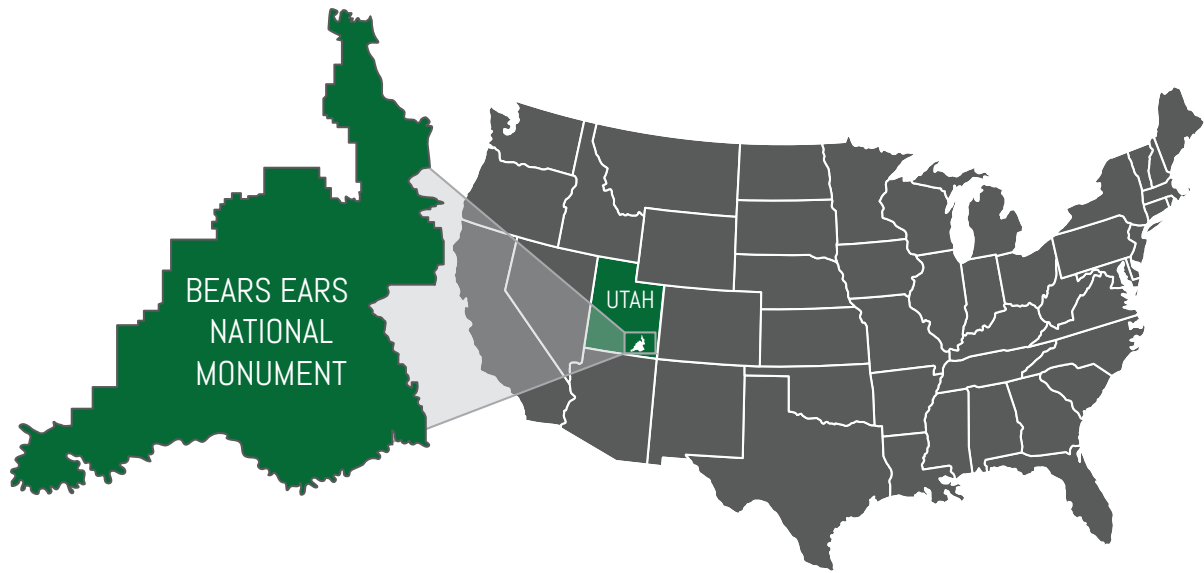


House on Fire, Mule Canyon, Utah | Photo Credit: iStock.com

# **Economic Development Planning for Cultural Tourism in Bears Ears National Monument**

San Juan County, Utah



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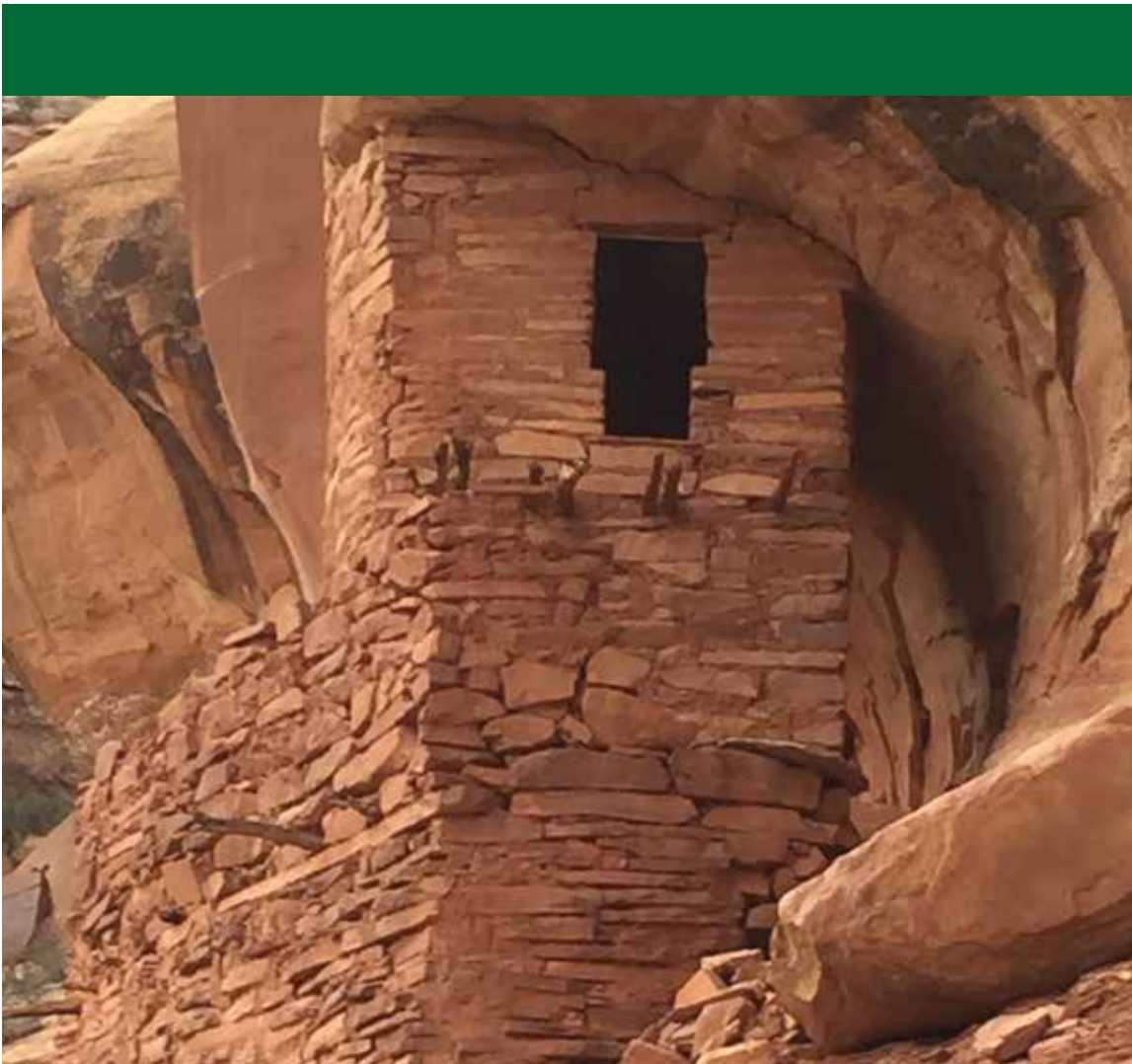
# I. Executive Summary

The goal of this report is to explore opportunities in the San Juan County region of southern Utah to anticipate and control regional economic growth by creating a county economic development plan in conjunction with the future land management plan for the Bears Ears National Monument (BENM).

This report summarizes the existing economics of San Juan County and highlights multiple examples of communities around the country that have adopted well planned cultural tourism programs which promote economic development, components of which could be applicable in southeastern Utah. A locally-driven economic development

plan, created in parallel with a fully funded management plan for the newly established BENM, could successfully integrate cultural tourism associated with the monument with existing land uses throughout the county such as Native American traditional uses, ranching, oil, gas, and mineral development. San Juan County residents can maximize economic opportunities through a locally-driven economic development plan involving the goals of the Bears Ears National Monument proclamation.<sup>1</sup>

Ultimately, San Juan county will see growth in both visitors and residents, and the time is now to take control of that growth.



Dwelling | Photo Credit: Jason Keith

## II. Economic Development in the 21st Century

Utah's population is growing twice as fast as the rest of the nation, and is expected to increase from 2.8 million in 2012 to 6.8 million by 2060.<sup>2</sup> Population increases will affect most regions of the state, especially San Juan County which is the fastest growing county in the nation by percentage according to census figures.<sup>3</sup> To accommodate this growth, a new economic development plan is needed to capitalize on increased growth and visitation.

Traditionally, community economic development plans have focused on investments in infrastructure, improvements in education, and favorable business tax structures and incentives. In the 21st century these components are not enough. Successful communities in both rural and urban settings are tapping into the recreation economy, including cultural tourism and outdoor recreation activities, as long-term economic drivers that can supplement existing industries and maintain respect for traditional lifestyles.

Communities that have proactively supported and invested in recreation and cultural assets are seeing not just increases in visitors, but also an improved ability to recruit businesses and create a wide range of jobs. In the American West, national parks have long provided gateway communities with a steady stream of revenue. But the concept of a gateway community is expanding to include any place with recreation assets, such as trails, canyons, or river access. This has led to an economic revival in a large array of places from Fruita, Colorado to Bentonville, Arkansas, to East Burke, Vermont—places with no particular defining cultural or geological feature. And while these locations are seeing steady and improving economic diversity, the advantage still goes to the truly unique locations like San Juan County.

Moreover, macroeconomic trends in the 21st century have led to increasing mobility in all segments of the population, bringing important economic diversity to communities that previously depended almost exclusively on tourism or traditional industries such as agriculture, ranching, and resource extraction. Businesses that can locate wherever they want are choosing cities and towns with access to outdoor recreation, bringing a new source of job creation to these areas. As such, the trend of growing economies adjacent to national parks and monuments is likely to continue.

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According to the US Travel Association,

**U.S. Travel economists expect the share of international visitors stopping at U.S. national parks during their trips here to steadily increase. The total number of overseas arrivals to the U.S. is expected to reach 40 million in 2017, and the share of these travelers that visit a national park or monument is projected to increase to 36.5 percent. As a result, national parks and monuments will likely receive about 14.6 million overseas travelers in 2017, up 7.3 percent from 2015.**<sup>4</sup>

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U.S. Travel Association President Roger Dow explains,

**There are a number of good theories as to why [growth estimates are so significant]—one is that many of the country's prime attractions, like the Grand Canyon or Yellowstone, can't be replicated just by going to a cheaper country; another is that the U.S. offers world-class activities at the full range of price points, from the tip-top of luxury to the freest of the free.**<sup>5</sup>

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While the uniqueness of the Bears Ears landscape gives it a brand that cannot be replicated, creating a permanent market advantage both for attracting visitors and attracting business investment San Juan County, planners should consider a full range of opportunities regarding costs and the degree of difficulty for outdoor adventure to maximize the potential of increased economic benefits from tourism.

The cultural treasures and unique landscapes of southeastern Utah led to the creation of the Bears Ears National Monument. The region is filled with abundant rock art, ancient cliff dwellings, ceremonial sites, and countless other artifacts that provide an extraor-

dinary archaeological and cultural record. The area is profoundly sacred to many Native American tribal members and the home of an important chapter in the pioneering history in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS). In addition, the area provides world-class outdoor recreation opportunities, including rock climbing, hunting, hiking, backpacking, canyoneering, whitewater rafting, mountain biking, and horseback riding. With all these natural and cultural advantages, San Juan County has a unique opportunity to capitalize on both the unique cultural history and recreation assets of the region to significantly improve economic conditions for all San Juan County residents.



Climbing at Indian Creek | Photo Credit: Dreamstime.com

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**Successful communities in both rural and urban settings are tapping into the recreation economy, including cultural tourism and outdoor recreation activities, as long-term economic drivers that can supplement existing industries and maintain respect for traditional lifestyles.**

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### III. Utah and San Juan County: Current Economic Statistics

The State of Utah is outperforming much of the rest of the country in terms of job growth and economic prosperity. In 2016, Utah added jobs at more than twice the pace of the nation, and the unemployment rate is at an eight-year low. The Salt Lake Chamber of Commerce's annual Utah Economic Review reported that Utah added an estimated 49,500 jobs in 2016 and the state's 3.6 percent employment growth was more than double the national rate.<sup>6</sup> Utah's leisure and hospitality sector posted 6.1 percent job growth in 2016, fueled by low unemployment and rising wages; the growth in travel and tourism activity is evidenced by a record number of visitors to Utah in 2016.<sup>7</sup> Although the Wasatch Front attracts the largest share of this economic activity, much of southern Utah's economy has also been growing well above the national average for several years, powered by relatively low unemployment and cost of living.<sup>8</sup>

However, San Juan County, with a population of 15,152, is not experiencing the economic boom benefitting the rest of the state. With over 28 percent of its population below the poverty level, and unemployment at 7.5 percent,<sup>9</sup> the typical household in San Juan County earns \$18,435 less than the typical Utah household. In 2016, San Juan County had Utah's lowest per capita income at \$23,399—only 60 percent of the average statewide—and a median household income at \$41,484, over \$20,000 lower than the state's average.<sup>10</sup> While much of the rest of Utah has seen strong economic growth by attracting both visitors and quality of life businesses that appreciate and value of the state's recreation assets and world class landscape as both a recruiting and retention advantage, San Juan County's economy has remained primarily reliant on traditional extractive industries.

Agriculture and ranching are important components of the San Juan County economy, yet over the years this sector continues to decrease as a percentage of occupations in the county.<sup>11</sup> Oil and gas development in San Juan County,<sup>12</sup> as measured by mineral lease payments to the county, has dropped by nearly 53 percent in recent years from a high in 2014 of \$1.635 million to \$761,000 in 2016, with similar expectations for 2017.<sup>13</sup> Losses in San Juan County mining and construction jobs were partially offset by increases in leisure/hospitality and government,<sup>14</sup> but by economic metrics statistically the county remains the poorest in the state.

However, San Juan County has an opportunity to increase revenues and diversify its economy by capitalizing on the attention created by the Bears Ears National Monument designation. The Bears Ears combines a stunning landscape and unmatched recreation opportunities with growing public interest in the cultural resources of the West including both Native American and early LDS pioneer history. The town of Bluff saw its first European settlement by LDS pioneers in 1890 via the "Hole in the Rock" route, and both the Native American and Mormon cultural resources are key assets that could drive increased visitation and resulting revenues to San Juan County.

Importantly, the establishment of Bears Ears National Monument precludes very few existing uses of public land in San Juan County. Perhaps the most significant traditional use of monument lands is grazing, and the national monument proclamation was careful to maintain that grazing permits "will continue to apply" within the monument. And with regard to resource extraction—oil, gas, potash, and uranium mining—most of this activity

has historically occurred outside the current monument boundary. And even so, many existing oil and gas leases in San Juan County remain undeveloped. These existing leases located outside the monument boundary will remain an asset potentially benefitting San Juan County when the price of oil, gas, and

potash rebounds. Yet in the meantime, the monument can provide the county and its residents significant and reliable economic benefits from its rich cultural history, incredible landscapes, and world-class recreation assets.



Camping at Indian Creek | Photo Credit: Dreamstime.com

## VI. Locally Driven Optimization of Public Lands

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**San Juan County boasts a unique landscape and a fascinating cultural history that has the potential to become a more robust economic driver for the region.**

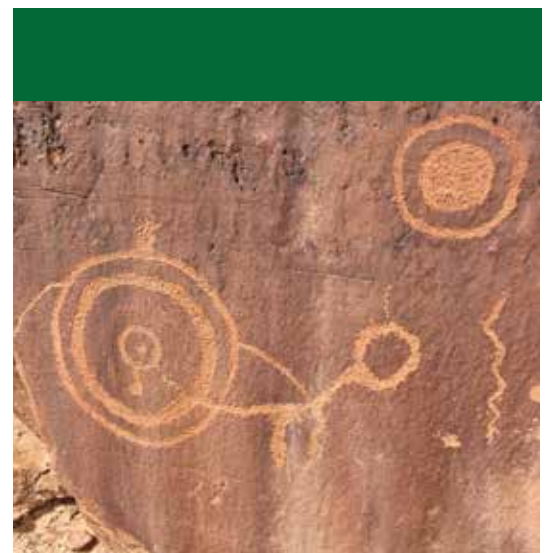
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San Juan County boasts a unique landscape and a fascinating cultural history that has the potential to become a more robust economic driver for the region. A 2016 study by the Small Business Majority found that national monuments bring diversity to communities previously dependent on resource extraction. A substantial number of visitors each year from outside the region devote multiple days in the area, spending money at local businesses and contributing to the local economy.<sup>15</sup> A key strategy for maximizing new economic opportunities related to Bears Ears would be to pursue a locally driven economic development plan, perhaps an addendum to the existing county master plan,<sup>16</sup> created in parallel with the Bears Ears National Monument land management plan. If planned correctly, increased visitation to San Juan County can bring additional revenue to existing businesses along with new business opportunities of many types. In addition to visitor services and new well-planned infrastructure, professional services will be needed to accommodate this growth leading to additional increases in jobs and tax revenue.

As a management plan is developed for the monument, San Juan County has the opportunity to shape its future by determining what type of visitors and residents they wish to attract—and where they want visitors to go—via a parallel economic development plan. Executed concurrently with the monument land management plan, this focused economic development plan can map out effective strategies to improve unemployment rates and household incomes by maintaining existing economic sectors in San Juan County while taking advantage of the marketing opportunity presented by the new Bears Ears National Monument. A county driven economic development plan is an ideal opportunity for San Juan County to take charge of its own future.

For example, if San Juan County residents wish to control and calibrate visitation and residential development, planning and zoning decisions can be made that limit hotel construction and protect existing residential areas. Concerns about water availability and other capacity-driven issues can be addressed in advance. While a certain amount of growth in the county is inevitable given current trends, residents can use a supplemental county economic development plan to control and direct that growth to where it is wanted, and limit it where it is not. Decisions regarding the location of the visitor's center along with other key trail heads and staging areas for different types of visitors will be made as part of the land management plan, but will need to be coordinated with a parallel economic development plan to optimize stakeholder needs and maximize local participation.

While every community is different, highlighted next are several examples of communities who took it upon themselves to create and execute economic development plans that allowed them to move towards a future of their choice by capitalizing on cultural tourism opportunities while preserving existing industries and lifestyles.



Petroglyphs | Photo Credit: Jason Keith



## V. Case Studies of Cultural Tourism Economies from Around the Nation and in the Bears Ears Region

Many communities across the nation have boosted their economic conditions by promoting cultural tourism opportunities. Cultural tourism can be defined as the subset of tourism concerned with a region's culture, specifically the lifestyle of the people in those geographical areas; the history of those people, their art, architecture, religion,

and other elements that helped shape their way of life. The communities listed here are examples of places where local business owners and longtime residents took charge of their economic future by strategically developing and interpreting their natural, cultural, and historic resources for the benefit of local residents.

### Medora, North Dakota

This community in the "badlands" of North Dakota is the gateway to Theodore Roosevelt National Park. The Bakken formation and associated oil fields extend to the north and south and has brought boom and bust economics to the region. To diversify the regional economy, the Theodore Roosevelt Medora Foundation was created with the mission to:

- 1 Preserve the experience of the badlands and the historic character of Medora,
- 2 Present opportunities for guests to be educated and inspired through interpretive programs, museums and attractions that focus on the Old West, and
- 3 Serve the traveling public, providing for their comfort while visiting historic Medora, the badlands, and Theodore Roosevelt National Park.<sup>17</sup>

The mechanisms for delivering on this mission include activities such as the pageant style Medora Musical, promoting the 100-mile purpose built single track Maah Daah Hey Trail that accommodates hiking, horseback riding and mountain biking, and supporting Theodore Roosevelt National Park with its wildlife, history, geology and other learning opportunities inside the park. These are just a few of the many activities in the region that make tourism the third largest economic driver in North Dakota.<sup>18</sup> The Medora example represents a wide range of opportunities available to a region like San Juan County that is fortunate to host both a rich cultural heritage and awe-inspiring landscape.

### Leavenworth, Washington

This Bavarian-themed community is surrounded by the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest and the towering peaks of the North Cascade Mountains. Like many western communities, European settlers were first attracted by the area's natural resources. Gold brought the first round of settlers and timber brought the second, but changes in demand for timber led the railroad to re-route the line out of town and by the 1930s the town dying off was a real possibility. Many people had often compared the beautiful alpine terrain around Leavenworth to Bavaria, so in 1960 the community made a decision to adopt a Bavarian architectural theme. As the Leavenworth town website states, "This was no mere facelift. In addition to completely renovating the downtown area, community leaders created a series of festivals, drawing revelers into town. From there, the Autumn Leaf Festival, Maifest, and the immensely popular Christmas Lighting Festivals were born and continue to this day."

For decades now, Leavenworth has been a top tourist destination in the Pacific Northwest, and more than a million tourists walk its streets every year.<sup>19</sup> Surrounded by public lands, Leavenworth enjoys a great many outdoor recreation opportunities, and because their community was very much planned, the number of hotels, restaurants and local residential areas are calibrated to match the infrastructure available. Some aspects of the Leavenworth experience may be available to select towns in San Juan County such as Bluff that has a strong pioneering history and cultural tourism infrastructure already onsite such as the Bluff Fort (see below).

## Palmyra, New York

Palmyra is the home of the Hill Cumorah, a visitor center, and historic sites of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. The area includes the Joseph Smith Farm and The Sacred Grove among many other important sites. Each summer the area hosts the Hill Cumorah Pageant with over 650 performers on a 10-story stage as part of an outdoor theater that accommodates 9,000 guests. While Hill Cumorah is unique in its significance to the LDS faith, San Juan County has an opportunity to share its settlement history with members and non-members alike who wish to learn more about the Mormon experience.<sup>20</sup> The Church of Latter Day Saints<sup>21</sup> has a significant cultural history tied to the Bears Ears landscape that may serve as the basis for increased cultural tourism. The town of Bluff was established by the San Juan Expedition in 1890 and the community hosts the Bluff Fort Historic Site and Visitor Center<sup>22</sup> that highlights the pioneer trail, early settlers, and Bluff Fort. Additionally, there is significant interest from tourists who want to visit the Hole in the Rock, and travel the San Juan Expedition route to visit its significant landmarks.<sup>23</sup>

## Plimoth Plantation in Plymouth, Massachusetts

Plimoth Plantation (historic spelling) is one of America's most historically and culturally significant living museums that provides the public with an authentic opportunity to gain a new level of understanding of historic events and lifestyles. The museum setting illustrates the connection between the people and the landscapes in which they lived, and allows people to go back in time to visit both a Native American community, the Wampanoag, and a 17th century English Village, populated by actors going about their daily lives as they would have 400 years ago. They speak from a modern perspective about Wampanoag history and culture, and invite the public to learn about their historic and modern cultural practices. Local tribes to the Bears Ears region have long used versions of the Plimoth Plantation model for economic development focused on cultural tourism (see below).



Cycling in the region | Photo Credit: Western Spirit Cycling

Indeed, many federally recognized tribes in the United States are embracing tourism as a way to keep culture alive and bring jobs and money to economically depressed areas. The

following case studies from the tribes that hold the Bears Ears landscape sacred may be relevant to other opportunities within and around the BENM.

**The Zuni Tribe**<sup>24</sup> welcomes the public “to indulge in our history, our culture, and our values that keep our heritage living strong.” Zuni Pueblo offers the visitor a variety of opportunities for cultural, historic, and outdoor enrichment, including the Old Zuni Mission Tour, “Middle Village” (Halona Idiwan’a) Walking Tour, A:shiwí A:wán Museum and Heritage Center, the Zuni Artist Workshop Tour, archaeological tours, picnicking, hiking, fishing, and promoting local Zuni artists and trading posts. Lodging, dining, and local artist shops are available for tourists. In 2012, Zuni became the first and only indigenous community to receive a MainStreet Community designation, encouraging positive economic development along its main street corridor and earning the recognition of state, federal, and tribal governments.<sup>25</sup>

**The Hopi**<sup>26</sup> welcome visitors, but with very specific controls on visitor etiquette, recording and photography, and ceremony viewing. Tourists have options for museum visitation, lodging, groceries, dining, and a convenience store.

**The Navajo Nation**<sup>27</sup> offers services to tourists at tribal parks and other locations throughout the reservation. Some of the most popular attractions—such as Monument Valley Tribal Park—host entire developments that cater to visitors with lodging, dining, shopping, and access to local artists. The Navajo Tourism Department promotes a range of activities on the reservation, including hiking, camping and fishing. The tribe also offers a “Navajo Cultural Tour”<sup>28</sup> and a wide range of amenities<sup>29</sup> including hotels, campgrounds and RVs, Hogan accommodations, B&Bs, a retreat center, and gaming.

**The Ute Mountain Ute Tribe**<sup>30</sup> welcomes the public to Ute Mountain Tribal Park to experience a “trip back in time” and witness a special Native American interpretation of the culturally diverse homelands of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe. The tribe provides Ute tour guides who interpret Ute history, pictographs, geological land formations, and Ancestral Pueblo petroglyphs, artifacts and dwellings.<sup>31</sup> The Ute Mountain Ute Tribe also operates a full service hotel, restaurant, and casino, and an off-site pottery and jewelry enterprise where native artisans can be viewed at work.

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**Many federally recognized tribes in the United States are embracing tourism as a way to keep culture alive and bring jobs and money to economically depressed areas.**

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All of these examples of cultural tourism could be further developed within the Bears Ears National Monument bringing significant economic returns to San Juan County residents. In all of the cases above, communities have consciously decided to make a better living by sharing their histories, cultures and landscapes. Combining this with a well thought-out effort to attract diverse busi-

nesses and entrepreneurs who want to live where both their children and their employees will have access to the out-of-doors is proving a powerful combination across the country. In addition to the case studies outlined herein, the following activities could also prove very popular to tourists wishing to visit the area.



Visiting a ruin | Photo Credit: Western Spirit Cycling

## VI. Recreation Tourism in Bears Ears National Monument

In addition to the many outstanding cultural attractions found in San Juan County, the Bears Ears region is famous for its adventurous recreational opportunities. The following locations are outstanding destinations for tourists to explore in the new Bears Ears National Monument. These locations are im-

portant to consider both in the management plan to ensure appropriate protections, carry capacity, and user protocols, but also in the county economic development plan that can appropriately market them for cultural and adventure tourism purposes.

**Lockhart Basin** is a remote and scenic valley near the Colorado River that borders Canyonlands National Park and offers mountain biking opportunities as well as a world-famous jeep trail.

**Indian Creek** is a gateway canyon to Canyonlands National Park and a world-class rock climbing destination. Visitors can also see rock art at Newspaper Rock State Park and in Harts Draw.

**Beef Basin** is a unique, high elevation archaeological area with many well-preserved surface sites. Due to its remoteness, Beef Basin is less frequented by visitors and is a place of solitude, beauty and archaeological wonder.

**Abajo Mountains and Elk Ridge** are essential hunting grounds and gathering areas for contemporary Ute, Navajo, and other native peoples. This area is also rich with remote Ancestral Puebloan sites, dwellings and rock art.

**White Canyon** and its dozens of tributaries are filled with recreational activities for hikers, backpackers and canyoneers.

**Bears Ears** are twin buttes that overlook Cedar Mesa and create a landmark visible for many miles. Navajo Headman Manuelito was born near the buttes, and the site is sacred to Navajo people.

**Moqui Canyon and Mancos Mesa** are remote, scenic areas containing archaeological sites, important big horn sheep habitat, and many archaeological areas in its canyons and high elevation mesas.

**Nokai Dome & Mikes Canyon** is a remote and untouched area of dramatic canyons that drain into the San Juan River.

**San Juan River** is a world famous river float along the border between the Navajo Nation and the Bears Ears area. The river provides access to spectacular scenery, desert flora and fauna, archaeology and geology.

**Valley of the Gods** is a geologic wonderland with striking red-rock monuments that rise sharply from the valley floor. These freestanding sandstone monoliths are celebrated by photographers, rock climbers and Native Americans.

**Cottonwood Wash** is a major canyon system that was heavily used by ancient people. It offers many natural features along with dwelling sites, rock art panels, great houses and great kivas for respectful visitation.

**Comb Ridge** is a dramatic geologic fold that runs from the Abajo Mountains to northern Arizona. Frequented by hikers, the Comb has a very high density of archaeological sites, testifying to thousands of years of occupation by Ancestral Pueblo, as well as Navajo and Ute people.

**Cedar Mesa** is a wild cultural landscape sacred to many Native American people, including the Pueblos, Utes, Paiutes, Hopi, and Navajo. With more than 56,000 archaeological sites and four wilderness study areas, Cedar Mesa is perhaps the best place in the U.S. to visit well-preserved cliff dwellings in a remote setting where solitude is still possible.

## VII. Front Country and Backcountry Management Techniques

Today's recreation management techniques are evolving from a time when we tended to manage specific areas with specific rules (i.e., National Forest recreation rules are often different from National Park rules), to a time when we are working to manage specific experiences. Instead of simply making a trail or road system available to the public, there are many advantages to providing specific information and interpretation about the experience the area provides. In this way, experiences gain a reputation and visitor expectations can be managed regarding the length of time or degree of difficulty of the experience. The county's economic development plan should consider each of the above Bears Ears tourist destinations in this light to bring the right product mix to support sustained economic activity.

Visitors range from the highly skilled who are seeking to check a specific place off their "bucket list," to families or other groups traveling with a diverse set of abilities who need activities that will work for their whole group. Locals on the other hand, are usually prepared to explore and travel independently. Creating a recreation system that meets the diverse needs of all groups and calibrates visitation to capacity is possible through landscape level planning. Thus, to the extent possible, the management plan for the monument should be coordinated with an economic development plan for the county focused on opportunities presented by BENM.



Petroglyphs | Photo Credit: Jason Keith

In analyzing such experiences it is useful to consider two general categories of recreation assets:

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**Frontcountry Recreation Assets:** These activities include experiences that are near towns and paved roads. Frontcountry recreation assets do not require an overnight stay and generally include a few options for shorter visits for less skilled travelers. Within BENM, examples of frontcountry recreation assets include Indian Creek and Valley of the Gods.

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**Backcountry Recreation Assets:** These activities that are harder to get to and may require overnight stay. Backcountry recreation assets generally require a higher level of skill or the assistance of an outfitter to prepare and execute safely for both the visitor and the resource. Within BENM, examples of backcountry recreation assets include Cedar Mesa and White Canyon.

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By organizing the planning area into front-country and backcountry regions, a large number of acres which are sensitive or require a higher level of protection can be managed accordingly, while popular frontcountry assets—and lands adjacent to monument boundaries and local communities—can be managed to accommodate a wide variety of cultural and recreational experiences. As technology evolves there will be opportunities for reservation and notification systems that will protect the visitor experience and make planning travel more convenient. These systems can also help with visitor education and capacity management and may be designed to give locals or permittees special privileges to maintain traditional access.

## VIII. Potential Business Opportunities

Many industries of all types can point to a significant development that brought their industry into the mainstream, a moment in time that lead to achieving critical mass for that industry, but which also significantly improved the business climate for existing participants. The creation of Bears Ears National Monument may be that moment for many San Juan County businesses.

The establishment of a well-designed monument management plan, in conjunction with an economic development plan for the county, will benefit businesses in the area. Many San Juan County businesses already exist that can service tourists wishing to visit

the region. These include a range of food and lodging establishments<sup>32</sup> located throughout the county, as well as several outfitters that can guide tourists on hunting, trail rides, float trips, hiking, jeeping /ATV, canyoneering, mountain biking, rock climbing, and archeological trips.<sup>33</sup> By expanding the focus of these businesses on cultural tourism, while creating space for Native-driven entrepreneurship within the Bears Ears National Monument, existing business are likely to grow and additional businesses will be needed. The following examples demonstrate possible new business opportunities that are likely to emerge with the establishment of Bears Ears as a national monument.

**Guides and Outfitters:** Demand for motorized and non-motorized outings in the monument is likely to increase. As mentioned above, a variety of permitted outfitters already exist in the region, and these businesses should be considered as new permit opportunities arise. To protect the resource and enhance the visitor experience, outfitters can provide a range of activities from those lasting just a few hours to those covering several days. There is an opportunity for enhancing the cultural component of the outfitting experience both with regard to the extensive Native history of the area and regarding LDS settlers. So in addition to the normal interpretive requirement associated with guiding visitors, other cultural experiences unique to the region, including Native-owned businesses, must be considered when reviewing the need for permitted outfitter activities.

**Activity Permits:** There may be both a need and an opportunity for a variety of additional specific activity permits, either inside the monument or adjacent to it close to nearby communities. New activity permits could include things as simple as shuttle services for certain point-to-point trail experiences, or something that requires more infrastructure that might be located outside the monument boundary. Planners should also consider relatively low-impact business opportunities for native people, such as establishing vending zones (jewelry, pottery, crafts and food), homestay/Airbnb, cultural immersion camping, horseback rides, among other business opportunities and target special use/business permits targeting underserved native communities.

**Visitor Infrastructure:** Many popular tourism communities suffer from poor zoning and mix of commercial developments, and it is important to plan for new businesses catering to an influx of tourists and the issues an expanded workforce brings. Problems can range from the availability of water to affordable and available housing to unplanned hotel and restaurant development. San Juan County has an opportunity to use an economic development planning process as a catalyst for getting ahead of these challenges. Population growth and visitation in the region has already occurred, and with this in mind, the communities of the county could work to establish some capacity calculations to shape the future of their towns. Rethinking zoning and commercial districts now could provide local residents with an important opportunity to control and manage the future of their communities, as opposed to reacting ad hoc to population growth, increased visitation and the sprawl experienced by some unplanned tourist communities.

**Infrastructure Planning and Supporting Professionals:** Community growth and increased visitation will spur the need to plan for new infrastructure and services to meet demand and expectations while preserving San Juan County's community character. For example, a revenue to plan to implement smart infrastructure growth such water, sewer, paved roads, airports, and broadband will be needed as will professional services from health care to accounting to technology. These supporting professionals will also create jobs and business opportunities for local residents.

## IX. Policy Recommendations for a Successful Cultural Tourism Economy in San Juan County

Essential to the success of growing cultural tourism as a sector of San Juan County's economy is full federal funding of a management plan for the newly established BENM. Also important is an open and inclusive planning process for locals and other stakeholders to participate, providing meaningful opportunities for input while also developing a complimentary economic development plan that prepares the county for future growth.

### Bears Ears National Monument Management Plan

For economic development associated with cultural tourism to be successful in and around Bears Ears National Monument, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) must develop, with a range of interested stakeholders, a strong management plan that incorporates guidance from the tribes about protecting cultural resources and incorporating traditional knowledge in the management of the region.<sup>35</sup> A landscape level analysis with a broad range of stakeholder input can ensure that sensitive locations are managed appropriately and that local entities have a hand in the development of the project. Robust funding is necessary to develop the management plan itself but also for BLM and USFS law enforcement to ensure protections for cultural resources and the natural beauty of the area. A well-funded monument plan will ensure that appropriate existing uses—such as grazing and other uses outlined in the proclamation—are protected while new opportunities for economic development using cultural tourism are planned and implemented such that sensitive resources are preserved.<sup>36</sup> In this way, a controlled increase in economic production can be facilitated without harming on-going uses in the monument.

In developing a management plan that fulfills the purposes of protecting and restoring

the objects identified in the proclamation establishing Bear Ears National Monument, the USFS and BLM are directed to provide for maximum public involvement and consider local and stakeholder input. It's critical that San Juan County residents, in consultation with federally recognized tribes and State and local governments, help design and implement the future of the Bears Ears landscape and its uses.

As stated in the BENM proclamation, most current appropriate uses will continue including:

- 1 Motorized and non-motorized vehicle use as authorized through a transportation plan,
- 2 Permitted grazing "shall continue to apply," and
- 3 The State of Utah shall continue to exercise its authority regarding fish and wildlife management.

Local residents and other stakeholders shall provide essential advice regarding how monument uses are administered. To incorporate public input into the BENM management plan, the USFS and BLM are to establish an **advisory committee** consisting of State and local governments, tribes, recreational users, local business owners, and private landowners. This advisory committee and other opportunities for public participation and input are key moments for San Juan County residents to influence plan outcomes and design their own futures on issues such as transportation, grazing and other uses of the monument. Also directed by the proclamation is a tribal commission to provide guidance and recommendations that ensure that management decisions reflect tribal expertise and traditional and historical knowledge. This **Bears Ears Commission**—consisting of one elected officer each from the Hopi Tribe, Navajo

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**Local residents and other stakeholders shall provide essential advice regarding how monument uses are administered.**

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Nation, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah Ouray, and Zuni Tribe—is another opportunity for local input into the future of Bears Ears.

The land management plan developed for the Bears Ears National Monument will include both infrastructure and permit opportunities. However, the plan only pertains to activities occurring on federal lands within the monument boundaries. The county has many opportunities to influence those activities, both via its participation in the land management planning process and through the development of a parallel locally driven economic development plan.

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**The implementation of a county economic development plan allows the county and community leaders to have broad control over the ultimate effect of the monument on residents of the area.**

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## County Economic Development Plan

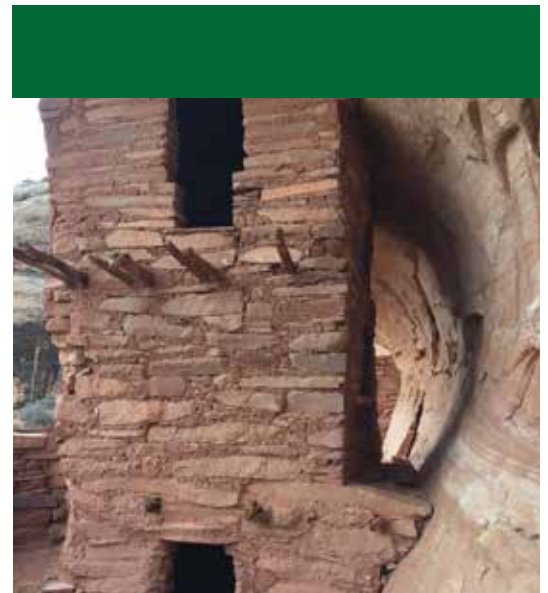
A key simultaneous step should be initiating an **economic development plan** that complements the monument land management plan and maximizes opportunities for economic growth in San Juan County. A complimentary plan also provides local residents with a critical opportunity to plan their desired future. By analyzing what experiences cultural tourists want when visiting Bears Ears, county planners can carefully market certain locations that are not sensitive while growing targeted economic sectors of the local economy.

The monument management plan will include prescriptions for building access to various cultural experiences. Executing this plan will require funding from a variety of sources. In many cases, partnerships between local government, non-governmental organizations, and the BLM are formed to implement the infrastructure improvements recommended by the land management plan. For example, if a plan calls for building/hardening a certain number of trails, the county has a variety of options for working with the BLM to enact a trail plan.

The monument management plan is likely to also recommend an assortment of permitted

activities and capacity guidelines. For example, if there are overnight outfitting activities, there will be a recommended user day cap on those activities. The county can use the associated projected volumes of visitors to guide in-town development with regard to hotel and restaurant needs. These calculations could lead to community zoning to meet local economic goals. This would allow cities and towns to make their own decisions regarding how many and what type of visitors they wish to attract. If a community wants to limit visitation, it can influence the number of hotel rooms it approves, and where those hotels are located, as well as insulate private lands from commercial activity through planning and zoning. In this way, community planning can control both the level of growth and the style and placement of that growth.

The implementation of a county economic development plan allows the county and community leaders to have broad control over the ultimate effect of the monument on residents of the area. One community may choose to encourage family-focused visitor services in order to attract both new residents and visitors, another community may choose to focus on attracting recreation visitors. Ultimately, the creation of a county-driven economic development plan affords the county a critical opportunity to plan its own future.



Dwelling | Photo Credit: Jason Keith



## X. Conclusion

San Juan County is significantly underperforming the State of Utah and the nation as a whole on a number of economic metrics. While Utah is adding jobs at twice the rate as the country, San Juan County is the poorest in the state with high unemployment double the state's rate and per capita incomes only 60 percent of the average statewide. Several factors contribute to the baseline economic condition of San Juan County, including an over-reliance on extractive industry that often fluctuates wildly with global commodity prices.

However, San Juan County boasts a world-class and diverse landscape of canyons, rivers and mountains that is the envy of most places in the country. In addition, the Cedar Mesa region especially holds one of the largest concentrations of preserved archaeological resources in the world. And this, combined with the newly created Bears Ears National Monument, brings a ready-made marketing campaign for cultural tourism that can significantly diversify and boost San Juan County's economy.

Research shows that national monuments greatly benefit surrounding communities especially in rural areas like San Juan County. In addition, many case studies—including by Native American Tribes that support the monument designation—model what an appropriate and successful cultural tourism program might look like at Bears Ears. This expanded economic sector will not displace existing multiple uses of the area's public land; indeed, the economic growth from cultural tourism will allow many local families and residents the option for local jobs instead of having to leave the area for work. By building on existing businesses that increase their focus on cultural tourism, San Juan County can attract more tourists and business entrepreneurs who will contribute to improving the economy of southeastern Utah.

Key to accomplishing this goal is the development of a fully-funded management plan for Bears Ears National Monument that can outline appropriate uses and protections for sensitive areas, and permitting for appropriate ongoing prior uses such as grazing. However, this monument plan must also be accompanied by a county-driven economic development plan that can customize and support business opportunities that take advantage of the world-class cultural tourism and adventure recreation found at Bears Ears.

A sustainable and improving economy for San Juan County that respects local goals, existing businesses, and traditional land use is within reach. The County has an opportunity to utilize the monument management planning process, combined with an economic development plan focused on opportunities presented by the new monument, by:

- Creating its own distinctive brand of cultural tourism that draws from its unique history
- Catering the tourism experience to meet the needs Utah residents from across the state
- Compliments existing uses and economic sectors within San Juan County
- Analyzes capacity and planning for the amount of desired growth

Growth in the region is inevitable, and San Juan County is well-positioned to utilize its rich cultural history and fascinating landscapes to create a well-planned future of its own making.

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**Research shows that national monuments greatly benefit surrounding communities especially in rural areas like San Juan County.**

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# End Notes

- <sup>1</sup> See <https://www.blm.gov/documents/nevada/public-room/blm-library/bears-ears-national-monument-proclamation>.
- <sup>2</sup> See <http://business.utah.gov/publications/population/>.
- <sup>3</sup> See <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/865676241/Census-San-Juan-County-is-fastest-growing-county-in-US.html>.
- <sup>4</sup> See <https://www.ustravel.org/press/study-more-overseas-visitors-choosing-us-national-parks>.
- <sup>5</sup> Id.
- <sup>6</sup> See 2017 Economic Report to the Governor, at <https://www.stgeorgeutah.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/2017-Economic-Report-to-the-Governor-Highlights.pdf>.
- <sup>7</sup> According to the Utah Office of Tourism, tourism is a key driver in Utah's economy, with travelers spending \$8.17 billion in 2015 and contributing \$1.15 billion in total state and local taxes. The Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute notes that income taxes from tourism related jobs contributed more than \$100 million to Utah schools in 2015, and gas taxes, from travelers contributed more than \$100 million to Utah's transportation and infrastructure.
- <sup>8</sup> 2017 Economic Report to the Governor, at <https://www.stgeorgeutah.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/2017-Economic-Report-to-the-Governor-Highlights.pdf>.
- <sup>9</sup> See <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/san-juan-county-ut/#intro>. Compared to other counties, San Juan County has an unusually high number of mining, quarrying, oil, gas extraction, with the highest paying industries by median earnings are utilities; educational services, mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction. By share, accommodation and food service represents 8.6% of San Juan County's industry, and arts, entertainment and recreation represents 4.8 of the county's industries.
- <sup>10</sup> See <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/san-juan-county-ut/>.
- <sup>11</sup> See Id.
- <sup>12</sup> As of October 2014 San Juan County had 3,568 wells on file and 509 producing wells, see <http://www.drillingedge.com/utah/san-juan-county>, but in both 2016 and 2017 there was only one application to the BLM for a permit to drill a new well. Today (3/17) there is no new drilling in the county; the industry had a significant drop in early 2015 right after the latest price crash, <http://www.macrotrends.net/1369/crude-oil-price-history-chart>.
- <sup>13</sup> See <https://www.udot.utah.gov/main/f?p=100:pg:0:::V,T,135>.
- <sup>14</sup> See <https://jobs.utah.gov/wi/regions/county/sanjuan.html>.
- <sup>15</sup> See <https://www.smallbusinessmajority.org/sites/default/files/research-reports/040616-Economic-Impacts-of-Obama-Administration-Natural-National-Monuments.pdf>.
- <sup>16</sup> See <http://www.sanjuancounty.org/documents/2008%20SJC%20Materplan.pdf>.
- <sup>17</sup> See <http://medora.com/>.
- <sup>18</sup> See <http://www.ndtourism.com/sites/default/master/files/pdf/2016AnnualReport.pdf>.
- <sup>19</sup> See <http://leavenworth.org/>.
- <sup>20</sup> See [http://www.hillcumorah.org/pageant\\_welcome.php#?af=tl](http://www.hillcumorah.org/pageant_welcome.php#?af=tl).
- <sup>21</sup> See <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/700096037/San-Juan-County-stakes-its-future-on-tourism.html>.
- <sup>22</sup> See <http://www.hirf.org>.
- <sup>23</sup> See <https://www.lids.org/church/news/newest-church-historic-site-dedicated-in-utah-bluff-fort?lang=eng>.
- <sup>24</sup> See <http://www.ashiwi.org>.
- <sup>25</sup> See <http://zunipueblomainstreet.org/about-us/>.
- <sup>26</sup> See <http://hopi.org/visiting-hopi/>.
- <sup>27</sup> See <http://navajonationparks.org/htm/monumentvalley.htm>, <http://www.discovernavajo.com>.
- <sup>28</sup> See <http://www.discovernavajo.com/indian-cultural-tour.aspx>.

## End Notes

<sup>29</sup> See <http://www.discovernavajo.com/relax-on-the-navajo-nation.aspx>.

<sup>30</sup> See <http://www.fourcornersgeotourism.com/content/ute-mountain-tribal-park/fca2A10185E286DF3A2F>.

<sup>31</sup> See <http://www.utemountaintribalpark.info/index.html>.

<sup>32</sup> For example, see Monticello (<http://www.monticelloutah.org/Visitors/FoodLodging.aspx>), Blanding (<http://www.blandingutah.org/lodging---dining.html>), Bluff (<http://bluffutah.org/about-bluff/>), and Mexican Hat/Fry Canyon, Etc. (<http://www.utahscanyoncountry.com/index.html>).

<sup>33</sup> San Juan County guides and outfitters near Bears Ears National Monument include the following. Hunting: Blue Mountain Hunts, Monticello; Redd Ranches Guides and Outfitters, Monticello; Sunrise Outfitting, Blanding. Trailrides: Horse Hotel, Monticello; Abajo Haven Guest Ranch, Blanding; Blanding Bunkhouse, Blanding. River Float Trips: Canyon Country Discovery Center, Monticello; Wild Rivers Expeditions, Bluff. Hiking: Canyon Country Discovery Center, Monticello; Roam Industry, Monticello; Abajo Haven Guest Ranch, Blanding; Blanding Bunkhouse, Blanding; Four Corners Adventures, Blanding; North Wash Outfitters, Blanding; Far Out Expeditions, Bluff; Buckhorn Llama Company, Bluff. Jeep, ATV, Side-by-Side UTV Tours & Motorcycle Tours: Black Hawk Tours, Blanding; Four Corners Adventures, Blanding. Canyoneering: Four Corners Adventures, Blanding; North Wash Outfitters, Blanding. Mt. Biking: Roam Industry, Monticello; Four Corners Adventures, Blanding. Guided Rock Climbing: Roam Industry, Monticello; Four Corners Adventures, Blanding. Guided Archeological Trips: Canyon Country Discovery Center, Monticello; Four Corners Adventures, Blanding; North Wash Outfitters, Blanding; Far Out Expeditions, Bluff.

<sup>34</sup> A recent report from the US Census bureau labeled San Juan County as the fastest growing county in the country, adding nearly 1,000 residents from 2015 to 2016. University of Utah's Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute's demographic analyst, Emily Harris, was surprised by the increase, "This data doesn't tell us the underlying reasons of why people are moving to San Juan County," Harris said. "It's a beautiful area in southeastern Utah, so we could assume maybe there's some retirement migrations. There's also the (Native American) reservations to think about. ... But these are all guesses. We can't really say for sure what's causing the migration in the past year." See <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/865676241/Census-San-Juan-County-is-fastest-growing-county-in-US.html>. Regardless of the current reason for the population increase, this new information highlights the need for improved planning to get ahead of issues and challenges that will face the county as it grows.

<sup>35</sup> Planning for a Traditional Knowledge Institute, potentially a tremendous economic driver in its own right, could be both an intellectual base and physical home for education on native cultures, traditions, foods, lifeways, and ancient and contemporary traditions. This institute would be a first-of-its-kind immersive storytelling and educational experience, much like a Native American version of the Bluff Fort on a multi-cultural scale, drawing scholars, anthropologists, writers, artists, and professionals from all over the globe, as well as making the experience memorable for visitors and inviting return visitation.

<sup>36</sup> The establishment of the monument is subject to valid existing rights, including valid existing water rights. See <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/12/28/proclamation-establishment-bears-ears-national-monument>.



Dwelling | Photo Credit: Jason Keith



Getting the kids outside | Photo Credit: Western Spirit Cycling

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