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Date: April 26, 2023 at 11:27:32 AM MDT
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Subject: RELEASE: City Not Pursuing Elena Gallegos Education Center



FOR
IMMEDIATE
RELEASE
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April 26, 2023

City Not Pursuing Elena Gallegos Education Center

Parks and Recreation brings closure to project, advances other Open Space priorities

ALBUQUERQUE – The Parks and Recreation Department (PRD) announced that they are not moving forward on the Elena Gallegos Open Space (EGOS) education center. Although studies concluded a facility would have minimal impact on the surrounding habitat, PRD chose to not pursue the project in response to community input. The City of Albuquerque will redirect its focus to fixing basic amenities at EGOS, improving safety on Simms Park Road, and upgrading a nature center at the Tijeras Arroyo Biozone.

The proposed 2023 General Obligation bond package would give PRD up to \$2 million to renovate an existing building to serve as the Tijeras Arroyo BioZone nature center. Trail work, better signage, and replacing worn out amenities (e.g. benches, picnic tables) will still move forward at EGOS.

"Improving environmental education and equitable access to our Open Space remains an important community need," said PRD **Director Dave Simon**. "The significant new resources proposed for the Tijeras Arroyo project would help advance our efforts and provide more ways for people to enjoy nature in Albuquerque."

"While the education center concept will not move forward, we remain committed to improving our City's open spaces and providing opportunities for our community to engage with nature," said **Chief Operations Officer Kevin Sourisseau**. "We will continue to identify and prioritize projects that enhance our natural environment and promote outdoor recreation for all."

PRD had been exploring the concept of a small facility to orient and educate visitors at the EGOS, which now receives over 200,000 visitors per year. PRD completed a feasibility study, habitat impact study, safety analysis of Simms Park Road, demographic survey of EGOS users, and took public input on the education center concept. The habitat impact study of the education facility concept by the environmental consulting firm Tetra Tech concluded: "The facility will likely have little impact on the wildlife present within Elena Gallegos Open Space and the Sandia Mountains foothills."

PRD still plans to explore measures to improve bicycle safety on Simms Park Road, which provides access to EGOS. An analysis of Simms Park Road completed by the engineering firm Parametrix identified relatively simple, low-cost measures, such as signage and speed control features, that could improve safety.

The road study and habitat impact study are available on the City's website at: www.cabq.gov/elenagallegos

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About CABQ Parks & Recreation: *The City of Albuquerque's Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for maintaining nearly 300 parks, 143 miles of multi-use trails, more than 29,000 acres of Major Public Open Space, four municipal golf courses, and numerous aquatics and recreation facilities throughout Albuquerque. Hundreds of employees across six divisions within the Department take pride in ensuring Albuquerque residents have great facilities to foster a vibrant and healthy community.*



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