THK Associates, Inc. is pleased to provide the Riparian to Refuge Master Plan for the City of Alamosa. The trail network running adjacent to the Rio Grande River, connecting Alamosa’s Riparian Park at the north end of the City with the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge south of the City, totaling approximately 4 miles in length. This study highlights an impressive 20+ mile existing trail network, the beauty of the greater San Luis Valley, and the quality of the river as a recreational asset. It is truly a valuable resource that many rural communities are not as fortunate to possess. While the existing trail network is somewhat of a hidden gem, it is in prime position to become even more successful with a series of strategic improvements.

Alamosa has the making of a world class trail network that could become one of the corner stones of a successful tourism destination. With its close proximity to the Great Sand Dunes National Park, a beautiful and intact downtown, historic railway infrastructure and scenic view corridors, Alamosa can become a nationally recognized destination. As revealed in the City’s recent 2017 Comprehensive Plan, access to the Rio Grande River via recreational trails rank as the most desired amenity for its neighborhoods and communities. With a fully developed trail network, improved access and visibility, the trails will be an amazing community asset as well as provide a wonderful user experience.

The goal of the master plan is to identify methods to complete and enhance the current community asset. A safe, continuous, well-planned trail network is critical to all future river improvement projects.
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The City of Alamosa is rich with history, natural assets, and beauty. Alamosa is a charming place to both live and visit, with an authentic culture representative of its historical roots, as well as a strong community, plentiful sunshine, and low humidity. Historically, the area has been a strategic transportation hub due to its rail infrastructure and proximity to the Rio Grande River in the southern end of the San Luis Valley.

The Rio Grande and riparian vegetation that line the riverfront create a shady oasis and a natural contrast to the open plains of the San Luis Valley. The levees on both sides of the river have become the modern trail network following the river, defining the river trails that have been used for the past several decades.

Alamosa’s existing trail network provides pedestrian and bicycle access across portions of the Rio Grande as it passes through the city, with opportunities to holistically connect the two sides through a series of pedestrian bridges and property acquisitions at strategic locations. The ability to develop safe and varied outdoor recreational loops of this magnitude is rarely found. This is an exciting opportunity to experience the riparian environment in a unique way, connecting to the city’s 1,400+ acres of open space.

Unique to Alamosa are the two large open space preserves found at the north and south ends of the Rio Grande Corridor, combined with the Alamosa City Ranch and Toivo Malm trail network adjacent to the levee trail network. The 203-acre Riparian Park at the north end of Alamosa was a visionary purchase by the City. The 12,000-acre National Wildlife Reserve defines the south end of the City and levee trail network.

The vision for Alamosa’s integrated trails master plan was well-articulated in the City’s Request for Proposal (RFP) distributed in mid-2021. The RFP states the overarching goal is to “create a master plan that will be the roadmap for future trail development and trail connections”. THK Associates, Inc. submitted a full proposal outlining a proposed scope of work, fees, and schedule to complete a comprehensive master plan report. The completed report is included in this document. THK began work in October of 2021 and the final document was completed in December of 2022, a fourteen-month process.

This document serves to provide a vision for the future of Alamosa parks, trails, and open spaces along with recreational and cultural service programs. It includes existing conditions, stakeholder-identified future needs, a road map for the future of Alamosa trails, and action items for the next five to ten years. It is anticipated that major stakeholders will use this document to garner community support and solicit funding from public entities and grant agencies.
Report Goals

VISION

The vision of the Riparian Park to Refuge Master Plan is to establish a cohesive regional trail along the Rio Grande Corridor, linking the Alamosa Riparian Park and National Wildlife Refuge in a safe and logical way. Providing additional access points and connecting existing trails throughout Alamosa will help generate a common identity. This is a direct response to the public’s desire for more regional connectivity, as voiced in the 2017 City of Alamosa Comprehensive Plan.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

- Understand the desires of community members and the preferred prioritization of trail connections along the Rio Grande Corridor between the Riparian Park and the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge
- Create a river-focused environment that is healthy and connected.
- Facilitate a common vision for the Rio Grande Corridor that is accepted by the City of Alamosa and key stakeholders.
- Enhance the safety of the Rio Grande Corridor and its surrounding areas.
- Connect neighborhoods by providing access to a centrally located trail network and create links to adjacent communities and businesses.
- Increase awareness and access to the recreational opportunities that exist within the Rio Grande Corridor to residents, especially in under served communities.
- Identify and maximize additional funding opportunities
- Work with local, state, and federal agencies to shape projects to meet specific funding programs.

METHODS TO ACHIEVE THESE GOALS

- Undertake an extensive public outreach program to obtain input from all of Alamosa’s communities and ensure all voices are heard.
- Obtain easements and ownership of specific parcels of the land throughout Alamosa that contain the existing levee system, providing access to the trail and river from South Alamosa and East Alamosa. Where private property ownership interrupts the trail network, seasonal trails have been suggested. Where possible the trail network will should improve connectivity to adjacent open space.
- Construct new trails upon acquiring properties and enhance the existing trails.
- Minimize conflicts between vehicles and active transit (pedestrians, runners, bicyclists) through enhanced street crossings. This consists of underpasses beneath bridges where possible, adding cantilevered pedestrian sidewalks to existing bridges, and improving street markings where other options are not possible.
- Create improved trailheads for access to the river corridor trail network with defined parking where appropriate, comfort stations, picnic tables and wayfinding signage.
- In addition to the fully funded pedestrian bridge and trailhead improvements at Stadium Drive, it is recommended two additional pedestrian bridges be constructed. The first within the Alamosa Riparian Park, and the second at the southern end of the river corridor at the Chicago Dam.
- It is recommended the city purchase land adjacent to East Alamosa to house a regional Rio Grande/San Luis Valley nature and environmental education center. This is a grand vision that has potential to attract national foundation and philanthropy funding.
- Seasonal trails and boardwalks have been suggested in certain sections of the river corridor. These will replace the current social paths that have been established over the course of many years. The seasonal trails boardwalks should be designed and constructed with respect to the riparian zone.

- The City should continue to treat and remove invasive and noxious plants within the river corridor. Where appropriate, native plants will be installed.

- The master plan recommendations result in a cohesive network of open space and trails, with elements such as wayfinding, designated parking, comfort stations and improved safety. Wayfinding and directional signage should provide information and direction to off-site attractions such as Adams State University and Alamosa’s downtown district.

- This master plan has been written so that recommendations can be installed in an incremental manner as funding becomes available. It is suggested that improvements are targeted to specific areas identified in the master plan. For example, all of Riparian Park proposed recommendations should be installed as one cohesive project, rather than spread available funds over a much larger area.
Background and Context

The City of Alamosa is a regional hub located within the San Luis Valley of south-central Colorado. Alamosa serves as the primary economic and recreational center of the San Luis Valley and is defined largely by the Rio Grande Corridor. The Rio Grande Corridor is a long-term recreational and economic development priority for Alamosa and has been identified as a resource for Alamosa’s downtown, adjacent neighborhoods, and the community’s ability to attract and retain talent across all sectors.

In early 2017, the City of Alamosa adopted its Comprehensive Plan after several months of community workshops, polling, and research. A consistent theme reflected from community input throughout the Comprehensive Plan was the strong support for increasing access to the Rio Grande Corridor. Embracing the river corridor was ranked as the highest priority for Alamosa’s Parks and Recreation department. This desire for enhanced connection to the Rio Grande Corridor is what ultimately spurred the creation of this Master Plan. This document is intended to serve as a guide for future recreational investment in Alamosa, and can be used in future discussions with stakeholders, property owners, local, state, and federal agencies, and to further educate the general public about the future of Alamosa’s Rio Grande Corridor.

The Rio Grande Corridor is characterized by earthen levees that run along both sides of the river in Alamosa. These levees have altered the river’s natural geometry in places, and are home to a significant percentage of the recreational activity that occurs within the Rio Grande Corridor, primarily consisting of walking, running, and cycling. The Corridor varies in degree of urban development along the banks of the river, ranging from undeveloped open space to dense single-family detached homes. The banks and floodplain of the Rio Grande Corridor consist of predominantly mature riparian vegetation such as Cottonwood galleries and willows. This contributes to a healthy and diverse migratory bird population, which brings further outdoor enthusiasts to the Rio Grande Corridor to recreate.

Despite their heavy use within the community, the current trail system linking the Alamosa Riparian Park (located in northwest Alamosa) to the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge (located in southeast Alamosa) are fragmented and lack a larger connection strategy. This +/- 4-mile stretch of the Rio Grande serves as the “spine” of recreational activity within Alamosa, with offshoots occurring in nearby parks, campuses, and downtown Alamosa. The potential exists for users to travel the full length of this recreational corridor unimpeded.

Alamosans take pride in their proximity and relationship to the Rio Grande. Construction of a cohesive trail network within and adjacent to the River Corridor will expand recreational opportunities and further increase its value as an economic asset, and will benefit not just the community of Alamosa, but the greater San Luis Valley and Mountain West region.
Goals of the Master Plan

Early on in the project, visions and goals were established in order to set the framework for the planning effort. These goals were defined by the Project Team and the Project Partners and were vetted through the public at community meetings and in-person events.

This master plan was commissioned by the City of Alamosa beginning in the Fall of 2021 as part of ongoing efforts to improve recreational access along the Rio Grande Corridor.

- Understand the desires of community members and the preferred prioritization of trail connections along the Rio Grande Corridor between the Riparian Park and the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge.
- Create a river-focused environment that is healthy and connected.
- Facilitate a common vision for the Rio Grande Corridor that is accepted by the City of Alamosa and key stakeholders.
- Enhance the safety of the Rio Grande Corridor and its surrounding areas.
- Connect neighborhoods by providing access to a centrally located trail network and create links to adjacent communities and businesses.
- Increase awareness and access to the recreational opportunities that exist within the Rio Grande Corridor to residents, especially in underserved communities.
- Identify and maximize additional funding opportunities. Work with local, state, and federal agencies to shape projects to meet specific funding programs.
Overarching Vision

The vision of the Riparian Park to Refuge Master Plan is to establish a cohesive regional trail along the Rio Grande Corridor, linking the Alamosa Riparian Park and National Wildlife Refuge in a safe and logical way. Providing additional access points and connecting existing trails throughout Alamosa will help generate a common identity. This is a direct response to the public’s desire for more regional connectivity, as voiced in the 2017 City of Alamosa Comprehensive Plan.

This document serves to provide a vision for the future of Alamosa parks, trails, and open spaces along with recreational and cultural service programs. It includes existing conditions, stakeholder-identified future needs, a road map for the future of Alamosa trails, and action items for the next five to ten years.

Stakeholder meetings, public meetings and community outreach efforts were held where participants were encouraged to provide feedback and share their visions of the regional trail. These forward-looking initiatives resulted in a strong level of community support for the preservation of open space, wildlife habitat and recreation components that lead to a better quality of life.
The Importance of Public Engagement:

With the ever-increasing connectivity of modern society, it is becoming increasingly important for municipalities to be open and transparent about what they are spending public money on, and why. The process of public-engagement (open, two-way conversations about what we do and why) helps to build appreciation of civic and cultural assets, while simultaneously understanding communities needs and aspirations. The involvement of all interested and affected parties in community master plans are critical to successful regional planning and programming. By incorporating the general public and stakeholders into design-making processes, decision makers are better informed and better able to meet community needs.

The goal of the stakeholder and public engagement process for the Riparian to Refuge Master Plan was twofold:

1. Elicit meaningful input with tangible application to the development of the Master Plan.

2. Apply that input to decisions and final concepts to the Plan itself.

Over the course of the master planning process, great effort was taken to ensure that the feedback the Project Team was receiving reasonably corresponded with the demographics of the City of Alamosa, allowing for the entire community to have their voices heard.

Overview of Planning Process:

The planning process began with the collection and analysis of existing trail maps, past research, and planning documents for the Project Site. Additionally, THK staff visited the City of Alamosa and the Rio Grande Corridor starting in December of 2021 to better understand and document the existing conditions of the Corridor.

Early in the planning process, the following plans and documents were reviewed by the Project Team to further understand past planning efforts, including:

- 2012 San Luis Valley Regional Habitat Conservation Plan
- 2017 Alamosa Comprehensive Plan
- 2017 River Corridor Improvements Feasibility Study
- 2018 Alamosa City Ranch Master Plan
- 2018 Revitalize the Rio Community Report
- 2019 Downtown Design Plan
- 2021 International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) Observations and Opportunities Memo

After reviewing the existing data, the Project Team engaged with City of Alamosa staff as well as knowledgeable stakeholders to understand the wants and needs for the trail system planning efforts. The community and stakeholders participated in a series public meetings and were asked to contribute further to the planning process by responding to several public surveys, straw polls, and open-ended questionnaires.
Overview of Public Engagement Process:

From the project’s launch, ensuring an inclusive and diverse range of voices was emphasized as a priority for the City of Alamosa. THK worked closely with City of Alamosa staff in organizing several public meetings and outreach events. The opportunity to build upon and expand an existing recreation destination made the Riparian to Refuge Master Plan an important project for regional stakeholders and community members. Discussions about the future of the Rio Grande Corridor with community members and stakeholders generated excitement and eagerness. Due to COVID-19 concerns, traditional in-person meetings and planning sessions couldn’t take place. This presented a challenge for the project team; face-to-face interactions and collectively drawing on base maps was not possible, and simply verbalizing ideas proved to be difficult. Several times after providing project updates to the public and stakeholders, it was noted that the demographics of attendees and respondents did not correlate with Alamosa’s demographics, which is approximately 50% Hispanic. Although efforts were taken to provide translated meeting advertisements, surveys, and live-translation at the virtual public meetings (thanks to the San Luis Valley Language Justice Cooperative), obtaining results from a sample group that was in-line with Alamosa’s demographics was also proving to be a challenge.

Public Meeting #1

On January 13, 2022, due to COVID-19 concerns, the Project Team held the first virtual public meeting through Zoom. The meeting had approximately 45 attendees. The goal of this public meeting was to make the community aware of the master planning project and to receive input on how they currently use the area, as well as how they would like to see it used in the future. Participants were presented with an inventory of trails and connections to the Rio Grande that currently exist throughout Alamosa. This was followed by identifying where gaps within the existing trail network exist. Several attendees expressed first-hand familiarity with where the major gaps were located and were eager at the prospect of closing said gaps.

Key Dates

- **January 13, 2022**
  1st Riparian to Refuge Public Meeting
- **January 13, 2022 through February 8, 2022**
  Community Survey (both physical and digital)
- **January 29, 2022**
  Rio Frio Ice Fest
- **March 2, 2022**
  2nd Riparian to Refuge Public Meeting
- **April 14, 2022**
  RAISE Grant Application
- **August 17, 2022**
  AHEC Community Survey Results
- **November 2, 2022**
  Joint Work Session w/ Recreation Advisory Board

The Project Team, following a similar format to the sections previously described within the Planning Area portion of this Master Plan, broke down these gaps into four distinct sections. Of these four gaps, two would potentially be linked by a pedestrian bridge crossing the Rio Grande (Riparian Park/Adams State University), while two would potentially be linked through Right-of-Way (R.O.W.) acquisitions and negotiations with private property owners.

Using Mentimeter, an online interactive audience engagement platform, attendees were able to give their feedback and vote on the prioritization of which gaps they would like to see connected first. By allowing participants to rank each option, the Project Team was able to decipher which approach was viewed more favorably (R.O.W. acquisitions vs. potential bridge). This format of feedback will be useful in determining the phasing and prioritization of future projects. At the end of the meeting, attendees were encouraged to respond to a survey, providing participants with an opportunity to give feedback, whilst providing the project team with additional information about user groups throughout the Rio Grande Corridor.
Public Meeting #2

On March 2, 2022, a public meeting was held with focus group Revitalize the Rio – an initiative derived from San Luis Valley Great Outdoors with the goal of activating the Rio Grande Corridor. The meeting had approximately 20 attendees and was once again held in a hybrid in-person/virtual format. The goal of this meeting was to hear from a key focus-group that has a vast amount of knowledge concerning outdoor recreation in the Rio Grande Corridor, as well as to provide an open forum to share ideas, concerns, and desires for future investments.

Like the initial public meeting in January, attendees were asked to provide input on why the Rio Grande was important to them, identify gaps within the existing trail network, and voice opinions on the prioritization of future developments along the Rio Grande Corridor within Alamosa. Additionally, select results of the public survey were shared with the group to provide a status update on the feedback gathered thus far. As a result of this process, meeting that the disparity between Alamosa’s known demographics and the results of the public survey were highlighted. The survey results showed that approximately 65% of respondents identified as Caucasian and 24% identified as Hispanic. The federal census of 2020 indicates that 46% of Alamosans identify as Caucasian and 48% identify as Hispanic. As a result, additional targeted public outreach in Alamosa’s under-represented Hispanic communities was deemed necessary.
**Rio Frio Ice Fest Strawpoll Outreach:**

The Rio Frio 5k is an annual community race held in Alamosa, and takes place on the frozen Rio Grande River, typically on the last weekend of January. It is held in conjunction with the annual Ice Fest. Both events are organized by Alamosa Parks and Recreation, San Luis Valley Great Outdoors (SLVGOI), Visit Alamosa, and Adams State University, as well as host of other public and private organizations.

THK, along with support of the City, set up an informational booth at the intersection of Main St. and San Juan Avenue and solicited interaction with community attendees. Using maps mounted on boards, THK engaged in conversation and gave a general overview of the regional trail and masterplan, highlighting the critical gaps within the river corridor and presented the question of “which potential connection do you value most?”

**Summary of Survey Results**

Upon the conclusion of the January 13, 2022, public meeting, attendees were invited to participate in an online public survey that would also be distributed to the general public for a period of approximately 6 weeks. Paper copies of this survey in both English and Spanish were posted in highly frequented public spaces throughout Alamosa, including the Alamosa Public Library, Family Recreation Center, Adams State University, and throughout Alamosa’s Main Street, among others. Results from paper copies were then manually entered into the SurveyMonkey poll.

The goal of this public survey was to continue to identify current users of the Rio Grande Corridor, as well as to better understand how the Corridor is being used. Open-ended questions were asked with the ability to leave comments and provide feedback on future developments along the Rio.
San Luis Valley Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Survey Results:

As a direct response to the disparity in the survey results obtained at this point in the masterplanning process, THK worked with the representatives from the San Luis Valley Area Health Education Center (AHEC) to target Alamosa’s Hispanic community, in order to ensure that as many voices as possible were heard. AHEC is a community-based 501(c)(3) organization with the goal of strategically addressing the fact that all counties in the San Luis Valley are federally identified as underserved.

Representatives from AHEC engaged directly with community leaders and residents. Through this effort, over 150 additional responses were recorded and documented. This feedback proved to be crucial in shaping the proposed recommendations within this document.

Summary of Public Engagement

Feedback provided through stakeholder and public meetings, along with community outreach efforts, identified a common theme of better connecting Alamosans to the Rio Grande. A great majority of the participants were open and excited about potential improvements within the River Corridor. Input from each of these meetings was documented and used to help drive the master planning process. As a result, guiding principles were developed to help steer the implementation of the Riparian to Refuge Master Plan:

- Maintain Open Space
- Connection to Nature
- River Access
- Preserve Wildlife Habitat
- Connections to Existing Trail Systems

Q: ARE THERE ANY OTHER POTENTIAL NEW AREAS YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE ADDED IN ALAMOSA?

"A trail on the east side of Alamosa behind the Loaf ‘n Jug"

"A place by the river to enjoy the water"

"More fishing ponds"

"I don’t know all the trails in Alamosa"

"It would be nice to have a water fountain feature for pennies and wishes, or a place to ride with my wheelchair"

"More fishing ponds"

"I only use one trail in Alamosa, mostly. I don’t know all the trails."

"I would like to see big rocks added along the riverbank in Cole Park, like in Del Norte and Salida"

"We could use a place on the east side of Alamosa to ride motorcycles"

"I would like to see more cultural resources events"
Summary of AHEC Public Engagement Findings

WHERE DO YOU CURRENTLY RESIDE?

- City of Alamosa: 81
- Alamosa County: 53
- Other San Luis Valley: 16

WITH WHICH RACE DO YOU IDENTIFY?

- Hispanic: 113
- Caucasian: 4
- Other: 10
- Do not wish to share: 4

HOW DO YOU USE THE TRAILS IN ALAMOSA?

- Walking: 21
- Running: 4
- Cycling: 27
- Picnicking: 14
- Fishing: 28
- Birdwatching: 18
- Other: 102
- No Use: 26

HOW OFTEN DO YOU USE THE TRAILS IN ALAMOSA?

- Daily: 18
- 3-5 times a week: 13
- Once a week: 18
- Once a month: 43
- Few times per year: 18
- Never: 102
HOW WOULD YOU RATE SAFETY ALONG THE TRAIL?

- Excellent: 34
- Good: 19
- Fair: 1
- Poor: 18
- Not Applicable: 1

- Excellent: 81
- Good: 19
- Fair: 1
- Poor: 18
- Not Applicable: 1

SHOULD ADDITIONAL ACCESS POINTS BE PROVIDED?

- Yes, if environmentally safe: 41
- Yes: 96
- No, access is sufficient: 4
- No: 7

HOW OFTEN DO YOU VISIT THE RIO GRANDE?

- Daily: 50
- 3-5 times a week: 54
- Once a week: 16
- Once a month: 13
- Few times per year: 4
- Never: 1

WHAT ACTIVITIES DO YOU DO AT THE RIVER?

- Fishing: 39
- Ice Fishing: 15
- Wildlife Observation: 28
- Other: 10
- No Use: 5
ALAMOSA TRAILS
RIPARIAN PARK TO
REFUGE TRAIL PLANNING
NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING
JANUARY 13TH, 2022
5:30 PM to 7:00 PM
* THIS MEETING WILL BE HELD VIRTUALLY

A neighborhood meeting for the Alamosa Riparian Park to Refuge Trail Master Planning will be held virtually.

We want to hear from you! Please vote on one of the options below through the Mentimeter link

Connection 1 - Riparian Park (Bridge)
Connection 2 - Adams State (Bridge)
Connection 3 - The Wilderness (ROW)
Connection 4 - DT to Malm (ROW)

WEB ADDRESS:
PASS CODE: 181913

Join us to share thoughts and ideas for what you want to see along the Rio Grande River Corridor, including a possible bridge structure, and hear about upcoming planning efforts.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!
PLEASE VOTE ON ONE OF THE OPTIONS BELOW THROUGH THE MENITMETER LINK

PLEASE RANK THE FOLLOWING POTENTIAL CONNECTION AREAS:

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</table>

Summary of Public Meeting #1 Results
Q: ARE THERE ANY OTHER CONNECTION AREAS NOT PREVIOUSLY DISCUSSED THAT YOU’RE INTERESTED IN?

“Going under the Broadway Avenue bridge would be very connective.”

“The Chicago Diversion at the Alamosa Wildlife Refuge would be the ideal crossing for the Malm Trail network.”

“Connection 2 would be far more inclusive and accessible than Connection 1. The Connection 3 ROW is already regularly used and should be formally acquired.”

None that I can think of. Love this idea of these connection areas!”

“Connection of town trails to Wildlife Refuge all along the river.”

“As far north in the Riparian Park as possible, from the trail, not the parking lot, so as to not mar the view from the river.”

“Connect to the river trail on the east side of the Rio Grande.”

“Underpass under the State Avenue bridge.”

“Highway 160 crossing”

“Bridge over the Chicago Diversion”
Summary of Public Survey Results

WHEN UTILIZING ALAMOSA TRAILS, ARE YOU USUALLY,

WHERE DO YOU CURRENTLY RESIDE?

- City of Alamosa
- Alamosa County
- Other (San Luis Valley)
- Other (Colorado)

WHICH RACE DO YOU IDENTIFY WITH?

- Caucasian
- Hispanic
- Do not want to share
- Other
- African-American
- Asian

WHICH AGE RANGE DO YOU FALL WITHIN?

- <13
- 13 - 17
- 18 - 30
- 31 - 50
- 51 - 65
- Over 65

RESPONSES

- 121
- 44
- 22
- 2

Alone
With Partner / Spouse
With Younger Children (<12yo)
With Older Children (12-18yo)
With Friends
Other
HOW OFTEN DO YOU USE THE RIO GRANDE RIVER IN ALAMOSA?

- 3 - 5 times a week: 20
- Once a week: 90
- A few times a year: 12
- Once a month: 23
- Daily: 5
- Never: 4

HOW DO YOU CURRENTLY USE ALAMOSA'S PUBLIC TRAILS?

- Walking: 94
- Cycling: 50
- Picnicking: 50
- Running: 36
- Birdwatching: 30
- Fishing: 25
- Other: 25
- Horseback Riding: 25

HOW OFTEN DO YOU USE THE TRAILS IN ALAMOSA?

- 3 - 5 times a week: 23
- Once a week: 63
- A few times a year: 35
- Once a month: 25
- Daily: 4
- Never: 4

HOW DO YOU CURRENTLY USE ALAMOSA'S PUBLIC TRAILS?

- Walking: 183
- Cycling: 107
- Picnicking: 76
- Running: 75
- Birdwatching: 66
- Fishing: 33
- Other: 3
- Horseback Riding: 3

Activities:
- Wildlife Watching
- Floating / Tubing
- Kayaking
- Paddleboarding
- Fishing / Ice Fishing
- Wading
- Snow Shoeing
Q: ARE THERE ANY POTENTIAL NEW AMENITIES YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE ADDED IN ALAMOSA?

“Continued development of river features and accessibility. Improved pedestrian access including a bridge across the river somewhere.”

“No OHV or equestrian areas. More bridges, boat ramps, and trails. More and better bike lanes. More trails dedicated to mountain biking, with jumps and features”

“Improved trails; upgrades to playground equipment and cleaner parks overall.”

“I bike a lot, and it would be awesome if there was a connection from the new Riparian Park to the disc golf course side of trails”

“Spaced lighting for the river trails would be helpful. A lot of people enjoy evening walks, but in the fall and winter months it’s dark early and the trails are very dark”

“More restroom availability and trash cans along the trails, maybe more seating for people to enjoy”

“Safe trails with scenery. More activities such as concerts, movie nights, activities to get us out of the house and enjoy the day”

“Long-term vision for river trail as far as possible through the valley”

“Free WiFi, charging stations for electronics, more steel grills... recognition that some trails are used for livelihood and this should be taken into account when planning for recreation”

“Trails to connect to the Wildlife Refuge would be great. The more we can utilize the river, the better.”

“Improved development of river features and accessibility. Improved pedestrian access including a bridge across the river somewhere”
Q: ARE THERE ANY OTHER EVENTS YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE ADDED IN RELATION TO PARKS AND TRAILS?

“Walks in addition to the runs. Not all of us can run anymore or maybe we just want to walk and be part of the fun.”

“Paddle boats that you can use at Blanca Vista Park; keep trails well maintained and trimmed back”

“Alamosa could play up the San Luis Valley’s reputation as a UFO viewing area and develop a tourist draw with a related event!”

“More maps that show spots for put in/take out for water recreation on the Rio.”

“I think a lot of our issues are not that we don’t have enough events, but that they aren’t well communicated and the public isn’t always sure if they should attend or take part. Come up with ways for the community to be involved, such as generating local fandom, competing on attendance for prizes, etc. Open Mic Nights, connect with schools and clubs, etc.”

“Have some police walk the park and trail system near the river. Recently I have not felt safe taking my children to these areas because of the homeless people and people using drugs that have seemed to have around. New activities will be successful if people don’t feel safe.”

“I would love to see another bridge, or two, crossing the river and connecting the trails in additional locations”

“Bring back the summer fest! Would be nice to have also a combo Art and Music fest either together or alternating late spring through fall”

“Volunteer experts providing nature walks (birding walks, plant walks, ecosystem walks) for a small fee through the Rec Center; funding would go to the Rec Center”

“Other cultural events...Pow-wows, Oktoberfest...we have a diverse population whose cultures are not celebrated.”
Summary of Public Meeting #2 Results

Q: WHAT WORDS COME TO MINE WHEN YOU THINK OF THE RIO GRANDE CORRIDOR IN ALAMOSA?

Q: WHY IS THE RIO GRANDE, SPECIFICALLY IN ALAMOSA, IMPORTANT TO YOU?

“A free outdoor classroom. It connects open spaces within the community.”

“Health and wellbeing, recruitment of employees, lifestyle and economic development.”

“It’s a recreational asset to our community and a centerpiece to the City.”

“Allows me to interact with nature and be able to exercise. Brings value to the community and property.”

“It’s my daily escape!”

“The Rio Grande is a place to connect with others in the community, with myself, and with nature.”

“I live near the river and walk on it every day. I float on the river during the summer and appreciate its natural beauty so close to our city. The Rio Grande is what makes Alamosa special.”

“As a new member to the community it’s important to me to see the life of outdoor spaces be maintained or improved. The Rio Grande is important to the ecosystems and should be appreciated.”

“Health and wellbeing, recruitment of employees, lifestyle and economic development.”
WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

PLEASE VOTE ON ONE OF THE OPTIONS BELOW THROUGH THE MENITMETER LINK

CONNECTION 1  RIPARIAN PARK
CONNECTION 2  ADAMS STATE
CONNECTION 3  THE WILDERNESS
CONNECTION 4  DT TO MALM

BETWEEN THE TWO R.O.W. LOCATIONS, WHICH DO YOU PREFER?

BETWEEN THE TWO BRIDGE LOCATIONS, WHICH DO YOU PREFER?

PLEASE RANK THE FOLLOWING POTENTIAL CONNECTION AREAS:

1st Place Votes
2nd Place Votes
3rd Place Votes
4th Place Votes

0 responses  5 responses  10 responses  15 responses  20 responses
Summary of the Analysis Process

The analysis portion of the master planning process included an objective review of findings from previous reports and planning efforts. The goal of this process is to take into account social, environmental, geographic, and historical context of each section along the Rio Grande Corridor. Several site visits and meetings with important stakeholders were also taken into consideration. The results of these efforts ultimately informed the recommendations described in this master plan document.
RIO GRANDE RIVER CORRIDOR
EXISTING CONDITIONS
RIPARIAN PARK SECTION:

With stunning views of the Rio Grande, the Alamosa Riparian Park, located in north Alamosa, consists of 203 acres of valuable wildlife habitat that also provides low-impact trail access for hiking, mountain biking, and wildlife viewing. Approximately five miles of trail on three distinct loops wind their way through habitat consisting primarily of Cottonwood gallery. While it is within walking distance of several neighborhoods and schools, the Park is a self-contained entity and does not link with any outside trail networks, despite being within eyesight of Alamosa’s disc golf course and several City Ranch trails located directly across the Rio Grande, such as the 109-acre Oxbow Recreation Area. As a result, the Riparian Park primarily serves residents in the immediate vicinity - where some of Alamosa’s more affluent residents live. The Riparian Park has the potential to be an anchor for a greater, more connected trail system in Alamosa that brings additional visitors in addition to those who have the luxury of living within walking distance.

The Riparian Park, created in 2018, is one of Alamosa’s more recent recreational investments, and was initially formed with the purchase of the land by Western Rivers Conservancy (a non-profit organization dedicated to saving rivers through land acquisition) with a GOCO Open Space grant. This property was then transferred to the City of Alamosa, placed under a permanent conservation easement with Colorado Open Lands, and is now maintained by Alamosa Parks and Recreation. This was the first conservation easement placed on City property.

On the east side of the Rio Grande Corridor, approximately half a mile north of the Riparian Park trailhead, exists the North River Pavilion. This recreational asset provides a dedicated shade structure and boat ramp, which is frequently used in warmer months as a launch point for inner tubing, paddleboarding, and rafting trips down the Rio Grande. The majority of these float-trips terminate either at the State Avenue River Access, or continue further downstream to Cole Park.
ADAMS STATE UNIVERSITY:

Just east of Adams State University’s (ASU) athletic fields, the Rio Grande Corridor carves its way further South through Alamosa. The earthen levees are heavily used by students and residents in this section - particularly runners and cyclists. ASU has a deep history of elite runners, and boasts over 50 national collegiate running titles which further underscores the importance of the trail access to the ASU community. Many of Alamosa’s recreational assets lie just on the other side of the river. The Alamosa City Ranch, home to a wide range of walking and cycling trails, a 27-hole disc golf course, as well as the city-owned Cattails Golf Course are directly east of ASU’s campus and athletic facilities.

With an enrollment of just over 3,000 students, ASU has all the educational and athletic facilities typically associated with that of a state university. Its campus adjacent to this stretch contains several hundred student housing units, making for the most densely developed residential area in Alamosa. Despite this, currently the only way to access the recreational opportunities of the Alamosa City Ranch is to traverse the State Avenue bridge - a minimum 1.5 mile journey for those who live near ASU’s campus. This bridge does not currently have a pedestrian crossing nor a dedicated bike lane, and the existing sidewalk traversing the bridge is a mere +/- 3'-6" in width, allowing for only one direction of pedestrian/bicycle traffic. Considering how essential this bridge is for connecting residents to the recreational assets of Alamosa City Ranch and Blanca Vista Park, it is evident that the current connectivity and trail network is not sufficient.

A combination of public and private properties abut the river in this section. The trails atop the earthen levees, while high in use, terminate on both the north and south ends into private property. In order to continue in either direction down the Rio Grande Corridor, users are forced away from the levee trails and onto streets with vehicular traffic. These gaps and lack of connectivity to the Alamosa City Ranch on the north side of the river corridor are a topic addressed throughout this document.
COLE PARK/"THE WILDERNESS" SECTION:

Similar to the Adams State University section, this area of the Rio Grande Corridor is comprised of earthen levees on either side with trails atop them. The north side of the river corridor continues to be primarily City of Alamosa property, with City Ranch trails and the Cattails Golf Course dominating the land usage. Along the south side of the river corridor, the levee trails back against residential properties, with two exceptions.

“The Wilderness” is a +/- 14 ac. property owned by the City of Alamosa that is regularly trafficked by residents, runners, and cyclists. True to its name, informal trails and features can be found throughout this section of the Rio Grande Corridor. Land masses from an older, defunct levee system are still present on site. Signs of wildlife are also easy to come by in this riparian eco-system. Cole Park ( +/- 14.5 ac.) is also owned by the City of Alamosa and sees the highest usage of any public space in Alamosa. Many city events occur at Cole Park, as it is host to flexible programming spaces, as well as athletic fields, picnic shelters, a playground, a pump track, and a skate park. In addition, it serves as a makeshift trailhead for users of the Rio Grande Corridor due to its proximity to population hubs and connectivity to the river.

This section is where two of the three existing pedestrian and automotive river crossings in Alamosa can be found. The State Avenue bridge is an essential link for Alamosa’s population hubs to the City Ranch and Blanca Vista Park, however its existing state is designed for automotive traffic, with little thought given to the pedestrian, cyclist, or even disabled experience. On the north side of the State Avenue bridge is the State Avenue Boat Ramp project, which was recently constructed in 2021, and serves as a “halfway” river access point between the North River Pavilion and the Chicago Dam / Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge.

The pedestrian bridge, connecting Cole Park to East Alamosa, was built in 1997 in response to concerns about children walking to Polston Primary School in East Alamosa, which has since been demolished. This pedestrian bridge still serves East Alamosa residents, providing a safer alternative than the State Avenue bridge and Highway 160 bridge.
DOWNTOWN AND DIVERSION SECTION:

Further south along the Rio Grande Corridor, the primary land uses on either side of the river transition from residential and educational to commercial and industrial uses. Lands on the south side of the river are dominated by rail yards, while the north side is primarily riparian buffer transitioning into residential properties that makeup East Alamosa.

As the levees continue southeast, the use of the trails atop them drops considerably. Lack of wayfinding signage and confusing ownership of these parcels is not clear to recreational users, which leads to decreased foot traffic. City ownership of parcels containing the levees ends approximately 500’ southeast of the Hwy. 160 bridge crossing. From there, ownership transitions to a mix of private/industrial uses, with the most prominent being the San Luis & Rio Grande Railroad tracks. The safe crossing of these railroad tracks poses significant challenge in the connection of trails linking the Riparian Park to the Alamosa Wildlife Refuge.

The Westside Ditch diversion structure is also located within this section.

The existing structure is in poor condition, and has been the subject of studies and proposed improvements by the Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project to improve hydrological functioning in order to benefit wildlife, recreational, and agricultural uses. Unlike the Rio Grande, the Westside Ditch does not have any formal or informal trails on either side of it. It also is not possible to navigate by watercraft due to the dangerous diversion structure. It does, however, provide the closest link to the Rio Grande for Alamosa’s southern neighborhoods.

Although not owned by the City, this section of the river corridor receives semi-frequent use. Navigating this section of the river corridor is confusing to users due to lack of wayfinding signage, lack of trail maintenance, and uncertainty as to where the trails lead. This section will be a key component of this Master Plan, as it represents a major and necessary link to in connecting downtown Alamosa and the National Wildlife Refuge.
ALAMOSA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SECTION:

The Alamosa Wildlife Refuge was created in 1962 to preserve ~12,000 acres of habitat for migratory birds and resident wildlife. It is one of three wildlife refuges in the San Luis Valley (Monte Vista and Baca Wildlife Refuges being the other two). The Refuge lies within the Rio Grande Floodplain and consists of wet meadows, old river oxbows, riparian corridors, and dry uplands. The west side of the Refuge abuts the City of Alamosa municipal border and the Rio Grande River. Water from the river helps maintain the habitat of songbirds, water birds, waterfowl, raptors, and many other species of land animal. Because a large portion of the Refuge is designated as a wildlife sanctuary and is seasonally closed to public access, only a handful of formally defined walking trails can be found throughout the Refuge in order to reduce environmental impact. Fishing, canoeing, boating, jogging, and bicycling are seasonally prohibited due to their conflict with the Refuges’ wildlife conservation mission, as these activities may result in disturbance to wildlife.

The Rio Grande Nature Trail, an approximately 3.5 mile loop, stems from the Refuge headquarters. Further southeast, the Bluff Nature trail, an approximately 2.3 mile loop, can be found adjacent to Road South 116. These trails, in addition to the Refuge’s hunting areas, make this a large attraction for outdoor recreation enthusiasts in the San Luis Valley and the greater Mountain West region.

Several trails within Alamosa’s Toivo Malm Trail Network technically fall within the limits of the Refuge. Crossing the Rio Grande from these trails into the Refuge, however, is currently not possible. Visitors to the Chicago Dam also technically pass through Refuge property. Access to the Refuge is limited to mostly vehicular traffic off of Emperious Road (which leads to the Chicago Dam fishing area and parking lot), and from El Rancho Lane (which leads to the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge Headquarters and Visitor Center). Currently, the Chicago Dam structure is the closest semblance to a pedestrian connection linking the City of Alamosa and the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge. In periods of low water, some
users have been reported to occasionally cross the structure on foot, a dangerous and unauthorized trek. While no “point-of-entry” statistics exist for this section of the Refuge, it can be reasonably assumed that this corner sees a significant percentage of its visitor traffic due to the proximity to population centers of Alamosa, as well as the quality and convenience of fishing at the Chicago Dam. Considering just how many Alamosa residents use the Rio Grande corridor for walking and cycling (as the Project Team learned in the public engagement phase), to not have a dedicated pedestrian connection to a valuable cultural resource such as the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge is a missed opportunity.

Each of these stretches along the river corridor have their own unique identity to them. While the Riparian Park and Downtown-Diversion sections have stark contrasts in users and feel, they share the common thread of abutting one of the San Luis Valley’s most treasured resources. Creating and cohesive trail network from northwest Alamosa to the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge would align with the public’s desire for more regional connectivity of outdoor trails, as demonstrated in the City’s 2017 Comprehensive Plan.
Aerial view of the Alamosa Riparian Park trailhead and parking lot. Continuing a trail south adjacent to the Rio Grande will be challenging due to private property ownership.

The sole entrance into the Riparian Park is gated to prevent motorized vehicles entering (both gas and electric), forcing recreational users off of the trail and around the gate.

The Alamosa City Ranch trail network is visible on the east side of the Rio Grande. Accessing this network from the Riparian Park would require a 4.7 mile journey by car across town.

The Alamosa Disc Golf Course boasts 27 holes/baskets and sees frequent use.

Wayfinding signage throughout the Riparian Park is visible and easy to understand. Three “loop” trails are offered - brown, green, and blue.

River access for rafts, inner tubing, and paddle-boarders is available at the recently enhanced North River Pavilion.
ADAMS STATE
EXISTING CONDITIONS
Users atop the levee heading north along Stadium Drive are quickly impeded by fencing, delineating private property. This forces to either turn around or turn off the trail entirely.

The trails atop the levee are generally in good condition, though ownership of the land intersects Adams State University property and various other private property owners.

The south end of the trail in this section unofficially terminates into the private property of Trinity Lutheran Church parking lot, forcing users onto Monterey Ave. Signage within the parking lot warns that this is not a river access point.

The Cattails Golf Course and Alamosa City Ranch trail network is visible on the other side of the Rio Grande. Accessing these assets from here requires a lengthy journey.
"THE WILDERNESS" & COLE PARK
EXISTING CONDITIONS

CATTAILS GOLF COURSE
STATE AVE, RIVER ACCESS
STATE AVE, BRIDGE
STATE AVE
"THE WILDERNESS"
COLE PARK

BLANCA VISTA PARK

FIRST ST
2ND ST
3RD ST
4TH ST
EDISON AVE
SAN JUAN AVE
STATE AVE
LA VERA AVE

COLE PARK PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE
HWY 160 BRIDGE
BROADWAY AVE
Aerial view of the levee trail system terminating due to property ownership. As a result, users are directed away from the river and out onto La Veta Avenue.

“The Wilderness” (left), provides a buffer between the Rio Grande and some of Alamosa’s denser residential neighborhoods to the south.

Trails in this section of the river corridor are generally in good condition. Because of their proximity to some of Alamosa’s residential neighborhoods, they see high levels of use.

The State Ave. bridge is the primary access point to many of Alamosa’s recreational assets. The existing configuration is uncomfortable and dangerous for non-automotive traffic.

The State Ave. River access is an important trailhead and boat launch. This access point is approximately halfway between the Riparian Park and the Refuge. Note the lack of pedestrian crossing on State Ave.

The Cole Park pedestrian bridge is currently the only non-automotive connection between the two banks of the Rio Grande River.
DOWNTOWN TO DIVERSION
EXISTING CONDITIONS

COLE PARK

HWY 160 BRIDGE

EAST ALAMOSA

WESTSIDE DITCH
DIVERSION STRUCTURE

ALAMOSA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE PROPERTY

SOUTH ALAMOSA
The lack of a dedicated pedestrian crossing/underpass at the Hwy. 160 bridge poses a danger to users. It is also unclear whether the trail is intended to continue downstream.

Litter, encampments, and the unsafe highway and railroad crossings dissuade users from continuing south of downtown.

Pedestrian connectivity is lacking both along the river corridor trails as well as on the Highway 160 bridge itself.

On the north side of the Rio Grande, levee trails are in good condition, despite falling on private property, resulting in a disconnect from other levee trails.

The Westside Ditch Diversion is in need of repair/replacement to bring it up to modern standards. It has the potential to serve as a whitewater feature and/or boat passage due to its significant drop in the river water surface elevation.

The Westside Ditch is used for irrigation, and primarily falls on private property. It could, however, potentially be used to connect South Alamosa to the river corridor.
The SL&RG trestle bridge, looking east. The rail lines are still semi-active and the bridge is not rated for pedestrian or vehicular activity.

Rail lines bisect the levee system, creating an unsafe condition for recreational users. Dedicated rail crossings and signage is needed.

Wayfinding signage in the Toivo Malm trail network is in good condition and well-placed. Additional wayfinding signage is needed elsewhere throughout the river corridor.

Open space in this portion of the river corridor has great potential to be converted into additional conservation areas, or into a future City of Alamosa park.

The Chicago Dam, looking east. This is a prime fishing spot in Alamosa.

Emperious Road is the only vehicular access road leading to the east side of the Chicago Dam Fishing Access.
SUMMARY OF EXISTING TRAIL NETWORK:

A network of both city-owned and informal trails currently exists within Alamosa along the Rio Grande Corridor. These trails primarily take advantage of the earthen levee system that runs along both sides of the river throughout Alamosa. These trails see semi-frequent use but suffer from a lack of connectivity between them primarily due to property ownership issues and infrastructure impediments. As a result, users who wish to venture along the river corridor from Alamosa to the Wildlife Refuge are unable to do so without straying from the existing trail network(s), subjecting users to a higher risk of vehicular collision.

SUMMARY OF EXISTING RIVER CROSSINGS:

Crossing the Rio Grande is currently only possible in the commercial hub of Alamosa, with three bridges (two vehicular and one pedestrian) spanning the gap between Alamosa and the Alamosa City Ranch/East Alamosa.

State Avenue Bridge

The State Avenue Bridge primarily serves as a vehicular bridge, with a span of approximately 360’. It is a critical piece of infrastructure and provides access to many of Alamosa’s recreational assets. This bridge does not currently have a pedestrian crossing nor a dedicated bike lane, and the existing sidewalk traversing the bridge is a mere +/- 3’-6” in width, allowing for only one direction of pedestrian/bicycle traffic. The current configuration is not sufficient for pedestrians and cyclists.

Cole Park Pedestrian Bridge

This pedestrian bridge, which was built in 1997, was intended to connect residents of Alamosa to Polston Elementary School (since demolished). While no longer providing a necessary safe passage for schoolchildren, the pedestrian bridge still serves the important function of giving East Alamosa residents a far safer option than the State Avenue bridge and Highway 160 bridge.

Highway 160 Bridge

The Highway 160 Bridge is the primary crossing for Alamosa’s commercial and industrial traffic. It provides a critical link to the East Alamosa community, as well as the greater San Luis Valley. Crossing this bridge as a pedestrian or cyclist proves to be an intimidating and uncomfortable experience. Additionally, no designated pedestrian crossings exist on either side, both grade or below the bridge along the riverbank. Upgrading this piece of infrastructure should be a high priority project.

Several other structures currently span the Rio Grande as a function of larger infrastructure projects.

San Luis and Rio Grande Railroad Trestle Bridge

The San Luis and Rio Grande Railroad trestle bridge is an iconic structure with historical significance in Alamosa, whose history is inextricably tied to the rail industry. While this parcel of land and the bridge is privately held, future ownership of this property has been in question due to the Railroad’s pending bankruptcy. The rail lines are still semi-active at the time of this report, and the trestle bridge itself is not rated or designed for recreational use.

Westside Ditch Diversion Dam and Headgate (Diversion Structure)

The Westside Ditch Structure is a piece of infrastructure associated with the San Luis Valley’s demand for agricultural irrigation. The infrastructure is in poor condition, as documented in the Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project’s 2019 inventory. Because no deterrent or signage is currently in place, traversing the Rio Grande across this structure is possible on foot, although it is not permitted and unsafe.

Chicago Ditch Diversion Dam

The Chicago Ditch diversion dam falls on federal land, as part of the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). In addition to its primary function as an irrigation source for the ANWR, this publicly accessible location is the only riverbank within the ANWR where fishing is allowed. While the Dam appears traversable in times of reduced flow, crossing the structure is prohibited.

Expanding the number of bridges, diversifying their locations, and appropriately designing them to accommodate their context and user groups will be a crucial step in achieving the vision and goals defined as part of this master plan.
SUMMARY OF DESTINATIONS ALONG THE RIVER CORRIDOR:
The Rio Grande Corridor is host to a wide range of attractions and destinations. These destinations draw

- Fishing Opportunities (especially at diversion structures)
- Alamosa Wildlife Refuge
- Cattails Golf Course
- Alamosa City Ranch
- Alamosa Riparian Park
- Alamosa Disc Golf Course
- Adams State University
- Downtown Alamosa
- “The Wilderness”
- Blanca Vista Park
- Cole Park
- Carroll Park

CHALLENGES:
Accessing the Rio Grande Corridor is challenging for many users, primarily due to property ownership issues. In many locations, particularly along the right (south/west) riverbank, private property and the major vehicular bridges interrupt the levee trail and are barriers to their use, limiting their integration into the greater trail network of Alamosa. Additionally, as the City of Alamosa continues to grow in population, residents are living further removed from the Rio Grande and its recreational opportunities.

While the earthen levee system in place makes for a natural trail system as a by-product of flood management, often times the grade change between the tops of these levees and their adjacent riparian benches poses a challenge for users to safely venture closer to the riverfront.

A safe, continuous, well-planned trail network and river access plan is critical to all future river improvement projects.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Better connect the existing trail network by purchasing trail corridors and privately held property, where possible.
- Enhance safety by reducing pedestrian/cyclist/vehicular conflicts at underpasses and trail crossings.
- Provide safer pedestrian bridge crossings by separating pedestrians and cyclists from vehicular traffic, preferably by separating these uses entirely.
- Enhance trailheads with improved parking and accessibility.
- Install and maintain comfort stations throughout the river corridor in strategic locations.
- Create enhanced, user-specific trails (i.e. birding, mountain biking, ADA accessible, etc.).
- Increase access to the Rio Grande for South Alamosan’s and underserved communities.
- Upgrade and expand the existing seasonal trails that are within the riparian benches adjacent to the Rio Grande.
- Create a regional environmental center to better inform the general public on the unique ecosystems and history of the Rio Grande and greater San Luis Valley.
- Leverage the recently awarded $4.8 million RAISE Grant funding with other grant opportunities to continue recreational enhancements.
Summary of the Property Appraisal Process

The purpose of this section is to provide guidance regarding future land acquisition for the Alamosa Riparian to Refuge trail and City open space network. It is often easiest to design and route trails owned by local, state, or federal agencies. The majority of existing trails throughout Alamosa fall on lands that meet this criterion. However, select parcels that are currently privately held impede a more cohesive and well-designed trail network throughout the Rio Grande Corridor. The subject parcels were identified as an early actions project due to their relatively small size and their necessity in creating a connection between the Riparian Park and the Wildlife Refuge, thus closing gaps identified as priorities in the public engagement process.

The City should also implement a strategy of purchasing property along the Rio Grande Corridor whenever possible. Once a property has been purchased, a public access easement can be placed upon the property, followed by re-selling the property with the easement in place. This method of property and easement acquisition does come at the cost of legal fees and slight loss in property value, but the net gain of obtaining a permanent easement on the property typically outweighs the short-term financial loss.

New land acquisitions can be controversial. In cases where a property is being considered for a fee title land acquisition, the demonstrated need for a trail connection can often strengthen the basis for funding and approving such an acquisition. In select instances, local agencies will negotiate the purchase of a smaller, linear corridor of land in which to establish a trail connection. Similarly, local agencies commonly pursue trail easement acquisitions across private property, where the underlying title to the property remains private, but recreational access is granted (similar to public utility easements). This process of trail easements allow for the underlying title to the property to remain private.

With its in-house appraiser and wide breadth of access to leading real estate research sources, THK prepared professional appraisals of select parcels in Alamosa to determine fair market value of both property acquisition and trail corridor easements. At the time of writing this master plan, Alamosa Parks and Recreation had been in discussion with one of the landowners for the acquisition of their property.

The map on the following page indicates the parcels THK and Alamosa Parks have identified as important for the completion of a unified trail network and open space preservation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parcel No.</th>
<th>Current Zoning</th>
<th>Owner</th>
<th>Proposed Use</th>
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<td>Trail</td>
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<td>HASLETT TIMOTHY W</td>
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<td>Trail / Potential Education Facility / River Access</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>River Access</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Rural - N/A</td>
<td>EAST ALAMOSA WATER &amp; SAN DISTRICT</td>
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<td><strong>Summary of Appraised Properties: $150,000 - $170,000</strong></td>
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Overview of Master Plan Recommendations:

The proposed recommendations are the heart of a master plan. The suggested improvements provide a roadmap for expansion of Alamosa’s trail network and supporting environmental assets. The following recommendations address current gaps within the trail network, especially where neighborhoods lack safe and easy access to the Rio Grande Corridor. Proposed recommendations are the result of the project team visiting Alamosa numerous times, obtaining a clear understanding of the opportunities and challenges that exist throughout the analysis phase of the project, as well as meeting all of Alamosa’s communities to obtain input on what the strengths, weaknesses, and desired future of the river corridor.

The recommendations generally include:

• Expanding and completing the trail network between the Alamosa Riparian Park and the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge.

• Increasing the number of river crossings to improve connectivity between the two banks of the Rio Grande River.

• Ensuring equitable access to the trail network.

• Expanding and enhancing environmental systems and educational opportunities within the River Corridor.

• Addressing existing safety conflicts between pedestrians/bicyclists and vehicular traffic.

Findings from the assessments, analysis, and public engagement were integrated into high-level, community-informed design recommendations for programming and amenities for basic improvements. On November 2, 2022, the following recommendations were presented to the Alamosa City Council in a joint work session with the Alamosa Recreation Advisory Board.
Branding and Wayfinding

A comprehensive wayfinding signage program should be developed for the Rio Grande Corridor with the assistance of local artists and subject-matter experts, in conjunction with Alamosa Parks and Recreation.

Information Kiosk Signs

Information signage generally has an illustrative map containing information beneficial to the trail user, such as locations of restrooms and water fountains, resting areas, trail/river access points, and written information regarding rules and regulations. These signs are usually located at trailheads and other entrances to the Rio Grande River Corridor.

Directional Signs

Directional signs should be located along the corridor and should provide directional information to the user. Directional signs are used at trail intersections and allow the trail user to know the destinations that are ahead for each alternative route. In some areas along the Rio Grande Corridor, existing directional signs and mile markers are already in place. These directional signs should be evaluated and expanded as needed throughout the River Corridor.

Education/Interpretative Signs

Education/Interpretative signage provide information about significant natural or cultural events and/or places along the Rio Grande. Explaining the importance of riparian ecosystems or a specific species of plant or wildlife are typical ecological themes found on these signs. Telling a story about the peoples who once occupied the San Luis Valley or have influenced the region (both good and bad) are examples of information that will enhance the users overall experience and appreciation of the Rio Grande Corridor.

The community should be further engaged in developing this program by identifying the history and stories that should be highlighted throughout the River Corridor.

Cohesive wayfinding and directional signage should be implemented throughout Alamosa. An example of a wayfinding and branding family of educational, directional, and kiosk signage.
Education

Alamosa's trail network provides the opportunity to provide access to the entire length of the Rio Grande as it passes through the city. This is an extremely rare opportunity to experience the natural environment for over 23 miles within a city’s boundary. The variety of environments is dynamic. We envision numerous interpretive opportunities along the entire length of the trails, and two major nodes of region-wide importance.

Alamosa Arboretum

There is a unique opportunity to enhance the approximately 14 acres of city-owned property known as the “The Wilderness,” located between the Rio Grande and Alamosa's residential neighborhoods. Currently the land is filled with cottonwoods and some informal paths. There is an opportunity to establish a collection of plants historically found in the San Luis Valley. This intentional “natural” area could include paths meandering through the collection of trees and shrubs and connect to the levee trail system.

San Luis Valley / Rio Grande River Nature and Environmental Center

An educational center of regional / statewide / national significance that complements the Fort Garland Museum and Cultural east of Alamosa is recommended. With access to the Rio Grande and views of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, the proposed location is adjacent to the East Alamosa neighborhood and has one of the few areas of the riverfront that is not owned by the National Wildlife Refuge. The Refuge closes access to the river within their jurisdiction between the months of May and August to protect migratory bird species nesting. The identified site includes direct river access for a short length of the river. It is the intent that this will attract support from national foundations and philanthropists, given how bold the vision of this facility is.

Environmental education programs are an excellent community asset

An example of a potential nature/environmental center

Acquiring select properties and easements would increase river access in Alamosa
MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS - AREA 1:

RIPARIAN PARK CONNECTIVITY IMPROVEMENTS

Reconfiguration and improvements to the main entry gate of the Riparian Park are needed to enhance the Park’s accessibility. This will require regrading of the entryway to be more in line with condition at State Avenue crossing (man-gate adjacent to vehicular gate).

A dedicated pedestrian bridge is needed to span the Rio Grande, connecting to the Alamosa City Ranch to the east. This pedestrian bridge should be placed either from Riparian Park trailhead across the Rio Grande, or from directly west of the North River Pavilion into Riparian Park so that it’s better insulated from the adjacent residential neighborhood. A pedestrian bridge will greatly enhance connectivity throughout the entire Rio Grande River Corridor, giving recreational users the opportunity to loop their routes and better access the Alamosa Disc Golf Course, Oxbow Recreation Area, City Ranch, etc.

General improvements at the Riparian Park trailhead are needed. Better organization of parking, additional landscaping, site features such as picnic tables, boulders, comfort station, etc. should be integrated into the parking lot and trailhead area. The proposed comfort station should be sited near the trailhead/entry gate as well, to allow for ease of maintenance and pumping of waste.
MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS - AREA 2:

BIKE LANE FROM STADIUM DRIVE PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE TO THE ALAMOSA RIPARIAN PARK

Currently, the Riparian Park is disjointed from the levee trail system on the west side of the Rio Grande due to the number of private property owners between the Park and the Adams State University athletic field trails. It is recommended that a dedicated bike lane is created between these two destinations with painted markings and wayfinding signage, resulting in better delineation between pedestrian and vehicular traffic. The proposed bike lane would total approximately 1.25 miles. This method of connecting these entities is a much more economical and realistic approach than acquiring numerous R.O.W. trail corridor easements from private property owners.

Wayfinding signage improvements should be installed at both the Riparian Park trailhead and Stadium Drive pedestrian bridge trailhead, informing users of the recreational trail opportunities ahead.

Currently, the levee trails end abruptly into private property, forcing cyclists onto Stadium Drive and with vehicular traffic.

Example of a dedicated bike lane in a rural community.

Example of bike lane wayfinding signage.
MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS - AREA 3:

STADIUM DRIVE PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE
AND TRAILHEAD IMPROVEMENTS

Due to its proximity to Alamosa’s population centers and relation to Adams State University’s campus, a pedestrian bridge spanning the Rio Grande (and associated trailhead) is needed in this location. In April of 2022, the City of Alamosa applied for and was awarded a 2022 RAISE Grant totaling $4,777,640, funding the construction of this recommended pedestrian bridge. This will better connect Alamosa residents and Adams State University students to outdoor recreation facilities and promote walk-ability and bike-ability throughout the Rio Grande Corridor.

As part of this project, general trailhead and parking improvements will be needed. Better organization of parking, additional landscaping, site features such as picnic tables, boulders, a comfort station, etc. should be integrated into the parking lot and trailhead area. River access should also be incorporated into this project to allow for kayak and raft put-in/take-outs.

It should be noted that Adams State University technically owns the property with river levees behind their athletic facilities. As part of these improvements, coordination with the University should take place to formalize the acquisition of a trail corridor easement along these levees.

Aerial view of the future Stadium Drive pedestrian bridge.

Example of features that could be incorporated into the future Stadium Drive pedestrian bridge trailhead.

Conceptual elevation graphic of the future Stadium Drive pedestrian bridge.
MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS - AREA 4:

SEASONAL TRAILS WITHIN RIPARIAN BENCHES

One of the largest gaps within the Rio Grande Corridor and levee trail systems occurs between “The Wilderness” and the Adams State University athletic field levees. It is recommended that a trail corridor easement is acquired on this property. This will potentially require reworking the existing levee structure, and additional engineering studies may be needed.

As referenced in the Area 3 Recommendation, the property on which the levee trail behind the Adams State University athletic fields should also be acquired and formalized into a City of Alamosa recreational trail.

Several “social” trails currently exist in the Rio Grande riparian benches, between the levees and the riverfront. It is recommended that these informal “social” trails be upgraded and converted into higher-quality seasonal trails. These seasonal trails should be designed so that in periods of high-water, washout of surfacing material is minimized. Seasonal trails could potentially take the form of boardwalks in sensitive/key areas.
It is recommended that a pumptrack/mountain bike feature be developed between the old and new levees within “The Wilderness,” taking advantage of this interesting and unique topological feature. A mountain bike skills park with boulders and log-type balance beams should also be incorporated for added interest.

The word “Alamosa” in Spanish translates to “Cottonwood.” This open-space area along the Rio Grande is home to some of the most impressive cottonwood galleries throughout the River Corridor. It is recommended that “The Wilderness” be designated a City Arboretum due to its ecological value and number of impressive cottonwoods. Areas within “The Wilderness” should be designated as off-limits to allow for preservation efforts. Trail surfacing within “The Wilderness” should be cleared and improved as-needed, creating a trail system that is intentional and designed, but still feels natural. The diversity of species historically native to the San Luis Valley should also be enhanced.

Wayfinding and trail signage should be incorporated into these improvements. Signage should be educational, referencing the diversity of wildlife and vegetation.

Additional site improvements such as benches, trash receptacles, nature-play features, etc. are also recommended in this area.
MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS - AREA 6: STATE AVENUE BRIDGE IMPROVEMENTS

It is recommended that additional structural engineering analysis is performed on the State Avenue Bridge to determine if the existing structure is capable of being retrofitted with a cantilevered sidewalk addition on the east side of the bridge, due to utilities on the west side.

Because only a single end needs to be supported, cantilevers can cover much greater distances than beams, trusses, and other common structures used in bridges. These cantilevers can be used to construction pedestrian walkways that extend off the side of the bridge. Since the existing State Avenue bridge lacks sufficient space for pedestrians and bicyclists, this improvement could significantly reduce the risk of injury that many users currently face when attempting to share bridges with oncoming vehicular traffic.

Additionally, a levee trail underpass should be installed on the north and south ends of the bridge, removing the need for users to cross State Avenue in conflict with vehicular traffic.

It is recommended that the State Avenue River Access and trailhead also be improved by installing a comfort station. Further, a signalized pedestrian crossing on the north side of the State Avenue Bridge should be installed, as the existing condition currently poses a danger to users.
MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS - AREA 7:

HIGHWAY 160 BRIDGE IMPROVEMENTS

It is recommended that additional structural engineering analysis is performed on the Highway 160 Bridge to determine if the existing structure is capable of being retrofitted with a cantilevered sidewalk addition on the east side of the bridge, due to utilities on the west side.

Because only a single end needs to be supported, cantilevers can cover much greater distances than beams, trusses, and other common structures used in bridges. These cantilevers can be used to construction pedestrian walkways that extend off the side of the bridge. Since the existing State Avenue bridge lacks sufficient space for pedestrians and bicyclists, this improvement could significantly reduce the risk of injury that many users currently face when attempting to share bridges with oncoming vehicular traffic.

A levee trail underpass should be installed on the east and west ends of the bridge, removing the need for trail users to cross Hwy 160.

It is also recommended that the a signalized pedestrian crossing on the north side of the Highway 160 Bridge be installed, as the existing condition currently poses a danger to users.

The existing crossing at the Highway 160 bridge is not conducive to pedestrian traffic.

Illustrative rendering showing a potential reconfiguration of the levee trail underpass (Credit: 2019 Downtown Design Plan)
MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS - AREA 8:

WHITEWATER FEATURE AT WESTSIDE DITCH DIVERSION

Because the Westside Ditch Diversion structure is in need of repair and/or replacement, and due to the significant drop in water surface elevation at this structure, a standing wave-play feature would attract boaters and kayakers throughout the San Luis Valley region. This attraction would also help in increasing the awareness and frequency of use along this section of the river corridor.

The wave-play structure would also allow for safe passage of kayakers, inner tubers, and other non-motorized boaters through the Westside ditch. Private property ownership of the Westside Ditch means that any such features will require buy-in and coordination with the Owner to address funding and liability concerns.
MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS - AREA 9:

DOWNTOWN TO TOIVO MALM, SOUTH ALAMOSA AND WILDLIFE REFUGE TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS

As referenced in the ‘Identified Properties & Proposed Uses’ section of this Master Plan, it is recommended that the City purchase select properties and easements to formalize the existing levee trail connections between Downtown, South, and East Alamosa, ultimately connecting to the National Wildlife Refuge.

Of particular importance, a trail should be constructed adjacent to the Westside Ditch beginning at the Westside Ditch Diversion structure and heading south to the Toivo Malm trailhead. This would greatly increase the access opportunities for the South Alamosa neighborhood to the Rio Grande River - a direct response to the community survey findings and AHEC public engagement efforts. This project would require further coordination between land owners along the Ditch, as this recommendation was made after property appraisals had been completed. The value of this trail corridor would prove to be especially valuable to community residents, especially since South Alamosa would benefit the most from additional safe walking corridors.

Due to the increase in trails, additional wayfinding and directional signage will be needed to inform users of the overall trail network.

It is recommended that the City formalize rail crossings where needed. Existing trails should be enhanced by improving surfacing, widening sections of trail as needed, clearing and grubbing overgrown vegetation, etc.

Privately-owned levee property on the north side of the Rio Grande could be easily converted into recreational trails and river access.

Recreational access should be brought to this relatively unknown section of the Rio Grande Corridor.
MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS - AREA 10:

PROPERTY ACQUISITION AND GATEWAY PARK TO THE ALAMOSA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

It is recommended that the City purchase this piece of property with the intention of constructing a regional nature and environmental center with opportunities for river access. The City of Alamosa is the regional hub of the San Luis Valley. Having a facility of this level of significance in Alamosa and East Alamosa makes sense. The identified site includes direct river access for a short length of the river.

It is recommended that the existing levee trails on this property be enhanced by improving surfacing, widening sections of trail as needed, and clearing and grubbing overgrown vegetation. A formalized railroad crossing for pedestrian and bicyclists will be needed to provide access to this facility.

Ample land near East Alamosa and the Rio Grande offers stunning views of Mount Blanca, and provides an excellent opportunity for a dedicated nature/environmental center.

An example of a bike trail in a rural community.

Located adjacent to the SL&RG trestle bridge, this site also has historical significance to it.
MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS - AREA 11:
PROPERTY ACQUISITION AND GATEWAY PARK TO THE ALAMOSA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

It is recommended that the City purchase this piece of property, currently held by the East Alamosa Water and Sanitation District, and convert it into an open-space and/or Gateway Park, with a network of trails leading to the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge. This property is unique in that it has access to river frontage.

Unimproved social trails throughout this property connect the adjacent neighborhoods to the Rio Grande but lack clear direction or wayfinding signage. Trails are also in need of improving.

Acquiring this property would allow for City of Alamosa property to abut against the National Wildlife Refuge property.
MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS - AREA 12:
CHICAGO DAM PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE AND TRAILHEAD IMPROVEMENTS

The Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge has indicated their willingness to participate in discussions regarding the installation of a pedestrian bridge across their existing diversion structure - the Chicago Dam. This would create an additional loop of the river trail network and complements the other planned projects.

General trailhead and parking improvements are also recommended. Better organization of parking, additional landscaping, site features such as picnic tables, boulders, a comfort station, etc. should be integrated into the parking lot and trailhead area. River access should also be incorporated into this project to allow for kayak and raft put-in/take-outs.

A bridge in this location would benefit all recreational users and allow for pedestrians and cyclists to loop around the entire trail network.

The Rio Grande Corridor would benefit greatly from having a pedestrian bridge at the Chicago Dam.

An example of a pedestrian bridge that could be used to span the Rio Grande at the Chicago Dam.
**Phasing**

Typically, trail projects spanning long distances are not constructed as a single project. Instead, these connections are completed as an iterative and systematic series of projects and phases. Additionally, funding may only be available for smaller, more manageable projects. Recognizing this, this document recommends breaking out the general recommendations into short, mid, and long-term phases.

The City should also implement a strategy of purchasing property along the Rio Grande Corridor whenever possible. Once a property has been purchased, a public access easement can be placed upon the property, followed by re-selling the property with the easement in place. This method of property and easement acquisition does come at the cost of legal fees and slight loss in property value, but the net gain of obtaining a permanent easement on the property typically outweighs the short-term financial loss.

**SHORT TERM PHASING:**

The projects listed below are considered quick-action items, and should be among the first projects implemented to work towards the greater vision and goals of this master plan:

- Pedestrian bridge at Stadium Drive (funded through recently awarded RAISE Grant)
- Convert and expand the existing social trails in the Rio Grande’s riparian benches into a season/submersible trail network within this riparian zone.
- Acquisition of trail corridor easements and private properties
- Parking lot and trailhead improvements
- Wayfinding signage improvements
- Improved surfacing for key trails
- Construction of a pump-track bicycle feature between the old and new levees adjacent to “The Wilderness”
- Construction of bike lanes connecting the trail network to select destinations
- Construction of trail underpasses beneath the State Avenue and Hwy. 160 bridges

**MID-TERM PHASING:**

The projects listed below are considered projects that will require additional study and may require short-term projects to be completed prior to their implementation:

- CDOT Active Transportation Grant for cantilevered pedestrian/cyclist bridges at State Avenue Bridge and Hwy. 160 Bridge
- Construction of dedicated at-grade pedestrian railroad crossings
- Construction of a pedestrian bridge within the Alamosa Riparian Park,
spanning the Rio Grande and connecting to the Alamosa City Ranch.  

- Construction of a pedestrian bridge adjacent to the Chicago Dam.  
- Develop a trail adjacent to the Westside Ditch, better connecting South Alamosa and the Toivo Malm trail network to the Rio Grande Corridor.  
- Improved surfacing for key trails.  
- Install comfort stations at select locations throughout the Rio Grande Corridor.  
- Develop “The Wilderness” into a dedicated Alamosa Arboretum with improved trail surfacing and wayfinding signage.  

**LONG TERM PHASING:**  

- Construction of a regional environmental/nature center for the Rio Grande Corridor and greater San Luis Valley.  
- Construction of a pedestrian tunnel beneath existing railroad tracks, allowing for safe passage to and from the future nature center.  
- Construction of a whitewater wave feature at the Westside Ditch Diversion structure.  
- Continue to acquire trail corridor easements and select private properties, as needed.  
- Connectivity to San Luis Valley-wide trails, such as the “Heart of the Valley” regional trail that is currently being conceptualized by San Luis Valley Great Outdoors.

It is anticipated that major stakeholders will use this document to garner community support and solicit funding from public entities and grant agencies.
Cost Estimates

Estimated costs for specified segments of the Riparian to Refuge Master Plan were created using 2022 construction costs. Construction costs in Colorado in 2022 remained volatile due to supply chain and labor shortage issues. When using this information in ensuing years, an inflation factor should be applied. The estimated costs are based on the elements presented in the Master Plan Recommendations chapter of this Master Plan. These estimated costs are intended to be used by managers and planners to project development costs of future trail projects.

15% has been added to the estimated costs for design and engineering services. This percentage will vary depending on level of involvement and complexity of technical input, like cantilevered trail sections over the creek, and bridges. Typical projects range from 12%-15%. A 20% contingency is included. Land and/or easement acquisition costs have been included.

Utility extensions associated with any potential project have not been included in the estimated costs because this element can vary widely in cost due to site specific conditions. When using these estimated costs, it is necessary to add costs for engineering and utilities.

The estimates have been broken down into twelve recommended areas. By applying the estimated costs for 100% completion, the entire trail system as planned, would cost approximately $14 million.

RIPARIAN PARK TO REFUGE TRAIL PLAN
Rough Cost Estimate
December 1, 2022

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* RECOMMENDED AREA #3 HAS ALREADY BEEN FUNDED
** ESTIMATE DOES NOT INCLUDE PRICING FOR THE NATURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER
Grant Agencies and Programs

One of the primary goals of the Riparian to Refuge Master Plan is to develop a funding and implementation plan. As the Master Plan has developed, the project team attempted to create implementable projects that could be funded through various sources. Several of the projects that are identified in the Recommendations sections were designed to create manageable implementation costs that would be covered through grants, increasing the likelihood that these projects could be funded and built within a reasonable amount of time.

As part of this master planning effort, THK assisted the City of Alamosa in receiving a 2022 RAISE Grant, offered through the US Department of Transportation. RAISE Grants are used for planning and capital investments that support roads, bridges, rail, ports, and/or intermodal transportation. The City of Alamosa received $4,777,640 of federal funds to apply towards the construction of a new pedestrian bridge near Adams State University’s athletic facilities. This bridge will better connect Alamosa’s population centers to the Rio Grande Corridor and Alamosa’s recreational assets within the Alamosa City Ranch.

Several grant agencies and programs exist that can help fund projects in the Rio Grande River Corridor. These agencies and programs include, but are not limited to:

**GREAT OUTDOORS COLORADO (GOCO):**
Community Impact Grants help build or improve community parks, outdoor recreation amenities, outdoor athletic facilities, and environmental education facilities. Funding is also available for land acquisitions.
Habitat Restoration Grants improve and restore Colorado’s rivers, streams, wetlands, and critical habitat on permanently conserved lands.
GOCO’s Centennial Program funds high-value, once-in-a-generation visions and projects. Considering the regional impact and high price tag of this project, the City of Alamosa should consider this grant program.

**COLORADO PARKS AND WILDLIFE (CPW):**
The Colorado State Recreational Trails Grant Program (Non-Motorized Trails) funds projects for large recreational trail grants, small recreational trail grants, trail planning, and trail support grants.

**DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL AFFAIRS (DOLA):**
The Department of Local Affairs distributes Conservation Trust Fund (CTF) dollars quarterly, on per capita basis, to over 470 eligible local governments, counties, cities, towns, and Title 32 special districts that provide park and recreation services in their service plan. Funding can be used for the acquisition of land, development, and maintenance of capital improvements for recreational purposes on any public site.

**TROUT UNLIMITED (TU):**
Embrace a Stream Program (EAS) is a matching grant program administered by TU that awards funds to TU chapters and councils for cold water fisheries conservation.

**PEOPLE FOR BIKES:**
People For Bikes Community Grant Program supports bicycle infrastructure projects and targeted advocacy initiatives that make it easier and safer for people of all ages and abilities to ride.

**THE COLORADO HEALTH FOUNDATION (CHF):**
Activating Places and Spaces supports locally-defined, place-specific efforts to get people outdoors and actively engaged in their neighborhoods – together. Foundation grant funds will support costs associated with project/program planning and/or implementation for up to one year. In addition, funding for technical assistance for community engagement, communications and marking is available.

**COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (CDOT):**
Transportations Alternatives Programs (TAPs) are federal funds that are distributed through State transportation agencies. TAP is a competitive grant program. Projects eligible for TAP funding include the design and construction of pedestrian and bicycle facilities, environmental mitigation of transportation activities, scenic activities, and the preservation of historic transportation facilities.
Senate Bill 17-267 Sustainability of Rural Colorado was passed at the end of May of 2017 and allocated $1.8 billion to transportation related infrastructure projects, of which 10% must be used for off highway transportation improvements. This could include trails and parking areas near state highways.

COLORADO WATER CONSERVATION BOARD
Grants and Special Programs – Flood and Drought Response Fund, Wild and Scenic Rivers Fund,
Water Plan grants fund river restoration and recreation projects and could be used to further in-stream improvements in Alamosa.

FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION
On November 15, 2021, President Biden signed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) (Public Law 117-58, also known as the “Bipartisan Infrastructure Law”) into law. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is the largest long-term investment in our infrastructure and economy in our Nation’s history. It provides $550 billion over fiscal years 2022 through 2026 in new Federal investment in infrastructure, including roads, bridges, active and mass transit, water infrastructure, resilience, and broadband. These include:

- Tribal funding
- Highway safety improvement program.
- Reconnecting communities
- Railroad crossing elimination program
- Safe street and roads for all
- SMART

NATIONAL FOUNDATIONS
- International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA)
- The Nature Conservancy
- National Wildlife Federation
- Audobon
- Center for Biological Diversity
Leveraging Grants

While granting agencies and programs are an excellent source of funds to help implement projects, many require a significant “match.” The amount of funds required for matching grants varies greatly depending on the agency. For example, most GOCO grants require a 25% match for the requested funds, while some DOLA grants require a 100% match for requested funds. Matching funds can also take two forms:

Cash Match:
Cash matches are funds that are being spent from a specific account or project. For municipalities, these funds are usually provided from General Funds or Capital Improvements.

In-Kind Match:
In-Kind matches are services or materials that are being provided or donated. This can include labor, planning, building materials, maintenance or other services.

Each grant will have specific language that will help determine how to calculate the overall match and composition of the match.

As previously shown, several of the projects identified in the Master Plan have significant cost for implementation. As municipalities and organizations related to the Rio Grande River Corridor move forward with grant applications, providing matching funds for numerous grants can be a difficult and unrealistic process. A more efficient approach to seek funding for implementing projects as to leverage grants and projects against each other. Leveraging grants is utilizing a specific grant for a project as the required matching funds for a second grant for the project, and vice versa. For example, a typical grant request to fund a project looks like Figure A. However, if the grants are leveraged against each other, the process looks more like Figure B.

Leveraging can also be done with utilizing project costs from associated projects. For instance, if CDOT is planning bridge improvements in Alamosa that include reconstruction of bridge abutments along the Rio Grande River Corridor, a grant application could be submitted to GOCO for construction of a trail underpass that includes the CDOT bridge abutments. The bridge abutments could be utilized as necessary matching funds for the grant submittal.

With the recent RAISE grant awarded for the Stadium Street bicycle and pedestrian bridge, the $4,777,640 can be considered project funds available for matching grants on related projects.
In this example, Alamosa would have to provide a combined $112,500 in matching funds for the grant applications. However, if the grants are leveraged against each other, the process looks more like Figure ‘B’:

In this example, the City of Alamosa would only have to provide $10,000 in matching funds as a project partner, saving the City $102,500.