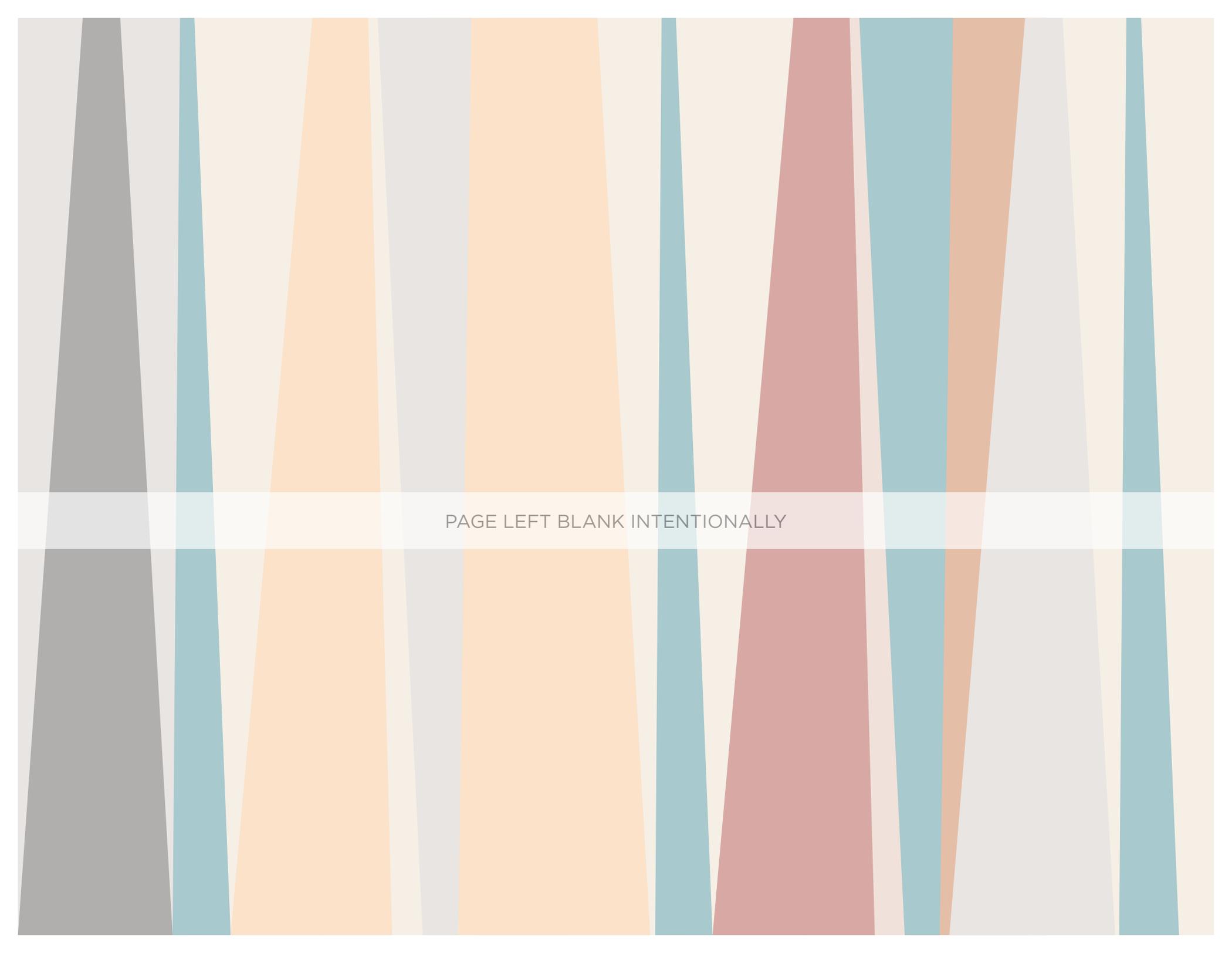




Albuquerque RAIL TRAIL

PART II - EXISTING CONDITIONS

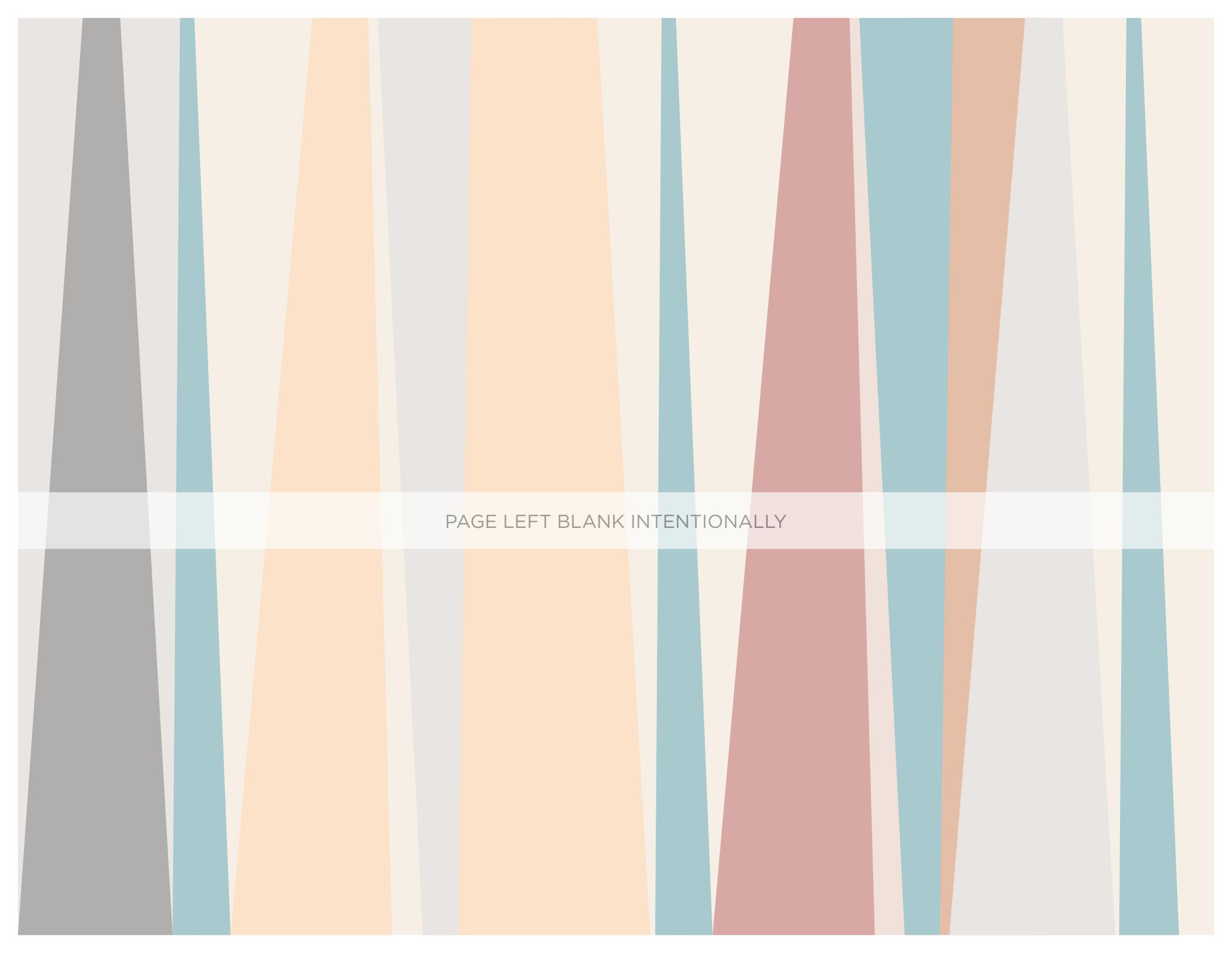
NOVEMBER 2021 - *Public Comment Draft*



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INTRODUCTION

The Rail Trail Framework Plan proposes a vibrant and artistic urban trail that will revitalize Downtown Albuquerque. The Rail Trail is imagined both as a celebration of Albuquerque's cultural history and a bright vision for our shared future.

At the crossroads of historic transportation routes such as El Camino Real, Route 66, and the AT&SF Rail Line, the Rail Trail envisions the creation of a localized and convenient multi-modal connection across Downtown.

The project will link the Downtown core to nearby neighborhoods, mass transportation options, the Rail Yards redevelopment site, employment opportunities, and activity centers. Through public-private partnerships, the City of Albuquerque seeks to reinvigorate the local economy by providing unique activities along the trail that will draw people to Downtown.

The plan ties into existing transportation projects, including efforts to enhance streetscapes for walkability, improve bicycle networks, reduce traffic fatalities, and implement other urban trails proposed along the railroad tracks.



PROJECT PURPOSE + GOALS

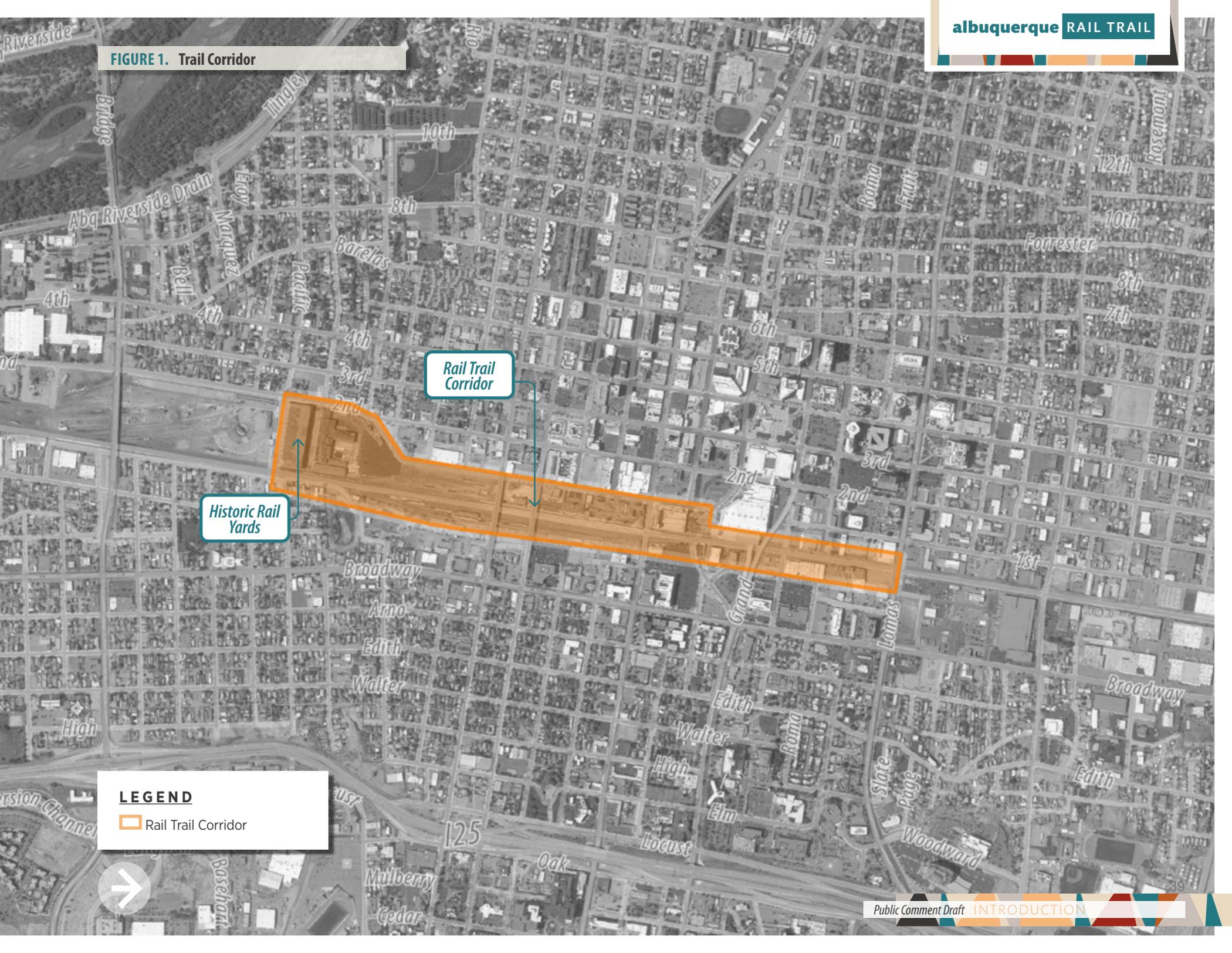
Areas along the railroad are bifurcated by the tracks and provide limited crossing options for pedestrians and cyclists. Many of the surrounding areas are underserved, parcels and buildings are underutilized or vacant, and economic opportunities are hindered. Similar projects in other cities have demonstrated that well-planned urban trails can increase property values, unlock redevelopment potential, and revitalize blighted areas through new investment.

The goal of the Rail Trail Design Study is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the opportunities and constraints of constructing a transportation link through Downtown Albuquerque. This project explores the potential benefits of constructing a trail that connects to existing trails, pedestrian facilities, and cycling facilities; breathes life into underdeveloped areas; and closes gaps in transportation networks. By constructing the trail, the City aims to catalyze the economic vitality of Downtown and its neighboring communities.

PURPOSE

-  *Reconnect East and West Downtown*
-  *Provide safe bicycle and pedestrian access to employment centers and transit stations*
-  *Unlock \$220M redevelopment potential*
-  *Celebrate the corridor's multi-layer history*
-  *Extend broadband and smart cities infrastructure*
-  *Provide healthy, post-COVID urban amenities*
-  *Link dis-invested communities to employment and transit*
-  *Ensure local community benefits from subsequent investment*

FIGURE 1. Trail Corridor



Historic Rail Yards

Rail Trail Corridor

LEGEND

-  Rail Trail Corridor

HISTORY

INTRODUCTION

Albuquerque's history is closely linked to a number of transportation modes that have brought people and goods to the City. The land was first stewarded by Indigenous people, was further developed by the wagon wheel, profoundly influenced by the steel wheel, and ultimately shaped into its modern-day urban form with the invention of the rubber wheel.

Pueblo Indians and nomadic tribes had established commerce between the ancient cultures in Mexico and communities in present-day New Mexico. Footpaths connecting the two date back to around 1000 AD and branched throughout the northern Rio Grande region. For centuries the cultures on both sides of the border carried on a trade relationship, as is evident in many archeological excavations made, including Chaco Canyon in New Mexico. Trade brought cacao, macaws (a type of parrot), turquoise, and copper to New Mexico and Chaco Canyon.

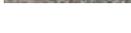
During the Spanish colonial era, El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro (El Camino) was formed, retracing some of the Indigenous trading routes and connecting Mexico City with Santa Fe.

THE WAGON WHEEL

Many communities, including Albuquerque, developed along El Camino. Over time, El Camino brought people from the south to New Mexico, and people from the north to Mexico. Those traveling in either direction, both voluntarily and involuntarily included traders, priests, settlers, enslaved Native Americans, convicts, and prisoners of war. Large caravans, often counting over thirty wagons, would bring goods and news between Mexico and New Mexico.

El Camino established its first trade route by means of the wagon wheel, which brought people and goods. Its route would change the United States and New Mexico forever. In the course of its history, El Camino and the newcomers it brought were responsible for the subjugation and enslavement of the region's Indigenous people. Newcomers established communities along its path, forcing the resettlement of many Indigenous communities, suppressing their religion, and oppressing their culture.

The proposed Rail Trail aligns with the historic El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro, as designated by the National Park Service.



Clockwise from top left: A large kiva at Pueblo Bonito in Chaco Canyon, Wagon Wheel, Desert Highway



THE STEEL WHEEL

The second wave that brought further change to the West was facilitated by the invention of the steel wheel. The age of the railroad and the expansion of Albuquerque are closely linked. Many communities, including Barelmas, South Broadway, and Martineztown saw growth and expansion due to the arrival of the railroad.



*From top to bottom: Alvarado complex, Atchison Topeka, Santa Fe Railway rail yard Albuquerque. (Source: The Albuquerque Museum)
Rail Yards roundhouse under construction, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1915. (Source: Palace of the Governors Photo Archives, New Mexico History Museum, Santa Fe)*

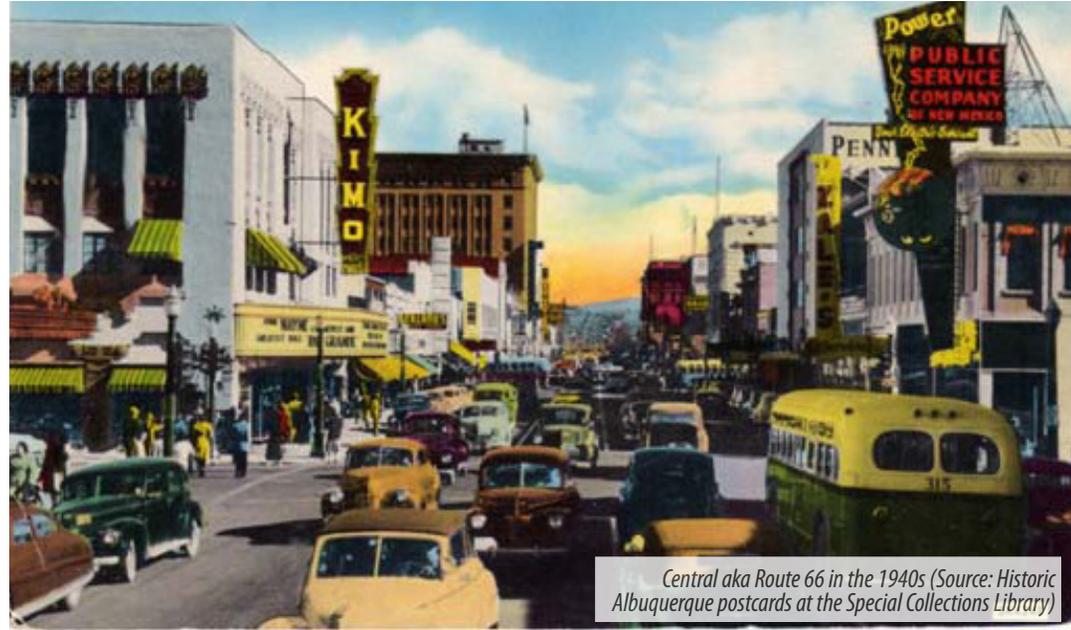
Initially, the Santa Fe Railroad planned to put its yard in Bernalillo. However land was priced so high there that Albuquerque businesses managed to lure the railroad to Albuquerque. The Santa Fe Railroad built its transcontinental tracks along the base of the sandhills to avoid annual flooding in the lower Rio Grande valley. Their regional operations center was built at what is today known as the Rail Yards. The decision to settle in Albuquerque was a pivotal moment in the city's history. The railroad brought people, goods, and economic growth, which led to Albuquerque's expansion in the early 20th century.

The Santa Fe Railroad company built a large locomotive maintenance shop and regional administrative offices at the edge of the Barelmas community. New businesses moved in, and the lands surrounding the Rail Yards flourished. At its height, the Rail Yards employed over 1,000 people. The Rail Yards became the largest employer in the city, and over 5,200 freight cars passed through on an annual basis.

After the arrival of the railroad, the original Albuquerque townsite was divided into four wards. The wards, labeled First, Second, Third, and Fourth - moving clockwise - were formed by the intersection of Railroad Avenue, now Central Avenue, and the railroad tracks, as seen on the map to the right. The wards were first populated with wood shacks and tents. As more durable materials arrived by train, the burgeoning town began to develop in earnest.



Trackside scene at the Alvarado Hotel complex Albuquerque 1940 (Source: The Albuaueraue Museum)



Central aka Route 66 in the 1940s (Source: Historic Albuquerque postcards at the Special Collections Library)



Historic map of 'New Town' as it was divided into four Wards.

THE RUBBER WHEEL

With the construction of Route 66, Albuquerque's streets transformed dramatically in both form and function. In 1937, the alignment of Route 66 shifted from 4th Street to Central Avenue. A variety of people came to and through Albuquerque - some finding the fresh air to offer a reprieve from tuberculosis, others fleeing conditions caused by the Dustbowl, and many more seeking new opportunities in the great Southwest. During the more prosperous years following the Great Depression, people traveled to the area on vacation, and the route became a corridor for leisure, adventuring, and trade. In response to the growing popularity of Albuquerque and Route 66, many businesses flourished along the corridor.

The original Route 66 first ran North-South, parallel to the Railroad tracks. But in the 1930s, the route was changed to an East-West axis to provide the first paved road crossing in New Mexico. Route 66 brought increased travelers and economic activity through Albuquerque for a time, but the completion of Interstate-40 and Interstate-25 in the 1960s diverted traffic to the more efficient highway system.

In the 1960s the completion of Interstate-40 and Interstate-25 diverted traffic away from Route 66. The businesses that targeted Route 66-related travel slowly disappeared and fell into disrepair. Today, there is renewed interest in historic Route 66, and the corridor is now a world renowned attraction. National and international tourists travel along this corridor and seek to experience diverse communities and beautiful landscapes, colorful neon signs, and classic roadside architecture along its pathway. The route still runs through the heart of Albuquerque along Central Avenue and bisects the Rail Trail corridor.

The changes that came with El Camino, the railroad, and Route 66 have altered the lives of Burqueños and determined the course of the development of the entire city. Without their influence, Albuquerque would not be the city that it is today.

The Rail Trail offers a unique opportunity to highlight this diverse history and anchor some of the stories, events, and anecdotes in the present-day trail experience.

HISTORIC COMMUNITIES

The Rail Trail Corridor is located within, and adjacent to several historic neighborhoods, including Barelvas, South Broadway and Martineztown. The rich history of these areas, still celebrated today, shaped present-day Albuquerque. Historic buildings and development patterns found in and around the project corridor tell important stories about the city's past.

Barelvas, to the west of the Rail Trail corridor, was originally settled as a farming village in the mid-1600's. It was established in its current location due to a river ford that became a popular crossing point along the historic El Camino Real. This crossing was later formalized with



Birds eye view of Albuquerque Bernalillo County New Mexico, 1886. (Source: Center for Southwest Research UNM)

a bridge in the vicinity of present-day Dolores Huerta Blvd. At this important crossroads, Barelás prospered through regional trade. Three irrigation ditches served the community, the primary being the Acequia Madre de Barelás (Acequia Madre). The long, narrow development patterns, still visible today, allowed access to the ditches that once irrigated or drained the land.

With the arrival of the railroad in 1880, Barelás flourished and expanded. The triumph of the automobile, however, diminished the importance of the railroad. The rubber wheel pushed aside the steel wheel. Route 66 and Route 85 became the main thoroughfares for the transportation of people and goods in both the east-west and north-south directions. Route 85 traveled along 4th street through the heart of Barelás, following the path of the historic El Camino Real. Barelás took advantage of this emerging car-centric world, developing automobile-oriented services along 4th street. This era of prosperity, however, was short lived. With the construction of the interstate, the installation of Civic Plaza in downtown Albuquerque, and several urban renewal projects, Barelás was eventually cut off from its flow of customers, and businesses languished.

Along the eastern edge of the Rail Trail corridor is the South Broadway neighborhood. South Broadway is now comprised of three neighborhoods: Eugene Field to the north, John Marshall in the middle, and South San Jose to the south. San Jose is the oldest of the three, originally part of Barelás before the railroad was built right through

the middle of the settlement. The village was founded by a wealthy landowner, Antonio Sandoval, who constructed the Acequia Madre de Barelás. In this neighborhood especially, the long narrow parcels reflect the agricultural past and the irrigation access afforded by orienting each parcel to the ditch. Much of the community's growth took place between 1885 and 1925. The neighborhoods that developed around the Rail Yards were predominantly middle class, with their residents employed by the railroad shops or iron foundry. As in Barelás, South Broadway suffered an economic and population decline with the decline of the railroad.

On the northeastern edge of the Rail Trail Corridor is the historic community of Martineztown. Like Barelás and San Jose, it was first settled as an agricultural community along the Acequia Madre de Los Barelás in 1830 and 1850. It was first settled by Don Manuel Antonio Martín who constructed the first adobe building along the Acequia Madre. With the arrival of the railroad, many residents abandoned agriculture and went to work for the railroad and related businesses. A wool-scouring mill opened in 1895 at the corner of Mountain Road and the railroad, which also employed many of the residents of this community.

Downtown Albuquerque is the civic and economic heart of Albuquerque. First developed with the arrival of the railroad in 1880, it was originally called "New Town." Soon after its founding, the young City was divided into four wards to serve the community.

New Town was platted in a grid encompassing 3.1 square miles north of Railroad Avenue (now Central Avenue) with Mountain Road as its northern boundary.

As it expanded, it annexed adjacent subdivisions and three of the previously unincorporated communities: the original Villa de Albuquerque (Old Town), Barelás, Martineztown, and Santa Barbara. Around the turn of the century, Albuquerque had a population of more than 6,000 people. It was the industrial hub of the region, with brickyards, tanneries, flour mills, packing houses, and wagon factories, amongst others. At the beginning of the new century, the American Lumber Company found a new home in the young city that was tied to the railroad. It had purchased land in the Zuni Mountains for timber extraction and built a sawmill and wood-working factory on 110 acres of former agricultural land, as well as a sawmill to process the timber in 1903. The factory was connected by a rail spur which served to transport logs to and from the factory.

The commercial Center of New Town was developed west of the railroad along Gold Avenue and Railroad, between 1st and 4th Street. The commercial district harbored banks, hotels, saloons, and professional offices. At the same time, residential neighborhoods sprung up around the commercial and industrial developments of New Town. Streetcar systems connected the residential neighborhoods to the commercial and industrial districts. In 1881 a mule-drawn streetcar operated on a three-mile track between New Town, Old Town, and Barelás. In 1903

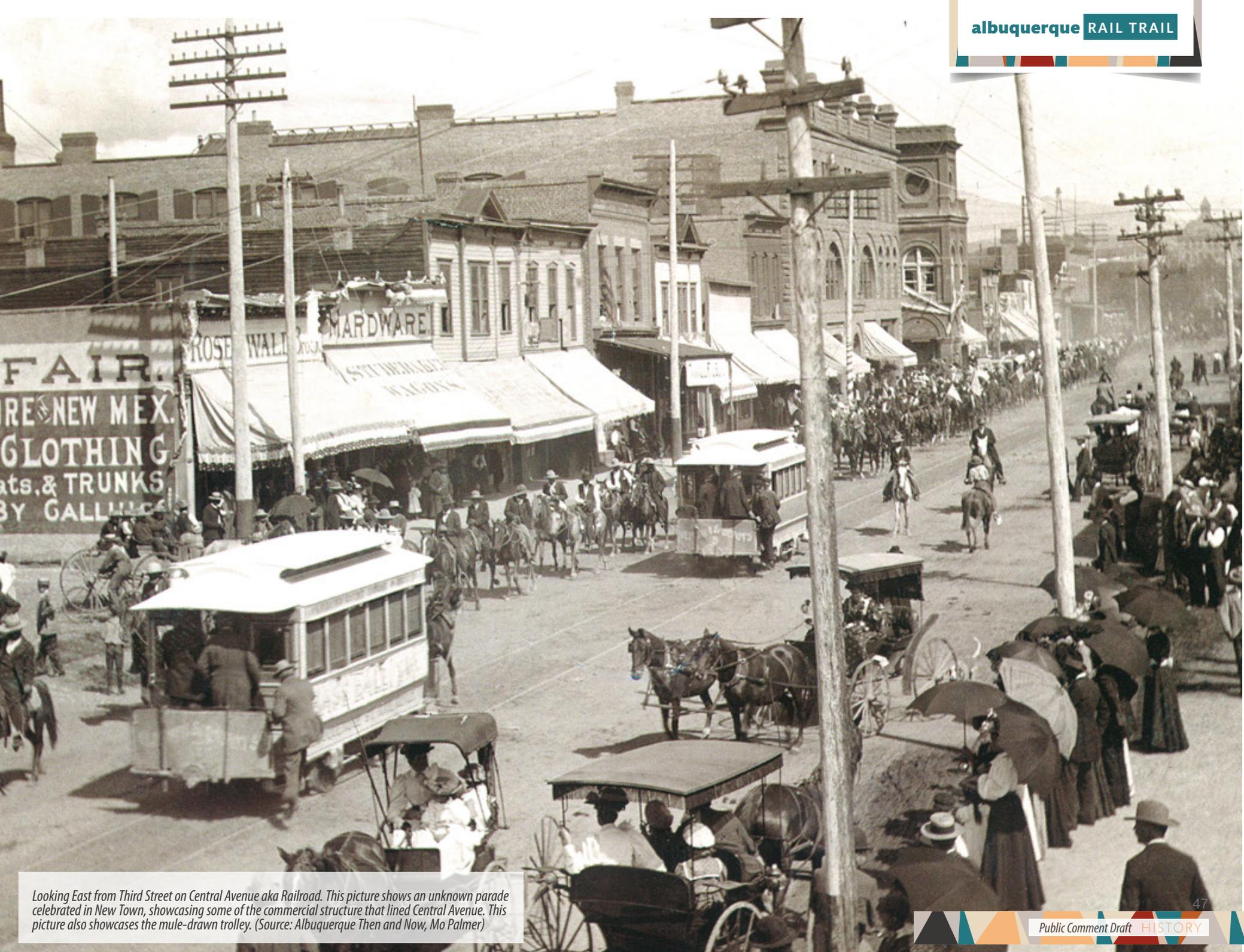
an electric streetcar system was built replacing the mule-drawn system. This service expanded and one line served New Town, Old Town, Sawmill, and the Railyards. The other line served Huning Highland and the University area.

In 1902 Atchison, Topeka, and the Santa Fe Railway constructed the Alvarado, a hotel operated by the Fred Harvey Company. The hotel was part of a complex that included the train depot, the Harvey Curio Museum, and Indian arts shop. It became the city's social and political center. For over six decades it served as an unofficial landmark for the City of Albuquerque. It too however, fell victim to the shift from rails to rubber wheels. With the increase of automobile traffic and the construction of motels along Route 66, train travel became less popular and in effect, so did with it the Alvarado hotel. The structure was demolished in 1970.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- *Tie the history of the various modes of transportation that shaped Albuquerque to the trail through signage, art, materials, and visual cues*
- *Highlight the historic neighborhoods, structures, and their historic figures*
- *Bring the community into the storytelling to share their stories and viewpoints*
- *Tell the “whole” story*
- *Develop community ownership*





Looking East from Third Street on Central Avenue aka Railroad. This picture shows an unknown parade celebrated in New Town, showcasing some of the commercial structure that lined Central Avenue. This picture also showcases the mule-drawn trolley. (Source: Albuquerque Then and Now, Mo Palmer)

EQUITY + INCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

The addition of linear parks can significantly change land values and uses in surrounding areas, leading to both economic and physical growth. However, this change can also result in the displacement of existing business and residents, leading to a loss of community cohesion and cultural identity. According to a recent study published in the *Urban Studies Journal*, greenway parks with an active transportation component near downtowns had a high correlation to increased property values.

The City of Albuquerque is committed to creating a Rail Trail that drives inclusive and sustainable development that creates opportunities for surrounding residents, uplifts the local economy, and provides culturally relevant amenities. This can be achieved by working collaboratively with community members, stakeholders, government officials, business owners, and policy experts to identify community needs and appropriate projects/programs for the area.

EXISTING COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS

The Greater Rail Trail Area is a historically underserved community and has suffered from decades of disinvestment. The residents in the Greater Rail Trail Area are more likely to be in poverty, more likely to be renters, and more likely to have a non-vehicular commute.

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION IN OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS

The planning process for this framework plan embodied DEI principles in the public engagement tactics to ensure the trail reflects the input and diversity of the local community. The team designed a survey (with both an English and Spanish option) to collect input on the Rail Trail's design, programming, and development. Postcards were sent out to every physical address in the Greater Trail Area to ensure that all residents and business owners in the vicinity were able to provide feedback. The survey was also pushed out via email to neighborhood associations, business associations, and community organizations. The survey received over 456 responses.

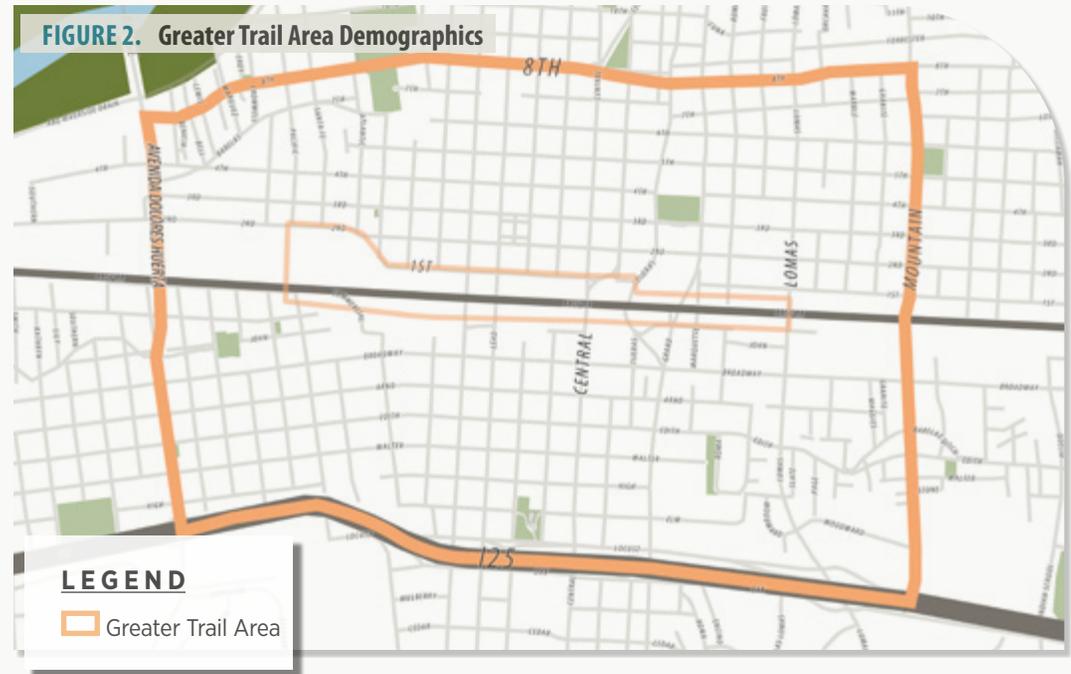
An open house was held at the Rail Yards, which is located in the Barelmas neighborhood at the southern terminus of the Rail Trail. Over 115 people were in attendance. A majority of attendees lived in neighborhoods adjacent to the Rail Trail (Barelmas, Downtown, EDo/Hunning Highland, Martineztown/Santa Barbara, South Broadway, and Wells

Existing Community Demographics

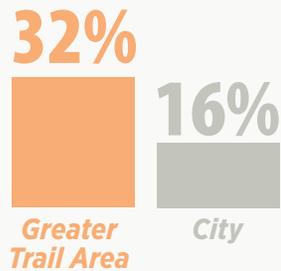
The Greater Rail Trail Area is a historically underserved community and has suffered from decades of disinvestment. The residents in the Greater Rail Trail Area are more likely to be in poverty, more likely to be renters, and more likely to have a non-vehicular commute.



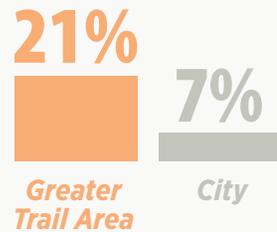
2021 Median Household Income



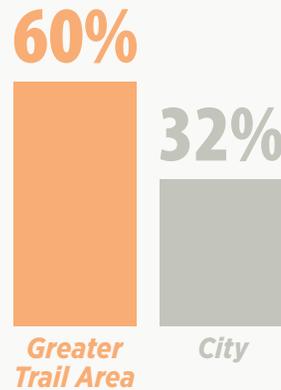
2019 Households Below the Poverty Level (%)



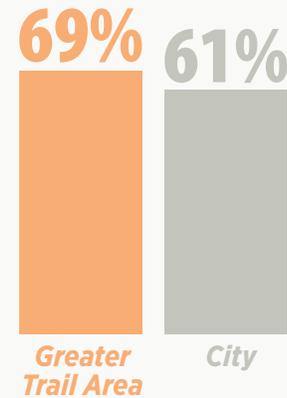
2019 % of Non-Vehicular Commutes (walk, bike, transit, etc)



2021 Renter Occupied Housing Units (%)



2021 Population of Color



Source: ESRI Business Analyst



Park). Attendees were given the opportunity to provide feedback through stickers, written comments on boards, and anonymous comments on feedback sheets. Attendees from the neighboring community were given a specific sticker color, which enabled the Design team to recognize the input from those who lived adjacent to the trail.

As the project moves forward, the City will continue to engage with the surrounding community to develop programming that meets the needs of local residents, such as youth, along Trail.

EQUITY PRINCIPLES

A next step of this framework plan is to develop a Rail Trail Equity Plan that addresses the following:

- *Authentically celebrating the history and culture of the local community;*
- *Incorporating community generated programming ideas that serve the existing residents;*
- *Prioritizing the hiring of neighborhood residents for job opportunities;*
- *Supporting new and existing local small businesses; and*
- *Ensuring that existing residents surrounding the Rail Trail can continue to afford to live in their neighborhood once the trail is built.*

EQUITY PLAN PLAY BOOK

- *Develop an equity plan early*
- *Assemble data to make informed decisions*
- *Be intentional to ensure diversity*
- *Tap into the social capital of community stakeholders and partners.*
- *Tackle equity opportunities with a multi-sector team*
- *Create a dashboard with clear, measurable goals*
- *Evaluate impact and course correct as needed*
- *Embrace an iterative process*

Source: 11th Street Bridge Equitable Development Plan



EXISTING CONDITIONS

INTRODUCTION

This section examines the surrounding context. It provides an overview of the opportunities and challenges that exist. It assesses various elements, including existing planning and design studies, regulatory policy and regulatory documents, zoning and ownership, connectivity and mobility, development activities, and community assets.

PROJECT CORRIDOR

The study area encompasses an approximately one mile corridor along the existing railroad tracks that run north-south through the center of Downtown Albuquerque as identified in *“Figure 3. Rail Trail Corridor” on page 53*. The corridor connects the Rail Yards to the south, Lomas Avenue to the north, and parallels the existing railroad lines. Surrounding the corridor are residential, commercial, industrial, and government uses. Beyond those are residential areas with historically disinvested neighborhoods (Barelas, Huning Highland, South Broadway, and Martineztown) and high-density, multi-family developments in Downtown.

SITE CONTEXT

The study area is located in the heart of Downtown Albuquerque. It is in close proximity to major activity nodes including the Rail Yards, Civic Plaza and Convention Center, Lobo Rainforest, and the Alvarado Transportation Center. It is bordered by the historic neighborhoods of Barelas to the southwest, Martineztown to the northeast, and Huning Highland to the east. Downtown is adjacent to the west. Further to the west is the Albuquerque Zoo and BioPark, and beyond these destinations is the Rio Grande and Bosque Open Space. Old Town and the Sawmill District are approximately 2 miles from the Project Corridor.

APPLICABLE PLANNING DOCUMENTS

The trail corridor is included in a number of adopted regulatory and policy documents, as well as studies and reports. The following is a high-level summary of these existing planning documents and how they apply to this study.

LEGEND

 Rail Trail Corridor



FIGURE 3. Rail Trail Corridor



Design + Feasibility Studies

1. RAIL SPUR TRAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY (2021)

The Rail Spur Trail Feasibility Study examines the railroad corridor between Lomas Ave and the Sawmill District for the feasibility of a multi-use trail. This trail is the extension of the study corridor and would connect the Rail Yards with the Swamill District when constructed. The trail follows the railroad corridor and a rail spur between

FIGURE 4. Rail Spur Trail Feasibility Study (2021)



Excerpt from Rail Spur Trail Feasibility Study

Lomas Ave and the Sawmill District. The study includes recommendations for trail alignment options and design strategies. The study recommends the following:

- A multi-use trail loop of eight miles. This loop connects the Rail Yards, the Rio Grande Zoo, ABQ BioPark, Old Town, Sawmill District, Downtown, and the Convention Center.
- An elevated portion of the trail where the rail corridor width is extremely constrained.

2. RAIL CORRIDOR: CENTRAL AVENUE TO LOMAS BOULEVARD (2019)

The Rail Corridor: Central Avenue to Lomas Boulevard study examined the railroad corridor between Central Ave and Lomas Blvd for the feasibility of a multi-use trail. The trail corridor measures approximately 0.5 mile.

The study evaluated options for a trail that parallels the railroad tracks, along with a new east-west railroad crossing at Copper Ave and Marquette Ave. It includes recommendations for trail alignment and connection options. The study recommends the following:

- Trail along the east side of the railroad tracks from Central Ave and north to Marquette Ave. This segment provides a 25-foot corridor for the trail and landscaping, while maintaining 25-foot separation from the centerline of the nearest tracks.
- Trail connection to the Central Ave north sidewalk with a ramp.
- Modified sidewalk connection from the trail to Tijeras Ave.

FIGURE 5. Innovate ABQ Trail Concepts (2015)

Excerpt from *Innovate ABQ Trail concepts*

- Combination roadway and trail at-grade crossing at Marquette Ave.
- Trail along the west side of the tracks from Marquette Ave to Lomas Blvd.
- Amenities such as lighting, wayfinding, landscaping, and public art

3. INNOVATE ABQ TRAIL CONCEPTS (2015)

The Innovate ABQ Trail Concepts study explores concepts for a north-south trail connecting the Convention Center area and Rail Yards site. The trail corridor covers the same area as this project, from the Rail Yards to Central Ave. It includes recommendations for two trail alignments and trail amenities. The study recommends the following:

- *Trail alignment 1 is on the west side of the tracks from the Rail Yards to the Convention Center. This alignment includes a promenade through the Alvarado*

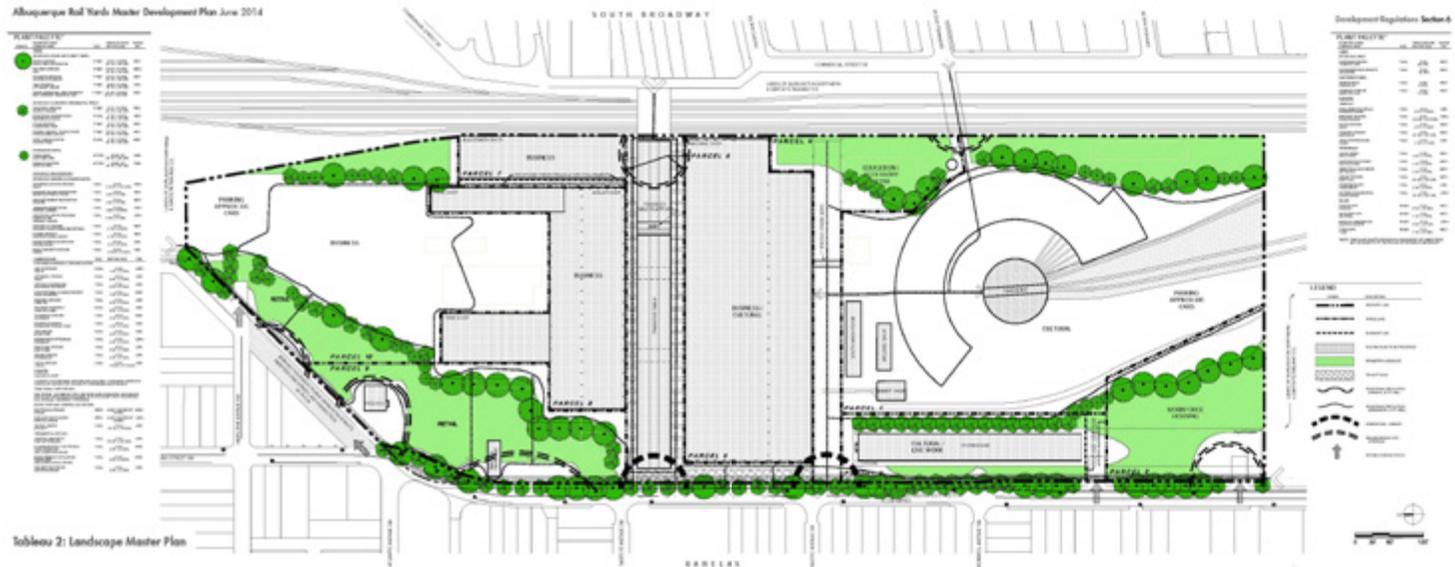
Transportation Station area, a park area south of Coal Ave, and a connection to Copper Ave with an option for a railroad crossing.

- *Trail alignment 2 via 1st Street between Coal Ave and Tijeras Ave. The alignment is located on the west side of 1st Street.*

4. ALBUQUERQUE RAIL YARDS MASTER DEVELOPMENT PLAN (2014)

The Master Development Plan for the Rail Yards was created to provide guidance for long term redevelopment of the Rail Yards. It identified a development path of this site into a vibrant, mixed use employment and cultural center that includes commercial, office, light industrial, and institutional. The plan establishes goals and objectives to guide future development. The Master Plan establishes goals and policies related to economic development,

FIGURE 6. Albuquerque Rail Yards Master Development Plan (2014)



Excerpt from the Rail Yards Master Development Plan

housing, community connectivity, land use, architecture, historic preservation, and art and culture. Some of the goals and policies spelled out are directly related to the Rail Trail. Implementation of the Rail Trail would support several goals and policies of the Master Plan, including:

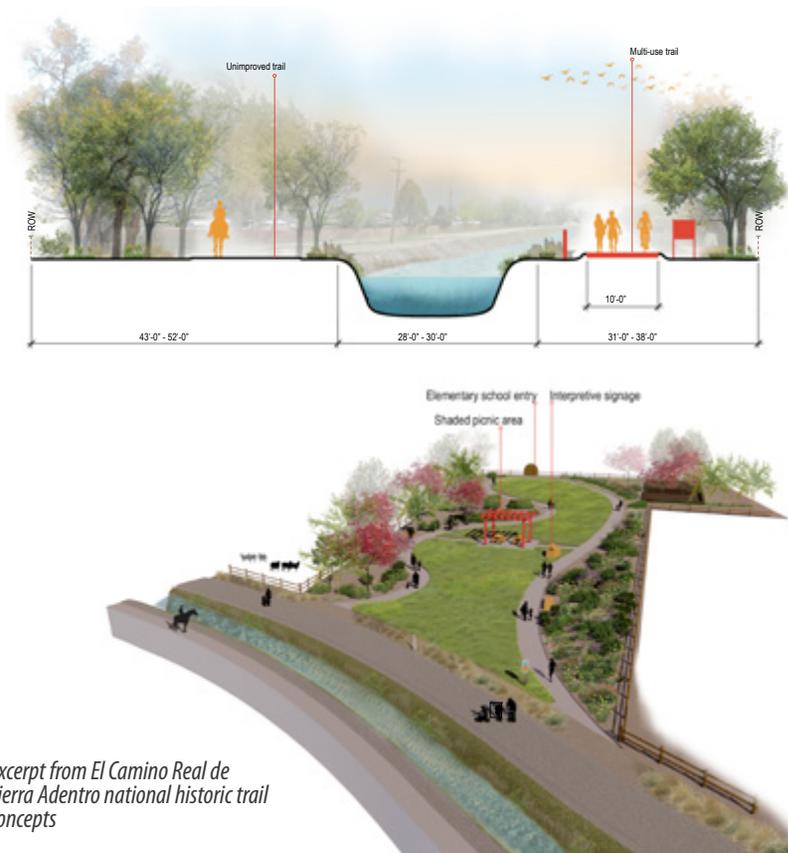
- Providing community gathering spaces that are accessible.
- Providing connections and alternative transportation options to the Railyards specifically accessed by public transportation, bicycling, and walking. The plan encourages connections to the Alvarado Transportation Center and the Central Business District via the main rail line.

- Direct, safe, and convenient pedestrian and bicycle connections to adjacent neighborhoods, specifically to and from the Bavelas and South Broadway neighborhoods.

5. EL CAMINO REAL DE TIERRA ADENTRO RETRACEMENT TRAIL CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT PLAN (ON-GOING)

El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro National Historic Trail (NHT) Concept Development Plan is a project currently underway in Bernalillo County. It is anticipated to be completed at the end of 2021. This project studies the

FIGURE 7. El Camino Real (on-going)



Excerpt from El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro national historic trail concepts

historic trail alignment to identify a preferred alignment for future development of a multi-use 'retracement' trail. The project will also preserve the trail's historic sites and segments and develop the trail for public use. The trail alignment will take advantage of already developed trail facilities where they travel along the historic route. Here, the project should consider integrating references to this route and acknowledge the historic significance. The look, feel, experience, branding, materiality, and design should take cues from the Camino Real. As this report is currently being generated, no final recommendations have been made.

Policy + Regulatory Documents

1. ALBUQUERQUE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (2017)

The Albuquerque and Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan (Comp Plan) outlines the long-term vision for growth and development for the County and City. It addresses transportation, land use, and urban design. The Comp Plan has several policies that call for closing gaps in the trail network and extending the access to communities that are currently underserved. It references the Mid-Region Council of Governments Range Bikeways map that identifies a trail along the rail corridor between Bridge Blvd to the south and past Mountain Rd to the north. The following are some of the most relevant policies from the Comp Plan.

- *POLICY 5.1.6 - Activity Centers: Foster mixed-use centers of activity with a range of services and amenities that support healthy lifestyles and meet the needs of nearby residents and businesses.’ According to this policy and subsequent action items, Downtown, a Center should be connected to nearby Centers and residential areas via good pedestrian and bicycle connections.*
- *POLICY 5.6.1 Community Green Space: Provide visual relief from urbanization and offer opportunities for education, recreation, cultural activities, and conservation of natural resources by setting aside publicly-owned Open Space, parks, trail corridors, and open areas throughout the Comp Plan area.*
- *Policy 6.2.1 Complete Networks: Design and build a complete, well-connected network of streets and trails that offer multiple efficient and safe transportation choices for commuting and daily needs.*
- *Policy 6.2.5 Bicycle Network: Promote an area-wide bicycle and trail network for transportation and recreation that emphasizes connections among Centers and safe crossings at intersections.*

2. ALBUQUERQUE BIKEWAYS AND TRAIL FACILITIES PLAN (2015)

The Albuquerque Bikeways and Trail Facilities Plan was created to help the City manage the growth of the bikeways trails system and promote a well-connected, enjoyable, and safer non-motorized transportation and recreation system. It establishes vision goals, policies, and strategies for implementation, and details guidelines

for the design and programming of existing and future facilities.

For the Rail Trail it provides minimum requirements for trail design standards including guidance on cycle tracks. Recommendations include:

- *Two-way cycle tracks should be a minimum of 12 ft. 14 ft. are recommended with a striped center line.*
- *Separate cycle track from traffic with physical barriers. Physical barriers can include bollards, parking, landscape strip, an extruded curb, or parking. If the cycle track is separate with a physical barrier it can be placed at the same level as the adjacent travel lane.*
- *Add pavement markings or other delineation from the adjacent sidewalk to discourage pedestrians from walking in the cycle track.*
- *Rolled curbs should be added at driveways and areas where cyclists should be able to enter or leave the cycle track.*
- *Where on-street parking exists, the cycle track should be placed between the parking and the sidewalk with a 2 ft. buffer between the on-street parking and cycle track.*
- *At major intersections, like Central Avenue, a bike box and colored pavement markings should be utilized to increase visibility.*

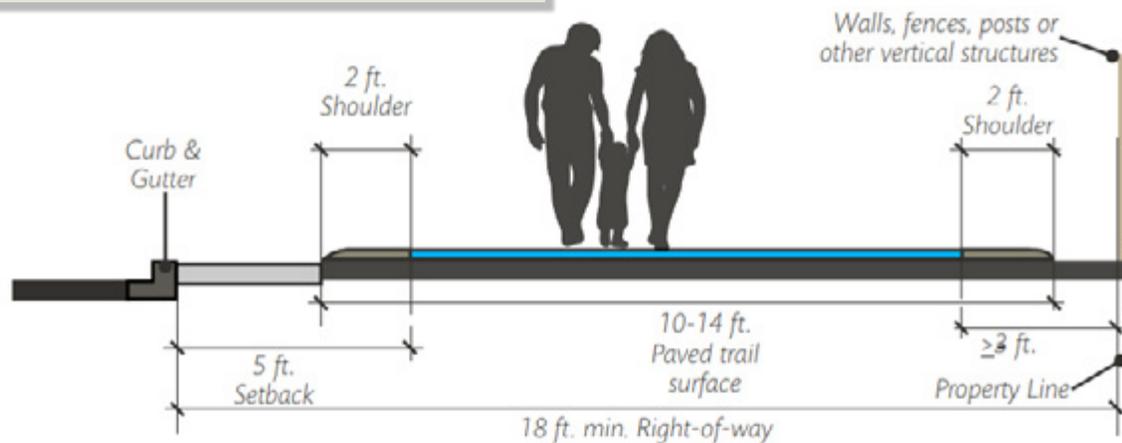
3. CONNECTIONS 2040 MTP

The Connections 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) is a transportation plan for the Albuquerque Metropolitan area. The MTP, a long-range transportation plan, guides transportation investment in the region. It is updated every five years and evaluates the existing transportation infrastructure, use patterns, and considers future demand. The MTP identifies critical infrastructure projects that sustain and improve transportation infrastructure including roads, bike facilities, sidewalks, and transit service. The Rail Trail is identified as a priority project.

4. DEVELOPMENT PROCESS MANUAL

The Development Process Manual (DPM) establishes design requirements for construction projects within the public right-of-way. Chapter 7 of this manual details the guidance pertaining to transportation facilities, including minimum requirements for trails. The purpose of this chapter is to promote consistent design of street systems with acceptable performance characteristics and to encourage innovative design. The DPM establishes dimensional guidance for trail facilities. It defines the minimum trail width as 10 ft. with 2 ft. shoulders on either side. For areas with anticipated high volumes of trail traffic, 12 ft. to 14 ft. are recommended. For multi-use trails along roadways, the minimum required width is 10 ft. with a 5 ft. setback from the curb, and 3 ft. from

FIGURE 8. Development Process Manual



Trail development standards from the Development Review Manual.

adjacent property lines. The setbacks from the curb and the property line can include the shoulders.

5. RAILROAD METROPOLITAN REDEVELOPMENT AREA PLAN (1998)

The rail corridor is located within the boundary of the Railroad Metropolitan Redevelopment Area Plan that was created to provide for the coordinated development of several major public and private projects within the plan. It was established to revitalize the downtown core and create a regional specialty-retail, entertainment, and visitor center. The plan identified several projects to focus on including the expansion of the Convention Center, a new 500 room hotel, an urban park, a museum focusing on transportation science and technology, parking facilities, and a transit link between Old Town and other destinations.

6. DOWNTOWN ALBUQUERQUE MAINSTREET AND ARTS AND CULTURAL DISTRICT

The Downtown Albuquerque MainStreet Arts and Cultural District encompasses 30 blocks in the Downtown core. It is an initiative of the Downtown ABQ MainStreet to promote creative work, local businesses and institutions, and increase visitors to the area.

7. DOWNTOWN 2025 (2010)

The Downtown 2025 plan is a 10 year policy and implementation plan for Downtown that also includes part of the Rail Trail corridor. The plan identifies a vision for future development to guide decision making regarding land use, transportation, development standards, and public investment. Key goals identified in this plan are to make downtown a “park-once” destination and a “pedestrian-first” location. These goals are supported by actions that call to remove parking requirements and modify pedestrian infrastructure to create a pedestrian oriented environment. Since the inception of this plan, many of the goals and actions have been implemented. The Rail Trail fits into this framework as an amenity focused on pedestrian movement through and within downtown.

8. VISION ZERO

In 2019 the City made a commitment to join the international initiative ‘Vision Zero’. Vision Zero is an effort to make transportation facilities safer for all participants. This initiative is employed around the world to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries, while increasing safe, healthy, equitable mobility for all. The goal of the City is to eliminate all traffic deaths by 2040. Some goals related to this effort directly speak to the Rail Trail project. These include:

- *The Downtown Safety Initiative limits traffic speed to 20mph in the downtown core. The initiative also identifies*

improvements to increase walkability and bike friendliness throughout Downtown.

- *The initiative organizes events to increase awareness about traffic safety and provide opportunities for walking and biking. Events with this focus include CiQlovía, Slow Roll 505, and bike valets at big community events like the Downtown Grower's Market, Balloon Fiesta, and Summerfest.*

CONSIDERATIONS:

- *Number of existing planning efforts that support this project*
- *Well studied corridor with many opportunities to tie into existing and future planning/development efforts*
- *Planning fatigue through number of existing planning efforts*
- *Coordination between existing and future planning efforts*

ZONING

The project corridor is composed of a number of different zoning designations as identified in *“Figure 9. Zoning”*;

- The Rail Yards property is zoned Planned Development (PD). The PD zone establishes a custom set of standards based on the Rail Yards Master Plan. For this zone, densities range between .10 Floor Area Ratio (FAR) to 1.50 FAR.
- Parcels zoned Residential Multi-Family (R-ML) permit building heights of 38 ft.
- Parcels zoned Light Manufacturing (NR-LM) and General Manufacturing (NR-GM) don't permit residential uses. Maximum building heights are at 65 ft. (>100 ft. from front lot line: N/A)
- Parcels zoned Mixed-Use Form-Based (MX-FB) are all part of the Downtown Form-Based zone district that establishes a set of unique standards. The Form-Based district has a number of variations, including Infill Development (ID), Flexible Development (FX), Activity Center (AC), and Urban Development (UD). Building heights range between 35 ft. and 45 ft. Parts of buildings that are 20 ft. removed from the property line can exceed these standards.

CONSIDERATIONS:

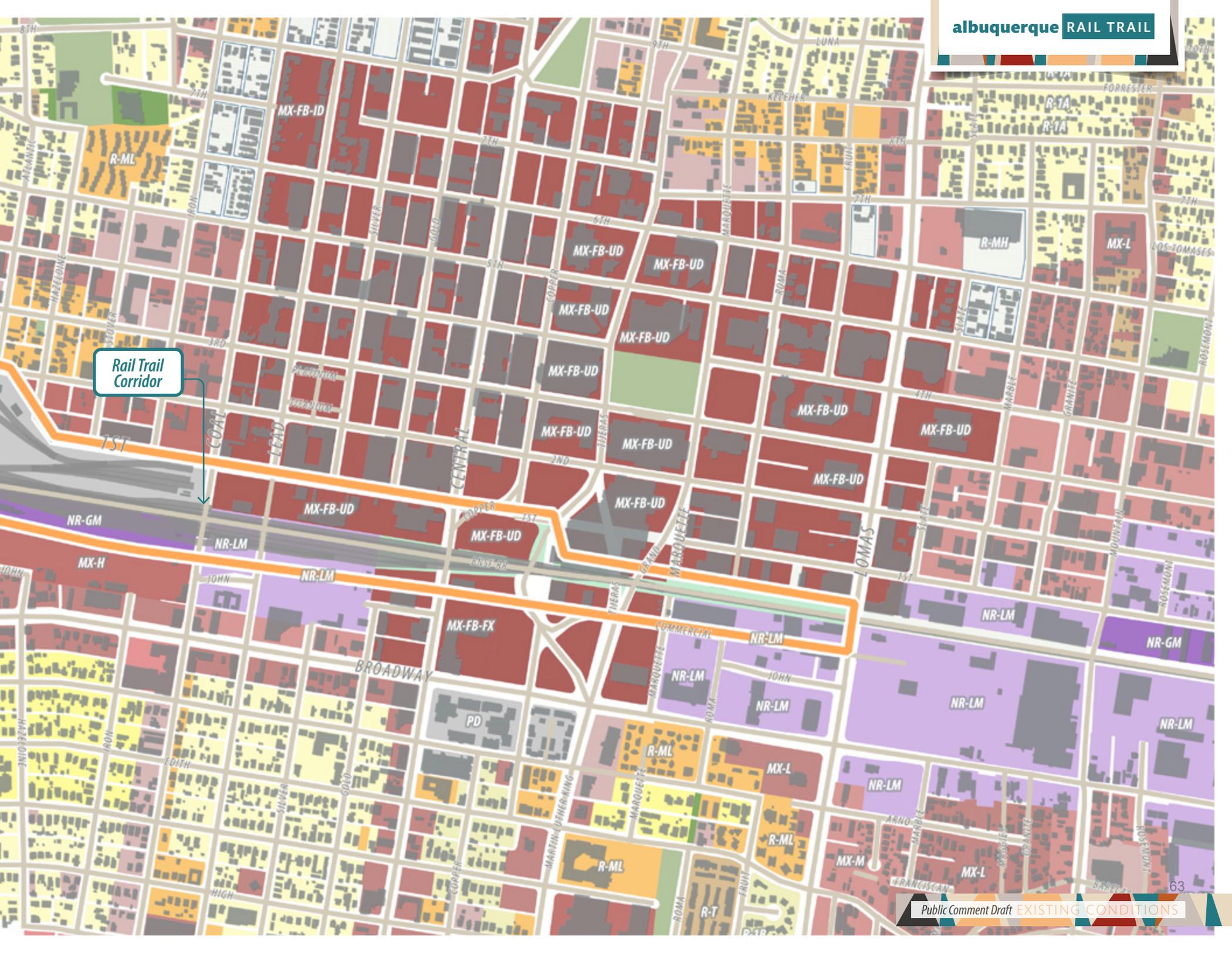
- Mixed-use and industrial zoning allows for a diverse mix of uses

FIGURE 9. Zoning

| Standards | MX-FB | | | | | |
|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | NR-LM | NR-GM | ID | FX | AC | UD |
| Building Heights <100 ft. of front property | 65 ft. | 65 ft. | - | - | - | - |
| Building Heights <20 ft. of front property | - | - | 35 ft. | 45 ft. | 45 ft. | 45 ft. |
| Building Heights ≥100 ft. from front lot line: | N/A | N/A | - | - | - | - |
| Building Heights ≥20 ft. from front lot line: | - | - | 55 ft. | 65 ft. | 75 ft. | N/A |

There is an additional height bonus of 12 ft. if a development provides certain amenities including structured parking, commercial uses that are over at least 50 percent of the ground floor of a building, and the provisions of a minimum of 30 percent of workforce housing of residential units in a development.





Rail Trail Corridor

OWNERSHIP + LAND USE

Most properties are privately held as identified in *“Figure 10. Ownership & Land Use”* on page 64. In the south-eastern portion of the site, many parcels are underutilized and predominantly used for storage and parking.

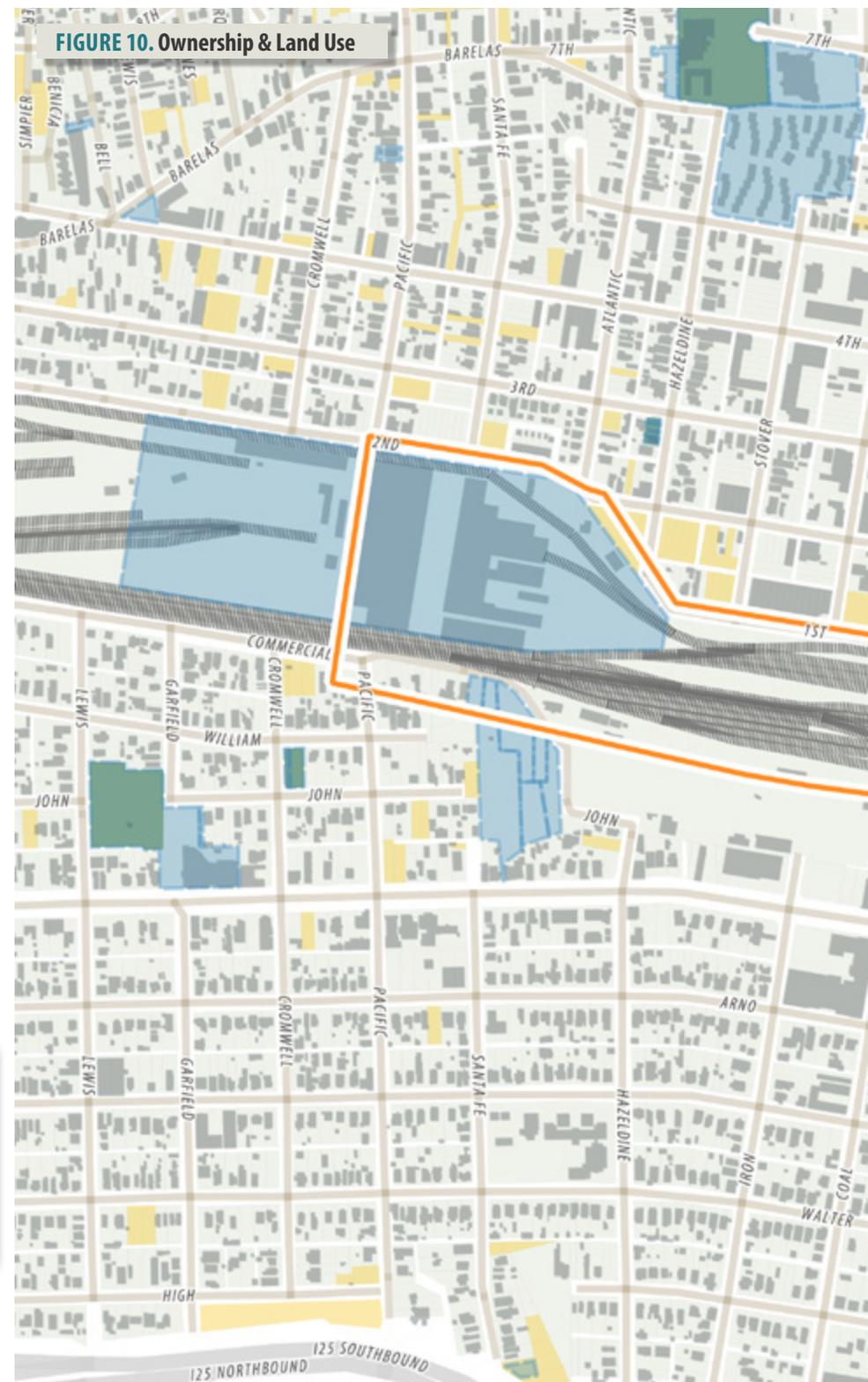
CONSIDERATIONS:

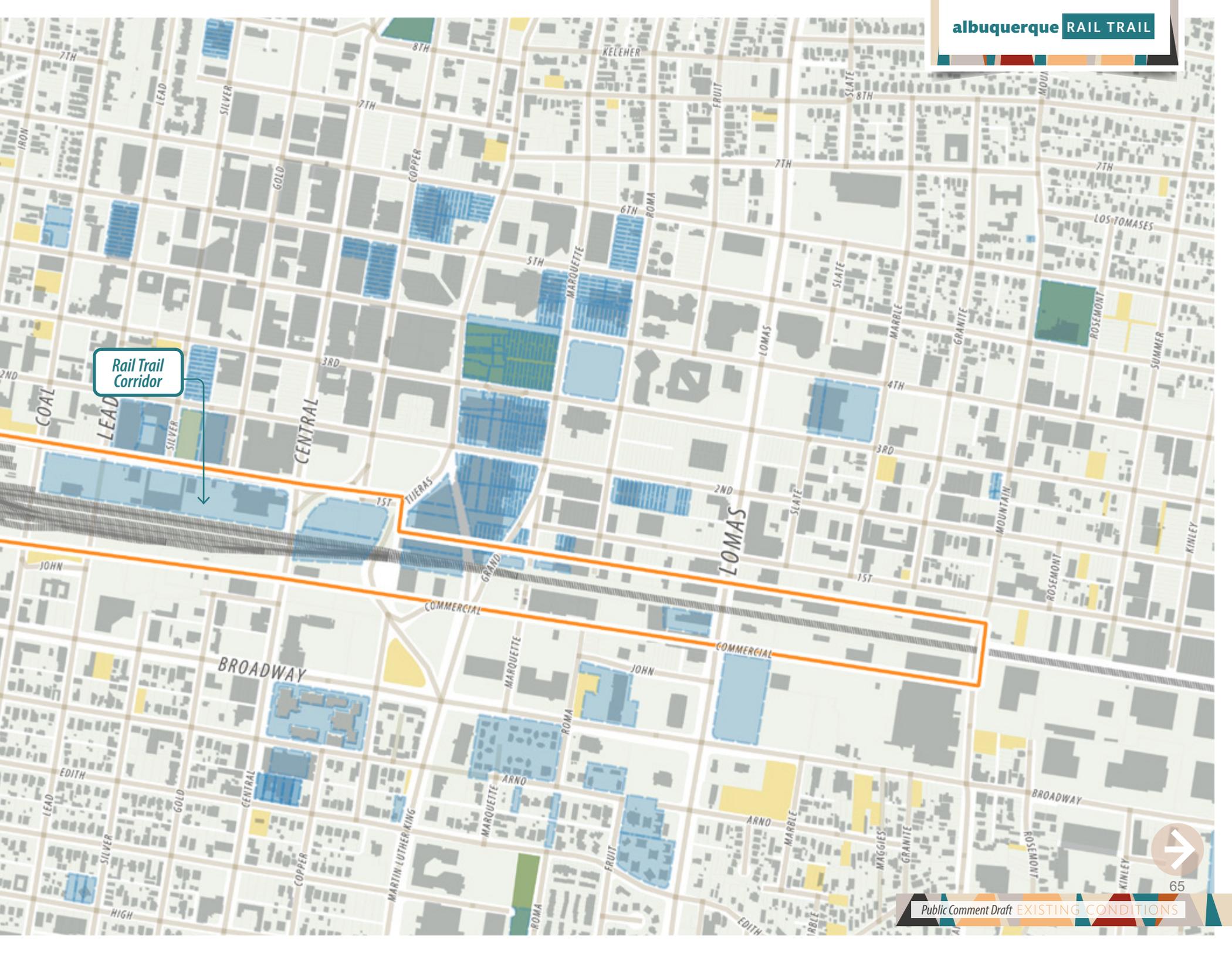
- Underutilized parcels provide development opportunities
- Owners of underutilized parcels and surface parking may be reluctant to develop those sites

LEGEND

-  Rail Trail Corridor
-  City Of Albuquerque Owned Property
-  Vacant Parcels

FIGURE 10. Ownership & Land Use





Rail Trail Corridor



CONNECTIVITY + MOBILITY

The trail corridor is located along the existing railroad tracks running north and south as identified in *“Figure 11. Connectivity + Mobility” on page 67.* The tracks carry the Railrunner to multiple cities, Pueblos, and townships between Belen and Santa Fe. Trains and buses leave from the Alvarado Transit Center located in the northwest portion of the corridor.

There are multiple bus stops and bus routes paralleling the corridor. Albuquerque Rapid Transit (ART), which connects the east and west side of Albuquerque with a rapid transit bus lines, runs along Central and bisects the project corridor.

There are bike lanes along Lead and Coal Ave, and further to the north the 50-mile loop runs along Marquette and Tijeras Ave. To the south, a bike Boulevard is planned on Silver Ave. Bike lanes are also proposed along Broadway and 2nd Street running parallel to the project corridor.

Sidewalk connections are present, however, sidewalks along 1ST Street are in need of repair.

At the Lomas terminus, the Rail Spur Trail plan proposes a northern extension of trail. This trail project stretches from Lomas to the Sawmill District. Together, the projects are intended to connect the Rail Yards to the Sawmill District. As mentioned earlier, the Rail Trail would become part of a multi-use trail loop that spans approximately seven miles. The loop would connect major destinations, including the Rail Yards, the Rio Grande Zoo, ABQ BioPark, Old Town, the Sawmill District,

Downtown, and the Convention Center. At the southern end of the project corridor, a connector exists that links the Barelmas neighborhood and the Bosque Trail via a foot bridge accessed through Santa Fe Ave.

There is a general lack of east-west connectivity, specifically to South Broadway and Martineztown.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- *Connect to Bosque and I-40 Trail*
- *Create eight-mile trail loop*
- *Connect to 50-mile loop*
- *Connect to neighborhoods, specifically those on the east side of the trail*
- *Consider competing user interests*
- *Consider constraints of existing roadways and intersecting traffic*

LEGEND

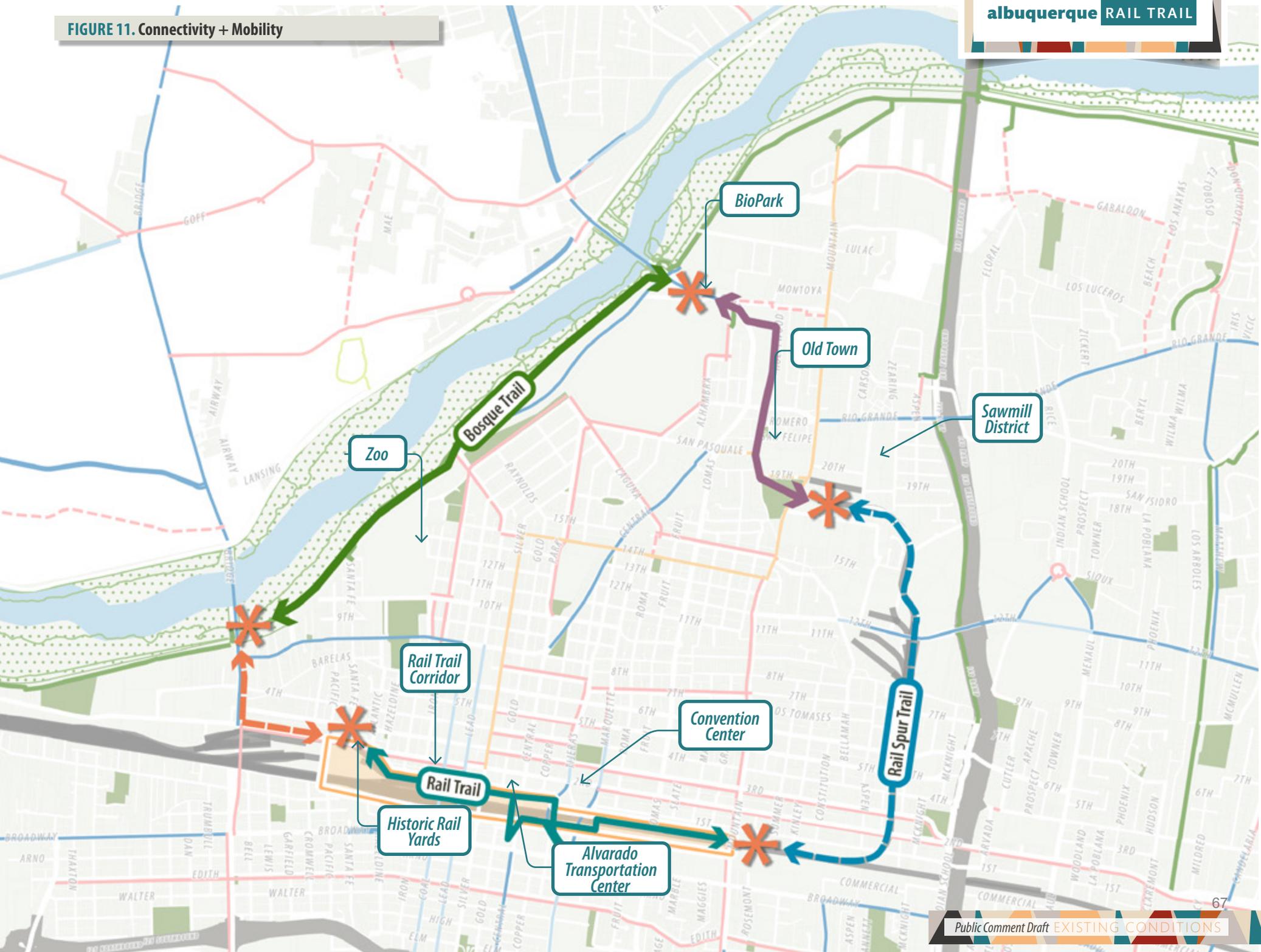
-  Rail Trail Corridor
-  Rail Trail
-  Bosque Trail
-  50-Mile Loop
-  Proposed Rail Spur Trail
-  Trail Connections

TRAIL TYPES

-  Bike Route
-  Bike Blvd
-  Paved Multi-Use Trail
-  Bike Lane
-  Buffered Bike Lane
-  Unpaved Trail



FIGURE 11. Connectivity + Mobility



DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

There are several projects under construction and in the planning phase surrounding the project corridor. The projects have different scales and are commercial, residential, recreational, private, and/or public in nature.

Many of the empty parcels and surface parking lots that dominated Downtown have been transformed into residential, mixed-use, and commercial uses. Some of the existing buildings have been renovated and repurposed. Notably, Bernalillo County has moved over 900 employees to the recently renovated Alvarado Square, increasing activity and presence in the Downtown core.

At Central and 1st Street, the new One Central development includes a parking garage with a mixed-use linear building, anchoring this corner with an active use. On the east side of the railroad tracks, the Innovate



Innovate ABQ. (Source: City of Albuquerque)

ABQ district is taking shape. This seven-acre site is being developed through a partnership with the University of New Mexico. The first phase, the Lobo Rainforest building has been constructed. This mixed-use building offers student housing on the upper floors and space for innovation and collaboration on the ground floor. A second phase is in planning which will transform the existing First Baptist Church. Across the street to the south, a 90-room Hilton Garden Inn and an 80 room Extended Stay Homewood Suites has recently completed construction.



One Central Development. (Source: Studio Southwest)



Rendering of Hilton Garden Inn.

Moving north, Springer Square is anticipated to expand and redevelop two existing surface parking lots. A sky bridge to the Convention Center parking garage, a publicly accessible plaza node, and up to 140 residential units or hotel rooms are anticipated as part of this development. To the north is a potential at-grade railroad crossing at Marquette.



Rendering of Springer Square SkyLink. (Source: Zydeco Development)

Further north is Glorieta Station, which encompasses an eight-acre site. This project is anticipated to rehab the historic Glorieta Building and create a mix of uses.

The Rail Yards, on the southern end of the project corridor, has received considerable investments from the City and new improvements are under way. Recently, the City installed a plaza. This space serves as an event space and as the front door to the historic site. The second

phase, which will add shade structures, lights, and signage, is currently underway. In addition, the Flue Shop is completed for a ready-to-be-occupied office space; roofs have been repaired on several buildings; utilities have been extended; and environmental remediation is underway. A streetscape project is in the planning phase



Rendering of Glorieta Station.



Rail Yards plaza. (Source: MRWM)



Bernalillo County @ Alvarado Square. (Source: Bernalillo County)

to enhance the roadway and pedestrian realm on 2ND Street along the Rail Yards.

Bernalillo County Alvarado Square is the new County seat. This project includes the renovation of the old PNM building, a 282,000 sf multi-story office building, and the construction of a new 12,000 sf building. The site is located just west of the project corridor and will house 900 County employees. It has the potential to increase the daytime population of this area.

In the historic neighborhood of Barelvas, there are two more projects in the planning and/or design phase. The Barelvas Great Blocks project hopes to improve 4TH Street and the surrounding blocks. The projects goal is to create economic



Barelvas Great Blocks. (Source: MRWM)

opportunities through infrastructure upgrades and placemaking to encourage private sector development. The other project is a renovation of Barelvas park. This projects aims to improve gathering and recreational opportunities for the community, as well as provide better connections between the Barelvas Community Center and Senior Center.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- Create connections between new developments
- Provide a space for recreation
- Take advantage of existing projects and align with their efforts
- Offer education about the history of the railroad

LEGEND

-  Rail Trail Corridor
-  El Camino Real Trail Preferred Alignment
-  Rail Yards Streetscape
-  Barelvas Great Block
-  Barelvas Park



FIGURE 12. Adjacent Development Projects



OPPORTUNITIES + CONSTRAINTS SUMMARY

The Existing Conditions Analysis identifies a number of opportunities and constraints along the corridor.

ALIGNMENT

In the northern portion of the trail corridor, the trail requires a total of 50 ft. of right-of-way (ROW) to observe the setback from the railroad, and to accommodate a multi-use trail. In the southern portion the trail requires 24 ft. of ROW.

Potential conflicts with trains and passenger traffic exists at the Alvarado Transportation Center.

CONNECTIVITY

The railroad tracks act as a major barrier for lateral connections between the east and west side.

There are several opportunities to connect either to existing trails, civic spaces, and neighborhoods.

An important connection is to link the trail to the east side of the railroad, particularly to South Broadway.

Other important connections include

FIGURE 13. Opportunities + Constraint Map



Barelmas, the Bosque Trail, the Rail Spur trail, the Convention Center, South Broadway, and Martineztown.

TRAIL AMENITIES

There are numerous opportunities for trail amenities. A linear park can be placed along 1st Street between the Rail Yards and Coal Avenue.

A park and/or plaza space can be provided at the Alvarado Transportation Center, at Tijeras Avenue, and at Marquette Avenue.

PUBLIC ART

Public art will be a major component along the trail. There are numerous opportunities for art. One key opportunity is a gateway feature

which could be located at the Rail Yards and/or at Lomas Avenue. Other major opportunities are at the linear park along 1ST Street, at the intersection of Central Avenue and 1ST Street, at Tijeras, and at Marquette.

