

Advancing Inclusive Growth through the Albuquerque Rail Trail

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Public Comment Draft January 2024



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The Albuquerque Rail Trail is a planned 7-mile urban bike and pedestrian trail, an iconic and artistic parkway that will reflect Albuquerque's vibrant history and cultural diversity. It will be lined with attractions such as plazas, art installations, and gardens.

The Rail Trail will link Albuquerque's vibrant downtown area to nearby neighborhoods, cultural destinations, entertainment districts, and mass transportation options, creating a world class urban amenity that is expected to catalyze redevelopment. The trail is imagined both as a celebration of Albuquerque's cultural history and a bright vision for our shared future.

THE RAIL TRAIL IS A SOCIAL EQUITY INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT THAT HAS THE PROMISE TO:

- Increase green space in our historic communities
- Expand economic opportunities for workers and businesses
- Add five miles of safe pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure for commuters and families
- Uplift the cultural heritage of historic neighborhoods
- Grow public space acreage available for residents and community-based programming
- Activate and develop vacant lots and buildings



BACKGROUND & VISION

Urban trail projects similar to the Rail Trail have transformed neighborhoods, providing significant economic, cultural, and recreational benefits. As the City invests in the Rail Trail, it seeks to ensure that the local community directly benefits from this transformative investment.

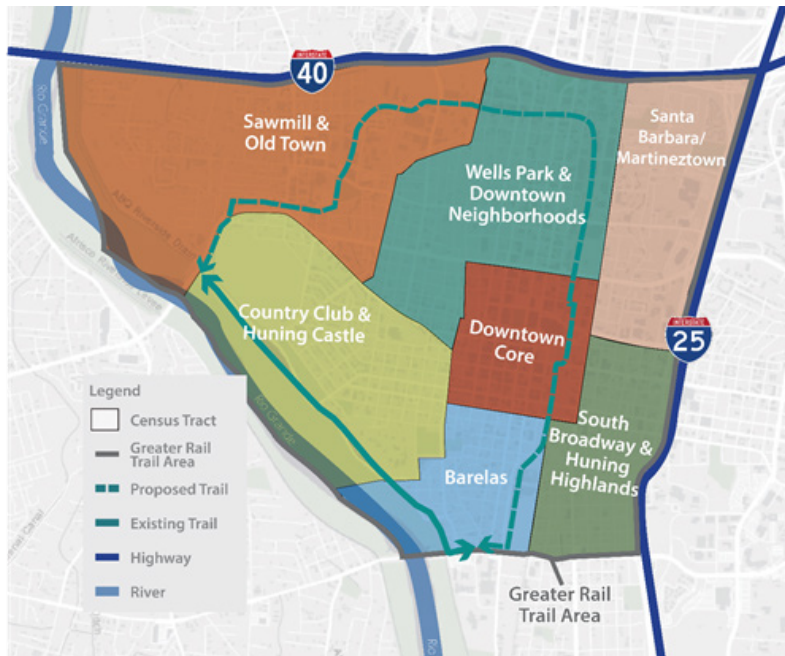
The Rail Trail will run through and by the historic neighborhoods of Baretas, Country Club and Huning Castle, the Downtown Core, East Downtown and Huning Highlands, Old Town, Santa Barbara/Martineztown, Sawmill, South Broadway, and Wells Park. These are some of the City's most historic and diverse areas.



The City of Albuquerque has conducted in-depth public outreach efforts to seek input on the design and programming of the Rail Trail. To date, over 700 community members have given input on the Rail Trail in a variety of formats (open houses, surveys, and meetings). From these activities, the City understands that equitable development and inclusive growth is are key priorities for many neighborhood stakeholders.

This report highlights the existing conditions in Rail Trail neighborhoods and studies trends over the last ten years. Utilizing this analysis, the City has identified a suite of programs that can promote neighborhood stability and vibrancy.

Identifying socio-economic and demographic trends over the past 10 years establishes a touchstone to compare against future trends. Generating a baseline understanding of existing conditions is a vital first step to tracking what impact the Albuquerque Rail Trail will have on surrounding residents post-construction.



NEIGHBORHOOD TRENDS

The Advancing Inclusive Growth Report features a deep dive into the existing conditions and trends in each neighborhood.

The Rail Trail Area is faster-growing than the rest of the city, both in housing development and population. Nearly 70% of all multi-family housing units in Rail Trail neighborhoods that were developed between 2010 and 2020 were income-restricted affordable housing.

Rent in these neighborhoods have generally been slower to increase year-over-year than the rest of the city. However, Rail Trail households are lower income and more likely to be rent-burdened when compared to the city-wide average.



The current built environment puts many of the Rail Trail neighborhoods at a health equity disadvantage. A lower proportion of residents own cars, which has led to higher rates of commuting to work by walking, biking, or bus—but residents do so on streets that have high rates of pedestrian and cyclist fatalities.

Life expectancy is generally lower in the Rail Trail neighborhoods, and residents have higher rates of exposure to toxins such as particulate matter from highways and heavy freight train traffic.

Finally, higher ambient summer temperatures and limited tree cover can lead to unsafe conditions for walking during hot days.

As the center of government, the greater downtown area provides a large number of job opportunities compared to its relatively small geography. More than half of the 32,000 jobs available in the Rail Trail area pay more than \$40,000 per year. However, of the nearly 9,000 Rail Trail residents who are workers, only 37% of them make over this amount, indicating a disparity in access to good-paying jobs.

PROGRAMS THAT SUPPORT INCLUSIVE GROWTH

Drawing from these trends, the report recommends investing in programs that empower communities to harness the benefits of the Rail Trail.

Drawing from equitable development principles and community engagement conducted over the past several years, the report identifies best practices as well as existing programs that can be bolstered. It also recommends developing additional programs that can help

address neighborhood stability and local economic development desires.

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THESE PROGRAMS HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO:

- Help ensure existing residents can afford to live in their neighborhood;
- Support new and existing local small businesses;
- Incorporate community generated programming ideas that serve the existing residents;
- Authentically celebrate the history and culture of the local community; and
- Partner with existing community-based organizations to expand community capacity.

Years of input from the community has illuminated the needs of these historic neighborhoods, which can help the City of Albuquerque, partner institutions, and community organizations develop place-based and needs-based programs.

The report recommends that the community draw on existing local, state, and national programs as well as develop new programs to ensure that equity principles are held up at every phase of Rail Trail design and development.

The report offers a summary of existing programs and best practices that meet equity principles, as a foundation for future activities relating to Rail Trail equity and development.

RAIL TRAIL FRAMEWORK PLAN EQUITY PRINCIPLES

- 1**
Ensure existing residents can continue to afford to live in their neighborhood
- 2**
Support new and existing local small businesses. Prioritize people of color, women, LGBT, and veteran-owned businesses
- 3**
Incorporate community generated programming that serve the existing residents
- 4**
Authentically celebrate the history and culture of the local community



INCLUSIVE GROWTH STRATEGIES

Equity Principle	Existing Programs	Example Programs from Other Cities
<i>Ensure existing residents can continue to afford to live in their neighborhood</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable Household Energy Management Initiative • Various property tax relief programs • Neighborhood Opportunity Home Rehabilitation Grant Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Montpelier Accessory Dwelling Unit Program (Montpelier, VT) • Tenant First Right to Purchase (Washington DC)
<i>Support new and existing local small businesses. Prioritize people of color, women, LGBT, and veteran-owned businesses</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SBA small business microloans and technical assistance • WESST business consultation • Fast Forward Loans • La Plazita Gardens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atlanta Beltline Marketplace (Atlanta, GA) • Legacy Business Registry & Preservation Fund (San Francisco, CA)
<i>Incorporate community generated programming that serve the existing residents</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Story Riders • Downtown Arts Collective • Rail Yards Market • USBC After School Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Excursions, First Horizons (High Line, New York City) • Nature's Beats (San Antonio, TX)
<i>Authentically celebrate the history and culture of the local community</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Casa Barelas • National Hispanic Cultural Center • Apprenticeship for Social Justice (Harwood Art Center) • Working Classroom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Maverick Tile Mural Installation (San Antonio, TX) • Fairmount Cultural Corridor (Boston, MA)

CONCLUSIONS & NEXT STEPS

The Rail Trail provides an unprecedented opportunity for positive growth and improved quality of life in and around greater downtown neighborhoods. Physical and environmental conditions show there is opportunity for improvement through investments in infrastructure that improve:

- 1) Conditions for pedestrians and cyclists to connect to jobs, resources, and parks; and
- 2) Environmental health and air quality.

Social and economic data suggest that there may be need for programs that improve financial and health outcomes for lower-income populations. Neighborhoods in the Rail Trail area are high-potential communities that deserve targeted investment to ensure neighborhood stability and opportunities for upward mobility.

Following the initial publication of this document, next steps may include:



Gather additional feedback from the community based on this report



Establish a Rail Trail Inclusive Growth Task Force, or equivalent long-term decision making body



Consider creating a public-facing data dashboard to track the trends highlighted in this report



Leverage state and community resources to increase funding for existing programs and develop additional programs as identified by community members

The Rail Trail has tremendous potential to foster economic development, create jobs, and improve the quality of life for residents across Albuquerque. This report highlights how the City of Albuquerque can encourage equitable and sustainable growth in the greater Rail Trail area.



To read the full report and provide input, visit cabq.gov/railtrailequity.