



The City of TorC applied for technical assistance from the National Park Service to support the development of a “comprehensive, collaborative trail/footbridge plan in June of 2019. The TorC City Commission and Williamsburg Trustee’s adopted similar resolutions supporting the project in June, 2019. The National Park Service reviewed and scored the application and selected the project in September 2019. Your project scored well because you wanted the project to address close to home recreation for residents, improving community health outcomes, economic development through improved quality of life benefits and perhaps adventure tourism. Your application also clearly showed numerous community partners supportive of the project idea. The NPS is helping TorC and Williamsburg develop a conceptual plan to help you move forward. It’s up to local leaders and community champions to make it happen.

The NPS Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program provides staff support to communities interested in establishing or improving close to home park, trails and open space opportunities. We work across the country working on trail corridor plans, regional trail system plans, open space acquisition and management and river recreation access and conservation.

Initial meetings with elected officials and community leaders occurred during October and November of 2019 and those early meetings helped frame the planning approach to this project. Some of the key elements included establishing a “planning team” representing the various stakeholders, agreeing on a collaborative work plan and extensive civic engagement strategy.

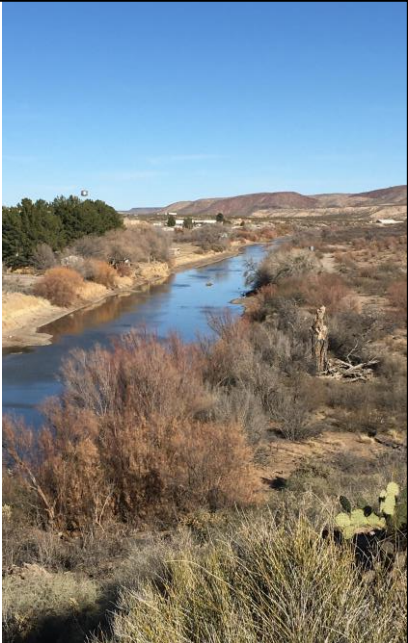
So far, and it’s really early in the process (with considerable setback due to public health restrictions) we’ve identified some core partners and we expect more partners to join as the vision and goals for the project become more clear and refined

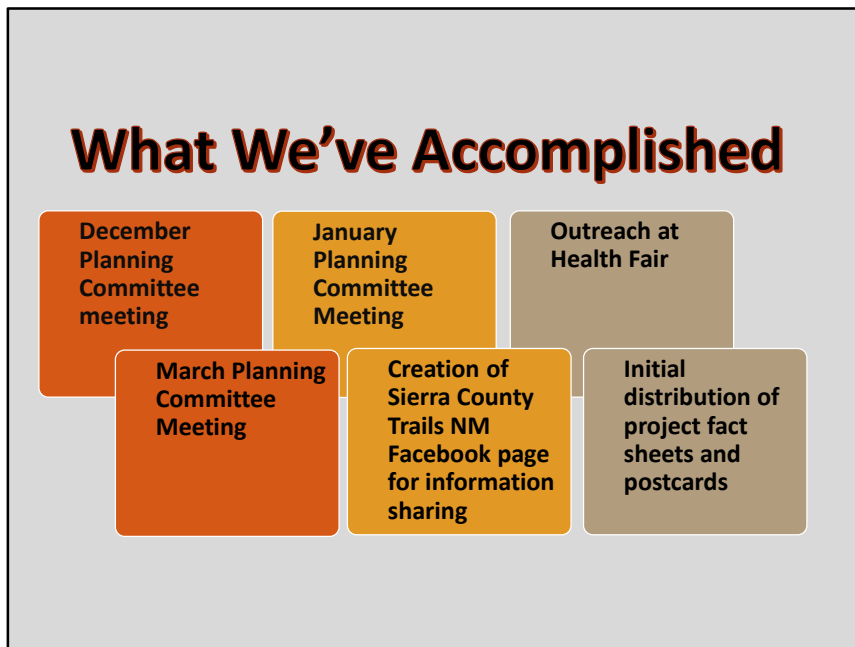
Key partners include: The City of TorC, Village of Williamsburg, Jornada Resource Conservation and Development District, Hot Springs Marketing, TorC Mainstreet, Bureau of Reclamation. Other supporting participants include Sierra County Tourism, Sierra Vista Hospital, Hot Springs High School 4H, Art and JROTC, NM State Parks, Outdoor Adventure Program and ACT Kids.



The Rio Grande Trail – a 500 mile cross state recreational trail - Vision and Framework was adopted several years ago. Realistically, for the Rio Grande Trail to happen, it’s up to local governments to implement sections of the trail. For the most part, existing trails within state park units or BLM lands have been designated. TorC and Socorro show the most promise for new RGT trail experiences.

The key elements of this project include determining the feasibility of constructing pedestrian bridges in TorC and Williamsburg to access the south side of the river, developing a 3.25 mile long trail on the river left bench of the Rio, and formalizing two track roads and social trails into a formal trails network on the Bureau of Reclamation and Bureau of Land Management properties. And, improving river access sites to create a 6.75 mile Rio Grande paddle trail.

<p>When completed, this Trail Network would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Let you hike, bike, run on a riverside trail from TorC to Williamsburg</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide public lands access on the east side of the Rio Grande</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Become part of the Rio Grande Trail - a 500 mile cross-state recreational trail</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Improve the paddling and tubing river access from Elephant Butte Dam to Williamsburg</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Teach about the pre-historical and historical settlements along the Rio Grande valley</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Increase river conservation efforts through education and habitat improvement projects</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Improve quality of life for residents by supporting healthy, active lifestyles</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Boost our adventure tourism opportunities</li></ul> <hr/> <p>Our planning principles include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Respecting private property interests along the proposed trail corridor</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Listening to and addressing community concerns</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Keeping the community informed</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Working with all federal and state land management planning processes to assure our project goals align with various resource or administrative policies of those agencies.</li></ul>	
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Our planning team began to form in December. The group – with new participants at every meeting -- met three times until the public health restrictions forced us to adapt. During the early meetings we established a workplan with ample opportunities for community engagement. One of the tasks was tabling at the Health Fair, where the project idea generated favorable reactions and statements.

As TorC gets more comfortable with virtual meetings we'll continue to engage local residents. We need to agree on Vision and Goals, we need to understand all the issues and opportunities related to bridge and trail construction. For example, could the project adversely impact natural or cultural resources along the river.

The mission of the planning team is to deliver a conceptual trail plan to City Commission and Village Trustee's for adoption within a year. Timing is perfect as we're likely to see an influx of federal and state funding for trails development and land conservation in the next few years. Funding follows a good plan

**Rio Grande Trails** – *our community idea!*

Pedestrian bridge crossings in Williamsburg and TorC with abundant trail opportunities on the east side of the Rio Grande

**When completed, this trail network would:**

- ✓ Let you hike, bike, run on a riverside trail from TorC to Williamsburg
- ✓ Provide public land access on the east side of the Rio Grande
- ✓ Become part of the Rio Grande Trail - a 500 mile cross-state recreational trail
- ✓ Improve river access for paddling and tubing from Elephant Butte Dam to Williamsburg
- ✓ Teach about the pre-historical and historical settlements along the Rio Grande valley
- ✓ Increase river conservation efforts through education and habitat improvement projects
- ✓ Improve quality of life for residents by supporting healthy active lifestyles
- ✓ Boost our adventure tourism opportunities

**Learn more at Sierra County NM Trails Facebook**



*Settlements along our river valley go way back in time. What stories should be shared about human settlements?*



Our newest strategy is engaging with residents at Rotary Park and Williamsburg community park. Two 4x8 information panels have been installed so people can learn more about the project. People will have an opportunity to leave comments on chalkboards. Our planning team will supply some prompting questions on a weekly basis. Thanks to the City staff for installing the signs and we really appreciate the ACT kids and Outdoor Adventure Program for volunteering to monitor the signs and chalkboards.



## Get Involved!

### Working Groups

- ✓ River Access
- ✓ Trails routes
- ✓ History
- ✓ Communications
- ✓ Conservation

Contacts:

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We'd like to leave you with some ideas to think about:

First there are several ways community members and Commissioners could support this planning project:

- We'd like to establish various working groups to do some of the work. We want to know how to improve river access, where are the trails you are hiking and running on; What's the history of the our prehistoric and historic settlements, How do we enhance the river corridor and the wetlands?
- How can City Commission help promote this project throughout the community?
- How can we better coordinate with other parks and recreation efforts underway in the City, specifically Ralph Edwards park
- How can we engage with the NM Finance Authority grant received by the City. Could some of funds be allocated towards addressing engineering needs for bridge crossings or geo technical engineering for trail sustainability. Could they be used to figure out a better low water dam system at Rotary Park?

Merry Jo Fahl is the planning committee chairperson for this project. Attila is our technical representative. Any of us are willing to discuss the project with you.

Thanks for allowing us time on your agenda today.