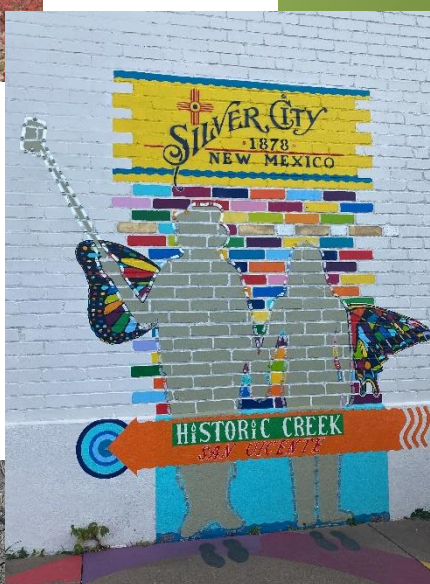


# CASE STUDIES OF BICYCLING & WALKING IN SMALL COMMUNITIES: *SILVER CITY, NEW MEXICO*



February 2022

Prepared by the Western Transportation Institute at Montana State University's Small Urban, Rural, and Tribal Center on Mobility (SURTCOM) for the New Mexico Department of Transportation.



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to acknowledge the contributions of the New Mexico Department of Transportation as well as the input and information provided by leaders, advocates, and residents within Silver City, New Mexico, Silver City Main Street, Silver City Public Library, and Grant County/Silver City Bicycle Advocacy Group.

## COVER IMAGES

Front Cover Top: A mural on the Visitor Center highlights Silver City, New Mexico's role as a gateway community for the Continental Divide Trail (CDT)

Front Cover Middle: A "selfie" mural in downtown Silver City

Front Cover Bottom: A pedestrian/bicycle bridge near the historic waterworks building

The back cover presents a photo collage of people walking and bicycling in Silver City, New Mexico, as observed by the case study researchers while on-site.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this case study was to identify bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and programs in Silver City, New Mexico that would be of interest to other peer communities. The people of Silver City have helped to drive the implementation of bicycling and walking facilities. This ranges from the completion of a bicycle plan to continuing to hold community leadership accountable that when changes are made to roadway infrastructure, facilities for bicycling and walking are almost always improved. Furthermore, in 2002, Silver City developed a trails and open space plan, identifying several projects of interest, including the creation of the Boston Hill Open Space and Trail System. Today, one can walk from their residence or from the downtown hotels to this resource which provides nearly 500 acres of open space and trails for users to enjoy scenic views overlooking the town. Silver City has many notable supporting bicycle and walking programs including a local non-profit which hosts “earn-a-bike” workshops and promotes bicycle activity among the local youth. The Tour of the Gila brings in thousands of visitors and competitors for the event, as well as those training for the race in the winter. The Youth Mural Program, which has created more than seventy murals throughout the area, engages the community to create these masterpieces, and accomplishes their overarching goal of fostering quality of life. Because community members are engaged in their creation, murals enable community members to have a unique connection to their community. In the future, Silver City hopes to further capitalize on their status as a gateway community for the Continental Divide Trail with the development of a historic waterworks building into a location that provides services and a campground for trail users.



## INTRODUCTION

Walking and bicycling have become increasingly popular modes of transportation and the existence of dedicated infrastructure to support active modes offers benefits to a community and its residents. While examples of active transportation infrastructure found in larger communities are well documented, this infrastructure can look different in rural communities and documented examples are lacking. This research effort aims to address this gap. Case studies from fifteen communities with fewer than 10,000 residents were developed. The case studies feature existing rural bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure located across five states, to include: Arcadia, LaBelle, and Taylor Creek in Florida; Calvert City, Corbin, and Morehead in Kentucky; Pelican Rapids, Pipestone, and Walker in Minnesota; Ruidoso, Silver City, and Truth or Consequences in New Mexico; and Fair Haven, Morristown, and the Town of Hartford in Vermont. Communities were selected using a prioritization process developed through a cooperative effort between the state departments of transportation and the researchers. More details about the research project, Case Studies of Communities of Less Than 10,000 People with Bicycle & Pedestrian Infrastructure, as well as additional case studies can be found at:

[https://westerntransportationinstitute.org/research\\_projects/case-studies-of-communities-of-less-than-10000-people-with-bicycle-pedestrian-infrastructure/](https://westerntransportationinstitute.org/research_projects/case-studies-of-communities-of-less-than-10000-people-with-bicycle-pedestrian-infrastructure/)

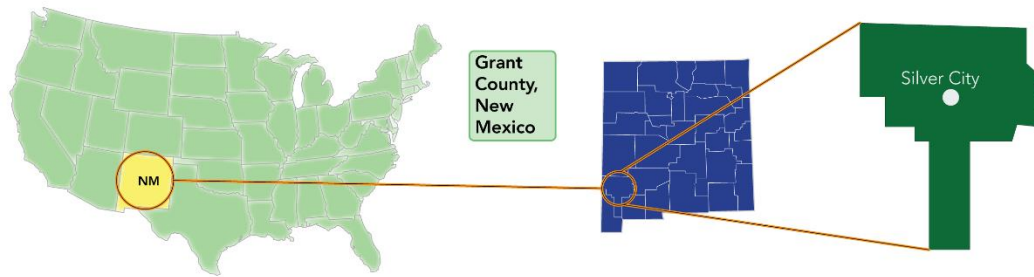
Case studies provide a detailed description of each community including a discussion of recent planning efforts related to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, supporting programs, and partnerships. Site visits, approximately one day per community, were conducted from June through December of 2021. During these visits, researchers collected spatial data and photographs to document existing infrastructure. Within this day visit, researchers also captured photos of people walking and bicycling in the communities, which can be found on the back cover of each case study. They also reached out to local advocates and community leadership. Lessons learned and best practices were documented from reviewing the planning documents and speaking with advocates and community leadership. The case studies aim to provide peer communities with the knowledge and encouragement to support additional implementation of active transportation infrastructure in rural communities across the US.

This case study focuses on Silver City, New Mexico.

## BACKGROUND OF THE COMMUNITY

Silver City, New Mexico has approximately 9,627 residents (2019), and has experienced a 6.7% population decrease since 2010. It is in Grant County, in southwestern New Mexico, in relative proximity to the U.S.'s border with Mexico. The community's boundaries encompass 10.1 square miles.





*Figure 1: Location of Silver City, New Mexico of Grant County in southwest New Mexico.*

The following paragraphs provide demographic and socioeconomic data about the community, so that peer communities can better understand similarities and differences between their community and this case study community.

The average age of Silver City residents is 38.4 years old (2019). Approximately 17.0% (2019) of homes in Silver City are vacant which includes seasonal housing, vacant housing for rent/sale, and vacant housing held off the market.

Approximately 43.6% (2018) of Silver City residents are employed within the community; a statistic which may provide a level of understanding regarding residents' commute distance and potential interest in walking or biking to work. According to the 2019 American Community Survey, 3.0% of people in Silver City walk and 1.8% bicycle to work for their daily commute. Silver City has a 6.7% (2019) unemployment rate. Silver City's median household income is \$31,620 (2019), with 17.4% of households earning less than \$10,000 and 2.1% earning more than \$200,000. Approximately 33.8% (2019) of Silver City's population lives in poverty, as defined by the Office of Management and Budget's Statistical Policy Directive 14.

## COUNTY TYPOLOGY

According to the rural classification methodology used in *Emerging Technology and Opportunities for Improved Mobility and Safety for Rural Areas*, Silver City is located within a county that was designated as an Older-Age County Type. An Older Age County Type is defined by having one-third of the population over 60 years of age. Considering that the average age in Silver City is about thirty-eight, this suggests that outside of the Silver City boundaries but within Grant County, there are many older residents.

## COMMUNITY HISTORY

Silver City, originally and still a mining town, is in a high alpine desert. A defining feature of the community is the nearby Gila National Forest, the "first wilderness declared a National Wilderness in the nation." The Gila River, within this national forest, is notable in that it is the only wild, free flowing river remaining in New Mexico. The Gila National Forest is also home to the National Park Service site, the Gila Cliff Dwellings. Many floods helped to carve out what today is known as The Big Ditch, including the most notable one on July 21, 1885.



Fifty-five feet below grade, the Big Ditch was the original main street. It was named after the Panama Canal. The San Vicente creek flows within The Big Ditch. Flooding occurs every spring when snow melt comes down from the mountain and travel through the core of the community. The impacts of reoccurring flooding is reflected in the sidewalks and stairs (Figure 2) that are several feet above the roadway surface throughout the community to channel the flood waters into The Big Ditch.

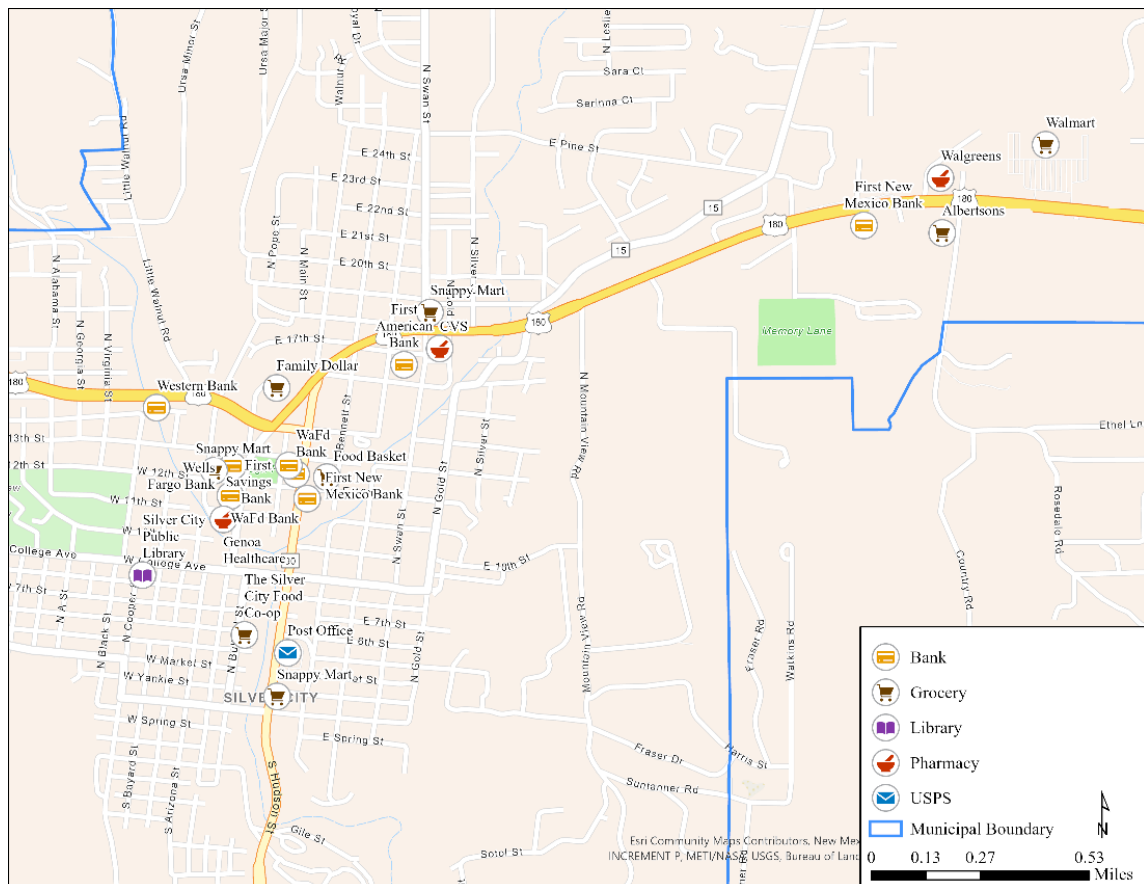


*Figure 2: Sidewalks and curbs elevated from the roadway.*

In the downtown area, there are about twenty-four art galleries and twenty-four eateries. The town reduced Bullard Street to fifteen miles per hour; it parallels NM90.

More recently, Silver City has worked to be defined as a gateway community for the Continental Divide Trail (CDT).

Destinations of interest, including grocery stores, banks, and pharmacies can be found primarily along the main roadways in the community (NM90 and US180) (Figure 3). The Silver City Public Library is still located within the urban core west of NM90. The very popular Silver City Co-op is on Bullard Street.



*Figure 3: City map of the downtown core of Silver City, New Mexico showing boundaries and services.*

## TIMELINE

A timeline of events is provided in Table 1 to describe major milestones for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure development and supporting programs in Silver City, New Mexico.

*Table 1: Timeline of major milestone events for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.*

Year	Event
1870	Silver is discovered in the summer of 1870
1880	An ordinance was passed requiring masonry construction of new buildings within the city's limits
1890-1910	Numerous floods washed away all but one of the brick buildings in Silver City, the Warren house
1895	On July 21, 1885, reportedly the result of uncontrolled grazing allowed on the hills surrounding Silver City, a wall of water hit the downtown business district, creating The Big Ditch
1907	Silver City gets its first sidewalks; Elizabeth Warren created a company to install these for the community
1985	The Silver City MainStreet Project has been working to revitalize the town since 1985
1997	The Grant County Bicycle/Pedestrian Task Force was created
2001	Trails and Open Spaces Committee (TOSC) was formed
2002	The Youth Mural Program began
2002	The Silver City Trails and Open Spaces Plan was developed
2007	The New Mexico Arts and Cultural Districts program was created in 2007; Silver City was one of two pilot communities
2010	A community workshop was held as a part of the development of the Silver City Downtown Action Plan
2010	Silver City adopted the Downtown Action Plan
2011	Silver City was the Great American Main Street Award Winner
2012	Two workshops were held as a part of the Silver City Greenways and Big Ditch Master Plan on Saturday, October 27, 2012, one at the farmers market near the Big Ditch and one near the Silco Theater in downtown Silver City
2013	Silver City adopted the Silver City Greenways and Big Ditch Master Plan on May 14, 2013
2013	Silver City adopted the Silver City Metropolitan Redevelopment Plan
2016	Silver City adopted a Bicycle Master Plan on August 23, 2016
2020	The Grant County Bicycle Advocacy Group initiated the development of the "Safe Bicycle Routes, Silver City, NM" map

## EVOLUTION OF PLANNING FOR BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE

Several plans of interest were identified for Silver City, including: the 2002 Silver City Trails and Open Spaces Plan, the 2010 Silver City Downtown Action Plan, the 2013 Silver City Greenways and Big Ditch Master Plan, the 2016 Bicycle Master Plan, and the 2017 Town of Silver City Comprehensive Plan.

### SILVER CITY TRAILS AND OPEN SPACES PLAN

The 2002 Trails and Open Spaces Plan developed goals for creating a trails and open spaces system within Silver City and the surrounding area that would work to provide recreational opportunities and preserve the rural character of the area while connecting people to natural, cultural, and historic resources. The plan notes that Silver City acts as a gateway to

the Gila National Forest and has swaths of undeveloped land that provide scenic views of the area.

The Trails and Open Space Committee (TOSC) was established in 2001. Members represent city planning, National Park Service's Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA), the United States Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and others. The TOSC surveyed local community members including school children to understand the desire for spaces for recreation and active transportation. The TOSC's ultimate mission is, "To protect, promote and encourage trails and open spaces in Silver City and throughout the surrounding area." Noted benefits of trails and open spaces included maintaining Silver City as an attractive place to live and work, a way to conserve natural spaces, increase tourism, increase property values, and improve health and fitness.

Recommendations in this plan align with previous planning efforts including goals in the 1996 Comprehensive Plan which listed goals related to preserving the visual quality of open space and creating a network of open spaces for recreation, conservation, education, and tourism. The 1997 Transportation Plan for Grant County, Silver City, Santa Clara, Bayard, and Hurley recommended policy to improve bicycle infrastructure in the region and recommended several bicycle lanes and routes and established the Bicycle/Pedestrian Task Force.

An inventory of existing open spaces noted thirteen developed parks around town and two open spaces (Boston Hill and La Capilla). At the time of the report, there were no officially designated trails, however several informal trails are located through town including the Boston Hill area, the Big Ditch area downtown, and near Brewer Hill.

Silver City did not currently have programs related to protection of open spaces or trails, but the local Parks Division was responsible for maintenance of city-owned parks. In 1998, money was left to the town (known as the Lennie Merle Forward Fund) to purchase property for parks. This fund was used to purchase a 500-acre Boston Hill site and a 35-acre La Capilla site. In 2000, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) designated Silver City as a brownfield demonstration pilot project. This resulted in the creation of a brownfields coordinator position within the community and received grant funding to identify brownfields as potential open spaces.

The TOSC assessed several open space sites and trail corridors using the following criteria: feasibility, community support, cultural/historic/education/scientific significance, wetlands/drainage area protection, scenic qualities, connectivity, recreation, and non-recreation potential. Ten priority projects were recommended through this analysis:

1. Boston Hill Open Space and Trail System
2. La Capilla Park/Open Space/Trails Plan
3. San Vicente Trail and Open Space Project
4. Brewer Hill Open Space and Trails System
5. Downtown Historic Walking Tour
6. Old Water Reservoirs Property (develop into an open space for trail users)



7. Silver/Swan Street Bike Lanes
8. Northern Loop Multi-Use Trail (along Little Walnut/Cain/Swan Streets)
9. Greenway Corridors on Pinos Altos Creek, Silver Creek and Maude's Canyon
10. Bear Mountain Trail

Several tools were listed to support protection of open spaces and trails in the area. These included officially designated "open space" zoning, integrating development of pedestrian and bicycle facilities with road improvement projects, and tax incentives to encourage landowners to protect open spaces and trails. Several funding mechanisms were also listed including long-term bonds, gross receipts tax, real estate transfer tax, trust funds, benefit assessment districts, and impact fees.

## SILVER CITY DOWNTOWN ACTION PLAN

The 2010 Silver City Downtown Action Plan (SCDAP) was completed in coordination with Silver City, Silver City MainStreet, community members, and local business owners. This plan identified projects to help revitalize Silver City's downtown area to be more economically resilient and physically attractive to preserve Silver City's unique rural character.

The plan notes that pedestrians and bicyclists are seen frequently in the area. It was noted that most streets within downtown have sidewalks that are generally in good condition, but a main safety concern is that some areas have sidewalks with a significant vertical offset to the street (see height of sidewalk in Figure 4, from the bottom of the rear bumper of a pick-up truck to the roadway, approximately two feet). This offset is to accommodate stormwater runoff and can be greater than eight inches in places. Three roadways were mentioned as having a bicycle lane (Pope Street, Hudson Street, and NM180), where other roadways have "Share the Road" signage. The plan mentions that bicycle use is prohibited on sidewalks along Broadway Street.



*Figure 4: Sidewalk elevated from roadway surface.*

Silver City downtown provides visitors and locals with access to local businesses and restaurants, access to unique recreational opportunities, and historical architecture. Many of Silver City's visitors are destination visitors (coming for a pre-determined purpose). However, with improved signage and wayfinding, it is expected that visitors may be drawn into the downtown area.

Local events are highlighted as a big tourism draw to the area. Events include the Wild Wild West Pro Rodeo which draws nearly 10,000 visitors, the Silver City Blues Festival, and Weekend at the Galleries. A local Tour of the Gila bicycle road race brings in an estimated 5,000 to 7,000 spectators.

Several recommendations were identified that could benefit bicycle and pedestrian opportunities in the downtown area. The plan notes the need to foster cultural heritage tourism including creating new signature events like the Silver City Blues Festival or Tour of the Gila, and through increasing bicycle and pedestrian linkages to natural and recreational opportunities in the area. It was noted that the Big Ditch Park should be revitalized and connections to the park should be improved. To improve pedestrian safety in the downtown area, the plan recommends constructing curb extensions to minimize pedestrian crossing distance. There are currently formal bicycle parking spots at only three intersections (Bullard & Broadway, Bullard & 6th, and Yankie & Texas). Thus, expanding and improving bicycle parking areas is recommended. Finally, the plan notes the need for a cohesive wayfinding system including vehicle and pedestrian signage, maps, parking, and destination identification.

A community workshop was completed in 2010. Community members helped to further identify and develop several key workshop ideas related to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure:

- Redesign Pope Street as a “boulevard” to create a more walkable and inviting entry to downtown
- Look into making the Pope St/College St/Bullard St intersection more pedestrian and bicyclist friendly
- Develop a cohesive wayfinding system
- Create public art
- Utilize the Big Ditch area and expand pedestrian infrastructure to improve access to this area
- Consolidate town offices and services buildings to a compact pedestrian-friendly location
- Increase the number of public restrooms

A number of funding sources were identified as potential opportunities to implement the recommendations in the plan, including: public/non-profit/private partnerships, New Mexico MainStreet Capital Outlay Funds, New Mexico Community Development Loans, Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and Tax Increment Development Districts (TIDD), an Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan, Industrial Revenue Bonds, Equity Capital, Local Economic Development act funds, Main Street Hope IV Housing Grants, Community Block Development Grants, Business Improvement District funds, and New Mexico Main Street (NMMS) Revolving Loan Funds.

## SILVER CITY GREENWAYS AND BIG DITCH MASTER PLAN

The 2013 Silver City Greenways and Big Ditch Master Plan was created to identify the alignment and needed projects to implement approximately ten miles of pathways along the riparian corridors within Silver City. Many areas within the proposed alignment would require acquisition of easements or land in fee. To create the Silver City Greenways and Big Ditch Master Plan, an eighteen member Greenways Citizen Steering Committee was created; it met monthly for ten months as the plan was developed.

Six benefits of the path system were identified: fitness and wellness, family resiliency, community economic development, an increase in property values, an increase in safety, and riparian protection. Two goals identified in the plan that more explicitly relate to improving the walkability and bikeability of the Silver City include: 1) “connect Silver City neighborhoods to downtown and public facilities by off-street paths and trails,” and 2) “improve public health by providing an interconnected off-road, non-motorized multi-modal transportation route that encourages outdoor recreation and creates a healthy community.”

The plan proposed two parallel trails, one at the bottom of the creek bed and the second which generally follows the top of the bank. The former path would be primitive in nature. Signage and some stones would be the primary identifiers of this trail. The latter would be



wider and have a solid surface, with the idea that it could serve pedestrians, bicyclists, skaters, and skateboarders. The plan suggests using ramps to connect the primitive trail to the developed trail in select locations, rather than the current steps built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The plan suggests that in some places, to ensure connectivity, shared streets may be needed. These shared streets would be identified by pavement markings (green bicycle lanes were shown in the plan as an example) and signage.

To implement the plan, it was suggested that the Town of Silver City was not the only responsible party, but that several organizations would need to be engaged to implement it. The plan provides cost estimates and a list of projects. An ambitious time frame of three to five years was identified as the duration needed to implement the plan.

## BICYCLE MASTER PLAN

In 2016, Silver City adopted a Bicycle Master Plan. The plan reports an interest in increasing the use of bicycles to benefit the community from a health, environment, safety, and economic perspective. It identifies that bicycle facilities will be implemented as road maintenance, road construction, and road reconstruction is performed. They noted that the public were strong participants in the development of the plan. The plan identified current bicycle facility types and noted that most streets in Silver City were shared by both bicycles and motor vehicles. It also identified that traffic volumes and speed were factors that influenced the provision of bicycle lanes instead of leaving the street as a shared-use situation. Some bicycle facilities were trails and several abandoned railroads were identified as potential avenues for future bicycle lanes, including: the Atchison Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad; Silver City, Pinos Altos and Mogollon Railroad; and the Brewer Hill Tramway. The plan recommends not using sidepaths because they can be “problematic.” The plan also highlights the challenges of crossing US180 and NM90, stating that, “Safe and convenient crossings of local streets and highways can be a major challenge for bicyclists and pedestrians alike.” The plan also indicates that Swan Street is “Silver City’s most significant route with bike lanes.” It also identifies that renovating the Waterworks Building is listed within the Town of Silver City’s Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan (ICIP). The following six recommendations were identified in the plan:

1. “Routinely accommodate bicycles along major roads through bike lanes or shoulders that meet national guidelines with respect to width and surface quality.”
2. “Continue the development of a system of multi-use trails and other non-motorized connections that complement the road system and provide convenient transportation and recreational opportunities for bicyclists, pedestrians, and other non-motorized users.”
3. “Pursue roadway treatments that reduce speed and/or volume of motorized traffic and improve street crossings to benefit the safety and comfort of non-motorized traffic traveling along or across roadways while maintaining street standards and measurement of benefits gained, based upon future Traffic Studies.”

4. "Provide guidance to bicyclists and other non-motorized users along optimal routes to common destinations, particularly those where motor vehicle traffic volumes and speed are minimized."
5. "Encourage and otherwise facilitate the use of bicycles to come to, stay in, and travel within Silver City."
6. "Support education and encouragement for cyclists, motorists, and other road and trail users."

An interesting point made related to land use and zoning codes was that the width of a bicycle lanes does not include the gutter.

## TOWN OF SILVER CITY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

In 2017, the Town of Silver City updated their previous 2004 comprehensive plan. The plan emphasized the need to maintain growth in a manner that allows Silver City to maintain its unique sense of place. The need for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure for both recreation and transportation is highlighted and is specifically tied to an interest in maintaining public health for community members, reducing traffic congestion, and improving air quality. Additionally, the plan notes that to attract young adults to the area, recreational opportunities like bicycle trails and open space are essential to economic development. The plan notes that the Silver City Walkability and Accessibility Advocacy Group acts as a champion to promote pedestrian safety and accessibility for all road users.

Specific goals related to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure include:

- Emphasize "traditional neighborhood development" which organizes the town into neighborhoods and corridors. This design method helps support a theme of keeping Silver City as a "pedestrian friendly community." Major design goals include pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure including sidewalks, pathways, and bicycle lanes. Furthermore, speed limits should be kept low in residential areas to encourage active modes of travel.
- Develop a master pedestrian and recreational trails plan that would identify areas for improvements and focus on creating an interconnected network of pedestrian infrastructure throughout the town.
- Advance plans to ensure that sidewalks or other pedestrian infrastructure is provided when reviewing town development projects.
- Apply for grant funding for alternative modes of travel including walking, bicycling, and public transportation.
- Develop a neighborhood traffic management program that would work with residents to identify traffic issues in their neighborhood. This program would include a surveying process to understand where people travel by vehicle to look into areas that could be developed as mixed use to promote bicycle and pedestrian activity.
- Improve streetscapes, specifically US180 and NM90, including designated bicycle lanes, improvements to crosswalk visibility, and sidewalks.
- Develop a GIS database to inventory existing infrastructure and its condition, planned infrastructure, and maintenance schedules.

- Collaborate with nearby communities, Grant County, and the Gila National Forest to establish a trails and open spaces network on the regional scale.

## EXISTING BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE

Table 2 summarizes bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure identified across all case study communities, noting which ones were observed while on-site in Silver City, New Mexico.

*Table 2: Bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure found across all case study communities, noting those found in Silver City.*

Bicycle and/or Pedestrian Infrastructure in Case Study Communities	Presence in Silver City
Bicycle Lane	X
Bike Rack	X
Shared Lane Markings	X
Side Path	
Defined Bike Route (by signage)	X
Multi-Use Pathway	
Trail (soft surface)	X
Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB) Crossing	
Mid-Block Crossing	X
Crosswalk	X
Sidewalks	X
Bridges that enable walking or biking	X
Underpasses that enable walking or biking	
Parklet	X
Benches	X
Repair Station/Air Pump	X
Speed Bump/Speed Table	X
Speed Feedback Sign – Permanent	
Speed Feedback Sign – Portable	
Signage	
<i>Bike/Ped Crossing Sign with light emitting diode (LED) lights</i>	
<i>Bicycle May Use Full Lane</i>	
<i>Share the Road</i>	
<i>State Law, Yield/Stop for Pedestrian in Crosswalk</i>	X
<i>Steep Grade</i>	
<i>Drive Slow in Residential Areas/Please Slow Down</i>	
<i>Traffic Calming Area</i>	
<i>Weight Limitations</i>	
<i>Interpretative/ Wayfinding Information</i>	X
<i>Walking Routes</i>	X
<i>Entertainment District</i>	

During the site visit for this research effort in December 2021, several priority projects identified in the 2002 Trails and Open Spaces Plan appear to have been completed including the Boston Hill Open Space and Trail System, La Capilla Park, San Vicente Trail and Open Space (Big Ditch Park), bicycle lanes on Silver Street (#10 in Figure 12) and Swan Streets, and a downtown walking tour. There are still ongoing discussions to convert the Old Water Reservoirs Property (also called the waterworks building) into an open space for Continental Divide Trail users.

Within the downtown core, several wayfinding signs were available, directing visitors to key points of interest (Figure 5). The need for wayfinding was identified in the 2010 Downtown Action Plan.



*Figure 5: Wayfinding.*

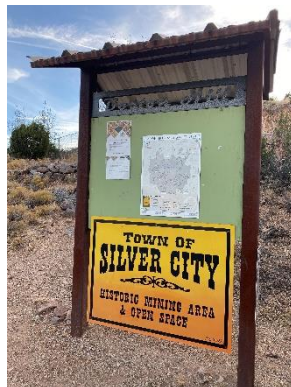
Silver City also had a parklet (Figure 6), although while theirs provides seating, it was not the result of repurposed parking, as described in National Association of City Transportation Officials' *Urban Street Design Guide*. Instead, it was repurposed public space.





*Figure 6: Parklet.*

Within walking or bicycling distance of many residences throughout the community is Boston Hill. Several of the trailheads, like this one at Spring Street, have supporting facilities, like water fountains (Figure 7), wayfinding information (Figure 7) and bicycle repair stations (#1 in Figure 12).



*Figure 7: Supporting facilities: wayfinding (left) and a water fountain (right).*

Evidence of pedestrian infrastructure constructed during the Works Progress Administration (WPA) can still be found on sidewalks within the community (#2 in Figure 12). Other examples of sidewalk projects across town can be found in markers, like this one from 1995 (Figure 8).



*Figure 8: Sidewalk project marker.*

A soft-surface trail parallels The Big Ditch (#3 in Figure 12). A bridge (#4 in Figure 12) provides a connection between the downtown core (Bullard Street) and NM90 (Hudson Street) over The Big Ditch. The 2002 Silver City Trails and Open Spaces plan identified several pedestrian bridges that were already in place throughout the community.

Silver City has a plethora of murals. In large part, this reflects their Youth Mural Program (described in more detail in the Supporting Programs section), which engages students to create these murals, whether from paint or with mosaic tiles. The community boasts more than seventy murals, including one created to honor bicycling and those bicycling in Silver City (#5 in Figure 12). Another example entitled “Dia de Los Muertos Ofrenda,” part of the Silver City Museum located near downtown, is shown in Figure 9.



*Figure 9: Dia De Los Muertos Ofrenda mosaic mural.*



The 2010 Downtown Action Plan identified creating more public art as a goal. See the cover page, right photo for an additional example. Near the selfie mural shown on the cover, the community tested out painting a crosswalk (Figure 10). However, they observed that over time, the painted crosswalk did not remain. Consequently, they noted that they either expect to repaint the crosswalk or try different materials in the future.



*Figure 10: A painted crosswalk.*

The community boasts two bicycle shops (one is shown in #6 in Figure 12) and also a non-profit entity that allows children and adults to donate time in order to earn a bicycle.



A shared lane marking can be found near Gough Park, where the community holds many events (#7 in Figure 12).

There are several bicycle racks throughout the community, including one on the Western New Mexico University campus (#8 in Figure 12). Another well-utilized bicycle rack is at the co-op store located in downtown, as shown by a bicycle parked both day and night (Figure 11).

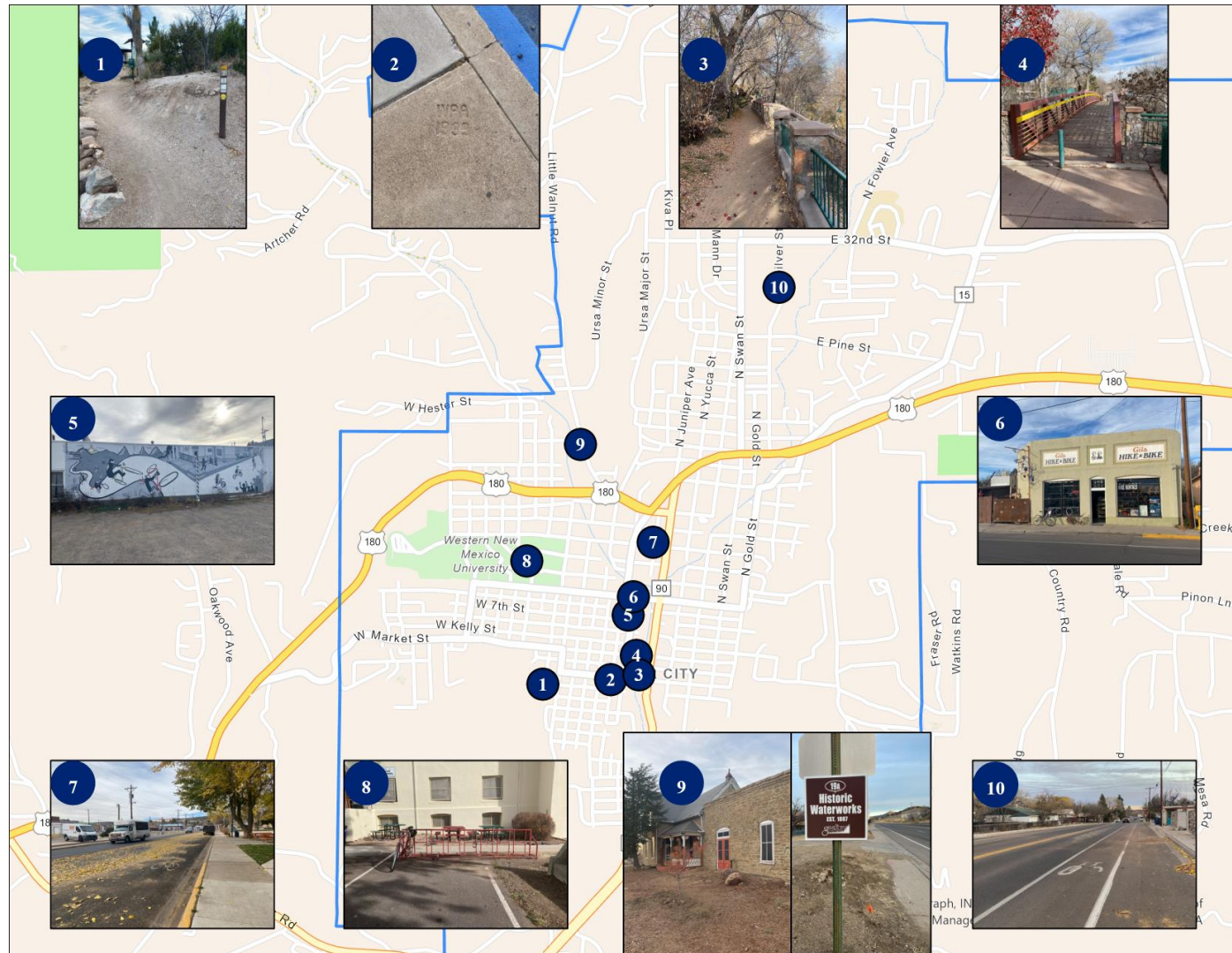


*Figure 11: Co-op bicycle rack use.*

The community has big plans for the historic water works building (#9 in Figure 12). They envision that it will serve as a campground, provide accessible restrooms, and sell supplies for those traversing the Continental Divide Trail.

A bicycle lane can be found on Silver Street (#10 in Figure 12). As the community has rehabilitated or reconstructed roadways, Silver City has made it a policy, albeit informal, of providing bicycle and pedestrian facilities where possible. The 2002 Silver City Trails and Open Spaces plan suggested that bicycle and pedestrian facilities are to be developed as road improvements are made; this recommendation seems to have been adopted. Community leadership notes that engaged community members “hold their feet to the fire,” ensuring that provisions for these modes are accommodated as changes to the roadway network are made.

## BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN MAP



*Figure 12: Silver City Bicycle & Pedestrian Infrastructure Map.*

## SUPPORTING PROGRAMS FOR BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE

Silver City has implemented all of the programs that support walking and bicycling that were identified in other case study communities that were observed while on-site or documented in reports (Table 3). In addition, they have many other programs supporting walking and bicycling that will be described in this section.

*Table 3: Bicycle and pedestrian supporting programs in case study communities, noting those found in Silver City.*

Bicycle and/or Pedestrian Supporting Programs in Case Study Communities	Presence in Silver City
Demonstration/Pilot Projects	X
Art Walks/Historical Walk/Children's Walk/Health Walk	X
Sculpture(s)/Statue(s)	X
Mural(s)	X
Little Free Library	X

Silver City, New Mexico has one of the most exemplary mural programs of all the case study communities, the Youth Mural Program. One can easily spend a day or three walking or bicycling the community to find the hidden gems, enjoying coffee, and stopping at the local restaurants along the way. There are more than seventy murals spread across the communities of Silver City, Gila, Bayard, and Santa Clara. The Mimbres Region Arts Council of Silver City sponsors the Youth Mural Program and publishes a walking tour map of mural locations and information in downtown Silver City. Maps can be found at the Visitor Center and the public library. The murals can be found on the sides of buildings, on sidewalk steps, and on blocked-in windows. Western New Mexico University art students provide support for the program. The following are goals identified for the program:

1. "To teach students about the history and culture of their community through the arts.
2. To connect students with their peers, local artists, and community members.
3. To teach students that public art can enrich and enhance the quality of life in their community.
4. To encourage students to engage in beautifying their community."

Murals were created by Aldo Leopold High School's Youth Conservation Corps (YCC), Juvenile Probation Program members, Western New Mexico University mural class, and mural summer camp participants. The summer camp is open to children ages 6 through 12.

Created from 2012-2020, the Silver City Visitor Center has one of the most extensive murals in the community. 2018 included Phase VI, "Continental Divide Trail" (see the cover page, top left photo). The mural features a map that depicts New Mexico rivers bisected by the Continental Divide Trail. The Aldo Leopold High School's art class designed the mural, the Cobre High School's art class created the tiles, and the Aldo Leopold YCC mural crew installed the tiles.

One mural created by summer camp participants was the “Dome Skull,” located in the Silver City Skate Park. The mural was inspired by skateboarders and bike riders.

The Silver City MainStreet is an accredited New Mexico MainStreet program since 1985. Their primary goal is to revitalize the economy of the historic downtown. Silver City MainStreet works to achieve this goal through:

1. Improvements to and preservation of their historic district
2. Development of new and creative uses of the downtown buildings
3. Collaboration and promotion of downtown events

Silver City boasts three bicycling-focused entities. Gila Hike & Bike and Twin Sisters Cycling and Fitness are both full-service shops. BikeWorks (Figure 13), a local non-profit, coordinates Pedalista!, an annual bike event held during Earth Day in April. BikeWorks recently relocated from the College Service Station to their own location in downtown Silver City. BikeWorks was described as a “non-profit bicycle cooperative providing repair stations for community use, sale of reconditioned bicycles and programs like Earn-a-Bike to promote bicycle ownership by youngsters.”



*Figure 13: BikeWorks logo.*

There are several groups within Silver City, throughout Grant County and across neighboring communities that provide encouragement for walking and bicycling and associated infrastructure provisions. At the county level is the Grant County Bicycle Advocacy Group. It helped to initiate the development of the Safe Bicycle Routes, Silver City, New Mexico map and was also involved in the development of the bicycle plan for Silver City. There is also the aforementioned Trails and Open Space Committee. The Silver City Walkability and Accessibility Advocacy Group was involved in the Silver City Comprehensive Plan.

Silver City offers numerous walking and bicycling meetups and events. There is the San Patricio Trail Run (nearest Saturday to St. Patrick’s Day), the All Souls Trails Race, monthly fun runs via the Silver City Adventure Trails (SCAT) group, and an Active & Alive Walking Group (that meets three times a week for an hour walk). The High Desert Humane Society also offers “Walk a dog,” where someone eighteen years old or older may help the Humane Society out by volunteering to walk a dog. The following are more bicycle-focused events. In September, Pedalista!, a “family fun day in Gough Park celebrating the bicycle with games, challenges & activities” is held. The Signal Peak Challenge Mountain Bike Race is held near Silver City in September, described as a “fun themed race in the woods.” The Silver City Cycling Group hosts several rides including a Monday night beginning mountain bike ride to Fort Bayard, a ‘Taco Tuesday’ mountain bike ride where cyclists bike a portion of the Continental Divide Trail and head into town to enjoy a local restaurant, and a Thursday night ‘Stir and Simmer’ with rides heading out of town along Highway 90. The Group also organizes trail maintenance days through a [Google Group](#). BikeWorks hosts



monthly rides. In addition, the Tour of the Gila, an annual, five-day pro road race takes place in and around Silver City. Professional teams train in Silver City in the winter.

The community also has a public transportation system, Corre Caminos.

## **PARTNERSHIPS TO PLAN & IMPLEMENT BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE**

Through the development of past plans and on-going efforts, Silver City has engaged the assistance of other entities within the community and beyond, even including neighboring communities.

To develop the 2010 Silver City Downtown Action Plan (SCDAP), Silver City worked cooperatively with Silver City MainStreet, community members, and local business owners

Silver City has collaborated with a variety of partners, including the National Park Service, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Forest Service as a part of the Trails and Open Space Committee.

Silver City has also been actively working with the nearby communities of Bayard and Santa Clara. In addition, they have been working with Grant County representatives, Southwest Regional Transportation Planning Organization, and entities to collaborate on a more regional approach.

## **FUNDING FOR BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE**

Silver City has been able to leverage several public and private funding sources to develop plans and implement facilities and programs.

The Lennie Merle Forward Fund was used to help secure open space within Silver City, including the Boston Hill Open Space and Trail System.

Funding for the Bicycle Master Plan was provided by the New Mexico Finance Authority's Local Government Planning Fund as well as the Town of Silver City. Within the plan, the Recreational Trails Program was identified as funding wayfinding related to the Continental Divide Trail within the Silver City Arts and Cultural District.

Funding for the Silver City Greenways and Big Ditch Master Plan was provided by the New Mexico MainStreet Program/Economic Development Department's Legislative appropriation.

Funding from AARP and Wells Fargo was used to create wayfinding in downtown Silver City.

Funding sources for the Youth Mural Program include the National Education Association, Comcast, foundations, site fees, donations, and sponsorships. The “Tour of the Gila” mural (#5 in Figure 12) was paid for by local bicyclists through a GoFundMe site.

Creation of the Downtown Silver City Walking Tour booklet of information was funded by the New Mexico Department of Tourism, and the Town of Silver City.

30something philanthropic group is reportedly composed of “people who live in and love Silver City.” It is a collective of people that report an interest in making a difference in their community while they are alive instead of as a result of donations from their wills. Annually, each member donates \$1,000 which is then allocated to a variety of non-profit organizations. The group notes that this relieves the non-profit organizations from raising funds with typical fundraising channels. The group also suggests that it is “a great way to meet like-minded people in this wonderful, inclusive little town.” The 30something has provided funding to support the Youth Mural Program. In 2020, the Silver City Cycling Group received funding from the 30something group to fund a new mountain bike flow trail on Boston Hill and purchase new kiosks and signage. They were also able to leverage funding for six benches and a picnic table.

The Silver City Greenways and Big Ditch Master Plan contained suggestions on funding sources that could be used to implement the plan, including: 1) Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), 2) North American Wetlands Conservation Fund, 3) National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Challenge Grants, 4) the American Hiking Society’s National Trails Fund, 4) Local Funds (General Obligation Bond Issue; Quality of Life Tax; Development Impact Fees), and 5) New Mexico MainStreet Capital Outlay Fund. These and other potential funding sources or mechanism were described within the plan.

## LESSONS LEARNED

As exemplified by the available funding to purchase open spaces, by the coordinated group who annually support local non-profits, and the enthusiasm of the leadership, the Silver City residents serve as a significant influence in the level of success that Silver City has had in implementing bicycling and walking programs and infrastructure.

Extensive planning and community engagement have helped Silver City set a clear vision for their town which envisions maintaining its unique rural character and preserving its historic, cultural, and natural resources. This planning has helped to prioritize future projects for when funding becomes available.

## THE FUTURE OF BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE COMMUNITY

One of the most significant upcoming projects will be the transition of the waterworks building into a trailhead with supporting resources for those traveling on the Continental Divide Trail.

Silver City has been successful in enabling connections to local resources, like the Boston Hill Open Space and Trail System, but acknowledges their desire to further connect other resources.

Silver City is part of a Five Points Initiative. A priority of this initiative is to connect communities along US180 with bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

## KEY POINTS

Silver City is the only community considered that developed a plan specifically focusing on bicycles. If a plan was found within a community, most often it focused on bicycles and pedestrians. In addition, their most recent comprehensive plan identified that they aim to create a plan specific to pedestrians in the near future.

While Silver City has been actively expanding its walking and bicycling infrastructure by adding bicycle lanes as roadways are resurfaced and adding or expanding the width of the sidewalks when possible, they have not formally adopted a Complete Streets policy. Rather, leadership within the community reports that it is understood that walking and bicycling infrastructure will be improved as community roadways are rehabilitated. Those within community government know that their constituents expect that walking and bicycling infrastructure will be improved. Additionally, the recent comprehensive plan emphasizes the desire to remain a “pedestrian friendly community.” One action item mentioned was that when planning for future development the town wants to ensure bicycle and pedestrian access is considered as a part of the review process.

## SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES TO APPLY IN OTHER SMALL COMMUNITIES

The following are successful strategies employed by Silver City that can be applied in other small communities:

1. Community engagement through art. The numerous murals throughout the community are incredible and can compel visitors to travel on foot to view them all. Since community members helped to create them, it also allows locals to have a unique connection with their community.



2. Partner and do not be afraid to think beyond your community borders. The community has been very successful in engaging a variety of partners, including nearby communities as well as federal entities (i.e. National Park Service).
3. Do not overlook making connections. Planning documents for Silver City continue to highlight the need to create an interconnected network of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. As an example, Boston Hill Open Space provides four trailheads that are in local neighborhoods, providing residents with direct connections to recreational opportunities.
4. Promote your great recreational opportunities through local events. Events like Pedalista!, monthly rides, and hikes can help promote pedestrian and bicycle activity among community members. Events like the Tour of the Gila and Signal Peak Challenge have helped draw in tourism to the town.

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