



STATE OF NOSARA

2023 REPORT- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

N Asociación
Cívica
Nosara
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1. What is the State of Nosara?

The Nosara Civic Association (NCA) presents the first edition of the Nosara State Report, a publication that will henceforth be our tool for monitoring the state of the community and its human and environmental balance. This document will be a living and accessible report that will be continuously improved in future editions so that our District has quality data that allow local leaders and residents in general to make better decisions to improve this unique place in the world we call home.

2. Methodology

Between March and December 2023, a consulting team hired by the Nosara Civic Association (NCA), composed of specialists with over 20 years of experience in Latin America in economic and social development, sustainability, and social innovation, led the project which was finally presented to the NCA with the results. The methodology consisted of:

- Analysis of previous research conducted on the reality of the district.
- Interviews with 25 local leaders in March 2023 representing associations and community groups, the education sector, local workers, and the private sector, among others.
- Field visits.
- Update Nosara's economic, social, environmental, and political context through data segmentation from 22 public institutions and an equal number of local organizations.
- Two community workshops with the participation of over 90 individuals providing feedback.
- SWOT analysis.
- Summary of information based on the methodology of the "Economics of the Doughnut."



POPULATION

- Nosara represents **ten percent** of the total area of Nicoya Canton and has a population of **7,044 inhabitants**, according to data from INEC for 2021, corresponding to twelve percent of the total population of Nicoya Canton.
- People between the ages of twenty and thirty, are the only age group **decreasing** over time. This could be related to the lack of study opportunities in the district and the tendency to migrate for educational reasons.
- According to Arias & Monge (2015), by 2011, Nosara showed signs of being a locality with **various coexisting nationalities** - including 28 nationalities, such as Americans, Nicaraguans, Swiss, and Germans.
- In the 2024 municipal elections, Nosara had **4,525 voters**, distributed in 5 electoral districts (Bocas de Nosara, Río Montaña, Garza, La Esperanza Sur, and Delicias de Garza). The majority were concentrated in Bocas de Nosara with 3,342 voters, representing 73.87% of all voters in Nosara, while Río Montaña only recorded 72 voters - representing only 1.59% of all voters in Nosara. The distribution between men and women is 52.59% men and 47.40% women.
- There are **four Integral Development Associations** in Nosara: Delicias de Garza, Garza, Nosara Centro, Esperanza Sur.
- During the pandemic, the estimated number of foreign tourists was 1,880, with 73% coming from the United States and 16% from Canada. Including the number of domestic tourists, the total during the pandemic was around **5,000 per month**.

BUSINESSES AND MUNICIPAL INVESTMENT

- There are a total of 459 natural or legal persons with municipal licenses in Nosara and a total of **562 municipal licenses** overall. The main activities include restaurants (106), hotels and cabins (49), shops (48), mini-markets (34), and soft drink sales (21). As of October 2020, there were 381 municipal license registrations, indicating a 47% increase over the last three years.
- There are eight licenses in the Yoga and related centers sector and 20 for Surf Schools and water sports.
- In 2023, the **205 new construction projects generated \$487,688 in revenue for the Municipality** (3.34% of total municipal income).
- Of the total taxes collected by the Municipality throughout the canton for construction permits, Nosara represents 70% in this category.
- In 2023, the **Municipality budgeted nearly \$700,000 in investments for Nosara**, mainly **road improvements**. This represents **7.64%** of the total Municipality expenses (excluding salaries). The main routes budgeted were:
 - Plaza Nosara to Santa Teresita
 - Guiones hotel sector
 - Santa Marta - Los Angeles
 - Rinde más crossroads to Plaza



POVERTY AND ACCESS TO HOUSING

- Between 2018 and 2023, **582 families** from the Nosara District registered with public institutions to receive government support. These families represented a total of 1,764 individuals. The total number of families served per year decreased from 168 in 2020 to **23 in 2023**.
- According to data from the Nosara Food Bank, between 2021 and 2023, **635 people benefited**, with 345 being served in 2021, 143 in 2022, and 147 in 2023.
- In the last five years, **33 housing vouchers** were awarded to families in the Nosara district.
- There is an evident **lack of accessible housing solutions** for the population displaced by high rental prices and land costs.

CONSTRUCTION

- According to data from the National Board of Engineers (CFIA), between January and September 2020 and 2022, the total square meters processed in Nosara **increased by 209%**.
- Nosara is the district of Nicoya with the **highest amount of square meters** processed in the Canton.
- Nosara has one of the country's highest construction costs per square meter, at an average of **\$3,495 per square meter**.
- Nosara is experiencing a construction boom due to luxury housing. In 2022, **176,120 square meters** of construction were built in Nosara (47% in housing).
- More square meters were built for **pools** (13,418 m²) than for **social housing** (1,769 m²) in Nosara between 2019 and 2022.
- In 2022 alone, **5,278** square meters of pools were built.
- The number of square meters of housing built almost doubled from 2021 to 2022, increasing from around 40,000 to **83,000** square meters.
- An investigation in the area identified **850 properties** in Nosara related to housing rental through platforms like Airbnb, which could generate **\$45,000,000** in income from 2022 to 2023.
- In Costa Rica, by law, all traditional Airbnb-type accommodations must be registered on the Costa Rica Tourism Board (ICT) platform to operate legally. ICT data shows **only 12 officially registered** accommodations in Nosara (less than 2%).
- Similarly, in the case of intermediary companies managing these services, there is also an obligation to register. According to ICT data, **only 1** marketing/management company is registered.
- Of the 91 environmental complaints received between January and October 2022, **28% were related to the invasion of protected areas** through construction, indicating that almost a third of all complaints were due to this cause.
- During this housing construction boom, Nosara did not have a **Regulatory Plan or a Temporary Construction Regulation**, as it was suspended due to a lawsuit filed by a developer.
- In all data collection instruments, community members emphasize the **need for a sustainable development plan** to protect the natural environment and simultaneously plan urban growth. These three statements were the most supported in the Q methodology and interviews, highlighting the collective need for adequate development planning and environmental conservation.
- Despite the construction boom, there is a significant **gap in community infrastructure** to support this new demand: Parks, sidewalks, public recreation areas, road signage, general road conditions, electrical infrastructure, rainwater drainage, etc.

HEALTH

- It is necessary to **change the classification of the EBAIS** (Basic Teams for Comprehensive Health Care) in the community to convert it into a medical center with specialized personnel and better equipment. By the year 2022, there were **3,545** registered individuals in the Nosara EBAIS; however, according to data from the INEC, it is clear that the population is larger. To qualify as a medical center, at least **4,000** residents must be enrolled in the health center.
- Private organizations have played an important role in providing health services. The "Nosara Siente" initiative gathers mental health professionals who conducted **110 therapy sessions** for community members in Esperanza between May and November 2023, with 31% of these patients under 18 years old.

EDUCATION

- It is urgent to establish accommodation opportunities for professionals who come to provide educational and training services in Nosara (teachers, educators, etc).
- From 2018 to 2022, the Avancemos and Crecemos programs supported **14,230** Nosara primary and secondary education students. The total amount granted is estimated at US \$643,654.98, on average, representing US **\$523.30 per student** year.
- **75%** of the active population in Nosara lacks complete secondary education, posing a significant challenge in training and education, especially in advanced digital transformation.
- In 2023, out of **2,144 students** in Nosara, 18% (399) attended private education (double the national level), considering that the national percentage of students attending private education was 8.7% in 2021. This means that proportionally more students in Nosara have the purchasing power to afford private education than in the rest of the country.
- In 2023, the National Institute of Learning (INA), in collaboration with Edunámica, provided **19 technical courses** in Commerce and Services, Tourism, and Textiles for a total enrollment of 234 people. 57.26% of these students received their degree, and some continued to graduate in 2024.
- The Distance State University (UNED) graduated **20 people** in Entrepreneurship Accounting in 2023.
- In 2023, Edunámica organized a job fair where 1,200 people applied for **70 vacancies**.
- The "Vive el Sueño" program has trained **132 people** between 2019 and 2023 in a course called "Mi Negocio," an entrepreneurship training program. In 2023, this same organization provided training in accounting and psychology.
- The Dreamcatchers Foundation, an organization in childhood and youth programs, worked with about **600 local kids** in 2023, representing nearly 25% of the student population in Nosara. They also worked with 3 schools: Santa Marta, Esperanza, and Delicias. Additionally, 700 children received school supplies in 2023; they conducted 360 workshops on dance, music, and martial arts for over 600 children, held 32 workshops on soft skills for children, and had an annual investment of \$60,000 that funded all these activities.
- The only public school offering secondary education (Colegio Bocas de Nosara) has several limitations, including the fact that many of its teachers cannot reside in Nosara due to the cost of living, forcing them to commute from Nicoya every day. Additionally, the school has limited infrastructure where more than **500 students** attend classes; however, it is at **180%** of its installed capacity (Real capacity for 300 students), which generates overcrowding issues.



EDUCATION

- There is an initiative to establish a Technical College, which is currently underway by the Ministry of Public Education (MEP).
- Currently, the school serves **25%** of the overall student population in Nosara and 86% of the total population in secondary education.
- The remaining 14% of the secondary school population is served at the Del Mar Academy, which offers a scholarship program for students to access its educational system. Currently, **25 students** at Del Mar Academy have a scholarship.

WATER AND SANITATION

- In Nosara, water management is the responsibility of the ASADAs (Water and Sewerage Community Associations) of Santa Marta, Nosara, Esperanza Sur, Delicias de Garza, Santa Teresita, and Playas de Nosara.
- Formulating a comprehensive work plan for the ASADAs in the district, which assigns various functions, defines the value and contributions of each ASADA to the alliance, and identifies achievable short-term goals, is crucial to strengthening water governance.
- Approximately 19 out of 27 water concessions of the ASADAs are located within **1 km of the coastline**, indicating vulnerability to saline intrusion.
- Between 2021 and 2022, almost all ASADAs in Nosara were, at some point, under a moratorium that prohibited them from granting new water concessions. This was due to unregistered wells or supply problems and other technical reasons. Therefore, many developers had to wait to obtain their permits. However, most of them have recently managed to exit the moratorium state, allowing pending permits to be issued.
- For example, the Santa Marta ASADA faced a **270% growth** from 2015 to 2022. The Playas de Nosara ASADA, which covers Guiones and Pelada, saw its operation doubled in the same period.
- The limitation throughout the district in terms of wastewater treatment is evident, and this is further exacerbated when considering that the average depth of aquifers is only about five meters in some areas. In the Guiones and Pelada area, many residents and businesses have opted to install treatment systems such as Bionest or similar ones, which are prohibitive for most residents. Nevertheless, it is important to mention that Bionest Costa Rica, between 2021 and 2023, had installed **147 improved treatment plant** systems, mostly residential.
- It is necessary to initiate an awareness strategy to reduce water consumption, mainly in the influence area of the Guiones and Pelada ASADA. This ASADA had a total annual consumption in 2022 of 577,930 m³, with an annual consumption increase of 7% for 2023, reaching the record figure of **619,609 cubic meters** annually, with a monthly average of 56,328 cubic meters, which in months like January increased to 74,646 cubic meters, equivalent to around **30 Olympic-size swimming pools**; a figure never before seen in Nosara.
- On the other hand, the Nosara ASADA, which corresponds to the Arenales and Nosara town, had an average annual consumption of 346,230 cubic meters, that is, a little **less than half of the consumption** of the Guiones and Pelada ASADA, with almost the same number of water meters.



WATER AND SANITATION

- Having the **Municipal Regulatory Plan** is vital to address water consumption issues and avoid overloading the aquifers.
- Regarding water pollution, according to WCA reports, there is a significant correlation between rainfall and bacteria levels detected in the water. The samplings clearly show that the **Boca del Río Nosara area presents higher water quality standard non-compliance** levels. After conducting DNA samples in the Nosara River, the highest proportion is attributed to cows, pigs, and poultry. In the Pelada sector, poultry DNA represents 43%, dogs 38%, and humans 19%. Finally, in Guiones, most DNA comes from dogs, 60%, and humans, 37%. These samples show pollution generated on the beach and originate from the entire watershed corresponding to water sources.
- Water pollution results from wastewater discharge into rivers and runoff carrying contamination from farms and septic tanks.

SECURITY

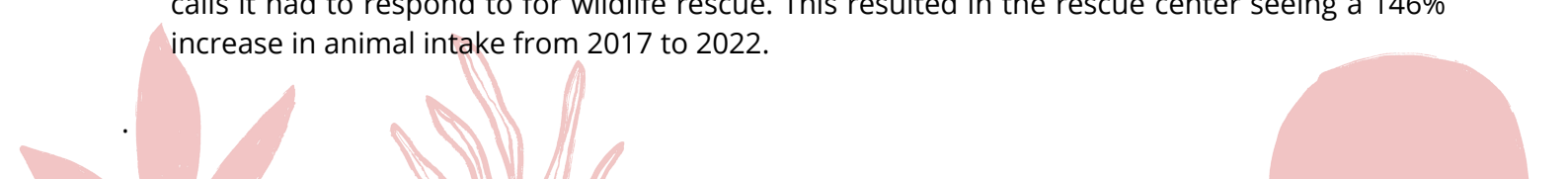
- By 2023, almost **50% of the homicides** in the Nicoya Canton occurred in Nosara. Analyzing the data using the homicide rate indicates that in 2023, Nosara experienced **levels of violence comparable to Mexican cities like Tijuana or Zacatecas** in terms of homicides per 100,000 inhabitants. This can be attributed to 2023 being **the most violent year** in the history of Costa Rica, with an increase in crime linked to gangs involved in controlling territory for the drug trafficking market.
- Due to the presence of a population with high purchasing power, Nosara is an attractive market for some gangs. According to the Social Progress Index for 2019, **80%** of residents considered marijuana consumption to be a serious problem.
- According to statistics from the Judiciary, between 2019 and 2023, **672** crimes were recorded in Nosara, of which robberies accounted for the highest number with a total of 276, representing 41.07%, while thefts totaled 204, representing 30.35%. Together, these two crimes accounted for over 71% of all crimes in Nosara during those years. The difference between robbery and theft is that robbery involves violence, whereas theft does not.
- The remaining crimes recorded between 2019 and 2023 were vehicle thefts (75 times), accounting for 11.16% of crimes, vehicle tampering (64 times) for 9.52%, and assault (34 times) for 5.05%. Between 2022 and 2023, 16 homicides were recorded, representing 2.38% of the total crimes, but they certainly represent the most violent type of crime possible. Nosara is the **second district nationally with the highest increase in homicides from 2022 to 2023**, with a **300%** increase, surpassed only by the district of San Rafael de Montes de Oca in San José, which showed a 400% increase.
- If the homicide data is excluded, the rest of the crimes in Nosara (vehicle theft, assaults, thefts) **tend to show a downward trend**.
- Bomberos de Nosara responded to **1064 cases** in 2023, representing a **269% increase compared to cases attended to in 2019**. According to Bomberos de Nosara data, most cases occur in the first few months of the year, with a trend toward a decrease as the year progresses.



SECURITY

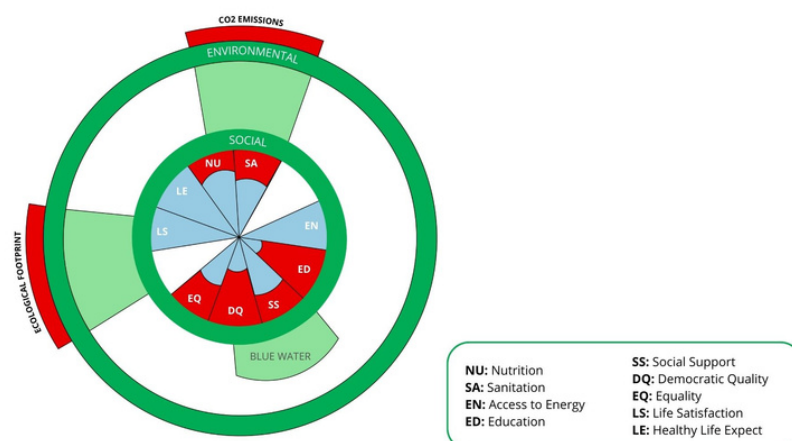
- Another interesting fact is that most incidents are related to animals, medical emergencies, and vehicular accidents. These three categories account for over 70% of the incidents the Bomberos de Nosara attended between 2019 and 2021, with three hotspots: **Playa Pelada, Guiones, and Arenales.**
- Regarding data provided by the Costa Rican Fire Department, they responded to a total of **191 emergencies between January 2019 and December 2023**, with the majority being fire emergencies, representing 25.13%. Notably, Bomberos de Nosara attended to 3365 cases in the same period (2019-2023), while the Costa Rican Fire Department attended to only 191 cases, meaning **1761% more cases.** This can be partly explained by the 60-kilometer distance separating Nosara from the nearest Costa Rican Fire Department station in Nicoya.

ENVIRONMENT

- The 200-meter Maritime Land Zone in Nosara (Guiones and Pelada) has been declared a National Wildlife Refuge (Ostional Refuge) since the 1980s, encompassing around **150 hectares.**
 - The Nosara Civic Association has protected **250 hectares** of forest adjacent to this Refuge since 1975.
 - "Costas Verdes" has reforested **36 hectares** of forest within the Ostional Refuge in the Pelada and Guiones sectors.
 - Due to these and other factors, it is notable that Nosara has a greater forest coverage than before the previous livestock period before the 1970s.
 - The Wildlife Monitoring program of the WCA has detected a total of **43 species**; among the most observed are the Coati, Common Raccoon, armadillos, agoutis, deer, foxes, and iguanas. Additionally, various species of predators, such as the margay, coyote, ocelot, and tayra.
 - Between October 2022 and November 2023, during WCA's monitoring, **775 dogs, 49 motor vehicles, and 18 campfires** were detected within the Ostional Refuge area. All of these activities are prohibited by the Refuge's Public Use Regulation.
 - According to WCA, sea turtle activity sightings reports confirm the nesting of olive ridley, leatherback, and hawksbill turtles on Playa Pelada and Guiones. **47 sea turtle activities** were observed, mainly in Playa Pelada, where 22 turtle nests were identified, while in Guiones, there were 7 nests.
 - From 2020 to 2023, there was a **360% increase in environmental complaints** filed through the SITADA system. This is the largest increase since 2013.
 - The environmental complaints registered mostly include tree felling (46), invasion of protected wilderness areas (38), electrocuted wildlife (16), and illegal water use (11). Among these four categories, they total 111 out of 206 complaints, accounting for 53.88% of the total complaints between 2019 and 2023.
 - Additionally, over the past two years, cases of **illegal landfill** operations have increased, which could be correlated with the increase in construction projects, generating atmospheric pollution from waste burning. There is an emergency regarding waste disposal, mainly rubble and construction project waste. This is exacerbated mainly because the nearest landfill for this type of waste is in Santa Cruz, almost two hours away, increasing construction logistics costs and leading to the proliferation of illegal sites, which, despite community complaints, often continue to operate.
 - From 2017 to 2022, International Animal Rescue experienced a **295% increase in emergency** calls it had to respond to for wildlife rescue. This resulted in the rescue center seeing a 146% increase in animal intake from 2017 to 2022.
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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- The report reflects that following the pandemic, Nosara, like other communities in the Pacific of Latin America, faces **unprecedented growth, which has generated financial flows and economic wealth but has also resulted in overcrowding, inequality, environmental degradation, habitat loss, and social displacement.**
- Nosara must balance fundamental human needs (access to water, quality education, and healthcare) and the planetary limits of its ecosystem.
- There is a need for an **integrated district development strategy** that considers the district's particularities compared to the rest of the Nicoya Canton, based on implementing a public-private partnership.
- There is **collective intelligence** that can be leveraged to make Nosara a global reference for regenerative development, with social innovation projects capable of reversing the negative effects of unchecked growth and harnessing the positive conditions of a Blue Zone through multisectoral collaboration.
- To do this, it is urgent to implement regulations to promote conservation and urban planning, such as the **Temporary Construction Regulations of the Municipality of Nicoya and the Regulatory Plan.**
- There is a high potential to generate **demonstrative projects** that change realities on the most urgent issues through the participation of the entire community.
- Nosara has a high potential to develop philanthropic projects and access resources from foreign and local individuals interested in community development.
- It is important to establish a **strengthened network of ASADAs** to learn best practices from other ASADAs in the country and ensure the sustainability of water resources.
- Establishing a **network of non-profit organizations** (NGOs) that can help address the city's most pressing issues and channel philanthropic resources toward true priorities is necessary.
- It is necessary to establish a **tool that allows monitoring of the most important indicators** of the district in terms of human development and environmental balance. The Report proposes an initial version of the Donut Economy model for these purposes. It is recommended that this first version be refined to include the key indicators that the community considers necessary to measure progressively



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The State of Nosara Report is a community effort of the Nosara District led by the Nosara Civic Association. If you require access to more information, please contact info@nca.cr