

Crestview Bluff

Site Analysis / Programming Document

DRAFT
July 10, 2019



PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW

This document is a comprehensive review and analysis of existing conditions and development opportunities for Crestview Bluff (hereafter referred to as the Site). It also builds upon a report prepared in March 2017 by Sage Land Solutions, LLC. Sage Land Solutions prepared an analysis of the Site (hereafter referred to as the Sage report) and presented the challenges, opportunities, and alternative methodologies for possible acquisition of Crestview Bluff to preserve as open space. The report summarized the following:

- Community Needs
- Open Space Attributes
- Land Ownership Issues
- Development Threats
- Loss of Opportunity to Acquire
- Preliminary Property Valuations

The conclusions of the Sage report were that although acquisition would be challenging due to the multiple small ownership patterns, the positive attributes of the site presented a strong argument for acquisition of the site for open space or park uses.

Partly as a result of the Sage report, both the City of Albuquerque and Bernalillo County agreed to work together on potential acquisition of the site. Citing the following:

- The rich history of this town settlement known as the Atrisco Land Grant;
- The potential of as many as 152 occasional, vagrant, and migratory wildlife species, 17 of which are formally recognized by either State or Federal authorities as sensitive, may be found at or proximate to the site;
- Crestview Bluff is one of the few remaining undeveloped properties with unobstructed views of the Bosque, downtown, and the Sandia Mountains;
- The community desires to preserve the land for historical and ecological interpretive education, biological conservation, wildlife viewing, scenic overlooks, and recreation; and
- The need for open space opportunities for outdoor recreation.

The City Council (Council Bill R-18-62/Enactment No. R-2018-071, October 11, 2018) and Board of County Commissioners (Administrative Resolution No. 2018-64, September 11, 2018) adopted resolutions to formalize a collaborative effort between the City and County to preserve Crestview Bluff as an historic urban green area.



LOCATION

The 43 properties comprising the 34.11-acre Crestview Bluff site are located south of Central Avenue and approximately ½-mile east of Old Coors Drive (see site vicinity map). The eastern edge of the site is bounded by the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District’s Arenal Canal. Public access to the site is generally from Central Avenue, and the extensions of Churchill Road and Gonzales Road.

SITE JURISDICTION AND ZONING

A majority of the site is in Bernalillo County, with only four lots being within the City of Albuquerque (see Zoning exhibit). The County portions of the site are zoned R-1. The City portions of the site are zoned MX-M along Central Avenue and R-1B at the extension of Gonzales Road. The MX-M zone district is to provide for a wide array of moderate intensity retail, commercial, institutional, and moderate density residential uses.



Exhibit 1: Site Vicinity Map



Crestview Bluff Proposed Boundary

City/County Boundary

Bernalillo County Zoning

- R-1, Single Family Residential
- M-H, Mobile Home & Single Family Residential

City of Albuquerque Zoning

- R-1, Single Family Residential
- R-ML, Multi-Family Low Density
- PD, Planned Development
- MX-M, Mixed Use Moderate Intensity

CRESTVIEW BLUFF ZONING

Prepared for:
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 3915 Carlisle Blvd. NE
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Scale: 1" = 120'

April, 2019

NORTH

Exhibit 2: Zoning

SURROUNDING LAND USES / ZONING

The surrounding land uses and zoning are as follows:

- West** Zoned City R-1A and R-1B, developed with detached single family residential.
- North** Central Avenue with primarily MX-M zoning, developed with strip retail and service uses.
- East** The Arenal Canal abuts the east side of the site with County R-1 zoning, developed with detached single family residential to the east of the Canal.
- South** Combination of City R-1A and County R-1 zoning, developed with detached single family residential.

RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

There are a number of community/recreational facilities within a 1-1/2-mile radius of Crestview Bluff. Managed individually by the City and County, these facilities offer a variety of recreational activities to the community (see Recreational Facilities exhibit).

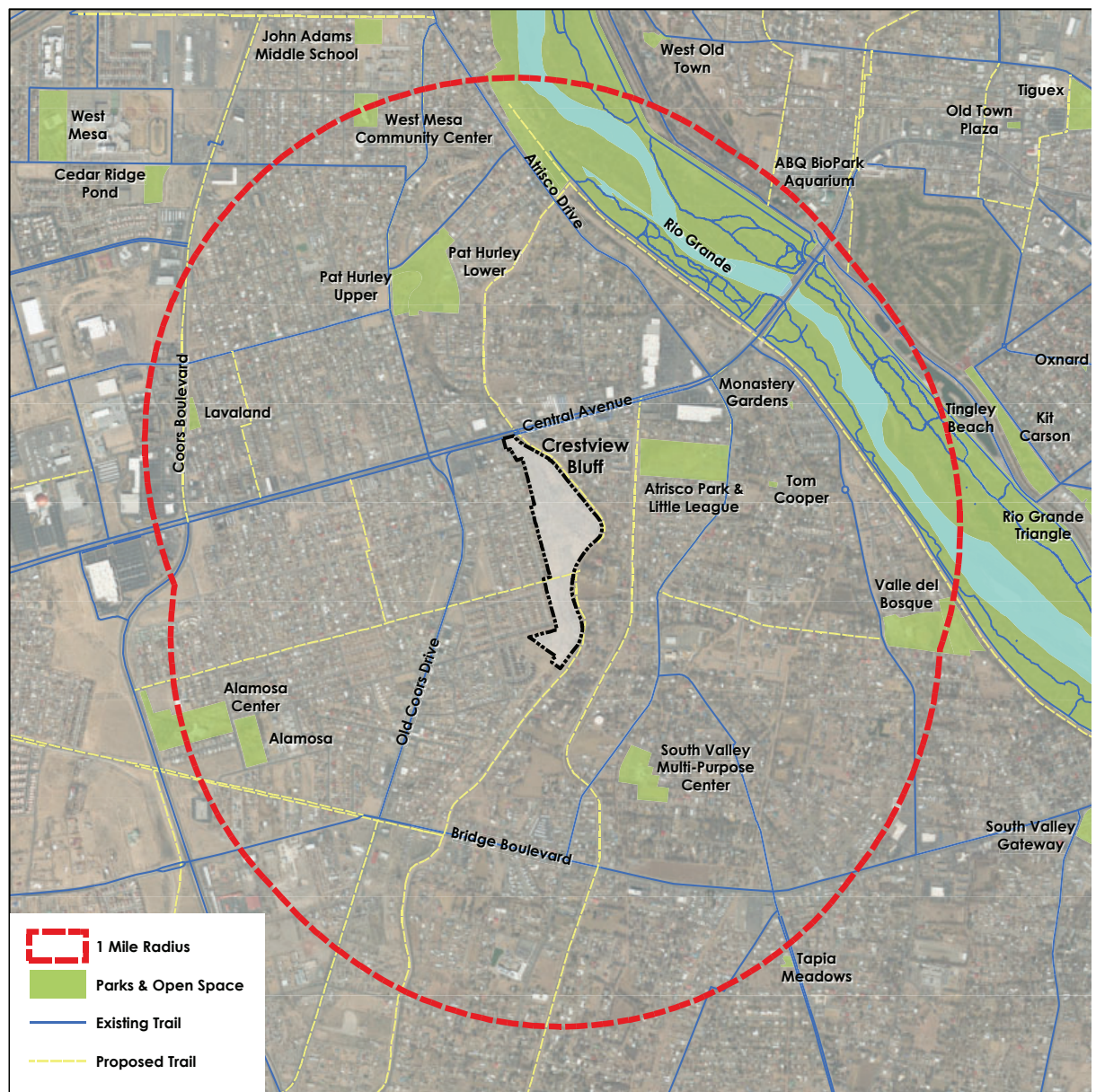


Exhibit 3: Recreational Facilities

Public Parks

- Lavaland Park (City)
- Pat Hurley Upper/Lower Park (City)
- Atrisco Park and Little League (County)
- Valle Del Bosque Park (County)
- Rio Grande Valley State Park (State)

Community Centers

- Alamosa Center (City)
- Joan Jones Community Center (City)
- West Mesa Community Center (City)
- South Valley Multi-Purpose Center (County)

Schools

- Alamosa Elementary School
- Valle Vista Elementary School
- Atrisco Elementary School

Neighborhood Associations

There are a number of neighborhood associations within a 1-1/2 mile radius of the park, including:

- Crestview Bluff Neighbors Association
- Alamosa Neighborhood Association
- Vecinos Del Bosque Neighborhood Association
- West Mesa Neighborhood Association
- Pat Hurley Neighborhood Association
- Southwest Alliance of Neighbors
- South Valley Coalition

PHYSICAL SITE FEATURES

The following site features are represented in the included Benefits and Constraints graphic.

Topography

The site generally slopes down from west to east, dropping approximately 65 feet down to the Arenal Canal. The western portion of the site is generally flatter, then a severe slope cuts through the site from north to south, beginning just north of Churchill Road. The eastern portion of the site is then generally flat adjacent to the Arenal Canal. The properties south of Gonzales Road include some of the most severe slopes, which encumber a significant portion of the area.



Pat Hurley Park



View South from approximately Gonzales Road

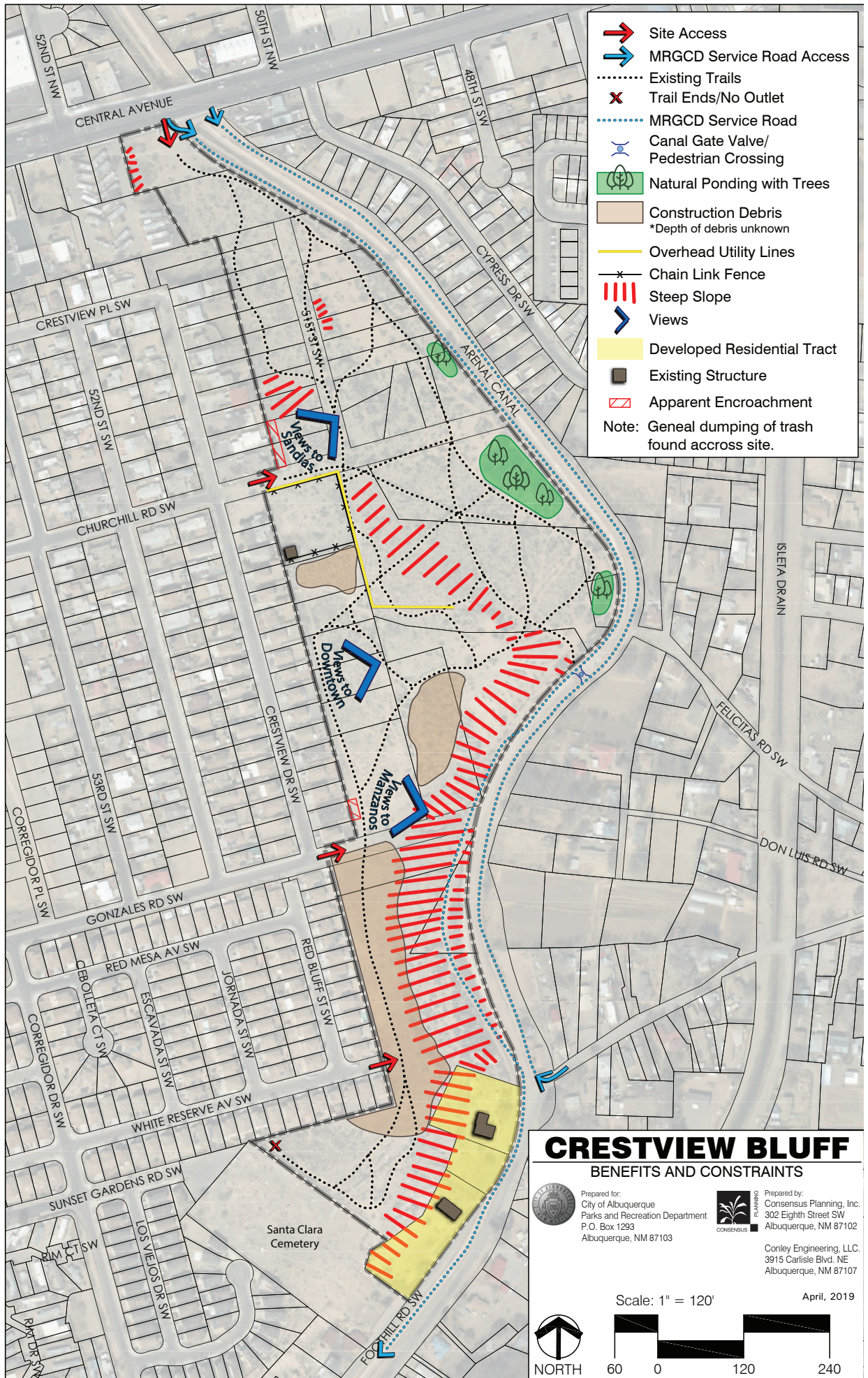


Exhibit 4: Benefits & Constraints Zoning

The topographic relief of the site opens up dramatic views to the Bosque, Old Town and the distant Sandia Mountains.

Soils

There are two soil types, BKD/Bluepoint-Kokan Association and MWA/Madurez-Wink Association that make up the site soils. Bluepoint-Kokan Association represents 70% of the site and Madurez-Wink Association represents 30% of the site. Neither of these soil types present any constraint to development or impact to the value of the site for open space or park uses.

Vegetation

The site is mostly covered with a moderate level of native grasses and shrubs typical to the West Mesa. There are several “ponding areas” on the east edge of the site, adjacent to the Arenal Canal that have stands of volunteer Elms.

Environmental

Currently the site is criss-crossed with trails created by walkers and off-road recreational vehicles. There is also a considerable amount of residential and construction debris, generally believed to have been dumped on the site during construction of the adjacent neighborhoods. No sub-surface investigations were conducted as part of this site review. The preparation of a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment is recommended to determine the potential impacts from the considerable trash dumping.

Views

The site provides a prominent visual presence for drivers heading west on Central Avenue and those residences east of the site, being one of the last remaining pieces of open land along the corridor. The prominent features of the site are the outward views looking east over the historic Atrisco village in the foreground, the Rio Grande bosque and Downtown skyline in the intermediate zone, and the Sandia Mountains in the background. As mentioned previously, the topographic relief of the site accentuates these views and creates multiple opportunities for strategically located viewing points.



View East across Valley to the Sandias



View North from South End of Site

Cultural/Historical

(excerpted from the Sage Report)

Crestview Bluff and the surrounding areas of Atrisco and Vecinos del Bosque (east), South Atrisco (south) and Alamosa (west), have a long and rich settlement history. In the early 1600's a number of Spanish estancias and ranches dotted the area of the Rio Grande Valley between the Pueblo of Sandia to the north and the Pueblo of Isleta to the south. By 1632, the first Spanish settlement in Albuquerque was on the site of present day Old Town. Twelve years after the reoccupation of New Mexico by Don Diego de Vargas in 1692, an 82,000-acre land grant was awarded to Don Fernando Duran y Chaves II as a town settlement, which became known as the Atrisco Land Grant. The land grant stretched from the Rio Grande to the Rio Puerco and included the Crestview Bluff area and surrounding neighborhoods. Settlers began arriving in 1703 and by 1760 over 200 people had settled in the ranchos and village proper known as Atrisco. As a result of this growth and the demand for additional common sheep and livestock grazing, the land grant was expanded in 1768 to include additional mesa grassland to the northwest.

From 1692 until the early 1900's, Atrisco was a self-sufficient, close-knit community. After 1900, the practices of irrigated agriculture, free grazing and trade with Mexico began to change, resulting in a decline in the Atrisco area. Changes were accelerated by the introduction of the railroad, urban growth of Albuquerque and government land- and water- management efforts, such as the establishment of Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District. In addition, as Albuquerque grew there were new opportunities for employment, such as American Lumber Company's sawmill north and east of Old Town and the AT&SF Railyards east of Barelvas, that attracted people away from the rural agricultural areas such as Atrisco and into the City.

During the 1920's and 1930's, in response to the expanding national highway system and city growth, Atrisco Land Grant heirs began to allow the sale of portions of the land for auto-oriented commercial development. The Crestview Bluffs, Atrisco and South Atrisco areas, like much of the near West Mesa, were greatly impacted by the designation of Route 66 as a national highway. Throughout the 1940's and 1950's, the land grant trustees and courts struggled with how to deal with these sales and the equitable division of proceeds to the land grant heirs. The sale of lands to developers and outside commercial interests continued in the 1940's and 1950's and represented a major shift from a subsistence to a modern economy.

The post-World War II housing boom in Albuquerque, which is well-documented for the Northeast Heights, had a profound effect on the near West Mesa as well. West Side subdivision development began in 1951, when homebuilder Leon Watson bought land between Central Avenue and Bridge Boulevard near Coors, which became known as Los Altos. Sam Hoffman, an early renowned Northeast Heights homebuilder, was also active in the near West Mesa in the 1950's.

Crestview Bluff and Atrisco neighborhoods are within the boundaries of the original 1692 Atrisco Land Grant, one of the few Hispanic land grants that has been continuously owned and occupied by the original settlers and heirs. Because of the longevity of the land grant, these neighborhoods have over 300 years of Hispanic heritage. Cultural identity and historical importance of the area is a strong element of community pride. Many families have lived in these neighborhoods for generations and there is an emphasis on maintaining community identity and cohesion, improving facilities and providing safe places to live and play.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Water

A review of the City of Albuquerque system maps shows two major water lines crossing the site. These are a 16-inch steel line on the north side of the site (in line with Churchill Road SW) and a 36-inch cast iron line on the south side of the site (in line with Gonzales Road SW). Our team had discussions with representatives of the Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority (ABCWUA) to verify these lines as well as to discuss possible connection points for irrigation systems. The ABCWUA stated that neither of these lines can be tapped for an irrigation system. There are small diameter potable water lines located in the streets of the neighborhood just west of the site that could be used for these purposes. The most convenient line to connect to is a 6-inch PVC water line located at the intersection of Churchill Road SW and Crestview Drive SW. This connection would require removal and replacement of a of roadway to make the connection. The proposed irrigation line could then be routed east to the site.

Sanitary Sewer

There is only one sanitary sewer system (SAS) line crossing the site. It is located on the south side of the site (in line with Gonzales Road SW) and this is a 12-inch interceptor line. Service connections cannot be made to this line. There are 8-inch diameter SAS lines located in the neighborhood streets to the west. If an SAS connection was required for a restroom facility, the most convenient location for an SAS service connection is the 8-inch line located at the intersection of Churchill Road SW and Crestview Drive SW. The facility would have to be located reasonably close to this intersection in order that the new SAS service line could gravity drain to the existing system.

Drainage

The site generally drains from west to east. The drainage in the subdivision located to the west is contained and collected within the boundary of the subdivision so there are no apparent offsite flows reaching the site. The study area is undeveloped with native plant species and some ponding areas located on the site. There is little evidence of concentrated flows on the site except at existing earthen paths. The existing vegetation helps to reduce erosion and should be protected as much as possible during development of the site.

An earthen berm is located on the east side of the site and this, generally, keeps overland flows from moving into the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD) Arenal Canal right-of-way (ROW). This berm directs flows into localized ponding areas. There are several ponding areas along the east boundary of the site north of Felicitas Road SW (the northern $\frac{3}{4}$ of the site). It is not readily apparent whether these are natural or constructed. However, based on the size of the trees in these ponding areas, they have been in place for an extended period of time. These collect the runoff from the site and it appears that the ponding areas keep flows from reaching the MRGCD ROW.

The Arenal Canal is located in MRGCD right-of-way on the east boundary of the site. This conveyance is for delivery of irrigation water to the MRGCD customers and, as such, this facility is not available for conveyance of storm water flows. There are two storm drains located on the site. An existing 24" storm drain is located on the site in the Churchill Road SW ROW. This system collects runoff that is generated in the subdivision to the west and this drain proceeds east through the site and then north to Central Avenue SW in the 51st Street SW ROW. This system does not have the capacity to accept any additional flows as it crosses the project area. A second existing 36" storm



LEGEND

- EXISTING BERM
- EXISTING PONDING AREA
- SAS EXISTING SANITARY SEWER
- SD EXISTING STORM DRAIN
- W EXISTING WATER
- OVERLAND FLOW

CRESTVIEW BLUFF

UTILITY PLAN

Prepared for:
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Scale: 1" = 120'

DRAFT

NORTH

60 0 120 240

May, 2019

drain originates in the subdivision to the west at the Gonzales Pond located at Gonzales Road (north side) and is routed through the subdivision to Churchill Road SW ROW. This system then continues east through the site and under the Arenal Canal to Cypress Drive SW. System maps do not show the continuation of the system east of the Arenal Canal. However, as-built plans for the construction of this system indicate that the system outfalls to the Osage/La Media system. This 36" storm drain is a dedicated outfall from the Gonzales Pond and no additional connections can be made to this system. There is no viable storm drain connection to accept site runoff. Therefore, any developed flows from site improvements would need to be captured and held on site.

Access - Vehicular

Central Avenue runs along the north side of the site and includes two driveway cuts, providing maintenance access to the Arenal Canal. The western driveway also provides for potential vehicular access to the site. Bus service, including Rapid Ride and ultimately Albuquerque Rapid Transit (ART) is available along Central Avenue, with an ART station located at Central and Yucca, just west of the site. There are three east-west streets which terminate at the western boundary of the site. These streets, Churchill Road, Gonzales Road, and White Reserve Avenue also have the potential to provide vehicular access, albeit through a residential neighborhood.

Access – Pedestrian

Pedestrian access to the site currently exists from virtually all sides of the site, although access south of Gonzales Road is limited to the maintenance Road along the west side of the Arenal Canal. The presence of the Santa Clara Cemetary and private residential development along Foothill Road (at the base of the slope), cut off pedestrian access opportunities.

FUNDING SUMMARY

City of Albuquerque (current)	
2018 GO Bond	\$49,000
2018 GO Bond	\$145,450
City of Albuquerque (proposed)	
2019 GO Bond	\$300,000
Bernalillo County (current)	
2018 GO Bond	\$100,000
2019 Capital Outlay	\$360,500
2019 Capital Outlay	\$175,000
Total Funding (current/proposed)	\$1,129,950
Estimated Value of Property *	\$1,250,000

** From Sage Report, and based on the entire 34.11 acre site.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

In reviewing the benefits and constraints, it was readily apparent that the southern end of the site, below Gonzales Road has severe limitations to development, and a host of issues that would be detrimental to the City and/or County if purchased. It is our recommendation that the City and County forego purchasing any of the properties south of Gonzales road, and focus acquisition and development capital on the northern two-thirds of the site that have a higher development value.

Due to the relatively severe topographic features of the site, and general consensus of City and County staff, as well as neighborhood representatives, development of the site should be limited to passive activities. This would generally include limited pedestrian circulation using some of the existing trails while closing and revegetating others. As previously mentioned the topography of the site lends itself to development of several overlook areas that may include shade structures, plazas, and seating to provide for gatherings and taking in the amazing valley views. These areas would also provide for the display of environmental and educational graphics to present the rich and storied history of the area. These overlook areas could be terraced to provide options for viewing points, and to accomodate multiple groups at each overlook location.

Vehicular access should be limited to using Central Avenue, and include the development of a small parking area (10-12 spaces). This access would take advantage of the existing driveway, continue the maintenance access for the Arenal Canal. Restricting vehicular access to this one point would alleviate an increase in traffic through the neighborhoods via Churchill, Gonzales, or White Reserve. Pedestrian access points could be provided and highlighted at these three streets, as well as from the parking area. In addition to improved trails within the site, some of the existing trails which extend to the south and east could be left in an unimproved state.



Existing Trails

The landscape treatment for the site should retain a native vocabulary and be used primarily to highlight the focal points of the site. This would include enhanced landscaping at the overlook structures and plazas, neighborhood pedestrian access points, and at the parking area. Extraneous and unwanted existing trails could be closed and revegetated to blend with the existing landscape.

The Conceptual Site Plan on the following page illustrates a potential site layout given the benefits and constraints of the site. The precedent images below provide a vocabulary for the site character and materials for the various site features. With input from City/County staff and the public, this Conceptual Site Plan could be used as a starting point for crafting a more site detailed development plan.



CRESTVIEW BLUFF

SITE PLAN

Prepared by:
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Checked by:
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 Marietta, GA 30067



City Engineering, LLC
 2015 Centre Blvd. NE
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CHARACTER/MATERIAL



Shade / scenic overlook structure



Shade structure, benches, and educational signage



Terraced Seating, Gabion Basket Retaining Features



Crusher Fine Trail

PROPOSED NEXT STEPS

1. Conduct neighborhood meeting to obtain input and confirm desired concepts for development of the site.
2. Prepare Phase I Environmental Site Assessment.
3. Develop acquisition strategy for properties north of Gonzales Road.
4. Develop detailed Master Plan for development of the site.