



# Tularosa, New Mexico

*2017 Tulie Trails Assessment*



# Acknowledgments

The agencies and coalitions listed below collaborated to organize the focusing assessment site visit to Tularosa on May 23, 2017. We would like to thank all the Tulie Trails members who participated and provided their valuable input into the process of assessing access and enhancement to places to be physically active in Tularosa.

This report was compiled by Julia Meredith Hess, Jeff DeBellis, Ashley Cummings, and Sally Davis of the University of New Mexico Prevention Research Center (PRC) in consultation with members of Tulie Trails, including Maureen Schmittle, (and others). It is designed as a dynamic document and the process is expected to be iterative.

## VIVA Connects

[viva-connects.org](http://viva-connects.org)

VIVA Connects fosters collaboration for spreading relevant, useful, evidence-based prevention strategies to rural communities throughout New Mexico. Its website contains relevant and useful information on community programs, current evidence-based recommendations for such programs, user-tested prevention strategies, best practices and lessons learned, “ask the expert” facilitation, and training modules and webinars. VIVA Connects developed a mobile app for iOS users that features walking paths and hiking trails for four of its communities: Raton, Cuba, Grant County and Otero County. The app contains information on parking, directions to the trailhead, trail distance, and other great features to encourage residents and travelers of all walking abilities to enjoy the wonderful New Mexican landscape.

## The University of New Mexico Prevention Research Center

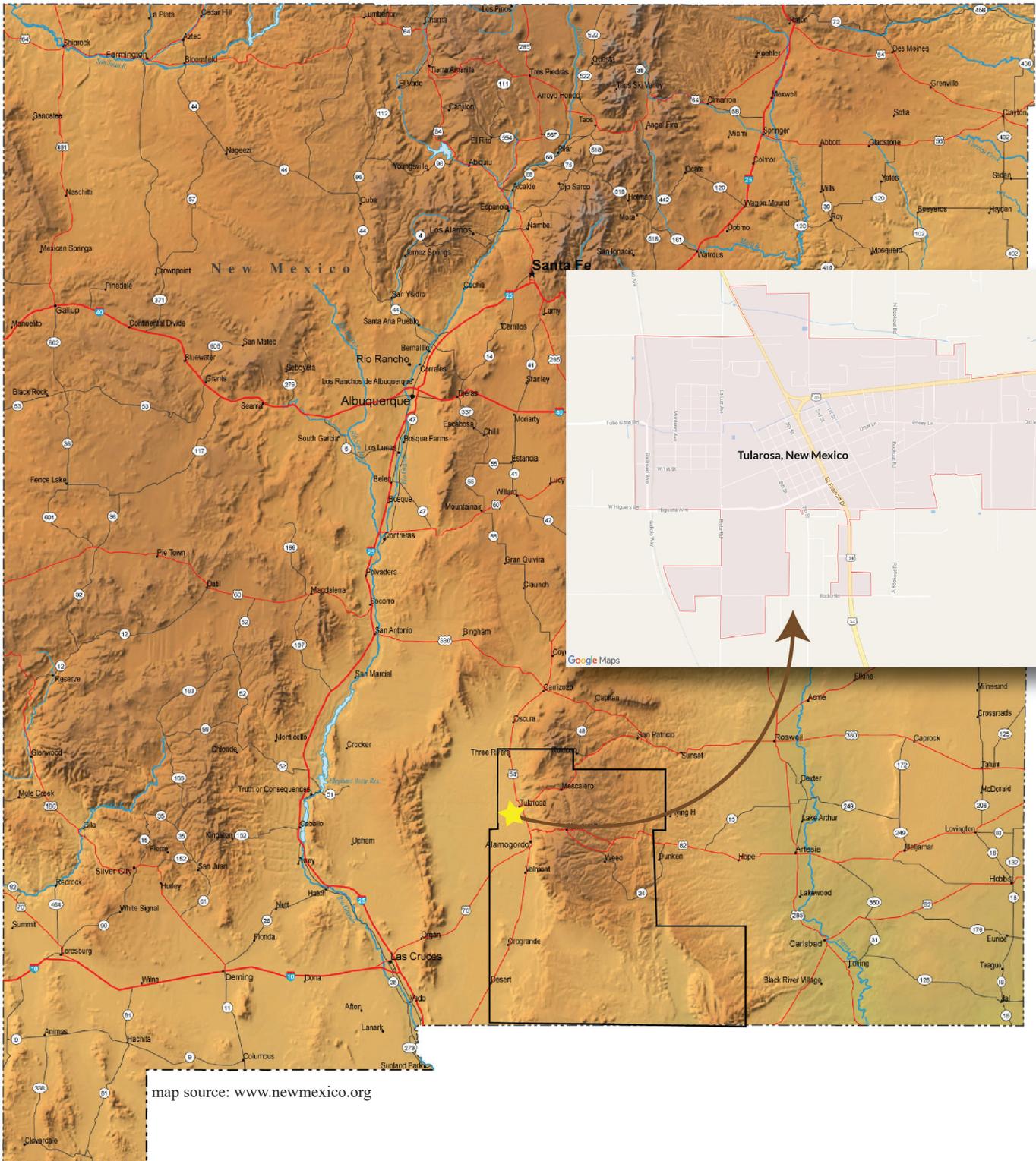
[prc.unm.edu](http://prc.unm.edu)

The PRC is one of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s 26 Prevention Research Centers. We are a part of the University of New Mexico, Health Sciences Center, Department of Pediatrics, in Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA.

For more information, contact Sally Davis, Director Prevention Research Center: [SDavis@salud.unm.edu](mailto:SDavis@salud.unm.edu).

This report was supported by Cooperative Agreement Number 5-U48-DP-005034 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The findings and conclusions of this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the CDC.

This document was completed March 2018.



# Table of Contents

Tularosa, N.M. ....	7
Overview of Site Visit .....	8
Tulie Trails .....	10
Tulie Trails Planning Goals .....	11
Bells and Water: A Guided Walking Tour of Historic Tularosa .....	12
Senior Center Trails .....	14
Fire Station Two .....	16
Public Schools Administration .....	18
Tularosa to La Luz Path/ Shoulder .....	19
Sidewalks Along Highway in Town.....	20
Round Mountain .....	20
Recent Accomplishments .....	21
Assessment Tools .....	22
Recommendations .....	25





*“This is really about being outdoors and celebrating public lands and all the places that make New Mexico the Land of Enchantment.”  
— Maureen Schmittle*

# Tularosa, New Mexico

The Village of Tularosa was established in 1863 and lies along the Tularosa Creek in Southern New Mexico's Otero County. The village has a population of roughly 2,920 (2013). The heart of the community is a 7 block by 7 block historic district known as "Old Tularosa," or "the 49 blocks." The Acequia Madre that carries water from the river through the 49 blocks is lined with giant cottonwood trees. The St. Francis de Paula Spanish Catholic Church, an important part of the village's identity, was built in 1869 to honor the saint. Some believe that divine intervention helped them to defeat the Mescalero Apache after a group of early settlers prayed around a photo of the saint during the Battle of Round Mountain.

Tularosa is at the intersection of US Highways 70 and 54. It is bordered to the east by the Mescalero Apache Reservation and to the west by the White Sands Missile range. The nearby Lincoln National Forest and White Sands National Monument are popular outdoor recreation destinations. Just under 3,000 people live in Tularosa, many of whom are either retired or work in the nearby city of Alamogordo.

## History of Tulie Trails

In 2016, Tulie Trails was established to coordinate efforts of multiple partners to increase the health and well-being of the Tularosa community. Tulie Trails is a local group of volunteers who hold regular planning meetings and have successfully organized community walking events. Stakeholders include Tularosa residents, county commissioner, a registered dietitian nutritionist, local merchants, members of the acequia association, Tularosa Schools, Tularosa Arts and History Council, Southeast Regional Transportation Planning Organization, New Mexico State University, NM Rails to Trails Association, USFS – Lincoln National Forest, the Bureau of Land Management, Otero Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) Committee, Otero Cooperative Extension, Presbyterian Medical Services Tularosa Clinic, New Mexico Department of Health, members of the Southeast New Mexico Economic Development District, and the New Mexico Department of Transportation.



## Overview of Site Visit

On May 23, 2017, staff members from the UNM PRC met with members of Tulie Trails in Tularosa for a site visit. The goal was to view first-hand the sites members of the coalition were planning to focus on for enhancement of places to be physically active including walking paths, trails, or other places in the community. The site visit provided an opportunity for participants to learn from each other and discuss project plans, ideas, and facilitators and barriers for project implementation. VIVA Connects gained experience working in its beta site in Cuba, New Mexico. One of the lessons learned was how to engage in partnerships with federal, state and regional agencies. As a result, they are able to provide technical assistance and recommendations to enable coalitions to meet their goals. The learning goes both ways, as VIVA Connects, through exposure to Tularosa's unique characteristics and the singular ideas of the coalition, can benefit from their ideas and share these with the larger VIVA Connects community.

The group separated their goals into “in town” and “out of town” goals. The in town goal is to provide opportunities for residents who wouldn't normally walk to do so. The out of town goal is to provide easier access to places for people who already walk or hike but may have to travel far from town to do so.

During the site visit the group visited three sites and discussed two others for potential development/enhancement:

1. Bells and Water: A Guided Walking Tour of Historic Tularosa
2. Walking Trail at Senior Center
3. Fire station 2
4. Sidewalks along Highway in Town
5. Tularosa – La Luz Trail
6. Round Mountain Trail
7. Public Schools Administration Brick Sidewalk Restoration

This report summarizes the observations and recommendations documented at each site or in relation to each site. It will serve as a guide as Tulie Trails continues its work in prioritizing and planning which of the projects to undertake and to assist in addressing identified challenges.



Tulie Trails site visit participants (from left): Helen Whigham, Otero County Master Gardeners; Jeff Bacon, New Mexico State University; Maureen Schmittle, New Mexico Department of Health; Rod Sims, NM Rails to Trails Association; Courtney Getchell, Bureau of Land Management/ Take it Outdoors, NM!; Julia Hess, University of New Mexico Prevention Research Center (UNM PRC); Jeff DeBellis, UNM PRC; Sally Davis, UNM PRC; not pictured: Ashley Cummings, UNM PRC.

# Tulie Trails



## *Objectives*

- Establish trails
- Improve accessibility & walking connectivity
- Quality of life
- Educational & fitness opportunities; healthy activities
- Economic development; tourism promotion
- Spotlight Tularosa's rich culture and history

## *Participants & Partners*

- Tularosa Volunteer Fire Department
- NM Dept. of Health
- Presbyterian Medical Services
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- Lincoln National Forest
- NM Dept. of Transportation
- Tularosa Rotary Club
- Tularosa Arts & History Council
- NM Rails to Trails Association
- Tularosa businesses
- County Commissioner Susan Flores
- Keep Tularosa Beautiful
- Tularosa Head Start
- Fiddler's Green
- UNM's Prevention Research Center (VIVA Communities)
- Southeast Regional Transportation Planning Organization (SERTPO)
- Tularosa Community Ditch Corp
- Eco-Servants

# Tulie Trails Planning Goals



## *Shorter-term / in-town goals:*

- In-town paths (enhance business access & economic development - focus around 49 Blocks)
- Establish a historic walking trail guide
- Fitness challenge trail
- Enhance resident safety
- Stripes for bicycles and pedestrians
- Increase access to / connect community parks
- Hold bi-annual community walks and outdoor activity days

## *Longer-term and further-distance goals:*

- Cooperate with BLM and DOT for trails and safety enhancements as opportunities arise
- Continue support of BLM plans for trail development
- Enhance existing path between Tularosa and La Luz
- Connect to Salado & La Luz Canyon, cooperate with Rails to Trails to become part of proposed Enchanted Trail loop (65-70 miles)
- Create a dedicated non-motorized trail (along existing trail Tulie to Alamo)
- Revitalization of Lions Park
- Include wildlife and nature opportunities

## *Accomplishments of the coalition:*

- Identified partners
- Became a VIVA Connects Action Community
- Received a Keep Tularosa Beautiful grant
- Started community walks

# Bells and Water: A Guided Walking Tour of Historic Tularosa

Bells and Water is a high priority project for Tulie Trails because there is strong leadership behind the project and much work has already been done. Joan Price, a local historian, developed a walking guide complete with photos, sites of interest, and historical and cultural content.

The proposed plan is to set up a trailhead with signage in Vigil Park, which is adjacent to the neighborhood where the walk will take place. The residential neighborhood, 49 blocks, is historic and built on a 7 x 7 block grid that is fed by the acequia. Participants reported that townspeople already come to this shady neighborhood with little traffic in order to walk.

Proposals include developing QR codes to be used in conjunction with signage in order to convey information to walkers. The group is hoping the QR codes could be linked to their website, which is currently under construction.



Before leaving on the walk, Maureen Schmittle discussed plans to install fitness equipment in Vigil Park, preferably in the shade or under a shade structure that would need to be installed. They're looking at chin-up bars, push-up bars, and other similar equipment. They mentioned installing information at the trailhead and including directions for the walk in the neighborhood. The group received a \$5,000 grant from Keep America Beautiful for the equipment and EcoServants, a non-profit based in Lincoln County that works on projects in environmental stewardship, agreed to donate labor for installation.

## Participant Observations

- Maureen plotted out a course for us to walk, but noted that the route has not been finalized.
- There are many large, historic (nationally recognized) trees on the route, including a sycamore that serves as a turkey vulture nesting site. There are large fig and pecan trees throughout the neighborhood.
- In order to post signage along the road, the group needs to figure out who they need to get permission from.
- They've considered painting directional arrows/signage directly on the road surface. The Department Of Transportation has said that this won't be a problem.
- There is an historic mission in the downtown area, but they decided not to make the walking path go to it because it would pass by some eyesore houses.
- Participants were welcomed into a beautiful garden and given an impromptu tour suggesting that residents are proud of the beauty of the area.
- Maureen mentioned that the regional planner for COG and BLM has been very supportive regarding a project east of town. She also mentioned the contributions of Joan Price and Karen Learner (Water Board), who are both local historians.



## Participants

Jeff Bacon, NMSU  
 Maureen Schmittle, NMDOH  
 Courtney Getchell, BLM/Take it Outdoors, NM!  
 Helen Whigham, Otero County Master Gardeners  
 Sally Davis, PRC  
 Jeff DeBellis, PRC  
 Ashley Cummings, PRC  
 Julia Hess, PRC  
 Monica A. Voorbach, Village of Tularosa  
 Rod Sims, NM Rails to Trails Association, Otero County

## Things to do:

- Create landscape plan
- Install fitness equipment at the park
- Establish trailhead signage and guidance
- Develop plan for using QR codes
- Develop plan for signage with respect to easements
- Finalize content for walking guide
- Initiate community-wide campaign

# Senior Center Trails

## Walking Trail at Senior Center

This project is also high priority for Tulie Trails. The Senior Center is located on Radio Road approximately 1.5 miles south of the 49 block historic district. It is a relatively new facility, built within the last five years. It is very popular with senior citizens and the dining room is currently undergoing expansion in order to accommodate more people at meal times. The proposed walking trail site is behind the building. It consists of an approximately one mile outer loop that will be surfaced with crushed rock and an inner loop that will be paved to better accommodate walkers and wheelchairs. The site is relatively flat.

## Participant Observations

Trail development could proceed in stages, first bulldozing the path, then adding crusher fines, and paving the inner trail once funds are available.

Maureen indicated that labor may be solicited from EcoServants.

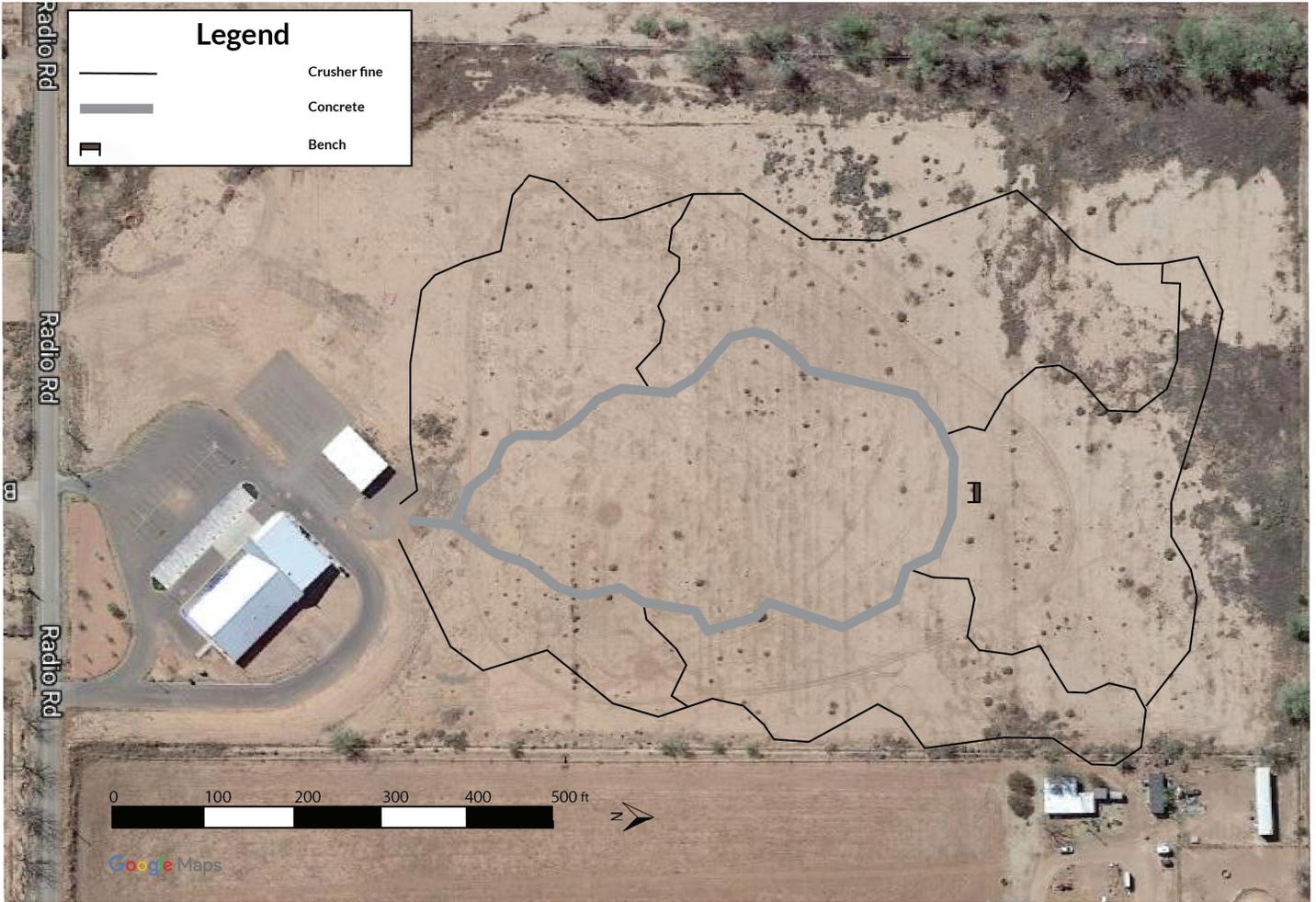
## Participants

Jeff Bacon, NMSU  
Maureen Schmittle, NMDOH  
Helen Whigham, Otero County Master Gardeners  
Sally Davis, PRC  
Jeff DeBellis, PRC  
Ashley Cummings, PRC  
Julia Hess, PRC

## Things to do:

- Creating path by clearing land
- Adding crusher fines or some other surface material in order to promote ease of walking
- Creating interior path with pavement for wheelchair and walker accessibility
- Bump outs on path to create areas for benches or small gardens
- Master gardeners could plant flower beds and seniors could maintain them





# Fire Station Two

The Fire Station Two is located on Central Ave. approximately 2 miles east of the 49 block historic district. The initial plan was to do a fitness trail addition here, but ultimately it was decided that it was too far out of town to promote. The Tularosa Creek runs directly behind the station. The proposed trail is northeast of the station, just past the water tower. It would be about ½ mile to Lions Park. This park was formerly developed, and is now privately owned. There are about 12 picnic tables and shallow pools to swim in with water year-round, but the park has largely been abandoned. Because of uncertainty about trail placement and park ownership, this project is a lower priority than both the Bells & Water Trail and the Senior Center Trail. There is a possibility of adding a playground behind the station.



## Participant Observations

Fitness trail is still part of proposal.

The area is being used, but access could be greatly improved with the development of a trail.

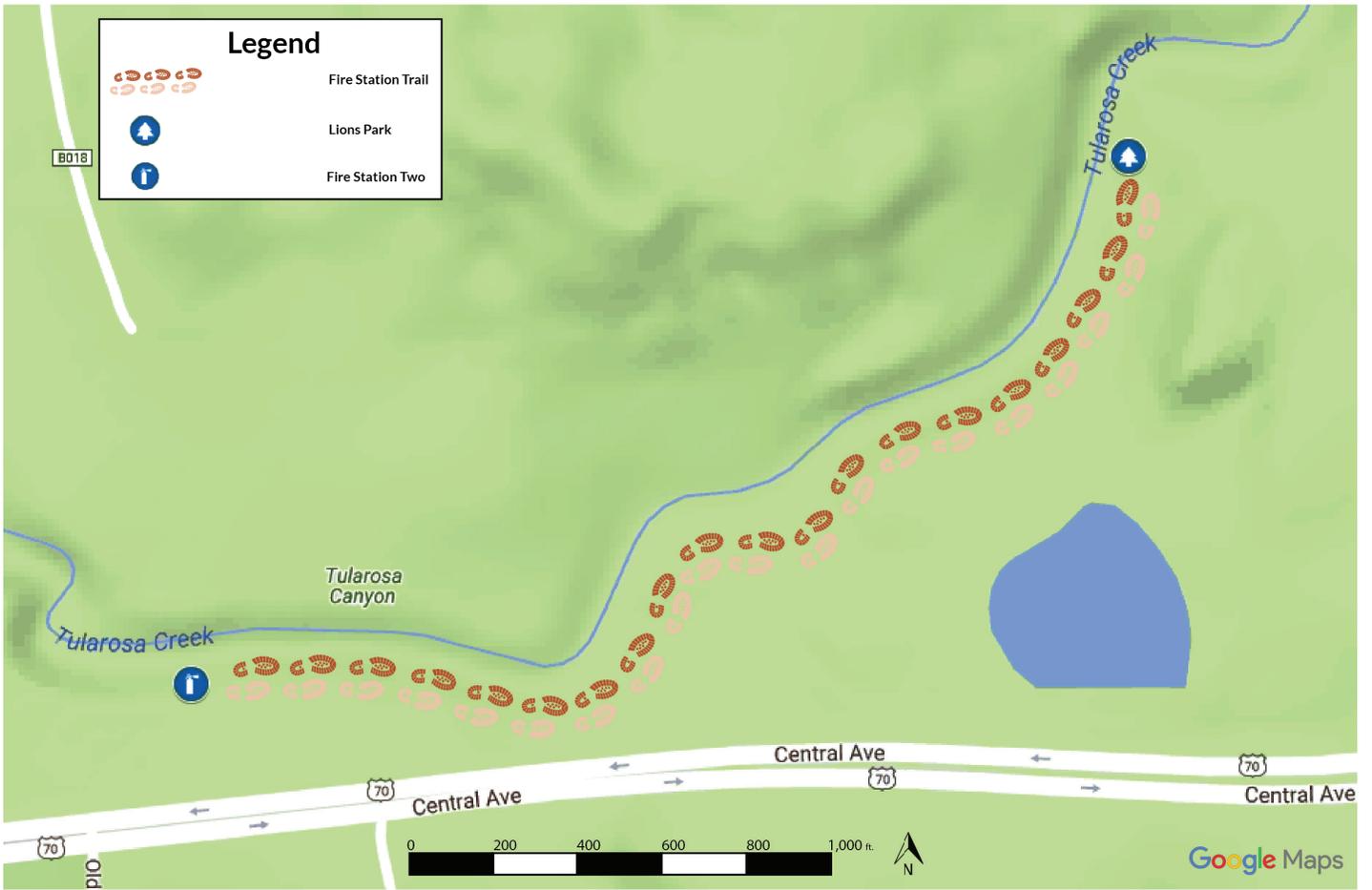
Access to the creek behind the fire station seems difficult as the banks are steep. The trailhead would have to begin closer to the water tower.

## Participants

Jeff Bacon, NMSU  
Maureen Schmittle, NMDOH  
Sally Davis, PRC  
Jeff DeBellis, PRC  
Ashley Cummings, PRC  
Julia Hess, PRC

### Things to do:

- Assess the availability of funding to complete the proposed work
- Investigate facilitators and barriers posed by private ownership and how trail access would be negotiated
- Assess parking needs and location of parking lot



# Public Schools Administration Brick Sidewalk Restoration

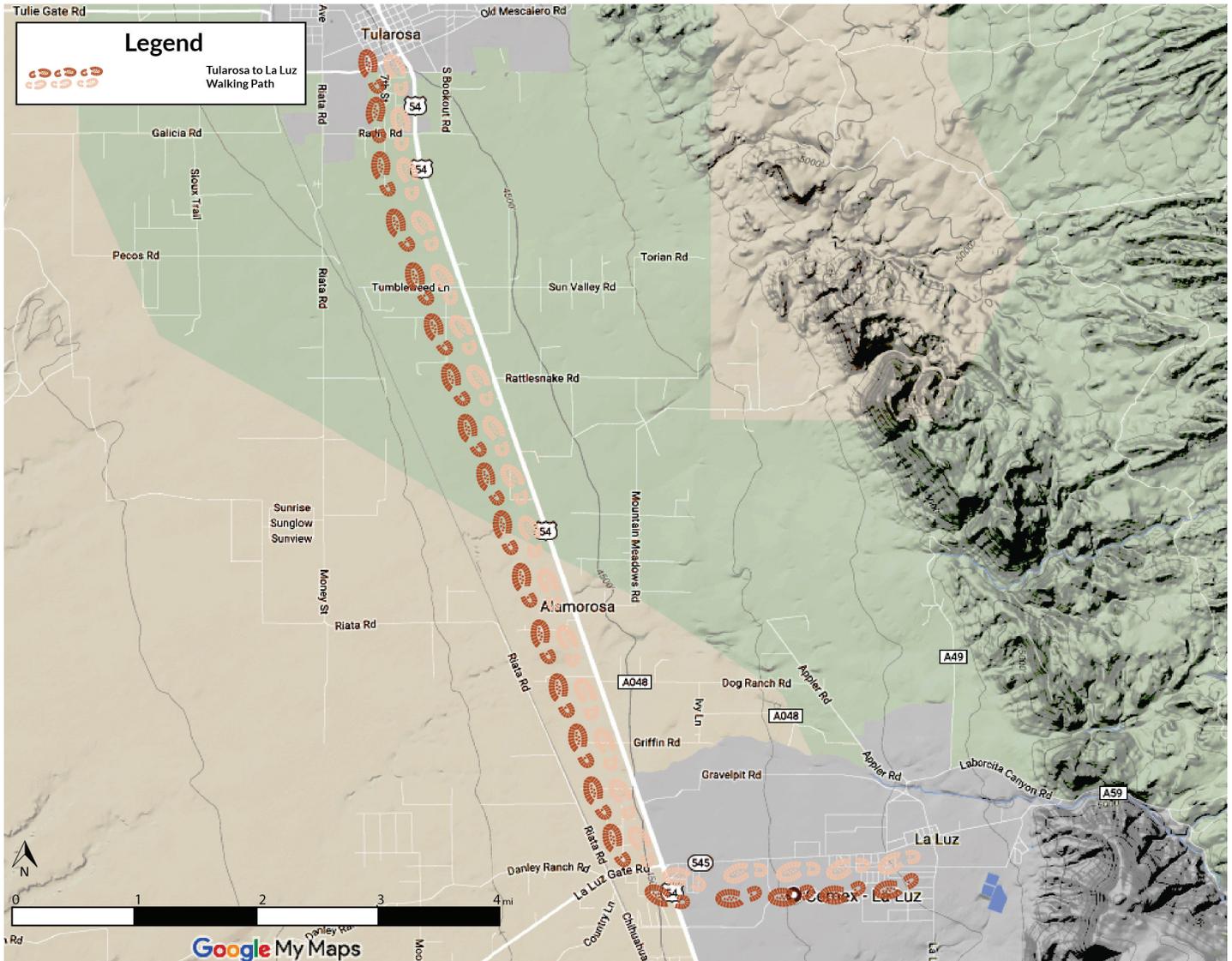


*"I love what you are doing. I love walking. One of my grandsons, we are trying to get him more active. Now he just wants to do video games. If he sees adventures -- he will like that."*

*—Monica Voorbach, Village Clerk*

# Tularosa to La Luz Path/ Shoulder

New Mexico Rails-to-Trails Association is working to turn abandoned rail lines in the region into multi-use recreation trails. Their goal is to create a 68 mile “Enchanted Loop Trail” connecting the towns of Cloudcroft, Alamogordo, and La Luz. Some of the organization’s members are also interested in connecting Tularosa by creating a trail between Tularosa and La Luz – a distance of 9.5 miles.



# Sidewalks along Highway in Town

Monica Voorbach said that the Department Of Transportation plan for sidewalks (already in process) is to put a 5' easement all around the highway through town (north & south side). Before doing so, they have to complete a water line project. The Village is trying to get matching funds. These sidewalks will be near the grocery store.

# Round Mountain

Courtney said that Outdoor Rec Planners representative Marten Schmitz is looking at trailheads near Round Mountain along Tularosa Creek on the north side of Old 70. This has moved up on the priority list. After getting information/feedback from fisheries, they cannot put a trail on the north side, because of the environmental impact. However, on the south side they need an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) because the route would require private access involving BLM, state, and another partner.



# Recent Accomplishments



A year's work of planning and partnership culminated in a fitness equipment site build at both Vigil Park and Higuera Park in Tularosa NM, Otero County on September 28th and 29th, 2017. This is due to a collaboration between *Keep Tularosa Beautiful*, *Eco-Servants*, and *Tulie Trails Planning Group*. Maureen Schmittle, Otero Health Promotion Specialist, helped establish the *Tulie Trails Planning Group* in June of 2016, with the support of UNM's Prevention Research Center VIVA Connects program, and Otero Healthy Eating Active Living committee. *Tulie Trails* continues to work on its goals of establishing walking paths in Tularosa and hosting community walks, as well as encouraging mitigation for safer pedestrian access throughout this lovely, rural village.



In late September 2017, Otero County Commissioner Susan Flores and Eco-Servants (a nonprofit trail building program staffed by Americorps workers), along with several volunteers, worked together to install 8 fitness equipment stations at two local parks approximately one half mile apart, which will be linked by a designated walking path and trailhead signs. Additional assistance was provided by local contractor Lancon; Village

of Tularosa and Otero County employees; and an NMSU intern. The equipment was purchased by a grant from *Keep America Beautiful*. *Tularosa Rotary* provided lunch for the work crew.

Although the equipment is ready to use, *Tulie Trails* plans on installing trailhead signs and a painted walking path to connect the two parks. They hope to have a Grand Opening in spring 2018.

# Assessment Tools

## Decision Matrix

A Decision Matrix can be a valuable tool for prioritizing interventions. Some interventions may have a greater impact than others, but are much more difficult to implement. The Decision Matrix allows communities to visualize the impact vs. the feasibility of each intervention – similar to a cost/benefit analysis. Community members give each intervention a score from 1 to 5 based on its anticipated impact. A score of 1 is the least impactful and a score of 5 is the most impactful. The same intervention is then given a score of 1 to 5 based on its anticipated feasibility to implement. A score of 1 is the least feasible and a score of 5 is the most feasible. The group then averages the scores that each member gives each intervention. They then plot them on a graph where the X axis is the feasibility and the Y axis is the impact. The resulting graph can help the community decide which interventions are most worth their time and energy.

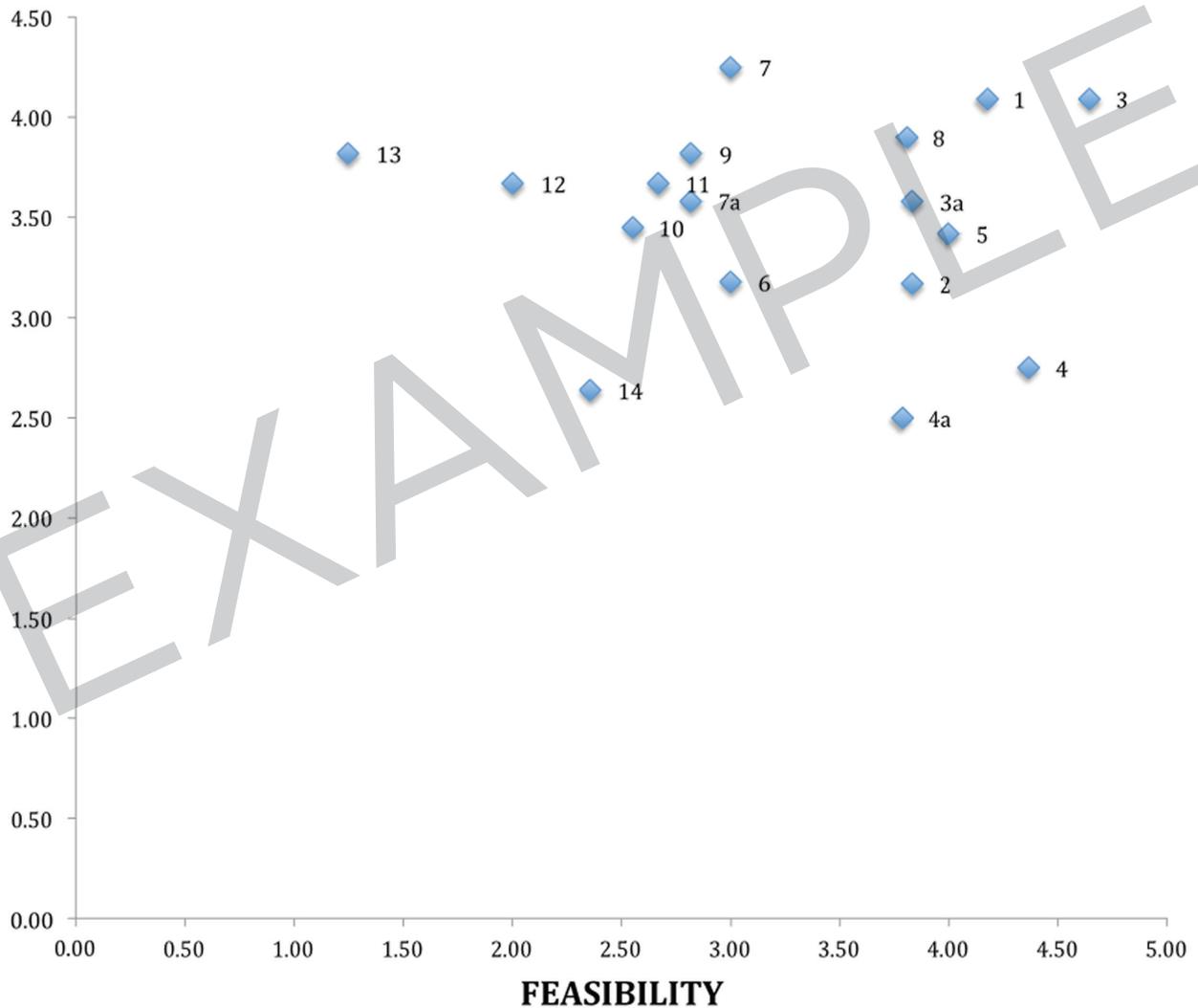
# Assessment Tools, Cont'd.

When a group of people come together with common goals and energy to devote their project ideas, they can still be overwhelmed by the number of things they want to do. It can be difficult to prioritize all these important things. Creating an impact and feasibility matrix of potential ideas and projects is a useful exercise that can be done in group settings to identify which projects the group wants to work on.

1. Identify potential projects for your community. Once the list is decided upon, each member of a group receives a scoring sheet with each project, labeled with, number and a score next to each project, one each for feasibility and for impact, with a space for comments.

#	Intervention	Impact	Feasibility	Comments
<b>Community Wide Campaigns</b>				
1	Build kiosk at trailhead of Beautiful Trail.	Least 1 2 3 4 5 Most	Least 1 2 3 4 5 Most	
2	Hold Full Moon Hike on Beautiful Trail.	Least 1 2 3 4 5 Most	Least 1 2 3 4 5 Most	
3	Buy advertising space in the <i>NY Times</i> .	Least 1 2 3 4 5 Most	Least 1 2 3 4 5 Most	
<b>Improving or Enhancing Access to Places for Physical Activity</b>				
4	Paving trail at Beautiful Park	Least 1 2 3 4 5 Most	Least 1 2 3 4 5 Most	
5	Land acquisition for new trail	Least 1 2 3 4 5 Most	Least 1 2 3 4 5 Most	
6	Building 6 million dollar gym facility	Least 1 2 3 4 5 Most	Least 1 2 3 4 5 Most	
<b>Street-Scale Design</b>				
10	Apply for DOT funding for sidewalks	Least 1 2 3 4 5 Most	Least 1 2 3 4 5 Most	
11	New signage for historic trail in town	Least 1 2 3 4 5 Most	Least 1 2 3 4 5 Most	
12	Build bridge over Railroad tracks	Least 1 2 3 4 5 Most	Least 1 2 3 4 5 Most	
<b>Social Support at the Community Level</b>				
13	Monthly hikes by community leaders	Least 1 2 3 4 5 Most	Least 1 2 3 4 5 Most	
14	Hire walking champion	Least 1 2 3 4 5 Most	Least 1 2 3 4 5 Most	
15	Create walk to school program	Least 1 2 3 4 5 Most	Least 1 2 3 4 5 Most	

## Enhancing/Creating Places to be Physically Active in Our Community Scoring Results Matrix



2. All the responses are collected, and scores for impact for each project are added and averaged. The same process is done with the scores for feasibility. Each of the averages for each project is then shown on a graph that shows each project's group average for impact and feasibility. Label each project with its number. Generally, projects with high impact and high feasibility often rise to the top of the priority list.

# Recommendations

- Conduct a decision matrix
- Prioritize trail construction
- Explore funding
- Meet with municipal leadership and build stronger relationship with Village of Tularosa
- Develop plan for Senior Center walking path
- Recruit a local chairperson for the committee



---

PREVENTION RESEARCH CENTER  
*Prevention & Population Sciences*

2703 Frontier, NE | RIB Suite 120, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87131  
Ph: 505-272-4462 | Website: <http://prc.unm.edu>