



PART 9. AGENCY PARTNER REPORTS



CANDID COMMUNITIES

NEAR NORTH VALLEY

This report details the outcomes of the Candid Communities project done in collaboration with Arts Hub, the City of Albuquerque's Long-Range Planning Department, and the residents of the Near North Valley CPA area.





ABOUT THE PROJECT

Candid Communities uses photography as a tool for community feedback and engagement. Instead of survey questions, photo prompts are used to elicit visual feedback from community members as a form of data collection.

This project engaged community members in the Near North Valley area of Albuquerque. The intent was to discover where residents like to spend time with friends/family, what they hope to preserve about their neighborhood, and what they think is missing from their neighborhood. This report is meant to supplement other data and outreach efforts from the City's Long-Range Planning Department and provide a more holistic view of the residents' desires.



PROJECT OVERVIEW



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In 2025 the City of Albuquerque's (City) Long-Range Planning Department collaborated with Arts Hub to integrate arts-based community survey and feedback techniques into the City's CPA process for the Near North Valley area in Albuquerque, New Mexico. For this process, the City and Arts Hub solicited photographs and visual art (in the form of 4-panel comic strips) from individuals who live in those two areas. The goal was to elicit both written and visual feedback to further inform the City's long-range plan in those two areas. A

This report details the process including development, implementation, analysis, and recommendations for next steps.

Data Gathering Design and Process

Beginning in the Summer of 2025, Arts Hub and the City collaborated to develop prompts aimed at soliciting feedback from community members. The City had already collected preliminary data from citizens in the Near North Valley, and the prompts were designed to explore emerging issues/themes more deeply. After reviewing the existing data, the City and Arts Hub developed the following prompts:

- 1) *Show us where you like to spend time with friends/family outside of your home in your community.*
 - 2) *Show us somewhere or something you would like to protect or preserve in your community.*
 - 3) *Show us what is missing in your community*
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PROJECT OVERVIEW



04

Once the prompts were developed, Arts Hub engaged local photographer, Sante Guajardo, to provide photography workshops for residents in the two areas. These workshops were designed to both raise awareness of the project to increase participation and provide photography skills that help community members tell more effective visual stories with their cameras. The two workshops lasted approximately one hour each.

Arts Hub and the City of Albuquerque, along with High Desert Playback and AMP Concerts, also collaborated on the *Art in Action* Festival. The festival took place at AirDance New Mexico and included music, photography, and a comic station where community members could provide visual feedback through a 4-panel comic. The event was a lively celebration, engaging young children, older residents, and everyone in between.

The City and Arts Hub then promoted the project through various channels including social media, email, and community meetings with the goal of engaging a broad representation of community members.

The City developed an online survey for community members to upload their photos and add written context. Arts Hub then analyzed the responses to identify emerging themes.

The resulting analysis of the photo submissions and accompanying written responses are the subject of this report.



Prompt #1: Show us where you like to spend time with friends/family outside of your home in your community

The top responses, in order, fell into the following themes:

A) The Bosque

By far, the most common response to this question related to the Bosque. Residents enjoy walking or biking through the many paths, spending time by the river, or finding “hidden” spots throughout the urban forest. Whether they are having lunch by the water, exercising, or just spending time outdoors, nothing beats the Bosque for a pleasant spot to hang with family and friends.

B) Community Spaces

The next most common response included spaces such as parks, community centers, and cultural spaces such as the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center. Near North Valley Residents particularly enjoy that these spaces are often well maintained and family friendly. The Indian Pueblo Cultural Center was specifically noted as an important space to connect for Indigenous peoples and cultures.

C) Local Businesses/Nonprofits

The final major theme noted local businesses or nonprofit organizations. Farmer’s markets, local coffee shops, and welcoming nonprofit organizations were noted as places of gathering. Residents enjoy spending time with their friends and family at businesses you can only find in the North Valley.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

SAMPLE PHOTO AND CAPTION RESPONSES TO PROMPT #1

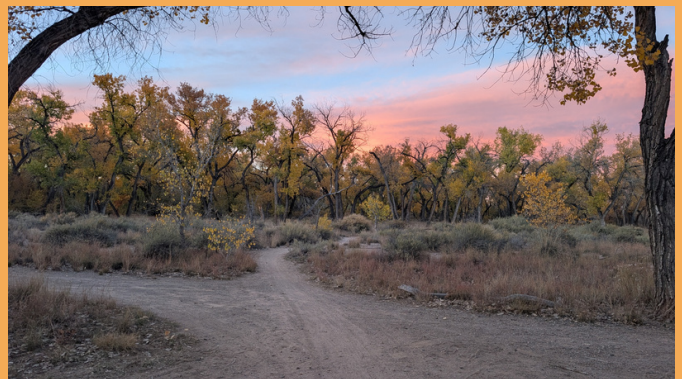
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“The Indian Pueblo Store and IPCC because our community is so fortunate to have Indigenous people who live, work, and thrive in Albuquerque. Experts at the store and great leaders running IPCC.”



“We love spending time at local businesses like Cutbow. The North Valley seems to have more local, rather than national, places and they are so much more welcoming”



“We love spending time in the Bosque. You can disappear into the wilderness, see amazing views, and see some cool wildlife.”

Prompt #2: Show us somewhere or something you would like to protect or preserve in your community.

The top responses, in order, fell into the following themes:

A) Access to the Bosque

North Valley residents not only like to spend time in nature, they also want their access to nature to be preserved and protected. The Bosque is the number one place that residents would like to have preserved and protected. Several responses also noted the many tree covered streets. These “tree tunnels” give the area a unique feel, cool down the street in summer, and offer beautiful views.

B) Heritage

North Valley residents wanted to preserve and protect heritage in the area. Again, the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center was noted as a space that preserves Indigenous culture, music, talent, and heritage. Other responses noted the unique architecture and old buildings that are still inhabited to this day. The architecture of these buildings gives the area a unique feel while reminding people of the neighborhood’s history.

C) Acequias

Many responses noted a desire to preserve the vast and sprawling acequia system. This system provides beautiful spaces to walk/bike as well as water for local farms and backyard gardens. Also, many discussed the acequia system in a way related to the above two themes. It creates access to, and supports, nature while remaining a vital part of the area’s heritage.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

SAMPLE PHOTO AND CAPTION RESPONSES TO PROMPT #2

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"Laberinto del Bosque found hidden in the bosque"



"Irrigation ditches in Duranes Neighborhood...don't know if this is Duranes lateral or Pearce lateral but it runs along south side of Los Duranes Park"



"There are so many historic buildings that give our area a flavor and distinction that makes it so special. Also the fields and DITCHES are unique and very special. All of these things give us a sense of history and community."

Prompt #3: Show us what is missing in your community

The previous two prompts asked respondents to tell us what they love about for their community, providing guidance on what to build upon and preserve. In contrast, this prompt asked respondents to dream about their community and identify ways it could be improved. By identifying what is missing, the City can help cultivate and support the creation of spaces and infrastructure that make the community an even better place to live.

After reviewing the photos and prompts, a few key themes emerged:

A) Local and Performing Arts Engagement Opportunities

The most common response from Near North Valley residents indicated they want more opportunities to engage with arts and culture offerings. In particular, respondents noted the lack of locally-focused performing arts opportunities. With recent closures, or changes in management to existing spaces, opportunities to experience local performing arts have decreased in the area. Respondents also noted a desire for more Indigenous-focused cultural and arts focused spaces.

B) Consistent Access to Groceries

Respondents noted a lack of affordable, or consistent, grocery options in the area. Responses indicated that grocery options in the area are either expensive or lack consistency in terms of stock or quality. While the area is certainly not a food desert, many of the options do not fit residents' needs. Mid-level grocery options like Sprouts, Albertson's, or Trader Joe's were mentioned as ideal.

Prompt 3: Show us what is missing in your community (continued)

C) Pedestrian Safety

While respondents noted the extensive trail system in the Bosque, they discussed how unsafe it is to walk or bike on streets in the Near North Valley. Respondents particularly mentioned the danger of biking on major thoroughfares such as Rio Grande Blvd. or 2nd St., primarily due to sharing the road with cars. Responses indicated that residents would like safer street-based biking options, especially when it comes to connecting to other parts of the city. One response noted how dangerous it is to bike between the Near North Valley and Downtown. A safer, and more connected, biking infrastructure would be welcomed in the area.

D) Improvement to areas that are not Bosque-adjacent

This theme was present throughout the responses, but we decided to discuss this in this section, since it relates to improving the Near North Valley. Along with the street-based bike lanes, residents also noted the degradation or elimination of walking and/or outdoor space along 2nd and 4th streets. These areas, which are several blocks removed from the Bosque, have become dumping grounds for trash and upkeep is not as consistent compared to areas near the Bosque. While residents treasure the access to nature, they would also like more consistent, clean, and safe options for pedestrian travel, or outdoor community spaces, further east in the CPA area.

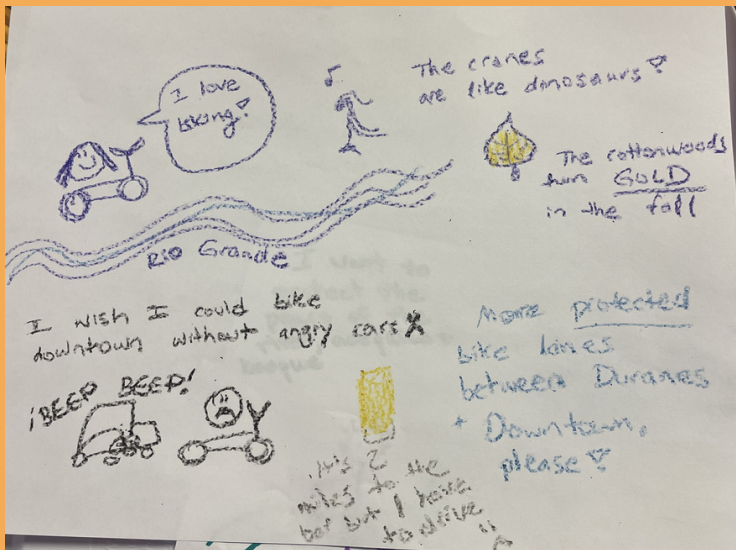
PROJECT OUTCOMES

SAMPLE PHOTO AND CAPTION RESPONSES TO PROMPT #3

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"I love seeing local performing arts, but there are almost no places in the Near North Valley.... there is pretty much nowhere to go to see high quality, local theater, dance, or music in the area"



A 4-panel comic from the Art in Action event. The comic depicts a love of outdoors, nature, and a desire for safer pedestrian travel.



"We don't have great grocery options...I have to leave the area to do grocery shopping and it'd be nice to have a mid-range option like Albertsons or Sprouts closer."

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

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Summary of photo and caption responses

Residents in the Near North Valley has a great appreciation and respect for the abundant opportunities to spend time outdoors. Whether they are enjoying the biking/walking trails in the Bosque, strolling the extensive acequia network, or playing sports in local parks, Near North Valley residents place a high value on the outdoors.

Similarly, residents also enjoy amenities that give the area a true “North Valley” feel. They spend time in shopping at local businesses, value the unique North Valley architecture, and walking along tree-lined streets. Residents also take advantage of the few cultural offerings in the area, such as the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center.

While there is great pride and joy in living in the North Valley, there are a few key pieces missing from the community. Residents who live a little further from the Bosque lament the lack of outdoor space. As one travels further east in the CPA, there are fewer options to enjoy shaded trails and there has been an uptick in trash dumping in those areas. Additionally, residents would like more cultural offerings in the area. Responses indicated a desire for more Indigenous-centric cultural opportunities as well as more opportunities to see and experience local performing arts. Residents also want more diverse grocery options, particularly at the mid-level range. Stores that offer a variety of consistent and reasonably priced grocery options would likely thrive in the area. While the area is not a food desert by any means, limited grocery options mean residents often have to travel outside the area to fulfill this need.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

What do residents want?

This project included a small sample size of Near North Valley residents, and conclusions should be used in conjunction with broader data gathered by the City. While the insight from the photo and comic responses should not be considered conclusive, they add depth, nuance, and context to other data sources. When used in conjunction with other data, the City should have a clear idea of what residents want/need and how to respond appropriately.

Recommendations for the City of Albuquerque's Long-Term Planning Department:

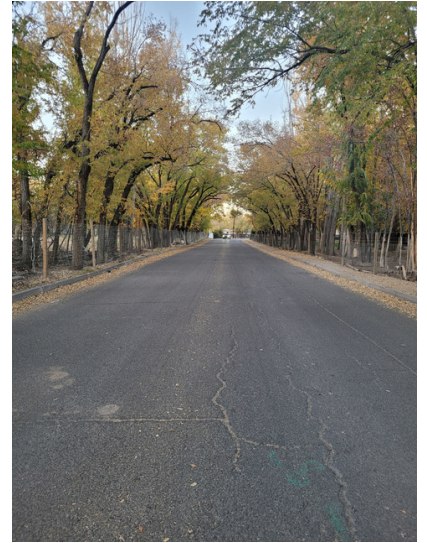
- 1) When considering any infrastructure planning, improving and maintaining access to the Bosque and the acequia system should be a top priority. There is a deep love for these amenities in the area and it is clear that these aspects make the Near North Valley a livable and enjoyable neighborhood. When considering expansion access, it may be worthwhile to consider how to more easily and safely link the eastern edge of the CPA area with the Bosque, creating safe and dedicated paths for people to walk and bike to the river.
- 2) When considering zoning or infrastructure, residents would welcome rules and regulations that encourage local businesses while also keeping the area's unique architecture intact. Coffee shops, grocery stores, or other shops that move into older buildings should be encouraged to maintain the aesthetic. Similarly, new construction could be encouraged to retain the *feel* of older architecture to retain that North Valley charm.

What do residents want? (Continued)

- 3) Residents want more cultural opportunities, specifically local cultural offerings. Performing arts and Indigenous cultural offerings were specifically noted. The Planning Department could review zoning ordinances to make it easier to house these institutions and/or work in coordination with other government departments to encourage the development of a more robust cultural infrastructure in the area.
- 4) More grocery options would be welcome in the area. There may be opportunities to incentivize the building of new grocery stores, changes to zoning regulations that make it easier, or other strategies to bring more options to the Near North Valley. In particular, residents would welcome mid-range options that provide consistent quality and accessible prices.
- 5) While residents noted the beauty and abundance of outdoor access in the western portion of the area (closer to the Bosque), it seems the outdoor access worsens as you travel east in the area (2nd/4th street areas). An increase in both the quantity and upkeep of outdoor spaces, especially walking trails, would greatly improve livability and walkability in the area.
- 6) Pedestrian safety and connections to other areas of the city were noted as a drawback. While acequias and the Bosque offer abundant and safe walking/biking options, the same cannot be said about the major streets in the area. Respondents noted that biking on streets, even with existing bike lanes, is dangerous. They also noted that it is difficult for pedestrians to access other areas of the city, such as Downtown, when using the current infrastructure. Improving pedestrian safety on major roads while also supporting connective infrastructure would likely encourage residents to walk and bike not simply for enjoyment but for modes of transportation to work and shop as well.

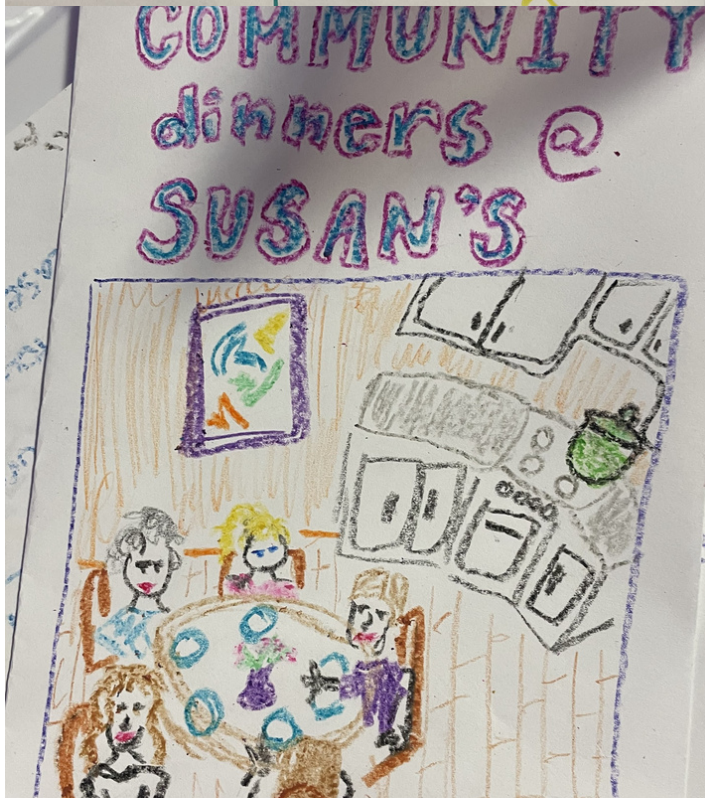
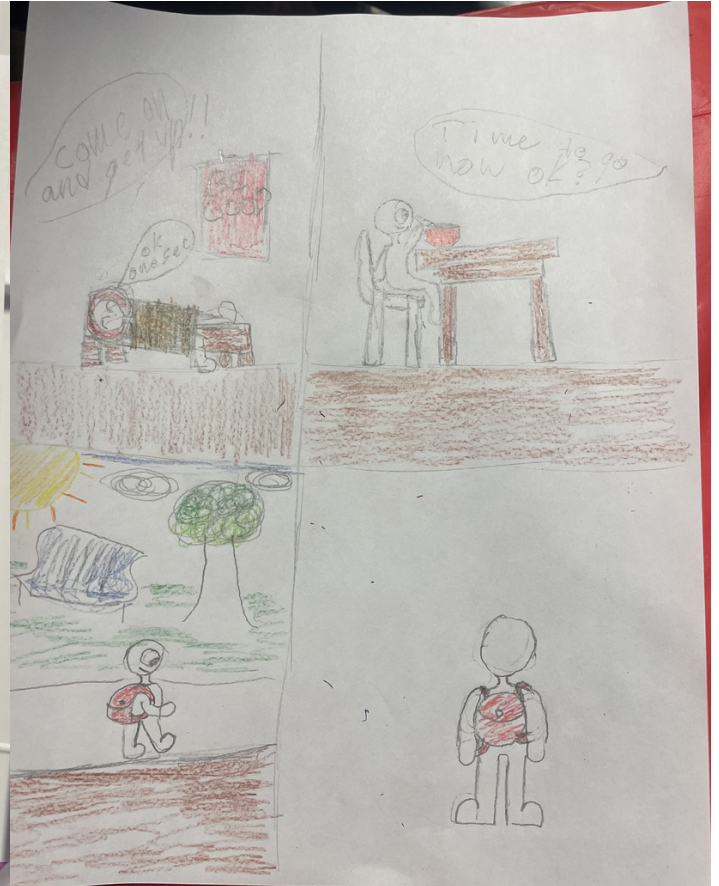
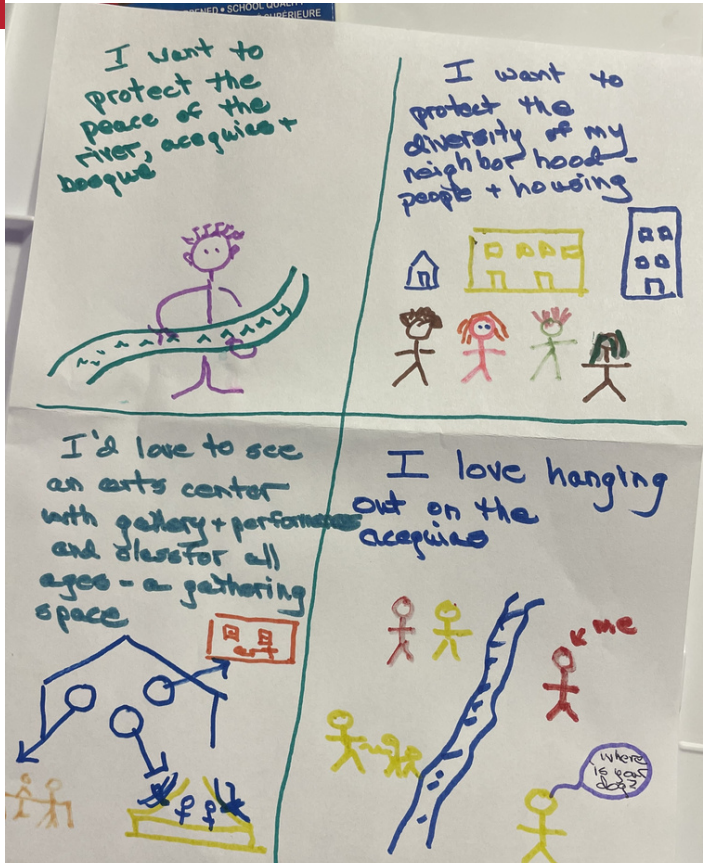
ADDITIONAL PICTURES AND COMICS

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ADDITIONAL PICTURES AND COMICS

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This project and associated report were the result of a collaboration between the City of Albuquerque's Long-Range Planning Department and Arts Hub, but constituted a broader community collaboration. The process would not have been possible without contributions from the following individuals and organizations:

City of Albuquerque Long-Range Planning Department

Arts Hub

Sante Guajardo/Sante Miguel Photo

Ivy Rose

High Desert Playback

AMP Concerts

Sanctuary Cinema

AirDance New Mexico

Los Duranes Community Center

Rudolfo Anaya Library

TWO NORTH VALLEYS

What We Heard. What It Means. What Comes Next.

A Community Listening Report

Near North Valley and North I-25 Community Planning Areas · City of Albuquerque



High Desert Playback × CABQ Long Range Planning

*Written + Prepared by Lynn Johnson
With Allison Kenny and Danielle Simone*

High Desert Playback

2026

We Heard You, North Valley

— a poem from the stories of North Valley residents

Written by Allison Kenny, Co-Founder + Artistic Director, High Desert Playback

We heard you, North Valley.

We heard how you lived in your house a long time.

How holidays create comfort

For the little ones

Generations of family rooted in the land

A nosy neighbor watching through binoculars

¡Oyé, mi gente! Don't take my heart.

This place has always been your home

How ICE showed up to your neighborhood

Threatening

Your dog, your home, your family business

Who gets to feel safe?

In disrupted sacred space?

We heard you North Valley.

How chosen family share meals, find housing, creates

Belonging

Feels lucky

How you are trans and your partner is Black

Deep Breath

Who did we say gets to feel safe here?

Riding bikes

In your beautiful cul-de-sac

Strangers gathering under cottonwoods

Roads closed

When you just want to feel welcomed

Where did all the neighbors go?

We hear you, North Valley

How your neighbor advocated for water rights.

*That the crows make you feel safe.
Because the land is watching
You love your neighborhood
tucked away and
Safe*

*With the baby goats next door
How Paula The Courageous
couldn't sleep
She went for
a walk in the acequia
Alone in the dark.
And felt safe.*

Don't we all deserve to feel safe here?

*12th and Rio Grande
Where houses are abandoned
Drugs and murder and fires and trespassing
Which of us is in danger?
Feeling powerless to help
No system in place
So many police
So little help*

***So who does have the power?
Who gets to feel safe?***

ABOUT THIS WORK

Last year, we listened to the Westside. This year, the North Valley spoke.

Two North Valleys is the second project in an ongoing partnership between High Desert Playback and the City of Albuquerque's Long Range Planning Department. Together, we are exploring a simple but radical question: what becomes possible for city planning when residents are truly, artfully heard?

Between November 2025 and February 2026, High Desert Playback produced two arts-based events for Albuquerque residents who live, work, play, and move through the Near North Valley and North I-25 Community Planning Areas. The first one—the Art in Action Festival at AirDance—was a collaboration with Arts Hub. The second, a Playback Theatre show and community dinner at Nahalat Shalom Synagogue. Using the methodology of Playback Theatre, an improvisational form practiced in over 70 countries, our ensemble invited community members to share real stories from their lives. Performers played those stories back using theater, movement, and music — transforming personal experience into collective witness.

What follows is what we heard, what it means, and what we believe the City must hold as it moves forward with planning decisions in the North Valley.

Who Was In the Room

The following data were collected from our *Two North Valleys* community event at Nahalat Shalom that took place on February 26, 2026.

99

community members attended

63%

show-up rate from 156 RSVPs

65

post-event survey responses

The room held a genuine cross-section of North Valley life: approximately 55–60% White, 35–40% Latine, 20–25% Multiracial, and 10–15% Black, Indigenous, and other identities. Roughly 30–35% of attendees identified as LGBTQ+, and 15–20% as gender-expansive. Homeowners and renters attended in nearly equal measure. Long-time and generational

residents shared space with people who have arrived in the last decade. Income levels were distributed across the full range.

This matters. Traditional planning forums tend to draw the same voices. This event drew the full, complicated, beautiful breadth of who calls the North Valley home.

What Participants Said Afterwards

Post-event surveys (n=65) told a consistent story.

97%

enjoyed the event overall

88%

felt confident their voice was represented

95%

would attend a similar event

Participants rated their overall experience 4.83 out of 5. They felt their voices were represented (4.41/5). They felt more connected to their neighbors (4.52/5). And 4.73 out of 5 said they would attend again.

Perhaps most meaningful for the City's purposes: participants rated their belief that their voice could influence policy at 4.06 out of 5 — a meaningful shift from the disengagement and distrust that can plague civic processes.

“It was a safe and wonderful way to hear different stories, perspectives, and experiences of my neighbors.”

“I felt like I was able to remember how to be human in a way we've collectively forgotten.”

“A nice antidote to the world we face today in our country.”

These are not words residents typically use to describe a planning meeting.

WHAT WE HEARD

Seven Themes from the Stories of North Valley Residents

The stories shared at these two events organized themselves into patterns and key themes emerged. Below are the seven themes that surfaced most consistently.

1. The Land Is Identity

“The land is watching.”

Residents talk about the natural elements of the North Valley as protective, ancestral, and essential. The Bosque was described as the scene of a life-changing decision point. An acequia as a nighttime companion. The crows as guardians. Cottonwoods as old friends. The bald eagle as evidence that the sacred is still here.

Walking in the Bosque is not recreation. It is ritual. For many residents — multigenerational families, newcomers who felt the place “alive” the moment they arrived — connection to the land is not separate from identity. It is the foundation of it.

For Planning: Planning decisions that treat the Bosque, acequias, and open space as amenities to be balanced against development will be experienced as a threat to identity. Ecological protection is cultural protection here.

2. Who Gets To Belong Here

“Poignant reflections on dynamics of belonging and gentrification”

This theme ran beneath nearly every story shared. Alongside stories of connection, family, and tradition ran stories of exclusion and distrust. A lifelong New Mexican described being watched and confronted by their own neighbors just for being a young person of color. A newer trans resident questioned the safety of them and their partner and decided they had to leave.

The North Valley is both welcoming and gatekeeping. That duality is not new, but it is intensifying. Newcomers worry about taking up space that isn’t theirs. Longtime residents worry about being erased. Neither group is wrong. Both are navigating a landscape where the meaning of belonging is actively contested.

For Planning: Engagement processes must do more than invite diverse voices into the room. They must actively address the question of belonging — who is seen as having the right to speak about this place, and who is treated as an outsider regardless of how long they’ve been here. And how do elements of identity play a role in this dynamic?

3. Safety Is Not Universally Defined

“I was surprised folks felt unsafe in the North Valley.”

The word “safety” appeared in nearly every story — and it meant something different each time. For some residents, safety means traffic control, reduced crime, and order. For others, safety is the freedom to walk alone at night in the acequia without fear. For others still, safety is having chosen family nearby, or living in a neighborhood that doesn’t call the police on everyone who looks “out of place.” Both experiences are true. Both residents deserve to be heard.

Safety is not one thing. It depends entirely on who you are and what you carry.

For Planning: Any planning framework that addresses "safety" in the North Valley must address its multiplicity. A single definition of safe — built implicitly around one kind of resident — will fail the others. The City should develop engagement strategies that surface whose safety is being centered and whose is being overlooked.

4. The Duality of Rural vs. Urban

"Crucial to find the balance in order to preserve culture and nature and adapt to needs of city and next generation"

The title *Two North Valleys* came out of a conversation with planners reflecting on the data they had collected in Phase 1 of the process. Residents experience the neighborhood as living in two realities simultaneously: ancient and modern, rural and urban, slow and fast. They love the baby goats next door. They are frustrated by roads that close without warning. They want bike lanes and to keep the feeling that this place hasn't been touched by the challenges of urban life .

This ambiguity is both a gift and a stressor. It is what makes the North Valley distinct. It is also what makes planning decisions here so consequential — because each decision tips the balance one way or the other.

For Planning: Planning decisions in the North Valley should be evaluated through the lens of this duality. What does growth and progress do to the rural character of the place? Does it protect the quality, or does it push the North Valley in a direction that would make it unrecognizable to the people who love it?

5. Neighborhood Change Is Emotionally Charged

"I don't think I realized how complex all of the feelings were from everyone."

Residents described a number of feelings associated with urban progress. The *fear* of displacement. The *guilt* about buying property not accessible to long term residents. The grief of witnessing homelessness. The *pride* of returning to the land you grew up in. The emotional landscape here is vibrant, lush, and valuable.

For Planning: The City should resist the urge to separate the "hard" policy questions from the emotional and relational context in which residents experience them. Feelings are data. They tell us something important about what residents need from planning: not just solutions, but the acknowledgment of the human cost of change.

6. The Moral Weight of Gentrification

"The North Valley is a community with conflicted wants."

Several newer residents described feelings that don't often surface in planning forums: moral discomfort with their privilege and influence as homeowners. Stories of people who love their neighborhood while feeling guilty about what their presence represents. Newcomers are grateful for being able to live here and uncertain whether they have the right to claim it.

These residents are actively wrestling with questions of stewardship, ownership, and responsibility in this land they are now choosing to call home.

For Planning: The City has an opportunity to channel this consciousness into concrete participation. Residents who feel both grateful and implicated are looking for ways to act in alignment with their values. Give them structures for doing that.

7. Community Is the Missing Infrastructure

“Our community is asking for more connection.”

Across both events, residents returned to one consistent longing: more of this. They joyfully shared stories celebrating genuine human contact. Chosen family sharing meals. Neighbors advocating for water rights together. A community dance party. Strangers gathering under cottonwoods.

Even the conflicts that surfaced — the fence, the confrontation, the question of who belongs — hurt because connection matters so much here. Several participants wrote about their need and want for more community spaces in the post-event. The desire is not gone. The infrastructure to support it is.

For Planning: The City should treat community space and gathering infrastructure with the same seriousness as road infrastructure. The demand is clear and consistent. Events like these demonstrate that when you create conditions for genuine connection, residents show up.

A STORY FROM THE CORNER

The Rooted Steward & The Grateful Newcomer

A narrative synthesis drawn from the stories shared at both North Valley events.

Written by Danielle Simone, Artistic Associate, High Desert Playback

The Rooted Steward leans on the worn fence on the corner of Griegos and Rio Grande as it recounts, voice low and steady, "This place holds stories you can't see. Names in the soil, footsteps in the dirt." The Grateful Newcomer nods, hands half-open, as if afraid to mar the history. "I didn't come to change any of that. I came because it felt... alive. But I don't know how to stand here without taking space that isn't mine."

A breeze moves through, carrying the scent of cottonwood and memory. "Belonging isn't the same as owning," the Steward says after a pause. Their voice softens. "It's tending. It's noticing. It blossoms when your desire to hear is stronger than your desire to be heard." The Newcomer exhales, something like understanding loosens their shoulders. "Then maybe, just maybe, I can start there? By learning the names, the rhythms, the echoes. Not to claim them, but to care for them alongside you." And for a moment, the space between them feels smaller.

The Rooted Steward studies them a while longer, then gestures toward the road where dust lifts at every passing car. "Safety isn't just fences and locks," they say. "It's knowing who will show up when something goes wrong, and who won't call something dangerous just because it's unfamiliar." The Grateful Newcomer shifts, thoughtful. "I worry about that." The Steward's gaze softens toward the acequias. "I worry too." Something akin to a sigh escapes them. "If you're willing to protect this place, you must also be willing to be changed by it."

The wind settles. Somewhere nearby, a goat bleats, answered by another. And in that exchange, they both feel it. A fragile, growing sense that safety, like belonging, might be something they can make together — without taking it away from anyone else.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR PLANNING

Recommendations Moving Forward

Who gets to feel at home? What kind of safety matters? How do we grow without fencing off our humanity? These are the types of questions flowing through the North Valley. Technical solutions alone will not address them. The stories we heard point to a community in the middle of deep questions and big feelings about identity, belonging, and power — issues that planning processes must acknowledge directly if they are going to earn the trust needed to be effective.

Here are four points to keep in mind as you move forward with policies and procedures impacting North Valley residents:

1. Acknowledge The Land as Cultural Identity

The land, the acequias, the Bosque, the cottonwoods are central to the identity of this community. Planning processes should name them as such, and any decisions with an ecological character should be evaluated for its cultural impact.

2. Address Belonging Explicitly

The North Valley is a place where multiple, sometimes conflicting, communities are navigating their right to be here. Planning processes that ignore this tension could be seen as taking sides. **Create structures that name this tension and allow residents to work through it together.** The impact of this can become a genuine resource for the entire city.

3. Recognize Conflicting Definitions of Safety

The City's planning documents should resist any single framing of safety. Whose safety is centered in each policy recommendation? Whose experience of danger is more visible? These are questions worth asking out loud.

Develop a narrative strategy on safety. The complex definitions of safety that surfaced in these stories are a sign. The City has an opportunity — and arguably a responsibility — to develop a narrative that helps residents move beyond generalization toward a more nuanced, humane understanding of safety in their community.

4. Create Visible Processes That Empower Participant Voice

Although the majority of residents stated that this process helped them feel that they could influence what happens next (4.06/5), there were still many who didn't see the connection between their participation and practical change.

"I could be helpful to better understand the work of long range planning. What decisions they make, how input from tonight can play into things."

Close the feedback loop. People needed to be able to hear from planners directly and understand next steps. In the CPA process, show North Valley residents — specifically, the ones who gave their stories to this process — how those stories influenced planning decisions.

Publish it. Say it plainly. Show residents, concretely, how their stories will shape the planning analysis and influence how decisions are made.

WHAT COMES NEXT

The Need Is Clear

4.73 out of 5 residents said they would attend another event like this one. The community is telling us it wants more — more space to be heard, more contact with neighbors across difference, more creative ways to engage with the City that shapes their lives.

This is the second report High Desert Playback has produced in partnership with the City of Albuquerque's Long Range Planning Department. The first listened to Westside seniors and youth. This one listened to the North Valley. The methodology is proving itself.

“I would love more events like this so myself and people who didn't share can work up the courage to share their stories and bring needed improvement to this city.”

Let's continue our partnership. High Desert Playback's model is reaching populations that traditional planning processes do not. This partnership is working. Invest in its continuation across other CPAs.

GRATITUDES

We Would Like To Thank...

High Desert Playback Ensemble: Allison Kenny, Danielle Simone, Dalilah Naranjo, Jessie Lane, Johnny Olesen, Lasha Helena Kirker, Lynn Johnson, Noe Field-Perkins, and Tatiana Isabel Gil

Guest performer: **Vicki Dello Joio**

The outreach efforts of **Dalilah Naranjo and Shelbie Corriz**

Vicente Quevedo and the team at **City of Albuquerque Long Range Planning Team**

Jeff Andersen and his team at **Arts Hub**

Esteban Rael and the team at **Nahalat Shalom Synagogue**

Joanna Furgal and the team at **AirDance**

And to **every North Valley resident who trusted us with your story.**

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**COMMUNITY
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NEAR NORTH VALLEY