NATIVE PROMISE

TUBA CITY MAIN STREET BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MASTER PLAN

Building a Stronger Economic Future for Tuba City and the Western Navajo Nation

A Strategic Plan for Sustainable Growth, Local Business, and Community Prosperity

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



AFTER: A Community Destination (Near-Term Vision)

Prepared with the Assistance of

BUILDING COMMUNITIES

www.buildingcommunities.com

FUNDING PROVIDED BY:

USDA Rural Development

Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG)
This publication was made possible through a grant from USDA Rural Development.

August 2026

Executive Summary

Tuba City already functions as the principal commercial, healthcare, educational, governmental, and service center for the western Navajo Nation. Its location at U.S. Highway 160 and Arizona State Route 264, established institutions, existing businesses, tourism traffic, and entrepreneurial activity give the community a strong economic foundation.

The central opportunity is not to create an economy from the ground up. It is to strengthen and connect the economy that already exists. The field inventory documented 46 business locations or operations—44 occupied and only two vacant—concentrated largely along Main Street and US 160. This active commercial base provides a strong platform for revitalization, business expansion, entrepreneurship, tourism development, and targeted redevelopment.

The report also identifies barriers that repeatedly slow promising projects: land and site control, infrastructure capacity, housing availability, environmental conditions, jurisdictional complexity, and insufficient pre-development work. The strategy therefore emphasizes project readiness—moving important ideas through site research, feasibility, engineering, environmental review, cost estimating, partnerships, approvals, and funding strategy.

Seven priority initiatives provide the organizing framework for implementation: Main Street revitalization; Fairgrounds development; Upper Main Street redevelopment; Dinosaur Tracks tourism development; entrepreneurship and small-business development; housing and workforce development; and development-enabling infrastructure.

The overall message is simple: Tuba City does not need to wait for economic development to arrive. The foundation already exists. The next step is to strengthen it, connect it, prepare projects, and move them toward implementation.

The Economic Foundation

Tuba City's strategy should build upon existing activity rather than replace it. The business inventory shows a functioning commercial district with high occupancy and a diverse mix of businesses and services.



What the Report Finds

- Main Street and US 160 form the principal commercial corridor and should be the focus of coordinated revitalization investment.
- Tuba City's healthcare, education, government, transportation, and tourism roles generate demand well beyond the Chapter population.
- Tourism offers a major opportunity to convert existing visitor traffic into longer stays and more local spending.
- Existing entrepreneurs, vendors, and Change Labs provide a foundation for locally driven business growth.
- Housing and infrastructure are economic-development issues because they directly affect workforce growth and the feasibility of new investment.

Recommendations

Implementation should be organized around seven priority initiatives. Each is important, but each is at a different stage of readiness.

1. Main Street Revitalization

Develop an updated corridor and revitalization plan with phased, costed improvements.

2. Tuba City Fairgrounds Development

Prepare a Fairgrounds Master Plan addressing uses, infrastructure, phasing, costs, and revenue opportunities.

3. Upper Main Street Redevelopment

Resolve land/site-control and infrastructure questions, then prepare a conceptual redevelopment plan.

4. Dinosaur Tracks Tourism Development

Establish a governance and site-development framework and complete conceptual planning and feasibility work.

5. Entrepreneurship & Small-Business Development

Build upon the work already led by Change Labs; Native Promise and other partners should support—not duplicate—existing efforts.

6. Housing & Workforce Development

Complete a targeted housing-demand and development-site assessment tied to employers, workforce needs, land, and infrastructure.

7. Development-Enabling Infrastructure

Identify water, wastewater, power, broadband, road, and pedestrian investments that can unlock multiple priority sites and projects.

From Project List to Project Pipeline

The most important implementation recommendation is to manage projects as a pipeline. Priority and readiness should be evaluated separately: a project can be highly important while still needing substantial preparation before it is ready for major funding.



First-Year Priorities

- Establish the project pipeline and assign a champion to each major initiative.
- Advance Main Street and Fairgrounds planning.
- Establish the governance and development pathway for Dinosaur Tracks.
- Create and maintain a development-ready site inventory.
- Assess workforce-housing demand and potential sites.
- Coordinate entrepreneur-support efforts with Change Labs and other partners.
- Identify infrastructure constraints preventing priority development.
- Maintain a funding calendar tied to project readiness.

VISION → PRIORITIES → PREPARATION → FUNDING → IMPLEMENTATION → RESULTS

A Practical Path Forward

The report recommends a flexible five-year implementation horizon. Projects will move at different speeds; the objective is for every priority project to keep moving.

YEAR 1 — Organize & Prepare

YEAR 2 — Prepare & Plan

YEAR 3 — Fund & Design

YEAR 4 — Build & Implement

YEAR 5 — Expand & Sustain

Implementation Principles

- Prepare strong projects and pursue the funding that fits them.
- Resolve land and site-control issues early.
- Invest deliberately in feasibility, engineering, environmental review, cost estimating, and other pre-development work.
- Target infrastructure investments that unlock multiple development opportunities.
- Review the project pipeline at least twice each year and measure progress by movement toward implementation.

Connect the assets. Remove the barriers. Prepare the projects. Pursue the funding. Implement the vision.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.