

Celebrating the Middle Rio Grande Valley

ATRISCO ACEQUIA MADRE MASTER PLAN

DECEMBER · 2023



PARTNERS



BERNALILLO COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
ADMINISTRATIVE RESOLUTION NO. 2024-5

ADOPT ATRISCO ACEQUIA MADRE MASTER PLAN

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WHEREAS, the Atrisco Acequia Madre project is intended to develop a two-acre outdoor recreation site near Central Avenue and the Rio Grande to celebrate acequia culture, to preserve agricultural traditions, enhance an outdoor recreation site, improve trails to connect to the Rio Grande Bosque State Park, while creating a destination that positively impacts the economic vibrancy of the area.

WHEREAS, the project is a collaboration between the County and the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD), the City of Albuquerque, and the Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority (ABCWUA).

WHEREAS, a master plan was prepared that identifies phasing and initial improvements to the site such as: placemaking and gateway features, landscaping and environmental improvements, access and parking, trail connections, and wayfinding, and acequia and lateral improvements.

WHEREAS, the County is covering the costs of initial site improvements with general funds and state capital outlay grants.

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved by the Board of County Commissioners, the governing body of the County of Bernalillo, Atrisco Acequia Madre Master Plan be adopted this 9th day of January, 2024.

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APPROVED AS TO FORM:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

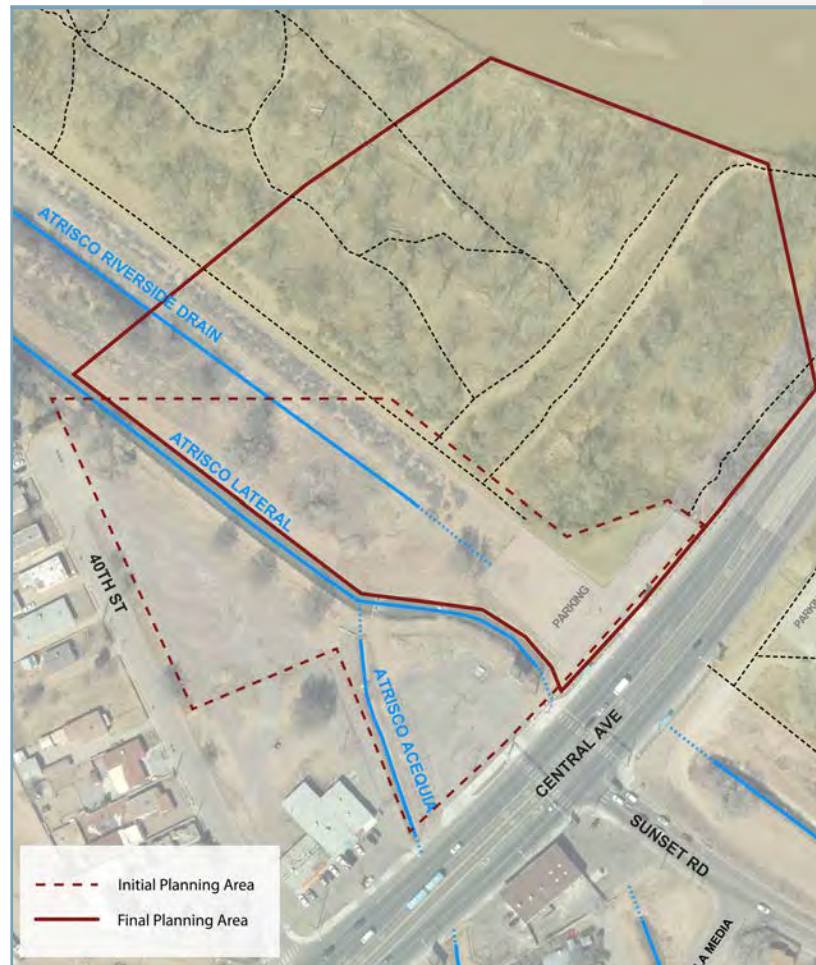
The goal of the Atrisco Acequia Madre project is to develop an outdoor education site near Central Avenue and the Rio Grande to celebrate acequia culture and to protect and preserve the agricultural traditions of the Rio Grande Valley, while creating a destination that grows the economic vibrancy of the Central Avenue corridor. This project is a collaboration between Bernalillo County, the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD), the City of Albuquerque, the Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority (ABCWUA), with guidance and direction from the South Valley Regional Association of Acequias (SVRAA) and the Center for Social Sustainable Systems (CESOSS).

On the west side of the river, across from the Albuquerque BioPark, is the heading of the Atrisco Acequia, originating from one of the oldest irrigation canals in the United States, Acequia Madre de Atrisco. In order to share the history of acequia culture and the role the acequias have played in the valley through the years, these four agencies have formed a partnership to fund a planning effort to document the history of this place, learn about what the community hopes to see here and create a conceptual site plan that captures that vision. This planning effort will provide recommendations and create a conceptual site plan that captures that vision. The plan will include recommendations for educational and recreational uses of the site, improved connections to trails, open space and amenities near the bosque, and interpretive signage which will incorporate a commemorative sign noting the historical and environmental significance of the site. The overall enhancement could serve to link the west of the river to the east and Central Avenue to the South Valley.

Project Location

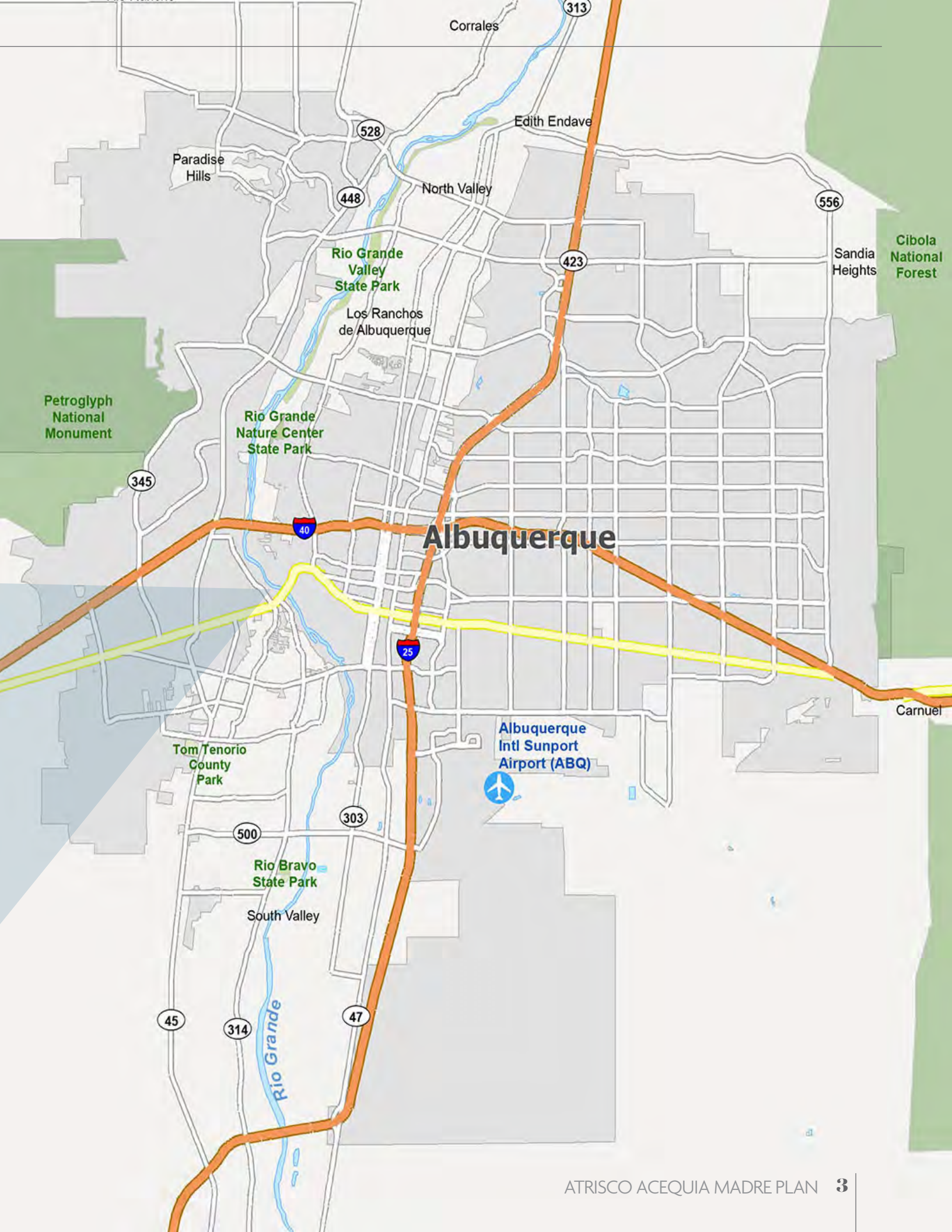
The Atrisco Acequia Madre project site is located on the west side of the Rio Grande. This location is adjacent to the historic Central Avenue, and has direct access to the bosque and Rio Grande. There are several neighborhoods that are close enough to walk to this site, including: Pat Hurley, Atrisco Viejo, Vecinos del Bosque and Huning Castle.

The property that was evaluated for this project shifted during the planning process as more was learned about the site itself and opportunities and constraints here. In the beginning, the focus areas, as shown in the maps, included parcels both on the east and west sides of the Atrisco Lateral. However, potential for near-term improvements proved to be more easily realized when focusing on the land east of the Atrisco Lateral. Consequently, the existing conditions investigation and initial scenario evaluation in this document includes both areas, but the final preferred scenario and implementation focuses on the eastern parcels only. This shift is illustrated in the image below.



General Project Boundaries for the Atrisco Acequia Madre Plan





Project Vision & Goals



Educate & Celebrate Our Acequia

Celebrate and educate the public about acequia history, acequia culture, and irrigated agriculture in the South Valley



Improve Connections

Improve connections to trails, open space, and amenities along the bosque and on both sides of the Rio Grande



Cultivate Stewardship

Cultivate a sense of stewardship for our shared water systems and promote the Acequia governance systems ingrained in Acequia culture, history and laws



Integrate Environmental, Social and Economic Uses

Foster a relationship between culture, open space, and the economic vitality of Central Avenue



Quality of Life Triangle

Source: Bernalillo County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan 2015-2030

The diagram to the left depicts the connections between community health, cultural heritage and economic development in growing the overall quality of life of our community. This is what we envision the Atrisco Acequia Madre project can be in the future: a catalytic site that stewards, preserves and provides access to the nature that sustains us as a people. Improving amenities here will make this a destination for residents and visitors, alike, contributing to the economic and social vibrancy of this connective space between the City and South Valley.

Project Partners

In 2020, Bernalillo County, the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, the City of Albuquerque and the Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority signed an agreement for the “Planning, Study and Design Services for the Atrisco Acequia Project”. Given the multi-jurisdictional nature of the Atrisco Acequia and the lands that surround it, each agency partner was included to ensure that the study and conceptual plan reflected the needs and vision of each of these agencies. Throughout the planning process, this group met regularly to provide invaluable direction and guidance for methods of engagement and concept development.

In addition to these funding partners, the South Valley Association of Acequias and the Center for Social Sustainable Systems were included as community partners with a vested interest in preserving the continued use of and education about the importance of acequias in the South Valley and communities around New Mexico. Alongside the West Central Alliance of Neighborhoods, the South Valley Coalition of Neighborhood Associations, the Atrisco Viejo and Vecinos del Bosque Neighborhood Associations and other community members, these groups supported community outreach efforts and made sure that the interests of those closest to and most affected by the project site would be involved in its visioning.





Presentation at the Kickoff Celebration at the Atrisco Acequia Madre headwaters
Source: Bernalillo County

Community Engagement

Community partnerships are key to understanding what will be successful and make sense at the headwaters site.



Stakeholder Interviews & Community Events

Through the summer and fall of 2021 the team initiated several stakeholder interviews with agency and community leaders, as well as other stakeholders. These initial insights helped inform subsequent engagement activities, provided history for the area and previous planning efforts, and gave a firsthand understanding for maintenance needs of the water facilities on and near the project site.

The South Valley Coalition of Neighborhood Associations, along with the Atrisco Viejo and Vecinos del Bosque Neighborhood Associations also invited the team to present and share the project at regular meetings.

In addition to the stakeholder interviews and community meetings, the team hosted project pop-up tables at different community events, including the South Valley Growers Market, the Rail Yards Market and the Primera Agua Celebration.

Finally, a Kickoff Celebration was held on September 18, 2021 to invite neighbors, community leaders, and project partners to learn about the importance of the project site and share their ideas for its future.

Each of these engagement methods offered a way to solicit feedback from interested community members on what they wanted to see most at the Atrisco Acequia Madre site while accounting for challenges and barriers they currently experience in accessing the site.

Community Design Workshop

On January 26, 2022, neighbors and interested stakeholders were invited to a community design workshop that was held at the South Valley Senior Multipurpose Center. Nearly 20 participants shared their vision for what this project site could be for the community and worked together to provide design direction to achieve that vision.

Key ideas that were shared at this workshop included:

- Develop a community education and site development project that could be conducive to an Acequia Education Office
- The headwaters site should celebrate and further land/water/food sovereignty
- Neighbors want to grow and uplift the agriculture in the South Valley that is still present
- Build connections to land and recreation while enhancing the Route 66 corridor; create a destination for neighbors and visitors
- Need to include a space for people to gather outside
- Include technology in educational/storytelling elements

- Improve bike route connections (east-west and north-south) holistically

Participants were also provided maps of the project site with small paper cutouts of potential site amenities. Using these and additional tools (markers, pens, dots, sticky notes), they were asked to begin placing the amenities that were most important to them and draw connections between these areas within the site and to other destinations within the site vicinity. The image below show some imagined site designs by these groups.

“““

I am very excited about educational materials, as well as improved pedestrian infrastructure that connects the east and west sides of the river.

- Workshop Participant



Participants at the Community Design Workshop
Source: Sites Southwest

Join Us!

ATRISCO ACEQUIA MADRE PLAN

Community Design Workshop
Taller de Diseño Comunitario

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 26
5:00 - 7:00 PM
South Valley Senior Multipurpose
Center
2008 Larrazolo Rd
Albuquerque, NM 87105

Survey & Project Website

A project website, www.acequiamadreplan.org, was created as a space to keep the community informed about updates and progress on the plan elements, and to share opportunities for community members to provide their feedback.

The website included a homepage, a section about the project background and history, a page that is updated with plan documents and maps, as well as a participation page (includes links to and information about upcoming and past meetings, survey link and comments form) and contact page.

The Community Survey launched in the fall of 2021. 44 community members responded to questions related to their knowledge of the history of the area, how they presently use the site and nearby amenities, what they hoped would be included here in the future, and identified barriers to achieving that vision.

The results revealed several important trends and themes including the fact that most respondents (56 percent) said that they would walk or bike to the site if it were to be developed with more public amenities. This may be a correlation with the fact that the majority of respondents identified as being a resident of the South Valley or nearby westside neighborhoods.

Some of the biggest challenges and barriers to using this space were:

- Trail accessibility -surface, connection, wayfinding
- Vehicle vandalism
- Personal safety
- Traffic safety
- Trash, dumping
- More/better parking
- Concerns about encampments

Key amenities that people wanted to see included: better bike/pedestrian infrastructure, educational/interpretive signage and seating with shade.





EXISTING CONDITIONS

The term acequia, derives from the arabic term as-saqiya, meaning “that which gives water”.

The Atrisco Acequia Madre site is located in a historically and presently significant part of Albuquerque. As such, there are several opportunities to build on this rich history with plans for its future. There are also notable constraints on the site that provide guidelines for the planning team, as well.

This section of the plan explores these conditions, along with their assets and challenges. First, a brief history of the place is provided, followed by an inventory of the many plans initiated by the City, County, community and regional planning groups that provide guidance on potential future land use and visioning for this area, recommended connections and multi-modal transportation opportunities and economic redevelopment opportunities.

Finally, this section provides a summary of findings for opportunities, constraints, and recommendations for preliminary design concepts and future development. These will be explored more in the Preferred Scenario chapter.

Cultural and Historic Context

History of South Valley Acequias

Acequias are the age-old, hand dug, gravity-fed irrigation ditches in northern New Mexico that make possible the cultivation of locally grown food. But, they represent much more than that. As a social system implanted into the hydrological cycle for community subsistence, acequias constitute a place-based knowledge of watersheds, intertwined with food traditions, community, and culture. They are an instructive example of democratic self-governance, stewardship and sharing of resources. They are also the defining structure of their ecosystem. The unlined ditches allow water to seep into and recharge local aquifers, providing a rich riparian zone for wildlife, shade trees, and native plants.

Source: Jorge Garcia, "The Genesis of Acequias in Atrisco", Green Fire Times, 2015



The Atrisco Acequia is one of the oldest surviving man-made features in the community. Pueblo peoples of Tiwa descent inhabited the area from the 12th century to the mid-16th century and most likely created an irrigation system in the area. Records indicate that in the late 17th century, Spanish colonists were the originators of the Atrisco Acequia and other area acequias that were

used to irrigate their fields. After assuming operations and maintenance of the acequias in the 1930s, the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD) began a number of infrastructure projects throughout the valley to reduce the threat of flooding and high water tables. Over the next several decades, this led to a transition from primarily agricultural land to residential development in the community.

Today, the Atrisco Acequia continues to be used by a number of local growers and irrigators. Moreover, community members utilize the land adjacent to these waterways as informal paths through the community. The water from the ditches support a habitat with a variety of flora and fauna and creates a quiet environment for recreation and retreat.

One of the primary goals of the Atrisco Acequia Madre Plan is to center the unique history



Historic New Mexico Acequia Madre
Source: New Mexico History Museum

of this acequia, as part of the Atrisco Land Grant founded in 1692, and to recognize the many ways that it supports the semi-rural foundation of life in the South Valley and Albuquerque, as a whole.

Our community would not exist without this life sustaining water. Moreover, the cultural practices surrounding these acequias have shaped cooperative social systems and decision-making/governing models that were not just important to the community historically, but offer lessons that we can carry into the future of how we can organize ourselves to support the preservation and stewardship of land and water in the Middle Rio Grande Valley. The continued presence and use of area acequias maintain the cultural landscape and provide a unique sense of place.



Historic view of the Rio Grande near the headwaters of the Atrisco Acequia (1930)
Source: Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District

History of the Atrisco Acequia Madre

The site of the headwaters of the Atrisco Acequia bridges the transition between the city of Albuquerque and the unincorporated South Valley. The original headwaters was located about a mile north of where the acequia is diverted today. It was moved and consolidated three acequia headings into the present day Atrisco heading as part of the MRGCD's work to mitigate high water tables and provide more efficient water delivery.

The origins of the Atrisco Acequia date back to the late 17th century. The acequia has been managed and maintained by inhabitants of the original Atrisco Land Grant for hundreds of years, cultivating

a local food system that enabled the community and culture to grow around it. In the 1930s an agreement was created which entrusted the MRGCD with operations and maintenance of the Atrisco Acequia which continues to the present day.

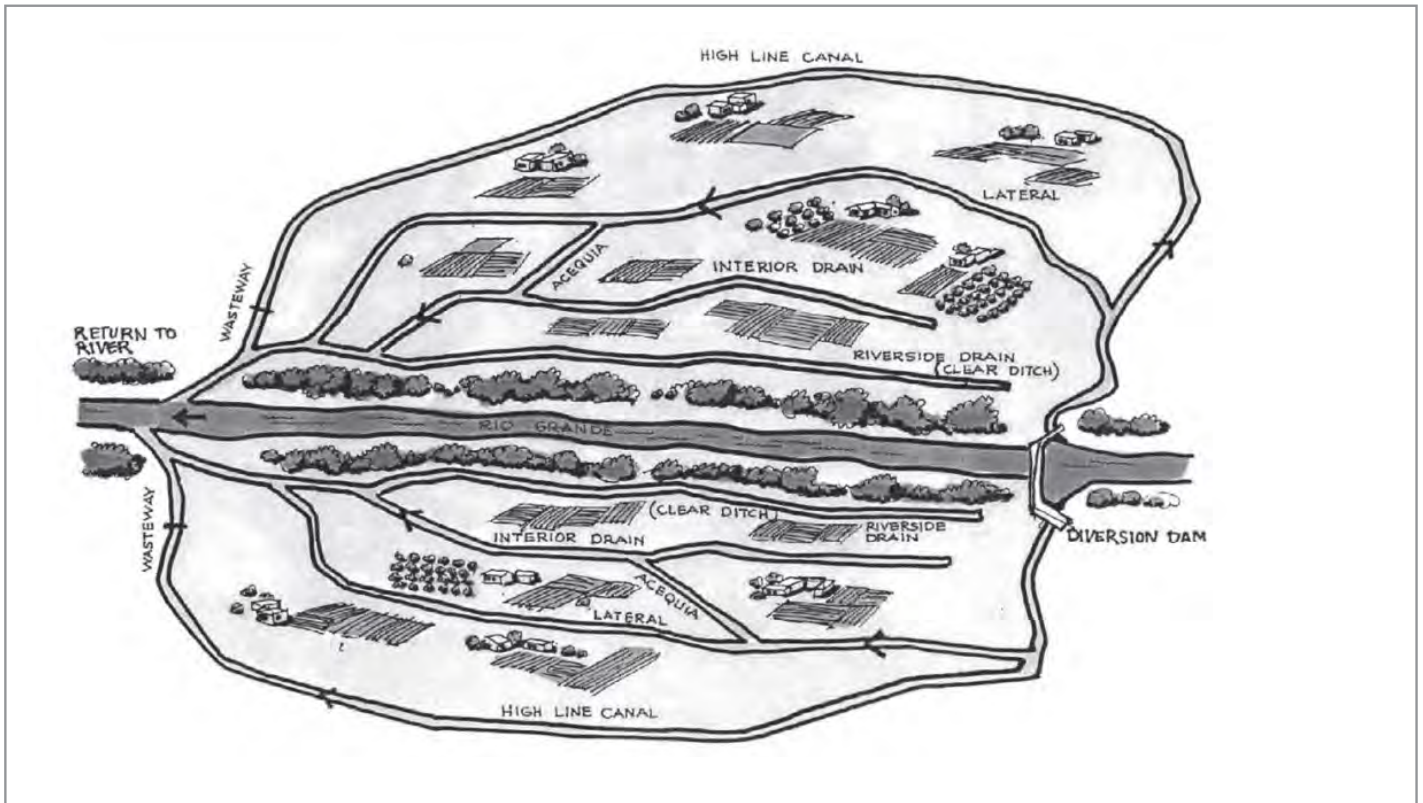
Today, the MRGCD continues to provide maintenance to flood control, drainage, and irrigation facilities. In the mid-2000s, the South Valley acequia associations, including the Atrisco Community Acequia Association, began to reorganize to assert the original connection between inhabitants and their right to the water and to participate in decisions related to water infrastructure.

The Board of Directors of the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District adopted a resolution in December of 2019 to create a cooperative planning initiative for the Acequia Madre de Atrisco partnership to include the MRGCD, Bernalillo County, City of Albuquerque and the ABCWUA to develop a community education and site development project. (Resolution M-12-09-19-163)

The importance of this multiagency partnership and cooperative community planning rests on the fact that the acequias connect our communities across jurisdictional boundaries and run through a wide variety of neighborhoods, including urban

EXISTING CONDITIONS

and rural properties, working farms and developed communities. The Acequia Madre de Atrisco and surrounding public properties are envisioned to be used as a demonstration project to celebrate the Middle Rio Grande Valley and the unique cultural landscape of the acequia system and to provide educational opportunities to the community, particularly our youth, about the importance of responsible water management and the many benefits of acequias. There is a need to protect not only the conveyance of water for irrigation, but the ecology, history, culture and natural beauty of our valley and our acequias.



Schematic of MRGCD Water Network

Source: Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District

Acequia Culture Past and Present

Acequias have helped to shape religious, cultural and political practices among those who understand how foundational these facilities are to community life. San Ysidro and Santa Maria de la Cabeza, understood in the Catholic religion as patron saints of farmers, are celebrated with a blessing day that traditionally occurs each spring to bless the water, which supports food production in the community.

The acequias also represent a unique type of democracy, as the caretaking and stewardship of these water systems requires coordination of all the farmers who benefit from water provided by the acequias. Historically in the Middle Rio Grande, these decisions about acequias were made by a group of elected Comisionados, led by the elected Mayordomo, on behalf of parciantes (irrigators with water rights). These elected bodies made decisions about seasonal release and distribution of water and also coordinated spring acequia maintenance, also known as La Limpia.



San Ysidro Day

Acequia associations in the North and South Valleys have revived some of these traditions, including making decisions about recommended water transfers, in cooperation with the MRGCD.

““

Acequia culture includes intangible aspects, such as the knowledge that is passed down concerning skills such as how you move water through the field once it arrives on your land, and how to efficiently and collectively clean the acequia ditches of accumulated debris each spring

Source: Jose Rivera, “Acequia Culture”, Southwest Water: An Artistic Approach to Preserving Water Quality and Quantity in the American Southwest



La Limpia, 1984

Environmental Context

The site of the Atrisco Acequia Madre exists within the larger environment of the Rio Grande Valley. The riparian land encompassing the Rio Grande is critical to supporting life in the arid landscape of the Southwest. These river valley lands are one of the original places of settlement in the region. Though our human patterns of development have shifted over the centuries, the river and its surroundings remain critical features that provide life-sustaining water and irrigation, as well as an environment for recreation and respite in the middle of a relatively urban landscape today.

The Rio Grande bosque, along with the water corridors of the South Valley, support a unique habitat for local flora as well as native fauna and migratory species.

As noted by South Valley Association of Acequias Commissioner Sanchez, “[Acequias] are the defining structure of their ecosystem. The unlined ditches allow water to seep into and recharge local aquifers. This provides a rich riparian zone for wildlife, shade trees and native plants. The acequias are like arteries to mother nature, they sustain life. When I walk my dog down the ditch, I see lots of wildlife. I sometimes witness coyotes, raccoons, skunks, ground squirrels and

lots of different birds. We even have egrets, robins, crows, ducks, geese, hummingbirds and doves.”

Within the bosque, large stands of native plants such as cottonwood and willow are common, along with wetlands of sedges and rushes that provide shelter for vegetation and wildlife. Native currents, wolfberries, mulberries, as well as Yerba Mansa, are also found and gathered by community members here. This area also hosts habitat that is vitally important for the endangered silvery minnow. Unfortunately, the bosque also has many non-native and invasive species.

The City Open Space Division has done a lot of restoration work in this area over the years including pole plantings, habitat improvements, planned wildfire mitigation and forest health initiatives. They have also led volunteer cleanups and stewardship efforts. The City’s Department of Municipal Development manages the stormwater outfall just north of Central Avenue. This area is also a part of the Route 66 restoration project, completed in 2010, which was a partnership between the Army Corps of Engineers and the MRGCD. This included ecosystem restoration and recreation amenity improvements north and south of Central Avenue in the project area.



The Atrisco Lateral (left) and partners during a site visit entering the bosque (right)

Source: Sites Southwest



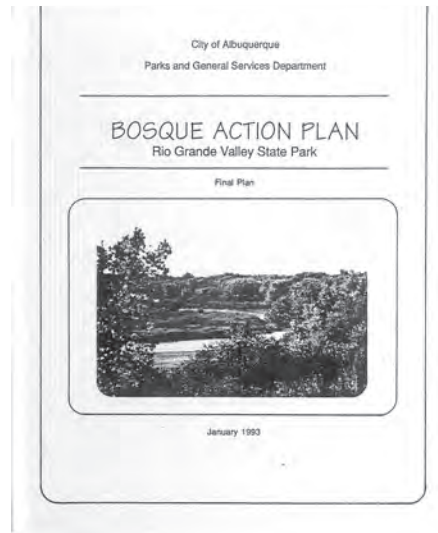
Plans and Regulations



SOUTHWEST AREA PLAN, 1988

This plan provides a framework for growth and development in the southwest quadrant of Bernalillo County. It covers 115 square miles, 15.5 of which are within Albuquerque municipal limits. This plan notes key themes and priorities for the community, which include preservation of the rural character of the South Valley. It also highlights constraints to development, notably, erodible soils on the mesa slopes and concerns about water contamination.

The plan, in alignment with the 1975 Comprehensive Plan, recommends that “right-of-way along arroyos, canals, drains, ditches and portions thereof needed as part of the trail network proposed in the Southwest Area Plan”. This includes the creation of a north-south trail network along the Atrisco Riverside Canal which extends to the Atrisco Acequia Madre Plan area.



RIO GRANDE VALLEY STATE PARK & BOSQUE ACTION PLAN, 1993

While state legislation and a joint powers agreement with the MRGCD gives management oversight to the City Open Space Division, the Bosque Action Plan (BAP) clarified agency roles. MRGCD would conduct and monitor operations in areas of flood control, irrigation and drainage in the Rio Grande Valley State Park. The City of Albuquerque agreed to submit any new plans or policies for the area to MRGCD for review and approval. A goal of this is to ensure that recreational opportunities are maintained to the greatest extent possible, so long as they do not interfere with MRGCD duties. The purpose of the Bosque Action Plan was to identify specific environmental and recreational improvements for RGVSP, creating policies that are designed to “minimize impacts on the bosque environment and ensure the continued survival of the plants and animals of the bosque habitat.” (BAP)

This document set an early vision for multi-agency cooperation in the valuable lands around the bosque and water networks that surround it. The Division recently developed a Bosque Update Assessment and Prioritization based on the Bosque Action Plan that recognizes the study area as a priority over the next five years.



**WEST CENTRAL
METROPOLITAN
REDEVELOPMENT AREA
PLAN, 2004**

The West Central Metropolitan Redevelopment Area (MRA) was established in May 2001 by the Albuquerque City Council. The Plan was subsequently adopted in 2004. This designation and plan provide the City with a number of tools for implementing project and contributing to area redevelopment.

The plan envisions this area - focused on Central Avenue from the Rio Grande to Unser Boulevard - drawing on the history of the Atrisco Land Grant and its proximity to the Rio Grande, as a destination for a mix of commercial, entertainment and recreational opportunities.

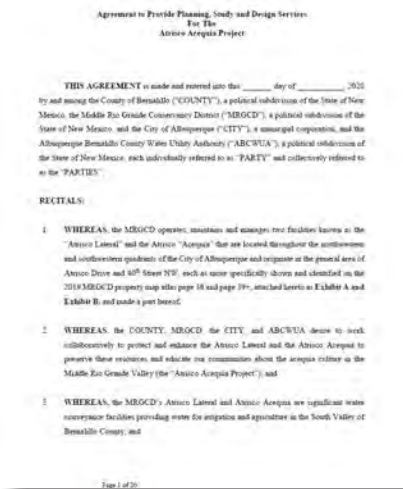
This first phase will create the distinctive sense of place, interpretation of local history and culture, recreational opportunities, and ties to the river envisioned in the West Central Metropolitan Redevelopment Plan.



**DITCHES WITH TRAILS
REPORT, 2008
NOT ADOPTED**

This report, though never adopted by MRGCD, was created by the Ditches with Trail Steering Committee with the purpose of presenting possibilities to enhance the MRGCD-managed ditch network in Bernalillo County as a “continuously and interconnected system of waterways and trails”.

Again, though this plan was ultimately not adopted, it offers important insights into a community vision for enhancing and celebrating the waterways that make the middle Rio Grande valley special. It uplifts the intrinsic value of these spaces near the water and the benefits they offer: recreation and exercise, enjoyment of wildlife and nature, a sense of place, and cultural heritage activities. The Atrisco Acequia Madre site is one such place that could provide amenities that further allow community members to access these benefits.



MRGCD RESOLUTION M-12-09-29-163, 2019

This Resolution authorized the cooperative planning initiative for the Atrisco Acequia Madre project between the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, Bernalillo County, City of Albuquerque, Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority. It outlines the importance of the acequias in the South Valley and the history and culture they've created. The Resolution calls upon the partners to use this project as an opportunity to celebrate this shared history at the site of the Atrisco Acequia headwaters.

This Resolution is the guiding document for the Atrisco Acequia Madre Plan. It outlines what is to be included in the following pages and sets the bar for what the team aspires to do through this work.



CONNECTIONS 2040 MTP MPO LONG RANGE BIKEWAY SYSTEM, 2020

This long range plan, created by the Mid-Region Metropolitan Planning Organization, aims to provide a guide for a multimodal transportation network that provides optimized mobility, economic linkages, active transportation and environmental resiliency, all goals that are aligned with goals of the Atrisco Acequia Madre plan.

This plan identifies multi-modal routes connecting to the Atrisco Acequia Madre site along Central Avenue, Sunset Road and Atrisco Road. Creating a destination at this site would fulfill several Connections 2040 goals, including promotion of transit-oriented development, improving the health and safety of the public, and encouraging low-impact and sustainable development in natural or culturally sensitive areas.

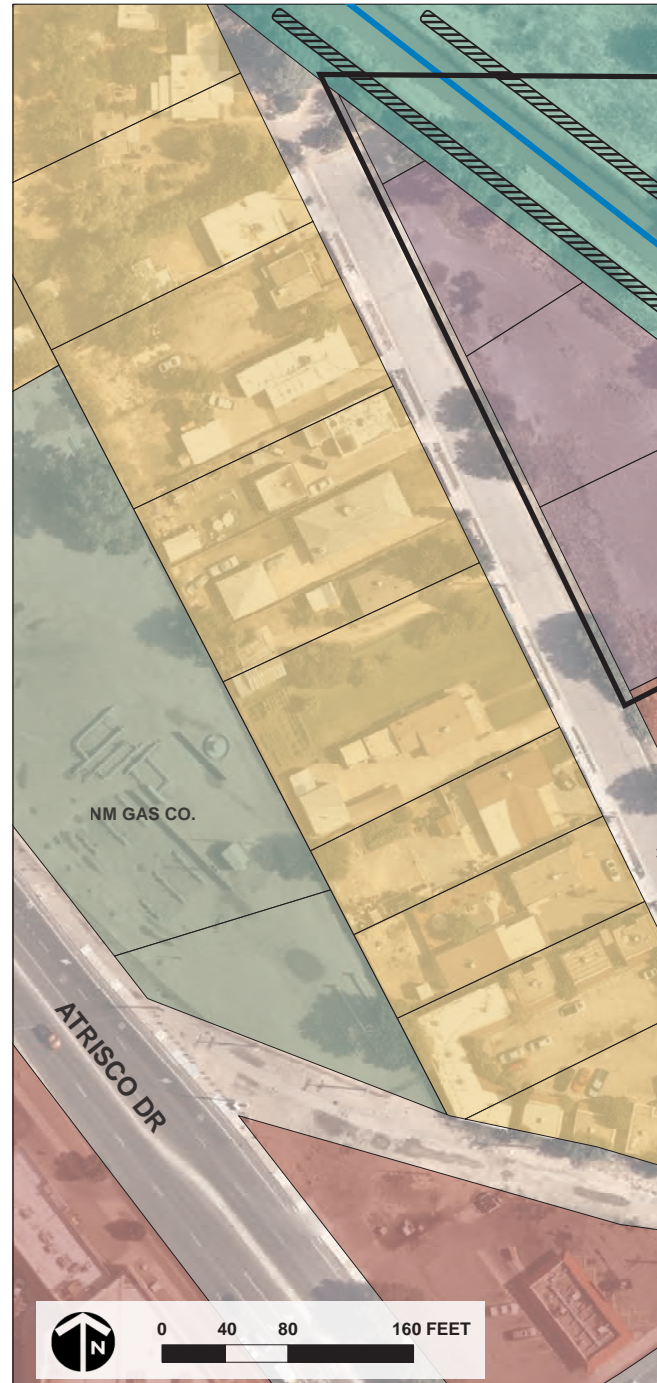
Physical Opportunities and Constraints

Property Ownership & Maintenance

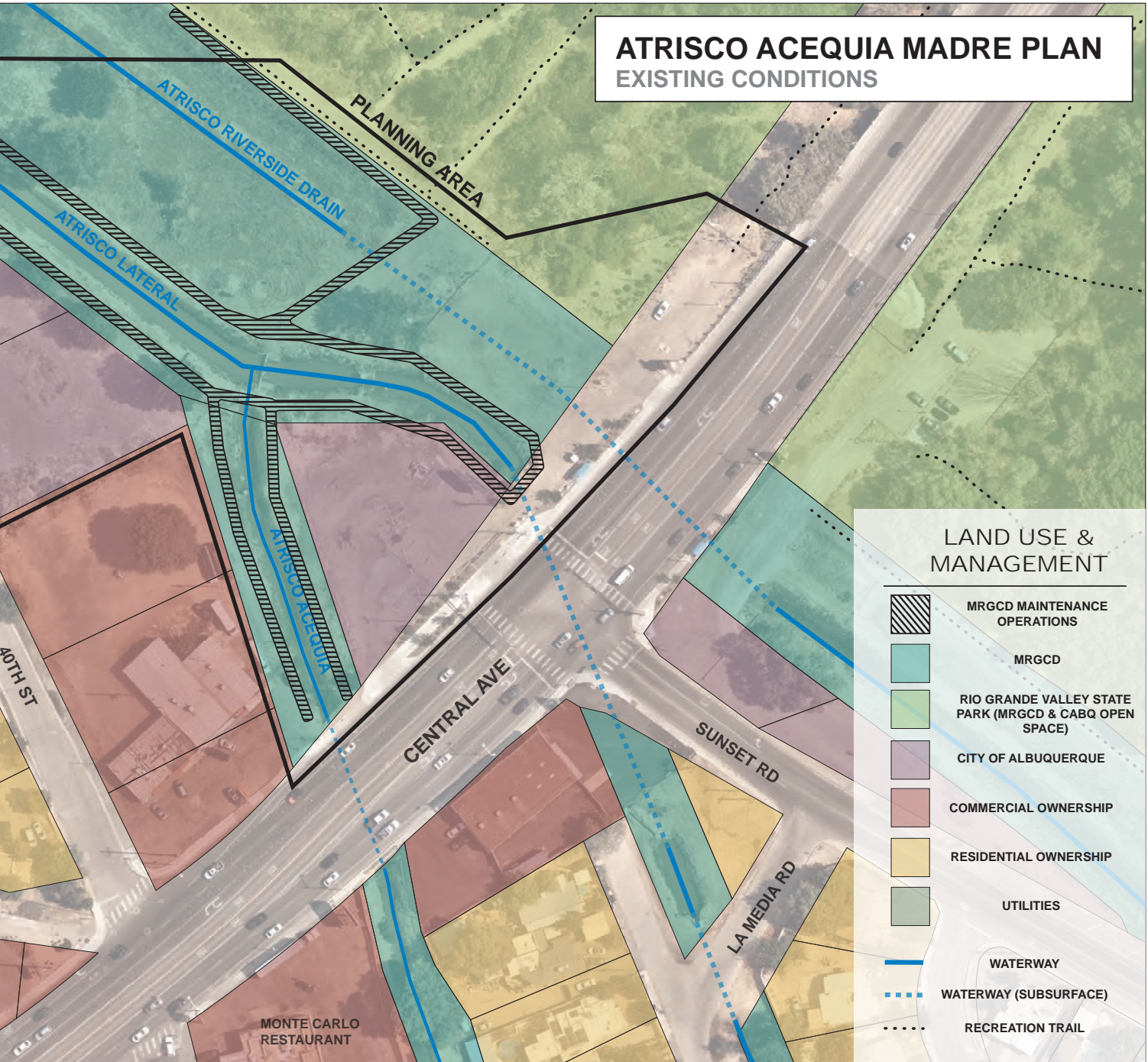
The land that is being considered for the Atrisco Acequia Madre Plan, in addition to the land that is adjacent to this property, is under the jurisdiction of several public agencies. The lots shown in purple to the right are owned by the City of Albuquerque Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency and are a part of the West Central Metropolitan Redevelopment Area. The MRGCD owns and manages the land shown in blue. While the land adjacent to the river is Rio Grande Valley State Park land, it is owned by the MRGCD and managed and maintained by the City of Albuquerque Parks, Recreation and Open Space. The City Department of Municipal Development manages a stormwater outfall in this area just north of Central Avenue that extends from the levee to the Rio Grande.

The hatched areas show the approximate right-of-way (approximately 40 feet wide) required by the MRGCD for maintenance purposes and for operation of the irrigation system that feeds the entire South Valley west of the river. The lateral and acequia undergo regular dredging and the removal of debris to ensure proper functioning. This occurs generally between November and early March each year when water is not present. Given these requirements, the team should not consider any trails, seating or other amenities within this right-of-way.

There is a water check where the Atrisco Acequia heading is diverted from the lateral and continues to the southwest, while the lateral flows to the southeast.



ATRISCO ACEQUIA MADRE PLAN EXISTING CONDITIONS

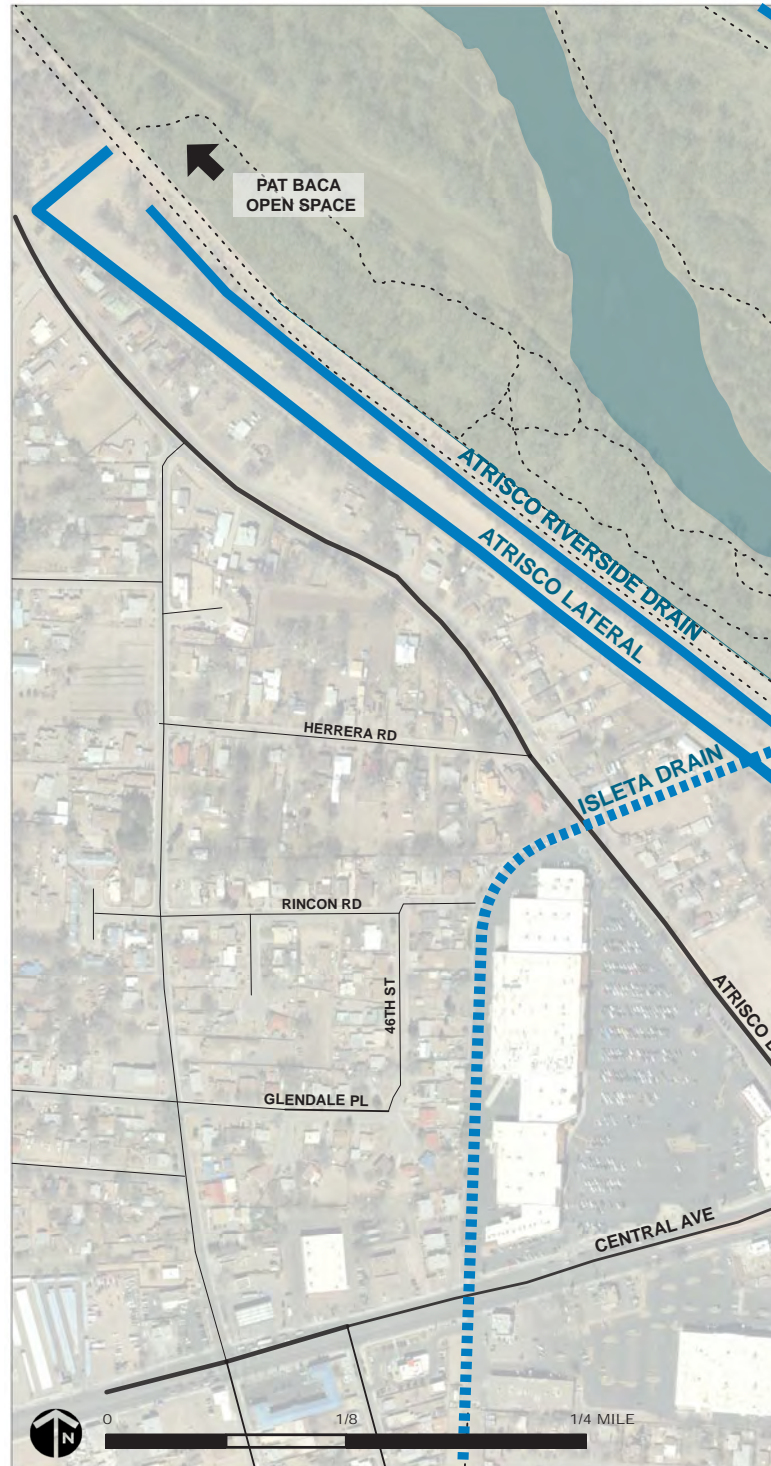


Water Network

The Atrisco Acequia Madre is part of a much larger and interconnected water network formed around the Rio Grande. The Atrisco Acequia once drew directly from the Rio Grande, but was rerouted and consolidated with two other acequia headings and now diverts water from the Atrisco Lateral. This lateral originates northwest of the project site near the intersection of Atrisco Drive and 49th Street. The Atrisco Riverside Drain also daylights on the north side of the project site, going underground for the crossing of Central Avenue and re-emerging on the southside of the road.

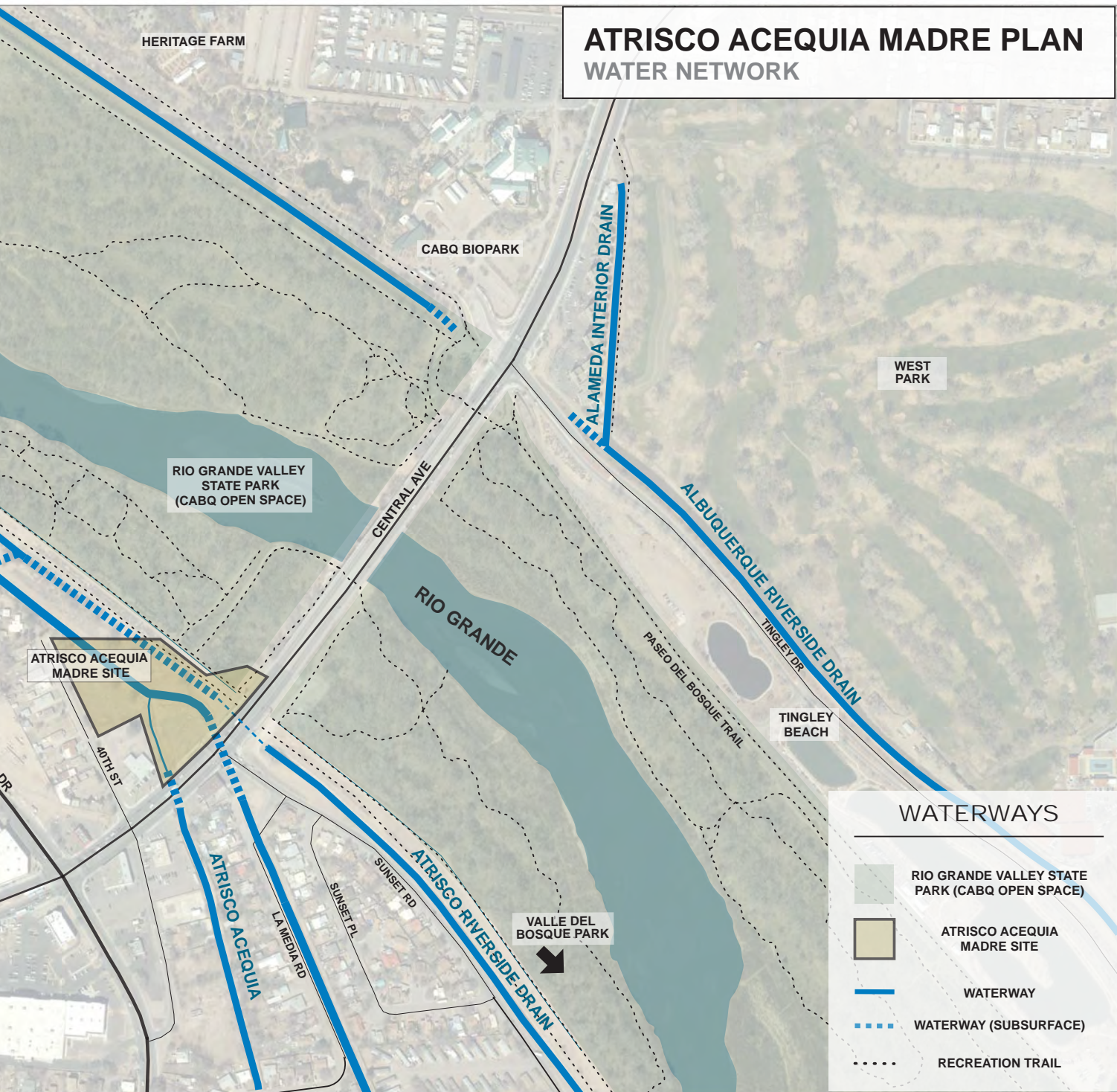
The Isleta Drain also originates just north of the project area; however, it is piped underground as it moves south, daylighting south of the Atrisco Park and Little League near Cypress Drive.

Each of these water facilities offer a rich set of natural corridors with the potential to connect users to other nearby community destinations.



ATRISCO ACEQUIA MADRE PLAN

WATER NETWORK



WATERWAYS

- RIO GRANDE VALLEY STATE PARK (CABQ OPEN SPACE)
- ATRISCO ACEQUIA MADRE SITE
- WATERWAY
- WATERWAY (SUBSURFACE)
- RECREATION TRAIL

Access and Connectivity

The location of the Atrisco Acequia headwaters is an ideal site within the City of Albuquerque. Located directly on Central Avenue, historic Route 66, this location has high visibility for residents and visitors alike. There are three vehicular access points to the site from Central Avenue: one at the intersection of Sunset Road, a second just east of this entrance on the MRGCD’s levee maintenance access, and a third just west of the intersection near the Atrisco Acequia. There is a secondary vehicular access point on 40th Street to the northwest side of the site.

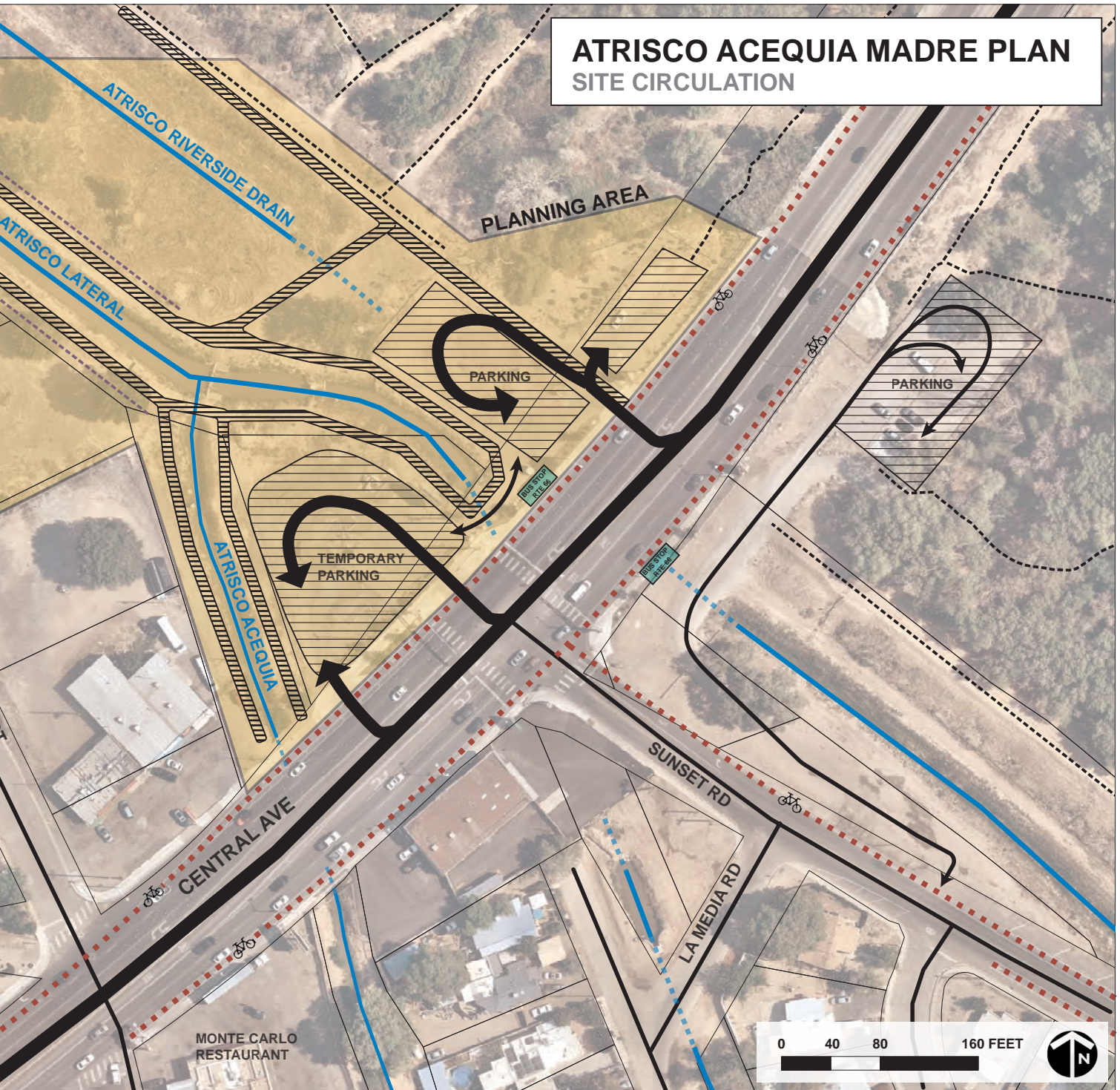
There is a bus stop on both sides of Central Avenue, east of the Sunset Road intersection. Additionally, there are designated bike lanes along both Central Avenue and Sunset Road; however, throughout the planning process, community members expressed feeling unsafe biking along Central Avenue due to the narrowness of these bike lanes and the relatively high speed of traffic crossing the bridge.

There is an extensive network of formal and social trails (natural surface) that weave throughout the bosque adjacent to the project site. These trails offer connections by foot for miles along the Rio Grande. Notably, the Pat Baca Open Space lies about 1 mile north of the site via bosque trails and the Valle del Bosque Park is about 1 mile to the south. One of the goals for this plan is to better establish formal trails, creating better access to nearby destinations. Additionally, while there are ADA accessible trails within the bosque, there is no ADA trail connecting the parking areas to these trails.

Finally, the Central Avenue bridge over the Rio Grande offers a valuable connection to the many destinations and public amenities on the east side of the Rio Grande, including Tingley Beach and the Albuquerque BioPark, which includes the Zoo, Aquarium, and Botanic Garden.



ATRISCO ACEQUIA MADRE PLAN SITE CIRCULATION



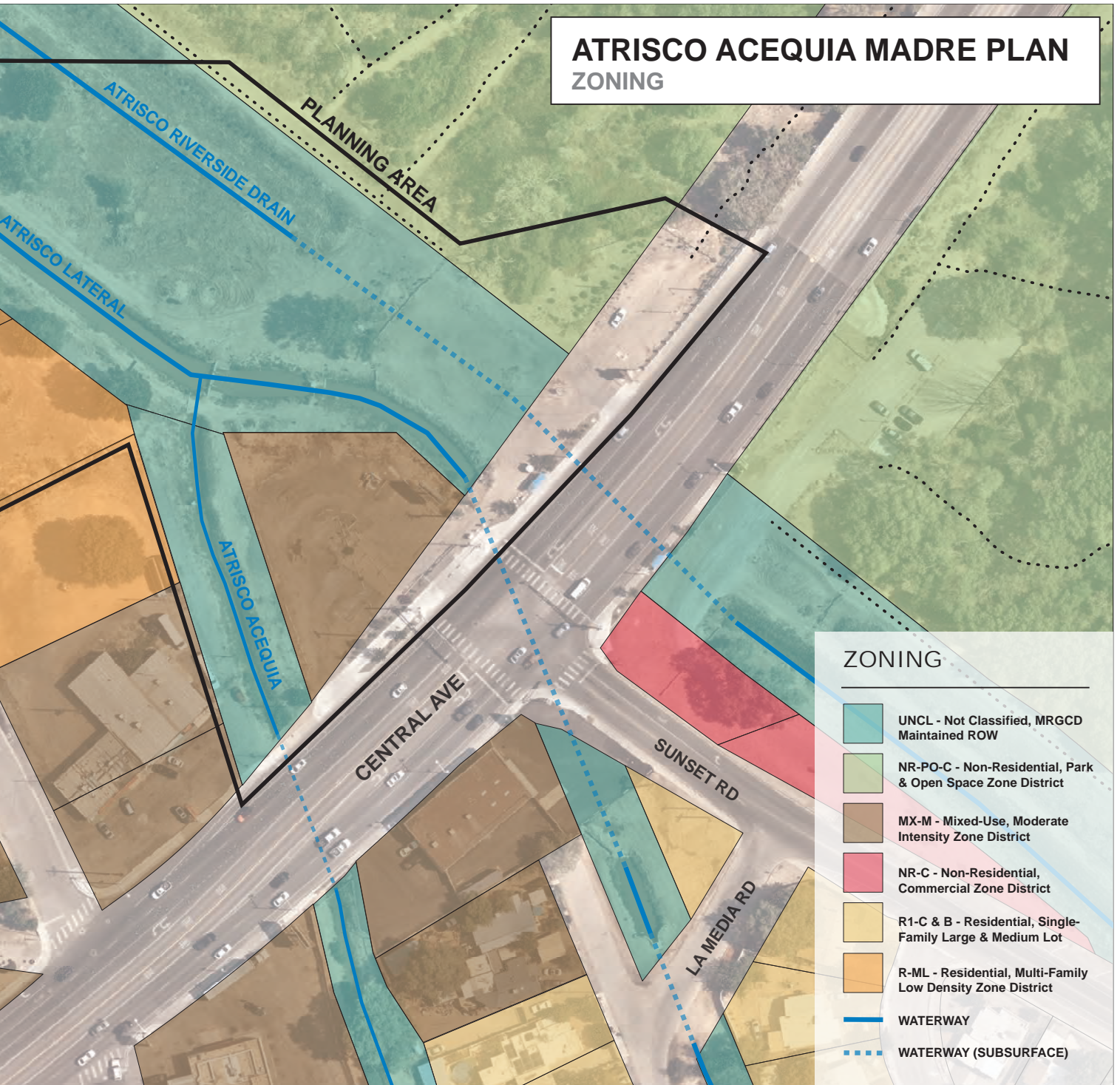
Zoning

The project includes several different zoning types. The area shown in green is classified as Non-Residential, Park and Open Space and primarily encompasses the land that is Rio Grande Valley State Park. Adjacent to this land is the blue area encompassing the Atrisco Riverside Drain, the Atrisco Lateral and the Atrisco Acequia. This is Not Classified as it is MRGCD maintained right-of-way.

Moving away from the river to the west, there is a section of the property that abuts Central Avenue that is zoned Mixed-Use, Moderate Intensity Zone District (shown in brown). Finally, the area shown in orange is classified as Residential, Multi-Family Low Density. This zoning is indicative of a transitional zone moving away from the primarily commercial corridor and into a more residential area.



ATRISCO ACEQUIA MADRE PLAN ZONING



Utilities & Existing Elements

There are a few existing utility elements and other features of note around the project site. There are several regularly spaced street lights along Central Avenue. There are above ground power lines that also extend mainly along Central Avenue with poles placed close to the sidewalk. There are clustered utility boxes on the site, as well: one near the sidewalk on the east side of the intersection with Sunset Road and another located further into the interior of the site, near the easternmost vehicular access approach.

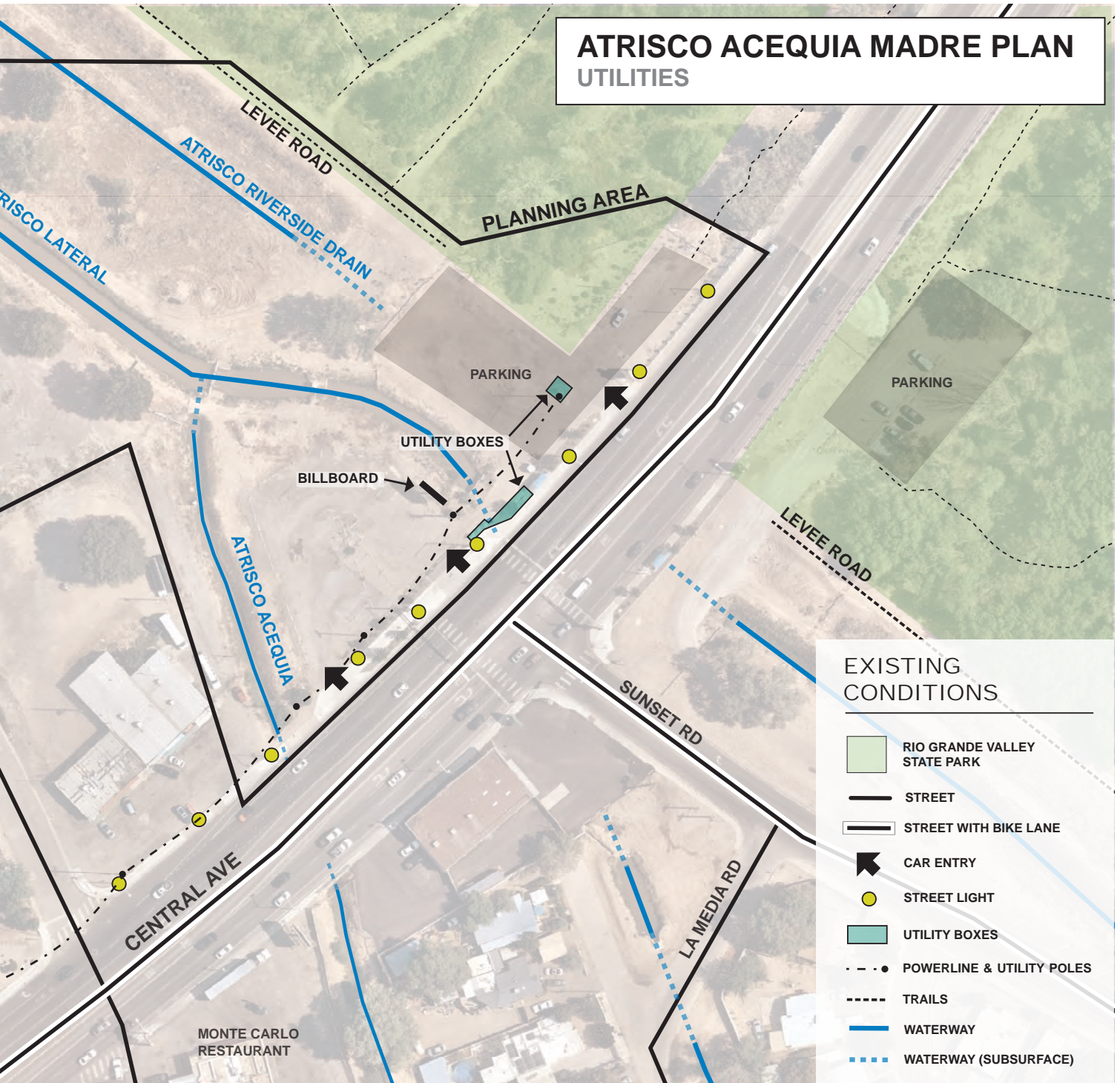
Lastly, there is a billboard currently on the west side of the Atrisco Lateral about 30 feet from the sidewalk.

PHASE 1 ENVIRONMENTAL SITE ASSESSMENT

The parcel with the address 3901 Central Avenue (bound by the Atrisco Lateral and Acequia) once had a gas station on site. Consequently, an environmental site assessment was initiated in 2003 by the property owner of adjacent sites 3911, 3913 and 3915 Central Avenue. This assessment indicated that though 3901 Central Avenue once had a registered underground storage tank (USG) site, no tanks are currently present and there were no indications of groundwater contamination on the subject property.



ATRISCO ACEQUIA MADRE PLAN UTILITIES



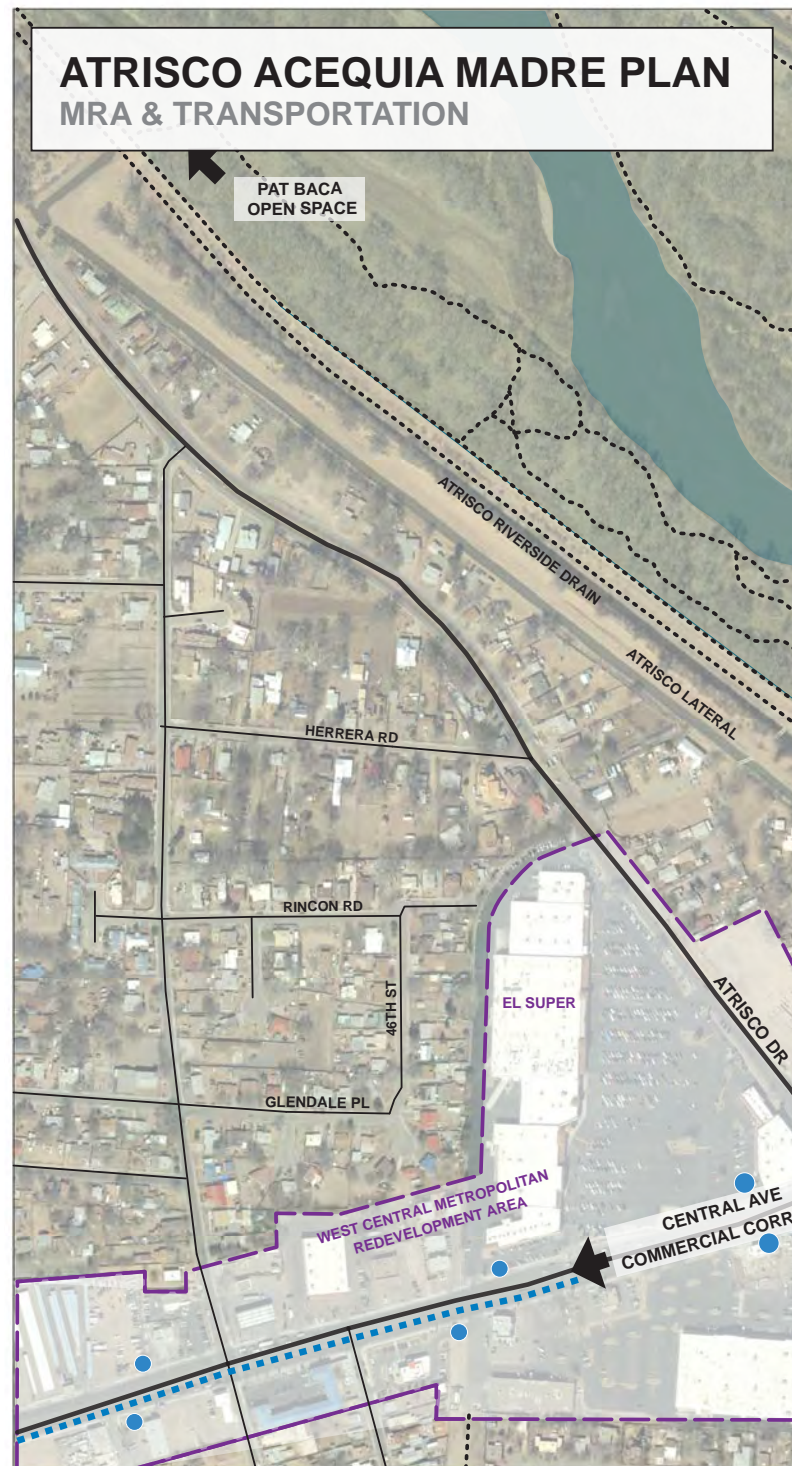
Economic & Transportation Connections

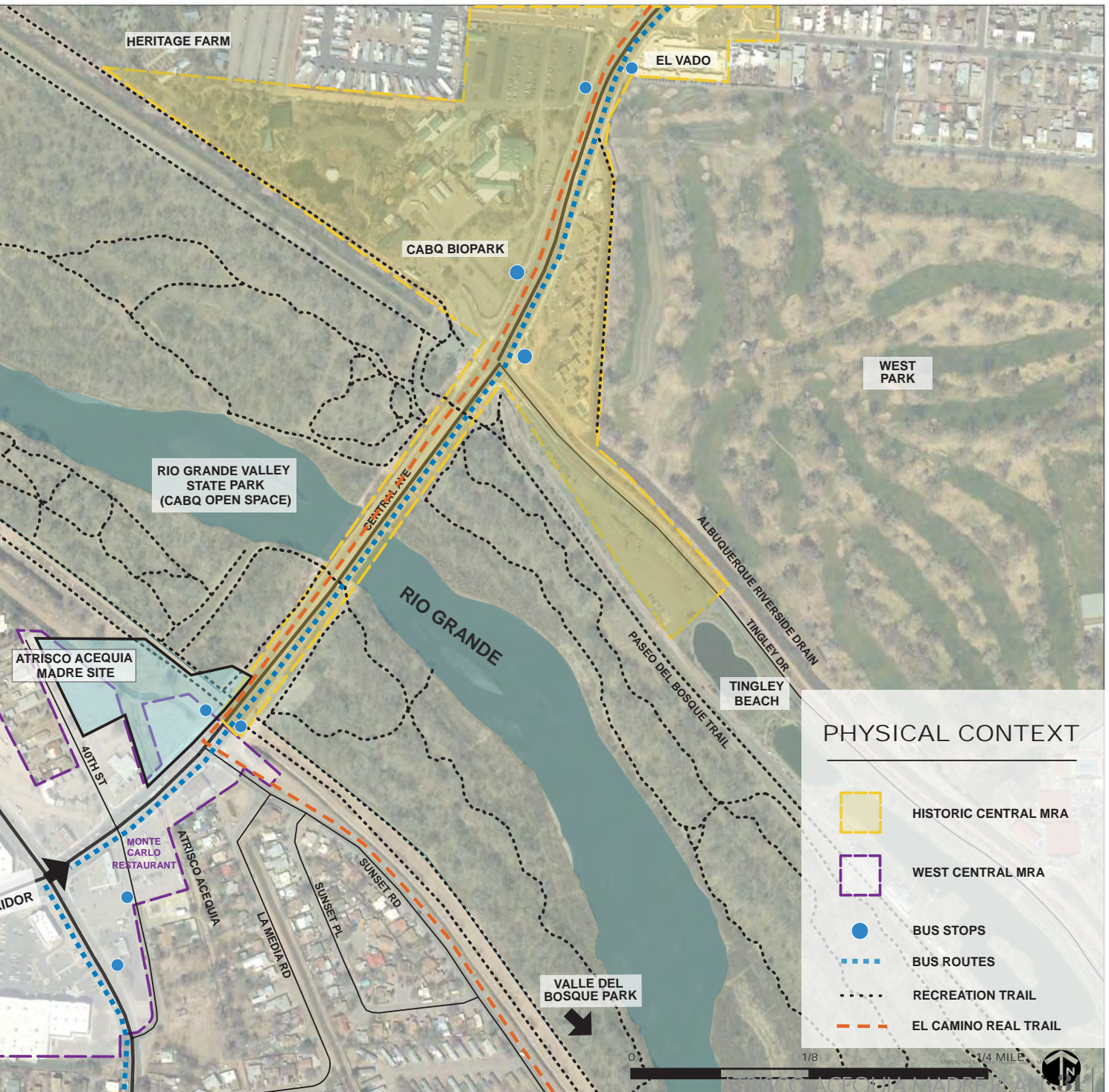
The project site is located adjacent to the West Central Metropolitan Redevelopment Area. As mentioned previously, the Central Avenue corridor is home to businesses and commercial districts that front the thoroughfare, with residential areas behind. The El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro National Historic Trail also runs adjacent to the project site, following Central Avenue and Sunset Road. The site is also within a Main Street Corridor as designated by the ABC (Albuquerque and Bernalillo County's) Comprehensive Plan. The Plan defines a "Main Street Corridor" as follows:

"Main Streets are intended to be lively, highly walkable streets lined with local-serving businesses, modeled after the American tradition of Main Street as a place for living, working, and shopping."







There are several bus routes that navigate Central Avenue and Atrisco Drive. The Albuquerque Rapid Transit (ART) line has a stop just west of the project site near the intersection of Atrisco Drive and Central Avenue. There are also several local bus routes that frequent these corridors, including 92, 94, 66, and 51. Finally, there are bike lanes on both Central Avenue and Sunset Road, offering an additional mode of transportation for visitors. The ABC Comprehensive Plan also designates this area on Central Avenue as both a Premium Transit Corridor and a Major Transit Corridor. These overlays provide further direction for future development and design, envisioning these areas as planned for mixed-use and transit-oriented development within walking distance to transit stations.

The Atrisco Acequia Madre site offers an opportunity to create a destination here, honoring and enhancing the natural amenities, while creating a bridge to future potential mixed-use space and/or a community facility.





PHYSICAL CONTEXT

-  HISTORIC CENTRAL MRA
-  WEST CENTRAL MRA
-  BUS STOPS
-  BUS ROUTES
-  RECREATION TRAIL
-  EL CAMINO REAL TRAIL





CONCEPTUAL SCENARIO DESIGN

Using community feedback and direction from partners, the team developed three conceptual design scenarios that incorporated the shared goals and vision. Common themes for this vision included space for recreation, a celebration of shared history and community, space for cultivation and sharing of practices, and stewardship of the land and habitat. Each of the scenarios illustrated these ideas along a spectrum of possible development, but all incorporated the most desired amenities and programmatic elements. Another way to think about the scenarios is as possible phases of design in the future, progressively adding to the site as resources become available. Below is a brief description of the three scenarios with illustrative drawings on the following pages.

Scenario 1: Enhanced Open Space | This concept offers the least amount of physical development, focusing instead on formalizing trails and supporting pockets of areas to rest and enjoying the solitude of the natural areas or gather with family, friends or neighbors. This concept also features a potential demonstration garden that could be tied to historic and present cultivation of land in the South Valley, as well as offerings at the Heritage Farm.

Scenario 2: Outdoor Plaza | The Outdoor Plaza features a primary focus on the land near the headwaters of the Atrisco Acequia, enhancing this space with a plaza that could be used for community events, outdoor markets and the like. This space would orient visitors to the divergence of the headwaters with educational signage and public art.

Scenario 3: Mixed-Use Facility | This scenario provides the most developed concept, with a mixed-use commercial and community facility on-site that would serve both educational and economic development purposes. This facility would be placed proximate to Central Avenue and provide framed views into the bosque to the northeast for the enjoyment of visitors. The educational component of this facility will focus on supporting water rights owners with information and education.

Visioning & Programming

Recreation



History



Economic Development



Beginning with the Community Design Workshop and continuing through the spring and summer of 2022, the design team worked to illustrate design scenarios based on the vision and ideas of the partners and community. While these scenarios have evolved since 2022, their programming ideas, connections and articulation of vision remain relevant to the planning process and the story of how the team arrived at a preferred conceptual plan. The images below illustrate these core concepts and vision that would guide future programming and amenity decisions.

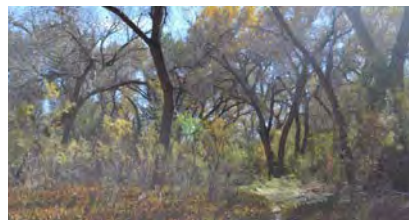
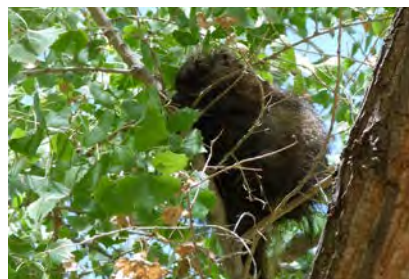
Cultivation



Community



Habitat



Design Scenarios

Scenario 1 | Enhanced Open Space



- ① Potential Community Garden/Edible Landscape
- ② Nature Play Area
- ③ Fishing Pier
- ④ Shade Structures
- ⑤ Educational Panels & Framing of Acequias
- ⑥ Parking
- ⑦ Seating/Gathering Area with Views of Bosque
- ⑧ Wayfinding & Signage Improved Boat Access
- ⑨ Outdoor Plaza/Market/Educational Space

Scenario 2 | Outdoor Plaza



Scenario 3 | Mixed-Use Facility



- ① Potential Community Garden/Edible Landscape
- ② Nature Play Area
- ③ Fishing Pier
- ④ Shade Structures
- ⑤ Educational Panels & Framing of Acequias
- ⑥ Parking & Bike Stations
- ⑦ Flexible, Mixed-use Facility
- ⑧ Wayfinding & Signage
- ⑨ Community Facility

Following the development of the three scenarios, the agency partners agreed to proceed with design of the first phase of development. The first phase of development will be on the land managed by the MRGCD and the City of Albuquerque Open Space Division. The concept for Phase 1 is shown on the following pages.

Future phases may occur on adjacent properties owned by the City of Albuquerque Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency (MRA). The mission of the MRA is to make Albuquerque economically competitive through the redevelopment of the Central Avenue corridor. New development and redevelopment is accomplished through public private partnerships and investments in sustainable infrastructure. Catalytic sites like this one are intended to attract economic investment and create opportunities for local residents and businesses to thrive.

The vision of the Atrisco Acequia Madre Master Plan for this site is development that makes the most of its location through orientation to the open space, maintaining views and direct pedestrian connections.



“The Block” rendering for Rio Rancho; this is an example potential development that could be appropriate next to an enhanced open space and recreation amenity near the Atrisco Acequia Madre site. This would need to be scaled and programmed, as appropriate for this location.

Preferred Conceptual Design

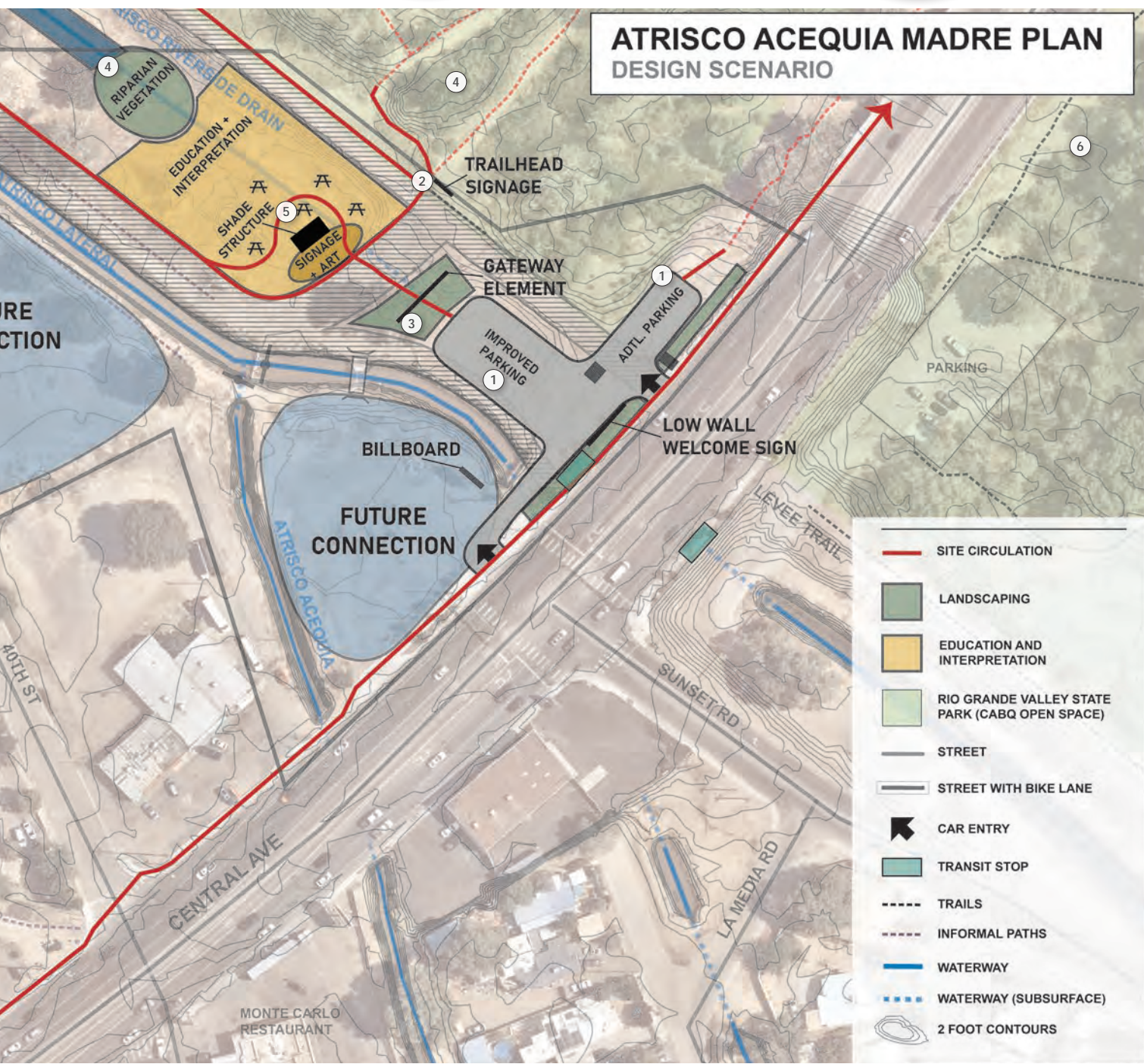


Ultimately, it was decided that the project would combine elements of the three scenarios when approaching development and creation of amenities at the project site. The initial work will create the distinctive sense of place, interpretation of local history and culture, recreational opportunities, and ties to the river envisioned in the West Central Metropolitan Redevelopment Plan. It will focus on providing recreational and educational amenities on the public lands, which are a combination of the MRGCD owned and maintained properties and Rio Grande Valley State Park - managed by City Open Space Division. Decisions about amenities and improvements will be overseen by City of Albuquerque Open Space Division and coordinated with the City of Albuquerque Department of Municipal Development when concerning the stormdrain outfall.

Amenities and programmatic elements include:

- Improved parking facilities
- Clear wayfinding and trail signage, showing connections to the bosque trails and amenities across the river
- Educational signage and public art that begins to tell the story of this place, the importance of the acequias and the deep connections that people have to the land and water
- Connections (pedestrian and vehicular) to existing trails as well as future phases of development (future study needed to determine placement and access)
- Improved and accessible connection to the bosque trails from parking area
- Habitat restoration and use of green stormwater infrastructure elements where appropriate; connect to wildlife viewing opportunities
- Improvements to the boat launch south of the Central Avenue bridge in coordination with City of Albuquerque Parks, Recreation and Open Space.







SOUTH VALLEY
HIDDEN GEMS
W/ ESTIMOTEK 360°

50



IMPLEMENTATION

The collaborative momentum for the Atrisco Acequia Madre Plan should be propelled by a set of realistic actions that the partners and community members who support this project can take to begin to realize their collective vision. This section of the plan begins to outline those first steps, along with resources that might enable their implementation. Critically, some funding has already been allocated to begin design and implementation of Phase One following the completion of the planning process.

These steps and guiding documents should be reviewed regularly, as capacity and time may change the circumstances for these actions. Contributing partners should continue to meet to review and guide progress to-date and make decisions for future elements of the project.

Initial Improvements

The following four categories for initial improvements should help guide decisions and priorities about which amenities to design and construct first. These have been selected because they focus on access, connection and overall improvement of the quality of recreational space near the Atrisco Acequia Madre site. Additionally, they draw attention to the importance of this space and begin to tell the story of this community by including educational and interpretive signage as well as public art.



Educational signage example
Source: EDX Seattle

Placemaking and Gateway Features

- Gateway signage from Central Avenue
- Culturally-relevant public art that celebrates the history of this place
- Small gathering plaza with seating and shade



Petroglyph Estates Park
Source: New Mexico ASLA

Landscaping and Environmental Improvements

- Environmentally sensitive landscaping
- Riparian restoration and implementation for green stormwater infrastructure along drainage outfall



Bridge near the Paseo del Bosque Trail, Albuquerque
Source: Dekker Perich Sabatini



Hahn Arroyo improvements and artwork
Source: AMAFCA

Access, Connections and Wayfinding

- Improved trailhead parking
- ADA trail extension from bosque to parking
- Interpretive signage around the headwaters and other locations demonstrating educational benefit
- Wayfinding signage showing connections to nearby trails and open space including the Bio Park, Pat Baca Open Space, Valle del Bosque Park and future Isleta Drain Trail and El Camino Real Trail

Acequia and Lateral Improvements

- Acequia and lateral stabilization and replacement of culvert at Central Avenue
- Replacement of gate
- Pedestrian bridge connecting across the Atrisco Lateral

Project Phasing

The team proposes dividing the initial work into three phases: Phase 1-A, 1-B and 1-C This will allow the work to be tackled in implementable pieces as funding is available. What follows is an approximation of the work flow, timeline and associated costs.

Some of the amenities and tasks are noted in multiple phases, due to the fact that these will be installed in different areas of the project site.

Phase 1-A

Phase 1-A encompasses the following items and tasks:

- Engineering and Design
- Mobilization, Testing and Permitting
- Construction Staking and Surveying
- Clear and Grub, Tree and Debris Removal
- Subgrade Preparation
- Compacted Base Course in Parking Areas
- Updated Wayfinding Signage
- Interpretive Signage
- One Shade Structure

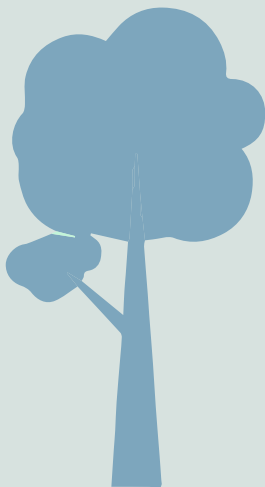


Winter 2023 – Winter 2024

Phase 1-B

Phase 1-B encompasses the following items and tasks:

- Any Additional Mobilization that is needed
- Clear and Grub, Tree and Debris Removal
- Subgrade Preparation
- Finishing Parking Lot Surfacing
- Trail Surfacing
- Railings, Gates, Access Control, as needed
- Water Harvesting Features
- Landscape Plantings
- Landscape Irrigation
- Native Seeding
- Additional Signage
- Site Furnishings
- Lighting

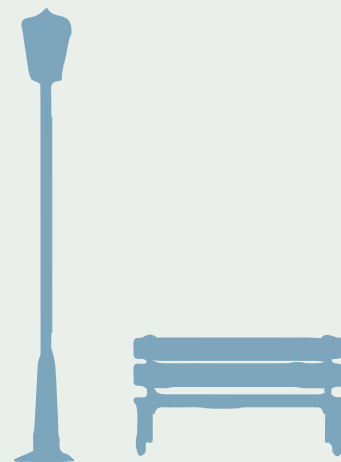


Spring 2021 – Spring 2025

Phase 1-C

Phase 1-C encompasses the following items and tasks:

- Clear and Grub, Tree and Debris Removal
- Subgrade Preparation
- Water Harvesting Features
- Landscape Plantings
- Landscape Irrigation
- Native Seeding
- Additional Signage
- Gateway Entry Feature/Public Art
- Second Shade Structure
- Site Furnishings
- Lighting
- Pedestrian Bridge



Summer 2025 – Summer 2026

Cost Estimates

ITEM DESCRIPTION	UNIT	QTY	UNIT COST	TOTAL
Phase 1 Engineering & Design	EA	3	\$30,000.00	\$90,000.00
Mobilization, Permitting, Testing, Misc. Costs	LS	3	\$20,000.00	\$60,000.00
Construction Staking and Surveying	LS	3	\$7,500.00	\$22,500.00
Traffic Control/Barricading	LS	3	\$2,000.00	\$6,000.00
Clear & Grub, Tree and Debris Removal	AC	1.5	\$10,000.00	\$15,000.00
Subgrade Preparation	SY	4,800	\$7.50	\$36,000.00
Compacted Base Course, 4" Depth, CIP	SY	2,400	\$10.00	\$24,000.00
Parking Lot Surfacing - Asphalt	SY	2,400	\$25.00	\$60,000.00
Trail Surfacing - Crusher Fines	SY	800	\$12.00	\$9,600.00
Railings, Gates, Access Control	LF	500	\$150.00	\$75,000.00
Bank Stabilization along the Lateral (by MRGCD)	SF		\$50.00	\$0.00
Bioswales, Water Harvesting Features (modified planting media, cobble, etc.)	SF	800	\$75.00	\$60,000.00
Landscape Plantings	SF	1000	\$10.00	\$10,000.00
Landscape Irrigation	AL-LOW	1	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00
Native Seeding, Class C	AC	0.6	\$10,000.00	\$6,000.00
Wayfinding Signage (Design and Fabrication)	LS	3	\$3,000.00	\$9,000.00
Interpretive Signage (Design and Fabrication)	EA	4	\$7,000.00	\$28,000.00
Gateway Entry Feature/Artwork	EA	1	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00
Shade Structure	EA	3	\$15,000.00	\$45,000.00
Site Furnishings	AL-LOW	1	\$21,000.00	\$21,000.00
Lighting	AL-LOW	1	\$30,000.00	\$30,000.00
Pedestrian Bridge	EA	1	\$80,000.00	\$80,000.00
			Subtotal	\$787,100.00
			NMGRT	\$60,016.38
			10% Contingency	\$78,710.00
			Phase 1 - TOTAL	\$925,826.38

Phase 1-A		Phase 1-B		Phase 1-C	
QTY	SUBTOTAL	QTY	SUBTOTAL	QTY	SUBTOTAL
1.00	\$90,000.00				
2.00	\$40,000.00	1.00	\$20,000.00		
1.00	\$7,500.00	1.00	\$7,500.00	1.00	\$7,500.00
1.00	\$2,000.00	1.00	\$2,000.00	1.00	\$2,000.00
0.50	\$5,000.00	0.50	\$5,000.00	0.50	\$5,000.00
2400.00	\$18,000.00	1400.00	\$10,500.00	1000.00	\$7,500.00
2400.00	\$24,000.00				
		2400.00	\$60,000.00		
		800.00	\$9,600.00		
		500.00	\$75,000.00		
			\$0.00		
		400.00	\$30,000.00	400.00	\$30,000.00
		500.00	\$5,000.00	500.00	\$5,000.00
		0.50	\$25,000.00	0.50	\$25,000.00
		0.20	\$2,000.00	0.40	\$4,000.00
1.00	\$3,000.00	1.00	\$3,000.00	1.00	\$3,000.00
4.00	\$28,000.00				
	\$0.00		\$0.00	1.00	\$50,000.00
1.00	\$15,000.00		\$0.00	2.00	\$30,000.00
		0.33	\$7,000.00	0.67	\$14,000.00
		0.50	\$15,000.00	0.50	\$15,000.00
				1.00	\$80,000.00
	\$232,500.00		\$276,600.00		\$278,070.00
	\$17,728.13		\$21,090.75		\$21,202.84
	\$23,250.00		\$27,660.00		\$27,807.00
Phase 1-A Subtotal	\$273,478.13	Phase 1-B Subtotal	\$325,350.75	Phase 1-C Subtotal	\$327,009.84

Partner Roles & Responsibilities

Each of the partners who has supported this project so far will continue to play an important role in its realization. They share a desire to work together to collaboratively protect and enhance the water facilities at the Atrisco Acequia Project site and to preserve these resources to educate the community about acequia culture in the Middle Rio Grande Valley. Ultimately, in addition to providing direct public benefit through improved amenities, this project should provide the opportunity to grow economic development along Central Avenue by creating a destination that celebrates the unique nature of this place.

City of Albuquerque Open Space Division

City Open Space Division will continue to manage and maintain the land encompassed by Phase 1 of the project area in conjunction with the MRGCD. As such, they are the entity who will likely lead future design, construction and implementation of plan elements and amenities in Phase 1.

Events and special use of the area should be coordinated with City Open Space Division.

Bernalillo County Open Space

County Open Space is an important coordinating partner for future planning and educational programming at the Atrisco Acequia Madre site. County Open Space will continue to advise, direct, review and approve future design and construction planning efforts for site.

City of Albuquerque Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency

As the landowner of the redevelopment sites adjacent to public open space, the MRA will be a key partner in the design of open space amenities. The MRA will work with the partners to determine connections between the sites, including pedestrian and vehicular access. As the lead redevelopment agency, the MRA will work with the partners to solicit investment that benefits from and provides benefit to the adjacent open space.

Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District

The MRGCD operates, maintains and manages both the Atrisco Lateral, the Atrisco Acequia and the Atrisco Riverside Drain that run through the project site. The MRGCD will remain a key partner in determining design and placement of future plan amenities so that they enhance the site while allowing for the districts core mission and associated activities. These include operations and maintenance of key facilities, as well as the protection of the environment, wildlife, and endangered species in the bosque in conjunction with the City Open Space Division.

Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority

The ABCWUA is an important partner for informing the development of educational materials for the Atrisco Acequia Madre site. They have the opportunity to build on their collection of water resources educational materials with new amenities at the Atrisco Acequia Madre site, creating a space for teachers, students and the community at-large to learn more about water stewardship, conservation and our bosque ecosystem.

City of Albuquerque BioPark

The BioPark, as a neighbor destination on the east side of the Rio Grande, will continue to provide input on plans for future design and specific elements that would complement current offerings for community members and visitors at the BioPark.

The BioPark will also provide direction specifically for educational and interpretive signage at the Atrisco Acequia Madre site to maintain consistency in design and overall aesthetic, drawing ties and enhancing the relationship between these two destinations.

Center for Social Sustainable Systems & The South Valley Regional Association of Acequias

The Center for Social Sustainable Systems, along with the South Valley Regional Association of Acequias, are integral to future storytelling components that are desired at the Atrisco Acequia Madre site. These educational and interpretive signs, as well as public art, should begin to inform visitors about both the history and present importance of the acequias in our community.

Both organizations also utilize this space for celebrations and community events. They should work with managing agencies (the MRGCD and City Open Space Division) to coordinate special use days and events.

Resources

Capital Outlay

Capital outlay funds are used to plan, build, improve, or equip physical property that will be used by the public. In NM, state capital outlay is authorized by the Legislature and generally is nonrecurring—one-time money. These funds could be used as a match requirement for federal grants.

Land and Water Conservation Funds (ORLP)

This grant is for projects that will provide outdoor recreation opportunities to the public through the acquisition of lands and waters for parks and other outdoor recreation areas, as well as through the development of new, or the renovation of existing, outdoor recreation facilities. There are two grant opportunities offered: LWCF funds are available every two years with grant application usually open through the summer. The Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP) Program has funding available that is targeted toward urban communities (population greater than 30,000) and populations who have historically been excluded from the benefits of parks and outdoor recreation spaces.

Trails Plus (Outdoor Recreation Division)

The Outdoor Recreation Trails Plus (formerly known as the Special Projects and Infrastructure Fund) is a grant program that supports projects enhancing community outdoor recreation opportunities. This grant funds shovel-ready projects that directly provide access to parks, rivers, trails, outdoor recreation opportunities, and wildlife viewing opportunities.

NMDOT Active Transportation Programs

There are several programs administered through the State Department of Transportation that focus on funding for trail and alternative transportation projects. These include the Recreational Trails Program, the Transportation Alternatives Program, the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program and Safe Routes to School Program. Each of these provide a range of possible project funding that could be used for planning, project design, engineering, construction and implementation of trails and related amenities.

Local Economic Development Act (LEDA)

LEDA allows public support of qualified economic development projects for existing expanding companies as well as for newly recruited ones to foster, promote, and enhance local economic development efforts while continuing to protect against the unauthorized use of public money and other public resources. LEDA can be used to reimburse eligible expenses for hard assets. The City also can act as the fiscal agent for State funds contributed to a qualified project.

Metropolitan Redevelopment Tax Abatement (RTA)

The Metropolitan Redevelopment Tax Abatement Program provides a 7-year abatement of property taxes on projects in MRAs. The applicant continues to pay taxes on the original taxable property value during this time period; at year 7, the property is reassessed and the applicant will begin paying taxes on the full taxable value. RTA projects must meet criteria to help meet the City's goals for quality design, sustainability, economic development and/or housing.

Impact Fee Waivers

These can apply to any project in a MRA. The City will waive parks, streets, open space, trails, police, fire and drainage impact fees. This does not apply to water and sewer impact fees.

Atrisco Acequia Madre Plan
December 2023