of expanding the Town's tourism profile is included in Chapter 6: Options for Strengthening Tourism. Costs are based on a combination of regional salaries and job descriptions alongside Bernalillo-specific salaries and budgets. Wage and salary data are drawn from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics, May 2023. The scenarios chosen for the analyses came from the scope of work and conversations with Town department heads.

# National Trends in Tourism

In this chapter, we focus on trends in tourism at the national level. The reports that are summarized in this chapter focus both on predicting future trends and cataloging actual activities in which respondents said they participated. The goal of this chapter is for the Town of Bernalillo to be able to examine how and where visitors and residents are more likely to engage in localized activities. Ideally, this will assist in understanding which Bernalillo activities and programs to build on and how to advertise them.

## 4.1. Current Trends in Tourism Nationally

### 4.1.1. Survey of Public Participation in the Arts<sup>10</sup>

Beginning in 1982, the U.S. Census Bureau has administered the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA) approximately every five years alongside its annual Current Population Survey. The supplemental survey is sponsored by the National Endowment of the Arts and samples up to two individuals per household, aged 18 and older at the time of the interview.<sup>11</sup> We utilize this data to generate a snapshot of both national interest in different types of arts-related activities and how those events are discovered by attendees. We additionally provide a look at the type of venues that respondents visited when attending various events and some of the activities they like to engage in outside of the arts.

As we are providing a snapshot and not a weighted analysis, these figures simply reflect what percent of respondents gave a “yes” response to the various questions. Valid responses included “yes,” “no,” “I don’t know,” a refusal to answer the question, or no response. In the following tables, we limit responses to “yes” or “no;” therefore, the number of respondents for each individual question may vary.

Each question is listed verbatim, followed by the results in table or chart form. We chose responses that may apply to the Town of Bernalillo and filtered out the ones that would not. We discuss the findings at the end of this section.

<sup>10</sup> National Endowment for the Arts, and United States. Bureau of the Census. Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA), United States, 2022. Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2024-02-12. <https://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR38936.v1>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/web/NADAC/studies/38936>

Figure 16. In-Person Performance Attendance, Select Responses

"The following questions are about live performances you have attended, in person, during the last 12 months between July 2021 and today. Do not include virtual performances or other online activities. With the exception of elementary, middle, or high school performances, did (you/name) go to or visit..."

Performance Options	Yes	No
A film festival?	2.9%	97.1%
Live book reading or a poetry or storytelling event?	5.1%	94.9%
An art exhibit, such as paintings, sculpture, pottery, graphic design, or photography?	24.8%	75.2%
Any place for its historic, architectural, or design value? This may be a park, building, monument, or neighborhood.	38.8%	61.2%
Live music, theater, or dance performance?	42.8%	57.2%

Figure 17. In-Person Performance Attendance, Select Responses, detailed

"The following questions are about your activities during the last 12 months between July 2021 and July 2022. With the exception of elementary or high school performances, did you go to or visit a/n..."

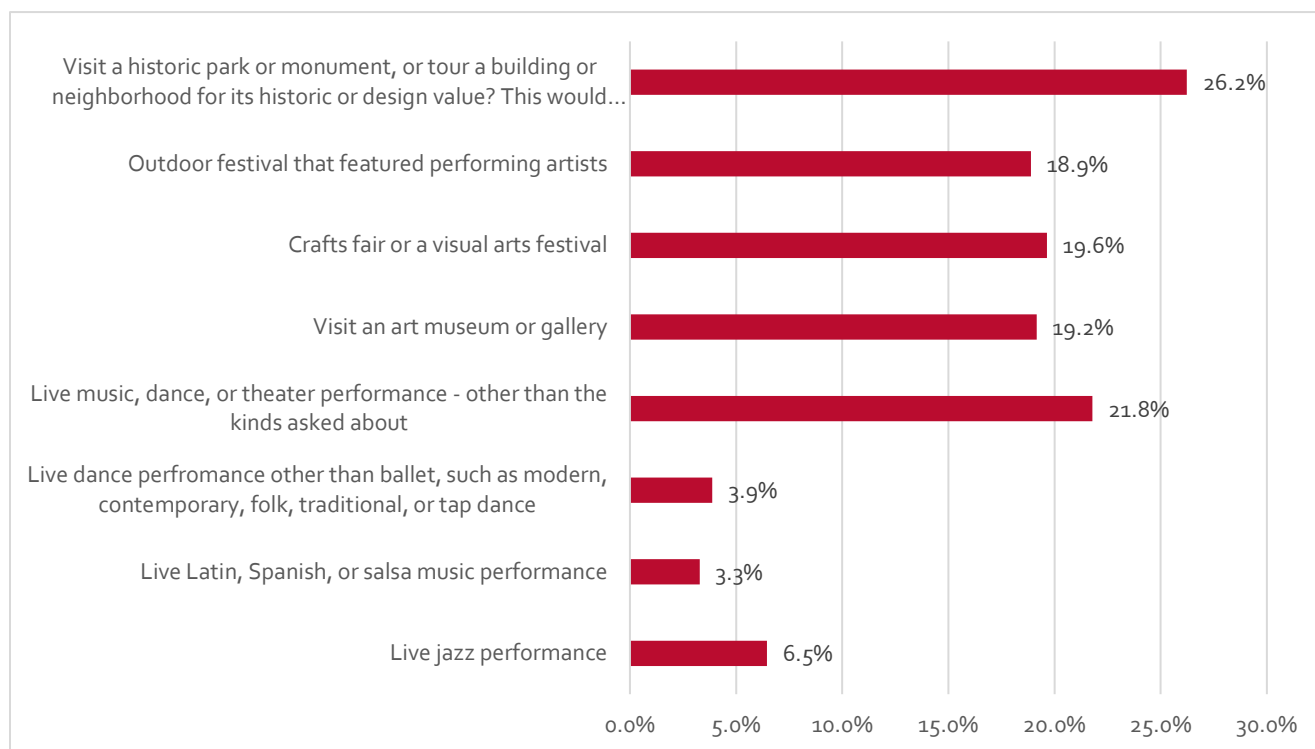




Figure 18. Informative Source Figures

"Thinking about all of the events you said you went to, did you first hear about them from \_\_\_\_\_"

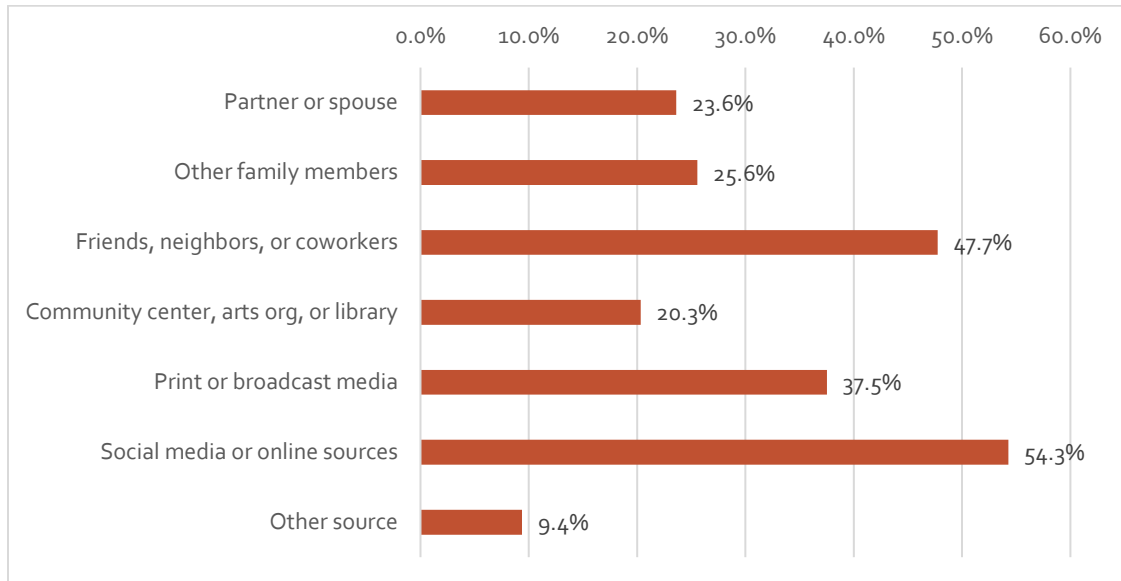


Figure 19. Location of Performance Attended, Select Responses

"You said you went to (live music, theater, or dance performances) (and) (live book readings or poetry or storytelling events) (and) (art exhibits). Did you go to any of these events at a..."

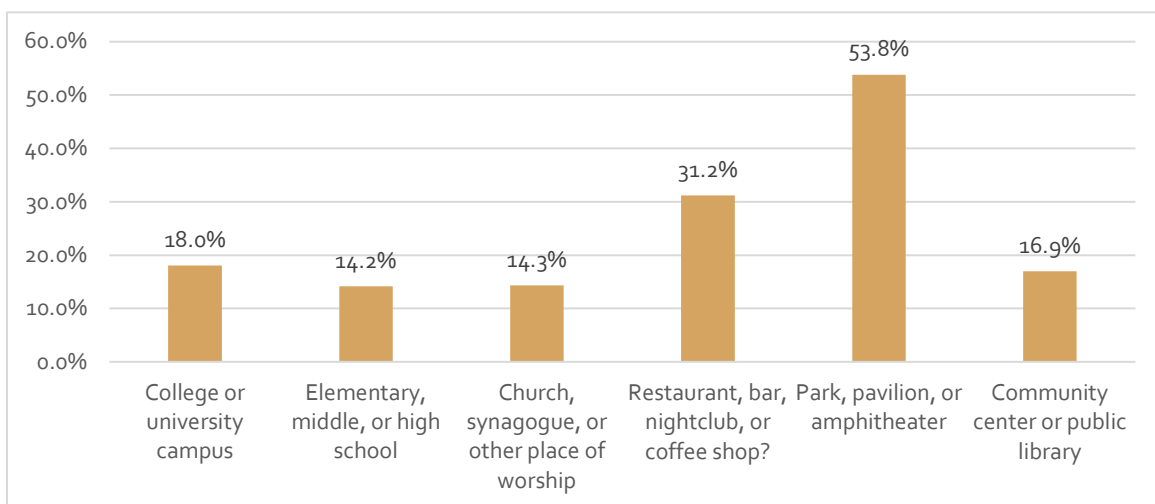
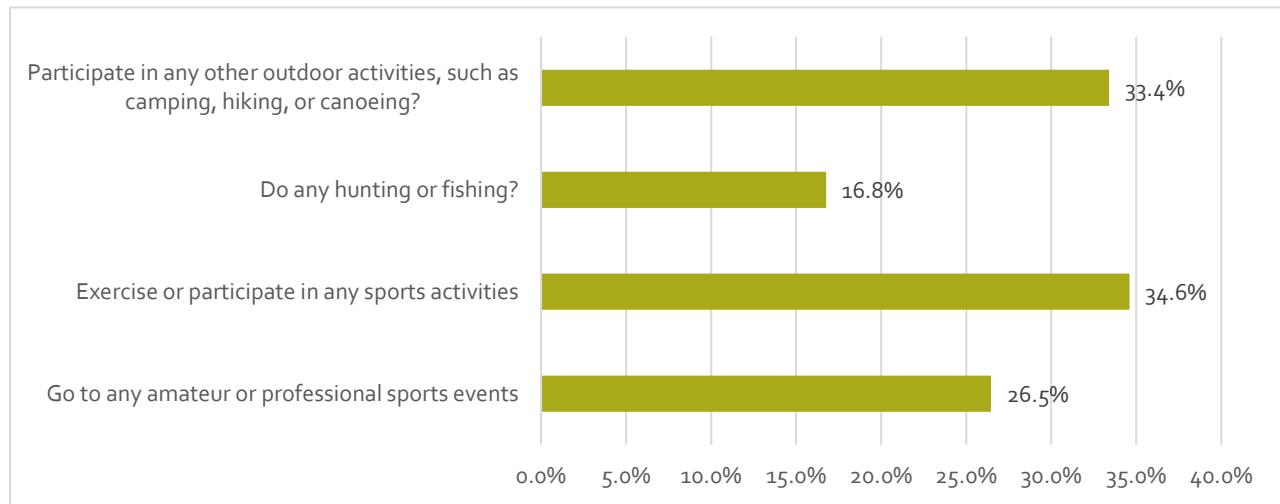


Figure 20. Leisure Activities, Select Responses

"These next questions are about your participation in other activities done for leisure. During the last 12 months, did you..."



The results of the PPAS show that art exhibits, historic sites, and live music and dance draw in more attendees than poetry or book readings and film festivals. Attendance for folk dance and Spanish or Latin music performances was low, but this is a nationwide survey, and the availability of such events is limited in certain parts of the country.

Word of mouth is the number one way in which respondents learned about an event they attended, closely followed by social media. In this way, it is key that travelers enjoy their time at an event or locale, so they pass along that information and entice more visitors. It is also important to advertise on appropriate platforms with eye-catching graphics and words.

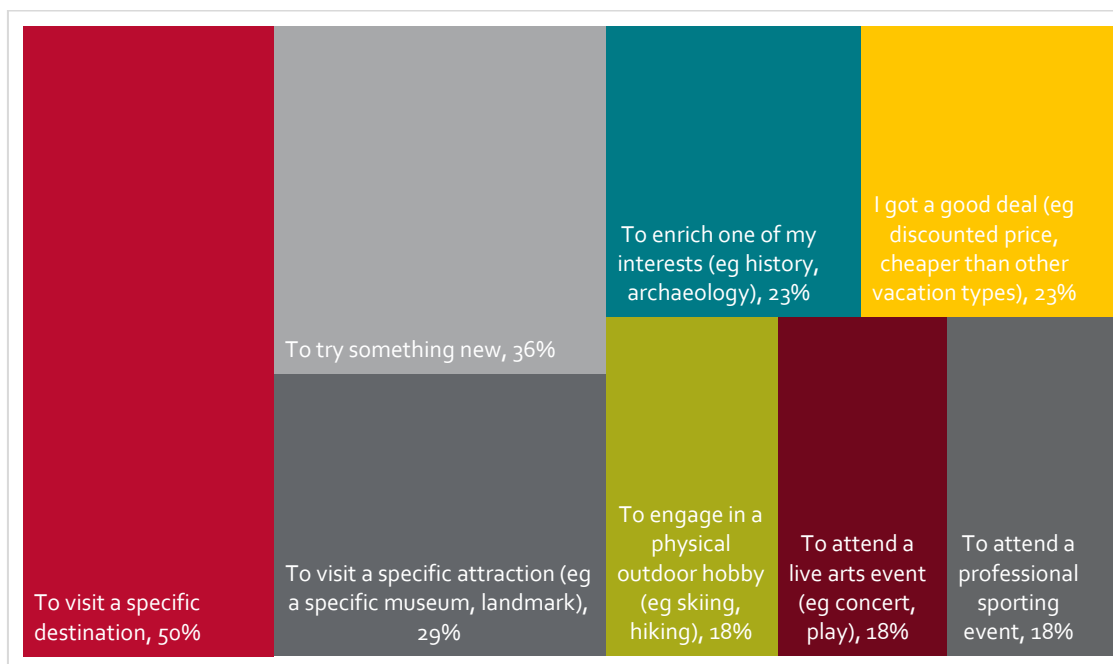
Outdoor activities also remain popular amongst respondents, with over one-third having exercised, participated in sports, and/or hiked, camped, or canoed. Over a quarter went to an amateur or professional sports event. Although Bernalillo does not have any outdoor outfitters or sporting goods stores at this time, the Big R on the Santa Ana Pueblo may be a spot for advertising Town events and amenities that focus on the outdoors.

#### 4.1.2. Mintel Report: Vacation Plans & Priorities 2025 - US<sup>12</sup>

This report focuses on predicting the market for travel, tourism, and vacation plans for 2025. The authors acknowledge that changes in policies at the national level may compromise travel plans, especially if individuals feel the need to save rather than spend liquid funds. Nonetheless, Mintel research shows that 84% of consumers in the United States plan to take an overnight vacation in 2025 and that over half of those travelers plan to spend more in 2025 than they did in 2024. Citing U.S. Census and Bureau of Economic Analysis statistics, the authors note that national travel and tourism generated \$688 billion in 2024, a year still considered part of the post-COVID recovery. They project tourism revenue to grow to nearly \$9 billion by 2029.

Of note to Bernalillo, the data show that tourists overall want authentic, relaxing experiences and that many are still planning to travel on a budget, looking to smaller locales and specific events that draw their interest. Further, many tourists are seeking “less crowded” experiences, particularly when they are not already set on a specific travel destination. Consumers continue to look to social media and online reviews to help guide their decision-making, but many are skeptical of the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) and the potential for false advertising. Selling authenticity could be a critical move for smaller locales.

The figure below illustrates the responses from 1685 surveys gathered by Mintel for their 2025 report in response to the question, “Why are you planning on taking a vacation in the next 12 months?” Respondents could select as many responses as applied.



Although 79% of the vacationers said they wanted to visit a specific destination or attraction, 36% wanted to try something new and 23% were looking to enrich their interests. These are the visitors who would benefit from targeted marketing about the uniqueness of Bernalillo. Additionally, 18% of respondents indicated they wanted to engage in an outdoor hobby; these vacationers would benefit from hearing more about Bernalillo’s excellent climate and proximity to myriad outdoor activities. Consumer interests align with what Bernalillo has to offer, it is just a matter of showcasing the offerings to the right markets.

<sup>12</sup> Gallinari, Mike. 2025. “Vacation Plans & Priorities: 2025 – US – 2025 [Industry Report]. Mintel. <https://www.mintel.com/>

Mintel breaks travelers into four primary categories: Ardent Adventurers, Potential Passengers, Habitual Homebodies, and Forethinking Forayers. Ardent Adventurers prioritize travel as a key component of their lives and often seek out new and unique destinations. Potential Passengers are not necessarily making their own travel decisions yet but could be inspired by current trips to rebook their own adventures in the future. Habitual Homebodies tend to revisit the same locales and would benefit most from add-ons to plans they routinely make. Forethinking Forayers like to strongly control their travel plans and benefit from seamless package deals.

Bernalillo may well seek to lure Habitual Homebodies and Forethinking Forayers who make travel plans for Santa Fe, Albuquerque, or Taos with specifically designed day trips to the Town. The Sandoval County Tourism Alliance offers itinerary options as a part of its application, but they are not specific to Bernalillo. Generating options for seasoned travelers to include as a part of a larger vacation may help bring in both new and repeat visitors in the long run.

#### 4.1.3. IBIS World Industry Report: Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation in the US, October 2024<sup>13</sup>

The IBIS World Industry Report for Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation includes a huge variety of activities nationally. In this section, we first focus on the industry as a whole and then briefly explore some of the subsectors highlighted by the authors.

Year-over-year revenue for this sector has increased annually with the exception of 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The authors of this report predict a strong recovery that has already been evident in recent years.

*Figure 21. Year-Over-Year Industry Revenue Growth*



Travel to and within the United States is projected to expand in the next five years, promoting revenue growth in the arts, entertainment, and recreation industry. However, overall free time per individual is expected to decrease as more and more workplaces require employees to return to in-person work. This indicates that individuals may plan vacations around arts, entertainment, and recreation, but travel may lessen outside of larger vacations. Of note, however, is the fact that “consumers are increasingly prioritizing unique experiences over buying material goods.” This could be a strong indicator in favor of developing even a modest tourism industry to promote Bernalillo’s unique character.

<sup>13</sup> IBIS World. 2024. “Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation in the US [Industry Report].”

Further, healthier, more low-cost options like outdoor activities continue to see a rise in interest and spending, so creating an image of being outdoor-friendly could benefit the Town.

The largest subsector in this industry is represented by spectator sports, earning 14.8% of the industry's revenue in 2024 [through October]. Specifically, this subsector is comprised of "professional, semiprofessional, and amateur sports and racing franchises that perform events in front of an audience." The second-largest subsector is made up of independent artists, writers, and performers, which is projected to earn 9.3% of total sector revenue in 2024. Live performances, whether sports or arts, drive the largest portions of this industry.

In light of recent inflation, consumers have cut back on their day-to-day spending, and museums and historical sites have experienced slowed revenue growth as a result. Further, these institutions have had cuts in funding that make their recovery post-2020 slower and more difficult, though they are still projected to grow. However, "pop-up art exhibitions and niche festivals" have seen a surge in consumer interest, demonstrating that if an idea is unique and well-marketed, it could see strong visitor numbers.

#### 4.1.4. Outdoor Industry Association's 2023 Outdoor Participation Trends Report<sup>14</sup>

The Outdoor Industry Association (OIA) has conducted the Outdoor Participation Trends Survey for 15 consecutive years, funded by The Outdoor Foundation, which is OIA's philanthropic arm. This study is widely cited throughout the outdoor industry, with findings being reported by large governmental organizations, such as the U.S. Forest Service, and smaller state organizations, like the Michigan Waterways Stewards.

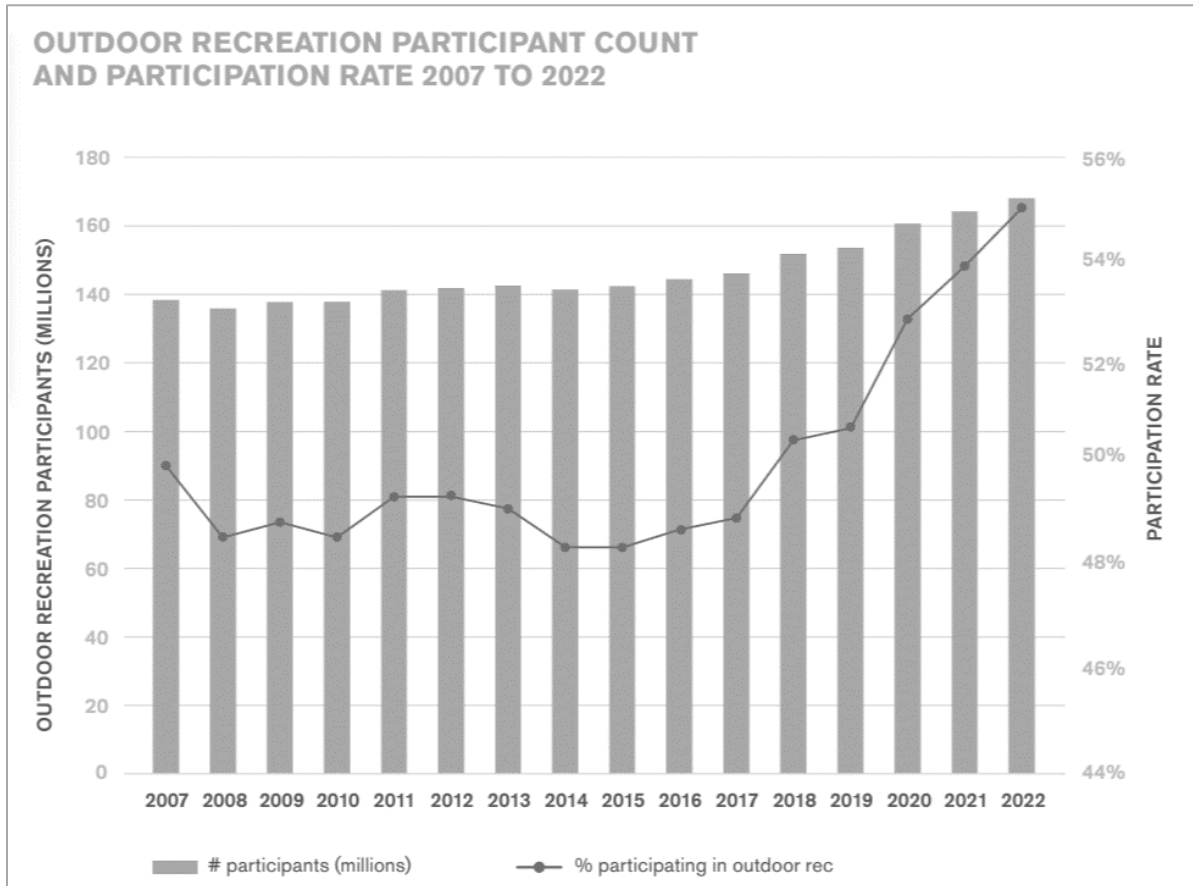
Respondents to the survey must have participated in one or more outdoor activities in the year the survey is focused on. We utilize their 2023 report to discuss some brief highlights of the outdoor recreation industry that might be relevant to Bernalillo's tourism development.

The report illustrates continuous growth in the outdoor recreation industry since the mid-2010s, with the most dramatic growth happening during the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020 to 2022. Their survey estimates that 55% of the U.S. population aged six or older participated in an activity related to outdoor recreation in 2022.

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<sup>14</sup> <https://oia.outdoorindustry.org/resource/2023-outdoor-participation-trends-report>

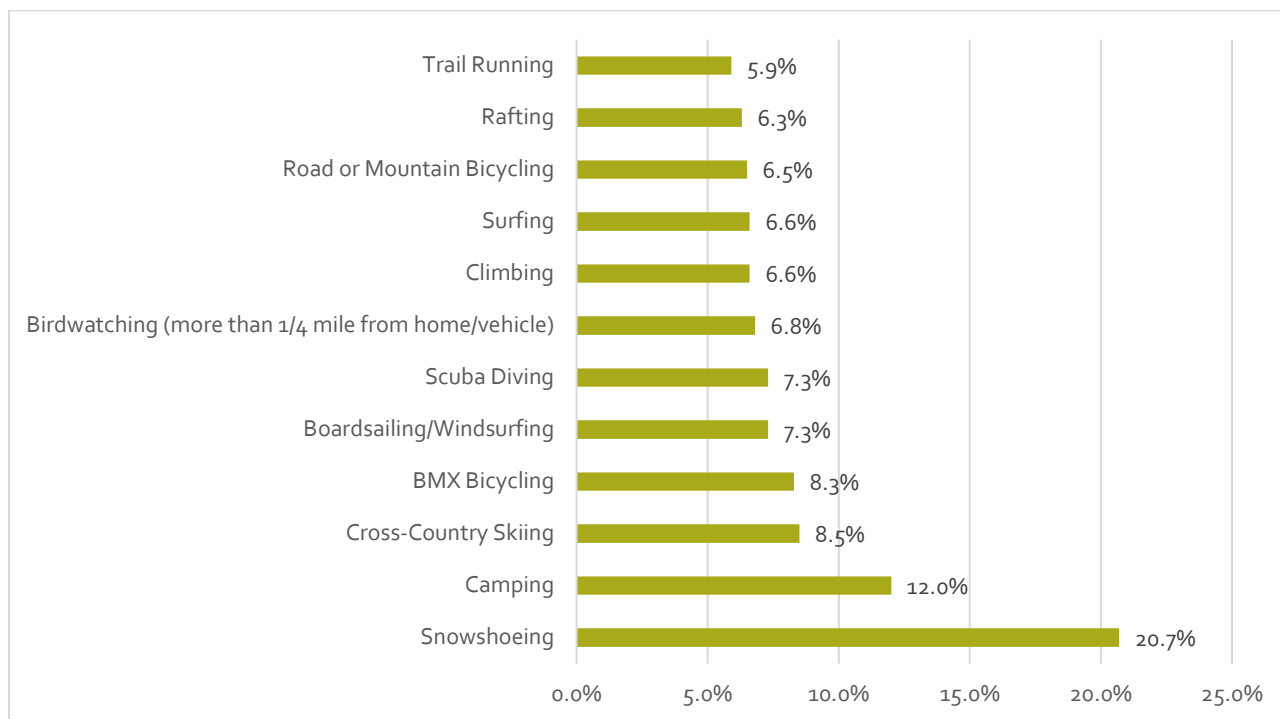
Figure 22. Year-Over-Year Outdoor Recreation Numbers [Graphic property of OIA]



OIA describes what they call “gateway activities,” or those outdoor activities that individuals describe as their first activity or an activity that increases participation across the board. Their findings show that 94% of individuals who camped and 83% of those who hiked participated in at least one other outdoor activity.

Some of the outdoor activities showing the highest annual growth rates include snowshoeing, camping, cross-country skiing, birdwatching, and climbing. Many of these activities are already found in or around the Town of Bernalillo, and it may be prudent to advertise to these participants, drawing them into the Town and potentially offering amenities for them as possible.

Figure 23. Growth Rate of Outdoor Activities, 2021-2022



Between 2019 and 2022, the number of participants in outdoor recreation increased by 14.5 million individuals and has not shown signs of decline. Many individuals began their outdoor recreation during the pandemic when it was not safe to be indoors with others, but this study illustrates that they have not given up their outdoor adventures, though the frequency of individual participation has declined slightly. This means that each individual is participating in slightly fewer activities than in the previous year, though more people are trying new activities. Bernalillo could tap into this market by luring participants off of the main roads and into the Town, especially if outdoor businesses could be drawn into the community. Further, drawing attention to existing businesses, such as Quiet Waters, may bring additional tourist revenue to the community with a little cross-promotion. These trends are not reversing and may be very beneficial for the Town, especially should we have another event that drives people to the outdoors.

#### 4.1.5. Mintel Report: Outdoor Vacation Activities - U.S. - February 2021<sup>15</sup>

Although this report primarily focuses on activities individuals engaged in during 2019 and 2020, it also discusses how outdoor recreation changed as the pandemic began, the trends they have charted over time, and how locations can engage in better marketing to capture more of these tourists.

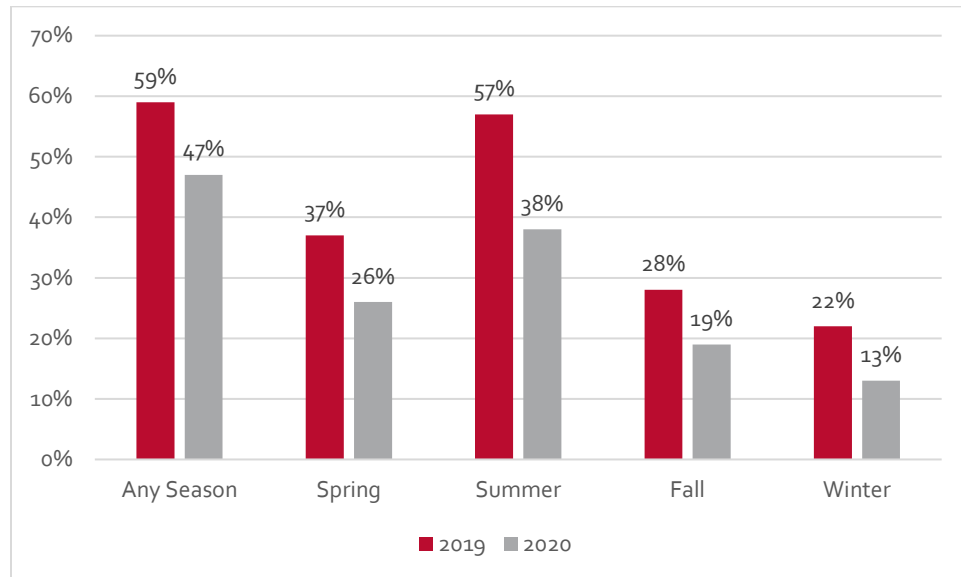
Of the 2000 participants Mintel surveyed in 2021, 61% said they had taken a leisure trip that included an outdoor activity in the previous two years. 39% of respondents specifically took a vacation that centered around outdoor activities. 36% included outdoor activities in their vacation but did not center their plans around those activities. Some of the respondents took both types of vacations.

The report notes that the majority of outdoor recreation vacations took place in summer, but participants noted an interest in winter activities such as skiing and snowshoeing. Mintel suggests that barriers to entry, such as cost and equipment, may inhibit potential winter recreationists. They outline a case study in which a Town created and

<sup>15</sup> Gallinari, Mike. 2021. Outdoor Vacation Activities – US – February 2021 [Industry Report]. Mintel. <https://www.mintel.com/>

promoted a winter recreation opportunity within one of its parks, including ice skating and skate rental, sledding, and walking through ice sculpture parks. Promoting similar family-friendly activities with easy entry could bolster winter outdoor tourism and also serve as a place for locals to gather. This could be extended to activities in other seasons as well.

Figure 24. Percent of Respondents Who Indicated Participating in an Outdoor Recreation Activity by Season, 2019 and 2020



Mintel also distinguishes between serious outdoor hobbyists and more casual recreationists. They discuss the importance of a destination considering the demands of both groups when expanding opportunities and when engaging in targeted marketing strategies. Casual recreationists tend to engage in activities like hiking and biking – often activities that do not require specialized equipment or training. Attracting an outdoor-focused store or rental business to the Bernalillo area could lure more tourists into the Town to spend money on other local attractions. As of this writing, the only outdoor outfitter in Bernalillo is Quiet Waters, which focuses on paddling sports and is well off the main streets.

Serious hobbyists are more likely to bring their own equipment but are interested in repair shops and places to buy perishables and supplies. Guiding these visitors to existing businesses and perhaps expanding local offerings, especially on route to Santa Fe and Jemez, could be beneficial for the Town.

Finally, the report looks at how to microtarget urban residents, such as those in Albuquerque, to attract more outdoor recreationists. They suggest generating advertising that piques curiosity about the destination and encourages visitors to try something new and unique that cannot be found in their urban area.



#### 4.1.6. IBIS World Industry Report: Historic Sites in the US, March 2024<sup>16</sup>

The Town of Bernalillo is home to the Coronado Historic Site. In this section, we focus on how the market for historic sites is affected by economic fluctuations, who visit historic sites, and what the competition for these sites looks like. All data and information come from the IBIS World Industry Report released in 2024 and include industry projections through 2029.

With the exception of 2020, the primary year of the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism related to historic sites on the national level has steadily increased for more than 10 years. This is illustrated in increasing revenue and increasing employment over time, as shown in the table below, which projects small but steady increases in the industry through 2029.

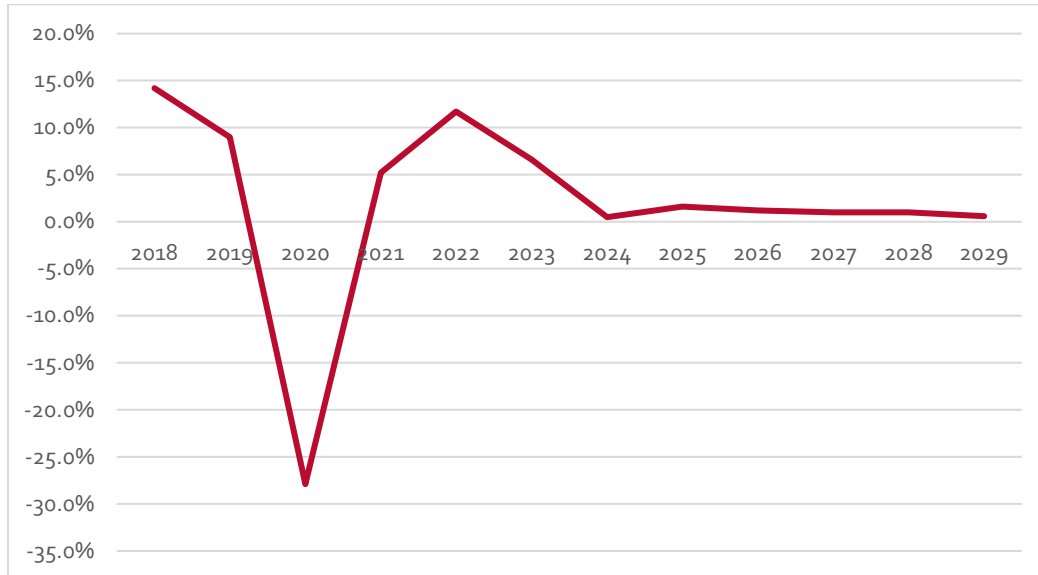
Figure 25. Historic Site Tourism Trends

Year	Revenue (\$ Million)	Employment (Units)
2018	1,594.0	13,366
2019	1,737.1	13,799
2020	1,251.8	13,500
2021	1,316.7	14,003
2022	1,470.8	15,191
2023	1,567.3	15,944
2024	1,575.0	16,384
2025	1,600.3	16,819
2026	1,619.8	17,089
2027	1,635.6	17,333
2028	1,651.9	17,612
2029	1,661.4	17,834

Another way to look at this is to examine the year-over-year growth of industry revenue. In the following chart, the percent increase (or decrease, in 2020 alone) is illustrated by the line graph. Although projections for increasing revenue slow, they do not decline over the projection period, illustrating stability in the industry. This means that historic sites will continue to bring tourists to destinations in the near future.

<sup>16</sup> IBIS World. 2024. "Historic Sites in the U.S. [Industry Report]."

Figure 26. Year-Over-Year Historic Site Tourism Revenue Growth



This industry is driven by domestic tourists, though visits by international tourists are expected to grow, especially with projected declines in the strength of the U.S. dollar. Because these venues are mostly visited by tourists, changes in travel patterns and disposable income can make historical site revenue from admissions quite volatile.

Interestingly though, many historic sites have limited or no admission fees. Even with admission fees and revenue from souvenirs and the like, these sites have been unable to keep their venues operational through self-generated funds alone. Instead, historic sites nationwide tend to rely on government funding, tax incentives, and private donations, which are currently unpredictable with the change in administration. Many of these sites are affiliated with the National Park Service or other government agencies, and although they may not generate enough revenue to operate, they are retained as an overall public service. The report notes that investments in these sites help with preservation and maintenance, potentially improving access to and interest in the venues.

IBIS World notes that museums, national parks, and other natural sites represent competition for historical sites. To maximize tourist interest in a destination, all the sites should be highlighted simultaneously to pique the greatest range of interests and to encourage visitors to spend a full day in an area, spending money and learning about the place.

44.4% of the 2023 historic site industry's revenue came from individuals who made more than \$95,000 that year, individuals in the highest income bracket. With low-to-no entry fees, increasing interest in these sites is less a matter of income and more a matter of marketing. Carefully advertising historical sites as a part of a larger vacation is key to capturing more tourist dollars.

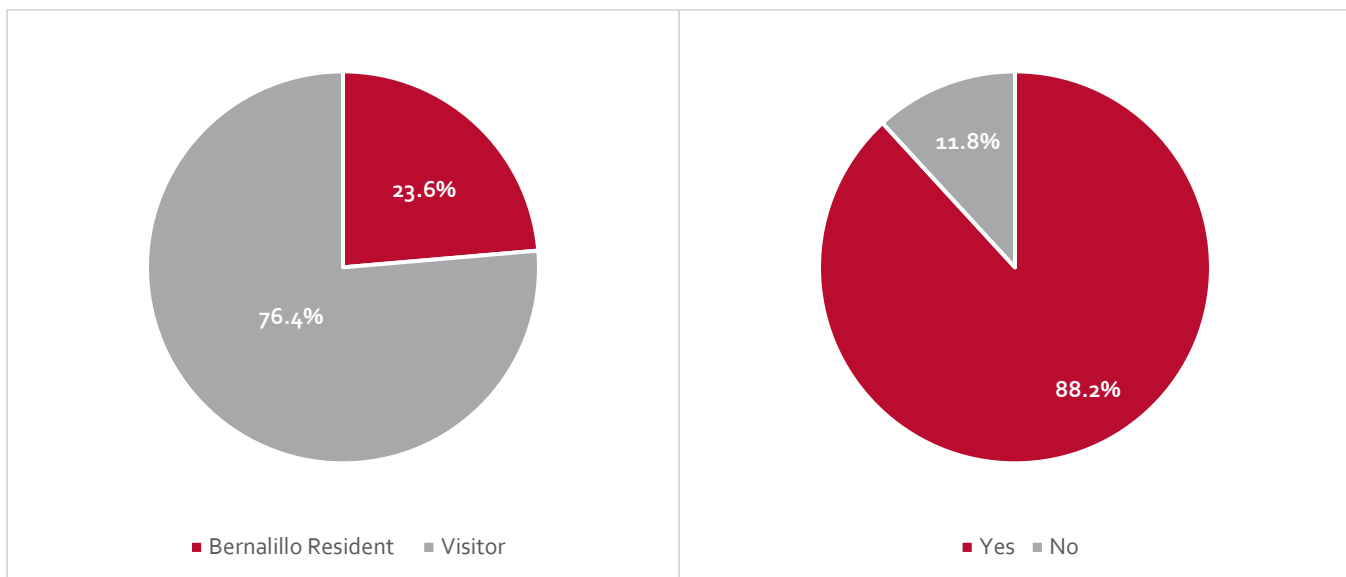
# Bernalillo Tourism and Marketing Analysis

This chapter focuses on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the tourism industry in the Town of Bernalillo. We examine marketing efforts and the survey data gathered by BBER at some Town-organized events in addition to events held on Town property but hosted by unaffiliated organizers during the spring and summer of 2024. In September 2024, BBER staff met with select Town of Bernalillo officials to discuss what we found. Our primary goals at that meeting were to present a digital and on-site marketing assessment using evidence from those events and affiliated websites and to ask for input on what strengths and weaknesses they see in Bernalillo as a tourist destination. At that meeting, we highlighted what seemed to be working and what needed improvement while garnering great feedback regarding the officials' vision for the Town. Since the September meeting, the authors acknowledge that Town personnel have taken several steps for improvement over the last six months.

Tourism can be defined as a social, cultural, and economic phenomenon that entails the movement of people to places outside their usual environment for personal or professional purposes. It may not seem important for a small community like Bernalillo, but it can have quite an economic impact that elevates the residents' quality of life. Obviously, there is the direct economic impact from tourism that local business owners will benefit from, but the input from visitors will also indirectly benefit the Town as jobs are created and more money is cycled through the community. Beyond economic impacts, improved hospitality is something everyone will enjoy. In the Comprehensive Plan, put together by Consensus Planning,<sup>17</sup> it is noted that residents desire more restaurants and activities within Bernalillo as well. Embracing tourism can help the Town expand its infrastructure, which is the backbone of a Town that keeps the community thriving.

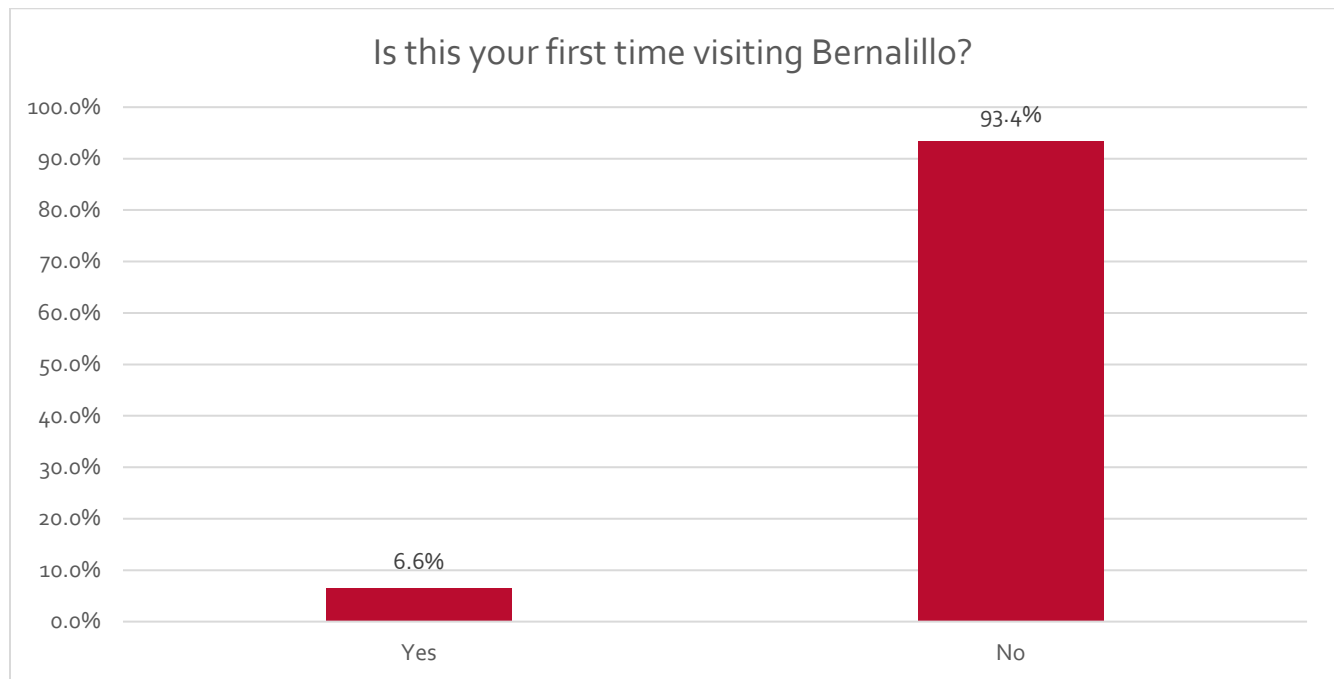
BBER's survey results indicate that Bernalillo is already seeing success in its tourism efforts as slightly more than 75% of the attendees of events are not Town residents. When talking to the out-of-town visitors, nearly 90% said that their entire reason for being in Bernalillo at that time was for the event. Almost 95% had been to Bernalillo previously. Exceptionally, not one person surveyed at any of the events said they would not attend the event again.

Figure 27. Ratios of Bernalillo Residents at Events and Events are the Reason for Non-residents in Town



<sup>17</sup> Consensus Planning. 2022. "Town of Bernalillo: Comprehensive Plan." Adopted June 13, 2022.

Figure 28. Repeat Visitors to Bernalillo



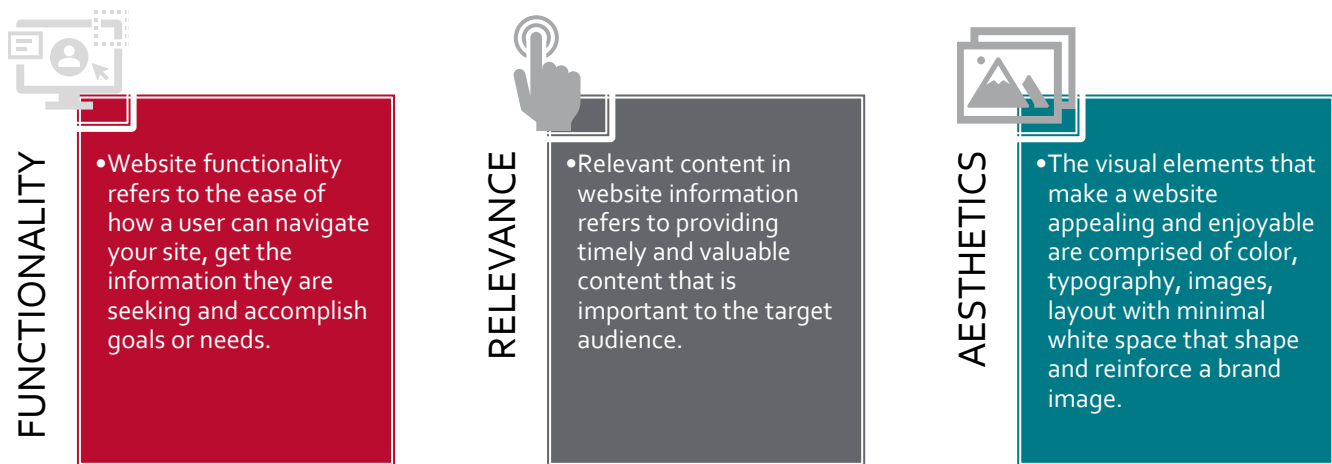
## 5.1. Digital Media

### 5.1.1. Website

A community's website is essential in today's technology-obsessed society. Most people want to get the information they crave with a snap of their fingers. Nationally, 76% of individuals have broadband in their homes, 96% say they use the internet, and 91% own a smartphone,<sup>18</sup> making that possibility now an everyday reality. Keeping that in mind, a community's website is a virtual Town hall. It should serve multiple user groups, including residents, businesses, and potential investors. A good website should provide essential information such as public meeting schedules, local resources, and development opportunities while also reflecting the community's identity and economic potential. Key considerations for web design include functionality, relevance, and aesthetics on all possible platforms.

<sup>18</sup> Pew Research Center. 2024. "Fact Sheet: Tech Adoption Trends." <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/internet-broadband/>, <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/mobile/>.

Figure 29. Key Considerations for Web Design



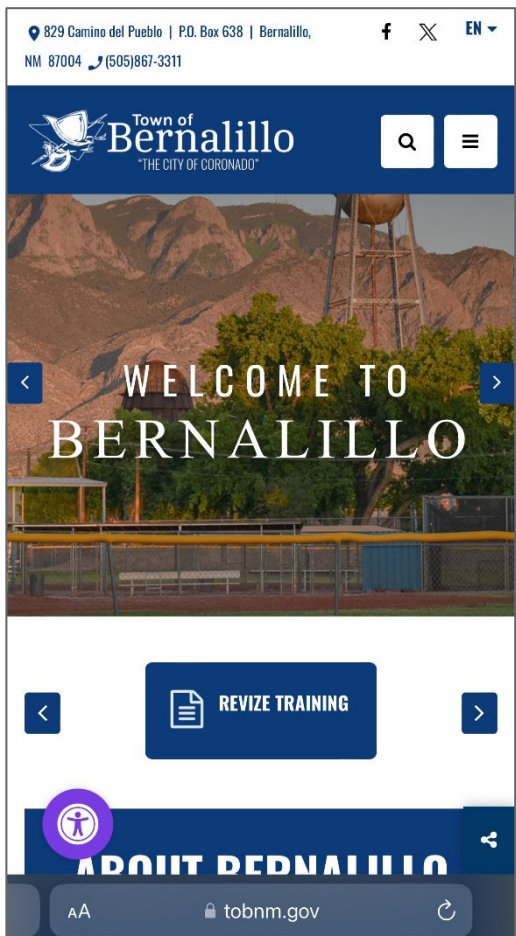
First impressions of a website happen within milliseconds, making design a critical aspect. The homepage should be clean, well-organized, and updated regularly. Essential elements include a menu bar for navigation, typically organized left to right; a quick links section for common tasks; and text formatting that avoids excessive capitalization and cluttered fonts. A search bar is also crucial for easy access to information. Websites should use visuals effectively,

maintain clear cross-references for both internal and external links, and ensure key documents and resources are accessible. Content should be clear, engaging, and regularly updated. Additionally, economic development opportunities should be clearly presented, with dedicated sections for relevant authorities and resources.

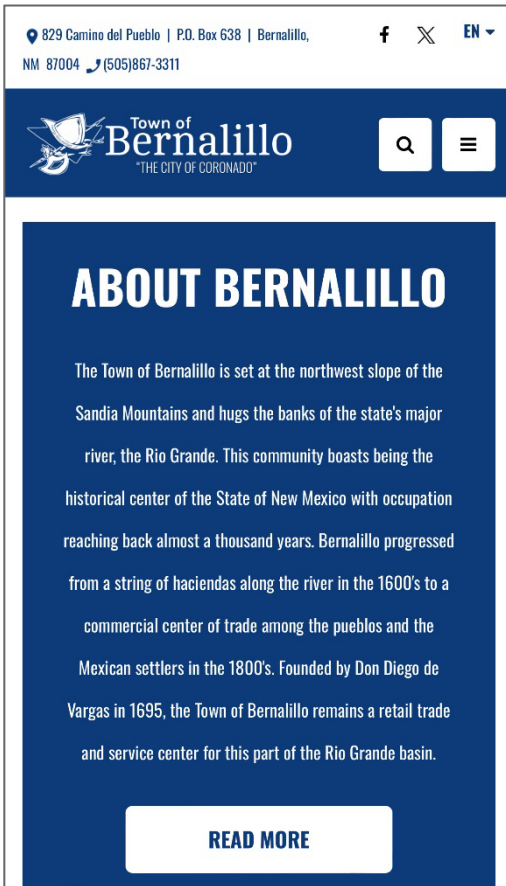
Bernalillo's website conforms to most of those principles. The following assessment describes the website's appearance on a desktop computer, yet it is important to acknowledge that it meets all the recommended criteria on mobile platforms as well, as illustrated in the graphic on the left.

The homepage has a menu bar at the top that is organized for easy navigation, including "Home" for a quick return to the start page. There are multiple subheaders under five of the eight main menu items. The only drawback with the subheaders is the overwhelming number of options under Departments and Visitors. That, in combination with the all-capitalized text, makes it hard to read at first glance. Immediately below the header is a rotation of beautiful Town photos. The quick link buttons immediately underneath the rotating photo gallery allow for the fast completion of common user tasks.

Scrolling down the home page, the next thing visitors see is a gorgeous, almost aerial photo of the Town highlighting the Sandia Mountains and a short paragraph about Bernalillo. For larger municipalities, this would look out of place and should not be on the main page. However, a case can be made for its placement in this instance. Bernalillo is a quaint, small Town

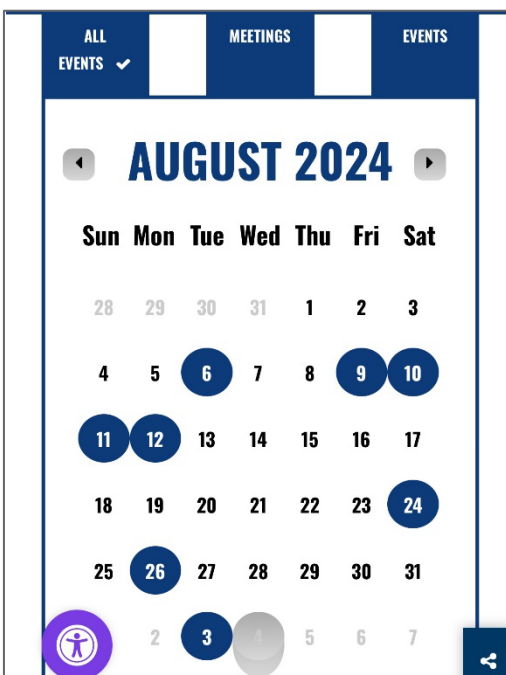


ABOVE: The appearance of the About Bernalillo section on the home page on a mobile device in August 2024.



ABOVE: The appearance of the About Bernalillo section on the home page on a mobile device in August 2024.

BELOW: The appearance of the Calendar on the home page on a mobile device in



with deep roots that emphasizes family values, heritage, and culture. In a land full of historic value and surrounded by three of the state's largest cities, Bernalillo's small-town lifestyle is a major selling point should the Town want to capitalize on it.

Beneath the quick introduction to Bernalillo is one of the website's premier features. The calendar of events is displayed alluringly on all platforms. The calendar is interactive, allowing the user to easily click on a date and see what is happening. The user can also click on the event and get more information, including a map to the location and an ICS file that can be downloaded and is compatible with many email and calendar programs, including Apple Calendar, Google Calendar, and Microsoft Outlook.

From a resident's viewpoint, the Town of Bernalillo's website is a rich source of information and should meet all needs, fulfilling the virtual Town hall role. From the viewpoint of a tourist or first-time visitor, there are some concerns. As previously mentioned above, there is a Visitors tab on the home page but there are 14 subheaders, all of which are in capital letters and difficult to read in such a tiny font. There are a few subheaders for some specific events under the Visitors tab, but not all are featured, and there is an additional Events option on the menu bar near Visitors. The Events page off the main menu does not list all events at this time, only a few, and that is at the bottom of the page. At the top of the page, there appears to be a cross between an advertisement for hosting an event in Bernalillo and a place to get information about hosting an event. There is a sidebar on the left side of the page that lists the seasons of the year, and from there, links to events that occurred during that period are listed. It is a clean and unique way to display events, but in its current state, it is easily overlooked because of its font size and color compared to the other text on the page. Just a few minor changes to the existing site could help the readability and improve the navigation for first-time visitors.

### 5.1.2. Social Media

For any successful social media account, it is vital to know one's audience while posting a mix of informative and engaging content. It is important to be visually appealing, maintain a recognizable style and tone across all platforms to build brand identity, and monitor and analyze the performance of each post to see what resonates best. Regularly updated photos showcasing community events and developments enhance engagement. Social media integration is essential, ensuring active updates across platforms.

The Town of Bernalillo currently has two official accounts on social media platforms: Facebook and Instagram. Facebook, owned by Meta, is statistically the most popular application with consumers and marketers.



The top-ranked application boasts over three billion monthly active users (MAUs) and is used by roughly 86 percent of marketers. Instagram, also owned by Meta, ranks fourth in MAUs with two billion and is leveraged by nearly 80 percent of marketers for advertising.<sup>19</sup> Links to both accounts can be found easily on Bernalillo's website at the top of the home page.

#### 5.1.2.1. Facebook

The Facebook page<sup>20</sup> accomplishes the goals of a strong account. Just like the website section, the following descriptions are from the view of an observer to the page on a desktop computer. Visitors are greeted by a stunning photo of the Town that is similar to one of the photos that welcome visitors to its website. The cover photo is colorful yet calm, with an abundance of green trees and vast landscapes that lead to the towering Sandia Mountains reaching into the sky. The Town's profile photo sits in the lower left of the cover photo, which is standard placement on all Facebook pages, and features a wooden sign that states "Welcome to Historic Bernalillo on El Camino Real." These two photos combine to accurately tell visitors that this community is a strong yet small Town deeply rooted in its culture.

Immediately to the right of the profile picture is the page's name, "Town of Bernalillo," and underneath that, the number of page likes (4,200) and followers (5,000) is visible. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2023 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year Estimates, roughly 92 percent of Bernalillo's 8,913 residents have a computer.<sup>21</sup> ACS data also calculates that there are 3,836 households in the Town of Bernalillo and 2.32 persons per household.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, it is feasible that a majority of the Town's residents access Bernalillo's social media account and that the reach could extend to nearly every household within its boundaries.

The principles of social media content are constantly evolving as technology and applications continue to change and grow. There are a few that have stayed true over the years, and the key thing to remember is not every page, or Town is the same. What works content-wise for Albuquerque won't necessarily resonate with Bernalillo's followers. The Town's Facebook page manager(s) have done an excellent job of making sure the "About" section is complete and the posts are timely and informative, especially for its residents. The page is full of notices regarding office closures, construction, job openings, and civic pride posts.

#### 5.1.2.2. Instagram

Bernalillo's Instagram page<sup>23</sup> is still in its infancy, with its first post appearing in October of 2024, but it is growing fast. The profile photo is the same as on Facebook. This is an excellent example of maintaining a brand identity, ensuring visitors that this is an official page. Brand identity is important because it builds trust with consumers, or in this case,



*IMAGE: The appearance of the Facebook page on a mobile device in August 2024.*

<sup>19</sup> MAU figures via <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/new-social-media-demographics/> and marketing percentages accessed at <https://www.statista.com/statistics/259379/social-media-platforms-used-by-marketers-worldwide>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/bernalillotown>

<sup>21</sup> <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDT5Y2023.B28008?t=Telephone,%20Computer,%20and%20Internet%20Access&g=160XX00US3506970>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/bernalillotownnewmexico,bernalillocountynewmexico/PST045223>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.instagram.com/bernalillotown/>

visitors, by creating a recognizable and reliable identity that allows them to easily connect with your community, understand what makes you unique, and drive them to choose to visit your Town over another.

In four months, there have been approximately 50 posts and 42 followers. While the content of the posts is all available on Facebook, the information is still vital and helps ensure the necessary info reaches as many people as possible. Even though both are owned by the same parent company, they offer a massive reach to diverse audiences because the user base is not necessarily the same.

#### 5.1.2.3. X

Bernalillo used to advertise that it has an account with X, formerly Twitter, in the same location on its website as it does Facebook. It was pointed out in our September meeting that the account had not had any activity since May of 2021 and was immediately removed from the website. While the account is still technically active, no new content has been added.

The decision to stop utilizing X in 2021 is unknown to BBER. However, based on our survey results, it is the least-used social media platform by event attendees. This tracks with the national numbers being reported. According to an article on technology and digital culture news site Mashable.com,<sup>24</sup> X lost 8.4% of its U.S. users (32.3 million to 29.6 million) in October 2024 and may lose millions more in 2025.

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## 5.2. Event Marketing

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BBER selected the Mountain West Brew Fest, held on Saturday, August 24, 2024, at Loretto Park, as its case study for an event marketing assessment. The Brew Fest is an annual Town-organized event that advertises local food, live music, and regional craft breweries.

The digital marketing leading up to the event was strong. The event had its own website<sup>25</sup> which was advertised on the Town's Facebook page and linked to by the calendar on the Town's website. The event's website was attractive, with informative images and text. There were several posts regarding the event on Facebook that targeted vendors as well as potential visitors. Attendees also mentioned seeing ads for it around Town, via emails, and on the water bill. Tickets were easily purchased from the website, the music lineup and participating vendors were displayed, and the venue's policies were clearly stated. There was even an interactive map that allowed you to access driving directions. However, the survey results showed that most attendees heard of the event through word of mouth.

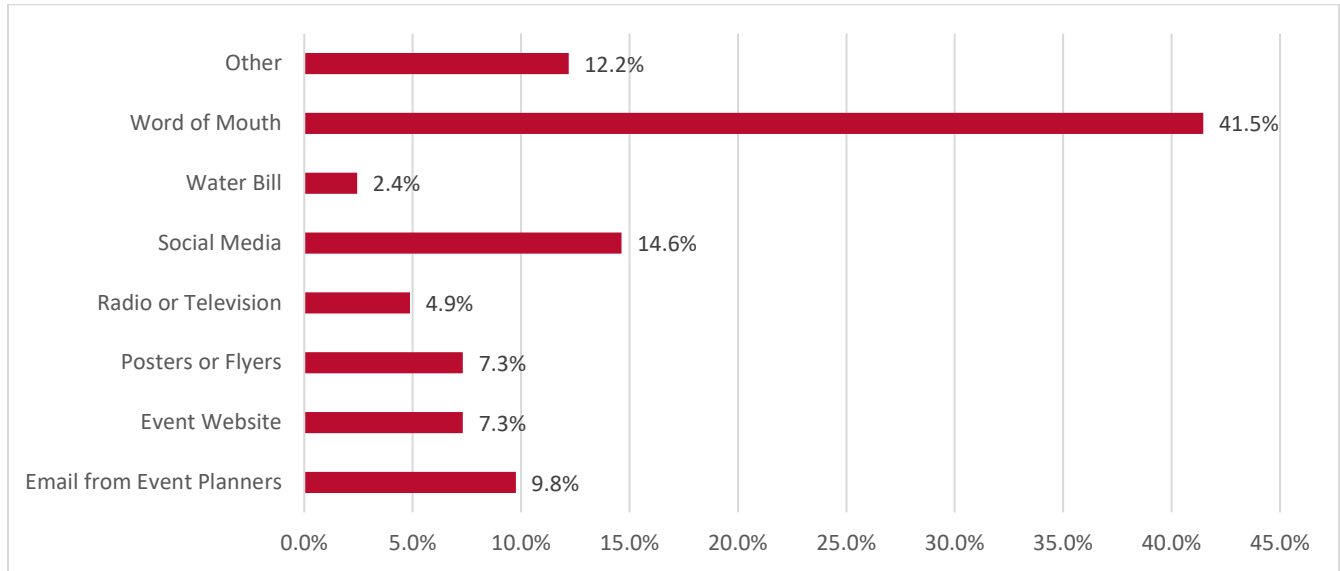
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<sup>24</sup> <https://mashable.com/article/elon-musk-x-declining-user-base-2025>

<sup>25</sup> <https://mwbrewfest.org/>



Figure 30. How Attendees Heard About Mountain West Brew Fest



Loretto Park has an established history of hosting community events, including several other beer and wine festivals over the years. With its vast green grass, shady trees, and easily accessible dirt path that skirts the outside of the park, it is a great place for outdoor events. There is a plethora of free street parking as well as a large, paved parking lot right next to the church. Arguably one of the Town's "can't miss" events, it was no surprise that the word of mouth around the event was so strong. The major drawback of Loretto Park is its lack of amenities. With no running water and problematic portable toilet placement, visitors reported difficulty in getting all of their needs met. We discuss this point further in the Threats section of this chapter.

As previously mentioned, BBER conducted surveys at eight different events. We had the highest response rate, nearly 25%, from the Mountain West Brew Fest. It was a highly anticipated event according to the attendees, with 46% planning to attend at least a month in advance and 89% about a week before or more. Yet when asked about repeat attendance at future events, the brew fest tallied the most maybes and the fewest yeses.

Figure 31. How Far in Advance Respondents Planned to Attend the Mountain West Brew Fest

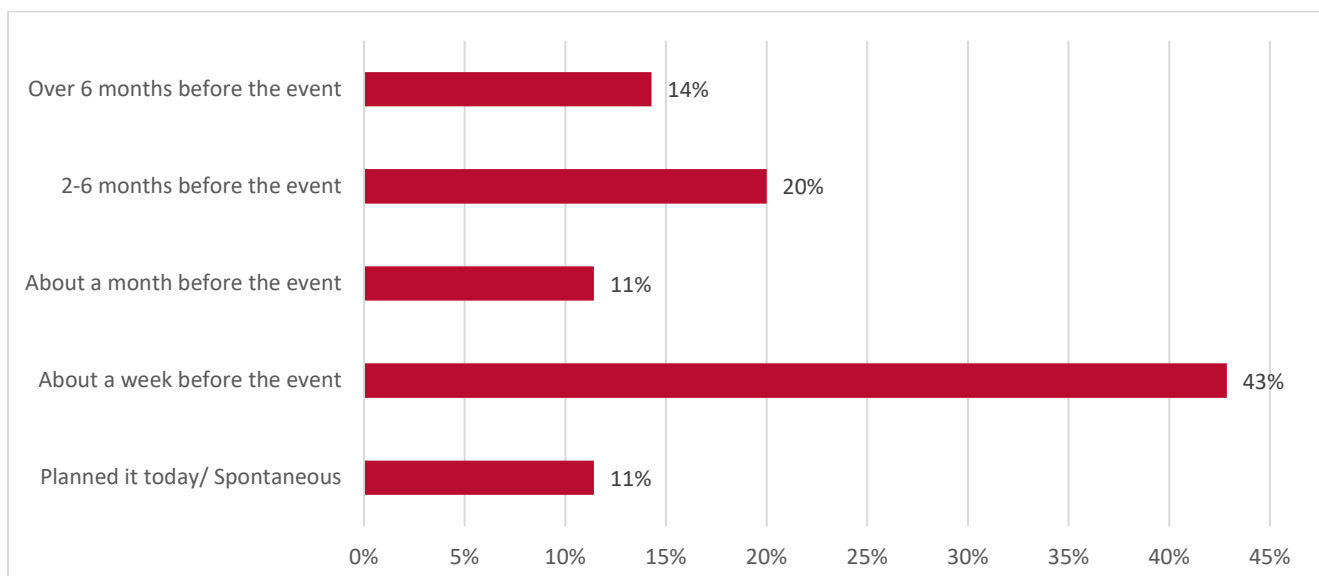
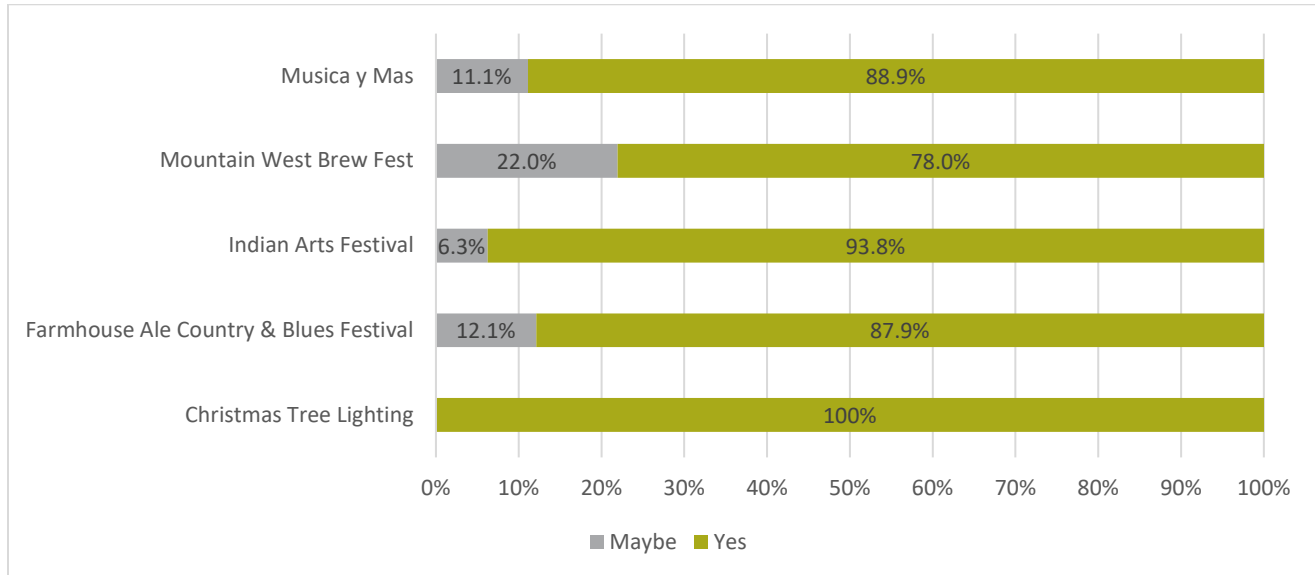


Figure 32. Participants Likelihood of Returning to Town Events in the Future



Attendees stressed their disappointment with the event compared to previous years. The website and social media stated certain vendors would be in attendance, yet they were not there. Accessibility for the elderly and handicapped was challenging because a lot of walking was required. The following are comments given by attendees when asked how they would improve the event.

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*There are a lot fewer vendors than in previous years. Please go back to the way it was before. There are other festivals this weekend that seem to conflict with this also.*

*[There needs to be] closer restrooms, signs directing to the event, better parking signs.*

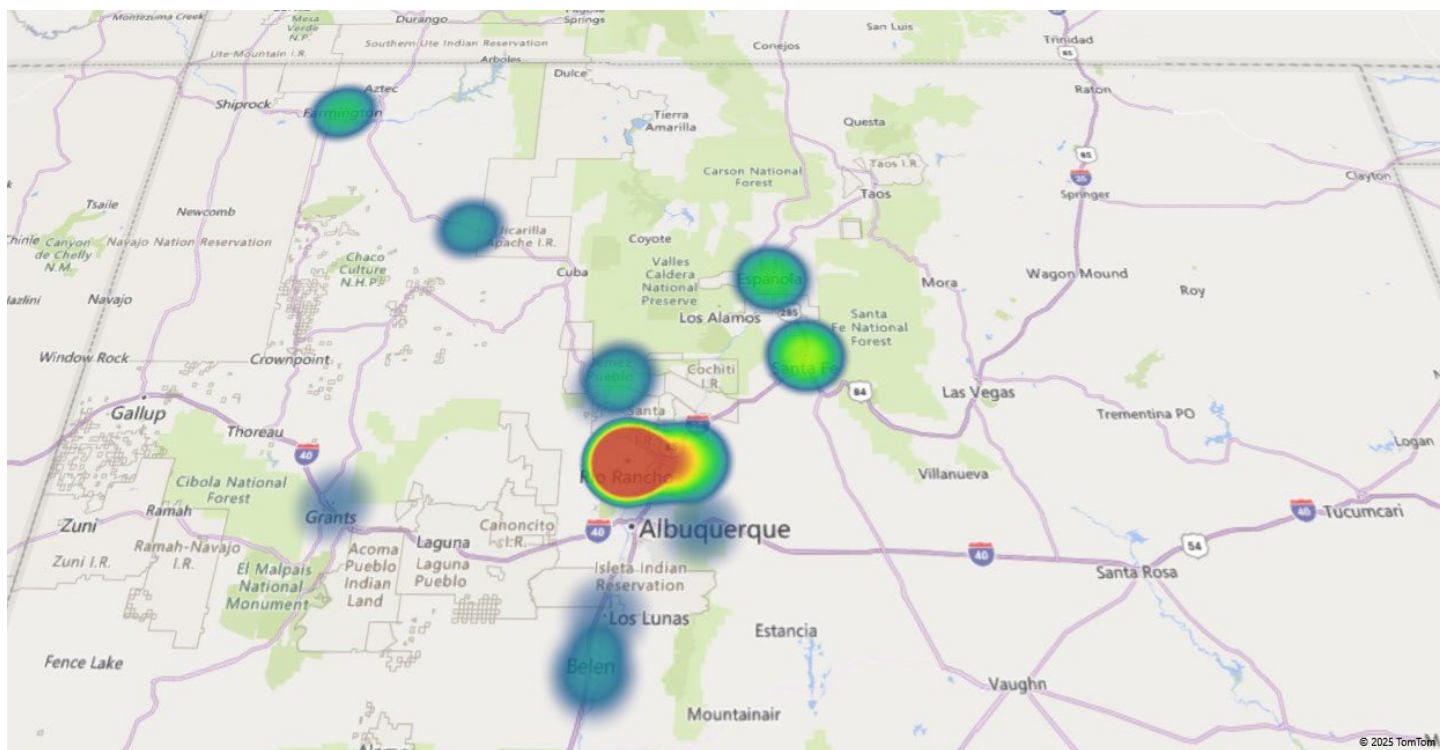
*[There were] not enough breweries represented to call it a "Mountain West Brew Fest".*

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It should be pointed out that of all the surveyed guests, not one said no when asked if they would return to the event in the future. This shows us that either the event or the Town has strong brand loyalty. What that means is that the attendees prefer the Mountain West Brew Fest, or perhaps Bernalillo as a whole, to other options, possibly even if the alternatives are cheaper or more convenient.

Notably, the event organizer(s) implemented on-site features that need to be recognized because they improved or possibly elevated the overall guest experience. There were signs with QR codes on the fences at the entrance to buy tickets to cut down on wait times. There was also signage advertising the event and parking, although they were small or hidden through no fault of the organizers. It is also possible that those who complained about the walking distance from parking had recently attended the Town's Música y Más event, where golf carts were utilized to shuttle guests to the venue.

Figure 33: Heat Map Showing Attendees' Places of Residence, New Mexico Only



One interesting point to note is the concentration of event attendees from Albuquerque and Rio Rancho. While this is not wholly unexpected, due to proximity and size, several issues need addressing. One, Santa Fe is underrepresented at events in Bernalillo. While we were not able to survey all attendees, we aimed for a large sample from each event. Only 4.4% of those surveyed hailed from Santa Fe. This indicates that better marketing in the state's capital should be a primary focus for event planners. Two, mirroring Santa Fe, only 4.4% of those surveyed were visiting from states other than New Mexico. Why this is particularly noteworthy is that the Indian Arts Festival specifically worked with the New Mexico Tourism Department on a New Mexico True matching grant to market the event to residents in Colorado. Of those we surveyed, only one individual was from Colorado, and that person was attending the Farmhouse Ale event. Finally, this map shows the full residency radius of surveyed event attendees from New Mexico. Expanding marketing to Gallup, Socorro, Taos, and Santa Rosa could benefit tourism greatly. Despite the fact that our numbers are estimates, we can see a pattern of attendance that should help Bernalillo consider its target markets and perhaps new ways to appeal to nearby populations.

### 5.3. Marketing SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis, which stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, is often an underrated technique, but when utilized properly, it can help a business or organization improve operations, make strategic decisions, and respond to market changes. For our assessment, we looked at Bernalillo's marketing efforts to bring in new visitors to Bernalillo and its events or attract new events. The events BBER conducted surveys at were all well-established, annual events that stand out as unique gatherings in Bernalillo. Therefore, if the following sections are not taken into consideration under that context, the analysis could be viewed as inaccurate or subjective.

The diagram consists of four vertical rectangular boxes, each with a colored header and a list of items below it. The boxes are arranged horizontally. The first box is red and labeled 'STRENGTHS' with a thumbs-up icon. The second box is grey and labeled 'WEAKNESSES' with a thumbs-down icon. The third box is teal and labeled 'OPPORTUNITIES' with a handshake icon. The fourth box is purple and labeled 'THREATS' with a hand with a diagonal line through it icon.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Reputation</li><li>•Location</li><li>•Digital media</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Communication</li><li>•Organization and/or coordination</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Enhance reputation</li><li>•Support local business</li><li>•New partners</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Inaction</li><li>•Reputation</li><li>•Lack of communication</li></ul>

The Town of Bernalillo does not have a marketing or communications department, so it utilizes the staff it has to accomplish those essential roles. The Town has a reputation as a small, friendly, traditional community, and its digital marketing and Town-run events are a true reflection of that. The following graphics show the results of the question, “What three words come to mind when you think of Bernalillo?” The size of the word equates to the number of times it was given, meaning the largest word was repeated the most on surveys.

[illegible]

[illegible]

*Beautiful park, love the grass, love the trees, please allow them to grow forever.*

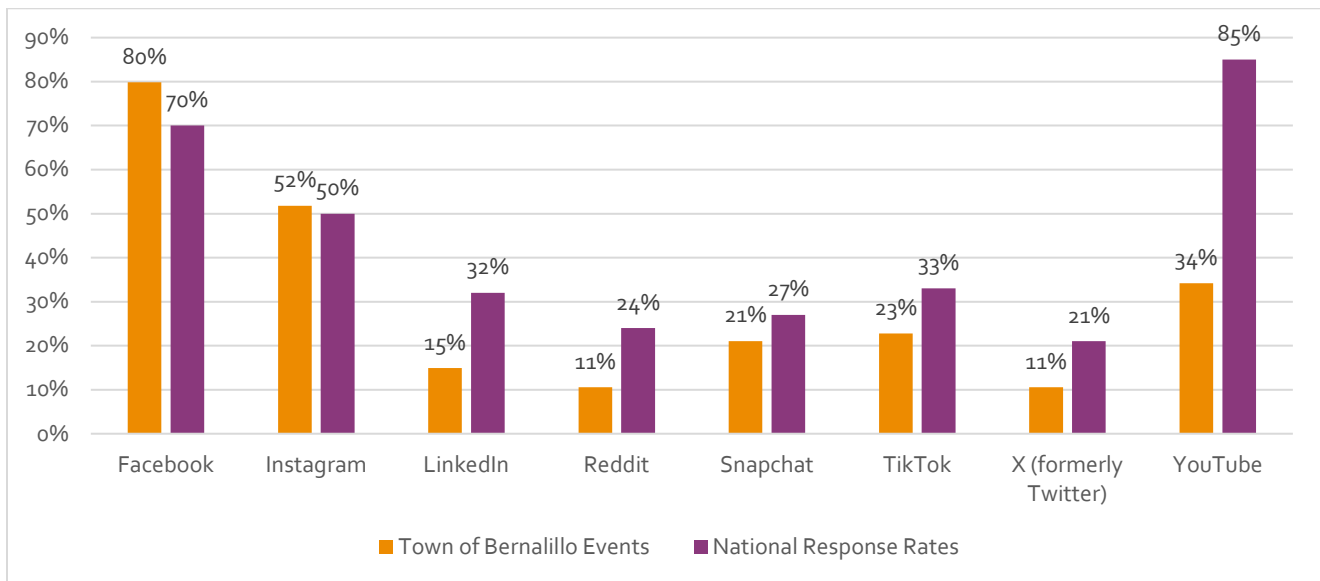
*[I like] the happy people, positive vibes, and big smiles.*

*[I came for] the small-town vibes, community environment, and the amazing Town bonfire.*

The Town's website and social media efforts to date should be viewed as top-notch. As stated above, with a small staff that is not focused primarily on marketing and communication, they have produced a website that reinforces their dedication to the Town and its residents for a fulfilled life. Also previously mentioned, Bernalillo utilizes Facebook and Instagram. We asked event attendees what social media applications they used, and those two programs were the most popular.



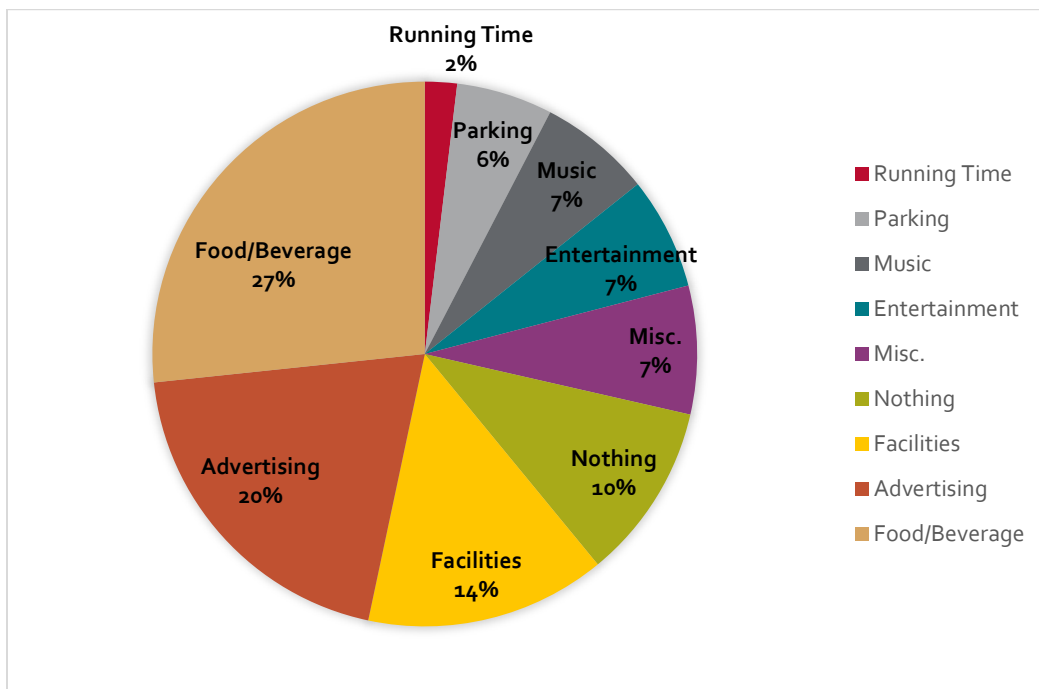
Figure 37. Comparison of Social Media Platform Usage Among Bernalillo Event Attendees vs. National Popularity



### 5.3.2. Weaknesses

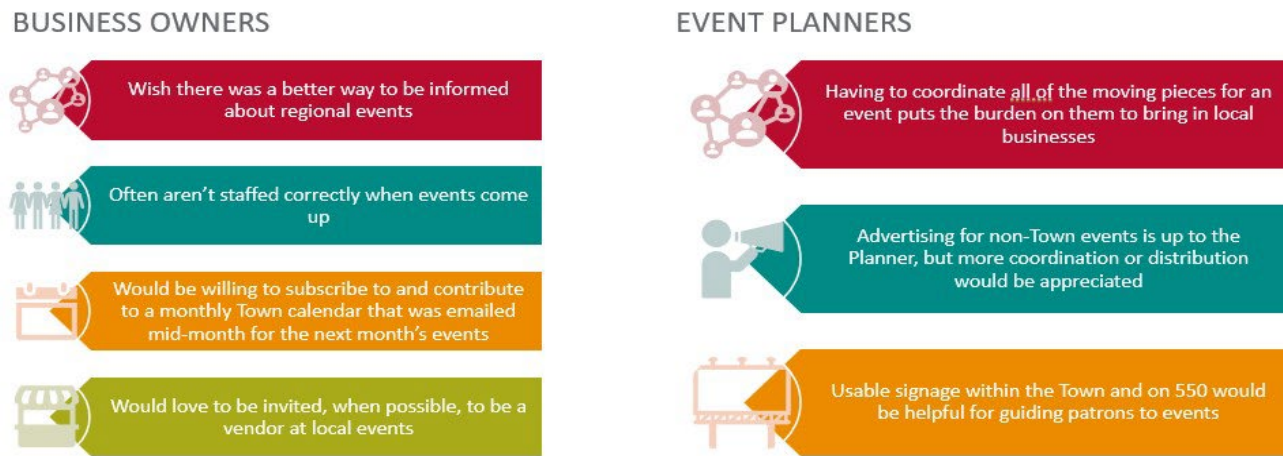
For someone unfamiliar with Bernalillo and its events, turning to the website for answers may be frustrating or create an unwillingness to engage with the community further, since navigating the site requires effort to digest the numerous options and all-capitalized text. On specific event websites and social media, BBER noted incorrect information was sometimes presented, such as conflicts in the timing of events and missing locations for the public portion of Fiestas de San Lorenzo. In the survey of all Town events, the second largest complaint (20%) was about the lack of advertising or information given surrounding the event in question.

Figure 38. Topics of Improvements Suggested at Events



Communication between the Town and its local business owners and event planners can be improved. As mentioned previously, we sat down with a select few from each group to find out how the Town could better support them. Below are the recurring comments made by each group.

Figure 39. Ways Business Owners and Event Planners Would Like More Help From Bernalillo



Organization and coordination weaknesses were also discovered, specifically with events. Planners said that they need a clearer explanation of why fees have increased in recent years. They also said it is problematic when the Town insists that events use specific vendors but doesn't have an easy list available or options for opting out. Specifically, the Town may want to consider offering a package deal that includes vendor coordination for things like fencing and facilities, with a surcharge, or allow event planners to hire their own professionals, but from a more expansive list of vendors. With Town-run events, vendors repeatedly voiced frustrations over procedures and protocols changing from year to year. The following are some comments specifically from vendors at events in 2024.

*[Don't]...have vendors here so early when the event starts in the evening.*

*[We need] better access to drop off stuff here*

*[The event] needs organization, more vendor support*

### 5.3.3. Opportunities

Opportunities are limitless. For Bernalillo, we are focused on fulfilling market needs, solving customer pain points, and improving existing products like events and local businesses.

#### 5.3.3.1. Website and Social Media

Bernalillo has several opportunities to generate new customers for its local businesses and events. Town staff has already made changes to the website since the original SWOT analysis meeting in September 2024. Little tweaks could be made to optimize new viewers' experiences by reorganizing and condensing the subheaders on the website and

removing the all-capitalized text. Making the Contacts page easier to find and adding the Town department contacts to it or creating a staff directory would be helpful.

The Town has also implemented our suggestion to utilize Instagram since we met. Creators can showcase more of the Town by utilizing Reels, which are videos favored by the Instagram algorithm. This means that they appear more often in feeds and can help boost the reach and potentially create more engagement. Reels can also be posted in Stories, a very popular feature. Stories can help creators build a deeper connection with consumers, which can increase brand awareness and encourage attendance or purchases. The best part about both Reels and Stories is that they can be created on Instagram and shared simultaneously on Facebook or vice versa. Both platforms also have a Go Live function that could easily be utilized at Town events to encourage spontaneous attendance. Bernalillo can continue to reach new audiences by creating accounts on other popular platforms like YouTube, which was the next most-used application, according to event attendees. Nationally, as we illustrated earlier, YouTube is more popular than Facebook and Instagram.

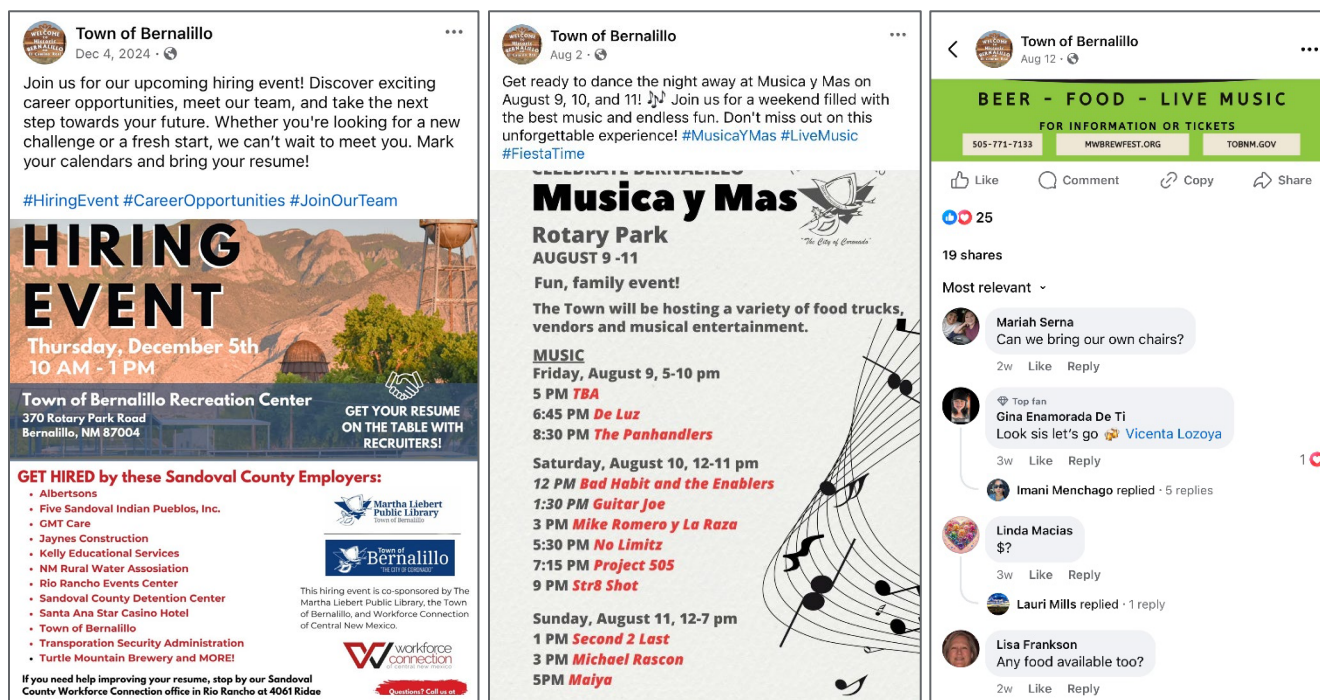
More engagement on social media could be beneficial for Bernalillo. Engaging with consumers through comments, replies, or personalized interactions can help build trust and strengthen relationships that result in loyalty. High engagement rates indicate that users are actively paying attention to you, and the interaction triggers application algorithms to organically boost visibility to a wider audience.

The easiest way to increase engagement is by responding to comments and messages promptly. Actively engage with people who leave comments or ask questions about your posts. Create new interactions by encouraging followers to share their thoughts or experiences, ask questions, run polls, or hold contests, giveaways or offer exclusive deals.

Cross-promotion or even simply tagging other accounts would also increase visibility. Both of these expand the reach to a larger audience by collaborating with others. For example, in the following figure, there is a screenshot of a post advertising a hiring event that lists multiple businesses that will be in attendance. These businesses can easily be tagged in Bernalillo's posts, and Bernalillo could also share posts made by those other accounts. Another example of cross-promotion or tagging with the image for a Música y Más post would be to tag all the artists who are playing in the event as well as encourage and then share the artists' posts about the event.



Figure 40. Previous Social Media Posts That Reflect Opportunities



### 5.3.3.2. Events

Regarding events already on the calendar, some partnerships can be created or expanded. Local business owners all stated that they would be more than willing to work with the Town to promote events if the Town was willing to extend an opportunity to participate in or even just advertise at the events. For instance, there is a clear relationship on social media between the Town and Coronado Little League. Coronado hosted several divisions of the New Mexico District 8 Little League Tournament, which brought in numerous families from Albuquerque and Rio Rancho. However, every business we asked about it had no idea the event was happening or had occurred.

There is an easy solution to this problem. There is already a Town newsletter; adding onto it or modifying it for business owners would take minimal effort. This would be key to helping boost business owners' and visitors' satisfaction because they would have proper knowledge of upcoming events and could be properly staffed.

Trying to partner with other events that already exist nearby is also an opportunity. The Tamaya Athletics Complex, owned by Tamaya Ventures, is conveniently located near Bernalillo at the intersection of 550 and 528. The complex has up to 38 grass soccer fields<sup>26</sup>, welcoming 7,000-8,000 athletes each weekend between February and November. That number jumps significantly when parents and other family members come to watch their child in action. They are actively looking for sponsors and offer multiple advertising opportunities. Advertising at this or other nearby venues could be as simple as creating a banner with a catchy slogan and a QR code that shows visitors the local businesses in Bernalillo, opportunities for shopping and/or entertainment, or offers a coupon to entice visitors to spend locally. See the following figure as an example of how Rio Rancho advertises at Cibola Little League.

<sup>26</sup> <https://tamayaathleticscomplex.com/>

Figure 41. An Example of Banner Advertising



Creating new events to fulfill demand is also an option. Even though Figure 38. Topics of Improvements Suggested at Events under Weaknesses says that 7% commented that improvements could be made in music, the majority of those complaints were that they wanted more local artists or that they were local musicians wanting to play too. This might mean there is an opportunity for another music-focused festival or perhaps even a local Battle of the Bands that could be hosted and organized by the Town and outsourced to an event planner.

In that same figure, 27% of the comments related to food and beverages. This was the highest of any category, and it should be noted that most of the comments were not negative despite being asked how they would improve the event. Most of the comments stated that they wished there were more vendors, specifically local ones. Communicating with local businesses should help increase the number of vendors at pre-existing events. If there is a desire to experience more local vendors, the appeal of a new event, maybe something like “A Taste of Bernalillo,” could be arranged. Keeping the national trends in the tourism section in mind, Bernalillo may prefer to offer something that sounds particularly unique, like a “Red vs. Green” event – something that sounds like an event a visitor couldn’t find anywhere else. The key is to stay true to Bernalillo’s brand so the exclusive feel the Town has to offer is honored.

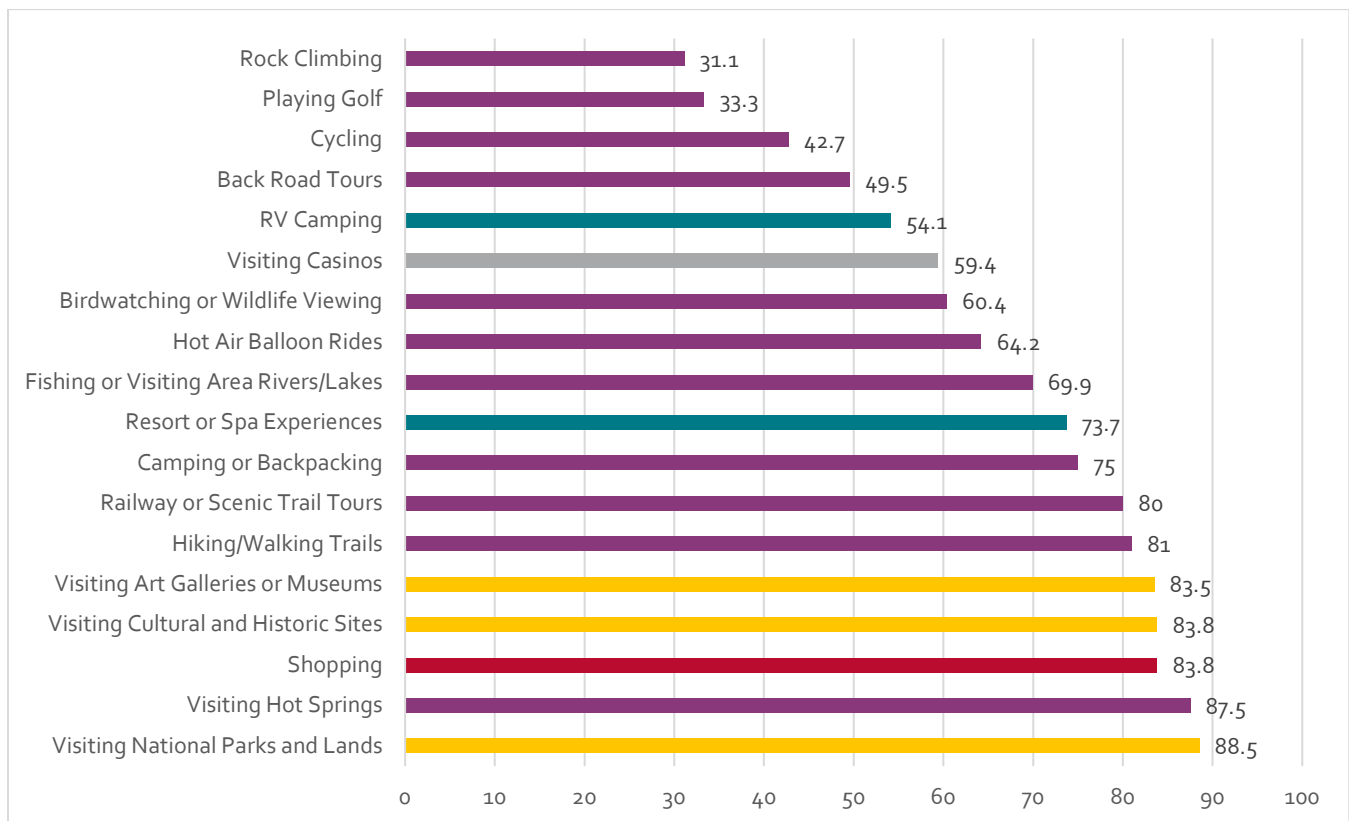
Another option could be to create a celebration of community and civic pride. These events are common in small Towns across the country, usually with a kitschy theme that lasts two or three days. They often kick off with a parade, and have a variety of fun events including but not limited to a pie-eating contest, car show, craft fair, 5K walk/run, treasure hunt, live music, food stalls, and some other competition like Town trivia, canoe regatta, horseshoes or cornhole. The key is bolstering what Bernalillo is, reminding its residents why they chose to build their lives there, and offering an opportunity for former residents to come back and connect. Hosting the event in the spring could be a great way to break out of the cold elements that confine residents to their homes. Naming it something like Bernalillo Bloom

or Blazing into Bernalillo might work. Or, if Bernalillo wants to capitalize on its ties to Route 66, themes like Route 66 Revelry or Raucous Route 66 are intriguing.

BBER's survey also asked about the interest levels in a variety of activities. All of these areas of interest have options located within a drivable distance. Creating an event or partnering with a local business(es) that specializes in the activity in question might be unreasonable, even with high public interest, unless Bernalillo partners with Sandoval County so more businesses and vendors can participate. For example, 84% said they like visiting art galleries or museums, but creating an art show at Rotary Park with only a few local artists would most likely be a mediocre event without more artists or galleries in nearby communities involved.

A more realistic approach would be to capitalize on experiences that Bernalillo can create without needing a lot of outside resources. For instance, in almost every historic city, you will find a ghost walk or a history walking tour. Almost 84% of the people surveyed said they were interested in visiting cultural and historic sites, and 81% claimed to be interested in hiking or walking tours. The important question is: Are there enough Bernalillo lore, history or historical points in a centralized area, preferably downtown, to create a walking tour with multiple points of interest? If the answer is yes, the time and effort to develop a walking tour would be beneficial. Almost 84% of the people surveyed said they were interested in visiting cultural and historic sites, and 81% claimed to be interested in hiking or walking tours.

Figure 42. Activities Bernalillo Visitors Are Interested In



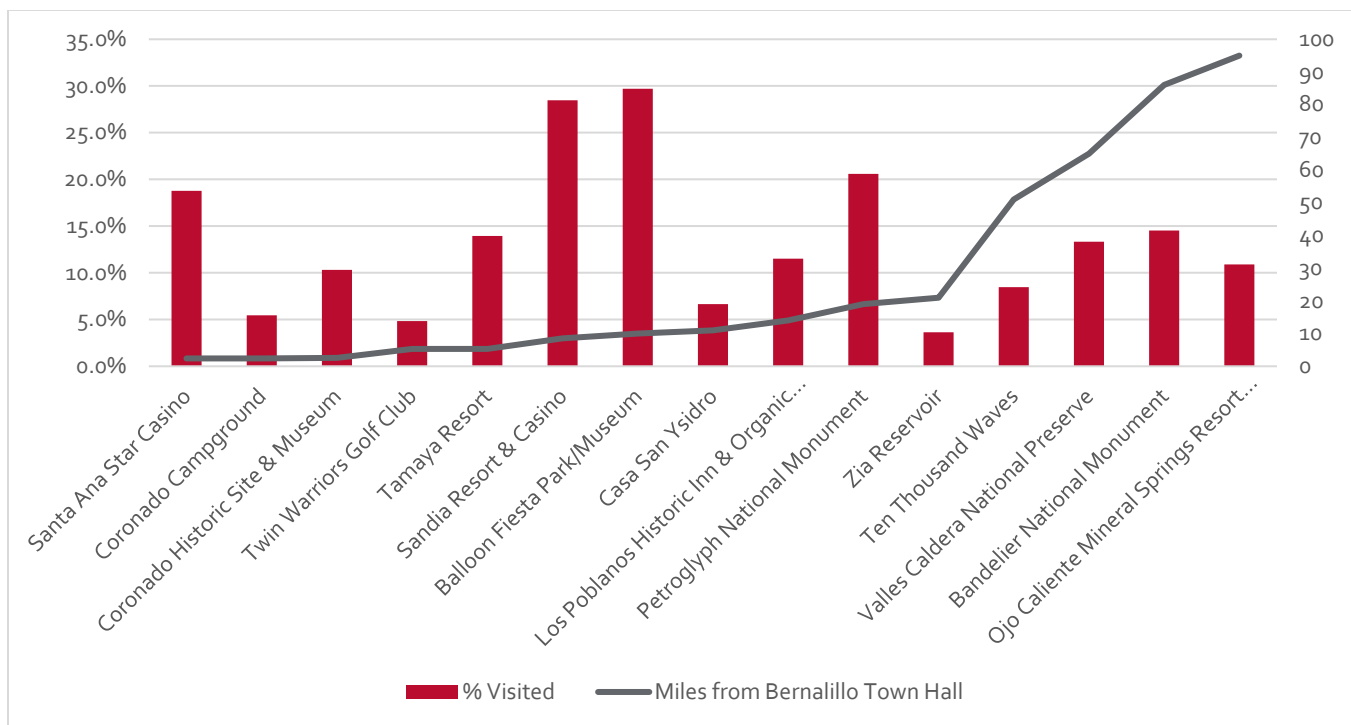
For the other activities, piggybacking off existing events by advertising how Bernalillo is a great place to spend some time seems more plausible. Nearly 65% said they are interested in Hot Air Balloon Rides. While the percentage might not seem that high, the heart of Bernalillo is just 10 miles from Balloon Fiesta Park, home of the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta. The 2024 event, held October 5-13, "generated an estimated economic impact of \$216.33

million. The nine-day event attracted an estimated 838,337 guest visits, including over 712,500 tourists (85% of estimated attendees) from outside the Albuquerque area.”<sup>27</sup> With two large parks, Bernalillo could do a variety of things to capitalize on those tourists. Rotary Park or Loretto Park could be a great alternate launch site for balloonists if weather patterns are amenable and no air restrictions prohibit flying in the area. Many currently attend the pilot briefing at the field, then load up to launch in Corrales or Rio Rancho, where there is more room. Pilots and their crews usually return to Balloon Fiesta Park after their flight to tailgate. If launching is out of the question at Rotary or Loretto Park, maybe an after-party could be held a day or two. Perhaps on one of the three days (Monday-Wednesday) when the official schedule of events concludes at noon, a small balloon glow in the evening or tethered balloon rides could be offered by local pilots.

### 5.3.3.3. Other Marketing and Advertising

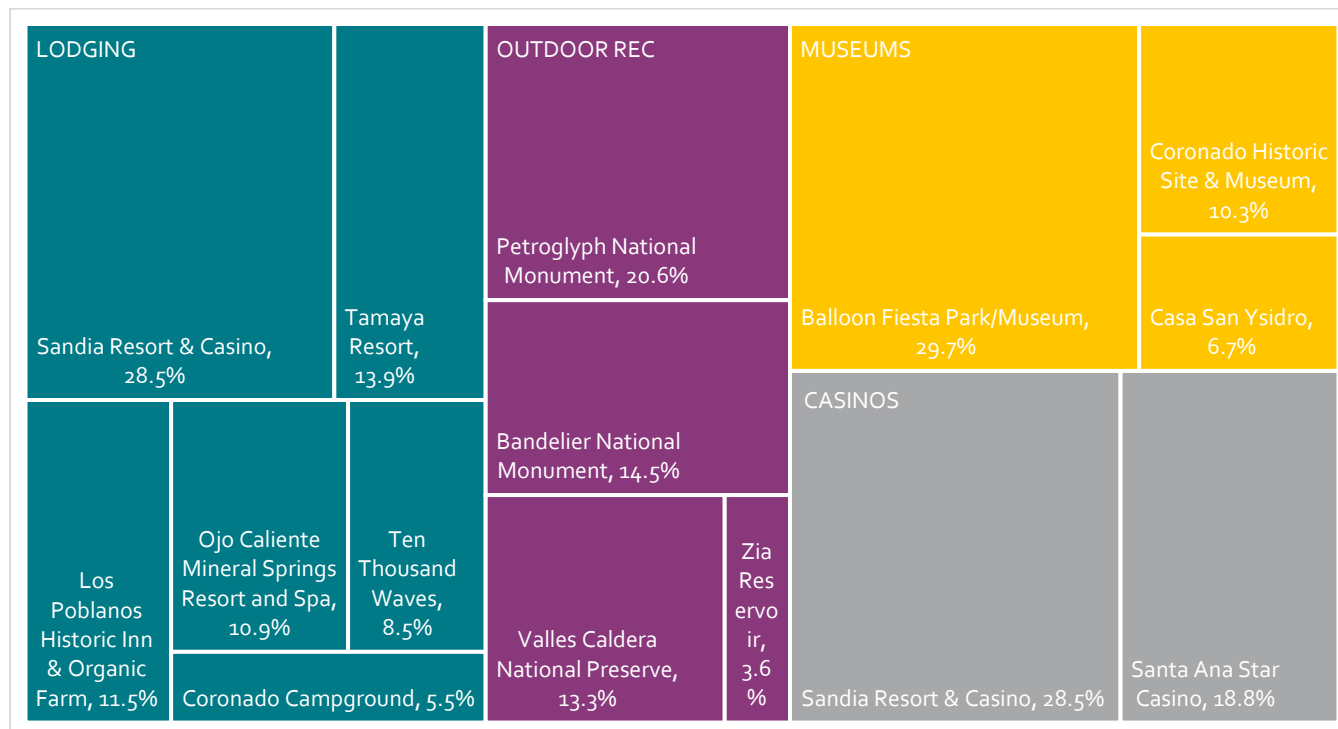
One thing BBER found from the survey results is that the interests of Bernalillo event attendees vary greatly. We asked people if they had recently been or were planning to go to the following locations. We charted the yes responses against the distance in miles from Bernalillo Town Hall. What we see is that distance isn’t a factor when looking for somewhere to go or something to do. We also broke them down into categories like outdoor recreation, museums, and casinos, and they all had about the same level of interest.

Figure 43. Locations Visited by Bernalillo Event Attendees



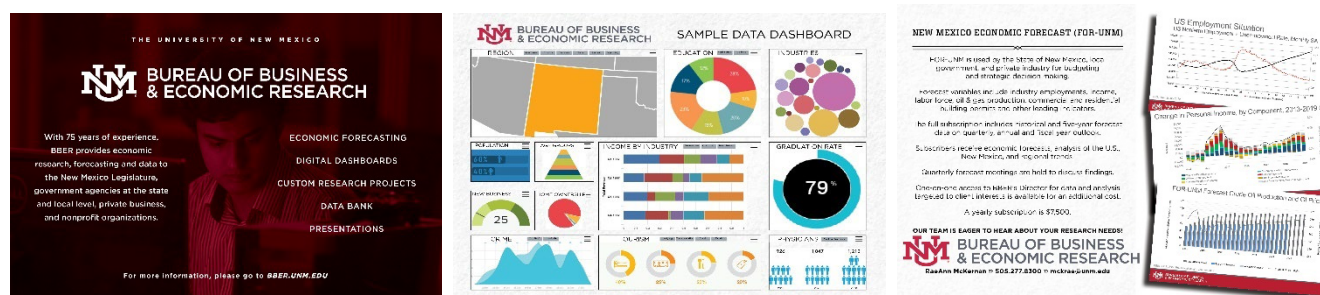
<sup>27</sup> <https://balloonfiesta.com/Post/Albuquerque-International-Balloon-Fiesta-Presented-by-ExxonMobil-Generates-S216-33-Million-of-Economic-Benefit-for-New-Mexico>





Based on those findings, we suggest that Bernalillo utilize a targeted advertising campaign if increasing awareness and attracting new visitors is desired. Regarding digital marketing tools, Google Analytics is free. It allows the user to track website traffic and user behavior, monitor revenue impact from marketing efforts, analyze traffic sources to see where visitors are coming from, and integrate with other Google tools like Google Ads. In the real or physical world, targeted or thematic pamphlets or postcards are effective and inexpensive. Creating these advertisements focusing specifically on the history of the Town, the unique and rich culture, the local food and beverages that can't be missed, or the music and community celebrations and the notable ways to explore and experience them will boost attendance. Bernalillo could advertise with one or multiple versions of these materials at all locations, considering how a history pamphlet might appeal to Coronado Historic Site visitors and a local food and beverage pamphlet might appeal to people who have been outdoors all day, like at Valles Caldera. For specific Town events, posters or flyers could also be placed at locations with over 15% of event attendees saying they planned to visit.

Figure 44. Examples of BBER's Thematic Marketing Tools



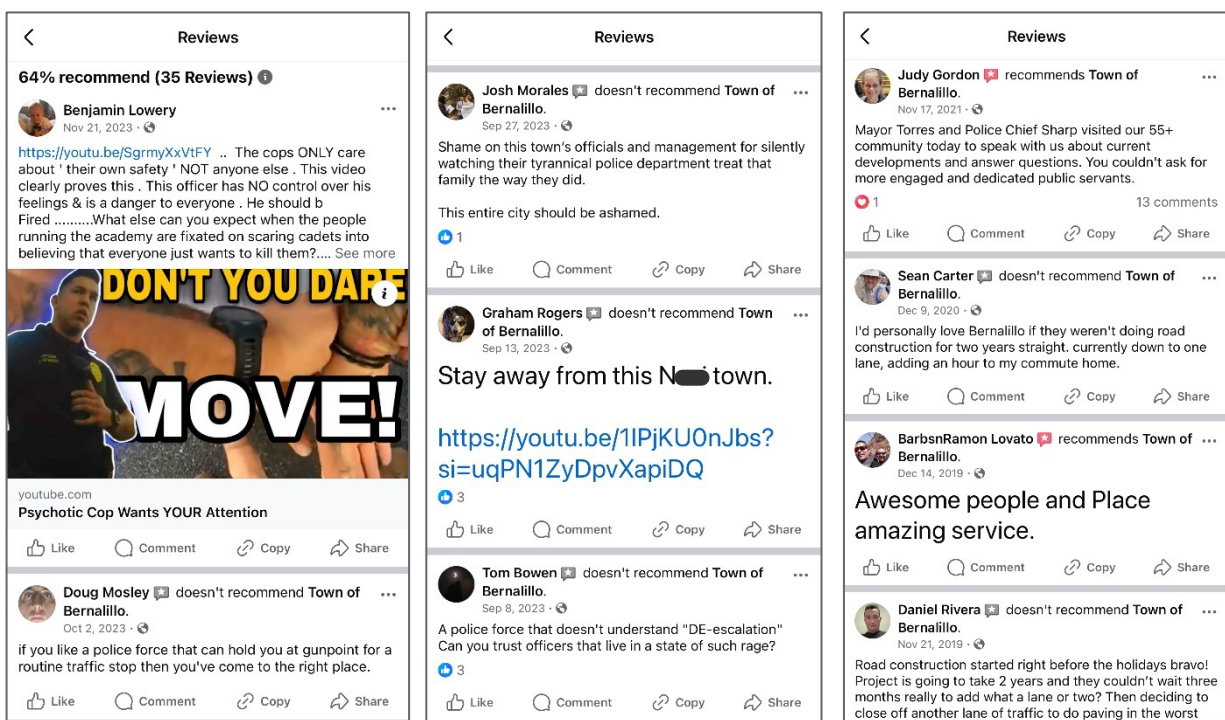
### 5.3.4. Threats

Change is inevitable. The world is constantly evolving with new discoveries, technologies, and natural cycles occurring around us all the time. Author John Maxwell said, "Change is inevitable. Growth is optional." Bernalillo does not have a

lot of room to grow, but as a Town and its residents age, it can expect population decline, a stagnant economy, and aging infrastructure that drive away residents and local businesses if no attempts to adapt are made.

Inaction is a serious threat on many levels. For instance, not actively monitoring social media can open the Town up to the spread of misinformation, reputation damage from negative comments, or even phishing attacks that could lead to severe pain and loss for its residents. While not intentional, we have already mentioned the spread of misinformation regarding specific events on Bernalillo's Facebook page. The negative comments and reviews are also a threat if left unchecked. If you click on the reviews tab on the Town's Facebook page, the first thing you see is a poll asking "Do you recommend Town of Bernalillo?" and visitors can click Yes or No. As recently as February 25, 2025, 70% of people recommended the Town based on 31 reviews. In theory, that seems good, but when you look closer, you see that a review hasn't been left since October 2023, and the first three reviews do not recommend the Town of Bernalillo. In fact, the first positive review dates back to November 2021. Some of the worst reviews have been removed since we pointed them out in our September 2024 meeting. However, it was also suggested that the Town employees or anyone else leave positive reviews, which has not been done. If the Town wants reviews from people not directly employed, then perhaps a campaign to get organic positive reviews can be designed.

Figure 45. Screenshots of Recent Reviews on Facebook



Inaction regarding the Town's infrastructure is a threat in the opinions of local business owners, which was mentioned repeatedly when we interviewed them one-on-one. The main points brought up concerning infrastructure issues are: lack of sidewalks/accessibility to businesses, incomplete sewage/wastewater systems, poorly maintained roadways including trash removal, unclear rules about signage, and a feeling of no one to reach out to for clarification. We even had one comment from the event surveys regarding infrastructure. One attendee said, "If possible, funding to improve sidewalks and increase lamp posts in dark areas of the neighborhood," when answering the question, "How would you change or improve this event?"

Inaction surrounding events will result in their loss. The Indian Arts Festival has already announced it is leaving Bernalillo for Albuquerque's Balloon Fiesta Park. Although this was primarily due to the need for an indoor space for

expensive art pieces, event planners, on the whole, expressed concern about attendance and facilities at 2024 events. Further, event planners would appreciate more assistance from the Town when selecting Bernalillo for their event. Specifically, complaints about having to book portable restroom services and security separate from renting the venue are time-consuming, especially when other nearby locations include them in the facility rental pricing agreement. Some planners stated that the Town insists they use specific vendors, but finding contact information was not easy. A preferred vendor list should be available with the rental agreement.

Another threat that is more difficult for Bernalillo to address is the lack of connectivity between the main part of the Town and the north side of Highway 550. Bypassing Bernalillo is easy for the average passerby with a number of amenities and attractions on the north side of Highway 550, including the Coronado Campground and all but one of the hotels located near the 550 and Interstate 25 junction. Petitioning the Department of Transportation to build pedestrian access from one side of the Highway to the other could potentially create a more integrative experience for tourists.

Residents could also benefit from this specific pedestrian connection. One of our interviewees noted that it was not unusual to see Bernalillo High School students walking up 550. Specifically, it was mentioned that the Spartan bowling team practices at Starlight Bowling, located at Santa Ana Star Casino Hotel. Members of the team were seen walking to practice after school while lugging their bowling balls in addition to their personal items. Santa Ana Pueblo, with properties located on both sides of 550, could also potentially benefit from such a connector, so working together may increase the likelihood of such a project.

With all of that being said, a disorganized rush to action could lead to overcrowding, rising housing costs for residents, or a break from local culture and the loss of the unique brand already in place. If too many visitors flock to a destination, this can lead to long lines, excess traffic, and an influx of commercial chains. The best way to mitigate this threat is to preserve and reinforce Bernalillo's identity, control tourism, and collaborate with locals so they can benefit from the investment in tourism.

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## 5.4. Discussion

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The Town of Bernalillo has much to offer and is incrementally building upon its existing resources, but it may need a stronger focus on tourism-specific initiatives to draw in more tourism without overwhelming the residents and jeopardizing the charming characteristics. In the next chapter, we will both estimate the costs of making this happen and also offer an optional marketing plan.

# Options for Strengthening Tourism

## 6.1. Organizational and Business Planning

### 6.1.1. Building Resilience into the Tourism Industry

The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic upended the tourism industry. Businesses had to close their doors, events were canceled, and people stayed at home. Economic losses were incurred to protect against loss of life. Communities with a tourist-focused economy took some of the hardest hits. Now that the world has moved beyond the lockdowns, the tourism industry is once again thriving, as discussed in earlier sections of this report. But careful consideration needs to be made when rebuilding an industry that could be subject to such great losses.

One of the recommended pathways to economic resilience in the tourism industry is one Bernalillo already supports: orienting all tourist endeavors to be community-centered.<sup>28</sup> This ties neatly into the aforementioned consumer desires for authentic, unique, and localized experiences. Marketing Bernalillo in ways that residents feel proud of and want to showcase should not only draw in visitors but should also inspire locals to be involved. Local involvement in the tourism industry, whether it is seen through local events, restaurants, or attractions such as the museum, helps to generate what is called “collective creativity.”<sup>29</sup> Collective creativity, in this context, occurs when the community comes together to help institutions adapt to changing events. Localized community support can be the difference between the success and failure of a business in times of crisis.

The grassroots organization, Strong Towns, discusses economic resilience as “small bets,” which are incremental changes to improve overall well-being within a community.<sup>30</sup> What this means is that if communities are seeking to make small positive changes in a variety of spaces, even if one change fails, the others are there to continue to forward momentum. They focus on ensuring that development within communities comes from local visions, not external developers. Albuquerque has the largest Strong Towns organization in the country and may be worth engaging with to discuss strategies for community development that benefit residents and tourists alike.

Another strategy for building resilience in the tourism industry in Bernalillo is the development of adaptive infrastructure. During the COVID-19 shutdowns, the City of Albuquerque capitalized on the good weather in this region and helped restaurants turn parking lots into outdoor eateries. Some of these pop-up patios have remained even after the lockdown was lifted. The National Restaurant Association reports that patio dining is a draw for tourists and residents alike, with 69% of adults preferring restaurants that have outdoor seating options.<sup>31</sup> Developing spaces for both visitors and locals benefits the community overall. According to the same study, \$3 of every \$10 spent in a restaurant comes from tourists. Clearly, 30% is an important figure, but marketing to that 70% is also critical. With the climate in Northern New Mexico and the appeal of a small-town main street like Camino del Pueblo, Bernalillo is well-positioned to create more enticing outdoor opportunities that could prove critical in the face of future crises.

Finally, improving accessibility to key Town features would also benefit Bernalillo in the long run. Consensus Planning’s Comprehensive Plan, adopted by Bernalillo in 2022, discusses accessibility extensively in Chapter 6: Transportation. Notably, with regard to tourism, the Plan recommends improved sidewalks, particularly on main thoroughfares. This

<sup>28</sup>Higgins-Desbiolles, Freya. 2020. “Socialising Tourism for Social and Ecological Justice after COVID-19.” *Tourism Geographies*, 22(3), 610-623.

<sup>29</sup> Richards, Greg and Julie Wilson, eds. 2007. *Tourism, Creativity, and Development*. Routledge: London.

<sup>30</sup> Price, Andrew. 2016. “Small Bets.” <https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2016/6/14/making-small-bets>

<sup>31</sup> National Restaurant Association. 2023. “State of the Restaurant Industry 2023.”



suggestion was supported by the community survey that Consensus Planning conducted and is also a way to encourage tourists to spend more time in the downtown area, seeing what the Town has to offer. Accessibility can look like benches, protected crosswalks, shade trees, and bike lanes. All of these improvements generate a connected outdoor space that encourages tourists and residents to visit more locations, boosting visibility and convenience for everyone.

### 6.1.2. A Tourism Hub, Gateway, or Dedicated Position

The Town of Bernalillo currently employs 108 individuals across all departments, including public safety, finance, and public services. In this section, we streamline the estimated costs of developing a more robust tourism industry, ensuring that proposed salaries align with current salaries and that the structure of the Town departments is not dramatically altered.

The grant funding for this research included a request to calculate the funding it would take to develop and maintain a tourism hub. By definition, a tourism hub includes a concentration of amenities and attractions that either act as an all-inclusive experience for visitors or a jumping-off point for tourists on larger vacations. Thinking of a hub as a jumping-off point is closer to the definition of a tourism gateway, which Bernalillo is better positioned to become. A tourism gateway is seen as a place where tourists may stop and enjoy local amenities but ultimately move on to further destinations. With a fairly small hospitality sector, Bernalillo may well think of itself as a gateway rather than a hub. In meetings with individuals from the Town, we discussed the idea of Bernalillo branding as a “crossroads” or “gateway,” which we bring up in the Marketing Plan later in this chapter. In this section, we will price out what a hub, a gateway, and a dedicated position would potentially look like for Bernalillo.

It should be noted that any new tourism staff hired will need to be managed by human resources staff. With a significant enough expansion of new employees, additional management staff would be needed to conduct general accounting and human resources tasks. In conversations with the State Personnel Office (SPO) for the state-run BBER research project, we have utilized an approximately 1:50 ratio for a human resources professional managing staff. We do not include this cost in our estimates, but should Bernalillo choose to greatly expand its personnel, management will also become a concern.

In the table below, the occupations associated with the development of a tourism industry are listed alongside the median salary for each position in the State of New Mexico<sup>32</sup> and an estimated cost of benefits at 30%. We chose the median salary for the state as it aligns with Bernalillo’s existing payroll structure for current employees. In the discussion that follows, we use the total compensation figures to calculate the estimated costs to Bernalillo for different hiring structures.

*Table 2: Median Salaries for Occupations Associated with Tourism*

Title	Estimated Salary	Benefits	Total Compensation
Market Research Analysis/Market Specialist	\$56,880	\$17,064	\$73,944
Travel and Tour Guides	\$33,660	\$10,098	\$43,758
Web and Digital Interface Designers	\$59,390	\$17,817	\$77,207

A Market Research Analyst/Specialist researches local and regional markets, develops advertising campaigns, analyzes web metrics, and develops recommendations for advertising locations. In the Town of Bernalillo, this position would also work with the economic development director to maintain communications with local businesses, catalog and

<sup>32</sup> US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2023. “Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics.” <https://www.bls.gov/oes/>

disseminate information about local and regional events, and assist in generating programming and development of Town-sponsored events. This overlaps with work that public relations specialists do and could also include managing the Town's social media. In Bernalillo, these tasks are currently written into the job descriptions of the Economic Development Director and the Museum Director. Further, this person would potentially need to staff a visitor center part-time should the Town choose to hire for only one tourism position.

Travel and tour guides develop and conduct tours and often serve as the face of a travel organization. They interact directly with tourists and help match visitors' interests with local offerings.

We include web and digital interface designers as a part of the tourism hub, particularly if new content is being created in order to maintain a hub. This position is currently being managed within the Town of Bernalillo but would likely need expansion should tourism grow to the hub level.

Initially, we had planned to include Americorps staffing as a part of the tourism cost analysis. However, the Americorps program's future is uncertain under the new federal administration, therefore, we omitted any references to it. However, should the program remain well-established, the Town already has a relationship with it and should definitely seek additional hires as it develops its tourism plans.

#### 6.1.2.1. Tourism Hub or Gateway

Creating a tourism hub would first involve centering attractions and amenities in a centralized location and developing a physical space for visitors to gather and learn more about what the Town has to offer. Currently, the Town hosts a visitor center at El Zocalo, but it is managed by Sandoval County and is not open to the public. Should Bernalillo develop its own physical location for a visitor center, signage would need to be crystal clear so guests do not wind up confused by two visitor centers.

A hub would need full-time staffing and potentially the development of activities that guests can sign up for at the visitor center. Ideally, this location would be staffed by at least one, more probably two travel or tour guide positions with a market research analyst/specialist maintaining what is available for tourists, staying current with local events, and helping to plan Town-sponsored events. We would recommend that operating hours be from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., seven days a week, to more fully capture the range of visitors who may come through the Town. A web or multi-media designer would be essential for generating content. This role is important for multiple reasons, especially ensuring that the performance and usability are at an attractive level. Tourists are not looking for dated, boring, inaccessible views and descriptions when choosing where to visit. A tourist will choose a different location if the information isn't attention-grabbing visually. Also, a web or multi-media designer should have the ability to create materials like maps or even an interactive app for tourism needs.

To truly see through this vision would take time, space, and the development of amenities and activities for visitors. We would recommend a minimum of one of each of the positions we describe above to create and maintain a hub, with the strong suggestion of two travel and tour guides so that one could be out in the Town while the other is staffing the visitor center. This would cost the Town approximately \$194,909-\$238,667 in annual compensation.<sup>33</sup> A tourism hub can see strong returns on investment over time, but given the current conditions in Bernalillo, start-up costs would be high.

<sup>33</sup> All compensation figures in this section include both base salary and estimated benefits.

Figure 46. Tourism Hub vs. Tourism Gateway in Bernalillo



Developing what is known as a “tourism gateway” is a slightly more pragmatic approach and could be a stepping stone towards developing a hub. A gateway serves as a clearinghouse for local and regional events and businesses. It still requires a physical location so visitors can speak to someone in person, pick up brochures and possibly local discounts, and have full-time staffing. However, the staffing can be reduced, and the hours can be limited. Currently, the Bernalillo Community Museum is open from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. from Tuesday-Sunday. We would recommend that a tourism gateway be open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily to help guide later arrivals to local campgrounds and restaurants. Ideally, this location would be staffed by a travel or tour guide position with a market research analyst/specialist maintaining what is available for tourists, staying current with local events, and helping to plan Town-sponsored events. The web design would be less critical, though it still may be important to contract someone temporarily to create a site that acts as a jumping-off point for tourists to quickly get to know what Bernalillo has to offer. One market research analyst/specialist and one travel/tour guide would cost the Town approximately \$117,702 in annual compensation.

#### 6.1.2.2. Dedicated Tourism Position

The simplest way to improve tourism in Bernalillo is to have a dedicated tourism position on the Town’s employment roster. That person could work alongside or be directly supervised by the economic development director and should have the qualifications of both a market research analyst/specialist and a travel/tour guide. It is more difficult to find good employees who are able to work outside of standard job descriptions, but we feel it is possible with the close alignment of these two positions. Rio Rancho recently developed a tourism position; BBER consulted with the Rio Rancho staff to discuss job duties. The Town could also engage in that conversation should it choose to create a dedicated tourism position.

Should the Town choose this path, we highly recommend a starting salary closer to that of the marketing analyst/specialist to ensure that person has the qualifications to do the more technical work required of that position. One market research analyst/specialist would cost the Town approximately \$73,944 in annual compensation.

## 6.2. Marketing Plan

The following is an optional comprehensive marketing plan that the Town of Bernalillo can utilize as is or adapt to fit its needs. Bernalillo has a strong sense of community, shared values, and unique assets to highlight. In the end, the Town knows what will and won’t work best for them.

Whether or not the Town decides to implement any part of the marketing plan found in this report, it is strongly recommended that brand guidelines be established. Creating an official brand guide will unify every entity and

personnel that represent the Town. This is necessary because the tone of words and the way the Town visually represents itself reflects upon its overall image. Consistency is key. Each representation is an integral part of the Town's identity. If everyone is unified in the message, the brand is strong and builds trust and bonds with both internal and external audiences.

### 6.2.1. Preface

Bernalillo, New Mexico, is a historic Town with a rich cultural heritage, stunning natural beauty, and a welcoming community. This marketing plan aims to promote Bernalillo as a prime destination for tourists looking to escape the hustle and bustle of city life, along with new businesses that can enhance its residents' lives. By leveraging its unique historical sites, vibrant festivals, and proximity to Albuquerque and Santa Fe, this plan will enhance Bernalillo's visibility and appeal.

### 6.2.2. Marketing Objectives

- Increase Tourism: Attract more visitors to experience Bernalillo's cultural and natural attractions.
- Encourage Business Growth: Position Bernalillo as a great place for small businesses or upstart restaurants to establish and thrive.
- Enhance Community Engagement: Strengthen local pride and participation in events and initiatives.

### 6.2.3. Target Audiences

- Tourists: History enthusiasts, adventure seekers, and cultural travelers.
- Businesses & Entrepreneurs: Small business owners, artisans, and investors looking for opportunities.
- Local Community: Current residents and business owners.

### 6.2.4. Brand Positioning & Messaging

#### 6.2.4.1 *Style Guidelines*

- Logo Usage: Include all variations of your logo, including your primary logo, secondary logo, and submarks (department logos). Specify how the logo should be used, including acceptable sizes, placements, variations (e.g., horizontal, vertical), and clear space requirements.
- Color Palette: This should include 2-3 primary brand colors that are used in every iteration of your brand, as well as secondary highlights that can be utilized if needed. Specify the color codes, including HEX for web, CMYK for print, RGB for digital screens, and Pantone for merchandise.
- Typography: Outlines the fonts used for headings, body text, and other elements, including font families, sizes, and styles. Ideally, select 2-3 acceptable fonts.
- Stationery: Utilize an official town letterhead for all published documents. Email signatures and business cards should also have a specific design across all departments.
- Do's and Don'ts: Provides clear examples of acceptable and unacceptable uses of brand elements. For example, DO always capitalize the T in Town when referring to the Town of Bernalillo. DON'T refer to it as "The Town of Coronado". It is "The City of Coronado" or not used at all.

- We have included a screenshot here to UNM's Brand Style page, just to provide an understanding of how a unified brand works. For example, the color palette link takes the user to specific colors and describes how to use them when representing UNM.<sup>34</sup>

Figure 47: UNM Design Standards

## Brand Style

### Design Standards

Typography ►

Design Elements ►

Color Palette

Photography

Videography ►

Writing ►

## Design Standards

The visual aesthetic of the UNM brand is inspired by the campus itself. The stucco architectural texture, dramatic shadows, and vibrant color palette bring the feeling of being on campus to print and digital design.



The UNM Brand Color Palette is been specially formatted to work with the other brand design element textures and shadows.



- Other examples that may be of interest are the brand guidelines displayed by the City of Portland<sup>35</sup>, Maine, and the Town of Kentland<sup>36</sup>, Indiana. The way Portland displays its guidelines is transparent and reflects the decisions made to establish the brand. This style would fit nicely with the Town of Bernalillo and could be a complementary page to About Bernalillo, which starts on the home page. The City of San Rafael<sup>37</sup>California takes a more limited approach with its guidelines, but the information necessary for employees is displayed.

<sup>34</sup> UNM Design Standards. <https://brand.unm.edu/brand-style/index.html>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.portlandmaine.gov/816/Brand-Guidelines>

<sup>36</sup> <https://kentland.in.gov/brand-guidelines/>

<sup>37</sup> <https://employees.cityofsanrafael.org/brand-guidelines/>

#### 6.2.4.2. *Tagline Suggestions*

Building on the tagline Rooted in Bernalillo and eventually Routed in Bernalillo is already in the works by some of the Town staff. The others below are possible ideas for future plans.

- "Bernalillo: Your Gateway to Adventure"
- "Bernalillo: The Heart of New Mexico's Heritage"
- "Where Culture, Community, and Opportunity Meet"
- "Historic Charm, Modern Opportunity"

#### 6.2.4.3. *Key Messages*

- History & Culture: Home to centuries-old traditions, including the annual Las Fiestas de San Lorenzo.
- Natural Beauty & Adventure: Located along the Rio Grande with access to scenic trails and parks.
- Economic Growth: A welcoming environment for small businesses and local artisans.
- Strategic Location: Near Albuquerque and Santa Fe, providing both a small-town feel and big-city access.

### 6.2.5. Marketing Strategies

#### 6.2.5.1. *Digital Marketing*

- Website Adjustments: Make minor changes to the website for friendlier usability for first-time visitors.
- Social Media Campaigns: Leverage Facebook and Instagram to showcase attractions, interviews with local business owners, and residential testimonials.
- Email Marketing: Monthly newsletters with event updates, business highlights, and community news for local business owners and event planners.

#### 6.2.5.2. *Traditional Marketing*

- Brochures or Postcards & Maps: Distribute in areas currently not being targeted but have a record of the same customers as Bernalillo.
- Signage & Murals: Promote Bernalillo with more signage to draw attention to downtown. Areas that need the most improvement are Bernalillo Rail Runner Station and Bernalillo Interstate 25 exit 240, NM-473.

#### 6.2.5.3. *Event Promotion & Partnerships*

- Annual Festivals & Events: Create new experiences to showcase Bernalillo's civic pride.
- Collaboration with Local Businesses: Offer cross-promotions.

#### 6.2.5.4. *Community Engagement*

- Resident Ambassador Program: Encourage locals to share stories and participate in promotions.
- Public Art & Beautification Projects: Enhance Town aesthetics to attract visitors.
- Interactive Campaigns: Photo contests, "Best of Bernalillo" awards, and community-driven storytelling.

#### 6.2.6. Metrics for Success

- Increase in Visitor Numbers: Measured by hotel stays, attraction foot traffic, and event attendance.
- Growth in Business Registrations: Track new business openings and expansions.
- Website & Social Media Engagement: Monitor traffic, social shares, and interaction rates.
- Resident & Business Satisfaction: Conduct surveys to gauge community perception and improvement areas.

#### 6.2.7. Conclusion

By strategically marketing Bernalillo's cultural heritage, economic potential, and community charm, this plan aims to position the Town as a must-visit destination and a great place to live and do business. Implementation of these initiatives will foster long-term growth and strengthen Bernalillo's reputation as a thriving New Mexican Town.



# Appendix A: Survey and Interview Questions

## A.1. Event Attendee Survey

Event:	Date:	Surveyor:
Q1.	Do you reside in Bernalillo?	Yes (skip to Q8) No
Q2.	Where do you currently reside? City, State or International location: _____ Zip Code (if in the United States): _____	
Q3.	Is this your first time visiting Bernalillo?	Yes No
Q4.	Was attending this event your primary reason for being in the area?	Yes No
Q5.	For what other reasons are you visiting the area? <input type="checkbox"/> Vacation/recreation/pleasure <input type="checkbox"/> Visiting friends/relatives <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Just passing through <input type="checkbox"/> Business/convention/meeting
Q6a.	Where were you before you were in Bernalillo? _____	
Q6b.	Where will you go next? _____	
Q6c.	In what city will you spend tonight? _____	
Q7.	Please mark the attractions/locations you have visited or plan to visit while you are in the area.	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Balloon Fiesta Park/Museum <input type="checkbox"/> Bandelier National Monument <input type="checkbox"/> Casa San Ysidro <input type="checkbox"/> Coronado Campground <input type="checkbox"/> Coronado Historic Site & Museum <input type="checkbox"/> Downtown Bernalillo <input type="checkbox"/> Jemez Springs <input type="checkbox"/> Los Poblanos Historic Inn & Organic Farm <input type="checkbox"/> Ojo Caliente Mineral Springs Resort and Spa	<input type="checkbox"/> Petroglyph National Monument <input type="checkbox"/> Sandia Resort & Casino <input type="checkbox"/> Santa Ana Star Casino <input type="checkbox"/> Santa Fe <input type="checkbox"/> Tamaya Resort <input type="checkbox"/> Ten Thousand Waves <input type="checkbox"/> Twin Warriors Golf Club <input type="checkbox"/> Valles Caldera National Preserve <input type="checkbox"/> Zia Reservoir
Q8.	What three words come to mind when you think of Bernalillo? _____ _____ _____	
Q9.	What option best describes the group with whom you attended this event? <input type="checkbox"/> Self <input type="checkbox"/> Couple <input type="checkbox"/> Immediate or extended family <input type="checkbox"/> Extended family <input type="checkbox"/> Family and friends <input type="checkbox"/> Friends <input type="checkbox"/> Business Associates <input type="checkbox"/> Organized group/club	
Q10.	Are there any children under the age of 18 in your group?	Yes No



Q11. How long before this event did you make plans to attend?

- |                                                         |                                                        |
|---------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Over 6 months before the event | <input type="checkbox"/> About a week before the event |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2-6 months before the event    | <input type="checkbox"/> Planned it today/Spontaneous  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> About a month before the event |                                                        |

Q12. How did you hear about this event? (Check all that apply)

- |                                                    |                                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth             | <input type="checkbox"/> Group or club               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Event website               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Radio or Television       | <input type="checkbox"/> Social media                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Posters or Flyers         | <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Email from event planners |                                                      |

Q13. What social or digital media do you use? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ X (formerly Twitter)
- ☐ YouTube
- ☐ TikTok
- ☐ Reddit
- ☐ LinkedIn
- ☐ Snapchat
- ☐ Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

Q14.	Would you attend this event again?	Yes	Maybe	No
------	------------------------------------	-----	-------	----

Q15. Please tell us a few things you liked about this event.

---

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Q16. How would you change or improve this event?

---

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Q17. What types of events do you like to attend in general?

<i>Interest Level:</i>	Not interested	Somewhat interested	Very interested	Check here if you did, or will do, this activity in the next or last month.
Back road tours (Jeep, OHV, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Birdwatching or wildlife viewing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Camping or backpacking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cycling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fishing or visiting area rivers or lakes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hiking/walking trails	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hot air balloon ride	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Playing golf	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Railway or scenic trail tours	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Resort or spa experiences	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rock climbing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
RV camping	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shopping	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Visiting art galleries or museums	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Visiting casinos	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Visiting cultural and historic sites	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Visiting hot springs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Visiting parks and national lands	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other, please specify				<input type="checkbox"/>

Q18. Please tell us a little about you.

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender Identification: \_\_\_\_\_

---

## A.2. Local Business Interview Protocol

---

1. What makes Bernalillo a unique destination for tourism?
  - What makes it difficult to draw in tourists?
2. How do new customers say they learned about your business?
3. What types of advertising do you use to draw attention to your business?
  - Social media?
  - Billboards/signs?
4. How do you determine whether your business is successful?
  - (prompt past profits)
5. Do you encourage visitors to review your business online?
  - Do you engage with responses/reviews?
  - What websites do you utilize?
6. What percentage of your sales annually do you estimate come from local shoppers?
7. What types of events seem to draw the most out-of-town visitors to your business?
  - Are you notified about events before they happen?
  - Have you ever collaborated with event organizers?
  - How could you see plugging into Town events in the future?
8. Is there a specific season, month, day of the week, and/or time of day where your business could use an influx of customers?
9. Are there other reasons people from out-of-Town give for visiting your business?
10. Could your business comfortably handle an unexpected increase in customers/sales?
  - Adequate staffing numbers?
  - Adequate supplies?
  - What's the largest growth of sales/customers you would feel comfortable managing in one year? Over five years?
11. What do you consider to be your biggest challenge at the moment?
12. Do you feel there is an opportunity to create innovative or locally grown tourism opportunities for the Town of Bernalillo?
  - How could the Town support you, as a business owner, when planning local events?
13. Does tourism have any negative impacts on Bernalillo that you'd like to discuss?
14. What do you consider to be the most important factors and influences that will shape the future of your business?
15. What other advice do you have for the Town of Bernalillo regarding tourism?

---

### A.3. Event Planner Interview Protocol

---

1. What makes Bernalillo a unique destination for tourism?
2. How long have you been hosting your event in Bernalillo? Is it a one-time event or recurring?
  - Why did you choose the location in Bernalillo to host your event?
3. Do you charge admission or ticket fees for your event(s)?
4. What types of advertising do you use to draw attention to your event/s?
5. How do you determine whether an event is successful?
6. Do you have online calendars that are regularly updated? Is there a way to communicate events with the Town of Bernalillo in advance?
7. Would you consider allowing Bernalillo or its local businesses to advertise at your events?
  - Do you sell advertising banners? Public address announcements? Do you offer out-of-Town visitors a local information guide or suggest visiting specific vendors in Bernalillo?
8. Do you permit outside food or beverages at your event?
  - Would you consider allowing Bernalillo businesses to set up food trucks or mobile sales vans at your event, either inside the facility or in the parking lot/near the entrance?
9. What percentage of visitors to your event do you estimate come from tourists, including anyone from outside of Bernalillo?
10. What do you consider to be your biggest challenge at the moment?
11. Do you feel there is an opportunity to create innovative or locally grown tourism opportunities for the Town of Bernalillo?
12. What other advice do you have for the Town of Bernalillo regarding tourism and events?

---

## A.4. Town Meeting Agenda, September 11, 2024

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### Internal Focus Group Agenda

1. Introductions
2. Introduction to the Study
3. Tourism in Bernalillo Activity
4. Preliminary Survey Results
5. Digital Marketing Assessment
6. Tourism Brainstorm
7. Review and Discuss Next Steps

### Tourism in Bernalillo Activity

*Please answer the following questions on your own. We will share our responses shortly.*

1. What three words come to mind when you think about Bernalillo?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What makes Bernalillo a unique destination for tourism?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

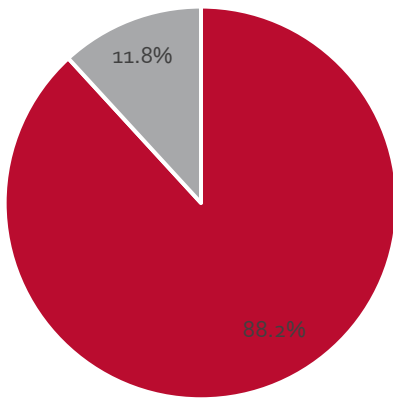
3. What drawbacks do you see to increased tourism in Bernalillo? What do you think needs to be done to safeguard against those drawbacks?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B: Full Event Survey Results

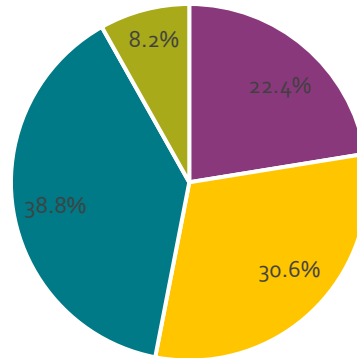
Charts found in this appendix are not featured in the main report but were included in either the September or December presentations to the Town.

Event was Primary Reason  
for being in Bernalillo



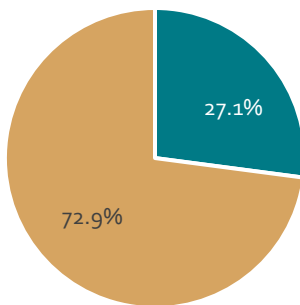
■ Yes ■ No

Reasons for being in Bernalillo other  
than the Event



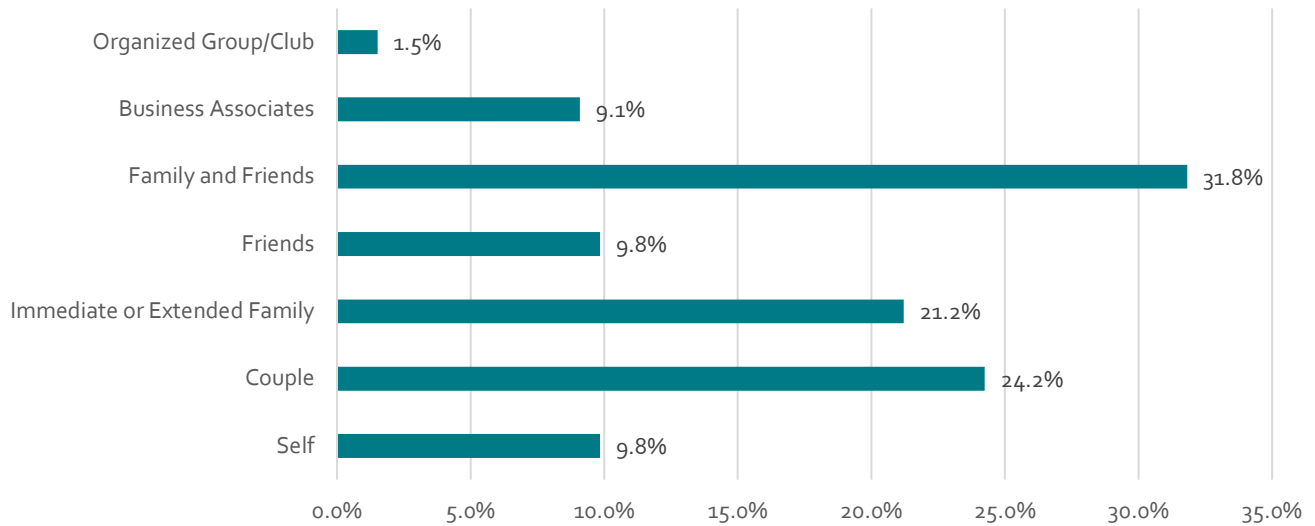
■ Business/convention/meeting ■ Vacation/recreation/pleasure  
■ Visiting friends/relatives ■ Just passing through

Event Attendees who  
brought Children

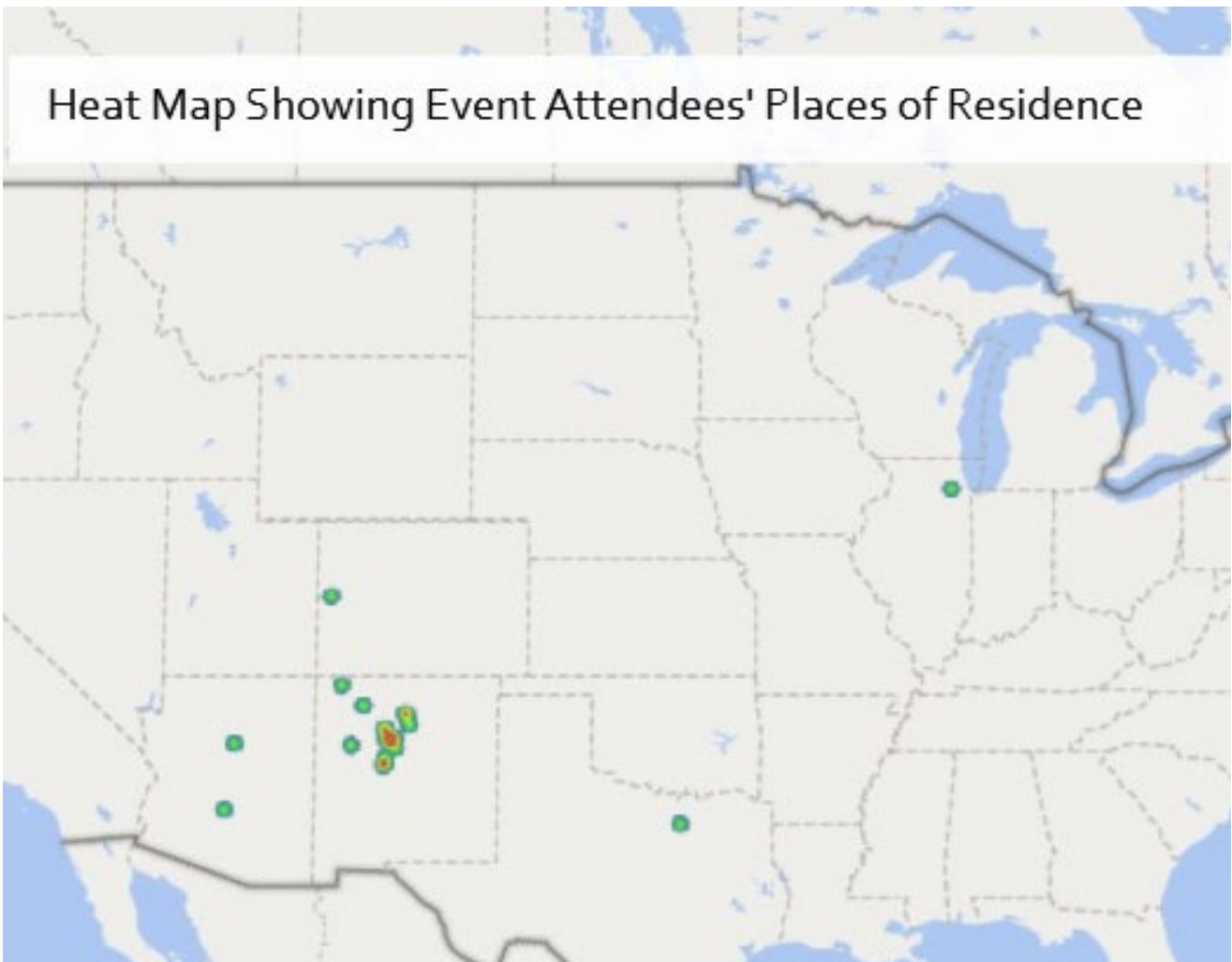


■ Party includes children under 18  
■ Party does not include any children

### Type of Group Attendees were at Event with



### Heat Map Showing Event Attendees' Places of Residence





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*Subject Tables.* <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>