



A. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Community Character section is to describe the unique character that makes Truth or Consequences a special place for residents, visitors, and new businesses, and to discuss ways to enhance and maintain that character. Support for community character improvements such as streetscape design, gateways and entries, historic preservation and community design and maintenance will assist Truth or Consequences in marketing and economic development efforts, as well as help to build community pride.



A map depicting the locations of hot springs in the City

1. Key Findings

- There is a need to protect and promote the Hot Springs Historic area;
- There is a need to improve wayfinding for visitors to the area;
- There is a need for gateway and streetscape improvements;
- There is a need to create a local business association;
- There is a need to celebrate the arts community within Truth or Consequences.

B. GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES, AND IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

GOAL I: Protect and promote the Hot Springs Historic area.

Objective A: Officially designate the Hot Springs Historic area as a recognized historic district.

Objective B: Create a historic overlay zone for the Hot Springs Historic area.

Policy 4.1: It is the policy of the City of Truth or Consequences to encourage the preservation, protection, and promotion of the Hot Springs Historic area.

Policy 4.2: It is the policy of the City of Truth or Consequences to recognize the historic merits of the city through the creation of a historic district overlay zone.

Implementation Actions

a. Historic Preservation Committee - Organize a historic preservation committee made up of property owners in the historic district, Chamber of Commerce representatives, City staff, and others, to oversee the nomination, marketing, and promotion of the Truth or Consequences Hot Springs Historic area. The committee will work with the City to nominate the Historic Hot Springs area as a state-recognized historic district.



b. Historic Overlay Zone - Develop and adopt a historic overlay zone for the Historic Hot Springs area. The overlay zone regulations shall provide guidelines for appropriate design and uses in future development in the district. The overlay zone regulations will also provide information on any maintenance requirements for the district, the approval process for future development in the district, and any tax credits or other available incentives for property owners in the district. This Plan recommends that the overlay zone be located within the boundaries of Main Street on the north, Van Patten Street on the south, Mc Elroy on the west, and Riverside/ Mims on the east. Please see “Future Land Use map” (pp. 19-21) in this Plan for a graphic representation of this area.

GOAL 2: Increase tourism to the Historic Hot Springs area.

Objective A: Create a marketing committee for the Historic Hot Springs area.

Objective B: Identify and utilize all available funding sources for conducting marketing efforts for the Historic Hot Springs area.

Objective C: Develop a marketing campaign for the Historic Hot Springs area.

Policy 4.3: It is the policy of the City of Truth or Consequences to help form, and to participate in, a marketing committee dedicated to marketing the Historic Hot Springs area.

Policy 4.4: It is the policy of the City of Truth or Consequences to identify and utilize all available funding sources, such as the Lodger’s Tax, to conduct marketing efforts for the Historic Hot Springs area.

Implementation Actions

a. Marketing Committee - Form a marketing committee made up of representatives from the City, the Chamber of Commerce, local spa owners, and SCEDO. The committee will be charged with administering all marketing efforts for the Historic Hot Springs area.

b. Marketing/Publicity Budget - The marketing committee will develop an annual budget for marketing efforts for the Historic Hot Springs area. The budget shall be based on any and all available funds, such as Lodger’s Tax revenues, NM Mainstreet funds, and other grant programs.

c. Marketing Campaign - The marketing committee will coordinate the development of a marketing campaign for the Historic Hot Springs area, including the following elements:

- identification of target audience(s) for the campaign;
- identification of print materials for the campaign (i.e. brochures, newsletters, fact sheets, etc.);
- identification of built-environment marketing elements (i.e. wayfinding signage, information kiosks, etc.);
- identification of marketing events such as annual festivals, holiday events, etc.



GOAL 3: To improve the appearance of the built environment (see also Goal 2, Land Use element).

Objective A: Beautify commercial corridors in Truth or Consequences.

Objective B: Beautify gateway areas in and around Truth or Consequences.

Policy 4.5: It is the policy of the City of Truth or Consequences to have landscaping requirements for all commercial corridors.

Policy 4.6: It is the policy of the City of Truth or Consequences to collaborate with community groups such as business owners associations, neighborhood associations, arts groups, etc. in order to implement and maintain beautification treatments such as landscaping, streetscaping, facade improvements, and public art.

Policy 4.7: It is the policy of the City of Truth or Consequences to identify gateway areas and facilitate beautification efforts such as landscaping and public art for those gateways. Coordinate any improvements along State Roads with the Department of Transportation.

Policy 4.8: It is the policy of the City of Truth or Consequences to support public art programs and projects.

Implementation Actions

a. Landscaping Ordinance - The City will write and adopt a landscaping ordinance requiring all commercial corridor medians and planter strips between curb and sidewalk to be landscaped. The ordinance will describe the funding mechanisms for such landscaping improvements, including any possible external funding sources such as grants or programs like New Mexico Mainstreet, and will have requirements for water conservation/xeriscaping principles in public landscaping. The ordinance should also create a prioritizing mechanism for landscaping existing commercial corridor medians and planter strips, as well as the requirements/funding for landscaping new commercial corridor medians and planter strips.



Gateway landscaping improves entries into the community and welcomes visitors and residents alike.



b. Business Partnerships - The City will conduct a study regarding the formation of business partnerships which would help fund and maintain landscaping, streetscaping, facade improvement programs, and public art on commercial corridors. The study should look at the various types of groups that could be formed (i.e. a Business Improvement Association) and the funding sources for those groups (i.e. a Business Improvement District). The marketing committee formed under Goal 2 on the proceeding page could serve as the core of a business group. The City should ask for assistance from entities like SCEDO and NM Mainstreet in conducting the study, and should disseminate the results of the study to the Chamber of Commerce, SCEDO, the Village of Williamsburg, and others.

c. Gateway Designation - The City will develop and adopt an ordinance designating official gateways to the City, and detailing the types of beautification efforts that should occur at those gateways. Funding for gateway improvements should come from sources external to the City, and the ordinance will describe some of those possible funding sources.

d. Public Art Program - The City will write and adopt an ordinance establishing a public art program. The purpose of the program will be to establish a process for funding and selecting public art projects to be installed on commercial corridors and at designated gateways. The process should include a City-managed public arts committee that oversees the selection process for public art projects. The ordinance should detail the funding source(s) for public art projects, whether those sources be bond proceeds, tax revenues, or private grants.

C. BACKGROUND

The Truth or Consequences region has a long and interesting history. The earliest inhabitants of Sierra County some 12,000 years ago, hunted, gathered and constructed pit houses in the Valley. In the 1500's the Apaches and Spaniards traveled through on El Camino Real, and much later, in the 1950's the county's largest town, Hot Springs, changed its name to Truth or Consequences. According to the Sierra County Factbook, the Warm Springs Apaches regarded the hot springs as "neutral grounds" and Geronimo led his wounded men to the waters for their healing powers. Today, health seekers regard the geothermal waters as having some of the finest minerals in the waters of any in the Rocky Mountain West.

1. The Name

Hot Springs was incorporated in 1916, which coincided with the completion of the Elephant Butte Dam, and in 1936 it became the county seat. In 1950, the city participated in a contest with NBC Television producer Ralph Edwards to change the name of the city to Truth or Consequences. The city won the contest and put the question to the voters on whether to change the name. Once approved by the voters, Hot Springs changed its name to Truth or Consequences, New Mexico. The name change gave the city an opportunity to promote itself free of charge. Mr. Edwards brought his production crew once-a-year and broadcast nationwide from the community.

Having a name like Truth or Consequences is bound to bring visitors to the com-



munity, especially fans of Ralph Edwards, and people curious about a town with such a unique name. Even Hollywood has created a motion picture called Truth or Consequences, New Mexico. The name Truth or Consequences, and the mystique it evokes, is part of the community character.

2. The Springs

Many people visit Truth or Consequences to experience the therapeutic benefits of the geothermal waters. The hot springs are not located in a remote area where one must hike to access them. Instead, within the Hot Springs area of Downtown Truth or Consequences, there are several hotels and bath houses that pump the geothermal waters into private tubs. Therefore, a person must pay a nominal fee to experience the hot springs. However, in Truth or Consequences, the springs can be difficult to locate for a newcomer. The community can better promote the location of existing springs and study the feasibility of making broader public use of the spring waters as a public recreational amenity.

3. The Historic Buildings

The Hot Springs Historic District includes commercial and residential structures that exhibit architectural styles and craftsmanship unique to the area. Contributing to the architectural style is a blending of southwest vernacular styles, including building materials of brick, stone and adobe. The development of a tourist market with hotels and motels with therapeutic baths is unique to Truth or Consequences in New Mexico.

Truth or Consequences has several 1930's-50's structures worthy of nomination to the State and National registers of historic places in addition to those listed in the following table.

Table 4.1: Historic Properties

Name	Date	State Register	National Register
Sierra Grande Lodge and Spa	7/18/1997	x	
Hedrick House	1/13/1989	x	
Carrie Tingley Hospital for Crippled Children	6/13/2003	x	
Alamosa Rancho House and Blacksmith Shop	6/8/1984	x	
Hot Springs Main Post Office	2/7/2000	x	x

Source: New Mexico Historic Preservation Division

4. Parks and Recreational Amenities

Truth or Consequences is located in a lush river valley, where hiking and recreational opportunities abound. Elephant Butte State Park is only 5 miles away and offers boating, swimming and other water-related activities. Water is an element of community character in Truth or Consequences, which has as its slogan, "Recreation Paradise of the Southwest."

With over 100 acres of land dedicated to City parks, there are plenty of opportunities to experience the outdoors in Truth or Consequences. The most recent park



to develop is the Memorial Wall Park, where a small scale replica of the Vietnam Wall, designed by Maya Linn, is on display. Long-term plans for the 51-acre park include memorials to all conflicts fought by American soldiers.

5. Community Character Considerations

Through discussions with Truth or Consequences staff, residents and public officials, the following community character issues have emerged:

a. Wayfinding for Tourists

Efforts have begun to assist tourists looking for the hot springs, the Memorial Wall Park, museums and other tourist-related venues. What is absent from the outreach and marketing information available is an explanation of the hot springs experience in Truth or Consequences, or the ability to utilize a public recreation amenity such as a swimming pool (heated geothermally).

b. Protecting and Designating the Hot Springs Historic District

The community of Truth or Consequences and individual property owners could benefit greatly from the nomination of the Hot Springs Historic District to the State and National registers of Historic Places. By doing so, the community benefits by gaining more recognition for its place in New Mexico history, and individual property owners can qualify for tax credits from the Federal and State governments. These tax credits can be considered for roof and facade repairs, interior upgrades to electrical and plumbing systems, and any other improvements that help maintain the structure and are compatible with the building's historic significance.



Crosswalks add to the streetscape and improve pedestrian accessibility

c. Gateway and Streetscape Improvements

Streetscape is the term used to describe the practice of designing roadways



to enhance the experience of pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists through the use of landscaping, color, texture, massing and shading elements. Even public art can be used as streetscape design. Streetscape can be designed to reflect the desired image for the community. Streetscaping typically includes landscaping with shade trees, sidewalks, crosswalks, planters and benches as well as signage, information kiosks, trash receptacles and planted medians. Employing these design features in Truth or Consequences could create a more welcoming, walkable community.

d. Creating a Local Business Association

Residents have commented on the lack of coordinated hours of operation among businesses in the commercial district along Broadway. In fact, many businesses do not post hours, or keep regular hours. The potential exists for the businesses to coordinate special, monthly shopping events, themed events and the possibility for shared responsibility for clean-up, promotion and beautification of the commercial corridors.

e. Celebrating the Arts

The City of Truth or Consequences has an excellent community resource in the presence of a large number of local artists. The City can make use of this resource by developing a public art program. These programs, often named “1% for arts,” earmark one percent of general obligation (g.o.) bond revenues for funding public art projects in parks, on roadways, at gateways, etc. In communities where g.o. bonds revenues are not readily available, a 1/8 or 1/4 cent increment of gross receipts tax revenues could be substituted. Another possible source of funding is through grants.



Welcome signs painted by local artists, sculptures and other monuments help as entry features and acknowledge the City's commitment to public art.