

**Gallup/McKinley Trails and Open Space Master Plan**  
**Focus Groups Summary Report**  
**September, 2004**

On August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2004 and September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2004 eight focus groups were held as part of the public involvement process for the Trails and Open Space Master Plan. The focus groups were intended to gather input from specific interest groups who might have a particular interest in or provide valuable insight to the development of the plan including: health professionals, the business and tourism sector, adjacent and neighboring jurisdictions, education professionals, recreation enthusiast, neighborhood associations, senior and special need populations, and safety and public transportation specialists. The following report is a summary of those meetings.

**SIGNAGE**

Focus group participants agreed the trails system need signs that included information regarding trail:

- Distance and mileage markers
- Difficulty
- Accessibility
- Surface type
- Directional markers
- Maps
- Safety information (emergency #, what to do in case of emergency, preparedness)
- Health information e.g. calories burned per hour
- Historical/cultural significance (interpretive trails)
- Rules
- Designated use
- Trail name or numbers

**INCREASING PUBLIC AWARENESS ABOUT TRAILS SYSTEM**

- Users need to be aware of rules.
- Publicize through distribution of maps and information in utility bills, PSA's, advertisement, newsletters, etc.
- Distribute maps/guides/information to agencies, organizations, health centers, senior centers, etc.

**PROGRAMMING TO ADVANCE HEALTH AND OUTDOOR EDUCATION**

Senior, education, safety, and health advocates all recognized that promoting the benefits of a trails system would require programs to encourage participation and use of the trails system.

**Health:**

- Billboards on the east and west ends of Gallup asking travelers *If they've drank enough water and How about going for a stress relieving walk while in Gallup –Trailhead exit*
- Walking and activity (hiking, biking, climbing) clubs for youth, mothers, seniors.
- Youth athletes mentoring other youth about sports involvement.
- Community competition for pounds lost, miles walked, etc. (e.g. Zuni, Get up and Move!, and America on the Move)
- Cultural tradition with running in Navajo culture. Revive this.

- Work with groups like the RSVP, NYLP, senior centers, Senior Olympics, SDI, etc. to promote and organize healthy activities.
- Gallup Trails 2010 creates a map of 1 to 3 mile neighborhood trail loops.

### **Education:**

- Coordinate with institutions of higher learning for outdoor leadership and environmental education curriculum.
- Don't have capacity at moment to do curriculum. Will require dedicated teachers.
- Access existing curriculums from web, State, schools, etc. such as:
  - Bike rodeos/bike safety
  - Pedestrian safety (DOT)
  - Hug a Tree
  - Lost in the Woods safety training
  - Environmental respect (e.g. recycle, don't litter!)
- Develop standardized curriculum by utilizing existing resources such as what was done with State water conservation curriculum.
- Utilize organizations such as RSVP, NYLP and YCC to be involved in trails programs.

### **DESIGN**

- Open air structures would be valuable to allow resting. Open air to lessen perceptions of danger lurking behind walls.
- Connectivity to activity centers/nodes and neighborhood to neighborhood.
- Integrated with transportation and recreation.
- Bike racks on buses and at end points.
- Access trails by public transportation, but also have trails in neighborhoods for easy access.
- Green infrastructure and environmental restoration a part of developing trails system. (e.g. retention areas)
- Variety of surfaces, but paved preferred for urban.
- Lights that are timed to preserve night sky and respect neighborhoods.
- Separate incompatible uses such as motorized/non-motorized and horses/bikers.
- Continuous network from one side of City to other.
- Design tasteful signage, markers, benches, etc. (e.g. bicycle cattle guards on Gamerco). Something that has a Gallup motif.
- Develop turnstiles/cattle guards where people, not livestock, can pass through property on trails without disrupting fences.
- Ensure all crossing are safe.

### **SAFETY**

- Needs to be clean of debris and weeds.
- Design with open site distances and no places to hide.
- Provide a selected number of lighted trails for early morning/evening/winter use.
- Create patrols – volunteer, police on bikes
- Create trails around youth play areas.
- Designate a phone number to report violations (e.g. trash, ATV's, etc.)
- Safety phones.
- Safety on trails requires cooperation with safety personnel (Sheriff, Police, Search and Rescue, Fire Department, etc.)

- Concern for safety personnel is rescue time. Easy access and knowledge of system imperative to quick rescue.
- Need to be able to locate quickly. Have a safety map with all trail locations, names, GPS points, access directions, topo map, etc.
- Dealing with homeless a perception issue. Most assaults homeless on homeless. Will not use trails. Do not want to be seen. Prevent places to hide.

## **TRASH**

- Community service clean ups more than 2 times per year. Do trash challenge with awards for most trash collected.
- Appliance day at dump.
- Bottle deposit.
- Phone number to report violators.

## **USER CONFLICTS**

### **Dogs**

- Designate “dog friendly” trails.
- “Control your dog” request.
- Provide for clean –up with bags and trash receptacle.
- Enforce leash law elsewhere in City.
- Larger community problem with strays and packs.

### **ATV’s**

- Keep off the trails and roadways. There is an attempt at state legislation to address ATV’s, but has not passed. Is a community problem. Plan is to create designated area.
- Create jogged intersections at trails to limit access.

### **Access**

- Develop good information. A lot of misinformation, especially about land ownership and easements.

## **SCHOOLS**

- Design areas near schools that can be used by schools for outdoor classrooms, mini-laboratories, nature education (native plants, habitat, culture, etc.), and exercise.
- Work with School board to educate about issues of bike to school connectivity and safety, environmental education opportunities, experiential education, etc. Right now, is a school by school basis for these issues.
- Need safe routes to school. Otherwise parents will not allow youth to ride/walk.
- Educate youth about appropriate use, safety, conflict mediation, respect, etc. on trails.

## **COMMUNITY BUILDING**

A resounding theme throughout the focus groups was how the open space and trails system will contribute to building a stronger, more united community. A sense of community would be strengthened through activities together, increased interaction with neighbors, and community pride and ownership of the trails system.

- Adopt a Trail program for schools, businesses, neighborhoods, organizations, etc. (e.g. fundraisers for Pyramid Trail)
- Community Trails Day (clean ups, activities)

## **ADA/SENIOR ACCESSIBILITY**

- Consider needs of elderly, disabled and those with diabetes by creating trails with:
  - Benches and shaded rest areas en route
  - Grab rails
  - Paved and wheelchair accessibility
  - Restrooms en route
  - Trail width for 2-people abreast
- Locate near senior communities (Cedar Hills, Ruby Lane, Nizhoni, Sunset Hills, Dairy Lane).
- Be sensitive with signage to not be discriminatory.
- Seniors will require way to reach trailheads. Most cannot drive. Need to coordinate transportation through public system and senior centers.

## **BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT/INVOLVEMENT**

- Will require new marketing skills, an informed workforce, and adjusted business hours to promote adventure tourism.
- Promote locally owned businesses. Not chains.
- Develop a “How to visit the Gallup Region” media show.
- Develop a Gallup Passport.
- Coupon sharing between businesses.
- Restaurant placemats that are trail maps.
- Recognition for businesses that support trails.
- Community “best of...” competition.
- Gallup Visitor Center sponsors bike tours.
- Commercial retail space at trailheads.
- Establish “Gallup Trails Experience” package.
- Explore tax incentives for beautification.
- Business sponsorship of trail, signs, maps, etc. where name of business is on the item.

## **COMMUNITY CONCERNS WITH TRAILS DEVELOPMENT**

- While people see the benefits to community health and economic vitality, adjacent communities and neighborhoods were concerned with the development of trails due to potential crime, loss of privacy, environmental degradation caused by activity, increase in trash, disturbance to range and range animals, disrespect for private property, destruction of cultural sites, liability, illegal access, etc.
- To improve communication between communities/landowners/neighborhoods and users:
  - Involve communities through monthly association meetings.
  - Clarify issues of land ownership to reduce conflicts/misunderstanding.

## **COLLABORATION**

- Coordinate trails development with other communities to make a regional effort.
  - USFS will update its’ Forest Management Plan in the next 5 years.
  - Zuni is developing a long range plan. Did a trails/walkability plan with assistance of NPS.
  - Navajo doing community-based plans. Less need for trails since work herding sheep all day.
  - Manuelito welcomes trails.
  - Chapters via CLUPC willing to meet with trails planners.

- Trails development will require clarification of jurisdictions for access, environmental protection, maintenance, security, law enforcement, problem resolution, etc.
- Continue to use community partners, e.g. the YCC for trail building.

### **SPECIFIC IMPROVEMENTS**

- Create a route map for Mentmore Climbing Area
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> St trail and Boardman should be improved.
- Improve trail from hospital to UNM.
- Add a trail along Route 66.
- High Desert Trails needs directional signage.
- UNM Gallup Trail could benefit from lighting.
- Mentmore could benefit from a map of climbing routes.
- Trail around gold course.
- Reopen middle school to public use.
- Integrate a skate park into trails system.
- Improve access at White Cliffs Road.
- Expand Stagecoach baseball park.
- Connect Chihuahuita to Romero Park to Sports Park.
- Bridge over Puerco. Shortcut to aquatic center.
- Develop Memory Trail footbridge.
- Link UNM & Boardman.
- Link Red Rock clinic.
- Enhance shoulders on roads for bikers.
- Connect the parks (Red Rocks, Zuni, Mentmore)
- Create a river park.
- Area between sports complex – set aside for recreational purposes with multi-use trails.
- Along 2<sup>nd</sup> Street build walking paths to downtown where Army Corps doing work.
- South of Pepsi plant and Blake's create a park like setting with trails.
- Modify Pyramid for wheelchair access.
- Improve Munoz overpass for alternative transportation or find alternate route.
- Nizhoni is unsafe. Should have shoulder, bike route, connection to UNM and high school, crosswalk to College.
- Railroad crossing from 3<sup>rd</sup>, to Maxwell, to south side of Rio Puerco, to Roundhouse Rd. Use Army Corps of Engineer as easement.
- Along Aztec, to overpass, by cemetery – no shoulder. Dangerous.
- Sundance Mine Road.
- Ft. Wingate to Morrow.
- Wend of (Barky) a continuous trail.
- 66 El Rancho southside would be okay.

### **CURRENT USE OF TRAILS**

- Health practitioners are hiking/walking at Red Rocks, High Desert Trails and hiking to work.
- Participants also hike on the streets in the morning near the hospital.
- Senior Olympics uses Washington Park (difficult to get to walking).
- Gallup Jr. High used by seniors.
- Washington school.
- Fitness trail at Sports Complex.