

# DISCOVERING PATHS TODAY AND TOMORROW

AN ILLUSTRATED VISION  
OF THE ACEQUIA/RIVER TRAIL COTTONWOOD LOOP  
IN OGA PO'GEH (SANTA FE)



**The intent of this comic is to showcase and build support for the Acequia/River Trail Cottonwood Loop in order to accelerate completion of the trails via local and federal funding.**

**This document was created through a collaborative and creative process by:**

**Artist Jessica Ortiz, the Santa Fe Metropolitan Planning Organization, the National Park Service, Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program and the National Trails Office.**

**With thanks to Santa Fe Public Schools and the Santa Fe Watershed Association.**



*"The Santa Fe Watershed honors the many essential roles the river plays in all our lives. We strongly support ongoing rehabilitation, and expansion of the River Trail.*

*In addition to better connecting communities while lowering carbon emissions, the trail will connect us to our landscape, our history, and our future. It is therefore essential to approach the construction and maintenance of the trail with an ethic of restoration and stewardship.*

*An increasingly functional riparian corridor -with and without flowing water- improves wildlife habitat, mitigates the urban heat island, improves air quality, and utilizes stormwater runoff to recharge our shallow aquifers.*

*Furthermore, a socially, ecologically, and hydrologically healthy river corridor reflects core values most important to our community: connection, equity, access, respect, diversity, and systems-thinking.*

*The river is a symbol of who we are, who we have been, and who we want to be. We are excited to continue working towards making it healthier and more accessible for everyone."*

**-Santa Fe Watershed Association**

# Acequia/River Trail Cottonwood Loop: Community planning background and history

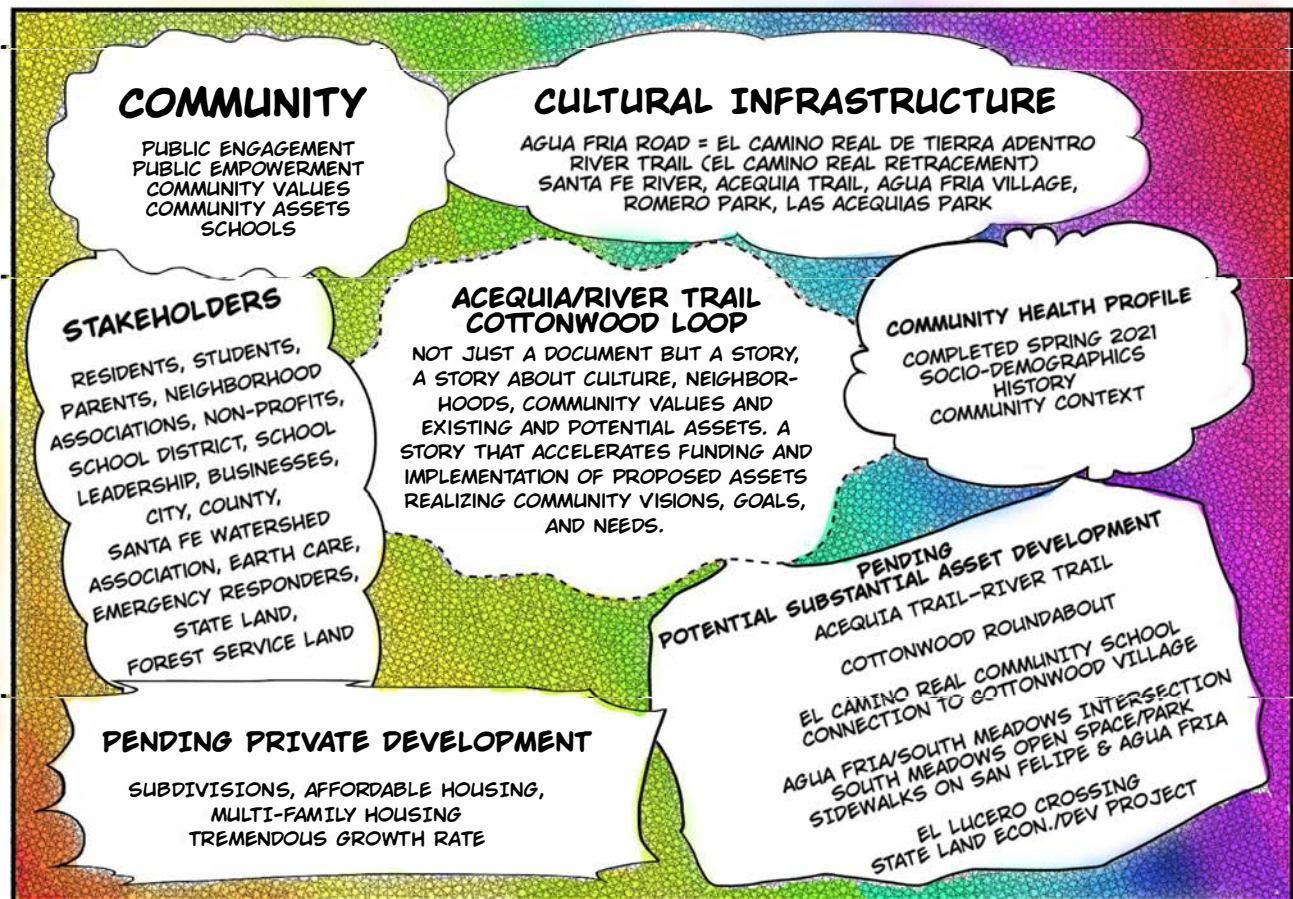
Read along to discover the potential for Santa Feans to celebrate the culture, history, and natural environment via the expansion of the River Trail and Acequia Trail into the Acequia/River Trail Cottonwood Loop as it weaves into the historic El Camino Real Trail.

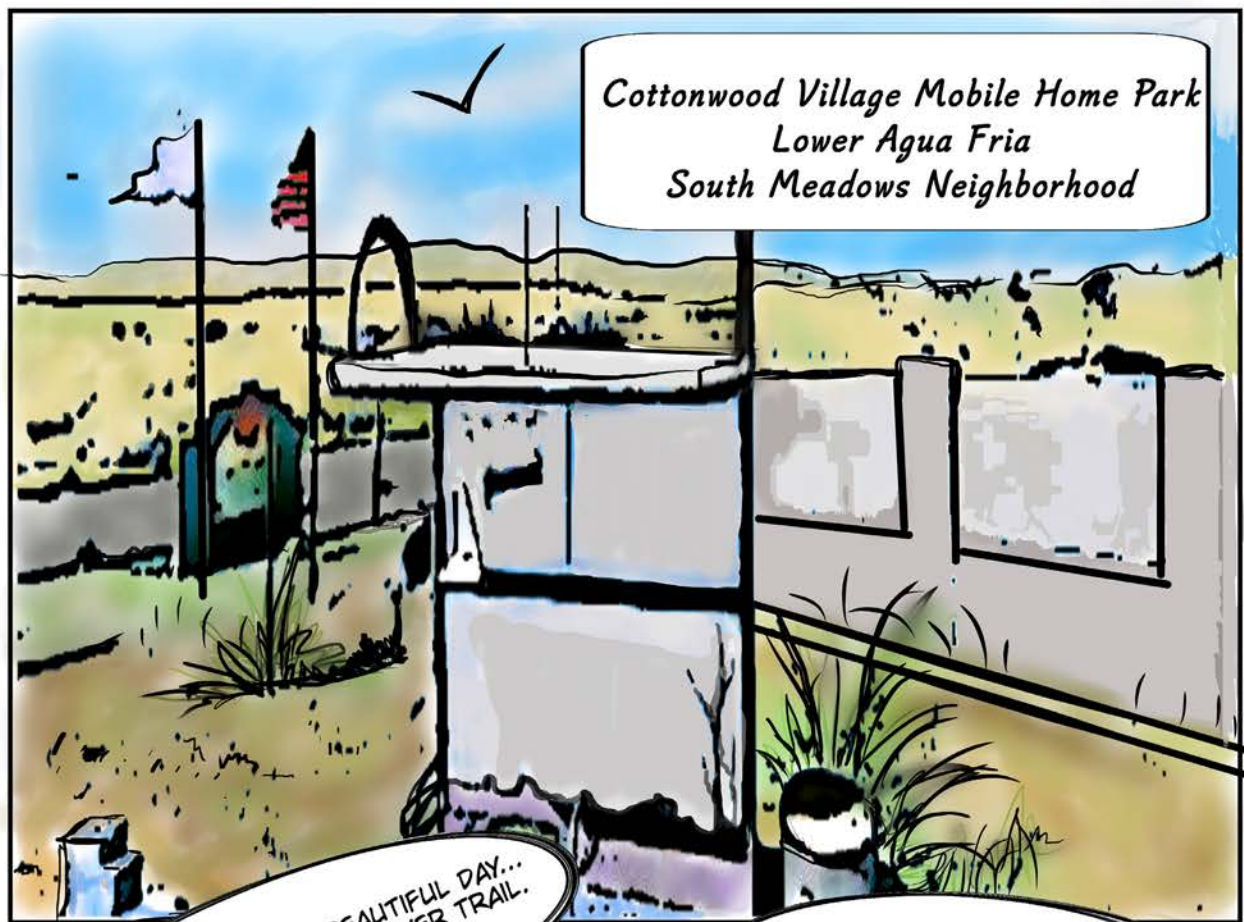
These trails are part of a long history of community planning in the area:

- In 1981 it was included in the Southwest Santa Fe Sector Plan.
- In 1997 the Santa Fe Watershed Association created the vision of the Santa Fe River Park and Trail.
- In 2000 the El Camino Real was designated a National Historic Trail.<sup>1</sup>
- In 2005 the Santa Fe Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) first supported the Acequia Trail and River Trail.
- In 2007 the River Trail was included in the Southwest Santa Fe Community Area Master Plan.
- The 2012 and 2019 MPO Bicycle Master Plans detailed several segments of the Acequia Trail and River Trail as formal projects.
- In 2020 the City was awarded funds to complete the Acequia Trail between South Meadows Road and San Felipe.
- In 2021 the Santa Fe Metropolitan Planning Organization focused on the opportunity and need for the Acequia/River Trail Cottonwood Loop in the Santa Fe Southside Sector Greenway Loop Community Health Profile.
- In 2022, the City was granted funds to connect El Camino Real Academy to Cottonwood Village Mobile Home Park via a spur of the proposed River Trail.

This is the culmination of thoughtful community planning. The work has inspired the goal of a shared vision that includes the creation of the Acequia/River Trail Cottonwood Loop. This shared vision will evolve with your collaboration and offer community inspired benefits for generations to come.

## VISIONS, GOALS, AND OPPORTUNITIES

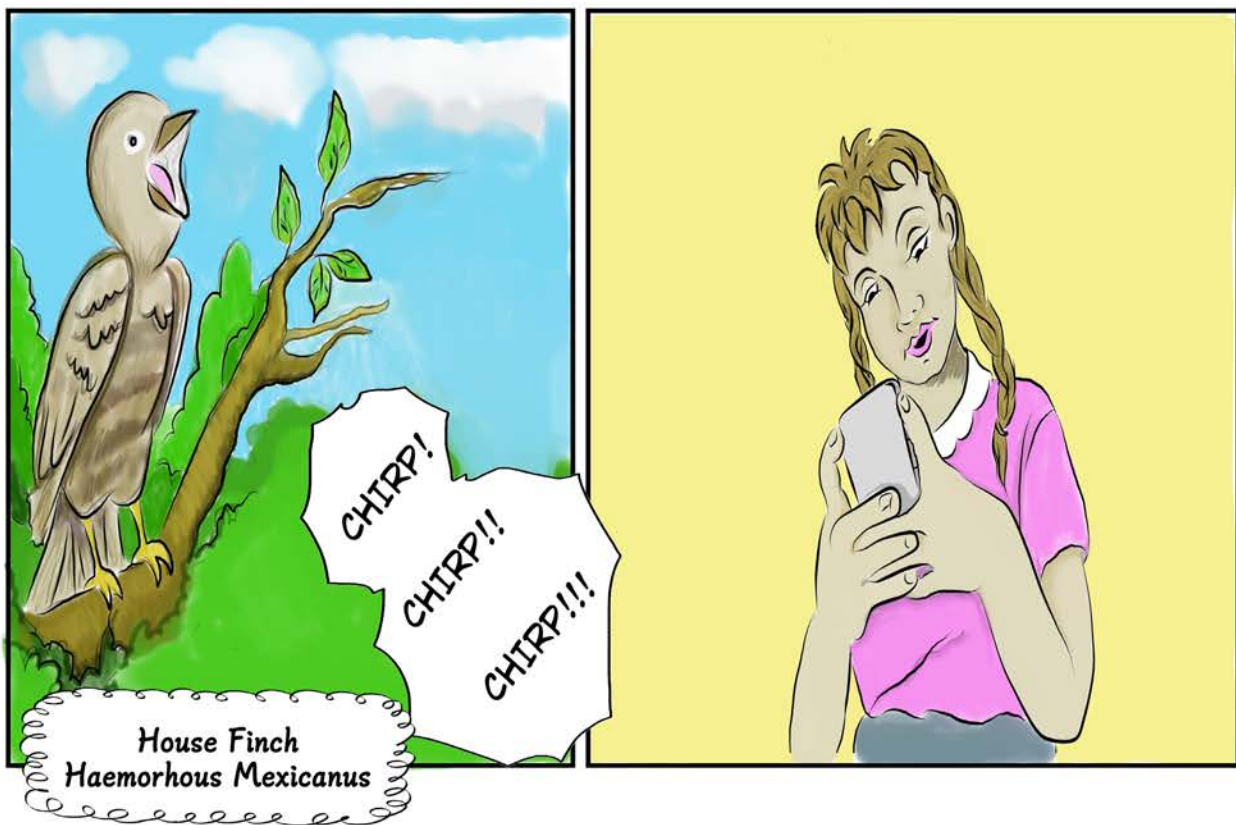




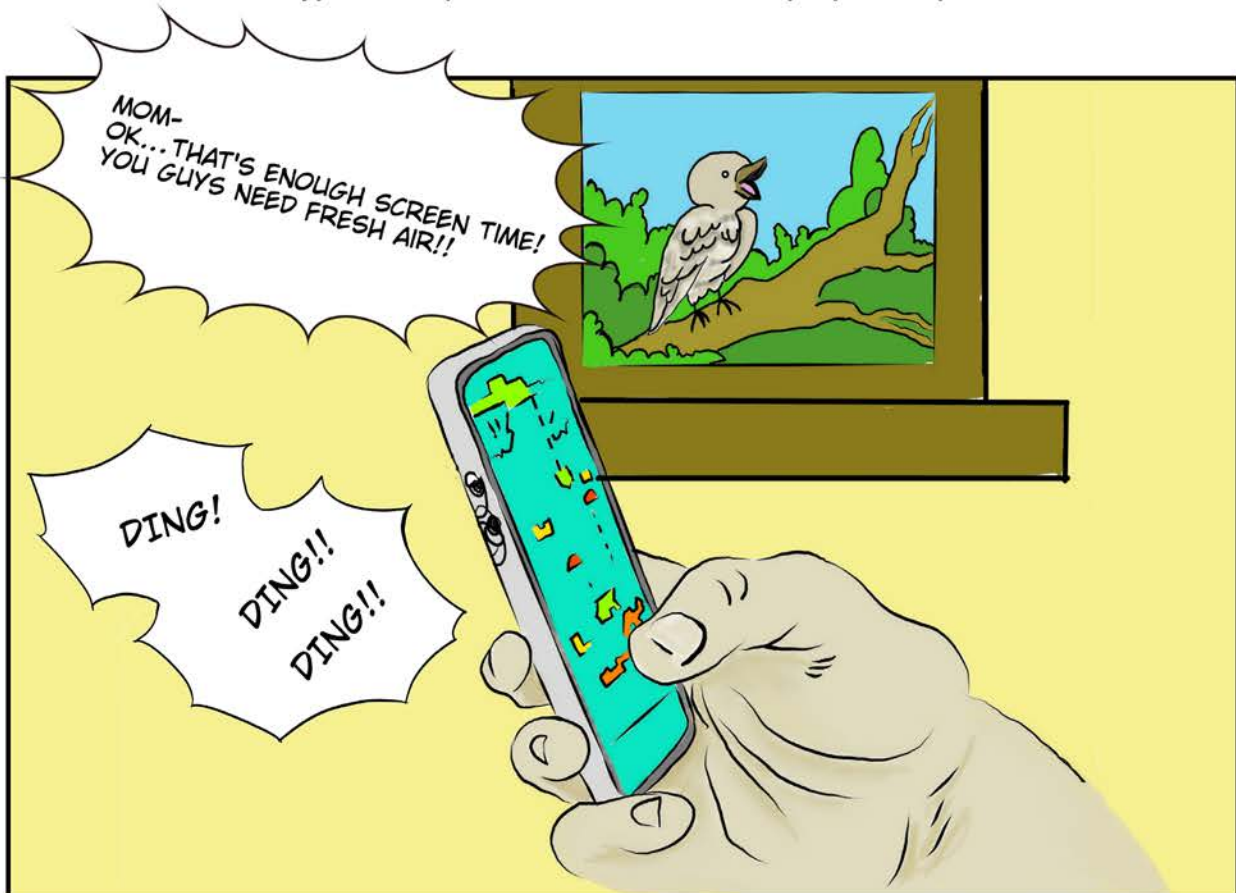
IT'S GOING TO BE A BEAUTIFUL DAY...  
WE SHOULD GO TO THE RIVER TRAIL.

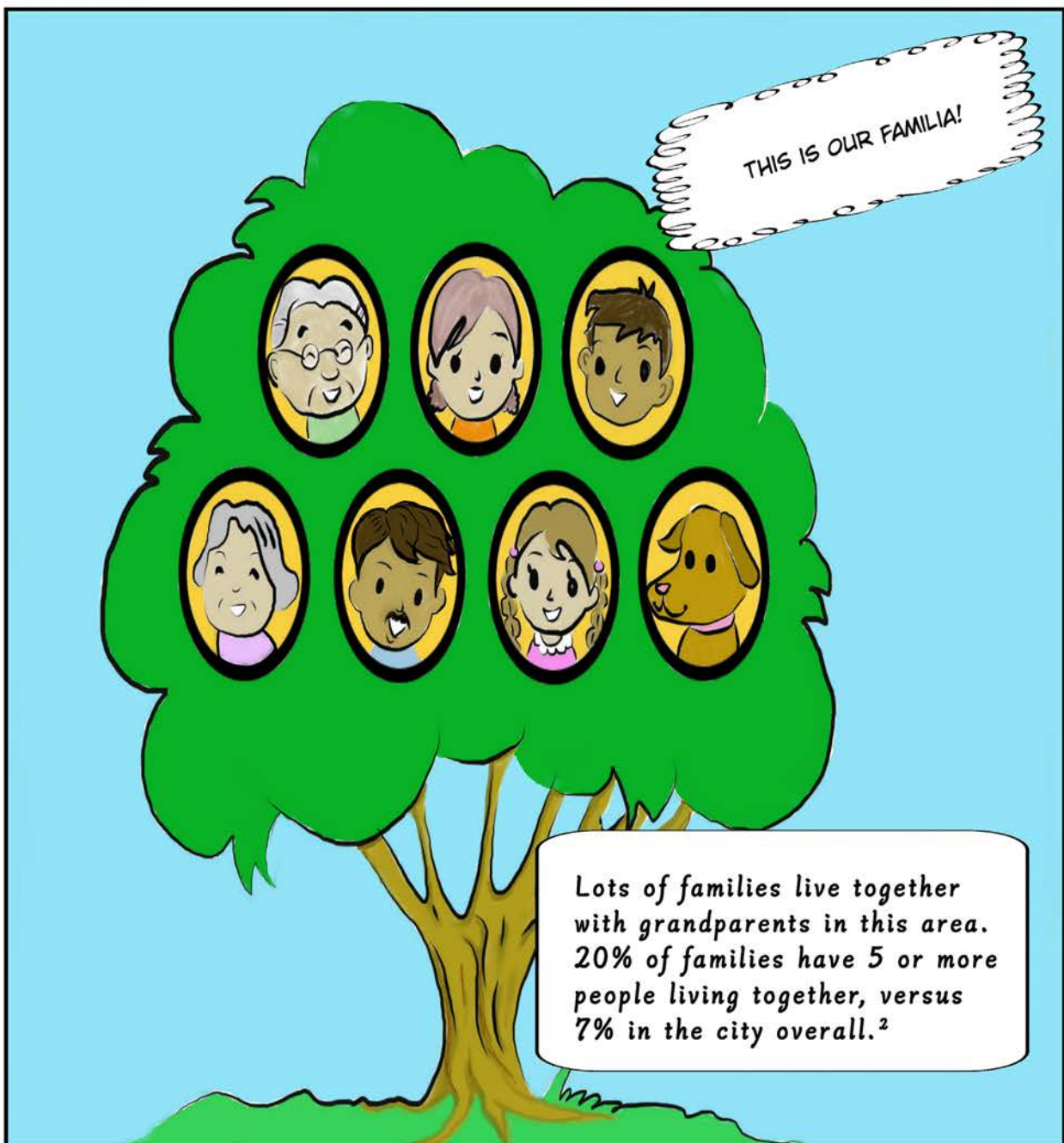
NICE!  
FIRST WEEK OF SUMMER VACATION!

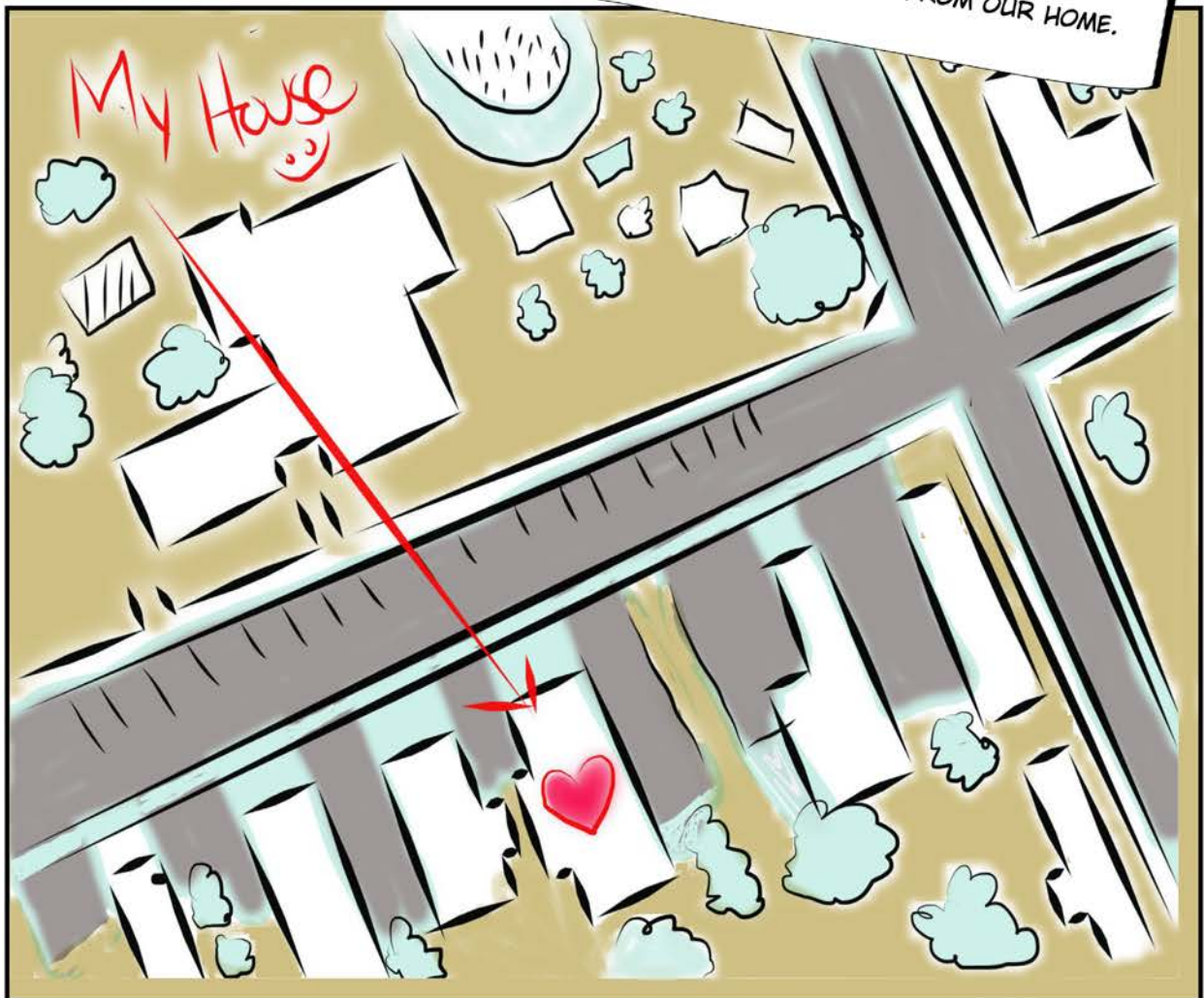


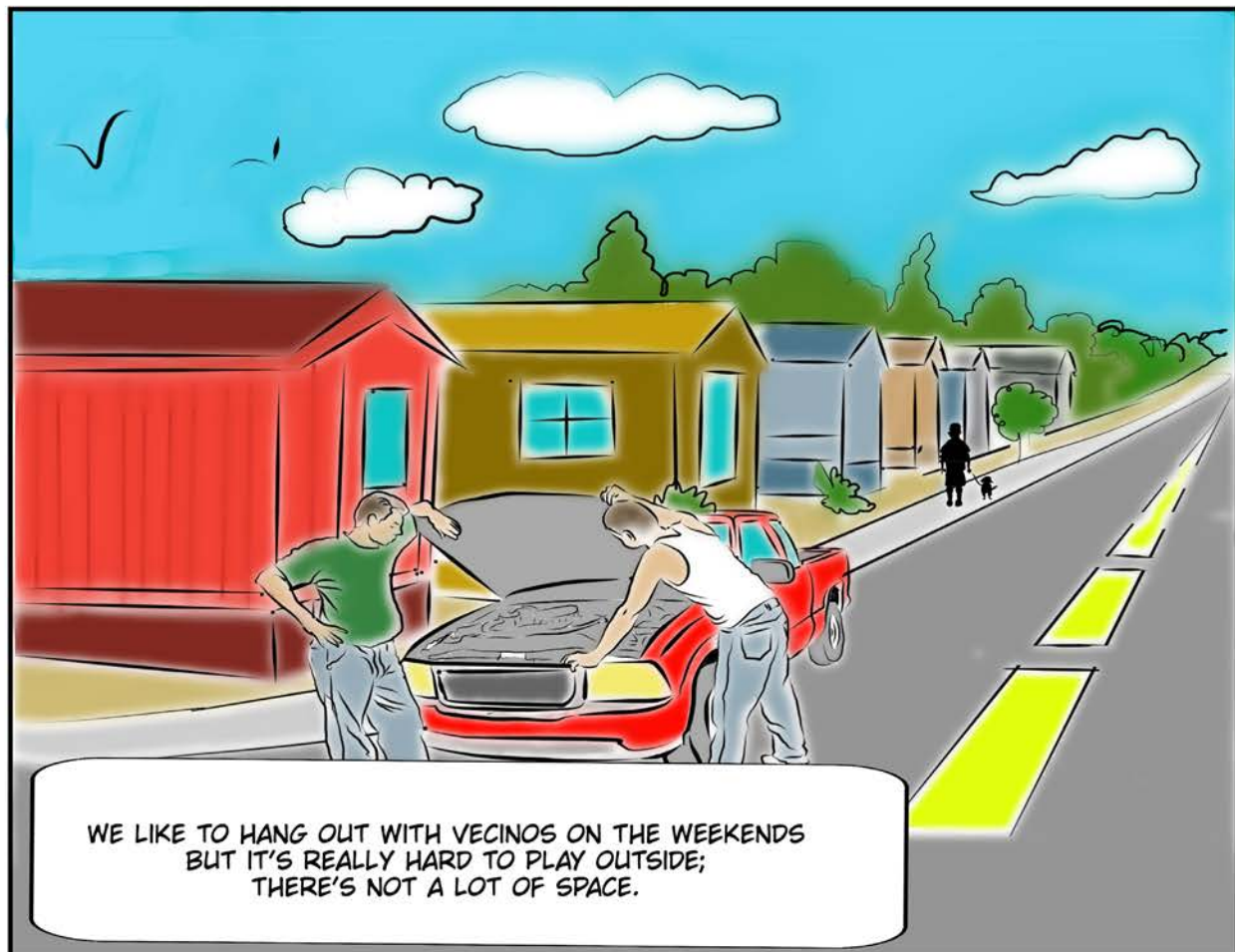


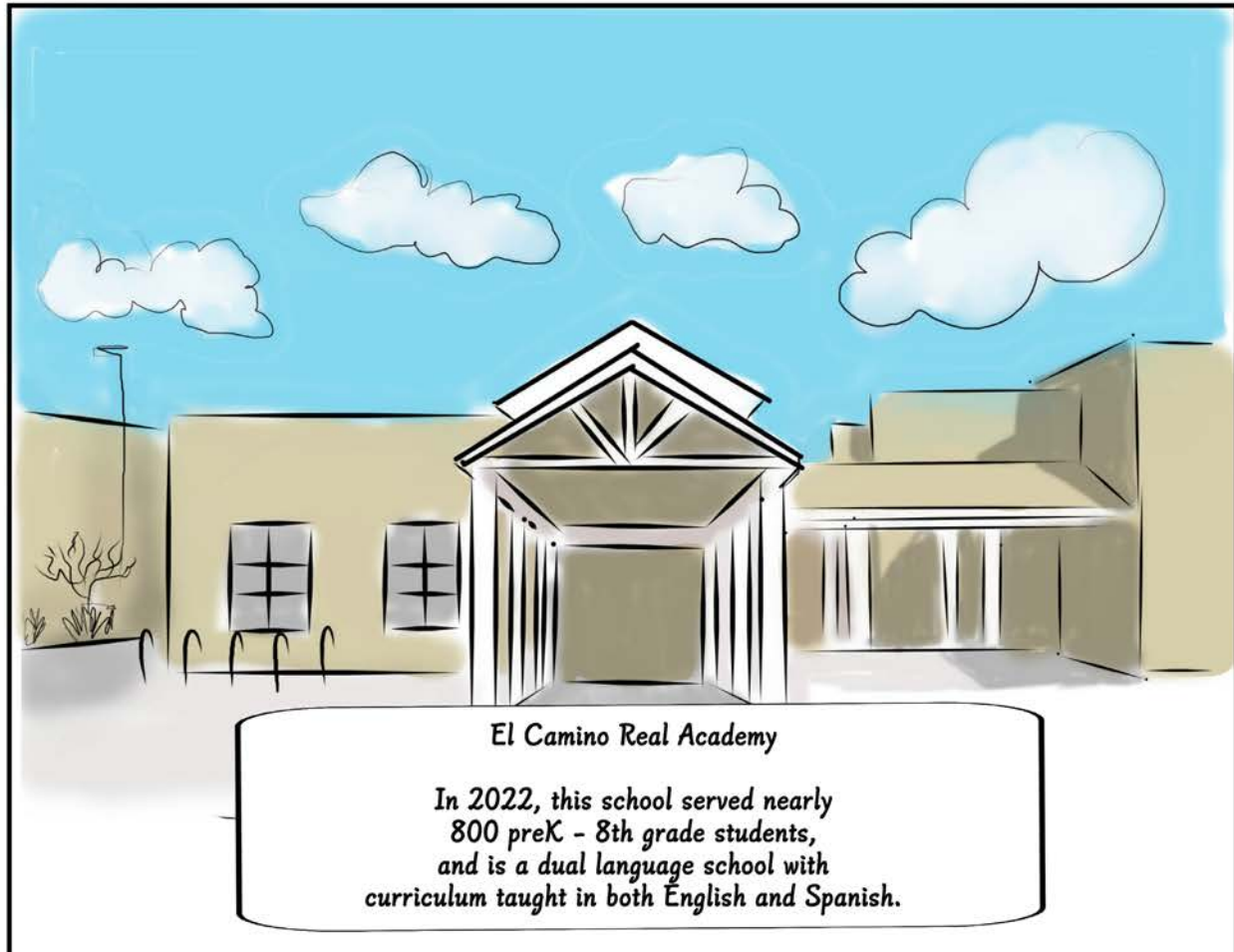
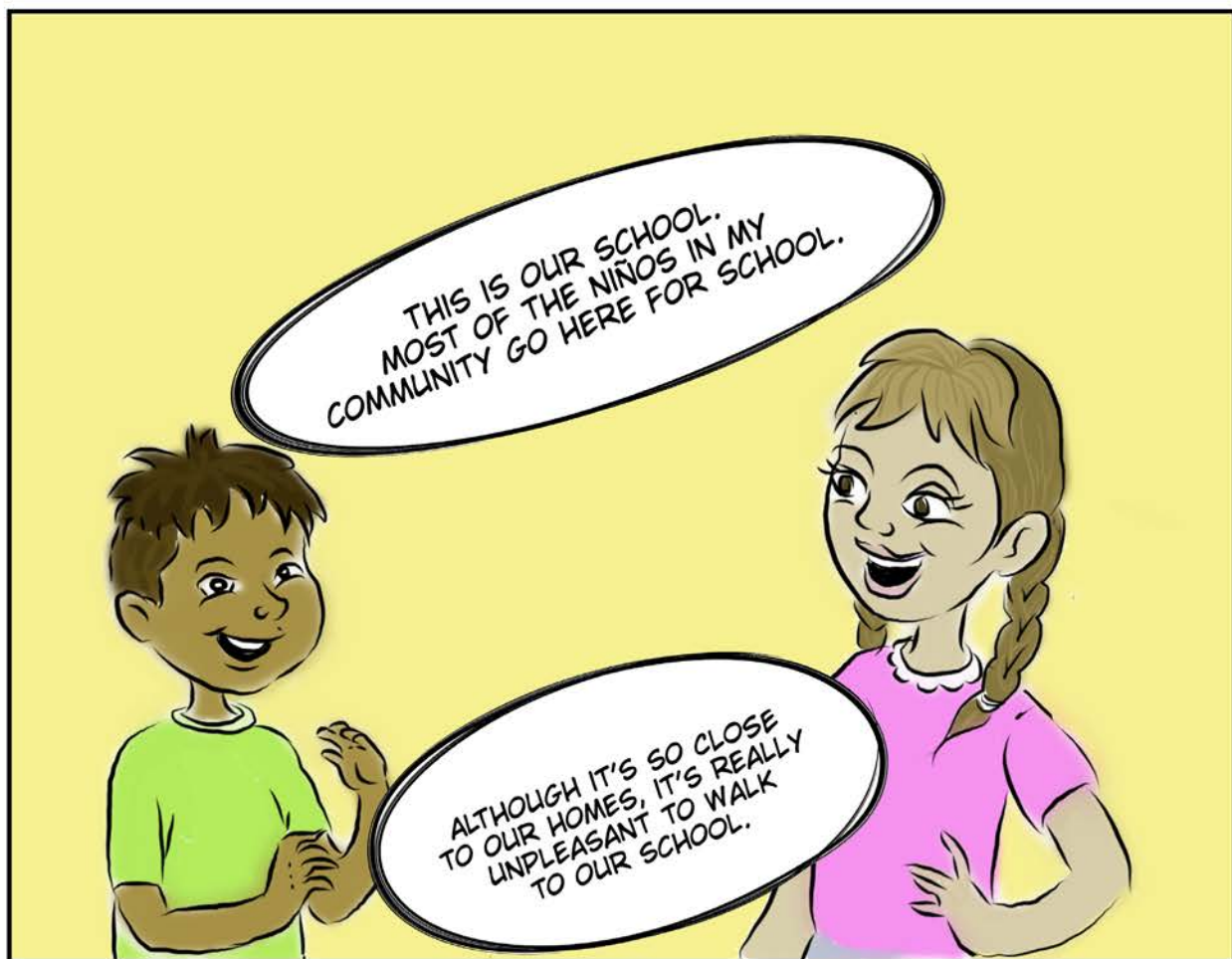
In Santa Fe, the neighborhoods adjacent to the Acequia and River Trail Cottonwood Loop are the most dense in the City. More than 25% of Santa Fe's youth live here. The majority (88%) of residents identify as Hispanic and 70% usually speak Spanish at home.<sup>2</sup>













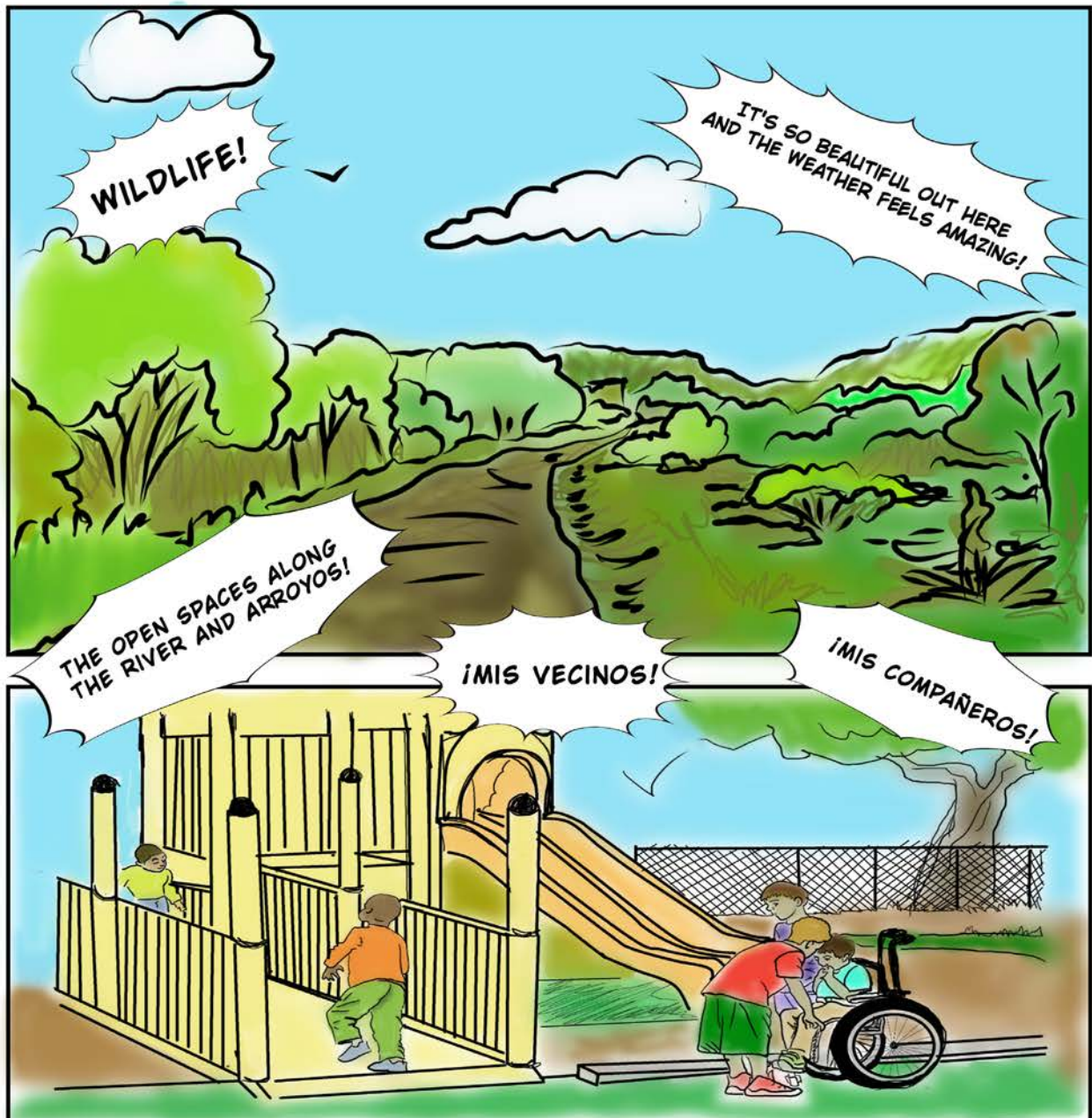
In 2021, the SFMPO and District 4 City Councilor Jamie Cassutt dispersed 32 decals and signs around the community to gather public input and inform the community vision.

They told us...<sup>4</sup>

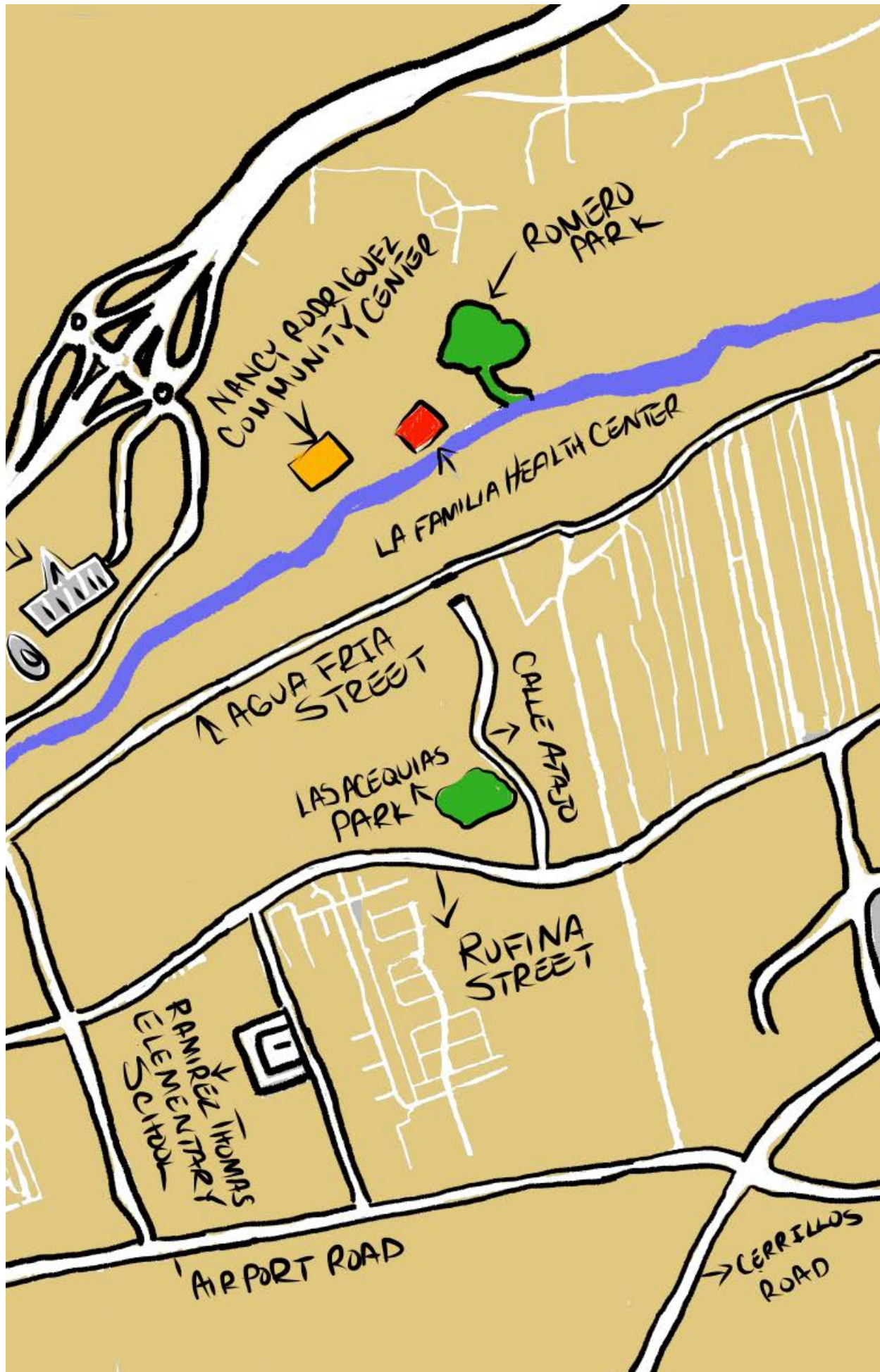
- \* The community loves the trails they already have and strongly support more trails being built.
- \* Lighting, benches, and artwork are desired on the existing and future trails.
- \* More sidewalks and street lights would improve the safety and accessibility of walking in the neighborhood.



## SOME OF THE THINGS WE LOVE ABOUT OUR COMMUNITY...









Between January 1, 2010 and December 31, 2019  
in the study area there were:<sup>2</sup>

8 fatal crashes, 2 of which involved people walking.

725 injury crashes or an average of 73 per year.

44 crashes involving a person walking or riding a bicycle.

The lack of continuous sidewalks on Agua Fria reduces access  
to buses, parks, and open spaces, which can provide many  
physical and mental health benefits to residents.



WE DON'T HAVE A LOT OF PARKS  
THAT WE CAN SAFELY WALK TO,  
AND MY PARENTS HAVE TO DRIVE  
KINDA FAR TO GET TO THE GROCERY STORE.





OK, BACK TO REALITY...

--MOM  
OK!

THAT'S ENOUGH  
SCREEN TIME!  
YOU GUYS NEED  
FRESH AIR!!

5 MORE MINUTES...  
PLEASE...  
I WANNA FINISH MY GAME

--DAD  
LISTEN TO YOUR MOTHER!



UGH..  
FINE!





Biking is a popular activity in Santa Fe!

A 2021 survey showed that of the 711 people who responded, 80% want to bike more. However, traffic safety, a lack of bike paths or lanes, and not feeling safe in bike lanes are major barriers to people biking more.<sup>5</sup>

For many people in Santa Fe, biking is an essential and affordable mode of transportation. The River Trail expansion will ultimately connect people and neighborhoods to employment centers downtown and across the city.

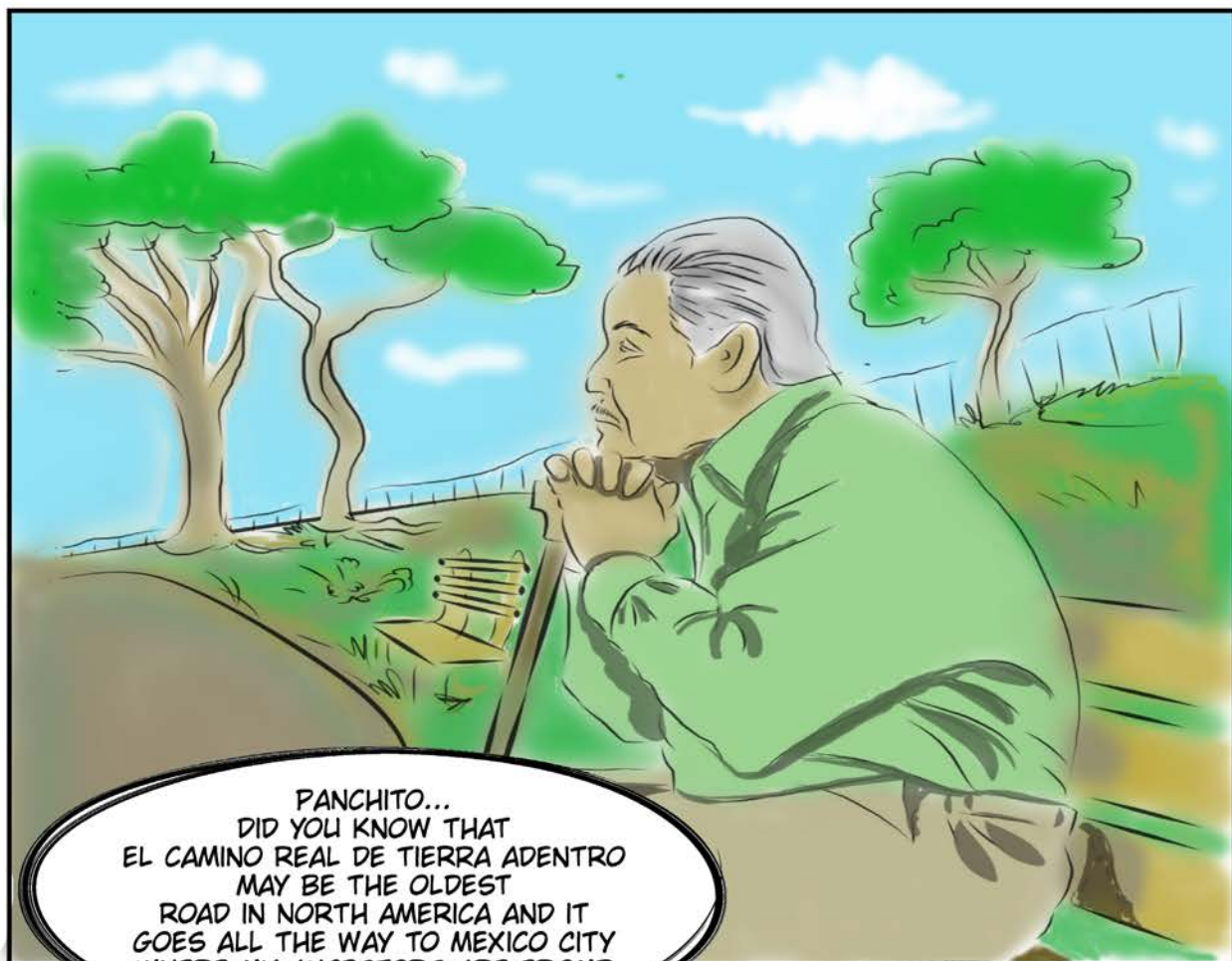
Studies show that people living close to a trail get more physical activity<sup>6</sup>, which provides a number of physical and mental health benefits. In fact, a 2005 study showed that for every \$1 invested in building trails there was a direct correlation of nearly \$3 in saved medical costs.<sup>7</sup>

Using trails for transportation reduces air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. Transportation is the largest source of greenhouse gases in Santa Fe and the Sustainable Santa Fe 25-year plan lists building more multi-use trails as a strategy to reduce the carbon footprint.<sup>8</sup>

*"Trails and greenways [also] provide a window into our history and culture by connecting people to the past. The preservation and highlighting of these places lets us learn about and understand the history of our communities."*

- Rails to Trails Conservancy<sup>8</sup>





PANCHITO...  
DID YOU KNOW THAT  
EL CAMINO REAL DE TIERRA ADENTRO  
MAY BE THE OLDEST  
ROAD IN NORTH AMERICA AND IT  
GOES ALL THE WAY TO MEXICO CITY  
WHERE MY ANCESTORS ARE FROM?



OH WOW!  
WAS IT HERE WHEN YOU WERE A KID?





--PANCHITO  
YOU'RE HISPANO RIGHT GRANDPA  
DID YOUR DAD SPEAK SPANISH TOO?

--ABUELO  
OUR ANCESTORS SPOKE  
SPANISH EVEN BEFORE YOUR  
GREAT GRANDFATHER.

BUT YOUR ABUELA'S ANCESTORS, THE  
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF THIS AREA, LIKE THE  
TEWA, WERE THE ORIGINAL USERS OF THIS NETWORK  
OF ROADS, WHICH CONNECTED THEM TO MESOAMERICA'S  
ANCIENT CULTURES.

This route was probably used by miners, trappers,  
and missionaries as they accessed La Villa Real  
de la Santa Fe de San Francisco de Asís, in order  
to trade and barter. They followed the Santa Fe River,  
which used to flow all the time here.



-- ALMENDRA  
WHAT'S THIS PLANT, ABUELA?

--ABUELA  
THAT'S A YUCCA,  
YOU CAN ROAST THE ROOT AND EAT IT!

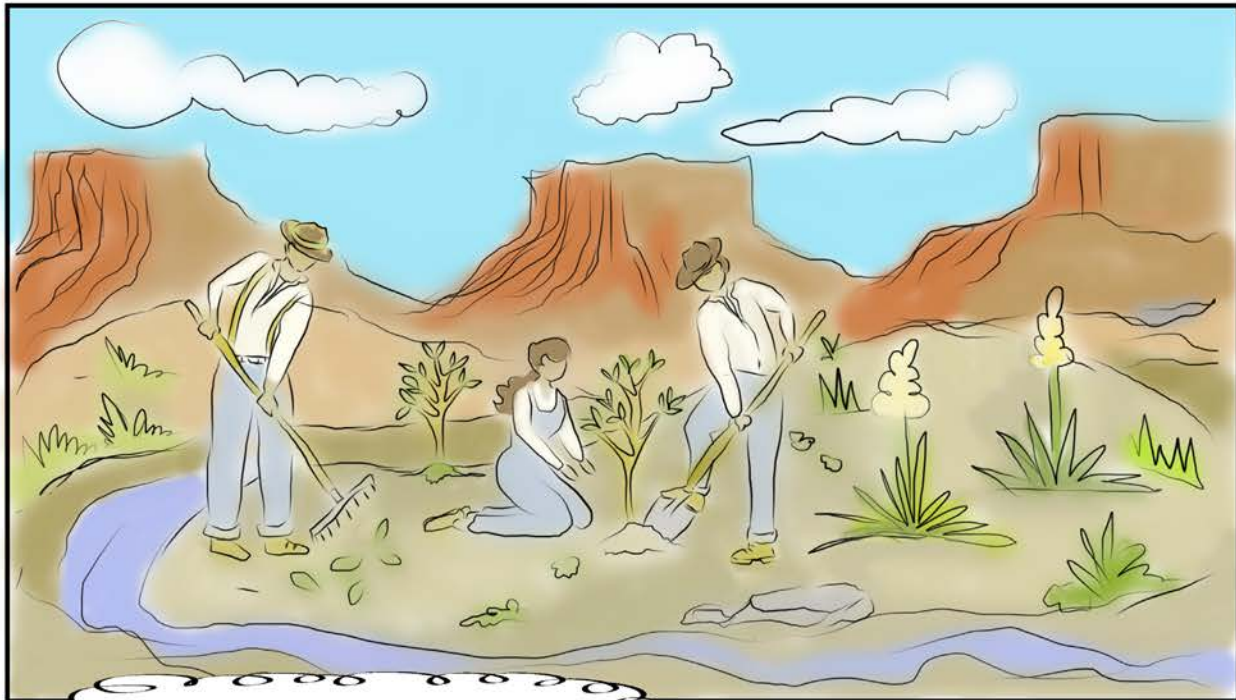


"The Santa Fe River, in its many forms, ebbs, and flows, has been the central artery connecting human and beyond-human communities in its watershed for millennia.

It holds, both physically and metaphorically, the entire, complex history of Santa Fe in its alluvial layers and cemented walls. In such times of division and difference, it has the potential to remain one of our most powerful forces of unity and common ground.

It runs in our veins as we walk along its banks. It provides refuge and rootedness to us all."

- Santa Fe Watershed Association

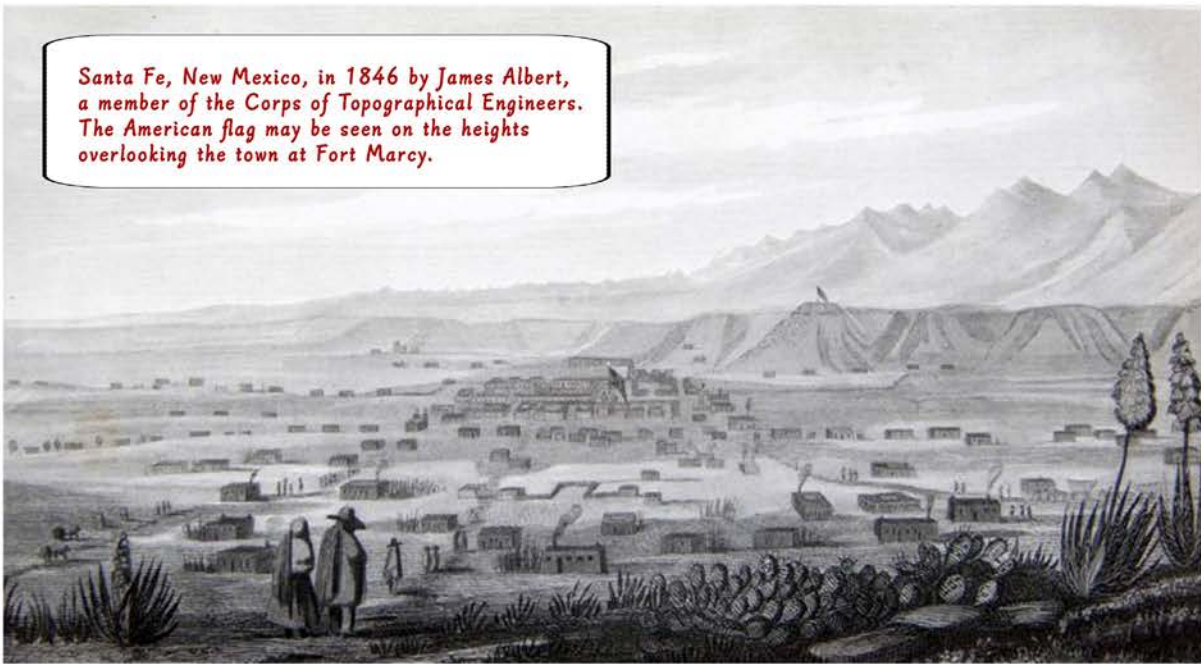


The State Bird of New Mexico  
The Greater Roadrunner  
(*Geococcyx Californianus*)



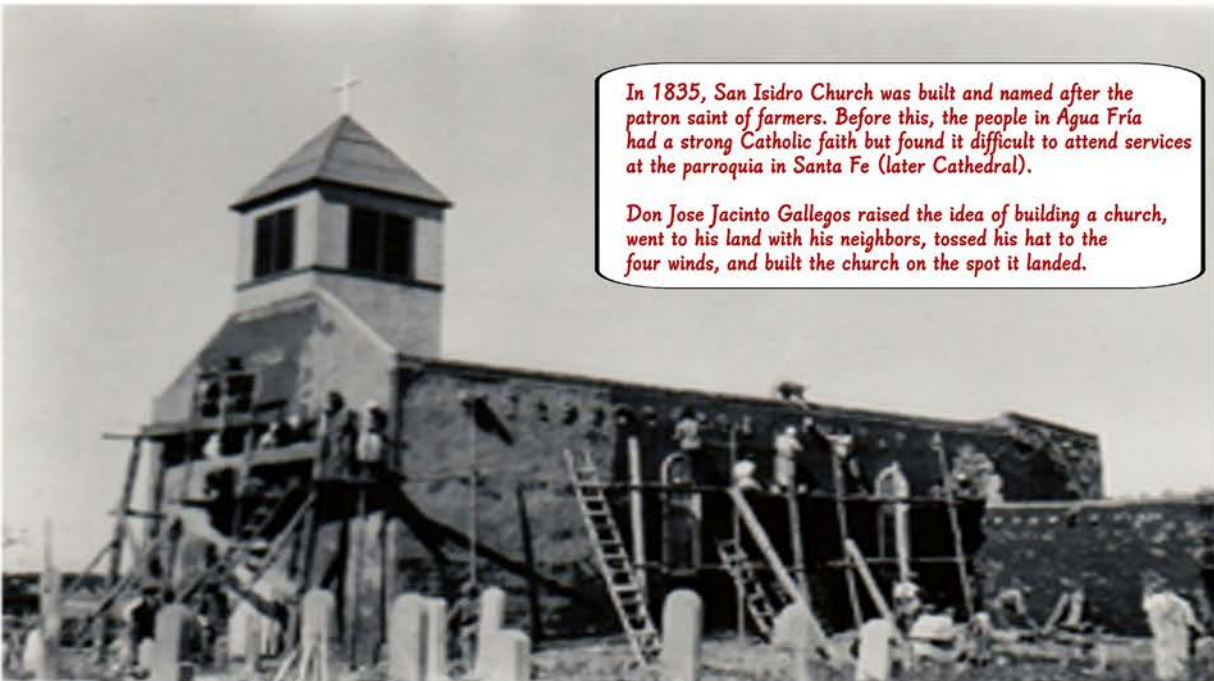
Arid rivers are special places in a dry landscape and are important habitats for a majority of New Mexican wildlife during some part of their lifetime. This is even true for rivers that only flow sometimes!

*Santa Fe, New Mexico, in 1846 by James Albert, a member of the Corps of Topographical Engineers. The American flag may be seen on the heights overlooking the town at Fort Marcy.*

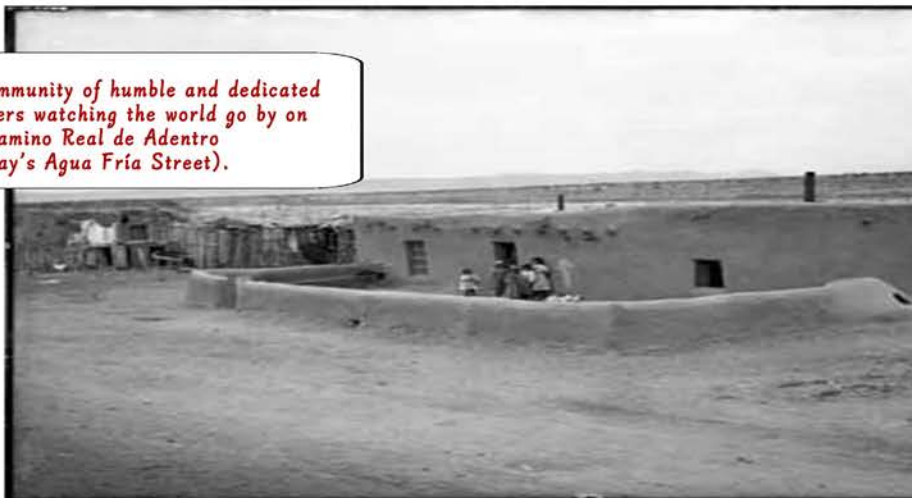


*In 1835, San Isidro Church was built and named after the patron saint of farmers. Before this, the people in Agua Fria had a strong Catholic faith but found it difficult to attend services at the parroquia in Santa Fe (later Cathedral).*

*Don Jose Jacinto Gallegos raised the idea of building a church, went to his land with his neighbors, tossed his hat to the four winds, and built the church on the spot it landed.*



*A community of humble and dedicated farmers watching the world go by on El Camino Real de Adentro (Today's Agua Fria Street).*

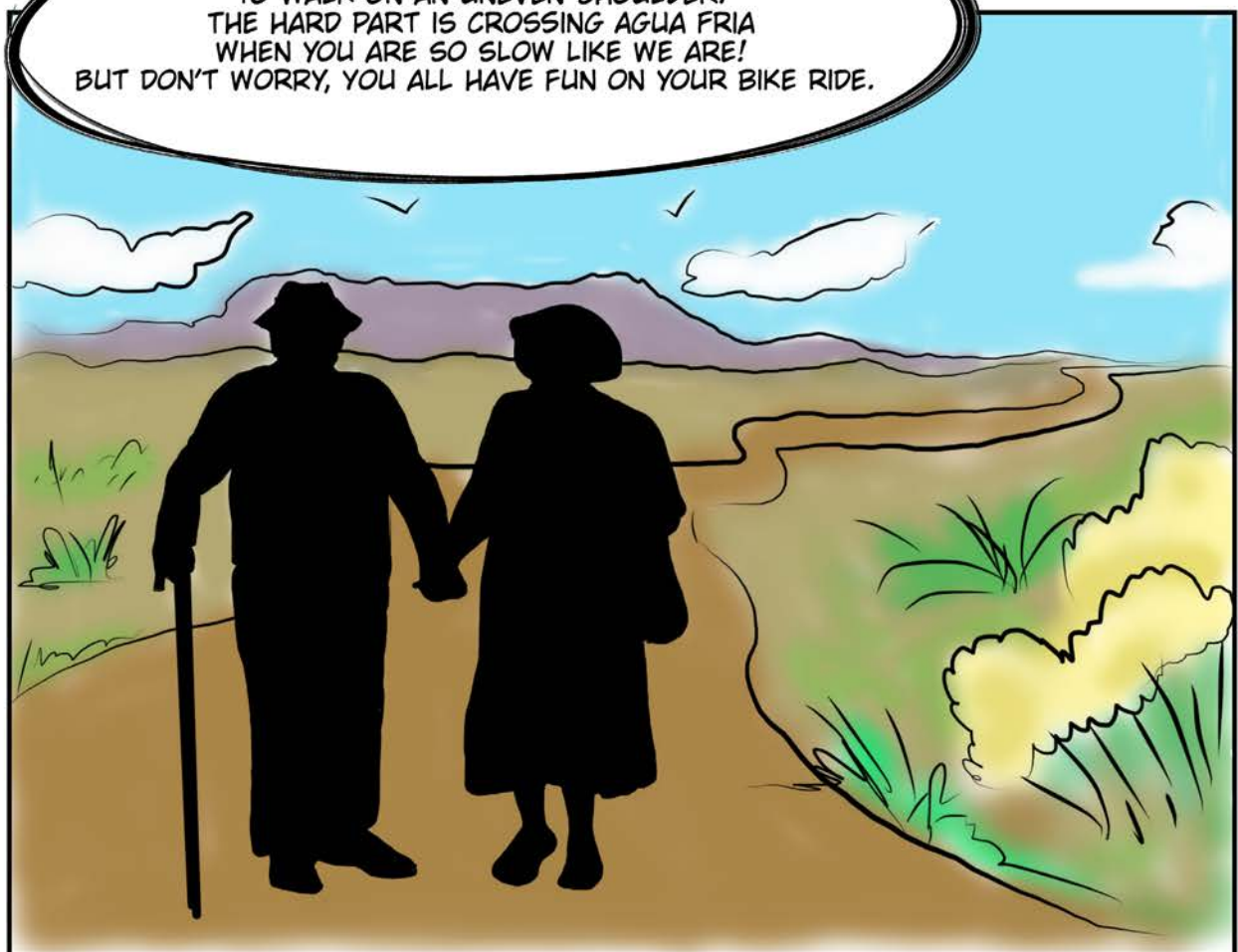


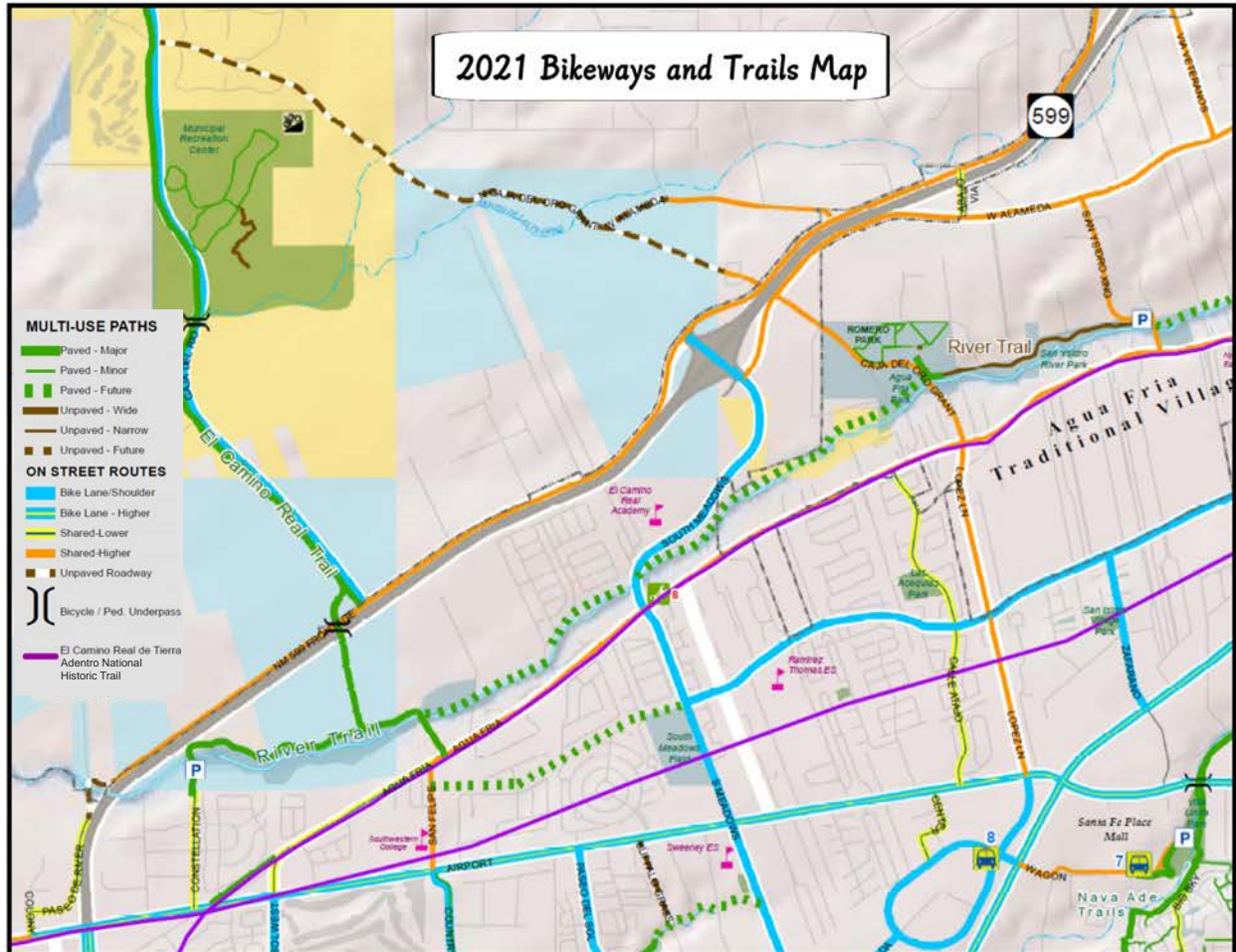
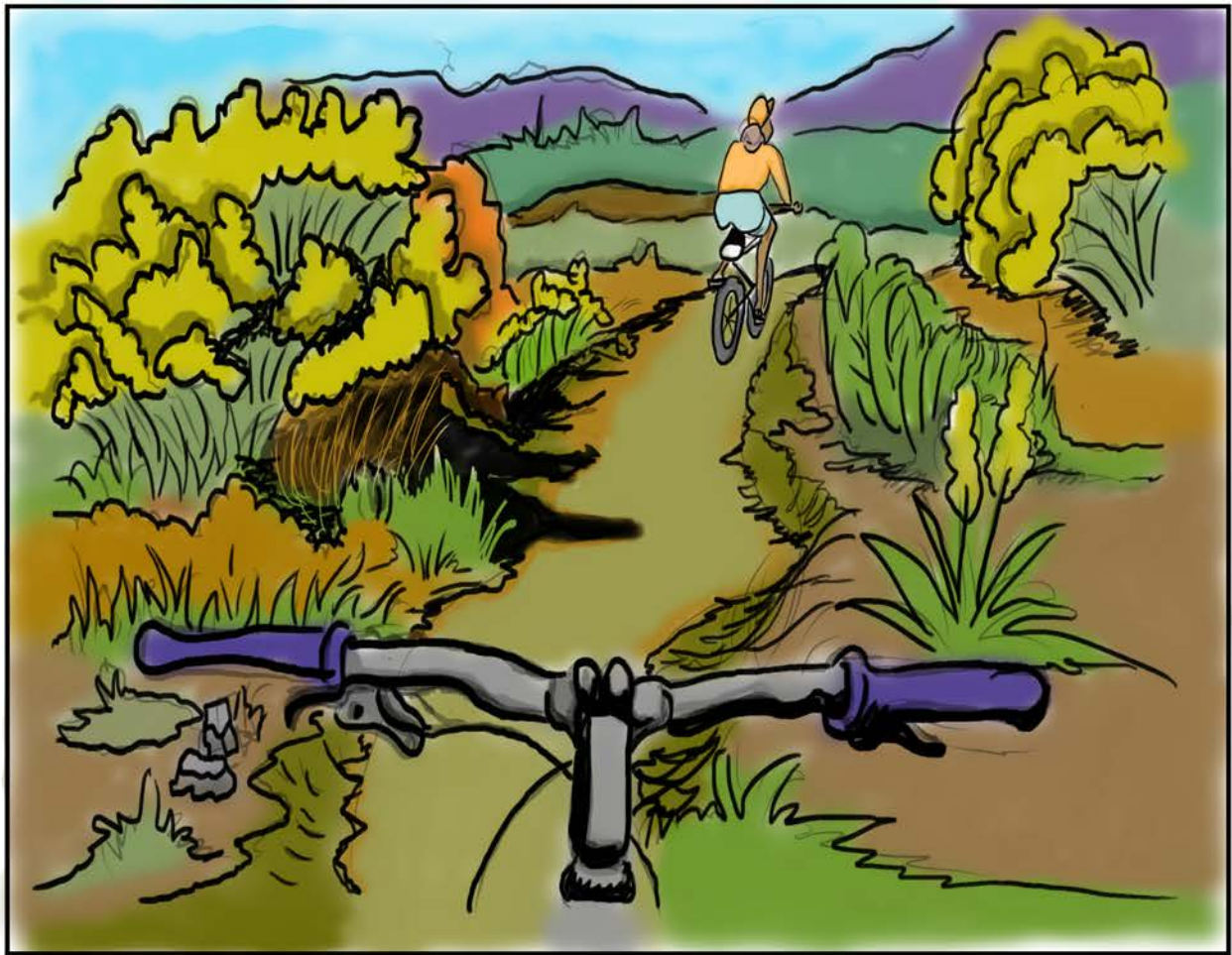
*Images and text courtesy of Historic Santa Fe Foundation <sup>11</sup>*

Later....

ARE YOU SURE YOU AND MOM  
ARE GOING TO BE ABLE TO GET HOME OK?  
I'M NOT SURE THE SIDEWALK GOES THE WHOLE WAY.

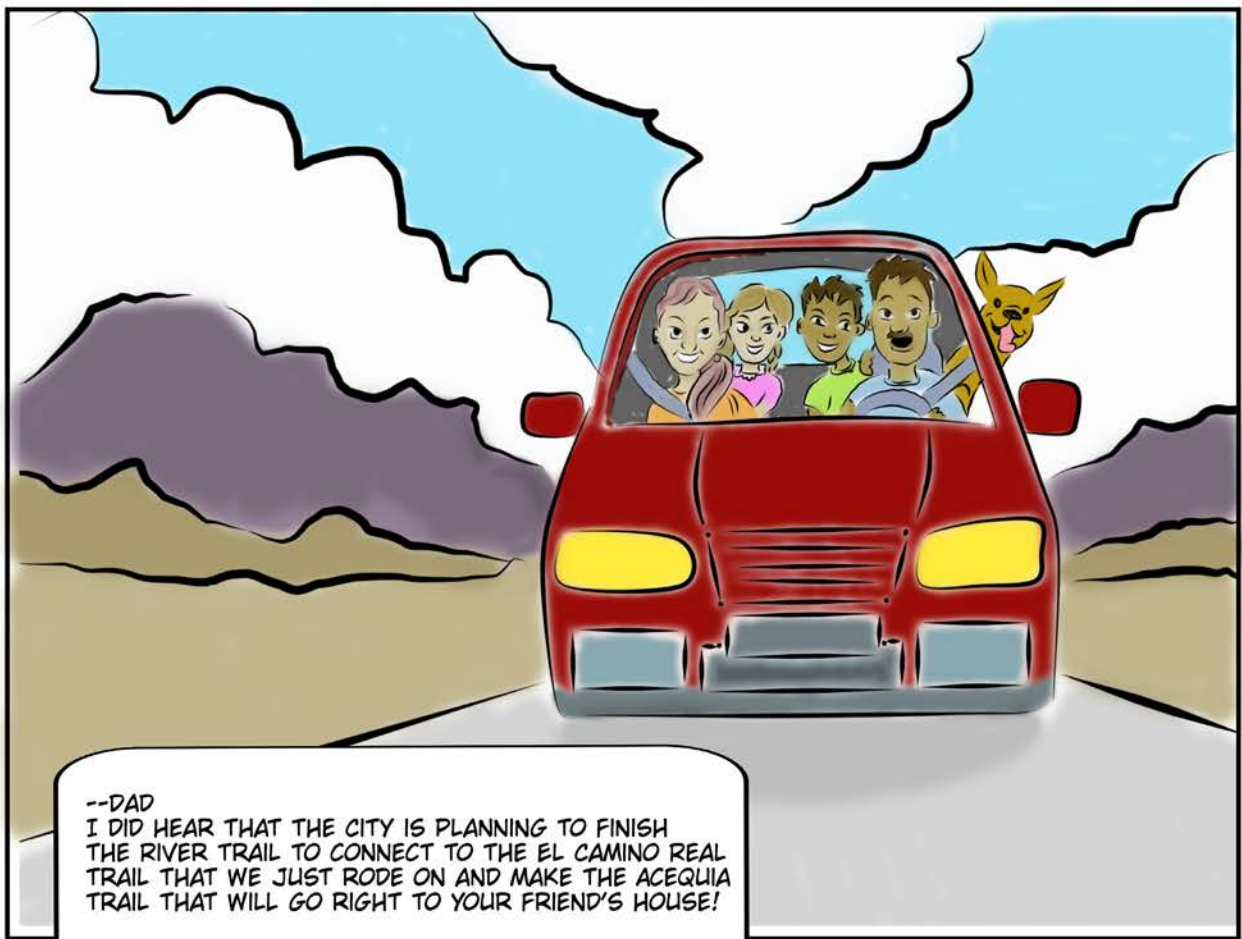
WE WILL BE FINE!  
LUCKILY WE ARE STILL ABLE  
TO WALK ON AN UNEVEN SHOULDER.  
THE HARD PART IS CROSSING AGUA FRIA  
WHEN YOU ARE SO SLOW LIKE WE ARE!  
BUT DON'T WORRY, YOU ALL HAVE FUN ON YOUR BIKE RIDE.











--DAD  
I DID HEAR THAT THE CITY IS PLANNING TO FINISH  
THE RIVER TRAIL TO CONNECT TO THE EL CAMINO REAL  
TRAIL THAT WE JUST RODE ON AND MAKE THE ACEQUIA  
TRAIL THAT WILL GO RIGHT TO YOUR FRIEND'S HOUSE!

--PANCHITO  
I CAN'T WAIT! THEN CAN I BIKE TO CHRIS'S  
HOUSE WHENEVER I WANT?

--ALMENDRA  
I HOPE THE TRAIL HAS LIGHTS ON IT SO I CAN  
RIDE AT NIGHT! I WANNA SEE A COYOTE!

--MOM  
IT BETTER GO UNDERNEATH  
SOUTH MEADOWS SO THAT  
IT'S SAFE TO CROSS THAT  
BUSY ROAD!

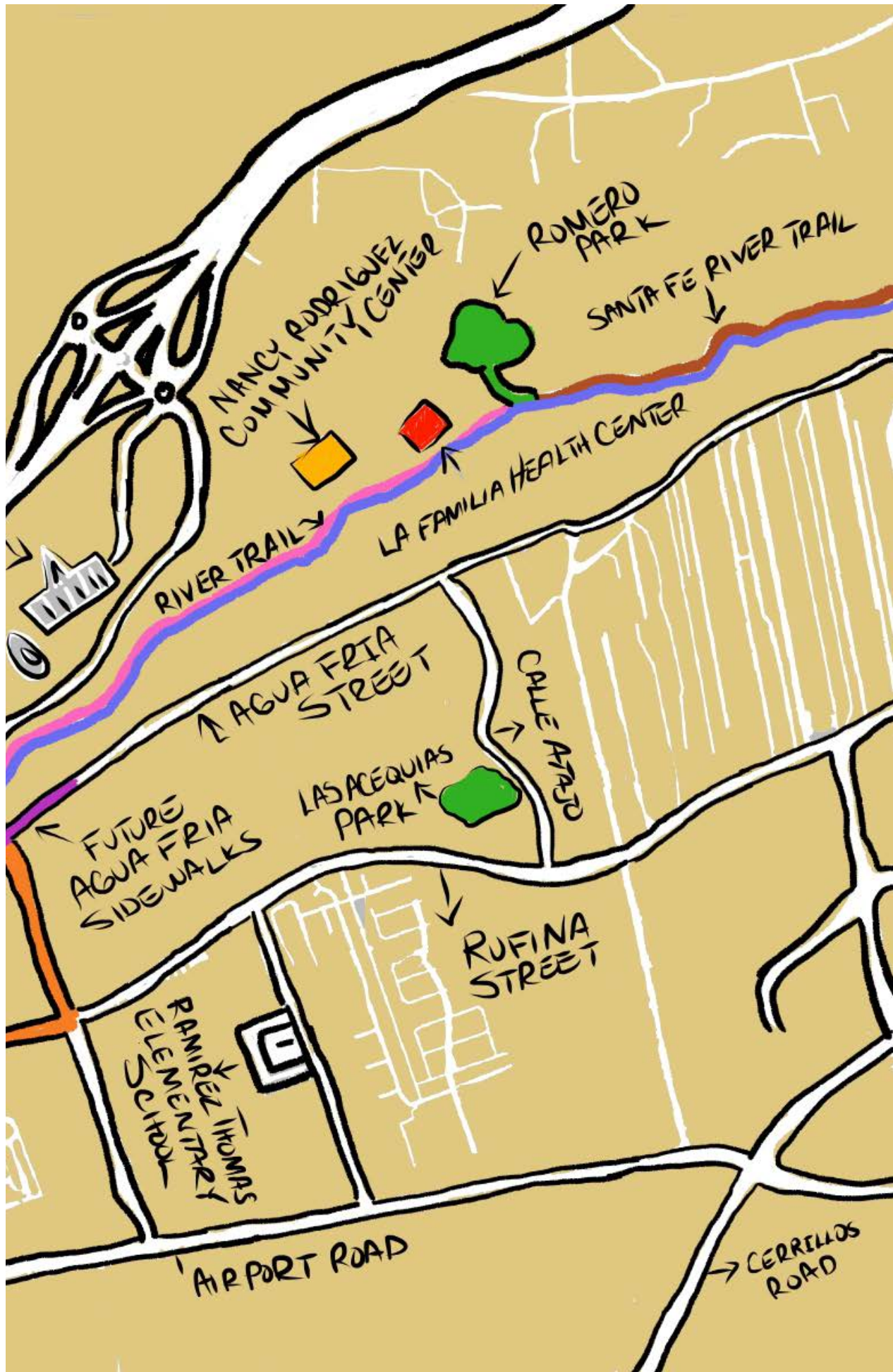
--PANCHITO  
DAD, WHEN WILL THEY MAKE THIS TRAIL?

--DAD  
WELL, I DON'T KNOW SON, BUT THE  
WHOLE WORLD IS MADE FROM THE  
DREAMS OF THE PEOPLE IN IT,  
AND IF YOU CAN DREAM A SPACE,  
WELL THEN WE CAN MAKE IT.









## Citations:

(Scan the QR code below to access the links)

1. El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro National Historic Trail  
<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/travelelcaminoreal/index.htm>
2. Santa Fe Southside Sector Greenway Loop Community Health Profile
3. Cleaner Air and Cost Reduction of Reducing School Bus Routes at Cottonwood Village Mobile Home Park to El Camino Real Academy, Alyce Leck, Director of Transportation, Santa Fe Public Schools, October 2020
4. Scavenger Hunt Results, available at:  
<https://santafemmo.org/resources/santa-fe-corridor-studies/acequia-river-trail-cottonwood-loop/>
5. Santa Fe Multimodal Transition Plan, Appendix A, page 6
6. <https://www.americantrails.org/health-benefits>
7. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/7883301\\_A\\_Cost-Benefit\\_Analysis\\_of\\_Physical\\_Activity\\_Using\\_BikePedestrian\\_Trails](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/7883301_A_Cost-Benefit_Analysis_of_Physical_Activity_Using_BikePedestrian_Trails)
8. [https://www.santafenm.gov/media/files/Sustainable\\_SF\\_Commission/Sustainable%20Santa%20Fe\\_October\\_Printsm.pdf](https://www.santafenm.gov/media/files/Sustainable_SF_Commission/Sustainable%20Santa%20Fe_October_Printsm.pdf)
9. <https://www.railstotrails.org/resource-library/resources/historic-preservation-community-identity/>
10. <https://www.nps.gov/elca/learn/kidsyouth/upload/ELCA-Junior-Ranger-2020-508.pdf>
11. <https://www.historicsantafe.org/agua-fria-village>

## Artist Bio:

Jessica Ortiz is an experienced Contemporary Artist, Muralist, Community Leader & Advocate. Born and raised in Santa Fe, NM. Jessica is driven by the love of her community, she is committed to engaging communities and governments in dialogue about how to create viable solutions for the problems that people of color face. Jessica has always been committed to education, empowerment, and the fostering of a strong network.

As an artist, Jessica uses her art as an extension to activism. She is inspiring others to be thought provoking by seeing outside of conventional thinking. In addition to her artistry, Jessica has been recognized by the City of Santa Fe for her extraordinary commitment to community service.

Jessica's passion for community service can be traced back to working with Alas De Agua Art Collective, Youthworks, and Boys & Girls Club of Generational Empowerment, where she has spent significant time mentoring, teaching art classes, and providing resources & opportunities for adult and youth BIPOC, immigrant, undocumented, LGBTQ artists who have historically and currently been marginalized and not afforded the same resources. Jessica helps support artistic visions and believes diversity is key in creating a loving community.

<https://tainted247.wixsite.com/bittersweet>

*Scan these QR codes for more information and resources!*



Acequia/River Trail  
Cottonwood Loop  
Main Webpage



Community Health Profile



Appendix:  
Inclusive Trail Planning

