

NORTH MESA RECREATION AREA MASTER PLAN



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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A special thank you to the community groups, residents, and participants who dedicated their time and shared their visions to help shape this plan and the future of the North Mesa Recreation Area.

Thank you to the staff and coordinators at Fuller Lodge for hosting public meetings.



LOS ALAMOS
where discoveries are made



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01

INTRODUCTION

PROJECT PURPOSE

The North Mesa Recreation Area Master Plan is a collaborative effort between Los Alamos County, community members, and local stakeholders to define a long-term vision for one of the community's most significant recreational assets. The site encompasses approximately 26 acres of County-owned open space and is currently home to a variety of amenities and trailhead connections.

The purpose of this planning process is to listen to the needs of residents, evaluate existing conditions, and establish a clear framework to guide improvements, investments, and programming at North Mesa. The Master Plan will identify priorities for enhancing recreation while ensuring the site remains an accessible and inclusive community resource. Ultimately, the plan seeks to strengthen quality of life in Los Alamos by providing a safe, engaging, and sustainable recreation area that balances active use with the preservation of valued open space.



North Mesa Recreation Area Boundary

SITE OVERVIEW

The North Mesa Recreation Area is located on the north side of Los Alamos, adjacent to residential neighborhoods, Los Alamos Middle School, and the North Mesa Stables. The site currently includes a soccer field, small parking area, mud volleyball pits, dog park, tennis courts, playground, and trailhead access to the Kwage Mesa Trail. The Brewer Arena and associated rodeo grounds border the property to the east, while nearby neighborhoods, schools, and trail connections make the site a central recreational hub.

North Mesa has long played a dynamic role in the life of Los Alamos. Following the Cerro Grande Fire in 2000, the site became known as “FEMAville,” a temporary housing area for displaced residents. This chapter in its history demonstrates the site’s importance as a community safety net and flexible open space resource. Over the years, North Mesa has evolved into a multi-use recreation area that supports youth programming, neighborhood gatherings, and casual open space enjoyment. Amenities such as the soccer field, playground, and dog park provide everyday recreation opportunities, while larger amenities, like the riding facilities, showcase its capacity to support community-wide activities. The site also contains cultural and historic elements, including interpretive signs recognizing early homesteads (Lujan and Quintana), linking present-day recreation with the community’s deeper history.



The site's location adjacent to schools, neighborhoods, and the stables makes it a uniquely connected and visible community space. Key connections include:

- Residential neighborhoods to the west, east, and across San Ildefonso Road to the south.
- Los Alamos Middle School, just west of the site, creates opportunities for youth-serving facilities and partnerships.
- Kwage Mesa Trail, providing access to a larger open space and trail system.
- North Mesa Stables, where careful planning is required to avoid conflicts between recreation uses and horse activities.

As one of the last major pieces of undeveloped recreational property in the County, North Mesa presents an important opportunity to shape a space that meets current needs and anticipates the recreational demands of future generations.



FINAL CONCEPTUAL DESIGN



Through community visioning and feedback, residents generally favored the first of two options developed by the design team as the preferred conceptual design for North Mesa. This scenario balances the continuation of well-loved amenities such as the soccer fields, community garden, dog park, and playgrounds, with new facilities that expand recreation opportunities. Key additions include a 3-acre bike skills park, walking and running trails, sand volleyball, basketball and pickleball courts, and outdoor fitness features.

The design also invests in site-wide improvements, including new and upgraded restrooms, ADA-compliant access, new playground equipment, picnic shelters, water refill stations, and sustainable landscaping.

Taken together, the preferred design transforms North Mesa into a multi-purpose, community-serving recreation area that honors its history while meeting contemporary recreation needs. It creates a setting that supports youth sports, community fitness, tournament play, and neighborhood gatherings, while maintaining the open character and natural qualities that make North Mesa unique.



Participants at the Community Design Workshop
Source: Sites Southwest



02

EXISTING CONDITIONS

SITE ANALYSIS AND INVENTORY

COMMUNITY CONTEXT & CURRENT USES

The North Mesa Recreation Area encompasses approximately 26 acres of County-owned land on the northern edge of Los Alamos. The site is zoned Open Space – Active (OS-AO), which allows for active recreation while preserving the natural character of the landscape. The property contains a variety of amenities, including:

- **Soccer Field** – Irrigated, well-maintained turf field used primarily for youth soccer.
- **Dog Park** – Popular facility with separated areas for large and small dogs with fabric shade canopies, drinking/dog watering fountains, and trash receptacles. Users have noted that some drainage, grading, and irrigation upgrades would be welcomed.
- **Playground** – Equipped with swings and climbing structures, though aging equipment and limited shade present concerns. A drinking fountain and picnic tables are present. The engineered wood fiber resilient surfacing needs to be replenished to provide maximum fall protection for playground users.



- **Tennis Courts** – Two courts, with County plans to rehabilitate and convert one to include four pickleball courts along with ADA upgrades.
- **Volleyball Pits** – Three mud pits just east of the soccer field, used primarily for a single annual tournament; otherwise underutilized.
- **Paved Walking Trail** – A narrow loop through the field, approximately 4 feet wide; heavily used by walkers, joggers, and dog owners.
- **Trailhead Access** – Provides entry to the Kwage Mesa Trail system.
- **Parking Areas** – Two large unpaved, and largely undefined, lots west of the soccer field and east of the dog park, small paved lot near the playground/tennis courts and informal overflow parking areas used during the rodeo and community events.
- **Community Garden** – There is a small, but well-used community garden in the northwest corner of the recreational area. This garden is highly desired by local North Mesa residents.
- **Restrooms** – A full restroom is located at the southwest corner of the soccer field, which is closed in the winter due to weatherization concerns. A pit toilet located near the Kwage Mesa trailhead just outside the boundaries of the study area is open year-round.



The site also contains utility infrastructure that remains in place from the FEMAville development, including water and sewer lines, fire hydrants, overhead and underground power, and storm drainage facilities that may be of benefit in future site development.

The North Mesa Recreation Area is well-situated within the community fabric of Los Alamos. It is bordered by residential neighborhoods on multiple sides, Los Alamos Middle School to the west, and the North Mesa Stables to the north.

Brewer Arena and rodeo grounds adjoin the property, and the Kwage Mesa Trailhead expands access to the County's larger open space and trail system.

The site serves a diverse set of users:

- **Youth Athletics** – The soccer field is heavily programmed by youth soccer organizations.
- **Dog Owners** – Both the designated dog park and surrounding open areas are widely used for dog exercise.
- **Families & Children** – The playground attracts families, though improvements are needed to better serve users of all ages.
- **Event Participants** – The mud volleyball tournament and annual rodeo generate peak use, including parking demand that extends into adjacent grassy areas.
- **Everyday Users** – Residents frequently walk, jog, and bike through the site, using it as both a recreation destination and a connection to trail systems.



ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

NV5's preliminary environmental and site assessment identified several key conditions:

- **Stormwater and Drainage** – The site slopes west to east, draining into the adjacent canyon. Poor drainage is evident in the dog park, soccer fields, and volleyball areas, requiring careful design and potential incorporation of green stormwater infrastructure (GSI).
- **Utilities** – Non-potable water is available for irrigation, and existing utilities are in place from prior site use. Overhead and buried power lines cross portions of the property, requiring attention in siting new amenities.
- **Vegetation and Landscaping** – The site includes a mix of turf (soccer field), xeric edges, and areas of weeds. Landscaping is limited, with opportunities for xeriscaping, pollinator gardens, and tree planting to provide shade.
- **Wildlife and Habitat** – While the site is not a designated sensitive habitat, deer and other wildlife are common visitors. Residents have raised concerns about bears and elk. Habitat enhancements could support pollinators and low-maintenance natural areas.



NV5

One Park Square
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Albuquerque, NM 87110

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- **Historic and Cultural Resources** – Two homestead landmarks (Lujan and Quintana) are recognized with interpretive signage, though the signage requires replacement and could be more fully integrated into the site experience.

Overall, the report's findings reinforce the need to integrate ecological design, drainage management, and sustainable landscaping into the Master Plan.

PREVIOUS PLANNING & REGULATIONS

Several existing County plans, policies, and regulatory frameworks provide guidance for how this site should be considered in relation to Los Alamos' broader system of parks, open space, recreation, and community services. Together, these documents emphasize stewardship of natural resources, improved recreational access, and the need for coordinated planning to support both residents and visitors.

TRAILS & OPEN SPACE MANAGEMENT PLAN

The County's Trails & Open Space Management Plan establishes a framework for balancing recreation with conservation. It emphasizes protecting cultural, historic, and natural resources while enhancing accessible recreational access. For North Mesa, this means ensuring that future improvements integrate trail connectivity with open space stewardship practices.

OPEN SPACE MANAGEMENT PLAN

This plan outlines a county-wide Open Space System that maintains ecological corridors and recreation opportunities. Its emphasis on soil erosion control, vegetative health, and habitat management is highly relevant to North Mesa, where drainage and vegetation management are ongoing challenges. Any improvements at North Mesa should align with the County's broader open space system and sustainability principles.

COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT INTEGRATED MASTER PLAN (2023)

The Integrated Master Plan identifies service gaps and future needs across parks, recreation, trails, cultural services, and libraries. For North Mesa, it highlights several relevant improvements, including upgraded restrooms, shade for playgrounds, ADA accessibility upgrades, standalone pickleball courts, and formalized volleyball courts. Importantly, the plan also recognizes the economic and tourism potential of outdoor recreation, suggesting North Mesa could play a role in attracting sports tourism and supporting destination events.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (2016)

The Los Alamos Comprehensive Plan establishes overarching community values, including the protection of open space, promotion of Los Alamos as an "outdoor community," and preservation of neighborhood-scale open areas. For North Mesa, the plan reinforces the importance of protecting its open space character while accommodating recreation. It also identifies hosting regional sports events as a revenue source for maintaining parks and open space, aligning with the site's potential to host tournaments and events.

PARKS MASTER PLAN (2005)

The 2005 Parks Master Plan specifically identified North Mesa as the only tract of parkland within the Town of Los Alamos large enough to serve as a county-wide park. It recommended developing a graphic master plan for the site through a community task force - a recommendation that this current Master Plan effort fulfills. The plan also emphasized maintenance, safety, and the potential for a community recreation center, reflecting the long-term significance of North Mesa in the County's recreation system.

TREE PRESERVATION AND MITIGATION POLICY

This County policy establishes standards for tree protection during construction and requires mitigation when desirable trees are impacted. At North Mesa, this policy will be critical in balancing new development with preservation of existing vegetation, particularly along the edges of the site and in areas where shade trees are needed.

PEDESTRIAN MASTER PLAN (2025 DRAFT)

The Pedestrian Master Plan highlights the importance of safe, accessible, and connected walking routes across Los Alamos. Its emphasis on integrating open space connections into the transportation network is directly applicable to North Mesa, where walking loops, trail connections, and neighborhood access points are central to the site's design.

ZONING REGULATIONS

The North Mesa Recreation Area is zoned Open Space - Active (OS-AO). This sub-zone is intended to protect the natural character of the county's wilderness areas designated for active public recreation and public use, and enjoyment with limited development such as campgrounds, athletic fields, and stables.



OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

OPPORTUNITIES

- Enhance and expand recreation amenities, including pickleball, basketball, sports courts, shaded play areas, and bicycling amenities including pump tracks, skills area, etc.
- Upgrade the dog park with improved drainage, fencing, and shade elements.
- Incorporate pollinator gardens, xeriscaping, additional community garden plots, and water-efficient irrigation.
- Celebrate history and culture through interpretive signage, art, and storytelling.
- Increase capacity for community events (e.g., rodeo, tournaments) while balancing everyday neighborhood use.
- Ensure accessibility for all ages and abilities, with ADA-compliant paths, play areas, and amenities.
- Improve trail connectivity and widen the existing walking loop, linking amenities and connecting to neighborhoods, schools, and Kwage Mesa Trail.



CONSTRAINTS

- Drainage challenges due to west-to-east slope and localized flooding at amenities.
- Conflicts with equestrian activities at adjacent stables (noise, bike/horse interactions).
- Limited staffing for maintenance, requiring durable, low-maintenance facility design.
- Community concerns about overdevelopment and loss of open space.
- Aging infrastructure, including playground equipment, shade structures, fencing, and bathrooms.
- Limited lighting, with dark sky compliance restricting options for field illumination.





03

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

SUMMARY OF ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

A central goal of the North Mesa Recreation Area Master Plan was to ensure the community's voice shaped the future of this important recreational space. Engagement was structured in phases to move from listening and visioning to hands-on design, and finally to review and prioritization. Each step was designed to be accessible, transparent, and inclusive of different user groups, from youth athletes to equestrian stakeholders.

Engagement was carried out over four community meetings, virtual facilitation, online engagement, and survey.

The four community meetings were comprised of two listening sessions, a design workshop, and an open house.



Participants at the Listening Session



Participants at the Community Design Workshop
Source: Sites Southwest

COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSIONS

The first meetings introduced the purpose of the master plan, the project timeline, and the opportunities for public involvement. This session was designed primarily as a listening event. Staff presented background information about existing conditions and then invited residents to split into groups and follow a facilitated exercise outlining activity areas on a map of the recreation area.



Presentation at the first Listening Session
Source: Sites Southwest

COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSION 1

MARCH 12, 2025 | 100 ATTENDEES

This session laid the foundation for the plan by surfacing both core values such as preserving open space and existing amenities - and emerging ideas like a bike park, shade structures, and expanded trails.

PARTICIPATION



Attendees included residents from nearby neighborhoods, youth soccer families, equestrian stable licensees, community gardeners, bicycling groups, trail users, and County staff.

FORMAT



Following a brief presentation, participants engaged in open discussion at breakout tables with staff facilitators and drew light mock-ups on maps of the area, outlining their visions.

FOCUS



Attendees were asked to share their overall vision for the recreational area, what amenities they currently value, unmet needs, and concerns about future changes.

COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSION 2 - ONLINE

MARCH 26, 2025 | 25 ATTENDEES

To broaden participation and increase access, the project team hosted an online listening session two weeks after the initial in-person meeting. This virtual session allowed residents unable to attend in person to engage with the same materials and introduction, ensuring that more community members had an opportunity to shape the plan.

FORMAT

What do you want to **preserve** here?

Soccer fields, parks, plants natural to area	A trail that encompasses the area	More the Bike Skills Park	Preserve "the trail that encompasses the area and extend to new facilities"	Could have a network of trails through the park	Volleyball pits: Must Volleyball tournament would be good to retain; want multiple sand courts too. Allow tournaments to be hosted here	Wide open views of Sangre de Cristo, mud volleyball pits, dog park, tennis courts, restrooms, soccer fields
Expanding the community garden area, there is not much room to expand the existing location, but a second location could be added	Preserving open feeling	Want to preserve space for wild animals, not wanting to create an attraction for too many dog events, this is a part of a residential area	Though I support developing the area, if the space ends up NOT being developed, I think it warrants restoration to seeing it towards a river natural state. Right now it's "limited open space" because it's been trampled on and used for dumping construction supplies against the fence.	Preserving the views, access to natural areas, preserving or moving upspreading the dog park, keeping the recreational opportunities such as the tennis courts and soccer fields.	Could there be another staging area for the County? Could we structure it when it up to be better integrated with surrounding uses?	Sand volleyball pits would be good; healthy residents, volume of playball is big, louder than tennis courts. Want to keep open space within the loop trail; may need another refuge space (potential future fire)
The gardens: I'm not a user but see many happy people	preserving the dog park					

Participants worked collaboratively using a MIRO whiteboard platform, where they posted their responses to questions surrounding their vision of the recreation area.

PROCESS

What are the **existing** amenities that you would like to see improved here?

Dog park improved: bathrooms available; trails or walkways; parking	Accessibility to bathrooms: Dog park, open fields by walking trail, improving landscaping and picnic area	Concerns with having too much light; security lights are disruptive to residential areas	Lights for soccer field? Not sure if there would be issues or concerns with proximity to stables/houses	Access to, and collaboration with the stables. It would be wonderful for more families to walk through and enjoy the animals. Considerations with the physical access (signs) will need to be made to ensure the animals that get loose can't escape the stable area. It would probably help to have a "rules" or "guidelines" sign to remind folks not to pet or feed the animals without permission of the	There is also a traffic issue. During the 2000 fire, we could not get out of our neighborhood because of the traffic. Putting facilities drawing a lot of traffic is not suitable for North Mesa.	The whole team had a hard time evacuating. The fire on mesa with only a few ways out. That would mean stop developing everywhere, which is never going to happen. So while I think the traffic should be considered, I hope it's not a deterrent for this area.
Want the community to value the stables. Collaboration is key; their families to feel encouraged to enjoy this	Improving the foliage and perhaps the picnic/restrooms.	The bathroom is NOT ADA compliant, but that is in the works with the new nodes. Bleacher project	Irrigation and grass quality of soccer fields			

Facilitators encouraged participants to add digital sticky notes with ideas, reflections, and priorities. As in the in-person session, responses were captured in real time, allowing participants to see where perspectives converged and where they diverged.

RESULT

What **potential new amenities** would best serve the community of Los Alamos?

Junior roller Derby space: effective indoor having environment smooth hard surface, 108 ft x 75 ft for regulation track; additionally "social" seating, restrooms and access to drinking water	better open space	easy to come, but I can't buy into anything involving a new permanent indoor facility	Bike Park: Park restroom, roller Derby facility, Folger/Chute Trail information kiosk, improved space for kiosk/ restrooms	Mountain Bike Skills Park	Junior roller Derby: Current roller Derby team in NM, need to have a space for roller Derby tournaments, currently hosting tournaments out of town. Reserving space at Expo M&E Community adult league, too. Size: 108' x 75' + spectator seating, restrooms, changing rooms, etc. Need space for safety there is a lot of heat, but no water available	Three dedicated, quality sand volleyball courts: sand volleyball is inherently doubles (2v2) sport, so only one sand court like what is at Bow Park is not sufficient to support multiple people who interested in playing at once. Similar to roller derby, not possible to host tournaments locally. Need to travel to AZ or out of state for sand volleyball tournaments. A children's sand pit would also be desirable to create the sand volleyball courts are used for volleyball and not cluttered with toys or other items that can sand level caused injury at Bow Park. Lights would be desirable, as well as shade structures. Healthy water access would be nice too for cooling the sand on hot days; unfortunately, an irrigation system could be installed with the sand courts. Multiple courts would provide an opportunity for middle/high school sand volleyball club and not require traveling to AZ.
The country is working on making the roller Derby near the stables area, but the entrance, bathrooms and parking will affect the land we are discussing now need to think about the parking.	Shade structure with picnic tables and BBQ facility	Bike skills park	Bike skills park	Roller Derby: need space for roller Derby tournaments, currently hosting tournaments out of town. Reserving space at Expo M&E Community adult league, too. Size: 108' x 75' + spectator seating, restrooms, changing rooms, etc. Need space for safety there is a lot of heat, but no water available	Volleyball: practice may be shared with roller Derby, Folger/Chute Trail, etc.??	I'm involved with the adult and junior roller derby teams. An indoor space would be amazing, but at the very least a large flat area that is covered from the rain. It would be great to see the gymnasium space available for not just roller derby but multiple sports and organizations. I really want to see the area as being multi-use and benefit many sports and activities around.

The digital format not only confirmed the priorities raised at the in-person session but also helped to expand the diversity of voices contributing to the community vision. The input gathered through this session was integrated with all other engagement activities to guide scenario development and ultimately the preferred design.

COMMUNITY DESIGN WORKSHOP

APRIL 16, 2025 | 50 ATTENDEES

The second major engagement step was an interactive design workshop. This session moved beyond discussion into hands-on planning, giving residents the tools to physically shape their ideas.



Participants designing the recreation area
Source: Sites Southwest

MATERIALS



Large-scale base maps of the recreation area were displayed on tables. Participants were provided with cut-outs representing amenities and infrastructure (e.g., bike skills park, courts, picnic shelters, parking areas). Boards with precedent images illustrated different materials, styles, and landscape approaches for participants to consider.

PROCESS



Residents worked in small groups, placing cut-outs and sketching on maps (see below) to create their preferred layouts. Staff circulated to answer questions, provide technical context, and encourage collaboration.

PRESENTATIONS



Each group presented its map board back to the room, explaining how they balanced desired uses, circulation, and open space. See an example of the community design boards below.

NORTH MESA RECREATION AREA COMMUNITY DESIGN WORKSHOP

The community design boards captured a wide range of community ideas and became the basis for developing two preliminary design scenarios. They also revealed the importance of clustering active uses, maintaining buffer areas near the stables, and prioritizing shaded gathering areas.



COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE & SURVEY

JULY 22, 2025 | 70 ATTENDEES

The third engagement step brought the design process full circle. The County and project team presented two draft design scenarios derived from common themes identified from the community-made boards. Community members



Participants at the Open House
Source: Sites Southwest



FORMAT



Every attendee was invited to complete an 11-question survey, either on paper or online through a QR code. Questions asked residents to identify likes and dislikes for each scenario, highlight missing amenities, and vote for their preferred design. A ranking exercise asked participants to score improvements and features from least to most important, while two open prompts invited final thoughts and general feedback.

SURVEY



The survey was designed to address those in-person and online. The open house was structured for flexibility. Large display boards showed the scenarios alongside material and aesthetic precedents. Residents moved freely through the room, studying the designs and engaging directly with staff.

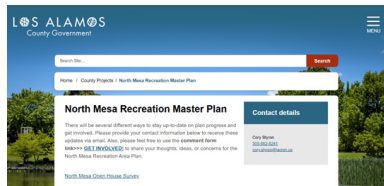
STAFF ROLE



Staff and facilitators “floated” throughout the room, answering questions, documenting comments, and listening for common issues or concerns that might not appear in survey results.

ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

To ensure a broad and inclusive reach, the project relied on robust online engagement strategies throughout the planning process. These efforts were designed to keep residents informed, involved, and able to participate - regardless of their ability to attend in person.



PROJECT WEBSITE

An official project webpage on the Los Alamos County site served as the central hub for community engagement. Here, residents could:

- Learn about the project's purpose, scope, and timeline.
- Access announcements, flyers, and press releases for upcoming meetings.
- View recorded Zoom sessions, transcripts, and meeting presentations.
- Click the "GET INVOLVED!" link to submit comments and stay informed via email updates.
- Find the North Mesa Area Recreation Master Plan document folder containing all public meeting materials.



PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS & VIRTUAL ACCESS

For every public meeting, the County published project announcements at least two weeks in advance. Each public announcement included the meeting date, time, and agenda, along with details on the in-person location, Zoom link for virtual attendance, and access to presentation materials and supporting documents. This early notice, posted both on the project page and through local news outlets like the Los Alamos Reporter, ensured transparency and maximized the opportunity for participation.



VIRTUAL PARTICIPATION & FACILITATION

Each public meeting offered a simultaneous online option, ensuring residents who could not attend in person were still heard. A facilitator was present during these virtual sessions to deliver meeting orientation, guide participants through discussion prompts and activities, and moderate the Q&A while capturing real-time digital input. This approach ensured that each meeting remained accessible, interactive, and responsive to community needs.



EXTENDED SURVEY ACCESS

Following the July 22 open house, the design scenarios were posted on the project website alongside a survey. Residents could review the two concept options online, complete the 11-question survey, rank improvements, share comments - ensuring participation from those unable to attend in person.

STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

COMMUNITY GROUPS	DESIRED USE NEEDS
Bicyclists	A designated area for bike skills, pump track, and a childrens' bike course. A safe space for cyclists to practice their skills, learn how to bike, and potentially hold tournaments.
Los Alamos Roller Derby	Availability to use a track/court without having to use the ice rink and share with the hockey team. A court that will be available year-round, preferably an indoor space.
Sand Volleyball Players	Central space that is designated just for sand volleyball, potential to host tournaments.
Open Space Advocates	Preservation of meadows, native plants, wildlife habitat, and dark sky character. Open space is seen as central to North Mesa's identity and should be valued alongside recreation uses.
Hikers	Safe, accessible trails with natural surfaces and clear connections to nearby trailheads and trail systems.
Gardeners	Expanded and well-managed community garden space with room for future growth for local residents.
Families	Playgrounds, nature play, picnic areas, and multi-use gathering spaces for all ages. Families value safe, shaded areas where children and adults can enjoy activities together.
Equestrians	Concerns over high activity levels next to the stables, activities and events that may spook the horses. Ask for some form of physical buffer to block the sights and mitigate sounds from the recreation area.

WHAT WE HEARD

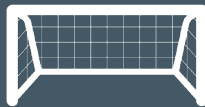
A PLACE FOR EVERYONE

Community members emphasized that North Mesa should remain a local hub for recreation, not just a destination for visitors. They envision a space inclusive of all ages and interests, offering activities ranging from biking and roller derby to dog walking, gardening, and youth sports. Residents want the area to serve as a multi-generational gathering place with amenities for both structured athletics and casual, family-friendly recreation.

PRESERVE WHAT WORKS



Existing trees and open space to maintain the natural feel and dark skies.



The soccer fields, dog park, tennis courts, and community garden, with interest in possible garden expansion.



Kwage Mesa Trailhead access and dirt walking paths, which provide valued trail connectivity.



The stables, which many see as an integral part of North Mesa's character and history.

DESIRED IMPROVEMENTS



Restrooms:
more facilities, better
maintenance, and ADA-
accessible options.



Parking & circulation:
improved layout to manage
increased use while
protecting sensitive areas
near the stables.



Shade & landscaping:
permanent structures and tree
plantings to provide relief from
sun and wind.



Signage & safety:
clearer wayfinding, trail
etiquette education, and
buffers between horses and
bikes.



Dog park:
drainage fixes, separate areas
for large/small dogs, more
shade, and seating.



Playground:
fenced for safety, refreshed
equipment, and shade
structures.

NEW AMENITIES REQUESTED



Bike infrastructure: pump track, progressive skills park, & connect to nearby trails. These features were the most consistently requested across all meetings.



Indoor sports space: regulation-sized multi-use facility, potentially indoor or covered, that could host roller derby, basketball, & other sports.



Picnic & gathering spaces: shaded seating areas, a central pavilion, and potential bandstand or flexible event area.



Water features: splash pad, drinking fountains, water bottle fillers, and dog stations.



Fitness & nature elements: outdoor exercise stations, pollinator gardens, and nature play areas integrated into the site.



Accessibility: trails and play areas designed for all abilities, including adaptive sports.

BALANCING PRIORITIES



1. **Open Space vs. Development:**
Many want to keep the natural feel and wildlife habitat, while others feel some open areas are underutilized and could support new recreational features.
2. **Bikes vs. Horses:**
The adjacency of the stables remains a sensitive issue. Some residents strongly support new biking facilities, while stable users worry about horse safety. Calls for buffers, vegetation screens, and educational signage reflect approaches for how these two groups can co-exist successfully.

STAFF INSIGHTS



County staff echoed many of these points, noting that:

- Maintenance capacity is limited, so designs should emphasize durability and low-water landscaping.
- Utilities and drainage will shape what's feasible on site.
- Existing zoning (Open Space – Active) allows recreation, but any major changes will require careful alignment with the ongoing zoning code rewrite.
- The site's potential lies in balancing local community needs with opportunities for sports tourism and youth programming.



04

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

WORKSHOP RESULTS

As noted above, during the April 16, 2025 workshop, residents gathered around large maps of the North Mesa Recreation Area to arrange cut-outs representing different amenities. While each group's layout was unique, several common themes emerged.

The bike skills park quickly became the centerpiece of most designs. Some groups placed biking features throughout the entire recreation area, while others concentrated them on the eastern or western side of the site. In either case, there was a strong contingent placing the biking facilities as a major focus of the area, with options for beginners, advanced riders, and everyone in between.

Participants also saw an opportunity for the community garden to serve as a buffer between the recreation area and the equestrian stables, softening the transition and reducing potential conflicts between horses and more active uses. The garden was often shown expanded or reconfigured to play this role more effectively.

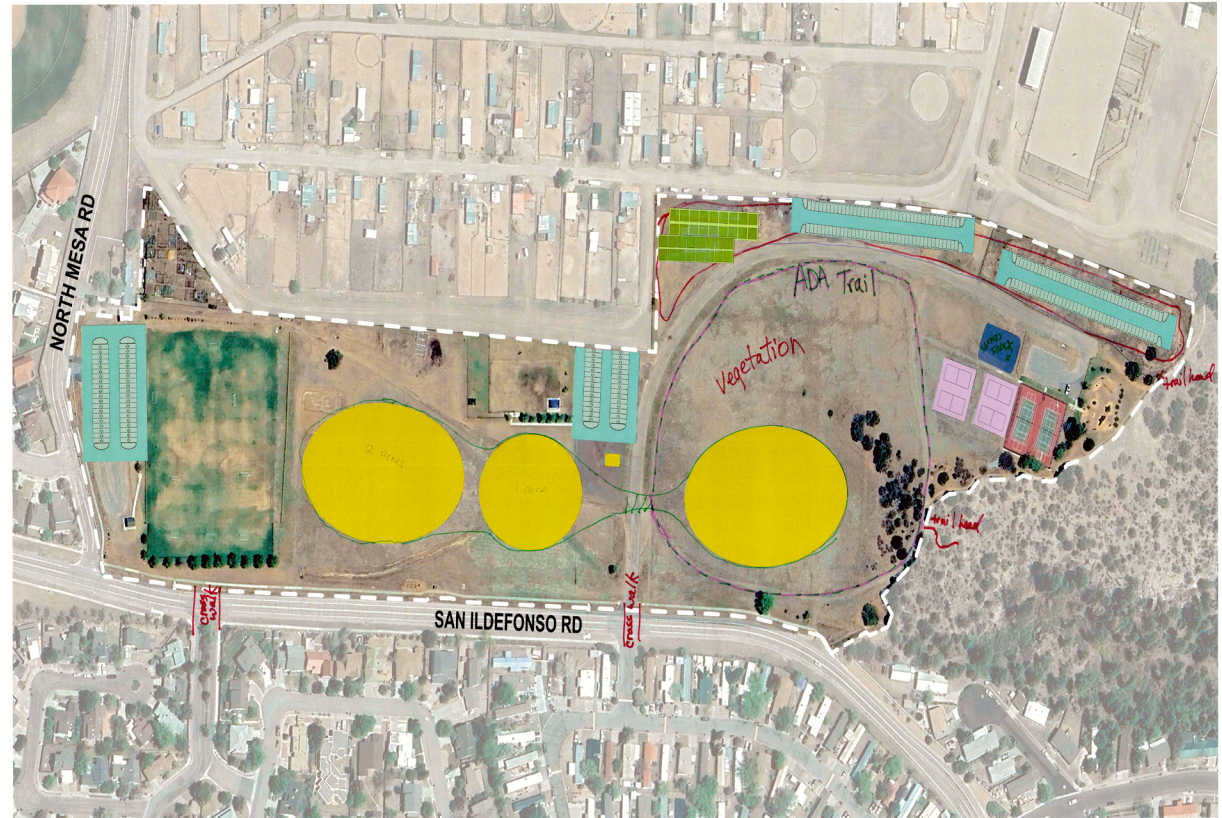
NORTH MESA RECREATION AREA COMMUNITY DESIGN WORKSHOP



The dog park was consistently kept in place near the soccer fields. Rather than relocating it, residents emphasized making improvements - better drainage, more shade, and additional seating, so it could continue to serve both people and pets.

Parking was added in several layouts, usually along the site's edges. Existing lots near the dog park and soccer fields were retained, with some groups suggesting new parking on the eastern side to better serve biking areas. Pickleball courts were kept paired with tennis courts to create a consolidated sports zone, while most maps included a central gathering space for shaded seating and community events.

NORTH MESA RECREATION AREA COMMUNITY DESIGN WORKSHOP



In the end, the mapping exercise painted a clear picture: residents want North Mesa to become a recreation area that balances active new amenities with the spaces they already love, while thoughtfully managing sensitive edges like the stables.

NORTH MESA RECREATION AREA COMMUNITY DESIGN WORKSHOP



NORTH MESA RECREATION AREA COMMUNITY DESIGN WORKSHOP



TWO COMPOSITE SCENARIOS

The ideas expressed at the Community Design workshop directly shaped the two conceptual scenario designs for the recreation area. Residents' preferences, along with staff input on site conditions, utilities, and maintenance informed the two alternatives presented here.



Participants sharing their group design
Source: Sites Southwest



SCALE = 1" = 60'
0 60' 120'

NORTH MESA RECREATIONAL AREA

OPTION A

CONCEPTUAL MASTER PLAN

Los Alamos, New Mexico
Conceptual Design
July 22, 2025

LOS ALAMOS
where discoveries are made



OPTION A

Option A created a recreation area that balanced active amenities with preserved open space. Beginning at the eastern end, the design introduced a cluster of courts and play features, including mud volleyball, tennis and pickleball courts, and a dedicated volleyball area. Nearby, the 2-acre bike skills park, complete with a pump track and children's bike playground, is positioned for easy access from the parking lot and is closely linked to the kids' natural play area and a ninja course. At the center of this zone, a large multi-use pavilion provide flexible space that could host covered basketball, roller derby, or other community events.

Along the northern edge, the community garden and new landscaping establish a buffer to the stables, reinforcing the separation of equestrian and active recreation areas. Moving westward, the heart of the site is preserved as open space. Accessible trails made of stabilized crusher fines, shade trees, and a pollinator garden create opportunities for nature play and quiet recreation, offering contrast to the more structured activity areas. At the far western edge, the existing soccer field remains in place, enhanced with improved shade structures for spectators. Trails connect these zones across the site, creating smooth circulation between each amenity while retaining the feel of a multi-purpose community recreation area.





NORTH MESA RECREATIONAL AREA

OPTION B

CONCEPTUAL MASTER PLAN

Los Alamos, New Mexico
Conceptual Design
July 22, 2025

LOS ALAMOS
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OPTION B

Option B organized the structure nearly opposite, with open space preserved on the east and active uses clustered on the west side. The eastern half of the site remains largely undeveloped, maintained as a native meadow that offers open space, habitat value, and opportunities for unstructured recreation. Within this half, the multi-use pavilion is placed closer to the eastern entrance, alongside the tennis and pickleball courts, the existing playground, and an open basketball court. By positioning these elements together, the design creates a smaller, complementary recreation cluster that is easily accessible from the east.

On the western side of the site, the bike park, pump track, and kids' bike track are grouped together with the soccer field, sand volleyball courts, an expanded dog park, and a children's nature play area. This concentration of activity creates a dynamic zone for sports, biking, and play. The existing community garden in this option is proposed for relocation to create space for a maintenance yard for the County, while a larger new garden is established along the northern edge. This expanded garden again serves as a buffer to the stables, strengthened with added landscaping.

Overall, Option B emphasized preservation, keeping a significant portion of the site in open meadow, while still providing well-defined hubs for recreation and community gathering.



PREFERRED CONCEPTUAL SCENARIO

Feedback received at the Community Open House and from the subsequent survey results, indicated that residents preferred Option A by an overwhelming majority. This alternative conceptual design represents an active and balanced approach that builds upon existing amenities while introducing new facilities to meet evolving community needs.

Despite Option A being the preferred alternative, residents had no shortage of further suggestions. There was significant pushback that the 2-acre bike park was still too small. Many cyclists requested that the bike skills park be at least 4-5 acres, however, other community members commented that the bike park was too large, and that the open space area needs to remain universal and less adult-focused. Many felt that 6 sand/mud volleyball courts were excessive, with requests to remove the mud volleyball pits, considering mud volleyball is only activated once a year for the annual tournament.

There was some pushback against the level of paved parking, with requests for overflow grass parking, or shuttle solutions. The meditation garden was questioned, with suggestions that it is not as important as other amenities. Some unique suggestions that came from residents' feedback were solar panel shading and a pond/wetland feature.

75%

OF RESIDENTS CHOSE
OPTION A AS THE PREFERRED
CONCEPTUAL DESIGN SCENARIO
IN THE SURVEY.

SITE FURNISHINGS

OPTION: RECYCLED PLASTIC



NATURE PLAYGROUND



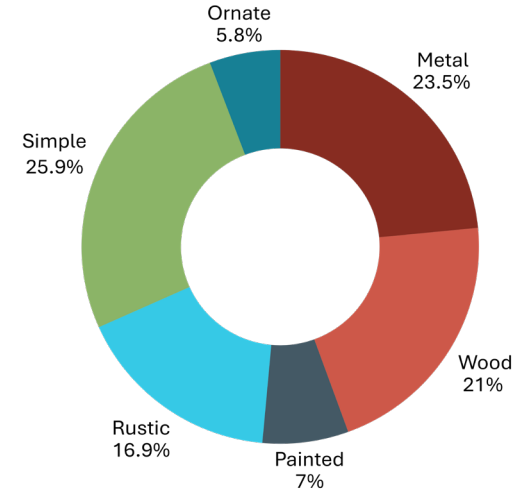
Design precedents with the highest votes

Residents expressed clear preferences for the types of surface materials they would like to see in the North Mesa Recreation Area. Crusher fines and dirt surfaces received the strongest support, with nearly 60% of respondents favoring crusher fines and just over half selecting dirt. These options reflect a community interest in maintaining a natural feel, lower maintenance costs, and accessibility for walking and multi-use trails. Asphalt received moderate support, with around 35–40% approval, suggesting it is seen as useful in some locations but not as the primary surface. Other materials received the least support, indicating little interest in alternatives beyond the main three.

When asked about the type of shade structures/gathering spaces are preferred, residents voted simple as the top choice with metal and wood following close behind. Preferences for simple, long-lasting, and easy to care for structures were discussed as valuable to residents.

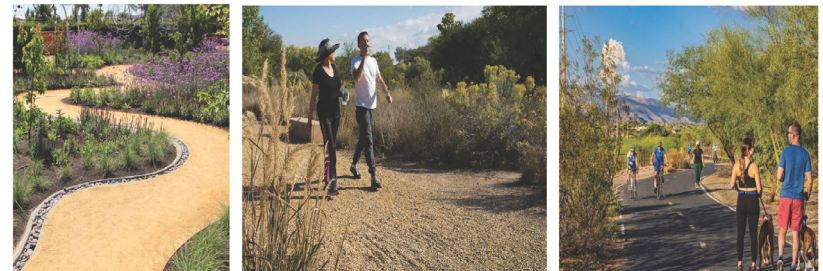
In regard to site furnishing materials, residents prefer recycled plastic with 64 responses, followed by perforated steel with 50 responses. Steel bar was the least voted for with just 37 responses. In community meetings, it was expressed by residents that they hope for a material that can best mitigate high heat and direct sun exposure, for the safety and comfort of users.

Survey results for the preferred style of shade structures/gathering spaces.



Source: Sites Southwest

ACCESSIBLE NATURAL PATH



SHADE STRUCTURE, PICNIC & GROUP SHELTER

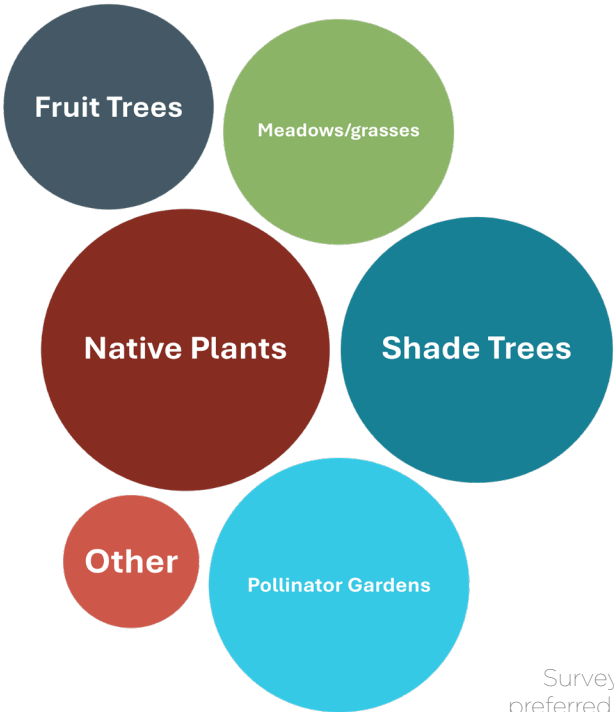


Example design precedents

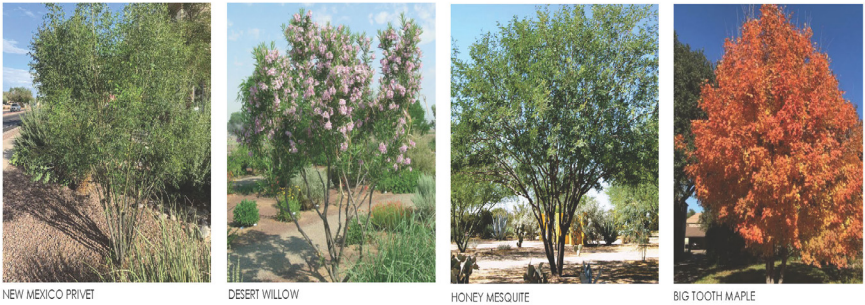
For landscaping, many residents felt that native plants and shade trees were the top two most important features. Pollinator gardens and meadows/grasses followed behind, with fruit trees seen as least important.

Taken together, these preferences show that residents want North Mesa to retain its natural character while providing durable, low-maintenance amenities. Their choices reveal a strong interest in surfaces and materials that feel connected to the landscape, are cost-effective to maintain, and can withstand local climate conditions. Shade, comfort, and protection from heat are recurring priorities, as is planting that reinforces the site’s ecological value while creating welcoming spaces for people. In short, the community is looking for a recreation area that is functional, resilient, and rooted in the natural setting of Los Alamos.

SHADE AND ACCENT TREES



Survey results for preferred planting in the recreation area.
Source: Sites Southwest



Example design precedents

FINAL CONCEPTUAL DESIGN



NORTH MESA RECREATIONAL AREA

FINAL PREFERRED OPTION

CONCEPTUAL MASTER PLAN

Los Alamos, New Mexico
Conceptual Design
September 18, 2025

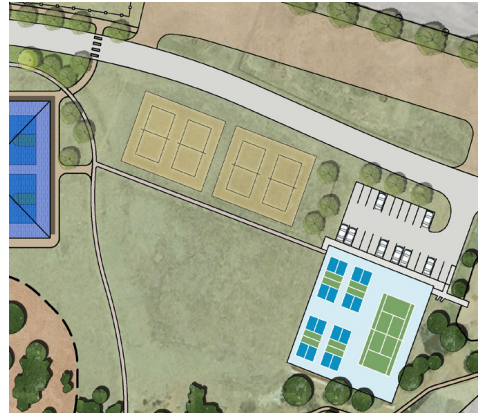
LOS ALAMOS
where discoveries are made



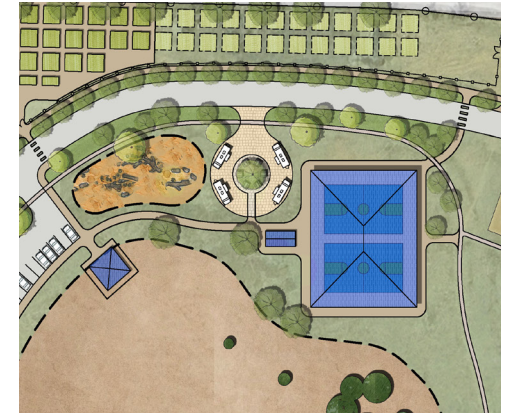
The Final Conceptual Design builds on Option A as the base while incorporating important feedback gathered from the community open house and survey. Several adjustments were made to reflect resident input and balance the needs of different users.

The bike skills park was expanded from two acres to three acres, giving the cycling community more room for progressive features while still leaving space for other recreational uses, and potential future expansion, as needed. Changes were also made to court facilities: the mud volleyball option was removed entirely (although the option remains to continue use of the existing pits on an interim basis), and sand volleyball was reduced to four courts, responding to community requests for fewer, high-quality courts.

The existing playground remains in place, complemented by a new nature play area near an enlarged multi-use pavilion, which can fit two full-sized basketball courts and provide ample room for roller derby use, as well as hosting other community events. Although details will be worked out when the actual facility design occurs, roll-up perimeter doors could provide multi-season use of this facility.



Northeast quadrant: Volleyball & tennis/pickleball courts, multi-use pavilion.



Eastern end of recreation area.

Parking at the northeast corner of the site was adjusted from a defined lot to unsurfaced overflow parking, honoring requests to keep this part of the site as natural as possible.

The community garden will be relocated for several reasons. The current site is not considered accessible for users of all abilities and making it so would require removal of a significant number of garden spaces from this already limited site. The new location will continue to serve as a transition area/buffer along the horse stables, but it can be enhanced by providing a central shade pavilion and gathering space for respite during gardening activities, as well as potential classes for new gardeners.

Meanwhile, its former location would provide space for a much-needed maintenance yard that will enable County staff to work more efficiently without having to haul materials and equipment from across town.

To ensure the garden's future, the plan includes designated expansion space along the stables. There is more proposed planting along that northern edge to provide further buffering for the stables.



Overflow parking in northeast corner.



Maintenance yard in northwest corner.



Community garden with buffer and room for expansion.

The dog park remains in its current location, although it has been reconfigured away from the stables, with the addition of a small dog park and shade tree planting to enhance comfort and usability.

Other refinements include replacing the previously proposed meditation maze with a botanical or demonstration garden, while maintaining berms and pollinator gardens in the central portion of the site. The western end of the recreation area remains largely unchanged, aside from the addition of the maintenance yard and more landscaping along the northern edge.

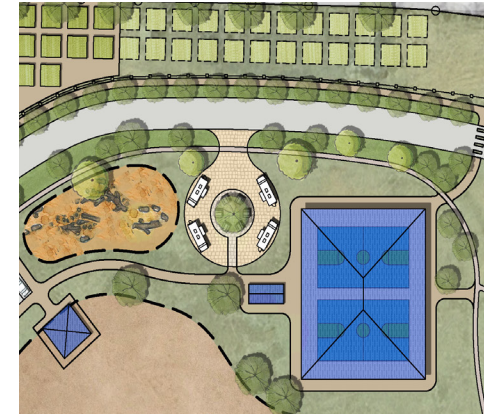
An area for food trucks was created to increase vendor opportunities, as well as support community events and sports tournaments.

Overall, the Final Conceptual Design attempts to provide a thoughtful balance of community priorities: expanded opportunities for biking, improved play and gathering areas, preserved open space, and sensitive transitions to or buffering from the equestrian stables. It reflects the community's vision for North Mesa as a space that is welcoming, multi-generational, and respectful of its natural setting and neighboring uses.

The County will move forward with implementation in phases, aligning funding and resources to priority projects, while considering evolving needs.



Botanical garden and dog park.



Natural play area and food truck pull-in.



Western end of recreation area.



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IMPLEMENTATION

PHASING

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APPENDIX

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