

Appendix A: Inclusive Trail Planning

The planning process for the Acequia/River Trail Cottonwood Loop strives to create the opportunity for meaningful and equitable community involvement in the design and vision of the trail system. To work towards this goal, the MPO:

- Contracted with the empowerment and community development organization Earth Care in the summer of 2021. The Earth Care summer leadership program participants conducted in-depth interviews with southside community members in Spanish and English around park, trail, and open space access. The program participants also conducted a walkability audit around El Camino Real Academy.
- Organized a community walkability audit in June of 2021 to walk the proposed trail alignments and give community members a chance to provide feedback.
- Conducted a community feedback scavenger hunt in the summer of 2021 with 32 signs strategically placed around the community; each sign had a question in English and Spanish and QR code for community members to answer the question.

The results of this outreach all indicated that the community strongly supports additional trails being built in their neighborhood.

A variety of strategies can be employed to continue the inclusive trail planning process. Some examples are:

- Distribution of the illustrated comic book plan within the community with a survey link and DIY community vision template
- Additional and pro-active programming to build interest in the trail, such as engagement with the El Camino Real Academy parents and students.
- One-on-one meetings with residents and community leaders
- Actively incorporating community feedback into the design
- Pre-construction open house
- Regular updates to the community during construction
- A community celebration when the trails are completed and open
- Facilitation of community-led programming on the completed trails, such as field trips, education about the history or nature, and/or community outreach.

Following an inclusive trail planning practice is essential to ensuring equity is a guiding factor in developing these trails and that they are in line with community needs and desires, especially given the risk that infrastructure improvements in low income communities can pose of displacement as an area becomes more desirable. The Prevention Institute's Healthy Development Without Displacement guide includes a number of risk and resilience factors that contribute to or work against displacement.

Risk factors in the Southside Greenway area include a concentration of low-income households and non-white population, low levels of educational attainment, and a lack of strong tenant protection policies in Santa Fe. Additionally, the Cottonwood Village Mobile Home Park operates on leased mobile home spaces rather than lot ownership.

However, there are also many resilience factors in the area that can counterbalance these risks, such as the emphasis on equity. With the clear need for safe walking and biking routes to El Camino Real Academy and the relative lack of access to parks and trails, equity has been a guiding factor in planning this trail system. Additionally, meaningful community engagement and strong community organizations, such as Earth Care, fortify and empower the community. The majority of households in this area are homeowner occupied and the percent of renters is equal to or lower than that in the greater city. For renters that may experience rising rents, a number of city funded non-profits provide rental or utility assistance to households in need.

The Acequia/River Trail Cottonwood Loop can help address many connectivity, transportation, recreation, and safety issues in the community. Throughout the development of these trails, the MPO will continue to strive for effective community involvement and collaboration.

Inclusive Trail Planning Resources:

[Inclusionary Trail Planning Toolkit](#), Pennsylvania Environmental Council

[Healthy Development Without Displacement](#), Prevention Institute

[Sharing in the Benefits of a Greening City](#), The CREATE Initiative