



Assessment Report

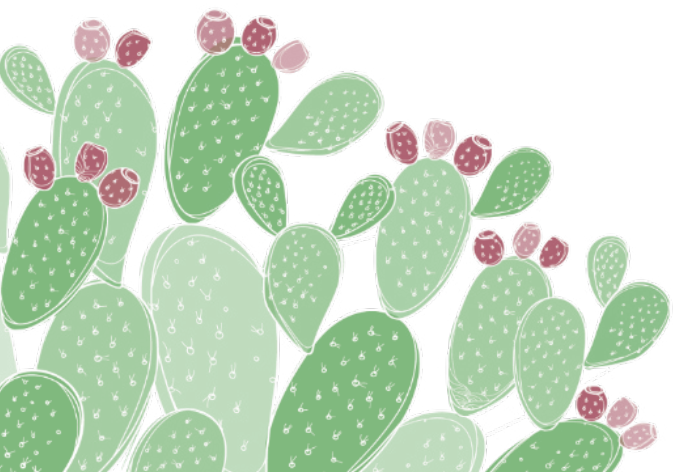
Executive Summary



What is Santa Fe Forward?

Santa Fe Forward is the City's effort to update its General Plan, a long-term vision that will guide decisions on housing, land use, transportation, public services, utilities, climate, and more — through the year 2050.

Our current plan dates back to 1999. This update is our opportunity to reflect today's community values and address issues like affordability, climate change, and inclusive economic opportunity.





Why It Matters

The General Plan affects nearly every aspect of daily life, such as:

- ✓ Where homes and businesses are located
- ✓ How we get around
- ✓ How our neighborhoods grow and evolve
- ✓ Access to parks, recreation, and open space
- ✓ Employment opportunities and economic development
- ✓ Protection of our cultural and environmental assets

By participating in Santa Fe Forward, residents are helping shape how Santa Fe will grow, change, and thrive in the decades to come.



Assessment Report Key Themes & Findings

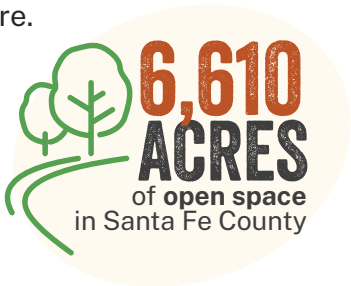
This Assessment Report serves as the first step in Santa Fe’s General Plan update, providing a clear picture of current conditions, progress since 1999, and the fundamentals shaping the community today. By analyzing existing conditions, opportunities, challenges, and trends across various topic areas, the report lays the groundwork for refining Santa Fe’s vision, goals, and policy objectives in the updated plan.

To see the full summary sheets of the Assessment Report, visit: <https://santafeforward.org/learn-more>. Key findings are also provided at the beginning of each Assessment Report chapter.

Nature, Climate, Sustainability & Resilience

Natural spaces, mountains, and life-giving resources are major assets to Santa Fe, benefiting its residents by providing clean air and water, tourism, and economic opportunities for an overall high quality of life. Stewardship of these spaces and resources contributes to Santa Fe’s character and vitality. Meanwhile, the climate is forecast to change, so Santa Fe needs to adapt to be ready and resilient.

- Santa Fe faces increasing risks from wildfire, drought, flash flooding, and extreme heat.
- Key natural areas and cultural features like the Santa Fe River and the acequias need stewardship to support recreation, habitat, and safety.
- Hillside protections, tree preservation, and maintaining and enhancing air and water quality are essential to Santa Fe’s environmental future.



Community Services & Governance

Important services and amenities are provided by area governments and institutions. These providers deliver services that include public safety, education, and healthcare. The City of Santa Fe only controls some of the decision-making on how these services are prioritized and delivered.

- While public safety coverage is strong, there are concerns about crime and disorder.
- School enrollment is declining, reflecting demographic shifts and affordability pressures.
- City services could benefit from modernization and smart technology.
- Better regional coordination is needed for healthcare and infrastructure.



Basic Utilities

Basic utilities include much of what is taken for granted in modern society: water, sanitary sewer, stormwater, waste disposal/recycling, energy, and communications. All these utility services require long-term, capital-intensive infrastructure investments that impact the environment, depend on sensitive resources, and affect households financially.

- Water supply is well-managed but vulnerable to long-term climate change and availability concerns.
- Stormwater and wastewater systems need investment and would benefit from better coordination.
- Solid waste services are effective, but further waste reduction requires incentives and intentional management.
- Most utilities (electricity, gas, telecoms) meet basic needs but could be held to higher standards for resiliency and sustainability.

The Santa Fe River
now **runs dry** up to
220 DAYS
PER YEAR
Water used to flow all summer

Transportation & Access to Opportunity

Transportation connects everything, providing access to opportunity via roads, sidewalks, bicycle facilities, trails, and transit, including Santa Fe Trails bus, Blue Bus, and Rail Runner. Transportation deeply affects quality of life, safety and the environment. Mobility represents a large portion of the City's and household budgets. Investments in transportation have long-term impacts.

- Santa Fe needs safer, multimodal streets and better access for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users.
- Bus service updates are needed to improve frequency and reach.
- Parking is overbuilt and underused in many areas – modern parking management strategies can improve efficiency.
- Transportation investments should be aligned with housing, economic development, and public spaces like parks and trails to create complete communities.

Santa Fe Trails
ANNUAL RIDERSHIP
 **~400k**

Housing, Social & Economic Opportunity

Housing, education, and economic opportunities are strongly linked to social stability, equity, and strength. The City of Santa Fe has a substantial influence on its housing and economic opportunities, while it needs to partner with the Santa Fe Public Schools, trade schools, and higher education to set up supportive educational systems.

- One-third of Santa Fe households spend more than 30% of their income on housing.
- Housing variety and affordability are limited.
- Increasing prosperity appears to reflect displacement, and not true poverty reduction.
- Wages in key sectors like tourism, healthcare, and education don't match the cost of living.
- More commercial and industrial space, and economic diversification are needed.

 **49%** OF
RENTERS
Spent **more than 30%** of
their income on housing
in 2020
VS. 39% OF
HOMEOWNERS 

67%  
of housing is
SINGLE HOUSING UNITS
detached homes or attached townhomes



Arts sector contributes
\$1 BILLION
ANNUALLY

100+ PROPERTIES

on the National Register
of Historic Places
and State Register of
Cultural Properties,
Sites and Districts.



History, Culture & the Arts

Santa Fe's strong tradition of historic preservation is crucial to its identity and is linked to inspiring and sustaining the arts and culture industry. The arts and culture industry contributes over \$1 billion to the area's economy, resulting in direct and indirect employment, along with generating revenue to support City services and infrastructure.

- Historic preservation is crucial to Santa Fe's sense of place, identity, and economy, particularly its \$1 billion+ arts industry.
- Preservation policies can limit new development if not managed with balance.
- There's opportunity to broaden access to the arts and innovate how Santa Fe's history is reflected in public spaces, design, and education.

81%

of residents live within a
10-minute walk of a park



68%

zoned parcels designated
as **RESIDENTIAL USE**



OVER 170
miles of trails

Land Use, the Built Environment & Public Spaces

A plan for the physical development and land use is the most visible feature of the City's general plan. This plan lays out how land will be used and developed, coordinated with transportation, and integrated with natural lands and economic development, while also respecting historic areas, and heritage features.

- Growth pressures are concentrated on the south and west sides, which need more infrastructure, parks, and services.
- Land use regulations are complex and restrictive, needing simplification to support housing and economic growth.
- Identifying areas for preservation, enhancement, and investment areas will help focus future growth and manage change in a responsible way.
- The Santa Fe Style has a significant influence on the identity and culture of Santa Fe today but is only part of the design story. Large areas south and west of the plaza and historic downtown area are oriented to single family housing and automobile travel.



People, Demographics & Income

Basic demographic information provides a strong, factual foundation of understanding. Characteristics of the population and forecasts shape Santa Fe's social, economic, infrastructure, and built environment outlook. This information provides insights on influences that will shape Santa Fe's values, just as people have shaped Santa Fe and its natural environment for over 10,000 years.

- Santa Fe's population is older on average than peer cities, and long-term, the population is forecasted to decline after peaking in 2040.
- Nearly 50% of residents identify as Hispanic, with 3.5% identifying as Native American.
- Newcomers tend to be wealthier, adding displacement pressure in legacy neighborhoods.
- Income inequality and housing burdens are most acute near acequia-adjacent neighborhoods.



RESIDENTS AGED
65-84
more than doubled
in the past 20 years

A medium growth scenario projects a
POPULATION PEAK
OF 99,000

Parcel Availability Inventory

- Within the City of Santa Fe, it is estimated that there are over 5,500 acres of available land, both vacant and designated for possible future development by the existing General Plan land use map. An additional 1,000 acres of underutilized land may offer future development potential.
- Redevelopment opportunities are distributed across the city, with notable locations including former institutional sites such as the St. Catherine's campus.
- Value-based parcel analysis underrepresents surface parking lots and vacant commercial properties. Surface parking lots remain a critical redevelopment challenge and opportunity, especially in central locations.

5,500  **acres of**
VACANT LAND
within the **City of**
Santa Fe



Policy Implications

- The 1999 General Plan provided a strong foundation, but most policy efforts were only partially implemented or are still ongoing, underscoring the need for clearer priorities and more actionable strategies in the 2025 update. While progress was made across many areas, the lack of consistent follow-through highlights the importance of setting achievable, measurable goals that can be fully realized over time.
- Santa Fe's enduring strengths — its cultural identity, arts community, historic character, and environmental values — remain central to the city's vision, but balancing these with flexibility, innovation, and equity is critical. The updated plan must safeguard these assets while adapting to modern needs such as climate resilience, technological change, and demographic shifts.
- Transportation and infrastructure investments advanced in part, but fell short of creating a fully connected, multimodal, and equitable system. Persistent gaps in housing, economic opportunity, and equitable access to services continue to challenge community well-being. Policies on inclusionary zoning, housing trust funds, and workforce training have helped, but affordability pressures, displacement risks, and low wages in key sectors show the need for stronger, coordinated action that ties housing, jobs, and infrastructure together.

Equity

- An Equity Analysis was performed, and it identified 13 census tracts as Equity Communities, all of which are low-income and predominantly west of Saint Francis Drive/ Highway 285 and east of Veterans Memorial Highway/Highway 599. These areas face compounded household, transportation, and environmental health burdens.
- The Equity Communities identified have a higher percentage of Hispanic, Black, Indigenous, or People of Color community members compared to the county averages. Generally, there is a correlation between ethnicity and income lower than the average.
- Without intentional strategies, the benefits of citywide or regional policies may bypass these communities. The Equity Analysis highlights the need for focused investments and policies to reduce burdens, improve quality of life, and ensure equitable outcomes for overburdened residents.

Santa Fe's **enduring strengths** remain central to the **city's vision**, but balancing these with **flexibility, innovation,** and **equity** is critical.

What's Next?

Santa Fe Forward is currently in its early phases. As the plan develops, the public will help shape:

- A shared vision and values
- Specific policy strategies, objectives, and goals
- A map of future land use areas to support growth and preservation
- An implementation plan with timelines and funding strategies



How to Stay Involved:



Attend Events

Public Open Houses and Workshops

Share your feedback and learn more about key issues.

Community Conversations

Join informal gatherings hosted by local organizations.



Engage Online

Interactive Mapping Tool

Pin your ideas and concerns directly on the city map.

Surveys and Quick Polls

Make your voice heard on a range of planning topics.



Stay Updated

Email List

Subscribe to receive updates on meetings, milestones, and ways to participate.

Social Media

Follow Santa Fe Forward for updates and share information with your networks.



Reach Out

Email

info@santafeforward.org

Voicemail

(505) 878-6520



@SantaFeGov

Stay Involved & Learn More
at **SantaFeForward.org**

